

A new veteran of the legion VII Claudia from the colonia Flavia Scupi

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Izvleček

Veterana Sedme klavdijske legije Marka Antonija Frontona, ki ga poznamo z nedavno odkritega nagrobnika, lahko dodamo obsežni zbirki že znanih veteranov te legije, ki je bila stacionirana v koloniji *Scupi* (današnje Skopje v Makedoniji). Nagrobnik je bil najden v vasi Sopište, približno 8 km južno od Skopja, a znotraj meja flavijske kolonije *Scupi*. Najverjetneje ga lahko datiramo v 1. ali na začetek 2. st. n. št.

Ključne besede: Zgornja Mezija, Scupi, Sopište, rimska doba, nagrobnik, veteran, Sedma klavdijska legija

Abstract

A veteran of the legion VII Claudia *pia fidelis*, M. Antonius Fronto, known from a recently discovered tombstone, can be added to the large dossier of the already known veterans of this legion settled in Scupi (present-day Skopje in Macedonia). The provenance of the tombstone is the village of Sopište, some 8 km to the south of Skopje, within the boundaries of the territory of the colonia Flavia Scupi. The inscription may most probably be dated to the 1st or the beginning of the 2nd century AD.

Keywords: Moesia Superior, Scupi, Sopište, Roman period, tombstone, veteran, legion VII Claudia

In 2002, when I visited Marjeta Šašel Kos at the Institute of Archaeology (Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts) in Ljubljana, she drew my attention to the new tombstone of a veteran of the legion VII Claudia from Scupi. She had been consulted about the contents of the inscription, on the basis of a photograph of bad quality, by the discoverers of the tombstone. Two years later, professor Viktor Lilčić gave me four better photographs of this inscription (*figs. 2-4*);¹ unfortunately it is not known where the tombstone is at present.

¹ I would very much like to thank him for his kindness.

THE SITE OF DISCOVERY

The tombstone was found in the village of Sopište, at the site named Raov Dol, locally known as Potkarpa.² The village is located on the slope of Mt Vodno, in the region of the mouth of the Markova River, the right tributary of the Vardar River, some 8 km to the south of Skopje.³ This region belonged to the territory of the colonia Flavia Scupi (present-day Skopje in Macedonia),

² I am grateful to Lenče Jovanova, custodian at the Skopje City Museum, for the information concerning the site of discovery.

³ About this region, see: J. Trifunoski, *Sliv Markove reke*, Filozofski fakultet na Univerzitetot Skopje. Posebni izdaniya kn. 7 (Skopje 1958).

the southernmost autonomous town of the province of Upper Moesia (*fig. 1*).

Although in the Roman period the village of Sopište was only a small settlement, nonetheless several finds of particular importance came to light there.⁴

In 1949, at the site named Kukloec, three tombstones bearing Latin inscriptions were found when holes were being dug for lime to build a community stable. They had been reused for the construction of a grave from the late Roman period.⁵ All of them are presently kept in the Archaeological Museum of Skopje.

One of these is an epitaph inscribed on a funerary stele made of limestone (inv. no. 499), and dated to the end of the seventies AD (*L. Valeris (!) L. f(ilius) Gal(eria) / Galenus, Luc(o), / veteranus / leg(ionis) IIII Mac(edonicae), / vixit an(nis) / LV, militavit / an(nis) XXVIII, / h(ic) s(itus) e(st). / E(res) (!) f(aciendum) c(uravit)*).⁶ It is one of the oldest epigraphic monuments from Scupi; most probably L. Valerius Galenus, by origin from Lucus Augusti Gallaeciae in Hispania Tarraconensis, came to settle at Scupi probably at the very time of the creation of the Flavian colony, since the legion was disbanded by Vespasian for having fought in the army of Vitellius.⁷ To date, this tombstone is the only evidence for the presence of the legion IV Macedonica in the territory of Scupi.⁸

The second funerary inscription is carved on a marble stele (inv. no. 461), and is dated to the 1st century AD (*Mesta Di/dae Site (!) f(ilia) / vixit anni(s) XX, / h(ic) s(ita) e(st). / Lucius Dic/conis f(ilius) con/iunx et Dida / Site (!) pater et Mes/cena mater et Sita / Mesti avius et / Mania avia / p(ie) f(aciendum) c(uraverunt)*).⁹ It is important because it contains epichoric names of the members of three generations in this region.

