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A NEW EQUESTRIAN FAMILY FROM POETOVIO

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The lower part of a sarcophagus of white Pohorje marble was discovered in 1977 at Vičava in Ptuj during the diggings for the sewerage-system, supervised by B.Jevremov who first published this important monument (Tafel VIa).¹ Extant is the lower third of the sarcophagus with the inscription on its longer lateral side, in a framed inscribed field to the right of which a side niche is preserved. This type of sarcophagus - with its longer lateral side divided into three fields, a central inscribed one, and two side figural niches, usually ending above with the so-called Norican-Pannonian volute - is characteristic of the Norican-Pannonian region and was developed from the similarly composed ash-chests.² On the upper part, ca. two lines of the inscription are missing, and it is also damaged on the left side on which the frame is broken off, as well as the whole of the left niche (46 x 194 x 119 cm., HL: 5-4.3 cm.). It seems, however, that only the first of the preserved lines is damaged on the left. In the right niche one can see only the crossed legs of a standing *genius*, who is leaning against a torch turned upside down. The preserved narrow side of the sarcophagus is likewise smoothly worked and framed. The inscription runs as follows:

[*P. Aelio -- et --*]
 [*P.] Aelius Marinus d[ec(urio) col(oniae) Poetov(ionensis)]*
eq(uo) publ(ico) praef(ectus) coh(ortis) II Hispanorum et
P. Aelius Marcianus dec(urio) col(oniae) eiusdem
 5 *eq(uo) publ(ico) praef(ectus) coh(ortis) I Germanorum*
parentibus pientissimis

Lettering careful. Triangular interpunction between the words. 1 At least two lines lacking.

2 The line is badly damaged on the right but the reading is assured. 4 The stone-cutter had to skip over a crack in the stone and carve the last three letters of the word *Germanorum* slightly smaller and above the line.

The two brothers P. Aelii most probably belonged to the family whose father - or perhaps already their grandfather - had acquired citizenship rights from Hadrian. This fact, combined with what we know of this type of ash-chests and sarcophagi date the erection of the

¹ B.Jevremov, *Varstvo spomenikov* 21, 1977, 251 (without phot.). Id., *Vodnik po lapidariju*, Ptuj 1988, 115-116 No. 132, phot. I would very much like to thank Dr. Hans Lieb and Professor Werner Eck who kindly read the paper and offered valuable suggestions.

² Erna Diez, *Die Aschenkisten von Poetovio*, *JÖAI* 37, 1948, 151ff., especially 171ff. B.Djurić, unpubl. dissertation, Ljubljana 1991.

monument to the post-Hadrianic period, to the middle of the 2nd century A.D., possibly even to its first half.

Any new inscription from Poetovio on which an *equus Romanus*, a native of Poetovio, is attested is a rarity deserving special attention. The *cognomina* of the two brothers, Marinus and Marcianus, are not native Celtic names, yet it is interesting that Marinus is a name which - although everywhere attested - is especially characteristic of the Celtic regions.³ Marcianus is a frequent *cognomen* in Pannonia, although, as the evidence available to Mócsy showed, it occurs more often after Marcus Aurelius.⁴ Thus it is not possible to conclude on the basis of onomastics that they belonged to an autochthonic Poetovionic family but this is by no means excluded. In any case they were living in Poetovio at least for one generation as their local provenance is confirmed by the fact that they took care of the burial of their parents. Both brothers were members of the *ordo decurionum* of their native town which attained colonial status under Trajan.⁵

Each commanded a cohort. It may be presumed that the order of offices as they are given on the inscription, i.e. municipal office followed by the appointment to the command of a cohort is actually the chronological order of their career although this should not be regarded as entirely certain.⁶ The first mentioned and probably the elder of the two brothers was prefect of the *cohors II Hispanorum* which could have been *scutata Cyrenaica* attested in the years 154 (?) and 164 on several diplomas in Dacia Porolissensis.⁷ It could however have been stationed there right from the establishment of the province ca. 120/123, and according to Kraft it was in Dacia probably since 108.⁸ Its garrison in Dacia Porolissensis was located at Resculum (present-day Bologna).⁹ The other possibility which could be considered for the identification of the cohort *II Hispanorum* is *equitata p(ia) f(idelis)* attested on a diploma of A.D. 129/130 in Germania Superior where it was stationed at Stockstadt¹⁰ and is attested

³ I.Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina*, Helsinki 1965, 308; G.Alföldy, *Die Personennamen in der römischen Provinz Dalmatia* (Beiträge zur Namenforschung Bh.4) Heidelberg 1969, 238; A.Mócsy, *Die Bevölkerung von Pannonien bis zu den Markomannenkriegen*, Budapest 1959, 180.

⁴ Kajanto 150; Alföldy 238; Mócsy 180.

⁵ B.Saria, *RE XXI,1* (1951) s.v. Poetovio.

