

LEGIO I IOVIA SCYTHICA AND LEGIO II HERCULIA IN ITINERARIUM ANTONINI 225. 2. 3; 226.1.

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Abstract: The two newly established legions during the early Tetrarchy, *I Iovia* and *II Herculia*, received two headquarters closely related to the situation of the deployment of legionary drafts provided mostly by *legio I Italica* in mid-3rd century in the extreme eastern regions of Lower Moesia, *Troesmis* and *Noviodunum* respectively. The organization of *Scythia* as a new province went in parallel with the deployment of the new regiments. The scheme showed by *Itinerarium Antonini*, a road map apparently thoroughly revised during the first Tetrarchy, displays the dispatch of the two legions in their very beginning. The veracity of the information released by the document is confirmed by the picture indicated for legionary redeployments in other provinces. *Troesmis* was initially the headquarters for *legio I Iovia* and *Noviodunum* for the *II Herculia*. The fact is authenticated by archaeological and epigraphic evidence which confirm the information provided by this important document.

Keywords: *Itinerarium Antonini*, *legio I Iovia*, *legio II Herculia*, *Troesmis*, *Noviodunum*, *Scythia*.

Two passages in *Itinerarium Antonini* (further Antonine Itinerary)¹ refer to the Scythian legions, *I Iovia Scythica*² and *II Herculia*³ and their garrisons, *Troesmis* (today com. Turcoaia, Tulcea county) and *Noviodunum* (today Isaccea, Tulcea county).

The text reads as follows:

225 2 *Trosmis leg I Iovia*
3 (Scytica)
226 1 *Novioduno leg II Herculea*

The picture strongly contrasts with the evidence on the same legions offered by *Notitia Dignitatum*⁴ in the section for the province of *Scythia*:

Not. dign. or.

XXXIX 29 *Praefectus legionis secundae Herculi[an]ae*⁵
30 *Praefectus ripae legionis secundae Herculiae cohortis*
quintae pedaturae inferioris, Axiupolis.

¹ For convenience, we used the edition G. Parthey, M. Pinder, *Itinerarium Antonini Augusti et Hierosolymitanum*, Berlin, 1848. However, see Cuntz excellent critical edition of 1929 (reprint. 1990).

² *I Iovia Scythica*: Ritterling 1925, 1407-1408; Ștefan 1944, 344-348; 1955, 161-163; Barnea 1968, 371-373; Hoffmann 1969-1970, 216-217, 228; Todd 1973, 335-336; Aricescu 1977, 110-112; Drew-Bear 1981, 101-102 and note 24; Zahariade 1988, 62-64; 66-68; Barnea 1991, 210-211; Zahariade 2006, 160-162.

³ *II Herculia*: Ritterling, 1925, 1407-1408; Barnea 1968, 372, 373; Hoffmann 1969-1970, 216-218, 228, 230; Aricescu 1977, 112-114; Zahariade 1983, 247-259; 1988, 64-66; Barnea 1991, 211-212; Zahariade 2006, 160-162.

⁴ On *Notitia Dignitatum* see more recently: Alexander 1976, 11-49; Tomlin 1976, 189-209; Brennan 1996; Neira Faleiro 2005; Richardot 2005; Kulikovski 2000, 358-377; Clemente 2010, 117-132; O'Hara 2013.

⁵ The restoration *Herculi[an]ae* in *Not. dign. or.* XXXIX 29 belongs to O. Seeck, but it looks improper in light of the clear name *Herculia* specifically applied to the legion in the further passages.

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- 31 *Praefectus ripae legionis secundae Herculiae cohortis
quintae pedaturae inferioris, Iprosmis.*
 32 *Praefectus legionis primae Ioviae, Novioduno.*
 33 *Praefectus ripae legionis primae Ioviae cohortis
quintae pedaturae superioris, Novioduno.*
 34 *Praefectus ripae legionis primae Ioviae cohortis
quintae pedaturae inferioris, Acciso.*

