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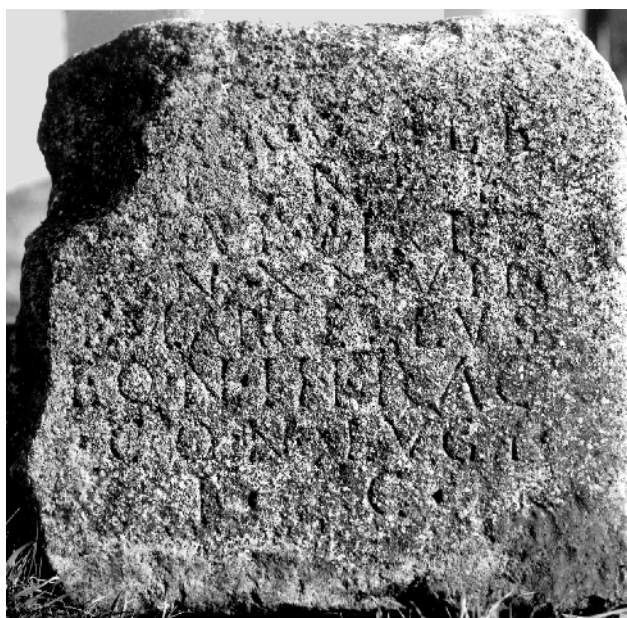
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At Csákberény (Hungary, Fejér county, north of Székesfehérvár, Fig. 1) the lower part of a Roman tablet with the inscription-field was found two years ago. According to the finder it was found in the plough-land next to the settlement. Now it can be found at Soponya in front of the house of Zoltán Varga. The area of Csákberény could belong to the civitas Azalorum in Pannonia Inferior¹ and earlier several inscriptions were found here.² In the last century a villa rustica with six buildings was unearthed at Csákberény-Orondpuszta.³ It can be dated to the 3rd c. AD. The tablet is of limestone, 0.45 m high, 0.49 m wide, 0.16 m thick. The letters are 3–4 cm high. The inscription is almost complete, the letters are very thin, but otherwise well preserved. The tablet could be used secondarily in a late Roman grave, therefore the upper part of the slab was cut.

The inscription reads:



*[D(is) M(anibus)]
Aur(eliae) Vale-
ntinae
quae vixit
5 ann(os) XXVII
Marcellus
eq(ues) n(umeri) III T(h)rac(um)
coniugi
f(aciendum) c(uravit).*

The lettering is clear and doubtless. It can be dated surely to the 3rd century according to the lack of the praenomina, the Aurelius nomen and the style of the letters. The cognomina Valentina and Marcellus occur very often in Pannonia, we know several Aureliae Valentinae (RIU 636, 693, CIL III 3678, 10528) and Marcelli (e.g. RIU 738, 779, 876, 924, 967) in Pannonia Inferior as well.⁴ This cognomen became frequent after Marcus Aurelius. The formula *f(aciendum) c(uravit)* occurs in Pannonia relatively frequently still in the 3rd c.⁵

The only problematical part of the inscription is the 7th line where the military unit of Marcellus can be read. After the word *eq(ues)* an N letter can be clearly read. In this case the letter surely cannot be

¹ A. Mócsy, *Die Bevölkerung von Pannonien bis zu den Markomannenkriegen*, Budapest 1959, 55–58, 123.

² AEp 1909, 143; A. Schober, *Die römischen Grabsteine von Noricum und Pannonien*, Wien 1926, 275; *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 27, 1907, 234–236; *Archaeologiai Értesítő* 26, 1906, 46.

³ E. B. Thomas, *Römische Villen in Pannonien*, Budapest 1964, 273–274.

⁴ L. Barkóczi, *The population of Pannonia from Marcus Aurelius to Diocletian*, *Acta Archaeologica Hungarica* 16, 1964, 257–356, 317, 326; A. Mócsy, *Nomenclator provinciarum Europae Latinarum et Galliae Cisalpinae cum indice inverso*, Diss. Pann. III.1, Budapest 1983, 178, 299. For the cognomina see I. Kajanto, *The Latin cognomina*, Helsinki–Helsingfors 1965, 46–47, 124–127.

⁵ E.g. (around Brigetio): RIU 636, 677, 679, 681, 690, 693–94, 696, 706, 712.

understood as an AL ligatura.⁶ Therefore the N can be only the abbreviation of the word *numerus*. The meaning of the followings letters (N III TRAC) is clear: *n(umerus) III T(h)rac(um)*.

