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# CAMP DRESS OR PARADE ARMOUR? AN EQUESTRIAN OFFICER COMMEMORATED ON A FUNERARY RELIEF FROM BRÂNCOVENEȘTI

**Dávid PETRUȚ**

Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Romania  
petrutdavid@gmail.com

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**Abstract:** Research undertaken in the past 35 years has shown that the depiction of soldiers in muscle cuirass (*lorica, thorax*), *pteruges* and *paludamentum* (in addition to other elements), is linked to the funerary commemoration of equestrian individuals who either fulfilled one or more posts within the *militia equestris* at one point during their lives or died while holding such a position. These members of the equestrian order chose to be commemorated in this way out of the desire to emphasize their service and devotion to the state and to the emperor himself *domi militiaeque* i.e. ‘home and abroad’. As such, these monuments are important sources for the social history of the Roman world and implicitly Roman Dacia, even if they are detached from their original epitaph, the commemorated persons retaining their anonymity. One of the most intriguing examples of full body armour representations from Roman Dacia comes from Brâncovenești in Mureș County (Hu: Marosvécs). Even though a detailed description of the relief was published over 30 years ago, apart from some elusive hints to its significance, and despite the numerous interesting questions it poses, no comprehensive analysis has been undertaken so far. The present paper intends to do justice to the relief from Brâncovenești by giving a long overdue detailed analysis of the piece.

**Keywords:** *Roman Dacia, limes, funerary commemoration, auxiliary fort, equestrian officer.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The armoured portrayal of soldiers on the funerary monuments of Roman Dacia is quite rare, indeed in most cases the members of the military chose to be represented wearing either the hooded cape (*paenula*) or the so-called military cloak (*sagum*),<sup>1</sup> thus making it hard for the modern onlooker to recognize these images for what they really are. The portrayal of soldiers clad in tunic and cloak, either unarmed or only with a sword hanging from their belt was intended to convey the picture of fellow citizen and familyman rather than that of battle-hardened warrior.<sup>2</sup> V. M. Hope showed for instance that the tradition of family representation within the rank and file of the military

<sup>1</sup> ȚEPOSU-MARINESCU 1982, 53–54; CIONGRADI 2007, 117–118. For statuary representations see DIACONESCU 2005, vol. 1, 128–129; DIACONESCU 2012; GUI/PETRUȚ 2018.

<sup>2</sup> SPEIDEL 2009, 237. On the significance of the military belt and baldric in the representation and commemoration of soldiers see GUI 2018, 265–266.

dated well before the legal right to join in matrimony was granted en masse to active soldiers.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore the fragmentary state of these depictions as well as their separation from the epitaphs which accompanied them, has a highly distorting effect on the message these monuments originally expressed to the viewer in antiquity.<sup>4</sup> As mentioned above, there are just a handful of funerary reliefs and statues of armoured soldiers in the province,<sup>5</sup> indeed throughout the empire their numbers have declined drastically following the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, being mostly replaced by unarmoured representations. Within this category the group of so-called ‘Ringschnallencingulum-reliefs’ or ‘ring-buckle gravestones’ starting roughly from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, have received most attention in the archaeological literature.<sup>6</sup>

Research undertaken in the past 35 years has shown that the depiction of soldiers in muscle cuirass (*lorica, thorax*), *pteruges* and *paludamentum* (in addition to other elements, see below), is linked to the funerary commemoration of equestrian individuals who either fulfilled one or more posts within the *militia equestris* at one point during their lives, or died while holding such a position.<sup>7</sup> These members of the equestrian order chose to be commemorated in this way out of the desire to emphasize their service and devotion to the state and to the emperor himself *domi militiaeque* i.e. ‘home and abroad’.<sup>8</sup> As such, these monuments are important sources for the social history of the Roman world and implicitly Roman Dacia, even if they are detached from their original epitaph, the commemorated persons retaining their anonymity.

