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ON THE REFLEXIVE NATURE OF ARCHAEOLOGIES OF THE WESTERN BALKAN IRON AGE: A CASE STUDY OF THE "ILLYRIAN ARGUMENT"

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this paper is twofold. On the one hand, it aims to reveal and present some interpretative issues in different Balkan Iron Age archaeologies that result from long-lasting use of culture-historical approach, and on the other to suggest that future interpretations of the past need to be more reflexive. Culture-historical archaeology is based upon a premise that individuals who are linked by production and consumption of stylistically homogeneous material culture form a group with a feeling of collective identity, whereas recent identity studies vigorously question this approach. Today, the idea about archaeological cultures as relatively stable and homogeneous systems of values characterizing certain group of people is recognized as ethnocentric projections that reflect modern national/ethnic identities and social concepts into the constructed image of the past. A following case study of the "Illyrian argument" – a well known dispute between Yugoslav and Albanian archaeologists and historians on "ethnogenesis" of the ancient Illyrians – shows how culture-historical archaeologies in different socio-political contexts, sometimes, beside the same methodology, reach very different conclusions. As a way forward, we suggest a reflexive approach that will be well aware of constitutive interrelations between the past as an object of the study and the present as a context of the research.

KEY WORDS: Iron Age – The Western Balkans – Culture-historical archaeology – Reflexivity theory – "Illyrian argument"

THE REFLEXIVITY THEORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY

As any other field within humanities, archaeological investigations of the past may be regarded as culture-

specific enterprises that are shaped by modern social structures, concepts, beliefs and interests, which all together compose the context of any investigation. Theoretical background of this viewpoint implies that archaeological studies of material remains are based

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upon constitutive circularity of theory and description. In order to generate any description of an object or an event, we start from some already established theoretical preconceptions that allow us to understand what the description relates to (Berger, Luckmann 1966). This constructivist argument goes even further claiming that since we do not know anything about supposed reality of an event until we have described it, and it cannot be described unless we know what we are looking for, then the reality itself does not exist outside the constitutive circularity of description and theory (Ashmore 1989: 32, Woolgar 1988: 22). Specifically, when applied to archaeology, this means that without an idea of time passing, archaeology would be virtually impossible. Without some pre-existing information about what we are describing, we would not be able to describe it; nor to group or classify objects. Without an idea about social models and mechanisms, any interpretation of past societies would also be unfeasible. As demonstrated by numbers of studies, archaeologists uncritically project some of their starting presumptions into images of the past they create, which are clearly determined, shaped and constructed according to their own social contexts and experiences (Hodder 1999, Morley 2009, Morris 1994, Owen 2005, Thomas 2004). This constitutive circularity of theory and description is at the base of all scholarly endeavours. Consequently, not only the final narratives are projections of our present concepts and analogies, but all the other levels of a research – starting from selection of theoretical approaches, methodology and subsequent collection of data – also give evidence about this interdependence.

It is important to know that archaeological practice does not just result from one-way projections of the modern social contexts into the past; it is rather a constituent part of the same interpretative process that creates narratives for today's audience. In the course of generating knowledge about the past, archaeology simultaneously constructs meanings of the world in which we live in, and legitimizes certain modern social and political values as "objective" truths (Wylie 2002: 156–157). While at the same time it shapes and influences the present socio-political context, archaeological interpretation is determined by circumstances wherein that research was conducted.

Periodically, within all interpretative disciplines including archaeology, this perspective on the mutually constitutive relationship between objects of investigation and contexts of research has been problematized as an epistemological issue. During the last couple of decades, a necessity for thinking deeply about this epistemological

feature of all humanities has made reflexivity into a new field of research (Ashmore 1989, Aunger 2004, Bourdieu 2004, Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992, Hodder 1997, 2003, McLennan 2006, Smart 1999, Woolgar 1988). A frequent usage of the concept in social theory refers to "the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relations to their (social) context and vice versa" (Archer 2007: 4). When applied as a research practices, reflexivity refers to the need for "the self-critical awareness of one's archaeological truth claims as historical and contingent" (Hodder 2003: 56).

