

NOVAE AND OESCUS IN TRAJAN'S CONSTRUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME ON THE LOWER DANUBE IN LATE FIRST AND EARLY SECOND CENTURY CE: A COMPARISON

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Michał Duch
Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań
Institute of European Culture in Gniezno
Kostrzewskiego 5–7
PL – 62–200 Gniezno
micduc@amu.edu.pl

The article provides a comparison of Novae and Oescus, enabling a discussion of Emperor Trajan's programme of construction and reconstruction on the Lower Danube. The changes introduced in Novae during Trajan's reign are well-documented thanks to archaeological research. Slightly less is known about Oescus, even though it is a perfect example of Trajan's citygenetic policies.

Key words: Novae, Oescus, Trajan, Pannonia Inferior, Pannonia Superior, Moesia Superior, Moesia Inferior, Dacia, fortifications, colonies, city

1. INTRODUCTION

For Trajan, it was exceptionally important to continuously increase the defensive capabilities of the northern border of the Imperium Romanum. Even before he became the emperor, while he was still governing over Germania Superior, he supervised a program of fortifying the border in that area. It is during this time that he might perhaps have initiated the construction of the so-called Odenwald limes (Bennett 1997: 50). Even after Nerva's death, he remained at the Rhine, after which he moved to the Danube to supervise the process of consolidating the border system. He only returned to Rome in

AD 99 (Eck 2014: 101). After dealing with his political business there, he hastened back to the north to execute his military plans, in which Oescus and Novae, albeit not part of the initial strategy, would play an important role later on in the campaign (on the wars with Dacians see Strobel 1984; Sarnowski 1988: 52–68).

Without a doubt, these places were directly linked with the radical plan for solving the Dacian issue. They constituted a link in the preparation of the fortifications for the planned offensive on Decebalus' state. Both locations can thus function as excellent examples of Trajan's construction programme in the territories on the Danube.

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Figure 1. Ruins of Novae, present state of preservation (photo M. Pisz)

2. NOVAE DURING TRAJAN REIGN

Let us begin with Novae, the ruins of which are located not far from the city of Svisthov in Bulgaria (Fig. 1). Initially, this had been the camp of the Augustus' eighth legion, stationed here from the mid-40s AD until 69. At the beginning of the 70s, this legion was replaced by legio I Italica, which remained in Novae until Late Antiquity (Fig. 2). The earliest earth-and-wood fortifications excavated here are dated to the Claudian-Nero period, while the first stone foundations of the principia most probably to Nero's reign. The early encampment covered an area of 17.8 ha. During Trajan's reign, it was completely rebuilt in stone, along with the erection of 32 guard towers, all of which was probably done before the first campaign of the Dacian War (101-102) (Tomas 2017: 38–39). This date might be confirmed by hypothesis claiming that scene XXXV (Fig. 3.1) on Trajan's column presents Novae during the First Dacian War (AD 101/102),¹ as does scene XLVI (Fig. 3.2.) (Depuyrot 2008: 79–80). A fort with an arching one-passage gate was visible on both of these images.

Yet another trace of the history of Novae during Trajan's period comes in the form of two foundation inscriptions (more on legio I Italica during Trajan's

reign see Sarnowski 2018). The first [Imp(eratori) Cae]sari Ne[rvae---] [---Po]ntif(ici) Max(imo) [---] (ILatNovae 33) is ascribed to Trajan, because at the beginning of his reign he bore the name Nerva (Nerva Traianus). The inscription has been preserved on a block 1.13 m in length, which was most probably part of the facade of a monumental building, but it is impossible to determine the specific structure it originated from as the block was reused in the construction of the guard tower next to the fortress's western gate (Kolendo 1972: 64). The second foundation inscription is also damaged – [---- Ne]rvaeTrai[ani ----] / [-----]AD +++ C / II / [-----] leg(atus) Aug(usti) pr(o) pr(aetore) / [-----] leg(atus) Aug(usti). Based on the dimensions of the partially preserved artefact, the researchers who found the inscription indicate that it must have initially been located in a temple (Bunsch *et al.* 2003: 56–57). The next two inscriptions are linked to the construction of a legionary hospital, more specifically Asclepius's sanctuary, in its interior as will be discussed further in this article. The first is an inscription dedicated to Asclepius (AE 1998, 1130; Kolendo 1998: 56–57, no. 1) (Aescula/pio sacrum / leg(io) I Ital(ica)), dated to the entire period of Emperor Trajan's reign. The next one ([A]esculapium \ ex donis arg(enteum) \ p(ondo) V unc(iis) V \ C. Mansuanus \ Seuerus leg(atus)

¹ This division is according to the one suggested by Conrad Cichorius (Cichorius 1896); Sarnowski 1984: 160.

