



<https://doi.org/10.26520/mcdsare.2019.3.101-114>

MCDSARE: 2019

International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on the Dialogue between Sciences & Arts, Religion & Education

THE LIMES THEORY. HISTORIOGRAPHICAL AND CONCEPTUAL DELIMITATIONS

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Abstract

In the present paper, we set out to determine the historiographical landmarks of the approaches to understanding the concept of limes, in order to understand its great semantic complexity, which is the basis for the construction of limes theory. The theory of limes emerged in the nineteenth century, and the meaning of the term was a fortified defensive barrier surrounding the Empire's territory, defending it from the external danger that the Romans identified with the barbarian world. Moreover, Theodore Mommsen defined limes as the space between the wall and the line of defense in the field on the other. The research spaces for which these meanings were then established were the ancient territories of Germany and Raetia. Overall, the theory emerged amid the analysis of the boundaries of the vast Roman Empire, in the context of attempts to redefine the relations between the center (Rome and the Italian Peninsula) and the periphery (the provincial territories and the barbarians at the edge). One can speak of a cosmology in which the territory is not limited, but the power of Rome establishes the reporting space. Paul Chaval, speaking of space and power, notes that the Empire is stopping its expansion on the edge of the civilized / cultivated universe. Charles R. Whittaker notes that the Roman attitude towards the border combines the practice of divination with the delimitation of the enclosure. It is Rome that creates order in chaos, and the sacred space, organized is delimited by profane, unorganized space.

Keywords: frontier strategy; Limesforschung; Pax Romana; invisible border;

1. INTRODUCTION

At the moment, Romania is facing a number of problems that have an impact upon the society and the 1892 the "Reichs Limeskomision" was founded, by the head of it, Theodor Mommsen, who worked in an Institute, which aimed to research the limes in Upper Germany and the one in Raetia. By 1937, 14 volumes about limes appeared. (Fabricius, Hettner, Von Sarvey 1894-1937 *passim*). In this context, the theory of limes appeared, and the meaning of the term is today a fortified defensive barrier



that surrounds the territory of the Empire (Le Bohec, 1989), protecting it from the external danger that the Romans identified with the barbarian world (Cadiou, Moret, 2009). In 1883, however, Theodore Mommsen considered the limes not a fortification, but returned two years later to this opinion, under the influence of Colonel O von Cohausen's work, so he defined the limes as the space between the wall on one side and the field defense line on the other side (Cagnat - in Daremberg, 1257 col. 2). The research areas, for which these meanings were established, were the ancient territories of Germany and Raetiae. The Romanians did not use this term too often. (Isaac 1990, 125).

At present, the scientific explanation of the concept of limes, based on evidence and their interpretation, has greatly expanded the possibilities of approach, through interdisciplinarity and complementarity. Thus, beyond analyzing the archaeological testimonies placed in a certain geographical space, for which exact dates can be determined, we can blind and interpret them, using various plans: economic, social, administrative, political, historical, military, cultural, religious, ideological and so on.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

In this context, the theory emerged in the background of the analysis of the borders of the vast Roman Empire, is supplemented a century after the emergence, by the attempts to redefine the relations, under the coordination of the specialists Michael Rowlands, Mogens Larsen, Kristian Kkristiansen (1989, 38) between the center (Rome and the Italian Peninsula) and the periphery (provincial territories and barbarians on the edge) for example. Or it may be a cosmology, in which the territory is not delimited but the power of Rome establishes the reporting space (Whittaker, 1994, 12-13). Let us not forget that at the beginning of the Empire, the delimitation of a temple was done by a priest, and then by the military for military fortifications or by architects if it was about constructions meant to bring and manage water reserves. With the expansion of the Empire, the measurements were passed to some professionals: agrimensori. (Minow, 2003, 14).

At the same time, cosmology is the basis of an ideology, on which the political and military strategy of Rome will be practically built. Even during the Republic some experts believe, such as Stephen L. Dyson (1985, 174 sqq), that there was a coherent and sustained „*frontier strategy*”. Moreover, Edward Luttwak (1976) speaks of a great imperial strategy that deals with borders and agrees with all or part of it Arther Ferrill (1986, 23 sqq) and Everett L. Wheeler (1993, 7 sqq). But the idea is contradicted by John C. Mann (1979, 175 sqq), Benjamin Issac (1990, 372 sqq), Charles R. Whittaker (2004, 28 sqq), who don't think there was a planned and sophisticated strategy. From a cultural point of view, Paul Claval (1978, 109), speaking of space and power, observes that the Empire stops its expansion at the edge of the civilized/cultivated universe. For his part, Charles R. Whittaker (1994, 18) notes that the Roman attitude towards the frontier combines the practice of divination with the delimitation of the enclosure. Rome is the one that creates order in chaos, and the sacred, organized space is delimited by the profane, unorganized space. Moreover, Rinaldi Tufi, S. (1990, 271 sqq) speaks of the Roman presence across the border as the bearer of civilization models over „Limes”.

