

THE LIMES SECTOR *CEBRUM-NOVAE* AT MID-3RD CENTURY

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Abstract. *The papers analyses particular aspects of the limes sector between the forts Cebrum and Novae. Compared to the significant number of forts recorded in the itineraries and other literary sources, except systematic excavations at Augustae (Hurlets), Oescus (Gigen), Sucidava (Celei), and Novae (Svistov), investigations yielded few data. The evidence coalesced thus far indicate a significant building activity during Gallienus' time. The large sized enclosure walls (Novae II) bonded against the legionary fortress (Novae I) and the similar operation carried out at Oescus, might be thought as structures ready to receive in a first phase civil population from the north Danubian Dacia in a period when the danger of isolating from the south considerable military strength was increasing. The sizable dimensions of the forts rebuilt south of the Danube (e.g. Augustae II) on the same place of the former 1st century installations seem to endorse such an idea. Also, the large towns of Montana, Ciomakovisi, Storgosia adduce more evidence for a process of Dacia's abandonment, commenced under Gallienus, but ended under Aurelian.*

Keywords: *limes, fort, Danube, wall, gate, legion, civil settlement, towers, town.*

The segment of administrative border between Lower Moesia and Dacia Inferior/Malvensis, with which we shall deal with in what follows, includes a number of military installations on the right bank of the Danube stretching from Cebrum (Gorni Tsibar)¹ auxiliary fort, at the mouth of the Tsibritsa (*Cebrus*) River, to the west, and the Utus (Vit) River, to the east, where another large auxiliary fort and an important civil settlement, Utum², identified at the present day village Milkovica, functioned since the 1st century AD (fig. 1). In terms of methodology, the Novae/Svishtov legionary fortress will be given important consideration, given its major role in the historical and archaeological landscape in the adjacent area.

The goal of this paper is to analyse the sector Cebrum-Novae, a parcel of critical importance for any analysis of the second half of the 3rd century Danubian limes. The inquiry is apparently justified because the River Cebrus was the 1st century western most auxiliary fort of Moesia Inferior bordering to the west Moesia Superior³; there were two 2nd - 3rd century major urban settlements Oescus, the former 1st century legionary headquarters of V Macedonia⁴ with the status of *colonia* since Trajan's reign, and Novae *municipium* a functional fortress of

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¹ *Cebrum* see: Tab. Peut., VI, 5.0 (*Camsitum*); It. Ant., 220.1: the archaeological site is rather little known: C. Patsch, *Cebrum*, in *Real Encyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (Pauly Wissowa Kroll), Stuttgart III/1, 1897, pp. 1820-1821; K. Škorpil, *Nekotoria izdorogi vostocinoi Bolgarii*, *Izvestia Ruskogo Arheologiceskoto Instituta v Konstantinopole* 10, 1905, p. 468; V. Beševliev, *Latinski mestnii mena v Mizia I Trakia*, in *Izvestia Arheologičeski Institut, Sofia*, XIX, 1955, pp. 317-318; *Tabula Imperii Romani*, K 34, 35; R. Ivanov, *Das römische Verteidigungssystem der Donauzwischen Dorticum and Durostorum (Bulgarien) von Augustus bis Maurikios*, Mainz, 1997, p. 482; M. Zahariade, N. Gudea, *The fortifications of Lower Moesia (A. D. 86-275)*, Amsterdam, 1997, p. 71.

² Fl. Matei Popescu, *Roman Army in Moesia inferior*, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, p. 187; R. Ivanov, *Das römische Verteidigungssystem Utum*: Plin., *Nat. Hist.*, III 26, 149; It. Ant., 221.1; Tab. Peut., VII, 1.0; in the middle and second half of the century it was headquarters for *ala I Hispanorum* (CIL III 12301; W. Wagner, *Die Dislokation der römischer Auxiliar formationen in den Provinzen Noricum, Pannonien, Moesien und Dakien von Augustus bis Diokletianus*, Berlin, 1938, p. 44; I. Beneš, *Auxilia romana in Moesia atque in Dacia. Zu Frage des römischen Verteidigungsystems in Unteren Donauraum und in den angrenzenden Gebieten*, Praha, 1978, p. 164, no. 24; Fl. Matei Popescu, *The der Donauzwischen Dorticum and Durostorum (Bulgarien) von Augustus bis Maurikios*, Mainz, 1997, p. 482).

³ M. Fluss, *Moesia*, in *Real Encyclopädie ...*, XV, 2, 1932, pp. 2353-2355 (with the whole controversy on the western border of the province).

⁴ *Oescus* I as headquarters of the Legion V Macedonia between about 6-62 CE and 71-106 CE: ILB no. 1; B. Filov, *Die Legionen der Provinz Moesien von Augustus bis Diokletian*, Leipzig, 1906, pp. 36-56; H. de Weerd, *Étude historique sur trois légions du Bas-Danube (V Macedonia, XI Claudia, I Italica) suivi d'un aperçu general sur l'armée romaine de la province de Mésie Inferieure sous le Haut Empire*, Paris, 1907, pp. 94-108; E. Ritterling, s.v. *Legio* in *Real Encyclopädie ...*, XII, 1, 1925, pp. 1573-1576; B. Gerov, *Nouvelles données sur le début de l'histoire d'Oescus I. Oescus, camp de la 1^{re} legion macedonienne à partir d'Auguste*, in *Revue de Philologie* 24, 1950, pp. 146-165; M. Bărbulescu, *Din istoria militară a Daciei romane. Legiunea V Macedonia și castrul de la Potaissa*, Cluj-Napoca, 1987, p. 16; T. Ivanov, *Das Befestigungssystem der Colonia Ulpia Oescensium*, in „Akten des 14. Internationalen Limeskongresses, 1986, in Carnuntum“, Teil 2, Wien, 1990, pp. 913-914; T. Ivanov, R. Ivanov, *Ulpia Oescus. Улпия Ескус. Римски i Rannovizantiiski grad*, tom I Sofia, 1988, p. 11, p. 14; G. Kabackieva, *Frühromische Militärlager in Oescus (Nordbulgarien)*, *Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen 1989-1993*, in *Germania* 74, 1996, pp. 95-117; Idem, *Die Gründung des Militärlagers bei der Mündung des Flusses Oescus und die Entstehung der provinz Moesien*, in „Proceedings of the 16th International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies“, Kerkrade, 1995, Oxford, 1997, pp. 387-392; in general see T. Ivanov, *Untersuchungen zur Topographie und zur Stadtlage von Oescus in Untermoesien (Bulgarien)*, in „Studien zur Militärgrenzen Roms II. Vorträge des 10 Internationaler Limeskongress in der Germania Inferior, Beihefte Bonner Jahrbücher 38“, Xanten, 1974, Köln-Bonn, 1977, p. 484 (geographical and historical sources); pp. 548-554 (archaeological situation and military architecture); Oescus I beginnings

