

NOTES ON THE FAMILIES OF ROMAN VETERANS ON THE LOWER DANUBE (1ST-3RD CENTURY AD)

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Abstract: The study is focused on several aspects regarding the family life of Roman Army veterans. The starting point for this paper was an extensive study on the veterans from the Lower Danube region (Dacia, Moesia Superior, Moesia Inferior). The fundamental information is retrieved from epigraphical sources due to the scarcity of archaeological and literary information. The epigraphical attestations are investigated for obtaining relevant data that could lead to a better understanding of the structure, patterns, and habits of the social category in question. The data should help us reconstruct a small slice of provincial society and the way it functioned.

Research on the issue is structured in such a manner that it can capture both the quality of the sources and the conclusions and limitations of the approach. Several aspects have been underlined, even though the extent of the research does not allow us to make a complete assessment of these matters.

The starting point is an attempt to quantify the total number of families and members, including those that are not mentioned explicitly but can be identified by using hints in the texts. The research further examines the family ties and questions how they can be interpreted in relation to the traditional structures that show up in the general studies concerning the problem. The careers of the male descendants and their relationship with the military environment are also considered. A distinct analysis focuses on the wives of the veterans and their social and regional backgrounds, hopefully shedding light on a less dealt-with issue.

Finally, the paper tries to establish some general and compared views on family problems, as far as they can be seen emerging for the category of Roman veterans in the three provinces.

Keywords: Roman family, veterans, military marriage, Lower Danube.

THE THEME AND THE SOURCES

Most studies concerning Roman veterans are centred on some variation of the following themes: the place of origin and the settlement of the veterans; the military units in which they were recruited and served; their role and carrier in the military, as well as their discharge or return to their place of origin; their interaction with the civilians and the army; and other subjects, mostly legal and administrative status.¹ An attempt at a general overview of the family issues concerning the military and veterans in the first three centuries has been made by Oliver Stoll,² but the focus and approach are different.

The present study on the families of Roman veterans situated in the territory of the three provinces on the Lower Danube (Dacia, Upper Moesia, and Lower Moesia) over three centuries is based on epigraphical sources and outlines some important features and peculiarities.

The choice for the described territory was natural, considering the geographical proximity, administrative organisation, historical background, as well as massive military presence in these border provinces that make the study worthwhile. The strong interconnection of the provinces can be observed over the three centuries whenever social, administrative, and military history is concerned.

¹ Mann 1983; Birley 1982-1983; Kerpie 2000; Krolczyk 1999; Ферјанчич 2002; Derks, Roymans 2006, and others.

² Stoll 2021.

The work is based predominantly on epigraphical sources. It takes out military diplomas and doesn't cover archaeological evidence. Military diplomas could provide some interesting information for the matter at hand, and their integration into the study could prove beneficial, but they also entail specific interpretation errors and distortions that must be dealt with separately. The lack of context and rigid content aren't as well suited for the reconstruction of social and cultural history. Those who have used them as sources followed the general hypothesis that all discoveries are equal to the attestation of settlement,³ which is tempting and plausible, but not all that is plausible is true when dealing with history.

New approaches laid the groundwork that could ensure archaeological data integration into studies such as this,⁴ but the conclusions are not usable yet for the present topic. Archaeological evidence for the Lower Danube is scarce and circumstantial, and for the time being, it is difficult to compile sufficient data to fit the models that have been developed for other parts of the empire. Sites in Germany and Britain have been particularly generous in providing archaeological evidence of women and children in connection to the garrison,⁵ but not so much in the Lower Danube area.

THE LEGAL STATUS

The issue of veteran families is directly linked to the one regarding the situation of Roman military families. The existence of a ban concerning the marriage of Roman soldiers has been scrutinised by researchers, as the statement of such a ban does not occur anywhere in its presumed original form and the evidence considering it is varied. Greek and Roman authors, writing both at the time of the ban's effect and after its recall, mention the fact that soldiers were not allowed to marry.⁶

The sources for the existence of the ban have been thoroughly investigated. Sara Elise Phang is responsible for their most recent and complete assessment.⁷ I will not linger on the matter but simply remind the reader that the marriage ban was probably a lost *mandata* that affected "common soldiers, both legionaries and auxiliaries, sometimes cavalrymen".⁸ It may have affected sub-equestrian officers (centurions and principals), but the practice was less rigid where these were concerned.⁹ The ban was abolished by Septimius Severus in 197 AD,¹⁰ so that in the third-century literary sources already pointed to legal marriage.¹¹ The fourth century records a lament for the civilian lifestyle in the garrisons and the bygone days of manhood and discipline,¹² as wives and children had become a part of soldiers' daily lives.¹³

