

PRE-ROMAN AND ROMAN BURNUM. SOME REMARKS, AND NEW EVIDENCE OF THE AUXILIARY FORT AT ČUČEVO

Abstract: Author discusses several subjects concerning pre-Roman and Roman Burnum (Dalmatia). Earlier authors presumed that the main centre of the Liburnian Burnistae should be located on Gradina in Puljani, a pre-Roman promontory fort located on the left bank of the river Krka. However, since Pliny the Elder mentions that river Krka forms a border between the Liburni and the Delmatae, it would be strange that the Liburnian civitas would place its centre on a promontory fort located on Delmataan side of the river. By surveying the wider landscape of the Liburnian frontier, the author argues that the centre of the Liburnian Burnistae should be located at Radučka glavica, the most dominant hillfort in the area of Kistanjska Bukovica. In the second part of the paper, the author reveals the existence of a Roman auxiliary fort at Čučevo, which is – so far – the fourth known auxiliary fort located on the right bank of the river Krka.

Keywords: Burnum, Radučka glavica, river Krka, auxiliary fort, Čučevo

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INTRODUCTION

After the signing of the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 and 1700, three powers – the Venetian Republic, the Habsburg Monarchy, and the Ottoman Empire – agreed to set a border between their territories. Consequently, they fixed a spot in the landscape which would determine the so-called *triplex confinium* (“triple border”; in Croatian: “tromeda”) – a place on the ground which merges all of the borders in one point.¹ The triple border was fixed on a peak, then known as “Medviđa glavica” on Debelo brdo between Knin and Oton; and was marked by a stone tumulus (in Croatian: “gomila”, “humka”), which was modelled a bit more carefully in comparison with other tumuli on the border between the three².

Today, if one searches the topographic maps of Debelo brdo between Knin and Oton, he would not find the peak named “Medviđa glavica” (literarily meaning “bear’s head”); and this is only because this peak is today known by the name “Medijak” – which could be literally translated as a “boundary marker”. Even today, the stone tumulus can be seen on aerial photographs, but it is less known that the Medijak peak is actually a pre-Roman enclosure, which was most likely connected with a hillfort situated on “Gradina” in Žagrović, approximately 900 meters to the east (Fig. 1).

The setting of a *triplex confinium* on a pre-Roman enclosure at Medijak

¹ SLUKAN 2001, 67.

² KOVAČEVIĆ 1973, 107.



Fig. 1. The pre-Roman enclosure of Medijak and the hillfort (Gradina) in Žagrović (source: Google Earth)

was not a case of coincidence, at least not in broader terms, since the wider area of Knin is a natural frontier between three different geographic entities – Dalmatia, Lika, and Bosnia; which was likewise the case even in pre-Roman times. However, in the pre-Roman era, this area was not a frontier between the three, but actually between the four different ethnicities of pre-Roman Illyricum – the Delmatae, Liburni, Iapodes, and Ditiones. Roughly speaking, the Delmatae occupied the hinterland of today's Central Dalmatia, as well as the great karst fields of Zadinarje (Duvanjsko, Livanjsko, and probably Glamočko polje);³ the Liburni occupied the territory of Northern Dalmatia, including the coastal line of Hrvatsko Primorje – all the way to the river Raša in today's Istria;⁴ Iapodes dwelled in today's Lika, including its immediate surroundings (the Pounje region, Ogulinsko-plašćanska udolina, and Gorski Kotar);⁵ while Ditiones most probably occupied the valley of the river Butišnica, as well as the territory of Plavno and Grahovsko polje.⁶

Speaking on the geographical outline of the wider *triplex confinium* area, it must be noted that the separation, just as the binding of these areas, was primarily outlined by the river flows of Cetina, Krka, Zrmanja, and Una. It is hard to detect all of the borders of these ethnic groups, which apparently progressed during the ages, but it is obvious that these rivers formed some sort of a natural guideline for setting up the borders between the four. According to Pliny the Elder, the river Krka formed a border between the Liburni and the Delmatae (Plin. *HN* 3.139; 3.141), and even today, the border between Northern and Central Dalmatia is

set on the same river. Likewise, river Zrmanja forms a natural border between Lika and Northern Dalmatia. However, this border is not formed by the flow, but by the actual source of the river Zrmanja, which – tightened between the slopes of Kom and Poštak – forms a natural barrier between Lika and Northern Dalmatia. On the other hand, its valley – on the same spot – forms a natural connection between the two. It is not certain in which way the rivers Una and Cetina formed a boundary between pre-Roman ethnicities of Illyricum, but it is certain that the valleys of these rivers eventually draw the people on the same spot. The bottleneck, of course, was to be found on the wider area of the *triplex confinium*.

I find these remarks essential for understanding the Roman presence in the area of Burnum, since it is obvious that the Romans, as pragmatic as they were, used the earlier frontier-system between these communities, simply adapting it to their own model. Hence, in order to understand the logic behind the Roman military garrison situated on the river Krka,⁷ one must first observe the system of pre-Roman fortifications situated in the area.

THE QUESTION OF PRE-ROMAN BURNUM

With the public access to the various providers of satellite images (Google Earth, Google Maps), as well as the aerial photographs and georeferenced topographic maps of Croatia (Geoportal DGU, Arkod, ISPU), the modern researcher is equipped with favourable tools for surveying the area in the comfort of his room. However, for providing the real evidence, eventually, one must take a direct field survey; in order to confirm (or confute) the data provided

³ ZANINOVIĆ 1966, 33-43. See also WILKES 1969, 162-163.

⁴ WILKES 1969, 159-162. For further discussion, see ČAČE 1993.

⁵ WILKES 1969, 157-159. See also OLUJIĆ 2007, 105-117.

⁶ BOJANOVSKI 1988, 262-265. See also, ČAČE 1989, 87-88, note 81.

⁷ For Burnum, see most recently CAMPEDELLI 2011. See also CESARIK 2017.

