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**ASPECTS OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE AUXILIARY FORT
FROM BUCIUMI (SĂLAJ COUNTY) BASED ON THE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS**

- ABSTRACT -

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Cluj-Napoca

2013

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Keywords: Roman army, auxiliary fort from Buciumi, everyday life, military diet, military production, supply of the forts, Roman pottery, barracks.

ABSTRACT

The thesis intends to investigate the military community from the auxiliary fort of Buciumi in *Dacia Porolissensis* using a different approach than the classical Roman army studies related to the province of Dacia. The aim of the research is to reconstruct certain aspects of everyday life within the abovementioned fort, based on the analysis of the specific archaeological data, consisting mainly of the finds analysis and distribution patterns within the assemblages while taking into consideration the wider context of military everyday life within the Roman Empire during the first three centuries of the Principate. The concept of everyday life is defined from a sociological, anthropological historical point of view, and adjusted to the requirements of the research concerning the Roman army.

The primary source for this investigation consists of the ceramic assemblages discovered in the barracks of the fort from Buciumi in the period between 1971 and 1976, hitherto unpublished. The historical narrative concerning the everyday life of the Roman soldiers is based on the results of the archaeological investigations during the last decades, mainly from Western Europe and on the data offered by the sub-literary record (papyri, writing tablets, *ostraca*).

The analysis of the ceramic assemblages offers the possibility for the study of a wide range of aspects related to the way of life of the communities of the Roman Empire, including trade, production, diet, thus bringing forward general problems regarding the cultural traits and means of identity expression of certain groups and social categories otherwise inaccessible for research.

The thesis comprises six chapters, followed by bibliography, the list of illustrations and the plates.

Chapter 1 (Introduction) comprises general aspects concerning the subject at hand as well as the object, methodology and general approach. In the first part emphasis is placed on the object and the necessity of this type of investigation, as well as the reasons behind the choice of the site. The auxiliary fort from Buciumi is currently among the most completely researched military sites within Roman Dacia in addition to being just one of the few forts where the majority of the

identified barrack blocks were extensively excavated. The vast and extremely diverse archaeological material resulted from the last few research campaigns in the fort has also benefited from an enhanced finds registration system, unlike the material from the monograph catalogue, the majority of the finds can be associated with some kind of spatial information.

Chapter 2 (The study of everyday life in the Roman military environment. Aspects concerning the history of research, terminology and methodology) comprises the definition of the concept of everyday life in the context of the Roman military during the Principate, as well as the classification of the topics and fields of enquiry pertaining to this line of investigation.

The classification is based on both thematic aspects, and aspects which are determined by the different types of approaches in the field. Due to its complex nature the subject is reflected in the archaeological literature as a group of wide-ranging research topics, which focus on different aspects related to the life in the Roman forts. The classification comprises the following topics: 1) supply of goods to the forts, 2) military architecture and use of space, 3) manufacture and crafts (military production), 4) “military diet”, 5) daily routine and recurrent activities within the forts, 6) military identity.

Chapter 3 (The sub-literary sources concerning the everyday life of the Roman soldiers during the Principate) comprises the analysis of the sub-literary record consisting of *papyri*, wooden inscribed tablets and *ostraca*, which offer the most conclusive evidence concerning life in the forts. The data offered by the official sources, as well as the personal correspondence of the soldiers has the potential of corroborating and decisively contributing to interpretation of the archaeological data. The most important aspects in this case are the following: 1) the administration and the bureaucratic system of the forts, 2) the daily activities and duties of the men, 3) the supply of the forts and the personal supply of the soldiers, 4) food and drink consumption in the forts. Among the *papyri*, the most significant are the official reports concerning military operations, the duties of the men and the state of the troops which were drawn up periodically, the most detailed of these being the annual reports, the so-called *pridiana*. Another part of these documents are comprised by the personal correspondence of the soldiers which contain equally valuable references to the life in the forts. The analysis of these documents have revealed important aspects concerning the particular tasks and daily activities performed by the various ranks of soldiers and officers as well as aspects concerning the frequent missions involving

detachments from the unit, often to other forts. The latter aspect had an important effect on the study of troop mobility within the provinces.

Chapter 4 (The auxiliary fort from Buciumi) comprises the general information concerning the geographical position, the strategic significance and the garrison of the fort, as well as a detailed presentation of the history of research and state of publication.