In spite of the increasing interest in the issue, it would be unsuitable to say that there is a consensus about the concept of reflexivity, regarding its relevance and applicability in different social theories and disciplines. Quite the contrary, while there are wide ranges of application, reflexivity is yet unclear and confusing issue. Some consider it to be a fundamental human characteristic so general that it is not appropriate for any practical research program (Lynch 2000), while others, treating it as critical (or self critical and self-conscious) human capacity, make various attempts to incorporate reflexivity into their analytical practices (Aunger 2004, Gramsch 2000, Hodder 1997, 2003). Ambiguity goes even further considering that some authors perceive the concept as the methodological basis for enhancing objectivity (Bourdieu 2004), while others still use it as a critical "weapon" for undermining scientific objectivism (Ashmore 1989, Woolgar 1988). Because of this diversity of meanings ascribed to reflexivity, including the epistemological and the methodological positions, it should be emphasized that the different ways in which it is used attest to the diverse intellectual orientations of authors.

Regarding the mutually constitutive relationship between objects of investigation and corresponding contexts of research presented above, there should be no doubt that archaeology needs to comprehend the theory of reflexivity. Even though many papers that scrutinize political and social roles of the discipline imply more-or-less explicitly this standpoint, a question of whether and how reflexivity may be challenging or encouraging for further development of archaeology has rarely been discussed (see, Gramsch 2000, Hodder 1997, 2003). In an attempt to demonstrate applicability and importance of the concept, we will scrutinize some culture-historical traditions of Iron Age archaeologies in the Western Balkan context – especially a case of the "Illyrian argument". This well-known dispute between former-Yugoslav and Albanian archaeologists, who have

vehemently argued contradictory paths for the ancient Illyrians "ethnogenesis", we think, gives an excellent opportunity to discuss mutually constitutive relationship between the different social contexts and the consequent opposing archaeological interpretations. The results reached in the case study will further be used for discussing the fundamental epistemological problem raised by reflexivity: whether archaeology could acquire any knowledge about the past even though its claims might never transcend the conditions of their productions.

THE WESTERN BALKAN IRON AGE: INTERPRETATIONS, THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

In Southeast Europe, beside some substantial increase in recent papers that target different theoretical issues and remain mindful to ethnocentric dangers of archaeological practices, (e.g., Aghelinu 2007, Babić 2009, 2010, Dzino 2011a, Gori 2012, Mihajlović 2012, Vranić 2011), the potential application of reflexivity within the discipline is not acknowledged enough. Even today, vast majority of all endeavours are based upon "proper" or "down-to-earth" archaeology: a loosely defined empiricist theory stemming from long-lasting central European culture-historical traditions (cf. Gramsch, Sommer 2011). The main ambition of researchers educated in this tradition remains reconstructing supposed territorial and chronological sequences of archaeological cultures (or cultural groups): the characteristic sets of stylistically similar artefacts, which supposedly are representative of different "ethno-cultural" entities. The next step, if possible, is applying some up-to-date physical and chemical analysis to "strengthen" the case with these new empirical insights.

Based upon this methodology, which perceives culture and ethnicity as determined and stable categories, culture-historical archaeology has initiated a quest for "ethnogenesis": the supposed evolution of tangible and stable ethnicities (Dzino 2010: 38–39, Kaiser 1995, Vranić 2011, in press). This concept in former Yugoslavia is substantially different from the Viennese school of the early medieval ethnogenesis (Dzino 2010: 38). It shows some resemblance with the Julian Bromley's Soviet concept who argues that ethnicity and language hold persisting "stable core" (see, Curta 2001: 10, 15–18, Dzino 2010: 38–39). At the same time, there are some local characteristics separating it from the Soviet approach. M. Garašanin elaborates the concept arguing

perpetual "disintegrations" and subsequent "reintegration" of "ethno-cultural" entities, rather than "peoples" (Garašanin 1988a: 10–11, cf. Benac 1987a, Čović 1986). Even though it is usually cited as the "official" Yugoslav approach to ethnicity (Gori 2012), this interesting position has never rendered all local researchers into applying it as a coherent theoretical position; nor has it any way diminished the traditional interests in cultural and ethnic continuities (Palavestra 2011), which are still perceived from a deterministic and strong culture-historical standpoint.

