WHERE WERE PSEUDO-SKYLAX'S TRIERAS HEADING?
Conflict and trade in the Eastern Adriatic during the first millennium B.C.

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to investigate one passage from Pseudo-Skylax's *Periplus* that explains that the Naro River is navigable for trieras. Through the critique of archaeological and written evidence and the use of deductive reasoning, the author reconstructs the relations between various polities on the South-eastern Adriatic from Archaic to Hellenistic period and the political and economic context of *Periplus*.. According to the new interpretations of the *Periplus* that emphasize the authenticity of presented data, the author concludes that this information pertains to times of 'pre-colonial' encounters or perhaps even from times of early colonization (i.e. from 5th till mid 4th century BC), thus the mentioned trieras were probably Corcyran or Syracusian.

KEY-WORDS: Illyria, Adriatic sea, triremes, Greek geography, Pseudo-Skylax's *Periplus*

The Pseudo-Skylax's *Periplus* is a mid-fourth century geographical work that mainly describes the coasts of the Mediterranean, starting at Gibraltar and made a clockwise circuit.[1] The oldest existing copy of *Periplus* is preserved in a thirteenth century manuscript and is attributed to Skylax of Karianda, a sixthth century navigator who explored Indus river for Darius I. However, the information presented

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[1] G. J. Shipley (2008) 281 – 2.

in this work is mostly dated after that period and thus the author is called 'Pseudo-Skylax'.[2]

The composition of the text is unified –description of the coast line and its length (in *stadia*), duration of the navigation along the coast (in days), ethnics inhabiting it, and various ethnographical data, extremely emphasized in the case of the East Adriatic coast. The value of *Periplus* is even greater when we concur that it is the first geographical description of this area that was preserved in any length.[3]
Mate Suić, the first scholar who thoroughly examined *Periplus* regarding the East Adriatic, dated the original as a mid-fourth century work. According to him, the text was written by using older data, possibly from 6th century B.C., and the author generally had very vague knowledge about the upper Adriatic. According to Suić, virtually all ethnographical data was added in Hellenistic, or perhaps even later, periods.[4]

Analysing paragraph 21 concerning Liburnia as an example. After listing the Liburnian cities and examining strange Liburnian customs, the author continues to give us the description of the Liburnian islands. He mentions a large island called Istrida, whose length is 310 stadia. The referred 'island' is probably the Istrian peninsula, so we have a strange situation where we are given the description of Istra (paragraph 20) and then description of Liburnia where Istra is listed as one of the islands. This peninsula is only mentioned as such is so-called Byzantine Eastern Chronicle, as a place where in 354. Constantius Gallus was murdered, and because of that and the fact that during late antiquity Liburnia and parts of Istra where incorporated into new administrative district, Suić concluded that much of this paragraph was an early medieval appendage.[5]

However, scholars of newer generations who have recently addressed the work are somehow sceptical about the quantities of data added to the original work. Graham J. Shipley dates the *Periplus* around 338 A.D.Patrick Counillon believes that *Periplus* was compiled by one author from Athens in the time of theascendance of Philip II (around 356 – 353 A.D.) and that the revision followed briefly afterwards, thus the text provides a 'geographical and political picture of Mediterranean around that time'.[6] The same author suggested various contaminations of the original text, but are difficult to assess. The *Periplus* wasmost likely an academic literary work that was compiled from second-hand maritime knowledge over time. The author is silent about his sources, which could have comprised of hypothetical local coastal pilots, administrative documents (at least for Attica) and other authors such as Hekataios, Ephoros and Theopompos.[7]

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[2] G. J. Shipley (2010) 100. The texts have been attributed to Skylax largely due to a note in the preference added to the text in late antiquity.
[3] P. Counillon (2006) 19 – 20.
[4] See M. Suić (1996) 192 – 4. for a new edition of his work originaly published in mid-fifties of 20th century.
[5] M. Suić (1996) 221 – 6.
[6] P. Counillon (2006) 19.
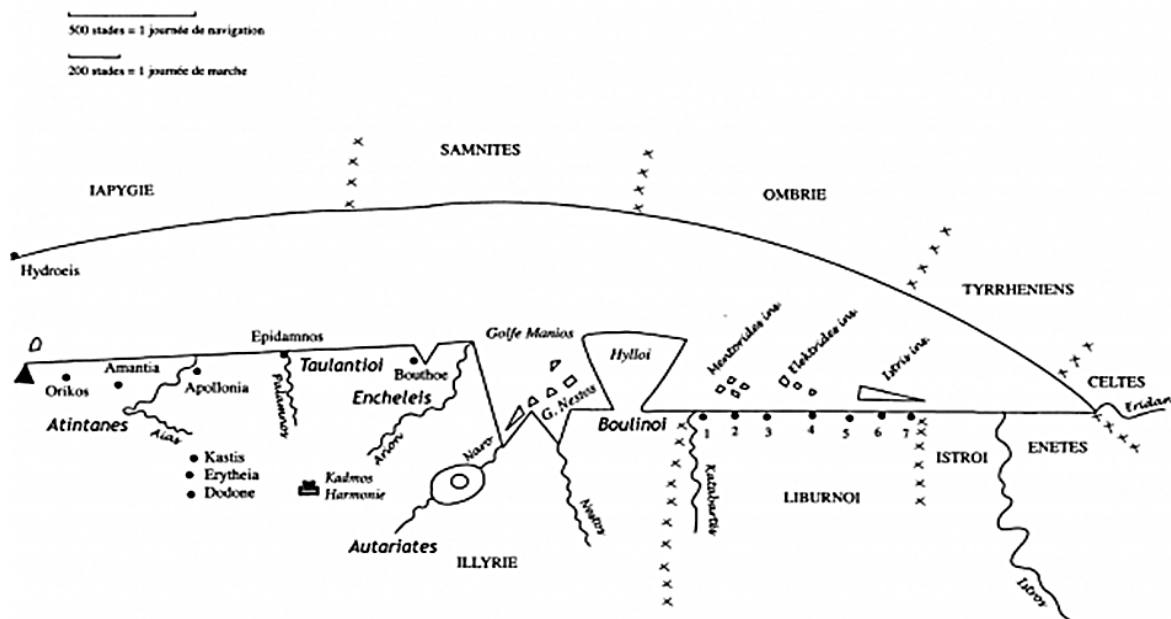[7] G. J. Shipley (2008) 282 – 4., G. J. Shipley (2010) 101., 110.

