

# Studies

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## ANCIENT HISTORY

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### GUARDING THE DANUBE AND BEYOND (I) *COHORS II MATTIACORUM*<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Organization and operation of the Danubian *limes* had been a concern of the Roman imperial administration for several centuries. The strategic conception for this space was translated into practice directly with the support of the Roman army. One of the early arrived units in the Lower Danube area was *cohors II Mattiacorum*; detachments of the unit would flank the river, being stationed in the “bridgehead” fortifications of Dinogetia and Barboși. The history of this auxiliary unit may be broadly restored pegged solely by epigraphic records which we shall review below, together with historiographical discussions related to the completion and interpretation of their text.

Although many of the opinions mentioned below remain mere hypotheses until new archaeological discoveries are made, I believe based on the documentary material that we know now, that the evolution of the *cohors II Mattiacorum* can be reconstructed with some accuracy. Obviously, any new epigraphic find may confirm or “colour” what we know now. The unit’s development spans more than a century from the last quarter of the 1st century AD to the end of the 2nd century AD, leaving more consistent traces at Dinogetia and Barboși, Sexaginta Prista and Sostra. We know the names of some soldiers and unit commanders and the fact that the unit was transformed somewhere in the middle of its existence into a *milliaria* unit.

**Keywords:** *Cohors II Mattiacorum, Danube, Roman forts.*

#### PREAMBLE

The organization and functioning of the Danubian *limes* was a matter of concern for the Roman imperial administration over several centuries. The concentration in the area on either sides of the river of certain elements, ultimately defensive, obviously served by a significant number of troops maintained in operation even after southern Moldavia became *intra provinciam* and *Dacia* was transformed into a Roman province<sup>2</sup>, suggests, without the shadow of a doubt the importance that the Romans showed to the “riparian” segment by the Lower Danube. Such close supervision may not be by any means attributed to the “international nature” of navigation, as suggested<sup>3</sup> (is it really possible to argue the presence by the Lower Danube of a “Barbarian fleet”, perhaps in rivalry with the *Classis Flavia Moesica*!). Obviously, without entirely neglecting the defensive aspect (on the contrary,

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<sup>1</sup> This is a version of my bilingual study (in Romanian and Ukrainian), see CROITORU 2018, 47-86.

<sup>2</sup> For a synthetic presentation of the main moments of the Dacian conflicts in this area, see ȚENȚEA/MATEI-POPESCU 2015, 109-130.

<sup>3</sup> LIUȘNEA 2008, 17. See my views on the author’s far-fetched assumptions CROITORU 2009, 385-430 (= CROITORU 2017, 212-261).

the set-up of the Danube border shows that the Romans considered the possibility of a strategic retreat south of the river early on), we believe that the economic nature, flow of people and goods and the official or semi-official trading activities pulsating on both sides of the conventional demarcation lines<sup>4</sup> should not be neglected. In this context, the very concept of *limes*<sup>5</sup> as regarded by the ancients, that of a well-defined area, on either sides, of an outer and inner border<sup>6</sup> with specific functions of preventing entry of certain ethnic elements and products and, respectively, exit of other from the delimited space<sup>7</sup>, since both Romans and Barbarians were present both inside and outside the frontiers<sup>8</sup> is worth mention. This entire strategic view of the space was put into practice with the direct support of the Roman army.

One of the troops early arriving in the area is *cohors II Mattiacorum*; detachments of the unit would flank the river also stationed in the “bridgehead” fortifications of *Dinogetia* and Barboși. The history of this auxiliary unit may be reconstructed in general, exclusively set out by the epigraphic records which shall be reviewed below, together with the completions and interpretations to which they have been subjected in the historiography on the issue.

## RECRUITMENT

The *Mattiaci* were a tribe inhabiting an area between the rivers Lahn, Main and Rhine, famous for its hot springs (*Aquae Mattiacae* or *Fontes Mattiaci*), of interest for both written sources<sup>9</sup> and imperial administration rather early, who would later found there *Civitas Mattiacorum* (the city of Wiesbaden in modern Germany)<sup>10</sup>. Although Tacitus counts the *Mattiaci* among the Germanic tribes (information adopted by the contemporary historiography), the archaeological finds at Wiesbaden do not seem to suggest the same; recorded there<sup>11</sup> are rather traces of worship of deities in the Gallic pantheon. The natives – whomever they were – are documented under Claudius (AD 41-54) at a time when they already were subjects of Rome<sup>12</sup>, likely as *foederati*<sup>13</sup>, used in the construction of fortifications, control of frontier areas and as labour in silver mines<sup>14</sup>. They stand out during AD 69-70 when they sided with the Batavians besieging the Roman garrison of *Mogontiacum*<sup>15</sup>; later, after *Limes Germanicus* had been established, they disappeared from known records; in fact, after the founding of that *Civitas Mattiacorum* during Trajan’s rule (AD 98-117), the town inhabitants would reference them as *vicani Aquaesens* not *vicani Mattiaci*<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> CROITORU 2014, 121-126 (= CROITORU 2017, 367-377).

