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Rivers as Boundaries and "Borderscapes" in Ancient Diplomatic Practice

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Abstract. For the Romans and their Hellenistic contemporaries, rivers served several functions. While rivers were encountered in everyday activities, they also operated, in historical narratives, as points of articulation and as markers of geography and distance. The role rivers played in the negotiation of power and diplomatic activities is worthy of examination. As liminal spaces and potential sites of neutrality, rivers (and islands within them) were used for diplomatic negotiation. Yet the river as boundary was also an important aspect of the negotiation and limitations of (perceived) power and control. Rivers and other natural geographical markers (such as mountains and seas) can be viewed as "borderscapes". Following Costas Constantinou (2020), who uses the term "borderscapes" to examine not only physical and material divisions, but also internal and mental, linguistic and immaterial, this paper will consider rivers as borderscapes and spaces of diplomatic negotiation, in order to provide wider context for the *Iber* river as a potential diplomatic boundary between Rome and Carthage, both in the immediate debates concerning culpability for the outbreak of war and in the later narrative reconstructions.
Keywords: "borderscape"; diplomacy; boundaries; rivers; Roman imperium.

[es] Los ríos como límites y "borderscapes" en la práctica diplomática antigua

Resumen. Para los romanos y sus contemporáneos helenísticos, los ríos cumplían varias funciones. Si bien los ríos se utilizaban en las actividades cotidianas, también servían, en las narraciones históricas, como puntos de articulación y como marcadores geográficos y de distancia. El papel que desempeñaban los ríos en la negociación del poder y las actividades diplomáticas merece ser examinado. Como espacios liminales y potenciales de neutralidad, los ríos (y las islas dentro de ellos) se utilizaban para la negociación diplomática. Sin embargo, el río como límite también era un aspecto importante de la negociación y las limitaciones del poder y el control (percibidos). Los ríos y otros marcadores geográficos naturales (como las montañas y los mares) pueden considerarse como "borderscapes". Siguiendo a Costas Constantinou (2020),

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quien utiliza el término "borderscapes" para examinar no solo las divisiones físicas y materiales, sino también las internas y mentales, las lingüísticas e inmateriales, este artículo considerará los ríos como "borderscapes" y espacios de negociación diplomática, con el fin de proporcionar un contexto más amplio para el río *Iber* como una potencial frontera diplomática entre Roma y Cartago, tanto en los debates inmediatos sobre la culpabilidad por el estallido de la guerra como en las reconstrucciones narrativas posteriores.
Palabras clave: "borderscape"; diplomacia; límites; ríos; *imperium* romano.

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1. Introduction

> As products of the act of separation facilitated by the drawn line in a chosen moment of water, rivers are extraordinary products of human creation.
> da Cunha 2019, 1

Understanding how societies use rivers provides insights into their conception and construction of space, both geographical and social, within their worldview. We should not assume that modern perspectives of, and relations to, bodies of water reflect the same concepts or relationships as those experienced and expressed in antiquity.[2] As Jean-Luc Desnier and Santiago Montero Herrero have demonstrated, rivers in antiquity were imbued with divine and religious characteristics as much as they had political and geographical functions.[3] For many communities of the ancient Mediterranean, rivers served several functions, to which a religious dimension of divine protection or guarantee should not be precluded: as sites of settlement and agricultural practices; for transportation and connectivity; for defence and boundaries; as points of axis and geographical definition; as a line and space of alterity.[4]

The river as a potential site of otherness, negotiation, and boundary is well illustrated in Plutarch's *The Glorious Deeds of Women* (ΓΥΝΑΙΚΩΝ ΑΡΕΤΑΙ) and the story of Chiomara, wife of Ortiagon, leader of the Tolistobogii in Galatia.[5] The episode takes place during the campaign of Gaius Manlius Vulso in Asia Minor in 189 BCE.[6] Chiomara, while a captive, was sexually abused by a

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2 Dan 2018 for ancient perspectives on rivers, and esp. 24-29 for changing and complex perspectives of, and relations to, the environment and rivers over time. Da Cunha 2019, 10 stresses that the concept of a river as a "drawn line in a chosen moment of water" is not necessarily applicable the world over: the Ganges can be understood, he argues, as "ubiquitous wetness" which refuses "to conform to the separation of land and water", cf. xi: "India is a river-driven wetness rather than a land drained by rivers, which is how maps, textbooks, histories, plans, ecologies and everyday conversations project it"; Campbell 2024, esp. 15-16 stresses rivers as entanglements which defy boundaries.

3 Desnier 1995; Montero Herrero 2012, esp. 13-163; Montero Herrero 2013; see also Dan 2018, 23-29; Braund 1996.

4 Dan 2018, 27-30; see also Franconi 2017; Montero Herrero 2013; see also Campbell 2024, for riverine archaeology and the impact of the geomorphology of rivers on human activity.

5 Plut. *Mor.* 258F. For Ortiagon, see: *RE* s.v. "Ortiagon". After Vulso's campaign, he fought at the side of Prusias I and Hannibal against Eumenes: Habicht 1989, 325-238.

6 Notably, Montero Herrero 2013, 450-451 dates the Roman custom of using rivers as locations for negotiation with enemies to the second century BCE, drawing on the meeting of Gaius Manlius Vulso with ambassadors from Alabanda in 189 BCE (Liv. 38.13.2).

Roman centurion and then ransomed by him to the Galatai for a substantial amount of gold. At the point of exchange, Chiomara was able to exact her revenge on the soldier, communicating with her fellow-countrymen (either via their own language, as in Livy's account, or simply by an understood nod of the head, as in Plutarch's account) to behead the centurion. She then took the head as a grisly gift to her husband, in order to demonstrate that she had avenged herself and her honour.[7] This story is attested in several literary sources, serving as an *exemplum* of *pudicitia* (chastity) and *pistis* (loyalty) in regard to Chiomara, while Livy's account of the episode also stresses the themes of sexual licence/lack of continence and greed (*libidinis et avaritiae militaris*).[8]

All the versions of the story focus on the qualities exemplified, but it is only in the longer accounts that any contextualising details are provided. Livy's account does give some information in terms of time and space: the exchange was to take place at night (*nocte insequenti*, repeated for emphasis)[9] and at a location near a river (*locum prope flumen*).[10] The emphasis on nighttime implies the centurion's desire to hide his deeds under the cover of dark, further underlining to Livy's audience his separation from appropriate and moral activity.[11] The location of a river is also found in Plutarch, and therefore it seems plausible that this detail was also part of Polybius' account, if we assume both Livy's and Plutarch's accounts derive from it.[12] It is Plutarch only, however, who seems to emphasise the significance of the river as the site of diplomatic exchange: the river provided a division or dividing line between the two parties (ποταμοῦ τινος ἐν μέσῳ διείργοντος). Subsequently, it is the crossing of the river by the Galatai (ὡς δὲ διαβάντες οἱ Γαλάται) that initiates the act of exchange (via the giving of money). While brief, this detail of the river acting as a dividing line, both conceptually and physically, underlines the relevance of spatial boundaries and dimensions in acts of negotiation and diplomacy. The river serves as the site (*locum prope flumen* in Livy) identified for the act of negotiation but also imposes a physical boundary, separating the identities of those involved in the exchange: the captor and captive on one bank; those seeking to pay ransom and receive the captive on the other. Such performance of boundaries of identity are central to diplomatic encounters. As Costas Constantinou has articulated:

