

WHY THERE? THE PRELIMINARIES OF CONSTRUCTING THE ROMAN FRONTIER IN SOUTH-EAST DACIA

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Abstract: Which are the reasons for which the forts in north-west Muntenia were built under Trajan?

Over the course of several historical periods, it could be noted that one of the most important deposits of Transylvania and the hill area south the Carpathian Mountains was the salt. This resource on the territory of the Dacians was most definitely one of the important parts of the trade with the Roman Empire. The hoard finds in the Teleajen valley area and nearby are very significant to this effect, even though they belong to a rather broad chronological interval. This corridor enters in an area with many salt resources, being one of the communication routes with south-east Transylvania, at its turn rich in salt exploitation.

We believe that Trajan's policy concerning some of the nomad populations, namely the Sarmatians, was to ban migration in their economically vital areas. This, as seen, had serious consequences on the relations with the Iazyges and then with the Roxolani.

During the process of pacification of the entire north-Danube area, Hadrian withdraws some legions, rethinks the defensive system in affected provinces and brings, in a series of key points, auxiliary units of which excel those very mobile, due to their cavalry units. In addition, the emperor chooses the specialised irregular units. Adaptability to the circumstances in Dacia, detailed thinking of strategic and, why not, economic solutions are noteworthy. The maintenance of the new units was cheaper, as they were more adaptable, likely less pretentious to the conditions existent in the newly established province.

Nevertheless, the Roman control over Muntenia did not cease, as the fortifications along the *transalutanus* line, most of which built only at the beginning of the Severan period, and the presence of *vexillationes* of the *legio XI Claudia pia fidelis* from Durostorum at Pietroasele during Caracalla's reign, fully attest. The above mentioned agreements probably allowed the nomad Sarmatian tribes to come to spend the winter in the nearby of the Roman Lower Danube frontier, without crossing some demarcation lines like the one built in Galați area and to have free pass over the Bărağan area. Therefore, one can easily label the Roman frontier from north-west Muntenia as an open-frontier, since the Roman policy towards the region was shaped by Rome's interactions with the nomad Sarmatian tribes settled there by the first half of the 1st century AD.

Keywords: Frontiers; Dacia; Lower Moesia; Muntenia; Sarmatians.

Rezumat: Care sunt motivele pentru care au fost construite castrele din nord-vestul Munteniei în timpul lui Traian?

În decursul mai multor epoci istorice a putut fi observat faptul că unul dintre cele mai importante zăcămintele din Transilvania și din zona colinară de la sudul Munților Carpați a fost sarea. Această resursă de pe teritoriul dacilor a fost cu siguranță una dintre componentele importante ale comerțului cu Imperiul roman. Descoperirile de tezaure din zona Văii Teleajenului și din împrejurimi sunt foarte semnificative în acest sens, chiar dacă aparțin unui interval cronologic destul de larg. Acest culoar pătrunde într-o zonă cu numeroase resurse de sare, reprezentând una dintre căile de comunicare cu zona de sud-est a Transilvaniei, la rândul ei bogată în exploatarea de sare.

Credem că politica lui Traian față de unele populații nomade, anume față de sarmați, a fost aceea de a le interzice migrarea în zonele lor vitale din punct de vedere economic. Acest fapt, după cum am văzut, a avut consecințe grave asupra relațiilor cu iazigii și apoi cu roxolanii.

În cursul procesului de pacificare a întregii zone nord-dunărene, Hadrian retrace unele legiuni, regândeste sistemul defensiv în provinciile afectate și aduce, într-o serie de puncte cheie, trupe auxiliare, dintre care excelează cele foarte mobile, datorită efectivelor de cavalerie. De asemenea, acesta optează pentru trupe neregulate specializate. Se remarcă adaptabilitatea la situația Daciei, gândirea în detaliu a unor soluții strategice și, de ce nu, economice. Întreținerea noilor trupe era mai ieftină, acestea fiind adaptabile, probabil mai puțin pretențioase la condițiile existente în provincia nou creată.

Cu toate acestea, controlul asupra Munteniei nu a încetat, după cum o arată construirea în mai multe perioade a unor fortificații de-a lungul liniei transalutane, respectiv prezența unor *verillationes* ale legiunii *XI Claudia pia fidelis* de la Durostorum la Pietroasele în timpul domniei lui Caracalla. Acordurile menționate mai sus, probabil, le-au permis nomazilor sarmați să poată ierna în preajma frontierei romane Dunărea de Jos, fără a traversa unele linii de demarcație, cum ar fi cea construită în zona Galați și să aibă trecere liberă peste zona Bărăganului. Prin urmare, se poate eticheta cu ușurință frontiera romană din nord-vestul Munteniei ca o frontieră deschisă (nomadă), deoarece politica romană față de această regiune a fost determinată de prezența în acest areal a populațiilor nomade.

Cuvinte cheie: frontiere; Dacia; Moesia Inferior; Muntenia; sarmați.

Introduction

Much has been written on the annexation of Dacia and the subsequent organization of the conquered territory into a Roman province, being a topic of choice recurrent in the scientific debate¹. By the exceptional number of the involved forces, the Roman army's effort in the Dacian campaigns most likely exceeded that of the famous Jewish War. The narrative of the Dacian campaigns, though lacking the detailed account of Flavius Josephus, was offset by the fierce debate among the Romanian historians². Our attempt herein is to synthesise the state of the archaeological research of the forts in north-west Muntenia. We shall discuss the area under the authority of the governor of Moesia Inferior during Trajan, emphasizing the reasons underlying the location of the Roman fortifications at Draja de Sus, Mălăiești, Târgșor, Pietroasele or Voinești. In our arguments, we shall avoid including, inasmuch as possible, the results of the archaeological research of the most recent years, which, nevertheless, shaped some of our conclusions.

The conquest of Decebalus' kingdom and its subsequent change into a Roman province led to significant mutations on a vast area stretching north of the Lower Danube³. The inclusion of such territory was atypical, should we bear in mind the previous extensions of the Roman borders. The control over the Carpathians was regarded as a strategic necessity in order to force out a powerful opponent, thus safeguarding the provinces of Moesia Superior, Moesia Inferior, Thracia and Macedonia⁴.

¹ The best overview is still Strobel 1984, with the addition Strobel 2006. See also Strobel 2010, 218–303, with Fl. Matei-Popescu's review, *Dacia*, N. S., LV, 2011, 203–206.

² Wheeler 2010, 1187.

³ On the organization of the Dacia province see Piso 2008, with the older literature.

⁴ Zahariade 1997, 603–608. The making of this “defence-in-depth strategy”, by the inclusion of Dacia, also meant considerable material resources, perceived as evidence to a “long-term strategic planning”. The economic principle of the cost-benefit analysis of certain conquests originates in the “preclusive defence” concept (“preclusive defence” 30 BC – AD 284, then “defence-in-depth” as of AD 284) defined by Luttwak, as a novel strategy designed to ensure stability and maximize profit. C. R. Whittaker (2004) rejects

The Roman army's campaigns north of the Danube during the 1st century AD were interpreted as designed to impose a client status over the populations dwelling these areas, occasions with which a so-called "*security area*" or "*buffer zone*" was established, by banning further establishment of civil settlements⁵. This discussion should not dismiss the desire of some of the governors to win the "glory of the extension of their province"⁶ and, implicitly, provide the emperors with the arguments of carrying out campaigns deemed successful at Rome, especially in their first reigning years. One should not exclude either the fact that Trajan was at his turn in this situation. The propaganda of the victory against the Dacians was exceptional, to the extent of the war which the emperor prepared against the Parthians⁷.

