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### AN ANONYMOUS STATIO OF CLASSIS FLAVIA MOESICA AND LATER FLAVIANA. ALL WE KNOW FOR NOW ABOUT ROMAN RASOVA (CONSTANȚA COUNTY, ROMANIA)

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**Abstract:** Few things have been written on Roman Rasova, although the subject proves to be a generous one and invites to further archaeological investigations. A fragmentary tile bearing a **CLASF[M]** inscription that I recently found at the top of the so-called "Fortress Hill" made me tackle again the issue of the construction material with stamps of *Classis Flavia Moesica* on the Lower Danube. It was the perfect argument for inferring an early Trajanic fleet installation southwest of the modern village of Rasova, on the right bank of Baci Lake. The *statio* was located next to a *horreum* and an undetermined monumental context with a building inscription (Bauinschrift dated 106 AD) and moreover along to what must have been the limes road. That was most likely the same place where later on *Flaviana* was rebuilt by Constantine the Great and the *milites naucarii* must have been garrisoned, according to *Notitia Dignitatum* (Or., XXXIX, 20). For such purpose, the right bank of Baci Lake was offering much more appropriate conditions than the next Caramancea and Cochirleni Lake valleys. The mapping of all three – *statio*, *horreum* and *via militaris* – was just the starting point of a thorough and critical discussion on the archaeological sites, inscriptions, coins, ancient roads and landscape of the area, based upon existing pieces of information and map analysis. It became conspicuous that the *statio* in Rasova with its storage facilities was as early as Trajan's time vital for provisioning the new inland imperial foundation in *Tropaeum Traiani*. The logical conclusion is as follows: the anonymous *statio* from Rasova was from the very beginning the supply port of the new interior city. The latter stood within a day's reach (fourteen miles) from the Danube and a road was built via Hațeg, in order to sustain both military and civil fast-expanding consumption index.

**Keywords:** *Classis Flavia Moesica*; *statio*; *horreum*; *limes road* / *via militaris*; *milites naucarii*.

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In modern times the first consistent piece of information on the existence of ancient sites in Rasova belongs to Pamfil Polonic. He is the one to signal in 1935 a Roman (double) fort at the top of what was locally known as "Dealul de la Cetate" (lit. the Fortress Hill) and next to the DJ 223 county road, some 3 - 3.5 km southwest from the center of the village of





**Fig. 1.** Detail from "Planul Director de Tragere" of the Romanian Army - 5242 (1928) with *Sacidava* (Muzait) and *statio* ... (Rasova-Pescărie).

Rasova<sup>1</sup> (Fig. 1). In fact, this piece of information must have been actually older and was gathered during field surveys in the period when Pamfil Polonic was the close collaborator of Grigore Tocilescu for archaeological investigations at the National Museum of Antiquities in Bucharest (1892-1902).<sup>2</sup> Yet the information was minor and it was not accompanied by any site plan, so nobody really paid attention afterwards to the initial inaccuracy (southeast instead of southwest from Rasova, indicated as direction). No wonder that it was perpetuated in literature.<sup>3</sup> We can still recognize the vast upper loess plateau southwest of Rasova on the right bank of Baci Lake, at the end of Mulciova Valley<sup>4</sup> (Fig. 2.1-3). The plateau was severely altered in modern times. A massive soil scarification is visible in the field and above all a large scale planting of vines makes virtually impossible any detection of an ancient double sized fort just by using aerial imagery.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> POLONIC 1935, 20: "... La 4 km spre SE de satul Rasova aproape de Dunăre pe malul drept al lacului Baci se văd pe coasta dealului urmele unei cetăți duble romane cu forma pătrată – cred că are un zid în valul înconjurător; șanțul cetății este adânc." / Translation: Some 4 km Southeast of the village of Rasova and close to the Danube, one can see on the right bank of the Lake Baci on the hillside the traces of a double Roman fortress with a square shape – I estimate that it has a wall in the the surrounding *vallum*; the defensive ditch (*fossa*) of the fortress is deep. See also "Planul Director de Tragere" of the Romanian Army - 5242 (1928). A surviving record from the local toponymy speaks about Râpa Ceatal (Ceatal Cliff) in other maps, an allusion to the privileged position of the promontory (*çatal* is lit. "fork" in Turkish). Precisely in this point one final 19th century record is that of a mill, known as "Móra lui Mamic", see DĂNESCU 1897, 40.

<sup>2</sup> See, in this respect an almost identically passage in one manuscript of his exceptional archive kept in the Romanian Academy Library, Manuscripts and Rare Books Department: "Manuscrise Pamfil Polonic" archive, I Mss VIII, A. *Săpăturile cetăților romane, A. Cercetări de la Hârșova până la Ostrov (Siliștră)*, 25: "Cetatea de la Rasova. La 4 km spre sudost (sic!) de satul Rasova și la 1 km spre sud de Dunăre se găsește pe malul drept al Vaei Molciovei vis a vis de lacul Baciului sus pe deal urmele unei cetăți duble romane înconjurată cu șanțuri adânci, formele ei nu sunt deslușite, cred că este înconjurată cu zid".

<sup>3</sup> ZAHARIADE/GUDEA 1997, 78.

<sup>4</sup> The name of the valley was taken from a small village at its southeastern end. The village was called Mulciova (nowadays Abrud, comm. Adamclisi). About its 19th century existence, see DĂNESCU 1897, 593.

<sup>5</sup> The high-resolution aerial imagery and its processing were recently acquired within the framework of the National 'Limes' Programme of the Romanian Ministry of Culture (photos - Dan Costea; processing and DTM

At the top of this plateau I found by chance during a field visit in late 2020 a tile-stamp of the *Classis Flavia Moesica*. The **CLASF[M]** stamp, most likely a 2<sup>nd</sup> century one, was the missing proof for attesting the *statio* of the military fleet long time ago inferred by Radu Vulpe, followed by A. Aricescu and Al. Suceveanu<sup>6</sup> (Fig. 3.1-3).

The scientific information regarding Roman Rasova, including the most important gazetteers of the Roman sites on the Lower Danube limes, was minute.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, one can draw from the pieces a rather interesting picture of the site, with its known ensembles, and unveil its importance as communication hub of the river limes network, as we shall further see. This approach belongs to a series of consistent contributions in the last few years in connection to the National 'Limes' Programme of the Romanian Ministry of Culture. The programme aims at cataloguing and at archaeological research of the frontier of the Roman Empire on the territory of Romania, as well as to the inscription of the limes in Romania on the List of Historic Monuments and on UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List / Nomination of the Danube Limes as a UNESCO WHS – Eastern Sector.<sup>8</sup>

The most important archaeological ensemble is an early Roman granary or *horreum frumentarium* (dated 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century), discovered during the rescue excavations started in