From Carnuntum we know a *librarius numeri* (CIL III 11135) but earlier we had no information about a *numerus* in Pannonia Inferior except two inscriptions from Intercisa (Dunaújváros). The first is an altar where the *numerus Osroenorum* is mentioned (RIU 1073), but this unit never stationed here or elsewhere in Pannonia.⁷ According to the inscription, Barsemis Abbei decurio of the unit later became magister of the cohort *milliaria Hemesenorum* and he erected the altar as a magister. The other one is a tombstone mentioning the *numerus equitum scutariorum* (RIU 1205). The unit could station in Intercisa in the 2nd half of the 3rd century because there is no mention about it in the *Notitia Dignitatum*.⁸ There are no archaeological data on a *numerus* fort in Pannonia either. Therefore a new *numerus Thracum* would be very unusual. According to my opinion the solution of this problem can be found elsewhere.

The meaning of the word *numerus* has been discussed for a relatively long time.⁹ The simplest supposition would be that the *numerus III Thracum* belonged to the national *numeri* of the Roman army. Against it there are several counter-arguments. The most important fact is that we do not know any Thracian *numerus*. From Thracia just cohorts and *alae* are known. The term *numerus III Thracum* is also against the supposition, because the title of an ethnic unit looks quite different: the ethnic name in plural genitive without serial number (and the adjective derived from the place-name also in plural genitive) (e.g. *numerus Maurorum Miciensium* or *Tibiscensium*). The units could be distinguished by fort names.

The term *numerus* can also mean an auxiliary unit or a *vexillation* according to our epigraphical and papyrological sources.¹⁰ In this context the military term *numerus* means nothing more than unit. On these inscriptions (e.g. AE 1927, 95, CIL III 1607, 12557, CIL XIII 8818) the cohorts or *alae* are always mentioned as *numeri* but the inscriptions always mention the real name of the units above in the texts as well. It was probably used to avoid repetition of the word *cohors* or *ala*. The inscription from Csákberény can belong to these inscriptions. The unit can be identified only with the *ala III Augusta Thracum* because the cohort III *Thracum* stationed in Pannonia just in the 1st c. AD.¹¹ The *ala* stationed from 118/19 in the 2nd and 3rd centuries in Odiavum (Almásfüzitő) according to military diplomas and epigraphical sources (CIL XVI 76–77, 178, 96–97, M. Roxan, *Roman military diplomas 1954–1977*. London 1978, 62, RIU 277, 560, 646, 704, CIL III 4626, 4627 = 11334, 11327, 11333b).¹² Its latest inscriptions can be dated to 252 AD (RIU 704) and 269 (CIL III 11333b).¹³ The inscriptions of the *ala* were found in the area of Azaum, the first inscription from the “Hinterland” (Kisigmánd) was recently

⁶ See M. P. Speidel, *Numerus or ala Vocontiorum at Palmyra?*, in: *Roman army studies I*, Amsterdam 1984, 167–169 = *Syria* 49, 1972, 494–497 (in French).

⁷ A. von Domaszewski, *Die Rangordnung des römischen Heeres*, Bonn 1908 (2nd edition by B. Dobson, Köln 1967), 59; M. P. Speidel, *The rise of ethnic units in the Roman imperial army*, ANRW II,3 (1975), 229 = *Roman army studies I*, Amsterdam 1984, 117–148, esp. 145–146; PWRE 17, 1937, 2548–2549.

⁸ B. Lőrincz, *Késő római hadsereg [The late Roman army]*, in: *Pannonia régészeti kézikönyve [Archaeological handbook of Pannonia]*, ed. by A. Mócsy – J. Fitz, Budapest 1990, 84–85.

⁹ H. T. Rowell, *Numerus*, PWRE 17, 1937, 1327–1341, 2538–2554; F. Vittinghoff, *Zur angeblichen Barbarisierung des römischen Heeres durch die Verbände der Numeri*, *Historia* 1, 1950, 389–407; H. Callies, *Die fremden Truppen im römischen Heer des Prinzipats und die sogenannten nationalen Numeri*, BRGK 1964, 130–227; M. P. Speidel, op. cit. (note 7); P. Southern, *The numeri of the Roman imperial army*, *Britannia* 20, 1989, 81–140.

¹⁰ PWRE 17, 1328; M. P. Speidel, op. cit. (note 7), 205–206; id., *Citizen cohorts in the Roman imperial army. New data on the cohorts Apula, Campana and III Campestris*, TAPA 106, 1976, 346–347 = *Roman army studies I*, Amsterdam 1984, 98–99.