Fig. 1. – Map of the Adriatic sea constructed from Pseudo-Skylax's *Periplus* (P. Counillon 2006.)

In this paper, we will concentrate on the beginning of paragraph 24 that describes the coast of today's Central and Southern Dalmatia, that says:

> *Manioi. And on the beginning of territory of Nestoi is the Naron river, and the estuary of Naron is not narrow, so even a trireme and boat navigate to the upper emporium, distant 80 stades from the sea. And these people are Illyrian by race, the Manioi. And there is a lake inland from there, a great one, and the lake extends to the Autariatai, an Illyrian people. In the lake, there is an island of 120 stades, and this island is extremely good for farming. And from this lake the Naron river flows away...*[8]

Numerous questions arise from this short passage, but we will try to answer those concerning the galleys, where the triremes were heading, which political entity they belonged to, why it was important for them to know if the river was navigable, and which period this data pertains to

Before trying to answer these questions, the authenticity of this paragraph much be established because the lake mentioned in the second part of the chapter does not exist.

For Suić, the crucial argument for this thesis is that the author(s) of *Periplus* were uninformed about the real geographical situation. He argues that there was some

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[8] According to the P. Counillon's critique of the original text

kind of 'academic reminiscence' about the great lake likely situated somewhere inland in Illyricum, but Greek scholars of that time were unable to pin-point its correct location.[9] Suić identified it with Lake Skadar, where the river is in fact Drim and the two trade posts mentioned later in that chapter should be identified with Scodra and Lissos. In such case, the original text describing the Dalmatian coast and the Neretva River were 'cut and paste' into descriptions of a lake, river, and towns of modern-day Albania.

On the other hand, recent analysis made by M. Šašel-Kos is closer with modern interpretations of *Periplus* mentioned above. According to her, entire chapters reflect real geo-historical situations where 'upper emporium' should be identified with Narona, a settlement which later evolved into a large city and a roman colony.[10] Moreover, 'great lake' should be identified with the Hutovo Blato swamp complex, as was proposed by C. Patsch in 1906. It must be reminded that local landscape has changed dramatically over the centuries – there were still lakes in the Neretva's delta back in the 1970s, therefore Hutovo Blato from ancient period could have been portrayed quite accurately by *Periplus*' author.[11]
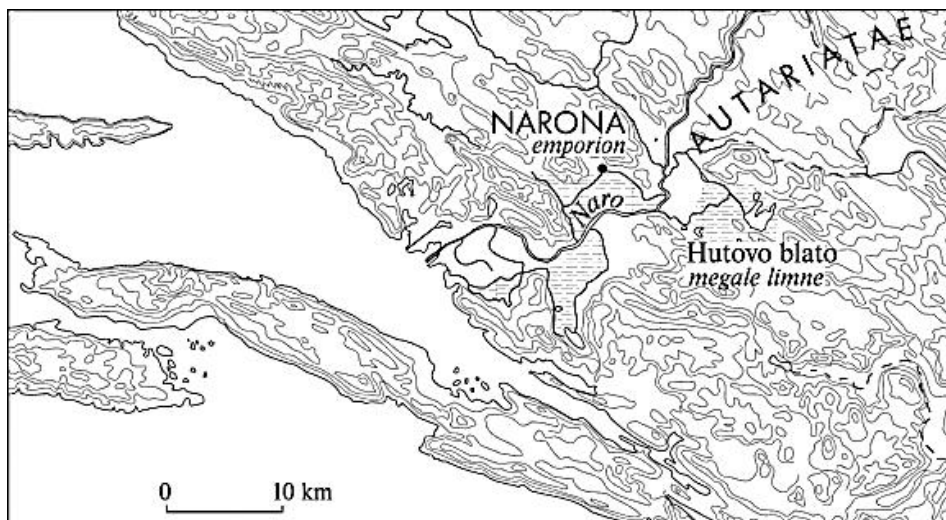

Fig 2. - Reconstruction of the area discussed in chapter 24. (M. Šašel-Kos 2013.)

Unfortunately, we can now say (not without hesitations) that this chapter hasn't been radically changed by different authors, and all of this data does not give us a precise timespan. Terminus *post quem non* could be the time of *Periplus*' creation in the second half of the fourth century, that is if we exclude further Hellenistic

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[9] M. Suić (1996) 196.

