

Greek, Latin and Palaeo-Balkan Languages in Contact

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Abstract

Focusing on the area of Danubian provinces of Roman Empire, this paper aims at touching upon linguistic diversity and language change in north-western Balkans in Roman epoch. Using epigraphic evidence, it will address the questions of the impact of the spread of Greek and Latin in this area, which led to a gradual extinction of the native, Palaeo-Balkan languages. In Antiquity, linguistic situation in this area was extremely complex: a great variety of languages came into close mutual contact and in contact with Greek and Latin, which became dominant. These Palaeo-Balkan languages are relict languages, and they are known almost exclusively through the onomastics recorded in Latin and Greek inscriptions and through rare glosses, i.e. by the time they came to be documented, their speakers were already Romanized or Hellenized. Most of the documents that record native onomastics are at the same time testaments of Romanization/Hellenization; however, these inscriptions bear witness that the native population preserved the memory of their ethnic and linguistic background.

Key Words – Illyricum; Palaeo-Balkan languages; onomastics; anthroponymy; native population; Romanization

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In Antiquity, the linguistic situation in Balkans was extremely complex. A great variety of languages came into close mutual contact and in contact with Greek and Latin, which became dominant and led to the gradual extinction of these languages; the result is that we are generally ill-informed about these Palaeo-Balkan languages. All Palaeo-Balkan languages: pre-Greek, the Thracian and Daco-Moesian complexes, Macedonian, Paeonian, Phrygian, the Illyrian complex, are relict languages; they are known almost exclusively through the personal names recorded in Latin and Greek inscriptions, through toponymy and through rare glosses. The present paper focuses on the north-western Balkans, more precisely, on the Roman province of Illyricum, which was established under Augustus, and subsequently divided into two provinces, Dalmatia and Pannonia, after the suppression of the Great Dalmato-Pannonian revolt in 9 A.D. (ALFÖLDY 1965; WILKES 1969).

This paper will address two topics: 1) mutual contacts between native languages in this area and the outcomes of their contact with Greek and, to a much greater extent, with Latin, and 2) the ethnic and linguistic situation produced by population shifts in pre-

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Roman times and by the systematic displacement of native population by the Roman government and the impact of Romanization on native languages and naming practices.

Despite the confusion and frequent misuse in modern scholarship produced mostly by the now abandoned ‘Pan-Illyrian theories’, the terms ‘Illyricum’ and ‘Illyrian’ had exclusively administrative meaning in the writings of ancient authors¹. Therefore it is wrong to consider the whole area of this Roman province that occupied a vast area from the Adriatic to the Danube as a uniform ‘Illyrian’ linguistic area (KRONASSER 1965; KATIČIĆ 1976; LOMA 2002-2003). Earlier Greek geographers, such as Hecataeus, Pseudo Scylax, Pseudo Scymnos, and Eratosthenes, distinguish clearly between the Illyrians, the Liburnians and other indigenous tribes². Later authors were also aware of the differences between these peoples, as well as of the fact that the term came to encompass some of the peoples who are not the Illyrians; that is, it became a political and geographical term rather than an ethnic designation³. The ethnic name ‘Illyrians’ can be only applied to the peoples in southern coastal regions. They came in early contact with Greeks and this influence on Illyrian peoples lasted from fifth century, when Greeks established first coastal and insular emporia and cities, up until the Romans entered the political scene on the eastern Adriatic coast. Based on the extant evidence, it is very difficult to assess the impact of Greek on Illyrian, although we have a general notion that the economic, cultural and language contact was intensive in Hellenistic period: for example, the Illyrian cities Scodra, Lissos, Rhizon and among some other Illyrian communities, the Daorsi and the Labeatae all minted coins in Greek. Greek influence from their Adriatic colonies did not penetrate far inland and eventually it was completely suppressed by the strengthening of Roman influence in the region, save for the southernmost parts of the Illyrian area, which were Hellenized. In the second half of first century Pliny the Elder states that the memory of these Greek cities is fading: «*multorum Graeciae oppidorum deficiens memoria*». It is with the establishment of Roman protectorate on the territory of Illyrian kingdom, and with the expansion of the Roman influence that the term was expanding, finally, to give the name to the entire province from the Adriatic to the Danube that was created in the times of Augustus, and subsequently divided in two provinces, Dalmatia and Pannonia.

