

Sylloge Epigraphica Barcinonensis (SEBarc)

VI, 2008, pp. 125-138

ISSN 2013-4118

data de recepció 07.11.2008

data d'acceptació 02.06.2008

Burgus building inscriptions of Commodus from Pannonia

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Abstract: *In this paper the author examines the case of the building of burgi and praesidia in Pannonia under the reign of Commodus that is attested by a series of inscriptions on the limes between Aquincum and Intercisa. A separated part is devoted to the question what the word praesidium could mean, i. e. most probably a smaller fortlet. The buildings were suddenly interrupted because of Perennis' conspiracy around 185.*

Zusammenfassung: *Der Verfasser beschäftigt sich in diesem Beitrag mit den Bauinschriften von Burgi und Praesidia in Pannonia Inferior aus der Zeit von Commodus. Eine Reihe (insgesamt 16 Inschriften) von Bauinschriften ist aus der Limesstrecke Aquincum-Intercisa bekannt. Nach dem Verf. bedeutet das Wort praesidium ein kleineres Kastell, wie die antiken Quellen bezeugen. Das Bauprogramm wurde plötzlich nach dem Sturz des Legatus Augusti, L. Cornelius Felix Plotianus wegen der Teilnahme in der Verschwörung von Perennis im Jahre 185 n. Chr. aufgegeben.*

Keywords: *Epigraphy, Pannonia, Commodus, limes, Roman History*

Schlüsselwörter: *Epigraphik, Pannonien, Commodus, Limes, römische Geschichte*

The reorganisation of the defence system of the province Pannonia became inevitably necessary after the Marcomannic wars¹. New auxiliary troops were translated or organized² and several forts were built into stone during the reign of

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1. On the wars see W. ZWIKKER, *Studien zur Marcussäule I*, Amsterdam 1941, P. KOVACS (ed.), *Fontes Pannoniae antiquae ab A. D. CLXVI usque ad A. D. CXCII*, Budapest 2006, P. KOVACS, *Marcus Aurelius' rain miracle and the Marcomannic wars*, Leiden 2008 (henceforth).

2. B. LÖRINCS, «Die Truppenbewegungen am pannonischen Limes während der Markomannenkriege», in: *Markomannenkriege. Ursache und Wirkungen*, Brno 1994, pp. 51-57, B.

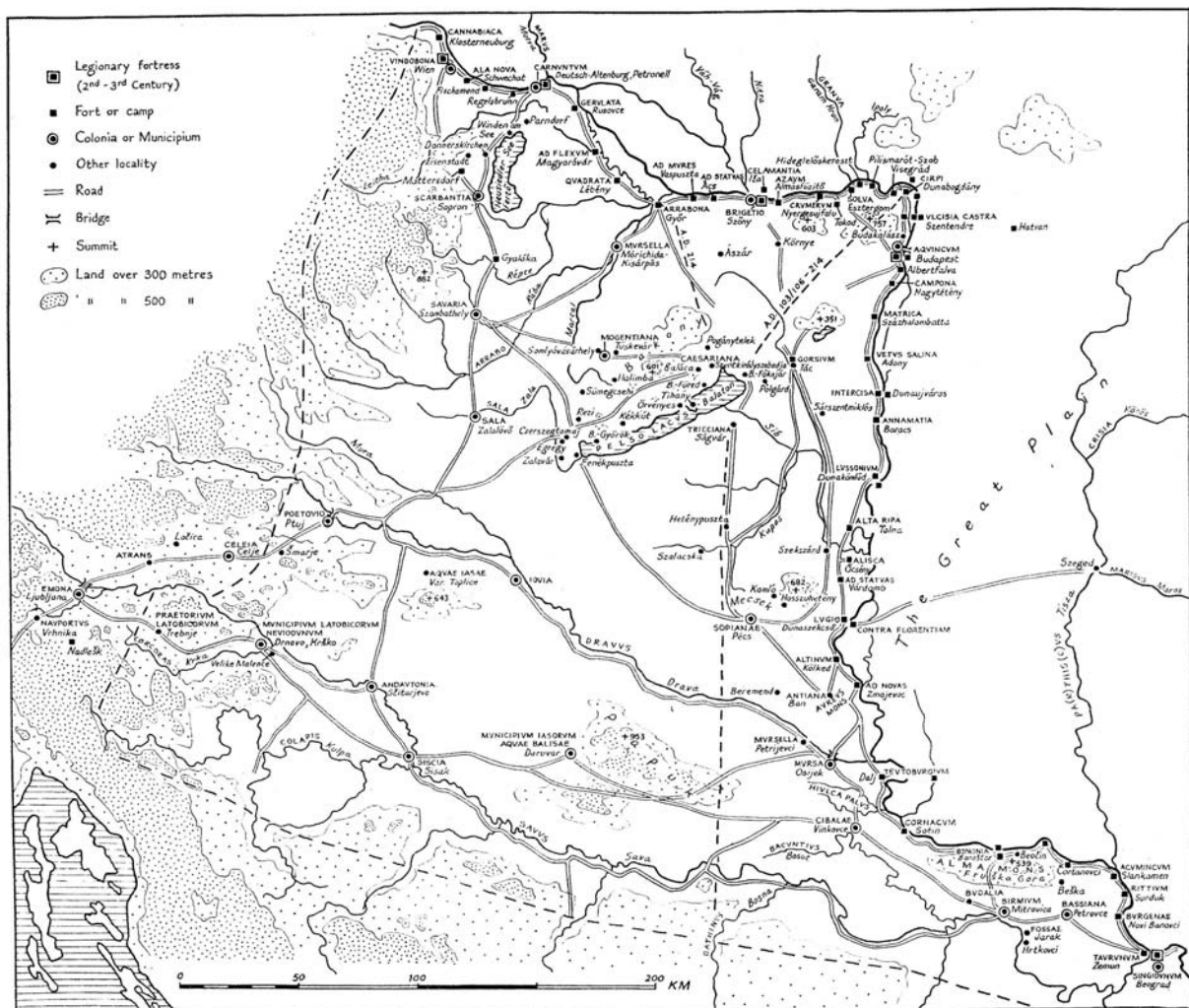


Fig. 1. The map of Pannonia

Commodus (Carnuntum – auxiliary fort, Quadrata, Ad Statuas, Celamantia, Ulcisia Castra, Aquincum-auxiliary fort, Campona, Matrica, Vetus Salina, Intercisa). The works in Intercisa are confirmed by three building inscriptions that can be dated to 183-185³ and that refer to the construction works of the new unit, the cohorts milliaria Hemesenorum inside the fort⁴. The building of smaller fortifications and watchtow-

LÖRINC, *Die Hilfstruppen in Pannonien während der Prinzipatszeit* (Wiener Archäologische Studien 3), Wien 2001, pp. 96-99.

