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Imagining the Ister/Danube in Ancient Thought and Practice: River, the Scordisci, and Creation of Roman Imperialistic Space*

Abstract: The paper considers cultural and imaginative construction of the Ister/Danube, and its implications in the creation of the *limes* area of the provinces of Moesia and (part of) Pannonia. It discusses how the Danube was used as an element in construing the Scordisci as a Roman enemy and (pseudo)ethnic tribe, what was the meaning of this connection, and did such conceptualization have real repercussions in the area of waterscape associated with the 'tribe'. It is proposed that the Danube emerged as a hydrographical frontier thanks to its specific *longue durée* symbolic meaning of liminality embedded in the imperialistic agency in the course of creating provincial/frontier/imperial space. The basic point is that the ancient imagological tradition had an important effect on the construction of Roman imperial space thanks to the intellectual and political elites' capacities to shape powerscapes by projecting their own conceptualizations of the world into the webs of relations under their influence.

Keywords: the Danube/Ister, the Scordisci, creation of space, Roman imperialism, Roman frontier zone, Moesia, Pannonia

What was the role of the Ister/Danube in ancient thought and practices? How was this river perceived and constructed inside the imaginarium of Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods? Was the Ister a well known hydrological object defined with the help of current geographical knowledge, was it a vague notion of a faraway watercourse only limitedly and often erroneously familiar

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to learned people of antiquity, or it first and utmost served the purpose of a cognitive and mental delimitation waterline? As ancient geography is inseparable from ethnographical thinking all the above also raises the questions of how the people of the Ister/Danube area were conceived and treated in ancient thought and practice: were they and to what extent known to the Greek, Macedonian and Roman worldviews, was there any accuracy behind the generic images of the northern barbarians living around the river, did these general ideas affect the realities of those populations (especially when Rome started to politically engage in the region), etc. These issues are discussed here in respect to one particular case: the relation between the Ister/Danube and the Scordisci which are regarded (both in ancient and modern times) as the most powerful Celtic tribe in the area of the central Balkans. In other words, what I try to accomplish in this paper is reviewing how the geographical exotics and the barbarian Other were interrelated in the ancient intellectual tradition, how this happened and did it bring some real-life repercussions for the area and people under study.

General theoretical positions and setting of the question

In the last couple of decades there has been a realization that geography, space and landscape are not objective and primordial categories of knowledge, but crucially dependent on particular socio-cultural constructions of certain phenomena. Natural objects, their mutual relations and relationships with society (or parts of it) are not mere physicality and have no obvious universal value, but are instead contextual, culturally specific, changeable and dynamic. Likewise, landscape and space are not static and fixed givens but cultural processes in a constant flow (to mention just a few handy introductory overviews: Soja 1999; Unwin 2000; Archer 2005; Kokot 2007; and volumes which are classic starting points in archeological/anthropological and historical research of the matter: Ingold 1993, 2000; Tilley 1994; Hirsch and O'Hanlon (eds.) 1995; Ucko and Layton (eds.) 1999). The consideration of space has been further changed after recognition that spatial dimension of the world is not a naturally given static 'container' inside which time and society/culture are independently going on, but the sphere inseparably interrelated with the former two. Doreen Massey argued convincingly that space could be regarded as multiple and never-finished simultaneity of ongoing stories-so-far, which actually means that space is a dynamic plurality of various multidirectional relations built by humans, 'natural environment', things, or other entities included in the network of interrelations. In other words, what we call space is actually the simultaneous coexistence of social (and other) trajectories in constant flux, an open ongoing (re)production of relations, while places are particular collections of trajectories within space i.e. 'spatio-temporal events' (Massey 2005). Another very important circumstance is that space(s) and place(s), as a sort of 'global and

local' of simultaneous multiple relations, are inseparably entangled with politics and power. Space represents an encompassing arena and open production of power-geometries, and place is the moment within it, in which particular social trajectories and power relations are intersected in particular ways (Massey 2005, 9–10, 130–131; and see further elaboration in Allen 2016, 36–55).

Thus, if we accept that geographical phenomena and landscapes in the ancient world were also relationally defined notions[1] (in terms of meaning, role, usage, and generating behaviors and practices), we should consider them through the concept of space/place as a plurality of socio-cultural interrelations and trajectories. For the purposes of the topics discussed here focusing on the Ister/Danube, this means that the conceptualization of a river as both spatial category and an element in construction of space (i.e. rivers, especially major ones, as obvious landmark and entities impossible to overlook, ignore or negate their existence – Campbell 2012, 63; Breeze 2013, 5), essentially rested on specific correlations, conceptualizations and the whole range of idiosyncratic experiences/knowledge of various peoples involved with it. In other words, when space is seen as a multiplicity of various interrelations, river ceases to be regarded as a fixed geographical given, and emerges as one of the entities that participate in creating, maintaining and living relations of different social actors (i.e. river is one of the elements in the socio-cultural production of space). Because of potential of engaging in various interrelations, the roles played by a river could have been drastically diversified, and it is possible to argue that simultaneously there were different spaces/places in which the 'same' river had an array of meanings, significances and agencies. In simple words, space created through interaction of (e.g.) fishers, river and the surroundings (i.e. village, town, relief, relations of different human and nonhuman elements etc.) was not the same as space produced through relations of members of the navy, or enemy's army that tried to cross the river in question. Thus, the perspective used in this paper is anti-deterministic, one that does not regard a river in clearly defined, 'objective' and absolute terms, but gives more scrutiny to its symbolic and psychological context (and further elaborate the arguments of Braund 2009; Campbell 2012, 370–388; Jones 2005; Purcell 2012). In short, I try to consider the Ister/Danube as a watercourse constructed in relation to the (pseudo)ethnic category of Scordisci, as well as vice versa.

The mutuality of their relation I additionally approach from the perspective of *imagology*. The term stands for studies of mental images of foreigners produced

[1] For the implementation of some of the mentioned ideas in studies of the ancient world, see e.g.: Riggsby 2006; Dzino 2010; Thalmann 2011; Rogers 2013. The echo of similar line of thinking can be also recognized in the studies which shifted the idea of Roman Empire's strict boundaries (and great rivers as a strategic asset that provided a natural line of defense) towards the concept of highly dynamic frontier zones full of changeable interconnections and interdependences of different sorts: e.g. Isaac 2000; Whittaker 1994; 2004; Wells 2001; 2005; Burns 2003; Creighton 2006.

from the perspective of dominant cultural discourse. It includes research of processes of specific ways of imagining the entity dissimilar from (individual or collective) *self* and construing the otherness through/as a stereotypical picture (no matter if and to what extent are the perceived differences based on reality – see Leerssen 2007; Zacharasiewicz 2010; Blažević 2012). Although imagology primarily refers to comprehensions and representations of other ethnic affiliations and their members in literature, this line of inquiry can be extended to encompass the construction of idea/image of different individuals and groups in terms of culture, class, sex, gender etc. Likewise, the concept of alterity is not exclusively established in literary practices, but also through various kinds of oral, visual and performative activities and social behaviors, so imagology can be treated as the study of mechanisms of othering by any means available to dominant (or some other) ideological discourse (Blažević 2012, 5–6).

