

Territorium Ciuitatis Ausdecensium: an Open Issue of Ancient Topo-Demography

Alexandru CODESCU¹

Abstract. This paper aims at re-examining the available data regarding the location of *ciuitas Ausdecensium* in *Moesia Inferior*, starting from the uncertainty as to the place where was discovered the inscription CIL III 14437² – the famous boundary stone which records the resolution of a land dispute between this *ciuitas* and a neighbouring population of Dacians. The analysis is focused on some key-elements which could elucidate the relation between *ciuitas Ausdecensium* and the Thracian strategy *Ούσδικησική* recorded by Ptolemy: the fact that we deal with a boundary stone which, therefore, was initially placed at an extremity of the territory belonging to this *ciuitas*, the fact that this territory extended in the opposite direction, most probably to the south, from the place where the boundary stone was installed, as well as the fact that the interprovincial border between *Moesia Inferior* and *Thracia* is considered to have passed north of the Balkans' range, not very far from Danube's line, although the exact border route is still debated. All these circumstances lead to the plausible consequence of *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium* reaching the interprovincial borderline. At its turn, this consequence, corroborated with the location in northern *Thracia* of the strategy *Ούσδικησική*, according to Ptolemy's account, supports the possible contiguity between *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium* and the territory of the strategy *Ούσδικησική*. If this hypothesis is accurate, it may shed light on the processes that led to the creation of this *ciuitas* and, at the same time, could generate the need to be reassessed the opinion that considers this population of southern Thracian origin as having been relocated to Dobruja.

Rezumat. Acest articol își propune să reexamineze informațiile disponibile cu privire la localizarea în *Moesia Inferior* a comunității ausdecensilor (*ciuitas Ausdecensium*), pornind de la incertitudinea locului de descoperire a inscripției CIL III 14437², bine-cunoscuta piatră de hotar care documentează soluționarea unui litigiu funciar între *ciuitas Ausdecensium* și o populație învecinată de daci. Analiza este focalizată pe câteva elemente-cheie care ar putea elucida raportul dintre *ciuitas Ausdecensium* și strategia tracică *Ούσδικησική* atestată de Ptolemaeus: faptul că avem de a face cu o piatră de hotar, prin urmare inițial plasată la o extremitate a teritoriului acestei *ciuitas*, faptul că acest teritoriu se întindea în direcția opusă, cel mai probabil spre sud, față de locul unde piatra de hotar a fost instalată, precum și faptul că limita interprovincială dintre *Moesia Inferior* și *Thracia* este considerată a fi trecut la nord de linia Balcanilor, nu foarte departe față de Dunăre deși traseul exact al graniței încă este subiect de dezbateri. Aceste circumstanțe conduc spre consecința plauzibilă ca *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium* să fi atins granița

¹ PhD. student, UAIC, Faculty of History; al.codescu@gmail.com.

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interprovincială. La rândul său, această consecință, coroborată cu localizarea strategiei *Ούσδικησικῆ* în nordul provinciei *Thracia*, potrivit relatării lui Ptolemaeus, sprijină posibilitatea existenței unei contiguități între *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium* și teritoriul strategiei *Ούσδικησικῆ*. Dacă această ipoteză este corectă, ea poate să aducă lămuriri cu privire la procesul care a condus la apariția acestei *ciuitas* și, în același timp, poate genera necesitatea de a fi reevaluată opinia potrivit căreia această populație sud-tracică ar fi fost relocalată în Dobrogea.

Keywords: CIL III 14437², *Moesia Inferior*, *Thracia*, *ciuitas Ausdecensium*, *Ούσδικησικῆ*.

Introduction

At the beginning of the 20th century, Gr. Tocilescu sent to the editors of the supplement to the third volume of CIL an inscription carved on a *terminus*, recording the resolution in the province *Moesia Inferior* of a boundary dispute which occurred between a certain *ciuitas Audec...* and a neighbouring population of Dacians: *Termin(i) pos(iti) / t(eratorii) c(iuitatis) Ausdec(ensium) adue/r(sus) Dac(os). Secun(dum) c(iuitatis) / act(a) C(aius) Vexarus t(erminauit) uel f(ecit) / opus. H(inc) excessent / Dac(i). Term(ini) t(eratorii) c(iuitatis) obli/[g(ati)] sint. M[es]sal(la) P[i]/[e?]ror term(inos) pos(uit) t(eratorii). / Iussu Helui(i) Per/tinacis co(n)s(ularis) n(ostri) per / Anternium An/[to]ninum trib(unum) / coh(ortis) I Cilic(um)*². According to the epigraphic text, the boundary marking was made upon instruction of the governor Helvius Pertinax, being thus dated in the period AD 175-179³.

In 1916, G. Mateescu was the first to notice that the members of this *ciuitas*, which was considered by him at that time to designate a fortified city⁴ and for which he restored the name as '*c(iuitas) Ausdec(ensis)*'⁵, most probably belonged to an already known Thracian people. Thus, G. Mateescu made the connection between the *Ausdecenses* indicated on the boundary stone, on the one hand, and the name of the strategy *Ούσδικησικῆ*, recorded by Ptolemaeus⁶ together with the mention made in a dedicatory inscription put in Rome by four praetorians who

² CIL III Suppl. 14437² = TUDOR 1956a, 52, no. 3 = AE 1957, 333 = ISM IV, 82. The text is that restituted by D. Tudor (1956a, 52, no. 3).

³ The period when Helvius Pertinax held the governorship in *Moesia Inferior* was generally dated in the years AD 175-179, but researchers' opinions as to the exact interval thereof vary considerably: 175-176 (SUCEVEANU 1977a, 152); 175-177 for both provinces of *Moesia* (PIR², H73); 175-178/179 for both provinces (LP I, 20, nos. 47, 98); 176-177 (MATEI-POPESCU 2010, 202; OPRIȘ, ȚENȚEA, CĂLINA 2020, 19, no. 9); 176-178 (STOUT 1911, 57); 177-178 (IDRE II, p. 346, no. 338, *sub numero*); 177-179 (STEIN 1940, 80-81; TUDOR 1956a, 55, no. 3 and n. 27; AE 1957, 333, *sub numero*; ISM IV, pp. 204-205, no. 82, *sub numero*).

⁴ The meaning of the Romanian word '*cetate*', used by G. Mateescu is either (old, ancient) fortified urban settlement or stronghold, fortress.

⁵ MATEESCU 1916, 38, no. 14 and *sub numero*. The emendation '*c(iuitatis) Ausdec(ensium)*' was made later by D. Tudor (1956a, 55, no. 3). However, V. Pârvan used in 1923 the expression (in Romanian language) 'the land of the city of Ausdecenses' (PÂRVAN 1923b, 109), but in that case, the use of the ethnonym in the genitive case was rather determined by the necessities of Pârvan's wording than by a reconsidering of the epigraphic text.

⁶ *Geog.* III, 11, 8; MATEESCU 1916, 38, no. 14, *sub numero*.

declared themselves '*ciues Vsdicensis (sic) uico Agatapara*⁷, on the other hand. G. Mateescu's conclusions on the relation between the name of this *ciuitas* and the population *Ausdecenses/Vsdicensis* were rapidly admitted by the other historians, starting with V. Pârvan⁸.

Together with the landmark contribution of G. Mateescu for establishing the connection between the *Ausdecenses* and the Thracian population *Vsdicensis* attested by the Rome inscription and by the name of the *Ούσδικησική* strategy, appeared in the Romanian historiography the possibility that other southern-Thracian population, besides the *Bessi*⁹, was object of a resettlement or migratory process towards Dobruja.

After more than a century from the first researches, the question of whether the *Ausdecenses/Vsdicensis* were indeed object of such movement or displacement of people is still not definitively answered, due to the fragmentary status of the ancient information which survived. Directly linked to this issue is another open question, as we do know precisely where *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium* was positioned. This is not only caused by the lack of knowledge regarding the place where this boundary stone was initially placed, but even the uncertainty as to the place where this inscription was discovered.

The purpose of this paper is firstly to examine the opinions expressed in respect of the above-mentioned problems, with a focus on those minority views which expressly or implicitly considered the *Ausdecenses* to be indigenous on the territory covered by their *ciuitas*, and subsequently to put forward and analyse a hypothesis that, even if it can be perceived in some of the previous contributions, nonetheless, to our knowledge, it has never been formulated as such – namely the possibility of a contiguity between *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium*, located in *Moesia Inferior* and the area occupied in northern *Thracia* by the eponymous population of the *Ούσδικησική* strategy¹⁰.

⁷ CIL VI Pars I, 2807 (= CIL VI Pars IV f.p. 32582) = ILS 4068; MATEESCU 1916, 38, no. 14 *sub numero* and n. 4.

⁸ PÂRVAN 1921, 202, where '*Thracas Ausdecenses*' are mentioned, however without citing the work of G. Mateescu, and PÂRVAN 1924, 4-5, where express reference is made to Mateescu's demonstration.

⁹ In 1916, when G. Mateescu published its contribution, the *Lai* (known at that time in Dobruja only from one inscription, found at Constanța-Anadolchioi, CIL III Suppl. 7533 = ISM II, 141 and which records this population under the term '*Lae*') were considered to be either an indigenous population the name of which would appear abridged on the stone, as it was thought by Gr. Tocilescu, the first editor of the respective epigraph (TOCILESCU 1900, 109, no. 2, *sub numero*; TOCILESCU 1903, 64, no. 95, *sub numero*), either a clan of the *Bessi* (PÂRVAN 1915, 432-434; MATEESCU 1916, 40). Afterwards, having discovered himself new inscriptions recording the presence of *Lai* in Dobruja (such as PÂRVAN 1923a, no. 61 = ISM I, 346; AVRAM 2007, no. 31), V. Pârvan modified twice his opinion on the meaning of the epigraphic term *LAI / LAE*, being however the first to accurately identify it (PÂRVAN 1925, 243, no. 41, *sub numero*) with those *Λαιαῖοι* mentioned by Thucydides (II, 96, 3; II, 97, 2).

¹⁰ As from the outset, it has to be pointed out an issue of chronology – at the moment when took place the dispute between the *Ausdecenses* and the *Dacians* (the eighth decade of 2nd cent. AD), the Thracian system of strategies had very probably been already abolished, this process being dated in the reigns of either Trajan or Hadrian (GEROV 1970, 129; GEROV 1978, 476; RUSCU 2007, 214; PARISSAKI 2009, 350 and n. 93; MATEI-POPESCU 2018, 108). Even if the distance in time between the moments when are attested *ciuitas Ausdecensium* and *Ούσδικησική* strategy has to be permanently kept in mind, this neither constitute, as will result from the below analysis of the chronological setting, an obstacle to

1. The provenance of the boundary stone

Based on the scarce available information, it is generally admitted at present that the inscription CIL III 14437² was discovered in the southern part of Dobruja, at Azarlâc (currently Cetatea commune, Constanța county). However, this place of discovery is far from being certain.

The editors of the supplement to CIL III indicated, probably based on information provided by Gr. Tocilescu, that the stone was found ‘*prope Adamclissi*’¹¹. V. Pârvan, in his first work dedicated to the excavations he made at *Ulmetum*, affirmed that the road that led from the fortification located at Abtat-Calessi¹² to Tropaeum Traiani passed through ‘Azarlâc (*Ciuitas Ausdec...*)’¹³ and in the footnote, he mentioned ‘CIL. III 14437² (found, according to verbal information, at Azarlâc). Cf. also the Greek funerary inscription from *Arch.-epigr. Mitt.* XVII, p. 98’¹⁴. To our knowledge, it was the first time when this discovery place was indicated. However, the detail from the second part of Pârvan’s note generates further confusion, because in respect of the inscription evoked by Pârvan for comparison (AEM 17, no. 37), Gr. Tocilescu indicated indeed that it was found at ‘Hasarlik’. However, this toponym designated in that particular instance the place where it is located the ancient Cius (Gârliciu) near the Danube, and not Azarlâc (Cetatea). Thus, the Greek funerary inscription to which V. Pârvan was referring appears to have been ‘found at Hasarlik’¹⁵, the same as the preceding Latin epigraph¹⁶. For this latter, Gr. Tocilescu offered more detailed, but still unclear, information, mentioning that it had been found in a ‘Turkish cemetery near Hasarlik, Ostrov commune, Constanța county’¹⁷. The indication of Ostrov commune could lead to the nearby Beroe fortress¹⁸, but in the supplement to the third volume of CIL, the place of discovery indicated for the inscription AEM 17, no. 36 is Cius fortress¹⁹, where it is attested the toponym Hazarlâc / Hissarlık, this designating both the

a hypothetic contiguity between the areas covered by *Ὀὐδοικησικὴ* strategy (in *Thracia*) and *ciuitas Ausdecensium* (in *Moesia Inferior*) nor is opposed to a coexistence for a certain period of these two administrative realities.

¹¹ CIL III Suppl. 14437², *sub numero*. D. Tudor considered that this indication was made ‘altogether inexactly’ (TUDOR 1956a, 52, no. 3, *sub numero*).

