

Indigenous Insurgence in the Central Balkan during the Principate

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Cases of insurgence provide valuable clues for the character of Roman imperial rule in the provinces. On the one hand, they allow us to gain an insight in the effectiveness of the Roman administration. On the other, as acts of negative negotiation of imperial policy, they provide an opportunity to measure not merely the (in)effectiveness of positive negotiation modes, like diplomacy and patronage, but also to grasp the limits of indigenous tolerance towards the political, cultural and economic integration of the region in the Roman Empire. Moreover, the characteristics of the acts of insurgence can often be reconnected with the particularities of the indigenous socio-political, cultural and economic structures. Thus, the examination of the cases of indigenous insurgence in the Central Balkan region, once described as “the keystone of the imperial arch”, can elucidate much more than merely the more or less bumpy trajectories of political incorporation of the various tribes¹.

Chronologically, this paper is limited to the period between the rise to autocracy of Augustus until the end of the Severian dynasty (BC 31 – AD 235). This choice is based on both the relatively rich amount of sources during this period, in comparison to the previous and later eras, and the fact that during this period the region was particularly marked by the initiation and development of political, cultural and economic structures as a result of its more intensive incorporation into the Roman empire in the age of Augustus. I have considered

¹ SYME, R. (1971) Augustus and the South Slav Lands. In SYME, R. (Ed.) *Danubian Papers*. Bucharest, Association Internationale d'Études du Sud-Est Européen, 14.

what eventually became to be the provinces of Dalmatia, Macedonia, Moesia Superior, Moesia Inferior and Thracia as making part of the Central Balkan. The Dacian and Pannonian provinces have been omitted, since they were, and remained, frontier provinces. Therefore they are potentially distortive for the current analysis, since in frontier zones it is often particularly difficult to distinguish internal conflicts from external ones (like invasions). Obviously, such conflicts like mutinies of the legions and usurpators may similarly distort the current analysis and are therefore likewise omitted.

Literary attestations

Especially in the case of the earliest uprisings the literary accounts are often particularly concise, leaving few space for the localization and description of the events. After I excluded those conflicts which were certainly or most probably exploratory campaigns or acts of conquest, I retained 11 cases:

1. Thracian Revolt of 29 BC

After the victories he earned against the Bastarnae and the Moesians, Marcus Licinius Crassus (cos. 30 BC) decided to retire to winter quarters through Thracian lands, which he thought to be friendly territory. However, a number of Thracian tribes decided to revolt. Only with considerable effort Crassus succeeded in warding off the insurrection and restoring Roman authority in the land of the Thracians. As a punishment, he cut off the hands of the captives who belonged to the Maedi and the Serdi².

2. Moesian Revolt of 29 BC

The same year was marked by a (poorly attested) revolt of Moesian tribes that had recently been subjugated. Since Marcus Licinius Crassus assigned the task to his generals, the uprising must have been of minor dimension³.

3. The Balkan Wars of 16 BC

In 16 BC various conflicts seem to have struck large parts of the Balkan region, but our source, Dio Cassius, provides little information. In brief, he narrates how Publius Silius Nerva (cos. 20 BC) had to face a coalition of Pannonian tribes and invaders from Noricum that ravaged the lands of Istria. At the

² D.C. 51, 25, 4-5.

³ D.C. 51, 27, 1.

same time there was an uprising in Dalmatia, which was quickly suppressed. Also in Macedonia the Thracian Dentheleti and (predominantly) Celtic Scordisci caused serious havoc, but it is unclear whether and how the Romans intervened⁴.

4. The Balkan Wars of 11 BC

Five years later, a chain of insurgency marked the region once again. The future emperor Tiberius had not merely to cope with a revolt of the Dalmatians, but then also had to take the field against the Pannonians, “who likewise revolted, taking advantage of the absence of himself and the larger part of his army”⁵. Tiberius managed to achieve success by fighting both enemies simultaneously, thus preventing each of them to regain forces. Importantly, by the conclusion of the hostilities, the lack of internal order and the strong Pannonian influence entailed the transformation of the province of Dalmatia to an imperial province directly controlled and managed by the emperor through his *legati Augusti pro praetore*, and provided with a legionary garrison⁶.

5. Rebellion of the Bessi in 11 BC

It may not be coincidental that at the same time a rebellion broke out among the Bessi, “who are even called brigands by the brigands”, in Thrace⁷. The Bessi are said to have surrendered to the Romans during the Illyrian campaigns of Octavianus, the future emperor Augustus⁸. This hostile relationship between the Romans and the Bessi had already become clear during the aftermath of Marcus Licinius Crassus’ restoration of Roman power in Thrace (cf. case 1) which predated another precedent in 18-17 B.C., when the subjugation of the Bessi by Rhoemetalces, the Thracian client prince, was actively supported by Marcus Lollius (cos. 21 B.C.)⁹. In 29 B.C., Crassus had rewarded the tribe of the Odrysae with land he had taken from the territory of the Bessi¹⁰. However, in 11 B.C., the latter tribe, lead by Vologaesius, rose in rebellion and obliged the client prince to flee after they killed Rhascyporis, the son of his brother-in-law.

⁴ D.C. 54, 20, 2-3.

⁵ D.C. 54, 34, 3. Transl.: CARY, E. (19684), *Dio’s Roman History*. Vol. VI. Books LI-LV (Loeb Classical Library), 369.

⁶ D.C. 54, 34, 3-4.

⁷ Strabo 7, 5, 12.

⁸ App. *Illyr.* 16.

⁹ D.C. 54, 20, 3.

¹⁰ D.C. 51, 25, 4-5.

A subsequent confrontation with Lucius Calpurnius Piso (cos. 15 B.C.), the governor of Pamphylia, resulted into the uneasy submission of the tribe and the bestowal of triumphal honours upon the victorious commander:

“At this time he reduced all of them to submission, winning over some with their consent, terrifying others as the result of battles; and later, when some of them rebelled, he again enslaved them. For these successes thanksgivings and triumphal honours were granted him.”¹¹

Florus relates that Rhoemetalces had given his military units a training and organization after the Roman example, and although this might be an expression of Florus’ exaltation of the Roman army rather than a historical truth, this situation could in part explain the difficulty with which Lucius Calpurnius Piso had to suppress the insurgents¹². One of the most remarkable features of this uprising is its religious undertone, suggested by the connection between the land loss to the Odrysaе, which was perceived to be sacral as it contained the Dionysus sanctuary in the Rhodope mountains, and the fact that Vologaesius was a priest of the same deity¹³.

6. Dalmatian Tribute Revolt (10 BC)

In 10 B.C., the Dalmatians revolted. They reacted against the tribute exactions that had been imposed on them. Tiberius was assigned to crush the revolt¹⁴. According to Velleius Paterculus, he succeeded in extorting a definite confession of submission (*certam parendi confessionem*) from the Illyrians and the Dalmatians¹⁵.

