



THE DACIAN WAR

The author of the commentary is unknown, we only know his dedication:

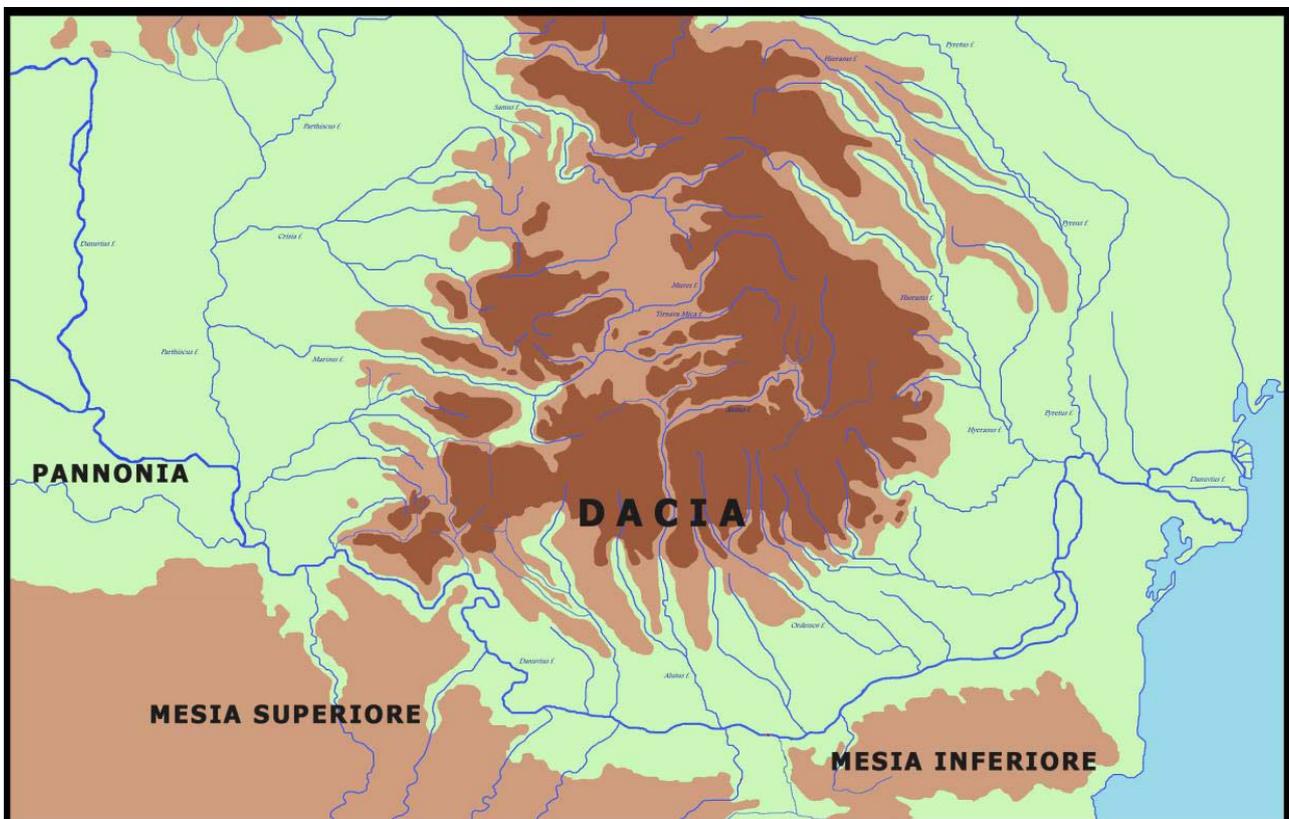
“nunc spernitur lux, nuper gloriam Romae vidi”

Now the days are wasted, once the glory of Rome I saw.

PREAMBLE

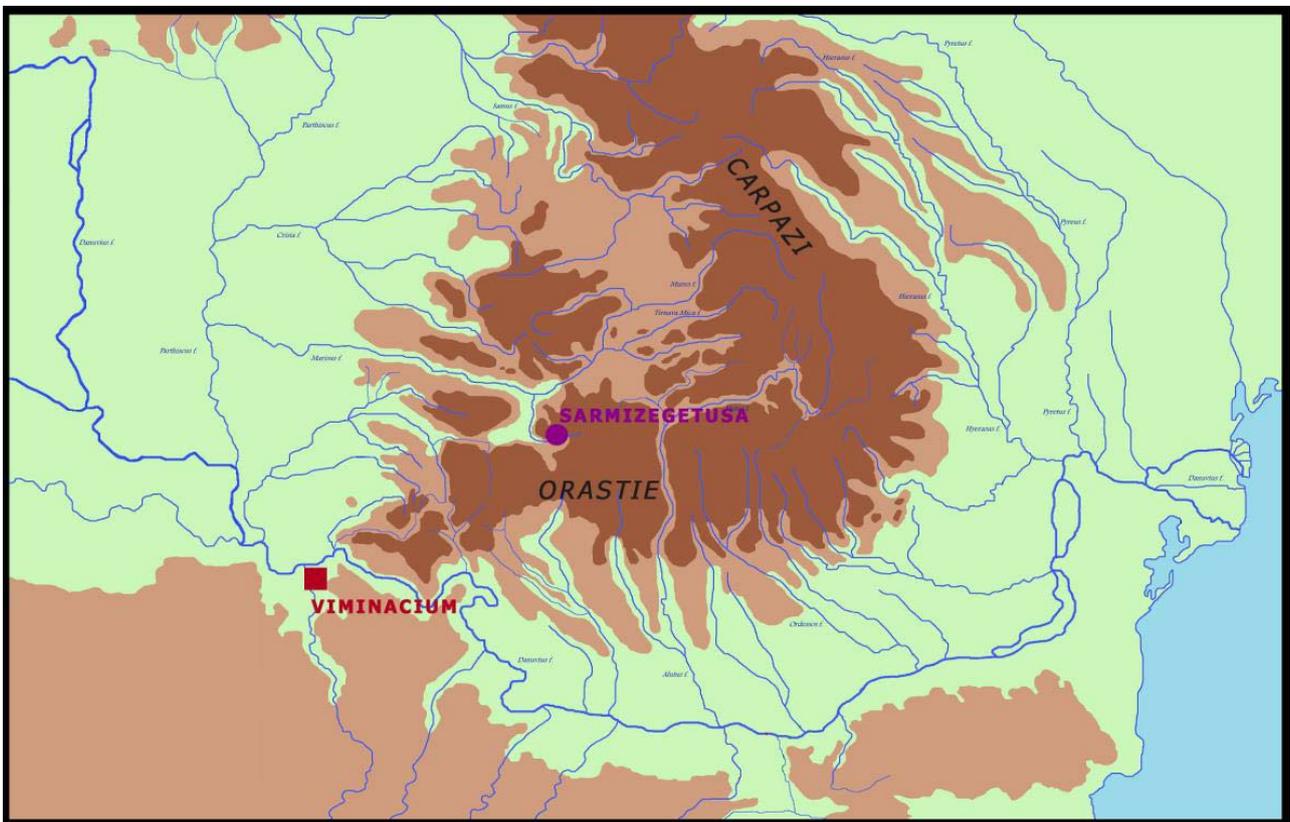
I - When (in 44 BC) Burebista, first king of the Dacians, was assassinated, the kingdom that he established (*the present Romania and part of Hungary*), fell apart, splitting into four parts. Burebista in the Roman civil war had supported Pompey against Caesar, after the victory of the Divine Julius at Pharsalus (48 BC.), and shortly after the death of Pompey, his position was weakened to the point that his enemies killed him.

However as weakened by internal divisions, already at the time of the Divine Augustus, when the Danube froze, Dacian most warlike tribes often attempted to penetrate into Moesia and Pannonia, to make raids into Roman provinces.



Every time they were driven back, nevertheless they continued to be a constant threat, forcing us to maintain armed garrisons along the Danube, to defend the “limes” (*border*) of the Empire.

With the passage of time, encouraged by our lack of decisive response, they began to design more daring attacks. It so happened that Diurpaneus, one of the Dacian kings, assailed (69 AD), the Roman “castra” (*encampment*) of Viminacium (*today Kostolac in Serbia*), in Moesia Superior, but, rejected by our legionnaires, he was forced to retreat.



This defeat persuaded Diurpaneus that first he had to strengthen himself inside Dacia. To this purpose he committed all forces to reunite the kingdom. When the bold enterprise succeeded (75 AD), it became clear that the danger he represented could not be long ignored.

II - The territory of the Dacians is a great salient, just as a headland that from Danube enters the east, defended by Carpathian and Orastie mountains.

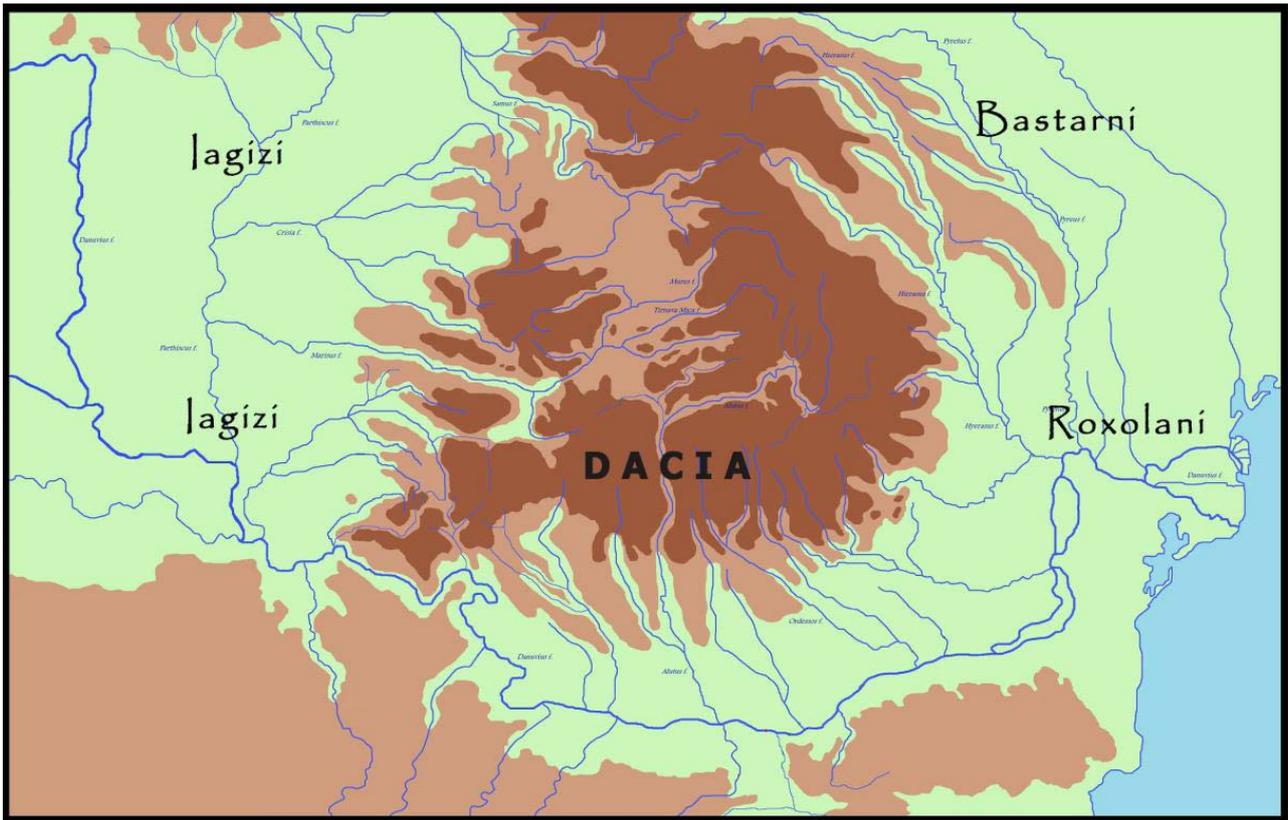
On these mountains, at an altitude of more than three thousand four hundred feet (*1,000 meters*), the Dacians built six fortified towns, the largest of which is Sarmizegetusa (= *seat of the king*).

Thanks to these fortifications Diurpaneo thought that his kingdom was unassailable. Unlike the barbarians, surrounding Dacia as the waters surrounds a peninsula, they are skilled builders, and their fortresses, defended by the Murus Dacicus (*Dacian wall*), high up to thirty feet (*10 meters*), deep almost ten feet (*3 meters*), is very resistant.

Moreover the reign of Diurpaneo, having numerous iron and gold mines, was very rich, as well protected by high mountains stretch fertile plains, crossed by large rivers.

For all these reasons, while the Dacians push westward attracted by the flourishing towns of our provinces, at the same time the barbarians, around them, would seize their wealth.

These barbarians, Iazyges to the North and West, Roxolani to the South and East and Bastarnae to East,



lovers of wars and robberies are in constant motion, so Dacians since ancient times had to take up arms, getting used to the war, becoming valiant fighters, skilled to defend their towns with fortresses and war machines, the construction of which had learned by Greeks before and then by Romans.

Having annihilated internal enemies, when Diurpaneo recreated the unified kingdom of Dacia, first established alliance relationship with Bastarnae and Roxolani, then together with them retook to cross the Danube, luring the barbarians with the mirage of big robberies. Finally Diurpaneo, also pushed by his ambitious nephew Decebalus (*strong as ten men*), set out to invade the Roman province of Moesia.

III - Having taken this decision, mindful of his previous defeat, convinced himself that to occupy Moesia he would have to field a large army, as in the past one Roman legion, with the support of the German auxiliaries, had thrown back him beyond Danube.

His neighbors, Roxolani and Bastarnae, possessed a great mass of horsemen, especially dreaded were the “catafratti” (*the armored cavalry*).

Diurpaneo then tried to enlist as auxiliary troops Roxolani and Bastarnae horsemen, but these nomadic peoples are treacherous, intolerant of any discipline, despise the job, robberies and lootings are their flag.

Diurpaneo then had to give up his first plan, reserving to hire them as mercenaries when he would begin the war, meanwhile with donations kept them quiet.

Changed plans, he committed the resources of his kingdom in order to build a large and extremely well trained army.

In view of so much effort, to prevent the risk of unexpected defeats and distrusting neighbors, he reinforced in Orastie mountains the defenses of the six fortified towns. For the above reasons spent long years, until (85) he did not feel ready for the engagement.

Then, he crossed the Danube with the mercenary horsemen Bastarnae and Roxolani, attacked the Roman province of Moesia Superior, which was garrisoned by a single Roman legion.

To defend the province governor Gaius Oppius Sabinus accepted the fight in the open field, overwhelmed by the great mass of the enemies was killed, while the

IV - Meanwhile (86) Diurpaneus, worn out by fatigue, handed power to his nephew Decebalus, who made elated by the outcome of the first clashes challenged the power of Rome.

Fate was against him, went to meet a bloody defeat, but, while the Romans were to anticipate the final victory, the wicked rebellion of Lucius Antonius Saturninus, who sought to usurp the Empire, stopped our advance. Saturninus began commanding two legions, incited to sedition Marcomanni and Quadi, Germanic peoples, and Sarmatians Iazyges, while in such situations the commanders of other Germanic legions showed a dubious loyalty to the Emperor. It was then that Trajan, commander of the legion I Adiutrix, took the field and in twenty five days defeated the usurper.

Put to death Saturninus and defeated the rebels, Domitian had to face the sedition of Marcomanni, Quadi and Iazyges.

Completed a hasty peace with the Dacians, immediately he began the Germanic-Sarmatian war (89), which lasted for many years.

Decebalus because of his losses was not able to take advantage of our difficulties, but even had to defend himself from Roxolani and Bastarnae, who, in turn, wanted to seize the opportunity provided by the Dacian weakness.

It took no little time to Decebalus to set up again his forces and regain prestige among neighboring peoples and the other Dacians chiefs, but when he was informed that the new emperor (*Trajan*), left the Danubian border, had gone to Rome (100) , estimated that the time was right to lead the venture so much coveted.

V - When (98) the command of the Empire passed to Marcus Ulpius Trajan, the new Emperor, after having fortified the German border, still remained a year and a half along the Danubian border, strengthening all our principal fortresses and building new ones.

Indeed Trajan expected that Decebalus, moved by his insatiable ambition, sooner or later would have attempted the fate.

Moreover not only the ambition moved Decebalus, but also the fear of being overwhelmed by treacherous Sarmatian people, who as nomads, constantly try to occupy new pastures to feed their innumerable herds of horses and oxen.

Decebalus therefore believed that only by increasing his own power could defend himself from the multitude of Sarmatians and to achieve his goal saw only one possibility: to cross the Danube and occupy the Roman provinces.

While these projects agitated the mind of Decebal, Marcus Ulpius Trajan could not delay over his departure for Rome and already his trusted friend Lucius Licinius Sura, insisted to hurry, to prevent the conspiracies that the oligarchs were always ready to plot.

The Roman people greeted Trajan with great enthusiasm.

The new Emperor, imposing for his tall stature, followed by a cheering crowd, walked in the Senate, where Senator Pliny delivered an interminable panegyric.

It was clear that, assassinated Domitian, the senators wanted to regain power. They wanted to, but could not, because the strength of the legions loyal to the Emperor was immense and none of us would tolerate even the idea of new conspiracies.

However Trajan listened patiently Pliny and to satisfy the Senators he appointed some of them, including Pliny, governors of provinces. But at the same time he established the “Consilium Principis”, with the task to assist the Emperor in the most important matters, including to punish senators guilty of extortion.

VI - A separate problem was constituted by the Praetorian Guard, as Domitian was assassinated with the complicity of those who were supposed to protect his safety and his successor, Nerva, without an army faithful to his orders, did not have the force to punish the perpetrators and their accomplices.

Marcus Ulpius, unlike his predecessor, could count on a loyal and victorious army, moreover for safety reasons, when he came to Rome, was escorted by his personnel Praetorian Guard, who had faced beside him long years of war.

Because of the above mentioned reasons he halved the premium that usually the new Emperor lavished on the praetorian guard of the previous Emperor, he punished those who had betrayed Domitian and dismissed those who were not worthy of trust. The new Praetorian Guard turned out very different from the previous, were enrolled a large number of Batavians (*coming from the current Netherlands*), men of extraordinary prowess and value, many of these during the German-Sarmatian war had shown great courage and unquestionable loyalty. In addition, the Batavians had no relationships with senators, or other intriguers.

Arranged the safety issues of the Empire, Marcus Ulpius, given the conditions of extreme poverty in which lived the Roman plebs, using his personal fortune founded the “*Institutio Alimentaria*”(food institution) , whose task was to provide for the needs of very poor children. Afterword, with the establishment of “*Alimenta Italiae*”, he extended the same benefit to the whole of Italy.

To finance his policy in support of the weakest Trajan took a series of enterprises, to promote economic development, he built new roads and ports such as Ostia, which solved the problem of supply of Rome. To facilitate links with the East expanded the port of Ancona. In Egypt built a canal, which was called the Trajan River, by which the Mediterranean was connected to the Red Sea. He reclaimed the Pontine plain

making it cultivable. He stimulated throughout the Empire building roads and aqueducts. He supported wherever the spread of small peasant property, ensuring to prevent great landowners and tax collectors, with their rapacity, did not fail his project.

Thanks to the income from improved economic conditions of the Empire Trajan was able to fund the establishment of boarding schools for orphans and illegitimate children, who until adulthood was assigned not only a subsidy, but also and above all an excellent education.

These colleges would have formed a new class capable of administering the Empire. Finally he faced the age-old theme of the administration of justice, reducing the duration of processes, banning anonymous allegations, prohibiting convictions without evidence.

All these things Trajan started as soon as he arrived in Rome.

VII - While Trajan was in the “Urbs” (*the City of Rome*), Decebalus, taking advantage of his absence, began openly to prepare for war.

First made arrangements with Susago, king of Roxolani, who would provide ten thousand mercenary horsemen, of whom five thousand catafratti.

Negotiations with Sarmatian people are never easy, because this mass of rascals claims to be paid in advance, only to disregard their commitments.

But Decebalus not lacked subtlety, moreover, some time ago, had experienced with the Sarmatian Iazyges how much these people were treacherous.

Finally he reached an agreement.

Even more difficult was the deal with Bastarnae, who not having a single leader, sent to Decebalus a litigious delegation. These Bastarnae consist of several tribes, some of German other of Sarmatian race, and these tribes disagree on everything except in raiding the neighbors.

Decebalus with great patience was also in charge of these negotiations and made sure other ten thousand horsemen, of whom, once again, five thousand had to be catafratti.

Afterward he attempted an agreement with Iazyges, who mindful of the recent defeat that Trajan had inflicted on them, refused every proposal.

Neither he had better success with Quadi and Marcomanni.

Instead he managed to secure the services of the Germanic tribes of Buri.

Because, to live up to the commitments made, he had to go to war within no more than a year, hastened training of army and thanks to the iron mines that abound in Dacia, he worked hard to forge weapons and armaments.

VIII - These were the news coming from our informormers, confirming the predictions of Trajan. For this reason, as mentioned, he had strengthened our defenses along the Danube to protect Moesia, but since the situation was falling ordered the governors of Germany, Inferior and Superior, Pannonia, Moesia Superior and Moesia Inferior to prepare the legions.

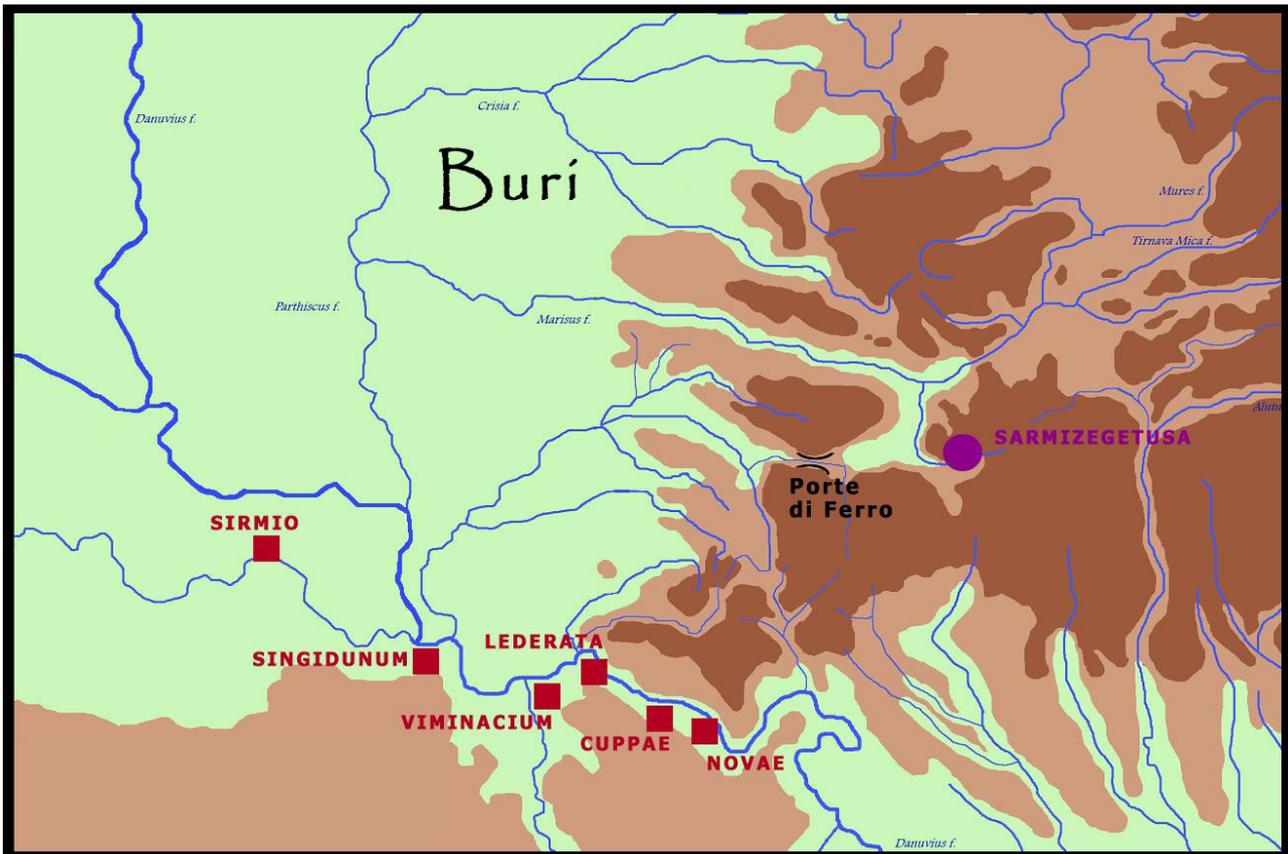
Therefore were alerted the legions positioned on the German-Rhaetian border and the Danubian legions, twelve legions in all: XII Claudia allocated to Brigetio (*the current Komarom in Hungary*), I Italica stationed at Novae (*today Svishtov in Bulgaria*), I Minervia allocated in Bonna (*Bonn*), II Adiutrix Pia Fidelis stationed at Aquincum (*Budapest*), IV Flavia Felix stationed in Singidunum (*Belgrade*), V Macedonica allocated in Oescus (*Bulgaria near Pleven*), VII Paterna Claudia Pia Fidelis stationed at Viminacium (*Serbia close to Kostolac*), XI Claudia Pia Fidelis allocated in Vindonissa (*now Windisch in Switzerland*), XIII Gemina allocated in Vindobona (*Vienna*), XIV Gemina Martia Victrix stationed in Carnuntum (*Austria today Petronell-Carnuntum*), XV Apollinaris also allocated in Carnuntum, XXII Primigenia Pia Fidelis allocated to Castra Vetera (*today Xanten in Germany*). Trajan, estimating these forces were not sufficient, ordered to be prepared about a dozen vexillationes (*detachments of selected legionaries*), thereby, among legions and vexillationes, he could count on about sixty thousand men. To which had to accompany the auxiliary troops formed by Numidian cavalry, commanded by Lusius Quietus and Germanic cavalry formed by about ten “*alae milliariae*” (*each consisting of 768 riders*), mostly provided by Batavians (*inhabitants current Netherlands*). Also among the auxiliaries were recruited archers and slingers. Quadi and Marcomanni pledged to provide about twenty thousand men, that the Emperor intended to deploy as troops engaged in the surveillance of the border.