¹² At the village named then Abtat-Calessi it was considered at that time to be located the ancient Abritus (PÂRVAN 1912, the map ‘*Dobruja in the Romans’ time*’; VULPE 1912, 136). Later, the ancient fortification from Abtat-Calessi was identified with Zaldapa (SUCEVEANU 1977b, 75).

¹³ PÂRVAN 1912, 579.

¹⁴ PÂRVAN 1912, 579, n. 3: ‘CIL. III 14437² (găsită, după știri orale, la Azarlâc). Cf. și inscripția funerară greacă din *Arch.-epigr. Mitt.* XVII, p. 98, găsită tot la Azarlâc.’

¹⁵ TOCILESCU 1894, 98, no. 37: ‘Gefunden zu Hasarlik’.

¹⁶ TOCILESCU 1894, 98, no. 36.

¹⁷ TOCILESCU 1894, 98, no. 36: ‘Gefunden auf einem türkischen Friedhof in der Nähe von Hasarlik, Kreis Ostrov, Bezirk Konstantza’.

¹⁸ At the end of 19th cent., Ostrov commune was located in Constanța county, Hârșova district (v. DĂNESCU 1897, 619 sqq., s.v. Ostrov); at present it is located in Tulcea county.

¹⁹ CIL III Suppl. 14214²¹.

hill on which are found the fortifications from *Cius* and the nearby lake²⁰. On this ground, these two inscriptions (*i.e.*, AEM 17, nos. 36 and 37) were recorded in ISM V with the probable place of discovery *Cius*²¹, the editor, Em. Doruțiu-Boilă, mentioning both the confusion existing between Hazarlâc (*Cius*) and Hazarlâc/Azarlâc (*Cetatea*) and the fact that it cannot be excluded that the actual place of discovery thereof was in reality Azarlâc (*Cetatea*)²².

Returning to the mention made by V. Pârvan regarding the alleged discovery of the inscription CIL III 14437² at Azarlâc (*Cetatea*), it should be noticed that its author was himself in doubt as to its accuracy, as it results both from the remark that it was based on 'verbal information'²³ and especially out of the fact that on the annexed the map of Dobruja, V. Pârvan placed *Ciuitas Ausdec...* in the area of Azarlâc (*Cetatea*), but accompanied by question mark²⁴.

G. Mateescu mentioned in his study of 1916 that the inscription CIL III 14437² was discovered at Azarlâc, 'on the road between *Abritus* and *Tropaeum*'²⁵, indicating that this was based on discussions with D. M. Teodorescu, the director of the National Antiquities Museum²⁶. He also stated that D. M. Teodorescu had worked with Gr. Tocilescu to a map of the ancient Dobruja, on which Gr. Tocilescu allegedly placed *Ciuitas Ausdec...* at Azarlâc and supported this localisation with the argument of the existence in the area of a fortification 'above the village'²⁷. Nonetheless, relatively recent researches revealed that the fortification to which G. Mateescu was referring is to be dated in the medieval period²⁸ and therefore this latter argument should be discarded.

In the ample study published in 1923 in respect of the Thracians epigraphically attested at Rome, G. Mateescu no longer manifested the same confidence as to the place in which had been found the inscription, observing that its provenance thereof was 'absolutely uncertain' and mentioning that 'in the Romanian works of Tocilescu and in the Museum's records was missing any information regarding this valuable epigraph'²⁹. He also pointed out that, irrespective of

²⁰ OPRIȘ 2020, 5-6. A similar confusion between the fortresses *Cius* and *Beroe* was made at that time also by P. Polonic who wrote on the plan he drew for the *Cius* fortress 'Roman fortress of Hazarlâc (*Beroe*)', v. OPRIȘ 2020, 7-8 and fig. 3.

²¹ ISM V, 116 and 116 bis.

²² ISM V, p. 137.

²³ PÂRVAN 1912, 579, n. 3.

²⁴ PÂRVAN 1912, the map '*Dobruja in the Romans' time*'.

²⁵ MATEESCU 1916, 38. The reference to this road certifies that the source of this information (expressly indicated by Mateescu in footnote 2) was indeed V. Pârvan (1912^b, 579) who mentioned *Ciuitas Ausdec...* in the context of the discussion on the roads in the area, also v. *supra* n. 12-13.

²⁶ MATEESCU 1916, 38. It is not clear whether these discussions were held only by V. Pârvan (these being probably the origin of that 'verbal information' mentioned by him, v. *supra* n. 14), or if G. Mateescu checked himself with D. M. Teodorescu the accuracy of the information.

²⁷ MATEESCU 1916, 38 and n. 2.

²⁸ BĂRBULESCU 2001, 125, n. 994 (date the fortification from *Cetatea* commune in the 13th-14th cent.); OPRIȘ, ȚENȚEA, CĂLINA 2020, 20 and n. 37, no. 9 (8th-10th cent).

²⁹ MATEESCU 1923, 161: 'nelle pubblicazioni romene del Tocilescu e nei registri del Museo mancava ogni notizia su questa pregevole epigrafe'.

the place of discovery, an inscription found other than by systematic archaeological investigation does not necessarily place the ancient name it records in the spot where the inscription was found by chance³⁰. These observations stood at the basis of G. Mateescu's hypothesis on the autochthony of the *Ausdecenses* in the area covered by the community – *ciuitas* – attested by the inscription CIL III 14437².

In the paper dated 1956 in which he made significant improvements to the restitution of the inscription's text, D. Tudor emphasised the totally uncertain character of the data we have in respect of its the place of discovery³¹. This was also valid, in his opinion, for the information passed by D. M. Teodorescu as regards the map to which he worked with Gr. Tocilescu, since, on 'this map reproduced by Gr. Tocilescu in his work *Fouilles et recherches archéologiques en Roumanie*, Bucharest 1900, there is nowhere recorded an indication in respect of the location of *ciuitas Ausdecensium*'³². D. Tudor also mentioned that in Dobrogea were two localities Azarlâc, that of Cius and that situated south of Adamclisi³³, and pointed out the uncertainty of whether the inscription was found *in situ*, as it could have been transported as construction material. Nonetheless, he observed the lack of any traces of mortar on the stone³⁴, circumstance which could indicate that it was never embedded in a wall. Al. Suceveanu remarked, as well, the doubt as to the place where the inscription had been found³⁵.

On the contrary, the editor of the fourth volume of ISM, Em. Popescu, considered unjustified such doubts, his arguments consisting in: (a) the fact that V. Pârvan could have obtained quite sure information from Tocilescu's collaborators; (b) the existence in Cetatea commune of an important archaeological site; (c) the fact that Gr. Tocilescu made several maps and that to which was referring D. M. Teodorescu 'is kept at MNA and on this is indicated *Ciuitas Ausdecensium*'³⁶; the possibility that *Fouilles et recherches archéologiques en Roumanie* was sent for

³⁰ MATEESCU 1923, 161.

³¹ TUDOR 1956a, 52, no. 3, *sub numero*.

³² TUDOR 1956a, 52, n. 20: 'Localizarea fixată de Pârvan se baza numai pe faptul că subdirectorul de atunci al muzeului (D. M. Teodorescu) îl informase că lucrase la o hartă arheologică cu Tocilescu și că acela localiza cu acea ocazie civitas Ausdecensium la Azarlâc dintre Tropaeum Traiani și Abrittus. Rămâne însă de neînțeles faptul că, în această hartă, reproducă de Gr. Tocilescu în lucrarea sa *Fouilles et recherches archéologiques en Roumanie*, București 1900, localizarea pentru *civitas Ausdecensium* nu apare deloc înregistrată'. However, from the information offered by D. M. Teodorescu, as this was recorded by G. Mateescu (1916, 38), does not necessarily result that the map on which he worked with Gr. Tocilescu would have been exactly that included in *Fouilles*.

³³ TUDOR 1956a, 52: 'în afară de localitatea Azarlâc (sau Hasarlâc) de lângă Adamclisi, mai există o a doua cu același nume lângă Gârlici (vechiul *Cius*), pe Dunăre (raion Hârșova)'. D. Tudor was not entirely accurate in respect of that Azarlâc from *Cius*, as this latter toponym does not indicate a locality but the lake Hazarlâc-ghiol (DĂNESCU 1897 514, s.v.), as well as the neighbouring hill, on which is located *Cius* fortress (OPRIȘ 2020, 5).

³⁴ TUDOR 1956a, 52, n. 21.

³⁵ SUCEVEANU 1977a, 152, n.33. Al. Suceveanu mentioned that the existence of this doubt was also confirmed by E. Comșa, but he did not provide any further detail in this regard.

³⁶ ISM IV, pp. 201-202, no. 82, *sub numero*: 'Cette réserve ne nous semble justifié, car Tocilescu a préparé plusieurs cartes (dont une, qui se trouve au MNA et sur laquelle est mentionnée la *Civitas Ausdecensium*) (...)'. In itself, the affirmation

printing before the discovery of the inscription. In support of this latter argument invoked by Em. Popescu could be brought the haste in which this inscription was sent by Gr. Tocilescu to A. von Domaszewski to be included in the supplement to the third volume of CIL, published in 1902, without Tocilescu having had the time to firstly edit himself the inscription as he previously used to. However, the other arguments of Em. Popescu may be contested since, on the one hand, V. Pârvan himself manifested distrust as regards the reliability of the information he got in respect of the place of discovery of the stone and, on the other hand, the fortification from Cetatea is medieval, as mentioned above. Thirdly, letting aside the fact that it cannot be verified the affirmation of Em. Popescu as to the existence 'au MNA' of another map of Tocilescu indicating '*ciuitas Ausdecensium*', since no reference or further indication – such as an inventory number – is given in this respect, the doubt would remain even if Gr. Tocilescu indeed made such indication on a map. This is because the situation of unclear or inaccurate information given by Gr. Tocilescu for the finding places of inscriptions, incidentally discussed above in respect of AEM 17, nos. 36 and 37, is by far not singular³⁷.

Therefore, at the current level of our knowledge, it can hardly be discarded the uncertainty admitted even by V. Pârvan and the doubt which was expressed especially by the researchers who had breakthrough contributions to the epigraphic study of the inscription CIL III 14437² – G. Mateescu and D. Tudor. To this uncertainty contributes the existence in the area of *Moesia Inferior* of at least three points where are attested the toponyms Azarlâc/ Hissarlık / Hazarlâc³⁸. Thus, besides the two toponyms of this type attested in Dobruja and to which made reference D. Tudor, it should be noted the existence of an additional one, located not very far away, this being Hisarlic from the vicinity of Razgrad, where was identified the ancient Abritus³⁹.

Therefore, prudence should be manifested in using rigidly the uncertain finding place of the inscription CIL III 14437² in order to infer the situation of the *Ausdecenses* for the benefit of whom this boundary stone was fixed.

that on a map drawn in the early 20th cent. would be mentioned '*Civitas Ausdecensium*' is anachronistic since the restitution of the name of this *ciuitas* with the genitive plural of the ethnonym was firstly made by D. Tudor (1956a, 52, no. 3).

³⁷ For example, Em. Doruțiu (-Boilă) managed to correct 11 such inaccurate indications, based on the comparison with official documents kept in Tocilescu's archive (DORUȚIU 1964), pointing out that such inaccuracies regarding the finding places were included in the maps which accompanied the communications made by Gr. Tocilescu, being afterwards taken over and presented as certain information by the researchers. She also emphasised that such confusions could have affected also the other inscriptions published in *Fouilles...*, but for those she did not manage to find information to support or to rebut the data recorded there by Tocilescu (DORUȚIU 1964, 134). Even if the inscription at stake was not published in *Fouilles...* its situation is similar, because it was handed over to Gr. Tocilescu in the same period in which *Fouilles...* was published.

³⁸ The meaning of this toponyms (as 'place of the citadel(s)' OPRİŞ 2020, 6) leaves open the possibility of existing even other points in the area of *Moesia Inferior* where this inscription could have been found, if one assumes as accurate at least the information that it was discovered in a place with such name.

³⁹ BE 1958, 328, Hisarlic being the finding place of the inscription put by Ἀπολλώνιος Ἐπτακένθου.

2. Status of the research in respect of the presence of the *Ausdecenses* in *Moesia Inferior* and regarding the location of their *territorium*

As from the beginning of this section, we should deal with a problem of methodology. The Romanian historiography thought about the first part of this matter as to the presence of the *Ausdecenses* in the Romanian part of Dobruja, where the inscription is generally considered to have been found. However, even supposing that this inscription was indeed found there and also admitting that this finding place is located on, or near, the point where this stone was initially fixed, two circumstances should be kept in mind. On the one hand, it is the fact that the supposed place of discovery – Azarlâc (Cetatea commune) – is located in the southernmost area of the Romanian Dobruja and on the other hand it is the fact that we deal with a boundary stone, which was initially placed at the very end of the territory of this *ciuitas*, on the limit between this community and a neighbouring group of Dacians. Therefore, there is a reasonable possibility that the territory of this *ciuitas* extended to the south of the discovery place, hence outside the area of the Romanian part of Dobruja. Going further on the same line of reasoning and taking into account that the finding place is uncertain, it is also reasonable to admit that the original place where this boundary stone was fixed may have been located to the southern part of the historical Dobruja, or even at certain distance from it, case in which *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium* could have extended further south, hence completely outside of the entire Dobruja region. Therefore, when discussing about matters related to the location of this territory, we have to rely on the only clearly known element in this respect, this being its location in *Moesia Inferior*, information resulting from the fact that the boundary stone was set upon instruction – *iussu* – of the governor Helvius Pertinax⁴⁰. Consequently, we should discuss on the reasons for the presence of this *ciuitas* in *Moesia Inferior* and not restrictively in Dobruja (being it either the historical region or only the Romanian part thereof).