Shaped by existence of Greek and Roman literary sources, and this supposed "distinctiveness" of archaeological cultures, the Iron Age archaeology in the Western Balkans is particularly illustrative about the weight and the enduring importance of culture-historical approach (e.g., Benac 1987a, Ceka 2005, Vasić 1973, 1987). In former Yugoslavia, this scholarly tradition has established the Iron Age as an era when "ethnogenesis" of "ethno-cultural" entities or "peoples" reaches a point when their differences are obvious and easily recognizable in material culture. Resulting from some long-lasting and meticulous efforts, the highlight of this approach is publishing of *The Prehistory of the Yugoslav Lands 5 – the Iron Age (Praistorija jugoslavenskih zemalja 5 – željezno doba)*. Published during the late 1980s by the Balkanology Research Centre (*Centar za balkanološka ispitivanja*) in Sarajevo, this monumental work consists of contributions made by numerous archaeologists, affiliated to different institutions from the entire country (Benac 1987b). This enterprise ends with a conclusion that in the territory of former Yugoslavia there is more than a dozen different Iron Age cultural groups (Benac 1987a, Vasić 1991). An obvious and strongly emphasized goal of the work is equating these archaeological cultures – the modern analytical tool for territorial and chronological comparisons of empirically distinguishable similar patterns in material remains (see, Wylie 2002: 42–56) – with information from the ancient literary sources. The outcome turns out to be the "discovery" of the appropriate Greek and Roman *ethnonyms* that should be located in the territories of the archaeological cultures. The following step is yet another contemporary construction about these Iron Age societies: that they should be organized strictly upon the ethnic differences into "tribes" or "peoples" (e.g., The Illyrian Autariatae – the Glasinac-Mati culture-complex, The Dardani – the Brnjica culture, The Triballi – the Early Iron Age culture in the Velika Morava valley).

Traditional scholars believe that some cultural traits, supposedly belonging to these ethnicities, should be

traceable and archaeologically distinguishable during the earlier phases of prehistory. Even today, due to the long-lasting impact of culture-historical archaeology, the main ambition of most researchers remains the same search for supposed origins, cultural continuity and spreading of influences, following the blueprint outlined in *The Prehistory of the Yugoslav Lands 5* (e.g., Bulatović 2007, 2010, Mesihović 2011, Stojić 2011, Šačić 2012).

Albania – the only country in the Western Balkans, which has never been a part of former Yugoslavia – has developed a similar strand of culture-historical archaeology. In comparison with the practices in Yugoslavia, the most prominent difference of Albanian archaeology lies within its interpretations of the Illyrian/Albanian ethnogenesis (Šašel-Kos 2007). Here, the ancient Illyrian ethnicity is perceived as less regionally diversified, more "stable" and longer lasting. This argument derives from domination of the "Illyrian theory": the scholarly interest in the Illyrian ethnogenesis arguing a direct descent and ethnic and cultural continuity with the modern-day Albanians. This quest has shaped the emergence of the entire Albanian archaeology and has rendered the ancient "Illyrians" as a substantial part of "national" (pre)history (Galaty 2011, Gori 2012). Compared to the case in Yugoslavia, it seems that this "ethnogenesis" concept has a different but also more demanding contemporary social position, and that it emerges through a slightly different path. In this instance, the idea of unchanging and "stable-core" ethnicity and the strong belief in the direct link between the ancient Illyrians and the modern-day Albanians has a more prominent position within the discipline (Wilkes 1992: 5, 10–11). This goal leads to the construction of the most famous case of primordial ethnicity in European practice, supposedly originating from the Bronze Age (e.g., Ceka 2005).

Even though we believe that there is nothing necessarily harmful if some academic endeavors are taken solely with the goals of establishing territorial and chronological positions of archaeological cultures as analytical categories, some substantial improvements of the disciplines could be achieved with more diversity that is theoretical. An obvious need for improvements of the two culture-historical practices in the region is especially visible within their obsolete concepts of identity, which include culture and ethnicity. Aside some differences between the two, and in comparison with wider European traditions, both the Albanian and the Yugoslav approaches to "ethnogenesis" are primordial and essentialist identity concepts. At the same time, they remain evolutionistic, perceiving ethnicity as one

previous step ultimately leading toward the modern nations (Dzino 2010: 7). Consequently, these locally produced traditional interpretations are interesting and enduring parts of Western modernistic discourse of nationalism. Applied throughout the entire twentieth century as culture-historical and to some extent as processual archaeology, this approach comprehends ethnicity as given, unchangeable, objective and stable group identity.

