"The people who are Illyrians and Celts":
Strabo and the identities of the ‘barbarians’ from Illyricum*

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INTRODUCTION

The geographer Strabo made peculiar and intriguing remarks regarding the ethnicity of the peoples from ancient Illyricum, known to his contemporaries as the Iapodes and Scordisci. He stated that both peoples are of ‘mixed origins’, the Iapodes: Celto-Illyrian (4.6.10; 7.5.2; 7.5.4), and the Scordisci: a Celto-Thracian-Illyrian mixture (7.5.1, cf. 7.1.1; 7.3.11; 7.5.2). These statements led to numerous

and often-fruitless scholarly debates in the past that neither shed any light on the nature of the identity of those peoples nor explained why Strabo perceived them as such.1

These remarks of Strabo are suddenly appearing in the intersection of several different contemporary focal points of scholarship in ancient history and archaeology. On one hand is a renewed interest in

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the work of Strabo, who is recognized as a complex author existing in the multiple discursive contexts of his age, rather than just being a faceless compiler of the earlier authorities. On the other hand is the growing impact of the discipline of cultural studies on the poststructuralist interpretation of the ancient past. Amongst other things, cultural studies re-examine the social constructs such as identity and culture, using the theoretical framework developed in the examination of social processes occurring in a contemporary postcolonial, globalized world. The understanding of culture and group identity, as complex but fixed structures is replaced with a view that both of them are in fact perpetually evolving and heterogeneous social processes, yet perceived as continuous and stable structures by those who participate in them. Identity is that very process by which the multiplicity, contradiction and instability of subjectivity is signified as having coherence, continuity, stability ... The poststructuralist interpretations show close, inseparable links between discourse and power: "... discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it." This view of Foucault has significantly influenced methodological approaches in more recent reassessments of the ancient world, convincingly showing that Graeco-Roman colonial narratives and the reality of the 19th and early 20th century European colonial discourse dominated the earlier scholarly interpretation of the classical world. There is a sharp rise in the volume of scholarship that deals with the issue of identities in the ancient world that have become too voluminous to be mentioned in detail here. In addition to these approaches, the criticism of Kossina/Childe 'archaeology of cultures' has significantly diminished the exclusive interpretation of archaeological cultures as reflections of ethnic identities. The position of this criticism is that the linkage of objects of material culture and identity of the social group which used them is an inadequate interpretation, as ethnicity is situational and contextual social phenomena and can be constructed only in a social context. The objects of material culture exist in numerous contexts different from ethnicity, such as gender, social hierarchy, power-relationships, fashion, etc. and should be interpreted inside these contexts.

It is also important in this context to note the influence of Bourdieu's habitus, especially its frequent use in the recent archaeological interpretation of ethnicity and identity-construction of peoples who have no written history. Bourdieu's habitus is a complex concept existing halfway between sociology and philosophy. It might be roughly described as an unconscious, but durable disposition towards certain perceptions and social practices such as morality, tastes, role of sexes in the division of labour, cuisine, communication, customs etc. These dispositions constitute a particular social environment and are shaped by social and cultural practices and common experience of the group.

"Children are inducted into a culture, are taught the meanings which constitute it, partly through inculca-

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3 H. K. Bhattacharya, The Culture of Location (London 1994); A. Loomba, S. Kaul, M. Bunzli (eds.), Postcolonial studies and beyond (Durham 2005) etc.


5 A. Brah, Cartographies of Diaspora (London 1996) 123.


tion of the appropriate habitus. We learn how to hold ourselves, how to defer to others, how to be present for others..."  

