

On the *Praetorium* Toponyms in Roman Dacia

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Besides the well-known Traco-Dacian toponyms, ancient cartographic documents mention several new place names of Latin origin in Dacia, like *Romula*, *Aquae*, *Salinae*, *Pons Vetus*, *Pons Augusti*, etc. One distinct class is made up of the *Praetorium* toponyms, which are attested by the ancient cartographic sources: *Ptolemy* and *Tabula Peutingeriana*; they name fortifications, localities which lie along the main ancient lines of communication.

A modern analysis of Ptolemy's work has shown that it is based on certain ancient imperial itineraries, which are identical with those found in *Tabula Peutingeriana* of a later period (Schütte 1917: 77-79).

At the beginning of the second century AD, Ptolemy (II, 8, 1) noted on his map a toponym called *Praetoria Augusta* (Schütte 1917: 14-33; Bogdan-Cătănciu 1990: 223-227). Vasile Pârvan (1926: 246-249) and, more recently, I. Bogdan-Cătănciu (1990: 225) have brought much evidence meant to help establishing a more precise date for the writing of this important work for Dacia province. The fact that the presence of Vth Macedonica Legion is mentioned in Moesia Inferior, in the castrum of *Troesmis*, where it stayed between 103-105 (Trajan) and 167-168 (Marcus Aurelius), represents an important chronological proof, which narrows the dating to the first half of the second century. On the other hand, the mentioning of Dacian centers such as *Piroboridava*, *Tamasidava*, *Buridava*, which are also remembered in other documents of Trajan's time, but which are no longer mentioned later on, further narrows the dating to the period between emperors Trajan and Hadrian, when the latter founded Dacia Inferior.

Finally, the last argument concerning only Dacia is the mentioning of the two centres *Sarmizegetusa*. The Dacian one, with the attribute of *Regis*, represented the capital of the former free kingdom of Decebalus. The Roman one was the *colonia* founded by Trajan. This evidence, of seemingly minor significance, shows that the main coordinates of pre-Roman Dacia were probably known from the military maps used during Trajan's campaigns for the conquest of the province lying North of the Danube.

Praetoria Augusta is a toponym placed at 50° 30' longitude and 47° 30' latitude, lying between *Salinae* (hypothetically identified with Războieni-Cetate), *Sangidava* (unknown, perhaps Sânpaul), *Angustia* (perhaps Brețcu), with great degree differences in all coordinates. What we are positive about is the fact that Ptolemy knew that this toponym was placed somewhere in the middle of Transylvania. The Romanian historians who have so far studied Ptolemy's map, failed to analyse the toponym *Praetorium*, which is mentioned only once. According to its meaning, *Praetorium* represents the residence of an emperor at a certain moment during a military campaign, the place of the headquarters, and, in a larger acceptance, of the general army commandment.

The toponym *Praetorium* is also mentioned twice in *Tabula Peutingeriana*, in segment VIII, 3, along two different communication lines. One was placed on the imperial road: *Taliata, Dierna* (11 mill. *Passum*) - *Ad Mediam* (14 mill. *Passum*) - *Praetorium* (9 mill. *Passum*) - *Tibiscum* (14 mill. *Passum*), and the other - on the imperial road along the Olt valley: *Castra Tragana (Traiana)* (9 mill. *Passum*) - *Arutela* (15 mill. *Passum*) - *Praetorium* (9 mill. *Passum*) - *Pons Vetus* (44 mill. *Passum*).

The two localities on the *Tabula Peutingeriana* are placed differently from the first locality mentioned on Ptolemy's Map, namely in the south of Roman Dacia province.

Tabula Peutingeriana (TP) is a late ancient map of the Roman Empire, drawn with the practical purpose of rendering the road network still existing in the empire at the time. It indicates the halts on the routs, the junctions, and the distances between them. The measurements in the area we are interested in were made by using *mill. Passum* as a unit, which represented 1482 m or 1.5 km.

