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## A CONTRIBUTION TO THE RESEARCH OF THE RAPPORT BETWEEN THE SCORDISCI AND THE DARDANIANS IN THE END OF THE SECOND AND THE BEGINNING OF THE FIRST CENTURY BC

*Abstract:* By the end of the 2nd century B.C. the Scordisci were launching the attacks upon the Roman province of Macedonia across the territory of Thracia. Their defeats in 104-101 B.C. and the change of strategic conditions, compelled the Scordisci to conduct the attacks on Macedonia across the Dardanian territory. The scarce archaeological material of Celtic origin found in the Dardanian territory dates back from that period.

The questions of the time, dynamics and directions of the raids that the Scordisci made upon the Roman province of Macedonia offer some interesting opportunities for enlightening their rapport with the neighboring Dardanians. A synergy or a partial alliance with the Dardanians during the numerous raids that they undertook, starting in the year 135 BC, may be registered solely in a complex testimony by Appian and, indirectly, in an emendated information by Licinian.<sup>1</sup> These data from the written sources are related to the chronologically close and successive events: the activity of Sulla in this area of the Balkans, during the pause in his combat with Mitridades and, on the other hand, the barbarian attack directly preceding the campaign of Cornelius Scipio Asiagenes against the Scordisci, probably taking place in the year 84.<sup>2</sup>

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- 1 App. III.5, *Grani Liciniani* XXV, 27, cf. F. Papazoglu 1969, 241, for the possible conjuncture of the text in this sense. The translations of the classical sources and the comments are quoted from F. Papazoglu 1969, and the appendix to J. Todorović 1974, 197-206.
  - 2 J. Dobiáš, 1929, 47-67; F. Papazoglu 1969, 241-255.

Although relative in terms of chronology, these data show that the Dardanians joined the Scordisci in their raids into Macedonia fairly late. This fact demands for an explanation. The methodological approach to the interpretation of this question may be reduced to the two basic hypotheses:

- during the first phase, by the end of the second century, the Scordisci exercise a supremacy over the Dardanians and the latter therefore do not act as an independent or equal factor in their campaigns to Macedonia, or

- the Scordisci do not conduct their attacks upon Macedonia in the end of the second century over the native Dardanian lands and do not use, at least not considerably, the Morava-Vardar valley communication.

I will state my opinion in advance. I consider the second hypothesis more probable. Some premises to back up this assumption may be derived from a brief review of the attacks the Scordisci made upon Macedonia.

A short note accompanying the contents of the 56th book of Livy cites that praetor Marcus Cosconius waged battles with the Scordisci in Thrace in the year 135.<sup>3</sup> An inscription from Lethe, dated into the year 119, testifies to a conflict between Marcus Annius and the Celts (Scordisci?) near Agros.<sup>4</sup> Caius Porcius Cato, as a consul and a proconsul, fought the Scordisci in Thrace, badly and shamefully, in the year 114/113 (*Liv. per* 63; *Eutrop. IV, 24; Flor. I, 39; Dio Cass. fr. 88*). In the year 113/112, Caius Caecilius Metellus Caprarius defeated the Scordisci (?) in Thrace and celebrated a triumph.<sup>5</sup> In the next year, 112/111, Marcus Livius Drusus once more suppressed the Scordisci in Thrace and "confined the enemies within their own borders" (*Fest. IX*, similar to *Amm. Marc. XVII, 4,4*), "overrun them in their own mountains" (*Iord. 219*), "drove them further away and banished them to cross the Danube" (*Flor. I, 39*). Minucius Rufus defeated the Scordisci in a battle on the river Hebar (*Amm. Marc. XVII, 4,4*), "drove them from the entire district of Hebar" (*Flor. I, 39*), "defeated them on the iced river of Hebar" (*Fest. IX*), "slayered many of them on the river Hebar" (*Iord. 219*). This battle on the Hebar (Maritsa) took place in the year 109, when Minucius Rufus was the administrator of Macedonia.

3 *Liv. per* 56; according to F Papazoglu 1969, 220

4 F. Papazoglu 1969, 224-226.

5 *Ibid.*, 228.