Besides the issue of marriage, the status of children that were the result of unofficial unions was also problematic. The children would be acknowledged as legitimate at the end of a soldier's term, as the marriage became official. In the meantime, they could not legally receive an inheritance. It was Emperor Hadrian's benevolent attitude that offered an official loophole for the unfortunate progeny. In his letter to the *praefect* of Alexandria,¹⁴ the emperor ensures the status of cognate relatives for the children of soldiers who had died intestate. If legitimate children or agnate relatives were absent, they would thus be able to inherit. In practice, though, illegitimate children had to bring proof of their descent from soldiers who could not have legally been their fathers. In Roman Egypt, birth declarations (which sometimes stipulated the illegitimacy of children due to a military ban)¹⁵ could sustain such a claim.¹⁶ We have no knowledge of how such cases were dealt with in less bureaucratized regions of the Empire. References to dowries, wills,

³ Raepsaet-Charlier 1978, 557; Roxan 1995 (1997).

⁴ Vos 2015; Ivleva 2015; Honcu, Varga 2023.

⁵ Greene 2020, 150-155.

⁶ Phang 2001, 16-21; Phang 2002, 353.

⁷ Phang 2001.

⁸ Phang 2001, 122.

⁹ Phang 2001, 132.

¹⁰ Phang 2001, 17, 100-101, 133; Scheidel 2007, 417.

¹¹ Herodian, III, 8, 5; *Synoikein*, see Phang 2002, 353.

¹² Libanius, *Oratio*, II, 39.

¹³ Phang 2001, Scheidel 2007, 417-418.

¹⁴ *BGU* I, 140; Phang 2001, 402; Phang 2002, 356.

¹⁵ Schulz 1942, 79-80; Schulz 1943, 59-63; Campbell 1994, 256.

¹⁶ Schulz 1942, 78-91; Phang 2001, 40-46.

and the litigations investigated by Roman magistrates also point out the difference between official restrictions and social practice.¹⁷

These official prescriptions and social practises among the military constitute the premise and the background for further investigating the family life of Roman veterans in the Empire and on the Lower Danube, as is the case.

NUMBER OF FAMILIES AND MEMBERS

As the nature of the sources is exclusively epigraphical, there is some degree of distortion in the resulting conclusions. The cause of it is obvious: both the calculations and the information considered during the research refer to these inscriptions as a significant sample for the whole social category. But a large amount of the collected material consists of funerary inscriptions; honorary and votive inscriptions are also to be found, but they seldom contain revealing data on the families. I should underscore that apart from chance, which only brought to the surface a share of inscriptions, it is plausible to believe that a considerable percentage of the mass of veterans or veteran families did not afford inscriptions or may have been impervious to this manner of honouring their dead.¹⁸ It is also plausible that some of them were intestate or had no descendants to bring them to our attention. These veterans elude us in the research concerning the social strata they belong to. Alongside these impediments, it is a known fact that epigraphic production in the Empire changed over time,¹⁹ rising in the 1st century, decreasing in the second, and dropping in the 3rd century,²⁰ thus unbalancing the sources.

Nevertheless, the thoroughly collected inscriptions show that veterans are more frequently attested than the active militaries on the Lower Danube. This discrepancy is also visible when it comes to the share of families attested. As far as I could survey, the families of active militaries are as follows: 56 in Dacia, 48 in Upper Moesia, and 75 in Lower Moesia. The number of veteran family cases rises to at least 74 in Dacia, 44 in Upper Moesia, and 71 in Lower Moesia.

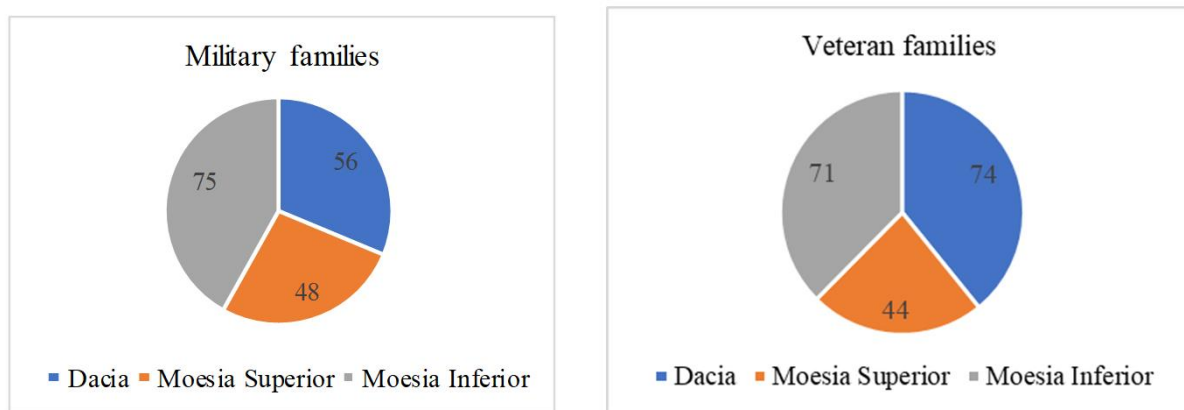


Fig. 1. The numerical situation of families.

