Roman Military Inscriptions from Siscia: An Overview

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The inscriptions left by soldiers who served in Siscia and by veterans who settled there, as well as the inscriptions commissioned by the soldiers who served elsewhere but originated from that city may not be exceptionally numerous, especially considering the size and importance of that large Pannonian town, but this epigraphic record is nevertheless far from insignificant.

While literary sources and archaeological finds certainly give an insight into the military history of Siscia, there are still many gaps left, some of which can be filled thanks to epigraphy. In recent years, several publications have dealt in more or less detail with the presence of the Roman army in Siscia (Radman-Livaja 2004; Radman-Livaja 2010, cf. the bibliographical references). Understandably, epigraphic finds have been discussed in those overviews, but the focus was not on the epigraphic record which, in our opinion, deserves a more thorough presentation. This paper might therefore be considered as a preliminary step before the publication of a comprehensive catalogue of inscriptions.

The Roman military inscriptions related to Siscia can be broadly divided into three different categories, as pointed out above:

- the epigraphic record of active soldiers stationed in Siscia, consisting mostly of votive inscriptions, but also of funerary inscriptions, as well as of some graffiti incised on military equipment
- inscriptions, mostly funerary, left by the veterans who retired to Siscia after their military career
- inscriptions from all over the Empire related to the soldiers and veterans originating from Siscia

Each of these categories has its importance as far as the military and social history of the Roman Empire in general – and the city of Siscia in particular – are concerned, but they pertain to different aspects of those segments of historical research, despite many common points.

Particularly, inscriptions left by active soldiers can give us an important insight about the army units stationed in Siscia, while this does not need to be the case with veterans’ inscriptions since a veteran’s tombstone cannot be considered as a reliable evidence for the presence of his former unit in the vicinity of his last residence. The inscriptions left by veterans tell us more in terms of social history: a town which attracts veterans wishing to start a new life and a new career has presumably something to offer as far as economic prospects and life standards are concerned. Obviously, there is nothing odd about veterans settling in their former garrison place, but as far as Siscia is concerned, we lack much epigraphic data about the veterans settling there after having served in that city. It is actually quite likely for a former beneficiarius like Marcus Aurelius Glabrio, but nothing points with certainty to an active duty stay in Siscia as far as other veterans are concerned. The sailor Marcus Minicius Saturninus must have spent his career in Italy, according to his funerary inscription, and we may presume that he settled in Siscia after his retirement, perhaps returning to his homeland. The Cilician Sapia likely did not return home after his service: his retirement took place in Moesia Superior and we can presume that he settled afterwards in the city where his diploma has been found, i.e. Siscia. We can only conjecture why: was it because of a local wife or because of friends or relatives already settled there? He might perhaps have been acquainted with the town since his military days? However, there is no proof that his cohort was ever garrisoned in Siscia, even for a very short period of time. Nevertheless, could the cohors I Antiochensium have spent few years in Pannonia in...
the early Flavian period, after coming from the East and before being transferred to Moesia? Wagner and Kraft did not exclude that possibility, but the idea was rejected by other scholars (Wagner 1938, 86-87; Kraft 1951, 166; Mócsy 1962, 621; Beneš 1978, 16; Spaul 2000, 424; Lőrincz 2001, 46). The available epigraphic record does not give any data for the \textit{cohors I Antiochensium} before the Flavian period and since it certainly was in Moesia by AD 75 (RMD 2), its hypothetic garrisoning in Pannonia, if it ever took place, must have been very short, unless we presume that the unit was founded much earlier. Nonetheless, this claim cannot be substantiated with any serious argument for the time being. Actually, \textit{Sapia} might have been among the first recruits of that cohort and since he left the army in AD 100, he likely spent his entire career in Moesia.

