XV CONGRESSUS INTERNATIONALIS EPIGRAPHIAE GRAECAE ET LATINAE NTOAOYHATOYAAN

From Offence to Defence: The Roman Army in the Lower Danube and Balkan Region

Kira Lappé

	Moesia		
Legio	Ala	Cohors equitata	Cohors
Legio I Italica	Ala I Vespasiana Dardanorum	Cohors II Bracaraugustanorum	Cohors I Bracarorum c. R.

Thracia					
Ala	Cohors equitata	Cohors			
	Cohors II Lucensium (Sev. Alex.)	Cohors I Aelia Athoitarum (3 rd c. CE)			
	Cohors II Mattiacorum (until 155 CE)				



	(241 CE)		$(3^{rd} c. CE)$
Legio V Macedonica (withdrawn)	Ala I Flavia Gaetulorum (240 CE)	Cohors II Flavia Brittonum (273–275 CE)	Cohors II Chalcidenorum sagittariorum
Legio XI Claudia pia fidelis	Ala I Gallorum Atectorigiana (Sev. Alex.)	Cohors I Cilicum milliaria sagittariorum (Decius)	Cohors I Cisipadensium (235/236)
	Ala I Gallorum et Pannoniorum	Cohors II Mattiacorum (1 st h. 3 rd c. CE)	Cohors I Germanorum c. R.
	Ala II Hispanorum et Aravacorum (200 CE)	Cohors I Flavia Numidarum (withdrawn)	Cohors I Lusitanorum Cyrenaica (235–238 CE)
		Cohors I Claudia Sugambrorum veterana	
		Cohors I Thracum Syriaca (around 200 CE)	

Table 1 and 2: Comparison of the troops stationed in the provinces of Moesia inferior and Thracia around the middle of the 2nd and the middle of the 3rd c. CE.

Legend: Gold: Troops that had been stationed in this province in the 2nd c. CE, but have been withdrawn before

the middle of the 3rd c. CE.

Grey: Troops that have not been documented in the 3rd c. CE.

In Brackets: Last documented presence of this troop in this province.

Own work.

The discovery of the so-called Scythica Vindobonensia on four palimpsest folios of a codex in the Austrian National Library has shown that new literary evidence can still come to light. The new text, most probably written by the historian Dexippos, allows new insights into the events of the so-called Gothic incursions during the 3rd century CE. As part of the Scythica Vindobonensia project team, my PhD thesis will focus on the situation of the Roman army in the Balkan region on the eve of the incursions as well as the changes and adaptations that were caused by them.

Sources

To produce a holistic picture of the situation in the investigated period, the literary, epigraphical and archaeological sources concerning the Roman army will be investigated (see fig. 1). The focus lies on the troops stationed in the two provinces and their garrisons, which include fortresses, forts and watch towers. For identifying the troops, the most important sources for the 2nd and 3rd century CE are inscriptions by the troops itself or by active soldiers as well as military diplomas (see tab. 1 and 2).





Aim

In the 2nd and more notably in the 3rd and 4th century CE, so-called barbarian groups started to cross the Danube Limes and invaded, pillaged and plundered the Roman provinces of the Balkan region. It is widely accepted in the research field that the army, confronted with this new situation, needed time to react to these attacks. Not before the reign of Diocletian, a completely new strategy and reorganisation of the provinces and the military was installed, which made it easier for the Roman army to react and respond to the invaders and defend the borders. Yet, it seems likely that the Roman army took measures to cope with the continuous threats already in the two centuries before. In this study, this supposed role of the Roman army especially in the 3rd century shall be challenged through a thorough analysis.

Time and geographical frame

The time frame of this investigation is set on the period from the 2nd to the 4th century CE. The starting point of the study will be the establishment of the province of Dacia by Trajan, when the reorganisation of the troops was settled according to the new borders. So, this stationing of troops in a relatively peaceful time allows a good comparison for latter changes. Although the main focus of my study lies on the 2nd and 3rd century CE, the changes caused by the army reform by Diocletian will be of importance. As a crucial source of the late antique army, the Notitia Dignitatum will be included as it allows for the comparison of changes in the stationing of the army. Thus, the compilation of the eastern part of the Notitia at the end of the 4th century The inclusion of Thrace in a military-based investigation will be a first. As an interior province it has never been the focus of military research. These investigations have always focused on the border provinces at the limes – that are Dacia, Moesia superior and Moesia inferior in the Balkan region. Yet, as a hinterland of the frontier and as supply base, the province of Thracia was integrated in the imperial military strategy. The number of known military diplomas from Thrace has increased tenfold in the last 15 years. Now, 17 diplomas are known from Thrace, which show a stable stationing of two to three units during the 2nd and 3rd century CE (see tab. 2). Yet, looking at the inscriptions, a much higher number of troops are recorded in this province. Vexillations of legions served in the capital city of Perinthos in order to protect the governor; other units crossed the province on their way to campaign in the East. The organisation of the hinterland and its function in the logistics have not yet been fully acknowledged – a gap in research that this work is intending to close.