We start from the premise that under the Principate, Roman borders were interaction rather than division lines, since the economy of the empire depended to a large extent on the trade relations with the neighbouring populations and tax collection⁸. Literary texts report on how important the imperial frontiers and the populations nearby them were in the political ideology of the empire. These texts account at length on invasions and aspects related to the political views of the emperors to the detriment of economy or the relations with the communities living in border areas. The results of the archaeological investigations provide a multitude of data regarding the interaction with the barbarian world, especially in the border areas of the empire⁹. Ensuring border control and not defence along or behind them supposed the allotment of considerable financial and human resources. We place this in the context of trade exchanges with the neighbouring populations, directed by the Romans to the well defended border areas where, beside the many units, custom stations and extensive economic activities are recorded.

The way that modern historians cartographically transposed literary, epigraphic or archaeological information was most often influenced by interpretations, calculations and estimates based on modern maps¹⁰, which led to a different approach than the

the cost-benefit consequence theory, which would have played an important role in the Roman frontier extension strategy, practically lacking the sustainability limits of such decisions (chapter "Where are the frontiers now?"). Wheeler 2010, 1185-1227; Wheeler 2011, 191-219. See also Petolescu, Matei-Popescu 2008.

⁵ Pârvan 1926, 733; Syme 1971, 148-149; Pippidi 1967, 306. This might have been the stake of placing outposts on the left bank of the Danube (Bogdan-Cătăniciu 1981, 4). We shall not resume here the entire discussion on the views of the historians who deemed that the goal of Roman campaigning north the Danube was to establish a "safety area".

⁶ TAC. Ag. 14.2: *fama aucti officii*. Domitian's campaign against the Chatti (Strobel 2010, 78-87), carried out with a considerable military effort, yet which also resulted in a modest expansion east the Rhine in the Wetterau area, was regarded from this view. The recurrent change of the northern border of the province of Britannia was placed on the account of the governors' ambitions.

⁷ See Speidel 2002 and Strobel 2010, 218-303.

⁸ Schallmayer 2006, 9-10: "Im Wesentlich dienten die Limeslinien in Britannien, an Rhein und Donau, in den Karpaten, am Euphrat und in Nordafrika als wirtschafts- und gesellschaftspolitisches Steuerungsinstrument der römischen Provinz- und Zentralverwaltung. Indem es durch die Sperranlagen gelang, Handelströme und Bevölkerungsbewegungen auf ganz bestimmte Limesdurchgänge zu leiten, schuf sich der römische Staat die Möglichkeit, einerseits den aus den einzelnen Provinzen ausgehenden und in das Reich hineinführenden Handel zu kontrollieren, ordnend einzugreifen Zölle zu erheben, andererseits den Zuzug ganzer Bevölkerungsgruppen je nach internem Bedarf zu regulieren".

⁹ Isaac 1990; Whittaker 1994.

¹⁰ See the discussion in Tentea 2014, 143-148.

reasoning of the Roman decision-making factors¹¹. Borders were a rather transition space, reason for which their classification into “natural” and “artificial” was inherently replaced with the terms of “division areas” or “connection areas”¹². The design of campaign approach strategies was thus made by reference to the populations the Romans came upon and, implicitly, the territories they occupied and not the reverse.

The biggest issue of the Roman army, similar to the modern ones, was supply, as road transport was slow and expensive, while ensuring necessary goods to a large number of soldiers compactly positioned was difficult. Over time, the optimal strategic solution was to disperse the units in areas where local resources could be fully exploited. The risk of locating smaller units in several fortifications was counterbalanced by the establishment of an infrastructure and logistics network, by which they could communicate efficiently. A second advantage of dispersing the army within the territory was the possibility to monitor and better guard both the territory as well as the access routes. The efficiency of their distribution within the territory was given by secured transport and minimized convoy movements. The preserved location of certain forts on their original spot for a long time suggests both the reason for which they were originally set in respective places and the fact that from some point on, units no longer changed garrison¹³. The defeat of the enemy also implied moving the fortifications on the novel operation theatres, which became new borders. Fortifications – as reinforcement points of certain positions – were useful during the warfare, while after the defeat of the adversaries, respective fortifications played the role of protecting the previously opposing populations included¹⁴.

The forts in north-west Muntenia

Returning to the subject herein, we raise the following question: if the role of the forts was explained to a certain extent for the military circumstances during the Dacian campaigns¹⁵, what was their purpose in north-west Muntenia after hostilities ceased?

These forts drew the attention of the scholars due both to their short use interval as well as their peculiar location. Based on archaeological surveys and excavations, correlated with epigraphic and literary sources, it was argued these Roman fortifications at *Drajna de Sus*, *Mălăiești*, *Târgșor* and *Voinești* functioned for a short period of time between the end of Trajan’s Dacian campaigns and early Hadrian’s reign¹⁶. The fortifications, as well as the buildings in the attached settlements, were archaeologically

¹¹ Ancient maps were schematic guidelines presented in the form of road itineraries or geographic descriptions. They contained explicative notes of certain sites, for the use of soldiers and traders, not rendered from a geographic or political view, since the borders, as limits of the empire, were not outlined – Whittaker 2004, 11, 82.

¹² Isaac 1990, 128.

¹³ Dobson 1986, 18–19, stressing that the legions did not change permanently their province after Marcus Aurelius; see also Dobson 2009, 31–32.

¹⁴ Dobson 2009, 31–32. The Roman army was not exclusively a foreign policy tool, its main function being that of provincial garrison (Isaac 1990).

¹⁵ Diaconescu 1997; Opreanu 1998; Bogdan-Cătănciu 1981; Bogdan-Cătănciu 1997; Stefan 2005; Petolescu, Matei-Popescu 2008.

¹⁶ Ștefan 1948, 141–142; Florescu 1960, 226–227. Based on the material yielded by the archaeological

investigated, though unequally. The forts at Târgșor, Mălăiești and Drajna de Sus are aligned along Teleajen valley, on a 50 km-distance, namely at an interval of one march day each¹⁷, while the fort at Voinești lies along the Râul Târgului valley, on the route of the future *limes transalutanus* and undoubtedly, in direct relation with the fortification at Rucăr and those from south-east Transylvania. We shall include herein also the fort at Pietroasele¹⁸, situated near the Buzău valley, another important entry corridor towards south-east Transylvania, respectively the access to important salt resources.

The interpretations regarding the role of these Roman fortifications were included in various scenarios regarding the advance of the army of Moesia Inferior to the north of the Danube during the Dacian campaigns.

Gr. Tocilescu assumed the existence of the *shortest access way* on route Sexaginta Prista, Bucharest, Ploiești, Drajna and, from there, towards the south-eastern area of Transylvania¹⁹.

V. Pârvan adopted this idea, developing an entire scenario on the occupation and defence of Muntenia. The area would have been monitored, according to above author, from the tall bank of Moesia Inferior, from the legionary fortresses at Novae, Durostorum and Troesmis. Other routes would have started at Barboși, on the Siret, the Buzău and the Ialomița²⁰.

