

Illyricum, the Adriatic, and Italy in the plans of Mithradates VI Eupator

Ilirik, Jadran in Italija v načrtih Mitradata VI. Evpatorja

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Izvleček

Mitradat VI. Evpator (120–63 pr. Kr.), najpomembnejši kralj Ponta v Mali Aziji, je osvojil bosporsko kraljestvo in večino dežel ob Črnem morju vključno s Kolhido, priključil svojemu kraljestvu Kapadokijo in Bitinijo ter širil oblast tudi drugod po Mali Aziji in Grčiji. Bil je eden najhujših sovražnikov Rima. Strabon omenja, da je že na začetku vlade hotel prodreti do Jadrana in se pripravljati na vojno z Rimljani. Tudi z upornim rimskim generalom Kvintom Sertorijem naj bi načrtovala vpad v Italijo, Sertorij z zahoda, Mitradat z vzhoda; Plutarh je Sertorija primerjal s Hanibalom, Mitradata pa s Pirom. Proti koncu tretje in zadnje vojne proti Mitradatu se je z njim uspešno bojeval Pompej. V virih je sporočeno, da je kralj malo pred uporom sina Farnaka in svojo smrtjo načrtoval invazijo Italije čez deželo Skordiskov, Panonijo in Alpe. Kot je poudaril Florus, je Mitradat vpad le načrtoval (ni namreč hotel priznati poraza) in ga ni mogel uresničiti, na vrhuncu njegovega vladanja pa vdor v Italijo čez Ilirik ne bi bil nemogoč.

Ključne besede: Ilirik, Panonija, Jadran, 1. st. pr. Kr., Mitradat VI. Evpator

Abstract

Mithradates VI Eupator (120–63 BC) was the greatest of the kings of Pontus in Asia Minor, gradually extending his control over most of the regions, gravitating toward Euxine, including Colchis, and annexing Cappadocia and Bithynia. He exercised his authority over other lands in Asia Minor and Greece, becoming one of the most formidable enemies of the Roman state. Strabo refers to Mithradates' intended military campaign against the Romans up to the Adriatic at an earlier stage of the king's rule. Mithradates had already contemplated invading Italy at the time of his contacts with Quintus Sertorius in 75 BC; according to Plutarch, Sertorius was compared to Hannibal, Mithradates to Pyrrhus. The last to wage war victoriously against Mithradates was Pompey the Great. Ancient sources refer to the king's plan of invading Italy across the territories of the Scordisci, Pannonia, and the Alps shortly before the revolt of his son Pharnaces and his own death. As is mentioned by Florus, Mithradates only planned an invasion (not wishing to admit the defeat), but was not able to carry it out. However, during the heyday of his reign such a plan would not have been impossible.

Keywords: Illyricum, Pannonia, Adriatic, 1st century BC, Mithradates VI Eupator

MITHRADATES: A BRIEF SKETCH

Mithradates VI Eupator Dionysus (120–63 BC) was the eldest son of Mithradates V Euergetes and the greatest of the kings of Pontus in Asia Minor (*Fig. 1*). His ruthless reign, which began with the imprisonment and murder of his mother and younger brother (whom their mother preferred), made him one of the most formidable enemies of the Romans. After he conquered Crimea and the northern and north-western regions along the Black Sea including Colchis, he gradually extended his control over most of the regions, gravitating toward Euxine. In some Asian regions he exercised indirect control, such as in Cappadocia, through the local noble Gordius, Mithradates' sister Laodice and her son Ariarathes VII, and his own son, who ruled as Ariarathes IX, with Gordius as his regent. With the temporary help of Nicomedes III of Bithynia he annexed Paphlagonia, planning his conquests also in view of possibly waging war against the Romans. The meeting with C. Marius in Cappadocia took place in 99 BC or a year after; Marius' mission and intentions are controversial.¹ After Sulla's arrival in this region, Mithradates began preparations for a war against Rome; eventually, he also annexed Cappadocia and Bithynia. The Roman state was at war at that time, since the country was ravaged in the course of the Social War (91–87 BC), when Italian allies fought against Rome's predominance.

The control that Mithradates exercised over most of the shores of the Black Sea enabled him to draw on manpower and other resources to supply his armies. It is difficult to trace the borders of his kingdom and of the regions under his control because they constantly changed as a result of his policy, which was partly aggressive and partly defensive and was not always successful. He acted both as an oriental autocrat and an enlightened Hellenistic ruler, claiming Persian and Macedonian descent. Proclaiming himself a new Alexander and Dionysus, he directed his Hellenism toward freeing the Greeks from the "barbarian" Romans. His

policy was a complicated blend of clever diplomacy, intrigues and brutal force, combined with various ways of negotiation, impossible to briefly summarize. Moreover – and not least – the accounts of Plutarch, Appian, Cassius Dio, and summarized descriptions of events in Strabo and other Greek and Latin writers are not always compatible.

Mithradates ultimately subdued or controlled most of Asia Minor, directly or indirectly provoking three major Roman wars.² In the course of the First Mithradatic War (between 89 and 85 BC), his armies were victorious, much of Asia was conquered, and in 88 BC he ordered a massacre of Italians and Romans who were living in Asia Minor (the "Ephesian Vespers"). After having subdued the province of Asia, Mithradates regarded his conquest as temporary and, therefore, plundered the province in various ways, partly for want of money, partly for mistrust in the cities and their leaders; he also encouraged piracy. Most of Greece – and notably Athens – were willing to support his cause, but he was not able to capture Rhodes. However, in 87 Sulla came to Greece with five legions, conquered and punished Athens, defeated Mithradates' armies, and crossed the Hellespont to Asia, where the king surrendered and withdrew to Pontus.

Sulla had to return to Italy to fight his foes, leaving in Anatolia his general L. Licinius Murena, who was responsible for the Second Mithradatic War (ca. 83–81), which was of lesser significance and mostly unsuccessful.³ Nonetheless, Murena could celebrate a triumph, as did all generals who had fought against Mithradates; in this respect, the king was "Rome's perfect enemy".⁴ The third and the last war against Mithradates was triggered by the death of Nicomedes IV of Bithynia in 76 or 75 BC, who bequeathed his kingdom to Rome; Rome wanted to annex it, but in 74 or 73 Mithradates invaded it. It is noteworthy that one of his allies was also Quintus Sertorius, the Roman

¹ Ballesteros Pastor 1996, 66–71; Mayor 2016, 116–118. I would very much like to thank Andreas Hofeneder for having read my paper and for offering valuable comments. My sincere thanks are due to Johannes Nollé for his helpful remarks regarding the first part of my text.

² On the chronology of the three wars, see De Callataj 1997; see also Bratož 2007, 124–126; 131–133. On the provocative policy of the king: McGing 2009. See, on various other aspects of Mithradates and his reign Højte (ed.) 2009. On archaeology: Lafli, Pataci 2016.

³ Broughton 1952, 61; 64; 77.

⁴ Madsen 2009; Id. 2014.



Fig. 1: Tetradrachm, Pergamum, 85/84 BC. Av: head of Mithradates. Rv: grazing stag, alluding to Ephesian Artemis.
Sl. 1: Tetradrahma kovana v Pergamonu 85/84 pr. Kr. Av.: Mitradatov portret; rv.: jelen, ki se pase, aluzija na efeško Artemido.

rebel in Spain, which sheds light on the diverse connections of the king.⁵ It is reported that in 75 BC they considered attacking Italy simultaneously from the west and from the east.⁶

However, Mithradates could not capture Cyzicus in southern Propontis (Mysia); the Roman general L. Licinius Lucullus, who raised the siege, compelled him to seek refuge with his son-in-law, the Armenian king Tigranes II; Mithradates unsuccessfully sought the support of the Parthians. It was only in 68 that he succeeded in returning to Pontus. Pompey the Great defeated him in Lesser Armenia, but in 66 BC abandoned pursuing him, in order to subdue Tigranes. Having wintered at Dioscurias, Mithradates retreated through the Caucasus, taking refuge in his Crimean kingdom, which he reached in 65 BC. He occupied Panticapaeum and stationed some of his army at Phanagorea, as well as at the Crimean harbours of Chersonesus, Theodosia, and Nymphaion,⁷ expecting an attack by sea, since Pompey had stationed his fleet at Phasis to control the access to the Bosphorus. It was then that he supposedly planned a major invasion of Italy through Illyricum.⁸ However, his son Pharnaces revolted against him, and Mithradates took his own life (or was perhaps assassinated) in 63 BC.⁹

Appian of Alexandria is the main source that mentions the plan of Mithradates VI Eupator to attack Italy across Illyricum. This invasion, which the king contemplated towards the end of his life, is further mentioned by Plutarch, Cassius Dio, and Florus, while Strabo refers to Mithradates' intended military campaign against the Romans up to the Adriatic at an earlier stage of the king's rule.

MITHRADATES' PLANNED CAMPAIGN TO THE ADRIATIC IN STRABO'S GEOGRAPHY

Strabo refers to the Pontic king in his seventh book, in which he described northern Europe and Germania, as well as Illyria, Thessaly, Macedonia, and the Pontic regions as far as the Tanais.¹⁰ Towards the end of the third chapter, he listed the countries along the rivers Borysthenes (the Dnieper) and Hypanis (the Bog), towns and settlements along these rivers, as well as the peoples of the interior, the Sarmatian Iazyges and various German peoples, such as the Bastarnae and Tyregetae, and the most northerly of them, the Roxolani, who waged wars with the generals of Mithradates Eupator (7. 3. 17 C 306).