[10] M. Šašel-Kos (2013) It seems that she dates the position of the local communities in time before the migration of Ardiaei from inland Illyricum, and who were mentioned living on the coast by Strabo. Some authors put Ardiaei more to the south, in borders of todays Monte Negro (as well as their neighbours Autariate), from where they should have expand (and not migrated) to the west. For summary of opinions about this problem see article by R. Dodig (2013) 42 - 5. (with extensive bibliography)

[11] H. Malenica (2012) 282.

adaptations as suggested above, and for the *terminus ante quem non* we could propose introduction of the trireme. It must be emphasized that weare forced to generalize and that precise answers to questions earlier mentioned are not concrete. A broader historical context should be provided to determine answers to the following questions.

Greek written sources state that this region was populated by peoples designated as Illyrian.[12] Their approximate locations can be designated as Manii, situated around the delta of the Neretva river and Nesti west of them. Further west, the Hyllis peninsula was occupied by Bulini and Hilli. South of the Manii were Pleraei and Daorsi. At one unidentified point of time, these communities and their southern neighbours were incorporated into the Illyrian kingdom. After its dissolution in 168 A.D.(?), they were left to struggle against expansionistic northern Delmates.

In archaeological sense, from 5th century onwards, all these communities were more and more under the cultural influence of the Mediterranean, culminating with the so-called 'protohistoric' or 'Hellenistic' period when the local urban settlements are identifies as Ošanići near Stolac (probably ancient Daorson) with distinctive acropolis, living quarters, walls with towers etc.[13] In this micro-universe, Neretva probably had central position as a highway between Mediterranean and continent, as well as a part of the connection between two coasts of the Adriatic via an 'island bridge' from Gargano to the central Dalmatian islands. First solid evidence for this processes dates from the Neolithic period when infiltration of Mediterranean cultural influences into central Bosnia can be observed.[14] These trade links were continued into later periods, so it is likely that the Greeks found it profitable to join this trade circle. Theopompus, quoted by Strabo,mentions Chian and Thasian pottery found in the Naro river.[15] The situation of the entire region and its surrounding islands must be examined in order to understand why the Greeks began to show interest in this local river for trade.

Classical sources describing the Roman conquests during last three centuries B. C. mention only four large ethnics on today's Croatian coast. Histri were, more or less, localized in Istra, Liburnians held territory between rivers Raša and Krka, Iapodi were mainly situated inland, in a region known as Lika and Daelmates today, occupied territory between rivers Krka and Cetina. More to the south was Illyrian kingdom and after its demise a group of smaller *civitates,* as mentioned before.[16]

But a few centuries earlier situations were quite different. Early sources like Pseudo-Skylax, Theopompus (quoted by Pseudo-Skimno), Hekataios (quoted by Stephan of Byzantium) etc. mention a great number of smaller communities which were probably assimilated into bigger ethnics as the time passed by. For example, it is known from *Periplus* about the existence of Nesti or Manii as Liburnians were then

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[12] At least communities southern of Cetina river. R. Katičić (1964) 17.
[13] B. Marijan (2011) 38 – 41.
[14] 'Mediterranean style' pottery discoverd amog sites of Starčevo culture. H. Malenica (2012) 280.
[15] Strabo VII, 9.
[16] S. Čače (1979) 44. - 5.

located in their original homeland, today's northern Dalmatia.[17] More interestingly, the Liburnians are also mentioned as inhabitants, or rulers, of various Adriatic islands, cities, and regions.