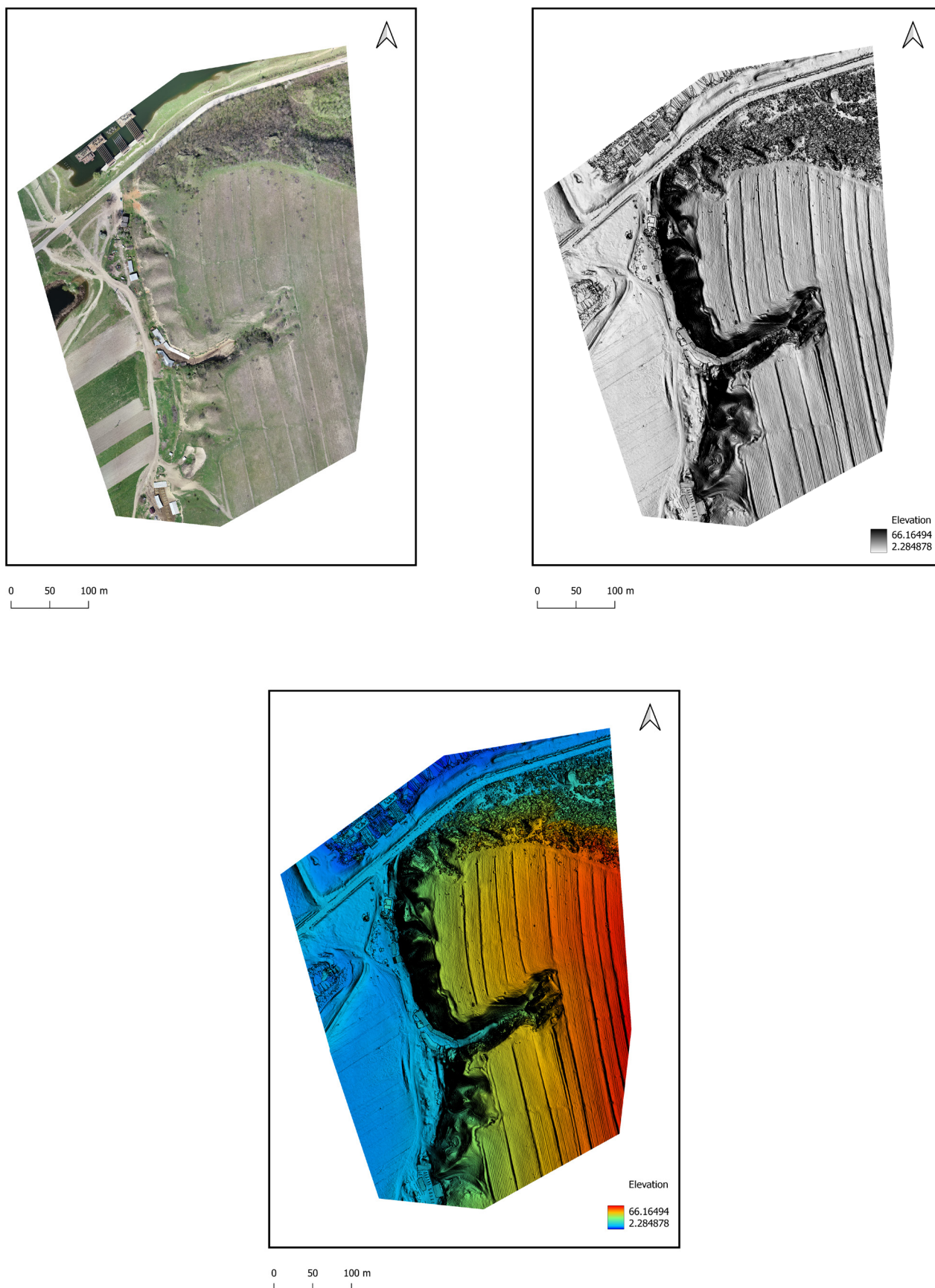
files - Vlad Călina, National Heritage Institute in Bucharest). All activities and coordination of the Lower Danube limes section are carried out by a team under the auspices of the National Museum of Romanian History in Bucharest.

<sup>6</sup> OPRIȘ 2020b (forthcoming). The stamped tile fragment entered the collection of the Museum of National History and Archaeology in Constanța – MINAC, inv.no. 51905. See VULPE 1938, 164 (aux environs de Rasova), 300 (peut-être à Rasova); ARICESCU 1970, 120; BARNEA/ȘTEFAN 1974, 19; SUCEVEANU 1977, 70, 143; GUDEA 2005, 446. For the location, see RAN code 62805.04/ LMI CT-I-s-B-02739, <http://ran.cimec.ro/sel.asp?codran=62805.04>.

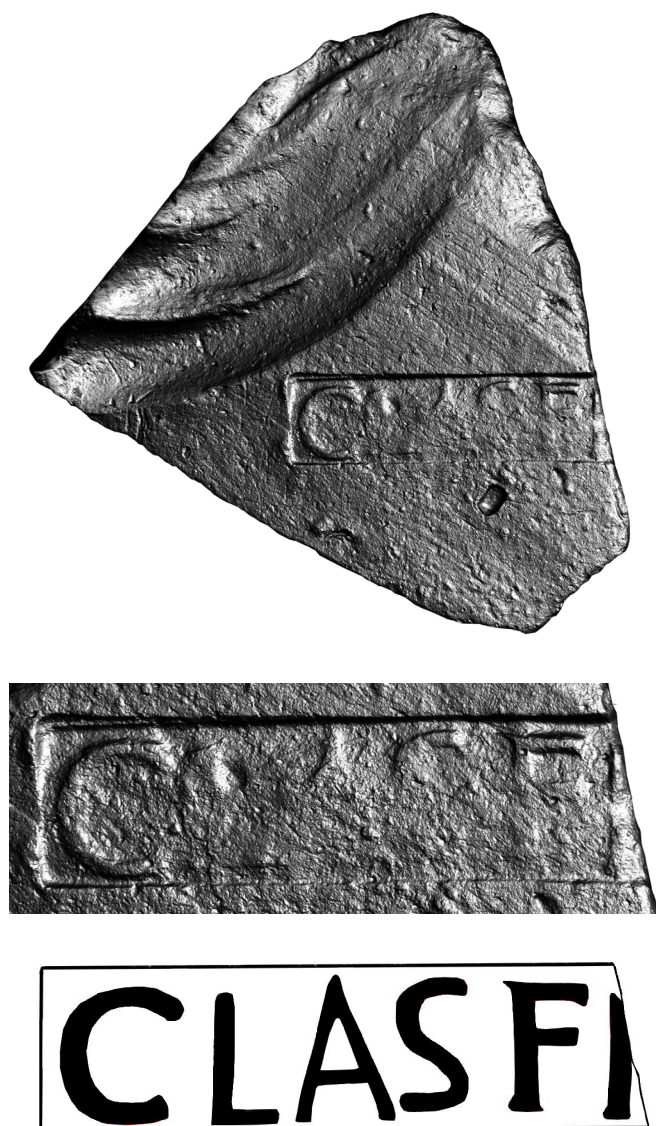
<sup>7</sup> ZAHARIADE/GUDEA 1997, 78, no 37(11); GUDEA 2005, 447 (III.37); MATEI-POPESCU 2010, 49, 211.

<sup>8</sup> See OPRIȘ/RĂȚIU 2017; OPRIȘ/DOBRINESCU 2018; OPRIȘ/RĂȚIU 2018; OPRIȘ 2019; OPRIȘ/RĂȚIU 2019a; OPRIȘ/RĂȚIU 2019b; OPRIȘ/RĂȚIU/POTĂRNICHE 2019; OPRIȘ 2020a; OPRIȘ/ȚENȚEA/CĂLINA 2020; ȚENȚEA 2018; ȚENȚEA et alii 2019.





**Fig. 2.** Aerial photo of "Dealul de la Cetate/Fortress Hill" in Rasova-Pescărie (orthophoto/hillshade/elevation). National LIMES Programme – NMRH, Dan Costea & Vlad Călina (National Heritage Institute, Bucharest).



**Fig. 3.** Roman tile bearing the stamp of *Classis Flavia Moesica* - **CLASF[M]**, MINAC, inv.no. 51905. Photo Marius Streinu (National Heritage Institute, Bucharest). Stray find from Rasova-Pescărie (Dealul de la Cetate).

the early 1980s that later turned to a systematic approach.<sup>9</sup> The find place is that from Rasova – "Pescărie", some 200 m south from the Fortress Hill, on the same right bank of the Baci Lake.<sup>10</sup> The building has a typical granary plan; its interior area presented three rows of dwarf walls and pillars dividing the interior space, on which was raised the ground

<sup>9</sup> RAN code 62805.32, see <http://ran.cimec.ro/sel.asp?codran=62805.32>. Later on, a second early Roman *horreum* was identified in Poșta (Tulcea county), between *Noviodunum* and *Aegyssus*, see LOCKYEAR/POPESCU/SLY 2007-2008, 46-47 and Fig. 9. The structure was recognizable by its parallel walls and outer buttresses. In northern Dobrudja another early *horreum frumentarium* is that found in (L)Ibida, superposed by the Late Roman fortification (curtain wall G), see recently PARASCHIV/IACOB/CHIRIAC 2019, 434-436, 455 (= Fig. 4.a-c). Regarding late Roman *horrea* in the Balkans, see RIZOS 2013; OPAIT' et al. 1991; OPRIS 2003, 26-33, Pl. IV.1-3; OPRIS/RAȚIU 2017, 19-2; SUCEVEANU 2010, 27 and n. 12; ANGELESCU 2019; MATTHEWS 2018, 33 and n. 67 (*Novae, Iatrus, Capidava, Dichin*).

