THE ROMAN FRONTIER IN BISTRIȚA – NĂSĂUD COUNTY. PART I. THE REPERTORY.

Abstract: The aim of this paper is to reopen the issues regarding the northern section of the frontiers of Dacia Porolissensis, most of the segment, located on the modern territory of Bistrița – Năsăud County. After almost 40 years, this study returns to the questions about the watchtowers of the Roman frontier, their locations, their state of preservation and their functionality. The paper is largely an updated repertory of the military structures, with a series of observations regarding their role in the military system of *Limes Romanus*.

Keywords: Roman frontier, northern frontier, Roman watchtowers, Bistrița – Năsăud County, Dacia Porolissensis.

There has been more than 150 years ago, since K. Torma, on the basis of his own researches, started the discovery of Dacia Porolissensis province frontiers, being from that point, a main concern for the Roman provincial archaeology in Dacia. In a complete study, he included everything which has been previously known or discovered by himself¹. His approach began with a misled reading² of an already known inscription³, discovered in the walls of Haller Castle, (Coplean - Cluj County), which was brought from the area of the auxiliary fort of Cășeu (Samum)⁴.

Being confident about the existence of a *regio transvallum*⁵, K. Torma started a series of field researches in order to identify the presumed *vallum*. Initially, he focused only on the area of the north – western frontier of Dacia Porolissensis, between Bologa and Porolissum. All of his researches and discoveries started a long series of discussions, new researches and theories, which stretched over the half of the 19th century and all over to the 20th one⁶ and even today.

The northern frontier of Dacia Porolissensis, therefore the part which

¹ TORMA 1880.

² BUDAY 1912, 121.

³ CIL III 827 = 7633; FERENCZI 1971, 613.

⁴ ISAC 2003, 29, 48.

⁵ The inscription was raised by Val(erius) Valentinus, aedil of colonia Napoca and beneficiarius consularis, for the Goddess Nemesis. As D. Isac mentioned, the inscription is the first mention of Samum (ISAC 2003, 48). Torma read wrong the second part of the inscription „subsi[g](navit) Samum cum reg(ione) (tr)ans val(um)...” (TORMA 1861, 37-38; TORMA 1880, 4), proposing the existence of a frontier vallum. The one who corrected the error was A. v. Domaszewski (CIL III 7633). The one who has launched the discussion of a *regio Ans(amsium)* was V. Pârvan (PÂRVAN 1926, 275 (For further details see mainly ISAC 1994, 205-215; OPREANU 1994, 69-78; ISAC 2003, 48-58; NELIS – CLÉMENT 2000; CUPCEA 2014, 47; FRANCE\ NELIS – CLÉMENT (ed), 2014.

⁶ For the evolution of the researches and theories regarding the north – western frontier see COCIȘ 2017, *forthcoming*.

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we can include *grosso modo*, is in the area controlled by the auxiliary Roman forts from Cășeu - *Samum* (Cluj County) and Ilișua - *Arcoba(da)ra* (Bistrița-Năsăud County). The targeted sector got an extremely low attention from the researchers, these focusing mainly on the area of *Porolissum*, "cheia de boltă a Dacia Porolissensis."⁷

Geographically speaking, the segment of the northern frontier from Bistrița-Năsăud stretches from the area of the auxiliary fort from Ilișua to the vicinity of the auxiliary fort from Livezile. Given the geomorphological configuration of Dacia Porolissensis, the topographical layout exercised a major influence on the disposition of the physical elements of the frontier⁸. It resulted in a tripartite functioning scheme composed of: *castra* (as major military structures of the frontier) – *burgi* (as middle structures) – *turres* (the smallest structures)⁹. In our case, given the fact that the auxiliary fort from Ilișua was investigated during systematic archaeological campaigns¹⁰, we focused on identifying and investigating the other two types of structures: *burgi* and *turres* (watchtowers).

BRIEFING OLDER RESEARCH

Archaeological investigations at the auxiliary fort from Ilișua HAVE started by K. Torma at the suggestion of Th. Mommsen, after a visit made by the second one in the area, in 1857¹¹. During his research, K. Torma identified and dug up two towers placed on the hills near the fort. The first tower, situated south – west of the fort, measures accordingly to him, 11.40 x 11.40 m., with a structure made of dry stone and an elevation consisting of wood planks.¹² The second one, smaller, was found north – west of the fort, on 'Măgura Hill'¹³.

In terms of interpretation, K. Torma did not advance any theoretical model, given the lack of identified structures in front of the fort.¹⁴ With the occasion of the archaeological investigations made by Em. Panaitescu in 1929 at the auxiliary fort from Cășeu, he advanced a hypothesis about the existence of a frontier on the Someș river: „C'est la partie du limes fluvial, constitué par la rivière fortifiée de Somes, sur une distance de 60 km.”¹⁵.. The same resolution gave decades later, I. Ferenczi, who also called it as a *fluvial limes*.¹⁶ During his research,¹⁷ A. Radnóti contested Panaitescu's statement, placing the northern frontier on 'Culmea Brezei' on some mistaken information, which claimed that in that location, a tower was identified: *La situazione cambia invece se la valle era difesa da un limes disteso sul crinale dei monti*.¹⁸ The hypothesis was later contested by I. Ferenczi¹⁹.