<sup>5</sup> CROITORU 2004, 39-50 (= CROITORU 2017, 262-277).

<sup>6</sup> MOMMSEN 1908, 456-464.

<sup>7</sup> LATTIMORE 1940, 240.

<sup>8</sup> ELTON 1996, 126.

<sup>9</sup> Plinius, *Naturalis historia*, XXXI, 17, 20; Martialis, *Epigrammata*, XIV, 27; Ammianus Marcellinus, *Rerum Gestarum*, XXIX, 4. See, for instance, the *milliarium* set for *Aquis Mattiacorum*, according to SELZER 1988, 265, no. 323.

<sup>10</sup> SCHOPPA 1972, 228-237; SCHOPPA 1974, *passim*; SIMON 2002, 485-491.

<sup>11</sup> CZYSZ 1994, *passim*.

<sup>12</sup> Tacitus, *Germania*, 29.

<sup>13</sup> KLOSE 1934, 53-57.

<sup>14</sup> Tacitus, *Annales*, XI, 20.

<sup>15</sup> Idem, *Historiae*, IV, 37.

<sup>16</sup> *CIL*, XIII, 7566a = *AÉ*, 1903, 309.

Otherwise, *C(aius) Iul(ius) Sp(icius) ratus* of *n(atione) / Mat(tiacus)*, veteran of legion VI Victrix, sets up a votive inscription in the province of Britannia sometime during the 2nd century AD, at least after 131<sup>17</sup>. On the middle of the 3rd century AD (from 238 to 244) at *Mogontiacum* (in *Germania Superior*) appear *Aur(elius) Candidus* an *cornicularius* from *Mat(t)iac(o)/rum Gordianor(um)*<sup>18</sup>. At *Burdigala* (in France) in the 4th century AD is recorded *Flavinus* – a soldier in *numerus Mattiacorum*<sup>19</sup>, while at *Nicopolis*, in Cappadocia, an epitaph, dating to the same century, honours a *primicerius* in *numerus Mattiacorum*<sup>20</sup>. In any case, the epigraphic material shows the existence of two units: *numerus Mattiacorum seniorum*<sup>21</sup> and *numerus Mattiacorum iuniorum*<sup>22</sup> at *Concordia* (in Dalmatia).

## ATTESTATIONS

The auxiliary unit here, mentioned rather frequently on military diplomas and tile material by the Lower Danube, was thus raised from the (Germanic?) tribe of the *Mattiaci*, likely starting from the Flavian period<sup>23</sup>, subsequent to the revolt of the Batavi of AD 69-70<sup>24</sup>.

The restoration of the inscription from *Appiaria* (Slivo Pole) is hypothetical, however it might firstly record the unit as early as 76<sup>25</sup>. For certain though, it is mentioned for the first time in the constitution of February 7, 78 (reproduced on two military diplomas, that of *Montana* and another, whose find spot is unknown<sup>26</sup>), without yet being able to distinguish whether it referenced *cohors prima* or *secunda*. From the same period or possibly early Trajan’s reign (!?)<sup>27</sup>, a *praef(ecto) coh(ortis) / Mattiacor(um)* is attested on an inscription discovered at *Praeneste* (in Italy)<sup>28</sup>; hence, whatever the recorded troop, with or without numerals, this was still a *quingenaria* cohort.

*Cohors II Mattiacorum* appears to be originally attested in the fragmentary diploma dated around AD 93 (95?)<sup>29</sup> and later possibly also the diploma of *Oltina*, from August 14, 99<sup>30</sup>. It would remain in the province until mid 2nd century AD, being ever-present in the texts on military diplomas. Thus, it is documented by the diploma of May 13, 105<sup>31</sup>, hypothetically that of November 24, 107 (?)<sup>32</sup>,

<sup>17</sup> RICHMOND/WRIGHT 1949, 112, no. 1 (= *AÉ*, 1950, 129).

<sup>18</sup> *AÉ*, 1889, 64 = *CIL*, XIII, 7250.

<sup>19</sup> *AÉ*, 1910, 59: *(H)ic iac<e>t Fla(v)inus de numero Mat(tiacorum) seniorum qui vix(it) / annus(!) qua(d)raginta et qui(n)que et dimisit(!) grande(m) / crudeli(ta)te(m) uxori(!) et fili(is) {I} (s)uis*.

<sup>20</sup> GRÉGOIRE 1909, 34-35.

<sup>21</sup> *CIL*, V, 8737; 8739.

<sup>22</sup> *CIL*, V, 8744; 8751.

<sup>23</sup> ALFÖLDY 1968, 83. Also see MATEI-POPESCU 2015, 408, Table I. The units attested in Moesia in Flavian time.

<sup>24</sup> More recently see SCHMITZ 2008, 117-140.

<sup>25</sup> BEŠEVILIEV 1952, 71-72, no. 122 (= *AÉ*, 1957, 307).

