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

Ilirik, Jadran in Italija v načrtih Mitradata VI. Evpatorja

Marjeta ŠAŠEL KOS

Izvleček


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

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.


3 Broughton 1952, 61; 64; 77.

4 Madsen 2009; Id. 2014.
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 Crimian kingdom, which he reached in 65 BC. He occupied Panticapaeum and stationed some of his army at Phanagoria, 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 Bosporus. 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.
\(^10\) 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. 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. 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. 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, 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.

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. 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).

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. 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. 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

---

11 Geyer 1935; Roller 2018, 362.
12 Macrobius 10.
16 ὁ δὲ Μιθριδάτης ἐς τὴν Μαιῶτιν ἐμβαλὼν, ὡς εἰσὶ πολλοὶ δυνάσται, πάντων αὐτῶν κατὰ κλέος ἐργῶν τε καὶ ἄρχης καὶ δυνάμεως ἐπὶ οἱ παροῦσαι διηλθόντος δεχόμενον τε καὶ παραπεμπόντων καὶ δώρα πολλὰ φερόντων καὶ κομιζομένων ἑτέρα, ὁ δὲ καὶ συμμαχίας αὐτοῖς ἔδωκεν, ἐπινοοῦ ἑτέρα καὶ δωρεάν, διὰ τὴν Μαιῶτιν ἐμβαλὼν. 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.
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.\(^{19}\)

\[\text{Fig. 2: Possible variants of Mithradates’ planned route across the Balkans to Italy.}
\]

\[\text{Sl. 2: Možne variante načrtovane Mitradatove poti čez Balkan v Italijo.}\]

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.

\[^{19}\] Ibid., 109. 520–521. Translated by Horace White (The Loeb Classical Library). See also Plutarch (Pomp., 41. 2), Strabo (7. 4. 3 C 309), and Cassius Dio (37. 11). On Florus (1. 40. 25), see below.


\[^{21}\] Božič 1991; Dizdar 2001; Guštin 2011.


\[^{23}\] 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?

Mithridates 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): Mithridates [...] 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, Mithridates 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 Mithridates, 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 Mithridates’ plan to invade Italy from the Danube and Scythia (37. 11. 1–2: ... πρὸς τὸν Ἰστρόν 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 Mithridates’ plan to invade Italy from the Danube and Scythia (37. 11. 1–2: ... πρὸς τὸν Ἰστρόν 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 Mithridates’ plan to invade Italy from the Danube and Scythia (37. 11. 1–2: ... πρὸς τὸν Ἰστρόν 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 Mithridates’ plan to invade Italy from the Danube and Scythia (37. 11. 1–2: ... πρὸς τὸν Ἰστρόν 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 Mithridates’ plan to invade Italy from the Danube and Scythia (37. 11. 1–2: ... πρὸς τὸν Ἰστρόν Σκυθῶν καὶ Παιόνων στρατὸν ἐλαύνειν ἐπὶ τὴν Ἰταλίαν).

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; Mithridates supposedly considered bridging the Bosphorus. 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 Mithridates; 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 Bosphorus 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 Italian 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”.

To advance through Macedonia and Greece would imply proceeding along the via Egnatia. In this case, Mithridates 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 Mithridates’ 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 Mithridates’ plan was never carried out, but the question is, whether it would have been possible shortly before his end. Since all other authors refer to Mithridates’ 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.

24 See also Justin, who mentions embassies sent by Mithridates 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.


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 possible 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 Papazoglou only referred to Mithradates’ plan in passing, but she never regarded it as impossible, and neither did Gajdukević.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. Ladišlas 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., Papazoglou 1978, 312–313; Gajdukević 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.
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.
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, and there are others in the vast literature about Mithradates VI Eupator, divergent in details.

**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. 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). 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.

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). 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).

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, 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).*

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 Alflödy 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.
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. 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 Ocra 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.

---

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

**Abbreviations / Kratice**

CAH = Cambridge Ancient History  
*RE* = Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll-Mittelhaus-Ziegler, Realencyclopaedie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft


ARRAYÁS MORALES, I. 2016, Conectividad mediterránea en el marco del conflicto mitridático. – *Klio* 98/1, 158–183.


LAFLI, E., S. PATACI 2016, Archaeology in the southern Black Sea area during the Mithridatic era. – In / V: M. Giannopoulou, Kh. Kallini (eds. / ur.), Ἠχάδιν Ι. Τιμητικός τόμος για τη Στέλλα Δρούγου (Εκδοση του Ι. Κατερίνης Διαδρομής), 164–206, Hildesheim.


