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ARTICOLE

THE MOBILITY OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE: A PERSPECTIVE ON THE CAREER OF *PUBLIUS AELIUS HAMMONIUS*

MOBILITATEA PERSONALULUI ADMINISTRATIV IN IMPERIUL ROMAN: O PERSPECTIVA ASUPRA CARIEREI LUI *PUBLIUS AELIUS HAMMONIUS*

Valeria PÎNTEA*

Cuvinte-cheie: epigrafie, administrație romană, Moesia Inferior, Dacia Apulensis, armata romană, mobilitatea în antichitate

Key words: epigraphy, Roman administration, Moesia Inferior, Dacia Apulensis, Roman army, mobility in antiquity

Rezumat: Cariera lui *Publius Aelius Hammonius* este atestată epigrafic în câteva inscripții descoperite în urmă cu mai bine de un secol în două provincii ale Imperiului Roman și a fost analizată în mai multe studii de specialitate. Prin corelarea datelor stabilite anterior cu informațiile geografice și cartografice, acest articol își propune să reconstruiască itinerarul lui *P. Aelius Hammonius*, evidențiind rolul administrației romane și mobilitatea elitelor în cadrul provinciilor romane. Reprezentările cartografice oferă o perspectivă vizuală asupra deplasărilor lui Hammonius, contribuind la o mai bună înțelegere a contextului istoric și a rutelor de comunicație din perioada târzie a Principatului.

Abstract: The career of *Publius Aelius Hammonius* was epigraphically attested in some inscriptions discovered more than one century ago in two provinces of the Roman Empire and was analyzed in several specialized studies. By correlating previously established data with the geographical and cartographic information, this article aims to reconstruct the itinerary of *P. Aelius Hammonius*, highlighting the role of the Roman administration and the mobility of the elites within the Roman provinces. The cartographic representations provide a visual perspective on Hammonius' movements, contributing to a better understanding of the historical context and the communication routes during the later period of the Principate.

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Introduction

The mobility in the Late Roman Empire varied according to several factors, being influenced primarily by the charges of an individual and by the ways they fulfilled their duties. Another important element which determined mobility were being acquainted with a particular region, as well as economic, religious or cultural factors, and the distances traveled. In the case of administrative personnel, as numerous inscriptions show, mobility was often influenced by advancement through ranks (*cursus honorum*), usually based on merits accumulated over the course of the career. Through this study, we aim to analyze the geographical trajectory of a member of the Roman administrative corps in the 3rd century AD, using the specific case of Publius Aelius Hammonius as a point of reference.

Before analyzing the inscriptions and investigation each office held by this individual, it is important to note that the study of particular cases is crucial to the broader effort of reconstructing the structures of Roman administrative organization, both within the Carpathian-Danubian region and across the entire Empire. Moreover, the inscriptions which will be presented have been dated to the mid-3rd century AD and can provide data regarding the evolution of Roman administration and elite structures during the final years of political stability, marked by the reign of Severus Alexander (222-235 AD). However, the most significant and, at the same time, the most unique aspect of our research consists of tracing the itinerary of P. Aelius Hammonius throughout his military and imperial service.

The Evolution of the Military and Administrative Career

The career of this individual was thoroughly described by the professor Ioan Piso in the work *Fasti provinciae Daciae II*. As a result of the research conducted at the beginning of the 20th century, an honorary inscription in Greek was found at Poarta Albă¹. Although the place of discovery was in the proximity of Tomis, it was collectively approved that

¹ ISM/II 106.

the inscription was originally from the city itself². The dedicator of the Tomitan inscription was an imperial freeman *Κατυλλεῖνος* (*Katylleinos*, the Greek form of the latin name Catullinus), who held the position of *λιβράριος* (*librarius*), and placed the monument in the honour of *Publius Aelius (H)Ammonius*. From the text of the inscription, can be seen a number of equestrian charges and administrative positions held by him throughout his career, listed in order: *praefectus cohortis V Hispanorum*, *tribunus cohortis I Germanorum*, *praepositus auxiliorum provinciae Cappadociae*, *praefectus alae I Flavia Gaetulorum*, *praepositus auxiliorum Moesiae Inferioris*, *praefectus Classis Flaviae Moesicae Gordianae*. The position of *procurator augusti Moesiae Inferioris* is mentioned immediately after his name, and another inscription found at Sarmizegetusa³ suggests that this individual also held the office of *procurator Augustorum Daciae*, which marks the end of his career, at least according to epigraphic sources.

