

## A ROMAN INSCRIPTION FROM TAURUNUM

In June 1959, during the excavations carried out by the National Museum of Zemun, in the area of the town (Njegoševa St.), on the site of the necropolis of ancient Taurunum, a Roman grave from the second half of the fourth century was unearthed<sup>1</sup>). The grave was covered with three stone blocks, one of which bore the inscription we are going to describe. This monument belongs today to the epigraphic collection of the National Museum of Zemun, and for the permission to publish it I am indebted to D. Dimitrijević, Director of the Museum, who has been so kind as to put at my disposal the photograph of the monument, and to give all the particulars about the circumstances of its discovery.

The inscription has been engraved on the tombstone, made of crumbly, grayish sandstone, the lower part of which is broken off, and the upper edge considerably damaged. During its removal from the grave, it was broken across, at the height of the third line of the inscription. Subsequently, it was set together, preserved, and fixed to the pedestal (see the figure below). Dimensions: H. 1, 44 m., W. 0,87 m., Th. 0,34 m.; the panel of the inscription: H. 0,70 m., W. 0,25 m.; letters 0,04 m. The upper edge of the monument is horizontal. A semicircular gable contains a rosette, surrounded by a wreath with ribbons twining in the left and the right field. The arch of the gable, decorated with a cable moulding, is laid on two low pilasters. Above the arch there are acanthus flowers in both corners. The framing of the inscription is ornamented with vines and leaves.

The semi-circular gable with the decoration of this kind is, as we know, an exceptional thing on the monuments of Pannonia<sup>2</sup>). On the other hand, this type is often found in the North of Bulgaria<sup>3</sup>), and the western border of the region in which it frequently occurs extends as far as Ravna and Kostolac<sup>4</sup>). A similar specimen has been also discovered in Belgrade<sup>5</sup>). With regard to the time, the semi-circular gable upon

<sup>1</sup>) The results of the excavations will be published by D. Dimitrijević.

<sup>2</sup>) A. Schober, *Die römischen Grabsteine von Noricum und Pannonien*, Wien 1923, 159 cites only two gravestones (Nos. 89, 125; figs. 37, 58) from this province with the gable of this type and the horizontal upper edge. The arch of the gable on two pilasters we see also on a stele from Dunapentele, described by A. Radnóti — L. Barkóczi, *Acta Arch. Acad. Sci. Hung.* I (1951), 204, pl. XL (left). All three tombstones differ, however, in style and representation from the one that we are dealing with.

<sup>3</sup>) D. Dimitrov, *Nadgrobnite ploči ot Rimsko vreme v Sev. Blg.*, Sofia 1942, 27sq

<sup>4</sup>) *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>5</sup>) N. Vulić, *Antički spomenici naše zemlje*, Spomenik XCVIII (1941—1948),



The Roman gravestone from Taurinum. The National Museum of Zemun

two pilasters is to be found on the monuments dating as late as the fourth century, made in a workshop near Ratiaria<sup>6)</sup>. The wreath here represents only a decoration<sup>7)</sup>.

The panel of the inscription bears eight lines of comparatively well-cut letters. While the grave was being constructed the surface of the inscription was covered with a layer of mortar and suffered several damages (fortunately, the inscription stood turned down). Both facts make the reading in some places difficult. The inscription reads:

D P R I T A T I A V R B I T T E L L I A N A E X P R O V I N 5 I T A L V I X A N X X F L O R E N T I N O F I L I O A V R F L O R V S P R [O] T D V C [E N] C O N I V [G] I . . .	M P E R P E T V A E S E C V R I T A T I A V R B I T T E L L I A N A E X P R O V I N 5 I T A L V I X A N X X F L O R E N T I N O F I L I O A V R F L O R V S P R [O] T D V C [E N] C O N I V [G] I . . .	D(is) M(anibus) perpetuae secu   ritati Aur(elia) Bittel   liana(?) ex provin(cia)   °Ital(ia) vix(it) an(nis) XX Flor  entino filio Aur(elius)   Florus pr[o]t (ector) duc   [en(arius)] coniu[g]i . . .
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L.1: An ivy leaf between D and M.