Aug(usti) f(aciendum) c(uravit)) is the base of a statue of Hygieia dated to AD 112–113 (AE 1998: 131; Kolendo 1998: 56–57, no. 1). In Novae during Trajan's reign, there was also a functioning customs office as also attested by an inscription from ca. AD 100: [Invicto] / Deo / Melichrysus / P(ubli) Caragoni / Philopalaestri.² This is a marble block, of which half has been preserved, serving as a base for Mithra's statue. It was funded by a slave belonging to a customs office leaseholder from the Lower Danube district. We know this thanks to the inscription known as the Horothesia of Laberius Maximus from Histria (AE 1919: 10; Kolendo 1992: 97–103). The office was most probably located just outside the eastern walls of Novae (Sarnowski 2017: 85, Abb. 7).

It is worth taking special note of yet another trace of Trajan's construction activities in the form of legio I Minervia and legio XI Claudia roof tiles (Fig. 3.3), dated by T. Sarnowski to AD 101 (Sarnowski 1987: 107–122). The roof tiles marked by these two legions attest to the presence of units whose purpose it was to produce such building materials in order to meet the demands of Novae (Sarnowski 1987: 107–122). Clearly, legio I Italica was not capable of fulfilling the production needs for building ceramics during the extensive reconstruction of the camp, as a result of which legio I Minervia and legio XI Claudia's aid was required. During the Dacian War, Novae constituted one of the major ports to which reinforcements and supplies were shipped (Sarnowski 1984: 143). In all probability, legio I Italica's stamps, which appear in Sarnowski's typology (Sarnowski 1983: 17–61) as types VI 61, VI 104–105, VI 119–122 and in Matuszewska's typology IV–12a (Matuszewska 2006: 45–63) (Fig. 3.4), should be dated to Trajan-Hadrian's period of reign (Reclaw & Żelazowski 2008: 58).

The presence of the emperor himself in Novae has been confirmed not only on the metopes from Trajan's column, but also by lead fillings (Fig. 3.5) bearing the inscription IMP(erator) TR(aian) (Mrozewicz 1981: 79–84; Sarnowski 1984: 160), in-

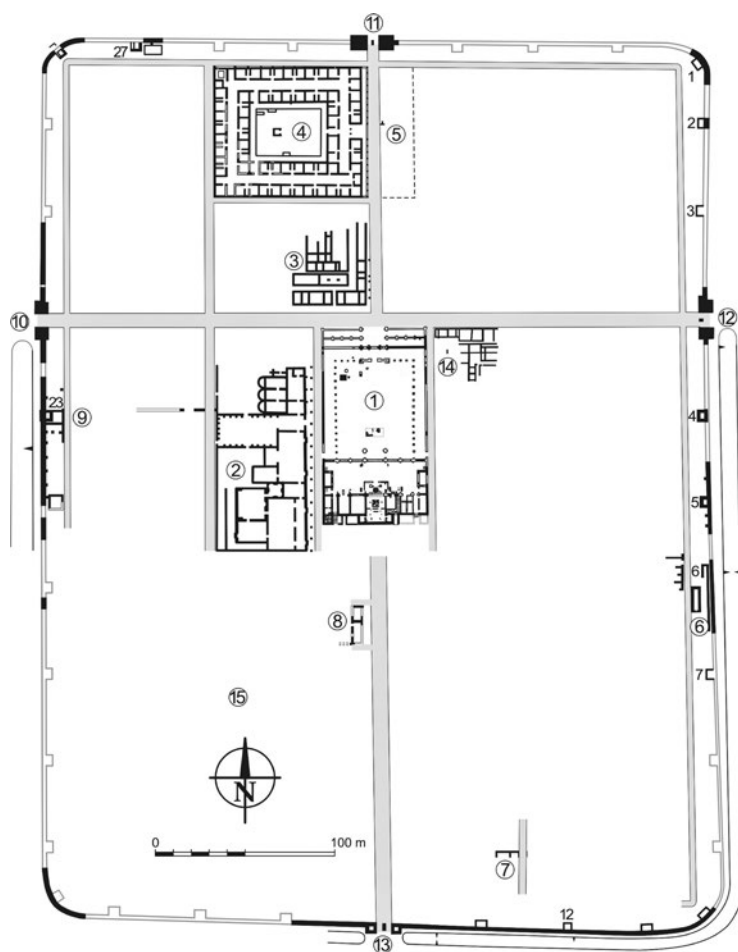


Figure 2. Novae. Legionary fortress in the 2nd and 3rd century. An outline plan (by T. Sarnowski, J. Kaniszewski and P. Zakrzewski. Based also on detailed drawings by M. Lemke and P. Dyczek). 1. Headquarters building (principia); 2. Bath house (thermae); 3. Officer's house; 4. Hospital (valetudinarium); 5. Granaries (horrea); 6. Water tank; 7. Cavalry Barrack; 8. Praetorium (?); 9. Fabrica (?); 10. West Gate (porta principalis sinistra); 11. North Gate (porta praetoria); 12. East Gate (porta principalis dextra); 13. South Gate (porta decumana); 14. Barracks of the First Cohort (?); 15. Water pipeline trench (emergency rescue excavation of 2015). Figures along the curtain wall refer to the numbers of towers (plan and caption after: Sarnowski et al. 2014: 178, fig. 1).

dicating that he might have personally overseen the reconstruction of the camp in Novae.

