

POETIC BAGGAGE: REPRESENTATIONS OF CAMP FOLLOWERS IN THE LATIN VERSE INSCRIPTIONS*

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Abstract

Each unit of the Roman army constituted a major logistic operation that cannot be reduced to the fighting men who formed their core and purpose. While camp followers are depicted in literary sources especially as an hindrance to war operations, inscriptions provide a different picture of the world that gravitated around the military forts and fortresses. In the military settlements that guarded the *limes*, the presence of paramilitary and non-military personnel did not represent a burden, but an important part of the military economy, which in some cases even led to the emergence of a new business class. In this paper, we provide an anthology of verse inscriptions dedicated by, or to, camp followers, with a view to showcase how their everyday interactions with the army were conceptualised and verbalised, ultimately contributing to a richer picture of the *limes* social ecosystem.

Keywords: camp followers, verse inscriptions, Roman army, military milieu.

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1. Camp followers in Roman literature

Whether standing or in motion, each unit of the Roman army, whether seen individually and collectively, constituted a major logistic operation that cannot be reduced to the fighting men who formed their quintessential core and purpose. There are several—sometimes clearly defined, sometimes somewhat nebulous—groups of individuals that were simultaneously crucial to the troops' functioning as well as a major problem when it came to matters of strategy and tactics. From family and household members to representatives of crafts and trades to entertainers and cultic personnel to veterans and their relations, the number of individuals who made up the diffuse, essential, yet also potentially vulnerable and strategically problematic 'cloud' of non- or para-military, non-combatant men, women, and children associated with the army must have been considerable and of major importance, as a liability and a need, to those who held responsibility over their troops' successful performance.

Significant research has been carried out in a wide range of aspects related to the non-combatant groups that moved and stayed with units of the Roman armed forces, in terms of their composition, the services they provided, economic aspects, social structure, and transformations in the context of the *canabae* and military *vici* the (quasi or actual) civic settlements in the vicinity of Roman army camps.¹ An aspect that has been of lesser importance so far is that of perception from outside and from within, especially when it comes to non-strategic matters.²

The problem at hand is almost ideally illustrated in the ninth poem of Ausonius' list of the top 20 cities of the Roman empire, the so-called *Ordo Urbium Nobilium*. In the ninth poem of his collection, the late antique poet covers the city of Aquileia:

*Non erat iste locus: merito tamen aucta recenti,
nona inter claras Aquileia cieberis urbes,
Itala ad Illyricos obiecta colonia montes,
moenibus et portu celeberrima. sed magis illud*
5 *eminet, extremo quod te sub tempore legit,
solveret exacto cui sera piacula lustru*
Maximus, armigeri quondam sub nomine lixa.
felix, quae tanti spectatrix laeta triumphi
punisti Ausonio Rutupinum Marte latronem.

This was not thy place; yet, raised by late deserts, thou shalt be named ninth among famous cities, O Aquileia, colony of Italy, facing toward the mountains of Illyria and highly famed for walls and harbour. But herein is greater praise, that in these last days Maximus, the whilom sutler posing as a captain, chose thee to receive his late expiation after five full years were spent. Happy thou who, as the glad witness of so great a triumph, didst punish with western arms the brigand of Rutupiae. (Auson. *Ordo nob. urb.* 9; transl. H. G. Evelyn-White)

¹ See Roth 1999, esp. 91–110 on non-combatant personnel, and Kehne 2007. On the food supply of the Roman army Breeze 2000 and Mitthof 2001 (for the specific case of Late Antique Egypt). On the *canabae* see Hanel 2007, 410–413; on the legal status of *canabae* and the so-called military *vici*, see Vittinghoff 1971 and Strobel 2016, respectively.

² In strategic terms, perception is, of course, already enshrined in the term *impedimenta*, 'hindrances'.

The Maximus in question here is, in fact, Magnus Maximus, usurper and Roman Emperor in the West (Britain and Gaul, specifically) between AD 383 and 388, the rival and opponent of Emperor Theodosius I, who ultimately defeated him. Maximus claimed familial ties with Theodosius, the father of Theodosius I, and he was a successful military leader under the elder Theodosius: his military successes resulted in his troops proclaiming him Roman Emperor to succeed Gratian (whom he had assassinated at Lyon). With that in mind, the gist and point of Ausonius' praise of Aquileia—a city whose main recent claim to fame, as Ausonius suggests, was to witness Maximus' demise—is beginning to emerge. For Ausonius' dislike of Maximus is apparent: appointed by the man's father, Valentinian I, Ausonius had served as Gratian's tutor, and that relationship remained strong even when Gratian eventually became the emperor. The end of his tutee's murderer Maximus was thus a reason to rejoice.

In that regard, it is most interesting to note how Ausonius handles the matter of the previous connection between the Theodosii (who avenged Gratian, so to speak) and Maximus, who once was close to the new emperor's father (family relation or not). The strongest point in Maximus was his successful military career, and Ausonius attacks this aspect in a cascade of abuse: it is a thing of the past (*quondam*), it was under false pretences (*armigeri ... sub nomine*)—and, really, Maximus was not even a regular soldier, but merely a *lixa*.³ Without judging too quickly, it would seem apparent that the tendentious translation of 'merely a *lixa*' captures Ausonius' intentions—he claimed to have carried arms (*armigeri*), but he did not (*lixa*), he was someone from the periphery, a parasite almost, a hanger-on and a distraction from what really matters when it comes to Rome's fighting forces: real soldiers. Much rather, after being called out as a wannabe-combatant *lixa*, he is additionally dismissed as a *latro* (v. 9).

Recent research into the composition and purposes of the various non-combatant groups that surrounded the Roman army has suggested that a *latro*'s activity may, in fact, not be altogether dissimilar from that of a *lixa*.⁴

There are dozens of literary passages that refer to *lixae*, but from none of them we get a clear definition of the role and status of those camp followers.⁵ This might depend on one side from the general lack of understanding of composition, duties, regulations as a result of studying this accompanying unit as an annex rather than an object of study in and of its own. *Lixae* would have been servicemen or sutlers, perhaps serving as intermediaries between the army and private business people. More generally the term is also used to indicate the lowest ranks of the army.

According to some researchers, these individuals must have been soldiers' servants,⁶ although their free origin, even if from lower social strata, or the status of freedmen seems

³ On this passage, see also Kolbeck 2018.

⁴ According to Vishnia 2002, *lixae* were specifically deputed to collect and manage the booty which included slaves.

⁵ The first person to address the question systematically was J. Roth, who analysed the different meanings given to the word *lixa*, according to the context (Roth 1999, 93–96).

⁶ Roth 1999, 104 suggests that public slaves existed, who belonged to the army and followed the army in expeditions. The same theory is supported and developed by Silver 2016. According to him *lixae* and *calones* were public slaves, i.e. slaves owned by the army to perform public duties.

to be more reasonable if we look at the sources and at their clear difference from other servants and *calones*.⁷

Even if the specific role of the *lixae* remains unclear and perhaps also changed over centuries, along with the changes that the Roman army underwent, what clearly emerges from the sources is that *lixae* were always present together with the soldiers and played an essential role in the economy and logistics of the Roman army.⁸ Nonetheless, in ancient sources they are generally perceived as negative. These ancient preconceptions of what *impedimenta*, *lixae*, and *calones* are, were commonly shared by modern readers, and the same ancient perceptions may well have overshadowed our modern understanding of camp followers to-date. They derive from considering primarily the army on the battlefield, in narratives that focus rather less on individuals than on homogeneous group functionality.

Ausonius' agenda in his use of the term *lixa* in the Aquileia poem is, of course, unambiguous: *lixa* to him, in this context, is uniquely derogatory in nature, implying that the person in question is not a member of a more noble profession (namely that of a soldier or of an officer), but acting sneakily and, ultimately, is but a thief. The top-down view, from someone who felt that he was to be found on the right(eous) side of matters), is, of course, not accidental, considering Ausonius' own societal position (in addition to his political loyalties): it is a common theme, across time, space, and cultures that those who do the (arguably) dirty work, however useful they might in fact be to those who call the shots, also find themselves at the receiving end of ridicule.

This poses an important question, of course, namely: is there any evidence at all for a view into the mentality and frame(s) of mind of those who actually *were* camp followers and sutlers, approaching a 'history from below' for these individuals? For, unlike for most other professions related to the Roman military, these individuals appear very much to form a group that to the present day has remained in the shade of (reasonably) well-attested pursuits and careers. More specifically, moving on from comprehensive and wholesale labels, what can be said about individuals, their needs, motivations, hopes, and fears? Was there any kind of identification with that role, for example? And how did they position themselves vis-à-vis the Roman army, in whose shadow they operated and sought to thrive?

To begin this analysis, it is worth differentiating first between the standing army and army in motion. Although the individuals involved must be basically the same, their number, tasks, and reciprocal relationships must change in the two very different settings, which, incidentally, are also mainly attested through different types of sources. The army in motion and its train are mainly documented in literary sources, where the baggage train is something that, on the one hand, is necessary, but on the other hand also constitutes a hindrance (*impedimenta*), as something that slows down and distracts the fighting soldiers.

Even if figures like *lixae* seem to belong specifically to the Roman army, the problem of camp followers seems to have been a concern for all armies. For instance, Diodorus Siculus reports on Dareius' army against Alexander the Great, that Dareius decided to redirect the non combatant personnel before the battle:⁹

⁷ Vishnia 2002. On the *servitia castris*, slaves in the army, see also Phang 2008, 235. On the soldiers' servants Speidel 1989 = Speidel 1992.

⁸ On the possible belonging of *lixae* to the paramilitary personnel see below.

⁹ On camp followers, especially women, in Hellenistic time see Loman 2005.

Δαρείος δὲ βουλόμενος εὐζώνον ποιῆσαι τὴν δύναμιν τὰ μὲν σκευοφόρα καὶ τὸν περιττὸν ὄχλον εἰς Δαμασκὸν τῆς Συρίας ἀπέθετο, τὸν δ' Ἀλέξανδρον πυθόμενος τὰς δυσχωρίας προκατειληφέναι καὶ νομίσας αὐτὸν μὴ τολμᾶν ἐν τῷ πεδίῳ διαγωνίζεσθαι προήγεν ἐπ' αὐτὸν σύντομον τὴν ὁδοιορίαν ποιούμενος.