To return to the ethnic divisions in the province, greater population shifts in this area were caused by the Celtic invasion of the Balkans in 279 B.C. Most probably the same movement pushed Pannonian tribes and the Delmatae to the south. The Delmatae, who were newcomers to the Adriatic coast, drove the Liburnians from the left bank of Krka, entered in an aggressive conflict with Illyrian peoples and began to threaten Greek settlements on the coastline and islands. These events prompted Issa to seek the intervention of Rome.

¹ E.g. Cass. Dio LV 32.4; Vell. Pat. II 115.1; 4; cfr. Strab. VII 5.3.

² E.g. Pseudo-Scylax (c. 21–26): Λιβουρνοί, Ἰλλυριοί, Ἰεραστάμναι, Βουλινοί, Ὑλλοι, Νεστοί, Μανιοί, Αὐταριάται, Ἐγγελεῖς, Ταυλαντίοι. Pseudo-Scymnos (394): Ἴσμενοι, Μέντορες; (403–404): Πελαγόνοι, Λιβουρνοί, Βουλινοί, Ὑλλοι, Ἰλλυριοί.

³ E.g. Strab. VII 5.3: ἔθνη δ’ ἐστὶ τῶν Παννονίων Βρεῦκοι καὶ Ἀνδιζήτιοι καὶ Διτίωνες καὶ Πειροῦσται καὶ Μαζαῖοι καὶ Δαισιτιάται, ὧν Βάτων ἡγεμών, καὶ ἄλλα ἀσημότερα μικρά, ἃ διατείνει μέχρι Δαλματίας σχεδὸν δέ τι καὶ Ἀρδιαίων, ἰόντι πρὸς νότον. ἅπανα δ’ ἢ ἀπὸ τοῦ μυχοῦ τοῦ Ἀδρίου παρήκουσα ὄρεινῃ μέχρι τοῦ Ῥιζονικοῦ κόλπου καὶ τῆς Ἀρδιαίων γῆς Ἰλλυρικὴ ἐστὶ, μεταξὺ πίπτουσα τῆς τε θαλάσσης καὶ τῶν Παννονίων ἐθνῶν. Plin. *NH* III 142: *gens Liburnorum [...] pars eius fuere Mentores, Himani, Encheleae, Bulini et quos Callimachus Peucetios appellat.*

Modern studies of native languages in Illyricum apply the method of *onomastic systems*, elaborated in the works of the linguist Radoslav Katičić (KATIČIĆ 1963, 1964a, 1965, 1976), who applied Jürgen Untermann's method of onomastic systems or *Namengebiete* on the territory of Illyricum. This method does not rely on etymologies of particular names considered to be 'Illyrian', which gave no promising results in previous scholarship, but on the exclusive geographical distribution of characteristic names.

Katičić distinguishes four major anthroponymic systems or regions (*Namengebiete*) in the province:

1. Illyrian or South-Eastern group
2. Delmato-Pannonian
3. North-Adriatic
4. Noric

These onomastic systems could roughly be connected to four large ethnic groups:

1. Illyrians — *Illyrii proprie dicti*, the territory of former Illyrian kingdom.

Characteristic personal names (KATIČIĆ 1976: 179-180): *Annaeus, Bardylis, Kalas, Cilles, Clevatus, Epicadus/Επίκαδος, Etleva, Etuta, Gentius/Γένθιος*⁴, *Glavus, Grabon, Monunius, Pinnes, Plassus, Pleuratus, Skerdilaidas/Σκερδιλαΐδας, Temus, Teutana, Τευταία, Verzo, Zanatis.*

2. The second group is connected to the Pannonian tribes including the Delmatae who, judging by their anthroponymy, settled compactly in the middle Sava valley, the present-day Bosnia and the interior of Dalmatia.

