

Miroslava
D. Mirković*

Univerzitet u Beogradu,
Filozofski fakultet

Vicissima libertatis in a new inscription found in the Upper town Belgrade fortress

* frida@eunet.rs

¹ I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Marko Popović who informed me of the discovery. My gratitude also goes to Nela Mićović, associate of the Belgrade City Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments who oversaw the archaeological investigation during the works on the conservation of the Mehmed paša Sokolović fountain. She provided me with photos of the monument and permitted me to publish the inscription before the final report of the archaeological researches has been published. During the archaeological excavations around the fountain the part of the rampart of the Roman legionary fort was discovered. It was constructed of big rectangle stones and formed the north east wall. This discovery will soon be published by Nela Mićović.

² Verbal statement by Marko Popović, PhD.

In memory of my friend the late Jovan Sekulić, the former director of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Serbia

Abstract: *The paper deals with the inscription engraved on the Roman altar discovered in the North-West wall of Upper town of the fortress in Beograd during the conservation works on the Mehmed Paša Sokolović fountain in 2017. The text of the inscription contains information on the manumission tax, the so called **vicissima libertatis**, assessed in the amount of 5% of the price in cases of the liberation of slaves. This tax was introduced in the Roman state in the fourth century BC and was paid up to the Later Empire. It was initially collected by the **societas publicanorum**, and later by procurators in the provinces. It was paid by the manumitted slave or his previous master. The inscription found in Kalemegdan could be dated in the imperial period, in the second half of the 2nd century for two reasons: first, Singidunum was no longer a municipium after the second half of the 2nd century, and secondly, the paying of vicissima libertatis to the city could be dated to the time of Marcus Aurelius (160-180). During his reign no provincial or regional procurators were attested.*

Key words: *Manumission, municipium Singidunum, Roman altar, procurators, Aerarium Saturni, vicissima libertatis.*

A small altar, 88 x 41 x 38 cm, made of Tašmajdan limestone was discovered in the Upper Town of Belgrade fortress, in the North-West wall of the Roman legionary camp in 2017 during the conservation works on the Turkish fountain built by Mehmed paša Sokolović.¹ It was found not far from the fountain and from the walls of the Roman legionary camp, reused as the construction material on the 19th century house which was situated on the Roman wall, as N. Mićović informed me, or during the removing the earth which directly covered the Roman wall, as Marko Popović asserts, assuming that the altar was rebuilt in ramparts of the Roman legionary camp.² It is now preserved in the Belgrade City Institute for the Protection of Cultural Monuments.

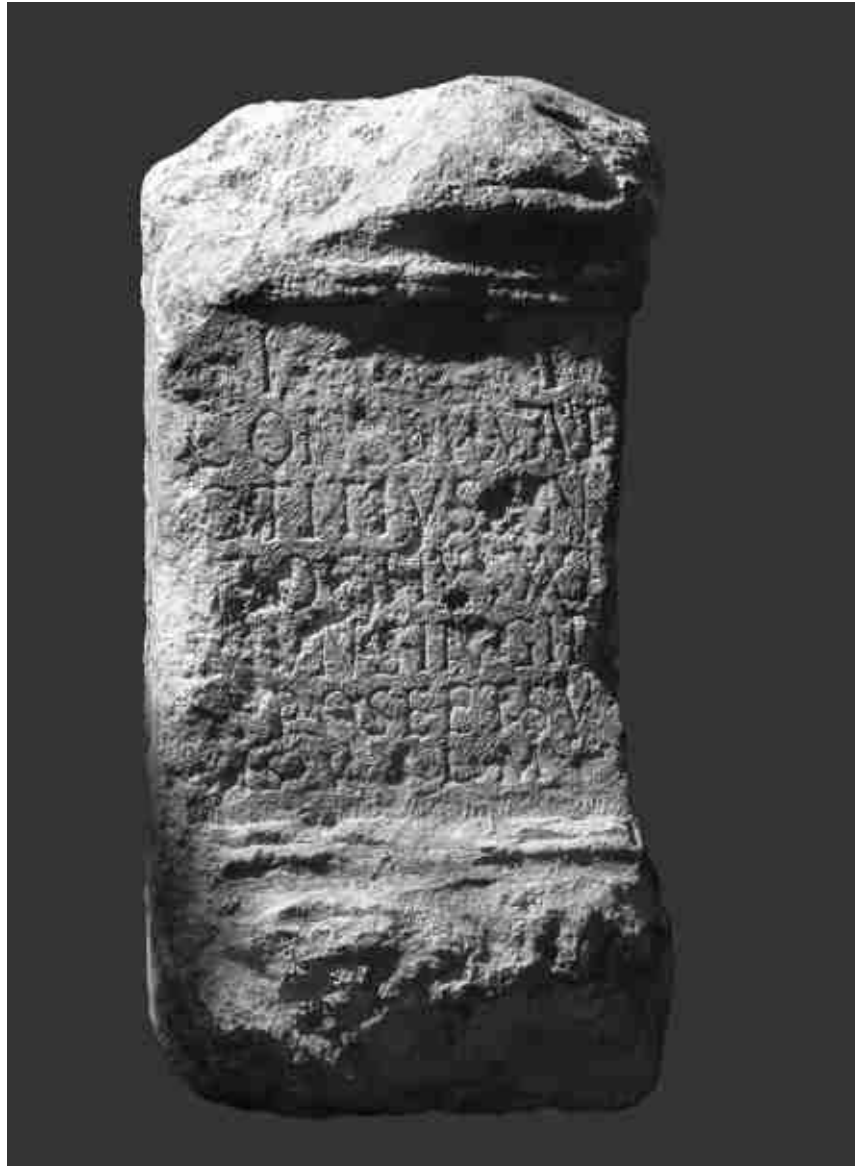
On the front side of the altar a Latin inscription is engraved consisting of seven lines. The letters are 4 to 3 cm in height (fig. 1).