7. The Balkan Wars of 9 BC

A year later, however, Tiberius had to launch another campaign against revolting Dalmatians and Pannonians. For his efforts he received an *ovatio* and celebrations were held in Rome¹⁶.

¹¹ D.C. 54, 34, 5-7. Transl.: CARY, E. (19684), Dio’s Roman History. Vol. VI. Books LI-LV (Loeb Classical Library), 371. The assignment of Lucius Piso has also been mentioned by Seneca, although concisely, cf. Sen. Ep. 83. Also Tacitus gives mention of his exploits: Tac. Ann. 6, 10, 3.

¹² Flor. Epit. 2, 27.

¹³ D.C. 51, 25, 4-5 and 54, 34, 5.

¹⁴ D.C. 54, 36, 2-3.

¹⁵ Vell. Pat. 2, 39, 3.

¹⁶ D.C. 55, 2, 4. Vell. Pat. 2, 96, 2-3.

8. The Great Illyrian Revolt (AD 6-9)

Within the given timeframe, no greater indigenous revolt challenged Roman rule in the Central Balkan than the Great Illyrian Revolt. Only with much hardship and the employment of 15 legions and as many auxiliary units, Tiberius succeeded in suppressing the revolt¹⁷. Rome's opponents numbered around 200000 infantry and 9000 cavalry, according to Velleius Paterculus¹⁸. As in the case of the Bessi, the imitation of Roman military organization and discipline is mentioned as a substantial problem for the Romans in their struggle against the Pannonians¹⁹. Suetonius relates how the war scene stretched the entire region between Noricum, Thrace and Macedonia as the Pannonians allied with Dalmatian mountain tribes²⁰. Yet in contrast to Velleius Paterculus, who emphasized the crucial role of these Pannonians at the early stage of the conflict, Dio Cassius identifies the Dalmatians as the initiators of revolt²¹. As Velleius Paterculus himself fought as a legate in the army of Tiberius during this war, his view in these matters can probably be considered more valuable than Dio's account, which was composed about two centuries later.

According to Dio, in AD 6 the Dalmatians were already displeased with the tribute that was demanded from them. Hence, when a new order came in to send a contingent of levies to support Tiberius in his war against Germanic tribes, this was met with particularly great resentment. The Dalmatian tribes assembling to decide about the division of the levies, agreed that if an army was to be sent to the Romans, it had to be to fight them. The fact that Marcus Valerius Messalla Messallinus (cos. 3 B.C.), the governor of Illyricum, was already under way with his army to Germania was no doubt taken as an opportunity to revolt.

The Dalmatian rebels, whose number increased after the first successes, were led to Salona by Bato, of the tribe of the Daesidiatiae. The revolting Pannonians, who marched upon Sirmium, were commanded by another Bato, called

¹⁷ Suet. Tib. 16. Velleius Paterculus mentions 10 legions and numerous squadrons, auxiliary and veteran units, the greatest army assembled since the civil wars. Vell. Pat. 2, 113, 1-2.

¹⁸ Vell. Pat. 2, 110, 3.

¹⁹ Vell. Pat. 2, 110, 5-6.

²⁰ Suet. Tib. 16.

²¹ Vell. Pat. 2, 110, 2.

the Breucian, and a certain Pinnes²². The first offensives directed towards the towns of Sirmium and Salona were unsuccessful. Aulus Caecina Severus (cos. AD 1), the governor of Moesia, checked the Pannonians near the Drava. The defense of Salona proved to strong for Bato the Daesidatian, who got wounded in combat. The Dalmatians proceeded with ravaging expeditions along the Illyrian coast²³.

The outbreak of this revolt, so close to Italy, urged the Romans to reconsider the employment of their military resources²⁴. The war against the Germans was temporarily put to a halt and Tiberius sent Valerius Messallinus in front of him to fight the rebels. According to Velleius Paterculus, the latter succeeded in routing more than 20000 men with only half a legion and was later for this reason granted the *ornamenta triumphalia*²⁵. Additional support was provided by Rhoemetalces, the Thracian client king. Although the Roman military power rose significantly as units entered the region from Germania, the situation nevertheless deteriorated for them. Not only was the number of revolting tribes constantly increasing, also their high mobility and their better knowledge of the terrain were clearly to their advantage. They also protracted the war during the winter period by performing raids from their mountain fortresses. An incursion into Macedonia was successfully warded off by the client king²⁶.

The second year of the revolt seems to have been somewhat less turbulent. Although the army of Caecina Severus suffered from an ambush by both Pannonian and Dalmatian tribes, the Romans gained strength by improving their numbers and organization. The Roman army was divided in smaller detachments in order to extend the army's action radius. However, "many detachments did nothing worthy of note"²⁷. Still in AD 7, Germanicus arrived and successfully subdued a Dalmatian tribe called the Mazaei²⁸.

In the following year, in the consulship of Marcus Furius and Sextus Nonius, famine and disease weakened the insurgents. This evidently softened the

²² D.C. 55, 29, 1-3. For the first mention of these leaders in Velleius, cf. Vell. Pat. 2, 110, 4-5.

²³ D.C. 55, 29, 3-4 and 30, 1-2.

²⁴ D.C. 55, 28, 6-7.

²⁵ Vell. Pat. 2, 112, 2.

²⁶ D.C. 55, 29, 3 and 30, 3-6. Vell. Pat. 2, 110, 4.

²⁷ This is also mentioned in Vell. Pat. 2, 113, 1-2.

²⁸ D.C. 55, 32, 3-4.

bellicosity and the ambition of many among them, and pushed some of the rebels to desert.²⁹ Although there is no hard evidence for this, some scholars believe this famine was the consequence of a scorned earth policy of the Romans, “a methodical destruction of crops and settlements that would eventually starve the indigenous population and break their will to fight”³⁰. It should be mentioned, however, that at least to some extent this famine was a consequence of a very tough winter, since Velleius Paterculus, our eye-witness, refers to the winter of AD 7-8 as *asperrimae hiems*³¹. Nevertheless, the situation was still critical enough to induce Augustus himself to move to Ariminum, in order to be closer to the field of operations and to increase his personal advisory involvement in the submission of the revolting tribes³². Notably, the emperor himself had acquired military experience in Illyricum during the operations he conducted in this region in 35-33 BC³³. His expeditions were primarily concerned with the suppression of piracy in the Adriatic and the enforcement of tribute exactions. No doubt they generated income, status and military experience which could have been particularly useful in the last civil war against Marcus Antonius. Interestingly, Appianus names the Daesidiatae, who took a supreme role in the Great Illyrian Revolt, as one of the tribes that were most troublesome to Octavianus, the future Augustus³⁴.