Those theories were soon to be forgotten. D. Tudor

resumed in 1968 the hypotheses of Em. Panaitescu, stating that on the northern frontier the border was following the course of Someș river. But he has no remarks regarding the Roman defensive military system, also stating that the northern area lacks fortifications like the ones at south – west of Porolissum²⁰. Nevertheless, the personal contributions brought by D. Tudor for this segment of limes, were very limited. Taking into account information from the Romanian bibliography (particularly from I. Ferenczi), G. Forni affirmed in 1959 the fact that: „*Parimenti dinnanzi all lignea degli accapamenti Tihău – Cășei – Ilișua, a nord e a vest del corso del Someșu Mare, esisteva una fascia profonda 10 – 25 km, con circa 36 torii e burgi in pietra e in legno, disposti secondo la conformazione del terreno*.”²¹

The first scientific approach of the Limes in this region was made by I. Ferenczi. He undertook a constant work of investigating *limes Dacicus* starting from the early '40s. Regarding the Roman frontier from Bistrița – Năsăud County, I. Ferenczi had systematically investigated in the '70s the line of towers located between Ciceu – Corabia (in west) and Salva (in east),²² also identifying a series of towers in the north – eastern area of the county²³. This activity was a continuation of the research of the northern frontier in general, started in the area of the auxiliary fort from Tihău²⁴. His surveys and mapping work were always doubled by a good knowledge of the geography and the geomorphology of the researched areas and also by his theoretical position which was connected with the latest theories.

In 1971, I. Ferenczi published a study about the concept of *limes Dacicus*, relying on literary and epigraphic sources, setting thereby his theoretical directions. In his opinion, the Roman frontier was initially a road, developing in the Hadrianic epoch to a linear fortification, (*vallum*, *clausura*), the frontier turning into a district administrated by *duces* and *praepositii* in the late Roman period.²⁵ This vision precedes with some years the important study of B. Isaac²⁶ about the origins of the term limes²⁷. Thus, he reached to consider the frontier of Dacia Porolissensis a road that links the forts between them, the road being secured on its route with towers, *burgi* and in some places with *valla*, in order to oversee the roadways in the province²⁸.

Theoretical remarks regarding the functionality of the northern frontier were also followed by small-scaled archaeological researches. In Bistrița-Năsăud county, I. Ferenczi had excavated integrally no structure, his trenches being made only to confirm the fact that the ruins were actually towers²⁹.

²⁰ TUDOR 1968, 256.

²¹ FORNI 1959, 1283.

²² FERENCZI 1969, 91-110; FERENCZI 1972, 37-46; FERENCZI 1973, 79-104; FERENCZI 1974, 181-189; FERENCZI 1976, 107-133.

²³ FERENCZI 1975, 285-289.

²⁴ FERENCZI 1988, 251-289; FERENCZI 1991, 127-151.

²⁵ FERENCI 1971, 605.

²⁶ COCIȘ 2017, forthcoming for further details.

²⁷ ISAAC 1988, 127-147.

²⁸ FERENCZI 1971, 616-622. The theoretical position of I. Ferenczi is framing in what E. Luttwak called the concept of *preclusive defence-forward defence* (LUTTWAK 1976, 51-126). We can find some of Ferenczi's ideas in the later theories of J. C. Mann who considered that the Roman state applied a total control over its frontiers, the role of them being mainly engendering and supporting the military factor (MANN 1974, 508-533).

²⁹ See *infra* the repertory.

⁷ "The keystone of Dacia Porolissensis" (GUDEA 1988, 195-214).

⁸ BREEZE 2011, 133-145; BREEZE 2013, 2-19.

⁹ COCIȘ 2015, forthcoming.

¹⁰ MARCU 2009, 78-84 with bibliography.

¹¹ BODA 2013, 78.

¹² TORMA 1864, 13; Pl. II, Z.

¹³ TORMA 1864, 13; Pl. II, L.

¹⁴ K. Torma was the creator and the promoter of the *limes Dacicus* concept applied on the north – western frontier.

¹⁵ PANAITESCU 1929, 88; For the whole discussion see mainly DAICOVICIU 1945, 106 and FERENCZI 1957, 279-292.

¹⁶ FERENCZI 1988, 127.

¹⁷ RADNÓTI 1945, 137-168.

¹⁸ RADNÓTI 1945, 154.

¹⁹ FERENCZI 1988, 129.

The archaeological contributions made after I. Ferenczi, were rather poor, although some diggings were done. In 1968 D. Protase signaled to I. Ferenczi the existence of a Roman tower somewhere in the area of Perișor (Zagra Commune), at 'Vârful Zgăului'³⁰. Between 1971–1972, I. Mitrofan excavated this structure almost integrally, the archaeological material and the plan is not published yet³¹.

In 1989 C. Gaiu (Bistrița – Năsăud Museum Complex) investigated another three structures in the territory of Ciceu – Poieni village from the points, 'Strunga Găvojenilor', 'Vârful Osoiului' and 'Podul Milcoaiei' discovering here rich archaeological material and establishing the plans of the towers. The last archaeological research of a tower was made between 2013 and 2014, by C. Gaiu and R. Zăgreanu, (Bistrița – Năsăud Museum Complex) the tower presenting a rich archaeological material and also a particularly interesting structure for the frontier of Dacia Porolissensis.

CURRENT SITUATION.

Today we have not progressed much further in acquiring new-knowledge, at least as to the I. Ferenczi period, as archaeological excavations have been extremely rare lately and many significant sites have been lost by spreading of urban settlements or modern agriculture. The re-identification of the towers and *burgus* – type structures, was mainly conducted in the years 2012 – 2017, during constant field researches. We succeeded thereby to identify and map almost all the elements initially described by I. Ferenczi. His studies were the main resources for tracing these objectives, even if the landscape had changed dramatically in some places, over the last 50 years. However, we did not yet succeed to identify the towers east of Salva village, this being a *desideratum*. We would like to mention that the towers between Spermezeu and Năsăud, were identified within the framework of 'Valorificarea și promovarea limes-ului roman de pe aliniamentul Breaza – Spermezeu – Zagra – Runcu Salvei' project.³² As part of the research, a series of geostatistical analyzes were applied in order to establish the functioning parameters of the frontier inter – visibility, analyzes which will be published in the near future.

