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ULRIKE ROTH*

MOBILITY, ETHNICITY AND FAMILY IN CIL III, 2006**

■ Abstract

This article corrects the reading of a Latin-inscribed tombstone from Roman imperial Salona in Dalmatia recently advanced in discussions of mobility, migration and trade in the north-eastern provinces. The revised reading enables a fresh exploration of some of the socio-historical interpretations proposed by earlier scholars, with particular regard to the question of the role of traders from the Empire's eastern provinces in local civic life, and of the use of onomastics in modern analyses of a person's ethnicity.

Keywords: Dacia & Dalmatia, onomastics, *negotiatores*, *ordo decurionum*, mobility & migration.

Introduction

The primary purpose of this contribution is to correct a reading of a tombstone from Roman Salona that has recently attracted the attention of students of the Roman economy, and in particular of Roman trade, as well as of students of mobility and migration in the ancient world, and to address some of the associated socio-historical interpretations¹. The text in question was first copied by Paravia in 1835, and subsequently included in the collection of inscriptions from Dalmatia by Giovanni Girolamo Orti – *Sulle antichità della Dalmazia* – which features 72 inscriptions in its first part, held then in the museum in Split². In 1848, Lanza pu-

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¹ Esp. W. BROEKAERT, *Navicularii et negotiantes: a prosopographical study of Roman merchants and shippers*, Rahden 2013, pp. 38-39 (no. 27); and R. VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila, negotiator ex provincia Dacia. A prosopographic reconstruction*, in R. ARDEVAN and E. BEU-DACHIN (eds.), *Mensa rotunda epigraphica napocensis*, Cluj-Napoca 2016, pp. 27-34.

² The manuscript is today in the Biblioteca civica di Verona (no. 816); the inscription is no. 65. While I was unable to consult the manuscript, it is clear from Mommsen's comment in *CIL III* ('Dalmatici auctores',

blished the text in his printed edition of the epigraphy of Dalmatian Salona, itself republished with minor revisions just two years later, in 1850³. The text is inscribed on the front of a funerary altar, measured by Lanza as 74 cm high and 63 cm wide, and included in Lanza's list of 'Militari' as no. XXXVII, with a basic line drawing (Fig. 1); Lanza adds that the monument was found in excavations in 1823, from where it was taken to 'nostro museo', in Split; he describes the stone as 'incisa a due colonne sopra di un cippo quadrilatero con zoccolo, che serviva probabilmente a sorreggere un qualche busto'⁴. The damage to the upper part of the monument prevents gaining certainty about its artistic programme. The text was subsequently restudied by Mommsen, and revised, as part of the undertaking of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. It is published as *CIL* III, 2006, in a similar manner to Lanza's (Fig. 2). The monument, still in the Archaeological Museum of Split (inv. A-144), has meanwhile lost most of the text, preserving roughly the top third only. It is therefore no longer possible to check the part of the reading where Mommsen diverted from earlier copies in the lower lines. In this article, I follow Mommsen's edition, not least because Mommsen studied the text himself. In any case, it is clear from what survives that the reproduction of the layout, in two columns on the front of the funerary altar, is accurate (Fig. 3).

As is moreover obvious from the text irrespective of edition, the monument was set up by Aurelius Aquila, while alive (*vivus fecit*), who terms himself a most unhappy father (*pater infelicissimus*). But then problems appear to arise concerning the relationships between the four named men. The commemorated Titus Aurelius Apollonius, who died at Sirmium aged 33, is identified as another man's brother (*fratri eius*), apart from being a centurion. Next, there is Aurelius Flavus, a trader (*negotiator*), who died aged 55, also at Sirmium, and who is described as originating from Syria. Finally, there is Aurelius Lucianus, whose age of death has not survived, but who is identified as 'their friend' (*amico eorum*). Given these complexities, it is understandable that modern scholars have proposed differing readings of the text, including recently, leading in some cases to rather far-reaching socio-historical interpretations. It is time to subject both readings and interpretations to more probing scrutiny.

p. 278) that Paravia's transcription is identical (or near identical) to that published by Lanza (see below, with note 3).

³ F. LANZA, *Antiche lapidi Salonitane inedite. Seconda edizione, riveduta, aumentata ed accresciuta*, Zara 1850, pp. 62-63.

⁴ LANZA, *Antiche lapidi Salonitane* cit., p. 63; see also note 13 below.

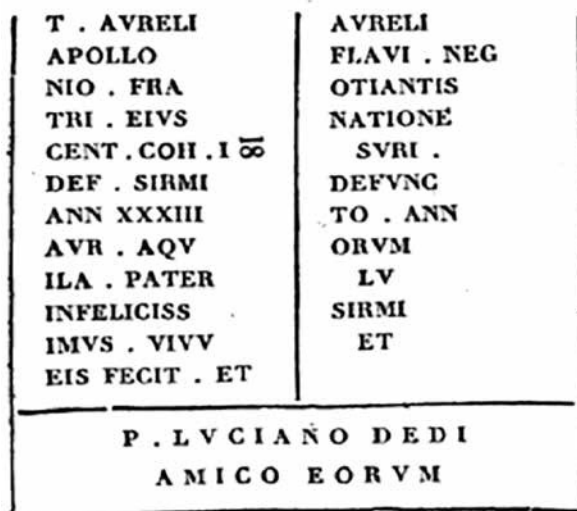


Fig. 1. Lanza, 'Militari', XXXVII (from F. LANZA, *Antiche lapidi Salonitane inedite. Seconda edizione, riveduta, aumentata ed accresciuta*, Zara 1850, p. 62)
[https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=DCtXAAAaAAJ&pg=PP12&source=gbs_selected_pages&cad=2#v=onepage&q&f=false].

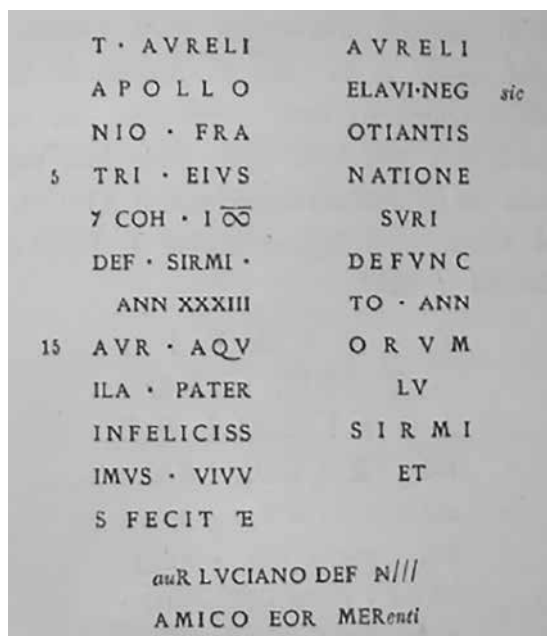


Fig. 2. Mommsen, *CIL* III, 2006 (photo: author).

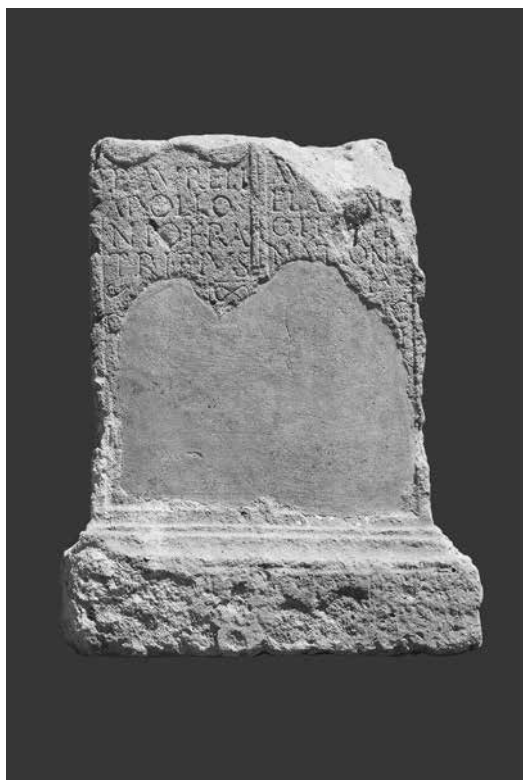


Fig. 3. *CIL* III, 2006 (Archaeological Museum of Split; inv. A-144; photo: Tonci Seser. With kind permission of the Archaeological Museum of Split, and Dr Nino Švonja).

Reading *CIL* III, 2006

The interpretative issues at stake over the correct reading of *CIL* III, 2006 can be illustrated on two recent contributions. To begin with, Broekaert took Aurelius Aquila as the brother of Titus Aurelius Apollonius, while interpreting Aurelius Flavius as a more distant associate, and Aurelius Lucianus as their friend, rendering the text as follows (with some mistakes in the line breaks)⁵:

T(ito) Aureli(o) / Apollo/nio fra/tri eius / \(\centurioni) cob(ortis) I(milliariae) / def(uncto) Sirmi / ann(orum) XXXIII / Aur(elius) Aqu/ila pater / infeliciss/imus vivu/s fecit et // Aureli / Flavi negotiantis / natione /Suri / defunc/to ann/orum / LV / Sirmi / et [Au]r(elio) Luciano def(uncto) an[n(orum) ---] / amico eor(um) mer[enti].

⁵ BROEKAERT, *Navicularii et negotiantes* cit., pp. 38-39 (no. 27).

Broekaert then suggested that Aquila's self-representation as 'father' (*pater*) cannot be taken at face value⁶:

Aquila dedicated the inscription to the memory of 3 people, viz. his brother Apollonius, a *centurio*; Flavus, a Syrian merchant; and Lucianus, a friend. The term *pater* on the 10th line can hardly be taken in a literal sense, as Apollonius is referred to as Aquila's *frater*. Maybe *pater* is used as a synonym for senior, indicating his older brother. It is equally unlikely that Aquila was Flavus' father, as this merchant was born in Syria and nothing suggests a close family relationship. As Apollonius was serving in the army and the other two deceased in the inscription seem to have been friends, it is possible that Flavus was using his connection with an army commander to secure contracts to supply the military garrisons in Dalmatia.

To support his interpretation of Aurelius Aquila and Titus Aurelius Apollonius as brothers, Broekaert drew additionally on another text, inscribed on the front of a sarcophagus, lost today, but seen in Venice in the nineteenth century (where it may have been since the sixteenth century), but most likely originating from Salona – namely *CIL III, 2086*⁷. The inscription records a(nother) man called Aurelius Aquila; first the text, then Broekaert's comments:

DD(is) MM(anibus) / V(aleriae?) Ursin(a)e T(iti) filiae con(iugi) inc(omparabili) d(e)functae an(norum) / [...] m(ensium) VI d(ierum) V Aur(elius) Aquila dec(urio) Pata(vissensis) neg(otiator) ex pro(vincia) Dacia b(ene) m(erenti) / p(osuit) et sibi cum qua / vixit an(nos) VII sine / ulla querella.

The inscription can be translated in the following manner:

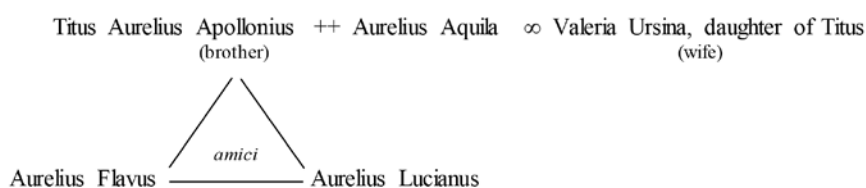
To the deified spirits of Valeria Ursina, daughter of Titus, incomparable wife, deceased aged ..., 6 months, 5 days. Aurelius Aquila, decurion of Potaissa, trader from the province of Dacia, put this up to the well-deserving, and to himself, with whom he lived 7 years without any argument.

