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## Some Cultural Aspects of Romanization in Dardania

*Dardania'da Romanizasyonun Kültürel Yönleri*

### Öz

Romanizasyon bir asimilasyon sürecidir başka bir ifadeyle göçmenler ve yerliler arasında karşılıklı etkidir. Bu süreç, farklı aşamalarla karakterize edildi ve buna bağlı ilk önce işgal altındaki bölgenin pasifize edilmesi, sonra bir dizi siyasi, maddi ve kültürel eylemler uygulandı ve böylece Romalıların yerlileri entegre etme çabaları eşliğinde bunları yeni koşulların parçası yapmak için uğraştılar. Romalılaşmanın temsil ettiği dönüşümlerin bütününden biz bu makalede Dardania'da kültürel açıdan görülen Romanlaşmanın incelenmesine odaklanacağımız çünkü Romanlaşmanın en önemli unsurlarından birinin kültürel sorunlarla temsil edilmesinden dolayıdır. Böylece romalıların getirdiği yeni kültürel ve sosyal çevreyi incelenirken kültürel etkileşimler ve bu süreçte dahil olan mekanizmalar ve kurumlar hedefleniyor ayrıca Roma istilasından sonra Dardania toplumunun yaşadığı temasların ve kültürel dönüşümlerin doğasını anlamaya yönelikdir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Dardania, romanizasyon, kültür, dönüşümler

### Abstract

Romanization is an acculturation process or a mutual influence between newcomers and indigenous people. This process was accompanied by various phases, including appeasement of the occupied territory, a number of political actions, including cultural and material, as well as efforts on the part of Romans to integrate local population.

Of the entirety of changes represented in Romanization, this article will focus on the cultural dimensions in Dardania of such process. By looking at the changes brought forward by the Romans, we will try to investigate the cultural interactions, mechanisms and institutions involved, as well as understanding the nature of contacts and cultural transformation brought onto Dardania upon Roman occupation.

**Key words:** Dardania, romanization, culture, transformation

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## Introduction

**R**omanization consists in a multitude of transformations that occurred in the territories under Roman occupation. Such transformation involved the administration, law, social and economic structures as well as use of Latin as administrative and religious language.

A fundamental principle of romanization is the adoption of Roman ideas in provinces, through a number of stages, starting with the acceptance by the population, adaption and reaction to such a system. Romanization is accompanied by processes such as appeasement of the territory, through setting up security institutions. This is followed by a number of political actions, including material and cultural, as well as Roman efforts to integrate the local population. A key role in diffusing such a system was played by the military-administrative apparatus at the hands of Romans, especially in cities, which due to the new administrative organization, became important economic centres, accompanied by high levels of cultural and artistic development.

The large Roman Empire included a vast number of populations and religions. Such value systems may have co-habited with the dominant culture, but it often faced fierce resistance, seen especially in the material culture and daily life.<sup>1</sup>

Of the entirety of transformations represented by Romanisation, this article will focus on assessing such a process in light of cultural issues. Thus, by looking at the changes brought forward by the Romans, we aim to investigate the cultural interaction, including the involved mechanisms and institutions, as well as we aim at understanding the communication and cultural transformations brought forward by Roman occupation.

The cosmopolitan nature of Roman Empire, contributed towards an openness to integrating elements of the new encountered cultures, without necessarily imposing their own onto them. This is evident in the daily life and material culture, where a number of tools, ceramic, glass objects as well as jewellery.<sup>2</sup>

## Cultural dimensions of Romanisation

The Roman occupation introduced new customs to the local population. Thus the local language did not anymore represent the only spoken language, as Latin is set as administrative language. Latin was key to integrating local population into Roman society, thus enabling their romanization, especially in urban centres with high Roman presence.