> Diplomacy is the enacted regulation of relations between self and other(s). … Diplomacy's *raison d'être* is … established only when there are boundaries for identity and when those boundaries of identity are crossed. Diplomacy's condition of possibility lies in identity/

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7 Liv. 38.24; Val. Max. 6.1. ext. 2; Plut. *Mor.* 258F; Flor. 1.27.6; *de vir*. ill. 55.2 (wherein Ortiagon has the centurion killed). Plutarch ends his account with a note that Polybius said that he had met and conversed with Chiromara at Sardis and admired her intelligence, although he does not explicitly claim to be quoting Polybius. There is disagreement as to whether Plutarch's or Livy's account should be used to reconstruct Polybius (21.38). In favour of a Plutarch-Polybius version: Stadter 1965, 108-110; Ratti 1996, 98-100; Péré-Noguès 2012, 165-169; see also Tanga 2019, 198-199. Walbank 1979, 151 stresses that Plutarch's account "has less claim to be classified as a fragment of P. than has Liv. 38.24.2-11, which is at many points fuller", cf. Briscoe 2008, 94. For a balanced discussion of the issues, see Campanile 2020, 203-204.

8 For Chiomara as an *exemplum* of Roman virtues, see Ratti 1996; Campanile 2020. For the centurion's *libido et avaritia*, see Liv. 38.24.2; Briscoe 2008, 94-95. For the importance of the appearance of sexual continency as an expression of Roman power, see Taylor 2022, esp. 140 for the story of Chiomara.

9 Liv. 38.24.6 and 38.24.7.

10 Liv. 38.24.5. Val. Max. 6.1. ext. 2, whose interest is explicitly on *exempla* and exemplarity, merely mentions a *locum* as the temporal marker for the exchange and Chiomara's subsequent demonstration of *pudicitia*: *postquam ventum est in eum locum in quem centurio misso nuntio necessarios mulieris pretium quo eam redimerent adferre iusserat* ("afterwards the women's relatives came to the place, where, by the messenger he had sent, the centurion had ordered that they bring the money, with which they would buy her back").

11 *RS* 40, *Tabula* I, 17-18 suggests it was lawful for a nighttime thief to be killed, while *RS* 40, *Tabula* VIII, 14-15 forbids nocturnal meetings. Notably, in Livy's account of the Bacchanalia in the following book (39.8-19), the emphasis on night (*nox* x6) and nocturnal activities (*nocturae* x11) serves to reinforce the sense of moral corruption. For night as a time for suspicious behaviour, particularly in the eyes of Rome's political elite, see Salisbury 2022, 51-53; Pieper 2020.

12 See n. 7 above, and in particular note Campanile 2020, 203: "Livio non rielabora Polibio ma utilizza –non è possibile affermare quanto integralmente– la narrazione senza riassumerla, come invece fa Plutarco".

> difference, but in the radical alterity of the other also lies diplomacy's impossibility of mediating final identity.[13]

The river, in Plutarch's account, not only imposes boundaries of separation (ποταμοῦ τινος ἐν μέσῳ διείργοντος), defining distinct identities in the exchange, but also necessitates the physical crossing (δὲ διαβάντες) of that boundary for the negotiations to be enacted. Moreover, that the Galatai were forced to making the crossing to the ground held by the other (the Roman centurion) suggests an imbalance of power in negotiations.

The short episode of Chiomara, particularly through Plutarch's narrative, reveals a social understanding and construction of rivers as both physical and conceptual boundaries in diplomacy and negotiation, not just for the characters involved but also for Plutarch and his contemporaries. Starting from this insight, this contribution provides a means by which to understand the role that rivers played in the negotiation of power and diplomatic activities, primarily during the period of the Roman Republic, in order to provide a broader context for the "Ebro Treaty" (226/225 BCE).[14] In this paper, I set out three main and interconnected points relating to rivers and diplomacy:

> 1) The river constructed as a line or boundary used to define, shape, and limit identities and (perceived) spheres of authority and control.
>
> 2) The river as a form of "borderscape".
>
> 3) As a consequence of the previous points, the river as a site of diplomatic encounter and exchange.

Before turning to examine these themes, I will first provide a brief discussion of "borderscapes" as an epistemological tool for understanding rivers as diplomatic spaces in antiquity. I note here that while this concept has, to some extent, been taken up in the field of archaeology –notably in the case of *The Borderscape Project* (2021-2023), which applies the concept to an investigation of the transformation of the First Cataract of the Nile in the fourth and third millennia BCE–[15] it has yet to be incorporated into studies of ancient diplomatic relations or spatial studies of the ancient world in general. The applicability of the concept of a "borderscape" within Roman frontier studies has been touched upon by Brian Buchanan and Emily Hanscam in their examination of the materiality of Roman frontier waterscapes, stressing the role and agency of the river in shaping Roman frontier spaces.[16] However, their discussion seems to accept "borderscape" as a specific type of -scape, comparable to "landscape" and "waterscape", as something shaped and moulded by a range of processes, without any explicit discussion or definition of the concept of "borderscapes".[17] In the same volume, Peter P. Campbell describes riverine archaeology as "cultural entanglements with rivers", locating the scaping of rivers in terms of processes and

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13 Constantinou 1996, 113.

14 For examination of the "Ebro Treaty" in this volume, see Domínguez Monedero (on the international context of the treaty); see also Hernández Prieto 2017, 132-142 for a discussion of the evidence and scholarly debates. For the wider international context of Carthage's political development over the long durée (sixth to second centuries BCE) via a diplomatic approach, see Rosselló Calafell 2024, 111-114 in which the "Ebro Treaty" is notably not included in Table 3 for Carthaginian state diplomacy between 264-201 BCE, presumably since the "Ebro Treaty" is not recognised by the Carthaginian state, but is perhaps better understood as an agreement between Hasdrubal and Roman representatives, see Hernández Prieto 2017, 133, 139-140, and 165; also p. 401 below. See also Rosselló Calafell 2022, 24-44 for Carthaginian-Roman diplomatic relations.

