

A VETERAN OF THE *COHORS NORICORUM* ON AN INSCRIPTION AT SALONA

Dino Demicheli

University of Zagreb, Faculty of Humanities and Social Studies,
Archaeology Department
I. Lučića 3
HR – 10000 Zagreb
ddemiche@ffzg.unizg.hr

UDK / UDC: 904.726.8(497.583 Solin)"652"

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The article analyses a tombstone that was found in Tower 15 on the northwestern part of the city walls of Salona. The stele, together with numerous other monuments, was used as building material during the construction of the tower, which was most likely in the 4th century. Epigraphic spolia are not rare in Salona, especially in ramparts and towers, where a very large number of them have been found. The inscription on the stele mentions a veteran of cohorts Noricorum, which is the only record so far of this military unit in Dalmatia. The veteran was most likely

the commemorator of the inscription to another male person whose name has not been fully preserved. The monument has a very interesting motif as acroteria, and it is a relief of the Winds, i.e. the Wind gods that are sometimes depicted in the context of Roman funerary art.

Key words:

Salona, city walls and towers, epigraphy, spolia, *cohors I Noricorum*, Winds.

During the systematic archaeological excavations of the Salonian city walls in 2021 and 2022 dozens of epigraphic monuments were found.¹ All of them were used as building material in towers attached to the city walls. Salona was encircled by a wall to a length of more than 4 kilometres in 170 AD; and, during the following centuries, numerous towers were added, especially on the northern side of the rampart. Of the more than 90 towers in total that have been found so far, more than 70 are on the northern side, as this side was most exposed to possible raids. In more than 200 years of archaeological excavations in Salona, the city walls and towers have sporadically been the focus of research in this provincial metropolis. The majority of the towers are beneath today's walking surface, as they are mostly preserved not much higher than the foundation level. Still, their foundations are very deep, sometimes more than three or four metres, which allows us to explore how these walls and towers were built.

On the basis of the research in the last three archaeological campaigns on Tower 15, one can say that the tower was erected after the 3rd century, and the builders abundantly used ready-squared stones that belonged to some other buildings. Among them, the most interesting pieces are the epigraphic monuments, particularly in Tower 15 (Figure 1). The walls of this tower were built, in part, with tombstones that were taken from the nearby so-called Northern Salonian necropolis, whose larger part stretched along the city walls.² All the inscriptions that were found in and around Tower 15 can be dated between the 1st and 3rd centuries. There are more than twenty inscriptions that can be related to the construction of the tower. Around half of them were found *in situ*, i.e. incorporated in the walls of the tower, while the other half were found among the large pile of stones that had collapsed from the tower and city walls. Most of them are civilian inscriptions, whereas three inscriptions belonged to soldiers.³ All the inscriptions are in Latin, except for two which were written in Greek. Five tombstones are still embedded in the visible part of the tower.

1 The excavation results and the article arose from the scientific project "The new lives of ancient inscriptions: epigraphic spolia from the territory of Central Dalmatia", financed by the Croatian Scientific Foundation (HRZZ IP-2019-04-3537).

2 On the so-called Northern Salonian necropolis, see: Miletić 1990; Mardešić 2019.

3 One of these inscriptions discusses a stele of a soldier of the *Cohors III Alpinorum* (Demicheli, forthcoming), while the other, mentioning a governor's strator, has already been published (Matijević 2024).



FIGURE 1. Aerial view of Tower 15 during the excavations in 2022 (photo by D. Demicheli).

The inscription in question was found *in situ*, but it is not complete, which additionally shows how the stonemasons treated pagan tombstones. These were considered ordinary stone material that had to be cut to the size required for building the tower. This monument was discovered on the eastern wall of the square part of the tower. Eventually, it was retrieved from the wall, primarily because the wall was very loose in the upper part, which had to be dismantled. While this was being done, several other inscriptions appeared near and below this monument, and all of them were taken out. This one has been singled out for a separate discussion, since it mentions a military unit that has not previously been attested in Dalmatia. It is the upper part of a rectangular stele (Figure 2), and its appearance slightly differs from the previously-known monuments found in Salona.⁴ What is interesting about it in terms of sculpting is the acroteria, which are made in the shape of a male (half) face with an accentuated beard and hair (Figure 3). Even more interesting is the fact that the head on the left seems to be turned upside down. The face is not detailed in either case, but more stylized, and it reveals features of provincial art. The two halves of the face on the inside of the monument are bordered by a relief showing strands of hair and a beard. The faces are turned 180 degrees

from each other, which can be seen from the way these strands are shown: those of the beard are longer than those of the hair, which is visible when looking at the left and right views. In the case of the left half-face, they are located above, while in the case of the right, they are below. From the physical features of the face, one eye, cheek and nose can be seen in both representations.

