

## NOTES ON THE COLLEGIUM UTRICLARIORUM

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*Keywords:* *collegium utriculariorum*, wineskins, *άσκός*, Gallia, Dacia, epigraphy, archaeology

*Cuvinte cheie:* *collegium utriculariorum*, *burdufuri*, *άσκός*, Gallia, Dacia, epigrafie, arheologie

### 1. Starting point: a growing inscription

A few years back my attention was drawn to an unnoticed manuscript signed by count József Kemény, a renowned historian-antiquarian of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Transylvania. His text presents the Roman site – auxiliary military camp and adjoining settlement – at Călugăreni (Hu: Mikháza, Mureş County), together with some interesting finds that were unearthed there<sup>1</sup>, some of which were sent to him. Among these the most important one was an altar<sup>2</sup> dedicated to *Adrastia* in the honour of the *Domus Divina* by the *collegium utriculariorum*. Unfortunately the monument was broken into pieces by the locals (hoping that it would contain gold inside it). Contrary to the later mentions, its pieces were not sent to the count, but only a transcription, made before its destruction, by the provincial of the Franciscans (a monastery functioned in the village for a long period)<sup>3</sup>. Anton Kurz, the editor of Ferdinand Neugebauer's *Dacien* received the mentioned Kemény-manuscript (he made some revisions and corrections on the text) and accordingly added the new information to the volume currently under his preparation, while also sending the inscription to the epigraphist Wilhelm

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<sup>1</sup> *Römische Alterthümer zu Mikháza in Siebenbürgen*. For the study presenting the manuscript see Nyulas *forthcoming*. I would like to thank again Ioan Dordea for transcribing the text and professor Radu Ardevan for drawing my attention to this manuscript, as well as Ernő Szabó for his comments on the present topic.

<sup>2</sup> CIL III, 944=ILS 3748=IDR III/4, 215=HD045404.

<sup>3</sup> The confusion goes back to Neugebauer's *Dacien*: Neugebauer 1851, 248; from where it was adopted in later works, e.g. see IDR III/4, 215. For a more detailed picture and other issues regarding this inscription see Nyulas *forthcoming*.

Henzen<sup>4</sup>. Probably by mistake, A. Kurz did not copy the last line, thus in both cases, and taken from there in every other later publication (including the CIL), the inscription has four lines, whereas in the count's manuscript a fifth (last) line is also present, composed of a simple *S F*, generally read as *S(acrum) F(ecit)*. Thus, a long-lost inscription had suddenly grown, the correct form being:

*IN H(onorem) D(omus) D(ivinae) / ADRASTIAE /  
COLLEG(ium) / VTRICLARIORVM / S(acrum) F(ecit)*

While the addition of the *sacrum fecit* does not change much the interpretation of the inscription, this development made me look more deeply into the subject of the *collegium utriclarium*. While there are a fair number of studies on the topic from various viewpoints, they all tend to use just one singular perspective: be it Latin epigraphy, Greek epigraphy or archaeology. Below is an attempt to gather the information from all three of these different disciplines in order to arrive to a common conclusion.

## 2. The trouble with the *utriclarii*

The *collegium utriclarium* is a corporation on the interpretation of which researchers still have not been able to settle. To make things more interesting, this *collegium*<sup>5</sup> is only attested in two regions<sup>6</sup>, mostly during the 2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD, namely in Gallia Narbonensis plus a high concentration in Lugdunum (21 and 12 inscriptions)<sup>7</sup> and in Dacia (2 inscriptions)<sup>8</sup>. This proportion is maintained in the studies regarding this corporation too: there are several works<sup>9</sup> on the Gallic

<sup>4</sup> Forwarded by Henzen, the inscription is first published in Rome: *Bullettino* 1848, 56.

<sup>5</sup> Both *collegium* and *corpus* are used on inscriptions indicating the association of the *utriclarii*.

<sup>6</sup> A very fragmentary funerary inscription from Italy (CIL X, 2949=8193=EDCS 15100149) is usually not taken into account as it mentioning an *utriclarius* is far from certain.

<sup>7</sup> For a collection of all the inscriptions see Deman 2002, 233–237. In addition, P. Marimon Ribas (2017) takes into consideration, besides two monuments that later appeared in Nîmes (AE 2014, 853 and 854=EDCS 71300172–3), also three inscriptions that other researchers did not include because of how fragmentary they are, as their interpretation cannot be totally sure: CIL XII, 189 and 1747 (from Gallia Narbonensis) and CIL XIII, 1979 from Lugdunum. Another one, also from Lyon and rather fragmentary, was published in 2018: Bérard, Silvino 2018=EDCS 76400178.

<sup>8</sup> The second Dacian inscription (CIL III, 1547=IDR III/1, 272), copied by Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli, is also lost today.

<sup>9</sup> For an exhaustive bibliography see Bannert 1978, 988–989; Kneissl 1981, 170–172 and Deman 2002, 240–241; more recently: Marimon Ribas 2017, 192–200. In the present article only the most important publications will be mentioned.

*utricularii*<sup>10</sup> (usually mentioning the two Dacian examples as exceptions that prove the rule) and very few with focus on Dacia<sup>11</sup>.

There are several aspects regarding this *collegium* that are the subject of scientific debate, but the most important one is the nature of their business. It has always been clear that they are an occupational association, but there is still no consensus regarding what the *utricularii* did. The Latin term is formed from the base *uter, utris*, meaning leather bag/container ('wineskin')<sup>12</sup>, adding the diminutive suffix *-culus* (*utriculus* = small leather bag) and the suffix *-arius*, usually indicating an occupation<sup>13</sup>. Unfortunately, this etymology does not help much in the decipherment of the craft: an *utric(u)larius*<sup>14</sup> can be someone who makes such leather bags and/or sells them (1); uses them for transport either as containers (2) or as means of transport on water (3); a firefighter – probably with leather hoses (4); but also a musician who plays the bagpipe or the manufacturer of such an instrument (5). Each of these possibilities were mentioned already before the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>15</sup> and were supported by different researchers throughout time. Below each theory will be shortly discussed apart. In all the cases these hypotheses take into account almost exclusively the Gallic inscriptions, usually mentioning the two Dacian examples separately, without necessarily including them in the argumentation.