Crucially, the landscape as socio-cultural process and space as a relational dimension of the world, are closely linked and compatible with the ideas developed in imagological studies. The picture of alter is frequently established by connecting (individual and collective) Others[2] to specific and (geographically or qualitatively) distant landscapes and spaces. The creation of such conceptual bond affects both people and space in question, as one is comprehended inseparably from the other. Accordingly, people could acquire characteristics of space ascribed to them, while space is simultaneously defined by projecting to it the imagined features of the associated population. Similar kind of thinking about the world is well evidenced in ancient intellectual tradition in the form of so-called *environmental theory* or *climatic paradigm* (the former definition is used by Isaac 2004, 55–109 and the latter by Woolf 2011, 44–51; both explain the idea and stress its longevity despite inconsistencies and variations throughout time and by particular authors). In basic terms, this cognitive scheme considered Mediterranean (i.e. Greece and Italy/Rome respectively) as the normal center of the universe with balanced and superior climate/nature and people/culture, concurrently regarding the continental parts of Europe, Africa and Asia as progressively less favorable and wilder (in terms of both nature and people) as the distance from the core increased. Thus, Greek/Hellenistic/Roman elites' construction of space came with ideological baggage, as they built relationalities (in Massey's and Allen's terms) on the edges of their universe with specific preconceptions. Hence, the question at the fore of this paper is approached from aforementioned standpoints (of space and imagology), by focusing on relations that dominant (Roman imperial elites') discourse constructed with the Danube

[2] There is justified criticism that the term Other became too general and vague and hence bears no analytical value (Isaac 2004, 4; Romm 2011, 26). Here it means groups/communities/individuals that Greek/Roman authors' perspective conceptualized and represented as foreign in the socio-political, cultural and geographical sense.

and Scordisci. In doing so I first shortly overview the cognitive history of the Ister/Danube in ancient thought, with the premise that the basic knowledge about the river among the Roman elites was constructed through inheritance and adaptation of the already established Greek and Hellenistic tradition. It should be emphasized however that it is not my intention here to give a comprehensive critical review of every single piece of evidence mentioning the watercourse but rather to show the long-standing and essentially unchangeable symbolic value of the Ister which entered the Roman imperial worldview.

Greek and Hellenistic views on the Ister (Danube): an outline

To the best of my knowledge, the first focus on the Ister/Danube in the surviving ancient literature is Herodotus' account on the source and length of the river, as well as its mention in the context of Darius' conquests in the Balkans. The Ister, which is the Greek name for the lower Danube (see Dan 2015 for terminology and its conceptions), is characterized in *Histories* as the river rising in the land of the Celts, who are seen as neighbors to the westernmost people in Europe, and flowing through the middle of the continent from west to east (Hdt. II, 33). In addition, Herodotus (IV, 47–50, 99) says the Ister has five mouths, it is the largest river in the world thanks to its tributaries and, most importantly for the focus here, is the westernmost river in Scythia. In other words, the Father of History conceived the Ister/Danube as the river that connects distant population of the Celts in Europe's west and the Scythians in the east i.e. as a waterway that straightforwardly links the extreme barbarian populations known to the Greek world. The significance of such conceptualization of the Danube lies in imagining it as a kind of a border between the world better known to Herodotus, and the areas that were familiar only in basic terms or not at all (cf. Karttunen 2002, 460). Moreover, the idea is explicated by characterizations of the land beyond the Ister as possibly vast and desolate, since nobody can give a reliable description of the people who lived north of Thrace (Hdt. V, 9, see also Romm 1992, 35–38). Herodotus does not even believe the explanation by the Thracians who claimed that the territory across the Ister is unpopulated due to infestation by bees. He asserts instead that bees are intolerant of cold and thus identifies the cold as the main reason that stopped the people to settle in these northern regions (Hdt. V, 10). What we do read about a handful of populations known beyond the river is indicative in respect of defining the Ister as the line of cultural division. In the description of Darius' campaign against the Scythians, after crossing the Danube, the king is warned not to destroy the bridge previously constructed on his orders, as he is about to invade a land where agriculture is completely unknown and there are no settlements (Hdt. IV, 89, 97). Additionally, in presenting

lands beyond the Ister, which neighbor Scythia (itself a paradigm of otherness), Herodotus engages ethnographic discourse which construes the tribes of Agathyrsians, Neurians, Cannibals and the Black Cloaks by attribution of abundance of curiosities in customs, half-mythical features, hostile natural environment and savage behaviors (Hdt. IV, 100–107). Although this logic of othering is long and well known for its projecting of sets of inverted Greek values to foreigners (Hartog 1988; Karttunen 2002; Isaac 2004, 55–82, 109–133, 257–303), the role of the Ister as a socio-cultural demarcation line and important element of the whole construction is not fully explored in the current scholarship (Hartog 1988, 58–61; Karttunen 2002, 471; Dan 2015). In my opinion, the fact that the river constitutes the northern extremity of the sun's path (as the Nile was the southern) within the space imagined by symmetrical principle, and divides the known, cultivated and secure from the unknown, savage and dangerous sets it as a clearly defined cognitive, symbolic and imagological threshold in Herodotus' perception of the world (cf. Hartog 1988, 15–16; Dan 2015, 135–136). Regardeless of the extent to which this image was inaccurate and by which conceptual background and knowledge the Father of History conceived it (the questions discussed by Dan 2015), the crucial point is that he made the Ister a recognizable landmark of liminality. This is of great importance, especially having in mind the influence Herodotus' work achieved in the subsequent intellectual life of classical antiquity and beyond.

From later times of Classical and early Hellenistic periods, there is no major piece of literature dealing with the Danube. However, few brief characterizations of the river suggest that the conceptualization of the Ister was not altered. For example, Herodotus' contemporary Pindar (*Olympian* 3, 10–20, 25–35) refers to the river's "shadowed springs" as the land of the Hyperboreans, from where Heracles brought the olive three to provide branches for the victors' wreaths at the Olympian Games. The connection of the Ister and the Hyperboreans, the most distant people in the north, who are the mythical Other par excellence, recurs in few later ancient works (Bridgman 2005, 70), implying that the river remained a sort of imaginary marker for fixing (although vaguely) realms of the Greeks and other populations (even if mythical). Even Aristotle (*Mete*. 350b), who can be regarded as the author generally employing more 'scientific' and skeptical approach (illustrated by more accurate information about the Ister, although keeping some of the older misconceptions – Dan 2015, 136), identified the source of the Ister in the extreme west, at the Pyrene, 'mountain range towards equinoctial sunset in Celtice'. Again, association of the Ister, characterized as the largest river flowing into the Mediterranean Sea (together with the Nile – *Mete*. 356a), with distant (i.e. end of the world's/sunset) mountain and the land named after foreign (barbarian) population, evokes its role as an entity belonging to the mystical realm alien to the Greek sphere of culture and knowledge.

Moreover, apparently both Philip II and Alexander the Great reached the river as the northernmost natural object in their campaigns. Although there are only much later accounts on the matter (possibly drawing from Ptolemy Lagides – Delev 2000, 365, notes 67 and 68) it seems that first Phillip (340–339 BCE) and then Alexander (335 BCE) made brief incursions across the Ister, as well as (both hostile and friendly) interactions with the populations on the right bank of the river (Worthington 2012, 76, 80, 128–129; Green 2013, 127–130). The motives for these campaigns could be various, from negotiating alliances and securing the back before further offensive, to emulating and exceeding Darius' accomplishments, but the symbolism of the Ister is again indicative. Along with practicalities of subduing 'barbarian' populations of the north, for the purposes of Macedonian imperialism it was also quite convenient to present self as master of the world all the way to the border of its known edges.[3] In that context, the Ister as an already established line of socio-cultural demarcation could have been an obvious choice, since reaching and crossing the distant river had a meaning of reaching and conquering boundaries of the unknown or even mythical areas (Jones 2005, 9–10; cf. also Romm 1992, 25–26). The symbolic value of the Ister rested in its capacity of simultaneously signifying one of the margins of the world and the rule over the whole of its perimeter. This meaning could be corroborated with the note that after entering Susa, among other treasures in the royal palace, the Macedonians also found the water which Persian kings had brought from the Nile and Ister and stored up 'as a way of confirming the extent of their empire and their mastery over the whole world' (Plut., *Alexander*, 36, Green 2013, 306). Whether the story was created in accordance with the genuine event or invented, it anyway underlines the liminal symbolism of the Ister, its role of the cognitive demarcation line, as well as the idea that control over it implies universal domination. In this line of thought, Alexander's act of taking over the water of the Ister hoarded by the Persian royalty can be regarded as the final emblematic appropriation of the river and accession of the new master of the world.

Finally, in the Hellenistic period the Ister received some attention in *Argonautika* of Apollonius of Rhodes. Although mentioned briefly, the river had a role as an escape route for the Argonauts and was given some interesting characterizations. Apollonius describes the Ister as the northernmost branch of the Ocean, which springs from the area beyond the North Wind, and flows single and solitary, but broad and deep enough for the merchants to sail it (*Argon*.