In the next paragraph, Strabo mentioned the cold regions around Lake Maeotis (modern Sea of Azov), where people did not breed asses (because they are sensitive to cold), horses were small, and cattle had no horns. In winter, fish could be obtained from the ice by digging; when the water in bronze water-

⁵ Arrayás Morales 2016.

⁶ Plut., *Sert.* 23; App., *Mithr.* 68; see below.

⁷ Plut., *Pomp.* 32. 9; App., *Mithr.* 101–102 (cf. 107 and 108); Livy, *Epit.* 101; Cass. Dio 36. 50. 2; Gajdukevič 1971, 320–322; McGing 1986, 162–165.

⁸ Mastrocinque 1999, 103–109.

⁹ Sherwin-White 1994, 254–255.

¹⁰ See a commentary to all cited passages in Roller 2018, 360–364.

jars froze, they burst. Neoptolemus, the general of Mithradates, conquered these barbarians during a summer in a naval battle, and in winter in a cavalry engagement, probably between the years 99 and 95 BC, or even in the 80s BC, but possibly as early as the late second century BC.¹¹ During the reign of Philip II, the father of Alexander the Great, Ateas ruled over most of these peoples. From Lucian's *Macrobii* it is known that he was killed in the war against the Macedonian king at the age of ninety.¹² In the fourth century BC, the Macedonians indeed had contacts with these distant peoples.

In the fourth chapter, Strabo described Tauric Chersonesus (modern Crimea) with the city of the same name, which, after having been attacked and plundered by the barbarians, called in Mithradates Eupator to protect it. At this point, Strabo added an enigmatic sentence, mentioning the Adriatic:

7. 4. 3 C 309:

[...] *who (Mithradates) was then planning to lead an army against the barbarians living above the isthmus up to the Borysthenes and against those up to the Adriatic; these, however, were arrangements to prepare a military campaign against the Romans.*

It can be claimed that Strabo, through his family's associations with the Pontic kings, knew these regions, as well as historical events that had taken place there during the reign of Mithradates. Nonetheless, at first glance, the statement about these two campaigns in one sentence seems unconnected. It could be explained by the assumption that Strabo understood the king's policy from the very start as an uninterrupted process leading to the wars with the Romans.¹³ It is not clear when Mithradates' campaign against the Scythians and other barbarian peoples up to the Borysthenes took place, possibly in 110 or 109 BC, or perhaps even five years earlier,¹⁴ which seems too early if in the same sentence a military campaign against the Romans is mentioned. Mithradates may well have planned a military expedition as far as the Adriatic at an early date; however, nothing more is known about it. An early campaign that would have involved the Adriatic could have been related to some unrecorded negotiations of the king with various dynasts in the Balkans, or perhaps to his early affairs in Greece.

¹¹ Geyer 1935; Roller 2018, 362.

¹² *Macrobii* 10.

¹³ Roller 2018, 363–364.

¹⁴ Geyer 1932, 2164; earlier: McGing 1986, 46–47; see Ballesteros Pastor 1996, 43–55.

A CONTEMPLATED INVASION OF ITALY SHORTLY BEFORE MITHRADATES' DEATH: APPIAN'S DATA

As has been suggested, Appian might have based his narrative on a Greek source, which was not particularly favourable to Lucullus and Pompey.¹⁵ In his *History of Mithradates* (102. 472–473), referring to 65 BC, Appian wrote:

*Mithradates finally reached the regions of the Maeotis (the sea of Azov), of which there were many princes, all of whom received him, escorted him, and exchanged numerous presents with him, on account of the fame of his deeds, his empire, and his power, which was still not to be despised. He even formed an alliance with them in contemplation of other and more novel exploits, such as marching through Thrace to Macedonia, through the country of the Macedonians to the Paeones, and passing over the Alps into Italy (Fig. 2).*¹⁶

There is hardly any doubt that the Paeones in this context should be understood as the Pannonians in Pannonia and not the Paeones north of Macedonia.¹⁷ Appian discussed the Paeones in his *Illyrian History* (chapter 14), and this passage makes it clear that he did not distinguish correctly between the Paeonians and Pannonians.¹⁸ In most instances, however, he had the Pannonians in mind when he spoke about the Paeones, only referring to the "Pannonians" to explain that they were called "Paeones".

In the same *History of Mithradates*, but several paragraphs later (an indication that he might have used several sources), Appian again referred to Mithradates' plans to invade Italy across the country of the Celts. In the previously cited passage Appian omitted to mention this significant people settled

¹⁵ Mastrocinque 1999, 103–109.

¹⁶ ὁ δὲ Μιθριδάτης ἐς τὴν Μαιῶτιν ἐμβαλῶν, ἧς εἰσι πολλοὶ δυνάσται, πάντων αὐτὸν κατὰ κλέος ἔργων τε καὶ ἀρχῆς καὶ δυνάμεως ἔτι οἱ παρούσης ἀξιολόγου δεχομένων τε καὶ παραπεμπόντων καὶ δῶρα πολλὰ φερόντων καὶ κομιζομένων ἕτερα, ὃ δὲ καὶ συμμαχίαν αὐτοῖς ἐτίθετο, ἐπινοῶν ἕτερα καινότερα, διὰ Θράκης ἐς Μακεδονίαν καὶ διὰ Μακεδόνων ἐς Παίονας ἐμβαλῶν ὑπερελθεῖν ἐς τὴν Ἰταλίαν τὰ Ἄλπεια ὄρη. Translated by Horace White (The Loeb Classical Library). The episode is discussed in Šašel Kos 2005, 530–534.

¹⁷ Sherwin-White 1984, 205–206, misunderstood Appian's reference to the Paeones, taking it to mean Paeonia; thus he erroneously regarded Mithradates' plan as impossible on this account. Also see Ballesteros Pastor 1996, 273, for similar misunderstanding.

¹⁸ See also the commentary in Šašel Kos 2005.



Fig. 2: Possible variants of Mithradates' planned route across the Balkans to Italy.
 Sl. 2: Možne variante načrtovane Mitradatove poti čez Balkan v Italijo.

in the Balkans close to the Danube, whose country would have to be crossed on the way to Italy. He did so in chapter 109 of his *History of Mithradates*, where he again reported the king's plan of an invasion of Italy. Appian mentioned certain Celts as the first to bar the way both to the Paeones/Pannonians and Italy. His passage reads (*Mithrid.* 109. 518–519):

He (Mithradates) proposed to turn his course to the Celts, whose friendship he had cultivated a long time for this purpose, and with them to invade Italy, hoping that many of the Italians themselves would join him on account of their hatred of the Romans; for he had heard that such had been Hannibal's policy when the Romans were waging war against him in Spain and that he had become in this way an object of the greatest terror to them. However, Appian also added that Mithradates' soldiers distrusted this bold plan fearing a defeat, and refused to march through the Balkans: *Filled with this idea he was for hastening to the Celts; but the very boldness of the plan, which would have brought him great glory, made the soldiers shrink from prolonged service in a foreign land, against men whom they could not overcome even in their own country.*¹⁹

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 109. 520–521. Translated by Horace White (The Loeb Classical Library). See also Plutarch (*Pomp.*,

The Scordisci seem to be the only Celtic people, who could be regarded as Mithradates' allies; they were settled in the broad area of the confluence of the Sava and the Danube Rivers, as well as in the Morava (Margus) Valley.²⁰ The regions next to them, to the west, were inhabited by the Celtic people of the Taurisci.²¹ The army of Mithradates would have needed – in case the king put into effect his military plan – to traverse the territories of the Scordisci before reaching those of the Pannonians. When conceiving an invasion from Crimea to Italy, the first Celtic people on his way that could have represented a threat could have indeed only been the Scordisci. It seems less likely that these would have been the Bastarnae, who were also Mithradates' allies,²² first of all, because they were regarded as German,²³ and further because they would not have been a critical obstacle on his way to Italy.

41. 2), Strabo (7. 4. 3 C 309), and Cassius Dio (37. 11). On Florus (1. 40. 25), see below.

²⁰ Papazoglu 1978, 271 f.; Popović 1999, cf. Tapavički-Ilić 2004.

²¹ Božić 1991; Dizdar 2001; Guštin 2011.

²² Papazoglu 1978, 312–313; cf. Popović 1999.

²³ Strabo 7. 3. 17 C 306; Pliny (*N. h.* 4. 100), and Tacitus (*Germ.* 46. 1).

WAS SUCH A PLAN A MERE FANTASY OR INTENTIONAL DISINFORMATION?

Mithradates had already contemplated invading Italy at the time of his contacts with Sertorius in 75 BC; according to Appian, two of Sertorius' supporters, Lucius Magius and Lucius Fannius played a significant intermediary role advising the king to ally himself with Sertorius. Appian writes (*Mithr.* 68, translated by H. White, Loeb Class. Library): *Mithradates [...] sent ambassadors to Sertorius. The latter introduced them to his senate and prided himself that his fame had extended to Pontus and that he could now besiege the Roman power from both the east and the west.* Plutarch writes that while Sertorius was compared to Hannibal, Mithradates was to Pyrrhus (*Sert.* 23). However, no such double attack had ever been attempted.

