

A NOTE ON A FRAGMENTARY LIST OF NAMES FROM NOVIODUNUM

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Cuvinte cheie: *inscripție, Noviodunum, classici, Classis Flavia Moesica, Moesia Inferioară, cetățenie, recrutare, peregrini.*

Keywords: *inscription, Noviodunum, classici, Classis Flavia Moesica, Lower Moesia, citizenship, recruitment, peregrini.*

Rezumat: *Fragmentul de inscripție descoperit la Noviodunum (Isaccea) conține numele a cinci personaje. Fiecare etalează câte două nume ceea ce sugerează originea lor inițială de peregrini. Dată fiind importanța locului de descoperire și în special statutul de comandament al flotei moesice (Classis Flavia Moesica) deținut de Noviodunum, cei cinci indivizi trebuie considerați drept classici lăsați la vatră foarte probabil în același sediu. Piesa trebuie să fi făcut parte dintr-o listă mai lungă de veterani ai flotei redactată și expusă cu ocazia lăsării la vatră a unui contingent probabil la sfârșitul secolului II sau începutul secolului III.*

Abstract: *The fragment of inscription found at Noviodunum (Isaccea) contains the names of five individuals. They hold each two names suggesting their initial peregrin origin. Given the importance of the find place and especially the position of Noviodunum as the headquarters of the Moesian Fleet (Classis Flavia Moesica), the five men must be considered most likely discharged classici from the same unit, apparently in the same headquarters. The piece may be part of a longer list of veterans from the fleet written up and exposed on the occasion of the discharge of a contingent likely in late 2nd or early 3rd century.*

In 2009, a fragment of white marble plaque (**Fig. 1**) was found accidentally on the fortress plateau¹. The marble is most likely a piece of import at

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¹ The piece was found by Mrs. Lucia Nora Pomazan, teacher at the Isaccea High

Noviodunum. It bears five visible written lines containing five personal names². On both surfaces and edges as well, the stone bears spots of iron oxides, likely proceeding from a certain mass of iron objects in long contact with the stone. The fragment contains on its entire written surface black small point-like incisions with iron oxides and traces of fire in composition proceeding, possibly, from a generalized fire in which the piece was caught.

All letters show traces of fire along their course. The maximum dimensions of the piece are: height = 15.3 cm; width = 17 cm; thickness=4.31cm; the letters are between 1.52 and 1.80 cm in height.

Although visibly broken, the left side of the fragment of the plaque did not affect the lettering, while the upper right and lower sides show traces of considerable and irrecoverable breaks.

The stone contains a list of fragmentary names arranged on five lines as follows:

1. VLP CAIV
2. VAL CASTV
3. AEL RESPE
4. VAL SATV
5. FONT IVL

Individually, the letters are enough carefully carved in the marble, although some are set on line rather irregularly. As a general observation, the letter A is rendered always as a Greek lambda (Λ).

The names of the five individuals on the list are easily restorable. Their last letters fall generally into the break of the plaque.

The reading:

1.1. VLP(ius) CAIV[s]

1.2. VAL(erius) CASTV[s]

1.3. AEL(ius) RESPE[ctus]

1.4. VAL(erius) SATV[rminus]; L has a short sole, which is obviously a lapicid error and not natural erosion.

1.5. FONT(eius) IVL[ius]; the name FONT has visibly N + T in ligature.

COMMENTARY

A. The names

All five individuals were of peregrine origin in the class of *humiliores* and most likely local inhabitants bearing initially one Roman name (*Caius*, *Castus*, *Respectus*, *Saturninus*, *Iulius*)³. The granting of additional names, which was supposed to officially confer the Roman citizenship, shows an erratic and random operation of local authorities. There have been assigned both Imperial gentilices

School, who donated to the Institute for Eco-Museal Recherches in Tulcea (ICEM). We are deeply grateful to the donator to whom we also thank on this instance. The piece is now in the custody of the same institute under inv.no. 50548.

² We also show our gratitude to our colleagues: Camelia Geambai for the drawing, Vera Rusu for the restoration of the stone, and Gabriel Dincu for the photography.

³ See in general: SCHEIDEL 2006. An explicit discussion on this social category: VARGA 2014, *passim*.

such as *Ulpus*, *Aelius*, and senatorial, *Fonteius*. *Fonteius* seems to be a 1st century inheritance from the senatorial governor of Lower Moesia, C. *Fonteius Agrippa*, killed in action against the Sarmatians in 70⁴.

The *praenomen* in this period lost any significance, and therefore was abandoned or sometimes borne as a *cognomen*.