The Romanian historiography, in its vast majority, considered that the *Ausdecenses* are attested in Dobruja by the inscription CIL III 14437² and that their presence in this area was an effect of a movement of population. After some previous hesitations in this respect⁴¹, R. Vulpe was the first scholar to clearly articulate, subsequent to the breakthrough study of G. Mateescu from 1916 in which was demonstrated the identity between *Ausdecenses* and the *Vsdicenses*, the idea that the *Ausdecenses* got in Dobruja as result of movement of population, a forceful relocation in his opinion⁴². In the years '50 of the 20th century, the researches interpreted the land dispute

⁴⁰ For the jurisdiction of the provincial governors, as agents of the imperial power, for the settlement of such boundary disputes, as well as for the involvement of the military force for the implementation of such settlements, especially for setting the boundary stones, v. BURTON 2000, 199, 202, 204-205, 212-213.

⁴¹ PĂRVAN 1911, 5-6; PĂRVAN 1912, 575-576; PĂRVAN 1923b, 110; PĂRVAN 1924, 5; MATEESCU 1916, 39 and n. 21.

⁴² VULPE 1938a, 35; VULPE 1938b, 188; VULPE 1940, 78; VULPE 1953, 741 = VULPE 1976, 286-287; VULPE 1968, 164-165. Previously, the idea that *Ausdecenses* came to Dobruja from the *ὀψοδικησικὴ* strategy had been expressed by G. Mateescu (1916, 39 and n. 21) and by V. Pârvan (1924, 5).

between the *Ausdecenses* and the Dacians in a social key, in which the Dacians were seen as the autochthonous element, fighting for land with the newly arrived southern Thracians colonized and supported by the Roman occupation force⁴³. However, the strongest driving force of the prevailing Romanian historiographic current, as from the study of G. Mateescu until current time – that of the *Ausdecenses* having migrated to, or having been relocated in, the area of Dobruja – was the analogy with the situation of the *Bessi* and *Lai*, determined by their affiliation to the southern Thracian populations⁴⁴. Except for the contributions of Al. Suceveanu who, as shall be detailed below, diverged from the majority standpoint and argued for the autochthony of this population⁴⁵, and except for the hypothesis proposed by M. Tacheva, which indirectly leads to the same conclusion of the autochthony of the *Ausdecenses*⁴⁶, in the recent researches it was almost unanimously affirmed that this population was colonised or relocated, either by the Roman or by the Odrysian authority. The *Ausdecenses'* origin in Balkans was also mentioned by Al. Barnea⁴⁷, M. Bărbulescu⁴⁸, M. Zahariade⁴⁹ and by D. Dana and Fl. Matei-Popescu⁵⁰ or A. Băltăc⁵¹. In a study from 2018, Fl. Matei Popescu, having remarked the impossibility to identify *ciuitas Ausdecensium* (located in *Moesia Inferior*) with the strategy *Ούσδικησικη* (situated further

An idea according to which the *Ausdecenses* got into Dobruja as result of a migratory process, as part of the *Bessi* and together with them, had been expressed by G. Mateescu (1916, 39), when hypothesised that such migration was caused by the Celts' invasion of the Balkans in the 3rd cent. B.C. Părvan rebutted partially this conjecture, opposing to the *Ausdecenses* being considered part of the *Bessi* (PĂRVAN 1924, 5), while in 1923 Mateescu abandoned himself this opinion completely, formulating for the first time the hypothesis of the autochthony of this population in the area of their *ciuitas* (MATEESCU 1923, 161).

⁴³ ȘTEFAN 1954, 30; RUSSU 1955, 84; TUDOR 1956a, 56.

⁴⁴ MATEESCU 1916, 39; VULPE 1938b, 188; ȘTEFAN 1954, 30; TUDOR, 1951, 18; TUDOR 1956a, 53; CONDURACHI, 1958, 307.

⁴⁵ SUCEVEANU, 1977b, 74-75; SUCEVEANU, 1991a, 38, 54 (in this latter work, the affiliation of the *Ausdecenses* to the southern Thracian populations and their bringing in the Roman period was accepted as one of the possibilities, together with that of having been indigenous) and especially SUCEVEANU, BARNEA 1993, 162-164.

⁴⁶ TACHEVA 1995, 431, 433. M. Tacheva did not express any opinion on the origin of the *Ausdecenses*, but, as we shall analyse below, her interpretation on the emergence and on the location of the *Ούσδικησικη* strategy, as well as to its relation with *ciuitas Ausdecensium*, leads to the conclusion that in her view the eponymous population of this *ciuitas* was indigenous in the respective area. We should also add to these diverging opinions, the doubt expressed by B. Gerov as to identity between *Ausdecenses* and *Vsdicenses*, as well as to the analogy with the *Bessi* and *Lai* (GEROV 1988, 23, n. 27, v. *infra*, n. 56).

⁴⁷ Al. Barnea had a slightly ambiguous position, on the one hand supporting the opinion of Al. Suceveanu on the autochthony of this population, v. BARNEA 1998, 223; BARNEA 2002, 52, but on the other indicating that the *Ausdecenses* had been brought by the Romans from the area of the Balkan Mountains, v. BARNEA 2002, 52.

⁴⁸ BĂRBULESCU 2001, 125, 193.

⁴⁹ ZAHARIADE 2009, 37.

⁵⁰ DANA, MATEI-POPESCU 2009, 247.

⁵¹ BĂLTĂC 2011, 32; 63 n. 724; 86.

south, in *Thracia*)⁵², pointed out that '[w]e must therefore envisage a resettlement of the *Urdicenses* in the area of Cetatea; this could have been done by the Thracian kings.'⁵³

In this overwhelming historiographic picture, the hypotheses which in some way or another considered a possible autochthony of the *Ausdecenses* in the area of their *ciuitas*, put forward by G. Mateescu and, decades later, by Al. Suceveanu and respectively M. Tacheva, remain isolated, both in their ensemble – in relation the dominant view – and the one in respect of the others. This latter situation is caused by the fact that each of these minority opinions is different, but also by the fact that when new such hypotheses were formulated it does not appear to have been known to their authors the previous opinions which took into consideration such autochthony. They require a thorough examination for two seemingly contrasting reasons – on the one hand because some objections may be opposed to them, and on the other hand because, if they are studied with due consideration to the whole of the information preserved by the sources, these opinions could lead to perceiving some important nuances in respect of the situation of the *Ausdecenses* which might tilt the balance towards the autochthony of this population. In the following paragraphs, we shall diverge from the method of following the historiographic evolutions in chronological order, out of the necessity to analyse in direct succession G. Mateescu's and M. Tacheva's respective hypotheses, which have some affinities, even if they were formulated completely independent and at long distance in time. Thus, we shall firstly deal with the hypothesis formulated by Al. Suceveanu, by presenting both the arguments invoked by its author and some of the issues which it raises.

Al. Suceveanu expressed his doubt in respect of a relocation of the *Ausdecenses* as from his work dedicated to the economic life in Roman Dobruja where he mentioned, as a working alternative, that their arrival in Dobruja as result of such displacement of population would not have been compatible with their status of *peregrini* and with their organisation as a *ciuitas*⁵⁴. In *La Dobrudja Romaine*, he mentioned, together with the majority opinion regarding a 'transplantation' of the *Ausdecenses*, also the possibility that they were autochthonous⁵⁵. In these brief early references to such possibility, Al. Suceveanu did not bring into discussion the identity *Ausdecenses-Vsdicenses*, which in the Romanian historiography stands at the basis of the thesis regarding their relocation. However, in the study published in 1993, together with Iuliana Barnea, Al.

⁵² MATEI-POPESCU 2018, 113. However, we consider that the mention according to which *Ὀύσδικησικὴ* strategy would have been 'situated south of the Haemus Mountains as mentioned by Ptolemy' (MATEI-POPESCU 2018, 113) doesn't follow accurately the information of Ptolemy, who mentions *Ὀύσδικησικὴ* strategy among the four northernmost strategies located towards the two *Moesia* provinces 'πρὸς μὲν ταῖς Μυσίαις' (as regards the meaning of the last part of Ptolemy's sentence 'καὶ περὶ τὸν Αἴμιον τὸ ὄρος' v. *infra*, n. 109).

⁵³ MATEI-POPESCU 2018, 113.

⁵⁴ SUCEVEANU, 1977b, 74-75.

⁵⁵ SUCEVEANU, 1991a, 54.

Suceveanu indirectly challenged this identity⁵⁶ and developed the hypothesis of the local origin of the *Ausdecenses*, proposing to ‘put in relation’ the toponym *Δαουσδάνα* recorded by Ptolemy⁵⁷ with *ciuitas Ausdecensium*⁵⁸. Al. Suceveanu’s demonstration started with the fact that the localisation of *Δαουσδάνα* at Razgrad – as had been thought previously – could no longer be kept, since there *Abritus* was identified, and therefore considered that *Δαουσδάνα* could be linked, actually identified, with *ciuitas Ausdecensium*⁵⁹. In his opinion, this had two consequences, on the one hand abandoning the placement of *ciuitas Ausdecensium* to Azarlâc (Cetatea) and on the other hand admitting a local origin of the *Ausdecenses*, ‘more in line with the status of *civitas peregrina*’⁶⁰. The principal argument invoked by Al. Suceveanu was that ‘in the light of the chronology of such kind of movements from south to north, we do not think that could be accepted to place the presence of a southern-Thracian population as early as 1st cent. BC – 1st cent. AD, and moreover in the form of a *civitas peregrina*’⁶¹. This reasoning was based on the comparison with the relocation of the *Bessi* in Dobruja in conjunction with the opinion previously expressed by Al. Suceveanu who considered this to have happened in the 2nd cent. AD⁶². However, on the one hand, the chronology of the bringing the *Bessi* in Dobrogea is far from being surely fixed in the 2nd cent. AD. On the contrary, the fact that Ovidius records

⁵⁶ The probable rejection by Al. Suceveanu of the ethnical identity between the *Ausdecenses* (the inhabitants of *ciuitas Ausdecensium*) and the *Vsdecenses* (inhabitants of the strategy *Ούσδικησική*) may be inferred from the following conclusion ‘Then, one could also envisage a local origin of these *Ausdecenses*, more in line with the status of *civitas peregrina* which results from the well-known inscription, besides that which makes them come from the southern Thracian area, deduced from the stemming of the ethnonym out of the strategy *Ούσδικησική*’ (for the original wording v. *infra*, n. 58. Independently, B. Gerov (1988, 23, n. 27) argued against the identity between the *Ausdecenses* and *Vsdecenses*, in his opinion the two ethnonyms being different.

⁵⁷ *Geog.* III, 10, 12.

⁵⁸ SUCEVEANU, BARNEA 1993, 162-164: ‘L’autre toponyme, Dausdava, a été localisé par W. Tomaschek à Razgrad. Mais il a été démontré, avec des arguments solides, qu’à Razgrad s’est trouvé l’antique *Abritus*. Cela signifie qu’il faut localiser Dausdava ailleurs et qu’elle pourrait être mise en rapport avec la non moins mystérieuse *civitas Ausdecensium*. La liaison que nous suggérons ici a cependant deux implications, chacune importante en son genre. D’abord on devrait abandonner son ancienne et hypothétique localisation à Cetatea, en faveur d’un emplacement vers le sud-ouest, plus près des coordonnées ptolémaïques. Ensuite, on pourrait envisager aussi une origine locale de ces *Ausdecenses*, plus conforme au statut de *civitas peregrina* qu’implique l’inscription bien connue, outre celle qui les fait venir de la zone sud-thrace ; déduite par la dérivation de l’ethnonyme de la stratégie *Ούσδικησική*. Cela parce que, à la lumière de la chronologie des déplacements de ce genre du Sud au Nord, nous ne croyons pas qu’il puisse être question de placer la présence d’une population sud-thracique en Dobroudja dès les 1^{er} siècle av. J.-C. – 1^{er} siècle apr. J.-C., et encore sous la forme d’une *civitas peregrina*.’

⁵⁹ SUCEVEANU, BARNEA 1993, 162-164.

⁶⁰ SUCEVEANU, BARNEA 1993, 164.

⁶¹ SUCEVEANU, BARNEA 1993, 164, v. for the original quotation *supra*, n. 58. B. Gerov also pointed out the distinction between the *Ausdecenses*, who had their own *ciuitas* and the *Bessi* and *Lai*, which are attested in Dobruja only as inhabitants of certain villages (GEROV 1988, 23, n. 27).