One of the most intriguing examples of full body armour representations from Roman Dacia comes from Brâncovenesti (Fig. 1) in Mureş County (Hu: Marosvécs). Even though a detailed description of the relief was published over 30 years ago,<sup>9</sup> apart from some elusive hints to its significance,<sup>10</sup> and despite the numerous interesting questions it poses, no comprehensive analysis has been undertaken so far. A short analysis of the relief was however included some years ago in a general survey concerning the iconographical programmes employed on the funerary monuments of soldiers in Roman Dacia.<sup>11</sup> The present paper

intends to do justice to the relief from Brâncovenesti by giving a long overdue detailed analysis of the piece.

## 2. THE DISCOVERY OF THE RELIEF

The auxiliary fort at Brâncovenesti (Hu: Marosvécs) situated on the eastern limes of Roman Dacia was constructed on a high terrace of the Mureş River and was meant to oversee the Deda pass.<sup>12</sup> Based on the evidence of the tile stamps and stone inscriptions, the fort was garrisoned by a certain *ala I Numeri Illyricorum*, a cavalry unit recruited in the area of Roman Dalmatia.<sup>13</sup>

The relief in question originally serving as the hind wall of an *aedicula* and as such wielding the representation of the deceased, was discovered in 1970 during the excavations conducted by D. Protase and A. Zrínyi in the area of the western defences of the fort.<sup>14</sup> It was reused as building material after being broken down to size and employed for mending operations to the defensive wall. According to the account of the excavators it was found collapsed face down on the berm, in the vicinity of the *porta decumana*.<sup>15</sup> Several other fragments of funerary monuments (52 in total) were discovered in the area during the aforementioned excavations carried out between 1970 and 1973,<sup>16</sup> which suggests that either major repair works were undertaken at the rear gate of the fort, or indeed the constructors proceeded to block the *porta decumana* for some reason. The use of local funerary monuments as construction material suggests that the intervention occurred in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, possibly around the middle or the second part of the century.<sup>17</sup>

## 3. DESCRIPTION AND DISCUSSION

Only the upper half of the relief has survived the process of recycling, while the lower part of the originally full-figure image has been lost (Fig. 2). The *aedicula* wall depicts a soldier in an elaborate posture with his left hand on the grip of his sword and his right palm raised towards the viewer. The height of the preserved fragment is 70 cm, while the original height was estimated at ca. 160 cm,<sup>18</sup> thus accounting for probably a life-size (or nearly life-size) depiction of the individual. The relief is 86 cm wide, 17 cm thick, and was carved from local volcanic tufa, being currently kept at the Mureş County Museum in Târgu Mureş (Archaeological collection, inventory no.: 6580). Red dye is clearly visible on different portions of the piece, mainly on the baldric and the hilt of the sword (Fig. 3). The figure was executed in high relief, with

nately, the respective volume was never actually published as such, the cited paper has remained a manuscript until now. The original version of the paper was supported by a grant from the National Authority for Scientific Research: CNCS-UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-ID-PCE-2012-4-0618.

<sup>12</sup> See PÁNCZÉL *et alii* 2012; MATEI-POPESCU/ȚENȚEA 2016, 9–10.

<sup>13</sup> MARCU 2009, 119–120; MATEI-POPESCU/ȚENȚEA 2016, 9–10.

<sup>14</sup> PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1975, 58–62, Pl. XXIX/4; PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1992, 102, Nr. 19, Pl. IX/4; PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1994a, 42–43, Nr. 19, Pl. XLVII/4; PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1994b, 116–117, Nr. 19, Pl. XLVII/4.

<sup>15</sup> PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1992, 102; PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1994a, 43; PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1994b, 117.

<sup>16</sup> See PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1992.

<sup>17</sup> See MATEI-POPESCU/ȚENȚEA 2016, 9.

<sup>18</sup> PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1992, 102; PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1994a, 42–43; PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1994b, 116–117.

<sup>3</sup> HOPE 1997, 256.

<sup>4</sup> DEVIJVER 1989, 416–417.

<sup>5</sup> See CIONGRADI 2007, 231, Sc/A5, Taf. 85 a–b; 213, Pf/M3, Taf. 69 1–b; 216–217, Ae/A7; DIACONESCU 2005, vol. 2, Nr. 42, Pl. XXV; Nr. 44, Pl. XXVI/1; Nr. 43, Pl. XXVI/2; Nr. 19, Pl. XXVI/3; Nr. 52, Pl. XXVII; DIACONESCU 2012, 146–153; GUI/PETRUȚ 2018, 116–128.

