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Any correspondence will be sent to the editor:
INSTITUTUL DE ARHEOLOGIE ŞI ISTORIA ARTEI
Str. M. Kogălniceanu nr. 12–14, 400084 Cluj-Napoca, RO
e-mail: choprean@yahoo.com

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Negotiating with the Dacians. The Case of *M. Ulpius Celerinus, interpres Dacorum**

Dan-Augustin Deac[1]

Abstract*: This paper aims to reevaluate the case of Marcus Ulpius Celerinus who served as a salariarius in the first Adiutrix legion stationed in the Roman settlement of Brigetio, in the province of Pannonia Inferior (modern day Szöny, district of Komarom, Hungary). Besides being a salariarius (a term which we will thoroughly discuss in the light of the new researches that were conducted), Marcus Ulpius Celerinus was also an inperprex of the Dacian tribes. With the help of epigraphy we will reexamine the monuments from which we posses bits of information regarding Celerinus and finally conclude the fact that he was not in the service of the Roman army as an interprex in the time of Caracalla when war broke out, but rather in the time of Septimius Severus` reign, being part of a mechanism involved in negotiating with the Dacian tribes on matters that elude us for the time being.*

Keywords: *Roman Army, Brigetio, interprex, salariarius, Pannonia, Dacians.*

In 1943 on the southern part of the legionary camp of the legio I *Adiutrix* in *Brigetio*, in the province of *Pannonia Inferior* (modern day Szöny, district of Komarom, Hungary) a beautifully decorated sarcophagus of limestone was discovered[2] which has triggered the attention of scholars ever since[3]. The inscription gives us the names of the deceased person, *Marcus Ulpius Romanus*, and his father *Marcus Ulpius Celerinus*, responsible for realizing a proper resting place. The text (letters from 3.5 to 2.4 cm; Fig. 1) of the inscription is as follows:

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[1] „Babeş-Bolyai" University Cluj-Napoca, 400084, Cluj-Napoca, Cluj county, RO; e-mail: dan_deac1923@yahoo.com.

[2] The lid has a roof form with *acroteria* on the corners (while themselves having depictions of masks) and in the middle it depicts a medallion with the busts of two men. It also has a coffin on which an inscription is found in the central area, while the edges of the frame of it are decorated by beautiful volutes in the shape of the so-called Baroque-motifs. The next register has decorations of jugs from which acanthus leafs grow, having the shape of chandeliers very nice manufactured. In the registers on the extremities, right and left, there are depictions of naked winged *Genii* in enclosed niches. Dimensions are: 74 × 210 × 96 cm. (sarcophagus and 42 × 219 × 105 cm (coffin). It is now housed by National History Museum in Budapest: inv. no. 62.351.1.

[3] BARKÓCZI 1944–1945, 178–192; RUSSU 1946–1947, 403–412; Année Épigr. 1947, 35; Année Épigr. 1951, 103; BARKÓCZI 1951, no. 91; ERDÉLYI 1974, 67f., 194 Nr. 71 Abb. 71; MÓCSY 1974, tab. 29c; IPD[4] 841; RIU 2, 590. Also recently: NAGY 1976, 79–91; RUSSU 1980, 44; KOCH/SICHTERMANN 1982, 324, Fig. 353; KRANZ 1984, 165; IDRE ii, 273; PERETZ 2006, 451–470; SPEIDEL 1987, 196 and SPEIDEL 1992, 76; AUSTIN/RANKOV 1995, 28–29; NÉMETH 1996, Taf. 22/1; POCHMARSKI 2001, 205, no. 2 (with the dating of the sarcophagus itself on which the new inscription is inscribed POCHMARSKI 1998, 194, no. 1); NAGY M. 2007, 87, no. 91; MÉA 2012, 207–213; MAIRS 2012, 17–28).

