

## ABSTRACT

### THE EGNATIAN WAY

The "matrix" of the terrestrial communications network from Asia Minor to Europe may be seen as a fork opening in the area of Bosphorus. This is the starting point of two main routes, which immediately diverge. The first one, heading north-west, wedges in the Balkans and the Rhodope mountains climbing up the Maritsa basin and then Morava's, until the Beograd junction, where it continues until Central Europe following the right bank of Danube.

The second route, on the contrary, after skirting southwards the farthest southwest offshoots of the Balkans and crossing the plains of Thrace and Macedonia, penetrates in the Balkan peninsula until its western coast. At its north-west end, the first route leads to the North-European, German and Russian plains, beyond the Porta Morava, whereas southwest the other axis was somehow a horizontal link between the southern regions of Adriatic and Northern Aegean, the Dardanelles and the Black Sea.

A main junction between the two axes, whose direction is North-West – South-West, which goes from the Morava valley, crosses the Wardar valley and leads to Aegean at Thessaloniki) has always enabled people to travel over the whole network, in various historical situations, both by intersections and by fragmentary routes.

In other circumstances, on the contrary, the political situation makes the practicability of routes along the first or the second path and its link roads extremely difficult, until preventing it completely.

The Egnatia road is the name by which the Romans defined and structured the East-to-West route of this network, starting from the II century B. C.

Such route was of strategic importance both in ancient times and today, when the flow of the sources of energy and the information, which are crucial to the development of many continental areas, are more evident.

The last conflict in the Balkans, as well the general prospects of the European development, have stemmed just from the redefinition of the route, rather than from the enhancement of the N-W/S-W link road, passing through Beograd and from the Danubian river navigation.

What was the function of the ancient via Egnatia may be found today in two slightly different positions: either northwards, under the name of *Corridor 8*, a connection project aimed at linking Bulgaria, Macedonia and Albania from the Black Sea through the bench marks of Varna, Burgas, Sofia, Skopje, Durazzo, with the exclusion of the modern Greece and the Thessalonica harbour; or, somehow in alternative, more southwards, by keeping its name and following, in its final section,

another ancient route which, from Larissa junction, led to the Ionian Sea (the *Nea Egnatia*, with its harbour at Igoumenitsa).

The need to tackle the problem of the topographical reconstruction of such route with a systematic and analytic approach, far from being solved, is at the roots of this research process. Though the Via Egnatia has been one of the most important communication routes of the Roman world, a modern global monograph is still lacking. It is essential in fact to co-ordinate any written sources as well as the results of the archaeological researches and finds, including a critical revision of all remarks that many scholars made on such topic (starting from Nicola Bergier, at the dawn of modern topography).

The existing bibliography seems, though not so huge, seems to be sometimes confusing.

The main objective of my work, which represents, among the other things, a sylloge of literary and historical sources and the historical and topographical framework of the Via Egnatia as a whole, has been mostly that of recovering, re-examining and updating the knowledge of Via Egnatia and the ancient path that preceded it, known in the Roman age as a road of Candavia, ἐπὶ Κανδαουίᾱς, in the Albanian central region, running from the Adriatic coast to the area of Ochrida lake and, more eastwards, until the ancient town of Herakleia Lynkestidos.

The starting point of this research process is a description of the environmental framework which takes the geomorphologic and climatic characters of the land concerned into account, as well as the most important changes in landscape in the last three millennia.

After examining the main natural pathways of the region concerned, the research process catalogued all the archaeological finds relating to the network of the Egnatia road (human settlements, remains of villas, warehouses, tombs, milestones, epigraphs, stretches of road, bridges) whose discovery has been often mentioned in few words only and seldom satisfactorily substantiated in the scientific literature.

Together with such finds, there is a list of all the topographical sites of interest, that might be obtained from historical and literary sources. The collection of all such data, organised in cards identifying sites, allowed to work out a chart of the archaeological records in order to trace the road course.

The cartographic basis was constituted by 1:100,000-scale Soviet military maps (since more reduced scale maps were difficult to find), as well as, for the section from Durrës to Elbasan only, some 1:10,000-scale maps of the Military Geographic Institute of Albania.