Iazyges declared themselves ready to put at our disposal ten thousand horsemen, but Trajan, knowing their lack of discipline and recklessness, told the chiefs of Iazyges

he thought most useful that they would defend their territory from Buri, their neighbors, who reportedly had agreed with Decebalus.

In all Trajan's forces added up to about one hundred twenty thousand men, of whom, according to the plans of the Emperor, about half would be destined to defensive duties.

IX - To deploy such a massive army Trajan ordered the governors of Pannonia and Moesia superior to organize the “castra” (*legionary enchampment*) and the “castella” (*auxiliary enchampment*) of Sirmio (*today Sremska Mitrovica in Serbia*) Singidunum, Viminacium, Lederata (*in Serbia near Viminacium*), Cuppae (*today Golubac in Serbia*) and Novae,



So worthily receive the legionaries and auxiliaries.

At the same time, great care had to be taken concerning the Pannonian and Moesica fleet, which sailing along the Danube would have taken care of the transportation of men, weapons and supplies.

This was the task of Gaius Cilnius Proculus governor of Moesia Superior and Lucius Julius Servianus governor of Pannonia, while Manius Laberius Maximus governor of Moesia Inferior had the task of strengthening the defenses along the Danube to prevent unexpected attacks of Dacians and their allies Roxolani.

As soon as castra and castella were prepared, Pannonian and Moesica fleets began to carry weapons, supplies and the necessary fodder for horses and other animals for transport. All this was done before the winter chill descended and the frozen Danube would impede navigation.

While we did these preparations, in turn Decebalus got ready a large army and established the final arrangements with Bastarnae and Roxolani. Nevertheless, we do not know why, he could not push Roxolani to make raids in Moesia Inferior, as he wanted, to divide our forces, consequently Laberius Maximus was not disturbed while he strengthened the defenses along the Danube.

Meanwhile Decebalus convened a war council, which was attended, as we knew, by all the Dacians chiefs, ordered them to enlist as many soldiers as they can and proceed quickly to their training. To this end, he drew largely on the rich treasury of the state.

Worried Decebalus the inexperience of his troops, which for long years were unused to the war, then he thought to make up with the number to our superiority.

He was also much on account of Bastarnae and Roxolani cavalry, who together provided more than twenty thousand horsemen, of whom ten thousand catafratti and ten thousand archers on horseback. Finally, he trusted that the ambushes of Buri could wear down our army.

The Dacians until the weather allowed, with great effectiveness reinforced their defenses in the Orastie mountains and while the recruits were trained, others prepared the weapons, both for Dacian archers and the light cavalry of Roxolani and Bastarnae.

Everyone knows that in hand to hand fighting, where only courage and value count,

we are insurmountable, therefore to keep us at a distance and upset our alignment, Decebalus intended to field an immense number of archers, later followed by armored cavalry, the dreaded catafratti.

In conclusion Decebalus counted on an army of about two hundred thousand Dacians, twenty thousand Roxolani and Bastarnae horsemen and an unknown number of Buri.



BOOK I

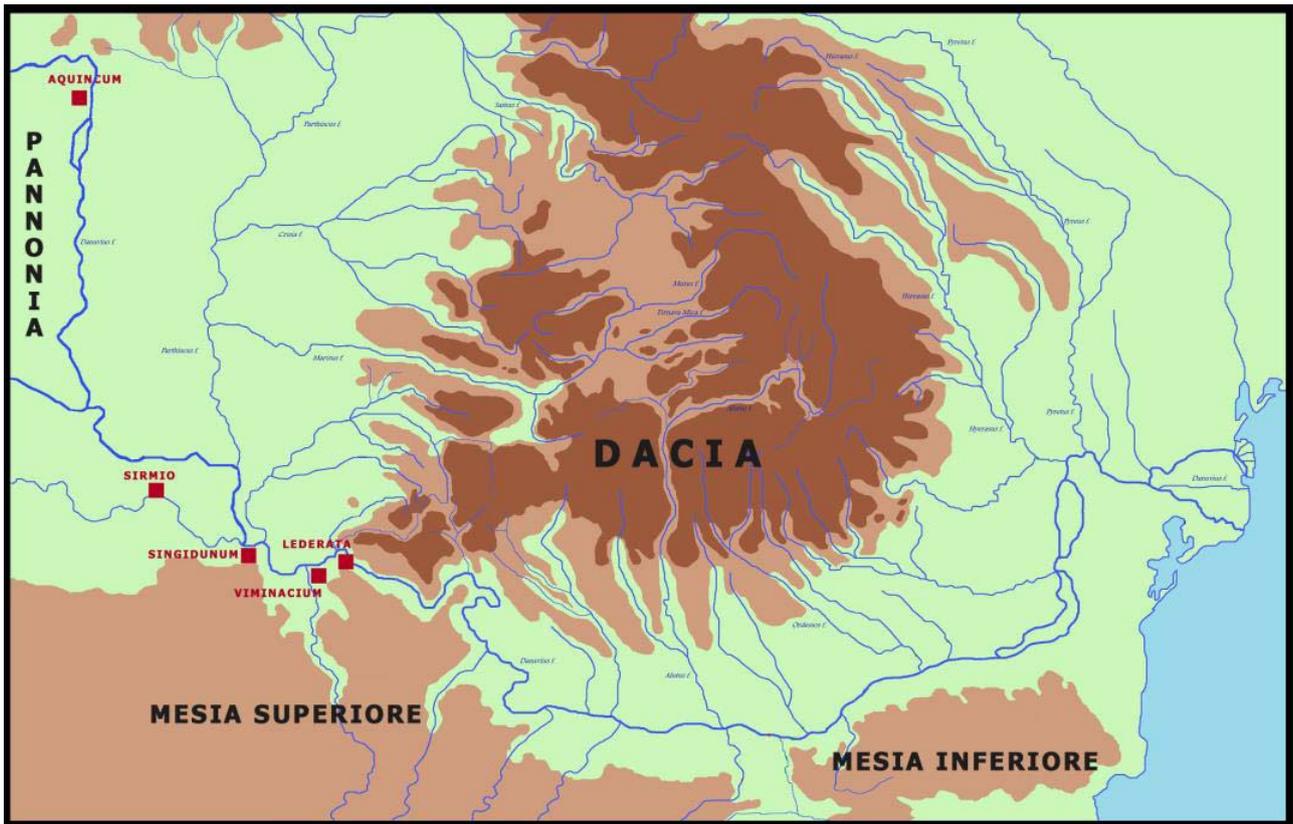
I - It was about to finish the winter, when Decebalus, crossed the frozen Danube in Moesia Superior, sent on ahead a cavalry unit, but our soldiers who never stopped to be on alert, sounded the alarm and from nearby Lederata intervened an ala (768 *riders*) of the Batavian cavalry, and put the Dacians to flight.

Trajan convened in Rome the war council, examined the situation, the unanimous opinion was that Decebalus intended to provoke our reaction to lure us inside Dacia and fight in conditions most favorable to him.

Trajan decided to accept the challenge.

In Early spring (101) he departed from Rome with the praetorian guard commanded by Tiberius Claudius Livianus. Trajan was accompanied by Lucius Licinius Sura, Apollodorus of Damascus, Lusius Quietus, Gneus Pinarius Aemilius Cicatricula Longinus, Quintus Sosius Senecio, Decimus Terentius Scaurianus.

Reached Ancona (*in Italy*), here we sailed to land in Salona (*today in Croatia near Split*) in Dalmatia and continue to Sirmio in Pannonia.



After a brief stop in Sirmio we proceeded to Viminacium where Trajan summoned Lucius Julius Servianus, governor of Pannonia, Gaius Cilnius Proculus, governor of Moesia Superior and Manius Laberius Maximus, governor of Moesia Inferior.

II - The castra (*legionary encampment*) of Viminacium is large and perfectly built, here is allocated the Legio VII Paterna Claudia Pia Fidelis.

In the canabae (*the built-up area that stood next to castra*), was erected a large amphitheater and, as befits us, even comfortable thermae.

Here Trajan held the first council of war far from Rome.

These decisions: Manius Laberius Maximus would be back in Moesia Inferior holding with him two legions to defend the limes (*the boarder*) and how many “numera” (*detachments of auxiliaries used primarily for the supervision of the border*), he deemed appropriate to report any attack along the Danube, which had to be constantly patrolled by the fleet Moesica.

The remaining troops were to leave quickly to focus on Viminacium.

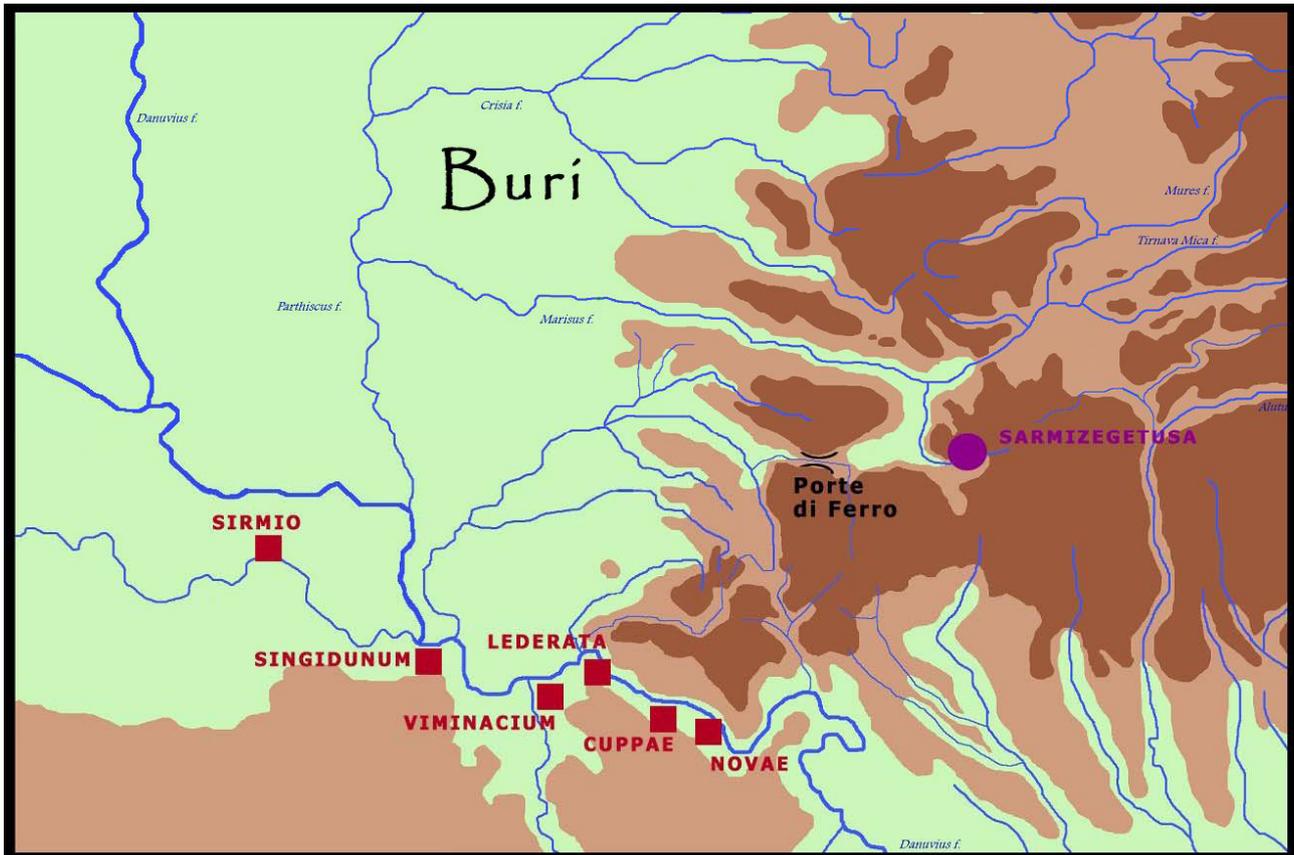
Lusius Quietus, with the most eminent Batavians, would go to Sirmio where the Numidian cavalry had to rejoin with the German auxiliaries, who, as noted, are for the most part Batavians. Quietus would take command of the Numidians, he was free to decide with the Batavians, to whom entrust the command of the alae of the German cavalry. In any case the chiefs of the alae were subjected to Quietus. Cicatricula and Scaurianus would go to Singidunum (*Belgrade*) where the Legio IV Flavia Felix was allocated.

Here they had to await the German legions and those of Pannonia.

The auxiliary troops would be concentrated in Lederata (*near Kostolac in Serbia*) and Aquincum under the command of Senecio.

For the defense of Pannonia and Moesia Superior, Servianus and Proculus would keep two legions each, at the same time they had to provide for supplies, which were transported from their fleets as a destination Aquincum (*Budapest*) and Lederata.

III – Arranged the most urgent things, Trajan made known to the “legati” (*commanders appointed by the Emperor*) that Buri had called the youth to arms against us, while Decebalus kept his troops focused on the Orastie mountains at that pass, called the Iron Gates, next to the town of Tapae,



in which site stood Bastarnae and Roxolani, with their cavalry, was not known for sure, but it was thought that they were hidden in the woods that from the Orastie mountains slope towards the Danube.

Trajan said that, in his opinion, Decebalus not prevented our crossing of the Danube, on the contrary he would attract our legions to the Iron Gates to make us attack by Buri, as we advanced, and, if the occasion had happened, by the cavalry of Roxolani and Bastarnae, with the intent to wear down our forces and arrive at the decisive battle, in the Iron Gates, in conditions of great advantage.

To split the enemy forces our plan was to cross the Danube with two columns,

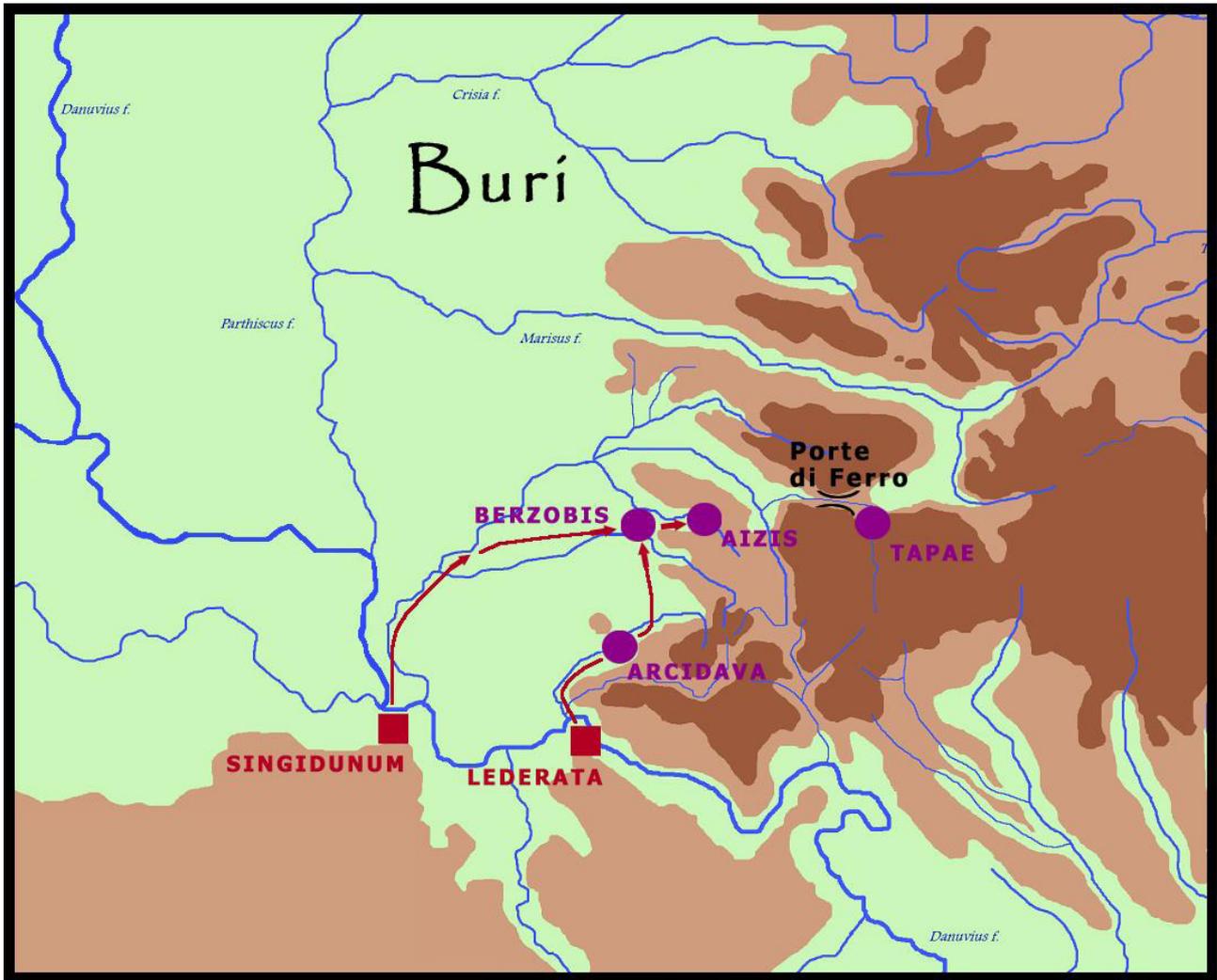


Two separate columns across the Danube

the one would move from Singidunum (*Belgrade*), the other with Trajan from Lederata.

The Emperor ordered: "INDE BERZOBIS, DEINDE AIZIS PROCESSIMUS"
(*before we will advance on Berzobis, following on Aizis*).

As stated above we foresaw no obstacles to crossing the Danube. Once entered in the Dacian land, the two columns had to march separately towards Berzobis,



where they would be reunited. The column moving from Singidunum had orders to advance with caution, because was likely an attack by Buri, for that reason Lusius Quietus would escort the troops with his Numidian cavalry.

No one should move too quickly and although the road that leads from the Danube to Berzobis is good, the commander had to keep a compact deployment, marching along at least six rows and possibly even eight, not for offer to the enemy a too stretched side.

War machines, especially the ballistae carts (*the tanks of the Romans*), were to be distributed along the deployment so that if necessary could be brought into use where needed.

Apollodorus oversaw the implementation of the two pontoon bridges.

When they were ready, in the same way at Lederata and Singidunum, first crossed the Danube two alae of cavalry, which took possession of the other bank, shortly after the legionnaires were to cross the river, but not all, only the most adept at building fortifications.

Trajan, once in enemy territory, did not tolerate any recklessness, he insisted that all the works that ensure our defense had to be treated with great attention.

The legionnaires brought with them the necessary timber and in a short time the fence was erected, while the cavalry was scouting the surrounding area.

No sign of enemies.

From Singidunum and Lederata, with special reports, Trajan was informed that everything was going quietly, as he had expected.

IV - As soon as the fences were erected also the rest of the legions and auxiliaries crossed the Danube.

Trajan had decided that Lederata would be the main support base for our advance into the Dacian land, because it is the quickest way to get to Berzobis from Danube. The road on the left hand is protected by a river, thus making it difficult to attack against us from that side, while on the right hand began the slopes of the Orastie mountains, covered with forests and this constituted a serious danger. Apollodorus of Damascus was commissioned to manage the works because on the bank of the Danube in front of Lederata a well defended fort was built, into his service remained four legionary cohorts (*over 2,000 people*).

In the following days around the fort it was dug a deep moat, ten feet (*3 meters*) wide and equally deep, with the filling earth was built an embankment, and on this was placed the fence, while turrets were erected at regular intervals. While Apollodorus started the works in the early hours of the day, everything was done with great speed, Trajan ordered commanders to advance the legions in the Dacian land.

At the first trumpet blast legionaries prepared for departure, at the second loaded the baggage on mules and other beasts of burden, at the third all were aligned.

The chief centurion with booming voice exclaimed, "parati?" (*ready*), all legionaries shouted three times "parati", raising their right hands.

The legionaries wore armor, each had his helmet, hanging on the left side they kept the "gladius" (*sword*), on the right flank the "pungio" (*dagger*), in the right hand the "hasta" (spear), in the left the "scutum" (*shield*), on the shoulders inside the backpack a saw, an axe, a cutter, a chain, and food for three days.

Almost at the same time crossed the Danube, Scaurianus, preceded by the cavalry and this by scouts, ordered the advance.

V - While the legion that opened the advance left the fortifications, the other legions and the vexillationes crossed the Danube, forming a column several miles long, but as soon as the whole army entered Dacia, the centurions, to shorten the deployment, ordered the soldiers to dispose in six rows.

The road we traveled going to Berzobis, marked out when Domitian had brought our first attack on Dacia, was a good road, wide enough for our needs. As I mentioned a river full of water, running down the left hand, protected our side.

On the right hand the slopes of the Orastie mountains covered with forests were favourable to ambushes, therefore was ordered the scouts to go into the woods for watch over the movements of the enemy, while the legionnaires were proceeding cautiously, protected by the cavalry.

This was the situation of the Trajan's column.

Scaurianus instead was advancing with the utmost speed, because the area, deforested by Buri to make pasture, was unfit to attacks.

Trajan sent forward two cohorts accompanied by a ala of cavalry, because in a place called Arcidava would start to trace the encampment where to spend the night.

Arcidava is halfway between Lederata and Berzobis.

No trace of the enemy.

Even when Scaurianus, estimated to have covered half of the way, stopped for the night, he didn't see any enemy.

Actually as mentioned the land was unfit to the attack of Buri, who apparently expected the better opportunity that would provide them with the forests to which we had to delve after Berzobis.

VI - Once in Arcidava we found waiting for ourselves the two cohorts sent ahead, which, consisting of the most expert veterans, had traced the camp and harvest the timber needed to raise the fence.

All legionnaires then went to work and in a short span of time was fortified a great camp, so great to accommodate two legions, five vexillationes, approximately ten thousand auxiliaries, in addition to carts and beasts of burden (*an area about 50 hectares*).

In war our great experience in getting camps ready furthers us, we attach great importance to the choice of the place, we seek close to a stream and in a position that does not allow for ambush by the enemy, we pay equal attention to the works of defense, that rely at least in a solid fence. Inside the camp, nothing is left to chance, it is as a city, with the *Cardo Maximus (the main street that ran the camp from north to south)* and the *Decumanus Maximus (perpendicular to Decumanus Maximus, ran through the camp from east to west)*, and parallel to the *Cardo* and *Decumanus*, as many streets as needed.

The gates of the camp, placed by *Decumanus* and *Cardo*, are four and have the name of *Decumana* gate, *Praetoria* gate, *Right Main* gate and *Left Main* gate. Since the gates can attract the enemy attacks, behind them, inside the camp, it is usually built a rampart of semi-circular shape and if the conditions of danger would recommend also a moat.

Traced the streets network, are arranged tents and neatly spread legionaries, auxiliaries, the *Praetorian (the tent reserved for the commander)*, the *Questorio (the tent reserved for officers)*, kitchens, enclosures for the animals, latrines and all that experience has taught us to be useful.

The works progress methodically and with great rapidity.

When the camp is ready and everyone is settled in, a trumpet announces the distribution of food.

After the mess centurions command guard duty and communicate the password chosen by the commander.

The night fires are lighted.

The trumpet orders to retire and sleep in tents.

VII - The day after the trumpet sounded to call the muster and immediately the camp returned to life.

Everything was going according to the rules: the legionaries get out from “contubernia” (*tents in each were staying nine soldiers*) deploy to their centurions and these to the chief centurion, who orders the second trumpet blare, immediately the soldiers pack their bags, take off the curtains, load up beasts.

On the third blare the centurion with powerful voice asks "parati?" (*ready*), all with a booming voice respond three times "parati".

Then the legions, the vexillationes, auxiliaries, servants, wagons and mules come from the camp and while it is set on fire the march begins.

Left Arcidava we proceeded to Berzobis, as we said our left flank was protected by a river, but a little later we had to cross it and penetrate in enemy territory. To our good fortune lands had been deforested to the time of Domitian’s Dacian campaign. We passed on the other side, not without difficulty, because the river was indeed small, but the waters came down from the above mountains swirling.

When we reached Berzobis found Scaurianus, who advancing with great speed had preceded us and was already building up a great “castra” (*encampment*) who would host four legions, ten vexillationes, twenty thousand auxiliaries, servants, horses, mules and beasts of burden.

More than fifty thousand men would've been in Berzobis.

This was the last safe outpost before advancing on Aizis.

Therefore Trajan had decided to make it an impregnable fortress, so was dug a moat

ten feet (*3 meters*) deep and wide, and a stone rampart also ten feet high and seven *2 meters*) thick, on the rampart at regular intervals were built turrets.

All this was done not immediately, but the work was carried out by the legionaries who Trajan left here in defense of the fortress.

Berzobis is next to a river and stretches over a flat land, which does not require to be levelled, good for our defense.

The orders of Trajan were to make use advantageously of time, building, inside the rampart, stone buildings that would be useful later to the arrival of harsh winter.

VIII – Joined his forces with those of Scaurianus, the following day Trajan summoned the council of war,



First council of war in Dacia

among those present there were: Lucius Licinius Sura, the Trajan's "Comites" (*the closest advisers*), Tiberius Claudius Livianus, commander of the Praetorian Guard, Apollodorus of Damascus, all the "Legati", Lusius Quietus, tribunes and the centurions of highest rank.