The Antonine Itinerary launches one of the most challenging conundrums in the history of Lower Danube lands: contrary wise to *Notitia Dignitatum*⁶, the late 3rd century document places the new Tetrarchic legions in different headquarters. Many times reiterated by scholars involved in commentaries on the Scythian legions, the controversy on whether or not the Antonine Itinerary erred led to no definite answer and congruent view on this specific topic. There has been much stress put on the subject of the so called 'error' in the Antonine Itinerary, an opinion based mainly on an indeed significant amount of tiles and bricks of *I Iovia Scythica* bearing the stamp *LEG I IOV SCY* found on the northern sector of the river frontier between *Dinogetia* (Garvăn-Bisericuța) and *Noviodunum* (Isaccea)⁷, where *Notitia Dignitatum* places it and their complete lack on the western sector, south of *Troesmis*.

The solving of this contradictory stance consists not so much in simply accepting either the easiest alternative, a mistake in the document, or a more difficult and necessarily demonstrable approach, the switch of headquarters, but to adduce clear evidence in favor of one of two major opinions.

Th. Mommsen thinks either to an error or a switch of headquarters⁸. B. Filov⁹ and more recently Em. Popescu¹⁰ trenchantly incline towards an 'error', a 'confusion' in the Itinerary.

In a booklet about the *Salsovia* fortress, V. Pârvan suggested, on the contrary, a switch of garrisons because of a failure of *I Iovia* during a military campaign that entailed a sort of 'punishment' by being moved to *Noviodunum*, on a more dangerous limes sector¹¹.

Gh. Ștefan strongly defended the idea of a mistake in the Antonine Itinerary¹². He based his opinion on the evidence of considerable amount of tiles and bricks bearing the stamp *LEG I IOV SCY* found between, *Dinogetia-Noviodunum*, on the northern frontier of *Scythia*¹³. I. Barnea¹⁴ and A. Aricescu¹⁵ remained, in general, adamant to the idea of an error, although both do not rule out the likelihood of a switch of garrisons.

⁶ For the final date of the Eastern part of *Notitia*: Lot 1936, 322; Jones 1964, 347-358; Clemente 1968, 378; Ward 1974, 434; Hoffmann 1970, 516-519.

⁷ On the abundance of this type of stamped bricks and tiles see in general Barnea 1968, 372; see also infra note 13; Zahariade 2015, 154.

⁸ CIL III 6159 and Mommsen's comment: 'either the itinerary erred or the legions swap the headquarters in the 4th century'; see also Mommsen 1899, 203 note 1.

⁹ Filov 1906, 84.

¹⁰ IGLR no. 241.

¹¹ Pârvan 1906, 39-40 note 2.

¹² Ștefan 1944, 346-348; 1955, 161-163.

¹³ IGLR no. 241 (*Dinogetia*); Todd 1973, 335-336 (*Noviodunum*); see also IGLR no. 268 a-b; two fragmentary bricks found at the place called 'Cetățuia', near Niculițel, were embedded in the turf wall of the early circular medieval stronghold; they might have been imported from *Noviodunum*, the neighboring legionary headquarters; two fragmentary tiles stamped *LE[g](ionis) I [Ioviae Scy[(thicae)]]* and *[LE(gionis) I IOVIAE SC]Y[(thicae)]* were recently found in the debris of the western gate of the late fortress at *Halmyris* (Zahariade, Alexandrescu 2011, no. 45; 46).

¹⁴ Barnea, 1968, 372.

¹⁵ Aricescu 1977, 111.

In an excellent study dedicated to the career and voyages of the soldier Aurelius Gaius across and outside the Empire, Th. Drew-Bear thinks also to an error in the Antonine Itinerary and give credit rather to the arrangement displayed in *Not. dign. or*¹⁶. Al. Barnea remained resolute to the idea of a mistake in the Antonine Itinerary¹⁷.

In tackling this subject, based on the then available evidence, I tried on several occasions¹⁸ to demonstrate the correctness of the passages and that there was no mistake slipped in the document, and expressed expectation that future epigraphic evidence on the western Scythian *limes* sector will soon come to light¹⁹.

The two new Diocletianic legions, *I Iovia Scythica* and *II Herculia*, specifically created for the province of Scythia are clear additional elements introduced by the late 3rd century editor(s) of the itinerary which released the final version of the document²⁰.