<sup>10</sup> ZAHARIADE 1996, 225 and Fig. 2; ZAHARIADE 1999, 200, 208 (= Fig. 2). For some other interesting pieces of information, see BĂRBULESCU 2001, 116-117.

floor. This aimed at ventilating the corn, as well as to reduce the likelihood of damp getting in and spoiling the strategic goods. The external long walls were buttressed (each of them presenting 9 buttresses, according to our calculations). The western short end presented a sensibly thicker foundation compared to the rest of outer walls: this was due to the fact that this side also supported the whole granary, built on the side of the hill, against the wetland<sup>11</sup>. The excavations from the 1980s revealed even the horizontal socket holes corresponding to the wooden floor joists.<sup>12</sup> The dimensions of the Trajanic *horreum* from Rasova – Pescărie are: cca 22.50 x 10.75 m (12.00 m large, buttresses included) (Fig. 4). One should finally stress that the masonry works exclusively used hydraulic mortar and that is convenient to the general purpose: fort overlooking a strategic storehouse, next to the port facility.<sup>13</sup>

The same context offered an official inscription right from the beginning of the excavations from Rasova-Pescărie (it was found in 1980), i.e. a so-called Bauinschrift dating from second half of 106 AD.<sup>14</sup> It must have been associated to a so-far unidentified and large scale edifice nearby, where it was displayed in *muro* (Fig. 5.1-2). The inscription in *tabula ansata* reads: *Imp(erator) Caesar divi Nervae fil(ius) / Nerva Traianus Aug(ustus) Ger(manicus) Dac(icus) / pontifex maximus trib(unicia) potest(ate) / X imp(erator) VI p(ater) p(atriciae) co(n)s(ul) V fecit / L(ucio) Fabio Iusto leg(ato) Aug(usti) pr(o) pr(aetore)*.<sup>15</sup> L. Fabius Iustus was *legatus Augusti pro praetore* of Moesia Inferior in 106 and most likely was in charge over the operations, reason why his name also offered the dating (106-107/108 AD) for the construction works in Rasova.<sup>16</sup> One should also add the VI<sup>th</sup> imperial salutation of Trajan on the limestone slab, a clear sign that the Dacian war was over.<sup>17</sup> L. Fabius Iustus was subsequently given a top command of another troublesome imperial province: Syria<sup>18</sup>.

During the excavations in the area of the *horreum* an important grouping of legionary stamps of a *Bauvexillation* (LEGXICLPF in *tabula ansata*, at least two types of stamps belonging to legio V Macedonica and LEGIITAL) was collected (Fig. 6.1-4). Two tiles of LEGXICLPF in *tabula ansata* type are displayed in the National History and Archaeology Museum in Constanța (MINAC inv. 32438 and 32435), along with some other stamped by V Macedonica (badly preserved) and three more of LEGIITAL (MINAC 33741/1985; 32440;

<sup>11</sup> See the plan published by ZAHARIADE 1999, 208 (= Fig. 2), reversed image.

<sup>12</sup> BOUNEGRU/ZAHARIADE 1996, 86 and n. 74 (citing a presentation of Traian Clianțe, on the occasion of the 20th Annual Session of Archaeological Reports, 21-22 March 1986, Deva). From the literature we know of at least three seasons of systematic excavations (1983-1985), as well as of other public presentations, on the occasion of the Annual Session of Archaeological Reports, Alba Iulia – 1984 and that of the Romanian Marine Museum, October 1985: see BĂRBULESCU 2001, 116, n. 898; MATEI 1991, 150, n. 53.

<sup>13</sup> I fully agree to the idea of a port facility at Rasova-Pescărie, put forward by BOUNEGRU/ZAHARIADE 1996, 86.

<sup>14</sup> The inscription is kept in the collection of the Museum of National History and Archaeology in Constanța (MINAC inv. 29710).

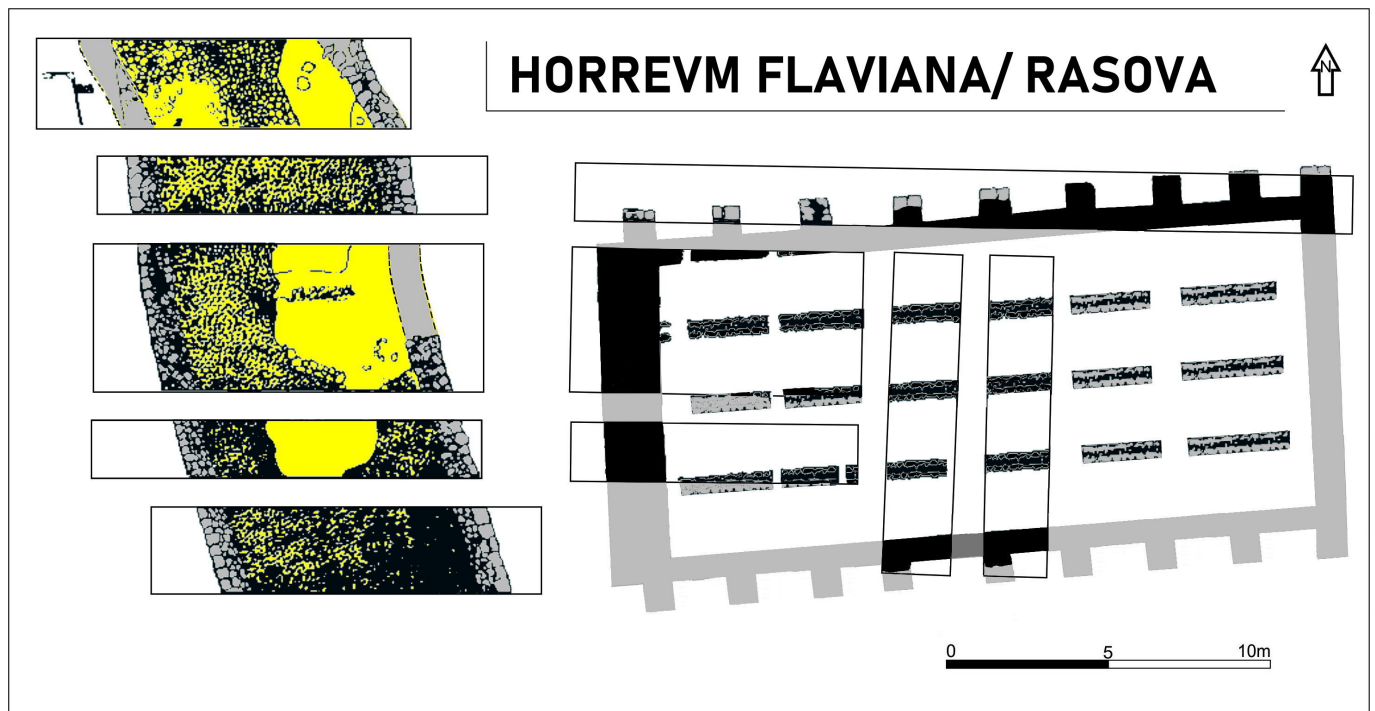
<sup>15</sup> RĂDULESCU/BĂRBULESCU 1981, 356-358, Fig. 2; AE 1981, 746 = ISM IV 210; OPRIS 2006, 241-242; OPRIS 2018, 150 and 156 (= Fig. 6).

<sup>16</sup> See ECK 1982, 341-345; THOMASSON, *Laterculi*<sup>2</sup>, 48, no. 20:070.

<sup>17</sup> KIENAST/ECK/HEIL 2017, 117 (August or in the autumn of 106).

<sup>18</sup> OPRIS 2018, 150 and n. 20.