When the inscription was set, the five individuals held Roman citizenship. They received the Roman Imperial gentilices as *nomina* in two cases, *Ulpus*, *Aelius*, and twice *Valerius*, which was not an Imperial gentile at that time. Their former single names, *Caius*, *Castus*, *Respectus*, *Iulius*, and *Saturninus* became *cognomina*⁵.

B. The personnel

1. *Ulpus Gaius*. The name is indeed rare, but not inexistent in the Danubian-Dacian community. There are no *Ulpus Gaii* (except our case) known as yet in Lower and Upper Moesia, but there are two *Marci Ulpus Gaii* and therefore holders of the Roman citizenship known in Dacia at different dates; one is recorded at *Ulpia Traiana*, holding a certain position in the *collegium Augustalium* of the Dacian capital⁶ and another, a *praefectus legionis IIII Flaviae* at *Sigidunum*, transferred to the same post to *legio XIII Gemina* at *Apulum* by mid-3rd century⁷.

2. *Valerius Castus*. Two more *Valerii Casti* are known in Lower Moesia: a *cornicularius* in the auxiliary unit in garrison at *Sacidava*, possibly *cohors I Cilicum milliaria equitata sagittariorum*, who died aged 48⁸; another case is at *Polski Senovec*, in the western parts of the province, where an individual holds *tria nomina* (C. *Valerius Castus*) and therefore, apparently the Roman citizenship⁹.

What is strikingly surprising is that even if *Casti* are remarkably widespread in the Empire, they are unusually rare at the Lower Danube in combination with the name of *Valerius*¹⁰.

⁴ The reference must be made to the senator *Caius Fonteius Agrippa*, the consular governor of Moesia Inferior, who succeeded M. *Aponius Saturninus* in 70, but was shortly after that killed in the battle against Sarmatians (Josephh. *Bell. Iud.* VII 91; Iord. *Get.* 13. 76; cf. Tac. *Hist.* III 46); KAPPELMACHER, in RE VI, 1909, col. 2846, no. 16, s.v. C. *Fonteius Agrippa*; STOUT 1911, p. 17 no.22; STEIN & GROAG, *Prosopographia Imperii Romani* vol. II s.v. C. *Fonteius Agrippa*; STEIN 1940, p.33.

⁵ For *cognomina* in general see: SOLIN 1977, p. 103-144; for the construction and evolution of the system of Roman naming see also: KAJANTO 1965; SALWAY 1994, p. 124-145.

⁶ IDR III/2, 278.

⁷ CIL III 1201: M. *Ulpio Caio/praefecto/legionum/IIII Flaviae/et XIII Gem(inae)*; cf. BENEÀ 1983, p. 203 no. 28; MOGA 1985, p. 144; cf. a first half of the 3rd century feminine variant of the name, *Ulpia Gaia*, is recorded at *Sacidava* (ISM IV 194); she is the mother-in-law of *Ulpus Victor, eques alae Aravacorum*. For the *praenomen* see: SOLIN & SALOMIES 1988, VI 2x; XI: 4X; III: 6X. VIII: 5x.

⁸ ISM IV 190.

⁹ ILBulg 391.

¹⁰ See the collation of the name *Valerius* at MINKOVA 2000, p. 93-96; see also: *Onomasticon Provinciarum Europae Latinarum* (OPEL) ed. B. Lörincz, Wien, 1999, p. 143-146.

3. *Aelius Respectus*. A *Respectus* is known at Oescus setting a dedication to his beloved wife (*obsequentissima, incomparabilissima*)¹¹. The Noviodunum combination of names is absent in Upper and Lower Moesia¹², which confirms the aleatory transfer of names to the individuals by the authorities.

4. *Valerius Saturninus*. An individual with the same name is recorded on the inscription of the Tropaeum Traiani funerary monument of 102, commemorating the soldiers fallen on the battleground against the Dacians and Germans. The soldier's home was *Agrippina* (*Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensis/Colonia Agrippinensis*) (Köln)¹³. Another *Valerius Saturninus* is known at Oescus where he apparently dedicated a little marble column¹⁴. The name is common in the Roman Empire in different variants¹⁵.

5. *Fonteius Iulius*. The name *Fonteius* was borne by an Old Italian plebeian family of which some decedents ascended to senatorial order. It is extremely rare although not inexistent in Lower Moesia; it is widespread in Italy and western provinces¹⁶. Except our individual, the name *Fonteius* is known in Lower Moesia only at Novae, where *Fonteius Maximus* is recorded on 1. V. 233 as *vir clarissimus, legatus legionis I Italicae*¹⁷.

In the Noviodunum case, the combination is indeed peculiar with two joint *nomina*, *Fonteius* and *Iulius*, of which only the former was assigned as a *nomen* while the latter became cognomen¹⁸.