### *Bagpipers?*

The literary sources have helped elucidating many Roman professions, but unfortunately they did not offer much guidance in this case. The only ancient literary source mentioning an *utricularius* is Suetonius's *Vita Neronis*, where it clearly denotes someone who plays the bagpipes<sup>16</sup>. This was an argument strong

<sup>10</sup> Though the western inscriptions come from both Gallia Narbonensis and Gallia Lugdunensis (almost all from the catchment area of the river Rhône), for the sake of simplicity they will be referred to generally as the 'Gallic inscriptions' in the present paper.

<sup>11</sup> The only short note regarding the Dacian *utricularii* is signed by Doina Benea (1995), an article which is now rather outdated. The contribution of Radu Ardevan (1998, 290–291) is also significant to the topic.

<sup>12</sup> The English term 'wineskin' unfortunately suggests that it served as a container only for wine, however it was suitable and used for all kinds of liquids, most importantly oil (*Edict. Diocl.* 10.14) and water (Sall. *Iug.* 91.1), but also pepper sauce (Petron. *Sat.* 36) or even blood if it was so needed (Apul. *Met.* 1.13).

<sup>13</sup> Deman 2002, 237–328; Marimon Ribas 2017, 184–185.

<sup>14</sup> The inscriptions mentioning the term always use the contracted *utricularius* form, which will be used in this paper as well.

<sup>15</sup> An exhaustive earlier bibliography regarding these theories can be found in Boissieu 1846, 401–404.

<sup>16</sup> Suet. *Ner.* 54: *proditurum se partae victoriae ludis etiam hydraulam et choraulam et utricularium*. Here *utricularius* without doubt means bagpiper. The word *utrarius* on the other

enough in the eyes of count József Kemény, and others before him, as he rather naively proposes a guild of bagpipe makers and dealers at Călugăreni (based on this he also suggests that a major Roman settlement must have been there, perhaps Napoca)<sup>17</sup>. Leaving Kemény's farfetched ideas behind, the theory of a *collegium* of bagpipe makers was soon abolished, having just the one shaky literary argument for, and many-many against it.

### *Rafters?*

Identifying the *utricularii* as rafters, i.e. transporters using rafts made of inflated animal skins – adequate for shallower or rapid waters where a normal boat might strand or crash –, is generally connected to Jean Rougé<sup>18</sup>. It is not a new idea, but he brings forth new arguments and it seems that for a while he managed to settle the scientific discussion<sup>19</sup>. This theory seems to be supported by the recurrent mentioning in inscriptions of the *collegium utriculariorum* together with the *nautae* (fluvial sailors)<sup>20</sup>. Hence it seemed logical to assume that they might be also involved in the river transport, and as there are several ancient literary, iconographic and ethnographic sources of inflated wineskins used as rafts or pontoons<sup>21</sup>, they must have been using something similar to get further up the rivers where the *nautae* could no longer go. As Peter Kneissl points it out, the biggest shortfall of this theory is that many inscriptions come from locations with no navigable rivers (even with such light rafts)<sup>22</sup>. Another important aspect is whereas the *nautae* are always linked to rivers on the inscriptions, the *utricularii* are identified with the settlement they work in<sup>23</sup>. Linking two separate professions based on both being mentioned by the same inscriptions must be treated always with care: in this case the most frequent 'connection' between the two are that they

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hand appears with the meaning of a person who carries water (probably in leather containers) for the army: see Livy 44.33.1.

<sup>17</sup> See Nyulas *forthcoming*.

<sup>18</sup> Rougé 1959. He proposes the idea that they could have been also ferrymen on larger rivers.

<sup>19</sup> For a concise presentation of this topic, together with the later counterarguments see Marimon Ribas 2017, 192–196.

<sup>20</sup> CIL XII, 731; 982 (this also mentions the *navicularii marini*); 4107; CIL XIII, 1954; 1960; 2009. In one inscription (CIL XII, 700) the *utricularii* also appear together with the *fabri navales* (and *centonarii*).

<sup>21</sup> See Marimon Ribas 2017, 192–193. For a short archaeological note on such military pontoons: Munteanu 2013. It must be underlined that while such solutions existed, they were used mostly spontaneously in specific situations.

<sup>22</sup> Kneissl 1981, 173–175.

<sup>23</sup> E.g. CIL XII, 982: *patronus nautar(um) Druenticorum et utricularior(um) corp(oratorum) Ernaginensum* (sic).

have the same *patronus*<sup>24</sup>, which does not necessarily mean a close relation between the two *collegia*.

#### *Wine-transporters?*

Taking into account the finding places of the (Gallic) inscriptions and supported with several other arguments, P. Kneissl proposed a new interpretation, one that convinced mostly everyone: namely that the *utricularii* transported wine on land and also participated in the wine trade<sup>25</sup>. He rejects, for the reasons seen above the idea that they were rafters, but also points out how, with the exception of one or two, all the inscriptions come from settlements located at important cross-roads or at least on essential roads<sup>26</sup>. Another important pillar of his argumentation is the institution of corporations itself, suggesting that because the *collegium utriculariorum* is clearly not a religious or administrative association, nor a craftsman-type of corporation, it must be part of the third type – connected to transport and trade, together with the *nautae* and *navicularii*<sup>27</sup>. He easily dismisses the idea that they could be artisans, the makers and sellers of wineskins, arguing that it is a rather simple recipient made of the entire hide of usually goats and sheep, for the making of which there is no need of ‘any special manual skills’, and he doubts that there was a demand high enough for such wineskins that there was an entire corporation of producers needed<sup>28</sup>. From an archaeological perspective these affirmation are highly disputable as it will be argued further below.