From a structural point of view, the towers of Dacia Porolissensis split in two main categories: stone towers and wooden towers. The first category has two types of known structures: quadrilateral towers and circular towers³³. The wooden towers are structurally unknown³⁴ because their existence was put in connection with the characteristic type of circular ruins, a small bowl in the ground, with a conical shape, only with burn clay on the surface. The segment of the northern frontier from the territory of the Bistrița-Năsăud county, although very sporadically researched, hides the ruins of the quadrilateral towers and the circular ones made with stone or wood, repeatedly observed by us on the field. The stone towers in the area of Dacia Porolissensis are built

with local material caught with mortar, exclusively using the *opus incertum* technique; sometimes the dry-stone wall also appears caught with clay. The quadrilateral towers measures vary from the minimum 5.95 x 6.10³⁵ to the maximum of 12.50 x 12.50 m³⁶. The thickness of the walls generally integrates between 70 – 75 cm.³⁷ and 1.10 m.³⁸ Most of them have however the wall thickness between 80 – 85 cm³⁹. Circular towers are built in the same way as the quadrilateral ones, in the *opus incertum* technique and also from dry – stone wall or caught with earth. Those have a diameter which varies from the minimum 5 m.⁴⁰ To 10 m.⁴¹ most of them having a diameter of 7 – 7.5 m⁴². The thickness of the walls

Fig.1. Vf. Osoiului tower plan Fig.2. Podul Milcoaiei tower plan

varies between 70 – 75 cm. to 1 – 1.10 m., most of them having a thickness of 80 – 85 cm.

No matter how the towers were built, either wood or stone, they are usually surrounded by a ditch, and most probably with a palisade⁴³. Same as in the case of quadrilateral towers from Germania⁴⁴, the ones from Dacia Porolissensis present no arranged entry on the first level, perhaps being used an entry, on the second level⁴⁵. Neither the circular structures present entries on the first level. The elevation can be both made of stone (at least one level) or wood⁴⁶. In regard of the roofs, it appears that they were constructed using *tegulae* and *imbrices*, discovered in the excavations, but also with a perishable material, possibly shingle. The big number of discovered nails proves a high usage of wood for the structure of the tower, at least the roofs being clearly made with this material. In some cases, there were discovered military stamps,⁴⁷ being extremely useful in order to identify the troop which had used the tower, but also the frontier area

³⁵ Poiana Șeredanilor (GUDEA 1997, 55-56).

³⁶ Grebăn (GUDEA 1997, 44-45).

³⁷ Poiana Șeredanilor (GUDEA 1997, 55-56).

³⁸ Sub Druia (GUDEA 1997, 68-69).

³⁹ Poieni 2 (GUDEA 1997, 39-40) Horhiș (GUDEA 1997, 40); Dealul Bonciului (GUDEA 1997, 42-43).

⁴⁰ Puguior (GUDEA 1997, 76-77).

⁴¹ Salhiger (GUDEA 1997, 48).

⁴² Dealul Bonciului (GUDEA 1997, 42-43); Sub Padină (GUDEA 1997, 56-57).

⁴³ The case of Vătava tower presented with the pale of the national conference 'Limes Forum IV', Sovata, 4-6.12.2015.

⁴⁴ BAATZ 1976, 39-51; FASSBINDER 2007, 16-17.

⁴⁵ GUDEA 1985, 143-218; GUDEA 1997, *passim*.

⁴⁶ In some cases the quantity of stone discovered in the demolition layer is huge, stating indirectly the existence of the secondary stone levels. In the case of the tower excavated by Torma existence of the wooden floors is attested.

⁴⁷ A stamp of *cohors II Hispanorum* based at the auxiliary fort from Bologna was discovered in the tower from Cornu Sonului (GUDEA 1997, 44) and another two of *cohors II Nervia Brittonum* based at Buciumi were discovered in the tower from Bozna – Cetățea. (POP) KALMAR 1988, 74, fig.10).

³⁰ FERENCZI *et alii* 1974, 182-183.

³¹ FERENCZI *et alii* 1974, 182-183.

³² BÎCĂ, ZĂGREANU 64-58, 2015.

³³ In the late Roman Empire is developed the rhombic type (see NAGY 1999, 134).

³⁴ A wooden tower was researched on the limes Transalutanus (see BOGDAN CĂTĂNICIU 1976, 348-349). For a typology of the wooden towers from Britain see HANSON, FRIEL 1995, 499-519.

controlled by a fort⁴⁸. Regarding the personal who occupied that tower, we agree with the idea of P. Southern according to whom the number varied between four to five persons (with weapons and afferent provisions).⁴⁹ The area surrounding the tower is intensely lived, usually discovering their bread kilns,⁵⁰ and waste or supply pits⁵¹.

A special case for the northern frontier particularly and for the frontier of Dacia Porolissensis in general, is the tower from Ciceu – Corabia 'Ponița' point, archaeologically investigated between 2013 – 2014. This tower presents a quadrilateral partitioned structure. Until now we have no analogy in the area of Dacia for this type of tower. In exchange, moving in the eastern part of the Empire, on *limes Palestinae*, or even on the German frontier, we can observe that they frequently appear here, similarly as in our situation, structurally and also chronologically⁵². Probably a room represents the tower structure, while the other one, an

Fig. 3. Ponița Roman watchtower plan.

Fig. 4. a. Mevo Abu Tulul; b. Moahila - Station (redrawn after Gichon 1974, 523, f, 521, h).

enclosure with various functionalities.