legio I Italica⁵ and a large civil settlement which had been granted the title of *municipium* in the second half of the 2nd century⁶; auxiliary Roman camps with their large civil settlements: Augustae, Utum, Dimum⁷, out of military function during the existence of Roman Dacia province⁸; a remarkable constructive dynamics materialized in both disappearance and appearance of new military installations, including a wood and stone bridge over the Danube⁹; a hinterland which in the 3rd century became essential for the future political, administrative, and military developments in western Lower Moesia¹⁰.

We will not approach the situation of the settlements at Almus and Ratiaria, also two important military centres on the Danube line, given the lack of significant conclusions for the present subject. Novae, Dimum, Oescus, Sucidava, and Augustae display clear archaeological evidence to make possible some preliminary considerations about the situation and the role of these structures on the West Moesian river segment.

The transformation of the 1st century auxiliary forts and legionary fortresses in Moesia Inferior and of some in eastern Moesia Superior into civilian settlements shortly after the establishment of the province of Dacia is clearly heralded by the establishment of the military colonies of Ulpia Oescus and Ulpia Ratiaria¹¹. At Augustae / Harlec, the headquarters of the ala I Augusta, there is evidence of a hiatus of military occupation until mid-3rd century¹². Partial excavations and surveys have been carried out at Utum and Dimum/Belene, although the results are yet incomplete as to their occupation character in the 2nd and 3rd century.

However, signs of important changes in these two centres at the beginning of the 2nd century, after the end of the Dacian wars, are quite visible from epigraphic view point Utum auxiliary fort, headquarters of the ala I Hispanorum in the 1st century, have lost his garrison in early 2nd century and only systematic excavations will provide a nuanced answer on the character of the occupation between 106 and mid-3rd century. The Dimum auxiliary fort, apparently uncovered by the territory of the province of Dacia, with an impressive civil settlement, recorded as canabae Dimensium, in Laberius Maximus' boundary regulation (horothesia) of 25 October 100, seems to have maintained a strong military character, with *ala Solensium* garrison¹³.

East of Cebrum, two military centres recorded by Ptolemy, *Regianum*, and *Pedoniana*¹⁴, were apparently no longer operational at the end of the 3rd century. In contrast, by mid-3rd century *Variana* and

acting as *colonia*: A. Balkanska, *Vnosna terra sigillata, otkrita v Eskus*, in *Arheologia* 4, 1990, pp. 26-33; T. Ivanov, *Die römische Städte in Ober- und Untermoesien*, in „L'Adriatico tra Mediterraneo e penisola Balcanica nell'antichità", Taranto, 1983, p. 138; G. Kabackieva, *Käm vaprosa za stratigrafiata na Ulpia Eskus (po danni ot arheologiceskite proucivania)*, in *Godišnik Nacionalne Arheologicesko Muzei, Sofia* 9, 1993, pp. 85-94; 1994, pp. 149-170; R. Ivanov, *Das römische Verteidigungssystem der Donauzwischen...*, pp. 549-551; the colony fortifications: T. Ivanov, *Das Befestigungssystem...*, p. 91.

⁵ From the immense literature produced about Novae as the headquarters of Legion I Italica, see recent complete bibliography, in *NOVAE. Legionary fortress and late antique town* (Derda, T., Dyczek, P., Kolendo, J. eds.), Warszawa, 2008, pp. 305-375.

⁶ The discussion about *Novae* as *municipium*: B. Gerov, *Die Rechtstellung der untermoesischen Stadt Novae*, in „Akten des IV Internationalen Kongress für Griechisch und Lateinische Epigraphie", Wien, 1964, pp. 128-133; A.G. Poulter, *Town and Country in Moesia Inferior*, in "Ancient Bulgaria Papers presented to the International Symposium on the Ancient History and Archaeology of Bulgaria", University of Nottingham (A.G. Poulter ed.), part 2, Nottingham, 1983, p. 84.

⁷ Early geographical and historical sources about Dimum: Ptol., *Geogr.*, III, 10.5; Tab.Peut., VII, 1.0; Itin Ant., 225. 3; R. Ivanov, *Das römische Verteidigungssystem der Donauzwischen...*, p. 485; an overview of the archaeological situation: M. Biernacka - M. Lubanska, *The Roman and Early Byzantine Fortifications of Lower Moesia and Northern Thrace*, Wrocław, Warszawa, 1982, p. 226; R. Ivanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 554-556; M. Zahariade, N. Gudea, *op. cit.*, p. 73 (see also note 13).

⁸ This issue has generated a number of discussions and controversy: P. Petrović., *O snabdevanjerimskih trupena Đerdapdelu limesa, Starinar XXXI* 1980, pp. 53-62; N. Gudea, *Die Militärorganisation und der nordgrenze der Moesia Superior während der Römerschaft in Dakien*, in "Akten des XI Internationalen Limeskongresses, Székesfehérvár 1976", Budapest, 1977, pp. 223-236; Idem, *Einige Betrachtungen zur Lage des Linken Donauufers im Gebiet des Eisernen Tores zwischen der zweitenhälfte des 1 Jh und 378*, in "Die Archäologie und Geschichte der Region des Eisernen Tores zwischen 106-275 n. Chr. Colloquium in Drobeta-Turnu Severin (1-4 Oktober 2000)", Bucureşti, 2001, pp. 15-24.

⁹ D. Bondoc, *The Roman bridge from Dolni Vadin (Bulgaria) - Grojdibodu (Romania)*, Craiova, 2014.