M(arco) Ulp(io) q(uondam) Romano mil(iti) / praet(oriano) et primoscr/inio praef/(ectorum praetorio) / qui vi/xit annos XXXV / M(arcus) Ulp(ius) Cele/rinus sal(ariarius) / leg(ionis) (primae) ad(iutricis) / p(iae) f(idelis) interprex (sic!) */ Dacorum vivus sibi / et filio suo s(upra) s(cripto) carissimo / f(aciendum) c(uravit)*

Celerinus was already known at the time of the discovery from a limestone altar, also found in *Brigetio* (height 97 cm. – thickness 35 cm. letters 7–2.2 cm; Fig. 2)[4]:

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) / Ulp(ius) Celer/inus salari/arius leg(ionis) (primae) adi(utricis) / p(iae) f(idelis) Antonini(anae)

MVLPQROMANO MIL
PRAETRRIMOSCR
3 INIOPRIAEF
FQVIVI
XITANXXXV
6 MVPCELE
RINVSSAL
LEGTAD
9 PFINTERPREX
DACORVMVIVVSSIBI
ETFILIOSVOSSCARISSIMO
12 F C

Fig. 1. The sarcophagus of *Marcus Ulpius Romanus* from *Brigetio*/Szöny, Hungary (after VISY 2008, 41 and RIU 2, 590). Date: 193-211 AD.

[4] It was firstly published in CIL III 10988 followed by BARKÓCZI 1951, no. 139; IPD[4] 842; NOLL 1962, 378; RIU II 422 (Abb. XCVIII), FITZ 1983, 54, no. 166; IDRE ii, 272.

Based on the epigraphic material presented, the purpose of this study will be to gain insight on the roles and careers of these men and the period of time during which they exerted their functions thus creating an image of their lives.

The first inscription tells us that Marcus Ulpius Romanus died at the age of 35 while still serving as a *primoscrinius* of the Praetorian Guard`s Prefects[5] during the reign of Septimius Severus[6]. The argument that I propose in dating his death during the time of Septimius Severus is based on the fact that the two epigraphic materials have a crucial difference. Although both of them specifically mention the epithets of the I *Adiutrix* legion, *pia* and *fidelis,* only the second one adds the appellative *Antoniniana*. Thus, we must date second inscription during the period 212–217 AD while the first inscription during a *terminus ante quem.* It would have been quite bizarre for a man like Celerinus, an already experienced man vis-à-vis the duties of the military, to overlook this important element of showing his loyalty towards the emperor Caracalla while remembering to mention the rather less important attributes (in this context), the epithets of the legion[7].

Another aspect regarding the dating of the first inscription is important: Septimius Severus, right after the march on Rome and the death of Didius Julianus, discharged the Praetorian Guard and replaced them with soldiers of the Danube region[8]. Most likely Romanus was among them or joined their ranks later on in Septimius` reign. We can now confirm that Romanus, who was a member of the Praetorian Guard and served in it as a *primoscrinius*[9], died of unknown causes during the reign of the same emperor who initially appointed him to this position, namely Septimius Severus[10]. When his son died at the age of 35, it is easy to believe that Celerinus was already in his 50`s. It would be absurd to consider an early period in Severus' reign as that of his son's death due to the fact that Celerinus was still a *salariarius* during Caracalla`s reign. However, what does the status of a *salariarius* in a legion imply and what was its role?

The *salariarius* was considered, until now, to be a person sent in the name of the State responsible for supplying a military unit[11]. Some other scholars considered him to be a civilian specialized for a specific task[12]. M. P. Speidel followed by J. Napoli suggest that the *salariarius* was a mercenary used for military porpouse [13] and C. Méa considers him a soldier joining the

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[5] About the *primoscrinius* see DOMASZEWSKI 1967, x.

[6] See *infra* note 8.

[7] About the legion and its epithets *pia fidelis* see: LÖRINCZ 2000, 154.

[8] BIRLEY 2002, 102–103 in the biography of Septimius Severus details the entire episode of the discharge of the old Praetorians and replacement beginning of June 193 AD with legionaries and officers of the Danube legions. For the ancient sources see: HA Sev. 6.5 and in a slightly more detailed manner: DIO 74.1.1–2; HERODIAN 2.13.1–12.

[9] A sort of a archivist of the Praetorian Guard and Prefect, see: O. Seeck, in RE II A col. 2054, s.v. *scrinium.*

[10] AUSTIN/RANKOV 1995, 29 dates the attestations of Celerinus in the "early third century" (but make the reference to the dating of the attestation of Celerinus from the altar dedicated in the time of Caracalla), also NAGY 1976, 81, n. 17 and STOIAN 2007, 169 suggests that the dating should be considered after 212 AD due to the dedication to Jupiter. Also all other scholars use the same argument, e.g. BARKÓCZI 1944–45, 186, IDRE ii no. 272–273 and MÉA 2012, 208, no. 7:"1ère moitié du III^{ème} siècle p.Ch. *Cf.* l'inscription précédente dont la datation est 211–222 p.Ch" (*nota bene* the previous inscription being the dedication to Jupiter). MAIRS 2012, 23–24, no. 2 dates it "late second-early third century AD" without expressing her arguments for this particular time frame.

