BARBARIAN PRESENCE ON ROMAN FUNERARY MONUMENTS BELONGING TO MILITARY PERSONNEL STATIONED IN DACIA (2ND – 3RD CENTURIES A.D.)

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One of the most vivid testimonies of the past, the funerary monument survives to this day with precious information about the Roman World at a given time in history, who were its inhabitants, from where they came from, what was their life expectancy or their occupation during their life time and who will survive them after they are gone. The funerary monument thus becomes a tool through which they will be remembered by, because what the Romans feared most and considered real death was to be forgotten.

Nevertheless, the habit of making modest to lavish stone monuments to be remembered by after death will not remain specific only to Roman citizens. Throughout the Empire this new type of funeral manifestation reaches new provincial regions with the help of military units, the mobility of the Roman army being a catalyst in the distribution of funerary monuments in provincial territory. Dacia doesn't make an exception from this pattern, as stone cutters workshops that deliver such products are born near centers where different military units, from legions to auxiliary troops and *numeri* are stationed.

Before beginning our discussion, it is important to define the term "barbarian", which is used here not in its legal sense, as a member of Barbaricum and not a part of the Roman world, as opposed to Roman citizens or peregrines, but in its cultural and ethnic sense, of non-Roman origin, from outside the Roman world, and who will become part of the Roman Empire through his or his ancestors military activity as a Roman citizen, but who is able to retain cultural elements clearly indicating his ethnic origin, such as language or ethnic names even after obtaining citizenship.

The so called "military funerary monuments" are recognized to be an important stage in provincial art evolution, as they are known to spearhead the production of funerary materials in provincial territory. Nevertheless, just as barbarians make their presence felt in the Roman Imperial Army early in the 1st century A.D., earning in some notable cases their rightful place as elite troops working for the benefit of the Roman Empire¹, is it possible to feel their influence on provincial funerary art? Is their presence felt among the vast numbers of Roman citizens and peregrines listed on funerary monuments and if it is, are there notable characteristics of these funeral manifestations that differentiate them from other such monuments found in the same region?

In our attempt to answer these questions listed above, we turn to the Roman province of Dacia, conquered from Decebalus' Dacians in a time when the Empire was at its territorial peak and with tremendous military effort. Its strategic significance as a border province required sustainable

As was the case, later on, of the Moorish cavalry led by their ethnic leader, Lucius Quietus, who joined Trajan in his expeditions in Dacia and Parthia as free allies (Cassius Dio, LXVIII, 32, 4), to which we add L. Quietus' own personal rise in the Roman hierarchy to a position in which, it was rumored, he could challenge emperor Hadrian's authority (SHA, Hadr., 5, 9). For further information, see Speidel, 1975, p. 208–213).

military control, provided by bringing and stationing a number of legions and numerous auxiliary troops, meant to protect this new Roman territory from the outside restless Barbaricum. As methodology, we chose two paths of analysis, the first being a search for names of people with cognomina indicating their direct ethnic origin, an evident barbarian ancestry, present on military funerary monuments, while the second path of analysis focuses on numeri stationed in Dacia in the 2nd and 3rd century A.D., those ethnic irregular military units composed of non-Roman elements from outside the Roman World, recruiting unromanized members who will retain their ethnic language, armament and uniforms². The general idea is to see if these examples show a tendency to preserve their national identity through funerary practice, the general appearance of the funerary monuments attributed to them or through evidence noted in the carved inscriptions.

Thus we begin our analysis at Romula, in Dacia Inferior, where the funerary stela of veteran Aelius Germanus³ was discovered. This monumental tombstone (fig. 1), measuring three meters in height and dating from the second half of the 2nd century A.D., was dedicated by the deceased's brother, also Aelius Germanus, decurio municipii. The two brothers, who cannot be distinguished from one another as they have no agnomina, obviously inherited their names from their father, who, most likely, obtained Roman citizenship during Hadrian's time, thus the nomen genitle Aelius, and chose to preserve his German ancestry through the cognomen Germanus. He was most likely a soldier, a career one of his sons will choose to follow, even if the name of the military unit is unknown to us, only the fact that he was a veteran.