<sup>6</sup> BISHOP/COULSTON 2006, 10–11; COULSTON 2007, *passim*. For examples from Dacia, see DIACONESCU 2005, vol. 2, Nr. 21, Pl. XXVIII/2; Nr. 54, Pl. XXVIII/3; Nr. 45, Pl. XXIX/1; Nr. 46, Pl. XXIX/; see also DIACONESCU 2012, 153–157; GUI 2015, *passim*; GUI/PETRUȚ 2018, 128–130.

<sup>7</sup> See DEVIJVER 1989, 422.

<sup>8</sup> DAVENPORT 2019, 295–298.

<sup>9</sup> PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1992, 102. The paper was later included *en masse* in the monographic study published in 1994 in two separate issues (PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1994a and PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1994b). With regard to the sculptural monuments the contents of the three papers are essentially identical. A photo of the piece was previously published in a report, albeit with no description or analysis, see PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1975, Pl. XXIX/4 (for the German version see PROTASE 1977, 384, Taf. 38).

<sup>10</sup> See DIACONESCU 2005, vol. 2, Pl. LXIII/2; DIACONESCU 2012, 151, Fig. 28a.

<sup>11</sup> See GUI/PETRUȚ 2018. An early version of the present paper was due to be published in 2015, as such it was referenced as ‘forthcoming’ in GUI/PETRUȚ 2018 as PETRUȚ 2015 (with a slightly different title). Unfortun-

a quite accurate treatment of proportions and details. There is some damage to the right hand, especially the fingers while the face was subsequently carved off, nonetheless the general state of preservation can be described as relatively good.

The individual is wearing a thick cloak fastened on his right shoulder with a T-shaped brooch, covering completely his left shoulder and partially his torso while hanging down from his left hand. The cloak in question can most likely be identified with a *sagum*, although the possibility that we might be dealing with a *paludamentum* cannot be ruled out entirely given the variety of ways this garment was represented on statues: most often around the shoulders (as in this case) or lying casually over one shoulder.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore the lower part of the clothing is missing and thus we cannot get a sense of its length. An even more intriguing question is: what is he wearing under the cloak? Indeed, this question is crucial to the understanding of the social and hierarchical implications of the image, although the apparent lack of any specific details renders the identification difficult. The most tempting choice would be the tunic, in which case the relief could be dismissed as an instance of the unarmoured standing soldier depictions (in ‘camp dress’) mentioned above. The main shortcoming in this case is the lack of folds on the torso which would normally indicate the presence of this garment especially given that the folds of the cloak are quite elaborately rendered. Furthermore, folds appear on the right shoulder and arm as well, but a careful look reveals that these are unconnected to the cloak and are likely to indicate *pteruges*. This detail was already suggested in the original publication.<sup>20</sup> All facts appear to indicate that the individual is wearing a muscle cuirass (*thorax, lorica*),<sup>21</sup> although some features which are normally consistent with cuirassed representations cannot be accounted for. First of all the lower end of the shoulder-straps should be visible beneath the line of the cloak on the right side. In this case they seem to be covered by the baldric, although there are instances where this detail is concealed by the surface of the cloak.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore the anatomical details of the cuirass have either faded due to the low quality of the stone (apart from a slight indication of the pectoral muscle on the portion which is not covered by the cloak), either their lack can be ascribed to the schematic treatment of this detail by the sculptor.<sup>23</sup> There is evidence that *pteruges* were also worn with scale armour (*lorica squamata*) by officers,<sup>24</sup> however in this case there is no indication of the intent to depict this type of armour. The figure from Brâncovenesti is portrayed with the ‘short cuirass’ worn usually by cavalrymen, as shown on the monument of T. Fl. Mikkalus from Perinthos.<sup>25</sup> In Dacia the short cuirass is depicted on a fragmentary marble statue from Ulpia Traiana

Sarmizegetusa (Fig. 4).<sup>26</sup> The parallels with the aforementioned statue account for far-reaching and interesting conclusions, these will be discussed below.

