

The archaeological campaign of 1985 in the Roman and Roman-Byzantine fortress near the Independența commune (Tulcea County) brought to light, among the great number of votive and funerary inscriptions, an epigraph (Fig. 1) which stands out through its contents and form in a series of eight pieces (altars, votive plaques) referring to the new "village" in northern Dobrudja, *vicius classicorum*<sup>1</sup>. The epigraph is written on a limestone altar of a yellowish colour, with a pedestal on the upper side, meant to sustain a statue. On the right side there is a tambour, divided by a double belt; the dimensions of the altar are: 0.96 × 0.49 × 0.35 m, the letters being 6.5 cm high.

The text is the following: **HERCULI  
VEXILLATIO  
LEG I ITALI  
ET LEG XI CPF**

and it should be read: *Herculi  
vexillatio  
leg(ionis) I Itali(cae)  
et leg(ionis) XI C(laudiae) P(iae) F(idelis)*

1. 2 : T + I in ligature.

To Hercules. The detachment (made up of subunits) of the legions I Italica and XI Claudia Pia Fidelis.

The altar also served as building material for the internal side of the northern gate (as proved by its position — face downwards — at the moment of discovery) and it was found, together with the other votive inscriptions, in the area of the inner gate of the stronghold<sup>2</sup>.

Mention should be made of the fact that *Hercules*, the well-known Greek-Roman deity<sup>3</sup>, is frequently attested to in the Balkan provinces<sup>4</sup>. In north-eastern Moesia Inferior, on the territory of the present-day Dobrudja, the name of *Hercules* appears in inscriptions<sup>5</sup> accompanied by such epithets as *Victor*<sup>6</sup>, *Invictus*<sup>7</sup>, *Om(nipotens)*<sup>8</sup> and in association with the supreme Roman deity, *Jupiter Optimus Maximus*<sup>9</sup>, or alongside *IO M*, *Ceres* and *Liber Pater*<sup>10</sup>. The cult of *Hercules* was usually linked to the life of the military units, of the soldiers (either in service or veterans) and its close association in the present instance with a *vexillatio* — a unique case in Dobrudja until now — emphasizes his attributes as a military deity and suggests his symbolic participation in the activities of the respective unit.

Another peculiarity which we should more extensively deal with is the union in a single vexillation of subunits belonging to the two legions in Moesia Inferior, the *I Italica*, stationed at Novae, and the *XI Claudia*, with its seat at Durostorum.

<sup>1</sup> In this number see also p. 109–120.

<sup>2</sup> We should remark that the votive inscriptions were found on the inner side of the gate, while the funerary plaques on the outer one.

<sup>3</sup> Haug, in *RE*, XV, 1912, col. 550–612 s. v. *Hercules* especially col. 582–586, 589–590; K. Latte, *Römische Religionsgeschichte*, München, 1960, p. 213–221.

<sup>4</sup> T. Sarafov, in *Acta Antiqua Philippopolitana. Studia Archaeologica*, Sofia, 1963, p. 171–180 and his significant statement that: "en Mésie ses adeptes sont avant tout les légionnaires romains".

<sup>5</sup> For the cult of Hercules in Dobrudja see M. Munteanu,

*Pontica*, 6, 1973, p. 73–86; Z. Covacef, *Pontica* 8, 1975, p. 399–428.

<sup>6</sup> Em. Dorușiu-Boilă, *Inscripțiile din Scythia Minor*, vol. V. (further quoted as ISM, V), București, 1980, no. 296 (*Barboși*).

<sup>7</sup> ISM, I, no. 324; cf. *CHL*, III, 14 214<sup>1</sup>; M. Munteanu, *op. cit.*, p. 83; Z. Covacef, *op. cit.*, p. 424.