Discussion

In order to thoroughly analyse the situation of the Roman army during the investigated period, several questions have to be considered:

- Is an effect of the recurrent incursions on the Roman army visible already in the 2nd and 3rd century CE, or does it first occur during the reorganisation by Diocletian?
- This includes:

Map 1: Geographical frame of this investigation: the provinces of Moesia inferior and Thrace Own work.

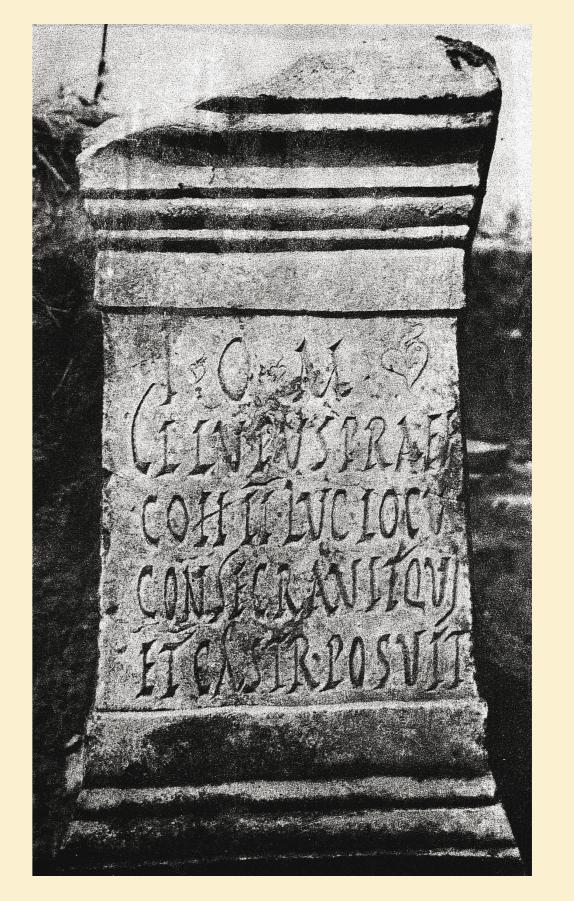


Fig. 1: Altar, Cabyle/Jambol, 135/136 CE, votive inscription referring to the erection of the

will conclude the time frame of this study.

The geographical focus lies on the provinces of Moesia inferior and Thrace, which are also the two main targets of the Gothic incursions especially in the 3rd century (see map 1). These two provinces are closely connected to each other in military aspects; changes of troops between them occur comparatively often. The investigation of Thracia and Moesia inferior will therefore offer an insight into the strategy and tactics of the Roman Empire in reacting to and defending against an aggressive invader.

- Changes in stationing
- Changes in the composition of troops (from infantry to cavalry units)
- Changes in military architecture (e.g. the later sealing of gates; the instalment of different types of towers)
- Changes in the recruitment area of soldiers
- Which role does the province of Thracia as hinterland play? Is a defence in depth, as asserted by Luttwak 1976, verifiable?
- Is a change in strategy and tactics over the investigated period visible?

fortress at Cabyle and the cohors II Lucensium.

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) / Cl(audius) Lupus praef(ectus) / coh(ortis) II Luc(ensium) locum /

consecravit qui | et castr(a) posuit

V. Velkov, Kabile II (Sofia 1991) 33, no. 4.

Kontakt | contact details:

Kira Lappé Institut für Alte Geschichte & Altertumskunde, Epigraphik und Papyrologie Universität Wien kira.lappe@univie.ac.at



Historisch-Kulturwissenschaftliche Fakultät

н Α U R F G R



ÖSTERREICHISCHE **AKADEMIE DER** WISSENSCHAFTEN