This epitaph commemorates, plainly, a woman called Valeria Ursina, whose father's *praenomen* was Titus, and who had been married to (an) Aurelius Aquila for seven years. The commemorator – Aurelius Aquila – is identified as both a decurion, of Potaissa (modern Turda in north-western Romania), and a man of affairs (*negotiator*), from Dacia. Because of the overlap in name – Aurelius Aquila – with the other inscription from Salona, Broekaert suggested that the monuments may have been set up by

⁶ BROEKAERT, *Navicularii et negotiantes* cit., p. 39.

⁷ On the monument, see the notice by D. BARTOLINI in the «Notizie degli scavi di Antichità» for the year 1885 (printed: 1886), pp. 307-309 ('VII. Venezia'); for the suggestion that the sarcophagus had been in Venice for several centuries, see pp. 308-309. The text here printed is that given in *CIL*. For a more recent edition, see C.C. PETOLESCU, *Inscriptions externes concernant l'histoire de la Dacie (I^{er}-III^e siècles)*, Vol. 1, Bucarest 2000, p. 305 (no. 299), with further bibliography.

one and the same person, thus creating the basis for supporting further his identification of the family relationship between Aurelius Aquila and Titus Aurelius Apollonius as brothers in *CIL* III, 2006⁸. Moreover, Broekaert cited two further texts in which he placed the signifier '*fratres*' in relation to business associates, rather than within a family context; he concluded on this basis that '(t)he semantic overlapping of terms denoting both family members and trading partners is well documented'⁹. Broekaert's preferred understanding of the various relations among the recorded individuals on the two funerary monuments from Salona appears to be as displayed in Graph 1¹⁰.



Similarly bewildered by the assumed 'brother-father duality' in *CIL* III, 2006, and drawing like Broekaert on *CIL* III, 2086 for its interpretation¹¹, Varga subsequently gave the relationship of Aurelius Aquila and Titus Aurelius Apollonius as that of father and son – not brothers – for the following reason¹²:

⁸ BROEKAERT, *Navicularii et negotiantes* cit., p. 39: 'In the same city [= Salona], an inscription has been found, dedicated by a *negotiator* Aurelius Aquila [= *CIL* III, 2086]. Both monuments may very well have been erected by one and the same person. From this angle, *pater* and *frater* could also be interpreted as senior and junior trading partner. This emotional language can imply a long-standing relationship of trust and cooperation'.

⁹ BROEKAERT, *Navicularii et negotiantes* cit., p. 39, with *AE* 1942/43, 21 (= BROEKAERT, cit., p. 41, no. 34) and *CIL* XIII, 8354 (= BROEKAERT, cit., p. 65, no. 82). Note however also the comment on 'parental' terms in note 26 below.

¹⁰ Broekaert's argument for understanding the relationship between Titus Aurelius Apollonius and Aurelius Aquila as that of brothers is weak (as is his broader identification of the *fratres* as business associates in the cited texts). The argument appears to be based solely on the lack of names given with the signifier '*fratres*' in the other cited texts (for which see note 9 above), which Broekaert describes (wrongly) as 'odd', without any justification: BROEKAERT, *Navicularii et negotiantes* cit., pp. 41 and 65. I further exclude the possibility that the term is used to denote comradeship in the army, given its combination with '*pater*'; for the possible use of '*frater*' in a military (non-familial) context (often as '*frater fratri*'), in Dalmatia, see J.J. WILKES, *Dalmatia*, London 1969, pp. 129 and 148.

¹¹ Despite citing Broekaert, VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit., p. 30 makes the bewildering claim that '(t) he two inscriptions haven't been connected before, though the central individual, the dedicator, bears the same name'.

¹² VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit., p. 30. While Broekaert needed to explain away Aurelius Aquila's identification as father (*pater*), Varga is consequently in need of downplaying the description of Titus Aurelius Apollonius as 'his brother' (*fratri eius*) – which jars in her reading with the seemingly simultaneous identification of the two men as father and son respectively. The following explanations are entertained: a semantic overlap of terms that denominate familial and business relationships; a cultic relationship (with particular reference to initiation links that mirror the status of blood ties); the identification of Apollonius as Aquila's brother-in-law that furthermore presupposes a large age gap between the two men, motivating Aquila's self-representation also in a paternal role vis-à-vis Apollonius. VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit., pp. 30-31.

due to the name Titus, which is also the name of Aquila's father in law from the first inscription [= *CIL* III, 2086] – and the only *praenomen* registered in the discussed inscription, thus probably of certain relevance for the dedicator.

Put differently, the identification of Aurelius Aquila as the *father* of Titus Aurelius Apollonius is argued on onomastic grounds, in reference to the other cited text. Varga consequently renders *CIL* III, 2006 (with some improvements over Broekaert's edition) as follows¹³:

T(ito) Aureli(o) / Apollo/nio fra/tri eius / \centurioni) cob(ortis) I(milliariae) / def(uncto) Sirmi / ann(orum) XXXIII / Aur(elius) Aqu/ila pater / infeliciss/imus vivu/s fecit et // Aureli(!) / F(lavi) neg/otiantis(!) / natione /Suri(!) / defunc/to ann/orum / LV / Sirmi / et // [Au]r(elio) Luciano def(uncto) an[n(orum) ---] / amico eor(um) mer[enti].

The other two men commemorated on the funerary altar – Aurelius Flavius and Aurelius Lucianus – are both regarded as friends by her: 'the friends for whom he [Aurelius Aquila] erects the second monument – and we can safely assume close ties, as they were buried along his son'¹⁴. The postulated understanding of the various relationships across *CIL* III, 2006 and 2086 appears, at this stage, as displayed in Graph 2¹⁵. Consequently, Varga (like Broekaert) assumed that Aurelius Aquila moved to Dalmatia from Dacia (where he was a decurion in Potaissa), 'probably working as a *negotiator*' in the Salona area, where he 'buried a young wife' (i.e. Valeria Ursina);¹⁶ some 25 years later, he is then assumed to have buried their son, Titus Aurelius Apollonius, 'a centurion who died at Sirmium, in Pannonia Inferior, and two friends'¹⁷. To support her argument for a small trading network and 'the group's closer connection

¹³ VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit., p. 29. I do not understand why Varga turns 'ELAVI' (for 'Flavi' in l. 2, right-hand column) into 'F(lavi)': while the E might in fact be an F, 'LAVI' is clearly on the stone. Neither Varga nor Broekaert appear to have consulted the earlier editions. VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit., p. 29 gives moreover the monument's dimensions (as '72 x 60 x 37 centimetres'), claiming that this information is absent from the bibliography, citing merely digital data repositories. A more recent (and textually correct) edition (albeit without discussion) is in N. CESARIK and I. GLAVAŠ, *Cobortes I et II millaria Delmatarum*, in D. DEMICHELI (ed.), *Illyrica antiqua II. In honorem Duje Rendić-Miočević*, Zagreb 2017, pp. 209-222, p. 216 (no. 7).

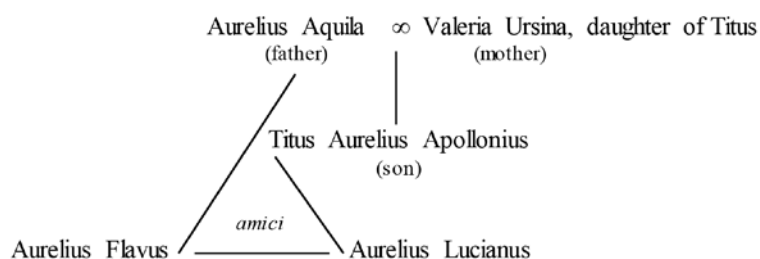
¹⁴ VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit., p. 31. Given the assumption that the two inscriptions from Salona record the same Aurelius Aquila, the proposed family relations are complemented by the idea that Titus Aurelius Apollonius 'must have been very young at the time of his mother's death' – given that Titus Aurelius Apollonius died aged 33, and his supposed mother (i.e. Valeria Ursina from *CIL* III, 2086) just seven years into her marriage with his father, Aurelius Aquila.

¹⁵ VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit., p. 32 presents a Gephi-generated graph of Aquila's socio-familial network that seems to me not to be intelligible by itself, besides lacking in real meaning.

¹⁶ BROEKAERT, *Navicularii et negotiantes* cit., p. 37: 'Aquila was a *decurio* in Patavissa, today the city of Turda in Romania. Yet, the gravestone erected for him and his wife was found in Salona. The commercial importance of this port city is well known: Salona connected the Donau provinces with Italy and the western regions. Aquila may therefore have settled in Salona, together with his family, to organize the distribution of merchandize he had imported from the Donau region to Italy and beyond'.

¹⁷ VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit., p. 33.

with Dacia', Varga cites another inscription (namely *CIL* III, 7761, also included in Broekaert's corpus), which records an Aurelius Flavus, besides an Aurelius Alexander, both self-professed traders from Syria, on a beautifully cut dedicatory inscription to Jupiter Optimus Maximus Dolichenus that is preserved on a marble column of almost two metres from Apulum in Dacia (near modern Alba Iulia, in central Romania)¹⁸:



I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) D(olicheneno) / Aurelii / Alexan/der et Fla/(v)us Suri / negotia/tores ex / voto l(ibentes) p(osuerunt).

There is no problem with the translation of the text:

To Jupiter Optimus Maximus Dolichenus, Aurelius Alexander and Aurelius Flavus, traders from Syria, put this up gladly in fulfilment of a vow.

Assuming the personal identity of Aurelius Flavus from this dedicatory text from Apulum with the commemorated Aurelius Flavus on the funerary altar from Salona because of the overlap in both name and self-identification as traders from Syria¹⁹, Aurelius Flavus is understood by Varga as 'an older business connection [of Aurelius Aquila], as the *negotiator Surus* had also activated in Dacia'²⁰. Varga's reasoning

¹⁸ VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit., p. 31. The monument type is also known from funerary contexts in Apulum: for a particularly fine example, see *AE* 1914, 102, and C. CIONGRADI, *Grabmonument und sozialer Status in Oberdakien*, Cluj-Napoca 2007, pp. 260-261 for the complete list of seven currently known monuments and discussion.

¹⁹ The Syrian dimension in *CIL* III, 7761 is, according to BROEKAERT, *Navicularii et negotiantes* cit., p. 36, supported by the choice of Jupiter Dolichenus, 'a native god from their homeland Syria'. But the cult was generally popular between the mid-second and the mid-third century AD across the Empire, including in Dacia (as well as in the Roman army): for attestations from across the Roman Empire, see M. HÖRIG and E. SCHWERTHEIM, *Corpus Cultus Iovis Dolicheni (CCID)*, Leiden-New York-Copenhagen-Köln 1987 (with Dacia at pp. 93-119, and *CIL* III, 7761 listed as no. 153, at pp. 104-105); for Dacia, see A. POPU and I. BERCIU, *Le culte de Jupiter Dolichenus dans la Dacie romaine*, Leiden 1978 (with *CIL* III, 7761 listed as no. 5, pp. 8-9); on the cult in the Roman army, see M. P. SPEIDEL, *The religion of Iuppiter Dolichenus in the Roman army*, Leiden 1978; and on the role of trade and economy in the dissemination of the cult, see the comments by F. CUMONT, *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain*, Paris 1929, pp. 20-22.

