

STAMPS ON BRICKS AND TILES OF THE ROMAN ARMY FROM THE AREA OF TRANSMARISKA

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Keywords: *Roman army, Transmariska, Danube limes, stamps on bricks and tiles, XI-th Claudia legion.*

Cuvinte cheie: *armata romană, Transmariska, limes danubian, ștampile pe cărămizi și țigle, legiunea a XI-a Claudia.*

Abstract: *The present paper aims to present to the colleges archaeologists and historians the stamps placed on bricks and tiles from the roman military forces from the area of the fortress Transmariska. In the present paper we present examples from deferent types and variants stamps placed on bricks and tiles from the XI-th Claudia legion, I-st Italic legion and Cohors I miliaria Batavorum. The archeological context of the artifacts and their accurate chronological dating allow us to mark the presence of roman troops on the Danube limes. Our additional goal is to use the archeological findings of stamp placed on bricks and tiles as a reliable source of information for the allocation of roman military forces in the area of Transmariska and create a better picture of the allocation of roman military forces on the Danube limes in province Moesia Secunda.*

Rezumat: *Articolul de față își propune să prezinte colegilor arheologi și istorici ștampilele de pe cărămizi și țigle ale trupelor militare romane din zona fortului Transmariska. În această lucrare arătăm exemple de diferite tipuri și variante de ștampile de pe cărămizi și țigle aparținând legiunilor a XI-a Claudia, I-a Italica și ale Cohors I miliaria Batavorum. Contextul archeologic al artefactelor și datarea lor precisă ne permite să marcăm prezența forțelor militare romane pe limesul danubian. Un obiectiv în plus este să utilizăm descoperirile de ștampile de pe cărămizi și țigle ca surse sigure de informație privind repartiția trupelor militare romane în arealul regiunii Transmariska și să creionăm o imagine mai clară a parcursului trupelor romane pe limesul danubian în provincia Moesia Secunda.*

The Danube limes of the Moesia Secunda province was one of the most important points on the empire's borders. Located in the immediate vicinity of the Eurasian steppes, the limes was the target of the frequent attacks from numerous barbarian tribes and groups. The stability and combat capability of the limes was of the utmost importance for the Roman Empire. Its importance is indicated by the construction of a massive system of forts and fortresses, the allocation of a large number of military forces, the creation and maintenance of a large and efficient river

* Tutrakan History Museum.

fleet. In the same time, the systems of fortification, organization and allocation of military forces are the object of drastic and dynamic changes. Those changes were in relation to the state of the Empire in general, as well as to the rising need to adapt to the changing historical conditions.

From the 3rd century on, the Danube limes, including the part comprised in the province of Moesia Secunda, suffered heavy losses. The barbarian invasions lasted for nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the century. The damages on the Danube limes were so severe that they lead to the complete removal of the old military organization, which existed during the time of the Principate, and the creation of new system. At the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century came one of the most remarkable stages in the history of the Danube limes during the Dominate era. The border defense of the Roman Empire, and more specifically of the Moesia Secunda province, was reconstructed from top to bottom. Emperor Diocletian lie the groundwork of those grandiose administrative, political, economic and military reforms that took place during that time period of the empire's history. It is believed that the Legio I Italica and the Legio XI Claudia were allocated mainly to their respective castra legionaria – Novae and Durostorum while the remaining coastline of the right bank of Danube river was guarded by vexillationes from the two legions and independent cohorts. The structures of the *pedaturae superioris* and *pedaturae inferioris* type did not seem to exist in the case of the respective legions¹.

There are still unclear details in what concerns the organization of the Danubian limes of the province of Moesia Secunda during the reforms of Emperor Diocletian, at the end of 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century. The few and scarce written sources and epigraphic documents do not allow for the recreation of a precise and detailed image of the Roman military organization at the Lower Danube border during that time period². In the present paper we will concentrate on the stamps that the Roman military forces placed on bricks and tiles. Those stamps accurately present information pertinent to the allocation of the military forces in the vicinity of Transmariska.

We must start with the stamps of the types **F** and **G** (*images 1 and 2*) from the Legio XI –Claudia, dated to the end of the 3rd and the very beginning of the 4th century, that is, the time of the first Tetrarchy³. Type **F** is represented by the stamp **LEGXICLFTRM**, while type **G** is represented by the stamp **LEGXICLFCAND**. The stamps translated as Legio XI Claudia figlinus Transmariska and Legio XI Claudia figlinus Candidiana, respectively. Bricks with such stamps were found in seven fortified locations of the legion's territory on the Danubian limes, near the modern cities of Tutrakan and Silistra: at the castellum Appiaria, at Transmariska, Nigrinianis, Candidiana, at the fort near the modern village of Popina, at Tegulitium and Durostorum. During the excavations in Tutrakan from 1989 to 1997 more than 200 bricks with stamps of types **F** and **G** were found. One of the stamp is variant 1 of the **G** type (*image 3*) and provides information pertinent to the allocation of the military

¹ Zahariade 1986.

