



INSTITUTE OF ARCHEOLOGY  
AND ART HISTORY OF ROMANIAN  
ACADEMY CLUJ-NAPOCA



UNIVERSITATEA TEHNICĂ  
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JOURNAL OF ANCIENT HISTORY  
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No. 12-1 / 2025

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ISSN 2360 266x  
ISSN-L 2360 266x

Design & layout: Francisc Baja



EDITURA MEGA | www.edituramega.ro  
e-mail: mega@edituramega.ro

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# WORKING IN MOESIA INFERIOR. THE CASE OF SLAVES AND FREEDPERSONS<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** The goal of this paper is to provide an overview of the enslaved population epigraphically attested in Moesia Inferior practicing a lucrative activity. The intention is to map their profile, as well as their social networks, in an essay of understanding what their potential local agency was. As expected, the best epigraphically represented are the enslaved persons of the local, or provincial elite, their work role being mostly connected to the private administration of their properties and enterprises (*vilici*/οικονόμοι, *actores*/πραγματευταί). Nevertheless, some isolated cases point to social mobility, as we find freedmen in more unique circumstances, such as *aedilis* (C. Valerius Epagathos), or *misticus* (Iulius Saturio).

**Keywords:** *work, labour, profession, slaves, freedmen, Moesia Inferior.*

## TERMINOLOGY

The diverse modern terminology<sup>2</sup> connected to work activity, understood through the concepts of work, labour, profession and occupation,<sup>3</sup> has been extensively defined by scholars in the field in an attempt to encompass the ancient realities of the multiple Greek and Latin terms (τέχνη, πόνος, μόχθος, *ars*, *labor* etc.). The slaves and freedmen from Moesia Inferior have left evidence directly, or indirectly of both work and labour, as well as profession/occupation,<sup>4</sup> although most of them remain invisible from this point of view, fading behind laconic inscriptions.

Work was a defining activity for someone having the juridical status of slave,<sup>5</sup> the relation to it varied, depending also on gender<sup>6</sup> and age,<sup>7</sup> from household work to various economic activities for their masters, with a varying degree of skilfulness and training (unskilled, low-skilled, skilled). While the type of work of most slaves and freedpersons<sup>8</sup> is invisible epigraphically,<sup>9</sup>

<sup>1</sup> My gratitude goes to professor L. Mihailescu-Birliba and professor K. Vlassopoulos for their comments and suggestions. All remaining shortcomings are my own.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the terminology see VERBOVEN/LAES 2016, 1–19; DE NARDIS 2016.

<sup>3</sup> On labour in the Roman Empire see: HAWKINS 2013; FREU 2018, 639–647. On occupations and professions see, HARRIS 2020. On the occupational epigraphy in the Roman world see: Varga 2020. See especially VARGA 2020, 21–25 for a discussion on juridical status and 97–102 for a list of persons with an occupation in Moesia Inferior. On occupational identities in the Roman world, see FLOHR 2016.

<sup>4</sup> On the occupations of private slaves and freedmen in Moesia Inferior, involved in the administration, see MIHAILESCU-BIRLIBA 2018a.

<sup>5</sup> See especially SCHEIDEL 2008; CRAWFORD 2010.

<sup>6</sup> On the work of female slaves in ancient Rome, see especially MCGIN 2018.

<sup>7</sup> On the work of child slaves in the Roman world, see especially LAES 2008.

<sup>8</sup> On the act of manumission and the organisation of labour, see HAWKINS (forthcoming).

<sup>9</sup> On the material life of Roman slaves, see especially JOSHEL/HACKWORTH PETERSEN 2015.

some of the epigraphic sources mentioning them record also their lucrative activity. This is especially the case of the slaves, or freedmen whose masters or patrons were part of the local elite, thus operating in an economic and social context, which implied better chances of leaving an epigraphic trace of their existence, and certainly offered better prospects.

### OVERVIEW OF THE SOURCES. SLAVES AND FREEDMEN IN MOESIA INFERIOR

In Moesia Inferior, the epigraphic manifestation of slaves and freedmen<sup>10</sup> is rather modest when compared to the epigraphically attested population of the province,<sup>11</sup> representing under 5% of it. Most of the evidence dates to the 2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD, and in terms of provenance, it is not surprising that these inscriptions originate from the urban centres and the military fortresses, where the enslaved population is attested alongside their masters or patrons.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, the examples from the rural territory (*vici*) are also significant, and they point to their activity on behalf of land owners. In what concerns the age of slaves and freedmen,<sup>13</sup> and the age of enfranchisement,<sup>14</sup> unfortunately for Moesia Inferior the evidence is scanty, not allowing any clear conclusions to be drawn.

### OVERVIEW OF THE SOURCES. SLAVES AND FREEDMEN WITH A WORK TITLE IN MOESIA INFERIOR

In total, there are 38 identifiable slaves (18)/possible slaves (15) and freedmen (6),<sup>15</sup> performing a lucrative activity (including also mere service to the master/patron) in Moesia Inferior between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD (see below, Fig. 1). Out of these, six are imperial slaves and one is an imperial freedman, with no evidence for public slaves and freedmen belonging to a city.<sup>16</sup>

Most of these two juridical categories (see below, Fig. 2) had roles in the administration (20), be it the administration of private or imperial estates, being recorded as *vilici*/οικονόμοι (12), *actores*/πραγματευταί (4), *σαλτουάριος*, *custos*, *contrascriptor*, and λιβράριος. Two possible craftsmen are also attested, one of them is a *lixā*, whose craft is not specified. To this list, we can also add the gladiators (13), who trained for the entertainment of the masses. By extension, we can also include one *aedilis* and a person whose duties towards his master might have been indicated through the iconography of the monument.

Unfortunately, when it comes to iconography, the funerary monuments dedicated to slaves and freedmen rarely

depict work-related scenes in this province. We can bring as evidence the monuments mentioning gladiators (with scenes of combat,<sup>17</sup> or with depictions of single gladiators<sup>18</sup>), and, by extension, the funerary monument of Euticus, the *verna* of the *equus* Terentius Iunior.<sup>19</sup> The iconography of the latter includes a mirror framed by two strigils, which has been interpreted by L. Mihailescu-Bîrliba as meaning that “the slave had duties related mostly to the personal hygiene of his master”.<sup>20</sup> As such, through the iconography of the monument, we have an exemplification of one of the many services that a slave had to provide to his master.

