

Reviews

Ancient Linear Fortification on the Lower Danube. Proceedings of the National Colloquium. (Brăila, 14-16 iunie, 2013), editors: Valeriu Sîrbu, Costin Croitoru. Mega Publishing House, 2014. pp.189. ISBN 978-606-543-529-2.

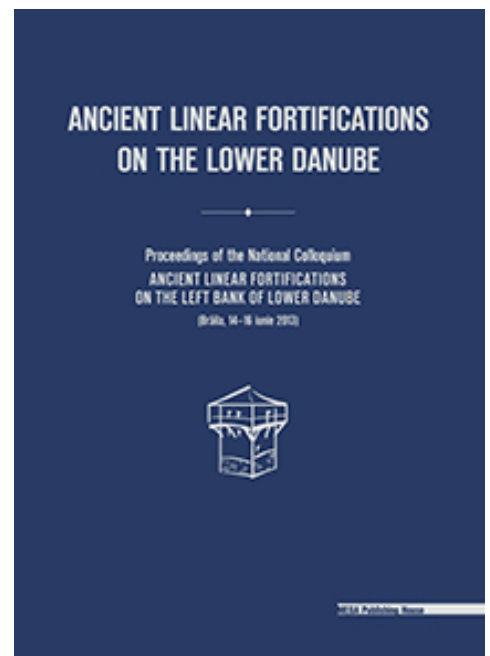
The following volume focuses on various historical aspects. First of all, there are highlighted archeological excavations on the Lower Danube from Romanian territory. Topographical issues within the ancient linear fortification are shown together with cartographical and oral history aspects, within the essays. The book is divided in three main categories: a) *Archaeological and Indisciplinary Research* ; b) *Narative Sources* ; c) *Discussions and Interpretations*.

The first part focuses on the archeological evidence from different sites where a roman *Vallum* is discovered. The essays presented in this section are very technical, a fact that can be noticed from Flavian Bozu's and Ovidiu Bozu's study: *Preventive and Archeological Research on Middle Ground Wave from Gearmata Confinē*, pp. 9-25, where we can find a detailed analysis of 248.9 km archaeologically investigated rampart nearby the Danube and exceeding the Mureș river, which lies on the terminal formations of the Vinga Plain, on a broad plateau with relatively steep slopes, between two deep broad valleys belonging to the hydrographical basin of Beregsău stream, between the Giarmata commune Cornești village, at approximately 1km. West from the Timișoara-Lipova railway. In this context is presented the linear fortification crossed by the Arad-Timișoara highway from km. 40+900 – 40 + 950, mechanically excavated on a 0.20 m depth, unearthed the route of a rampart framed by ditches both eastwards as well westwards (p.10-11). The fortification was studied in the literature: A. Mocsy associates the building of the linear fortifications with the period of emperor Diocletian, S. Soproni placed their construction during the war of emperor Constantine against the Sarmatians in 322, specifying that his "Vorlimes" type fortification loses its defensive role under Valentinianus (Fig.XII) (pp. 13-14).

In Richards A. Mason's and Lucas C. Mason's we can find some interesting aspects from Western Segment of the Ploșcuțeni-Stoicani *Vallum*. In the introduction, the authors are making an intense literature review. The main body of the study is focused on the German scholar Carl Schuchardt, who discovered the remains of a linear earthwork embankment extending toward the South and East from the left bank of the Siret near the village of Ploșcuțeni (Vrancea County) during an expedition in Romania in 1885 (pp.27-30). The *vallum* had a lack of professional expertise until the Second World War when Radu Vulpe led the excavations from Poiana. Furthermore, in the 70's Mihalache Brudiu established the middle course of the embankment in the vicinity of the villages of Tecuci, which, due to the poor state of preservation, had escaped detection by Vulpe. The embankment has unfortunately been destroyed by anthropogenic/ agricultural activities in many places, an area was sought, where remains might be better preserved, as in a forest. In the last two studies of this section are presented various analysis upon the *The linear fortification from Șuțești*. This site is almost unmentioned in the literature. The year 2006 marked the simultaneous start

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of the research at the locations *Fortification* and *Popina*. The campaigns from 2012-2013 can be resumed: the research of two cassetts, about 300 m away one another, showed also similar aspects, but also differences (pp.41-43). Why is the reason for this fortification?. Therefore, it is obvious that this fortification was meant to oversee a major route for communication, and therefore trade, between Brăila and the Curvature Carpathians. If it played strictly a military role, then its construction should be associated with a particular event/warm which is not something that we can say at the present moment (pp.43-44). Another auxiliary study upon the *Tranjan's Vallum* from Șuțești was made by Magdalena Ștefan and Dan Ștefan. The two scholars started some non-invasive investigations, which were undertaken in the Eastern border of the village Șuțești, with the purpose of exploring and documenting the linear defensive earhwork located here, by geodesic, geophysic and remote-sensins methods, during a joint program with the Museum of Brăila. The report represents mainly, the scientific report of that field, focused on processing and interpreting the topography (on a large scale and site-scale) and geophysical data, and integrating the monument in its surrounding environment, either modern/ anthropic or projected in the past with the help of historical cartographic sources (pp.58-60).

The second section of the volume is focused on *narrative sources*, specifically *cartographic sources* found within narrative sources. Dragoș Măndescu's essay presents an old map, which has possibly the first mentions of Roman remains from the *Alatanus* and *Transalutanus Limes*. The old map of Transylvania, drawn by Giovanni Morando Visconti in 1699 (after the moment when this province began to be ruled by the Habsurgic Empire) and printed in Sibium under the title *Mappa della Transilvania e Proutie contigue*. This information also includes the oldest cartographic attestations of some important Roman archaeological sites situated on the two Roman limites from the eastern border of Dacia Inferior: *Alutanus* and *Transalutanus* (p.57-61).

