

UPON THE BORDERS OF MACEDONIA SECUNDA – FACTS, ASSUMPTIONS, CONSIDERATIONS

Abstract

The borders of the Roman Empire, which fluctuated throughout the empire's history, were a combination of natural frontiers and man-made fortifications which separated the lands of the empire from the "barbarian" lands beyond. In assessing the territory of the Roman Empire, we can observe different geographical and artificial administrative demarcations. At the outskirts we have the frontiers that determined the physical edges of the empire, which established not only the Empire's size geographically, but also designated the limits of the territory that was to be ruled by the Empire's administration. The expansion of the empire in the Late Republic and (early) Empire led to an increase of provincial territories and thus of provincial boundaries or borders, separating the different provincial territories from each other.

The sources of the topography of Macedonia in the Roman period are very poor despite the many geographical and historical works that treat its territory. For the gradual alteration and redefinition of administrative boundaries, the creation of new and the abolition of the old provinces, the sources offer a fragmented picture, while offering only partial details on the definition of the boundaries. In this regard, the attempt to define the exact boundaries between the late antique provinces is based on several reliable facts and many assumptions.

Keywords: LATE ANTIQUE, ROMAN PROVINCES, ADMINISTRATION, MACEDONIA, BORDERS

Introduction

The bureaucratic system of the Roman Empire, composed with the most serious attention to detail, as a solution to the serious problem of maintaining a vast heterogeneous empire, endangered by dissolution and bankruptcy, far from being geographically compact, with its four long, as well as several smaller defending borderlines, was one of the key links for controlling and governing the spacious territory. To rule a great state through two independent but perfectly similar machines, controlled not from one centre, but from two foci: autocratic and bureaucratic, without sacrificing its unity, was interesting and a completely new experiment.

The Illyricum prefecture was one of the four praetorian prefectures in which the Roman Empire was divided. The administrative centre of the prefecture was Sirmium (375-379), and after 379, Thessalonica. Its name was inherited from the older province of Illyricum. Unlike the other three "classical" prefectures mentioned in *Notitia Dignitatum* (*Notitia Dignitatum* 63.2) (Gaul, Italy - Africa and the East), the early administrative history of Illyricum as prefecture during the 4th century includes its abolition, re-establishment and multiple division. Initially, part of the territories that constituted belonged to the prefecture of Italy, Illyricum and Africa. It was established as a praetorian prefecture during the dynastic struggles between the sons of Constantine the Great, after his death in 337 (Barnes, 1982, 139). It seems that the three dioceses of Macedonia, Dacia and Panonia were first grouped together in a special praetorian prefecture in 347 by Constance by removing them from Italy, Africa and Illyricum (which then became the diocese of Italy and Africa) or that this praetorian prefecture was formed in 343 when Constance appointed a prefect for Italy (Morrison, 2015, 396).

It existed until 361, when it was abolished by Emperor Julian, to be re-established by Gratian between 375-379. The same year, however, the diocese of Pannonia (*Illyricum occidentale*, "West Illyricum") was added to Italy as "Illyricum Diocese", while Macedonia and Dacia (*Illyricum orientale*, "East Illyricum") were briefly managed by Theodosius I from Thessalonica. During the years 384-395 they were again incorporated in the Italian prefecture, except for a short period of 388-391, when the two dioceses formed a special prefecture (Morrison, 2015, 396). After the death of Theodosius in 395 and the division of the Empire, Illyricum received the permanent form that appears in *Notitia*, with the inclusion of the dioceses of Macedonia and Dacia, and the Thessalonica as the capital city. Nevertheless, the Western Empire, especially during the regency of Stilicho, continued to regard it as its own until 437 when, as part of the *Licinia Eudoxia's* dowry, Valentinian III recognized the sovereignty of the East over the prefecture (Morrison, 2015, 397/398). In this period, there are assumptions that the capital of the prefecture was Sirmium (437-441) (Andrić, 2002), but this is debated because the northern Balkans was at that time devastated by invasions. Also, Justinian I's intention to move the capital to his new city Justiniana Prima in the 540s remains unfulfilled (Morrison, 2015, 401/402).