The geographical distribution and concentration of the evidence recording slaves and freedmen with a work title is scattered across the province; it is only at Tomis and Oescus that we come across larger numbers of slaves and freedmen, with 8 and 4 attestations respectively; in all other cases, there are only one or two attestations in each settlement. Given the fact that many of the slaves and freedmen are involved in the administration, a considerable number of attestations come from the rural territory<sup>21</sup> where *villae* existed.

Despite their status, and consequently their expected lesser economic potency, there are more slaves, or possible slaves attested (32), than freedmen, or possible freedmen (7). Among the inscriptions who record them, votive monuments (22) set up by the slaves and freedmen predominate. Some of them are set up for the health of the masters, patrons, family members, or for their own sake, sometimes after escaping a life-threatening danger (*Memor*<sup>22</sup>) or following a dream (*Iaehetav*).<sup>23</sup> Epitaphs are the second most common type of inscription for slaves and freedmen (15); all of these were set up by family members, masters, patrons, or third parties. Two honorific inscriptions are also included, one by a slave (*Narcissus*) for his master (*Marcus Titius Maximus*), and the other by an imperial freedman (*Κατυλλεῖνος*) to his *πραιπόσιτος* (*Πούβλιος Αἴλιος Ἀμμώνιος*<sup>24</sup>), the honorands being prominent members of the local society.

### ADMINISTRATORS OF PRIVATE MASTERS<sup>25</sup>

In Moesia Inferior there are both private and imperial slaves and freedmen who undertook some administrative roles. Many of the private slaves and freedmen are attested in connection with the *conductores publicii portorii*,<sup>26</sup> who

<sup>10</sup> On the attestation of slaves and freedmen in Moesia Inferior, see especially, MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2000; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2001; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2004; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2006; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2015.

<sup>11</sup> See VARGA/PÁZSINT/BODA/DEAC 2018, 47–52.

<sup>12</sup> See especially MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2004; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2006.

<sup>13</sup> See MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2001.

<sup>14</sup> See MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2008.

<sup>15</sup> One of them, *Iaehetav* even mentioned both his previous status of slave and that of freedman, which is not so common.

<sup>16</sup> On the slaves of the city, see Weiss 2004.

<sup>17</sup> Dionysopolis: CONRAD 2004, Tafel 58/2 (109). Odessos: BOULEY 2001, 444, fig. 4, 5; BOULEY 2001, 445, fig. 2.

<sup>18</sup> Marcianopolis: CONRAD 2004, Tafel 57/4 (310); CONRAD 2004, Tafel 58/3 (311); Tomis: CONRAD 2004, Tafel 58/1 (153); CONRAD 2004, Tafel 58/4 (151); CONRAD 2004, Tafel 59/1 (152).

<sup>19</sup> MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2015, 109–112; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2018A, 50–52.

<sup>20</sup> MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2018A, 51.

<sup>21</sup> On the rural territory see BĂLTĂC 2011; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2016; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2018B.

<sup>22</sup> ILBulg 237.

<sup>23</sup> ISM IV 34.

<sup>24</sup> PIR I<sup>2</sup> 135.

<sup>25</sup> See the paper of MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2018A, who focuses on the occupations of private slaves and freedmen from the Moesia Inferior involved in the administration. The aspects addressed in the paper of Mihailescu-Bîrliba have not been addressed here in depth, reference will be made to the paper.

<sup>26</sup> There is a vast literature on the topic of the *conductores*: PFLAUM 1950; PFLAUM 1960; BOUNEGRU 1981–1982, 121–132; PÁZSINT/VARGA 2021.

oversaw the *publicum portorii Illyrici*.<sup>27</sup> A number of 17 inscriptions<sup>28</sup> from Moesia Inferior attest seven *conductores*,<sup>29</sup> their private slaves, and freedmen undertaking different administrative functions, due to their role in the provincial administration. As such, we find them mostly as *vilicii* (7), but there is also evidence of a *contrascriptor*. At the scale of the Empire, the *conductores' familia* is attested as fulfilling a wider range of administrative roles (*vilicius – vectigalis/provinciae/vikarius, praepositus, scrutator, arcarius vicesimarius*<sup>30</sup>).

The *vilicus*<sup>31</sup> (οικονόμος<sup>32</sup>) was an administrator, was an estate steward, and this is the most commonly attested title. In Moesia Inferior most of them (6/12) are the *vilici* of the *conductores*. The extensive network of T. Iulius Saturninus's slaves and freedmen<sup>33</sup> is attested throughout the province, at Oescus (Tertullus), Dimum (Quintillus), Montana (Favorinus, Secundia), but also outside of it, in Dacia (Ad Mediam,<sup>34</sup> Dierna,<sup>35</sup> Apulum<sup>36</sup>), Noricum (Teurnia<sup>37</sup>), and even *regio X* (Saben<sup>38</sup>),<sup>39</sup> at least two of the slaves being *vilici*. Other *vilici* are those of the *conductores* P. Caragonius Philopalaestrus, T. Iulius Eutyches, Iulius Ianuarius, Iulius Capito and Iulius Epaphroditus. Besides them, there are the *vilici* who administered the private estates of their masters, some of whom were dignitaries (the senator P. Aelius Marcianus),<sup>40</sup> or Roman citizens on whose career we do not have much information (Flavius Macedo).<sup>41</sup> One of them, the οικονόμος Φλάουιος Ξριμιος sets up four votive inscriptions to Mithras in the territory of Histria.<sup>42</sup>

Next, we find *actores* (πραγματευταί<sup>43</sup>), who were also administrators managers of agricultural estates. In the province, there are 5, either private slaves or freedmen. Out of these, Καστήριος<sup>44</sup> was the *πραγματευτής* of the *centurio* Ίούλιος Φρόντων. The monument was found in the area of Tomis, and given the reference to the *πραγματευτής*, it seems

<sup>27</sup> A custom district that during the 1st–3rd centuries AD comprised Dalmatia, Raetia, Noricum, Pannonia Inferior, Pannonia Superior, Dacia, Moesia Inferior, and Moesia Superior. There is a vast literature on the topic of the *publicum portorium Illyrici (et Ripae Thraciae)*: NESSELHAUF 1939, 331–338; DOBÓ 1940; DE LAET 1949, 175–245; GEROV 1980, 119–130; ØRSTED 1985; ØRSTED 1989, 175–188; TATSCHÉVA 1996, 177–182; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2004, 48; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2006, 36; PÁZSINT/VARGA 2021.

<sup>28</sup> PÁZSINT/VARGA 2021, 114–117.