The plan to march into Italy as described by Appian, conceived by the king shortly before his death, is also mentioned by Plutarch, Cassius Dio, and Florus.²⁴ Plutarch referred to it when he mentioned Pompey's march to Petra, the capital of the Arab Nabataeans, where the Roman general wished to obtain personal confirmation of the Nabataean king to comply with the commands of the Roman army as he had consented to do. Pompey's followers regarded the expedition as unnecessary and indeed as an evasion from the pursuit of the old Roman enemy Mithradates, particularly since a rumour circulated that the king was preparing to march with an army through Scythia and Paeonia to Italy (*Pomp.* 41. 2: ... ὡς ἀπηγγέλλετο, διὰ Σκυθῶν καὶ Παιόνων στρατὸν ἐλαύνειν ἐπὶ τὴν Ἰταλίαν.). Paeonia here is, of course, Pannonia, as is clear both from the context and the mentioned current usage of Greek authors, writing during the Imperial period. Dio similarly made mention of Mithradates' plan to invade Italy from the Danube and Scythia (37. 11. 1–2: ... πρὸς τε τὸν Ἰστρον Σκυθῶν ἐλθεῖν, κἀντεῦθεν ἐς τὴν Ἰταλίαν ἐσβαλεῖν).

Florus, however, mentioned an invasion through Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece, the usual route for the Roman armies to return from the East to Italy across the sea, or, *vice versa*, travel from

Italy to the East. However, he emphasized that it had only been a plan; Mithradates supposedly considered bridging the Bosporus. Florus' text reads (1. 40. 24–26):

*That night [referring to the battle in Armenia, in which Pompey decisively defeated the king] saw the final defeat of Mithradates; for he never again effected anything, although, like a snake, which, though its head is crushed, threatens to the last with its tail, he tried every expedient. For, after escaping from the enemy to the Colchians, he formed a plan (though it remained only a plan) of bridging the Bosporus and then crossing through Thrace, Macedonia and Greece and making a sudden inroad in Italy; but, baulked by the desertion of his subjects and the treachery of his son Pharnaces, he ended by the sword a life which he had in vain tried to destroy with poison.*²⁵

It should be noted that in the French *Collection Budé* edition the translation of the relevant sentence referring to the plan to invade Italy reads: ([...] *iungere Bosporon, inde per Thracen Macedoniamque et Graeciam transilire, sic Italiam nec opinatus invadere – tantum cogitavit.*): “[...] il conçut le projet grandiose de jeter un pont sur le Bosphore, de bondir ensuite à travers la Thrace, la Macédoine et la Grèce et ainsi d’envahir à l’improviste l’Italie”.²⁶

To advance through Macedonia and Greece would imply proceeding along the *via Egnatia*. In this case, Mithradates would have needed a fleet and have had it available in the Adriatic; neither that nor a march along the Egnatian road would have been possible shortly before his end. Since all other authors refer to Mithradates' planned march across Illyricum, it is clear that Florus must have confused the regions he noted. Perhaps he was not aware that Paeonia, which he might have found in his source, referred to Pannonia and not to the country immediately north of Macedonia.

Clearly Mithradates' plan was never carried out, but the question is, whether it would have been

²⁴ See also Justin, who mentions embassies sent by Mithradates to the Cimbri, Gallograeci, the Sarmatae, and the Bastarnae (38. 3. 7), and refers to Hannibal, the invasion of Transalpine Gauls into Italy, and to Asian Gauls, who had to make a long and difficult journey through Illyricum and Thrace to their new territories (38. 4. 1–10). Cf. Ballesteros Pastor 2013, 214–216.

²⁵ Translated by E. S. Forster (Loeb Classical Library 1929). The Latin text reads: (24) *Et Mithridates quidem nocte illa debellatus est. Nihil enim postea valuit, quamquam omnia expertus more anguim, qui oprito capite postremum cauda minantur.* (25) *Quippe cum efugisset hostem Colchis tenuis, iungere Bosporon, inde per Thracen Macedoniamque et Graeciam transilire, sic Italiam nec opinatus invadere – tantum cogitavit.* (26) *Sed defectione civium Pharnacisque filii scelere praeventus male temptatum veneno spiritum ferro expulit.*

²⁶ Jal 1967, 95.

feasible at all. Theodor Mommsen was explicit: “Diese beabsichtigte Invasion der Orientalen in Italien war einfach lächerlich und nichts als die Ausgeburt einer ohnmächtig phantasierenden Verzweiflung.”²⁷ Théodore Reinach, in contrast, described it as a dream of young Mithradates that would not be impossible under different circumstances.²⁸ Fritz Geyer also did not regard it as impossible: “So phantastisch dieser Plan auf den ersten Blick auch erscheint, unmöglich war unter den damaligen Verhältnissen ein Erfolg nicht.”²⁹ Fanula Papazoglu only referred to Mithradates’ plan in passing, but she never regarded it as impossible, and neither did Gajdukevič.³⁰ The two opinions are not mutually exclusive, but it is clear that briefly before his death when Mithradates (again) planned this invasion, it would certainly not have been possible to carry it out. Ladislav Havas regarded Mithradates’ plan as a realistic and strategically farsighted project, related to the Catilinarian conspiracy; Mithradates would have been aided by the friendly Gauls who would have been the distant Allobroges and supported by the Catilinarian conspirators.³¹ However, this hypothesis has not been argued convincingly and does not seem likely.

At an earlier time, with all resources at Mithradates’ disposal, his plan would have probably been achievable, and indeed, the Romans must have been well aware of the menace represented by the Pontic king. On the eve of the Third Mithradatic War, they systematically waged war against the peoples of the Balkans, who could be possible Mithradates’ allies. This is suggested by the campaign of C. Scribonius Curio, proconsul in Macedonia (75–72 BC), who continued the campaign of his predecessor Appius Claudius Pulcher (77–76 BC). Commanding a (too) large army of five legions, he defeated the Dardanians and was the first of

all Roman generals to reach the Danube, having advanced as far as Dacia.³²

An exhaustive commentary concerning Mithradates’ last plans – not, however, similar plans at any other time of Mithradates’ rule – has been offered by Holger Sonnabend, according to whom most former opinions could roughly be reduced to three main theses. Discussing them in detail, he called attention to various weak points of previous proposals, putting forward his own explanation, which can be regarded as reasonable. A summarized account will be presented here, without repeating *in extenso* the arguments *pro* and *contra*, since these and the pertinent literature can be consulted in Sonnabend’s contribution.³³ The first thesis, regarding Mithradates’ last plans as realistic and intended to be carried out, but only prevented by the revolt of Pharnaces, should in his opinion be regarded as the least plausible. However, as has been seen, this was argued by several scholars and also by Havas and has actually been one of the most favoured explanations.

It has further been proposed that the projected invasion of Italy would have been an idea of Mithradates’ contemporaries and should be judged a legend,³⁴ or, better, invented by his enemies, to stigmatize the king as an entirely unrealistic strategist. Such propaganda might have served his son Pharnaces in his attempt to win over his father’s troops,³⁵ or it would have been made up by certain political adversaries of Pompey the Great in order to ruin his reputation since he could not defeat Mithradates in 66 BC.³⁶ This seems less likely, as does the idea that Mithradates’ last plans should be explained as a literary *topos*.³⁷ This latter explanation was discussed as the third possible thesis by Sonnabend,³⁸ who offered a fourth one. Mithradates would have spread rumours about an invasion into Italy (which he never intended to put into effect), in order to enhance his own political position and possibly persuade Pompey to resume negotiations. This opinion is more plausible, since

²⁷ Mommsen 1909, 135.

²⁸ Reinach 1895, 402–404. He correctly stressed “different circumstances”, therefore Bengtson’s critical remark (1975, 275: “... die Phantasie dem sonst so kritischen Forscher einen Streich gespielt [hat]”) does not seem justified to me.

²⁹ Geyer 1932, 2196.

³⁰ E.g., Papazoglu 1978, 312–313; Gajdukevič 1971, 320–321; Bratož 2007, 133, regarded them as a result of a wrong estimation of Balkan distances.

³¹ Havas 1968, particularly 13–25, but his arguments are not only hypothetical, but also implausible, see Ballesteros Pastor 1996, 270–274, who convincingly refuted them.

³² Syme 1999, 135–136; cf. Wheeler 2011, 197–199; most recently: Petković 2014.

³³ Sonnabend 1998. Under the same title a student published his seminar study (Gruber 2005), containing a short superficial summary of this discussion.

³⁴ Bengtson 1975, 275–276.

³⁵ McGing 1986, 165.

³⁶ Sherwin-White 1984, 205; discussed by Sonnabend 1998, 201–203.

³⁷ As, e.g., Strobel 1996, 146–149.