²⁰ VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit., p. 33. Already BROEKAERT, *Navicularii et negotiantes* cit., p. 37 noted that 'it seems plausible that Aquila was involved in the burial of one of his colleagues [= Aurelius Flavus from *CIL* III, 2006] in the business community of Salona' (emphasis added).

behind her argument for the personal identity of the Aurelii Flavii emphasises the mobility of traders²¹:

Expectedly, these two are the only epigraphs from the Empire which attest Aurelius Flavus, *negotiator Surus*. Though caution is required, the ‘coincidence’ is too big to be disregarded. The great mobility of merchants and traders has always been attested and accepted as such, and there is no reason to doubt it in this case either.

In its totality, Varga’s interpretation of the three monuments is designed to argue for ‘the great mobility of traders in the Roman Empire, as well as on how strong and time-enduring business connections could be’²². It is then noted that ‘the only real interpretation problem is dating the inscriptions’ – with Varga opting for a date between the late second and first half of the third century AD for all three texts²³, while Broekaert dated the two texts from Salona to the second century AD, and the text from Apulum to the third century AD²⁴.

There can of course not be any doubt that the mobility of traders in the Roman Empire was immense. Indeed, this mobility is lucidly illustrated by the localities implicated in each individual text. First, *CIL III*, 2006 documents connections of a trader from Syria, i.e. Aurelius Flavus, in Pannonia (Sirmium) and Dalmatia (Salona). This mobility is largely mirrored in *CIL III*, 7761, which documents connections of traders from Syria, i.e. Aurelius Alexander and Aurelius Flavus, in Dacia (Apulum). On a seemingly smaller scale, *CIL III*, 2086, too, documents the mobility of traders, recording the movement of the *negotiator* Aurelius Aquila, also decurion of Potaissa, between Dacia and Dalmatia. Evidently, we need not question that these inscriptions illustrate some considerable geographic mobility across the northern and northeastern parts of the Empire, with particular regard to traders.

But it is not the case that ‘the only real interpretation problem is dating the inscriptions’, as Varga contends (cited above) – for the proposed readings are faulty in the first place. To solve the riddle posed by *CIL III*, 2006, due account needs to be taken of the layout of the text on the stone – in two columns, side-by-side, with the surfaces that carry the text cut like panels into the stone, and a dividing line protruding between these panels (Fig. 3). Accustomed to reading Latin text left to right, and top to bottom, modern scholars are prone to reproducing the epitaph in the

²¹ VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit., p. 31. Note the existence of other (near) contemporary inscriptions from Salona that mention (near) namesakes: Aurelius Flavus: *CIL III*, 8921; Aurelius Flav(i?)us: *CIL III*, 12898; Marcus Aurelius Flavius: ILJug-02, 00692. Note also the army interpreter Marcus Aurelius Flavius, who appears to have been fluent in German, whatever his origin and later residence(s): *CIL III*, 10505 (Aquincum / Pannonia Inferior).

²² VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit., p. 33.

²³ VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit., p. 32-33.

²⁴ *CIL III*, 2006: BROEKAERT, *Navicularii et negotiantes* cit., p. 39: AD 100-200?; cf. EDH (Brigitte Gräf), and EDCS: AD 151-300. *CIL III*, 2086: BROEKAERT, *Navicularii et negotiantes* cit., p. 37: AD 100-200; cf. EDH (Brigitte Gräf), and EDCS: AD 201-270. *CIL III*, 7761: BROEKAERT, *Navicularii et negotiantes* cit., p. 38: AD 200-300; cf. EDH (Marta García Morcillo), and EDCS: AD 211-275; Lupa (Friederike Harl): AD 211- 270.

way illustrated on Broekaert and Varga – beginning with the mention of Titus Aurelius Apollonius (who is listed in the left-hand column), followed by that of Aurelius Aquila (still in the left-hand column, further down), followed by that of Aurelius Flavius (commemorated in the right-hand column), and finally that of Aurelius Lucianus (listed at the bottom below the two columns). The result is a text, simple as such, that does not make much sense regarding the recorded family relationships (i.e. *fratri eius* and *pater* respectively), forcing in consequence interpretations that draw on fairly complex, and poorly contextualised conceptualisations of the relationship-terms used in the inscription. But there is in fact no need to suppose what Varga has termed ‘the brother-father duality’ (cited earlier) – for it is entirely possible to resolve the seeming ‘familial’ tension if due attention is paid to the often wilful and artistic presentation of epitaphs – here with two columns, to be read, actually, right to left:

Aureli / <F>lavi negotiantis / natione /Suri / defuncto(!) ann/orum / LV / Sirmi / et // T(ito) Aureli(o) / Apollo/nio fra/tri eius / \(\centurioni) cob(ortis) I(\milliariae) / defuncto) Sirmi / ann(orum) XXXIII / Aur(elius) Aqu/ila pater /infeliciss/imus vivu/s fecit et // [Au]r(elio) Luciano def(uncto) an[n(orum) ---] / amico eor(um) mer[enti].

The text can then be translated thus:

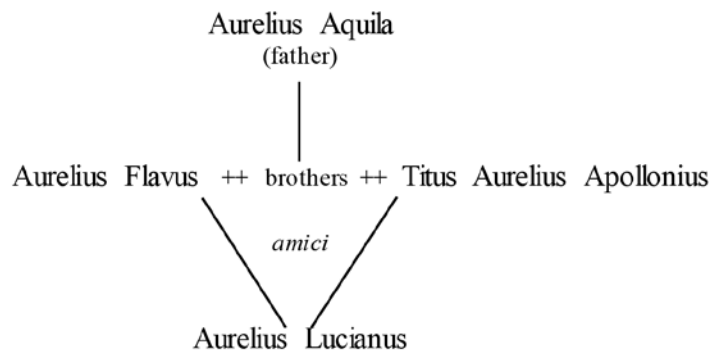
Of Aurelius Flavius, trader, Syrian by origin, deceased aged 55, at Sirmium; and to Titus Aurelius Apollonius, his brother, centurion of *cobors I milliaria*, deceased, at Sirmium, aged 33. Aurelius Aquila, the most unhappy father, made this while alive, also to Aurelius Lucianus, deceased aged ..., their deserving friend.

The relationships between the three men logically experience some changes to those proposed by Broekaert and Varga respectively²⁵. First, Aurelius Aquila, *pater infelicissimus*, emerges as the father not just of Titus Aurelius Apollonius, but also of Aurelius Flavius; consequently, not trading connections or friendship characterise Aurelius Flavius’ relationship to Aquila and Apollonius, but family ties²⁶. It follows that, apart from missing the parent-son-link between Aquila and Apollonius, Broekaert was also quite wrong to state that ‘nothing suggests a close family relationship’ (cited above) between Aquila and Flavius – for *the text* does. Second, Apollonius is entirely

²⁵ The following explication of the family relationships would not change if Lanza’s edition were preferred.

²⁶ I exclude an understanding of Aquila’s self-identification as ‘*pater*’ with the homonymous title of the roles of benefactors of *collegia*: CIL III, 2006 is an epitaph, not an honorific text, and Aquila’s (natural) parental role is underscored by the adjective *infelicissimus*, emphasising the man’s personal loss; there is no mention of *collegia* in the text. For discussion of the use of the title ‘*pater*’ (besides that of ‘*mater*’ and ‘*parens*’) in the context of *collegia*, see, e.g., J. LIU, *Collegia centonariorum. The guilds of textile dealers in the Roman west*, Leiden-Boston 2009, pp. 220-221 (and for ‘*matres*’ specifically: E. HEMELRIJK, *Patronesses and ‘mothers’ of Roman collegia*, «Classical Antiquity», 27.1 [2008], pp. 115-162); an overview focused on the Black Sea region is in A.-I. PÁZSINT, *The kindred dimension of the Black Sea associations: between fictive and real meaning*, in G. CUPCEA and R. VARGA (eds.), *Social interactions and status markers in the Roman world*, Oxford 2018, pp. 79-90.

logically identified as the brother (*fratri eius*) of Flavus, who emerges as the older of Aquila's two commemorated sons. The age gap between the two men may (or may not) have influenced Flavus' pool-position in the ordering of the text. On the other hand, Aurelius Lucianus emerges as the friend of the two deceased sons (*amico eorum*) – but not, as such, of Aquila himself. The family and friendship relationships between the four men recorded through *CIL III, 2006* are thus somewhat more simplified, as shown in Graph 3.



Reading *CIL III, 2006* from the right column to the left was also the preferred option of earlier scholars. Notably, in his edition of the Salonitan epigraphy, Lanza commented on the unusual display, expressing however the view that the layout was the result of a mistake by the text-setter-cum-engraver ('Si scorge alquanto scorretta; ed è chiaro che quella parte dell'iscrizione superiore che si presenta a destra dell'osservatore, dovrebbe l'altra precedere, che forse per errore del quadratario fu posta a sinistra'); to make better sense of the grammatical rendering of Aurelius Flavus' name in the genitive, Lanza moreover sensibly assumed a (by his day already missing) *Dis Manibus*: 'Onde a mio avviso tutta l'epigrafe sarebbe da rilevarsi così: *Dis Manibus AVRELI FLAVI ...*' (original emphasis)²⁷. Lanza's edition was followed by Henzen a few years later, in the third volume of his *Inscriptionum Latinarum Selectarum*, from 1856, citing Lanza explicitly (*ILS 7257*). Dessau, too, in 1906, emphasised the right-to-left order in his *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae (ILS 7528)*: 'Titulus Aurelii Flavi in lapide legitur intuenti a dextra, Aurelii Apollonii a sinistra; sed illum praecedere debere apparet'. The fraternal relationship between Aurelius Flavus and Titus Aurelius Apollonius was subsequently noted by Pârvan, in his pioneering study of salesmen and traders in the Roman Empire, from 1909²⁸, which laid the groundwork for our appreciation of what Pavis d'Escurac has called 'la libre circulation des marchands dans

²⁷ LANZA, *Antiche lapidi Salonitane* cit., p. 63; Lanza consequently amends 'defuncto' to 'defuncti' in l. 7 on the right-hand column.

²⁸ V. PÂRVAN, *Die Nationalität der Kaufleute im römischen Kaiserreiche*, Breslau 1909, p. 112 (citing *CIL* and Henzen 7257 for the text); Pârvan's shortened rendering of the text, in a mix of (the original) Latin and German, indicates that he, too, read the text from right to left.

l'Empire', irrespective of the weakness of some of Pârvan's ethnic identifications²⁹. Perhaps because these scholars did not contextualise the problems that arise from a different reading, later scholars have diverted, as seen, from what is plainly the correct order in which the text is to be appreciated³⁰. But contrary to the notion that the right-to-left order is a mistake, expressed by Lanza, there is no reason to assume a *faux pas* in the course of the process of inscribing: the right-to-left order in the ordering of this epitaph is not an *unicum*. Thus, this order can be supported by reference to other Latin funerary inscriptions in a columnar display that do not follow the seemingly standard left-to-right alignment of the text (without evidence for a seeming engraver error) – such as a funerary plaque from Rome set up by the *libertus* Titus Thorianus Salvius to himself and his deceased wife (CIL VI, 9884; Fig. 4)³¹:



Fig. 4. CIL VI, 9884 (Musei Vaticani, Galleria Lapidaria, 25, 65, inv. 7574)
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T(itus) Thorianus / T(iti) l(ibertus) Salvius / sibi et // Matiae ((mulieris)) l(ibertae) Prime coniugi suae / sarcinatr(ici) ab Sex / Aris vix(it) an(nis) XLVI.

Titus Thorianus Salvius, freedman of Titus, to himself and to Matia Prime, freedwoman of a woman, his wife, clothes-mender at the Six Altars, who lived 46 years.