Kneissl’s most developed and quite original argument brings in the ancient wine trade as a huge economic factor that significantly marked many other industries as well in this region. Wine production became widespread in south Gallia from the first century AD, the *utricularii*-inscriptions following soon after, all dating roughly in the second and third century. This region rapidly became the main source of wine for the northern parts of the Empire, the Germanic *limes* and Britannia. This growth generated the development of a special group of transporters on land, possibly using wineskins as containers. As the majority of the inscriptions come from this region, most probably this evolution took place here<sup>29</sup>. From this perspective it is even more interesting how at the turn of the second and third century the area of activity of the *utricularii* shifted from the south of Gallia, close to the coastline with a possible bigger centre at today’s

<sup>24</sup> CIL XII, 982; CIL XIII, 1954; 1960.

<sup>25</sup> Kneissl 1981.

<sup>26</sup> Kneissl 1981, 175, Abb. 2.

<sup>27</sup> Kneissl 1981, 172–173. He presents here a rather oversimplified view on corporations.

<sup>28</sup> Kneissl 1981, 172.

<sup>29</sup> Kneissl 1981, 177–182.

Arles, up north to establish a new large centre at Lyon, the *corpus utriculariorum Luguduni consistens*<sup>30</sup>, due to the expanding demand for wine especially in the Mosel-area<sup>31</sup>.

All this makes the *collegium utriculariorum* an association that deals with wine-trade on land, starting off with shorter distances, probably using wineskins as containers – hence the name, but evolving into a large corporation dealing with the export of wine to the north<sup>32</sup>. At this point, to meet the epigraphic-iconographic discrepancy<sup>33</sup>, it is supposed that they started to use barrels as containers. Of course, Kneissl's argumentation is much better structured and logical than what a short summary can give, yet he has a tendency to leave out the aspects that do not coincide with his theory or to take the absence of proof as proof of absence.

Kneissl deals separately with the two Dacian inscriptions mentioning this *collegium*. In his view the situation in the Danubian province is very similar to that of Gaul and the Rhine region. In both cases with the arrival of large military groups the demand for great quantities of quality wine could not be met on the closer territories, thus these two regions needed to import wine from further away, hence the presence of the *utricularii*. As this corporation is constrained to just two regions, solely the similar circumstances were most probably not the only reason for their presence north of the Danube, and a direct Gallic influence must be also suspected in Dacia<sup>34</sup>.

Kneissl's article had a great impact, and some scholars tried to enhance the idea. Albert Deman (2002) proposes that the *utricularii* were simple muleteers, assuring the land transport of wine and oil on difficult terrain where wagons could not go, having the wineskins directly attached to the animals. He argues that Kneissl worked with a very narrow understanding of the *navatae* – namely that they only practised river transport, the land transport being done by the

<sup>30</sup> CIL XIII, 1954; 1960; 1985; 1998; 2009; 2039.

<sup>31</sup> Kneissl 1981, 182–191. Though many researchers agreed with Kneissl, the part of his theory revolving around long-distance wine trade especially to the Trier-area was not questioned but rather omitted by later publications, even though his argumentation here is quite doubtful, based on lack of evidence instead of proofs, and presents elements of circular reasoning.

<sup>32</sup> He argues that because there are no inscriptions from the third century AD from Lyon that mention any *negotiator vinarius*, this must mean that the *utricularii* took over their tasks too. See Kneissl 1981, 190.

<sup>33</sup> Kneissl 1981, 180–182. There is no known depiction of an *utricularius*, the bronze *tessera* from Cavaillon (CIL XII, 136; Kneissl 1981, 172, Abb. 1) shows only a full/inflated wineskin. On the other hand, there are multiple scenes from this period depicting wine transportation in barrels on carts, whereas there is apparently no specific term for barrel-transporters.

<sup>34</sup> Kneissl 1981, 192. R. Ardevan fully agrees with him in regard of Dacia: Ardevan 1998, 290–291. This stands at the base of the article written by Doina Benea (1995) too.

*utricularii*. In Deman's viewpoint both the river and land transport were covered by the *nautae*: as a proof he brings an inscription (CIL XIII, 1709) attesting the *nautae Ararici et Ligerici*, where only terrestrial connection can be established between the Saône and the Rhone. A second argument is a funerary inscription of a *nauta Araricus* also depicting two mules pulling a wagon with a large barrel on it<sup>35</sup>. Thirdly, Strabo, while describing Gallia Narbonensis clearly points out how frequently the river transporters opted for travelling on land when going upstream, as the roads were good and it was easier this way<sup>36</sup>. Thus widening the role of the *nautae*, Deman shifts the *utricularii* towards being muleteers on difficult terrain. The *muliones* is a well attested profession, especially in Italy, the most notable example being a funerary inscription that besides mentioning the term, also depicts a man handling two mules that pull a cart with a heavy barrel on it<sup>37</sup>. Such line of work having been existed before, which Deman does not mention, makes it improbable that the *utricularii* were preoccupied with the same thing.

Florence Verdin also argues against the theory of the *utricularii* being rafters, and broadly agrees with P. Kneissl and A. Deman that they must have been involved in transport on land, though she believes that one should not confine the use of these containers only for wine, but rather for oil<sup>38</sup>. She arrives to this conclusion based on that there are very few oil amphoras known from Gaul, whereas the wine has its own containers – amphoras and especially barrels, thus the *utris* must have been used mostly for the transport of oil. This of course is highly disputable, but nonetheless the idea that they must have been transporting different types of liquids (she even mentions beer as a possibility), otherwise their name would come from the product, not from the container<sup>39</sup>, is something to take into account.

#### *Wineskin makers?*

Already in 1846, Alph de Boissieu, while publishing the Latin inscriptions found at Lyon, presented a very modern take on the *utricularii*, namely that they were responsible for the production of the wineskins<sup>40</sup>. He did not reject the idea that these containers were used for transportation of wine and oil, or when inflated and bound together, as rafts. He even added to this how such skins were used in medicine according to Hippocrates<sup>41</sup>. Boissieu's main

<sup>35</sup> CIL XIII, 5489. See Deman 2002, 245, Fig. 6.

