

# DEITIES IN TRAJAN'S AND MARCUS AURELIUS' COLUMN

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**Abstract:** In his paper the author deals with the deities depicted on Trajan's and Marcus Aurelius' Column with a special regard to the cult of Danuvius/Danube and the winged and bearded god of the rain miracle. The cult of Danuvius is rarely attested epigraphically (and not before the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD) and it must be connected to Trajan's campaign against the Dacians. The rain god is iconographically unique but a figure of a river god among the Dionysiac relief panels of the theatre in Perge dated to Marcus Aurelius' reign can be its first parallel.

**Keywords:** Trajan's and Marcus Aurelius' Column, deities depicted in the columns, Marcus Aurelius' rain miracle, the cult of Danuvius

It is well known that Roman deities/personifications appear in Trajan's and Marcus Aurelius' Column. The figure of Victoria divides the campaigns in the middle of the shafts (scenes LXXVIII and LV), at the beginning the river-god Danuvius is observing the Roman troops crossing the river in both columns (scenes III). In scenes XXXVIII and CL of Trajan's Column the figure of Night (*Nox*) can most probably be seen. Jupiter is helping with his thunderbolt the Romans during the first battle against the Dacians (scene XXIV). All gods are on the Romans' side, the darkness of the Night is covering the Roman troops, the Danuvius is protecting the Romans crossing the river (cf. the turbulent river as the Dacians' allies are crossing [scene XXXI]). During the lightning miracle of Marcus Aurelius only the thunderbolt can be seen as it destroys the siege-tower of the Quadi (scene XI). Later, the mysterious figure of the Rain god appears to help the thirsty Roman soldiers and to destroy the Barbarians (scene XVI). In my paper I wish to deal with the figures (and cult) of the river-god Danuvius and the gods of the weather miracles in both columns.

## DANUVIUS AND HIS CULT

First, the deity named Danuvius appears in the age of Trajan without any doubt in connection with Trajan's Dacian campaigns.<sup>1</sup> The first where he was depicted is the badly damaged relief of the Tabula Traiana in the Iron Gate (CIL III 8967) around 100 A. D. where the kneeling naked male river-god can be seen below the *tabula ansata*. The figure of Danuvius as I have mentioned appears on both Trajan's and Marcus Aurelius' Column. In scene III of Trajan's one the half-naked, bearded old river-god with long hair rising from the waves in a cave shown from the back (his face depicted in profile) is benevolently watching the Roman troops crossing the river in a double pontoon bridge (*Fig. 1*).<sup>2</sup> In his hair reed can be observed. In his left hand *himation* rising from the waves can be seen, his extended right is below the water. In scene III of the Antonine Column a very similar figure can be detected (obvi-

<sup>1</sup> PWRE IV (1901) 2132–2133, LIMC III (1986) 343.

<sup>2</sup> CICHORIUS 1896, 27; LEHMANN-HARTLEBEN 1926, 112; GAUER 1977, 23, 46; LEPPER–FRERE 1988, 47, 50, SETTIS 1988, 164.



Fig. 1. Danuvius in Trajan's Column (after Cichorius)



Fig. 2. Danuvius in Marcus Aurelius' Column

ously imitates the one on Trajan's Column with minor changes<sup>3</sup>) but there is no *himation*, with his extended right hand above the waves of the river, with his left he is leaning against a rock (Fig. 2).<sup>4</sup> The reclining figure of the river-god appears on the reverse of several coins (*aurei* and *denarii*) struck by Trajan (BMC III 84–85, 395–399) (Fig. 3). His latest representation is depicted on a medallion of Constantine (327–333) from Rome where on the reverse (RIC VII 298) the same bearded figure with the legend DANUVIVS can be seen below the bridge built by the emperor (together with the counter fortification Constantiniana Dafne) as a part of province Dacia was re-occupied (cf. RIC VII 36–37, Constantinople).<sup>5</sup>

Here, we have to mention that the river Danube had two different ancient names: *Ister/Istros* used by the Greeks and *Danuvius* known by the Romans.<sup>6</sup> The two names were also used at the same time, as Strabo and Appian remark the upper course of the river was identified with *Danuvius* and the lower one with *Istrus* from the Iron Gate (VII.3.13 and III. 22). Naturally, *Ister* was also worshipped as a river-god, the son of *Oceanus* and *Tethys* in the Greek mythology (cf. *Hes. Theog.* 337–339) and his cult also survived the Roman occupation.<sup>7</sup> *Istrus* was also depicted as a bearded river-god but with two horns in a Hellenistic (around 200 B. C.) coin of *Histria*, a town named

<sup>3</sup> On the first scenes see BECKMANN 2011, 89–98.

<sup>4</sup> *Marcus-Säule*, 42; CAPRINO *et al.* 1955, 82; COARELLI 2008, 114.