3. RIU 1124 (183-185 AD), 1125 (180-183 AD), 1126 (184-185 AD)

4. J. FITZ, «Maßnahmen zur militärischen Sicherheit von Pannonia Inferior unter Commodus», in *Klio* 39, 1961, pp. 199-214, pp. 208-211, J. FITZ, *Les Syriens à Intercisa* (Coll. Latomus CXXII),

ers at the same period was also attested by a series of building inscriptions on the Eastern Pannonian limes between Aquincum and Intercisa (fig. 1). In this paper I will deal with them. Their text is almost identical, only the mention of the title Britannicus and the number of Commodus' *tribunicia potestas* (VI or X) maybe a question (fig. 2):

IMP·CAES·M·AVR·COMMODOVS·
 ANTONINVS·AVG·PIVS·SARM·GERM·
 PONT·MAX·TRIB·POT·VI·IMP·III·COS·III·P·P·
 RIPAM·OMNEM·BURGIS·ASOLO·EXTRVCTS
 ITEM·PRAESIDIS·PERLOCA·OPPORTVNA
 ADCLANDESTINOS·LATRVNCVLORVM
 TRANSITVS·OPPOSITIS·MVNIVIT·
 PER·L·CORNELIVM
 FELICEM·PLOTIANVM
 LEG·P·R·P·R

Fig. 2. The RIU 1129 inscription from Intercisa

Imp(erator) Caes(ar) M(arcus) Aur(elius) [[Commodus]] Antoninus Aug(ustus) Pius Sarm(aticus) Germ(anicus) pont(ifex) max(imus) trib(unicia) pot(estate) VI imp(erator) IIII co(n)sul IIII p(ater) p(atriciae) ripam omnem burgis [a solo extractis item praesidiis per loca opportuna ad clandestinos latruncolorum transitus oppositis munivit per [[L(ucium) Cornelium Felicem Plotianum leg(atum) pr(o) pr(aetore)]]].

The find-spots of those so far Intercisa⁵ (late Roman cemetery, Szalksziget) (Fig. 2), Százhalombatta⁶ (fig. 3), *Aquincum*⁷ (Victoria Brick Factory), Rákospalota⁸ (medieval church), Bölcske⁹⁻¹⁰. The significant majority of the inscriptions can be dated

Bruxelles 1972, pp. 63-64 No. 1-3, B. LÖRINCS, Zs. VISY, «Die Baugeschichte des Auxiliarkastells von Intercisa», in W.S. HANSON, L.J.F. KEEPIE (eds.), *Roman Frontier Studies* 1979. (BAR, int. ser. 71), Oxford 1980, pp. 685-686.

5. RIU 1127-1137; KOVÁCS, *Tituli Romani...*, cit., Nr. 159.

6. RIU 1426.

7. B. KUZSINSZKY, «Róma feliratok az Aquincumi múzeumban», in *Budapest Régiségei* 8, 1904, p. 172, Nr. 10

8. P. KOVÁCS, *Tituli Romani in Hungaria reperi. Supplementum*, Budapest, Bonn 2005, Nr. 239.

9. P. KOVÁCS, P. PROHÁSZKA, «Újabb feliratos római köemlékek az MNM Adattárában Antik», in *Tanulmányok* 47, 2003, pp. 291-299.

10. A. ALFÖDI, «Epigraphica IV», in *AÉrt* 2, 1941, pp. 30-59, pp. 30-37, A. ALFÖDI, *Budapest története I*, Budapest 1942, p. 749, M.R. ALFÖLDI, L. BARKÓCZ, J. FITZ, *Intercisa, 2 (Dunapentele)*.

to 184-185 AD. Many aspects have become certain over the course of the debate concerning the meaning of the entire inscription and its parts:

1. Since the study of A. Alföldi we can be absolutely certain concerning the meaning of the word *latrunculus*. Nothing to do with smugglers, local bandits of the province, the word *latrunculus* can only refer to the Sarmatians of the Great Hungarian Plain, while the construction works were definitely parts of the border defence system of the province. It may not have been emphasised enough that the construction works could only have taken place during a more peaceful period, most probably following the peace treaties after the wars under Marcus and Commodus, as the Barbarians of the opposite riverside were not addressed by the name *hostis* applied during wars started in a sacral way (*bellum iustum ac pium*), but they were referred to as *latrunculus* that would refer to others (Ulp., Dig. 49, 15, 24: *Hostes sunt, quibus bellum publice populus Romanus decreuit uel ipsi populo Romano: ceteri latrunculi uel praedones appellantur*. Pomp. Digesta 50.16.118. *Hostes hi sunt qui nobis aut quibus nos publice bellum decrevimus: ceteri latrones aut praedones sunt*)¹¹. The usage of *latrunculus* in the same meaning can be observed on other military inscriptions as well¹². If the construction works had been conducted in a war period, the enemy would have been given the *hostis* title, as it happens on the geographically also very close building inscription of Sarmizegetusa AE 1976, 561 with the expression *porticus cum cubiculis a vi hostium exusti*¹³ (cf the *post debellatas hostium gentes* expression of the tetrarchy-period Lower Danubian inscriptions.: see below). The phenomenon can be observed very well in the work of Herodian where the emperor had to start a *bellum* against deserter bandits in case of the *bellum desertorum* under Commodus, who this way were sorted into

Geschichte der Stadt in der Römerzeit (Archaeologia Hungarica 36), Budapest 1957, pp. 226-227, 208-209, FITZ, «Maßnahmen...», *cit.*, pp. 199-204, A. MOCSY, s.v. «Pannonia», in *RE IX*, Suppl., Stuttgart 1962, col. 515-776, col. 639, T. NAGY, «Buda régészeti emlékei», in *Budapest műemlékei II*, Budapest 1962, pp. 13-116, p. 47, J. FITZ, «A military history of Pannonia from the Marcomann wars to the death of Alexander Severus (180-235)», in *ActaArchHung* 14, 1962, pp. 25-112, pp. 76-77, 83-87, E. SWOBODA, *Carnuntum. Seine Geschichte und seine Denkmäler*, Graz-Köln 1964, pp. 254-255, F. GROSSO, *La lotta politica al tempo di Commodo*, Torino 1964, p. 487, FITZ, *Les Syriens...*, *cit.*, pp. 67-68, S. SOPRONI, «Zu den Burgusbau-Inschriften von Commodo», in *Festschrift für Jenő Fitz*, Székesfehérvár 1996, pp. 91-94 = *Mitteilungen des Museumvereins Lauriacum* 1993, pp. 10-15, A. MÓCSY, J. FITZ, *Pannonia régészeti kézikönyve*, Budapest 1990, p. 103, J. FITZ, *Die Verwaltung Pannoniens in der Römerzeit I-IV*, Budapest 1993-1995, pp. 533-536, No. 320, O. HEKSTER, *Commodus. An emperor at the crossroads* (Dutch monography on Ancient history and archaeology 23), Amsterdam 2002, p. 49.

