

RATIARIA – WRITTEN SOURCES, HISTORY, URBAN TERRITORY AND BORDERS DURING THE PRINCIPATE AND THE DOMINATE

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The name is interpreted by most historians as a raft or a small ship (*ratis*).

Here are some more important references of the settlement:

Claudius Prolemaeus, III, 9, 3 - Ῥατιαρία Μυσῶν, κολωνία; VIII, 11, 5 - ...τῆς δέ Μυσίας τῆς ἄνω ἠ΄ Ῥατιαρία;

Itinerarium Antonini Augusti, 219, 1 - Ratiaria, leg. XIII G.G. (sic !);

Tabula Peutingeriana - Ratiaris XII - Remetodia;

Notitia Dignitatum, or. XLII, 43 – Praefectus classis Ratiarensis (ЛИБИ:249);

Excerpta e Prisco. De conventione inter Hunnos et Imperium Orientale (fr.3, HGM, I p.281, 23; 318, 32) - τῆ Ῥατιαρία... μεγίστη καὶ πολαθρόπων;

De itinere Maximini - Ῥατιαρίας.

Codex Iustinianus IV, 33, 5; VI, 59, 8; VIII, 13, 21 - Retiariae (ЛИБИ: 32; Beševliev, V. 1970:118); I dem AA. et CC. Vito. Res obligates exterus debito soluto liberando datum peter, non earum dominium adipidci potet. S.,III, k. Nov. Retiariae CC.conss. (294) (VIII, 13, 21, p.341);

Hieroclis Synecdemus, 655, 2 - Ῥαζαρία ;

Theophilactus Simocatta, I, 8 - Ῥατηρίαν;

Procopius, De aedificiis, IV, 6 - Ῥατιαρίας πόλεως; CIL, III, 7429, 8 - Ulp(iae) Ratiar(iae) ex Moesia superiore; CIL, III, 14 217 - Col(onia) Ulp(ia) Rati(aria); CIL, VI, 32624 - Retiaria

In 29 BC Bastarnae and Daci crossed the Danube and invaded far to the south. They reached the field by Kyustendil (South-Western Bulgaria). *M. Licinius Crassus*, grand-son of the triumvir *Crassus*, invaded from provincia Macedonia into the territory of the Denteletai where the newly arrived settled. He conquered everything and chased the barbarians to the great European river. This was achieved by a sharp march along the river valleys of Nishava and Timok towards the Danube. The Romans surrounded and defeated them; *Crassus* alone even killed their leader - *Deldo*. Those who survived the massacre found shelter in some island fortress. Its location is disputable - somewhere around the mouth of Tsibritsa River, on a small Danubian island or at the very site where much later the Roman colony of *Ratiaria* would be founded.

Up to now, the dispute why the conquered territory was called “*Moesia*” by the Romans, respectively - provincia Moesia - has not been settled once and for all. It is assumed that it was the first tribe to be in a more significant military contact with the Romans; or that this was the largest tribe that later on gave its name to the newly founded Roman province. Many believe that North-Western Bulgaria is a great part of the region inhabited by the Triballi (*Triballoi*).

There is a view that around Ratiaria lived the tribes of the *Moesi*; south of them were the *Treeres*, and east of them - the *Triballi*. To the west, but further, was the Celtic tribe *Scordisci minores*. Recently in Bulgarian historiography a new idea is promoted. It is very likely that *M. Crassus* did not know against whom he was fighting at that time. He was using older maps from which it was understood that the *Moesi* were settled there. *Strabo* (*Strabo*, VII, 32, 2) presumes that the *Moesi* as well as the *Getae*, occupied the lands south of the *Istar* (Danube), but also territories on the other side of the river to the north. According to *Cassius Dio*, LI, 27, 21, “*Moesi*” is a collective term including the multitude of tribes between the Danube and the Balkan, as the larger ones were *Moesi*, *Getae* and *Dardani*.

However, attention should be paid on the following fact that is subject to future serious studies. In today’s region of Vidin there are neither Thracian tumuli nor votive tablets of the Thracian Horseman. There must be archaeological research of the region east of *Timacus* River towards the rivers of *Almus* and *Cebus* by studying the museum inventories in this area. It is possible that some mixed population inhabited this region during the 1st century BC. It should be studied whether the *Scordisci* had any influence in this area.