I will not refer in detail the architectural details of the Novae walls and streets (see Jęczmieniowski and Zakrzewski in this volume). I would only like to mention that aside from the reconstruction of the fortifications, a new monumental basilica was built in the principia (Sarnowski 2012: 50) (Fig. 2, no. 1). During Trajan's reign, a legionary hospital was erected in place of the large legionary bathhouse (Dyczek 2008: 65–66) (Fig. 2, no. 4). The purpose of the new building was to provide care for sick and wounded soldiers, transported to Novae by the Danube from

² AE 1940: 0100; ILBulg 289; Kolendo 1993: 127; however, H. Nesselhauf's annotation is frequently quoted (1939: 334–335): / [cond(uctoris) publ(ici) por(torii)] / [ripaeThraciae] / [ser(vus) vil(icus) posuit]. J. Kolendo rejects this annotation as there is simply not enough space for such a long inscription on the base.



Figure 3. Sources for the Trajanic History of Novae: 1. Scene XXXV from Trajan's column with representation of Novae (after Cichorius 1896); 2. Scene XXXV from Trajan's column with representation of Novae (after Cichorius 1896); 3. The stamps of the legio I Minerva and legio XI Claudia (all stamps are elaborated by A. Momot); 4. Stamps from Early 2nd century (after Reclaw & Żelazowski 2008: 61, fig. 5); 5. Lead fillings with signature of Trajan (after Mrozewicz 1981: 79–84).

the battlefields. In the centre of the hospital, in the courtyard, there was a small temple constructed during Trajan's reign, but most of the stratigraphic and epigraphic evidence indicates that it was reconstructed in AD 156–159 (Dyczek 1999: 495–500). The courtyard itself was surrounded by a portico (32.66 x 42.40 m), around which two rows of rooms (all with a triangular layout) were constructed with a circular corridor running between them. The entire building (to the exception of the courtyard) was covered by a Basilica roof (Dyczek 1997: 199–204). New baths were constructed a bit later, in the first half of the 2nd century AD (Biernacki & Klenina 2016: 45) (Fig. 2, no. 2). Structures located in section XII have very recently began to be studied, i.e. since 2011 (Fig. 2, no. 14). According to excavators, the structures currently being researched might possibly have been the legionary barracks of the first cohort or the house of a high-ranking officer. For the present moment, it has been possible to distinguish four architectural phases of the excavated structure. Timber was used as principal material in two of those phases, the earliest dating to the Julio-Claudian dynasty, while the second was constructed during the reign of the Flavians. In turn, in the period of interest, i.e. before the Dacian Wars, it is clear that certain modifications were introduced, as this is when the pool and baths were constructed within this building. Aside from various

numismatic artefacts, this chronology is confirmed primarily by the roof tiles stamped by legio I Minerva and legio XI Claudia, which had been used to build the canal used to drain the water from the baths. In the Late Antiquity period, military and civilian architecture began to merge (Lemke 2014: 193–203; 2015; 2016; Dyczek 2018a; 2018b).

It can be observed that during Trajan's reign the camp at Novae was completely reconstructed. This was how Novae fit into Trajan's plans to reorganize the Roman border defence system at the Danube by strengthening the border fortifications.

3. OTHER FORTIFICATIONS BUILT OR REBUILT DURING TRAJAN'S REIGN IN PANNONIA INFERIOR, MOESIA SUPERIOR, MOESIA INFERIOR AND DACIA

Before the Dacian War broke out, in Pannonia Trajan ordered fortifications to be built in Alisca, Ad Statuas, Ad Militare and Taurunum (Fig. 5). As a result of these actions, Trajan was able to standardize the defensive system in this province (Karavas 2001: 58). Already as emperor in AD 98, Trajan initiated an extensive program of reorganising the defensive

system in Upper Moesia (Ječzmieniowski 2015: 119). At some point before the First Dacian War broke out, these actions led to the Romans being able to complete the road along the Danube next to the Iron Gates (CIL III, 1699), as well as digging a 3 km long canal near Sip, enabling sailing down the Danube (Šašel 1973: 80–85). Trajan also ordered the modernisation of the earth-and-wood fortifications functioning in this area by rebuilding them in stone, for example those in Ram (Lederata), Pojejena, Čezava (Novae), Saldum, Gospodin Vir, Kostol (Pontes), Drobeta-Turnu Severin (Drobeta), Prahovo (Aqua). He also built new ones in Karataš (Diana), Velike Livadice, Male Livadice (Fig. 5). This is perhaps the moment when Singidunum and Viminacium acquired stone walls, as perhaps did some smaller fortifications like the ones on Sapaja Island, in Donji Milanovac (Taliata), Tekija (Transdierna), Brza Palanka (Egeta) (Ječzmieniowski 2015: 120–121) (Fig. 5).

