

**“AL. I. CUZA” UNIVERSITY, IAȘI
HISTORY FACULTY**

DOCTORAL THESIS SUMMARY

**VETERANS IN THE ROMAN PROVINCES ON
THE LOWER DANUBE
(UPPER MOESIA, LOWER MOESIA, DACIA)
IN THE 1ST – 3RD CENTURIES A.D.
POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ROLE**

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INTRODUCTION

Veterans constitute a social category found in close connection to the army. It is the reason for which the study on individuals that are part of it was mostly conducted in order to extract information that concern the Roman army and not the definition of specific features of this social layer.

Most of the works regarding this category bear on the republican period and 1st century A.D., a time when the Roman state encountered difficulties in managing the problems caused by the civil wars.

In Romanian historiography, the subject is present in a small amount of studies. Most of the titles are small-scale and approach the subject fragmentarily, with reference to particular cases, not in the intent of perceiving a complete and uniform image on the subject.

All the more there lacks an overview on this social layer in Dacia and a careful discerning of the peculiarities in the provinces on Lower Danube.

The subject of the thesis complies with this historiographic necessity and fits into an endeavor to render the political and social context in which the Roman rule on the Lower Danube took place.

Addressing the subject implied collecting and interpreting epigraphic sources on the social layer of veterans.

The nature of these inscriptions layed down the lines of the study, by the information they furnished. They are either incomplete most of the times or conceived in a formal style that discloses few details and restricts further deduction.

Another trait of epigraphic sources is constituted by their bias in representativity. Even though more abundant compare to those concerning other categories, they still offer limited representativity.

Considering the fact that all sources are of the same type, the thesis wears a univocal mark, as a risk assumed.

I. THE POLITICAL ROLE OF THE VETERANS IN THE ROMAN PROVINCES ON THE LOWER DANUBE

I.A Political-administrative role of roman veterans in *civitates*

I.A1 Upper Moesia

We deal with a number of 24 veterans at Scupi. Out of them, only four filled positions in *ordo decurionum*: C. Cornelius Magnus, M. Octavius Valens, L. Aufidius Celer and L. Marcianus Secundus. Two of them were magistrates. The time period in which they assert themselves lies shortly after the founding of the colony.

Out of the 14 veterans at Singidunum only one is a magistrate: T. Aurelius Atticus. He was at the same time, a member of the local senate in Sirmium, in Lower Pannonia.

At Viminacium there are two attested veterans integrated into the *ordo decurionum*, both of them with a previously prominent military background: G. Iulius Valens și M. Valerius Speratus. The rather late testimonies are due to the instable military and political situation on the Danube border in the early period.

C. Valerius Firmus and his son bearing the same name, as well as a certain [Firmus . . .], are recorded as decurions at Ratiaria. Here, Andras Mócsy perceives a continuity of veteran families, as well as custom officials and flamens, based on their names, perpetuated during several generations in the elite of the colony.

I.A2 Lower Moesia

The largest number of documented veterans is at Troesmis, where the stationing of the V Macedonica gave a powerful impulse to the *canabae* development. The first waves of veterans mirror this evolution by their attested *magistri* and *quinquennali*: C. Valerius Pudens, L. Cominius Valens și P. Valerius Clemens, T. Flavius Alexander, L. Licinius Clemens; with the municipal transformation followed: Tiberius Vitales, M. Ulpius Marcianus, C. Egnatius Valens.

After the departure of the legion to Potaissa, the number and importance of veterans in the settlement of Troesmis decreased drastically.

Settled in Ia Oescus, T. Aurelius Flavinus, *primipilaris*, was active all across Lower Moesia, having tight connections with the Greek cities; this was less common for the former soldiers, who

preferred being close to communities of roman citizens. He was granted the rank of *buleuta* at Tyras, Dionysopolis and Marcianopolis; at Oescus he was acknowledged as *princeps ordinis coloniae*.

Other two *Ilviri* are attested at Oescus, in the second to third centuries, but their names are unknown.

C. Iulius Valens is recorded as *magister* in Vicus Vergobrittiani. As in other cases, reputation and weal helped him play an important part in a small community, where it was easier to integrate.

M. Cocceius Firmus fills magistrature in Vicus Quintionis. Unlike Vicus Vergobrittiani, atestat întâmplător, Quintus' *vicus* is known through many inscriptions of the *veterani et cives Romani et Bessi consistentes*. Veterans didn't signal their status in the dedications, which doesn't help us establish their situation in this settlement or in any of those similar.

In the list of Greek cities, Tomis exerted a certain attraction amongst veterans. In addition to a large presence (around 25 former soldiers), some managed to have acces in the city's elite. Counting M. Ulpius Longinus, M. Pompeius Lucius, T. Aurelius Flavinus, P. Tenacius Vindex.

Overall, there is an increase in the number of roman veterans belonging to the local elites in Lower Moesia. But the number of veterans in the province is also higher.