<sup>26</sup> *CIL*, XVI, 22; *RMD*, IV, 208; *AÉ*, 1925, 67; ECK/PANGERL 2010, 237-243.

<sup>27</sup> For discussions in this respect see WAGNER 1938, 164-165.

<sup>28</sup> *CIL*, VI, 37274 = *AÉ*, 1906, 104.

<sup>29</sup> PETOLESCU 2014, 71-76.

<sup>30</sup> TOCILESCU 1887, 24-27, no. IX.15. (= *CIL*, XVI, 44 = *ILS*, 2000). See also the reconstruction proposal at ECH/PANGERL 2014a, 215-218, no. 1, where instead of *cohors II Mattiacorum* is read *cohors II Lucensium*.

<sup>31</sup> PETROVSZKY 2004, 7-64 (= *AÉ*, 2004, 1256).

<sup>32</sup> ECH/PANGERL 2014a, 222-225, no. 4.

then in those of September 25, 111<sup>33</sup>, September 27, 112<sup>34</sup>, hypothetically in the ones of 113 (?)<sup>35</sup> and 119 (?)<sup>36</sup>, then in those of October 19, 120<sup>37</sup>, June 1, 125<sup>38</sup>, August 20, 127<sup>39</sup>, April 2, 134<sup>40</sup>, February 28, 138<sup>41</sup>, April 7, 145<sup>42</sup>, AD 145-146<sup>43</sup>, 146<sup>44</sup>, October 11, 146<sup>45</sup> and AD 147<sup>46</sup>.

It was garrisoned at *Sexaginta Prista*, where emerge stamped bricks with its name: *Coh(ors) II M(attiatorum)*<sup>47</sup>, but also two *miliarii* from 144<sup>48</sup>. From there it was transferred to *Sostra* (Lomet), being replaced by *cohors II Flavia Brittonum* (likely from *Durostorum*), the latter attested by two milestones of 162-164<sup>49</sup>, then in AD 230 during the reconstruction of the baths<sup>50</sup> and later in 273-275<sup>51</sup>.

Of particular importance to the unit's history is the fragmentary diploma issued for a soldier in *cohors II Mattiactorum* discovered at "Kalugerskoto", a *vicus* nearby the *castellum* of *Sostra* (see *supra*). Although fragmentary, it could be dated with precision on October 11, 146 based on the name of the mentioned consuls and phrase "*a(n)te d(i)em V Id(us) Oct(obres)*". Undoubtedly, the record of numeral "III" is an error.

It is also attested at *Sostra* on an inscription<sup>52</sup> set up on the base of an imperial statue erected during the fourth assumption of consular power by emperor Antoninus Pius, thus from 145 until the end of his reign, in 161, and subsequently, on a second statue base, this time dated with certainty to 20 July 198<sup>53</sup>. Therefore, the unit was likely present in the fort of *Sostra* in the interval between Antoninus Pius (138-161) and Septimius Severus (193-211) without interruption.

It is mentioned in Thrace on the diploma of March 10, 155, recording its prefect *Antonius Annianus*. It remains there for a few decades (?), being attested by diplomas issued between 155-169: March 10, 155<sup>54</sup>, April 23, 157<sup>55</sup>, AD 161-162<sup>56</sup>, AD 166-168<sup>57</sup>, AD 166-169<sup>58</sup> and 167-169<sup>59</sup>.

<sup>33</sup> RMD, IV, 222.

<sup>34</sup> KELLNER 1985, 239-243 (= *AE*, 1985, 700 = RMD, II, 85).

<sup>35</sup> ECK/PANGERL 2009, 522-524, no. 6.

<sup>36</sup> ECK/PANGERL 2009, 530-533, no. 8.

<sup>37</sup> ECK/PANGERL 2009, 533-537, no. 9.

<sup>38</sup> ROXAN/ECK 1997, 193-203 (= *AE*, 1997, 1772 = RMD, IV, 235). Also see ECK/PANGERL 2009, 537-541, no. 10-11; ECK/PANGERL 2014, 245-249.

<sup>39</sup> ROXAN 1997, 287-299 (= *AE*, 1997, 1780 = RMD, IV, 241).

<sup>40</sup> CIL, XVI, 78.

<sup>41</sup> *AE*, 1900, 26 = CIL, XVI, 83 = *AE*, 1900, 56-57.

<sup>42</sup> RMD, III, 165; TORBATOV 1991, 23-27; TORBATOV 1994, 159-167, pl. 1 u. 2; WEISS 2001, 261-262 (= RMD, V, 399); WEISS 2008, 314-316, no. 16. *AE*, 1991, 1380; *AE*, 1994, 1528; *AE*, 2001, 1729; *AE*, 2008, 1190.

<sup>43</sup> WEISS 1999, 279-286 (= *AE*, 1999, 1359 = RMD, IV, 270).

<sup>44</sup> PETOLESCU/POPESCU 2007, 149-151, no. 2, fig. 2 (= *AE*, 2007, 1233).

