

POPULATION AT CALLATIS AND ODESSUS: THE ROMAN SOLDIERS¹

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the military personnel epigraphically attested at Callatis and Odessus up to the 3rd century AD. Considering the status of the two cities as *civitates peregrinae*,² the presence of soldiers is exceptional, and mostly temporary, consequently, it is interesting to see what are the epigraphic traces that soldiers leave here, and in what context.

Keywords: population, ancient Greek cities, military personnel.

Introduction

The study of the population of Callatis and Odessus has left room for more research, as it has been included especially in wider analyses, or in more punctual approaches. For example, V. Cojocaru³ included Callatis and Odessus in an analysis on the population from the north-western and northern shores of the Black Sea but focused on its anthroponymy and only up to the 1st century BC, therefore not including the Roman period. Other authors included the population,⁴ or segments of it in wider analyses (chronologically or geographically), focusing on aspects such as the identity of the individuals starting with the onset

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² Regarding the status of Odessus, cf. Nawotka 1997, 79: “At the present state of our knowledge we can only guess that these three western Pontic cities acquired the same, the most common status of *civitates stipendiariae*”.

³ Cojocaru 1996, 135–149; Cojocaru 2004; Cojocaru 2006, 35–59; Cojocaru 2007, 383–434.

⁴ Varga *et al.* 2018.

of the Roman rule,⁵ demographic aspects,⁶ onomastic aspects,⁷ the attested foreigners,⁸ the *cives Romani consistentes*,⁹ the military personnel.¹⁰ Other more punctual works implied prosopographical reconstruction of certain families,¹¹ or of certain categories of individuals (women,¹² some elite members,¹³ writers¹⁴). Worthy of mention are of course also other works that approached prosopographical reconstructions,¹⁵ or population studies¹⁶ in more concise terms. In this context, a focus on the category of military personnel brings a contribution to the study of the population of these two cities.¹⁷

Callatis

Callatis¹⁸ (located at modern Mangalia, Romania¹⁹) was a colony of Heraclea Pontica,²⁰ that was founded at the end of the 6th century BC.²¹ Just like other Pontic cities, the ancient city of Callatis is overlapped by a modern one, Mangalia, fact which has limited the archaeological researches.²² There are around 768 persons epigraphically attested at Callatis, from the first attestation and up to the 3rd century AD, size which is similar to the population from other Pontic cities (taking into consideration the size of the city and the state of the archaeological research). Certainly, the epigraphic sources reveal only a fragment of the population, archaeological researches on the size of the territory, as well anthropological researches would bring a more complete outlook on the population. However, given the archaeological research context, the epigraphic sources are a good starting point.

As it results from the catalogue below, the number of the military personnel attested here is very modest, six, three recorded in Greek inscriptions, one in a bilingual inscription (Latin – Greek) and two in Latin inscriptions. The earliest evidence comes from the

⁵ Ruscu 2014, 473–488.

⁶ Mihailescu-Bîrliba – Piftor 2009, 419–451.

⁷ Cojocaru 1996, 135–149; Cojocaru 2004; Cojocaru 2006, 35–59; Cojocaru 2007, 383–434.

⁸ Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2009, 153–160.

⁹ Avram 2007.

¹⁰ Matei-Popescu 2010; Matei-Popescu 2014.

¹¹ Ruscu 2004, 907–911.

¹² Pázsint 2017, 49–70.

¹³ Beševliev 1978; Ruscu 2005, 141–162; Sauciuc-Săveanu 1958, 207–225; Sauciuc-Săveanu 1960, 501–507.

¹⁴ Firicel 2001/2002, 133–156; Dana 2011.

¹⁵ Musielak 1993, 97–108.

¹⁶ Minčev 2003; Damyanov 2010; Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2018.

¹⁷ On an estimative number of Roman soldiers in service or veterans attested in the Greek cities of Moesia Inferior, see Matei-Popescu 2010, 27.

¹⁸ On the foundation of Callatis, see Ps.-Scyl., 760–764.

¹⁹ Avram – Hind – Tsetschladze 2004, 934.