<sup>29</sup> Titus Iulius Saturninus; Publius Charagonius Philopalaestrus; Titus Iulius Capito; Iulius Ianuarius; Caius Iulius Epaphroditus; Caius Iulius Sa[–]; *ignotus*.

<sup>30</sup> DE LAET 1949, 392–394; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2004, 71; MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2006, 50; PÁZSINT/VARGA 2021, 102.

<sup>31</sup> MASON 1974, 71. On the *vilici* see, especially: NICOLAIS 1922; AUBERT 1991; CARLSEN 1995; SCHÄFER 2001; SCHUMACHER 2010; RIGATO 2020.

<sup>32</sup> For the Greek equivalent see AUBERT 1994, 32–34.

<sup>33</sup> See PÁZSINT/VARGA 2021, 138.

<sup>34</sup> AE 1960, 344 = CIL III 1568 = IDR III/1, 60. Felix was a former private slave, and he was probably only in transit at Ad Mediam, being based at Dierna: MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2010, 149.

<sup>35</sup> AE 1960, 343 = IDR III/1, 35.

<sup>36</sup> IDR III, 5, 702 = AE 1998, 1074.

<sup>37</sup> CIL III 4720.

<sup>38</sup> CIL V 5079; CIL V 5080.

<sup>39</sup> See PÁZSINT/VARGA 2021, 108–110.

<sup>40</sup> MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2018A, 49, 52–54.

<sup>41</sup> MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2018A, 48, 51, 53.

<sup>42</sup> MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2018A, 48, 51, 53, 54.

<sup>43</sup> EHRHARDT 1990, 185–188. For the Greek equivalent see AUBERT 1994, 32–34.

<sup>44</sup> ISM II 289.

that Ίούλιος Φρόντων had a property in the rural territory, which was administered by Καστήριος.<sup>45</sup> The latter sets up an epitaph for his wife, Εὐφροσύνη (probably a slave herself), who died at the age of 25. This is only one of the many examples of slaves and freedmen in connection to the military<sup>46</sup> in Moesia Inferior. Another *actor* was Narcissus, the slave of a local elite member (M. Titius Maximus),<sup>47</sup> as well as Herculanus, the slave of a Roman citizen, Flavius Gemellus.<sup>48</sup>

Besides playing a role in the administration, these slaves and freedmen were in charge of providing various services to the masters, or patrons, such as setting up monuments for different deities, as is the case of Thallion and Agathopus for the Numen Augusti and Genius, in the name of the *conductor* Titus Iulius Eutyches.

The networks are those of fellow *vilici*, or their families. Except for Καστήριος, there is evidence on the family network of the *vilicus* Asclepiades, *servus* of T. Iulius Saturninus. He makes with his wife Lucensia a dedication to Diana Regina, for their two children (Favorinus and Secundia), *vernae* of the same *conductor*.

## ADMINISTRATORS OF THE EMPERORS

While less numerous than the private slaves and freedmen attested as active in administration, six examples of imperial slaves and one imperial freedman<sup>49</sup> acting for the emperors are identifiable in Moesia Inferior as well.

First, chronologically, is Maceio, a *vilicus vectigalis* attested at Oescus.<sup>50</sup> Maceio set up an altar there on the 15<sup>th</sup> of September, AD 182 for Iupiter Optimus Maximus and the Numen Augusti, and for the procurator of the customs district Avianius Bellicus. As *vilicus vectigalis*,<sup>51</sup> he was part of the Roman taxation system regarding the *publicum portorii vectigalis Illyrici*.<sup>52</sup>

Additionally, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, possibly from the imperial estate near Montana comes a fragmentary dedication by the imperial slave Anicetus.<sup>53</sup> The altar is dedicated to Apollo et Diana, and given the place of discovery, as well as the juridical status, it is very likely that in the missing text of the inscription there was also engraved the administrative office that Anicetus might have had. Similarly, a fragmentary inscription<sup>54</sup> from the imperial estate of Madara mentions a certain M. Aurel[–] and a Meno[–], who seem to be imperial freedmen who could have been involved in the administration of the estate. The examples of these three imperial slaves and freedmen are uncertain, and come from indirect evidence,

<sup>45</sup> MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2018A, 48, 51, 53, 54.

<sup>46</sup> On the soldiers' slaves in the Roman world, see especially PHANG 2005.

<sup>47</sup> MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2018A, 49, 52–54.

<sup>48</sup> MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA 2018A, 49, 52, 53.

<sup>49</sup> On the imperial slaves and freedmen, see WEAVER 1972.

<sup>50</sup> ILBulg 442; <https://patrimonium.huma-num.fr/documents/apcd352>.

<sup>51</sup> According to the *Atlas patrimonii Caesaris* (<https://patrimonium.huma-num.fr/people/list/>), there are around 4 identifiable imperial slaves or freedmen holding this office in the Roman Empire.

<sup>52</sup> See BÉRAUD 2024.

<sup>53</sup> Montana I 14 = Montana II 55 = AE 1987, 880; <https://patrimonium.huma-num.fr/documents/apcd325>.

<sup>54</sup> DETCHEV 1936, NO. 3; <https://patrimonium.huma-num.fr/documents/apcd347>.

but in all likelihood they were *vilici*, *actores*, or other administrators of the emperors.

In the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century (209–211), at Giridaua, around 70 km to the south-west of Dimum (see Fig. 1), an inscription records the turbulent existence of the imperial slave Memor.<sup>55</sup> He was a *contrascriptor*<sup>56</sup> of the *statio Dimensis*, more precisely he was a clerk part of the Roman taxation system regarding the *publicum portorii vectigalis Illyrici*. The slave set up an altar for Jupiter Optimus Maximus and the other gods and goddesses of Giridaua. The reason behind this *votum* is expressed as due to having been cured after a serious illness (*grave valetudine liberatus*), without further details. This testimony is among the few epigraphically attested expressions of distress from the province, recording health issues from which the person recovered.<sup>57</sup> Most such inscriptions record exposure to life-threatening events (e.g., attacks by bandits/pirates), whether “personal tragedies”,<sup>58</sup> or “collective tragedies”<sup>59</sup> at the level of the city, or of the province; but this is the only which records the work title of the individual involved, despite many appearing in attacks by enemies, sea travel.

Later on, under Gordian III, the imperial freedman Κατυλλεῖνος,<sup>60</sup> who acts as λιβράριος<sup>61</sup> (*librarius*) at Tomis,<sup>62</sup> respectively a secretary, sets up an honorary inscription for Πούβλιος Αἴλιος Ἀμμώνιος, *procurator* of the province at that time.

