

THE DEFENSIVE SYSTEM OF THE CAPPADOCIA LIMES AT THE BEGINNING OF THE 2ND CENTURY

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(Abstract)

In my paper I would like to outline the defensive system of the province of Cappadocia and widely of the Northern part of the Eastern Limes between the end of the 1st century and the beginning of the 2nd century A.D. The Romans were able to develop successfully operating defensive in Cappadocia with a remarkable army and with the network of client states in the foreground of the limes quite effectively. This network included not only those client states which were in direct geographical contact with Roman territories, but also the strategically important regions further away from the limes. I also outline the protection of the mountain passes of the Caucasus in the mentioned period.

Since the Euphrates in the 1st century B.C. became the borderline between the Romans and Parthians, a strong defensive line was built in the region. This had two essential components: on the one hand, it was the constant military presence, and, on the other hand, there was a chain of vassal states lying between the two empires.¹ The first Limes and its network of roads were built during the reign of Vespasian, in the 70s A.D.² The Roman defence was based on two legions. The *legio XII Fulminata* was sent to Cappadocia after the occupation of Jerusalem (after September 70 A.D.).³ It was followed by another legion in 72 or 73 A.D., after the annexation of Armenia Minor.⁴ This new one protected the northern border of the province. Inscriptions report that some units of the *legio XVI Flavia Firma* were already stationed at Asia Minor in the 70s A.D.⁵ The build-

ing of the second legionary encampment at Satala began around 75 A.D., when Vespasian sent M. Hirtius Fronto Neratius to Cappadocia to fend off the menace brought forth by the Alani.⁶ Fronto's army assisted in the reinforcement of the allied Armenian and Iberian kingdoms. Roman units participated in the fortifications of Harmozica that protected the Caspian Gates.⁷ One of the units of *legio XII Fulminata* occupied a fort to the north of the present-day Baku, this is attested by a Roman inscription.⁸

With the building of the two legionary encampments, the eastern border of the newly annexed Galatia-Cappadocia province was well supplied with garrisoned forces, and other auxiliary

Ancyra (today's Ankara) which belonged to the centurions of the legion, which again proves that this legion served in the region. Mitchell 1993, 118. footnote 8 and 112–113; Wheeler 2011, 246.

⁶ On the events of 75–76 see Halfmann 1986, 39–51. For further information on the chronology and the building of fortification of Satala see Mitchell 1993, 118–119 (mainly footnote 9). According to van Berchem the legion *XVI Flavia Firma* played no part whatsoever in the construction of the encampment, since this unit never actually left Syria, its original place of recruitment: van Berchem 1983, 185–196. Cf. *AE* 1983, 927. It is not contradictory to van Berchem's statement to suppose that one *vexillatio* of the same legion did help to build the camp.

⁷ *SEG* XX. 112.; Boltounova 1971, 213–222.

⁸ „*Imp(eratori) Domitiano Caesare Aug(usto) Germanic(o) L(ucius) Iulius Maximus (centurio) leg(ionis) XII Ful(minatae)*” in: *AE* 1951, 263; Grosso 1954, 117.

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¹ Some problems about the so-called Euphrates border: Wheeler 2011, 235–237.

² On the creation of the Eastern limes under the Flavian dynasty: Wheeler 2011, 243–246.

³ The *legio XII Fulminata* took part in Domitius Corbulo's campaign against Armenia in 62–63 A.D. Tacitus described the hardships this legion had to go through in the mountains of Cappadocia during the winter of 61–62 (*Tac., Ann.* 13. 35.)

⁴ Mitchell 1993, 118.

⁵ *Legio XVI Flavia Firma*. Mitford 1974, 160–175; Dabrowa 1982, 614–619. Several epitaphs were found in

cohorts were on their way, previously ordered into the province. The network of roads permitted the fast movement of units in the area, and we know the exact structure of this network.⁹ The limes-road, which ran along the eastern border of Cappadocia, connected Trapezus with the two legionary encampments in Satala and Melitene, and it headed to Samosata and Zeugma, each of them reinforced with one legion that protected the Eastern border. The encampments were built along the most important routes: Satala guarded the crossing of the Euphrates at Tomisa, while Melitene controlled the route running along the Arsania-river.¹⁰ The road from Melitene to Samosata headed Edessa. The coastal route of the Black Sea ran from Trapezus through Rhisus, and reached Bathys on the border-line of the Empire, which was the Acampsis river that time. From Bathys, it went on to the city of Phasis, and there it turned to the east in the valley of the Phasis river. There were auxiliary encampments between the legionary camps. From the first stage (between Trapezus and Satala) we know the exact place of Zigana, while Pithia and Domana cannot be localized punctually. On the second stage (from Satala to Melitene) the locations of Suissa, Arauraca and Analiba are uncertain, but we are aware of the locations of Zimara, Sabus, Dascusa and Chiacca.