A further intriguing aspect is the sword hanging from the baldric on the left side (Fig. 3). Only a portion of the hilt is visible, with a rather spectacular pommel shaped as an eagle protome. The details of the hilt but also the fastening system are very richly rendered. Considering the baldric, the position of the sword on the left side, and the fact that we are most likely dealing with a cavalryman, it is safe to say that the weapon depicted is a *spatha* rather than a *gladius*.<sup>27</sup> According to M. P. Speidel the so-called ‘eagle-head swords’ were part of the gala uniform of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century mounted troops.<sup>28</sup> Apart from being the occasional attribute of the god Mars on various representations,<sup>29</sup> depictions of the weapon occur on the 3<sup>rd</sup> century gravestones belonging to members of the Praetorian Guard from Rome,<sup>30</sup> on one of the Sassanid reliefs from Bishapur where such a sword is worn by a figure associated with the later emperor Philippus Arabs,<sup>31</sup> and on the 4<sup>th</sup> century porphyry statuary group displaying the Tetrarchs also known as the ‘Venice Tetrarchs’.<sup>32</sup> In view of the iconographic context (*lorica, pteruges*, etc.) there is also the possibility that the weapon is in fact a *parazonium*, the honorific long dagger exhibited occasionally by senior officers and emperors. While the *parazonium* would make sense in this context, literary evidence points to the fact that it was worn on the belt (*cingulum*) and not on the baldric,<sup>33</sup> therefore it appears safer to dismiss this hypothesis.

A final iconographical problem concerns the unusual feature depicted above the waist. The enigmatic feature could not be properly interpreted, the authors of the original publication suggesting that it might be an oversized semicircular decorative belt buckle (“*pafta masivă, semicirculară*”).<sup>34</sup> Apart from the total lack of analogies, the major shortcoming of this supposition is that oversized belt-buckles such as the ones represented on the *Ringschnallencingulum*-reliefs are normally not associated with cuirassed representations, appearing instead on unarmoured depictions of soldiers wearing tunic and *sagum*. A further possibility which might be taken into account is that of a very schematic and crude rendering of the abdominal muscles as part of the anatomical details on the cuirass. Even if this theory cannot be dismissed totally, it seems unlikely in view of the elaborate depiction of other details on the relief. It is also possible to interpret it as an allusion to embossed decoration of the cuirass as found on some more elaborate statues of emperors and high-ranking officers, which often include vegetal, volute and serpent motifs. However, a survey through the

<sup>19</sup> ROBINSON 1975, 149.

<sup>20</sup> PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1992, 102; PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1994a, 42; PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1994b, 116.

<sup>21</sup> PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1992, 102; PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1994a, 42; PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1994b, 116; DIACONESCU 2005, vol. 2, Pl. LXIII/2 (see the comment in the caption).

<sup>22</sup> See DIACONESCU 2005, vol. 2, Pl. XXVI/2.

<sup>23</sup> For similar situations on Trajan’s Column see D’AMATO/SUMNER 2009, 124, Figs. 145–148.

<sup>24</sup> ROBINSON 1975, 149, 156.

<sup>25</sup> ROBINSON 1975, 147; DEVIJVER 1989, 435–437, Fig. 9.

<sup>26</sup> ALICU *et alii* 1979, 127, No. 296, Pl. XLIX; DIACONESCU 2005, vol. 2, 61–62, Nr. 19, Pl. XXVI/3; DIACONESCU 2012, Cat. M, 20, Fig. 27.

<sup>27</sup> See the discussion in BISHOP/COULSTON 2006, 154–157.

<sup>28</sup> SPEIDEL 1994, 106–107, Fig. 7.

<sup>29</sup> MINA *et alii* 2004, 606–607.

<sup>30</sup> BISHOP/COULSTON 2006, 153, Fig. 94/2–4; COULSTON 2007, 550, Fig. 1.

<sup>31</sup> BISHOP/COULSTON 2006, 163, Fig. 103/3.

