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## THE WEAK LINK? MOESIA INFERIOR DURING THE CLOSING YEARS OF SEVERUS ALEXANDER'S RULE (230–235 CE)

**Abstract:** This paper explores the geopolitical landscape and military activities in Moesia Inferior during the closing years of Severus Alexander's reign between 230–235 CE. Drawing upon epigraphic evidence and historical accounts, the study examines the construction and restoration of fortifications, road networks, and strategic outposts in response to escalating threats from barbarian tribes and the Persian Empire. The investigation highlights the pivotal role of provincial governors, such as C. Messius Q. Decius Valerianus, in overseeing these initiatives and adapting to shifting geopolitical dynamics. Additionally, it examines the imperial visit of Severus Alexander to Moesia Inferior in 234 CE, shedding light on the emperor's interactions with local authorities and the impact of his presence on infrastructure projects. Furthermore, the deployment and movements of Roman military units in Crimea and along the north-western part of the Black Sea coast, are explored, emphasizing the strategic significance of these regions. The absence of Lower Moesian units in Severus Alexander's Persian campaign is also examined, with hypotheses proposed linking this occurrence to the looming threat posed by barbarian incursions. An analysis based on available archaeological and written sources sheds light on the situation in the supposedly quiet province of Moesia Inferior, just before the crisis.

**Keywords:** Moesia Inferior, Severan dynasty, epigraphy, Severus Alexander, Roman Army, Goths

### Introduction

The starting point for examining the geopolitical landscape of Moesia Inferior during the final years of Severus Alexander's reign will be one of building inscription.<sup>1</sup> In 1874, a monument was unearthed in Sexaginta Prista (modern-day Ruse, Bulgaria), although it has unfortunately since been lost.<sup>2</sup> The inscription can be transcribed as follows:

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Archaeology, University of Warsaw), for his invaluable guidance, insights, and feedback on the topic of Roman military presence in the north-western Black Sea region. I would also like to extend my gratitude to my colleague, Tomasz Dziurdzik (curator of Collection of Ancient Art, National Museum in Warsaw) for his insightful and pertinent comments, as well as invaluable assistance in improving my text.

Imp(eratori) Caes(ari) diui Magni Antonini Pii fil(io) | [[diui Severi Pii nep(oti) M(arco) Aur(elio) Seuero]] | [[Alexandro Pio Felici Aug(usto) pon]] | tiff(ici) maximo t(ribunicia) <p=B>(otestate)] IX co(n)s(uli) III p(atri) p(atriciae) [[et Iuliae]] | [[Mamaeae matri]] Aug(usti) n(ostr) et castrorum | [b]aln(e)a coh(ortis) II Fl(aui)ae Britt(onum) [Alexa]n[d]rianae | a so<l=i>o restitutae sub Anicio Fausto Paullino leg(ato) Aug(usti) pr(o) pr(aetore) | per Septimium Agathonicum praef(ectum).<sup>3</sup>

The monument was erected as a dedication to Severus Alexander and his mother, Iulia Mamaea. The inscription provides evidence of the restoration or reconstruction of the baths of cohorts II Flavia Brittonum Alexandriana.<sup>4</sup> Septimius Agathonicus,<sup>5</sup> the *praefectus* of this unit undertook this task under the auspices of the governor of the province of Lower Moesia, Anicius Faustus Paulinus.<sup>6</sup>

The dating of the monument relies on the preserved information regarding the emperor's *tribunicia potestas*. Fragments of the numbers suggest the IX *tribunicia potestas*, indicating the period from December 10, 229 CE to December 9, 230 CE. Due to the scarcity of sources, determining the nature of Anicius Faustus Paulinus' activities in Moesia Inferior remains elusive.<sup>7</sup>

Construction activities within the baths dating back to the Severan dynasty, primarily the reign of Septimius Severus, are documented at several sites in Moesia Inferior and along the north-western coast of the Black Sea.<sup>8</sup> In Novae, the rebuilding of the baths took place in the initial four decades of the third century CE. The pre-existing building underwent modifications, with its design tailored to accommodate evolving spatial requirements, and a sprawling complex emerged, significantly surpassing the dimensions of the original structure (phase II). New chambers were added from north to south and east to west, with the primary objective seemingly to create a symmetrical layout accommodating two sets of rooms. Bathing areas were seamlessly integrated into a unified complex, introducing the *palestra* as a new component. In the southwestern part of the complex, the *caldarium* housed a hot water pool. The newly constructed southern section of the bath featured a meticulously organized technical zone, composed of interconnected corridors designed for service and transit within the baths, discovered by recent archaeological excavations.<sup>9</sup>

In Chersonesus, at the turn of the second and third centuries CE, or the beginning of the third century CE, notable expansions were made to the garrison bath (identified as building A). In phase 3, the following rooms were added: an apodyterium and a small *frigidarium* equipped with bathtubs, a spacious *frigidarium* designed as a swimming pool, a *tepidarium*, and a *caldarium*. This expansion suggests a considerable increase in the size of the Roman garrison stationed in the area during this timeframe. Notably, under the rule of the Severan dynasty, the Roman garrison, composed of soldiers from legio XI Claudia positioned near the southwestern section of the walls showed increased construction activity. It is plausible that this military unit played a role in the construction of fortifications in this specific part of Chersonesus.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>2</sup> CIL III 7473.

<sup>3</sup> Inscription from Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss/Slaby (EDCS-ID: EDCS-28500191).

<sup>4</sup> The only feature discovered so far in Sexaginta Prista are defensive walls surrounding an area of 4–5 ha. Hence there is no information where the baths were located (STANČEV 2003, pp. 56–62). For more information about cohorts II Flavia Brittonum see e.g. ARICESCU 1977, pp. 48–49; SUCEVEANU, BARNEA 1991, pp. 65–66; MATEI-POPESCU 2010, pp. 198–199.

<sup>5</sup> PIR<sup>2</sup> S 431.

<sup>6</sup> PIR<sup>2</sup> A 599; THOMASSON 1984, col. 142, no. 122; STEIN 1940, p. 97.

<sup>7</sup> This is the only inscription from Lower Moesia mentioning the governor of the province, Anicius Faustus Paulinus.

<sup>8</sup> Under the rule of Septimius Severus, Tyras and Olbia were incorporated into the province of Moesia Inferior, bringing them under Roman governance see KRÓLCZYK 2017.

<sup>9</sup> BIERNACKI, KLENINA 2003; BIERNACKI *et alii* 2016, pp. 99–105.

<sup>10</sup> Similar observations can be made regarding other sites in Crimea, such as Balaklava and the Cape of Ai-Todor KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI 2015, pp. 38, 42.

The fort at the Cape of Ai-Todor underwent significant reconstruction and expansion of various facilities under the reign of Septimius Severus and his successors. This included the enlargement of the *thermae* and the expansion of the fort through the addition of an outer wall. The heightened construction activity during this period is associated with the presence of a detachment of soldiers from the legio XI Claudia. The traces of the fort's expansion at the onset of the third century CE could suggest an intention to increase the size of the garrison stationed in this location.

Sources indicate that the Roman military baths at Capidava, constructed during the reign of Trajan in the early second century CE, remained in use through the third century under the Severan dynasty. Evidence supporting this includes bricks bearing the stamp of the legio XI Claudia Antoniniana (LEG XI CL ANT), found in a newly constructed drainage channel.<sup>11</sup> Since the legio XI Claudia was awarded the title *Antoniniana* during Caracalla's reign, the presence of these bricks suggests that renovations and upgrades to the baths were likely carried out during this period.