Habitus does not determine or represent personal/group identity per se, or ethnicity, but is a very significant part of its construction. Essentially, ethnic identity is formed through perception of difference between the cultural habitus in the interaction of different groups (‘Us’ and ‘Them’), and thus it can be transformed and manipulated as a kind of social and political instrument, rather than being regarded as an already predetermined, reified structure. Ethnicity is constructed through internal self-definition of the group, but also through the influence of the external observer, especially if the external observer is in a position of political or cultural-discursive dominance over the group. So, as S. Jones argues, ethnicity is constructed on the intersection between habitual dispositions (Barth’s "cultural stuff") and particular social conditions, especially through the interaction between different forms of habitus and the continuous juxtaposition of cultural differences with the ‘Other’. The new methodological approaches have already resulted in a more sophisticated view of ancient societies. They disrupted earlier notions of isolated, discrete cultural or ethnic identities within antiquity. For example, scholarship dealing with the Roman Empire is now much more aware of the transitional nature and complexity of imperial identities, both individual and group, seeing them as an outcome of the globalizing processes that occurred in classical and late antiquity. The terms ‘Roman’ and ‘Greek’ begin to lose their meaning as cultural and ethnic singularities, and gradually reveal all the cultural and ethnic complexity that existed beneath them. These approaches have also enabled concerted scholarly efforts in the deconstruction of a ‘barbarian discourse’ constructed by the dominant Graeco-Roman sources. The depiction of ‘barbarians’ is revealed as a discursive stereotypical construction of the cultural ‘Other’, impacted by the power-relations and colonial interaction between the Mediterranean and temperate Europe, or the ‘East’, rather than being accurate ‘ethnographic’ descriptions.

The recent interpretations of ancient identities, as well as the development of contextual and discursive source criticism of literary sources, has opened new possibilities for the explanation of these statements by Strabo, and indeed, for a reassessment of the whole methodological framework that determined the interpretation of group identities in pre-Roman Illyricum. This work will focus on Strabo’s perception of the ‘mixed identity’ of the Iapodes and the ways their identity might have existed in the pre-Roman period, while the problem of the identity of the Scordisci will be dealt with elsewhere.

**WHAT DID STRABO SAY?**

The Iapodes are mentioned in two different parts of the Geography. The first mention in 4.6.10 is at the end of the western European depiction, while the other one belongs in the description of Illyricum 7.5, and is part of the ‘barbarian excursus’ that deals with Germany, Scythia, Dacia, Illyricum, Macedonia and Thrace. Earlier scholarship assumes that Strabo’s information on the Iapodes derives from two different sources, dated to two different periods: Posidonius and Diodorus for book 4 and Polybius and Artemidorus for book 7. Even if used by Strabo, these sources are synthesised with other sources, such as Augustus’ Commentarii, which devoted a

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12 "The critical focus of investigation from this point of view becomes the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff it encloses", F. Barth, *Introduction*, in: id. (ed.), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (Bergen, 1968) 9–38 the quote from 12; R. Jenkins, *Rethinking ethnicity. Identity, categorization and power, Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17/2, 1994, 197-223.


part to his (i.e. Octavian’s) expedition against the Iapodes in 35 BC.18

There is a slight but important difference between these statements. In 4.6.1019 Strabo saw the Iapodes as a ‘mixed’ (ἐπιμικτον) ethnos of Illyrians and Celts. However, in 7.5.2 Strabo sees the Iapodes as a Celtic and Illyrian ethnos at the same time.20 In 7.5.4, however, he does explain why they should be seen in that way. The Iapodes tattoo themselves ‘like other Illyrians and Thracians’ (τοῖς Ἑλλάδος Ἰλλυρίων καὶ Θρᾴκι), and use Celtic weapons.21 This perception of Iapodian ‘Celtiness’ in Strabo is reinforced by the fragment of the 16th book of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, preserved in Stephanus Byzantinus, mentioning the Iapodes as the Celts.22

Paleolinguistics proved Strabo wrong in the case of the Iapodes, there are only a few names from Roman-era inscriptions that might be regarded as ‘Celtic’.23 La Tène influences in the archaeological record are superficial. There was, undeniably, a certain ‘Celtic’.23 La Tène influences in the remains of Iapodean material culture, but they are shown in the scholarship as a regional reinterpretation and incorporation of outside influences, existing as a part of the Iapodean habitus, rather than a ‘different ethnic element’.24 So the Iapodes were placed by earlier scholarship under the shadowy label of ‘Illyrian’ people, with some ‘Celtic’ cultural influences, and only the most recent interpretations, hopefully, might lead researchers into developing new interpretative frameworks.25

