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## Traces of the city of Damastion in the lands of central Dardania

### *Damastion kentinin Orta Dardanya topraklarındaki izleri*

#### Abstract

Following the footsteps of ancient civilizations is not easy at all. One should always start from the oldest data, going through the itineraries of guidebooks, legends, legends, comparisons, archaeological excavations, assumptions and hypotheses of different authors.

The territory of Dardania, was a very rich territory with various and very precious mines and minerals, and also to search for a very rich city and civilization which is known more by its coins, is also challenging but also easily defined. According to the data and finds of coins from this city we see that we have done with the extension of the monopoly all over the Illyrian Peninsula, including Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo as well.

Therefore, we should always look for the city of Damastion in the area of ancient Dardania, since this area also had an influence on the entire region.

**Key words:** Damastion, civilization, currency, mining, Dardan, Illyrian.

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## Öz

Eski uygarlıkların ayak izlerini takip etmek hiç de kolay değil. Her zaman en eski verilerden başlamak, rehber kitapların, efsanelerin, efsanelerin, karşılaştırmaların, arkeolojik kazıların, farklı yazarlar tarafından verilen varsayımların ve hipotezlerin seyahat programlarını gözden geçirmek gerekir.

Dardania bölgesi, çeşitli ve çok değerli madenler ve madenlerle çok zengin bir bölgeydi ve öyledir, bu nedenle, daha çok madeni paralarıyla tanınan çok zengin bir şehir ve medeniyet aramak bile zorlayıcı ama aynı zamanda kolayca belirleyicidir. Bu şehirden elde edilen sikkelere ait verilere ve buluntulara göre, bu sikkelerin tekelinin Bulgaristan, Yunanistan, Karadağ, Kuzey Makedonya, Arnavutluk ve Kosova da dahil olmak üzere İliro Yarımadası boyunca genişletilmesiyle uğraştığımızı görüyoruz.

Bu nedenle, Damastion şehrini her zaman antik Dardania bölgesinde aramalıyız, çünkü bu bölge sadece zengin değil, aynı zamanda tüm bölgede etkiliydi.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Damastion, uygarlık, madeni para, madencilik, Dardan, İliro.

### 1. The city of Damastion

Damastion was an important mining center in Illyria, where since the 4th century BC, silver coins were minted. Among the symbols used on the coins is the miner's hammer, which proves that the city was the center of a region rich in gold and silver mines.

Damastion is one of the important Illyrian cities which has not yet been discovered in which Illyrian territorial space it was built. Based on ancient sources this city was known for gold and silver processing.

Mining around, and the processing of precious metals in this city had a very important role in the economic development, social and cultural life of that town.

The traces of the location of this city are still not clearly defined, many hypotheses have been raised regarding this issue, but due to the lack of research in the field, it has not been proven where all those mines existed, and where this civilization flourished.

The hypotheses raised so far differ greatly among themselves, looking for it in several cities and different settlements in the lands of Illyria and ancient Dardania in particular.

Many researchers gave different opinions about this city, looking for it in the southern parts of Albania, in the Republic of North Macedonia, in Kosovo and in today's Serbia.

From the earliest sources, we learn that in this city, in addition to the processing of noble metals, coins with the name of the city and the miner's hammer were minted, which today are found in many settlements of the Balkan Peninsula.

If we are based on the writings of ancient researchers, but also on the opinions of our researchers from Kosovo such as: Zef Mirdita, Edi Shukriut, etc., who think that the Illyrian city Demastion should be sought in Dardani, and precisely in the localities of metal processing in the vicinity of Artana, and based on the archaeological and mining traces,

it can be concluded that this town must have been the primary center for the Dardanian economy.

In addition to many other archaeological sites, coins of Damastion have also been found in Veletini Castle near Janjeva.<sup>1</sup> It is important to mention that about 3 km, southeast of Veletin, right at the entrance of Janjeva, in front of the Grab hill, where mining galleries have been discovered, is Gradina e Janjeva. On the northern side, about 100 m. from the surrounding walls of the garden, the foundations of two buildings and some ancient coins were discovered by Serbian archaeologists, so this archaeological site should be considered important in ancient Dardania.

Among the early archaeological finds, the relief of Dhemitrws is of great importance. In this relief, in its center Mitra is shown killing the bull.<sup>2</sup>

Two bylyzyk made of bronze material, discovered in Janjevë, belong to the Dardanian period. One that was discovered in 1934, is kept in the People's Museum of Belgrade, while the other is in the National Museum of Vienna. These findings date from the VIII-VII century, before the birth of Christ.<sup>3</sup>

The importance of this territory of Dardania is also proven by the existence of many castles and terraces near the mining galleries that we encounter today in the field.

