

„ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” UNIVERSITY OF IAȘI

FACULTY OF HISTORY

DOCTORAL SCHOOL

DOCTORAL THESIS

Military organization and strategy in Scythia Minor

(late 3rd century - 7th century AD)

– ABSTRACT –

Supervisor:

Prof. univ. dr. Lucrețiu - Ion BÎRLIBA

PhD Candidate:

Cornel BALLA

IAȘI

2021

Table of contents

Abbreviations	p. 5
Foreword	p. 9
I. The subject of the thesis, the objectives and the research methodology	p. 9
II. Theme history	p. 11
III. The invasions of the 3rd century and the need to reorganize the <i>limes</i>	p. 18
IV. Edward N. Luttwak, the Dominate and the concept of " <i>defense in depth</i> "	p. 20
V. The structure of the paper	p. 28
Chapter I. The system of fortifications in Scythia	p. 31
I. Periods	p. 31
II. Establishment and borders of the province	p. 32
III. The Scythian <i>limes</i>	p. 34
IV. Road network	p. 35
V. Ports.....	p. 41
VI. Categories of fortifications and construction stages	p. 46
VII. The fortifications on the road of the Danube <i>limes</i>	p. 49
VIII. The fortifications on the main road inside the province	p. 105
IX. The fortifications on the coastal road	p. 125
X. The fortifications on the secondary roads	p. 164
XI. General considerations	p. 178

Chapter II. Military units in the province of Scythia	p. 191
I. The military organization of the province	p. 191
II. Military troops in Scythia	p. 200
III. <i>Legiones riparienses</i>	p. 214
IV. <i>Vexillationes</i>	p. 223
V. <i>Cunei equitum</i>	p. 229
VI. <i>Milites</i>	p. 233
VII. <i>Burgari</i>	p. 240
VIII. <i>Numeri</i>	p. 240
IX. <i>Sacrum Palatium/Sacer Comitatus</i>	p. 243
X. <i>Legiones comitatenses</i>	p. 244
XI. <i>Vexillationes comitatenses</i>	p. 245
XII. Anonymous military units	p. 246
XIII. <i>Foederati</i>	p. 251
XIV. <i>Classis</i>	p. 257
XV. Armament parts	p. 269
XVI. General considerations	p. 283
Chapter III. The <i>limes</i> of the province of Scythia in the context of the "<i>grand strategy</i>" of the Dominate	p. 290
I. Stage A: 284-378 (the reign of Diocletian - the death of Valens)	p. 290
II. Stage B: 378-491 (battle of Hadrianopolis - the reign of Zeno)	p. 324

III. Stage C: 491-559 (reign of Anastasius I - reign of Justinian I)	p. 345
IV. Stage D: 559-614 / 641 (reign of Justin II- reign of Heraclius)	p. 367
V. Scythia in the 7th century (ca. 626-680)	p. 390
Conclusions	p. 393
Annexes	p. 417
Sources of illustrations	p. 437
Illustrations	p. 446
Bibliography	p. 522

Introduction

The subject of the thesis, the objectives and the research methodology.

The study we propose is part of a broader research topic, that of Roman military history. From the last years of Augustus' reign until the first quarter of the seventh century, elements of the Roman army were permanently stationed in the territories of the Lower Danube. From a chronological point of view, the military history of the Dobrogea area can be divided into two major periods: the Principate (1st century - end of the 3rd century AD) and the Dominate (late 3rd century - beginning of the 7th century AD), each of which is largely characterized by different military conceptions of border protection.

Our thesis focuses on Scythia Minor, and the chronological limits of the analyzed period coincide with the establishment of the Roman province of Scythia (between 286-293) and the loss of imperial control over the region (during the seventh century). Among the issues addressed are the role that the province played in the Roman military structures on the Lower Danube, the causes and stages of the reorganization of the limes, the identification of military units in Scythia, how the Roman military organization and strategy functioned in the territory between Danube and Black Sea. We did not want to obtain a simple synthesis of the data already published in the specialized volumes, but a reinterpretation of them, taking into account the latest discoveries, focusing on the aspects discussed less in the specialized works.

Several factors contributed to the choice of theme. From a historiographical perspective, we have tried to identify the contributions made over time to the military history of Scythia Minor, following an analysis designed to reflect the current state of the issue. From a methodological point of view, the study aims to collect data on the organization of the province and the military strategy applied during the Dominion era, to subject them to a critical analysis and to systematize them. The approach method was also influenced by the lack of a unitary, balanced work, in which to structure the results of the researchers from the Romanian and universal space.

The objectives of the study are focused on identifying the implementation of military reforms and the impact on the security of the province, identifying the types of fortifications, categories of military units and troops present in different periods on Scythia, and establishing its role. as part of the imperial defensive system as part of the Lower Danube military strategy. To achieve the objectives, we resorted to the method of critical analysis of literary sources, which were related to epigraphic information and archaeological data. Also, the comparative method was used to present the military framework of the province at the mouth of the Danube in relation to other provinces of the empire, and finally, through the synthesis method, we corroborated the data to formulate conclusions.

Edward N. Luttwak, the Dominate and the concept of "*defense in depth*"

The present study starts from E. N. Luttwak's theory, according to which in the era of Dominate, the empire adopted a new defensive strategy, "defense in depth". This involved changing the *limes* which, from a relatively narrow fortified line on the outskirts of the border provinces, became a wider militarized area, with high fortifications at key points, positioned along the border communication lines and from within, meant to absorb and neutralize hostile military actions¹. The "fixed" (*limitanei/ripenensis*) border units and the "mobile" (*comitatenses*) inland collaborated during military operations, performing different tasks: the former repulsed small-scale attacks and defended the fortresses in which they were stationed in case of strong invasions. , until the arrival of the maneuvering army. After breaking through the *limes*, the attackers entered a peripheral battle zone of the empire where, using the system of fortifications and defensive infrastructure, the Roman mobile army was to confront and repel the enemies².

Another strategic defensive concept was defined as "elastic defense", which meant the complete abandonment of the *limes* and the advantages offered by the fortifications and related

¹ Luttwak 1976, p. 159. The thesis attracted several criticisms. B. Isaac argued that one could not speak of a "grand strategy" as defined by Luttwak, but it was shown that depending on the objectives set and the politico-military context, there was a strategic thinking at the imperial level, reflected in decisions taken at the central level on the distribution of resources, both in time of peace and in time of war. See Isaac 1990, p. 372-418 and Kagan 2006, p. 333-362.

² Luttwak 1976, p. 131-132.

infrastructure, the defense being based exclusively on the maneuvering army, the only advantages being increased mobility and knowledge of the terrain³.

S. Torbatov was of the opinion that in the case of the Lower Danube one can speak of "defense in depth" only from the first half of the fifth century, because the constant measures to strengthen the *limes* between the last quarter of the third century- century and until the time of Valens they transformed the river into an efficient border, very difficult to cross. The Bulgarian archaeologist also pointed out that there is no evidence of the relocation of the theater of war between the Roman army and barbarians on the territory of the Roman provinces during this period⁴.

The establishment of the Huns in the northern Danube territories (followed by other nomadic steppe populations, such as the Kutriguri, Avars and Bulgarians) forced the Romans to adapt to a new fighting style, based on increased mobility and surprise cavalry attacks⁵.

The structure of the paper.

The thesis was divided into three chapters, the structure and volume of each varying according to the information available. To these are added the introduction, the final conclusions and the annexes.

In the first chapter, *The system of fortifications in Scythia*, the fortifications in the province (typology, location, elements of defense) and the role they played in the provincial defensive system are treated. Their presentation was made according to their position on the roads of the province: the road of the Danube *limes*, the central road, the road on the sea shore and the secondary roads (*semitae*). Each fortified center was analyzed (as far as possible) from two perspectives: a "technical" one, which includes in particular measurements and data on the construction of the fortified enclosure and its defensive elements (towers, gates, extramural defense system) and a historical ", Where the evolution phases and the main chronological landmarks are presented. At the end of the chapter, certain conclusions were issued regarding

³ Luttwak 1976, p. 130-131.

⁴ Torbatov 2002, p. 438-439; Torbatov 2011 a, p. 317.

⁵ Luttwak 2009, p. 57-59. Perhaps due to the need for a strong cavalry to successfully oppose the nomads of the northern Pontic and Danube steppes, Turanian *foederati* were hired to defend the border provinces. Vitalian's troops, consisting of Hun and Bulgarian *foederati* stationed in the province of Scythia, were able to defeat several imperial armies.

their main characteristic elements and the functional defensive scheme of the late Roman enclosures was presented.

