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Lina Diers*

*Department of Historical Archaeology
Austrian Archaeological Institute – Austrian Academy of Sciences
Vienna, Austria*

Reading the Subtext – Site Location and Settlement Systems in Roman Moesia

Abstract: This paper argues that there is a political, social, economic or even historical substratum to the location and development of settlement that is significant to the diachronic understanding of settlement systems but may easily get neglected in favour of discussions of settlement hierarchy or single events in settlement history. Hence, it postulates that the factors for initial site location may not be the same as the factors for further settlement development, and that said substratum should be explored to fully grasp the reasons behind settlement dynamics. In doing so, it focuses on two categories of sites – so-called bridge-sites at significant geographical locations and legionary garrisons turned colonies. Settlements used as examples are Horreum Margi, Naissus, Scupi, and Ratiaria in Moesia Superior.

Keywords: Moesia (Superior), site location, settlement development, settlement systems, Scupi, Ratiaria, Naissus, Horreum Margi.

Introduction

With ‘why’ undoubtedly being the most striking question to be asked in Archaeology, ‘why there’ readily presents itself as the obvious equivalent in archaeological settlement studies. Hence, studies on settlement development, settlement systems, or urbanism immanently are studies on site location and locational factors, too. The pivot, here, is how to approach such studies on a theoretical or methodological level, and particularly in Roman Archaeology. Inquiries into the development of settlements and settlement systems are per se inquiries into pattern. The search for pattern is a *conditio sine qua non* in Humanities, and there is nothing wrong with applying it, as long as the backbones of thought that lie at the – to remain anatomical – heart of a study’s starting point are properly acknowledged. In Roman Archaeology settlement studies these backbones are often rather structuralist; overemphasising the principle of pattern in search

* lina.diers@oeaw.ac.at

for overarching, supra-regional or even global development characteristics in settlement types, urban – rural divides, urbanisation, monumentalisation, or settlement hierarchy. A certain horror vacui can easily take hold of the process of mapping: Territories need to be administered, settlements need to be connected, the location of settlements needs to be assigned a mathematical value in order to explain conurbation or empty spaces. The counterpart for this is a focus on the local, i.e. a zooming in on a certain settlement and its development. Understanding a site in its surroundings, emphasising the significance of the actual living environment of inhabitants, and recognising the impact of the landscape a site is embedded in are desirable objectives that have – rightfully so – taken their place in current settlement studies in Roman Archaeology.

For the topic of this paper, I endorse a combination of both described *modi*, making the approach to settlement development both more organic and holistic – if those two are not mutually exclusive. The goal is to stop structuralising pattern while still recognising it. By emphasising the local, yet not limiting the gaze to it, an *as-is* approach to the characterisation of the development of both settlement and settlement systems is strived for. Understanding the development of a single site requires zooming in, understanding the development of systems of sites requires zooming out. The famous bigger picture, though, is comprised of both: recognising pattern and system is necessary to also accentuate the environment of the single site and the local, yet pattern and system will not be comprehensible without a deeper enquiry into the specifics of single sites. For this condition, I use the terms of ‘subtext’ or ‘substratum’ to refer to determinatives for site location within the bigger picture that are imperative to identify in order to fully grasp both settlements and systems.

Accordingly, this discussion sets out to do two things. First, it accentuates subtexts or substrata of site location¹ to understand settlement characteristics, using the settlements of *Horreum Margi* and *Naissus* as examples by coining the term of ‘bridge-sites’ for their characterisation. Secondly, it argues that there often is a difference between factors for initial site emergence and subsequent settlement development, which is significant to the understanding of a settlement’s nature but will easily be overlooked in favour of – for example – single events in settlement history. Here, the colonies of *Scupi* and *Ratiaria* serve as examples. This selection of reference sites displays a clear focus on *Moesia Su-*

¹ Obvious subtexts or substrata for site location can be pre-Roman Iron Age settlement systems, pre-existing roads, routes of penetration in the course of military conquest, the existence of raw materials or resources, geographical aspects like river crossings, preceding or contemporaneous historical developments or the like. Out of this set of aspects, only a few are discussed here, mainly those of traffic/transport axes with a specific focus on military conquest.

terior; a short concluding, paralleling view over to Moesia Inferior is, however, conducted, too.

Adjusting the Scale

Before initiating the actual discussion, some remarks on the adjustment of the data set are in order. This relies on the premise that any study benefits from the application of a suitable approach that is designed to nuance instead of filter: in the case of settlement studies, this means choosing a scale for enquiries that makes sites appear on the map. August Lösch provided a starting point for this approach when stating that although location and locational conditions were geographical facts, what was made of these conditions in a specific regional and/or chronological context was open to be guided by different development factors.² This statement inherits the premise that irrespective of how we label sites and settlements, their development still needs to be explained. Thus, it is purely logic to focus on development factors to characterise sites and settlements.³ In doing so, we should park the idea that mapping the settlement landscape of Moesia with municipia and coloniae provides a realistic picture and conclusive research framework. Status granting, urbanisation, and monumentalisation are crucial categories, but if we focus on them as conditions for the identification of major settlements, hierarchical centrality, and hubs of urbanism – especially in a comparatively little urbanised area of the Roman Empire – otherwise particularly significant settlements are excluded, which potentially impairs the process of painting the bigger picture of settlement systems-characteristics. Moreover, it potentially negates the background and substratum of settlement development in a certain region as guided by economic and social aspects and depending on a dynamic mixture of historical events, imperial agency, and political strategy on a global scale that can all affect said region.

When now zooming in on the settlement landscape of Moesia, two, very much intertwined aspects are vital to note: the chronological discrepancy between settlement emergence/development and status granting, and the innate reasons for status granting in Moesia. Traditionally, the Dacian wars and Trajan's foundations in the whole Balkan region are viewed as a neuralgic point for Moesian settlement, but the heyday of urban development is usually set in the reigns of Marcus Aurelius and Caracalla – which derives from the fact that a

² A. Lösch, *The economics of location* (Newhaven, 1954), 5.

³ For this approach in further detail, see in L. Diers, *Roman urbanism in Moesia Superior and Inferior. Studies on the formation, development, and contextualisation of urban settlement and space during the Principate (1st–3rd century AD)* (Dissertation University of Vienna, 2019), 23–31.

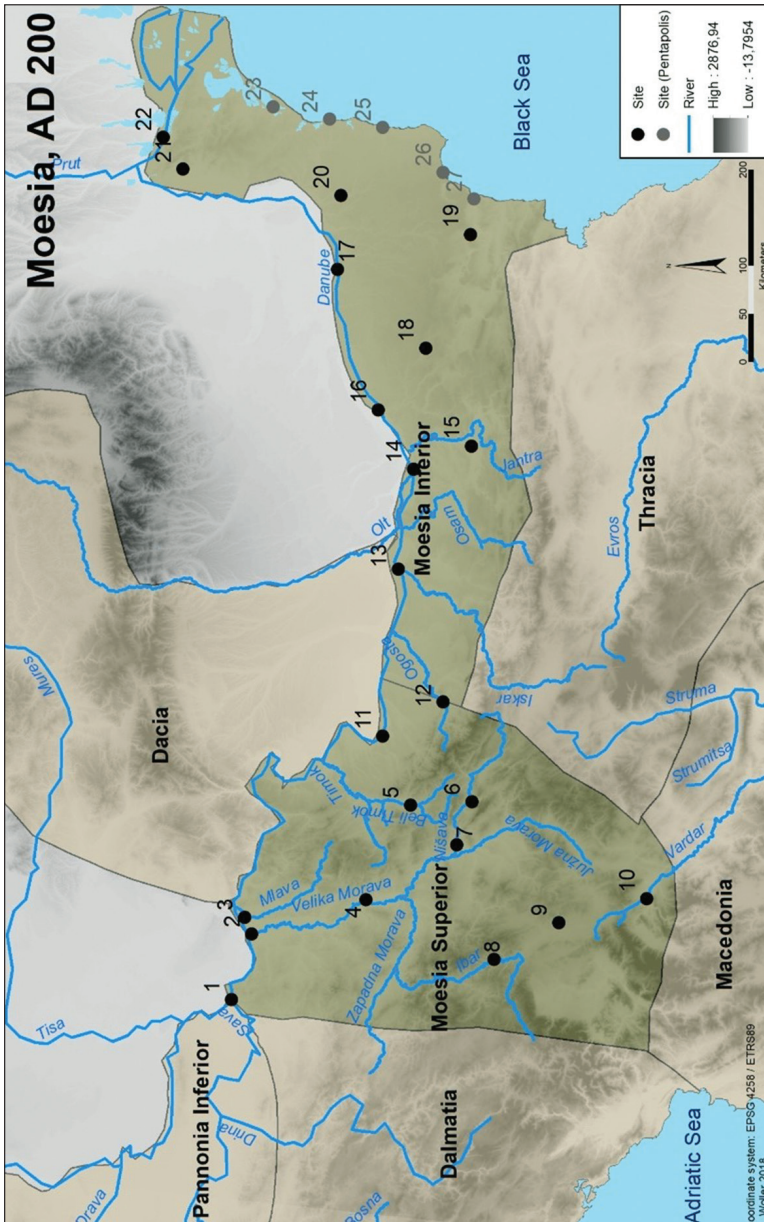


Fig. 1: The settlement landscape of Moesia (Superior and Inferior) around AD 200 (1. Singidunum, 2. Margum, 3. Viminacium, 4. Horreum Margi, 5. Timacum Minus, 6. Remesiana, 7. Naissus, 8. Municipium Dardanorum/DD, 9. Ulpiana, 10. Scupi, 11. Ratiaria, 12. Montana, 13. Oescus, 14. Novae, 15. Nicopolis ad Istrum, 16. Sexaginta Prista, 17. Durostorum, 18. Abritus, 19. Marcianopolis, 20. Tropaeum Traiani, 21. Troesmis, 22. Noviodunum, 23. Histria, 24. Tomis, 25. Kallatis, 26. Dionysopolis, 27. Odessos). © Diers, Woller