In the case of towers and *burgus* – type structures, the chronological framework with different phases is hard to detect, due to the small number of archaeological excavations and lack of datable archaeological artifacts. Different phases in the evolution of the frontier can be observed in exchange on the field, where two towers at a small distance one from another (wooden tower near the stone tower, or even two close stone towers) frequently appear. This situation can be met in other places on the frontier⁵³, but

also in other provinces⁵⁴. One can also observe the opposite of this situation, where some towers present a thick layer of habitation and reconstructions of the wall, indicating a long utilization⁵⁵.

The existence of such situations is perfectly normal, given the fact that the frontiers do not appear already constituted in a final form, but they evolve and develop over time⁵⁶, sometimes being influenced by the changing imperial policy⁵⁷. For our interest area, a clear dating of the construction phases is for now impossible because of the causes mentioned above.

In the case of the excavations from Ciceu – Corabia, 'Ponița', we have however among the artifacts a strongly profiled bronze fibula discovered in the tower's ditch. The type of the fibula is Cociș 8b1a1,⁵⁸ dated in the first decades of the 2nd century C.E., being in connection with the military milieu⁵⁹. The pottery from the towers and *burgi* present no special particularities, with cooking and supplying dishes predominating, usually discovered inside.⁶⁰ In the western segment of the northern frontier, especially in the geographical area between Ileanda (Sălaj County) and Cășeu (Cluj County), the archaeological trenches for surveying the towers made by I. Ferenczi, largely clarified the chronology of some towers. Within the structures from Bârsăul Mare – 'Cetate' and 'Cetate 2', I. Ferenczi had discovered two different phases of the frontier, expressed in the existence of a stone tower, situated at 14 m. near a wooden tower⁶¹, a situation also confirmed in other cases from the frontier area, at Tihău⁶². At the excavations from Gâlgău – 'Casa Urișilor' he found in the habitation layer a bronze fibula datable for the beginning of 2nd century C.E. (probably a profiled fibula type Cociș 8b). In the tower from Gâlgău – 'Hotroapă', which was excavated almost entirely, there were identified two successive phases of the structure, the second one being delimited from the first one by a burnt layer. In the second phase, a denarius from Lucius Septimius Geta (189-211) was identified.⁶⁴

Fewer than the above-mentioned artifacts are the inscriptions. In Dacia, we currently have no epigraphic discovery which can be connected to the towers⁶⁵. Nevertheless, on the surface of the *burgus* from Negrilești⁶⁶ (Bistrița-Năsăud County) two inscriptions were discovered, a unique situation for the province. The first one, discovered in 1831, is a votive altar raised by *Publius Aelius Atilianus*,

⁵⁴ For example JOST 2007, 4-5.

⁵⁵ MATEI 2007, 252.

⁵⁶ BREEZE 2013, 5.

⁵⁷ See the multiple construction phases of the linear frontier from Germany (BAATZ 1976, 10) or Britain (BREEZE, DOBSON 1970, 110).

⁵⁸ COCIȘ 2004, Pl. XXIV/344-349.

⁵⁹ COCIȘ 2004, 65.

⁶⁰ GUDEA 1985, *passim*; GUDEA 1997, *passim*.

⁶¹ FERENCZI 1991, 137-138.

⁶² *Fața Chicerii* (FERENCZI 1988, 261-262) or *Hornicior* (FERENCZI 1988, 262).

⁶³ FERENCZI 1991, 139.

⁶⁴ FERENCZI 1991, 139-140.

⁶⁵ The inscriptions in connection with the towers structures are very rare. An eloquent example is the inscription from Mauretania Caesariensis, dated between 184-191, which mentions the building of new towers and the reparation of the old ones by the soldiers: '...*turres novas instituit et veteres refecit opera militum*...' (CIL VIII 20816 = ILS 396).

⁶⁶ KÁDÁR 1901, 222; MARȚIAN 1920, 28, nr.459; MARȚIAN 1921, 23-24; FERENCZI 1973, 95; COCIȘ 2016, 53-67.

⁴⁸ COCIȘ 2016, 59.

⁴⁹ SOUTHERN 1990, 233-242.

⁵⁰ MATEI 2007, 252.

⁵¹ SARNOWSKI *et alli* 2007, 65-67.

⁵² GICHON 1974, 521, 523.

⁵³ *Poieni 1 și Poieni 2* (GUDEA 1997, 38-40); *Fața Chicerii* (FERENCZI 1988, 261-262); *Hornicior* (FERENCZI 1988, 262).

decurio ex singulari consularis, for Silvanus and Diana⁶⁷. This situation is at least interesting, given that Atilianus, an ex-member of the governor's personal guard, was detached, serving as a *decurion* (most probably for the *ala I Tungrorum Frontoniana* at Ilișua), in the northern frontier area, at the *burgus* from Negrilești⁶⁸. The second inscription (18 x 16, 5 cm.) was discovered in 1970, at a close distance from the first one⁶⁹. Initially, it was incorrect read. After close examination, the text seems to be [---e]t? Saur(-ius?; -io?; -nus?; -us?) [---] / [---] mile[s]⁷⁰ (or *mile(tavit)*). Those two inscriptions indicate an increased importance of the site within the frame of the northern frontier.

