
A NOTE ON THE NAMES OF THE THRACIAN SAILORS

Ivo Topalilov*

Abstract: The present paper deals with the spread of the name *C. Iulius* among the Thracian sailors in the Roman fleet in the second century. Analysis of Roman diplomas reveals that *C. Iulius* was one of the typical military names that soldiers of peregrine origin, such as these Thracians, would take if they had no other preferences. The name had a good, very Roman sound to them. In the second century, however, there were still Thracian aristocrats whose Roman citizenship can be linked with Caligula. This shows that, on the one hand, the name may have indicated hereditary dignity when associated with the aristocracy and descendants of the last Thracian kings; but on the other hand, it could have revealed a typical military background when held by newly Romanized Thracians in the second century.

Rezumat: Lucrarea de față tratează răspândirea numelui de *C. Iulius* printre marinarii traci din flota romană a sec. al II-lea. Analiza diplomelor militare relevă ideea conform căreia *C. Iulius* reprezintă unul dintre cele mai răspândite nume militare pe care soldații de origine peregrină, precum acești traci, l-ar adopta dacă nu ar avea alte preferințe. Numele avea o bună rezonanță romană pentru aceștia. Cu toate acestea, în sec. al II-lea, existau încă aristocrați traci a căror cetățenie romană putea fi legată de domnia lui Caligula. Acest lucru ne arată că, pe de-o parte, numele ar putea indica o demnitate ereditară atunci când este asociat cu aristocrația și cu urmașii ultimilor regi traci, însă, pe de altă parte, ar putea semnala un trecut militar specific, atunci când era deținut de traci poraspăt romanizați în sec. al II-lea p.Chr.

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Cuvinte cheie: Traci, onomastică, *C. Iulius*, flotă, romani.

In the time of Vespasian, after a wide-ranging reorganization of the Roman fleet, both the Misenum and Ravenna fleets received the honorific title *praetoria*. Despite this, however, both fleets remained full of *peregrini*.¹ But by this act the fleets were undoubtedly equalized with another similar military institution, *equites singulares Augusti*. It is well established that the latter also contained peregrine soldiers, who at their *adlectio* received the names of the Roman emperor under whose reign they had been enlisted into the Guard.² This practice, not surprisingly, was applied to both fleets, with one difference – the sailors were allowed to choose names other than those of the emperor.³ By this time, around the end of the first/beginning of the second century, the name and filiation type nomenclature that had previously been used had

* Shumen University, Department of History and Archaeology; e-mail itopalilov@yahoo.com.

¹ See on the status of the sailors – Starr 1993, 66-74; Kienast 1966, 26-29; Reddé 1986, 526.

² Speidel 1994, 10-11.

³ Salomies 1996, 174.

been replaced by that of *tria nomina* obtained by newly recruited sailors.⁴ As with the *equites singulares Augusti*, the soldiers simply received a Roman name, and not Roman citizenship. A proof for this may be the military diploma issued on 1 August 142 for *M. Ulpius Bizae f. Rivoze* or *Rivozis* from *Nicopolis ex Bessia* who served in the *classis praetoria Ravennas*⁵ and clearly enlisted in 116. This document implies that he enlisted at the very end of Trajan's reign, and upon his enlistment received the imperial names. Such cases, however, are very rare, and the practice was abandoned in the time of Trajan himself, as seen in the diploma issued for another Thracian sailor from the Ravenna fleet, who originated from *Nicopolis ex Bessia* and was discharged with our *M. Ulpius Rivoze* – that of *L. Petronius Eptaezeni f. Eptaetralis*.⁶

The *tria nomina* also spread in the nomenclature of the *Bessoi*, who were one of two major contingents recruited for the Misene fleet.⁷ It has been suggested that recruiting this horse-loving, trouble-making barbarian tribe into the fleet was intended to pacify them,⁸ but it is also relevant that recruitment usually focused on poorly Romanized areas,⁹ and we can also add incompletely urbanized areas like *Bessica* itself.¹⁰ The only exception seems to have been in 133/134, when a special recruitment of Thracian soldiers to meet the needs of the Misenum fleet was carried out,¹¹ but on this occasion in urbanized territories such as those of Philippopolis, Augusta Traiana, and *Nicopolis ad Istrum*.¹² Among the earliest attested *Bessoi* with this new nomenclature is *C(aius) Iulius Candidus / n(atione) Bessus*, who was *mil(es) ex clas(se) / pr(aetoria) Mis(enensi)* and who is known from his funerary stele set up in Carales, Sardinia.¹³ The date of the *stela* is Trajanic/Hadrianic. In this case, one should remember also the diploma of *C. Iulius C. f. Valens Tralles*, who was an *eques* of *cohors III Gallorum* discharged on 19 July 114 and who clearly received his Roman name on discharge.¹⁴

Other Thracian sailors *Cai Iulii* are attested a few years later on both military diplomas and funerary *stelae*. They are presented in table 1. On the military diplomas, one can easily observe *peregrini* who seem to have received Roman citizenship upon

⁴ Salomies 1996, 168-169.