¹¹ B. Lőrincz, *Segédcsoportok [Auxiliary units]*, in: *Pannonia régészeti kézikönyve [Archaeological handbook of Pannonia]*, ed. by A. Mócsy – J. Fitz, Budapest 1990, 72–82.

¹² For Odiavum see E. Bíró, *Azaum*, in: *Der römische Limes in Ungarn*, Székesfehérvár 1976, 39; Zs. Visy, *Der pannonische Limes in Ungarn*, Budapest 1988, 58ff.

¹³ For the inscription RIU 277 cf. M. Nagy, *A double building inscription from Pannonhalma, Specimina Nova dissertationum ex Instituto Historico Universitatis Quinqueelesiensis de Iano Pannonio nominatae XI*, 1995, 147–153.

published by Zs. Visy.¹⁴ The lack of the name Augusta on the inscription of the ala occurs relatively often.¹⁵ Azaum after 214 AD belonged to Pannonia Inferior, therefore the tombstone must have been erected after this date. The family (the wife) of Marcellus may have lived in the Romanized native civil settlement of Csákberény or rather in a villa rustica far away (approx. 45 kms) from Odiavum and the limes. Because of the findspot the husband and his wife could come from a native family. In the 3rd c. the cognomina Valentinus and Marcellus were frequently used by natives as well.¹⁶

The closest parallel of this numerus inscription (an ala is also termed numerus) was found at Vechten (Germania Inferior, CIL XIII 8818, cf. Suppl. p. 145)¹⁷: *D(is) M(anibus). Valenti Bititrali(s filio) vet(erano) ex n(umero) ala(e) I [Thr]acum. H(eres) f(aciendum) c(uravit).*

On this inscription the ala was mentioned as well but on the tombstone of Csákberény it was not. The question is why it did not seem necessary to mention the ala on the inscription. It seems to be impossible that the numerus III Thracum was derived from the earlier ala after 269 (the date of the latest inscription of the ala) because an ala would not be used to create a less privileged unit.¹⁸ The fact is that in the 3rd c. the usage of the term numerus instead of the original of a unit became more frequent is proved by our literary sources of the 3rd century as well. Especially the classical jurists used it.¹⁹ According to my opinion the tombstone of Csákberény could be the part of this process. Most of the above mentioned inscriptions where the term numerus was used can be dated to the 2nd c. The only exceptions could be the inscription from Stratonikeia (CIL III 12257) and a revised altar from Carnuntum (CIL III 11135).²⁰ The altar of Iuppiter Dolichenus may have been erected by a librarius numeri s(uprascripti) under Maximinus Thrax. In this case the legion was called numerus. The letter of Marius Maximus from Dura-Europos where tribb. et praeff. nn (numeratorum) were mentioned can be dated to 208 AD (AnEp 1933, 107). Our new inscription can be the latest known numerus-inscription. It was surely erected after 214 AD and probably in the middle or rather in the 2nd half of the 3rd c. It also seems possible that after the military reform of Gallienus the numerus derived from the earlier ala but we have no data (or parallel) on this process in the 2nd half of the 3rd c. This can also be the reason why just the term numerus was used.²¹

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¹⁴ A recently found new inscription: Zs. Visy, Neue römische Inschriftsteine aus Pannonien, Specimina Nova dissertationum ex Instituto Historico Universitatis Quinqueeclensis de Iano Pannonio nominatae 1989, 25–42, 27–28, Nr. 1 = AÉp 1993, 1292.

¹⁵ Cf. the tombstone from Kisigmánd and RIU 560, 646, 704. For the lack of the letter H in the word Thrax (ala III T(h)rac(um)) cf. S. Soproni, Előzetes jelentés a bölcskei késő római ellenerőd kutatásáról – Vorläufiger Bericht über die Erforschung der spätrömischen Gegenfestung in Bölcske, Communicationes Archaeologicae Hungariae 1990, 133–142, 135, Nr. 12, 14 (altars of the praefecti of the ala I Thracum veterana).

¹⁶ L. Barkóczy, op. cit., 317, 326.

¹⁷ G. Alföldy, Die Hilfstruppen in der römischen Provinz Germania Inferior, Düsseldorf 1968, 188, Nr. 68.

¹⁸ On the contrary under Decius in Dacia the numerus Palmyrenorum Porolissensium was transformed into an ala and a cohort (CIL III 908 = ILS 9472). Cf. PWRE XVII, 1340.

¹⁹ E.g. Ulpian (Dig. 37,13,2): *ex alio numero militum in alium translatus*. Cf. Callies, op. cit. 175–178.

