
Indigenous Populations of the Central Balkans and the Classical World

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Résumé

The last millennium BC was the time of great changes in the Balkans. New cultures were rising in all of its parts – in the western Balkans (Slovenia, Croatia), central Balkans (Serbia), eastern Balkans (Bulgaria) and northern Balkans (Romania). They were all capable of processing iron, thus giving this period its name. The early phase was marked with settling of the Illyrians and the Thracians. Further on, changes took place in the settlement forms, but also in burial rites, especially during the Late Iron Age, with the appearance of monumental tombs and big burial mounds. During this period, there was the earliest occurrence of the Greek imports in the central and the east Balkans, along with the foundation of Greek colonies on the Adriatic, Aegean and Black Sea coasts, leading to a huge change of lived spaces. In its later phase, the earliest Roman imports appeared.

Contacts with the Greek world led to the earliest appearance of written sources related to this area. Herodotus, Thucydides, Strabo, Pliny the Elder and many other ancient authors wrote about the Balkans and these data are precious for defining large ethnic groups that were settled here, like the Illyrians and the Thracians, but in the later period also the Macedonians who conquered part of Illyria and Thrace. During the early 3rd century BC, the Celts settled down in the region and the Dacians populated parts of this area.

Many turbulent changes took place during this last millennium BC. Those of the burial rites were probably the most striking, since they went from cremations, over skeletal burials and back to cremations again. There were also changes in settlement types and forms, including the appearance of Hellenistic towns, but also in the production of everyday items. In this regard again, probably the most striking changes were those in the pottery production. Not just that pottery types, forms and their decoration changed, but also the very way of their production, since during the Late Iron Age, a potter's wheel was introduced.

During the second half of the 1st millennium BC, besides the change described above, the impact of the Mediterranean world also reflects in the introduction of coinage. The appearance of Greek coins can be noticed all over the Balkans, not only along its coasts (the Black Sea, Adriatic Sea), but also in the inland. Soon enough, they were copied locally, however quite successfully. In the final stage of this era, Roman republican coins were also included into the monetary circulation.

Mots-Clés: indigenous, central Balkans

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