The Scythian legions seem the earliest raised by Diocletian in the series of three pairs of *Iovia I, III, V* and *Herculia II, IIII, VI*, and apparently even among the other 17 or 20 new legions considered to have been Tetrarchic in origin²¹.

Diocletian and Maximianus became *Iovius* and *Herculius* on 21 July 286, a day considered *dies Imperii, geminus natalis* of the two sovereigns²². The date is a *terminus post quem* for the setting of the province of Scythia concomitantly with the two assigned legions, *I Iovia* and *II Herculia*²³. The earliest inscription recording a *v(ir) p(erfectissimus)* referring strictly to the office of *dux* in the new province does not exceed the year 293²⁴ which is a strong *terminus ante quem* for the setting of both province and legions, shortly after 286 but not before 293²⁵.

The general view is that Diocletian created some of the legions by pairs. It might be also that the Scythian legions could have been created successively, but at very short intervals, although concomitance seems preferable and most likely. If one considers the first case, the epithet *Scythica* assigned to *I Iovia* in the Antonine Itinerary must refer to the circumstance that for a very short period of time it could have been the only legion in the new district, Scythia, being termed with its name: *legio I Iovia Scythica*, λεγίω πρεΐμα Ιοβία Σκίθια.

¹⁶ Drew-Bear 1981, 95-141 = AE 1981, 777; the inscription was reproduced also by Petolescu, Popovici 1989, 244; on the specific issue of the Scythian legions' switch see Petolescu, Popovici 1989, 101-102 note 26. See also Petolescu, Popovici 1989, 113 note 88; 119; 131; for some observations on Aurelius Gaius' career linked to *legio I Iovia* see Petolescu, Popovici 1989, 135.

¹⁷ Barnea 1999, 210-211.

¹⁸ Zahariade 1983, 247-259; 1988, 62; 2006, 161; 2015, 154-155.

¹⁹ Zahariade 1988, 62.

²⁰ On the Antonine Itinerary and its date see recently: Arnaud 1993, 33-49; Calzolari 1996, 369-520; Calzolari 1997, 125-189; Salway 2001, 22-66; Löhberg 2006; Talbert 2007, 256-270; 2008, 9-28; Salway 2012, 193-234. On Arnaud's and Salway's recent harsh criticism of the document, believed to date from ca. 300, see some observations in note 35 particularly on the date of the Pannonian and Scythian sections in light of the epigraphic material.

²¹ Ritterling 1925, 1351 thinks to a very early creation of *I Iovia* and *II Herculia*, possibly in 285, a date which is must be taken into account given the very early setting of the province sometime in the period between 286 and 293, with an emphasis on the first years; Zahariade 2006, 40-42; on the Diocletianic legions see Parker 1933, 175-189.

²² For the date of the event in 286: Ensslin 1948, 2427; 257-266; Jones 1964, 38; Barnes 1982, 24-26; Williams 1985, 39-40; Totzke 2006, 4-5.

²³ cf. Seston 1946, 60-61; 1950, 257-266; 1980, 441-450 prefers to date the enforcement of the new Imperial titles and theology, *Iovius* and *Herculius* in 287; therefore the creation of the two legions would have followed this year. The date of the new titles is largely contested by Drew-Bear 1981, 101-102 note 25 on the basis of some Egyptian papyri.

²⁴ IGLR no. 1 and 2.

²⁵ Zahariade 2006, 40-42; 160.

In both cases, successiveness at very short intervals or concomitance, according to the itinerary, *I Iovia Scythica*, was dispatched at *Troesmis* fortress, the province's most important legionary headquarters in the 3rd century, while *II Herculia* was billeted at *Noviodunum*, in the second largest legionary and fleet center of the province.

The epithet *Scythica*: Ἰοβία Σκυθικῇ (l. 5); λεγίω πρεῖμα Ἰοβία Σκυθικῇ (l. 8-9) is borne by the legion on the funerary stele of Ada Köy (*Phrygia*)²⁶ which refers to the career of Aurelius Gaius, a soldier whose third service was in the Scythian regiment. The epithet *Scythica* derives directly from the name of the province and would signify 'the legion from the province of Scythia'²⁷. O. Cuntz considered *Scythica* as the name of the province²⁸, while Parthey, Pinder in their edition of 1848 set *Scytica* (with the variants of the manuscripts) in the brackets suggesting that this was the name of the legion²⁹. K. Miller thought that *Scytica* is another name for *Troesmis*³⁰.

