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Licinianus' account of the Roman campaigns against the Balkan tribes in 85 B.C.

Abstract: In Granius Licinianus' description (35.79–81 Criniti) of the Roman war in the hinterland of Macedonia in 85 B.C., two independent Roman campaigns against the Balkan tribes are mentioned. The fragmentary text has given rise to emendations, thus admits different readings. It is proposed here an interpretation of the text that seems the most plausible, on both historical and linguistic grounds. Relying on this interpretation, it seems proper to reconsider some common observations regarding certain Balkan tribes and their part in the First Mithridatic war, as well as the timing of the Hortensius' military campaign.

Key words: Sulla, Granius Licinianus, Dardani, Dentheletae, Maedi, First Mithridatic War.

Toward the end of the First Mithridatic War (89–85 B.C.), Sulla had marched against certain Balkan tribes before he crossed the Hellespont to the conference with the Pontic king Mithridates VI Eupator. The war was often glossed over by ancient historians,¹ who were rather concentrated on major war theatre and battles with Mithridatic forces. Accordingly, Sulla's war in the Balkans provoked little discussion among scholars.² It is difficult to tell from our sources what was the actual motivation for the campaign, and even more speculative to discern the scope of it. However, some aspects of the campaign could be cleared up. The focus here is on the interpretation of the text of Granius Licinianus – the information he gives is valuable and requires to be examined, or highlighted, more fully than it has been. Several insights emerging from our reading contribute to a better understanding of the campaign.

Fragmentary account of Granius Licinianus concerning the expedition in the Balkan interior runs as follows:

¹ Sulla's Balkan campaign is briefly mentioned in Liv. *Per.* 83; Gran. Licin. 35.79–81 Criniti; Plut. *Sull.* 23.5; App. *Mith.* 55; Eutr. 5.7.1 and in De Vir. Ill. 75.7.

² It is usually mentioned in passing, while speaking about the First Mithridatic War, see REINACH 1895, 192, 196; MAGIE 1950, 229–230, 1109–1110 n. 57; ORMEROD 1951, 257; SHERWIN-WHITE 1984, 142–143; KALLET-MARX 1995, 273; ПЕТКОВИЋ 2009, 200; KEAVENEY 2005, 87–88, or in the histories of certain Balkan tribes, see ZIPPEL 1877, 161–162; ГЕРОВ 1961, 172; ДАНОВ 1979, 113–114; DELEV 2015, 71. For a fuller discussion of the war see ПАΠΑЗОГЛУ 1979, 177–178, 313–314 and ПЕТКОВИЋ 2008, 119–125.

Ac dum de condicionibus disceptatur, M(a)edos et Dardanos, qui socios ve|xabant, Hortensius le[gatus] fugaverat. ipse Sulla ex[er]citurum in M(a)edi(c)am ind[u]xerat, priusquam in A[siam] ad conloquium transiret. quo Dardanos e[t] Denseletas caesis hos[tibus], qui Macedoniam ve[xa]bant, in deditionem recepit.³

While the terms of the treaty were being negotiated, the legate Hortensius routed the Maedi and the Dardani, who were harassing the allies. Sulla himself had led an army into the territory of the Maedi, before he crossed over to Asia to the meeting [with Mithridates]. There he received the surrender of the Dardani and the Denseletae, after the slaughter of the enemies who were harassing Macedonia.⁴

We have seen that, besides Sulla's campaign, Licinianus makes reference to another campaign led by Sulla's legate Hortensius. The chronological indication for Hortensius' campaign, *dum de condicionibus disceptatur*, is rather ambiguous. The mention of negotiations has induced some scholars to suggest that Hortensius' expedition occurred during the final conference at Dardanus in the late summer or early autumn 85 B.C.,⁵ that is, after Sulla's campaign.⁶ On the other hand, military operation under Hortensius' command is mentioned first – no small argument for dating it before Sulla's.⁷ It should be noted that the chronological reference mentioned above only suggests that the campaign was conducted during the negotiations,⁸ not at the time of Dardanus. The negotiations had probably started at the end of previous year,⁹ and were prolonged and transferred from place to place as Sulla moved northward to Macedonia and then eastward to Asia.¹⁰ Mithridates probably consented to the terms of agreement that had already been discussed between

³ Gran. Licin. 35.79–81. In the *editio princeps* of Granius Licinianus, PERTZ 1857, 19, 41 suggested the reading *Hortensius retro fugaverat*. The reading *legatus*, suggested by the Bonn editors (see HEPTAS 1858, 35), instead of *retro*, is accepted by all subsequent scholars.