Together with colonialism (Goff 2005, Gosden 2004), the most important socio-political characteristic of modernity in the Western world is appearance of nation-states (Anderson 1983, Gellner 1983). Consequently, pursuits for "national heritage" become essential requirements in construction of national identities. As distinctive academic disciplines, humanities are established and developed within this modern political context (Díaz-Andreu 2007, Thomas 2004). At the same time, the deterministic theories of culture and ethnicity come into light exactly when the Western European model of nation-state and national identity, which Benedict Anderson terms "imagined communities", seeks to find some form of cultural continuity with past group identities, conveniently perceived as "our" mythic ancestors (Dietler 1994, Jones 2007, Lucy 2005, Meskell 2002).

Alternatively, recent postmodern and post-structural studies comprehend ethnicity as constructed and instrumental, vastly depending upon different contexts of its formation and sustainment. Most authors today conceive it through the lens of constructivism, which positions ethnicity as merely one form of numerous identities that are constantly being recreated in a nexus of habitual dispositions and local changing socio-political conditions (Jones 1997). Therefore, ethnic identity turns out to be unstable, changeable and actively manipulated by human and material culture agencies in the past; but it is also handled by modern scholars.

In the process of presenting their possible interpretations of past ethnic and cultural identities, traditional researchers in the Western Balkans still lack a proper understanding of this very important role of self-reflexivity. The problem escalates with the modern constructions of stable and unchanging Iron Age ethnicities, which are highly visible in the case of the ancient Illyrians and the "Illyrian argument", wherein the past identities are measured against researchers' own modern concepts of nation and society.

THE WESTERN BALKAN ARCHAEOLOGIES: A CASE STUDY OF CONSTRUCTIONS OF "ILLYRIAN" AND "DARDANIAN" NARRATIVES

Variety of local Iron Age ethnicities plays an active and important role in modern constructions of national identity in the Western Balkans (Dzino 2010, in press, Gori 2012, Vranić 2011, in press). Taking into consideration numerous changing interpretations of the supposed "Illyrian" and "Dardanian" identities, this case study of constructing different and conflicting narratives about the two ethnicities, emerging within the two different archaeological schools – former-Yugoslavian and Albanian – can be a very useful starting place in an attempt to point out the importance of reflexivity in future interpretations. With the purpose of achieving this more important role for reflexivity, we shall start from deconstruction of the two narratives, which are the most important segments of the "Illyrian argument". After the scrutiny of the well-established practices of Yugoslav and Albanian archaeologies, these scholarly interpretations will appear to hold some valuable clues about the different ways in which modern political contexts of the emerging national identities have shaped the images of the Iron Age ethnicities, and the other way around.

During the final decades of the twentieth century, Yugoslav and Albanian researchers have agreed to disagree on the "Illyrian argument" (see, Garašanin 1979, 1988b, *contra* Islami *et al.* 1985). While the Iron Age archaeology in Yugoslavia favors a concept of the Illyrians as a "supra-ethnicity", consisting of numerous different "tribes" (Benac 1987a, Čović 1986, Papazoglu 1978, Šašel-Kos 2005), Albanian colleagues claim existence of only one distinctive Illyrian "people", or even a "nation" (Ceka 2005, Islami *et al.* 1985). Therefore, in spite of the same theoretical and methodological starting points in culture-history, the different conclusions regarding the Illyrian ethnicity/ies give evidence about numerous setbacks in conceiving archaeology as an "objective" and "scientific" discipline.