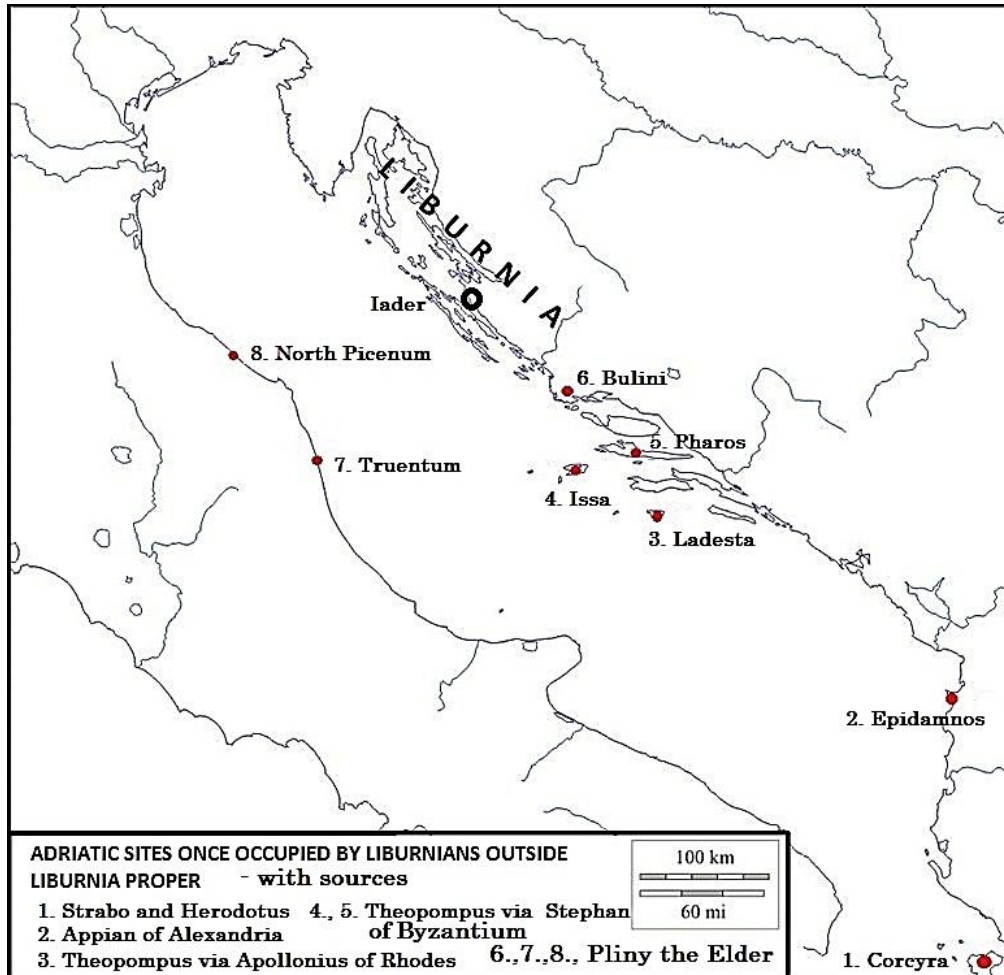Fig 3. - Liburnians in the Adriatic

Theopompus (as quoted in Pseudo-Skimno's Periegesis) has basically divided all of the east Adriatic islands into three groups. If we eliminate mythical Amber islands, there are the Apsirdites, Kvarner, and Liburnides islands i.e. all other Adriatic islands southern the Apsirdites. Another fragment of Theopompus' lost 21st book, preserved by Stephan of Byzantium, explicitly says Lastovo is a Liburnian island. Stephan also notes that there is "another island called Pharos in the Adriatic" that is also Liburnian. Apollonius of Rhodes (also probably quoting Theopompus) states in his Argonautica that the island of Vis and two other islands that cannot be identified are Liburnian, and adjacent sholia says that "from those islands Liburnians reached Korkyra." Appian, in his Civil wars, wrote that Liburnians ruled Dyrrachium after the Taulantes. They were "in the habit of making piratical expeditions against their neighbours with very swift ships." Later, citizens expelled them from the city with the

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[17] S. Čače (1979) 43.

help of Corcyrians. Pliny mentions Liburnians as an old inhabitant of Northern Picenum, together with Siculi, before the Gallic invasions. He also noted that they were present in Truentum, south of Ankon, and that Bulini, as well as some other smaller east Adriatic communities, were once "part of Liburnians." The most southern site connected with the Liburnians is Corcyra. Both Strabo and Herodotus record similar stories where Corintins have captured the island from the Liburnians that ruled there.[18]

Such evidence has convinced local scholars to propose a period of "liburnian thalassocracy," a thesis to be discussed later. because now we will concentrate on a emerging power that ended Liburnian escapades and is a fist candidate that could have sent triremes into river Naro – the Corinth. For now, focus should be spent on the Corinth, a power that emerged and ended the Liburnian escapades, likely sending the triremes into the Naro river.

In his first book of the History of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides gave a short summary of maritime hegemonies before his time in a chapters sometimes known as thalassocratic list.[19] After semi-legendary king Minos, who ruled the Cyclades and the Greeks during the Trojan war, Thucydides discussed the Corinth. While he is still sceptical about trustworthiness of sources he had on disposal, he admits that Corinthians fist had a navy in the modern sense (i.e. navies of his own time) which were used to "scoured the sea of pirates and, affording traffic both by sea and land, mightily increased their city in revenue of money."[20] Thucydides also noted that Corinthians were the first among Greeks to start to build triremes, as well as fight the first sea battle with their ex-colony Corcyra in 664 A.D..[21]

Although Corinthians were asked to build additional triremes for Samos, it appears that warships of the day were mostly old-style penteconters, so the Corinthian navy was considered modern by Thucydides standards, because of some kind of innovation in fleet management or strategy, not because ship types they used.[22]

Next, Greek naval hegemon from Thucydides' thalassocratic list was Polykrates from Samos who around 525 A.D. allegedly had 40 triremes and 100 penteconteres.[23] Moreover, Aegina and Athens, who were at war in the beginning of 5th century, were both mainly using penteconters, proposing that triremes slowly became the main ship of the line in the Greek world in the first three decades of the 5th century. Before Xerxes's invasion, supposing Herodot's data is correct, Corinth

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[18] For the summary of opinions about 'Liburnian thalassocracy' see M. Zaninović (1988) 44. – 9. For Liburnians on the central Adriatic islands and critical translation of Greek texts with comentary see R. Katičić (1995),184., 189. – 191. Other sources: Strabo, VI, 2., 4., Appian *BCiv.* II, 39., Plin. *HN.*, III, 52., 110., 112., 139. -145.

[19] Thuc. I., 1. -19. Antoher 'thalassocratic list' is preserved via Eusebius . That list is probably copy of one of the lost, earlier books of Diodorus. It is quite diferent that Thucydides's one featuring many Midel-eastern peoples and other Greek polities. P. De Souza (1998) 312.

[20] Thuc. I., 13., 2.,3.

[21] Thuc. I.13. 3 According to Pliny and Clement of Alexandria, the original invention of the trireme should be attributed to the Phoenicians, N. Fields (2007) 4.

[22] H.T. Wallinga (1995) 45.

[23] Thuc. I. 18. 1-2.

had forty, Korkyra sixty and Athens 200 triremes.[24] On the eve of the Peloponnesian War, it was heardfrom the mouth of Corcyraean ambassador to Athens that: "There are three main naval powers in Greece -Athens, Korkyra, and Corinth".[25] According to Diodorus, Dionysios I of Syracuse was the first among the Greeks to build the war ships larger than trireme, but it seems that triremes were still used as a main battleships for centuries, although in the mid-4th century they beganto be subdivided into different categories based on speed.[26]

It can be assumed that the poorly documented archaic period was a time of Corinthian ascendance, and one of the directions of Corinthian expansion was North. Adriatic was no mystery for the Greeks of that time. As Herodotus informs us, Phoceans were the first Greeks to explore this sea. According to the same author, they used pentaconteres and if we place that information in context of Phocean behave in Western Mediterranean, 'exploration' is a euphemism for piracy.