The confusing part of the controversy on the 'error' of the Antonine Itinerary is that the stamped bricks and tiles of *I Iovia* found exclusively on the northern front of the province (see above and note 13) bears also *SCYTHICA* as epithet which confirms the itinerary.

The process of the setting of *I Iovia* and *II Herculia* may have used basically the existing legionary detachments in the region between the Danube and the Black Sea, and must have consisted of their on spot amalgamation, backed by a solid addition of a considerable mass of new recruits from drafts across the new province, other districts or even outside the Empire³¹. The continuation of the legionary occupation of the main two provincial headquarters, *Troesmis* and *Noviodunum*, was logical and a first-hand solution for the early Tetrarchic strategy.

'Contradictions' between the Antonine Itinerary and *Notitia Dignitatum* similar to those in *Scythia* are observable in other instances. The Pannonian case is significant from this view point. A second pair of legions, *III Iovia* and *III Herculia*, was created apparently later than *I Iovia* and *II Herculia*. We still ignore for what specific province they had been assigned, although likely for one of the Middle Danube provinces, as Ritterling suggested³². Theoretically, *III Iovia* must have existed but it is not recorded in any of the epigraphic sources. A *III Herculia* is recorded in *Not. dign. occ.* among the operative legions (*comitatenses*) under the command of a *comes Illyrici*³³. It apparently bears a bogus number in *Notitia*, restored on good ground by Ritterling in III. Possibly this legion was transferred to the operative group during the reigns of Constantine I or Constantius II, while its pair seems to have been lost sometime in one of the civil wars or outside the frontiers.

²⁶ Drew-Bear 1981, 97.

²⁷ *I Italica* and *VIII Augusta*, the first legions in which Gaius served, display also the provincial epithets: *Moesica* (l.2) (cf. CIL V 914; VI 2759=ILS 2045) and *Germanica* respectively, stressing the old territorial bond with those districts.

²⁸ Cuntz 1929, 32 no. 225, 2-3: *Scytia sc. provincia*.

²⁹ Parthey, Pinder 1848, 105.

³⁰ Miller 1916, LX 225.

³¹ On the recruitment in the later period: Vegetius 1-7; Kromayer, Veith, 1928, 575-576; Várady 1961, 334-339 (with older bibliography); Jones 1964, 614-623; 668-679; Haldon 1979, 20-39; Elton 1996, 128-154; Nicasie 1998, 83-96; Lee 2007, 12, 79-100. Some of the 3rd century existing legionary *vexillations* of *I Italica* documented at *Capidava* (ISM V no. 41), *Carsium* (ISM V no. 113), *Troesmis* (ISM V no. 216), *Noviodunum* (ISM V no. 271), *Salsovia* (ISM V no. 290a), *Halmyris* (Zahariade, Alexandrescu 2011, no.26) could have served as base for the setting of the new regiments; auxiliary units, still existing in the province, were presumably poured into the new legions.

³² Ritterling 1925, 1532; Parker 1933, 177.

³³ *Not. dign. occ.* V=89=238=VII 54; Ritterling 1925, 1532; Hoffmann 1970, 217, 228.

Another pair is *V Iovia* - *VI Herculia* assigned to *Pannonia Secunda*, a district detached from former *Pannonia inferior*³⁴. The new province was established in 295/296, and therefore the legions must have been set concomitantly. There is no sign of any of these two legions in the itinerary³⁵.