Another somewhat similar example is found at Potaissa, in Dacia Porolissensis, although this time we are dealing with a civilian4. The epitaph nominates the deceased, Aelia Publica, who lived for 40 years, and the one that erected the monument, her husband, Aurelius Germanus. This time we are not dealing with any kind of direct evidence to a military background, one can only suspect that he was a descendant of a military figure of German origin who obtained his citizenship through a military career in the time of Marcus Aurelius.

Nevertheless, it must be taken into account also the fact that the Latin word for brother of same parents or, at least, same father, was "germanus", often seen in the works of Cicero, Plautus and Ovid5, thus, in our cases, to attributing the German origin of the already mentioned men it is common sense to add the idea that the name "Germanus" could have been also an indication of close family relationship.

On the other hand, an interesting situation arises from the tombstone of one Aurelius Maurus from Micia⁶ (fig. 2). The monument has in its upper part a horseshoe-shaped niche with five busts inside, above the niche in the stone slab's corners we have stylized acanthus leaves. The field of the inscription is bordered by a frame which continues to surround even the horseshoe niche. The monument was damaged in the 19th century, the second line of the epitaph, after the formula Dis Manibus, was interrupted. A manuscript from that time contained the transcript of this epitaph, naming Aurelius MAIVRVS, determining the authors of CIL to give the name of Maurus⁷ to the deceased. While some scholars disagree with this proposition, suggesting that the name should be read Ma(t)urus8, others consider the former theory a reliable one9, as do we.

Le Bohec, 1989, p. 28.

CIL III, 8033 = IDR II, 351

CIL III, 916.

Lewis/Short, 1879, germanus.

CIL III, 6267 = IDR III/3, 166.

Speidel 1975, p. 210.

Speidel 1975, p. 210.

Petolescu 2002, p. 136., Nemeth, 2003a, p. 448.

Thus we have the deceased Aurelius Maurus, a veteran of cohors Commagenorum, his sons, Aurelius Primanus and Aurelius Surus, the latter being a milis(!) n(umeri) M(aurorum) M(iciensius) and his daughter Aurelia Eustina. The monument was erected by the wife and mother Aurelia Surilla for her family. Not only do we have the father Maurus, indicating a Moorish ancestry, who this time is a member of an auxiliary regular troop of Commagens, but we have also the son named Surus, a cognomen taken after his maternal grandfather, a Syrian,

maybe even a Commagen¹⁰, who is a member of the *numeri Maurorum* stationed at Micia. The monument belonging to this family with strong Oriental ancestry has been dated in the 3rd cen-

And so we reach our second path of analysis, concentrating on the *numeri* stationed in Dacia in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D.. These ethnic units, the so called "national *numeri*", recruited their members from the least Romanized communities (especially in the first three centuries A.D.)¹² and, by not being incorporated in legions, cohorts or *alae*, they were able to preserve not only their fighting techniques, which were the very reason for which they were recruited in the first place, but also, in some degree, their way of life. Because of this, they were considered by scholars to be, if not the main reason¹³ at least one of the decisive factors that gradually led to the barbarization of the Roman Army in the Later Empire¹⁴.

In the 2nd century, these tribal and regional units become a permanent presence on the *limes*, serving far away from home in defending for long periods of time specific sectors on the borders of the Empire. And even if their commanders were Roman officers¹⁵, by replenishing their numbers from their home land, at least initially, these communities preserved their ethnic characteristics, their names, their gods, even their language. Moreover, their ethnicity became the element that defined these units, the Romans calling these soldiers "barbarians" (*nationes*) or by their ethnic origin (the Moors or the Palmyrians), which will become in time their troops' names (ex: *numerus Maurorum*)¹⁶.

In Dacia, the *numeri* whose members were among the last ethnic groups to renounce their national characteristics were the ones composed of Palmyrians, Syrians or Moors.

Palmyreni sagittarii were first recorded in Dacia in two military diplomas, one dating from 120 A.D.¹⁷ and the other from 126 A.D.¹⁸, stating that members from this group were rewarded Roman citizenship by Emperor Hadrian, probably ante emerita stipendia¹⁹, for valor in time of war. They were brought by Hadrian from the Syrian city of Palmyra, where he was governor until Trajan's death in 117 A.D., as a solution to the Sarmatian problem²⁰. They were organized later on into a numerus until the time of Antoninus Pius, based on a funerary monument from Tibiscum²¹.