<sup>36</sup> Strab. *Geogr.* 4.1.14.

<sup>37</sup> CIL V, 7837. For more on *muliones* see Pastor 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Verdin 2005, 281.

<sup>39</sup> Verdin 2005, 282.

<sup>40</sup> Boissieu 1846, 401–404.

<sup>41</sup> Hippoc. *Art.* 77.



argument thus is that if the *utris* have so many practical uses, it is only normal that there was a high enough demand for it that resulted in a whole corporation being busy producing them. He also pointed out that based on the names known from the inscriptions, it seems that the local population was more involved in this craft, adding to this that, especially in larger cities, the *collegia* might have admitted as members also persons that not necessarily practised the same profession<sup>42</sup>.

More recently Pau Marimon Ribas (2017) published a detailed paper on this subject. After shortly reviewing the ideas published before him<sup>43</sup> – also specifying what aspects make each one improbable – he finally presents new arguments for his theory<sup>44</sup>, i.e. the *utriclarii* are wineskin manufacturers. At the base of his argumentation stands the fact that the persons attested to be a member of this *collegium* are all of a lower social rank<sup>45</sup>: mostly people with *tria nomina*, but there are frequent names of indigenous origins and names indicating a freedman. Furthermore, none of them are attested with any other important function or as magistrates, and rarely are they part of any other corporation<sup>46</sup>. Even then, the *utriclarii* are being mentioned last – just as is the case with the inscriptions of patrons of different *collegia*, where they are at the end of the line.

He points out that a) there is clearly a connection between the *utriclarii* and the *nautae* and *navicularii* (= transport especially on water), but the *utriclarii* appear in a secondary position; b) they are frequently mentioned together with other artisan-corporations<sup>47</sup>; c) one inscription makes an apparent connection with the *negotiatores vinarii* (CIL XIII, 1954) which is important exactly because of the growing wine production in the region, for which many wineskins were also needed; d) as it was shown, they are of low social status, whereas the wine and oil trade was one of the most rewarding branches of trade; and e) it seems to be a local phenomenon, generally met only in south Gallia<sup>48</sup>. From all this and

<sup>42</sup> Boissieu 1846, 403–404.

<sup>43</sup> Marimon Ribas 2017, 190–200.

<sup>44</sup> Marimon Ribas 2017, 200–204.

<sup>45</sup> Marimon Ribas 2017, 186–190. The social status of the *utriclarii* was recently analysed at length by T. Hasegawa (2015, 141–177). He puts them in parallel with the *nautae* of Lyon, and basically arrives at the same conclusion: the corporation of the *utriclarii* is clearly more modest and inferior to the *nautae*. Based on this, he proposes the not too convincing idea that the previous could have been a kind of subcontracted group of the latter, to whom the *nautae* could outsource the surplus of their business.

<sup>46</sup> The three exceptions, all related to *nautae*: CIL XII, 731; CIL XII, 4107 and CIL XIII, 2009.

<sup>47</sup> For example: *fabri*, *fabri navales*, *dendrophori*, *centonarii*, *lintearii*. See CIL XII, 700; CIL XIII, 1954; 1998; AE 1965, 144; AE 1966, 247; AE 1967, 281.

<sup>48</sup> Marimon Ribas 2017, 200–202.



from the fact how widespread the wineskins were in the ancient world, Marimon Ribas draws the conclusion that the *utricularii* were wineskin-manufacturers.

### *Firefighters?*

Based on the repeatedly attested association of the *collegium utriculariorum* with other craft corporations<sup>49</sup>, Friedrich Drexel proposed already in 1926 that they could have been involved in the voluntary municipal firefighting<sup>50</sup>. The connection between firefighting and the *collegium fabrorum* is clear at least under Trajan's rule, from Plinius's letters to the emperor<sup>51</sup>, but similar duties are supposed in the case of the *centonarii*, *dendrophorii*, *dolabrarii* etc<sup>52</sup>.

The *collegia*, being an official institution, meant certain privileges but also obligations, usually referred to as the *utilitas publica*, i.e. to be of service<sup>53</sup>. Voluntary firefighting is of course very valuable, nevertheless it seems more and more clear that the involvement of these corporations in this task was secondary, if not non-existent<sup>54</sup>. Furthermore, in the case of the *centonarii* Jinyu Liu brings forth a new hypothesis, namely that the *utilitas* of the said *collegia* revolved around the textile industry and supplying the ever-growing army<sup>55</sup>, an idea that is highly thought-provoking for the study of the *utricularii* too.

Of course, the very nature of the profession of the *utricularii* makes it easier to imagine such a task for them, the wineskins being generally used for water-transportation too – a very important aspect in firefighting<sup>56</sup>. Drexel makes them a sort of aid for the real fireman (especially the *fabrii*), as they seem to be of a lower rank<sup>57</sup>, while Marimon Ribas sees in this a possible explanation for their association with the mentioned *fabrii*<sup>58</sup>.

Leather hoses and wineskins were surely used to stop fires, nevertheless this does not have to mean a direct involvement of the *utricularii* in these drills, rather they supplied parts of the equipment.

<sup>49</sup> These are the *fabrii*, *centonarii* and *dendrophorii*, see CIL XII, 700; CIL XIII, 1954; AE 1965, 144; AE 1966, 247; AE 1967, 281.

<sup>50</sup> Drexel 1926, 157–158.

<sup>51</sup> Plin. *Ep.* 10.33; 34.

<sup>52</sup> The mentioned ones are the best attested. For the whole topic see Lafer 2001, 45–117, especially 47–63.

<sup>53</sup> Focused on the *centonarii*, but the general affirmations are on spot for other *collegia* too: Liu 2009, 111–115.

<sup>54</sup> See Liu 2009, 125–160, with an emphasis on the *centonarii*.

<sup>55</sup> Liu 2009, 115–122.

<sup>56</sup> On the use of wineskins in firefighting see Lafer 2001, 192.