Not. dign. occ., indicates as headquarters of *V Iovia*: *Bononia*, *Burgenae* and *Castellum Onagrinum* shared with *VI Herculia*. The *VI Herculia* left abundant epigraphic evidence in Tetrarchic period in some of the forts under its control³⁶. On the basis of a building inscription dated to 306-307 found at *Ad Militare* (Batina), in *Pannonia Secunda*, T. Nagy convincingly demonstrated that the fortress was at that date the headquarters of *VI Herculia* in *Pannonia Secunda*³⁷. But *Not. dign. occ.* indicates *Aureus Mons*, *Teutoburgium* and *Castellum Onagrinum* (the latter shared with *V Iovia*) as late 4th century headquarters for *VI Herculia*, in *Pannonia Secunda*. In the meantime, likely under Constantine I, *Ad Militare* had been transferred to the province of *Valeria*³⁸ and was garrisoned, according to *Notitia*, by an auxiliary unit.

At least in case of *VI Herculia*, a simple comparison of the epigraphic evidence with the information for *Pannonia Secunda* section in *Notitia* point to a significant change of garrisons between late 3rd-early 4th century, when the legion had its headquarters at *Ad Militare*, and the late 4th century when the regiment appears garrisoned in three other locations.

Some 'contradictions' between the Antonine itinerary and *Notitia*, could be invoked in other cases. The Itinerary places *II Augusta* at *Isca* (Carleon)³⁹, while *Notitia* indicates *Rutupiae* (Richborough) as headquarters, as result of a switch of garrisons shortly after 293, or possibly later in the 4th century⁴⁰. According to the itinerary, *VII=XVI (Flavia Firma)* occupied *Samosata*, in *Syria*, at the end of the 3rd century⁴¹, while *Notitia Dignitatum* places it at *Sura*, in *Augusta Euphratensis*⁴². The change of garrison seems to have taken place under Diocletian, after 299, when the new territorial acquisitions following the Persian war were reorganized *in formam provinciae*.

As the correctness of the itinerary in indicating the late 3rd century headquarters of the legions is without question, the cases cited above show how the Diocletianic scheme could have been affected by later redeployments in the 4th century or even earlier, in Tetrarchic period and how two basic documents can offer conflicting information without being considered mistakes. It is true that the examples we have just referred to are only indirect evidence, endorsing the correctness of the information of the itinerary in the Scythian case. In fact this thorny debate needs solid archaeological and epigraphic confirmation.

³⁴ *Not. dign. occ.* XXXII 44-48. On *V Iovia* and *VI Herculia* see: Ritterling 1925, 1572; 1596-1597; Parker 1933, 177; Mocsy, Lőrincz 1990, 111; a short commentary on both legions, Kovács 2003, 31.

³⁵ Mocsy 1974, 273, 396 note 33; Fitz 1983, 14-15; Mocsy, Lőrincz 1990, 111. The legions were created concomitantly with *Pannonia Secunda*, in ca. 296, but they are not recorded in the Antonine Itinerary. That would imply a final revision of the itinerary previous to 296. On the other hand, none of the new Diocletianic legions (Ritterling 1925, 1351; Parker 1933, 176-178) are mentioned in the itinerary, a sign that the document does not exceed the year 293 in date.

³⁶ Šaranović Svetek 1989-1990, 49-50.

³⁷ Nagy 1964, 276 = AE 1964, 226; cf. Fitz 1983, 15-16.

³⁸ Fitz 1983, 16. Stamped tiles and bricks of *VI Herculia* were found at *Teutoburgium* and *Castellum Onagrinum* 4th century forts of *VI Herculia* and also at *Ad Militare* (Šaranović Svetek 1989-1990, 50).

³⁹ *Itin. Anton.* 484. 4: *Iscae leg II Augusta*.

⁴⁰ *Not. dign. occ.* XXVIII 19; Ritterling 1925, 1464; van Berchem 1955, 142, 145-147; Frere 1974, 268; Hassal 1977, 7-10; Fulford 1996, 24-25; a comprehensive, although synthetic presentation of the command of the *comes litoris Saxonici* in control over *legio II Augusta* at <http://www.vortigernstudies.org.uk/artsou/notitallist.htm> (last seen 18.04.2016).

⁴¹ *Itin. Anton.* 187. 6.

⁴² *Not. dign. or.* XXXIII 28; Ritterling 1925, 1766.

Troesmis and particularly the so called 'Eastern fortress' supposed to have garrisoned a legion was not, unfortunately, systematically excavated, although the recent studies of the site are of considerable value⁴³.