<sup>5</sup> A. ALFÖLDI: Die Donaubücke Constantins des Grossen und verwandte historische Darstellungen auf spätrömischen Münzen. ZIN36 (1926) 161–167.

<sup>6</sup> P. ANREITER: Die vorrömischen Namen Pannoniens. *Archaeolingua SerMin* 16. Budapest 2001, 229–238. On the ancient sources of the Danube see B. FEHÉR–P. KOVÁCS: *Fontes Pannoniae Antiquae*. 1.: Early geographers – The period of the Roman conquest. Budapest 2005, 12–26.

<sup>7</sup> PWRE IX (1916) 2269; LIMC V (1990) 804–806.

after the river.<sup>8</sup> It is important because in the Roman Imperial period a long a row of local mints of Histria and Nicopolis ad Istrum (a polis in Thrace founded after Trajan's Dacian victory with the Imperial Beiname Ulpia: cf. *Amm. Marc.* 31.5.16, *Jord. Get.* 18.101) are known from the reign of Antoninus Pius to Gordian III (Histria: Iulia Domna, Elagabalus, Tranquillina, Gordian: LIMC V (1990) 805 Nr. 21–25, Nicopolis ad Istrum: Antoninus Pius, Commodus, Septimius Severus, Caracalla, Macrinus, Diadumenianus, Elagabalus, Gordian III: LIMC V (1990) 805 Nr. 2–20) where on the reverse the deity appears again. In our point of view the most important is that iconographically the deity was exactly depicted so as Danuvius on the Trajan's coins, a bearded, in water reclining half-naked river-god with *himation*, holding branch/reed or *cornucopia* in his hands or leaning his hand on an amphore (out of which water flows) or ship's prow. It is also clearly proven on a Pannonian gem that Istrus and Danuvius were the same as the same river-god was depicted with the inscription below: Δανούβις (CIGP 145) (Fig. 4). On several coins including the gem the same arch/floating cloak symbolizing a cave can be seen over the deity as on the Columns. As all these representations can be dated to the second century or later, the prototype of them must be connected with Trajan's coinage and his column. Naturally, the iconography of Danuvius does not significantly differ from that of other river deities.<sup>9</sup>

Epigraphically, the cult of Danuvius is attested only in Pannonia inferior and Raetia (see Addendum).<sup>10</sup> All three Pannonian altars of Danuvius belonged to the official cult,<sup>11</sup> the first one was found in the governor's palace in the Hajógyári island in Aquincum and the dedicator, Haterius Callinicus was most probably a freed-slave of Haterius Saturninus, the governor of Pannonia inferior under Marcus Aurelius (Tit. Aq. 46).<sup>12</sup> The second altar was erected by the Vetulenus Apronianus, the commander of the legio II adiutrix (Tit. Aq. 45) after 214 A. D.<sup>13</sup> The third altar from Mursa dedicated to Danuvius and Dravus was erected by the otherwise unknown legate of Elagabalus whose names were erased after their *damnatio memoriae* (CIL III 10263).<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, the cult of Danuvius in Raetia can only be connected with private persons but the CIL III 5863 from Ristissen erected *in honorem domus divinae* shows also this official character. Similarly to the cult of Danuvius, all bigger navigable rivers in Pannonia were worshipped mainly in the ports of bigger cities such as in Poetovio and Mursa along the Dravus and Neviodunum and Andautonia along the Savus: dedications to Dravus: CIL III 10263, AIJ 267 and dedications to Savus and Adsalluta: CIL III 3896, 4009, 5138, 11684, AIJ 27, 255, KNEZOVIC 2010, 187–193, Nr. 1 (cf. AIJ 557 as well). The cult of the river-god Savus (in most cases associated with the local Celtic native deity Adsalluta) was limited to the upper course of the Save in the territory of SW Pannonia (Andautonia, Neviodunum), Emona and SE Noricum and as protectors of the fluvial navigation they were worshipped by local boatmen and merchants but their cult never belonged to the *vota publica*.<sup>15</sup>



Fig. 3. The figure of a Danuvius on Trajan's coin



Fig. 4. Danuvius on a Pannonian gem

<sup>8</sup> IMMHOFF-BLUMER 1923, 218, 110–111.

<sup>9</sup> J. A. OSTROWSKI: *The Personifications of Rivers in Greek and Roman Art*. Warszawa–Krakow 1991.

<sup>10</sup> On the reading of the CIL III 14359<sup>27</sup> altar from Vindobona see G. ALFÖLDY: *Eine umstrittene Altarinschrift aus Vindobona*. *Tyche* 26 (2011) 1–22 (with an earlier erroneously restored dedication to Danuvius).

<sup>11</sup> G. ALFÖLDY: *Geschichte des religiösen Lebens in Aquincum*. *ActaArchHung* 13 (1961) 105, 107.

<sup>12</sup> FITZ 1993, 527, Nr. 314.