[11] LE BOHEC 1989, 53 and 68 and ROTH 1999, 274 argues that the *frumentarii* were replaced by the *salariarii* "after the time of Septimius Severus, these seem to have been replaced by a single officer, called the *salariarius*". In my opinion we do not posses strong evidence to conclude that they were replaced (not to mention the period after Septimius Sever) because in the case of this argument it is mentioned only that Claudius Iustianus was a *centurio ordinarius*, *salariorum XII* who lived for 38 years.

[12] NAGY 1976, 79–91; BALTY 1993, 53; WECH-KLEIN 1998, 43–44.

[13] SPEIDEL 1987, 195–201 and NAPOLI 2010, 68–77.

army not in the common way of recruitment but rather by a contract which specifically noted the retribution but also the attribution of tasks[14]. This specific task could be anything including supplying the army in some cases. In my opinion this last hypothesis is the most likely to be the truth and I am tempted to follow it. Bearing this premise in mind we can infer that Celerinus was a man who was contracted by the I Adiutrix legion to help due to his experience to do some specific tasks. He continued to do so until the reign of Caracalla and afterwards he is never mentioned ever again.

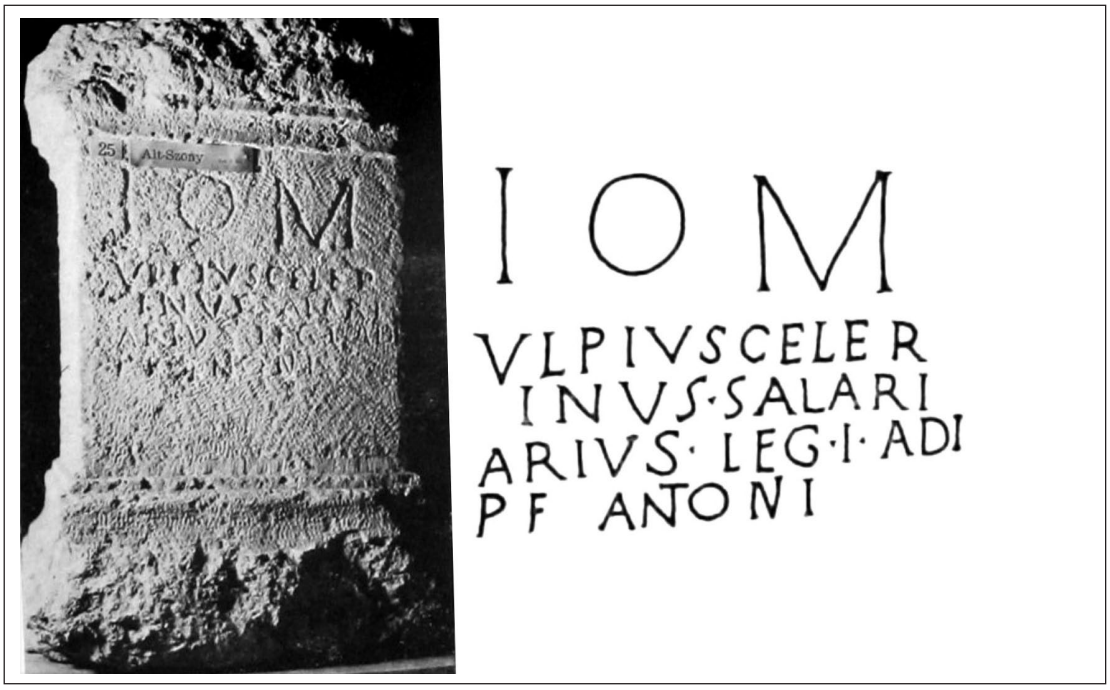

Fig. 2. Dedication made by *Marcus Ulpius Celerinus to Iupiter* (photo/drawing after RIU 2, 422). Date: 212-217 AD.