Potential factors influencing construction work within the garrison baths in Sexaginta Prista could encompass strategic considerations, shifts in military presence, or the necessity to upgrade infrastructure to serve various purposes. It is plausible that the construction or reconstruction of the baths in Sexaginta Prista was prompted by the expansion of the garrison stationed there. However, determining the exact reason for such work in 230 CE requires further investigation. Delving into epigraphic sources, local circumstances, and the broader context of the time may provide insights into the specific reasons behind the construction activities during that period.

### Barbarians growing in power

Lower Moesia, given its geopolitical and geographical location, occupied a critical position in one of the most vulnerable regions of the Roman Empire. The Balkan provinces served as a crucial geographical link connecting the western and eastern parts of the Empire. By the end of the second century CE, the Goths<sup>12</sup> had established settlements along the northern coast of the Black Sea. Moreover, Sarmatian and Geto-Dacian tribes residing in the regions north of the Danube became increasingly active.<sup>13</sup> After 225 CE, an economic crisis ensued, attributed to the frequent incursions of barbarian tribes from the north of the Danube and Dacia.<sup>14</sup>

In 227 CE, certain G. Baienius Ianuarius, the *primus pilus* of the legio I Italica in Novae erected a statue for Jupiter Depulsor.<sup>15</sup> Marjeta Šašel Kos posited that the cult of Jupiter Depulsor might have origins predating the Roman period, suggesting that his name conceals one of the most significant deities of the Norican divinities.<sup>16</sup> It is important to note that *Depulsor* means “the one who pushes back”. Rienhold Egger suggested that Jupiter Depulsor was a deity associated with warding off diseases and pandemics.<sup>17</sup> However, according to Hans-Georg Pflaum, it was believed that Jupiter Depulsor served to repel enemy attacks.<sup>18</sup> M. Šašel Kos proposed a broader context for the cult, suggesting that Jupiter Depulsor was believed to safeguard its devotees from a range of adversities. This encompassed protection from epidemics, diseases, personal misfortunes,

<sup>11</sup> OPRİŞ, RAȚIU, POTÂRNICHE 2018, pp. 6, 19, 22.

<sup>12</sup> The archaeological equivalent of the Gothic settlement in the northern region of the Black Sea is the Chernyakhov culture. Developing across a vast expanse of Eastern Europe, it encompasses territories of present-day Ukraine, Romania, Moldova, and parts of Belarus.

<sup>13</sup> SARNOWSKI 1988, p. 93.

<sup>14</sup> IVANOV 1983, p. 131.

<sup>15</sup> *IGL Novae* 25 = *IL Novae* 13 = *IL Bulg* 272 = *AE* 1972, 526; KOLENDO 1968; FAURE 2013, pp. 749–750, no. 232; PISO 2017.

<sup>16</sup> ŠAŠEL KOS 1999, p. 126.

<sup>17</sup> EGGER 1929, pp. 202–203.

<sup>18</sup> PFLAUM 1956, pp. 19–23.

financial setbacks, professional failures, and even military attacks.<sup>19</sup> This cult enjoyed particular popularity in Pannonia and Noricum, regions inherently vulnerable to barbarian invasions due to their geographical positioning.<sup>20</sup> Within this framework, the cult serves as evidence of a defensive instinct among the Romans in response to invasions. The dedications were not merely pleas for victory but rather they were supplications for the deity's assistance in repelling invaders.<sup>21</sup> Evidence from both the military community and civilians fails to conclusively show that the cult of Jupiter Depulsor was exclusively military in nature. Instead, it reveals that the choice of this deity was likely influenced by a variety of factors.<sup>22</sup> This suggests that Jupiter Depulsor, originating in the regions of Pannonia and Noricum, held broader significance in the everyday lives of these people, extending beyond purely military concerns.<sup>23</sup> According to Tadeusz Sarnowski, the erection of a monument to this deity could signify the involvement of soldiers from the legio I Italica in some battles along the Danube unknown to us.<sup>24</sup> However, their deployment might not signify active participation but rather apprehension about potential involvement in future combat. The erection of the monument could stem from a belief that divine intervention could alter the course of events. This suggests a noteworthy religious development, possibly reflecting a new spiritual demand born out of a heightened sense of peril necessitating divine assistance. As emphasized by Tomasz Dziurdzik, regardless of its location, this text highlights a remarkable and highly individualized adoption of customs typical for Novae. Statue of G. Baienius Ianuarius introduces some new elements, which includes a dual dedication, homage to a deity associated with his Norican origins and incorporation of a poetic autobiography.<sup>25</sup>

During this period, the legion was under the command of Q. Servaeus Fuscus Cornelianus, who had formerly served as the legate of the legio XIII Gemina stationed in Dacia.<sup>26</sup> Instances where a legate commanded two legions successively are quite rare and typically occurred during periods of tension and unrest.<sup>27</sup> It is widely accepted that such circumstances indicate ongoing or anticipated hostilities, thereby requiring the appointment of experienced and capable legates to command the legions involved or expected to engage in a specific theatre of war.<sup>28</sup> Q. Servaeus Fuscus Cornelianus was from Gigthis, a city in Africa Proconsularis, and his career apparently began during the reign of Septimius Severus. Interestingly, after serving as legate of the legio I Italica, he was appointed *legatus provinciae Galatiae* by the emperor. His governorship of the province of Galatia is dated between 228 and 231 CE.<sup>29</sup> During that period, the emperor embarked on a campaign to the East against the Parthians. It is plausible that his decision to appoint a former commander of two legions from provinces located in a sensitive part of the Empire, such as Dacia and Moesia Inferior, as the governor of one of the eastern provinces was not merely coincidental. It is possible that Q. Servaeus Fuscus Cornelianus proved himself in Danubian provinces, so the emperor decided to appoint him governor of one of the eastern provinces. In the 30s of the third century CE, the East certainly became one of the most sensitive regions of the Empire.<sup>30</sup>

There is a lack of information from written sources regarding the invasion of barbarian tribes towards the end of Severus Alexander's reign. Herodian describes the barbarian invasions of 233 CE, noting that Germanic tribes crossed both the Rhine and the Danube, posing a threat to the peoples of Illyria, bordering and neighboring Italy.<sup>31</sup> The earliest known hoard

<sup>19</sup> ŠAŠEL KOS 1999, p. 127.

<sup>20</sup> PFLAUM 1953, p. 451; KOLENDO 1989, p. 1073.

<sup>21</sup> KOLENDO 1989, p. 1076.

<sup>22</sup> HILALI 2010, pp. 463–466.

<sup>23</sup> ŠAŠEL KOS 1999, pp. 126–127.

<sup>24</sup> SARNOWSKI 1988, p. 93.

<sup>25</sup> DZIURDZIK 2025, forthcoming.

<sup>26</sup> *PIR*<sup>2</sup> S 560.

<sup>27</sup> KOLENDO 1968, p. 135; KOLENDO 1989, pp. 1073–1076.

<sup>28</sup> ALFÖLDY 1967, p. 77.

<sup>29</sup> OKOŃ 2017, p. 224, no. 952.