total of 7 out of 12 municipia of Moesia received their legal rights from one or the other emperor.⁴ When taking a closer look to single settlement chronologies and stepping away from the paradigm of official settlement status, however, it becomes clear that this can be misleading. In fact, the exoskeleton of settlement and settlement networks between the Adriatic and the Black Sea and Macedonia and the Danube had already existed by the time of the separation of Moesia into Moesia Superior and Inferior at the end of the first century AD; and by the time of Trajan – and to a part Hadrian – the settlement landscape of Moesia had fully developed.⁵ Searching for reasons for this chronological discrepancy in the way Moesian settlement has often been approached to date, the reasons for official status granting to a settlement need to be explored. In Moesia – as may also be the case in other parts of the Roman Empire, where it is likewise worth enquiring – status granting had very specific reasons. Those reasons did not necessarily have anything to do with the actual settlement in question, but could derive from the need of widespread military recruitment in so far officially unadministered territories⁶, the necessity of local administration, manpower and financial equity in the organisation of resources⁷, filling of economic voids due to changing site circumstances⁸, or fostering territorial consolidation in sending imperial messages, attracting inhabitants, and allowing for the solidification of inland production, transport, and – thus – supply systems.⁹ Given the fact that status granting did not only come with benefits but also with obligations like maintaining the imperial cult or financing public buildings, we can not only un-

⁴ Issues in deciding on either Marcus Aurelius or Caracalla are rooted in the same imperial names of both emperors. For an overview of either Marcus Aurelius or Caracalla granting municipal rights: Diers, *Urbanism*, 565–566.

⁵ Visual comparison in settlement maps according to legal status granting and actual development can be found in Diers, *Urbanism*, 561–563.

⁶ As will be focussed on in the course of this paper with the examples chosen for the discussion.

⁷ As is the case with the mining settlements of Ulpiana and Municipium DD, see in Diers, *Urbanism*, 442–425, 38–444.

⁸ As, for example, in the case of Troesmis, where the municipium was installed in AD 177–180 using the same space as the former military camp after legio V Macedonica had left in AD 167/168: C.-G. Alexandrescu, C. Gugl & B. Kainrath, *Troesmis I. Die Forschungen 2010–2014* (Cluj-Napoca, 2016), 195; A. Waldner, C. Gugl, “Der Oberflächensurvey in Troesmis (RO) 2012–2013: Keramikfunde und Verbreitungsbilder”. In *Akten des 15. Österreichischen Archäologentages in Innsbruck 27. Februar – 1. März 2014*. *Ikarus* 9, eds. G. Grabherr, B. Kainrath, (Innsbruck, 2016), 438; Diers, *Urbanism*, 342–347.

⁹ This particularly applies to the imperial foundations and colonial status grantings of Trajan, e.g. in Ratiaria, Oescus, Tropaeum Traiani, Nicopolis ad Istrum, and Marcianopolis, see in Diers, *Urbanism*, 204–208, 234–235, 355–358, 478–480.

derstand that settlements at certain times during their existence and in their local/regional contexts did not give respective emperors any reason to grant status, but that status granting, on the other hand, could also entail rapid urbanisation and monumental planning and growth.¹⁰ Yet, this cannot be presupposed, but needs to be highlighted for each single settlement.

Hence, irrespective of the settlement or topic of enquiry at hand, we always have to explain why a site became a site in the first place or attracted people to agglomerate in a successive step. Understanding a settlement landscape and the single settlements in them means enquiring what made sites appear on the map, and why and how they developed – or did not develop – from this starting point and as parts of larger systems. An open and organic approach to settlement, again, facilitates understanding the evolution of a site in its local, regional, supra-regional, and global context based on substrata of site emergence and site development factors.

Bridge-Sites

In terminological regard, the 'landscape' of a site or settlement does not necessarily relate to natural conditions and conditioners like rivers, mountains, terrain, soil, water access, or climate only. It can also be understood as a catch-all, as an aggregation of surrounding political, social, and economic characteristics and infrastructure. This is a category independent of time and space, which means that any man-made characteristic of a certain area and/or period of time could have an effect on a landscape and/or settlement in either the same area and period or varying ones. According to this principle, the elements of a landscape that site location and settlement agglomeration oriented on, could be already existing settlements in the same spatial, territorial, or political entity or in neighbouring spatial, territorial, or political entities, natural or political borders, histories or agendas of political control, the presence of resources, existing or emerging economic systems, existing or emerging traffic axes, and the like. Such elements were able to determine where sites were deliberately installed, where sites emerged due to these elements or even in spite of them, or – perhaps most striking – where sites needed to be in order to facilitate the governance of territories, occupation and control, or the development of networks and supply systems. According to the latter aspect, traffic nexuses were clearly logical site emergence factors. In Roman Moesia, several such traffic nexus sites existed. Located throughout the inland of both Moesia Superior and Inferior, they marked significant spots along already existing inter- and supra-regional roads or gradually emerging intra-

¹⁰ As was, for example, most probably the case with Ratiaria, see in the Ratiaria subchapter below.

provincial communication lines. These sites can be addressed as bridge-sites; not in the sense that they were located at river crossings with bridges – which, interestingly, is true for both the examples I will employ here – but in the sense of network bridges following Granovetter.¹¹ Hence, they were interlinked with other sites along the roads and communication lines that spawned them. In this, the underlying substratum to site location and settlement emergence becomes apparent, a substratum that generated a certain centrality for the sites it applied to. This centrality, however, was no hierarchical one. The sites in question were not necessarily significant as settlements, presenting a particular urbanisation rate or monumentalisation. In fact, the opposite is true. As discussed in the following, both Horreum Margi and Naissus, which are used as examples in this section, remained comparatively un-urbanised, small and marginal settlements throughout the Principate. Yet, the whole systems of Moesian conquest, occupation, administration, military supply, and settlement networks would not have been possible to implement and maintain without the existence of these bridge-sites, as building these systems relied on the occupation of the location of pre-existing and developing traffic nexuses, i.e. bridge-sites.

Certain sites might get eliminated from archaeological enquiries into urbanism and settlement because of their lacking ability to check boxes on settlement characterisation scales; yet I argue that they should still be included for their potential in pinpointing the underlying system behind the settlement characterisation to be scaled. Assessing both a settlement's character and the relevance for it to be put on the map does not only rest on the settlement itself but on the aspects and background workings that made it become a settlement to begin with.

Horreum Margi

The site of Horreum Margi lay in the inland of Moesia directly at the confluence of the small Ravanica river with the Velika Morava, one of the most important fluvial communication lines throughout the province's entire history. When following the course of the Morava to the north, Horreum Margi was also directly

¹¹ M. Granovetter, "The strength of weak ties", *American Journal of Sociology* 78/6 (1973), 1364 stating that a bridge is a line in a network that provides the only path between two points, in the sense that a bridge between A and B provides the only connection between any contact of A and any contact of B. This means that bridges are important for diffusion, but they are not strong but weak ties in Granovetter's terminology; and weak ties are what ultimately holds up systems. Following C. H. Cooley, *The theory of transportation. Publications of the American Economic Association* 9,3 (Dissertation University of Michigan, 1894), 314–315, 322, one could also refer to these bridges as breaks (as in track switches) in the transportation network.

connected to the Danube Limes in the area of the only conurbation zone of Moesia between Singidunum, Margum, and Viminacium.¹² Apart from the Timok valley, the Morava valley, thus, provided the only accessible and direct connection from Macedonia and Dardania to the Danube, which would have made it pivotal in the gradual Roman military approach from Macedonia to the Danube and beyond.¹³ Judging by this location and – strikingly – by its name, Horreum Margi is characterised as a supply station and back-up post for the Danube Limes legionary and auxiliary garrisons from as early as the first century AD on.¹⁴

Epigraphic and archaeological data on Horreum Margi are generally scarce. Still, military presence of some sort must be assumed based on the historical and locational relevance of the site alone; and indeed, several hints at the presence of legio VII Claudia vexillations in Horreum Margi exist. A fairly large number of legio VII Claudia soldier and veteran gravestones¹⁵ and an overall ratio of 3:2 of military over civilian inscriptions from the site and its direct surroundings¹⁶ attest to a certain military influence over Horreum Margi. Various finds of legio VII Claudia bricks and tiles are also striking, and although military building material is not necessarily solid proof for the actual presence of a respective unit, it surely provides some information about influential spheres. Also, archaeological evidence further solidifies the presence of a military unit in Horreum Margi: In the main identified settlement area on the left bank of the Ravanica, several phases of a military architecture were excavated. The identification of the south-western and north-eastern corner towers of a fortification as well as wattle-and-daub structures and a horreum inside the fortification walls¹⁷ allows for the estimation of the military camp's size of approximately 400 x 350

¹² Diers, *Urbanism*, 570.