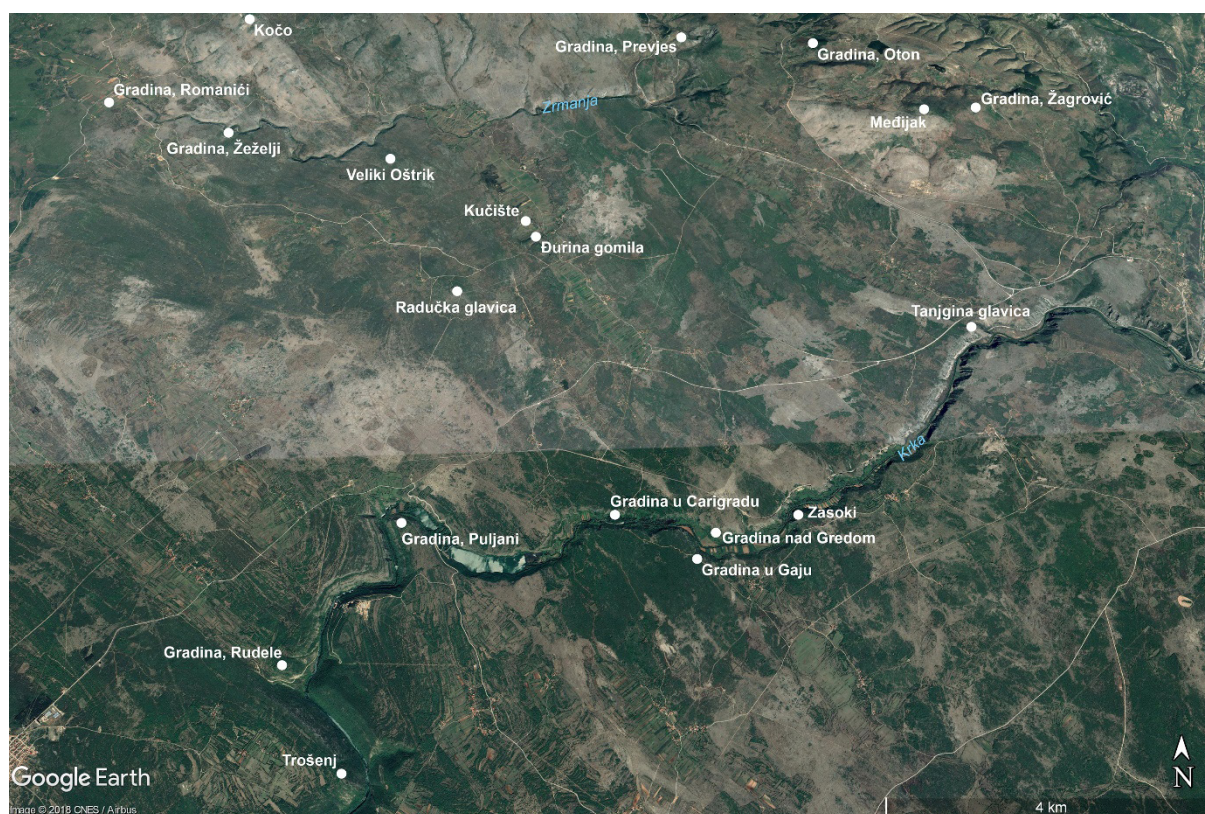


Fig. 2. The concentration of pre-Roman hillforts, enclosures, and promontory forts in the area between the rivers Krka and Zrmanja (source: Google Earth)

by these tools.

By observing the satellite images, as well as the aerial photographs of the area of *triplex confinium*, one will note an abundance of archaeological sites – particularly pre-Roman hillforts, promontory forts, and enclosures – which are easily perceivable by the ruins of dry-stone walls. If, however, the fortification is not recognizable on modern aerial photographs, there is always a way to locate it by consulting the aerial photographs from the 1968 reconnaissance; or by consulting the georeferenced topographic maps, since many of the pre-Roman fortifications are marked with the place name “Gradina” (augmentative of the word “grad”, meaning “town”), or “Straža” (meaning “lookout”, or “watch”), and so on.

The great concentration of pre-Roman fortifications is especially perceived above the travertine barriers situated on the upper Krka, but also on the area between Krka and Zrmanja (Fig. 2); which is, it must be stressed, the most natural corridor that connects Dalmatia and Lika. The high concentration of fortifications in the described area should not come as a surprise, especially if we have in mind that the river Krka forms a deep canyon after it leaves the area of Kninsko polje; and it could only be crossed on the spots of travertine barriers – particularly on the places with gentler slopes which provided an easier access to the river banks, such as the crossing over the Čavlinov buk (Fig. 3).⁸ The almost similar case is with river Zrmanja, which – on the other hand – is most easily crossed in the area of Mokro Polje, where the river leaves a deep canyon and opens a karst

field.⁹ Considering these facts, it is easy to perceive that the easiest crossings over the Zrmanja and Krka are naturally connected with the corridor of two narrow karst fields – Radučko polje, and Mokro Polje.

Accordingly, it is evident that the pre-Roman community that occupied the Liburnian frontier prospered from the fact that it controlled the natural corridor between Krka and Zrmanja, placed on a border with Delmatae to the East, Iapodes to the north-west, and Ditiones on the north. Such a case is nicely backed-up with the remarkable discovery of a great dry-stone wall, which goes from the hillfort of Kočo in Gornji Ervenik, all the way to the Prnadovac in Radučić, on the right bank of the river Krka.¹⁰ This wall has actually closed the easiest entrances into Liburnia from the territory of Iapodes and Ditiones since it closes the entrance from the pass of Razdolje (the last mountain pass over the Velebit mountain, between the slopes of Gostuša and Kom), as well as the entrance from the corridor between Krka and Zrmanja.

In the search for the main centre of this community, there is only one hillfort that stands out. This hillfort is known by the name of “Radučka glavica” (Fig. 4), and it is placed right in the middle of the corridor between the main crossings over the Krka and Zrmanja (Fig. 5). With its dominant place in the landscape, the hillfort provides an excellent observation potential for the control of the whole area around the Liburnian frontier (Fig. 6-7); but it can also be seen from a very large radius, not just from the Liburnian, but from the territory of the Delmatae and Ditiones as well

⁸ Cf. CESARIK 2017, 366.

⁹ CESARIK 2017, 363-364.

¹⁰ VRKIĆ 2017, 25-61.



Fig. 3. The access towards the river Krka at the former travertine barrier of Čavlinov buk (photo: N. Cesarik)



Fig. 4. Radučka glavica (photo: N. Cesarik)

(Fig. 8-9). The hillfort was organized on several levels; and with its conical shape, it can provide good protection from various winds, especially the northern winds (if, of course, one is situated at the southern parts of the hillfort). The total

surface of the enclosed area definitely suggests that this was the main hillfort of the whole area of Kistanjska Bukovica.¹¹

¹¹ It is difficult to measure the total surface of enclosed area of Radučka glavica, since the hillfort is organised on several levels. However, with

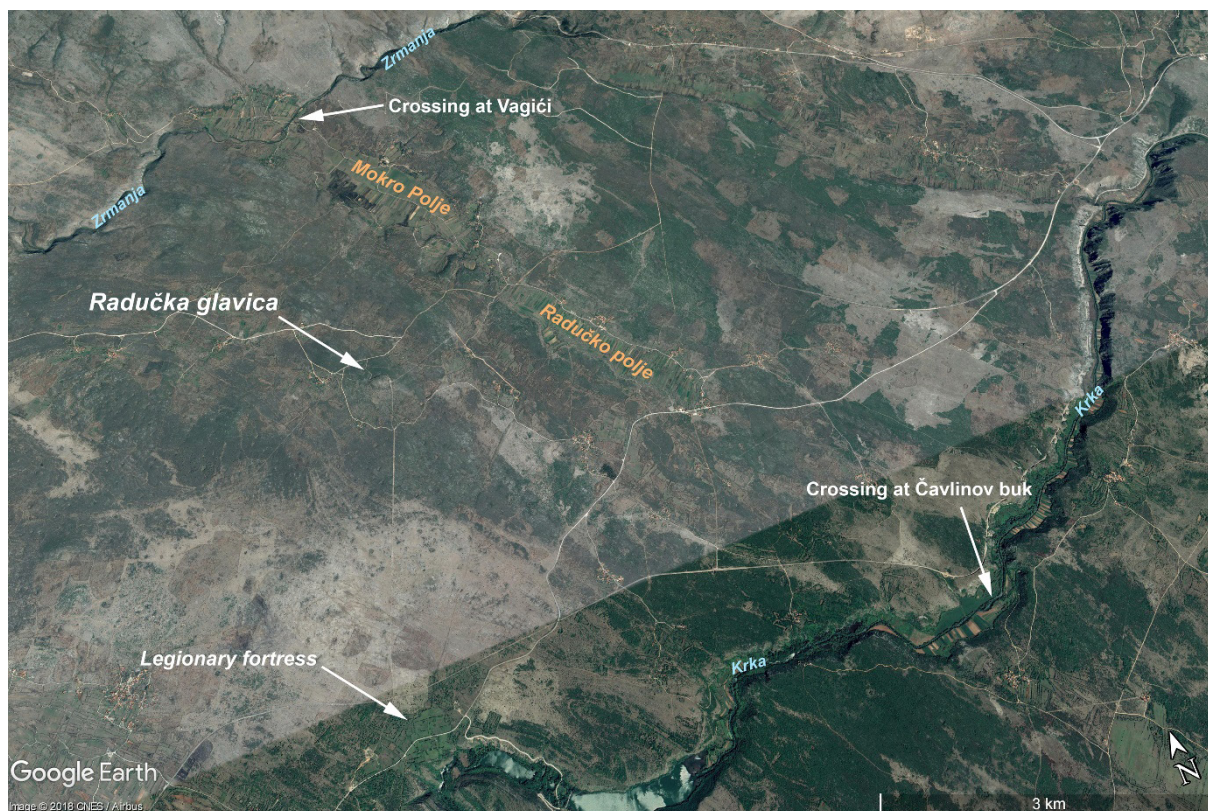


Fig. 5. Radučka glavica and the corridor between the crossings over the rivers Krka and Zrmanja (source: Google Earth)



Fig. 6. The view from Radučka glavica to the north-west, towards the Velebit Mountain (photo: N. Cesarik)

a rough measurement on Geoportal DGU and Google Earth, it is easily perceivable that the total surface of enclosed area is way over 4 ha. For the surface area of Liburnian hillforts, see especially ČAČE 1982, 42-43.