<sup>45</sup> ECK/HOLDER/PANGERL/WEISS 2015, 222-230; HRISTOV/STOEV 2016, 309-320.

<sup>46</sup> WEISS 2008, 307-309, no. 13.

<sup>47</sup> DEČEV 1940, 120, fig. 3 (= *AE*, 1944, 4).

<sup>48</sup> *AE*, 1900, 18 = CIL, III, 762; *AE*, 1916, 65.

<sup>49</sup> *AE*, 1915, 137-138.

<sup>50</sup> CIL, III, 7473

<sup>51</sup> *AE*, 1915, 139.

<sup>52</sup> HRISTOV/KITOV/IVANOVA/BINEV 2003, 31-33.

<sup>53</sup> *AE*, 1902, 125 = CIL, III, 14428 = ILS, 8915 = ILB, 260 (July 20, 198).

<sup>54</sup> *AE*, 2004, 1907.

<sup>55</sup> *AE*, 1998, 1627 = RMD, 417.

<sup>56</sup> *AE*, 1998, 1623 = RMD, 435.

<sup>57</sup> *AE*, 1998, 1625 = RMD, 440.

<sup>58</sup> *AE*, 1998, 1622 = RMD, 439.

<sup>59</sup> *AE*, 1998, 1626 = RMD 441.

## THE UNIT'S SOLDIERS

During the unit's stationing Moesia inferior, few mentions were preserved about the soldiers who joined *cohors II Mattiactorum*. For a certain *Capito*, possibly associated with the unit on an extremely fragmentary epigraph discovered at *Sexaginta Prista*<sup>60</sup> no additional data are available, not even chronological. We "know" *Clagissa*, son to *Clagissa*, of Thracian origin, former pedestrian recorded by the diploma of Târnovo<sup>61</sup> (AD 138), *L. Spurennius Rufus - bucinator cohortis* owing to the inscription of Obedinenie in the territory of *Nicopolis ad Istrum*<sup>62</sup> (unfortunately, without dating elements; the lack of the numeral in the unit's title may suggest an early dating to the Flavian period !?) and *T. Flavius Lupus*, originally from *Medessa* (writing error for *Edessa?*), mentioned in the diploma from *Sostra*<sup>63</sup> (October 11, 146). As for the latter, we note he bears the *nomina gentilica*, a specific feature of the newly "Romanized" especially from the Danubian and African provinces of the empire<sup>64</sup>.

The epigraphic documents preserve the names of five commanders. In chronological order, these include the attestation from the Flavian or perhaps early Trajan period of *L. Clodius Ingennus - praefectus* in the inscription from *Praeneste*<sup>65</sup> (noteworthy, even in this case the unit's numeral is missing from its title); then, *T. Flavius Laco* named in the diploma of Târnovo (February 28, 138) and *P. Aelius Alexander*, a native of *Ancyra* in *Galatia*, mentioned in the diploma of *Sostra* (October 11, 146), likely prefects, insofar as the cohort became *miliaria* only after having left the garrison at *Sexaginta Prista*<sup>66</sup>; then, *T. Aurelius Aquila* - tribune of the cohort - attested by the inscription of *Sostra* (AD 198) and lastly, a certain *Faustinianus*, son to *Marcus* - former tribune of the cohort - recorded by the inscription from *Carnuntum*<sup>67</sup> (August 23, 219) at a time when he was already decurion of the colonies of *Savaria* and *Carnuntum*.

For the stationing period in Thrace, the diploma of March 10, 155<sup>68</sup> mentions an *ex pedite*, *Aelius Batonis f. Dassius, Pannonicus*, recruited around AD 130 (hence he would have been in service for quite a while during the unit's stationing in Moesia inferior) and the unit's prefect of the time, a certain *Antonius Annianus*.

Incomplete information is provided by a funerary monument discovered at *Bisanthe* (today near Tekirdağ in Turkey), set up for *Aurelius Diophanes* by his comrade *Aurelius Martialis - miles cohortis Mattiactorum* and dated to the 3rd century AD (more likely the second half, based on palaeographic details)<sup>69</sup>. In any case, the band was *equitata*,

<sup>60</sup> ŠKORPIL/ŠKORPIL 1892, 221, no. 116 (= CIL, III, 12449): [D(is)?] M(anibus?) / [---] Capito [---?] / [coh(ortis)?] II Matti[a]c(or)um(?) / [---]?

<sup>61</sup> *AE*, 1900, 26 = CIL, XVI, 83 = *AE*, 1900, 56-57.

<sup>62</sup> *AE*, 1892, 109 = CIL, III, 12437 = ILB, 395; CONRAD 2004, 214-215, no. 328; taf. 81/3 (with a proposal to date the inscription in the third century A.D.) and АЛЕКСАНДРОВОБ 2013, 80-81 (with discussions about *L. Spurennius Rufus*'s ethnicity).

<sup>63</sup> ECK/HOLDER/PANGERL/WEISS 2015, 222-230; HRISTOV/STOEV 2016, 309-320.