The borders of Macedonia

The sources of the topography of Macedonia in the Roman period are very poor despite the many geographical and historical works that treat its territory. For the gradual alteration and redefinition of administrative boundaries, the creation of new and the abolition of the old provinces, the sources offer a fragmented picture, while offering only partial details on the definite-

on of the boundaries. In this regard, the attempt to define the exact boundaries between the late antique provinces is based on several reliable facts and many assumptions. If we take into account that the Romans themselves did not always make a distinction (which we consider to be so crucial) between the province as a "permanent / formal / territorial province" and as a "sphere of command", nor the need for the use of provinces and in a clear geographical sense it implied an official demarcation or more formal structure (Kallet-Marx, 1995, 20-21).

We cannot with certainty give an exact date when the Roman province of Macedonia was formed. It is too legalistic to say that Macedonia was converted into 148/146 in the Roman province - after the Roman General Quintus Caecilius Metellus defeated Andriscus, the last self-proclaimed king of the ancient Kingdom of Macedonia in 148 BC - as if the Senate issued a charter (*lex provinciae*) that determined this legal annexation. Such charters are modern constructions because the term *lex provinciae* did not appear in any ancient source. Roman "provinces", apparently, developed in a random and gradual manner (Kallet-Marx, 1995, 12-18). Thus, the traditional four Macedonian *merides* still functioned as administrative units 200 years later under the Flavius, and most of the places in Macedonia had local self-government according to their traditional laws (Kallet-Marx, 1995, 14). Nor is it clear that the Roman military commander took over all administrative tasks from the very beginning, which we associate with the Roman governor under the Empire. Initially, his primary duties were purely military - to protect Macedonia from the barbarian invasion from the north and to prevent internal Macedonian disorders. But over time, the continued presence of a high-ranking Roman representative in Macedonia, supported by the army, led him to officially make administrative decisions. The process by which the commander took on more and more administrative duties over the course of time was spontaneous; but continuously reduced the scope of Macedonian freedom.

The territory that gradually became Roman province of Macedonia incorporated ancient Macedonia, with the addition of Epirus, Thessaly and parts of Illyria, Paionia and Thrace. For the first century and a half of the provincial period Macedonia was the most important area for Rome's military interests in the region. Subsequently, its role as a military buttress against the north declined because it created new provinces between Macedonia and the Danube; the concentrations of fighting forces were now headquartered in Dalmatia, Moesia and Thrace. Nevertheless, Macedonia remained important and, especially during the second century AD, its cities prospered under the peace of the Antonine period. Afflicted, as much of the empire was, by the third-century crisis, Macedonia re-emerged later in the century as a more important region than it had been for some time. The Emperor Galerius' choice of Thessaloniki as his imperial residence was partly responsible for the renewed prominence, and other emperors (for example Theodosius) ma-

intained winter quarters at Thessaloniki when fighting Goths and others on the Danubian frontier. By then, however, the redivision of provinces under Diocletian and Constantine had changed the geographic unity of the Macedonia that the Romans had known for about 450 years. (Vanderspoel, 2010, 252).

The administrative reorganization of the empire, initiated by Diocletian in the late third century and extended by Constantine in the fourth century, resulted in a larger number of smaller provinces grouped into dioceses and then in prefectures. After the reforms of Diocletian towards the end of the third century, Epirus Vetus was split, and in the 4th century, the province of Macedonia was divided into Macedonia Prima to the south and Macedonia Secunda or Salutaris to the north. These provinces were part of the diocese of Macedonia, one of the three dioceses composed by the praetorian prefecture Illyricum (together with Dacia and until 379, Pannonia, then separated and annexed to the prefecture of Italy, leaving Thessalonica as the capital of Illyricum instead of Sirmium); formed, probably under Constantine I (306-337), from the division of the Diocletian diocese of the Moesia, which included the provinces of Macedonia Prima, Macedonia Secunda or Salutaris (periodically abolished), Thessaly, Epirus Vetus, Epirus Nova, Achaia and Crete. With the division of Illyricum between the Western and Eastern Empires in 379, the Macedonian provinces became part of the *Illyricum orientale* (Snively, 2010, 549).