¹³ As e.g. suggested already in P. Petrović, *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure IV. Naissus – Remesiana – Horreum Margi* (Belgrade, 1979), 20, 58.

¹⁴ On the significance of storage-related place names in general and Horreum Margi specifically: G. Rickman, *Roman granaries and store buildings* (Cambridge, 1971), 316–322. On Horreum Margi's character as a supply post: Petrović *Inscriptions*, 58–59; M. Mirković, *Moesia Superior. Eine Provinz an der mittleren Donau* (Mainz am Rhein, 2007), 60.

¹⁵ E.g. IMS IV 83–87, compare to mentions in M. Valtrović, “Rimski natpisi”, *Starinar* 7 (1890), 52–56; S. Ferjančić, *Naseljavanje legijskih veterana u balkanskim provincijama I–III vek n.e.* (Belgrade, 2002), 292.

¹⁶ A. Mócsy, *Gesellschaft und Romanisation in der römischen Provinz Moesia Superior* (Budapest, 1970), 167, although it must be stated that the overall little number of around 20 inscriptions is no solid base for estimates on ratios. For the inscriptions in general see Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 109–116 (IMS IV Nos. 82–100).

¹⁷ D. Piletić, “Rimski castrum Čuprija – Horreum Margi”, *Vesnik vojnog muzeja* 15 (1969), 15–16; Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 58–59; Petković & Tapavički-Ilić, 2011, 252.

m, which matches a smaller legionary camp.¹⁸ Although the camp appears to only date from the third century AD onwards¹⁹, an earlier military architecture should have existed – potentially as a smaller wood-and-earth structure. At the right bank of the Ravanica opposite the camp, several sections of walls with varying orientation and partial overlap, which were identified already in the 19th century in the basements of modern dwellings of the town of Čuprija²⁰, can then be interpreted as parts of a civilian settlement relating to the military presence.²¹ The spread of the settlement remains as well as the fact that at the north-eastern corner tower of the military camp, the third century AD walls are directly set into a layer with late first century AD finds and material of pre-Roman Iron Age tradition²² shows that neither the camp site nor an accompanying settlement of Horreum Margi reached the state of a large-scale settlement of monumental layout or rapid growth throughout the first, second, and even third century AD. Despite this fact, the importance of the site in aspects like traffic and supply becomes apparent in its most significant feature, a bridge crossing the Velika Morava west of its joining with the Ravanica. While it is completely eroded by today, Felix Kanitz identified this bridge as a Roman, Principate-times installation at the end of the 19th century.²³

The site of Horreum Margi is generally listed as one of the municipia of Moesia Superior. Yet, this rests on one inscription only, which was not found

¹⁸ Piletić, 1969, 37; 1971: 963; Mócsy, 1970, 142; S. Petković, M. Tapavički-Ilić. “Römerzeitliche Keramik aus dem nördöstlichen Turm der Römerstadt Horreum Margi”, *Stari-nar* 61 (2011), 254; D. Mladenović, *Urbanism and settlement in the Roman province of Moesia Superior* (Oxford, 2012), 84.

¹⁹ According to M. Vasić, S. Petković, “Rezultati istraživanja višeslojnog nalazišta Horreum Margi – Ravno – Čuprija u 1990. godini”, *Studije i članici* (2010), 9–23, two building phases can be determined; and the earlier dates to the mid-third century AD only. For preliminary reports of the finds: S. Popović, “Antički pokretni nalazi sa lokaliteta Horreum Margi – Čuprija”, *Vesnik vojnog muzeja* 33 (1989), 49–77.

²⁰ F. Kanitz, *Srbija, zemlja i stanovništvo. Od rimskog doba do kraja 19. veka I* (Leipzig, 1904), 227, 229.

²¹ Petković & Tapavički-Ilić, *Keramik*, 253 identifying one of these wall sections as part of a bath.

²² M. Stojić, *Gvozdeno doba u basenu Velike Morave* (Belgrade, 1986), 24, compare to further comments in D. Piletić, “Certains aspects de la continuité laténo-romaine sur les fortifications de la Basse Pannonie et de la Haute Mésie”. In *Actes du VIIe congrès international des sciences préhistoriques et protohistoriques Prag 1966*, ed. J. Filip, (Prag, 1971), 961; M. Tapavički-Ilić, “Dacian ware at Horreum Margi”. In *Late Roman coarse wares, cooking wares and amphorae in the Mediterranean 3,2* ed. S. Menchelli et al., (Oxford, 2010), 979; Vasić & Petković, *Horreum Margi*, 9–23.

²³ Kanitz, *Srbija*, 0229, referred to in M. Garašanin, D. Garašanin, *Arheološka nalazišta u Srbiji* (Belgrade, 1951), 196; Mócsy, *Moesia Superior*, 143; Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 59.

on site, but in Novae in Moesia Inferior, and names *Horreum Margi* with the caption of *'m Moesia Superioris'*²⁴ or potentially even *'mu Moesia Superioris'*.²⁵ As the inscription dates to the time of Alexander Severus, it makes a striking case for the principles that underlie status granting in Moesia. The date allows to speculate that *Horreum Margi* was another of the settlements that received municipal rights under Marcus Aurelius²⁶, again allowing for widespread legionary recruitment in the course of his comprehensive military mobilisation; or under Caracalla, providing an administrative constant at the beginning of the unsettled third century AD.²⁷ According to the currently available archaeological data the presumed granting of municipal rights had no background in urbanisation, rapid growth, or civilian monetary force manifesting in monumentalisation. Hence, it can be understood in the context of its decisive properties only: *Horreum Margi's* extraordinarily relevant location and its role in the consolidation of the province of Moesia (or provinces of Moesia Superior and Inferior) represent the substratum to the understanding of the site's further development.

Naissus

The same principle can be observed for Naissus. The site lay at the most significant and frequented traffic nexus of the central Balkan area: the crossroads of the connection from the Sava-Danube confluence and the Danube section between Singidunum and Viminacium to Scupi and further on into Macedonia via Stobi with the transregional, heavily travelled artery from the Adriatic in general and Lissus specifically to Constantinople via Serdica. Moreover, this crossroads was perfectly embedded between the (Južna) Morava – Moesia's most important fluvial artery – in the west and the Nišava, which connected the Morava traffic further to the east.²⁸ Due to this extraordinary location, Naissus has been

²⁴ CIL III 6224 = CIL III 7591.

²⁵ J. Kolendo, "Études sur les inscriptions de Novae", *Archeologia* 16 (1965), 138 (no. 3).

²⁶ This applies to several other settlements throughout Moesia, namely Troesmis, Noviodunum, and potentially also Margum, Naissus, and Durostorum; see in Diers, *Urbanism* 335, 140–141, 306–307, 335, 468, 474.

²⁷ This is also discussed in Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 58; S. Černač-Ratković, "Burnished pottery from *Horreum Margi*", *RCRF Acta* 42 (2012), 51–52; for an overview see in Diers, *Urbanism*, 450–451.

²⁸ On the characteristics and significance of Naissus' embedment into traffic systems: P. Petrović, *Niš u antičko doba* (Gradina, 1976), 9–18, 167; *Inscriptions*, 19–29; D. Srejšević, *Roman imperial towns and palaces in Serbia* (Belgrade, 1993), 58–59; Mirković, *Moesia Superior*, 58–59; V. P. Petrović, "The roman road Naissus – Lissus: the shortest connection between Rome and the Danubian Limes", *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 12,1 (2008), 31–40.

occupied not only during the Roman Principate, but also in Late Roman, Late Antique, and Ottoman times; and remains to be so as the third-largest city in Serbia – Niš – today. A certain focus on Naissus'/Niš' archaeology and history, however, has always been laid on the Late Roman period with the residence in Mediana²⁹ and the Ottoman period with the fortress on the right bank of the Nišava³⁰; so the first–third centuries AD are a comparatively blank space.

Given the fact that the traffic axes from the Danube to Macedonia – or rather the other way around – via the Morava valley and from Lissus to the east via Naissus had already been installed throughout the first century AD as military approach and supply lines serving the occupation and consolidation of the Balkan peninsula³¹, we may expect the site of Naissus to have already been put on the map during the same period as well. Yet, although – as with Horreum Margi – military presence as well as an accompanying settlement are attested for Naissus, their exact chronological development remains dusky at best. First, a temporary legionary garrison as a stop-over on the way to the Danube in the first half of the first century AD has been assumed for Naissus³², although there is no archaeological or epigraphic evidence to back this assumption. For the end of the first century AD, however, the grave stela of IMS IV 35 attests to an auxiliary presence in Naissus by mentioning an auxiliary administrative office.³³ Attempts to narrow down the respective auxiliary unit to either cohorts I Cretum or cohorts I Cilicium have been made, but assessing the validity of the evidence used in this is – to date – no easy task.³⁴ For the mid-second century AD, a

²⁹ For overviews of Mediana: Srejšević, *Palaces*, 69–75; M. Vasić, G. Milošević & N. Gavrilović, “Iskopavanja Medijane u 2010. i 2011. godini”, *Starinar* 64 (2014), 231–263.

