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THE ROADS IN THE LIM RIVER VALLEY IN THE LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE MIDDLE AGES: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE*

Abstract: The paper deals with the study of roads in the region of Lim river valley ranging from late antiquity to the beginning of the Ottoman period. In late antiquity, the Lim valley did not have a primary hub for the transportation of people and goods. This changed in the Middle Ages when the Lim valley became a transit point through which roads and merchants from Primorje (Dubrovnik and Kotor) passed through to the centers of the Serbian medieval state (Ras and Novo Brdo). In this paper the continuity and discontinuity of this movement through the Lim river valley will be discussed.

Keywords: Middle Ages, Roads, Lim river valley, late antiquity, Dubrovnik, Ras.

In late antiquity and the early Byzantine period, the Lim river valley was an important mining area. As a result of mining, two of the most important late-Roman settlements developed there: one in Kolovrat mountains near Prijepolje and the *municipium* in Komini near Pljevlja.¹ The most important road in this period connected those two settlements via Jabuka. The road that went through the Lim river valley to the Drina River valley was also important because the center of this area was located in Domavia (now Srebrenica). Transportation in late antiquity mostly followed the Lim River and down the Drina toward the economic and administrative centers of the time. These were roads that the Romans built according to certain regulations and of a certain width, with bridges on the rivers, and they were wide enough for carriages.

After the migration and collapse of the Roman and then Byzantine rulers, new entities and new economic and administrative centers were created in this region. The old

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¹ For more details see: Mirković 1975: 95–108; Cermanović Kuzmanović 1980: 43–52; Cermanović Kuzmanović 1981: 75–79; Cermanović Kuzmanović 1989: 5–13; Loma 2005: 9–21.

Roman roads became neglected, often because they no longer led anywhere or were only partially incorporated into separate sections of new roads.²

Dubrovnik's emergence as a trading republic made it a center for intermediary trade, and it became a locus for trade coming in from the hinterlands in Serbia and Bosnia. For this reason, the roads extended toward the Adriatic coast and Dubrovnik. The Lim river valley began to gain importance due to its location on the caravan route connecting Dubrovnik with the new state (Ras) other economic centers (Novo Brdo). Previously, there had been no roads through this area due to the nature of the soil and because the Romans had no need for them here. However, all trade with the Littoral was done by caravan, so caravan routes emerged, which enabled the transportation of people, goods, and animals. The earliest information about this trade is in connected to the mine and the market in Brskovo on the right bank of the Tara River. As it declined and other centers emerged, the focus for caravan trade began shifting to the Lim river valley, and Prijepolje became a new trading center.³

There were two main routes leading from Dubrovnik to Polimlje. The first went from Trebinje to Bileće, Gacko, Tjentište and Foča. From there it led to Pljevlja along the Čehotina River. Then it either went to Prijepolje, or from Foča down the Drina River to the mouth of the Lim River, and on to St. Nicholas in Banja Pribojska.⁴ Travel writers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries mentioned three waystations between Foča and Pljevlja: Brahu, which was located somewhere west of Čajnič on the Mt. Kovač; Uništa, located on the right bank of the Tara River; and Vikoč, located on the left bank of the Čehotina River.⁵ This road was connected to another road that went below Gradina on Podstjenica (perhaps the fortress of Koznik), and came from Bukovica and went to Vrela, Pužići, Strahov Do, and Kamenica. The Koznik River flows below Gradina and then into the Čehotina River about two kilometers away. There are still fifty meters of preserved cobblestones in the section leading toward Gradina.⁶ The road from Foča to the mouth of the Lim River went to Severin on the left bank of Lim. There are remnants of the old road leading from Rudo to Severin via Crkvina in Luka.⁷ The route from Banja Pribojska led to the Mažići monastery and to the town of Kovin on the left bank of the Lim and on the same side as Prijepolje.⁸ On the way to Priboj, the route crossed the Lim River at Severin, where it split, with one branch heading through Poblacé to Pljevlja, with the other being the previously mentioned route heading through Priboj and Kovin to Prijepolje.⁹

The second road to Polimlje went through Jesera to Trebinje, then Onogošt (Niksic), and then to the river estuary area of Piva across the Lukovica mountain. The road then went to today's Šavnik, where there is a stone bridge known in Serbian as the *Latinska Čuprija*

² Dinić 1978: 305.