²⁰ Hanell 1934, 129–130; Avram 1996, 292–284; Avram – Hind – Tsetschladze 2004, 934; Robu 2014, 261.

²¹ Avram 1996, 300. On the history of the city, see *IScM* II,3, pp. 3–123 (Avram); Alexandru 2013; Ionescu – Alexandru – Constantin 2017, 241–256. On the foundation of the city, see Avram 1994, 167–175; *IScM* II,3, pp. 9–11 (Avram); Avram – Hind – Tsetschladze 2004, 936; Alexandru 2011, 83–89; Robu 2014, 305.

²² *IScM* II,3, pp. 4–9.

late 1st century BC/early 1st century AD, when a certain Μονιάνιος²³ acted probably as a στρατιάρχης (*tribunus militum*), or another type of Roman officer. He was the beneficiary of a decree on behalf of the Council and the People, the proposal being made under the eponymy of Apollo Agyeus, by the *strategoï* and the *synedroi*. According to Alexandru Avram, Μονιάνιος “aura agi comme commandant d’une unité militaire en faveur de Callatiens, qui lui auront exprimé leur reconnaissance”,²⁴ dating this activity to that of P. Vinicius in the area, therefore around 3–2 BC.

The next references come only later, from the 2nd century AD, one inscription being written in Latin and one in Greek. The attestation in Latin is that of Publius Aelius Villanus (?), an *ex decurio* of an unnamed *ala*, who makes a dedication at Callatis²⁵ to an unnamed deity. Considering the *tria nomina*, and the dedication in Latin, he might have been only temporarily at Callatis, or he might have settled there once with the *honesta missio*. Contemporary with him is also the veteran Οὔλπιος Παῦλος, attested on a funerary inscription set up for him.²⁶ We find that he was Δεβελτηνός (from Colonia Flavia Pacis Deultensium in Thracia), that he lived for an unreadable number of years and that he fought for 25 years. Considering his status as veteran, his age at death was probably above 45, nevertheless, it is impossible to suggest a more precise age range. Given the distance, it is not excluded for him to have settled in the area after discharge. Indirect evidence of temporary presence of military personnel at Callatis is to be seen, as stated by Fl. Matei-Popescu,²⁷ also under the governor M. Valerius Bradua (AD 172). It is very likely that soldiers contributed to the construction of the wall, even though this is not mentioned in the respective inscriptions,²⁸ which should be linked to the stamp of the *legio V Macedonica* found at Callatis.²⁹

From the end of the 2nd century AD and beginning of the 3rd century AD comes another inscription, this time from the rural territory, respectively from *vicus Amlaidina*, where a funerary monument³⁰ was set up for Aurelius Dalenis,³¹ a veteran, a former *praetorianus*.³² His wife, Aurelia Cuthis,³³ set up the monument from her own resources. Based on their onomastic, they are Romanised Thracians, and after his service in the praetorian guard he came back to Moesia Inferior. As mentioned by L. Mihailescu-Bîrliba, even though his age is not recorded, as he was a veteran, we expect that his age at death was over 45, having as point of reference his discharge.³⁴

²³ *IScM* II,3, 30 = *IGRR* I 656 = *IG* X,3,3,1 24.

²⁴ *IScM* II,3, p. 269.

²⁵ *AE* 1981.753.

²⁶ *IG* X,3,3,1 167.

²⁷ Matei-Popescu 2010, 50, n. 259.

²⁸ *IScM* II,3, 97–98. Τίτος Αἴλιος Μινίκιος Ἀθαναίων – πρῶτος ποντάρχης καὶ ἀρχιερεὺς καὶ ἄρξας τῆς Ἐξαπόλεως and his son Τίτος Αἴλιος Μινίκιος Μοσχίων contributed to the construction: *IScM* II,3, 99 = *SEG* 49.1016; *IScM* II,3, 100 = *IGRR* I 651.

²⁹ Matei-Popescu 2010, 50.

³⁰ *IScM* II,3, 237 = *IScM* II,2, 266 = *CIL* III 13743.