The end of the bronze culture in the Galabi highlands is evidenced by the necropolises discovered in the lower Bërnica village, Grashticë e Keqekollë, near Pristina, a new iron culture begins.

Above the village of Bërnice, the castle of Siceva rises, in Grashticë there is a fortification and an ancient settlement spread over several hectares. In the village of Keqekolle, there is a fort that is thought to be the Kekolle Castle.<sup>4</sup> The Dardanian civilization in this region is evidenced by a large number of fortifications and discovered monuments.

In the Iron Age, the Dardanians lived in these lands, who were the bearers of the new civilization, proving the continuity of civilization since prehistoric times.<sup>5</sup>

This period of the Dardanian civilization is evidenced by the fortified settlements (towns), which today we find in the entire territory of today's Kosovo and beyond.

Settlements of the type of fortifications in the territory of Kosovo appear to us since the end of the Neolithic period. The material culture discovered in the village of Damarocë,

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1 Edi Shukriu: "Kosova Antike", Prishtinë 2004, faqe 69

2 Miodrag Grbić: NOUVEAUX MONUMENTS MITHRIAQUES DE LA YOUGOSLAVIE, fq. 179  
Source: Revue Archéologique, Sixième Série, T. 10 (JUILLET-DÉCEMBRE 1937), pp. 174-180  
Published by: Presses Universitaires de France  
Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41728020> Accessed: 31-10-2019 19:39 UTC

3 Srpska Akademija Nauka i Umetnosti & Muzej u Pristini: Arheolosko blago Kosava I Metohije, Od neolita do ranog veka, Pjesa e II, Beograd, 1998, fq. 228, <http://www.zemrashqiptare.net/news/54116/qazim-namani-gjurmet-arkeologjike-dhe-historike-ne-rrethinen-e-janjeves.html>

4 Qazim Namani: Arkivi i Kosovës, "Vjetari XXIX-XXX", Lashtësia Iliro-shqiptare në Malësinë e Galabit, Prishtinë, 2003, faqe 57

5 Bashkësia e institucioneve shkencore të Kosovës: "Studime Libri 26", Emil Cerskov: "Romakët në Kosovë dhe municipiumi D.D. te Soçanica, e përkthyer nga Gani Luboteni, Prishtinë, 1973, faqe 13

near the river Morava Jugore, and in the village of Vlashnje near Prizren, belong to the group: Iodertaro-humusor.<sup>6</sup> It is assumed that these fortifications, erected in the early periods of history, continued their development throughout the Bronze Age, so that in the Iron Age they became dominant settlements in the areas around where they lay.<sup>7</sup>

In the territory of the source of South Moravia, we can look for the main center of civilization in this area, and that the discoveries of the material culture of the Iron Age in these parts belong to the Dardanians.<sup>8</sup>

It should be noted that the ores of Kosovo have been exploited since the early periods of metals, and this is evidenced throughout the territory of Kosovo.

Mining as an important economic branch during the Kingdom of Dardania during the 4th-3rd century BC, was also developed outside the northeastern borders of today's Kosovo. The mines in the vicinity of Leskoci, Medvegja, Vraja, Bujanoci, Presheva and Kumnova were the main branches of the economy that influenced the development of the cities in these parts, during the Hellenistic period, in late antiquity and the Middle Ages.

Emil Čerškov: during field research, he wrote that, in the territory between Gjilan and Bujanovac, traces of old ancient and medieval ore have been preserved, which are difficult to distinguish, because the pits and galleries have collapsed due to the weather and can hardly be seen on the ground.<sup>9</sup>

We also have data from ancient authors about the mining of these three. The Roman writer Strabo, who lived in the first century before our era, in his book VII, wrote that, Dardan are also the Galabrs, among whom .....(absence in the text), is an old city .... they live in the depths of the country.<sup>10</sup>

It is a fact that Strabo knew about that city, and found it appropriate to cite it with the epithet Arhaia, and this shows that it cannot be a question of any ordinary fortress.<sup>11</sup>

The Dardanians have been organized in political, economic and social life, that's why this polis Arhaia has been an important center of the Dardan Galabroi tribe.<sup>12</sup>

Edi Shukriu, about the existence of cities in Dardani, writes: According to ancient sources, there were cities in Dardani, so in the c. BC, the ancient author Titus Livy made a distinction between the settlements, calling some of them with the nation urbus, while Strabo mentions an old city among the Dardanian Galabrians, i.e. a city that was old in the 1st century BC.<sup>13</sup>

6 Po aty, faqe 13

7 Po aty, faqe 13

8 Po aty, faqe 13

9 Emil Čerškov: "Romakët në Kosovë dhe municipiumi D.D te Soçanica", Prishtinë 1973 faqe 51-52.

10 Ilirët dhe Iliria te autorët antik", Prishtinë 1979 faqe155.

11 Fanula Papazoglu: "Srjednobalkanska Plemena u predrimsko doba", Sarajevë 1969 faqe.367.

12 Zef Mirdita: "Studime Dardane" Prishtinë 1979 faqe 97,

13 Edi Shukriu: "Arkivi i Kosovës", "Vjetari XXVII-XXVIII", "Gradina e Gushicës dhe municipiumi Labutza", Prishtinë 2002, faqe 23.