<sup>30</sup> Regarding inscriptions containing information about individuals who were soon to be transitioned to new positions or had received promotions in their careers, both within the senatorial or equestrian orders, see BIRLEY 1979, pp. 495–506.

of eastern denarii in Germania dates back to 231 CE. The initial surge, marked by the emergence of eastern denarii in hoards, is pinpointed to 235 CE, aligning with a string of assaults by Germanic tribes in the early 30s of the third century CE. Hoards unearthed in the region of *Agri Decumates*, and the surrounding limes regions appear to validate incursions by barbarian forces across the Danube, posing a tangible threat to Italy.<sup>32</sup> It appears that during the 30s of the third century CE, these invasions did not directly threaten the areas along the lower Danube. It is widely acknowledged in the literature that large-scale invasions of barbarian tribes into the Balkan provinces commenced in 238 CE.<sup>33</sup> Several premises lead me to believe that the movements of barbarian tribes, which disrupted the borders but did not necessarily result in disastrous consequences for the province, commenced as early as the 30s of the third century CE. The initial incursion of barbarian into the regions south of the Danube is believed to have occurred in 214 CE during the reign of Caracalla.<sup>34</sup> It appears that the Carpi invasion was swiftly suppressed, and they did not have the opportunity to inflict considerable damage to the province.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, the available sources are extremely scarce. Only two inscriptions from Moesia Inferior are known,<sup>36</sup> likely associated with Caracalla's involvement along the lower Danube.<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless, peace seemed elusive in these regions during that decade, as evidenced by coin hoards discovered in the territory of Moesia Inferior.<sup>38</sup> Some researchers associate coin hoards found in both Moesia Inferior and Dacia with likely barbarian incursions in the regions following 232 CE.<sup>39</sup> It's likely that the portion of the province encompassing the north-western and northern coasts of the Black Sea, probably also Dobruja, had been under threat from barbarian incursions.<sup>40</sup> It is assumed that several groups of invaders entered Moesia Inferior towards the end of the reign of Severus Alexander.<sup>41</sup> At Sostra, the destruction of fortifications dating to the last years of Severus Alexander's reign is evident. This occurrence is linked to barbarian incursions.<sup>42</sup> From Tomis, a well-known coin hoard was discovered in Grăniceri district. The hoard was likely concealed during the time of Severus Alexander, probably after 232 CE. It is possible that the hoard was hidden in the *vicus* or in a *villa* north of Tomis when the *bellum Scythicum* broke out.<sup>43</sup>

The first incursion of barbarian tribes onto the northern coast of the Black Sea occurred between 232 and 235 CE. Meanwhile, towards the end of Severus Alexander's reign, Roman garrisons were withdrawn from Crimea.<sup>44</sup> The Goths and their allies were reported to have appeared at the mouth of the Dniester in the early years of the third century CE.<sup>45</sup> According to Vasile Pârvan, barbarian invasions commenced during the reign of Severus Alexander, leading to the capture of Tyras and Olbia by the Goths.<sup>46</sup> However, it is worth noting that Chersonesus was not subjected to attacks by barbarians during this period.<sup>47</sup> Narrative and epigraphic sources provide no precise information regarding the date of the Goths' invasion of Olbia. Nonetheless, some scholars propose that the city was devastated during the initial barbarian expedition, occurring between 232 and 235 CE,<sup>48</sup> or within the broader timeframe of 232–238 CE.<sup>49</sup> This campaign primarily targeted

<sup>31</sup> HDN 6.7.2.

<sup>32</sup> HELLINGS 2020, pp. 294–296.

<sup>33</sup> HASZCZYC 1975, p. 209; GEROV 1977, p. 126; DIMITROV 2005, p. 79. Subsequently, the Carpi, backed by the Goths, intended to breach the border into the province of Moesia Inferior and ravage Histria.

<sup>34</sup> GENČEVA 2003, p. 63.

<sup>35</sup> DORUȚIU-BOILĂ 1973; GEROV 1980; BARNEA, VULPE 1968, pp. 201–214; MROZEWICZ 2010, p. 274.

<sup>36</sup> *ILBulg* 18 = *AE* 1900, 155 = *CIL* III 14416 = *ILS* 7178 and *ILBulg* 19 = *AE* 1972, 548.

<sup>37</sup> *HA M. Ant.* 5.8.

<sup>38</sup> GEROV 1977, p. 126.

<sup>39</sup> VERTAN 2002, pp. 273–274; POPILIAN, GHERGHE 2003, pp. 107–108.

<sup>40</sup> BUZOIANU, BĂRBULESCU 2012, p. 48.

<sup>41</sup> VERTAN 2002, pp. 253–254; VARBANOV, IVANOV 2016, pp. 66–69; VARBANOV 2021, p. 64.

<sup>42</sup> HRISTOV 2015, p. 334.

<sup>43</sup> VERTAN 1999, p. 122.

<sup>44</sup> KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI 2015, pp. 36, 164.

<sup>45</sup> KARYŠKOVSKIJ, KLEJMAN 1985, p. 126.

<sup>46</sup> PÂRVAN 1911, p. 11.

<sup>47</sup> Unlike Balaklava or Cape of Ai-Todor the army returned to Chersonesus in the mid-third century CE (KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI 2015, p. 36).

the regions along the northwestern coast of the Black Sea. The main supporting evidence for this hypothesis includes the cessation of minting activities in Olbia by 235 CE at the latest, as well as the archaeological observation of a layer of destruction within the Olbia citadel.<sup>50</sup> The initial destruction of Olbia, attributed to the so-called “Gothic” defeat, occurred around 230 CE.<sup>51</sup> This dating is further supported by the discovery of a coin of Severus Alexander within a burnt layer in the so-called Southern House.<sup>52</sup> However, there are epigraphic sources reliably dated to 248 and 250 CE,<sup>53</sup> alongside discoveries of Roman coins ranging from 269 to 270 CE. Also, the tombstone of a soldier from the legio I Italica is likewise dated to the half the third century CE.<sup>54</sup> These findings suggest that the city may not have suffered such catastrophic effects. The second “Scythian” or “Gothic” campaign against Olbia occurred in 269–270 CE.<sup>55</sup>

A different scenario appears to have transpired in Tyras. Currently, there is no evidence suggesting that Tyras fell during this period.<sup>56</sup> The final known coins from Tyras date back to the era of Severus Alexander. The decline in coinage production may not necessarily have been solely caused by unrest in the regions and barbarian raids. It’s worth noting that this could be part of a larger phenomenon affecting the eastern provinces of the Roman Empire, driven by the depreciation of currency value and the unprofitability of coin production.<sup>57</sup> Another issue concerns the name of the city, which appears on the so-called Shield of Dura,<sup>58</sup> a document believed to have been created around 244 CE.<sup>59</sup> Certainly, it should be noted that the Shield of Dura does not necessarily imply the occurrence of potential attacks. Instead, it serves as evidence of troop movement along the route from the mouth of the Danube to the East.

When considering Olbia, another issue arises. Arrian, during his visit to the Roman garrisons along the coast of Colchis, documented the stops along the shipping route to the northwestern coast of the Black Sea. Although this account dates back to the reign of Hadrian, he mentions stops such as Chersonesus and Borysthenes as significant points along the trail.<sup>60</sup> Notably, Olbia is only mentioned in the context of a location accessible by sailing up the river. According to Radosław Karasiewicz-Szczypiorski, this implies that Olbia was situated outside the primary route typically utilized by Roman ships at that time.<sup>61</sup> It appears that the Roman military presence in this region during Roman times was rather limited and not permanently established within the city.

It is plausible that both Tyras and Olbia were attacked during that period. However, both Olbia and Tyras survived, and were promptly rebuilt, likely with the support of the Roman Empire, which remained keen on the swift reconstruction and maintenance of its remote outposts, crucial for the ongoing war against the barbarians.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>48</sup> LATYŠEV 1887, p. 211; GAJDUKEVIČ 1955, p. 65; VETŠTEJN 1967, pp. 135–137.

<sup>49</sup> KRAPIVINA 2007, p. 607.

<sup>50</sup> VETŠTEJN 1967, pp. 134–137; VETŠTEJN 1968, pp. 142–146.

<sup>51</sup> KRAPIVINA 2007, p. 593; KOKOWSKI 2007, p. 165.