I O M
CONSERVATORI
C. TITIVS [.]N
TIOCHUS XX L
[.]MVN SINGID
PRO SE ET SV
IS V S L M

The letter A at the end of the line 3 damaged; the letter at the end of line 4 is not completely preserved, but it to be recognized as L rather

1. The Altar with Inscriptiom, the Upper town Belgrade fortress

1. Жрѣвник с најѣисом, Горњи град Београдске тврђаве



than as H, designed *h(ereditatum)* which would be expected on this place. However, the inspection of the stone proved that no trace of the horizontal line of the letter H in the middle of the preserved vertical line is visible on the stone. At the beginning of the line 5 seems to be place for one letter more.

The inscription runs as follows:

*I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) | Conservatori | C. Titius [A]ntiochus XX
l(ibertatis) [.]⁵ Mun(icipii) Singid(uni) | pro se et su|is v(otum) s(olvit)
l(ibens) m(erito).*

It could be translated as:

“To Iuppiter the Best and Greatest, the Saviour, Gaius Titius Antiochus (the clerk? in the office) of the tax collection of 5% on the liberation of slaves in Municipium Singidunum (dedicates the altar) for himself and all his family, fulfilling the vow, willing (to be rewarded) as he deserved.”

As the word after XX L is missed, it is possible both, that C. Titius Antiochus paid or he collected *vicissima libertatis*. More probably seem to be the latter solution, because he is not designed as *libertus*, as it would be expected if the former would be accepted.

³ Passerini 1925: 242.

⁴ IMS I, no. 34.

⁵ Livy VII 16,7.

⁶ About this tax see: Marquard 1884: II-2, 161; Hirschfeld 1905: 71 f; Wesener 1958: 2477-2479; Cagnat 1882: 153-173; Neesen 1980: 140 f.; Bradley 1984: 175-182 summarised the results of the investigation; Novak 2011: 49-53.

⁷ Nos. 1864, 1866, 1867, 1870, 1871 and others.

⁸ For instance AE 1975, nos. 292, AE 1976, no 671.

⁹ Pflaum 1960-1961: nos. 645, 646, 1034.

¹⁰ IMS I, Praefatio, p.31 f.

¹¹ Hirschfeld 1877: 70.