**Figure 1.** Map's showing the extent of the ancient dardan tribe Galabri

The Dardanians had developed mining units called fines, units that possessed an administrative unit called vicus metallic.<sup>14</sup>

Coins minted and produced in the city of Damastion, in addition to Kosovo, Albania and Macedonia, have also been found in many other locations, such as: the tetradrachm in Kulina (between Nish and Leskovci).<sup>15</sup>

The author Petar Popović presents three coins discovered in Kërševica, among which one minted in Damastion and two in Pelagia.<sup>16</sup>

As we said above, coins of Damastion were discovered in Dalmatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, in Albania, in addition to Shkodra where 3 coins were discovered, coins of Damastion were also discovered in the area of Elbasan.

According to Imhoof-Blumer, coins of Damastion were found near Stob, Skopje, Vranje, Kumanovo and western Karatova. The presentation of Damastion coins was witnessed in Janjevë, Prizren, Gjakovë and Pejë. Next to the Morava River in the north-east from Vranje and Kumanova, specifically in Kulina, near Leskovci, in 1923 a large hoard of Damastion coins was discovered. Going further east, there are 11 coins of Damasio in the National Museum of Sofia in Bulgaria. All those 11 coins were discovered on the territory of Bulgaria. Coins of Damastion were also discovered in Romania. In Dalmatia in Sinj, about 25 km near Split, 30 coins were discovered, in Risan (ancient Rhizonia), in Bocche di Cattarro, a hoard of coins of Damastion was discovered. A miner's hammer appears on

14 Slobodan Dušanić: "Roman mining in Illyricum", Historical Aspects, faqe, 257.

15 Margaret Thompson, Otto Morkholm, Colin M. Kraay: "An Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards", Neë York 1973, faqe, 59-64.

16 Petar Popović: "Numismatic finds of th 4<sup>th</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC from Kale at Krševica (southeastern Serbia)", "Arheološki vestnik 58", 2007, faqe, 156 - 416

several coins of Damastion, which proves that the city was the center of a region rich in silver minerals. While the coins of Damastion are mainly gold and silver coins, then we can freely affirm that Damastion was located near gold and silver mines, which is proven by the traces of mines that are still found today in various mines, rivers and in the Kosovo region.<sup>17</sup>

About the location of the city of Damastion, in the absence of other written archaeological material, some opposing opinions have been expressed, the location of this city has been determined thanks to the coins found that were minted in the c. IV-III BC. According to the type, style and name of the coin, *Imhoof-Blumers* and *Gaeblers* “*Zeitschrift fur numismatic P*” 1874/99 ss and “*Zeitschrift fur numismatic 37*” 1927 pag 245 ss, have thought that this city must be somewhere near Peonia, even Dyestoi according to Gaebler, the Dynasties will be Peons. Later, the *Imhoof-Blumes* beg somewhere in the south of Albania in *Antigoneja*, respectively in the place of *Dames*, some 10 km north of Tepelena, at the Vjosa river. Philipson is of the opinion that Damastion can be identified with today’s Gjirokastra.

Karl Paçi also thinks that it should be found in the south of Albania. V. Tomashek places this city somewhere in the territory of Pirustev, respectively in Mirdita, where mining activity was known. R.L. Beau Mond has the same but more specific opinion, according to which Damastion should beg somewhere in *Mirdita* or *Dukagjin*.

However, it should be noted that, as far as is known, only a small number of coins of Damastion have been found in Albania, which is incomprehensible to accept the hypothesis of the location of this settlement, anywhere in Albania.

The very fact that the localization of this settlement has stimulated great interest, and thoughts about its extension, from one place to another, shows not only the importance but also the difficulty of this approach. So Konstantin Jeriqeku thinks that his location should be somewhere north of Dibra. A. Majeri, who is begging for this in the north of the city of Ohrid, is close to the thoughts of K. Jeriqek.<sup>18</sup>

With all the opposing opinions about the location of this city, following the beaten method so far, based on the traces of the exploitation of ores and fortifications, we think that Damastion should be begged in the central territory of Dardania, respectively in today’s territory of Kosovo, Serbia southern and western Macedonia.