³⁸ Sonnabend 1998, 203–204.

it is much more likely to assume that the idea of an invasion into Italy would not have been invented by the king's enemies but conceived by the king himself. As has been pointed out, he had contemplated such an invasion at an earlier date. If enemies had to be postulated at all, it could only be suggested that his idea would have been taken up by his adversaries and made ridiculous to harm him. Admittedly, however, the core of none of the mentioned hypotheses can be entirely rejected,³⁹ and there are others in the vast literature about Mithradates VI Eupator, divergent in details.⁴⁰

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS OF CROSSING ILLYRICUM

Although an invasion of Italy planned by Mithradates was probably never meant to be carried out, it should be recalled that an incursion into Italy from the East had been a real threat ever since the Cimbri invaded Noricum in 113 BC and defeated Cn. Papirius Carbo at Noreia. Eventually, they were defeated in 101 BC by C. Marius in northern Italy.⁴¹ Indeed, even before this event, the Roman state feared a possible invasion of Italy through the so-called Illyro-Italian Gate near Postojna. When in 171 BC C. Cassius Longinus, who had been assigned Cisalpine Gaul, left his province in an attempt to reach Macedonia with his army and earn a triumph, the Senate acted immediately to prevent his march. The senators expressed fear that Longinus' march across the Balkans might open the way to Italy to the peoples whose territories he would have traversed (*[...] viam tot nationibus in Italiam aperiret*, Livy, 43. 1. 9).⁴² A few years earlier, the Macedonian king Philip V (died in 179 BC) considered invading Italy with the help of the barbarians, who were settled along the Danube (Livy, 39. 35. 4). The Bastarnae were mentioned (cf. 40. 57. 6–7; Justin [Pomp. Trog.], *prol.* 32); however, it would not be possible to avoid the Scordisci, particularly because Livy in the same context stated that there was no other way for an army to reach Italy but to march across

the territories of the Scordisci (40. 57. 7). Philip obviously had a wrong idea about the length of Illyricum, because he believed that by climbing to the top of Mount Haemus he would be able to see the Black Sea, the Adriatic, the Danube and the Alps (Livy, 40. 21. 2); in any case, fog prevented him from having any view at all.⁴³

Philip was misled by a popular and wide-spread tradition, according to which there was a mountain somewhere in Illyria, from where it was possible to see both the Black Sea and the Adriatic. A similar account could be found in Pseudo-Aristotle in his *Strange Tales (De mirabilibus auscultationibus)*, as well as in Eratosthenes. The latter was also criticized by Strabo, who emphasized that these were false traditions and popular beliefs (7. 5. 9 C 317).⁴⁴ Pseudo-Aristotle did not mention Mt. Haemus, but another mountain, called Delphium (Velika and Mala Kapela, Velebit?), somewhere in the hinterland of the northern Adriatic, between the land of the Mentores and the Istri (c. 104 [839b]). The Mentores seem to have been early inhabitants of the Liburnian coast, and later assimilated to the Liburni, since Pseudo-Scylax, when referring to Liburnia, mentioned the islands called Mentorides, which might be identified with Rab and Pag (c. 21).⁴⁵

At that time, it was erroneously estimated that the distances across the Balkans were shorter and the regions not so difficult to traverse. Polybius, too, claimed that it was possible to see both seas from Mt. Haemus, and so does Pomponius Mela (2. 2. 17–18: *e quis Haemos in tantum altitudinis abit, ut Euxinum et Hadrian ex summo vertice ostendat*). Polybius was censured by Strabo, who writes (7. 5. 1 C 313): *Close to the Pontic Sea is Mount Haemus, which is the largest and highest among mountains in that part of the world, and which divides Thrace almost down the middle into two parts. (Polybius claims that from this mountain both seas may be seen,⁴⁶ however this is not true, since the distance to the Adriatic Sea is great and there are many obstacles in the way to obscure the view).*⁴⁷

Perseus inherited his father's plans of attacking the Romans across Illyria with the help of the

³⁹ Sonnabend 1998, 204.

⁴⁰ See also Mayor 2016, 310–314 (= 2010, 327; 341; 344–345).

⁴¹ Alföldy 1974, 35–38; Hofeneder 2018, 37–43; 272–312, with an evaluation of all relevant literature.

⁴² Šašel Kos 2014; see also, for all such attempts, Löffl 2011, 555.

⁴³ Jaeger 2011.

⁴⁴ Cf. Roller 2018, 377.

⁴⁵ Wilkes 1969, 7; Zaninović 1982, 44; cf. also Vattuone 2000, 17–22.

⁴⁶ Polyb. 24. 4 (from Strabo).

⁴⁷ Roller 2018, 368–369.

Bastarnae, who would have been sent through the land of the Scordisci, called “lower Galatia” by Plutarch.⁴⁸ The Senate was informed of Perseus’ project by Eumenes of Pergamum (Livy, 42. 11. 2 ff.; 42. 11. 4: *Bastarnarum gentem excitam sedibus suis, quorum auxiliis fretus in Italiam transiret*; cf. Livy, 40. 5. 9–10; 44. 26. 2 and Plutarch, *Aemil. Paul.* 9. 7). Obviously, the Pannonians had not yet become a significant factor in the Balkans at that time, because no mention is made of them in these plans. An attack on Italy across Illyricum was also planned, at an even earlier date, by Antiochus of Syria; in 192 BC, Hannibal, who had taken refuge at his court, advised him to bring Philip V into the war so as to invade Italy together (Livy, 34. 60; App., *Syr.* 7; Justin, 31. 3. 5–10).⁴⁹

CONCLUSION

Mithradates’ plan of invading Italy has not been transmitted consistently in the cited sources. Strabo mentions a military campaign planned by Mithradates up to the Adriatic, possibly ca. 110 BC: an expedition against the barbarians living in the region of the Adriatic as an arrangement for a military campaign against the Roman state. When contemplating war against the Romans, the

Adriatic was clearly one of Mithradates’ goals. In 75 BC, Sertorius and Mithradates considered attacking Italy simultaneously from the west and from the east, as is mentioned by Appian. According to Plutarch, Sertorius was compared to Hannibal and Mithradates to Pyrrhus. During the heyday of his reign Mithradates would have well been capable of attacking Italy across the regions of the Scordisci and Pannonia, passing the Odra Pass and descending into northern Italy in the area of the upper Adriatic.

However, an invasion into Italy that he planned shortly before his death would not have been possible. It is mentioned by several Greek and Latin writers, but not consistently, since the cited accounts differ in several details. Appian mentioned a march through Thrace and Macedonia to Pannonia and across the Alps into Italy. In another passage of his *History of Mithradates*, he only referred to the Celts and Italy. Plutarch noted Scythia, Paeonia (Pannonia), and Italy, while Cassius Dio mentioned the Danube, Scythia, and Italy. Florus’ version is different, but must obviously be erroneous: he made mention of an invasion into Italy through Thrace, Macedonia and Greece. Inconsistencies may confirm the vagueness of Mithradates’ plan, which only resulted in rumours and indeed, no action had ever even been contemplated. Florus mentioned that Mithradates, not wishing to admit utter defeat, considered the idea of invading Italy, but was not able to carry it out.

⁴⁸ See Papazoglu 1978, 281–282.

⁴⁹ Cf. Patsch 1932, 32–33; Christ 2003, 146–147; 193.

Abbreviations / Kratice

CAH = *Cambridge Ancient History*

RE = Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll-Mittelhaus-Ziegler, *Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*

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Ilirik, Jadran in Italija v načrtih Mitradata VI. Evpatorja

V spomin na Fanulo Papazoglu

MITRADAT: KRATEK ORIS NJEGOVEGA VLADANJA

Mitradat VI. Evpator Dioniz (*Mithradates VI Eupator Dionysus*: 120–63 pr. Kr.) je bil najstarejši sin Mitradata V. Evergeta (*Mithradates V Euergetes*) in najpomembnejši med kralji Ponta v Mali Aziji (sl. 1). Zaradi svojega brezobzirnega vladanja, ki se je začelo s tem, da je dal zapreti in umoriti mater in mlajšega brata (ki ga je mati protežirala), je upravičeno veljal za enega najbolj strah zbujujočih sovražnikov Rima. Ko je osvojil bosporsko kraljestvo ter severne in severozahodne dežele ob Črnem morju vključno s Kolhido, je postopoma razširil oblast čez večino regij na območju Črnega morja. V nekaterih azijskih deželah je bil Mitradatov nadzor le posreden, tako npr. v Kapadokiji, kjer ga je izvajal ob pomoči lokalnega velikaša Gordija (*Gordius*), svoje sestre Laodike in njenega sina Ariarata VII. ter svojega lastnega sina, ki je vladal kot Ariarates IX., z Gordijem kot regentom. Ob pomoči Nikomeda III. iz Bitinije je anektiral Paflagonijo in načrtoval svoja osvajanja tudi v mislih na morebitno vojno z Rimljani. Z Gajem Marijem se je srečal v Kapadokiji leta 99 pr. Kr. ali leto zatem; Marijeva misija in njegovi nameni niso natančno pojasnjeni.¹ Po prihodu Sule na vzhod je Mitradat začel resne priprave na vojno proti Rimu; svojemu kraljestvu je priključil še Kapadokijo in Bitinijo. V tistem času, med letoma 91 in 87 pr. Kr., je v rimski državi divjala zavezniška vojna, v kateri so se italjski zavezniki borili proti nadvladi Rima.