Rescue excavations on the Danube's available flooding right bank were carried out at *Noviodunum*, the northern legionary headquarters in the 50's and 60's of the 20th century.

A key archaeological element in our discussion is held by the very detailed observations on the structure of the water front walls, particularly when the low level of the Danube made possible such investigations. There have been made important observations on the composition of the mortar of some towers and a portion of the curtain wall. Noticeable are the clear dissimilarities between west and east parts of the researched segment of the wall.

The mortar between the facing stone blocks of the bastions no. 7 and no. 5 has fine gravel in composition compared to the east side of the tower no. 5 and the towers numbered 1-4 which shows mortar containing fine crashed bricks.

On the east side, traces of *προτείχισμα* have been identified. Two stone walls, 3.50 m and 3.00 m in width separated by a strip of 12 m show interesting signs of difference in fabric. The exterior one contains stone bound in mortar with gravel in composition, while the interior one was built in stone with courses of bricks bound in mortar with smashed bricks in structure. The archaeologists proposed a relation of posteriority of the exterior wall in comparison with the interior one⁴⁴.

The marked differences in materials suggest two phases of construction of these particular river front structures, carried out successively by different manpower, and also a certain interlude in the general reconstruction. The succession of the two legions at *Noviodunum* could be an answer for the differences in the composition of the structure of the water front wall. Reasonably, the archaeological evidence would need fresh confirmation in the future research.

From the epigraphic view point of the debate a remarkable discovery has been made during the rescue excavation of the 4th century necropolis at Hârşova carried out in the second half of the 1980s. The digs yielded five crypts with tombs. One of the crypt (no. 4) contained an inhumation burial oriented NW-SE. The burial was built in stone and bricks bound in mortar with a ceiling formed of five reused sizable slabs. One of the slabs proved to be a marble stele which contains an inscription set facing down. The inscription was published and thoroughly commented by C.C. Petolescu and D. Popovici in 1989⁴⁵. The inscription, datable in late 3rd century, reads as follows:

*D(is) M(anibus)
b(ene) m(erentibus) Castae, quae
vixit an(num) I d(ies) V et
Reginae, quae vixit
ann(os) VII mens(es) V dies
XVIII, filiabus dul-
cissimis, Val(erius) Castus
centur(io) ord(inarius) leg(ionis) I Iov(iae)
Scyt(hicae), unacum Val(erio)
Valeriano, centen(ario), so-
cero suo, posuit*

The discovery of the funeral monument mentioning explicitly *legio I Iovia Scythica* at *Carsium*, on the western river frontier of *Scythia* raises some key observations.

⁴³ An all-out view of the history of research at *Troesmis* and the recent surveys: Alexandrescu, Gugl 2012, 251-257.

⁴⁴ Barnea, Mitrea, Angheliescu 1957, 162; Barnea, Mitrea 1959, 461-464; Zahariade 1988, 134-137.

⁴⁵ Petolescu, Popovici, 1989, 241-247 and note 1.

First, one of social tinge. The reutilization of the stele into a vaulted tomb indicates its origin from an intentionally dismantled 3rd century necropolis. A similar circumstance is observable at *Halmyris* where the 2nd-3rd century necropolis was considerably depleted of funerary monuments, some being reused in the rebuilding of the late 3rd-early 4th century north and west gates of the fortress⁴⁶.

Castus' daughters, Casta and Regina, were very young upon their death which occurred at *Carsium*, most likely in the civil settlement where they must have spent their short lives. Their mother seems to have died earlier, no mention of her being made in the inscription. But Castus' father-in-law, *Valerianus*, is recorded as fully involved in the obsequies of his nieces.

The gravestone indicates a solid family established by Castus with strong ties in the military milieu created by the legion at *Carsium*⁴⁷. It is hardly believable that Castus could have traveled from *Noviodunum* to inter his *dulcissimae filiae* at *Carsium* and that *Valerianus* accompanied him for the accomplishment of the same ritual.

If Regina was aged seven upon her death and the legion was created in 286 or shortly after and dispatched directly to *Carsium* that suggests that decease could have occurred sometime in the 90's of the 3rd century.