<sup>64</sup> ALFÖLDY 1969, 38-39.

<sup>65</sup> CIL, VI, 37274 = *AE*, 1906, 104.

<sup>66</sup> TORBATOV 2012, 120.

<sup>67</sup> *AE*, 1968, 422.

<sup>68</sup> *AE*, 2004, 1907.

<sup>69</sup> SAYAR 2005, 343-345 (= *AE*, 2005, 1370).

the two soldiers being part of the same *turma*.

## HISTORY

Apparently, the unit was raised beginning with the Flavian period, subsequent to the revolt of the Batavi (AD 69-70), from a demographic area comprised between rivers Lahn, Main and Rhine. As shown, its record by the inscription from *Appiaria* is hypothetical, however it could be a first attestation as early as AD 76<sup>70</sup>. It is mentioned with certainty on the diploma of February 7, 78, without yet being able to know if it was *cohors prima* or *secunda*<sup>71</sup>. Most likely from the same period (or possibly early Trajan's reign?), a *praef(ecto) coh(ortis) / Mattiacor(um)* is recorded on an inscription discovered at Praeneste (in Italy)<sup>72</sup>; so, whatever it was, either *prima* or *secunda*, it was *quingenaria*.

The lack of the numeral in the title of the auxiliary unit (due either to the lapicide's error or the fragmentary preservation of the epigraphic document) gave rise to passionate debates, which, we believe, will not provide additional information until a new decisive find. Spaul<sup>73</sup>, for instance, was convinced this was one and the same unit and treated it as such. Of course, there is neither evidence in this respect, as recently underlined by Whately<sup>74</sup>, however, we dare say, nor to the contrary, since the available written sources are not quite convincing. In any case, Wagner<sup>75</sup> and Kraft's<sup>76</sup> suggestions on the evolution of *cohors II Mattiacorum* from that *cohors Mattiacorum* of which *L. Spurennius Rufus - bucinator* and *L. Clodius Ingenuus - praef(ectus)* formed part early in its history, seems plausible and justifies the presence of the second, distinctive numeral. However, if these are different units, considering that once with the last decade of the 1st century AD only *cohors II Mattiacorum* is recorded, what happened to that *cohors [?] Mattiacorum*? The single explanation for its disappearance might be related to its association with the disasters suffered by *Oppius Sabinus* or *Cornelius Fuscus* in AD 85-86 before the Dacians and their allies. In this context, the destruction of the original cohort justifies the establishment of the second.

The first time it appears on the "history's stage" - and, we believe, one of the plausible reasons why it was (re) established under the new title of *cohors II Mattiacorum* is the expedition against the Sarmatians undertaken by emperor Domitian in AD 92<sup>77</sup>; thus, the diploma of AD 93-95 seems to record precisely the units drawn together from the two Moesias for the Pannonian campaign<sup>78</sup>.

After the division of the province, it would remain in Moesia inferior until mid 2nd century AD, ever-present on

military diplomas, which record it there during AD 93 (95?) - 147. Available data for the first period of the unit's operation are relatively numerous, but not always eloquent for the reconstruction of its history.

According to Strobel<sup>79</sup>, the unit was involved in the two Dacian wars, manoeuvring in the north-eastern part of Dobrudja and past the Danube in the Siret valley area (in any case, it left no recognizable traces<sup>80</sup>) and, in this scenario, after *Dacia devicta est*, it remains in garrison at *Dinogetia*<sup>81</sup> and Barboși<sup>82</sup>, flanking the Danube's crossing area. In both locations, it is also involved in building activities, leaving epigraphic evidence, unfortunately impossible to restrict chronologically (all widely dated over the course of the 2nd century AD). Attempts to place there *cohors II Mattiacorum* only from, or after mid 2nd century AD<sup>83</sup> are, first of all, in contradiction with its attestations at *Sexaginta Prista* (Ruse) and *Sostra* (Lomet) - and, in general, without arguments due exclusively to the automatic adoption of the information thus "accustomed" in the historiography of the matter, hence, the suggestion of its presence at Barboși-*Dinogetia* in the first part of the 2nd century AD, or at least for the time being, in any case prior to 144/145 should be used.

At Barboși, several rectangular "tiles" were discovered, bearing the *coh(ors) II Matt(iacorum)* stamp, applied in the negative. It is by far the most recorded unit there - perhaps also further evidence of a longer term stationing in southern Moldavia, however, we believe rather, the consequence of its involvement in many building activities. Pârvan's excavations<sup>84</sup> resulted in the find of a specimen, those of Ștefan<sup>85</sup> with the identification of seven *tegulae* (out of three only *COH* survived), of Gostar<sup>86</sup> with "an appreciable number" and those of Sanie's (et al.) with 35 examples<sup>87</sup>, respectively 16 (selectively published out of the 60 available to him)<sup>88</sup>. There is no further information regarding the context of their find, except they emerged among the "finds from the oldest Roman level"<sup>89</sup>, yet this detail is important in order to establish the cohort's early presence in the south of the Danube, as Pârvan theorized more than a century ago<sup>90</sup>. Amendments to and detailing of the chronology of

<sup>79</sup> STROBEL 1984, 139.