With a less precise dating (1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD) is the votive inscription set up by the imperial slave Νοῦμων to Heros Marmarithas at Abrittus. Νοῦμων was a σαλτουάριος (*saltuarius*)<sup>63</sup>, respectively he was in charge of the forest or pastureland in the imperial property near Abrittus.

With two exceptions, it comes as no surprise that the majority of inscriptions mentioning the imperial slaves and freedmen are in Latin. The monuments set up by them are both official and of personal nature, at their initiative, which points to a greater agency and economic potency.

## MERCHANTS AND CRAFTSMEN

Besides the numerous administrative offices held by slaves and freedmen in the province, inscriptions record a possible slave and a freedman who were involved in commerce and possibly the crafts.<sup>64</sup> The earliest evidence comes from the

1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, when a *lixa legionis*,<sup>65</sup> by the name of L. Freius Faustus,<sup>66</sup> the *libertus* of a Lucius [Freius] [---], is present at Oescus. As a *lixa*, he followed the Roman army, and he was probably a small trader, or handicraftsman.<sup>67</sup> His epitaph is modest and fragmentary; consequently we do not know who set it up – maybe a family member, or a slave – but his age at death is mentioned (50).

Next, sometimes in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, a verse inscription found at Noviodunum records two *alumni* of the *prae-fectus* of the fleet Postum(i)us, Achelous and Krystallus, out of whom Achelous might have been skilled in a craft. The inscription is fragmentary in those lines, and the proposed readings<sup>68</sup> are *artibus [excellens pra]editus ingen[io]*,<sup>69</sup> or *artibus [romanis infans] editus*.<sup>70</sup> As foster-child, he might have been an enslaved person, even though reference to a *genitor* Hermogenes is made. The inscription does not make any reference to the potential work activity of Krystallus.

## ENTERTAINERS OF THE MASSES

The performing arts and the games in the arena are also of importance in the province, where several amphitheatres (at Tomis,<sup>71</sup> Marcianopolis<sup>72</sup>) and theatres (at Histria, Tomis, Callatis, Dionysopolis, Odessus<sup>73</sup>) have been discovered,<sup>74</sup> or whose existence can be presumed, including through the various inscriptions that can be connected to these activities. Nevertheless, we can identify only some possible slaves among those who performed directly for the entertainment of the masses. More precisely, we can assume servile status for some of the gladiators epigraphically attested.

Especially in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD, across the province, gladiatorial combats<sup>75</sup> were organised to celebrate the imperial cult.<sup>76</sup> In what concerns the juridical status of the gladiators,<sup>77</sup> these could have been freeborn persons (even citizens), but many of them had a servile origin, be they slaves or freedmen. As such, 13 gladiators recorded in Moesia Inferior can be considered as possible slaves, even though through indirect evidence, respectively through the a) mention of only the personal name, b) the mention of a personal name and the combat name, c) the type of personal name, d) the activity itself, and even e) the non-specification of the status of free person. For the matter, the status is often recorded when the gladiator is a free person.<sup>78</sup>

Overall, in Moesia Inferior, the personal names of

<sup>55</sup> CIL III 12399 = AE 1895, 44 = ILBulg 237; <https://patrimonium.humanum.fr/documents/apcd351>.

<sup>56</sup> According to the *Atlas patrimonii Caesaris* (<https://patrimonium.humanum.fr/people/list/>), there are around 9 identifiable imperial slaves or freedmen holding this office in the Roman Empire.

<sup>57</sup> There are several inscriptions that attest death following an illness, which is given especially in the case of children (e.g., ISM II 173 = SEG 25, 779).

<sup>58</sup> For evidence of “personal tragedies” in the Roman Empire (including Moesia Inferior), see (among others) VARGA/PÁZSINT 2018, 26–27.

<sup>59</sup> For evidence of “collective tragedies” in the Roman Empire (including Moesia Inferior), see (among others) VARGA/PÁZSINT 2019, 52–55.

<sup>60</sup> IGR I 623 = ISM II 106 = ISM VI.2 106.

<sup>61</sup> MASON 1974, 66; HOFMANN 1989, 240.

<sup>62</sup> According to the *Atlas patrimonii Caesaris* (<https://patrimonium.humanum.fr/people/list/>), there are around 19 identifiable imperial slaves or freedmen holding this office in the Roman Empire.

<sup>63</sup> According to the *Atlas patrimonii Caesaris* (<https://patrimonium.humanum.fr/people/list/>), there are around 7 identifiable imperial slaves or freedmen holding this office in the Roman Empire.

<sup>64</sup> On the crafts practiced in Moesia Inferior, see especially IACOB 2013;

NUȚU 2019. On craftsmen, see BURFORD 1972. On migration of craftsmen in the Roman world (including Moesia Inferior), see VARGA/PÁZSINT 2021.

<sup>65</sup> IVANOV 1990; FEIG VISHNIA 2002; STOIAN 2009; VARGA 2020, 98.

<sup>66</sup> AE 1990, 862 = AE 1996, 1336.

<sup>67</sup> MATEI-POPESCU 2010, 42.

<sup>68</sup> See also GAMBERALE 1989, 43–54.

<sup>69</sup> SOLIN 1981, 101–123.

<sup>70</sup> BARNEA 1975, 258–261.

<sup>71</sup> STREINU 2015–2016.

<sup>72</sup> TONTCHEVA 1981; VAGALINSKI 2002; BOULEY 2001, 159–160.

<sup>73</sup> BOULEY 2001, 87–89. On the theatres in the Greek cities of the Black Sea, see DANA 2011, 55–85, and 515, carte no. 3.

<sup>74</sup> On the buildings used for gladiatorial fights see, STREINU 2021.

<sup>75</sup> On *munera* in Moesia Inferior see especially: MINČEV 1974; BOULEY 1994; STREINU 2016; FERARU 2024. For gladiatorial games in Odessos and Marcianopolis, see MINČEV 2012; MINČEV 2021.

<sup>76</sup> For the imperial cult in Moesia Inferior, see especially BOTTEZ 2009.

<sup>77</sup> ROBERT 1940, 287–292; BOULEY 2001, 250–262 (especially 260–261).