Darius decided to make his army mobile and diverted his baggage train and the non-combatants to Damascus in Syria; then, learning that Alexander was holding the passes and thinking that he would never dare to fight in the plain, made his way quickly to meet him. (Diod. Sic. 17.32.3; transl. C. Bradford Welles)

In the episode of the capture of Hamilcar by the Syracusians in 311 BC, described by the same author, the mass of camp followers in Hamilcar's army created confusion, causing the defeat of the Carthaginians.¹⁰

καὶ τότε δὲ τῶν ὁδῶν στενῶν οὐσῶν καὶ τραχειῶν οἱ μὲν τὰ σκευοφόρα κομίζοντες καὶ τῶν ἐκτὸς τῆς τάξεως συνακολουθούντων τινὲς ἐβάδιζον πρὸς ἀλλήλους φιλοτιμούμενοι περὶ τῆς ὁδοιορίας.

And on this occasion, since the roads were narrow and rough, the baggage train and some of the camp-followers kept jostling each other as they competed for the right of way. (Diod. Sic. 20.29.7; transl. R. M. Geer)

Camp followers are most of the times designated with the term *lixae* which accords to them a particularly negative connotation.¹¹ Valerius Maximus, who in his *Facta et dicta memorabilia*, written during the reign of Tiberius, collects anecdotes on military discipline, describes the change in the behaviour of the Roman army in Spain after P. Cornelius Scipio took command, freeing the *castra* from all people that caused distractions to the soldiers. In this passage, *lixae* are placed on par with prostitutes.¹² Only after the measures to restore discipline, the army was able to conquer Numantia, finally establishing Roman rule in Spain.

Eodem momento temporis quo castra intravit, edixit ut omnia ex iis quae voluptatis causa comparata erant auferrentur ac summoventur: nam constat tum maximus inde institorum et lixarum numerum cum duobus milibus scortorum abisse. Hac turpi atque erubescenda sentina vacuefactus exercitus noster, qui paulo ante metu mortis deformi se foederis ictu maculaverat, erecta et recreata virtute acrem illam et animpsam Numantiam, incendiis exustam ruinis prostratam, solo aequavit.

The moment he entered the camp he issued orders that all items assembled for pleasure be taken away and removed. For it is established that a great number of pedlars and sutlers then left the spot along with two thousand prostitutes. Emptied of this shocking and shameful bilge water, our army, which shortly before from fear of death had sullied itself by the conclusion of an unseemly treaty, now with valour raised and revived burned down and demolished that bold, high-hearted Numantia, levelling her with the ground. (Val. Max. 2.7.1, transl. D. R. Shackleton Bailey)

¹⁰ The same point of view is shared by Vegetius (*Mil.* 3.6) who stressed that camp followers could get easily scared or distracted and create confusion among the ranks at war.

¹¹ See above.

¹² On this and on the following passage by Valerius Maximus, see also Kolbeck 2018.

Exactly the same episode is reported by Appianus, who shares with Valerius Maximus the critical tone regarding merchants, prostitutes, and diviners:

Ἐλθὼν δὲ ἐμπόρους τε πάντας ἐξήλαυσε καὶ ἐταίρας καὶ μάντιες καὶ θύτας, οἷς διὰ τὰς δυσπραξίας οἱ στρατιῶται περιδεεῖς γεγονότες ἐχρῶντο συνεχῶς.

So when he arrived, he got rid of all merchants and female camp followers—prophets and diviners too, whom the soldiers, grown timid by their lack of success, were constantly consulting. (App. *Hisp.* 14.85; transl. H. White)

In the same section of the *Facta et dicta memorabilia* regarding warfare and soldiers, Valerius Maximus reports that one of the successful measures of Q. Caecilius Metellus was to banish the sutlers from the *castra* and reduce the number of non-combatant staff following the army in expeditions.

Protinus namque lixas e castris summovit, cibumque coctum venalem proponi vetuit: in agmine neminem militum ministerio servorum iumentorumque, ut arma sua et alimenta ipsi ferrent, uti passus est.

For he immediately banished sutlers from camp and forbade the exhibition of cooked food for sale. On the march he allowed no soldier to use the service of slaves or pack animals, making them carry their arms and rations themselves. (Val. Max. 2.7.2; transl. D. R. Shackleton Bailey)

Tacitus describes Vitellius' army as they were approaching Rome in AD 69, pointing out that the camp followers outnumbered the actual soldiers.¹³

Sexaginta milia armatorum sequebantur, licentia corrupta; calorum numerus amplior; procacissimis etiam inter servos lixarum ingeniis; tot legatorum amicorumque comitatus inhabilis ad parendum, etiam si summa modestia regetur.

Sixty thousand armed men were in his train, all corrupted by lack of discipline; still greater was the number of camp-followers, and even among the slaves the sutlers' servants were the most unruly. There was also a great train of officers and courtiers, a company incapable of obedience even if they had been subject to the strictest discipline. (Tac. *Hist.* 2.87; transl. C. H. Moore)

In this passage, the group of people moving with the army is clearly judged as unnecessary and undisciplined. Tacitus also gives further detail on a particular category of people through the expression *procacissimis etiam inter servos lixarum ingeniis*. This somewhat ambiguous phrase has also been used to prove the status of *lixae* as either slaves or free citizens, respectively. First, the phrase may be read with an understanding that among the slaves the *lixae* were especially undisciplined, supposing therefore that they, too, were slaves, and, in fact, slaves of the worst kind. Alternatively, one may surmise that the slaves of the *lixae* were the most undisciplined, assuming that *lixae* themselves were of free birth, and that they themselves owned slaves,¹⁴ who then also followed the army. Either way, the way in which Tacitus pictures *lixae* is extremely negative.

¹³ On the number of the soldiers' servants Speidel 1992, 342; cf. also Josephus, *BJ* 3.125.

¹⁴ The first interpretation is preferred by Silver 2016, while Vishnia 2002 supports the second interpretation, which is also chosen by ourselves in the translation.

In the negative portrait of Maximinus Thrax in the *Historia Augusta*—a barbarian man, speaking pure Thracian—the future emperor is put in competition with sutlers by Septimius Severus during military games.

Magnitudinem corporis Severus miratus primum eum cum lixis composuit, sed fortissimis quibusque, ne disciplinam militarem conrumperet. Tunc Maximinus sedecim lixas uno sudore devicit sedecim acceptis praemiis minusculis non militaribus iussusque militare.

Severus, struck with his bodily size, pitted him first against sutlers—all very valorous men, none the less—in order to avoid a rupture of military discipline. Whereupon Maximinus overcame sixteen sutlers at one sweat, and received his sixteen prizes, all rather small and not military ones, and was commanded to serve in the army. (SHA *Max.* 2.6–7; transl. D. Magie)

Whether the narratives appear to be on the trustworthy side, like that of Tacitus, or rather more anecdotal, like the episodes in the *Historia Augusta*, the overall preconception of camp followers that is summarised by the term, and identified with the person of a, *lix* is not limited to historians interested in picturing the successes of the Roman army or providing portraits of one emperor. One finds the same perspective, practically unchanged, also in poetic works, such as for example Silius Italicus' *Punica*, a reasonably reliable indication that this (negative) perspective was shared more widely among a certain elite as well as in the literary works that circulated in Italy in the 1st century AD: in the fifth book, concerned with the Roman defeat at the lake Trasimene the *lixae*, of no use for the battle, represented an obstacle:

*(...): consul carpebat iniquas,
praegrediens signa ipsa, vias, omnisque ruebat
mixtus eques; nec discretis levia arma manipulis
insertique globo pedites et inutile Marti
lixarum vulgus praesago cuncta tumultu
implere et pugnam fugientum more petebant.*

The Roman general was marching over the uneven ground, ahead even of his standards; all his cavalry hastened in confusion after him; the skirmishers were not arrayed in separate companies; the footmen were mixed up with the body of cavalry; and the unwarlike rabble of camp-followers filled the air with ominous uproar, and went into battle like fugitives. (Sil. *Pun.* 5.28–33; transl. J. D. Duff)

Pillaging soldiers are definitely not surprising, neither for ancient nor for modern times. In antiquity the passage of a marching army was never seen positively by the civil population who had to provide supplies by requisitions or more or less voluntary contributions.¹⁵ It is therefore not rare that camp followers are assimilated to *latrones* and pillagers also in literary sources, like in two passages reporting on completely different historical periods.

The first example can be found in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and it refers to the battle of Veii between the Romans and the Sabines in 475 BC:

¹⁵ See, for example, the famous Skaptopara inscription (*CIL* III 12336), a letter to the emperor in which a praetorian soldier laments the presence of military camps next to his village. On this letter see also Magioncalda 2010.

ληλατήσας δὲ κάκεινιν ἔτι ἀκέραιον οὕσαν ἐπὶ πολλὰς ἡμέρας καὶ βαρεῖαν ἤδη τὴν ἀποσκευὴν ἔχων ταῖς ὠφελείαις ἀπῆγεν ἐπ' οἴκου τὴν δύναμιν.

For many days he plundered their territory too, which was still untouched, and then, since his baggage train was now heavily laden with booty, he led his troops homeward. (Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 9.35.5; transl. E. Cary)

The second episode is reported by Procopius of Caesarea, in the second book of his *Persian War*; about the conflict between the Romans and the Sassanids in the 6th century AD

τοῖς γὰρ σκευοφόροις οἱ στρατιῶται ἀναμειγνύμενοι ἐπορεύοντο ὡς ἐπὶ ἀρπαγὴν ἐτοιμοτάτην ἰόντες χρημάτων μεγάλων.

For the soldiers marched forward, mixed in with the baggage train, as if going to the ready plunder of great wealth. (Procop. 2.25.14; transl. H. B. Dewing)

Plundering and enslaving the enemies was actually almost a routine practice in the Roman army, and, according to R. F. Vishnia, it was logistically so important that specific figures, who were not included in the rank of the army had to take care of it: these were the *lixae*.¹⁶ This assumption, which seems to be more than reasonable, at least in some contexts, is mainly based on a passage by Sallustius:

lixae permixti cum militibus diu noctuque vagabantur, et palantes agros vastare, villas expugnare, pecoris et mancipiorum praedas certantes agere eaque mutare cum mercatoribus vino advecticio et aliis talibus.