15 https://www.borderscapeproject.org/

16 Buchanan and Hanscam 2023, esp. 228, 233, and 236.

17 Dan 2018, 30 applies the term "frontierscape" to the Euphrates and describes Asia Minor as a "*soft space,* à limites flexibles et fluides" (Dan 2018, 30, n. 22).

patterns, which brings us closer to the term "borderscapes" in regard to its conception and application within numerous disciplinary fields.[18]

2. "Borderscapes"

The concept of borderscapes first appears in discourse at the turn of the 21st century in relation to theatre and performance art, though has since been used in a variety of ways in a number of disciplinary fields including political geography, anthropology, and sociology.[19] One particularly interesting application of the term underlines the performative nature of borders, building on the notion of landscape as something perceived (and perceived differently by different peoples) and represented in various different forms, whether maps, paintings, or literary texts.[20] As Oren Siegel has articulated, the concept of borderscapes has a spatial perspective in terms of placement and situation of a border and the practices maintaining it, but also:

> ... the host of practices we undertake to shape and mold the landscape around us. This is particularly useful to think about with borders: whether deliberately or inadvertently, these divisions are *constructed*, and human actions or environmental changes can modify them –sometimes drastically. The term suggests that we should look beyond the border itself to the host of social, cultural, economic, and environmental practices that reify, subvert, transcend, and give meaning to it.[21]

Siegel, a researcher on the aforementioned *The Borderscape Project*, stresses the applicability of the term within the study of the ancient world (notably from an archaeological perspective), since it emphasises not just the landscape and physical space where a border is located, but requires that we engage with the practices, performances, and perspectives of the border within social, cultural, religious, political, economic, and environmental frameworks of the peoples who construct, maintain, and challenge the border.

When considered as a means of understanding the various practices of those engaged with and experiencing borders, the concept of borderscapes is also concerned with the negotiation of identities at boundaries. In 2020, Costas Constantinou used the concept to think about diplomatic geography, working with the medium of video to document and analyse the borderscape of Cyprus between four different juridical zones. The video dispatch *Lines* travels through an area of the "Green Line" controlled by the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, dividing the Greek-controlled south from the Turkish-controlled north, as well as meeting the border of the British Sovereign Base. The video documents and highlights divisions which are not only physical and material, but also internal and mental, linguistic and immaterial. The purpose of the video is to articulate diplomacy as "something that is taking place, always with a habitat of relations and spaces scripted with meaning and a plurality of forces and potentialities that require negotiation and balancing".[22] For Constantinou, borderscapes are thus concerned not solely with maps and clearly demarcated areas but also the various ways in which identity and otherness, access and restriction are enacted and communicated.

How is such a concept applicable to ancient perspectives of rivers? Rivers, as a line situated within the landscape, defined and shaped spatial, social, cultural, economic, religious, and political relationships between groups, communities, and individuals, and so provided a space and place for the practice and performance of borders, i.e. a borderscape. Thus, they also became conceived of as liminal spaces and islands, situated within their course, as potential

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18 Campbell 2024.

19 Dell'Agnese and Amilhat Szary 2015 for a discussion of the various interpretations and applications of the term.

20 Ibid. 7-8 for a discussion of this approach.

21 Seigel 2022a; see also Seigel 2022b for a review of archaeological and anthropological approaches to boundaries, borders, and frontiers.

22 Constantinou 2020, 666.

sites of neutrality used for diplomatic negotiations.[23] Perhaps the most notable case is that of the Euphrates and negotiations between Rome and Parthia from the early first century BCE onwards, where the various activities around the line of the river and within its liminal spaces offer ways of observing the fluctuation and dynamics of power between Rome and Parthia. The Euphrates as a borderscape offered both sides, on an international stage, different perspectives, experiences, and types of border.[24] Another example of a borderscape in the negotiation of power, this time between influential figures within a single state, would be the meeting of the Triumvirs at Bononia on an island in the middle of a river in 43 BCE.[25] I will return to consider rivers as borderscapes, particularly in the context of the river Iber[26] and the "Ebro Treaty" (as the focal point of this monographic section of *Gerión*) later in this paper. I now turn to examine rivers as a line in the landscape, which provide a means for dividing and distinguishing peoples and power in antiquity.

3. Dividing lines

In the ancient Mediterranean world, the river, and more broadly bodies of water, served as geographical and natural physical markers, which delineated, defined, and confined human movement. This is demonstrated on a local, regional, and indeed an "international" level. Bodies of water were perceived to dictate and restrict, and yet also provide access and transport for, human movement: rivers were boundaries which could be crossed. By way of example, we can consider Polybius' description of the tactics used during the conflict between the Epirots and the Illyrians in 230 BCE. On reaching Phoenike, the Epirots had set up their camp, establishing the river running by the city as a defensive line and reinforcing this by removing the bridge planks to impede access from that front.[27] The response of the Illyrians was to replace the planks during the night, in order that they might safely cross the river (τῇ γεφύρᾳ σανίδας ἐπιβαλόντες τόν τε ποταμὸν ἀσφαλῶς διέβησαν).[28] The river was used as a defensive zone, though it was the intervention of the man-made bridge which served as the element of access and restriction, with the Epirots looking to secure their safety through its removal, and the Illyrians reconstructing the bridge to ensure their safe crossing.

As Campbell has articulated, in his discussion of riverine archaeology, "rivers are entanglements that are neither natural nor cultural", both agents but also acted upon and shaped by human interactions.[29] While there is agency in rivers in the confining, delineating, and defining of human movement, –and notably from ancient perspectives, such agency was divine[30]– we should, nevertheless, also understand the river, conceptualised as a line, as a human imposition on the

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23 For the "symbolism of neutral space", particularly in relation to rivers and water during the Triumviral period, see García Riaza 2020, 293-298; see also Montero Herrero 2012, 60 and 69.

24 For a detailed discussion of the Euphrates in Parthian-Roman relations, and in the wider contexts of Mesopotamian conceptions of the divine and testimonial nature of rivers, see Desnier 1995, 93-130 ("Aller au fleuve") for the meaning of "going to the river" in order to have the deity act as witness and guarantor of oaths sworn and treaties made, esp. 103-108 for the Euphrates as an international frontier, at least from the Parthian perspective. Desnier (99-100) does suggest that the Euphrates' may not have been the river in question in 53 BCE for the first written treaty between Parthia and Rome, following Crassus' defeat at Carrhae, instead proposing the Khabour/Chaboras or the Balikh/Balissos; see also Montero Herrero 2012, 61-63. See Edwell 2008, 9-30, esp. 9-10, 16-18 for the Euphrates' symbolic value as a boundary and 18-20 for the potential creation of a "practical line" under Vespasian's territorial reorganisation; 23-26 for the extension of Roman control to both banks of the middle Euphrates. For the breakdown in Romano-Parthian relations in 54 BCE and continued relations up until 31 BCE, see Ziegler 1964, 32-36.

25 See García Riaza 2020 and in this volume.

26 In this paper I refer to the river by its ancient name, using "Ebro" only in the context of the "Ebro Treaty".

27 Plb. 2.5.5: παραγενόμενοι δὲ πρὸς τὴν Φοινίκην, καὶ προβαλόμενοι τὸν παρὰ τὴν πόλιν ῥέοντα ποταμόν, ἐστρατοπέδευσαν, τῆς ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ γεφύρας ἀνασπάσαντες τὰς σανίδας ἀσφαλείας χάριν.