<sup>57</sup> Drexel 1926, 158.

<sup>58</sup> Marimon Ribas 2017, 204.

### 3. The archaeology of wineskins

A dominant shortcoming of the majority of the articles mentioned above is that they are trying to decipher the profession of the *utriclarii* without looking at the objects they are related to, the *utris*. Surely for the social history or structure of these *collegia* epigraphy suits best, nevertheless the total disregard for archaeological sources hinders the chances of understanding. While P. Marimon Ribas shortly brings this perspective into discussion<sup>59</sup>, P. Kneissl on the other hand is sure by default that making such containers does not require any special skills<sup>60</sup>.

To better understand this aspect, one must look at the work of Élise Marlière, who tried to lift the wineskins and wooden barrels to the position they deserve, right next to the amphoras. The basic conclusion she always gets to is that these three are complementary container types for liquids<sup>61</sup> (just like today's glass bottles, aluminium cans, PET bottles, cartons and even plastic bags). Ancient people could choose between these based on the nature, the value of the liquid, where and how it had to be transported, what were the costs etc.

As É. Marlière points it out, one can only suppose that the wineskin was 'invented' in the Near-East by the pastoral communities living there. What is for sure, that their first mentions (18<sup>th</sup> c. BC) as well as illustrations (9<sup>th</sup> c. BC) are from this region, and they are also frequently mentioned in the Bible<sup>62</sup>. Possibly from here it spread to the ancient Greek world (see below) and from there into other parts of Europe, but due to its rather simple form, its creation in other regions in parallel cannot be ruled out.

The most common wineskins are made of goat hides, but sheep, pig, cow and ox skins were widely used too. They can be either made of a whole, uncut hide, or sewn together – sometimes from several pieces<sup>63</sup>. These hides were not subjugated to the process of tanning, but were 'cured', meaning that they were rubbed in oil and grease and smoked, thus basically delaying their decay. Due to this practice, these types of leathers survive only in very dry climate, whereas the tanned ones are preserved in waterlogged contexts<sup>64</sup>. As a result, the only archaeologically attested wineskins are from Israel and Egypt. Although only a few remained more or less intact, the many small fragments from the military camps in Didymoi and Mons Claudianus suggest that at least in these desert-like regions these containers were part of the soldiers' personal equipment<sup>65</sup>.

<sup>59</sup> Marimon Ribas 2017, 185, 202–204.

<sup>60</sup> Kneissl 1981, 172.

<sup>61</sup> Marlière 2002, 189–192; Marlière, Torres Costa 2007, 105–106; Marlière 2019, 75–76.

<sup>62</sup> Marlière 2019, 66–68, Fig. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Marlière 2002, 16–17.

<sup>64</sup> Van Driel-Murray 2008, 485–487.

<sup>65</sup> Marlière 2019, 68–69, Fig. 2.

Besides the classification based on the manufacturing technique, the wineskins can be grouped according to their size (and capacity) too, which highly affects their functions. Smaller ones, usually rectangular in shape, that held around 1,5–2 litres of liquid were meant for personal use (what someone might take with themselves for a day-trip); the medium ones, corresponding roughly to the size of an entire goat-hide (and also of one amphora), with a capacity of around 26 litres, were used mainly for transport; while the largest ones, the so-called *cullei* (*culleus*), made of an entire ox-skin could transport up to 20 amphoras or 526 litres of wine or oil<sup>66</sup>.

The *cullei* are quite frequently attested on the territory of Italy, especially in the 1<sup>st</sup> c. BC – 1<sup>st</sup> c. AD, being used for the bulk transportation of wine and oil on shorter distances (for example from the vineyard to the storage building of a *villa rustica*). It even became a general unit of measurement, Columella giving the adequate quantity of wine as at least 3 *cullei* per *iugerum*<sup>67</sup>. They were surmounted on special wagons, secured with additional straps. Luckily several illustrations of these survive, the most notable one being a fresco from Pompei showing such a *culleus* being emptied into amphoras<sup>68</sup>. Though its mentions seem to concentrate in this early period, two sarcophagi from the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD represent similar vehicles<sup>69</sup>. Finally, there is even an inscription from Rome (CIL VI, 33846), also from the first century AD attesting a *cullearius*, which – contrary to the *utricularii* – was easily translated as maker and/or tradesman of *cullei*<sup>70</sup>.

Turning back to the ‘normal’ *uter* (Greek: ἀσκός) of roughly the size of a goat, many illustrations feature it from the Antiquity, especially from the Greek world, where it constituted possibly the most practical way of transport for water, wine and oil. Satyrs, Silenus, and Dionysus too are often depicted with wineskins, while Homer also frequently mentions such artefacts, the most notable being Aeolus’s gift – the winds trapped in an ox-hide<sup>71</sup>. A special, interesting aspect is the existence of a game, called ἀσκόωλια, where the contestants had to balance on an oiled wineskin, half-filled with wine. Whoever won, got the wine as a prize<sup>72</sup>.

<sup>66</sup> Leguilloux 2019, 186; Marlière 2019, 68. The actual size of the middle one is based on the *ascopa/ascopera a byzacena* (derived from the Greek ἀσκός meaning *uter*) mentioned by the *ostraka* from Carthage from the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> c. AD, see Marlière, Torres Costa 2007, 93–94.

<sup>67</sup> Columella, *Rust.* 3.3. For other literary sources see White 1975, 139–140.

<sup>68</sup> Marlière 2019, 68–69, Fig. 3/2; whereas Fig. 3/1 shows a relief depicting a *culleus* from the Augustan period.

<sup>69</sup> Marlière 2019, 68–69, Fig. 3/3.

<sup>70</sup> E.g. see the list of Petrikovits 1981, 94.

<sup>71</sup> For several mentions of wineskins in Greek mythology as well as typical illustrations see Marlière 2002, 15–16, Fig. 4–6; Dercy 2015, 145–152, Fig. 16.

<sup>72</sup> Dercy 2015, 153–156.