Lixae and soldiers ranged about in company day and night, and in their forays laid waste the country, stormed farmhouses, and vied with one another in amassing booty in the form of cattle and slaves, which they bartered with the traders for foreign wine and other luxuries. (Sall. *Iug.* 44.5; transl. R. F. Vishnia)

Despite their generally negative perception, camp followers also played a military role, and they were strategically necessary to soldiers, including on the battlefield.¹⁷ Servants were in fact trained to follow the army and some specific categories of soldiers, like grooms of cavalry units were considered as paramilitaries.¹⁸

We conclude this overview (which has no ambition to be complete or exhaustive), with two exceptional episodes from Frontinus' *Stratagems*, where non-combatant personnel turn out to be useful in the battle strategy after all. The military leader Marcus Claudius Marcellus used the same stratagem on two separate occasions. The first time, he deceived his enemy in Aquae Sextiae in 102 BC pretending to have a larger military force than he in fact had. To achieve this, he took with him grooms, camp followers, and pack-animals wearing saddles.

¹⁶ Vishnia 2002.

¹⁷ On this see Speidel 1992, 345–348.

¹⁸ See Veg. *Mil.* 1.10 on the *calones* who were taught to swim in order to be able to cross rivers and Joseph. *BJ* 3.69 where servants are put at the same level of real soldiers. for a more detailed analysis, see Speidel 1992, 346–347. On paramilitary and non military personnel see also James 2018. According to James 2018, 40 *lixae* have to be included in the category of the paramilitary personnel.

Marius circa Aquas Sextias, cum in animo haberet postera die depugnare adversus Teutonos, Marcellum cum parva manu equitum peditumque nocte post terga hostium misit et ad implendam multitudinis speciem agasones lixasque armatos simul ire iussit iumentorumque magnam partem instratorum centunculis, ut per hoc facies equitatus obiceretur, praecepitque, ut, cum animadvertissent committi proelium, ipsi in terga hostium descenderent. Qui apparatus tantum terroris intulit, ut asperrimi hostes in fugam versi sint.

At Aquae Sextiae, Marius, purposing to fight a decisive battle with the Teutons on the morrow, sent Marcellus by night with a small detachment of horse and foot to the rear of the enemy, and, to complete the illusion of a large force, ordered armed grooms and camp-followers to go along with them, and also a large part of the pack-animals, wearing saddle-cloths, in order by this means to present the appearance of cavalry. He commanded these men to fall upon the enemy from the rear, as soon as they should notice that the engagement had begun. This scheme struck such terror into the enemy that despite their great ferocity they turned and fled. (Frontin. *Str.* 2.4.6; transl. C. E. Bennett)

Another time, not specified in greater detail, he repeated this very stratagem by mixing the soldiers with camp followers, asking them to join the battle cry.

M. Marcellus, cum vereretur, ne paucitatem militum eius clamor detegeret, simul lixas calonesque et omnis generis sequellas conclamare iussit

Marcus Marcellus on one occasion, fearing that a feeble battle-cry would reveal the small number of his forces, commanded that sutlers, servants, and camp-followers of every sort should join in the cry. (Frontin. *Str.* 2.4.8; transl. C. E. Bennett)

Most of the episodes reported above refer to the ambivalence of a personnel which to a certain extent was necessary to the army for vital tasks like transporting food supply,¹⁹ taking care of the horses²⁰ and assisting soldiers in all their basic needs, including their health,²¹ but which, strategically, turned into an obstacle in war situations. The same passages that have just been commented on are also in most cases referring to the Republican time, when the army was still very mobile and constantly in a state of warfare. This situation remained more or less the same up to the Julio-Claudian time, when the perimeter defence was provided by client states. It is from the Flavian emperors that a change in the strategy for the control of the borders was introduced with the creation of standing units designated to guard the *limes*. Military and civil society became then the two interdependent and integrating elements that made the provincial society function.²² Over the 3rd century the army became more and more ‘immobile’ and the differentiation between civilians and soldiers thinner and thinner.²³ The period between the Flavian dynasty and the late 3rd century is exactly the time when the biggest part of our epigraphic documentation

¹⁹ Breeze 2000, 59–64; Mitthof 2001.

²⁰ Speidel 1989 = Speidel 1992; Speidel 1994a; Speidel 1994b; Roth 1999, 78.

²¹ Roth 1999, 86 on medical staff.

²² See Le Roux 1982, 408–409 on the connection between the military administration and the provincial society in the Iberian provinces. Against the fallacy of the conception of a military-civilian dichotomy in light of the specific case of Roman Britain, see James 2001 and Kolbeck 2018; for the case of Dura Europos, see James 2018.

²³ Luttwak 1976; Le Roux 1982. On the relations between civilians and soldiers in Late antiquity, see MacMullen 1967.

concentrates. Servants and army followers are depicted more rarely in inscriptions and seem therefore to be less than literary sources suggest.²⁴ To this it has to be added that they have generally been neglected in the epigraphic research that mainly focused on military history. They often appear as ‘secondary characters’ in inscriptions or they are only represented in the reliefs above the texts.²⁵

Uniformity of its constituent members is, and for a long time already has been, a key element of regular armed forces. Variation is generally avoided, predominantly restricted to contexts in which distinction (of units, of seniority, of responsibility) is of an operational essence. This truism applies, with little modification, to the regular fighting forces of the Roman empire just as much as it applies to other chronological, geographical, and political contexts. Yet, while much of Roman military history is concerned with strategy, logistics, and technology, epigraphy provides a chance to get beyond notions of uniformity (in general) and allows to better understand the understudied phenomenon of what exactly the baggage train was and how it was perceived. Compared to literary evidence, funerary, votive and honorific inscriptions provide a different picture of the world gravitating around military forts and fortresses, which was formed by craftsmen, handworkers, merchants, bath personnel, gladiators, people running the *mansiones* for travelling military officials and, of course, the soldiers’ families.²⁶ The *canabae* and *vici* developing close to the fortresses and forts of the standing army were populated by people who were connected and involved with military life, providing goods and other services to the army, in what has been also defined an ‘extended military society’.²⁷ A large part of this population consisted in the families of the soldiers, their wives and children, but also parents and other relatives. The presence of families in particular became a constant feature on the turn in the 3rd century when soldiers were allowed to live with women during the military service.²⁸ The settling of veterans with their families in the close vicinity of fortresses after their discharge led with the time to the recruitment of the veterans’ offspring for the same units, enlarging and making communities of civilians around military settlements more stable.

In the military settlements guarding the *limes* the presence of paramilitary or non military personnel did not represent a burden, but an important part of the military economy,²⁹ which led in some cases to the emergence of a new business class. The positive economic impact in a needs-based environment cannot be underestimated. To this families of soldiers also contributed. Extended military societies gave birth to new rich and important urban centres and were the engine that moved many of the *limes* provinces.

²⁴ Speidel 1992, 343.

²⁵ See Stoll 2006 on families and wives living with soldiers also following the evidence of portraits on funerary monuments. On grooms, see Morin 2006.

²⁶ For the presence of soldiers’ families in the specific case of the army in Rome and the contact between military and civilian world in the capital, especially in cult places and necropoleis, see Stoll 2001, Stoll 2006, Cenati 2023.

²⁷ James 2018.

²⁸ For an overview, see Cenati 2023, 216–220. On the marriage of soldiers see specifically Phang 2008 and a more recent theory by Radulova 2022.

²⁹ Verboven 2007. According to Kolbeck 2018 the army was the main economic force in the frontier zone and civilians were important economic actors at a local level.

Based on a pragmatic decision as to who gets to be counted as ‘on the baggage train’, a number of case studies will be assembled that help us to understand (i) the impact of mobility and displacement connected with the desire to create new home(s); (ii) family relations and social dependence / socio-economic concerns of those who supplied the army with goods, services, and human relations; (iii) the general climate and atmosphere in the lives of those individuals who accompanied the Roman army in its movements.

The aim of the remainder of this paper is, therefore, to gain an understanding of the way in, and imagery through, which these experiences—not dissimilar to, yet also separate from, military lives—were conceptualised and verbalised.

2. Mobility and displacement

In the general historical discourse about the Roman army, soldiers are considered to be one of the social groups with the highest level of mobility, often neglecting the number of people who, in actual fact, had to, or voluntarily decided to, follow their relatives or masters in their transfers. Merchants who did business with the army often moved to the proximity of military camps, taking with them their slaves and families if possible. The soldiers’ relatives and slaves did not have much choice but to follow the soldiers during their long years of service. This would have meant, for an ordinary soldier in the 2nd and 3rd century, a largely stationary life. By contrast, army officials lived in a completely different situation, as they were constantly on the move, being surrounded by—what we can imagine to be—multi-ethnic families of slaves and foster-children. The aspects of mobility and displacement are thus important ones, and they did, in fact, leave their traces in the epigraphical record of the baggage train.

2.1. End points

There are not many texts that specifically refer to members of the Roman army’s baggage train in that very capacity, and there are even fewer that do so in a poetic setting. The single most striking exception to that rule is the following piece, for one Lucius Cominius Firmus, from Carnuntum in the province of Pannonia superior.

Datable to AD 30–70, this piece—a sizeable limestone stele with a long inscription comprising prose and verse elements, whose prose part (*ll.* 1–7) is clearly distinguishable from the poetic element (*ll.* 8–16) through a significant reduction in letter size—commemorates a *lixa*, one of the types that are commonly associated with the Roman army’s *impedimenta*:

- L(ucius) Cominius*
T(iti) f(ilius) Romil(ia)
Firmus lixa
annor(um) XXV
 5 *h(ic) s(itus) e(st).*
T(itus) et C(aius) Comini

- fratri posuerunt.*
Cominius hic iaceo
sed morte peremptu[s]
 10 *[optab]am in patriam [de]-*
[hinc] cum fratribus
[ve]rti. quos liqui et
morti debita fata dedi.
o utinam Italiae poti-
 15 *us mea fata dedissent*
quam premeret cine[re].