The dating of this document has been very much debated in the specialist literature, both Romanian and foreign (see Benea 1999: 138-144, with all the recent references on the issue). C. Daicoviciu (in FHDR, I, 1964: 736) noticed that the eastern part of Roman Dacia is actually missing on the map and consequently thought that he had managed to identify a definite proof for dating the document between the years 251-271, when this part of Dacia may have already been abandoned. Later on, this supposition was enforced by E. Manni (1949: 30-31), who argued that the Romans had also abandoned certain territories along the river Rhine.

On the first publication of the document on the basis of the personified representations of cities like Rome (IV, 5), Constantinopolis (VII, 1), Antiochia (IX, 4-5), K. Müller (1916) identified the emperors in whose time this map of the ancient world was drawn: Valentinianus, Valens, and the usurper Procopius. So, the dating of the map can be established between September 365 and May 366.

Luciano Bosio (1983: 154-156) resumed the analysis of the vignettes which accompany the representations of the most important cities, and established a *terminus post quem* as the date when the map was drawn, between the foundation of the city of Constantinople in 324 and the building of St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, in the middle of the same century. The year 362, when the temples of Asclepius in Hain and of Daphne in Antioch were closed, could be a *terminus ante quem* for dating TP.

E. Weber (1976: 10-14) brought other significant details to this dating, among which the building of the precincts of Niceea (VIII, 2), a city recognized as an important Christian centre only after the Niceea Synod in 325. Later on, E. Weber (1989: 116) considered the possibility that the prototype of the map under discussion was ordered by empêror Teodosius II, in 435, and was drawn on the same principles as the map produced by Agrippa, in emperor Augustus' time, at the beginning of the first century AD.

The references to Dacia can be found in segment VII, 1-3 on TP. As we have already mentioned, this cartographic document was considered to have been drawn during Gallienus' time. The presence of the two *Praetorium* toponyms on a map belonging to the 4th - 5th centuries suggests that the information was borrowed from older documents on the one hand, and that it continued to be used in the ancient and, probably, local tradition in the late Roman epoch, on the other hand. Epigraphically, the two localities are not documented under this toponym. We can state that there were two *Praetorium* toponyms in the vicinity of some important access routs to free

Dacia. They signalled the presence, in that area, of an emperor, and, subsequently of his headquarters. The name was used, however, only when the emperor was undertaking a military campaign and his headquarters was placed outside the Roman state, in *barbaricum*. The mentioning on Ptolemy's Map of a similar toponym, yet topographically different from those on TP, offers the possibility of identifying the military events which contributed to the arrival of an emperor to Dacia. The literary and epigraphic evidence discovered so far proves the presence in Dacia of the following emperors, either on the occasion of certain military events, or just with the purpose of visiting the province: **Trajan** (101-102, 105-106, during the wars for the conquest of Dacia), **Hadrian** (perhaps in 118, during the attacks of the free Dacians and the Sarmates and in 124, on his way to the East), **Caracalla** with his mother Julia Domna (214, while travelling to the East), **Philippus Arabs** (245?/246-247, during the battles against the Carps and the Goths). The topographic information on TP seems to be related to the military events connected with emperor Trajan.

There is an essential difference between the two cartographic documents. One mentions the headquarters of an emperor in the central parts of Transylvania, while the other mentions two other imperial headquarters, omitting the one existing in Ptolemy's time. Modern literature has identified them in Banat region, more exactly at Mehadia and on the Olt valley, in two small fortifications at Racovița and Copăceni, called by D. Tudor (1968: passim) *Praetorium I* and *Praetorium II*.