Chapter 5 (The pottery finds from the barracks of the fort discovered between 1971 and 1976) is the main chapter of the thesis. The chapter comprises an evaluation of the terminology employed in Roman pottery studies (the duality of Latin and modern terms), and sets the principles of the terminology used in the present study, as well as the description of the typological system, the typological classification followed by the catalogue of the finds. The next step of the investigation consists of the evaluation of the technological and functional aspects.

The analysis of the pottery is divided into two sections: 1) the examination of the ceramic recipients, and 2) the analysis of the ceramic objects, including small-finds (lamps, statuettes, sling shots, crucibles and moulds). The quantification of this material was achieved using a Microsoft Access 2013 database. The data was subsequently exported in Microsoft Word tables in the case of the coarsewares (the common pottery) and in the form of an analytical catalogue in the case of the special categories.

The analysis of the pottery vessels is based on an integrated approach comprising three complementary levels of investigation which are in some instances intertwining: 1) typology, 2) technology, and 3) functional analysis. The first stage of this approach consists of the typological classification of the vessels. According to the preliminary grouping, the category termed as coarsewares which makes up 89% of the entire assemblage, can be divided into three large functional categories: 1) cooking wares, 2) tablewares and 3) utilitarian wares. The formal analysis is based on the typological system developed by J.Cl. Gardin.

The category of cooking ware consists of the following types of recipients: pots, jars (38%), carinated bowls (10%) and platters (52%).

The tablewares consisting of vessels for serving food and for drinking are presented jointly mainly because they were employed as part of the same phenomenon, furthermore in some instances the multiple functionality of these vessels cannot be ruled out, especially in the case of the small size bowls. The category consists of: bowls (65%), plates (11%) and platters (15%), in the case of the vessels for serving food, and beaker (2%), small size bowls (6%) and cups (1%).

The category of utilitarian wares consists of a wide range of vessel types with varied functionality. The common feature of these vessels is their adjacent role in the process of preparing and serving foods. The category includes jugs (38%), pitchers (23%), *dolia* (25%), *mortaria* (10%), strainers (3%) and table amphorae (1%).

During the period between 1963 and 1970, 23 *terra sigillata* fragments were discovered in the fort, of which 20 come from the barrack blocks of the *praetentura*, while the second period of excavations (1971-1976) has revealed fragments deriving from 39 vessels. The majority of the fragments belong to the type of bowl Dragendorff 37 (15 pieces), followed by cups of the type Dragendorff 33 (6 pieces), while the other types are represented by one or two fragments (Dragendorff 35, Dragendorff 36, Curle 15, Curle 21, Curle 23, Ludowici Tg, Déchelette 72), 7 fragments being undeterminable from a typological point of view.

Among the archaeological material discovered during the period of the early '70's, a total number of 5 amphorae could be identified. Among these two belong to the Dressel 6B type, further two are consistent with the type known as Zeest 90, while one fragment belongs to the somewhat enigmatic type Aquincum 78. With the exception of the Aquincum 78 type, for which the contents are uncertain, all of the fragments come from amphorae produced for the transportation of olive oil.

Hitherto, fragments coming from 12 vessels included in the category of local imitations of *terra sigillata* have been identified. Nearly all pieces are imitations of plain *terra sigillata* types, with the notable exception of two copies belonging to bowls of the type Dragendorff 37 with cut-glass decoration.

Among the imitations of *terra sigillata*, one fragment belonging to a plate (Curle 15) displays a *graffito* revealing the name of the owner, who, according to the inscription was a simple soldier (*miles*) in the unit. Further vessels belonging to the special categories include: a base deriving from a thin-walled beaker, imported probably from Northern-Italy, two fragments of glazed vessels, and two miniature vessels.

The ceramic objects and small finds display a high degree of variety. Hitherto a number of 59 lamps were identified and published the majority coming from the barrack blocks, to which we can add further three newly identified fragments. From a typological point of view, the lamps from the barracks of the fort can be included in the following four types: 1) *Firmalampen* (Loeschcke

IX-X), 2) Loeschcke I and Loeschcke I *similis*, 3) Loeschcke VIII, and 4) circular wheel-made lamps.

The category of metalworking tools includes three finds: two crucibles and one ceramic mould fragment used for copper-alloy casting. In addition, the finds catalogue of the monograph contains a number of 33 ceramic crucibles, among them three completely preserved pieces. The majority of the finds were discovered in 'barrack no. 5', which functioned probably as a workshop.

