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Below is the requested information for the FIEC-Conference 2009:

Definite Title of the lecture:

**Edge of Empire or Center of Commerce: a case study for interaction across the
limes in northwestern Dacia**

Language: English

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Final Abstract:

In AD 106, immediately following the Roman success in the Dacian Wars, several strongholds were established in the new province which is roughly the area of modern Transylvania. Most notable of these are Ulpia Traiana (Sarmizegethusa), Apulum, Napoca and Porolissum. While there are certainly others, these four are evenly spaced locations on a major road extending from the center of Roman Dacia to the northwestern *limes*. Porolissum is the terminus of this road and its structures are integrated with the border defense system. However, although the *Roman* road may end at Porolissum, the route itself continues well into Barbaricum. This paper extends the study of Roman Dacia beyond its borders. I will examine the systems of interconnection in a region that straddles the Roman border in an effort to determine the nature and range of communication and the patterns thereof as well as determining the level of porosity of the *limes* in northwestern Dacia.

Two constructed features at the walls of Porolissum indicate not only that the road continued on, but that it was a major entry point into the Empire. The first feature is a large enclosure which has been identified as a detaining area for incoming traffic. Whether or not the identification of this space is correct, the second structure, a customs station on the west side of the road, further attests to the fact that Porolissum was not merely an end, but also a point of entry. The full realization of the site as an entry point

cannot be assessed in a monograph-type study as has been the trend. Only through a regional topographic study can Porolissum be truly placed into its proper context.

Primary components of the region which would have naturally determined traffic and trade in the Roman period are ridges and rivers. Both determine the most efficient route by obstruction by the former, conductivity of the latter. A simple overview of the geography reveals several rivers in northwest Transylvania, most notably the Mureş and the Someş. Water transportation was quicker and less expensive than land transportation in Antiquity and the hilly region around the *limes* only makes that efficiency more emphatic.

By establishing a model of viable connectivity in the region of Porolissum, more specific conclusions can be made concerning the external settlements that interacted with the Romans. In the absence of written accounts and epigraphy, a topographical examination, combined with the material record, is the best way to determine the nature of provincial response to the Roman occupation. The material record tells us what was exchanged between the two entities, but the topographical model provides a more refined idea concerning the origins and quantities of goods and how the Romans and the provincials interacted on a quotidian, rather than general, level.

The Roman fort at Porolissum is indicative of a continuing debate in Roman Frontier Studies. In the wider scope of the field, the military functions of the borders cannot be forsaken for the economic, nor vice-versa. Likewise, all aspects of Porolissum's interaction with the immediate region as well as the empire as a whole must be examined in tandem. While the site was certainly a terminus of the imperial road at the limits of the empire, those limits were not as concretely defined as previously thought and this paper examines the details of that flexibility.