Aside from Novae, in construction activities have been confirmed to have taken place in Lower Moesia (Fig. 5). In AD 103 Carsium (Hirşova) a fort for ala Gallorum Flaviana was rebuilt in stone (the first earth and wooden phase occurred during Vespasian's reign) (Nicolae *et al.* 2008: 313), at this time between AD 103–106 forts in Rasova-Flaviana (Gudea 2005: 446), Sacidava (Celei) (Scorpan 1972: 315; 1977: 230), Capidava (Florescu, Florescu & Diaconu 1958: 15; Gajewska 1974: 150) were built and Barboşi was rebuilt in stone in AD 112 (Sarnowski 1984: 159; Poulter 1986: 521; Ţentea 2016: 88). It should also be emphasized that military troops left the forts between Viminacium and Novae (Ţentea 2016: 88).

The new forts Trajan built along the border with Scythia Minor (Fig. 5) contributed to the integration of the Lower Moesian defensive system. Additionally, new legionary camps were constructed in Durostorum (Silistra) and Troesmis (Iglita) (Poulter 1986: 522). It was also the first time that the construction of Roman roads in Dobrudja was initiated, about which information is provided by an inscription issued by cohors IV Gallorum, found not far from Sacidava (Poulter 1986: 522; Panaite 2013: 131). Due to the Danube's frequently low levels and it periodically being frozen over, which translated into a lower degree of security in the province, the decision was reached to construct early warning military outposts in Wallachia, southern Moldavia and south-eastern Transylvania (Fig. 5) (Poulter 1986: 523; Ţentea 2016: 89).

Following the Dacian Wars, these areas were under the jurisdiction of the governor of Lower Moesia (Ţentea 2016: 89). In time of Dacian Wars forts for the vexillations were built in Drajna de Sus, Mălăieşti, Târgşor, Pietroasele, and possibly Voineşti (Karavas 2001: 197; Ţentea 2016: 89). Thanks to Hunt's papyrus (RMR 68), we know that forts were also constructed in Buridava (Ocnele Mari) in Wallachia and in Piroboridava (Poiana) in Moldova (RMR 68). Without a doubt, these new structures did not function in isolation; thus, they must have been linked to the main communication routes along the Danube (Poulter 1986: 522; Ţentea 2016: 89). According to O. Ţentea, one of the roads ran from the area between Oescus and Novae along the Olt River ensuring access to the south-eastern Transylvania pass (Ţentea 2016: 90). Just after the First Dacian War, the Roman army began to fortify its camps and bases around Decebalus' territory (limited to the Carpathian Arc), but primarily they focused on the systematic development of the network of communication routes in the extensive borderland zone by the Lower Danube. Trajan ordered the construction of roads in the Iazyges' tribal terrains, situated on both sides of the Tisa River (Poulter 1986: 523; Karavas 2001: 151). On the map depicting the fortifications built during Trajan's reign in Dacia (Fig. 5), it can be observed that due to the characteristic landscape (the broad arc of the Carpathian Mountains) fortifications were only constructed in the most vulnerable spots, especially in Banat, along the Aluta (Olt) River, but also in the Apulum and Potaissa regions.