The second chapter, *Military units in the province of Scythia*, begins with a history of the province's military administration and an analysis of the number of soldiers present in the province and the numbers of various categories of units, based on figures in literary sources and estimates made from archaeological discoveries in certain provinces. The categories of military units attested epigraphically or literary in Scythia and the pieces of offensive and defensive armament discovered are then presented. The last part of the section presents the partial conclusions on the disposition and composition of the border army in different chronological stages.

The third chapter, called *The limes of the province of Scythia in the context of the "great strategy" of the Dominate*, aims to identify how the Roman military strategy worked in the politico-military context of the Lower Danube. The chapter is divided into four sections, each corresponding to a main chronological stage of the province's history, these being divided where appropriate. For each chronological stage, three sections were elaborated: a. *The province of Scythia and the imperial policy on the Lower Danube*; b. *The army of Scythia*; c. *The fortification system*. At the end of the chapter, the situation of Scythia in the years 626-680 was approached, based on the little information provided by literary and numismatic sources.

Conclusions

In Late Antiquity, the Roman military organization and strategy on the Lower Danube underwent changes caused by the politico-military context of the region, related to the general situation of the empire and the priorities set by the central leadership. The evolution of the imperial military strategy on the Lower Danube can be traced during the four main chronological stages (A-D) and their subdivisions. Specific elements of "defense in depth" are observed throughout the Dominate era, from Diocletian to the end of the sixth century - early seventh century. As E. N. Luttwak pointed out, the transition was never total or final, with the empire being able to resume an offensive policy at certain stages, taking advantage of the military and

political context⁶. The analysis of literary, epigraphic and archaeological sources allows a nuance of the way in which the strategic military conception evolved in the 4th-6th centuries.

The first defensive measures marking a change in the strategic conception were taken by Diocletian (especially after the establishment of the tetrarchy): the adaptation of the fortification plans. The route of the enclosures followed the route of the terrain curves, and the defensive elements were designed to make them difficult to access to the enemies. The fortified centers on the Danube bank, rebuilt under the first tetrarchy, have specific types of defensive lines. We notice first of all the camps with the main defensive line defended by a massive rectangular central tower (*phrourion*), flanked by two U-shaped towers and two fan-shaped towers on the corners (the central tower and the corner ones being equipped with support pillars for artillery platforms) and secondary lines defended by U-shaped and / or rectangular towers: Capidava, Troesmis, Noviodunum and Halmyris⁷.

The second type of fortified enclosures have the main and secondary sides provided with rectangular curtain and corner towers of different sizes, such as those at Sacidava and Aegyssus (maybe also Axiopolis). Dinogetia is a special case, with fan-shaped corner towers with supporting pillars and exclusively U-shaped curtain towers. The gates, generally located on the secondary sides, were flanked by towers, and on the outside, the exposed sides were protected by earth waves with ditches. The artillery machines, mounted on the platforms at the upper levels of the towers (especially the large ones, equipped with support pillars), allowed remote combat⁸.

The urban centers on the seashore had the sides of the precincts adapted to the new military requirements, being equipped with towers (mostly rectangular) and bastions⁹. Better known is the one from Histria, where all the towers and bastions are arranged on the main resistance side from the west, some towers being equipped with support pillars for artillery

⁶ Luttwak 1976, p. 132. S. Torbatov notes that "defense in depth" cannot be discussed in the case of the Balkan dioceses and provinces until the first half of the 5th century. Torbatov 2011 a, p. 317.

⁷ Apostol 2012, p. 81-94; Teodor 2014 b, 1, p. 142-150; Lungu 2015, p. 63-91. In the case of the legionary camps at Troesmis and Noviodunum, the secondary sides were defended (exclusively?) by U-shaped towers, and the *phrourion* on the main side was equipped with four supporting pillars.

⁸ The earth waves with defense ditches surrounding the civilian settlements of Troesmis and Noviodunum were located at 300/360-460 m from the main defensive lines of the camps, at the limits of the range of the *ballistae* installed on the platforms of the towers. Apostol 2012, p. 87.

⁹ The Argamum precinct is similar to the Sacidava precinct.

platforms. The Tomis precinct, rebuilt in the second quarter of the 4th century (Constantine I - Constans II), was also provided with U-shaped towers¹⁰.

The main gates were flanked by towers/bastions (the gates of Axiopolis, the north gate of Carsium, the west gate of Troesmis, the main gate of Dinogetia, the north gate of Noviodunum, the north and west gates of Halmyris, gates 1 and 2 from Ulmetum, the east and west gates from Tropaeum, the north, east and west gates from (L)Ibida, gates 1, 2 and 3 from Zaldapa, gate C from Histria, the north gate of Tomis, the gate of the outer enclosure of Acres, the north and west gates of Balchik-Horizont), provided with *propugnaculum* (the west gate of Troesmis, the main gate of Dinogetia, the north gate of Noviodunum, the west gate of Halmyris) or *zwinger* (the east gate of Sacidava) and gate-tower (the west gate of Sacidava, the west gate of Argamum, the gate of the median enclosure of Acres).

The network of fortifications of the province was extended after the reign of Diocletian. During the diarchy of Licinius - Constantine I, the reign of Constantine and his sons, the enclosures of (L)Ibida, Tropaeum and Zaldapa were built, located on the main road inside the province¹¹. The enclosures of Tropaeum and Zaldapa are similar: at Tropaeum there are 20 U-shaped towers, a *phrourion* and a corner tower in the shape of a fan/horseshoe, and at Zaldapa 32 towers, including a *phrourion*, three in the shape of fan/horseshoe and 28 U-shaped. At (L)Ibida, the plan specific to the main resistance sides of the camps on the *limes* of approx. 1.50-2 ha was adapted to the urban enclosure of 20.90 ha, defended by several segments with *phrouria* and U-shaped towers and fan-shaped towers on the corners.

A single larger fortification (approx. 2 ha) was founded inside the province after the middle of the 4th century: Ulmetum (post 382 or more likely post 395/401)¹². The resistance

¹⁰ The towers of the Great Gate and the tower discovered in 2019 at approx. 20 m from it. The dating was based on a coin of Constantine I discovered between the foundation of tower 4 and the moat (CCA 2001, p. 71) and the stratigraphy of the newly discovered tower. In terms of shape and size, it was assumed that the Butchers' Tower could date from the same period (Teodor 2014 b, 2, p. 82).

¹¹ In the case of the enclosure at Tropaeum, a first attempt to build a new fortified enclosure took place under Diocletian, but was abandoned. The works started under Licinius were continued by Constantine I, being completed after the year 331/332 (Papuc 1974, p. 325-335; Barnea et al. 1979, p. 75 și 228; Scorpan 1980, p. 46). The date of the erection of the enclosure from (L)Ibida was made on the basis of monetary discoveries (Iacob et al. 2015, p. 560). The erection of the Zaldapa enclosure took place in the second quarter of the 4th century (Torbatov 2002, p. 334; Torbatov 2003, p. 107).

¹² CCA 2010, p. 137; Teodor 2014 b, 2, p. 168. Coins from 395-401 were found on a leveling layer. CCA 2010, p. 137; CCA 2011, p. 98.

sides show some changes compared to the previous fortifications, the symmetry specific to the camps on the Danube line being no longer encountered: the main side of the resistance was defended by two circular corner towers (of different sizes), a *phrourion* positioned south of the middle side and two U-shaped towers flanking gate 1; on the corners of the north-east side were two relatively symmetrical circular towers and a small rectangular tower in the center; on the south side there are four rectangular towers of different sizes and two U-shaped towers of gate 2. Support pillars were present inside the corner towers and the *phrourion*, attesting to the continued use of artillery machines¹³.

The inland fortifications were designed as regional economic centers, with the role of production, storage and supply of *limes* with food and products needed by the troops. The large enclosures at Tropaeum and (L)Ibida were provided with external towers (some of them massive with supporting pillars), which proves that they were designed to be defended with the help of artillery.

After the large number of towers on the sides of the fortified enclosures of urban centers on the coast and inside the province and the presence of the two annexed fortifications with a military character from Tropaeum and (L)Ibida, we can see that they served as military bases and supply points for maneuvering army units. We do not know whether such formations represented permanent garrisons or whether these forts served as a *castra hibernia* for the Thracian regional army, but certain garrisons (more or less numerous), familiar with the use of artillery machines, were probably maintained permanently to guard the settlements and the *annona* stored inside the walls.

During the reconstruction campaigns of Anastasius I and Justinian I, the defensive elements of the resistance sides were modified¹⁴. Some towers were (re)built, retaining their U-shape (Tomis Butchers Tower, Carsium's G-section tower), but others were modified: tower 8 (*phrourion*) from (L) Ibida a was narrowed, two of the four pillars of the tower M (*phrourion*) from Noviodunum were not rebuilt, the shape of tower A from Noviodunum was changed from

¹³ See the plan of the enclosure at Gajewska 1974, p. 105, fig. 136; Scorpan 1980, p. 158, pl. XIII; Teodor 2014 b, 3, p. 130, fig. II-2.2-3.