I ascribe this to the "legal"²¹ situation of the families, as shown above. Previous scholars have argued that "it would be unrealistic to expect soldiers (...) to postpone marriage till discharge, and no one has ever suggested that they did".²² I assume this would be the first case in which someone suggests they did,

¹⁷ Scheidel 2007, 418.

¹⁸ Although a counterbalance to this possibility was the traditional obligation to perform the *sacra*, which fell on those tied to the deceased by inheritance and property, not just family ties, no matter if these overlapped; Meyer 1990, 76.

¹⁹ Woolf 1996, 22, for the "epigraphic boom" for the beginning of the Empire.

²⁰ Meyer 1990, 76.

²¹ The use of the term is slightly unfitting and has a conventional note here, since the state did not prohibit by law the marriage of soldiers, but simply denied the existence and consequences of such a union.

²² Phang 2001, 164; Allison 2011, 167, for the same opinion.

because considering these data, I may suppose that part of the military did not wait for their discharge only to attain acknowledgement of their quasi-marriage but also to actually start a family.

Several questions arise, one of which is whether life in *castra*, with permanent troop movements and transfers, didn't hinder the founding of families, thus postponing establishment in the *canabae*, *vici*, or anywhere else.

Part of the problem could have resided in the material support that soldiers would have been able to provide. Depending on the approach, some scholars believe that soldiers had enough money to provide for their families²³ (to put it into Speidel's words, "they could afford not only a wife, but a concubine as well").²⁴ Others think the cash inflow was limited, as inflation and large deductions for army supplies weakened the financial capacity of soldiers;²⁵ deductions, however, decreased during the 2nd century AD, so that the soldiers were left with more cash.²⁶ In the back and forth of the discussions about pay scale (in which the model provided by M. Alexander Speidel is probably the most feasible)²⁷, we have to keep in mind that the financial situation of the troops, even though life costs in the *limes* provinces were lower,²⁸ could have prevented them from providing for a family.

As far as hardships and financial status are concerned, the household contribution, as suggested by Greene,²⁹ must have been the key to starting a family before discharge. The parents and siblings, as well as the "wife", would have contributed to the welfare of the soldier and the stability of the couple. With that in mind and the fact that female presence inside military communities and forts needs further investigation,³⁰ I will simply note that there is a similar attestation for unions of active and discharged soldiers, with a surge of epigraphic cases in the Dacia province.

In order to see what more can be revealed (or not) about the veteran families' situation, I decided to put it into numbers. To accurately determine the number of families in the provinces, I had to take into account a margin of error caused by the limited information provided by the inscriptions. Thus, some of the inscriptions suggest the presence of a family; however, there is no way of knowing for sure. Take, for instance, the cases of Aurelius Attelanus³¹ or Ulpus Mettius³² in Dacia, of Caius Rauconius Verecundus³³ or Tiberius Claudius Valens³⁴ in Upper Moesia, and of Caius Vibius Fronto³⁵ or Caius Iulius Magnus³⁶ in Lower Moesia. Their stones mention the age of the deceased in some of the cases, but the dedicator is missing. He may very well have been a part of the family or an ex-comrade, friend, or *libertus*. That is why the numbers range from a lower, definitely clear, percentage to a higher, possible – but not unchallengeable – percentage. The data set could also have been influenced by the fact that, as noted before,³⁷ widows and former concubines make no mention of their involvement once they marry or remarry.

Tabella I

Province	Veterans	Families*	Families**	Percentage		Average %
				minimum	maximum	
Dacia	143	74	97	51.75	67.83	59.79
Upper Moesia	87	44	60	50.57	68.97	59.77
Lower Moesia	176	71	121	40.34	68.75	54.55
All three provinces	406	189	278	46.56	68.47	57.52

* probable minimum

** possible maximum

²³ Speidel 1973, 145-147; Alston 1994, 117.

²⁴ Speidel 1973, 146.

²⁵ Phang 2001, 183

²⁶ Speidel 1992, 105.

²⁷ Speidel 2014.

²⁸ Alston 1994, 113-123; Herz 2007; Rathbone 2009, 299-326.