Literary sources emphasize the importance of the Siscia garrison in the Augustan period, and there are few doubts about its importance for most of the Julio-Claudian period, but the epigraphic record is not of much help for the early 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD. Siscia almost certainly kept its garrison even after Bato’s insurrection was suppressed, and the IX legion \textit{Hispana} probably formed the mainstay of the garrison until AD 42 or 45 at the latest, but this is not recorded on inscriptions (Sašel 1974, 734; Radman-Livaja 2010, 190, cf. the corresponding bibliographical references). While some of the graffiti found on the military equipment could be dated to the Julio-Claudian period, no army units are explicitly mentioned. The helmet found in the Sava river near Sisak likely belonged to a soldier garrisoned in Siscia at that time, but there is not much to be said about the unit in which \textit{Varro} and his centurion \textit{Luccius} served. The nomen \textit{Luccius} is far from being frequent, with most cases encountered in Italy and \textit{Gallia Narbonensis} (Schulze 1904, 424; Solin / Salomies 1994, 107; Lőrincz 2000, 34). The cognomen or single name \textit{Varro} is admittedly more common, but outside of Italy mostly among the indigenous population of Dalmatia, far less in other provinces (Krahe 1929, 123; Mayer 1957, 354; Kajanto 1965, 69, 118, 264; Alföldy 1969, 321-322; Mócsy 1983, 301; Solin / Salomies 1994, 418; Lőrincz 2002, 148). This helmet could have belonged to a legionary, i. e. a Roman citizen, but it could have just as likely been used by an auxiliary soldier. The fragmented curb bits found in the Kupa river can be ascribed with far more certainty to a Roman citizen, \textit{Veturius Vivus}. His \textit{nomen gentile}, \textit{Vet(t)urius}, while not widespread, is nevertheless a well known name, more particularly common among Italians (Schulze 1904, 259, 380, 411, 428, 432, 448; Solin / Salomies 1994, 206; Lőrincz 2002, 164). His cognomen, \textit{Vivus}, is however seldom encountered, being particularly rare outside of Italy (Kajanto 1965, 274; Solin / Salomies 1994, 425). It is quite likely that the man in question was an Italian, presumably a legionary horseman, perhaps even a commanding officer of an auxiliary unit,\footnote{At least two \textit{Veturii} are known to have been equestrian officers during the Julio-Claudian period, \textit{L. Veturius Homuncio} and \textit{Q. Veturius Pexsus}, cf. ME V, 85, 86; Demougin 1992, 170, 327.} but we

\begin{figure}[h]
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\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image1.png}
\caption{CIL III 10854, Archaeological Museum in Zagreb, photograph by I. Krajcar}
\end{figure}
have no clues whatsoever about the exact identity of his unit. Since the chronological frame of such bits is quite large, i.e. they were in use at least till the end of the 2nd century AD, if not longer, one cannot date the Sisak specimen to the Julio-Claudian period with certainty.

The soldiers from two Pannonian legions are mentioned on Siscia’s funerary inscriptions, namely the centurion Tiberius Claudius Pontius, of the legio XV Apollinaris (1st century AD) and the cornicularius Caius Sempronius Severus, of the legio XIV Gemina (late 2nd – first half of the 3rd century AD). Since both of them died while on active duty, their burial in Siscia could imply that they were stationed there at the time of their death.