A few more recent date studies, which examined several aspects related to the Dacian campaigns and the period in their aftermath, expressed a number of hypotheses on the corridors that the Roman army followed north the Danube, respectively the areas which it surveilled for a certain period of time. The units which belonged to the Moesia Inferior province, and which crossed the Danube in order to participate in the Dacian campaigns, were deemed as part of a secondary column, termed (according to the departure point, namely *castra aestiva* from Izlaz), the Islaz-Cetatea Vedeia group²¹. It was believed this column crossed the Danube, very likely from the legionary fortress at Oescus, aided by the ships of *classis Flavia Moesica* or a bridge of vessels built between Vadin and Orlea. A concentration point north the river is the place where later was built the town at Sucidava, visible in the field by a large-sized trapezoid enclosure²². Other two troop columns displaced from Moesia Inferior would have crossed the Danube in front the legionary fortresses at Novae and Durostorum²³,

research of the baths or the fort at Pietroasele, it was chosen a date starting by mid 3rd century (*LEG XI CL ANT*), included (Bogdan-Cătănciu 1981, 60, n. 62).

¹⁷ The first proper archaeological research was carried out by Gh. Ștefan in the fort at Drajna. Gh. Ștefan made a very interesting note, namely that the fortification, identified with Ramidava, did not close only the Drajna valley to Tabla Buții, but also ensured communication by Ogretin to the Buzău valley (Ștefan 1948, 144); Mălăiești (Zagoriț 1940; Florescu, Bujor 1955); Târgșor (Ciupercă, Măgureanu, Anton 2015, 771-780); Drajna (Ștefan 1948; Zahariade, Dvorski 1997, 7-23, 50, 62, 63-65, 67); Bogdan-Cătănciu, 1981, 5, 9-10, 21, 26, 40, and n. 59, 66, 68-70; Petolescu 1986, 510-514; TIR L35, 39, 41, 50, 58.

¹⁸ Stăicuț 2010, 211-238; Stăicuț 2011, 96-97; Mărgineanu-Cârstoiu 2015, 91-120.

¹⁹ Tocilescu 1900, 127. Gh. Ștefan believed possible that the Romans had used a previous route (Kahrstedt 1937, 127, apud Ștefan 1948), although it had been less likely left defenceless on a distance of approximately 150 km.

²⁰ Pârvan 1923, 140-142.

²¹ Zahariade, Dvorski 1997, 60.

²² Petolescu 2001, 349-350; Petolescu 2007, 40-41.

²³ Petolescu 2001, 349-354; Petolescu 2007, 40-41. Further, Zahariade, Lichiardopol 2006 = Zahariade, Lichiardopol 2009.

although there is no direct proof of the presence of the *legio XI Claudia pia fidelis* in the Durostorum fortress before the end of the *bellum Dacicum*, since it occupied the former fortress of the *legio V Macedonica* at Oescus²⁴.

Large fortifications that might have accommodated significant military strengths may be recorded north the Danube at Sucidava, Islaz-Verdea²⁵ or Poiana (former Flămânda)²⁶. This concentration is located approximately in the same area of the fortifications at Oescus and Novae.

There is no archaeological evidence pointing to the routes of the Roman armies to the hill area from north Muntenia. They might have been, for instance, temporary Roman fortifications. A possible route was suggested along the Ialomița valley. At Filipești (Brăila), on the Buzău valley a temporary fort was built²⁷ (340 × 500 m), supposed in connection with the fortification at Barboși or Durostorum²⁸. However, at present, there is still no evidence to support such assumptions.

C. C. Petolescu supposed that the fortifications on the Teleajen valley, alike other supposed in Moldova area, likely fulfilled the role of blocking all valleys which were access ways to Transylvania, thus removing any possible surprise attacks of the Dacians after the first Dacian campaign of emperor Trajan (AD 101/102)²⁹.

Following the analysis of the tile stamps discovered at Drajna de Sus and Târgșor, M. Zahariade argued that respective fortifications marked the route of the Roman army during the first campaign against the Dacians of AD 101–102, subsequent to the annihilation of most important Dacian fortifications in this area³⁰. The building phase where the tile stamps were found belongs to the period when respective area was under the control of Moesia Inferior. According to Ioan Piso, the production of bricks and tiles was not possible in a territory which was not yet a province³¹, the production starting thus after the complete pacification of AD 106.

²⁴ Matei-Popescu 2010, 133–134, 261–264.

²⁵ At approximately 20 km south Slăveni, nearby the Olt interflow with the Danube, was identified the fortification at Islaz-Verdea (340 × 120 m, partially damaged by the river) (Tudor 1978, 279; Vlădescu 1983, 81, no. 6; Vlădescu 1986, 29–30; Gudea 1997, 82, no. 66; Gudea 2005, 492, no. VII. B. 1; Marcu 2009, 212, no. 56. Tudor 1978, 266, no. 3; Vlădescu 1983, 114–115). The archaeological research reported the existence of the fortification and its dating to the Principate (Tudor 1978, 279). From the Islaz-Racovița fortification survived the north-western corner (75 × 105 m – Tudor 1978, 279; Gudea 1997, 82, no. 67; Marcu 2009, 212, no. 56).

²⁶ The fort at Poiana (former Flămânda) lies on the Danube bank in the area where the so-called “*trans-Alutanus line*” starts, in the part comprised between the forts at Oescus and Novae, located south the Danube. The fortification was strongly damaged by the river erosion. The fort sizes (350 × 390 m – Tocilescu 1900, 122, Fig. 72; Tudor 1978, 286; Bogdan-Cătănciu 1980, 658–659; Bogdan-Cătănciu 1981; Vlădescu 1983, 119; Vlădescu 1986, 87; Bogdan-Cătănciu 1997, 42–43; Gudea 1997, 70, no. 47), allowed the camping of significant strengths and its temporary use, mirrored by the archaeological research, led to the supposition it was a temporary fort which served to disembark units involved in the Dacian campaigns (Bogdan-Cătănciu 1997, 43).

²⁷ Bogdan-Cătănciu 1981, 9, 62, n. 66.

²⁸ Christescu 1937, 111.

²⁹ Petolescu 1986, 510–514.

³⁰ These stamps record the name of three legionary vexillations and one auxiliary troop vexillation as part of the army of the province of Moesia Inferior: *legio I Italica*, *legio V Macedonica*, *legio XI Claudia* and *cohors I Flavia Commagenorum*, all recorded at Drajna, and only the last two recorded in the fort at Târgșor – Zahariade, Lichiardopol 2006, 127, Fig. 5 e-f.

³¹ Piso 2000, 213; Piso 2001, 18.

Currently, it is difficult to endorse any scenario on the distribution of the stamped tile material in this area, be it only owing to the conflicting views maintaining in the specially literature regarding the significance of such artefact discoveries. Samples taken from identical stamp types discovered in different sites are still under study in order to obtain data on their production place (origin of the used raw material), after which pertinent conclusions may be drawn.

An interesting thing worth underlining within this context is the fact that the record of the military units of Moesia Inferior north the Danube was made by stamps marked on building materials identified exclusively in hill and sub-mountain areas. Records on the *transalutani* line confirm the same, finds being reported at Voinești³² and Rucăr³³.