²⁹ H. PAVIS D'ESCURAC, *Origo et résidence dans le monde du commerce sous le Haut-Empire*, «Ktéma», 13 (1988), pp. 57-68, at pp. 57-58.

³⁰ Brigitte Gräf, who prepared the entry for EDH, merely noted that *ILS* offers a divergent reading, but gave the same order for the text here illustrated on the studies by Broekaert and Varga. Oddly, unlike in other entries in his corpus, the entry for CIL III, 2006 in BROEKAERT, *Navicularii et negotiantes* cit., pp. 38-39 (no. 27) does not cite *ILS*, implying even that there does not exist any earlier literature on this text; *ILS* is also not commented on in VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit.; neither of the two cites PÂRVAN, *Die Nationalität der Kaufleute* cit., despite the thematic overlap of their own work with his.

³¹ With *AE* 2001, 169. Unlike in the case of CIL III, 2006, this text has been presented in the order here given also at EDCS-19400117 and at EDR171347 (besides, as one would expect, by Dessau: *ILS* 7567). For a possible example of 'disorderly' columnar writing in an epitaph with (apparently) three columns, see CIL X, 1945 (Puteoli).

Although it is impossible to know the motivations behind the choice of this admittedly more unusual display, there is plainly no reason to assume a mistake regarding the ordering of the text on this funerary plaque from Rome. Seen in this light, then, there can be little doubt that the easier, meaningful reading of *CIL* III, 2006, championed by earlier scholars and re-proposed in the present article, is to be preferred, removing in the process however the idea of an engraver's mistake. But with *CIL* III, 2006 read in the way here argued for, it becomes obviously (more) problematic to link this text to the other inscription from Salona as well as to the dedication from Apulum: challenging those links has moreover repercussions on the wider socio-historical interpretations attached to these texts in contemporary scholarship, which must now be addressed.

Travel, trade, ethnicity and onomastics

First, we now know that Aurelius Flavus from *CIL* III, 2006 came from Syria. This makes it likely that his father – Aurelius Aquila – also came from Syria, even if a different origin for him cannot be excluded categorically; the same holds for the brother, Titus Aurelius Apollonius, the centurion, hitherto regarded as originating ‘from within the province’³². A Syrian origin does quite obviously not stand in the way of being a trader in Dacia, but it would make office-holding as *decurion* in Potaissa less likely if seen against the current lack of evidence for Syrian traders turned members of one or other *ordo decurionum* in Dacia, besides the considerable financial outlay that membership in the *ordo* entailed – all points to be returned to in due course. It is however opportune to note at this juncture that the underlying issue also affects Aquila's seeming residence in Salona irrespective of any Syrian connections. Thus, if – as both Broekaert and Varga hold – Aurelius Aquila from *CIL* III, 2086, the widower who to all accounts buried his wife in Salona, had settled in the city, his office-holding in Potaissa raises several questions: assuming that this Aurelius Aquila was *both* a member of Salonitan society *and* at Potaissa puts the spotlight on his formal relationship to the city in which he was *decurion*, including his ability to deliver his financial and civic dues at his *origo* (which I take to be Potaissa), while living away³³.

As a rule, registering for *domicilium* away from one's *origo* does not normally remove one from liabilities at the *origo*: if Aurelius Aquila formally made Salona his *domicilium* as an *incola*, he was likely still liable for *munera* at Potaissa³⁴. Additionally,

³² WILKES, *Dalmatia* cit., p. 152. Sons normally follow the *origo* of their father (even if the latter enjoys *domicilium* elsewhere) – which would exclude Potaissa (as *origo*) for the *negotiator Suri*: Digest 50.1.6.1 (Ulpian): ‘*Filius civitatem, ex qua pater eius naturalem originem ducit, non domicilium sequitur*’; see also Digest 50.1.1 (Ulpian); cf. Digest 50.1.17.11 (Papinian). Brief discussion (with exceptions, and further bibliography) is in PAVIS D'ESCURAC, *Origo* cit., p. 59.

³³ For discussion of the relationship between residence and civic roles and duties (on examples from the western provinces), see S. BENOIST, *Coloni et incolae, vingt ans après? Mobilité et identité sociales et juridiques dans le monde romain occidental*, in E. LO CASCIO and L.E. TACOMA (eds.), *The impact of mobility and migration in the Roman Empire*, Leiden-Boston 2017, pp. 204-221, at pp. 214-219.

³⁴ E.g. Digest 50.1.29 (Gaius). Brief discussion of the double (or multiple) dues for (this type of)

there is no way of telling whether Potaissa established the same kind of rigid residence requirements for their decurions as Taranto or Urso (for which we have the relevant charters surviving, for the late Republican period), such as a house of a specified size, and *domicilium* within clearly defined boundaries³⁵. These residence requirements must be seen in the context of the practical functioning of town councils, at times requiring a large quorum, in some cases up to two-thirds, for some types of decisions³⁶. In the case of another Dacian decurion who is known from a text outside of Dacia, these kinds of requirements have therefore been taken as evidence for the man's ordinary residence in the Dacian city – irrespective of the location of the inscription outside Dacia: the decurion in question is Aurelius Primus Asteo Iulianus, recorded as β(ου)λ(ευ)τις τῆς Δακίας Σεπτυμία Πορολίσσου on a dedication to Dolichenus in Augusta Traiana in Thrace (*IGB* III, 1590), set up with another man (on whom more below). In his discussion of the inscription, Ardevan was adamant that Asteo Iulianus was 'membru al aristocrației municipale din Porolissum, unde rezida cu siguranță' (emphasis added), supporting the case by reference to the details contained in the above mentioned charters: 'Decurionii municipali erau obligați să aibă casă în orașul unde dețineau necastă demnitate sau în imediata lui apropiere'³⁷. Whatever was the case at Porolissum, if such residence requirements were strictly adhered to at Potaissa, still in the second and third centuries of imperial rule (on which also more below), Aurelius Aquila could not have 'moved to Dalmatia' in a formal (and time-consuming) sense and maintained membership in the *ordo* at Potaissa.

While not directly engaging with the problem, Varga tacitly addressed the underlying tension when stating that Aurelius Aquila was decurion 'at some point in his youth', i.e. at an earlier time, even though she also entertained the possibility for concurrent residence at Salona and membership in the *ordo* at Potaissa, on the basis of social status, without however offering discussion of the issue of residence³⁸. While civic biographies are a staple of funerary epigraphy, listing offices held at one or other point in the past, I see no reason to postulate an earlier phase for Aquila's membership

incolae at different locations over time is in C. MOATTI, *Migration et droit dans l'Empire romain. Catégories, contrôles et intégration*, in LO CASCIO and TACOMA (eds.), *The impact of mobility* cit., pp. 223-245, at pp. 242-244; and C. MOATTI, *Mobility and identity between the second and fourth centuries: the 'cosmopolitanization' of the Roman Empire*, in C. RAPP and H.A. DRAKE (eds.), *The city in the classical and post-classical world. Changing contexts of power and identity*, Cambridge 2014, pp. 130-152, at pp. 136-140.

³⁵ Taranto (c. 80s BC): *RS* 15 – Lex Tarentina II.26-31; Urso (mid-first century BC): *RS* 25 – Lex coloniae Genetivae XCI. A summary of the salient points is in B. KÜBLER, *Decurio*, «RE», IV.2 (1901), cols. 2319-2352, at col. 2328; see also W. LANGHAMMER, *Die rechtliche und soziale Stellung der Magistratus municipales und der Decuriones in der Übergangsphase der Städte von sich selbstverwaltenden Gemeinden zu Vollzugsorganen des spätantiken Zwangsstaates (2.-4. Jahrhundert der römischen Kaiserzeit)*, Wiesbaden, 1973, pp. 190-193.

³⁶ F.F. ABBOTT and A.C. JOHNSON, *Municipal administration in the Roman Empire*, New York 1986, pp. 67-68.

³⁷ R. ARDEVAN, *Porolissum și Augusta Traiana. Observații asupra inscripției IGB, III/2, 1590*, «Acta Musei Napocensis», 12 (1988), pp. 291-295, at p. 293.

³⁸ VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit., p. 33. The idea of Aquila's past membership of the *ordo* at Potaissa is also cited in R. CIOBANU and V. BARBUTA, *Le port romain d'APVLM*, in R. BEDON and A. MALISSARD (eds.), *La Loire et les fleuves de la Gaule romaine et des régions voisines* [Caesarodunum 33-34 (1999-2000)], Limoges 2001, pp. 257-277, at p. 267: 'ancien décurion de Potaissa'.

of the *ordo* at Potaissa: the office of decurion is the single such office listed by Aquila, without the kinds of temporal indicators used by others to denote a past membership³⁹. Plainly, the question needs to be asked as to why Aurelius Aquila chose to emphasise his firm association with Potaissa and Dacia on a tomb monument set up (we believe) in Dalmatian Salona.

Traditionally, modern scholars have favoured interpretations of the epigraphic inclusion of civic and professional roles as active and positive expressions of someone's personal identity – here, the pride of being a decurion, in a fine Dacian city, besides that of being a man of affairs, from Dacia. But if seen within the Salonitan context in which the monument is thought to belong, the stress on being a decurion in Potaissa, besides being *negotiator ex provincia Dacia*, actually functions at least as much in a negative fashion – for it appears to distance Aurelius Aquila from the kinds of dues associated with a possible *domicilium* in Salona, perhaps fraudulently so⁴⁰. As Nutton emphasised several decades ago: 'An *incola* is defined as a man who has his domicile away from his native city, and his civic responsibilities are the object of many legal rulings'⁴¹. The legal discourse pertaining to the civic duties of such *incolae* illustrates clearly the significant issue that avoidance of *munera* represented, including avoidance of formal acknowledgement of *domicilium* away from one's *origo*⁴². This is not to deny that some jurists held that an individual could have more than one *domicilium*; that (over time) *incolae* could join the *ordo decurionum* at their (new) *domicilium*; and that, moreover, at least by the mid to late second century AD some wealthy individuals became members of more than one *ordo decurionum*, including in Dacia, indicating the gradual relaxation of the strict requirements for membership in the *ordo decurionum* attested in the much earlier charters from Taranto and Urso⁴³. Whatever the precise status of Potaissa when Aquila was decurion – it is called a *municipium Septimium* in several inscriptions, as well as a colony by Ulpian – it is self-evident that Aquila's decurionate is to be placed precisely in this late(r) period in which multiple memberships

³⁹ Such as the use of (e.g.) *quondam*, as for instance in CIL III, 1214 (Apulum / Dacia); note also the Iiviralis Publius Aelius Strenuus, discussed below.

⁴⁰ The stress on one's *origo* among traders, expressed in multiple ways, has been noted, but not explained in the fashion here suggested, in PAVIS D'ESCURAC, *Origo* cit., pp. 58-59.

⁴¹ V. NUTTON, *Two notes on immunities: Digest 27, 1, 6, 10 and 11*, «Journal of Roman Studies», 61 (1971), pp. 52-63, at p. 53. Despite its title, the study by T. GRÜLL, *Origo as identity factor in Roman epigraphs*, in CUPCEA and VARGA (eds.), *Social interactions* cit., pp. 139-150 does not engage with the question here pursued, providing a mere overview of attestations of 'civis', 'domo' and 'natione'.

⁴² See notably Digest 50.1.17-38. See also CIL V, 875 (Aquileia / Venetia et Histria), documenting that the right to extract *munera* from *incolae* was subject to a town's enterprise before the double fiscal obligation of *incolae* became generally established, by Hadrian: MOATTI, *Mobility and identity* cit., pp. 136-138.