<sup>8</sup> D. Tudor, *Materialie*, 1956, p. 605, no. 100 fig. 25 (*Noviodunum*); Z. Covacef, *l. c.*

<sup>9</sup> ISM, V, no. 70 (*Ulmelum*); M. Munteanu, *op. cit.*, p. 75, 83; Z. Covacef, *l. c.*

<sup>10</sup> *CHL*, III, 14 214<sup>1</sup> (*Tropaeum Traiani*); M. Munteanu, *op. cit.*, p. 75; Z. Covacef, *l. c.*

There are two instances in Moesia Inferior when detachments from the units in the province were united, both in Tropaeum Traiani. Specifically, there are the *vexil(latio) leg(ionis) I Ital(icae) M(oesicae) et V Ma(cedonicae) D(aciae) Tropea[e]i (agens)*<sup>11</sup> and a *[vexil(latio)] leg(ionis) V Mac(edoniae) [et] leg(ionis) I Ital(icae)*<sup>12</sup>. In both cases, we should note that the legio XI Claudia which controlled an area including Tropaeum Traiani<sup>13</sup> was committed in southern Dobrudja.

On the northern and north-western coasts of the Black Sea, an area conjointly controlled by the three legions of Lower Moesia, with its main centers at Tyras, Olbia, Chersonesus Taurica and Charax, the union of legionary detachments in *vexillationes* was common practice and the examples are too numerous and well-known to review them here<sup>14</sup>. The north-Pontic vexillations includes either subunits of the three legions, and in that case the subunits were designated specifically<sup>15</sup>, or they consisted of detachments belonging to one single legion<sup>16</sup>, or they were designated with the general term of *vexillatio Moesiae Inferioris*<sup>17</sup>, or *vexillationes Pontici apud Scythiam et Tauricam*<sup>18</sup>. However, there is no instance, known in Moesia Inferior, when subunits of the two Moesian legions, the I Italica and XI Claudia, were associated in a *vexillatio*.

As for the two examples from Tropaeum Traiani — taking into account the fact that the legion of Durostorum was included in neither of the vexillations — the union of detachments of the legions I Italica and XI Claudia without the detachment of the Vth Macedonica, is not surprising. As the very letters indicate, the altar from Independența could be, at first sight, dated back to roughly the 2nd–3rd centuries A.D.

However, there are two details which deserve particular attention, namely the fact that the patronymic of the XI Claudia is shortened to C = C(*lavia*) and the legion is characterized by the epithets *p(ia) f(idelis)*. The insight into the epigraphs of the legio XI Claudia proves what E. Ritterling<sup>19</sup> had suggested as early as 1925, namely that over the entire period of its station in Dalmatia, at Burnum (42–71), then in Germania Superior, at Vindonissa (71–101), the patronymic of the legion, always accompanied by the epithets *pie fidelis*, was abbreviated to CPF<sup>20</sup>. The abbreviation was also used during the legion's temporary and probably

<sup>11</sup> CIL., III, 14 433. The command (*sub curam*) of the vexillation was in this case exerted by two legionary centurions, Eptidius Modestus, from the V Macedonica, and Valerius Clemens, from the I Italica, which actually means that each centurion was in command of his own unit. The interpretation given to letter “D” as coming from *D(acica)*, as it is currently considered in the reference material, indicative of the fact that the detachment of the legion was shifted from Dacia to Moesia Inferior, requires further substantiation.

<sup>12</sup> CIL., III, 14 214<sup>3</sup>. Unlike the above-mentioned one, this vexillation had one commander only, an *evocatus* from the V Macedonica. A. Aricescu, *Armata in Dobrogea romană*, (further quoted as *Armata*), București, 1977, p. 46, identifies this vexillation with the preceding one, which seems to me highly improbable.

<sup>13</sup> A. Aricescu, *Armata*, p. 38–39; idem, *Pontica*, 10, 1977, p. 183.

