

Florin-Gheorghe Fodorean

Pannonia, Dacia and Moesia in the Ancient Geographical Sources

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Ancient Geographical Sources

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Begründet von Ernst Kirsten,

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*To my wife Angela,
my two sons Alexandru Florin and Dan Mihai,
and to my parents
Viorica and Gheorghe Fodorean*

Zum Geleit

Es ist keine Frage: die vorliegende Studie fügt sich thematisch geradezu selbstverständlich in die Reihe der *Geographica Historica* ein. In ihrem Zentrum stehen mit der *Tabula Peutingeriana* und dem *Itinerarium Antonini* zwei der klassischen historisch-geographischen Quellen.

Florin-Gheorghe Fodorean nutzt sie nicht nur als Quelle für die Geschichte der römischen Provinzen an der Mittleren und Unteren Donau und speziell deren Verkehrsinfrastruktur, sondern trägt Dank einer vergleichenden Analyse Wesentliches zur Diskussion über ihre Entstehung bei.

Eckart Olshausen und Vera Sauer

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Introduction

The histories of the Middle and Lower Danubian provinces, i.e. Pannonia, Dacia and Moesia, were characterized by the same traits. Pannonia became a target of Roman military conquest around 35–33 B.C. In the preceding years Roman interest in that region had been restricted exclusively to Pannonia's economic resources. Now it was turned into an imperial province of consular rank, under the name of *Illyricum inferius*, in the wake of the defeat of the Dalmato-Pannonian rebellion of 6–9 A.D. Between 102 A.D. and 106 A.D. Trajan divided it into Pannonia Superior, located on the upper reaches of the Danube and guarded by three legions, and Pannonia Inferior, further to the south-east, with one legion garrisoned at Aquincum.

Although Moesia had close ties with Dacia and Pannonia, it was a separate historical and geographical entity.¹ It became a Roman province in the last years of Augustus' reign. According to ancient geographical sources, the province was bounded in the east by the Pontus Euxinus (Black Sea), in the west by the river Drinus (Drina), in the north by the Danubius (Danube) and in the south by the Haemus (Balkan) and Scardus (Šar) mountains. Today it includes territories in Macedonia, Southern Serbia (Moesia Superior), Northern Bulgaria and the Dobrudja (south-eastern Romania).

The territory to be conquered last by the Romans was Dacia. There were many reasons for Trajan's action, among them the decision to secure the river frontier along the Danube. By creating the province of Dacia, this goal was accomplished.

The history of the region was characterized by numerous threats that had to be dealt with incessantly. Thus the Dacians attacked Moesia during Domitian's reign. They also crossed the river in the winter of 101/102. In 102 A.D. the Moesian troops remained in their south-western territories, which had been under Roman military control since the end of the first war against the Dacians. In 105 the *pridianum* of *cohors I Hispanorum veterana*, from Moesia Inferior, mentions a *vexillatio* of these units *intra provinciam* (i.e. in Moesia Inferior), at Piroboridava (along the valley of Siret, at Poiana, Galați County) and Buridava (Stolniceni, Vâlcea County). Then, at the beginning of Hadrian's reign, in order to solve the problems with the Sarmatians, the emperor put Quintus Marcius Turbo in charge of the armies of Pannonia and Dacia. After the outbreak of the Marcomannic wars, the most difficult moment in the existence of the province of Dacia, the *legio V Macedonica* was transferred in 168 A.D. from Moesia Inferior to Potaissa (Turda, Cluj County), in Dacia Porolissensis. These examples show that on numerous occasions the Danubian provinces cooperated in order to solve difficult situations.

¹ Mócsy 1974.

These are data from military history, which forms a connection of the Danubian provinces. But there are also other features that may be analyzed as a whole. That is why I decided, throughout this book, to pursue an in-depth investigation concerning the representation of this geographical space in the Roman itineraries. Regional investigations like the present one can offer interesting results, as A. MÓCSY noted.² After more than one century of scholarly studies focused on the Roman itineraries we are still far from explaining some details, but also from making general statements. The Peutinger map and its dating are still a problem today, generating intense debates. The same is true for the Antonine itinerary.