⁶ As Dr. Hans Lieb kindly pointed out to me, this cannot be regarded as the only possibility and the reversed order should also be considered. He drew my attention to the sentence in E.Birley's article *The Equestrian Officers of the Roman Army*, Durham Univ. Journal Dec. 1949, revised and republished in: Id., *The Roman Army (MAVORS)* 1988, 151, for which I most gratefully thank him. Nevertheless it seems to me more likely that the brothers had first been decuriones who later entered their military equestrian career, and this seems to fit better the general conclusions of Birley's study.

⁷ Margaret M. Roxan, *Roman Military Diplomas 1954-1977*, London 1978, and *Roman Military Diplomas 1978-1984*, 1985, Nos. 47, 63, 64, [66], [65/115], [116], [117].

⁸ K.Kraft, *Zur Rekrutierung der Alen und Kohorten an Rhein und Donau*, Bernae 1951, 178 No. 1510.

⁹ J.Beneš, *Auxilia Romana in Moesia atque in Dacia*. (Studie arch. úst. českosl. akad. Brno VI/2). Prague 1978, 39-40, cf. 117.

¹⁰ Roxan II (n. 7) 152 No. 90; Kraft (n. 8) 177 (C.Cichorius, *RE IV,1*, 1900, 300,11). See *Die Römer in Hessen*. Stuttgart 1982, 479f.

there also under Antoninus Pius.¹¹ The second brother, P. Aelius Marcianus, was prefect of the *cohors I Germanorum (equitata?) c(ivium) R(omanorum)*, which is documented on a diploma of ca. A.D. 157 in Moesia Inferior,¹² where it was stationed at Capidava (present-day Topalu).¹³ Its previous garrison had perhaps been in Upper Germany where it is actually documented on the same diploma of A.D. 129/130 on which *II Hispana* is also mentioned.¹⁴ But it seems more probable, that the cohort *I Germanorum* in Germany is some other cohort of the same name as it is attested several times at a later date at Wimpfen, Jagsthausen and Olnhausen.¹⁵ Its *centurio* is known from an inscription from the end of the 2nd century at Olnhausen (CIL XIII 6555) which may have been its fortress. It seems likely that both brothers served under Antoninus Pius by whom they were most probably admitted to the equestrian rank¹⁶ as prefects of the two cohorts, stationed in Germania Superior. An earlier datation, such as the late years of Hadrian's reign, which would otherwise not be excluded on the basis of stylistic elements of the sarcophagus, seems an unlikely possibility, as there is hardly any evidence that new citizens attained equestrian status under the same emperor by whom they were awarded the citizenship.¹⁷

The only other family of equestrian rank attested on the Poetovio inscriptions were the Valerii,¹⁸ their most illustrious member, M. Valerius Maximianus - after his exceptional equestrian career during the Marcomannic Wars - was admitted by Marcus Aurelius among senators with the praetorian rank (*in amplissimum ordinem inter praetorios allectus*).¹⁹ As was shown by G.Alföldy, the Valerii were doubtless of foreign origin and probably came from northern Italy to settle in the prosperous commercial town situated along the ancient Amber Road.²⁰ Interestingly most of the *duumviri* attested to date in the first two centuries A.D. in Poetovio were members of the Valerii family which was no doubt the most important family in the city in the period before the Marcomannic Wars.²¹ New evidence will probably reveal members of other families besides the Valerii, holding duumvirate in

¹¹ E.Stein, *Die kaiserlichen Beamten und Truppenkörper im römischen Deutschland unter dem Prinzipat*. Vienna 1932, 195f.

¹² Roxan I (n. 7) 72-73 No. 50.

¹³ Beneš (n. 9) 36, cf. 102.

¹⁴ Roxan II (n. 7) 152 No. 90. Cf. CIL XVI 62 and 80; Kraft (n. 8) 176 (C.Cichorius, RE IV,1, 293,44).

¹⁵ E.Stein (n. 11) 192-193.

¹⁶ See Ségolène Demougin, *L'ordre équestre sous les Julio-Claudiens* (Coll. de l'Ec. fr. de Rome 108, 1988) 202: she maintains that the person who specifically stated to possess *equum publicum* is most usually the first member of the family to have entered the equestrian rank. This opinion is also shared by Dr. H.Lieb who kindly drew my attention to it.

¹⁷ I would like to thank Prof. W.Eck, to whom I am indebted for this observation.

¹⁸ G.Alföldy, *Die Valerii in Poetovio*, *Arh. vest.* 15-16, 1964-65, 137-144.

¹⁹ AE 1956, 124 from Diana Veteranorum. See G.Alföldy, P. Helvius Pertinax und M. Valerius Maximianus, *Opuscula I. Kastelic sexagenario dicata, Situla 14/15*, 1974, 199-215.

²⁰ Alföldy (n. 18) 141.

²¹ Alföldy, *op.cit.* (n. 18) maintained that all were Valerii, and it is only recent evidence which brought about modification of this statement.