<sup>14</sup> For the term *vexillatio* see A. Neumann, in RE, XV<sup>2</sup>, 1958, col. 2442–2446. From the rich bibliography referring to the Roman troops on the Black Sea coast, we select: M. Rostovtzeff, in JMPN, 328, March, 1900, p. 140–158; idem, in “Klio”, 2, 1902, 1, p. 80–95; V. N. Diacov, in *Učenyje moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogičeskogo instituta*, *Žurnal ministerstva*, 28, 1942, 1, p. 48–56; S.A. Beliaev, VDI, 106, 1968, 4, p. 127–137; cf. R. Saxer, *Untersuchungen zu den Vexillationen des Römischen Kaiserheeres von Augustus bis Diokletian* (further quoted as *Vexillationen*), Köln-Graz, 1967, p. 90–92.

<sup>15</sup> Suffice it to mention two typical examples of tegulary fragments with the stamps: *leg(io) I Il(alica) leg(io) V Mac(edonica) leg(io) XI Cl(audia)*, etc. (P. Nicorescu, in ARMSI, s. III, t. XIX, 1937, p. 218); *vexil(latio) leg(ionum) XI Cl(audiae) I Il(alicae)*, V *Mac(edonicae)*, etc. (IOSPE, I, no. 322).

<sup>16</sup> IOSPE, I, no. 550: *v(e)x(illatio) per qua[dr]iennium leg(ionis) XI Cl(audiae)*; P. Nicorescu, ARMSI, s. III, t. XXV, 1943–1944, p. 503, fig. 3: *vexil(latio) leg(ionis) V Mac(edonicae) et auxiliis eius*; cf. idem, in ARMSI, s. III, 6, XIX, p. 218.

<sup>17</sup> P. Nicorescu, in ARMSI, s. III, t. XIX, 1937, p. 218, fig. 2–4 = EDR, 2, 1924, p. 413, no. 68 = AE, 1925,

78: *[leg(io) I Il(alica) leg(io) V] Mac(edonica), leg(io) XI Cl(audia) [vex(illatio)] [Moes(iae) Inferioris]*.

<sup>18</sup> CIL., VIII, 619; S.A. Beliaev, in VDI, 106, 1968, 4, p. 127–137: *praepositus vexillationibus Ponticis apud Scythiam et Tauricam*; (M. Rostovtzeff, in “Klio”, 2, 1902, 1, p. 93); likewise, account should be taken of the *vexillatio Chersonesitana*, including all troops in the garrison at Chersonesus (IOSPE, IV, no. 81); cf. IOSPE, I, no. 561.

<sup>19</sup> E. Ritterling, in RE, XII, 1925, col. 1691, 1694, 1696–1697, 1705; The same abbreviations and chronology are also true for the VII Claudia, therefore see ibidem, col. 1622, 1628; see also C. Museleanu, M. Zahariade, D. Elefterescu, in SMMI, 12, 1979, p. 164–175.

<sup>20</sup> There are too many examples to permit a thorough presentation here. Given the less justified doubts still existing as regards the abbreviation of titles (the patronymic and the epithets), we should mention, for the period of station in Dalmatia, J. J. Wilkes, *Dalmatia*, Routledge & Keagan Paul, London, p. 99; Appendix, III, p. 451, where, the author's statement, namely that “after legio XI left Dalmatia in 69, the form CI became a general rule” appears at least strange in the light of the epigraphy of the unit from Vindonissa; see also, CIL., III, 2833, 2834, 2839, 6417, 9903, 9904, 9908, 14 999; AE, 1903, 303, 376; Suié, *Inscriptiones*, no. 835, 836, 838, 839, 849 (*Burnum*); CIL., III, 9973, 9974 (*Corinium*); CIL., III 2013, 2035, 2054, 2062, 8740 (*Salona*); CIL., III, 9709, 9970 (*Tragurium*). We also remark the fact that the abbreviation CPF on the tegulary material in Dalmatia was invariable, an official indicator not subject to irregularities as in private inscriptions, like in AE, 1925, 131, 133. In Germania Superior, inscriptions continue to invariably shorten CPF: CIL., XIII, 2, 5307, 5209, 5210, 5211, 5213–5217, 5240, 5241, 5197; AE, 1900, 115; 1901, 99; 1911, 111; 1914, 97; 1926, 69; see also, A. Meyer, in *Mitteilungen der Antiquarischen Gesellschaft in Zürich*, 1853, p. 125–150; the stamped tegulary material officially issued contains, in Germania Superior as well, the CPF abbreviation of titles, in several variants, with no change. As for Vindonissa, see C. Zangemeister, CIL., XIII, 2, 1 (1905) p. 37; R. Laur-Belart, *Vindonissa Lager und Vicus*, Berlin, Leipzig, 1953.