Lucius Cominius Firmus, son of Titus, of the Romilian tribe, sutler, lies here, aged 25. Titus and Gaius Cominius have placed (*sc.* this monument) for their brother.

I, Cominius, lie here, albeit snatched away by death: I was hoping subsequently to return to my fatherland with my brothers. I left them behind and paid to death the fate that was due. Oh if only my fates had permitted me (*sc.* to return) to Italy (*or:* Italy's) . . . rather than for my ashes to be hassled . . . (*AE* 2008.1099; Grassl 2009; *CLE* 2589; lupa.at/15758)

Lucius Cominius Firmus, who had died at the age of twenty-five, was buried by his brothers Titus and Gaius (*l.* 6), and it does not seem implausible that Lucius' brothers were in the same business as he was himself, namely that of a *lixa* (*l.* 3).³⁰ If the three Cominii in Carnuntum were working for the army without being soldiers themselves, other members of the same family, who were born in the same city, Ateste, were serving in the legion XI Claudia in Burnum. To one of them another *carmen* is dedicated by a brother or a fellow soldier.³¹

Next to the obvious observation, that being a *lixa* had apparently become a family business for the Cominii, to one side, it is interesting to see how the brothers present themselves through Lucius' imagined first-person narrative in the poetic part. The poem of lines 8–16, composed in a dactylic rhythm, reports that Lucius Cominius Firmus, had been abandoned *hic*, i.e. at Carnuntum, by his brothers even though he had long hoped (*[optab]am*) to return home (*in patriam* ... *[ve]rti*) eventually from there (*[de]hinc*), if correctly supplied) with his brothers (*cum fratribus*). There is much to unpack in that statement, from the idea that there was a (presumably shared!) wish to return *in patriam* from their stay at Carnuntum to the general, potentially devastating occurrence of having to leave behind the body of a loved one in foreign or far-away soil, to the family ties, to the implied ability to move physically and geographically.

This latter aspect is especially interesting, for the inscription then proceeds to suggest that the brothers eventually left (again told from the perspective of the deceased): *quos liqui* (*l.* 12), and they returned to Italy (*l.* 14), perhaps Ateste,³² the region that Cominius is presented to have desired, too, for his return—and his final resting place.

³⁰ The three brothers, heirs of Titus, would have formed a *consortium*; they were engaged in the transportation of goods and in the commerce between Northern Italy and the Pannonian *limes* (Grassl 2009). Another interpretation is presented by Vishnia (2002, 271), who assumes that the two soldiers were followed by the younger brother in the quality of a *lixa*.

³¹ *CIL* III 2835 = *CLE* 992 = *ILS* 2257 = HD058166: *T(itus) Cominius | C(ai) f(ilius) R[o]milia | Ateste, miles | leg(ionis) XI, anno[r]um XL, stip(endiorum) XVI, | h(ic) s(itus) e(st). Frater | fratri posuit. | Vixsi (!) quoad potui semper bene, pauper, honeste. | [Fr]audavi nullum, nunc iuvat | [os]sa mea.*

³² Cf. *CIL* III 2835 below. According to Grassl 2009 these Cominii might come either from Sora or Ateste.

Syntactically, the poem ends just as abruptly and somewhat obscurely as the life of Lucius Cominius itself. Nevertheless, it is apparent what he was supposed to have his readers know. He is presented as an unhappily displaced individual, with a regrettable death at a young age far away from home, from his *patria*. What is more, substantial space is given to his presentation as a Roman citizen, with his *tria nomina*, his filiation, and mention of his voting tribe. To this one may wish to add that, while his occupation—*lixa*—is mentioned, no reference to any specific military unit is made: he is a *lixa*, but not a *lixa* of the *legio XV Apollinaris* (according to the presentation on his tombstone, that is). In that, Cominius remained a free agent, attached only to his family and his *patria*, and his burial was placed relatively far away from the military camp, at Carnuntum's *Gräberstraße*, in relative proximity to the *canabae*.

In general, the self identification as *lixa* is very rare in inscriptions, perhaps because of the widespread prejudice on this specific category of people, which can be seen very clearly in literary sources. It is therefore logical to expect that the qualification as sutler or serviceman of a military unit was either unsaid or hidden in funerary inscriptions. The evidence of *lixae* in inscriptions comprises only three further texts: a funerary monument from Noviomagus, where a *lixa* is buried together with some soldiers,³³ the funerary inscription of L. Freius Faustus, freedman and *lixa* of the *legio V Macedonica* in Oescus³⁴ and the one of M. Titius, *lixa* of the cohort III Thracum in Syria.³⁵

2.2. The journey is its own reward?

Soldiers in general and high ranking soldiers in particular were raising foster children who lived with them in the military forts and fortresses and followed them on expeditions.³⁶ It is not rare to find poems dedicated to *alumni*³⁷ and especially *alumni* of Imperial fleets. One of the longest and most significant ones is dedicated to two *alumni*, who died in their young age, by the *praefectus* of the *classis Flavia Moesica*³⁸ in Noviodunum during the 3rd century.

 [- - -]AV[- - -]iuv[- - -]a[- - -]
 [K]rystallus alumni
 Postumi praef(ecti) class(is)
 aput (!) fluen[tu]m (!) I+e[-]ic(- - -)

³³ CIL XIII 8732.

³⁴ AE 1990.862.

³⁵ AE 1980.887.

³⁶ On the *alumni militum*, see Brancato 2015, esp. 233–245 and Nielsen 1987 on their legal status. *Alumni* were foster children, some of them were of free birth, some others were slaves. The bond with their master was mainly of emotional nature. In case of enslaved *alumni*, these could be manumitted before the eighteenth birthday (see Ulp. *dig.* 40.2.13).

³⁷ CIL XI 117, 188, 207; XIII 5855; *IScM* II,2, 383.

³⁸ On the *classis Flavia Moesica*, see Reddé 1986, esp. 619 on the 3rd century; Gudea 2005, 396–401; Saddington 2007, 215.

- 5 *Romanus infans editus*
alumnus castris mari[- - -]
Hibera postquam videri[t]
et Maura longe moenia
[f]acta quiescit Moesica
- 10 *primaev(a)e pubis indigus*
ut verna florum germin[a]
vento feruntur Thracio.
 ((vacat))
Achelous alumnus
- 15 *Postumi praef(ecti) c(lassis)*
extima Cappadocum Ponti
qua(e) iungitur orae me genuit
tellus moenia sunt Tyan[ae]
Hermogenes genitur nom[en]
- 20 *[mihi erat] Acheloo artibus*
[Romanus infan]s editus ingen(io)
[- - -]forma a homine[s - - -]
iam gemitu [- - -]
 - - - - -

A: Krystallus, foster-son of the admiral Postum(i)us. Born as a Roman infant and a nurseling in the *castra* by the river [- - -], after seeing the towns of Spain and, from a distance, of Morocco, he rests on the Moesian shore, robbed of his tender youth, as the spring buds of flowers are carried off by the Thracian wind.

B: Acheolous, foster-son of the admiral Postum(i)us. The outer Cappadocian land, where it borders on Pontus, produced me; the city was that of Tyana, my father was Hermogenes, the name Acheolous (was bestowed on me), given birth . . . with humane accomplishments . . . (*AE* 1977.762; *IScM* II,5, 281; *AE* 1984.793; 1987.897; 1989.639; Cugusi 1995 = Cugusi 2016, 1605–1610; Courtney 1995, 54, 250–251; Cugusi 2000 = Cugusi 2016, 1610–1643; *CLEMoes* 40; Brancato 2015, no. 57; *CLE* 2648; translation adapted from Courtney 1995)

Postum(i)us was one of the most prominent persons in the province of Moesia inferior, but the twenty-three lines of text that he had engraved, and that survived to the present day, do not give any indication regarding his career and his life. His full name is lost in the gap of a prescript that must have opened the inscription. We get to know him only at a stage of his career when he is in charge of the fleet at Noviodunum. The set of two verse inscriptions, preserved fragmentarily and dedicated to his two deceased foster-sons, Krystallus and Acheolous, are entirely focussed on their short lives, characterised by their constant movements, eventually (at least poetically) carried off by the Thracian wind (*l.* 12: *vento feruntur Thracio*).

The circumstances of the death of the two boys are unknown, and it is impossible to determine whether they died at different times or simultaneously. They are remembered in two distinct poems, the first of which is written in iambic dimeters, whereas the second one is composed in elegiac couplets,³⁹ well separated by a *vacat*, but are engraved on the same monument nonetheless.

³⁹ See also Gamberale 1989.

While soldiers in the 3rd century were mainly stationary, officials of the Roman army were always on the move. They were transferred according to the unit to which they were appointed. Perhaps through the origin and transfers of his two foster-sons, we might be able to reconstruct some of his movements. Krystallus was born by a river, which has been identified by editors as either the Ebrus or the Danube.⁴⁰ A birthplace in Castra Martis in Moesia superior, as suggested by A. Donati,⁴¹ has to be excluded.⁴² However, Postum(i)us might have been active in the Lower Danube area as commander of some military unit. Here, he would have taken little Krystallus into foster care, after which he then would have been transferred to Hispania and Morocco (*Hibera postquam videri[t] | et Maura longe moenia*).⁴³ We do not know at which stage of his frequent transfers he was moved to the East again, more specifically to Cappadocia, where he took his second foster son, Acheolus, with him. All these frequent transfers happened over a short period of time, since both Krystallus and Acheolus were still children when they died. At least for Krystallus we read that he was robbed of his tender youth (*primaev(a)e pubis indigus*).⁴⁴ Regarding Acheolus, we may assume that he became a foster son when Postum(i)us was already an official of the Moesian fleet, therefore after Krystallus, which would explain why he was given the name of a river.⁴⁵

2.3. Origins and departures

Firma was a former slave, manumitted by a man, who then married her. She lived in the 2nd century and was buried in Carula, in the province of Baetica, where her funerary monument was found. Its text is today known only from the manuscript tradition:

*Firma Epaphroditi (scil. liberta)
ann(orum) XXIII h(ic) s(ita) e(st).
Firma satis felix cum me mea vita maneret
coniugis opsequio (!) cum pietate fui
5 coniugis illius quem vix aequare mariti
adfectu poterint aut bonitate pari
conlibertorum vultus animosque meorum
placatos merui sedulitate mea
placatos merui per te magis omnis ut aetas
10 sanguine me iunctam crederet esse sibi
qui tecum pia castra sequi consuetus et ille*

⁴⁰ Cf. *Ibe[r]ic(um)* vs. *I[s]t[r]ic(um)* suggested by Cugusi 1995 and by the same author in *CLEMoes* 40.

