

TITULUS PICTUS FROM NOVAE – A NEW READING

The inscription discovered in 1978 in the area of the *Legio I Italica* camp (in Novae, Moesia Inferior) by the Archaeological Expedition of the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań has come down in history as the *titulus pictus* from Novae.¹ Painted on a stone, the inscription was preserved in approximately 1/3 of the whole, which became the basis for various suggestions for reconstruction – its supplementation is largely credited to prof. Leszek Mrozewicz and to Eryk Bunsch, a museologist.² It is dated to 176–180, i.e. to the period of the joint rule of Mar-

¹ A complete reading of the inscription following L. Mrozewicz, 'A letter of contention... once again on the *titulus pictus* from Novae (ILatNovae 38 = IGrLatNovae 57)', *Palamedes* 9/10 (2014/2015), 167 (with line numbers added by me):

1. *Imperatores* [Caes. Aurelius Antoninus]

2. *et Aurelius Com[modus Augusti --- ve]*

3. *tustate conlabsu[m a solo restituerunt per]*

4. *leg(ionem) I Ital(icam) P. Calpurni[o Iuliano leg(ato) Augustorum pr(o) pr(aetore) v(iro) c(larissimo)]*

5. *et C. Sannmicio Maiore [legato legionis eiusdem]*

² Complete information on the relic under discussion can be found in the works of these authors. See, for instance: L. Mrozewicz, 'Inskrypcje łacińskie' ['Latin inscriptions'], in *Novae – Sektor Zachodni 1976, 1978*, Poznań 1981, 130–132; idem, 'Inskrypcje łacińskie z Novae' ['Latin inscriptions from Novae'], *Archeologia* 31 (1980) [1982], 157–166; idem, 'P. Calpurnius Iulianus, der Statthalter von Moesia Inferior', *Eos* 69 (1981), 315–317; idem, 'Inscriptions Latines de Novae' in V. Božilova, J. Kolendo, L. Mrozewicz, *Inscriptions Latines de Novae* (eds), in *Inscriptions Latines de Novae*, Poznań 1992, 68–69; E. Bunsch, 'Nowe spojrzenie na rzymską technikę wykonywania inskrypcji malowanych na kamieniu. *Titulus pictus* z Novae w Mezji Dolnej (IGrLat. Novae 57) — Efekty prac konserwatorskich' ['Roman inscriptions painted on stone – technique reconsidered. Results on conservation work on a *titulus pictus* from Novae in Lower Moesia'], *Novensia* 17, 2006, 63–71; E. Bunsch, L. Mrozewicz, 'C. Sannmucius Maior im *titulus pictus* aus Novae (ILatNovae 38= IGrLatNovae 57)', *ZPE* 165 (2008), 241–248; L. Mrozewicz, *Palaeography of Latin Inscriptions from Novae (Lower Moesia)*, Poznań 2010; idem, 'A letter of contention', 151–178.

cus Aurelius and Commodus. In my opinion, this dating should be narrowed to the period between June 177 (elevating Commodus to the rank of August) and March 180 (death of Marcus Aurelius). My suggestion is based on the chronology developed by D. Kienast,³ commonly adopted in the scholarship on the issue and on epigraphic practice, wherein the title of the emperor (at the beginning of the inscription from Novae in the plural) referred to the ruling *Augusti*. If the limited dating (177–180) is rejected, then one would have to deny the state of research on the imperial titlature and engage in polemics with the findings presented by Kienast (and there are no grounds for it). However, accepting this dating is of great significance for resolving many important issues, such as precise determination of the biograms of senators mentioned in the inscription, and also *fasti* of Moesia Inferior.⁴

Titulus pictus from Novae is a rare case of a surviving dedication made using the painting technique,⁵ located on a renovated (mentioned in line 2, and unknown to us) camp building – probably an important one, as names of two emperors, the legate of the province (P. Calpurnius Iulianus) and the legate of the legion (C. Sabucius Maior [Caecilianus?])⁶ were invoked.

The technical solution applied in this dedication is a source of well-founded curiosity – inscriptions painted in Imperium Romanum were usually short-lived, such as information on amphorae or graffiti on the walls. This *titulus pictus* is not in accordance with this convention, and it does not resemble the meticulously painted inscription from the sarcophagus of Scipio Barbatus dated 3rd century BC⁷ (which is unique among tombstones of senators, which proves that this method of commemorating was abandoned as not being permanent). Even if we assume, following Eryk Bunsch, that the inscription from Novae represents a new category of inscriptions,⁸ the selection of the simplified technique remains unexplained.

In my opinion, the original dedicatory inscription, probably traditionally carved in stone, was placed in the central location (above the entrance?) of the

³ *Römische Kaisertabelle: Grundzüge einer römischen Kaiserchronologie*, Darmstadt 1996, 138 and 147.

⁴ For instance, P. Helvius Pertinax could have been the legate of the province until 177, and then he would have been replaced by P. Calpurnius Iulianus (178–180). Inconsistent dating of the stay of legates in the province results in confusion. For example, B. Thomasson in a new version of *Laterculi praesidium*, Göteborg 2009 (No. 20:097 a (2)) restricts the stay of Calpurnius Iulianus in Moesia Inferior to the years 177–180, but fails to correct the dating of the stay of Pertinax, who according to the version from 1984 (No. 20:98), still valid in his case, governed Moesia in the years 176–179.