But to be a *salariarius* and an *interprex* are two different things as our first inscription tells us. While being a *salariarius* (again probably joining the ranks of the legion but doing specific tasks and having a special status among the other soldiers while being paid with "an annual sum which embraced also his expenses"[15]), at the point when his son died in the last part of Severus` reign, Celerinus was for a temporary period of time also hired as an interpreter/translator of the Dacian language[16]. As Daniel Peretz points out during the period of the Principate, the military interpreters were "from foreign origin and new Roman citizens" and [their] "service only temporary"[17]. Judging by his name, Marcus Ulpius Celerinus originated in a family which

[14] MÉA 2012, 207–213, especially 212–213 for his detailed opinion.

[15] PERETZ 2006, 453.

[16] General remarks on the term: *intepres* s.v. F. J. KÜCHNER, in ThLL VII, 1, (1964) 2250–2253; *Dolmetscher* s.v. A. HERMANN/W. von SODEN, in RAC IV (1959), 24–49 especially pages 35–40 for the Roman interpreter and also ROCHETTE 2000, 83–93. For interpreters in the Greek period see: *presbeia* s.v., in RE suppl. XIII (1973), 562–563; RUSSELL 1999, 55 n. 207, 64, 171–174. A more thorough examination of what the role of the interpreter was during the Roman Empire: AUSTIN/RANKOV 1995, 28–29; CAMPBELL 2001, 14 (mentions them briefly); PERETZ 2006, 451–470; STOIAN 2007, 165–169, MAIRS 2012, 17–28. For interpreters at Rome see ROCHETTE 1996, 75–89.

[17] PERETZ 2006, 452. This aspect of temporary assignment is obvious in the second inscription where Celerinus is only a *salariarius*.

gained Roman citizenship during the time of Trajan, approximately three generations before him or was given to one of his ancestors by a Marcus Ulpius after being freed. Implying that he was a man of Dacian origin because of his knowledge of their language is plausible but he could have learned it in numerous other ways. Whatever the case, there is still an unanswered question. Why was he needed as an *interprex* during this relative peaceful period of time on the Danubian frontier and what was his mission?

Interpreters[18] are attested epigraphically only five times in the Roman army except the case of Celerinus. All the other *interpretex* are soldiers and officers serving in the legionary forces spread around the Danubian frontier. One of them is M. Aurelius Flavus "*interpres* (sic!) *Germanorum oficii consularis*" and also a *duplarius* in the Second Adriutrix legion stationed in Aquincum[19]. The other one from the area nearby, namely from *Transaquincum* is Caius Castricius Victor, an "interpres (sic!) *S(armatarum?) ex officio consularis*" coming from the same legion[20]. Both of them date in the II–III[rd] c. AD[21]. Q. Atilius Primus (*interprex legionis XV*) is another *interprex* of the Quadi, dated at the end of the I c. AD from a funerary inscription found downstream of *Carnuntum* at Baldog (modern day Slovakia)[22]. To these inscriptions from Pannonia Inferior and Superior one more must be added to our catalogue which comes from *Viminacium* and talks about two veterans, C. Valerius Valens and M. Ulpius Martialis who were discharged members of the VII[th] Claudia legion stationed in the fort near the capital of *Moesia Superior*[23]. We are able to distinguish the fact that two of the interpreters were subordinates of the governor of *Pannonia Inferior* (the ones from *Aquincum*)[24], one was a subordinate of the commander of the XV *Apollinaris* legion (the example of *Carnuntum*) and two of them do not specify for whom they offered their services for. There are also two more indications on people who`s activity is was be an interpreter in the sense of "go-between"/intermediary (but on a rather more lower, unofficial level) who were also soldiers or people related to the army recently identified by R. Mairs on the Northern frontier. The first inscription from a *Vindolanda* tablet dated in the "Period 2", about 92–97 AD and belongs to the correspondence of an officer stationed in the above mentioned auxiliary fort around this period of time (probably even longer), named Cassius Saecularis (who is not mentioned anywhere else in the *Vindolanda*

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[18] For the literature about the interpreters as translators in administration see: MAIRS 2011. For the interpreters in Roman Egypt see: MAIRS 2012a.