The analysis and interpretation of data has been made by dividing the Via Egnatia in various sections: from Durrës to Elbasan, from Apollonia to Kuç, from Elbasan to Qafë Thane, from Qafë Thane to Ohrid, from Ohrid to Bitola. Moreover, some road sections have been examined which belong to the road system of the Via Egnatia: the section from Kuç to Thanaj, from Lushnje to Muriqan, from Cerriku to Elbasan and finally the coastal route between Durrës and Aulon.

Being well aware of their complementarity, such natural pathways, together with the archaeological finds, have been examined and compared with the evidences of written sources, among which the itinerary sources are of great prominence. Very poor information have been brought by toponomy, due to the lack of specific previous research processes and the scanty presence of toponyms in the cartography used. The historical cartography and the aerial photographs found at the Military Geographic Institute of Florence may be numbered among the resources exploited.

Other aerial photographs dating back to 1940 have been identified at the National Archives Cartographic and Architectural Branch of USA.

The hypotheses of reconstruction of the Via Egnatia, thanks to multidisciplinary contributions, have been adjusted in time by subsequent approximations and have been superimposed on the cartographic basis on which the archaeological records already listed had been previously placed; of course, such settings have been decided taking account of the uncertainties of some reports, arising from frequent inaccuracies or even from the lack of specific references in literature.

With regard to the section of road included between Durrës and Lin, the adjustments took advantage of the reading and interpretation of aerial images, also recent ones, by using MatLab software. This way, it has been possible to determine with some precision not only some sections of paths, but also the exact course of the ancient Roman road.

In the light of the foregoing, the research processes carried out until now must be considered as an arrangement of a know-how, made of data and a basis for work; it is preliminary to a number of *in situ* operations that the author intends to make together with the team of researchers created to the purpose, i.e. *Via Egnatia (Albania) Project*, constituted by Albanian and Anglo-American scholars.

In order to perform and complete the road's reconstruction, not only will such researchers make first of all a direct inspection and geo-referencing of all data collected about the archaeological records, but they will also bring a thorough photographical and graphic documentation and, finally, they will ascertain the existence of the road path along those sections of land which are most likely to host it, by means of excavations performed in important sites.

## ROADS IN THE ROMAN WORLD

### *Introduction*

The Roman road system represented, together with the sea transport network<sup>1</sup>, one of the essential structural means<sup>2</sup> through which the Roman state established itself and then spread its power on populations and territories for at least ten centuries<sup>3</sup>.

In the meanwhile, the Roman civilisation, thanks to roads, assimilated, merged and transformed even the most varied and distant cultural and economic contributions and influences, taking on that character of universality which enabled it to live on<sup>4</sup>.

Compared to other civilisations, the construction of Roman roads is governed by a strong abstraction process<sup>5</sup>. The land loses its original condition and is isolated from its context. The marks of nature, which are uncertain due to their continuous becoming, are replaced by the land surveyor by the well-defined marks of the Roman State.

A milestone sets once and for all a point in space and so marks time as well. This way, huge territories take on for the first time a definite outline, permanent military and economic reference points are established and travelling times are fixed more precisely<sup>6</sup>. Political, military, economic and administrative activities may be carried out in such territories with a precision unknown until then.

Such process has been possible only thanks to the concurrence of a suitable organisational economic, geographical, ethnographical, geometrical, building know-how. The peculiar novelty of which Rome bears witness<sup>7</sup> does not lie, as often said, in its general, strategic plan, unknown to other civilisations, governing the development and maintenance of road infrastructures. The latter is, if anything, the result of an effective scientific system, the only one able to consistently redefine the territory.

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<sup>1</sup> P. A. Gianfrotta, "Le vie di comunicazione", *Storia di Roma*, vol. 4, Caratteri e morfologia, pages 301-322.

<sup>2</sup> *Moles necessariae* in Plin. *N. H.* 30,75.

<sup>3</sup> Rutilio Namaziano's voyage to Gallia turns into a symbolic event, as it epitomises the metaphor for the decadence of the Roman road network, within the framework of the wider decadence of the Roman Empire.

<sup>4</sup> L. Bosio, *Le strade romane della Venetia e dell'Histria*, Padova, 1991, page 15.

