

Exit Fanius. About a Brick Stamp from Drobeta

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Abstract: The present study undertakes a reinterpretation of the tile stamp published for the first time by D. Tudor in 1965 with the reading FANIUS, interpreted as a civilian tile workshop owner. Even though no other stamps pertaining to this civilian tile manufacturer have been discovered at Drobeta, this particular stamp was interpreted in the same way in all subsequent publications. Our reading shows that is a tile stamp with the abbreviated name of the Legio V Macedonica, in the form V (quinta) Mac(edonica) retrograde. This new type completes the series of legion's abbreviated name on tile stamps known from Drobeta.

Key-words: tile stamp; Drobeta; Legio V Macedonica.

Rezumat: Se reia lectura unei ștampile tegulare publicată de către D. Tudor în anul 1965, care citea FANIUS și considera că este un antroponim, un producător civil de material tegular. Deși nu s-au mai descoperit la Drobeta ștampile aparținând acestui producător civil, ștampila apare reinterpretată astfel în toate publicațiile ulterioare. În realitate este o ștampilă cu numele legiunii V Macedonica abreviat V (quinta) Mac(edonica) în redare dextrogradă. Noua variantă se adaugă ștampilelor tegulare ale legiunii V Macedonica cunoscute la Drobeta, completând repertoriul acestora.

Cuvinte cheie: ștampilă tegulară; Drobeta; Legio V Macedonica.

The civilian brickyards are known in Dacia mainly from the tile stamps with the abbreviation of the owner's name. Many three or five letter stamps were interpreted as belonging to some civilian tile workshop owner, as for example CIV or CIVAL, QCC, MCC from

Sarmizegetusa¹ identified with *C(aius) I(ulius) Val(ens) / Val(erius), Q(uintus) C(ornelius) C(ornelianus)* and *M(arcus) C(ominius) C(elerinus)*?².

Based on a tile stamp published for the first time by D. Tudor in 1965 (pl. I/1), several scholars stipulated the existence of a private *officina* in Drobeta owned by a certain *Fan(n)ius*. D. Tudor had found the brick type *bessalis* (measurements 28 x 18 x 7.5 cm; stamp letters 2 cm) within the museum from Drobeta, lacking references concerning the finding spot or context of the discovery. In the second series of epigraphic restitutions he offers the reading *Fan(n)ius?*, interpreting the name as that of the *officina's* owner (despite the fact that the restitution shows the name in the Nominative case)³.

The stamp is mentioned in a study regarding the tile stamps from the Drobeta museum collection, along with 148 stamps belonging to *Legio V Macedonica*, maintaining the reading FANIUS (?) which was considered a private stamp. One can find new information about the inventory number (Inv. II 7388), the measurement of the stamp's frame (9.2 x 2.7 cm) and the height of the stamp's letters (2.7 cm)⁴.

The stamp of the so-called FANIUS is discussed again by M. Grec, who tried to read it similarly to a civilian stamp from Sarmizegetusa, previously read IANV(arius)⁵. M. Grec remarks the fact that the FANIUS stamp is «the only civilian stamp known» from Drobeta. However he compares it with the fragmentary stamp IANV[...] from Sarmizegetusa and came to the conclusion that this was in fact a workshop owner, FANIUS, who manufactured civilian bricks and tiles at Sarmizegetusa⁶.

The brick stamp from Drobeta portrays the same reading, FANIUS, in the national corpus of inscriptions⁷. The stamp was meant to showcase particular aspects of Drobeta's economic life, such as local pottery and building material manufacture, as well as the existence of private *officina*, supposedly owned by Fanius⁸. Fanius or Fannius is a well-known Latin *nomen* with many occurrences in the Western and Danubian provinces⁹. A fragmentary inscription reused in the fortress from Turnu Măgurele attests a family with the *nomen* Fanius¹⁰. However,

¹ Christescu 2004, 69-70; Macrea 2007, 268; Petolescu 2010, 257-258.

² Branga 1974-1975, 84, 87-88; Piso 1996.

³ Tudor 1965, 181-182, no. 6, fig. 1/5 (drawing).

⁴ Benea 1978, 207, no. 199, fig. 26 (photo).

⁵ IDR III/2 555a.

⁶ Grec 1993, 185-186, fig. 1-3.

⁷ IDR II 112 (p. 71).

⁸ Stângă 1998, pl. XXVI; Iliescu 2018, 169, fig. 11/12 («private stamp of the potter Fanius»).

⁹ OPEL II, 134.

¹⁰ IDR II 638.

we do not believe that a person with that name was a workshop owner from Drobeta.