Poetovio; one such family who belonged to the highest city elite is now known to have been the Cassii. T. Cassius Verinus who had been *dec(urio) col(oniae) Poet(ovionensium)*, as well as *praef(ectus) fabr(um)* and *praef(ectus) pro II vir(is)* is documented on a recently discovered dedication to the Nutrices.²² The last posting mentioned on the inscription, *praefectus pro II viris*, is already attested for Poetovio as it was also held by a member (his name is not preserved) of the Valerii family (AIJ 279).²³ The dedication of T. Cassius Verinus and his wife Donnia Maximilla for the health of their son T. Cassius Severus was dated by the editor to the beginning of the 3rd century A.D., but must certainly be assigned to the second half of the 2nd century. An earlier date is suggested not only by the onomastic formula (the son, too, bears *tria nomina*), but also by the letter-forms and stylistic elements of the relief.²⁴

As is indicated by the present state of evidence, the only other family until now known in Poetovio - besides the Valerii - whose members attained equestrian status seems to have been the family of the brothers P. Aelii Marinus and Marcianus. They may have belonged to the romanized epichoric inhabitants of the formerly Norican town but they could well have been descendants of a colonist family of veteran or other origin. The sarcophagus they had erected for their parents certainly shows a typically Norican-Pannonian decoration, although this fact in itself can of course not be regarded as evidence of their ethnic appartenance. At most it is an additional proof that they were well integrated in the life of their community. The recently-found inscriptions have shown that in the 2nd century other families, too, besides the Valerii, became prominent among the ruling elite in Poetovio, thus the Casii who may have come, like the Valerii, from northern Italy. Most probably the Donnii, too - assuming that intermarriage among members of the same social class was usually a rule - were one of the important Poetovionic families, and almost certainly of Celtic origin. And, lastly, the P. Aelii who had acquired citizenship comparatively late, under Hadrian, but whose members attained, perhaps a generation later, the equestrian rank. Poetovio acquired colonial status under Trajan who also gave citizenship rights to a relatively large percentage of the inhabitants.²⁵ It is interesting that to date no Ulpii are attested among the members of the *ordo decurionum*; as *decuriones* the following citizens are known besides Valerii: C. Iulius Magnus (CIL III 4068 = AIJ 388), T. Aelius Patrinus and T. Aelius Celer (CIL III 4067), Aelius Secundinus (CIL III 4052/3 + p. 1746, 2278 = AIJ 328), C. Clodius Avitus (CIL III

²² I. Tušek, Neue römische Reliefsteine und Inschriften aus Ptuj, Arh. vest. 37, 1986, 349, phot. Tab. 8.

²³ For the possible explanation of the office see Maria Silvia Bassignano, I "praefecti iure dicundo" nell'Italia settentrionale, Epigrafia. Actes du colloque en mémoire de Attilio Degrassi. Coll. de l'Ec. fr. de Rome 143, Rome 1991, 535f., if, indeed, praefecti pro II viris could be regarded the same as praefecti iure dicundo.

²⁴ I gratefully thank Prof. Erna Diez for having confirmed my datation of the monument and for having kindly discussed it with me.

²⁵ For Ulpii in Poetovio see A. Mócsy (n. 3) 213ff. No. 64. For recent epigraphic evidence see the volumes of AE.

4022), one [-Ma]nsuetus (CIL III 4050), and the above mentioned *praef(ectus) fabr(um)* and *praef(ectus) pro II vir(is)* T. Cassius Verinus. These families were reckoned among the municipal elite, and it was possible for some members of some of them to attain the equestrian rank. Two of these were P. Aelii Marinus and Marcianus.

There are other P. Aelii known in Poetovio: one P. Aelius Vitalis is attested on a fragmentary inscription on the lid of a sarcophagus,²⁶ he may or may not have belonged to the family of Marinus and Marcianus. And further there are a number of Aelii without a *praenomen* attested on the Poetovio inscriptions²⁷ which indicates that Hadrian or Antoninus Pius (the T. Aelii, too, are known) - well in accordance with their policy in general - were not reluctant in awarding citizenship rights to the inhabitants of the colony founded by their predecessor.²⁸ The period of these two emperors during which both brothers performed their careers - certainly outstanding if compared to the majority of the careers of other members of the municipal elite - was one of the most flourishing periods in the history of Poetovio. Hadrian additionally contributed to it by having a bridge restored over the river Dravus (present-day Drava), as is epigraphically attested: *pontem Dravi fluminis restituendam curavit.*²⁹

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²⁶ It has recently been published as a newly discovered inscription by I. Tušek (n. 22) 345, phot. Tab.3,2, but had in fact already been published in CIL III as No. 4072.

²⁷ These are: the above mentioned decurio Aelius Secundinus (AIJ 328), Aelia Vera (AE 1986, 567, Aelius Marcellus (CIL III 4045 + p. 1746 = AIJ 341), Aelius Valerius (ibid.), Aelia Faustina (Varstvo spomenikov 21, 1977, p. 248).

²⁸ A.N. Sherwin-White, *The Roman Citizenship*. Oxford 1973², 254ff.

²⁹ AIJ 361.



Sarkophag mit Inschrift aus Poetovio (Foto: T.Lanko)