In AD 8, and perhaps a consequence of the serious level of distress caused by the famine that struck them, unity was broken among the rebels. According to Dio Cassius, Bato the Breucian had betrayed the other Pannonian

²⁹ D.C. 55, 33, 1-2.

³⁰ RADMAN-LIVAJA, I. & DIZDAR, M. (2008) Archaeological Traces of the Pannonian Revolt 6-9 AD: Evidence and Conjectures. In ABKAMP, R. & ESCH, T. (Eds.) *Imperium - Varus und seine Zeit. Beiträge zum internationalen Kolloquium des LWL- Römermuseums am 28. und 29 April 2008 in Münster*. Münster, Aschendorff Verlag, 48.

³¹ Vell. Pat. 2, 113, 3.

³² D.C. 55, 34, 3.

³³ Vell. Pat. 2, 78, 2. During these operations the soon-to-become emperor was repeatedly wounded, according to Suetonius and Appianus. Cf. Suet. Aug. 20; App. Illyr. 20 and 27. Augustus celebrated his victory in Dalmatia in his triple triumph of 29 BC (along with his victories in Actium and Alexandria). Cf. Suet. Aug. 21, 22. Also see App. Illyr. IV, 28.

³⁴ App. Illyr. 17.

leader, Pinnes³⁵. Interestingly, this statement allows us to contextualize the statement of Velleius Paterculus, that Pinnes gave himself up³⁶. All these events did evidently no good to the cohesion among the rebels, and indignant with the execution of Bato the Breucian, a number of Pannonian tribes apparently left the coalition.

But these separated tribes formed the target of Marcus Plautius Silvanus (cos. 2 B.C.). This general had arrived with reinforcements from Galatia and Pamphylia and now profited from the dissent and was able to subdue many of them, amongst whom also the Breucians. These developments brought the uprising in a new stage. Bato the Daesidiatian went completely in the defence, confining his warfare to the mountain passes between Pannonia and Dalmatia³⁷. Consequently, and as a result of the campaign of Silvanus, the greater part of the remaining Pannonian rebels surrendered at a river called the Bathinus³⁸. What was now left of the Pannonian side of the uprising were bands of brigands that were scattered and apparently badly organized³⁹.

In the last year of the rebellion, Germanicus captured, among others, the Dalmatian settlements called Splonum and Seretium, but could not take Raetinum⁴⁰. After a short stay in Rome, Tiberius had meanwhile divided the army in three parts, distributing the Roman forces among Germanicus and himself, Marcus Plautius Silvanus and Marcus Lepidus (cos. AD 6). The latter two commanders proved to be successful in their particular assignments⁴¹. But not without serious effort, Tiberius and Germanicus, leading an army that outnumbered Bato's forces, pursued the insurgents and took the strongholds of Andetrium and Arduba, amongst others. They also subdued not merely the tribe of the Perustae, but also the Daesiadiates, who had probably played a prominent in the rebellion. A number of rebels surrendered. Notably, one of these was their leader Bato, who, perhaps surprisingly, was given a quite comfortable exile in Ravenna afterwards⁴². When being asked for the reasons of his insur-

³⁵ D.C. 55, 34, 4.

³⁶ Vell. Pat. 2, 114, 4.

³⁷ D.C. 55, 34, 6-7.

³⁸ Vell. Pat. 2, 114, 4.

³⁹ D.C. 55, 34, 4-7.

⁴⁰ D.C. 56, 11 and 12, 1.

⁴¹ D.C. 56, 12, 2-3.

⁴² D.C. 56, 12, 3 to 16, 2. Suet. Tib. 20. Vell. Pat. 2, 115, 4.

gence, Bato would have pointed to the dreadful treatment of the subjugated peoples by the Roman administrators⁴³. Thus ended the Great Illyrian Revolt, the greatest challenge the indigenous population posed to Roman rule in the Central Balkan. Undoubtedly, it was also the most expensive one since “the war was ended after the loss of many men and immense treasure; for ever so many legions were maintained for this campaign and but very little booty was taken”⁴⁴. The size of the revolt is reflected by the triumph celebrated by Tiberius and the military decorations won by other commanders⁴⁵. One inscription that can be related to the rebellion commemorates the donation of military decorations to a soldier who fought in the army of Tiberius⁴⁶.

One can pose the question whether as a conflict so great in size the Great Illyrian Revolt has left archaeological traces. Surprisingly, the answer may rather be in the negative. Radman-Livaja and Dizdar have posed that, except for a logistic camp in Obrežje, “there are no finds which would undoubtedly corroborate the sources. No battle nor siege sites were identified, no marching camps, no inscriptions, in fact not a single find or archaeological site which would point to any known event of the Pannonian revolt”⁴⁷. However, both scholars have pointed to a number of artefacts found in Croatia which can be dated to the early first century AD and thus could be connected with the uprising. Many of these artefacts are found in the Sava valley, and this, according to Radman-Livaja and Dizdar, should be linked with the strategic importance of the Siscia - Sirmium axis⁴⁸. However, although the discoveries can indeed be connected with frequent manoeuvring of Roman forces in the Sava valley between Siscia and Sirmium, it can be questioned whether the (relatively) dense concentration of Roman

⁴³ D.C. 56, 16, 3.

⁴⁴ D.C. 56, 16, 4. Transl.: CARY, E. (20007), Dio Cassius. Roman History. Books 56-60 (Loeb Classical Library), 37.

⁴⁵ Vell. Pat. 2, 121, 2 and 2, 116, 1-2.

⁴⁶ CIL 3, 3158.

⁴⁷ RADMAN-LIVAJA, I. & DIZDAR, M. (2008) Archaeological Traces of the Pannonian Revolt 6-9 AD: Evidence and Conjectures. In ABKAMP, R. & ESCH, T. (Eds.) Imperium - Varus und seine Zeit. Beiträge zum internationalen Kolloquium des LWL- Römermuseums am 28. und 29 April 2008 in Münster. Münster, Aschendorff Verlag, 47.

⁴⁸ Which had also been acknowledged by Syme, cf. SYME, R. (1971) Augustus and the South Slav Lands. In SYME, R. (Ed.) Danubian Papers. Bucharest, Association Internationale d'Études du Sud-Est Européen, 21.

finds in this area is also a result of the fact that this region is marked by a higher rate of excavation and modern habitation.

One of the most important discoveries that is probably related to the outbreak of the revolt, is a coin hoard found somewhere between Osijek and Valpovo. These coins, of which the latest piece was produced in 2 BC, could well have been hidden by a desperate Roman who fled from the rebels who, according to Velleius Paterculus, hunted down the Romans in the region at the outbreak of the revolt: "Romans were overpowered, traders were slaughtered"⁴⁹.