MCGING, B. C. 1986, The Foreign Policy of Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus. – Mnemosyne Suppl. 89.


ROLLER, D. W. 2018, A Historical and Topographical Guide to the Geography of Strabo. – Cambridge etc.


ŠAŠEL KOS, M. 2005, Appian and Illyricum. – Situla 43.


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 zbujajočih 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 nekaterih azijskih deželah.

Mitradat je osvojil večino Male Azije in neposredno ali posredno povzročil tri velike vojne z Rimljani. 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 podvrgel provinco Azijo, je menil, da bo le začasno pod njegovo oblastjo, zato je po deželi na vse načine ropal, deloma zaradi pomikanja 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 Mureno (L. Licinius Murena), ki je bil odgovoren za drugo vojno proti Mitradatu (ok. 83–81); ta je bila manj pomembna in večinoma neuspešna. 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 “idealen rimski sovražnik”.

Tretjo in zadnjo vojno proti Mitradatu je leta 76 ali
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 Kyzika (Cyzicus) v južni Propontidi (Miziji); rimski general Lucij Licinij Lukul (L. Licinius Lucullus), ki je mesto rešil obleganja, je Mitradata prisilit, da je poiskal zatočišče pri svojem zetu, armenskem kralju Tigranu II. Mitradat je neuspešno iskal pomoč pri Parthih in se 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 podvrgel Tibra. Mitradat je prezimil v Dioskuriadi (Dioscurias) in nekaj vojske namestil v Fanagoreji (Phanagorea) ter tudi v bosporških pristaniščih - ter tudi v bosporskih pristaniščih.\(^{7}\) App., 5 v Kolhidi, nato pa se je umikal čez Kavkaz 9. Tyregetae (Parthenopolis) - Bojinih (Bog), mest ter naselja ob obeh rekah kot tudi ljudstva v notranjosti, sarmatske Jazige in razna germanska ljudstva, npr. Bastarne in Tiregete (Tiregetae) in najbolj severe med njimi, Roksolane, ki so so bojevali z generali Mitradata, v križi 7, 3, 17 C 306.

V naslednjem razdelku Strabon omenja mrtve dežele ob jezeru Meotidi (Maecotis, zdaj Azovsko morje), kjer ljudje niso gojili oslov, ker so te živali občutljive za mraz, konj so majhni, govedo pa nima rogov. Pozimi dobi bo rabe tako, da jih izkopljejo iz led, ko voda v bronastih vrčih zmrzne, ti počajo. V četrtom poglavju je Strabon opisal Tavriški vzhod, ki je bil območje, v katerem je Mitradat naj bi načrtoval veliko invazijo v Italijo čez Ilirik. Vendar je njegov sin Farnaces (Pharnaces) organiziral upor proti njemu in 63 pr. Kr. si je Mitradat sam vzel življenje, čeprav je morda izključno, da ga niso ubili.\(^{8}\)

Apian iz Aleksandrije je glavni vir, ki omenja načrt Mitradata VI. Evpatorja, da bi napadel Italijo čez Ilirik. To vpad, o katerem je kralj razmišljal proti koncu svojega življenja, omenja tudi Plutarh, Kasijs 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.

---

\(^{5}\) 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.

---

MITRADATOV NAČRTOVANA VOJAŠKA ODPRAVA NA JADRAN V STRABONOVI GEOGRAFIJI

Strabon omenja pontskega kralja v sedmi knjigi svoje Geografije, v kateri opisuje severno Evrope in Germanijo ter Ilirijje, Tesalijo, Makedonijo in pontske dežele vse do reke Tanais.\(^{10}\) Koncu tretjega poglavja je navedel dežele ob rekah Borysthenes (Dneper) in Hypanis (Bog), mesta in naselja ob obeh rekah kot tudi ljudstva v notranjosti, sarmatske Jazige in razna germanska ljudstva, npr. Bastarne in Tiregete (Tiregetae) in najbolj severe med njimi, Roksolane, ki so so bojevali z generali Mitradata, v križi 7, 3, 17 C 306.