It is less likely that the name *Fonteius* could have been initially invoked before desk at that date by the individual as a certain extraction from or a relation with the famous 1st century senatorial governor of Lower Moesia. If he did so, it seems a highly forged appeal at that date although it was tacitly accepted by the recruiting officers. That shows, in our opinion, either the lack of inspiration of the local authorities granting him automatically this name, or poor vetting on the recruitment process.

C. The type of the document

The use of marble to draw up a list, which in our case is fragmentary, highly augments the probability that the piece under scrutiny is a small part of an official longer list. The best deduction would be that the fragment shows apparently the names of some soldiers who dealt with military service in one of the detachments of the Roman army billeted at Noviodunum¹⁹. As only legionary and war fleet

¹¹ ILBulg 104. *Respectus* is a PN specific to western provinces; OPEL IV Wien 2002, p. 26-28; ALFÖLDY 1969, p. 281.

¹² cf. MINKOVA 2000, p. 18-20.

¹³ ISM IV 8 frg. 7 E.

¹⁴ ILBulg 42.

¹⁵ OPEL IV Wien 2002, p. 52-53.

¹⁶ SCHULZE, 1991, Darmstadt 1991, p. 212 note 4 specific to the area of Clusium and Saena; cf. MINKOVA 2000, p.52; OPEL II Wien 1999, p.149.

¹⁷ ILNovae 50=AE 1987, 862; MROZEWICZ 1984, p. 179-180, taf. XIV.

¹⁸ SOLIN & SALOMIES 1988, p.281.

¹⁹ *Legio V Macedonica*: ISM V 284; *Legio I Italica*: ISM V 271; *Classis Flavia Moesica*: ISM V 273, 281; 273; 283; TOPOLEANU 1984, p. 184-205; TOPOLEANU 1991, p. 97-100; cf. MATEI-POPESCU 2010, p. 245-249.

(*classis*) personnel were documented thus far in the Noviodunum epigraphic record, it means that the individuals recorded on our fragment could have been part of one of these categories of units of the Roman army.

The sequence of the names, the poor paleography of the lettering, and especially the structure of the prosopographic package on the list strongly suggest that the piece is only a section of a larger list (*laterculum*) sanctioning the discharge (*honesta missio*) of a contingent of marine soldiers (*classici*) from *classis Flavia Moesica* which took place at Noviodunum, its main Danubian headquarters.

The important social and juridical act of discharge of contingents from the army (*honesta missio*) was regularly fulfilled in the main headquarters of the unit, the only official place where such a task could have been undertaken²⁰. Like the legionary *latercula*, lists for the Imperial navy (*latercula classicorum*) were also issued in the main bases at Misenum and Ravenna and other main provincial headquarters where collective discharge occurred²¹.

D. The date

An attempt to date more precisely the Noviodunum piece is a matter of conjecture and vulnerability. There are no solid arguments for that.

One might take into account the structure of the names on the inscription, but that can hardly represent a firm element for a date of the piece. The list shows apparently an erratic and archaic attribution of Imperial gentilices in combination with extremely common names. The gentile *Aelius*, which became a name, would indicate mid and second half of the 2nd century as a *terminus post quem* to the date of our fragment, although inscriptions shows rare but not inexistent cases of *Aelii* in the first half of the 3rd century. *Valerius* is allegedly a name circulating with more intensity in the second half of the 2nd and 3rd century²².

The paleography of the letters would suggest late 2nd or rather first half of

²⁰ Mass discharge of *classici* (navy veterans) took place at Noviodunum rather early, in 73 A.D. when a diploma mentions *veteranis dimissis honesta missione* who served in *classis qui [est in Moesia]* (ECK & PANGERL 2006, p. 93-97, no. 1); see also CIL XVI 37 (06. 14, 92). The diploma was found at Brețcu, but the veteran discharged in 92 from the fleet could have chosen to settle at Brețcu (Angustiae), after the conquest of Dacia, in 106. The mass discharge from 112 must have taken place also at Noviodunum (BAUMANN 2003, p. 210 no. 127; ECK & PANGERL 2005, p. 247-254; cf. MATEI-POPESCU 2010, p. 246-247 = RMD V 344; RMD IV 252 (131/2-134/5). A copy of a constitution issued on 02.08.157 at Noviodunum was found at Olbia (IVANTCHIK & KRAPIVINA 2007, p. 219-242). Some other constitutions were apparently released from the fleet upon discharge at Viminacium, in Upper Moesia, where the secondary Moesian fleet base resided (CIL XVI 46 = ECK & PANGERL 2008a, p. 317-387; ECK & PANGERL 2008b, p. 326-329; ECK & PANGERL 2009, p. 338-345 no. 3, 4, 5) (MD of 08.05.100); CIL XVI 46. It is likely that given the long distance between Noviodunum and Viminacium, the right for issuing constitutions could have been conceded to the latter which was the second headquarters in rank of the Moesian navy. BOUNEGRU & ZAHARIADE 1996; veterans from the Moesian navy squadron at Halmyris were discharged most likely at Noviodunum and returned *ad Lares suos*: ZAHARIADE & ALEXANDRESCU 2011, p. 28-39, no. 5-17.