In 1961, in the southwest of Janjeva, in the place called “white earth”, the remains of an ancient settlement were discovered, this area with Artana (Novo Brdo),<sup>19</sup> and the mines of Kishnica are known as places rich in minerals.

It is important to know that the most coins of Damastion were found in this area, while both Strabo and the Vatican Palimpsest mention the silver ores that were found near Damastion. It is precisely these data that make us look for this city in the vicinity of

17 Margaret Thompson, Otto Morkholm, Colin M. Kraay: “An Inventory of Greek Coin Hoards”, Neë York 1973, faqe, 59-64.

18 Z. Mirdita: “Studime Dardane”, Prishtinë 1979, faqe 104

19 The Albanian and Slavic name for this castle.

Kishnica, respectively Janjeva or Pristina, writes Zef Mirdita.<sup>20</sup> From this article it can be seen that Zef Mirdita has missed field research in other villages of this region.

I think that Zef Mirdita's opinion about the location of Demastion in the central part of Kosovo, precisely in the mountains of Galab, is correct, based on the ore traces mentioned above in the vicinity of Janjeva, Artana and Pristina. It is important to add the fact that the northeastern and southwestern territories of Artana are very rich in ore sites, and ancient traces from antiquity that have not been written about by contemporary authors, since proper research has not been done in these territories.<sup>21</sup>

M. Suici thinks that this polis was the center of a territorial community. The identification and location of this center was also given by Ivan Mikulcici, locating it with the Skopje castle, and Fanula Papazoglu takes this opinion with reservations.<sup>22</sup>

We think that Ivan Mikulcici and the other researchers mentioned above, regarding the location of this city, have followed the wrong path, because it must be believed that the well-known Dardan tribe, Galabroi, lived in the territory of today's Galab, that is, in the depths of ancient Dardania, while the city of Skopje does not lie in the territory of the Galab highlands, nor in the central part of ancient Dardania, and this contradicts Strabo's data.

Based on the results of the field, we think that in the future this city should be searched for in the surroundings of Artana and precisely in the Galabi Highlands.

Based on the sources collected from the field, it appears that even the northern side of Pristina has not been behind in terms of mining development, compared to the western side, where we can highlight traces of mining and fortifications in the villages: Samaderxë, Barilevë, Lupçë te , Besi Tenezhdoll, Majac (Castle and Gradina), Popovë, Patok, Kacanoll, Lllashtice, Pakashtice, Zhiti, Marina, Murgulle, Bollostenë, etc.

During field research in the Galab highlands, we came across many toponyms that are somehow related to silver and gold mines and the first city of Dardan Aria.

It is important to mention that the "Gjyteti te Rimi" trough in the village of Prapashtica is today called the Arusha trough, where the inhabitants of this area do not remember that gold has ever been seen in this locality, it should be added that on the southwest side of this the locality begins with the territory of the village of Keqekollë, where the kroi of this village is called Kroi i Kikolli (Kroi i Gjytet).

In this village, a castle has been discovered that is thought to be the Kekolla Castle, which is on the list of reconstructions by the emperor Justinian.<sup>23</sup>

In the village of Keqekollë, about 1km south of the city center, an entrance to the gallery is called "Silver Cave" by the population. In this village, six places were recorded, where slag (metal dross or samakova) was collected from the processing of ores. The

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20 Po aty fq.106

21 Qazim Namani: Arkivi i Kosovës, "Vjetari XXIX-XXX", Lashtësia IlIRO-shqiptare në Malësinë e Galabit, Prishtinë, 2003, faqe 57

22 Zef Mirdita: "Studime Dardane", Prishtinë 1979 faqe 97.

23 Qazim Namani, Vep. cit, faqe 58

amount of slag collected in Keqekollë, Ballaban, Brainë, Herticë, Prapashticë, Dabishec, Hajkobilë, Kremenate, Strezoc, Bugjenicë, Gjyrishec, Kronidel, Krilevë, Marec and the villages in the vicinity of Janjeva and Gjilan, has been transported and sent to the Trepçë smelter in the fifties of the XX century.

In Prapashtica there are ruins of the ancient settlement, the foundations of several churches, ore deposits, cemeteries with burials and tumuli, while at the entrance of this locality a valley is called “Lugut te Arusha” where the road that has existed since ancient times has been documented. .

On the southeast side, in the village of Marec, not far from this locality, there is an archaeological site called gradina. A similar microtoponym can be found in the village of Mramur, with the name “Fusha e Arusha”. Traces of an ancient civilization have been found in this village, which only reinforces the opinion that the city of Aria should be sought in the string of microtoponyms preserved for “Towns (Towns)”, in this area, which prove an indisputable development in antiquity, starting from Gjytet i Istrina (Grashtica), precisely the archaeological locality that lies in the territory of Mramur village.