These decisions: at Berzobis would remain two cohorts "equitate" (*composed of 800 infantry and 240 horsemen each*), a legion, an ala quingenaria (480 horsemen) of the German cavalry.

The fortress was to be defended by a powerful artillery consisting of catapults, "ballistae" (*machines that could throw large amounts of both arrows and bullets*) and "scorpions" (artillery based on bronze springs). Here supplies from Aquincum and Lederata would have flowed.

All other troops had to leave to Aizis.

Because the road to Aizis penetrated into thick forests and the scouts had spotted hidden Buri warriors, we had to be ready for combat.

Buri had come with a great mass of horsemen, who, although numerous, were not able to a front attack, it was predictable that, after their custom, they would give rise to sudden attacks and equally sudden flights, as indeed, to weaken our strength, wanted Decebalus.

To avoid these ambushes we had to advance slowly, but at the same time we could not leave behind us the danger formed by Buri.

Reached Aizis, fortified camp,



Legionnaires fortify the camp

a suitable maneuver against the enemy had to be devised, while the bulk of the army had to advance on Tibiscum (*today in Romania Caransebeş not far from Timisoara*).

This decided, the war council was closed.

The Lustratio (*ritual sacrifice*) of the castra was set for the following day.

IX - Trajan, having experience with the mood of the soldiers, knew how important is for them the respect of the ancient rite, which is to be celebrated with great solemnity.

We celebrate the Lustratio at the beginning of a war, then the Dacian war began at Berzobis.

In the evening, before the trumpets ordered the silence, Trajan, with a few of us, left the Praetorium, went to greet the centurions of the legions who had fought with him in the victorious German-Sarmatian war, that finished just over a year and a half.

Then, accompanied by the “Legati” (*commanders appointed by the emperor*), he went to meet the centurions of the Danubian legions, who militated for the first time under his insignia.

When Trajan was back into the Praetorium sounded the trumpet, which was followed by the sound of the trumpets of all detachments.

The silence of the night came down on the camp.

The next day, announced by the blares of trumpeters and bucinatores (*players of large horns*) began the Lustratio.

Trajan, veiled head, presided over the sacred ceremony.



Lustratio

The pig, the sheep and the bull were led to the “Victimarius” (*who immolated the victims of Sacrifice*), Immolated the victims the Lustratio was accomplished, while bucinatores and trumpeters freed high sounds.

Trajan then went up to the rostrum and the legions, the vexillationes and all the auxiliaries, lined up in front of the Emperor with their flags and their insignia.



Allocution of Trajan

According to his custom the Emperor’s adlocutio (*address*) was concise.

I remember his final words:

"Do not indulge in unnecessary acts of courage, your Emperor will award more willingly sagacity and prudence than rashness."

X - The rest of the day was spent in preparations for departure.

The following day, left a strong garrison in Berzobis, we left to Aizis. The road we had to go was little more than a path, that penetrated into thick forests.

Our scouts began their work, while the army was advancing carefully, following the vanguard who proceeded cutting down as many trees as they could,



Legionaries cut down trees

those who followed moved the trunks, both to widen the road and to make it a barrier against sudden ambushes.

We were marching to no more than two hours when the explorers returned warning that they had seen many barbarian horsemen hidden in the woods.

Trajan ordered the army to advance in battle formation, but to induce Buri to come out he left in the rearguard part of the luggage and baggage.

Suddenly Buri emerged from the forest, jumping on the bait we had left.

It was what we expected.

Archers and slingers entered into action.

Buri, who thought they take us by surprise, tried to resist responding to our with their archers, but since these were mounted on horseback their shots were not very precise, while our legionaries loaded the ballistae carts (*the Roman mobile artillery*), hit

horsemen and horses.

The battle was short, the enemy took refuge in the woods.

It was not prudent to pursue them.

In all we captured a few dozen horses.

The scouts came back in the woods, while the army was making his way through the trees.

We had stopped to feed us, when the explorers again foretold an attack of the barbarians.

The path that we walked with difficulty, went under a hill, where Buri had hidden.

Trajan sent in the rearguard Lusius Quietus with four alae of Numidian cavalry, who secretly covered back about a mile, while the legions refrained to dine longer than usual.

Preceded by explorers Quietus went into the woods, in order to get around the hill where was the cavalry of Buri, to catch them from behind.

When Trajan estimated that Quietus had come at a good point, ordered to come back on the road, slowly and with apparent disorder, as if we didn't expect a further attack of the barbarians.

We were now nearing the hill when there was a tremendous outcry, this was Lusius Quietus who was attacking Buri from behind. Immediately we turned our insignia and began to climb hill with the maximum speed allowed by the soil.

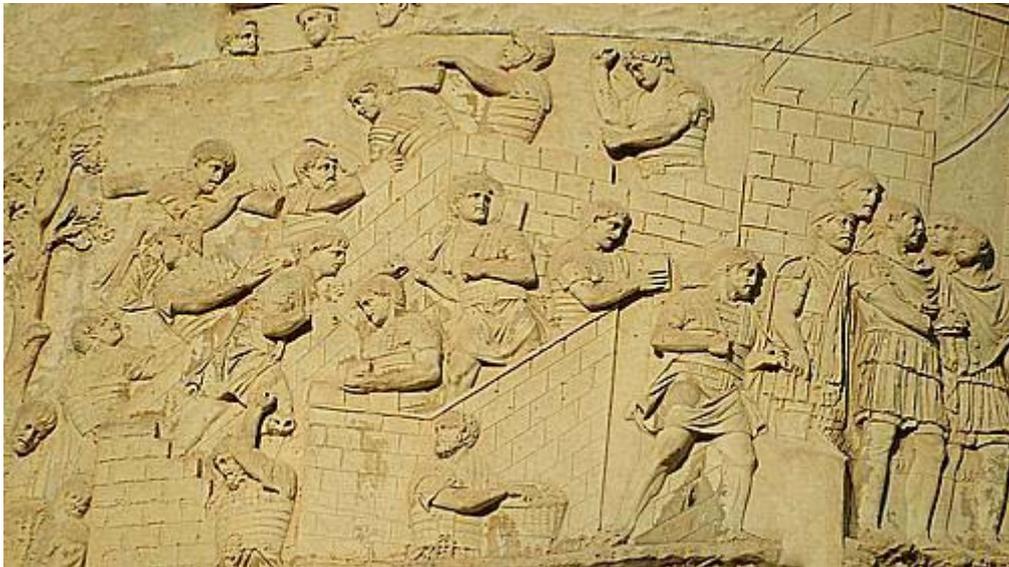
Buri caught between two fires, first tried to resist Quietus, then seeing our advancing in forces, they scattered in the woods.

The Roman archers were ordered to shoot at the horses to take prisoners and demoralize the enemy, for whom nothing is dearer than their horses.

Among our there were less than ten injured, how many Buri were fallen or wounded was not given to know, on the other hand we did thirty prisoners and captured many horses.

XI - Crossed the hill the way to Aizis was easy.

The legionnaires arrived here at once went to work to fortify the camp.



Legionnaires build fortifications

Because Buri were nearby, Trajan ordered to dig a ditch seven feet (*2 meters*) deep and wide. With the ground reported was erected the rampart, reinforced by a palisade, which, given the abundance of timber, was particularly solid.

erected turrets along the rampart, between these war machines were placed.

Trajan fact remembered as the Suebi (*Buri were a German tribe belonging to the people of the Suebi*), are prone to attacks at night, when they think to surprise their enemy.

Guard duty were doubled.

War machines were prepared ready to fire.

The legionaries were ordered to keep ready armor.

Archers and slingers at the first alarm had to run on the fence, along where were stacked arrows.

It was the third watch (*from midnight to three in the morning*) when the alarm sounded.

Buri, surrounded the camp from all sides, attacked us launching countless flaming arrows.

Not a few tents went up in flames.

Our soldiers however did not respond immediately to enemies, waiting for them come close to the moat and hidden behind the fence left believe to be unprepared.

Reassured by our weak reaction, Buri came to the attack with the light cavalry.

When they reached the moat our legionaries put in action the war machines.

The uncertain light of the night was lit by the flames of the fire arrows and the fireballs (*small containers of leather stuffed with pitch*), launched by our ballistae

No shot failed.

In this mess many Buri, driven by their own momentum, fell into the moat with their horses.

The fighting went on for about an hour, under the blows of our legionaries many barbarians were killed or wounded

Watched vain their efforts Buri withdrew.

Among our soldiers were counted twenty wounded, none fell, several tents were burned.

We captured two hundred wounded enemies and as many horses that roamed free in the fields.

While these clashes took place Dacians remained holed up on their mountains and brought no help to Buri.

XII - When arose the day, Trajan after the camp was restored, ordered the soldiers to rest.

The brief previous clashes had not been such as to convince Buri to retreat to their land beyond the river Marisus nor Trajan considered prudent to advance further towards Tibiscum, leaving behind enemies with forces almost intact.

These barbarians could mean a serious danger to the garrison left in Berzobis and would be just as dangerous for our legionaries working to widen the road that from Berzobis leads to Aizis. Moreover, for our provisioning and communication needs, the way that leads from Danube to Tibiscum through, Berzobis and Aizis, must necessarily be secured.

For all these reasons Trajan decided to stop the advance and sent back to Berzobis two alae of Numidian cavalry under the command of Lusius Quietus, with two vexillationes and thirty ballistae carts. Quietus would follow the river, to get behind the Buri and cut off their escape route.

When Trajan was informed that Quietus began the outflanking maneuver, retreated from Aizis to Berzobis, with two legions, two cohorts of archers, sixty ballistae carts and two alae of cavalry.

Buri were hidden in the woods waiting for an opportunity to attack us, but according to their customs did not care to go out scouting and even had not set up a real camp. When our scouts reported that we were close to the barbarians, Trajan, to flush them out, ordered to set fire the woods, in the meantime were positioned archers and ballistae carts.

When the flames were given off Buri retreated inward of the woods, but here Quietus with his cavalry was waiting for them, so when he saw this mass disorderly retreat to

escape the flames, ordered the charge.

As it happens to those who have nothing planned, barbarians were filled with terror, fleeing in every direction, so falling under the fury of the Numidians, others pelted by ballistae carts and arrows of the archers.

As soon as the flames were extinguished the legionnaires advanced compact. Those of Buri who failed to escape were taken captive.

The fugitives were chased by Quietus with all alae of cavalry, those who had followed him from Berzobis and the two who had led Trajan from Aizis.

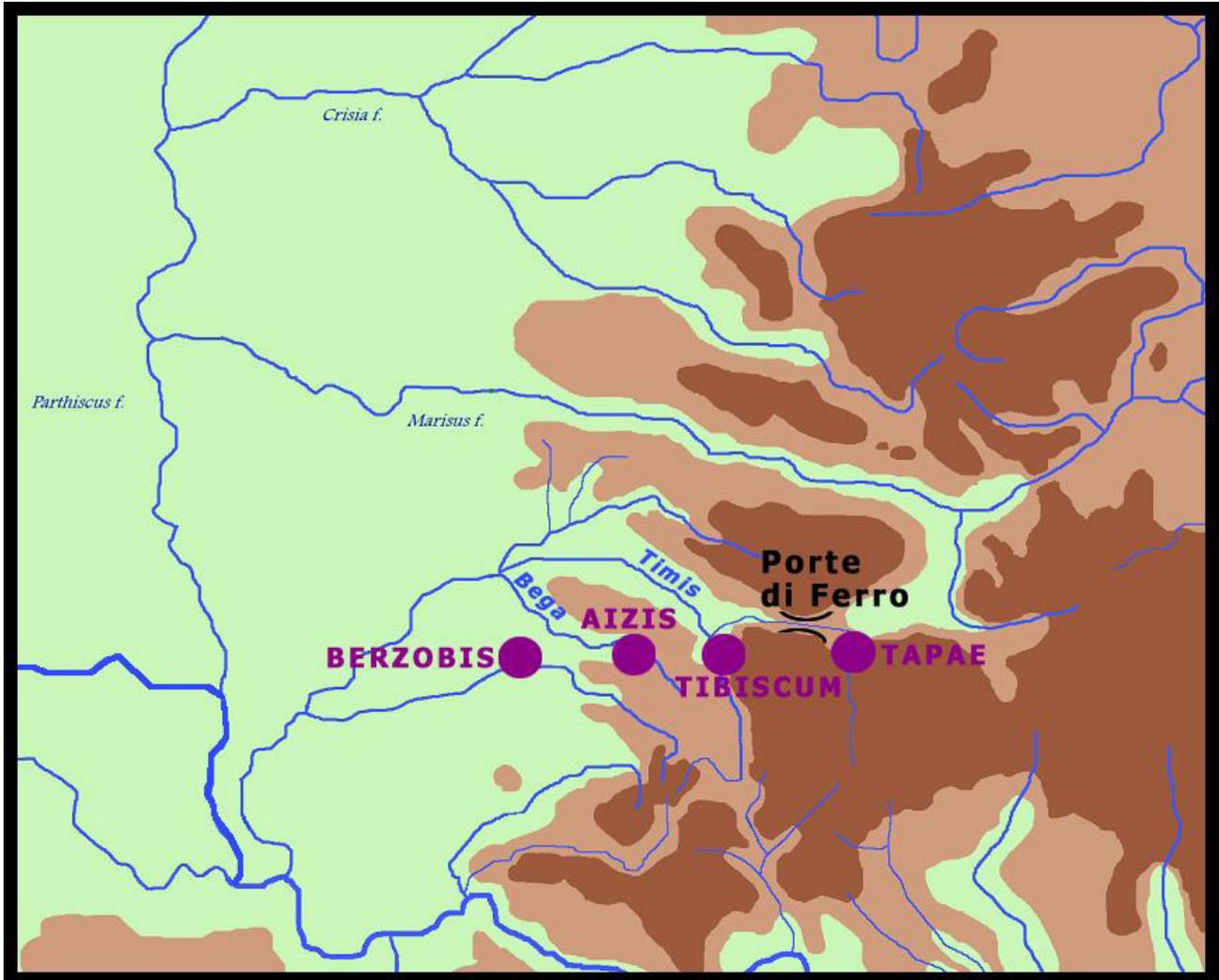
The improvidence of Buri had handed us an easy victory. Among our soldiers losses were minimal, while among Buri were counted more than a thousand dead, we took prisoners four thousand men, wounded included. Amazing the number of horses caught: almost ten thousand. In fact, after the custom of Suebi, Buri go into battle with two and some even three mounts.

Trajan, chosen the best, decided to donate them to the chiefs of Quadi, Marcomanni and Iazyges, since they had remained faithful.

When in the evening Quietus returned to the camp, he told us that Buri survived, crossed Marisus river, fled at full gallop.

XIII - The next day we were back to Aizis, while the two vexillationes with thirty ballistae carts, who had followed Quietus returned to Berzobis.

The road that leads to Tibiscum from Aizis meets a river that Dacians name Bega,



the road was little more than a path that climbs the hills in the woods, then back down to Tibiscum.

Trajan thinking about the present and the future ordered Apollodorus to build a bridge over Bega, wide enough to allow passage of legionnaires lined up on six rows. The river itself is not very big, but its waters come down from the mountains quickly, therefore Apollodorus built a central pillar stone to prevent a flood could destroy the work.

When the bridge was ready the army marched, while the explorers came in the forests that cover the mountains and make unsafe the way.

Once on top of the hill, which looks out on Tibiscum, our eyes saw a sad spectacle. Tibiscum is located in a fertile plain crossed by a large river, named Timis, but nothing remained of the town and villages.

Decebalus, either he thought it was futile defense, or because he wanted to do a scorched earth had given everything to the flames.

No sign of life, only the smoke rising from the ruins.

As there was no trace of enemies we quickly descended from the mountain and fortify the banks of Timis near what once had been Tibiscum.

Here Trajan built a great fortress, since from Tibiscum climbs the way to the pass of the Iron Gates, where Decebalus was waiting for us with all his army.

Trajan was in no hurry, so when the fortifications were sufficient sent back four legionary cohorts with the task of widening the road that connects Tibiscum to Aizis. As we said above this road rises and falls down the mountain through dense forests. First the soldiers thinned the woods cutting down trees close to the road and with the trunks, placed next to the road itself, they erected a sort of wall to prevent sudden attacks. The road was later widened and leveled to allow a smooth transition to wagons. This was all the more necessary as Decebalus, having burned around Tibiscum everything, made necessary the continual provisioning of our army. While we were engaged in this work the scouts informed us that Bastarnae, descending along the Timis, which flowing from the Iron Gates laps Tibiscum, had taken a position on our left flank.

XIV - The Emperor, fearing that Roxolani did a similar maneuver on our right flank, sent overnight Lusius Quietus with all the Numidian cavalry towards a pass that Dacians call Teregova Keys.

This pass had been fortified by Decebalus, to vice the Romans: on one side the Iron Gates, on the other the Teregova Keys.

Trajan had great confidence in Lusius Quietus and his Numidian cavalry, but he supposed that the surprise would not be adequate. Therefore while advised Quietus to proceed with the utmost silence, moving only at night, in the meantime ordered to move from Dierna towards the Teregova Keys a legion with carroballiste, archers and slingers.

Our informers made it known that the garrison, left by Decebalus in the fortress of Teregova, was not very large, but properly armed.

Quietus advancing, as said by night, went a short distance from Teregova and here, hidden in the woods, waited.

When the sun was high, Dacians opened the gates of the fortress, leading the horses to graze.

Great was the surprise of Quietus when he saw that Dacians, to the greatest neglect, left the gates open, with a few armed guards, while the horsemen dismounted from the horses, let free the beasts. Quietus decided to take the opportunity, gave the signal and rushed to the charge.

Absolutely unprepared Dacians did not have time to close the north gate and while our horsemen penetrated inside the fortification, they tried to escape from the south gate. Surrounded were all taken prisoners to the last man.

Those who had brought the horses grazing had surrendered immediately.

Quietus warned our legionaries rising from Dierna, that the fortress had fallen, therefore they could proceed without any danger.

Occupied the fortress with a garrison of four cohorts, the rest of the troops returned to Dierna.

Quietus came back to Tibiscum.

A few days after the Dacian spies informed Decebalus that the Romans had occupied Teregova Keys.

Distressed by this news, Decebalus moved a part of his soldiers and all Roxolani to protect his left side, faced to the south towards Teregova Keys.

XV - As we said the Dacian king had burned Tibiscum, including pastures. This caused Bastarnae, who from the Iron Gates were dropped near the town, many troubles, in fact, because of the lack of pasture, they were constantly forced to climb the mountain to take the forage necessary to feed more than ten thousand horses. We also had the problem of provisions, but, thanks to the new road, wagons with supplies could travel quickly from Lederata to Tibiscum through Berzobis and Aizis. As for Buri, Iazyges informed us that, crossed the river Marisus, they had dispersed into their lands.

Meanwhile in Tibiscum we built a strongly fortified encampment, defended by a deep moat, with a rampart of stone ten feet (*3 meters*) high and along it at a distance of one hundred feet (*30 meters*) one from the other, were placed wooden turrets. Trajan, observed the maneuvers which forced Bastarnae to feed the animals and themselves, while we quite have everything, wondering until the barbarians would have endured these many efforts.

The case came to our aid.

In fact the fire, set by Decebalus, had burned only partially pastures, also the ashes favored the rapid growth of a flourishing grass.

Bastarnae thought that luck was their friend, because within a short time they would not have to climb the mountains in search of forage, having large pastures at hand. Moreover it happened that one night fell an heavy rain that favored the rapid growth of pastures.

Trajan was waiting confident.

Bastarnae impatient watched grass grow and since Timis separated these pastures from our fortifications, they were thought to be safe.

These barbarians are a jumble of Germanic and Sarmatian tribes, they are united only by the common wish to rob the neighbors, for the rest each tribe follows only his own chief. They have no discipline, are lazy, do not cultivate the land, they move followed by a large number of wagons, horses and oxen, wagons carry supplies for a few days, at night they sleep in the wagons or under rough tents. In winter they take shelter in shacks covered with leaves and mud.

They are very skillful horsemen and excel in archery.

They do not feel shameful, if necessary, to flee, but, if they are pursued recklessly, reunite themselves and return to the attack, so they face in their favor many battles that seemed lost.

They're used to fighting in the endless plains that from the Carpathian Mountains spread to the east.

Their cavalry is equally divided between catafratti, who are the most noble of them and archers on horseback, who are entrusted with the first attack. When under their clouds of arrows the enemy heels, catafratti start an attack sweeping everything. They are indescribably cruel.

XVI - When pastures appeared mature, Tiberius Claudius Livianus asked Trajan to grant his Batavians horsemen, who were anxious to do it, the honor of fighting against Bastarnae.

Consent, during the third watch (*between midnight and three in the morning*), commanding Livianus, five alae of Batavians left the camp, together with two cohorts of archers, three vexillationes and some ballistae carts.

Following Timis, on our bank, and proceeding westward, the column ran fifteen miles, found a place hidden from the trees, stopped here.

Cut enough trunks was built a number of rafts to cross the river at that point flowing placidly.

Spent the day in the evening Livianus, crossed the river, during the third watch, the column set off again, returning to Tibiscum on the other side of the river, but at some distance from the shore, keeping well hidden in the woods on the slopes mountains. The advance was not easy because the narrowness of the places made arduous the advance of ballistae carts, nor was it possible to cut down the trees to avoid alarming Bastarnae.

When the sun rose Livianus stopped the column and, made a makeshift fort, ordered to rest, while the scouts penetrate the woods.

When they returned informed Livianus that Bastarnae were at a distance of five miles, and as we had surmised had brought the beasts to pasture.

Livianus then hid ballistae carts in the eyes of the enemy, but at the same time positioned them to keep the barbarians at gunpoint. For this reason, cut many branches, he concealed under the foliage archers and ballistae carts.

The next day Bastarnae, fearing nothing, brought back the animals to pasture and, according to their own indolence, left them free, while they lie under the trees sheltering from the sun. When it became clear that Bastarnae were resting Livianus ordered Batavians to ride and, having captured as many horses as possible, shield in the woods at the ballistae carts.

Livianus said he had witnessed a memorable show, when Batavians captured the horses, Bastarnae stranded were running below the horses, thus falling under the strokes of Batavians, who were returning in the woods after having made a large massacre.

Those barbarians who had managed to take a horse ran at their camp and raised the alarm, almost without stopping went back with their mates to catch their horses.

Shortly thereafter the “catafratti”, worn the chain mail, followed them.

With their numbers they occupied the entire plain and immoderately turned to the woods, where Batavian had repaired.

When they were within range of our ballistae carts Livianus gave the signal to start the battle.

Part of ballistae carts were loaded with arrows, some with bullets, in any case their range was by far superior than that of Bastarnae archers. Under the first volley much of the first line of the barbarians fell, those who followed continued to advance, but while ballistae carts were recharged, went into action our archers, who defended by the branches of trees were in better conditions than Bastarnae archers on horseback, when rejected, they made way to catafratti on whom the bullets of ballistae carts beat making a massacre.

Bastarnae, unprepared for this kind of fighting, receded enough to get out of range, leaving their dead, while the horses, without riders, wandered aimlessly. In that Livianus let out an ala of Batavians, with the same order as before: capture all the

horses they could and come back quickly into the woods.

And so it was done.

Bastarnae, upset with anger, did not mind the more danger and attacked again and again were welcomed by the blows of ballistae carts. When their light cavalry was defeated Livianus ordered to come out all the Batavian cavalry and hurl at catafratti. These weighed down by armor, unable to escape, fell under the blows of the valiant Batavians.

When Livianus estimated that Bastarnae had been annihilated he stopped Batavians. Over the course of two fights had taken to the field no less than eight thousand Bastarnae horsemen, nearly two thousand dead remained on the ground, three thousand were injured and two thousand prisoners. Among our soldiers fell no more than fifty horsemen and archers, two hundred were injured.

Collected our wounded, bound prisoners, yoked captured horses, more than six thousand, Livianus wondered what should be done with wounded Bastarnae, he seemed impious to leave them without help, however they were too many to take care himself.

Therefore he decided to set a prisoner free and, given him a mount, sent to Bastarnae survivors, to tell them that they were free to help their wounded.

But these people, made treacherous by nature, not knowing the mercy of the Romans feared a trap.

Livianus after waiting a while, thought barbarians no more represented a danger, ordered his men to start.

Meanwhile he sent messengers to Trajan informing him of the happy outcome of the battle, also asking to be sent an escort to prevent prisoners fled and wagons to transport our wounded.

Towards the evening of the third day since he started, Livianus was back to Tibiscum, with Batavians in celebration.

As we said earlier Bastarnae not have a king, but every tribe has his own chief. In the battle against Livianus many of these chiefs had fallen, so between them there existed the most complete confusion and as happens in these cases they reproached each other for the disastrous defeat.

XVII - Meanwhile Decebalus stood at the Iron Gates, alongside Roxolani. He had been informed of the escape of Bastarnae, however these, trying to get other gifts, were saying that they had to yield to the number and arms of Romans, but had made great slaughter.

Men like to believe what gives solace, so Decebalus would believe Bastarnae so that generously discharged them, moreover thinking that in the future they could be helpful.

Anyway his situation in the Iron Gates was not the happiest, eighty thousand Dacians stood at the Iron Gates, others he had left nearby in the town of Tapae, plus ten thousand Roxolani, a lot of horses and pack animals, so a vast mass of men and animals had to be fed.

As the days went by as his anxiety grew.

Above all the loss of Teregova Keys distressed him, fearing that Romans, going down from the mountains of Teregova, which from noon overhang the Iron Gates, would have put in evil, nor could entrust undisciplined Roxolani with the task of defending his left side. Accordingly he was forced to move part of his troops from the Iron Gates towards the mountains facing the Teregova pass.