<sup>78</sup> For example, at Tomis, the epitaph of the gladiator Σκίρτος Δακίσις

gladiators are attested on epitaphs and on an invitation to *munera* at Tomis (2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> century AD), Marcianopolis (1<sup>st</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> century AD), Dionysopolis (3<sup>rd</sup> century AD) and Odessos (3<sup>rd</sup> century AD). At Tomis we find most of the gladiators,<sup>79</sup> respectively, six, all bearing a sole personal name: Ἀργοῦτος (*retiarus*),<sup>80</sup> Ἀργοῖκος (*provocator*),<sup>81</sup> Σπίκλος,<sup>82</sup> Ἀμάραντος,<sup>83</sup> Ἄπταλος (*bestiarius*),<sup>84</sup> and Ναρκισσός.<sup>85</sup> Some of the inscriptions provide additional information concerning the close networks of the gladiators. As such, the monument of Σπίκλος was set up by his spouse, Πανθία, that of Ἀργοῦτος by a certain Ὀρέστης, who might have been a fellow gladiator himself, while that of Ἀμάραντος by Ὀφέλλης Λόνγος and Σόφων, the relation between the persons being unspecified. According to the text of the inscription, Ἀργοῦτος is among the few gladiators who seem to have been left-handed (*χειρετερόπλον*); other examples of left-handed gladiators being Ἰάσων (*secutor*) at Beroia,<sup>86</sup> or Βίκτωρ (*secutor*) at Philipopolis.<sup>87</sup>

From Marcianopolis come two attestations, that of Μαρκιανός, who had the combat name of Πολυνείκης (*secutor*, *murmillo*)<sup>88</sup> and Σμάραγδος.<sup>89</sup> Both inscriptions stipulate the fact that the gladiators died in combat. The epitaph of Μαρκιανός<sup>90</sup> is written in verse, narrating in the first person singular his career as gladiator, as he fought twice as *secutor*, and then fought three (?) more times as *murmillo*.

The sole attestation of a gladiator at Dionysopolis is that of Δημήτριος (*retiarus*);<sup>91</sup> unfortunately, because the inscription is extremely fragmentary, is impossible to be certain that the monument was set up by a certain Ἀπρία, or what her relation to the deceased might have been (maybe his spouse). The marble plate includes a relief<sup>92</sup> with the representation of two gladiators in combat, the reason for which we presume Δημήτριος might be a gladiator.

At Odessos,<sup>93</sup> there are four gladiators Τεῦκρος,<sup>94</sup> Λυαῖος,<sup>95</sup> Πάρδος<sup>96</sup> attested on the same inscription,<sup>97</sup> an invitation to gladiatorial combats<sup>98</sup> from AD 227, and an *ignotus*,<sup>99</sup> on an epitaph.<sup>100</sup>

As it is common for gladiatorial funerary inscriptions, some of them mention also what type of gladiators they were, the number of fights in which they took part, and sometimes the fact that they died in combat. Despite being frequent in gladiatorial inscriptions, the number of victories is not stipulated in any text, while the number of combats is stipulated only at Marcianopolis.

## INVISIBLE WORKERS

These examples provide only glimpses into the lives of slaves and freedmen who were involved in a form of lucrative activity (be it production, commerce, transportation, administration, or entertainment) in Moesia Inferior, in the first three centuries AD. The epigraphic sources offer an incomplete view on the lucrative activities of the slaves and freedmen; nevertheless, when we look at the evidence from other Roman provinces, we see a very complex picture in what concerns the work that they do. This varies from household labour (e.g., *cocus*,<sup>101</sup> *pedisequus*<sup>102</sup>), to various levels of skilled work (e.g., *glutinator*,<sup>103</sup> *pictor*,<sup>104</sup> *faber*,<sup>105</sup> *marmorarius*,<sup>106</sup> *doctor cursorum*,<sup>107</sup> *medicus*,<sup>108</sup> *medicus auricularius*,<sup>109</sup> *architectus*<sup>110</sup>), to arts and entertainment roles (*comoedus*,<sup>111</sup> *pantomimus*<sup>112</sup>), to roles in the administration (e.g., *procurator*, *procurator marmorum*,<sup>113</sup> *procurator metallorum*<sup>114</sup>), the army (e.g., *δεκάδαρχος/decurio*,<sup>115</sup> *trierarchus*<sup>116</sup>), or even in the city council (e.g., *gerousiastes*,<sup>117</sup> *Prytanis* for life<sup>118</sup>), which point to the diverse life trajectories that they could have and which could potentially lead them to freedom, economic and social mobility. These examples regard especially the imperial slaves and freedmen, as well as the private slaves and freedmen of the members of the elite, who had better chances of mobility. When it comes to female slaves and freedwomen, at the scale of the Empire they are attested through a variety of occupations, such as *obstetrix*,<sup>119</sup> *vilica*,<sup>120</sup> *οἰκονόμισσα*,<sup>121</sup> *lanipendia*,<sup>122</sup> *acroamatica Graeca*,<sup>123</sup> *nutrix*,<sup>124</sup> but they are underrepresented.

The previous examples illustrate the possible gaps in the

(ISM II 344), written in the first person (sg.), specifies that he is ἐλεύθερος. Similar examples are recorded across the Empire; see BOULEY 2001.

<sup>79</sup> See also VARGA 2020, 42.

<sup>80</sup> ISM II 343.

<sup>81</sup> ISM II 288.

<sup>82</sup> ISM II 207.

<sup>83</sup> ISM II 342.

<sup>84</sup> ISM II 340.

<sup>85</sup> ISM II 206.

<sup>86</sup> EKM 1. Beroia 378 = SEG 36, 593.

<sup>87</sup> IGBulg III, 1 1019.

<sup>88</sup> SEG 46, 901.

<sup>89</sup> IGB II 816.

<sup>90</sup> See especially, ANGELOV/CONRAD/LUPPE 1996, 135–144; JUNKELMANN 2000, 106 F. FOR THE RELIEF SEE, CONRAD 2004, Nr. 310 [TAF. 57,4].

<sup>91</sup> IGB I<sup>2</sup> 28. BOULEY 2001, 262 believes that he might have been a free-born person due to the quality of the monument.

<sup>92</sup> CONRAD 2004, Nr. 109 [Taf. 58,2].

<sup>93</sup> See MINČEV 1974.

<sup>94</sup> PÁZSINT 2024, 248, NO. 1206.

<sup>95</sup> PÁZSINT 2024, 228, NO. 855.

<sup>96</sup> PÁZSINT 2024, 239, NO. 1054.

<sup>97</sup> IGB I<sup>2</sup> 70(2) = IGB V 5031.

<sup>98</sup> See BOULEY 2001, 206.

<sup>99</sup> PÁZSINT 2024, 258, NO. 1372.

<sup>100</sup> IGB I<sup>2</sup> 72.