Corinthians have secured Corcyra in the seconded half of 8th century. Soon after, Epidamnos and Apollonia were founded on a nearby land, undoubtedly to control the Strait of Otranto. However, the mayor setback in Corinthian expansion was the loss of influence on Corcyra and started to push its own independent policy.[27] According to the reconstruction of the events by Slobodan Čače, Corinthians and Corcyrans showed interest in Central Dalmatia by 7th and 6th century, and Liburnians were chased away from said islands no later than 5th century.[28] Common perspectives of this problem emphasise that there was no considerable Greek interest in Central and Southern Dalmatian coast and the islands before 4th century, ergo Dionysios of Syracuse, should be modified.[29] The Greek interest was mainly commercial since control of the islands guaranteed control over coastal and Neretva river trade. There was probably no large influx of Greek settlers, yet we can imagine the number of emporia being established in that period – Narona mentioned in peripolus is the best example.[30] Legend of Hilo, the son of Heracles and a legend of nymph named Corcyra as well as the reminiscence of pre-4th century Greek colonization are here to exemplify this thesis. Black Corcyra (Korkyra Melaina) was probably founded in 6th or 5th century on the island of Korčula, as well as Heracleia – another Adriatic colony from this period of unknown location. None of them survived into the 4th century.[31] Legend of Hilo, which was probably generated on Corcyra as shown by Katičić, mentions Greek origin of Hilli – one of the smaller communities of the Hylis

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[24] H.T. Wallinga (2000) 46.
[25] Thuc. I., 36., 3.
[26] Diod. Sic. XIV., 42 – 44. , N. Fields (2007) 38.
[27] For newer summary of Greek colonization of Adriatic see J. Wilkes, T. Fischer-Hansen (2004) 322. – 332.
[28] S. Čače (2005) 172.
[29] S. Čače (2002) 83. – 99.
[30] R. Osborne argued that Greek collonization in archaic period could have possess a feature of private enterprise, and that could probably work for this discused aerea. R. Osborne (1998) 279.
[31] M. Zaninović (2008) 153. - 154.

peninsula, it was probably based on collective memory from times when Corcyra needed local allies in their fight against the Liburnians.[32]
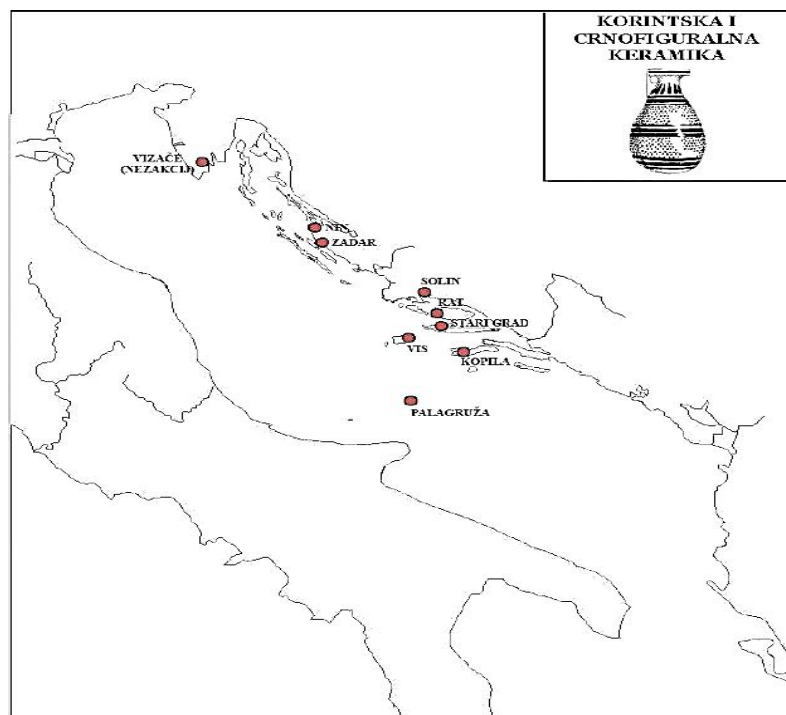

Fig 4. – Corinthian and black-figure pottery in the Eastern Adriatic (L. Šešelj 2013.)

Archaeological evidence shows that Corithian pottery was exported to the territories around the Strait of Otranto by the 9th century, with considerable increase of trading activities into the next century. Such early Corinthian material is relatively rare in Central and Southern Dalmatia, but a steady increase of Greek artefacts from the 6th century, when rising tendencies of Attic black-figure pottery merged with Corinthian ceramics, can be observed. The dominate type among Corinthian ceramics were various perfume bottles, which were demanded on such a high scale that Etruscans began to manufacture imitations on their own.[33]

This type of archaeological materiel can be associated with Narona, the Pseudo-Skylax's upper emporium. Theophrastus, a 4th century peripatetic philosopher who is sometimes mentioned as 'father of botany' wrote in one of his works, that the best Iris Illyricacan be found in the Adriatic sea.Illyrida, while poet Nikandros, who lived in the next century added that specimens of highest quality grew on the shores of the Naron river.[34] It seems that processed Iris illyrica were a drug for inducing miscarriages and ingredients of various medicamentsand perfumes.[35]

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[32] R. Katičić (1995) 380.
[33] About the Greek pottery import see L. Šešelj (2009) 412., 414., 416. J. Wilkes, T. Fischer-Hansen (2004) 322.
[34] M. Nikolanci (1980) 155.
[35] J. Wilkes (1992) 221.