This treasury, as well as the entire set of helmets, spears, scabbard fittings, chapes, daggers and swords found in various places in the Sava valley (Podsused, Rugvica, Bok, Sisak,...) may form the sole archaeological evidence on the Great Illyrian Revolt that has yet been discovered⁵⁰. The connection between the Roman campaigns at the time of Augustus and other types of material evidence found in the Drava and Sava valleys, like pottery, is in my view more speculative⁵¹. Archaeologists can expectedly make similar connections between this revolt and other artefacts that have possibly been found outside Croatia but apparently neglected by Radman-Livaja and Dizdar. Finally, there is a distinct possibility that additional discoveries can still be found during new archaeological campaigns in the region, not merely in the river valleys but also in the interior. These campaigns could aim for the localization of both indigenous settlements and Roman camps. However, the increasingly criticized connection between destruction layers encountered in various sites in Baetica and the literarily attested raids from the Moors during the second century AD should warn every archaeologist (and historian) for the effects of the tendentious interpretation of this kind of evidence⁵². After all, it is often impossible to render a precise date for a large number of demolitions and destruction layers. For instance,

⁴⁹ Vell. Pat. 2, 110, 6.

⁵⁰ RADMAN-LIVAJA, I. & DIZDAR, M. (2008) Archaeological Traces of the Pannonian Revolt 6-9 AD: Evidence and Conjectures. In AßKAMP, R. & ESCH, T. (Eds.) Imperium - Varus und seine Zeit. Beiträge zum internationalen Kolloquium des LWL- Römermuseums am 28. und 29 April 2008 in Münster. Münster, Aschendorff Verlag, 49-55.

⁵¹ WILKES, J. J. (2005) The Roman Danube: an Archaeological Survey. *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 95, 149.

⁵² On these raids, cf. SHA (Capit.) Marcus Antoninus, 21,1. SHA (Spart.) Severus, 2, 4. CIL 2-5, 783 = CIL 2, 2015 = AE 1961, 340; CIL 6, 41140 = AE 1934, 155 = AE 1958, 26; CIL 2, 1120 = AE 1961, 339.

in order to date the destruction of the aqueducts of Emerita Augusta, one archaeologist argued that the aqueducts were perfectly plausibly demolished by the aforementioned Moorish raiders. However, according to his relative date based on the material evidence, the destruction could actually have taken place somewhere in the two-century time span between the reign of Hadrianus and Constantinus⁵³. The repetitive association of literarily attested conflicts with destructions, for which a relative date is the best we can get, remains highly speculative and it entails the potential danger of serious overestimating those conflicts.

A final remark can be made about the apparent difference in objectivity encountered in the principal sources on this conflict. Velleius Paterculus may at first seem to be more trustworthy than Dio Cassius due to his position as an eyewitness. However, the lavish praise for Tiberius in Paterculus' work should not be so readily adopted, since, it has been noted, the author served Tiberius as a *legatus* in this very conflict. The narration of Dio Cassius, however, is more neutral, which is reflected in the treatment of the defeats of the Roman generals. No doubt, this also explains why the tactical error of Tiberius at Andetrium receives much more attention in Dio's recite. Similar discrepancy marks for instance the treatment of the capture of Pinnes. It is tempting to assume that for Velleius Paterculus the surrender of a chief renders more grandeur to the Roman actions than the unplanned capture of a betrayed one.

9. The Thracian Uprising of AD 21

This revolt in the client kingdom of Thrace took the form of an internal conflict, in which various tribes fought against Rhoemetalces and each other. The turmoil was ended by the swift intervention of Publius Vellaeus, governor of Moesia. The threat was, according to Tacitus, minimal and its suppression effortless: "Neither battle nor engagement is a term applicable to an affair in which

⁵³ JIMENEZ, A. (1975) Los acueductos de Emerita. In BLANCO FREIJEIRO, A. (Ed.) Augusta Emerita. Actas del Simposio internacional conmemorativo del bimilenario de Mérida, 16-20 de Noviembre de 1975, 111-125. Other examples from Baetica, for which a connection is, admittedly, somewhat less doubtful, are the destruction of an olive mill in Aratispi and the abandonment of the Rio Tinto mines, cf. JONES, G. D. B. (1980) The Roman mines at RioTinto. *The Journal of Roman Studies*, 70, 146-165. PERDIGUERO, M. (1995-1996) La fase romana en Aratispi (Cauche el Viejo, Antequera). *El molino de Aceite*. Mainake, 17, 125-169.

half-armed men and fugitives were butchered with no effusion of Roman blood.”⁵⁴

10. The Thracian Revolt of AD 26

Another conflict was fought in Thrace in AD 26, as Thracian mountain tribes refused to deliver levies to the Roman army. The Roman general, Caius Poppaeus Sabinus (cos. AD 9), received legionary reinforcements from Moesia and Thracian auxiliaries from the Macedonian client king, and proceeded against the rebels after refusing to concede at negotiations. After initial battles conducted with the Thracian auxiliaries, one stronghold was besieged until famine and thirst induced the insurgents to surrender. Other rebel groups likewise laid down their weapons. For this victory Poppaeus Sabinus earned the *ornamenta triumphalia*, although the advent of winter did not allow him to suppress the rebellion completely⁵⁵.

11. The presence of banditry in Dalmatia in the late II century AD

The next literary attestation refers to a situation of banditry among the Dalmatian and Dardanian tribes during the reign of Marcus Aurelius, as it is said that this emperor recruited bandits from these areas into the army⁵⁶.

It is unlikely, though not completely implausible, that there was another internal conflict at the confines of Dalmatia during the reign of Commodus. One should rather think of an incursion, perhaps of the Dacians, although the conciseness of the statement in the *Historia Augusta* renders every hypothesis in this case nothing more than an assumption⁵⁷.

Epigraphic attestations

There are numerous acts of insurgence attested epigraphically for the given chronological and geographical circumscription. However, the nature of the sources rarely enable us to give a precise date and description of the events. In fact, through their conciseness and stereotypy, inscriptions often only pro-

⁵⁴ Tac. Ann. 3, 38 and 39 (quote). Transl.: JACKSON, J. (19626) Tacitus. The Annals (Loeb Classical Library), 587.

⁵⁵ Tac. Ann. 4, 46-51.

⁵⁶ SHA (Capit.), Marcus Antoninus, 21, 7.

⁵⁷ SHA (Spart.), Didius Julianus, 1, 9.

vide a glimpse of a particular major or banal historical event they refer to. Only one case can be dated precisely, but the remaining inscriptions can all be dated broadly from the second to the third century AD by secondary indications (the letter forms, expressions or the names of the persons, especially the *dua nomina* of the second order, the *gentilicium* and the *cognomen*).

1. Murdered by bandits in Moesia Superior (AE 1934, 209; Peć, Servia).

“To the holy spirits. For Flavius Kapito, freedman, who at Dasminium, on his way to Viminacium, was inflicted a most cruel death by bandits.