11. E. DE RUGGIERO, *Dizionario Epigrafico di antichità romane IV*, 15, Roma 1947, col. 464-466, *ThLL VII*, 2, fasc. 7 (1985) col. 1016.

12. *CIL III*, 12483 = *ILS* 724, 12376?

13. N. GUDEA, *Dacia Porolissensis und die Markomannenkriege. in Markomannenkriege. Ursachen und Wirkungen*, Brno 1999, p. 373.

the *hostis* category (Her. 1.10.1): ὡς μηκέτι ληστῶν ἀλλὰ πολεμίων ἔχειν ἀξίωμα¹⁴. A citizen of Scarbantia was probably murdered around Aquileia by the Marcomann-Quadian troops who sieged the city in 170: ILS 8507= Inscriptiones Aquileiae 861: *interfect(us) a latronibus intrtusis (!)*¹⁵.

a. As we already have mentioned, the *burgi* and *praesidia* mentioned on the inscriptions could not have been similar to the roadside *burgi* or *turres* that were definitely newly built or reconstructed near roads (CIL VIII, 2495, 22629 = ILS 5849, 396: *burgum Commodianum speculatorium inter duas vias ad salutem commeantium nova tutela constitui iussit, burgis novis provincia munita (miliaria conlapsa vetustate restituit), securitati provincialium suorum consulens*)¹⁶. On the other hand these inscriptions are only known from establishments belonging to the border defence system of the province (if the find-spot is not secondary) and the text of the inscription does identify their building location, at least in the case of the *praesidia*: *per loca opportuna ad clandestinos latruncolorum transitus*: based on the latter it can only refer to the Barbarians of the opposite riverside and the structures located at the crossing places in order to halt them. In all probability the statement is valid for *burgi* as well, even if it concerns semantically the *praesidia*.

b. Summarizing we can establish the following concerning the inscriptions: Based on the (obviously erroneous) imperial titulature, the constructions could take place after Commodus had the *tribunicia potestas IIII* (181), was a four-time emperor (180), received the *Sarmaticus* and *Germanicus* titles (172, 175), became *pater patriae* (177) and held the *pious* title (latest from the 3rd of January 183)¹⁷. On the other hand the inscription does not apply his title Felix assumed in 185 (maybe exactly after the fall of Perennis), and the majority of the inscriptions do not mention his title *Britannicus* assumed in the second half of 184 either¹⁸. Based on the inscription of Százhalombatta, where contrary to the others the trib. pot. X. was displayed, the constructions are dated to 185, or at the most 184-185¹⁹. Based on the governorship

14. T. GRÜNEWALD, *Räuber, Rebellen, Rivalen, Rächer. Studien zu Latrones im römischen Reich* (Forschungen zur antiken Sklaverei 31), Heidelberg 1999.

15. S. PANCIERA, *Un falsario del primo ottocento Girolamo Asquini e l'epigrafia antica delle Venezie*, Roma 1970, pp. 44-48, P. KOVÁCS., *Interfectus a latronibus intrtusis. Megjegyzések egy scarbantiai libertus halálához*, in *Soproni Szemle* 61, 2007, pp. 324-334.

16. FITZ, «Maßnahmen...», *cit.*, pp. 205-206, GROSSO, *La lotta politica...*, *cit.*, pp. 616-618, FITZ, *Les Syriens...*, *cit.*, p. 83, J. LANDER, *Roman stone fortifications* (BAR, int. ser. 206), Oxford 1984, pp. 92-105, HEKSTER, *Commodus...*, *cit.*, pp. 84-85.

17. The latter therefore could not have been the counter-argument of dating to the year 183: E. RITTERLING, *Pannonia Inferior helytartói (legati pro praetore) Traianustól kezdve – Die Legati pro praetore von Pannonia Inferior seit Trajan*, in *AERt* 41, 1927, pp. 58-88, 281-301.

18. D. KIENAST, *Römische Kaisertabelle. Grundzüge einer römischer Kaiserchronologie*, Darmstadt 1996, pp. 147-151.

19. RITTERLING, *Pannonia Inferior...*, *cit.*, pp. 74-76, L. BARKÓCZI, *Intercisa II. (Dunapentele). Geschichte der Stadt in der Römerzeit* (ArchHung 36), Budapest 1957, 208-209, FITZ, «Maßnahmen...», *cit.*, pp. 203-204.

of Plotianus dated between 183-185 (and there are no arguments against this) and due to the fact that the titulature supports this as well, the constructions could have started as early as 183. J. Fitz and T. Nagy identified three groups of inscriptions²⁰:

1. the earliest ones: no *Britannicus* title.
2. The title *Britannicus* was later carved on the edge of the inscription²¹, or the title *max(imus)* standing in front of the name was reshaped²².
3. the latest ones: the original text already contains the title (only *Matrica*²³).

It is not a coincidence that the latter can be considered as the latest; based on the trib. pot. X it can be dated to 185²⁴. It is noteworthy that due to its crude and improvised state, on the contrary to the others, the inscription was carved out almost certainly on the scene. According to the plans – the expression *ripa omnis* in the text refers to it clearly – they would have fortified the border of the entire province; the interruption of this process happened not so much due to the disgrace of Plotianus, but much rather because of the subsequent Sarmatian war. The theory concerning the construction tablets remaining in the stone-cutter workshop²⁵ can hardly be proven; the secondary insertions (the title *Britt.*), then the deletion of the names of Plotianus and later Commodus after 185 and 192 definitely exclude it. S. Soproni correctly suggested that the removal of the inscriptions from their original places could occur earliest after the rehabilitation of Commodus by Septimius Severus (195 AD)²⁶.

c. The already mentioned find-spots of the inscriptions are also characteristic based on which the expression *ripa omnis* of the inscription also became questionable. It is noteworthy that the inscription of Bölcske was the first one that was found to the south of Intercisa therefore the possibility that the constructions were limited to the section between Aquincum- Intercisa emerged rightfully earlier²⁷. In the light of the new inscription near Bölcske it can be suggested that the text should really be interpreted literally and the fortification of the entire border section really did take place. Apart from this a serious argument on the contrary is that the find-spot is not secondary, but tertiary, namely, the stone was transferred to the medieval church from the fort of Bölcske, where it was transported to from Aquincum or its surroundings (Campona) in the 4th century²⁸. As a possibility this is also true for the

20. FITZ, «Maßnahmen...», *cit.*, pp. 203-204, NAGY, «Buda régészeti...», *cit.*, p. 47.

21. *RIU* 1135, S 250.