A fortress rebuilt in Dardani by King Justinian was called ARIA, which we think should be located with one of the forts that were built on the Gradina of the village of Siarina.

In the villages around Siarina, almost in every village even today traces of metal processing can be seen, and during the flow of water in these parts, slag left over from metal processing can be found everywhere. The mine in the village of Lece is well known in this area.

Near Gradina e Siarina in the village of Sfirçë, the toponyms “Birat e Arisa” have been preserved, in the village of Zajçec the toponym “Bashqja e Arisa” is still preserved today, microtoponyms that reinforce our opinion. In the village of Marec, there is a gradina, a locality surrounded by many fortifications and mines. Next to this terrace there is a large amount of metal processing waste.

In the village of Gjyrishec, Veleglavë on the border with the village of Marocë, a place where minerals are smelted is called “Spella e Argjendit”, traces of a gallery can be seen in this place.

Near the Siarina garden, a castle today is called “Quka e Dukat”, which we think is the name dukat (gold),<sup>24</sup> this castle got after the Ottoman conquest, implying that before it was called “Quka e Ari”. Today in Siaria the toponymies are preserved, Gurra e Dukat, Perroi i Dukat, Kodra e Gropave (mines) in Sfirçë, In Tupalle, Trojet, Proroi i Samakova, Gomure, churches, monasteries and fortifications for the district, so we are dealing with a settlement of archaeologically important.

The village of Siarinë is a well-known archaeological locality and the only ancient settlement that is characterized by a geyser with healing water. The slope of this village since ancient times testifies to an ancient settlement, which also had a healing bath, which

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24 Dukat, name for gold in the Turkish language.



is why the names of the villages “Banja e Vjetër” and “Romabaja” have been preserved to this day. Both of these villages, including the villages around Siarina, are known as mining settlements of antiquity.<sup>25</sup>



**Figure 2.** From many maps published during the 19th century, it is proven that the mountains around Artana (Novo Brda) were called the Silver Mountains

It is noted that even in Ptolemy’s descriptions of four urban cities in Dardani, Aribantioni is listed in the road relation between Naissus (today’s Nishi) and Ulpiana near Pristina, which corresponds to the locality “Quka e Dukatit”.

Mita Rakiqi, in his book “Iz Nove Serbije”, sometimes called the Galab Highlands Gulab, who emphasizes that in the Galab mountains, bearing in mind the Jabllanica region, the Albanian element lived, or as he called the Arnaut element.<sup>26</sup> The presence of the Dardanians in the vicinity of Medvegja has been confirmed by the archaeological excavations in the mounds of this area, which chronologically date back to the end of the Bronze Age. M. V. Garashanin says that the region of Leban of Leskoci was undoubtedly inhabited by the Dardanians.<sup>27</sup> In 1858, some villages of “Pustareka” and “Jablanica” were also visited by Johann Georg Von Hahn. Hahn, based on Strabo’s notes, says that there was a very important ancient city in Galab, he called Artana “*The mother of all cities*”. Hahn stayed in the Galab Mountains for several days and visited many villages.<sup>28</sup> Based on these data, we can affirm that Hahn, based on Strabo’s notes, set off in search of the city of Arhaia (*Aria*) and Damastion.

We think that in search of Damastion, one should not overlook the fortifications in the

25 Qazim Namani, “Punim i doktoratës”, “Trashëgimia Kulturore dhe Historike e Kosovës gjatë shekujve XIX,XX,XXI”, Tiranë, 2016, pp. 165

26 Mita Rakic, Mita Rakic: “Iz Nove Serbije”, Leskoc 1987, fq. 17,

27 Zef Mirdita: “Studime Dardane”, Prishtinë, 1979, fq. 37.

28 Sabit Uka: Materiale nga sesioni shkencor i mbajtur në Prishtinë me 7-8 dhjetor 1989, Prishtinë 1990, fq. 385-386.

villages rich in minerals in the “Black Mail” of Skopje, in the villages of the Municipality of Kumanovo, Presheva, Gjilan and Viti. Traces of mineral exploitation have been discovered in these villages. In this area, a number of fortifications have testified to traces of early civilization. In the village of Llojan, Likovë, there are traces of old mines. In Vllanishte near Breca Castle, there are traces of a mine. In Dumanoc, there are traces of civilization, this village lies between three fortifications, Likova, Patlishani and Breca. Llojani is also close to Keshjtella e Stanec in the municipality of Presheva. Coins from the fourth century BC have been discovered in Rahavica, Preševa. In these mountains in the territory of Kosovo there are several fortifications such as: Pogradja Castle, Zhegra, Vërboc, Binca, Gërncar, etc. Near these castles, in the watercourses, there are remnants of rust from the processing of metals.