Flavia Va[---], his mother, (has placed <this monument>?) for her son [---]”⁵⁸.

2. An execution by *stationarii* near Timacum Minus, in Moesia Superior? (CIL 3, 8266 = CIL 3, 14574 = IMS-3-2, 108; Urbica, Servia).

“[<name of the erector>, for <name of the deceased>, who] lived [---] years [---], who was killed by *stationarii*(?) together with Diurpagisa, his son, who lived 18 years, has placed <this monument> for them who deserve this”⁵⁹.

This badly preserved funerary inscription is not easy to interpret due to the difficult restoration of *tionaris*. On the one hand, the victims could have been slain by *stationarii*, a military police force who were appointed “to protect the quietness of the population and to report of what happens everywhere”⁶⁰. In late antiquity, *stationarii* were employed behind the frontier to ward off raiders and marauders⁶¹. On the other hand, it cannot be expected that this shameful execution would be commemorated on a funerary monument. Therefore, Mócsy has argued that the murderers were bandits, implying that *tionaris* stands for a local term⁶². It is also possible to think that the word refers to foreign invaders, or to a poorly subjugated tribe within the empire’s borders. The letter

⁵⁸ AE 1934, 209: D(is) M(anibus) / Fl(avio) Kapitoni liber/to qui casu Vimi/nacium Dasmini a / latronibus atro/cissima(m) mortem / [per]pessus est Fl(avia) Va/[---] mater filio / [---]S[---].

⁵⁹ CIL 3, 8266 = CIL 3, 14574 = IMS-3-2, 108: Qui / [v]ix(it) an[n(os) [--- in]/terfectus a [sta]/tionaris(?) cum Di/urpagisa(?) filio suo / qui vix(it) ann(os) XVIII / b(ene) m(erentibus) p(osuit).

⁶⁰ Dig. I, 12, 12: ad tuendam popularium quietum et ad referendum sibi quid ubi agatur. Cf. FUHRMANN, C. J. (2012) Policing the Roman Empire : soldiers, administration, and public order, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 207f.

⁶¹ This strategy has been applied in Mesopotamia in AD 354, cf. Amm. 14, 3, 2.

⁶² MÓCSY, A. (1970) Gesellschaft und Romanisation in der römischen Provinz Moesia Superior, Amsterdam, Hakkert, 194 (note 2).

forms of the inscription point to a third century date of the inscription.

3. Killed by bandits near Timacum Minus, Moesia Superior (*CIL* 3, 14587 = *IMS*-3-2, 93 = *AE* 1901, 19; Ravna, Servia).

“To the holy spirits. Val(erius) Marcus lived 19 years, was killed by bandits. Valerius Eutyclus and Sextilla Frontina have placed <this monument> for their son, who deserves it”⁶³.

4. Another victim of banditry in Moesia Superior (*CIL* 3, 8242; near Prizren, Kosovo).

“To the holy spirits. Scerviaedus Sitaes, who lived 30 years, was killed by bandits. Sita Dasi has placed <this monument> for his most pious son, and for himself and for Caia D[-]si, his wife, who deserves this. He cared for the erection <of the monument> when alive”⁶⁴.

5. A gladiator slain by bandits in Dalmatia (*CIL* 3, 8830; Solin, Croatia).

⁶³ *CIL* 3, 14587 = *IMS*-3-2, 93 = *AE* 1901, 19: D(is) M(anibus) / Val(erius) Marcus / vixit annis / XVIIIII a la/tronibus / interfectus / Val(erius) Eutyclus et Sextilla / Frontina / filio / b(ene) m(erenti) p(osuerunt).

⁶⁴ *CIL* 3, 8242: D(is) M(anibus) / Scerviae/dus Sitaes / vix(it) ann(os) XXX / interfec<t=I>us / a latroni/bus Sita Pa/sip(i) f(ilia) p(osuit) et sibi / <et=FI> Caia<e=F> D[-]/si coniu/gi b(ene) m(erenti) vi/(v)us f(aciendum) c(uravit). Mócsy provides an alternative reading of the text, with alterations with respect to the names and erectors of the monument and the their relationship with the deceased: D(is) M(anibus) / Scerviae/dus Sitaes / vix(it) an(nis) XXX / interfectus / a latroni/bus Sita Da/si p(ater) f(ilio) p(ientissimo) / et sibi / et Caiae Da/si coniu/gi b(ene) m(erentibus) vi(v)us f(aciendum) c(uravit). MÓCSY, A. (1970) *Gesellschaft und Romanisation in der römischen Provinz Moesia Superior*, Amsterdam, Hakker, 195. Moreover, Mócsy explains Sitaes as a Thracian form denoting the filiatio, namely Sitaes filius. MÓCSY, A. (1974) *Pannonia and Upper Moesia : a History of the Middle Danube Provinces of the Roman Empire*, Boston (Mass.), Routledge and Kegan Paul, 65. One could object that the same case of the cognomen Dasi is difficult to understand as each form should have a different grammatical case (first nominative, then dative), but the current forms could also be explained by the influence of the local language. In the light of these considerations, I do not tend to agree with Shaw, who believes that the erector was the son of Scerviaedus Sitaes. Cf. SHAW, B. D. (1984) *Bandits in the Roman empire. Past and Present*, 105, 11 and SHAW, B. D. (1989) *The Bandit*. In GIARDINA, A. (Ed.) *Romans*. Chicago, London, The University of Chicago Press, 311.

“For Maximianus, also called Aureus, gladiator, 22 years old, winner of five <gladiatorial> battles, assassinated by bandits. <This monument was erected by> his brother, for his most beloved brother, <and> Maximina, his wife, who misses him very much”⁶⁵.

The correction of *a latrone bos* into *a latronibus* is correct, as it seems that the ancient epigrapher made an error, perhaps due to his poor knowledge of Latin. However, *bos* could refer to the name of his brother, since an ablative singular *latrone* still makes sense in the text. In that case, it remains nevertheless unclear what this indigenous name could be. A connection between this inscription and the militarization of gladiators by Marcus Aurelius seems unlikely as Maximianus was *deceptus* (deceived, trapped, ambushed,...) by bandits, which stands in contrast with a death *in pugna*, which is more glorious. Moreover, the incorporation of gladiators into the army was decided in the context of the preparation of the Marcomannic and Germanic wars and the plague⁶⁶.

6. An expedition against brigands at the border zone of Macedonia and Thrace (*AE* 1956, 124 = *AE* 1959, 183 = *AE* 1962, 390).

“Marcus Valerius Maximianus, son of Marcus Valerius Maximianus quinquennalis sacerdotalis, pontifex of Poetovio ... governor of Moesia Inferior, and at that time sent as commander of bodies of legionaries to the border zone of Macedonia and Thrace in order to subdue a band of bandits of the Brisei...” (abbrev.)⁶⁷.