Edward Luttwak (1976) believes that one can even speak of a „scientific frontier” (*Limesforschung*), understood as a permanent search for the optimal line for military defense. In the same idea, the author distinguishes between two models: „*Hegemonic Empire*” and „*Territorial Empire*” (Luttwak, 1976). On the other hand, carrying out a lexical study on the term of fines, *terminus* and *limes*, Benjamin Isaac (1990, 427) shows that an exclusively military perspective must not be accepted in order to understand the nature of the Roman frontiers, defining the *limes* as being between the centuries. I and III, „*a land border*”, an arbitrary political line, which does not impede relations between its two parts (Issac, 1990, 417), so that in the fourth century it indicates a border district. under the command of a dux, following an administrative concept first and only secondly military (Issac, 1988, 125 sqq). Moreover, the military character of the frontier was stronger during the Severian dynasty, when a series of measures and reforms favorable to the military were adopted, in general (Willems, 1989, 40).

At the same time, Benjamin Isaac (1988) criticizes the opinion of Edward Luttwak (1976, 27, 60), who speaks of the „*invisible*” border, with the belief that the *limes* is a symbolic military limit, through which the population non-Roman was kept at a distance and its movements were controlled on the outskirts of the Empire. He believes that borders are often more administrative boundaries than boundaries of separation of Romanians from Barbarians (Luttwak, 1976, 187.), so that relations with

nationes (or gentes) externae, whose geographical delimitation was neutral, being established in various forms: *amicii* (Kienast, 1968, 330 sqq), *socii*, *Soci et amici Populi Romani*, *foederati* by signing a *foedus* et al. (Cimma, 1976, 25-27).

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the present paper, we set out to determine the historiographical landmarks of the approaches to understanding the concept of *limes*, in order to understand its great semantic complexity, which is the basis for the construction of *limes* theory. The approach we set out to be of an interdisciplinary nature and the objective was to overcome the positivist perspective, the ideologies as well as to use as a cultural model totally inappropriate modern realities in order to correctly reconstruct the realities of Roman Antiquity.

4. FINDINGS

The ancient author Strabo (*Geographia* XVII, 3, 24) allows us to understand that the territories governed by kings are considered an integral part of the empire, just like the provinces, based on the *foedus*, which transform them into *Soci et amici Populi Romani* (Matthaei, 1907, 182 sqq), the authority of the Imperium being extended to them as well (Whittaker, 1994, 24-25). Moreover, the deep presence in the territory considered barbarous of Roman products (ceramics, especially amphorae that show imports of wine, metal and glass artefacts probably received as gifts), as Philippe Leveau (1990, 898.) observes highlight the existence of a market economy, in which the producers migrate from the center to the periphery, resulting in a decentralization accompanied by the development of cities in the latter area. In these conditions, the specialists speak of an economic expansion (Owen Latimore, in 1962, introduces the phrase “zone of economic integration”), and in certain areas such as Gallia, elites become intermediaries in commercial relations (Willems, 1989, 35-36; France, 2001, 205 sqq.).

Starting with the end of the 3rd century, after the transition from the Principality to the Dominated, the defense no longer targets the space in front of the border, but focuses on the border itself (Polverini, 1975, 1013-1015), which will be disposed, starting with the reign of Emperor Constantine the Great, troops from the border (Janniard, 2015, 1 sqq), recruited from barbarians.

Edward Luttwak (1976, 185) also captures this change of strategy, since the third century, when the barbarians are under great pressure on the Roman borders, so that the emperor Gallienus begins a reform of the defensive system, reorganized by Diocletian and later, by Constantine the Great (Whitby, 2004, 156 sqq), and by brothers Valentinian I and Valens (Bishop, Coulston, 1993, 19 sqq), with consequences and on the state apparatus to be militarized. (Polverini, 1975, 1013-1015)

In addition to the new units, the emperors will be concerned, as evidenced by the archeological testimonies of the 4th century, and the activity of building the border fortifications, along the borders on the Rhine and Danube, as well as in North Africa, in Egypt, offering a clear picture of the differences regarding the solutions adopted by Romanians for very different spaces (Birley 1981, 39 sqq.; Willems 1984, 39 sqq; Fulford 1984, 129 sqq.).