Though well attested also in the Roman period, it seems that the wineskins are a lot more common in the Greek world. Whereas a very practical container (impermeable and also keeps its contents cold), due to its fabrication process the liquids stored in them over a longer period of time acquire a specific taste. However, this does not stop Ulysses to use the container for a 'divine drink' that he got from Maro, pouring the special wine from amphoras into a wineskin for easier transport<sup>73</sup>. One can also find reference in both the Old and New Testament of maturing wine in wineskins and even smoking them<sup>74</sup>. Although for the transport these skins were used over a long period of time, for storage and serving wine was not too fashionable after a while. It seems to this alludes Varro, saying that in the early days wine at dinners was served from wineskins, later from *tinae* or casks, ultimately from amphoras<sup>75</sup>. Finally, the laws drawn up by *Ulpian* regarding the bequeathment of wine show us the legal status of the wineskin (*uter* and *culleus* alike), not used for storage (like ceramic vessels), but for transport, thus they are not automatically bestowed together with the wine<sup>76</sup>.

Whereas the *cullei* occupied a full wagon, thus basically it was intended for land transport, the filled up *utris* were not suitable to be stacked, or even to be put on a flat surface as the pressure could have easily made the wineskins burst. In the case of transport on water, this could have been avoided if the wineskins were hanged up inside the ship, which in addition prevented damages caused by rodents. A relief from Mainz from the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD shows the cargo of a ship (wineskins filled with liquid) being unloaded<sup>77</sup>.

A much more practical way of transport was to attach the wineskin to pack animals as panniers. In the case of Italy, Varro mentions such donkey-trains that transport wine, oil or grain to the sea from where they are taken further by ship<sup>78</sup>. This method is even more important where the road conditions do not allow the transportation with wagons, for example in desert areas. As É. Marlière and J. Torres Costa had pointed out in the case of Roman Africa, the shipment of olive oil from the inner large farms to the exporting ports was done mostly with dromedary and camel caravans loaded with wineskins, these packed animals even appearing on several *terra sigillata* vessels and lamps<sup>79</sup>.

Whereas in the Roman period, especially the good quality wine was best

<sup>73</sup> Hom. *Od.* 9.196–213.

<sup>74</sup> Ps. 119.83; Luke 5.37–38; Mark 2.22; Matt. 9.17. See Marlière 2002, 21–22.

<sup>75</sup> Varro, *De vita populi romani* 1.57. See also White 1975, 200–201.

<sup>76</sup> Ulp. *Dig.* 33.6.3.1.

<sup>77</sup> Marlière 2002, 22–24, Fig. 13; *Lupa* 27251.

<sup>78</sup> Varro, *Rust.* 2.6.5.

<sup>79</sup> Marlière, Torres Costa 2007, 87–92, Fig. 4–6.

not kept in wineskins, it seems that for the olive oil they were adequate. As shown above, in Africa Proconsularis, for example, they were regularly used. The already mentioned Carthage *ostraca* also further prove the use of these skin bags (ἄσκός) for the transport of oil. Similarly, Diocletian's *Edict on Maximum Prices* lists the price of the good quality wineskin (25 *denarii*) next to the wineskin used for oil (20 *denarii*), while the daily tariff for renting wineskins was of 2 *denarii*<sup>80</sup>.

#### 4. The Greek parallel

The reference to the possibility to buy and especially rent wineskins opens up the question of who's business this might have been. At this point it is fruitful to look past the Latin epigraphy to the inscriptions in Greek language – this matter is usually forgotten by the researchers dealing with the *utricularii*. The Greek inscriptions mark the difference between the wineskin manufacturers (ἄσκοποιός), the renters (ἄσκόμισθος), and possibly even the manufacturers of skins intended for rafts (ἄσκοναυτοποιός), though the latter is rather disputed<sup>81</sup>.

Unfortunately, the inscriptions from the theatre of Bostra<sup>82</sup> mentioning the wineskin makers give no further information, though usually such seat-markings are connected to professional corporations. Instead, the inscription from Ephesos<sup>83</sup> attesting the wineskin renters sheds light to interesting aspects. This inscription, dated to the reign of Severus Alexander, immortalizes the act of Marcus Fulvius Publicianus Nikephoros of granting two *diastyla* for the corporation of the wineskin-renters (συνεργασία ἄσκομίσθων)<sup>84</sup>. The clear mentioning of the *synergasia* in relation of wineskins made a parallel with the Latin *collegium utriculariorum* conspicuous from the start. P. Wahrmann argues for this connection, underlining that the *utricularii* were not just renters of wineskins but they also took care of their transportation, possibly with the use of wooden poles from which the wineskins could be hanged<sup>85</sup>. From this proposed shipping technique he quickly arrives to the conclusion that in Italy for example, where there are no *utricularii* attested, the *phalangarii* must have fulfilled a similar role (i.e. transporting wineskins with the help of poles)<sup>86</sup>. Starting off from a

<sup>80</sup> *Edict. Diocl.* 10.13–15.

<sup>81</sup> Sève 2009. See IGLSyr 17.1, 59.

<sup>82</sup> IGLSyr 13.1, 9158–9160.

<sup>83</sup> IvEph 444.

<sup>84</sup> Dittmann-Schöne 2010, 159, II.1.39. A similar space was awarded by Nikephoros, among others to the temple-wine merchants too (SEG 35, 1109), see Dittmann-Schöne 2010, 45, 49, 155, II.1.34.

<sup>85</sup> Wahrmann 1933, 43–44.

<sup>86</sup> Wahrmann 1933, 45.

relief depicting a covered bucket (*cadus*) and two *phalangae*, while mentioning the *saccarii iuvenes* from Dyrrachium, J. Napoli proposes that these dockers played an important role in the unloading of liquids from larger built-in barrels or tanks on ships<sup>87</sup>. Naturally, the illustrated bucket delimits in a way the spectrum of possible carriers for this task and the author does not venture to propose others, but one should also consider how practical wineskins are for this purpose, keeping in mind the other mentioned relief<sup>88</sup> depicting dockers unloading wineskins. While wineskins can easily be connected to loading works on docks, the close connection of the *utriclarii* to *saccarii* or *phalangarii* is not a well-founded hypothesis, a business of selling and renting of wineskins seems much more plausible.