The dominant place or Radučka glavica in the area around it is especially perceivable on the Digital Terrain Model of Geoportal DGU (Fig. 10).



Fig. 7. The view form Radučka glavica to the south-east, towards the Promina Mountain (photo: N. Cesarik)

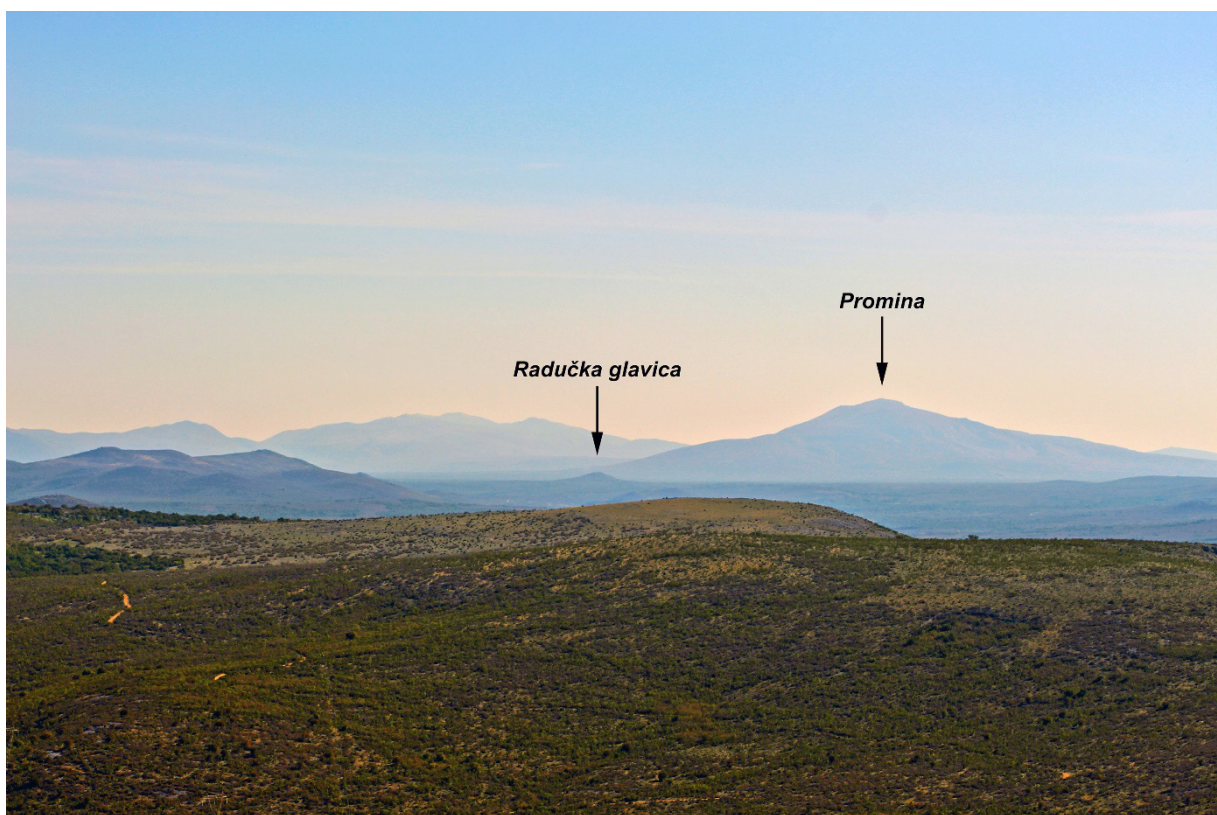


Fig. 8. The view at Radučka glavica from the state road D27, above Muškovci (photo: N. Cesarik)

Previously it was thought that Radučka glavica was abandoned at early stages of the Iron Age,¹² but the finds of

¹² BUTTLER 1931, 193, No. 25; ČAČE 1989, 79.

pre-Roman coins – namely, the Ptolemaic, South Italian, and Numidian coinage – definitely prove that Radučka glavica was active during the last two centuries BC (i.e. in the last

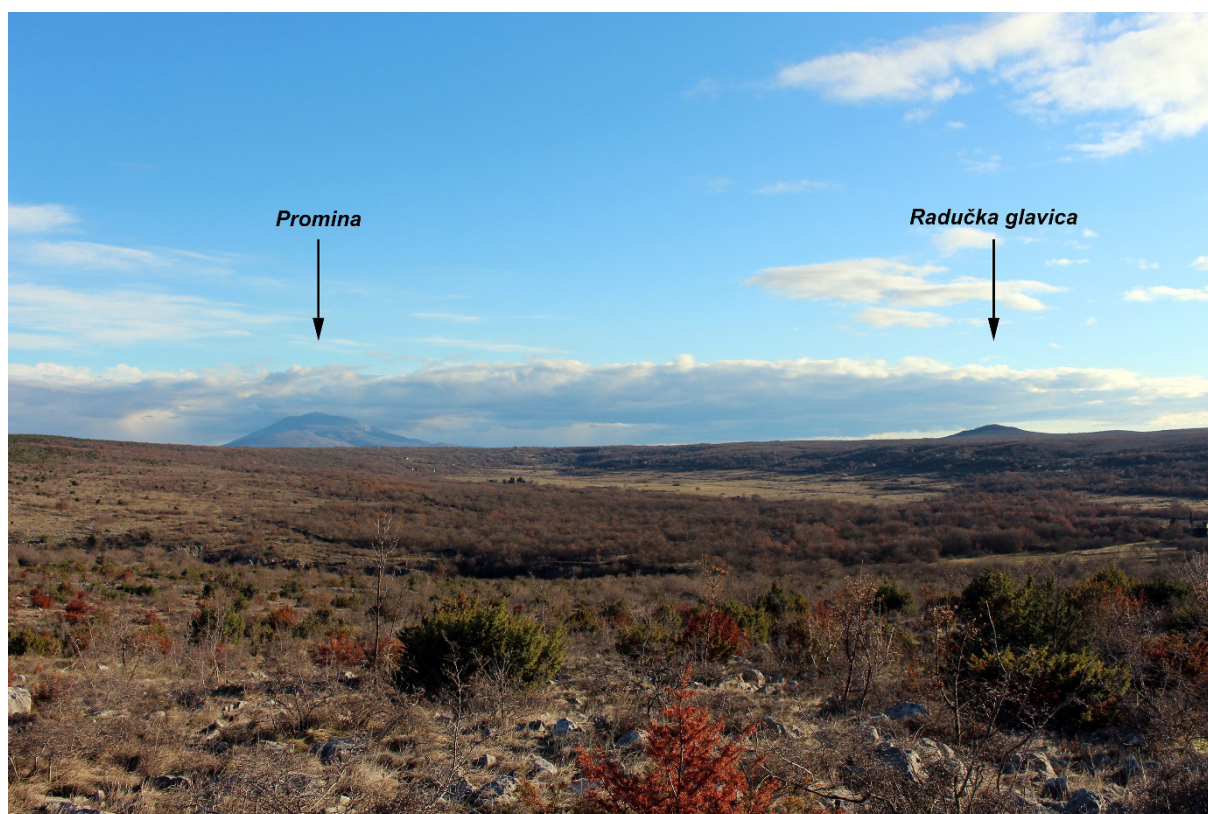


Fig. 9. The view at Radučka glavica from the hamlet of Vagići in Mokro Polje (photo: N. Cesarik)

phase of the Liburnian Iron Age culture).¹³ The surface finds of Roman roof tiles provide additional evidence that Radučka glavica also remained active during the Principate (Fig. 11), which points to the conclusion that this hillfort should be