Based on the large number of identified fortifications and those that have been archaeologically excavated so far, we can assume that in the territory of the Kingdom of Dardania, there were several dozen cities, which in terms of cultural and urban development did not lag behind developed cities of the time in ancient Greece, today’s Turkey, Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria and Romania.

Recently, in the east of Bujanovac, namely in the castle of Këshevica, the archaeological excavations have proven quite rich archaeological material, therefore, based on the discoveries, many archaeologists associate this civilization with the center of Damastion. In addition to the discovered architecture and foundations of this castle, a coin of Damastion, ceramics and luxury vessels of the time have also been found there.<sup>29</sup>

The ancient city between Bujanovac and Vranje, where the remains of an urban settlement of the 4th century BC were discovered. It has been known in the archaeological literature since 1966 and has been researched since 2001 until 2011. According to the results so far, the settlement covered about five hectares and was located in a dominant position near the important route connecting Central Europe with Greece through the Morava valley - Vardar.



**Figure 3.** Coins of Damastion and vessels discovered in Këshevica Castle<sup>30</sup>

The population during that time used all the modern achievements of the way of life. They lived according to the principles that had already been established in the cities of the

29 <https://www.blic.rs/kultura/vesti/izgubljeni-gradovi-u-srbiji-damastion-aleksandra-velikog/fezdzx7>

30 <https://www.blic.rs/kultura/vesti/izgubljeni-gradovi-u-srbiji-damastion-aleksandra-velikog/fezdzx7>

Aegean and the Ionian.<sup>31</sup> The Councilor at the National Museum in Vranje, Goran Mitrović, says the same thing.<sup>32</sup>

After the start of excavations in 2001, Serbian archaeologists, for this Dardanian city, gave their opinions, trying to reveal it as a Greek, Macedonian and Celtic civilization. These claims of theirs contradicted the data of the ancient authors who called Damastion an Illyrian city.

There is no doubt that in that period, there was an exchange of goods between the Mediterranean polis and the Dardanians, so traces of Hellenistic culture have been found in the entire territory of today's Kosovo. Emil Čerskov, among other things, writes that traces of material culture from the Hellenistic period have been discovered in the castle of Tenezhdoll, between Pristina and Podujeva, and in the Gold Mill (Zlatno gumno), east of the castle of Artana (Novo Bërda).<sup>33</sup> This does not doubt at all that the civilization in the castle of Këshevica near Bujanoci, is a civilization that flourished during the time of the kingdom of Dardania.

There is growing evidence that the city is most likely the ancient Damastion, said Nenad Radojčić, adviser to the National Museum in Belgrade. According to him, one of the greatest discoveries that testifies to the skill of its builders is a barrel-vaulted cistern that is supposed to have been used to supply the city with water. The city had at least three thousand inhabitants and the settlement covered four or five hectares. He declared that there lived an autochthonous population that could not be called barbaric, but a population with an aristocratic culture and lifestyle, said Radojčić.<sup>34</sup>

That very rich population had reason to build a fortified settlement in that place that dominates the area of the Vranje basin.<sup>35</sup>

According to the results so far, the settlement was located in a dominant place, near the important road that connected Central Europe with Greece through the valley of Morava and Vardar. There are more and more reasons to assume that Damastion was located in the valley of South Morava, in the place of Kale in Këshevica, but only further excavations will give the final answer, say archaeologists.<sup>36</sup>

Based on the archaeological discoveries so far in Dardani and results, but also the large number of fortifications and terraces evidenced, it is clearly observed that the Dardanian civilization was not behind the Mediterranean civilization. Likewise, archaeological discoveries in the territory of Bulgaria and Romania convincingly prove that the Dardanians,

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31 <https://www.nekretnine.rs/magazin/1116/damastion-izgubljeni-grad-aleksandra-velikog-u-srbiji/>

32 <https://www.blic.rs/kultura/vesti/srebrni-grad-aleksandra-velikog-izranja-iz-rusevina-kod-vranja/knvlkx4>

33 Bashkësia e institucioneve shkencore të Kosovës: “Studime Libri 26”, Emil Čerskov: “Romakët në Kosovë dhe municipiumi D.D. te Soçanica, e përkthyer nga Gani Luboteni, Prishtinë, 1973, faqe 17

34 <https://www.blic.rs/kultura/vesti/srebrni-grad-aleksandra-velikog-izranja-iz-rusevina-kod-vranja/knvlkx4>

35 <https://www.blic.rs/kultura/vesti/srebrni-grad-aleksandra-velikog-izranja-iz-rusevina-kod-vranja/knvlkx4>

36 <https://www.nekretnine.rs/magazin/1116/damastion-izgubljeni-grad-aleksandra-velikog-u-srbiji/>

Dacians and Thracians had very advanced civilizations, so the hypotheses that these peoples were behind the civilizations of the Greek polis do not stand.