The numeri are not numbered as other Roman military units, the ones bearing the same ethnic name are known by the location of their camp where they are stationed. In Dacia, the

tury A.D., most likely after constitution Antoniniana11.

Petolescu 2002, p. 136.

¹¹ Nemeth 2003a, p. 448.

¹² Speidel 1975, p. 202.

¹³ Mommsen 1910, p. 109, Rostovtzeff 1957, p.428 and following.

Speidel 1975, p. 203 and following.

¹⁵ Speidel 1975, p. 203 and following.

¹⁶ Le Bohec 1989, p. 28.

¹⁷ IDR I, 5. 6

¹⁸ IDR, I, 8.

¹⁹ Petolescu 2002, p 138.

²⁰ Benea/Bona 1994, p. 54–55.

IDR III/1, 167, Petolescu 2002, p. 139. www.cimec.ro / www.muzeul-caransebes.ro

Palmyrian numeri were recorded at Tibiscum, in Dacia Superior and Porolissum, in Dacia Porossisensis. Most likely, in this case we are referring to two distinct units that occupied their respective camps at the same time²².

At Porolissum there is evidence that a temple dedicated to deo patrio Belo, a Palmyrian god, was rebuilt in the time of Caracalla, with the financial effort of numerus Palmyrenorum Porolissensium²³, obvious evidence that its members still worshiped their homeland deities. Furthermore, there are some examples where we have either fully or partially Palmyrian names mentioned on funerary monuments discovered here²⁴. Even so, we have only one example showing a fully Palmyrian name on a military tombstone from Porolissum, the fragmentary monument raised by Salmas Rami²⁵ ex n(umero) P(almyrenorum) to his beloved wife. Nonetheless, at Potaissa, we have an interesting monument belonging to a family of Palmyrian lineage²⁶ (fig. 3). The monument is dedicated by Aelius Bolhas Bannaei, a veteran of n(umerus) Palmur(enorum) (!) and by his wife Aelia Domestica to their daughter Aelia Tiiadmes²⁷ (read as Thadmes by other scholars²⁸) Palmura, a freed slave named Surillio and other servants. The veteran not only preserves his origin by making his name the cognomen (Bolhas) but also his patronymic as agnomen. His ancestry is passed to his deceased daughter in two ways, the use of Tiiadmes (Thadmes), but more importantly by adding Palmura to her name. Moreover, we have a Syrian freed slave mentioned, Surillo, probably brought together with the family from Syria, as it was really not uncommon for the soldier to bring along with him his family and slaves to his new home²⁹.

Returning to Tibiscum, this location has several particularities that distinguish it from other Dacian military centers. Not only it is the home of two "national numeri", numerus Palmyrenorum Tibiscensium and numerus Maurorum Tibiscensium, but also it is the location where the majority of military funerary monuments dedicated to these types of units were identified. Moreover, Tibiscum is the only documented center in Dacia where we have bilingual tombstones written in both Latin and Palmyrian. This fact further supports the idea that the Palmyrian community located here was reluctant to abandon their ethnic heritage.

Even though Syria and Palmyra were under Roman rule from the 1st century B.C to the 1st century A.D., their culture and language remained unconquered30. Moreover, an interesting fact is that even though this region was in a Greek linguistic dominated part of the Empire, the people who came to Dacia did not use Greek in their epitaphs, but Latin. This can mean only one thing, that even though the ones that dedicated the funerary monuments were speaking Greek or any other language for that fact, the epitaphs were meant to be read and understood by the surviving settlers and passersby, who were speaking Latin. Furthermore, the fact that there are Palmyrian epitaphs means that this ethnic group was really strong at Tibiscum.

The Palmyrian archers stationed at Tibiscum were the ones mentioned in the 126 A.D. military diploma, who were later organized in a numerus, as mentioned before. The majority of epigraphical material discovered here is of funerary use, mostly dedicated to soldiers and subofficers, who died during their service³¹. They have either complete or partial Palmyrian names

Benea/Bona 1994, p. 55.

Petolescu 2002, p. 141.

See Nemeth 2003b, p. 444-445. 24

²⁵ CIL III, 837.

CIL III, 907=CIL III, 7693=Russu, 1969, p. 173.

Petolescu 2002, p. 142, Nemeth, 2003b, p. 445.

Marinescu-Ţeposu 1982, p. 130, nr. S115, pl. X.