³ *Ibid.* 308.

⁴ Škrivanić 1974: 43, 48; Dinić 1978: 311.

⁵ Mišić 2010: 21.

⁶ I performed a field study of this location on May 25, 2000.

⁷ A field study of the road was conducted on August 30, 2014.

⁸ Mišić 2010: 21.

⁹ Tomović and Pušica 2009: 74.

(the Latin Bridge).¹⁰ The road went further on to the area of the Drobniak (Lake), then across the Tara River, where it split into several branches that reached the Lim River. The most important one of these went through Pljevlja. It once led from Onogošt through Župa, Morača, and Kolašin to upper Lim valley.¹¹ The road from Pljevlja to Prijepolje, whose remains are visible in several places, went through the village of Otilović, to the Ivovik mountain and through the village of Kozica to Prijepolje.¹² From Pljevlja to Prijepolje also went through Kamena Gora. Both roads existed in Roman times and connected the commune in Komini with the Roman settlement on Kolovrat.¹³ The road across Jabuka was shorter but impassable in the winter months. It once split in two directions at Maoč, with one road heading across Kamena Gora to the valley of Lim and to Prijepolje. From Maoč it also led one way across Kovren and Pavina fields to the upper Lim river valley. The second road went to Ras, and then from Banja to the villages of Kratovo, Rutoši, Mangura, Nova Varoš and further on to Sjenica (Senice). There are remains of old cobblestones on this road.¹⁴

Within the Lim river valley, the roads connected to marketplaces and caravanserais, and then continued from there to the interior of the Serbian state and its political and economic centers. One of the caravan and trade destinations in the Lim river valley was the monastery of St. Nicholas in Banja Pribojska. From there, the old caravan route, which survived in many places until 1938, went to Dobrun and further on to Užice.¹⁵

Prijepolje was the largest marketplace in the Lim river valley and a caravanserai. It was reached by roads from Pljevlja and Banja Pribojska. The main road from Prijepolje (formerly the Mileševa monastery) led to Senice and Ras. From Prijepolje it followed the Mileševka River, then went to the village of Kaćevo and Mount Gvozd. The remains of the old medieval road have been preserved from the Beg's Bridge in the village of Hisardžik, then over the mountain and past Kaćevo, where it was about 6 km long.¹⁶ The road continued past the northern slopes of Jadovnik to Dobra Voda, where it turned east between Gornji Goračić and Donji Goračić, then to Gonje before descending into the Uvac river valley. It went further toward Radišić Hill with its medieval church, then east of Sjenica. The road continued eastward through the villages of Dubnica, Razdaginja, Vrsjenica, Dragojlović, Gradac, Smiljevci, Raspoganca, and Brnjica to the Šarsko Karst, and then descended to where the Ljudska River rises and continued to Ras (Novi Pazar).¹⁷ It once went from Prijepolje to Milošev Do, where there was a caravanserai during the Ottoman period.¹⁸

From Prijepolje it was possible follow the Lim River to Brodarevo, which was just a caravanserai, primarily because there was a suitable place there to cross the Lim. There were several roads from Brodarevo to Senice. The first went from Brodarevo through the

¹⁰ Škrivanić 1974: 66.

¹¹ Dinić 1978: 311.

¹² Tomović and Pušica 2009: 75.

¹³ Bojanovski 1987: 109, 151.

¹⁴ Škrivanić 1974: 125; Knežević 1979: 42–58; Ćuk 1997: 9.

¹⁵ Tomović and Pušica 2009: 86. A field survey to identify remnants of the road was carried out in September 2014.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 77. I carried out a field survey of the road on September 15, 2009. For more on Prijepolje as caravanserais, and other caravanserais in the Lim river valley, see: Ćuk 1997: 7–24.

¹⁷ A field survey of the villages and the road was carried out and recorded during 2009 and 2010.