28 Plb. 2.5.7.

29 Campbell 2024, esp. 16.

30 Desnier 1995, esp. 17-40; Braund 1996; Montero Herrero 2012, 13-27; Montero Herrero 2013; Dan 2018, 23-29; see also Campbell 2024 for the agency of rivers in shaping human activity.

landscape. Architect Dilip da Cunha has argued that the river is a product of human invention rather than a product of nature, taking as a point of departure for his discussion Alexander the Great's imposition of a geographically (and Hellenistic) disciplined view of the earth's surface in India. By confining, defining, and naming channels of water, Alexander sought to make the river a subject of empirical (and imperial) knowledge.[31] Through an examination of the Ganga (Ganges) as a moment of "ubiquitous wetness", Da Cunha's main purpose is to challenge the river as a line imposed by a human perspective of the world, notably from a Hellenistic and colonising worldview.[32] Nevertheless, his discussion of the "invention of rivers" serves to underline a geographical conception of the world that is evident in cultures of the Mediterranean in antiquity. In the third and second centuries BCE, a global, pan-Hellenistic conceptualisation of the world emerged; a recognised universal, collective space of the "known" or "civilised inhabited world" –the *oikoumenē*.[33] By examining how communities conceptualised rivers as part of a pan-Hellenistic view of the world, we can consider the ways in which they geographically represented the realities of their spatial and territorial experiences.[34]

For a "global" perspective of the *oikoumenē,* as defined by rivers and other natural phenomena, we might turn to Polybius' literary description of the geography of the world and how rivers (and to a lesser extent, mountains) divide (ὁρίζουσιν) the continents of Asia, Africa, and Europe to comprise the known world, which is bound and limited by "our sea" (the Mediterranean)[35] and the "outer sea" (ὑπό τε τῆς καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς καὶ τῆς ἔξω θαλάττης).[36] Polybius' description is hardly a serious work of geography, but does indicate the broad, common-place ways in which he expected his readers to perceive and understand the world.[37] The concept of a world-river (Oceanus) was also understood to connect and delineate regional and provincial limits, with rivers serving to further articulate boundaries. These were clearly emphasised in several Augustan monuments, demonstrating the use of "rivers as eloquent markers of conceptual space" to demarcate the limits of Roman power.[38] In the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, the *provinciae* of Gallia, Hispania, and Germania are presented as being enclosed by Oceanus "from Gades to the mouth of the river Elbe", while a milestone from 2 BCE commemorated the rebuilding of a Hispanic road "from the river Baetis and the Ianus Augustus to Oceanus".[39] Moreover, such a Roman delineation of the limits and boundaries of a province (or soon-to-be province) is illustrated in both Caesar's geographical description of Gallia*,* where rivers demarcate and divide peoples, and Cicero's account of his province of Cilicia, delimited by the "line of its watershed" (*in aquarum divertio dividit*).[40] Indeed, the concept of the river as a line is made clear in the *Historia Augusta,* when Hadrian is described as keeping out "the barbarians not by means of rivers but by fortified boundary-lines (*limitibus*)", implying the conventional use of rivers to divide and demarcate.[41]

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31 da Cunha 2019, 12-23.

32 da Cunha 2019, 10 and 14-16 on perceptions of the environment and the "colonizing eye". See also Campbell 2024, 15-16 for rivers not as boundaries but entanglements.

33 Nicolet 1988, 69-96; Davies 2019, 20-27.

34 See Nicolet 1988, 10 for a concept of *l'historie de la géographie*, where "geography" is not to be understood as a reality, but as the "representation" of that reality.

35 On the anachronism of the term "Mediterranean" in the Hellenistic and Roman periods, see Davies 2019, 23-24.

36 Plb. 3.37.1-10.

37 For the issues of Polybius' understanding of geography and geographical knowledge, see Walbank 1957, 367-371.

38 Purcell 2017, 157.

39 *RGDA* 26.2; *CIL* 2.4701=*ILS* 102, cf. *CIL* 2.4701-11; Purcell 2013, 373.

40 Caes. *BGall.* 1.1.1-7; Cic. *Att.* 5.20.3 [SB 133] (trans. Shackleton Bailey 1968). My thanks to Liv Mariah Yarrow for drawing my attention to the Ciceronian passage.

41 *Hist. Aug. Hadr.* 12.6; Campbell 2012, 45-82 for the role of rivers in Roman geographical knowledge and the demarcation of spaces (53-62) and provincial boundaries (62-64).

Beyond marking a limit or line defining geographical space, rivers also served to articulate social and legal boundaries of identity, through the relative spatial position of peoples and territories. There was a well-established use of the river Tiber to separate and confine those who had rebelled from Rome. In 338 BCE, Rome dissolved the Latin League, reformulating its relations with its member communities. In a discussion of the decisions of the senate regarding various grants of citizenship to Latin communities, Livy provides a particular detail in relation to the Veliterni, a community of the Volsci located 40 km south-east of Rome.[42] The punishment inflicted on the senators of Velitrae was that they were forced to re-locate and ordered to live *trans Tiberim*, that is on the far side (i.e. the righthand side) of the river. A heavy reparation was to be exacted from any of them who was caught *cis Tiberim*.[43] Similar relocations were imposed in 329 BCE on the senate of Privernum and in 211 BCE on the Campanians.[44] In the case of the Campanians, these measures were dependent upon their level of participation with Hannibal's campaign in Italy: those who had sided with Carthage were to be relocated *trans Tiberim*, but not permitted to be in close proximity of the river itself (*qui non contingeret Tiberim daretur*); those who had not been in Capua during the conflict, or in any other Campanian city which had defected, were to be removed to the near side of the river Liris in the direction of Rome (*cis Lirim amnem Romam versus*); those who went over to Rome before Hannibal's arrival in Capua were relocated north of the river Volturnus (*cis Volturnum*) and were restricted from building within fifteen miles of the sea.[45] The qualifying expression *Romam versus* repeats the concept of the move *cis Lirim amnem,* where *cis* is relational to Rome (likewise in the case of the Volturnus).[46] Further limitations where placed on the rights of those *trans Tiberim* to acquire or possess land. In such instances, to be *trans Tiberim* was equated to being banished beyond the privileges of Roman and Latin territories: indeed, the Twelve Tables set out a punishment for the inability to settle debt as transfer across the Tiber in order to be sold.[47] Notably, Livy recorded that Cincinnatus was forced to live *trans Tiberim velut relegatus* after paying surety for his son, who had gone into voluntary exile among the Etruscans.[48] In these ways, the river served as a boundary and border of identity, providing a physical, yet permeable line dividing groups of different status.

4. Diplomatic boundaries

In order for a river to serve as a boundary in diplomacy, it must be recognised by all parties as such, as a perceived line dividing space. This is particularly clear when we consider territorial arbitrations and boundary examinations, often documented in the Greek epigraphic record, demarcating either a division between two poleis or even between leagues of city-states. In 263/262 BCE, when the Aetolian and Akarnanian Leagues made a treaty and alliance (συνθήκα καὶ συμμαχία), they defined their respective territories by marking the river Achelōos as far as the sea as the border (ὅρια τᾶς χώρας).[49] A mid second century BCE boundary settlement between Delphi and its neighbours Ambryssos and Phlygonion used a number of features of the landscape

42 For the settlement of 338 BCE and Livy's presentation of the record of decrees, including its anachronistic view on the citizenship and his likely compression of material spanning several years into the record of 338, see Oakley 1998, 538-559.