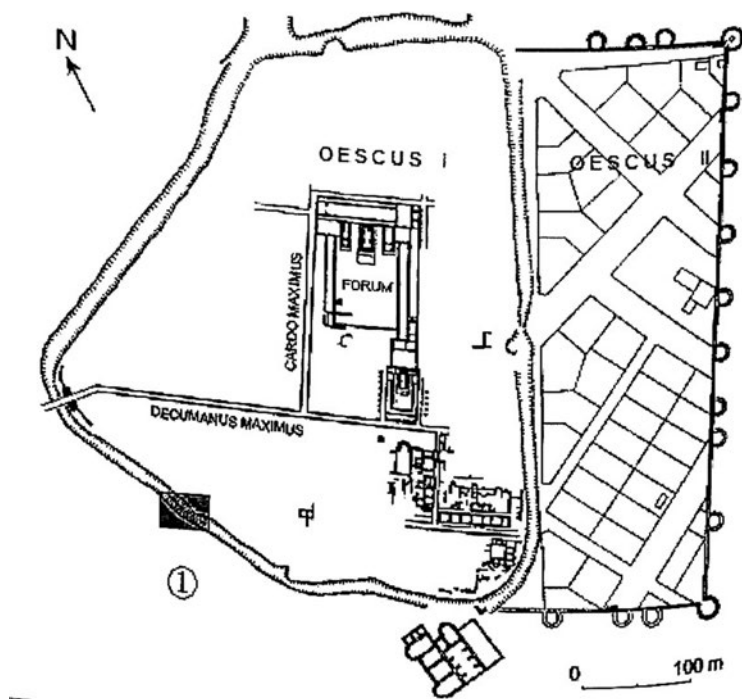
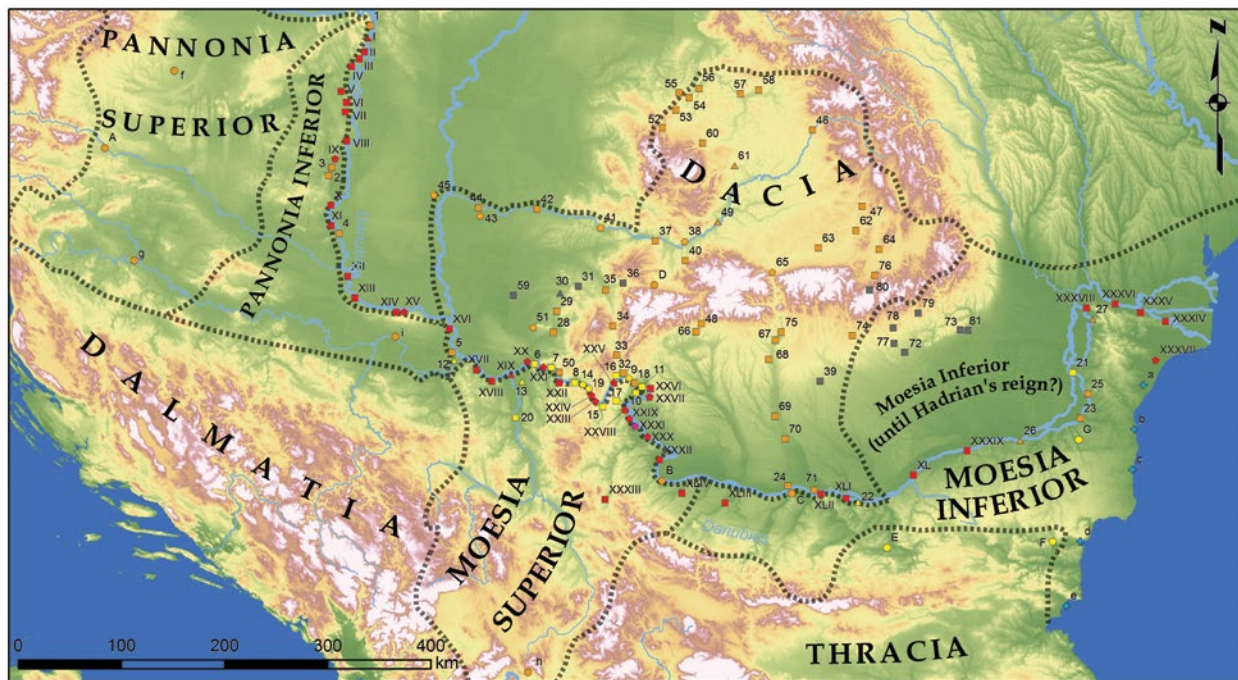


Figure 4. The General Plan of Oescus (after Kabakchieva 2014: 182, fig. 1).



1 - 81: Fortifications built or rebuilt during Trajan's reign; I-XLIV: Fortifications built before Trajan's reign; A - G: Cities founded by Trajan; a - e: Greek cities; f - i: Pre-Trajanic colonies

◆ Greek cities	▲ Legionary camps rebuilt in stone during Trajan's reign	■ Auxiliary forts rebuilt in stone during Trajan's reign
● Colonies	▲ Legionary camps built during Trajan's reign (abandoned)	● Minor fortifications built in stone during Trajan's reign
● Other towns founded by Trajan	■ Auxiliary forts	● Minor fortifications rebuilt in stone during Trajan's reign
▲ Legionary camps	■ Auxiliary forts built during Trajan's reign	● Other minor fortifications
▲ Legionary camps built during Trajan's reign	■ Auxiliary forts built during Trajan's reign (abandoned)	● Uncertain type of fortifications

Figure 5. Lower Danube in the end of Trajan's rule (Map was prepared based mainly on J. Karavas work (see Karavas 2001) with added supplements: from E. Jęczmieniowski for Moesia Superior (see Jęczmieniowski 2015), and from M. Lemke for Moesia Inferior (see Lemke 2011)).

Arabic numerals (1-81) presents the fortifications built or rebuilt during Trajan's reign; Roman numerals (I-XLIV) presents fortifications built before Trajan's reign; Capital letters mark cities founded by Trajan (A-G); Lowercase letters mark Greek cities (a-e) and pre-Trajanis colonies (f-i).

List:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1 Ulcisia Castra (Szentendre) | 19 Velike Livadice |
| 2 Alisca | 20 Male Livadice |
| 3 Ad Statuas | 21 Carsium (Hirşova) |
| 4 Ad Militare | 22 Novae |
| 5 Taurunum | 23 Rasova Flaviana |
| 6 Ram | 24 Sacidava (Celei) |
| 7 Pojejena | 25 Capidava |
| 8 Čezava (Novae) | 26 Durostorum (Silistra) |
| 9 Gospodin Vir | 27 Troesmis (Iglita) |
| 10 Kostol (Pontes) | 28 Arcidava (Vărădia) |
| 11 Drobeta-Turnu Severin (Drobeta) | 29 Centum Putei |
| 12 Singidunum | 30 Berzovia |
| 13 Viminacium | 31 Aizisis |
| 14 Saldum | 32 Dierna |
| 15 Donji Milanovic (Taliata) | 33 Praetorium |
| 16 Tekija (Transdierna) | 34 Ad Pannonios |
| 17 Brza Palanka (Egeta) | 35 Tibiscum |
| 18 Karataš (Diana) | 36 Zăvoi |

37 Micia	D Sarmizegethusa
38 Cigmău	e Mesembria
39 Costești	E Nicopolis ad Istrum
40 Orăștioara de Sus	F Marcianopolis
41 Bulci	f Colonia Claudia Savaria
42 Aradul Nou	G Tropaeum Traiani
43 Sânnicolaul Mare	g Colonia Flavia Siscia
44 Cenad	h Colonia Flavia Felix Dardanorum
45 Partiscum	i Colonia Flavia Sirmiensem
46 Brîncovenești	I Aquincum
47 Sînpaul	II Albertfalva
48 Bumbesti	III Campona
49 APULUM	IV Matrica
50 Pojena de Sus	IX Alta Ripa
51 Vrșac	V Vetus Salina
52 Resculum	VI Intercisa
53 Bucium	VII Annamantia
54 Romita	VIII Lussonium
55 Porolissum	X Lugio
56 Tihău	XI Altinum
57 Căței	XII Teutoburgium
58 Ilișua	XIII Cornacum
59 Livezile	XIV Bononia
60 Gilău	XIX Margum
61 Potaissa	XL Sexaginta Prista
62 Hoghiz	XLI Dimum
63 Cincșor	XLII Securisca
64 Feldioara	XLIII Augustae
65 Boița	XLIV Variana
66 Castra Traiana	XV Beočin
67 Buridava	XVI Rittium
68 Pons Aluti	XVII Tricornium
69 Acidava	XVIII Mons Aures
70 Romula	XX Sapaja Island
71 Islaz	XXI Pincum
72 Târgșor	XXII Cuppae
73 Pietroasele	XXIII Smorna
74 Voinești	XXIV Ravna(Camps)
75 Buridava	XXIX Mora Vagei
76 Piroboridava	XXV Hajdučka Vodenica
77 Filipești	XXVI Kurvingrad
78 Cîmpina	XXVII Rtkovo
79 Drajana de Sus	XXVIII Ušče Slatinse Reke
80 Mălăiești	XXX Dorticum (Vrav)
81 Pietroasele	XXXI Prohovo
82 Tîrgșor	XXXII Bononia (Vidin)
a Istrus	XXXIII Timacum Minus
A Poetovio	XXXIV Salsovia
B Ratiaria	XXXIX Transmarisca
b Tomis	XXXV Aegyssus
c Callatis	XXXVI Noviodunum
C Oescus	XXXVII Argamum
d Odessus	XXXVIII Arrubium

4. OESCUS DURING TRAJAN REIGN

The significance of *Novae* in Trajan's construction policies is thus quite obvious. We should therefore ask what the significance for Trajan's plans was of the oldest legionary camp in Lower Moesia, *Oescus*. It is claimed that *Oescus* was constructed as early as in the first decade of the 1st century AD and that it was built by the *legio V Macedonica*, which resided there up until AD 62 and later between AD 71 and AD 102. *Cohors IIII Gallorum* filled in during the nine-year gap. During Tiberius' reign, *ala Pansiana* was probably also stationed here (or somewhere nearby); however, this has not been fully verified (AE 1927: 51; *ILBulg* 47; Kabakchieva 2000: 31–62; Boyanov 2008: 69; The presence of this cohort in *Oescus* is confirmed by inscription *CIL III 14417=ILatBulg.61* cf. Boyanov 2008: 69; Matei-Popescu 2010: 210). There was a Thracian settlement of the *Triballi* tribe located north of *Oescus* (Boyanov 2008: 70; Lemke 2011: 172). In addition, as of the end of Augustus' reign, this area was subjected to intense settlement by veterans, as confirmed by epigraphic evidence (Boyanov 2008: 72; Kabakchieva 2014: 184). The presumed remains of a *vicus* were also located near *Oescus* (Boyanov 2008: 70), while a *canabae* extended east of the *castra*, probably in place of which a town called *Oescus II* formed in the 3rd century (Fig. 4) (Ivanov 1990: 917; Lemke 2011: 169). The stone walls of *Oescus* were probably built during *Vespasian's* reign. The camp itself covered an 18-hectare area, and, according to most researchers, it was located directly beneath *Oescus I* (Fig. 14), but it remains uncertain exactly where (Kabakchieva 2000: 120; Lemke 2011: 168). The most of researchers accept theory that, the the *principia* were situated in the spot later occupied by the forum (see discussions and arguments against it in: Boyanov 2008: 70; Tomas 2017: 96). A different opinion has been expressed by Boyanov, who claims that the military camp was located at the highest point in the southern part of this settlement due to the risk of flooding (Boyanov 2008: 70). Unfortunately, taking into account the current state of knowledge it is very difficult to determine what specific changes were introduced in the camp itself during Trajan's reign (Lemke 2011: 169–170). The written sources do not provide any additional information. We know of only five inscriptions from this period. The first is a gravestone dated to AD 98–117 belonging to a veteran of the *cohortis IIII Gallorum* (AE 1902: 120). The second is the gravestone of *Caius Cornelius Iustus* (AE 1935: 78; AE 1951: 240; Conrad: 435), the third is *Publius Scribonius Publius* (Conrad: 436) and the fourth is *Q. Pompeius Eutyches'* gravestone, a freedman of *legatus legionis Q. Pompeius*