<sup>13</sup> FITZ 1993, 1061, Nr. 693.

<sup>14</sup> FITZ 1993, 1035–1036, Nr. 675.

<sup>15</sup> M. ŠAŠEL KOS: *Savus and Adsalluta*. *AV* 45 (1994) 99–122 = *Pre-Roman divinities of the Eastern Alps and Adriatic*. *Situla* 38. Ljubljana 1999, 93–119; KNEZOVIC 2010.



Coming to conclusions the cult of Danuvius spread after (and based on) Trajan's Dacian campaign (and his column) only in the Danubian provinces and his cult never lost his official character, esp. in Pannonia. It is not surprising that as the mint in Siscia was established in 262 by Gallienus,<sup>16</sup> the personification of the town together with the river-gods Savus and Colapis (Kulpa) were depicted on gold coins and medaillons of Gallienus<sup>17</sup> and on the reverse of several *antoniniani* of the Pannonian emperor Probus with the legend SISCIA PROBI AVG (RIC V 764–766).

#### JUPITER AND THE RAIN GOD

It is probably less known that besides the famous miracles of the Antonine Column Trajan's one also depicts a divine help for the Romans. In scene XXIV during the first battle against the Dacians personally the bearded Jupiter Tonans appears wrapped in a cloak floated by the wind (representing the clouds and the storm) and he is hurling his thunderbolt with his right hand (now it is missing) at the Barbarians (*Fig. 5*).<sup>18</sup> His gesture is very similar to the Roman soldiers below him. Trajan on the Great Trajanic Frieze on Constantine's arch appears with the same gesture as Jupiter as he intends to throw his spear against the Dacians.<sup>19</sup> Naturally, it cannot be decided whether it was only a storm with lightning during the battle used by the imperial propaganda in order to associate Trajan with the supreme god and to show his divine support or the Dacians were really struck by light-



Fig. 5. Jupiter Tonans in Trajan's Column (after Cichorius)

ning. It is a fact that Roman emperors from Domitian were associated with Jupiter shown on coin reverse holding his most important symbol, the thunderbolt as the symbol of supremacy and protection.<sup>20</sup> On the left, country side attic frieze of the arch at Benevento Iuppiter Optimus Maximus gives his thunderbolt to the Optimus princeps entrusting him power on Earth as he arrives at the town.<sup>21</sup> In Xiphilinus' epitoma of the book 68 of Cassius Dio there is no mention on this event (68.8), perhaps the *epitomator* wanted to keep other details (the use of the emperor's cloth as bandage at the funeral and altar in honour of the fallen Roman soldiers). On the other hand, the

<sup>16</sup> A. ALFÖLDI: Siscia. Vorarbeiten zu einem Corpus der in Siscia geprägten Römer Münzen. I.: Die Prägungen des Gallienus. Budapest 1931.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 47, Nr. 2, 14.

<sup>18</sup> CICHORIUS 1896, 113, 116–117; VULPE 1971; LEPPARD-FRERE 1988, 68, 71; SETTIS 1988, 129, 288; LIMC VIII (1997) 451, Nr. 342.

<sup>19</sup> A.-M. LEANDER-TOUATI: The Great Trajanic Frieze: the Study of a Monument and of the Mechanisms of Message Transmission in Roman Art. AIRRS IV.45. Stockholm 1987, 56–57; J. BENNETT: Trajan. Optimus Princeps. A life and times. London 1997, 159.

<sup>20</sup> A. ALFÖLDI: Die monarchische Repräsentation im römischen Kaiserreich. Darmstadt 1970, 238–239; J. R. FEARS: The cult of Jupiter and Roman imperial ideology. In: ANRW II 17/2. Berlin–New York 1981, 79; *id.*: The theology of victory at Rome: Approaches and problems. In: ANRW II 17/2. Berlin–New York 1981, 817; J. LEBERL: Domitian und die Dichter: Poesie als Medium der Herrschaftsdarstellung. Hypomnemata 154. Göttingen 2004, 51; D. N. SCHOWALTER: The Emperor and the Gods: Images from the Time of Trajan. Harvard dissertations in religion 28. Minneapolis 1993, 109–111.

