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# **The roman military barracks from the forts of Dacia**

PhD. Thesis

Abstract

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# **Summary**

## **Argument**

- I. Brief history of the barracks problem concerning roman forts**
- II. Ancient sources and visions regarding the barracks as element of the internal planning of a roman fort**
  1. The „Polybe” type
  2. The „Hygin” type
- III. The typology of the barracks from the roman forts of Dacia**
  1. Barrack typology; Dimensions; Subdivision; Role – the existence of „*stable barracks*” in certain cases
  2. The archaeology of the barracks: typology viewed in relation with construction phases
- IV. Data base**
  1. Archaeological material perceived from a data base perspective
- V. Construction techniques of the military barracks from the forts of Dacia**
  - a) Bologa
  - b) Buciumi
  - c) Cășei
  - d) Porolissum
  - e) Ilișua
  - f) Gilău
  - g) Potaissa
  - h) Drobeta
  - i) Slăveni
  - j) Tibiscum

## **Conclusions**

## **Glossary**

## **Abbreviations**

## **Bibliography**

## **Illustration list**

## **Data base**

## **Plates**

Key words: barrack, Dacia province, typology, roman fort, *Polybe*, *Hygin*, stratigraphy, construction materials

“The barracks from the roman forts are an entire Universe” – illustrates the opinion shared by a large part of the archaeologists specialized in the Roman period, starting from this consideration, we wish to submit to the reader all the scientific observation that make up the big picture of this idea, considering this type of structure is one of the most important for the simple Roman military life.

The following research should give a number of pertinent observations about the problems that we faced during the development work:

1) The difficulty to differentiate between features tents used in marching camps and construction components of a “*stativa*” camp;

2) The lacunar archaeological information, in most cases, where no feature or stratigraphic data hindered our attempt to present a more comprehensive and complete discussion of the subject;

3) The difficulty of interpretation raised by the construction material (especially the one perishable) used in these structures and hence the modest comparisons regarding the architecture.

The aim of the paper is the analysis of historiographical perspective, archaeological, stratigraphic and constructive, concerning the barrack type buildings and features represented by them in the province of Dacia, in relation to the situation in other cases in the Roman Empire.

We believe that just as the result of a careful assesement regarding such data can be obtained and leading to satisfying conclusions on the usefulness of the constructs revealed the issues raised by the materials used and related renovations, internal reorganization or rebuilding from scratch.

The desire to produce a larger picture of the structures analyzed in the province Dacia, providing a significant number of results that presented the features of the cases analyzed in a slightly different manner to the tests so far, focusing not just on disparate examples, but on a large number of forts resulting the overview of a definite purpose - the analysis of military barracks from the fortifications of roman Dacia - requiring a comprehensive study, the data obtained thus subject not only to proof certain theories, but has a great relevance to the overall

picture of both the province and the specific features observed in contrast to the other provinces of the Roman Empire.

During the research, we analyzed ancient sources that refer to Roman military camp and in particular the *Polybe* "History", which was the first comprehensive description of the situation from a military marching camps in the Republican period, followed by *Hygin* who recorded the evolution and specific type of construction camp fortifications in the Imperial era, thus obtaining the ideal images of the roman military fort.

Trajan's Column is the only ancient source with graphic illustrations that casts light on the broader issues, giving us valuable information about the appearance of "temporary" camps of these structures on the march. Although some of the interpretations are generally known, ancient evidence lead us to obtain new data on the Roman camps barracks. The evolution of these structures from simple tents to special constructions made of durable materials (stone walls and tile roof), indicated not only the change of mentality - the army gradually becoming less and less mobile - but also a high degree of attention to comfort the roman soldier.

The typological analysis of these structures revealed that the barracks were located within the fortification camp where troops were quartered, their shape and size varying to a large degree in relation to the number of soldiers present.

Thus, for a unit type as *ala milliaria*, featuring 24 *turmae* can be determined a need for 12 barracks and 12 stables, which can be arranged in separate constructions or buildings dedicated to combining the two different functions, the so-called stable-barracks, for an *ala quingenaria*, which totaled 16 *turmae*, eight barracks were needed and 8 stables.

Moving from cavalry units to the foot troops, a *cohors milliaria peditata*, which has 10 *centuria*, had to get 10 barracks for soldiers, while only a *cohors quingenaria peditata* with 6 *centuria*, requires only 6 barracks.