⁴³ Legal discussion: e.g. Digest 50.1.5 (Paul); *incolae* in the *ordo*: e.g. CIL II, 1055 (Axati / Baetica), CIL XII, 1585 (Dea Augusta Vocontiorum / Gallia Narbonensis), and Plin. *Ep.* 10.114; membership in more than one *ordo*: e.g. CIL III, 1141 and 14468 (both Apulum / Dacia), with further examples and discussion in MOATTI, *Mobility and identity* cit., pp. 145-147; cf. Digest 50.1.17.3-4 (Papinian). Note also that senators are deemed to have a *domicilium* both in Rome and in their city of origin: Digest 1.9.11 (Paul). See further LANGHAMMER, *Die rechtliche und soziale Stellung* cit., pp. 191-192 (with note 19) on the gradual loosening of the membership requirements. Note also the parallel development of giving low-ranked members of the Roman army access to equestrian rank: C. DAVENPORT, *Soldiers and equestrian rank in the third century AD*, «Papers of the British School at Rome», 80 (2012), pp. 89-123.

were possible and the rules for membership relaxed, i.e. not before the very end of the second century AD, and perhaps more likely in the third – even if this does not answer the question at hand⁴⁴. In any case, an *origo* at Potaissa would not have stopped Aurelius Aquila from travelling or indeed from doing business elsewhere, including enjoyment of a ‘second home’, on the nice Dalmatian coast – as long as he delivered his civic dues in Potaissa. But it may simply have been the case that whatever disaster led to the death of his wife took place rather incidentally at or near Salona, and that Aurelius Aquila was unable or unwilling to transfer his dead wife’s body for burial to Potaissa – recalling the case of Cocceius Severus, a decurion, augur and pontifex at Porolissum, who was buried by his son in Dalmatian Nedinum (modern Nadin in Croatia), some 100 kilometres up the road from Salona, specifically emphasising the deceased’s association with Dacia (*provinciae Daciae*)⁴⁵. The connections strung between different places through human mobility that lurk behind these texts and monuments need not be conceptualised in a consecutive fashion – for instance: first Potaissa, then Salona – but were likely a contemporaneous characteristic of life for many individuals in antiquity, moving back and forth between different places all the time. There is perhaps no better nearby example to illustrate more fully such toing-and-froing, including belonging at either ‘end’, no matter what the specific arrangements locally, than the tombstone of Lucius Cassius Hermodorus, a skipper (*nauclerus*), commemorated by his wife, Ulpia Candida, in Italian Aternum (modern Pescara), on the Adriatic coast (CIL IX, 3337): Ulpia Candida self-identifies on the monument as hailing from Salona – *domu Salon(is)* – where Hermodorus was also a member of the *collegium* of the followers of Serapis – *qui erat in colleg(io) Serapis Salon(itano)*. Modern scholars will probably argue forever over Hermodorus’ *origo* – with some opting for the Dalmatian shore, the majority for the Samnite coastline⁴⁶. What *is* certain is that Hermodorus’ profession functioned to connect the two sides of the Adriatic, much as the god whose *collegium* he joined created linkages across the even bigger pond – no doubt through precisely the kind of mobility typical of skippers, traders and anyone else involved in the movement of goods and people, beautifully encapsulated in the verse chosen for his epitaph: ‘one who had often been carried across the waves, through straits, through seas’ (*per freta per maria traiectus saepe per undas*).

To return with all this in mind to Aurelius Aquila, I propose that the stress on being a man of affairs from Dacia – *neg(otiator) ex pro(vincia) Dacia*, underpinned by

⁴⁴ E.g. CIL III, 7689; and Digest 50.15.1.8-9 (Ulpian).

⁴⁵ CIL III, 2866: Cocceio Umbriano / decurioni auguri et pontifici / civitatis Paral(is)ensium / provinciae Daciae / Cocceius Severus / filius patri pientissimo.

⁴⁶ The case for a Dalmatian *origo* has recently been made in G. PACI, *Contatti e scambi adriatici in età romana attraverso le più recenti acquisizioni epigrafiche in territorio marchigiano*, in *Marche: uno ‘snodo’ nell’Adriatico antico*, «Bollettino di Archeologia online». More often, an Italian *origo* is favoured: e.g., PÁRVAN, *Die Nationalität der Kaufleute* cit., p. 31, note 1; C. DAICOVICI, *Gli Italici nella provincia Dalmazia*, «Ephemeris Dacoromana», 5 (1932), pp. 57-122, at p. 94; A. BUGARSKI-MESDJIAN, *Traces d’Égypte en Dalmatie romaine: Culte, mode et pouvoir*, in L. BRICAULT, M.J. VERSLUYS and P.G.P. MEYBOOM (eds.), *Nile into Tiber: Egypt in the Roman world*, Leiden-Boston 2007, pp. 289-328, at pp. 304-5; P. ARNAUD, *Polysemy, epigraphic habit and social legibility of maritime shippers: navicularii, naukleroï, naucleri, nauculari, nauclari*, in P. ARNAUD and S. KEAY (eds.), *Roman port societies. The evidence of inscriptions*, Cambridge 2020, pp. 367-424, at p. 416, note 162.

the reference to his decurionate in Potaissa, on the sarcophagus in Salona is *technically* meaningful: Aquila thus indicates that he sees himself as ‘in transit’, at best enjoying what Moatti has called ‘un domicile de passage’ in Salona (however long-term in practice)⁴⁷. If more than a strictly passing visit or residence is envisaged, one may interpret Aquila’s Dacian emphasis as an attempt at expressing what the jurists called intention, his *animus*, albeit negatively with regard to Salona, and in contradistinction to putting up a fancy tomb monument in the city (including the futuristic convention ‘*sibi*’)⁴⁸. Such a ‘transitory’ arrangement can entail the consistent undertaking of business locally, including the establishment of a shop (here: in Salona) as well as regular presence and indeed habituation in the city, *without* the transfer of *domicilium*, as a passage by Ulpian makes sufficiently clear, even if there was by all accounts some considerable debate on this and related issues, at least among the jurists⁴⁹. In her related discussion of non-local entrepreneurs in cities of the western provinces, Pavis d’Escurac even suggested that formal inscription in their chosen places of de facto residence was not of interest to many traders⁵⁰.

Whatever the details in any of these cases, which will likely escape us for good, the complexities constituted by Aurelius Aquila’s implication in both Dacian Potaissa and Dalmatian Salona require full acknowledgement and engagement in any attempt at linking the man additionally with a Syrian origin via *CIL III, 2006*, on slight onomastic grounds. To be sure, the age gap between the two brothers in *CIL III, 2006* – some 22 years – may indicate that the two men had different mothers, and that, therefore, their father had (at least) two wives, potentially burying one after a short marriage. This possibility applies to a reading of the men’s ages-at-death on the stone as contemporaneous, rather than consecutive. The columnar display might on the other hand indicate just such a consecutive commemoration of the two brothers, but this cannot be ascertained, and the possibility may in any case be invalidated by the fact that the brothers died both at Sirmium, potentially emphasising mortal contemporaneity, a reading that may be further underpinned by the ‘ET’ that appears to conclude

⁴⁷ MOATTI, *Migration et droit* cit., p. 227. Note already the cautious reference regarding the nature of Aquila’s stay in Salona in PARVAN, *Die Nationalität* cit., p. 70: ‘der sich in Salonae aufbielt’ (emphasis added). On the distinction between the presence of a ‘travelling salesman’ and a business by a non-local permanently located in a city, see PAVIS D’ESCURAC, *Origo* cit., pp. 61-64.

⁴⁸ See Digest 50.1.27.2 (Ulpian). For the role of intention in the identification of someone’s *domicilium*, expected to be documented through actual action (*re et facto*), not mere assertion (*contestatio*), see also Digest 50.1.20 (Paul); brief discussion is in MOATTI, *Mobility and identity* cit., pp. 134-140.

⁴⁹ Digest 5.1.19.2. Such a ‘transitory’ arrangement does however not free the individual from being held to account, including juridically, at their ‘temporary home’, which is the main thrust of the cited passage. On ‘temporary *domicilium*’, see also Digest 50.1.17.11 (Papinian); cf. Digest 50.16.203 (Alfenus). For discussion, see MOATTI, *Migration et droit* cit., pp. 224-231. PETOLESCU, *Inscriptions externes* cit., p. 305 (no. 299) compares the text to one recording a *negotiator* identified as ‘*ex [provinc]ia Bri[tannia]*’ and commemorated in Castellum Mattiacorum (modern-day Kastel in Germany, across the Rhein from Mogantiacum), apparently by one or more freedmen (i.e. *CIL XIII, 7300*), but does not comment further on the implications for Aquila’s potential residence at Salona; cf. A. CHASTAGNOL, *Une firme de commerce maritime entre l’île de Bretagne et le continent gaulois à l’époque des Severes*, «ZPE», 43 (1981), pp. 63-66, who implies (at p. 65) that the deceased *negotiator* from *CIL XIII, 7300* would have lived at least for a short time (‘était établi au moins pour un temps’) in the area.

⁵⁰ PAVIS D’ESCURAC, *Origo* cit., p. 68.

each column⁵¹. Whether or not death at Sirmium connects one or both brothers (as well as their friend) to the Marcomannic Wars is a tempting idea, giving the identification of Titus Aurelius Apollonius as centurion of *cohors I milliaria* – most likely *I milliaria Delmatarum* – potentially dating the inscription to the later part of the reign of Marcus Aurelius;⁵² if so, their burial (back) at Salona may in turn be indicative of the placement of the cohort (or at least a smaller detachment) in the Dalmatian capital, in the 170s/180s AD⁵³. In this scenario, the family relationships between father and sons-cum-brothers would of course also speak to the debate about the role of ethnically mixed recruitment to the cohort despite its long-term stationing in or near Dalmatia – if Titus Aurelius Apollonius, too, is to be regarded as Syrian⁵⁴. As things stand, however, reconstruction of possible army placements and recruitment as well as the family contexts pertaining to wife (or wives) and mother (or mothers) lurking behind the epitaph commemorating the two brothers (and their friend) is mere guess-work – and the same goes ultimately for whatever tragedy struck at Sirmium. Moreover, as Varga rightly stressed, it is notable that only one of the four Aurelii in this text is recorded with a *praenomen* – T(itus), seemingly differentiating this Titus Aurelius from the other three Aurelii; this may imply that the other three men are all Marcus, thereby augmenting the weight of the onomastic signifier ‘Aurelius’ – and pushing a dating of the text rather into the third century AD, after the Edict of Caracalla⁵⁵. All that said, there is in my view no way of gaining certainty between the outlined chronological limits of the inscription. Yet, whether late second or third century, the case of Titus Aurelius Apollonius is worth a brief additional comment in the broader context here explored: if the man was born and raised in Dalmatia *and* was regarded as Syrian, like his brother, even if only by virtue of his father’s *origo*, would he count as local or foreign, neither or both? This kind of question is absent from the debate on the ethnicity or origin of the individuals whom we meet in the sources here discussed⁵⁶.

⁵¹ John Wilkes has emphasised in discussion that the ‘ET’ may also weaken the force of the fact that the lines in each column are not neatly aligned with each other, which may otherwise be understood as an indication of consecutive engraving.

⁵² cf. VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit., p. 31, who suggest that ‘Most probably we are not dealing with an auxiliary unit, but with the (first) cohort of a legion’, potentially Legio II Adiutrix from Aquincum. An auxiliary unit is by contrast assumed by WILKES, *Dalmatia* cit., p. 152, and CESARIK and GLAVAŠ, *Cohortes I et II milliaria* cit., p. 216.