43 Liv. 8.14.5; cf. 8.20.9.

44 Liv. 8.20.9, where specific reference is made to the earlier decree concerning Velitrae; 26.34.6-10.

45 Liv. 26.34.8-9.

46 Liv. 26.34.8; Henry 1905, 130 notes "the tautology [is] characteristic of legal phraseology".

47 *RS* 40, *Tabula* III, 1-7, at least as recorded in Gell. *NA* 20.1.46-47; cf. Crawford 1996, 629. Oakley 1998, 563 interprets the treatment of the Veliterni in relation to these measures.

48 Liv. 3.13.9-10.

49 *SdA* n. 480 (= *Syll*^{3} I 421) esp. ll. 5-8. The west bank of the river was to belong to the Akarnanians, with the exception of the districts of Demphis and Pras, the borders of the latter were to be decided by the Akarnanian city of Stratos and the Aetolian Agraioi; cf. Thucy. 2.102.2 for the course of the Achelōos "which rises in Mount Pindus and flows through the country of the Dolopians, Agraeans, and Amphilochians and then through the Acarnanian plain, passes by the city of Stratus" (trans. Smith 1919).

to mark points of a boundary line, including the course and direction of a river, emphasised by the phrase "as the water flows" (ὡς ὕδωρ ῥεῖ).[50] Notably, later in the text a specification was included stating that the water "which flows beside Aigoneia" was to be accessible and common property to all parties (κοινὸν πάντων).[51] The emphasis on the river's course appears in several demarcation agreements (mostly from Crete), indicating the relevance of the direction of flow in the definition of the boundary-line.[52]

In addition, it is notable that for many ancient peoples, rivers, and more particularly river gods, served as witnesses and guarantors of oaths sworn and treaties made. Jean-Luc Desnier has emphatically demonstrated this in the context of Indo-Iranian and Mesopotamian thinking.[53] Polybius' account of the treaty between Hannibal and Philip V of Macedon in 215 BCE records that the Carthaginians sworn in the presence of "rivers, and great seas, and springs", among other deities.[54] Notably, the river Achelōos, who marked the boundary between the Aetolians and the Akarnanians in the abovementioned treaty of 263/262 and thus marked a limit of the Greek world, was worshipped and honoured as a great pan-Hellenic river god; this river was, according to Dan, "une altérité, ou, du moins, une voie d'accès à l'Autre, un passage entre le cœur du monde grec et les confins barbares".[55] While great rivers might mark the limits of the *oikoumenē* or the alterity between leagues, hegemonies, and empires,[56] other rivers served as boundary markers for settlements between neighbours or in regional, territorial conflicts.

From the early fourth century BCE, the river Halykos (generally agreed to be the modern-day Platani river)[57] in south-western Sicily appears to have demarcated the limit of territory acquired by Carthage during the wars with Syracuse. In a very cursory treatment of the third war between Carthage and Dionysius I, Diodorus Siculus records the peace treaty (376/375 BCE) which concluded the conflict and which confirmed that both sides would maintain authority of the territories over which they previously had control.[58] A notable addition to the previous arrangements between the two powers was that the Carthaginians were to take possession of both the city and

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50 Ager 1996, n. 126.I, ll. 19-20. For the courses of water as characterised in antiquity by its flow, see Dan 2018, 27.

51 Ager 1996, n. 126 I, ll.31-32; Ager 1996, 350.

52 See, for example, *SdA* n. 148 (contract between Knossos and Tylissos through the mediation of Argos, c. 450 BCE), b. ll.8-9 (ἅι ὕδο/ρ ῥεῖ τὄμβριον); n. 675 (resolution of dispute and boundary demarcation between the Lycian League and Termessos-Minor, c. 160 BCE), ll. 43-45 (ἀνὰ ῥοῦν τῷ αὐτῷ ποταμῷ), also ll. 51-55; n. 708 (*isopoliteia* and boundary demarcation between Hierapytna and Lato, 111/110 BCE), ll. 52-53, 60 (ἅι ὕδωρ ῥεῖ); n. 713 (alliance with *isopoliteia*, c. 110/109 BCE), l. 51 (ἃμ ποταμὸν τὸν Κυμαῖον ἅι ὕδ[ωρ ῥεῖ), also ll.60-61 ([καὶ ἐς τὸν Κόλον ἅι ὕδωρ ῥεῖ καὶ ἐς Κυμνητάλλαν] ἅι ὕδωρ ῥεῖ), 63-64 (ἅι]/ ὕδωρ ῥεῖ).

53 Desnier 1995, esp. 17-40.

54 Plb. 7.9.2-3: ἐναντίον ποταμῶν καὶ λιμνῶν καὶ ὑδάτων. The translation here is based on Barré 1983, 90-93, esp. 93 for an interpretation of the Punic meaning behind these Greek terms, particularly the meaning of λιμνῶν as a great body of water; see Walbank 1967, 51 for the various emendations to the manuscript text of δαιμόνων το λιμένων ("harbour"), λειμώνων ("meadows"), and λιμνῶν ("lakes"), with Walbank favouring λιμνῶν.

55 Dan 2018, 30. *RE* s.v. "Acheloos"; *BNP* s.v. "Achelous"; *LIMC* s.v. "Acheloos". *SdA* n. 480 (= *Syll*^{3} I 421) ll. 14-15 specifies that bronze tablets of the treaty and alliance between the Aetolians and Akarnanians are to be set up at the number of sanctuary sites: Thermos, Olympia, Delphi, and Dodona, emphasising the religious nature of the oaths underlining such treaties and alliances.

56 In ancient thought, the great rivers were perceived to divide up and mark the limits of the *oikoumenē*: Dan 2018, 27-37; Montero Herrero 2012, 28-48 for the use of rivers to divide up and delimit Roman political and administrative frontiers, esp. 33-34 for the redundancy of rivers marking the limits of empire in the west, but being maintained as northern and eastern limits; see also Purcell 2013; Campbell 2012, 45-82. Desnier 1995, 103-108 for the Euphrates as the perceived limit of "empire" for the Parthians.

57 See Dudziński 2019, 190-192 for a discussion of the identification of both the Halykos and the Lykos with the Platani river.

