

A DETACHMENT OF *LEGIO VII CLAUDIA* AT CIOROIUL NOU, (DOLJ COUNTY, ROMANIA)

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Cioroiul Nou appears to have been one of the most important Roman settlement in the area of the Romanian Plain. Its urban characteristic (Tudor 1968, 315), the abundant archaeological (Tudor 1965, 109-115) and epigraphical (IDR II 141-156) materials show undoubtedly the particular importance of this point located in the very middle of the Oltenian Plain. Because of the incipient stage of the investigations many of the legitimate questions connected to the existence of this settlement, however, continue to remain without clear answers.

An unclarified issue is that of the ancient name of the settlement. The first suggestion was given by C.S. Nicolăescu-Plopșor who, after the discovery of a fragmentary statuary group with an inscription (IDR II 142) in 1964, placed here the enigmatical *Malva* (Plopșor 1965, 203-207). This assumption was immediately rejected (Daicoviciu 1965, 654-655). After four season excavations (1938, 1959, 1960, 1961) and a new analysis of the epigraphic sources D. Tudor (Tudor 1966, 847-854) proposed the name *Aquae* a place already known in Dacia Inferior. This suggestion is supported especially by the existence of some constant springs near the settlement. The hypotheses was also rejected (Daicoviciu 1969, 542-543).

Given the lack of some clear clues connected with the existence of a military unit within the settlement, D. Tudor thought of a possible civilian fortification (Tudor 1962, 552). Some military traces within the settlement are nevertheless, detectable.

An inscription (fig. 2) certifies, however, the existence of a certain *Germanus, speculator* of *Legio VII Claudia* (IDR II 141). In 1997 there has been published a fragmentary stone monument with an inscription mentioning clearly *Legio IIII Flavia* (Bondoc 1997, 272, nr. 3). The inscriptions have not yet been considered as a proof for a military presence at Cioroiul Nou (Benea 1983, 64-65; Petolescu 1994, 279 nr. 726).

In the autumn of 2000 several bricks have been found there which might bring further information on this matter.

A ditch (S1/2000) was dug, 300m west from the line of the present cemetery (fig. 1). In the squares 11-12, at -0.95m depth. It yielded traces of a heating equipment (*hypocaustum*) (fig. 3). Bases of six *pilae* of bricks with clay in between disposed on two NW-SE orientated rows. These *A pilla* consists of two or three rows of small bricks (0.22 x 0.22 x 0.06m), each one placed on a larger base-brick (0.32 x 0.32 x 0.06m). On the platform of the *hypocaustum*, at -1.20m in depth, the traces of the other *pilae* have been detected, The floor was build in the *opus signium* technique. The distance between the base bricks is 0.23m. It seems that the *hypocaustum* was 5 m width on the east-western side.

This is the second *hypocaustum* discovered at Cioroiul Nou. The first is now under the present cemetery, and was intended to serve as an installation for the *thermae* (Tudor, Diaconescu, Popilian 1967, 599).

The novelty of this research consists in the fact that there have been discovered many bricks carrying the stamp of *Legio VII Claudia* (fig. 4). Although the excavations were only partial the number of the intact or fragmentary stamped bricks raises to 39. The intact bricks are 22 x 22 x 6cm. and show the same type of inscription: LEG VII CL, framed in *tabula ansata*; normal writing. The stamp is rectangular (18 x 4cm) with the letters in relief, set in a frame of 0.6 cm. width, with 2.2 cm. high letters.

The multitude of the stamped bricks found during the excavations (S1/2000) excludes the possibility of a tegular import from an *officia* in Moesia Superior belonging to *Legio VII Claudia*. It seems likely that at a certain moment a detachment of *Legio VII Claudia* took position at Cioroiul Nou. The inscription that certifies the presence of *Germanus speculator* of this legion, seems to support this hypothesis.

It is for the first time that clear military traces at Cioroiul Nou have been found. Strange enough is that these stamped bricks were found only in the area of the *hypocaustum*. The fact that they are missing within the settlement might be a deficiency of investigations. Even more strange is the fact that there traces of *Legio VII Claudia* have been discovered at Cioroiul Nou, deep into the province of *Dacia Inferior (Malvensis)*, at quite a distance from *Viminacium*, the headquarters of the legion.