### 5. *The utriclarii from Dacia*

Turning our attention back to Dacia, the low number (2) of sources mentioning the *utriclarii* seriously hinders their interpretation. One inscription, as mentioned above, is from Călugăreni on the Eastern *limes*<sup>89</sup>, the other one was copied by Luigi Ferdinando Marsigli at Marga (Caraş-Severin County)<sup>90</sup>, though most researchers think it is more probable that it originates from the nearby Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa. In the latter's case, besides the proximity of the two sites (around 25 km), the act of (re?-)building of the temple of Nemesis attested on the inscription is a further argument for the presence of the monument in the capital of the province<sup>91</sup>. R. Ardevan suggests that the two separate mentions of a *collegium utriclariorum* speak in fact of the same corporation, one that covers the whole province, with a centre possibly initially at Sarmizegetusa, which later, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD gets shifted to the Colonia Aurelia Apulensis. In his opinion this relocation must have taken place because Apulum became a much more important economic centre in the later period<sup>92</sup>.

The connection between the two inscriptions is further amplified by the divinities they are dedicated to, Adrastia being a minor Anatolian deity, in the Latin world usually associated with Nemesis<sup>93</sup>. D. Benea proposes that the goddess of fortune might have been the protector divinity of the corporation,

<sup>87</sup> Napoli 2017.

<sup>88</sup> *Lupa* 27251.

<sup>89</sup> CIL III, 944=ILS 3748=IDR III/4, 215=HD045404.

<sup>90</sup> CIL III, 1547=ILS 3747=IDR III/1, 272=HD046600.

<sup>91</sup> D. Alicu suggests that this inscription might refer to the building of the second phase of the *Nemeseion* at Sarmizegetusa: Alicu 2007, 40.

<sup>92</sup> Ardevan 1998, 290–291.

<sup>93</sup> Karanastassi 1992, 736.



thus appearing as a guardian of tradesman and travellers in general<sup>94</sup>. Rather interestingly, Nemesis does not appear on any inscriptions from Gallia, nevertheless it must be added that the majority of the epigraphic sources mentioning the *collegium utriclariorum* are funerary monuments. After withdrawing the honorific inscriptions, bronze *tesserae* and also the too fragmentary inscriptions, only five Gallic (plus the two Dacian) monuments remain that clearly show religious content<sup>95</sup>. This low number of course also means that they do not tend to evoke the same divinity: besides the two Dacian ones for Nemesis/Adrastia, only the *Genius utriclariorum* appears two times. On the other hand, a clear pattern shows the preference for the official imperial cult: two inscriptions for the *Numinibus Augustorum* and two with the formula *in honorem Domus Divinae*, and even Mars appears as Mars Augustus. This fact is usually used by researchers to underline the low rank of the *utriclarii* who, by dedicating to the imperial cult wished to attest their commitment towards the Empire. In the case of the Călugăreni-inscription for example this might have been necessary as the goddess Adrastia is quite foreign to the Roman world. However, this argument does not acknowledge the general importance of the official imperial cult, present in most aspects of the everyday life. It is a lot more complicated to decipher the meaning of such practices, whether it is an actual sign of commitment to the Empire or a mere unconscious routine.

The Marga-inscription seems stranger from this point of view. The dedicators' names (Aelius Diogenes and Silia Valeria) possibly suggest oriental origins, presumably freedmen, which could explain why the woman uses a *gentilicium* as *cognomen*. The position they held as *mater* and *pater* shows an elevated status inside the *collegium utriclariorum*, which is further justified by their willingness to pay for the temple of Nemesis. Nevertheless the current view of research on these functions tends to accept that the *pater/mater* should not be confused with the *patronus/patrona*. They were rather of lower social ranks, usually members of the *collegia*, and were singled out (possibly on the basis of their wealth) to be the 'parents' of the organizations<sup>96</sup>.

As it was mentioned before, when discussing the *utriclarii*, researchers tended to focus solely on Gallia and leave out the Dacian inscriptions or at

<sup>94</sup> Benea 1995, 306.

<sup>95</sup> Dedicated to: *Signum Mercuri* (AE 1967, 281); *Deo Marti Aug(usto) et Gen(io) col(legi) sevir(or)um Aug(ustalium)* (AE 1966, 247); *Genio et honori utriclarior(um)* (CIL XII, 1815); *In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) genio utriclar(iorum)* (CIL XIII, 2839); *Numinibus Augustorum* (CIL XII, 360). To this we can add two rather questionable fragments: *[Numini]b(us?) Aug[ustorum] [Gen(io?) ut]ric(u)lar[iorum]* (Bérard, Silvino 2018=EDCS 76400178) and *Au[g(ust) sacrum* (AE 2014, 853=EDCS 71300172).

<sup>96</sup> For a more complex argumentation see Lalu 2016, 205–206, 208.



least to deal with them entirely separately. Circling back to the two most discussed and also most probable theories presented in the first part of this paper (the hypotheses that the *utriclarii* were bagpipers, rafters or firefighters seem far from the reality, regardless of the geographic region), an attempt will be made to apply each to the Dacian circumstances.

The few Romanian researchers that explored in a minimal depth this topic<sup>97</sup> accepted P. Kneissl's proposal and supported that they were direct participants in the wine trade. Kneissl argues that the Dacian situation can be compared to the circumstances met in Gaul and the Rhine-area: a suddenly appearing high demand for wine (and for oil, for that matter) represented by the large masses of soldiers brought forward the need for a corporation specializing in the trade of these goods<sup>98</sup>. While a parallel between the Germanic and Dacian provinces can be easily drawn from this point of view, with Gaul itself, from where all the *utriclarii*-inscriptions are known, not so much. The basis of this argumentation was the presence of this corporation in regions best known for their grape cultivation, from where it was their task to take the wine to the north. Dacia, mostly not very appropriate for viticulture, is situated at the other end of this trade-route, to where the precious liquid was exported. While Marga and Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa also lies on an important road and it would make sense to have a regional centre here from where the whole province could be catered, Călugăreni's position is far less advantageous. The auxiliary fort on the eastern frontier is situated on the *limes* road and there probably existed traffic routes into the *barbaricum* through the nearby valleys, yet there is no proof that would suggest a major transit of goods in this region, thus the presence of the *utriclarii* here is hard to explain.