The disposal of the towers and *burgus* – type structures in the field is not random. The locations of those elements within Roman frontier were made exploiting to the maximum the topographical element in favor of the tactical aspects. Thereby, as we mentioned above, the frontier of Dacia Porolissensis is organized using a tripartite scheme (*castra – turres – burgi*), in order to accomplish precise tasks in the provincial *limes* organization.⁷¹

The repetitive location of the towers using dominant points of the *cuestas* system oriented north – south created a repetitive model, a pattern of distribution, giving a particular aspect to the northern frontier. By the standpoint of the location of the elements of the *limes*, D. J. Woolliscroft established the existence of two main categories: *terrain crossing systems* and *terrain following systems*. This typology aims at the physical location of the frontiers according to the usage of the topographical setting. Thus, a *crossing system* defines a frontier which sacrifices the topographical advantage in favor of a predefined pattern⁷², while a *following system* fully exploits it, in favor of the tactical element⁷³. In the case of the northern frontier we are dealing with a *terrain following system*, respectively a system which uses the forts in order to secure main entry points in the province, *burgi* for their control, situated in our case at a distance of approx. 10 km. in front of the forts, respectively towers located on dominant heights of the *cuestas* system, to oversee the valleys but also some areas in the *Barbaricum*⁷⁴.

The towers need to carry out two major functions: overseeing and dispatching information. This fact arises a situation clearly surprised by G. Donaldson, that is to say the inter-visibility and the optimum overseeing range is combined to determine the optimum number of towers in a chained system of inter-visibility⁷⁵, being considered

⁶⁷ Nemzeti Társalkodó (1831) nr.18; FINÁLZ 1911, 433-436; AÉ 1913, 54; DAICOVICIU 1940, 332; RADNÓTI 139, 1945; TIR L 35, 52-53; BĂRBULESCU 205, 1972; FERENCZI 1973, 95; ILD 795. Text: *Dian(a)e et / Silvano / sacrum / P(ublius) Ael(ius) Atili(anus) dec(urio) ex si/ng(ulari) co(n)s(ularis) / fecit.*

⁶⁸ CUPCEA 2010, 390.

⁶⁹ FERENCZI 1973, 95, 97, fig.10. Recently, a second possible *burgus* – type structure within the frame of the northern frontier from Bistrița – Năsăud was identified (COCIȘ 2015, 46-57).

⁷⁰ COCIȘ 2016, 58, fig.7.

⁷¹ An epigraphic proof of a tripartite system is the inscription AE 1957, nr. 270 = AE 2000, nr. 1291 from Serdica: ‘... per fines ciuitatis / Serd(ic)ensium regione Dyptens(ium) / praesidia n(umero) IIII, burgi n(umero) XII, phruri / n(umero) CIX.’

⁷² WOOLLISCROFT 2001, 51-78, 141-154.

⁷³ WOOLLISCROFT 2001, 53-57.

⁷⁴ COCIȘ 2015, forthcoming.

⁷⁵ DONALDSON 1998, 352.

also the possibilities of inter – acoustic communication⁷⁶. Those elements are combined giving a special layout on the northern frontier (and the north – western one).

The *burgus* – type structures on the other hand, are situated in a way that they fulfill a wide range of responsibilities, from the permanent visual and acoustic link with the towers, to the control of the *intra* and *extra provinciam* traffic, supplying also the watchtowers with manpower and provisions.⁷⁷ Indeed, the personal was drawn from the auxiliary forts for activities in the area of the frontier, which required a higher mobility.⁷⁸

In conclusion, this study wished to have a rediscussion of a problem which was abandoned 40 years ago, constituted mainly in an updated repertory of the component structures of the Roman frontier. It tries to bring up to date especially the information regarding the location and the current state of preservation of the archaeological sites, but also a brief reinterpretation of their functionality in the military system of the frontiers of the Roman Empire. We end our theoretical remarks with a famous observation of Ch. Whittaker according to which those points facilitate economical aspects in a pure line of administrative delimitation⁷⁹, in order to control the traffic and not to stop it.⁸⁰

REPERTORY OF ROMAN TOWERS FROM BISTRIȚA-NĂSĂUD COUNTY

1. Poniță (Ciceu – Poieni, Ciceu – Giurgești Commune).⁸¹

Description: The tower is situated on a high hogback called *Poniță*, at a 700 m. altitude, between *Vârful Spânzu* (729 m.) and *Vârful Pietrii* (722 m.). It was first identified in 1969 by I. Ferenczi. He described a circular ruin with a diameter of 15 m. with a height of 1.5 – 1.6 m. and a surrounding ditch. He excavated on a small surface finding reddish and brown Roman potsherds and a spear head.

Excavations: The excavations were resumed by C. Gaiu and R. Zăgreanu (Bistrița – Năsăud Museum Complex) between 2013 and 2014. A rectangular structure of 10 x 5 m. made of local stone in the *opus incertum* technique was identified. The walls were preserved on a 0.8 – 1 m. height. The structure has two construction phases, a wooden and a stone one. The ditch was investigated too. It has a width of 3 m. and an opening on the north – eastern side. The tower is composed of the main structure of 7 x 5 m. and an annexed structure of 3 x 5 m. Inside the tower a thick layer containing potsherd of storage vessels, jugs, bowls, cups and also of amphorae dating in the Roman era was identified. Beside this, there were identified fragments of bronze brooches, bronze fittings, arrow heads and *pila*.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D. It was identified a bronze brooch type *Cociș 8b1a1* dated in the first decades of the 2nd century A.D. It was found in the ditch of the tower. The two phases identified in the excavations are similar with

⁷⁶ WEBSTER 1969, 135-136.

⁷⁷ For the role of the *burgus* – type structures on the north – western frontier see COCIȘ 2015, forthcoming.

⁷⁸ GICHON 1974, 538.

⁷⁹ WHITTAKER 1994, 91, 121.

⁸⁰ BREEZE, DOBSON 1976, 77.