<sup>21</sup> K. FITTSCHEN: Das Bildprogramm des Trajansbogens zu Benevent. AA 87 (1972) 778–782.

explicit figure of Jupiter cannot only be identified with a storm during the battle or with the general support of Olympus it seems storm and thunderbolts helped the Roman troops. Later it was identified with a divine intervention in the form of a weather miracle as so often earlier in the Roman history (e.g. the rain that keeps Hannibal from marching on Rome: *Oros.* 4.17.5, the rain helps Sulla at the siege of the Acropolis of Athens: *Plut. Sull.* 14.11, his stormy funeral: 38.4, Cn. Hosidius Geta in his campaign against Mauri: *Dio* LX.9.3–5, Corbulo at the occupation of Artaxata: *Tac. Ann.* XIII.41.3 (Tacitus calls the event *miraculum velut numine oblatum*), Hadrian brings rain when he visits Africa: *HistAug* v. *Hadr.* 22.14, the legate of Numidia supporting the legitimate emperor, Maximinus Thrax, against the Gordiani is helped by storm: *HistAug* v. *Gord.* 16.2, the victory in the battle by the river Frigidus is due to the wind caused by the prayer of Theodosius: *Oros.* 7.35.12–14 cf. *Rufinus* H. E. 11.33, *Socrates* H. E. V.25, *Sozomenus* H. E. VII.24, and *Ambrosius In psalm.* 36.25, *Claudianus De tert.cons.* Hon. 88–98, *Theoderetus* H. E. V.2).<sup>22</sup> According to Pausanias 10.23.1, the Celts who took Delphi under siege were repelled by Apollo's thunderbolt, and according to Propertius 3.13.51–54 their commander, Brennus was struck to death. The most interesting parallels of the events appear in Cassius Dio's work, among the events of the civil war of 193–197, which had to be part of the Severan imperial propaganda with certainty, and which compared the divine favour of Severus to that of his fictive father, Marcus Aurelius.<sup>23</sup> In the decisive battle at Issus against Pescennius Niger Severus' troops are also helped by storm and rain (LXXIV.7.6–7), and Dio attributes that again to divine help: μέγιστον δ' αὕτη ἡ συντυχία τοῦ γενομένου τοῖς μὲν θάρσος ὡς καὶ ταρὰ τοῦ θεοῦ βοηθουμένοις. During his first Parthian campaign, Septimius Severus personally finds water for his thirsty soldiers in the desert beyond the Euphrates (LXXV.1.2–3). Another miracle happens at the same time (196 AD), the commanders of the turbulent Scythae (Goths or free Dacians) are struck to death by lightning, so they kept the peace (LXXV.3.1): The Scythians were in a mood for fighting at this time; but while they were consulting together, thundering and lightning accompanied by rain, suddenly broke over them, and thunderbolt fell, killing their three chief men, and this restrained them (translation by E. Cary).<sup>24</sup> In my opinion this event can be an allusion to the miracle on the Trajan's Column as well.

In the ancient written sources on Marcus Aurelius' Marcomannic-Sarmatian wars,<sup>25</sup> two events were of the utmost significance.<sup>26</sup> During the first war (between A.D. 169 and 175), divine intervention – a lightning and rain miracle – saved the Roman troops, surrounded by the enemy and suffering from a water shortage. Thunderbolts struck the Germans while the rain soothed the Romans' suffering. The Column of Marcus Aurelius depicted the miracles in two different scenes during the first Roman campaign in the Barbaricum (scenes XI and XVI) that clearly proves the lightning and rain miracle were two different events.<sup>27</sup> Among the written sources only the account of the *vita Marci* in the *Historia Augusta* separates them: 24.4. By his prayers he summoned a thunderbolt from heaven against a war engine of the enemy, and successfully besought rain for his men when they were suffering from thirst (translation of D. Magie).<sup>28</sup> The word *machinamentum* can only be translated as 'siege-tower'. During the former event the enemy besieged a Roman fort and their siege-tower was destroyed by a thunder-struck. During the latter one the thirsty Roman soldiers were saved by a storm and lightning bolts destroyed the Barbarians. The miracles became extremely famous following the heavy dispute by whom the help of God (and which god) was provoked. Several versions existed beside each other and the earlier research focused mainly on this topic. According to the earliest and official version, naturally the emperor himself reached God's support and the god can most probably be identified with Jupiter as a passage of Tertullian shows: *Ad Scapulam* 4 *Tunc et populus acclamans Deo deorum in Jovis nomine Deo nostro testimonium reddidit*. Claudian explicitly mentions the god as Jupiter Tonans: VI. cons. Hon. 349–350 *omne Tonantis / Obsequium Marci mores potuere mereri*. The author of book XII of the *Oracula Sibyllina* and Themistius must have thought also on Jupiter too as they mentioned the god as θεὸς οὐράνιος

<sup>22</sup> KLEIN 1989, 131–133; KOVÁCS 2009, 145–146.

<sup>23</sup> Z. RUBIN: *Civil-War Propaganda and Historiography*. Bruxelles 1980, 66–74; A. R. BIRLEY: *Septimius Severus: the African Emperor*. London 1999<sup>2</sup>, 113–114, 117.

<sup>24</sup> ἐν δὲ τῷ καιρῷ τούτῳ τοὺς Σκύθας πολημειούντας βρονταί τε καὶ ἀστραπαὶ μετ' ὀμβρον καὶ κεραυνοὶ βουλευομένοις σφίσιν ἐξαίφνης ἐμπεσόντες, καὶ τοὺς πρώτους αὐτῶν τρεῖς ἀνδρας ἀποκτείναντες, ἐπέσχον.