[19] CIL III 10505; NAGY 1976, 82; AUSTIN/RANKOV 2005, 28; PERETZ 2006, 453; MAIRS 2012, 23–24, no. 2, text of funerary inscription: *D(is) M(anibus) / M(arco) Aur(relio) Flavo m[il(iti) leg(ionis)? II Ad(iutricis), du]pl(icario) / et in[t]erpreti Ge[rmanoru]m officii consularis et M. Aur[(elio) ... an(norum)] XIII / filio communi Aurelia Q/u[i]aeta (?) marito et filio dulcissim/is scribi in memoriam iussit.*

[20] CIL III 14349, 5; AUSTIN/RANKOV 2005, 28; PERETZ 2006, 458 n. 38; MAIRS 2012, text of funerary inscription: *[?Iul.] Gaius mil(es) leg(ionis) [?II Ad(iutricis)] / interprex S(armatarum) e[x o]/fficio co(n)sularis.* NAGY 1976, 82 rejects the old reading of the inscription *interprex S(armatarum)* and suggests: *[? Iul.] Gaius mil(es) leg(ionis) [?II Ad(iutricis) interprexs i[n of]/fici(o) co(n)s(ularis).*

[21] AUSTIN/RANKOV 1995, 28.

[22] KOLNIK 1978, 61–75 (= Année Épigr. 1978, 635), Flavian period for the dating 70–71. Also see: Année Épigr. 1988, 938; AUSTIN/RANKOV 1995, 28; MOSSER 2003, No. 13, 171; PERETZ 2006, 460; MAIRS 2012, 23, no. 1. Text: *Q(uintus) Atilius / Sp(uri) f(ilius) Vot(uria) Pri/mus inter(p)rex / leg(ionis) XV idem (centurio) / negotiator an(norum) / LXXX h(ic) s(itus) e(st) / Q(uintus) Atilius Cocta/tus Atilia Q(uinti) l(iberta) Fau/sta Privatus et / Martialis hered(es) / l(iberti?) p(osuerunt).*

[23] CIL III 14507; IMS 53; AUSTIN/RANKOV 1995, 29; Année Épigr. 2004, 1223; PERETZ 2006, 458, n. 39; MAIRS 2012, 24, no. 5, partial text after MAIRS 2012, 24, no. 5: line 11: *C(aius) Val(erius) Valens int(erpres) R(atiaria)* and line 40: *M(arcus) Ulp(ius) Martial(is) int(erpres) Sc(upis).* Date according to MAIRS 2012, 24 after 195 AD.

[24] PERETZ 2006 452–454 and MAIRS 2011, 65–66 give us an insight of the interpreters from the literary classical sources but also their usage by Marcus Tullius Cicero and of Verres, both of them governors of o province, *Cilicia* respectively *Sicilia* in the Late Republic.

tablets). He seems to have been, most likely, an *optio* as the publishers of the tablet suggest from which Curtius Rufus via other persons demanded a quantity of barley[25]. Another example is the case of Quadratus, an agent whose role is to facilitate and mediate between two parties who did not speak the same language[26]. Furthermore in *Germania Inferior* there is another *interprex*, called C. Ianuar(i)us Sextus, who does not mention if he came from a military or civilian background[27].