⁴¹ Donati 1987, 128–129.

⁴² A new autopsy of the stone in February 2024 has allowed a new reading of the text. The new edition is in preparation.

⁴³ The *classis nova Lybica* and *vexillationes* of other fleets defended the seafront between Mauretania and the Iberian peninsula (Bollini 1997, 81–91).

⁴⁴ For an analysis of this inscription in the context of the verse inscriptions from the *limes* of Moesia inferior, see Cenati – González Berdús (forthcoming).

⁴⁵ At least another *alumnus*, perhaps of a soldier, seems to have the name of a river. It is Aurelius Timavius, whose funerary inscription also contains a *carmen* and was found in Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippensium (*CIL* XIII 8371).

*quem lex servitii distrahit a domino
hos omnes tibi pro meritis qui sidera torquent
secum placatos semper habere velint.*

15 *T(e) r(ogo) p(raeteriens) d(icas) s(it) t(ibi) t(erra) levis.*

“Firma, (freedwoman) of Epaphroditus, of twenty-four years, is buried here.

I, Firma, while I lived, was very happy with the consideration of my husband and my obedience to him, that husband who could barely compare to other husbands in similar affection or goodness. I was deserving of the favouring looks and good will of my fellow freedmen thanks to my dutifulness; but I merited their friendly disposition more because of you, so that all of them, whatever their age, considered me to be of their own blood, both those who were accustomed to following you obediently to the camps and those whom the law of slavery separated from their master. May those who make the stars turn under their authority make them all well disposed to you thanks to your merits.

I beg you, say as you pass by: ‘may the earth rest lightly on you’”. (*CIL* II 1399 = *CILA* II,3, 827 = *CLE* 1140 = *CLEBaeticae*, p. 201 = *HEp* 2009, 307)

The inscription opens with a very short prescript declaring the name and age of Firma. This is followed by six elegiac couplets, each line corresponding to a verse. The inscription closes with a postscript that contains metrical clauses in abbreviation (*t(e) r(ogo) p(raeteriens) d(icas) s(it) t(ibi) t(erra) levis*).

It is very singular that we get from the inscription virtually no information about a woman’s (here: Firma’s) husband and / or former master, who, in the present case, must have been a rich soldier or camp follower.⁴⁶ Only the *cognomen* Epaphroditus is stated in the first line, but only to—very obscurely—state Firma’s status (*Firma Epaphroditi*). Most editors explain that the expression ‘wife of’ is to be supplied to the mention of Epaphroditus’ name. This would be an unusual way to express such a relation, however, and thus we prefer to supply a more common relation like *liberta*.⁴⁷

The omission of any information regarding Epaphroditus’ own status and life is even more striking as he—and not Firma—very quickly advances to become the centre of the poem, as the recipient of *pietas* and *obsequium* from his wife Firma who, in turn, is introduced as the first-person speaker.⁴⁸

Firma addresses her husband directly twice in this poem, saying that she was well-liked by other slaves because of him (*l. 9: merui per te magis*) and that she wishes him that the gods are well disposed towards him (*ll. 13–14: hos omnes tibi pro meritis qui sidera torquent | secum placatos semper habere velint*).

One hint about Epaphroditus’ profession is dropped at *l. 11*, where Firma declares that some of her fellow freedmen were following their master to the *castra* (*qui tecum pia castra sequi consuetus*),⁴⁹ while others stayed behind because of the *lex servitii* (*ll. 11–12: et ille | quem lex servitii distrahit a domino*). Epaphroditus thus evidently was a rich

⁴⁶ Thigpen 1995.

⁴⁷ For the first interpretation see for example *CILA* II,3, 827; Mariner 1952, 67, 77–78, 102, 204; Camacho 2009.

⁴⁸ Hernández Pérez 2001, 144–145, 157, 165, 178, 181, 280, 290.

⁴⁹ The combination of the adjective *pia* with the substantive *castra* is unique and was interpreted in relation with the service for the emperor (see Camacho 2009). Fernández Martínez (1998, no. 1140) interprets *castra* metaphorically as home.

man, who owned slaves, some of whom took care of his affairs back home, while others followed him to the *castra*. These lines have been interpreted in various ways, however, which include a metaphorical understanding of *castra* as homestead or in relation to some funerary *collegium* of slaves, that had its own statute (*lex servitii*).⁵⁰ The most logical explanation still is, however, that some freedmen followed their master to the military camp (the only plausible, directly recognisable meaning of the term *castra*), while other slaves had to stay at home in order to take care of the house and of their master's affairs.

While it seems sufficiently clear that Epaphroditus worked in contact with the army, we cannot know with absolute certainty, of course, whether he was a soldier or a camp follower, a rich merchant trading with soldiers. If the first option is correct, this would make the inscription a rare testimony of the bond that existed between a soldier and his homeland, the place where he arguably still had a house and slaves. He then would have been native from this region, but arguably serving out of the province,⁵¹ as there is no large presence of soldiers in Baetica in this period, except from the legion VII Gemina, stationed in León and few auxiliary units.⁵² Epaphroditus might have been a legionary or a praetorian soldier or, more likely, an official, who was frequently travelling and taking his slaves and freedmen with him.

It cannot at all be ruled out, however, that Epaphroditus was a wealthy merchant doing business with the army. This would explain why no information about his career or military unit is provided in the text—a remarkable gap otherwise. What is problematic with this option, however, is the unanswered question as to why he did not settle closer to the only legionary fortress—if in the Hispanic peninsula, the one of the VII Gemina, was more than 600 km away from the find spot of the inscription, or even further afield.

3. Relations and relationships

Just like members of paramilitary staff like *lixae* and slaves followed the army on military expeditions, there also were craftsmen and artists who lived next to the military settlements and provided goods and services to the soldiers who lived there with their families. These are very well documented in inscriptions, but all too often neglected when it comes to military studies, dismissed as not strictly related to the army. In this section we provide three examples of verse inscriptions, attesting to the civilians, men and women, whose professional life revolved around Rome's military forces.

⁵⁰ Santero (1978, 85) believes that *pia castra* and *lex servitii* refer to some sort of funerary *collegium* of slaves and its statute; this view is shared by Di Stefano Manzella 2008, 307.

⁵¹ Recruitment from the Iberian provinces was happening in a systematic way. See Le Roux 1982, 157 on the recruitment in auxiliary units.

⁵² On the Roman army in Hispania, see Le Roux 1982. The first legion to be settled in Hispania was the VI Victrix to which auxiliary cohorts and another legion, the VII Gemina were later added. See in particular 194–218 for a prosopographical overview of legionary and auxiliary soldiers in Hispania, where our inscription is not included.

3.1. Music for leisure

Among the army followers there were also musicians. Most of them were soldiers themselves, some others were part of the non-combatant personnel,⁵³ like the two *hydraula* players from Aquincum, Sabina and her husband Iustus. Their lives are remembered in a *carmen* inscribed on a sarcophagus, which can be dated to the beginning of the 3rd century AD:

*Clausa iacet lapidi (!) coniunx pia cara Sab[[d]]ina
artibus edocta superabat sola maritu-
m. Vox ei grata fuit, pulsabat pollice cordas (!).
Set (!) cito rapta silet. Ter denos duxerat annos, he-
u male quinque minus, set (!) plus tres menses (!) habebat,
bis septemque dies vixit. Hec (!) ipsa superstes spectata in po-
pulo hydraula grata regebat. Sis felix quicumque leges (!), te
numina servent, et pia voce cane: Aelia Sabina vale. T(itus) Ael(ius) Iustus
hydraularius salariarius leg(ionis) II Ad(iutricis) coniugi faciendum curavit.*

My wife, dutiful and dear, Sabina lies here, enclosed by this stone. Educated in the arts, she alone surpassed her husband. She had a charming voice, she plucked the strings with her thumb, but now, seized all too quickly, she is silent. She was three times ten years old, woe is me!, minus five, but with yet three months added—and she lived another twice seven days. While still alive, she was popular, most welcome, she ruled over the masses with the water-organ. Be happy, whoever you are, reading this: may the gods protect you, and may you sing with a dutiful voice: Farewell, Sabina. Titus Aelius Iustus, salaried water-organ player of the legio II Adiutrix, had this made for his wife. (*CIL* III 10501 = *CLE* 489 = *CLEPann* 36 = *TitAq* II 519 = Kuntić-Makvić 1976, 54–55, no. 12; HD068458; lupa.at/3025)

Aelia Sabina and her husband, T. Aelius Iustus, were living in Aquincum in Pannonia inferior, *municipium* under Hadrian and *colonia* under Septimius Severus. They worked as musicians for the legio II Adiutrix, which was stationed at Aquincum since AD 117. Yet, notably, Aelia Sabina's husband is not a soldier. This is clear for at least two reasons. First of all, he defines himself as a *salararius*, a very specific word, whose exact meaning is still partially unclear. It might refer to the non-military or paramilitary personnel who served the army and, unlike soldiers, counted the years of service in *salaria* and not in *stipendia*, or to *evocati* who were recalled to service for non-military tasks and started counting the years after the end of their regular service in *salaria*.⁵⁴ Due to the ambiguity of this word, one might be somewhat unsure about Iustus' pertaining to the ranks of the legio II Adiutrix as a former legionary soldier. Yet, his profession as *hydraula* player suggests that he was only working for the legion without actually being a soldier himself. To-date, Iustus remains the only known water organ player in the Roman army,⁵⁵ and the inscription represents a unique testimony of a musician playing not for military purposes, but merely to entertain the soldiers.

⁵³ Alexandrescu 2010.

⁵⁴ On the *salararii*, see Méa 2012.

⁵⁵ Domaszewski 1981, 46; Wille 1967, 205–210.