With all these efforts, as a result of the definitive split of the two *partes imperii* after 395, the *Rhine limes* will collapse under the blows of the Swedes, Vandals and Rallies in 406/407, which will compromise the unit of action of the Roman army on the border after this date. In fact, the administrative separation had begun from 364, during the emperors Valentinian I and Valens. (Ammianus Marcellinus, *Roman History*, XXVI, 5, 1-6).

Regarding the problem of the Roman roads, André Piganiol (1963, 122) initially considered that the *limes* can be understood as a perpendicular road on the border, after analyzing the chronology of its evolution he came to the conclusion that it would be a road parallel to the border. Even the mentioned author observes that starting with Hadrian's reign, the military significance is replaced by a legal one, given that Traian remains the last great conqueror. Subsequently, specialists such as John C. Mann (1974, 350.), Benjamin Isaac (1988, 417), nuanced the definition, speaking of a border complex with a total control role, representing the extent of Rome's authority, a moral barrier (Fodorean 2006, *passim*). Returning to the analysis that we set out to carry out, from a political, administrative and economic point of view, Edward Luttwak (1976, 27, 60) believes that it is a porous barrier, indeed, sometimes non-existent, a space transient. The argument would be that the Latin historian Appian (*Roman History*) mentions that the Romans brought certain Celts from the Rhine into the Roman space. So, the *limes* was an area of influence of Rome that extends to the whole of the oikumen, an allied intermediate zone that

separates it from the limits of the universe. Confused with the territory, the space must have a limit, and from this perspective, the limes is at the base of the administrative institution of the border and of the „indefinite and floating finish that bases the legal theory of the border” (Leveau, 1990, 896).

Much later, Charles R. Whittaker (1994, 19-20) lists two types of Roman-specific frontiers: the first - *arceo* (*land*), which represents an organized space that is in the jurisdiction of a civil administrative authority and the second - *arcifinius*¹ (*boundary beyond*), bounded by a mountain range or a river, placed under the responsibility of a military authority. Synthesizing the ideas set out above, we find that if in the period of the Roman Republic there were no militarily protected borders and as a result, the isolation of barbarians was achieved through a cordon of half-subject populations, only through legal agreements, everything will change with the creation Empire, which had the mission to ensure the security of the borders of the Romanian state against the barbarians. The specialists in historical-legal studies have found that at one point, in the dynamics of their expansion, the Romanians transfer to the *potestas* from the private world to the public one (Buono-Ccore Varas, 2003, 23 sqq.), under the conditions in which the Romanians accept that they have they were appointed by the gods (*providentia*) to spread the culture and civilization of the other nations. Now comes the idea of delimiting the Roman possessions from the uncharted, independent territories², suspected of an acculturation process, sometimes forced, which explains their revolts. (Dyson, 1971).

Originally conceived as a means of delimiting the Roman world of *barbaricum*³, the *limes*⁴ meant the defense system, represented by a natural border⁵, such as the Rhine or the Danube, given that the river delimited in the minds of the people the sacred space, Charles R. Wittaker (2004, 7) thinks. Moreover, the watercourses were considered by the Romans as *usus publicum riparum* (Scapini, 1998, 11-12, 53-55), and the right of navigation and even fishing were recognized and protected by the Roman Law (Costa, 1919 *apud* Tomás, 2001, 361-372)

As a result, in the beginning, this system was established on a natural obstacle (watercourses - *ripa*, flumen, mountain ranges), because later, in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, to it becomes a true fortification, organized behind a security territory created in the enemy territory. (Vlădescu, Barnea 1994, 313, col. 2; Liuşnea 2009, 101-102)

The beginnings of the organization of the border of the Empire in the form of the *limes* have been set since the beginning of the first century of the Christian era, under Octavian Augustus, as Rufius Festus (*Breviarium*, VIII, 1) allows us to understand: “*et limes inter Romanos et barbaros ab Augusta Vindellicorum per Noricum, Pannoniam et Moesiam est constitutus* ”), given the fact that Rome conquered the gents and sought to include in the Empire the entire territory they belonged to (Cătănicu, 1997, 32; Da Costa, 2000, 17 sqq) and, as a consequence, to establish clearly the *locum in parte limitis positum gentilium*⁶ Florus (*Epitome*, II) and Tacitus (*Annales*, IV, 44.), states that Augustus had asked General *Cn. Cornelius Lentulus* to deal with the dangerous peoples for Rome, and he executing the order, fixed the first military garrisons on the right bank of the Danube. Shortly after, Sextus Aelius Catus, consul in the year 4 AD, the proconsul of Macedonia and imperially bound in Thacia during the 1st and 4th years

¹The land that was delimited but not measured and divided was called *ager arcifinius*. (Schulten, 1922,89-92).