Following this, we will attempt to associate, where possible, a geographic reference with a chronological one for each of the charges listed. His equestrian military career begins with the position of *praefectus cohortis V Hispanorum*, which was garrisoned in the province of Moesia Superior and attested there in 93, 100, and 160⁴. Later, throughout the 3rd century AD, the cohort returned to the territory of Moesia Superior and was stationed at Cuppae, where Hammonius was likely appointed *praefectus cohortis* around the years 228–230 AD⁵.

He then held the position of *tribunus cohortis I Germanorum*, which, during that period, was stationed at Sisila, in Lesser Armenia, part of the province of Cappadocia. There, Hammonius commanded a

² Maria Bărbulescu, Iorgu Stoian, „Inscripțiile din Scythia Minor grecești și latine (Les inscriptions de Scythia Minor grecques et latines), II volume: Tomis și teritoriul său (Tomis et son territoire)”, recueillies, traduites et accompagnées de commentaires. Index par Al. Suceveanu, Editura Academiei, Bucharest, 1987, 436 p. et 58 planches”, in *Dacia - Revue d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne*, N.S. Nr. 32, 1988, p. 245.

³ IDR III/2 246.

⁴ Hans-Georg Pflaum, *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain*, Paris, Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1960, p. 854.

⁵ Ioan Piso, *Fasti provinciae Daciae*, vol. II, Bonn, Habelt, Die ritterlichen Amtsträger, 2013, p. 241.

vexillatio composed of infantrymen selected from several provincial cohorts, and whose effective power did not exceed that of a *cohors miliaria*⁶. This military unit likely took part in the war between 231–233 AD, waged by Severus Alexander against the Parthians.

The next position was that of *praefectus alae I Flavia Gaetulorum*. This auxiliary unit was stationed in the territory of *Moesia Inferior* several times, especially at the end of the 1st century and in the early decades of the 2nd century AD, before being transferred to the army of Pannonia Inferior⁷. Also during this stage, P. Aelius Hammonius was given the command of a *vexillatio* of cavalry, probably under the title *praepositus vexillationi/vexillationibus ex Moesia Inferiore*. This assignment was probably related to conflicts with the Goths or to the campaigns of Maximinus Thrax⁸.

His first administrative position was held in the Lower Danube region, where he obtained the role of *praefectus* of the imperial fleet *Classis Flavia Moesica Gordiana*, with the rank of *sexagenarius*⁹. The title *Gordiana* clearly indicates that this office was held during the reign of Emperor Gordian III (238–244 AD), though this is not complete proof that he was assigned prefect of the fleet directly by Gordian himself¹⁰. Nevertheless, **the period during which he served as prefect of the fleet is generally dated to 238–240 AD.**

In the same period, during Gordian's reign, he was promoted to *procurator financialis centenarius* in *Moesia Inferior*. Initially, from the expression *προστάτης τῶν ἐπιτρόπων πιστῶς*, it was deduced that the office he held was that of *agens vice praesidis* (representative of the governor)¹¹. Thus, it was initially believed that P. Aelius Hammonius was

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 242.

⁷ Florian Matei-Popescu, *The Roman Army in Moesia Inferior*, Bucharest, Conphys Publishing House, 2010, pp. 172-174.

⁸ Ioan Piso, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

⁹ Hans-Georg Pflaum, *op. cit.*, p. 854.

¹⁰ Arthur Stein, *Die Legaten von Moesien*, Ser. I, Fas.11, Budapest, Dissertationes Pannonicae Musei Nationalis Hungarici, 1940, p. 115.

¹¹ C. W. Keyes, *The Administrative Personnel of the Roman Empire*, Oxford, Oxford Press University, 1915, p. 6, Alfred von Domaszewski, *Die Rangordnung des römischen Heeres*, Bonn, A. Marcus Und E. Weber's Verlag, 1908, p. 190 (*apud* Hans-Georg Pflaum, *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain*, Paris, Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1960, p. 855).

replacing the governor Tullius Menophilus, and various hypotheses were proposed around this scenario¹². However, Artur Stein concluded that the expression just referred to his activity as *procurator financialis*¹³. Indeed, the office of *vice praesidis* does not appear in the inscription from Tomis (at the time the inscription was erected, Hammonius was not replacing any governor), but only from a *rescriptum* of Gordian, dated to the year 240 AD¹⁴, from which it has been established that it refers to the same individual. From this *rescriptum*, it shows that Hammonius entered office around 240 AD, and it is likely considered that he held it until 242 or 243 AD¹⁵.