58 For the previous agreements, see D.S. 13.114.1 (405 BCE), 14.96.3-4 (293 BCE); Lewis 1994, 134-135, 145, 149; Dudziński 2019, 192. While Diodorus deals with the events of the third war in only three chapters and assigns all the events to 383/382, scholarship dates the conflict from 383/382-374/373 BCE, see Lewis 1994, 148-149; Dudziński 2019, 189, who dates the treaty to 376/375 BCE.

countryside belonging to Selinous and that of Akragas "as far as the river named Halykos".[59] The river thus served to mark a limit to the territories now under Carthaginian control. A river boundary-line (ὅριον) would again be used in the negotiations between the Carthaginians and the Corinthian liberator of Syracuse, Timeleon, in 338 BCE, although this time Diodorus refers to the Lykos river (whether or not this should be understood as the same river as the Halykos), defining the sphere of authority (ἐπικρατεία) of both sides, and Plutarch states that the Carthaginians were to keep hold of the territory within or on the near side of the Lykos.[60] As Andrej Dudziński has articulated in his analysis of the treaty of 376/375 between Carthage and Dionysius I, it marked a potential new step in Carthaginian activity in Sicily and relations with Syracuse: Carthage's presence and acquisition of territory was defined with a geographical boundary, rather than as previously achieved by ethno-political delineations in terms of communities subject to pay tribute to Carthage, though such delineations appear to continue in the case of cities east of the river boundary.[61] If we accept the narrative of Diodorus,[62] it seems that by the early fourth century Carthage not only acquired direct control of territory in Sicily but was familiar with defining its limits with the river as a boundary-line, even if such limits should be understood simply in terms of the organisation of territories and taxation of the southern Sicilian coast between Syracuse and Carthage, rather than dividing two geopolitical spheres of influence.[63]

A similar practice of a river demarcating a division between Carthaginian and Syracusan territories may be observed during the second Punic war, where the river Himeras was intended to designate the boundary (ὅρος) between the areas governed by Carthage and Hieronymus of Syracuse in 215. The river was conceptualised as dividing Sicily across the middle.[64] For Hieronymus, the desire to articulate his own control over a clearly demarcated area and remove a Roman presence is emphasised in the narratives of Polybius and Livy. Even if the king later wished to extend his control to cover the whole island, he nevertheless initially recognised the need to demarcate his area of control and that which he was promising to Carthage; indeed, according to Polybius, he later used the river as a boundary of Syracusan territory in his negotiations with Rome.[65] Livy's account emphasised the river dividing the *fines* of the Syracusan kingdom from the *Punicum imperium*. This echoes his conceptualisation of the boundary function of the river *Iber* earlier in his narrative, where he presents it as a "boundary of both empires" (*finis utrisque imperii*).[66] While Livy's reading is, on the one hand, anachronistic due to the lack of Roman *imperium* operational in Hispania at the time of "Ebro Treaty",[67] on the other hand it potentially reflects Roman attitudes to the validity and relevance of the river as a boundary in the years following the second Punic war. This indicates that the *Iber* as a boundary between Rome and Carthage was fluid and fluctuating in

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59 D.S. 15.17.5: ἐξαίρετον δ᾽ ἔλαβον οἱ Καρχηδόνιοι τὴν τῶν Σελινουντίων πόλιν τε καὶ χώραν καὶ τῆς Ἀκραγαντίνης μέχρι τοῦ Ἁλύκου καλουμένου ποταμοῦ.

60 D.S. 16.82.3: τὸν δὲ Λύκον καλούμενον ποταμὸν ὅριον εἶναι τῆς ἑκατέρων ἐπικρατείας; Plut. *Tim.* 34.2: ὥστε τὴν ἐντὸς τοῦ Λύκου χώραν ἔχειν. For the Halykos and the Lykos as the same river, see n. 57 above, though also note Quinn 2017, 322 for the question of whether the two rivers are identical or not.

61 Dudziński 2019, 194-196.

62 See Dudziński 2019, 192-193 for the issues of Diodorus' source(s); cf. Lewis 1994, 120-124.

63 Quinn 2017, 321-322. See also Rosselló Calafell 2024 for shifts in Carthaginian political development within the Mediterranean, esp. 106-111 for relations between Carthage and Syracuse, and the river as "una linde casi intangible" (108) between the aspirations of both parties.

64 Plb. 7.4.2: ὃς μάλιστά πως δίχα διαιρεῖ τὴν ὅλην Σικελίαν; Liv. 24.6.1: *Himera amnis, qui ferme <mediam> dividit;* Strabo 6.2.1 for the Himeras river "flowing through the middle of Sicily" (Ἱμέραν ποταμὸν … διὰ μέσης ῥέοντα τῆς Σικελίας); *RE* "Himeras", 1620-1621. See Quinn 2017, 322 for the observation, in relation to the Halykos and the treaty of 376/375 BCE, that, if a "river bisected Sicily, it would be two islands rather than one".

65 Plb. 7.4.1-5.8; Liv. 24.6.7-9.

66 Liv. 21.2.7.

67 Liv. 34.13.7: *ipsi nullum in ea militem haberent;* Montesanti 2016, 46-47; Richardson 1986, 24-28; Briscoe 1981, 74. See Rosselló Calafell 2024, 118-121 for the non-imperial nature of Carthaginian power, emphasised through its diplomatic relations.

terms of the meanings imposed on it over time in relation to the "Ebro Treaty". It is possible to think about attitudes to the *Iber* within diplomatic space as a borderscape, as something shaped and negotiated through the various practices and performances in relation to the river as a line and limit, and that the historical perspectives shifted in relation to the narratives and interpretations imposed on it over time.

5. The "Ebro Treaty" within the framework of borderscapes

Unlike the river in Plutarch's account of Chiomara, the river *Iber* in the context of the "Ebro Treaty" does not serve as a site for actual diplomatic meeting and exchange but rather defined a boundary of identity between the exercise of Carthaginian, or more precisely Barcid, power and (we might also assume, albeit without explicit reference to the limitation of) Roman power.[68] Previous diplomatic encounters between Carthage and Rome, at least as they were expressed in earlier treaties recorded in Polybius, set limitations and boundaries on the advancement of power of the other party, with a focus demarcating access and restriction in terms of coastal areas.[69] The "Ebro Treaty" marks, at least in Romano-Carthaginian relations, a shift to a land rivalry.[70] In Polybius' account of the "Ebro Treaty", the act of negotiation between Rome and Carthage –whether formally recognised as a treaty made with Hasdrubal (συνθήκας),[71] or merely an agreement (διομολογήσεις / τὰς ὁμολογίας)[72]– established that the Carthaginians were not to cross (μὴ διαβαίνειν) the river *Iber* under arms. That the river appears to have served as a restriction on Barcid military activities is understandable when the geography of the peninsula is considered. As John Richardson has clearly articulated, the course of the Iber, from its source in the Cantabrian mountains, runs "in a remarkably direct course until it reaches the Catalonian hills, through which it breaks to reach the Mediterranean. It is thus ideally suited to act as a line preventing movement north towards the Pyrenees".[73] In the context of the imminent war between Rome and the Gauls in 225, the agreement supposedly made with Hasdrubal took the river as a line to limit a Carthaginian military (land) force, in a similar manner to the terms imposed on Illyrian maritime movement in 228: "not to sail beyond Lissus with more than two small vessels".[74] From at least a Roman perspective, the *Iber* served as a *terminus,* restricting and circumscribing Carthaginian movement; Livy's Hannibal bitterly notes that while the Romans defined such *termini*, they themselves did not observe them in their own activity.[75] In this regard, the borderscape of the *Iber* offered or required different performances and practices on the part of the Romans and of the Carthaginians.