³¹ Dana 2014, 109.

³² Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2018, 70–71, 302, 331; Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2019, 133; Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2021a, 469–471.

³³ Dana 2014, 100.

³⁴ Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2021b, 225.

From the middle of the 3rd century AD (AD 238–244) comes another example, that of Ἐρέννιος Ἀπολινάρις.³⁵ He was a βενεφικιάριος ὑπατικοῦ (*beneficiarius consularis*), but he was also part of the association Οἱ περὶ Π(όπλιον) Οὐαλέρι(ον) Χάρητα/Φιλοκύνηγοι, therefore he was one of those who gathered around Πόπλιος Οὐαλέριος Χάρης. Ἐρέννιος Ἀπολινάρις dedicates a monument (ὁ ταλαμῶν and an ἄρκος)³⁶ to the emperor Gordianus and Sabinia Tranquilina, as a gift to the members (at least 44) of the association.³⁷ The text of the inscription is bilingual (Latin – Greek)³⁸ and the association seems to have grouped amateur hunters (φιλοκύνηγοι), respectively “spectacles with amateur hunters carried out in the amphitheatre at the main civic or cultic celebrations”.³⁹

Even though the next inscription (AD 212–217) does not come from Callatis, but from Dionysopolis, it has been included as the person Μᾶρκος Πομπειῶς Λούκιος⁴⁰ was a βενεφικιάριος ὑπατικοῦ λεγεῶνος α΄ Ἰταλικῆς Ἀντωνεινιανῆς, but also a βουλευτῆς Διονυσοπολειτῶν, Καλλατιανῶν, Μαρκιανοπολειτῶν. This information is recorded on an altar he sets up to Deus Dolichenus,⁴¹ and found in the *forum*. Given his military rank and his position as βουλευτῆς, Fl. Matei-Popescu argues “that honours were due to several activities like the surveillance of the surroundings and communication ways between these cities close one to another and police activities”.⁴²

As opposed to Istros, where attested are *veterani et cives Romani consistentes*, at Callatis we find only *cives Romani consistentes (qui negotiantur?)*,⁴³ under Trajan. At Odessus the explicit presence of *consistentes* is not attested, the closest evidence is as an early honorary inscription⁴⁴ dedicated to the emperor Titus mentioning Ῥωμαῖοι along with πολῖται and ξένοι.⁴⁵

Overall, the evidence on Roman soldiers at Callatis is negligible, and incidental, two are attested in funerary inscriptions, one in a decree and three in dedications. Two of the soldiers are *beneficarii consularis*,⁴⁶ three are veterans (a former praetorian, an *ex decurione alae*), and one *tribunus militum*. The units to which they belonged are with an exception (*legio I Italica Antoniniana*) unknown or unreadable. Out of the veterans one makes a dedication to a deity, while the other two are mentioned on their funerary monument. As the local origin of one of the veterans (Aurelius Dalenis) is explicitly stated, he returned to the area after discharge, nevertheless, we have no information on the unit in which he fought, or his rank. Except for him, whose spouse is mentioned, the family members of the other soldiers are unknown.

³⁵ *IScM* II,3, 74 = *IG* X,3,3,1 118.

³⁶ For references, see Pázsint 2022, 70.

³⁷ Pázsint 2022, 70.

³⁸ Only the dedicatory formula to the Imperial house is in Latin, being an example of code-switching. For code-switching, see Curcă 2011; Curcă 2019.

³⁹ Pippidi 1972, 147; Pázsint 2022, 70.

⁴⁰ *IGBul* I² 24(2); *PPEE*, no. 2227; Matei-Popescu 2010, 83, 109, 283; Matei-Popescu 2014, 185.

⁴¹ Matei-Popescu 2010, 83, 109, 283.

⁴² Matei-Popescu 2010, 83.

⁴³ *IScM* II,3, 83. See Avram 2007, 91–92; Matei-Popescu 2014, 180.

⁴⁴ *IGBulg* I² 58.

⁴⁵ Matei-Popescu 2014, 180.