The dating of Tiberius Claudius Pontius’ funerary inscription to the 1st century AD is quite likely but since the monument has been lost, it is rather difficult to conjecture about a more precise dating. Considering the young age of the deceased officer, he most probably had an affluent background which gave him the opportunity to start his military career as an officer, although not of equestrian rank. His name points to a peregrine background of the family which must have earned the Roman citizenship under Claudius or, less likely, under Nero. Presumably, it was his father who received the citizenship during the rule of Claudius and took therefore the emperor’s praenomen and gentilicium, Pontius, probably as the eldest son, was given the same praenomen. The funerary stone could consequently not have been erected much before the mid-1st century AD, and certainly not before AD 41. It is admittedly rather unlikely that Tiberius Claudius Pontius became a Roman citizen and officer at the very beginning of Claudius’ reign and passed away soon thereafter. We can therefore assume that his death occurred somewhat later, perhaps already during Claudius’ reign but rather towards its end, more likely in Nero’s time or during the Flavian period. However, since there is no way to date the monument by its typological and stylistic characteristics, we have to rely on the 19th century transcription of the inscription and remain cautious about a narrower chronological frame. Despite Mócsy’s claim, it is far from being certain that the young man was of Pannonian origin, perhaps even a native of Siscia. It is however not impossible, as it would certainly provide a good reason why he was buried there at a time when his legion must already have been garrisoned in Carnuntum or campaigning in the East (Wheeler 2000, 271-282; Mosser 2003, 15-28, 138-157). Although this monument might represent a clue about the garrisoning place of the XV Apollinaris before its transfer to Carnuntum in the early Claudian period, i.e. somewhere between AD 39 and 49, it can hardly be considered as conclusive proof. Undeniably, this legion might have spent some time in Siscia: it is rather likely for the Augustan period, not impossible as far as the early Tiberian period is concerned but quite conjectural for the early Claudian period (cf. Radman-Livaja 2012, 162-165, 169-170 and the corresponding bibliography). The last assumption would truly provide a plausible story for Pontius’ short military career: the son of a prominent and well-off local family, he enlisted as an officer while the XV Apollinaris was stationed in his home town, presumably Siscia. However he met his death before the legion left for Carnuntum. The story is nevertheless rather far-fetched and would imply that it all happened before the mid-1st century AD at the latest. We would therefore be more inclined to believe that Tiberius Claudius Pontius, as a native of Siscia, was buried there after meeting his death somewhere else during the second half of the 1st century AD. Another possibility would be that the young centurion had no family ties whatsoever in Siscia but died...
there during an official mission, also in the second half of the 1st century AD.

Being a cornicularius, Caius Sempronius Severus could have been in Siscia on a detached assignment, since nothing points to a presence of his legion in Siscia during the late 2nd or 3rd century AD. At that time, the permanent camp of the XIV Gemina was Carnuntum, although it was regularly on campaign in distant areas, most notably in the East (Franke 2000, 201-202). As a matter of fact, he could as well have been buried in Siscia because of purely personal, i.e. family reasons.

Siscia presumably preserved a diminished military garrison after the departure of the legionaries, consisting almost certainly of auxiliary units, but we do not know precisely which units those were. From Mucius Hegetor’s tombstone we suppose that the cohors XXXII voluntariorum civium Romanorum was stationed in the city for some time during the 1st century AD. It was perhaps present in Siscia already during the stay of the legion, presumably the IX, and it could have remained in the city until Vespasian’s time, when it was transferred to Upper Germania (Radman-Livaja 2012, 171).

It would seem that from approximately the end of the 1st century AD no permanent garrison of any substance was stationed in the city for quite a long time. In the lack of evidence on the existence of a garrison in the post-Flavian period, it seems that the military presence was limited to the beneficiarii, as evidenced by the rather rich epigraphic record (Nelis-Clément 2000, 49-50, 52, 124, 162, 183-186, 194-196, 255), and a squadron of riverine navy, which was in all likelihood stationed in the city over a longer period of time, even though Siscia’s importance as a navy base was considerably diminished from the moment the centre of gravity of the operations shifted to the Danube (cf. Radman-Livaja 2012, 180, and the corresponding bibliography). One must admit however that the presence of naval personnel has not been corroborated with epigraphic finds. As
already pointed out, the epigraphic record certainly confirms the presence of *beneficiarii* in the 2nd and 3rd century AD, but there is almost no data about other active duty soldiers in that period, with the exception of the cornicularius *Calius Sempronius Severus*.