⁵ RMD V, 392.

⁶ RMD IV, 264.

⁷ Starr 1993, 77.

⁸ Tatscheva 1999, 863-872.

⁹ Salomies 1996, 168.

¹⁰ Topalilov 2013, 251-264.

¹¹ Roxan 1995, 110.

¹² Topalilov 2013, 252.

¹³ EE VIII, 1, 709.

¹⁴ On the diploma – see Roxan, Paunov 1997, 269-279.

discharge. For instance, *C. Iulius* [---] from Philippopolis has the distinguished Thracian paternal name *Seuthes*, the one from *Nicopolis ex Thracia* which is in fact Nicopolis ad Istrum, and whose father was probably *Epta[centis]*. These *C. Iulii* are no doubt new citizens, and therefore a hereditary link should be excluded with an older *C. Iulius*, such as a veteran like *C. Iulius Valens Trallus*, or others like the *C. Iulii* among the Thracian aristocracy attested in inscription found near Topirus from the time of Claudius I.¹⁵ It is also obvious that no connection with any other persons who had obtained Roman citizenship and names under Caligula should be established. A link with the emperor himself or one of the Julio-Claudian emperors should also be excluded, given that that these soldiers were of low social status.¹⁶

We do not yet know why the name *C. Iulius* was chosen by some of the Thracian sailors, though not many of them. Of the repertoire of Roman *gentilicia* that the soldiers took, *Iulius* is one of the most popular; it is second only to *Valerius*. The reasons for this are not yet clear, but some suggestions can be made. For instance, if we consider the examples studied by O. Salomies, we would expect that these veterans may just have received the name of the man who was provincial governor of Thrace when they were recruited.¹⁷ Therefore we should expect that in c. 133-134 the *legatus Augusti pro praetore* of Thrace was a certain *C. Iulius*, to whom was entrusted the extraordinary recruitment needed for the Misenum fleet, whose soldiers were transferred to strengthen the *Legio X Fretensis* because of the Bar Kochba revolt in Judaea.¹⁸ If this was the case, it could also provide a clue to how recruitment for the fleet was carried out. Table 1 only shows that that this recruitment was so huge that the sailors could have been discharged on at least two dates, as two different *praefecti classis praetoriae Misenensis* are mentioned on the military diplomas.

Unfortunately, our knowledge of Thrace's provincial governors in the 30s of the second century is far from complete and we cannot say if a legate with the name *C. Iulius* governed the province. Thus, we are aware of [*? Cavarius Fronto* who was governor c. 135/136,¹⁹ *Agrippa* in 131/132,²⁰ who is also attested in the hagiographical sources,²¹ and a certain *Publius* [...] dated roughly to 129-136.²² It seems that *Publius*

¹⁵ I Thr Aeg, 84

¹⁶ Salomies 1996, 174.

¹⁷ Salomies 1996, 173-174.

¹⁸ See Starr 1993, 188; Roxan 1995, 110; Paunov 2005, 47; Eck 2007, 30-38.

¹⁹ Šarankov 2014, 38-45; Šarankov 2017, 205-206.

²⁰ Thomasson 2011, 22:017.

²¹ Šarankov 2015, 17-26.

²² Thomasson 2011, 20:015.

[...] was prior to *Cassius Agrippa's* (?) governorship, as *Agrippa* was legate when the question of the border of the administrative territories was sent up to the emperor Hadrian, as the case with *Abdera* reveals (ἡ Ἀδριανέων Ἀβδηρειτῶν πόλις),²³ but it was solved under the governorship of *Cavarius Fronto*.²⁴ It is more likely that the governorships of *Agrippa* and *Cavarius Fronto* were successive.²⁵

Table. 1. *C. Iulii* among the Thracian sailors.