Entry and surveillance corridor

The detailed analysis of the displacement of the Roman army during the campaigns against the Dacians evidences several moments. Prior the establishment of the new province, the former Decebalus' kingdom was, legally and administratively, the competence field of the legate of Moesia Superior. The army displaced in certain areas from the space comprised between the Olt valley, north-west Muntenia and south-east Transylvania was the competence area of the legate of Moesia Inferior³⁴.

The military diplomas discovered in the recent years had the merit of clarifying overall the number and composition of these auxiliary units, especially the fact that under Domitian their number increased significantly due to the organization measures the emperor took³⁵. For a long time, such measures were ascribed to activities under Trajan, for the preparations of the Dacian expedition. Most important troop displacements from other provinces were noted in the second part of the first Dacian campaign of Trajan, in connection with the supplemented military strength required both after the campaign to the north of the Danube as well as especially due to the losses incurred during the warfare south the Danube in the winter of AD 101³⁶.

The decisive event to significantly change the development of the first Dacian campaign was the attack over the Roman garrisons south the Danube in the winter of AD 101-102, firstly by the Sarmatian Roxolani, at the time Dacian allies³⁷. The

³² Petolescu, Matei-Popescu, Dumitrescu 2015, 254.

³³ Bogdan-Cătănciu 1974, 277-288; IDR II 607; Bogdan-Cătănciu 1997, Fig. 81/1-2.

³⁴ During Trajan's Dacian campaigns there existed several autonomous commands, like that of Longinus (Cn. Pinarius Aemilius Cicatricula Pompeius Longinus, *vir consularis* - Piso 1993, 1-4), former governor of the provinces of Moesia Superior and Pannonia, that of C. Iulius Quadratus Bassus (AE 1934, 176 = IDRE II 381; Piso 1993, 23-29, no. 4) or likely Laberius Maximus, Matei-Popescu 2015, 410, n. 10.

³⁵ Matei-Popescu 2010, 264-269; Matei-Popescu, Țentea 2006a, 75-120.

³⁶ Matei-Popescu, Țentea 2006b, 56-65.

³⁷ According to Cassius Dio (LXVIII, 10, 3) the Sarmatian Iazyges adopted a neutral position, different than that of the Roxolani, allies to the Dacians. See also Mócsy 1974, 94 or more recently Bărcă 2006; Bărcă 2013a. The hypothesis of Trajan's involvement in Moesia to hold back the Sarmatian and Dacian attack was expressed for the first time by Radu Vulpe based on the scenes of Trajan's Column (Vulpe 1964, 211-223). Opreanu believed that the moment when Moesia Inferior was raided, Sarmizegetusa was not under attack, which explains why Decebalus risked getting involved in this campaign, as the frieze on Trajan's Column would show (scenes XXXI and XXXII). This raid would have forced Trajan to cease attack in the mountain area and rush to the south-Danubian area in Moesia Inferior (scenes XXXIII-XXXV).

so-called “Decebalus’ Moesian diversion”³⁸ is rather a historiographic metaphor based mainly on the narrative interpreting of the frieze on Trajan’s Column. The presence of the Dacians beside the Sarmatians in respective scenes, but also the restoration of the inscription text from Tropaeum Traiani, may be regarded rather as expressions of contextualised episodes of *bellum Dacicum Traiani*, of which obviously the Dacians could not lack. Moreover, the historiographic view according to which Decebalus was a great king of the Dacians, ascribed him a distinctive strategic vision, which, alike the operations in the “Moesian diversion”, we do not believe to have belonged to him³⁹. We believe that still from this view were interpreted the too many directions of the Roman army attack over the “Dacian kingdom”.

The Sarmatian Roxolani were not involved in Trajan’s second campaign, which may be related to an agreement after the first campaign⁴⁰, of which only the payment of *stipendia* to the Roxolani⁴¹ is known. Cessation of hostilities in this area maintains over the course of Trajan’s reign.

The Roman units under the command of the governor of Moesia Inferior were concentrated as known from many examples of other operations, in a territorially well delimited area (*task-force*), in our case the Oescus-Novae area. The attack of the Sarmatian Roxolani in the winter of AD 101–102 did not occur there by chance. Their mission, as allies of the Dacians, was to pillage the territories of the province of Moesia Inferior lying to the right of the Danube. These attacks would peak with the attack of the Roman armies amassed in the north-west of the province, between Oescus and Novae, as underlined by the most important battle fought nearby, at Nicopolis ad Istrum, where later the Roman town would be built. In the same area could be noticed also the measures to supplement the units by the end of AD 101, when *legio XI Claudia* and *legio I Minervia* – the latter led by Hadrian and auxiliary units from Germania Inferior⁴² arrived. We may also believe that at that time the front of Moesia Inferior

The first battle was fought at Nicopolis ad Istrum (AMM. MARC. 31, 5, 16: *Nicopolis quam indicium victoriae contra Dacos Traianus condidit imperator*), the final battle of the Moesian campaign being given at Tropaeum Traiani (Opreanu 2006). Since in the inscription from Epidaur (IDRE II 370) Trajan’s name contains the epithet *Germanicus*, but not also that of *Dacicus* (awarded in AD 102), C. C. Petolescu believes its text refers to the “victory in Moesia over the Dacians and the Sarmatians in the winter of 101/102” (Petolescu 1995, 223–226).

³⁸ See more recently Petolescu 2010, 140, respectively Petolescu 1991, 54, n. 265. Their attack may be reconstructed based on the representations on some scenes on Trajan’s Column (Cichorius 1896–1900, scenes XXXI–XXXII, XXXVII) and the inscription text at Tropaeum Traiani – [*devicto exercitu D[acorum et Sarmata]rum*] (CIL III 12467 = AE 1965, 276; IDRE II 334; ISM IV 5. The reading of lines 8–9 [*devicto exercitu D[acorum et Sarmata]rum*], suggested by Emilia Doruțiu-Boilă and adopted in his argumentation by C. C. Petolescu (1991, 54, n. 265; Petolescu 1995a, 224) was suggested by comparison with the text of another inscription discovered in the ruins of the triumphal monument (IDRE II 335). Brief indications are found also with Ammianus Marcellinus, Jordanes, respectively an inscription from Epidaurus, recording the victory of Trajan in Moesia (IDRE II 370). C. C. Petolescu interprets this inscription text as evidence that Trajan himself was present in the campaign of the winter of AD 101–102 against the Roxolani and Dacians who attacked the area south the Danube in Moesia Inferior – Petolescu 1991, 64–66; Petolescu 1995a, 223–226.

³⁹ Țentea 2014, 136–137.

⁴⁰ Opreanu 1994, 207.

⁴¹ SHA *Hadr.* 6, 6–8.

⁴² The presence of *I Minervia* at Novae was recorded by tile stamps discovered in archaeological contexts dated by early 2nd century AD (of type *LEG I M P F* – *valetudinarium*). Ti. Claudius Vitalis’ promotion

lay at the hands of the Sarmatians, whose incursion on the right bank of the Danube must have commenced on the territory of Dobrudja. Not by chance, after the peace of AD 102, the reinforcement measures of the Danube border are notable⁴³.