⁴ Author's translation. Licinianus' *quo* could be an adverb for place (»there« in our text), or a relative pronoun which refers to the army mentioned in the previous sentence. But *quo* as an adverb could only refer to the place already mentioned, that is *Maedica*, rather than Philippi, as SCARDIGLI 1983, 102 has suggested.

⁵ For the date of the Peace of Dardanus see MAGIE 1950, 230, 1110 n. 58 and REINACH 1895, 199.

⁶ REINACH 1910, 307; BADIAN 1964, 81; PAPAZOGLU 1979, 178; SCARDIGLI 1983, 102; DELEV 2012, 436; idem. 2015, 71. Cf. ZIPPEL 1877, 161. There is no evidence that after the campaign Hortensius left Greece in order to join Sulla in Asia, as Reinach said, loc. cit. After the campaign we hear nothing about him.

⁷ REINACH 1895, 192, 196; MAGIE 1950, 229–230; KEAVENEY 2005, 87–88; BRENNAN 2000, 527; PETKOVIĆ 2008, 120–121.

⁸ CAMOZZI 1900, 51.

⁹ MAGIE 1950, 1107 n. 46; MCGING 1986, 130.

¹⁰ For the negotiations see Plut. *Sull.* 22–23; App. *Mith.* 54–56; Gran. Licin. 35.71–78; Eutr. 5.7.2.

Sulla and Archelaus before the final conference.¹¹ This fact is corroborated by Licinianus' wording – *Colloquium Sullae et Archelao in Aulide fuit et condiciones impositae, si rex pacem mallet. Quibus ille tandem paruit.*¹² So, when Licinianus says that the campaign was launched *dum de condicionibus disceptatur*, he obviously had in mind the time before the meeting at Dardanus.¹³ Therefore, there are no reasons to date Hortensius' expedition after Sulla's. Both expeditions should be dated to the spring or summer of 85 B.C.

Ipsae Sulla had marched against the Maedi before he crossed the Hellespont, says Licinianus in the quoted passage. The Thracians are well attested as Roman enemies – Sulla's campaign is also documented in other ancient texts,¹⁴ and clashes between the Thracians and the Romans occurred frequently in the first two decades of the first century.¹⁵ The following sentence is more problematic: *quo Dardanos et Denseletas caesis hostibus, qui Macedoniam vexabant, in deditionem recepit.* Certain scholars have supposed that the text is corrupt and that the emendations Scordiscosque¹⁶ or ceterosque¹⁷ are more acceptable than *caesis hostibus*, suggested by Pertz.¹⁸ By making these corrections, the Dardani and the Dentheletae could be seen as the tribes *qui Macedoniam vexabant*. In that case, translation would be: »There he received the surrender of the Dardani, the Denseletae and the Scordisci (or other tribes) who were harassing Macedonia«. It appears that this interpretation is, to some extent, influenced by the widespread belief that the Dardani were Roman enemies and the tribe always hostile to Macedonia, according to Livy's expression relating to the year 179. B.C.¹⁹ In accordance with this view, the Dardani should be placed among the enemies who were harassing Macedonia in Licinianus' text too.

¹¹ Plut. *Sull.* 24.3; App. *Mith.* 58. Cf. Memn. 25.1 J.

¹² Gran. Licin. 35.71–72.

¹³ KEAVENEY 2005, 205 n. 41 dates the campaign to the very beginning of the negotiations, REINACH 1895, 192 to the time when Archelaus was in Larissa, and BRENNAN 2000, 861 n. 34 when Archelaus was negotiating with Mithridates.

¹⁴ Against the Maedi: Plut. *Sull.* 23.5; De Vir. Ill. 75.7; Eutr. 5.7.1. Against the Thracians: Liv. *Per.* 83. Cf. App. *Mith.* 55.

¹⁵ For the Thracian incursions into Macedonia and Greece see Liv. *Per.* 70, 74, 76, 81, 82; Dio Cass. 31 fr. 101.2; Oros. 5.18.30. Cf. Cic. *Pis.* 84. The Maedi are explicitly mentioned only in Iul. Obs. 48 (97 B.C.) and 53 (92 B.C.). See also an important inscription in SHERK 1969, 119–123.