This family of musicians found a way to make a real profession out of what was perhaps originally only a hobby. Music and entertainment must have been an important component of the life of soldiers on the *limes*. Companies of actors, musicians and other artists who are less documented either archaeologically or epigraphically lived in the *canabae*, villages and then cities that expanded next to legionary fortresses and auxiliary forts and perhaps also travelled from one military settlement to the other in order to play for the soldiers and perform in military amphitheaters.⁵⁶

The verse inscription in hexameters is one of the very few pieces in which a woman is praised for surpassing a man in his very field of expertise (*ll. 2–3: superabat sola maritu[m]*), which, in this case, was the mastery of playing an instrument and singing. In this inscription we also clearly see how strong the link between music and poetry is: poetic compositions could be, and also were, occasionally sung. In this text, the wish to sing the farewell to Aelia Sabina is clearly expressed in the form *pia voce cane* (*l. 8*).⁵⁷

3.2. Special baths for former soldiers

Like gladiatorial games and musical entertainment, baths were a fixture of Roman everyday life, and as such they were always present around military settlements. Bathing and baths have inspired verse compositions of poets like Martial, but also verse inscriptions—especially in late antique North Africa—and are attested in graffiti.⁵⁸

One verse inscription, now unfortunately lost, once decorated the baths for the veterans of the legio IV Flavia in Singidunum, commemorating the name of the man who built them, one Aelius Tertius, datable to the first half of the 3rd century.

- Alma lavacrorum de sa[xis deci]do lymphā
Et sunt ex lapide perfecta[e balnea]e pulchrae
Laetis inque locis natus la[us]. Haec] tamen ipsis
Tunc cum sospes erat coniux s[acravit] in usum
5 Emeritis quondam Alexandr[i] nomine dignae.
Raucisoni lapidoso cadunt [iam fo]nte liquores.
Tam laudati operis dominus ve[- -] et auctor
In suae memoriam voluit con[secrare] maritae.
Ut tamen et lector nomen cog[nosce]re possis,
10 Singulae declarant exordia l[itte]rae primae:
Aelia cum Tertia subole de coniuge [cas]ta
Ael(ius) Tertius.*

I, the clear spring Water, nurturer of every bath, fall down from these rocks, so that a beautiful bath, made of stone, could be built, and a pond could rise in this delightful landscape. This was once consecrated by a husband, when his wife was still alive, for the use of the veterans belonging to the legion worthy of the name of Alexander (Severus). Hear the hoarse-resounding clear water falling

⁵⁶ In Aquincum itself there were two amphitheatres, a military and a civil one.

⁵⁷ A similar expression can be found in a funerary verse inscription from Salona (*CIL III 9449 = CLE 581: Ma[n]es et super[i si quo vos carmine possunt] | [a]c Plutonīs adi[re domos, sit nunc quoque vobis] | [d]ulce cani [- - -] | - - - - -*).

⁵⁸ Busch 1999. For a verse inscription from a military Bath in Bu-Ngem, see *AE 1929.7B = IRT 918*.

from its rocky spring! The renowned donor and builder of this highly praised construction wanted to dedicate it to the memory of his wife. And in order that you too, reader, may learn his name, the first letter of each verse, the beginnings, will tell you: Ael(ius) Tertius, with Aelia Tertia, daughter of his chaste spouse. (*CIL* III 6306 = *CIL* III 8153; *CLE* 273; *ILJug* I 20; *IMS* I 48; *CLEMoes* 20; Papazoglu 1971 = *AE* 1973.470; Marcovich 1984 = *AE* 1987.852; HD011462, translation adapted from Marcovich 1984)

The function of this poem in hexameters is to commemorate the woman Tertius shared his life with, together with his daughter, but, at the same time, to state that he was responsible for the construction of these baths exclusively for veterans.⁵⁹

A debate regarding the circumstances of the construction of the bath and the person who was in charge of it unfolded immediately after the publication of the inscription, and it has remained unsolved. The meaning of the opening of *l.* 4 (*tunc cum sospes erat coniunx*) is ambiguous and hard to ascertain. The interpretation given by S. Busch⁶⁰ and E. Courtney,⁶¹ namely that Tertius' wife was running the bath for the veterans when she was still alive, seems implausible to a degree. F. Papazoglu suggested an alternative interpretation, supplementing the name *Alexandrea* at *l.* 5 and suggesting that this was the name of the wife who had dedicated the bath to the memory of her deceased husband.⁶² More promising attempts to elucidate the line have been made by M. Marcovich, who related the line to the husband, who would have built the bath after his recovery from an illness.⁶³ Finally, M. Mirković interprets the word *sospes* along the lines of 'having completed the military service'. Even if this set of interpretations seems more plausible than previous attempts, both are stretching the meaning of the Latin word *sospes*, which means 'alive'. If *coniunx* refers to Tertius' wife, then it is necessary to understand that the baths were built during her lifetime, and her commemoration following her death was just an occasion to remind the audience that Aelius Tertius was, in fact, the donor of the baths, by enshrining his name in the acrostic. The main question is, of course, who was Tertius and why did he invest in this building? The correct answer to that might lie in M. Mirković's view that *l.* 4. Tertius was probably a veteran of the legio IV Flavia who settled in Singidunum with his family and financed the building of the baths for his fellow veterans.

Courtney calls the versification of this *carmen* 'deplorable', a value judgement, that in its essence was shared also by Busch, who writes about literary half education of veterans in the provinces. Yet, the intentionality of composing a high-standard literary text is clear from the choice of the metre, even if the piece's prosody does not match that of literary poetry, and is perhaps influenced by an accentuating rhythm. In the text, the spring water is personified in the first person narrative, and it has been treated as some

⁵⁹ It is noteworthy that in Singidunum baths existed that were reserved for former legionary soldiers, who had settled in the civil centre, which at the time of this inscription was perhaps still a *municipium* or had just been elevated to the rank of *colonia*. The words at *l.* 5 *Alexandri nomine dignae* could refer to the reign of Severus Alexander as the legion received his name as epithet or in a more poetic way to Alexander the Great to whom also Caracalla was compared (see Mirković, *IMS* I 48).

⁶⁰ Busch 1999, 266–268: "Dies [alles] hat damals, als sie noch wohlbehalten war, die Gattin zum Gebrauch reserviert ...".

⁶¹ Courtney 1995, 66–67, no. 39: "However a married woman, while she was still alive, set me aside (?) and 262–263.

⁶² Papazoglu 1971.

⁶³ Marcovich 1984: "This was once consecrated by a husband, on the occasion of his recovery".

kind of local divine agent.⁶⁴ This literary device confers solemnity upon the whole text and brings it very close to poetic compositions dedicated in shrines in the proximity of natural springs.⁶⁵ This is completed by the use of words like *raucisonus* or *lapidosus* and by the effort to create the acrostic: perhaps not such deplorable versification after all, if one ought to engage in such ultimately useless and distracting forms of aesthetic judgements in scholarly appraisals of art.

3.3. Mirror, mirror on the wall

Craftsmen were active not only in the civil settlements that came to exist both in the vicinity of the military camps and also within their walls. These individuals were responsible for the construction of weapons in the *fabricae*, and for the production of other goods that were needed for everyday life.

An inscription from Carnuntum, composed in the 3rd century, seems to have been one of the rare dedications by one of them.

D(is) I(n)feris M(anibus).
Aurelie (!) Aureliani (scil. servae)
a(nnos) n(atae) XXXV et Bono fi(lio)
a(nnos) n(ato) X quem mihi
 5 *crudelis Genesis*
abstulit de sc(h)o(l)a (?)
immerentem et
Iuste (!) filie (!) a(nnos) n(atae) V
que (!) erat ingressa
 10 *atministrare (!) pa-*
rentibus dulcissim-
am aetate(m) Bonos-
us Firmani (scil. servus) imm-
unis speclariarius
 15 *leg(ionis) XIII G(eminae) qui ipse*
coniugi et fili(i)s sui[s]
fecit.

Sacred to the underworldly Spirits of the Departed.

For Aurelia, slave of Aurelianus, aged 35 years, and for Bonus, our son, aged 10 years, whom cruel Genesis snatched away, undeservedly, from the *schola* (?) and for Iusta, our daughter, aged 5 years, who had begun to regale her parents with her sweetest age.

Bonosus, slave of the *immunis* Firmanus, *speclariarius* of the legio XIV Gemina, who made this himself for his wife and his children. (CSIR-Ö I,4 517 = ILS 9094 = CLEPann 61; CLE 3039; HD073348; <http://lupa.at/238>)

In this inscription, a couple of soldiers' slaves are portrayed, Aurelia, slave of Aurelianus, and Bonosus, slave of Firmanus. They must have lived close to their masters in the *castra*

⁶⁴ Marcovich 1984.

⁶⁵ See, for example, the famous verse inscription from Germisara (AE 2015.1186).

of the *legio XIV Gemina* at Carnuntum. According to A. Passerini and B. Dobson, Bonosus held the post of *specularius* or *speculariarius*,⁶⁶ which would have given him the status of *immunis*⁶⁷ and would have been employed in the *fabrica* of the *castra*.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, it becomes clear from the inscription that Bonosus was not an *immunis* himself, but he was the slave of an *immunis* of the legion. He was an artisan, specialised in the production of mirrors, which he perhaps sold to the soldiers and their families.

This inscription offers an interesting insight into the side affairs carried out by soldiers stationed in the military fortresses along with their slaves. Bonosus was involved in some kind of mirror business with his master, but at the same time he had the chance to build his own family in Carnuntum. The premature death of his wife and of his two children led him to compose, perhaps himself, a very personal and moving funerary inscription which is not actually metrical, but contains two poetic clauses which specifically refer to the death of the two children. The sequence *que (!) erat ingressa | atminestrare (!) pa|rentibus dulcissim|am aetate(m)* at lines 9–11 invokes a dactylic rhythm.⁶⁹ A poetic intention can be seen in the choice of the words at lines 5–6. In particular, the use of the term *genesis* can be found in other *carmina epigraphica* like *CLE 1968 (o prava genesis!)* and *CLE 1992 (o quit tribuat genesis)*.⁷⁰ This selected use of emotional terms and poetic sequences has been defined by M. Massaro ‘prosa affettiva’, also referring specifically to this inscription.⁷¹

4. Hopes and fears

Common topics in verse inscriptions are the lamentation for a premature death, the consolation after the sudden loss of a relative and the praise of the virtues of the person. Despite the widespread formulaic expression that at a first glance might seem taken from ready repertoires and handbooks, personal stories and individual destinies are very often depicted in the verses. The hopes and fears of the deceased and of and for the people left behind can be read between the lines. These can show different personalities and approaches to life of the people involved in the composition.