Trajan understood the difficulties of Decebalus, but was also aware of his own, since try to break through the Iron Gates would require a terribly bloody combat.

So to wear down the enemy, he remained in Tibiscum, where nothing was lacking.

Meanwhile he sent scouts to know deeply the area and find out if we could discover ways to weaken the strong position of Decebalus.

Finally he could not consume all summer in Tibiscum.

After some time the scouts came back saying they had found a path somewhat long,

but not arduous, leading to the mountain to the north of the Iron Gates, in this way, albeit with difficulty, we could carry our ballistae carts.



Ballistae carts

Trajan ordered to occupy and strengthen the place, remaining hidden in the eyes of the enemy.

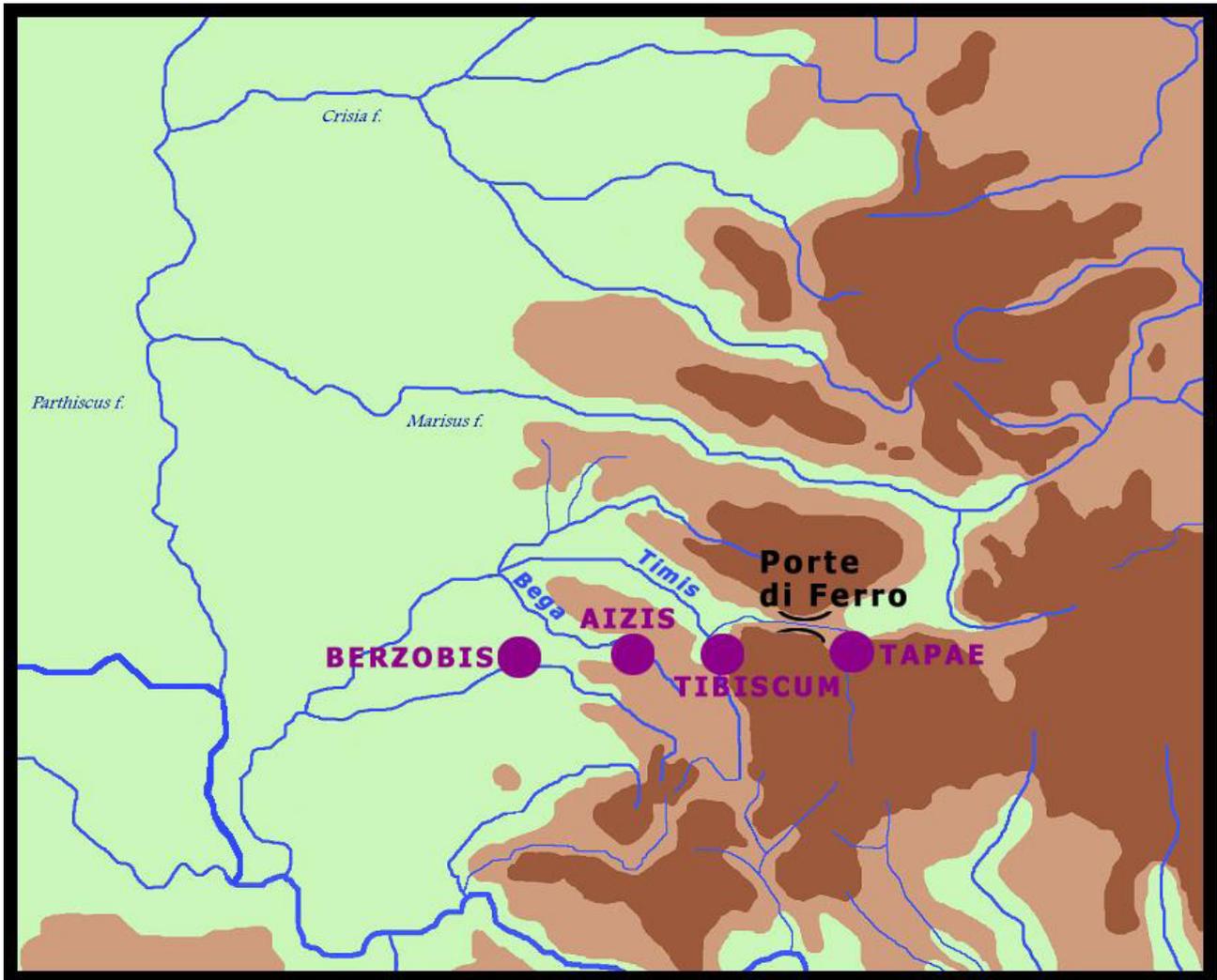
First he sent two vexillationes, later two cohorts of archers and slingers. While they were stationed above the Iron Gates a whole legion was advancing cautiously opening the way for passing the ballistae carts.

To distract Dacian scouts, the Emperor sent to Teregova Keys two alae and two legionary cohorts, with orders to move to the Iron Gates through the mountain which is at noon of these, but only to divert attention of the Dacians, inducing Decebalus to believe that our intention was to circumvent him from the South.

Dacian scouts, who already were turning attention to the South, as the Northern side of the Iron Gates is too steep to allow the descent to the pass, were soon attracted by the sound of our men, who came down noisily from Teregova.

Decebalus, felt comforted in his suspicion, reinforced the defenses toward the South.

Trajan informed about Decebalus ' troop movements, decided it was time to begin the decisive combat.



Since the steep slope that leads from Tibiscum to the Iron Gates made unusable the ballistae carts, he ordered that most of those available were carried to our post in the north of the pass.

There were one hundred machines.

It was impossible that a column so long, inevitably noisy, could pass unnoticed, so he sent more reinforcements to those who were fortified above the Iron Gates.

When the ballistae carts dragged by oxen came to our post, Decebalus realized what was happening, believing to still be in time ordered a large number of soldiers to climb the mountain, but as mentioned the side of the mountain is so steep that even the rock climbing is almost impossible, moreover our legionaries, as soon as Dacians scrambled up, bombed them from above with arrows and stones.

Seen futile this attempt, Decebalus withdrew his men, anyway comforted thinking that whereas it was difficult to climb the mountain, it would be impossible for Romans getting down.

Our soldiers to avoid being surprised by Dacians fortified bravely the post so as to make it unassailable.

XVIII - Trajan, having prepared for the best everything, ordered to be ready to march on the Iron Gates.

Ascended the tribune he addressed the whole army.

Four legions with the eagles and insignia, the vexillationes with their banners and all the auxiliaries with their commanders were lined.

Around "Signiferi" (the bearers of insignia) could be seen the "Antesignani" (*valiant legionaries deployed in defense of Signiferi*).

When Marco Ulpius ended his "Adlocutio" (*speech*) the chief centurion turned to his own legionaries said:

"Silentium (*be silent*)

Mandata captate (*attention to orders*)

Ordinem servate (*maintain alignment*)

Signa sequite (*follow the insignia*)

Nemo demittat signa et inimicos sequat "*(no one goes away from the insignia to chase the enemies)*).

The Signiferi raised their insignia and all together the legionnaires answered "Parati! Parati! Parati!" (*ready*)

The commander of the legion, got down from the platform, mounted his horse and followed by the tribunes stood at the head of the column.

The gates of Tibiscum were opened.

The advance began.

All the legions, the auxiliaries, the vexillationes repeated the ritual.

Marched ten miles we began to see the high mountains enclosing the Iron Gates, as the scouts could see inside the forests a growing number of Dacians.

Trajan changed the alignment, at the head, mixed with legionnaires, sent archers and

slingers, followed the Emperor and the praetorian guard, close behind the other legions, the vexillationes and auxiliary infantry.

The cavalry was kept in the rear to protect the wagons.

The Timis river was on our left hand.

Trajan, found a suitable place to fortify, stopped the advance.

However a mass Dacian attack was unlikely, we could not rule out some sudden incursion of Roxolani, therefore the moat was dug, raised a strong palisade.

Overnight we suffered brief but repeated attacks, but our strong position allowed the enemies only to disturb our sleep and it was what they probably wanted, to find us tired the following day.

XIX - Finally the crucial day came.

Not far, in an elevated position, Dacians were waiting for us.

Given the narrowness of the places the front that opposed our soldiers to Dacians was rather small, they had sided archers in the center of the alignment, while their left flank was secured by Roxolani light cavalry, on their right flank flowed Timis river.

The main army was behind the archers.

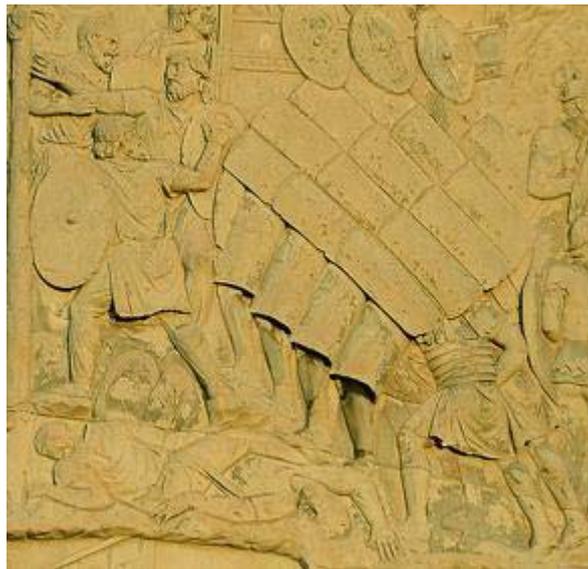
The catafratti were kept in the rear.

Trajan sent legionaries in the front.

Along our right side, covered by the legionaries, archers and slingers were mixed.

The cavalry followed closing the rear.

When Dacians began the launch of darts our vanguard formed the tortoise,



The legionaries forming the testudo

while in the rear was set fire to a large pyre, this was the expected signal to begin the bombardment with ballistae carts, placed above the Iron Gates.

The bullets falling on the close mass of Dacians, caused a massacre, breaking into two parts their deployment.

The shelling was constant, indeed while fifty ballistae carts were running other fifty were recharged, so the launch was continuous, nor the bullets were lacking, as in the

days before our legionaries had accumulated a huge amount.

To evade the shots Dacians clambered on a mountain in the south in front of our post, but not having war machines, they could not oppose our artillery and those who returned to the pass were targeted.

On the ground lay mountains of bodies.

Meanwhile our compact testudo was advancing as an iron monster, while the arrows of the Dacian archers fell on the shields of legionaries and bounced away, providing little damage. More dangerous were the attacks on our right flank where our archers and slingers could offer a feeble resistance. Then Trajan ordered Lusius Quietus to run with his cavalry on the mountainside to flush out the enemy archers.

The Dacians pressed, began to withdraw not without putting up a fierce resistance. Our testudo continued its relentless advance, moving ever closer to the enemy archers.

When hand to hand fighting was close, Dacian archers abandoned the battle by fleeing within their ranks.

Then the testudo opened, and fresh forces came to the forefront.

The fighting became increasingly tight and fierce.



Legionnaires show to Trajan heads of decapitated Dacian

The Signiferi defended by Antesignani were leading the legionaries,



The Signiferi lead the advance

German auxiliaries fought with great value,



German auxiliaries fight bare-chested

among whom excelled Batavians, who defied the enemy fighting bare-chested. Step by step the Dacians retreated under the blows of our soldiers. In vain the

catafratti were called, weighed down by heavy armor they were moving with difficulty in the steep mountain slope, until, fearing to be surrounded, they took refuge in the rear.



Flight of catafratti

While on the other side of the Iron Gates, the pass continued to be bombarded by our ballistae carts, Quietus had succeeded to push back the enemy from our right flank. As said the front , short between the river and the mountain, gave little space to the front lines, therefore our men advanced very slowly, at the same time Decebalus continued to send reinforcements to replace the fallen.

The clash became even more violent,



A legionary fights holding within the teeth the hair of a beheaded Dacian

our men were advancing through the body of the enemy, their first line, pushed from behind, could not even move back.

But everyone knows that in the hand to hand fighting no one can resist our legionnaires and after the will of the Immortal Gods we broke through the Iron Gates. Enemies realizing lost, while Decebalus abandoned the battle, gave themselves a stampede.

Trajan ordered Quietus to run with all the cavalry towards Tapae, to prevent fleeing Dacians occupied it.

XX - Decebalus had left at Tapae a small garrison, who barely had time to close the doors before Quietus broke into with all the cavalry.

Decebalus, feeling the Iron Gate unsurpassed, had not given thought to defend the town in an appropriate way, even here he left his sister with her family. When the Dacian garrison learned that Decebalus was defeated, left the town and fled.

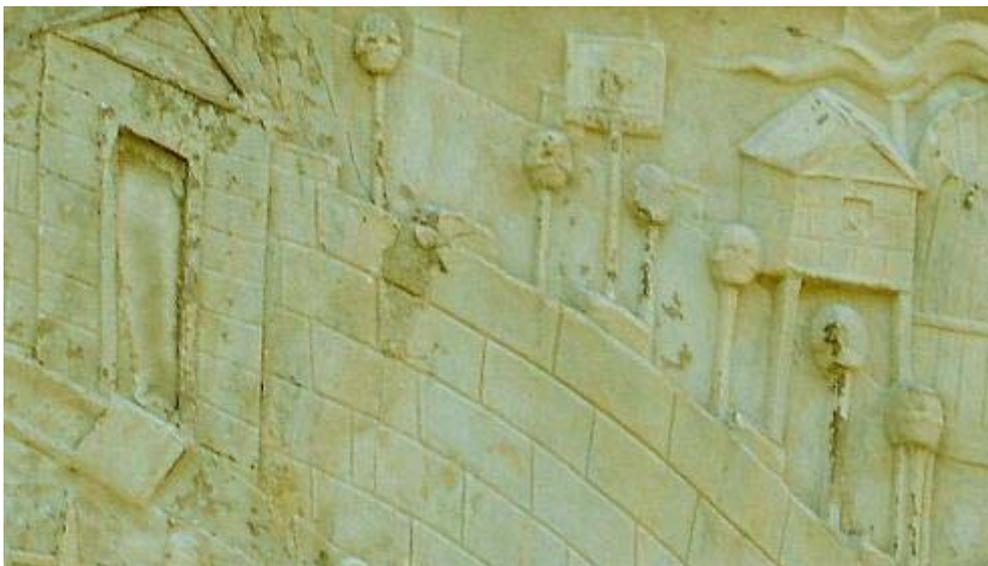
Quietus, according to the orders, not pursued them, preferring to garrison Tapae and prevent Decebalus could find shelter.

He, chased by the Romans, view closed the retreat in Tapae, at the head of his warriors, along with Roxolani, found a ford, crossed the river to safety and regroup his forces. At the same time he commanded to send reinforcements from Sarmizegetusa.

Decebalus, known for his value, did not mean giving up, thinking that with new forces, as Roxolani had accused modest losses, could counterattack, considering that to break through the Iron Gates we had paid a heavy bloodshed.

As Decebalus brought himself to safety, our legions surrounded Tapae.

A dreadful sight appeared to our eyes,



Roman prisoners beheaded

on the city walls were fixed the heads of legionnaires who had been captured by the Dacians.

An uncontrollable fury took possession of our soldiers: Tapae was sacked and set on fire.



Trajan observes the legionnaires who set fire to Tapae

While setting up a new camp, Trajan ordered from Tibiscum were sent wagons to take the wounded in its “valetudinarium” (*hospital*).

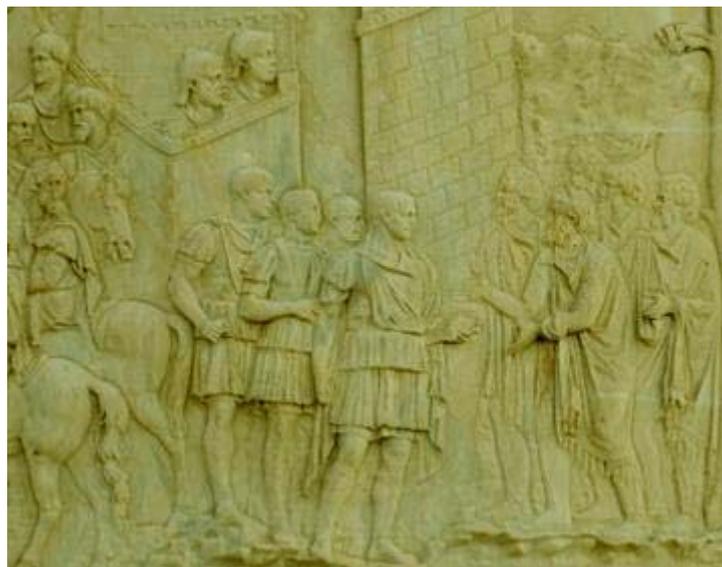
XXI - The following day an embassy of Dacian warriors came to Trajan for parliamentary,



Dacian warriors come to Trajan for parliamentary

but the Emperor disdained for their impiety, refused the talks.

Later the noblest Dacians, unarmed and as suppliant, asked audience.



Embassy of noble Dacians

Trajan heard their prayers, they had asked to hospitalize the wounded men, ransom the prisoners and bury the dead.

Trajan allowed they could take the wounded, but to get back the prisoners they had to give to the Romans five hundred hostages from among the noblest Dacians, as for the dead the Romans piety would give them burial.

Since the embassy of Daci said could not make decisions about the hostages, was only allowed them to transport the wounded.

Meanwhile our soldiers, picked up the bodies of the fallen, raised a great pyre, Trajan himself, payed the last honors to their bravery set fire, the ashes were entrusted to centurions to be preserved as evidence of the value of the legions.

A great high stele was erected.

The bodies of the enemies were burned on a huge pyre, it was granted to the Dacians to collect the ashes.

The fighting was so bloody that were counted between Dacians more than thirty thousand deaths, far fewer were injured, some two thousand prisoners.

XXII - After having honored the fallen Trajan convened the war council to decide how to continue the war.

Cicatricula, who also in this battle had fought bravely, suffering a wound to his right arm, pressed because we did not give the enemies time to regroup, but crossed the river we would chase without giving them a chance. Many of the Legati and some of centurions, outraged for the Dacian wickedness argued forcefully Cicatricula.

Sura had an opposing view, the forces of the Dacians, he said, were still remarkable and after the defeat at the Iron Gates a commander as Decebal, a man of rare cunning, never would accept an hand to hand fighting, on the contrary he would try to draw us on the Orastie Mountains, where the Dacians had six heavily armed fortified towns, that we would have to conquer one after another, while in the meantime the summer was heading at the end.

Trajan, praised Cicatricula for his value and those who supported him for the courageous intentions, said:

"We should not be asking too much to the favor of the Gods, we must give thanks to their help and not ask more to the mercy of the Gods.



Jupiter fights alongside the Romans

We must not challenge the fate that so far, favorable, accompanied us.

Decebalus was defeated, but he was not destroyed.

Do not forget that Dacians long have been for us a pernicious threat, perhaps the worst that the East causes us, so it would be unreasonable if we, imprudent because of our victory, were trying new dangers.

We have broken through the Iron Gates, we occupied Teregova Keys, we destroyed Tapae.

No longer unpunished Dacians will move toward the West and undermine the Pannonia and Moesia.

Now it is time to take advantage of our victory.

We shall construct at Tapae a great fortress and also fortify the Iron Gates, we shall open a big road to link Tibiscum and Tapae and if Decebalus wants to continue the war, when the weather allows, we will advance on Sarmizegetusa.

I believe, however, that Decebalus, seeing that we stop at Tapae, be persuaded that our forces are exhausted and ventures into some rash move."

So Trajan said and called Cicatricula praised him again for his value and assured him that according to his hopes soon have had the opportunity to cover himself with glory.

XXIII - Tireless legionnaires went to work fortifying what once was Tapae.

In view of the winter barracks for the soldiers and every other building were built in stone. The Iron Gates were fortified, the surrounding hills were fortified and joined at the Iron Gates by a solid fence. It was leveled and enlarged the road that connects Tapae to Tibiscum. All these works were carried out under the guidance of Apollodorus.

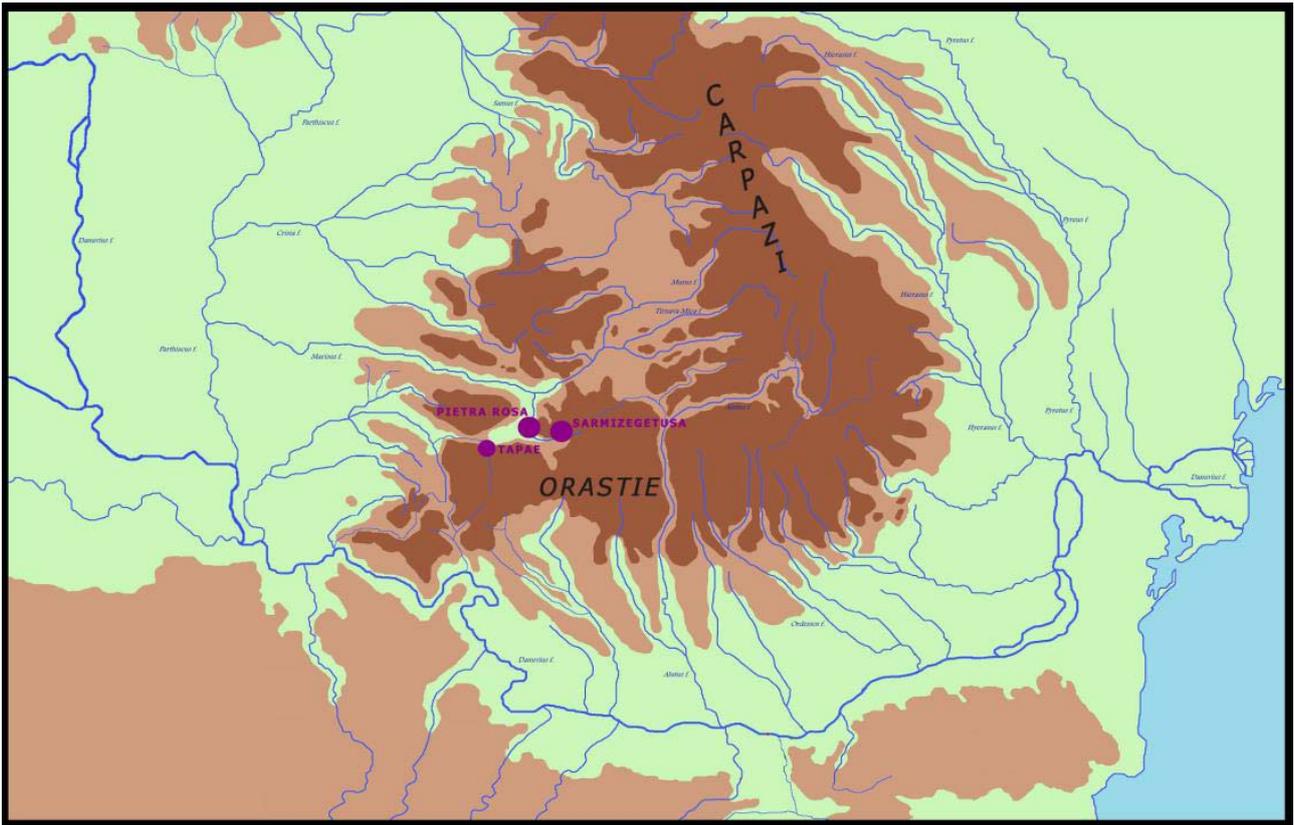
Decebalus in this same period had retired on the Orastie Mountains in a large fortress named by Dacians Pietra Rosa (*Rose Stone*), located at an altitude of more than four thousand feet (*a thousand meters*).

Here he awaited reinforcements.

When they arrived, he, reorganized his army, went down to the valley with Roxolani, focusing on Tapae.

The defeat at the Iron Gates persuaded Decebalus that in the clash between infantry was inferior, so he placed all hope in the cavalry. Considering Dacian knights, Bastarnae and Roxolani, he fielded thirty thousand men, followed by as many dismounted archers and infantry.

As soon as Trajan heard that Decebalus had set off, deployed the army along the Marisus river, that Dacians would have to cross to attack Tapae.



For extra security he had fortified those places where the ford could be easier.

Decebalus not had the chance to take us by surprise, because the valley opposite Tapae was open, and such a large number of armed men could not go unnoticed, moreover to cross the river at night would be all the more dangerous.

Decebalus was advancing slowly not to tire his soldiers, but when approached the river he found deployed our legions.

He stopped the army, deployed in the front line Roxolani who challenged our legionaries urging them to fight and calling them cowards, but the legionaries responded with jokes saying that if they wanted to be our guest we were ready to receive them magnificently.

Both sides prepared to spend the night.

Restless night.

The Romans feared that taking advantage of the darkness Dacians were moving the field, to take us by surprise in the early dawn.

And this exactly decided Decebalus, who ordered Dacian cavalry to ride downstream. Not to be found out by our sentries, Dacians came out from the camp holding the horses by the reins, just when they had departed somewhat mounted up.

But our scouts, even during the day, crossed the river, moved on the right bank of the river, on the side of the enemy, therefore they saw in the distance the Dacians, who because of the night proceeded slowly the scouts crossed back the river and gave the alarm.

Not content with this ploy Decebalus, after the Dacian cavalry was coming out of the camp downstream, in the same way ordered Roxolani to go upstream, looking for a comfortable ford, indispensable for heavy catafratti.