Falco (Conrad: 443). Among these inscriptions, only one is linked to building policy and might be connected to the period of Trajan's reign, is the following fragment (*ILBulg* 2) [*Imp(erator) Caesar N]erva T[ra]ianus A]ugust[us]/ ---LEXSTO---/---*, which was reused in the construction of the walls from *Aurelian's* or *Constantine's* period. The key roads south of *Oescus* were probably modernised at that time since the settlement was situated at the natural crossroads of nearby communication routes. The roads from *Nicopolis ad Istrum* and *Philippopolis* run through the area, as *Oescus* linked *Serdica* with the Danube and the interior of *Dacia* (Lemke 2011: 172–173; Tomas 2017: 97). After the *Dacian Wars* ended, the army left the camp, and – according to most researchers – a veterans' colony was formed in its place called *Colonia Ulpia Traiana Oescensium* (Kabakchieva 2014: 181; Tomas 2017: 96–97). In general, in terms of their appearance the fortifications of the colonies are reminiscent of a military camp (Fig. 14) (Kabakchieva 2014: 184). The more important structures built during Trajan's reign include the monumental forum (220 x 97.60 m) situated in the very centre of the colonies. According to Kabakchieva, the construction of the forums was initiated just after the colonies were founded in AD 106. As in the case of every Roman forum, these structures contained public utility buildings. In *Oescus*, three such structures were located there, as was the *Capitolium*, situated in the southern part of the forum. The *Jupiter Optimus Maximus* temple, the eastern part of the *Temple of Juno* and the western part of the *temple of Minerva* were located in the middle of the *Capitolium*. It is worth emphasizing the strong influence of architecture that was not very Asian in *Oescus* (for more architectural details, see Kabakchieva 2014).

5. TRAJAN CITYGENIC POLICY ON LOWER DANUBE

In addition, Trajan created three other colonies in the area near the Danube (Fig. 5): *Colonia Ulpia Traiana Poetovio*: *Ptuj* in *Pannonia*, in *Upper Moesia* (*Ratiaria*: *Colonia Ulpia Traiana*: *Arčar*), and in *Dacia*: *Colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Sarmizegethusa* (Mrozewicz 1989: 18).

It should be emphasized that *Oescus* is an ideal example of Trajan's citygenic policies, because a number of factors influenced the choice of place for a colony. First of all, such colonies were placed primarily in locations that were strategically important. All the colonies established by Trajan were significant in this respect. *Poetovio* was located

on the amber route leading across the Drava River (Šašel-Kos 2014: 139). Such also was the localisation of Oescus, which – as already mentioned – was situated at the crossroads of crucial communication routes. Sarmizegetusa was constructed at the spot where two important roads intersected, one beginning in Dierna and running through the Timis-Cerna Valley, crossing Tibiscum (Marcu & Cupcea 2011: 543). Ratiaria was also conveniently located at the crossroads of the route running along the Danube with the trail leading to the Adriatic Sea (Luka 2014: 50). Other common features of these places included the colonies being founded after the legions had marched away and autochthonic settlements also being located there. Such was the case of Colonia Ulpia Traiana Poetovio established in AD 102 (Šašel-Kos 2014: 146) and of the important river port in Ratiaria, which like Oescus was probably a legionary camp in the 1st century AD as well as a tribal base (Ῥατταρία Μυσῶν; Οἴσκος Τριβαλλῶν) (Ptol., *Geogr.* 9, 10, 10). This political approach was continued also after Dacia was conquered, and in AD 106 Trajan established Colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica Sarmizegetusa consisting of veterans (Piso 2003: 294).