<sup>32</sup> See BISHOP/COULSTON 2006, 204, Fig. 129. For further analogies see MINA *et alii* 2004, 607.

<sup>33</sup> DEVIJVER 1989, 393. See also FISCHER 2012, 193.

<sup>34</sup> PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1992, 102; PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1994a, 42; PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1994b, 116.

few cuirassed statues of Roman Dacia reveals that none of them are represented with relief-ornamented cuirasses,<sup>35</sup> indeed usually only the more elaborate statues display the ornamented *lorica*.<sup>36</sup> It would be surprising thus to have this feature on a relief such as this one. A further possibility could be implied based on a cuirassed marble statue of an officer from *Celeia*.<sup>37</sup> The figure in question displays a semi-circular decorative feature above the waist which seems to be an upward projection of the *pteruges* (Fig. 5). One cannot ignore however that the ornament displayed on the statue from Noricum is considerably smaller than the one on the relief in question, making this association problematic. The most likely situation is that we might be dealing with a naive representation of the 'officers' sash' i.e. the *cinctorium*, represented on most cuirassed statues and reliefs as a badge reserved to high-ranking officers (see below). The source of confusion for the sculptor could be linked to the two parallel straps of the *cinctorium*. It seems very likely that he failed to illustrate the upper strap which holds the knot, this circumstance accounting for the semicircular shape of the feature. Additionally, we also need to take into account the effects of polychromy on the relief and how the combination between sculpted effects and dye would have rendered a different perspective of the image.

As far as the chronology of the relief is concerned, a number of features point to a 3<sup>rd</sup> century dating, possibly in the Severan period. This is suggested by the equipment and clothing of the soldier especially the *sagum* (or *paludamentum*) fastened with a T-shaped brooch and the sword hanging on the left side from a wide baldric.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore the suspension system of the sword, especially the *phalera* on the baldric which covers the scabbard slide is representative for 3<sup>rd</sup> century military equipment.<sup>39</sup> It has also been suggested that representations of eagle-head swords are only known from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century onward,<sup>40</sup> thus entering into use only after this period (see above). While it is certainly true that most known instances are dated after the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, this feature has been identified on much earlier reliefs as well, e.g. on the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD funerary altar of Q. Sulpicius Celsus from Rome, which displays a combination of cuirass and 'eagle-head sword'.<sup>41</sup> All in all the conjunction between the clothing, elements of the military equipment and the evidence provided by analogies indicate clearly a 3<sup>rd</sup> century dating.

#### 4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RELIEF

At the end of the discussion, we need to address a final important question. What message, if any, does the relief convey in terms of the identity and military rank of the deceased? With the epitaph gone, it is impossible to assert

anything with full certainty in this regard, however the interpretation of the iconography can lead us to some interesting assumptions. It is essential to keep in mind that the relief represents a cuirassed soldier in parade posture, and also that this type of representation has clear parallels among the funerary monuments of equestrian officers. These symbolic representations of heroic service to the empire allude usually to parades, which makes sense considering that besides war, battle, and perhaps training, these festive events were the only occasions for wearing the full body armour.<sup>42</sup> It is also interesting to note the occasional display of triumphal symbols and allusions, such as military decorations on such monuments.<sup>43</sup>

In these particular cases the depicted armour was mostly decorative and carried a very strong symbolic meaning. Surveys on this subject have concluded that within the members of the military, cuirassed representations were normally reserved for high-ranking officers and members of the Praetorian Guard,<sup>44</sup> in fact a vast number of funerary reliefs and statues depicting soldiers in full body armour were proven to belong to officers who have performed certain stages of the *militia equestris*.<sup>45</sup> H. Devijver has asserted that each *militia* was represented by a specific set of insignia: members of the first militia (usually *praefecti cohortes quingenariae*) were represented in an undecorated cuirass, *pteruges* and cloak; the second militia (legionary tribunes – *tribuni angusticlavi* or *tribuni cohortes milliariae*) additionally displayed the *parazonium*, the officer's long dagger, while members of the third militia (*praefecti alae quingenariae*) also displayed the officer's sash, the *cinctorium*, tied around their breastplate between the abdomen and the chest.<sup>46</sup>