The idea for this book started from several fundamental questions: 1. Do the Peutinger map and the Antonine itinerary offer different information related to Pannonia, Dacia and Moesia? 2. How can one establish this? 3. Why is Dacia not listed in the Antonine itinerary? 4. How did other late sources, such as the *Notitia Dignitatum*, the Bordeaux itinerary, or the Cosmography of the Anonymous from Ravenna, present or describe these regions? 5. How were the Peutinger map and the Antonine itinerary actually compiled? 6. By analyzing these provinces, can one obtain new information useful to dating the above-mentioned documents? 7. So far, in order to date these documents, historians have discussed them as a whole or separately, focusing on small, sometimes insignificant details from certain areas. What other methodological criteria or means can be employed, beside the classical, established methods, to provide new data? 8. Can we differentiate between the purpose of the Peutinger map and the Antonine itinerary? 9. Supposing that new dating criteria can be identified, will they be useful for further research and could this method be applied to other regions, and finally to all former Roman provinces? 10. The Peutinger map and the Antonine itinerary each list around 2700 settlements. Can one compare these two documents by analyzing the presence or the absence of certain settlements, in order to date the documents?

I started my research with these questions in mind. I realized that few historians thought to compare the distances mentioned in these two itineraries. Is this method useful? Can it provide new data? The reader can find answers to these two questions in the subsequent chapters of the present book.

The geographical space of my research includes the provinces of Pannonia, Dacia and Moesia.³ The main investigations are focused on data provided by the Peutinger map and the Antonine itinerary. In some cases, I have also used data provided by Roman milestones, useful when comparing the distances between various settlements. However, there is a misbalance: In Dacia only nine milestones are known so far.⁴ For comparison, 338 milestones from Pannonia were recently investigated by P. KISS.⁵ 180 milestones were

² MÓCSY 1974, *Preface*, xix.

³ It should be mentioned that my research focuses on seven provinces (Pannonia Superior, Pannonia Inferior, Dacia Porolissensis, Dacia Superior, Dacia Inferior, Moesia Superior and Moesia Inferior).

⁴ FODOREAN 2006, chapter 2, 63–82.

⁵ KISS 2007.

discovered on the territory of Bulgaria alone.⁶ I have also used TALBERT's online database concerning the Peutinger map.⁷ This information is related to TALBERT's recent study.⁸

The book is divided into eight chapters. Each province is presented individually. Chapters 1, 2, and 3 contain brief descriptions of each province: Pannonia, Dacia and Moesia. Each presentation follows the same pattern. I have tried to highlight some features for these provinces: 1. the models of conquest; 2. the organization of the military infrastructure; 3. their administrative structure. Chapter 4 presents a history of the research into information from Roman itineraries for each province. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 investigate all the available data on the ancient cartographic sources. Chapter 5 presents the situation of Pannonia. The reader will observe that for this province the majority of information available is related to the limes road along the Danube. For the settlements listed or depicted inside the province, few data are still available. Chapter 6 is dedicated to Dacia. It presents the data concerning the representation of this province on the Peutinger map. I have also tried to locate, where I found accurate data, the ancient place-names. Each road sector is described separately. In my analysis I used data provided by other sources as well: Trajan's Column, the Ravenna Cosmography (*Anonymus Ravennas*), and archaeological data. I employed the same method to the Roman itineraries from Moesia, in chapter 7.

In chapter 8 all data available are resumed, analyzed and interpreted. The conclusions provide new insights into the purposes, the historical context, the origins and the role of the most important Roman itineraries with direct reference to the geographical space my research focuses on.

* * *

This book is the result of 14 months of research in Germany, at the University of Erfurt. I was a DAAD fellow from November 1, 2010 to December 25, 2010. Then, for a year, from January 1, 2010 to December 31, 2011, I benefited from a prestigious Fritz Thyssen scholarship for postdoctoral researchers. I would like to thank Prof. Dr. KAI BRODERSEN for all his help and the support he offered in Germany, helping me during this stay. I would also like to express my gratitude to my professor, MIHAI BĂRBULESCU, for all his support. I would also like to thank PÉTER KISS, ZSOLT VISY, MICHAEL RATHMANN, and ANDRÁS BÖDŐCS for all their help. My gratitude also goes to my colleagues DRAGOȘ BLAGA, who helped me with the graphics in this book, and to SORIN NEMETI, with whom I had numerous interesting debates during the last years regarding the historical geography of the Romans.