⁸¹ The watchtower from Poniță will be fully published in the near future.

other situations on the northern frontier. On the surface of the tower, a medieval grinder was discovered.

State of preservation: Primary conservation but exposed on one side.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1971, 81-82; FERENCZI 1973, 89.

RAN\LMI: 34208.03.01\BN-I-m-B-01317.01.

2. Vârful Muncelului (Chiuești, Chiuești Commune).

Description: The structure is situated near a forest road, on the top of the hill. It has circular ruins with visible walls on the surface. The structure seems to be made of local stones tied together with mortar. The diameter is about 7 m. and preserved height of 0.7 m. It has a surrounding ditch of 3.5 m. wide.

Excavations: There are no mentions or traces of any archaeological excavations.

State of preservation: On the southern side are traces of stone exploitation. The rest of the structure is intact.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1973, 90; CRIȘAN *et alli* 1992, 110.

RAN\LMI: 34208.04.01\BN-I-m-B-01317.02.

3. Vârful Runcului (Dumbrăveni, Ciceu – Giurgești Commune).

Description: The tower is located on a top of a plateau. The ruins are barely visible, with approximate dimensions of 4 x 3 m. and small ditch of 0.4 m. wide. On the surface, one can observe burnt clay and Roman potsherds.

Excavations: I. Ferenczi excavated a small part of the structure, the traces being quite visible today. He mentions the existence of several wrought stones, some bricks and column fragments.

State of preservation: The structures are heavily affected by constant agricultural works carried in the area.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1973, 90.

RAN\LMI: 32982.01.01\BN-I-s-B-01340.

4. Dealul Sfederului (Negriștești, Negriștești Commune).

Description: The tower is situated on a steep peak, dominating a large valley. Its ruins are heavily covered by vegetation. The structure has a diameter of approximately 15 m. and a preserved height of 1.5 m. On the Southern side, we identified a 0.6 m. wide ditch and occasionally traces of an earth mound. On the surface, we found some Roman potsherds.

Excavations: I. Ferenczi excavated inside the tower, not providing any further information about the structure or the archaeological artefacts.

State of preservation: Fully preserved exterior, the interior being rummaged by Ferenczi's interventions.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1973, 91; FERENCZI 1974, 182.

RAN\LMI: --.

5. Cetatea lui Negru Vodă (Negriștești, Negriștești Commune).

Description: *Burgus* – type structure identified at the beginning of the 20th century. It is located on a terrace near a narrow watershed (Valea Dumbrăviței and Valea Mare). The dimensions can only be approximated due to the fact that the structure is overlaid by the modern settlement. After a close look, we estimated that the structure had about 35 x 35 m. On the unaffected surfaces, there is a huge quantity of potsherds, burnt clay and stones. As seen above, two inscriptions were discovered on the surface of the *burgus*-type structure. Near the *burgus* we found a rural settlement most probably in connection with this structure.

Excavations: Even if the location of the structure was very well known, there are no mentions of any excavations carried in the area.

State of preservation: The structure is overlaid by the modern village, being constantly destroyed by stone and brick extractions for the houses and also by intensive agricultural works.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: KÁDÁR 1901, 222; MARȚIAN 1920, 28, nr. 459; MARȚIAN 1921, 23-24; FERENCZI 1973, 95; COCIȘ 2016, 53-67.

RAN\LMI: 32991.01.01\BN-I-s-B-01371.

6. Cornul Malului (Negriștești, Negriștești Commune).

Description: Situated in the western part of a promontory, the ruins have a circular aspect with a hollow interior, largely covered with vegetation. The diameter of the ruins is approximately 13 m. with a preserved height of 1.5 m. On the eastern part, we found traces of a ditch, 0.8 m. wide.

Excavations: In 1969 I. Ferenczi excavated a small part of the interior finding mortar fragments and Roman potsherds.

State of preservation: The structure is in a good state of preservation with no traces of destruction.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1973, 93-94.

RAN\LMI: --.

7. Purcăreț (Negriștești, Negriștești Commune)

Description: The tower is situated on the top of a promontory in a wooded area. The ruins are of rectangular shape with the approximate dimensions of 6 x 8 m. with a surrounding ditch of 0.4 m. On the surface, we observed mortar and burnt clay.

Excavations: It was not excavated.

State of preservation: There are no traces of later interventions.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: The tower was previously unknown.

RAN\LMI: --.

8. Dealul Podului (Dumbrăveni, Ciceu – Giurgești Commune).

Description: The ruins are situated on a plateau, above a precipitous valley. They have a square shape with the dimensions of 8 x 5 m. and preserved height of 0.7 m.,

covered with shrubs. On the northern side, the wall made of local stones is very visible. The structure is surrounded by a ditch of 0.5 m. wide. On the surface, there is a large amount of burnt clay and potsherds.

Excavations: No traces or mentions of excavations.

State of preservation: The structure is fully preserved.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: The tower was previously unknown.

RAN\LMI: --.

9. Vârful Osoiului (Ciceu – Poieni, Căianu Mic Commune).

Description: The tower is located on a small hill, near a valley. It was firstly mentioned by I. Ferenczi as a destroyed stone structure, without any additional info.

Excavations: It was excavated in 1989 by C. Gaiu (Bistrița – Năsăud Museum Complex). The structures were almost fully excavated (three archaeological sections). It has a square structure with the dimensions of 6 x 5.5 m. Only a single phase was recorded, with a stone foundation made of local stone, a wooden elevation and a surrounding ditch. A large quantity of Roman pottery was recovered due to the archaeological investigations.

State of preservation: The structure is fully preserved.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1973, 99-100.

RAN\LMI: --.