² For the role of *limes* in maintaining a *Pax Romana*. (Souza, 2008, 76 sqq.)

³Strabo explains the word barbarian as having to do with the hostile terrain that is unfit for the genesis of civilization. (Strabon, *Geographia*, III, 3.8). As a result, it is normal for barbarians to be aggressive, savage and dangerous individuals. (Lomas Salmonte 1982, 16, 20 Populations beyond the Romanian frontier. (Kolendo, 1994, *passim*).

⁴In Latin, it meant a dividing road, having the meaning, during the republican period, of a limit for the division of a land. (Vlădescu 1982, 436. Vlădescu, Barnea 1994, 313sqq). R. Cagnat explains it as a technical term originally used in the language of those who measured the land (*agrimensori*), who to divide a territory, drew two lines, one with North-South orientation, and the other with East-West orientation, these intersecting at the center of the territory they were supposed to measure. The first line was called *cardo*, and the second *limes decumanus*. But this *limes* was only a simple line “*destined to mark a separation between the different properties, private or public: it constituted the road of communication between neighboring areas*”. (Darembergp. 1255).

⁵ An obstacle, beyond which the environmental conditions are radically different from the Mediterranean ones, unfit for agriculture and therefore for the Roman civilization. (Armario 1999, 218 sqq). The great rivers were military and commercial arteries. (Issac, 1990, 410 sqq.)

⁶ The inscription discovered at Troesmis, attesting a *dux limitis Scythiae*, Sappo, under the reigns of Constantine, Constans and Constant, in Scythia Minor. (Toutain, 1981, 243).

AD, (Syme 1934 113 sqq.) Crossed the river and defeated three chiefs. of the Geto-Dacians (Suetonius, Augustus, 20, 1, 2. Strabo, VII, 2, 13), after which he ordered the transmutation of 50,000 geets from the left bank of the Danube in the year 6 AD (Pârvan, 1926, 95). At about the same time, year 6 (Premmerstein, 1898; Mommsen, 2009, 50), 11⁷ or 13 AD. (Patsch, 1932, 19) *Cornelius Lentulus* applies a military choreography to the Geto-Dacians (*Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, V, 47-49).

The term itself appears mentioned for the first time in the work of Tacitus (*The Life of Cnaeus Julius Agricola*, 41, 1, 2: „*nec iam de limite imperii et ripa, sed de hibernis legionum et possessione dubitatum*”), in the year 97/98 AD., with the sense of border line strengthened, fortification, in front of a territory still undiscovered, in the case of Lower Germany, the reference of the ancient writer being to the *limes* on the Lower Rhine⁸. The civilization / barbarian dichotomy is interpreted by Leopoldo Zea (1988, 21) as „a sign of power and dependence, of center and periphery”.

Benjamin Issac (1988, 125 sqq.) Notes that in Tacitus the term of *limes* („*land boundary*”) is different from the *ripa* („*river boundary*”), although it escapes, as Pol Troussel (1993, 26, n. 6) notes, the fact that the two terms evolved in parallel in the sense of military territory. Thus, in the second half of the second century, a *praefectus ripae fluminis Euphratensis*,⁹ appears, and in the third century a *praepositus limitis Tripolitanae* is attested. (Rebuffed, 1977, 1985, 127 sqq.; Alföldi, 2002, 145)

The purpose of the *limes*, thus understood, was to defend the borders of the Empire of Europe (Germany¹⁰, Britannia¹¹, Pannonia, Dacia), Africa¹² (Egypt, Mauretania, Numidia)¹³ and Asia (Syria) respectively. Its forms varied, however, depending on the geographical and historical conditions, in the conditions in which the conquest itself was not a problem but the maintenance of authority, constantly using military force (Willems, 1989, 38). The most concrete example being the *limes* in Britannia, where the system will be completely different, Hadrian building 110 km of wall, with a north-facing ditch, with fortifications at a distance of 6.5 km between them¹⁴, the only one for which - could accept the phrase "linear fortification". And in Africa, Charles R. Whittaker (1994, 135) recalls the high areas of the Kabylas (Bénabou, 1976, 584. Leveau, 1977, 201 sqq) of *Caesarensis* (Mauretania), where there was a