² Aricescu 1980.

³ Mușețeanu *et alii* 1979, p. 169-171.

force of the legion during that time. The toponym **CAND** contains in its ligature the marking **PS** – we suggest that the marking **PS** must be read as *pedaturae superioris*⁴. Stamps of the legion with similar abbreviation exist also in Upper Moesia and Dacia. Those are the stamps of the types **LEX XIII G PS** and **LEG VII CL PS**⁵.

We consider that the allocation of the Legio XI Claudia during the reorganization of the military forces, undertaken by the emperor Diocletian, is marked by bricks with stamps of the **F** and **G** types (both placed from the end of the 3rd century until the reform of Constantine I). The cohorts of the *pedaturae inferioris* were under the command of the Praefectus ripae legionis XI Claudiae with residence in Durostorum. During that period the *limes* was under the direct control of the Legio XI Claudia and the territory was fully occupied by the legion's military forces.

During the archeological excavations on the northern fortress wall, in the sector positioned east of tower 2, we found several early types of the stamps of the Legio XI⁶. The stamps in question were three, two of the **A** type, variant 2 (*image 4*). The existence of stamps of the **A** type, variant 2 is the evidence for the allocation of the legion's forces in Transmariska at the time of the legion's arrival in the province of Moesia Inferior⁷. Another newly found stamp is of the **H** type, and dates from the 2nd or the 1st half of the 3rd century⁸. The important fact is that the *vexillatores* of the Legio XI Claudia were located in Transmariska during that time period. Their allocation to Transmariska took place during the same time as that of the Cohors I Luisitanorum Cyrenaica, from the year 99 to the end of the 3rd century.

We would like to point out that in most cases the stamps of the **G** type of the Legio XI Claudia bear the text **LEGXICLFCAND**, with the letters **A** and **N** used in the ligature of **CAND**. In different variant of the same stamp, when using **A** and **N** is added in ligature the marking **PS**. We believe that the latter must be read as *Pedaturae Superioris* that is the upper or first part of a legion.

During the archeological excavations a stamp of the Legio I Italica legion was found, seen as an early type of such stamp⁹. Its recovery suggests that parts of the legion were allocated to the settlement from the very beginning, at the end of the first half of the 1st century, before the coming of the Legio XI Claudia.

Another group of stamps that we would like to present came from the Roman encampment near the modern village of Dolno Riahovo, the Glavinica municipality. We will start with the stamp of Cohors I miliaria Batavorum (*image 5*) – the first double Batavorum cohort. The encampment was small – only 4.5 acres - which was unusual for a double cohort. The unusual small size of the fortification is the reason for the assumption that only one separated *centuria* was allocated there. The stamp dates from the period between the years 86 to 98, the same period as the very construction of the fortification. The encampment was used from the 2nd century to the

⁴ Petkov 1999.

⁵ Шарановић-Светек 1990.

⁶ Раупов 2005, p.141-146.

⁷ Mușețeanu *et alii* 1979.

⁸ Mușețeanu *et alii* 1980.

⁹ Matuszewska 2006.

end of the first half of the 3rd century¹⁰. Under these circumstances, Cohors I miliaria Batavorum was the earliest military force allocated on that part of the Danube limes, known for now.

From the same encampment we have and a stamp placed on an imbrex of the First Italic legion, and two other stamps, again on an imbrex, from the Legio XI Claudia of the A type, variant 2. Those imbrices were all dated to the period of active use of the encampment – the 2nd century.

The stamps of the Roman military forces presented here, provide information regarding the dynamic changes and the functionality of the Danube limes in the area of the fortress Transmariska from the 1st to the 4th century. The stamps of the Legio XI Claudia legion are an indication that after the arrival of the Legio XI Claudia in that part of the empire and the establishment of its residency in Durostorum in the 2nd I century, the Legio XI Claudia has a systemic presence on that part of the limes. It is worth mentioning that no written source to support such a hypothesis. In his Geography, Claudius Ptolemy does not situate Transmariska in his mentioning of the other settlements, from the west to the east, but he positioned it after Durostorum¹¹, where already resided the Legio XI Claudia. We believe that it was not an error, but he aimed to show the submitted nature of Transmariska to the legion's centre, Durostorum.