<sup>52</sup> KRAPIVINA, BUJS’KIH, KRUTILOV 1998, p. 87.

<sup>53</sup> First inscription: *IOSPE* P 167 = *AE* 1904, 164; KARYŠKOVSKIJ, KLEJMAN 1985, p. 133; SARNOWSKI 1988, p. 143; ZUBAR’ 1998, p. 130; KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPORSKI 2019, p. 153. An altar dedicated to Mercury for the well-being of Philip I the Arab and his son Philip II set up by Pyrrus Bithus. Second inscription: *AE* 2004, 1289; ZUBAR’, KRAPIVINA 2004, pp. 168–169; KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPORSKI

2019, p. 153. Inscription on a votive slab mentioning the cohorts I Cilicum Daciana.

<sup>54</sup> ZUBAR’, KOZUB 2002, pp. 102–109; KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPORSKI 2019, pp. 153, 161.

<sup>55</sup> KRAPIVINA 2007, p. 607.

<sup>56</sup> KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPORSKI 2015, p. 149.

<sup>57</sup> KUNISZ 1971, pp. 7, 143–144; BUTCHER, PONTING 2014, p. 24.

<sup>58</sup> KARYŠKOVSKIJ, KLEJMAN 1985, p. 132.

<sup>59</sup> GAWROŃSKI 2011, pp. 59–66.

<sup>60</sup> Arrian, *Peripl. M. Eux.* 16.

<sup>61</sup> KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPORSKI 2019, pp. 162–163.

<sup>62</sup> KRAPIVINA 2013, pp. 145–146.

### *Expeditio Persica*

The early 30s of the third century CE marked a significant intensification of the Roman-Persian conflict, a period also known for the *expeditio Persica*.<sup>63</sup> Ardashir I launched an attack on the eastern border of the Roman Empire in 230 CE.<sup>64</sup> According to Herodian, letters reached Rome from the governors of Mesopotamia and Syria, revealing the Persian threat to the eastern territories of the Empire. The Persians aimed to invade Roman Mesopotamia, subjugate nearby barbarian tribes, and cross the Tigris River, posing a direct menace to the Roman province of Syria. In their correspondence, the governors implored the emperor for military intervention.<sup>65</sup> Initially, Severus Alexander opted to send an embassy to the Persian king in an attempt to resolve the situation through diplomatic means.<sup>66</sup> Emperor Severus Alexander, along with his mother Iulia Mamaea and advisors, advocated a policy of peace and concessions marked by bribery instead of direct confrontation with enemies. However, this policy came to an abrupt halt in 230 CE when war erupted in the East.<sup>67</sup>

Without waiting for a response, the emperor, strategically buying time, initiated thorough preparations for the imminent military expedition. As recounted by Herodian, there was a widespread mobilization during this period, involving inhabitants from Italy and all Roman provinces.<sup>68</sup> The expeditionary force primarily comprised units from various Danubian regions, with Herodian specifically noting the inclusion of soldiers from Illyricum in Severus Alexander's army.<sup>69</sup> Additionally, archaeological sources suggest that maybe some road maintenance activities were undertaken in Danubian provinces, Asia Minor, Arabia, and southern Palestine.<sup>70</sup>

Ardashir I rejected the terms proposed by the embassy sent by Severus Alexander and, in 230 CE, breached the frontiers of the province of Mesopotamia.<sup>71</sup> The Roman expedition, likely commanded by the emperor himself, commenced in late spring of 231 CE.<sup>72</sup> The *Acta Fratrum Arvalium*<sup>73</sup> include a prayer for the safe return and victory of Severus Alexander.<sup>74</sup> By the end of summer 231 CE, the emperor reached Antioch on the Orontes.<sup>75</sup> The course of the expedition is well-documented through Herodian's work. Despite initial Roman successes,<sup>76</sup> the Persians managed to inflict losses on the Roman forces in the fall of 232 CE.<sup>77</sup> Severus Alexander, along with a contingent of troops, retreated to Antioch during the winter of 232/33 CE. Harsh conditions and challenging terrain resulted in the deaths of many soldiers, leaving only a few to reach the Roman side of the *limes*.<sup>78</sup>

In the winter of 232/33 CE when stationed in Antioch and preparing for another assault on the Persians, Severus Alexander received distressing news regarding disturbances unfolding in the western provinces. Governors reported to the emperor that Germanic tribes had breached the frontiers of the Empire along the Rhine and Danube, wreaking havoc on imperial territory.<sup>79</sup> The Alamanni raids during 232–233 CE particularly impacted the forts in the Agri Decumates region, with the barbarians crossing the Rhine near Argentorate, the camp of the legio VIII Augusta, and plundered Gaul.<sup>80</sup>

The challenges in the western provinces prompted Severus Alexander to make the decision to withdraw. Leaving a part of his forces in the East to safeguard the frontiers,<sup>81</sup> the Persian expe-

<sup>63</sup> KRÓLCZYK 2013; 2015.

<sup>64</sup> KRÓLCZYK 2015, p. 137.

<sup>65</sup> HDN 6.2.1.

<sup>66</sup> HDN 6.2.3–4.

<sup>67</sup> DE BLOIS 2002, p. 16.

<sup>68</sup> HDN 6.3.1.

<sup>69</sup> HDN 6.4.3; 6.2.

<sup>70</sup> KRÓLCZYK 2013, pp. 20–24.

<sup>71</sup> HDN 6.2.5

<sup>72</sup> HALFMANN 1986, p. 231; KRÓLCZYK 2015, p. 141.

<sup>73</sup> HENZEN 1874, p. 217.

<sup>74</sup> HALFMANN 1986, p. 231; KRÓLCZYK 2015, p. 141.

<sup>75</sup> HDN 6.4.3.

<sup>76</sup> HDN 6.5.5–7.

<sup>77</sup> HDN 6.5. 9–10; KRÓLCZYK 2015, p. 142.

<sup>78</sup> HDN 6.6.2–3.

<sup>79</sup> HDN 6.7.2–5.

<sup>80</sup> ZIÓŁKOWSKI 2008, p. 273.

dition concluded with a marginal victory for the Persians. Surprisingly, despite their successes, Ardashir I and his forces did not capitalize on their gains, resulting in a state of peace on the eastern Roman frontiers. Despite the absence of a decisive victory, Severus Alexander declared himself the victor.<sup>82</sup>

### Moesia Inferior

Simultaneously, C. Messius Q. Decius Valerianus<sup>83</sup> assumed the role of governor of Moesia Inferior. According to epigraphic sources, his *legatio* spans from the end of 232 or the beginning of 233 CE. Recognizing the escalating challenges at the Empire's frontiers the emperor appointed C. Messius Q. Decius Valerianus to oversee Moesia Inferior and mandated a province-wide reorganization.<sup>84</sup> This undertaking is well-documented in inscriptions; aside from constructing new fortifications, the governor implemented a comprehensive program to reconstruct roads and bridges (*pontes derutos et vias conlapsas restituit*) (Fig. 1).<sup>85</sup>

The construction of a new fort situated approximately 20 km northwest of Municipium Montanensium commenced no earlier than the spring of 233 CE. The fort was garrisoned by the cohors Gemina (milliaria) (?) Dacorum Alexandriana.<sup>86</sup> A slab with a building inscription, likely belonging to one of the structures erected in the recently established fort, has been identified. This monument is presumed to have originally been situated at the main gate or within the headquarters building. According to Nicolay Sharankov, it was initially believed that this new unit was formed either in 231–232 CE to take part in the Persian campaign or in 232–233 CE to safeguard the regions of province Moesia Inferior.<sup>87</sup> The Montana region held strategic significance due to mining activities and an important road junction. The absence of evidence in epigraphic sources regarding the participation of soldiers from Lower Moesian legions and auxiliary units in Severus Alexander's Persian expedition leads me to infer that the formation of these units was likely associated with the security of the frontiers of the province of Moesia Inferior. Herodian repeatedly references soldiers from Illyricum.<sup>88</sup> However, if we consider the *vexillationes* of the Danube provinces as the foundation of Severus Alexander's army, there is a conspicuous absence of information regarding the units from Lower Moesia.<sup>89</sup> According to Zygmunt Haszczyc, the military force under the emperor's command comprised a minimum of eleventh legions, supplemented by a suitable contingent of auxiliary troops.<sup>90</sup> However, does not specify the composition of these units or the rationale behind his assertion.