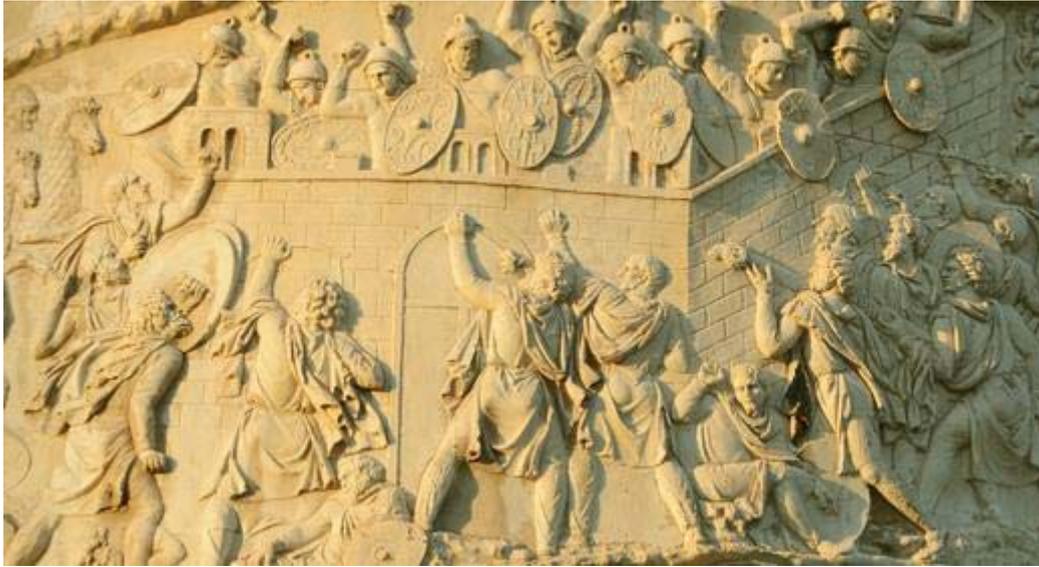
When the first light arose Dacian cavalry instead take us by surprise, was surprised in his turn, as we stand lined up in their waiting, where the ford was easier. Although disappointed Dacians did not want to give up the attempt, then started on both banks of the river running between them and us, as long as, having taken a little advantage, the Dacian horsemen tried to cross the river, but the hurry was a bad advisor, since in the middle of the river the waters were deep and unbelievable strong the current, so that it was equally difficult to go forward or to go backward. While they were struggling in these dangers came the legionaries and what their javelins did not do made the waters.



Dacian horsemen are overwhelmed by the waters of the Marisus river

he legato, according to the orders received, detained on our bank the legionaries, leaving Dacian survivors give assistance to the wounded, while the dead were dragged from the current and with them a lot of horses.

XXIV - While these things were happening downstream, upstream Roxolani followed by Dacian infantry, found an easy ford, crossed the river, but opposite to the easy ford, on our bank we had built a fortress, from here battered the catafratti who, left on the field many of them, withdrew. Shortly after the Dacian archers and infantry, with battering rams attempted to break through the walls of the fortress.



The catafratti and Dacian infantry attacking a Roman fort

When the legions arrived, to rescue their comrades, found that the battle had already ended and barely Dacians had retreated carrying the wounded, but leaving behind many dead.

Decebalus, dashed his hopes, retreated to the Orastie mountains, while Roxolani returned to their lands.

Fearing to be abandoned by them, Decebalus sent an embassy to Susago, who is the king of Roxolani.

The ambassadors said to Susago that the Romans had a vain victory, since they were

trapped at the foot of the Orastie mountains which are impregnable and with the new season Decebalus would dealt them a decisive blow.

We know that Susago was convinced when the ambassadors offered him the rich gifts sent by Decebalus, promising even more in the future.

Meanwhile, the season was declining, the rains in the Orastie mountains swelled rivers, then Trajan ordered to complete the works undertaken and left two legions at Tapae, returned to Tibiscum carrying prisoners, including the sister of Decebalus. Hence after a brief stop, he crossed the Danube and stopped at Singidunum. The prisoners were sent to Sirmio.

The Emperor through the usual way returned to Rome.



BOOK II

I - On his return to Rome Trajan was received by the people with great celebrations. Reassured by Plotina (*wife of Trajan*) that in his absence there had not been riots, he devoted himself to the care of the Empire.

Following the complaints of the provincials he ordered to institute proceedings for misappropriation against Roman procurators of Syria and Cilicia. The first was sentenced to compensation of three million sesterces, the second of two million. Both were saved from exile. (*At the time of Trajan the annual salary of a legionary was 1,200 sesterces*).

The sentence showed that the Emperor did not intend to bear the intolerable malpractice of Roman administrators, which, if not stopped, would push the provincial to revolt, while the Dacian war was still in progress.

Add to this that Pacorus II, king of Parthes (*ancient Iran people*), had appointed, against our will, king of Armenians his nephew Esedare and gladly would cross the Euphrates to invade the Roman province of Syria, if he had not been retained by Vologases III, who legitimately claimed the throne usurped by Pacorus II and threatened him backed by an army of other Parthes and Iberians (*people contiguous to Armenians*), who since the time of Augustus are our staunch allies and often fight against Armenians and the same Parthes.

Such being the situation Trajan ordered to strengthen defenses along the Euphrates and to prevent the Syriac legions, idleness became indolent, forgetting the ancient discipline, commanded they built new roads, bridges and aqueducts.

Meanwhile our informers learned that Decebalus had sent an embassy to Pacorus II inviting him to join forces against the Roman Empire.

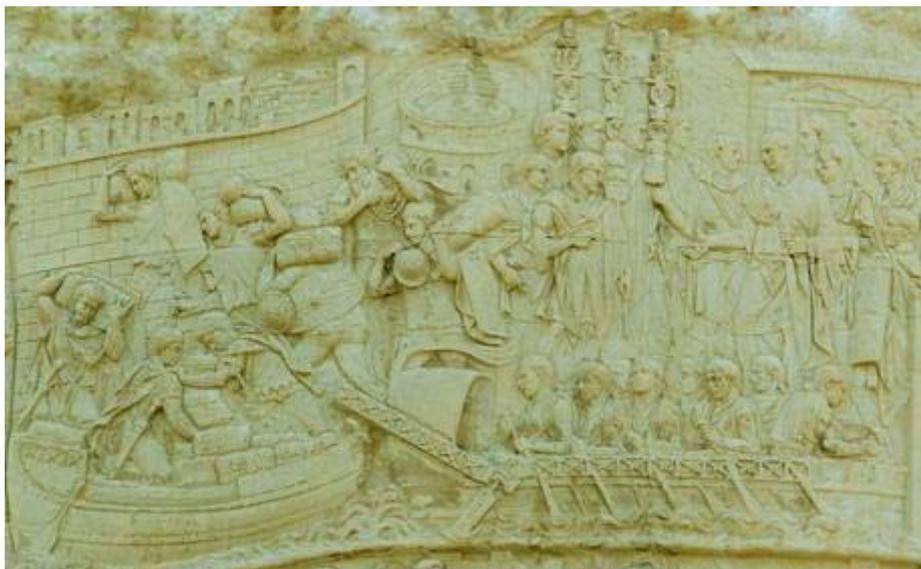
But for the reasons above mentioned the king of the Parthes did not closed a covenant.

II – Nevertheless, eager for revenge, Decebalus gave up his plans.

After agreeing with Susago king of Roxolani and hired mercenaries, many of whom Bastarnae horsemen, when it was still winter (102), he advanced his army in the direction of Moesia Inferior, to which, according to plan, converged Roxolani horsemen.

Blockaded in the West, both at the Iron Gates and Teregova Keys, the Dacian king, attempting to take us by surprise, descended towards the South, at the same time he expected that to go to the rescue of Manius Laberius Maximus, governor of Moesia Inferior, we would leave Tapae and the Iron Gates unprotected. But Laberius was a commander so brave as experienced and despite the winter season he kept alert the army. Neither enemy movement could be unnoticed. Fact Roxolani move with long columns of wagons and countless horses. Moreover, the chill of winter forced Daci and Roxolani to light high fires for withstand the unbearable frost of the nights.

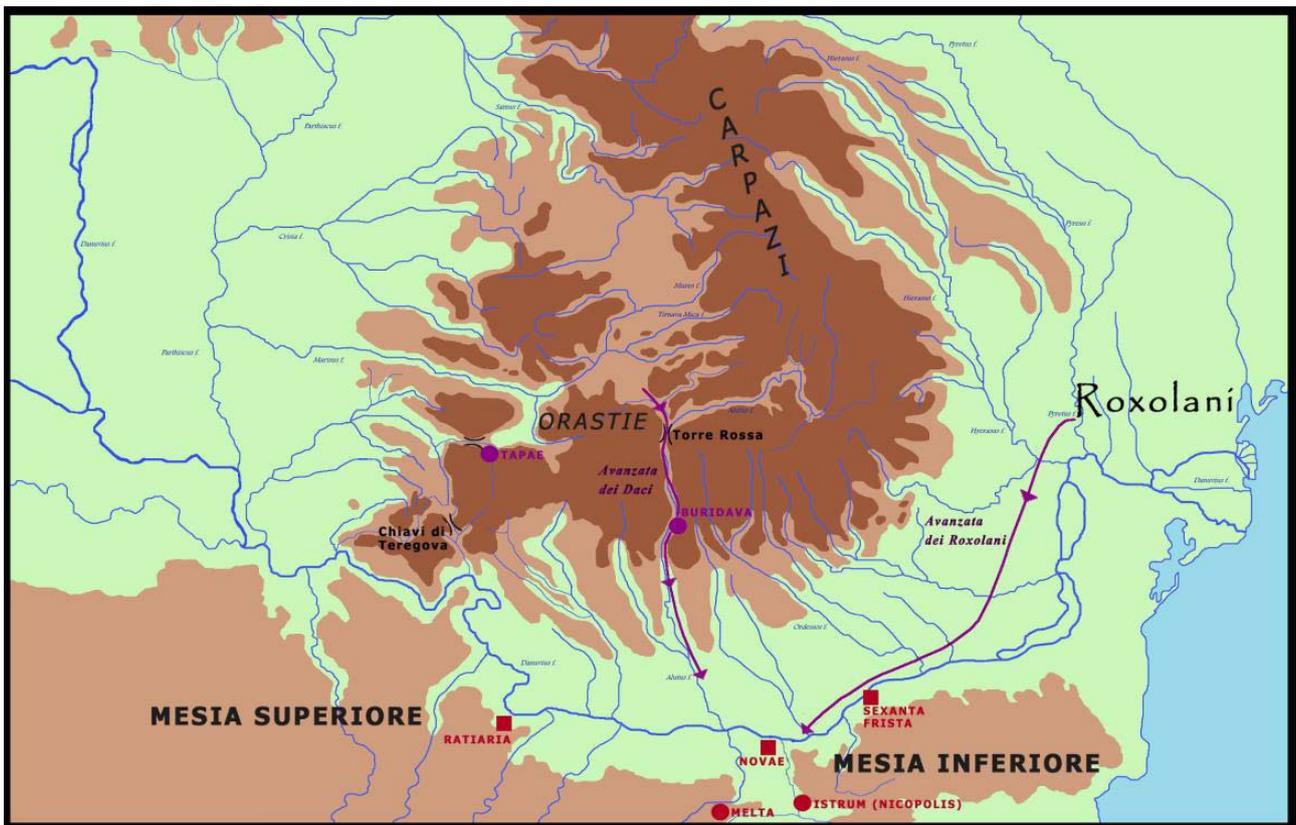
Trajan, once aware of what was happening, left Rome with the Praetorian Guard and the "Comites" (*the closest advisors of the emperor*). Reached Ancona forced marches, we boarded.



The legionnaires in the retinue of Trajan embark supplies

Crossed the Adriatic we marched to Ratiaria (*today Archar in Bulgaria*), in which “Stative Castra” (*permanent camp*) was stationed the legio V Macedonica.

Short before Roxolani, crossed the Danube not far from Novae (*today Svishtov in Bulgaria*), where Laberio with legio I Italica was wintering, invaded the province. But Laberio warned of their advance had been repaired the inhabitants of Moesia Inferior into the same Novae,



in the fortresses of Melta (*today Lovech in Bulgaria*), and in the towns of Sexanta Prista and Istrum, with orders to carry all they could.

Contextually Dacians, commanding Rosiedano, descended towards South after crossing the pass named Red Tower and hence exceeded Buridova, advancing along the Alutus river, marched towards the Danube, while Decebalus stood on the Orastie mountains.

The heavy snow made it difficult the advance of Rosiedano. Afflicted by terrible frost, having to sleep in tents, many Dacians fell sick.

Roxolani since Laberio remained within Novae, ventured inside the Moesia Inferior, doing raids. But also they found themselves in some difficulty because in that season the pastures were sterile and was increasingly difficult for them to feed their countless horses and pack animals.

III – Trajan, embarked on the Moesica fleet, arrives in Ratiaria,



Trajan at the helm of a ship

where he took the command of the Legio V Macedonica and auxiliaries, collected large supplies, he embarked men, horses and supplies on the ships of the fleet. Finally, embarked himself with the Praetorian Guard, he left Ratiaria down along the Danube towards Novae.

The instructions his messengers had delivered to Laberio were not to make sorties and attack in the open field Roxolani, their horsemen were too many, let them abandon to raids, reassuring the provincials Trajan was coming with great forces and abundant supplies.

As for the destruction inflicted by the barbarians, the Emperor after having defeated and pushed back Roxolani and Dacians, would rebuild everything.

Nevertheless Laberio had to watch over Roxolani's moves and if, satiated with plunder, they intended to re-cross the Danube he had to attack them as tried the ford. As in war are determined paradoxical situations!

Indeed Decebalus was tormented by the fear that Roxolani, satisfied by raids, would return to their lands and leave Dacians alone against the Romans.

So he sent messages announcing his imminent arrival, and asked them to keep the conquered positions, forcing the Romans to fight on two fronts.

IV - Opposite was the interest of Trajan, who wanted to fight the enemies one by one. Therefore he made from Ratiaria first and with the fastest speed the ships that had embarked Lusius Quietus with the Numidian cavalry, ordering to land just before Novae, where the Alutus river flows into the Danube.

From here, going up the Alutus, Quietus would be meeting Dacians and slow their advance by means of persistent threats, without engaging in real battles.

As we said the Dacians had suffered the rigours of winter and were afflicted by diseases and exhausted by their efforts in the long march.

The discipline, that Decebalus with severe punishment had imposed, had loosened and their scouts were carrying out their task without due attention, staying close to the long column formed by the army.

The cavalry was at the forefront, disorderly followed by the infantry, wagons with supplies and heavy weapons were weakly protected.

The Dacian column was not advancing in battle formation, nor in serried ranks, so that stretched for about twenty miles.

Quietus, kept hidden in the woods, overlooking the imprudence of the enemy, attacked the rear, giving instruction to hit beasts of burden.

Dacians, unprepared, reacted slowly, many of the soldiers had left the shields on the wagons, the archers had put a few arrows in the quivers, the cavalry was at the fore front, not a few miles faraway. When finally the Dacians did rally round the wagons. Quietus after hitting countless animals, retired in the woods. Few of his horsemen had been slightly wounded.

V - The Dacians were forced to stop and fortify a camp. Moreover because of the many beasts of burden lost they were forced to completely reorganize the distribution of loads. Each soldier, horsemen, archer or infantryman, had to carry his own weapons, that before were loaded onto wagons. The horsemen had to load on their own beast the forage needed for a day.

The cars damaged had to be repaired.

Thus, three days were spent, the fourth, left the camp in battle formation, they resumed the march, taking the wagons in the middle of the array, while the cavalry protected the rear and sides of the column.

The infantry was deployed in six ranks.

Taken all these measures, the column shortened up to five miles.

The advance, however, did not proceed expeditiously, because bottlenecks were frequent in the arduous road and when Quietus saw a bottleneck, his cavalry get out from the woods. The Dacians then stopped by tightening the ranks, their horsemen were throwing against Numidians who rapidly retreated in the woods, nor Daci dare chase us where we could hide dangers.

Continuing these skirmishes every day and forcing the enemy to fortify every night, they were unable to advance for more than ten miles a day.

As long as the Dacians, exasperated, decided to attack at the first opportunity with all their cavalry.

But their intention did not escape Lusius Quietus, in fact on the morning of the day

of which we are talking about, Dacians deployed in a different way in comparison with that they were used in the previous days, all the cavalry was lined up along the side facing us and advancing increasingly tight the infantry column.

The impediments offered by the road, caused such a deployment could not be maintained for long, at the first bottleneck Dacians would have had to stop.

Quietus conjectured that if his cavalry, according to the usual tactic, would come out of the woods, they would attack en masse.

Therefore he devised a new stratagem, in the wood close to a bottleneck, ordered to amass a pile of wood and, when the Dacians were coming up to the bottleneck, gave it to the flames, as if we had stopped to feast. While a few of our horsemen, looking indolent as if they were tired after so many days, faced coming out of the woods.

The Dacian cavalry moved to the charge, pointing to the smoke, where they thought we had stopped.

But Quietus had dislocated the “turmae” (*squads of 30 horsemen*) in different locations, with the aim of attracting the enemy's cavalry in the thick of the forest.

The Dacians reached the site where our men had set fire to the woodpile, not finding anyone, set out to chase our horsemen penetrating the thick woods. But the

Numidians are insurmountable horsemen, they do not only ride bareback, but also unbridled.



Numidians riding bareback and unbridled

Indeed the Numidians have for their steeds incredible care. Hard to believe but before drinking or eating themselves they minister to their faithful horses. These animals are trained with the expertise to obey the voice of his master, so they seem to be one with its horseman. If in a conflict the horseman falls or is injured, the horse does not abandon him, but remains at his side regardless of any danger.

Back to us, while the Dacian horsemen moved into the wood with a great noise, the Numidians quietly retreated more and more inside, until the Dacians, lost orientation, did not know where to proceed, nor found themselves the way to withdraw from the forest .

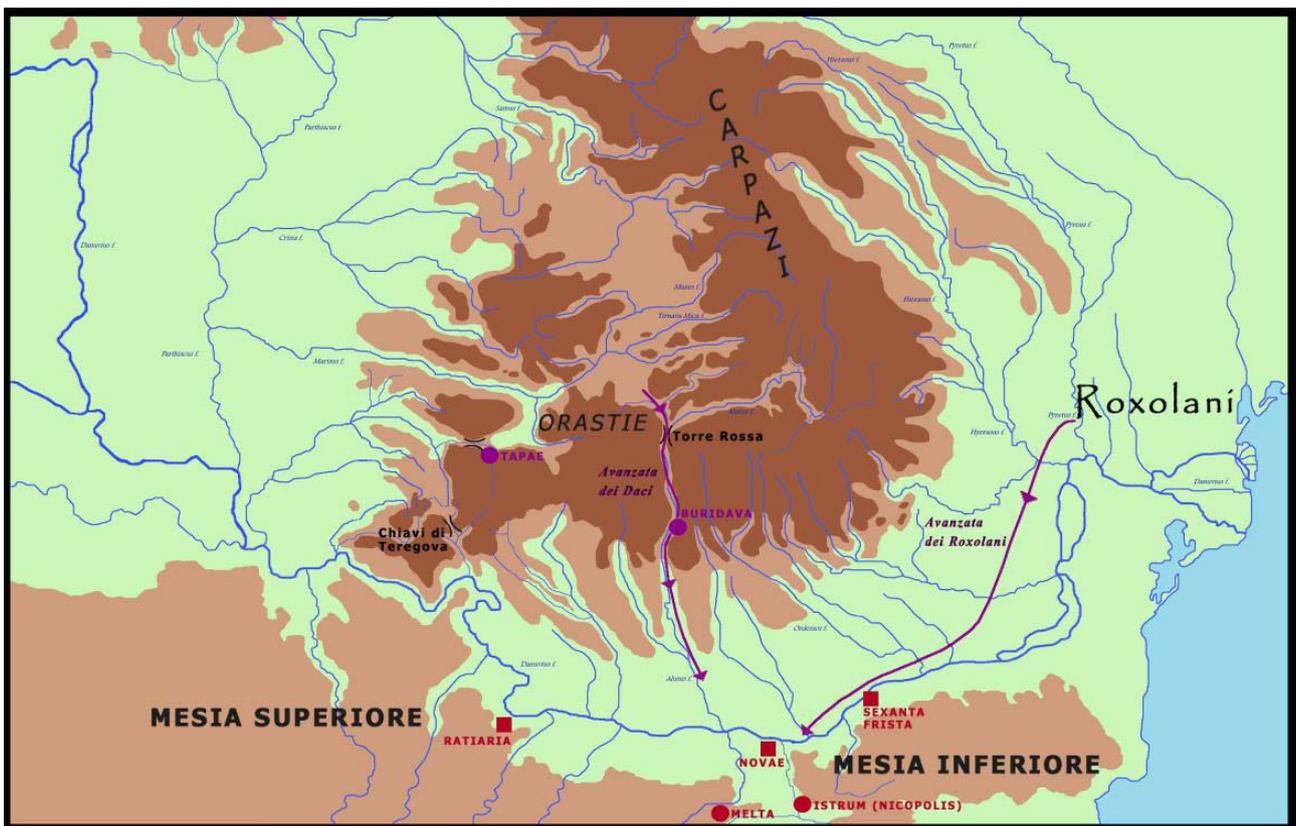
Meanwhile the hours passed and already approached the evening when Rosiedano, commander of the Dacian column, fearing for his cavalry, ordered the trumpets sounded to call the horsemen.

Following the sound of the trumpets they found the way to get out of the woods. Tired and humiliated they fell back into line, but as stated, had become evening, at this point the Dacians preferred to go back to shelter in the fortifications that had been raised the day before and spend the night there.

VI - While Lusius Quietus, with various tricks, that his long experience had taught him, delayed the advance of the Dacians, Trajan sailing along the Danube, which in this stretch runs so slowly that it is difficult to understand what is the direction of the water, landed at Novae.

A few days before Roxolani, with those Dacians who had joined them, after having looted all they could, loaded with prey and yet insatiable, seeing that Laberio did not make sorties from Novae, went on Istrum, where they knew that most inhabitants of Moesia Inferior had taken refuge with their most valuable things.

Istrum, being somewhat distant from the Danube, at the confluence of two rivers, the Iatrus and Rositrus,



is not protected by powerful fortifications, then Roxolani thought could easily take the town, the citizens and their possessions.

But Laberio, to defend the town, had deployed a large number of war machines.

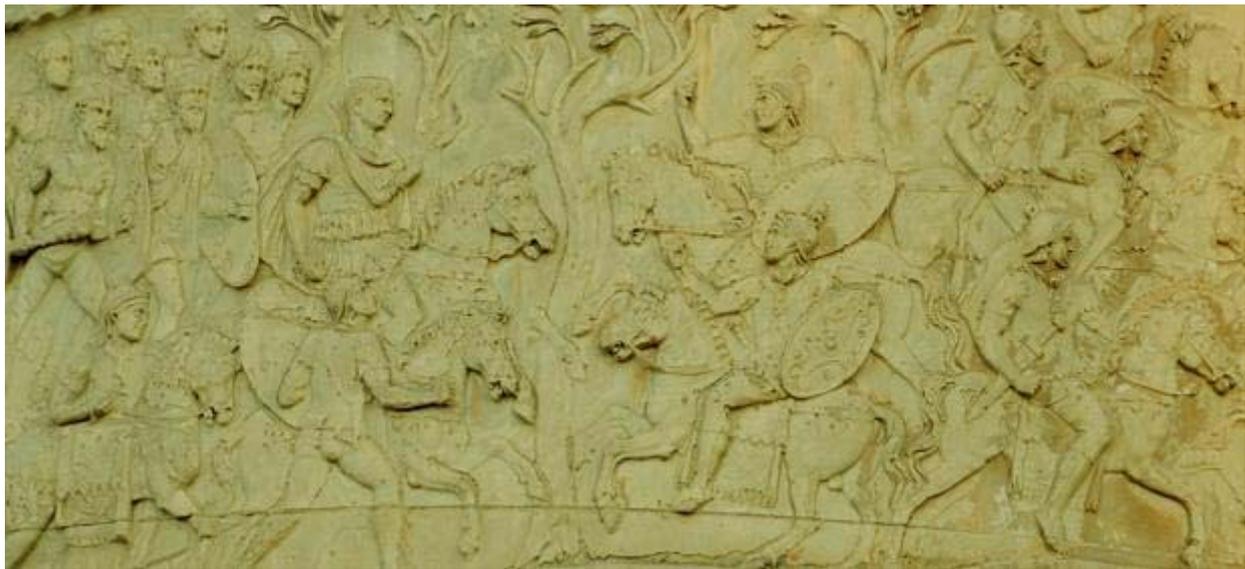
Roxolani unaccustomed to sieges, regardless of our artillery, came under the weak

walls of Istrum.

When they were under fire the defenders bombarded with all kinds of bullets, forcing them to retreat.

Given the resistance of the garrison and inhabitants thereof Roxolani decided to postpone the following day the decisive attack, meanwhile, after their custom, made with wagons a barrage, set free the horses and pack animals, celebrated the next conquest feasting and singing into the night.

They would not have celebrated long! fact Trajan was advancing quickly to the head of the cavalry, followed by three legions and auxiliaries, among whom for their singular prowess stood our loyal Batavians.



Trajan advances toward Novae to rescue Laberio

As Marcus Ulpius approached the camp of Roxolani slowed and began waiting. The barbarians, suspecting nothing, and as their custom not taking any precautions, when it was full day decided to attack Istrum.

Gone out from their camp and deployed the cavalry, in front archers on horseback, behind catafratti, Roxolani advanced at full speed over the town, followed by

Dacians.

In that Trajan ordered the trumpeters to sound the charge.

A terrifying cry rose from our ranks.

First advanced the heavy infantry with German auxiliaries, immediately below the archers and slingers, alongside the cavalry.

The barbarians, while thought to slaughter and plunder, heard the trumpets, the war cry and seen advancing the legions, stopped, turned the horses, and returned to their wagons,



Drain of catafratti

while Dacians fled crossing the Iatrus.