Despite the archaeological results in Kërshevica Castle near Bujanovac, it has been proven that Kërshevica as a castle is one of the developed fortifications of that period, but based on the large number of fortifications in the northwest of this castle, the geographical and strategic position of other fortifications, we think that Damastion should be sought in the deepest part of the mountains in the Galab Highlands.

Many other researchers and archaeologists have expressed their opinion that the city of Damastion must have been the present-day Artana (Novo Brda), based on some archaeological findings in the Gumnishte locality, about 3 km east of the Novo Castle. Brda.

We think that there is good reason to think that Damastion should be looked for in some other locality.

Damastioni is not the archaeological site in Gumnishte, near Artana, because the archaeological discoveries that have been made in this site have not provided sufficient evidence that we are dealing with a developed civilization in this site compared to other archaeological sites in the area.

When it comes to the flourishing of Damastion, in the period of the Kingdom of Dardane, IV-III century BC, a more developed civilization than Novo Brda, dozens of fortifications and archaeological sites in this region testify. We think that the castle of Novo Brda and that of Cassova, about 10 km northeast of Pristina, began to develop after the barbarian invasions that took place in late antiquity, and the destruction of the civilization in Justiniana Prima near Medvegja, Justiniana Seconda (Ulpiana near Pristina) and Vendenis near today's Podujeva.

A road that connected the city of Niš with Skopje passed through a line of fortifications of archaeological sites in the Gollaku (Galabit) Highlands, which branched off into the source lands of South Morava, joining near the ancient settlement of Statio Vectigalis, in the village of Runjevë, with the road coming from the direction of Ulpiana and ending in the city of Skopje.<sup>37</sup>

Based on the traces of mining on the southern side of Artana, starting from the castle of Veleton, Vogoçinca, Vërbica, Gadima, Gadish, Kishnople (Church Field), Terpeza, and other castles in the villages of the municipality of Gjilani, Viti, Presheva and Kumanovo, the possibility of this city being sought in this area is not excluded.

The traces of mines in the vicinity of today's Medvegja, the places mentioned above on the north-eastern side of Janjeva and Pristina, as well as the finding of coins of Damastion in the vicinity of Artana, we have full reason to look for this Illyrian city in today's Kosovo. precisely in the village of Domarocë, which lies about 15 km east of Artana (Novo Brda).

Not leaving aside the other villages mentioned above, in order to discover the location

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37 Bashkësia e institucioneve shkencore të Kosovës: "Studime Libri 26", Emil Cerskov: "Romakët në Kosovë dhe municipiumi D.D. te Soçanica, e përkthyer nga Gani Luboteni, Prishtinë, 1973, faqe 51



of the city of Damastion, the attention of archaeologists should be focused on the flow line of the South Morava River, precisely on the village of Domarocë.

In the village of Domarocë there are two terraces, less than 100 m apart, where one of them is



**Figure 4.** Photos of the two terraces in the village of Domarocë that are known today: Photo 1. Topanica’s terrace and Photo 2. Domaroc’s terrace

today known as Gradeci i Topanica. These terraces were erected near the terraces of the rivers, Morava e Kamenica and Hodonoc.

Being close to rivers, fertile lands and surrounded by hills rich in minerals, they have created prerequisites to develop as an early settlement.