³⁰ On the research history of Naissus and its surroundings: Petrović, *Niš*, 9–18; 166. For investigations in the area of the Turkish fortress and throughout Niš: G. Jeremić, “The late antique necropolis in Jagodin Mala, Niš (Naissus), Serbia – eighty years of research”. In *Strategie e programmazione della conservazione e trasmissibilità del patrimonio culturale*, ed. A. Filipović, W. Troiano, (Rome, 2013), 272–281; Vasić, Milošević & Gavrilović, *Iskopavanja Medijane*, 231–263 and further references in the site record entries in Mladenović, *Urbanism*, 159–160.

³¹ Petrović, *Niš*, 27–46, 168; Petrović, *Naissus – Lissus*, 31–40.

³² As with most other sites relevant to the early history of Moesia, legio IV Scythica and legio V Macedonica have been suggested for this: Mócsy, *Moesia Superior*, 50; Petrović, *Niš*, 30–46, 169.

³³ Petrović, *Niš*, 84–85.

³⁴ IMS IV 34 is a grave stela of a veteran of cohorts I Cretum: Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 83–84. Yet, the presence of a veteran is not necessarily proof for the presence of the unit he was discharged from. Cohors I Cretum has been proposed to have served as manpower in the erection of baths at the site of Timacum Maius: V. P. Petrović, V. Filipović, “The first cohort of Cretans – a Roman military unit at Timacum Maius”, *Balkanica* 46 (2015), 33–39, which could – due to the proximity of Naissus and Timacum Maius – be

change in units has been proposed: Naissus is now believed to have housed cohorts I Aurelia Dardanorum, for which IMS IV 32 and 94 are employed despite from being solid proof either.³⁵

In spatial terms, the camp for the proposed military units as discussed here is commonly located underneath the Turkish fortress on the right bank of the Nišava.³⁶ Roman civilian settlement structures generally stretch out on both sides of the river over a total area of 20–25 hectares³⁷; and significantly, a bridge – although only broadly dated to the first to sixth century AD – connected both

conclusive. IMS IV 33 names an active soldier of cohorts I Cilicium: Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 83. A singular inscription is also not compelling, although an active soldier is more indicative than a veteran.

³⁵ Petrović, *Niš*, 30–40. IMS IV 32 is a grave stela for an active soldier of cohorts I Aurelia Dardanorum, which provides a good hint for its presence in Naissus. The soldier-grave stela IMS IV 94 (Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 114), however, is far from conclusive: lacking the indication of a number, it could refer to either cohorts I Aurelia Dardanorum or cohorts II Aurelia Dardanorum. Cohors II Aurelia Dardanorum is safely attested as being garrisoned in Timacum Minus from the sixties of the second century AD on: Mócsy, *Moesia Superior*, 123, 170; A. Mócsy, *Pannonia and Upper Moesia. A history of the Middle Danube provinces of the Roman Empire. The provinces of the Roman Empire* (London, 1974), 51; P. Petrović, “Timacum Minus und die Kastelle im Timok-Tal”. In *Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms III. 13. Internationaler Limeskongreß Aalen 1983 – Vorträge. Forschungen und Berichte zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Baden-Württemberg* 20, ed. C. Unz, (Stuttgart, 1986), 514; P. Petrović, *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure III/2. Timacum Minus et la vallée du Timok*, (Belgrade, 1995), 44–45, 66–67, 73–77, 82–85; also see in L. Diers, “Timacum Minus in Moesia Superior – centrality and urbanism at a Roman mining settlement”. In *Central places and un-central landscape. Natural resources and political economies in the longue durée, Land* 2018, 7.4, eds. G. Papantoniou, A. Vionis, (2018), doi:10.3390/land7040126. Cohors I Aurelia Dardanorum has also been suggested for a longer-term garrison in Municipium Dardanorum/DD: S. Dušanić, “Aspects of Roman mining in Noricum, Pannonia, Dalmatia and Moesia Superior”. In *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt II. Principat* 6, ed. H. Temporini, (Berlin, 1977), 75 based on E. Čerškov, *Municipium DD kod Sočanice*, (Belgrade & Prishtina, 1970), 65 (no. 13) = *ILJug* 511, although this suggestion was later revised by Dušanić in favour of a garrison of cohorts I Aurelia Dardanorum in Naissus: S. Dušanić, “Army and mining in Moesia Superior”. In *Kaiser, Heer und Gesellschaft in der Römischen Kaiserzeit. Gedenkschrift für Eric Birley. Heidelberger Althistorische Beiträge und Epigraphische Studien* 31, ed. G. Alföldy et al., (Stuttgart, 2000), 348–349; see also in Diers, *Urbanism*, 438–439 with further references. Due to the fact that the inscription was found in the village of Vukašinovac in roughly the same distance from Naissus, Municipium DD, and Timacum Minus, the issue of IMS IV 94 cannot be solved, although it appears most likely that cohorts I Aurelia Dardanorum was indeed stationed in Naissus.

³⁶ On location and characteristics of the camp: Petrović, *Niš*, 48, 51–53; *Inscriptions* 44; Mladenović, *Urbanism*, 160.

³⁷ Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 38, also *Niš*, including a map with an overview over Roman settlement areas and remains throughout modern Niš.

sides of the Nišava, which further attests to the immense traffic relevance of Naissus.³⁸ Yet, the settlement remains on the left bank of the river all date to the period of the fourth to sixth century AD³⁹, while scatters of first to third century AD finds, single graves in Beograd Mala southwest of the Turkish fortress/Roman camp⁴⁰, or a bath structure in Gradsko Polje directly north of the fortress/camp⁴¹ allow to suggest that the Principate-times civilian settlement of Naissus developed in direct proximity to the military camp and was limited in size.

As was the case with *Horreum Margi*, there is only one inscription that refers to Naissus as a *municipium*⁴² by mentioning the *decurio m(...) N(...)* Marcus Aurelius Posidonius. Two further inscriptions name *decuriones* by the name of Aurelius without mentioning an actual *municipium*⁴³; yet all three inscriptions suggest the service of a person, who was granted civil rights by emperor Marcus Aurelius, in an administrative office of the *municipium* of Naissus. This is a strong hint for municipalisation during the reign of Marcus Aurelius⁴⁴, although two other options are theoretically possible as well: either civil rights granting and municipalisation by Caracalla or municipalisation even prior to the reign of Marcus Aurelius, with the *decuriones* mentioned in IMS IV 10, 18, and 27 having nothing to do with the status and civil rights granting but having come to Naissus from any other place that had been given legal status by Marcus Aurelius. This would mean that the granting of municipal rights in Naissus could have happened at any earlier time really; most favoured are the reigns of Hadrian or Antoninus Pius.⁴⁵ Like in *Horreum Margi*, however, this municipal status was given to the only, rather small-scale settlement that existed in Naissus in the first to third century AD.⁴⁶ This settlement per se clearly developed

³⁸ Garašanin & Garašanin, *Nalazišta*, 175–177; Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 45; Mladenović, *Urbanism*, 159.

³⁹ R. Ajdić, “antičke nekropole u Nišu”, *Niški zbornik* 1 (1974); Jeremić, *Jagodin Mala*; Diers, *Urbanism*, 473–474, including all relevant references. For the general layout of settlement spheres throughout Niš and its surroundings, e.g. in *Jagodin Mala*, *Sokolana*, and the *Trg Kralja Milana* see in Petrović, *Niš*.

⁴⁰ Mladenović, *Urbanism*, 159, including further references, discussed in Diers, *Urbanism*, 473.

⁴¹ Petrović, *Niš*, 48–49, 87–88; *Inscriptions*, 45; Mladenović, *Urbanism*, 159, including further references.

⁴² IMS IV 10, Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 72.

⁴³ IMS IV 18 and 27: Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 75, 80.

⁴⁴ As also suggested in Mócsy, *Moesia Superior*, 35; Petrović, *Niš*, 30–40, 169; Mirković, *Moesia Superior*, 59.

⁴⁵ Jeremić, *Jagodin Mala*, 273.

⁴⁶ Contra Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 44–45 the archaeological evidence clearly suggests that there was no second civilian settlement near the military camp in the first to third cen-

out of the impact of the military presence, and the later act of municipalisation should be related to Roman agendas of fostering recruitment options and filling an administrative gap of territorial control between the mining settlements of Ulpiana, Municipium DD, Timacum Minus, Remesiana, and Montana and the Danube Limes hinterland from Singidunum, Viminacium, and Margum to Horreum Margi.⁴⁷ To fully understand the motivators and circumstances behind this, it is, however, vital to spotlight Naissus' character as a bridge-site.

Site Emergence vs. Site Development

When looking at urban settlement in Moesia, there appears to be a difference between the development factors for settlement(s) and the factors for initial site emergence in some cases. This is particularly apparent in the imperial foundations of Moesia Superior, Scupi and Ratiaria. Both sites were officially founded as *coloniae* by Vespasian/Domitian (Scupi) and Trajan (Ratiaria), and their settlement layout and spatial characteristics as well as architectural development is very much linked to the respective foundation process and its aftermath. Yet, both sites initially emerged out of their military relevance and relationships to the gradual occupation of the territory that became Moesia throughout the first and early second century AD, which needs to be zoomed in on in order to fully grasp the settlements' nature and history.

Scupi

As the earliest official settlement foundation of Moesia, Scupi is the prime example for the principles that can underlie site emergence and subsequent settlement development in this area of the Roman Empire. The earliest presence in the region around later Scupi is believed to date back to the time of Augustus, when a Dardanian military district centring on Scupi is assumed to have existed.⁴⁸ For this early period, neither a military garrison nor an accompanying

ture AD and, hence, no settlement dualism.