²⁹ Nemeth 2003b, p. 440.

³⁰ Nemeth 2003b, p. 440.

Petolescu 2002, p. 140-141.

^{...} www.cimec.ro / www.muzeul-caransebes.ro

or complete Roman names without a hint to their origin. Another interesting aspect is that the ones with partial or complete Roman names have as nomen gentile Aelius, in some cases even the praenomen Publius is present, in direct link, probably, to the two military diplomas offering citizenship to this ethnic group stationed in Dacia by Hadrian.

Thus we have the fragmentary funerary monument dedicated to Aelius Borafas Zabdiboli³², mil(es) [e]x n(numero) Pal(myrenorum) (fig. 4), probably by Valeria and another Zabdibol³³. The tombstone is so damaged that only the lower part of the relief survived, indicating two busts in a niche, a pattern often used at Tibiscum. Again we see that a new Roman citizen opted to keep his given name as cognomen and his patronymic as agnomen. It is probably a citizenship offered only to this soldier and not to his family as no Aelia or Aelius is seen in the epitaph. Another tombstone dedicated to an Aelius with Palmyrian cognomen is the fragmentary monument of Aelius Male³⁴, a soldier in the same numerus Palmyrenorum (fig. 5).

There are three bilingual tombstones at Tibiscum that retain our further attention (in all there are four bilingual examples³⁵). Firstly, there is the funerary monument dedicated to Neses Ierhei³⁶ [e(x)] n(umero) Pal(myrenorum) (fig. 8), erected by his brothers Malchus and Ierheus. The Palmyrian text offers further information, as it does not translate mot a mot the Latin epitaph, indicating the date of the monument the month of Teveth of the year 470, sometimes between December 17th 159 A.D. and January 16th 160 A.D. in the Julian calendar³⁷. The monument was roughly mutilated, even so, we can distinguish the bust of the deceased in the upper register, above the field of the inscription.

Secondly, we have the monument dedicated to Aelius Guras Iiddei³⁸ (fig. 7), an optio from the Palmyrian numerus, erected by his heir, the pontifex Aelius Habibis. Only the partial field of the inscription survived and a small section from the lower part of the relief. Again the Palmyrian text casts an interesting light, as the Roman nomen gentile is eliminated from the epitaph, only the military rank is mentioned, the deceased being presented as "Gura, the son of Iaddai, optio"39, thus indicating what the deceased or his heirs considered important to be communicated to their ethnic community, the deceased's given name under which his people knew him, while the Latin epitaph shows that he was a Roman citizen, to be recognized by his fellow peers. We have two different messages for to two distinct communities.

Lastly, there is the fragmentary bilingual tombstone of a soldier from the Palmyrian numerus, erected by his brother Themhes40 (fig. 6), the Palmyrian incomplete text offering only a filiation⁴¹, probably the deceased's.

A funerary column from Apulum⁴² (fig. 9) that mentions two Thracians as members of the n(umerus) Palmyren(orum) Tibiscensium retains our attention. Mucatra Brasi and his heir Mucapor Mucatralis, two obvious names of Thracian origin, were soldiers and contubernales in the Tibiscian Palmyrian numerus, indicating that even these ethnic military units were forced

CIL III, 14216=IDR III/1, 152=ILD 216.

³³ ILD, nr. 216, p. 115–116.

³⁴ IDR III/1, 155.

The forth is extremely fragmentary and with little relevance to our study, for further information see IDR III/1, 178, p. 210.

³⁶ IDR III/1, 167.

³⁷ IDR III/1, p. 197.

CIL III, 7999=IDR III/1, 154.

IDR III/1, p. 180.

⁴⁰ IDR III/1, 170.

IDR III/1, p. 200-201.

AÉ, 1914, 102=IDR III/5, 559.

at some point to apply regional recruitment to replenish their ranks as a result of the different conflicts they were involved in⁴³.

Syrian origin has proven to be difficult to attest with certainty, as the cognomen Surus, Sura, Surillio or Surilla, may belong to Thracians, Celts or Illyrians⁴⁴ other than Syrians. It may be possible to be sure if the names are written as Syrillio or Syrus⁴⁵. In our analysis we already discussed Aurelius Surus from Micia and the freed slave Surillio at Potaissa. In Dacia there is a numerus Surrorum sagittariorum documented at Arutela46 (mentioned as Surii Sagittarii) and later at Romula, on the funerary monument of Claudia Amba, dedicated by Claudius Montanus immunis⁴⁷, but without relevance to our present study.