<sup>80</sup> MATEI-POPESCU/ȚENȚEA 2006, 75-120.

<sup>81</sup> ISM, V, 260, 267.

<sup>82</sup> ISM, V, 306 = CIL, III, 07620 = CIL, III, 00785, 2; AÉ, 1975, 739; AÉ, 1974, 562b.

<sup>83</sup> RADNOTI 1959, 149; GOSTAR 1967, 110, 112; ZAHARIADE/GUDEA 1997, 80-81, no. 48(14); KARAVAS 2001, 121 and table 3; GUDEA 2005, 455-457, no. III.48 (the presence of the cohort *post* 167).

<sup>84</sup> PÂRVAN 1913, 114.

<sup>85</sup> ȘTEFAN 1938, 345, fig. 4/17 (= AÉ, 1939, 84 = CIL, III, 7620 = CIL, III, 785, 2).

<sup>86</sup> GOSTAR 1962, 508.

<sup>87</sup> SANIE/Dragomir/Sanie 1975, 190, fig. 1/3 (= AÉ, 1975, 739; AÉ, 1974, 562b).

<sup>88</sup> SANIE 1996, 143-144, fig. 9/2, 4-8; 11.

<sup>89</sup> SANIE 1981, 80. See also GOSTAR 1967, 108-109; SANIE 1996, 144: "at Barboși, the stamps with the smallest letters were found in the oldest level".

<sup>90</sup> PÂRVAN 1913, 115; similar views also at CANTACUZINO 1928, 65; VULPE 1938, 126, 159-162, 246; the same early dating of the presence of the military unit at Barboși also at WAGNER 1938, 165, who is convinced that at the latest in 113 the cohort was stationed in southern Moldavia. For the same chronology see also the original epigraphic interpretations at TUDOR 1953, 476-477, who appreciates that veterans *Marcus Antonius* and *T. Flavius...*, recruited during consuls *Largus* and *Messallinus* (year 147) and thus released in 172-173 (= CIL, III, 7515 = ISM, V, 295), belong to *legio V*

<sup>70</sup> BEŠEVLIJEV 1952, 71-72, no. 122 (= AÉ, 1957, 307).

<sup>71</sup> CIL, XVI, 22; AÉ, 1925, 67; ECK/PANGERL 2010, 237-243.

<sup>72</sup> CIL, VI, 37274 = AÉ, 1906, 0104.

<sup>73</sup> SPAUL 2000, 243-244.

<sup>74</sup> WHATELY 2005, 28-29.

<sup>75</sup> WAGNER 1938, 164-165.

<sup>76</sup> KRAFT 1951, 180.

<sup>77</sup> STROBEL, 99-104. For the results of this campaign the emperor received an *ovatio* (Martial, VIII, 8, 5).

<sup>78</sup> PETOLESCU 2014, 71-76. (In the restoration suggested by the Romanian epigraphist, cohort II *Mattiacorum* appears as *miliaria*. If this is correct, then it is the first record of the unit's strength, which lowers the dating of the inscription from *Praeneste* attesting a *praef(ecto) coh(ortis) / Mattiacor(um)* and for which the diploma from 93 (95?) becomes a *terminus ante quem*).

the Roman complexes at Barboși<sup>91</sup> are also indicative of the unit's early presence there. Discussions concerning the size of the fortification that might have accommodated a *cohors quingenaria* are useless<sup>92</sup> in this context; no such information exists about the fort on the Tirighina hill and we do not believe they would ever be recovered; in addition, surprises about military installations in the area continue to emerge, with recent research eloquently suggesting the presence of forts<sup>93</sup> within the territory enclosed by the earthen rampart between the places at Traian and Tulucești (Galați county)<sup>94</sup>, so that the camping area increases significantly.

Stamps of the same type, applied retrograde (negatively) on rectangular bricks also appeared in *Dinogetia*, nearby and therefore associated in the historiography of the issue with a tile firing kiln, dated with coins during the Tetrarchy, yet these would only mark the date of its disuse, after having been operational during the 2nd – 3rd centuries AD, as evidenced by “the 5-6 clay coating layers covering its walls”<sup>95</sup>. A stamped fragmentary brick appeared in the area in 1949<sup>96</sup>, another in 1956<sup>97</sup> (in fact, the chance, successive find of these *tegulae* led to the survey which identified the kiln) and later another<sup>98</sup> evidence, we believe, of a present still unidentified military facility and not the “firing” of the stamped tiles in respective kiln, as seems to be suggested at first sight. The lack of certain dating elements of the remains left by *cohors II Mattiacorum* was synonymous with the adoption of hypotheses of its presence on the left bank, at Barboși (see *supra*), the authors of the archaeological research choosing the early arrival of the auxiliary unit at *Dinogetia*, from the beginning of the 2nd century AD.