Pliny, who probably used additional sources regarding this plant, mentioned that Iris illyrica was used in the perfume industry and that Corinth was famous for this kind of perfume.[36] M. Nikolanci first associated this with 24th chapter of Pseudo-Skylax's *Periplus*. He argued that mass production of Corinthian pottery, especially manufacture of various aryballos and alabastor types of ceramic were demanded by cities' perfume industry that needed packages for its merchandise.[37] If these initial trade links were established in 7th century or earlier, considerable increase in trading activity on the Adriatic Sea can be witnessed from the 6th century.

Archaeological records shows\ that from that period, trading goods from Athens were found in Spina and Adria on a regular basis – and remained so throughout the entire classical period.[38] Pottery records shows that in the late 6th century the establishment of Diomedes shrine on the island of Palagruža in the mid-Adriatic can be dated – i.e. on one of the crucial Adriatic navigation points.[39] For Greek sources of the classical age, trade in Adriatic was considered to be highly profitable, but also a very risky– at one point, among the creditors of Piraeus the expression 'navigating the Adriatic' became synonymous with hazardous enterprise.[40] As an indicator of endemic naval conflicts of that period, the wealthy dedication of spoils in Spina's treasury at Delphi can be used as an example, possibly deriving from a successful elimination of a local competitor in open warfare, as Wilkes proposed.[41] The fact that trade vessels needed some kind of protection encouraged S. Čače to suggest that during this period merchant shipping in the southern and central Adriatic was protected by the Corcyrian navy, and in northern by warships of Etruscans and Greeks from Spina.[42] Yet it seems that Greek relations with the Etruscans were not idyllically for most of this period. The victory of Hiero over Ethruscans at Kyme probably also weakened Ethruscan thalassocracy in the Adriatic, a situation later exploited by Dionysios I (432 – 367 A.D.) who founded colonies at Ankon, Adria, Lissos and, probably, Spina,thus turning the Adriatic into a syracusian sea.[43] In central Dalmatia, Dionysios'Adriatic empire initiated gradual shift in pattern of Greek colonisation. Now, a number of 'real' colonies and not only emporia began to emerge, no doubt to secure Syracusian thalassocracy. One of those colonies, named Issa, was founded on the island Vis, and soon afterwards another one followed on the nearby island Hvar.[44] That latter colony was involved in the first documented sea battle in the Adriatc. In 384A.D., local Illyrians from Hvar waged war against the colonists with the help of other natives from the nearby coast. Fortunately for the Greeks, Dionysios' commanding officer

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[36] Plin. *HN.* XIII. 2.,5
[37] M. Nikolanci (1980) 156 – 8.
[38] L. Šešelj (2009) 381.
[39] B. Kirigin (2003) 377. It seams that Diomedes was protector of the sailors and was revered in the entire Adriatic basin.
[40] L. Šešelj (2009) 383.
[41] J. Wilkes, T. Fischer-Hansen (2004) 325.
[42] S. Čače (2005) 172.
[43] J. Wilkes, T. Fischer-Hansen (2004) 325., 332.
[44] J. Wilkes, T. Fischer-Hansen (2004) 332.

from Issa (or Lissos) used his triremes and swiftly defeated the numerous Illyrians, whose smaller ships could not parry the larger Greek warships.[45]
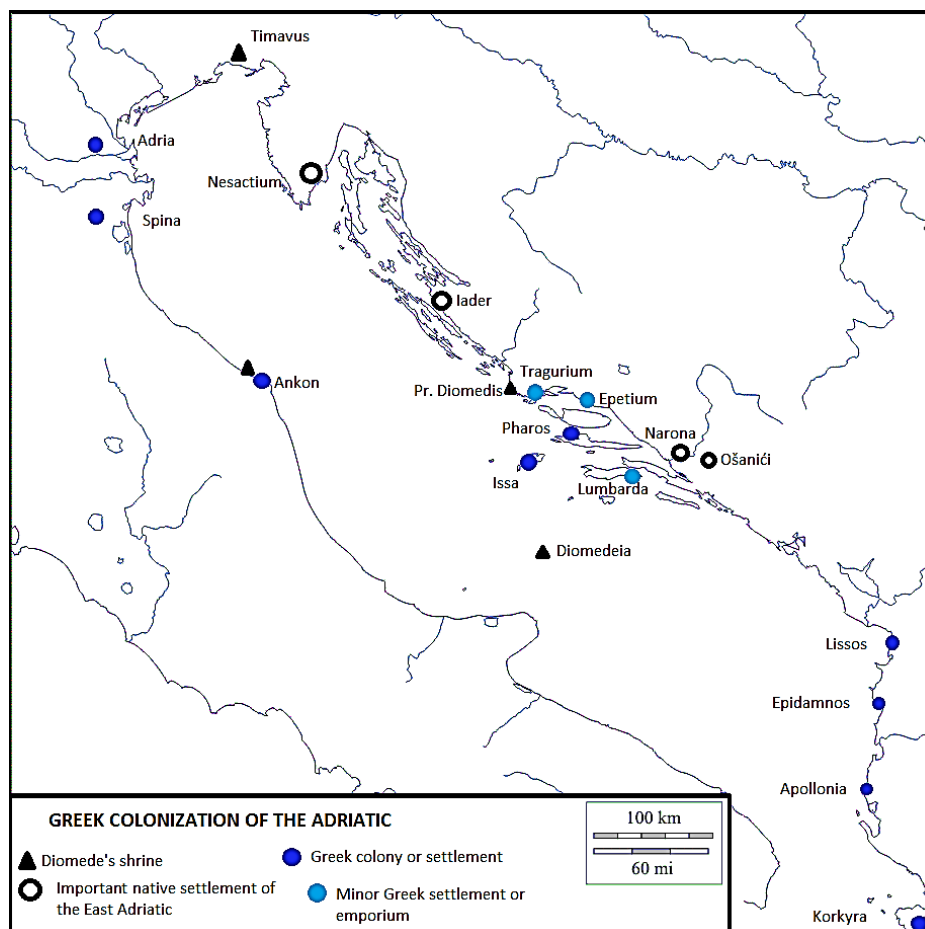