During the governorship of C. Valerius Q. Decius Valerianus, construction initiatives were underway along provincial roads, as indicated by two milestones set up between December 10, 233 CE, and December 9, 234 CE (Fig. 2). These milestones were uncovered in proximity to the roads linking Marcianopolis with Durostorum and Tropaeum Traiani.<sup>91</sup> Archaeological findings reveal that the roads originating from Marcianopolis extended towards key urban and military centers, including Melita, Nicopolis ad Istrum, Durostorum, and Odessos. The route from

<sup>81</sup> HDN 6.7.2–5.

<sup>82</sup> KRÓLCZYK 2015, pp. 145–146.

<sup>83</sup> *PIR*<sup>2</sup> D 28.

<sup>84</sup> SHARANKOV 2020, pp. 318–319.

<sup>85</sup> Building inscription: *CIL* III 14211, 1 = III 12382 = *AE* 1905, 218. Milestones: *CIL* III 12519 = *AE* 1895, 56 (Paskalevo) and *CIL* III 13758 (Shtipsko).

<sup>86</sup> The unit identified in the inscription text is further confirmed in a subsequent inscription discovered at the

same location, referred to as cohors Gemina Dacorum Gordiana (milliaria) (*CIL* III 14211).

<sup>87</sup> SHARANKOV 2020, p. 312.

<sup>88</sup> HDN 6.4.3; 6.2; 7.3.

<sup>89</sup> About the units participating in the *expeditio Persica*, see KRÓLCZYK 2013, pp. 16–27; WIEGELS 2014, pp. 97–100.

<sup>90</sup> HASZCZYC 1975, p. 205.

<sup>91</sup> SHARANKOV 2020, p. 318, footnote 58.



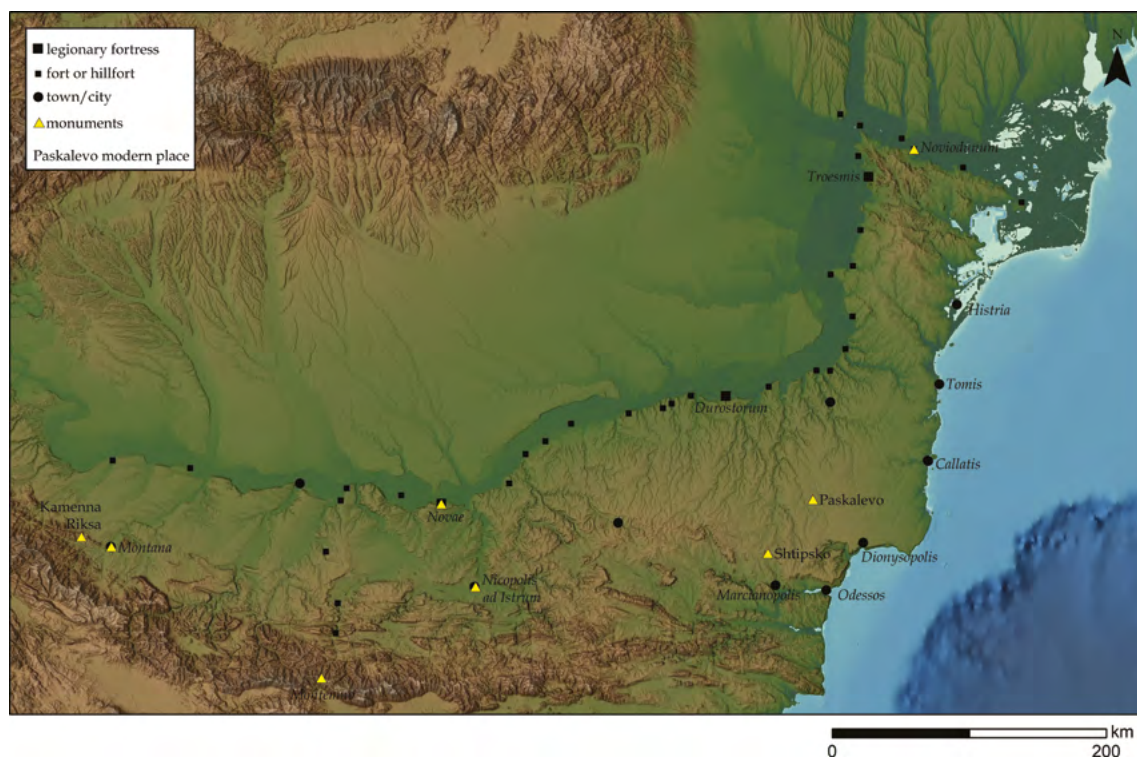


Fig. 1. Moesia Inferior. Monuments related to the governor of the province of Lower Moesia, C. Messius Q. Decius Valerianus (prepared by A. Gizińska, basemap from NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) via ArcGIS Online)

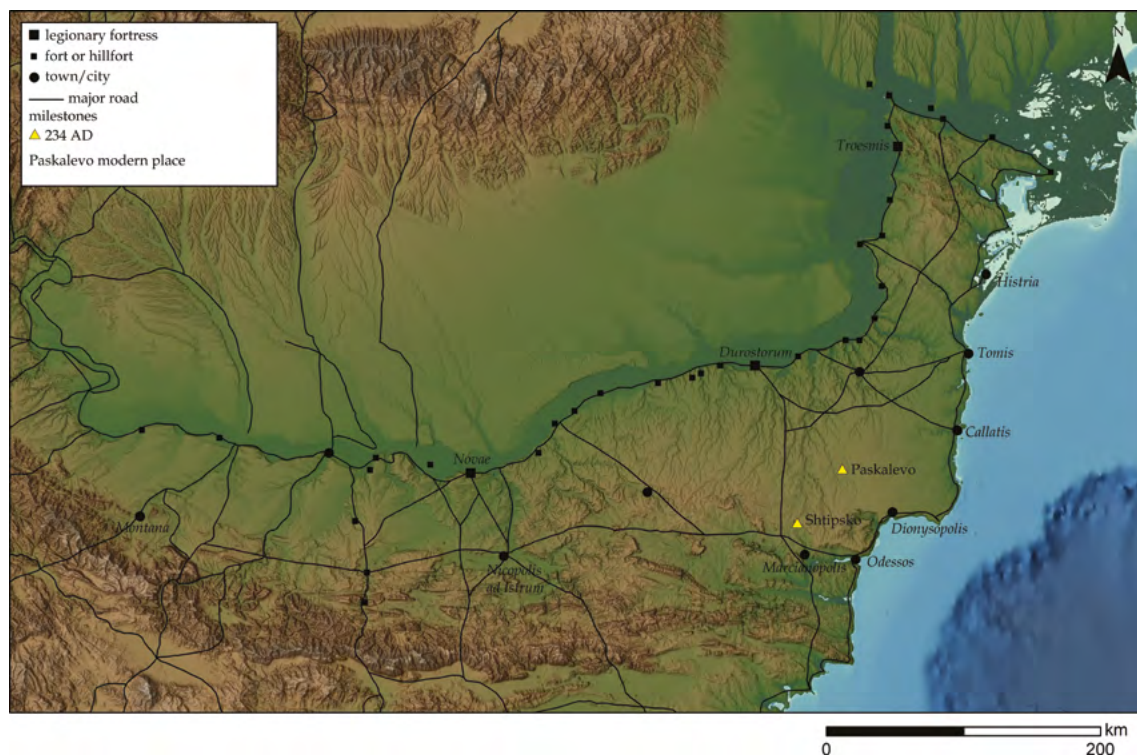


Fig. 2. Moesia Inferior. Milestones set up during the reign of Severus Alexander (prepared by A. Gizińska, basemap from NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI) via ArcGIS Online)