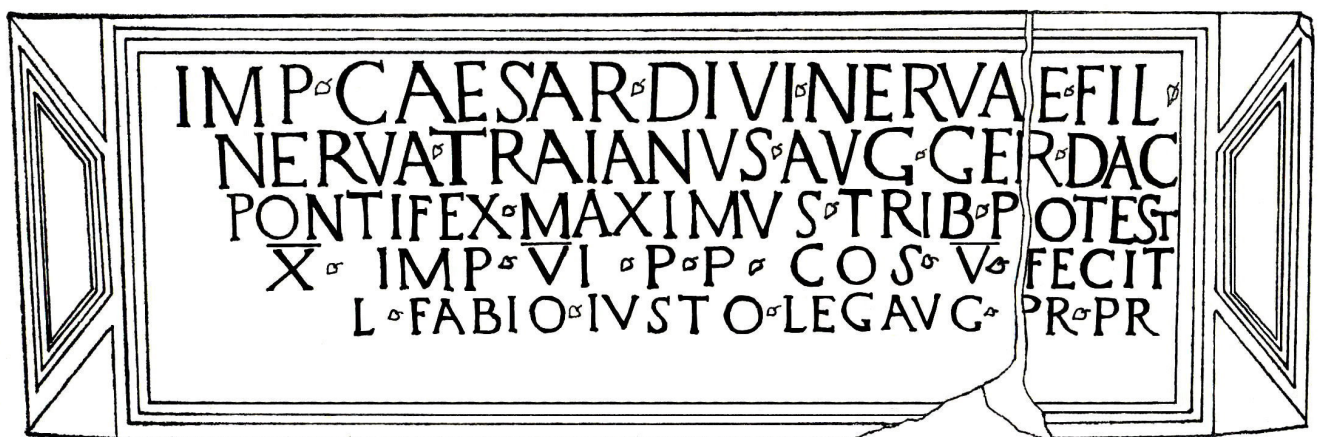




**Fig. 4.** *Horreum frumentarium* and road section (*via militaris*) from Rasova-Pescărie (after ZAHARIADE 1996, 225, Fig. 2; ZAHARIADE 1999, 208, Fig. 2).



1.



2.

**Fig. 5. 1-2.** "Bauinschrift" from Rasova-Pescărie (ISM IV 210). Photo MINAC inv. 29710 (after RĂDULESCU/BĂRBULESCU 1981, 357, Fig. 2 (drawing)).





**Fig. 6.1-4.** Stamped tiles from the *horreum* in Rasova-Pescărie. Permanent exhibition MINAC. 1. MINAC inv. 32438 (LEGXICLPF); 2.-4. MINAC inv. 33741; 32440; 33743 (LEG LEGITIAL).

33743).<sup>19</sup> A discussion on the typology of these finds is currently in press<sup>20</sup>, but I shall resume it here, as well. The LEGITIAL stamps from Rasova are belonging to G1 – type 4 proposed by N. Gudea and type VI 112 of T. Sarnowski.<sup>21</sup> The dating is divergent. According to N. Gudea, the type was surely produced during the first six decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD<sup>22</sup>; in contrast, T. Sarnowski dated it to the first quarter of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, even if slightly earlier contexts must be also taken into account.<sup>23</sup> LEGXICLPF stamps in *tabula ansata* show to be more helpful in our investigation. This type, directly derived from LEGXICPF one has been dated during the reign of Antoninus Pius.<sup>24</sup> Based upon the critical analysis of the literature available in the current state of research, I could distinguish at least two different construction moments. After the conspicuous initial Trajanic phase, the stamp types of LEGXICLPF and LEGITIAL (?), combined some badly preserved late Moesian stamps of V Macedonica, point to an intervention under Antoninus Pius

– Marcus Aurelius, but that will not have happened later than 167-168/170 AD.<sup>25</sup> Only systematic excavations will make it possible to ascertain if later interventions involving independently a construction detachment of Legio I Italica really happened or not.

Almost parallel to the short southwestern side of the *horreum* and just 3 m away from the latter, a section of a 7 m broad Roman paved road was also uncovered in the 1980s (Figs. 4; 7). I fully agree to M. Zahariade's assumption that this must have been precisely the limes road (*via militaris*). Built up with care, the road had kerbs of middle size blocks with mortar set in concrete on each side.<sup>26</sup> A supplementary discussion on the relationship of this road to a milestone (ISM IV 169) found some 4 km away (as the crow flies) is mandatory. If the discovery of a limes road section in Rasova was a première for Roman Dobruja, a second one is that of the earliest milestone known along this strategic road, found in secondary context in *Sacidava* (Muzait-Dunăreni).<sup>27</sup> According to A. Rădulescu and Maria Bărbulescu, the ones

<sup>19</sup> On the stamps from Rasova (Pescărie), see DORUȚIU-BOILĂ 1990, 261 and n. 16. For both those *tegulae* and *imbrices* with legionary stamps, see also BĂRBULESCU 2001, 116, n. 898.

<sup>20</sup> OPRÎȘ 2020 (forthcoming).

<sup>21</sup> See SARNOWSKI 1983; GUDEA 2003.

<sup>22</sup> GUDEA 2003, 213.

<sup>23</sup> See SARNOWSKI 1983, 37 (= Taf. V), 61. Special thanks of the author go to Agnieszka Tomas (University of Warsaw) for supplementary pieces of information.

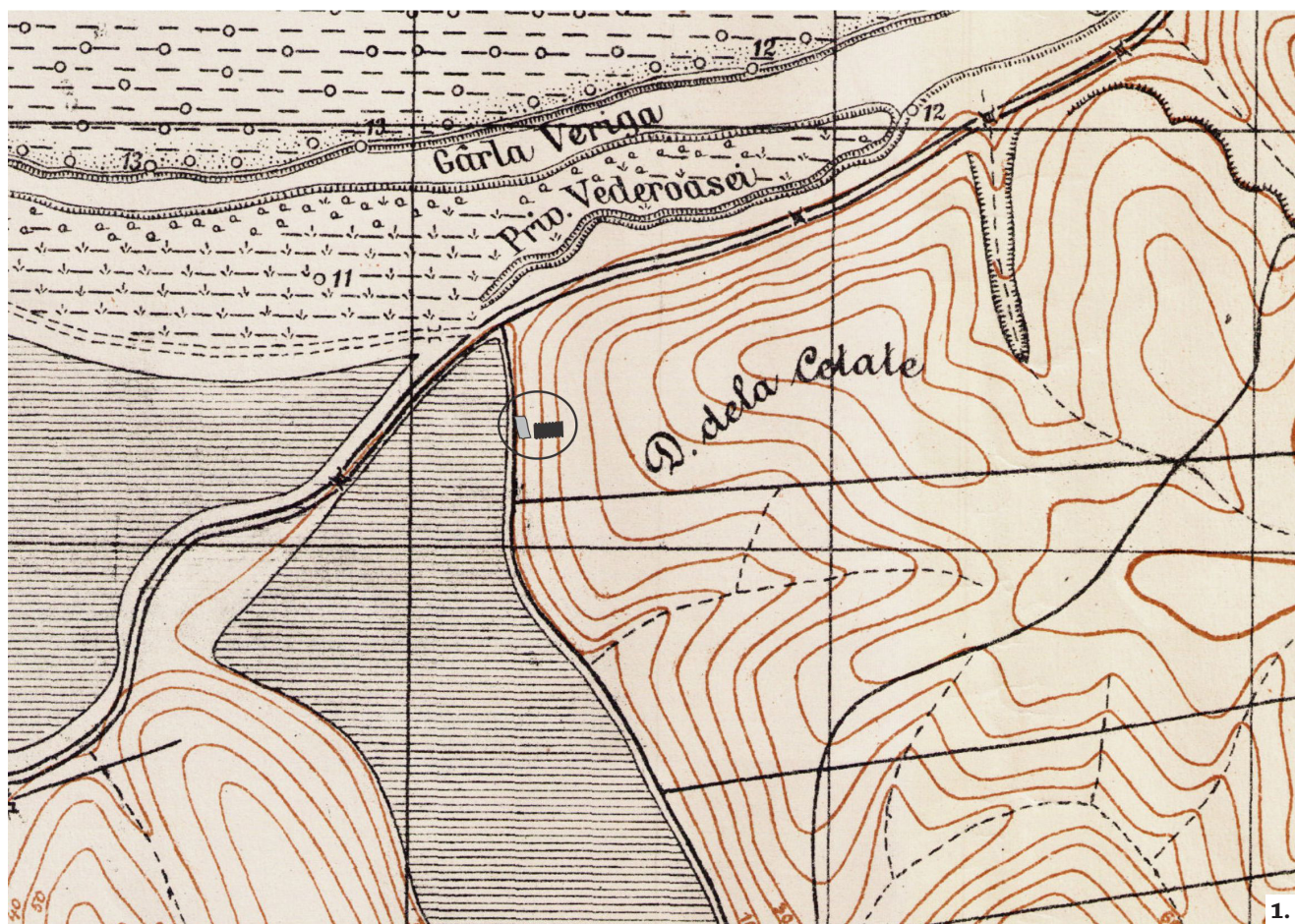
<sup>24</sup> DONEVSKI/IVANOV 2006, type B, 378.