10. Strunga Găvojenilor (Ciceu – Poieni, Căianu Mic Commune).

Description: Located on a large plateau, the tower has square ruins. It was almost completely destroyed by the locals.

Excavations: It was excavated in 1989 by C. Gaiu (Bistrița – Năsăud Museum Complex). He established that the tower has a rectangular shape of approximately 7 x 4 m. The structure was almost completely destroyed, being recovered only some Roman potsherds and mortar fragments. It was stated that the tower had only one phase of construction.

State of preservation: At this moment, we can observe only some scarce traces on the field.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1973, 98.

RAN\LMI: 32848.02.01\ BN-I-m-B-01321.

11. Podul Milcoaiei (Ciceu – Poieni, Căianu Mic Commune).

Description: The tower is located on a plateau above the village, surrounded by steep slopes. It was firstly described as a flattened mound. The locals extracted a large quantity of stone from its structure.

Excavations: It was excavated in 1989 by C. Gaiu (Bistrița – Năsăud Museum Complex). After two archaeological trenches he established that the tower had a circular shape with the diameter of 8 m. and preserved

wall of 0.7 m. The structure had only one stone phase. He collected a lot of Roman potsherds. There is no mention about a surrounding ditch.

State of preservation: Before the excavations, the structure was heavily affected by stone extraction and intensive agricultural works.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1973, 98.

RAN\LMI: 32848.01.01\ BN-I-m-B-01320.

12. Rângoită (Dobricel, Spermezeu Commune).

Description: The ruins are situated close to a small valley, on a promontory surrounded by steep slopes. They have a circular aspect with a diameter of 14 m. A ditch of 1 m. width is visible on the north – eastern side. There are some trees on the surface of the ruins.

Excavations: There are no traces or mentions of excavations.

State of preservation: The southern side was destroyed by the locals who extracted stone.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1973, 100.

RAN\LMI: 32857.01.01\ BN-I-s-B-01333.

13. Vârful Lazului (Dobricel, Spermezeu Commune).

Description: It is located on a tillable plateau above the village. The ruins have a conical shape and an earth mound on the western side. The relative dimensions are 10 x 6 m. On the surface, we observed Roman potsherds and a huge quantity of stones. Nowadays the tower is used as a landmark between two agricultural properties.

Excavations: There are no archaeological excavations carried on this objective.

State of preservation: The structure is heavily affected by agricultural works, the stones were scattered across the fields.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1973, 101.

RAN\LMI: 32866.01.01\ BN-I-s-B-01334.

14. Locul Fătului (Dobricel, Spermezeu Commune).

Description: The structure is completely destroyed by agricultural works. I. Ferenczi mentioned in 1973 some traces of stone walls and mortar. Nowadays there are no signs visible. We identified the spot with the aid of a local inhabitant.

Excavations: There are no archaeological excavations identifiable.

State of preservation: Completely destroyed.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1973, 101.

RAN\LMI: --.

15. Casa urieșilor (Sita, Spermezeu Commune).

Description: The tower is located on the top of a hill, on a dominant point. It has conical ruins, extremely well preserved. The diameter is about 14 m. with a preserved height of 0.8 m. We identified a surrounding ditch of 1 m. width. There are no traces of later interventions. On the

surface of the ruins, there are Roman potsherds, bricks and stones.

Excavations: There are no traces or mentions about any excavations carried out on this objective.

State of preservation: The ruins are completely preserved with no traces of interventions.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1976, 107-109.

RAN\LMI: 34592.02.01\ BN-I-m-B-01401.02.

16. Păltiniș (Perișor, Zagra Commune).

Description: The tower is located on a plateau above the village, near ‘Perișorului’ Valley, in the vicinity of **Casa Urieșilor**. The ruins are of a square form, with the dimensions of 7.2 x 7.5 m. In the north – eastern corner the wall is still visible. On the surface of the tower, there is a huge quantity of stone. Near the tower, we identified another set of ruins, probably part of an annex building.

Excavations: There are no excavations carried on this structure.

State of preservation: The tower and the annex building are fully preserved, with no traces of destruction.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1976, 109.

RAN\LMI: --.

17. Corobană (Perișor, Zagra Commune).

Description: The tower is located on the top of a cuesta, above ‘Frasinului’ Valley. The ruins are of a conical shape with a preserved diameter of 8 m. and a height of 0.7 m. The structure has a surrounding ditch of 2.5 m. width. On the surface of the ruins, we observed Roman potsherds, bricks and roof tiles.

Excavations: There are no excavations carried on this structure.

State of preservation: There are no traces of any interventions, the structure is intact.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1976, 109-110.

RAN\LMI: --.

18. Comoară (Zagra, Zagra Commune).

Description: The structure is considered by I. Ferenczi a *burgus* in connections with the abovementioned towers from Perișor. The ruins are situated on the top of a hill in a dominant spot. It was completely destroyed by the locals who extracted stones and probably also by the treasure hunters. The interior and the sides are completely destroyed. Anyway, the dimensions of the ruins are impressive: 40 x 30 m.

Excavations: No mentions of archaeological excavations.

State of preservation: The structure is completely destroyed being visible only the interior hole from where the stones were carried out.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1976, 107-112.

RAN\LMI: 35456.01.01\ BN-I-s-B-01378.

19. Vârful Zgăului (Zagra, Zagra Commune).

Description: The tower is located on the termination of a hogback. It was identified in 1968 by I. Ferenczi based on the info provided by D. Protase.

Excavations: It was excavated between 1971 and 1972 by I. Mitrofan, but never published. He identified a square structure of 6 x 4 m. made of local sandstone in the *opus incertum* technique with a preserved wall of almost 1 m. height. There was also identified a surrounding ditch. There are no further pieces of information provided.