<sup>5</sup> Quilici points out that the construction of the Via Domitia is celebrated by Statius, *Silvae*, IV, as "the triumph of man who tames wilderness, bringing about order and civilisation where there were wood and marshes only"; later, the same author underlines, still with regard to Roman roads, "the assertion of a rational design, at the cost of great difficulties". L. Quilici, *Le strade. Viabilità tra Roma e Lazio*, Roma, 1990, pages 11, 22.

<sup>6</sup> Cato measures the land of the Sabines by means of the length of a road. Cato, *Orig. ferg.* I, Jord, 6 Jord. Also Dion. Al., *Antiq.*, II, 49; the same does Strabo for Umbria, *Geogr.*, V, C 227 see G. Radke, s. v. "Viae publicae romanae", *RE*, Supplementband XIII, Stuttgart, 1971, (Italian translation *Viae Publicae Romanae*, Bologna, 1981, page 313).

<sup>7</sup> For Dion. Ali., *Antiq.*, III, 13, the wealth of Rome is extraordinary for three reasons: its aqueducts, roads and cloacas. These three elements constitute, also for Strabo, *Geogr.*, V, 3, 8, the element of the Roman's superiority on Greeks.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Egnatia road is the infrastructural work with which the Romans, starting from the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B. C., structured the millenary route that ran from the southern regions of the Adriatic coast to the northern Aegean, ensuring thus communications from East to West.

Strabo<sup>8</sup> bears witness that, at its western end, on the Adriatic coast, this road started from the town of *Apollonia*.

A road coming from *Epidamnus* (Dyrrachium) - conventionally called in studies as the "northern branch of Via Egnatia" or, more usually and easily, "Via Egnatia" - joined Via Egnatia in a point that, according to Strabo, was equidistant from the two above mentioned towns.

Such intersection, at least in the period when the two itineraries contained in the entire *Itinerarium Provinciarum* were written, coincided with the site of Clodiana, or had such site in its neighbourhood as its subsequent *statio*, that was called "*mansio Coladiana*" in a third source of itineraries, the *Itinerarium Burdigalense*.

After the two roads met in a single route, the latter took the middle valley of Shkumbin climbing it up until Sopi Polis hill, in the area of Haxhi Beqarit, where the ancient road was forced to pass from the right to the left banks of Shkumbin, due to the morphology of the valley itself.

According to Strabo, from this region on, or maybe from farther downhill, the road was surely called ἐπὶ Κανδαυίας, the "road of *Candavia*", from the name of an Illyrian mountain.

This section of the road crossed in fact some highlands which, at that time, were supposed to stretch at least until the *Lychnidòs* lake region (Ochrida lake, lakes of Prespa and Mikra Prespa). From *Lychnidòs*, the road went on towards the mountain passes along which ran the border between Illyricum and Macedonia. Through such passes, the route let into a district of the northern Macedonia, Lyncestyde, and its main centre, *Herakleia Lynkestidos*, where another route of the great road junction of Stobi came.

The Egnatia road touched then *Edessa* and thus, after crossing the Macedonian plain, it reached *Thessalonica* through *Pella*. This town on the thermaic gulf, however, was located only at the middle of the route which ended at *Cipsela* on the *Ebro* and that only later was continued until Byzantium.

Along such route, considering its wide radius, the road met the most different morphological configurations: from plains, at the side of the marshy districts of Myzeqe, to river terraces along the Shkumbin and to lakeshores; from saddles among formations of low hills to demanding rises on the side of mountains sometimes followed by steep slopes.

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<sup>8</sup> Strabo, VII, 7, 4.

The Roman builders, nevertheless, managed to avoid a course with sharp changes in height, except that in few cases. The route of Via Egnatia shows a great observance of what have been always the basic principles of the Roman building technique: reaching the various destinations in the straightest, easiest and cost-effective way, taking first of all the long-range destinations into account, and then leaving out any lands subject to floods as well as any pointless straining of the land itself.

Though the Egnatia road has been one of the most important communication routes of the Roman world and in spite of two centuries of studies and archaeological researches leading to a substantial bibliography, the state of knowledge on its route is unfortunately far from being satisfactory.