<sup>101</sup> CIL VI 8753 (Rome); CIL VI 5197 (Rome).

<sup>102</sup> CIL VIII 12644 = ILTun 898 (Carthago).

<sup>103</sup> CIL X 1735 (Puteoli).

<sup>104</sup> CIL X 702 (Sorrento).

<sup>105</sup> CIL VIII 12915 = AE 1888, 162h (Carthago).

<sup>106</sup> CIL II 133 = ILS 4513b = AE 2009, 499 (Terena).

<sup>107</sup> CIL VIII 12904 = ILS 1715 = AE 1988, 162d (Carthago).

<sup>108</sup> CIL VI 5197 (Rome); CIL VIII 24689 (Carthago).

<sup>109</sup> CIL VI 37752 = AE 1910, 71 = AE 1910, 71 (Rome).

<sup>110</sup> IG XIV 2421,2 (Egypt); I. Pan 40, I. Pan 41 (Rome).

<sup>111</sup> CIL VI 33966 = CIL VI 3217 = ILS 5182 (Rome).

<sup>112</sup> CIL V 5889 (Mediolanum).

<sup>113</sup> CIL III 348 = ILS 1477 (Trokna).

<sup>114</sup> IPan du désert 55 (Egypt).

<sup>115</sup> IEphesos 2219 (Ephesos).

<sup>116</sup> CIL X 3357 (Miseno).

<sup>117</sup> IEphesos 2223a (Ephesos).

<sup>118</sup> IEphesos 859 (Ephesos).

<sup>119</sup> AE 2005, 328 (Surrentum).

<sup>120</sup> CIL X 1750 (Baiae). On *vilicae*, see CARLSEN 1995, 109–122; RIGATO 2020.

<sup>121</sup> IK Prusa ad Olympum 68 (Prusa ad Olympum). This title is attested especially in Bithynia, with at least five examples.

<sup>122</sup> CIL IX 321 (Cannae).

<sup>123</sup> CIL VI 8693 (Rome).

<sup>124</sup> CIL II 545 (Emerita).

tableau concerning the activities of the enslaved population in Moesia Inferior. As such, their labour in the household, in the different workshops (ceramic,<sup>125</sup> metal,<sup>126</sup> glass<sup>127</sup>), or in the quarries (stone, marble<sup>128</sup>) of Moesia Inferior is to be expected, even though untraceable, as many of the slaves used as work force did not leave an epigraphic imprint of their existence, which is the outcome of both their economic and social status. The case of women is even more telling, as there is no female slave or freedwoman attested with a work title in the province. Invisible in Moesia Inferior is also the potential grouping of slaves and freedmen in associations, be they occupational or purely religious. Examples of slaves and freedmen being members of such associations are attested also in the Eastern provinces<sup>129</sup> of the Empire. In Moesia Inferior,<sup>130</sup> the associative phenomenon is well represented in the first three centuries AD, but there is no evidence for the involvement of slaves.

### ORIGIN AND GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY

Certainly, slaves were a juridical category prone to a high degree of geographical mobility, as they could be sold and resold in slave markets close or far away from their place of birth, and they assisted and followed their master wherever needed. While in the province there are several examples of enslaved persons mentioning their origin (or for which we have indirect proof), the number of those who mention also some form of lucrative activity is insignificant.

In the case of the imperial slave Memor, who was a *contrascriptor* at the *statio Dimensis*, but who makes a dedication at Giridaua to the south-west of Dimum, we can assume a short-term mobility, given the distance, most likely related to his work, where he might have fallen ill, reason for which he gives thanks not only to Iupiter Optimus Maximus, but also to the gods and goddesses of Giridaua.

A longer distance mobility is experienced, in the first century AD, by Iulius Saturio, freedman of Iulius.<sup>131</sup> He originated from the Gallic tribe of Aedui but was part of the *auxilia (ala Capitoniana)* at Augustae in Moesia Inferior, living for 80 years, and serving<sup>132</sup> in the Roman army for 30 years. As a member of the Roman army, it comes as no surprise that he himself had a freedman<sup>133</sup> by the name of Agato, who set up the funerary monument for his patron.

If the previously mentioned Achelous, from 3<sup>rd</sup>-century

<sup>125</sup> On ceramic production in the province, see IACOB 2013, 53–93; NUȚU 2019 (chapter 4).

<sup>126</sup> On metallurgy in the province, see IACOB 2013, 95–100; NUȚU 2019 (chapter 2).

<sup>127</sup> On glass production in the province, see IACOB 2013, 93–95; NUȚU 2019 (chapter 3).

<sup>128</sup> On stone and marble extraction and processing in the province, see COVACEF 2002; IACOB 2013, 100–110; NUȚU 2019 (CHAPTER 5); ALEX-ANDRESCU-VIANU 2022.

<sup>129</sup> On the professional associations in the Roman East, see VAN NIJF 1997; Zimmermann 2002. On the professional associations in Asia Minor, see DITTMANN-SCHÖNE 2001.

<sup>130</sup> See PÁZSINT 2022 for the western cities of the Black Sea included in the province.

<sup>131</sup> AE 1912, 187.

<sup>132</sup> On public slaves in the Roman army see SILVER 2016. On slaves and freedmen in the Roman army, see BOYMEL KAMPEN 2013, 180–197; LINDEN-HIGH 2020.

<sup>133</sup> PHANG 2005 203–225.

AD Noviodunum, did practice some type of craft (despite his young age), he could be included in this discussion. The *car-men* dedicated to him and his fellow *alumnus* (Krystallus) by the *praefectus* of the fleet (Postum(i)us), stipulates the fact that “the land of the distant Pontic Cappadocia gave birth to me”. This points first of all to the mobility and career of Postum(i)us,<sup>134</sup> and consequently to the diverse origin and high mobility of their *familia*, including their *alumni*.

In the case of the gladiators attested in Moesia Inferior, we do not have origin markers, but some of the gladiators from the Roman Empire do perform in other provinces than the ones of their origin.

### SOCIAL MOBILITY

The evidence at hand offers a limited number of instances where social mobility can be traced. More precisely, this is the case of two freedmen, the soldier and, by extension, the *aedilis* C. Valerius Epagathus.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, Iulius Saturio was already a freedman and veteran of the Roman army, pointing to a long military career, which not only improved his social status, but also his financial one, as we know that it at least enabled him to have his own slave, already a freedman at his death.

The case of Quintillus from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD is also interesting, as the votive monument that he set up mentions him as *servus* and *libertus* of the *conductor* T. Iulius Saturninus. The text of the inscription therefore marks his change of juridical status.