⁶² ZAH, SUCEVEANU 1971; against this hypothesis regarding the *Bessi*, which was admitted by a significant part of the researchers, brought arguments or expressed doubts R. Florescu (1990, 111 and n. 82) and, more recently, Fl. Matei-Popescu (2018, 114).

the presence of the *Bessi* in the vicinity of Tomis⁶³ and probably generally in the area of the Left *Pontus*⁶⁴ at the beginning of the 1st cent. AD shows that we should take into consideration a movement of population which led them to this area and that could be dated at the end of the 1st cent. BC – beginning of the 1st cent. AD⁶⁵, probably in the aftermath of their defeat by L. Calpurnius Piso in 11 BC. Secondly, the hypothetical identification of *ciuitas Ausdecensium* with *Δαουσδάνα* is only an alternative to placing this *ciuitas* at Azarlâc (Cetatea), but for which Al. Suceveanu did not offer any concrete argument. The mere fact that it is equally improbable that *ciuitas Ausdecensium* was located at Azarlâc (Cetatea), even if we admit that the stone was indeed found there and that this *ciuitas* designates not a community but an urban centre⁶⁶, this does not constitute in itself an argument to place *ciuitas Ausdecensium* at *Δαουσδάνα* and not somewhere else. Moreover, identifying *ciuitas Ausdecensium* with *Δαουσδάνα* starts from the uncertain assumption that *ciuitas Ausdecensium* was an urban centre or at least a centre of habitation, which, although not excluded, neither is it necessarily imposed by the sphere of the Roman notion of *ciuitas*, which is more complex than that of a mere settlement⁶⁷. Thirdly, the identification by G. Mateescu of the *Ausdecenses* with the *Vsdicenses*, was not made solely based on the similarity with the name of the strategy *Ούσδικησική* as it results from Al. Suceveanu's argumentation, but also taking into account the similarity with the ethnonym declared by the four *ciues Vsdicenses* who commissioned the inscription from Rome⁶⁸.

We turn therefore to G. Mateescu, the researcher who firstly⁶⁹ formulated and brought arguments for the hypothesis of the *Ausdecenses'* autochthony in the area of their *ciuitas*. In his work regarding the Thracians of Rome, published in 1923, without denying the identity *Ausdecenses-Vsdicenses*, he departed from the standpoint which he previously had as regards a migration of this population⁷⁰. Starting from the uncertainty of the place where the inscription CIL III 14437² was discovered and from the observation that the stone could have been moved

⁶³ Tr. III, 10, 5-6; IV, 1, 67-68.

⁶⁴ FLORESCU 1990, 111, n. 82, lit. b).

⁶⁵ For the opinion according to which the *Bessi* were relocated by the Thracian rulers, v. MATEI-POPESCU 2018, 114.

⁶⁶ As mentioned above, the inscription CIL III 14437² is a boundary stone, so even if it was found at Azarlâc (Cetatea) and even if *ciuitas Ausdecensium* designates some sort of urban centre (both assumptions being not only uncertain, but rather improbable) this does not necessarily mean that this urban centre was located at Azarlâc because the boundary stone was initially placed on the border of the territory of this *ciuitas* and neither we have any evidence to suggest that it was transported from this border exactly to the presumptive urban centre of this *ciuitas*, nor have we any evidence that at that time was located any urban centre at Azarlâc, since the fortification located there proved to be medieval (v. in this respect *supra*, n. 28).

⁶⁷ In respect of the meaning of the term *ciuitas*, with reference to *ciuitas Ausdecensium*, v. MATEESCU 1923, 161; TUDOR 1956a, 57; AVRAM 1984, 159.

⁶⁸ MATEESCU 1916, 38, n. 4, v. *supra* n. 7.

⁶⁹ The initial opinion of V. Pârvan, indigenous character of this *ciuitas* (PÂRVAN 1911, 6) is not counted among those opposed to the majority opinion on the relocation or migration of the *Ausdecenses*, as it was put forward before 1916 when G. Mateescu observed the identity between the *Ausdecenses* and *Vsdicenses*.

⁷⁰ MATEESCU 1916, 38-40, no. 14, *sub numero*.

since ancient times, G. Mateescu pointed out that, not having been discovered in a clear archaeological context, this inscription could have originated from the north-eastern border of the strategy *Ούσδικησική*⁷¹, for the localisation of which he used the map of H. Kiepert⁷². According to G. Mateescu's argumentation, the stone could have been used for the delimitation between 'Usdice(n)ses and the Geto-Dacians who neighboured the Danube'⁷³ In addition, he indicated that, by analogy to other *ciuitates*, as *ciuitas Cotinorum*, he understood '*ciuitas Ausdecensis*, as well, as an indigenous rural organization, recognized by the roman state, with a certain right of autonomy, comprised within the limits of a larger territory, which coincided maybe with that of the strategy of Ptolemy'⁷⁴. The biggest issue raised by the new hypothesis put forward by G. Mateescu may already be perceived from the place where he imagined that was placed the boundary stone, namely 'at the north-eastern border of the strategy *Ούσδικησική*⁷⁵ and this becomes obvious in G. Mateescu's supposition that *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium* coincided with the area covered by the strategy *Ούσδικησική*. Against this view stands the fact that, in accordance with the inscription CIL III 14437², *ciuitas Ausdecensium* was situated in the province *Moesia Inferior*⁷⁶, while the strategy *Ούσδικησική* was located by Ptolemy in the province *Thracia*⁷⁷. G. Mateescu appears as not having noticed and therefore did not address the issue raised by the fact that the two administrative entities are located in distinct provinces, it is true that in slightly different times⁷⁸.

⁷¹ MATEESCU 1923, 161.

⁷² FOA, XVII, *Illyricum et Thracia*.

⁷³ MATEESCU 1923, 161: 'Spostando un po' la provenienza di questa pietra di confine al mezzogiorno di Abritus nel paese dei Crobizi ci avviciniamo al limite di nord-est della strategia *Ούσδικησική*, secondo la carta summentovata, e in questo caso la nostra iscrizione ha potuto servire proprio alla delimitazione dei confini tra gli Usdicesii e i Geto-Daci vicini al Danubio.'

⁷⁴ MATEESCU 1923, 161: 'Tuttavia ora l'esempio di quella *civitas Cotinorum* di cui abbiamo già parlato e di molte altre *civitates peregrinae*, come quelle delle tribù celtiche (es.: Vindelici, Treveri, Raurici, Taurini, Suessiones, Viromandui, etc.), mi muove a intendere anche la *civitas Ausdecensis* quale una organizzazione rurale indigena, riconosciuta dallo stato romano con qualche diritto di autonomia, e compresa dentro i limiti di un *territorium* più vasto, che combaciava forse con quello della strategia di Tolomeo, donde la nostra iscrizione per il tramite di un *actor civitatis* manda via i Daci intrusi.'

⁷⁵ MATEESCU 1923, 161.

⁷⁶ This results by the fact that in accordance with the inscription on the boundary stone, the delimitation of lands was made 'upon instruction of Helvius Pertinax, our consular governor' – *Iussu Helui(i) Per/tinacis co(n)s(ularis) n(ostri)* (v. for the restitution of the inscription, TUDOR 1956a, 55-56, no. 3).

⁷⁷ On the geographical distinction between *ciuitas Ausdecensium* and the strategy *Ούσδικησική*, see also MATEI-POPESCU 2018, 113.

⁷⁸ On the chronology of Ptolemy's catalogue of strategies, as well as on the relation with the information recorded by Pliny the Elder (*NH*, IV, 40; 45; 47), v. PARISSAKI 2009, 337-338, 339-345. In this context, two conclusions drawn by M.-G. Parissaki should be noted. The first is that the ancient geographer lists two catalogues of the Thracian administrative units, one for the strategies (Ptol. *Geog.* III, 11, 8-10) and other for the big cities (Ptol. *Geog.* III, 11, 11-13), this latter mentioning also the cities established by Trajan, G. Parissaki emphasising that these two enumerations are not contemporaneous, and 'the second catalogue is, consequently, considered as a *terminus ante quem* for dating the

In 1995, in the second part of a study published in the previous year in respect of the northern border of the province of *Thracia*, M. Tacheva developed, independently of the previous opinions of G. Mateescu and Al. Suceveanu, a hypothesis which indirectly leads to the conclusion of the autochthony of the *Ausdecenses* in the area where the boundary stone had been installed. The construction of M. Tacheva's hypothesis had already started as from the first part of her study, dated 1994, where she criticised the previous localisation of the strategy *Ούσδικησική* in the mountainous area at south of Loveč (the ancient Melta), pointing out that through the respective area passed, as from AD 61, the military road from Oescus to Philippopolis, circumstance which would exclude the survival of a strategy in that region, with the preliminary conclusion that the strategy *Ούσδικησική* had to be located somewhere else⁷⁹. Starting from this point, in 1995 she further noticed that the inscription from Svärlig⁸⁰ record in the years AD 55-60 a strategy *Σηλλητική όρεινή* (mountainous) which implies the existence of a flat one too, *Σηλλητική πεδιασία*. She corroborated this with the discovery at Razgrad (Abritus) of the inscription put by *Ἀπολλώνιος Ἐπταικένθου, στρατηγός* of *Ἀνχιάλος, Σηλλητική* and *Ῥυσική*⁸¹ arguing that this 'suggests that the *flat* Selletike, together with its centre (in the future Abritus), was in Moesia Inferior even at the time of Traianus and therefore only one Selletike (the former *mountainous* part) appears in Ptolemy'⁸². M. Tacheva's argumentation was grounded on the view that the strategies' catalogue recorded by Ptolemy dates from the period subsequent to the establishment by Trajan of Nicopolis ad Istrum⁸³, corroborated with the fact that in this catalogue is mentioned only one strategy *Σηλλητική* (while out of the inscription of Svärlig results the existence of two such strategies) and with the opinion that Abritus was situated in the area of the strategy *Σηλλητική*. These circumstances would prove, according to M. Tacheva, that the strategy *Σηλλητική πεδιασία* (or the geographical area where this had been situated) was placed in *Moesia*. Subsequently, M. Tacheva argued that 'Judging by the

strategies' catalogue' ('Ce second catalogue est donc considéré comme *terminus ante quem* pour la datation du catalogue des stratégies' PARISSAKI 2009, 338); for the opinion according to which both the list of the strategies and that of the cities recorded by Ptolemy date from the same time, that of Hadrian, v. GEROV 1970, 130-131; GEROV 1979, 216, n. 22.). A second conclusion expressed by M.-G. Parissaki is that dating before the year AD 77 the commencement of the third chronological division proposed by her for the evolution of the strategies and the administrative reform which led to the 14 strategies enumerated by Ptolemy (PARISSAKI 2009, 345). Also B. Gerov mentioned that the decrease of the number of the strategies started with the reign of Vespasian (GEROV 1970, 127).

⁷⁹ TACHEVA 1994, 117.

⁸⁰ IGRR I, 677.

⁸¹ BE 1958, 328.

⁸² TACHEVA 1995, 431. Since neither the inscription from Svärlig, nor that of Razgrad, referred to by M. Tacheva, date from Trajan's time, but are earlier, dating from the first half of the 1st cent. AD (the inscription from Razgrad, v. PARISSAKI 2009, 325), respectively at the beginning of the second half of this century (inscription from Svärlig, v. PARISSAKI 2009, 329-331), it is not very clear the reasoning for which M. Tacheva considered that the strategy *Σηλλητική πεδιασία* would have been located in *Moesia* 'even at the time of Traianus'. Most probably the ground which M. Tacheva had in view was the fact that one *Σηλλητική* is recorded by Ptolemy in *Thracia*.

⁸³ TACHEVA 1995, 429.

inscription about the boundaries traced in 178 AD of *civitas Ausdecensium*, discovered in Tropaeum Traiani, it was precisely that part which must have been renamed to Usdikesike (known only from Ptolemy), to distinguish it from the preserved (*mountainous*) Seletike.⁸⁴ However, even if we let aside the localisation, longtime outdated, at Tropaeum Traiani of the discovery of the inscription CIL III 14437², most probably based on the inaccurate indication in CIL, it retains the attention the inaccuracy resulting from corroborating the placing in *Moesia* of the strategy *Σηλλητική πεδιασία* during Trajan's time with the hypothesis of it having been renamed *Ούσδικησική*⁸⁵, because this latter strategy is expressly recorded by Ptolemy in *Thracia*. This inaccuracy no longer appears in the conclusion of the respective paper, because there M. Tacheva formulated the hypothesis according to which the strategy *Ούσδικησική* would have been annexed to *Moesia Inferior* during the reign of Hadrian: 'It can be claimed that the flat Selletike was also eliminated by Emperor Traianus, similar to the strategy Rhysike; the mountainous Selletike and Usdikesike were annexed to *Moesia Inferior* at the time of Emperor Hadrian, after his visit to Thrace, which is also associated with the building of new camps and with the care for the fortification system of the provinces'⁸⁶. It may be noticed that the aforementioned inaccuracy was corrected, but at the price of an inconsistency between the body of the argumentation, where was argued that the strategy *Σηλλητική πεδιασία* would have been located in *Moesia* also in the time of Trajan, being subsequently renamed *Ούσδικησική*⁸⁷ and the conclusion of the strategy *Σηλλητική πεδιασία* having been abolished by Trajan followed by the annexation to *Moesia Inferior* of the strategy *Ούσδικησική* during the reign of Hadrian⁸⁸. In spite of the issues raised by the demonstration made by M. Tacheva, there should be taken into account some of her preliminary conclusions, especially the possible localisation of the strategy *Ούσδικησική* further to east of the area Loveč (Melta)⁸⁹, as well as the hypothesis of a possible annexation to *Moesia Inferior* of the territory of this strategy during Hadrian⁹⁰. If this latter hypothesis put forward by M. Tacheva (at this moment only conjectural) will prove to be accurate, the territory of the strategy *Ούσδικησική* either got to be overlapped (and replaced by) *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium*, either was located in its immediate vicinity, both these alternatives implying the autochthony of the *Ausdecenses* on this latter territory.