22. *RIU* 1136-1137.

23. *RIU* 1426.

24. Instead of *RIU* trib. pot. V[I] the reading of Mommsen *CIL* III, 3385 is correct: trib. pot. X.

25. A. MOCZY, *Pannonia and Upper Moesia*, London-Boston 1974, p. 197.

26. SOPRONI, «Zu den Burgusbau-Inschriften...», *cit.*, p. 93.

27. FITZ, «Maßnahmen...», *cit.*, p. 200, 203, FITZ, «A military history...», *cit.*, p. 77, 83.

28. E. TÓTH, «Die Topographische Lage der Ruinen von Bölcske und der Bestimmung», in Á. SZABÓ, E. TÓTH (eds.), *Bölcske. Römische Inschriften und Funde* (Libelli Archaeologici 2), Buda-

pieces of Intercisa therefore it is not excluded that the construction only started around Aquincum²⁹. The similar pelta-shaped ornamenting on the edges of the tablets of Rákospalota and *RIU 1135* of Intercisa enables this and also makes it probable. The slab found in the fort of Matrica must be a local piece³⁰, as in the area of Százhalombatta/Matrica *tituli* carried away from Aquincum are unknown³¹, the late Roman fort wall was fortified with local stone monuments only³², therefore its original find-spot had to be in the near. The slab from Rákospalota was also not found at its original location, therefore we cannot talk about constructions in Barbaricum at this date³³, the stone monument was found in 1914 in secondary usage in a medieval building along with many other carved Roman monuments³⁴. Due to all these reasons and because of the Matrica inscription being the latest, it is a legitimate possibility that the works that had started as early as 183 started from Aquincum or rather from the Northern province border and only reached the area of Matrica. Based on the late Roman watch tower construction inscriptions (371-372 AD: Solva and Visegrád³⁵) we can take it for granted that they were advancing section-by-section in a North-South direction, in topographical order, with the construction works³⁶.

d. It maybe one of the most important questions what kind of objects did they actually use to fortify the defence system of the province. The meaning of watch towers-*burgi* is beyond question even if we do not actually know the Commodus-age watchtowers, as we do not know a majority of the ones built during the early Imperial period³⁷. Only the watch tower of Csillaghegy of 5.8 × 5.8 m is normally dated to this period from the section belonging to the province, everything else is now questioned with reason³⁸.

The meaning of the other fortification-type, the *praesidium* is much more uncertain. Since Alföldi they are normally related to the small forts or larger watchtow-

pest 2003, 5-10.

29. ALFÖDI, «Epigraphica...», *cit.*, p. 36, BARKÓCZI, *Intercisa II...*, *cit.*, pp. 226-227.

30. J. LUCZENBACHER, «A pogány magyar sírok körül tett felfedezések», in A. MAGYAR, *Tudományos Akadémia, Értesítője* 1847, pp. 287-88.

31. *RIU 1423-1439*.

32. P. KOVÁCS, *Matrica – Excavations in the Roman fort at Százhalombatta (1993-1997)* (Studia Classica - Series Historica 3), Budapest 2000, pp. 98-104, Nos. 1-22.

33. L. NAGY, *Az eskü-téri római erőd, Pest város öse*, Budapest 1946, pp. 85-86.

34. KOVÁCS, *Tituli Romani...*, *cit.*, Nr. 242-244, 247. V. KUZSINSZKY, *Aquincum. Ausgrabungen und Funde*, Budapest 1934, p. 200, No. 372.

35. *RIU 771*, 804; KOVÁCS, *Tituli Romani...*, *cit.*, Nr. 128.

36. S. SOPRONI, *Der spätrömische Limes zwischen Esztergom und Szentendre*, Budapest 1978, pp. 53-55, 203, S. SOPRONI, *Die letzten Jahrzehnte des pannonischen Limes* (Münchner Beiträge zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte 38), München 1985, pp. 109-112, P. GRÓF-D. GRÓH, «Spätrömischer Wachturm und Statuenfund von Visegrád-Lepence», in *FoLA* 47, 1998-1999, pp. 103-116.

37. Zs. VISY, *A ripa Pannonica Magyarországon*, Budapest 2000 = *The ripa Pannonica in Hungary*, Budapest 2003, pp. 113-114.

38. L. NAGY, «A szír és kisázsiai vonatkozású emlékek a Duna középső folyása mentében», in *AÉrt* 52, 1939, p. 126, VISY, *A ripa Pannonica...*, *cit.*, p. 54, p. 114.

ers similar to those of Germania³⁹. Recently, based on the 195 AD inscription of the *praesidium* of Érd⁴⁰ I also have made an attempt to identify this⁴¹. The latter one was built *vetustate collapsio mutato loco* according to the text. The most probable location of this must have been the Kakukk-hill over Érd-Ófalu, which is the closes to the find-spot (Chapel of St Roque)⁴², the changing of the location could have become necessary because of the collapsing loess-wall. Based on this the suggestion of Mócsy A. is most probably justifiable according to which this *praesidium* must have been related to the ones of the Commodus era⁴³. The expression *vetustate collapsio* does not exclude this⁴⁴. This hypothesis has become especially important by now as it has recently been found that the latter inscription is a palimpsest, and maybe its original inscription must have been one of the original building inscriptions of the Commodus era⁴⁵. The most important meanings of the word *praesidium* among others, from a military point of view are as follows: 1. defence, aid 2. garrison, unit. 3. any type of fortification in general. 4. outpost 5. military fort. 6. a kind of stronghold smaller than a military fort – these two cannot be identified with each other due to the simultaneous usage of the word *castra* (e. g. Cic. Phil. 12, 24, Caecin. 83, Caes. Bell. Civ. 3, 62, 2, Tac. Agr. 20, 3, Ann. I, 56, 1)⁴⁶.