<sup>25</sup> See MATEI-POPESCU 2010, 52-53 for the displacement of Legio V Macedonica to *Potaissa*. The stamps of the V<sup>th</sup> Macedonica (MINAC inv. 33723 and 33724) belong to one or two types, with upper horizontal numeral stroke, but different from those known in *Potaissa* and gathered by NEMETI 2019.

<sup>26</sup> ZAHARIADE 1996, 225 and Fig. 2; ZAHARIADE 1999, 200, 208 (= Fig. 2).

<sup>27</sup> RĂDULESCU/BĂRBULESCU 1981, 354, Fig. 1; ISM IV 169.





**Fig. 7.** Location detail for the *horreum* and road section in Rasova-Pescărie. 1. "Planul Director de Tragere" of the Romanian Army – 5242. 2. Orthophoto (National LIMES Programme – NMRH, Dan Costea & Vlad Călina, National Heritage Institute, Bucharest).





**Fig. 8.** Milestone (ISM IV 169) from *Sacidava* /Muzait-Dunăreni (after RĂDULESCU/BĂRBULESCU 1981, 354, Fig. 1).

who published it for the first time, this milestone was set by *cohors III Gallorum* under legate Quintus Fabius Postuminus and this happened most likely in 103 AD<sup>28</sup> (Fig. 8). The epigraph was broken and reutilized as building material in the Late Roman reconstruction of *Sacidava*, inside tower E of the fort. The examination of the stone (more precisely of the clear shots published in ISM IV, 169) draws attention to an implausible V<sup>th</sup> (?) imperial salutation of Trajan, an event that arrived during or after *expeditio secunda* (before end of August 106).<sup>29</sup> Moreover, Q. Fabius Postuminus, a governor mentioned by an earlier Bauinschrift from *Carsium*, finished his governorship tenure in 103, when he was replaced by A. Caecilius Faustinus (103-105).<sup>30</sup> We are rather looking to a lapicide's error (than to a result of state of conservation of the pillar)<sup>31</sup> since the correct writing would have been [IM]P [I]V. A confusion with the V<sup>th</sup> consulship held by the emperor should be also taken into consideration. A second remark is that the limes road construction near *Sacidava* and *horreum* & port facilities from Rasova belong to the same accelerated program in 103-106 AD, although the governor changed twice in the meanwhile. One should notice that despite an excellent co-visibility from *Sacidava* (Muzait) to the Fortress Hill (Rasova-Pescărie), the road must have been sensibly longer than the cca 4 km between the two across the wetland (Fig. 9). The Roman road must have followed the left bank of the Vederoasa Lake and the most convenient crossing over (in front of the modern villages of Vlăhi or Aliman), if not completely going around both lakes. In fact, that is the question, whether the road completely bypassed both lakes or if crossing points actually functioned. Hypothetically speaking, a potential crossing point of Baci Lake could be

the narrowing at some 1.8 km southeast of the *horreum*. From that point a road heading northeast to Caramancea Valley could have actually functioned, as well. I should agree that inferring an early route from Rasova to *Tropaeum Traiani* (via Hațeg village) is sensible<sup>32</sup>, indeed, and this idea has been mentioned on several occasions.<sup>33</sup> Even in modern times this easy route was known and preferred (Fig. 10). Lord William Bentinck followed this route in late November 1801, after writing a description and drawing some sketches of the ruined *Tropaeum Traiani*; the same did Karl von Vincke-Olbendorf and Helmuth von Moltke who later rode 2 1/2 – 3 hours from Rasova to visit Trajan's monument.<sup>34</sup> This route was from the very beginning essential to the provisioning needs of the new imperial foundation, and again to those of the artisans striving to finish in 109 AD the trophy itself. The control over the river hub in Rasova was acknowledged by an altar offered to the Syrian god *Deus Aeternus* (Ba'alim) (ISM IV 214) in unspecified conditions. The dedicator was Castus, former *duumvir* of the nearby city in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. (Fig. 11).

In analyzing all of the above one should definitely stress the local landscape, namely what once C. Brătescu called lagoon-like "river limans".<sup>35</sup> Both Vederoasa (Limpezișul) and Baci modern Lakes are quite representative of such liman-shaped deep openings, as shown in an early 20<sup>th</sup> century map made by the Geographic Service of the Romanian Army.<sup>36</sup> The map analysis proves to be extremely helpful in reshaping the local landscape and the relationship of these valleys to the river in Roman times, as well.

It turns out that Baci Valley offered on several occasions attractive conditions to habitation: Neolithic (Gumelnița), La Tène, as well as Middle Byzantine ceramic fragments (and sunken dwellings) have been collected or reported during field surveys.<sup>37</sup> The author of the excavation at the *horreum* from Rasova-Pescărie mentioned in his turn earlier habitation contexts, with pottery from the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, as well as local Getic kitchenware (cooking pots and storage vessels) associated to the Early Roman military inventory.<sup>38</sup> Among most important sites is a 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century fortified settlement, located south of the *horreum*, on the right bank of Baci Lake.<sup>39</sup>

To resume, the ISM IV 169 milestone is not the only one known in that area. Three others have been discovered in Rasova by locals, either along the Danube or on the plateau above the village. They are attesting successive interventions to the maintenance of the road system during the reigns of Traianus Decius (249-250), Diocletian and Maximianus with

<sup>28</sup> RĂDULESCU/BĂRBULESCU 1981, 353, no 1 and 354 (= Fig. 1); AÉ 1981, 745; ISM IV 169; MATEI-POPESCU 2010, 210-212; OPRIȘ 2018, 150-151, 157 (= Fig. 7). Q. Fabius Postuminus was *legatus Augusti pro praetore* in Lower Moesia in 102/103, see ECK 1982, 338; THOMASSON, *Laterculi*<sup>2</sup>, 48, no. 20:067.

<sup>29</sup> KIENAST/ECK/HEIL 2017, 117.

<sup>30</sup> ECK 1982, 339-340.

<sup>31</sup> RĂDULESCU/BĂRBULESCU 1981, 354-355.

<sup>32</sup> MATTHEWS 2018, 253-254.

<sup>33</sup> BĂRBULESCU 2001, 117; PANAIT/MIU 2016, 204.

<sup>34</sup> SÂMPETRU 1984, 24-25; TOCILESCU/BENNDORF/NIEMANN 1895, 8-9.

<sup>35</sup> BRĂTESCU 1928, 38. Such limans are specific to the right bank of the Danube south of Carasu Valley. All of them are nowadays lakes: Gârlița, Oltina, Mârleanu, Vederoasa (Limpezișul) and Baciul, Cochirleni, Carasu. The only one north of Carasu Valley is Seimeni Lake.

<sup>36</sup> Map of the Geographic Service of Romanian Army (1912), Ser. XIII/ col. M – Rasova & Medgidia.

<sup>37</sup> BEM 2011, 54 (no 113).