⁸⁴ TACHEVA 1995, 431. As consequence of this hypothesis on the renaming as *Ούσδικησική* the strategy *Σηλλητική πεδιασία*, M. Tacheva considered that 'Usdikesike survived until the time of Emperor Antoninus Pius (140 AD) at the latest, when a cohort is attested in the castellum of Abritus' (TACHEVA 1995, 431).

⁸⁵ TACHEVA 1995, 431.

⁸⁶ TACHEVA 1995, 433.

⁸⁷ TACHEVA 1995, 431.

⁸⁸ TACHEVA 1995, 433.

⁸⁹ TACHEVA 1994, 117; TACHEVA 1995, 431.

⁹⁰ TACHEVA 1995, 433.

3. The contiguity hypothesis

The questions raised by the arguments elaborated by G. Mateescu, Al. Suceveanu and M. Tacheva risk to lead to the rejection of their common element constituted by the indigenoussness of *Ausdecenses* both on the territory of their *ciuitas* located in *Moesia Inferior* and on that of the strategy *Ούσδικησική*. Nonetheless, a careful look shows that this autochthony deserves to be kept among the plausible alternatives, waiting for additional data to settle the issue. Thus, in addition to the above hypotheses, there is another possibility that the aforementioned opinions did not express, although the ensemble of the preserved data supports it and the standpoints of G. Mateescu and M. Tacheva implicitly leave open, namely that of a contiguity between *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium* located in *Moesia* and the territory that (previously) belonged to the strategy *Ούσδικησική* recorded by Ptolemy. From this perspective, the demarcation line between these two territories would have been on the border between *Moesia Inferior* and *Thracia*, and the boundary stone CIL III 14437² probably originates from the opposite side of the *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium* where this latter neighboured the land inhabited by a group of Dacians. This possibility is supported by the fact that the inscription CIL III 14437² is a boundary stone, a *terminus*, fixed⁹¹ between *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium* and the Dacians with whom they were in dispute. Consequently, this territory probably extended to the south from the place where the stone was initially installed. As this initial place of installation is at least uncertain, if not completely unknown, it is also possible that the point from which *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium* started to extend southwards was in reality situated further to the south or south-west from Azarlâc (Cetatea) where it is currently supposed that the stone was found.

In this case, the geographical order (from north to south, or from northeast to southwest) was probably the following: the *Daci* / the boundary stone CIL III 14437² between *Daci* and the *Ausdecenses* / the provincial border between *Moesia Inferior* and *Thrace* / the area (previously) covered in *Thrace* by the strategy *Ούσδικησική*.

The course of the provincial border between *Moesia Inferior* and *Thracia* in 1st-2nd cent. AD is still subject to debates, which are continuing even at present, since new inscriptions have been found. In the modern historiography, a landmark contribution in this respect is due to B. Gerov⁹². The border route proposed by B. Gerov started from the Tsibritsa (*Ciabus*) river where,

⁹¹ For a short reference to the method of installation of these *termini*, v. TUDOR 1956a, 54-55, no. 3, *sub numero*, and for an overview on boundary disputes and installation of boundary stones, v. BURTON 2000.

⁹² GEROV 1979. However, seven decades before B. Gerov, G. Seure analysed the literary and epigraphic sources available at that time and proposed a northern border for the province of *Thrace* which followed a route parallel with the line of the Balkan Mountains, having at south (in *Thracia*) Nicopolis ad Istrum and Marcianopolis and at north (in *Moesia Inferior*) the modern Razgrad (SEURE 1907, 259: the map placed on top of the tripartite figure and 270 for the probable positioning of the border at 43°20'N). G. Seure pointed out that this border, with its main characteristics (its location at the north of Haemus Mountains and the parallelism with this mountain range) had been exactly indicated by Ptolemy (SEURE 1907, 267).

according to the account given by Ptolemy⁹³, *Moesia Superior*, *Moesia Inferior* and *Thracia* met, passed south of Montana⁹⁴, following the direction to southeast up to the upper course of river Osăm (*Asamus*)⁹⁵, turning subsequently north between the modern settlements Butovo and Maslarevo⁹⁶ and continuing towards east approximately parallel with the Balkan line, to the north of Nicopolis ad Istrum and Marcianopolis and south of Abritus⁹⁷. The discovery in 1979, at Polski Senovec, on the course of Yantra (*Iatrus*) river, of a new stone fixed on the border *inter Moesos et Thraces*⁹⁸ led to a correction being proposed by V. Gerasimova-Tomova to the line pencilled by B. Gerov. In her opinion, the border passed at the east of Maslarevo, in parallel with Yantra river up to the vicinity of Nicopolis ad Istrum⁹⁹. This latter hypothesis appears to have been carried further by M. Tacheva, according to whom the reorganization during the reign of Hadrian of the border between *Moesia Inferior* and *Thracia*, which would result from these border stones having been installed in AD 136, included the moving toward south of the provincial limit in the area between the cities Nicopolis ad Istrum and Marcianopolis¹⁰⁰. In 1985

⁹³ *Geog.*, III, 9, 1.

⁹⁴ GEROV 1979, 216-217.

⁹⁵ B. Gerov, who placed in the area of the upper course of the river *Asamus* the strategy *ὀυσιδικησική*, considered that initially this stretch of land had been part of *Thracia*, being transferred to *Moesia* sooner than other areas from the north of Balkan Mountains, due to strategic reasons, related to the control of Troian pass (GEROV 1979, 221).

⁹⁶ In the area of Nicopolis ad Istrum, the border route proposed by B. Gerov was based on the boundary stones fixed *inter Moesos et Thraces*, especially those discovered at Maslarevo (Iaidzi) (CIL III Suppl. 14422¹ = ILBR 358) and Butovo (CIL III Suppl. 12407 = ILBR 429) (GEROV 1979, 222-223). B. Gerov considered that these boundary stones marked the border between the provinces *Moesia Inferior* and *Thracia*, as this border resulted from a reorganisation of this limit made by Hadrian in the year AD 136, in the course of which had been installed the respective *termini*. A. Tomas pointed out that the demarcation with such *termini* of the provincial border was made only in exceptional situations (TOMAS 2007, 38), but admitted that the discovery of the boundary stones from Roman (in the Vratsa region, on the course of the river Iskär) constitute an argument supporting the interpretation made by B. Gerov (TOMAS 2007, 38). When B. Gerov was writing, were also known in the area situated in the relative vicinity of Nicopolis ad Istrum other two boundary stones regarding the border *inter Moesos et Thraces*, one of them discovered in the cemetery at Svištov (CIL III, 749 = ILBR 357), which was considered by B. Gerov to have been moved towards north from the border area where it had initially been installed), and the other discovered at Hotnica (CIL III pars posterior, p. 992 *ad no.* 749 = AE 1985, 730 = ILBR 386), where he mentioned that had been stone quarries (GEROV 1979, 223). A. Tomas noted that each of the six boundary stones *inter Moesos et Thraces* were more or less moved from the initial places where the stones had initially been placed (TOMAS 2016, 111).

⁹⁷ GEROV 1979, 222-225, 230, 237. In the same vein v. PETOLESCU 2000, 45.

⁹⁸ AE 1985, 729 = ILBR 390.

⁹⁹ GERASIMOVA-TOMOVA 1987. She also brought arguments (p. 18-19) for the opinion according to which also on the course of the Yantra river, at Radonovo, would have been found at the end of 19th cent., or in the early 20th cent., another border stone *inter Moesos et Thraces*, to which arguably made reference G. Seure (1907, 269-270, n. 8).

¹⁰⁰ The border line proposed by M. Tacheva was based on the opinion that the territories of the two cities, Nicopolis ad Istrum and Marcianopolis, which were part of the province of *Thrace* in most of the 2nd cent. AD, were relatively small, as would be evidenced by the geographical distribution of the epigraphical findings, and consequently did not occupy the entire space between these two urban centres (TACHEVA 1994, 118; TACHEVA 1995, 427); for the small extent of the territories of the cities of *Thrace*, v. also GEROV 1970, 125; *contra* RUSCU 2007, 215-216. However, M. Tacheva did

a new such *terminus* was discovered at Novae¹⁰¹, therefore in an area located in close proximity to the place where had been discovered the inscription from the Svištov cemetery¹⁰². This, together with other arguments, allowed L. Ruscu to put forward the hypothesis according to which the territory belonging to Nicopolis ad Istrum was very large, extending in the 2nd cent. AD up to the Danube¹⁰³. The consequence of this hypothesis was that the territory of the province *Thracia* would have separated *Moesia Inferior* in two discontinuous areas¹⁰⁴.

not explain the reason for which, even admitting that the territories of the two cities were small and therefore did not touch, she considered that necessarily between these territories the provincial border had to be pushed further south; apparently her hypothesis, continuing that of V. Gerasimova-Tomova (1987), took further the opinion according to which the border followed the line of the Yantra river, this turning to east near Nicopolis ad Istrum.

¹⁰¹ AE 1985, 733.

¹⁰² v. *supra*, n. 96.

¹⁰³ RUSCU 2007.

¹⁰⁴ M. Duch, although considered that L. Ruscu demonstrated 'very convincingly' that except for the inscription from Hotnica, the others would reflect the course of the border between *Thracia* and *Moesia Inferior* (DUCH 2017, 374-375), and therefore 'Lower Moesia in its eastern course, at least until the times of Pertinax/Septimius Severus, was much narrower than it is generally thought to have been' (DUCH 2017, 375), nonetheless he pointed out that he did not think 'that Nicopolis ad Istrum's territory directly bordered the Danube and cut through Lower Moesia as this would have been impractical and would have introduced chaos into the exaction of customs duties (*portorium*)' (DUCH 2017, 375). An additional problem raised by the hypothesis formulated by L. Ruscu is raised by its implied consequence, namely that of placing Abritus in *Thracia* in 2nd cent. AD. According to the opinion of B. Gerov, generally accepted by the researchers until recently, the basin of Rusenski Lom River and of its tributaries, where Abritus was situated, had permanently been part of *Moesia*, as from the moment when the province *Thracia* was established (GEROV 1979, 229). The contrary opinion expressed by L. Ruscu (2007, 218-229) who considered that in the 2nd cent. AD, starting with the northern part of Nicopolis ad Istrum and probably up to the northern part of Marcianopolis, the border between *Thracia* and *Moesia Inferior* got close to the Danube or even touched the river, appears to be supported by the opinion argued in a study published in 2006 by P. Weiss. He, started from (a) the relatively recent discovery of some fragments of a military diploma dated 10 October, AD 138 (AE 1998, 1620) which records a praetorian legate of *Thracia*, Iulius Crassipes, based on which was corrected the name of the *consul suffectus* mentioned by another military diploma, dated 30 October, AD 140 (AE 1998, 1183, for the correction of the date thereof v. WEISS 2006, 358) from [I]ulio Crass[o...] in [I]ulio Crass[ipede ...], as well as from (b) the reference to the same governor of *Thracia* on three coins of Anchialos, previously unknown WEISS 2006, 358-360). On this double ground, P. Weiss corrected to *Iulium Crass[ipedem ...]* the name of the governor recorded by a famous inscription discovered at Razgrad (Abritus), namely AEM 17, no. 65 = CIL III Suppl. 13727 (WEISS 2006, 361 and 364, n. 27). P. Weiss went further by arguing the fact that the inscription from Abritus was raised when Iulius Crassipes was praetorian legate of *Thracia*, rather than after AD 140 when he could have theoretically held the command of consular legate of *Moesia Inferior* (WEISS 2006, 364-367). If the argumentation put forward by P. Weiss will be confirmed, the location of Abritus in *Moesia Inferior* during the reign of Antoninus Pius should be reconsidered, with the consequence of admitting the extension in that period of the extension of the territory of *Thracia* up to north of Abritus, towards the Danube (v. in this vein also AE 2006, 1209).

Therefore, *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium*, being located towards the southern part of the province *Moesia Inferior*, was probably in close proximity of a portion of the border with *Thracia*, in virtually all hypotheses regarding the course of this border¹⁰⁵.