The problem with Strabo’s Celto-Illyrian labelling of the Iapodes is that it loses all meaning in the context of recent scholarly developments in understanding how Greeks and Romans saw group identities of ‘barbarian’ peoples. The existence of both above-mentioned identities Strabo used to depict the Iapodes is questioned, as constructed by outside Graeco-Roman sources in antiquity, and later used in the service of more recent national-political contexts. ‘Illyrians’ and ‘Celts’ never existed as common indigenous identities, before being defined as such by Graeco-Roman discursive stereotypes of ‘barbarians’. The construction of ‘Illyrians’ is related to the Roman geo-political term Illyricum. The Romans borrowed the term earlier applied by the Greeks on their western non-Greek neighbours they called Ἰλλυρίμοι, and extended it gradually to the space stretching out all the way between the Adriatic and Danube.26 Changing perceptions of what Illyricum was reflected wider changes in Roman cognitive geography and Roman geo-political discourse of the late Republic/early Principate, which resulted in the similar and contemporary examples of the Roman colonial constructions of new political regions in temperate Europe, such as Gaul, Germany or Britain.27

The indigenous population of Illyricum never shared the same identity before the Roman conquest. In time inhabitants of Roman Illyricum ‘became Illyrians’ (Dalmatians, Pannonians), in the same ways...
as the population of imperial Gaul, Britain or Roman Germany became ‘Gauls’, ‘Britons’ and ‘Germans’, constructing these identities inside Roman imperial ideology in the process of ‘becoming Roman’, rather than reflecting the pre-existing ethnographic situation.28 ‘Illyrianness’ might have been a sense of wider regional identity in the later Empire,29 but in Strabo’s times of the early Principate, ‘Illyrianness’ was nothing but a colonial cultural stereotype imposed from external Graeco-Roman observers as an ‘ethnic’ term on the heterogeneous indigenous population of this region.

The ‘Celtic debate’ is known even better, and points out that the terms ‘Celts/Gauls’ were constructed by Graeco-Roman literary discourse and applied to the heterogeneous Iron Age population of temperate Europe, who shared certain cultural and linguistic similarities, art styles and customs, but not a sense of common identity.30

**STRABO AND HYBRIDITY: DIFFERENT APPROACHES**

This example of Iapodean ‘mixed ethnicity’ should be observed in the context of Strabo’s wider ‘ethnographic’ methodology. His ‘ethnographic tools’ for determining the ethnicity of different peoples were very general and rooted into the outsider Hellenistic tradition and a stereotypical perception of their cultural habitus, including ways of life, customs, language, physical appearance and the political organization of certain communities. These pre-conceptions were incorporated in Strabo’s use of Augustan imperial ideology that presented Rome as the ultimate civilizing power.31 Strabo lacks methodological uniformity and changes his ethnographic approach relative to the perceived level of civilization of the people in question – more civilized are distinguished by political factors, less civilized through phenotypical and cultural differences and similarities.32

When discussing ‘mixed peoples’ in Illyricum, it is very interesting to remind oneself that Strabo strongly opposed Ephorus’ notice of ‘mixed peoples’ of Greeks and non-Greeks, a crossbreed between the Greeks and ‘barbarians’ in Asia Minor.33 He makes the only exception in the case of the ‘barbarophone’ Carians, allowing them to exist in his work as a separate ethnic and linguistic category, tertium quid, speaking Greek unlike the barbarians, mispronouncing it, unlike the Greeks.34 Strabo’s Roman contemporaries, Livy and Ovid, did not look upon linguistic hybridity kindly either, when hybridity involved a Greek component.35 Strabo is obviously less sensitive to ethnic mixing when it comes to ‘mixed identities’ amongst the barbarians in Illyricum, having no objections to their mixing and matching, as seen through his depiction of the Iapodes and Scordisci.

Two different stereotypical perceptions are merged in Strabo’s depiction of the Iapodes – the tattooing that belongs to the stereotype of ‘Illyrian’ and ‘Thracian’ cultural habitus, and the weapons, which are made in the fashion of the inhabitants of Iron age western and central Europe, perceived by the Greeks and Romans as ‘Celts’. We can see Strabo’s Iapodes and Scordisci inhabiting the ethnological middle ground, constructed as a category per se, positioned in-between different ethnic and cultural stereotypes that he used as his ethnographic tools. The fact that they are tattooed like Illyrians and Thracians and that they use weapons made in the ‘Celtic’ style in no way means that the Iapodes are either ‘Illyrians’ or ‘Celts’, or a product of their ‘ethnic mixing’. It seems rather that they selectively incorporated stereotypes, which Strabo and his contemporaries might call ‘Illyrian’ or ‘Celtic’ and actively created new meanings for cultural/material products associated with other cultural contexts. The Roman sources, and