partial stay in Pannonia Inferior, at Brigetio (101–106). In Moesia Inferior the abbreviation was still in use during 106–c. 117/118<sup>21</sup>, but starting the reign of Hadrian the patronymic was changed to CL<sup>22</sup>, while the epithets were preserved; later on, the epithets *pia fidelis* were to completely disappear from the epigraphy of the legion<sup>23</sup>, being used in exceptional cases only, for instance on Gallienus' coins<sup>24</sup>. These rules seem to have been strictly observed, as the extensive stamped regular material issued by the legion in the 2nd–3rd centuries testifies to. Consequently, the mere fact that on this inscription from Moesia Inferior the patronymic and the epithet are abbreviated to CPF indicates that the altar belongs to until c. 117/118. Undoubtedly, the altar could also have been dated to a later period, namely the second half of the 2nd century, as on the one hand, the detachment of the legio V Macedonica is not mentioned, although it could have made tandem with detachments of the two other legions or with detachments of the legio XI Claudia exclusively, and on the other hand, on the mere grounds of the existence of a subunit of the Ist Italica from Novae, in the north-eastern part of the province. It was only after 167/168 that the great vexillation from the Novae area – which had replaced the Vth Macedonica at Troesmis –, extended its control over the maritime Danube<sup>25</sup>. In such a case, however, the rule of abbreviated patronymic would have proved pointless, which is hard to accept. Moreover, as we have seen<sup>26</sup>, in mid 2nd century, in southern Dobrudja, at Tropaeum Traiani, that is in the middle of the territory under the military and administrative control of the XIth Claudia, exactly this unit misses from the contents of vexillation which is not to be surprising in our case, too.

The Polish archaeologist T. Sarnowski, reexamining the text of Ptolemaios' *Geographia* referring to the legio I Italica<sup>27</sup>, has recently brought to the fore the question of the presence of one of its great vexillations at Durostorum prior to the coming of the XIth Claudia<sup>28</sup>. However, a cooperation between subunits of the two legions in this case could only be conceived at some earlier stage in the 2nd century. Without entering the details of such a vast topic, which we intend to discuss in the future, we should note that the association of detachments from the Ist Italica and the XIth Claudia is indicative of the fact that the latter (or parts of it only) had certainly come to Durostorum before the legio V Macedonica came to Troesmis.

No epigraphic investigation in either Moesia Inferior or the other provinces of the Empire revealed an association of *Hercules* to a *vexillatio*. Consequently, the union of subunits from the I Italica and the XI Claudia in northern Dobrudja corroborated with the altar worshipping *Hercules* point to some type of activity which was neither routine, nor customary piety, but the carrying through of an important mission which the *vexillatio* was assigned to, having *Hercules* as the patron God, a symbol of strength and valiance in combat, of great physical power.

The legions I Italica and XI Claudia were committed to a great extent in the battles against the Dacians. It is difficult to ascertain whether the vexillation had already been established when it came to northern Dobrudja, or it was set up *ad hoc*. We only hypothetically advance the possibility that the vexillation took part in the battle of Adamclisi, its mission in northern Dobrudja being linked in this case with the mopping up of the territory of the last remnants of

<sup>21</sup> The inscriptions which can be dated back to first two decades of the 2nd century are the following: IDR, 111/2, no. 437 (*Sarmizegetusa*); AISC, 2, 1933–1935, p. 217 = AE, 1936, 14 (*Durostorum*); Izvestiia, 8, 1934, p. 451 (*Oescus*); cf. AE, 1980, 357 in late 1st century. Some other inscriptions: CIL, VI, 32 933 (*Roma*); CIL, IX, 1123 = 1110 = IL, 1054 (*Aeclanum*); CIL, XIV, 3599 (*Tibur*) records the abbreviation *leg(io) XI Cl(audia) P(ia) F(idelis)*, but the dedications, belonging to some tribunes of the legion, were marked later, during Hadrianus' and Antonius Pius' time, when the abbreviation was already in general use.