⁴ I. Mikulčić, *Teritorija Skupa*, *Živa Antika* 21, 1971, 465.

⁵ M. Grbić, *Arheološki naogališta vo Makedonija*, *Glasnik Muzejsko konzervatorskog društva NR Makedonije* 1/9, 1954, 117; all are published by B. Dragojević-Josifovska, *Scupi et la région de Kumanovo. Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure*, Vol. VI (Beograd 1982), nos. 39, 132, 156; this fundamental publication will from now on be cited as *IMS VI*.

⁶ *IMS VI*, 39, with earlier literature.

⁷ A. Mócsy, *Gesellschaft und Romanisation in der römischen Provinz Moesia Superior* (Budapest 1970) 68, 69; B. Dragojević-Josifovska, ad *IMS VI*, 39.

⁸ About this legion: E. Ritterling, *Legio*, in: *RE* 12 (1925), 1550-1555; for its movements and service in Macedonia, Hispania and Germania, see J. Gómez-Pantoja, *Legio IIII Macedonica*, in: Y. Le Bohec, C. Wolff (eds.), *Les légions de Rome sous le Haut-Empire*. Actes du Congrès de Lyon 17-19 sept. 1998 (Lyon 2000) 105-117.

⁹ *IMS VI*, 132, with earlier literature.



Fig. 1: The province of Moesia with the location of the site (from M. Šašel Kos, Appian and Illyricum, Situla 43, 2005, fig. 123). Sl. 1: Provinca Mezija z lokacijo najdišča (po M. Šašel Kos, Appian and Illyricum, Situla 43, 2005, sl. 123).

The third Latin inscription, inscribed on a marble stele (inv. no. 450), is from the 2nd century AD (*D(is) M(anibus). / G. Venuleius / Arator, vix(it) / an(nis) LV, Val(eria) Restu/ta vix(it) an(nis) XL, / h(ic) s(iti) s(unt). / G(ai) Venulei Her/culanus, / Persinus, / Silvanus, fili / parentibus / pientissimis / f(aciendum) c(uraverunt)*).¹⁰

The Latin inscriptions discovered at this site are evidence that in the village of Sopište or in the immediate vicinity a cemetery existed, and most probably private estates of veterans and civilians from colonia Flavia Scupi.

Many epitaphs commemorating veterans of the legion VII Claudia *pia fidelis* have been found to date, most of which are dated to the second half of the 1st century AD.¹¹ The deduction of veterans and foundation of the colony of Scupi has been ascribed to the emperor Vespasian.¹²

¹⁰ *IMS VI*, 156, with earlier literature.

¹¹ *IMS VI*, nos. 44-57; see on this legion: E. Ritterling, *Legio*, in: *RE* 12 (1925), 1614-1629. Veterans of all legions in Scupi have now been collected by S. Ferjančić, *Naseljavanje legijskih veterana u balkanskim provincijama, I-III vek n. e. / Settlement of Legionary Veterans in Balkan Provinces, I-III Century A.D.* Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Institute for Balkan Studies, Special editions 79 (Beograd 2002) 282-286.

¹² *IMS VI*, pp. 25-26.

Instead of having been paid in money (*praemia*), the dismissed soldiers received land property in the region of the Skopje plain from the emperor. They were buried on their estates. For one of them, C. Iulius Ponticus, also from the legion VII, his wife Iulia Pontinia (her cognomen is not entirely certain) noted *expressis verbis* that he was buried in his own estate, *in praedio suo*. The tombstone was discovered at Bardovci, to the northwest of Scupi.¹³