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32 Van der Vliet (n. 31) 38–42; E. Almagor, Who is a barbarian? The barbarians in the ethnological and cultural taxonomies of Strabo, in: Dzino et al. (n. 2) 54. For Strabo’s barbarity and civilization in general see Thollard (n. 31), for Strabo’s barbarity and civilization in Illyricum, D. Dzino, ‘Welcome to the Mediterranean semi-periphery: The place of Illyricum in book 7 of Strabo’, *Zitra Antika* 56, 2006, 113–128.
33 Strabo, 14.5.25.
34 Strabo, 14.2.28; Almagor (n. 32) 44–46; cf. Salmeri (n. 31) 171–180.
35 Livy 38.17.9 ‘hi iam degenerates sunt, mixti, et Gallograeci were, quod appellantur’ (oddly Strabo knows for these ‘Gallogreeks’ – the Galatians in Asia Minor – but does not comment on their ‘mixed nature’ in 12.5.1); Ovid, *Tristia* 3.1.46–49; 5.2.67–68; 7.5.71–52 (the Getae).
Strabo in many ways belonged to these,36 were more concerned and accordingly much better informed about strategic and tactical information than about the ethnographic ‘barbarians’.37

As argued above, Roman perception of ‘Illyrian-ness’ was a construction that projected Mediterranean stereotypes of the shared cultural habitus of the peoples living between the Adriatic and Danube. The practice of tattooing placed the Iapodes into the category of ‘Illyrians’ and ‘Thracians’.38 Strabo’s view of the Iapodes as the ‘Celts’ in 7.5.2 also fits well into recent scholarly interpretations that the Greeks and Romans constructed the ‘Celts’ as a pseudo-ethnic category through their perception of a shared cultural habitus amongst the communities of temperate Europe. Strabo shows that his understanding of ‘Celtiness’ was based upon the same stereotypical cognitive perception, reinforced with the elements of their material culture. The existence of late La Tène and La Tène-like artefacts in Iapodean society, or the social values in their society such as ‘warrior ethos’, was therefore perceived as evidence for their partial belonging to this ‘Celtness’.39 It is especially visible in the fragment of Dionysius of Halicarnassus who indeed regards them as ‘Celts’. His source is obviously older than the Roman-constructed notion of Illyricum, and he mentions an Illyria that corresponds with the Greek perception of ‘Illyris’, which roughly corresponds to the Hellenistic Ardiaean/Illyrian kingdom. Under these circumstances, it is no wonder that the Iapodes are for Dionysius the ‘Celts’, living close to Hellenistic Illyris, especially in the context of book 16, lost except for excerpts that deal with the events of the 4th century BC.40

BEYOND IAPODENESS

The identity of the Iapodes was in reality much more complex than Strabo’s notion of ‘ethnic mixture’. According to archaeological interpretations, the Iapodes shared similarities with their neighbours the Liburni, Histri and Veneti, participating with them in the construction of a wider regional cultural habitus.41 At the same time they also maintained strong cultural links with the group which the Romans knew as the Colapiani.42 Below this shared regional cultural habitus, the Iapodes possessed certain unique cultural elements that were rightly recognized and defined as ‘Iapodean archaeological culture’ by modern scholars. However, archaeology also noted recognizable regional differences inside ‘Iapodean archaeological culture’, thus fragmenting the singular ‘Iapodeness’ of their material culture into a plurality of regional sub-cultural ‘Iapodenesses’ that surrounded the Iapodean cultural ‘core’ in the Lika and Ogulin-Plaščani valley.43 There are common Iapodean elements in the material culture and the scholarship has recognized specific art forms and an increased emphasis on conservatism, militarization and egalitarianism in their burial rites.44

Below this regionally fragmented ‘Iapodeness’, the population in question formed different political identities before the Roman conquest, described by the sources under Roman terms: the ‘Transalpine’ and ‘Cisalpine’ Iapodes who were dominated by the communities of the Metuli and Arupini respectively.45 Recently, Olujić disputed the existence of a politi-