Acroteria decorated in this manner are very rare, but on steles in Dalmatia this is not an isolated case. There is a stele of a decurion, *C. Publicius Romanus*, of Narona,⁵ representing the same motif but in a more elaborate style, and the faces are in normal position, but looking in different directions (Figure 4). These faces represent the Winds (ἄνεμοι, *Venti*), which are sometimes depicted in a funerary context.⁶ Their symbolism is related to the belief that the soul of the deceased is lifted by the winds.⁷

4 Dimensions of the fragment are: h. 59 cm; w. 45 cm; th. 14 cm; letters 4.1 cm (1st row) 2.9 cm (6th row).

5 CIL III 8441.

6 Except for the one mentioned from Dalmatia, the Winds are represented (mostly as a bust) in funerary monuments from Pannonia and Dacia, some of which can be seen on: <http://lupa.at/102> (*Carnuntum*), <http://lupa.at/423> (Walbersdorf), <http://lupa.at/633> (Maria Lanzendorf), <http://lupa.at/2939>, <http://lupa.at/3117>, <http://lupa.at/10574> (*Aquincum*), <http://lupa.at/3348> (*Scarabantia*), <http://lupa.at/3972> (*Intercisa*), <http://lupa.at/4690>, <http://lupa.at/9094> (*Vetus Salina*), <http://lupa.at/14992> (*Alburnus Maior*), <http://lupa.at/15025> (*Micia*). On votive monuments (reliefs of Mithras): <http://lupa.at/7109> (Weisbaden), <http://lupa.at/24880> (Dieburg).



FIGURE 2. Stela of *Pa()* *Arneoras* (photo by D. Demicheli).

The face turned upside-down on the Salonitan stela is unusual indeed,⁸ but either it can be interpreted as a stonemason's error, or it could represent the wind blowing from a different direction than the other one.⁹ The faces have the role of acroteria flanking the triangular gable, inside which there is a four-petalled rosette with a pistil in the middle. On the slope side, the gable is decorated with moulding in the form of a *cyma reversa*, while there is no such decoration on the horizontal side. Below the pediment is an inscription field bordered by a *cyma reversa* moulding. The remains of the inscription are visible in six lines, five of which are complete and read:

Pa() *Arneoras*
veteranus
c(o)hortis
Noricorum
 5 *posuit C(aio) Iul(io)*
Phil[-----]

The letters of the inscription are decently carved, but it is clear that this was not the highest-quality work. Apart from the fact that the last letters S on the first two lines are carved on the moulding, the inscription on the 2nd line goes slightly diagonally downwards. However, no word has been transferred to the next line, which is avoided not only by the letters carved on the moulding but also by the ligatures of N and E in the 1st line and of V and M in the 4th line. Punctuation marks are carved in the 1st line between A and A, and in the 5th line between T and C, and C and I. The inscription mentions two people: a veteran whose name was carved in the form of *Pa()* *Arneoras*, and a person who had a *tria nomina* scheme, and whose name was *C. Iulius Phil[---]*. Not knowing the cognomen of the latter person is due to the damage to the inscription, but the case of the former is somewhat different. Presuming that the first syllable *Pa()* is a shortened name, it cannot be restored with confidence. Given that he is a veteran of the auxiliary unit, it would be expected that he has a Roman *praenomen* and a *nomen*, so the letters PA might be an abbreviated name form of *P(ublius) A(elius)* or some other family name.¹⁰ However, since there is no punctuation mark between these two letters, this cannot be proven. It seems that the stonemason took care of where the punctuation marks should be carved, as can be seen in the 5th line, where the *praenomen* *C(aius)* is separated from the *gentilicium* *Iul(ius)*. The name *Arneoras* is *hapax*, as it has not been recorded anywhere in the Empire so far. The cognomen of the second person is undoubtedly of Greek origin; it starts with *Phil-*, and, since many names begin in the same way, there are more than a few possible solutions; thus any reconstruction would not be plausible. *C. Iulius Phil[---]* was probably a comrade of *Arneoras*, which is unclear from the inscription who erected the monument to whom: the first name is in the nominative case followed by the verb *posuit*. Although it was a practice to put the deceased person's name at the beginning of the inscription on tombstones, that was not always the case, as there are examples in which the commemorator is listed first and the deceased second.¹¹ There is no indication of the veteran having been deceased at the time the inscription was placed, but because of the verb *posuit*, which stands between these two names, I believe that the veteran was the commemorator of the monument.