V četrtem poglavju je Strabon opisal Tavriški vzhod, ki je bil območje, v katerem je Mitradat naj bi načrtoval veliko invazijo v Italijo čez Ilirik. Vendar je njegov sin Farnaces (Pharnaces) organiziral upor proti njemu in 63 pr. Kr. si je Mitradat sam vzel življenje, čeprav je morda izključno, da ga niso ubili.\(^{8}\)

Apian iz Aleksandrije je glavni vir, ki omenja načrt Mitradata VI. Evpatorja, da bi napadel Italijo čez Ilirik. To vpad, o katerem je kralj razmišljal proti koncu svojega življenja, omenja tudi Plutarh, Kasijs 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.

---

\(^{10}\) 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 prodir vse do Jadranja, a o tem ni znanega nič več kot to. Zgodnjo vojaško odpravo, ki naj bi mitradatovo vojsko pripeljalo do Jadranja, 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 MITRADATOVOM SMRTJO:
PODATKI PRI APIJANU

Apjian je za svojo pripoved po vsej verjetnosti uporablil 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., Apjian pravi (102, 472–473):


"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 Rimljancov. Slišal je namreč, da je bila to Hanibalova politika, ko so se Rimljani z njim bojevali v Hispanski, in da jim je na ta način povzročil silno grozo. Vendar je Apjian tudi dodal, da Mitradatovi vojaki niso zaupali temu držnemu 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 držnem načrtu, ali so ga pripravili za ta pot čez Balkan. V prej citiranem odlomku je Apjian ponovno omenil Mitradatov načrt, da bi napadel Italijo čez deželo Keltov. Kelti so bili prvi, ki so zapirali pot do Panoncev, in Italije (Mithrid. 109, 518–519):"


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

JE BI TА NAČRT LE FANTAZIJA ALI NAMERNO ZAVAJAJOČA INFORMACIJA?

Mitrdat 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 Fanij (Lucius Fannius), posreduvala pri kralju, naj se poveže s Sertorijem (Mithr. 68): Mitrdat je poslal k Sertoriju odposlanca. Sertoriji ju je predstavil v svojem senatu in se pohvalil, da njegov sloves sega vse do zahoda kot z zahodna. Plutarh piše, da so Sertorija primerjali s Hanibalom, Mitradata pa s Pirom (Sert. 23). Vendar pa tega dvojneg napada nista nikdar niti poskusila izvesti.

Pri Apijanu opisan Mitratov načrt o vpadi v Italijo, o katerem je kralj razmišljal malo pred smrtjo, omenjajo tudi Plutarh, Kasijs Dion in Flor. Plutarh ga omenja, ko piše o Pompejevem pohodu v Petro, glavno mesto abartskih Nabatejev, kjer je rimski general želel dobiti od nabatejskega kralja osebno zagotovilo, da se bo držal ukazov rimsko vojske. Pompejevi privrženci so se njegovi stikov s Sertorijem leta 75 pr. Kr. Apijan posredovala pri kralju, naj se poveže s Sertorijem. Sertorija v svojem senatu je predstavil v svojem viru, ki jih je našel v svojem viru, jasno, da je Flor v svojem opisu razumeti dežele severno od Makedonije, temveč pa v deželi, ki jo je našel v svojem viru, kjer je rimski general želel dobiti od nabatejskega kralja osebno zagotovilo, da se bo držal ukazov rimsko vojske. Pompejevi privrženci so se njegovi stikov s Sertorijem leta 75 pr. Kr. Apijan posredovala pri kralju, naj se poveže s Sertorijem.

Flor pa omenja invazijo čez Trakijo, Makedonijo in Grčijo, običajno pot, po kateri so se rimske vojske vračale z vzhoda v Italijo, ali pa obratno, potovale iz Italije na vzhod. Poudaril je, da je bil to le načrt; Mitrdat 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 Mitrdat 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 vpadl 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. 24

Prevod stavka, ki govoriti o načrtovanem napadu na Italijo ([...] junger Bosporon, inde per Thracian Macedionamque et Graeciam translire, sic Italiam nec opinatus invadere – tantum cogitavit), se v francoski izdaji Collection Budé glasi: “... si je zamisil veličasten načrt, da bi premostil Bospor, odtel 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 Mitrdat na južnem Jadrani potreboval mornarico; v času malo pred njegovim koncem ne bi bilo mogoče ne eno ne drugo. Glede na to, da vsi drugi avtorji omenjajo Mitratov načrtovan napad po vzhod, Flor, ki je 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 Mitratov načrt ni bil nikdar urešnjen, vprašanje pa je, ali bi sploh bil urešnjen. Theodor Mommsen je bil mnenja, da ne: “Diese beabsichtigte Invasion der Orientalen in Italien war einfach lächerlich und nichts als die Ausgeburt