36 Nothing is known of tattooing amongst the ‘Illyrians’ apart from this note. It was without doubt part of the regional cultural habitus in an earlier and later period, M. Petrić. On tattooing and cicatrization in a prehistoric population of a part of the Balkans, Godišnjak Centra za balkanoška istraživanja 4/2, 1968, 151–171. For written sources on Thracian tattooing see C. P. Jones, Stigma: Tattooing and Branding in Graeco-Roman Antiquity, Journal of Roman Studies 77, 1987, 145–146.
37 Weapons of any kind are very rarely found in the Iapodean graves, and start to appear only after the late 4th century BC. However, strong emphasis on martial values in their visual art and burial customs strongly suggest the existence of La Tène-influenced martial ideology amongst the Iapodes, cf. Olujić (n. 1) 182–184; D. Balen-Letunić, Novi prikaz japodskog ratnika iz okoline Gračaca, in: M. Blecic, M. Črešnar, B. Hässnel, A. Hellmuth, E. Kaiser, C. Metzner-Nebelsick (eds.) Scripta Praehistorica in Honorem Biba Teržan, Situla 44 (Ljubljana 2007) 384.
44 Olujić (n. 1) 160–175; Balen-Letunić (n. 24, 1999–2000) (burial rites); Raunig (n. 26) art forms.
45 Appian, Illyricum 10, 16, 18, 21: Τάμαθες δὲ οἱ ἐπάνω Ἀλπέως Τάμαθες δὲ οἱ πέραν Ἀλπέως. See S. Čače, Prilozi proučavanju političkog uređenja naroda sjeverozapadnog Iliira,
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Strabo as an authority on ‘barbarian ethnography’ is also a risky matter. Firstly, his work is a part of Roman imperial discourse, which reflects the relationship between knowledge and power, and draws upon and reproduces the relationship of dominance within society. In this case the dominance of the Mediterranean colonizer over the ‘barbarian’ colonized. Colonial hybridity in more recent history is a product of the uneasiness and ambiguous stand of the colonizer towards the ‘biological’ and intellectual hybridity of the colonized. Romanizing discourse encounters contradictions reflected in the more recent Western colonial discourse: ‘One of the most striking contradictions about colonialism is that it needs both to civilise its others and to fix them into perpetual “otherness”.’

Strabo ‘civilizes’ the Iapodes through his projection of their political singularity, by terming their settlements ‘poleis’ (7.5.4), but he also fixes them into the perpetual ‘otherness’ by constructing the notion of their poverty (7.5.4), and presenting them in the hybrid, in-between cultural space between the stereotypes of ‘Illyrians’ and ‘Celts’. This cultural translation makes defining the Iapodes to his audience more straightforward, similar to the Roman perception of ‘kings’ of the Gauls. They saw these group organisations and placed their own value terms on their group structure.

There is no consistency in Strabo’s ‘ethnography’, as argued earlier, neither in terminology nor in approach, so his mention of the Iapodes as a singular identity does not necessarily show their political singularity. It only reveals a singularity that might be the projection of a cultural or ethnic stereotype arising from his outsider perspective. Finally, the archaeology of the pre-Roman settlements, especially their fortifications, suggests that communities of the Iapodes were politically disunited, lacking a central authority that would dominate their space.

The sources knew of more specific identities in (what they called) the Iapodean civitates, such as the Metulum, Arupium, Tarponus, Avendo, and Monetium, and it is obvious that their identity was constructed on this level as well.

Tattooing of the Iapodes shows another means of expressing their identity in a more specific way. The marking of the human body, whether as tattooing or branding in the ancient world, is classified as religious or decorative, but branding was also used as a punishment. However, Jones, in his influential study of tattooing in the ancient world underplays the significance of tattooing as an expression of the identity of those who are tattooed. Tattoos became a mark of identity that distinguished the social group that practiced tattooing from others who did not tattoo themselves, or used different designs. Regardless of the initial context of tattoos, which were perhaps religious, magical, medicinal or decorative, tattooing became a mark of identity when it was visibly displayed on human bodies in parts of late Iron Age Europe. Tattooing was not always the mark of a...
group identity, but also a mark of social distinction inside the group, the privilege of the elite, or a part of masculine identity-construction. In a recent comparable study of tattooing in pre-Roman and early Roman Britain, it is well-argued that tattooing there was visibly displayed and short-lived, taking place only during the period of Roman conquest as a part of changing communal and private identities, resistance and acculturation. Unfortunately, due to the lack of evidence, we do not know what was the real purpose of tattooing amongst the Iapodes, whether it signified social distinction, or it was a sign of individual, communal or group/political identity. In all certainty it transgressed all three levels of identity-construction.