⁴⁷ On the territory of Naissus and its presumed delineation: M. Mirković, "Rimski put Naissus – Scupi i stanice ad Fines", *Živa antika* 10 (1960), 249–257; Petrović, *Niš*, 89–114, 175; *Inscriptions*, 27; V. P. Petrović, "Une nouvelle borne milliaire découverte sur la voie romaine Naissus – Lissus", *Starinar* 56 (2006), 367–376; see also in Diers, *Urbanism*, 475.

⁴⁸ L. Jovanova, "The disposition of Scupi (Colonia Flavia Scupinorum) in relation to the necropolises from the first-third centuries". In *The Roman and Late Roman City: the International Conference, Veliko Turnovo, 26-30 July 2000*. eds. L. Rousseva-Slokoska, A. G. Poulter, (Sofia, 2002a), 318; L. Jovanova, "New evidence on the historic and urban development of Coloniae Flaviae Scupinorum", *Histria Antiqua* 11 (2003), 478; L. Jovanova,

settlement have been safely identified in the area. Yet, the historical context of the Dardanian wars and the campaigns of Marcus Licinius Crassus in 29–27 BC aiming at securing the province of Macedonia and its borders support the assumption.⁴⁹

The actual settlement of Scupi was then officially founded as a colony in Flavian times. Numerous inscriptions attest to both the chronological setting of the foundation and the initial status of the settlement as a *colonia*.⁵⁰ The abbreviation of the settlement title as *colonia F F D*⁵¹ first left the debate around the exact foundation throughout Flavian times somewhat undecided, as a reading as *colonia Flavia Felix Domitiana* would have clearly pointed to the reign of Domitian.⁵² The discovery of IMS VI 15, however, confirmed that *F F D* should be written out as *colonia Fl(avia) Fel(ix) Dar(danorum)*. While this reading, of course, does not exclude Domitian as a possible founder of Scupi, the scholarly debate has by now largely accepted Vespasian as the most likely initiator of the colony.⁵³ Additional evidence for the dating of Scupi's foundation is provided by gravestones of legio VII Claudia veterans naming the tribus Quirina⁵⁴ and

“Scupi from the first to the third century according to new archaeological and epigraphic discoveries”. In *Römische Städte und Festungen an der Donau. Akten der regionalen Konferenz organisiert von der Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung*, Belgrad 16.-19. Oktober 2003, ed. M. Mirković, (Belgrade, 2005), 153; V. P. Petrović, *Dardanija u rimskim itinerarima. Gradovi i naselja* (Belgrade, 2007a), 114; M. Mirković, „Die Anfänge der Provinz Moesia“. In *Die römischen Provinzen. Begriff und Gründung*, ed. I. Piso, (Cluj-Napoca, 2008), 257.

⁴⁹ On the early history and these events in general: R. Syme, *Lentulus and the origin of Moesia. Danubian papers* (Bucharest, 1971), 40–72; Mirković, *Anfänge*, 249–270; M. Šašel Kos, “Octavian’s Illyrian war: ambition and strategy”. In *The century of the brave. Roman conquest and indigenous resistance in Illyricum during the time of Augustus and his heirs. Proceedings of the international conference Zagreb, 22.-26.9. 2014*, ed. V. Vlahović-Štetić, (Zagreb, 2018), 41–58.

⁵⁰ An overview of these inscriptions is found in B. Dragojević-Josifovska, *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure VI. Scupi et la région de Kumanovo* (Belgrade, 1982), 25.

⁵¹ IMS VI 42, 46.

⁵² This has, for example, been assumed in I. Mikulčić, “From the topography of Scupi”, *Archaeologia Iugoslavica* 14 (1978), 31.

⁵³ This is discussed in B. Dragojević-Josifovska, “Deux monuments funéraires inédits de Scupi”. In *Mélanges helléniques offerts à Georges Daux*, (Paris, 1974), 183; *Inscriptions VI*, 25; E. Birley, “The Flavian *colonia* at Scupi”, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 64 (1986), 210; Ferjančić, *Naseljavanje*, 214; Jovanova, *Scupi*, 319; Šašel Kos 2012, 507; Mrozewicz 2015, 153. Further titles of the colony are attested as *colonia Flavia Scupinorum* (IMS VI 31, 66) or simply *colonia Scupinorum* (IMS VI 6, 34, 45, 49, 62, 65, 68, 70, 71, 73, 74, 76, 195).

⁵⁴ Dragojević-Josifovska 1974, 183; 1982, 25; Jovanova, *Scupi*, 319; M. Šašel Kos, “A glimpse into stonemasons’ workshops in Scupi, Upper Moesia”. In *L’officina epigrafica Romana in ricordo di Giancarlo Susini*, ed. A. Donati, G. Poma, (Faenza, 2012), 507.

referring to the deceased as being *deductos Scupos* or *deducticius*.⁵⁵ Considering the Flavian foundation of Scupi, these veterans clearly were discharged when legio VII Claudia was still deployed to Dalmatia, thus attesting to the deductive veteran colony character of Scupi.⁵⁶ However, the small number of veteran inscriptions does not provide solid ground for the assessment of the earliest deduction's scale.⁵⁷

Generally, it should be highlighted that Scupi played a significant role in the development of the province of Moesia in two ways. First, the assumed Augustan military district of Dardania provided a buffer zone to the border of Macedonia and facilitated the gradual approach towards the Danube, aimed at the occupation of the Morava valley, the Danube basin, and the area north of the Stara Planina. With the focus of the later, established province of Moesia and the debate about its history in academia clearly being centred on the Danube Limes, the first century AD approach from the very south of the later provincial territory may surprise. Yet, in order to understand the gradual occupation of Moesia's later territory in its very own historical circumstances, acknowledging the convenience of the earliest lines of approach from the south and the role the area around Scupi and the settlement itself played in it, is strikingly significant: It provided the background to connect the existing Roman World with the Danube via the Morava and Timok valleys. Secondly, the location of Scupi as Moesia's first colony was also clearly linked to Flavian policies. On one hand, it provided a convenient starting point and back-up facility for the connection to the Morava valley and Danube, for example becoming apparent in Domitian's Dacian campaigns.⁵⁸ On the other hand, Scupi's official foundation allowed for local and territorial recruitment, and this must be viewed as part of a distinct political agenda and thoughtful planning. Founding a colony north of

⁵⁵ IMS VI 52–54, 56.

⁵⁶ Scupi has been explicitly named as a veteran colony, e.g. in Dragojević-Josifovska, *Deux monuments*, 181.

⁵⁷ For remarks on the nature of veteran settlement in Scupi: K. Stoev, "Settlement of veterans to the Roman colony of Scupi (end of first – beginning of second century AD)", *Thracia* 17 (2007), 217–225.

⁵⁸ For comments on these campaigns and their organisation: Syme, *Lentulus*, 205; K. Strobel, *Die Donaukriege Domitians. Antiquitas I. Abhandlungen zur Alten Geschichte* 38 (Bonn, 1989); S. Dušanić, "The frontier and the hinterland: The role of Scupi in Domitian's wars on the Danube". In *Roman Limes on the Middle and Lower Danube. Đerdapske sveske* 2, ed. P. Petrović, (Belgrade, 1996), 42; Petrović, *itinerarima*, 122–125; L. Mroze-wicz, "Flavische Städtegründungen auf dem Balkan". In *Kontaktzone Balkan. Beiträge des internationalen Kolloquiums „Die Donau-Balkan-Region als Kontaktzone zwischen Ost-West und Nord-Süd vom 16.-18. Mai 2012 in Frankfurt am Main*, ed. G. von Bülow, (Bonn, 2015), 151–163, especially 153.

the Macedonian border was a significant step towards inhabiting, administering, and maintaining the province of Moesia.

In this regard, it is not only essential to understand the role of the officially founded settlement of Scupi as a permanent base of Romaness and as a recruitment centre from Flavian times onwards. There is also the layer of pre-colonial Roman presence in and agendas around Scupi. If a first half of first century AD military district of Dardania⁵⁹ existed, legionary presence in this district needs to be assumed as well. Being the earliest attested legions in Moesia, either legio IV Scythica or legio V Macedonica appear the most likely candidates for a temporary deployment in the border region of Macedonia and Dardania already in Augustan times, with later Scupi being the most likely candidate for the location of their garrison site.⁶⁰ Yet, neither legio IV Scythica nor legio V Macedonica left epigraphic evidence for such a garrison and no archaeological features of a temporary wood-and-earth military camp or an accompanying settlement have been safely identified throughout the settlement area of Scupi. Still, there are contextual data: First, the eastern necropolis of Scupi revealed several graves, which have been addressed as containing Augustan and Tiberian Italic grave good-ceramics.⁶¹ Although there is, of course, the possibility that the pottery represents residual material that had been in use for a longer period of time while travelling with soldiers and, thus, relates to the Flavian colony rather than to Augustan and Tiberian times per se, the graves may also actually date to the first half of the first century AD, i.e. the potential pre-colony phase of Scupi. If this was the case, the graves would also hint at the location of a presumed military camp in the eastern part of the later, walled colonial settlement space of Scupi, as a certain spatial proximity of camp features and burial grounds can

⁵⁹ Dragojević-Josifovska, *Inscriptions VI*, 24; V. P. Petrović, "Pre-Roman and Roman Dardania. Historical and geographical considerations", *Balkanica* 37 (2007b), 11; Mladenović, *Urbanism*, 4–5.