To this regard, Wilkes' statements reported in his introduction to Map 49 Illyricum of Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World<sup>9</sup> appear as being not thoroughly true; he says "*Recent investigations in Albania, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Greece have established the line of the road in many places. Also now identified are the locations of most of the stations listed by itineraries*". In fact, not only the detailed course but even the general line of the road between Kuç and Muriqan are completely unknown to us. Moreover, too often a reconstruction of the ancient route of the Egnatia road was hastily associated with the path of modern roads<sup>10</sup>, while this is likely to have occurred only when the morphology of the land actually forced the road to follow a given course, in narrow passages.

Though, since the Bronze Age, the region crossed by the western part of the Egnatia road showed a lively metallurgical activity, due to the presence of many deposits, shops, supply points, markets and stations, any attempt to discover any track and, in the Greek, Macedon and Illyrian age, even any road handwork, proved itself unsuccessful.

Even the attempts to refer any structures and road pavings to the Illyrian age or to ascertain the chronology of any building phases preceding or following the Roman intervention are not properly substantiated by excavations but merely by macroscopic examinations of the route and by sometimes conflicting measurements of its width.

Shtylla<sup>11</sup>, who summarizes the theories of Ceka and Papajani<sup>12</sup>, deems the remnants near Gurat and Zeza of Xhyrës and a substraction wall near Qafë Thane to be pre-Roman (Illyrian), alleging that their width (1,2 – 1,8 metres) could only allow the transit of horses and beasts of burden, but not of carts.

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<sup>9</sup> J. J. Wilkes, "Map 49 Illyricum. Introduction" (compiled 1995), in R. J. A. Talbert, *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*, Map-by-Map directory, Volume II, Princeton, 2000, page 749.

<sup>10</sup> The correspondence of the modern road with the ancient course has been lately maintained for the distance between Bradashesh and Mirakë. M. G. Amore, L. Bejko, Y. Cerova, I. Gjipali, "The Via Egnatia (Albania) Project and the bridge at Topçias", *JRA*, 14 (2001), page 381.

<sup>11</sup> V. Shtylla, *Rruget dhe urat e vjetra ne Shqipëri*, Tirane, 1997, pages 11, 32 and 35.

<sup>12</sup> N. Ceka – L. Papajani, "Rruga në luginën e Shkumbint në kohën antike", *Monumentet*, 1 (1971), pages 43-59 (in particular, fig. 6, 7 and 8); N. Ceka – L. Papajani, "La route del la vallée du Shkumbin dans l'antiquité", *Studia Albanica*, 9/1 (1972), pages 95-106.

Hammond had already underlined the limits of such attempts to make the road widths and lines match with their building stages<sup>13</sup>. In this connection, it seems quite unlikely that the Illyrian kingdom of Agron and later of his wife Teuta, that gave life to an administrative organisation only around the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, managed to perform any road paving works in a territory that, among the other things, it is uncertain they managed to control.

Thoroughly different is the situation of road works in the Macedonian age. It is certain, in fact, that some sections of the road (which will later become the Via Egnatia), as the ones crossing the "défilé" of Kirli Derven, were delimited by horoi (ΟΡΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΟΔΟΥ) and by road stones bearing distances in *stadia*. It is quite certain that the Macedonians performed some maintenance and repair of the road in 190 B. C. under Philip V, in order to facilitate the passage of the consul Lucius Cornelius Scipio, as specifically required from the Romans themselves. The only possible Macedonian infrastructural work in the area under examination is that of the bridge of Topçias, made by Hammond, though it has been recently questioned, after some archaeological researches have ascertained that such bridge had been built in the Roman age<sup>14</sup>.

Maybe the Romans did not take advantage of any former building experience in this area. Their expertise was entirely innovative and implied a suitable and well-established economic, geographical, ethnological and geometrical, as well as organisational, know-how. They were the only ones who managed to redefine consistently the territory and to adapt it to the new institutional requirements. Thanks also to reclamation works of marshy areas, some former bends of the route were replaced by long stretches which sometimes overlooked already existing towns to create new axes of population.

Sometimes, the former tracks were paved. Stone bridges rose above watercourses, subtraction walls and viaducts were built to cross some areas.