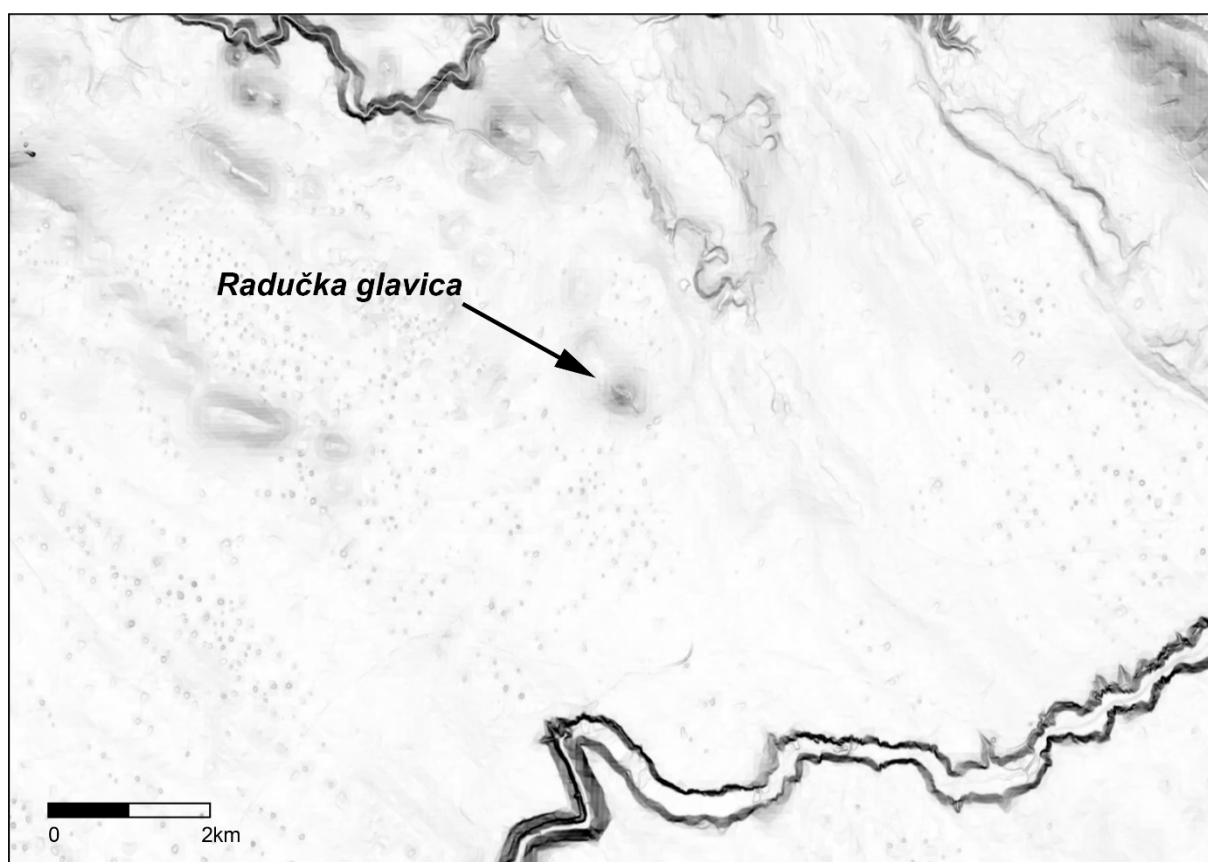


Fig. 10. Radučka glavica at the Digital Terrain Model, black and white hypsometric scale (source: Geoportal DGU)

¹³ ILKIĆ/REBIĆ 2014, 98-106, Cat. No. 1, 3, 36-38.



Fig. 11. Fragments of Roman roof-tiles from Radučka glavica (photo: N. Cesarik)

considered as the main centre of the Liburnian Burnistae.

Such a case, again, nicely demonstrates the policy of Imperial Rome, which took over the pre-existing system of control of natural corridors, simply adapting it to their own model. What was once the Liburnian Burnum with the centre at Radučka glavica, was now the Roman Burnum with the centre at the legionary fortress, 3 km to the south-west.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that earlier scholars assumed that the main centre of the Liburnian Burnistae should be located at "Gradina in Puljani", situated right across the legionary fortress, on the left bank of the river Krka.¹⁴ However, in my opinion, such an assumption is not only deeply questionable, but it is also highly illogical. Firstly, Gradina in Puljani is not a typical hillfort, but actually a promontory fort, which does not provide any kind of control over the wider area around it. It only controls the passages over the travertine barriers of Brljan and Manojlovac waterfalls, which were minor crossings over the Krka in the comparison with the crossing over the Čavlinov buk. Secondly, the fort can be hardly observable, even from its immediate proximity, since it is positioned on a karstic plateau surrounded by the cliffs of the river Krka. The highest point of the site is actually a dry-stone wall on the south-east of the fortification. Thirdly, as far as I know, there are no finds of pre-Roman coinage from Gradina in Puljani, which later become the main clue for the detection of the last phase of the Liburnian Iron Age culture. Such coinage was frequently used on the territory of the Liburnians and the

Iapodes, but not by the Delmatae!¹⁵ With all said, it is hard to believe that the Liburnian *civitas* would place its centre on a promontory fort on the left side of the river Krka, turning their back to Liburnia, and opening to the Delmatae. It seems that one of the reasons for the positioning of the legionary fortress right across it was the fact that this was the fort of the Delmatae, which was sieged during the Great War in Illyricum of AD 6-9. The connection of Gradina in Puljani with Arduba – the last stronghold of the Delmatae – certainly has its support in the evidence.¹⁶

With all said, if we look at all the facts, in my opinion, there should be no doubt on the question of the centre of Liburnian Burnistae, since it all points to the clear conclusion that such a centre was placed on the most dominant and prosperous hillfort in the area, which was definitively active in the last centuries BC, but also during the time of the Principate. Again, in my opinion, the centre of pre-Roman Burnum could only be located on Radučka glavica.

It can be seen that the main obstacle in earlier research was caused by the lines of Pliny the Elder. Firstly, Pliny records that *Titius flumen* (river Krka) was the border between Liburni and the Delmatae (Plin. *HN* 3.139; 3.141). Secondly, he says that among the fourteen Liburnian *civitates* – which, together with the Iapodes belonged to the *conventus Scardonitanus* – only the Lacinienses, Stulpinos, Burnistas, and Olbonenses are worth mentioning (Plin. *HN* 3.139). Finally, when describing the territory of a *conventus*

¹⁴ ZANINOVIĆ 1996, 272; MILETIĆ 2010, 114.

¹⁵ Cf. CESARIK/KRAMBERGER 2018.

¹⁶ See especially, PERIŠA 2008, 513.

Salonitanus, Pliny uses the words: *in hoc tractu sunt Burnum, Andetrium, Tribulium* (sc. Tilurium), *nobilitata proeliis castella* ("in that area are Burnum, Andetrium, and Tilurium, forts/fortresses that are celebrated in battles" (Plin. HN 3.142).

