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A NOTE ON THE LEGION IV ITALICA

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Inscriptions recording repairs to roads at Aquileia in the reign of Maximinus Thrax (CIL V 7989–90 and AE 1919, 256–7) include a reference to work done *per tirones iuventutis novae Italicae suae dilectus posterioris*. It has been suggested (by M. F. Petracchia Lucernoni, *Epigraphica* 47, 1985, 182) that the reference should be to a legion, I Italica, which was stationed at Novae, in Moesia Inferior (and that Novae was the origo of Maximinus). However, there is no evidence that I Italica was at Aquileia at this time – presumably shortly before the death of Maximinus and his son in AD 238 – or that anyone there would have recognized the legion or its station.

If the words *novae Italicae suae* do indeed refer to a legion – and that the work was carried out *per tirones iuventutis novae Italicae suae* would support that suggestion – then a better candidate would be the legion IV Italica. Admittedly, the only certain reference to that legion seems to be in Not. Dig. Or. VII, 54, when it appears as a *legio pseudocomitatensis* under the *Magister Militum per Orientem*. However, Ritterling (RE XII, 1329–30) suggested that the *legio quarta* raised by Severus Alexander was in fact IV Italica, on the basis of SHA Maximinus 5,5: *statim denique illum* (sc. Maximinum) *tribunum legionis quartae, quam ex tironibus ipse* (sc. Alexander) *composuerat, dedit*. That Severus Alexander did indeed hold *dilectus* in Italy is clear from an inscription from Capua, CIL X 3856 = ILS 1173: the *dilectus* was held in Transpadana.

Severus Alexander thus raised a new legion in Italy, and appointed Maximinus to a tribunate in the new legion. Rebellion against Severus Alexander at Mainz resulted in the death of Alexander, and his replacement by Maximinus. This new legion presumably took part in the campaigns of Maximinus in Germany and on the Danube, and will have accompanied him to Aquileia. It would not be surprising if Maximinus referred to this legion as “his legion”; it no doubt had supported his bid for the throne. Then, at Aquileia, what would be more natural than that new recruits should have been enrolled there – hence the reference to *dilectus posterior*: the *dilectus prior* was presumably the original *dilectus* by Alexander when the legion was formed.

It was suggested some time ago that during the principate, at least as late as the reign of Severus, new legions were raised in Italy, in spite of the fact that after the time of Hadrian few Italians volunteered to join existing legions (*Hermes* 91, 1963, 483–9 = Mann, *Britain and the Roman Empire* 1996, 1–7, cf. Mann, *Legionary Recruitment and Veteran Settlement during the Principate*, 1983, esp. p. 64). Some of these new legions had the title Italica – I Italica, raised by Nero; II and III Italica, raised by Marcus – a confirmation of the fact that they were raised in Italy. The reference in the Aquileian inscription to (legio) nova Italica sua is surely to the next in the series, IV Italica, and supports the view that the raising of new legions in Italy continued at least to the time of Severus Alexander.