The castrum of Mehadia represents a building stage with earthwork wall datable in Trajan's time. The dimensions of the fortification: 116 x 142,60 m are known only for the stone stage of the building (Macrea, Gudea, Moșu 1993: 27; Benea 1997: 45-51). Initially, *cohors I Ulpia Brittonum ∞ Ulpia Torquata pia fidelis c.R* was stationed in this fortification. This was the only unit which, besides *cohors I Flavia Ulpia Hispanorum p.f.*, received the imperial appellation of *ULPIA* during the Dacian-Roman wars. Although all the military troops involved in these wars either received decorations, or were rewarded by the epithet *pia fidelis*, or were given the quality of *civium Romanorum*, the two in question gained an even higher appreciation from the emperor, probably because they ensured his security in the events, or for some other reason, which history did not mention (Benea 1997: 50-51). In this case, *Praetorium* castrum represented the first headquarters of the emperor, after the crossing of the Danube in 101. This centre was probably chosen for its strategic position, before the Timiș-Cerna gorge, but mainly for its vicinity to the Danube, which provided the possibility of swift withdrawal in case of an immediate danger for the emperor.

PRAETORIUM I, partially preserved at 500 m from the second one, on the old riverside of the Olt at Selișteea, had a square shape, with sides of 41.60 m and semicircular towers. The most important fortification, however, is *PRAETORIUM II* (101.10 x 112.41 m) with a precinct wall 1.50 m wide. The headquarters building was a little different, without an *armamentaria*, only with an *atrium* (10.10 x 19.85 m) and an *aedes* (9.70 x 19.85 m). D. Tudor (1968: passim) dates these fortifications within a late period. At the same time, TP mentions *CASTRUM TRAIANA* a few *millia Passum* southwards, which could represent the Roman imperial headquarters, while the residence of the emperor himself might have been at *Praetorium*. It is very likely that the military event was the second war with the Dacians, when a large part of Oltenia region was already under the Roman rule. *Praetorium* appears to be placed 33 *mill. Passum* farther from *Castrum Traiana*, which suggests the safety of the place because of the presence of Roman troops there.

The last imperial site is in the center of Transylvania, at *PRAETORIA AUGUSTA*, which signifies the army's headquarters and residence of the emperor, probably reflecting the ending of the wars with the Dacians, when the province had already been conquered to a large extent. The toponym could represent the locality *Ranisstorum*, epigraphically attested, where Ti. Claudius Maximus took Decebalus' head, after the latter had committed suicide, as it is mentioned on the funeral stone of this Roman decurion.

It is significant that the topographic tradition makes reference only to the centers in the sub-Carpathian region and does not say anything about the one in central Transylvania, which has been lost. This may also be due to the evolution of military centres in Banat and Oltenia, which preserved troops up to the moment when the province was abandoned in 274, while the centre in Transylvania may have represented an important site only for the year 106, and afterwards did not play any role in the defensive system of the province. This is also true for the toponym *ULPIANUM*, unidentified so far in the field.

The information provided by the two ancient cartographic documents reflects a situation which is well-known to the ancient world, referring to the way in which Dacia's conquest was organized.

A last aspect regarding the military campaigns led by the Roman emperors on the barbarian territories refers to the places chosen by the army leadership to settle the imperial army headquarters. In Domitian's wars with the Dacians, the headquarters was placed at *Naissus*, in Moesia Superior. Trajan chose for his 117 campaign the city of Antioch, moving the centre into *barbaricum*, at *Ctesifon* and *Babylon*, while Marcus Aurelius, during the wars with the Marcomans, settled at *Carnuntum*. We do not know where Trajan's initial imperial headquarters was within the empire. Taking into account the representations and images on *Columna Traiana*, we may presume that it was placed at *Viminacium*, before he crossed the Danube in the year 101. TP lets us know about the headquarters of Mehadia in the first war, in 101, and about the place on the Olt valley, in the second war. Ptolemy, who was the closest to the events in question, provided information about the imperial headquarters when the emperor stayed a longer time there, probably also after the war had ended and the province had been organized. We can thus have a representation of the successive movements of Trajan's personal imperial headquarters towards the inside of the Carpathian chain, along with the evolution of military events and the conquest of Dacia.

