

# POTAISSA'S SOCIETY REFLECTED THROUGH EPIGRAPHIC SOURCES

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In order to compose a hierarchy of Potaissa's population, we can't establish exact barriers and social classes but as much as epigraphic sources allow us we can study the positions held by the attested characters. But we must focus our attention on the fact that the information in the inscriptions reflects only a part of the social classes, the favorable one. To a very small extent we will meet the lower functions, medium or modest carriers. We already know that is a rarity for a whole *album ordinis*<sup>1</sup> to be recorded. Most of the characters mentioned in the text inscriptions are part of the military, but we also find names of family members. In this purpose, it was composed a repertoire of all the characters mentioned by the epigraphic sources from Potaissa, both from among the civilians and the military. Along with the names kept was recorded the position held and where it has been kept, we noted the age too.

Potaissa's population was estimated to have had 20.000–25.000 inhabitants<sup>2</sup>. For a century, while the legion was stationed here, from the estimated number about 414 people are certified epigraphically, either civilians or military, because it is impossible to study the population of Potaissa without including the soldiers too. Out of these, a number of 39 characters have the name unknown because the inscriptions are kept in fragments or because only bits from the name are visible, so it is almost impossible to remake the name. To establish the hierarchy of Potaissa's population, this study brings characters functions statistics, as identified in the epigraphic sources.

From the total of the identified characters, 34,39% the position held is not stored or mentioned in the inscription. This prevents us from even formulating assumptions regarding their social status or the military rank, in case joined military service.

The main source of information about soldiers families are funerary inscriptions. These keep most of the times valuable information related to the deceased but also to his family, in the Roman world it has been developing a true cult of commemorations through the epitaphs. Thus, in 9.90% of the situations we meet female characters, who appear either in the position of dedicators or as deceased. The appearance of children's names on tombstones indicates the infant mortality rate. From epigraphic sources we find out that (5.55%) mostly of the characters are children aged up to 15 years old and are mentioned as deceased.

As we anticipated, the civilians from the inscriptions represent mainly the local aristocracy. That does not mean that *humiliores* are missing from the epigraphic landscape. Potaissa's municipal council (*ordo decurionum*) is represented in epigraphic sources as follows: *IIII vir*

<sup>1</sup> Ardevan 1998, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Bărbulescu 1987, p. 40.

0,24%; *Ilvir* 0,72% *magister* 0,72%; *quaestor* 0,24%; *aedilis* 0,48%; *decurio* 1,44%; *flamen* 0,24%; *sacerdos* 0,48%; *augur* 0,24%. Percentages are in relation to the total number of characters identified in the epigraphic sources. Being part of *ordo decurionum* meant holding a wealth of 25.000 dinars<sup>3</sup>, that is why I stated that aristocracy is more often represented in inscriptions. Between the wealthy civilians we meet the *augustales*, a group of wealthy and locally influential people, but which could not hold magistracy. They are found into at a rate of 0.48% in epigraphic sources.

*Humiliores* category has a percentage of 1.71% through the 7 liberty or slavery mentioned in the votive inscriptions or funerary monuments. It is possible, for this category to include any other characters for who we lack reference to occupation. An exception represents a certain *Aurelius Viator* who we know that he was *scriba municipii Septimi Potaissensis*<sup>4</sup>.

In the development of *collegia*, we see through the inscriptions that Potaissa makes no exception from this custom. The sources reveal the existence of a *pater Collegio Isidis* and a *quaestor* of the same *collegium*. Also the epigraphs tell us about the existence of a *schola* own by non-commissioned officers<sup>5</sup> and perhaps even one of the veterans in the town<sup>6</sup>.

As I said at the beginning of the paper, we cannot talk about Potaissa's population without taking into account the legion soldiers. Hierarchically, obviously we will categorize them as *honestiores*, given that a *miles* received an annual payment between 300 and 500 dinars in the second century – reaching 675–750 dinars annually under Caracalla<sup>7</sup>.

The presence of soldiers in epigraphic sources will be illustrated according to military rank, so starting with the highest of them. Here too, the percentages will be also reported to the total number of characters. While the legion was settled at Potaissa, in the inscriptions, is mentioned the *Legatus legionis* position. Also the sources reveal the presence of *praefectus legionis* at a rate of 0.72%. *Tribunus militum* function is found in 0.48% of cases. *Primipili* can be found in inscriptions too. The centurions enjoy a fairly large presence among Potaissa's epigraphic sources due to an honorary inscription dedicated to *Iulia Domna* who completes this picture somewhat containing a list of centurions after which their representation reaches a percentage of 13.76%. So they become the largest category that we find in epigraphic sources. Even if we decided that all soldiers are part of *honestiores*, however we believe that officers make up the elite legion.