Oblast, ki jo je Mitradat imel nad večino obalnih predelov Črnega morja, mu je omogočala nabor vojakov in preskrbo vojske z vsem, kar je potrebovala. Mej njegovega kraljestva in dežel pod njegovo oblastjo ni mogoče natančno določiti, ker so se stalno spreminjale glede na njegovo politiko, ki je bila delno napadalna in delno defenzivna, včasih tudi neuspešna. Nastopal je hkrati kot orientalni

despot in razsvetljen helenistični vladar, ki se je skliceval tako na perzijsko kot na makedonsko poreklo. Proglasil se je za novega Aleksandra in Dioniza in svoj helenizem usmeril v osvoboditev Grkov izpod jarma "barbarskih" Rimljanov. Njegova politika je bila zapletena mešanica preudarne diplomacije, raznih intrig, grobe sile in različnih pogajanj, česar ni mogoče opisati v kratkem povzetku. Poleg tega prikazi njegovega vladanja pri Plutarhu, Apijanu, Kasiju Dionu in v kratkih opisih pri Strabonu ter drugih grških in latinskih piscih niso vedno usklajeni.

Mitradat je osvojil večino Male Azije in neposredno ali posredno povzročil tri velike vojne z Rimljani.² V prvi vojni med Rimom in Mitradatom (89–85 pr. Kr.) so bile Mitradatove vojske uspešne, osvojil je večino Azije in leta 88 pr. Kr. ukazal pobiti vse Italike in Rimljane, ki so živeli v Mali Aziji; ubili naj bi jih 80 000. Ko si je podvrigel provinco Azijo, je menil, da bo le začasno pod njegovo oblastjo, zato je po deželi na vse načine ropal, deloma zaradi pomanjkanja denarja, deloma ker ni zaupal mestom in njihovim voditeljem, in spodbujal piratstvo. Večina Grčije in predvsem tudi Atene so se odločile, da stopijo na njegovo stran, ni pa mogel osvojiti Rodosa. Leta 87 je v Grčijo prispel Sula s petimi legijami, premagal Mitradatove čete, kaznoval Atene in nadaljeval pot v Azijo, kjer se je kralj vdal in umaknil v Pont.

Vendar se je moral Sula vrniti v Italijo in se boriti proti svojim sovražnikom, v Anatoliji pa je pustil svojega generala Lucija Licinija Murena (*L. Licinius Murena*), ki je bil odgovoren za drugo vojno proti Mitradatu (ok. 83–81); ta je bila manj pomembna in večinoma neuspešna.³ Kljub temu je Murena nad Mitradatom slavil triumf, kot so ga vsi rimski generali, ki so se borili proti kralju; v tem smislu je bil Mitradat "idealni rimski sovražnik".⁴ Tretjo in zadnjo vojno proti Mitradatu je leta 76 ali

¹ Ballesteros Pastor 1996, 66–71; Mayor 2016, 116–118. Zahvaljujem se Andreasu Hofenederju, ki je prebral in komentiral moje besedilo. Hvaležna sem tudi Johannesu Nollé-u za koristne pripombe k uvodnemu poglavju članka.

² H kronologiji vseh treh vojn glej De Callataÿ 1997; glej tudi Bratož 2007, 124–126; 131–133; za Mitradatovo provokativno politiko: McGing 2009; za razne vidike njegove vlade: Højte (ur.) 2009; za arheološko sliko: Lafli, Pataci 2016.

³ Broughton 1952, 61; 64; 77.

⁴ Madsen 2009; id. 2014.

75 pr. Kr. sprožila smrt Nikomeda IV. iz Bitinije, ki je svoje kraljestvo z oporoko zapustil Rimu; Rim ga je hotel anektirati, a ga je Mitradat leta 74 ali 73 napadel. Eden njegovih zaveznikov je bil Kvint Sertorij (*Quintus Sertorius*), rimski upornik v Hispaniji, kar meče zanimivo luč na Mitradatove dalekosežne povezave.⁵ V zgodovinskih virih je omenjeno, da sta leta 75 pr. Kr. načrtovala sočasen napad na Italijo z zahoda in vzhoda.⁶

Vendar Mitradat ni mogel zavzeti Kizika (*Cyzicus*) v južni Propontidi (Miziji); rimski general Lucij Licinij Lukul (*L. Licinius Lucullus*), ki je mesto rešil obleganja, je Mitradata prisilil, da je poiskal zatočišče pri svojem zetu, armenskem kralju Tigranu II. Mitradat je neuspešno iskal pomoč pri Partih in se mu je šele leta 68 uspelo vrniti v Pont. Pompej ga je premagal v Armeniji, a ga je leta 66 pr. Kr. nehal zasledovati, da bi si lahko podvrigel Tigrana. Mitradat je prezimil v Dioskuriadi (*Dioscurias*) v Kolhidi, nato pa se je umikal čez Kavkaz in se zatekel v svoje bosporsko kraljestvo, kamor je prispel leta 65 pr. Kr. Zasedel je Pantikapaj (*Panticapaeum*) in nekaj vojske namestil v Fanagoreji (*Phanagorea*) ter tudi v bosporskih pristaniščih Herzonezu (*Chersonesus*), Teodoziji (*Theodosia*) in Nimfeju (*Nymphaion*);⁷ pričakoval je namreč napad z morja, ker je Pompej svojo mornarico namestil v mestu *Phasis* ob izlivu reke z istim imenom, da bi imel nadzor nad dostopom v Bospor. V tem času naj bi Mitradat načrtoval veliko invazijo v Italijo čez Ilirik.⁸ Vendar je njegov sin Farnaces (*Pharnaces*) organiziral upor proti njemu in 63 pr. Kr. si je Mitradat sam vzel življenje, čeprav ni povsem izključeno, da ga niso ubili.⁹

Apijan iz Aleksandrije je glavni vir, ki omenja načrt Mitradata VI. Evpatorja, da bi napadel Italijo čez Ilirik. Ta vpad, o katerem je kralj razmišljal proti koncu svojega življenja, omenjajo tudi Plutarh, Kasij Dion in Flor, medtem ko se Strabonovo poročilo nanaša na vojaško odpravo proti Rimljanom do Jadrana, ki jo je Mitradat načrtoval na samem začetku svojega vladanja.

MITRADATOVA NAČRTOVANA VOJAŠKA ODPRAVA NA JADRAN V STRABONOVI GEOGRAFIJI

Strabon omenja pontskega kralja v sedmi knjigi svoje *Geografije*, v kateri opisuje severno Evropo in Germanijo ter Ilirijo, Tesalijo, Makedonijo in pontske dežele vse do reke *Tanais*.¹⁰ Proti koncu tretjega poglavja je navedel dežele ob rekah *Borysthenes* (Dneper) and *Hypanis* (Bog), mesta in naselja ob obeh rekah kot tudi ljudstva v notranjosti, sarmatske Jazige in razna germanska ljudstva, npr. Bastarne in Tiregete (*Tyregetae*) in najbolj severne med njimi, Roksolane, ki so se bojevali z generali Mitradata Evpatorja (7, 3, 17 C 306).

V naslednjem razdelku Strabon omenja mrzle dežele ob jezeru Meotidi (*Maeotis*, zdaj Azovsko morje), kjer ljudje niso gojili oslov, ker so te živali občutljive za mraz, konji so majhni, govedo pa nima rogov. Pozimi dobijo ribe tako, da jih izkopljejo iz ledu; ko voda v bronastih vrčih zmrzne, ti počijo.

Mitradatov general Neoptolem je te barbare premagal poleti v pomorski bitki, pozimi pa s konjenico, verjetno med letoma 99 in 95 pr. Kr. ali celo v osemdesetih letih pr. Kr., morda pa tudi že tako zgodaj kot konec 2. stoletja pr. Kr.¹¹ V času vlade Filipa II., očeta Aleksandra Velikega, je večini teh ljudstev vladal Ateas. Iz Lukijanovega spisa *Stoletniki* (*Macrobii*) je znano, da je bil ubit v vojni proti makedonskemu kralju, ko je bil star devetdeset let.¹² V 4. stoletju pr. Kr. so Makedonci dejansko imeli stike s temi oddaljenimi ljudstvi.

V četrtem poglavju je Strabon opisal Tavriški Herzonez (zdaj polotok Krim) z istoimenskim mestom, ki je potem, ko so ga napadli in izropali barbari, poklicalo na pomoč Mitradata Evpatorja, da bi ga zaščitil. Na koncu tega opisa Strabon omenja Jadran:

7, 4, 3 C 309:

... (*Mitradat*) je nato načrtoval, da bi z vojsko odrinil proti barbarom, ki so živeli nad ožino do reke *Borysthenes*, in proti tistim, ki so živeli na Jadranu; to so bile priprave na vojaško odpravo proti Rimljanom.

Strabon je glede na povezave svoje družine s pontskimi kralji nedvomno dobro poznal te dežele kot tudi zgodovinska dogajanja v času Mitradatovega vladanja. Kljub temu je omemba teh dveh vojaških

⁵ Arrayás Morales 2016.

⁶ Plut., *Sert.* 23; App., *Mithr.* 68; glej nižje.

⁷ Plut., *Pomp.* 32, 9; App., *Mithr.* 101–102 (prim. 107 in 108); Liv., *Epit.* 101; Cass. Dio 36, 50, 2; Gajdukevič 1971, 320–322; McGing 1986, 162–165.

⁸ Mastrocinque 1999, 103–109.

⁹ Sherwin-White 1994, 254–255.

¹⁰ Komentar k vsem citiranim odlomkom: Roller 2018, 360–364.