The battle took place around the wagons,



Defeat of Roxolani

indeed these hordes, ferocious and unruly, would have escaped, if had not been deterred by their greed, so to defend the wagons laden with booty, they met a bloody defeat. Great evidence of value once again gave the German auxiliaries, who regardless of the danger were fighting bare-chested.

From Istrum itself not only the garrison, but also the people came out to avenge the injuries suffered.

Only with difficulty Trajan held the population to shoot also women who, as is the custom of the Sarmatians, follow the warriors on the wagons.

Roxolani were ten thousand, only few fleeing towards the Danube survived.

VII - Without resting, when night fell Trajan moved with two legions and cavalry against the Dacians, who, as said, had fled.

He, crossed the Iatrus, surprised them sleeping.

Those who did not fall under our swords, were taken prisoner, few others taking advantage of darkness scattered in the countryside or in the woods.

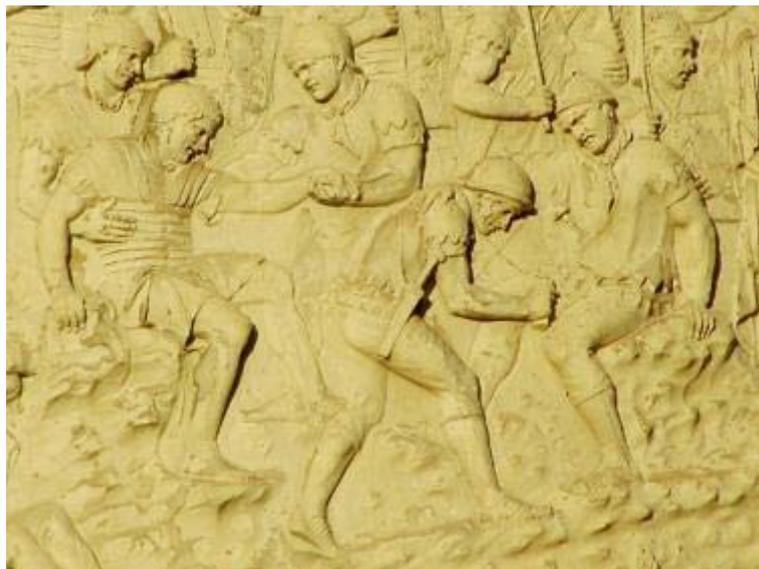
The day after Trajan was received by notables of Istrum who gave thanks for saving them from certain death.

The Emperor observed as in Istrum had taken refuge a great mass of people coming from the suburbs, while the campaigns were disrupted by Roxolani. The town was too small to accommodate such a large number of people.

Marcus Ulpius thought that this was the right occasion to keep the promises made to provincials, therefore commissioned Apollodorus of building a new town, as the Roman custom, where all the people could accommodate with dignity.

Where the barbarians had been defeated he ordered to erect a monument to celebrate our victory and warn the enemies of Rome.

Meanwhile, as the wounded were treated,



The wounded are treated by fellow soldiers

the legions were marching toward Novae.

Trajan with the cavalry at full gallop reached the castra to organize the crossing of the Danube and advance against the Dacians of Rosiedano Lusius Quietus while having slowed down the advance of Dacians, being the Danube not far, quickly reached the bank facing Novae. Here he signaled his arrival: almost to the will of the Gods at the same time Trajan had returned to Novae.

the Emperor did not delay and embarked on the Moesica fleet some cohorts of legionaries sent them to meet Quietus, with order to fortify the bank to enable the legions a safe crossing of the river.

The Danube at Novae is unusually wide, its waters flowing so slowly so that it is believed that the Divinity (*the Danube god*) wants to rest after such a long journey. The ship glided on placid waters, the legionaries landed on the left bank, bringing with them the timber needed to build the fort.

Quietus came alongside to protect our soldiers with his cavalry.

In a short time the fence was finished, then the whole fleet moving from Novae crossed the Danube on board with the legions, the auxiliaries and the German cavalry.

VIII - The Dacians of the countryside, when they saw the landing of the Romans, came to meet Trajan, with women and children and paid tribute to him.



Dacians pay tribute to Trajan, while the legionnaires build fortifications

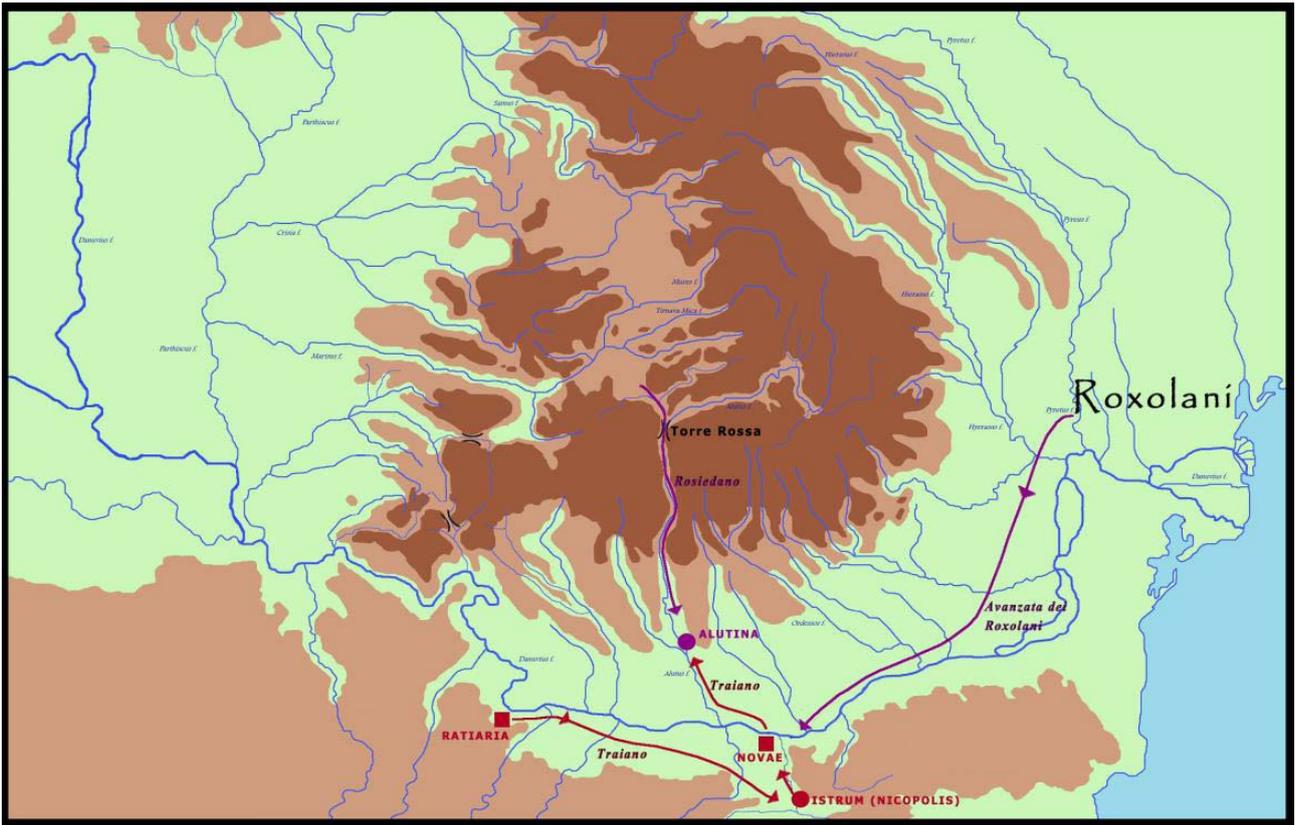
Trajan benevolently welcomed them and ordered not to abuse them.

Dacians, thanked Trajan, placed themselves under his protection.

The Emperor then calmed the most malevolent of our soldiers saying that "Would be the grossest injustice, unworthy of the Roman People, deduce enslaved people innocent and terrified, overwhelmed by a war desired by Decebalus, of which they knew nothing and in which unarmed were subjected".

And truly these Dacians were peaceful peasants, who later, grateful to Trajan, provided plenty of corn and forage to our army.

Rosiedano, known that Trajan had crossed the Danube, stopped at the confluence of the river Alutus (*today Olt in Romania*) and Buridavus, in a place called Alutina (*today Slatina in Romania*), in very strong position.



Here he strengthened himself awaiting the Romans.

Trajan when was next to Alutina saw that only with great losses could attack the enemy, then decided to lead from Novae many ballistae carts



Legionnaires advance with ballistae carts

and began to surround with a rampart Alutina, which is protected by two rivers, but is on a modest relief.

Rosiedano when he saw that the Romans were about to besiege the town, fearing that he could not last long, failing to collect enough supplies for such a large number of armed men, they were over forty thousand, had neither fodder for the beasts of burden and horses, decided to give up Alutina and retire going back along the Alutus.

Meanwhile he sent soldiers to stock up on food and fodder.

Trajan not having suspected such a lack of foresight on the part of the enemy, gave thanks to the Gods for such a good luck.

IX - As soon as Rosiedano marched Marcus Ulpius followed his tracks.

The Dacians proceeded taking vanguard infantry, the center wagons, then still the infantry, following the archers and the cavalry in the rear.

Trajan, observed the enemy alinement, ordered Lusius Quietus to circumvent and stop them.

Alutus' valley near Alutina is quite wide and flat, so it was easy for the Numidian cavalry, precede Dacians and found a suitable place Quietus drew up preventing their advance. The Dacian column was not less than ten miles long, so that those who were in the rear did not know what had happened in the vanguard.

Trajan, made advance ballistae carts, began to bombard the enemy's cavalry, which as mentioned covered the rear.

Rosiedano had no time to fortify himself and while the Dacian horsemen fell under our blows, their archers tried a last defense, but little they could do against our artillery. When the archers were forced to retreat behind the infantry, our legionaries advanced and began the hand-to-hand fighting.



Legionnaires attack Dacians

No one can resist our legionnaires in the close clash.

Overwhelmed the Dacians fled, leaving behind many dead and wounded.

Rosiedano himself preferred death to a dishonorable escape.

The Numidians chasing the fugitives slaughtered them.

The survivors of the Dacian army scattered in the woods.

While these things were happening, in a Dacian fortress, not far from the site of the battle, oblivious of everything, overwhelmed by uncontrollable fury, Dacian women tortured Roman prisoners.



Dacian women torturing Roman prisoners

tormenting them with torches.

Captured by our legionaries all were sold as slaves.

X – Trajan, defeated the Dacians, returned to Alutina.

The inhabitants, opened the gates, got out to meet him begging his forgiveness, of any crime, they said, were stained, their only fault was to be on Rosiedano's way.

The Emperor, knowing that it was the force of circumstances to advise Alutini, however, preferred to show himself generous and ordered that the town was not looted. However warned Alutini to prove themselves worthy of his clemency, they had verified the power of the Roman arms, then remain in peace and faithful to their word.

He ordered that all weapons were handed over to the Romans and ruled that the town walls were pulled down.

Moreover the territory of Alutina, with its wide plains, would be found in the rear of the Roman army, then he judged that it would be not only useless, but also dangerous to give an example of the inflexible severity, which would inevitably have caused hatreds and uncontrollable resentments.

The Romans were hosted by the citizens happy for the escaped danger.

The next day Trajan addressed the army deployed,



Allocution of Trajan

announcing to the soldiers that while they would remain at Alutina in order to rest, he would go to Novae, where new forces were converging, carried by the Moesica fleet. With these, he would be back to Alutina, then all together would advance on Orastie mountains to inflict Decebalus a decisive defeat.

After saying these things he distributed awards to the bravest legionaries.



Trajan rewards legionnaires

Dacian prisoners, who had been confined in a fort not far from Alutina,



Dacian prisoners kept in a fortress

were led by Trajan in Novae.

Here the Emperor received a delegation of Dacian chiefs, come to pay their respects and seek his protection.



Dacian chiefs homage Trajan

So ended the second Dacian campaign, for us with slight losses, but with great advantages: Roxolani had fled, while the same Dacian army, sent by Decebalus in order to stop us, or at least to inflict great losses, delaying our advance towards Sarmizegetusa, had not only failed in its task, but most had left on the ground a large number of fallen, including the commander Rosiedano.

On the contrary Decebalus was saying that his forces had just been tarnished, his strongholds in the Orastie mountains unassailable.

BOOK III

I - Trajan, secured the province, while Apollodorus reconstructed Istrum, that in memory of the victory was called Nicopolis (*the city of victory*) at Istrum, in the spring (102), predisposed battle plans to end the Dacian war. The Emperor had to reconcile two conflicting demands, according to the first was necessary defeat Decebalus before the season should decline, as the Dacians had settled on the mountains Orastie, at an altitude of more than a three thousand feet, and here at the dawn of October fell heavy rains, followed by frost and snow.

Conversely advance imprudently meant exposing Roman army to the dangers of Decebalus.

So it had to be at once cautious and fast.

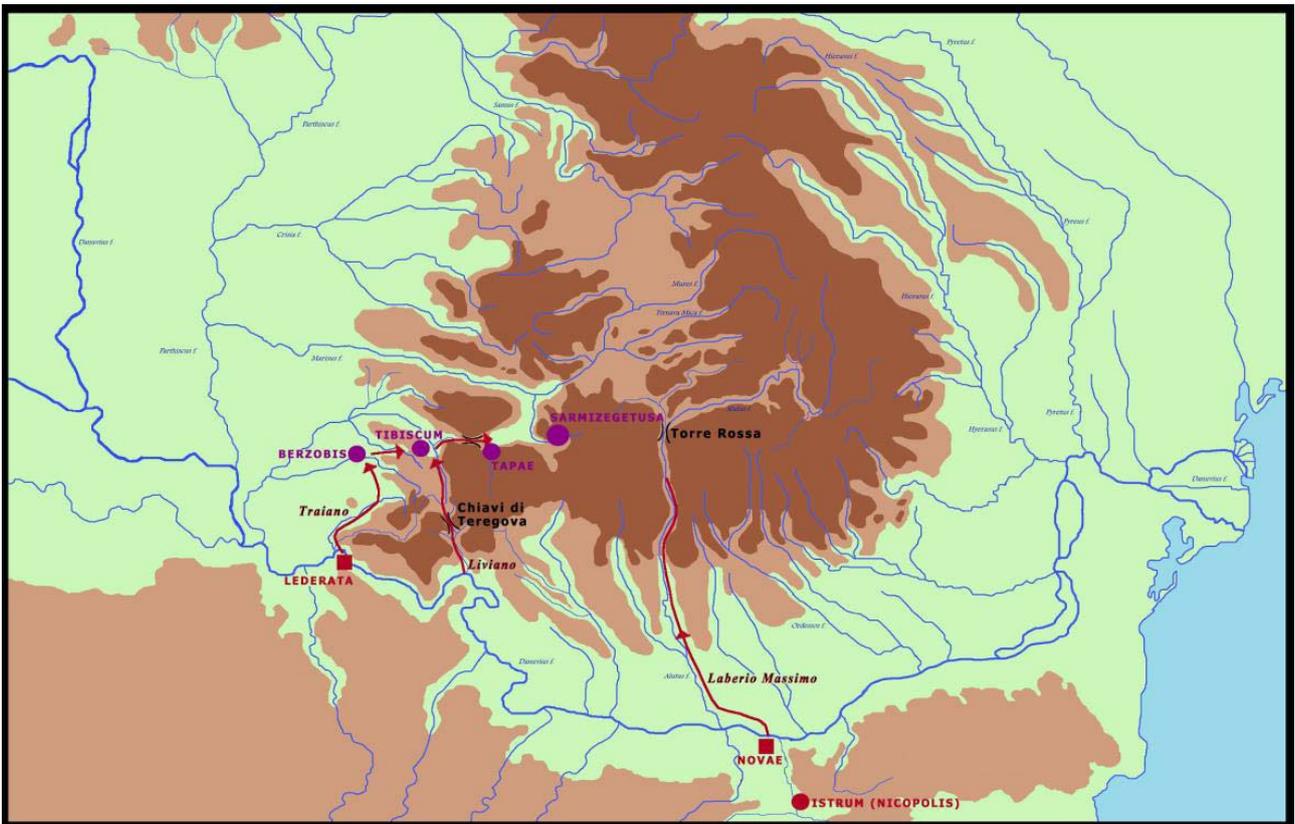
Not to give certainty to Decebalus Trajan decided to move forward with three forces , the first, commanding Laberius Maximus who so valiantly defended the Moesia Inferior was to advance from Novae heading to the pass of the Red Tower, of Trajan.

The second force, commanded by Livianus, had to go towards the Teregova Keys, from here down to the Iron Gates would meet with the Trajan's army, who, crossed the Danube at Lederata,



Trajan crosses the Danube at Lederata

would march into hyper roadside Berzobis, Aizis, Tibiscum, then climb to the Iron Gates.



II - Far from it was the design of Decebalus, who trusting in the strength of his fortified towns, expected to stop our army until, by the end of summer, the rains and snows would force us to retreat, or, camped in the Orastie mountains, suffer winter's frosts, while Dacians, inside the fortified towns protected by inclemency of the weather and well-fed, could mockery our soldiers.

Finally Trajan could not lead this war for a too long time, with the risk of getting bogged down in an endless conflict.

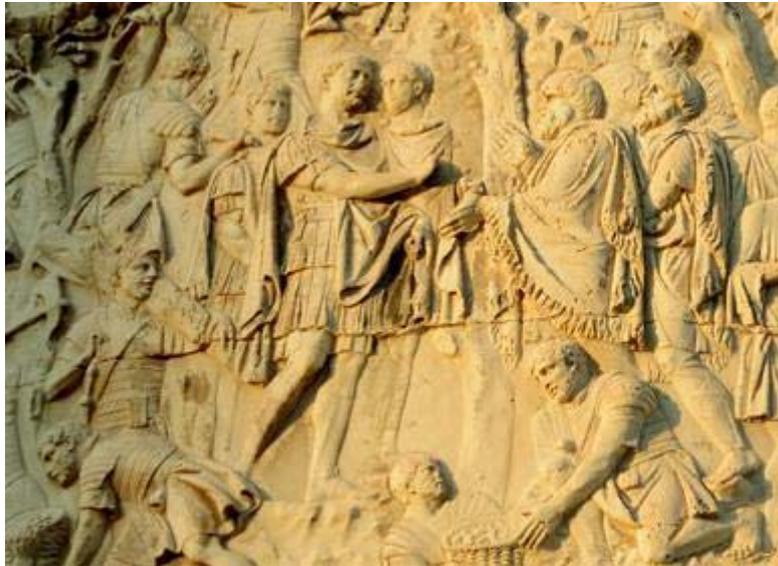
On the other hand Decebalus could not hope to delay the advance of Trajan, without fighting, but where?

As mentioned Trajan was advancing with three distinct columns. Decebalus, after much hesitation, decided to attack the column rising toward the Red Tower's pass.

He was solved in this way, not only because he thought that this was the weakest column, but also because he feared that, since one column was climbing the Orastie mountains from the east, while Trajan was coming from the west, he would be crushed by the Roman pincers.

But his decision was late, and while he sent his soldiers on ahead, we had already occupied the pass, caught the Dacians by surprise, our legionaries put them to flight.

III - Meanwhile, many of the Dacian chiefs, abandoned by Decebal, gave themselves up to Trajan.



Dacian chiefs pay homage to Trajan

As we have said elsewhere, the name Decebalus, in our language, means brave as ten men, and indeed he was a man of great courage and with great ambition and great cunning, but also of great cruelty.

In fact, like all tyrants Decebalus demanded absolute obedience. Who betrayed his expectations, or dared oppose paid temerity with his life. In addition to support a war so costly and feed an immense army, he had requisitioned supplies everywhere, reducing in poverty his own subjects. Woe to whom tried to oppose.

By the way we were not so surprised when many Dacian chiefs, comparing the cruelty of Decebalus and piety of Trajan, chose the latter,



A Dacian chief give up to Trajan

neither they had to repent, because with the advance of our forces the peasants returned masters of their own land. Our needs were met in part by these same farmers, who were equally remunerated, and elsewhere by the provisions carried by the province.

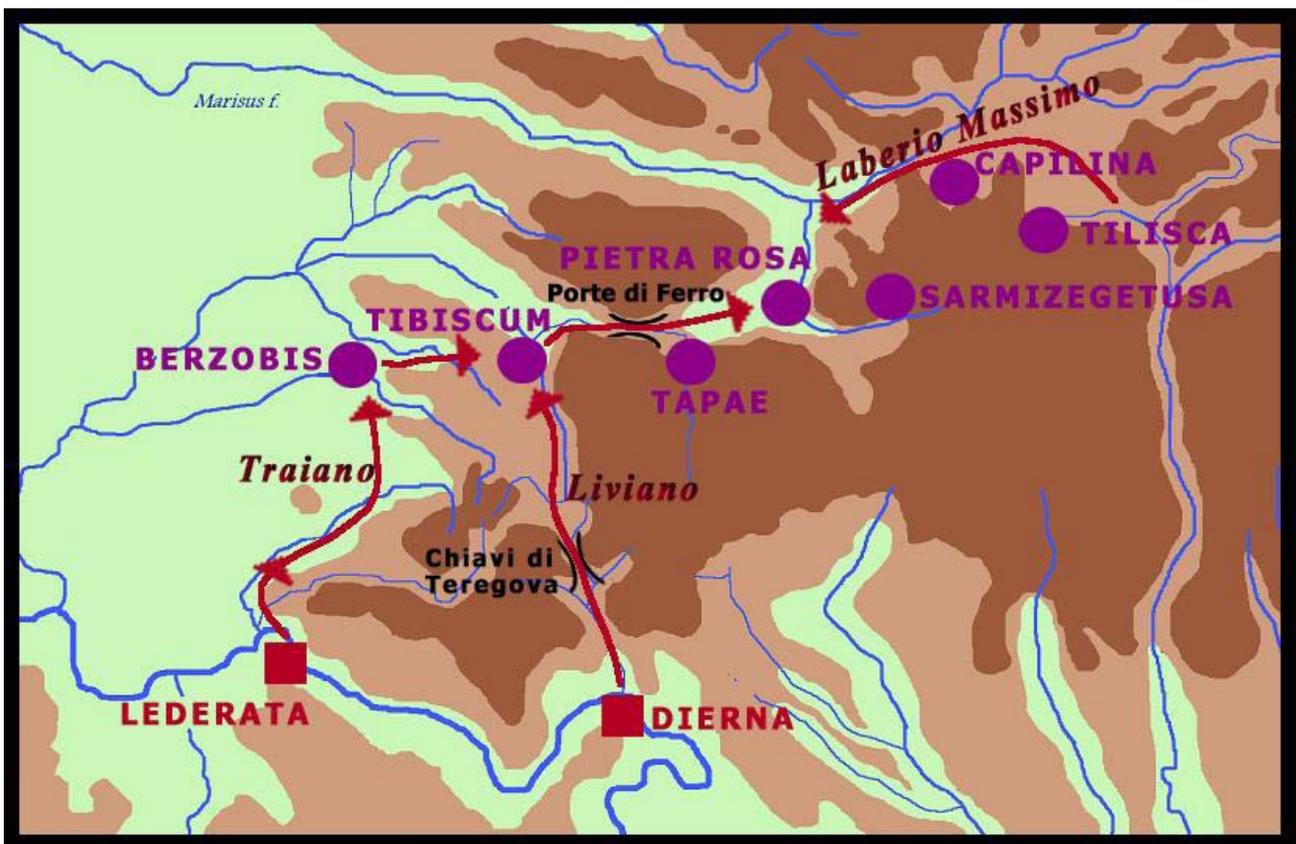
In short the same Dacians were convinced that their life was definitely better under the Roman insignia than under the lash of Decebalus.



A Dacian Chief pay homage to Trajan

IV - Conquered, with minimum losses, the Red Tower pass, Laberio ordered to get down along the valley, then climb on Orastie Mountains from the east and focus on the fortress of Capilna (*today Capalna in Transylvania*).

The army of Trajan climbing Orastie mountains from the west, would head for Rose Stone and threatening the same Sarmizegetusa Regia,



would draw on it the army of Decebalus.

The road that leads to Tapae from Viminacium through Berzobis, Aizis and Tibiscum had been completed, allowing Trajan a rapid advance.

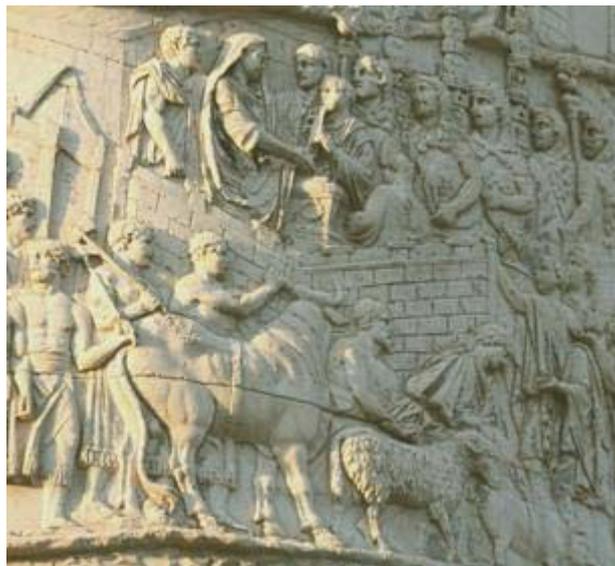


Supplies for the Romans come with ox carts

The Emperor, reached Tapae, stopped waiting for Livianus, who from Dierna had risen to the Teregova Keys.

Since all passes were garrisoned by our troops and populations, we would leave at our back, were peaceful, we proceeded without mishaps until Tapae.

Here Trajan celebrated a Lustratio, since it was clear to all that was about to begin the decisive battle.