There are only archaeological occurrences and inscriptions from the time of the Principate that could give us some details about the station of certain units. The late antique *Notitia Dignitatum*, (from the 4th century A.D.) identifies the stations of nine military units.¹¹ According to this, two

legions were stationed henceforward at the same places (Satala and Melitene). The *Ala I Augusta Colonorum* was stationed at Chiacca, the *Ala Auriana* at Dascusa, the *Ala prima Ulpia Dacorum* at Suissa, the *Ala secunda Gallorum* at Aeliana, the *Cohors tertia Ulpia miliaria Petraeorum* at Metita, the *Cohors quarta Raetorum* at Analiba, the *Cohors miliaria Bosporiana* at Arauraca, the *Cohors Apuleia civium Romanorum* at Ysiporto, and the *Cohors prima Lepidiana* was stationed at Caene.

The majority of these units had already been stationed in the region at the turn of the 1st and 2nd Centuries. In the 120s Emperor Hadrian reorganized the defence of the borders in this region and made strenuous efforts to strengthen the loyalty of the client states along the Cappadocian limes.¹² In this particular period the situation between the Caucasian states of Iberia and Albania was very tense; the Iberian king Pharasmene II rejected the friendly approach of the Romans. The *Historia Augusta* informs us that, when Emperor Hadrian visited Cappadocia in 129, he wanted to meet the Iberian king, but Pharasmene refused to attend the meeting.¹³ On the other hand we also know that a few years later the Emperor sent luxurious gifts to the king who was obliged to accept them. These gifts consisted of splendid garments and all sorts of treasures, and were also accompanied by a unit of approximately five hundred Roman soldiers. These men officially served as reinforcement of the king's guards, but in fact they were the embodiment of Roman military presence in the region.¹⁴ Apart from the *Historia Augusta* other sources also support the notion that during

⁹ Monumental road constructions were carried out in Cappadocia during the governorship of Caesennius Gallus between 80 and 82 AD. „*Vias provinciarum Galatiae, Cappadociae, Lycaoniae, Armeniae Minoris stravit*” (ILS 268); Mitford 1974, 160–175; Mitford 1980, 1169–1228; French 1986, 277–285; French–Lightfoot 1989; Mitchell 1993, 119–121.

¹⁰ The webpage of MAVORS-Institute for Ancient Military History provides up-to-date information on the Roman defences in Asia Minor. For further research on the geographical environment of Satala and the role it played in the protection of the region see: http://www.mavors.org/en/projects_3.htm

¹¹ Not. Dign. XXXVIII.: „*Sub dispositione viri spectabilis Ducis Armeniae. Equites Sagittarii Sabu. Equites Sagittarii Domanae. Praefecturae Legionis quintadecimae Apollinaris Satalae. Praefecturae Legionis duodecimae Fulmineae Melitenae. In Ponto. Praefecturae Legionis primae Ponticae Trapezunte. Ala Rizena Dalearizae. Ala Theodosiana apud Auaxam. Ala Felix Theodosiana Siluanis.*

Et quae de minore Laterculo emittuntur. Ala prima Augusta Colonorum Chiaccae. Ala Auriana Dascusae. Ala prima Ulpia Dacorum Suissae. Ala secunda Gallorum AEliaanae. Ala Castello

Tablariensi constituta. Ala prima Praetorica nuper constituta. Cohors tertia Ulpia miliaria Petraeorum Metitae. Cohors quarta Retorum Analibae. Cohors miliaria Bosporiana Arauracae. Cohors miliaria Germanorum Sisilae. Ala prima Iovia felix Chaszanenicae. Ala prima Felix Theodosiana Pithiae. Cohors prima Theodosiana Valentiae. Cohors Apuleia civium Romanorum Ysiporto. Cohors prima Lepidiana Caeneae Parembolae. Cohors prima Claudia Equitata Sebastopoli. Cohors secunda Valentiana Zigannae. Cohors Mochorae.”

¹² Birley 2007, 142–146 (Cappadocia 143).

¹³ SHA Hadr. 13.: „*Cumque ad eum quidam reges venissent, ita cum his egit, ut eos paeniteret, qui venire noluerunt, causa speciatim Pharasmanis, qui eius invitationem superbe neglexerit.*” During the reign of Antoninus Pius the relationship between the two countries improved somewhat. It can be seen as a sign of acknowledgement that a statue of Pharasmene II was erected in Rome after the king paid a visit to the emperor.