The third administrative position, and the last for which we have information, is that of *procurator financialis* of the province Dacia Apulensis. As previously stated, the advancement to this position was inferred from another votive inscription dedicated to the twelve gods, discovered at Sarmizegetusa, probably placed by Hammonius himself in the *forum novum*. The expression *proc(urator) Augustoru.*, representing his title, refers to the two Philippi, not from the summer of 247 (when Philippus iunior became Augustus), but rather from 245. The second “G” was erased in the autumn of 249, when Decius came to power. Most likely, Hammonius held the procuratorship in Dacia Apulensis immediately after that in Moesia Inferior, that is, during the years 243–245/246 AD¹⁶.

Reconstructing the Itinerary

As has already been established, the first *militia* of P. Aelius Hammonius, that of *praefectus cohortis V Hispanorum*, situated the beginning of his career in the province of *Moesia Superior*. Recent studies have identified a possible location where the cohort was stationed in the early third century: at Cuppae — a region in present-day Serbia, known today as Golubac. This hypothesis is based on a tegula found at

¹² Ioan Piso, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

¹³ Arthur Stein, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

¹⁴ Codex Iust.VI 45, 2.

¹⁵ Ioan Piso, *op. cit.*, p. 244.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 244.

Golubac, stamped with *COH(ortis) V*¹⁷, although it could also refer to the *cohors V Gallorum Pannonica*¹⁸.

A new *militia equestris* in the *cohort I Germanorum* placed Hammonius in the province of Cappadocia. This military unit had been present in Cappadocia since the time of Arrian, first attested in the region in the year 135 AD¹⁹. According to the *Notitia Dignitatum*, the cohort was stationed at Sisila, an ancient settlement whose exact location remains uncertain. Although debates continue regarding its precise whereabouts, recent studies place Sisila near the city of Satala, known today as Sadak²⁰. For the sake of convention, the coordinates of *Satala* have been used to represent Sisila.

As praefectus of the *ala I Flavia Gaetulorum*, P. Aelius Hammonius returned to the lower Danubian provinces, this time in *Moesia Inferior*. Although the unit was stationed within this province throughout the second and third centuries, the precise location of its castrum has not been determined yet²¹. Since the exact station of the military unit during the mid-third century remains unknown, we chose the city of Oescus as the geographical reference, where the *ala* was definitively attested in the second half of the first century AD²².

He continued his career in the province of Moesia Inferior as prefect of the fleet *Classis Flavia Moesica Gordiana*. It is known that this fleet was stationed at Noviodunum, periodically providing detachments to forts along the Danube, where epigraphic evidence has been found²³.

Since the exact location is unknown, for the position of financial procurator of *Moesia Inferior*, as a methodological reference, we have

¹⁷ CIL III 1702.

¹⁸ Florian Matei-Popescu, Ovidiu Țentea, *Auxilia Moesiae Superioris*, Cluj-Napoca, Mega, 2018, p. 63.

¹⁹ Michael Alexander Speidel, „The Development of Roman Forces in Northeastern Anatolia”, in *Heer und Herrschaft im Römischen Reich der Hohen Kaiserzeit*, Stuttgart, 2009, p. 614.

²⁰ T. B. Mitford, „The Inscriptions of Satala”, in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 115, Bonn, 1997, pp. 137-167.

²¹ Florian Matei-Popescu, „Trupele auxiliare romane din Moesia Inferior”, in *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie*, tomurile 52-53, Bucharest, 2001-2002, p. 9.

²² F. Matei-Popescu, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 245-249.

chosen to associate it with *Tomis*, the modern city of Constanța, which was also the headquarters of the provincial governor and where the honorary inscription detailing the career of Publius Aelius Hammonius was found.

The final geographical indicator is suggested by the inscription from the province of Dacia Apulensis, where Hammonius was once again mentioned in the role of procurator financial. Since the monument was set up by him personally at Sarmizegetusa, we are inclined to choose this city as the geographical reference in this case as well and as the final point in Hammonius' entire itinerary.