THE NEW TOMBSTONE

The funerary inscription is carved onto a stone of a mediocre quality, probably a local limestone. It is entirely preserved (*figs. 2, 3*), missing only its upper part (233 x 63 cm), therefore it is not clear how the tombstone terminated above the relief field. There are remains of an acroterion at its right corner. In the relief field (41 x 29 cm) a funerary banquet is represented (*fig. 2*). A female figure is depicted on the left and a male figure on the right. They are lying on a funerary couch, which is of a Roman type, with a high back. Both figures are supporting themselves on their left elbows; the woman is probably holding a scroll in her right hand. In front of the couch there is a three-legged sacrificial table. The inscription field (72 x 30 cm) is framed with a double moulded border (*fig. 2*). The inscription surface is damaged in places (*fig. 4*). The inscription reads as follows:

- Saeviae*
Basillae
vix(it) ann(is)
L. H(ic) s(ita) e(st).
 5 *M(arcus) Antoni-*
us Fron-
to, vet(eranus) leg(ionis)
VII C(laudiae) p(iae) f(idelis), co-??
ugi b(ene) m(erenti) po-
 10 *suit.*

To Saevia Basilla, who lived fifty years. She lies here. Marcus Antonius Fronto, a veteran of the legion VII Claudia, pious and loyal, had (the tombstone) erected to his most worthy wife.

The letters are deeply carved. They are not regular. The letters *S* are inclined to the right. The oblique stroke of the letter *R* is long and stretches out under a sharp angle. There are deep triangular punctuation marks between the words, some of which are damaged. In line 2 the last two letters *AE* are in ligature,



Fig. 2: Sopište. The front side of a tombstone. Photo: V. Lilčić.

Sl. 2: Sopište. Prednja stran nagrobnika. Fotografija: V. Lilčić.



Fig. 3: Sopište. The lower part of a tombstone. Photo: V. Lilčić.

Sl. 3: Sopište. Spodnji del nagrobnika. Fotografija: V. Lilčić.

¹³ *IMS VI*, 53.

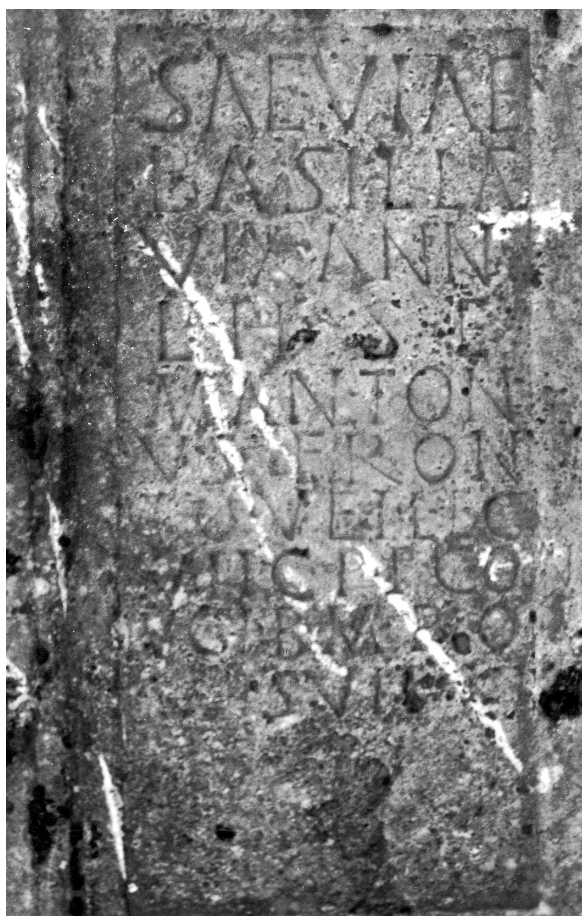


Fig. 4: Sopište. A tombstone inscription. Photo: V. Lilčić.
Sl. 4: Sopište. Napis na nagrobniku. Fotografija: V. Lilčić.

in line 5 the last two letters *NI* are in ligature. *Coiugi* instead of the *coniugi* or *coniugi* is a vulgar Latin form.

Depiction of the funerary banquet (*cena funebris*), in which a typical three-legged table is represented, occurs frequently on the tombstones at Scupi.¹⁴ These tombstones are dated predominantly to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD.