The region around *Ratiaria* falls within the borders of the newly founded province of *Moesia* (12-16 AD). We know very little about this part of *Moesia* (the region of Vidin). There is a supposition that by the village of Negovantsi, north of the city of Vidin, was deployed *cohors I Cisipadensium* (CIL, XVI, 39). In *Ratiaria* and *Dorticum* (the village of Vrav, Vidin region, on the Serbian border) have been found bricks with stamps of *cohors I Cretum*. We don’t know whether outfits of this auxiliary unit stationed there because only few discovered stamps don’t provide any certainty for serious conclusions. This unit is considered by Serbian scholars to be stationed at *Timacum Minus* (today’s Ravna in Serbia). We believe that during the 1st c. in Ratiaria there was no legion stationed (perhaps an outfit of *legio VII Claudia* ?).

Past question, during the rule of Claudius, by *Ratiaria* was built-up a section of the Danubian riverside road by outfits of IV Scythian and V Macedonian legions. This area later was controlled by the western Moesian legions - especially by VII Claudian.

In the late fall of 86 AD *Moesia* was divided into *Moesia Superior* and *Moesia Inferior*; the river *Kebros*, *Ciabrus fluvius* served as a border between the two provinces. *Ratiaria* fell in *Moesia Superior*, near the border. The capital was *Viminacium* (Kostolac) in today’s Serbia.

Through *Ratiaria* passes the important Danubian road from *Singidunum* (Belgrade) to the Danube’s delta. Another road is *Ratiaria - Combustica* (Kladorub, Vidin region) - *Naissus*. Very important is the road passing through three provinces - *Ratiaria (Moesia Superior)* - *Montana (Moesia Inferior)* - *Serdica (Thracia)*.

Colonia Ulpia Traiana Ratiaria, founded between 106 and 112 AD, has its urban territory, which is somehow revealed mainly by the discovered epigraphic materials. The town represents an important roadside and customs station, belonging to *Portorium Illyrici*.

During Domitian’s wars (81-96 AD) and the large-scale military activities and battles of Trajan (98-117) against the Daci, *Ratiaria* somehow remained in the background of the hostilities. In both cases there were fronts far to the east from this site or to the north-east, across the Danube, but not so distant locations.

Under Hadrian some changes in the military doctrine of the Lower Danube took place. The lands west of *castellum Dimum* (Belene) no longer lay opposite enemy lands. On the other side of the Danube the new province of *Dacia* had already been founded. Later, it was divided into *provincia trium Daciarum*. Facing *Ratiaria* is located *Dacia Inferior*. Thus, relatively peaceful times followed until 170-171 AD. Not surprisingly the Upper Moesian IV Flavian and VII Claudian legions were stationed quite far to the west from here. During the great invasion of the *Kostobokoi* (in 170-171) in *Moesia Inferior*, *Thracia*, *Macedonia* and even towards *Ahaea*, a number of raids have been established. The most western barbarian aggression is related to attack against the lands along the road *Ratiaria - Naissus* - the stream of *Axios River* (Vardar) - and from there to *Thessaloniki* and even further south to the Aegean Sea.

A century later, under Gallienus (253-260) and definitely under Aurelian (270-275) the army and the Romanized population from the Dacian lands would be evacuated south of the Danube and mainly settled in the area around *Ratiaria* as well as in other nearby localities.

The newly founded province was called *Dacia Ripensis*. It was not founded before 274 AD (for instance, *Scythia* and the neighbor *Moesia Secunda* were organized between July 21, 286 and March 1, 293). We should not forget an inscription from 282 AD, where the two new provinces are mentioned - *Dacia Ripensis* and *Dacia Mediterranea*. The two Danube colonies - *colonia Ulpia Traiana Ratiaria* и *colonia Ulpia Oecensium* - fell in the first province. However, *Ratiaria* was chosen for its capital.

In the beginning of September, 294 AD, Diocletian started a great tour along the right bank of the Danube, starting from *Singidunum* (Belgrade). Perhaps around October 8-10 he stayed in *Ratiaria*. From *Notitia Dignitatum*, or. XLII we know the location in *Dacia Ripensis* of some units, commanded by: *Praefectus legionis tertiaedecimae Geminae - Ratiaria*; *Praefectus classis Ratianensis (Ratiarensis)*.

Ratiaria was an important religious Christian centre - there is information about the bishops *Paulinus* (340), *Sylvester* (340-346) and especially the theologian *Palladius* (346-381), who wrote in *Ratiaria* many religious treatises on Arianism. There are also records about an unknown (from 424 AD) and about presbyter *Paul* (5th c.).

In 441 or 442 Huns invaded *Sirmium*, *Naissus*, *Margos*, *Ratiaria*, even far southwards - *Philippopolis* and *Hadrianopolis*. In 586 the Avars attacked massively and with great efforts entered *Bononia* and *Ratiaria*.