L.2: The expression *perpetuae securitati* often appears on the inscriptions of the Western Danubian provinces. According to the correct interpretation given by Hartmann<sup>8)</sup>, *securitas* in such cases is only appellativum which means eternal peace of the dead and does not represent a protectress of the repose of the deceased, as Ilberg<sup>9)</sup> considers it.

L. 3: The reading is difficult because no letter has been entirely preserved, and out of more than a half of them only traces have remained. The first letter of the gentilicium is probably A, of which the part of the right *hasta* has survived. Perhaps, in the damaged place before it there might have been space for one thinner letter (e.g.T), but it is very probable that in such a case a nomen as Tauria or the like would have remained unabbreviated. A considerable difficulty represents the cognomen, because between BI (incomplete) and EL only two verticals are visible (of the second only the lower part is perceptible), partly hidden under the layer of the hardened mortar, partly lost in the breakage, so that one cannot say with confidence whether we have to deal with one letter only, or a ligature, or double T or L respectively. Furthermore, the space between the verticals has been damaged in such a way that the reader can be easily misled. In any case, there is, as far as I know, no established cognomen beginning with *Bi* and ending in *elliana*. Still, we can assume the existence of two of them, Bittelliana [and] Billelliana, derived from a diminutive form of the

<sup>6)</sup> Dimitrov, op. cit., 100.

<sup>7)</sup> Cf. H. Hofman, *Römische Militärgrabsteine der Donauländer*, Wien 1905, 16 sq.

<sup>8)</sup> Hartmann, *Securitas*, RE, II R. II (1921), 1003.

<sup>9)</sup> J. Ilberg, *Securitas*, Roschers Myth. Lex. III, 2, 597.

Celtic names *Bittus* (Bitto or alike) resp. *Billo*<sup>10</sup>), which are in conformity with the remaining parts of the letters. Our reading prefers *Bittelliana* only because the similarly formed names *Bittelus* (*fundus*)<sup>11</sup>) and *Bitilla*<sup>12</sup>) have already been attested. The only other acceptable restoration of the name in question would be *Nigelliana*, arrived at by joining the two first verticals and the fragment of the letter between them into N, and by taking the two next as I resp. as the lower part of G.

L. 4: Between L and I there is an occasional cut resembling a cross-bar. It is not improbable that one of the two e's that could follow *liana* had been omitted, and that the name should be read in the dative.

L. 5: L has not its horizontal stroke.

L. 7: Only the upper part of the letters R and T in the word *protector* has been preserved, though incomplete. The last but one letter in the line is rather worn out. All the three letters, however, are indubitable.

L. 8: The proposed restoration of the beginning of the line is preferable with regard to the available space. C is scarcely visible.

In the text of the inscription our attention is attracted by the designation *provincia* added to the name of Italy. The correct understanding of this extraordinary occurrence requires a preciser dating of the text itself. The title *protector ducenarius* borne by Aurelius Florus, could be in this respect of some use. It was conferred on the most important members of the officer corps appointed to be the personal guard of the emperor<sup>13</sup>), established in the middle of the third century<sup>14</sup>). The attribute *ducenarius* determining the rank of the *protectores* occurs, however, very rarely after the third century<sup>15</sup>), owing to the constitutional change of the body, which since then included the promising common soldiers and subalterns and represented, as it were, a military school offering success for their future career<sup>16</sup>). The reform may have taken place even before Diocletian's reign, but its first reliable mani-

<sup>10</sup>) The rule that double consonants in the names to which a diminutive suffix with *ll* is added are reduced to one, shows in later times many exceptions (cf. W. Schulze *Zur Geschichte lateinischer Eigennamen*, Berlin 1904, 462 sq., note 6). As otherwise there are no vulgar features in the text, there is no ground for supposing that *Bittelliana* stands for *Vitelliana*.

<sup>11</sup>) *CIL* XI 1147.

<sup>12</sup>) *Bitilla* (figuring in *CIL* III 15159 as the daughter of a certain *Bito*) is neither a Thracian name (*ThLL*, II 2017 sq.), nor an Illyric name, as permitted by A. Mayer, *Die Sprache der alten Illyrier*, I, Wien 1957, 88 sq., after Jokl.