In the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, another freedman provides evidence of social mobility. This is the case of C. Valerius Epagathus, the freedman of Caius, attested through his epitaph at Nicopolis ad Istrum.<sup>135</sup> The monument was set up by his son, C. Valerius Castus, to his most devoted father, but of interest is especially the fact that the text mentions him being an *aedilis* of Nicopolis. In this context, it would be of no surprise for C. Valerius Epagathus to have been the freedman of an important local, or even provincial figure, for him to have become *aedilis* after he was granted freedom. Even though for Moesia Inferior the example is unique, *liberti* who managed to obtain different roles in the organisation of the city are not uncommon, being attested in other parts of the Roman world (see above), even though sparsely. These represent the best examples of the former's slaves' potential for social and economic mobility and local agency at its peak.

### CONCLUSIONS

The inscriptions erected by slaves and freedmen, or dedicated to them, allow a glimpse into their close networks, and into more personal details concerning their activities, and even struggles in the province, bringing life to otherwise restrictive personal names.

The agency of this juridical category is undoubtedly directly connected and proportional to their masters' or patrons' appurtenance or non-appurtenance to the elite,

<sup>134</sup> See CENATI/KRUSCHWITZ 2024, 165–167 for the mobility of Postum(i)us.

<sup>135</sup> CIL III 12435 = ILBulg 391.

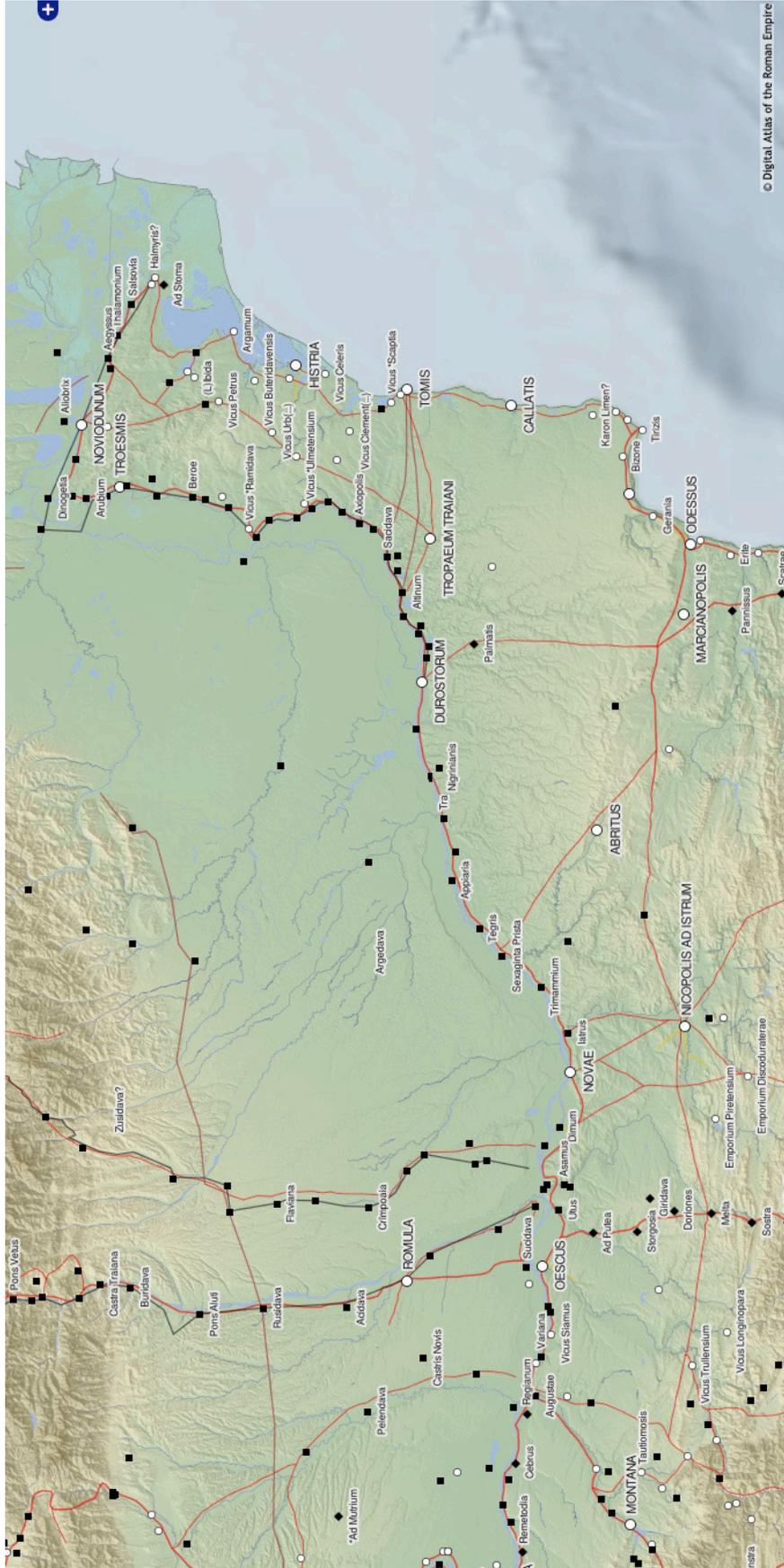
which influenced their prospects. If on the one hand we have slaves with no visible agency, such as gladiators, or craftsmen, on the other hand we have the administrators, as well as the examples of the *misicius* and *aedilis*, who point to the best social and economic evolutions in the province.

Working as a slave or freedmen in Moesia Inferior in the first three centuries AD implied different types of activities, as well as levels of agency and prospects even inside this juridical category. Being the slave, or freedmen of the emperor, or of a local, or provincial member of the elite gave chances to freedom, economic and social mobility,

which implied a better epigraphic visibility of themselves, and of their networks.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Research for this article was funded by the research project *SlaVEgents: enslaved persons in the making of societies and cultures in Western Eurasia and North Africa, 1000 BCE–300 CE*, funded by an Advanced Grant of the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (Grant Agreement no. 101095823).



**Fig. 1.** Map of Moesia Inferior with the attestation of private and imperial slaves and freedmen with a work title. © Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire <https://imperium.ahlfeldt.se/>.

Fig. 2. Catalogue with the attestation of private and imperial slaves and freedmen from Moesia Inferior with a work title.