¹⁴ Some changes have taken place in previous centuries, such as the dismantling of the U-shaped towers at Capidava in the second half of the 4th century or the types of towers built towards the end of the 4th century - beginning of the 5th century at Ulmetum (there is also the possibility that some of these towers were built during the reign of Justinian I).

U to rectangular. In the case of the newly built fortifications, there is a preference for circular corner towers instead of fan-shaped ones (at Ulmetum, Bisericuța, West Bulgarevo, Balchik-Horizont, in the case of the towers on the west corners of Ovidiu, of the north tower of at Shabla 2) and rectangular curtain towers, sometimes used on corners (at Ulmetum, West Bulgarevo, Kamen Bryag- "Jaylata", Sveti Nikola, Shabla 2 and Balchik-Horizont).

Military fortifications built in the 6th century have different typologies from those of the 4th century. If in the 4th century the new fortifications (generally small) were built especially on the bank of the Danube and on some *semitae* in the northern half of the province (the road on the Taița Valley and the one between Tomis and Axiopolis), in the 6th century they were built near Tomis and especially on the Black Sea coast, on the coastal segment in the southeast of the province, between Shabla and Balchik-Horizont¹⁵. Some *castella*, such as Bulgarevo West and Balchik-"Tuzlata" (?), had the main defensive lines defended by a central rectangular tower and two circular towers on the corner¹⁶. In other cases, the fortification was provided with a variable number of rectangular towers: Kamen Bryag- "Jaylata" and Sveti Nikola. The Balchik-Horizont enclosure (approx. 15 ha) has a different plan, with circular towers at the corners, quadrilateral towers (later pentagonal) and triangular bastions on curtains. In the case of the *quadriburgium* from Ovidiu, the corner towers have different shapes: two circular and two rectangular. The distinction between military fortifications and civil fortifications disappeared in the 5th-6th centuries, with most of the *castra* and *castella* becoming fortified civilian settlements¹⁷.

The presence of the towers and the records of Vegetius¹⁸ show that small-caliber *ballistae* were used not only to defend large fortifications, but also small *castella* (Dunavățu de Jos, Castelu, Kapitan Dimitrovo, Obrochishte, Odarci, Novo Botevo, Tvărdica, Kamen Bryag- „Toprak Kale”, Kamen Bryag-„Jaylata”, Sveti Nikola, Bulgarevo, Balchik-„Tuzlata) or *quadriburgia* (Peceneaga, Traian and Jijila, Mircea Vodă, Mihai Bravu, Poiana, Bisericuța, Ovidiu, Shabla). Ballistic missiles were discovered in the large fortified centers of the province,

¹⁵ It was considered that the construction works of the fortifications in the southeast of the province were carried out within a micro-regional program during Justinian's time. Torbatov 2002, p. 213.

¹⁶ The main resistance side of the *castellum* erected in the 6th century at Kamen Bryag-"Toprak Kale" was also defended by three towers, but their shape could not be established. Other castles that functioned in the IV-VI centuries also had the main side defended by three towers: Tvărdica (uncertain shapes) and Obrochishte (circular?).

¹⁷ Torbatov 2002, p. 402.

¹⁸ Vegetius, III, 3 și IV, 10.

such as Capidava, Dinogetia, Noviodunum, Halmyris, (L)Ibida, Ulmetum, Argamum, but also in the *burgus* of Babadag-Topraichioi.

Most of the information we have about the army stationed in Scythia dates from the end of the 3rd century and the 4th century. The military reforms adopted during the time of Diocletian and the tetrarch emperors for the defense of the Lower Danube were conservative. The basic units of the Roman army remained the legions, still stationed on the border, together with auxiliary troops, such as *vexillationes equitum*. The *comitatus* was not yet a real mobile army at that time, but a personal guard of the emperors¹⁹. When necessary, legionary corps and auxiliary formations were withdrawn to repel the offensives launched by barbarians on the provinces or to participate in military operations organized by emperors²⁰.

Based on the available data, we estimated that in sub-stage A1 (ca. 284-324²¹) in Scythia were stationed two legions of ten cohorts, numbering about 5,000-6,000 soldiers each (*legio I Iovia Scythica* with the main base at Troesmis²² and detachments at Dinogetia²³ and Carsium²⁴, most likely also in other centers on the western border of the province; *legio II Herculia* with the main base at Noviodunum²⁵ and probably with detachments in the fortifications on the Danube segment downstream of Dinogetia); an unknown number of *vexillationes equitum*, some attested epigraphically at Sacidava (4th century)²⁶, Capidava (late 3rd - early 4th century)²⁷, Aegyssus (4th century, post 324/328)²⁸, Salsovia (322/323)²⁹, perhaps also at Halmyris (late 3rd century -

¹⁹ Among the military figures attested epigraphically in Scythia, two were part of the *sacro comitatus* at one time: Aur(elius) [Valens], which later became *praepositus vexillationis Capidavensium* (Opriş 2004-2005, p. 187) and Val(erius) Thumpus, *lanciarus*, then became *praefectus legionis II Herculia* (IGLR 236), and one of the *sacro palatium*: Val(erius) Victorinus, *biarchus*, killed in the battle of Chrysopolis (IGLR 206).

²⁰ Torbatov 2002, p. 22; Torbatov 2011 a, p. 309-310. Cohorts of both Scythian legions participated in military campaigns in various parts of the empire (Crimea, Mauretania, Egypt, East), but also north of the Danube, against the Carps, Goths and Sarmatians.

²¹ Scorpan 1980, p. 135: 295-313/332; Barnea 1991, p. 205: Diocletian - the last years of the reign of Constantine I/the reign of Constantius II.

²² *Itinerarium. Anonini*, 225, 2-3; Stefan 2000, p. 40 și 43.

²³ IGLR 241 a-f.

²⁴ Petolescu, Popovici 1989, p. 241-243.

²⁵ *Itinerarium. Anonini*, 226, 1.

²⁶ *Vexillatio equitum Sacidavensis*. IGLR 188.

²⁷ *Vexillatio equitum scutariorum Capidavensis*. IGLR 220; IGLR 221; Opriş 2004-2005, p. 187.

²⁸ *Vexillatio equitum Aegyssensis*, although attested at Aegyssus after the reforms of Constantine I, was probably confined to this base from the previous period. IGLR 270.

²⁹ *Vexillatio Salsoviensis*. IGLR 271 b.

early 4th century)³⁰; a *classis ripae Scythicae*, whose headquarters were at Noviodunum³¹. Next to them, in the small fortifications on the border and inside the province, there were *burgari*, a unit of this type being attested by an inscription from the Tropaeum³². We estimate the total number of military personnel stationed in the province during the first tetrarchy at a minimum of 10/12,000 soldiers and a maximum of 15,000 (two legions, auxiliary troops and fleet)³³.

Sub-stage A2 (approx. 324-378) begins with the military reforms adopted simultaneously in Moesia Secunda and Scythia, after the victory of Constantine I in 324 at Chrysopolis. The two legions were divided into two formations of five cohorts each, and their headquarters inverted³⁴. Also now, *legio I Iovia* gives up the nickname *Scythica*. The two Scythian *milites Scythici* units mentioned at Carsium and Dinogetia³⁵ probably represent detachments (cohorts?) of the *I Iovia Scythica* legion, left in the old military bases after the legions moved³⁶, in which case we could assume a possible decrease in the legionary cohorts³⁷. Epigraphically, *legio I Iovia* is attested after 324 in the military bases from Dinogetia³⁸, Noviodunum³⁹, Aegyssus⁴⁰ and Halmyris⁴¹, and *legio II Herculia* in those from Sacidava⁴² and Troesmis⁴³. The *vexillationes equitum* units on the *limes* have been replaced or reorganized in the form of *cunei equitum*. The presence at Aegyssus (post 324/328) of a *vexillatio equitum Egissesis* (*Aegyssensis*) together with a detachment of the *I*

³⁰ *V(exillatio equitum) I D(almatarum)* (?). Reading is not certain. (Zahariade 2009 b, p. 122). *Vexillatio equitum XII[I?] catafractariorum* attested at Histria was not part of the provincial army. It was based at Trimmamium in Moesia Secunda and arrived in Scythia during a military campaign. (IGLR 110).

³¹ ISM V, 285; Bounegru, Zahariade 1996, p. 22-23; Madgearu 2013 a, p. 49.

³² IGLR 172.

