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DISTRIBUTION SPREAD OF BUILDING CERAMICS OF LOWER MOESIAN LEGIONS AND AUXILIARY TROOPS

Abstract: This paper compiles information on the sites where stamped bricks and tiles of the Lower Moesian army (legions, cohorts, alae and classis) have been discovered. The analysis is also concerned with the locations of artefacts associated with the army in military (castra), semi-military (canabae and nearby vici) as well as civilian (towns, villae rusticae) contexts.[1]

The author also reviews existing publications on the subject, as well as provides maps of distribution networks. According to the author, there is no convincing evidence of the supply of military building ceramics in Lower Mesa for civilian use. It should be noted, however, there is no shortage of them at semi-military sites in canabae and vici near military strongholds. Coming across bricks and tiles of a specific military unit in a particular location does not immediately mean that the manufacturer of these artifacts was stationed there.

The material may have been transported to specific military facilities. Based on the maps included in the article, we can see the productive activity as well as the military activity of the lower moesian army during the Principate period. It was not the purpose of this text to present a detailed analysis of the logistics of military building ceramics in Lower Moesia because it is a very complex process, requiring further, separate very in-depth studies.

Keywords: building ceramics, stamp impressions, bricks, roof tiles, Roman legions, auxiliary units, distribution

State of research

The legions stationed in Lower Moesia were the largest producers of building ceramics, which they manufactured primarily for their own use. Hence, it would be a truism to state that such material is discovered chiefly among the remnants of structures built by soldiers. However, relics are also found in sites that were clearly non-military. Numerous studies to date have deliberated on how and why building ceramics was distributed to such locations[2], while their authors advanced

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[2] For a comprehensive overview of literature until 2006 see Kurzmann 2006, pp. 109–140.

various conjectures, arguing for instance that the army was involved in civilian construction or engaged in barter (bricks for grain). Nonetheless, recent research has demonstrated that instances of such practices were relatively few and, when they did take place, they should be attributed to local circumstances (e.g. politics: the case of Sarmizegetusa).[3]

Those local conditions are an object of interest mainly to military historians and archaeologists of the Roman provinces, who analyze the spread of military bricks and tiles. This is due to the fact that having their locations catalogued enables one to determine where individual legions and auxiliary troops were stationed and facilitates mapping distribution ranges. Consequently, one obtains valuable information concerning the logistics and relocation of troops. Also, stamped building ceramics offers an excellent source for research into the organization of work in military workshops as well as a dating tool to determine the stages of reconstruction of masonry or ceramic floors.

One of the studies which provides a comprehensive catalogue of stamped building ceramics is *Der untermoesische Donaulimes und die Verteidigung der moesischen Nord- und Westküste des Schwarzen Meeres Limes et litus Moesia Inferioris (86–275 AD)*[4] by Nicolae Gudea. With respect to the issue in question, the work largely relies on Tadeusz Sarnowski's article entitled "Legionsziegel an militärischen und zivilen Bauplätzen der Prinzipatszeit der Prinzipatszeit in Niedermoesien".[5] Also, the section on the distribution of legionary building ceramics in Lower Moesia in "Untersuchungen zu den Ziegelstempeln römischer Legionen in den nordwestlichen Provinzen des Imperium Romanum"[6] by Urlich Brandl or in the more recent book by Thomas Schmidt, i.e. *Gestempelte Militärziegel ausserhalb der Truppenstandorte. Untersuchungen zur Bautätigkeit der römischen Armee und zur Disposition ihres Baumaterials*[7] draw on that study as well. Furthermore, there is no shortage of studies that map the distribution range of selected military units.[8]

Methodology is one of the major challenges for investigations into the spread of building ceramics in Lower Moesia, particularly in certain earlier studies (notably those dating from the 1950s–1960s, mainly archaeological reports). That kind of material was quite often disregarded, and when it was included, information such as the exact location of the find, the archaeological context, or the number of discovered artefacts was lacking. Not infrequently, photographs and drawings were not provided either. Still, it has to be noted that the authors of the earliest publications (XIXth century and the first half of the XXth century) usually had no such data to share, as they would document loose artefacts discovered on the surface of the ruins, items deposited in local museums and schools or brought by the local community. Even so, impressions of stamps on building ceramics drew attention of travellers-documentarians such as Karel Škorpil[9] and, in many cases, their notes constitute the only source of knowledge about the discovery of bricks and tiles at particular locations. In recent decades, the quality of publications on stamped building ceramics from Lower Moesia has substantially improved, primarily due to the quantity of available material. After all, stamped bricks and roof tiles are currently an abundant type of relic as a result of extensive archaeological research. It is the second most frequently discovered category of archaeological artefacts after vessel pottery. Therefore, there is still much to be done in this particular area of investigations.