Since Pliny mentions Burnistae as a Liburnian *civitas*, it should be clear that their centre was placed on the right bank of the river Krka, since Krka is thought to be a border between the Liburnians and the Delmatae. However, since Pliny once more mentions Burnum – this time as a *castellum* in the context of *conventus Salonitanus* – earlier scholars thought that this might correspond to the location of Gradina in Puljani, which is actually located on the left bank of the river Krka.¹⁷ However, in my opinion, it should be clear that Pliny obviously did not mention pre-Roman hillforts celebrated in battles, but actually, the Roman forts/fortresses that were exactly called Burnum, Andetrium, and Tilurium.¹⁸ It is true that Andetrium was recorded by Cassius Dio, as a place of one of the final battles in Great War in Illyricum in AD 9 (Cass. Dio 56.12.3), but there is no mention of Burnum or Tilurium in any of the sources prior to Pliny himself. Besides, it would be strange that Pliny – as a Roman – would mention that an enemy's hillfort was celebrated in battle. Since he writes from the Roman point of view, I believe that the only forts that could be celebrated in battles would be Roman fortresses, which were used for the conquering of Illyricum. Additionally, I think that it would be a bit more than a coincidence if Pliny had mentioned the forts/fortresses of Burnum, Andetrium, and Tilurium – which were actually the only Roman garrisons in that area – and not thinking of Roman encampments, but actually of earlier pre-Roman hillforts.¹⁹

It should also be noted that Roman legionary fortress of Burnum – although situated on the right bank of the river Krka – had its *prata* in Kosovo polje (CIL III 13250; AE 1988, 923), which is located some 17 km east of the encampment; so, it should not come as a surprise that Pliny mentioned it while discussing the area of *conventus Salonitanus*. Burnum was located on the edge of Liburnia, but it was orientated on the Delmataean side, with several outposts in the area of *conventus Salonitanus*, such as Kapitul in Knin, and Klanac in Tepljuh.²⁰

However, if we are to better understand Pliny's words, we must observe some wider section on *conventus Salonitanus*. Pliny states: ... *Salona colonia ab Iader CXII. Petunt in eam iura viribus discriptis in decurias CCCXLII Delmatae, XXV Deuri, CCXXXVIII Ditiones, CCLXVIII Maezei, LII Sardeates. In hoc tractu sunt Burnum, Andetrium, Tribulium* (sc. Tilurium), *nobilitata proeliis castella* (Plin. HN 1.141-142). The literal

translation would be: "...the colony of Salona is situated 112 miles from Iader. To this place, the ones which forces are enlisted in decuriae, come for jurisdiction: Delmatae with 342, Deures with 25, Ditiones with 239, Maezei with 269, Sardeates with 52. In that area are Burnum, Andetrium, Tribulium (sc. Tilurium), forts/fortresses celebrated in battles."²¹

It is noteworthy that Pliny uses the syntax "*in hoc tractu*" (not "*eo conventu*"), which means that he does not specifically address Burnum as a place in the *conventus Salonitanus*.²² In my opinion, he enlisted the ethnic groups that belonged to the *conventus Salonitanus*; and after that, he simply recorded the only Roman encampments in the area, which were not only used to subdue these ethnicities during the war but were also placed on strategic location to control them during the time of peace.

With all said, I believe that there should be no impregnable obstacle in concluding that the main centre of the Liburnian Burnistae – who were mentioned by Pliny the Elder, as one of the Liburnian peregrine communities under the jurisdiction of *conventus Scardonitanus* – was located on the dominant hillfort of Radučka glavica. In pre-Roman times, the Burnistae controlled the whole area between the major crossings over the rivers Krka and Zrmanja; and later, at the end of the reign of Augustus, these crossings came under the control of the newly established legionary garrison. Since the Roman garrison was established on the previous territory of Liburnian *civitas*, situated 3 km to the north-east, it was only natural to call it the same way – Burnum. Roman Burnum was also mentioned by Pliny the Elder, as one of the fortresses celebrated in battles – evidently, during the Great War in Illyricum AD 6-9. The main objective of this military garrison was primarily to control the entrances towards Liburnia, especially from the territory of the Delmatae.

The surface finds of Roman roof tiles found at Radučka glavica, points to a conclusion that the hillfort stayed active during the Principate; while the inscription from Scardona (CIL 3, 2809) clearly shows that the Burnistae were still a peregrine community during the reign of Marcus Aurelius. On the other hand, several inscriptions from the legionary encampment (CIL 3, 2828=9890, 2830, ILJug 845), may suggest that the Roman Burnum gained municipality – at the beginning of Hadrian's reign, at latest – which was apparently caused by the definitive departure of a legionary garrison, somewhere between the reigns of Domitian and Hadrian.

AUXILIARY FORT AT ČUČEVO: NEW EVIDENCE ON THE LINE OF ROMAN GARRISONS ON THE RIVER KRKA

Public access to various satellite images, as well as aerial photographs of today's Croatia, provided an opportunity for detecting previously unknown archaeological sites. This has especially reflected in the area of the Krka valley, where some of the sites were perceived by different scholars at relatively the same time. During the last year, three different papers were published arguing on new discoveries of Roman

¹⁷ See especially, ZANINOVIĆ 1967, 8.

¹⁸ For Burnum, see: ZABEHLICKY-SCHEFFENEGGER/KANDLER 1979; for Tilurium: SANADER/TONČINIĆ 2010, 33-53; for Andetrium: BEKIĆ, 2011, 316-317. For some new evidence of auxiliary forts in the hinterland of Salona, see CESARIK 2018.

¹⁹ It is true that Pliny uses the word *castella* in describing some places in the *conventus Salonitanus* (cf. Plin. HN 3.141: *castellum Tariona*; 3.142: *castella Petuntium, Narestae, Oneum*), but that does not mean that the term *castellum* should always be equated with the term "hillfort", as Zaninović considered (ZANINOVIĆ 1996, 272). The word *castellum* designates any fortified place (GLARE 1968, 281-282; DIVKOVIĆ 1980, 170), and could be equally used in describing the pre-Roman hillfort as well as the Roman fortification; cf. KUBITSCHKE 1899, 1754-1758.

²⁰ CESARIK 2017, 368-369.

²¹ Cf. ČAČE 2010, 59-61.

²² ČAČE 1989, 82.