Due to various datable offices and events mentioned in the full text, the expedition against the *latrones* near the common border of Macedonia and Thrace can be dated to AD 175 or soon afterwards (not later than AD 178).

⁶⁵ CIL 3, 8830: Maximiano cui et / Aureo sec(utori) an(norum) XXII / pug(narum) V deceptus / a latron<i>=E>b<u=O>s(?) fr/ater fratri caris(s)i(mo) / Maximina coniux / desideratis(s)imo.

⁶⁶ On the militarization of gladiators as obsequentes, cf. SHA (Capit.), Marcus Antoninus, 21, 7 and 23, 5. KYLE, D. G. (2001) Spectacles of Death in Ancient Rome, New York, Routledge, 67 (note 81).

⁶⁷ Inscription from Diana, Numidia (Mergueb ez Zana, Algeria). *AE* 1956, 124 = *AE* 1959, 183 = *AE* 1962, 390: M(arco) Valerio Maximiano M(arci) Valeri Maximiani quinq(uennalis) s[ac(er)dotalis] / f(ilio) pont(ifici) col(oniae) Poetovionens(ium) ... adeptus procurationem Moesiae inferioris / eodem in tempore praeposito vexillationibus et a<d=T> detrahen/dam Briseorum latronum manum in confinio Macedon(iae) et Thrac(iae)... (abbrev.).

7. Murdered by runabouts in Dalmatia (*CIL* 3, 9054; Solin, Croatia). “For Euplus, 25 years old, killed by runabouts”⁶⁸.

8. Caius Tadius kidnapped by brigands in Dalmatia (*CIL* 3, 2544; Solin, Croatia).

“For Caius Tadius Severus, son of Caius, was kidnapped by bandits, 35 years old, and for Proculus, his son, 6 years old, [---]bricia Primigenia, freed-woman of Lucius, has placed <this monument> for her husband and son. The son was destined to set up this inscription for his mother []”⁶⁹.

9. A girl murdered for her jewelry in Dalmatia (*CIL* 3, 2399; Solin, Croatia).

“To the holy spirits. For Iulia Restuta, most miserable, murdered at the age of 10 years, for the reason of her jewelry, Iulius Restutus and Statia Pudentilla, her parents <placed this monument>”⁷⁰.

General analysis

Apparently, the general image of insurgence in the Central Balkan during the Principate is one of severe resistance at the time of Augustus and Tiberius, as we count as many as 11 revolts in this relatively short period, followed by the apparition of small-scale banditry, especially in Dalmatia. However, in my opinion, some critical remarks can be suggested about this image. In both its earlier and later form, indigenous insurgence in the region can be easily overestimated as a result of a number of shortcomings of the sources. With respect to the rebellions at the time of Augustus, it is fairly plausible to argue that a number of these conflicts that predate the Great Illyrian Revolt were rather Roman expansionist operations instead of internal revolts. In some cases, the subjugation of conquered tribes took place along with the suppression of revolting neighbours. Although Velleius Paterculus and Dio Cassius chiefly identify the conflicts as revolts, Augustus himself relates in his *Res Gestae* that he ex-

⁶⁸ *CIL* 3, 9054: Euplo / ann(or)um XXV occis(o) / a viatoribus.

⁶⁹ *CIL* 3, 2544: C(aio) Tadio C(ai) f(ilio) Seve[ro] / abducto a latronib[us] / ann(or)um XXXV et / Proculo f(ilio) ann(or)um VI / [---]bricia L(uci) l(iberta) Primi-gen(ia) / [co]niugi et filio pos(u)it / [fili]us hunc titulum / [debe]at ponere matri / []

⁷⁰ *CIL* 3, 2399: D(is) M(anibus) / Iul(iae) Res/tutae in/felicissi/mae inter/fectae / annor(um) / X caus(a) or/namentor(um) Iul(ius) / Restut(us) et / Statia Pudentill(a) parent(es).

panded the frontier of Illyricum during his reign⁷¹. A thorough identification of the 'false' revolts is however particularly difficult, not in the least because of the concise description of the earliest rebellions.

Through its scale and suddenness, the Great Illyrian Revolt, however, definitely asserts among the 'true' rebellions. That the Romans were surprised by its outbreak and size is also shown by the truce they hastily concluded with the Germanic tribes. The Thracian revolt of 29 BC should also be considered as a valid case, as Dio Cassius explicitly mentions that the Roman general was opposed by tribes which he considered to be thoroughly subjugated. When considering the sequence of conflicts in Thrace it becomes particularly clear that statements made by ancient authors concerning the definite subjugation of tribes should not always be taken for granted. As we have seen, Dio Cassius refers to the restoration of Roman rule in Thrace and the loss of sacral territory of the Bessi, thus implying that the latter tribe was involved in the conflict. However, later in his narrative the same author relates that 13 years later the Bessi were to be subjugated by the client king of Thrace, and that in 11 BC the very same tribe revolted, stirred up by a charismatic leader called Vologaesius. A definite subjugation, resulting into a *certa parendi confessio*, is often not as definite as it would seem in the accounts of the ancient authors. So, although the victory Tiberius earned in Illyricum in 10 BC received much praise by Velleius Paterculus, it can hardly be said to have been effective in the imposition of Roman rule. In a number of cases it is particularly difficult to recognize the causes of the revolts. This problem is in part a consequence of the Roman identity of the authors, their focus on the role of the individual leaders and the resulting lack of interest they had for the collective motives and views of the rebels. Hence, in the accounts of the four earliest cases few, if none, attention is paid to the intentions of the rebels or the causes of the uprisings. Fortunately, direct clues are given by Dio Cassius in the case of the Dalmatian revolt of 10 BC. The cause of this revolt would have been the exaction of tribute. Similar discontentment with tribute exactions has also been mentioned as a cause of the Great Illyrian Revolt, along with the extensive exploitation of the indigenous human resources for Rome's military exploits in Germania. Interestingly, the number of tax revolts was particularly high in this period of the Roman Empire⁷². I believe that the

⁷¹ R.G. 5, 30.

⁷² Among others, a minor revolt in Thebe, Egypt (ca. 25 BC), Gallic revolts eventually suppressed by Drusus (16-12 BC), uprisings in Syria and Judaea (AD 17), the

abundance of tax revolts is a concrete consequence of a deliberate policy of Augustus to ensure a stable influx of income in order to meet the costs of the military resources and administrative structures that guaranteed both the efficient government of the Empire and the very existence of the regime itself.