[3] Schmidts 2018, p. 171.
[4] Gudea 2005.
[5] Sarnowski 1995.
[6] Brandl 1999, pp. 48–53, 97–101, 137–145.
[7] Schmidts 2018, pp. 126–128.
[8] See e.g. Stăicuţ 2017, p. 55, Fig. 11: when developing the map, the author relied on papers from the 1970s and 1980s, while failing to include more recent literature, such as Sarnowski's article from 1997 or the 2005 study by Nicolae Gudea.
[9] Škorpil 1905, pp. 443–502; Škorpil 1914.

Aim of the study

The scholarly literature cited above needs to be supplemented. First, researchers studying the distribution range of building ceramics have focused their attention on the legions whilst neglecting the auxiliary forces. The aforementioned work by N. Gudea and studies on the history of individual auxilia are an exception in that regard.[10] Second, those works were published decades ago and the information they contain is not up to date. Admittedly, Th. Schmidts' work is relatively recent, though with regard to Lower Moesia it also relies on earlier literature, mainly articles by Tadeusz Sarnowski. For these reasons, the distribution maps of the building ceramics produced by Lower Moesian legions and auxiliary troops requires additions, revisions and corrections (Maps 1–6).[11] Also, one should re-examine the discoveries of military building ceramics at civilian sites, as the knowledge of the latter is now more extensive. Consequently, the aim of this paper is to develop new maps of the distribution range of building ceramics produced by the Lower Moesian contingent. The maps in question are not just mere visualizations of data, but another building block for further, more advanced research, especially concerning chronological distribution network of military bricks and tiles in Lower Moesia. To that end, it is also necessary to devise new typologies of both military and private stamp impressions on building ceramics, which should be informed to a greater extent by chronological rather than on typically epigraphic-paleographical criteria, notably with respect to the imprints on bricks and tiles of legio I Italica at Novae. Furthermore, this author does not engage in the debate on the existence or size of the legionary territories,[12] the subject of inquiry by Harald Petrikovits, Barnabás Lőrincz, Geza Alföldy[13] — or Emilia Doruţiu-Boilă[14] and T. Sarnowski[15] in the case of Lower Moesia — as they are known to have been within the range of the Gallic league (*leuga*).[16]

In this paper, the presumed territorial extent of Lower Moesia overlaps with the borders established during the reign of Septimius Severus.[17] The surviving stamped bricks and tiles from that area where produced by six legions (legio V Macedonica, legio I Italica, legio XI Claudia, legio I Minervia, legio VII Claudia, legio XIII Gemina), nine auxiliary cohorts (cohors I Bracarorum civium Romanorum, cohors III [...],[18] cohors I Claudia Sugambrorum [Sugambrum] veterana equitata, cohors II Chalcidenorum sagittariorum, cohors I Cilicum milliaria equitata sagittariorum, cohors I Lusitanorum Cyrenaica, cohors I Ubiorum equitata, cohors II Mattiacorum, cohors II Flavia Brittonum),[19] two auxiliary cavalry units (ala Flavia Gallorum, ala I Pannoniorum) and the Moesian fleet (classis Flavia Moesica). Nearly all of the troops listed above were based in Lower Moesia (temporarily and permanently, both as entire units and vexillationes) with the exception of legio VII Claudia, whose tile was discovered only at Durostorum,[20] and legio XIII Gemina's at Sucidava.[21] The stamp impression of legio VIII Augusta from Selanovtsi was not included either,[22] as in this case an interpretation or inventory error is likely to have occurred.[23] On the other hand, as regards the stamps of legio I Minervia, they were found only in Novae,

[10] At this point one should mention the work by Florian Matei-Popescu, see Matei-Popescu 2010.