I.A3 Dacia

Most veteran inscriptions in Dacia come from Apulum (with a total of 45 persons), but Sarmizegetusa is ahead on the list concerning involvement in the administration.

The first inscriptions from Sarmizegetusa originate in a time following the establishment of the province: Q. Manlius Verus, C. Sentius Flaccus, Firmus, T. Flavius Longinus. The rest of the inscriptions mentioning veterans are late, mostly severan age.

At Napoca are attested as decuriones Ulpius Masculinus, Aelius Themarsa, T. Flavius Germanus și T. Flavius Ianuaris. There is also an *aedilis a censibus*, Valerius Valentinus.

Valerius Themo and M. Cocceius Alexander are included in *ordo decurionum* at Porolissum.

A special case is represented by M. Antonius Maximus, *decurio ornatus ornamenti IIIviralibus*. His prestige is rounded by his financial possibilities.

Apulum represents an opposite case to that of Sarmizegetusa. If in the colony of Sarmizegetusa 15 out of 18 veterans attested are part of the local elite, at Apulum, in an obvious disproportion, only three former soldiers out of 45 climbed the social ladder to decurionate.

Only one *decurio municipii*, Aurelius Faustus, is given evidence of at Tibiscum. Another legionary is *decurio* at Romula: Aelius Germanus.

In the *pagus* at Micia, known for sure to be a veteran is C. Antonius Crispinus, *ex decurio* of an ala, in his civil role of *magister pagi*.

The emergence of 11 cities constituted an indirect contribution to the higher number of veterans members of local aristocracy in Dacia compared to the south-danubian provinces. This led to a reduced elite pressure around larger urban centers and access to higher status became easier to gain.

I.B Political-administrative role of roman veterans in *vici* and *pagi*

According to Radu Ardevan's hypothesis, the first one of the *magistri* referred to in the inscriptions pertaining to *pagus Miciensis* was always elected from among the Roman veterans. This theory is both appealing and plausible. The same could be said about the Vicus Quintionis. There too was a similar community, comprising both veterans and Roman citizens and Bessi. Pursuant to the lists of quaestors and magistrates in the settlement, the division of magistrature between Romans and Bessi is noticeable. But whether the veterans had a defined position, whether they were exclusively or in turns elected by the Romans, or quaestorship was the one subject to rotation cannot be precisely assessed.

The presented cases emphasize the presence of veteran groups in rural communities across the provinces, as well as the fact that they were prominently placed.

Some features of the veterans' activity in the administrative life on the Lower Danube can be foreseen.

First of all there is a numerical difference: in Upper Moesia, both in the elites and in general, their number is lower. In Lower Moesia there are more veterans but they do not outnumber the ones in Dacia in the category of local aristocracy.

In the colonies founded in the three provinces, the attestations show that the favourable moment for their involvement in the life of the cities is placed in the first decades from the establishment. Once the civil activity became more intense, the visibility of the former soldiers dropped.

The case of Sarmizegetusa does not comply with the trend in the rest of the moesian colonies.

Troesmis represents the most eloquent model for the way veterans acted in civil life. Starting with legion long-term settlement and regional recruitment, the units' garrisons became the center of gravity for *canabae*, *vici militares*, *conventi civium Romanorum* or *civitates*. Veterans most strongly assert themselves in the *canabae* and concurrently in the neighboring congestions.

The cases in which veteran families, sons and brothers, continued to enjoy influence and were part of the local elite are occasional, but corroborated with evidence of the same type in the civil environment they lead to the idea that favoring the members of one's family was an outspread practice at the same time with the existence of a competing elite.

When referring to the chronology of veteran's attestation in local administration on the Lower Danube, these are to be found at the point of beginning and respectively the end of the dating. With the epigraphic decline veterans also vanish from the record.

II. SOCIAL ROLE OF THE VETERANS IN THE ROMAN PROVINCES ON THE LOWER DANUBE

27II.A Roman veterans' families in the provinces on the Lower Danube

The problem of veteran families is directly linked to the one concerning the situation of military families. The existence of a ban concerning roman soldiers' marriage has been under debate from Roman law specialists as it does not appear in its original form and evidence of its existence are varied. After removing the ban, in the fourth century A.D., wives and children came to be considered a natural part of soldiers' life.

Number of families and members

The documented cases of veteran families are in higher numbers than those of the military. This difference is partly rooted in the “legal” situation of the two categories. In all three provinces more than 50% and up to almost 70% of the veterans are attested with families.

In most cases marriages had as a result a single descendant, on average 35% in all provinces, while 60% of all families have offsprings.

From the collected data I have determined a prevailing pattern within the social layer of veterans, that of a family with one or two descendants. Illegitimate children represent a demographic input impossible to quantify.

This pattern may have a positive meaning, as an indicator for a sound financial situation, maintaining a large family and wealth sharing between numerous heirs might have led to lower welfare and reduced social advancement prospects for that family.

Regarding the ratio of malee and female descendants, there is a visible superiority of the former, with a percentage ranged between 65 and 78 for the three provinces.