⁵³ The possible link between the Marcomannic Wars and the epitaph has been made with regard to Titus Aurelius Apollonius, the centurion, in CESARIK and GLAVAŠ, *Cohortes* cit., p. 212, who also discuss (at pp. 211-213) army deployments and movements in the period, siding with the view of a north-eastern location of the cohort. If Titus Aurelius Apollonius, too, was Syrian, he is indicative of ethnically mixed recruitment to the cohort despite its long-term stationing in or near Dalmatia.

⁵⁴ On the relationship of the *origo* of fathers and sons, see above, with note 32.

⁵⁵ My thanks to John Wilkes for stressing these onomastic criteria in discussion; brief comment is also in VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit., p. 33 (but see also above for her dating of the text to between the late second and the mid-third century AD).

⁵⁶ It is notable in this context that ethnic self-identification is characteristic of Syrians who are recorded epigraphically in late antique Salona, including mention of their place of origin: N. GAUTHIER, E. MARIN, F. PRÉVOT, *Salona. IV. Inscriptions de Salona chrétienne, IV^e-VII^e siècles*, Rome 2010, pp. 77-79. See further below, with note 66.

Next, in the light of the clear geographic mobility that the evidence at hand documents, it is timely to note that the name – Aurelius Aquila – is known from other northern provinces. For example, in Noricum, the priest Aurelius Aquila presents on a dedicatory text found near Municipium Claudium Virunum (near modern Klagenfurt in Austria), together with his colleague in the priesthood, a man with a similar name to Aurelius Flavius from *CIL* III, 2006, namely Aurelius Flavianus; in Aquae Iasae, in Pannonia Superior (in northern Croatia, south of Varaždin), in AD 239, an Aurelius Aquila dedicates a votive altar together with several other Aurelii; back to Noricum, at Celeia (today in north-eastern Slovenia), roughly half-way between Aquae Iasae and Municipium Claudium Virunum, an Aurelius Aquila, also a priest, presents on a dedicatory inscription to Jupiter Optimus Maximus Dolichenus, dated to AD 217-218, with two of his colleagues⁵⁷. Thus, while *CIL* III, 2006 and 2086 from Salona are the only two such records preserving the name Aurelius Aquila epigraphically in Dalmatia, the name is not, as such, unique in the wider region, cautioning also from this angle against rushed personal identifications.

To turn to the related proposition of the personal identity of the Aurelii Flavii from *CIL* III, 2086 and 7761 – which opens further the window on some of the wider socio-historical issues at stake in the discussion of this type of epigraphy. As Aurelius Alexander and Aurelius Flavius from *CIL* III, 7761 illustrate, traders from Syria were freely operating in Dacia, a point long acknowledged in modern scholarship⁵⁸: it is therefore in my view unlikely that this Aurelius Flavius was the only Syrian trader who carried this name in the region. Put the other way round, it seems frankly problematic to assume a personal identity between the Aurelius Flavius from *CIL* III, 7761 with that of *CIL* III, 2086 simply because both are traders from Syria⁵⁹. There is a bigger issue here arising from the scholarly predilection for seeing personal identity when a name appears more than once. For example, there exist also attestations of Aurelii Flavii who were members of one or other *ordo decurionum*. Two such named men are recorded precisely in Dacia on a(nother) dedication – a fine altar with statue – to Jupiter Optimus Maximus Dolichenus, from Porolissum (near Mirșid in north-western Romania): *AE* 2001, 1707. In the text in question, Marcus Aurelius Flavius, IIIIvir of Municipium Septimium Porolissense, records to have paid for the temple and shops, together with his (near) namesake Aurelius Flavius, himself a municipal decurion, besides a man called Marcus Antonius Maximus, another IIIIvir; the men are further

⁵⁷ *CIL* III, 5021 (Municipium Claudium Virunum); *AE* 2013, 1209 (Aquae Iasae); *AE* 1987, 797 (Celeia).

⁵⁸ Another example is *CIL* III, 7915; for recent discussion of Dacian traders, see F. MATEI-POPESCU, *Despre originea negustorilor din provincia Dacia pe baza analizei surselor epigrafice. Stadiul problemei*, in D. BENEĂ (ed.), *Meșteșugari și artizani în Dacia romană*, Timișoara 2007, pp. 235-246 (and the slightly expanded English version: *The origin of the tradesmen in Dacia*, in D. BOTEVA-BOYANOVA, L. MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA, O. BOUNEGRU (eds.), *Pax Romana: Kulturaustausch und Wirtschaftsbeziehungen in den Donauprovinzen des römischen Kaiserreichs*, Kaiserlautern 2012, pp. 85-98).

⁵⁹ Note the equally unsupported proposition that the two Aurelii from *CIL* III, 7761 may be brothers or *coliberti*: BROEKAERT, *Navicularii et negotiantes* cit., p. 36, noting that ‘the immense spread of the *gentilicium* Aurelius after the *constitutio Antoniniana* clouds many family relationships’. This is clearly right, but it does not constitute a license for unsupported relationship identifications.

identified with additional roles, including priesthoods, and with the army⁶⁰. It has been suggested that the last named Aurelius Flavus from this text is identical with the *negotiator Suri* Aurelius Flavus who (together with Aurelius Alexander) put up the above cited dedication to Jupiter Optimus Maximus Dolichenus, in Apulum⁶¹. The suggestion, made by Matei-Popescu first in 2007, and since reiterated in 2012, emphasises the potentially strong links, at Porolissum, between trade and army: ‘Dacă o asemenea ipoteză s-ar dovedi adevărată, relațiile dintre mediul militar și comercial la Porolissum par a fi fost foarte strânse, iar activitatea comercială a acestui personaj devine una extrem de interesantă’⁶². The army – which is so clearly foregrounded in the text from Porolissum – played certainly a crucial role in the migration of individuals across the Empire, at least as far as men are concerned, leading in many cases to settlement in a new environment and membership of the local community, its practices and institutions; there can equally be little doubt over the strong link between army and trade and traders, whether with regard to the army’s need for supplies, the trading activities of soldiers, or the commercial roles of veterans (many of whom must have been what Mairs has termed in a related context ‘skilled multi-taskers’)⁶³. *Mutatis mutandis*, the army functioned also as a means to effecting changes to local economies, institutions, cultures and practices: the cult of Dolichenus is as good an example as any, illustrating the spread of a localised eastern cult in origin across the Empire, facilitated by the army, and thereby changing its religious characteristics and the ethnic composition of its adherents – so much so that devotion to Dolichenus cannot be taken by itself as a sign of a devotee’s eastern origin, even in combination with Greek *cognomina*⁶⁴. By way of parallel, the above mentioned Lucius Cassius Hermodorus, a devotee of Serapis in Salona, who was buried in Samnite Aternum, has quite rightly never been associated with an Egyptian background. It would also be fair to state that the names of the male individuals here discussed fall squarely into Mócsy’s rubric of

⁶⁰ I follow the reading of I. PISO, *Studia Porolissensia (I). Le temple dolichénien*, «Acta Musei Napocensis», 38 (2001), pp. 221-238, at pp. 225-233. Further discussion of the text and its interpretations is in A. ȘTEFĂNESCU, *Some observations on the Oriental cults in the Roman army in Dacia*, «Banatica», 17 (2005), pp. 211-218, at pp. 216-217.

⁶¹ The predilection for seeing family or other types of relationships that are not, as such, documented in the evidence is not restricted to this particular interpretation: PISO, *Studia Porolissensia* cit., p. 229, entertains the idea that the two Flavii recorded in this dedication may be father and son.

⁶² MATEI-POPESCU, *Despre originea negustorilor* cit., p. 238 (pp. 87-88 in *The origin* cit.); cf. VARGA, *Aurelius Aquila* cit., p. 31, note 11.

⁶³ R. MAIRS, *Interpretes, negotiatores and the Roman army*, in J. CLACKSON, P. JAMES, K. MCDONALD, L. TAGLIAPIETRA and N. ZAIR (eds.), *Migration, mobility and language contact in and around the ancient Mediterranean*, Cambridge 2020, pp. 203-229, at p. 218 (with an overview of the close relationship between the army and traders at pp. 210-213; but note also the author’s argument for *immobility* among some sections of the army). For discussion of the settlement of veterans away from their place of origin, their involvement in local, civic life and institutions, as well as the broader impact of the army on society, economy and culture, see, e.g., L. DE BLOIS and E. LO CASCIO (eds.), *The impact of the Roman army (200 B.C. - A.D. 476): economic, social, political, religious and cultural aspects*, Leiden 2007, especially the chapters by K. STROBEL (pp. 207-237) and K. VERBOVEN (pp. 295-313).

⁶⁴ The debate on the force behind the spread of the cult and its translation into the Roman pantheon is ongoing: e.g. E. SANZI, *IVPPITER OPTIMVS MAXIMVS DOLICHENVS. Un ‘culto orientale’ fra tradizione e innovazione: riflessione storico-religiosa*, Rome 2013, and several chapters in M. BLÖMER and E. WINTER (eds.), *Iuppiter Dolichenus. Vom Lokalkult zur Reichsreligion*, Tübingen 2012.

the ‘colourless names typical of soldiers’ (whatever the link with the army in each individual case)⁶⁵. It is of course entirely correct that what an individual may inscribe on one stone need not be the same information on the next: different epigraphic contexts reflect different forms of self-representation. But caution is nevertheless in order here over the proposed association of someone who self-identifies as a Syrian trader (and nothing else) with one who self-identifies as a *decurio municipii* (and *without* reference to any Syrian origins)⁶⁶. Indeed, to assume that Aurelius Flavus the trader (from *CIL* III, 7761) is identical with the decurion Aurelius Flavus (from *AE* 2001, 1707) has the ring of special pleading: the corpus of epigraphically attested traders in Dacia presented by Matei-Popescu does not otherwise sport a Syrian trader who is a member of the decurional order.

To be sure, Matei-Popescu argued in the opposite direction, i.e. he held that the bulk of Dacia’s trade was in the hand of eastern entrepreneurs (‘Oricum, fără frica de generaliza excesiv, putem susține faptul că cea mai mare parte a comerțului din provincial Dacia se afla în mâinile întreprinzătorilor orientali’)⁶⁷, speaking more broadly of the integration of such traders in the city council – as a means to securing the city’s supply of provisions, and foregrounding what appeared to him a pronounced visibility of these traders in civic life: ‘În Dacia, ca și în alte provincii, observăm că negustorii, pe lângă aristocrația tradițională, legată de proprietățile funciare, sunt extrem de active și vizibili în viața orașelor unde își desfășoară activitatea. Mulți dintre ei devin chiar decurioni și alți sunt aleși în diverse magistraturi sau în diverse funcții preoțești’⁶⁸. Of the 19 inscriptions listed by Matei-Popescu in his epigraphic appendix of traders (a mere eight of which clearly attest to the profession), only six mention decurions of Dacian cities⁶⁹. Of these six, one is our friend Aurelius Aquila from *CIL*

⁶⁵ A. MÓCSY, *Pannonia and Upper Moesia. A history of the middle Danube provinces of the Roman Empire*, London 1974, p. 157, citing inter alia *CIL* III, 14507 (Viminacium / Moesia inferior), from AD 195, including multiple Marci Aurelii, Titi Aurelii, and a couple of Flavii.

⁶⁶ This is not to question the hybridity that characterised individual identities in the period: for discussion of some intriguing cases, see MOATTI, *Mobility and identity* cit., pp. 149-150, and further below. But note also the comments in note 56 above on ethnic self-identification among Syrians in later centuries at Salona.