¹⁶ The emendation is suggested by HEPTAS (1858) 35. It is accepted by ZIPPEL 1877, 161; OBERHUMMER 1901, 2102. Cf. REINACH 1895, 196 n. 1 and PAPAZOGLU 1979, 314, who take the Scordisci for a possible emendation, but BADIAN 1964, 81, 99 n. 61 remains skeptical.

¹⁷ Th. Mommsen has tried this emendation in PERTZ 1857, 41. Cf. MAGIE 1950, 1110 n. 57; PAPAZOGLU 1979, 314, and translation on the p. 177.

¹⁸ PERTZ 1857, 41. This emendation is accepted in most subsequent editions of Licinianus' text, see CAMOZZI 1900, 49; FLEMISCH 1904, 28; CRINITI 1981, 21. See also FLEMISCH 1900, 51 and SCARDIGLI 1983, 144.

¹⁹ Liv. 40.57.6: *Dardani, gens semper infestissima Macedoniae.*

It seems, however, that there are no conclusive grounds for such emendations. Firstly, there are no proofs that the Dentheletae were hostile towards Rome in this period. Although we have little information on the Dentheletae, there are few instances in which there is enough material for an opposite conjecture. They helped in the protection of Macedonia while C. Sentius governed the province (c. 93–87 B.C.),²⁰ in the tumultuous period when Mithridates instigated a general revolt in the Balkans and a tribal invasion of Macedonia.²¹ We may assume that they were on friendly terms with the Romans also in the period following Sentius' governorship. Cicero, speaking about Piso's Macedonian command (57–55 B.C.) and his Thracian war, says that the Dentheletae have always been submissive to the Romans. By making an unjust war against the Dentheletae, he says, Piso turned them into plunderers though they might have been the permanent defenders of Macedonia and trusted allies.²² Although some remarks in Cicero's invective speech are tendentious, it is hardly believable that he would have invented facts.²³ Moreover, the Dentheletae were mentioned as Roman allies in the time of Crassus' campaign 29–28. B.C.²⁴

This is not to say that the Dentheletae were always peaceful. As we happen to know from Dio Cassius, Macedonia was ravaged by the Dentheletae in 16 B.C.²⁵ In the Augustan period, Strabo lists them among the plundering Thracian tribes.²⁶ Still, all this does not provide sufficient grounds to change Licinianus' text and make them marauders of the Roman province in the period discussed here, especially when Cicero states the opposite. Moreover, it is absurd to claim that they were Roman enemies and cite Licinianus' text as the only evidence for this, as some scholars do,²⁷ when that in fact is nowhere clearly stated in his text.

²⁰ Cic. *Pis.* 84.

²¹ Dio Cassius says explicitly that barbarian plundering was at the instigation of Mithridates, and Appian mentions the Thracians as Pontic allies in the First (*Mith.* 13, 15) and the Third Mithridatic War (*ibid.* 69). Cf. McGING 1986, 57, 62; Петковић 2009, 188–189. For barbarian incursions into Macedonia during the First Mithridatic War, see Liv. *Per.* 74; 76; 81; 82; Dio Cass. 31. fr. 101.2; Oros. 5.18.30. For a general rising of the barbarians, see Cic. *Pis.* 84, and also Diod. 37.5a for the revolt in Macedonia in that period.

²² Cic. *Pis.* 84.

²³ PAPAZOGLU 1979, 185; PETKOVIĆ 2008, 122. It seems implausible that Cicero would represent Roman enemies as allies, even if we accept Nisbet's famous characterization of the speech as a masterpiece of misrepresentation, see NISBET 1961, xvi.

²⁴ Dio Cass. 51.23.4.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 54.20.3.

²⁶ Strab. 7.5.12.

²⁷ NISBET 1961, 153; SCARDIGLI 1983, 103; Syme 1999 Cf. RE 4, 2102; Героб 1961, 172; REINACH 1896, 196 n. 1.