<sup>25</sup> Summarily see ZWIKKER 1941; BIRLEY 1987, 159–210; KOVÁCS 2009, 201–263.

<sup>26</sup> PETERSEN 1894, HARNACK 1894, DOMASZEWSKI 1894, MOMMSEN 1895, PETERSEN 1895, GEFFCKEN 1899, WEBER 1910, GUEY 1948a, GUEY 1948b, GUEY 1949, BARTA 1968, FOWDEN 1987, SAGE 1987, KLEIN 1989, MAFFEI 1990, PEREA YÉBENES 2002, ISRAELOWICH 2008, KOVÁCS 2009.

<sup>27</sup> *Marcus-Säule*, WEGNER 1931, ZWIKKER 1941, CAPRINO et al. 1955, WOLFF 1990, WOLFF 1993, SCHEID-HUET 2000, COARELLI 2008, FERRIS 2009, DEPEYROT 2010, BECKMANN 2011.

<sup>28</sup> *Fulmen de caelo precibus suis contra hostium machinamentum extorsit, su<i>s</i> pluvia impetrata, cum siti laborarent.*

or ó ζωής δοτήρ (*Or. Sib.* 12.199 and *Oratio* XV.191d). Another pagan version can be found in Cassius Dio's account (LXXI.8–10). According to his epitoma, there was an Egyptian magician in Marcus Aurelius' court, Arnuphis and his magical practice provoked Hermes Aerijs' support. The existence and presence of Arnuphis in the region is epigraphically attested by an altar dedicated to Isis from Aquileia (AÉp 1934, 245 = Inscr. Aq. 234). According to the latest pagan version (attested only in the *Suda* I 334) Julian, the Chaldean magician was responsible for the miracle. In Eusebius' (222.1) and Hieronymus' *Chronicon* (206i) the future emperor, Helvius Pertinax commanded the troops during the miracle (not attested elsewhere). At the same time with the earliest pagan version (i.e. at the end of the second century) the Christians made their own one (cf. Apollinaris in Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* V.5. and *Tert. Ap.* V.25, *Ad Scap.* 4). According to them, the prayer of the Christian soldiers of the legio XII fulminata from Melitene provoked God's help. Based on these, the question of Who cannot exactly be answered as several versions existed at the same time.

The study of scenes XI and XVI of the Column of Marcus Aurelius does not support to decide the dispute either. In scene XI a Roman fort besieged by the Germans can be seen and their siege-tower is being destroyed by a thunderbolt.<sup>29</sup> No deity can be seen in the sky, only his attribute, the thunderbolt appears with fire. Below the collapsing siege machine corpses of the Barbarians are depicted (*Fig. 6*). The scene is so similar to the description in the *vita Marci* (24.4) that several researchers came to the conclusion that the author of biography could have consulted and followed the scene of the column.<sup>30</sup> Besides the Roman fort the emperor executes a sacrifice, highly likely the *fulgur conditum*.<sup>31</sup> Scene XVI was divided by the figure of the old bearded, winged rain god whom water streams down from. Below his outstretched (longer) right hand the thirsty Roman soldiers survived the battle, below his left the corpses of the Barbarians and their horses can be seen who were washed away in a stream of water (*Fig. 7–8*).<sup>32</sup> No lightning can be seen. Despite this fact and A. v. Domaszewski's opinion<sup>33</sup> the scene matches well with Cassius Dio's description (LXI.8, 10): the column compresses the events into one scene, mainly the result of the miracle can be observed. The Barbarians are already dead, the Romans are not thirsty any more, they are defending themselves with their shields against the rain but the first Roman soldier near the emperor's tent is still praying with extended arms, another one watering his horse with his shield turned upside down (soldiers Nr. 9, 10) cf. *Dio* LXXI.10.1). The emperor is not visible in scene XVI either but his tent can be seen in scene XV and the *deditio* in scene XVII (also mentioned by *Dio*: LXXI.10.4) happens before the emperor.

The portrayal of the bearded, winged rain god is a new feature from an iconographic point of view as well, and corresponds to no other depiction of Jupiter or other deity.<sup>34</sup> On a bronze coin of Antoninus Pius from Ephesus the figure of Jupiter Pluvius/Jupiter Hyetius enthroned on Mount Koressos holding a thunderbolt in his left hand is represented as shower is descending from his right (BMC Ionia 236) (*Fig. 9*).<sup>35</sup> If the artist of the column would have wanted to depict Jupiter Pluvius a similar representation should have been waited for. It is also very unlikely that the old frightening figure could have been identified with the young, wing-footed Hermes Aerijs or his supposed Egyptian equivalent Thot-Shou (whose cult is not attested in the Imperium Romanum)<sup>36</sup> as he was depicted (with his normal Graeco-Roman attributes as the *caduceus* etc.) on the coins (in my opinion wrongly) connected to the rain miracle struck between the end of 172 and 175 A. D. with the legend RELIG AVG (end of 172–173: RIC III (1930) Nrs. 285–285a: *denarius*, 308–309: *denarius*, 1070–1073: *dupondius*, 1074–1076 (*aedicula* depictions),

<sup>29</sup> *Marcus-Säule*, 56–57, 111–112; ZWIKKER 1941, 262–263; CAPRINO *et al.* 1955, 86; COARELLI 2008, 50–51, 135; BECKMANN 2011, 133–134.