¹⁰ In the 3rd century makes its appearance in fact, a line of fortifications (see also below), practically small fortified cities, with important resources, behind *limes*: *Montana*, *Ciomakovti*, *Storgosia*.

¹¹ D. Giorgetti, *Ratiaria and its Territory*, in "Ancient Bulgaria. Papers presented to the International Symposium on the Ancient History and Archaeology of Bulgaria", University of Nottingham 1981, part 2, Nottingham 1983, pp. 25-34.

¹² See A. Dimitrova-Milčeva, *Untersuchungen am Befestigten Limesystem an der Unteren Donau des Territorium der V. R. Bulgarien*, in "Akten des 14. Internationalen Limeskongresses 1986 in Carnuntum", Teil 2, Wien, 1990, pp. 866-867 with important and refined stratigraphical observations and especially mentioning the imports of north-Italic ceramic discovered in *Augustae I* as well as emphasizing the functional gap between *Augustae I* and *Augustae II*.

¹³ *Canabae Dimensium*: ISM I, no. 68, r. 71-2; *ala Solensium*: B. Gerov, *Zum Problem der Entstehung der moesischen Städte am Unteren Donaulimes*, in *Klio* 59, 1977, p. 308, no. 39. See presence of a vexillatio of Legion I Italica (stamps) and an inscription of a *miles* (D. Mitova-Dzonova, *Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Antiken Dimum*, in "Studia in honorem Vesilini Beşevliev", Sofia, 1978, p. 219).

¹⁴ The settlements are mentioned only by Ptol., *Geogr.*, III, 10. 5 (Phgianón) and Tab.Peut., VII, 1.0 (*Pedoniana*).

Valeriana are recorded as new military centres. Both are mentioned for the first time by Itinerarium Antonini¹⁵. For *Valeriana* it could be suggest a place with a name rather derived from that of the Emperor Valerian than from Valerius, it is a Roman general, as claimed by V. Beševliev. Place-names derived from imperial names are relatively well documented, although they are rather late in date: e.g. two *Gratianae* one in Moesia Prima and another in Scythia, from *Gratian*, and *Valentiniana*, in Scythia from *Valentinian I*.

An examination of archaeological and architectural evidence provided by some settlements on the Cebrum-Novae segment will cast some light on the 3rd century important transformations the area have undergone.

Augustae (fig. 2) is the western most fort of the segment under scrutiny and better known due to the partial investigations of Spas Mashov. The architecture and archaeological evidence was commented on several occasions by Alesandra Dimitrova-Milcheva¹⁶ and R. Ivanov¹⁷. The fort has two distinct architectural phases labelled *Augustae I* and *II*, apparently separated by a period of ca. 150 years. The first phase is datable in the 1st while the second, on which we will focus our discussion below, belong to the 3rd century. *Augustae II* is ca. 250 x 250m in size which means a surface of ca. 6.25 ha. On the basis of the protruding U-shaped gate and curtain towers, Dimitrova-Milcheva proposed mid-3rd century as date for the building of the installation, possibly even post 250¹⁸, when these forms became a common feature in the Danubian military architecture. Spas Mashov dates the building of *Augustae II* much earlier and invokes the coins at *Pautalia* from *Septimius Severus* and *Julia Domna*, and *Gordian III*¹⁹. R. Ivanov proposed the construction of *Augustae II* under *Diocletian* or *Constantine*.

Oescus II

As in the case of *Augustae*, the archaeological literature circulates frequently the terms of *Oescus I*, the area of the former camp of the legion V *Macedonica*, 20 ha in surface, superposed mainly by the 2nd -3rd century Roman *colonia*, and *Oescus II*, a 10 ha fortified surface bonded against the western wall of the *colonia* (fig. 3). *Oescus II*²⁰ is surrounded by a rectangular in shape enclosure wall with three gates. The western and eastern gates seems to be aligned with the *decumanus maximus* of the *Oescus I colonia* running eastward, towards the eastern gate, called commonly *porta Utensis*, which opened the road to *Utum* auxiliary fort, ca. 25 km east of *Oescus*. A *cardo maximus* must have connected the north and south gates of the *Oescus II* wall. The curtain has round towers, except the north gate which is flanked by a pair of U- shape and a horseshoe towers, which, given the uniformity of the curtain round shape towers seems either an architectural anomaly or distinct construction phases. Intense modern habitation within the area of *Oescus II* hindered systematic research and therefore the lack of urban architectural elements is significant. Also, the research was not yet able to clarify the bonding of the north and south sides against the walls of the *Oescus colonia*. The researchers of the *Oescus II* area, A. Frova, T., and R. Ivanov suggested the occupation of the surface with urban villas, private properties and workshops a really '*grosses Wohnviertel*'²¹. Despite some contradictory dating of the modern studies, envisaging either the chronological sequence shortly after 251 or

¹⁵ *Variana*: It. Ant., 220. 3; K. Skorpiol, *op. cit.*, pp. 465-466; D.P. Dimitrov, *Arheologiceskite izsledvaniana graf Luigi Marsigli v Bălgarskite zemi vakraiana XVII vek*, Sofia, 1947, p. 47; V. Beševliev, *Latinski mestnii mena v Mizia I Trakia*, in *Izvestia Arheologicheski Institut*, Sofia, XIX, 1955, pp. 284-285; R. Ivanov, *Das römische Verteidigungssystem der Donauzwischen....* p. 483; M. Zahariade, N. Gudea, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72; *Valeriana*: It. Ant., 220. 4.

¹⁶ A. Dimitrova-Milcheva, *op. cit.*, pp. 866-867.

¹⁷ R. Ivanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 543-548.

¹⁸ A. Dimitrova-Milcheva, *op. cit.*, p. 867; R. Ivanov, *Das römische Verteidigungssystem der Donauzwischen....* p. 548 - I propose the Tetrarchy Era regarding the timing of construction *Augustae II*.