[3] Indeed, Polybius (as the surviving source chronologically closest to the events) states in Histories (I, 2) that Macedonian dominion first stretched from Adriatic region to the Ister, before extending to Asia. Strabo (I, 2. 1) also says that campaigns of Alexander the Great opened up for geographers all the northern part of Europe as far as the Ister.

IV, 282–293). Continuing the tradition Apollonius thus confirms the notion of the river as intimately linked with fantastic lands of the north, and even identifies it as a branch of the ultimate mythical border of the universe (i.e. Ocean). Additionally, Apollonius represents the people inhabiting the banks of the Ister as rustic shepherds completely unfamiliar with seafaring ships, who at the sight of the Colchian vessels and Argo mistake them for the monsters from the deep, and panic to the extent they flee, leaving behind their flocks. The picture of otherness is strengthened by emphasizing that the Sindians (one among the 'tribes' living by the Ister ignorant of Greek nautical technology) populate the vast desert plain (*Argon*. IV, 316–321). In short, the Ister is a determinant for the area characterized by shepherds who dwell in the wild, populations unaware of achievements of (Greek) civilization, and inhospitable (i.e. vast desert plain) terrain. Two things should be specially underlined here. As Thalmann pointed out in the analysis of the passage, the portrayal of stunned shepherds and ignorant tribes along the Ister indicates their understanding as socio-cultural inferiors, since the ships and sea voyages were one of the crucial elements in Greek conceptualization of a worthy and civilized way of life (Thalmann 2011, 147–160). Furthermore, the Ister as a marker of cultural differentiation is also construed by the suspicious lack of any further descriptions of landscape or people Argonauts could have encountered (Thalmann 2011, 160–167). The dwellers of the river had life and culture of no concern from the Greek point of view, the area was empty of phenomena for Argonauts' attraction, and hence this space is (narratively) produced as liminal and outside of the Hellenistic (cultural) cognitive scope. Since *Argonautika* was 'imaginary *periplous*', developed from 'speculative geography' (Meyer 2001, 220–227, 230, 232), and a spatial system imagined with the Greek world at its center, it served the purpose of defining and producing the space of Hellenism by setting the core and circumscribing the limits of that space (Thalmann 2011, 171–172, 196–197). In the present context, it is again indicative that the Ister signified a sort of boundary separating the familiar and cultured from less or completely unfamiliar, savage and mythical.

In sum, there was a long tradition of perception of the Ister as a river closely connected to the otherness of the north and a limit of the Greek cognitive orbit. Although its meaning and significance were not strictly defined, the recurring motif of a waterway setting the perimeter of the known space provides a ground to suggest the Ister was constructed as a socio-cultural frontier in the mental maps of (at least part of) Classical and Hellenistic periods' elites. Of course, it is highly probable that the knowledge about the Ister/Danube and the areas between Hellenistic world and the river (and beyond) varied in different social milieus and levels of usage, especially having in mind intensive rela-

tions (primarily of mercenary character) of Hellenistic rulers and populations of the continental Balkans and Europe (cf. Will 1984, 109–117; Strootman 2005, 104–107; Džino 2007; Rustoiu 2013, 215–216). In other words, there almost certainly were individuals and groups who understood the Ister in ways other than presented in the literary tropes, and whose relationalities with the river (i.e. construction of space associated with it) had different connotations (e.g. more 'realistic', close, 'practical', familiar, 'friendly' etc.[4] However, judging by surviving literary evidence, the role of the Ister in 'academic' discourses remained unchanged, with the symbolism generally fixed in the way previously discussed. Given the influence that Greek intellectual thought achieved inside the Roman elite culture, my further supposition is that Rome's upper classes, involved in the conquest of the ancient Balkans, approached the area laden with conceptual heritage according to which the Ister/Danube was a symbolic frontier, and adapted it according to their own needs.

Scordisci and the Danube: inception of relation

After the fall of the Macedonian kingdom (168 BCE) and the establishment of the province with the same name (148 BCE), the presence and influence of Rome in the central Balkans assumed permanent and direct character. The imposition of the Roman rule inevitably set in motion the changes in previous power relations and included the creation of various new political arrangements with communities in the regions surrounding Macedonia (cf. Morstein Kallet–Marx 1996, 12–42; Vanderspoel 2010). One of the populations that got involved in violent rearrangements of relations with the Roman authorities was the Scordisci. In modern scholarship they are interpreted as the tribe that directly descended from Brennus' Celts of the 280s BCE and allegedly continually existed as a defined ethnic group well into the Roman imperial period. According to the traditional view (e.g. Papazoglu 1978, 271–345; Todorović 1974; Jovanović and Popović 1991; Tasić (ed.) 1992; Tapavički–Ilić 2004), firmly confident in ancient literary narratives, the Scordisci were an extremely warlike population that managed to put under control the area from Roman Macedonia to the Danube, holding their core territories between the mouths of Drava and Timok (Fig. 1).

[4] For literary motives that could seem as fixed tropes but actually varied and changed through time and contexts see Woolf 2011 who discusses ethnography.

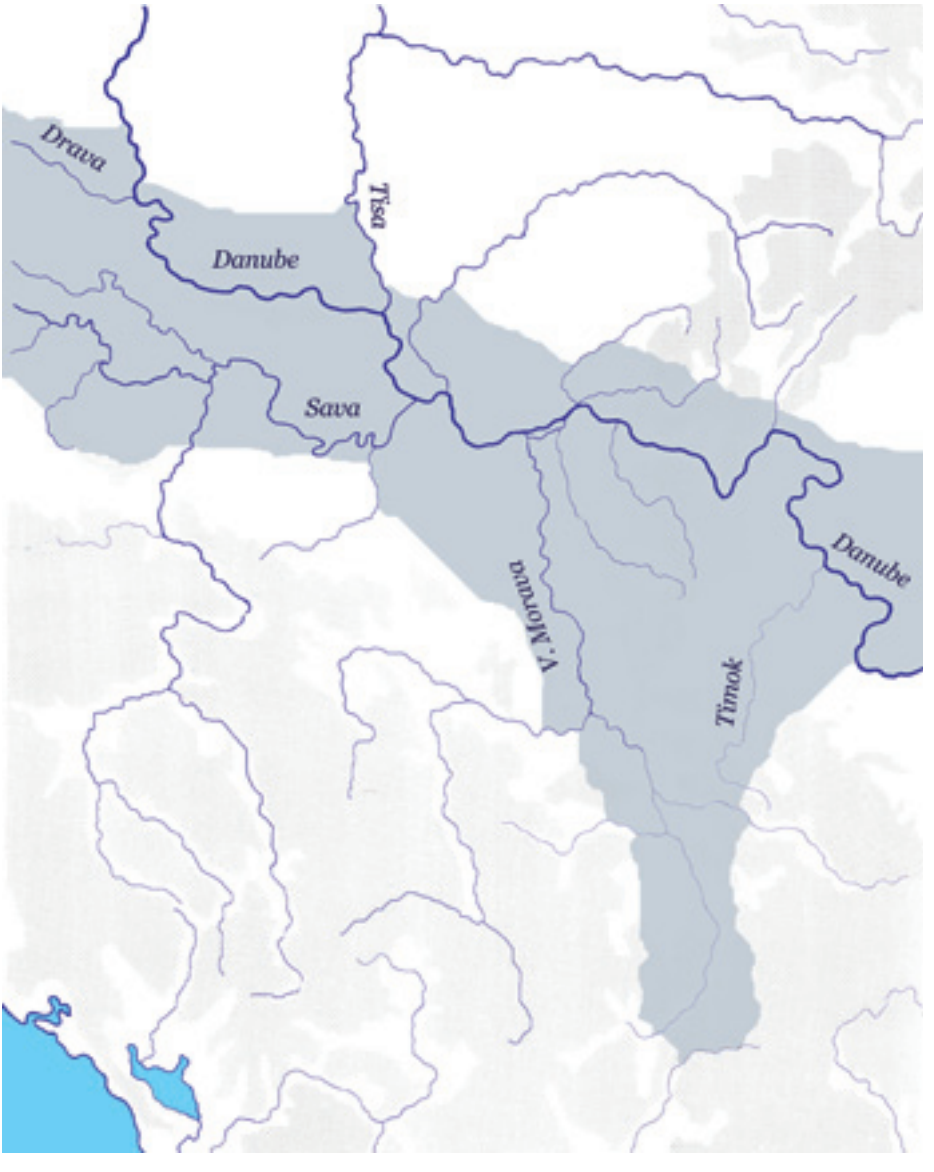

Fig. 1. Territory of the Scordisci in traditional interpretations
(according to Papazoglu 1978; Todorović 1974; Popović 1992)