The origin of our veteran is uncertain, but he may well have been from Italy; the gentilicium is widely spread in the western as well as in the eastern provinces. The Antonii in Dalmatia, for example, were mainly from Italy in the early imperial period.¹⁵ In Scupi, three inscriptions with this *nomen gentile* have been discovered to date.¹⁶ On the inscription no. 33 the origin of the veteran is stated as Pelagonia. In addition to several veterans of the legion VII Claudia from Scupi, mentioned in the list of dismissed soldiers under the emperor Pertinax, found in Viminacium, there is also one

¹⁴ *IMS* VI, nos. 43, 59, 118, 132, 136, 138, 150, 151, 160.

¹⁵ G. Alföldy, *Die Personennamen in der römischen Provinz Dalmatia*, Beiträge zur Namenforschung. Bh. 4 (Heidelberg 1969) 59.

¹⁶ *IMS* VI, nos. 33, 81, 87, possibly also 237.

beneficiarius tribuni of this legion, who bears the gentilicium Antonius and originated from Scupi.¹⁷ The veterans of the legion VII Claudia from Scupi came from various regions; the known places of origin of veterans of this legion are: Berytus, Salona, Aquileia, Placentia, and Curicta.¹⁸

Fronto is a frequent and very popular cognomen (prominent, broad forehead), and well attested everywhere in the Roman Empire, even in the indigenous context;¹⁹ it is an Italian name.²⁰ One M(arcus) Anto[nius] Fronto is attested in Rome,²¹ but due to the frequency of both gentilicium and cognomen homonyms this should not cause surprise.

The gentilicium *Saevia* appears for the first time at Scupi; it is documented only once in Italy, in Latium et Campania (Regio I),²² and it occurs once in Gallia Belgica.²³ Also the cognomen *Basilla* has not been documented to date at Scupi, although it is not a particularly rare cognomen; it is spelled with a single or double *S*;²⁴ *Bassilla* is more frequently attested, also in Dalmatia.²⁵

There are several criteria, according to which the new tombstone may be dated to the 1st century AD, or at the latest to the beginning of the 2nd century AD. These are: depiction of the *cena funebris* with a typical three-legged table, further the onomastic formula with *tria nomina*, the sepulchral formula *h. s. e.*, as well as the absence of the invocation to the *Dii Manes* (*D. M.*).

IMPORTANT RECENT EPIGRAPHIC DISCOVERIES AT SCUPI

After the publication of the Scupi inscriptions (as well as the inscriptions from Kumanovo and its area) by Borka Dragojević-Josifovska in the 6th volume of the series *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure*, cited above (n. 5), Lenče Jovanova drew attention to the new epigraphic discoveries

¹⁷ *CIL* III 14507.

¹⁸ *IMS* VI, nos. 45, 46, 51, 48, 55, 57.

¹⁹ A. Mayer, *Die Sprache der alten Illyrier* I (Wien 1957) 146.

²⁰ I. Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina, Commentationes Humanarum Litterarum* 36/2, (Helsinki 1965) 17, 26, 118, 236; cf. Alföldy (n. 15) 207; A. Mócsy, *Nomenclator provinciarum Europae Latinarum et Galliae Cisalpiniae cum indice inverso, Dissertationes Pannonicae* 3/1 (Budapest 1983) 130; *Onomasticon* II, 153.

²¹ *CIL* VI 38007.

²² *CIL* X 3753.

²³ *Onomasticon* IV, 43.

²⁴ *Onomasticon* I, 113-114.

²⁵ Alföldy (n. 15) 163.

in these regions.²⁶ Of great importance is the tombstone for Timonius Dassius, a decurio of the cohort II Aurelia Dardanorum, who was killed by the Costoboci. It was found in 1996 during the archaeological excavations in the eastern cemetery of Scupi, reused for the construction of a grave dated to the first half of the 4th century AD. It contains important data concerning the historical events related to Scupi and the region during the Marcomannic Wars, and indirectly helps in dating the first stone fortification of Scupi, i.e. to AD 170, after the Costoboci had invaded the province.