Durostorum to Marcianopolis served as a segment of a broader artery leading to Anchialos. This alignment is substantiated by an ancient itinerary, the *Tabula Peutingeriana*,<sup>92</sup> which designates the section between Marcianopolis and Anchialos as one of primary strategic importance.<sup>93</sup>

The first milestone was found in Shtipsko, and archaeological investigations have revealed that in ancient times, this site was traversed by the road from Durostorum to Marcianopolis.<sup>94</sup> Fragments of this road were examined during archaeological excavations,<sup>95</sup> and even as far back as the 1950s, remnants of the road were visible in the village.<sup>96</sup> According to Boris Gerov, this road, connecting Durostorum on the Danube with Marcianopolis in the province's interior, naturally evolved into one of the most crucial routes in the region.<sup>97</sup> In addition to the monument dating from the reign of Severus Alexander, another one dating from 293–305 CE was discovered in the area.<sup>98</sup> This later monument provides information about the distance of XI millia passuum, corresponding to the distance between the locations where monuments were found and Marcianopolis.<sup>99</sup>

The second monument was unearthed in the present-day village of Paskalevo, located approximately 70 km north of Marcianopolis and roughly 66 km south of Tropaeum Traiani.<sup>100</sup> This milestone provides evidence of construction activities carried out along a section of one of the province's secondary roads, which branched off from the main thoroughfare connecting Marcianopolis and Tropaeum Traiani.<sup>101</sup> In the vicinity of Tropaeum Traiani, there was a road stretching across Dobruja from south to north, commonly referred to as the central road. Fragments of this road are discernible in satellite and aerial photographs taken near Tropaeum Traiani.<sup>102</sup>

The usage of Severus Alexander's name and title in the nominative case implies that the roadwork was conducted under the direct authority of the emperor himself,<sup>103</sup> signaling his role as the overseer of the renovation or reconstruction efforts.<sup>104</sup>

### Imperial visit in Moesia Inferior

The visit of Severus Alexander and his mother, Iulia Mamaea in the province is dated to the early months of 234 CE. Following his return from the East the emperor visited Lower Moesia. This is substantiated by the discovery of an altar in Montemno, situated on the border of Thrace and Moesia Inferior.<sup>105</sup> The monument was discovered in close proximity to the highest point along the road connecting Oescus to Philippopolis. It was positioned at Montemno, a *statio* recognized from the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, and a fortified military post (*praesidium*). Historically, this road traversed through the mountains and represents a crucial connection between Thrace and Moesia Inferior. The dedication was made to Jupiter, as well as other deities, the Genius loci, and the deities of the Haemus mountains (*praesides Haemi montis*) to celebrate the joyful arrival of Severus Alexander and his mother, Iulia Mamaea. The altar was set up by the governor of the province, C. Messius Q. Decius Valerianus. During this visit, the emperor probably conducted an inspection to assess the effectiveness of the governor's efforts in securing the provincial frontiers.<sup>106</sup>

<sup>92</sup> TORBATOV 2000, p. 60.

<sup>93</sup> BEŠEVILIEV 1969, p. 485.

<sup>94</sup> *CIL* III 13758 = *AE* 2001, p. 1736.

<sup>95</sup> TORBATOV 2000, p. 65–67.

<sup>96</sup> MIRČEV, TONČEVA 1956, p. 74.

<sup>97</sup> GEROV 1975, p. 51.

<sup>98</sup> *CIL* III 142151.

<sup>99</sup> TORBATOV 2000, p. 62.

<sup>100</sup> *CIL* III 12519.

<sup>101</sup> PANAITE 2012, p. 75.

<sup>102</sup> PANAITE, MIU 2016, pp. 207–208 and footnote 98.

<sup>103</sup> BĂRBULESCU, CÂTEIA 1998, p. 123.

<sup>104</sup> GIZIŃSKA, forthcoming.

<sup>105</sup> *CIL* III 13724 = *ILBulg* 264.

<sup>106</sup> SHARANKOV 2020, pp. 318–319.

The inscription, along with the suggested visit of Severus Alexander to Lower Moesia, appears to pose a contradiction with established written records. The biography *vita Alexandri Severi* under the fictitious name Aelius Lampridius, provides an account of the emperor's triumph in Rome, celebrating his victory over the Sassanids.<sup>107</sup> Scholars widely concur on the timing of this event, with near unanimity indicating that the emperor arrived in Italy during the late summer of 233 CE.<sup>108</sup> In the *vita Alexandri Severi*,<sup>109</sup> it is recorded that the emperor was scheduled to commemorate his triumph on September 25, the seventh day before the October kalends.

However, it is reasonable to infer that Severus Alexander did not, in fact, observe the triumph on September 25, 233 CE in Rome. This assumption is supported by the understanding that he was not present in Italy during that period and had not yet returned.<sup>110</sup> In the SHA, only the daily and monthly dates are provided, without explicit mention of the year. The assignment of the year 233 CE is a deduction made by contemporary scholars. Werner Eck's comprehensive analysis conclusively demonstrates that from 232 to 235 CE, the title of *proconsul* consistently features in the imperial designation. The title of *proconsul* is notably absent from all imperial decrees issued between 222–231 CE.<sup>111</sup> It is presumed that during this period, the emperor remained primarily in Rome and Italy. The title reemerges solely in military diplomas issued from the start of January 232 CE.<sup>112</sup> This means that the emperor travelled directly from the East to Germania.<sup>113</sup> This is further confirmed by Herodian himself, who mentions that upon receiving reports of Germanic crossings over the Rhine and Danube,<sup>114</sup> the emperor immediately ordered his troops to march. He left some forces to defend the eastern frontier and proceeded with the remainder against the Germans.<sup>115</sup> Severus Alexander was expected to reach the Rhine by the autumn of 234 CE.

The legate of the legio I Italica, Fonteius Maximus, erected a monument on May 1, 233 CE, most likely in connection with Severus Alexander's "victory" over the Sassanids or his visit to Moesia Inferior.<sup>116</sup> The preserved text constitutes the final part of the dedication; however, it is likely that the remaining portion of the inscription was located on another plate or plates. According to T. Sarnowski, this fragment is believed to be the faceplate of the plinth of an equestrian monument of Severus Alexander, situated in the courtyard of the headquarters building.<sup>117</sup>

A statue base<sup>118</sup> erected by the governor of Moesia Inferior, most likely related to the visit of Severus Alexander and his mother in Danubian provinces, is known from Noviodunum.<sup>119</sup> It cannot be ruled out that it was related to the end of the Persian campaign. A similar honorific inscription is known from Nicopolis ad Istrum. C. Messius Q. Decius Valerianus also erected the statue base.<sup>120</sup>

A monument identified in Montana was also set up by C. Messius Q. Decius Valerianus, presumably dedicated during his tenure as governor of Moesia Inferior when he was also appointed governor of Lower Germania.<sup>121</sup> This is evident from the inscription's wording, which refers to him as *legatus Augusti pro praetore provinciarum Moesiae itemque Germaniae inferiorum*. C. Messius Q. Decius Valerianus erected the monument upon his assignment to Germania Inferior. Montana is situated near the western border of the province of Moesia Inferior. According to Nicolay Sharankov, the favorable outcomes of the reorganization of the province overseen by C. Messius Q. Decius Valerianus led to his appointment as the governor of Lower Germania.