The term *praesidium* turns up on building inscriptions and papyri at a number of occasions, quite a few of these from the same period (between the reigns of Marcus Aurelius - Sept. Severus). Some of the latter definitely stands as a synonym of the word *castra* in the text: 1. *apsentes... Kas(t)rae in praesidio* (Hunt pridianum⁴⁷)⁴⁸. 2. *cum esset insecurem praesidium fortius aedificari iussit* (Kr. u. 84, Aegyptus, AE

39. ALFÖDI, «Epigraphica...», *cit.*, p. 37, A. MÓCSY, «A százhalombatta-dunafüredi római tábor és település - Roman fort and settlement at Százhalombatta», in *AERT* 82, 1955, pp. 59-69, p. 67, A. MÓCSY, *Gesellschaft und Romanisation in der römischen Provinz Moesia Superior*, Budapest 1970. pp. 48, 57, VISY, *A ripa Pannonica...*, *cit.*, p. 114, Zs. VISY, «Wachttürme an der ripa Pannonica in Ungarn», in *ActaAntHung* 36, 1995, p. 257, P. KOVÁCS, «Building inscriptions of Septimius Severus from Pannonia», in *Atti del XI Congresso Internazionale di Epigrafia Greca e Latina*, Roma 1999, pp. 526-527.

40. *RIU* 1353.

41. KOVÁCS, «Building inscriptions...», *cit.*, pp. 526-527.

42. KOVÁCS, «Building inscriptions...», *cit.*, p. 526.

43. MÓCSY, «A százhalombatta-dunafüredi...», *cit.*, p. 67.

44. E. THOMAS, CHR. WITSCHER, «Constructing reconstruction: claim and reality of Rome rebuilding inscriptions from the Latin west», in *BSR* 60, 1992, pp. 135-177.

45. G. ALFÖLDY, «Epigraphica Pannonica II. Inschriften aus der niederpannonischen Limeszone zwischen Matrica und Intercisa», in *Specimina Nova* 16, 2000, p. 50, No. 4, Zs. MRÁV, «Die Palimpsestinschriften», in Á. SZABÓ, E. TÓTH (eds.), *Bölske. Römische Inschriften...*, *cit.*, p. 262. The latter also proves the impossibility of the theory that the inscriptions remained in a 'depot'.

46. *ThLL* XX, 2, fasc. VI, col. 883-892, esp. col. 891-892, CH.T. LEWIS, CH. SHORTT, *A Latin dictionary*, Oxford 1879, p. 1429.

47. R.O. FINK, *Roman military records on papyrus* (Philological Monographs of the American Philological Association 26), Cleveland 1971, Nr. 63 II 21

48. R.O. FINK, *Roman military records on papyrus*, Cleveland 1971, pp. 222-223.

1956, 57). 3. *praesidium Sufative per cohortem I ... factum* (Mauretania, Ain-Temouchent, Kr. u. 119-120, AE 1913, 157 = 1985, 984)⁴⁹. 4. *qui praefectus a Moesia Inf(eriore) Montan(ensi) praesidio numerum in Asia perduxit* (Phrygia, 2nd century, AE 1927, 95). 5. *praesidium vetustate delapsum renovatum* (Kr. u. 174, Alexandria, CIL III, 12048). 6. Based on their building inscriptions, the limes-section of the Lower Danube had been fortified by many *praesidia* during the age of the tetrarchy; the text of the inscriptions, similarly to those of Pannonia, is identical here as well: *post debellatas hostium gentes pro futurum in aeternum reipublicae praesidium constituerunt*: Zanes-Donje Butorke (299-300, AE 1978, 519), Sexaginta Prista (298-299, AE 1966, 357), Transmarisca (294-299, CIL III, 6151), Durostorum (294-299, AE 1936, 10), Seimeni (292-304, IGLR 205), Halmyris (301-2 - 305, AE 1997, 1318)⁵⁰. All of them were found in the Lower Danubian provinces (Dacia Ripensis [1], Moesia Secunda [3] and Scythia [2]). The wording and the size of the inscriptions is very similar (3,2-3,8 m), but they did not belong to the same building campaign because of the different dates. If all fragmentary inscriptions could be dated to the year 299, then we could suggest the constructions in a West-East direction as the slab from Halmyris is the latest one (301/2-305) as it is the most eastern one. It maybe more probable that the construction works were taking place province-by-province beginning from the upper sections of the river, the fact that the inscription of Zanes can be dated to 299-300 provides a possibility for that. Based on the rather large dimensions and the observations made at excavation sites in almost all cases the *praesidium* stands for a military fort (Sexaginta Prista, Transmarisca (200 × 240, 200 × 300 m, with archaeological dating: between 292 - 308-10), Durostorum, Halmyris: 179 × 137 m)⁵¹. It is necessary to contemplate over the question why inscriptions were erected with the same wording in different provinces. The latter one obviously had to be related to the reconstruction of the defence system during

49. J. MARCILLET-JAUBERT, «Inscriptions et reliefs d'Ain-Temouchent», in *BAAIger* 7, 1977-79 (1985-86), pp. 94-96, No. 10.

50. T. SARNOWSKI, «Die Anfänge der spätrömischen Militärorganisation des unteren Donauroumes», in *Akten des 14. Internationalen Limeskongresses in Carnuntum*, Wien 1990, pp. 855-861, M. ZAHARIADE, «The tetrarchic building inscriptions and the lower Danubian limes», in *XI Congreso Internazionale di Epigrafia Greca e Latina. Preatti*, Roma 1997, pp. 635-643, M. ZAHARIADE, «The Halmyris tetrarchic inscription», in *ZPE* 119, 1997, pp. 228-236.

51. R. IVANOV, «The fortification system along the Lower Danube in Moesia Secunda», in *Roman frontier studies 1997. Proceedings of the XVIIth International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies*, Zaláu 1999, pp. 510-512, M. ZAHARIADE, «An early and late Roman fort on the Lower Danube limes. Halmyris (Independența, Tulcea county, Romania)», in *Roman frontier studies 1989. Proceedings of the XVth International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies, Canterbury 2-10 September 1989*, Exeter 1991, pp. 311-317, M. ZAHARIADE, «The Roman frontier in Scythia Minor (1980-1995)», in *Roman frontier studies 1997. Proceedings of the XVIIth International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies*, Zaláu 1999, pp. 203-204, M. ZAHARIADE, M.K. PHELPS, «Halmyris, a settlement and fort near the mouth of the Danube: interim report», in *JRA* 15, 2002, pp. 230-245, esp. pp. 236-237.

the era of the tetrarchy and due to the identical texts of the inscriptions in more than one province it had to be made on the chancellery of the praetorian prefect⁵².