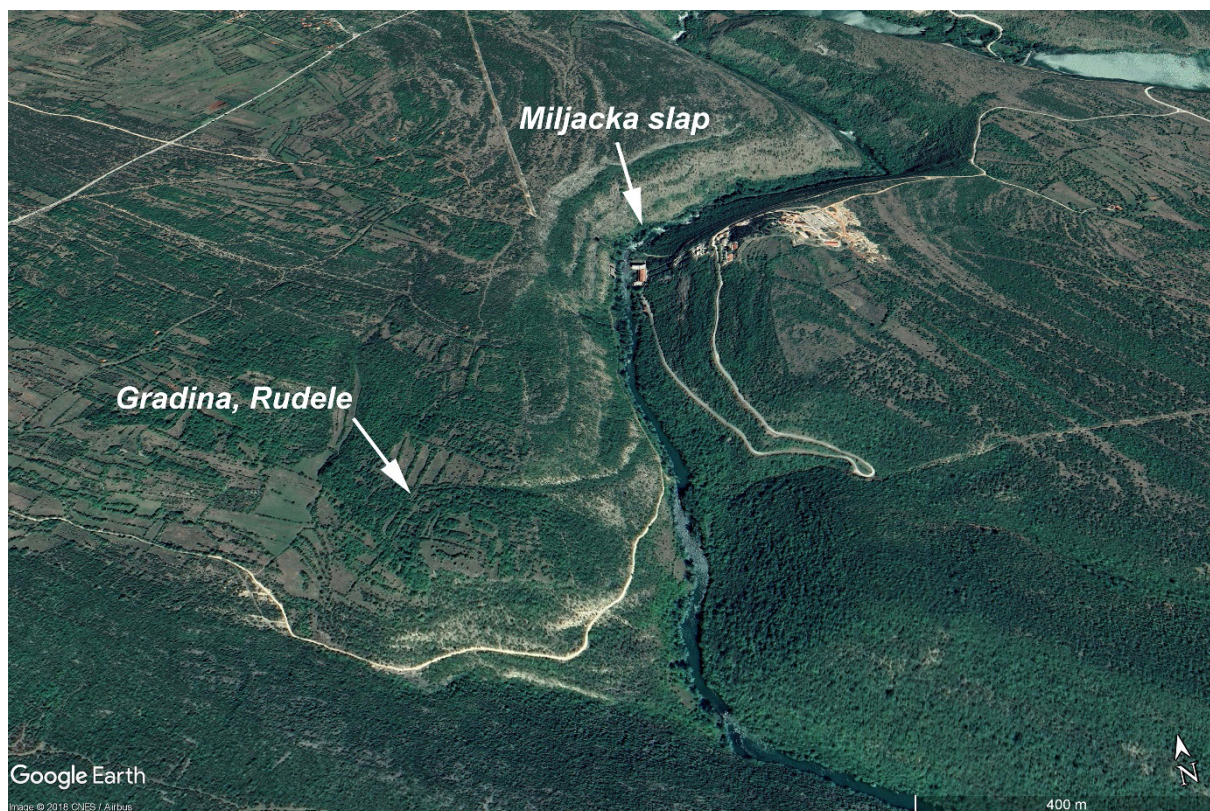


Fig. 12. The location of Gradina in Rudele in relation with the Miljacka slap (source: Google Earth)



Fig. 13. The travertine barrier at Mostina with the designated access paths towards the river Krka (source: Geoportal DGU)

auxiliary forts and pre-Roman promontory forts, placed above the canyon of the river Krka.²³

²³ VRKIĆ 2017a, 207-210; VITALE 2017, 871- 875; CESARIK 2017, 365-368.

Having in mind the fact that the Krka could be crossed only at several spots, it comes clear that there was a specific

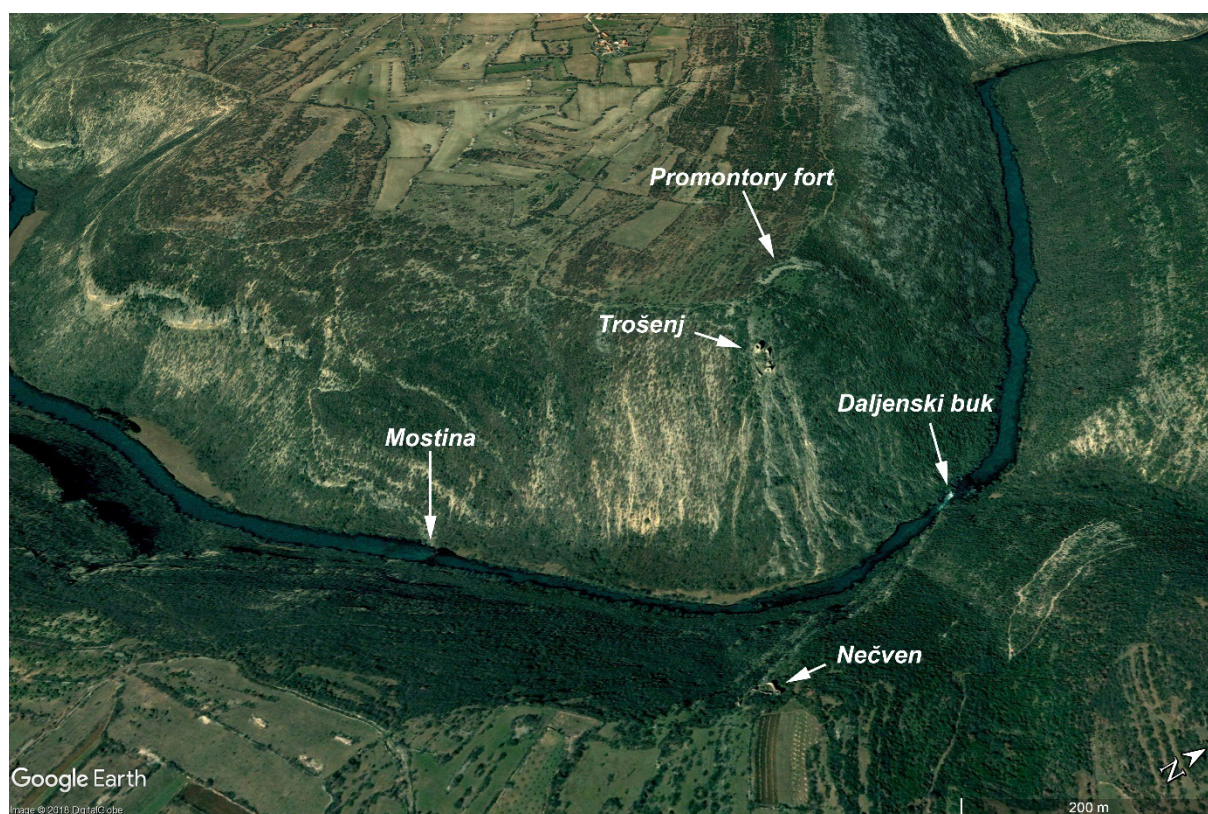


Fig. 14. River crossings, pre-Roman promontory fort, and medieval fortresses of Trošanj and Nečven (source: Google Earth)

pattern for the positioning of these fortifications. Namely, they were all scattered in order to control the crossings over the travertine barriers of the river Krka. After it leaves the area of Kninsko polje, the Krka forms a steep canyon, and the first – but also the most important crossing – is to be found at the former travertine barrier of Čavlinov buk.²⁴ During the pre-Roman era, the crossing was controlled by three promontory forts, placed on both sides of the river. The first is Gradina nad Gredom, located on the right bank of the Krka, on the area of Radučić village. The second and the third are located in the area of Marasovine, on the left side of the Krka. One of them is called Zasoki, while the other – spotted by S. Vitale²⁵ – is located right across the Gradina nad Gredom. The fort is unnamed in the topographic, as well as the Croatian base map, but the cadastral parcel 950/1 in which the fortification is located, is called “Gaj”; so maybe it is best to call it the “Promontory fort in Gaj” (in Croatian “Gradina u Gaju”). In the Roman period, the crossing of the travertine barrier was controlled by the auxiliary fort located in Dračevica at the hamlet of Ljevaje in Radučić.²⁶

The second travertine barrier is to be found at Bilušića buk, near the hamlet of Burze in Radučić. In pre-Roman times, it was controlled by the promontory fort known as “Gradina u Carigradu”. During the Roman period, the crossing was controlled by another auxiliary fort, located at the household of Bjelobrci, in the hamlet of Donji Radići in Radučić.²⁷

Third and fourth travertine barrier on the upper Krka are found at Brljan and Manojlovac waterfalls, and these

were guarded by the already mentioned Gradina in Puljani, situated on the left bank of the Krka. On the opposite side, in Ivoševci, there is a legionary fortress (known as “Šupljaja”), as well as the auxiliary fort at “Jurine ograde” near Provalije.²⁸

By observing the locations of these forts, it is evident that there was some sort of a pattern in their disposition. Namely, during the pre-Roman era, the wider area was controlled by the most significant hillfort – the Radučka glavica; while other fortifications evidently served as promontory forts in controlling the key river crossings. During the Principate, the earlier pattern was adopted by the Romans, who took over the control of the crossings, using the model of one legionary and several auxiliary forts located in immediate proximity of travertine barriers.