The portrayal of the short muscle cuirass can be usually interpreted as a badge for the rank of *praefectus alae* (either *quingenariae* or *milliariae*), as shown by the abovementioned author based on the funerary monument of T. Fl. Mikkalus which displays the transition from the rank of *tribunus militum* to the aforementioned superior grade.<sup>47</sup> Al. Diaconescu pointed out the similarities between the relief of Mikkalus and a funerary statue from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa. Based on this parallel the statue was interpreted as belonging to an equestrian member of the municipal elite who was probably a *militiis* who ended his military career with the rank of *praefectus alae*.<sup>48</sup> The iconographical resemblances between the respective statue and the relief from Brâncovenesti are quite marked, both men being represented in short cuirasses, partly covered by the cloak, both are armed with the eagle-head sword, and both display more or less the same posture.<sup>49</sup> Considering that the garrison of

<sup>35</sup> See DIACONESCU 2005, vol. 2, Pl. XXV–XXVI. A notable exception is the funerary statue from Apulum with the representation of an embossed Medusa on his chest (Lupa 19304).

<sup>36</sup> NOELKE 2012, *passim*.

<sup>37</sup> Lupa 4684.

<sup>38</sup> See BISHOP/COULSTON 2006, 156–162.

<sup>39</sup> OLDENSTEIN 1977, 226–234; BISHOP/COULSTON 2006, 156–162.

<sup>40</sup> DIACONESCU 2005, vol. 2, 61–62.

<sup>41</sup> See BOSCHUNG 1987, Nr. 849, Pl. 45; DAVENPORT 2019, 280–281, Fig. 6.2a-b,

<sup>42</sup> SPEIDEL 2009, 237–239.

<sup>43</sup> DAVENPORT 2019, 280–281, Fig. 6.2a-b. See the aforementioned funerary altar of Q. Sulpicius Celsus erected outside Rome in the Flavian period, displaying the prefect's *torques*, *phalera* and *corona muralis*.

<sup>44</sup> ROBINSON 1975, 147; BISHOP/COULSTON 2006, 9; D'AMATO/SUMNER 2009, 39.

<sup>45</sup> DEVIJVER 1989, 422.

<sup>46</sup> DEVIJVER 1989, 422, 444–446; See also DAVENPORT 2019, 261–262.

<sup>47</sup> DEVIJVER 1989, 435–437.

<sup>48</sup> DIACONESCU 2005, vol. 2, 61–62, Nr. 19; DIACONESCU 2012, Cat. M, 20, Fig. 27.

<sup>49</sup> See DIACONESCU 2005, vol. 2, Pl. XXVI/3.

the fort from Brâncovenești comprised of an *ala*, the representation of a cavalry prefect would make sense.

Concerning the question of correlation between social status and funerary monument, the view that members of the equestrian order were in most cases commemorated with mausolea has traditionally predominated in the archaeological literature.<sup>50</sup> While this is generally true for Italy, in the provincial environment the range of monuments commemorating equestrian officers was proven to be extremely wide, including more modest monuments as *stelae* and simple *aediculae*.<sup>51</sup> As stated above, there is no claim of certainty with regard to the status and military rank of the person represented on the relief, but rather an ‘accumulation of indications’, according to H. Devijver’s expression,<sup>52</sup> based on which we are probably dealing with the funerary monument, or perhaps the cenotaph of an equestrian officer who in this case should be identified with the commander of the cavalry unit stationed at Brâncovenești. If it is indeed a cenotaph, then the *praefectus alae* in question must have had an elaborate funerary monument incorporating his statue in his native or adoptive town somewhere in the empire, and possibly also a honorary statue in the town’s forum or theatre.<sup>53</sup> Equestrian cenotaphs are known from many parts of the Roman world, a well-known example being the stela of Cn. Petronius Asellio, cavalry officer and *praefectus fabrum* from Mogontiacum during the reign of Tiberius. In addition to the complex architectural design, the monument displays the *parma equestris* (the round shield of the cavalrymen) over crossed spears, the motif emphasizing the deceased’s status of cavalryman.<sup>54</sup>