²⁹ Greene 2020, 152-156.

³⁰ Allison 2006.

³¹ *IDR* II, 67.

³² *IDR* III/3, 184.

³³ *IMS* VI, 56.

³⁴ *IMS* II, 269.

³⁵ *ILBR* 51.

³⁶ *ILBR* 304.

³⁷ Tomas 2015, 94; Tomas 2017, 232.

A case study similar to that of Agnieszka Tomas³⁸ for the *Legio I Italica* might have yielded different, less confusing results. The study mixes active soldiers with veterans, but the additional charts favour a comparison of the two types of relationships.³⁹ The chronological approach is also taken into consideration in the mentioned study.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, that would have exceeded the study area as well as the type of family relations that I had in mind for the present notes.

Tabella II

Sons & daughters / veteran	<i>incerti</i>	1	2	3	4	5	Descendant cases / family cases ⁴¹	Descendants / veteran ratio
Cases Dacia	1	19	8	6	-	1	35 / 74	1:2.423
% Dacia	1.35	25.68	10,81	8.11	-	1.35	47.30	
Cases Upper Moesia	-	16	4	2	3	1	26 / 44	1:1.851
% Upper Moesia	-	36.36	9.09	4.55	6.82	2.27	59.09	
Cases Lower Moesia	1	31	11	6	2	1	52 / 71	1:2.022
% Lower Moesia	1.41	43.66	15.49	8.45	2.82	1.41	73.24	
Total cases / families	2	66	23	14	5	3	113 / 189	1:1.765
%	1.06	34.92	12.17	7.41	2.65	1.59	59.79	

As seen above (*Tabella II*, column 8), I preferred to halve the margin of error to obtain a reasonable average. Based on the gathered data, the social layer of Roman veterans tends to be represented as family founding.

I further tried to establish a leading pattern for veteran families and the kind of relationships that were established within it.

In most cases, veteran marriages were paired with a single child, as can be seen in the table below. Almost half of the attested families had one or two children. From these data, a dominant paradigm for the social layer of the veterans may be defined for the provinces on the Lower Danube, consisting of a family with one or two descendants, rarely more, up to five. Some of them were dead at the time the stones were carved.

Two major aspects seem to require attention as the results of the investigation are synthesised in *Tabella II*: the single-child families considered a rather modern phenomenon, and the lower number of descendants per family north of the Danube.

First of all, the number of descendants does not look all that consistent. For a time in which infant mortality was high, diseases, famine, and war were common expectations, and the lifetime span was shorter even under gentler circumstances, one or two children could hardly have provided support, shelter in old age, or a future for the family's name.

The model also seems flawed because it falls under the population replacement rate. If this reflects the real situation of the veteran families, other social categories probably had a higher demographic input. Contemporary models of the population replacement rate show that the number of births necessary for a stagnant population pool is 2.1.⁴² In unstable environments and a lower fertility rate, the number would have to grow. A higher number of births, even if not inside the attested families, would balance the demographic expectations.

Several explanations come to mind, and it is to be noted that they are just as plausible for any other social category in the Roman world when it comes to demographic issues.

1. The first explanation, of course, is that we did not find the records that say otherwise. The epigraphic sample consists of a handful of finds, and this should be representative

³⁸ Tomas 2015.

³⁹ Tomas 2015, 120, charts 8, 9.

⁴⁰ Tomas 2015, 120, charts 10, 11.

⁴¹ Minimum numbers are taken into account, as the comparison cannot assign children to possible families.

⁴² Casper 2019, 92.

of three centuries in three Roman provinces. The inhabitants of the provinces didn't erect enough inscriptions to feed our research, or they are still buried or lost.

2. Even when families are described, epigraphs do not take into consideration all children for a variety of reasons that we can only speculate about. It is possible that: they were away at the time; the children were too young to make preparations for their parents' funeral; they preferred to omit their name from the dedication; the stone eroded or broke; they were already long dead as infant mortality took its toll; the parents didn't consider it necessary to commemorate them; and so on. The point is that *they did exist, but they weren't recorded, or we have no knowledge of such records.*

3. They were not recorded because they did not exist.

If premeditated, a very good or very poor material condition can both cause such a family schema. Although the Roman veterans are usually seen as having the means to undertake much greater endeavours than that of sustaining their families (such as entering the *ordines decuriones* or *equester*), some may have been subjected to destitution. But if they did position themselves within the generally acknowledged model, then their unwillingness to have children could stand for their attempt to avoid shredding the heritage.