However, there are many difficulties with this interpretation, from the problematic theoretical position (ethno-determinism and cultural-historical paradigm – Kuzmanović and Vranić 2014; Mihajlović 2014) to the lack of any evidence for the use of the term Scordisci prior to the end of the second century BCE (Mihajlović 2015). For the present purposes, it is sufficient to say that

I treat the Scordisci as a term used for the first time to denominate a newly encountered enemy of Rome in the central Balkans, and a denominator with a vague, general and ethnically unspecific meaning (in a generally similar manner as in the cases of better known vague collective identifications such as Celts, Germans, Scythians etc. See Collis 2003; Wells 2001; Isaac 2004, 411–439). In other words, when one review the epigraphic and literary evidence without ethno-deterministic prejudice, it becomes clear there is no solid ground to imply the continual existence of the ethnic tribe under the name of Scordisci from the third century BCE to the second century CE, as traditionally claimed. In addition, archaeological data do not show ethnic and political unity or the type of normative cultural homogeneity previously supposed as a common fact (Mihajlović 2015, 262–302; 2014, 104–106). While the area traditionally ascribed to the Scordisci indeed belonged to the wide (continental) Iron Age cultural templates, they do not automatically reflect belonging neither to some sort of Celtic ethno-cultural block nor to the Scordisci as a specific Gallic tribe. Instead, it is plausible that the Roman military and administrative personnel and civilians who were settled in (or frequented) Macedonia, together with the population of the province, and combining their own perspective with local knowledge, coined the term to signify alien, 'barbarian' and hostile population, initially understood as the 'Gauls' or 'Gallic' like. These 'Gauls' (whatever socio-political, ethnic or cultural form(s) stood behind the name) were repeatedly invading Macedonia and fighting Roman garrisons starting from the fourth decade of the second century BCE (see Papazoglu 1978, 284–304; Morstein Kallet-Marx 1996, 224–227; Brennan 2000, 227–229). For some reasons, probably caused by pseudo-ethnic stereotypization (due to their general similarity to the 'La Tène koine') and closer (re)definition of the region's barbarology, they received the nominal particularization: the earlier general notion of the Gallati[5] was changed

[5] This conclusion is sustained by the fact Polybius does not mention Scordisci (or the form Scordisti/Scordistae) in descriptions of the events in the Central Balkans, neither in his time nor for the earlier periods. When talking briefly about 'Gallic invasion' he points to the band of the Gauls who avoided the battle of Delphi and went to Thrace, never acknowledging any other group originating from Brennus' people – Polyb. *Hist*. IV, 46. Narrating the events from 179–175 BCE in which Philip V and Perseus made an effort to involve the Bastarnae in their war against the Dardanians and Rome, Polybius uses the term Gallati as an alternative name for Bastarnae, without connecting them to 'Celtic migrations' of the third century or explaining their origin – Polyb. *Hist*. XXV, 6; Walbank 1979, 282. Furthermore, the Lete inscription, dated to 119 BCE, attests two successive attacks of Gallati (second one in collaboration with the Thracian Maedi) directed towards the area of Argos in Vardar valley – Papazoglu 1978, 291–294, 576–577. The monument can be regarded as a testimony to the authentic experience of the local population (or authorities of Lete) affected by the intrusion of the enemy, and as a direct

to the more specific Gallati Scordisti somewhere in the last two decades of the II c. BCE.[6] The name afterwards underwent yet another modification as the form Scordisci became widespread starting from the authors of the Augustan period.

Consequently, it can be advocated that the metamorphosis of the ethnonym mirrors the process of stereotyping some population(s) north of Roman Macedonia first by using the broadest conceptual framework of 'the Gauls', and then by designating to them a particular attribute of uncertain original meaning,[7] possibly in order to differentiate these from the other 'Gallic' enemies of the period. In this way, out of the hostile relations with the neighboring warrior group(s), the new (pseudo)ethnic category emerged to specify the current prime enemy of Rome in the Balkans. However, this particularization (in determining the Gallati Scordisti as 'the Gauls beyond Macedonia') most probably did not mean that the new designator marked some strictly defined ethnic group or socio-political entity. As surviving written sources and available archaeological evidence suggest (see fn. 37), the ethnonym had a very ambiguous meaning, narrower than the generalizations of the highest order (such as the Gauls/Scythians/Germans), but not specific as singularized 'tribal communities' (such as e.g. the Batavians/Arverni/Catuvellauni). In conclusion, since there is no evidence of emic collective identification with the notion of the Scordisci, it was most probably an external umbrella term that should be treated and used in our interpretations with the greatest caution.

How does the Danube fit into this picture? A significant number of literary sources connect the Scordisci to the Danube, which was exactly the motive to identify the valley of the river (between the Drava and Timok) as their core territory. The oldest among them is Posidonius, whose preserved fragment (in Athenaeus VI, 25, 234a–c) describes the tribe of Scordistae as the remnants of the Gauls

reflection of original perception of the hostile 'barbarian' group. This proposition finds further support if the epigram from Demetrias (mentioning some Roman commander who looked at the boundaries of the Ister and expelled the Gauls), really could be dated prior to 110 BCE – Brennan 2000, 523.

[6] This is the oldest known form of the name appearing in two identical inscriptions set in Europos (the Vardar valley) and Delphi around 106 BCE. The monuments commemorate victories of proconsul M. Minucius Rufus who defeated the Gallati Scordisti along with the Bessi and other Thracians – Papazoglu 1978, 299–304. The inscriptions designate this population in a more precise way then the Lete monument, probably echoing terminological specification and imagological construction of the new enemy. Posidonius (ca. 135–ca. 51 BCE) employs similar terminology, in the form of Scordiscan Gallatae and Scordistae – Kidd 1999, 312, 344. This implies that nominal specifying took place at the end of the second century entering the literature and common usage during the first century BCE.

[7] There is a chance the term Scordisti/Scordisci Gallati had a meaning of 'mounted Gauls' or 'the Gauls who use saddle', but this possibility is circumstantial – Mihajlović 2015, 274–275.

who attacked Delphi under Brennus, and whom (after defeat) the leader named Bathanattus settled along the Danube. In addition, narrating how the Boii repulsed Cimbri (preserved in Strabo VII, 2. 1–2), Posidonius says the latter descended to the Ister and Scordiscan Gallatae (Kidd 1999, 312, 344). The Augustan period author, Pompeius Trogus (i.e. Justin who epitomized his work) offers a similar story, telling that the part of defeated Brennus' army, after some wandering, settled at the confluence of the Danube and Sava and took the name of Scordisci (Just. *Epit*. XXXII, 3). The association of the Scordisci with the river is repeated by Strabo, who informs that the river Tisa flows to the Danube near the Gallatae Scordisci (VII, 5. 2), and that Sava enters the Danube among the Scordisci. Strabo (VII, 5. 11–12) also states that they inhabit the country along the banks of the Danube, divided by the Margus (Morava) river into the tribes of Great and Little Scordisci. Several later writers make the same connection, either saying that the Scordisci were banished to the Danube (Flor. XXXIX) or fled to its islands after the Romans inflicted them many defeats (App. *Ill*. 3, 5), or else indirectly relating the ethnonym and area of the river (Cass. Dio LIV, 31. 3).