The 2nd-3rd c. traces of *Legio VII Claudia* were revealed only in a few places north of the Danube, where the regiment sent detachments after the Dacian wars: Drobeta (IDR II 42, 100), Gornea (IDR III/1, 59), Pojejena (IDR III/1, 49) and Vršac (IDR III/1, 126-127). The presence of some detachments of the legion in these places might be dated during the Marcomanic wars (Benea 1983, 57). In Romula some *centuriac* of *Legio VII Claudia* were also present (IDR II 327-328, 380) during the Philip the Arab's war against the Carps.

Cioroiul Nou has become therefore a new point in the known scheme of the 2nd and 3rd c. deployment of detachments of *Legio VII Claudia* north of the Danube.

A sore issue is to state the period in which the detachment of *Legio VII Claudia* stationed at Cioroiul Nou. The military stamps found at Cioroiul Nou are largely dated between the 2nd and 3rd c. (Benea 1978, 204; Benea 1983, 39). It should be noticed that the epithet *pia fidelis* is lacking.

The Cioroiul Nou fortification was dated by mid 3rd century (Tudor 1962, 552; Tudor 1968, 315) and could be considered rather a military installation where detachment of *Legio VII Claudia* was sent.

It is worth mentioning the fact that as far as typology is concerned the stamps discovered at Cioroiul Nou shows differences from those from Drobeta, Gornea, Pojejena and Vršac, which seem to be earlier. A stamp with similar letters like those on the Cioroiul Nou pieces was discovered at Romula (IDR II 380).

The inscription which certifies the presence here of a *speculator* of *Legio VII Claudia* (IDR II 141), could also be dated towards mid 3rd century. If the epithet *Philip(pianae)* born by *Legio VII Claudia* on the Romula inscriptions (IDR II 327-328), would have been the same on our epigraphical piece (Petolescu 1981, 602 nr. 30), then the dating of the inscription could be placed during the Philip the Arab's reign. The inscriptions with analogous epithets discovered at Romula and received by other legions as a result of the participation of the legion in the war against the Carps plead for a similar dating. The latest interpretations of the inscription (Petolescu 1981, 602, nr. 30) from Cioroiul Nou, is as follows:

[Dia]nae san[c-]
[ta]e, Mercurio G[u-]
bernatori e[st] Genio]
stationis, A[... Ger-]
manus, spe[cul(ator) leg(ionis)]
VII Cl(audiae) [Philip(pianae)]
[li]bens an[imo]...

All the clues that have been obtained till now certify the presence of a detachment of *Legio VII Claudia* at Cioroiul Nou sometime in mid 3rd century. The year 248 ? could be justified on one hand by the war against the Carps between 245-247, and on the other by the need to fortify settlements like those from Romula and Drobeta.