<sup>22</sup> See note 21 to which we can add the following: CIL, IX, 5833 = IL, 1059 (*Auxinum*); CIL, VI, 1408, 1409 = IL, 1141, 1142 (*Roma*); AE, 1913, 215; 1937, 101, to mention a few of the better dated inscriptions. However, in late 2nd and early 3rd century, in a *cursus honorum* at Clusium the epithets are still maintained (CIL, XI, 2106 = IL, 1138).

<sup>23</sup> Probably that the epithets *pia fidelis* were abandoned sometime during Marcus Aurelius' reign, or rather towards the end of the 2nd century. This is, nevertheless, a change of less consequence to our discussion.

<sup>24</sup> RIC, V, 1, p. 96, no. 359; Lukas de Blois, *The Policy of Emperor Gallienus*, E. J. Brill, 1976, p. 109; LEG(ionis) XI CL(audae) P(iae) VI (sextum) F(idelis) VI (sextum). These titles were assigned to other legions too, in the fifth, the sixth, the seventh year of the emperor's reign, in conse-

quence of the victories won on the Rhine, the Danube and in northern Italy and were temporary. We mention the fact that the epithets reappeared on an inscription discovered at Ostrov, M. Bărbulescu-Munteanu, A. Rădulescu, *Pontica* 15, 1982, p. 153–159; cf. C.C. Petolescu, SCIVA, 35, 1984, 4, p. 381–382, a unique case until now in the epigraphy of the legion in this period, linked to the honorific titles which also appear on coins.

<sup>25</sup> Em. Doruțiu-Boilă, SCIV, 23, 1972, 1, p. 45–62; A. Aricescu, *Armata*, p. 41–43; idem, *Pontica*, 10, 1977, p. 180, 181, 184, 186 and 187–188.

<sup>26</sup> See notes 11, 12.

<sup>27</sup> Ptolemaios, *Geographia*, III, 10, 5: Δουρίστον, λεγίων Λεγίων πρώτη Ἰταλκή.

<sup>28</sup> T. Sarnowski, in *Studia Balcanica*, I, 1984, p. 143–169. C. Patsch, *Beiträge zur Völkerkunde von Südosteuropa*, V, 2: *Der Kampf um den Donauraum unter Domitian und Traian*, Wien, 1937, p. 3, pleads for the presence at Durostorum of the V Alauda Legion, but the traces are altogether absent. The lot of bricks found at Durostorum bearing the stamp LEG I ITAL (AE, 1936, 16) if not the result of exports from Novae could indicate the presence of some subunits of the legion from Novae at an early date, in any case in the 1st century; E. Ritterling, RE, XII, 1925, col. 1410, 1698 and Radu Vulpe, in *Din istoria Dobrogei*, vol. II. București, p. 61, note 164, question the accuracy of Ptolemaios' information.

the great Dacian-Buro-Sarmatian expeditionary corps which had penetrated the regions between the Danube and the sea <sup>29</sup>. We could also presume that the respective troops had building tasks in the area (considering that at Independența, on the level XII, dated back to late 1st century, the early Roman camp was built, which the present campaign identified at the northern and southern edges of S2), an action which would have gone on concurrently with the remaking and the strengthening of the Danubian limes, started by Trajan in 102–105 <sup>30</sup>. Without altogether ruling out such a possibility, we nevertheless should remark that the establishment of the Roman camp at Independența by the vexillation of the I Italica and the XI Claudia was possible only in consequence of some military action in which they should have been engaged, as if no vexillation had existed, the fortifications could have been built by the nearest auxiliary troops.