On the other hand, there seems to be an alternative localization of the Scordisci. The three 'firsthand' epigraphic inscriptions mentioned above (see fn. 5 and 6) suggest that the Gallati (in 119 BCE) and then Gallati Scordisti (somewhere 110–106 BCE) were attacking the Vardar (Axios) valley allied with populations identified as Thracian. Deriving their information from Livy, a couple of later writers (starting with Florus), also associate the Scordisci with Thrace (Papazoglu 1978, 297–300, 349–350). Similarly, besides the mentioned localization of the Scordisci along the Danube, Strabo offers a view about their intermixture with the Thracians (VII, 3. 2, 11; 5. 1–2), and defines their land as extending along the Macedonian and Thracian mountains (VII, 5. 10; i.e. they increased to a great extent and advanced to them – VII, 5. 12). Finally, some circumstantial evidence also points to the association of the Scordisci and the Thracian lands. The lack of reports of hostilities with the Scordisci from the last years of the second century BCE until the time of Sula, coincides with the Roman conflicts against the populations of Thrace (Papazoglu 1978, 304–314; Delev 2015, 69–72; Iliev 2015, 134–137), which might indicate that they were included into the general ethnonym. More importantly, the operation of Scipio Asiaticus, that according to ancient tradition finally ended Scordiscian intrusions into Macedonia, and following which they are not mentioned in the literary sources until 16 BCE, also indicates their connection to the lands much more to the south than the Danube-Sava confluence. Since Scipio waged the war at some point in the first half of 85 BCE, and there is no indication he could have reached the Danube with this brief excursion (Papazoglu 1978, 314–331; Delev 2012 for reconstruction of chronology), it is safe to assume his troops reached the territories in the vicinity of Macedonia. Another piece of evidence,

provided by Appian (*Ill*., 5) indicates that Asiaticus reacted with the march as a counteroffensive against the Scordisci, Dardanians and Maedi, who 'invaded Macedonia and Greece together, and plundered many temples, including that of Delphi'. Again, the Scordisci are associated with the ethnonyms located to the immediate north of the province of Macedonia.

The dominant interpretation of the Scordiscian history explains these controversial statements by ignorance of the ancient authors and the spread of Scordiscian rule all the way to Roman Macedonia. Although this scenario cannot be excluded, its probability is questionable as there are no indications the communities of the Danube valley were necessarily and directly involved in such raids. To the contrary, the picture derived from the archaeological material suggests that these communities (especially in nowadays eastern Slavonia and Syrmia) enjoyed relative prosperity and possible population growth, manifested in the appearance of permanent settlements, higher number of burial grounds, intensification of agricultural, metallurgical, craft and ceramic production, and trading activities. These changes started in the last decades of the second century and reached the peak during the first century BCE, exactly in the period when the traditional perspective claims the 'decline of the Scordisci' (Popović 1992, 35–52; Mihajlović 2015, 276–281). In short, I strongly doubt that the communities of the Sava-Danube valley can straightforwardly be connected to the clashes the Roman forces had with the enemy called the Gallati Scordisti. Rather, by giving priority to the epigraphic evidence referring to the Gallati and Gallati Scordisti respectively, it is credible that the term first signified some communities near Macedonia, and somewhat later (in the end of II or early I c. BCE) was 'stretched out' to the Danube. In other words, the ethnonym was geographically generalized to encompass the unknown areas beyond the province, covering numerous different communities between Macedonia and the Danube, and (mistakenly) treating them as one tribe.[8] While certain overall similarities of general cultural features in the region did exist and could have given the impression of the integral whole (especially to the uninformed foreign observer), there is no evidence of its political unity, centralization or common ethnic awareness. Moreover, the broad cultural closeness continued well beyond the Danube making all these regions the part of the 'global La Tène world'. Hence, I presume that the extension of the spatial and ethnographic meaning of the term Gallati Scordisti/Scordistae and its use as a generic notion, stemmed from the Roman/Macedonian/Greek simplified understanding of the region and its population, and was reinforced thanks to the fact the Danube symbolized a notorious landmark in ancient thought.

[8] Since the practice of assigning familiar names to unfamiliar people or areas, or naming wide regions and populations after the community closer/closest to the one who signifies, is common, it should not be surprising that the notion of Gallati Scordisti was imposed further north. Cf. Collis 2003, 106, 117, 121; Clay 2008, 133–134.

The literary references noted above indicate that the earliest known bond between the Scordisci and the Danube was created at the time of, or shortly after, the most intensive fights between the Roman troops and the population(s) thus named. In other words, Posidonius as the first author who gave attention to the Gallatae Scordistae and defined their past, territory, character and curious ethnographic customs[9] was most probably inspired by topicality of the recent military events involving them (cf. Lampinen 2014, 239, fn. 31). He structured the description according to the old Greek mechanism of othering, representing the Scordistae as greedy barbarians and linking them to the sacrilege (the stereotypes well known in ancient 'Celtic ethnography' – Lampinen 2011; Isaac 2004, 411–425) of the Brennus' Gauls and the distant river of Danube. Since this ancestral relation is not known from older sources mentioning the 'Gallic invasion' of Greece (e.g. Callimachus, Polybius), and it appears later only once more (in Pompeius Trogus), there is a good chance the story was fabricated as the origin myth of the fiercest enemy Rome was currently facing in the vicinity of Macedonia. Although it remains unknown whether this mytho-historical narrative already existed in the form Posidonius presented,[10] was it modified according to his own ideas and designed to meet contemporary audience's concerns, or it represented the author's original invention, its nucleus was probably conceived as the part of the imagological construction of the Gallati Scordisti. Namely, while the general signifier (Gallati) experienced semantic specifying (Scordisti), the signified (i.e. the population(s) to which the ethnonym referred) was simultaneously invested with the mythical story that connected the events,

[9] 'They have forsworn gold as an abomination, and will not have it in their country, because of all the many terrible things they suffered because of it; but silver they do use, and for its sake they themselves do many terrible things. And yet surely it is not the particular kind of metal that they plundered that they ought to have banned, but the impiety that committed the sacrilege; if they had refused even to have silver in the country, they would have been committing wrong for bronze or iron; and if even these were banned, they would continue to fight crazily for food, drink and the other bare necessities of life' – Kidd 1999, 312.

[10] There is a chance that M. Rufus set the commemoration of his victory over the Gallati Scordisti at Delphi in 106 wishing to make an association between his deed and the expulsion of the Brennus' Gauls. In Morstein Kallet-Marx' (1996, 226) words: 'Delphi in particular provided a fine opportunity for appropriation of the sanctuary's great mythology of the defense of Hellenism against the barbarians: the Scordisci were the new Gauls, last fought off from Apollo's shrine by the Aetolians in 279, and the Romans, by throwing them back, assumed a role appropriate to the champions of Hellas'. This link could have been an outcome of self-promotion in Macedonia and Greece in the last decades of the second century BCE when the new enemy was 'bestowed' with invented history in order to appear even fiercer, simultaneously making Roman authorities/army to look admirable and more worthy in successes and less feeble upon defeats.

populations, spaces, past and present, and provided an explicatory matrix for origin, territorial extension, character and ferocity of the actual enemy. In this process of 'inventing the Other' and their tradition, the Gallati Scordisti were fixed inside the Greek/Macedonian/Roman frame of time-space-events referential system by assignment of the specific historical (Gallic 'sack' of Delphi) and geographical features (the Danube).

Another reason why the Danube became a geographical reference in this imagining might have been its already established reputation as the waterline symbolizing the threshold of the new and unknown world, potentially dangerous and full of unfamiliar, wild and foreign inhabitants. As in the case of later and more famous ethnic and territorial determination of the Gauls and Germans by dividing them with the Rhine (Riggsby 2006, 59–71; Krebs 2006), the Scordisci (i.e. Scordisti, Scordistae) were spatially defined with the help of the Danube as the river traditionally associated with liminal, unknown, mythical and barbarian. In this way, the idea of the fierce and barbaric Scordisci was enhanced by adding the qualities associated with the river, while simultaneously the river's symbolic value as the world's borderline was confirmed by coupling it with the 'terrible' alien population (for stereotyping 'barbarian otherness' and image of the enemy see Mattern 1999, 66–80; Shaw 2000, 375–378; Woolf 2011, 74–77, 105; for defining the people, and sometimes their character, by associating them with the rivers cf. Jones 2005, 39–41, 74; Östenberg 2009, 234; Campbell 2012, 19–20, 46, 57, 65, 127). Concisely, the described cognitive framework merged geographical exotics (the Danube) and the 'barbarian' enemy (the Scordisci), creating a condensed and powerful imagological amalgam. In terms of the theory of space discussed in the opening section, this means that for the Roman imperial elites the two mutually determined each other and that the space beyond Macedonia was defined both through political relations towards the Scordisci and through the imagined relation they had with the Danube. In other words, the territories north of Macedonia were constructed as a space marked by the bitter enemy and the river symbolizing the threshold of unfamiliar and mystical. This combination of imagology and production of space had profound consequences since it, at least to some extent and limitedly, dictated the subsequent actions of the Empire which affected the population of the area in the most direct way.