¹⁸ Mišić 2010: 24.

village of Grobnica to Klisur and Šanac, between Gornji and Donji Stranjan, to Korita, through Jadovnik and Katunić (1733 m) to the village of Gonje, where it joined up with the road from Prijepolje and continued to Senice or Ras.¹⁹ The other route led past the Davidovica monastery to the villages of Mrčkovina and Šćepanica, through Crni Vrh to Duboki Potok. The road continued to Koprivna, located below Javor, then descended to the village of Sidula and connected with the road to Gonje. From Brodarevo, merchants also crossed the Mrkovska River, Milaković, and Tičje Polje to Ozren, and through Caričino and Trijebin to Senice (Sjenica).²⁰ From Trijebin on the Pešter plateau, the road at one time went to Bubanje and Goševo and further to the Kumanica monastery. It was the shortest route connecting Senice, Bijelo Polje, and Ras. So far, no traces of the old road have been found along this route.²¹

Merchants from Dubrovnik traveled less often to upper Polimlje than to the lower and middle Polimlje. It was of interest for merchants from Kotoran and for those who left the the coast of Zeta and its interior. It once led from Primorje to present-day Podgorica, and from there to the medieval town of Medun. The road continued across the pass between the Kolštica and Krisitori mountains to Katun and Lake Rikavac, then Skrobotnica and the Vrmoška River valley, past the village of Grnčari to Gusinje and further on to Plav. It then went from Plav to Budimlja (Berane) and through Bihor to Sjenica and Ras (Novi Pazar).²² That road then separated from the Lim valley and led to the village of Lagatori in lower Bihor, and then further on to the villages of Trnavica and Savin Bor. The road below the Krstač mountain went further to Đerekari (Lower and Upper) and lower Pešter, from there it went to Duga Poljana and to Ras. There are still some remnants of this road at Djerkare.²³

There was also an old road of minor importance connecting the Bistrica valley and the region around Bijelo Polje with the Podvrh monastery, which was connected through the mountain pass with Petrovo selo (Osmanbegovo selo) in the Bihor region, and then it went on to the Pešter plateau and Ras. Except for this route, there was no way to reach the Pešter plateau from right bank of Bistrica via the medieval village of Mojstir because the Čalovića canyon through which Bistrica flows is impassable.²⁴ In this direction is the interesting village of Donji Djerekare which, as we have seen, was located on the route from the Lim river valley to Ras. It is located in the south of the lower Pešter plateau, and from there, an interesting local road leads over the Žegnica hills and Gusti Viganj, which then leads to Paučine.²⁵ This is a route that leads to a local mining area that was active during the early Byzantine Empire and where there are visible remains of old mining (toponymy, old mining shafts).

¹⁹ A field survey of the villages of Gonje and Katunić was performed on September 15, 2009. See: Tomović and Pušica 2009: 90.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 90. A field study of the road leading to Tičje Polje was performed in September 1999.

²¹ The reconnaissance of the road leading to village of Goševo and the village itself had been performed on 19th September 2009.

²² Škrivanić 1974: 67.

²³ A field survey of the road and the village of Đerekari of was performed, and of the medieval church on Crkvište archeological site was performed on September 1, 2008.

²⁴ A field study of the road and the monastery of Podvrh was conducted on September 3, 2008.

²⁵ A field study of the road was conducted on September 10, 2006.

From the Lim river valley (from the *župa* of Lim) the road once went to what is now the village of Crniš, above which are the remains of a fortification in the site of Gradac located on a rocky hill. Well-preserved remains of a road paved with river stones are still visible within a modern driveway. This was the old road to Azane, Lozna and Savin Bor in Bihor, and further on to Pešter. There was also a local road passing through this fortress to Goduša and then to Korita.²⁶