Trajan presides over the Lustratio

V - Decebalus, with the bulk of the army, had settled in Sarmizegetusa Regia, ready to rush to the aid of the garrisons distributed in the other fortified towns, which are defended by the Murus Dacicus (*Dacian wall*). This wall, thick up to twelve feet and thirty high, built with a particular technique, is very resistant, in fact consists of two parallel walls formed by large stones, the two walls are about ten feet from one another. The space between the two walls is filled with cementitious material, while the walls themselves are linked together by wooden beams.

As I said the Murus Dacicus is very durable, but at the same time its construction requires much time and labor.

Decebalus was very reliant on these defense works, so much that he gave up the mercenary cavalry provided by Bastarnae. Among other things it would not be possible to billet in town such a great mass of horsemen and horses, moreover rowdy and unruly.

His great confidence in the Murus Dacicus led him to neglect the artillery. In their battles against the barbarians when Dacians were besieged, protected from the wall, did not fear the enemy archers, and these, once under the walls, were bombarded from above by the archers. Also the barbarians, after their customs, love fighting in the open field and are unprepared to conduct long sieges.

Anyway Decebalus expected to have to withstand only a few months, then the supervening winter would be his best ally.

In the worst case he would have lost one, maybe two fortresses, which with the retreat of the Romans would have easily regained.

This thought Decebalus.

For these reasons he neglected artillery, not having arranged neither catapults, nor scorpions, a few ballistae.

VI - Trajan reached by Livianus at Tapae, after a few days of rest, ordered the advance towards Rose Stone fortress, while on the same day Laberio, left Red Tower pass, began to climb toward Capilna fortress.

The Orastie mountains are covered with forests and the road to Capilna, little more than a path, is well suited to ambushes. Furthermore, hidden from the trees, Dacians had scattered numerous fortifications along the way,



Dacian fortifications hidden by trees

behind which they were protected.

Laberio had to advance in dense woods, cutting down large numbers of trees,



Romans cut down trees and behead enemy spies

flushing out Dacians, burning their fortifications.



Legionnaires burn enemy fortifications

The same fate befell the army of Trajan, who met with a resistance much more vigorous, as Decebalus wanted to slow his advance at any rate. Finally Lusius Quietus, with his Numidian cavalry, put the Dacians to flight.



Lusius Quietus put Dacians to flight

Laberius carried with him a hundred ballistae carts, necessary to bombard the forts, but exhausting to carry along the steep mountain,



Legionnaires pulling ballistae carts

so that often the legionnaires were to help the mules, to advance machines.

The same happened to Trajan who had one hundred and eighty ballistae carts.

VII - The great effort not discouraged the legionnaires, this was a race against time!

From the Orastie mountains get down great rivers, in his advance Laberio had followed the Alutus, and shortly after Red Tower pass one of its tributaries, which is coming down from the walled town of Tilisca (*near the present Sibiu in Transylvania*).

Come close to this location he detached from his army an ala of cavalry and two legionary cohorts, to prevent the Dacian garrison would attack him behind as he advanced on Capilna.

Meanwhile Trajan, left Tapae, passed through the valley formed by the river Marisus, which swirling down from the Orastie mountains, laps Rose Stone. The Dacians, sent to the rescue by Decebalus, were waiting for us lined up on the other bank of the river.

Neither us nor Daci could cross the river except with great losses. Therefore Trajan decided to send a strong detachment, which had to follow the Marisus towards north, until it found a favorable ford.

While Trajan would have deployed, the praetorian guard of Livianus, with all the insignia in front of the Dacians, hiding our maneuver. The detachment was formed by Lusius Quietus with his Numidian cavalry, Cicatricula with a legion, the German auxiliariess, archers and slingers.



Slingers in the Roman army

Quietus and Cicatricula, moved during the third watch (*between midnight and three in the morning*), in complete silence, walked fifteen miles, stopped waiting for the day.

As soon as the sun rose scouts went in search of a favorable ford. They found, unattended by Daci, in the maximum speed returned to our troops, who promptly, crossed the Marisus river, fortified themselves on the enemy bank.

VII - Trajan warned about the success of the maneuver, ordered Quietus ride along the enemy bank towards Rose Stone, to block Dacians, while Cicatricula, following him with the remaining troops, was to build a large fortification,



The Romans build a large fortification

to accommodate the troops of the same Trajan. Knowing the fierce heat of Cicatricula, the Emperor ordered him specifically not to attack battle. When the Dacians saw advance galloping the Numidian cavalry, taken by terror, some gave themselves to build fences,

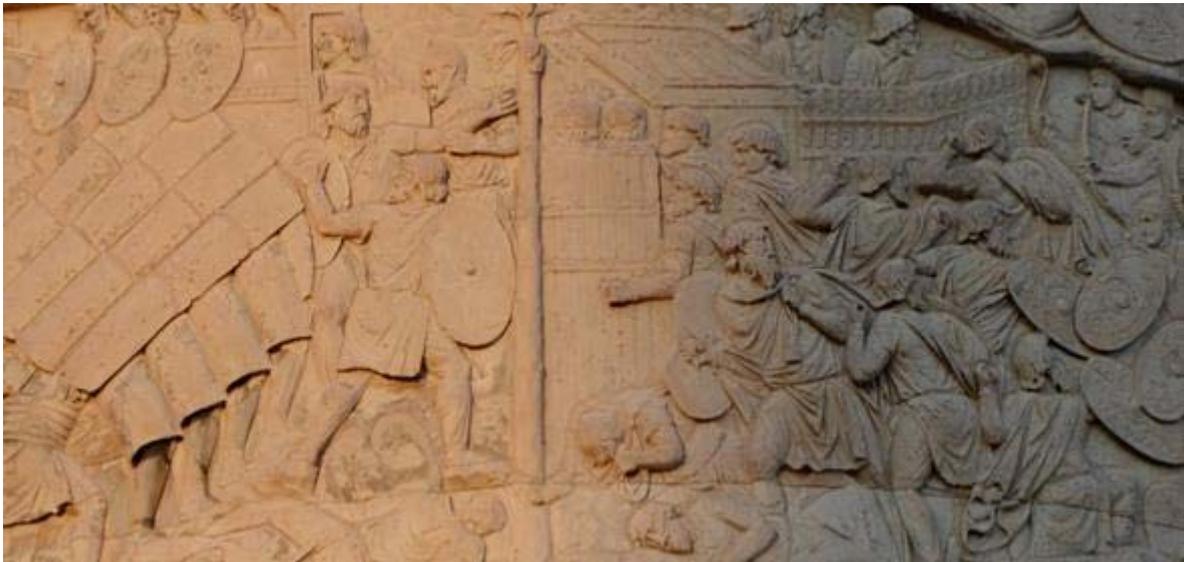


The Dacians take refuge in their fortresses

while others took refuge in the fortifications on the way to Rose Stone. At the same time they asked aid to Decebalus, who, understood the gravity of the situation, as fiercely angry at of their lack of foresight, sent troops to rescue.

VIII - As soon as Cicatricula had fortified the camp, Trajan, left a small garrison in front of the Dacians, on our bank, to discourage any attempts to cross the river, by the same way traveled by Quietus and Cicatricula, crossed the Marisus, entered our camp, with all ballistae carts.

The rest of the day was spent preparing weapons and body care. The next morning left the camp we advanced against the enemy. Put into action the ballistae carts their fence was quickly demolished. Then the Numidian cavalry charged followed by the legionaries and German auxiliaries.



Charge of the legionaries and German auxiliaries

The Dacians fought with great fury,



Dacian defeat

but nothing could stop the advance of the legionnaires. The enemy put to flight, with big losses, repaired into Rose Stone.

IX - Meantime Laberio, arrived beneath the walls of Capilna, circumvallated the town, proceeded to the siege. The Dacians, protected by their massive walls, felt safe, but soon were prey to terror. In fact, deployed the ballistae carts, Laberio began to shell the city and not only with bullets, but with fireballs too. These Dacians had never before experienced the power of ballistae carts.

Not knowing how to defend themselves sought help from Decebal, who barricaded in Sarmizegetusa abandoned them to their fate.

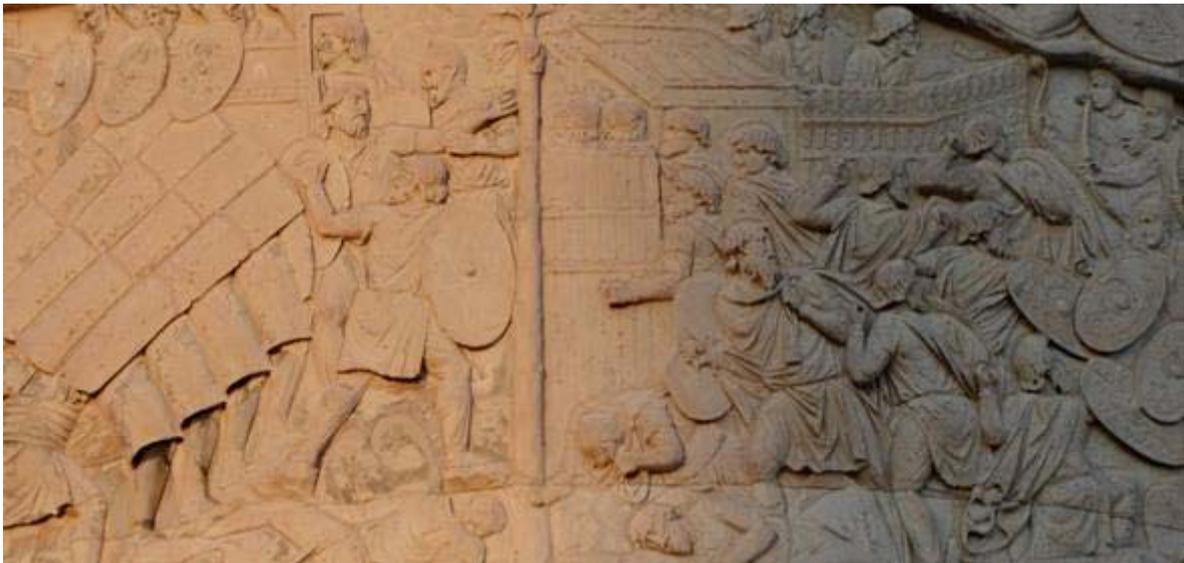
Laberio not wishing to lose too much time at Capilna, granted Dacians to leave the town. Destroyed a large part of the wall, he went to the other forts.

Circonvallated Cogir and Costesti, left sufficient garrisons to patrol the fences, to prevent the enemy from escaping, he advanced again to join his forces with those of Trajan.

X – Once the Roman forces met, marched to the attack of Rose Stone. This town, to be built to protect Sarmizegetusa Regia, is marvelously fortified.

Deployed on the high walls the Dacians fearless were waiting for us. The town was circumvallated by a double fence, to prevent Decebalus, coming to the aid of his people, would take us behind.

We began the bombing with ballistae carts, but with little success, because Rose Stone is located on top of a steep hill and its walls rise very high. Therefore, dropped the ballistae carts, legionnaires advanced in testudo formation, to break through the gates of the city. Failing to stop the testudo, the Dacians try a sortie.



The Dacians are overwhelmed by the Roman legionaries

In vain, overwhelmed were forced to surrender.

XI - Fallen in such a short time Rose Stone, Decebalus, despairing of being able to defend Sarmizegetusa, appearing to Trajan as a suppliant, surrendered.



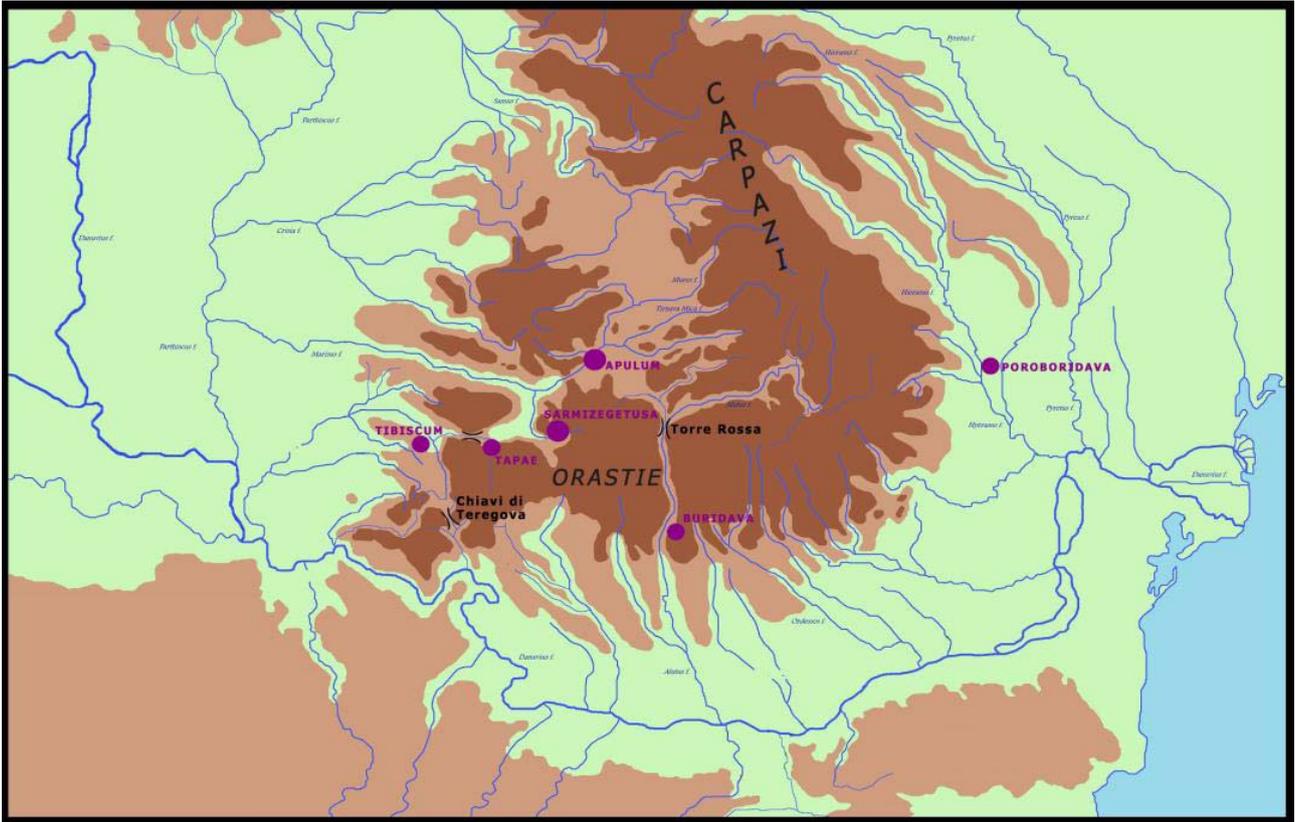
Surrender of Decebal



Surrender of Dacian chiefs

The Emperor imposed to the Dacian king a tribute correspondent to the pay for two years for the entire Roman army (*about three hundred million sesterces*).

Moreover, in addition to the existing ones, he settled Roman garrisons near Sar-mizegetusa Regia and colonists at Apulum, Buridava and Piroboridava. This last town, located in the extreme east of Dacia, watches over Bastarnae and Roxolani.



Trajan commanded that they should hand all weapons and war machines over the Romans, ordered the same Dacians to demolish the walls of the fortified towns in the Orastie mountains.



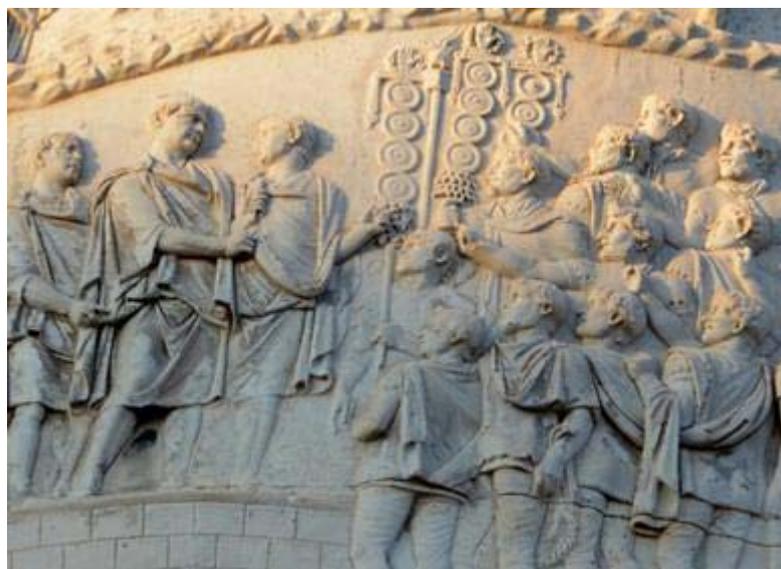
The Dacians break down the walls

After the war the Dacians who had taken refuge in the fortresses returned to their peaceful occupations.



The Dacians return to their homes

Trajan praised the legionnaires for valor,



Allocution of Trajan

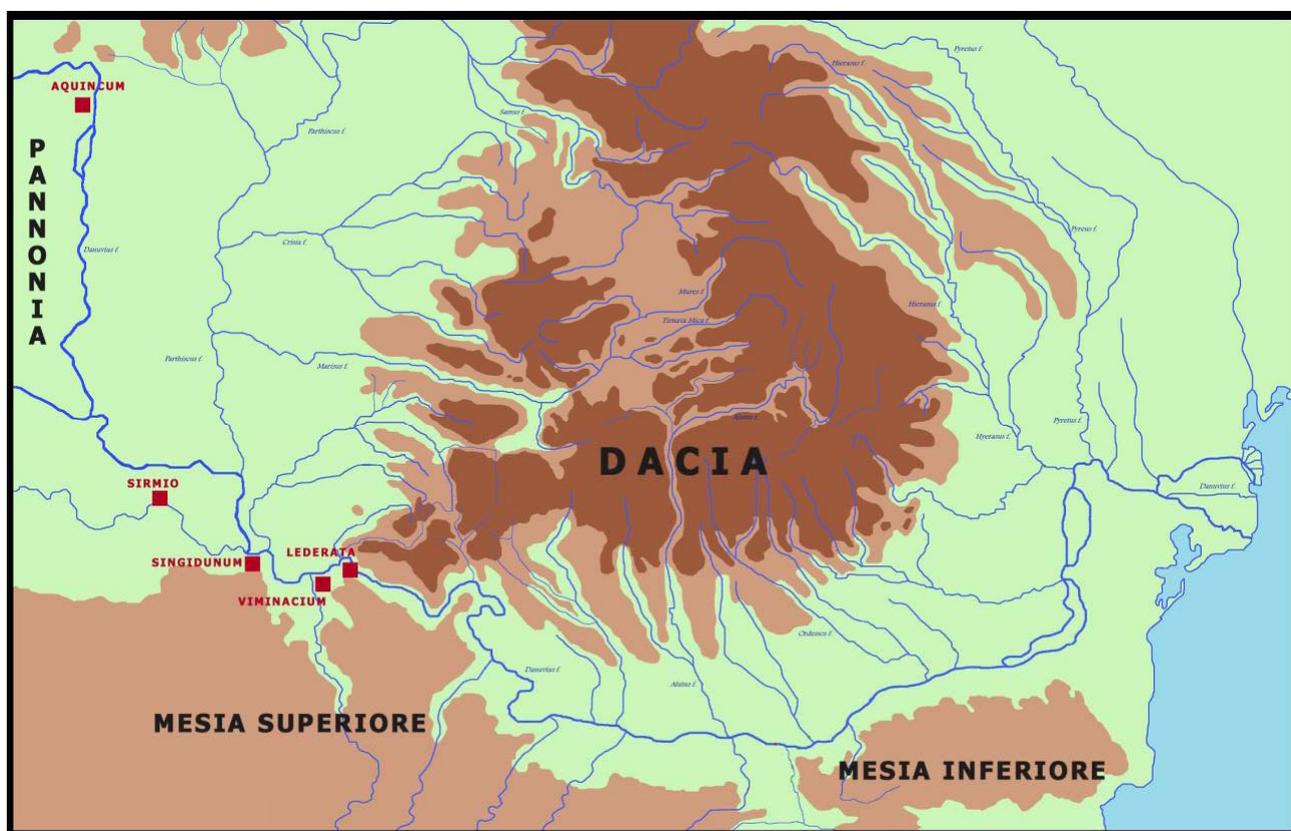
returned to Rome.



Winged Victory celebrates the victory of the Romans

BOOK IV

I – Trajan, pacified Dacia, before returning to Rome, decided to share the Pannonia into two provinces, which took the name of Pannonia Superior and Pannonia Inferior. Quintus Atilius Agricola, former governor of Pannonia, became governor of Pannonia Superior and did not move from Carnuntum. Marcus Ulpius appointed governor of Pannonia Inferior, based in Aquincum (*today Budapest*), Lucius Neratius Priscus.



On the east bank of the Danube, in front of Pannonia Superior, there are Marcomanni and Quadi, Suevian (*German*) peoples, pacified after recent campaigns Germanic-Sarmatian, which Trajan had led victoriously. These same people had participated in the Dacian war as our auxiliaries, deployed in defensive actions. Nevertheless the Emperor knowing the combative spirit of these people, considered necessary to be vigilant, to prevent any rash initiative.

Opposite Pannonia Inferior, live Iazyges, a Sarmatian people, Buri of Germanic origin and stretch the western plains of Dacia.

Iazyges, who Trajan had submitted a few years ago, during the Dacian war had proved loyal to the Empire, but Iazyges and Buri, are divided by a deep and ancient enmity, it could not be ruled out that some conflict might break out between them.

II - Concerning Moesia, the Emperor appointed Gneus Pinarius Cicatricula Longinus governor of Moesia Inferior instead of Manius Laberius Maximus, who having demonstrated a great sagacity, resisting Daci and Roxolani, became part of Trajan's "Consilium Principis" and followed the Emperor to Rome (*the Consilium Principis, established by Domitian, was placed at a level higher than the Senate, it assisted the emperor in every subject of interest of the state*).

During the second Dacian campaign along the border of Moesia Inferior its fortifications had shown inadequate, for this reason Trajan ordered Cicatricula to secure the border.

The Sarmatian hordes, which accompanying Roxolani could invade the province, worried the Emperor.

Taken these measures, postponed the legions in their "Castra Stativa" (*permanent encampment*), accompanied by the Praetorian Guard, Trajan returned to Rome and with him, we went back to our homes.

III - While the settlers, accompanied by their garrisons, went to Apulum, Buridava and Piroboridava, Decebalus, overflowing with anger, was secretly preparing the redemption.

First he ordered to assassinate Dacian chiefs friends of the Roman People. Cicatricula when learned it, asked for an explanation. Decebalus replied that he had to defend himself by their attempt to depose him. Cicatricula was content with that response.

At the same time Neratius Priscus, governor of Pannonia Inferior was informed that the Dacians were rebuilding forts in the Orastie mountains. Replying to his grievances Decebalus said that he had to defend from the continuous attacks of Iazyges. Neratius wrote to Trajan asking for instructions. The Emperor advised him to investigate and understand what it was the real situation.

Neratius had no experience about the customs of Iazyges, who, not having a king, share only the name, while every tribe follows only his own chief, moreover among these chiefs there was total disagreement. Some wanted to fight Buri, others, lured by promises of Decebalus, intended to stand by his side, when he had gone to war, still others, mindful of the power of Rome, wanted to fight as our auxiliaries against Decebalus.

Since these lasts were our most immediate interlocutors, while the others were elusive, Neratius became convinced that the fears of Decebalus were credible and in this sense he wrote to Trajan.

Meanwhile Decebalus reconstructed fortifications, at the same time, hidden by the walls, Dacians with the greatest commitment rearmed. The Dacian king thanks to the gold mines and to his personal treasure possessed great wealth, which allowed him to promise large donations, to

Buri, to Bastarnae, to Roxolani and to that part of Iazyges favorable to him when, rekindled the war, they would fight alongside him.

Always with a promise of great remunerations, he appealed to all the bandits and criminals who were hidden in the province.

Indefatigable he resumed contact with Pacorus II Parthian king, we do not know with what result.

IV - As Decebalus prepared for war passed about two years (*103 and most of the 104*), when our settlers in Piroboridava informed Cicatricula that a large mass of Roxolani moved towards the province.

Our governor, given the precedents, imagined that Roxolani were moving according to the orders of Decebalus. So he wrote him ordering to stop the barbarians.

The Dacian answered not only was not aware of anything, but he was ready to meet Cicatricula to decide together what measures to take.