Equally, the analysis of the Ptolemy's catalogue of strategies reveals that *Ούσδικησική* is included the group of the northernmost strategies of *Thracia*, situated towards *Moesia*, 'along Haemus mountains'¹⁰⁶, more precisely 'on the side of the two Moesia and around Mount[ain] Haemus'¹⁰⁷ – *πρὸς μὲν ταῖς Μυσίαις καὶ περὶ τὸν Αἴμον τὸ ὄρος*¹⁰⁸ – case in which the northern limit thereof probably coincided with the interprovincial border. At the same time, it should be remarked that *Ούσδικησική* strategy is enumerated the third from west to east, among the four northern strategies of *Thracia*, being therefore most probably situated in the eastern half of the northern part of this province¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁵ There could be an exception for most of the border line proposed by M. Tacheva (save for the part passing nearby Marcianopolis), although, as mentioned above, one of the consequences of her opinion was the autochthony of the *Ausdecens* in the area of their *ciuitas*.

¹⁰⁶ PARISSAKI 2009, 338.

¹⁰⁷ DELEV 2009, 245.

¹⁰⁸ Ptol. *Geog.* III, 11, 8.

¹⁰⁹ The exact location of the strategy *Ούσδικησική* made object of various hypotheses, since the mid-19th cent. (for the bibliography of this matter up to his time, v. GEROV 1979, 217, n. 25). In B. Gerov's opinion *Ούσδικησική* was situated in the area of the upper reaches of Osām (*Asamus*) river (GEROV 1979, 221). For the problems raised by this hypothesis, v. TACHEVA 1994, 117. According to P. Delev, a possible location of the strategy *Ούσδικησική* is in the area where afterwards was established Nicopolis ad Istrum (DELEV 2009, 246); a similar opinion had been expressed by G. Seure (1907, 265, n. 4). Against these latter views was opposed the possible location in the area of Razgrad (Abritus) of the strategy *Σηλλητική*, as it was considered by Th. Ivanov (1961, 97, n. 1) and by M. Tacheva (1995, 431), because in such case the two strategies mentioned by Ptolemy in the vast area at the east of *Σαρδική*, namely *Ούσδικησική* and *Σηλλητική*, would get to be positioned in a very narrow area (Nicopolis ad Istrum – Abritus). The question of whether Abritus was located in the 2nd cent. AD in *Moesia Inferior* or *Thracia* (v. in this respect, *supra*, n. 104) should also be taken into account, but irrespective of the answer thereof, it does not materially change the essence of the aforementioned problem, because if Abritus was located in *Moesia Inferior*, probably a part of this strategy remained in *Thracia* after the year AD 46 and continued under this name, possibly with the attribute *ὄρεινή*, mountainous, according to the inscription from Svārlig (IGRR I, 677) and in Ptolemy's catalogue this Thracian part is simply indicated as *Σηλλητική*. In any case, if Th. Ivanov's and M. Tacheva's opinion in this respect is correct, then between Nicopolis ad Istrum and Marcianopolis was placed, in Ptolemy's catalogue, the strategy *Σηλλητική*, making difficult the localisation of *Ούσδικησική* in the area of Nicopolis ad Istrum, as thought by G. Seure and P. Delev. However, the location of the strategy *Σηλλητική* in the area of Abritus, proposed by Th. Ivanov is not unanimously admitted by the researchers (for different opinions, v. the bibliography quoted by TACHEVA 1995, 430, n. 13). For the hypothetical situation at Abritus of the strategy *Ψυσική* v. MATEI-POPESCU 2018, 112; M. Tacheva, at her turn, placed the strategy *Ψυσική* in the area Novae-Nicopolis ad Istrum (TACHEVA 1995, 430), while A. Tomas considered that it would have been located in the area of the Yantra river basin, or at east of it (TOMAS 2016, 98), hence toward Abritus. In support of situating *Ψυσική* strategy in or nearby, the area of Abritus, it should be noted that the epigraphic argument – the inscriptions of Razgrad (BE 1958, 328; PARISSAKI 2009, no. I/5) and Burgas (BE 1963, 160; PARISSAKI 2009, no. I/6), based on which the strategy *Σηλλητική* was placed by Th. Ivanov at Razgrad (Abritus) may be equally applied for situating there the strategy *Ψυσική*. In this latter case, the lack of strategy *Ψυσική* from Ptolemy's catalogue would be easier to explain by its abolishment as results of the respective area being annexed to *Moesia* following the year AD 46. In this light, it is plausible the opinion of A. Tomas, according

To the extent to which the above coordinates are valid, the ensemble of this geographical setting makes plausible the hypothesis that *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium* had its southern limit on the border between *Moesia Inferior* and *Thracia*, with the possible consequence of this *territorium* neighbouring the strategy *Ούσδικησική* if *ciuitas Ausdecensium* existed in *Moesia* before was abolished the strategy *Ούσδικησική*, or at least with the possible consequence of the contiguity of the territories inhabited by the *Ausdecenses* in *Moesia Inferior* and the *Vsdicenses* in *Thracia*, in the case when these administrative entities were at no time contemporaneous. In this latter respect, it should be noticed that, most probably, the Thracian strategies were abolished during the reigns of Trajan or Hadrian¹¹⁰ and hence several decades earlier than the moment when was raised the inscription CIL III 14437². Nevertheless, the emendation by D. Tudor of the restitution of the lines 3-4 from *secun[d(um)] / act(orem) c(iuitatis)*, in *secun(dum) c(iuitatis) act(a)*¹¹¹, pointing out that these *acta* have ‘the broad meaning of ownership titles (archives of the city, older delimitation made by the emperors, provincial governors etc.’¹¹² allowed FI. Matei-Popescu to observe that the possession of such documents proves that ‘the *civitas* has been in place for decades before AD 177’¹¹³. These decades before the years ‘70 allow the possible existence of a period in which the strategy *Ούσδικησική* and *ciuitas Ausdecensium* were coexistent. Moreover, if it is admitted that the source of this possible coexistence resided in the division of lands between *Moesia* and the newly established province of *Thracia* when was dissolved the Thracian kingdom, we get to a period of almost a century of coexistence of the two administrative units, until the strategy *Ούσδικησική* was abolished, afterwards continuing for a time only its counterpart from *Moesia* – *ciuitas Ausdecensium*. This would further lead to the conclusion that, in the aftermath of the establishment of the province of *Thracia*, on that

to which to the east of *Ψυσική* were situated the strategies *Ούσδικησική* and *Σηλλητική* (TOMAS 2016, 98), with the remark that in such case, *Σηλλητική* should be placed east or southeast of *Ούσδικησική*. This latter interpretation also makes possible to be observed Ptolemy’s indications, including in respect of the strategy *Σηλλητική*, allowing to be kept the order of these northern strategies as well as their localisation towards the two *Moesia* provinces. The final part of the information provided by Ptolemy, regarding the localisation of the four northern strategies ‘(...) and around Haemus Mountains’ – *καὶ περὶ τὸν Αἴμον τὸ ὄρος* (for the meaning of the preposition *περὶ* v. SEURE 1907, 267, n. 3: ‘= autour, des deux côtés de’), could lead to situating the strategy *Σηλλητική* to the south of *Ούσδικησική* and west of Burgas, but such placing raises the issue of the spatial, temporal and toponymical relation between (a) the strategy *Σηλλητική* and (b) the strategy recorded around Anchialos (*περὶ Ἀνχιάλον τόπων*) by the inscription of Vize (Bizye) (DAWKINS, HASLUCK 1905-1906, no. 1; PARISSAKI 2009, no. I/4).

¹¹⁰ v. *supra*, n. 10.

¹¹¹ TUDOR 1956a, 53-54.

¹¹² TUDOR 1956a, 54: ‘sensul larg al unor acte de proprietate (arhive ale cetății, hotărnicii mai vechi făcute de împărați, guvernatori de provincie, etc.)’. For the relevance and use of the documentary evidence in boundary disputes, usually previous decisions in respect of the same dispute, v. BURTON 2000, 202, 214.

¹¹³ MATEI-POPESCU 2018, 113.

portion of the territory of the former Thracian kingdom which was assigned to *Moesia* the older strategies, or parts thereof, were transformed in *Moesia* in *ciuitates* and, possibly, in *regiones*¹¹⁴. Therefore, the contiguity hypothesis fits in the following chronological setting:

- The period which followed the Thracian uprising of 13-11 BC: the extension, under Roman control of the Odrysian authority over the territory of Dobruja, except for the Western Pontic Greek cities¹¹⁵, with the consequence of the expansion in this area of the administrative system of the strategies¹¹⁶.

- AD 46: the establishment of the province of *Thrace*¹¹⁷, accompanied by the transfer to *Moesia* of a part of the former Thracian kingdom, including Dobruja¹¹⁸. In this context, the territory inhabited by the *Ausdecenses/Vsdcenses* was probably divided by the newly established border between the two provinces, the Moesian part thereof constituting *ciuitas Ausdecensium*, and the part remained in *Thracia* keeping its name, *Ούσδικησική*, but with a narrower area.

¹¹⁴ For the replacement of the former strategies by *regiones*, v. MATEI-POPESCU 2013, 207-208; 226; MATEI-POPESCU 2018, 115. Fl. Matei-Popescu remarked that 'At the moment of the introduction of the direct Roman administration, the strategies were most probably dissolved. There is no information that in the Moesian area of the former Thracian kingdom the strategies continued to function.' (MATEI-POPESCU 2013, 208: 'În momentul introducerii administrației romane directe strategiile au fost cel mai probabil dizolvate. Nu există informații că în zona moesică a fostului regat tracic strategiile ar fi continuat să funcționeze.', v. also n. 40 for a possible exception). In a later study, Fl. Matei-Popescu put forward the hypothesis of the survival for a while of the strategies including in the Moesian area of the former Thracian kingdom (MATEI-POPESCU 2018, 116). The phenomenon of the replacement in time of the strategies by territories of the cities, by *regiones* and rural *ciuitates* is also observed in Thrace, but at a later time, after the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian. For the existence of *regiones* and rural *ciuitates* between Nicopolis ad Istrum and Marcianopolis, v. GEROV 1979, 229. In the area of Marcianopolis it is epigraphically recorded a *regio Gelegetiorum* (AE 2000, 1268; MATEI-POPESCU 2018, 115, n. 164; MATEI-POPESCU 2019, 104).

¹¹⁵ MATEI-POPESCU 2022, 143.

¹¹⁶ In Dobruja is recorded epigraphically, by the already famous decree of *Mokaporis* discovered at Dionysopolis, the existence of a strategy of Axiopolis (*Αξιούπολις*) (LAZARENKO, MIRCHEVA, ENCHEVA, SHARANKOV 2010, 36; BE 2011, 448; SHARANKOV 2013, 63; BE 2014, 283, 327; SHARANKOV 2015, no. 1; BE 2017, 351).

¹¹⁷ The establishment of the province of *Thrace* in AD 46 is based on a text of the *Chronicle* of Eusebius Hieronymus who records for this year '*Thracia huc usque regnata in prouinciam redigitur*' (Euseb. *Chron*, sub anno 46, ed. Fotheringham 1923, 262). The information is taken-over, for the same year, by the *Chronicle* of Synkellos: 'Θράκη ἀπὸ τοῦδε τοῦ χρόνου ἐπαρχία ἐχρημάτιδε, βασιλεύουσα πρὶν' (Synkell., sub anno 46, ed. Mosshammer 1984, 405; trad. Adler, Tuffin 2002, 482).

¹¹⁸ The majority opinion is that simultaneously with the establishment of *Thracia*, the area of Dobruja was included in the province of *Moesia*; in this sense, v. PIPPIDI 1965, 306; VULPE 1968, 48; DORUȚIU-BOILĂ 1977, 96-97, n. 23; GEROV 1979, 237; PETOLESCU 2000, 35, 69. In the same vein, MATEI-POPESCU 2010-2011, 228-229, who brings a nuance in his study of 2018 regarding the strategies of *Scythia Minor* where he points out that the Roman advance, both military and administrative, was slow, beginning with AD 46 and having been finalised in the reign of Trajan (MATEI-POPESCU 2018, 112). See also MATEI-POPESCU 2022, 139 and 144 (where is mentioned that *Ripa Thraciae* which was part of Trebellenus Rufus' *prouincia*, was assigned to *Moesia* 'probably already under Tiberius'). For an annexation dated after AD 46, v. AI. Suceveanu (1971b, 122; 1979, 47), according to whom *Ripa Thraciae* would have been annexed to *Moesia* only at the time of Vespasian, opinion admitted by A. Tomas (2007, 32, n. 6); AI. Suceveanu admitted also the possible extension in time of this process until the reign of Domitian (SUCEVEANU 1991b, 269).