⁷ Maria Chitescu connects the monetary treasures with coins minted in the years 2-4 AD, dating from the time of the emperors Tiberius (Pinceşti and Fitionaşti in Moldova and Fotos in Transylvania), Claudius (Niculiţel) and Vespasian (Poiana, Galaţi county), with the events from the beginning of the first century AD, when Catus's campaign coincides with that of an anonymous general, perhaps *M. Vinicius* and that of the general *Cn. Cornelius Lentulus*. (Chitescu, 1982, 159)

⁸ Starting with the reign of Emperor Claudius, the *limes* are formed on Yssel and Rhine. Then the emperors of the Flavian dynasty will realize the *limes* of Upper Germany on a length of 25 Roman miles. Marked from place to place by gates and towers, the *limes* were not a material obstacle, intended to prohibit passage, and the towers were also used for communication with fire. (Daremberg, 1256).

⁹ The inscription is undated, which Pol Troussel (Trousset, 1993, 26, n. 6.) mistakenly dates to the middle of the third century. The text recalls an elite unit, *Legio XXI Rapax* (ILS 2709 = CIL 1357), brought from the Rhine to the Danube during the period 70-107 (Cheesman, 1914, 73, n. 2) or 69-101, at the same time as the relocation and other military units, among which the *Legio XI Claudia pia fidelis*, whose garrison was established at Vindonissa in Upper Germany (Zahariade, 1999b, 600). The *Legio XXI Rapax* is no longer mentioned after Domitian's reign. (Cheesman, 1909, 155; Raschke, 1978, 879, No. 934; Erdkamp, 2007, 332). Probably the unit fell into disgrace, because it is not mentioned next to *Legio V Alaudae*, disappeared in the campaign against the Dacians organized by Domitian and as it seems to prove the deletion of the name of the unit from the inscriptions on two tombstones (CIL XIII 5201 and 11514) discovered in Vindonissa (Webster, 1998, 105, 107 n. 32; Erdkamp, 2007, 332).

¹⁰ The organization of the *limes* begins during the reign of Claudius. (Willems, 1989, 38.) and „The frontier in Lower Germany was one of the earliest to be created; surviving into the early 5th century, it illustrates the whole range of Roman military installations”. (Graafstal, Willem & Bödecker, 2018, 7).

¹¹ For organizing the *limes* in Britannia (Hingley, 1997, 81-82).

¹² Leveau, 1977, 201 sqq.

¹³ In North Africa, Charles. R. Whittaker believes that there is a relationship between *limes* and the cultural boundaries of wheat and olives. The concept of cultural boundaries involves three conditions: ecological, plant-specific, agricultural techniques and economic conditions. (Leveau, 1990, 896).

¹⁴ *Historia Augusta. Vita Hadriani*, XI, 2. „... *Britanniam petit, in qua multa correxit murumque per octoginta milia passuum primus duxit, qui barbaros Romanosque divideret*”, with direct allusion to the German-ethic *limes*, where the border was no longer established on the river but on an artificial boundary of the ground-bound and tied between them. (*Historia Augusta. Vita Hadriani*, XII, 6).

world of vast fortified domains, the *castella* and the *centenaria*., where banditry was endemic and where the populations inside created more problems than those at the borders.

Giovanni Forni (1959, 1076-1081; 1987, 272-294), followed by other authors (Forni, Malavolta, Fentress, Benseddik, 1960 - 1985, 1074-1376 / 80.), Considers that limes is not a concept linear as claimed by Ernest Fabricius (1926, 572-671), but two-dimensional, like a strip, where its longitudinal development is maximum, at least during the Principality period, that is, a road, probably continuous or a road network guarded by circulating troops and through which the supervision and connection between various units (Forni 1959, 1076-1081) „fortified border and defense of the Roman Empire” was ensured. (Forni, Malavolta, Fentress, Benseddik, 1960 - 1985, 1074-1376 / 80. Forni, 1987, 272-294.)