When and whether the Iapodes ever ‘became Iapodes’, cannot be determined beyond speculation. The construction of their identity existed in different contexts: cultural, political, communal and individual, but was also impacted by the outsider view that saw them as Iapodes. The sources referring to the Iapodes before the Roman conquest never specify whether they refer to the Iapodes or a ‘Iapodes’ – to the unified ethnically and politically compact Iapodes, to the individual communities they commonly saw as Iapodes, to changing political alliances in and around Iapodean space, or to a different people of the same name from Transpadana. Especially questionable is if the Iapodes actually ever shared the sense of ‘Iapodeness’ – belonging to the same community before the Roman occupation, and how strong it was, or whether their identity was constructed through the socio-political contexts of different communities inhabiting parts of Iapodean space. If it indeed ever existed, ‘Iapodeness’ must be put in the context of the formation of more complex political structures in this area that occurred no earlier than the 4th century, and especially the conflicts with the Romans in the 2nd and 1st century BC. It is impossible to consider the formation of group identities/ethnicities in antiquity outside of the socio-political context. Ethnicity is a social construction that reflects the power relationships inside society and its social and political mobilization, regardless of the period in which it was constructed. The question whether ‘Iapodeness’ was just a unifying identity imposed on this people by their conquerors after the formation of an administrative civitas Iapodum cannot be excluded as a possibility, but falls outside of the scope of this paper and requires separate discussion.

**CONCLUSION**

Therefore, the statements of Strabo on the mixed identity of the ‘barbarians’ from Illyricum show several important things. Strabo allows the possibility that hybrid, in-between identities can exist amongst the ‘barbarians’, unlike his disapproval of the possibility of hybridity constructed between the Greeks and non-Greeks. Secondly, Strabo’s ‘ethnography’ was based on cultural stereotypes, so when confronted with regional recasting and restructuring of existing colonial stereotypes in Illyricum, he employs hybrid terminology in his description in order to define it. Finally, these statements show that the way in which the Iapodes expressed their identity has nothing to do with either ‘Illyrians’ or ‘Celts’. It was a unique way of recasting the La Tène cultural habitus with specific ways in which their own personal and group identities were expressed and constructed, and also recognized by outsiders as ‘the Iapodes’. I do not think that there was a single narrative of Iapodean identity. The group ancient sources and modern scholars conveniently call ‘Iapodes’ constructed their sense of identity through their regional belongings, shared cultural habitus, the communication of that habitus to the surrounding habitus (perception of ‘others’), and politicization of regional identities. The conflicts with the Romans might also ignite a sense of common identity, but, paradoxically, it might also be the Roman-created Iapodean civitas that accomplished the construction of the ‘Iapodeness’ as a sense of common identity.

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58 Carr (n. 57) esp. 283–286.

59 Livy, 10.2.4; 43.1; 43.5; *Periochae* 59; Frontinus, *Stratagemata* 2.5.28; Appian, *Illyricum* 11; *Insc. It.* 13/1, 82, 559.

60 V. Vedaldi Iasbe, *La Venetia orientale e l’Histria. Le fonti letterarie greche e latine fino alla caduta dell’Impero Romano d’Occidente* (Rome 1994) 267 arguing that there were the Iapodes in Transpadana and they were referred to by Cicero, *Pro Balbo* 32; Vergil, *Georgics* 3.474–477; Servius ap. Vergil, *Georgics* 3.475.


62 Pliny, *Naturalis Historia* 3.143; *CIL* V 3346. There are also indigenous praepositi et principes Iapodum known from dedications from Golubić-Privilica locality; *CIL* III 14324, 14326, 14328; see Bojanovski (n. 26) 313–314. This still does not necessarily reflect ‘Iapodeness’ as their own identity but might well be new, imperial-constructed identity of civitas Iapodum.

63 "Hybridity thus makes difference into sameness, and sameness into difference, but in a way that makes the same no longer the same, the different no longer simply different." Young (n. 4) 26.
After this discussion on Iapodean identities it is simply not possible to avoid the question of its wider context, asking whether future research of identities in Illyricum must remain focused on ethnicity, as it has been in earlier scholarship. It is apparent that individuals and communities who lived in ancient Illyricum formed their identities on the intersection between sameness and difference with other communities and across a number of different social spaces and contexts that they inhabited and participated in. The search for cognitive singularities of their ethnicity, their ‘ethnic and cultural layers’ and ethnic boundaries, reflect rather our own need as scholars to insert some order into the chaotic world of intersected identities of pre-industrial societies. However, it does not help us to explain how they formed their identities, why they did it and what were the ways in which they expressed and constructed these identities.