Macedonia Salutaris, a province whose existence is mentioned for the first and only time in *Notitia Dignitatum* and whose abolition is stated in the same document. Appears in the prefecture of Illyricum as one of the eight provinces administered by the president (*Oriens* 1.125). In Part III, in the six provinces of Macedonia's diocese are Macedonia and "Old Epirus and part of Macedonia Salutaris", while the last of the five provinces of the Diocese of Dacia appears as "Praevalitana and part of Macedonia Salutaris" (*Oriens* 3.13 and 19). In other words, the province of *Macedonia Salutaris* appears and disappears within *Notitia Dignitatum*. Probably created during the reign of Theodosius I, perhaps in 386 (Konstantakopoulou, 1984, 61-73), it is not mentioned in any other document or inscription. Although the description of the Eastern Empire in *Notitia* almost certainly reflects the arrangement towards the end of the fourth century during the reign of Theodosius, the document cannot be dated accurately enough to determine the period of existence of the short-lived province. The only geographical information provided is that the province was eventually split between New Epirus and Praevalitana. After the disappearance of Macedonia Salutaris not later than 412 (Papazoglou, 1988, 98) there was only one province of Macedonia until the middle of the fifth century.

Accordingly, the territory of the Republic of Macedonia in the late antiquity belonged to five (six) different provinces: *Macedonia Salutaris*, created

at the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th century, in the territory of present-day western Macedonia, which was later renamed *Macedonia Secunda*, with the capital Stobi, in the middle part of the stream of Axios (Vardar) and its tributaries, which appears in the sources from the middle of the 5th century to 535 years; *Macedonia Prima*, with the capital of Thessalonica (Thessaloniki), which encompassed the area of southern and central Macedonia, with the city of Heraclea Lyncestis (Bitola); *Epirus Nova*, with the capital city of Dirachion (Durrës), which with the city of Lychnidos (Ohrid) stretched all the way to the outer, western part of Macedonia; *Dardania* to the north with a centre in Scupi (Skopje); and the small north-eastern part which, after the loss of the countries north of the Danube by Aurelius in 279, it belonged to the then established province of *Dacia Mediterranea*, with the capital of Serdica (Sofia).

Macedonia Secunda

The history of the province of *Macedonia Secunda* - and even the existence of a province with that name - is based on a small number of sources and is full of uncertainties. We already mentioned that at the end of the 4th century, Macedonia's diocese (fig. 1) is divided into two provinces: *Macedonia* (or Macedonia Prima) and *Macedonia Salutaris* (Papazoglu, 1988, 91), a division that runs relatively briefly because Macedonia Salutaris already in the beginning of the 5th century was abolished as a province (Papazoglu, 1957, 91).

Later, Macedonia is again divided and the province of Macedonia II appears in the sources. In the acts of the council in Ephesus in 449, seven bishops from Macedonia I (Братоџ, 2000, 31) appear as participants and signatories, a fact which leads to the conclusion that Macedonia II already existed. Two Macedonia mentions *Marcellinus Comes in Chronicon* for the year 482 "*utramque Macedoniam Thessaliamque depopulatus est*", and later for 517 "*Duae tunc Macedoniae*".¹ Accordingly, Macedonia was again divided in the end of the 5th century. In the *Novella 11* of Justinian from 535, Macedonia II is one of the provinces that the emperor puts under the jurisdiction of the newly founded Archbishopric Justiniana Prima: "(...) *Primae Iustinianae patriae nostrae, pro tempore sacrosanctus antistes non solum metropolitanus, sed etiam archiepiscopus fiat, et certae provinciae sub eius sint auctoritate, id est tam ipsa mediterranea Dacia quam Dacia ripensis nec non Mysia prima et Dardania et Praevalitana provincia et secunda Macedonia et pars secundae Pannoniae, quae in Bacensi est civitate.*"², but ten years later, in the *Novella 131*, Macedonia II is

¹ Marc. Com., *Chronicon*, V. Trocondi et Seuerini, and X. Anastasii et Agapiti, In *Marcellinus and Croke, B. (1995). The chronicle of Marcellinus*. Sydney: Australian Association for Byzantine Studies

²[Droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr](https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr). (2019). *Novella constitutio XI (Schoell & Kroll)*. [online] : <https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Corpus/Nov11.htm> [Accessed on 15 May 2019].