- The reigns of Trajan and Hadrian: Ptolemy's list of strategies (which probably evokes also some older situations) records *Ούσδικησική*, in the northern group thereof; the establishment of the new cities Nicopolis ad Istrum and Marcianopolis entails the diminishment of the territory of strategies¹¹⁹; subsequently the strategies were abolished¹²⁰.
- AD 136: border stones are fixed *inter Moesos et Thraces/ inter Thraces and Moesos*¹²¹, operation interpreted as part of a reorganization of the border between *Moesia Inferior* and *Thracia*, either in the area between the rivers Osăm (*Asamus*) and Vit (*Utus*), according to the opinion expressed by B. Gerov¹²², or also between the territories of Nicopolis ad Istrum and Marcianopolis, as argued by M. Tacheva¹²³; if such reorganization of the provincial border involved also a movement to south of the border and if this moved border got to the territory of the strategy *Ούσδικησική* and divided it, this could constitute an alternative moment of the occurrence in *Moesia Inferior* of the community belonging to the *Ausdecenses – ciuitas Ausdecensium*, as result of the extension of the territory of this latter province in the formerly Thracian lands¹²⁴.
- The years AD 175-179: the inscription CIL III 14437² records the installation of some *termini* between *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium* situated in *Moesia Inferior* and a neighbouring population of Dacians;
- End of 2nd cent. AD: reorganisation of the interprovincial border, by the inclusion in *Moesia Inferior* of the cities Nicopolis ad Istrum and Marcianopolis¹²⁵.
- 3rd cent. AD: four praetorians '*ciues Vsdicensis (sic) uico Agatapara*' raised a dedicatory monument at Rome¹²⁶. The elements recorded in the inscription, such as the toponym terminated in *-para*, the *cognomen* Mucianus of one dedicant, as well as the divinity (Hero Brigantius) for which the dedication was made determined the researchers to locate in

¹¹⁹ TACHEVA 1994, 119.

¹²⁰ PARISSAKI 2009, 350 și n. 93; MATEI-POPESCU 2018, 116.

¹²¹ For the bibliography of the border stones *inter Moesos et Thraces* (6 inscriptions) / *inter Thracas (sic) et Moesos* (5 inscriptions) v. AE 2004, 1306 a, b, *sub numero*; RUSCU 2007, 216; TOMAS 2007, 31, n. 1; TOMAS 2016, 108-113.

¹²² GEROV 1979, 221.

¹²³ TACHEVA 1994, 119.

¹²⁴ In such case, *ciuitas Ausdecensium* would have probably followed chronologically the strategy *Ούσδικησική*, because any part of this strategy that potentially remained in *Thrace* could not have continued under this administrative form (i.e., that of strategy), as in the same chronological horizon is observed in *Thrace* the dissolution of the strategies' system). As pointed out by G. Parissaki, the reorganisation of the border dated AD 136 was put by some researchers precisely in connection with the dissolution of the strategies (PARISSAKI 2009, 350, n. 93, with the bibliography of the matter).

¹²⁵ This reorganisation of the border was dated after the assassination of Commodus, to the end of the 2nd cent. AD (PETOLESCU 2000, 45), or during the reign of Septimius Severus, or even earlier, during the reign of Pertinax (BOTEVA 1996, 174). B. Gerov proposed a wide interval of time (between AD 187 and the first years of the reign of Septimius Severus (GEROV 1979, 224); in the same vein, but with an interval slightly extended, AD 187-197, L. Ruscu (2007, 215).

¹²⁶ CIL VI Pars I, 2807 (= CIL VI Pars IV f.p. 32582) = ILS 4068.

Thracia the origin of these four¹²⁷. The contiguity hypothesis, corroborated with the fact that the indication *ciues Vsdicenses* may refer to their origin in a *ciuitas*, could lead to situating *uicus Agatapara* in *Moesia Inferior* at the time when this inscription was raised, taking also into account that the extension to the south of the territory of this latter province, at the end of the 2nd cent. AD, possibly involved the annexation to *Moesia Inferior* of that part of the former strategy *Οὐσδικησικὴ* which had remained in *Thracia* up to that moment¹²⁸.

From a different angle, it may be raised the question of whether the identification at Sacidava (Muzait hill, between Dunăreni and Rasova, Constanța county) of the place where cohort *I Cilicum* had its garrison, could offer some clue in respect of the area where *ciuitas Ausdecensium* was situated. Thus, since the operation of setting boundary stones evoked by the inscription CIL III 14437² was implemented by the tribune of this cohort, Anternius Antoninus, it could be argued that the place where these *termini* were fixed was situated within the area controlled by *Cohors I Cilicum* and hence in a relative proximity to Sacidava, where this military unit had its garrison¹²⁹.

The identification at Sacidava of the place of garrison belonging to *Cohors I Cilicum* came after some unsuccessful attempts had been previously made in this respect. We shall have a brief overview on the historiographic evolution of this matter, because one of the previous contributions touches upon the relation between the localisation of this garrison and the boundary setting operation recorded in the inscription CIL III 14437². In his study of 1956 in which was emended the reading of the aforementioned epigraph, D. Tudor mentioned that the garrison of *Cohors I Cilicum* was to be located 'in the region between Constanța and the Danube'¹³⁰. In the same year, on the basis of two funerary inscriptions discovered at Tomis, D. Tudor inclined to place there the garrison of this cohort, in the 3rd cent. AD, 'from the reign of Philip the Arab at the latest'¹³¹. A. Aricescu placed this garrison even at Azarlâc (Cetatea), firstly

¹²⁷ GEROV 1988, 116. B. Gerov considered that the inscription raised by the four *ciues Vsdicenses* proves that the strategy *Οὐσδικησικὴ* would have survived in a very reduced area, under the form of a rural territory, until the 3rd cent. AD. (GEROV 1970, 129, n. 7; in the same vein, v. GEROV 1978, 484, n. 71, where is formulated the hypothesis that this rural territory was organised as a *ciuitas (Vsdicensium)*, distinct of the Moesian *ciuitas Ausdecensium*; GEROV 1988, 23, n. 27, 40, 115-116). G. Parissaki (2009, 350, n. 93) manifested doubts in respect of this opinion. For the hypothesis of a Moesian origin of the four dedicants, v. BĂLTĂC 2011, 157.

¹²⁸ The distinctive elements pointed out by B. Gerov (1988, 116) undoubtedly assign the dedicants, as well as their home village, *uicus Agatapara*, to the area of southern Thracian culture. However, due the fact that the strategy *Οὐσδικησικὴ* was located in the northern part of *Thracia* province, space in which the border shifted south at least at the end of 2nd cent. AD, these southern Thracian elements of the inscription CIL VI, 32582 cannot constitute a peremptory argument to locate the *ciuitas* of the four Thracian praetorians in *Thracia* province, as this area could have been located precisely in the zone which had been annexed to *Moesia Inferior*, either at the end of the 2nd cent. AD or even before, if will prove to be correct M. Tacheva's hypothesis regarding an earlier border shifting to the south.

¹²⁹ I thank to Prof. Dr. L. I. Bîrliba for having suggested the necessity of examining this issue.

¹³⁰ TUDOR 1956a, 56-57.

¹³¹ TUDOR 1956b, 584.

in a study of 1970¹³², and subsequently in his work dedicated to the Roman army in Dobruja¹³³. A. Aricescu's opinion was based on a hypothetical emendation of Procopius' reference to *φρούριον Τιλικίων*¹³⁴, which he considered that should be read *φρούριον Κιλικίων*¹³⁵. However, besides such emendation, it is the argumentative structure of A. Aricescu's demonstration which raises problems. This line of reasoning started in Aricescu's study of 1970, when he placed *φρούριον Κιλικίων* at Cetatea, based on the involvement of the Cilicians' cohort in the land delimitation between the *Ausdecenses* and the *Dacians*¹³⁶, involvement which already implied in his view that the cohort had a stable presence in the very place where the land delimitation was arguably made. On the other hand, A. Aricescu contended that the cohort's garrison was located at Cetatea by invoking the emendation *φρούριον Κιλικίων*¹³⁷. Therefore, the argumentative construction put forward by A. Aricescu may be summarised as follows: out of the cohort's involvement in the boundary dispute (at Cetatea), it results that *φρούριον Κιλικίων* was situated in the same place; out of the localisation of that *φρούριον* in the respective place, it results that there was also the garrison of that cohort. Such reasoning cannot stand because the involvement of the cohort in the land delimitation operation neither necessarily implies that there was the presumptive *φρούριον Κιλικίων*, nor does this necessarily imply that there was the garrison of the respective cohort. Such involvement could have taken place also by sending a body of that military unit, together with its tribune, in a mission at a certain distance from the garrison. For instance, at the end of 2nd cent. – early 3rd cent. AD, the involvement of the Moesian fleet's praefect, Vindius Verianus, in the settlement of another boundary dispute, in the northern Dobruja, to which we shall refer in certain detail below, namely the dispute between the *Buteridauenses* villagers and Messia Pudentilla and the emplacement by this praefect of boundary stones (of which were found two, one of them with

¹³² ARICESCU 1970, 305-306.

¹³³ ARICESCU 1977, 58, 153-154, 157.

¹³⁴ Procop. *Aed.* IV, 7.

¹³⁵ A. Aricescu's opinion did not generally receive acceptance, especially in the context when, at short time after its was put forward, the place where *Cohors I Cilicum* stationed was convincingly identified by C. Scorpan. Researchers' doubts did not concern only the positioning at Azarlâc of this garrison, but also the emendation of Procopius' text. (v. DORUȚIU-BOILĂ 1990, 19 and ISM IV, p. 207, no. 82, *sub numero*, where Em. Popescu remarked that the hypothesis proposed by A. Aricescu was 'adventurous').

¹³⁶ 'Le point où nous sommes aboutis avec cette localisation se trouve sur l'ancien territoire de la communauté des Ausdecenses au sujet desquels on sait, d'après une inscription célèbre, qu'ils ont été protégés contre les Daces par la *cohors I Cilicum*' (ARICESCU 1970, 305; to the same effect, ARICESCU 1977, 153-154).

¹³⁷ ARICESCU 1977, p. 58: 'Among the inscriptions which mention *Cohors I Cilicum*, a particular importance has that discovered at Cetatea, dating from the years 177-179 (the Epigraphic Supplement 90) where the unit had its headquarters, as it proves to us the name of the fortification, kept until the 6th century and recorded by Procopius of Caesarea, *Castellum Cilicum*, (*φρούριον δὲ τὸ Κιλικίων*)' ('Dintre inscripțiile în care este menționată *Cohors I Cilicum* o însemnătate deosebită are cea descoperită la Cetatea, datând din anii 177-179 (SE 90), unde își avea reședința unitatea, după cum ne-o dovedește numele fortificației, păstrat până în secolul al VI-lea și amintit de Procopius din Caesarea, *Castellum Cilicum*, (*φρούριον δὲ τὸ Κιλικίων*).').

known discovery place at Mihai Viteazu commune, previously Sariurt, Constanța county)¹³⁸ proves that it was not necessary for the military unit that supervised the installation of these *termini* as result of a boundary dispute to have been stationed precisely in the place at which or for which these stones were fixed¹³⁹. Later, when his work on the Roman army was published in English, A. Aricescu nuanced his opinion to the effect that at Cetatea would have been permanently stationed only a detachment of the cohort *I Cilicum*¹⁴⁰. It was C. Scorpan who established, based on inscriptions found in the fortification situated between Dunăreni and Rasova, on the Muzait hill, that the garrison of the cohort *I Cilicum* was in reality located at Sacidava¹⁴¹. One of these inscriptions¹⁴² is a dedication for Marcus Iulius Philipus, *nobilissimus Caesar*, by the cohort *I Cilicum* itself, being thus certain its stationing at the respective moment at Sacidava¹⁴³. C. Scorpan also pointed out that the mentions of this cohort in other parts, as Tomis, Chersonesus or Azarlâc 'may refer to detachments of the cohort sent out on specific missions'¹⁴⁴.

Returning to the question of the existence of a connection between the existence at Sacidava of the garrison of the cohort *I Cilicum* and the localisation of *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium*, at first view the answer would seem to be negative, since, as it was observed, this cohort was 'one of the most mobile units of Moesia Inferior army, being present in several locations during its stationing within the province'¹⁴⁵. However, as it was noticed by V. Pârvan in respect of the boundary stones between Messia Pudentilla and the *Buteridauenses*, the instruction given by the provincial governor to a military commander for the boundary setting took into

¹³⁸ CIL III Suppl. 14447 = ISM I, 359.

¹³⁹ In addition, even if it was admitted that the discovery place of the inscription CIL III 14437² was indeed at Azarlâc (Cetatea), it should be noticed firstly that, in the hypothesis when the stone was discovered in its initial position, at Azarlâc could not be the administrative centre of that *ciuitas*, but only the border thereof. In the alternative hypothesis when the inscription was discovered in a secondary position, we do not have any guarantee that the place where the stone was transported and where it was found was the very administrative centre of that community, and that this place of secondary use was not a different urban centre more important at the time when the stone was put in secondary use. Therefore, even if the inscription CIL III 14437² was indeed discovered at Azarlâc (Cetatea), this neither brings by itself any reliable information as to where was the administrative centre of that rural community, nor does it prove that the respective rural community actually had such administrative centre when the *termini* were installed.

¹⁴⁰ ARICESCU 1980, 24 (in the same vein at pp. 43-44): 'A particularly interesting inscription among those referring to Cohors I Cilicum is that found at Cetatea (SE 90); it dates from between 177 and 179, when a detachment of the unit was in permanent residence, as is shown by the survival of the name of the fortress until the 6th century A. D. when it was mentioned by Procopius of Caesarea: *Castellum Cilicum*, (φρούριον δὲ τὸ Κιλικίων).'