In order to do so scholars must rely on archaeology and written sources. Archaeology provides hard facts and aids significantly in the understanding of the *habitus* of these peoples, and its historical development. However, as shown earlier, material evidence alone, outside of the social and political context in which it existed, is frequently of no assistance in establishing or mapping the ethnicity of these peoples. A particular type of fibulae per se does not show ethnicity of the persons which carried it. It shows customs, habits and fashion of its carriers, from a particular period in which the fibula was dated. Yet, if the same fibula was carried by soldiers of a particular army, it could be perceived and imagined as an ‘ethnic boundary’, dividing ‘Us’ and ‘Them’, by both its carriers and those in opposition to them. Thus, contextual mapping of artefacts appears to be the best possible way for scholars who approach the construction of imagined communities of pre-Roman Illyricum to attempt to understand the construction of these communities from an archaeological perspective.

Written sources mainly reflect the stereotypical views of ancient Greek and Roman ‘ethnographers’ who developed a discursive colonial projection of ethnic singularities in their periphery such as ‘Celts’, ‘Illyrians’, and ‘Germans’, from their own Mediterranean-centred perspective. However, these singularities in all certainty did not exist in isolation from Roman imperial discourse. The same ‘ethnographers’ also described ethnic singularities within Illyricum such as the ‘Pannonii’, ‘Delmatae’, ‘Liburni’, or ‘Iapodes’, which also existed in the frequently interlocked ideological contexts of the Roman Empire and earlier Greek colonialism; its joint Mediterranean perception of the cultural ‘Other’.

Instead of ethnicity, the research should focus on the ways and contexts in which the peoples of Illyricum in pre-Roman and Roman times constructed and expressed their identities. These contexts are numerous: political,65 funerary,66 and even progressing all the way down to the personal level, such as the negotiation of individual identities of Dalmatian sailors from the Misene fleet.67 It becomes more and more urgent to break up and finally abandon the grand narrative of ethnicity in Illyricum, to paraphrase Lyotard, and focus on its smaller pieces, using archaeological research, socio-anthropological conceptual methodologies and contextual and genre literary criticism of written sources. Only then the scholarship could be able to approach indigenous group identities in Illyricum with the more complex interpretative frameworks, being more aware of interlocked networks and parallel narratives of their identity-construction in which they in fact existed.

64 The term *Λιβυρνοί* in earliest instance reflect the Greek cognitive common name for the indigenous population of the eastern Adriatic, regardless of their real identities, S. Čače, *Corcira e la tradizione Greca dell’espanzione dei Liburni nell’Adriatico orientale*, in: N. Cambi, S. Čače, B. Kirigin (eds.), *Greek Influence along the East Adriatic Coast* (Split 2002) 83–100.


66 Olujić (n. 1) 160–175.

Avtor v članku analizira Strabonovo oznako Japodov kot "mešanice Keltov in Ilirov", kar mu je izhodišče za preučevanje identitet oz. skupinskih identitet predrimskega Ilirika. Strabonovo pojmovanje "mešane identitete" je postavljeno v kontekst sodobne post-kolonialne kritike grških in rimskih besedil, v katerih so "barbarska" ljudstva opredeljena na osnovi literarno obarvanih etnografskih opisov. Strabon, kakor tudi drugi antičniisci njegove dobe, je dojemal in slikal "barbarska" ljudstva skozi tedaj aktualne kulturne stereotipe in tako ustvaril njihove identitete v skladu s temi stereotipi; tovrstne žanrske opise pa so pričakovali tudi njegovi poslušalci.

V prispevku avtor razpravlja tudi o različnih kontekstih, v katerih je japodska identiteta lahko obstajala v predrimskem obdobju, in ponovno kritično ovrednoti uveljavljeno pojmovanje "japodskosti" kot samostojne identitete. Avtor se zavzema za to, da bi v prihodnosti morale biti zgodovinske in arheološke raziskave Japodov in tudi drugih ljudstev antičnega Ilirika osredotočene na različne kontekste, v katerih so si ta ljudstva gradila svojo identiteto. Na ta način bi lahko ustrezneje interpretirali prepletene mreže identitet, v katerih so sobivala.

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