³³ A. Aricescu proposed the figure of 10-12,000 soldiers for the first tetrarchy (Aricescu 1977, p. 129), and Al. Barnea 10-15,000 for the 4th century, of which 2,000 belonged to the mobile army of Thrace (Barnea 1991, p. 218-219). Following our own calculations, we came to the conclusion that the fortifications on the *limes* of Scythia were designed to house between 9,159 and 11,485 infantry (but we must keep in mind that in some fortifications there were horsemen and the total number of troops could be in this case smaller).

³⁴ *Notitia Dignitatum Or.*, XXXIX, 29-34.

³⁵ *Notitia Dignitatum Or.*, XXXIX, 22 și 24.

³⁶ Zahariade 2015, p. 155. At Carsium and Dinogetia are epigraphically attested detachments of the *I Iovia Scythica* legion, dating before the reforms of Constantine I.

³⁷ It was assumed that the number of legionaries in a cohort would have dropped from 500 to 300, with a *pedatura* of 1,500 and a legion of 3,000 soldiers. Zahariade 1988, p. 74-75.

³⁸ IGLR 241 g-l.

³⁹ Tood 1973, p. 335-336; IGLR 266.

⁴⁰ IGLR 270.

⁴¹ Halmyris II, 36.

⁴² IGLR 189.

⁴³ IGLR 236.

Iovia legion attests the maintenance of these older cavalry formations at least in the first years of Constantine I's rule on the Lower Danube⁴⁴.

During the time of Constantius II the auxiliary infantry units *milites secundi Constanti(a)ni* were established, stationed at Troesmis together with five cohorts of *legio II Herculia*, *milites primi Constantiani*, stationed at Noviodunum with five cohorts of *legio I Iovia* and *milites quinti Constantiani*, stationed at Salsovia⁴⁵. Under Valens, *milites primi Gratianenses* were encamped at Gratiana, and an inscription from 368/369 from Cius attests the reconstruction of the fort by *milites primani*⁴⁶. Most likely, in both cases, the same military unit is attested, which, after raising the fortification from Cius, was moved to Gratiana, near the point of the discharge of the arm of Saint George into the sea, and in its place was brought a *cuneus equitum stablesianorum*. Other military units mentioned in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, such as *cuneus equitum scutariorum* from Sacidava, *cuneus equitum Solensium* from Capidava, *cuneus equitum stablesianorum* from Beroe, *cuneus equitum catafractariorum* from Arrubium, *cuneus equitum armigerorum* from Aegyssus and *milites superventores* from Axiopolis could be placed in the bases mentioned under any of the emperors Constantine I, Constantius II or Valens.

Constantine I separated the mobile army, commanded by a *magister utriusque militiae per Thracias*, from the frontier army, placed under the authority of a *dux Scythiae*⁴⁷. *Comitatenses* units were probably stationed from this period on the territory of the province from the mouth of the Danube, in the interior centers or on the shores of the Black Sea. Some fortifications on the "inland road", such as (L)Ibida, Tropaeum, Zaldapa or on the coast (Argamum, Histria, Tomis, Callatis, Acres) have strongly fortified enclosures, with defense towers (some massive or with pillars of support for artillery platforms) and a military architecture specific to the era. At (L)Ibida and Tropaeum were built in the 4th century annexed fortifications, which follow the same pattern of defensive lines.

The only city in which military units from the 4th century are attested is Tomis. A funerary inscription mentions a *praefectus*, Ladicius and a *miles officialis* (Flavius Ursus), son of

⁴⁴ Or, if the *vexillatio Aegyssensis* was reorganized in the form of a *cuneus equitum (armigerorum)* under this emperor, the parallel use of the two terms to designate the same unit.

⁴⁵ Aricescu 1977, p. 117-118.

⁴⁶ IGLR 233.

⁴⁷ Zahariade 1988, p. 42; Zahariade 2006, p. 52; Wiewiorowski, 2008, p. 16.

Quintus Mestrius, *equitus in numerus II catafractariorum*⁴⁸. We do not know the name of Ladicius' unit or whether the *catafractari* formation actually stationed in Tomis⁴⁹. Towards the middle of the 4th century, a *veteranus d(e) n(umero) Orsarisa* or *Orsari(ensium) sa(gittariorum)* is mentioned, but we do not know if his unit was active in the provincial capital⁵⁰. Probably during Valens' war with the Goths in 367-370, a *vexillatio comitatensis (sagittarii iuniores)* was brought to Tomis, established in June 364⁵¹.

Around 395, the army subordinated to the duke of Scythia was composed of two legions (*legio I Iovia* at Noviodunum and Aegyssus, *legio II Herculia* at Troesmis and Axiopolis), seven *cunei equitum* (*cuneus equitum scutariorum* at Sacidava, *cuneus equitum Solensium* at Capidava), *cuneus equitum stablesianorum* at Cius, *cuneus equitum stablesianorum* at Beroe, *cuneus equitum catafractariorum* at Arrubium, *cuneus equitum armigerorum* at Aegyssus, *cuneus equitum Arcadum* at Halmyris), eight *auxiliares* (*milites nauclarii* at Flaviana, *milites superventores* at Axiopolis, *milites Scythici* at Carsium, *milites secundi Constanti(a)ni* at Troesmis, *milites Scythici* at Dinogetia, *milites primi Constantiani* at Noviodunum, *milites quinti Constantiani* at Salsovia, *milites primi Gratianenses* at Gratiana) and a fleet using two types of boats (*musculi Scythici* and *plateypegia* vessels)⁵². *Cuneus equitum Arcadum* from Halmyris could be recruited from 386-392 in the province of Arcadia in Egypt, later reaching Scythia⁵³. Around 386, a Roman cavalry unit (probably *sagittarii iuniores*) was stationed at Tomis, and a unit of federated barbarians (Goths?) was temporarily stationed outside the fortress⁵⁴.

Information on the provincial army from the 5th-6th centuries is scarce. The decrees of 412 on the reconstruction of the fleet in Scythia and Moesia Secunda⁵⁵ and of 443 for the restoration of the fortifications on the *limes*, the border units and the fleet⁵⁶ outline the military priorities of the empire in the first half of the 5th century. In the second half of the century,

⁴⁸ Avram 2017, p. 390.

⁴⁹ Another possible unit stationed after 324 in Tomis could be *cun(eus) D(almatarum)*. Aricescu 1977, p. 122.

⁵⁰ Chiriac et al. 2014, p. 440-441; http://db.edcs.eu/epigr/epi_ergebnis.php.

⁵¹ IGLR 30 și 41.

⁵² *Notitia Dignitatum Or.*, XXXIX, 11-35.

⁵³ Zahariade 1988, p. 83; Zahariade 2009 a, p. 348.

⁵⁴ Zosimos, IV, 40. As the archeological evidence shows, other groups of Germanic *foederati* probably stationed at Ulmetum, Tropaeum, Dinogetia or Argamum.

⁵⁵ In seven years, Scythia's fleet was to reach 125 *naves lusoriae*, 5 *naves judicariae* and 12 *naves agrarienses*. *Codex Theodosianus*, 7, 17, 1.

⁵⁶ *Novella Theodosiani*, 24, 5.

groups of federated barbarians settled in Scythia (usually at the border): the Huns led by Hernac "*in extrema minoris Scythiae*" (probably receiving the fortress of Halmyris)⁵⁷, and the Scirians, Sadagars and Alans subject to Candac in Scythia and Moesia Secunda (probably on the *limes*, in the territories bordering the two provinces)⁵⁸. Other federates mentioned are *Roubi* (Rugians?) led by Valips, who controlled Noviodunum in the fourth decade of the 5th century⁵⁹. Based on the inscriptions from the years 430-432 attesting the presence of the *I Italica* legion at Novae⁶⁰, the edict of 443 by which Theodosius II requested the completion of the frontier border (including Thrace) and Priscus' text on the presence of *Roubi* at Noviodunum by 433-441, we can assume that the military units attested on the *limes* in *Notitia Dignitatum* disappeared or were reorganized following the Hun attacks, especially after the one in 447.

In the second half of the 5th century and in the 6th century, the defense of the Danube *limes* was largely based on the *foederati*. In 513-518, the bulk of the army with which the "Scythian" Vitalian started the revolt against Anastasius I were made up of Hun and Bulgarian *foederati* (kutriguri?)⁶¹, probably stationed on the *limes*⁶². In the 6th century, at least two units of the Thracian mobile army were stationed in Scythia. In Tomis there was a cavalry unit, *saggitarii iuniores* (epigraphically attested in the V-VI centuries)⁶³, and in Ulmetum (post 540/550) an infantry unit, *lanciarii iuniores*⁶⁴. The detachment of a large part of the troops from the Balkans to fight the Goths in Italy (between 535-554), the negative demographic evolution and the reduction of military forces during Justinian's time (about 150,000 soldiers for the whole empire⁶⁵) also had effects on Scythia.