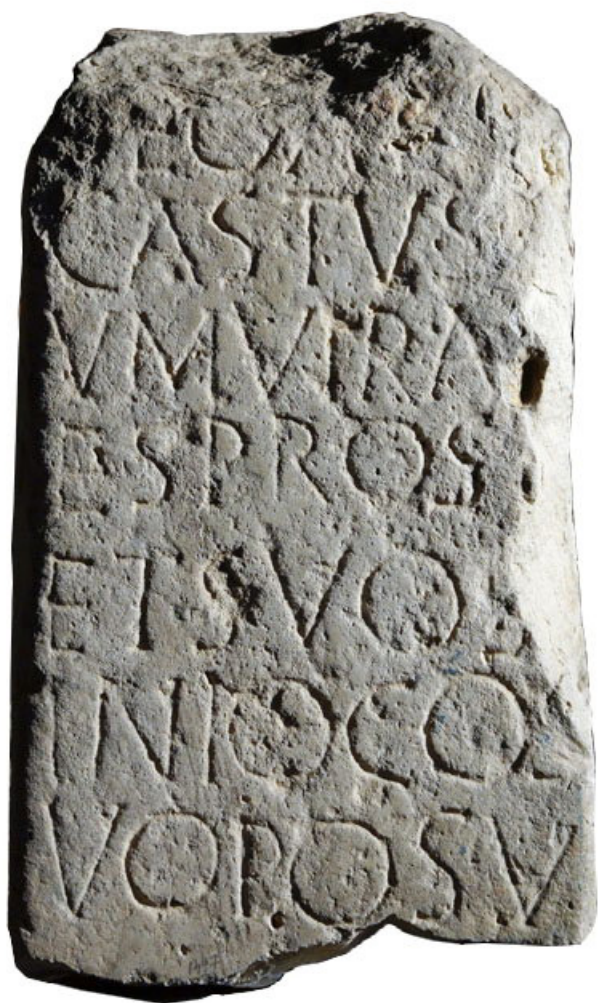
<sup>38</sup> CLIANTE 1985, 59-60.

<sup>39</sup> RAN code 62805.31/ LMI CT-I-s-B-02739. See <http://ran.cimec.ro/sel.asp?codran=62805.31>.









**Fig. 11.** Altar offered to the Syrian god *Deus Aeternus* (Ba'alim) from Rasova (ISM IV 214). MINAC, photo <http://lupa.at/21037>

their *Caesares* (292-305) and, once more, of Constantine (?).<sup>40</sup> ISM IV 211 raises an insoluble problem: a *Sacidav(a)e IIII milia passuum* (Fig. 12.1-2). Just four miles to *Sacidava*? If the stone was not in secondary position (which is very likely), from the modern village of Rasova to *Sacidava* could be so, but just à vol d'oiseau over the floodplain. As already shown, in Roman times the road must have been seriously longer. In such case, the stone must have been brought from elsewhere. ISM IV 212 is also important for a specific detail: that is the latest known milestone on the limes, with its secondary inscription dating from Valentinian, Valens and Gratian (367-375).<sup>41</sup> In French words, from ISM IV 169 to 212, from the earliest to the latest milestone in this Lower Danube area, on a *bouclé la boucle*. The latter milestone indicated an unusually large segment (cca 20.7 km) - *XIIII milia passuum* – and that must have been precisely the distance from *Tropaeum Traiani*

<sup>40</sup> ISM IV 211-213 (ISM IV 211, MINAC inv. 16822; ISM IV 212 = CIL III 13755 = IGLR 190, MNA inv. L 262; ISM IV 213 = CIL III 12512 was lost).

<sup>41</sup> A second slightly earlier milestone from Scythia is dated 367-369. The unusual find came from Miriștea (comm. Mereni, Constanța County), IGLR 81, MNA L 271. It was set on an inland road (if not, more likely, brought from the litoral one) during the presence of Valens in the conflict area, during his war with the Goths of Athanaric. Further south in the nearby *Moesia Secunda*, the latest known is that from Kipra (383-393), along the imperial road heading from *Marcianopolis* to *Noviodunum*, see SSIB, 100-101, no. 149.

to the limes road<sup>42</sup> (Fig. 13.1-2). One should compare it to the precious information offered by *Tabula Peutingeriana*, where the distance indicated for the road segment between *Axiopolis* and *Sacidava* is *m.p. XVII* (25.150 km).<sup>43</sup>

We do not know the name of the fort and port facility in Rasova because it is missing from any specialized source, like Ptolemy's *Geographia*, or *Itinerarium Antonini Augusti*. But the later Constantinian reconstruction brought a new name, *Flaviana*. *Flaviana* and again *Milites Naclarii* were mentioned in *Notitia Dignitatum* (Or., XXXIX, 20) in this area. Was *Flaviana* actually rebuilt on the spot of the previous *statio*?<sup>44</sup> It is plausible and even if I am inclined to support this strong hypothesis, the answer is pending for decisive arguments (archaeological evidence). One should nevertheless mention a second opinion, inferring the position for *Flaviana* some 2.5 km east of Rasova, in the narrow Caramancea Valley, where both a civilian site<sup>45</sup> and a 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century fort have been identified.<sup>46</sup> Here again field surveys revealed Neolithic pottery (Gumelnița culture), as well as provincial Roman fragments on the left bank of Caramancea Valley, some 800 m before its junction with the river<sup>47</sup> (Fig. 14). One should stress the local conditions, i.e. the southern bank of the valley, obviously unsuitable to a port facility for *milites naclarii*, if compared to those from Rasova-Pescărie. The dispute could be settled by combined non-invasive archaeological diagnostic with intrusive research.

There is also a numismatic file that we should take into account, even if most of the coins are out of context. Coins from Rasova and the nearby area (including Rasova-Malul Roșu) mostly ranged from 2<sup>nd</sup> - late 4<sup>th</sup> century (from Trajan to Arcadius). Some later issues date from the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century (Justin II and Mauricius Tiberius) and, finally, from the 9<sup>th</sup> century (Theophilus).<sup>48</sup> As expected, among the finds from Rasova-Pescărie, four coins of Trajan accompanied the initial phase of construction.<sup>49</sup> We also

<sup>42</sup> In support of this idea, see also PANAITE 2006, 67.

<sup>43</sup> See, *in extenso*, ARICESCU 1970, 301.

<sup>44</sup> VULPE 1938, 300; BARNEA 1968, 373-374, 386; ARICESCU 1970, 300, 302; ARICESCU 1977, 119-120; Al. Barnea, in SUCEVEANU/BARNEA 1991, 215.

<sup>45</sup> RAN code 62805.02. See the National Archaeological Record of Romania ([ran.cimec.ro/](http://ran.cimec.ro/)), i.e. <http://ran.cimec.ro/sel.asp?descript=rasova-rasova-constantia-situl-arheologic-de-la-rasova-valea-caramancea-cod-sit-ran-62805.07>; TIR L 35, 60, 42; BĂRBULESCU 2001, 117; PANAITE/MIU 2016, 204, 206; MATTHEWS 2018, 185.

<sup>46</sup> The so far uncovered fort(s) is (are) marked with RAN code 62805.02/LMI CT-I-s-B-02737. It (or they) stood cca 1 km further southeast from the previous settlement, on the same left bank of the valley. Supplementary approach (i.e. field surveys, mapping, diagnostics etc.) is actually needed.

<sup>47</sup> BEM 2011, 54-55, Figs. 34-35; BĂRBULESCU 2001, 117, n. 905 is mentioning also bricks and inscriptions, a Roman bronze weight etc.

<sup>48</sup> OCHEȘEANU/PAPUC 1976, 231, no. 625 (Crispina, 180-183AD); VERTAN/CUSTUREA 1983, 304, nos 659-660 (Trajan; Licinius); IACOB 2003, 288, no. 53 (Gordian III); CUSTUREA 2004-2005, 499, no. 57 (Justin II, 575/76); OCHEȘEANU 2006, 148-149, with coins of Probus (281), Licinius I (313), Constantine the Great (324/327), Urbs Roma (330/335-336), Constans (346-350), Constantius II (351-354), ? (364-378) and Arcadius (383-392); CUSTUREA 2019, 189 (Justin II and Mauricius Tiberius, 571/72, 574/75, 577/78 and 592/593). For the latter, see also POENARU BORDEA/OCHEȘEANU/POPEEA 2004, nos 502, 647, 731, 890. From Rasova, we also know a small deposit with (3) bronze issues of emperor Theophilus (829-842), see DIMIAN 1957, 198 (Theophilus and Constantine (832 ? - 839), respectively Theophilus (839 - 842?); CUSTUREA/TALMAȚCHI 2011, 319-320.