⁶⁷ MATEI-POPESCU, *Despre originea negustorilor* cit., p. 240 (p. 91 in *The origin* cit.). The question of the role of so-called eastern entrepreneurs has also been debated with regard to the western provinces: e.g. P. LAMBRECHTS, *Le commerce des ‘Syriens’ en Gaule du Haut-Empire à l’époque mérovingienne*, «L’Antiquité classique», 6 (1937), pp. 35-61; M. CHRISTOL, *Remarques sur les naviculaires d’Arles*, «Latomus», 30 (1971), pp. 643-663. See also note 68 below.

⁶⁸ MATEI-POPESCU, *Despre originea negustorilor* cit., p. 242 (p. 93 in *The origin* cit.). Since repeated in F. MATEI-POPESCU, *Review: L. Mibailescu-Bîrliba, Ex toto orbe Romano. Immigration into Roman Dacia* (2011), «Bryn Mawr Classical Review», 2013.04.27: ‘The wealthy tradesmen, especially the ones involved in the long-distance trade, were in fact also part of the elite, since many of them became decurions in different towns’. The ‘poids des Palmyréniens (et d’autres Syriens)’, especially at Porolissum, is also cited in D. DANA and R. ZĂGREANU, *Deux dédicaces latines inédites de Porolissum (Dacie romaine)*, «Iyche», 28 (2013), pp. 27-36, at p. 33.

⁶⁹ MATEI-POPESCU, *Despre originea negustorilor* cit., pp. 244-246 (pp. 93-95 in *The origin* cit., with additions of sales contracts and prices). The eight texts that clearly mention traders in the inscription (out of Matei-Popescu’s 19 texts) are: *CIL* III, 1068 (Apulum / Dacia Superior); *CIL* III, 1500 (Ulpia Traian Sarmizegetusa / Dacia Superior); *CIL* III, 2086 (Salona / Dalmatia); *CIL* III, 7761 (Apulum / Dacia Superior); *CIL* III, 7915 (Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa / Dacia Superior); *CIL* III, 14216¹¹ (Drobeta / Dacia Superior); *CIL* V, 1047 (Aquila / Italia, Regio X); *IGB* III/2 1590 (Augusta Traiana / Thracia).

III, 2086, who buried his wife in Salona, and who was indeed a trader, but not as far as one can tell of eastern origin. In any case, none of the other five decurions are identified as traders in the inscriptions that record them. Two are known from their tombstones located in Dalmatia – a decurion of Drobeta who went by the name of Aurelius Longinianus, and a decurion, augur and pontifex from Porolissum whom we have already met – i.e. Cocceius Umbrianus⁷⁰. A third, a freeborn equestrian of the Papiria tribe who is known from an honorific inscription set up to him in Apulum, is a man called Publius Aelius Strenuus – priest of the altar of the Augustus, former *II*vir of Sarmizegetusa, augur of Apulum, decurion of Drobeta; he was also patron of *collegia fabrum, centonariorum, and nautarum*, besides being the lessee (*conductor*) for use of the salt-pans and commercial contracts – but not a trader⁷¹. I see no strong reason to associate any of these three men with an eastern origin of the kind discussed by Matei-Popescu, even if the possibility has been raised in passing for Publius Aelius Strenuus by Ciobanu and Barbuta ('un oriental peut-être')⁷². The fourth man is our other friend Aurelius Primus Asteo Iulianus whom, as already seen, Ardevan understood as belonging into Porolissum. Besides the argued for residence at Porolissum, cited above, Ardevan's onomastic discussion challenged moreover a reading of the man's *cognomen* – Asteo – as indicative of an eastern background: 'Numele grecesc (al său ori al tatălui) nu asigură o obârșie greco-orientală, el putîndu-se datora și mo-dei filoenice din societatea romană'⁷³. It is notable that Ardevan argues accordingly despite accepting an eastern origin for the individual with whom Aurelius Primus Asteo Iulianus set up the dedication – recorded as Ἀὐρ(ήλιος) Σαβεῖνος Θειοφίλου Σύρος ἱερέυς – a trader (but no decurion), assumed of Syrian origin ('preot sirian')⁷⁴: this 'mixed' interpretation fully acknowledges the diversity and hybridity of Roman provincial society, including the significant scope for interpersonal contact between individuals with diverse origins and socio-cultural make-ups. The detailed analysis and argument offered by Ardevan is to be preferred to hasty interpretations based on

⁷⁰ *CIL* III, 2679 (Tragurium / Dalmatia): Aurelio / Longini/ano, dec(urioni) col(oniae) Drobeten-s(ium), Aelia / Balbina, coniunx ob/sequentissima, qui liber/os suos S[...]CERISTANUPA/TITIOS S[...] mater qu(a)e v/ixit cum eo an[no]s / XX. (The edition is adapted from that of Ingrid Weber-Hiden at <http://gams.uni-graz.at/o:epsg.973>.) For the text recording Cocceius Umbrianus (*CIL* III, 2866), see note 45 above.

⁷¹ *CIL* III, 1209 (Apulum / Dacia), with *AE* 2006, 1155: P. Ael(io) P. fil(io) Pap(iria) / Strenuo eq(uo) / p(ublico) sacerd(oti) arae / Aug(usti) auguri et / II viral(i) col(oniae) / Sarm(izegetusae) augur(i) / col(oniae) Apul(ensis) dec(urioni) / col(oniae) Drob(etensis) pat(ron)o collegior(um) / fabr(um) cento(nariorum) et nau(tar)um conduc(tori) pas(cui) salinarum et commer(cior)um Rufinus eius. See LIU, *Collegia centonariorum* cit., pp. 243-245 for discussion of the patronage of *collegia* at Apulum.

⁷² CIOBANU and BARBUTA, *Le port romain* cit., p. 266, note 20, citing the overlap in *praenomen* and *nomen* with Hadrian, and in tribal affiliation with Trajan, the founder of the province; note however also (e.g.) *CIL* VIII, 8492 (Sitifis / Mauretania Caesariensis) or *AE* 1933, 67 (Diana Veteranorum / Numidia), documenting other Publii Aelii Publii filii of the Papiria tribe in different provincial contexts.

⁷³ ARDEVAN, *Porolissum* cit., p. 293.

⁷⁴ ARDEVAN, *Porolissum* cit., pp. 292-293. Similarly also DANA and ZĂGREANU, *Deux dédicaces latines* cit., p. 34; cf. MATEI-POPESCU, *The origin* cit., p. 88, opting for a *cognomen* (Syrus – which may of course have served to fossilise a Syrian origin), but in any case assuming a Syrian origin: p. 89 (= *Despre originea negustorilor* cit., p. 239). For a more cautious approach, see S. Sanie, *Die syrischen und palmyrenischen Kulte im römischen Dakien*, «ANRW», II 18.2 (1989), pp. 1165-1271, at p. 1196.

onomastic proxies and preconceived notions of ethnic associations carried by names⁷⁵. The fifth and final man to be discussed is known from a dedication which he set up to the Most High God at Mytilene on Lesbos⁷⁶. The Greek text records not much else than the vow, the man's name – Publius Aelius Arrianus Alexander – and the fact that he was decurion of Sarmizegetusa in Dacia (where dedications to the Most High God are well attested, including in Greek, including by members of the *ordo*)⁷⁷. Because of the location of the inscription, Matei-Popescu held that the man was a wine trader, dealing in Greek wine⁷⁸: as with Aurelius Longinianus and Cocceius Umbrianus, the key reason for an association of this individual with the world of trade is the fact that the inscription is not located in Dacia – as if only traders were mobile and found reason to travel⁷⁹. By way of contrast, Mihailescu-Bîrliba entertains the idea of leisure sojourns at one or other thermal resort in the case of one *ex voto* and two tombstones – both victims of robberies – of Dacian decurions⁸⁰. The Most High God, too, is likely to have attracted dedications by individuals not from or ordinarily resident at the place of dedication; indeed, the god was particularly suited for attracting devotion by way of cultic assimilation⁸¹. Frankly, it is impossible to deduce from any of these contexts whether Arrianus Alexander should be seen as of Greek origin, setting up a dedication upon (a) return to his homeland, or whether the man's name and his Greek travels arise from the same kind of philhellenism suggested by Ardevan to lurk behind the *cognomen* Asteo, potentially encouraging a leisure sojourn on a fine Greek island in the case of Arrianus Alexander. More critically, from the evidence at hand, it is impossible to speak to the source of Arrianus Alexander's economic capacity that supported his dedication to the Most High God on Lesbos. Looking the other way, at the sizeable body of decurions attested in general in Dacia, it is precisely the seeming irrelevance of professional and ethnic identity that stands out from the epigraphy, combined with a prominence of attestations speaking to an army background⁸². In

⁷⁵ In one discussion, Aurelius Primus Asteo Iulianus is even regarded as both a trader and of Syrian origin – like his co-dedicant – despite the lack of epigraphic attestations to that effect in his own case ('D'autres *negotiatores*, toujours d'origine syrienne, sont attestés en différents endroits de la Dacie ou dans les provinces voisines [...] *Aurelius Sabinus* et *Aurelius Primus Asteo Iulianus* à *Augusta Traiana* (Stara Zagora en Mésie), deux négociants en vin, venant de *Porolissum*'): CIOBANU and BARBUTA, *Le port romain* cit., p. 267 (original emphases).

⁷⁶ IG XII/II 125 (Mytilenae / Achaia): Θεῷ Ὑψίστῳ / Π. Αἰλίῳ Ἀρριανῶς Ἀλέξανδρος, βουλευ(τῆς) / Δακίας κο/λωνείας Ζερμιζεγ[ε]/θοῦης, εὐχῆ[ν] / ἀνέθηκεν.

⁷⁷ See, e.g., *AE* 1939, 5. On the inscriptions dedicated to the Most High God in Dacia, see generally Y. USTINOVA, *The supreme gods of the Bosporan kingdoms. Celestial Aphrodite and the Most High God*, Leiden-Boston-Cologne 1999, pp. 250-251.

⁷⁸ MATEI-POPESCU, *Despre originea negustorilor* cit., p. 239 (p. 89 in *The origin* cit.).

⁷⁹ The central role of travel in the Roman world, including pilgrimage, tourism, and individual travel, is surveyed in some detail from various key angles in R.L. CIOFFI, *Travel in the Roman world*, «Oxford Handbooks Online». Note also the cultic contexts in which several of the texts discussed in this article fall – a context that is well known to encourage mobility.

⁸⁰ L. MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA, *Ex toto orbe Romano: immigration into Roman Dacia*, Louvain 2011, p. 7.

⁸¹ An intriguing epigraphic example is discussed in Y. USTINOVA and J. NAVEH, *A Greek-Palmyrene Aramaic dedicatory inscription from the Negev*, «*Atiqot*», *ES* 22 (1993), pp. 91-96.

⁸² A cursory search for members of the *ordo decurionum* in Dacia via EDCS (search term: 'decurio') presents over 150 relevant texts, many of which attest more than one (municipal) decurion, providing a sizeable basis for the noted observations. An overall paucity of explicit professional and ethnic markers is

sum, in the light of the currently available inscriptional documentation of men of affairs from or pertaining to Dacia, the case especially for a *Syrian* trader turned municipal decurion in one or other Dacian city is unsupported. On present evidence, there is moreover no basis for suggesting that the town councils of the Dacian cities were infiltrated by eastern entrepreneurs, Syrian or otherwise.