The Romans started to build the Egnatia road immediately after, or at the latest in the twenty five years after the launching of the measures that can be summarized in Floro's statement "*Metello ordinanti cum maxime Macedoniae statum*"; by means of such measures, Macedonia (after the crucial events of 148 – 146 B. C.), was given its rules and all political and juridical conditions were established so that the new occupiers could exploit that land.

In this peculiar chronological lapse of time, the circumstance, reported by Strabo, that the road was "βεβηματισμένη κατὰ μίλιον καὶ κατεστηλωμένη", might be a reference, as well as an exact

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<sup>13</sup> "I am less confident about the attribution of forms of construction and types of zigzag than the authors (N. Ceka – L. Papajani), but the broad distinction between packhorse tracks and carriageable gradients can be made firmly" N. G. L. Hammond, "The western part of the Via Egnatia", *JRS*, 64 (1974), pages 186 – 187.

<sup>14</sup> N. G. L. Hammond, [Note 175], page 191; N. G. L. Hammond, [Note 179], page 25; N. G. L. Hammond, [Note 136], page 235. M. G. Amore, L. Bejko, Y. Cerova, I. Gjipali, "The Via Egnatia (Albania) Project and the bridge at Topçias", *JRA*, 14 (2001), page 389.

fulfilment, of *Lex Sempronia viaria*<sup>15</sup> that, among the other things, made the presence of milestones official and mandatory.

Moreover, the construction of the Via Domitia<sup>16</sup>, still in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B. C., may ascribe the two infrastructures to the same temporal and strategic framework, as they were conceived and built almost as if they were meant to embrace the new territories that the Romans had conquered in the Mediterranean area.

The construction of the new infrastructure was naturally helped both by military needs, aimed at fostering the control of the new province, and economic reasons, i.e. the exploitation of the new territories and their populations.

The new road was meant to trigger a general upturn in the economy of the region that, after the strict measures adopted in 168 B. C., plunged into a state of serious depression; its devastating effects, which Strabo<sup>17</sup> could still experience one century later, may be inferred from other historical and literary sources of the 1<sup>st</sup> century A. C., depicting the thoroughly desolated landscape surrounding some sections of the road.

The Via Egnatia undoubtedly falls within that category of roads which take their name from their builder, or better from the person who paved them, rather than from their function or point of arrival, and the find of 1974 in the alluvial soils of Gallikos river near Thessalonica of a milestone bearing the name of the builder confirms such theory.

Festo and Flacco Siculo<sup>18</sup> themselves report this tradition, and the latter affirmed, about in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A. C., "*nam sunt viae, quae publice muniuntur et auctorum nomen optinent*". The person who executed such work was in fact the Roman magistrate Cneus Egnatius, son of Caius, quoted in the milestone discovered in 1974, of whom no other information is known for the time being, besides his name and capacity as proconsul Ἀνθύπατος Ῥωμαίων.

The simplicity of text, the name of the magistrate, in the nominative case, and some paleographical peculiarities of the inscription engraved on the milestone, both in Latin and in Greek, help to date it to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B. C., and the researchers agree with that.

Between the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A. C. (when the *redactio in formam provinciae* of Macedonia occurred) and the 1<sup>st</sup> century A. C., when Strabo wrote the VII book of Geography, where the Via Egnatia is mentioned, only five public figures have been found in written sources bearing the name of Egnatius, who may be associated to the builder of the road.

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<sup>15</sup> Plutarco, *C. Gracc.*, 7.

<sup>16</sup> R. Chevallier, *Rivista di topografia antica* (JAT), VI (1996), pages 25-36; G. Castellui, *Via Domitia et Via Augusta*, Paris, 1997; for a bibliography on the Via Domitia, see R. Chevallier, *Les voies romaines*, Paris, 1997<sup>2</sup>, pages 331-332.

<sup>17</sup> Strabo, VII, 7, 9.

<sup>18</sup> *De cond. Agr. Gromat.* I, 146, 2 and following.



Of all of them, Cneus Egnatius C. f. Stell(atina tribu) is the only eligible one to be identified – though it is not entirely certain – as the builder of the Via Egnatia. He is in fact the only one linked to some events of Greece, being he quoted by P. Cornelius Blasio, praetor allegedly between 175 and 160 B. C., in a letter to Corcyreans containing a copy of a Senatus Consultum.