The final shape of these confronted standpoints is set during the 1970s and the 1980s. However, in interpretations proceeding this time, images of the ancient Illyrians are not that strict nor that confronted. Throughout the entire history of archaeological practices in the region, these images have been constantly changing and taking different shapes. These changes, which precede the establishing of the two stable and confronted narratives during the 1970s and 1980s, we

believe, also correspond to constitutive circularity of objects and contexts of the research, and lack of self-critical awareness in some earlier and different socio-political circumstances. The previous perspectives are highly visible in the case of Yugoslavia, while Albanian scholars have a more stable opinion.

The ancient Illyrians are the most prominent and well-known "Paleo-Balkan" "ethnicity" (Papazoglu 1978, Šašel-Kos 2005, Wilkes 1992). The first archaeological assessment of the Balkan indigenous populations, using culture-historical interpretative framework and linguistics, begins with "Pan-Illyrian" theories of G. Kossinna who argues migrations and vast territory for this "people", supposedly originating from central Europe (Kossinna 1926: 271–282). Prior to this flawed hypothesis, some political and identity-construction usage of the Illyrians appears within the "Illyrian movement": an early modern and modern national-romanticist discourse of the South Slavic people within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Since their first national awakening in the post-Middle Ages, the Slavic communities have already begun to rely on literary sources depicting the local Illyrians, and to construct narratives about these Iron Age communities as their mythic ancestors. This local discourse takes its final form with the nineteenth-century "Illyrian movement", providing a very important intellectual background for construction of various Slavic national identities, including to some extent the appearance of later Yugoslav identity (Dzino in press). On the other hand, the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century archaeological investigations conducted in the territory of modern-day Albania and Austro-Hungarian Bosnia and Herzegovina (Gilkes 2004: 40) provide Kossinna with some archaeological data for his different understanding of the Illyrians. These two different narratives have a substantial influence on the first local archaeological and historical interpretations of the ancient Illyrians.

After the WWII, Yugoslav scholars reach a conclusion that the ancient Illyrians should be searched for only in the territories where they are mentioned by Greek and Roman sources, thus breaking all connections with any Pan-Illyrian ideas of the northern migrations (Garašanin 1988a: 87). Consequently, according to these interpretations, which resemble some principles within the earlier "Illyrian movement", the Illyrians inhabit the entire territory of the Western Balkans (Benac 1964, Papazoglu 1967). However, further research, conducted during the 1970s, continues to shrink their supposed territory. Ultimately, Yugoslav scholars reach their final conclusion – the Illyrian "tribes" could have inhabited

the following territories: central and eastern parts of Bosnia, Herzegovina, central and southern parts of Dalmatia, Montenegro, central and northern Albania and western parts of Serbia (e.g., Čović 1986, Garašanin 1979, 1988b, Papazoglu 1978). As an outcome of the same endeavor, these authors agree that there is not just one Illyrian ethnicity; rather, there are numerous different "Illyrian tribes", e.g., the Autariatae, the Ardiaei, the Enchelei, the Taulantii, the Daorsi, the Molossi, the Nestaei, the Parthini, the Atintanes. Supposedly, the most recognizable connection with Iron Age cultures is visible in the case of the Autariatae who are usually equated with the Glasinac Culture (e.g., Čović 1987). During the entire course of these changing interpretations in former Yugoslavia, Albanian authors, on the other hand, hold to an entrenched position of the one Illyrian ethnicity, encompassing a much wider territory of the entire Western Balkans (Ceka 2005, Islami *et al.* 1985).

Following the disagreement about the wider or the smaller "Illyrian" territory and the nature of their ethnicity/ies, the differences between Yugoslav and Albanian archaeologists are especially visible in the case of the Dardani. The Dardani are supposed ethnic group known from the third century BC as fierce adversaries of Hellenistic and Roman Macedonia and Greece (Papazoglu 1978: 131–270). Their territory is usually located in modern-day Kosovo and Metohija, southern parts of central Serbia and the northern FYR Macedonia (Vasić 1987: 673–689). From a perspective taken by Albanian archaeology, they are an "Illyrian people" (e.g., Berisha 2012, Mirdita 2009, 2000). Even though some earlier interpretations perceive the Dardani as an "Illyrian tribe" (Papazoglu 1967), after the 1960s Serbian and Macedonian scholars usually define them as the "Daco-Mysians". At first, the Daco-Mysian ethnicities are established through linguistic research. Later, archaeologists and historians come with an agreement that they should be located in the central part of the Balkans (modern-day Serbia and FYR Macedonia), separating the western "Illyrian" and the eastern "Thracian" regions. Supposedly, their most prominent characteristic is a very long cultural continuity (Papazoglu 1978: 131–270, 1988, Srejšović 1973, Wilkes 1992: 12, 85–86). The most prominent Daco-Mysian ethnicities in Yugoslav literature are the Triballi, the Dardani and the Paeonians.