¹⁹ S. Mašov, *Ausgrabungen der antiken Festung Augustae bei Dorf Härleț. Bezirk Vrața. Archäologische Entdeckungen und Ausgrabungen 1982*, in Pleven, 1983, pp. 73-74; Idem, *Käsnoanticiinii kastel i rannovizantiiskiat grad Avgusta prez Härleț obscina Kozlodui*, in *Izvestia Muzeiski Severozapadna Bălgaria* 16, 1990, p. 41; R. Ivanov, *Das römische Verteidigungssystem der Donauzwischen....*, p. 547; T. Ivanov, *Die römische Städte in....*, p. 134 which apparently accepts the date proposed by Mašov. Severan period, for the construction of *Augustae II*. It is worth mentioning the discovery of a tile with the stamp of *Legio V Macedonia* topologically datable after the return of the unit from *Dacia*, in *Oescus*.

²⁰ From the large amount of literature to *Oescus II* we quote here: T. Ivanov, *Die letzten Ausgrabungen des römischen und frühbyzantinischen Donaulimes in der V. R. Bulgarien*, in „Actes du IX Congrès International d'Études sur les frontières romaines“, Mamaia, 1972. Bucharest-Köln-Wien, 1974, p. 59; Idem, *Untersuchungen zu Topographie und zur Stadtlage von Oescus in Untermoesien (Bulgarien)*, in „Studien zur Militärgrenzen Roms II. Vorträge des 10 Internationaler Limeskongress in der Germania Inferior. Beihefte Bonner Jahrbücher 38“, Xanten, 1974, Köln-Bonn, 1977, pp. 339-350; Idem, *Das Befestigungssystem....*, pp. 917-921; R. Ivanov, *Das römische Verteidigungssystem der Donauzwischen....*, pp. 552-554; T. Ivanov, R. Ivanov, *Ulpija Oescus. Улпия Ескъс. Римски i Rannovizantiiskii grad*, tom I, Sofia, 1988, pp. 42-91.

²¹ A. Frova, *The Danubian Limes in Bulgaria and excavations at Oescus*, in “The Congress of Roman Frontier Studies”, Durham 1949, p. 29; R. Ivanov, *Zur frage der Planung und der Architektur der römischen Militärlager*, in *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 21, 1993, p. 18.

after Aurelian's reign (270-275), the coins found on the first level in Oescus II towers no. 4, 5, and partially 13, date from the reign of Valerian (253-254), which is a good *post quem* indication for the beginning of the building of the *Oescus II* enclosure wall.

Sucidava

The interventions to the site and the application of different methodologies during systematic excavations over the years, not always accompanied by a coherent coordination and recalibration of the discoveries, makes quite difficult the drawing up of the basic stratigraphy. However, D. Tudor and O. Toropu tried and generally succeeded in outlining the stratigraphic sequence and chronology of the fortress²² (fig. 4).

To compress the discussion we will approach the third level which is commonly seen as the one on which the defence wall and the ten towers on the west, north-west and north-east sides were initially built. In fact, there are two enclosure walls, numbered I and II, the latter, built in stone and earth mixed with low quality mortar, being considered as a later addition. The towers I and J will not be accounted in our discussion for they are much later, likely of 6th century. Four projecting towers (B, D, G and H) have rectangular front and are organically interwoven with the enclosure wall. The tower F seems a freestanding initial construction, to which the curtains were subsequently bonded. It is important to be mentioned that the towers A, C, and E, the first two with semicircular front, the third trapezoidal in shape, have no structural connection with the curtains and implicitly to the enclosure walls no. I and II. The lack of contact with the curtain walls would clearly indicate that they had been implanted in a subsequent period.

The series of rectangular towers together with the commencement of the building of a defence wall at Sucidava could be assigned to mid-3rd century. On the basis of analogies with the east side of the Halmyris fortress, and north side of Noviodunum legionary headquarters one can suggest, an initial construction of a basic structure (the tower F), from where the curtain walls sprang in the required directions. It is possible that the same type of rectangular tower underlies the towers A, C and E rebuilt in a later period.

Dimum

At Dimum, a site known since the early twentieth century, with its northern third destroyed by the Danube, the 1989 and 1990 rescue excavations conducted by D. Mitova-Dzonova²³ showed a rectangular fortress, 240 x 180m (= 4.32 ha) in size (fig. 5). Mitova-Dzonova dates the massive reconstruction during Constantine when the fan-shaped corner towers were implanted. Rectangular towers flank the four gates of the fort, while the north and south sides have U-shaped towers.

Novae II

Bulgarian-Polish research teams carried out excavations on the eastern side of the legionary fortress²⁴ and identified its earth and stone phases as well as its defence ditches. An irregular line of a defence wall encompasses a surface of ca. 10 ha (fig. 6) east of the initial fortress and was conventionally called *Novae II*. The new enclosure wall is bonded against the north and south sides of the legionary camp. The wall has eight towers, of which seven rectangular in shape and one AU-shaped tower makes the bond between the south-east corner of the fortress and the south side of the enclosure wall of *Novae II*. The new precinct encompasses an area where, possible due to lack of systematic research in recent decades, few stone structures have been found.

Some observations

A basic question mark for the mid-3rd century defence structures on the Cebrum-*Novae* sector is when some of these military installations have regained their former 1st century configuration and function. It is highly noticeable that the fortified areas from *Novae II* and *Oescus II* are identical in surface, ca. 10 ha, although the architecture of the defence walls shows some noticeable differences (fig. 7).

²² D. Tudor, *Oltenia romană*, the 4th edition, Bucharest, 1978, pp. 423-448; O. Toropu, C. Tătulea, *Sucidava-Celei*, București, 1987, pp. 73-86 and pp. 212-214.

²³ D. Mitova-Dzonova, *Belene-minalo i nastoiaste*, Sofia, 1991, pp. 10-23; Idem, *Dimum und region Dimensis*, in "Limes. Studi di storia", 5, Bologna, 1994, pp. 47-65; R. Ivanov, *Die römische ...*, pp. 554-556.

²⁴ For the history of the archaeological research in the surface conventional called *Novae II*, see: T. Ivanov, *Die letzten Ausgrabungen...*, p. 67; NOVAE, *Legionary fortress ...*, pp. 311-368 passim (see note 5). A description of the situation of the curtain wall towers and the defensive wall *Novae II* at R. Ivanov, *Die römische ...*, pp. 560-563.