Whether the Carthaginian state itself acknowledged the river as a line of dispute is another matter, but it does not detract from the wider issue of how the "Ebro Treaty" might fit into a conceptual landscape or "borderscape" of diplomatic boundaries. In this regard we may reflect on the ways in which the river served as both physical and conceptual boundary, whether "real"

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68 See Walbank 1957, 168-169 for the assumption that the agreement concerning the *Iber* as a boundary of military activity was bilateral; *contra* Montero Herrero 2012, 32-33; Rich 1996, 2021; Richardson 1986, 24-28. App. *Ib.* 7.25-27 not only states that the *Iber* was to be a boundary (ὅρον) of Carthaginian rule, but also that the Romans were not to bring war to the peoples on the far side of the river (μήτε Ῥωμαίους τοῖς πέραν τοῦδε τοῦ ποταμοῦ πόλεμον ἐκφέρειν). For an overview of the sources and scholarly debate, including the lack of evidence for a bilateral agreement, see Hernández Prieto 2017, 132-142.

69 Plb. 3.22-24. Hernández Prieto 2017, chapters 1-5 for the treaties between Carthage and Rome prior to the first Punic war, and chapter 6 for inter-war relations (241-218 BCE). For the importance of river mouths as markers of maritime routes for the Carthaginians, demonstrating their approach to empire, see Quinn 2017, 322.

70 Montesanti 2016, 46.

71 Plb. 2.13.7, 3.6.2.

72 Plb. 3.27.9, 3.29.3.

73 Richardson 1986, 27.

74 Plb. 2.16.2-3 for the sailing restrictions placed on the Illyrians in 228 BCE: μὴ πλεύσειν πλέον ἢ δυσὶ λέμβοις ἔξω τοῦ Λίσσου; Richardson 1986, 27-28.

75 Livy 21.44.5-6; Montero Herrero 2012, 32-33.

or "imagined". Indeed, it is worth noting the ways in which the treaty concerning the river *Iber* as a boundary was itself contested within the diplomatic encounters between Carthage and Rome, as presented in the sources. In the debates surrounding the decision to declare war in 218 BCE, the validity, and indeed very existence, of the "Ebro Treaty" was a relevant aspect of negotiations and assigning of culpability. In answering the Roman ultimatum to surrender Hannibal or to accept responsibility for his attack on Saguntum, the Carthaginians were deliberately silent on the question of "the agreements made with Hasdrubal", seeing them as either non-existent or not applicable to Carthage, since they had not validated the agreement.[76] When Polybius' narrative returns to the debate in 218, after his digression on the earlier treaties, we are presented with the Roman delegation's arguments, which stress that "the agreements with Hasdrubal must not be set aside".[77] The validity of the agreement and the role of the river to serve as a demarcation line of Carthaginian advancement becomes, itself, a site of debate and negotiation. In this way, the river may serve as a conceptual point of diplomatic agreement and/or contention.

Whether a "real" boundary (Livy) or a contested one (Polybius), the *Iber* served to create a borderscape in Romano-Punic negotiations and diplomacy both in the real world and in the narratives constructed around the historical events. The river as a line demarcating and limiting Barcid advantage into northern Spain was one that was imposed and accepted by Rome but rejected and denied by the Carthaginian senate. Irrespective of the form of agreement that might have taken place between Hasdrubal and Roman representatives in 226/225 BCE, in 218, the river was a borderscape wherein the limits of Punic and Roman power were shaped and challenged. While the very existence of the river as a boundary line was itself a site of debate at Carthage between the two powers in 218 BCE,[78] what I wish to consider in the remainder of this contribution are the ways in which the river continued to be conceptualised as a potential boundary after the outbreak of war, and how it might have served conceptually as a borderscape and a space of negotiation between Roman and Carthaginian power even once the treaty had allegedly been broken.

A brief examination of the practices, performances, and perspectives of the *Iber* after the outbreak of war will illustrate how it was actively shaped as a border through the actions of individuals during the war and through different literary representations at different times. As an alleged border which was originally framed with the express command that it not be crossed (by Carthage) under arms, it becomes, in the narratives, a space where the crossing of the boundaries of identity were performances of power relations. While for Livy the river was a real and significant boundary defining the limits of empire (*imperium*) between Rome and Carthage, for Polybius the river perhaps only really assumed any relevance in the context of the assigning of culpability for the outbreak of the war. Subsequent activities are framed in relation to the river. This is clear in Polybius' account of the activities of Gnaeus Cornelius Scipio and Hasdrubal in 217 BCE. Scipio's activities are confined to the area "as far as the Iber",[79] while still being able to capture Hanno and Andobales, causing Hasdrubal to cross and recross the river before the winter (διαβὰς τὸν Ἴβηρα ποταμόν…καὶ διαβὰς αὖθις τὸν Ἴβηρα ποταμόν).[80] Livy's narrative similarly emphasises Hasdrubal's recrossing *cis Hiberim*.[81] In both narratives the *Iber* is still relevant in the shaping of the relative positions and activities of both sides.

Even more striking is the use of the *Iber* by Abilyx in his negotiations with the Carthaginian commander Bostar in the same year. With the arrival of Publius Cornelius Scipio, the Roman force crossed the Iber:

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76 Plb. 3.21.1. Hernández Prieto 2017, 139 for the absence of any arguments made by the Carthaginian senate as to the agreement between Hasdrubal and Rome being bilateral.

77 Plb. 3.29.2.

78 Plb. 3.21.1-2; Hernández Prieto 2017, 164-168.

79 Plb. 3.76.2: ἕως Ἴβηρος ποταμοῦ; 3.76.6: ἐντὸς Ἴβηρος ποταμοῦ; cf. Liv. 22.19.5, where Scipio's position at Tarraco is given relative to the *Iber.*

80 Plb. 3.76.9-11.

81 Liv. 22.21.5-6 (*cis Hiberum ad socios tutandos retraxit).*

> For the Romans, who had never before dared to cross the Iber, but had been content with the friendship and alliance of the peoples on its north bank, now crossed it, and for the first time ventured to aim at acquiring dominion on the other side, chance also greatly contributing to advance their prospects in the following manner.
>
> οὐδέποτε γὰρ πρότερον θαρρήσαντες διαβῆναι τὸν Ἴβηρα ποταμόν, ἀλλ᾽ ἀσμενίζοντες τῇ τῶν ἐπὶ τάδε φιλίᾳ καὶ συμμαχίᾳ, τότε διέβησαν καὶ τότε πρῶτον ἐθάρρησαν ἀντιποιεῖσθαι τῶν πέραν πραγμάτων, μεγάλα καὶ ταὐτομάτου συνεργήσαντος σφίσι πρὸς τοὺς περιεστῶτας καιρούς.[82]

Abilyx, a "noble Hispanic man from Saguntum" and ally of the Carthaginians,[83] sees this moment as an opportunity to break loyalty and side with the Romans, using the argument that now that the Romans had crossed the Iber, the Carthaginians would no longer be able to use fear to control the Iberians. With this argument he convinced Bostar, who had been left by Hasdrubal to prevent the Romans crossing the river, to hand over the hostages of Saguntum to him, to be restored to their peoples in order to thwart the Romans and win favour with the Iberians. Once in receipt of the hostages, Abilyx handed them to the Romans, who in turned used him to restore the hostages to their peoples, as a show of Roman magnanimity.[84] While the event concerns many aspects of diplomacy and diplomatic relations, the importance of the *Iber* as a conceptual boundary appears critical for Abilyx's argument about the positions of Carthage and Rome in relation to the Iberian communities and the power dynamic between them.