<sup>107</sup> HA *Alex. Sev.* 56–57.

<sup>108</sup> HOPKINS 1907, p. 235; HALFMANN 1986, p. 252; KRÓLCZYK 2015, p. 27; KIENAST, ECK, HEIL 2017, p. 171.

<sup>109</sup> HA *Alex. Sev.* 56.

<sup>110</sup> ECK 2019, p. 266.

<sup>111</sup> ECK 2019, pp. 259–261.

<sup>112</sup> RMD V 471a–b = AE 2001, 2160.

<sup>113</sup> ECK 2019, pp. 264–268.

<sup>114</sup> HDN 7.7.2.

<sup>115</sup> HDN 6.7.5–6.

<sup>116</sup> IGLNovae 71 = ILNovae 50 = AE 1987, 862.

<sup>117</sup> SARNOWSKI 1989, pp. 97–120.

<sup>118</sup> AE 1977, 761 = ISM V 269.

<sup>119</sup> SHARANKOV 2020, p. 318.

<sup>120</sup> IGBulg II 640.

<sup>121</sup> AE 1985, 752.

This event is likely connected to the emperor's preparations for the Germanic expedition taking place in 234–235 CE.<sup>122</sup> If the unveiling of the monument and the emperor's visit to Moesia Inferior occurred in early 234 CE, then Severus Alexander, along with C. Messius Q. Decius Valerianus, the newly appointed governor of Germania Inferior, would have had sufficient time to reach the Rhine by the autumn of 234 CE. What is intriguing, the epithet *invictus* is inscribed on the monument. This epithet first appeared in epigraphic sources as early as 230 CE. However, it gained broader significance when added to the imperial title during the immediate lead-up to the expedition against Ardashir I. This is evident from inscriptions carved on milestones dating back to 231 CE, which likely commemorate victories over the Persians.<sup>123</sup>

## Summary

The final years of Severus Alexander's reign witnessed escalating unrest along the frontiers of the Roman Empire. These challenges compelled the emperor to take decisive measures to safeguard the frontiers. In Lower Moesia, a notable instance of imperial intervention in the province was the initiatives led by C. Messius Q. Decius Valerianus. Under his direction, substantial investments were allocated to the construction of new fortifications and the restoration of crucial roadways within the region.<sup>124</sup>

Epigraphic sources provide evidence of an imperial visit to Moesia Inferior in 234 CE. The emperor's itinerary likely took him from Antioch to Byzantium, proceeding through Thrace. Near the Trojan Pass and *praesidium* at Montemno, he crossed the border between Thrace and Lower Moesia, where he met with C. Messius Q. Decius Valerianus. The province Thrace was traversed by the major Roman road, *via Egnatia*.<sup>125</sup> The visit may have been related to an inspection aimed at assessing the governor's handling of the province's reorganization efforts and then with his appointment as governor of Lower Germania. This action by Emperor Severus Alexander indicates his appreciation for the governor's effective administration and reorganization of the province of Moesia Inferior, particularly during a period when the Empire faced a burgeoning crisis. It appears that the governor had earned the emperor's trust, as evidenced by his selection to address another major challenge—the Germanic expedition. Additionally, it is worth noting that if C. Messius Q. Decius Valerianus had indeed awaited the emperor's arrival at the province's border, he might have received prior notice of the emperor's readiness to journey westward. This would indicate that other inscriptions from Moesia Inferior commemorate a visit that *de facto* did not have to take place.

*Profectio* (or *adventus*) monetary emissions are documented from Tomis, indicating that minting may have occurred during Severus Alexander's potential visit to the city, possibly upon

<sup>122</sup> SHARANKOV 2020, p. 319.

<sup>123</sup> KRÓLCZYK 2015, p. 150.

<sup>124</sup> Some parallels can be drawn regarding the appointment of specific individuals and the initiation of particular projects in the provinces during the last years of Severus Alexander's reign, such as the career of Rustilius Pudens Crispinus (*PIR*<sup>2</sup> R 257). He is mentioned on 14 milestones from Thrace (*IGBulg* III,1 897; *IGBulg* III,1 898; *IGBulg* III,1, 1372; *IGBulg* III,1 1382; *IGBulg* III,2 1697; *IGBulg* III,2 1704; *IGBulg* III,2 1827; *IGBulg* IV 1982a; *IGBulg* IV 2021; *IGBulg* IV 2040; *AE* 1978, 726 = *IGBulg* V 5604; *AE* 1992, 1511; *AE* 1995, 1371), suggesting his involvement in road construction projects

within the province. Indicating a possible connection to Emperor Severus Alexander's Persian campaign (GERASIMOVA-TOMOVA, HOLLENSTEIN 1978, p. 113). Furthermore, by 232/33 CE at the latest, Crispinus was appointed as the governor of the province of Syria Phoenicia. As highlighted by Danuta Okoń, this appointment must have been significant in Crispinus's career, as it likely involved his participation in the war with Persia and solidified his close association with the emperor (OKOŃ 2012, p. 209).

<sup>125</sup> Helmut Halfmann suggests that Severus Alexander opted for the *via Egnatia* as his route eastward in 231 CE (HALFMANN 1986, p. 231).

his return from the East.<sup>126</sup> The approximate date of issue of these coins is 231–235 CE.<sup>127</sup> However, there is no specific information confirming the emperor's presence there at that time.<sup>128</sup> It is also theoretically plausible that he traveled from the East to Moesia Inferior through the *Pontus Euxinus*, eventually reaching Tomis and then to the western border of Moesia Inferior. This hypothesis could provide an explanation for the road repairs conducted in the vicinity of present-day Paskalevo and Shtipsko. Utilizing the roads, one could travel from Tomis to the vicinity of Marcianopolis, from where both milestones are known. Parallel to the *limes* road, an interior route within the province connected Black Sea coast – Odessos – Marcianopolis – Nicopolis ad Istrum – Melta – Montana and Bononia.<sup>129</sup> Roman roads were built for a variety of purposes, including military, economic and political,<sup>130</sup> however, road repairs were not always motivated solely by technical reasons, as the concentration of milestones in a particular area within a short period of time could be associated with the planned visit of the emperor.<sup>131</sup>

In the beginning of the third century CE, or at least in the first half of the third century CE the responsibility for military deployments in Crimea was primarily shouldered by a *vexillatio* consisting mainly of soldiers from the legio XI Claudia.<sup>132</sup> At the beginning of the third century CE, there was a change in the garrison at Tyras, with the introduction of the aforementioned unit. Evidence suggests that officers and soldiers from the legion were present also in Chersonesus,<sup>133</sup> Balaklava,<sup>134</sup> and Cape of Ai-Todor.<sup>135</sup> During the reign of the Severan dynasty, stamped building materials bearing the stamps of the legio XI Claudia were discovered in both Chersonesus and its *chora*, including Balaklava, Kazackaja, Cape of Ai-Todor, and Alma Kermen.<sup>136</sup>

Both Chersonesus, Balaklava, and the Cape of Ai-Todor were abandoned at the end of the Severan dynasty. Nearby outposts, which were predominantly manned by soldiers from the legio XI Claudia, were also deserted during this period.<sup>137</sup> The exact date of the Roman garrison's departure from these places is unknown. It is speculated that this occurred in the mid-third century CE.<sup>138</sup> With the end of Severus's reign, the army withdrew from Taurica. However, it remains unclear whether this withdrawal extended to garrisons in cities such as Tyras and Olbia.