Oescus II displays round protruding but has no rectangular towers; three monumental gates bring decisive contribution to the drawing up of a regular street network within the surface. At *Novae II*, although the structure of the defence wall is built coherently and in an unitary manner, the majority of the towers are rectangular in shape, there is only one U-shape tower (nr. 8) and a gate to the south-east, modest in architecture and size. The bonding of the *Novae II* wall against the south-east corner of the legionary fortress took place when the defence wall of the latter was rounded off and necessitated the adoption of the construction or reconstruction of a U-shape tower possibly pre-existent (fig. 8) as a similar situation shows in its south-west corner. An inscription found on one of the stone blocks bears the letters LEG XI CL which means the participation to this constructive effort of the legion XI Claudia from *Durostorum*²⁵, certainly together with the legion I *Italica* as indicated by the significant number of stamped bricks and tiles found in the interior area of the same U-shape tower.

One hypothesis, otherwise rather attractive for the major differences in the treatment of architectural structures could be that the military architects who worked on the *Oescus II* and *Novae II* enclosure walls could have borrowed architectural elements from the military centres where they resided. Thus, as shown above, if on one of the foundation stone blocks of the U-shape corner tower of *Novae II*, an inscription of the legion XI Claudia was carved, we could strongly suppose that portions of the construction work (*pedaturae*) of the defence wall probably curtain walls, and towers were erected by detachments which came from *Durostorum* where the curtain and the south gate towers were dominantly rectangular in shape or trapezoidal at the southwest corner, at the most. Possibly, therefore, the expression of the free options of the military architects who will have accompanied the legionary detachment cannot be ruled out.

According to Jordanes, *Novae* was besieged by Kniva-led Goths²⁶ which possibly produced significant damage to the legionary fortress and *municipium*. The entire area of the lower Olt as well as the settlements on the segment *Novae-Oescus* appear to have been seriously affected by the Gothic invasion 250-251²⁷. *Romula* recently refortified with a new precinct wall in 248²⁸ loses its civil and military importance as a centre after 251, while the auxiliary fort at *Slăveni*, despite the inscription set in honour of Philip the Arab in 248/249 by *ala I Hispanorum* is finally abandoned shortly after 251²⁹. On this occasion, *Romula*, Galerius' mother, seems to have fled south of the Danube³⁰.

Repair and reconstruction works have been obviously urgently needed and one cannot conceive that installations affected were neglected; one of the problems of some researchers remains whether the defence reconstruction works began earlier, under Gallienus and Aurelian or under the Tetrarchy.

Oescus II may relatively be easier dated by Valerian's coins found in the masonry of the towers no.4, 5, and partially 13³¹. Even if the architecture of the towers is quite distinctive from those of *Novae* and *Sucidava*, the numismatic evidence confirms clearly the construction of the *Oescus II* defence wall to the mid third century.

Novae II has a very wide time span of dating due to Bulgarian and Polish researchers (e.g. Teophil and Rumen. Ivanov, Maria Chichikova, Tadeusz Sarnowski). M. Chichikova and T. Ivanov opined for a post abandonment of *Dacia* during Aurelian, or alternatively the Tetrarchic period³² as construction and initial inauguration of *Novae II* relying on the palaeographic evidence of the inscription of the legion XI Claudia on the U shaped tower from the southwest corner. However, the abbreviation LEG XI CL is datable at mid-3rd

²⁵ T. Sarnowski, *Fortress of the legio I Italica at Novae*, in "Akten des XI Internationalen Limeskongresses, Székesfehérvár, 1976". Budapest, 1977, p. 416.

²⁶ Jord., *Get.*, XVIII. 101-103.

²⁷ B. Gerov, *Die gotische Invasion in Moesien und Thrakien im Lichte der Hortfunde*, in *Acta Antiqua Philippopolitana*, 1963, pp. 127-146; D. Tudor, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-40; H. Wolfram, *Geschichte der Goten: von Anfängen bis zur Mitte des sechsten Jahrhunderts*, 3rd edition, München, 1990, pp. 43-48; K. Dimitrov, *Novae and the Barbaric Incursions in 238-251*, in "Orpheus. Journal of Indo-European and Thracian Studies". 15. 2005, pp. 79-98; C.C. Petolescu, *Dacia. Un mileniu de istorie*, București, 2010, pp. 278-279.

²⁸ *Inscripțiile din Scythia Minor grecești și latine*, vol. I. *Histria și împrejurimile. Culese, traduse, însoțite de comentarii și indici de Dionisie M. Pippidi*, București, 1983, ns. 325, 326; D. Tudor, *La fortificazione delle città romane della Dacia nel sec. III dell' e.n.*, in *Historica XIV*, 1965, pp. 368-380; Idem, *Orașe, țirguriși sate în Dacia romană*, București, 1968, pp. 344-346; Idem, *Oltenia romană*...., p. 188.

²⁹ D. Tudor, *Distrușirea castrului roman de la Slăveni pe Olt*, in *Historica*, I, 1970, pp. 67-83; Idem, *Oltenia romană*...., pp. 301-307.

³⁰ Aur. Vict., *Epit.de Caes.*, 40. 16; Lact., *De mort. persec.* IX 2.

³¹ In general, T. Ivanov, *Das Befestigungssystem*...., pp. 917-918 dates the construction of fortifications *Oescus II* in "das letzte drittel des 3 Jahrhunderts", more precisely during the time of Aurelian (p. 919), while Ivanov jr. (R. Ivanov, *Das römische*...., pp. 553) during the first Tetrarchy. The situation of the numismatic and epigraphical discoveries in towers: T. Ivanov, *Das Befestigungssystem*...., p. 920.

³² e.g. R. Ivanov, *Das römische*...., p. 563.

century and not during the Tetrarchic epoch³³ when reliable elements on the stamped tiles and bricks are LEG XI CL CAND and LEG XI CL TRAM.

Sucidava could have a relatively well defined chronological sequence if one or two main sections would be carried out. Until then, we must withhold the realistic date of O.Toropu according to whom the levels of the late Roman period within the fortress commenced to unfold after 265/274 till 323³⁴ and of V. Barbu who proved the raising of *Sucidava* fortress during the Gallienus emperor³⁵. However, D.Tudor considered the Aurelianic epoch for the building of the late fortress³⁶. D.Tudor dated the towers A, C, E, G, and J in this period, although apparently they have been later restored. It is noticeable that the architecture of the tower B, D, F, G and J in relation with the defence wall indicates a unitary concept which might be better demonstrated if the existence of some earlier rectangular structures in case of the towers A, C and E would be certified in the future.