"It can be therefore concluded on the basis of the archaeological material available at present that the Dardanians belong to a family of peoples which separate geographically the Illyrians from the Thracians in the continental parts of the Balkan Peninsula. In view of the

characteristic features of the material and spiritual culture of the central Balkan region it would seem that the peoples from this family are genetically more closely related to the Thracians than to the Illyrians" (Srejšović 1973: 69).

DISCUSSION: HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS OF THE DIFFERENT ILLYRIAN NARRATIVES

In the case of communist Yugoslavia – a historical period when archaeological discipline reaches its final shape and sets foundations for contemporary research – national and ethnic identities hold a very specific social position. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) – a multi-ethnic federal state run by the Communist Party – was a federation consisting of the six republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia. Additionally, the two autonomous provinces – Vojvodina and Kosovo and Metohija – were constituent parts of Serbia. Even though communist Yugoslavia tried to suppress any form of nationalism within its multiethnic population, political processes from the 1970s have shown some significant weakening of the central authority and strengthening of confederate principles, ultimately leading toward disintegration of the country in civil wars during the 1990s. These modern identity changes, we believe, are reflected in earlier constructions and subsequent disintegration of Yugoslavia's imagined community. Consequently, the most interesting question considering the archaeological practices turns out to be: are the multi-ethnic nature and the growing local nationalisms influential in any way upon the local interpretations of the Iron Age, and vice versa?

Previously mentioned changing perception of the Illyrians, starting during the 1960s and reaching its final shape in the 1980s, may be very informative about the transformations within Yugoslav national identity. The fading Yugoslav national identity and a great importance within numerous local ethnicities – subsequently, emerging nations and nation-states – to construct their own specific heritage and mythic ancestors substantially changes the archaeological perspective on the Illyrians. Interpreted earlier as "united" and inhabiting much wider territory, during the 1980s the dominating scholarly perspective about the Illyrians moves toward the concept of "supra-ethnicity": the numerous loosely connected groups of similar "tribes" (e.g., Benac 1987a, Garašanin 1979, 1988a), resembling modern context of decentralized

Yugoslavia (Dzino 2010: 56, in press, Vranić 2011, 2013). In the case of former Yugoslavia, the dominating interpretation of the Illyrians as being composed of the numerous different but related Illyrian ethnicities may be in a constitutive relation with the official Yugoslav ideology of brotherhood-and-unity. One outcome of this modern socio-political context may be the proliferation of different archaeological cultures during the second half of the twentieth century (e.g., Benac 1987b). This case of declining interest in the "united" Illyrians, and what Dzino calls *deconstruction of "Illyrian" metanarrative* (Dzino 2010: 57), may be a very good example of the constitutive relation between object and context of the research.

If the previous hypothesis is correct, then the case of growing interest in the Dardani as a separate ethnicity is an interpretation emerging out of the same context of the fading Yugoslav identity and the deconstruction of the Illyrian metanarrative. In the last couple of decades of communist Yugoslavia's existence, special attention is paid to construction of the local and decentralized Iron Age ethnicities. The Dardani, which are previously perceived through the lens of the "Illyrian metanarrative" as an integral part of the Illyrian ethnicity, are now constructed as specific ethnicities (Papazoglu 1978). The case of the Dardani and their supposed "Daco-Mysian" origin becomes an official perspective taken by most Serbian and Macedonian authors against the standpoint of Albanian archaeologists who are still arguing their "Illyrian" origin (e.g., Berisha 2012). This construction of the "Daco-Mysian" (Dardani and Triballi) as different ethno-cultural groups turns out to be more suitable for changing socio-political context in the final decades of the SFR Yugoslavia and its growing local nationalisms (Vranić 2011, 2013). However, as another testimony to the changing perspectives and some new targets in the Iron Age archaeology after the deconstruction of the Illyrian metanarrative, there is the idea of some very long Dardanian cultural continuity, which then surfaces as the most important question. The next paragraph cited from a paper published by Dragoslav Srejšović, one of the leading figures in Serbian archaeology, is an appropriate example of this increasing interest in supposed "Daco-Mysian" long cultural continuity and "ethnogenesis".