<sup>49</sup> BĂRBULESCU 2001, 117, n. 902 (MINAC nos 5911-5914).



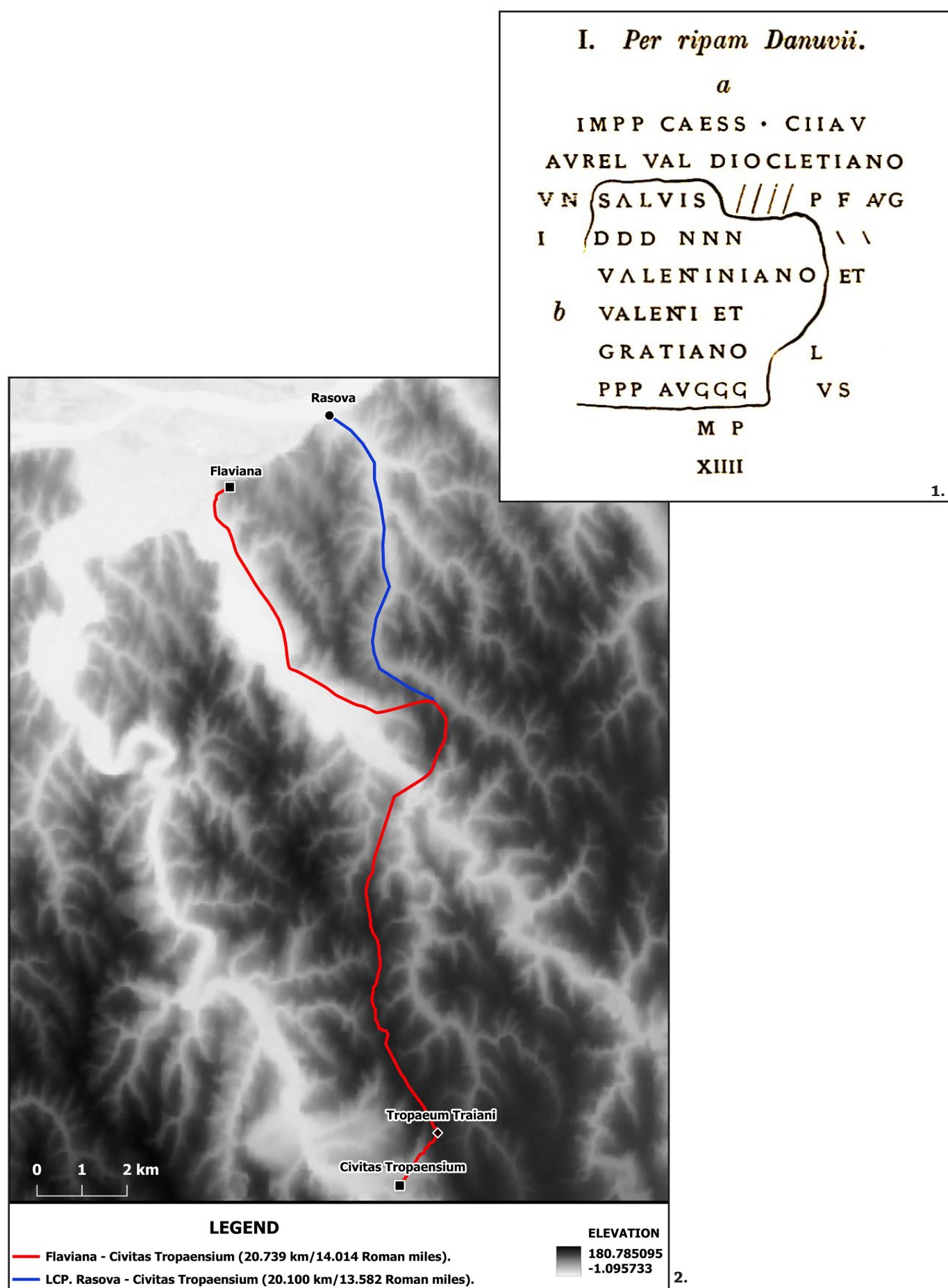
1.

IMPCAS CAES  
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 SACICIDAVE  
 M PIIII

2.

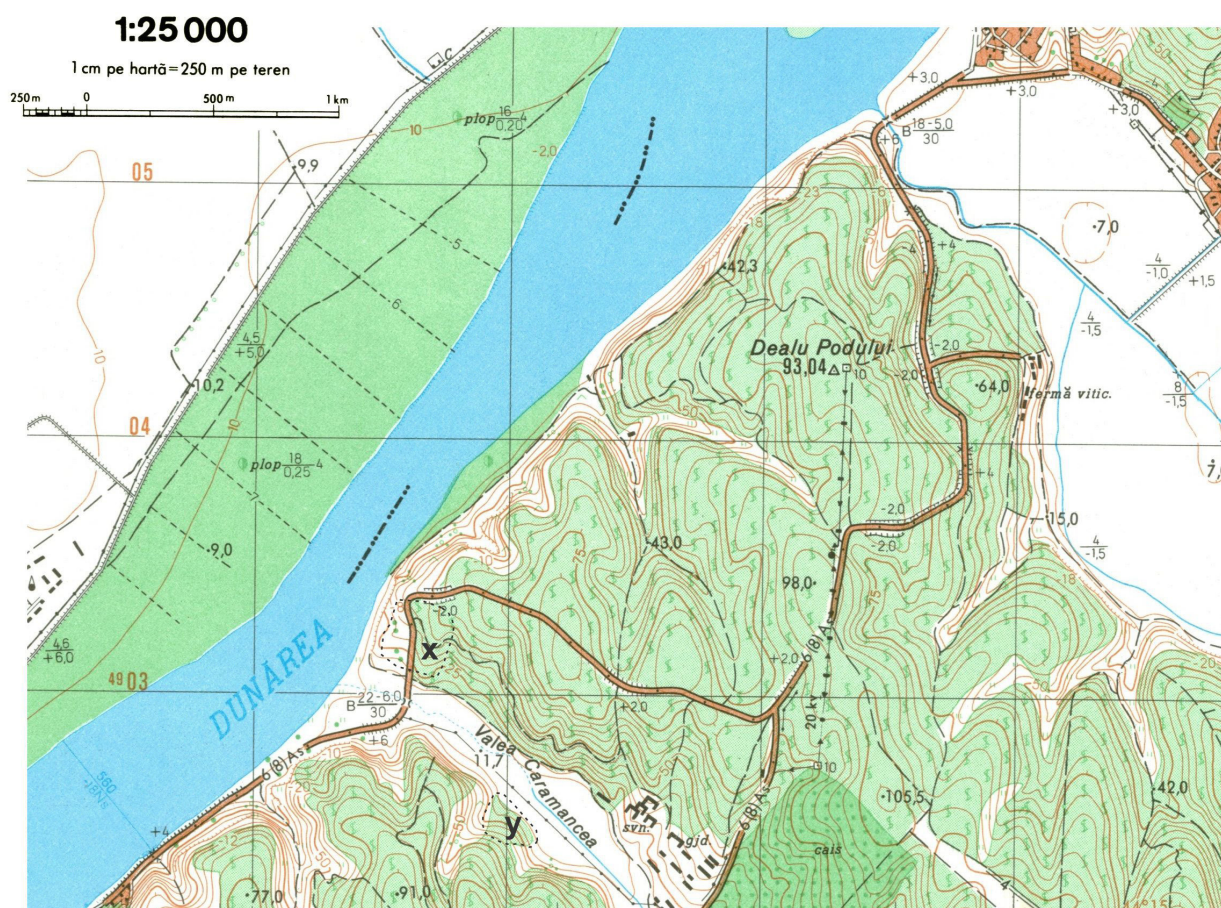
**Fig. 12.1-2.** Milestone (ISM IV 211) from Rasova (after RĂDULESCU 1969, 349, Fig. 1.a-b (photo); ARICESCU 1970, 298, Fig. 1 (drawing)).