The positive aspect of this pre-conceived family schema is that it constitutes an indicator of a healthy material status; sustaining a numerous family and splitting the fortune between various inheritors might have led to a decrease in material well-being and smaller chances of social promotion. In such cases, the use of contraception, abortion, and infanticide cannot be ruled out. Contraceptive measures are generally attributed to the upper class,⁴³ but it is doubtful that people in the army, including military doctors, were unaware of them.

If unpremeditated, it suggests a low fertility rate, perhaps coupled with high mortality. In this respect, studies⁴⁴ do show that lower male fertility occurs in older population samples, which roughly correspond to our own.

4. Illegitimacy and exposure. Somehow, two of the above-mentioned explanations are blended here. In other words, they did exist, and it is a premeditated family schema, but there's no record of them. Concubinage, broken marriages, widowhood, and remarriage are all good reasons to believe that the offspring in the inscriptions are not the only ones linked to the Roman veterans.

As can be seen, the number of variables is quite large, but two issues deserve parenthesis.

Tabella III

Provincia	Fili	Filiae	Incerti	Mortui		Sex ratio males to females	Sex ratio in percents
				fili	filiae		
Dacia	40	18	1 case <i>fili</i>	13	5	2.222	68.97% – 31.03%
Upper Moesia	31	16	-	9	4	1.937	65.96% - 34.04%
Lower Moesia	67	19	1 case <i>fili</i>	11	4	3.526	77.91% – 22.09%

I emphasise here that illegitimate children of soldiers and veterans cannot be taken into account for establishing the dominant family pattern; still, illegitimate children would have constituted an important demographic input. More can be said about this, as the Roman family, although usually constituted of a couple, would be renewed after the death of a husband or divorce by remarriage, resulting in children from more than one marriage that could have lived in the same household or at least continue to have close contact with one another. Numerous examples in the literary sources show us men from the upper strata of society remarrying several times (be it after the death of their wives at birth or because they found political, social, and economic advantages in other families).⁴⁵ The same was true for women who

⁴³ Hopkins 1965, 124.

⁴⁴ Ford, North 2000; Levitas, Lunenfeld 2007; Matorras, Matorras 2011; Harris, Fronczak 2011.

⁴⁵ Corbier 1991, 47-78; Bradley 1991, 79-98.

had survived their husbands; if they were young enough, they often got remarried and had other children.⁴⁶ The result was the so-called "blended family", a "fluid organism".⁴⁷

As to the ratio of male and female descendants, the superiority of the former is obvious. Attestations in Dacia indicate 40 veteran sons and 18 daughters (and one case with no specification). In the province of Upper Moesia, a number of 31 sons and 16 daughters are attested, while in Lower Moesia, I could identify 67 sons and 19 daughters (and again, one case with an uncertain number – *fili*). From this point of view, it was assumed that the practises of veterans could replicate those of active soldiers who were suspected of exposing, neglecting, or even encouraging infanticide in the case of daughters.⁴⁸ In my opinion, these suppositions are not realistic; perhaps further investigations into survival rates and infantile mortality could shed some new light on the matter.



Fig. 2. The situation of veteran family descendants.

FAMILY TIES

I have tried to perceive, to a certain degree, beyond these guidelines, the way in which family connections are defined in the case of veterans on the Lower Danube. To that purpose, I differentiated in the body of inscriptions between the nuclear family (husband, wife, and children) and the family in a larger frame, comprising cognates, agnates, and affines (meaning the extended family). This distinction is not new, but it is more often used in cases involving large amounts of data.

Family relations recorded by epitaphs appear simple at times and complex at other times, but the written text only renders part of the ensemble. Epitaphs chronicle some but not all family ties, so the real dimension or complexity of family relations the deceased enjoyed during their lifetime cannot be reconstructed with accuracy. For instance, although the majority of soldiers in the first and second centuries AD were commemorated by comrades, one cannot purport that they had no relatives; it's just possible they didn't live near the soldier's camp. An epitaph's role was not that of providing a complete family tree or recording living relatives. Many types of family connections may be encountered on funeral stones, but most of them are simple, from one family member to another.⁴⁹

The possible commemorators were varied⁵⁰ and included more than just the husbands, parents, grandparents, and children. Maternal uncles (*avunculus*), in the absence of a husband or parents, could fill the role of a householder, taking charge of the funerals. The maternal uncle appears to have been a protective figure in Roman society and a possible tutor, but he generally had no financial obligations.⁵¹ For such a case,

⁴⁶ Shaw 1987, 30-46.

⁴⁷ Bradley 1991, 97; Carroll 2006, 182.