Very important information comes from the name of the military unit in which this veteran served: *Cohors Noricorum*. Only *Cohors I Noricorum* has been attested, but it was not known in Dalmatia before now. Still, regarding the fact that this was a veteran, it is unlikely that this unit resided in Dalmatia. Although the number of the unit on the Salonitan inscription is missing, by analogy with other inscriptions there is no other option but to conclude that this veteran served in *Cohors I Nori-*

7 The literature on Winds or Wind-gods in the ancient world (particularly Greek) is extensive, and there are several different interpretations on their role and functions. The most recent monograph (Coppola 2010) delivers an extensive bibliography list, but some titles should be singled out, such as the works of Cumont 1922; 1939; Steuding 1965²; Neuser 1982.

8 The votive plaque with Mithras relief from Dieburg has a depiction of the Wind gods with upside-down faces, although different than on the Salonitan example.

9 I extend my gratitude to Prof. Nenad Cambi and Prof. Dražen Maršić for suggesting the interpretations related to the Winds.

10 The possibility that he bore two *cognomina* is not excluded, but one could mention that the abbreviated *Pa()* could stand for *Pa(ullus)*, which sometimes occurs as a *praenomen* of auxiliary soldiers. Still, *Arneoras* having been a veteran, one could rather expect *gentilicium + cognomen*.

11 E. g. CIL III 2021; CIL III 8375; CIL III 8489; CIL III 8730; CIL III 9847; ILJug 89.



FIGURE 3. Representation of the Winds on the stela of Pa(l) Arneoras (photo by D. Demicheli).

corum.¹² There was also a cavalry unit of the same ethnic group (*ala Noricorum*), which is also not recorded in Dalmatia,¹³ as well as *legio I Noricorum*, which was formed in Late Antiquity. During the 2nd and 3rd centuries, soldiers from Noricum served in units in Dalmatia, for which there are some epigraphical records.¹⁴ Monuments of *Cohors I Noricorum* have been found mostly in Pannonia, and there are some in Germania and Dacia, but its permanent residence was in Pannonia (later Lower Pannonia). The earliest record for this cohort in Pannonia is from the diploma issued in 80 AD,¹⁵ but the cohort very likely came to Pannonia a few decades earlier. Other evidence of this cohort has been found mainly on military diplomas, brick stamps and, in smaller number, tombstones.¹⁶ The *Cohors I Noricorum* in the 3rd century became *equitata*, as can be seen from two inscriptions on which it bore the honorific names of *Antoniniana equitata*¹⁷ and *Gordiana equitata*.¹⁸ The ethnic component of the name is chiselled off on both inscriptions. So far, the epigraphic

records of this cohort that have been found do not bring many names of soldiers, and some of them show traces of local onomastics. Only one monument bears the name of a person who was probably a *Noricus* by ethnicity,¹⁹ while it is known that a soldier from Crete served in this cohort.²⁰ Both monuments can be dated to the 1st century. The only known prefect of this cohort was Q. Volcacius Q. f. Vel(ina) Primus, and he is confirmed on two monuments from Firmo in Italy. The inscriptions state that *Cohors I Noricorum* was in Pannonia at the time of his command.²¹

The Salonitan monument can be dated to the second half of the 1st century or the beginning of the 2nd century. That is concluded by the onomastics,²² the appearance of the stela, primarily its dimensions and decorative programme, and by the lack of the *D(is) M(anibus)* formula.

12 There are inscriptions in Dalmatia mentioning cohorts without numerals, but it is clear which number there should have been inscribed: *cohors Campana*, CIL III 8693; CIL III 14246,1 (*Salona*); *cohors Aquitanorum* CIL III 2053 (*Salona*); CIL III 9760 (*Aequum*); *cohors Montanorum*, CIL III 15003; ILJug 841 (*Burnum*); *cohors Alpinorum*, CIL III 8495 (*Bigeste*); *cohors Cyrrhestarum*, AE 2009, 1034 (*Burnum*); *cohors Voluntariorum*, CIL III 12679 (*Doclea*).

13 On one tombstone from Dugopolje (not far from *Salona*), an inscription was mistakenly read and, consequently, attributed to a soldier of *ala IV Noricorum*, which was corrected to *ala Tungrorum* by revision. For more on this, see Cambi 1994; Saddington 2002; Cesarik 2014; Radman-Livaja 2022.