I would also like to express my gratitude to my colleague, Dieter Prankel, who made a great effort to revise the entire English text of this book.

For their patience and the sacrifices they made in 2011, when we lived apart, I would like offer heartfelt thanks to my wife Angela and my son Dan Mihai, two of the dearest persons in the world to me. I dedicate to them, and to my second born son Alexandru-Florin, this book, with all my love.

⁶ MADZHAROV 2009, 58.

⁷ <http://www.cambridge.org/us/talbert>

⁸ TALBERT 2010.

CHAPTER 1

Pannonia. Archaeological, Historical and Geographical Background

Pannonia first gained the attention of the Romans in 35–33 B. C. During this period, the inhabitants of these regions, the Pannonii, allies of the Dalmatians, were attacked by the Romans, who conquered and occupied Siscia (Sisak, in Croatia). Before that, the Roman interest in this area had focused exclusively on economic resources (silver and iron).¹ The founding of Aquileia in 181 B. C. may be the very first clue to the Romans' economic interest in the Balkan area. Aquileia continued to develop in the subsequent period. Even after the establishment of the Roman provinces it played an important role as the starting point of the road to Emona, east of the Julian Alps. From there, one road followed the old line of the Baltic traffic northwards via *Poetovio* (Pettau) to *Carnuntum* on the Danube. The other road descended into the valley of the river Sava, by way of *Sirmium* (Mitrovitsa), to the confluence of that river with the Danube at *Singidunum* (Belgrade). Between the foundation of Aquileia and the first Roman military actions in that area, it seems that the Romans were only interested in its natural resources.²

The ancient sources provide information regarding this war against the Pannonii. Appian mentions all the populations east of the Alps: *Sallasoi*, *Iapodes*, *Segestanoi*, *Dalmatai*, *Daisitiatai* and *Paiones*.³ Cassius Dio provides a short list of the populations involved in this event.⁴ Appian notices that the conquest of Siscia and of the valley of river Sava was motivated by Octavian's desire to use Siscia and the river itself as a military base in a future war against the Dacians and the Bastarni.⁵

Strabo describes Siscia as a place which, due to its location, was very suitable as a base for military action against the Dacians.⁶ Cassius Dio suggests that Octavian had no reproach against the Pannonii, because they did not harm to the Romans.⁷ He continues with a description of this conflict.⁸ According to Cassius Dio, this expedition was organ-

¹ Mócsy 1974, 31.

² Mócsy 1974, 31.

³ Appian, *Illiriké* 17.

⁴ Cassius Dio 49,34,2; NEMETH 2007, 131.

⁵ Appian, *Illyriké* 22; NEMETH 2007, 32.

⁶ Strabo 7,5,2.

⁷ Cassius Dio 49,36,1,2.

⁸ Cassius Dio 49,37,1–6.

ized in order to train the soldiers. The specialists agree with these two ancient sources.⁹ Some of them accepted Arrian's version.¹⁰ Mócsy understood the conquest of Siscia as an action related to Augustan propaganda.¹¹ In fact, if one looks more closely, the true purpose was, as observed by Mócsy, the creation of a land connection between Northern Italy and the Roman territories in the Balkans, but also the pacification of the neighbouring population in North-Eastern Italy.¹² I think the same strategy was applied in Dacia. The decision to conquer this territory was not only motivated by its resources, but also by the wish to pacify the barbarian populations which lived north of the Danube.