¹¹ Geyer 1935; Roller 2018, 362.

¹² *Macrobii* 10.

odprav v enem stavku težko razumljiva. Lahko bi jo razložili z domnevo, da si je Strabon Mitradatovo politiko razlagal kot proces, ki je bil od samega začetka usmerjen v vojno proti Rimljanom.¹³ Ni jasno, kdaj se je Mitradat bojeval proti Skitom in drugim barbarskim ljudstvom v deželah do reke Boristena, morda leta 110 ali 109 pr. Kr. ali celo pet let pred tem,¹⁴ kar je verjetno prezgodaj zato, ker je v istem stavku omenjena vojaška odprava proti Rimljanom. Verjetno je imel Mitradat dejansko že zgodaj v načrtu, da bi z vojsko prodrli vse do Jadrana, a o tem ni znanega nič več kot to. Zgodnjo vojaško odpravo, ki naj bi Mitradatovo vojsko pripeljala do Jadrana, je morda treba povezati z njegovim sicer neznanim dogovarjanjem s katerim od vladarjev na Balkanu ali pa morda z njegovim zgodnjim delovanjem v Grčiji.

NAMERAVANA INVAZIJA ITALIJE MALO PRED MITRADATOVO SMRTJO: PODATKI PRI APIJANU

Apijan je za svojo pripoved po vsej verjetnosti uporabil grški vir, ki ni bil posebno naklonjen Lukulu in Pompeju.¹⁵ V svoji *Zgodovini Mitradata VI.*, kjer je pisal o dogodkih leta 65 pr. Kr., Apijan pravi (102, 472–473):

Mitradat je končno prispel do dežel ob Meotidi (Azovsko morje), kjer je vladalo mnogo princev; vsi so ga sprejeli, mu dali spremstvo in z njim izmenjali številna darila, saj so dobro poznali sloves njegovih dejanj, njegov imperij in njegovo moč, ki je še nikakor ni bilo mogoče podcenjevati. Mitradat je z njimi celo sklenil zavezništvo in razmišljal o novih in nenavadnih podvigih, npr. o vojaški odpravi čez Trakijo v Makedonijo in čez deželo Makedoncev do Peoncev (namreč Panoncev) ter čez Alpe v Italijo (sl. 2).¹⁶

Ni namreč dvoma, da je treba Peonce v tem kontekstu razumeti kot Panonce v Panoniji in ne

Peonce severno od Makedonije.¹⁷ Apijan je o Peoncih pisal v svoji *Ilirski zgodovini*, v 14. poglavju, iz katerega izhaja, da ni pravilno razlikoval med obema ljudstvom.¹⁸ V večini primerov je imel v mislih Panonce, ko je pisal o Peoncih, "Panonce" je omenil le, ko je razložil, da se imenujejo Peonci.

V isti *Zgodovini Mitradata VI.*, a več razdelkov pozneje (kar verjetno pomeni, da je uporabljal različne vire), je Apijan ponovno omenil Mitradatov načrt, da bi napadel Italijo čez deželo Keltov. V prej citiranem odlomku Apijan ni omenil tega pomembnega ljudstva, ki je bilo naseljeno na Balkanu blizu Donave in katerega deželo bi Mitradat na poti v Italijo nujno moral prečkati. Omenil ga je v 109. poglavju svoje *Zgodovine Mitradata VI.*, kjer je ponovno pisal o načrtu kralja, da bi vpadel v Italijo. Kelti so bili prvi, ki so zapirali pot do Panoncev in Italije (*Mithrid.* 109, 518–519):

Mitradat je nameraval z vojsko do Keltov, katerih prijateljstvo je dolga leta negoval s tem namenom, in z njimi napasti Italijo v upanju, da se mu bodo priključili mnogi Italiki sami od sebe, zaradi sovraštva do Rimljanov. Slišal je namreč, da je bila to Hanibalova politika, ko so se Rimljani z njim bojevali v Hispaniji, in da jim je na ta način povzročil silno grozo. Vendar je Apijan tudi dodal, da Mitradatovi vojaki niso zaupali temu drznemu načrtu; bali so se namreč poraza in niso hoteli na pot čez Balkan: Navdušen nad svojo idejo je hotel takoj odriniti do Keltov, toda vojake je odvrnila drznost načrta, ki bi Mitradatu prinesla veliko slavo, oni pa bi morali služiti vojsko dalj časa v tuji deželi, proti možem, ki jih še v lastni deželi niso mogli premagati.¹⁹

Edino keltsko ljudstvo, ki bi lahko bilo Mitradatov zaveznik na poti proti Panoniji, so bili Skordiski, naseljeni na širokem območju izliva Save v Donavo in v dolini Morave (*Margus*).²⁰ V deželah zahodno od njih je prebivalo keltsko ljudstvo Tavriskov.²¹ Če bi Mitradat dejansko uresničil svoj načrt, bi morala njegova vojska na poti v Panonijo prečkati deželo keltskih Skordiskov, ki bi za vojsko v resnici lahko bila nevarnost. Manj verjetno je, da bi to bili

¹³ Roller 2018, 363–364.

¹⁴ Geyer 1932, 2164; bolj zgodaj: McGing 1986, 46–47; glej Ballesteros Pastor 1996, 43–55.

¹⁵ Mastrocinque 1999, 103–109.

¹⁶ ὁ δὲ Μιθριδάτης ἐς τὴν Μαιώτιν ἐμβάλων, ἥς εἰσι πολλοὶ δυνάσται, πάντων αὐτὸν κατὰ κλέος ἔργων τε καὶ ἀρχῆς καὶ δυνάμεως ἔτι οἱ παρούσης ἀξιολόγου δεχομένων τε καὶ παραπεμπόντων καὶ δῶρα πολλὰ φερόντων καὶ κομιζομένων ἔτερα, ὃ δὲ καὶ συμμαχίαν αὐτοῖς ἐτίθετο, ἐπινοῶν ἔτερα καινότερα, διὰ Θράκης ἐς Μακεδονίαν καὶ διὰ Μακεδόνων ἐς Παίονας ἐμβάλων ὑπερελθεῖν ἐς τὴν Ἰταλίαν τὰ Ἄλπεια ὄρη. Komentar k epizodi pri Šašel Kos 2005, 530–534.

¹⁷ Sherwin-White 1984, 205–206, je napačno smatral, da se Apijanova omemba Peoncev nanaša na Peonijo, in zato menil, da bi bil Mitradatov načrt neuresničljiv. Glej tudi Ballesteros Pastor 1996, 273, za podoben nesporazum.

¹⁸ Komentar pri Šašel Kos 2005.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 109, 520–521. Glej tudi Plutarh (*Pomp.*, 41, 2), Strabon (7, 4, 3 C 309) in Kasij Dion (37, 11). Za Flora (1, 40, 25) glej nižje.

²⁰ Papazoglu 1978, 271 ss; Popović 1999, prim. Tapavički-Ilić 2004.

²¹ Božič 1991; Dizdar 2001; Guštin 2011.

Bastarni, ki so bili tudi Mitradatovi zavezniki,²² deloma zato, ker so jih šteli za Germane,²³ predvsem pa niso pomenili kritične ovire na Mitradatovi načrtovani poti v Italijo.

JE BIL TA NAČRT LE FANTAZIJA ALI NAMERNO ZAVAJAJOČA INFORMACIJA?

Mitradat je načrtoval napad na Italijo že v času svojih stikov s Sertorijem leta 75 pr. Kr. Apijan piše, da sta dva Sertorijeva podpornika, Lucij Magij (*Lucius Magius*) in Lucij Faniij (*Lucius Fannius*), posredovala pri kralju, naj se poveže s Sertorijem (*Mithr.* 68): *Mitradat ... je poslal k Sertoriju odposlanca. Sertorij ju je predstavil v svojem senatu in se pohvalil, da njegov sloves sega vse do Ponta in da lahko rimsko državo zdaj napade tako z vzhoda kot z zahoda.* Plutarh piše, da so Sertorija primerjali s Hanibalom, Mitradata pa s Pirom (*Sert.* 23). Vendar pa tega dvojnega napada nista nikdar niti poskusila izvesti.

Pri Apijanu opisan Mitrdatov načrt o vpadu v Italijo, o katerem je kralj razmišljal malo pred smrtjo, omenjajo tudi Plutarh, Kasij Dion in Flor.²⁴ Plutarh ga omeni, ko piše o Pompejevem pohodu v Petro, glavno mesto arabskih Nabatejcev, kjer je rimski general želel dobiti od nabatejskega kralja osebno zagotovilo, da se bo držal ukazov rimske vojske. Pompejevi privrženci so smatrali odpravo za nepotrebno, saj se je Pompej zaradi nje izognil zasledovanju starega rimskega sovražnika Mitradata, še posebej, ker se je govorilo, da kralj pripravlja pohod čez Skitijo in Peonijo v Italijo (*Pomp.* 41, 2: ... ὡς ἀπηγγέλλετο, διὰ Σκυθῶν καὶ Παιόνων στρατῶν ἐλαύνειν ἐπὶ τὴν Ἰταλίαν). Peonija je nedvomno Panonija, kar je jasno ne le iz konteksta, ampak tudi glede na običajno rabo imena pri grških avtorjih, ki so pisali v rimskem obdobju. Dion podobno omenja Mitrdatov načrt, da bi napadel Italijo z območja Donave in Skitije (37, 11, 1–2: ... πρὸς τε τὸν Ἰστρον Σκυθῶν ἐλθεῖν, κἀντεῦθεν ἐς τὴν Ἰταλίαν ἐσβαλεῖν).