<sup>30</sup> BECKMANN 2011, 140. Cf. the different opinions PETERSEN 1894, 82–83; HARNACK 1894, 871; MOMMSEN 1895, 102; PETERSEN 1895, 458, 465; *Marcus-Säule*, 56, 112; GEFFCKEN 1899, 262; SCHWENDEMANN 1923, 78–80; ZWIKKER 1941, 214; ROOS 1943, 18–19; BARTA 1968, 86; BERWIG 1970, 143–144; SCHINDLER-HORSTKOTTE 1986, 62; BIRLEY 1987, 171–172, 123–124; KLEIN 1989, 133–135; WOLFF 1989, 41, Anm. 17; WOLFF 1990, 16–17; MAFFEI 1990, 336; MOTSCHMANN 2002, 133, Anm. 400; KOVÁCS 2009, 60–67; J. HAAS: Die Umweltkrise des 3. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. im Nordwesten des Imperium Romanum. Interdisziplinäre Studien zu einem Aspekt der allgemeinen Reichskrise im Bereich der beiden Germaniae sowie

der Belgica und der Raetia. *Geographica historica* 22. Stuttgart 2006, 58; G. W. ADAMS: Marcus Aurelius in the *Historia Augusta* and Beyond. Plymouth 2013, 114.

<sup>31</sup> MAFFEI 1990, 352–354.

<sup>32</sup> *Marcus-Säule*, 58–59, 107–109, 112–113; ZWIKKER 1941, 206–218, 263; CAPRINO *et al.* 1955, 88–89; COARELLI 2008, 51, 140–142; BECKMANN 2011, 134–140.

<sup>33</sup> DOMASZEWSKI 1894.

<sup>34</sup> HAMBERG 1945, 153–154; LIMC VIII (1997) 451, Nr. 343; BIANCHI BANDINELLI 2002, 324–325.

<sup>35</sup> W. STRONG-GIANELLI: La scultura romana da Augusto à Constantino. Firenze 1926, 270; COOK 1940, 333; FOWDEN 1987, 86.

<sup>36</sup> E. g. BIRLEY 1987, 173; M. GRANT: The Antonines: the Roman Empire in Transition. London–New York 1996, 43.





Fig. 6. The lightning miracle in Marcus Aurelius' Column

1077–1082: *sestertius*, second half of 174: 309: *denarius*, 175: 298: *denarius*).<sup>37</sup> The figure of the rain god resembles the description of Notus given by Ovid the closest.

*Metam.* I.264–269:

Forth flies the South-wind with dripping wings,  
his awful face shrouded in pitchy darkness.

His beard is heavy with rain, water flows in streams down his hoary locks,  
dark clouds rest upon his brow, while his wings and garments drip with dew.

And, when he presses the low-hanging clouds with his broad hands,  
a crashing sound goes forth, and next the dense clouds pour forth their rain ...

(Translation by F. J. Miller).<sup>38</sup>

Based on the similarities first observed by E. Petersen<sup>39</sup> Domaszewski came to the conclusion that figure of the rain god must have been Notus.<sup>40</sup> The problem, however is that while winds are indeed portrayed with a beard and wings as Boreas, Notus normally appears as a young, beardless figure (cf. e.g. the Tower of Winds

<sup>37</sup> Based on this fact another hypothesis is given by researchers who held Cassius Dio's account reliable: the earlier official version with Hermes Aereus (appeared in the emperor's coinage) would have been changed soon around 175 A. D. and the column would reflect already a new, neutral version: GUEY 1948b, 57–59; RUBIN 1979, 367–375.

<sup>38</sup> ... *madidis Notus evolat alis*,

*terribilem piceaectus caligine vultum;  
barba gravis nimbis, canis fluit unda capillis;  
fronte sedent nebulae, rorant pennaeque sinusque.  
utque manu lata pendentia nubila pressit,  
fit fragor: hinc densi funduntur ab aethere nimbi ...*

<sup>39</sup> *Marcus-Säule*, 59.

<sup>40</sup> DOMASZEWSKI 1895, 123, Anm. 2.