Two funerary inscriptions from the western cemetery were found *in situ*; in one *Genius macelli* is mentioned, while the other refers to the sanctuary of Hercules. They are of particular significance for urbanism of the city centre at Scupi in the early Roman period.

Jovanova also published several other Latin inscriptions in another two articles; two tombstones were discovered at the village of Kučeviška Bara, near Skopje.²⁷ They are dated to the 2nd century AD and were reused in a grave from late antiquity. An *Augustalis* is mentioned on one of them, L. Iulius Argaeus and his family, including his son Iulius Ingenus, a soldier of the legion IIII Flavia.

²⁶ L. Jovanova, Scupi from the 1st to the 3rd century according to new archaeological and epigraphic discoveries, in: *Römische Städte und Festungen an der Donau*. Akten der regionalen Konferenz, Beograd 16-19 Oktober 2003 (Beograd 2005) 153-156. This is a preliminary report, the author will publish an epigraphic analysis of the texts elsewhere.

²⁷ L. Jovanova, Two Latin inscriptions at the village of Kučeviška Bara, near Skopje, *Makedonsko nasledstvo* 9/24, 2005, 69-84 (also in Macedonian).

A tombstone with Latin inscription, dated to the 2nd century AD, was discovered in the western cemetery of Scupi, containing the family name Valerii.²⁸

Acknowledgement

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Abbreviations / okrajšano citirana literatura

CIL: *Corpus inscriptionum Latinarum*.

IMS: *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure*.

Onomasticon I: Onomasticon provinciarum Europae Latinarum.

Ex materia ab A. Mócsy, R. Feldmann, E. Marton et M. Szilágy collecta. Vol. I: Aba-Byanus. Edd. B. Lőrincz, F. Redő. Budapest 1994.

Onomasticon II: Onomasticon provinciarum Europae Latinarum.

Ex materia ab A. Mócsy, R. Feldmann, E. Marton et M. Szilágy collecta. Vol. II: Cabalicius-Ixus. Composuit et correxit B. Lőrincz. Wien 1999.

Onomasticon IV: Onomasticon provinciarum Europae Latinarum.

Ex materia ab A. Mócsy, R. Feldmann, E. Marton et M. Szilágy collecta. Vol. IV: Quadratia-Zures. Composuit et correxit B. Lőrincz. Wien 2002.

RE: Pauly-Wissowa-Kroll-Mittelhaus-Ziegler, *Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*.

Veteran Sedme klavdijske legije iz mezijskega mesta Scupi

Povzetek

Članek prinaša objavo novoodkritega nagrobnika iz Sopišta, vasi, ki leži znotraj meja nekdanjega ozemlja flavijske kolonije Scupi. Gre za nagrobni spomenik z reliefnim poljem, v katerem je upodobljen pogrebni obed (*cena funebris*) (sl. 2). Del nagrobnika nad reliefnim poljem je odlomljen. Latinski napis je obdan z dvojno profiliranim okvirjem (sl. 2). Glede na besedilo, ki je v celoti ohranjeno (sl. 4), je Mark Antonij Fronton (*M. Antonius Fronto*), veteran Sedme klavdijske legije, postavil nagrobni spomenik svoji ženi Seviji Bazili (*Saevia Basilla*).

Mesto Scupi je postalo rimska kolonija v času cesarja Vespazijana; večina tam nastanjenih veteranov je služila v Sedmi klavdijski legiji. Spomenik lahko datiramo v 1. ali na začetek 2. st.

V članku je pozornost namenjena tudi pomembnim nedavno objavljenim epigrafskim spomenikom, ki so bili v zadnjih letih

odkriti v koloniji Scupi ali na njenem upravnem območju. Med njimi je izrednega pomena nagrobnik Timonija Dasija (*Timonius Dassius*), dekuriona v Drugi avrelijski kohorti Dardancev, ki so ga ubili Kostoboci. Posredno omogoča datiranje utrjevanja mesta Scupi. Na drugem napisu iz okolice Skopja sta omenjena še *augustalis* Lucij Julij Argej (*L. Iulius Argaeus*) in njegov sin Julij Ingen (*Iulius Ingenus*), vojak Četrte flavijske legije.

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