The picture of the Dardani is somewhat problematic. The question arises whether the Dardani are to be found among the barbarians who were attacking Macedonia, either during the First Mithridatic war or somewhat earlier. The important point in the discussion is that there is no direct evidence of Dardanian bellicosity towards Macedonia since the Second Macedonian War (200–197 B.C.).²⁸ In the Third Macedonian War (171–168 B.C.), Perseus made an expedition against them as a side issue of the war with the Romans.²⁹ The next recorded example does not come until the next century. According to Obsequens, the Dardani were subjugated in 97. B.C.,³⁰ but there is no evidence that they attacked Macedonia on that occasion. It could also be a minor clash, kind of demonstration of Roman power. It seems that Livy's *semper infestissima* shouldn't be stretched to a period more than one hundred years distant from the last attested Dardanian attack.

On the other hand, Appian says that in 85. B.C. Sulla marched against the Eneti, the Dardani, and the Sinti, tribes on the border of Macedonia, who were continually invading that country. In this way, according to Appian, he exercised his soldiers and enriched them at the same time.³¹ I think we must not give too much weight to this statement of Appian. As is mentioned above, there is not a single known example of Dardanian attack since the 190s. Moreover, we hear nothing about Sintian or Enetian invasions of Macedonia. The comment about barbarians who were disturbing the Roman province should be seen as a mere justification for Sulla's campaign, which may have come from his memoirs or some Sullan annalist.³² Besides, Appian's comment is not convincing considering Sulla's motivation for the war too,³³ and the whole episode sounds as his common form of reporting such matters.³⁴

²⁸ Even then the Dardani were on the Roman side, as Livy explicitly tells us, see 31.28.1–2, 33.3.

²⁹ Plut. *Aem.* 9.3.

³⁰ Iul. Obs. 48.

³¹ App. *Mith.* 55.

³² Cf. WALBANK 1983, 133 for the observation regarding Roman-barbarian relations: »[...] it is impossible to assign responsibility for the separate incidents since while punitive expeditions were often provoked by Thracian invasions of Roman territory, it will have been easy even when there was no provocation to represent Roman expeditions as retaliation or a preventive strike.« In any case, the initiative could have been the Sulla's, but that he managed to give the contrary impression.

³³ Having in mind that Roman troops had hitherto fought in Greece, the reason for more training is not obvious. Furthermore, the Roman soldiers could not expect a campaign in the Balkan interior against barbarians to be very profitable compared to the war against Mithridates and his allies in central Greece. See PETKOVIĆ 2008, 119.

³⁴ Cf. App. *BCiv.* 5.75: Desiring to enrich as well as to exercise the soldiers [...] he sent some of them against the Partheni, an Illyrian tribe near Epidamnus [...] others against the Dardani, another Illyrian tribe, who were for ever making incursions into Macedonia. (Loeb trans.); cf. *ibid.* 128.

Fanula Papazoglu is of the opinion that the Dardani may lurk behind the term Thracians, since the Dardani were neighbours of the Maedi thus they could make joint incursions into Macedonia. In her view, that could be an explanation for the silence of our sources on Dardanian incursions.³⁵ Although it is not impossible, we have no positive evidence on this. Iulius Obsequens, for instance, distinguishes between the Dardani and the Maedi when he says that they were subdued in 97, but five years later it was the Maedi who were invaded Macedonia in his text.³⁶ Although the author knew who were the Dardani, it must be more than coincidence that we read only about Thracian incursions into Macedonia in Livy's brief *Periochae*.³⁷ In the absence of any direct evidence to the contrary, we cannot presume that the Dardani were associated with the Thracians, or that the term Thracians covers the Dardani too. It seems more appropriate to argue that the Dardani were either too weak or passive for some other reasons. They could be hostile to the Romans, and disturb Roman friends,³⁸ but it seems that they avoided open conflict with the Romans.³⁹

Yet another piece of evidence should be invoked. According to Eutropius, Sulla at that time either conquered or accepted the surrender of certain Balkan tribes. He lists the Dardani, the Scordisci, the Maedi and the Dalmati,⁴⁰ though some scholars have argued that the Eutropius' text is corrupt in this point and that the Dentheletae seems to be in accordance with the context.⁴¹ Anyway, we can take it as certain that Eutropius speaks of two distinct ways in which the Romans dealt with those barbarians. *Deditio*, whether *in fidem* or in any other comparable formulation, meant surrendering to the discretion of the victorious general, that is unconditional surrender.⁴² But *deditio* could

³⁵ PAPAZOGLU 1979, 175.