"Some finds from the fourth millennium (Reštani, Hisar) or from the time of c. 750 BC (Janjevo), or from the end of the fifth century BC (Krševica, Skopsko Kale) show that the long-lasting process of the ethnogenesis of the Dardanians also incorporates Illyrian, 'Thracio-Kimmerian' and Thracian elements. It is essential, however, that archaeology, like linguistics and history,

sees the Dardanians as an ancient Balkan people, steadily tied to their native soil and its traditions, vital and able to preserve its individuality even in the most trying existential situations" (Srejšović 1973: 69).

In twentieth-century Albania, which is a country characterized by much smaller ethnic differences and more xenophobic foreign politics, the development of archaeological discipline takes place within different political circumstances. In this case, less dramatic changes of the modern national identity produce a different scholarly tradition that argues a more permanent role of the Illyrians as (mythic) ancestors of the modern nation. The most decisive phase in the construction of this Albanian national narrative is the reign of Enver Hoxha: the twentieth-century communist dictator (Galaty 2011, Galaty *et al.* 1999, Galaty, Watkinson 2004). However, the first hypothesis of the direct Illyrian/Albanian continuity begins with eighteenth- and reaches its final shape with nineteenth-century German linguistic research (Kopitar 1829, Thunmann 1774, von Hahn 1853). Later Austro-Hungarian archaeological excavations, conducted in the territory of modern-day Albania during the later nineteenth century, appear to support the same argument. This perspective in Albanian archaeology lasts until this day (Wilkes 1992: 5).

"Austro-Hungarian ambitions led to the earliest study of the land, its people and linguistics, with an emphasis on the possibilities of Illyrian survival in the actual Albanian population. These initiatives were part of a wider 'Illyrian' phenomenon linked to the emerging national consciousness of the populations of the cosmopolitan Austro-Hungarian world" (Gilkes 2004: 40).

Even though it is true that the wider nineteenth-century "Illyrian phenomenon" gives interest for the quest of the Illyrian/Albanian continuity, another important agency behind the raise of this interesting hypothesis is Austro-Hungarian imperial policy in the Balkans. It is possible that these first researchers shape their opinion against the already flourishing Slavic national and nationalistic narratives within the Illyrian movement, which have been already searching for continuity with the ancient Illyrians. The Austro-Hungarian Empire most certainly perceives the Slavic romantic nationalism as dangerous. Consequently, the beginnings of their interest in the Illyrian/Albanian continuity, which from the nineteenth century perspective seems more plausible than any connection with the Slavic-speaking populations, may be a part of the Austro-Hungarian imperial position in the region.

This endeavor provides the "scientific" proof against the nineteenth-century South Slavic beliefs in their "Illyrian descent".

In later-emerging Albanian archaeology, the ancient Illyrians are accepted as the direct ancestors, and all further research of the subject is perceived through the lenses of national history. This scenario stands as the biggest distinctive characteristic of Albanian archaeology that produces most of the subsequent disagreements with scholars from the former SFR Yugoslavia. Beside the nineteenth-century romantic discourse of the "Illyrian movement", the different Slavic nations emerging within Yugoslavia subsequently construct their national histories starting from the early medieval Slav migrations (Curta 2001, Dzino 2011b). Even though the Iron Age communities beyond any doubt present some more-or-less prominent form of "our heritage" and mythic ancestry, and their supposed multi ethnicity probably is in a reflexive form of interrelation with the twentieth-century politics, the later Slavic histories provide a more appealing material for constructions of the modern imagined communities. This position allows the local scholars to change completely their position on the Illyrians and to see this "supra-ethnicity" as "the others", which was not the case in Albania.