Earlier, I thought that Burnum was organized with a legionary fortress and three auxiliary forts, but I was not paying much attention to the travertine barriers a bit downstream from the Manojlovac. The first in line comes Rošnjak – a waterfall which is almost impossible to access, due to the protection of a steep canyon. Since its inaccessibility, it was never guarded by any kind of fortification. However, such a thing could not be said for Miljacka slap (Miljacka waterfall), which was, in pre-Roman times, guarded by the Gradina in Rudele (Fig. 12). The access towards the Miljacka slap was especially accessible by the path located right beneath the Gradina, and even today there is a road that leads right to the Miljacka Hydroelectric Power Plant. After Miljacka slap, there comes Daljenski buk, located right beneath the medieval fortresses of Trošanj and Načven. A bit downstream of Daljenski buk, there is another travertine barrier at site called “Mostina” (literally

²⁴ Cf. CESARIK 2017, 366-367; VRKIĆ 2017a, 216-218.

²⁵ VITALE 2017, 876-877.

²⁶ CESARIK 2017, 366-367; VITALE 2017, 874-875.

²⁷ VRKIĆ 2017, 207-210; VITALE 2017, 871-874; CESARIK 2017, 366.

²⁸ CESARIK 2017, 365-366.

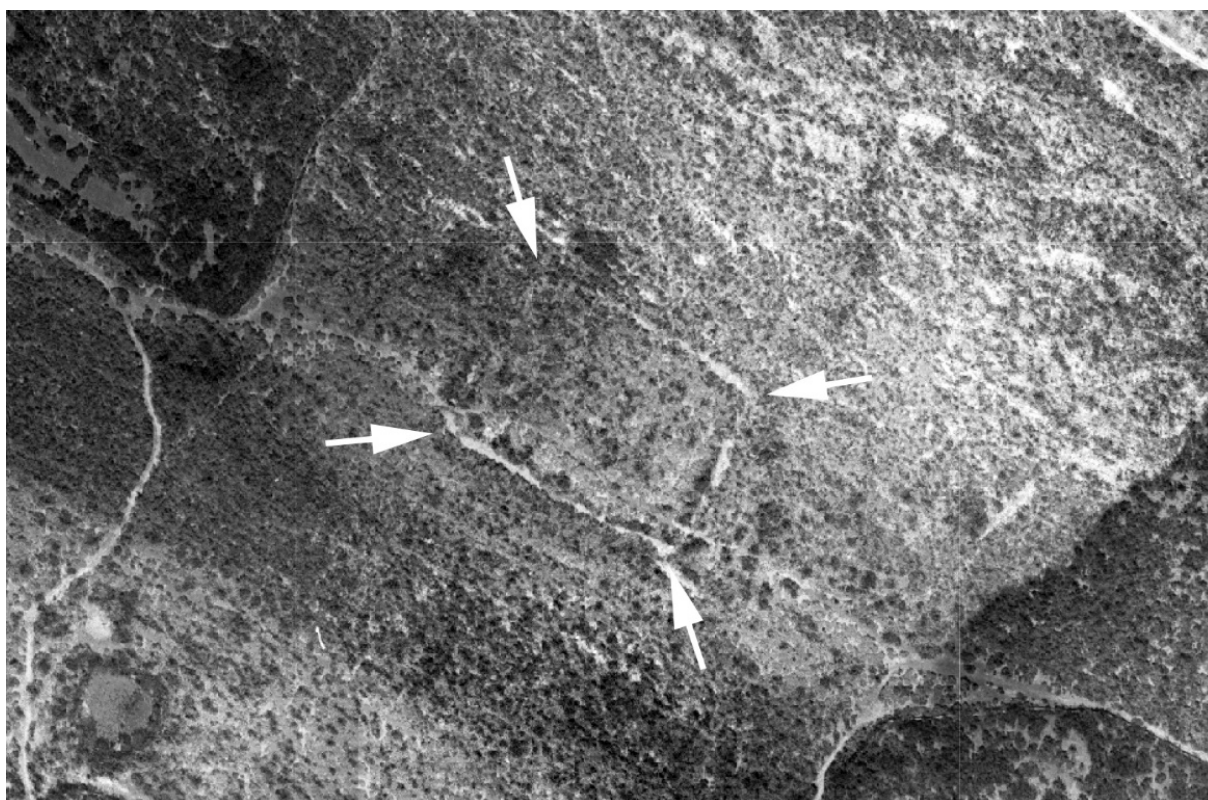


Fig. 15. The outline of the auxiliary fort at Čučevo on the aerial photograph from 1968 (source: <https://ispu.mgipu.hr>)



Fig. 16. The outline of the auxiliary fort at Čučevo on the satellite image from 2010 (source: Google Earth)

meaning “the bridge”), which can be accessed on both sides with clearly visible pathways (Fig. 13). The importance of these crossings is emphasized by the fact that the medieval fortress of Trošenj, was actually built next to a pre-Roman

promontory fort (Fig. 14).²⁹

By observing the satellite images, as well as the modern

²⁹ Cf. BUTTLER 1931, 193, No. 24; BRUSIĆ 1976, 120, No. 92. See also, BALEN-LETUNIĆ 2011.



Fig. 17. The fragments of pottery from the auxiliary fort at Čučevo (photo: N. Cesarik)



Fig. 18. Ruins of the eastern wall of auxiliary fort at Čučevo (photo: N. Cesarik)



Fig. 19. Ruins of the northern wall of auxiliary fort at Čučevo (photo: N. Cesarik)

aerial photographs and topographic maps, at first it would seem that there was no Roman auxiliary fort in this area; but using the aerial photographs of 1968 reconnaissance, there is a clearly visible outline of a rectangular fortification at Čučevo (Fig. 15). Having in mind the pattern of a dispersion of pre-Roman and Roman fortification system over the travertine barriers of upper Krka, it is clear that this is the fourth known Roman auxiliary fort in the area. The total surface of enclosed area is about 0.9 hectares (approx. 113 x 80 m), which places the fort at Čučevo in the group of smaller Roman forts (measuring from 0.9 to 1.2 ha of the enclosed area). The best analogies can be found in Britain: for instance, the fort at Nanstallon in Cornwall encloses the same area as the fort at Čučevo.³⁰ Other similar examples can be found in the Pennines and Lake District (e.g. Whitley Castle, Ambleside, Low Borrow Bridge, Brough-on-Noe, and Brough Hill at Bainbridge).³¹

Today, the whole area of the fort is covered by dense scrubs (Fig. 16), so it very hard to conduct a thorough field survey. However, I managed to visit the site on several occasions and to confirm that this is actually a Roman auxiliary fort. Fragments of pottery can be found all over the site (Fig. 17), and what is important: the walls are made in exactly the same manner as the walls of other auxiliary forts on the right bank of the river Krka (Fig. 18-19).³² Having in mind the state of the walls; the regular “playing card” shape of the enclosure, including the rounded corners; the level

terrain; as well as the surface pottery finds – there should be no doubt that this is another Roman auxiliary fort on the right bank of the river Krka.

By placing the fort at Čučevo in between the pre-Roman promontory forts of Gradina in Rudele, and Trošenj in Čučevo, the Romans were able to control all of the nearby travertine barriers from the same spot (Fig. 20). Therefore, it is obvious that the line of the Roman fortification system on the river Krka, ran all the way from Radučić to Čučevo, and consisted of one legionary fortress and four auxiliary forts, located above major travertine barriers on the upper Krka (Fig. 21). On the basis of the dispersion of pre-Roman fortifications on the same line, it is evident that the Romans have simply adapted the earlier system of control of these crossings, which were previously controlled by the Liburnian Burnistae with the centre at Radučka Glavica.

On the question of the dating of these forts, nothing can be said for sure before systematic archaeological excavations are conducted. However, since rectangular auxiliary forts with “playing card” shape – and permanent character – started to be built from the time of Claudius,³³ it would seem that these forts were probably erected in the period after AD 42, when the suppression of the revolt of Scribonianus caused a severe reform of the Dalmatian military garrison.³⁴ The only archaeological excavation (which was actually a simple “shovel test pit”), was conducted on the fort at “Jurine ograde” next to the Provalije in

³⁰ FOX/RAVENHILL 1972, 64.