Characteristic names are (KATIČIĆ 1976: 180): *Anna, Andes, Aplis, Aplo, Apludus, Baezus, Baezo, Baracio, Barcinus, Baurea, Bennus, Beuzas, Buzetius, Biso, Bubant-, Carpius, Carvius, Cato, Cursulavia, Dasas, Dasant-, Dasto, Diteius, Dito, Gresa, Lavius, Lavo, Paius, Paio, Panes, Panico, Pant-, Panto, Pinent-, Pladomenus, Plares, Platino, Prevo, Samuntius, Samuntio, Scaeva, Scenobarbus, Scenocalus, Seius, Seio, Stataria, Staticus, Suttis, Teitimos, Testo, Tizius, Tritanus, Tritano, Tritaneria, Tudania, Varro, Vendes, Vendo.*

3. To the third group, North-Adriatic, belong the Liburnians, people cognate to the Istrians and Venetic population, who occupied the coastal stretch between the river Krka to Istria and confines of Italy.

Characteristic personal names are (KATIČIĆ 1976: 179): *Aetor, Aplus, Ceunus, Darmocus, Oeplus, Oia, Opiavus, Opia, Op/us, Oplica, Raecus, Suioca, Vadicus, Vescleves, Veturia, Viniocus, Vo/so, Voltissa.*

4. The fourth group, represented by Celtic anthroponymy of the Norican type is dominant in the Pannonian plain, along the Danube and in the regions north of the Drava river and in regions adjacent to Noricum (tribes of the *Latobici, Varciani, Boi, Hercuniates*).

Characteristic names are (KATIČIĆ 1976: 182): *Adnamatus, Assedomarus, Ato, Auscus, Bardo, Bella, Boniatus, Calendinus, Catullus, Comatus, Couso, Deuso, Diastumarus,*

⁴ The native personal name *Gentius* is usually treated as an Illyrian name. However, it may be a Celtic element, see EICHNER (2004: 93, 114).

Dubna, Eppius, Iantumarus, Leucimarus, Loucita, Magemarus, Maro, Medus, Mogio, Nemeto, Nertomarus, Nonnus, Nundinus, Ressatus, Secconius, Suadra, Tatucus, Titio, Trogimarus, Tutor, Vepo, Vindo.

A minor independent anthroponymic group is to be found in the Ig (KATIČIĆ 1968, 1976), with a significant repertory of unique personal names, closely affiliated with the North-Adriatic system and a strong component of Celtic names, which do not belong to the Norican type, but names that have attestations in Gaul and western Celtic regions, suggesting an older Celtic substrate. Non-Noric Celtic names (KATIČIĆ 1968, 1976: 182-183): *Aiconus, Broccus, Ecco, Emo, Eppo, Exouna, Moiota, Mosso, Otto, Ovis, Secco, Talsus, Tetta*. Names belonging to the original component cognate to the North-Adriatic names: *Bucca, Buccicu, Bucu, Buccio, Buccirega; Enna, Ennia, Enno, Enico, Enignus, Eninna; Laso, Lasaiu, Lascontia, Voltanis, Voltarenis, Voltaron-, Voltaronitia, Voltarotia, Voltia, Voltilius, Voltognas, Voltrex, Voltuparis.*

The difficulties in applying Untermann's and Katičić's elaborate method of *Namengebiete* arose with the attempt to connect native personal names with particular tribes (ALFÖLDY 1964a) or, to be more precise, with particular tribal communities – *civitates peregrinae*, since the most of the material dates well after the establishment of the Roman provincial government (at least a century). We have evidence on the existence of about 50 peregrine, tribal communities in the province Illyricum, formed after at least two organizational phases. Recent re-examination of the source material on the peregrine communities in Illyricum has proven that it is essential that the linguistic criteria be met first in employing the results of onomastic studies to determine ethnic background of population. If these criteria are met, it really comes down to these four groups as determined by Katičić, and to their mutual contacts. Secondly, it is important to make sharp distinction between tribes as they were before the Roman conquest and *civitates peregrinae*, which were established – as it turns out – quite loosely on ethnic bases. In the majority of cases, these communities represent Roman political entities, which were ethnically heterogeneous (GRBIĆ 2014).