The Moors, organized as national numeri, even if little funerary evidence has survived up until now, have made their presence felt in Dacia in the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. Their first connection with this territory was during Trajan's campaigns for conquering Decebalus' Kingdom, when their sheik Lucius Quietus led the Moorish cavalry as free allies in battle in Dacia and later on in Parthia⁴⁸. We also see them depicted in full charge on Trajan's column, scene LXIV. Lucius Quietus, the destroyer of Edessa, will even run for the position of consul, such was his influence that when later emperor Hadrian will want to get rid of him, he just has to spread the rumor that the Moorish commander wants imperial power⁴⁹.

In Dacia, a military cavalry formation composed of Moors is mentioned in two military diplomas from the time of Antoninus Pius, one at Răcari⁵⁰, and the other from Cristești⁵¹, mentioning vexilarii Africae et Mauretaniae Caesarensis qui sunt cum Mauris gentilibus in Dacia Superiore. These ethnic troops, in time, especially from the end of the 2nd century A.D., will provide a tremendous helping hand in Imperial expeditionary armies⁵², becoming one of the Empire's most important elite assault troops. In Dacia they were present during Marcus Aurelius' Marcomanic Wars and in the time of Philip the Arab the Moors had a decisive role in defeating the Carps⁵³.

There are three Moorish troops identified in Trajan's province, each of them named after their camp's location, one at Optatiana, while the other two were already mentioned at Micia and Tibiscum.

At Optatiana we have the base of a pilaster shaped monument dedicated by Aurelius Bassus⁵⁴ (fig, 10), a signifer in n(umeri) M(aurorum) O(ptatianensium) to his family, his wife Aurelia Prisosta, daughter Aurelia Bassina and son Aurelius Denzi (who supposedly lived for 80 years!). The names indicate the Thracian origin of this family, especially Denzi and Prisosta⁵⁵, again maybe suggesting that this troop has also used regional recruitment for replenishing its numbers.

At Micia, in 205 A.D. a temple dedicated to the gods of the motherland was reconstructed by the Moorish community settled here⁵⁶, again, as the Palmyrians, the Moors also continue to

Russu 1967, p. 91.

Russu 1969, p. 179.

Nemeth 2003b, p. 446.

⁴⁶ CIL III, 12601a=IDR II, 575 and CIL III, 12601b=IDR II, 576.

⁴⁷ IDR II, 350.

Cassius Dio, LXVIII, 32, 4, Speidel 1975, p. 212.

⁴⁹ SHA, Hadr., 5, 9. Speidel 1975, p. 212.

IDR I, 29.

⁵¹ CIL XII, 108=IDR I, 6.

⁵² Spidel 1975, p. 212.

⁵³ Zosimos, I, 20.

AÉ, 1932, 81=ILD 757.

Russu 1968, p. 460.

IDR III/3, 47.

worship their local deities even in the 3rd century A.D. We already discussed the funerary monument of Aurelius Maurus from Micia, but there is another tombstone discovered here that draws our attention, a fragmentary one⁵⁷, only the Illyrian patronymic Dassi survived and the name of the n(umerus) Mau(rorum) M(iciensium) is visible on the three fragments of the monument's inscription field.

Nevertheless, Tibiscum again is a source of exceptional funerary material regarding this type of numeri. Only two fragmentary stelae survived to this day, but they are considered to be essential to highlighting the fact that this community was reluctant to abandon their native habits, and what makes them special is the field of the inscription divided by a border in two separate segments.

The first example is the tombstone of an anonymous libra(rius) n(umeri)⁵⁸ (fig. 11), which has as well as the field of the inscription and the broken and badly damaged upper relief divided in two by a wide simple border. In the two halves destined for the epitaphs, both texts begin with the formula of D(is) M(anibus), the one on the left mentioning the librarius, while the one on the right is impossible to decipher. The other example refers to one Aelius Sebl[...]⁵⁹ (fig. 12), ex n(umero) M[a]/ur(orum) Tib(iscensium), his wife Aelia Sa[...]tus and son Aelius Valens, monument erected by their heirs. The field of the inscription is divided by a simple border into two halves and the epitaph which was meant to occupy only one section is spread in both, disregarding their purpose, as if the artisan did not know the function of this type of monument.