The *Limes* includes, among the auxiliary constituent elements, the military units and their trimmings *castra legionum*¹⁵, *castra auxiliariorum* (Zahariade, 1999a, 199), *castella*, *praesidia*, *centenaria*, *quadriburgia* or *burgi* (is small castella), *turres* (towers square or polygonal towers with supervisory role: signaling and observation), *oppidum* (fortified settlements), "roads to and between fortifications" and even "a series of rural settlements [Roman or barbarian]" (Gudea, 1999-2000, 211) and fortifications with role of supervision of water sources, bridges. To these are added the integrated elements or accessories such as: *fossae*, *vallum* and bastions of stone, wood or earth (Forni 1959, 1086-1092.), representing the "linear fortifications", imposed by certain relief conditions or "political" situations "strictly local. (Gudea, 1999-2000, 211.) But it must not be confused with "*Elements*" of additional reinforcement (*waves*, *palisades*, *walls*, *dams*) or only subsidiary elements of commercial traffic control ". (Gudea, 1999-2000, 211). Thus, Valeriu Sârbu and Vitalie Bârcă (2000, 47) erroneously use the term limes, in order to define the defense wave on the route between "Prut and Siret", Tuluceşti - Serbesti Vechi, given that most specialists admit that this was just an additional element of fortification. In fact he delimited the neutral zone in sec. I-II, a file beyond the boundaries as Henry Lattimore called it, a *Vorlimes*. (Wheeler, 1993, 7 sq. Liuşnea, 2000.78 and 2008, 28). If they were isolated waves, without being linked to the other constituents of the limes, they could have only political importance and not military purpose. (Rocco, 2010, 47). At the same time, Ioana Bogdan Cătănicu (2009, 196) is of the opinion that "*vallum* was built only where the land did not offer a natural landmark, where the plains did not offer a „barrier "for circulation", referring to the *limes transalutanus*.

As for the constituent elements of the fortification type *limes*, they were classified by specialists according to the geographical criterion, such as those in Scythia Province, (Torbatov, 2002), according to functionality such as those in Northern Gallia for example (Brulet, 1990, 118 sqq) or according to the legal status.

Another criterion is used by Denys Pringle (2001, 139 sqq.), who performs a classification of all types of fortifications, from the Byzantine period in Africa, according to their size, distinguishing three types: 1. "Towers" (*turres*, *burgi*) with areas between 0.05 and 1.75 ha, 2. Fortresses / "Fortlets and forts" (*castra*, *castella*) and 3. Fortifications, citadels, cities protected by the wave / "fortresses, citadels, town walls" , those with an area greater than 1.75 / 1.80 ha.

The *Limes* practically protected against aggression with the help of constituents, as it artificially created the feeling of a „moral barrier” in front of what was the unknown world. It does not close but allows the peaceful migration of nomads, the passage of merchants and the departure of Roman troops from the Roman territory to carry out explorations in the barbarous territory (Rocco, 2010, 47).

In Europe and Africa, the border area could include not only the border provinces but also spaces under the supervision of the Roman military units located in Barbaricum, and when Romanization was advanced it could be moved to a linear structure, where troops were concentrated (Rocco, 2010, 48). The concept of "advanced defense" can be used for the Dacia reality. (Rocco, 2010, 49), where the *Dacian limes* was made (Gudea, 1997, passim.) The Roman state, which became Empire under Augustus, never actually admitted the idea of negotiating an external boundary for the sovereign power - *imperium* (Mommsen, 1981, 45 sqq.; Halgan, 1981, 79 sqq.), Since it was confused with the entire known world, even though in practice it was necessary to have a limit, argues Pol Trouset (1993b, 115 sqq.) and Javier Arce (1996, 71 sqq.). There is no principle of reciprocity of border rights in relations with *externae gentes*

¹⁵ These could be *hiberna* (fixed) or *aestiva* (mobile).

(Cadiou, Moret, 2009, 5). In other words, that „Roma¹⁶ that gave other nations boundaries could not have them for themselves" (Troussset, 1993ab, 120), because the Romans believed in *imperium sine fine* (Vergilius, *Eneida*, I, 280), being a state continuously expanding and as a result with dynamic boundaries (Willems, 1989, 34) or open borders (Isaac, B., 1993, 105).

However, the governors could know precisely what belongs to their province or not, and the reason for this rigorous delimitation is administrative and fiscal, given that before being a territory, the province represents, according to Patrick Le Roux (2003, 15), the essence of the legal-political relations established between Rome and the subject populations. The political limit is evident especially in the east, where Rome has never succeeded in integrating the populations from its axis of jurisdiction, in the Roman ideology, so that it put in place the author's belief, an imaginary geography, which included the respective world in an anti- world (Seneca, *Lettres a Lucilius*, CXXII, 2.), becoming an identity folding place. In fact, more than territory, this border delimits human communities with religious, civil or military practices, very different mentalities, which, in the chosen space, creates the feeling of belonging to the Roman reality, more global.

In the 70s of the last century, Owen Latimore (1962, 480) made a distinction between areas that could be determined geographically:

1. unified by military actions,
2. centralized through uniformization of the civil administration
3. economically integrated.