With the establishment of peregrine *civitates*, and again, in their reorganization after the Great Dalmato-Pannonian rebellion in 9 A.D., there was a tendency to create larger territorial units by joining several disbanded autochthonous ethnic groups into a larger administrative unit on the one hand, while on the other in some places we can clearly observe a fragmentation of larger ethnic units into smaller communities. Ethnic and tribal borders did not have to serve as the chief parameter in the division of the provincial land. In consolidating the provinces, one of the priorities of the Roman administration was to organize local populations, that is, to form communities, to delimit the territories and impose taxes. In defining borders, just as in other considerations, Roman government was led by political and geostrategic reasons of a practical nature. Generally, the Romans tended to establish a system that would be as efficient as possible and would stay vital for as long as possible, which often entailed artificial ethnic divisions, depending on local circumstances. Thus, although native population was organized based on a tribal structure, from the moment Roman rule was established they ceased being independent tribes and became *de facto* Roman administrative units. Most of these tribal communities were created by a political intervention of the Roman administration. Some tribal structures appear only after the creation of the Roman province: e.g. *Docleatae* are named after the centre *Doclea*, *Colapiani* after the river *Colapis*, *Cornacates* after the *civitas* centre *Cornacum*, and so on (GRBIĆ 2014).

Native onomastics in epigraphic records testifies to lively ethnic and linguistic contacts and sheds light on how the migrations influenced ethnic and linguistic

circumstances in the region. In some places the process of pacification went ahead smoothly, while in some cases Romans had to apply severe measures, such as confiscating tribal lands, compulsory recruitment, forced labour, displacements of the population. The treatment varied upon the proven loyalty to Rome. Concerning systematic, forced displacement of native peoples, one can point to the example of the dislocation of the *Ardiaei*⁵, belonging to a period earlier than the one discussed here. According to the testimony of Strabo and Pliny the Elder, the population of this tribe was reduced and moved into the interior by Romans, where they were forced to cultivate infertile soil. During the Principate, this once powerful Illyrian tribe, as Pliny (*NH* III 143) states «*populatores quondam Italiae*», formed a rather minuscule peregrine community whose territory in this period is, furthermore, exceedingly difficult to locate.

In the first century, Romans resettled several native communities of the Delmatae from the coastal hinterland into the mining districts in the eastern part of the province. These dislocations produced quite an interesting ethnic and linguistic situation. Onomastic, anthroponymic as well as toponymic evidence reflects those displacements quite well. For example, a *civitas* of *Siculotae* in the extreme east of Dalmatia is named after the group of the Delmatae resettled from *Siculi*, near Salona, where the veterans were settled later. The settlement, which was later to become a *municipium*, in the mining district around the modern town of Pljevlja (today NE Montenegro), was named *Splonum* after a *castellum* of the Delmatian *Splauon*, situated somewhere in the hinterland of Salona (LOMA 2002; LOMA 2003-2004: 36). Rich anthroponymic inventory of eastern Dalmatia reveals a mixture of Celtic and Delmato-Pannonian names. A Celtic component is usually attributed to the Celtic *Scordisci* while the Dalmatian naming belongs to the population resettled there in the first century from the coastal hinterland of Salona by the Roman government (ALFÖLDY 1964a: 99-102; LOMA 2003-2004). Epigraphic records show that anthroponyms of both onomastic systems are well represented in some communities. For example, in the anthroponymic inventory of the *civitas* of *Narensii* there are attestations of Delmato-Pannonian names: *Bato*, *Carvus*, *Dazas*, *Pinnes*, *Venetus*, and of Celtic names: *Boio*, *Bricussa*, *Iacus*, *Laiscus*, *Mallaius*, *Mascelio*, *Mandeta*, *Maca*, *Posaulio*, *Temus*, *Tattuia*. Sometimes names belonging to Dalmatian and Celtic onomastic systems respectively are represented within single families. The rich epigraphic material from *Municipium Splonistarum*, a significant town in eastern Dalmatia, after the careful analysis of Svetlana Loma (LOMA 2003-2004), shows the same situation: the presence of personal names characteristic for the tribe of the Delmatae that belong to the newcomers from the Dalmatian coastal hinterland and a strong Celtic component, belonging to the natives that came there earlier.

These names are all preserved in Latin inscriptions. Many of them date from the third century, after the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, which shows that while being exposed to Romanization, these people preserved well the memory of their ethnic background by keeping indigenous onomastics within the Roman name formula.

The recently re-examined case of the ethnic structure of the peregrine community of the Azali shows the need for caution when drawing conclusions from onomastic evidence and highlights the importance of having the correct reading of inscriptions and an onomastic corpus which is up to date (GRBIĆ 2013; GRBIĆ 2014).