Secondly, an aspect related to the military field. The two dedicants, Castus and *Valerianus* are recorded as *centurio ordinarius* and *centenarius*, respectively⁴⁸. The ranks must have been equivalent, maybe with an imperceptible hierarchical difference. However, they were definitely members of the detachment of *I Iovia Scythica* at *Carsium* in late 3rd century. From its main headquarters at *Troesmis* the legion controlled indiscriminately the entire west river front of the province where forts and fortresses may have billeted legionary strengths of different size.

If the Diocletianic legions, at least the first created, remained in general at an unaltered size compared to that during the Principate, ca 5500-6000⁴⁹, then a legionary *centuria* in the legion could have continued to reach 80 men. As both officers were active at the date of the setting of the gravestone they apparently each commanded one legionary *centuria*. But *Carsium* is too large and strategically too important for only two *centuriae* (160 men) and therefore the garrison of the fortress was supposedly much bigger.

The precise date of the switch of the headquarters as recorded by the Antonine Itinerary vs. *Notitia Dignitatum* remains basically unknown. An inscription on stone found at *Aegyssus*⁵⁰ recording *Valerius Proculus*, a *miles* of *I Iovia* and a brick with handwriting at *Halmyris*⁵¹ mentioning a possible officer in the same legion, add more evidence on a considerable presence of the regiment on the northern *limes* sector. The *Halmyris* handwriting in the rough paste prior to firing records λεγίω περίμα Ἰοβία.

It is remarkable that on both documents *legio I Iovia* appears without the epithet *Scythica*. That could open another question of when the legion lost its territorial epithet, otherwise not mentioned in *Notitia*. Except a brick stamped TROS discovered at *Dinogetia*, other similar building material produced in the legionary workshops by *II Herculia* was not yet found on the northern and western river frontiers of *Scythia*⁵².

⁴⁶ Zahariade, Alexandrescu 2011, 17-20.

⁴⁷ On the fort see recently: Nicolae 2010, 223-249; 2011, 183-195.

⁴⁸ On the ranks: Drew-Bear 1981, 106 note 47; Petolescu, Popovici 1989, 245-246; Janniard 2007, 383-394.

⁴⁹ Parker 1933, 187; Jones 1964, 56.

⁵⁰ IGLR no 270.

⁵¹ Zahariade, Alexandrescu 2011, 57-60 no. 36.

⁵² IGLR no. 265. A significant military activity of a *vexillatio* of *II Herculia* is reported in Crimea, where two fragmentary inscriptions were found at *Chersonesus*. One is datable likely (Sarnowski 1988, 96-97 no. 74; 76; AE 1984, 808; AE 1994, 1539) during Diocletian's reign and suggests a temporary garrison and a participation in the Bosporan war sometime between 286 and 293 (Sarnowski 1988, 97 no. 74).

Several instances are serious candidates for more chronological accuracy on the date of the switch of the headquarters after 293. The following dates could be considered: the Diocletian's visits along the Danube in 294; shortly after 295 or 298, when fractions of the Scythian legions returned from Egypt and *Mauretania Caesariensis*; anytime during the first or second Tetrarchy. A swap of headquarters during Licinius could have been also possible.

Gh. Ștefan and Em. Popescu assign indiscernibly the series of stamped bricks and tiles found on the northern river front of the province to 4th century but that sounds unproductive. T. Sarnowski elaborated on the series of the stamped bricks of *I Iovia Scythica*, and suggested, more specifically, the possibility of a late issue of the series during the second Tetrarchy or early Constantine' reign⁵³.

The first record of the legion without the epithet *Scythica* comes from *Aegyssus*⁵⁴ in a period when the regiment had already been moved to *Noviodunum* and *Halmyris* brick. They both show that the legion apparently lost at that time its epithet *SCY(thica)*. But when?

Diocletian visited the Lower Danube river frontier in 294 and that could be a benchmark. The main fortresses and forts from *Viminacium* to *Durostorum* were inspected on that occasion. From *Durostorum* the Imperial suite turned south-east to Suneata, recently identified with Ezechioi, present day in Bulgaria⁵⁵, ignoring the north river tract, but orders could have been previously released for the inspections of the military assets downstream Danube⁵⁶.