⁴⁸ Whether infanticide and abandonment were more frequent in the case of girls is still under debate, taking into account that the evidence is fairly poor; see Pomeroy 1995; Engels 1980, 111-120; Rawson 2003, 114 *sqq.*

⁴⁹ As in this: *D(is) M(anibus) / Ael(ius) Corneli / us vet(eranus) vix(it) / ann(is) LXXX / Aelia Primiti / va coniugi b(ene)m(erenti) p(osuit)*; IDR, III/1, 84.

⁵⁰ Carroll 2006, 181.

⁵¹ Carroll 2006, 181.

I found one possible example on a monument in the auxiliary camp of *Certiae*.⁵² Also, if a brother took on the role of a commemorator for his younger sister, he might have become the head of the family.

Roman epigraphy also lists other possible dedicators or inscriptions recipients,⁵³ but they can seldom be found in the provincial societies of Dacia, Upper and Lower Moesia (in my examination, I found no cases of *vitricus* (stepfather), *matertera* (aunt from the mother's side), or *amita* (aunt from the father's side). Most often met are the grandchildren. A woman could just as well have become the only survivor; commemorating a brother or sister would have been her task then.

Saller and Shaw, in their research regarding family relations in the empire, have highlighted the fundamental importance of nuclear families, with more than 80% of the funerary inscriptions in the Western part of the Empire registered in this class.⁵⁴ Their methodology, however, is criticised by Dale B. Martin. He suggests multigenerational and laterally extended families were behind the inscriptions, even though centred on a nuclear core.⁵⁵

Moreover, Rawson, among others, distinguishes between family and household; the latter group was perhaps living with the family but was not responsible for commemorating the dead.⁵⁶ It is to be expected that around the family, more individuals, with or without a blood bond, would reunite. And even if they didn't live together, they kept in close contact with each other.⁵⁷ The extended family or household⁵⁸ could include various slaves and freedmen living with the family.

Coming back to the present study, the inscription analysis shows the extended family is present in up to 16% of the cases in all provinces subject to observation, with a lower rate in the case of Upper Moesia (12.5), while the nuclear family is present in over 60% of the cases.

Again, Upper Moesia shows lower numbers than the other provinces, but it has a better representation of freedmen, comrades, and friend inheritors. Otherwise, surprising for the small number of inscriptions concerning veterans, the province is almost even, in established freedmen numbers, with Lower Moesia. Proportionally, that would mean twice as many. The distinct figures in Upper Moesia, regarding both lower extended family presence and higher freedmen and comrades' occurrence, could be partly caused by the small epigraphic sample, but it's not necessarily a random pattern. There are other possible explanations for this situation, especially in connection with the geographical position and chronology of the attestations, but they deserve to be discussed in a separate work.

Tabella IV

Province	Stones with dedications mentioning		
	extended family	nuclear family ⁵⁹	<i>servi, liberti⁶⁰, amici et commilites</i>
Dacia	14 out of 105 (13.33%)	74 out of 105 (70.48%)	16 out of 105 (10.48%)
Upper Moesia	8 out of 77 (10.39%)	44 out of 77 (57.14%)	25 out of 77 (32.47%)
Lower Moesia	19 out of 141 (13.48%)	71 out of 141 (50.35%)	24 out of 141 (17.02%)
Overall	41 out of 323 (12.69%)	189 out of 323 (58.51%)	65 out of 323 (20.12%)

The numbers are consistent with a similar model that showed up in the research of Moesia Inferior. Two recent studies in the region concerned with family links and military and civilian families show a predominance of nuclear families.⁶¹ There is, of course, an overlap between the two types of families, so

⁵² *D(is) M(anibus) / C(ai) Campani Vita / lis coh(ortis) I Bat(avorum) / cohortis stip(endiatius) VIII / vix(it) an(nos) XXVII / Florinus Viri / lis veteranus) ex dec(urione) / nepoti p(ro) p(ietate) c(uravit)*. ascia?; CIL III, 839. Although not entirely certain (it could be the case of a nephew from a daughter), the name suggests the young soldier Caius Campanus Vitalis has veteran Florinus Virilis as *avunculus*, the sole commemorator, "out of piety".

⁵³ King 2000, 149.

⁵⁴ Saller, Shaw 1984, 147 sqq.; Carrol 2006, 181.

⁵⁵ Martin 1996, 40-60; Carrol 2006, 181.

⁵⁶ Rawson, Weaver 1997.

⁵⁷ Martin 1996, 59-51.

⁵⁸ See Nevett 2011, 16, for disambiguation of the terms.

⁵⁹ The numbers here are defined by *Tabella I*, column 3, as the highlighting of the minimum veteran families was based on mentions of nuclear family members.

⁶⁰ *Coniuges* are not included.

⁶¹ Carroll 2015; Pázsint 2019.

it's difficult to assert the absence of the extended family when considering the nuclear one. On the other hand, the exclusive presence of distant commemorators could be indirect proof of the dissolution or absence of the family core.