¹⁴ SHA Hadr. 17 (Cf. Hadr. 21): „*Albanos et Hiberos amicissimos habuit, quod reges eorum largitionibus prosecutus est, cum ad illum venire contempsissent.*” Although the two rulers were reluctant to appear in front of the Emperor in personal, he gave them lavish gifts. Bosworth 1977, 230.

Hadrian's reign the Roman control over Iberia was tightened. A bilingual epitaph (in Aramaic and in Greek) from around this period demonstrates that a man of Roman origin served as a high ranking governor in the kingdom:¹⁵

„I am Serapit, daughter of Zewah the younger, pitiax of Parsman (Pharasmenes) the king wife Yodmangan – both victorious and having wrought many victories as chief of the Hsepharnug the king – son of Agrippa, chief of the court of Parsman the king.”

(Translated by A. B. Bosworth)

We are not absolutely familiar with the privileges or powers a *pitiaxi* held, but all researchers agree that Publikos Agrippa must have been a high ranking Roman military officer and he entered the king's service precisely for his military merits and experience. It is without any doubt that Agrippa did not offer his services to a barbarian king voluntarily, he was most probably sent from the imperial court.

Finally I would like to present how the Roman defensive system worked in Cappadocia. Flavius Arrianus, a Roman historian of Greek origin, was not only the author of several historical works but he also made a remarkable career as a politician and military officer.¹⁶ Between 131 and 137 he served as governor of Cappadocia province. Contemporary historical sources tell us that in 134 the Alani attacked from the Russian plains, crossed the Caucasus, and devastated Albania, which was an ally of Rome, then turned towards Armenia and Media and finally broke into Cappadocia.¹⁷ Arrian mobilized the whole army of his province to meet the invaders in battle. Among his surviving works Arrian's plan of campaign can also be found.

¹⁵ Tseretheli 1942, 1–83; Tod 1943, 82–86; Metzger 1956, 18–26; SEG XVI 781.

¹⁶ Main literature: Stadter 1980; Bosworth 1993, 221–275.

¹⁷ The exact course of events can be found in Cassius Dio's work: *Hist. rom.* 69. 9. 15. According to the author the Alani, whom he called Massageteans, were instigated by Pharasmenes to levy war on the Romans. The invaders ravaged and destroyed Albania, Media and Armenia in the Caucasus region, and also broke into the province of Cappadocia. Thanks to the gifts of the Armenian king called Vologaesius and also to the military campaigns organized by governor Flavius Arrianus, the Alani finally withdrew their forces. The most influential work on the history of the Alani in the Early Imperial period is Bachrach 1973 (the following pages are especially devoted to Arrian: 126–132.). The most essential works on the military operation of the Alani are as follows: Bosworth 1977, 217–255; Pelham 1896, 625–640; Ruscu-Ruscu 1996, 205–259.

In this particular work entitled *An Array against the Alans* he discussed the very details of his plans regarding the size and equipment of his units, how he marched his column against the Alani, and even how he planned to draw up his army on the future battlefield.¹⁸

Arrian's army consisted of four major divisions: the heavy infantry of Roman legions (*legio XV Apollinaris* and the *vexillatio legionis XII Fulminatae*), cavalry (which was mainly made up of light cavalry archers to counteract the tactics of the Alani), auxiliary infantry, and allied troops. The enumeration of the various units show that he relied partly on the troops stationed in the border fortifications (these troops used the road which ran along the limes when they marched north). He also needed the military assistance of the client states and cities, namely Armenia Minor and three cities, Colchis, Rhizus and Trapezus.¹⁹

Unfortunately we do not know whether the Romans met the Alani in battle or not, neither Arrian nor other historical sources provide us with further information. In any case it is certain that, after the attack of the Alani, Arrian began to strengthen the defences of the province, and by 137 he also successfully expanded Roman control over the neighbouring client states. According to present research it was exactly in the same period that Pharasmenes, who previously denied cooperation with Emperor Hadrian, was compelled to welcome Roman troops in his state.

As conclusion, I would like to point out that, despite the characteristic geographical conditions of eastern Cappadocia, the Romans were able to develop a closed and successfully operating defensive system in the 2nd Century A.D. In case of an attack against the province this system was able to mobilize a remarkable army. The Romans also used the network of client states in the foreground of the limes quite effectively. This network included not only those client states which were in direct geographical contact with Roman territories, but also the strategically important regions further away from the limes. Iberia is perhaps the best example for the latter category, since this area was responsible for the protection of the mountain passes of the Caucasus. Based on Arrian's description, one can say that this dual defensive system stood its ground even in a threatening crisis.

¹⁸ Roos 1968, 177–185; DeVoto 1993.

¹⁹ On the state of the towns allied to Rome see Mitchell 1993.

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