The moment when the strengths of *I Italica* and *V Macedonica* (or only their vexillations) were involved in the Dacian campaigns cannot be established for certain over the course of AD 101. It is clear that *XI Claudia* and certain units of *I Minervia* were involved starting with AD 102. *Legio V Macedonica*, respectively *XI Claudia* were displaced to Troesmis, respectively Durostorum, sometime between the two Dacian campaigns of Trajan, or more likely by the end of the *bellum Dacicum*⁴⁴. The actions of the legions involved starting with the end of the AD 101 to the north of the Danube thus started in the forts at Oescus and Novae⁴⁵, on two distinct directions, the alignment of the Olt to Buridava, respectively the road on the *transalutani* line, reaching the pass towards south-east Transylvania.

from the *legio I Italica* to the *legio I Minervia* (CIL VI 3584 = ILS 2656 = IPD⁴ 794 = IDRE I 3) may date to the time of these campaigns, Strobel 1987; Matei-Popescu 2010, 41.

⁴³ Until that time, Roman fortifications on the right bank of the Danube are unknown between the naval bases at Sexaginta Prista (Ruse) and Noviodunum (Isaccea), monitoring this route being the responsibility of a *praefectus classis Flaviae Moesicae et ripae Danuvii* (M. Arruntius Claudianus, *praefectus classis Moesicae et ripae Danuvii* – AE 1972, 572). According to the archaeological and epigraphic sources under Trajan, most likely from the period between the two Dacian expeditions – 102–105 (Matei-Popescu 2010; Oprea 2006, 241) were built the forts at Carsium, in 103, Rasova-*Flaviana* (105–108?), as well as part of a road, according to the milestone found at Sacidava (Muzait, Dunăreni), set by *cohors IV Gallorum*, between 103–105 (ISM V 94, p. 120–121; Rădulescu, Bărbulescu 1981, 586–588, Fig. 2, no. 1, 353–356. See also the discussions Matei-Popescu 2004, 208–210; Oprea 2006, 237–242; Matei-Popescu 2010, 32; Țentea 2013, 146). We believe that such fortifying activity of the lower course of the Danube is an expression of the agreement with the Sarmatians, materialized in the field by clear territorial delimitation.

⁴⁴ The displacement of the *legio XI Claudia* in the Lower Danube area occurred in the second half of AD 101, together with the displacement of other auxiliary units from Germania Inferior (Matei-Popescu, Țentea 2006b). Likely, the first place where the legion stationed in Moesia Inferior, between the two Dacian expeditions of Trajan, was Oescus (ILB 62 and tile material), from where dates the earliest evidence on the presence of the legion by the Lower Danube. Sometime, between AD 102–105, the legion is set at Durostorum, where it stations until the end of the 3rd century AD and even in the Roman period. We do not agree with the classical view that the involvement of this legion in operations north the Danube must be related to its stationing at Durostorum.

M. Zahariade argued there has been a communication corridor from Durostorum. The stationing of the *legio XI Claudia* at Durostorum could be documented by certain data no earlier than 106, which excludes the existence of this route at least until Trajan's second Dacian campaign. See the discussion on the displacement of the *legio XI Claudia*.

⁴⁵ As early as Vespasian until the commencement of the first Dacian expedition of Trajan, at Oescus was stationed the *legio V Macedonica*, and the *legio I Italica* at Novae. The *legio V Macedonica* would be involved in the Dacian campaigns, being moved sometime between AD 103–105 at Troesmis. At Oescus was brought from Vindonissa, *legio XI Claudia*. It would be moved after the end of the second Dacian expedition at Durostorum. *Legio I Italica* or only some units displaced from Novae to the north of the Danube was replaced by a vexillation from Bonna or possibly the entire *legio I Minervia* (Matei-Popescu 2007, 290). Their displacement from Germania Superior, respectively Germania Inferior, beside other auxiliary units (Matei-Popescu, Țentea 2006b, 56–65) aimed at reinforcing a vulnerable area, respectively compensate the losses suffered following the attacks of the Sarmatians in the winter of AD 101–102. We may not know for certain if during AD 101, strengths from Moesia Inferior would have been involved in operations north the Danube or whether this decision would have been taken the subsequent year. It is important to specify that the involvement of the armies of Moesia Inferior did not occur concurrently with those of Moesia Superior or Pannonia. Without deeming it a secondary action front (Zahariade, Petolescu), it is much more likely these units had been massively involved in operations north the Danube after the Sarmatians' attack.

The *transalutanus* line, known as *Limes Transalutanus*, is a road starting from the area of the forts at Novae and Oescus, crossed the Plain of Muntenia to the hilly area, from where it made the connection with south-east Transylvania by the Rucăr-Bran pass. In the southern area, this road was protected eastwards by a palisade, along which, at variable distances, towers and fortifications were distributed. The exact date when this line of fortifications was built is still controversial in the specialty literature, most visible opponents being Ioana Bogdan-Cătănciu (who argued in favour of the dating starting with Hadrian) and C. C. Petolescu (who chose a dating no earlier than Septimius Severus)⁴⁶. The construction of the various fortifications set along the *transalutanus* line is related to local strategic reasons and not necessarily the existence of an entire defensive system: *Mapping and dating forts without considering the road-network is an unstructured procedure which cannot lead to an understanding of the system*⁴⁷.

The fortifications on this line were thus lying along a road connecting the Danube in the Poiana (former Flămânda) area (Oescus) with the passes ensuring communication with the intra-Carpathian area. In most cases, only a timber-and-earth phase was identified⁴⁸. Special circumstances were recorded in the case of the fortifications at Săpata de Jos (brick ramparts) and Câmpulung-Jidova (stonewalls). Amid the fortifications on the *transalutanus* line comprised between the Danube and Câmpulung there is no epigraphic evidence recording the stationing of any troop. In the fort at Câmpulung Muscel I a *graffito* was discovered which seems to record a soldier of *cohors I Flavia Commagenorum*⁴⁹. At Voinești, located north Câmpulung, tile stamps belonging to cohort *I Flavia Commagenorum*⁵⁰, in association with stamps of the *legio XI Claudia*, were found, which rather points to an earlier dating of this fort, as well

⁴⁶ Ever since the publication in the inter-War period of the coin hoard discovered in the brick fort at Săpata de Jos, it was hypothesized that the construction of the *transalutanus* line started with the reign of Septimius Severus (193-211), while its functioning was established until AD 245, view agreed by most specialists (Christescu 1934, 73). The so-called *limes transalutanus* was firstly discussed by Schuchhardt (1885), investigated by Gr. Tocilescu between the Danube and Roșiorii de Vede and crossed on its entire length by P. Polonic. The approach of the entire issue of the *limes* was made rather theoretically by D. Tudor, Cr. M. Vlădescu, Ioana Bogdan-Cătănciu and C. C. Petolescu. Archaeological excavations were performed at Jidava, Săpata de Jos, Băneasa, Rucăr, Urluieni, Poiana (Flămânda), Voinești, Isbășești, Putineiu and Gresia. For a synthesis of most recent views see Petolescu 2010, 182 sqq.). Ioana Bogdan-Cătănciu maintained on several occasions that the line was built more than a half a century earlier (Bogdan-Cătănciu 1981; Bogdan-Cătănciu 1997). A dating attempt to two distinct chronological moments belongs to R. Florescu: a first stage would be the period of the Dacian war of Trajan, the principal evidence being the *castellum* at Rucăr (Florescu 1978, 55-61), and the second would be the time of the proper construction of the *limes* under Septimius Severus.