Lastly, for the issue at hand, worthy of note is a pottery fragment, unfortunately lost today, on which a soldier had written his wish: “*Demitte me / mil(item) coh(ortis) II [Mattiacorum?]*”<sup>99</sup>.

Therefore, *cohors II Mattiacorum* seems to have arrived in the area (perhaps transferred even from *Sexaginta Prista* or *Appiaria*?) within the context of emperor Trajan's expeditions, and stationed at *Dinogetia*. After the province organization, it would remain in Dacia at Barboși where it would substantially contribute in stone construction of

*Macedonica*, arrived in the garrison from Barboși precisely to replace *cohors II Mattiacorum*, which left towards mid 2nd century AD; see for further discussions CROITORU 2004a, 159-172; also see MATEI-POPESCU 2010, 223 to whom it seems very likely that the unit was stationed at Barboși and *Dinogetia* “as early as its beginnings”).

<sup>91</sup> PETCULESCU 1982, 251.

<sup>92</sup> See GOSTAR 1967, 110-111 with an ingenious attempt to explain the presence of only a section of the cohort that would have been “detached” to Barboși, where it would have been placed under the command of a centurion of *legio V Macedonica*, with the suggestion of the analogy from *Tyras*: „-----] *Falco*[---] / *vexil(lation*---) *II* [---] / *sub cura* [---] / *leg(ionis) V Ma[cedonicae* ---]”, according to NICORESCU, 1937, 218 (= *AĖ*, 1934, 112). ȚENȚEA/ RAȚIU 2015, 189-270.

<sup>93</sup> ȚENȚEA/OLTEAN 2009, 1515-1524; ȚENȚEA 2016, 127-136. For a synthetic presentation of the latest archaeological discoveries in Dobrogea, see ȚENȚEA *et alii* 2019, 9-82.

<sup>94</sup> CROITORU 2004b, 80-89; CROITORU 2016, 209-219.

<sup>95</sup> ȘTEFAN 1957, 339-345. For an earlier chronology suggestion see SUCEVEANU 1969, 358, note 92.

<sup>96</sup> ȘTEFAN 1949, 132-133.

<sup>97</sup> ȘTEFAN 1957, 339. See also ȘTEFAN 1958, 324.

<sup>98</sup> BARNEA 1974, 111, fig. 5/6.

<sup>99</sup> ȘTEFAN 1949, 133; ȘTEFAN 1958, 324 (= *ISM*, V, 267).

the fortification on Tirighina hill (the stone carried across the Danube from Dobrudja is indirect evidence of the early presence in the area of the auxiliaries from *classis Flavia Moesica*). Although quartered at Barboși, it would send detachments to the forts and towers supporting the linear fortification between Traian and Tulucești. Though finds to this effect are missing for the time being, it is not excluded that in the future its presence would be documented even in the fortification of *Aliobrix* (Cartal)<sup>100</sup>, strategically similar and where, except for it, all the other military units stationed at Barboși<sup>101</sup> were also recorded, evidence of the unitary vision of the imperial administration in this area.

It is impossible to say when it was transferred to the garrison at *Sexaginta Prista* (placing the unit there from the time of the Flavians<sup>102</sup> relied on the dedication set up for Domitianus nearby, at *Appiaria*<sup>103</sup>, but in which the unit's name was restored only presumably), where stamped bricks with its name also appear<sup>104</sup>, but also two milestones from 144<sup>105</sup>. The last record of the unit in this garrison dates from AD 145<sup>106</sup>, nonetheless, as shown, the last diploma of *Moesia inferior* places it within the province until AD 146.

From there it was displaced to *Thracia*, being replaced at *Sexaginta Prista* by *cohors II Flavia Brittonum*. Likely from this period, subsequent or concurrent with the transfer, as Birley suggested<sup>107</sup>, it became *milliaria* (however, for this matter the restoration of *milliaria* on the diploma of AD 93<sup>108</sup> should be also considered); regardless, the *Sostra* inscription<sup>109</sup>, of 198, records its tribune, alike that of *Carnuntum*<sup>110</sup> (in *Pannonia superior*) already in August 23, 219, which also documents a *trib(unus) coh(ortis)* of the unit which is then (*miliariae*) *eq(uitatae)*.

Most likely, the unit's presence in the fort of *Sostra* (Lomet) was uninterrupted during the time span between Antoninus Pius (138-161) and Septimius Severus (193-211), its episodic mention on the diplomas for Thrace being, according to Rossignol's argument, the result of a temporary re-tracing of the border between the two provinces<sup>111</sup>. In any case, the unit's pertaining to the army of Thrace was also linked to a possible exchange of troops with *cohors I Cispadensium*<sup>112</sup>, unit whose evolution has many gaps as well. After the province's division, it would be stationed in *Moesia superior*, where it is recorded by the diplomas of

<sup>100</sup> GOSTAR 1967a, 987-995.

<sup>101</sup> More recently see GUDEA 2005, 459-460, nr. IV.51, with literature.