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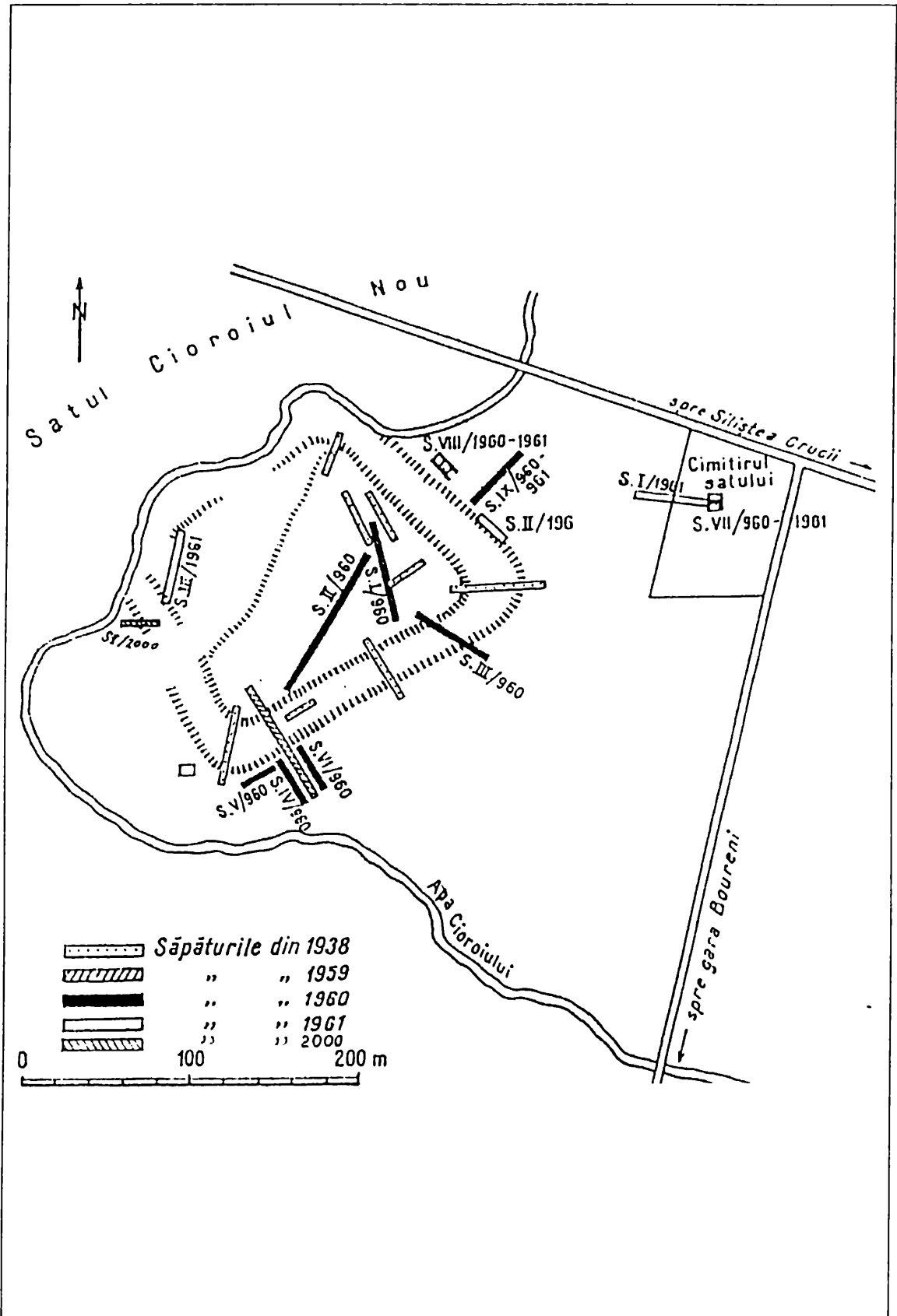


Fig. 1. Cioroiul Nou: the general plan showing old and new excavations.