CONCLUSION

The role of self-consciousness regarding the mutually constitutive relationship between the present and the past has started to appear in archaeological research since the 1980s. Along with other critical theories based on traditions of the Frankfurt school, the reflexivity theory is primarily used to undermine positivistic program of New archaeology, especially its presumption about the value-independent context of research. Even though this critique initially launches a very lively debate about some epistemological and methodological aspects of the archaeological practice, it soon grows solely into assessments of political and social roles of the discipline, usually with no or very rare attempts to improve the relevance and the objectivity of archaeological results. By pointing out that "facts" and "evidences" are always based upon some pre-existing paradigmatic assumptions, and that social and political forces play a key role in alternation of these paradigms, postprocessual critique argues that archaeology is always interest-specific, projecting this modern social and political circumstance into a context of its research. If the past can only be grasped as an analogy with the present, it implies that

any idea of its objective reconstruction must be discarded. Such a standpoint inevitably leads toward radical relativism. This position challenges the role of all "scientific values" throughout the entire history of archaeological thinking, ultimately leading toward a theoretical position which regards the discipline only as a political endeavor that contributes to reproduction of modern relations of power and interests (Shanks 1992).

We would like, however, to question this widespread tendency of identifying reflexivity with "radical", critical and anti-objectivistic programmes, and to suggest that many conceptions of reflexivity support, rather than undermine, the idea of enhanced objectivity. In other words, our approach abandons radical relativism, even though it may also be deriving from the reflexivity theory. A question of how descriptions correspond to objects they intend to describe – the primary issue tackled by the program of radical reflexivity – is the classical problem for philosophy of science. However, it does not have to be the reason for scepticism about practicing archaeology, nor favoring one interpretation over another. Indeed, the philosophical and theoretical debates about possibilities of human knowledge, which have been lasting for centuries, show how objectivity and subjectivity are relative categories, and how the two are based upon a certain context, i.e., vantage point (Wylie 2002). The abandonment of radical relativism should lead toward re-contextualizing of reflexivity into a theory that is not undermining and undignified for science; rather it should be an attempt to making the process of archaeological inferring as appropriate as possible.

A possible way toward the establishing of this more positivistic perspective on reflexivity is to formulate a methodological procedure that would critically explore, in a form of a controlling procedure, our contexts of research and its reflection into the course of our research, subsequently calibrating the archaeological inferences according to the conditions of their production. As A. Wylie proposes, even though she does not address reflexivity as an explicit topic, it does not require a development of any new and unique methodology. This approach works perfectly just with applying some conventional analytic-empirical methods to identifying distortions in particular knowledge, and tracing these distortions to authors' underlying assumptions and interpretative principles, which are determined by conditions inherent in contemporary society (Wylie 2002: 159). The introduction and the formalization of the concept of reflexivity at this level require some reconsideration of mechanisms according to which our

knowledge, experiences and ideas have influenced our constitution of the past as an object of a research, and vice versa. Thus, this perspective on reflexivity includes reconsideration of common places of the discipline (i.e., fieldwork, interpretation, theory development and methods), its institutional background, as well as its political, academic, and educational status (Gramsch 2000). Together with the fact that insights reached in this way contribute to more reliable reconstruction the past, they could also be potentially transformative for our understanding of the present, due to constitutive circularity between object and context of research.

Regarding the case study of the "Illyrian argument" and the Western Balkan Iron Age archaeologies, a final conclusion may be that this possible incorporation of reflexivity as a self-critical and a self-correcting resource may produce less ethnocentric endeavors in the future research. Simultaneously, there are numerous possible paths for deconstruction of the already existing interpretations, which have grown into the confronted pasts that are already claimed by the different nations from South Eastern Europe. Emerging within the different archaeologies, we believe, these confronted Illyrian narratives should be treated as multivocalities and "local voices" (cf. Hodder 2003). Recognizing them in published literature and public discourse is the essential step for a better understanding of the Balkan Iron Age. However, a problem that seems imminent is that these deconstructions may turn into further constructions and some future political arguments. Even in this case, the self-critical nature of the theory of reflexivity may be a helpful solution, and archaeology may really end up with some enhanced objectivity.

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