<sup>13</sup>) R. Grosse, *Römische Militärgeschichte von Gallienus bis zum Beginn der byzantinischen Themenverfassung*, Berlin 1920, 13 sqq.

<sup>14</sup>) E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, I<sup>2</sup> (1959), 1, 57; G. Gigli, *P protectores e i domestici nel IV secolo*, *Atti dell' Accademia naz. dei Lincei*, ser. VIII, vol. IV (1949), fasc. 5—6, 384.

<sup>15</sup>) Th. Mommsen, *Protectores Augusti*, *Ges. Schr.* VIII (1913), 426.

<sup>16</sup>) See Grosse, op. cit., 138 sqq.; Gigli, *Atti dell' Accademia naz. dei Lincei* ser. VIII, vol. IV (1949), fasc. 5—6, 385 sq.

festation dates from 290<sup>17</sup>). It is very probable, however, that this alteration had not been completely carried out at that time and that there were men of higher rank in the above guard still for some years as it is testified by an inscription mentioning a *protector ducenarius* in Constantin's time<sup>18</sup>). In case that the inscription from Taurunum were placed somewhere in the second half of the third century, the words 'provin(cia) Ital(ia)' could be explained by reducing the term *provincia* to a geographical notion<sup>19</sup>), in connection with the process of the general leveling of the empire. This process had been already threatening the privileged position of Italy, though it had not yet overthrown it. But, as the year 290 does not represent a secure *terminus ante quem* for the inscription in question, and taking into account the form of its letters, it seems to be much more plausible if we date it at the beginning of the period during which Italy, through the great administrative reform of Diocletian, was even formally assimilated to the provinces<sup>20</sup>). In such a case we are faced with the problem of the geographical identification of the information 'ex provin(cia) Ital(ia)'. Owing to the omission of a corresponding specifying attribute<sup>21</sup>), it cannot be identified as one of the Italic *regiones*, which in every respect resembled the provinces of the time<sup>22</sup>).

It remains to conclude that the term 'provin(cia) Ital(ia)' in this inscription unofficially denotes the *pars annonaria* of the Italic *dioecesis*<sup>23</sup>), which did not comprise Rome and consisted to a considerable extent of the former actual provinces, and the *vicarius* of which was simply given the title *vicarius Italiae*<sup>24</sup>).

Beograd.

S. Dušanić.

<sup>17</sup>) Grosse, op. cit., 138.

<sup>18</sup>) Mommsen, *Ges. Schr.* VIII (1913), 421 (№. 14) and 426; cf. O. Seeck, *Ducenarius*, RE, V (1905), 1753; N. Vulić, *Ducenarius*, Diz. Ep. II (1910), 2071.

<sup>19</sup>) Cf. Dessau, ILS, 1362a: *Cives Romani [ex Italia et aliis provinciis in Raetia consistentes (2nd cent.)]*. The use of the word *provincia* in the meaning 'region' and similar, however, has become general much later (A. Souter, *A Glossary of Later Latin to 600 A. D.* Oxford 1949, 331).

<sup>20</sup>) The fact that this gravestone was exposed to secondary use as early as the second half of the fourth century may be explained in several ways and is not important considering the comparatively small oscillation in dating.

<sup>21</sup>) The reading 'ex provin(cia) It(alia) Al(pina)' which might allude to Alpes Cottiae is not plausible.

<sup>22</sup>) Cf. Cardinali, *Italia*, Diz. Ep. IV (1928), 108; W. Ensslin, *Valerius*, RE, II R. VII (1948), 2456.

<sup>23</sup>) As to the time of the division of Italic *dioecesis* and the characteristic initial privileged status of its suburbicarian part, see W. G. Sinnigen, *The Vicarius Urbis Romae and the Urban Prefecture*, Historia VIII (1959), 99, note 10.

<sup>24</sup>) This opinion could be strengthened with regard to the probable Celtic origin of the wife of Aurelius Florus. The reading Nigelliana would lead us to the same, as the names Nigella and similar, were especially popular in the North Italy (cf. A. Mócsy, *Die Bevölkerung von Pannonien bis zu den Markomannenkriegen*, Budapest 1959, 183).