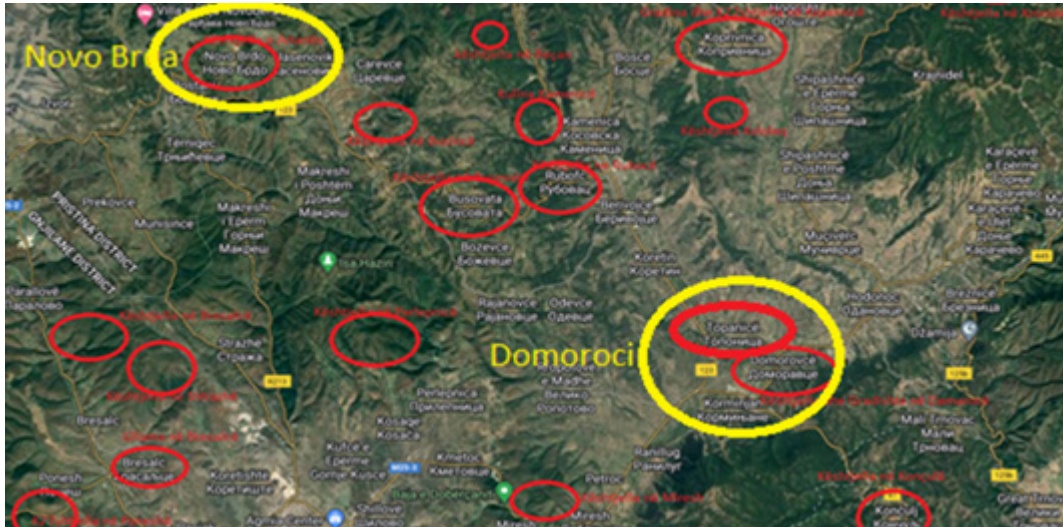
Archaeological research and the occasional finds that have been discovered so far have proven that the construction of terraces in the Dardania region dates back to the Neolithic period. Emil Čerskov, among the gardens in today’s Kosovo, also mentions the Garden of Domaroc, who writes that they were part of the group of those with cultural continuity, of Bubanj-Hum, Hallshtat, and the later ones.<sup>38</sup>



**Figure 5.** The geographical position of the village of Domarocë, between castles, mines, fertile land and rivers

38 Emil Čerskov: “Kosovo i Metohija u rimsko doba”, Beograd 1969, faqe 15

These two terraces next to each other are located at a strategic point, where near them at a distance of about 200 m. merge, the two branches of the source of the Morava River, the one that comes from the Black Mountain of Skopje (Morava e Binca), and the one that comes from the Galab Highlands (Morava e Kamenica).



*Figure 6. Fortifications on the north-western side around Gradina and Gradec (Castle), in the villages of Domaroc and Topanica*

As can be seen from the map presented above, only on the northwest side, in the direction of Artana (Novo Bërda) and Kamenica, at a distance of about 15 km, the Domaroc hill is surrounded by more than a dozen fortifications. A similar system of fortifications around Domaroc is also on the southern and eastern side, therefore, based on the archaeological findings described by Čerskov, we have many reasons to focus our attention on this archaeological site.

Domaroci, as a settlement, lies at a distance of about 15 km, to the east of the castle of Artana (Novo Brda), about 5 km to the south of Kulina e Kamenica, about 3 km to the west of the Castle of Konçuli, and about 5 km to the northeast of Pogradja Castle, these localities, which have given evidence of a developed civilization in this area, these terraces may have been the center that unites the other fortifications around.

Taking a look at the terraces and archeological, onomastic, geographical and strategic traces, we think that the Terraces in the village of Domaroc offer more arguments to think that Damastion was the center of mining in the Galab Highlands and Skopje's Montenegro. This data is also proven by some maps published during the 19th century, in which it is clearly noted that these were called Damantza, which in etymological terms is very close to the name of Damastion as well as the terraces in the village of Domarocë (see photos).



*Figure 7. In the maps published by some geographers during the 19th century, the mountains to the northeast of Pristina and Artana (Novo Brdës), we also find them marked as the Domantza-Domacza mountains, which leaves room to assume that we are dealing with the Illyrian city of Damastion*

To witness the traces of civilization developed in the archaeological sites around the terraces in the village of Domarocë, we are offering some of the case findings in the region of South Moravia, which prove high civilization before and after the Roman occupation.

These random discoveries are an additional reason to think that in these two terraces, archaeological excavations should be done to discover the level of development of the Dardan civilization.





**Figure. 8.** Photo 1,2,3 from Kamenica region, Photos 4,4,6,7,8 from Presheva region, Photo 9 from Kumanova region, Photo 10, 11 from Vitia region. Photos from the Preševo region are published for the first time, and are known to the author of the photos and the author of the article.

### Conclusion:

As a conclusion, we can say that the Illyrian city of Damastion should be sought in the territory of central Dardania, precisely in the two terraces of the village of Domarocë.

Archaeological traces have proven that we are dealing with an early settlement, with material culture from the Neolithic, Bronze, Iron and Antiquity periods.

The geographical position, the archaeological and mining evidence, the large number of fortifications and mining galleries in the area, the etymological and recently also the cartographic sources reinforce the opinion that the Domaroc terraces must be the mining center in central Dardania.



These two terraces, erected near rivers and fertile lands, in both branches of the source of South Morava, as well as the processing of metals in that area, are prerequisites that are fully met, to think that we are dealing with the city of Damastion.

### **List of figures:**

**Figure 1.** Map's showing the extent of the ancient dardan tribe Galabri.

**Figure 2.** From many maps published during the 19th century, it is proven that the mountains around Artana (Novo Brda) were called the Silver Mountains.

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