⁶⁶ *Specularii* are artisans, slaves or *liberti*, attested mainly in Rome and in the *regio I*: *CIL VI 2206 (collegium speculariorum)*, 5203, 7299, 8659, 8660, 9899, 9900; *AE 1986.26*; 2001.775 (from Capri); *CIL X 3738* (from Atella). In one inscription from Apulum (*AE 2007.1198 = ILD II 934*) the abbreviation *SPECLAR* is to be expanded in *spec(u)la(to)r*; as we are clearly dealing with a soldier.

⁶⁷ This would have been attested only one at the time of Dobson’s edition of Domaszewski’s work on the *Rangordnung* of the Roman army. If *specularii* were actually *immunes*, which we do not believe, then the inscription *AE 2007.1198 = ILD II 934* (see footnote above) would be another piece of evidence.

⁶⁸ Domaszewski 1981, XV (B. Dobson).

⁶⁹ Cugusi in *CLEPann* 61.

⁷⁰ Cugusi in *CLEPann* 61.

⁷¹ Massaro 2023, 45–47. Massaro’s analysis also includes interesting observations on the vocabulary, like the use of the colloquial word *administrare*, which in its transitive form means serve food at the table / feed, and here it is used with the meaning of “feeding her parents with the sweetest age”.

4.1. The Time that Remains

The time that was left to live could be a matter of real concern for anybody in antiquity (just as much as it is today). We can grasp it in the verse part of a funerary inscription, written on a stele, that was found in 1883 in Petronell, Carnuntum. The formulae, the letters, and the style suggest a date of the monument in the 1st century AD:

- C(aius) Pedusius*
M(arci) f(ilius) Ani(ensi) Crem(ona)
vet(eranus) leg(ionis) XV Apo(llinaris)
ann(orum) LX stip(endiorum) XXIII
 5 *h(ic) s(itus) e(st).*
Amanda l(iberta) pos(u)it.
Inida mors rapuit fato
crudelis iniquo, nec licuit pretium
[su]mere militiae, non tantum
 10 *[carae cura]m (a)equam ut reddere pos-*
[sem liberta]e et dignae plurima
[quam foveat]. huic precor in
[longum extendan]t sua fila so-
[rores ac nostros ad]eat
 15 *[saepe memor cineres (?)].*

Gaius Pedusius, son of Marcus, of the tribus Aniensis, from Cremona, veteran of the legio XV Apollinaris, aged 60, with 24 years of service, lies here. Amanda, his freedwoman placed (*scil.* this monument).

Envious death cruelly snatched (*scil.* me) away in an unfair turn of fate, and it was not permitted to reap the reward for my military service, not even to the extent that I could return the equal attentive care to my dear, most deserving freedwoman that she gave to me. May those sisters (*i. e.* the Fates) kindly extend the threads (*scil.* of her life), I beg, for a long time . . . (*the remaining text is highly fragmentary and thus proposed reconstructions remain somewhat tenuous: . . . and may she often pay a commemorative visit to our ashes . . . ?*). (*CIL* III 11229 (cf. p. 2328.32) = *CLE* 1011 (cf. p. 857))

Finishing with honour the military service (*honestam missionem*) was the biggest wish of any Roman soldier. The attention given to the years of service, which is often also specified in months and days, is bigger than the one given to the age, frequently approximated.⁷²

Dying shortly before the end of the service was a reason of great pain for the soldier and his family, which is sometimes also expressed in inscriptions.⁷³ On the other hand, soldiers who died after the end of the service, no matter at what age, had accomplished their duty and could leave this world with no regret, ensuring a certain social and financial status to their nuclear families and relatives.

C. Pedusius from Cremona was already a veteran. He had served in Carnuntum, in the legio XV Apollinaris, and had been buried by his former slave, Amanda. Veterans do

⁷² Cenati 2023, 209–210 with further bibliography.

⁷³ See for example *CIL* VI 32808; *CLE* 474: *Ann(os) XXVI, ut sibi | castris honorem atquireret (!), ipse dolori ma[g]no sustentavit tempore longo. Postea, cum | sperans dolorem effugisse nefandam, ante | diem meritum hunc demersit at (!) Styga Pluton.* On this inscription, see also Cenati, Limes forthcoming.

not usually express the years of service as legally they no longer belonged to the military, but to the civilian society. The exception in the case of Pedusius, for whom a service of 24 years is declared (*stip(endiorum) XXIII*), must be due to the fact that he had served shorter than the usual 25 years of a legionary soldier. The number of years of service of veterans is indicated more often when these are more than the regular conscription, as this was of course, a reason for pride. The expression of the years of service in this inscription is therefore an exception.⁷⁴ Verse inscriptions for soldiers usually share the common feature of not addressing military topics in their text.⁷⁵ There are very rare and few exceptions, and in all cases the reference to the military service is linked to a honourable discharge, exactly as in this inscription (*ll. 8–9: nec licuit pretium | [su]mere militiae*).

Yet, in the case of Pedusius and Amanda, the long military service had a negative side, as it stole precious years to spend in retirement, enjoying the time after the discharge. The years of service had also prevented him from granting to his freedwoman Amanda what she deserved in return. Much remains unsaid about the relationship between Pedusius and his *liberta*, that led her to dedicate him not a simple funerary monument, but an inscription in verse. Judging from the affectionate expressions in the poetic part, written in smaller characters than the prescript, the two were a couple even if not bound in an official marriage. It is possible that Amanda had followed her master all the way from Cremona to assist him during his military service. As it often happened in the 1st century AD, soldiers were isolated and far away from their families, and the few relationships that they were able to develop in the place where they served became very strong, including those with unofficial partners. This may well constitute an important reason for the composition of verse inscriptions, which allowed to express deep feelings like, in the present case, captured the wish of Pedusius for his life partner Amanda—or actually the wish of Amanda for herself, as she writes the poem—to live a long life (*huic precor in | [longum extendan]t sua fila so|[rores]*).

4.2. If there is something on the other side...?

It is not unusual for slaves to be conceptualised by soldiers as family members. Some of the slaves followed their masters everywhere, also on expeditions (see section 2.3). Among these, we have to count grooms of members of cavalry units who were appointed to take care of the horses.⁷⁶ Soldiers took care of the funerary monuments, when some of these—most of the time: still young—servants died prematurely. One inscription in particular, whose findplace is unknown, but which might come from the necropolis of the *equites singulares Augusti* in Rome, is dedicated by a *duplicarius* of the cavalry unit to his attendant Miles.

D(is) M(anibus).
Militi s(uo), nat(ione) Marsac(o)
vix(it) ann(is) XVIII ob-

⁷⁴ On this Cenati 2022 with further examples.

⁷⁵ On civilian themes in verse inscriptions, see Massaro 2023 and Cenati, Tomis (forthcoming).

⁷⁶ See also Speidel 1994a; Speidel 1994b; James 2001.

- audientissimo ac*
 5 *fideliss(imo). T(itus) Aurelius*
Sanctinus dupl(icarius) sing(ularium)
imp(eratoris) n(ostri) optim(o) ac pien-
tissim(o) mihi fac(iendum) cur(avit).
Frater Flave, commen[do]
 10 *tibi delictum nostr[um]*
Militem si sunt aliq(uid) infer[i].

To the Spirits of the Departed. To his Miles from the tribe of Marsaci, who lived 19 years, most obedient and faithful. Titus Aurelius Sanctinus *duplicarius* of the Imperial Horse Guard had this monument erected for me, the best and most devoted servant. Brother Flavius, I entrust you with our dear Miles, if there are such things as the Gods of the Underworld. (CIL VI 3221 = AE 1973.67 = 1989.30 = 1991.233; Speidel 1994a, no. 691; EDR075392)

As his name suggests, Miles was born to be a soldier's slave. He was born in the province of Germania inferior, and he belonged to the tribe of the Marsaci.⁷⁷ It is possible that his master Sanctinus was recruited from the same province—a province from which many *equites singulares Augusti* originated.⁷⁸ In this case, he would have taken the young Miles with him to the city of Rome. The close relationship that had formed between the *duplicarius* and the young slave whom he fostered almost like a son is expressed in the first part of the inscription in the words *obaudientissimus* and *fidelissimus*, but is made especially clear at ll. 5–11, where he is regarded as *delictum*. The monument does not display a proper verse inscription, but there are several elements in this text that place it close to traditional ancient poetry, including an abrupt turn from the third to the first person at l. 5. At ll. 5–8 Miles speaks and declares that the monument was erected by Sanctinus. From l. 9, the speaking voice turns into that of Sanctinus, who beseeches his brother, Flavius, to take care of Miles in the Underworld. The concluding clause *si sunt aliquid inferi* finds parallels in Propertius in the form *Sunt aliquid Manes* (eleg. 4.7.1) and in other *carmina epigraphica*.⁷⁹

Just like the *praefectus classis* Postum(i)us, Sanctinus had more than just one groom. Some years later, after his promotion from *duplicarius* to *decurio*, Sanctinus dedicated another—now a ‘proper’—verse inscription, to a second groom, who died under unknown circumstances.⁸⁰

4.3. Relax, take it easy

The final inscription in this dossier is an exhortation to take life in the way it happens, and to be grateful for what one has been given. The text was engraved on a stele which

⁷⁷ Speidel 1985; Speidel – Panciera 1989.

⁷⁸ It is common that servants had the same nationality as their masters, see Speidel 1992, 348–350.

⁷⁹ CIL VI 24520 = CLE 1057: *Si sunt di manes, iam nati numen habetis*; CIL VIII 11594 = CLE 1328: *Si sunt Manes, sit tibi terra levis*.