It is likely that Lower Moesian units did not participate in Severus Alexander's Persian campaign, or at least epigraphic sources do not confirm their involvement.<sup>139</sup> The absence of Moesian units in the *expeditio Persica* could indeed be linked to threats posed by barbarian tribes. This hypothesis may be supported by the activities of C. Messius Q. Decius Valerianus in the province, including extensive efforts related to its reorganization, as well as the expansion of baths in Sexaginta Prista, which may indicate an increase in the number of soldiers stationed at the fort.

It is conceivable that the withdrawal of soldiers from the northern Black Sea region (Tyras, Chersonesus, etc.) was not coincidental but rather driven by security considerations. Lower

<sup>126</sup> Type *profectio* or *adventus*: AMNG no. 3253; VARBANOV 2005, no. 5423 and 5427. Type trophy with prisoners: AMNG no. 3255 and 3272; VARBANOV 2005, no. 5411.

<sup>127</sup> BELDIANU 2019, pp. 315–316.

<sup>128</sup> ISM II 92 (58) = AE 2016, 6 = ISM VI.2 92; STOIAN 1962, 108–109, no. 12. From Tomis, there is an altar erected by the council and the citizens with a dedication to Iulia Mamaea. Iorgu Stoian (STOIAN 1962, pp. 108–109, no. 12) was of the opinion that the monument was set up in connection with the unrest on the frontiers of the Empire that emerged in the final years of Severus Alexander's reign. However, there is no direct information about an imperial visit to Tomis.

<sup>129</sup> PANAIT 2012, p. 73; PANAIT 2015, p. 596.

<sup>130</sup> WIELOWIEJSKI 1984, p. 61.

<sup>131</sup> KOLENDO, ŻELAZOWSKI 2003, p. 131.

<sup>132</sup> SARNOWSKI 1988, p. 144.

<sup>133</sup> ZUBAR' 2000, pp. 249–251.

<sup>134</sup> KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI 2015, p. 75. In the early third century CE, the fort underwent expansion, and the Roman military presence in Crimea was reinforced during the reign of Septimius Severus.

<sup>135</sup> ZUBAR' 1998, p. 118; SARNOWSKI 2006; KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI 2015, pp. 103–104.

<sup>136</sup> SARNOWSKI 2000, pp. 219–224; SARNOWSKI 2006, p. 98.

<sup>137</sup> KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI 2015, pp. 36, 164–66.

<sup>138</sup> SON 1993, p. 53.

<sup>139</sup> KRÓLCZYK 2013, pp. 16–27; WIEGELS 2014, pp. 97–100.

Moesia, facing threats from barbarian tribes, underwent reorganization under the provincial governor, possibly necessitating an increase in military personnel. This could explain the secondment from the aforementioned areas. It is likely that the *vexillationes* were withdrawn from Taurica and possibly from Tyras (and Olbia?) to reinforce military garrisons along the Danube, including those at Sexaginta Prista. These movements reflected the policies prevailing during the increasingly incompetent reign of Severus Alexander. While Lower Moesia was secured in the short term, the situation ultimately led to disastrous consequences in the following decades.

The last years of Severus Alexander's reign and the situation in Moesia Inferior from 230 to 235 CE can thus be summarized as:

- Severus Alexander commissioned C. Messius Q. Decius Valerianus with the reorganization of the province. Under his governance in Moesia Inferior, various projects were undertaken, including the construction of roads and bridges, as well as the fortification of new structures.
- Emperor Severus Alexander and his mother made a visit to the province of Moesia Inferior in 234 CE, as evidenced by an altar found in Montemno. This visit, along with the title of *proconsul*, contradicts the notion presented in written sources such as the *Historia Augusta* and the late Roman historian Festus, which suggest that the emperor triumphed in Rome in 233 CE.
- *Vexillationes* composed primarily of soldiers and officers from the legio XI Claudia were withdrawn from areas along the northern coast of the Black Sea and outposts situated *extra fines Imperii*. Simultaneously, there is a possibility that a portion of the army was also withdrawn from the cities of Tyras and Olbia (which had been part of the province of Moesia Inferior since the reign of Septimius Severus). This withdrawal left the cities vulnerable and contributed to their susceptibility to initial invasions by barbarian tribes.
- The construction activities within the garrison baths in Sexaginta Prista might have been connected to either the enlargement of the stationed garrisons or the anticipated expansion of the garrison itself. It is likely that the detachments of the legio XI Claudia were secondment to the lower Danube from northwestern part of Black Sea towards the end of Severus Alexander's reign. Building materials stamped with stamps of the legio XI Claudia are known from Sexaginta Prista.<sup>140</sup>
- The invasion of barbarian tribes into the province of Moesia Inferior appears to have been neither a singular nor unexpected event. While their large-scale incursions are recorded from 238 CE onwards, archaeological evidence suggests that these incursions may have commenced in the final years of Severus Alexander's reign.
- There are no epigraphic sources validating the involvement of the Moesian legions in Severus Alexander's Persian campaign. The absence of *vexillationes* from Moesia Inferior suggests that the precarious situation within the province and the unrest along its frontier precluded the possibility of deploying troops alongside the emperor in the East.

## Abbreviations

<i>AE</i>	<i>L'Année épigraphique</i> , Paris.
AMNG	Die antiken Münzen Nord-Griechenlands, Vol. 2, eds. B. PICK, K. REGLING, Berlin 1910.
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> , ed. Th. MOMMSEN <i>et alii</i> , Berlin 1863–

<sup>140</sup> *AE* 1944, 6; *AE* 1944, 7; *AE* 1944, 8 = *CIL* III 12527; *AE* 1944, 9.

<i>IGLNovae</i>	J. KOLENDO, V. BOŽILOVA, <i>Inscriptions grecques et latines de Novae (Mésie inférieure)</i> (= <i>Ausonius – Publications. Mémoires</i> 1), Bordeaux 1997.
<i>ILBulg</i> <i>ILNovae</i>	B. GEROV, <i>Inscriptiones Latinae in Bulgaria Repertae</i> , Serdicae 1989. V. BOŽILOVA, J. KOLENDO, L. MROZEWICZ, <i>Inscriptions latines de Novae</i> , Poznań 1992.
<i>IOSPE I<sup>2</sup></i>	B. LATYŠEV, <i>Inscriptiones antiquae Orae Septentrionalis Ponti Euxini. Inscriptiones Tyrae, Olbiae, Chersonesi Tauricae aliorum locorum a Danubio usque ad regnum Bosporanum</i> , second edition, Petropoli 1916.
<i>ISM II</i>	<i>Inscriptiile antice din Dacia și Scythia Minor. 2. Inscriptiile din Scythia Minor grecești și latine. 2. Tomis și teritoriul său</i> , ed. I. STOIAN, București 1987.
<i>ISM V</i>	<i>Inscriptiile antice din Dacia și Scythia Minor. 2. Inscriptiile din Scythia Minor grecești și latine. 5. Capidava, Troesmis, Noviodunum</i> , ed. E. DORUȚIU-BOILĂ, București 1980.
<i>ISM VI.2</i>	<i>Inscriptions grecques et latines de Scythie mineure. Volume 6. Suppléments. Fascicule 2, Tomis et son territoire</i> , eds. A. AVRAM, M. BĂRBULESCU, L. BUZOIANU, București 2018.
<i>RMD V</i>	P. A. HOLDER, <i>Roman Military Diplomas V</i> , London 2006.

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