⁶⁰ This has been suggested by Mikulčić, *topography*, 31; Dušanić, *frontier and hinterland*, 42; Jovanova, *Scupi*, 318; L. Jovanova, "Colonia Flavia Scupinorum – western necropolis grave forms and rituals", *Histria Antiqua* 8 (2003), 193; *New evidence*, 478; *New discoveries*, 154; Mladenović, *Urbanism*, 16; Šašel Kos, *stonecutters' workshops*, 508. As both legio IV Scythica and legio V Macedonica are attested to have stayed at the Danube while taking part in the construction of the Danube road and Danube shipment facilities in the year of AD 33/34, the unit stationed in Scupi should have left its camp at this date at the latest. See also in Jovanova, *Scupi*, 318; *Western necropolis*, 193; *New discoveries*, 154. Furthermore, it is assumed that legio V Macedonica stayed in Oescus already before AD 33/34, which would result in either a vexillation garrison of this unit in Scupi or in the presence of legio IV Scythica instead of legio V Macedonica.

⁶¹ These graves and their inventories have, unfortunately, not been published in detail. Hence, the origin and dating of the associated pottery cannot be confirmed or further assessed to date. For remarks on the graves and their Italic material and dating: Mikulčić, *topography*, 30.

be assumed.⁶² Secondly, there is epigraphic evidence for a short-term or stop-over stay of legio V Macedonica and legio I Italica in Scupi around the year of AD 70.⁶³ IMS VI 42 is a burial inscription that names both an active soldier of legio V Macedonica and the colony of Scupi⁶⁴; IMS VI 36 refers to a soldier of legio I Italica.⁶⁵ Two additional grave stelae for veterans – one of legio V Macedonica⁶⁶ and one of legio I Italica⁶⁷ – date to the end of the first century AD and may, thus, also relate to the stay of both units around AD 70 in Scupi.⁶⁸ These epigraphic data, combined with the logical assumption that Domitian would have used Scupi as a military base for all his campaigns⁶⁹, hint at the continued maintenance of a military facility in Scupi until the end of the Flavian period and the manifestation of the initially small deductive colony of Scupi, although legio V Macedonica and legio IV Scythica had been given home garrisons at the Danube from Claudian times onwards already and such a maintenance task would have needed to be conducted by vexillations.

In addition to the location of the earliest graves in Scupi's eastern necropolis, small-scale features of simple buildings underneath the crossing of the

⁶² The eastern necropolis of Scupi is located north-east of today's village of Zlokucani and covers around 30 hectares: Jovanova, *Scupi*, 319; *Western necropolis*, 194. Given the dating of the 650 identified burials, it seems that over time the graves gradually moved closer to Scupi's eastern fortification wall: I. Mikulčić, "Ronarimski skeletni grobovi iz Skupa", *Starinar* 24/25 (1975), 89–102; for more details see D. Koračević, "Sostoljata na arheološkite iskopuvanja na antičko Skupi", *Macedoniae acta archaeologica* 3, (1977), 180; D. Koračević, *Antički Skupi. Rezultati novih arheoloških istraživanja* (Pula, 1989b); M. Ivanovski, Ž. Vinčić, "Skupi – istočna nekropola, 1981", *Macedoniae acta archaeologica* 9 (1988), 165–174; L. Jovanova, D. Mihailova, "Skupi – istočna nekropola, istraživanja 1994 g.", *Macedoniae acta archaeologica* 15 (1996/1997), 203–250; Jovanova, *Scupi*, 319–320. The earliest graves with the presumed first half of first century AD date, however, lie in an area later occupied by fourth–seventh century AD graves, hence closer to the colonial settlement of Scupi: Mikulčić, *territory*, 29; Dragojević-Josifovska, *inscriptions* VI, 24; Jovanova, *Scupi*, 319; Mladenović, *Urbanism*, 52. For an overview of Scupi's settlement layout and development in general see in Diers, *Urbanism*, 382–390.

⁶³ Legio V Macedonica came back from Syria in AD 70/71. On its way to its home garrison in Oescus, it might have temporarily stopped at Scupi. Legio I Italica is safely attested in Novae from AD 71 onwards. Accordingly, a short interim stay at Scupi on its way to the Danube around AD 70 is possible, too.

⁶⁴ Dragojević-Josifovska, *Inscriptions* VI, 74–75.

⁶⁵ Dragojević-Josifovska, *Inscriptions*, 70–71; Stoev, *Settlement of veterans*, 220; Šašel Kos, *stonecutters' workshops*, 509.

⁶⁶ IMS VI 43; Dragojević-Josifovska, *Inscriptions* VI, 75–76.

⁶⁷ IMS VI 37; Dragojević-Josifovska, *Inscriptions* VI, 71.

⁶⁸ Accordingly, the veterans could have been discharged and remained in Scupi until the time of their death.

⁶⁹ Jovanova, *Scupi*, 319.

fourth century AD *cardo* and *decumanus* of Scupi⁷⁰ may contextually attest to the existence and location of a pre-colonial, military-related Roman presence. In any case, they are clear proof for a different layout of Scupi's settlement area at any time prior to the erection of the theatre and the fortifications, on which the later streets were oriented on. Hence, they may as well relate to the pre-colonial and/or early colonial phase in the first century AD.

Although no traces of an actual military camp or accompanying settlement have been found to date, the discussed contextual evidence allows to suggest that such facilities existed in the eastern half of what later was to become the walled colony of Scupi. Moreover, the archaeological evidence indicates that the earliest colonial settlement of Vespasianic or Domitianic Scupi was rather small, spatially un-organised and related to the pre-colonial first half of first century AD military camp.⁷¹ A flourishing period of urbanisation and monumentalisation – apparent for example in the erection of the theatre and fortifications of Scupi – can only be found during the reign of Hadrian. This was at a time, when the province of Moesia was fully consolidated and its legions were permanently stationed along the Danube Limes. Scupi, however, still kept its character as some sort of back-up post for the consolidation of the Danube Limes: An AD 169 *laterculus* from Viminacium lists one third of recruits as originating from the territory of Scupi⁷², which without question attests to the character of Scupi as an important recruitment centre in the second century AD.⁷³

Ratiaria

Ratiaria is one of the Moesian colonial foundations of Trajan, being safely attested as such by its full title of *Colonia Ulpia Traiana Ratiaria* and the known

⁷⁰ D. Koračević, "Arheološkite istraživanja vo Skupi vo 1982 godina", *Macedoniae acta archaeologica* 9 (1988), 155–163; D. Koračević, "Urbanizam i arhitektura Skupa o svetlosti arheoloških iskopavanja", *Lihnid* 7 (1989a), 102–104, 107; J. P. Zeitler, "Ausgrabungen in der römischen Colonia Flavia Scupi, Mazedonien 1998", *Natur und Mensch* 1998, (1999), 84; Diers, *Urbanism*, 384–385 and generally 382–389.

⁷¹ Compare to the overview of the general outline of settlement structures and settlement history in Diers, *Urbanism*, 377–397.

⁷² Šašel Kos, *stonecutters' workshops*, 509.

⁷³ This is further backed up by data from the western cemetery of Scupi: Here, a considerable number of graves from the second and third centuries AD with Mala Kopašnica Sase-type traits were identified, which attests to a continuation of local PRIA traditions in the colonial settlement of Scupi and is believed to be evidence for the presence of a fairly large group of indigenous/local origin in Scupi throughout the Principate: L. Jovanova, "Skupi – zapadna nekropola", *Macedoniae acta archaeologica* 13 (1992), 191–200; Scupi, 320–321; *Western necropolis*, 193–206; for an overview of this burial pattern see in Mirković, *Moesia Superior*, 20 including further references.

remains of Ratiaria's *lex coloniae*.⁷⁴ The exact date of the colonial status granting is not known; yet the phrasing of the title leaves no doubt that it can be assigned to Trajan, its most likely context being the period of AD 106–112.⁷⁵ Ratiaria presents different circumstances than Scupi, although resting on the same principle: A pre-colonial presence with different backgrounds than the later, fully developed colonial settlement existed, which needs to be acknowledged and explored in order to fully understand the later, fully developed colonial settlement.

During the second and third centuries AD, Ratiaria clearly became a Danube Limes centre, displaying significant monumental growth and scale.⁷⁶ While – admittedly scarce – hints at the existence of a naval base exist⁷⁷, Ratiaria's character in this time was largely civilian. Before this civilian urbanisation period of the colonial settlement of Ratiaria, however, two chronological phases were of high relevance for the site of Ratiaria: the beginning of the first century

⁷⁴ For transcript/translation see W. Eck, "Fragmente eines neuen Stadtgesetzes – der *lex coloniae Ulpiae Traianae Ratiariae*", *Athenaeum* 104 (2016), 538–544.