No	Name of sailor	Praefectus	Find-spot	Reference
1	C(aius) Iulius Candidus / n(at)ione Bessus	Unknown	Sardiania	EE VIII, 1, 709
2	C(ai) Iuli Pudentis, mani(pularis) lib(urna) Libertate / qui Dines Sautis / nat(ione) Bessus	Unknown	Unknown	CIL X, 3590
3	C(aio) Iulio R(h)eso, manip(ulari) / ex III(triremi) Fide nat(ione) Bess(o)	Unknown	Unknown	AE 1949, 208
4	C(aio) Iulio Epta[---Ni]/copol[ex Thracia]	Sub Tut]icano Capitone	Unknown	RMD V, 425
5	C(aio) Iulio Seuthi f(ilio) Bitho Philippop(olitano) ex Thr(acia)	Unknown	Paestum	RMD 2, 105

Another possible solution to the problem of why the Thracian sailors chose the name *C. Iulius* is the fact that it was borne by a different *praefectus classis praetoriae Misenensis* or *subpraefectus*.²⁶ One such person, for instance, is *Iulius Crescents*, whose term of office started in AD 160, as is revealed by a military diploma issued for an unknown sailor²⁷ and who was clearly *praefectus classis praetoriae Misenensis* until at least AD 166.²⁸ It is established that on 15 September 134 the prefect was *M. Calpurnius Seneca*, and after that most probably *M. Gaius Maximus*.²⁹ Before 15 September 134, however, the situation is uncertain as there is a gap. Thus, we are aware of a certain *Iulius Fronto* on 18 November 129,³⁰ who could have held office until the second half of 134 and been replaced by *M. Calpurnius Seneca*. If so, this *Iulius Fronto* could have given his name to some of the newly recruited sailors.

²³ I Thr Aeg, 78, 79.

²⁴ Šarankov 2014, 38-45.

²⁵ I am very grateful to Nicolay Šarankov for drawing my attention to this fact.

²⁶ Salomies 1996, 170.

²⁷ RMD III, 172.

²⁸ CIL XVI, 122.

²⁹ Reddé 1986, 674.

³⁰ Reddé 1986, 673.

It is, however, not certain that this man was named *C. Iulius*, although it is very likely, and that his office lasted till 134, although this too is possible. Besides, there is no compelling evidence that the sailors took his name.³¹

It seems that *C. Iulius* was a very popular name among the sailors, and especially in the Misenum fleet, and it is attested in the nomenclature of almost all nations that provided soldiers for the fleet – Egypt,³² Syria,³³ Cyrene,³⁴ Pannonia,³⁵ Ponticus,³⁶ Italy,³⁷ Bithynia,³⁸ Germania,³⁹ Raetia,⁴⁰ Moesia Superior⁴¹ and so on. It is therefore likely that a newly recruited man simply received the name of some of his comrades. A very good example of this practice is the case of *C. Scentius Celer*, due to the fact that *Scentius* was a very specific *gentilicium* and therefore quite rarely attested.⁴² This could hardly explain all the cases of *C. Iulii* in the fleet.

The name *C. Iulius*, just like the name *C. Valerius*, however, might have sounded very Roman, and therefore attractive to the newly recruited soldiers, and this may be the case with most of our examples. I would not be surprised if *C. Iulius* was one of those typical military names which soldiers of peregrine origin would take if they had no other preferences. If so, we may conclude that in the second century, in the provinces and military camps, the name *C. Iulius* signalled a link with Caligula if held by an aristocrat with or without royal origin,⁴³ as is the case with *C(aius) Iul(ius) Maximus Mucianus, vir clarrisimus, [latoclavo honoratus a] divo Pio, q(uaestor) pr(o) [pr(aetore)] per provinciam Pontum et Bith(y)niam, aedilis cer(i)a(li)s, praetor designatus, item de(curio) Philipp(is) et in provincia Thracia*, and his brother *C(aius) Iulius Teres, thracarches*, known from inscriptions set up in Philippi an dated to the time of Marcus Aurelius,⁴⁴ but if held by a newly named person it signalled a man of low social status with a military background. If so, this would point to a rather interesting

³¹ Salomies 1996, 170.

³² AE 1983, 189; AE 1996, 425; CIL VI, 3117; CIL X, 3469; 3583; 3589.

³³ AE 1953, 26; CIL VI, 32774.

³⁴ CIL VI, 3115.

³⁵ CIL VI, 3156 = CIL VI, 3157.

³⁶ CIL X, 3425.

³⁷ CIL X, 3485.

³⁸ CIL X, 3490.

³⁹ CIL X, 03588.

⁴⁰ AE 1988, 314.

⁴¹ RMD V, 449.

⁴² Topalilov 2013, 252-258.

⁴³ *C. Iulius Roemetalces* (II) - Pilhofer 2000, 213, No. 199/L 309.

⁴⁴ See for them Pilhofer 2000, 66-68, No. 61/L 50; 256-259, No. 240/L 465; 366-367, No. 357/L 120.

phenomenon, with the same name indicating hereditary dignity on one side, and a typical military background on the other.

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