The Azali were native people in northern Pannonia, organized into a large *civitas peregrina* in Roman times. Based on the anthroponymic inventory, in previous scholarship these Azali have been considered to be of Pannonian origin ('Illyrian'), and

⁵ Plin. *NH* III 143; Strab. VII 5.6; App. *Ill.* 10; Liv. *Epit.* LVI 6.

that the tribe, positioned between the Celtic tribes of the Boii and the Eravisci, represents a 'south Pannonian linguistic island in northern Pannonia'. Building on this assumption, it has been suggested that this tribe must have been resettled to the north of the Sava valley (the south of the Roman province of Pannonia) by Tiberius (MÓCSY 1968, 1974). However, the re-examination of the onomastic inventory that has increased thanks to recent epigraphic findings has shown that this hypothesis is no longer tenable. Namely, most of the Pannonian names that can be positively attributed to this *civitas* are the most characteristic and the most popular Dalmato-Pannonian names which have a very broad geographical distribution and a very high frequency. On the other hand, the number of Celtic names represented in this inventory is not only much greater than it was previously thought, but it makes 80% of all attested non-Roman personal names (GRBIĆ 2013).

a) Epigraphically attested Pannonian names: *Anna*; *Bato*; *Munnus*; *Prosostus*, *Breucus*; *Dasas* (*Dasent-*)/*Dasius*; *Dasmenus*; *Liccaius*.

b) Epigraphically attested Celtic Names: *Aicca*; *Atta/Atto*; *Busturo*; *Cuso*; *Cot[---]*; *Gallunus*; *Lucca*; *Lucius* (?); *Matena*; *Nivio*; *Racio*; *Ruma*; *Sibulla*; *Siusius*; *Solva*; *Talalnus*; *Tutula*; *Vivenia*; *Verbacius*; *Aturo*; *Atresus*; *Blecissa*; *Busturo*; *Butto*; *Camurius*; *Carmio*; *Couco*; *Dervonia*; *Ioparus*; *Lasc(i?)us*; *Lucius*; *Madena*; *Masclenia*; *Ner{o}tomarus*; *Pusinnio*; *Sammo*; *Sibulla*; *Sisiu*; *Trasanu(s?)*; *Troucetimarus*; *Urbacius*; *Vanno*; *Vinedia*.

Such ratio consequently changes not only our notions about the ethnic and linguistic situation in this area, but also our understanding of historical and political realities in the province.

As in some other regions, here one can also find examples of both Pannonian and Celtic names being represented within a single family: for example, an inscription commemorates a person *Prosostus Couconis f.* and his father *Couco Bleciss(a)e f.* (AE 1997: 1262). *Prosostus* is a characteristic Pannonian name, while the other two are Celtic. On the other hand, in the neighbouring *civitas* of *Eravisci*, that is unquestionably considered to be Celtic, there are similar occurrences of Pannonian names, although their number is smaller than in the case of their neighbours, the previously discussed community of the Azali. Most probably, the population of this community was aggregated in an administrative unit in Roman times, and did not represent an ethnic entity before that. Their ethnic name is most likely derived from the toponym of the *civitas* centre, as in the case of some other communities. The small *civitas* of *Scordisci*, named after the Celtic tribe – the most dominant of Balkan Celts enclosed a mixture of Celtic and Pannonian population. Such is also the case the *Amantini*, and probably the *Andizetes*, and probably the case of the most of these 50 or more tribal communities (GRBIĆ 2014).

As Katičić emphasizes, onomastic systems are not languages, and we cannot draw direct conclusions about the language upon them (KATIČIĆ 1976). Did Celts in some regions switch to *lingua Pannonica*? To what extent were Pannonian and Illyrian languages cognate? We could only try to answer these questions with an educated guess.

On the positive side, the epigraphic documents that record the native onomastics, while testifying about the Romanization of natives, at the same time bear witness to the preservation of their native ethnic origin and language. We can follow changes and continuity in onomastic formulae fairly well, first under the influence of Greek, and later

of Latin and observe the mechanisms by which native population adopted the Roman naming practices.