It is easily noticeable that the *Novae II* and *Sucidava* curtain towers have the same rectangular shape and roughly the same size at the protruding parts, which hypothetically could suggest the same mid-3rd century architectural design and conception. However, *Dimum* shows the same square protruding towers and four gates. As to the fan-like corner towers we might suggest, in concordance with A. Mitova-Dzonova, a later date of construction, typical for Constantinian or mid-4th century architectural fashion, as happens with the tower A and partially C at *Sucidava*.

For the early construction phase of *Augustae II*, Spas Masov's numismatic arguments could be apparently valid as the U-shape towers began to circulate in the Severan period. The analogies with N, E, and V tower gates from Buciumi³⁷ or the four gates from Bologa auxiliary forts³⁸, datable under Caracalla (Bologa) or later, under Severus Alexander (Buciumi), could possibly be taken into consideration if the philosophy of the military architecture in Dacia did not obviously contrast with the situation at *Augustae*; if in the two first cases the towers protrude with 1/3 from the wall line, at *Augustae* the protrusion outside the wall is complete. It would be reasonable to suggest that the commencement of the building of *Augustae II* can be dated rather to mid-third century.

However, there are some striking aspects which must be revealed. There is an oversized dimension of the military installations on the discussed segment. On the other hand, it must be mentioned that the hinterland, behind *Oescus*, had two important military and civil centres: the fortress and the town of *Montana*, also with the rank of *municipium*, where massive fortifications built in 256-258 are recorded in two inscriptions³⁹, and the vast fortified, although still unexplored, fortress from Ciomakovtsi, on the Middle Isker River valley⁴⁰. Both maintained a close and direct contact with the Danubian military centres.

One question arises: which are the reasons for such large sized fortifications built at mid-3rd century on the segment *Cebrium-Novae*? They could not otherwise be explained, in our opinion, which certainly still needs more arguments to outline a working- hypothesis, than by the beginning of a significant transfer of troops and a part of the population south of the Danube. One could therefore foresee the beginning of a gradual process of military and administrative abandonment of Dacia north of the Danube while some segments of the population willing to run from invasions could have been transferred in the hinterland or within great enclosures on the Danube: *Novae* and *Oescus II* additions, massive constructions which resized *Montana* and the great fortified areas from Ciomakovtsi could take as a first illustration of this process.

³³ M. Zahariade, *Scythia Minor. Moesia Secunda si Notitia Dignitatum*. București, 1988, pp. 105-106 (with the bibliography).

³⁴ O. Toropu, C. Tătulea, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

³⁵ V. Barbu, *Fortăreața romano-bizantină de la Sucidava în lumina cercetărilor din sectorul de sud-est*, in *Studii și cercetări de istorie veche*, 24, 1973, pp. 27-53; Idem, *Sucidava et la frontière du Bas-Danube au temps de Gallien*, in "Studia Danubiana. Pars Romaniae. Series Symposia I. The Roman Frontier at the Lower Danube 4th -6th centuries. The second International Symposium (Murighiol/Halmyris 18-24 August 1996)". Bucharest, 1998, pp. 141-150.

³⁶ D. Tudor, *Olenia romană...*, p. 430.

³⁷ N. Gudea, *Castrul roman de la Buciumi*, Cluj, 1972, pp. 14-18.

³⁸ Idem, *Castrul roman de la Bologa. Cercetările arheologice din anul 1970*, in *Crisia*, 3, 1973, pp. 25-57.

³⁹ *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*, III, 12376; Anne Epigraphique, 1927, 95; G. Alexandrov, *Anticini kreposti v raiona na Mihailovgrad*, in *Sbornik Ciprovti*, Sofia, 1971, pp. 124-129; Idem, *Rezultati ot razkopkite na kaleto v Mihailovgrad*, in *Izvestiana Muzeite Severozapadna Bălgaria*, Sofia, I, 1977, pp. 269-292; N.B. Rankov, *A contribution to the military and administrative history of Montana*, in *Ancient Bulgaria*, 2, 1983, pp. 40-73; G. Alexandrov, *Rezultati ot razkopkite na krepostta Montana (1971-1982)*, in *Montana*, Sofia, 1987, pp. 54-85; M. Zahariade, N. Gudea, *op. cit.*, pp. 89-90.

⁴⁰ K. Skorpil, *op. cit.*, pp. 480-482; H. Veters, *Dacia Ripensis*. Schriften der Balkankommission, Antiquarische Abteilung 10.1. Wien, 1950, pp. 14-15; T. Ivanov, *Prinos kam proucivaneto na anticinaia grad pri Ciomakovti*, in *Izsedvania K. Škorpil*, Sofia, 1961, pp. 255-269; M. Zahariade, N. Gudea, *op. cit.*, p. 91, no. 104 (40).

There are five military centres, auxiliary and legionary on the approached limes sector between Cebus River course and Novae that displays architectural and archaeological elements; in conjunction with evidence from the historical sources they could shape a future and preliminary picture of the logistical situation of a sector of the river, mainly during Gallienus, of critical importance for the future configuration of the Danubian frontier of Dacia Ripensis.



Fig. 1. The limes sector Ratiaria-Novae at mid-3rd century. Schematic representation.

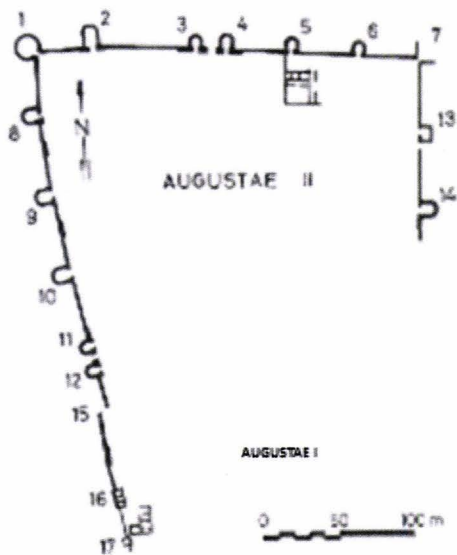


Fig. 2. The *Augustae II* fort (after Ivanov, *Das römische...*, p. 545 fig. 14).