⁵⁷ Iordanes b, L, 266.

⁵⁸ Iordanes b, L, 265.

⁵⁹ Priscus c, I A.

⁶⁰ Poulter 2007, p. 39; Poulter 2014, p. 58. The legion is mentioned in this location also in the *Notitia Dignitatum Or.*, XL, 30-31.

⁶¹ Ioannes Antiochenus, 214 e. 1; Ioannes Malalas, XVI, p. 402, 3-403, 3; Theophanes Confessor, 6006 (514).

⁶² Scorpan 1980, p. 126. Most likely, the Bulgarian and Hun *foederati* of Vitalian were stationed in fortifications in Scythia, where the revolt began, the area being preferred by the steppe populations: Ernak and his Huns were previously settled in *extrema Scythiae Minoris* (Halmyris region); the Avars (another nomadic population) ask as a settlement from Justinian the province of Scythia; in 680/681 the Bulgarians occupied Scythia Minor and Moesia Secunda, establishing their capital in the steppe zone, suitable for nomadic living. The Goths later joined Vitalian as he advanced through the diocese of Thrace (due to the fact that they were stationed in other regions than the Hun and Bulgarian *foederati*).

⁶³ IGLR 30 și 41. It was stationed in the provincial capital probably from the second half of the 4th century.

⁶⁴ IGLR 211.

⁶⁵ Ioannes Antiochenus, 218. The estimate may not include *limitanei*, but only mobile units.

Some references in the chronicles of the time refer to a military presence in Scythia in the last quarter of the 6th century: in 578, there was a fleet on the Lower Danube⁶⁶; in 586, at (L)Ibida is attested a Roman commander whose task was to guard the river⁶⁷; in 586-587, the local garrisons of Zaldapa and Tropaeum fought against the Avars, but the fortresses were conquered⁶⁸; in 587 and 597, at Tomis there was a garrison capable of withstanding the Avarian sieges until the intervention of the mobile army⁶⁹. According to archaeological data, most of the troops in the Scythian fortifications of this period consisted of infantry, and artillery was still used to defend the enclosures.

From the point of view of the strategic conception, in the tetrarchic epoch it has not yet passed to "*defense in depth*", the military strategy of the Lower Danube being closer to what E. N. Luttwak defined as "*forward defense*" or "*preclusive defense*"⁷⁰. However, signs of a transition can be observed during this period and consist in the (re)construction of the fortified enclosures of the urban settlements on the Black Sea coast and of some *castra*, *castella*, *quadriburgi*, *burgi* and *turres* along the Danube, in the main strategic points, according to a new conception, which emphasized the defensive role. The new enclosures were designed to be defended as effectively as possible by a small number of soldiers and with artillery machines. The military units were distributed in the bases on the Danube: two legions with headquarters at Troesmis and Noviodunum and detachments in other fortifications, auxiliary cavalry troops (*vexillationes equitum*) and a river fleet.

Diocletian's predominantly conservative military reforms, maintained under Galerius and Licinius, were effective. The few barbarian attacks in the A1 subperiod (approx. 284-324) were triggered when some of the troops on the *limes* were sent to other fronts: Scythia was hit by a barbarian attack in 295 (troops were detached in Egypt), one possible attack in 315-316 and another in 323 (Licinius withdrew troops to fight Constantine I). Under Diocletian and Galerius, the Roman army held the strategic initiative, between 291-309 being organized at least eight

⁶⁶ Menander Protector, 48.

⁶⁷ Theophylact Simocatta, I, 8.

⁶⁸ Theophylact Simocatta, I, 8.

⁶⁹ Theophylact Simocatta, II, 10 și VII, 3; Theophanes Confessor, 6079 (587).

⁷⁰ Military units were stationed along the borders, being able to intercept a barbarian attack before it penetrated the *limes* and intervened in enemy territory to eliminate a potential danger. Luttwak 1976, p. 136.

military campaigns north of the Danube (mostly against the Carpi⁷¹), in order to weaken the enemy and bring them under the control of the empire. By restoring the system of client kingdoms at the borders (in 296-297 a *foedus* with the Goths was concluded⁷²), the emperors wanted to stop possible raids, defend the border provinces and ensure auxiliary military contingents for the wars with the Sassanids.

In sub-stage A2 (ca. 324-378) we can see a new transition to "*defense in depth*", after the takeover of Thrace by Constantine I in 324. He changed the strategy and military organization of the Danube *limes*, taking account of the situation in the empire and the political realities of Barbaricum (the Goths represented the dominant military power in the north of the Lower Danube, having a center of power in the Romanian Plain). The Danube was still perceived as the frontier of the empire and as the main front of resistance against the barbarians, being defended by the border units under the command of the dukes, while troops of the Thracian mobile army were stationed in urban settlements on the coast (such as Tomis) and inside the province, where the construction of the fortified centers at (L)Ibida, Tropaeum and Zaldapa, begun under Licinius, was completed.

During the period 324-378, "*forward/preclusive defense*" was not abandoned. Constantine I created an infrastructure necessary for an offensive policy in the north of the Danube: he rebuilt the forts of Drobeta, Sucidava-Celei, Daphne, Barboși and a bridge between Oescus and Sucidava (completed in 328). The attacks of the Goths in the Danube provinces were few: an attack in 331/332, raids organized by small groups of Goths in Scythia around 337-340 and another possible attack in the winter of 346/347. To protect the Danube border, Constantine I, Constantius II and Valens tried to keep Gothia in the sphere of Roman influence, as a client kingdom. When the Goths threatened regional balance, the emperors launched offensives in Barbaricum: in 328 and 332 Constantine I defeated the Goths north of the Danube and concluded a *foedus* with their king, in 367 and 369 Valens personally led two campaigns against the Goths⁷³, and in 372 he became involved in internal fighting in Gothia, sending the Thracian army

⁷¹ For the dating of the wars against the Carpi, see Madgearu 2011, p. 39-41.

⁷² In 297-298, the Goths participated alongside with the Romans in the war against the Sassanids. Iordanes b, XXI, 110; Madgearu 2011, p. 36.

⁷³ For a description of the events, see Themistios, X, 132, C, D and 133-140; Ammianus Marcellinus, XXVII, 5, 1-9; Zosimos, IV, 10-11.

in support of the pro-Roman faction⁷⁴. In 376, the lower Danube *limes* was an effective barrier against the barbarians, but once crossed south of the river, the Goths defeated troops stationed inside the provinces, the Roman defense being reorganized on the Balkan Mountains, and Scythia and Moesia Secunda were temporarily abandoned by the imperial army⁷⁵.

In sub-stage B1 (approx. 378-450) the military policy characteristic of stage A was abandoned in favor of a "*defense in depth*" type. Under Theodosius I, the defensive system underwent certain changes. The only fortress built *a fundamentis* was Ulmetum. The Danube remained the main defensive line, and in the fortifications on its shore were stationed the border army and the river fleet, commanded by the duke of the province⁷⁶. In some urban centers there were units of the Thracian maneuvering army, the only one mentioned in the sources being the one led by Gerontius at Tomis⁷⁷. Barbarian *foederati* were massively recruited to fill the gaps left by the wars, forming their own units or being incorporated into existing ones.

The offensive military policy was abandoned, between 372-528 no Roman offensives were mentioned north of the Danube, the battles with the barbarians being carried out on the territory of the empire. In 381 there is an attack of the Scythians and Carpodacians⁷⁸, and in 386 of the Greuthing of Odotheus⁷⁹. Once established near the Danube, the Huns launched periodic raids on the provinces, as well as five large-scale attacks between 404 / 405-447⁸⁰. In the first part of the 5th century, the Huns became the dominant power on the Danube and due to the fighting style characteristic of the nomads, they forced the empire to adopt a defensive policy. In the new context, the leadership in Constantinople tried to weaken its opponents through diplomatic actions. An attempt was made to conclude some treaties with the Amilzuri, Itimari, Tonosuri and Boisci, with the Acatiri⁸¹ or with various chiefs of the Huns, such as Uldin, Bleada

⁷⁴ Socrates Scholasticus, IV, 33, 3.

⁷⁵ A detailed description of the events is given in Ammianus Marcellinus, XXXI, 3, 1-16, 8. Some troops probably resisted at the shelter of the walls, but the *limes* could not prevent the passage of groups of Huns and Alans south of the Danube, in support of the rebellious Goths.

⁷⁶ *Notitia Dignitatum Or.*, XXXIX, 11-35.

⁷⁷ Zosimos, IV, 40. Other units were probably present in other settlements in the province.