Liberti attested

Dacia	Moesia Superior	Moesia Inferior
8/105 (7.62%)	14/77 (18.18%)	15/141 (10.64%)

The weaker presence of the extended family on the inscriptions found in the territory of the three Lower Danube provinces is accountable, having in mind the nature of military life that might have hindered the regrouping of the families in the camp area, sometimes distant from the recruitment region (especially until local recruitments became regular). It's not ruled out that veterans drifted away from their civil families because of rough military life and altered socialising patterns on campus and during campaigns. However, this type of behaviour has not yet been subject to debate and research.

SONS OF VETERANS AND THEIR CAREERS

I considered it necessary to follow the trace left by the veterans' families in the social environment of the provinces, and to that end, I used their sons' careers as an indicator. In the inscriptions retrieved in the three provinces, at least 138 veteran sons have been documented, most of the time with minimal information. Still, I thought there could be a way to detect their career path. Customarily, soldiers' inscriptions state their military condition and rank. There is no assurance that they were not left out, but it is more probable that they were rather desirable and the men would arrange for their inscription. In the provinces, one should expect that influence, power, and prestige could come to a man displaying his military status. In that case, the number of military careers revealed by epigraphic evidence would equal the maximum number.

If this criterion stood, the difference between the military and civil careers of the veterans' sons could become visible. In 22 cases (families), 29 sons follow a military career, most of them in the same unit the father served in, representing almost a quarter of the recorded cases.

For the rest of the male descendants, a profession is not assigned, or a civil career in local administration is revealed.

When reading the numbers, it's worth noting that 33 of the cases are of deceased descendants, while others had not yet reached the age of recruitment. That certainly does not make the case for saying veterans' sons preferred being dead over being soldiers.

Furthermore, when considering imperial policy in the matter of recruitment, these data concur with a relatively disparate basis of troop filling, suggesting that veteran settlement in these areas wasn't intended to sustain troop recruitment by creating a safe demographic base consisting of former combatants. This historicity, confirmed in Egypt,⁶² refutes the concept that the army was a relatively closed community, mostly raised with the sons of veterans settled around camps.⁶³

The established view is that the Roman elite acquired much of its income out of landed investments and most of its prestige from tradition, and as a consequence, held family continuity in high regard. It also maintains that the upper class was not enthusiastic about risky entrepreneurial activities in manufacturing and commerce; such initiatives were undervalued as personal virtues. On the other hand, succession strategies were valued as an integral part of the principles of Roman families.⁶⁴ The opposition between *bonus* and *malus pater familias* implied an assessment considering property administration: while *malus pater familias* handled carelessly his estate,⁶⁵ *bonus pater familias* attended thoroughly to his patrimony and embodied a legal standard of husbandry in judicial thought.⁶⁶ From this standpoint, it is possible that the sons of the veterans, having the occasion to enter local elites, placed themselves in this pattern of

⁶² Alston 2003, 48.

⁶³ Alston 2003, 48.

⁶⁴ Frier, McGinn 2004, 6.

⁶⁵ Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, IV, 27, 5; IV, 39, 2.

⁶⁶ Buckland 1963, 556.

conservative conduit and landed patrimony administration. However, as they were not aristocracy, trade was just as attractive to former soldiers,⁶⁷ some of whom perhaps had connections established during their service.

This is the theoretical background that should be considered. The key to a plausible reconstruction of these families' destinies in the Lower Danube provinces, including the heirs, probably lies in the actual settlement of the veterans. The rural environment is where plenty of the epigraphic monuments were discovered. Some of the traces consist of diplomas, but others are monuments erected in the rural territory of various *municipia* or *coloniae*.⁶⁸ To the inhabitants of various *vici*, one can add the communities consisting of Roman citizens and discharged soldiers.⁶⁹ We do not have a complete understanding of these communities, but agriculture and trade are the only reasonable sources of income in these locations.

WIVES OF THE VETERANS

As to veterans' wives, they prove to have proper Roman names in most cases. Some preserve traces of a non-italic origin: Aurelia Calliroe,⁷⁰ Afrodisia,⁷¹ Oppia Agathena,⁷² and Aelia Aide.⁷³ The nomenclature of people showing up in inscriptions is visibly mixed, especially as one of the provinces is in the Greek-speaking part of the Empire. Also, it seems natural, after the influx of newcomers into Dacia, that a certain number of settlers would show up on stones, including in the category of veterans.