⁸⁰ Speidel, Panciera 1989, 119–122 = Panciera 2006, 1415–1417 = AE 1989.91 = Speidel 1994a, no. 692 = EDR081242.

was very likely originally set up in Margum. The monument itself is now lost, but its representation is preserved in a drawing by Marsili.⁸¹ The inscription can be dated to the very first years of the presence of the legio IV Flavia in the province, i. e. around the end of the 1st century.⁸²

*L(ucio) Valerio Sex(ti) f(ilio) Vol(tinia) Serano
Luco ((centurioni) leg(ionis) IIII F(laviae) F(elicis)
L(ucius) Valerius Privatus et
L(ucius) Valerius Martialis*

- 5 *liberti et heredes
a se f(aciendum) c(uraverunt).
Non fui mari(t)us et rel(i)qui liberos servi
dominis: mac(t)e tu vale.*

Column 1:

*Valerius Secundus
Valerius Cerdo li{i}b(ertus)
Valerius Cresce(n)s li{i}b(ertus)
Valerius Verecund(us) li{i}b(ertus)*

Column 2:

*Valerius Gemelin(us) li{i}b(ertus)
Valerius Abrio li{i}b(ertus)
Valeria Ap(h)rodisia li{i}b(erta)
Valerius Ampliatus h(eres?) lib(ertus).*

To Lucius Valerius Seranus, son of Sextus of the tribe Voltinia, from Lucus, centurion of the legio IV Flavia Felix, his heirs Lucius Valerius Privatus and Lucius Valerius Martialis had the monument built at their own expenses.

I was not married and I left children / freedmen; I served my masters. Be blessed, farewell.

Valerius Secundus, Valerius Cerdo freedman, Valerius Crescens freedman, Valerius Verecundus freedman, Valerius Gemellinus freedman, Valerius Abrio freedman, Valeria Aphrodisia freedwoman, Valerius Ampliatus heir and freedman. (*CIL* III 1653 (cf. p. 1021) = III 8143 = *CLE* 2162 = *IDR* II.1, 1a = *IMS* II 325 = *CLE*Moes 2)

The monument commemorates a centurion of the legio IV Flavia, L. Valerius Seranus from Lucus. The provenance may be interpreted as either Lucus Feroniae in Italy or Lucus Augusti in Narbonensis, both places that were ascribed to the *tribus* Voltinia.⁸³ Seranus is a Celtic name that appears in many inscriptions from Aquitania and Narbonensis as an idionymic.⁸⁴ The centurion therefore must have been born in the Gallic centre. The monu-

⁸¹ *IMS ad loc.*

⁸² Rémy 2012 dates the inscription to the reign of Vespasian, but the legio IV Flavia arrived in Moesia superior only under Domitian during the preparation of the war against Decebalus.

⁸³ Soldiers of the IV Flavia in the first and 2nd century come from different centres of Italy, Africa, Macedonia and Gaul. The legion is therefore of no help to recognise Seranus' provenance Bellunum, Beneventum (*CIL* III 1480), Lugdunum (*CIL* III 14995), Vindobona (*CIL* III 1665), Sirmium (*IMS* I 34), Caesarea Augusta (*CIL* III 14511), Bracara Augusta in Tarraconensis (*IMS* II 87), Brixia (*IMS* II 88), Scupi? (*AE* 2006.1194), Stobi (*AE* 1948.147), Viminacium (*CIL* III 10250), Sirmium (*AE* 1994.1460), Ticinum (*CIL* III 4593), Vienna (*CIL* III 4245).

⁸⁴ Delamarre 2007, 167.

ment itself was erected by two of Seranus' freedmen, L. Valerius Privatus and L. Valerius Martialis. The verse part is limited to two lines in an iambic rhythm (*Non fui maritus et reliqui liberos. | Servi dominis: macte tu vale*) and is followed by the list of eight further *liberti*, whose names are arranged on two columns and are written in smaller letters. These are listed to be remembered together with their master, even if they did not take part in financing the funerary monument. The ten *liberti* were in some way, and certainly felt like, family to Seranus. This notion is summed up with a light humor in the only poetic clause, which is an example, as also Cugusi also points out,⁸⁵ of a spell, a popular saying. The phrase plays with the double meaning of the word *liber* which means both 'son' and 'free person', exactly as the ten freedmen listed on the monument, who were at the same time Seranus' former slaves, perhaps freed by testament, and his family far from home.⁸⁶ Incidentally, this is not the only wordplay in this inscription, as the clause *servi dominis* may also be interpreted in different ways: *servi* can be understood as the perfect of *servio*, equivalent of *servivi*, as displayed in the translation, or it can be intended as an imperative 'Serve your masters!'

It has been observed on other occasions that military units have their specific epigraphic fingerprints. This has been stated recently also in respect to verse inscriptions, like those of the *equites singulares Augusti* in Rome.⁸⁷ Epigraphic patterns travelled with the soldiers, and they became peculiar to military settlements and units. For the first soldiers settling in Moesia superior, in particular, these have to be searched outside the province. The popular saying *non fui maritus et reliqui liberos* can be compared to the very common *non fui, fui, meminī, non sum* which is widespread in verse inscriptions. In particular, the wordplay with *liber* interpreted as free or son finds a parallel in a verse inscription in Africa,⁸⁸ while the clause *reliqui liberos* seems to cluster in central Italy in the 1st century.⁸⁹ The use of it in Seranus' poem could be due to the contact with soldiers recruited from Italy in the 1st century legions.

⁸⁵ CLEMoes 2, ad loc.

⁸⁶ Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 1998; Linden-High 2020.

⁸⁷ Cenati, Limes (forthcoming).

⁸⁸ CIL VIII 15719 = CLE 623 = ILTun 1586 = CLEAfrigue 64 (Sicca Veneria, Africa Proconsularis): *Et iacet hic talis qui nunquam fraudibus iste laetatus post | magnos ac | tus pauperes | reliquit li |beros spe libe |ros.*

⁸⁹ CIL IX 7072 = AE 2003.567 (S. Valentino in Abruzzo citeriore, Samnium): *Mevia sum (mulieris) l(iberta) | Nicipolis (!) in Asia | nata hic occidi | vixi ut pauper sa |tis esse(m) an(nos) LIII exis |timavi quod ad | superos tres re |liqui liberos | vos valete; CIL IX 3158 = ILS 2682 = CLERegio IV, 30 (Corfinium, Samnium): - - - - - | Nigri annos XXXVIII u[n]i | nupta viro summa cum | concordia ad ultimum (!) | diem pervenit tres ex [e]o | superstites reliquid (!) liberos | unum maximis municipi(i) honorib(us) | iudiciis Aug(usti) Caesaris usum | alterum castr(e)n(s)ibus eiusdem | Caesaris August(i) summis [eq]u[es] |tris ordinis honoribus et iam | superiori destinatum ordini | filiam sanctissimam probissimo | viro coniunctam et ex ea duos | | [nepotes - - -] || [- - - -] | dedit [- - -] | quas [- - -] rib[- - -] | - - - - -; CIL IX 2778 (Bovianum Vetus, Samnium): - - - - - | [- - -]cia [- - -] et sibi v(ivus) f(ecit) | incolumes reliquit | [f]ilios IIII P(ublium) Cattium Optatum | [- - -]attium Ferozem C(aium) Cat[ti]um | Celere[m] et M(arcum) Cattium Dex[tr]um vixit annis XXXVII | florentissimo co(n)s(ulis) L(uci) Catti | Sev[er]i in hoc prato sita est.*

5. Conclusions

Although this overview is far from providing a complete and exhaustive dossier of all literary and epigraphic documents about the camp followers of the Roman army, it may be sufficient to get an idea of the different trends in these two types of sources. What we read in inscriptions fully contradicts, and balances out, the literary sources that sharply criticise the discipline of the soldiers' slaves and depict camp followers as a hindrance both in the military camps and on the battlefield.

Verse inscriptions provide a unique insight into the everyday life of Roman soldiers, especially on the *limes*. By analysing the interaction of soldiers with paramilitary and non military personnel under different perspectives, we can clearly see how these people were emotionally and economically essential parts of the everyday life of soldiers, thus representing a crucial economical factor and contributing to the development of the civil settlements on the *limes*.

Merchants following the army, soldiers' families and slaves experienced a start in a new life in a different region or province, which sometimes included having to bury a relative far from their motherland. Having to cope with the separation of a family or with a life constantly on the move is a common topic in their verse inscriptions.

Carmina on stone also provide vivid portraits of craftsmen, artists and benefactors, who proudly contributed with their work to the wellbeing and entertainment of soldiers.

Finally, emotions like fear, hope and grief find space and are expressed in verse inscriptions. Some of them are directly related to military life, like the concern of not having enough time with the family after too many years of military service, or not leaving behind an offspring after the death. Some others are more general like the universal question of what is there after death.

ABBREVIATIONS

CILA – *Corpus de inscripciones Latinas de Andalucia*, Sevilla 1989–

CLE – F. Bücheler, E. Lommatzsch, *Carmina Latina Epigraphica*, Leipzig 1895–1926.

CLE IV – P. Cugusi, M.T. Sblendorio Cugusi, *Carmina Latina Epigraphica IV. Vol. 1. Carmina in provinciis reperta*, Berlin/Boston 2023.

CLEAfrique – D. Pikhhaus, *Répertoire des inscriptions latines versifiées de l'Afrique romaine (I^{er} – VI^e siècle)*, Bruxelles 1994.

CLEBaeticae – C. Fernandez Martinez, *Carmina Latina epigraphica de la Bética Romana. Las primeras piedras de nuestra poesia*, Sevilla 2007.

CLEMoes – P. Cugusi, M. T. Sblendorio Cugusi, *Carmina Latina Epigraphica Moesiaca (CLEMoes)*, Bologna 2008.

CLEPann – P. Cugusi, M. T. Sblendorio Cugusi, *Studi sui carmi epigrafici. Carmina Epigraphica Pannonica (CLEPann)*, Bologna 2007.

CLERegio IV – M. Buonocore (1997), *Carmina Latina Epigraphica Regionis IV Augusteae*. Avvio ad un censimento, *GIF* 49: 21–50.

- CSIR-Ö – *Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani, Österreich*, Wien 1967–
 EDR – *Epigraphic Database Roma*.
 HEp – *Hispania Epigraphica*, Madrid 1989–
 IDR – *Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae*, București 1975–
 ILLD – C. C. Petolescu, *Inscriptiile latine din Dacia*, București 2005.
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