⁴⁶ Matei-Popescu 2014, 185. Their role being according to Mihalescu-Bîrliiba 2021c, 47: “en principal de faire circuler l’information entre les autorités civiles et militaires et la population civile”.

Odessus

Odessus (located at modern Varna, Bulgaria⁴⁷) was probably a direct colony⁴⁸ of Miletos,⁴⁹ that was founded in the 6th century BC in an area previously inhabited by Thracians.⁵⁰ There are around 1542 persons epigraphically attested at Odessus, from the first attestation and up to the 3rd century AD. The size of the epigraphically attested population is not negligible, being close in range to that of Tomis, and Istros.

As it results from the catalogue below, the number of the military personnel recorded here is very modest as well, six, four are present in Greek inscriptions, one in a bilingual inscription (Latin – Greek) and one in Latin. The dating of the inscriptions is less precise, but they seem to come mostly from the 2nd/3rd century AD. Among the earliest evidence we mention that of Caius Rabirius Alexander,⁵¹ who in the 2nd century AD was a veteran. He dedicated a marble statue to Hercules and Apollo Patros. As the inscription is fragmentary, no additional information results on the unit to which he belonged, nor on his rank. With regards to his presence there, he might have settled there after the *honesta missio*, as most of the members of *gens Rabiria* come from Italy, the western Roman provinces, and more isolated ones from Africa proconsularis, or Achaia.

Another dedication, this time in Greek, was set up for Δὴ καὶ Ἥρα by [Λοῦ]κιος Φῆστος,⁵² a στατιωνάρις of an unreadable legion, who mentions also a certain Ῥοῦφος. The latter was “in charge of a *statio* or a group of *stationes* [---]. This is the only direct information of a possible *statio* on the coastal road of the western shore of the Black Sea.”⁵³ Despite having Latin *cognomina* (and *nomen*), the language of the dedication is in Greek, probably due to the location where the monument was set up (in the territory of Odessus).

Sometime in the 3rd century AD, an *ignotus* son of Μάξιμος – who was στρατιώτης πραιτωριανός,⁵⁴ set up a marble monument with a relief of the Thracian Horseman. The inscription is in Greek, but due to its fragmentary state we have no further information on him, nor on the reasons for this dedication which is made “τὸν θεὸν”.

The following two inscriptions are funerary. One of them was set up by Γάιος Αἰμίλιος Βιάτωρ,⁵⁵ for his spouse Οὐαλεντεῖνα daughter of Οὐάλης who lived for only 20 years. His military rank is unknown, but he was probably part of the *legio XI Claudia*.⁵⁶ The other is among the rare bilingual (Latin – Greek⁵⁷) inscriptions and it was set up by M. Iulius Secundus, a *beneficiarius consularis*, to his wife Antistia Firmina,⁵⁸ with whom he

⁴⁷ Avram – Hind – Tsetschladze 2004, 936.

⁴⁸ Avram 1996, 300.

⁴⁹ Avram – Hind – Tsetschladze 2004, 936.

⁵⁰ Ehrhardt 1988, 64–65; Nawotka 1997.

⁵¹ AE 1954.36b = AE 2010.1443.

⁵² *IGBulg* I² 277.

⁵³ Matei-Popescu 2014, 186.

⁵⁴ *IGBulg* I² 282.

⁵⁵ AE 1969/1970.574 = *IGBulg* I² 175(2) = Conrad 2004, 136, no. 35; Matei-Popescu 2010, 160.

⁵⁶ On the legion, see Zahariade 1999; Matei-Popescu 2010; Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2010.

⁵⁷ On the military presence in bilingual inscriptions from Moesia Inferior, see Mihailescu-Bîrliba – Curcă 2018, 105–112. On bilinguism in Moesia Inferior, see Galdi 2008; Curcă 2011.