V. M. Hope explained the paucity of funerary monuments belonging to the officers and unit commanders in Mogontiacum, with the brevity of their posts, and the fact that these officers tended either to return to their hometowns or continue their careers elsewhere, often in Rome, where they were also buried.<sup>55</sup> It thus seems likely that the cavalry prefect from Brâncovenești died in service, and was commemorated with a cenotaph by his comrades, while his remains were transported home.<sup>56</sup> Still, we cannot rule out the possibility that we are dealing with the funerary monument of the prefect, as analogies can be found for this scenario as well. In Ephesos an equestrian officer from Rome named L. Pompeius Marcellinus was commemorated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century with a ‘simple’ tombstone (a stela) depicting the tribune on horseback in camp dress while throwing a javelin.<sup>57</sup>

A final point that needs to be addressed concerns the place of the relief within the funerary sculptural material from Brâncovenești. As mentioned above, a total of 52 sculptural fragments were discovered between 1970 and 1973, as far as we can tell all of them coming from funerary monuments.<sup>58</sup> Without attempting to give a quantitative iconographical

analysis of the of the material here, it can be said that the relief in question is the only one to depict an armoured soldier. This is not to say that the assemblage lacks iconographical elements that are typical for the military, as at least five monuments (*stelae* and *aedicula* hind walls) exhibit the scene of the funerary banquet (*Totenmahl*),<sup>59</sup> an iconographical theme that was primarily preferred by military communities on the Rhineland and the Danubian provinces.<sup>60</sup> In addition to the aforementioned depictions, a further case of ‘military style commemoration’ has to be mentioned. One of the best preserved *aedicula* walls from Brâncovenești depicts a family of three, the standing male adult figure on the right wearing what should be interpreted as a *sagum* (i.e. a military cloak) fastened with the well-known T-shaped brooch on his right shoulder (Fig. 6).<sup>61</sup> Although the cloak covers his entire body, thus leaving no place for the representation of a waist-belt and possibly sword suspended from a baldric, the presence of the *sagum* and of the large brooch is enough to indicate that we are in fact dealing with a military person, possibly another officer. This brief analysis was meant to showcase the mainly military nature of the funerary commemoration in Brâncovenești, although a full-scale detailed reevaluation of the entire material (including the epigraphy) is necessary to get a better sense of the phenomenon.

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<sup>51</sup> See DEVIJVER 1989, 416; DIACONESCU 2005, vol. 1, 409–415.  
<sup>52</sup> DEVIJVER 1989, 427.  
<sup>53</sup> See DAVENPORT 2019, 278.  
<sup>54</sup> See HOPE 2001, 41, Pl. 14; DAVENPORT 2019, 186–188, Fig. 4.1.  
<sup>55</sup> HOPE 2001, 38.  
<sup>56</sup> HOPE 2001, 38, note 9.  
<sup>57</sup> See DAVENPORT 2019, 286–287, Fig. 6.4.  
<sup>58</sup> See PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1992.
- <sup>59</sup> PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1992, Nr. 20, Pl. X/1; Nr. 21, Pl. X/2; Nr. 22, Pl. X/3; Nr. 25, Pl. XI/2; Nr. 26, Pl. XI/3.  
<sup>60</sup> See HOPE 2001, 42–43; For the situation in Dacia see GUI/PETRUȚ 2018, 130–134.  
<sup>61</sup> PROTASE/ZRÍNYI 1992, Nr. 23, Pl. X/4.