The only source that, besides the name, gives specific data for Macedonia Secunda is Hierocles' *Synekdemos*, which refers to the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century. Of the eight cities that Hierocles places in Macedonia II, only Stobi and Bargala are ubicated. He also mentioned Argos (near Stobi), Pelagonia (downstream of Erigon), Astraion (around the source of Strumica), Kalendin, Armonia and Zapara (northeast of Bargala) (*Hieroclis Synekdemosis*, 1939). Although many of the listed cities cannot be reliably located, they are sufficiently identified to define the general area of Macedonia II. In the north, the border with Dardania was marked by a series of fortresses, especially the *Via Axia* near the river basin of the Pcinja River with Vardar, near *Kale Kozhle* (Mikulčić, 2002, 19). To the west, a chain of mountains, from Ilinska to the north to Galichica in the south, formed the provincial border with New Epirus and the triangle with Macedonia I. The border station, Brusidia, on Via Egnatia between Lychnidos and Heraclea; Mikulčić identifies it with the fortification called Prentov Most in the Opejnichka Gorge just west of Bukovo pass (Mikulčić, 2002, 25, 36-7). The southern boundary, following natural features and traceable by the line of fortifications, ran to the north of Heraclea Lyncestis (modern Bitola), a city of Macedonia I, and south of Stenae (Demir Kapija) high above river Axios (Vardar). Accordingly, the province covered the middle stream of Axios, the lower stream of Erigon and the entire basin of Bregalnica.

The western, northern and southern borders are largely clear, but the question of the northern and eastern parts of the province and its local borders are the cause of various assumptions and considerations.

The regions around the upper and lower streams of Bregalnica did not enter the province of Macedonia in the early period, but first formed part of Thrace, and later, with the formation of Mediterranean Dacia⁴, they were connected to this province. The city of Bargala, the southernmost of the cities in this area, in 371, was still in the Mediterranean Dacia (Papazoglu, 1988, 93), later to be attached to Macedonia I, as Papazoglu thinks (1988, 93) or, much more likely, to Macedonia II, as Mikulčić writes (Mikulčić, 1999, 213-215); in fact, as stated in the census of Hierocles (641.6-9) from 527 AD.

The city census at Hierocles refers to the situation during the 5th and early 6th century. This means that in the 5th century the eastern border was moved about 40 km to the east - northeast, joining the Osogovo - Bregalnica - Maleshevo region towards Macedonia Secunda. Within its framework, it will also be in the time of Justinian I, and it will remain there until the end of the 6th century.

⁴ *Dacia Mediterranea* was separated from the former *Dacia Aureliana* during the reign of Diocletian (284-305), with the capital of Serdica (or Sardica, later Sradec or Sredets, now Sofia). For the various opinions regarding the date and circumstances of the establishment, see Mócsy, 2014.

The second and particularly disputed territory is the region of Polog and the north-western frontier of the province. This section, unfortunately, is not accurately noticed in the sources, and due to its modest research and partial communication disunity with the rest of the province, that is, Stobi the capital, some researchers tend to think that it become part of the Praevalitana province, probably in the late 4th century (Микулчиќ, 1999, 217, 218; Papazoglu, 1988, 95, 96), others (Петровски, 2009, 137) attributed it to the borders of Dardania, while others (Лилчиќ, 2003, 75) place it within Macedonia Secunda.

The length of Polog in a straight line from the southwest to the northeast is about 60 km (the Papradino-Novo Selo-Jazince intersection), while the width of the individual places is unequal. The largest is in the north-west direction - the southeast in the middle part (the 2497m mountain on Shar Planina - Popova Shapka on the mountain Suva Gora), which is 29 km. To the southwest, and especially to the northeast, the area gradually narrows, so in the border northeast, the width of the valley is 18 km.

The poor research in this area further complicates the attribution to some of the provinces with certainty. The archaeological findings on this terrain for the time show a low concentration of populated areas in this region. However, the remains of early Christian churches in the villages of Stenche and Tudence indicate the existence of larger or smaller city centres, possibly also episcopies.

Although the establishment of the late-state province of Macedonia Secunda is covered by obscurity, based on the parts preserved in the sources that directly or indirectly relate to its creation and existence, we can conclude that it was formed sometime in the middle of the 5th century, as probably a direct successor of Macedonia Salutaris - a province that a century ago, with some deviations, stretched on the same territory.

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