²⁰ M. P. Speidel, A Pannonian *optio vexillationis* buried at Stratonikeia, Epigraphia Anatolica 6, 1985, 77 = Roman army studies II. Mavors VIII, Stuttgart 1992, 69; id., The career of a legionary, TAPA 112, 1982, 209–214 = Roman army studies I, Amsterdam 1984, 197–202.

²¹ I wish like to thank Barnabás Lőrincz for his helpful advice. The drawings were made by Edina Fácányi.

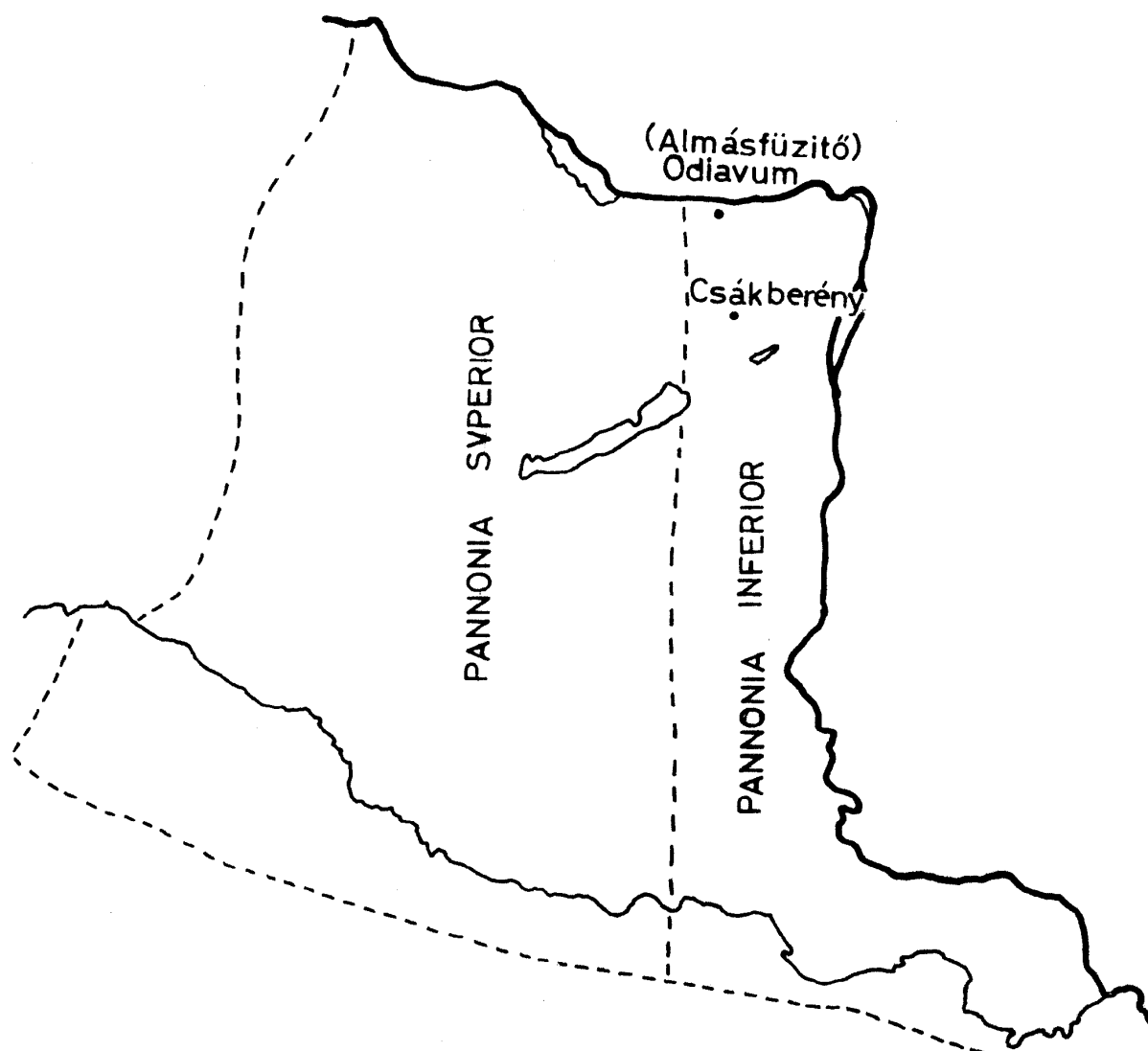


Fig. 1. Pannonia Inferior after 214 AD