Titus or Marcus Didius<sup>6</sup> defeated the Scordisci and "drove them back to Thrace" (*Flor. I, 39*), "controlled the Thracians and the Scordisci who wandered about" (*Fest. IX*), "with great effort stopped these tribes, which till then were disobedient and wandered not knowing for laws and ordered life" (*Amm. Marc. XVII, 4.4*), "defeated them, and their lands, turned into provinces, accepted the Roman yoke" (*Iord 219*). This information by Iordanes and the other authors gave grounds to the conclusion by F. Papazoglu that the campaigns of Titus Didius were the turning-point in the rapport between Rome and the barbarian peoples on the border of Macedonia. I will quote the conclusion, since I consider it crucial in rationalizing the hypothesis I am arguing for: "While the efforts of his predecessors were aimed at repulsing the raids and defeating the mugging hordes, Didius was the first to permanently subdue to the Roman power some of the Thracian districts. This is, as a matter of fact, the first penetration towards the north of the province of Macedonia, the beginning of the process that would eventually move the borders of the province up to the Danube".<sup>7</sup>

After this event, taking place in 104 or 101, the raids of the Scordisci into Macedonia stopped. The next movements mentioned in the sources, occurring in the mid-80's of the first century BC, were organized together with the Dardanians, and were of a different geographical ordinance

The cited list of the conflicts between the Scordisci and the Roman magistrates makes it obvious that the fighting took place in Thrace. This location, in a wider sense, has not been disputed. F. Papazoglu supposed that such a widely conceived ethno-geographical unit may even have comprised the Morava valley, and that the mentioned conflicts could therefore be located in this region. This would conform to the supposed, or more precisely, anticipated direction of the Scordisci moving towards Macedonia.<sup>8</sup> Not questioning the possibility that the Morava valley could have been conceived as a part of the Thracian land in a wider ethno-cultural sense, the fact indirectly affirmed by an information in Livy's work (*Liv. per. 92*), I would like to point to the veracity of the stance that the conflicts in question really took place in Thrace, in the narrow sense of the notion, and not in the

6 On the controversy over Didius's name and the date of his praetorship in Macedonia, cf. F. Papazoglu 1969, 234-238.

7 F. Papazoglu 1969, 238.

8 *Ibid.*, 228.

Morava or Vardar valleys. In this respect the conflict mentioned in the inscription from Lethe is an exception, for it might be located in the Vardar valley, provided that the location of Argos, the battlefield, is accepted as being south of Stobi.<sup>9</sup> The other location of Argos, proposed by Zippel, in the Strumica valley towards Medica, seems to me more acceptable in this context.<sup>10</sup>

The supposition thus formulated suggests that the raids of the Scordisci into Macedonia ran over Thrace, and not along the Morava-Vardar transversal. That may then be the reason why the Dardanians do not appear as the participants in the campaigns of the Scordisci. The situation is in fact quite the opposite: the Dardanians form a barrier against the attacks of the Scordisci upon Macedonia along a more natural and more convenient communication along the South Morava and Vardar.

Unfortunately, the archaeological evidence at hand for a solution of this problem is fairly modest. In that respect, any conclusion on these grounds may well be refuted or further developed. As opposed to the area of the Danube valley, Pannonia and the lower Morava valley, the period of the Late Iron Age in the interior of the central Balkans is not known well enough.<sup>11</sup> Some facts may however be noted, some conclusions may be anticipated and tentatively patterned into a model. It seems that we must acknowledge the fact, in spite of the small amount of information, that the archaeological material of the III-II centuries, rightfully ascribed to the Celts, is far more abundant in Thrace than in the South Morava or upper Vardar valleys, i.e. in the Dardanian lands. A certain methodological difficulty presents itself here in systematizing and a more precise cultural attribution of the Celtic material in Thrace. It is beyond doubt that a part of the material, especially that dated into the III century and associated to the area of Kabila, should be ascribed to the Celts from the ephemeral kingdom of Tylis. The majority of the material, however, especially the one dated into the II century, from the western Thracian lands, is a consequence of the presence of the Scordisci.<sup>12</sup> The situation is indirectly confirmed

9 Б. Јосифовска 1965, 117-135, with the bibliography.

10 G. Zippel 1877, 145

11 The problem is treated in J. Todorović, 1968; id., 1974; B. Jovanović 1987, 815-854.

12 B. Gerov 1968, 352 ff.; Z. Wozniak 1974, 77 ff.; 1975, 177-184; B. Домарадски 1984. In this context, the Celtic mercenaries in Maroneia at the time of Philip V, perhaps originating from the Thracian lands, may be of some interest. Cf. Y. Grandjean 1971-I, 280.

by the information in Florus, Festus, Orosius and Ammianus Marcellinus, speaking of the Scordisci in the Thracian area, and sometimes qualifying them as a Thracian tribe.<sup>13</sup>