<sup>102</sup> SPAUL 2000, 244; KARAVAS 2001, 131. Also see MATEI-POPESCU 2010, 223 who hypothetically places the unit at *Sexaginta Prista* after the Dacian wars.

<sup>103</sup> BEȘEVLIIEV 1952, 71-72, no. 122 (= *AĖ*, 1957, 307).

<sup>104</sup> DEČEV 1940, 120, fig. 3 (= *AĖ*, 1944, 4): *Coh(ors) II M(attiacorum)*.

<sup>105</sup> *AĖ*, 1900, 18 = *CIL*, III, 762; *AĖ*, 1916, 65.

<sup>106</sup> TORBATOV 2012, 133-143.

<sup>107</sup> BIRLEY 1966, 65, no. 8, n. 10 (= BIRLEY 1988, 361-362, no. 8).

<sup>108</sup> See *supra* note 73.

<sup>109</sup> *CIL*, III, 14428 = *ILS*, 8915 = *ILB*, 260; SEURE 1915, 178-181, no. 136; fig. 47 (= *AĖ*, 1916, 65).

<sup>110</sup> *AĖ*, 1968, 422.

<sup>111</sup> ROSSIGNOL, p. 25. Same idea at MATEI-POPESCU 2002, 220. For the position of the *Sostra* fortification in relation with the borders of Thrace see GEROV 1979, 220-221. Also see TACHEVA 1995, 427-434; BOTEVA 1996, 173-176.

<sup>112</sup> MATEI-POPESCU 2010, 223. In fact, transfers between Thracian and *Moesia inferior* garrisons seem to be a common fact, see, e.g. HOLDER 2003, 104.

September 16, 94<sup>113</sup> and May 8, 100<sup>114</sup>. After the Dacian wars it was deployed during the Parthian campaign and nothing would be known about its fate until 138 when it was recorded again among the troops of the Thracian army<sup>115</sup>. Later it is transferred to Moesia inferior where it is documented by the diploma of around AD 155<sup>116</sup>. It would remain there until mid 3rd century AD, under the reigns of Maximinus Thracicus (with epithet *Maximiana*)<sup>117</sup> and Gordian III (with epithet *Gordiana*)<sup>118</sup>, accommodated in the *Sostra* fort.

Returning to the unit of interest here, we also note that, according to Dubois<sup>119</sup>, it would have been one of the elite units of the Roman army, together with the *Lanciarii* representing the “last stronghold” of the emperor’s protection; thus, being involved in the disaster near Adrianople (AD 378), resulting including with the disappearance of Valens (363-378).

The record in the *Notitia Dignitatum* of certain *Mattiaci seniores*, respectively *iuniores* within *Auxilia palatina*<sup>120</sup> is rather interesting.

## CONCLUSIONS

Although much of what could be summarized here as conclusions remains until new, more eloquent finds, mere working hypotheses, we believe that the evolution of the auxiliary unit *cohors II Mattiacorum* may be restored with somewhat precision on the basis of the currently available documentary material. Obviously, any new epigraphic find might confirm or nuance what we know for now. The unit’s evolution spans over more than one century, from the last quarter of the 1st century AD to the end of the 2nd century, leaving more consistent remains in Barboși and *Dinogetia*, *Sexaginta Prista* and *Sostra*. The names of certain soldiers and also some of the unit’s commanders are known, the unit being, somewhere midway its existence (?), transformed into a *miliaria*.

There is no information on the disappearance or evolution of the unit in the 3rd century AD, which makes impossible any connection between the cohort here and those *Mattiaci seniores*, respectively *iuniores* from the 4th century, which seem rather to be new units.

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<sup>113</sup> *CIL*, XVI, 39. See also *RMD*, V, 335.

<sup>114</sup> *CIL*, XVI, 46. See also ECK, PANGERL 2008, 326-329, no. 1.

<sup>115</sup> *RMD*, V, 385/260.

<sup>116</sup> WEISS 2001, 262-265 = *RMD*, V, 414.

<sup>117</sup> *AE*, 1902, 126 = *CIL*, III, 14429 = *ILB*, 261.

<sup>118</sup> *AE*, 1902, 127 = *CIL*, III, 14430 = *ILB*, 262.

<sup>119</sup> DUBOIS 2015, 118 (confusion with *matiarum*?). See also 120-121).

<sup>120</sup> *Notitia Dignitatum*, *In partibus occidentis*. Also see those *numerus Mattiacorum seniorum* (*CIL*, V, 8737; 8739) and *numerus Mattiacorum iuniorum* (*CIL*, V, 8744; 8751) from Concordia mentioned above.

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#### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- AE  
*L'Année épigraphique*. Revue des publications épigraphiques relatives à l'antiquité romaine, Paris, 1988-.
- CIL, III  
Th. Mommsen, *Inscriptiones Asiae, provinciarum Europae Graecarum, Illyrici Latinae*, Berlin, 1873-1902.
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- ILS  
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