Nevertheless, it is not excluded that occasional legionary vexillations were also sometimes accommodated in the city, perhaps during Domitian’s wars on the Danube or during the Marcomannic wars (Radman-Livaja 2010, 194-195).

Siscia must have gained considerably in importance during Gallienus’ reign, after that emperor established a mint in the city, in all probability in 262. At this moment at the latest, the garrisoning of troops in Siscia became again a necessity, unless they had already been present in the city in the first place. Taking into consideration that the *Notitia Dignitatum* mentions *cohortis III Alpinorum* as part of the city garrison, there is no doubt that the army was permanently stationed at Siscia in the 4th century AD but we presume that a garrison must have been in the city from the moment the mint was established, in order to provide security to this institution of immense strategic significance (Radman-Livaja 2010, 198). Nonetheless, the epigraphic record for that period is still lacking.

The last category of inscriptions covered by this overview is obviously not very informative as far as Siscia’s garrison is concerned, but it certainly gives an interesting insight both in the interest held by Siscia’s natives in a military career and in the extent of Romanisation. As shown by the inscriptions, the inhabitants of Siscia and its vicinity were joining the army already before the Flavian period, serving both in the legions and the auxiliary units, and by the Severan period their presence in the Praetorian Guard was definitely not uncommon.

A thorough study of these inscriptions would certainly be useful but the limited scope of this paper does not allow us to go into more details. Thus, we consider this short overview to be just an introduction to this subject since it is our aim to write a more comprehensive study with an extensive bibliography, hopefully to be published soon.

**List of Soldiers and Veterans**

**Serving soldiers**

- CIL III 10853; Mócsy 1959, 57/1; Mosser 2003, 261, Kat. 188 – Ti(berius) Claudius Pontius, centurio *legionis XV Apollinaris*
- CIL III 10854; Brunšmid 1908/1909, VHAD 10, 154, cat. 346; AIJ 567; Mócsy 1959, 57/3; Fig. 1 – M(arcus) Mucius Hegetor, medicus *cohortis XXXII voluntarium*
- CIL III 3942; AIJ 527; Mócsy 1959, 57/12; CBI 308 – Q(uintus) Iulius Moderatus *beneficiarius procuratoris*
- CIL III 3957; Barkóczi 1964, 29/10; CBI 302 – Aurelius Quintillus beneficiarius *consularis*
- CIL III 10843; Barkóczi 1964, 29/43; CBI 303 – C(aius) Apullius Sabinus, M(arius) D(exter) beneficiarius *consularis*
- CIL III 3955; Barkóczi 1964, 29/9; CBI 304 – L(ucius) Virilius Pupus, beneficiarius *consularis*
- CIL III 3948; Barkóczi 1964, 29/5; CBI 305 – T(itus) Flavius Candidus beneficiarius consularis
Praetoriae Ravennatis

Minicius Saturninus, veteranus ex optione Classis Veterani (soldier of an unknown unit)

I Antiochensium, Sarmosi f(ilius)

Sarabae f(ilius)

AIj 534; Barkóczi 1964, 27/39; CBI 310 – C(aius) Iulius Flav(us), beneficiarius consularis

116 – Aelius Lucius, eques singularis Augusti

Soldiers and veterans native to Siscia

CIL III 3971; Mócsy 1959, 57/2 – M(arcus) Minicius Saturninus, veteranus ex optione Classis Praetoriae Ravennatis

CIL XVI 46; Mócsy 1959, 57/4 – Sapia Sarmosi f(ilius), domo Anazarbo, ex pedite cohortis I Antiochensium

CIL XVI 103; Mócsy 1959 57/23 – C(aius) Sarabae f(ilius)

CIL III 3970; Brunšmid 1908/1909, VHD 10, 151-152, cat. 343; AIJ 566; Barkóczi 1964, 29/17; CBI 313; Fig. 5 – M(arcus) Aurelius Glabrio, veteranus legionis XIII Geminae, ex beneficiario consularis