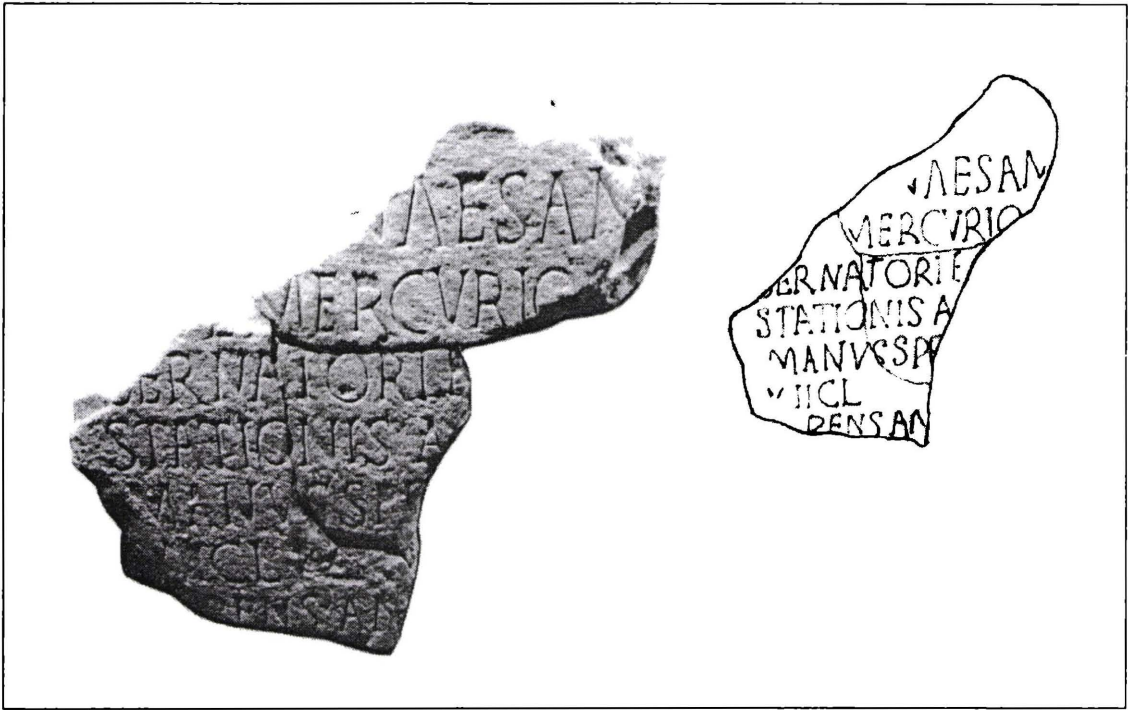


Fig. 2. The Germanus' inscription, speculator of Legio VII Claudia.

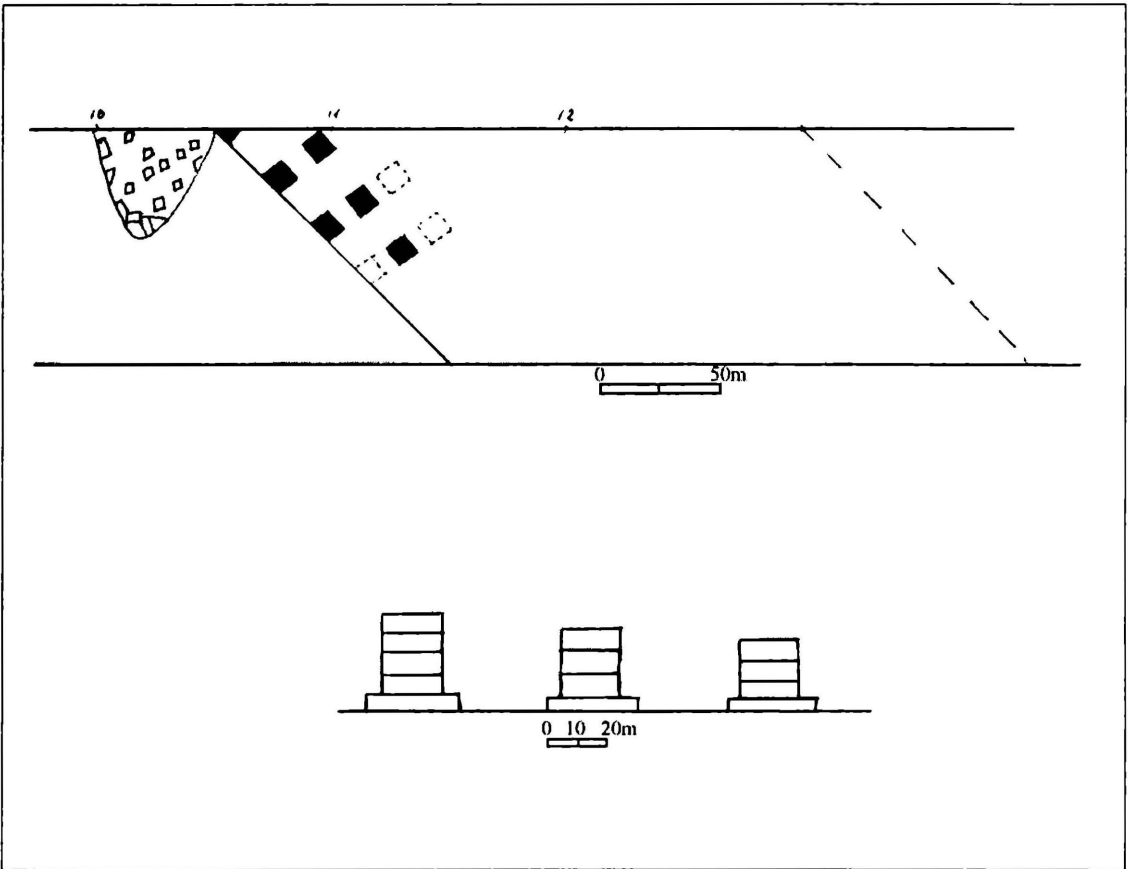


Fig. 3. Cioroiul Nou: the heating installation (hypocaustum).