Family ties

I made a distinction (already used in historiography) between the family consisting of husband, wife, children (designated as the nuclear family) and the wider family seen as a whole, including distant relatives, cognates / agnates (i.e. extended family).

The most simple and common commemorations are made by a family member to another.

Inscriptions analysis shows that the extended family is present in up to 13% of cases, and the nuclear one in 50% to 70% of them. Freedmen, comrades and friends are present in varying proportions, the highest percentage being in Upper Moesia (32.74), followed by Lower Moesia (20.12) and Dacia (17.02%).

Veteran sons' careers

I used sons' careers as an indicator for the path followed by veterans' families in the social space of the provinces. At least 133

sons are certified by inscriptions in Upper Moesia, Lower Moesia and Dacia.

Only 22 cases (families), meaning 29 veteran sons (almost a quarter) pursue a military career, most of the times in the same unit as the father.

For the rest of male descendents, the profession isn't specified, or a civil career in local administration is looming.

I took into consideration the fact that some of the sons hadn't yet reached recruiting age or are recorded as deceased (33 case), which provides an explanation for the registered number of soldiers.

Soțiile veteranilor

In what concerns the veterans' wives, they prove, in most cases, to have good Roman names, still, some retain a non-italic ancestry: Aurelia Calliroe, Bonosa, Oppia Agathena, and Aelia Aide.

Some veterans took their own freedwomen as wives, which was not at all unusual. This is most often suggested by their names, derived from that of their patron, but also stated openly in the inscription. Not all are clear cases, as identifying them only based on their names can only lead to suppositions. Common *cognomina* may be simple coincidence.

A significant age difference, of 16, 17 or even 30 years can be noticed in some cases. This is partly due to the fact that male age at marriage in the military environment is higher than the one in the civil environment.

II.B Statutul, averea și integrarea socială a veteranilor

The financial power that veterans enjoyed and the reflection of their reputation become visible through the monuments they raise.

Veterans only rarely appear to be doing evergetic deeds. However, some were sufficiently wealthy that they do such acts. It's the case for Aelius Tertius, G. Julius Valens, T. Marcus Aurelius, C. Julius Frontonianus, M. Antonius Maximus and P. Aelius Theimes. Besides these obvious acts, mass epigraphic documentation includes beautifully crafted limestone stelae or marble monuments that testify to the better the situation of those concerned. In some cases,

engraved blocks, medium-sized, wore statues that didn't survive to our days.

From the look of some texts, it is not certain that all attested veterans settled after release in the Lower Danube provinces. Mention of a family or the fact that most collected inscriptions are funerary, comes as a confirmation. Formulas like *vivo posuit* are not useful from the perspective of this analysis: they are present in many cases after one or more family members are already dead.

Number of freedmen belonging to veterans is not high, but they appear to be very close to their masters: in some cases, in the absence of family members, they are the ones who take on the role of heirs. The presence of freedmen confirms veterans' better financial situation. Although the numbers are very similar, percentage is different: 10% Upper Moesia, Lower Moesia 5.95%, 6.41% Dacia.

III. Considerații finale

Considering all things mentioned above, some lines become sharper in tracing the political and social role of the veterans.

As shown in the study on veterans' families, they often form a stable relationship even before being discharged. After leaving service this relationship becomes legitimate. The number of veteran families that can be estimated rises up to two thirds in an optimistic computation.

Family strengthening through descendants is well documented in Lower Moesia and not so much in Dacia. They settle around castra and their dense presence is noticeable in civil settlements (*veterani et cives Romani*).

In social life, the presence of veterans was marked by prestige, which is highlighted both by their monuments and their presence in the provincial elite.

Their political ascent was based rather on conjuncture: the opportunity of a new space and the lack of genuine civil competitors combined with their superior financial possibilities. It either preceded the emergence of *municipia* (the *canabae* cases) or followed the establishment of colonies. They also took advantage of the importance that the military acquired during the severan dynasty and the momentum gained by municipal life in the provinces at that

time. In the *vici* environment they most commonly become visible as magistrates or in the guise of a group.

Raising marble monuments, having freedmen and good connections with the merchants and military environment qualifies them as prominent characters in the provincial society on the Lower Danube.

The role played by the veterans in the three Danubian provinces, in different parameters, was the same: they played a catalytic part, completed through organic integration in the provincial society.

IV. Supplementum epigraphicum

The inscriptions are categorized on provinces and in alphabetical order of the settlements and of the veterans respectively.

Selective bibliography

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IDR – Inscricțiunile Daciei Romane, București, Paris

ILBR – Inscriptiones Latinae in Bulgaria repertae, Sofia

ILD – Inscricțiuni latine în Dacia, București, 2002

IGB – Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria Repertae

ILJug – Inscriptiones Latinae in Jugoslavia repertae, Belgrad

IMS – Inscriptions de la Mesie Superieure, Belgrad 1976-

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