We hope future archaeological excavations and further research will present the archeological science with new stamps of the Roman military forces allocated to this part of the Danube limes. This would allow for a more accurate picture of the dynamic events that took place at the Empire's border.

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¹⁰ Vagalinski 2004.

¹¹ Кацаров, /Дечев 1949.

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1



2

Plate I. 1 – *F* type stamp of XI-th Claudia legion; 2 – *G* type stamp of XI-th Claudia legion.



1



2



3

Plate II. 1 – *G* type stamp, variant 1, of XI-th Claudia legion; 2 – *A* type stamp of XI-th Claudia legion; 3 - Stamp of Cohors I miliaria Batavorum.

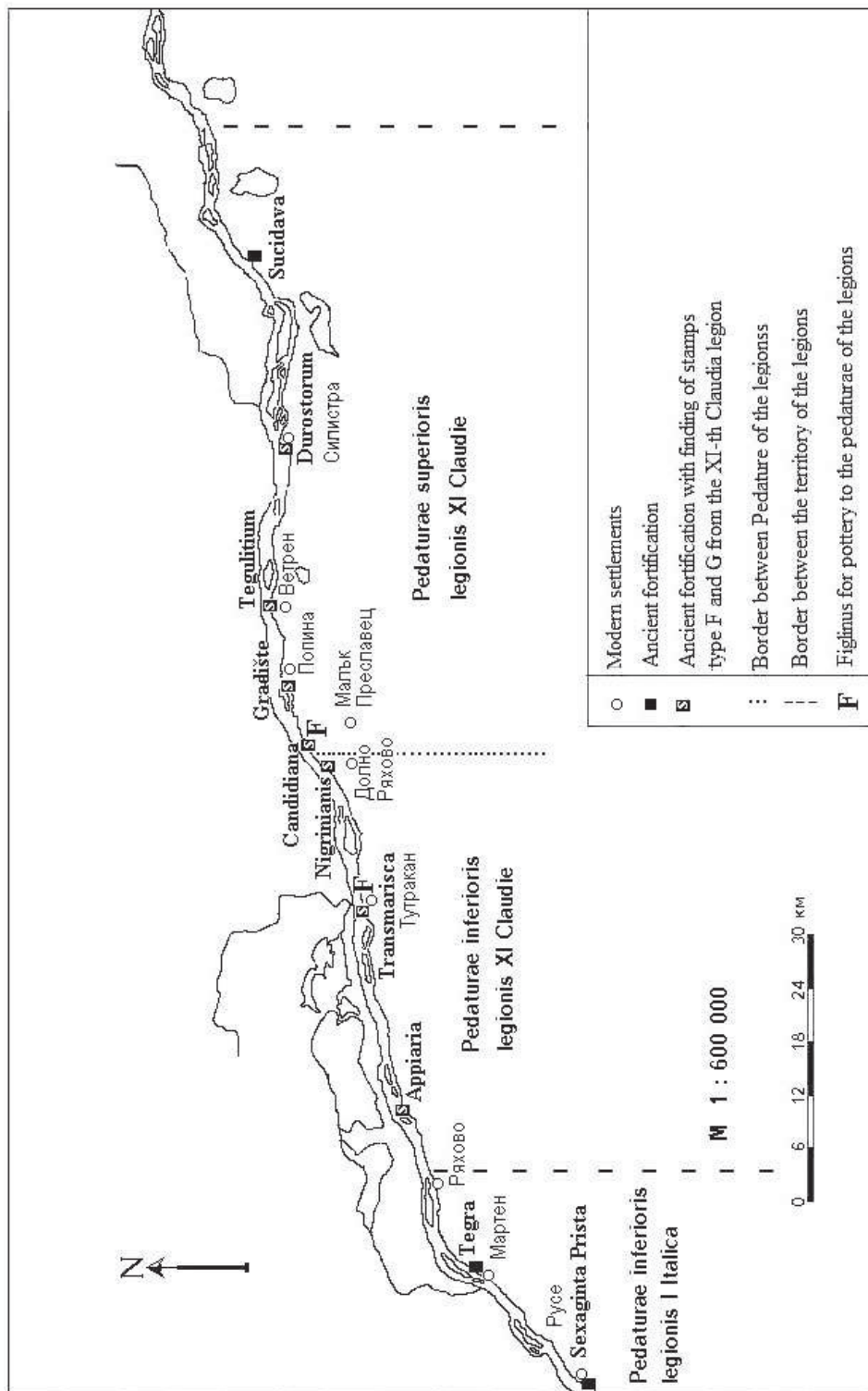


Plate III. Map of the IX-th Claudia legion on the Danube limes in the end of III-rd and beginning of the IV-th century.