No.	Name	Juridical status	Work title	Master/Patron	Dating	Place	Reference	Type of inscription	Dedicated by	Divinity	Dedicated for
1.	Melichrysus	Servus	<i>Vilicus</i>	Publius Caragonius Philopalaestrus	100	Novae	IGL Novae 35	Votive	x	Mithras	
2.	Thallion	Servus	<i>Vilicus</i>	Titus Iulius Eutyches	169-175	Novae	AE 2017, 1223	Votive	x	Numen Augusti, Genius	
3.	Agathopus	Servus	<i>Vilicus</i>	Titus Iulius Eutyches	169-175	Novae	AE 2017, 1223	Votive	x	Numen Augusti, Genius	
4.	Asclepiades	Servus	<i>Vilicus</i>	Titus Iulius Saturninus	146-157	Montana	AE 1996, 1341	Votive	x	Diana Regina	
5.	Hermes	Servus	<i>Vilicus</i>	Iulius Ianuarius Iulius Capito Iulius Epaphroditus	161-169	Almus Oescus Altimir	ILBulg 441 CIL III 6124 AE 1977, 767	Votive Votive Votive	x x x	Numina Augustorum, Genius, Nemesis Regina	
6.	Quintillus	Servus, Libertus	<i>Vilicus</i>	Titus Iulius Saturninus	141-160	Dimum	ILBulg 336	Votive	x		
7.	laehetav	Servus	<i>Vilicus</i>	Lucius Aelius Marcianus	151-250	Tropaeum Traiani	ISM IV 34	Votive	x	Hero invictus	
8.	Primus		<i>Vilicus</i>		171-230	civitas Dianensium	ILBulg 233	Votive		Apollo et Diana	
9.	Sergilianus		<i>Vilicus</i>		201-300	Montana	Montana II 32	Votive	x	Diana Lucifera Augusta	
10.	Φλάουσιος Ξηριμος		Οικονόμος	Φλάουσιος Μακεδών	1-300	Gura Dobrogei (Histria)	ISM I 374 ISM I 375 ISM I 376 ISM I 377	Votive Votive Votive Votive	x x x x	Mithras	
11.	Maceio	Servus Caesari	<i>Vilicus vectigalis</i>	emperor	182	Oescus	ILBulg 442	Votive	x	Numina Augustorum, Iuppiter Optimus Maximus	
12.	Domitianus		<i>Vilicus</i>	emperor	222-235	Vicus Trullensium	CIL III 13722	Votive	x	Diana Scoptitia, imperial cult	
13.	Valerius Nilus	Libertus	Actor	Lucius Valerius Victorinus and of Ulpia Nicandra	201-300	Vicus Ulmetensium	ISM V 72	Votive	x		
14.	Narcissus		Actor	Marcus Titius Maximus	101-150	Oescus	ILBulg 16	Honorary	x		
15.	Herculanus		Actor	Flavius Gemellus	101-200	Nicopolis ad Istrum	ILBulg 403	Votive	x		
16.	Καστήσιος		Πραγματευτής	Τούλιος Φρόντων	101-300	Tomis	ISM II 289	Funerary			x
17.	Caeth(us?)	Puer	Custos	Quintus	131-300	Nicopolis ad Istrum	ILBulg 362	Votive	x	Domnus et Domna	
18.	Νοήμων		Σαλτουάριος	emperor	1-300	Abritus	AE 2018, 1423	Votive	x	Heros Marmarithas	
19.	Memor	Servus Augusti	Contrascriptor	emperor	209-211	Dimum Girdava	ILBulg 237	Votive	x	Iuppiter Optimus Maximus, Diis deabusque Girdavensibus	
20.	Κατυλλεϊνός	ἀπελευθέρως τοῦ κυρίου ἀποκράτωρος	Λιβράριος	emperor	238-244	Tomis	ISM II 106	Honorary	x		

No.	Name	Juridical status	Work title	Master/Patron	Dating	Place	Reference	Type of inscription	Dedicated by	Divinity	Dedicated for
21.	Lucius Freius Faustus	<i>Libertus</i>	<i>Lixa</i>	Lucius Freius [---]	71–130	Oescus	AE 1990, 862	Funerary			x
22.	Achelous	<i>Alumnus</i>	Craftsman?	Postumus	201–300	Noviodunum	ISM V 281	Funerary			x
23.	Iulius Satorio	<i>Libertus</i>	<i>Misicus</i>	Iulius	1–100	Augustae	AE 1912, 187	Funerary			x
24.	Caius Valerius Epagathus	<i>Libertus</i>	<i>Aedilis</i>	Caius Valerius [---]	201–230	Nicopolis ad Istrum	ILBulg 391	Funerary			x
25.	Euticus qui et Ofellus	<i>Verna</i>	?	Terentius Iunior	1–300	Troesmis	Mihailescu-Birliba 2015, 109	Funerary			x
26.	Αργούτος		Gladiator (προβοκάτωρ)		101–300	Tomis	ISM II 343	Funerary			x
27.	Αγροΐκος		Gladiator (ρητιάριος)		101–300	Tomis	ISM II 288	Funerary			x
28.	Σπικίλος		Gladiator		101–200	Tomis	ISM II 207	Funerary			x
29.	Αμάραντος		Gladiator		101–300	Tomis	ISM II 342	Funerary			x
30.	Άπταλος		Gladiator (κυνηγός)		101–300	Tomis	ISM II 340	Funerary			x
31.	Ναρκισσός		Gladiator (ρητιάριος?)		101–200	Tomis	ISM II 340	Funerary			x
32.	Μαρκιανός/ Πολυνείκης		Gladiator (σεκούτορ, μυρμιλλων)		175–224	Marci-anopolis	SEG 46, 901	Funerary			x
33.	Σιμάραγδος		Gladiator		1–300	Marci-anopolis	IGB II 816	Funerary			x
34.	Δημήτριος		Gladiator (ρητιάριος)		225–275	Dionysopolis	IGB I <sup>2</sup> 28	Funerary			x
35.	Τεύκρος		Gladiator		227	Odessos	IGB I <sup>2</sup> 70(2) = IGB V 5031	Invitation to <i>munera</i>			
36.	Λυαΐος		Gladiator		227	Odessos	IGB I <sup>2</sup> 70(2) = IGB V 5031	Invitation to <i>munera</i>			
37.	Πάρδος		Gladiator		227	Odessos	IGB I <sup>2</sup> 70(2) = IGB V 5031	Invitation to <i>munera</i>			
38.	<i>Ignotus</i>		Gladiator		1–300	Odessos	IGBI <sup>2</sup> 72	Funerary			x

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