⁴⁷ Isaac 1990, 128.

⁴⁸ Flămânda (350 × 390 m), Putineiu (53 × 53 m), Băneasa I (130 × 126 m), Băneasa II, Roșiorii de Vede (50 × 51 m), Valea Urluii (48 × 72 m), Gresia (50 × 60 m), Ghioca (com. Crâmpoia) (75 × 102 m), Urluieni I (105 × 123 m), Urluieni II (85 × 112 m), Fălfani (63 × 93 m), Săpata de Jos I (125 × 90 m), Săpata de Jos II (35 × 46 m), Albota (56 × 81 m), Purcăreni (160 × ? m), Câmpulung Muscel I (123 × 100 m), Câmpulung Muscel II (50 × 60 m), Voinești, Rucăr (60/55 × 47/42 m) – Bogdan-Cătănciu 1981; Vlădescu 1983, 119-122; Bogdan-Cătănciu 1981, 8; Bogdan-Cătănciu 1997, Fig. 76; Gudea 1997, 72-81, no. 49-65. Worthy of note is also the interpreting of the so-called *geminari castra*, Marcu 2005, 706.

⁴⁹ There was discovered a *graffito* which seems to record a soldier of *cohors I Flavia Commagenorum* -, [- -]ITULCAI (ILD 164; Petolescu 2002, 96-97).

⁵⁰ Bădescu 1981, 292, Fig. 2; Zahariade, Lichiardopol 2006, 127, Fig. 5/g.

as of the baths⁵¹. In the small *burgus/praesidium* in the shape of an almost rectangular shape at Rucăr stamp tiles belonging to *cohors II Flavia Bessorum* were discovered⁵². The presence of a mixed unit composed of detachments of the *legio XI Claudia* and *cohors I Flavia Commagenorum* at Voinești proves without any shadow of a doubt that the road on the future *transalutanus* line was already in function under Trajan.

The Olt River was not an important communication route at that time, the Cozia Massif being a very difficult obstacle to cross by any army, reason for which we believe that the advance very likely stopped in the hill area of Buridava. There is no epigraphic evidence recording units from Moesia Inferior involved in the Dacian campaigns north the Cozia Massif⁵³. With one exception⁵⁴, the fortifications mapped and researched between Boița (lying by the entry into the Olt gorge) and Buridava (Stolniceni?, Sâmbotin?) are small-sized⁵⁵. Owing to their reduced sizes, the units in garrison were of *numeri* type⁵⁶. The alternate road, along the Olt, through the eastern area of Cozia Massif, seems to have been completed a few decades later, as suggested by the inscriptions discovered in the fortifications at Călimănești-Bivolari (Arutela?)⁵⁷ and Rădăcinești⁵⁸, built by *Suri sagittarii* under T. Flavius Constans (AD 138), respectively at Copăceni (Praetorium I?)⁵⁹, built by *numerus burgariorum et veredariorum* (AD 140)⁶⁰. The fortifications on the *transalutanus* line are not elements of a coherent, well defined defensive system; not all these fortifications were contemporary over the entire operation of the road along which they were set. The fact that the small fortification at Rucăr functioned under Trajan points to the use of this communication way on the “*transalutanus*” route as early as that period⁶¹. Further evidence to this effect,

⁵¹ See n. 32.

⁵² See n. 33.

⁵³ Zahariade, Dvorski (1997, 60) believed there are no attestations north Buridava. We considered though the find of a tile stamp in the fortification at Arutela (IDR II 579), which might date to the same period.

⁵⁴ The fortification at Racovița (Praetorium II?) is sized 112 × 101 m.

⁵⁵ The fortifications are approximately square or with a very close length-width ratio, with sizes comprised between 45 and 65 meters. Boița (45 × 50 m), Copăceni (64 × 64? m), Titești (56 × 48 m), Călimănești-Bivolari (Arutela - 61 × 61 m), Rădăcinești (63 × 56 m), Stolniceni (Buridava? - 60 × 60 m). It is worth mentioning that their sizes appear with slightly different values within publications. On the fortifications at Căineni (Pons Vetus?), Râul Vadului, Perișani, Jiblea and Sâmbotin (Castra Traiana?) it is known that they are small-sized, yet values are unspecified.

⁵⁶ Gudea 1997, 92-93, no. 89-91.

⁵⁷ CIL III 12601 a = 13793 = IDR II 575; CIL III 12601 b = 13794 = IDR II 576.

⁵⁸ CIL III 12604 = IDR II 584; CIL III 12605 = IDR II 585.

⁵⁹ TIR L 35, 35; Tudor 1978, 287-288; Gudea 1997, 93, no. 81.

⁶⁰ CIL III 13795 = ILS 8909 = IDR II 587; CIL III 13796 = ILS 9180 = IDR II 588; Petolescu 2002, 128-129. The inscription records for the first time the term of *burgarii*, that of *burgus* being recorded slightly later (Visy 2009). Their role was to monitor certain key-points. Vegetius, for instance, advised the construction of a *burgus* for the protection of water sources, impossible to control from town walls. An inscription from Thracia, at Pizus (Dimitriev, Bulgaria - IGBR III 2, 1690 = SEG 45.845) evidences that the natives supplied garrison units, *burgarii*, and supplies for these garrisons which were the imperial post service (Isaac 1990, 180, n. 101). An inscription of AD 152 from Panëevo mentions *praesidia, burgos et phruria* for the protection of the province of Thracia by the care of the authorities (AE 1927, 49, p. 404). Increased attention is awarded to the safety of the internal roads of the mentioned province under Antoninus Pius: [...] *praesidia n(umero) IIII burgi n(umero) XII phruri / n(umero) CIX* (AE 1957, 279 = ILB 211 = AE 2000, 1291). One may infer from these phrases that *praesidia* were larger fortifications as only 4 were recorded compared to 109 *phruria* (Isaac 1990, 180).

⁶¹ It seems that the road was also used in the pre-Roman period - Bogdan-Cătănciu 1981, 8.

even though indirect, is the association of the units recorded on the stamps discovered at Voinești frequently found under Trajan⁶². Furthermore, some fortifications came into existence at a later date, their functioning period being different from one case to another. Some of the fortifications along this road may be functionally interpreted as similar to those very well recorded in Egypt, termed *praesidia*⁶³. Ancient sources frequently used also the alternate terms like *praesidium*, a general term for watch post or garrison, respectively *phrourion*, used for *castellum* (Engl. *fort*, germ. *kastellum*)⁶⁴. A series of inscriptions from Pannonia, discovered between Aquincum and Intercisa, mention the construction of certain *praesidia* under Commodus⁶⁵. A century later, the epigraphic records regarding the fortification of the Lower Danube by many *praesidia*, contain the same stereotype phrase: *post debellatas hostium gentes confirmata orbi suo tranquillitate pro futurum in aeternum reipublicae praesidium constituerunt*⁶⁶. The same term designated under Augustus the fortifications built by Lentulus subsequent to the pushed back Dacian attack (*praesidia constituta*)⁶⁷, as well as the mentioned record of the displacement of cohort *I Hipanorum veterana* in AD 105 north the Danube: *Piroboridavae in praesidio*⁶⁸. It may thus be noted that the terminology of the fortifications was rather varied, which was due to both the evolution of denominations over the time as well as to the regional peculiarities.