Very few finds of this character originate from the Morava valley. From Donja Toponica<sup>14</sup> comes a spearhead with a massive ridge and from Držanovac<sup>15</sup> near Niš a goblet with two handles, both dated into the second century. The granulated bracelets from an unknown site along the Niš-Pirot railway may be roughly dated into the III-II centuries,<sup>16</sup> and the fibula from Bela Palanka<sup>17</sup> of the Middle La Tene pattern most probably belongs to the same period. The material registered south of Niš, also scarce, is somewhat younger than the mentioned finds. The pottery from the prehistoric fortifications at Zlokućani<sup>18</sup> and Oraovica<sup>19</sup> on grounds of its form and decoration may be related to the vessels of the Židovar I phase, belonging to the I century,<sup>20</sup> as well as the situla-like pot from Brazda by Skopje,<sup>21</sup> also comparable to the material of the Židovar I phase.<sup>22</sup> The similar dating may be attributed to the bronze fibula with a large spring, from the outskirts of Skopje.<sup>23</sup>

Although scarce, the traces of the Celtic presence in these parts allow for some suppositions. First of all, the Celtic material from Thrace is more abundant and chronologically prior compared to the corpus from the Dardanian lands. Furthermore, the material from the Morava valley seems chronologically heterogeneous, the finds from the vicinity of Niš and the Nišava valley seem earlier than the ones registered in the south. This fact points to the possibility that the Scordisci may have moved southwards along the Morava or Timok valleys,<sup>24</sup> and reached the plain of Sofia and the valley of Maritsa, therefrom jeopardizing Macedonia via Thrace. Such a reconstruction

13 F. Papazoglu 1969, 229; E. Salomone Gaggero 1981, 58 ff.; 1980, 108 ff.

14 J. Todorović 1968, 35, 70. The spear belongs to the IIb type.

15 *Праисторијске културе Поморавља и источне Србије*. Niš 1971, 55, catalogue no.498; J. Todorović 1968, 42, 1972, 52.

16 J. Todorović, 1968, 58. T. XI/2, 8.9. The finds are included into the type of "granulated bracelets" and dated into the III-II centuries.

17 М. Гарашанин 1953, 10.

18 М. Васаћ 1911, 97 ff.

19 M. Vukmanović-P. Popović 1982, 201, 204, T.V/2, IX/1,3.5.

20 M. Sladić 1986, 31-32.

21 P. Пашић 1989, 91.

22 M. Sladić 1986, 33, sl. 6, T. XXIV.

23 Д. Гарашанин 1954, T. XLIX/4. J. Todorović 1968, 52, T.XI/10, classifies it as a variant of the B type of the "fibulae with a large spring".

24 Cf. the find from Debelica by Knjaževac (M. Sladić 1990, 117-180).

of the direction the Scordisci took in their raids presupposes a kind of a friendly relationship or a coordination with the Thracian tribes, especially the ones dominating the Sofia plain. The archaeological material of the Colonia Panadjurska cultural group of the Late Iron Age in these parts leads to such a supposition.<sup>25</sup>

This direction was probably taken in the numerous attacks by the end of the II century. After the intervention of Titus Didius, however, the strategic situation utterly changed. The impact over Thrace became difficult and virtually impossible. I assume that only in this phase the Scordisci turn the majority of their military activity towards the Morava-Vardar communication. The sporadic traces of the Celtic material on the Dardanian hillforts (Zlokućani, Oraovica, Brazda) belong precisely to this period. The fact registered in the excavations at Skobeljić grad by Vučje<sup>26</sup> seems particularly important in this context. In the layer of destruction of the Dardanian fortification, a *denar* of L. Saturninus, minted in 104, was found.<sup>27</sup> I assume the coin represents *terminus post quem* for the destruction of this fortified settlement, i.e. for the impact of Scordisci towards the central Dardanian territory and further south towards the frontiers of Macedonia. Only in this period the Scordisci become superior to the Dardanians in this area, and begin to organize joint raids into Macedonia. These are the raids testified to by Appian, probably also Licinian, and maybe even by the archaeological material of the Celtic origin registered at Dodona.<sup>28</sup> After these raids, Cornelius Scipio Asiagenus undertook the campaign against the Scordisci, while he made an agreement with the Dardanians.<sup>29</sup> The reason for such a twofold approach to the enemies may well lie in the fact that the Scordisci played the dominant role in these raids

25 Б. Геров. ГСУ, ФЗФ, II, 61/1, 1967, 55 ff; Т. Герасимов 1966, 136-137; А. Dimitrova-N.Gizdova, 1974, 321-331; Z. Wozniak 1975, 180-183; М. Домарадски, 1984. Of special interest is the possibility to actualize the epithet of Apollo - Skodriso - from the monument found in Opicvat near Sofia (IGBR IV, 1966, 2025), in the light of the interpretation of the amulet with a Celtic mythological scene and the inscription Skordi (М. Манов, 1993/34, 24-31). Let us additionally mention the friendly relations between the Scordisci and the Thracians concerning the stay of the Bastarns in the land of the Dardanians (Liv. XLI, 19,4-11).