Starting from the vision of Owen Latimore and from the concrete case of Muntenia (Bogdan Cătănciu, 1997, 57), which was annexed by Traian, but then „left in the middle” by Hadrian (Eutropius, *Brevirium ab urbe condita*), it is possible to speak we believe of the territories that belong to the Empire at one time, but the situation does not become definitive. Ioana Bogdan Cătănciu (2009, 198) explains the different treatment of the territories conquered in the North of the Danube by the fact that the Romanians did not refer to the geographical space but to the populations that inhabited them. Thus, although it was occupied for two decades, Muntenia was not colonized nor integrated into the urbanization process. The same will happen with Dacia, from which Aurelian orders the withdrawal of the army and administration after previously the Roman authority over the province had been lost during Gallienus.

Charles R. Whittaker (1989, 209), will return to the opinion of the 80s of the twentieth century and would later assert that the Romans never had a planned and sophisticated imperial strategy. Basically, borders were for Romanians, often administrative boundaries rather than a line of separation between Romanians and barbarians (Leveau, 1990, 896). Thus, they were not a barrier but a transient space (Leveau, 1990, 897). The idea of a transition zone is also accepted by Alexandru Madgearu (Madgearu 1999, 51.). At the same time, Immanuel Wallerstein (1983, 300) and James I. Miller (1998, 170) propose a comparative analysis of two social systems, the Roman and the barbarian that come to interact, one from the center position and the other from the periphery. The Romanian territory, is defined by Jean Michel Carrié (1995, 49) by its tax obligations, by the legal status of its inhabitants, by the obedience to the laws of the Empire, which legally determines that the border is between the Roman and the non-Roman ones. it is precisely known what it is. At the same time, the territory is a legal-political space to which individuals belong to different extent, depending on their personal status, and the border delimits the change of their rights and obligations towards the state (Carrié, 1995, 49).

Regarding the structure of the border, and the Hungarian professor Zolt Visy (2002, 71-75) makes a classification according to the local geography: *ora* (maritime border), the *ripa* (river border)¹⁷ and *limes* (artificial land border). For Pannonia the same specialist speaks of „*limes road*” or of the *ripa* (Visy, 2003, 131-134). In the same sense, Pol Troussset (1993a, 26; 1993c, 141-152). carries out a suggestive lexical analysis. Indeed, in Latin there are four terms that can be grouped two by two, in

¹⁶ The Roman world (*Orbis Romanus*), which is clearly individualized by the other numerous populations beyond the Rhine and the Danube, does not recognize any limit to its domination, nor to the annexation of a neighboring barbarous territory, imposing then a policy of peace (*Pax Romana*), which does not it will allow later withdrawal beyond the space already conquered. (Mommsen, 1981, 64 sqq.)

¹⁷ *Ripa Thraciae*, corresponding to the customs constituency between the Haemus Mountains and Danube (the prefecture of the Danube bank in the pre-provincial period (Bogdan-Cătănciu, 1993, 2004, n.2.) or *ripa Histri*.

relation to metonymy or antinomy: *finis*¹⁸ and *terminus* on the one hand and *limes*, respectively *ripa* on the other. Also, the meanings of the concept of *limes* are different from those of the term of *ripa*, geographical name and then notion of military administration. In Tacitus (*Annales*, II) and in *Vita Hadriani* (12), the latter appears with the significance of the shore of a flowing water, natural boundary: „places where barbarians are not separated from the Roman territory by rivers, but by mere conventional borders (*limitibus*)". With time and these two notions will merge. (Tudor 1976, 132 sqq.)

Thus, if the *terminus* and *finis* belong to the ideal semantic field, one sacred and the other profane, the *limes* belongs to the material-profane field, having the sense of military border (Issac, 1988, p. 125 sqq.), The control area in which it is located. in garrisons legions and auxiliary units (Troussset, 1993b, 115-120). The term of *finis* means the imperceptible and fluctuating limit of the periphery of what is *orbis Romanus*. From a *limes* perspective, it is difficult to determine exactly where *finis imperii* are (Troussset, 1993b, 120). In turn, C.R. Wittaker, (1994, 68) writes: „It is true that two places are marked as *fines Romanorum* on a section of the *Peutinger Table* depicting Syria and Mesopotamia, a medieval copy of a fourth-century A.D. Roman road map. But apart from dating difficulties, these *fines* look as if they were the boundary between the provinces of a client state (possibly Palmyra), since underneath one is written *fines exercitus Syriaticae*, showing where the military responsibility of the Roman army ended.” Same author is convinced that: "*Termini* and *fines*, therefore, referred to the limits of internal order, not of military power. *Propagatio terminorum* did not contradict the idea of fixed boundaries." (Whittaker 1994, 24-25). It was a religious formula for the proper advance of the boundaries, establishing a "dynamic stability" in order of the state. "As a result, the two terms, *fines* and *limes* are antithetical.