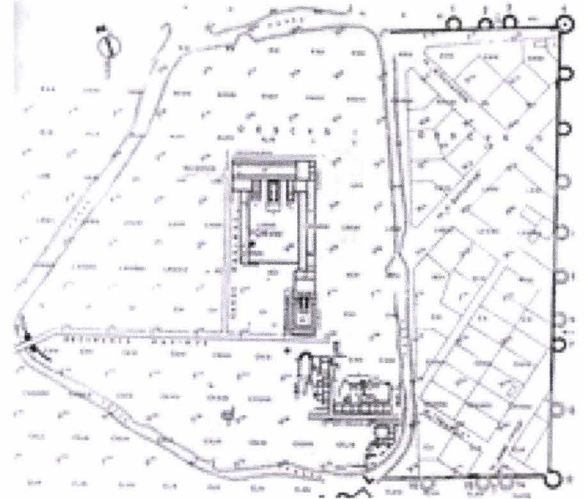


Fig 3. *Colonia Oescus I* and the adjacent precinct wall known as *Oescus II*. Aerial view and plan (after Ivanov, *Das römische...*, p. 551 fig. 19).

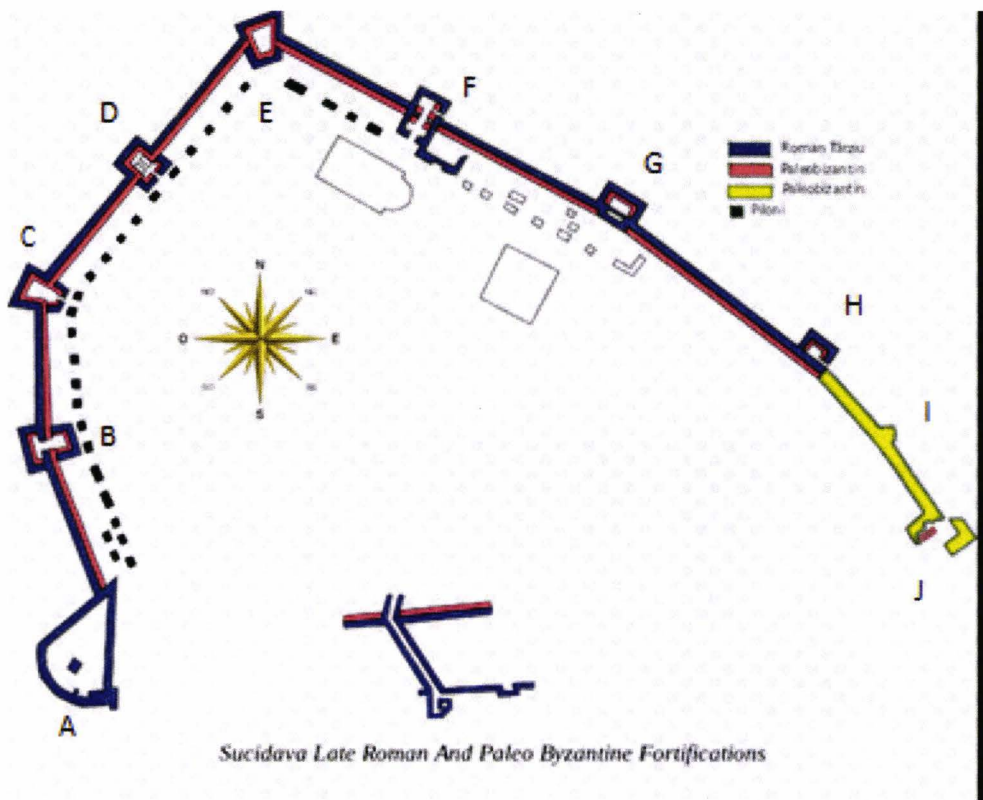


Fig. 4. The *Sucidava* stronghold (castellum).

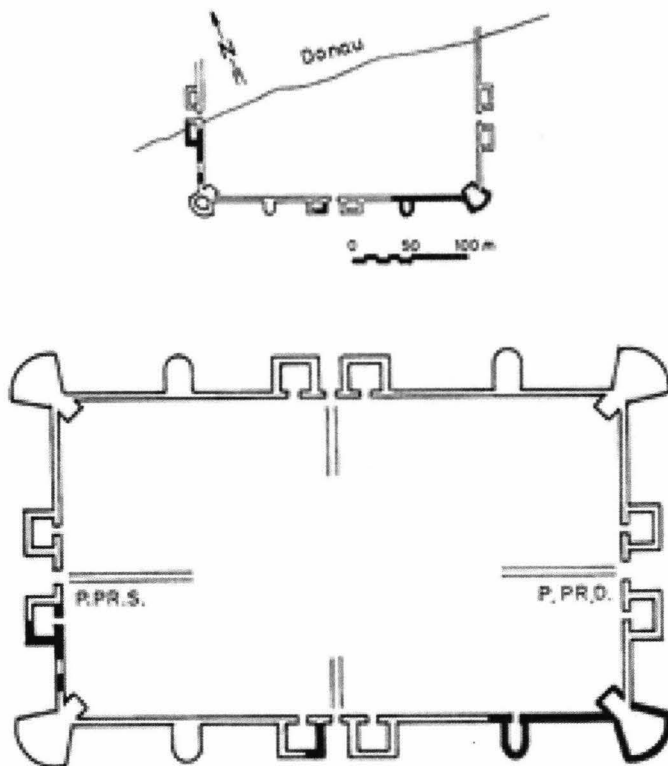


Fig. 5. The *Dimumfort* (after Mitova – Dzonova, *Belene-minalo...*, fig. 22 a).