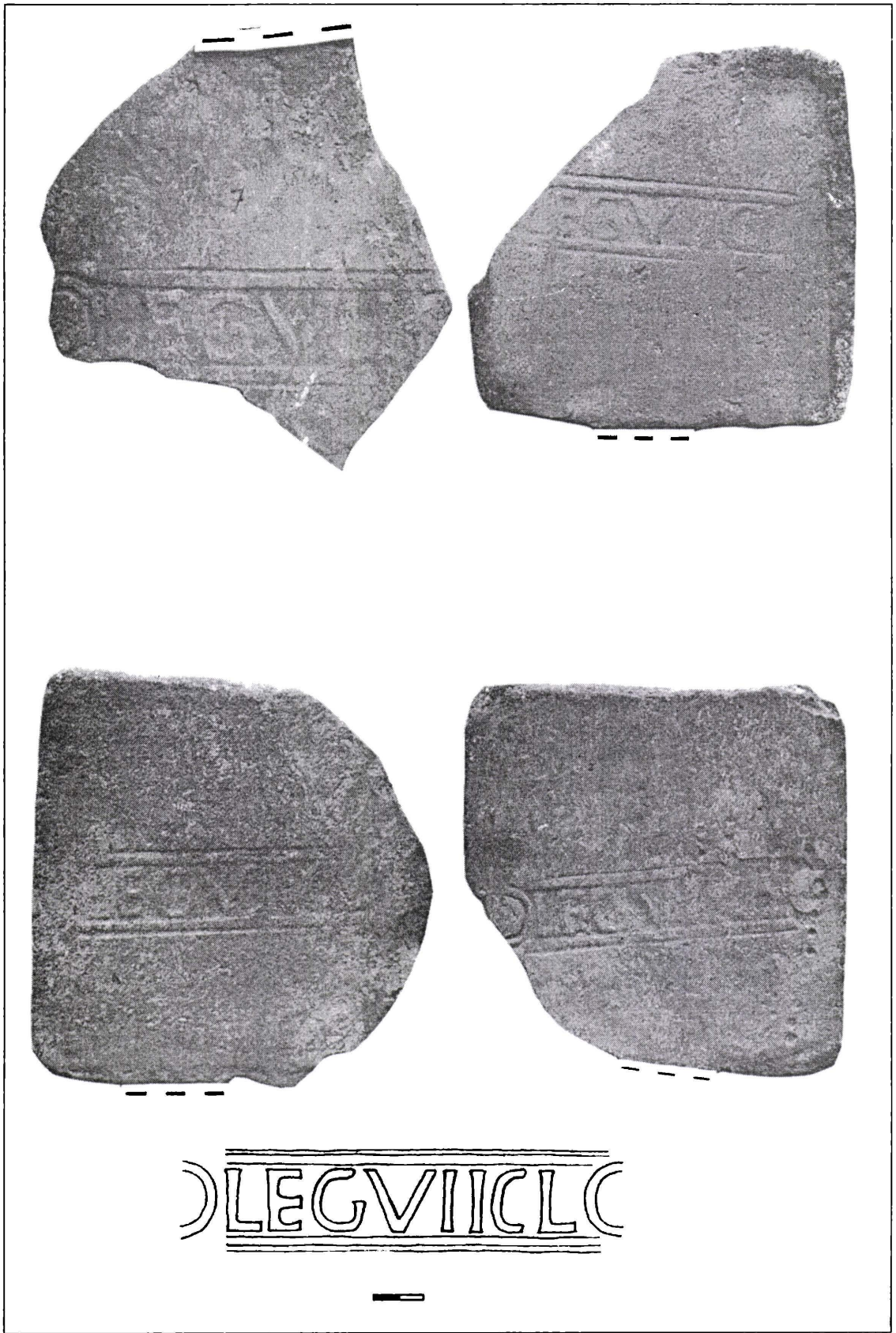


Fig. 4. Bricks with the stamp of Legio VII Claudia.