⁵⁸ *CIL* III 14458.1 = *IGBulg* I² 218 = *IGRR* I 661 = Kalinka 1906, 303–304, no. 386; Matei-Popescu 2010, 27, 83.

had lived for 23 years. This inscription is an example of inter-sentential code-switching,⁵⁹ as the part written in Latin mentions the commemorator and the commemorated person, and the part written in Greek represents a prohibition on the violation of the tomb.⁶⁰ The formula is rather generic,⁶¹ and it stipulates that it is illicit to bury any other person there, as well as the amount of the fine and the institutions to which the fine should be paid. According to Radulova, the institutions chosen as recipient of the fines are those able to punish these illicit acts, and they can vary from the imperial *fiscus*, to the *aerarius*, the treasury of the city, the local Council etc.⁶² In this case, the fine against such wrongdoing is set at 5000 sesterces, 2500 sesterces to be paid to the imperial *fiscus* (τάμιας), and 2500 to be paid to the treasury of the city (Ὀδησσειτῶν πόλις).⁶³ According to Radulova, such sums are similar to the ones in Asia Minor for these wrongdoings.⁶⁴ These warnings against the violation of the tombs are not very frequent at Odessus, they are present in the case of civilian tombs,⁶⁵ but from Moesia Inferior there are some inscriptions that testify to cases from the military milieu.⁶⁶ Taking into consideration the onomastic of the couple, as well as the fact that only the provision against the violation of the tomb is in Greek, we might presume that they were not necessarily Greek-speakers. Nevertheless, it is not excluded for Antistia Firmina to have been related to the other Antistii⁶⁷ attested in Moesia Inferior and coming from Ancyra.⁶⁸ Given the existence of an important port⁶⁹ at Odessus, and the presence of a *beneficiarius consularis* here, it is very likely for a *statio* to have existed here.⁷⁰

As in the case of Callatis, the attestation of military personnel at Odessus is very sparse, some (as the veterans, or the soldiers that commemorated their wives) might have settled there after discharge, others (as those who dedicate monuments) being possibly only temporarily there. With one exception (*legio XI Claudia*), the names of the units to which they belonged are not mentioned, or are unreadable, the military rank being however recorded. Most inscriptions are dedications to deities worshipped in the military *milieu* (Zeus and Hera, Deus Dolichenus, The Thracian Horseman). The sole family members attested are two spouses, children⁷¹ and other family members are not mentioned.

⁵⁹ Curcă 2019, 15–16.

⁶⁰ On the *iura sepulchrorum* in Moesia Inferior, see Radulova 2016.

⁶¹ Radulova 2016, 203–204.

⁶² Radulova 2016, 209.

⁶³ The payment of the fines to these two institutions is attested in another inscription from Odessus: *IGBulg* I² 214 = *IGBulg* V 5056.

⁶⁴ Radulova 2016, 208.

⁶⁵ *IGBulg* I² 134, 214 (= *IGBulg* V 5056), 216, 303.

⁶⁶ *IScM* II,2, 199, 363 (Tomis); *IScM* II,5, 193 (Troesmis); *IGBulg* II 687 (Nicomopolis ad Istrum); Radulova 2016, 211.

⁶⁷ On the Antistii in Moesia Inferior, see Curcă – Zugravu 2005, 318; Mihailescu-Bîrliba – Piftor 2005; Acrudoae 2009; Mihailescu-Bîrliba – Dumitrache 2012, 41–45; Mihailescu-Bîrliba – Curcă 2018, 107; Pázsint 2019, 7–8.

⁶⁸ Mihailescu-Bîrliba – Curcă 2018, 107–108.

⁶⁹ Damyanov 2010, 274; Peev 2014, 179–180.

⁷⁰ Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2018, 75.

⁷¹ For the children of the military personnel from the rural territory, see Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2020.

Conclusions

As expected, the evidence on military personnel at Callatis and Odessus is marginal, given the status of the two cities. The active soldiers mostly dedicated monuments to deities, and were a temporary presence in the area, while the veterans very likely settled in the area, at least one of them originating from there. When they do not dedicate monuments, they commemorate or are commemorated by a spouse, their familial and external networks missing. Other instances are more exceptional, as, for example at Callatis, where a soldier is honoured in a decree for his activity, while another one is invested as *bouleutes* in three cities. Even though the epigraphic evidence is laconic, it presents fragmentary personal stories on the lives and death of the Roman soldiers, in areas where their presence is not necessarily expected.