Here is a brief survey of development in onomastic formulae as captured in our sources, offering several, randomly chosen examples for each case:

1) *Single name*

Γένθιος
Πλευρῶτος
Σκερδιλαΐδας
Munnius et Gentius, *CIL III*: 8437
Buo (-onis f.), *CIL III*; 2753

2) *Patronymic in genitive with or without Latin filiation marker*

a) *Without filiation marker:*

Μάθιος Πυθέο, *SEG 45*: 703
Μεδεστις Πλατουρίου, *SEG 38*: 572
Teuta Vietis, *ILJug*: 1591
Platinonis Verzonis, *CIL III*: 1271
Dasa Suttinis, *CIL III*: 1262

b) *With Latin filiation marker:*

Calus Epicadi f(ilius), *princeps civitatis Docl(e)atium AE 1910*: 101
Bato Liccai f(ilius), *ILJug*: 1591
Tritano Lavi f(ilia), *CIL III*: 2792
Tattaris Veneti filius, *CIL III*: 12800
Temeia Glavi f(ilia), *AE 1910*: 100

3) *Name + 'surname'*

Scenobarbus Tizius, *CIL III*: 2775
Apludus Staticus, *CIL III*: 2773
Sextus Platurius, *CIL III*: 15055
Plator Carvius Batonis, *ILJug*: 1807
Pladomenus Sera Turi f(ilius), *CIL III*: 2787
Sextus Statinius Aplinis f(ilius), *CIL III*: 2790
Aplo Darmoca Turi f(ilia), *CIL III*: 2779
Baezo Cursulavia Lavi f(ilia), *CIL III*: 14321, 1
Vendo Tritaneria Pinsi f(ilia), *CIL III*: 2796
Turo Stataria Turi f(ilia), *ILJug*: 2787

We can follow the dynamics of adoption of the Roman onomastic formula – *tria nomina* that went hand in hand with the spread of Roman citizenship. It was most common practice that natives preserve their native name as a *cognomen* within the Roman name formula.

For example:

T. F(lavius) Valens Varron(is) f. princeps Desitiati(um), *ILJug*: 1582
T. Flavius Blodi f. Plassus, aed(ilis), IIII vir iure dicundo Naronae, *ILJug*: 117

P. Aelius Pladomenus Carvianus, [praefectus] civitatium [Del]m[atarum] praef(ectus) i(ure) d(icundo) m(unicipi) Aureli S[p]lo(nistarum), Loma (1997: 197, no. 2) = AE (1998: 102)

Cobromarus Tosiae f. princ(eps) Boioru<m> AE (2004: 89), also attested as T. Flavius Cobromarus, Polaschek, Seracsin 1937: 35, 58)

M. Ulpius Gravi f(ilio) Bato Sirmien(sis), AE (2010: 1857).

qui et

M. Baebio Celeri qui et Bato Dazantis f(ilio) Delma(tae) ... (AE 1992: 101)

C. Ravonius Celer qui et Bato Scenobarbi ... (CIL X: 3618)

Inscriptions, many of which date after the *Constitutio Antoniniana* show continuity in using native languages and native personal names as *cognomina*.

For example:

Aur. Plares, CIL III: 14605

Aurelia Panto, CIL III: 8317

Aur(elia) Venuco, AE (1980: 698)

Aurelia Madussa, ILJug: 1736

Regarding the conclusions that can be drawn from the extant sources about the character of native languages of the north-western Balkans, they are mostly negative. In this vast area, from the Adriatic to the Danube, the impact of Roman culture and the urban development greatly varied and the tempo was dictated by somewhat harsh realities of the life of provincial population, which was principally employed for the labour in provincial ore-mining districts and for the recruitment for auxiliary units. In the provinces established by the division of Illyricum, the creation of *municipia* did not inevitably cause the disbanding of the peregrine communities. The changes brought on by 'Romanization' were usually slow to come, especially in places where a proper urban setting was lacking and where there was no greater external influence. Epigraphic findings of a more recent date (mainly Roman military diplomas, which are official documents that, furthermore, allow reliable dating) show that majority of native communities, created in the Augustan epoch continued to exist after the founding of Roman towns on their territories or in their immediate vicinity. The native population lived in tribal structures until the Late Antiquity and no doubt spoke in native languages on whose character it is very difficult to judge. 'Romanness' and the dominance of Latin as the only existing form of literacy led to their gradual extinction. On the other side of the coin, the adoption of epigraphic habit was the only mechanism through which all information about them, however scarce, came down to us.

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