The conquest of Siscia and parts of the Sava valley served to create not only a land connection between Italy and the Balkans, but also a strategic point for a future conflict with the Dacians, even if such a war was not yet included in the Roman plans. After this conquest the sources remain silent until 16 B. C. Cassius Dio states that Macedonia was attacked by the Scordisci.¹³ Tiberius acted against the Pannonians in the subsequent year, 15 B. C. The rebellions of the Pannonians, who sometimes had the Dalmatians as allies, continued over the following years, 14, 13, 12, 11, 9 and 8 B. C.¹⁴ Some of these events were recorded by Velleius Paterculus.¹⁵ In the beginning, Agrippa and M. Vinicius were in charge of the military operations. After Agrippa's death, operations were led by Tiberius. Even Augustus came to Aquileia. The measures taken by the Romans after this intensive conflict were very harsh; for example, most of the young men were captured and sold as slaves.¹⁶ In 11 B. C., Illyricum was constituted as an imperial province. It included the area of what was later to become Dalmatia and Pannonia. The Danube came to be the northern limit of this vast area.¹⁷

We do not know the extension of the territory conquered on that occasion. We may be sure that the tribes living in the southern part of future Pannonia and in the northern part of the future province of Dalmatia came under Roman control. But Augustus, in his *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* (30), specified that after Tiberius defeated the Pannonians, the frontiers of Illyricum were pushed back to the bank of the Danube (*ripa fluminis Danuvii*). Anyway, matters regarding this frontier are related to the fact that Augustus viewed the river as an important axis of communication. He was aware that for future military actions the control of the Danube was more than necessary.¹⁸

In 6 A. D., the Pannonians, Dalmatians and other Illyrian tribes started a rebellion, which was crushed in 9 A. D. This was the last big revolt against the Romans. Illyricum was dissolved and its territory divided between the new Pannonian provinces.

Other attacks stemming from outside of the province are not known, with the exception of the one in 10 A. D., when the Dacians tried and succeeded to cross over the frozen

⁹ NEMETH 2007, 32.

¹⁰ TÓTH 2003, 19.

¹¹ Mócsy 1974, 32–33.

¹² Mócsy 1974, 32.

¹³ Cassius Dio 54,20,3.

¹⁴ NEMETH 2007, 132.

¹⁵ Velleius Paterculus 2,96.

¹⁶ Mócsy 1974, 32.

¹⁷ Mócsy 1974, 34; Cassius Dio 54,34,4.

¹⁸ Mócsy 1974, 35.

Danube to Pannonia.¹⁹ This is the first mention of a conflict between the Romans and the Dacians on the territory of the future province of Pannonia. It has not been established exactly where this conflict took place. E. NEMETH thinks that the South of Pannonia is a good possibility.²⁰ Anyway, from the same paragraph of Augustus's *Res Gestae* we know that this attack was followed by some Roman actions.²¹

The ancient sources document another Roman military action against the Dacians during Augustus' reign. But there is not enough information to establish when and where this attack happened. Annaeus Florus notes that every time the Danube was frozen the Dacians attacked the neighbouring areas.²²

Augustus decided to remove such a dangerous tribe from the Roman frontiers and sent Cn. Cornelius Lentulus to do the job. Lentulus managed to repel the Dacians to the opposite bank of the Danube (the left bank). He built surveillance posts on the right bank, which was controlled by the Romans. Despite these measures, the Dacians were not defeated, but only removed from the border area. Very soon, the Romans clashed with the Dacians during their occupation of the future province of Pannonia. The Dacians perceived this Roman proximity as a real danger.

In Illyricum the Roman domination was not yet secured either. The last significant revolt took place between 6 and 9 A. D. Tiberius, together with M. Valerius Messala Messalinus, the governor of Illyricum, started a military expedition against Maroboduus. The majority of the army participated in this expedition. Cassius Dio mentions this episode,²³ which is also described by Velleius Paterculus.²⁴ The revolt started immediately afterwards. At the same time the Dacians and the Sarmatians also attacked Moesia, in 6 A. D. Caecina Severus, the governor of Moesia, was in Sirmium at the time.

E. NEMETH noticed some interesting aspects.²⁵ Only the southern part of the future province of Pannonia was affected by this rebellion. The people living south of the river Sava, on the territory of the future province of Dalmatia, figure as the 'Dalmatian people' in the literary sources, e. g. in Strabo.²⁶ The populations north of the Sava did not participate in the rebellion. This aspect proves that the Roman military occupation had not yet extended to that area. The region between the Drava and the Sava was not fully conquered by the Romans, since Suetonius states that the conflict of 6–9 A. D. was an external one.²⁷

The first auxiliary troops were recruited from the Southern Pannonian tribes only after the defeat of this rebellion. After that, some men were recruited from the tribes north of the river Drava, but not before the middle of the first century A. D.