Fig 5. - Greeks in the Adriatic

After the demise of Dionysios' Adriatic empire around the mid- 4th century, the Adriatic Greeks began 'grim days', marked by uncertainty and rise of privateering and piracy.[46] It seems that Liburnians and Ethruscans tried to conduct active policy once again.[47] Around 325 A.D. Athens tried to found a colony in the Adriatic, an unsuccessful endeavour. A good impression about the nature of this aborted colonisation can be made by examining the epigraphic evidence found in Piraeus that suggests a strong military mark of the entire enterprise. In the texts, it is mentioned that shipyard supervisors are out to provide ships and equipment for the trierarchs so that the colonists can defend themselves against the Ethruscans.[48]

However, it seems that on the long run, this turbulent period after the fall of the Syracusian hegemony was merely an interlude. The beginning of the Hellenistic

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[45] M. Zaninović (1988) 51. Most scholars beleved that, judging by tropeum with the inscription found on Hvar, local Illyrians were joined by the Liburnians from Iader.

[46] S. Čače (2005) 173.

[47] S. Čače dates Liburnian unsuccessful attack on Hvar in this period (after 357.) and not earlier as has sugested before (see futnote no.45.) S. Čače (1994) 48.

[48] R. Osborne (1998) 257.-258.

period was marked by trade and cooperation between Greeks, from the Dalmatian Islands,native Illyrians, and theLiburnians. The loss of a powerful protector, such was Syracusa on the Greek side, and the loss of influence in the western Adriatic coast caused by Ethruscans, Greeks and (later) Celts for the Liburnians, somehow pushed these conflicted polities into mutual cooperation. Analysis of the archaeological material in Croatia, Bosnia, and Herzegovina show that Dalmatian Greeks had established strong trade links with these communities by the 4th century and, that from that time, trade only expanded.[49] Economic and population growth, as well as trade demands, likely moved Issa towards founding two settlements on nearby land and a colony of its own on island Korčula, as seen fromLumbard Psephisma.[50]

Artefacts found in a Diomedes' shrine on Cape Ploča suggest that from 3rd century, local trade routes were already successfully incorporated in broader trade network of the Eastern Mediterranean.[51]

With context explained, the question surrounding the trirems mentioned in Chapter 24 of Periplus can be answered. The author indicates that it is possible to navigate with a trade boat and a trireme via the Naron river about 20 km upstream. It is sound to assume that this information comes from empirical knowledge, maybe copied by periplus' author from some local maritime pilot, i.e. triremes really navigated into Naro river. The reason that the Greek ships would be interested in sailing into this river is, above all, commercial – it has been observed that the Corinthians were the first to establish regular trade links with this particular region. So why was it necessary to send triremes?

Only two answers are plausible. The triremes were sent there as part of some military or trade mission. Contrary to common opinion, galleys were used from ancient until the modern times as trade boats, as well as warships, especially in situations when speed was more essential than cargo capacity. We can distinguish several types of these ships, and while some of them were also used as warships, they cannot be associated with triremes by construction, nor by any other feature.[52] The most problematic thing is the fact that the overall majority of evidence of these trade galleys was from Hellenistic or post-Hellenistic age, and in the earlier periods, triremes had been exclusively described as warships – so with great probability the thesis of merchant triremes in Naron can be ruled out.

By marking Pseudo-Skylax's triremes as warships, their assignments depends on a political position of their owner in the designated time-span.

In order to find out to which political entity triremes belonged to, events much be put in chronological order. Corinthians, of all the Greeks, first started to build triremes in the 7th century, yet these ships began to be prevalent in the early 5th century. This would mean that mentioned triremes were probably not Corinthian and

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[49] L. Šešelj (2009) 388., 479., 516. S. Čače (2005) 178.
[50] M. Solarić, N. Solarić (2009) 78. – 85.
[51] L. Šešelj (2012) 346.
[52] L. Casson (1995.) 117. – 124.

rather Corcyrian, or Syracusian, if Pseudo-Skylax used newer data.[53] Smaller Greek colonies established at that time were dependent on the help of the Syracusian navy during the conflict with local Illyrians and, they later developed their own fleets (we know that Issa assisted Rome in Second Macedonian war with 30 warships), these vessels were described by literary sources as lembi. Also, these events fall out of the time-span for over a century.[54]

All polities mentioned above are Greek, but can it be assumed that there were non-Greek trireme users? According to the literally sources, various warship types were not a monopoly of any single state or city. Similar as today, ship designs were borrowed and copied, so could these triremes have belonged to local Liburnians or Ethruscans? It is plausible but it cannot be proved. Boats used by Illyrians and Liburnians are, by the ancient sources, referred as lembi and liburnas and, although data about their construction is quite sparce, it seems that those vessels were quite different from triremes.[55]

Corinthians, Corcyrians, Syracusians, Greeks from Issa and all other potential owners of discussed triremes could have used them in a similar manner – as a main 'workhorse' in their fleets charged with an assignment of maintaining local or more universal thalassocracy, and as part of that mission, as an escort for commercial shipping (in our case heading to Narona emporium) in the times of trouble.