14 With the ethnonym *Noricus*: CIL III 8730 (*Salona*); CIL III 14935 (*Tilurium*); from *Celeia*: CIL III 2745; CIL III 2746 (*Andetrium*); from *Virunum*: CIL III 13975 (*Tilurium*); CIL III 14249,4 (*Salona*).

15 CIL XVI 26.

16 Listed in Spaul 2000, 297-298; Lőrincz 2001, 40; cat. nr. 3, 5, 6, 13, 17, 21, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29?, 30?, 33, 396-402, 507, 508.

17 CIL III 10279 (*Lugio*). The inscription is from the reign of Caracalla.

18 CIL III 10277 (*Mohács*). This is also the latest dated inscription of this cohort (240 AD).

19 AE 1974, 475 (*Virunum*), Ti(berius) Claudius Trausi fil(ius) / Attucius missicius coh(ortis) I / Nor(icorum) ann(or)um L stip(endiorum) XXVIII t(estamento) f(ieri) i(ussit) sibi et / Primo Fusco Prisco lib(ertis) isdem / liberti et heredes fecer(unt).

20 AE 1965, 251 (*Mogontiacum*), Theander Aristome/ni f(ilius) Cretensis mil(es) / coh(ortis) I Noricor(um) optio / an(norum) XLV stip(endiorum) XXVI h(ic) s(itus) e(st) h(eres) f(aciendum) c(uravit). Interestingly, both of these soldiers had more than 25 *stipendia*, which indicates a practice that was more noticeable before the reign of Claudius, but there are also later cases.

21 CIL IX 5363; CIL IX 5364 (*Firmo*). The text of inscription CIL IX 5363 reads: L(ucio) Volcacio Q(uinti) f(ilio) / Vel(ina) Primo / praef(ecto) coh(ortis) I Noricor(um) / in Pann(onia) praef(ecto) ripae / Danuvi(i) et civitatium / duar(um) Boior(um) et Azalior(um) / trib(un) milit(um) leg(ionis) V / Macedonicae in / Moesia praef(ecto) alae I / Pannonior(um) in Africa / Ilviro quinq(uennali) / fl(ami)ni divorum / omnium p(atrono) c(oloniae) / ex testamento eius / posita / M(arco) Accio Seneca / [---] Manlio Planta / Ilvir(is) quinq(uennalibus) / l(ocus) dat(us) dec(reto) dec(urionum).

22 The name C. Iulius Phil[---] suggests that Roman citizenship was obtained from Augustus or Caligula, but there are numerous *Caii Iulii* of the 2nd and even 3rd centuries who are not connected with the early emperors.