The authors of IDR III/1 bring convincing analogies as similar monuments were found in the North African provinces of Numidia and Mauretania⁶⁰, proposing that the two monuments from Tibiscum were ordered from here and their epitaphs were carved upon their arrival, in one case without knowing the proper way to do it. There were other opinions⁶¹, that these monuments were brought to Tibiscum through the filter of the workshops situated in Scupi, in Upper Moesia, as similar "dyptical" monuments were discovered here. Even so, the fact that the tombstones of Scupi do not refer at all to any north Africans or to members belonging to Moorish troops, we tend to believe that the monuments from Tibiscum were in fact of North-African origin, only that they were made locally, after the client's specifications. The errors found on one monument indicate that the artisans in fact were facing a new type of product which they never dealt with before.

There were two stonecutter workshops identified in the vicus at Tibiscum⁶² and the monuments that they produced here have specific characteristics. The tombstones are simple, the field of the inscription has a simple undecorated border while usually the upper relief is occupied by the deceased's busts in a niche. Elements of portraiture indicate their exotic origin, men having curly hair and beards, typical for the inhabitants of North Africa. Moreover, now, at the end of our study, by analyzing the mentioned funerary material, we can see that among all the centers where national numeri were stationed, where their funerary material had the usual elements typical to their respective workshops, with no clear evidence that these ethnic groups brought new characteristics to the monuments' composition, Tibiscum on the other hand breaks the mold and shows how reluctant were these Oriental communities to abandon their ways, their language and their preference in funerary material.

IDR III/3, 176.

IDR III/1, 172.

IDR III/1, 156.

IDR III/1, 172, Nemeth 2002a, p. 447-449.

Crînguş 2004, p. 103-110.

Benea/Bona 1994, p. 102-103.

Even so, the fact that their epitaphs are written in Latin and the fact that their dead are remembered by using Roman style monuments is evidence enough that even if they maintain some native elements, they become in time an active part in the Roman World, a world so eclectic, that everybody in some way could find their place in it.

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BARBARIAN PRESENCE ON ROMAN FUNERARY MONUMENTS BELONGING TO MILITARY PERSONNEL STATIONED IN DACIA ($2^{ND} - 3^{RD}$ CENTURIES A.D.) (Abstract)

Military funerary monuments are known to spearhead the development of funerary material in newly founded provincial territory and represent an important stage in funerary provincial art in general. Nevertheless, there are examples mentioned on these monuments referring to military personnel stationed in Dacia in the 2nd-3nd centuries A.D. indicating their wish to be remembered by as representatives of distinctive ethnic groups, such as Aelius Germanus from Romula or Aurelius Maurus and his son Aurelius Surus of Micia. Moreover, there are members of the so called "national *numeri*" composed of Palmyrians, Syrians or Moors stationed in Trajan's province who show their reluctance to abandon their ethnic characteristics by preserving their original names even after obtaining Roman citizenship, their native language or particular elements in the monument's architecture in some cases, as seen especially in the case of Tibiscum, showing an unique individuality among Roman funerary provincial art.



Fig. 1. Funerary stela of Aelius Germanus from Romula



Fig. 2. Funerary stela of Aurelius Maurus from Micia



Fig. 3. Tombstone of Aelia Thadmes Palmura from Potaissa



Fig. 4. Upper fragment of Aelius Borafas Zabdiboli's tombstone, Tibiscum



Fig. 5. Fragmentary monument of Aelius Male from Tibiscum



Fig. 6. Fragmentary bilingual tombstone erected by Themhes at Tibiscum



Fig. 7. Bilingual tombstone of Aelius Guras Iiddei, **Tibiscum**



Fig. 8. Bilingual tombstone of Nerses Ierhei, from Tibiscum



Fig. 9. Funerary column from Apulum dedicated to Mucatra Brasi

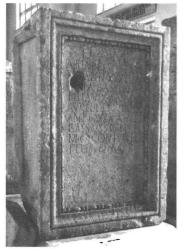


Fig. 10. Funerary altar from Optatiana dedicated by Aurelius Bassus



Fig. 11. Tombstone of a librarius numeri from Tibiscum



Fig. 12. Tombstone of Aelius Sebl[...] from Tibiscum