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The problem of the lower Danube frontier in the fourth century A. D., and of the legions that garrisoned it, is one of those questions in which the legacy of the ancient literary sources is confusion. In the years since 1939, however (the first campaign of Gh. Ștefan at Dinogetia), archaeology has clarified the picture considerably. The recent discovery by the author<sup>1</sup> at Noviodunum (Isaccea) of a stamped brick confirms the general picture that has emerged as a result of the work of Gh. Ștefan and Ion Barnea.

The brick was found in September of 1972 on the beach immediately to the north of the still unexcavated mound of the Roman Danube fortress of Noviodunum<sup>2</sup>. It is fragmentary (about 15 × 13 cm), broken on all sides, and bears the first part of an inverted legionary stamp of the *legio I Iovia*. The L is eroded and the E barely legible, but „G I IO” before the break is quite clear (see fig. 1). The stamp is exactly the type of one found by Gh. Ștefan at Dinogetia<sup>3</sup>, but not identical with it if the drawing of the Dinogetia stamp is exact. The similarity extends to the width of the frame (4 cm), the height (2 cm), shape and relative position of the letters, and the strange „S” shape of the letter „G”. Like its Dinogetia counterpart the stamp lacks the ligatures of the several other varieties found by Gh. Ștefan<sup>4</sup>. If it is to be restored after the pattern of these different but more complete examples it would read LEG (*ionis*) I IOVIAE SCY(*thicae*). A brief discussion of the role of the *legio I Iovia* in the history of the lower Danube *limes*<sup>5</sup>, and the way that recent research has clarified that role, will help us to understand the importance of this particular legionary brick.

After the Aurelian evacuation of Dacia in the later third century, the fortifications of the lower Danube became even more critical to the defence of the frontier. Hence the massive construction program of Diocletian and Constantine at such strategic fortresses as

<sup>1</sup> The author was in Romania from August to December of 1972 at the invitation of the National Council for Science and Technology as part of a scholarly exchange between the National Council and the International Research and Exchanges Board of New York. Among the many who helped to make his stay a profitable one he wishes to thank especially Prof. D. M. Pippidi, Director of the Institute of Archaeology, and researchers Maria Coja and Alexandru Suceveanu.

<sup>2</sup> For a report on excavations on the northern perimeter of the fortress in 1953 and 1956 see SCIV, 5, 1954, p. 175–182; I. Barnea and B. Mitrea, *Săpăturile de salvare de la*

*Noviodunum (Isaccea)*, Materiale, 5, 1959, p. 461–473.

<sup>3</sup> Gh. Ștefan, *Dinogetia*, I, 1967, Dacia; 7–8, 1937–1940, p. 409, fig. 12, n. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, fig. 12, n. 1–3.

<sup>5</sup> For a more complete account, with a discussion of the literary and archaeological evidence, and the significance of the legionary epithet „Scythica”, cf. Gh. Ștefan, *La Legio I Iovia et la défense de la frontière danubienne au II<sup>e</sup> siècle de notre ère, Nouvelles Études d'Histoire présentées au X<sup>e</sup> Congrès des sciences historiques, Rome 1955*, Bucharest, 1955, p. 161–167.

Dinogetia <sup>6</sup>. To man the strengthened lower Danube defences two new legions were created, *legio I Iovia*, named after the cognomen of Diocletian, and *legio II Herculeia*, from that of his co-ruler, Maximian. Which fortresses were garrisoned by each of these legions was not clear, however, since the two ancient literary sources which listed the lower Danube garrisons of the fourth century contradicted each other. According to the older *Itinerarium Antonini* <sup>7</sup>, *II Herculeia* was stationed at Noviodunum and *I Iovia* at Troesmis. In the *Notitia Dignitatum* <sup>8</sup> however, the positions are reversed.



Fig. 1. — Brick stamp of the *legion I Iovia* from Noviodunum (Isaccea). Actual size.

The matter is much clearer now, however, after several decades of excavation and research on the lower Danube fortifications. The first campaign of Gh. Ștefan at Dinogetia turned up a considerable number of stamped tiles reading *LEG (ionis) I IOVIAE SCY(thicae)* <sup>9</sup>. An inscription from Tulcea published by Barnea <sup>10</sup> places the legion *I Iovia* at Aegyssus in the early fourth century. The presence of our legion at Aegyssus supports the view of V. Pârvan <sup>11</sup> that an eroded inscription of 322 from Salsovia refers also to *I Iovia*. Finally, from the excavations at Niculițel <sup>12</sup>, in the territory of Noviodunum, have come fragmentary tiles with traces of the legio-nary stamp of *I Iovia Scythica*, similar to those from Dinogetia. There could be no doubt, therefore, as a result of these discoveries, that the defence of the northern sector of the lower Danube *limes*, including Noviodunum, was in the fourth century entrusted to the *legio I Iovia*,

as the *Notitia Dignitatum* informs us.

It is, nevertheless, a welcome confirmation of this conclusion to find for the first time on the site of Noviodunum itself a stamp of the legion *I Iovia*.

Whether anything beyond this may be concluded is more difficult to say, in view of the absence of a collection of brick stamps of *I Iovia* from Noviodunum to match that from Dinogetia. One may suggest, however, that the strikingly similar Dinogetia and Noviodunum stamps could be from a single workshop. This, if true, does not, of course, prove the existence of a single center of brick production in the fourth century for these two great fortresses—on the face of it unlikely—but it does raise interesting questions about the relationship between them in terms of the manufacture and supply of construction materials. To some of these questions, we hope, answers will be supplied by further excavation at Noviodunum.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of this work of reconstruction on the lower Danube *limes*, cf. Gh. Ștefan, *Un miliario, dell'epoca di Diocleziano scoperto a Garvăn (Dinogetia)* Dacia, N.S., 1, 1957, p. 221–227.

<sup>7</sup> *Itinerarium Antonini*, p. 225–226.

<sup>8</sup> Or. XXXIX, p. 29, 32.

<sup>9</sup> Dacia, 7–8, 1937–1940, p. 408–410 and fig. 12.

<sup>10</sup> *O inscripție de la Aegyssus*, SCIV, 1, 1950, 2, p. 175–184.

<sup>11</sup> V. Pârvan, *Salsovia*, Bucurest, 1906, p. 26 C. Moisil, who first published the inscription, Convorbiri Literare, 39, 1905, p. 564, thought the reference was to the *legion I Italica*.

<sup>12</sup> SCIV, 5, 1954, 1–2, p. 186 and fig. 23.