Notably, in the case of the rebellion of the Bessi in 11 BC, the revolt seems to have been more than just a struggle for independence. As Vologaesius, the leader of the rebels, was a priest of the cult of Dionysus, the revolt could have been influenced by religious motives as well. It has been mentioned that in 29 BC the Bessi lost sacral land that was related to the Dionysus cult as Crassus added this land to the territory of the Odrysae. It can therefore be assumed that Vologaesius could attract a substantial retinue based on the combination of his charismatic leadership with religious overtones and tribal religious (and perhaps also economic and political) resentment following this land loss. According to Dyson, this element renders this revolt comparable to so-called “nativistic revolts” and “revitalization movements” of modern periods⁷³.

Another consequence of the relative disinterest – or lack of knowledge – of the ancient authors with respect to the rebels is the absence of specifications regarding the socio-political and cultural identity of the rebels⁷⁴. This entails the use of general names and terms to denote Rome’s opponents. Scholars who fail to perceive this type of generalization will evidently overestimate the size and importance of the conflict. A similar lack of specification in ancient accounts of conflicts in North Africa convinced modern scholars of the rightness

rebellion of Tacfarinas in North Africa (AD 17-24) and of Sacrovir in Gallia (AD 21). On the need for money for military purposes, also involving the imposition of taxes on the Romans, in A.D. 7, cf. D.C. 55, 31, 4.

⁷³ DYSON, S. L. (1975) Native Revolt Patterns in the Roman Empire. *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*, 2, 170. On nativistic revolts and revitalization movements, cf.: LINTON, R. & HALLOWELL, A. I. (1943) Nativistic Movements. *American Anthropologist*. New Series, 45, 230-240, WALLACE, A. F. C. (1956) Revitalization Movements. *American Anthropologist*. New Series, 58, 264-281, LANTERNARI, V. (1974) Nativistic and Socio-Religious Movements: a Reconsideration. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 16, 483-503, CARROLL, M. P. (1975) Revitalization Movements and Social Structure: Some Quantitative Tests. *American Sociological Review*, 40, 389-401.

⁷⁴ Appianus’ account of the campaigns of Augustus in 35-34 BC forms a notable exception, cf. *App. Illyr.* 4, 16f.

of their maximalist reconstruction of revolts and resistance in the region⁷⁵.

When turning to the epigraphically attested cases, one can be surprised by the absence of any indigenous revolts or rebellions after the reign of Tiberius. Another remarkable feature is the relatively high number of cases of *latrocinia* or banditry in the region. Except for the honorific inscription from North Africa, all other cases are known through funerary inscriptions dedicated to the victims of banditry. Contrary to the literarily attested sources, we have seen that they can be dated to the second and third century. However, this does obviously not imply that banditry as such did not exist before the second century AD. In fact, the absence of earlier attestations may simply be explained by the unpopularity of the epigraphic habit in this region at that time⁷⁶. It should be noted that it is not a coincidence that 4 attestations are found at Salona, one of the towns in the region where the impact of imperial culture was most profound⁷⁷. Importantly, the erection of these monuments in Salona does not imply that the victims were killed in its immediate vicinity. Few in number as they are but still numerous in comparison to many other regions in the Roman empire, the inscriptions attesting banditry probably attest of the existence of a phenomenon that was actually more widespread than these inscriptions quantitatively reveal. It is highly plausible to assume that the high costs connected with the erection of funerary monuments and the production of extensive inscriptions prevented similar cases from being attested, namely those of which the victims were not wealthy enough to meet these costs.

Interestingly, the statement in the *Historia Augusta* about the omnipresence of bandits confirms the violent image provided by the epigraphic sources. At the same time it offers additional evidence for the view that the phenomenon of banditry was a permanent feature of the mountainous interior of the Central Balkan. Who were these *latrones*? Perhaps they should be identified with tribal segments which were never thoroughly subjugated. However, they may also be identified with impoverished groups and other social outcasts for whom

⁷⁵ As I have argued elsewhere: VANACKER, W. (Forthcoming) Differentiated Integration Trajectories of the Nomadic Population in Roman North Africa (1st-3rd cent. AD). Xth Impact of Empire Conference. Integration at Rome and in the Roman World Lille, 2011.

⁷⁶ On epigraphic habit, cf. MACMULLEN, R. (1982) The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire. *American Journal of Philology*, 103, 233-246.

⁷⁷ WILKES, J. J. (1969) *Dalmatia*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 220-238.

social banditry in a Hobsbawmian sense formed a crucial mode of economic redistribution⁷⁸.

However, resource extraction as an economic alternative can have different origins, rooted in the structural characteristics of the indigenous economy. In certain (though not all) inland regions in the Central Balkan, this economy was not so much based on agriculture, but on transhumance and perhaps even pastoral semi-nomadism⁷⁹. Hence a valuable hypothesis regarding these acts of banditry can be derived from anthropological studies on itinerant pastoral societies. It has been acknowledged that through their specialized nature pastoral economies are non-autarchic and continuously structurally imbalanced due to the instable and changeable nature that is characteristic their three main economic variables (i.e. the size of the human population, herd size, and the availability of pasture)⁸⁰. Notably, these features have not merely been observed in fully nomadic economies, but also in economies that in addition to pastoralism contained a minor agricultural sector as well⁸¹. The structural imbalance manifests itself for instance in the situation in which the increase of the human population is checked by the rise of herd sizes, the latter itself being checked eventually by both the limits to reproduction rates and the availability of pastures. For pastoralists, such a situation entails the quest for economic alternatives and the interaction with settled (fully) agricultural communities. However, the number of alternatives and their nature depend on the particular power relationship between the sedentary and (semi-)nomadic groups. When the sedentary power is particularly stronger, the economic alternative is often the commitment to hired labour and market consumption. In the opposite situation, the

⁷⁸ HOBBSAWM, E. J. (1959) *Primitive rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 13f.

⁷⁹ Notable exceptions form the greater river valleys such as the Sava valley. WILKES, J. (1969) *Dalmatia*, London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 178-180.

⁸⁰ KHAZANOV, A. M. (1994) *Nomads and the Outside World*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 69f and 121. POUCHA, P. (1979) *Bodenbauern und Nomaden im alten Mittel- und Zentralasien*. In SELLNOW, I. (Ed.) *Das Verhältnis von Bodenbauern und Viehzüchtern in historischer Sicht*. Berlin, Akademie Verlag, 124.

⁸¹ KHAZANOV, A. M. (1994) *Nomads and the Outside World*, Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 21. BACON, E. E. (1954) *Types of Pastoral Nomadism in Central and Southwest Asia*. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, 10, 46.

settled groups are often subject to recurrent raiding and tribute exactions. Obviously, the need for economic alternatives is not necessarily continuous or invariable. Environmental disasters or stock diseases substantially increase the necessity of economic alternatives. Furthermore, the power relations and the related patterns of exchange and interaction between itinerant pastoralists and settled communities is dynamic as well. Interestingly, according to Mócsy, Roman occupation favoured the development of agriculture and promoted the position of agriculturalists, and thus destabilized the preRoman situation of symbiosis⁸². In this respect, it should also be noted that the Roman imposition of tribute and taxes could have provided at least some additional pressure on the pastoralist economy. From these considerations it can be argued that at least in some regions banditry possibly resulted from either the structural imbalance of the pastoral economy, and/or the ‘bouleversement’ of formerly symbiotic relations of exchange and power in the indigenous society. One solution to the problem could have been the military recruitment of these marginal groups, as Dio Cassius proposed and Marcus Aurelius, as we have seen, actually realized⁸³.