The problem is diversifying easily if we look at mixed units, a *cohors milliaria equitata* with 8 or 10 *turmae*, requiring 14 or 15 barracks and 4 or 5 stables, while the troops of *cohors quingenaria equitata* composed of 6 *centuria* and 4 *turmae*, were housed in 8 barracks and only 2 stables.

All these troops have a particularly important impact, not only on the internal structure and the general layout of the camps, but also on the allocation of space needed by troops who are wanting full advantage of all the possibilities in the forts, although a few cases failed to meet the requirements the *castrametatio* set in ancient treaties for various reasons, passing thus as inappropriate, with exceptions related to barracks arrangement in the fortifications.

A number of problems concerning the interpretation are probably due to the way in which a large number of the barracks seem to have most of the accommodation, shared equally. Interestingly, they cleaned the internal structuring and maintained the camps where they quartered only infantry troops (most eloquent cases being Buciumi and Drobeta).

As such, the lack of a fully researched camp of legionary or auxiliary troops, either *peditatae*, *equitatae*, or mixed cohorts, creates some significant gaps related to the issues discussed above, as such the insufficiently advanced stage of research in most camps is an impediment to obtain some satisfactory conclusions on typological classification of the roman barracks from the forts of Dacia.

We embraced the opportunity created by making a database that includes the most relevant information related to the barracks of the roman camps from Dacia, they are leading in turn to achieve an overview of the subject quickly analyzed by making a comparison between the clear values (surface of the camp, barracks area, orientation, subdivisions, typological classification, the number or type of the construction phases or even presenting new perspectives on dating the archaeological material), its main advantage being the fact that it allows an easy access to information for comparative studies .

The database gives researchers the opportunity to observe certain patterns and peculiarities easier, interpretations becoming better anchored in the structure analysis made by them. The ultimate goal of the approach, however, was reached in a more temperate form, out of more than 100 camps discovered in Dacia, barracks related features and items were identified satisfactorily only in a noticeably smaller number of 32 such cases.

From the point of view of the construction phases, it can be noted that there are at least two stages, drawn from the materials used in this process, the first phase called “wood phase” (the actual buildings made of wood, and/or other combinations of perishable materials such as clay or wattle), followed later by the so called “stone phase” (in which at least a significant part of the barracks bodies was built using this material – with emphasis on the foundations). Sometimes both were identified and were analyzed with rigorous deductions, but in most cases only one of them was better preserved.

From an architectural perspective, there can be seen especially the simple construction plans of the *contubernia* assigned to the first phase, the following steps while indicating the types of the development of these structures, passing from type A to type B, I or M, C, D, E, H,

N and O after Davidson, the increasing complexity becoming clear during the late stages of construction.

The dimensions and the internal partitioning mode varies from one case to another, due to the particularities of the types of troops stationed in them (from legions, cohorts or even *ala* with a larger or narrower number of soldiers). Constraints of space, make that the room dedicated for soldiers (*contubernium*) is usually bounded by an inner wall and separated into two compartments, one as sleeping quarters (*papilio*), while the other is dedicated to the storage of weapons and equipment (*arma*). To facilitate access, in many cases it was observed that there was used a veranda.

If the case of the Dacia province, and also in the rest of the Empire, the material used primarily is the wood, which although being a perishable material was more readily available, easier to process and manipulate than stone, also representing the building material with which were obtained the fastest results.

These techniques, however, are not a clear standard, each fortification enjoying a number of features starting from the geographical framework, continuing with the type of troop or troops quartered and ending with the availability of raw materials for construction. But on all these issues interesting conclusions can be obtained from analyzing the findings that provide light on the decisions regarding the construction techniques operated by roman soldiers.

All these aspects lead to an accentuation of differences presented by periods of relative peace, in contrast with the times of war, gradually to the third century A.D., such differences were observed in all the structures analyzed, regardless of the province or the type of camp (regardless if they were legionary or auxiliary troops).

Finally, we conclude that the roman soldier was forced to conform to a number of specific military standards, regardless of the historical period, and the time spent in *contubernia* was probably a good comradeship generator, both in times of peace and in those of war. Archaeological discoveries not only lead to the completion of this truncated vision of life led by soldiers inside the barracks, each such piece adding extra light on the knowledge of the military elements of the Roman army in the province of Dacia.