The altar is devoted to Iuppiter whose epithet *Conservator* is known also in other inscriptions.³

C. Titius Antiochus could be a former slave of the *Titii* family who was manumitted. This family is attested in Singidunum. C. Titius, a veteran of the legion *IV Flavia*, appears together with Philomusus Andronici among the heirs of Albanus Septiminus who originated from Sirmium and died in Singidunum as a soldier in the same legion.⁴

The main interest of the new inscription from Kalemegdan lies in the information which it gives about the administration of the 5% tax, *vicissima libertatis*, provided by the State for the liberation of slaves. Introduced by the consul Gnaeus Manlius Capitolinus in BC 357,⁵ this tax remained unchanged until the time of Diocletian. The amount was shortly raised to 10% under Caracalla, but soon afterwards it continued to be levied at 5% of the slave price. This tax was paid in gold to the state in *Aerarium sanctum* or *Aerarius Saturni*, later to the *fiscus*. It is argued that this tax was abolished under Diocletian probably by his fiscal reform, because the number of slaves in general was reduced. Still, it was mentioned in Egyptian papyri in the fourth century.⁶

Vicissima libertatis was assessed on all who liberated slaves. The right to liberate slaves was also given to cities by a law whose author is not known and to the provinces by *lex Aelia Sentia*. The collection was farmed like other state taxes to private companies. *Vicissima libertatis* and the officials who were entrusted with its collection are attested in many inscriptions in all parts of the Roman Empire. Important inscriptions for the understanding of the function of the service are collected by Dessau, ILS,⁷ and newly published in *Anné épigraphique*.⁸ Some of them are included in H.G. Pflaum's study on *ordre equestre*.⁹

Vicissima libertatis was paid by the manumitted slave or his previous master or by the heirs if the manumission was provided by testament. The tax was initially collected by the *societas publicanorum*, and later by procurators in the provinces. Members of their staff included *vilicus*, *arcarius* and *tabularius*, and among them were many slaves and freemen. Titius Antiochus in the new inscription performed one of these functions. Procurators and their staff are attested until now in numerous inscriptions in Gallia and Hispania, in the provinces in Asia Minor, Pontus and Bithinia, Gallatia, Capadocia, Pisiadia, Licia and Licaonia, Pannonia, Italy and Dacia, Achaia, Africa and Egypt, in the regions of Transpadana and Campania, and in the *Tractus Etruriae*. The first from the province of Moesia Superior is proved by the new inscription from Kalemegdan.

A particularity in the new inscription from the Belgrade fortress is the connection of the *vicissima* not with the region or the provinces as in the other known examples, but with the city of Singidunum. The usual duty of the city authorities was to control the payment, but the tax was not included in the city income. It was collected by provincial or regional agents and sent to the state *fiscus*. The connection of *vicissima libertatis* with the *municipium Singidunum* could mean that in this case the city had assumed the duty of collecting taxes which was usually assigned to the provincial or regional agents.

The dating of the inscription is made possible by the following circumstances: it is earlier than Diocletian's reign as this emperor, as generally accepted, abolished this kind of tax; secondly it is to be dated before the emperor Septimius Severus because Singidunum was not a *municipium*, but a *colonia* in his time.¹⁰ Lastly, the connection of the *vicissima libertatis* with the city, *municipium Singidunum*, supports the dating of the inscription in the time of the emperor Marcus Aurelius (160-180). None of the imperial procurators or other agents who collected *vicissima* are known under this emperor. It is supposed that for this short period of time the collection of the manumission tax was passed on to the city administration and was probably included in the city revenue.¹¹

- Bibliography** AE = Année épigraphique
- Abbreviations** CAH = Cambridge Ancient History
CIL = Corpus inscriptionum latinarum
Dessau, ILS = H. Dessau, Inscriptiones latinae selectae, I–IV
IMS = Inscriptions de la Mésie supérieure
JJP = Journal of Juristic Papyrology, Warsaw
Pflaum, Les carrières = Pflaum, H.-G., Les carrières procuratoriennes équestre sous le Haut-Empire romain
RE = Real Encyclopaedie der klassischen Alterumswissenschaften

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У чланку се ради о латинском натпису на жртвенику који је откривен недалеко од Мехмед-пашине чесме у Горњем граду Београдске тврђаве. Натпис је сведочанство о провинцији Горња Мезија о порезу од 5% који се плаћа на ослобађање робова. Натпис је значајан као једино сведочанство о овом порезу који наплаћује град, у овом случају Сингидунум. Натпис је из времена после Диоклецијана, који је укинуо ову врсту пореза јер се број робова у Царству смањио. Ближе датовање у време пре Септимија Севера омогућује две ствари; прво, Сингидунум, који се на натпису спомиње као *municipium*, имао је већ у време овог царства статус колоније; друго, околност да се наплата пореза везује за град упућује на време Марка Аурелија, за које нема података о царским прокураторима који су прикупљали овај порез за царску класу у провинцији.