Flor pa omenja invazijo čez Trakijo, Makedonijo in Grčijo, običajno pot, po kateri so se rimske vojske vračale z vzhoda v Italijo čez morje, ali pa obratno, potovale iz Italije na vzhod. Poudaril je, da je bil to le načrt; Mitradat naj bi celo razmišljal, da bi zgradil most čez Bospor. Florovo besedilo se glasi (1, 40, 24–26):

*To noč [po bitki v Armeniji, v kateri je Pompej kralja odločilno premagal] je bil Mitradat dokončno poražen; nikdar več ni namreč napravil karkoli omembe vrednega. Kot kača, ki ima zdrobljeno glavo, pa do konca grozi z repom, je poskušal vse mogoče. Ko je pred sovražnikom pobegnil h Kolhijcem, je razmišljal o velikem načrtu, da bi premostil Bospor in čez Trakijo, Makedonijo in Grčijo nepričakovano vdrl v Italijo. Toda potem, ko so ga zapustili podaniki in ga je izdal sin Farnak (Pharnaces), je z mečem končal svoje življenje, kajti zaman se je trudil, da bi ga s strupom.*²⁵

Prevod stavka, ki govori o načrtovanem napadu na Italijo (*[...] iungere Bosporon, inde per Thracen Macedoniamque et Graeciam transilire, sic Italiam nec opinatus invadere – tantum cogitavit*), se v francoski izdaji *Collection Budé* glasi: "... si je zamislil veličasten načrt, da bi premostil Bospor, odhitel čez Trakijo, Makedonijo in Grčijo ter nato nepričakovano vpadel v Italijo".²⁶

Odprava čez Makedonijo in Grčijo bi pomenila potovanje po Egnatijski cesti (*via Egnatia*). V tem primeru bi Mitradat na južnem Jadranu potreboval mornarico; v času malo pred njegovim koncem ne bi bilo mogoče ne eno ne drugo. Glede na to, da vsi drugi avtorji omenjajo Mitrdatov načrtovani pohod čez Ilirik, je jasno, da je Flor v svojem opisu navedel napačne dežele. Najverjetneje se ni zavedal, da pod Peonijo, ki jo je našel v svojem viru, ne gre razumeti dežele severno od Makedonije, temveč gre za Panonijo.

Jasno je, da Mitrdatov načrt ni bil nikdar uresničen, vprašanje pa je, ali bi sploh bil uresničljiv. Theodor Mommsen je bil mnenja, da ne: "Diese beabsichtigte Invasion der Orientalen in Italien war einfach lächerlich und nichts als die Ausgeburt

²² Papazoglu 1978, 312–313; prim. Popović 1999.

²³ Strabon 7, 3, 17 C 306; Plinij (*N. h.* 4, 100) in Tacit (*Germ.* 46, 1).

²⁴ Justin omenja odposlanstva, ki jih je Mitradat poslal h Kimbrom, Galatom (*Gallograeci*), Sarmatom in Bastarnom (38, 3, 7), in Hanibala, invazijo Keltoev onstran Alp v Italijo ter azijske Kelte, ki so se podali na dolgo in težko pot čez Ilirik in Trakijo v svojo novo domovino (38, 4, 1–10). Prim. Ballesteros Pastor 2013, 214–216.

²⁵ Besedilo se v latinščini glasi: (24) *Et Mithridates quidem nocte illa debellatus est. Nihil enim postea valuit, quamquam omnia expertus more anguivum, qui optrito capite postremum cauda minantur.* (25) *Quippe cum efugisset hostem Colchis tenus, iungere Bosporon, inde per Thracen Macedoniamque et Graeciam transilire, sic Italiam nec opinatus invadere – tantum cogitavit.* (26) *Sed defectione civium Pharnacisque filii scelere praeventus male temptatum veneno spiritum ferro expulit.*

²⁶ Jal 1967, 95.

einer ohnmächtig phantasierenden Verzweiflung.”²⁷ Théodore Reinach pa je načrt označil kot sanje mladega Mitradata, ki jih v drugačnih okoliščinah ne bi bilo nemogoče uresničiti.²⁸ Fritz Geyer tudi ni smatral načrta za nemogočega: “So phantastisch dieser Plan auf den ersten Blick auch erscheint, unmöglich war unter den damaligen Verhältnissen ein Erfolg nicht.”²⁹ Fanula Papazoglu Mitradatovega načrta ni posebej komentirala, ampak le omenjala, vendar vedno kot odpravo, ki bi bila izvedljiva, enako tudi Gajdukevič.³⁰ Mnenji se ne izključujeta povsem, jasno pa je, da malo pred svojo smrtjo, ko je Mitradat (ponovno) načrtoval vpad v Italijo, tega gotovo ne bi mogel uresničiti. Ladislav Havas je smatral Mitradatov načrt za realističen in strateško daljnoviden projekt, povezan s Katilinovo zaroto: Mitradatu naj bi poleg zarotnikov kot zavezniki pomagali prijateljski Kelti, ki naj bi bili precej oddaljeni Alobrogi.³¹ Vendar svoje hipoteze ni argumentiral prepričljivo in tudi sicer ni smiselna.

V času, ko je bil Mitradat na vrhuncu moči in je imel na razpolago vse vire in sredstva, bi svoj načrt po vsej verjetnosti lahko uresničil in Rimljani so se dobro zavedali nevarnosti, ki jim je pretila s strani pontskega kralja. Malo pred izbruhom tretje vojne proti Mitradatu so se sistematično bojevali z ljudstvi na Balkanu, ki bi lahko bili Mitradatovi zavezniki. To bi izhajalo iz vojaške odprave Gaja Skribonija Kuriona (*C. Scribonius Curio*), prokonzula Makedonije med letoma 75 in 72 pr. Kr., ki je nadaljeval vojno svojega predhodnika Apija Klavdija Pulhira (*Appius Claudius Pulcher*, 77–76 pr. Kr.). S (pre)veliko vojsko petih legij je premagal Dardance in bil prvi rimski general, ki je dosegel Donavo in prodril vse do Dacije.³²

Holger Sonnabend je izčrpno komentiral Mitradatove poslednje načrte (ne pa podobnih iz zgodnejšega časa njegove vlade) in moderne komentarje, ki jih je razvrstil v tri glavne teze;

opozoril je na njihove šibke točke in predlagal svojo razlago, ki nedvomno lahko velja za dobro utemeljeno. Povzela bom bistvo omenjenih tez, ne da bi *in extenso* navajala argumente za in proti, ki so zlahka dostopni v Sonnabendovem članku.³³ Prva hipoteza, po kateri Mitradat ni mogel uresničiti svojega sicer stvarnega načrta le zaradi Farnakovega upora, je po njegovem mnenju najmanj verjetna. Toda kot je bilo omenjeno, je to tezo zagovarjala cela vrsta avtorjev, tudi Havas.

Nekateri interpreti so predlagali, da bi bila načrtovana invazija Italije ideja Mitradatovih sodobnikov in jo je treba obravnavati kot legendo³⁴ oziroma da so si jo izmislili njegovi sovražniki, ki so hoteli kralja prikazati kot popolnoma nerealnega stratega. Ta sovražna propaganda bi lahko služila njegovemu sinu Farnaku, ki si je prizadeval pridobiti na svojo stran čete svojega očeta,³⁵ ali pa Pompejevimi političnim nasprotnikom, da bi uničili njegov ugled, češ da leta 66 pr. Kr. ni mogel premagati Mitradata.³⁶ To se zdi manj verjetno, kot tudi teza, da je Mitradatov zadnji načrt treba razložiti kot literarni *topos*.³⁷ To slednjo razlago je Sonnabend obravnaval kot tretjo tezo,³⁸ sam pa je predlagal četrto. Mitradat naj bi sam razširil govorice o vpadu v Italijo (česar ni nikdar nameraval izvesti), da bi poudaril pomembnost svoje politične pozicije in morda prepričal Pompeja, da bi z njim nadaljeval pogajanja. Dejansko je veliko bolj verjetno, da si invazije Italije niso izmislili Mitradatovi sovražniki, temveč si jo je zamislil kralj sam. Kot omenjeno, je razmišljal o takšnem vpadu že na začetku svoje vlade. Ne bi bilo nemogoče, da bi ga njegovi sovražniki zaradi tega načrta osmešili in mu s tem škodili. Nobena od omenjenih hipotez ni povsem nemogoča,³⁹ v obširni literaturi o Mitradatu VI. Evpatorju pa najdemo še druge, ki se v podrobnostih nekoliko razlikujejo.⁴⁰

²⁷ Mommsen 1909, 135.

²⁸ Reinach 1895, 402–404. Pravilno je poudaril “drugačne okoliščine”, zato se mi zdi Bengtsonova kritična pripomba (1975, 275: “... die Phantasie dem sonst so kritischen Forscher einen Streich gespielt [hat]”) neupravičena.

²⁹ Geyer 1932, 2196.