Figs 7–8. The rain miracle in Marcus Aurelius' Column



in Athens).<sup>41</sup> This fact suggested the *communis opinio* that the depiction of the rain god is allegorical. The creator of the visual message of the column evidently did not wish to identify the figure with any specific Roman god as it was pointed out by Th. Mommsen first.<sup>42</sup> In my opinion there is no need to identify the figure with an otherwise unknown 'Sondergott' called *Pluvius Imbricator* either.<sup>43</sup> This neutral point of view is fully understandable if one considers the emperor's Stoic philosophy known from his *Meditations*, and what could have been written by him in the oft-cited report/epistle to the Senate (*Dio* LXXI.10.5, *Tert. Ap.* V.25, *Eus.* V.5.6, *Eus. Chron.* 222.1 = *Hier. Chron.* 206i, *Oros. Hist.* 7.8–9, Marcus Aurelius' forged epistle: *Corpus apologetarum Christianorum saeculi secundi* I, Jena 1876<sup>3</sup> [repr. Wiesbaden 1969], 246–252). It is also without any doubt that the emperor sent several letters, reports to the senate during the wars as Cassius Dio and the *vita Marci* attest several times (*Dio* LXXI.17, 27, 30.1, *v. Marci* 14.8 cf. also *Fronto* II.3. Haines II. p. 194) but the use of this official document by Christian authors cannot be proven. On the other hand, Tertullian (*Ap.* V.25) and the *vita Marci* (24.4) used a very similar expression, an ablative absolute both can come from a common source, a letter written by the emperor himself: *prec(ation)ibus* ... (of Marcus or the Christian soldiers) *pluvia (imbri) impetrata*. Cassius Dio also mentions that the miracle happened *παρὰ θεοῦ* (LXXI.8.1, 10.5), *οὐκ ἄθεοι* (8.3), *τὸ θεῖον* (8.1). This abstract god suits perfectly Marcus Aurelius as for instance the philosopher emperor following the victory in 171 said the followings to his soldiers: *Dio* LXXI.3.4. *περὶ γὰρ τοῖς αὐταρχίας ὁ θεὸς μόνος κρίνειν δύναται* – for the fate of the sovereignty, Heaven alone could determine that (cf. 24.1). A similar abstract god was mentioned in his *Meditations* several times (cf. 7.9, 8.34, 9.10; 28, 12.2). As Mommsen already pointed out this kind of *θεός* could have been mentioned in the letter of the emperor and the figure of the rain god on the Column could show this neutrality too.<sup>44</sup> In Marcus' *Meditations* there is a reference that in the emperor's opinion which god is responsible for rainmaking<sup>45</sup>:

V.7. A prayer of the Athenians: —

Rain, rain, O dear Zeus,  
down on the ploughed fields  
of the Athenians  
and on the plains.

In truth we ought not to pray at all, or we ought to pray in this simple and noble fashion (translated by George Long).<sup>46</sup>

On Trajan's Column the figure of Jupiter personally appears on the Romans' side but in the miracles on the Antonine Column only the greatest god's attribute, the thunderbolt and the personification of the storm can be seen but both of them can be connected to Jupiter.

In the point of view of the figure of the rain god it is noteworthy to examine the reliefs of the theatre of the Pamphylian Perge that based on the new Turkish excavations was built in the first decades of the second century A. D. Later rich-decorated, three-storeyed *scaenae frons* was added that was preserved in a very good state.<sup>47</sup> In the late Antonine period the first two storeys were built and in the first half of the third c. a third one was added. Each



Fig. 9. The figure of Zeus on Antoninus Pius' coin from Ephesus (after Cook)

<sup>41</sup> LIMC VIII (1997) 186–192.

<sup>42</sup> MOMMSEN 1895, 99–101; ROOS 1943, 17; GUEY 1948a, 108, 118–120; BARTA 1968, 86; RUBIN 1979, 367; KLEIN 1989, 119; ISRAELOWICH 2008, 101; MOTSCHMANN 2002, 138–139; COARELLI 2008, 55–56; KOVÁCS 2009, 150, 167.

<sup>43</sup> J. SCHEID: Sujets religieux et geste rituels figurés sur la Colonne Aurélienne. Questions sur le religion à l'époque du Marc Aurèle. In: SCHEID–HUET 2000, 232–236.

<sup>44</sup> MOMMSEN 1895, 100–101.

<sup>45</sup> On the connection of Zeus/Jupiter to the rain see COOK 1940, 284–881.

<sup>46</sup> V.7. *Εὐχὴ Ἀθηναίων*  
*ὕσον, ὕσον, ὦ φίλε*  
*Ζεῦ, κατὰ τῆς ἀρούρας*  
*τῆς Ἀθηναίων*  
*καὶ τῶν πεδίων.*  
*ἥτοι οὐ δεῖ εὐχεσθαι*  
*ἢ οὕτως ἀπλῶς καὶ ἐλευθέρως.*

<sup>47</sup> INAN *et al.* 2000; ÖZTÜRK 2009.