With regard to the subsequent maintenance and restoration interventions, the examination of milestones and road handworks highlights the activities performed by Augustus (to the age of whom the construction of at least two bridges, that on Strymon and maybe that of Topçias, date back) and by Trajan; we have information of his restoration works of the road, *longa intermissione neglectam*, and of their progress, by means of two milestones. In particular, the memory of the works performed by Trajan is perpetuated in centuries. Still milestones testify an undoubted interest in the course shown by Settimio Severo, Caracalla and the emperors of the second tetrarchy. Finally, the last maintenance works of the Via Egnatia are testified by the reutilization of the most ancient milestones, bearing inscriptions of Constantinian age.

The Roman road system in the modern central Albania seems to be made up in the imperial age of four main routes: one longitudinal (lengthwise), i.e. the coastal road from Dyrrachium to Aulon, that was, in turn, part of a longer route which from southern Epirus climbed up towards Dalmatia; two transversal routes, the first one from North-West to South-East, i.e. the internal road going from Dyrrachium to Antipatreia (that stretched until the plain of Larissa) and the second one represented by the Via Egnatia, that from Apollonia (South-West) headed for the modern town of Elbasan (North-East), from where it joined a route coming from Dyrrachium (West-East) and continued towards the middle valley of Shkumbin, climbing it up until the watershed between the Shkumbin and Drin's basins.

With regard to written sources, six milestones bear witness up to now to such routes, and the only ones which may be referred to the route of Via Egnatia are the so-called "twin routes", dating back to the kingdom of Caracalla and discovered respectively at Struga and Ohrid.

With regard the so-called southern and northern branches of the Via Egnatia between Apollonia and Dyrrachium and the town of Herakleia Lynkestidos, the sources of itineraries testify the existence respectively of:

- 1) 7 *stationes* located along 153 m. p., mentioned in the *Itin. Ant.* 317,7-319,1 (to be increased in case by 10 m. p. if one agrees with the data about the distance between Dyrrachium and Clodiana, according to the B code of the *Itin. Ant.* 318,1).
- 2) 9 *stationes* located along 173 m. p., mentioned in the *Itin. Ant.* 329,5-330,3 (a route very likely to coincide with the genuine Via Egnatia from Apollonia on);

- 3) 16 (15) *stationes*, 8 of which *mutationes*, located along 174 m. p. in the *Itinerarium Burdigalense* 606,9-607,8 (from which the 13 m. p. assigned for the distance between the mansio Coladiana and the mansio Marusio may be in case deducted, if one accepts Hammond's<sup>19</sup> theory according to which Marusio is a spelling mistake of the copyist, who repeated the word "mansio" by distorting it and assigning it a distance);
- 4) 10 *stationes* in the *Tabula Peutingeriana* (to which at least other 2 have to be added, which are not mentioned because of some gaps of such document);
- 5) 8 *stationes* in all, testified in several routes, of which the Ravenna Geographer bears witness;
- 6) the data mentioned in the compilation of Guidone is not significant, due to its incompleteness.

It may be inferred from the above information that the Via Egnatia measured about 173-174 m. p. from Apollonia to Herakleia and that it had not less than 9 *stationes*, which from the 4<sup>th</sup> century A. C. increased to at least 15.

The attempts to identify such *stationes* made by researchers does not seem to have been always convincing.

The route of the Via Egnatia between Apollonia and Verbës, from Muriqan to Haxhi Beqarit and finally from Qukës on Shkumbin to Radozda, on the western shore of the Ochrida lake, has been defined with more precision. The same applies to the ancient stretch of road from Durrës to Hani i Goses.

In other areas, the lack of any previous researches and exact data about the circumstances and the places where archaeological finds have been discovered, prevents the identification of the exact path of the Roman road.

Such general problems, that are peculiar to the area under investigation, have been compounded by some obstacles intervening in the reconstruction, which arise from the natural environment itself: in the highlands between Babie and Qukës, for example, landslides; in the alluvial soils of Myzeqe and in lands which are subject to changes in the course of rivers, the alluvial soils; along the coastlines and the Ochrida lake, the variations respectively in the sea level and the level of lake.

The information brought in by toponymy has been very poor, for want of specific past researches and the scanty current toponyms in the maps used, though there are good chances that satisfactory results may be achieved within this scope of studies.