[11] For instance, information about the discovery of a brick stamped by Legio I Italica at Flaviana (Rasova) was nowhere to be found, cf. Sarnowski 1997, p. 499 and Doruţiu-Boilă 1990, p. 261 or misplacement of some points on the map by Sarnowski 1997, p. 501 (e.g. Cuza Voda).

[12] Kurzmann 2006, pp. 256–262.

[13] Schmidts 2018, pp. 161–162.

[14] Doruţiu-Boilă 1972, pp. 45–62.

[15] Sarnowski 1988.

[16] Piso 1991, pp. 131–169.

[17] Gerov 1998, pp. 437–467.

[18] The full name of this military unit has not been preserved.

[19] As far as auxiliary troops are concerned, their bases changed quite frequently, therefore the Map includes only those determined in Lower Moesia.

[20] CIL III 14597, 2.

[21] Tudor 1960, p. 338, Fig. 2.13.

[22] Karadmitrova 2004, pp. 105–106 and 115.

[23] The photograph in the paper (Karadimitrova 2004, p. 126, Fig. 26) shows the impression of the stamp of legio I Italica which is fairly frequent at Novae.

where the legion stayed in the course of Trajan's Dacian War;[24] the unit was not a part of the permanent contingent deployed to Lower Moesia.

The analysis encompasses stamp impressions on bricks and roof tiles which, having been produced by the Moesian army, were later discovered in Oltenia, Wallachia and the Black Sea coast including the Crimea. Finds from Dacia and Upper Moesia were included as well, as without such data the mapping of the distribution ranges would be incomplete.

The timeframe of this study covers only the period when Lower Moesia functioned as a province, but in several cases stamp impressions from the Late Roman period were taken into account as well, given that they represent an integral part of several existing typologies.[25] It should be stressed that the process of production and distribution of military building ceramics in late antiquity differed significantly from the established practice during the Principate.[26] It would therefore be necessary to ask quite different research questions. It is also worth noting that a number of publications on stamped building ceramics are confined to contemporary national borders, separating the Bulgarian part of Lower Moesia from the Romanian part (Dobrudja)[27], whereby this division is not adopted solely in publications on building ceramics.

Stamp impressions of the Moesian legions

1. Legio I Italica

The stamp impressions on bricks and tiles from Novae have so far been classified in three typologies [Tab. 1]. T. Sarnowski distinguished 32 types further subdivided into variants,[28] while Marta Matuszewska developed a very similar one, spanning 32 types, but expanded it to include new variants with their respective subvariants.[29] The third, comprising three groups with variants, was devised by N. Gudea. Legio I Italica arrived in Novae after 70 AD and remained there until around 435.[30] This explains such a large number of distinct variants: while Lower Moesia existed (86–270), the legion used at least 217 matrix designs.[31]

a. Discovery sites in Lower Moesia [Map 1]**:**

1. Augustae: LEGIT[LI;[32]
2. Variana (Selanovtsi [Rahovska]): LEG I ITAL;[33]
3. Baykal: LEG I ITAL;[34]
4. Oescus: LEGITAL; LEGITALI; PROCV LEGITAL; VETIA LEGITAL; FIR LEGITAL; MAX LEGITAL; LEGITAL;[35]
5. Obnova: LEGIITAL;[36]

[24] Sarnowski 1987, pp. 107–122.

[25] This applies particularly to the stamped building ceramics of legio I Italica, as I did not intend to break the typologies down even further.

[26] Cf. Sarnowski 1991, pp. 9–32.

[27] E.g. Karadmitrova 2004, pp. 103–128.

[28] Sarnowski 1983, pp. 17–61.

[29] Matuszewska 2006, pp. 45–63.

[30] It is possible that legio I Italica was stationed in Novae until 432, see Sarnowski 2005, pp. 223-230.

[31] Sarnowski 1983, pp. 34–39.

[32] Mašov 1983, p. 98, Fig. 13, no. 9. Fragmentary stamp, showing only LEGIIT…; the remainder has not been preserved. I am disinclined to assume that it should be read as LEGIIT(ALI), cf. Sarnowski 1997, p. 499.