From Plav, along the road through the Lim river valley, one road diverted over the Čakor mountain. The road went from Plav to the right bank of the Lim from Čeligrad and came to Murine, where a customs house was located in the modern period. From there it followed the Lim to Velika, then headed to Čakor and further on to Peć and Dečani.²⁷ That direction connected the upper Lim river valley with Metohija. It was a horse trail (for leading a loaded horse or horseback riding) that mostly followed the route of an old Roman macadam road, which was still well-preserved and visible in the nineteenth century.²⁸ One branch of the road went past Chakor from the village of Desni Metoh, then into the valley of the Bjeluha river and from there to the Peć road, or directly to Dečani. From Plav to Peć, it also went from Bevčina and along Mount Košuta to Savin Senokos near Peć, which is mentioned in the *Chrisobule* of Dečani.²⁹

Medieval roads in the Lim river valley connected the Adriatic coast (primarily Dubrovnik and the coast of Zeta) with Ras (Novi Pazar) and Metohija, which were the centers of the medieval Serbian state. By the time medieval commerce emerged, the ancient Roman roads had deteriorated due to neglect, so that they were only partially used, and only in those segments where they coincided with medieval trade routes. Medieval roads were often just rocky paths that could only be used by people and animals, since the commerce in the Balkans was carried out by caravans. As the material remains on the ground in Lim valley testify, most of these roads were cobbled, at least when leading up to the fortresses and marketplaces. In some places, material from ancient Roman roads was used for these.

When considering late antique and medieval routes in Polimlje, different contexts must be taken into account. In antiquity, the Lim river valley had no special significance for Rome. So at that time, these were the local roads connecting the region with the neighboring areas. The hub for transportation networks at that time was in central Podrinje. In the medieval Serbian state (from the early twelfth century onward) the Lim river valley was one of the most important regions where the estates of the ruling dynasty were located. As part of caravan trade, the Lim river valley was an important transit center between the Serbian Littoral, Dubrovnik, and the central parts of the Serbian state. Most caravan trade (except Prizren) directed toward the Adriatic communes ran through this region. Medieval roads were important and numerous because they led to many marketplaces and caravanserais in the Lim river valley, and from there to Serbia.

²⁶ A field survey of the road was performed on September 4, 2008.

²⁷ A field survey of the road was performed June 11, 2005.

²⁸ Mijatović 1868: 269–270.

²⁹ Milojević 1880: 58; Škrivanić 1974: 68.

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**ПУТЕВИ У ПОЛИМЉУ
У ПОЗНОЈ АНТИЦИ И СРЕДЊЕМ ВЕКУ –
КОНТИНУИТЕТ И ПРОМЕНЕ**

Резиме

Средњовековни путеви у Полимљу повезивали су Јадранско приморје, пре свега Дубровник и Зетско приморје, са центрима средњовековне српске државе, са Расом (Нови Пазар) и Метохијом. Стари римски путеви су, до времена развоја средњовековне трговине, били запуштени и пропали, тако да су само делимично искоришћавани и то само у оним сегментима где су се поклапали са средњовековним правцима трговине. Средњовековни путеви су често били само камените стазе којима су могли да се крећу човек и товарна животиња, јер је балканска трговина била караванска. Како сведоче материјални остаци на терену у Полимљу, већина ових путева је била калдрмисана, бар на прилазима тврђавама и трговима. Понегде се за ово користио материјал са старих римских путева. Мора се имати у виду и чињеница да је део ових путева свакако калдрмисан тек у турско доба, али се та разлика на терену неда утврдити у већини случајева.

Када се говори о позноантичким и средњовековним путевима у Полимљу мора се имати на уму да се ту ради о различитим контекстима. У антици Полимље ни по чему нема посебан значај за Рим. Њиме тада иду локални путеви који га повезују сасуседним областима. Центар ка коме се гравитира у то време налази се у средњем Подрињу. У доба средњовековне српске државе (од почетка 12. века) Полимље је једна од најважнијих области где су баштине владарске династије. Полимље у караванској трговини представља важан транзитни центар између српског Приморја, Дубровника и централних делова српске државе. Највећи део караванске трговине (ако се изузме Призрен), усмерен ка јадранским комунама, води преко Полимља. Зато су средњовековни полимски путеви важни и бројни јер воде до многобројних полимских тргова и караванских станица, а од њих воде даље у Србију.

Кључне речи: средњи век, путеви, Полимље, касна антика, Дубровник, Рас.