

# The iconography of the waiting servants depicted on funerary reliefs from Roman Dacia<sup>1</sup>

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## I. Introduction

The funerary monuments from Roman Dacia have been, for almost one hundred years, the subject of many studies and debates between specialists<sup>2</sup>. Still, even if great progress has been done in the investigation of several aspects related to the typology and chronology of the structures, there are many issues linked above all to iconography, especially to secondary elements connected to the main scenes, which need to be more extensively discussed.

The object of the present paper is to explore an aspect of Roman funerary iconography, namely the motif of the waiting servant present on funerary reliefs from the province of Dacia. While in Dacia hitherto no wall paintings or floor mosaics with such portrayals are known, there is however a relatively numerous group of funerary monuments which include representations of servants. In archaeological literature, the Dacian depictions of the servant are usually identified with the individuals known from the written sources as *camilli(-ae)*<sup>3</sup>. The basis for this association is the assertion that these characters can be regarded as attendants at the ritual event called the *funerary banquet*, often shown on grave reliefs<sup>4</sup>. The identification of the servants with the *camilli* however, as it will be shown below, is less than straightforward. Thus the mentioned iconographical aspects which can be observed on monuments will be analysed in relation to other forms of iconographical expression in Roman art.

## II. Methodological and terminological aspects

Our survey comprises funerary reliefs with portrayals of servants performing waiting duties (serving food and drinks at convivial events, including washing the hands of guests) discovered in *Dacia Porolissensis* and

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2 For the most important contributions see: FLORESCU 1930; FLOCA/WOLSKI 1973; BIANCHI 1974; ȚEPOSU-MARINESCU 1982; BIANCHI 1985; CIONGRADI 2007. For the funerary iconography of Dacia see: CHIȘ 2004, with no comments related to the subject of servant depictions. The present study doesn't include other representations of servants appearing in Roman Dacia which are related to other types of activities specific to household servants: the *calones* present on a funerary *stela* from *Apulum* (CIONGRADI 2007, 186, no. S/A 97, Taf. 58/S/A 96), on a lateral wall of *aedicula* from Gherla (ȚEPOSU-MARINESCU 1982, 204, No. 27, Pl. XXXIX/AE 27) and on a funerary *stela* from Sutor (ȚEPOSU-MARINESCU 1982, 129, No. 112, Pl. XI/S 112). Even if there is a special category of waiting servants involved in attending their masters during the toilet (see CSIR Österreich II. 3, types I.d, I.e, I.f, I.l), the iconographical particularities of the depiction on the *aedicula* wall from Rediu (ȚEPOSU-MARINESCU 1982, 207, No. 40, Pl. XXXIX/AE 40), showing the servant involved directly in the work process, determined us to exclude it from the present study.

3 ȚEPOSU-MARINESCU 1982, 49; PÎSLARU/BĂRBULESCU 2003, 42.

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*Dacia Superior*<sup>5</sup>. Emphasis will be placed on iconographical information; however there will be an attempt to correlate the iconography with epigraphic and architectural data wherever the nature of the record allows this. The terms “servants” and “attendants” will be used as opposed to the term “slaves”, as the function of the represented figures is relevant to our discussion rather than their legal status<sup>6</sup>. Alternatively the term “waiting servant” can be applied, as our discussion refers exclusively to this category of household servants<sup>7</sup>. The term *camillus* or *camilla* often used in archaeological literature in relation with servant-depictions, cannot be applied in this case, being characteristic exclusively to votive representations<sup>8</sup>. In the German literature the customary terms used are *Diener (Dienerin)* or *Opferdiener (Opferdienerin)* with no apparent differentiation regarding their usage in either votive or domestic context<sup>9</sup>. For designating the attributes and objects associated with the servants, the use of modern terminology is preferable as opposed to the Latin names, which in many cases are prone to controversy. The most important attributes discussed below, and for which the modern terminology will be applied, are: the jug<sup>10</sup>, the *Griffschale*<sup>11</sup> and the napkin<sup>12</sup>. In the case of the jug, if noticeable, a difference will be made between the vessels with spout (designated as “jugs with spout”) and the vessels without spout (designated as “jugs”) since these features are also displayed by artefacts known from the archaeological record. Elements of clothing (*tunicae, pallae*) and of furniture (*mensa tripes, cathedra*) will be named according to the Latin terminology<sup>13</sup>.