From our point of view from those definitely not meaning larger military camps the inscriptions whose fortifications are known are especially important. 1. The building inscription of Si Aoun (Numidia, 198 AD, ILAfr 9 = ILS 9177) - with dimensions of 30 × 40 m⁵³. 2. Qasr El-Uweinid (Arabia, 201 AD⁵⁴): *castellum et s(uum) praesidium Severianum*. In the latter case the *praesidium* can be identified without doubt with a tower of 9.5 × 9.5 m inside the *castellum* of 65 × 44 m⁵⁵. 3. Balgarski, Panèvo (A. D. 152, IBulg 211, AE 1927, 49, p. 404, s. n. 168): *praesidia, burgos et phruria ob tutelam provinciae fecit*. The policy of Antoninus Pius wishing to strengthen the safety of the internal roads of Thracia is well displayed on these identically phrased inscriptions⁵⁶. Sometimes they even displayed the number of the object built on the given road section (the territory of the town: *per fines civitatis Serd(ic)ensium regione Dyptens(ium)*) (*praesidia n(umero) IIII burgi(!) n(umero) XII phruri n(umero) CIX*). From the numbers given it can be concluded that among the latter road stations the *praesidia* were larger as there were fewer of these (only 4) compared to the 109 *phruria*⁵⁷. The word *praesidium* was also applied as a road station outpost in the East (P. Yadin 11: prais...dion (Ein Gedi, Babatha-archive) and the word was also used in the Rabbinic literature (tos. Ta'anit 4: 7, 8, y. Ta'anit 4: 69)⁵⁸. 4. Zanes (AE 1978, 519) – the *praesidium* can be found in the middle of the camp, its dimensions are 19 × 18.5 m, may not be identified with the 6th century tower but the inscription was found among the ruins of the latter⁵⁹. The fort itself however is only a *quadriburgium*-type of small fort with dimensions of 46 × 45 m. Based on all these the identification of Alföldi can be legitimately accepted according to which the Pannonian *praesidia* were also similar 40 × 40 m-large small forts and not larger watch towers that could not be identified yet archeologically.

52. T. SARNOWSKI, «Die Anfänge der spätrömischen Militärorganisation des unteren Donaupraumes», in *Akten des 14. Internationalen Limeskongresses in Carnuntum*, Wien 1990, pp. 855-861.

53. P. TROUSSET, *Recherches sur le limes Tripolitanus du Chott El-Djeird à la frontière Tuniso-Libyenne*, Paris 1974, pp. 118-120.

54. S. GREGORY, D.L. KENNEDY, Sir Aurel Stein's limes report. The full text of M.A. Stein's unpublished limes report his aerial and ground reconnaissance on Iraq and Transjordan in 1938-39 I-II, (BAR Int. Ser. 272), Oxford 1985, pp. 281-285, pp. 421-422

55. LANDER, *Roman stone fortifications...*, *cit.*, pp. 134-138, S. GREGORY, *Roman military architecture in the Eastern frontier II*, Amsterdam 1997, pp. 316-322, esp. pp. 317-318, D. KENNEDY, *The Roman army in Jordan*, Amman 2000, pp. 59-61.

56. V. BEŠEVLIJEV, *Epigrafski prinosi*, Sofia 1952, pp. 33-36, No. 55, pl. 22, 2, B. ISAAC, *The limits of the empire. The Roman army in the East*, Oxford 1990, p. 180.

57. ISAAC, *The limits of the empire...*, *cit.*, p. 180, G. MIHAJLOV, «La fortification de la Thrace par Antonin le Pieux et Marc Aurèle», in *StUrbis* 35, 1961, pp. 42-56.

58. ISAAC, *The limits of the empire...*, *cit.*, p. 174 n. 63, p. 175 n. 68-69.

59. A. ÈERMANOVIC-KUZMANOVIC, «Rimsko utvrđenje kod Kladova – Fortification romaine près de Kladovo», in *Starinar* 28-29, 1977-1978, pp. 127-134, pp. 185-186.

e. At the same time the question must by all means be examined in what context did the Pannonian constructions of Commodus take place. As we could see the fortification of the border section could by all means have happened in a peaceful period and it fits in well with the policy of the emperor wishing to fortify borders and the safety of the provinces. Based on the above inscriptions a construction activity can be identified in the African and European provinces of the empire as well. The most probable date of construction of these *burgi* and *praesidia* could have happened before (or after) the Sarmatian war of Commodus mentioned by the sources many times (Comm. 6.1, 13.5)⁶⁰. This is definitely referred to by addressing the enemy as *latrunculus*. The fall of the governor Plotianus took place according to all probability together with the fall of the son of the praetorian prefect, Tigidius Perennis (Her. I.9.9, Dio LXXII.9.4, HA v. Comm. 6.4); the removal of his name from the inscriptions of the definitely already standing buildings took place after this (see below)⁶¹.

Following the Marcomannic wars therefore Pannonia only appears again during the reign of Commodus when Herodian (I.9.1, 9) and the *vita Commodi* (6.2) report on the assignment of Tigidius Perennis, the son of the praetorian prefect to Illyricum (in order to obtain the support of the troops), and on his successes against the Sarmatians. The latter event is normally dated to 185-186 as accepted primarily by the Hungarian research community⁶². The mistake of Herodianos, that can be considered as characteristic, that he talks about more than one son should not confuse anyone as at the questionable passage of I.9.9. the emperor only called home one son: I.9.1. καὶ τοῖς τε υἰοῖς αὐτοῦ νεανίας οἶσιν ἐγχειρίσαι πείθει τὸν Κόμοδον <τὴν> πρόνοιαν τῶν Ἰλλυρικῶν στρατευμάτων. Obviously he had two sons but only one of them was old enough to hold offices (cf. Dio LXXII.9.4). From the text of Herodian I.9.9 we do not find out what was the subject of the assignment of the son that he had not enough time to complete: I.9.9. πιστεύσας ὁ νεανίας (sc. a in the letter), ἀσχάλλων μὲν καὶ δυσφορῶν ὅτι δὴ ἀτελῆ κατέλιπε τὰ βεβουλευμένα, ὅμως δὲ θαρρῶν τῇ τοῦ πατρὸς ὡς ἔτι συνεστῶση δυνάμει, ποιεῖται τὴν ἕξοδον. γενόμενον δὲ αὐτὸν κατὰ τὴν Ἰταλίαν, οἷς τοῦτο ἐντέταλτο, διεχρήσαντο. The latter one luckily is also remembered by the *vita Commodi*: 6.2. *Eo tempore in Sarmatia res bene gestas per alios duces in filium suum Perennis referebat*. The expression *Pannoniae quoque conpositae* mentioned later on, concerning the wars of Commodus (13.5), is not likely to refer to the

60. MÓCSY, *Pannonia...*, cit., pp. 196-197, FITZ, «A military history...», cit., pp. 83-87, MÓCSY, FITZ, *Pannonia...*, cit., p. 41.