There is a high epigraphic evidence in Dardania, which illustrate such transformation. Some of the first Roman epigraphic evidence dates in the I century BC, but it increases largely in the II and III centuries AD.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, such evidence remains insufficient, for many reasons. First,

1 Jovanović, Aleksandar, *Nakit u rimskej Dardaniji*, Beograd, 1978, f. 8.

2 Kalaja-Hajdari, Emine, *Shndërrimet në Dardani gjatë periudhës romake*, Prishtinë, 2017, f.169.

3 Regarding the epigraphic signages discovered in Dardan territory, see: Mirdita, Zef, *Antroponomia e Dardanisë në kohën romake*, Prishtinë, 1981; Josifovska, Borka, *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure: Scupi et la Région de Kumanovo*, vol. VI, CÉENFPHUB, Beograd, 1982; Pertović, Petar, *IMS*, vol. III/2, *Timacum Minus et la vallee du Timok*, Beograd 1995; Kalaja-Hajdari, Emine, *Shndërrimet në Dardani gjatë periudhës romake*, Prishtinë, 2017.

this is due to fact that their presence was an urban phenomenon, while the majority of Dardania was rural,<sup>4</sup> where the local tradition did not allow for such monuments. Based on such inscriptions, one could see that through the use of Latin, the process of inclusion of individuals or categories into the Roman system, thus diminishing the differences between cultures. Such inscriptions were carried out by soldiers, veterans, municipal elites, as well as slaves.

During Roman invasion, Dardania's arts and culture went through a great development, as evidenced by the archeologic material, including ceramics<sup>5</sup>. Italic and Galean sigilita were imported, including in the most conservative areas.<sup>6</sup> Besides these, a number of clay lamps stamped with foreign or local ateliers were found, as well as bronze ones.<sup>7</sup>

Other genres of art are represented by sculptures, like the monumental ones, relief or figurines. The monumental sculpture discovered so far has a religious feature. It is worth mentioning that this type of sculpture has been mostly found in the northern part of Dardania, where in majority of cases it is represented by high quality artistic realisation.<sup>8</sup> In these groups the most dominant are the statutes which personify the gods of Greco-Roman, oriental or local cult.

Majority of them are imported from Greece<sup>9</sup> and East,<sup>10</sup> but some of them have been realised also in local workshops,<sup>11</sup> and they are featured by a special provincial style.<sup>12</sup> The best model of local sculpture is Dea Dardane, discovered in Nish and the woman portret discovered in Kllokot. Another important groups is the miniature sculptures, which have a high artistic quality. Amongst them there are also replica of Hellenistic models. These include the sculptures of Apollon, Aferdita and Mercury,<sup>13</sup> found in Ulpiana as well as the one of elephant found in Rahovec.<sup>14</sup>

Additional categories include monuments embroidered in relief which represent lines of stele, altars and honorific basis discovered throughout the territory of Dardania, whereby the local characteristic have been best preserved. According to stylistic criteria steles can be divided in two groups: the first one comprises those in which the portrets have been realised in the style of Greco-Roman funerary art, but with significant provincial influence,<sup>15</sup> while in the second group, which also comprises the largest portraits with steles, discovered so far, is dominated by local

4 Regarding the process of urbanisation in Dardania see: Kalaja-Hajdari, Emine, "Procesi i urbanizmit në Dardani gjatë periudhës romake", Java e Shkencës, 2016, MASHT, Prishtinë, 2017, 221-225

5 Fidanovski, Slobodan, *Rimska keramika Ulpiane*, Beograd, 1990.

6 Čerškov, Emil, *Romakët në Kosovë dhe Municipiumi D. D. te Soçanica.*, Prishtinë, 1973, f. 76.

7 Shukriu, Edi, *Kosova antike*, Prishtinë, 2004, f. 116.

8 Dobruna-Salihu, Exhlale, *Plastika dekorative dhe figurative e gurit në Dardani gjatë kohës romake*, IAP, Prishtinë, 2005, f. 529-530.