⁷⁵ The earliest known inscription referring to the settlement title dates to the year of AD 125; CIL III 14499, e.g. discussed in V. Velkov, "Prinosi kam istorijata na rimskite gradove v Balgarija i. Ratsiarija", *Trudove na visshija pedagogicheski institute* 2 (1964/65), 4; M. Mirković, *Rimski gradovi na Dunavu u Gornjoj Meziji* (Belgrade, 1968), 76–77; K. Luka, "Colonia Ulpia Traiana Ratiaria. The rediscovery of the ancient city". In *Ratiaria semper floreat 1. Ratiaria and its territory*, ed. R. Ivanov, (Sofia, 2014), 50; V. Dinchev, "From Colonia Ulpia Traiana Ratiaria to Anastasiana Ratiaria". In *Thracian, Greek, Roman, and medieval cities, residences and fortresses in Bulgaria*, ed. R. Ivanov, (Sofia, 2015), 173. An overview over additional inscriptions can be found in K. Stoev, "Novi epigrafski pametnitsi ot Ratsiarija i nejnata teritorija". In *Ratiaria semper floreat 1. Ratiaria and its territory*, ed. R. Ivanov, (Sofia, 2014b), 230–283.

⁷⁶ Diers, *Urbanism*, 156–64, 170–172.

⁷⁷ Port facilities per se are not archaeologically attested, but indicated by epigraphic evidence for the existence of a toll station in Ratiaria: CIL III 7429 names a toll station in Ratiaria (Velkov, *Prinosi*, 9; J. Iliev, "Ikonomikata na Ratsiarija (106-271 g.)", *Studentska nauchna sesija* (2006), 67; R. Ivanov, "Ratiaria – pismeni izvori, istorija, gradska teritorija i granitsi prez printsipata i dominate". In *Ratiaria semper floreat 1. Ratiaria and its territory*, ed. R. Ivanov, (Sofia, 2014), 35–36, 48; Luka, *Ratiaria*, 50) and an inscription found under the paving of the *decumanus maximus* of Ratiaria in 2011 most probably dates to the times of either Marcus Aurelius or Caracalla and i.a. reads *P P Illyr* (cat. 3 in Stoev, *Novi pametnitsi*, 237, 239, 282). The discovery of an inscription referring to the donation of a *schola ar[maturarum?]* would then add military character to this suggested port/harbour facility, as it indicates training of soldiers as marines and, hence, the existence of a naval base in Ratiaria: Stoev, *Novi pametnitsi*, 230–235, 282. Further backup for the assumption of a naval base is added by the funerary inscription IMS IV 31 (Petrović, *Inscriptions*), which – although found in Naissus, a considerable distance from the Danube – attests to trainees of the *classis Moesica* by naming a soldier of legio VII Claudia as *disce[n]s epibeta* (also Stoev, *Novi pametnitsi*, 232–233). For the emergence of the *classis Moesica* in general see in T. Sarnowski, "Zur Geschichte der moesischen Provinzialflotte im 1. Jhd. n. Chr.", *Ratiariensia* 3/4 (1987), 261–266.

AD and the time around the end of the first and the beginning of the second century AD, i.e. the time of preparing and fighting the Dacian wars of Trajan.

We can generally act on the assumption that the earliest occupation of Moesia and the Danube Limes proceeded from Macedonia via Naissus along the Timok valley.⁷⁸ In this scenario, Ratiaria's location at the end of the Timok valley road from Naissus to the Danube would have made the site one of the earliest centres of occupational politics on the Danube frontier. This, again, makes the existence of an early military garrison in Ratiaria very probable⁷⁹; and the later settlement's prominent site of the Kaleto-plateau, overlooking the Arčarica's confluence with the Danube, would have been a prime geographical position for such a garrison. When looking into possible units for this early first century AD military presence, a temporary deployment of legio IV Scythica has been taken into consideration.⁸⁰ At the end of the first century AD, Moesia had already been separated, and the onset of the Dacian wars presented different circumstances. Here, Ratiaria's position on the Danube Limes directly east of the Iron Gates offered a convenient intermediate location between the earliest permanent legionary bases of Moesia in Viminacium (Moesia Superior) and Novae (Moesia Inferior), which should have been utilised in the efforts to man the frontier towards the – then – Barbaricum. For this second period, a temporary deployment of legio IV Flavia has been assumed.⁸¹ Other opinions

⁷⁸ Cassius Dio's report of Marcus Licinius Crassus' Bastarnae campaign (Dio. Cass. LI 24, 4) may be taken as a hint for this assumption. Generally, on the topic of early military approaches in Moesia: Mirković, *Anfänge*, 249–270.

⁷⁹ As e.g. assumed in K. Stoev, "Ratiaria: Grundzüge der Stadtgeschichte und Gesellschaftsentwicklung (1.-3. Jh.)." In *Trajan und seine Städte*, ed. I. Piso, (Cluj-Napoca, 2014a), 168.

⁸⁰ Again; Stoev, *Grundzüge*, 168. However, note the issue that legio IV Scythica could not have been everywhere at once; and while it is generally attested to have taken part in the erection of the Danube road as early as AD 33/34 (for an overview over the famous Đerdap inscriptions and further references: M. Mirković, "The Iron Gates (Đerdap) and the Roman policy on the Moesian Limes AD 33-117". In *Roman Limes on the Middle and Lower Danube. Đerdapske sveske* 2, ed. P. Petrović, (Belgrade, 1996), 27–40; 2007: 26–27), it is not clear where it might have been stationed before. Scupi is in the running as its Augustan/Tiberian home, too; so assuming that legio IV Scythica moved from Scupi to the Danube via the Timok valley line of approach and was, here, first stationed in Ratiaria is logical, yet there is no conclusive evidence of either epigraphic or archaeological character.

⁸¹ First suggested i.a. by B. Filow, *Die Legionen der Provinz Moesia von Augustus bis auf Diokletian* (Leipzig, 1906); referred to in Mirković, *Gradovi*, 75; later repeatedly stated e.g. in Velkov, *Prinosi*, 5; V. Velkov, "Ratiaria. Eine römische Stadt in Bulgarien," *Eirene. Studia Graeca et Latina* 5 (1966), 157; V. Velkov, "Sulle origine de Ratiaria e sul nome "Ratiaria", *Ratiariensia* 3/4 (1987), 10; Mócsy, *Moesia Superior*, 50; J. Atanasova, "Résultats des fouilles de la ville antique de Ratiaria au cours des années 1976 à 1982". In

favour the presence of vexillations of legio IV Flavia or legio VII Claudia over an actual legionary deployment.⁸² This could be supported by a comparatively large number of bricks of legio VII Claudia throughout Ratiaria's settlement territory and surroundings.⁸³ While the presence of military-stamped building material per se is no proof for the presence of respective units, the high percentage of legio VII Claudia material around Ratiaria indeed suggests some sort of local involvement. Adding to the discussion of legionary presence, several auxiliary units are believed to have been present at the site of Ratiaria throughout the pre-colonial period. The evidence, here, is circumstantial at best, comprised of brick and tile finds or singular inscriptions with partly unclear interpretation.⁸⁴ The location of a potential military camp in or around the later colony, finally, is as debated as the identification of the military unit occupying it. While earlier research favoured the location of a camp in the plain north of the Kaleto-plateau⁸⁵ or on the edge of the plateau west of the western gate of Ratiaria⁸⁶, other opinions exist and search the camp in the northern area of the

Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms III. 13. Internationaler Limeskongreß Aalen 1983 – Vorträge. Forschungen und Berichte zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Baden-Württemberg 20, ed. C. Unz, (Stuttgart, 1986), 437; R. Ivanov, „Larmata romana a Ratiaria durante al principato (dati epigrafici)”, *Ratiariensia* 3/4 (1987), 26; Stoev, *Grundzüge*, 168.

⁸² Ivanov, *Ratiaria*, 35–36, 48; Dinchev, *From Colonia*, 173; also considered in Stoev, *Grundzüge*, 168.

⁸³ See the most recent map of Ratiaria showing the distribution of legio VII Claudia bricks and tiles in Luka, *Ratiaria*, 55. For further context: *Ibid.*, 55, 59.

⁸⁴ R. Hoshek, V. Velkov, “New antique finds in Ratiaria (Moesia Superior)”, *Eumonia* 2 (1958), 32–35; Velkov, *Prinosi*, 5; *römische Stadt*, 157 with the ala Gallica based on an inscription found in a farmyard in Arčar during one of Velkov's first site inspections in 1956; M. Bollini, “Bollini laterizi di Ratiaria”, *Ratiariensia* 1 (1980), 97; Ivanov, *armata romana*, 30 with the cohorts I Cretum and an ala M(...) based on stamped tile finds; Stoev, *Grundzüge*, 169 with the cohorts VIII Gallica based on stamped tile finds; V. Gerasimova, “Dislokatsija na rimskite pomoshetni vojski v provintsija Mizija ot 44 do 86 g. na n.e.”, *Arheologija* 12,4 (1970), 27 with the ala I Claudia nova miscellanea based on CIL III 14217, which names a decurio of the colonia Ratiaria, who served in the ala I Claudia nova miscellanea before he was discharged and settled in Ratiaria. While this inscription is important because it attests to the presence of veterans in Ratiaria and their service in official functions, it does not provide solid evidence that ala Claudia I nova miscellanea was stationed in Ratiaria and not at some other site along the Danube Limes/in the wider surroundings.

⁸⁵ Velkov, *Origine*, 10.

