

The main purpose of this thesis is to answer various questions about the condition of the Roman strongholds and military units along the Lower Danubian frontier between 364 and 378. It is important to evaluate the state of the frontier before the Battle of Adrianople which had a decisive impact on the history of the Roman Empire for it was the very same Lower Danubian border that separated Rome from the Goths at that time. The total length of the border section in question is about 1120 km (Moesia Prima – ca. 180 km, Dacia Ripensis – ca. 380 km, Moesia Secunda – ca 260 km, and Scythia Minor – ca 300 km).

The thesis consists of three parts. The first one presents the various sources, state of research and shows the geographical and historical setting. The analytical second part deals with military bases and *riparienses* units stationed along the border. The third part outlines some secondary aspects related to the functioning of the frontier, such as military provisioning, communication along the river and the presence of mobile army behind the frontier zone. *Comitatenses* are not the focus of this dissertation, yet it would be difficult to evaluate the frontier without considering the role played by the army at the back of it. It is also important to compare the knowledge on the Lower Danubian frontier during the discussed period with E. Luttwak's theory. He put the idea of a defensive defence-in-depth strategy in the 4th century. The idea was that the border provinces would be simply a buffer zone while the only purpose of few and ill-trained *riparienses* units was to hold their strongholds until the arrival of relief forces (*comitatenses*).

The need to improve certain elements related to the functioning of the frontier was recognized in the very beginning of Valens' and Valentinianus' reign. Large scale construction works were undertaken: repairs of existing bases and construction of new ones – almost exclusively watchtowers. The purpose of these works was to make the border tighter and to enable more effective surveillance of the enemy movements behind the river. Such works were necessary due to changing geopolitical situation which became more and more unstable since the beginning of the second half of the 4th century. A dense network of posts facilitated the flow of information. Thanks to that the army was able to quickly find out about the threat and respond to it.

It seems that in result of these works the border was in good condition on the eve of the Battle of Adrianople. The network of the bases was quite dense while their fortifications were solid and allowed the defenders to effectively repel the enemy in case of siege. The strongholds with high walls and massive towers posed a serious challenge to an opponent unfamiliar with

laying sieges. There were organizational differences between the legions of both dioceses, yet it probably did not affect their combat ability, but was rather a results of some local factors and history of various provinces. Troops were deployed according to a scheme that allowed them to be used optimally: the dislocation of different types of units was adapted to the natural conditions of the specific sections of the border. In general, it seems that the troops stationed inside the frontier fortresses had a high combat value and were well supplied – both with provisions and armaments. Communication along the river was efficient thanks to river navigation and a road network that was in good condition as it was constantly maintained. This allowed easy transportation along the border and simplified communications with the provinces, which was crucial for supplying border units. The existence of a well-maintained road network was also invaluable in the event of an emergency for it allowed a quick movement of *comitatenses* to the border area.