9 Cermanović-Kuzmanić, Aleksandrina, "Rimska skulptura u Srbiji, Grčko-rimska antika vo Jugoslavija i na Ballkanot", *Prilozi od 5-iot Naučen sobir na Sojuzot na društvata za antički studii na Jugoslavija, orzano vo Skopje od 26-29 septembri 1989*, Posebni izdania, ŽA 9, Skopje 1991, f. 224.

10 Petrović, Petar, *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure: Timacum Minus et la Vallée du Timok*, vol. III 2, CÉÉNFPHUB, Belgrade 1995, f. 42, 45.

11 Dobruna-Salihu, Exhlale, 2005, f. 530.

12 Čerškov, Emil, 1973, f. 77.

13 Nikolić, D., "Bronzana statueta iz Ulpijane", *BMK II*, Prishtinë, 1957, f. 265-272.

14 Čerškov, Emil, 1973, f. 77.

15 Dobruna-Salihu, Exhlale, 2005, f. 253a.

artistic features.<sup>16</sup> The local influence is especially present in realisation of women's portraits, especially in their clothing, featured by the headscarf and medallion around the neck. This type is characteristic to Dardania territory and especially in the parts of Kosovo and Nish.<sup>17</sup>

Additional art pieces are rather limited. There are few mosaics discovered until today and the artistic realisation of the same is dominated by geometrical motives such as rhombuses and various combination of circles. Other motives include figurative ones, namely human, animal and birds' figures.

However, there are mosaics combined with geometrical and figurative motives. Until now we do not have any example of mosaics before the romans. Influence and cultural diversity are much more present in jewellery and the craft art. A large number of rings, bracelets, necklaces. Earrings, fibula, etc have been discovered in a number of different habitations and necropolis throughout Dardania. The largest number of these jewellery are made in bronze, but there are also examples of them being in gold or silver. The rings are made mostly by such metals and they reflect new models and forms brought by romans. Majority of them are imported. Even in cases of local products, they are influenced by oriental culture<sup>18</sup>. Unlike the rings, bracelets are mostly made in bronze and rarely in gold or silver, being mostly local products. Oriental influence is rather visible and present in earrings.

Regarding earrings, based on data so far, in Dardania they were quite common in various shapes, techniques and materials. Diadems are an important category of previous jewellery. They have been discovered mostly in necropolis of large urban centres such as Scupi, Ulpiana and Municipum DD. Fibula also represents an important category of jewellery, not only regards shape but also their function, they are found in vast numbers and represent different shapes and types.

### Conclusion

As a conclusion, one can say that the objects of material culture discovered in the territory of Dardania are various. The products which are influenced by the local tradition, there is a visible oriental influence, while pure italic imports are rather limited. Such imports are realised mostly by other provinces of empire. It is impossible to systematically connect a category of jewellery with a specific social class. However, it is rather common to see local traditions, especially in the funeral art and in the most common jewellery, because those that procured them may have belonged to the elites, but also other parts of society. Special jewellery such as diadems or urban votive and honorific were directly associated with local aristocracy, where the roman influence was much more visible and this is a sign of Romanisation from the top.

Epigraphic and archeologic data that we have until now establish that Dardania, under the Roman Empire was subject to a number of changes, which have affected almost all areas

16 Rendić-Mijočević, Duje, "Dva antika signirana reljefa iz radionice majstora Maksimina", *ARR* 4-5, 1967, f. 339; Dobruna-Salihu, Exhlale, 2005, f. 253.

17 Dobruna-Salihu, Exhlale, 2005, f. 315-316.

18 Regarding the jewllery of Roman period dsicovered in Dardania, see A. Jovanović, 1978.

of life of the Dardan population. This complicated cultural process has occurred by bringing a new provincial culture, which absorbs elements of locally inherited culture. This new co-existence form, is materialised in all the areas of everyday life, transition of habitation, establishment of new urban centres, development of trade relations, economic structures, increasing of religious beliefs, establishment of new institutions, use of new artisanal products, improved hygiene and an enriched cultural life. Overall, despite numerous interferences and influences, Dardans have not lost their cultural and ethnic features.

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