Some veterans take freedwomen as their wives, which is not uncommon. The fact that a former slave had become a freedwoman and eventually wife of some erstwhile soldier is suggested many a time by their names, derived from that of their owner, and sometimes explicitly admitted in the inscription: *Hesperis lib(erta) / itemque con(iunx)*.⁷⁴ These cases are, however, not very frequent: about ten cases in Dacia, four in Upper Moesia, and seven in Lower Moesia. And they're not all above question, because identifying them as freedwomen based on their derivative names can only be an assumption. Common *cognomina*, like Iulia, Aelia, and Aurelia, may be simple coincidences, as it goes to show in an inscription where the father-in-law's name affirms the status of a free woman as a veteran's wife.⁷⁵ The epigraphic information confirms that the presence of women with a servile background is generally low.

A significant age gap between the spouses is also noticeable. Field literature has already shown that men in the military marry at older ages than civilians, which is possibly linked to career advancement, acquiring housing, and improving financial rights.⁷⁶ It could also reflect a characteristic of the military environment maintained up to modern times,⁷⁷ as well as a reflection of the "Mediterranean" pattern of marriage, with this distinct age gap between the partners.⁷⁸

I render some examples of differences in age for the category under study: the case of Aurelia Marina and Aurelius Babus⁷⁹ (the age of the veteran is unknown, but his wife dies at 17); Aelia and Publius Aelius Theimes⁸⁰ (a 17 years difference between them); Ulpia Procila and Lucius Valerius Rufus⁸¹ (a difference of

⁶⁷ Suharoschi, Dumitrache, Curcă 2020.

⁶⁸ Mihailescu-Bîrliba 2019.

⁶⁹ Avram 2007.

⁷⁰ IDR II, 39.

⁷¹ IMS II, 110.

⁷² IMS II, 132.

⁷³ IMS III.2, 28.

⁷⁴ IMS VI, 43.

⁷⁵ IMS I, 115.

⁷⁶ Phang 2002, 366.

⁷⁷ Phang 2002, 366.

⁷⁸ Bagnall, Frier 1994, 111-121; Phang 2001, 164.

⁷⁹ CIL III, 866.

⁸⁰ IDR III/2, 370.

⁸¹ IDR III/2, 452.

at least 16 and at most 39 years); Ulpia Pia and Aurelius Maximus⁸² (a possible difference of 16 years); Aelia Serena and Caius Iulius Vindex⁸³ (there is a 30 years age gap).

An average of the age difference would be impossible to compute based on the few examples, but it is visible that, where it could be determined, it greatly exceeds the admitted average of 4-5 years for the upper classes and up to 10 or more for the lower classes.

As to the age at marriage for veteran wives, the study on the three provinces is not conclusive, as epigraphic evidence only indicates their age at death (or, if the couple raises a monument while alive, the age at that particular time). Indirectly, by using children's ages, a precise moment of marriage can rarely be established, as monuments only furnish data on some but not all family members. Even so, this could be a partial illustration, by the social category of veterans, of the spread of the Mediterranean household and family pattern⁸⁴ in all areas of the Empire.

CONCLUSIONS

The paper creates the context and adds interrogations for a more in-depth investigation, with an extended view of both active and discharged soldiers. The quest for a balanced overview on the matter should combine quantitative research and the partial conclusions extracted from it with case-to-case analysis similar to recent, above-mentioned attempts to understand aspects of provincial life. There are some observations that can be placed at the end of this short study. Some traits are rather well-defined, while others are less obvious and undeniable, so they require further inquiry.

A general tendency towards family founding is noticeable. Most of the veterans in the study area have family connections. In an optimistic estimation, around 70% of the inscriptions bear witness to such relationships. The wives of the veterans have proper Roman names in most cases and are much younger. Although the data is incomplete, the numbers gathered until now show large age gaps, feeding the idea that this is a general trend within the category.

Connubial relations with freedwomen were not unusual but occurred rarely, as well as those with recently Romanized women. For the target group, the extended family is underrepresented in the three provinces, probably just as much as in the case of other social categories. This problem is, most likely, the result of epigraphic habit. Archaeological sources and, perhaps, a closer look at possible connections with civilians and other provinces could yield some surprises, but not enough to turn the numbers around. In other words, the general framework for this type of attestation in the Roman Empire is valid in the present case.

Male descendants dominate in number, raising questions about the abandonment and exposure of children in the military environment. The matter should be approached cautiously, taking into consideration previous research that shows similar conclusions about the prevalence of boys in written sources. My opinion is that, perhaps, anthropological research might shed some light on infantile survival rates, a step towards exhaustive explanations. On the long road to understanding, this is a small, but hopefully not insignificant, step.

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⁸² IMS I, 39.

⁸³ IMS IV, 37.

⁸⁴ Huebner 2011, 74, 77-78.

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