CIL VI 3180; Mócsy 1959, 57/5; Dobó 1975, 116 – Aelius Lucius, eques singularis Augusti

CIL III 14214; Mócsy 1959, 57/7; Dobó 1975, 192 – C. ? Art(orius) Saturninus, ex decurione, veteranus cohortis I Lusitanorum

CIL VIII 9761; Mócsy 1959, 57/9; Dobó 1975, 180 – P(ublius) Crescentinius Saturninus, miles legionis XI Claudiae (X Geminae in the older bibliography)

CIL VI 2689; Mócsy 1959, 57/20; Dobó 1975, 63 – C(aius) Valerius C. f. Fl. Spectatus, miles cohortis VIII praetoriae

EE IV 903; CIL VI 3280; Barkóczi 1964, 29/68; Dobó 1975, 61 – M(arcus) Aurelius Dasius, miles cohortis V praetoriae piae vindicis

CIL VI 2644; Barkóczi 1964, 29/69; Dobó 1975, 62 – Sex(tus) Iulius Sex. F. Augurinus, beneficiarius praefecti praetorio cohortis VII praetoriae

CIL VI 2689; Dobó 1975, 63 – C(aius) Valerius C. f. Spectatus, miles cohortis VIII praetoriae

EE IV 891; CIL VI 37184 (35223); Barkóczi 1964, 29/70; Dobó 1975, 63a – T(itus) Flavius T. f. Provincialis (praetorian soldier)

CIL VI 32533 (2385); Dobó 1975, 63b – Ius (praetorian soldier)

CIL VI 32536; Barkóczi 1964, 29/71; Dobó 1975, 63c – I-mati Pr(o)c(u)liae(n)s, L(ucius) Septimius Lucanus (praetorian soldiers)

EE IV 894; CIL VI 32624; Barkóczi 1964, 29/72; Dobó 1975, 63d – M(arcus) Aurelius M. f. Valentinus, M(arcus) Aurelius M. f. Firm[u]s (praetorian soldiers)

CIL VI 32627; Barkóczi 1964, 29/73; Dobó 1975, 63e – evocatus M(arcus) Aurelius Verus, M(arcus) Aurelius Licinius (praetorian soldiers)

CIL VI 32628; Barkóczi 1964, 29/74; Dobó 1975, 63f – L(ucius) Marius L. f. Candidus, M(arcus) Aurelius M. f. Nero (praetorian soldiers)

CIL VI 32640; Barkóczi 1964, 29/75; Dobó 1975, 63g – Aurelius M. f. Tato (praetorian soldier)

CIL VI 2388; Barkóczi 1964, 29/76; Dobó 1975, 63h – [ - - - ]/i Restitut[us] (praetorian soldier)

CIL XIII 8035; Barkóczi 1964, 29/65; Dobó 1975, 157 – C(aius) Publicius C. f. Priscilianus, primipilus legionis Minerviae [Alexandrianae] piae felicis

CIL VIII 2586; Barkóczi 1964, 29/77; Dobó 1975, 165 – T(itus) Aelius Victorinus beneficiarius consularis (miles legionis III Augustae)

AE 1964, 14; Dobó 1975, 161 – [Val]enti-nus, Glauc[us ?], [Marc]ellin(us) (miles legionis II Parthicae ?)

AE 1965, 35; Dobó 1975, 189 – Ael(ius) Propi(n)cus, librar[ius] [co(n)js(ularis), [... mil]es leg[ionis] X[III G(eminae)]

CIL VI 32914; Dobó 1975, 190 – nian[us] (soldier of an unknown unit)

AE 1909, 235 = 1938 n. 13; Dobó 1975, 219 – milites vexillationis cohortium Pannoniae superioris, cives Sisciani et Varciani et Latobici

IL] 3117 – L(ucius) Valerius L. f. Verecundus, veteranus legionis XV Apollinaris