⁷⁸ Zosimos IV, 30.

⁷⁹ See the description of the battle at Zosimos, IV, 38-39.

⁸⁰ The attacks took place in 404/405 (Sozomenos, VIII, 25, 1), 408/409 (Sozomenos, IX, 5, 1-5), 422 (Marcellinus Comes, 422, 3; Theodoretos, V, 37, 4), 442 (Marcellinus Comes, 442, 2; Cassiodorus 1238/1239, 442) and 447 (Priscus Panites a, 3, p. 123-124 și 146 De Boor; Priscus Panites b, 2, p. 576-579 De Boor; Marcellinus Comes, 447, 2-5; Iordanes a, 331; *Chronicon Paschale*, I, 586, 3-7).

⁸¹ Priscus Panites a, 1 (p. 121 De Boor) și 3 (p. 130 De Boor).

and Attila. In order to stop the raids, towards the end of the 4th century, the Church of Tomis tried to Christianize (unsuccessfully) the Huns, and under Theodosius II, their kings were given annual payments and various gifts⁸².

The measures adopted after 447 restored the *limes*, but the defense was increasingly based on border *foederati* and the mobile army. In sub-stage B2 (approx. 450-491), some Huns and other tribes were received into the empire (including Scythia) as *foederati* of the emperors Marcianus and Leo I⁸³. Two attacks by the Huns and Goths, organized by Dengizih, broke through the *limes* in 467 and 469, but the maneuvering armies defeated the invaders⁸⁴. In 474-480, the border was crossed several times by barbarians who organized raids, Scythia being severely affected⁸⁵.

In period C (ca. 491-565) efforts made to strengthen the defensive capacity of the *limes* were noted. Anastasius I began an extensive program of rebuilding the fortifications in the province and began the construction of the Balchik-Horizont enclosure, completed under Justinian I. Most military units in Scythia consisted of Hun and Bulgarian *foederati* (Kutrigurs?), cavalry troops with increased mobility, but also infantry and artillery troops stationed in fortified centers. Units of the mobile army of Thrace (passed perhaps from 492 under the command of the dukes) were probably stationed in some urban centers, at Tomis being attested the *saggitarii iuniores* (5th-6th centuries)⁸⁶. In the first part of Anastasius' reign, the Bulgarians organized at least three attacks south of the Danube (in 493, 499 and 502), with Scythia suffering destruction⁸⁷. The *limes* was pierced by the Antes in 518, but they were stopped by the mobile Thracian army⁸⁸.

Justinian I resumed the offensive policy on the Lower Danube and the northern Black Sea in the first years of his reign: in 528 a sea and land campaign was launched to recapture the

⁸² Priscus Panites a, 1, (p. 121-122 De Boor); Priscus Panites b, 3 (p. 576 De Boor); Zosimos V, 22; Philostorgios, XI, 8; Sozomenos, VII, 26, 6.

⁸³ Iordanes b, L, 265-266.

⁸⁴ In the case of the 467 attack, the Huns and Goths were stopped on the Balkan Mountains. Priscus Panites b, 21 (p. 589-590 De Boor); Marcellinus Comes, 469, 1.

⁸⁵ Euagrios Scholasticus, III, 2, p. 100, 6-13; Theophanes Confessor, 5966 (474); *Codex Iustinianus*, I, 3, 35(36).

⁸⁶ IGLR 41.

⁸⁷ Marcellinus Comes, 493, 2; 499, 1 și 502, 1.

⁸⁸ Procopius a, VII, 40, 5-6.

Crimean city of Bosphorus⁸⁹ and between 530-533/534, Chilbudios (*magister militum per Thracias*) launches periodic attacks in the territories of the Sclavini in the Romanian Plain⁹⁰, and by 535 the bridgeheads on the north bank of the river were rebuilt⁹¹. In the long run, Chilbudios' actions did not mean a return to "*forward/preclusive defense*". In 528, after the Crimean expedition, the Huns were able to break through the *limes* and defeat the armies of Scythia and Moesia Secunda⁹², and in 530 the Bulgarians invaded Thrace⁹³. In the case of strong attacks, the defense of the Balkan provinces was based on the mobile armies of Thrace, Illyricum and the one led by *magister militum praesentalis*⁹⁴.

The return to a "*defense in depth*" strategy was made after 533/534: no more attacks were organized in Barbaricum and measures were taken to strengthen the defensive system. Scythia became part of the *qaestura Iustiniani exercitus* in 536, a structure designed to strengthen the defense of the Lower Danube by redirecting resources from certain Aegean and Mediterranean provinces⁹⁵. Following an extensive program throughout the empire, the system of fortifications at Scythia was consolidated and expanded. The existing fortifications were repaired, and new ones were built especially near Tomis (the *quadriburgium* from Ovid, maybe also the one from Poiana) and on the southeast coast of Scythia (between Shabla and Dionysopolis)⁹⁶. The defense of Constantinople and its hinterland was designed by Justinian on three successive alignments: the Danube, the Balkan Mountains line and the Istranca Dağlar mountain range⁹⁷. The only military unit attested in Scythia during the time of Justinian I are the *legio lanciarii* from Ulmetum (around the middle of the 6th century) and it is possible that the *sagittarii iuniores* were still in Tomis. According to archaeological data, infantry and artillery units were distributed in most of the (re)built fortifications.

⁸⁹ Ioannes Malalas, XVIII, p. 431-433.

⁹⁰ Procopius a, VII, 14, 4.

⁹¹ *Iustiniani Novellae*, XI, 2. The text only mentions fortifications on the Danube segment of the Illyricum.

⁹² Ioannes Malalas, XVIII, p. 437, 19-438, 20.

⁹³ Marcellinus Comes, 530, 1.

⁹⁴ Marcellinus Comes, 530, 1 și 535, 3; Ioannes Malalas, XVIII, p. 437, 19-438, 20 și p. 450, 19-451, 15; Theophanes Confessor, 6031 (539) și 6032 (540).

⁹⁵ Ioannes Lydos, II, 29; *Iustiniani Novellae*, XLI, p. 262, 5-30.

⁹⁶ S. Torbatov considered that the fortifications on the southeastern shore of the province were built under Justinian, around 551 (Torbatov 2002, p. 213), but the recovered coins may also suggest a date from the period of Anastasius - the beginning of Justinian's reign..

⁹⁷ Curta 2006, p. 133.

Justinian also tried to secure his borders by concluding alliance treaties with barbarian populations: in 528 with king Grod of the Huns (Kutrigurs?) to protect the Crimean city of Bosphorus⁹⁸; in 545/546 with the Antes (to whom he offered the fortress of Turrus) to stop the attacks in the northern Pontic steppes⁹⁹; ante 558/559 with the Kutrigurs and Utigurs¹⁰⁰; in 558 with the Avars from the North Caucasus steppes¹⁰¹. The emperor also resorted to diplomacy to neutralize his enemies: in 559 the Kutrigurs were paid to retreat, while Sandilch, the king of the Utigurs, was persuaded to attack the Kutrigurs lands¹⁰².

In the period 535-551, the *limes* of the Lower Danube was pierced several times: in 535 by the Bulgarians (Kutrigurs?)¹⁰³; in 544-545 by the Antes and Sclavini¹⁰⁴; in 550 by the Sclavini¹⁰⁵. Justinian's defensive program, completed around 551, worked for the most part, stopping the Sclavini raids. In the winter of 558/559, the Danube could be crossed by the Kutrigur army, which plundered Scythia and the Balkan provinces, as far as the outskirts of Constantinople¹⁰⁶. The cause is probably due to the type of war for which the *limes* was adapted: raids organized by small groups of Sclavini, which targeted mainly the rural area and could be repulsed by a small number of soldiers from the fortified centers, while the agreements with the Antes and the Utigurs were probably considered sufficient to keep the Kutrigurs in check.

In the subperiod D1 (approx. 565-602), the political scene in Barbaricum changes. The Avars, established in the Tisza Plain and Pannonia in 568, were the main power pole of the barbarian world, and the raids of the Sclavini in the Romanian Plain posed a permanent threat to the Balkan provinces. Justin II, Tiberius Constantine and Maurice Tiberius tried to maintain a functional *limes*, able to repel attacks of a certain intensity (such as those of Sclavini), fortified centers inside the provinces to resist strong attacks (such as those organized by the Avars) and they concluded *foedera* with the populations at the borders (the *foedus* with the Antes was

⁹⁸ The attempt failed due to the killing of the Hun king on his return to his lands. Ioannes Malalas, XVIII, p. 431-433.

⁹⁹ Procopius a, VII, 14, 33. The Antes are remembered as allies of the Romans until 602. Theophanes Confessor, 6094 (602).