Notably, the development of intensive mining activities in the region during the Roman period has possibly connected to the aforementioned lack of autarchy of the indigenous economy in two completely different ways. On the one hand, labour in the mines could have formed an important economic alternative for the indigenous pastoralists during periods of distress. Obviously, this would put into perspective Florus’ observation that after their subjugation the conquered Dalmatian tribes mined the gold “with such zeal and diligence

⁸² MÓCSY, A. (1970) *Gesellschaft und Romanisation in der römischen Provinz Moesia Superior*, Amsterdam, Hakkert, 196-197.

⁸³ D.C. 52, 27, 4-5: “For these reasons I give it as my opinion that, while in general the men of military age should have nothing to do with arms and walled camps during their lives, the hardiest of them and those most in need of a livelihood should be enlisted as soldiers and given a military training. For they will fight better if they devote their time to this one business, and the rest will find it easier to carry on their farming, seafaring, and the other pursuits appropriate to peace, if they are not compelled to take part in military expeditions but have others to act as their defenders. Thus the most active and vigorous element of the population, which is generally obliged to gain its livelihood by brigandage, will support itself without molesting others, while all the rest will live without incurring dangers.” CARY, E. (19684), *Dio’s Roman History*. Vol. VI. Books LI-LV (Loeb Classical Library), 145-147.

that you would think they were extracting it for their own purposes"⁸⁴. On the other hand, the transports of silver and gold as well as the mobility of miners (and the salaries they earned) and merchants could have encouraged raids, thefts and robberies⁸⁵. It should be mentioned that at least two murders committed by bandits took place in or near mining districts. The most obvious case is clearly that of Flavius Kapito, who was killed along the road that connected Viminacium to the Metalli Dardanici and Ulpiani in the south, where gold and silver mines seem to have been abundant. At the same time, the geographical context was clearly advantageous to these bandits⁸⁶.

With regard to the main impediments to Roman domination and control of the Central Balkan, three factors can be observed. First, there is obviously the inaccessibility of its geography, which the literary sources repeatedly refer to and the Romans could overcome but with great difficulty. With respect to these geographical particularities, the Central Balkan resembles a number of North African contexts (for instance the Aurès in eastern Algeria, the Atlas ranges in Morocco and western Algeria) and it should be noted that the Romans reverted to similar strategies of containment, integration and adaptation. In North Africa, the Romans adapted their military resources to the enemy and the terrain, as they incorporated Syrian auxiliaries as well as trustworthy levies from North African tribes in their armies⁸⁷. Similarly, in the Central Balkan the Romans employed *equites singulares* from Isauria (now southern Turkey) and Dardanian levies⁸⁸.

⁸⁴ Flor. Epit. 2, 25. Transl.: FORSTER, E. S. (1929), *Florus: Epitome of Roman History* (Loeb Classical Library), 335.

⁸⁵ MÓCSY, A. (1970) *Gesellschaft und Romanisation in der römischen Provinz Moesia Superior*, Amsterdam, Hakkert, 197.

⁸⁶ The other case is that of Valerius Marcus near Timacum Minus. On the geographical particularities of the region, cf. TALBERT, R. J. A. (2000) *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World*, Princeton, N.J.; Oxford, Princeton University Press, Map 21.

⁸⁷ For instance, the Ala II Syrorum mentioned in AE 1931, 36 = AE 1931, 38 = AE 1966, 607 = AE 1983, 998 = AE 1989, 914 = AE 1993, 1787 from Sala (Mauretania Tingitana); the cohors I Flavia Musulamiorum mentioned in AE 1913, 157 = AE 1985, 984 from Albulae (Mauretania Caesariensis).

⁸⁸ MÓCSY, A. (1970) *Gesellschaft und Romanisation in der römischen Provinz Moesia Superior*, Amsterdam, Hakkert, 147 and 197. For instance CIL 3, 14513 = AE 1901, 128 = AE 1902, 2; CIL 3 14576 = AE 1902, 31.

The wars conducted in 16 BC and 11 BC give an indication of the seditious nature of the entire region. When one tribe rose arms against Rome, this was easily seen as an opportunity for others to undo or renegotiate Roman domination as well. One of the major difficulties the Romans encountered during the Great Illyrian Revolt was the swiftness with which the Pannonian and Dalmatian tribes could form major political coalitions. The participation in these coalitions were probably voluntary for many of the tribes, but in some cases it could have been enforced by dominant tribes⁸⁹. Especially in the aftermath of the Great Illyrian Revolt, the Romans therefore attempted to break up and loosen the existing political structures by dividing, deporting and resettling various (sub)tribes in the Central Balkan⁹⁰.

Another factor of instability was the relative closeness of the frontier and the unconquered peoples beyond it. In heavy contrast to most parts of North Africa, the Central Balkan was situated within range of military and political intervention of unconquered “barbarian” polities that were strong in terms of human and economic resources. Their potentially destabilizing influence is for instance suggested by the synchronicity of the incursion of the Dacians and the tax rebellion of the Dalmatians in 10 BC⁹¹. This connectivity also became obvious during the Great Illyrian Revolt, as the Dacians and the Sarmatians seem to have perceived his absence as an opportunity to invade Moesia⁹². The region was integrated into the larger geopolitical zone that ranged from the Black Sea to Northwest Europe. This is most clearly demonstrated by the fact that the outbreak of the Germanic Revolt, which entailed the massacre of the legions of Varus in the Teutoburger Forest, occurred when the Romans were occupied with the suppression of the Great Illyrian Revolt⁹³. In Late Antiquity, the emperors grew increasingly aware of the fact that the fatal challenge to Roman domination in the Central Balkan came from outside, not from within.

⁸⁹ As in North Africa, where the Musulamii compelled the Cinithii to revolt. Tac. Ann. 2, 52.

⁹⁰ WILKES, J. J. (1996) The Danubian and Balkan Provinces. In BOWMAN, A. K., CHAMPLIN, E. & LINTOTT, A. W. (Eds.) *The Cambridge Ancient History*. Volume 10, *The Augustan Empire, 43 B.C.-A.D. 69*. 2nd ed. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. p. 576f.

⁹¹ D.C. 54, 36, 2.

⁹² D.C. 55, 30, 4.

⁹³ Vell. Pat. 2, 117, 1.

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