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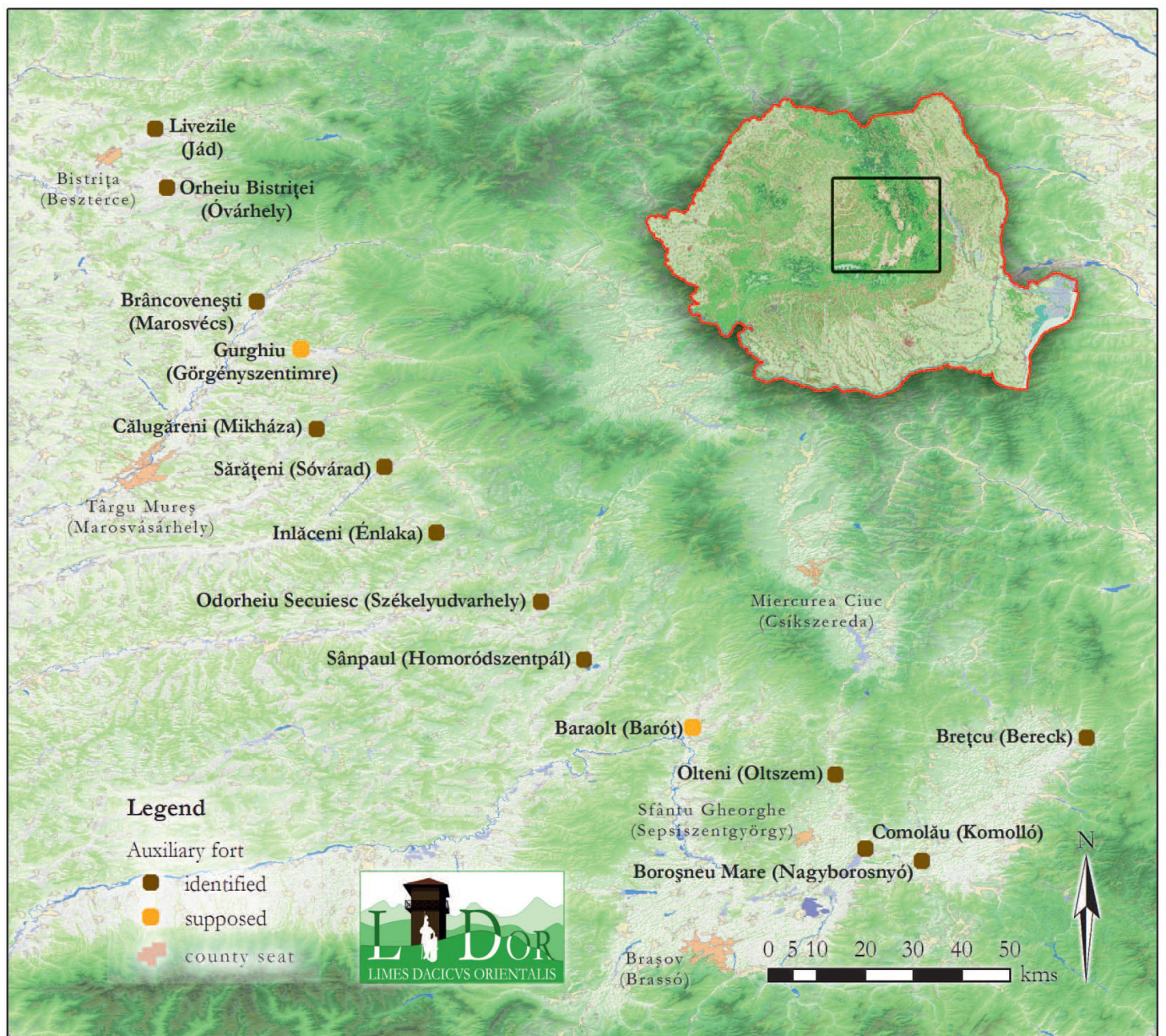


Fig. 1. The fort at Brâncovești within the eastern limes of Dacia (PÁNCZÉL *et alii* 2012, 110, Plate 1.1).



Fig. 2. Photo of the *aedicula* wall. Photo of the author.



Fig. 3. Detail photo of the sword hilt. Photo of the author.



Fig. 4. Marble cuirassed statue from Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa (Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilization, Deva, inventory no.: 2181). Photo made by Al. Diaconescu.



Fig. 5. Cuirassed statue of an equestrian officer (the head is a later addition) from Celeia, Noricum kept at the Pokrajinski Muzej in Celje. Photo made by Ortoľ Harl.



Fig. 6. *Aedicula* hind wall from Brâncovenesti. Photo of the author.