During the first research campaigns, a number of 34 ceramic gaming counters were discovered in the fort. Further 17 pieces were discovered during the last campaigns between 1971 and 1976.

The number of sling shots known at the moment is 44. Almost all of the pieces are ceramic. Subsequently a further 27 unpublished pieces have been identified. The vast majority consists of ceramic pieces (20), while the rest is made up by small pebbles, or worked limestone and sandstone.

In addition to the five terracotta statuettes published in the monograph, one completely preserved piece, depicting the goddess Venus was identified among the unpublished finds. The *ronde bosse* image of the goddess is standing on a rectangular pedestal.

The incense burners, known as *turibula* are usually associated with cultic activity. A total number of 22 pieces were discovered in the barracks of the fort.

Chapter 6 comprises the conclusions concerning the everyday life in the fort from Buciumi based on the results of the typological, technological and functional analysis.

1) Various aspects concerning the problem of the supply of goods to the fort could be discussed with regard to the terra sigillata and the *amphorae*. With regard to the terra sigillata, the total absence of the material dated to the beginning of the 2nd century potentially indicates the lack of supply during the period of the Dacian conflicts. Furthermore, the small number of fragments dated in the 3rd century appears to be in accordance with the general situation across the Empire attributed either to a decrease in production or to a change in the manner of consumption. Concerning the sources of supply, it has to be pointed out that a single dominating source could not be identified, the vast majority of the pieces originating from the production centres of Lezoux and Rheinzabern. This fact suggests the existence of a relatively diverse market characterised by a certain degree of competition between the great producers of *terra sigillata* in the Empire.

The small number of *amphorae* is in an apparent contradiction with certain theories concerning the Roman military diet. Similar situations have been documented in various provinces lately. The situation accounts for the fact that contrary to previous opinions, the use of olive oil was generally restricted to the officers, all fragments in the case of the fort from Buciumi coming from the centurion's quarters. The total absence of vine amphorae points to the fact that this product was probably supplied locally or regionally, in which case the use of *amphorae* was redundant.

2) The problem of military production can be asserted with regard to two different situations: the products of the so-called legionary ware and the activity of the fort workshop, the *fabrica*. A number of aspects indicate that the pottery assemblage from the fort of Buciumi is consistent with the category termed legionary ware. As shown in the case of the legionary fortress from *Apulum*, the production which was aimed towards the military gradually spread into the civilian environment. The potters who engaged in this production probably followed the unit during its transfer from Pannonia as indicated by the similar features of the *Pannonian* production. The surprisingly high number of crucibles discovered in the fort could indicate potential special attributes regarding metalworking.

3) The data referring to the military diet in the fort from Buciumi are mainly based on the analysis of the functional categories of the pottery assemblage (tablewares, cooking ware and utilitarian wares). The analysis comprises three stages: the evaluation of the structure of each category, the functional analysis based on the technological aspects, and the physical traces of use.

4) With regard to the problem of the daily activities in the fort emphasis is placed on three aspects: 1) the cultic activities of the soldiers, 2) leisure activities and 3) the problem of illumination in the *contubernia* of the barracks as an essential condition for activities in an enclosed environment. The leisure activities are documented by numerous features. First of all we have to take into account the high number of gaming counters as well as the gaming boards. The consistent number of cult-related objects (incense burners, face pots, *terracotta* statuettes) suggests on the one hand the practice of cultic activities at a "domestic" scale within the *contubernia*, as well as the potential existence of specially designated worship places (sanctuaries) within the barracks.

According to our current knowledge related to the soldiers' barracks in the abovementioned period, the architectural features of these structures did not provide access to a suitable amount of natural light, therefore, the need to attend to this shortcoming by means of artificial lighting would

seem evident. Although over 80% of the 61 lamps from the fort were discovered in the barracks the amount is insufficient to provide a suitable level of lighting in the contubernia. The explanation for this situation could be related to the following possibilities: 1) the proportion of the metal lamps (iron and copper-alloy) was significantly higher, and these objects were either removed from the fort at the time of the unit's departure, or recycled; 2) the usage of alternative lighting methods (candles, torches, hearth light the use of the so-called lamps with floating wicks, which leave little or no trace in the archaeological record was more widespread than previously thought.