Fig. 10. Dionysus and his followers on the relief from Perge (after Özgür)

storey was decorated with reliefs and in niche standing statues.<sup>48</sup> In the second and third storeys reliefs depicting the *Gigantomachia* and *Centauiromachia* can be seen<sup>49</sup> but the base of the first storey was decorated with 58 panels (all together 65 m long) showing scenes from the life of Dionysus.<sup>50</sup> The scenes are doubled from the North and the South towards the middle and with minor changes each scene has its own northern/southern equivalent. In panel XXI Dionysus can be seen as he arrives in a ship (together with Pan). In the southern relief the god was greeted by several figures standing on the beach. Next to him a female figure, highly likely a nymph, beside her the drunken Silenus and a Maenad can be seen. Behind the Nymph a bearded figure can be seen who according to J. Inan's interpretation is a '*männliche Gestalt mit Fell und Gesichtsmaske*'. The northern panel follows the southern one with minor changes, for instance the questioned figure is missing. The figure greets Dionysus holding up his right hand; in his left he is holding a badly damaged instrument, probably a rudder. The problem with this interpretation is that it cannot be identified with a fur wrap because it outreaches his hand and depends. The figure's head is damaged but it can clearly be seen that the aged, wild-looking figure does not wear a mask either but he has a kind of diadem and he has no horns (so he cannot be a satyr either). In my opinion the male figure can probably identified with a river-god and his 'fur' is the imitation of water as it is falling down. The most obvious would be to identify him with Cestrus, the river-god of Perge (today Aksu) but he appears in scene I as usually as a younger male figure similarly to the Nymphaeum revealed in the city.<sup>51</sup> It must also be added that as the identification of the story is unclear it remains unknown to where the god arrives. The figure of the river-god can be the closest parallel for the rain god (both of them can be dated to the same period) but in this case the wings are missing. The relief from Perge can confirm M. Pallottino's and R. Bianchi Bandinelli's observation that the figure of the rain god is '*iconograficamente ispirato ai tipi delle divinità marine*'<sup>52</sup> and it is '*una grande imagine alata, tratti più simili a quelli della personificazione di un fiume che di un Giove*'<sup>53</sup> as the face of the Bocca della verità in Rome.<sup>54</sup>

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- <sup>48</sup> ÖZGÜR 2011.
- <sup>49</sup> INAN *et al.* 2000, 336–340; LIMC Supplementum (2009) 1955, 54.
- <sup>50</sup> INAN *et al.* 2000, 322–331; ALANYALI 2009.
- <sup>51</sup> LIMC VI (1992) 19.
- <sup>52</sup> M. PALLOTTINO: L'arte della colonna. In: CAPRINO *et al.* 1955, 54.
- <sup>53</sup> BIANCHI BANDINELLI 2002, 324.
- <sup>54</sup> FERRIS 2009, 84.



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## ADDENDUM

- Dedications to Danuvius  
Pannonia inferior:
1. Tit. Aq. 46 Aquincum  
*Danuvio / Defluenti / Haterius Callinicus vo(tum) / [- - -]V[- - -]*.
  2. Tit. Aq. 45 Aquincum  
*Danuvio / sacrum / [V]etulenus / [A]proni[a]nus / leg(atus) leg(ionis) [II] / [Ad]i(utricis) P(iae) [F(idelis)] / - - - - -*
  3. CIL III 10263 Mursa  
*Danuvio / et Dravo / [[[pro sa]ut[e] et in[columit]a[te(?)]]] / [[[Imp(eratoris) Ca]es(aris) M(arci) Aur(eli) [Antonini div]i]]] / [[[Ant]onini [Magni f]il(ii) [- - -]M]]] / [[[[- - -]I]]] / [[[[- - -]V]]] / [[[[- - -]I]EO[- - -]]] / [[[[- - -]L[- - -]]] / [[[[- - -]S[- - -]]] / [[[leg(atus) Aug(usti)] pr(o) pr(aetore) [- - -]]] / [[[[- - -]V[- - -]]]*.
- Raetia:
4. CIL III 5863 Risstissen  
*In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) / I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) et Danu/vio ex vot/o Primanus / Secundi v(otum) s(olvit) l(aetus) l(ibens) / Muciano et Fabi/[an]o [co(n)s(ulibus)]*.
  5. CIL III 11894 Mengen  
*Aram / Danuvio / Q(uintus) Ver(atius?) Avian/us l(ibens) l(aetus) m(erito) / vo(tum) s(olvit)*.
  6. F. WAGNER: Neue Inschriften aus Raetien. *BRGK* 37–38 (1956–57) Nr. 65 Stepperg  
*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) / Nept(un)o / Dan(uv)io / Tr(ebius) Profe/[ssus - - -] / - - - - -*