²¹ On the imperial fleets see in general: STARR 1941; CHAPOT 1967; SUSINI 1968, p. 291-307; REDDÉ 1986; SPAUL 2002; D'AMATO 2009.

²² See note 5 and 7.

the 3rd century in date.

The Noviodunum marble fragment submitted to investigation is highly probable part of a longer list (*laterculum*) containing names of discharged soldiers apparently from *Classis Flavia Moesica*. The piece is unique in the epigraphy of Noviodunum and most importantly in Lower Moesia where such *latercula classicorum* remain unknown as yet²³.

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²³ The tight collaboration between the legionary centers and the fleet is very well known. Noviodunum as the supreme headquarters of the Danubian fleet could have legitimately issued *latercula* for the discharged soldiers.

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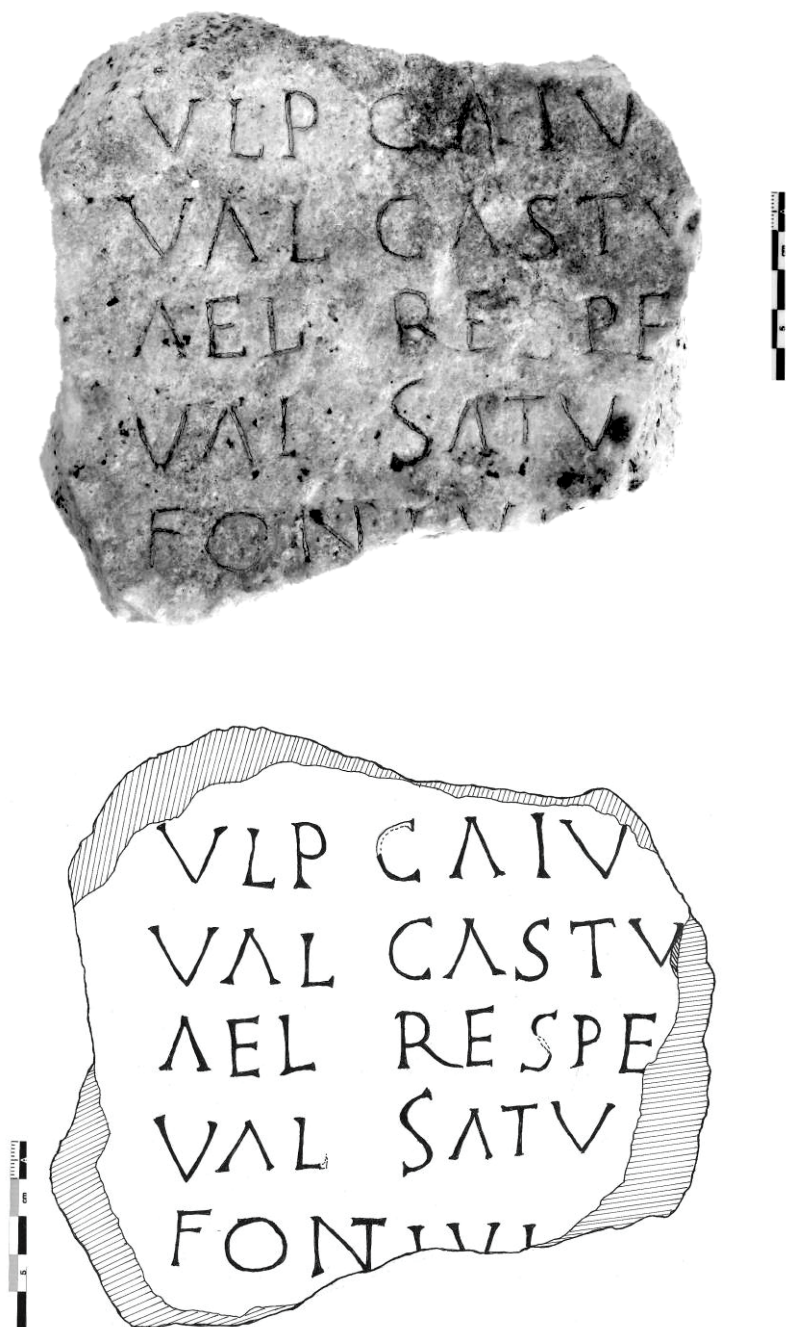


Fig. 1