Empire on the Danube: setting the relations

Having in mind the influence of the Greek and Hellenistic intellectual thought, literature, geography, ethnography etc. on Roman elites, and the character of their education (e.g. Mattern 1999, 3–6, 18–20, 25, 65; Grant 1995, 62–83; Nicolai 2007, 14, 16; Marincola 2009, 21), the long-established symbolism of the Ister/Danube could not only have been familiar but also could

have gained particular meaning in the context of the intensive territorial expansion. Along with using the Ister/Danube to augment the construction of the Scordisci as the powerful and territorially widespread enemy, it is possible that the reputation of the river was also employed to enlarge the accomplishments of the commandants and armies that fought the 'tribe'. As we have seen, first Darius, and afterwards both Philip and Alexander were believed to have reached and crossed the Ister. The symbolism of grasping the universe's margin and conquering the unfamiliar and remote could be also desirable at least to some of the Roman generals who were involved in fighting the communities of the continental Balkans, and who potentially wanted to emulate famous military examples (cf. Krebs 2006, 127–133 explaining the motivation and meaning of Caesar crossing the Rhine). Hence, already in the period of the end of II or the beginning of I century there is an epigram from Demetrias celebrating some Roman general's success by referring to his expulsion of the Gauls while gazing at the shores of Ister. Likewise, later authors report that M. Livius Drusus prevented the Scordisci to cross the Danube (Flor. XXXIX) and that they took refuge to its islands after suffering defeats from the Romans (App. *Ill*. 3), or more specifically after Scipio Asiaticus beat them (App. *Ill*. 5; see Brennan 2000, 522–523, 530–531). This kind of stories could magnify the glory of the generals by exaggerating the success and territories covered by their ventures, or confirm the real advance made by some of them. In this context, the Ister/Danube served as a rhetoric device and a sort of propaganda element contributing to the personal repute of the generals and officials, but also to Rome and her domination. The notable example is G. Scribonius Curio who is commemorated as the first Roman general who reached the Ister/Danbe in the campaign against the Dardanians and other populations of the continental Balkans in 76–73 BCE (see Papazoglu 1978, 179–183, 408–409). Curio's operation can be marked as the beginning of the Roman firmer grasp deep into the Balkan hinterland and the breaking point in further relations, since the following activities were gradually increasing the presence and domination of the Empire. Thus, both from the already active southern and eastern directions (campaigns of M. Lucullus, G. Antonius Hybrida, G. Octavius) and from the Adriatic in the west, the Roman influences progressed towards the area of the Ister/Danube valley, at least by establishing more direct contacts of various kinds with the local communities in the region. Although the present state of our knowledge is slim due to the limited scope of written accounts and lack of extensive archaeological research, there is a growing body of evidence suggesting intensifying relationships (from hostile to mercenary, clientele and allied) between the representatives of Rome and indigenous populations (see Lozanov 2015, 76–79; Iliev 2015, 134–138; Šašel Kos 2005, 311–374, 492–502; Džino and Domić Kunić 2018, 79–81; Ujes-Morgan 2012).

Thus, all of the aforementioned cases (both before and after Curio) imply slow but continuous construction of the Ister/Danube in Roman elites' (semi) official discourse as the outermost line to which their power stretched (or was imagined to stretch), and indicate the specific relations imperialistic mindset built with the river, space and associated populations. Simply, it seems that the Danube (together with the Scordisci) gradually grew from ideal-typical and elusive universe's borderline-stream to become the tangible spatial objective of the Roman (elites') cognitive scheme. Of course, this does not mean there was a grand strategy aiming at the Ister/Danube as an ultimate goal of Rome's actions, but that the prevailing recognition of the river as a borderline of the familiar world stimulated the entertainment of idea about reaching its shores for the purposes of self-promotion and aggrandizement of personal and Roman power and fame. This kind of conceptual framework could easily become even more relevant and adaptable in the context of the emerging Augustan Empire and accompanied ideology of the Roman rule over the Oecumene (see Wolf 1995; Eck 2003; Galinsky (ed.) 2005), symbolically expressed by referring to the Ocean but also other great waters which delimited the known world. In other words, imperialistic mentality at the end of the Republic was a rewarding atmosphere for the more direct and final appropriation of the Ister/Danube, initially as a powerful emblem but soon enough as much more than 'just' an effective image.

The area between Macedonia and the Danube was eventually incorporated during the reign of Octavian Augustus (for recent scholarship on the issue see: Dautova Ruševljan and Vujović 2006; Domić Kunić 2006; Dzino 2010; Šašel Kos 2011; 2015; Radman Livaja 2012; Mladenović 2012; Kovács 2014, 1–40). The arrival to its right bank and 'control' over the river was an important event judging by the *princeps*' emphasis of the accomplishment (*Res Gestae*, 30. 1–2), and the speech he allegedly gave before the battle of Actium (Cass. Dio, L, 24. 4). Under his auspices, several generals operating in different sections of the river combated populations on both its banks and (willingly or not) credited the successes to the emperor. Marcus Licinius Crassus waged wars against people of the lower Danube in 29–28 BCE (Papazoglu 1978, 414–430; Šašel Kos 2005, 502–505), while Tiberius might have got to (or very near) its mouths with Sava and Drava in campaign of 13/12–9/8 BCE (Domić Kunić 2006; Šašel Kos 2011, 2015; Kovács 2014, 28–29). Cornelius Lentulus fought the Dacians and Sarmatians and forbade them to cross the Danube (probably somewhere in its lower parts) at an undetermined moment in the last decade BCE (Syme 1934; Šašel Kos 2005, 508–509; Kovács 2014, 30). Another Augustan general (possibly Marcus Vinicius – Syme 1933; Šašel Kos 2005, 509; Kovács 2014, 27), who crossed the Danube and fought populations on its left bank under the aegis of the emperor, was adequately commemorated with an inscription stating the deed (Syme 1933, 144). Although slightly out of the immediate focus, the campaigns

directed by Tiberius and Drusus in the Alpine region and the Danube's upper course in 16–15 BCE should also be mentioned here, as well as the following developments in the regions of Raetia and Noricum (Gruen 1996, 170–171; Šašel Kos 2005, 473–476, 480–485; for the Roman understandings of the upper part of the Danube, its mixing with the Rhine and realization it did not reach the Adriatic as previously misconstrued in Greek/Hellenistic thought see Dan 2015, 136–138). Thus, by appropriation of his generals' successes and resting on the tradition of martial bragging about reaching the great rivers (including the Danube), Augustus capitalized on it and made it a regular method of expressing the extent of the Roman rule and greatness of the emperor for centuries to come (which is obvious from the usage of rivers' symbolism in various forms of imperialistic ideology, from rhetoric, iconography and monumentalization to spectacles, ceremonies and parades – Nicolet 1991, 87, 128, 188; Braund 2009, 45–47; Östenberg 2009, 230–245; Campbell 2012, 128, 188–189, 192, 369–388; Mattern 2013, 216–217).

With the incorporation of the lands as far as the Danube, the Roman Empire really stretched the volume of its hegemony to (previously only) imagined limits of the familiar world, and mastered them by the direct physical subjugation of natural object and people in the area. Although the subsequent constructions of space (*sensu* Massey 2005) associated with the Danube certainly differed depending on the actors involved in the process, it cannot be denied that those in control could impose understanding, organization, and construction of space in a way they themselves saw fit. The asymmetrical distribution of socio-political capabilities between the elites and 'ordinary' population (for uneven power distribution and real effects of Roman imperialisms – e.g. Webster and Cooper (eds) 1996; Mattingly 2011; Mihajlović and Janković 2018) could, therefore, prevail over the supposed 'native voices' and local influences (argued by e.g. Gruen 2011; Woolf 2011; Purcell 2012) in shaping the Empire's ethnographies, mythologies and space. In other words, the preconceptions and perceptions of those in power,[11] with capacities to influence relations in the emerging social settings, could have *de facto* incarnated the Danube to conform the imperialistic 'attitudes of mind' (the term used and defined by Isaac 2004, 2, 7).[12] Since the ideology and imagology of imperial elites constituted an active cognitive system projected into the production of space (i.e. geometries and topologies of power relations and social trajectories) of the newly founded provincial structures (see e.g. Habinek 1998, 151–169; Riggsby 2006; Osgood 2009, 352–353;

[11] To which I count individuals and groups supportive of the Empire regardless of their origin/background, who had (or managed to acquire) privileged socio-political positioning.