61. MÓCSY, «Pannonia», cit., col. 21-22, PIR² C 321 No. 1359, FITZ, *Die Verwaltung Pannoniens...*, cit., pp. 533-536 No. 320, SOPRONI, «Zu den Burgusbau-Inschriften...», cit., p. 93.

62. FITZ, «Maßnahmen...», cit., NAGY, Buda ..., p. 47, MÓCSY, «Pannonia», cit., col. 562-563, FITZ, «A military history...», cit., pp. 83-87, MÓCSY, *Pannonia...*, cit., pp. 196-197, M. SASEL KOS, *Zgodovinska podoba prsotora med Akvilejo, Jadranom in Sirmijem pri Kasiju Dionu in Herodijanu – A historical outline of the region between Aquileia, The Adriatic and Sirmium in Cassius Dio and Herodian*, Ljubljana 1986, pp. 342-352, MÓCSY, FITZ, *Pannonia...*, cit., p. 41, HEKSTER, *Commodus...*, cit., p. 63-64.

wars in relation to the Sarmatians as in this case it would be enough to talk about Pannonia Inferior.

It is not satisfactorily cleared what the exact office of the son of Perennis was. Obviously, despite earlier hypotheses⁶³ it could hardly have been Pannonian governor as the legati Augusti are known in this period in both provinces: Pannonia Superior: C. Vettius Sabinianus Iulius Hospes⁶⁴, Pannonia Inferior: L. *Cornelius Felix Plotianus*⁶⁵. That is why the premise that he would have been the governor of Moesia Superior, also bordering the Sarmatians, was created⁶⁶, whose legatus of the period is unknown⁶⁷. According to F. Grosso the son would rather have been the legatus of Upper Pannonia or Noricum and the legio II Italica, although in this case he would hardly have been a participant of the Sarmatian war⁶⁸. It is not obvious from our ancient sources that the son would necessarily have been a legatus neither the senatorial office of the son of the praetorian prefect. Recently M. Šašel Kos suggested that the equivalent of the word *str̄teuma* used by Herodian is 'legion' and, based on this, he would have been the legatus of the legio II adiutrix in Aquincum⁶⁹. The main reason of the British unrests against Perennis was exactly the fact that he replaced the military leadership of the province with equestrians (v. Comm. 6.2-3. *Perennis, qui tantum potuit, subito, quod bello Britannico militibus equestris loci viros praefecerat amotis senatoribus, prodita re per legatos exercitus hostis appellatus lacerandusque militibus est deditus* (cf. Dio LXXII.9.2-4, moreover LXXXIII.4.1-4, v. Pert. 3.5-9)⁷⁰. L. Artorius Castus, who earlier served as *praefectus legionis*, later as *dux legionum*, was among these equestrians (CIL III, 1919 = ILS 2770)⁷¹. Would it be impossible that this happened in the case of the son of Perennis?⁷² The story of the soldiers from Illyricum who showed the emperor

63. RITTERLING, *Pannonia Inferior...*, cit., p. 75, PWRE IIA (1937) col. 954.

64. P.M.M., LEUNISSEN, *Konsuln und konsularen in der Zeit von Commodus bis Severus Alexander (180-235). Prosopographische Untersuchungen zur senatorischen Elite im Römischen Kaiserreich* (Dutch monographs on Ancient history and archaeology 6), Amsterdam 1989, p. 258, FITZ, *Die Verwaltung Pannoniens...*, cit., pp. 498-499, No. 294.

65. LEUNISSEN, *Konsuln...*, cit., p. 277, FITZ, *Die Verwaltung Pannoniens...*, cit., pp. 533-536 No. 319.

66. FITZ, «A military history...», cit., p. 85, MÓCSY, FITZ, *Pannonia...*, cit., p. 41.

67. A. STEIN, *Die Legaten von Moesien*, Budapest 1940, pp. 49-50.

68. GROSSO, *La lotta politica...*, cit., pp. 171-172 n. 2.

69. M. ŠAŠEL KOS, «Zgodovinska podoba prsotora med Akvilejo, Jadranom», in *Sirmijem pri Kasiju Dionu in Herodijanu – A historical outline of the region between Aquileia, the Adriatic and Sirmium in Cassius Dio and Herodian*, Ljubljana 1986, pp. 342-352, esp. pp. 347-348.

70. GROSSO, *La lotta politica...*, cit., pp. 185-194, Britannia: pp. 173-185, P.A. BRUNT, «The fall of Perennis: Dio-Xiphilinus 72.9.2», in *CIQ* 23, 1973, pp. 172-177, M. ZIMMERMANN, *Kaiser und Ereignis: Studien zum Geschichtswerk Herodians* (Vestigia. Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte 52), München 1999, pp. 100-112, HEKSTER, *Commodus...*, cit., pp. 61-64.

