

The Military Ranks in Roman Dacia.

- abstract -

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All the sources categories, epigraphical, literary and archaeological, together with the precious contributions of the contemporary scientists, must be a solid foundation for the purpose of this thesis, for the study of the military hierarchy in Dacia, in its professional coordinate. The most complex aspect is by far the hierarchy of soldiers. The richness of information offered by the epigraphical sources is the primordial ingredient, in this matter Dacia topping the table of the number of attestations. As an example, if in the northern province the number of attestations of veterans is over 100, in the two Germanies it barely comes to 13. This is a fertile environment for this study. Unfortunately, the less documented aspect in Dacia is that of promotions and careers. Thus, the understanding of military hierarchy in all the Empire is very valuable.

Following the perpetual advice of the supervisor of this paper, that one cannot understand the history of Roman Dacia, unless in the wider context of the Roman Empire, and by studying the general phenomenon, I tried to understand the multitude of ranks and functions in the soldier careers, as they have been approached in the rest of the academic world. Thus, the research has moved from general to particular, starting with the literary sources and monographical contemporary studies, and reaching the individual epigraphical sources, in a certain category of officer or feature. Each type of Roman military unit was decrypted in the matters of organization and size, because the connections between them are

very tight, especially in the matters of personell and officers, as elements of the same ensemble, functional in all the Mediteranean.

For the purpose of systematization, I followed the approach of Domaszewski, dating from more than 100 years. He divided the military ranks in several categories: soldier ranks – *principales*, centurions and *primipili*, equestrian and senatorial officers. This structure has been borrowed in all the major studies regardin Roman military hierarchy.

The first chapter of the thesis looks upon the organization and size of the military units in the time of the Principate. I considered it necessary as a theoretical prologue for the following chapters, and also to avoid repetition when the situation would call for these notions, later in the study. I separated the Rome cohorts, the legions and the auxiliary units, trying to decrypt as much as possible their size and organization of each one. Finally, I attempted the registry of the military units stationed in Dacia.

The second chapter is concentrated on the soldier hierarchy, under the centurionate, called *Immunes and principales*. It started with the clarifying of the terminology and general notions about all these soldier categories, as well as their military decorations and pay. It continued with the separate study on each military unit type, in the same order, the Rome cohorts, the legions and the auxiliary units. The *immunes* and *principales* have been presented in their decreasing hierarchy, in each of their rank the following aspects being traced: 1) the nature and signification of the rank/function, 2) its hierarchical position inside the unit and 3) its perspectives for promotion and career. Where information was abundant, I developed the discussion, trying to update the study, at the same time concentrating it. After the study of the general hierarchy of every unit type, the part referring to Dacia followed. I applied the same structure, trying to better present the information by adding statistical tables. In the case of the legions, each one was approached separately, because the quantity of evidence was considerable, but for the auxiliary units I was compelled to a more general study, because the number of attestations for each unit was not usable. However, in a last part of the chapter, I attempted to unify the lower hierarchy of the Roman army in Dacia, especially in the well defined environment of the *officia* of the superior officers.

The third chapter is called the *centurions*. Although concentrated on a single rank, its size is comparable to the previous, exactly because of its complexity and amplitude. Methodologically, I excluded from this category the auxiliary centurions and decurions,

because their hierarchical position is clearly inferior to the legionary centurions, a limited and self-sufficient of professional Roman officers. Only the centurions of the Rome cohorts are included, because they stand on the same rank as their legionary colleagues, maybe being privileged because of their place of service. The centurionate is a complex and treacherous matter. Its study must be made from many perspectives, and still it is hiding most of the features that determine its existence. I started with the origins of the centurionate, in the Republican army and in the first century BC, as I thought necessary the early evolution of the rank for its future development. In continued with a section dedicated to the general notions of the centurionate during the Principate, then with the study of its many aspects. First, the origins of centurions and the promotion to the centurionate are two vital matters for the understanding of the rank's nature and structure, especially in the Roman world, where origins are vital for the life and career of an individual. The next section is dedicated to the hierarchy of centurions, and is probably the most difficult, because of many reasons. First, the apparent silence of the sources prevent us from categorically adopt one of the study directions. Second, because the actual state and behaviour of the Roman army is a matter basically unknown, the difference between theory and practice being traceable in the study of the many sources categories. It is followed by the section dedicated to the centurions of the Rome cohorts, that are closely related to their legionary colleagues, many times their activity being extended in the legions. Plus, they have the leading role in the conservation of the tactical and loyal unity of the army, at least in the first two centuries of the Principate. Subsequently, I approached the multitude of uses of the centurion in the Roman army and administration, as extraordinary functions of the centurion. Their review has revealed an impressive versatility of the rank, implicated practically in all the organization aspects of the Roman authority. Connected to the study of the pay and decorations of the centurions, their social status has been also investigated, considering the belonging of the military to the lower social strata. Finally, the legionary centurions of Dacia have been studied in as many aspects as those of the Empire, as mentioned before: origin, access, career, functions, social status. I excluded those that have taken part in the Dacian Wars but haven't remained as active officers in the provincial army, as well as those serving in one of the Dacian legions while they were garrisoned in other provinces.

A fourth chapter is dedicated to the *primipili* and *primipilares*. Although the first are a category, the highest, of centurions, and the study of both must be done together, I processed this separation not absolutely, as I often mentioned the "embryonic" connection of both of these categories, but to facilitate the study of the truly first kind of privileged professional officer. For them, only the formality of the one-year service as *primus pilus* of a legion stands in the way of social and economic achievement which awaits for them in the equestrian order. I began with the presentation of the rank of *primus pilus* and the access to it, as the ending point of the centurional career of a certain character. The second part is dedicated to *primipilares*, for the study of their status and careers. In this matter, I divided the subject on two echelons of the career, the legionary one, as *praefectus castrorum*, with a development towards *praefectus castrorum Aegypti* and the changes in military command at the middle of the third century AD, and the other, equestrian. After this I touched also the matter of their status and economic, social and religious role. In all these aspects, they are the only true category of military that leave a traceable mark, as privileged members of their communities. They are the expression of a long term struggle of the soldier to become officer, of the humble to become honest. Finally, I analysed the *primipili* and *primipilares* attested in Dacia, from all these points of view.

In the final part, I attempted the unification the main conclusions of the paper as a separate chapter of general conclusions, in which to enounce clearer the main study coordinates and the main results. For the better understanding and recognition of characters, I included a series of illustrations and central tables, in every chapter as the need occurred but also at the end for data unification and systematization.

As the bibliography is concerned, I tried to access the primary sources as well as the specialized papers and thesis, following the normal chronological course. I used the British citing norms as I thought easier the following of the large number of footnotes.

Ideally we should see and understand matters as they actually were, not as they should be, so Roman military hierarchy unfortunately still has many secrets for us. Some I tried to understand and express them for others to understand, but aware of my limits and the errors that can occur at any time. Even if this is not a high class innovation, it is very well documented, and constituted as a starting point for the further study of military hierarchy.