For the first time in a cartographic production made inside the country, the archeological monuments from the Roman times from Walachia, such as the Roman road along the Olt River which corresponded to the Limes Alutanus and the bridge built by Apolodor of Damascus to Drobeta or the bridge of Constantin the Great to Celei (Sucidava) were represented on the map drawn by High Steward Constantin Cantacuzino and printed in Padua in 1700. In this area we can find toponyms like *Citta* and *Castrametatione*, *Citta Romana* which is the first cartographic attestation after the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, of Roman Buridava, where the headquarter of the province Moesia Inferior functioned between the two Trajan - Dacian Wars (pp.79-80).

Another important aspect of the ancient sites drawn in modern maps are given by Specht's map. In his essay Ion Dumitrescu account the data found on the Austrian map drawn by the Colonel Specht, regarding the archeological monuments from the Roman era. Specht's map represents the first topographical approach for Walachia (pp.84-87). The Map and its supplement (it has three parts that are preserved in the Romanian Academy Library) give information about: the bridge from Drobeta, the Roman roads from Sucidava to Romula and from Islaz to Romula, respectively: the Roman

road sector between Romula and Piatra Olt; the earth wall built to the east of the Olt River, known as "Troian"(part of limes Transalutanus) and moreover, gives possible clues about the bridge from Drobeta, the fortress from Celei, the Roman road from Sucidava to Romula, the roman road from Islaz to Romula, the route of the earth wall situated in the East of the Olt River-"Troian", and about some Roman forts of the Transalutanus limes (pp.79-80). The last essay of this section is focused on the Romanian Oral Tradition, presenting aspects of the way words and formula like: "Trojan", "Trojan dike", Trajan's wall", are understood and interpreted in the Romanian kinfolk tradition. The word Trajan as an expression of the perpetuation, within the collective memory, of the persistence of the Roman emperor's engineering works: *Aqua Traiana*, *Portus Traiani*, *Via Traiana*, *Anaglypha Traiani*, *Columna Traiani* (centenaria), *Equus Traiani* are just a few of the names, if we only mention those from Italy, which remind us of his constructive projects (pp.101-104).

Moreover, Trajan was considered the founder of villages in different areas of Moldavia and Wallachia. In the rural areas there was the belief, that villages were very old, dating from the times of the giants, of the dwarfs, of the Jews or of the Tartars or that they are related to famous characters. Foundation legends reflect the "reality of the initial kinship". Thus, "Trojan" is nothing else then the popular form of he name of Trajan, not so much as an expression of perpetuation, within the collective memory, of the persistence of his engineering works, but of the ancient earth walls (pp.104-107).

The last section of the volume emphasizes interpretations upon the analysis from different *vallums* from Moldavian area. In his essay Eugen S. Teodor, makes a complex research, using GIS and cartography for a better knowing of the area. The strategic value of the vallum between the villages Traian and Tuluțești (near Galați) is given by the fact that the control of the embankment at Galați provided the Romans, not only with the ability to fight back on the opposite Danube bank, but also an effective control-even tough indirect, of all movements to and from Eastern Muntenia, thus contributing to the security of the entire Lower Danube. The essay is completed with pottery typology and numismatic findings from different points from the site (p.111-140). Futhermore, in this section Vasile Cotiugă and Octavian Ursulescu are trying to date the Linear Fortifications from Southern Moldavia (Stoicani-Ploșcuțeni). The authors of the essay have stated, after analysing the historical context, that the fortification was raised from the initiative of the Dacian King Decebalus, in order to stop the Roman northward advance, after latter established control over the present-day Muntenia and Southern Moldavia. After an intensive excavation, the autors consider that the line fortification from Southern Moldavia had three main use stages: the Dacian period, (up to the conquest of Dacia); the Roman period, when the ditch was covered and the wall was used for watching the lands to the north (lef outside the province of Dacia); post-Roman period, during which time it was partially re-dug, with smaller dimensions than the initial one. The third use of the fortification could be from the time of Athanaric, as assumed

by Radu Vulpe on the basis of the passage from Ammianus Marcellinus (XXX,3,7) but the archeological evidence is lacking (pp.143-150). Another interpretation upon the *earth vallums* is found in Mircea Ignat's essay, where the author focuses on two types of *earth vallum*, the Barbarian and Roman one. The model of the barbarian fortifications in Europe is to be sought only in the Roman world. That is to say, these European fortifications are either Roman (and continued by the Byzantine ones) or made by peoples that had nothing to do with Rome, imitating such constructions (p.164). The author shows brief information about various fortifications found in the barbarian world, from "Athanasius's vallum" to the *vallum* built by King Offa II. In this succession he mentions the vallums from Bucovina, Galicia and Western Podolia (p.166). An extra essay in the *varia* section it belongs to Vitalie Bârcă, which is focused on complex aspects regarding the Greek cities: Olbia and Tyras and their relations with the Roman Empire and Sarmatian world. The author makes his analysis throughout the political history, concerning some epigraphic, literary and numismatic aspects regarding the complex socio-political relations from this part of *Pontus Euxinus*. The numismatic evidence along with epigraphical finds gives the study a huge note of reliability. The coins minted in time of Nerva-Trajan give a precise chronology of the events. The inscriptions from Tiburtina and Mangrup provide a fragmentary view about the Roman administration in this area in the 1st and 2nd century C.E in this area. (pp.168-173).

To sum up, the present volume is very useful for the scholars, whom are interested in this kind of research. The GIS and cartographical surveillance, the good quality of the maps and of the photos from archeological excavations are making this volume to be taken in account in the specialized literature.