State of preservation: The structure was left uncovered after the excavations. The walls are in a bad state of preservation.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1974, 183.

RAN\LMI: 35438.01.01\ BN-I-m-B-01440.01.

20. Vârful Colnicului (Zagra, Zagra Commune).

Description: The structure is located above Zagra, on a smooth promontory. Is almost fully covered with bushes. The ruins have a diameter of approximately 15 m. with a preserved height of 2 m. and are surrounded by a ditch of 3 m. width. Here and there we observed traces of masonry and burnt clay.

Excavations: I. Ferenczi excavated a small trench finding burnt clay, coal and some potsherds.

State of preservation: The ruins are in good state of preservation due to the fact that they are covered with vegetation.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1974, 183.

RAN\LMI: 35438.02.01\ BN-I-m-B-01440.02.

21. Dealul Ciorilor (Zagra, Zagra Commune).

Description: The tower is located at a watershed of three valleys, on a dominant height. The structure is well preserved. It is a square tower with the dimensions of 8 x 5 m. and a preserved height of 1.5 m. We identified a ditch on the northern side with the width of 1 m.

Excavations: No mention of archaeological excavations.

State of preservation: The ruins are covered with vegetation but the structure is not affected. The walls are in a good condition.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1974, 184.

RAN\LMI: --.

22. Modruț (Runcu Salvei, Runcu Salvei Commune).

Description: Located in a quite nonstrategic place, near a predominant hill, the structure is barely perceptible on the field, is also destroyed by the trees. The ruins are flattened. On the surface, we observed burnt clay.

Excavations: A small trench carried out by I. Ferenczi in 1973. He noted the presence of the burned clay and some sort of wooden structures.

State of preservation: The structure is very much destroyed by the vegetation. There are no other traces of destruction.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1974, 184.

RAN\LMI: --.

23. Dealul Belei (Salva, Salva Commune).

Description: The tower is located on a hilltop, in a dominant position. The structure was completely destroyed by a mobile phone antenna. On the surface, there can be seen only some stones. I. Ferenczi found in this spot Roman potsherds and bricks.

Excavations: There was no archaeological excavation carried out in this spot.

State of preservation: Completely destroyed.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1974, 184-185.

RAN\LMI: 35438.03.01\ BN-I-m-B-01440.03.

24. Roata lui Todoran (Salva, Salva Commune).

Description: Circular ruins, with a diameter of 12 m., located on the edge of a plateau, above the village. The preserved height is about 0.2 m. The tower has ditch of 0.8 m. width. On the surface, we observed worked sandstone and potsherds.

Excavations: There is no information about any excavation carried on this structure.

State of preservation: The structure is well preserved with the exception of the eastern side of the ditch (and probably also of the structure) where a cross for a local Orthodox martyr was raised.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1974, 185; COCIȘ 2015, 46-57.

RAN\LMI: --.

25. Cetățea (Salva, Salva Commune).

Description: *Burgus* – type structure located at 300 m. south from **Roata lui Todoran**. It was identified using a 19th century Austro – Hungarian toponymic account which mentioned the existence of a site with a lot of potsherds and stones. The identified structure has 30 x 20 m. and a preserved height of 1.5 m. On the surface, we noticed the existence of a large amount of potsherds, stones, burnt clay, mortar and even a grinder. The Roman pottery was combined with the hand – made vessels of La Téné period tradition.

Excavations: The structure was previously unknown.

State of preservation: The intensive agricultural works have damaged the structure, the stone from the walls being systematically removed.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: RETEGAN 2002, 163; the existence of the Roman potsherd was reported by L. Vaida (Museum of Năsăud) – VAIDA 2009, 79-80; COCIȘ 2015, 46-57.

RAN\LMI: 34404.01.01\ BN-I-s-B-01385.

26. Vârful Mijii (Salva, Salva Commune).

Description: The ruins are of conical shape situated on a small plateau. On the surface, we observed some parts of the foundation with the diameter of 12 m. and a preserved height of 1.5 m. The structure is covered with small vegetation.

Excavations: There is no info about any excavation carried on this structure.

State of preservation: The structure is preserved very well. There are no traces of destruction.

Chronology: 2nd – 3rd century A.D.

Bibliography: FERENCZI 1974, 185-196; COCIȘ 2015, 46-57.

RAN\LMI: 32553.01.01\ BN-I-s-B-01370.

Unidentified objectives.

There are several objectives that we were not able to identify due to the lack of info about their localization and most probably because the structures are completely destroyed, with no traces left on the field.

A. Dealul Măgura (Ilișua, Uriu Commune).

Identified and excavated by K. Torma in 1863. We identified the spot but not the structure.

B. Kövecsesdomb (Ilișua, Uriu Commune).

Identified and excavated by K. Torma in 1863.

C. Răzoi (Negrilești, Negrilești Commune).

Identified by I. Ferenczi. We identified the spot but not the structure.

D. Dealul Horgii (Dumbrăveni, Ciceu – Giurgești Commune).

Identified by I. Ferenczi. We identified the spot but not the structure.

E. Dobric (Dobric, Căianu – Mic Commune).

Identified by I. Ferenczi. Uncertain structure. We did not identify the spot.

F. Măgura Brezei (Ciceu Poieni, Căianu – Mic Commune).

Identified by I. Ferenczi. Uncertain structure. We did not identify the spot.

ABBREVIATIONS:

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PLATES

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Pl. II. The elements of the frontier (red – auxiliary forts, blue – *burgus* structures, green – watchtowers).

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a

b

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a

b

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a

b

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a

b

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a

b

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a

b

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a

b

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a

b

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a

b

a

b

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a

b

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a

b

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a

b

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