26 М. Јоцић-Ђ. Јанковић 1987, 62.

27 M.H. Crawford 1974, 323, No 317.

28 M. Szabo 1971-II, 502, with the commentary concerning the other finds of this kind in Greece. The find of the fibula at Dodona may indicate that the Scordisci were among the barbarians who ran over Macedonia like an avalanche during the office of C. Sestius Saturninus (Cic.in.Pis. 35, 84).

29 F. Papazoglu 1968, 241-255, with the bibliography and the elaborate commentary.

and thus represented the main adversary; as for the Dardanians, it may be that their former attitude towards the province of Macedonia was appreciated, i.e. the fact that during the second half of the II century not only that they did not jeopardize the Macedonian borders, but even impeded the Scordisci to do so over their territory.<sup>30</sup>

*Translated by Staša Babić*

ПРИЛОГ ПРОУЧАВАЊУ ОДНОСА СКОРДИСКА  
И ДАРДАНАЦА КРАЈЕМ II И ПОЧЕТКОМ I ВЕКА П.Н.Е.  
Резиме

Учешће Дарданаца у бројним нападима које су Скордисци предузимали према римској провинцији Македонији од 135. године веома се ретко помње, и то при самом крају ових активности, 80-их година I века пре наше ере. Чињеница да се Дарданци прилично касно укључују у походе Скордиска на Македонију захтева објашњење. У методолошком приступу интерпретацији овог проблема могућа су два основна прилаза који се своде на претпоставке:

- да крајем II века Скордисци имају супрематију над Дарданцима и да се, стога, Дарданци не појављују као независан и равноправан чинилац у њиховим походима на Македонију, или

- да Скордисци своје нападе на Македонију у последњим деценијама II века не усмеравају преко матичне дарданске територије и не користе, бар не у значајнијој мери, моравско-вардарску комуникацију у те сврхе.

Залажем се за ову другу могућност. Посредно, подаци из историјских извора иду у прилог таквој претпоставци. Већина сукоба између Скордиска и Римљана у периоду 135-104/101. одиграва се у Тракији. Чак и сукоб код Арга 119. године, који се помиње у Летијском натпису, могао би се у овом светлу локализовати, према старој Ципеловој тези, у долину Струмице према Медки.

Тек 104. године долази до радикалних промена на овом плану. Ф. Папазоглу с правом претпоставља да ратови Гита Дидија против Скордиска и

30 From the time the province of Macedonia was established in 168 up to the 80 s of the I century the raids of the Dardanians into this territory were not registered. May this fact be explained by their weakness or by the consistent observation of a conceivable agreement with the Romans? I assume that the latter is more likely, though the opposite opinion prevails in the current literature (cf. F. Papazoglu 1968, 134 ff).



запоседање дела трачких територија представљају прекретницу у односима Рима са северним суседима провинције Македоније. Освајањем стратешки важног дела Тракије, римска војска је онемогућила пролаз Скордиска ка Македонији преко Тракије, те се ови окрећу новој комуникацији. Након 104-101. године, напади Скордиска ка Македонији усмерени су преко дарданске територије и тада се у њих укључују Дарданци. Ова ситуација траје до похода Корнелија Сципиона Азијагениа, покренутог, вероватно, 84. године, када су Скордисци потучени, док су Дарданци, вероватно због уважавања њихове раније улоге када су били брана упадима у Македонију, нагодбом дошли до мира.

Археолошки материјал из овога периода није бројан али, чини се, може подржати ову претпоставку. Уочљиво је да у долинама Велике Мораве и Нишаве, као и у Софиском пољу и даље према Тракији, има келтског материјала из III-II века. Међутим, на простору јужног Поморавља и Повардарја, материјал келтске провенијенције јавља се тек почетком I века (Злокућани, Ораовица, Бразда), што одговара успостављању нових праваца у продорима Скордиска према Македонији. Термин *post quem* за ове промене означава и налаз денара Л. Сатурнина, кован 104. године, из слоја деструкције на дарданској фортификацији у Скобелџићу граду код Вучја. Претпостављам да постоји непосредна веза између успешног ратовања Тита Дидија против Скордиска и страдања дарданских фортификација после тог догађаја којим је обележен нови пут Скордиска ка провинцији Македонији.

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