¹⁰⁰ Aghatias, V, 24, 1-7 și V, 25, 1; Menander Protector, 3.

¹⁰¹ The treaty was annulled by Justin II in 565 by the cessation of subsidies. Menander Protector, 5 și 24.

¹⁰² Aghatias, V, 23, 7-8; V, 24, 1-7 și V, 25, 1; Menander Protector, 3.

¹⁰³ Marcellinus Comes, 535, 3;

¹⁰⁴ Procopius a, VII, 13, 24-25 și VII, 14, 11.

¹⁰⁵ Procopius a, VII, 40, 31-45. Other barbarian attacks took place through Illyricum.

¹⁰⁶ Aghatias, V, 11, 6-7 și 13, 5-6; Ioannes Malalas, XVIII, p. 490, 6-12.

respected, and in 573 and 585 new *foedera* with the Avars are concluded). The strategy worked as long as the empire maintained a strong maneuvering army in the Balkans, who won victories against the Avars who attacked through Illyricum¹⁰⁷.

In the third quarter of the 6th century, the *limes* of the Lower Danube was a barrier for barbarians, being pierced only twice: in 562 by the Huns (Kutrigurs?)¹⁰⁸ and in 565 by the Avars¹⁰⁹. Between 578/579-586/587 are mentioned several attacks of Sclavini south of the Danube¹¹⁰, and the imperial leadership determined its allies (the Avars in 578/579 and the Antes in 582/583) to launch counter-offensives in the territories of Sclavini¹¹¹.

The Avar attacks of 584-585¹¹², 586-587¹¹³ and 593¹¹⁴ affected severely the *limes* of the Lower Danube and Scythia, and battles were fought on the territory of the empire. The measures taken by Maurice Tiberius and the resumption of an offensive military policy against the Avars and Sclavini between 594-602 only led to a partial restoration of authority over the Balkan Peninsula, and entire regions (especially the mountainous Illyricum) appear to have been outside the military control of the empire¹¹⁵. Operations led by generals such as Priscus, Petrus or Comentiolus indicate the adoption of an "*elastic defense*" strategy. Roman offensives and counter-offensives generally start near Constantinople, battles are fought from the outskirts of the capital to Tomis (in Scythia) and Singidunum (in Moesia Prima), sometimes even north of the Danube, the operational army is forced to winter in barbarian territory (and to procure food by plundering the Sclavini) or in the cities of the Thracian Plain (Philippopolis, Hadrianopolis, Heraclea), being forced to return to the border in the spring.

Military units still existed in the fortifications on the *limes*, but they were probably few and generally made up of locally recruited infantrymen, who also used artillery machines. From the little information recorded, it is understood that Tomis was the best defended city of Scythia,

¹⁰⁷ In 570 the Avars were defeated in Thrace. Barnea 1968, p. 431; Liebeschuetz 2007, p. 116.

¹⁰⁸ Barnea 1968, p. 430; Teodor 2002, p. 29; Zahariade 2006, p. 33; Madgearu 2011, p. 174.

¹⁰⁹ Barnea 1968, p. 431; Scorpan 1980, p. 127; Barnea 1991, p. 175; Zahariade 2006, p. 33.

¹¹⁰ Menander Protector, 47-48; Barnea 1968, p. 432; Chiriac 1993, p. 191; Madgearu 1996 b, p. 41; Teodor 2003, p. 4 și 8.

¹¹¹ Menander Protector, 48; Kardaras 2010, p. 82.

¹¹² Theophylact Simocatta, I, 3-6; Theophanes Confessor, 6075 (583).

¹¹³ Theophylact Simocatta, I, 8; Theophanes Confessor, 6079 (587).

¹¹⁴ Theophylact Simocatta, VI, 4-5; Theophanes Confessor, 6084 (592).

¹¹⁵ Teodor 2003, p. 22, nota 59.

resisting the sieges of the Avars¹¹⁶. The policy of Mauricius Tiberius worked partially, the *limes* between the cataracts and the mouths of the Danube being maintained. Some fortified centers probably ceased to exist, others were repaired or replaced by other smaller fortifications (the late fort of Capidava).

After the Phocas revolt, in subperiod D2 (approx. 602-614 / 641), the political situation in the Danube basin worsened, but the *limes* continued to function in certain forms¹¹⁷, the disintegration gradually occurring. Until the years 614-619, when several strong attacks took place in the Balkans or perhaps until the siege of Constantinople in 626, the empire still controlled certain centers on the shores of the sea or on the banks of the Danube. The pressure of the Avars, the loss of the Eastern provinces (especially Egypt) and the wars in the East with the Sassanids and the Arabs led to the disintegration of the defensive system in Scythia¹¹⁸. The imperial strategic objectives in Europe were now limited to defending Constantinople and maintaining peace with the Avars, the armies being merged on the Eastern Front. No military actions are mentioned in Europe, and the Avar offensives of 623 and 626 reach the Long Walls of the capital. Even after the victory of 626 and the weakening of the chagan's power, the empire did not have the power to restore the control over the provinces.

Lacking imperial support, the settlements had to defend themselves. The ruralization, decay and gradual abandonment of the fortified centers in the first half of the 7th century could be observed archeologically, most of them not showing traces of fires on the last level¹¹⁹. It is possible that coastal centers such as Tomis, Callatis or Dionysopolis remained under the administration of the empire until the migration of the Bulgarians in 679/680. The monetary discoveries in certain parts of Dobrogea, dating to the 7th century, after 619¹²⁰, may be related to the establishment of some *foederati* (Slavs) in Scythia, the Danube being still considered, at least nominally, the border of the empire.

*

¹¹⁶ Theophylact Simocatta, II, 10 și VII, 13; Theophanes Confessor, 6079 (587) și 6092 (600).

¹¹⁷ Phocas concluded a new treaty with the Avars in 604 to buy his peace. Theophanes Confessor, 6096 (604).

¹¹⁸ Curta 2001, p. 121-213.

¹¹⁹ Scorpan 1980, p. 132; Madgearu 2006, p. 155-156; Madgearu 2007, p. 266-271.

¹²⁰ Barnea 1968, p. 443; Custurea 1986, p. 277, nr. 6; Madgearu 1997 a, p. 145; Madgearu 2007, p. 271; Custurea, Talmațchi 2011, p. 168-169; Custurea 2019, p. 32, 36, 38, 149, 163-164 și 202.

The existing data lead us to believe that a "*defense in depth*" strategy, as defined by E. N. Luttwak, was not applied to the Lower Danube until the time of Theodosius I. Although some defensive measures were taken from the time of Diocletian and the first tetrarchy (increasing the defensive potential of the fortified enclosures) and continued under Constantine I and his successors (building new military fortifications within the provinces, separating the maneuvering army from the border one, setting up regional mobile armies), in the first three quarters of the 4th century the military strategy of the Lower Danube is largely characteristic of the previous era ("*forward/preclusive defense*"): it maintained a political-military balance favorable to the Romans, when the barbarians became threatening, they were launched offensively north of the Danube, the *limes* was defended by the Roman army stationed in the border provinces and by client kings near the frontier with which the emperors concluded *foedera*, bridgeheads were rebuilt on the northern bank.

After 378, a "*defense in depth*" strategy was adopted, the main objective being to maintain and defend the borders: the Danube remained the main defensive line, but the barbarians managed to break through the *limes* (especially in winter, when the river froze), fighting being carried on the territory of the provinces. The relations between the Roman state and the barbarian kings change, the latter being able to impose conditions in the negotiation of treaties and limiting the political influence of the empire on their own political formations. The empire increasingly resorted to diplomacy to solve military problems, trying to pay the barbarians to stop their attacks or make them fight against each other.

A temporary return to "*forward/preclusive defense*" occurs in the early years of Justinian I's reign: the elimination of the danger of Sclavini raids by periodic low-intensity offensive actions launched by the Thracian regional army north of the Danube and the rebuilding of the bridgeheads for the protection of river fords. After the beginning of the wars in the West, Justinian returned to "*defense in depth*": barbarian attacks were intercepted on Roman territory, but an attempt was made to limit the damage by restoring and expanding the fortification system. Through a system of treaties with barbarian kings outside the borders, the emperor tried to stop the attacks on the provinces and make the barbarians fight against them to weaken each other.

From the time of Maurice Tiberius is observed the implementation of an "*elastic*" military strategy: the operational army travels long distances to fight the enemy, both on the

territory of the empire and north of the Danube, while defending the fortifications in the border provinces it was left to local forces (apparently with a high degree of autonomy). In the case of military operations, the maneuvering armies and the regional garrisons collaborated. It is not clear what kind of military strategy was adopted in the first part of the 7th century at the borders, but archaeological evidence suggests that defense increasingly depended on the possibilities of local communities, with effective support from central authorities being impossible to provide.