The soldiers could also aspire to higher levels on the gradation scale. They become non-commissioned officers where they go through several degrees to get to the position of Centurion<sup>8</sup>. There are two inscriptions mentioning lists of non-commissioned officer's military rank<sup>9</sup>. For one of them we can assume that they had *signiferi* degree, but their position is uncertain in this function so we chose to include in the present statistics a category called generic non-commissioned officers, in order not to make unjustified assumptions. Therefore, these rank characters are found in epigraphic sources at a rate of 7.24%. To these are added those characters with the rank of non-commissioned officers for which we know the military rank:

#### 1. Non-commissioned officers from *officium legati augusti pro praetore*:

– 0,24% *speculatores* (to which we may add further two *corniculares* appearing in an inscription from Apulum who had been probably promoted from the position of *speculatores*).

– 2,41% *beneficiarii consularis* (even if they are not actually staying at Potaissa, by having

<sup>3</sup> Macrea, 1969, p. 137.

<sup>4</sup> Milea/Jude 1972, p. 667–670, fig. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Bărbulescu 2012, 6, p. 83.

<sup>6</sup> Nemeti 2007, p. 229–234.

<sup>7</sup> Bărbulescu 1994, p. 61.

<sup>8</sup> Bărbulescu 1987, p. 70.

<sup>9</sup> Bărbulescu 2012, 5–6, p. 62–65.

their names mentioned it is given that they are detached from the legion<sup>10</sup>, so we decided to include on the list of those who had been in office during the time the legion was stationed here).

– 0,24% *candidati* (they are those *beneficiarii consularis* who waited their advancing to the rank of centurion of the legion).

**2. Non-commissioned officers from *officium legati legionis*:**

– 0,24% *adiutores officii corniculariorum*.

– 0,24% *Cornicularius legionis*.

– 0,96% *beneficiarius*.

– 0,24% *actarii*.

– 1,44% *librarii* (three of them are *immunes librarii*).

**3. Non-commissioned officers from *officium tribunorum*:**

– 0,24% *beneficiarii tribunii*.

**4. Others non-commissioned officers with different missions:** *imaginiferi* 0,24%, *signiferi* 0,72%; the ones who hoped for a position of centurion are the *optiones* and we meet them in inscriptions in proportion of 1,20%; *tesserarii* 0,72%; 0,48% *tubicenes*; *custodes armorum* 1,69%; *mensores* 0,24%; *arcarii* 0,24% and last but not least we find again non-commissioned officers who were not mentioned with the rank, but whom I couldn't add to the above mentioned, because their states that are paid with dual balance, we meet them at a rate of 2.89% in inscriptions.

Cavalry legion is represented in a proportion of 0.72%. Legion soldiers are represented among inscriptions depositors, thus two former *immunes* are mentioned in CIL III, 7688<sup>11</sup>, and the function of *miles* is found in sources with a rate of 5.31%. Probably this percentage should take into account the veterans too for whom, unlike former NCO's of inscriptions, it is not specified the military rank held during military service. In this situation, in addition to the soldiers category, we should take into account a percentage of 7%, reaching a representation of 12.31%.

Without considering the military ranks actually held during military service, the percentage of veterans discharged at Potaissa, according to epigraphic sources, is 16.90%.

Following these percentages, we can conclude that of all the characters identified in epigraphic sources, Potaissa civilians can be found in 22.44% of cases, while 42.66% belong to the military corpus.

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<sup>10</sup> Bărbulescu 1987, p. 72.

<sup>11</sup> Nemeti 2007, p. 229–234.

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## Abstract

In order to compose a hierarchy of *Potaissa*'s population, we can't establish exact barriers and social classes but as much as epigraphic sources allow us we can study the positions held by the attested characters. Most of the characters mentioned in the text inscriptions are part of the military, but we also find names of spouses, or their children. Most often the mentions on family or kinship appear on funerary inscriptions. *Legio V Macedonica* was brought to *Potaissa* to defend the borders in this part of the Roman Empire. For a century, while the legion was stationed here, about 400 people are certified epigraphically. Out of these, approx. 300 appear with their names in the form of *dua* or *tria nomina*. Epigraphic documentation regarding the civilians in *Potaissa* is showing a deficit situation as they kept few inscriptions in which civilian positions of characters were mentioned. Therefore, this study takes the form of civil or military positions statistics identified in the epigraphic sources.