In this context, being semantically from the concept of *fines* (borders, borders), finishes (border, limit), the *limes* reaches its classical period of evolution, the 2nd-4th centuries AD, to represent a space under Roman military protection, an area at the same time contact and asserting the supremacy of a superior civilization. To be beyond *limes*, in exile, was equivalent to the Romanians with a legal death, a deprivation of "water and fire", that is to leave the city, to live among the monsters ("*wilder people fiercer than wolves*"), as the poet Ovid (*Tristele*, V, 7, 45-46) suggests. When a prisoner of war returned to the Empire, he returned "*in fines nostros*", by virtue of "*jus postliminium*" (Smith, 1875) or right of return „*jus postliminium*" (Smith, 1875) sau drept de reîntoarcere « *Postliminio redisse uidetur, cum in fines nostros intrauerit, sicuti amittitur, ubi fines nostros excessit. sed et si in ciuitatem sociam amicamue aut ad regem socium uel amicum uenerit, statim postliminio redisse uidetur, quia ibi primum nomine publico tutus esse incipiat.* » (*Digeste Justiniani*, 49, 15, 19, 3.).

In the second century it is completed by a road (Issac, 1988, 125) following the border line, along which are arranged: troops (legions and auxiliary troops) enclosed in fortifications (*castra, castella, burgi, turres, specula*¹⁹), and in some cases, the defense is reinforced with waves of earth that have defense ditches and sometimes palisades or stone walls. There is practically a dense road network, which mobilizes, in the second and third centuries, the whole Roman army from the Lower Danube for example (Vlădescu 1994, 436-437; Vlădescu, Barnea 1994, 313, col 2.). The communication between the fortifications is ensured by means of strategic roads (*via militaris*), parallel to the wave (Vlădescu, Barnea 1994, 314, col.1.) In this way, the *limes* becomes what is called a fortified border in continuous dynamics or "*constantly evolving*" (Chevallier, R 1972, *passim.*). A macro-regional boundary between the empire and the barbarian world, preserving until the Byzantine era this line between Oikumene and Barbaricum (Madgearu, 1999, 41). The *Limes* is a military boundary and a symbol by which populations are kept at a distance and their movements controlled. At the same time, politically, administratively and economically, we are talking about a permeable, "fluid" barrier (Maxfield, 1989, p. 157), which facilitates communication, does not prevent it. Of course, there are many different situations depending on the region. In the East, for example, where the Romans failed to integrate the parties, in their axis of Roman jurisdiction and ideology, the barrier is practically an imaginary geography, which includes them in a sort of antilume, if they were to we give Seneca (*Lettres à Lucilius*, CXXII, 2) belief.

¹⁸ With the sense of border or limit, beyond which was *Barbaricum*. (Fabian, 2006, 219).

¹⁹ *Specula* – square shaped observation towers that signaled to each other through torches, as represented on Trajan's Column. (Vulpe 1988, 21 sqq.; Timoc, 2001, 97) .

5. CONCLUSION

As a result, the meaning of the term, which is merely a technical name of the border from a military point of view (Zahariade 1994, *passim.*), will know different connotations in time, given that, as part of the strategy applied to the borders of the Empire, the emperors Romanians will constantly try to adapt to various situations. Moreover, Charles R. Whittaker (1994, 223) observes that during the crisis of the Empire, during the centuries II-III, the border area will be enlarged continuously, so that the barbarian provincial could no longer be distinguished. In the second half of the third century, a change in military architecture can be noticed, which borrows from the civilian the lavish style, as R. Fellmann (1976, 186) observes.

From the point of view of Roman jurisprudence, the *limes* of the provinces is only a tactical border, lacking a formally attested legal value, a *de facto* border, which does not include all the territories subject to the Roman Empire and which enjoys *Pax Romana*, after as Marco Rocco (2010, 48) observes. In other words, the *limes* is a military fortified control line and not a political demarcation, based on the concept of "*frontier-territory*" specific to the Roman people promoting an expansionist policy.

Later, in the IV-VI centuries, the idea of the natural obstacle, in political and military practice, returns to the meanings of the two terms, *fines* and *limes*, respectively, to coincide, so that during the reign of Justinian the role of *limes* disappears (Mann, 1974, 531).

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