Selective Bibliography

I. Sources

FHDR I: Vladimir Iliescu, Virgil C. Popescu, Gheorghe Ștefan, *Fontes ad Historiam Dacoromanae Pertinentes I. Ab Hesiodo usque ad Itinerarium Antonini - Izvoare privind istoria României I. De la Hesiod la Itinerarul lui Antoninus*, București, 1964.

FHDR II: Haralambie Mihăescu, Gheorghe Ștefan, Radu Hîncu, Vladimir Iliescu, Virgil C. Popescu, *Fontes Historiae Dacoromanae II. Ab anno CCC usque ad annum M - Izvoare privind istoria României II. De la anul 300 până la anul 1000*, București, 1970.

IGLR: *Inscripțiile grecești și latine din secolele IV-XIII descoperite în România*. Culese, traduse în românește, însoțite de indici și comentate de Emilian Popescu, București, 1976.

Notitia Dignitatum: *Notitia Dignitatum accédunt Notitia Urbis Constantinopolitanae et Laterculi Prouinciarum*, edidit Otto Seeck, Berolini, 1876; *Notitia Dignitatum* în FHDR II, p. 206-213.

II. General and special literature

Apostol 2012: Virgil Apostol, *The „Large Towers” of Roman Dobruja* în *Caiete ARA*, 3, 2012, p. 81-95.

Aricescu 1977: Andrei Aricescu, *Armata în Dobrogea romană*, București, 1977.

Barnea 1968: Ion Barnea, *Perioada Dominatului* în Radu Vulpe, Ion Barnea, *Din istoria Dobrogei*, vol. 2, București, 1968, p. 367-555.

Barnea 1991: Alexandru Barnea, *Chapitre III. La Dobroudja aux IVe - VIIe siècles n. é.* în Alexandru Suceveanu, Alexandru Barnea, *La Dobroudja Romaine*, București, 1991, p. 154-295.

Barnea et al. 1979: Alexandru Barnea, Ion Barnea, Ioana Bogdan Cătănicu, Monica Mărgineanu-Cârstoiu, Gheorghe Papuc, *Tropaeum Traiani I. Cetatea*, București, 1979.

Baumann 2010: Victor Henrich Baumann, *Noviodunum. Șantier arheologic 1995-2009*, Tulcea, 2010.

Băjenaru 2010: Constantin Băjenaru, *Minor Fortifications in the Balkan-Danubian Area from Diocletian to Justinian*, Cluj-Napoca, 2010.

Bounegru, Zahariade 1996: Octavian Bounegru, Mihail Zahariade, *Les Forces Navales du Bas Danube et de la Mer Noire aux Ier-VIe Siècles*, Oxford, 1996.

Curta 2002: Florin Curta, *Questura exercitus: The evidence of the lead seals* în ABzF, 1, N. S., 2002, p. 9-26.

Custurea 2019: Gabriel Gheorghe Custurea, *Circulația monedei bizantine în Dobrogea (sec. VI-VIII)/Circulation of Byzantine currency in Dobrudja (6th-8th c. AD)*, Constanța, 2019.

Domăneanțu, Sion 1982: Catrinel Domăneanțu, Anișoara Sion, *Incinta romană târzie de la Histria. Încercare de cronologie* în SCIVA, 33, 4, 1982, p. 377-394.

Forescu et al. 1958: Grigore Florescu, Radu Florescu, Petre Diaconu, *Capidava. Monografie arheologică*, vol. 1, București, 1958.

Glad, Nuțu 2010: Damien Glad, George Nuțu, *L'armement du Nord de la Dobroudja. Un examen preliminaire* în SAA, 16, 2010, p. 131-146.

Goldsworthy 2003: Adrian Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army*, London, 2003.

Iacob et al. 2015: Mihaela Iacob, Antonio Ibba, Dorel Paraschiv, Alessandro Teatini, *La città romana di (L)Ibida, in Scythia Minor. La ricerche recenti e l'accordo di collaborazione tra l'Istituto di Ricerche Eco-Museali di Tulcea e l'Universita di Sassari* în Livio Zerbini (ed.), *Culti e religiosità nelle province danubiane. Atti del II Convegno Internazionale Ferrara 20-22 Novembre 2013*, Bologna, 2015, p. 559-573.

Jones 1964: A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire. A Social Economic and Administrative Survey*, vol. 1-3, Oxford, 1964.

Luttwak 1976: Edward N. Luttwak, *The Grand Strategy of the Roman Empire. From the First Century A.D. to the Third*, Baltimore, 1976.

Madgearu 2011: Alexandru Madgearu, *Istoria militară a Daciei post-romane, 275-614*, ed. a 2-a, Târgoviște, 2011.

Mănucu-Adameșteanu 2001: Mihaela Mănucu-Adameșteanu, *Orgame/Argamum*, Tulcea, 2001.

Opriș 2020: Ioan Carol Opriș, *Rediscovering Roman Cius (Gârliciu, Constanța County, Romania). From Emperor Valens to Grigore Tocilescu, Theodor Mommsen and Beyond* în JAHA, 7, 1, 2020, p. 5-18.

Paraschiv et al. 2010: Dorel Paraschiv, Marian Mocanu, Costel Chiriac, *(L)Ibida - précisions chronologiques et stratigraphiques* în V. Atanasov (ed.), *Rekata i vremeto/ The River and the Time*, Tutrakan, 2010, p. 107-116.

Rubel 2019: Alexander Rubel, *Römischer Einfluss im Barbaricum Zwischen Diplomatie, Klientelpolitik und Defensivstrategie: Neue Methoden des Machtmanagements in der Spätantike* în Lucrețiu Minăilescu-Bîrliba (ed.), *Limes, Economy and Society in the Lower Danubian Provinces*, Leuven-Paris-Bristol, 2019, p. 193-218.

Scorpan 1980: Constantin Scorpan, *Limes Scythiae. Topographical and Stratigraphical Research on the Late Roman Fortifications on the Lower Danube*, Oxford, 1980.

Stefan 2000: Alexandra Stefan, *La Legio I Iovia Scythica à Troesmis à propos de CIL III, 6174* în *Romanité et Cité Chrétienne. Permanences et Mutations, Intégrations et Exclusion du Ier au VIe Siècles*, Paris, 2000, p. 33-54.

Suceveanu et al. 2003: Alexandru Suceveanu, Mihail Zahariade, Florin Topoleanu, Gheorghe Poenaru Bordea, *Halmyris I. Monografie arheologică*, Cluj-Napoca, 2003.

Teodor 2002: Eugen Silviu Teodor, *Epoca romană târzie și cronologia atacurilor transdanubiene. Analiza componentelor etnice și geografice (partea întâi, de la 469 la 565)* în MN, 14, 2002, p. 3-35.

Teodor 2003: Eugen S. Teodor, *Epoca romană târzie și cronologia atacurilor transdanubiene. Analiza componentelor etnice și geografice (partea a doua, de la 565 la 626)* în MN, 15, 2003, p. 3-36.

Teodor 2004: Eugen S. Teodor, *Epoca romană târzie și cronologia atacurilor transdanubiene. Analiza componentelor etnice și geografice (partea a treia, concluzii)* în MN, 16, 2004, p. 3-38.

Teodor 2014 b: Alexandra Teodor, *Configurațiile urbane și militare din provincia Scythia*, vol. 1-3, București, 2014, teză de doctorat.

Torbatov 2002: Sergey Torbatov, *Укрепительната система на провинция Скития (края на III – VII в.), Veliko Tărnovo*, 2002.

Țentea et al. 2019: Ovidiu Țentea, Ioan C. Opriș, Florian Matei-Popescu, Alexandru Rațiu, Constantin Băjenaru, Vlad Călina, *Frontiera romană din Dobrogea. O trecere în revistă și o actualizare* în CA, 26, 2019, p. 9-82.

Wiewiorowski 2008: Jacek Wiewiorowski, *Duces of Scythia Minor. A Prosopographical Study*, Poznań, 2008.

Zahariade 1988: Mihail Zahariade, *Moesia Secunda, Scythia și Notitia Dignitatum*, București, 1988.

Zahariade 2006 : Mihail Zahariade, *Scythia Minor. A History of a Later Roman Province (284-681)*, Amsterdam, 2006.

Zahariade 2015: Mihail Zahariade, *The Scythian Section of Notitia Dignitatum: A Structural and Chronological Analysis* în *Ad Fines Imperii Romani. Studia Thaddaeo Sarnowski septuagenario ab amicis, collegis discipulisque dedicata*, Varsaviae, 2015, p. 151-172.