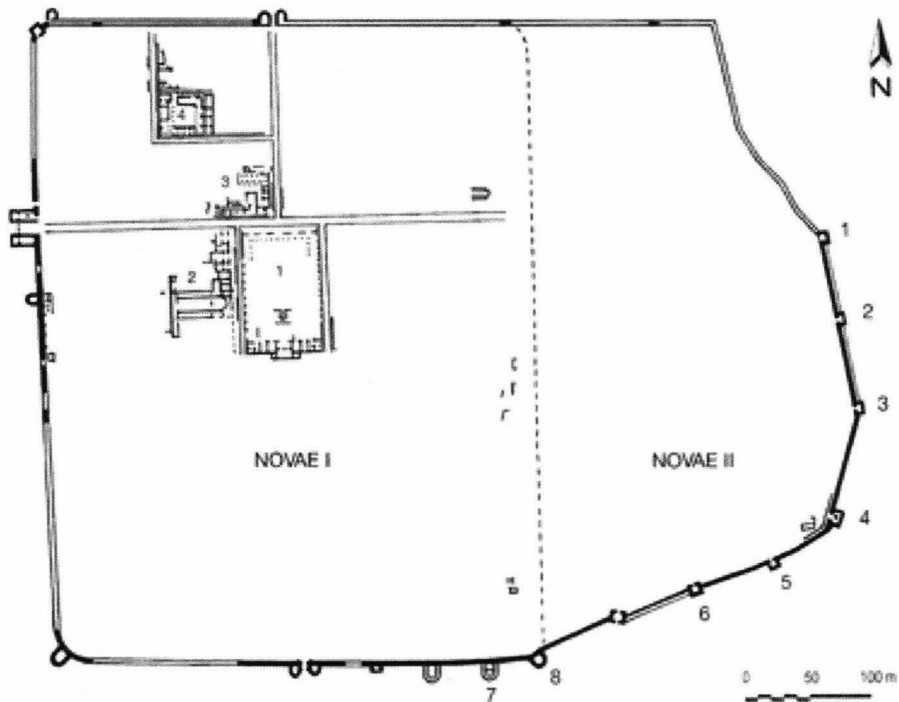


Fig. 6. The fortress of the legion I Italica (Novae I) and the adjacent precinct wall Novae II (after Ivanov, *Das römische...*, p. 562 fig. 27).

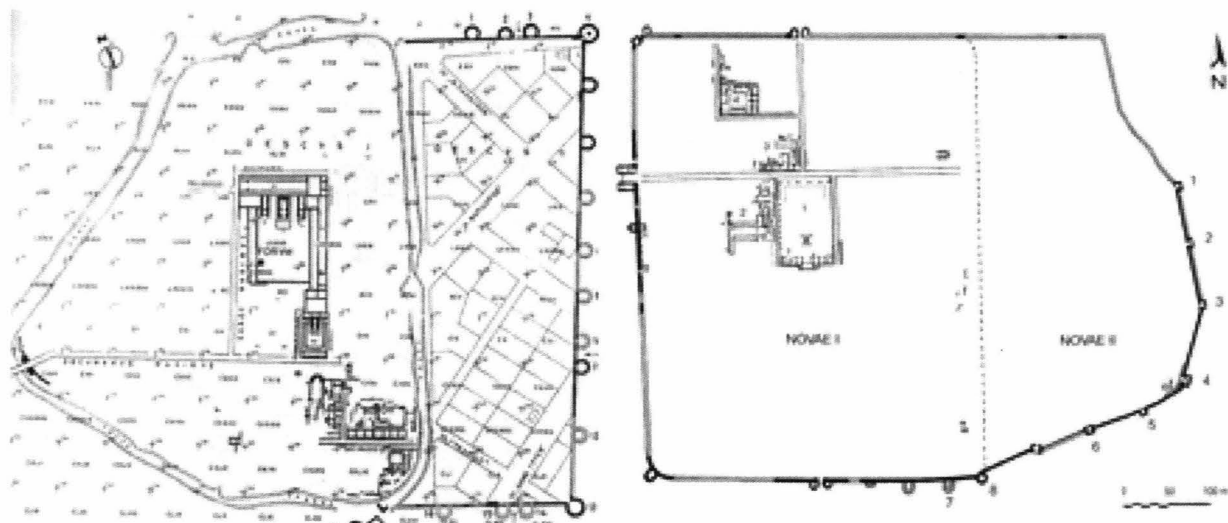


Fig. 7. Oescus II and Novae II. Comparative plans.

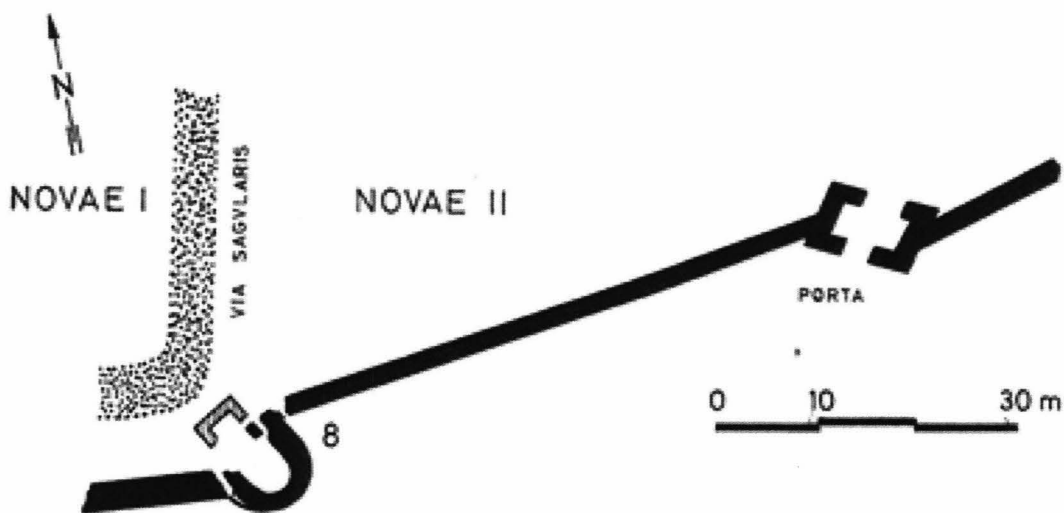


Fig. 8. The bonding of the Novae II against the Novae I fortress wall and the 'trap' gate (after Ivanov, *Das römische...*, p. 563 fig. 28).

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