[33] Filov 1911, p. 275; Sarnowski 1997, 499; Karadimitrova 2004, 115: LEGIITAL (VI-121).

[34] Kalinka 450; Škorpil 1905, p. 465; Sarnowski 1997, 499; Karadmitrova 2004, p. 114, Cat. 29 (VI 119, VI 66).

[35] Ivanov 2002, pp. 7–92.

[36] Tomas 2016, p. 28; Gerasimova-Tomova 1986, pp. 26–32.

Tab. 1. Typologies of stamp impressions of legio I Italica

Author	Sarnowski 1983	Gudea 2003	Matuszewska 2006
Typology [cont. from prev. page]	Type I: LEG I ITALICAE;II: LEG I ITALIC;III: LEGI I ITALI;IV: LEG I ITALI;V: LEG I ITALE;VI: LEG I ITAL; VII: LEG I ITAL ANT;VIII: LEG I ITAL ALE; IX: LEG I IT ALE; X: [LEG I] ITA; XI: LEG ITAL; XII: LEG I AN; XIII LEG IT; XIV LE I ITAL; XV: ITAL FI COR; XVI: LE PI FIGV CRT V XVII: LEG I ITA C ∞; XVIII: LE P I FI COR; XIX: MRVLO COS; XX: [illegible]; XXI: LEGXICPF, XXII: ALSOL; XXIII: VETIA XXIV: [illegible]; XXV: C ATON M; C ATO M; C ANTO M, CATO; XXVI: LCOELPRIMI; XXVII: MARC; XXVIII: ERI; XXIX: LEG I M PF; XXX: CEMEL; XXXI: RUMORID; XXXII: IIP or IIF;	Type G1: 1. LEGIITALICAE; 2. LEGIITALIC; 3. LEGIITALI; 4. LEGIITAL; 5. LEGIITA; 6. LEGIIT; G2: 7. LEGITAL; 8. LEGITA; G3: 9. LEIITAL Variants: LEGIITAL LEGIITALA LEGIITALAL LEGIITALALE LEGIITALANT LEGIITALE LEGIITALS LEGIITALT LEGIITAL LEGIITAL LEGIITAL卐 LEGIITAL	I: LEG I ITALICAE;II: LEG I ITALIC;III: LEGI I ITALI;IV: LEG I ITALI;V: LEG I ITALE;VI: LEG I ITAL; VII: LEG I ITAL ANT;VIII: LEG I ITAL ALE; IX: LEG I IT ALE; X: [LEG I] ITA; XI: LEG ITAL; XII: LEG I AN; XIII LEG IT; XIV LE I ITAL; XV: ITALFIGCOR; XVI: LEPIFIGVCRTV or LEPIFIGVCHRTV;XVII: LEGIITAFIC; XVIII LEPIFICOHR, LEPIFICOR; XIX: MRVLOCOSLEGIITAL; XX: [illegible]; XXI: LEGXICPF, LEGXICPP, XICPP; XXII: ALSOL; XXIII: VETIA XXIV: [illegible]; XXV: C ATONM; C ANTO M; XXVI: LCOELPRIMI; XXVII: MARC; XXVIII: ERI; XXIX: LEG I M PF; XXX: CEMEL XXXI: RVMORID; XXXII: IIP or IIF; XXXIII: [illegible]; XXXIV: [illegible[; XXXV: VREL; XXXVI: [illegible]; XXXVII: N; XXXVIII: LEGV MC; XXXIX: [illegible] XL: ΑΛΕΞ COΛ

6. Nikopol I: LEGIITAL;[37]
7. Dimum: LEGIITAL; LEGIITALI;[38]
8. Svishtov: LEGIITAL; LEGIITALI;[39]

[37] Tomas 2006, p. 156.

[38] Kalinka 454; Škorpil 1905, 459; Karadmitrova 2004, pp. 119–120 (Type IV 5, IV 11, VI 61–65, VI 108–109): LEGIITAL; LEGIITALI.

[39] CIL III 785, 1; 6239; 7617; Sarnowski 1997, p. 499.