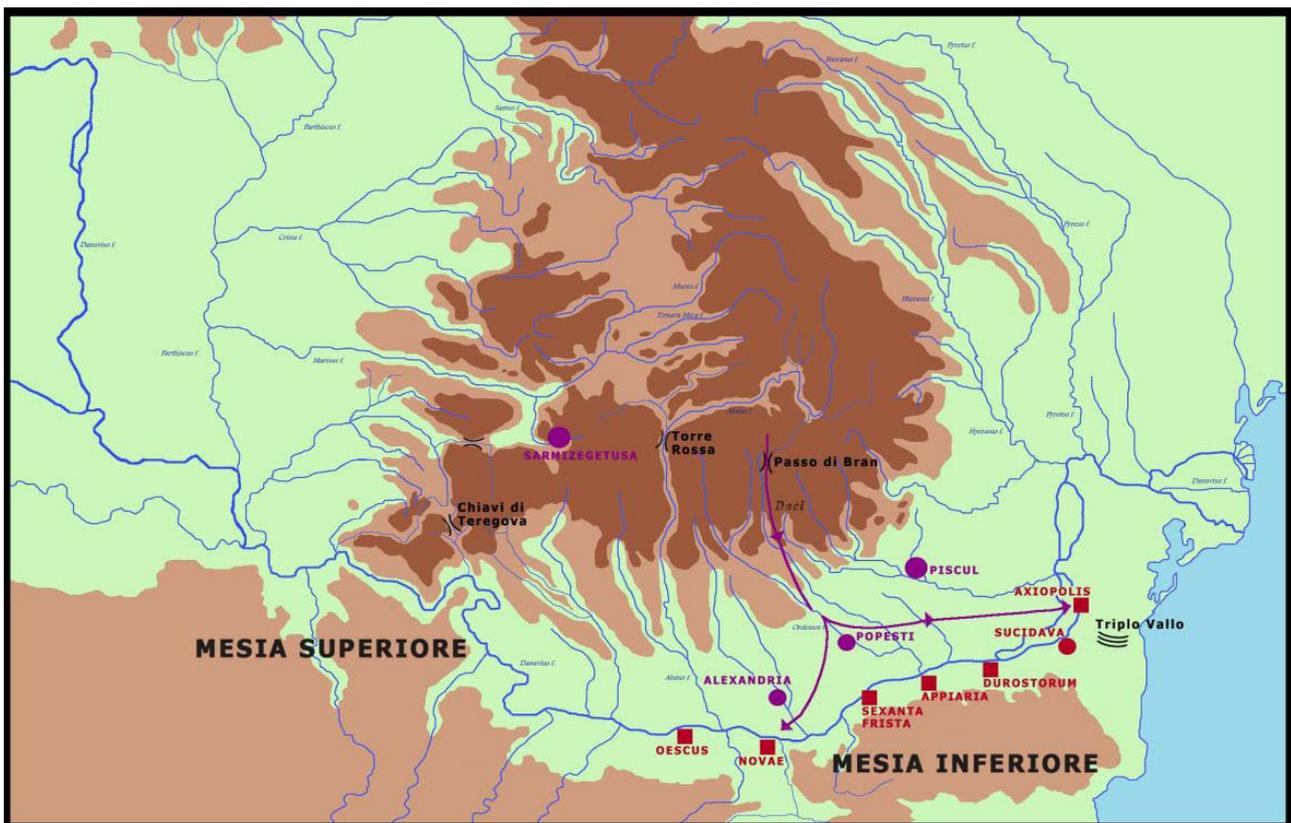
The governor, more reckless than circumspect, crossed the Danube with a few horsemen, fell into an ambush and was taken captive.

Before being led in chains to Decebalus committed suicide.

Rome lost a valiant commander, while the Moesia Inferior went toward the horrors of the war.

V - Mindful of his previous error (*in 102*), Decebalus awaited for spring (*105*) to start the war, when he came down from the north with large forces. While our soldiers were garrisoning the pass of the Red Tower, the Dacian king crossed the pass of Bran (*today known for Dracula's Castle*), ran through the valley furrowed by the Ordessos River. In his advance he put the Roman garrisons of Alexandria, Popesti and Piscul to flight .

Our men crossing the Danube sheltered in the strongholds of Oescus, Novae, Appiaria (*today Rjahovo in Bulgaria*), Durostorum (*today Slistra in Bulgaria*), Sucidava (*today Corabia in Romania*) and Axiopolis (*today Cernavodă in Romania*), where a triple stone rampart defended Moesia Inferior from Sarmatian people.



In fact, according to the orders of the Decebalus, Roxolani were advancing from the east to Moesia Inferior.

VI – Trajan, appointed governor of Moesia Inferior Lucius Fabius Iustus in place of Cicatricula, ordered the mobilization of all the legions, the vexillationes and the auxiliaries who had taken part in the first Dacian war. He sent in Pannonia Inferior Lucius Licinius Sura, with the task of recruiting part of Iazyges, who Sura knew well, having participated alongside Marco Ulpius to the German-Sarmatian wars. In Moesia Inferior he sent Manius Laberius Maximus, because with his experience supported Iustus and at the same time reassured the province with his presence. Sura and Laberius as members of the Consilium Principis, represented the authority of the Emperor himself.

Decebalus meanwhile with large forces was besieging Novae, where was the legio I Italica, Sexanta Prista, landing place of Moesica fleet, Durostorum seat of Legio XXI Rapax, Appiaria, Sucidava and Axiopolis, where German auxiliaries were distributed.

From the east were pressing Roxolani, who, rejected by our troops at the triple rampart of Axiopolis, attempted to cross the Danube between Sucidava and Durostorum. Recommended by Laberius, Iustus ordered the Legio XXI Rapax to oppose the barbarians with all its strength. With the help of the German cavalry the Legio repulsed Roxolani, but suffered heavy losses, while Sarmatians taking flight, chased by Germans, confined their losses.

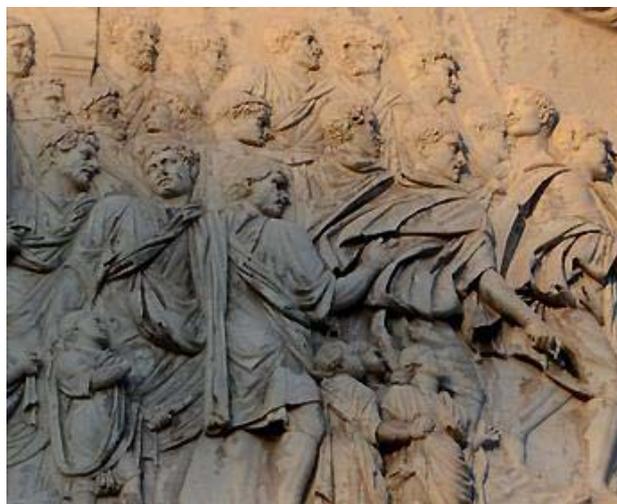
The Germans disdain Sarmatian peoples, considering them at the same time cruel, cowardly and addicted to every vice. Therefore they celebrated with great rejoicing a victory paid with so much Roman blood.

VII - While these things were happening in Moesia, in spring we started from Rome in the wake of Trajan. By forced march we arrived in Brundisium (*today Brindisi in Italy*) where we boarded,



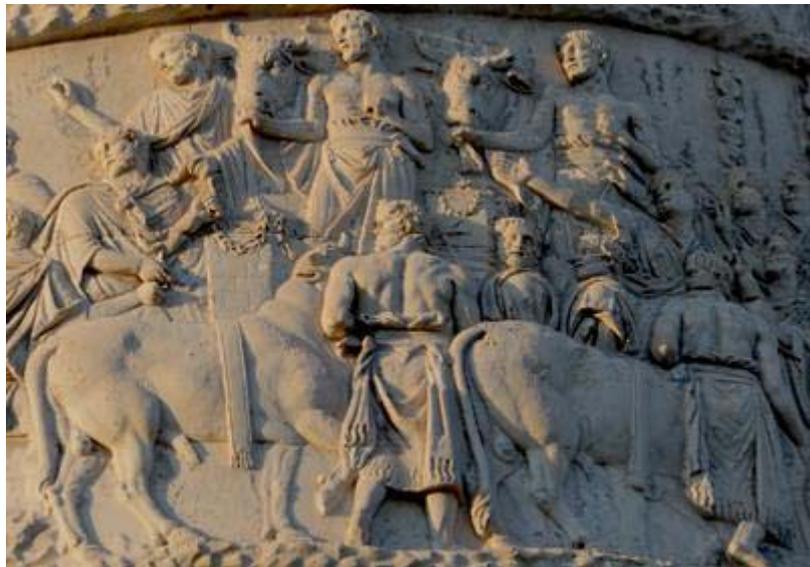
Trajan crosses the Adriatic see

crossed the Superior sea (*the Adriatic*), we landed at Dyrrhachium (*today Durrës in Albania*), from there proceeded to Naissus (*today Nis in Serbia*) in Moesia Superior, seat of the Legio VII Claudia. Left a small garrison in Naissus, followed by the legion, we stepped toward Ratiaria (*today Archar in Bulgaria*), where we were waited by the Legio XXX Ulpia Traiana. Wherever we passed the people came out of the towns to pay homage to the Emperor.



Homage to Trajan

In Ratiaria Trajan celebrated a great Lustratio,



Lustratio

the second Dacian war began.

Decebalus, informed of Trajan's arrival, tried with all his might to conquer Novae and our other forts in Moesia Inferior, but the legionnaires and auxiliary resisted bravely, comforted by the news that the Emperor was oncoming with great forces.

Started from Ratiaria Trajan reached Oescus, where was the legio V Macedonica. Non-stop, proceeding along the road, which connects our Danube fortresses, we advanced to free Novae from the siege of Decebalus.



Trajan's advance

Fearing to succumb, the Dacian king retired to the east in order to reunite with Roxolani.

We chased him until Axipolis, here Decebalus, joined Roxolani, accepted the battle. Protected by the triple rampart our legionnaires, deployed the ballistae carts, decimated the Roxolani cavalry. Given the outcome of this first fight the Dacian king preferred to withdraw to preserve his army. While Roxolani survivors returned to their lands. Decebalus chased by our troops retreated northwards.

All the successes he had achieved in the spring were lost, but his very numerous army remained substantially intact.

VIII - The retreat of Decebalus left us masters of the field, then we saw which disaster had caused the Dacian king with its Roxolani allies. The fertile fields that descend from the Carpathian Mountains to the Danube (*today Dobrogea*), had been devastated, owing to the hatred against the peaceful Dacian peasants, friends of the Roman People, rather than for the necessities of war. Anything that could not be robbed had been set on fire. After the first massacres the peasants had fled and crossed the Danube, taking refuge in the Roman province, rescued by the mercy of the inhabitants.

Wherever destruction and pain.

The Emperor, since the summer was near to its end and it was not advisable to chase Decebalus up to Orastie mountains, decided it was appropriate to help the inhabitants of the province and Dacian peasants, starting the reconstruction.



The Dacian peasants thank Trajan



The inhabitants of the province give thanks to Trajan

Furthermore among the legionnaires and auxiliaries many wounded needed of care. The Legio XXI Rapax, counting dead and wounded, had been halved, nor was it easy to replace skilled legionnaires, with new recruits.

The strength of our army is due both to the discipline, as to the ability of our Legionnaires to support the most diverse tasks. It is not enough to know how to fight and that in itself requires not only courage, but also a long experience, the legionnaires must be able to build camps, roads, bridges, buildings, heal the wounded, and many other things. We estimate that a recruit becomes a legionnaire after at least a couple of years.

Therefore Trajan decided to postpone the resumption of operations to the following spring, meanwhile he ordered to begin the reconstruction, both in the province and beyond the Danube in Dacian lands. In fact the provisioning of the army was not only supported by the province. Since the retreat of Decebalus allowed the return of Dacian peasants to their lands, these proceeded to the sowing of the fertile fields, so you would have abundant provisions in late spring .

Then the legionaries escorted peasants into their land and as winter

approached, helped them rebuild their homes.
Finally, to avoid surprises, all the main garrisons were reinforced



Reinforcement of the garrisons

IX - Our Emperor since the time of the German-Sarmatian wars, having defeated Quadi, Marcomanni and Iazyges had managed to pacify these people and bring them back to the friendship of the Roman People, because, he thought, it was more useful to have, along the left bank of the Danube, allied peoples able to resist the steppes hordes (*Sarmatians*) rather than occupy their territories.

Trajan knew that only a constant Roman presence would maintain the status quo, but, given the powerful fortifications in Pannonia, that seemed the best solution.

He distrusted Decebalus, however hoped that, after the outcome of the first Dacian war, the Dacian king would have deduced the consequences. It did not happen.

The Dacian king fell into the same error of many of our enemies, that until the earliest times, have exchanged our mercy for weakness.

Indeed, I am convinced that Decebalus was betrayed by his own boundless ambition.

This lack of restraint led him to plan the most shameful plots, in fact tried repeatedly to attempt on the life of Trajan falling into ridicule. This, however, was the state of things.

The Emperor summoned the council of war, Lucius Licinius Sura, the most influential Trajan's friends, member of Consilium Principis, war experienced, prudent and circumspect, argued that, since Decebalus' incorrigibility, to avoid we would be forced to engage every year a new war, we must absolutely conquer Dacia.

Just as Sura we were all convinced that if we did not want to grow old along the Danube, we had to destroy Decebalus. Dacia must be conquered.

BOOK V

I - Trajan concentrated troops at Drobeta, (*today Turnu Severin in Romania*) where Apollodorus of Damascus (*between 103 and 104*) had built the largest bridge ever made before.

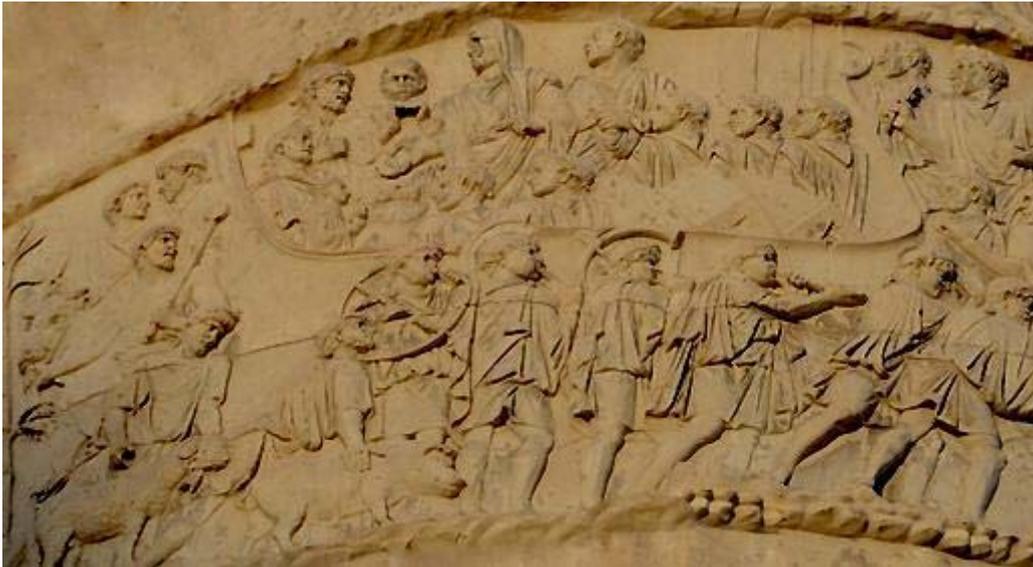


Drobeta's bridge

The bridge, which stands on twenty four stone pillars, acrosses the Danube along about four thousand feet (*1,150 meters*). The foundation of the stone pillars was necessary in order to withstand the violent floods of the Danube.

The Emperor wanted to attack Sarmizegetusa through the pass of Vulcan. Before Decebalus becomes aware of his plans, he ordered the Legio II Adiutrix, stationed in Singidunum reach at Tapae legio I Adiutrix Pia Fidelis (*Loyal and Faithfull*) and from there proceed up to the pass of Vulcan, as we knew that the king of the Dacians expected Trajan,

advancing through the Teregova Keys pass, already under our control. Marcus Ulpius instead, in order to attack as soon as possible Sarmizegetusa, wanted to advance through the most direct way. At Drobeta Marcus Ulpius celebrated a great Lustratio.



Lustratio

Afterwards, crossed the Danube on the marvelous bridge, we began the march toward Vulcan.

At the same time, two other our armies had moved, crossing the Danube from Oescus, the first, commanded by Terentius Decimus Scaurianus and from Axiopolis the second, commanded by Lucius Fabius Iustus.

Scaurianus had to advance through the pass of the Red Tower and close the pincer around Decebalus.

The task of Iustus was to deter Roxolani and Bastarnae from bringing aid to Daci.

II - A little lower than the pass of Vulcan, we fortify at a place called Banita.

We had just finished the operations when we were attacked by Dacians. The battle was very violent, many of our men were wounded.



Dacian assault

Rejected the first charge, we carried out a sortie, the enemy tried in vain to resist fighting with desperate courage, overwhelmed by our legionnaires they had to flee, leaving behind countless fallen.



Roman counterattack

This sudden attack caused a great risk, moreover whether Dacians would have attacked the previous day, they would have surprised us without defenses and even worse while we were engaged in the construction of fences.

It was not our custom to be unprepared, so that Licinius Sura, was saying that he could not understand how such a large mass of armed men had escaped to our scouts.

Many legionnaires were calling for the punishment of the culprits.

To appease minds, exacerbated by the many wounded and not few dead, the same Trajan intervened, to subtract scouts to wrath of legionaries, granting them to the Praetorian Guard, ordering that for thirty days they ate, standing, only bread and water.

No more occurred neglected scouting expeditions.

The technique of scouting expedition, fundamental to our security, is so meticulous and proven that we never suspected could allow surprises by enemies, even cunning as Dacians.

In the following days Sura ordered all detachments of the scouts, in turn, repeated all the coded maneuvers, under his eyes.

III - While at Banita these things were happening, the army of Scaurianus exceeded the Red Tower pass get down to Apulum meeting weak resistance.



Saurianus Advance

By then Decebalus was no longer fighting for glory, but for life, so he concentrated all his forces on the Orastie mountains, after trying in vain to stop Trajan in Banita, waited for our arrival protected by the defences of the six fortified towns.

If he could no longer hope for victory, he hoped the winter would rescue him, then nobody could know what the future would have reserved.

Therefore his imperative was to resist, resist for even a few months.

On the contrary we just wanted the victory and immediately.

The Army of Iustus, left Axiopolis, advanced along the eastern plains of Dacia, where stretched vast cornfields.



Legionnaires reap wheat

As said the task of Iustus was to hold off Roxolani and Bastarnae, but since these, fearing that we wanted to attack them, sent ambassadors asking for peace, magnanimously peace was granted to them!

Trajan then ordered Iustus to advance on Dacia from east to rejoin the army of Scaurianus.

The Dacian Towns encountered, did not try to resist, on the contrary opened their gates.

As often it happened in our history all happened in such a short time that our enemies first saw our armies, later realised what had happened.

IV - The Emperor quickly marched on Sarmizegetusa.



Trajan advances on Sarmizegetusa

This town had a plan somewhat irregular, defended by the powerful Murus Dacicus which contained it within a perimeter of about fifteen thousand feet (*four kilometers*).

The town is formed by a lower part and a non-small acropolis, which constitutes its extreme defense.

In its vicinity flows Marisus river, from which are deducted the waters that feed the town.

Circumvallated Sarmizegetusa, we began the siege, bombarding with our ballistae carts its defense, but because of the high walls and the tenacity of Dacians, we were not able to remove them from their Murus.

Ineffective the ballistae, we attacked along all the perimeter of the walls, to climb them where the slope of the hill is less steep.



The legionnaires attack Sarmizegetusa



Romans approach the stairs to the walls

When we drew the stairs near the walls, Dacians, rushed numerous, tried a desperate defense, throwing large stones on our legionnaires, but thus inevitably left themselves open becoming the target of our ballistae carts. When they warned their furious resistance was in vain, before repairing inside the acropolis, set fire to the lower town, because nothing would fall into our hands.



Dacians burn Sarmizegetusa

In the general confusion, while people were in despair over the loss of all their things,



Desperation of the Sarmizegetusa citizens

Decebalus, with a strong escort of horsemen, which made an opening, had fled.

As said, the town is supplied with water from the Marisus river, which arrives in the lower town, not in the Acropolis, where the water supply, as we knew, were scarce.

It only remained to await the surrender of Dacians.

But the chiefs did not want to give up at any price.

Exhausted by thirst, when their forces were about to leave they ordered the last distribution of water to the inhabitants,



Last distribution of water



Dacian's chiefs committ suicide

then most of them committed suicide.

Survivors surrendered.



Surrender of Dacians

We were at once horrified and admired by such a courage.

However they gave evidence of poor judgment, subjecting citizens to terrible pains, Whereas if they had driven people to escape, at least they would not be left without supplies and especially water after a few days.

V – As soon as we occupied Sarmizegetusa, carried into the ravaged town, large supplies,



Romans carry supplies to Sarmizegetusa

both for the needs of our soldiers and to feed the Dacians who had surrendered.

Decebalus, knowing what fate hung over his head, retired somewhat in the Orastie mountains, tried to reorganize the left faithful troops.

The time of mercy was past, too many treasons, too many deaths, too much blood shed, Trajan wanted Decebalus dead or alive.

Pursued by our forces , the Dacian king played his last card, hoping to catch unprepared our vanguard, he tried a counterattack,



Dacian counteroffensive

but fate was sealed, hidden among trees,



Decebalus witnesses the defeat of his last faithful forces

he witnessed the defeat of his last forces.



Dacians' flight

Over the head of the king hit the fate of the vanquished, Bikelis his best friend, so he taugt, betrayed him.

For having saved the life Bikelis revealed where Decebalus had hidden his treasure. An extraordinary amount of gold got in our possession, the mules on which the treasure was loaded formed an endless line.



Romans loaded mules with Decebalus' treasure

In desperation, he who had been the king of the Dacians, discharged his last soldiers, took flight.

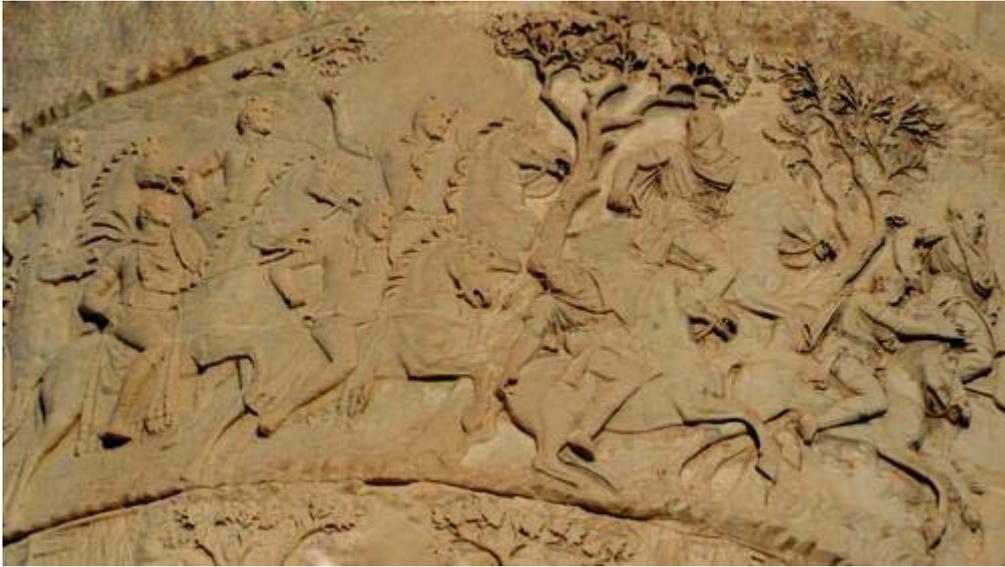
Not enduring dishonor, many of the Dacian chiefs committed suicide, others surrendered.



Surrender of Dacians

VI - We do not know what Decebal could hope, nor where he thought to fly.

Pursued by our cavalry,



Decebalus chased

at full gallop he rode dreaming up salvation.



Desperate flight of Decebalus

In vain.

Surrounded,



Decebalus is surrounded

not to fall into the hands of Trajan, he committed suicide.



Suicide of Decebalus

His two sons were captured.



Decebalus's children are caught

Briefly continued Dacians' resistance,



Extreme resistance of Dacians faithful to Decebalus

but without chiefs and without hope, soon they were induced to surrender.
All their fortresses were burned.



The Dacian fortresses are set on fire

Trajan avoided the massacre.

The prisoners were deducted in slavery.

The Dacians who had surrendered were led with their flocks, far from the Orastie mountains. Part of them was distributed in the southern plains of Dacia, between peaceful peasants. Others were conducted in Pannonia Inferior, others in Moesia Superior.

The walls of the fortified towns in the Orastie mountains were torn down. Sarmizegetusa Regia was abandoned.

The new capital of Dacia, built by Trajan shortly after thirty miles (45 kilometers) from the old capital, was named Colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Sarmizegetusa and was inhabited by Roman settlers, who were the veterans of the victorious legions.

Next to the main Roman fortifications, as Apulum, Buridava, Tapae, Tibiscum, Berzobis, new towns were built or were resurrected, even these were inhabited by Roman settlers.

VII - The colonization of Dacia was made necessary due to the unbridled ambition of Decebalus.

Trajan would have preferred to rely on an ally of the Roman People, to share together the same interest, which was to oppose the Sarmatian hordes incumbent from the East, first against Dacia, then against Roman provinces.

Even the silliest of the leaders would understand that Dacia alone could not long resist the invasions of Sarmatians.

As we have mentioned elsewhere these barbaric and cruel populations, are nomads, they do not cultivate the land, moving with endless masses of horses and oxen, where they stop they leave the desert. Since their incurable laziness means they do not grow new pastures, on the other hand this same laziness condemns them to look constantly for new ones, therefore they are constantly moving, creating a deadly threat to their neighbors.

Obviously it was only a matter of time, after consuming all the pastures of the plains to the east of Dacia, they would try to invade the same Dacia, then our Provinces, first Moesia, then Pannonia.

It is remarkable that a man as cunning as Decebalus proved so lacking in intelligence, so much to think of increasing his power at our expense, regardless of the danger threatening from the East. The very fact of hiring

Roxolani and Bastarnae to these peoples was the proof of his weakness.

With our help he would have saved his kingdom and himself.

We predicting the mentioned danger had built between Axiopolis and Tomis a triple strong stone rampart, to reject the attempts of Roxolani, descending along Pontus Euxinus (*Black Sea*), to penetrate into Moesia Inferior.

With its strongholds in the Orastie mountains the same Decebalus could stop the barbarians, who are accustomed to fight in the great plains of the steppe, but absolutely unprepared both to siege and to fight on rough lands.

We would have assisted Decebalus building in the lowlands of southern Dacia impregnable fortresses.

Together we would have rejected Sarmatian hordes.

Given the folly of Decebalus, the conquest of Dacia became essential for us, fact we would not have tolerated that Sarmatians, once occupied the kingdom of Decebalus, would have forced us to defend Pannonia and Moesia, deploying our forces along the Danube for more than a thousand miles.