In his conclusions to the research of the vexillations of the Roman imperial army R. Saxer spoke about *legionäre Besatzungsvexillationen*; we put forward the possibility that this vexillation was stationed in the Roman camp for a certain period <sup>31</sup>.

We conclude by stating that the altar of the I Italica and the XI Claudia vexillation was devoted to *Hercules* by the soldiers, in order to win military victories, which enables us to characterize it as preponderantly a war vexillation (*Kriegsvexillation*). After the conclusion of the military campaign it was maintained in the area for a while, but this time for building purposes or to take part in erecting the first Roman camp, near the Independența commune, so its destination changed had it become a building vexillation (*Bauvexillation*). Consequently the military missions and the probable building ones seem to substantiate the fact that the altar was dedicated to *Hercules*.

The period in which the *vexillatio* was stationed in the area either covered the years 102–106 (and not later because over 106–107 northern Dobrudja was exclusively controlled by the V Macedonica), or lasted after the legion from Troesmis had left for Potaiissa. The carefully written graphs, the big, regular letters and the abbreviation C P F of the patronymic of the XIth Claudia prompt us to establish an early date, at the beginning of the 2nd century. As the implicit presence of the legio V Macedonica at Troesmis dates back to 107–108 on the basis of the veterans' altar of 134 <sup>32</sup> and the epigraphy of the legio XI Claudia do not allow us to set a period beyond 117/118; it results that particular events (fights or extensive building activities) called for the presence of united detachments from both legions before 106 when the Vth Macedonica was camped at Troesmis. Another important consequence of the analysis is the fact that the legio XI Claudia or great parts of it are considered to have come to Durostorum before 106, probably in A. D. 100 or 101.

<sup>29</sup> For these events see at length R. Vulpe, *op. cit.*, p. 84–92.

<sup>30</sup> See for example the remaking in stone of the castrum at Carsium by all II Hispanorum Aravacorum; ISM, V, no. 94.

<sup>31</sup> R. Saxer, *Vexillationen*, p. 126–127.

<sup>32</sup> ISM, V, no. 137.