Certain other settlements should also be added to this list (Fig. 5), which even though they had initially been located in Thrace were also situated next to the Danube, such as Nicopolis ad Istrum, this town was initially called Nicopolis ad Heamum, (cf. Ptol., *Geogr.* 11, 7; Vladkova 2002: 32), and most probably also Marcianopolis. These towns were newly founded by Trajan after the Dacian Wars, i.e. they were not organized like Roman towns but as traditional Greek poleis (Ruscu 2007: 214). Most of the settlers of these towns originated from Syria and various areas in Asia Minor (Slokoska *et al.* 2002: 85). Trajan chose the Greek model as a basis for their further development as Hellenistic influences and traditions were strong in this area (Rostovtzeff 1926: 233; Ruscu 2007: 214). Marcianopolis lay on the route linking the northern edge of the Balkan Mountains with the road running to the cities by the Black Sea. Much like Oescus, Marcianopolis was also founded on tribal territory (Kolendo 1976: 47, 59). However, the problem with Marcianopolis lies in the issue that this town might have been constructed during Hadrian's reign and not Trajan's. This may be indicated by the fact that as many as four poleis in Thrace (Traianopolis, Plotinopolis, Augusta Traiana and Marcianopolis) refer to Hadrian's family through their names. Additionally,

as noted by D. Boteva, Marcianopolis and Augusta Traiana are not present in Ptolemy's texts. Thus, it is possible that Ptolemy based his account on a source written just after the province of Dacia was established, but before Sarmizegetusa was founded, i.e. AD 108–109 (Boteva 2014: 196). According to Boteva, the final years of Trajan's reign or the initial years of Hadrian's reign should be considered for the date of founding Marcianopolis (Boteva 2014: 198). There are no such doubts in the case of Nicopolis ad Istrum, as the only ongoing discussion refers to whether it was established after the First or the Second Dacian War.³ For a long time, it was also believed that the polis was established in virgin territory. This would most certainly have been a significant departure from Trajan's principles in terms of how he established such poleis. However, the latest research indicates that underneath the city's agora were discovered coins dated to 2–1 BC and Thracian ceramic fragments and fibulae (Vladkova 2012: 31), while the seat of the Thracian strategy may also have been somewhere nearby (Delev 2009: 246–247), but according to Vladkova these archeological finds are not sufficient proofs that below Nicopolis ad Istrum was Thracian settlement (Vladkova 2002: 32). It is worth noting that in the vicinity of Nicopolis ad Istrum archaeologist found a several coins dated to the Flavian period, which prompts the hypothesis that a military facility might have been located there (Vladkova 2002: 31), and so Nicopolis ad Istrum was not founded entirely on an empty area.

Similarly, under the buildings of Tropaeum Traiani, yet another city Trajan established by the Danube, traces were found of a Geto-Roman settlement, dated very broadly to the period between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD (Panaite 2016: 167). According to various opinions, the settlement that developed at the beginning of the 2nd century AD would have been either a vicus or a civitas. It was also located at a strategically important spot at the crossroads of the central road, crossing Dobrudja from Noviodunum, in the north down to Zaldapa and Marcianopolis with the east-west-oriented routes connecting Durostorum, by the Danube with Tomis and Callatis, on the Black Sea Coast (Panaite 2016: 168). A municipium had existed here from Trajan's times. The city, however, should be called municipium Traianum Tropaeum or even municipium Ulpium Traianum Tropaeum (Popescu 2013: 143–144; Matei-Popescu 2014: 208; Panaite 2016: 166).

³ However, Boteva (2014: 200) is of the opinion that this occurred in AD 102–104, i.e. after the First Dacian War.

6. CONCLUSION

The article juxtaposes Novae and Oescus, comparing the roles both places performed in the construction programme introduced by Emperor Trajan. The comparison of these two settlements serves as a pretext for presenting a synthetic description of Trajan's construction policies in the Lower Danube area (from Pannonia Inferior, through both Moesias, up to Dacia). During Trajan's reign, Novae maintained its military character; however, it was subjected to an extensive reconstruction as a result of which it became a strongly fortified place. In this context, Novae fit Trajan's construction approach as he was interested in building new fortifications and strengthening the existing ones

through reconstructing them in stone. Areas that had just been conquered by Trajan were subjected to the most extensive military construction procedures, which should come as no surprise. However, Trajan also devoted a lot of attention to Upper and Lower Moesia. On the other hand, Oescus, the oldest Lower Moesian legionary camp, lost its military character and a colony was founded in its place. The example of Oescus shows yet another important aspect of Emperor Trajan's construction programme and is in line with the approach he followed when selecting a place for founding a new polis. Aside from Oescus, Trajan also initiated the construction of such cities as Poetovio, Ratiaria, Sermizegetusa, Nicopolis ad Istrum, Tropaeum Traiani and probably Marcianopolis.

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