The criteria for defining the iconography of the servants on funerary reliefs were elaborated by G. Piccottini, while analysing the monuments from *Virunum* (province of Noricum) and its *territorium*. According to the mentioned scholar, the servants are portrayed as individuals of young age, attired in a simple manner, usually in short calf-length *tunicae*, sometimes adorned with two vertical *clavi*, and holding either of the following objects: napkin, cauldron or bucket, *Griffschale*, jug<sup>14</sup>. In this group of reliefs however servants are associated with less conventional objects which are apparently unrelated to the theme of conviviality, as the mirror or the incense box (*acerra*), both being very common. The figures of the servants (just as those of other depicted categories of slaves) usually occupy, an adjoining position, either on the side walls of *aediculae*, funerary altars,

5 According to our information, there are no funerary monuments with servant depictions in *Dacia Inferior* (For the funerary monuments from *Dacia Inferior* see: ALEXANDRESCU-VIANU 1977 and BIANCHI 1985).

6 DUNBABIN 2003a, 443, Note 1. With regard to the terminology we adopted the practice of the cited author.

7 See DUNBABIN 2003a: Other types of household servants commonly depicted on funerary reliefs are: *librarii*, carriers, horse grooms (*calones*), see CSIR Österreich II. 3, 8-9.

8 See the discussion below.

9 See: CSIR Österreich II. 3; CIONGRADI 2007.

10 For the Latin terms see NUBER 1972, 143. The jug as part of the hand-washing service is mentioned in the written sources as: *vas, urceus, urceolus* (most commonly used for the jug with spout), *vas cum aqua* and *guttus* or *guturnium* (not so common); SIEBERT 1999, 32-40. Using the depictions from votive and funerary reliefs the author distinguishes between a vessel with a wide neck: *urceus*, and a vessel with a narrow neck: *guttus*. The distinction is not entirely convincing since the basis of the analysis were the sculpted images of the vessels, without any attempt to correlate them with archaeological artefacts, a fact which determined the employment of different denominations for types belonging to the same shape or to the same shape made from different materials (e.g.: bronze versus silver and gold); for the recurrence of the Latin terms designating vessels in the written sources see also HILGERS 1969, without a precise attempt of identifying specific shapes: *gut(t)urnium, gut(t)us* (HILGERS 1969, 58-60, 191-192, Nos.: 183-184), *urceolus, urceus* (HILGERS 1969, 83-86, 298-299, Nos.: 377-378).

11 Part of the hand-washing service, it designates a hand bowl with a cylindrical handle, commonly confused in the literature with the vessels known as *paterae* (See NUBER 1972, 105). The Latin terms ascribed to this object in the literature are: *polybrum, trulleum* or *trulleus* (the oldest denominations known in Latin), *malluvium, aquaeminarium* and *aquamanus* (NUBER 1972, 140-142); *polybrum* (SIEBERT 1999, 46-47), and *trulleum* (CSIR Österreich II. 3, 8); see also HILGERS 1969 and note 9: *aquae manale* (HILGERS 1969, 107, No.: 29), *malluvium* (HILGERS 1969, 216-217, No.: 228), *pol(l)ubrum/polybrum* (HILGERS 1969, 262-263, No.: 299), *trulleum* (HILGERS 1969, 293, No.: 365); The choice to use the German term *Griffschale* is justified by its univalent meaning in comparison to other terms used in different languages to describe this vessel shape.

12 See DUNBABIN 2003a 447-448. The Latin terms commonly used in the literature are: *mantela* (appropriate for sacrificial contexts) and *mappa* (used in domestic contexts). See SIEBERT 1999, 108.

13 The Latin terms were employed here because of their unequivocal meaning in this case.

14 CSIR Österreich II. 3, 6-8.