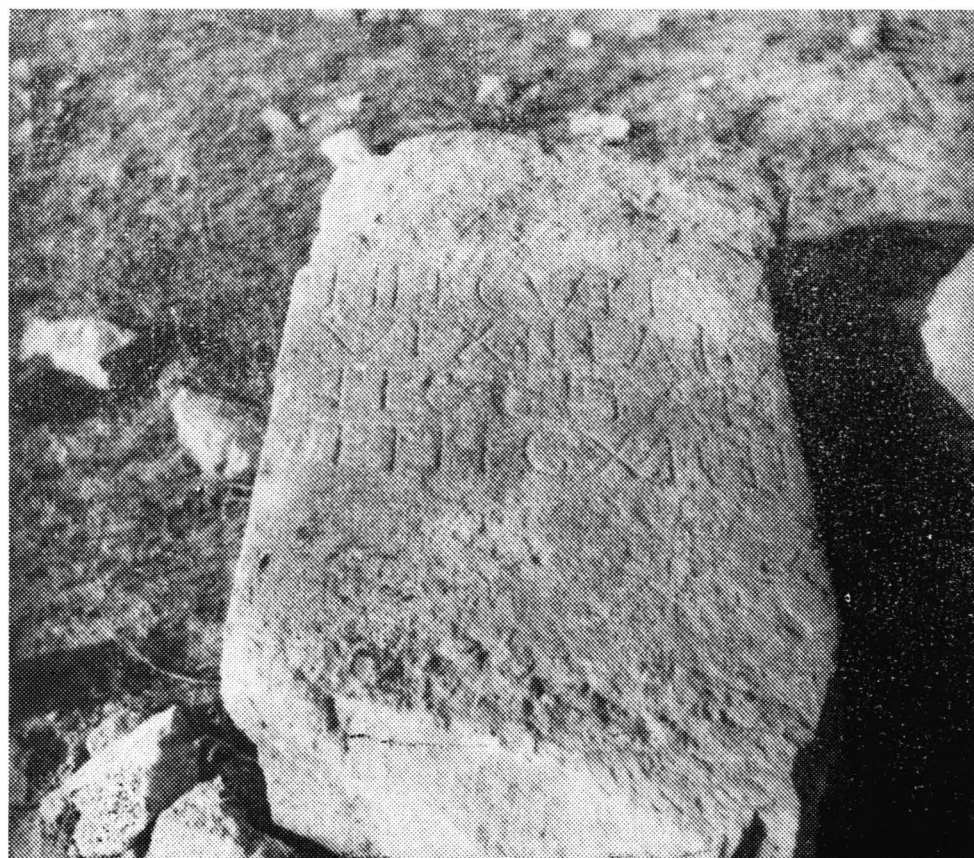
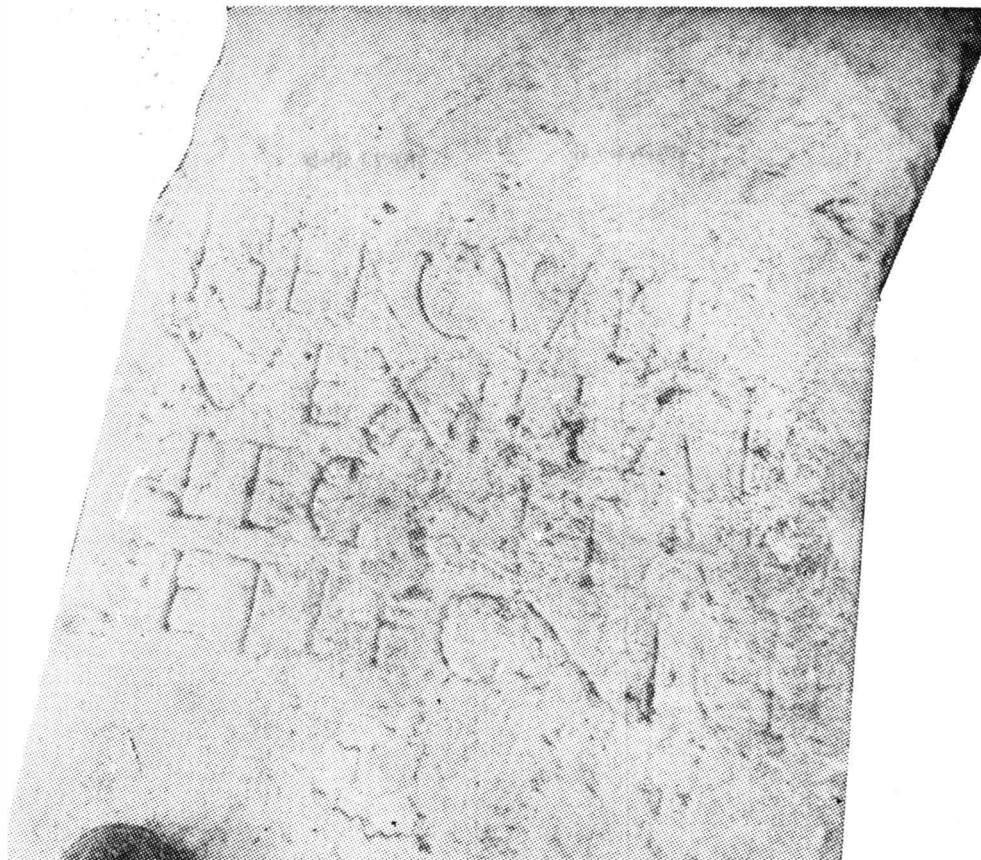


Fig. 1 A—B. Inscription mentioning a vexillation made up of the detachments of the 1st Italica and Xlth Claudia legions at Independența.