[12] For the real effects of imperial administrative discourse cf. Braund 2009, 45; Purcell 2012, 374–375, 381, 384; Mattern 2013, 218, 224.

Džino 2010; Džino and Domić Kunić 2018), some ideas inherent to imagining the Danube were enacted in currently instituted relationalities.

One of these ideas was the articulation of the Danube as a psychological frontier inside the imperialistic mental map. Along with probable administrative and strategic practicalities (cf. Rankov 2005; Sommer 2009; Purcell 2012, 379–380; Campbell 2012, 56–57, 160–199; Breeze 2013, 15), the river was constructed as a frontier zone by reifying its *longue durée* imagining as the waterway bordering the realm of the unfamiliar. It is, of course, true that the Danube in the Roman times cannot be seen as an obvious impenetrable barrier or a natural strategic object, as it is highly probable that the populations from its opposite banks were interrelated and had intensive mutual contacts (as recent archaeological studies show there were intensive contacts and exchange of goods with populations beyond the Danube who lived in the neighborhood of the provinces of Pannonia and Moesia, see e.g. Burns 2003; Egri 2014; 2017). However, from the beginning of the Principate the Danube reappears as a reference for the Empire's frontier in different sources and semantic contexts (Millar 1982, 19–20; Campbell 2012, 55–56, 63, 156, 190–191, 198; Breeze 2013, 14), and it can be argued it certainly represented the 'lateral boundary of public imagination' (Whittaker 1994, 80; Mattern 2013, 217). For example, Virgil (*Geor.* III, 339–383) associates the Danube with the Scythians who are represented as wild nomadic people living in an extremely harsh natural environment and in an excessively uncivilized manner. Another Augustan poet, Horatius (*Od*. IV, 15), eulogized the princeps and his deeds, stating that 'those living by the mighty Danube shall not break the Julian decrees', which is an obvious allusion to the safety the princeps had achieved on the Empire's borders. Ovid, the member of the highest social circles who was banished to close proximity of the Ister's mouth with the Black Sea, also passes on the comprehension of the waterway as an evident socio-cultural frontier (e.g. *Ex Ponto* IV. 2; 6; 10; V. 10; Batty 1994; Habinek 1998, 151–163). With the already mentioned Strabo's view on the river (e.g. VII, 3. 10–11; 5), it is safe to conclude there was a common image of the Danube as frontier water, appropriated from older intellectual tradition and further strengthened by the scope of contemporary military exploits. This liminality could have symbolized not only spatial but also temporal distance, having in mind that the perspective of Romano-centric elites implied a decrease of civilization at the margins of the Roman world and the wild state of people living beyond (cf. Clarke 1999, 146, 182–183; Isaac 2004, 56–109; Evans 2008, 24–25; Woolf 2011, 44–51). In other words, the river acquired the significance of an entity that separated 'people without history', 'retrograde barbarians' who were vestiges of the wild past, and space that was integrated with the Roman Empire and thereby included in superior *humanitas* of the present.

Reification of imagology through the production of space: the Danube as Empire's frontier zone

Apparently, Augustus' rule marked the synchronization of literary and imagological topos of the Danube as psychological and symbolic frontier with the treatment of the river inside the sphere of 'Realpolitik'. In my opinion, this happened as a direct outcome of imperial elites' mindset that was inextricably entangled both with 'abstract' intellectual views of the (Roman) world and 'practical' actions to order it.[13] Since the construction of the Danube as the frontier was a political matter, privileged social elements could closely tie the perception of this space on the one hand, with the treatment of the river and the associated population on the other. This view is supported by the testified utilization of the river as an axis for setting the course of actions that affected (for better or worse) a great number of people. First in the Augustan period, and then under Claudius and Nero, four (known) population transfers happened whereupon the Danube served as a spatial referential point (Boatwright 2015; Conole and Milns 1983). Foreign populations, who lived beyond the Danube, were instigated to settle within the Empire, probably in the process of institutionalizing provincial structures and arranging political interactions with their immediate surroundings. What is important for the present purpose is that the described cognitive system defined the status of some people in relation to the river, and designated actions to 'handle' them accordingly. Subsequent Domitian's and especially Trajan's wars across the Danube (Mirković 1996, 35–39) further demonstrate the point, and show that in the last third of the first century CE the river was definitely set as a frontier zone (at least towards the Decebalus' kingdom). Thus, political relations were structured by the criterion of the river as a sort of a line of differentiation and separation, and there cannot be any doubt that the river was an integral part of the topology of power and one of the norms for defining roles of different groups of people.

The production of space related to the Danube and defining it as a frontier zone was also carried out through the virtual construction of 'architectural space' (and other interventions) that accompanied the foundation of imperial institutions. Since it is not my aim to cover the entirety of the river's course in this respect, I will briefly review only the portion ascribed to the Scordisci. Probably already under Augustus, and certainly under Tiberius, the river was reified as a frontier zone by the construction of military camps and roads along its course (Kovács 2014, 1–40). It is known from Florus that Lentulus built

[13] *Contra* Woolf 2011, 85–88, 111 who argues separate spheres of intellectual thought and political/military activities and implies independent tracks of literary fiction and practice of ruling the world.

praesidia somewhere on the river after stopping intrusions of the Dacians, while Festus marked that the constitution of the limes (of Danubian provinces) between the Romans and barbarians took place in the time of Augustus (see Syme 1934; Mirković 1996, 29; Kovács 2014, 23–40). Such an early imposition of the Roman military system is not archaeologically confirmed in the region as yet, but two identical inscriptions carved on the natural rock in the Iron Gates testify to the construction works (most probably the building of a road) conducted by two Moesian legions during Tiberius' reign (33–34 CE – Mirković 1996, 29–30). While the precise chronology of the first fortifications in the area is lacking due to the poor preservation of the oldest layers, in the context of the mentioned inscriptions the earliest horizons of several military camps in the Iron Gates are interpreted as the stations of the units that built and maintained the road through the canyon (Petrović and Vasić 1996, 20; Kondić 1996; Mladenović 2012, 16). An illuminating fact regarding the Iron Gates is the existence of several more inscriptions cut on cliffs commemorating new constructions or reparations under various emperors (Claudius, Domitian, Trajan), carried out by the troops of Moesia (Petrović and Vasić 1996, 19–20; Mirković 1996, 30, 36, 38). Official imperial *tabulae* on natural stone formations not only point to the progress in making the southern bank of the Danube the part of the imperial socio-political and military system, but also indicate the symbolic dimension of overcoming natural difficulties (canyon, cataracts) and overpowering the river's environment (cf. Bowman and Woolf 1994, 8–9; Edmondson 2002, 42). In the rest of the 'Scordiscian' portion of the Danube (between the Drava and the Iron Gates) permanent military camps are certainly confirmed in the second half of the first century, but the existence of some outposts is presumed already for the Augustan period (Dautova Ruševljan and Vujović 2006, 57–58; Radman Livaja 2012, 166–172). Regardless of many uncertainties in terms of chronology and exact development, the important thing is the gradual transformation of the right riverbank by the construction of the physical delimitation line, which actually meant the materialization of the cognitive frontier that affected and changed local social processes. Although there were no walls and barriers in the literal sense of the word, during the whole first century, and especially in the reign of Domitian who waged wars against the Dacians, the string of fortifications was built which made a clear distinction from the left bank of the river (see Đorđević 2007). The right riverside was 'conquered and tamed' by the mere presence of the Roman authorities and army, and 'domesticated' through the reshaping of the landscape, the imposition of Roman social structures and realization of architectural projects. With the abandonment of pre-Roman enclosed settlements (confirmed at least in the area of Srem – Popović 1992, 38–43; Tapavički–Ilić 2004, 29–30), the emergence of various new types of centers (administrative, military, economic), the introduction of Roman imperial forms of administration

(*civitates peregrinae*, *municipia*, *coloniae* – Mirković 1968; Móscy 1974; Migotti (ed.) 2012; Kovács 2014, 1–40), architectural activities that accompanied them, and incorporation in the Empire's 'material world', the functioning on the right side of the Danube was substantially changed. All these interventions had the profound impact on the people living there as they articulated power relations and (material and ideological) conditions under which space was incarnated and lived further (cf. Bishop 1999, 113 for the symbolic impact of the Roman military structures, regardless of the strength of the residing manpower). In conclusion, it is possible to argue that the Danube kept its connotation of the water line that divided the space produced as an integral part of the Empire and space that was not constituted as a part of the imperial structure. While the latter could, of course, be under the influence and control of the imperial system, it was not vested with the help of 'institutions' and practices specific to the Empire, which was a pivotal difference in comparison to the former.