Firstly, one has to start with the unique stamp bearing the name of a bricks manufacturer, Fanius, while keeping in mind the latin adagio *testis unus, testis nullus*. This uniqueness is due to an erroneous reading of the stamp. D. Tudor had published only a drawing of the stamp, which was far from the original. The stamp, in Tudor's opinion, should be read from left to right, and the first letter F is in fact the border of the stamp's cartouche. From the stamp's photo (pl. I/2-3, II/4) it is clear that this letter never existed. From the published photography one can observe a trapezium-shaped cartouche and three or four letters, with two reading variants, both of them from right to left:

- a) A sign that suggests a *tabula ansata*, the letter V (the Roman numeral five), an inverted M, an eventually, the letter A. The reading could be then: VMA, an abbreviation for V (*quinta*) Ma(*cedonica*).
- b) The letter V (the Roman numeral five), the letters MAC, in normal position. The reading runs as it follows: V (*quinta*) Mac(*edonica*).

In both cases we have a retrograde stamp that abbreviates the name of the *legio V Macedonica*. A similar stamp, with the trapezium-shaped cartouche and the elongated letters is known from the excavations at the headquarter building (*principia*) from Potaissa (pl. I/4)¹¹. Given the great variety of the *legio V Macedonica's* stamps from Potaissa (Turda, Cluj County), finding an identical stamp is very likely improbable, but one should search for the stamp series¹². Four variants of the so-called Potaissa type (the short abbreviation LVM) were found out Drobeta, namely 148 tile stamps discovered in the Roman camp and in the civilian settlement. Only one came from the Late Roman settlement from Hinova¹³. Three of the illustrated variants I/1, I/2, I/3 (pl. II/1-3) correspond to very similar stamp series discovered in Potaissa: two of them are known from the headquarters building (pl. II/5-6) and only one within the baths (pl. II/7)¹⁴. If we add the retrograde stamp with the trapezium-shaped cartouche from *principia* (pl. II/8) we can reach the conclusion that soldiers charged with the tiles and bricks production from Potaissa worked in the fort from Drobeta as well. In fact, several funerary

¹¹ Nemeti 2020, 92, P. VI.108; 324, pl. IV/P.VI.108; 325, pl. V.2.

¹² Nemeti 2020, 94 (about the stamp series from headquarter's building from Potaissa).

¹³ CIL III 8066, 14216,24; Tocilescu 1896, 79, no. 3, 84, no. 14; Tocilescu 1902, 331, no.46 a, b; Benea 1978, 201-202, fig. 2-4; IDR II 99 a-i.

¹⁴ Nemeti 2000, pl. II/P.VI.87, pl. IV/P. VI. 104; Nemeti 2019, 134, fig. 309/5.

inscriptions mentioning veterans from legio V Macedonica at Drobeta are known as well. We know a *veteranus* (Iulius Bassus)¹⁵, a *veteranus candidatus* (Aurelius Atellanus)¹⁶, but mostly officers and *optiones*. Maecius Domitius was a *centurio*¹⁷, C. Domitius Alexander a *signifer*¹⁸, M. Valerius Alexander a *strator consularis*¹⁹, C. Valerius Victorinus a *beneficiarius tribuni*²⁰, and C. Iulius Melcidianus, a *beneficiarius consulari*²¹. All these veterans²² could belong the staff of a *vexillatio* dispatched here from Potaissa in the first half of the IIIrd century A. D.²³ The elements which help date the inscriptions are: the mention of *colonia Septimia Drobeta*²⁴ (*terminus postquem* the reign of Septimius Severus) and the epithets *pia constans* for *legio V Macedonica* which indicates the reign of Caracalla²⁵. The high frequency of the *legio V Macedonica* stamps with variants related with the series used from the *tegulae* and *lateres* from the *principia* at Potaissa could indicate the existence of an *officium* and some *figlinarii* involved in building activities in the Roman camp from Drobeta and the neighboring civil area.

¹⁵ IDR II 40.

¹⁶ IDR II 67.

¹⁷ IDR II 36.

¹⁸ AE 2005, 1303.

¹⁹ IDR II 38.

²⁰ IDR II 39.

²¹ IDR II 41.

²² A soldier or a veteran is mentioned in the fragmentary inscription AE 2015, 1193.

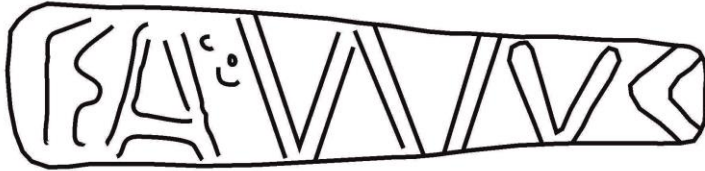
²³ A similar dating in Tocilescu 1902, 332-33.

²⁴ AE 2005, 1303.

²⁵ IDR II 38. Nemeti 2019, 141-146 (for dating of the legion's epithets).

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Pl. I



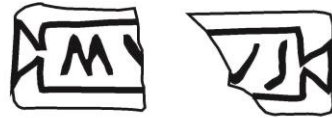
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Pl. II