As noted also in the case of the three forts on the Teleajen valley, the road protected by the *Transalutani*, alike that which might have temporarily functioned between Galați and Brețcu⁶⁹, lead to the same direction – south-east and centre of Transylvania, not by chance incorporated in the province of Dacia Inferior, whose territory covered an area mainly located south the Carpathians.

⁶² Petolescu, Matei-Popescu, Dumitrescu 2015, 254.

⁶³ In Egypt, the term of *praesidium* refers to fortifications used for rest and exchange of horses, provided with a small garrison comprising a few soldiers, beside whom lived civilians (including women). The soldiers in these *praesidia* belonged to a cavalry troop or had cavalry strengths stationed in a fort in respective area. The *praesidia* played a monitoring role, ensured security (including of water reserves) and escort, respectively post service. In-between *praesidia* were recorded the so-called signal towers (*skopeloi*). Their command was exercised by a *praefectus praesidiorum et montis Beronices* – CIL IX 3083 = ILS 2699. Based on the *ostraca* discovered in the fortifications lying along the road Koptos – Myos Hormos or Berenike, Helene Cuvigny showed that *praefectus montis Berenicidis* was an official post which belonged to an equestrian officer. This prefect, who was likely stationed at Koptos, ensured the command of all military units displaced on the road between Koptos and Berenike (Cuvigny 2004, 295–305).

⁶⁴ Richardson 2004, 35–50. The discussions are yet much more nuanced depending on some peculiar cases. The term of *praesidium* is found by early Principate in the writings of Titus Livius as garrison to designate a certain type of fortifications *quibus opportuna imposuerat praesidia, impetum dedit* (Titus Livius, III, 5; III, 3: ... *Relicto itaque castris praesidio egressi tanto cum tumultu inuasere fines Romanos*); III, 60: (... *relinquitur magis castris praesidium quam satis uirum ad certamen*).

⁶⁵ RIU 1129 – Intercisa: [...] *ripam omnem burgis [a / solo extractis item praesidiis per loca opportuna ad clandestinos / latruncolorum transitus oppositis munivit [...]*.

⁶⁶ Zahariade 1997, 229–230; Kovács 2008, 133. The term refers for that time to the fortifications at Sexaginta Prista, Transmarisca, Durostorum, Halmyris, with sizes similar to auxiliary troop forts during the Principate.

⁶⁷ FLOR. II, 28; Cn. Cornelius Lentulus Augur: PIR² C 1379. Ioana Bogdan-Cătănciu believed that the fortifications were built previously this event (Bogdan-Cătănciu 1981, 4).

⁶⁸ Fink 1971, 217–227, 222–223, no. 63 II 21: *apsentes: ... Kas(t)rae in praesidio*. It is interesting why a *praesidium* was built at Soza in the Bosporus, Crimea: “as the temper of the people was uncertain” (TAC. *Ann.* 12. 16).

⁶⁹ Pârvan 1913, 14–27.

Why there?

Which are the reasons for which the forts in north-west Muntenia were built under Trajan?

1. The construction and short term operation of the fortifications at Târgșor, Mălăiești, Drajna de Sus and Pietroasele must be regarded within the same context with those at Rucăr and Voinești⁷⁰. Differently to the traditional historiography, we believe that the construction of the fortifications in the mentioned points (*locations*) should rather be related with the exploitation of highly important resources for the Roman army. It is this way one should understand also the location of certain units in the fort at Pietroasele, respectively Buridava. Thus, the displacement of the army in these points corresponds firstly to logistic reasons.

Over the course of several historical periods, it could be noted that one of the most important deposits of Transylvania and the hill area south the Carpathian Mountains was the salt. This resource on the territory of the Dacians was most definitely one of the important parts of the trade with the Roman Empire. The hoard finds in the Teleajen valley area and nearby are very significant to this effect, even though they belong to a rather broad chronological interval. This corridor enters in an area with many salt resources, being one of the communication routes with south-east Transylvania, at its turn rich in salt exploitation.

The rich salt resources on the territory of Dacia were precious due both to the impressive quantity of the deposit and the fact that solid salt lacked from an expansive territory (Pannonia, the Balkan Peninsula or the north of the Black Sea)⁷¹. Salt must have been one of the components of the trade relations between the Dacians and the Sarmatians⁷², as it was highly necessary to a nomad population, whose economy was mainly centred on cattle breeding. As indicated by the epigraphic data, the salt mines in the future province of Dacia were part of the imperial estate, leased to *conductores pascui et salinarum*, who also had the right to sell the salt⁷³.

In the support of the arguments above, we shall mention only one further example, which belongs to a different period though, namely the Bulgarian control of the salt resources of Transylvania in the early medieval period, which is no longer a novelty, underlined in several more recent studies⁷⁴.

2. Another reason for the arrangement of the Roman units in this area was identified based on parallels with a situation very similar in the north of the border

⁷⁰ Although the fort there was not yet found, the archaeologists who excavate the Roman baths there related the functioning of this edifice to an extant fort nearby.

⁷¹ Benea 2007a, 99; Benea 2007b, 41. For the salt mines in Dacia see also Glodariu 1977, 960f.; Wollmann 1996, 411ff. In Antiquity, beside mine or surface exploitation, salt was also obtained from sea water, in coastal areas or, in inland areas, from salted waters or lakes (PLIN. *Nat.* 31. 82). At this moment, yet, there is no estimate of the proportion in the domestic demand that could be covered by salt exploitations from sea water (Marzano 2013, 124, 141). Interpretations on the value of salt were sometimes exaggerated, as it was deemed more valuable to the Roman Empire than the gold in Dacia, being “a key argument for the conquest of the Dacian state” (Medeleț 1995, 285–301).

⁷² Bărcă 2006, 270.

⁷³ Piso 2007, 179–182; Benea 2007a, 91–111. These *conductores* either paid a lease tax for salt extraction or collected the taxes due to the state by other mine owners.

⁷⁴ Madgearu 2001, 280; Madgearu 2005, 111; Ciupercă 2010a, 289 = Ciupercă 2010b, 628; Yotov 2012, 326, Fig. 5, 330.

in Pannonia Superior. *Historia Augusta* noted that Marcus Aurelius had wished to establish a new province in the north⁷⁵. Although in AD 175, the Marcomanni, Quadi and Iazyges were Roman allies, three years later, the presence of the units stationed among the Quadi and the Marcomanni was designed, according to Cassius Dio, to impede respective tribes to carry out a normal economic life, namely to hinder the free movement specific to nomad populations⁷⁶. *This way (Marcus) wished not to seize their land, but to punish them!* Over the last three decades were researched and published many data indicative of a special dynamics of the Roman armies, noticeable from the spatial distribution of the Roman fortifications north the Danube in the Vindobona and Kelamantia segment, datable starting with the second half of the 2nd century AD⁷⁷.

We believe that Trajan's policy concerning some of the nomad populations, namely the Sarmatians, was to ban migration in their economically vital areas. This, as seen, had serious consequences on the relations with the Iazyges and then with the Roxolani.