Similarly, in 209 BCE, Scipio Africanus addressed his troops prior to crossing the *Iber.* In Polybius' narrative, he stresses the significance of the Roman crossing in the eyes of the Iberians, in terms of the continued establishment of alliances between Rome and Iberia against Carthage. The argument is used to convince the Romans of the validity and strength of their position in relation to both Carthage and Iberia.[85] In Livy's version of the speech, the *Iber* is less a symbol of connection and alliance between Rome and Hispania and more an assertion of Rome's *imperium*: the successes and preparations of Scipio's army ensures that their task is not to stand on the banks of the river guarding against the crossing of the Carthaginians but instead to cross the river themselves and bring war to their enemy. Livy places particular emphasis on the removal of the Carthaginians from Hispania through the very act of crossing the river: *nec ut pro ripa Hiberi stantes arceamus transitu hostes sed ut ultro transeamus transferamusque bellum* ("so that we are not focused on standing before the banks of the *Iber* to prevent the enemy crossing but on crossing ourselves and to bring across war to the other side").[86] Moreover, Livy ends the speech with an address to the "old soldiers" to lead across (*traducite*) both their commander and army, into lands where they have already many times demonstrated "brave deeds".[87] Scipio's speech in the narratives of Polybius and Livy offers different perspectives on the use of the river crossing to articulate relations and alliances either side of the boundary, as well as the shift in power dynamics implied in the crossing. Such borderscapes offer not just lines defining limits or barring crossings, but due to the nature of such "lines", rivers (as borderscapes) could offer spaces of potential debate and discussion, for a re-orientation of position and alliances. In this regard, rivers could also serve as spaces of potential neutrality for diplomatic encounters.

As I have already emphasised above, in Livy's account both the *Iber* and the Himeras served as boundaries of *imperium*, yet this imposition of the *fines imperii* is anachronistic both for the exercise of Roman *imperium* in Spain in the late third century BCE and for Carthaginian attitudes

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82 Plb. 3.97.5, trans. adapted from Paton 2010; cf. Liv. 22.22.4.

83 Liv. 22.22.6; Plb. 3.98.2 refers to him as an Iberian.

84 Plb. 3.98-99.

85 Plb. 10.6.4-8. Walbank 1967, 201 for the speech as derived from Polybius' source (Fabius Pictor?); cf. Liv. 26.41.2-25 for Scipio's speech.

86 Liv. 26.41.6-7.

87 Liv. 26.41.23-24, again using an emphatic repetition: *traducite Hiberim…traducite in terras…*

to 'empire'. As John Richardson has suggested, the concept of the *Iber* as a boundary of *imperium* may potentially derive from later Roman activities in Hispania after the end of the second Punic war, during the period of Cato's consulship and *provincia* of Hispania Citerior in 195/4.[88] In a pre-battle speech during operations at Emporiae (c. 300 km north of the *Iber* river), Cato reflects on the "Ebro Treaty":

> Nevertheless, our fathers wanted this clause to be included in the treaty, that the river *Iber* should be a boundary of their empire. Nowadays, when two praetors, a consul, and three Roman armies have hold of Hispania, when none of the Carthaginians has been in these provinces for almost ten years, is our empire on this side of the *Iber* lost to us.
>
> *tamen addi hoc in foedere voluerunt ut imperii sui Hiberus fluvius esset finis.nunc cum duo praetores, cum consul, cum tres exercitus Romani Hispaniam obtineant, Carthaginiensium decem iam prope annis nemo in his provinciis sit, imperium nobis citra Hiberum amissum est.*[89]

Livy's narrative for events in Hispania must ultimately derive from Cato himself.[90] Indeed, some 30 years later, Cato would further emphasise an understanding of *imperium* beyond the scope of military powers awarded to a magistrate to carry out tasks on behalf of the state. In his speech defending the Rhodians in 167 BCE (*pro Rhodiensibus*), Cato frames the Rhodians' position during the third Macedonian war as driven by a fear of enslavement to Rome and of being *sub solo imperio nostro*.[91] Here *imperium* cannot simply refer to the command awarded to a single magistrate, but must carry a broader application and understanding of Roman power and its sphere of operation.[92] It is perhaps within the evolving understanding of *imperium* in the early second century BCE that Cato conceptualised the *Iber* as a *finis imperii*, influencing not only Livy's perspective of the *Iber* and the "Ebro Treaty" but also of the near contemporary boundary of the Himeras river, dividing Sicily between Carthaginian control and that of Syracuse. In this manner, we can see some of the ways in which the river was conceptualised, at least in later Roman thought, as a real, political boundary of global importance.[93]

6. Conclusion

Rivers as borders is a well-known and familiar concept in the study of ancient history, particularly in relation to Rome, whether serving as demarcations of the city, within Italy, in the provinces, the Empire, or the *oikoumenē*.[94] For Rome itself, the river was "a symbol of Roman history, continuity, power... of Rome's mastery of the world",[95] yet as the above discussion has highlighted, the river was not simply or singly a line imposed by Rome in its relations, but a borderscape open to varied encounters, experiences, and perspectives. There was a shared recognition of the river as a form of line imposed on and defining the natural landscape, which could be harnessed to serve for border disputes and delineations of authority and control.[96] Yet the river was also a space of transition in crossings and provided potential spaces of liminality and alterity. While the Iber, through its natural characteristics, served as an appropriate and clear line delineating the two

88 Richardson 1986, 24 n. 53; see also Barzanó 1987, 179.

89 Liv. 34.13.7-9.

90 Briscoe 1981, 63-65.

91 Gellius, *NA* 6.3.16. Gellius provides direct quotations of Cato's *pro Rhodiensibus* in his chapter (6.3) evaluating Tiro's criticism of Cato's rhetoric.

92 Richardson 2008, 43-44.

93 See Montesanti 2016 for an examination of Livy's "bordering perspective".

94 Montero 2013, 259; Montero 2012, 66-67; Purcell 2013; Campbell 2012, 45-82.

95 Campbell 2017, 30.

96 Desnier 1995, 17-40 and 103-108 for Iranian and Parthian perspectives; Rossello Calafell 2022, 99-101 for Carthaginian perspectives of waterscapes of diplomacy.

powers, what is perhaps more interesting in relation to understanding the river in the context of the "Ebro Treaty" are the debates in our sources of its relevance and significance, both at the moment of the outbreak of the second Punic war and in the subsequent negotiations of relations during the conflict. The varied perspectives of the role and purpose of the *Iber* in the narratives also demonstrates the significance of the river in later Roman reconstructions of *imperium* and the role of rivers in the negotiation of power.

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