None of what has been said is to suggest that traders of a Greek or eastern origin, who made Dacia their home, could not have risen to notable wealth and social status in their new domicile, including the acquisition of the required economic capital to join the *ordo*: there is clear evidence that traders gained social status on the basis of their economic status in other regions of the Empire⁸³. Indeed, leaving the question of ethnicity aside, Aurelius Aquila from *CIL* III, 2086 illustrates neatly the successful combination of membership in the *ordo* and engagement in trade in the geographical context under discussion. Moreover, going by the monuments here discussed, the identified traders and their associates and family had access to notable financial resources, making it likely that they would push upwards in terms of social mobility, including into the higher civic and political ranks, irrespective of their geographical origins⁸⁴. Indeed, the rich pool of diverse geographical origins

evident in the body of the surviving epigraphy from Dacia more broadly, irrespective of individual social status: see the various tables in MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA, *Ex toto orbe Romano* cit., pp. 39-149, but note the author's overly optimistic identification of ethnic origins and social statuses on dubious grounds, listing inter alia (at p. 57) 16 individuals (15 men, 1 woman) of supposed Syrian origin as members of the urban elites, taking for instance devotion to Dolichenus as evidence for a Syrian origin: see also below, with note 85; cf. the tiny number of non-Dacian ethnics among the civic elites identified specifically on funerary monuments from Dacia Superior by CIONGRADI, *Grabmonument* cit., pp. 356-358, Table 1-2. Some particularly successful examples of military men in the civic realm are discussed in G. CUPCEA, *Centurions: military or social elite?*, in CUPCEA and VARGA (eds.), *Social interactions* cit., pp. 151-164, at pp. 160-161; note however also the author's wider argument for a remaining distinction between established, local elites in the Empire as a whole and these socially successful army members (former and present).

⁸³ Several second and third century cases from the Gallic and Germanic provinces are discussed in K. VERBOVEN, *Magistrates, patrons and benefactors of collegia: status building and Romanisation in the Spanish, Gallic and German provinces*, in B. ANTELA-BERNÁRDEZ and T. NACO DEL HOYO (eds.), *Transforming historical landscapes in the ancient empires*, Oxford 2009, pp. 159-167, at pp. 163-164 (but note also Verboven's argument for differences between different provinces).

⁸⁴ Both the funerary monuments of *CIL* III, 2006 and 2086 indicate that the economic capacity of the commemorators was significant within the context of the society they lived in, and the same goes for the dedication of *CIL* III, 7761. For discussion of the relationship between social status and monuments in Dacia, see C. CIONGRADI, *Burial monuments and their implications*, in W.S. HANSON and I.P. HAYNES (eds.), *Roman Dacia. The making of provincial society*, Portsmouth 2004, pp. 165-178, at pp. 172-176, and CIONGRADI, *Grabmonument* cit., pp. 119-137. Note however also that for some of the neighbouring provinces, being part of the local elite is seen as an exceptional achievement for traders: M. ZIMMERMANN, *The Barbi, trade in Noricum and the influence of the local epigraphic habit on status display*, in CUPCEA and VARGA (eds.), *Social interactions* cit., pp. 1-8, at p. 5 (regarding Raetia). Note in this context also the widespread idea that traders from Syria were predominantly of modest means, as expressed for instance in L. DE SALVO, *Mobilità di mercanti nell'Occidente romano*, in A. AKERRAZ, P. RUGGERI, A. SIRAJ and C. VISMARA (eds.), *L'Africa romana. Mobilità delle persone e dei popoli dinamiche migratorie, emigrazioni ed immigrazioni nelle province occidentali dell'Impero romano*, Vol. 2, Rome 2006, pp. 773-789, at p. 776: 'In maggioranza si trattava di uomini d'affari e commercianti, molti dei quali dovevano essere di condizione sociale modesta, che cercavano di arricchirsi e di elevarsi socialmente nella loro nuova patria'. But see also De Salvo's interpretation of Gaius Domitius Zmaragdus, from Antioch (widely assumed to be Syrian Antioch), decurion at Carnuntum in Pannonia Superior, as a 'grande imprenditore siriano' – based solely

of members of Dacian society documented in the funerary and cultic realms, both visually and epigraphically, documenting in itself an above average social status, is not in dispute⁸⁵. Rather, my scepticism over the proposed *personal identity* of the Aurelii Flavii (*et al.*) centres on the ease with which modern scholars make such propositions, left, right and centre, in what is but a tiny epigraphic corpus, including the creation of a socio-historical *unicum* in that corpus. It needs to be reiterated that the number of texts that securely mention traders in, from or pertaining to Dacia is a meagre eight in Matei-Popescu's list, attesting nine individual traders and one group of traders, only five of which are plainly identified as Syrian⁸⁶. There exists moreover an underlying oddity in the combination of the argument for extensive mobility with the hunt for personal overlaps in such a small corpus: as just seen, the proposed personal overlaps diminish the corpus of attested traders to an even more trifling number of known individuals; more critically, the *idea* of voluminous personal overlap in the surviving epigraphy reduces the documented commercial activity to the notion of an essentially concise number of networks in which personal contact emerges almost as the norm, in what appears in consequence a rather small, somewhat immobile world⁸⁷.

Conclusion

It is high time to return with the above discussion in mind to CIL III, 2006. In the case of Aurelius Aquila, too, the more detailed contextualisation here undertaken has thrown doubts on the personal identification of the man who commemorates his two sons (one of whom is identified as hailing from Syria) with the man of the same name known from CIL III, 2086, a decurion of Potaissa (who commemorates his wife). I would myself be equally more hesitant than other scholars to identify the Aurelius Flavus from CIL III, 2006 with the man of the same name known from CIL III, 7761 (who in turn has been proposed as identical with another Aurelius Flavus,

on the man's financial ability to pay for the construction of the local amphitheatre and his foreign origin: DE SALVO, *cit.*, p. 777, with CIL III, 14359².

⁸⁵ For a case study concerned with the presence of dedicants and their gods from Asia Minor in imperial Dacia, see A. SCHÄFER, *The diffusion of religious belief in Roman Dacia: a case-study of the gods of Asia Minor*, in HANSON and HAYNES (eds.), *Roman Dacia* *cit.*, pp. 178-190; for an example of a visual marker of non-Dacian origins – a woman's Norican bonnet – see pp. 181-182. But see also note 87 below, and the argument against large numbers of foreign residents in Dacia.

⁸⁶ For the full list of the eight texts, see note 69 above. The Syrian traders – in part discussed earlier – are known from CIL III, 7761 and 7915, and IGB III/2 1590.

⁸⁷ For the notion that foreign residents were not numerous in Dacia, see K. VERBOVEN, *Resident aliens and translocal merchant collegia in the Roman Empire*, in O. HEKSTER and T. KAIZER (eds.), *Frontiers in the Roman world: Proceedings of the ninth workshop of the International Network Impact of Empire (Durham, 16-19 April 2009)*, Leiden and Boston 2011, pp. 335-348, at p. 338. My rejection of the notion of a close-knit 'small world' is not directed at current understanding of *collegia* as 'closed groups with a select number of members tied together in bonds of trust and solidarity' (VERBOVEN, *cit.*, p. 342), but at society at large. Notably, none of the individuals here discussed with ties to Dacia self-identify as members of *collegia*, while Publius Aelius Strenuus from CIL III, 1209 is recorded as patron of *collegia*, not proving ordinary membership; see also the study listed in note 71 above.

as seen above), despite the onomastic, ethnic and professional overlaps: the modern scholarly desire to make sense of our source material by establishing connections between otherwise unrelated, individual pieces of evidence does not always match well the disparate body of epigraphic materials.

Commenting on Mihailescu-Bîrliba's interpretation of the Dacian epigraphy as evidence for immigration 'on a massive scale', Raepsaet-Charlier has recently emphasised forcefully that onomastic arguments need to be taken one at a time: 'Les arguments de nature onomastique [...] sont à prendre avec la plus grande prudence'⁸⁸. Exercising such greater caution does not equate to denying – in the present context – the notable economic successes of many traders, the existence of trading networks, or the longevity of business links; nor does it deny the significant level of mobility that can be deduced for many of the individuals who are documented in the surviving evidence, besides the multiplicity of personal identities that this early intercontinental super-power called the Roman Empire fostered. There cannot be any doubt, to speak with Moatti, that a 'cosmopolitan consciousness is what made the Roman Empire an empire: the capacity of moving and weaving links between places, and the liberty of accumulating identities and affiliations'⁸⁹. Indeed, the multiplicity and hybridity of many of the discussed individuals' socio-cultural make-up functions as a timely prompt to sharpen our analytical tools and concepts in the discussion about ethnicity: the search for eastern origins in the debate on Dacian traders operates in a static vacuum in which the individuals appear unaffected by the society around them, at times over generations.

It is equally timely to reconsider the relationship between the widely assumed mobility and the kind of personal identifications in a small corpus here discussed – 'tempting though it is to play that game' (to speak with Mairs)⁹⁰: the greater the level of mobility, the smaller the chances that the inscriptions surviving from the period record the same people in ordinary monumental displays in what is but a tiny corpus⁹¹. While in better attested regions personal overlaps and business links among traders have been successfully identified, leading to meaningful discussion of individual biographies, the development of commercial networks and the role of affiliated organisations (such as *collegia*), it is plainly unhelpful to build far-reaching interpretations about the practices of traders in a given region on limited evidence and rushed epigraphic analysis, especially in the context of the kind of profuse repetition of bland Roman names as the ones carried by most of the men discussed in this article. Doing so is likely to obscure differences not least between diverse regions in regard to geographical and social mobility⁹². As Christol has put it in an attempt at tracing connections among

⁸⁸ MIHAILESCU-BÎRLIBA, *Ex toto orbe Romano* cit., p. 37 (see also note 82 above), with M.-T. RAEPSAET-CHARLIER, *Review: L. Mihailescu-Bîrliba, Ex toto orbe Romano: Immigration into Roman Dacia, Louvain 2011*, «L'Antiquité classique», 82 (2013), pp. 510-511, at p. 511.

⁸⁹ MOATTI, *Mobility and identity* cit., p. 150.

⁹⁰ MAIRS, *Interpretes* cit., p. 217.

⁹¹ Higher up the social ladder, overlaps are not unknown, as for instance documented by the five inscriptions known for Publius Aelius P. f. Marcellus, of the Papiria tribe: *CIL* III, 1181, 1182 and 7795 (Apulum / Dacia), besides *CIL* XI, 5215 and 5216 (Fulginae / Umbria).

⁹² Differences between the social mobility possible for traders in, for instance, Noricum and Raetia

wine traders through rather unusual *gentilicia* in northern and northwestern Gaul: 'Les recherches fondées sur l'analyse anthroponymique [...] ne peuvent porter leurs fruits que si elles s'inscrivent dans un cadre relativement large'⁹³. For small bodies of nondescript evidence, by contrast, an argument in favour of mobility would rather acknowledge the volume of *incidental* overlap of names, professions, civic roles and ethnics in the surviving epigraphic sources – an overlap that is *naturally* explained by the mobility of people across the Roman Empire, traders and non-traders alike – what De Salvo called 'scambi intensi e frequenti'⁹⁴. Such movements require no special explanation. The only movement that is unexplained and unjustified is the modern scholarly shift towards reading *CIL III*, 2006 from left-to-right.

respectively, have been pointed out in ZIMMERMANN, *The Barbii* cit., pp. 5-6, with earlier bibliography; see also note 83 above.

⁹³ M. CHRISTOL, *Du CIL, XII au CIL, XIII: liaisons onomastiques*, «Revue archéologique de Narbonnaise», 33 (2000), pp. 82-86, at p. 86. On the potential of detailed analysis of sizeable bodies or especially conspicuous specimen of epitaphs for the study of traders' multiple interests and economic networks, see already J.H. D'ARMS, *Commerce and social standing in ancient Rome*, Harvard 1981, pp. 130-133.

⁹⁴ DE SALVO, *Mobilità* cit., p. 789.