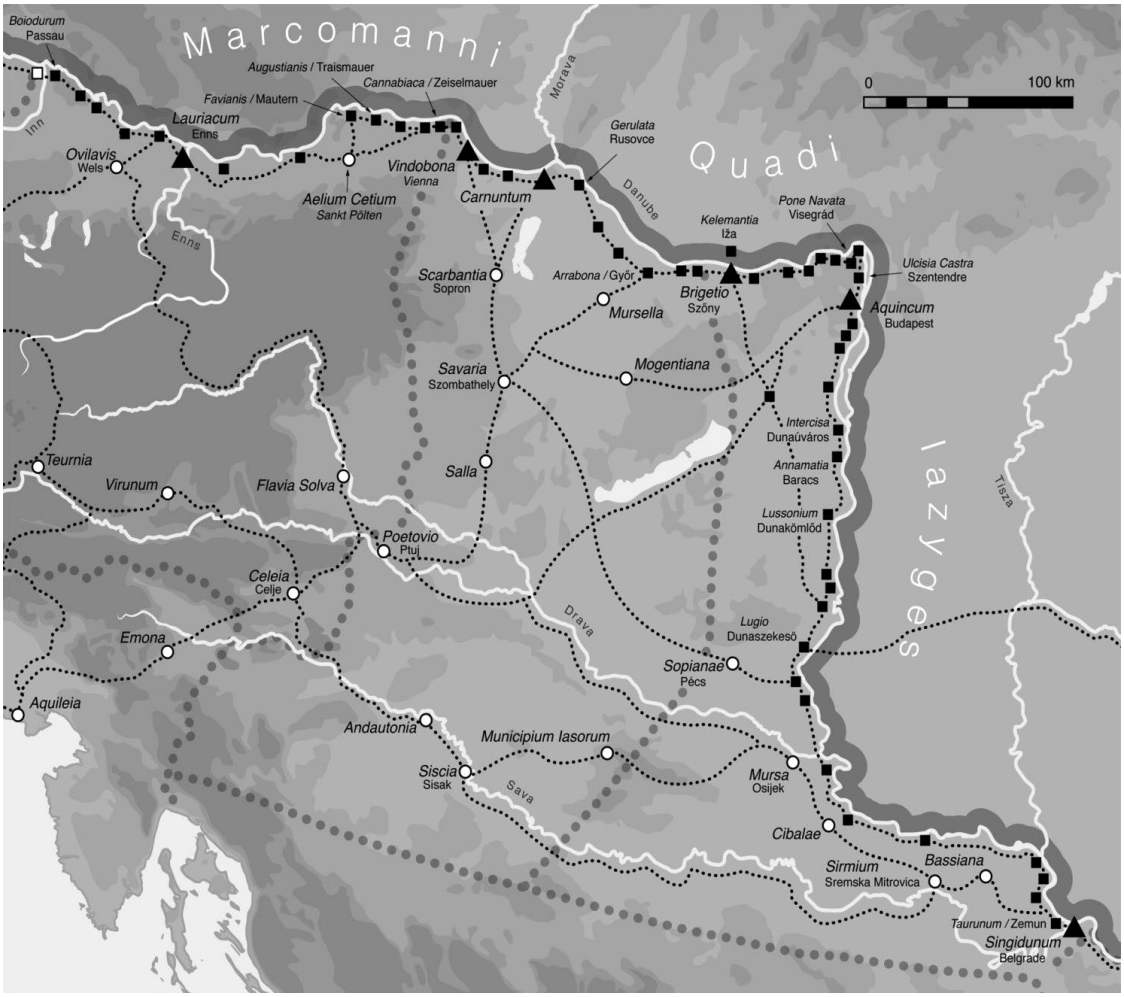

Fig. 3. Map of the frontier in the Middle Danube region. The Danube Limes – UNESCO World Heritage/ Pen&Sword/CHC University of Salzburg, authors: David Breeze and Kurt Schaller. The maps are made available via CC license by courtesy.

Analyzing the role of other interpreters we can now establish an image of the role of Marcus Ulpius Celerinus. It seems that Marcus Ulpius Celerinus offered his services to the Ist Adiutrix legion signing in as a *salariarius*, contracted by the army to do a specific task during the early third century AD regarding supplies most probably. Meanwhile, sometime in the last part of Septimius Severus` reign (in the 3rd c. AD), when Marcus Ulpius Romanus died at the

25 MAIRS 2012.

26 MAIRS 2012 with the text and BOWMAN/TOMLIN/WORP 2009, 161–162.

27 From the rural settlement of Rummel, *cf.* CIL XIII 8773: *C(aius) Ianuar(i)us / Sextus / interpres / vivos sibi / fecit*.

age of 35 as a member of the staff of the Praetorian Guard`s Prefect, Celerinus` position, aside of being a *salariarius,* was also an interpreter of the Dacian language. This must mean that he accompanied a group of army agents responsible for negotiating with the Dacians in a peaceful period of time on the northern frontiers of the province of Dacia (in Severus` time we do not know of any military conflicts with the Dacian tribes)[28]. When Caracalla started his campaign in 214 A.D. against these Barbarian tribes, the peaceful relations must have ceased to exist, reducing Celerinus` tasks to the ones attributed to the status of a *salariarius*, as we find out from the dedication of the altar to Jupiter. His case, in my opinion, is similar to the one of Q. Atilius Primus, from *Carnuntum*, interpreter, centurion of the XV *Apollinaris* legion in the time of the Flavian dynasty (and sometimes throughout his military career or later after his retirement) a *negotiator* responsible for translating the dialogues between the Quadi and the Romans in matters related to economic reasons[29].

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[28] Looking at the geographical area and the positioning of the Roman forces on the Danube and in *Dacia* we might infer the fact that these Dacian tribes (some of them) where positioned in an area of the on the North of the Danube which entered in the control area of the I *Adiutrix* legion.

[29] Supra note 22.

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