During the process of pacification of the entire north-Danube area, Hadrian withdraws some legions, rethinks the defensive system in affected provinces and brings, in a series of key points, auxiliary units of which excel those very mobile, due to their cavalry units. In addition, the emperor chooses the specialised irregular units. Adaptability to the circumstances in Dacia, detailed thinking of strategic and, why not, economic solutions are noteworthy. The maintenance of the new units was cheaper, as they were more adaptable, likely less pretentious to the conditions existent in the newly established province.

*Historia Augusta*⁷⁸ is unclear whether the Roxolani attacked or not Moesia Inferior during the crises of AD 117-118⁷⁹. Hadrian's arrival in Moesia Inferior was firstly due to the negotiations with the Roxolani⁸⁰. The displacement of garrisons gave access to the Sarmatians to key areas for their nomad economy. The entry of the Sarmatians in these territories does not seem significant in the first half of the 2nd century AD⁸¹, which may be explained either as a result of their nomad economy or a temporary conclusion owed to the current state of research.

⁷⁵ SHA *Marc.* 24, 5-6 and 27, 10. Based on Cassius Dio some reject any emperor's intention to create a new province, Instinsky 1972.

⁷⁶ CASS. DIO LXXI 20.

⁷⁷ The directions of certain operations during the Marcomannic wars could be established also by identifying temporary forts north the Danube (Rajtár 1997, 475, Fig. 6.75, 76; Tejral 1997, 534, Fig. 6.101).

⁷⁸ SHA *Hadr.* 6, 6-8.

⁷⁹ Analysing literary sources, C. C. Petolescu rejects the existence of a Sarmatian attack of the Roxolani (Petolescu 1993, 161-162).

⁸⁰ The main elements of these negotiations were seemingly the continuation of *stipendia* grant (Opreanu 1994, 207) and the award of the *rex amicus populi Romani* status to their chieftain (identified in an inscription from *Pola*, under the Roman name *P. Aelius Rasparaganus* - CIL V 32; Opreanu 1994, 207; Opreanu 1998, 53). Territorial clauses must have regarded the resolution of inconveniences caused by the displacement of certain Roman units on the territory of Muntenia.

⁸¹ For views on the starting date of the Sarmatian entry in the Plain of Muntenia see Bichir 1977, 191; Niculescu 2003, 184-186; Bogdan-Cătăniciu 1997, 140, 142; Diaconu 1980, 284; Oța 1999, 887; Oța 2007, 51; Oța, Sîrbu 2009, 178-196; Sîrbu et alii 2014, 122-133; Opreanu 1998, 63-64; Sîrbu, Bârcă 1999, 93-94; Bârcă 2013a, 117-119; Bârcă 2013b; Bârcă 2015. For the Sarmatian advance and inhabitancy in the 1st century BC - 1st century AD on the east-Carpathian territory see Bârcă 2006; Bârcă 2013a, 99-119.

In the case of Muntenia one may speak of the withdrawal/displacement of units from certain strategic areas (either economically and/or militarily) which had had the role of hindering the access of the Sarmatian tribes to certain vital resources for pastoralism. In this case, these areas are beneficial for winter spending and salt mining⁸². Therefore, there is no case of occupation of Muntenia and south Moldova and neither of a later withdrawal from a vast territory. The so-called occupation, respectively abandonment of a vast territory (the Plain of Muntenia and south Moldova) must be regarded rather as a displacement of units from a few key positions (military occupation), subsequent to constraints to which some of the nomad populations were subjected to, and not at as a significant loss of a territory not intended for colonisation. This space, generally described by modern names (East Oltenia, Muntenia, south Moldova), was not incorporated in the province of Moesia Inferior, the governor of this province bearing authority only over army controlled areas. This is how the lack of data on the colonisation of the newly-conquered area may be explained. In fact, even though legally, these territories were defined as *intra provinciam* (the Hunt papyrus), one should not forget that *provincia* was the competence field of a magistrate and not the proper territorial expression. Thus, territories were part of the competence field of the governor of Moesia Inferior, however since specific civil structures did not emerge, one may not speak of a territorially established province. In fact, this is not the single case when the authority of the governor of Moesia Inferior exceeds the proper limits of the province, the Roman control over the northern region of the Black Sea being indicative to this effect.

3. All these hypotheses open the discussion on the collocations defining the conquest of Muntenia and south Moldova and the integration of these territories in the province of Moesia Inferior, respectively the withdrawal of the Roman army from this vast territory. They were given historical value by association with Hadrian's decision to "abandon these territories", the "similar" situations in Assyria and Mesopotamia, within a strategic vision likely based on Augustus's policy, that of affixing empire borders along natural barriers. The conquest, respectively withdrawal of the army from the territory of Muntenia and south Moldova became paradigms in the historical context where the military operations of the Romans north the Danube under Trajan aimed at encircling the Dacian kingdom (seen as centralized structure, well organized administratively and militarily).

Furthermore, we shall mention that in the case of Muntenia there is no evidence of Roman colonisation or of any intention recording this could have happened. The extended Dacian campaigns and the arrangement within the territory of the Roman units seem to indicate that the authority of the governor of Moesia Inferior was exercised only over areas where the effective presence of the Roman army may be argued. Compared to the general situation, whereby the *provincia* might have inferred only the area where the consular legate exercised its *imperium*⁸³, we may argue that the territory controlled by the Romans in Muntenia was rather restricted.

⁸² It is possible that in some sub-Carpathian areas the salt exploited at surface might have also been mined by private entrepreneurs.

⁸³ Piso 1993, 3.

Conclusions

To conclude, similar with the Roman Eastern frontier, the area between Orontes and Tigris (the so-called *desert frontier* or *Steppengrenze*⁸⁴), one can easily imagine that something pretty similar must have been into place in the north-west Muntenia, namely an area which, due to the geographic layout of this territory, namely the Bărăgan area (virtually a deserted area, a no man's land, only colonised by the Romanian state by the end of the 19th century), was only under Roman control, but never part of the Empire. The region which was *intra provinciam*, as mentioned in the Hunt papyrus was the Olt valley, the core of the Dacia Inferior province. Therefore, Hadrian only withdraws the units from the above mentioned *praesidia*, due to some agreements reached with the nomad Sarmatian tribes and, in the same time, organized the Dacia inferior province in the region which was part of the Moesia inferior province, i.e. the region between Jiu and Olt Rivers and south-east Transylvania.

Nevertheless, the Roman control over Muntenia did not cease, as the fortifications along the *transalutanus* line, most of which built only at the beginning of the Severan period, and the presence of *vexillationes* of the *legio XI Claudia pia fidelis* from Durostorum at Pietroasele during Caracalla's reign, fully attest. The above mentioned agreements probably allowed the nomad Sarmatian tribes to come to spend the winter in the nearby of the Roman Lower Danube frontier, without crossing some demarcation lines like the one built in Galați area⁸⁵ and to have free pass over the Bărăgan area. Therefore, one can easily label the Roman frontier from north-west Muntenia as a *nomad frontier*, since the Roman policy towards the region was shaped by Rome's interactions with the nomad Sarmatian tribes settled there by the first half of the 1st century AD.

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⁸⁴ Sommer 2005, 33-47.

⁸⁵ Țentea, Oltean 2009.

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