³¹ Cf. BIDWELL 2012, 57.

³² Cf. CESARIK 2017, 365-367.

³³ JOHNSON 1983, 234-245; TONČINIĆ 2014, 85.

³⁴ Cf. TONČINIĆ 2014, 86-92. For the revolt of Scribonianus, see especially CAMBI 2009; PARAT 2016.

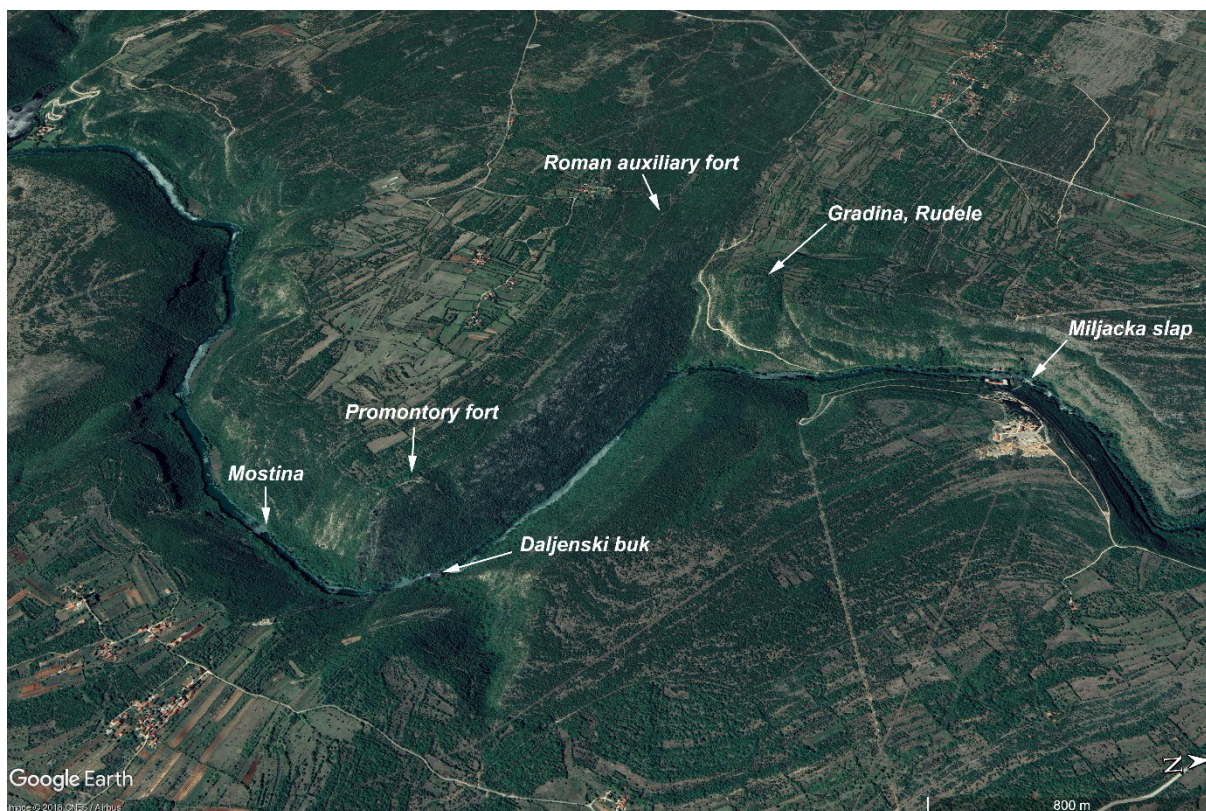


Fig. 20. The auxiliary fort at Čučevo in relation with the pre-Roman promontory forts and crossings over the river Krka (source: Google Earth)

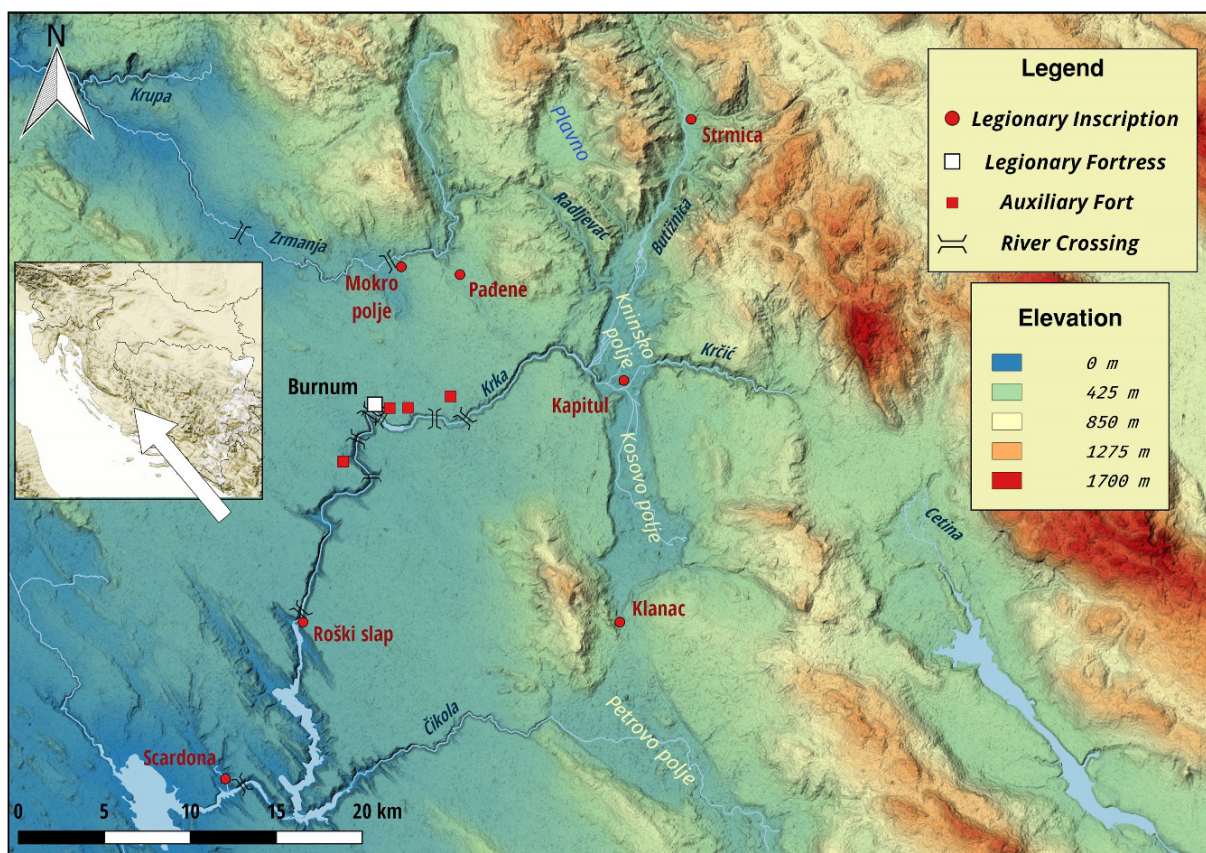


Fig. 21. The system of the Roman military garrison at the edge of Liburnia (made by: L. Drahotusky-Bruketa)

Ivoševci; so maybe the finds of roof tiles with the stamp of legio XI Claudia Pia Fidelis can prove such an assumption.³⁵

³⁵ MILETIĆ 2011, 267-268.

Considering the fact that all of the forts followed the same model, and were obviously built as a “chain of forts” in order to control the river crossings, it is my opinion that they were all active during the same period. However, more precise data, of course, can only be achieved by conducting the systematic archaeological excavations of all of the forts.

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