¹⁹ *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 30; NEMETH 2007, 133.

²⁰ NEMETH 2007, 134.

²¹ *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 30: *et postea trans Danuvium ductus exercitus meus Dacorum gentes imperia populi Romani perferre coegit.*

²² *Epitome de gestis Romanorum* 2,28.

²³ Cassius Dio 54,20,2.

²⁴ Velleius Paterculus 2,109.

²⁵ NEMETH 2007, 136.

²⁶ *Geographia* 7,5,3.

²⁷ *De Vita XII Caesarum* 3, Tiberius, 16,1.

After that time, the province of Illyricum was created. Recent research indicates that the Romans created two provinces: *Illyricum inferius* and *Illyricum superius*.²⁸ This division was required by the significant size of the province. Still, another explanation is based on the fact that five legions remained there after the defeat of the Dalmatian-Pannonian rebellion. In Northern Illyricum, the *legio XV Apollinaris* (at Emona?), the *legio VIII Augusta* (at Poetovio?) and the *legio IX Hispana* (at Siscia?)²⁹ are attested. In the Southern Illyricum, the *legiones VII* and *XI* (later *Claudia* p.f.) were garrisoned in Tilurium and Burnum respectively.³⁰ After the defeat of the rebellion, such a concentration of military troops was no longer a necessity. It also represented a real danger for Italy, not far away from Illyricum. Soon after Augustus' death, in 14 A. D., Tacitus³¹ describes a rebellion of three legions in the northern part (in Pannonia). This episode was also presented by Velleius Paterculus³² and Cassius Dio.³³ The north-eastern corner and the eastern part of Pannonia were an important strategic area, which the Romans had an eye on from the beginning. The real danger there was the presence of the Sarmatians (Iazyges). We do not know exactly when the Sarmatians occupied these regions. Their first literary mention is found in Tacitus.³⁴

The Sarmatians lived close to the Marcomanni and the Quadi for a while; in Tacitus they are perceived in some sort of alliance with Vannius. MÓCSY argued that the Iazyges were intentionally settled between Pannonia and pre-Roman Dacia, to act as a barrier against the Dacians.³⁵ One should notice that this represents the first 'common feature' of the Danubian regions. Having set up military control so well in Pannonia, the Romans avoided further attacks of the Dacians in the area. For Rome, Pannonia was primarily significant with a view to the defence of Italy.³⁶ The central provinces of the Roman Empire were well defended to the north and west by the Alps. But the area was vulnerable from the east. The Amber Road, which connected the Baltic sea to the Adriatic, represented a danger because along it anyone was able to approach Roman territory with ease. With the creation of Pannonia, Dacia and Moesia, the Amber Road was no longer the main commercial route. Before the establishment of Roman control in these areas, the Amber Road was the only route available for long-distance trade.³⁷ Starting with the second century A. D., all the traffic was redirected along the course of the Danube.³⁸ The creation of Pannonia triggered a 'chain process': Italy was safe now, and the Marcomanni and the Quadi were no longer a big threat, at least for the time being. The next problem was the Dacian threat. When Pannonia and Moesia were consolidated, the next step was made:

²⁸ NEMETH 2007, 137–140.

²⁹ MÓCSY 1974, 42–43.

³⁰ NEMETH 2007, 138, note 63.

³¹ *Annales* 1,16–30.

³² *Historiarum Libri Duo* 2,125.

³³ *Historia Romana* 57,4.

³⁴ *Annales* 12,29,3.

³⁵ MÓCSY 1974, 37–39.

³⁶ FITZ 2003, 207.

³⁷ BURNS 2003.

³⁸ WILKES 2005, 124: 'the river itself is the core, as it was for the Roman presence in Central and Eastern Europe from early in the first century A. D. to the last decades of the fourth century'.