³⁰ E.g. Papazoglu 1978, 312–313; Gajdukevič 1971, 320–321. Bratož 2007, 133, je načrt pripisal Mitradatovi napačni predstavi o razdaljah na Balkanu.

³¹ Havas 1968, posebej 13–25, vendar njegovi argumenti niso le hipotetični, ampak tudi malo verjetni, glej Ballesteros Pastor 1996, 270–274, ki jih je prepričljivo zavrnil.

³² Syme 1999, 135–136; prim. Wheeler 2011, 197–199; nazadnje Petković 2014.

³³ Sonnabend 1998. Pod istim naslovom je študent objavil svojo seminarsko nalogo (Gruber 2005), ki vsebuje kratek in površen povzetek te razprave.

³⁴ Bengtson 1975, 275–276.

³⁵ McGing 1986, 165.

³⁶ Sherwin-White 1984, 205; o tem razpravlja Sonnabend 1998, 201–203.

³⁷ Kot npr. Strobel 1996, 146–149.

³⁸ Sonnabend 1998, 203–204.

³⁹ Sonnabend 1998, 204.

⁴⁰ Glej tudi Mayor 2016, 310–314 (= 2010, 327; 341; 344–345).

PREDHODNI POSKUSI POHODOV ČEZ ILIRIK

Čeprav Mitradat načrtovanega vpada v Italijo malo pred svojim koncem ni nameraval uresničiti, je treba poudariti, da je bil vdor v Italijo z vzhoda grožnja vse od časa, ko so leta 113 pr. Kr. Kimbri vdrli v Norik in pri Noreji premagali Gneja Papirija Karbona (*Cn. Papirius Carbo*). Gaj Marij (*C. Marius*) jih je šele leta 101 pr. Kr. premagal v severni Italiji.⁴¹ Rimska država pa se je že pred tem bala morebitnega vpada v Italijo čez tako imenovana iliropitaljska vrata pri Postojni. Ko je leta 171 pr. Kr. Gaj Kasij Longin (*C. Cassius Longinus*), ki je dobil v upravo Cisalpinsko Galijo, zapustil svojo provinco in se z vojsko napotil v Makedonijo, kjer je upal na zmago in triumf, je senat takoj ukrepal in mu preprečil pohod. Senatorji so izrazili strah, da bi Longinovo prodiranje čez Balkan utegnilo odpreti pot v Italijo vsem tistim ljudstvom, katerih teritorij bi prečkal (*[...] viam tot nationibus in Italiam aperiret*, Livij, 43, 1, 9).⁴² Nekaj let prej je makedonski kralj Filip V. (umrl 179 pr. Kr.) razmišljal o napadu na Italijo ob pomoči barbarov, naseljenih ob Donavi (Livij, 39, 35, 4). Omenjeni so bili Bastarni (prim. 40, 57, 6–7; Justin [Pomp. Trog.], *prol.* 32), nikakor pa se ne bi bilo mogoče izogniti Skordiskom, posebno ker je Livij v istem kontekstu zapisal, da vojska, ki hoče v Italijo, ne more prodirati nikjer drugje kot čez ozemlje Skordiskov (40, 57, 7). Filip je imel očitno napačno predstavo o dolžini Ilirika, saj je menil, da bo z vrha gore Hem (*Haemus*, pogorje Balkan) lahko videl Črno morje, Jadran, Donavo in Alpe (Livij, 40, 21, 2), vendar zaradi megle ni videl ničesar.⁴³

Filipa je zavedlo splošno razširjeno ljudsko izročilo, da bi nekje v Iliriji obstajala gora, s katere bi bilo mogoče videti tako Črno morje kot Jadran. Podoben opis je ohranjen pri Psevdoaristotelu v njegovih *Nenavadnih zgodbah* (*De mirabilibus auscultationibus*) in pri Eratostenu. Eratostena je kritiziral Strabon, ki je poudaril, da so to napačna

izročila in ljudska vera (7, 5, 9 C 317).⁴⁴ Psevdoaristotel ni omenjal gore Hem, ampak neko drugo goro, ki se je imenovala Delfij (*Delphium*, Velika in Mala Kapela, Velebit?), nekje v zaledju severnega Jadrana, med deželo Mentorov (*Mentores*) in Istrov (c. 104 [839b]). Mentori so bili po vsej verjetnosti zgodnji prebivalci liburnijske obale, pozneje del Liburnov, kar sklepamo po tem, da Psevdoskilak omenja otoke Mentoride v Liburniji, ki bi jih lahko enačili z Rabom in Pagom (c. 21).⁴⁵

Še v 2. stoletju pr. Kr. je veljalo napačno prepričanje, da so razdalje čez Balkan krajše in dežele lažje prehodne. Tudi Polibij je trdil, da je z gore Hem mogoče videti obe morji, in podobnega mnenja je bil tudi Pomponij Mela (*Pomponius Mela*; 2, 2, 17–18: *e quis Haemos in tantum altitudinis abit, ut Euxinum et Hadrian ex summo vertice ostendat*). Polibija je kritiziral Strabon, ki piše (7, 5, 1 C 313): *Blizu Ponskega morja je gora Hem, ki sodi med največje in najvišje gore v tem delu sveta in ki deli Trakijo skoraj po sredi na dva dela. (Polibij trdi, da je s te gore mogoče videti obe morji,⁴⁶ vendar to ni res, saj je razdalja do Jadranskega morja velika, na poti pa je cela vrsta preprek, ki preprečujejo razgled).*⁴⁷

Perzej je nasledil očetove načrte, da bi napadel Rimljane čez Ilirijo ob pomoči Bastarnov; ti naj bi prodirali čez deželo Skordiskov, ki jo Plutarh imenuje "Spodnja Galatija".⁴⁸ O Perzejevem načrtu je senat obvestil Evmenes iz Pergamona (Livij, 42, 11, 2 ss.; 42, 11, 4: *Bastarnarum gentem excitam sedibus suis, quorum auxiliis fretus in Italiam transiret*; prim. Livij, 40, 5, 9–10; 44, 26, 2, in Plutarh, *Aemil. Paul.* 9, 7). Očitno je, da Panonci takrat na Balkanu še niso bili pomemben faktor, saj jih v zvezi s temi načrti nihče ne omenja. Še bolj zgodaj je napad na Italijo čez Ilirik načrtoval Antioh iz Sirije; Hanibal, ki se je leta 192 pr. Kr. zatekel na njegov dvor, mu je svetoval, naj pridobi za vojno Filipa V., da bosta skupaj vpadla v Italijo (Livij, 34, 60; Apijan, *Syr.* 7; Justin, 31, 3, 5–10).⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Prim. Roller 2018, 377.

⁴⁵ Wilkes 1969, 7; Zaninović 1982, 44; glej tudi Vattuone 2000, 17–22.

⁴⁶ Polyb. 24. 4 (iz Strabona).

⁴⁷ Roller 2018, 368–369.

⁴⁸ Papazoglu 1978, 281–282.

⁴⁹ Prim. Patsch 1932, 32–33; Christ 2003, 146–147; 193.

⁴¹ Alföldy 1974, 35–38; Hofeneder 2018, 37–43; 272–312, ki je kritično komentiral vso relevantno literaturo.

⁴² Šašel Kos 2014; glej za vse takšne poskuse tudi Löfl 2011, 555.

⁴³ Jaeger 2011.

SKLEP

Mitradatov načrt o napadu Italije v virih, ki sem jih komentirala, ni sporočen enotno. Strabon omenja vojaško odpravo do Jadrana, ki jo je Mitradat načrtoval verjetno ok. leta 110 pr. Kr.; ta pohod proti barbarom, ki so živeli na območju Jadrana, naj bi bil priprava na vojno proti rimski državi. Ko jo je Mitradat načrtoval, je bil Jadran očitno eden njegovih ciljev. Apijan omenja, da sta leta 75 pr. Kr. Sertorij in Mitradat razmišljala o napadu na Italijo hkrati z zahoda in vzhoda. Kot piše Plutarh, so Sertorija primerjali s Hanibalom, Mitradata pa s Pirom. Na vrhuncu svojega vladanja bi bil Mitradat nedvomno zmožen napasti Italijo čez teritorij Skordiskov in Panonijo, prečkati prelaz Okro in vpasti v severno Italijo na območju severnega Jadrana.

Invazije Italije pa, ki jo je načrtoval malo pred svojo smrtjo, takrat ne bi mogel več uresničiti. Omenja jo več grških in rimskih piscev, vendar ne enotno, saj se njihovi opisi v več podrobnostih

razlikujejo. Apijan opisuje pohod čez Trakijo in Makedonijo v Panonijo in čez Alpe v Italijo. Na drugem mestu v svoji *Zgodovini Mitradata VI.* omenja le Kelte in Italijo. Plutarh omenja Skitijo, Peonijo (= Panonijo) in Italijo, Kasij Dion pa Donavo, Skitijo in Italijo. Florova verzija se od omenjenih razlikuje, a je očitno napačna: omenja invazijo v Italijo čez Trakijo, Makedonijo in Grčijo. Nedoslednosti potrjujejo nejasnost Mitradatovega načrta, ki je bil omejen le na govorice, saj ga kralj ni nameraval uresničiti. Florus je namreč poudaril, da je Mitradat, ki ni želel priznati popolnega poraza, razmišljal o vpadu v Italijo, vendar le na teoretični ravni.

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