Finally, what was the fate of the 'Scordisci' in the Roman Empire? The evidence is extremely blurred and inconclusive, but some known facts are indicative, especially in the context of the Danube 'case'. After Scipio Asiaticus' campaign of 85 BCE the Scordisci are not mentioned in the context of the Roman conquest of the Balkans in any of the events up to the reign of Augustus. In 16 BCE they are noted as raiding Macedonia together with one Thracian group (Cass. Dio LIV, 20, 3), but already for 12 BCE they are characterized as Tiberius' allies in the Pannonian war (Cass. Dio LIV, 31, 3). The discrepancy of geographic references and changeable relationship towards the Empire could be the consequence of the traditional vagueness of the term and its association with vast areas between Macedonia and the Danube, which was reactivated in the course of the Roman advances towards southern Pannonia. In any case, at some point after the incorporation of Pannonia, the *civitas peregrina* of the Scordisci was constituted (Grbić 2015, 285–291) in the area that underwent the mentioned processes (i.e. integration with imperial socio-political structure; very telling in this light is the imposition of the Roman military officer as the governor of the Scordiscian and two adjacent *civitates peregrinae* – Kušan Špalj 2015, 53–54). The area of the community is assumed to have covered the easternmost part of Srem, on the right bank of the Danube, between the mouths of Tisa and Sava. These geographical references are exactly the ones mentioned by Strabo and Pompeius Trogus, which could mean that both authors specified them (in contrast to the older vague versions) having in mind administrative organization of their own times. In other words, the projection of the state of affairs current under Augustus' and Tiberius' reigns into the past, together with the existing tradition of linking the Danube to the Scordisci could result in moving their core territory to the confluence of the Danube and Sava in the narratives of these

writers. Whatever the case, it is not known why this area was designated as the native community of the Scordisci, since other lands traditionally ascribed to them are known as territories of peregrine populations of other names (which appear for the first time in the Principate: Cornacates, Sirmiensi, Amantini, Tricornenses, Pincenses, Celegeri – cf. Móscy 1974, 53–55, 66; Papazoglu 1978, 344–345). Nevertheless, the fact remains that the Danube (with the help of Sava and Tisa) played the role in defining the Scordiscian administrative unit, despite the way local communities previously perceived and used it.[14] More precisely, even if this river did not have a role of any kind of frontier among the pre-Roman communities of the area,[15] it certainly became one in the Roman times. Simply, a tradition from which members of the Roman imperial elites derived their comprehension of ethnography and geography of the Danube was projected in the real space-time-social sphere, and this must have impacted the lives of the local populations and their understandings of the 'world order'. Even though archaeological material suggests the contacts never completely ceased and the river continued to act as a connector (which in turn means there was no strict separation of the people living on two sides of the Danube),[16] the general sociopolitical setting nevertheless changed. If nothing else, the fact that only a small native community was officially signified as the Scordisci and confined to the area determined by the rivers certainly influenced the self-perception of the people hit by the act. Consequently, this might have repercussions ranging from social positioning to everyday performative practices, as in the case of the title *princeps praefectus Scordiscorum* (Grbić 2015, 288 nr. 205) that suggests not only a particular status and social structure behind it, but also a peculiar

[14] Instructive analogy is the case of Moesi who were new imperial ethnographic invention that emerged in the course of establishing the homonymous province and was defined as population living between the Haemus and the Danube. In this way they were 'artificially' cut off from the Daci and Getae who lived in the right bank of the river, although it is probable that all shared strong linguistic and cultural closeness and did not previously identified in a manner the Roman administration delineated them – see Papazoglu 1978, 404, 414; Boteva 2012; Dan 2015, 146.

[15] Close contacts across the Danube in pre-Roman times are indicated by very similar settlements (and material) on both sides of the river. Although their exact mutual relations are not known, and we can only speculate if they were separate socio-political and economic entities or, quite the opposite, parts of some larger collective social organization, they must have had very tight interactions – see Popović 1992, 38–43.

[16] The exact nature and intensity of these contacts are not clear due to the lack of extensive research, but Roman material at the left side of the Danube and persistence of similar local traditions of material culture at both riverbanks point to the keeping of some extent of exchange and mutual relations. See: Popović and Borić Brešković 1994; Đorđević 2007, 80–112; Janković 2014; Egri 2014.

form of identity and the social role T. Flavius Proculus performed. To conclude, socio-political realities and relationalities were shaped through spatial references involving the watercourse, and this is a perspective that promises fruitful potential for research of similar cases and aspects of rivers and the construction of space in the Roman world.

Translated by the author

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Zamišljanje Dunava/Istera u antičkoj misli i praksi: reka, Skordisci i rimski imperijalistički prostor

U radu se razmatra kulturna i imaginativna konstrukcija Istera/Dunava i njene implikacije u stvaranju zone limesa na području (Gornje) Mezije i (dela) Panonije. U tekstu se diskutuje upotreba Dunava kao činioca pri konstrukciji Skordiska kao rimskih neprijatelja i (pseudo)etničkog plemena, značenje ove veze i da li je takva konceptualizacija imala realne posledice na delu reke koji je asociran sa ovim „plemenom". Iznosi se pretpostavka da je Dunav postao hidrološka međa zahvaljujući svom dugotrajnom značenju simbolične granice koja je bila usađena u rimske imperijalističke aktivnosti tokom stvaranja provincijskog/graničnog/imperijalnog prostora. Glavna poenta je da je antička imagološka tradicija imala važan efekat na konstrukciju rimskog imperijalnog prostora zahvaljujući kapacitetima intelektualnih i političkih elita da oblikuju odnose moći pomoću projektovanja svojih svetonazora na mreže društvenih odnosa koji su bili pod njihovim uticajima.

Ključne reči: Dunav/Ister, Skordisci, konstrukcija prostora, rimski imperijalizam, rimska pogranična zona, Mezija, Panonija

La conception du Danube/Istros dans la pensée et la pratique antiques: fleuve, Scordisques et espace impérial romain

Le présent travail étudie la construction culturelle et imaginative d'Istros/Danube et ses implications dans la création de la zone du limes sur le territoire de Mésie (Supérieure) et de Pannonie (en partie). Le texte discute de l'utilisation du Danube comme facteur lors de la construction des Scordisques comme ennemis romains et tribu (pseudo)ethnique, de la signification de ce rapport et si cette conceptualisation avait provoqué de réelles conséquences sur la partie du fleuve associée à cette « tribu ». Il est supposé que le Danube était devenu la limite hydrologique puisqu'il présentait pendant longtemps la frontière symbolique installée dans les activités impériales romaines durant la création de l'espace provincial/frontalier/impérial. Le point principal est que la tradition antique imagologique avait produit un effet important sur la construction de l'espace impérial romain grâce aux capacités des élites intellectuelles et politiques à établir des relations de pouvoir en projetant leur conception du monde sur des réseaux de rapports sociaux étant sous leur influence.

Mots-clés: Danube/Istros, imagologie antique grecque/romaine, Scordisques, construction de l'espace, impérialisme romain, zone frontalière romaine sur le moyen Danube, Mésie, Pannonie

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