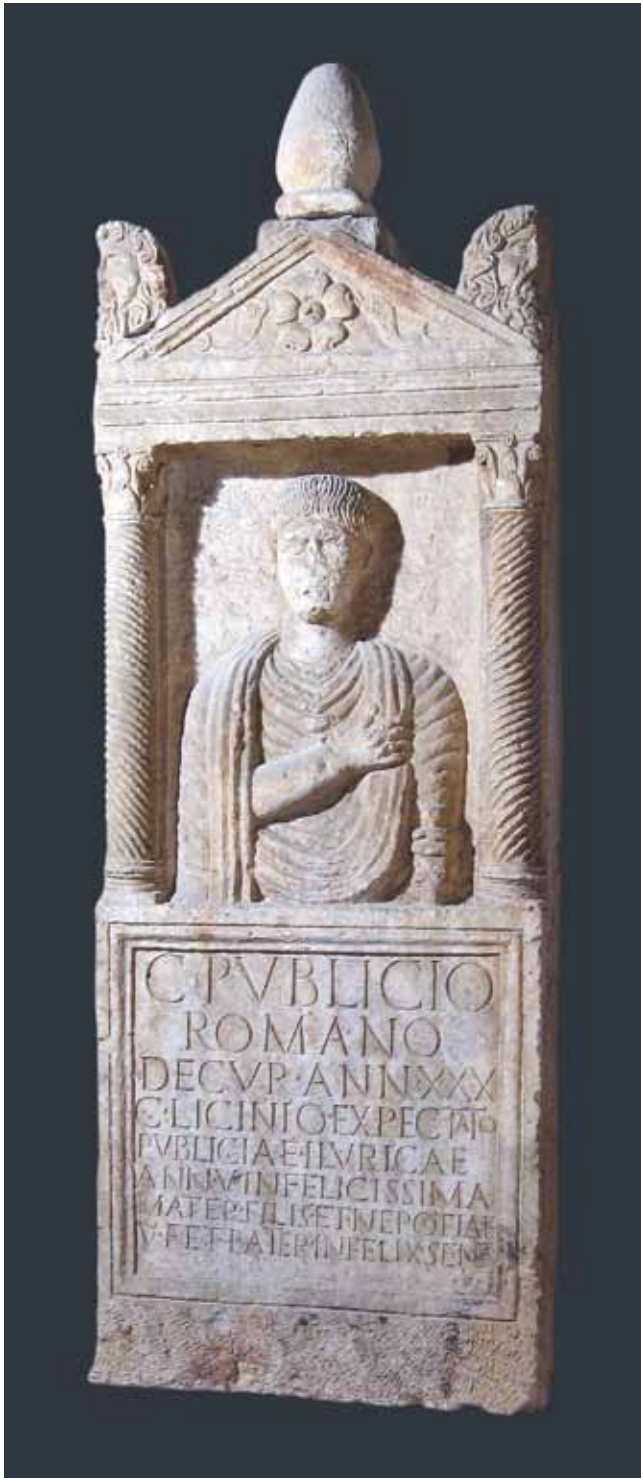


FIGURE 4. Representation of the Winds on the stele of C. Publicius Romanus of Narona (photo by T. Seser).

We do not know how *Pa()* *Arneoras* ended up in Salona; but, since Pannonia and Dalmatia were two neighbouring provinces, as a veteran he could have come from one to the other relatively easily, like those others who came to Salona although their

units did not have permanent stay in Dalmatia.²³ It is less likely that, during active service, he was engaged at the governor's office in Salona, where legionaries and members of auxiliary units served; an auxiliary unit outside Dalmatia from which the governor's men were recruited has not yet been confirmed.

Not only has this monument brought the attestation of a previously-unrecorded cohort in Dalmatia, but its appearance also represents a *unicum* on Salonitan monuments. The representation of the Winds on a stele of Narona can be dated to the 1st century, but somewhat earlier than *Arneoras*'s monument, which proves that this motif had been known in Dalmatia. Still, this does not prove that the decorative programme for the monument was chosen as a standard one in a Salonitan workshop.²⁴ As a soldier, *Arneoras* could encounter this motif in the place where he served, which is most likely, since the representation of the Winds in a funerary context is well attested on steles in Pannonia.

The Salonitan architectural defensive system shows that, during the building of some of the towers in Late Antiquity, the masons did not show particular respect and piety towards the memory of the deceased whose monuments were used as building material. Maybe they intended to erase the memory of those pagan Salonitans; but, at the same time, by concealing those monuments in the architecture, they saved them from perishing in some other way. There is no doubt that Salonitan city walls still hide more inscriptions, which is confirmed by the fact that new inscriptions are being discovered in every new digging campaign. Given the state of the research on the Salonitan defensive system, we have a very well-grounded expectation of finding more epigraphic spolia.

23 These do not include those soldiers who served in the office of the governor of the province, and who were detached from units outside Dalmatia: CIL III 2064 (*Legio XXX Ulpia*); CIL III 2066 (*Legio XIII Gemina*); CIL III 8730 (*Legio II Italica*); CIL III 13907; ILJug 2089 (*Legio V Macedonica*); ILJug 2045; ILJug 2207 (*Legio X Gemina*). Some of the veterans mentioned were probably of Dalmatian origin, but this is not stated in the inscription.

24 If the upside-down face can be interpreted as a stonecutter's error, maybe this can be explained by the assumption that the stonecutter had some difficulties with understanding of the orientation of the faces looking in different directions.

SAŽETAK

VETERAN *COHORS NORICORUM* NA NATPISU IZ SALONE

Članak analizira nadgrobni spomenik pronađen u Kuli 15 na sjeverozapadnom dijelu gradskih zidina Salone. Stela je, zajedno s brojnim drugim spomenicima, korištena kao građevinski materijal tijekom izgradnje kule, najvjerojatnije u 4. stoljeću. Epigrafski spoliji nisu rijetkost u Saloni, osobito u bedemima i kulama, gdje je pronađen vrlo velik broj takvih nalaza.

Natpis na steli spominje veterana *cohors Noricorum*, što je do sada jedini zapis o toj vojnoj jedinici u Dalmaciji. Veteran je najvjerojatnije bio osoba koja je posvetila natpis drugoj muškoj osobi čije ime nije u potpunosti sačuvano. Spomenik ima vrlo zanimljiv motiv u obliku akroterija, a riječ je o reljefu Vjetrova, odnosno bogova vjetrova, koji su ponekad prikazivani u kontekstu rimske pogrebne umjetnosti.

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