P. Marimon Ribas's arguments<sup>99</sup> for his theory of the wineskin makers are harder to assess in the case of Dacia because of the low number of *utriclarii*-inscriptions. One cannot know if they were connected in any way to the *nautes* or *negustores* or even the *fabri* or any other corporations for that matter. However, the names appearing on the Marga-inscription, as well as the dedicatees of the Călugăreni-inscription suggest a lower social rank, with origins outside of the Roman Empire, be it as slaves or as foreigners.

As it was shown, there is a lack of proofs to support Marimon Ribas's viewpoint, but on the other hand there are arguments against at least some aspects of Kneissl's hypothesis. Even so, none of the argumentations are satisfactory. It is no wonder that not many researchers tried to give an interpretation for the Dacian *utriclarii* – due to the low number of sources it is almost impossible to

<sup>97</sup> Benea 1995; Ardevan 1998, 290–291.

<sup>98</sup> Kneissl 1981, 192.

<sup>99</sup> Marimon Ribas 2017, 200–202.

propose a solid theory. Inevitably one must turn back to the Gallic examples for more information, where, as it was discussed above, the situation is not too clear either.

## 6. Conclusions

The study of the *collegium utriculariorum* is seriously hindered by the low number of epigraphic and basically non-existent literary sources, while the archaeological finds, also poorly represented and preserved only in extremely dry climate, can shed light only on technological aspects of wineskins and their production at most. Whereas wineskins were surely used everywhere in the Roman Empire to some extent, the inscriptions mentioning the corporation of the *utricularii* conspicuously appear only in south Gallia (33), to which one can add the two inscriptions from Dacia. Based on just this it is already clear that this *collegium* is a Gallic speciality (and it got to Dacia most probably due to direct influence).

As it was shown, some of the theories developed over time by researchers regarding this association can be rather easily dismissed: they were clearly not bagpipers, not solely a firefighting brigade (though it cannot be totally ruled out that they helped during fires), nor rafters or ferryman. It is much harder to decide between the remaining two ideas: was Peter Kneissl right and they are wine merchants, or (more recently) Pau Marimon Ribas is correct and they are wineskin manufacturers and sellers?

Starting off from the etymology of the word *utric(u)larius*, based on many other parallels, the most evident meaning is someone who produces and/or deals with *utris* – wineskins. The researchers who brought forward other theories used different arguments to justify why they do not think these craftsmen produced wineskins. J. Rougé thought that they could not have been producing wineskins in such quantities that the many attestations allude to because Gallia's (otherwise rather high) need for containers of liquids were perfectly met by the amphoras and barrels<sup>100</sup>. P. Kneissl was on the opinion that these wineskins are far too simple and do not need any special skills to produce, also adding that probably there was no demand high enough for such containers that could explain this many corporations<sup>101</sup>. This is even more surprising as the rest of his theory rests on the economic boom caused by the unprecedentedly high demand for wine in the north that had to be supplied from Gallia. This demand was high enough for a new transporter/merchant corporation to appear (next to the *nauta* and *negotiator vinarius*), but not high enough to need more con-

<sup>100</sup> Rougé 1959, 287–288.

<sup>101</sup> Kneissl 1981, 172.

tainers. Having in mind also the more recently appeared archaeological studies, it is clear that wineskins were as general as barrels or amphoras – possibly not for the same qualities of wine for example, but used nonetheless. And most probably the growing request for wine from Gallia boosted the industry of wineskins to the point of forming corporations. The Greek terminology is more straightforward: the producers (ἄσκοποιός) are a corporation clearly distinguished from the tradesmen who rent and possibly sell wineskins (συνεργασία ἄσκομίσθων). The Latin language does not seem to make this difference, thus it is reasonable to suppose that the *collegium utriculariorum* dealt with both aspects – not necessarily the same person had to make the wineskins and also sell them, rather the members of the association had different tasks, who knows, maybe sometimes even revolving around the transportation of liquids from A to B. Either way, one should not forget that they were in one way or other closely connected to actual wineskins – to this alludes not just their name, but also the bronze *tessera* from Cavaillon depicting such an artefact.

Unfortunately, the inscriptions from Dacia give no further guidance in this matter. But as the presented monument from Călugăreni shows, even the inscriptions lost long ago can suddenly grow with a line, maybe the discovery of other inscriptions or other manuscripts will shed light to this matter and will resolve once and for all what did the ancient *utricularii* do.

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## NOTE ASUPRA COLEGIULUI UTRICLARILOR

### Rezumat

Colegiul utricularilor apare destul de des în inscripțiile din Gallia Narbonensis și Gallia Lugdunensis și numai acolo, cu excepția a două monumente din Dacia. Etimologia cuvântului, cât și o *tessera* de bronz din Cavaillon dovedește clar că activitatea utricularilor se leagă într-un fel de burdufurile din piele, însă până în ziua de azi nu s-a ajuns la un consens în ceea ce privește preocupările exacte ale acestora. Conform celor mai răspândite teorii, ei au putut fi cimpoieri (sau fabricanți de cimpoaie), plutași, transportatori de vin, fabricanți/vânzători de burdufuri din piele sau pompieri. Studiul de față oferă o trecere în revistă sumară ale teoriilor menționate, elaborate strict pe baza surselor epigrafice, adăugându-le și o scurtă privire asupra arheologiei acestor burdufuri, precum și o discuție legată de echivalentul grecesc al problemei.