23 Strabon 7, 3, 17 C 306; Plinij (N. r. 4, 100) in Tacit (Germ. 46, 1).
einer ohnmächtig phantasierenden Verzweiflung."\textsuperscript{27} Théodore Reinach pa je načrt označil kot sanje mladega Mitradata, ki jih v drugačnih okoliščinah ne bi bilo nemogoče uresničiti.\textsuperscript{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."\textsuperscript{29} Fanula Papazoglu Mitradatovega načrta ni posebej komentirala, ampak le omenjala, vendar vedno kot odpravo, ki bi jo bila izvedljiva, enako tudi Gajdukevič.\textsuperscript{30} Menjii se ne izključujo povsem, jasno pa je, da malo pred svojo smrtjo, ko je Mitradat (ponovno) načrtoval vpad v Italijo, tega gotovo ne bi mogel uresničiti. Ladišlas Havas je smatral Mitradatov načrt za realističen in strateško daljnoviden projekt, povezan z Katalinovo zarojo: Mitradatu naj bi poleg zarodkov kot zavezniki pomagali prijateljski Kelti, ki naj bi bili precej oddaljeni Alobrogi.\textsuperscript{31} Vendar svoje hipoteze ni argumentiral prepršljivo 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 oddaljeni Alobrogi.


Holger Sonnabend je izčrpno komentiral Mitradatove poslednje načrte (ne pa podobnih iz zgodnješega 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.\textsuperscript{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 legendo\textsuperscript{34} 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, ali pa Pompejevim političnim nasprotnikom, da bi uničili njegov ugled, češ da leta 66 pr. Kr. Kr. ni mogel premagati Mitradata.\textsuperscript{35} To se zdi manj verjetno, kot tudi teza, da je Mitradatov zadnji načrt treba razložiti kot literarni topos.\textsuperscript{36} To slednjo razlago je Sonnabend obravnaval kot tretjo tezo, sam pa je predlagal četrtlo. Mitradat naj bi sam razširil govorice o vpadu v Italijo (česar ni nikdar izmerival izvesti), da bi poudaril pomembnost svoje politične pozicije in morda preprčal Pompeja, da bi z njim nadaljeval pogajanja. Depanjo je veliko bolj verjetno, da si invazije Italije niso izmislili Mitradatovi sovražniki, temveč si jo je samuščil 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,\textsuperscript{37} v občini literaturi o Mitradatu VI. Evpatorju pa najdemo še druge, ki se v podrobnosti nekoliko razlikujejo.\textsuperscript{40}
PREDHODNI POSKUSI POHODOV ČEZ ILIRIK


Perzej je nasledil očetove načrte, da bi napadel Rimljane čez Ilirijo ob pomoči Barbarov, naseljenih na Donavu (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 druge, 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, Jadransko morje, Donavo in Alpe (Livij, 40, 21, 2), vendar zaradi megle ni videl ničesar.43 Filipa je zavedlo splošno razširjeno ljudsko izročila in ljudska vera (7, 5, 9 C 317).44 Psevdaristotel ni omenjal gore Hem, ampak neko drugo goro, ki se je imenovala Delfij (Delphium, Velika in Mala Kapela, Velebit?), nekje v zaledju severnega Jadranja, med deželo Mentorov (Mentores) in Istrov (c. 104 [839b]). Mentori so bili po vsej verjetnosti segodnji prebivalci liburnijske obale, pozneje del Liburnov, kar sklepamo po tem, da Psevoskilak omenja toko Mentoride v Liburniji, ki bi jih lahko enačili z Rabom in Pagom (c. 21).45


Perzej je nasledil očetove načrte, da bi napadel Rimljane čez Ilirijo ob pomoči Barnarvov; 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

42 Šašel Kos 2014; glej za vse takšne poskuse tudi Löffl 2011, 555.
43 Jaeger 2011.
46 Polyb. 24. 4 (iz Strabona).
47 Roller 2018, 368–369.
49 Prim. Patsch 1932, 32–33; Christ 2003, 146–147; 193.
SKLEP


Marjeta Šašel Kos
Znanstvenoraziskovalni center SAZU
Inštitut za arheologijo
Novi trg 2
SI-1000 Ljubljana
mkos@zrc-sazu.si