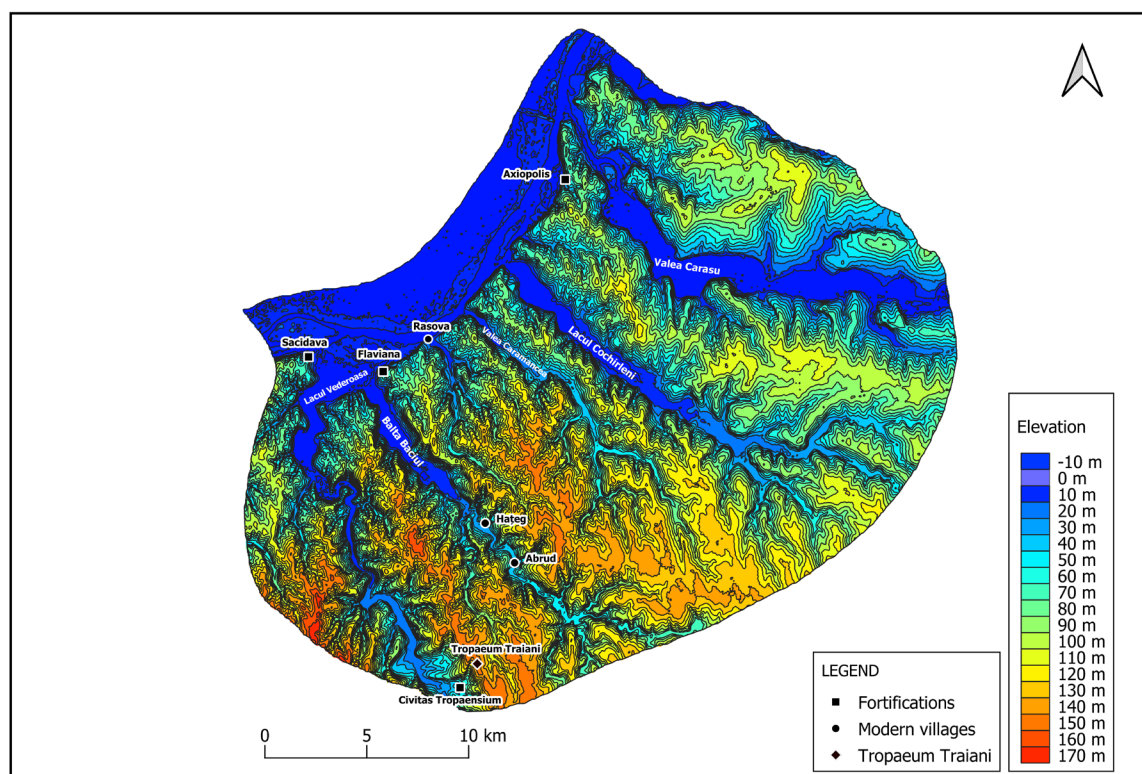


**Fig. 13. 1.** Milestone (ISM IV 212 = CIL III 13755) from Rasova, indicating XIII milia passuum.

**2.** The least cost path *Flaviana/ Rasova to Tropaeum Traiani* (Vlad Călina - National Heritage Institute, Bucharest).



**Fig 14.** The Caramancea Valley. The prehistoric & Roman sites from Malul Roșu (x – right bank) and Valea Caramancea (y – left bank). Military Topographic Map L-35-140-B-b (1979, 1: 25.000).



**Fig 15.** The right bank of the Danube from Sacidava (Muzait/ Dunăreni) to Axiopolis (Hinog Hill). Elevation details of the main valleys (National LIMES Programme – Vlad Călina, National Heritage Institute, Bucharest).





**Fig 16.** Aerial picture of the right bank of the Danube. In the foreground – Rasova-Pescărie (*Flaviana?*); in the background – Muzait Hill (*Sacidava*, *Dunăreni*). National LIMES Programme – NMRH, photo Dan Costea.



**Fig. 17.** Aerial picture of the right bank of the Danube. In the foreground – County Road 223 and Rasova-Pescărie (*Flaviana?*); to the right and in the background – Baci Lake. National LIMES Programme – NMRH, photo Dan Costea.



ignore the precise conditions of discovery of a Roman steelyard weight (Jupiter's head?) cast in bronze of 1.525 kg (= 5 *librae*) from Rasova.<sup>50</sup>

A separate issue is the pluristratified site from Rasova-Malul Roșu<sup>51</sup> (Fig. 14). A coin from Gordian III announces a possible Roman habitation<sup>52</sup>, along with other pottery fragments. The site is located at cca 2.5 km north of Rasova, on a right bank promontory at junction of Caramancea Valley with the Danube.<sup>53</sup> The earliest layer is Bronze Age one, with pre-Coslogeni and Coslogeni pottery.<sup>54</sup> Hallstatt dwellings and pits with pottery of Babadag III type (but also earlier Babadag I-II ceramic fragments), superposed by a Latène habitation from the 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> century BC have been investigated during the excavations in the early 1970s. The Latène contexts also contained imported wares (Thasos and Heraclea Pontica amphorae).<sup>55</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century AD collected pottery is related to a rich habitation on the southern uninvestigated plateau.<sup>56</sup> Finally, the latest archaeological finds are cooking pots of brownish sandy fabric belonging to a settlement from the second half of 9<sup>th</sup> – first half of 10<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>57</sup> Rescue excavations in 1980 at cca 80-100 m southeast from the previous ones (seasons 1970, 1972-1973), on the occasion of the construction works to County road 223 (DJ 223), uncovered a rectangular Roman kiln with equally rectangular built pedestal.<sup>58</sup> This kiln became object to misunderstanding. A few years after its discovery the kiln was incorrectly rolled in the literature as if it were located in Baci Valley, in relationship to the *horreum* and road segment discussed above.<sup>59</sup> The kiln adds to the other records sustaining a 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century consistent habitation close to the Danube, at the end of Caramancea Valley.

To conclude, the existing Roman finds from Rasova-Pescărie point to the early Roman port of *Tropaeum Traiani*, a mandatory supply point which has every chance to be the later garrison of *milites nauclarii* in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD, as well<sup>60</sup>. Its position is one of the most appropriate for that purpose in the whole area and the analysis of elevation details of the right bank of the Danube with its main tributary valleys clearly demonstrates that (Fig. 15). It stood in line of sight with the much better fortified *Sacidava* and strategically observed the whole Baci Valley, but also the overland transport to *Tropaeum Traiani*<sup>61</sup> (Figs. 16-17).

<sup>50</sup> BARBU 1965, 394-395, Fig. 11.

<sup>51</sup> RAN code 62805.01/ LMI CT-1-s-B-02736. See <http://ran.cimec.ro/sel.asp?codran=62805.01>.

<sup>52</sup> IACOB 2003, 288, no 53.

<sup>53</sup> IRIMIA 1974, 75-77.

<sup>54</sup> IRIMIA 1974, 77-86.

<sup>55</sup> IRIMIA 1974, 87-129. See also IRIMIA 1980, 75 and n. 81; IRIMIA 1981, 244-246.

<sup>56</sup> IRIMIA 1974, 130.

<sup>57</sup> IRIMIA 1974, 130.

<sup>58</sup> IRIMIA 1981, 240-243 and Fig. 1/1-2.

<sup>59</sup> ZAHARIADE 1996, 225 and n. 15.

<sup>60</sup> The 4<sup>th</sup> century *Flaviana* represents a great challenge for the future. Until now, besides the numismatic evidence already mentioned *supra*, just one tombstone is known (ISM IV 215). The funerary monument was offered to Flavius Tatianus 15 years after his death by his wife Euticus.

<sup>61</sup> For substantial considerations on the capacity and speeds of ancient wagons & pack-animals, see MATTHEWS 2018, 258-263.

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