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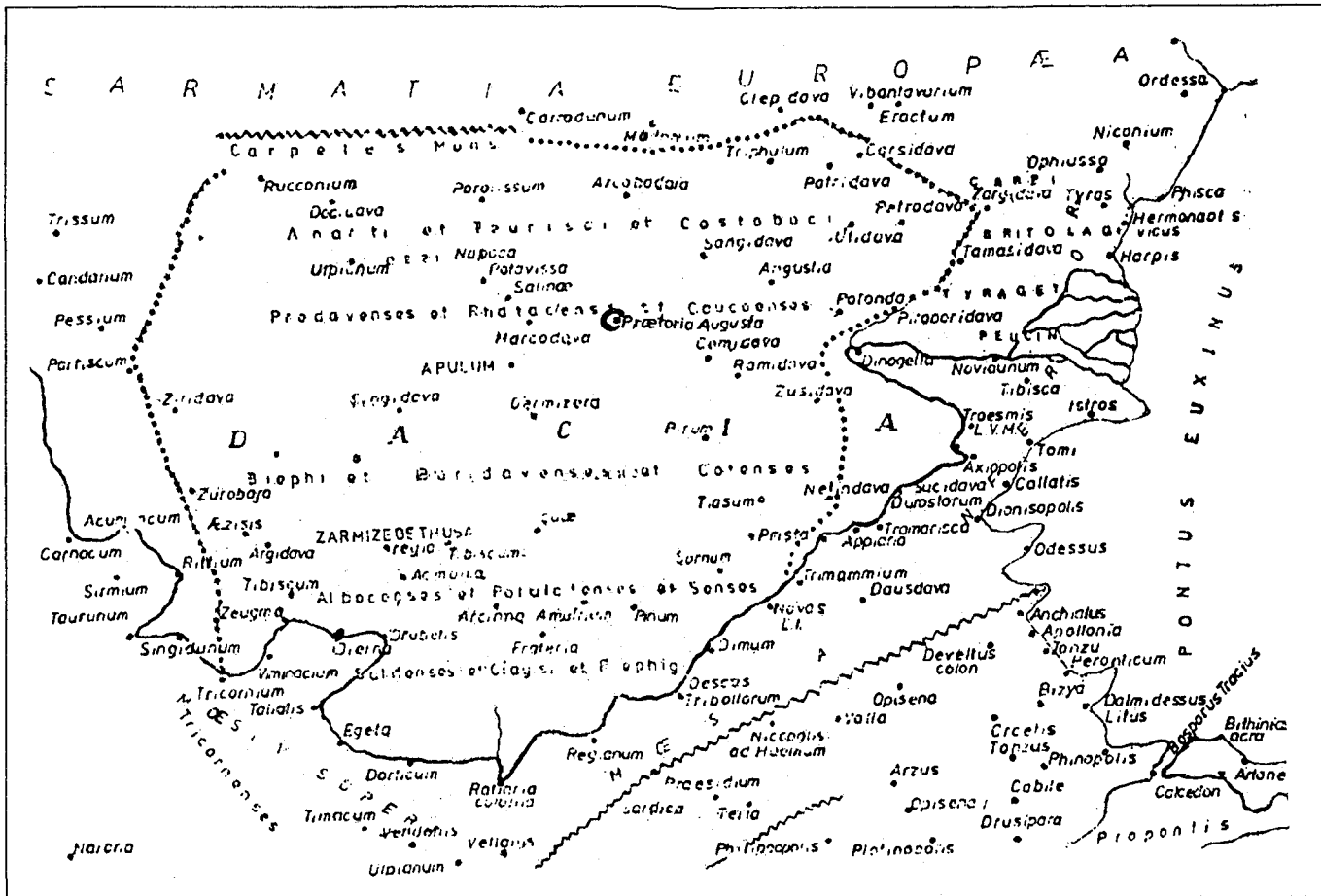


Fig. 1