Some useful indications on the date of the swap of the headquarters are perceivable in the epigraphy of *II Herculia*. A milestone, today disappeared, dated between 308 and 323, records *II Herculia* already at *Troesmis*⁵⁷. The last line of the text was restored by Dessau *LEG(io) [II Herculia]* and remains conjectural although likely⁵⁸ and could be an important chronological reference point.

A *crux* in this analysis is a long time known, published and commented inscription from *Troesmis* which mentions an officer, Valerius Thumpus⁵⁹. The individual served initially in *XI Claudia*, apparently as a simple soldier; he was later transferred as *lanciarus* in the Tetrarchic *sacer comitatus*, where he served five years and was finally promoted *praefectus* in *II Herculia* where he died aged 45, after only two years of service. The inscription was dated by all editors to late 3rd or early 4th century at the latest. The inscription seems not to exceed first years of 4th century, when the dedication *Dis Manibus* was still a common feature on the gravestones. If Dessau's restoration of the name of the legion on the milestone is correct, then the switch of the headquarters could have occurred shortly before 308, the earliest date of the stone⁶⁰.

Some conclusions:

1. The Antonine itinerary is the first document to mention the newly established legions, *I Iovia Scythica* and *II Herculia*;

⁵³ Sarnowski 1985, 119.

⁵⁴ see note 50.

⁵⁵ Zahariade 2011, 137-138 notes 1-4 (with bibliography).

⁵⁶ On Diocletian's presence in early 90' of the 3rd century at the Lower Danube: Mommsen 1994 (reprint), 203-291; Ensslin 1948, 2438-2439. Inspections of the Imperial officials to the mouth of the Danube are reported even earlier, e.g. in 290: ActaSS II Iulius III 19 [...] *Latronianus dux in Almiridensium civitatem. Et cum per triduum opera publica et imperialia ministeria, quae ibidem errant, pervidisset.*

⁵⁷ IGLR no. 237.

⁵⁸ ILS 683.

⁵⁹ IGLR no. 236= ILS 2781; cf. Madgearu 2001, 111-117.

⁶⁰ It must be noticed that the inscription found at *Sacidava* (IGLR no. 189) which mentions a *legio II* thought to be *II Herculia* (Aricescu 1977a, 111-112) is too late in date to be taken as the earliest possible evidence for the redeployment of legion at *Troesmis*. It is certainly assignable to the first decade of the 4th century when fractions of the same legion could have been already dispatched on the west river frontier of *Scythia*.

2. Bearing long traditions as a legionary center, with already at hand existing logistic structures, *Troesmis* was in the very beginning the only option for billeting a legion, *I Iovia*, in its entirety in the province; a new fortress was built for it.

3. The *II Herculia* was established concomitantly or shortly after on the principle of pair legions in the new created Diocletianic provinces; it was initially assigned to *Noviodunum*, the second in importance after *Troesmis* headquarters and the main base of the naval forces at the Lower Danube, but also with longstanding tradition in billeting effectives of *I Italica*⁶¹;

4. The much invoked 'error', 'mistake' in the Antonine Itinerary as to the initial headquarters of the Scythian legions must be finally ruled out. The document is remarkably exact in indicating the legionary headquarters throughout Empire and it would be hardly believable a mistake in case of the deployment headquarters of the first Diocletianic legions in *Scythia*. The archaeological and epigraphic evidence is enough relevant to support the correctness of the document.

5. The *Carsium* inscription is a strong evidence for the early presence of *I Iovia Scythica* on the western front, with *Troesmis* as its headquarters⁶². The passage in the Antonine Itinerary is thus considerably endorsed by an important and explicit epigraphic document.

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⁶¹ Aricescu 1977a, 41-44; 1977b, 186-187.

⁶² Surprisingly, the first editors of the gravestone still consider this solid epigraphic evidence as 'fragile' and which need to wait for more evidence in 'stamped bricks and tiles' (Petolescu, Popovici, 1989, 346-347) to confirm the presence of *I Iovia Scythica* on the Western front of the province at the date of the Antonine Itinerary.

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