³⁶ Iul. Obs. 48: *Celtiberi, Maedi, Dardani subacti*. Cf. *ibid.* 53: *Maedorum in Macedonia gens provinciam cruenta vastavit*. Other authors also mention the Dardani on other occasions, see Dio Cass. 38.10.2; 51.23.2, 27.3, and for the region of Dardania see Oros. 1.2.57, 59; 5.23.20, but name only Thracians for the 80s.

³⁷ Liv. *Per.* 43 (Perseus' victory over the Dardani), *ibid.* 92 and 95 (Curio's campaigns against the Dardani).

³⁸ Gran. Licin. 35.79. The Thracians were also attacking Roman allies, see SHERK 1969, 119–123.

³⁹ In the period following the First Mithridatic war, when the Dardani became Rome's chief enemies, they used to buy peace when it was possible, see Cic. *Sest.* 94; App. *Ill.* 5; cf. Sall. *Hist.* 2. 80 M.

⁴⁰ Eutr. 5.7.1: *Interim eo tempore Sulla etiam Dardanos, Scordiscos, Dalmatas et Maedos partim vicit, alios in fidem accepit*.

⁴¹ ZIPPEL 1877, 161–162; FLEMISCH 1900, 52 n. 1; ВУЛИЋ 1910, 94; ГЕРОВ 1961, 172; BADIAN 1964, 99 n. 61; PAPAZOGLU 1979, 313 n. 124; ŠAŠEL-KOS 2005, 311, but quite differently on p. 539. For a different view, see PETKOVIĆ 2008, 121–123, who argues that it is more plausible to accept Eutropius' information without additional emendation.

⁴² DAHLHEIM 1968, 25–43.

be performed voluntarily for the explicit purpose of receiving Roman protection,⁴³ or under pressure and following military defeat by Rome.⁴⁴ Bearing in mind that Eutropius distinguishes the tribes who were overcome by force from those who surrendered, it can be supposed that the tribes who surrendered submitted without a struggle, or that *deditio* was performed voluntarily in anticipation of Roman protection. In the light of the pending Civil war, and unfinished Mithridatic war, Sulla had good reasons to win some barbarians over to the Roman side by diplomatic means.⁴⁵

It might well be true that Licinianus too distinguishes between the tribe who was conquered by force, that is the Maedi in his text, and those who surrendered through *deditio* – the Dardani and the Dentheletae. I think that Eutropius' text strongly supports this view, regardless whether *Dentheletas* should be read instead of *Dalmatas*. Therefore, the most satisfactory emendation of Licinianus' CAESISHOS is *caesis hos[tibus]*, which refers to the Maedi.⁴⁶ As we have already observed, this reading fits well with the information we have on the Dentheletae. The evidence simply does not allow us to alter Licinianus' text without some good reasons.

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⁴³ See the following cases: Campanians: Liv. 7.30–31; 8.2.13; Lucanians: Liv. 10.11–13; Mamertines: Polyb. 1.10–11.3; 3.26.6; Greek cities and Illyrian tribes: Polyb. 2.11–12.2; App. Ill. 7; Dio Cass. 12.49.1; Messenians: Liv. 36.31. Cf. DAHLHEIM 1968, 52–67.

⁴⁴ See the famous example in Liv. 1.37–38.

⁴⁵ For the possible alliances between Sulla and the Balkan tribes, see PETKOVIĆ 2008, 119–125.

⁴⁶ FLEMISCH 1900, 51–52.

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Лицинијанова вест о римским операцијама против балканских племена 85. године пре Христа

Апстракт: У Лицинијановом приказу римског ратовања у залеђу Македоније (Gran. Licin. 35.79–81 Criniti), 85. године пре Христа, помињу се две кампање против балканских племена. Текст није сачуван у потпуности, стога допушта различита читања. У складу са интерпретацијом Лицинијановог текста која је предложена у овом раду, размотрени су односи између Рима и појединих балканских варвара, нарочито у време Првог Митридатовог рата. Осим тога, анализирано је хронолошко одређење које стоји уз Хортензијеву кампању.

Кључне речи: Сула, Граније Лицинијан, Дарданци, Дентелети, Меди, Први Митридатов рат.

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