⁸⁶ D. Giorgetti, “Res ad topographiam veteris urbis Ratiariae pertinentes – prolegomena all'urbanistica della città romana”, *Ratiariensia* 3/4 (1987), pl. A, reproduced and discussed in Luka, *Ratiaria*, 54.

later colonial settlement, namely east of the western gate and in the area of the late Roman residence.⁸⁷

In connection to the proposed first century AD military camp, a contemporary settlement has been suggested for Ratiaria as well. As is the case with the military camp, there is circumstantial evidence for its existence in first century AD dated small finds⁸⁸ and a large number of Flavian coins as well as several residual Republican coins.⁸⁹ Depending on the evidence employed, the pre-colonial settlement has been characterised as a Flavian trade post⁹⁰ or as a military settlement.⁹¹ While some scholars have emphasised the trading function of Ratiaria in the first century AD, stating that the economic expansion preceded the military expansion in Moesia⁹², I argue that first century AD military presence at the site is far more likely and that the development of a settlement motivated by military presence would have been a strong factor for the development of trade routes and a trade post.

With the Trajanic colonial foundation, new structures of reference were installed both in spatial and administrative terms. The newly planned settlement surely used existing communication systems on regional and inter-regional scales, but if it had been oriented on a pre-existing settlement structure, this would have become apparent in the – admittedly more than fragmented – archaeological record of the site. In the second and third centuries AD, Ratiaria was indeed a major trade node and trans-shipment centre east of the Iron Gates, connecting Moesia Superior with the areas towards the Black Sea. A comparatively large-scale monumental growth of the colony in the second and third centuries AD attests to this.⁹³ Although Ratiaria is listed as a major recruitment territory in the AD 169 Viminacium *laterculus*⁹⁴, there is a sparsity of indigenous names in the epigraphic record of the colony.⁹⁵ Also, recent studies have shown that contrary to earlier beliefs Ratiaria was not largely settled by veteran

⁸⁷ Luka, *Ratiaria*, 59, based on the fact that the bricks of legio VII Claudia seem to accumulate in this location.

⁸⁸ E.g. published in Velkov, *Prinosi*, 5; *römische Stadt*, 157; Mirković, *Moesia Superior*, 48; A. Haralambieva, “Fibuli ot teritorijata na Ratsiaria”. In *Ratiaria semper floreat 1. Ratiaria and its territory*; ed. R. Ivanov, (Sofia, 2014).

⁸⁹ These are part of the unpublished collection of the Historical Museum in Vidin.

⁹⁰ Velkov, *Prinosi*, 5; *römische Stadt*, 157; Mirković, *Moesia Superior*, 48.

⁹¹ Stoev, *Grundzüge*, 169.

⁹² Velkov, *römische Stadt*, 156.

⁹³ See in Diers, *Urbanism*, 156–166, 170–172.

⁹⁴ Mirković, *Gradovi*, 79, see also in Stoev, *Grundzüge*, 178.

⁹⁵ Velkov, *römische Stadt*, 165; Mócsy, *Moesia Superior*, 180; Ivanov, *Ratiaria*, 30–21, 48; Stoev, *Grundzüge*, 176.

deductions.⁹⁶ This absence of both large numbers of indigenous population and large-scale veteran deductions as well as the new spatial layout of the colony of Ratiaria demonstrate the independence of the colonial settlement from both pre-Roman Iron Age civitas-centred settlement and first century AD military impact. Acknowledging the latter, however, is vital for the understanding of Ratiaria's extraordinary role as a connector along the Danube Limes and monumental development throughout the second and third centuries AD.

Conclusion

Summing up, two significant discussions for the characterisation of Moesia's settlement landscape have been introduced in this paper, both aiming to illustrate the importance of 'reading the subtext' in settlement studies.

The first coined the term bridge-sites for sites with extraordinary traffic relevance by using the examples of Horreum Margi and Naissus. With their location at traffic nexuses in the hinterland of the Danube, both had a vital position within the primary transport networks of Moesia as installed during the first century AD alongside the gradual occupation of Moesia via the Morava and Timok valleys. Horreum Margi and Naissus remained comparatively marginal, small settlements, probably with recruitment or territorial administration as the main motivators behind their municipalisation. Yet, their exclusion from the settlement landscape would be detrimental to the understanding of Moesian settlement systems and settlement development, as they clearly occupied an important inter-regional role and impacted other settlements as well. The same principle can also be observed in Abritus in Moesia Inferior: The main phase of settlement here lies in the Late Roman period, but an auxiliary presence with a small accompanying settlement 300–400 m west of the later fortification and today's archaeological park of Abritus definitely existed already in the first–third centuries AD, which was clearly due to the extraordinary traffic relevance of the site of Abritus as a connector of the middle Danube

⁹⁶ While Mirković, *Gradovi*, 165 states that the colony would probably have been founded by veteran deductions after discharges after the end of the Dacian wars, and Mócsy, *Moesia Superior*, 107 says that the earliest officials of Ratiaria were also veterans, Mirković, *Moesia Superior*, 49 speaks of numerous immigrations from the West. Stoev, *Grundzüge*, 170–172, 176 then establishes that while B. Gerov, "Romanizmat mezhdu Dunava i Balkana 2. Ot Hadrian do Konstantin Veliki", *Godishnik na Sofijskija Universitet. Istoriko-filologicheski fakultet* 47/48 (1953) still assumed widespread veteran settlement already from Flavian times onwards, the epigraphic evidence from Ratiaria and its territory at the current state actually rather depicts small numbers of veterans both in the settlement and in its offices in favour of people coming to Ratiaria from Italy and the southern areas of the Danube provinces.

Limes and Serdica – Philippopolis communication lines with the Pentapolis at the Black Sea coast.⁹⁷

The second zoomed in on the differences of site emergence and site development factors, using the colonies of Moesia Superior – Scupi and Ratiaria – as examples. Although the archaeological data are lacking or scarce, both had an epigraphic and contextually attested military presence in the pre-colonial phase at different stages throughout the first century AD. The character of the sites differed significantly from the later colonial settlements; yet it is pivotal to the understanding of Moesian settlement systems and the reasons and modes behind status granting at particularly Scupi and Ratiaria. Interestingly, when Scupi and Ratiaria are put in line with the other Moesian colony – Oescus in Moesia Inferior – the same principles can be observed: Before becoming *colonia Ulpia Oescensium* in Trajanic Times, Oescus was home to legio V Macedonica from as early as maybe Tiberian, but surely Claudian times onwards.⁹⁸ The legionary camp has been thoroughly located underneath the central area of the later colonial settlement space⁹⁹; yet the newly founded colonia with the only attested forum-and-Capitoline Triad sanctuary complex in Moesia, the Fortuna temple, the winter portico, and the street system displays a change in settlement spheres and layout and considerable as well as privately funded monumentalisation.¹⁰⁰ Hence, a pattern of founding colonial civil centres at the sites of the earliest military presence connected to the occupation of the central Balkans, the Stara Planina, and the Danube Limes is identified. Officially installed settlements offered opportunities for large-scale military recruitment. Also, the earlier military

⁹⁷ For an overview and discussion of Abritus: Diers, *Urbanism*, 460–464. More details in T. Ivanov, *Abritus. Rimski kastel i rannovizantijski grad v Dolna Mizija* (Sofia, 1980); R. Ivanov, *Roman cities in Bulgaria. Corpus of ancient and medieval settlements in modern Bulgaria 1* (Sofia, 2012); J.-P. Carrié, D. Moreau, “The archaeology of the Roman town of Abritus. The status quaestionis in 2012”. In *Limes 22. Proceedings of the 22nd International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies, Ruse, Bulgaria, September 2012*, ed. L. Vagalinski, N. Sharankov, (Sofia, 2015), 601–610. The same also applies to Timacum Minus, which was one of the most significant and earliest traffic nexus sites in Moesia, but is not discussed here because it has been covered elsewhere already: Diers, *Timacum Minus*.

⁹⁸ For a historical overview: Diers, *Urbanism*, 198, 204–208.

⁹⁹ G. Kabakchieva, “Frührömische Militärlager in Oescus (Nordbulgarien). Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen 1989–1993”, *Germania* 74,1 (1996), 95–117; G. Kabakchieva, *Oescus/Castra Oescensia. Rannorimski voenen lager pri ustieto na Iskar* (Sofia, 2000).

¹⁰⁰ For an overview over architectural features in Oescus: T. Ivanov, R. Ivanov, *Ulpia Eskus. Rimski i rannovizantijski grad 1* (Sofia 1998); T. Ivanov, *Ulpia Eskus. Rimski, kasnorimski i rannovizantijski grad II. Grazhdanska bazilika i hram na Fortuna* (Sofia, 2005); for the latest plan of the forum see in V. Dinchev, “Antichnite gradski ploshtadni kompleksi i tjahnata sadba prez kasnata antichnost”, *Arheologija* 50, 3/4 (2009), 29; also discussed in detail in Diers, *Urbanism*, 201–204, 209–222.

garrison sites could be used as bases for settlement, because the infrastructure and human resources for supplying a considerable amount of people had already been present in areas that had otherwise not been densely populated or were still in the process of developing between either dislocating or engaging local indigenous people and allotting administrative territories and economic networks; and an economic vacuum potentially needed to be filled.¹⁰¹

Concluding, this paper argued that in order to fully understand a settlement in its urban form, its resilience throughout various periods of history, its status, its economic and social embedment into its surroundings, or its relationship to imperial and private agency – or the lack of all or any of these – one has to consult the subtexts of historical events, geographical circumstances, or global and regional developments, due to which the respective settlement came into being and was shaped. It is not necessarily important what to call settlements – their development still needs to be explained irrespective of how we label them; and, in fact, the development up to the point at which a settlement received a label is very much part of the explanatory process.

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¹⁰¹ This also applies to Troesmis, see reference 8 above.

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