¹⁴¹ SCORPAN 1980, 203-209; SCORPAN 1981.

¹⁴² SCORPAN 1980, 204-205, no. 3 = SCORPAN 1981, no. 3, = AE 1981, 743 = ISM IV, 170.

¹⁴³ For the certain character of this localisation v. also DORUȚIU-BOILĂ 1990, 269. Even A. Aricescu admitted in 1980 this positioning of the garrison, noting about *Cohors I Cilicum* that it was 'installed probably by Trajan at Sacidava' (ARICESCU 1980, 44).

¹⁴⁴ SCORPAN 1981, 102; in the same vein, SCORPAN 1980, 209.

¹⁴⁵ MATEI-POPESCU 2010, 203. This high mobility of this unit was also noticed by A. Aricescu who remarked that it was 'a sort of transferrable unit' (ARICESCU 1980, 25).

consideration the existence of a certain form of authority of the respective military unit on the rural area adjacent to the place where the it had its garrison¹⁴⁶. The information offered by the two inscriptions regarding the boundary established between the land of Messia Pudentilla and that of the villagers of Buteridava may prove to be significant for establishing an analogy with the situation of the *Ausdecenses*, due to the relative proximity, in space and in time, of the two disputes which took place in *Moesia Inferior*, in the period between the last quarter of the 2nd cent. AD and the first years of the following. The inscriptions regarding the boundary between Messia Pudentilla and the *Buteridauenses* bring very important knowledge, because in their case are known not only the localisation of the headquarters of the military unit the commander of which dealt with the dispute, but also the area where, most probably, it was initially installed one of the two *termini* that were found. This was initially published by Gr. Tocilescu in *Fouilles* and short time afterwards was included in the Supplement to the third volume of CIL¹⁴⁷. The discovery place was vaguely indicated to be near Isaccea (Noviodunum). V. Pârvan noted that the discovery place was indicated 'for sure inaccurately'¹⁴⁸. The second of these two *termini*, having an almost identical text, was discovered by V. Pârvan, fallen from Histria's perimetral wall¹⁴⁹. The reading of these boundary inscriptions was significantly improved, initially by V. Pârvan who correctly restored the three final lines, regarding the praefect of the fleet, Vindius Verianus¹⁵⁰ and subsequently by I. I. Russu who elucidated with a very high probability the name of the landowner, Messia Pudentilla, giving also the final wording of the text: *[I]ussu et ex decreto u(iri) c(larissimi) Ouini Tertulli co(n)s(ularis) termin(i) positi inter [?]Messiam Pude[n]tilam et uicanos But(?)eridauenses per Vindium Verianum praef(ectum) cl(assis)*¹⁵¹. An essential contribution to the valorisation of the scientific potential of the two inscriptions was brought by Emilia Doruțiu(-Boilă) who made research in Gr. Tocilescu's archive where she discovered a 'note of the communal authorities of Casapchioi (Sinoe), Mss. vol. 5132, f. 202' which 'shows however that the piece published by Gr. Tocilescu was discovered at Sariurt in the yard of an inhabitant'¹⁵². Even if neither in this case is sure that the inscription was discovered in its original place, but rather on the contrary, since it was found in a villager's yard, where it was probably transported in order to be given a practical use, we may nonetheless assume with a

¹⁴⁶ PÂRVAN 1916, 636-637. For the possible existence of a certain type of military subordination in the area where the prefect of the fleet actioned for settling the boundary dispute v. SUCEVEANU 1971a, 161, 166.

¹⁴⁷ Tocilescu, 1900, no. 31 = AE 1901, 52 = CIL III Suppl. 14447 = ISM I, 359.

¹⁴⁸ PÂRVAN 1916, 635: 'desigur neexact'. The inaccuracy of Gr. Tocilescu's recording was also remarked by I. I. Russu, in the context of the discovery in the perimetral wall of Histria of a second *terminus*, situation which proved that these boundary stones had been fixed in *regio Histriensis*, from where this second piece was subsequently transported for the erection of the city's wall (RUSSU 1955, 81).

¹⁴⁹ PÂRVAN 1916, 633-637, no. 30 = AE 1919, 14 = ISM I, 360.

¹⁵⁰ PÂRVAN 1916, 634-635.

¹⁵¹ RUSSU 1955, 80.

¹⁵² DORUȚIU 1964, 132, no. 2.

fair degree of probability that the difficulties of transporting such stone with the technical means available for a villager at the end of 19th century did not allow it to be brought from a large distance to Sariurt (Mihai Viteazu, Constanța county). We have thus the benefit of certain information which support an analogy with the situation of the *Ausdecenses*:

- The delimitation operation was made upon instruction of the governor of *Moesia Inferior*, [I]ussu et ex decreto, u(iri) c(larissimi) Ouini Tertulli co(n)s(ularis), similar with the situation of the boundary set to *Ausdecenses*' territory: *Iussu Helui(i) Pertinacis co(n)s(ularis) n(ostri)*.
- The governor's name, Ovinius Tertullus, dates the litigation which took place in northern Dobruja at the end of the 2nd cent. – early 3rd cent. AD¹⁵³, not much time after the litigation which had opposed the *Ausdecenses* and the *Dacians*, dated in the second half of the eighth decade of the 2nd cent. AD, when Helvius Pertinax was governor¹⁵⁴.
- The delimitation of the territories was made by installing *termini*, boundary stones, the epigraphic text being almost identical in this respect in both cases: *termin(i) positi / termin(i) pos(iti)*.
- Both boundary settings were made under the direct supervision of a military commander, Vindius Verianus, *praefectus Classis Flauiae*¹⁵⁵, respectively Anternius Antoninus, *tribunus cohortis I Cilicum*.

The land delimitation made for Messia Pudentilla brings, however, an additional information – the operation was made at approximately 70km distance in straight line from Noviodunum, where the Moesian fleet was stationed. Even if in the case of the *Ausdecenses* it is not necessary that the tribune of the cohort acted at the same distance as that at which operated the praefect of the fleet, this 70km distance may offer an indicative frame for testing the contiguity hypothesis, by taking into account that within this radius and in the zone located in a reasonable proximity outside it, could have been set the boundary stones of the *Ausdecenses*, while in the relatively narrow remaining space stretching from these to south, towards the border with *Thracia*, could have been located *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium*.

¹⁵³ The command held by Ovinius Tertullus in *Moesia Inferior* was dated in AD 198-201 (STOUT 1911, 60-61; STEIN 1940, 84-86). D. M. Pippidi gave the interval 198-202 (ISM I, p 473, 159-160, *sub numeris*), with reference to Stein.

¹⁵⁴ For the different opinions as to the date of the command held by Helvius Pertinax in *Moesia Inferior*, v. *supra*, n. 3.

¹⁵⁵ Although the inscriptions from Sariurt (Mihai Viteazu) and Histria indicate only that Verianus was *praefectus classis*, V. Pârvan noted that this 'is naturally *classis Flauia Moesica*' (PÂRVAN 1916, 636: 'e firește *classis Flauia Moesica*'), and his opinion was going to be confirmed by an inscription on a votive *tabula ansata*, made of silver sheet, dedicated by Verianus to *Fortuna Mellior*, part of the famous silver treasure found in 1928 at Marengo (Cascina Perbona), in Italy: *Fortun(ae) Melliori / M(arcus) Vindius Verianus praefectus clas(sis) Fl(aui)ae Moes(icae) et a militiis III d(ono) d(edit)* (BENDINELLI 1937, 37-38, no. 23; AE 1937, 178; SUCEVEANU 1971a, 161, n. 45).

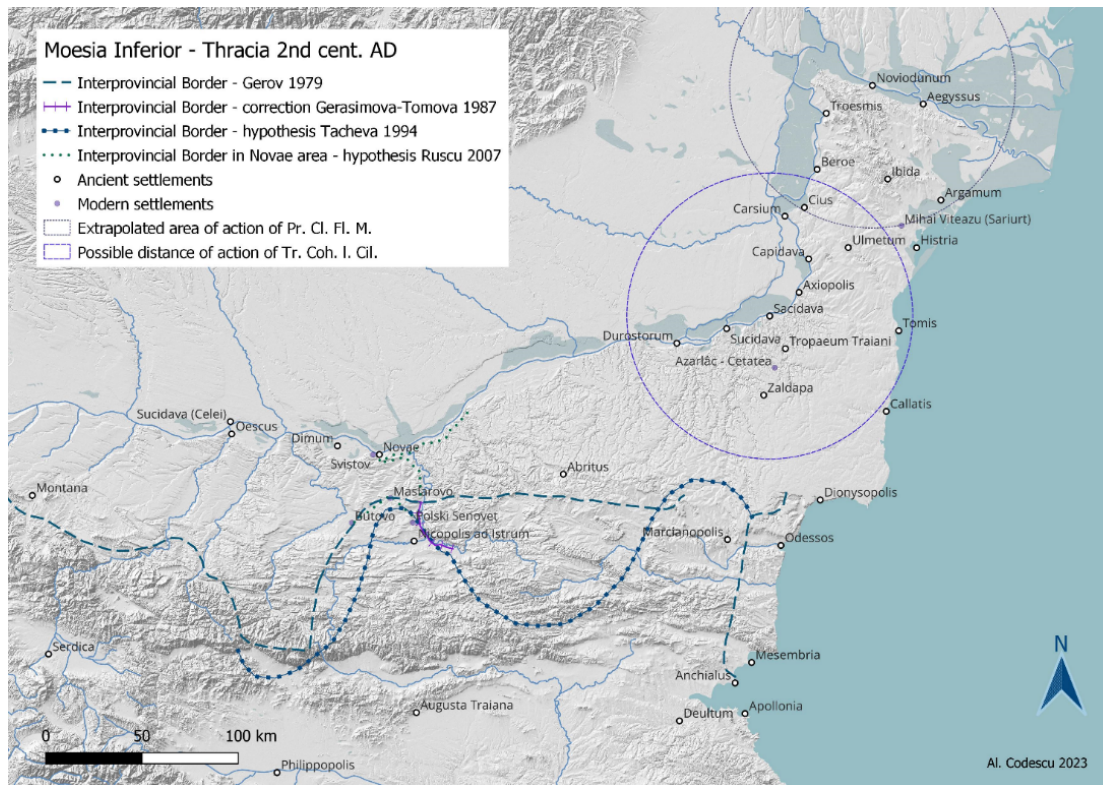


Fig. 1 Hypotheses regarding the border between *Moesia Inferior* and *Thracia* and the possible area of action of *tribunus Cohortis I Cilicum*

4. Conclusions

Should the contiguity hypothesis prove to be accurate, a first consequence is that the population *Ausdecenses/Vsdicenses* probably occupied a larger area, which had been divided by the border drawn between *Moesia* and *Thracia*, either at the moment of the dissolution by Claudius of the Thracian kingdom and of the annexation of a part of its territory to *Moesia*, either at a later reorganisation of this border which occurred prior to the moment when the inscription CIL III 14437² was set. Since in the area of Dobruja existed strategies in the period when this region was included in the Thracian kingdom, but no such administrative entities are attested there after it was annexed to *Moesia*, we may conceive *ciuitas Ausdecensium* as result of this division of the larger area previously occupied in the Thracian kingdom by the *Ausdecenses/Vsdicenses*. While that part of this area which remained in the province of *Thracia* continued, in a narrower space, the previous form of organisation – the strategy *Ούσδικησική*, the part situated north of this division, annexed to *Moesia*, could have become *ciuitas Ausdecensium*. Another possible origin of this *ciuitas*, in the same context of the contiguity, could be a hypothetical extension to the south of the province *Moesia (Inferior)*, dating before the boundary dispute recorded by CIL III 14437².

A second consequence of this possible contiguity is that it no longer makes necessary to conceive a relocation of the *Ausdecenses*, conclusion which was based almost entirely on the belonging of the *Ausdecenses/Vsdicenses* to the southern Thracian branch. If the contiguity

hypothesis is correct, this population was autochthonous in the area covered by the contiguous territories of *ciuitas Ausdecensium* and respectively of the strategy *Ούσδικησική*. Nonetheless, it should be noted that although it no longer imposes the idea that the *Ausdecenses/Vsdicenses* were object of a movement of people, it does not exclude either that this population indeed came in its entirety, before AD 46, to the area situated at the north of Balkans, to the extent, unproven though, that this population has its origin in a zone located further south than that where Ptolemy placed the strategy *Ούσδικησική*.

In conclusion, it has to be pointed out that the contiguity hypothesis starts, as also does the majority view, from the thesis of the identity *Ausdecenses-Vsdicenses*. In addition, it takes into consideration the fact that the inscription CIL III 14437² was a boundary stone, hence initially installed at the extremity of *territorium ciuitatis Ausdecensium*, and the possible consequence that this territory extended further south towards the provincial border between *Moesia Inferior* and *Thrace*. It also takes into account that the respective border, in almost any of its the proposed courses, was located in the 2nd cent. AD somewhere between Danube and the Balkan range. At the same time, it observes the location of the strategy *Ούσδικησική* in Ptolemy's catalogue in the norther part of *Thracia*, as well as the uncertainty regarding the place where this boundary stone was discovered.

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