Catalogue

Kallatianoi

1. Έρέννιος Απολινάρις; he was a βενεφικιάριος ύπατικοῦ; he was part of the Οἱ περὶ Π(όπλιον) Οὐαλέρ(ιον) Χάρητα/Φιλοκύνηγοι: *IScM* II,3,74 = *IG* X,3,3,1 118; <http://romans1by1.com/rpeople/3841>; dedication; AD 238–244.
2. Aurelius Dalenis; husband of Aurelia Cuthis; *ex vicus Amlaidina*: *IScM* II,3, 237 = *IScM* II,2, 266 = *CIL* III 13743; <http://romans1by1.com/rpeople/7544>; former praetorian; funerary monument; 2nd–3rd century AD.
3. Μᾶρκος Πομπεῖος Λούκιος; he was a βενεφικιάριος ύπατικοῦ λεγεῶνος α΄ Ἰταλικῆς Ἀντωνεινιανῆς, βουλευτῆς Διονυσοπολιτειῶν, Καλλατιανῶν, Μαρκιανοπολιτειῶν: *IGBulg* I² 24(2); *PPEE* no. 2227; dedication; AD 212–217; Dionysopolis.
4. Μονιάνιος: *IScM* II,3, 30 = *IGRR* I 656 = *IG* X,3,3,1 24; <http://romans1by1.com/rpeople/8260>; the individual was probably a στρατιάρχας (*tribunus militum*), or another type of Roman officer; decree; late 1st century BC/early 1st century AD; Callatis.
5. Publius Aelius Villanus; *ex decurione alae* [---]: *AE* 1981.753; <http://romans1by1.com/rpeople/15166>; dedication; 2nd century AD; Callatis.
6. Οὔλπιος Παῦλος; he was Δεβελτηνός: *IG* X,3,3,1,167; <http://romans1by1.com/rpeople/23062>; he lived for an unreadable number of years; he fought for 25 years; funerary; 2nd century AD; Callatis.

Odessitai

1. Caius Rabirius Alexander: *AE* 1954.36b = *AE* 2010.1443; <http://romans1by1.com/rpeople/14721>; veteranus; dedication; 2nd century AD; Odessus.
2. Γάιος Αιμίλιος Βιάτωρ: *AE* 1969/1970. 574 = *IGBulg* I² 175(2); <http://romans1by1.com/rpeople/15457>; husband of Ουαλεντεῖνα daughter of Ουάλης; his military rank is unknown, but he was probably part of the *legio XI Claudia*; funerary inscription.
3. Ροῦφος: *IGBulg* I² 277; <http://romans1by1.com/rpeople/16487>; unreadable relation with [Λοῦ]κιος Φῆστος; he was part of an unreadable legion; dedication; Roman period; Odessus.
4. Malius Secundus: *CIL* III 14458.1 = *IGBulg* I² 218 = *IGRR* I 661 = Kalinka 1906, 303–304, no. 386; <http://romans1by1.com/rpeople/14727>; husband of Antistia Firmian; *beneficiarius consularis*; funerary inscription; AD 50–299; Odessus.
5. [Λοῦ]κιος Φῆστος: *IGBulg* I² 277; <http://romans1by1.com/rpeople/16486>; unreadable relation with Ροῦφος; he was a στρατιωνάρις of an unreadable legion; dedication; Roman period; Odessus.
6. *Ignotus* son of Μάξιμος: *IGBulg* I² 282; <http://romans1by1.com/rpeople/16496>; he was στρατιώτης πραιτωριανός; dedication; 3rd century AD; Odessus.

ABBREVIATIONS

IGBulg – G. Mihailov, *Inscriptiones Graecae in Bulgaria repertae*, 6 vols., Sofia 1958–1997.

IGRR I – R. Cagnat, *Inscriptiones Graecae ad res Romanas pertinentes*, vol. 1, Paris 1906.

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