The analysis of very often generic, vague and fragmentary information about the remnants of a road paving leads to believe that the width of the Via Egnatia was not uniform all along it.

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<sup>19</sup> N. G. L. Hammond, *A history of Macedonia*, v. 1. Historical geography and prehistory, Oxford 1972, page 24.

Its width ranges in fact from 6,7 m., including sometimes one-metre wide pavements, to 2,4 m. in some highlands. The road's width was obviously determined *quantum ratio utilitatis permittit*. A recurring measure seems to be that of 6,2 m. (maybe 21 feet). It has been also ascertained the existence of *crepidines*. The road was not always comfortable. Malchus effectively defines the route from Herakleia to what was called the *Epirus Nova*, as *δύσοδον καὶ στενήν ὁδὸν*<sup>20</sup>.

The size of stones used for paving, that was conditional upon the materials available from time to time, was generally 0.50-0.70 m. x 0.40-0.30 m. x 0.15-0.10 m. There is no information (at the most expectations for future research processes<sup>21</sup> on the matter) confirming the casting of paving on layers of material or vice-versa directly on the ground.

At the end of this first stage, the research processes undertaken on the Via Egnatia not only prepared a suitable grounding, made up of data and a basis for work, in view of a number of interventions on land which hopefully fall within the scope of *via Egnatia (Albania) Project*, but also enabled researchers to get new information on the reconstruction of the ancient road tracks thanks to an examination of the aerial photographs; in particular, in the areas between Durrës and Kavajë, between Qukës and Qafë Thane and in the one between Izbiste and Jankovec.

Some segments of land have been identified, respectively between Apollonia and Kuç and between Lushnje and Belsh, that are supposed to have "housed" the Via Egnatia or a possible route linked to it.

To this purpose, it is clear that it is important to explore just the area included between Thanaj Lushnje, Kuç and Çërrik, in order to discover the existence of possible road layouts.

The hope is that the Via Egnatia may crop up in time from earth just like the remains of those who fought along it in centuries, whom Virgil celebrated. *Scilicet et tempus veniet, cum finibus illis / agricola incurvo terram molitus aratro / exesa inveniet scabra robigine pila / aut gravibus rastris galeas pulsabit manis / grandiaque effossis mirabitur ossa sepulcris*<sup>22</sup>.

The state of the research process is not so favourable, due to the ruinous political, economic and social situation of all the Balkans and the strong hostility that has always torn the peoples living along the axis of Via Egnatia, such as Albanians, Macedonians, Valakians, Greeks, Turks. Incomprehension and mistrust barriers prevent the full unfolding of scientific activities; all researchers need on the contrary an atmosphere of peaceful co-operation for an exchange of information and a free access to data, in order to tackle such wide-ranging issues as historic-territorial matters.

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<sup>20</sup> *Historici Graeci Minores*, I, ed. Dindorfius, Lipsiae, MDCCCLXX, 412.

<sup>21</sup> M. G. Amore, L. Bejko, Y. Cerova, I. Gjipali, "The Via Egnatia (Albania) Project and the bridge at Topçias", *JRA*, 14 (2001), page 385.

<sup>22</sup> *Virg., Georg.*, I, 493-496.

The acquisition of cartographic material, GIS data and the photographic documentation of the archaeological finds involved many hindrances, since it was *de facto* prohibited, subjected as it was to numerous governmental restrictions and requests for authorisations.

The archaeological research process seems nowadays to be strongly influenced by racial hatred and the reasons of political power, so that it often ends up by privileging certain fields rather than others or by issuing partial results. Such process sometimes involves economic interests or conceals intelligence activities. This is not a good reason, anyway, to give up all hopes, to stop looking for co-operation and friendship, making any attempts to overcome mutual mistrust, to settle rifts and to fill gaps.

The experience of disasters occurred in the past may be of help. After all, it is just in roads that the contradiction crossing every day our life and society (life that wins death, the wish for happiness and peace that prevails on destruction and human despair) finds its truth and achievement. The Via Egnatia, like other roads, epitomises the meeting with a different experience, the acknowledgement, respect, dialogue, exchange, fraternity, co-operation among human beings: all those principles without which no research process would after all make sense.