71. GROSSO, *La lotta politica...*, cit., pp. 176-177.

72. F. KOLB, «Zur Statussymbolik im antiken Rom», in *Historia* 26, 1977, pp. 267-268 Anm. 101, ZIMMERMANN, *Kaiser und Ereignis...*, cit., pp. 108-111.

coins showing Perennis (or his son) is mostly a product of the imagination of the historian, spiced up with some rich fantasy⁷³. The war could be dated well by the coin of the emperor with a reverse of *VO DE SARMATIS*⁷⁴ from 185 AD⁷⁵, by his eighth imperial acclamation used from 186 (alternatively, from September 186 (emission 56⁷⁶)⁷⁷, and by the fact that the emperor only assumed the name Felix during the spring of 185 (April-May?) following the fall of Plotianus (v. Comm. 8.1)⁷⁸. The latest burgus building inscription from Matrica can also be dated to 185 (*RIU* 1426). The governor of Lower Pannonia, Plotianus must also have got mixed up with the conspiracy as, as we could observe, his name was carefully erased from all building inscriptions⁷⁹. This is when the replacement of Vettius Sabianus must have taken place, who, at the same time, did not fall out of favour as his career carried on: he became the proconsul of Africa still under Commodus (*CIL* VIII, 823)⁸⁰. Maybe this was the time when L. Vespronius Candidus Sallustius Sabinianus became the legatus of the province who became so hated by the soldiers of Pannonia, and who was nearly killed when he was visiting Septimius Severus as an envoy (Dio LXXIII.17.1, v. Did. Iul. 5.5-6)⁸¹. He may have created order using too hard measures (cf. v. Did. Iul. 5.6. *militibus invisus ob durum et sordidum imperium*). The Sarmatian war can mostly be attributed to their own, internal unrest that was caused (known only on the basis of their archaeological find material (the new Sarmatian buckle types⁸²), their burial traditions (circular trenches, tumuli and the mainly East-West directional burials⁸³) by the settling down of new ethnic groups on what is now the Great Hungarian Plain (Szentes-Nagyhegy group)⁸⁴. What is certain based on the *vita Commodi* is that the war was solved by the governors themselves: 6.2. *Eo tempore*

73. C.R. WHITTAKER, *Herodian in two volumes with an English translation, I*, Cambridge/Massachusetts, London 1970, p. 57 n. 3, HEKSTER, *Commodus...*, cit., p. 63.

74. Cf. GROSSO, *La lotta politica...*, cit., p. 489 n. 4.

75. H. MATTINGLY (ed.), *Coins of the Roman Empire in the British Museum IV*, London 1940, p. 166.

76. W. SZAIVERT, *Die Münzprägung der Kaiser Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus und Commodus (161-192)* (Moneta Imperii Romani 18), Wien 1986, pp. 221-222.

77. FITZ, «A military history...», cit., p. 87, KIENAST, *Römische Kaisertabelle...*, cit., p. 149.

78. KIENAST, *Römische Kaisertabelle...*, cit., p. 149.

79. FITZ, *Die Verwaltung Pannoniens...*, cit., pp. 533-536 No. 319, ŠAŠEL KOS, *A historical outline...*, pp. 348-350, HEKSTER, *Commodus...*, cit., pp. 63-64.

80. ŠAŠEL KOS, «Zgodovinska podoba prsotora...», cit., p. 350, FITZ, *Die Verwaltung Pannoniens...*, cit., p. 499.

81. T. NAGY, «Nem Ignotus, hanem L. Vespronius Candidus – Nicht Ignotus sondern L. Vespronius Candidus», in *Aert* 110, 1983, pp. 195-200, FITZ, *Die Verwaltung Pannoniens...*, cit., pp. 499-500.

82. M. PÁRDU CZ, «Beiträge zur Geschichte der Sarmaten in Ungarn im II. und III. Jahrhundert», in *ActaArchHung* 7, 1956, p. 174, A. VADAY, *Jazigok, roxolánok, alánok. Szarmaták az Alföldön*, Gyula 1998, 41.

83. V. KULCSÁR, *A kárpát-medencei szarmaták temetkezési szokásai – The burial rite of the Sarmatians of the Carpathian basin*, Aszód 1998, pp. 87-88.

84. FITZ, «A military history...», cit., p. 83-85, MÓCSY, FITZ, *Pannonia...*, cit., p. 41.

in Sarmatia res bene gestas per alios duces, and it seems possible that in spite of this the question was not fully settled yet as: 1. the eighth imperial acclamation only appears in September 186 2. according to Herodian Perennis' son returned home without completing his assignment: 1.9.9. ἀτελῆ κατέλιπε τὰ βεβουλευμένα (here the historian could have thought about the private plans of Perennis too).

f. Grosso explains the latter somewhat untraditionally according to whom the event should much rather be dated to 183. The watchtower construction program only started after this and the newer Sarmatian war cannot be related separately to any of the imperial acclamations of Commodus⁸⁵. The events of the mid 180s left Pannonia untouched, the eighth imperial acclamation of Commodus is related to the *bellum desertorum*⁸⁶. The main evidence of his reasoning is the passage of the *vita Commodi* counting up Sarmatian wars inside the already mentioned locus: 13.5-6. *Victi sunt sub eo tamen, cum ille sic viveret, per legatos Mauri, victi Daci, Pannoniae quoque conpositae <et> Britannia, in Germania et in Dacia imperium eius recusantibus provincialibus; quae omnia ista per duces sedata sunt*. In the latter, the author of the *vita* reviews the wars of the emperor in chronological order: 1. Mauri 2. the victory over the Dacians 3. the two Pannoniae 4. later the stabilisation of the situation in Britannia 6. Germania (*bellum desertorum*) 7. then movements inside Dacia. According to this the Sarmatian war had to precede the events in Britannia. It is in favour of the argumentation of Grosso that the assignment of the son of Perennis must evidently be dated before 185 (as how could the son falling in the spring of 185 have convinced the governor Plotianus to conspire in such a short time), and it is not related to the Sarmatians. The only evidence of the dating to 185 are the coins with *VO DE SARMATIS* reverses (BMC IV [1940] 166). The fact, however, is that the event mentioned separately by the *vita Commodi* would not have an acclamation is against his opinion⁸⁷. He wished to resolve the contradiction in a way that the sixth acclamation of 183 (March 183 [emission 47]⁸⁸) that the emperor received for defeating the Dacians would also refer to the Sarmatians⁸⁹. It seems problematic however how much the *victi Daci, Pannoniae quoque conpositae* co-ordinate clauses can refer to one event, especially because of the usage of the *Pannoniae* plural, and also, why was only Dacia discussed at the above passage of Dio's epitome (LXXII.8.1), he should have mentioned the Pannonian events in connection with the none the less famous son of Perennis as well. If Grosso is right the usage of the plural in the words of *vita Commodi* may be more understandable: 6.1. *in Sarmatia res bene gestas per alios duces*.

85. GROSSO, *La lotta politica...*, cit., pp. 180-183, 485-490, 516-521.

86. GROSSO, *La lotta politica...*, cit., pp. 516-521.

87. GROSSO, *La lotta politica...*, cit., pp. 516-521.

88. SZAIVERT, *Die Münzprägung...*, cit., p. 217.

89. GROSSO, *La lotta politica...*, cit., p. 520.