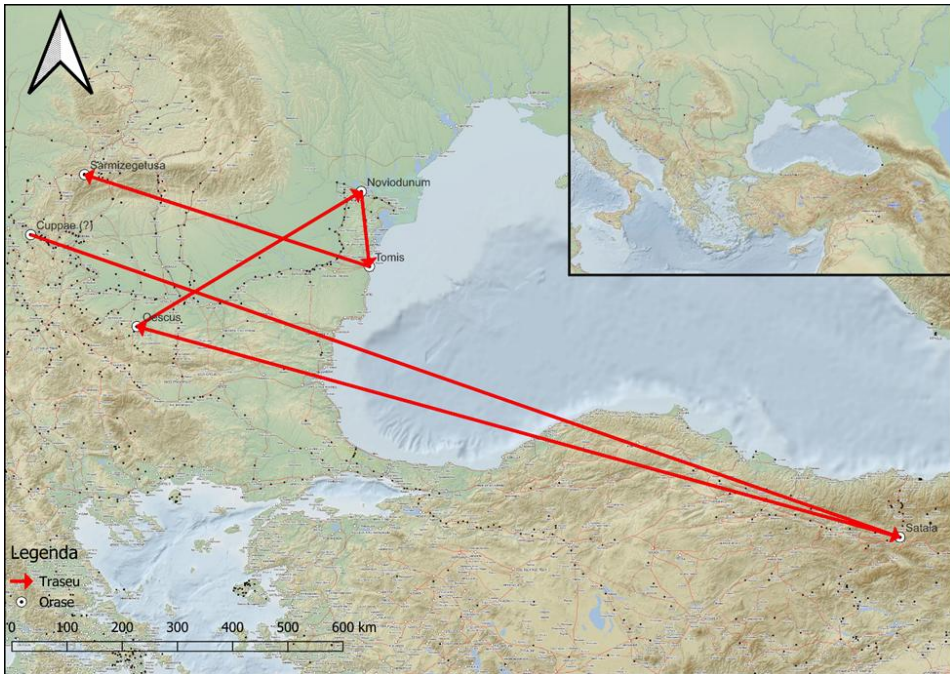


Fig. 1. The directions of mobility

The following table, along with the map, illustrates the mobility of P. Aelius Hammonius across various regions of the Empire, indicating not only the directions of his movements but also the distances and the number of days required for these transfers. The distances were calculated using the ORBIS application with the function "Fastest route". Since the application does not include all the

urban centers where the individual was stationed, the nearest geographical point was used instead – as is the case with Cuppae, for which Viminacium was used, and Noviodunum, which was represented by Troesmis. According to Fig. 1, the starting point for this mobility was Cuppae (represented in this case by Viminacium).

Table 1. Distance and days for mobility

Direction of mobility	Km/days
<i>Satala</i>	2532/21
<i>Oescus</i>	1845/21
<i>Noviodunum</i>	433/4
<i>Tomis</i>	281/2
<i>Sarmizegetusa</i>	861/16

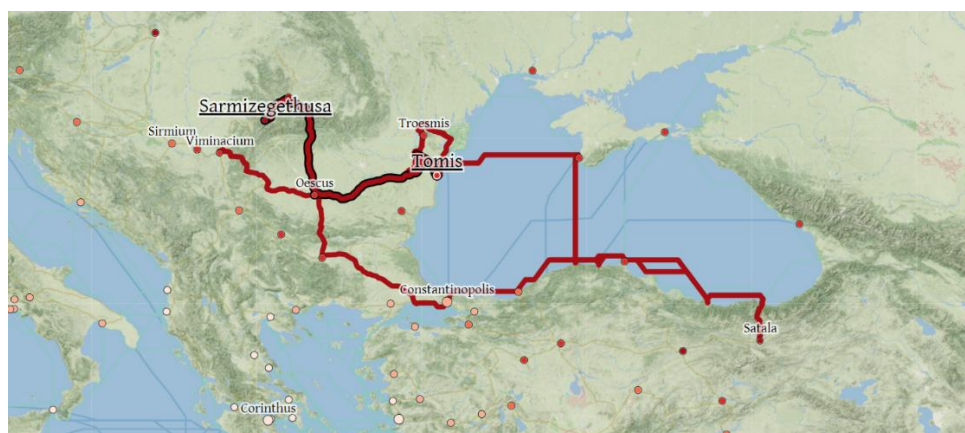


Fig. 2. Possible routes

Following the analysis of the data provided by the ORBIS application, it has been determined that, throughout his *cursus honorum*, Publius Aelius Hammonius covered a total distance of approximately 5,952 km (only when moving from one province to another) in about 64 days.

Conclusion

The mobility of imperial officials within the Roman Empire was possible over significant distances and was primarily determined by the

positions held within the army and the Roman elite. In the case presented here, it is evident that the military qualities possessed by Publius Aelius Hammonius were the main factor that allowed this mobility, as reflected in the offices he held: from cohort prefect to financial procurator, largely due to his previous experience. Furthermore, the military expeditions in which he participated—particularly as *tribunus cohortis* in Cappadocia during the war against the Parthians, as well as *praefectus classis* of the Moesian fleet, which stood against the Goths—shaped both his character and his military skills, qualities that were defining traits of an imperial official. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that Hammonius secured his rise through the ranks by demonstrating his military leadership abilities, which were not recorded in written form but were nonetheless part of a broader effort of that time.