In the end of this article we will try to say few words about proposed Liburnian thalassocracy. The main argument against it is the fact that it should have commenced in the beginning of the iron age. According to the literally sources, proposed Liburnian thalassocracy should have started to deteriorate in 8th century (with the loss of Corcyra to Corinth). From then, the process should have continued with the expansion of Ethruscans, Corcyrian hegemony over the central Dalmatia and finally, by Dionysios' campaigns in the Adriatic.[56]

So, in order to see is it possible for Iron Age chiefdom(s) to achieve something of that magnitude we need to address two main problems:

1) It must be examined if it was possible to achieve something similar to thalassocracy in the beginning of the Iron Age, and;

2) Liburnian society must be evaluated in order to assess if it was capable of doing such a thing

It is easier to give an answer to the second question. Prehistoric Liburnia is one of the most excavated regions of present day Croatia and, after more than a century of archaeological exploration, it is possible to give a rough outline of local development. It seems that during first Iron Age (from 9. - 5. Century) there were at least three main types of local communities – first was characterised by (protourban) agglomeration which occupied more than four hectares, that we could probably describe as oppidum,

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[53] Except these most likely candidates, as posible owners of those warships we can also include Athens whic had significant comercial interests in this region.
[54] L. Šešelj (2009) 636.
[55] D. Džino (2003) 19 – 36.
[56] M. Zaninović (1988) 51 – 2.

and attached farmhouses. Second was composed of main oppida and a number scattered smaller fortified settlements (type characteristic for Kvarner aerie) .Thethird type of community was made of several smaller hilforts. After 5th century the only type of community left was that composed of 'city' with adjoined farmhouses. Large oppida with territory of 100 km2 such as Asseria or Varvaria dominated the aerie with Iader as a hegemon, with territory of over 200 km2.[57] All of this data, combined with scares Greek and Roman literally sources indicates that Liburnia was one of the most developed regions on the east Adriatic coast.
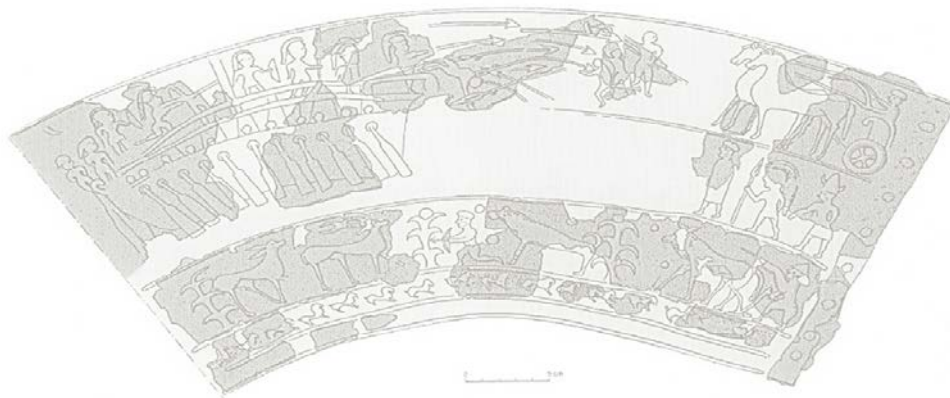

Fig 6. – Segment of situla from Nesactium depicting naval battle (K. Mihović *et all*., 2001.)

In order to give answer on the first question, thalassocracy must be defined. By examining the Thucydides' 'thalassocratic list', his main goal of any thalassocracy was accumulation of wealth. It is also observed that Thucydides is sceptical about the capabilities of earlier Greek societies to conduct thalassocracy in a manner of his age. Philip de Souza suggested that the main requirement for establishing thalassocracy was a public navy – where ships are property of polis and not the individuals, so all pre 6th-century thalassocraties should be seen as a construction of later historians.[58] This definition does not leave a lot of space for manoeuvre, but just as Thucydides did, the search for the goal of thalassocracy should be concentrated on, rather than preoccupation with instruments for achieving this goal. Earlier generations of archaeologists imagined Liburnian thalassocracy as a stream of migrations by the Liburnians over then Adritic.[59] Yet, examination of written sources suggests that we are dealing with only limited migrations (if any) and that the main occupation of Liburnian 'thalassocrats' is ruling over cities (Epidamno, Truentum), islands (Ladesta, Issa, Pharos, Corcyra) and of course - piracy – in short accumulation of wealth. We can also use a anthropological 'rule' that cultures on similar stages of development behave similar. There is a number of societies and groups quite more primitive then

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[57] S. Čače (2006) 68.
[58] P. De Souza (1998) 312.
[59] Š. Batović (1987) 348.

the Iron Age Liburnians that managed to achieve something similar to thalassocracy in broad sense of that world. The best example could be so called Lasakau sea warriors from Fiji, that managed to impose hegemony over certain parts of Fiji archipelagos in the 18th century. That hegemony was not based (only) on piracy but rather on complicated relations between warriors from Bau and their vassals and allies on other islands.[60]

All of this considered, it can be concluded that sparse literary evidence from classical sources tell the forgotten story about an interesting episode of maritime history of the Adriatic, one that a 'barbarian' community of 'others' had and then lost the 'upper hand'.

D. S.

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[60] J. Calvert (1858)

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