⁵ For other *tituli picti* from Novae, see: J. Kolendo, 'Trzy stele z napisami malowanymi z Novae (¿)' ['Three steles with painted inscriptions from Novae?'], *Novensia* 13 (2002), 35–48.

⁶ For this very type of legate's *nomen*, see below.

⁷ *CIL* VI 1286=4671=37039=*CIL* I² 8=*CLE* 6=*ILS* 2=*ILLRP* 310.

⁸ Bunsch, *Nowe spojrzenie*, 64.

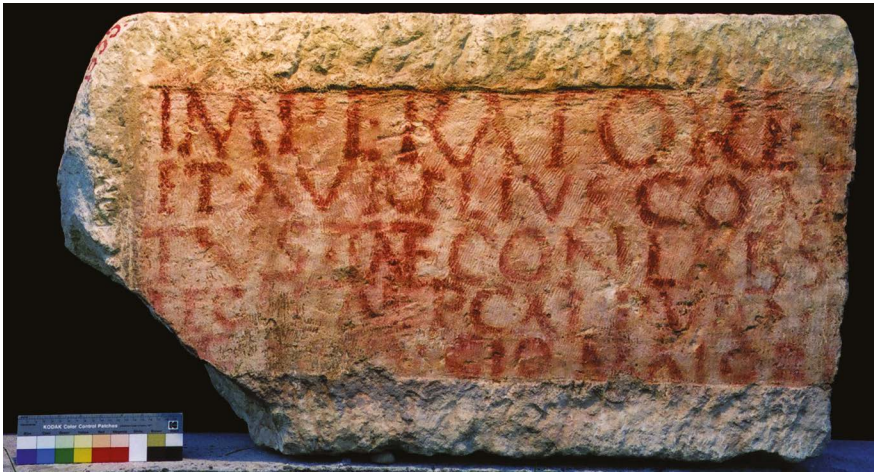


Fig. 1. Photo by Eryk Bunsch.

renovated building. Subsequently, another inscription was added underneath – informing about the renovation of the building (*titulus pictus*), which was not as elegant (it cannot be ruled out that the renovation itself as well as the inscription informing about it were made by soldiers). Given the above, it can be suspected that pieces of the original dedication can be found among the fragments of inscriptions already discovered in Novae. Following my suggestion, we can search for the object under investigation among those that are already known to us, such as the camp *principia* or the camp gate. Having no new data available, however, I do not wish to point to any option. The suggestion by prof. Mrozewicz that identifying a dedicated building based on speculation and creating a ‘history in square brackets’ should not be attempted is substantiated in this case.⁹

Another important part of my analyses is the personal data found in the lower part of the inscription (lines 4–5) – this applies both to their names and their functions.

The reading recently suggested by L. Mrozewicz¹⁰ is as follows:

4. *leg(ionem) I Ital(icam) P. Calpurni[o Iuliano leg(ato) Augustorum pr(o) pr(aetore) v(iro) c(larissimo)]*

5. *et C. Sāmmvicio Maiore [legato legionis eiusdem]*

According to this interpretation, the inscription mentions: P. Calpurni[us Iulianus] as the legate of the province and C. Sammucius Maior as the legate of the

⁹ Mrozewicz, ‘A letter of contention’, 155.

¹⁰ Mrozewicz, ‘A letter of contention’, 167. For the complete reading of the inscription, see note 1.

legion. Thus *nomina* of two senators arranged according to rank hierarchy appear. A quite interesting concept advanced by I. Piso should be noted at this point. According to this scholar, the aforementioned individuals are interpreted as: praetorian legate of the Moesia Inferior province and the legate of the *Legio I Italica* (P. Calpurnius Iulianus) and the centurion of that legion (...ucius Maior).¹¹ This theory is controversial – Moesia Inferior was a consular province at that time. Any information on the change of its status to the praetorian one is lacking; a mention in late antique (*HA*, vita Marci 22, 9) of such decisions by Marcus Aurelius does not refer to Moesia Inferior, but it is general in nature.¹² In addition, a partly preserved votive inscription of Calpurnius Iulianus from Mehadia,¹³ from which we learn the fragments of his *cursus honorum*, fails to mention the legateship of *Legio I Italica*, but only that of *Legio V Macedonicae* (stationed in Dacia) and the governorship of Moesia Inferior.¹⁴ We also know that the predecessors (e.g., P. Helvius Pertinax), and the successors of Iulianus (e.g. P. Septimius Geta) achieved consular rank; nothing indicates that the *casus* of Iulianus was different. A question arises as to why there is no mention of the consulship (*suffectus*) in the inscription from Mehadia. This is evidently due to its being damaged. In my opinion, the missing part of the text could have contained (as is commonly assumed) letters VC, but they could be deciphered as *v(ir) c(onsularis)*, and not – as had previously been the case – as *v(ir) c(larissimus)*. An even more likely assumption is that the inscription, instead of letters VC, contained letters CS, i.e. *co(n)s(ul)*, with C and O written in ligature¹⁵ (several of which can be found in the inscription), which corresponds to the honorific nature of the inscription.

¹¹ I. Piso, *Fasti Provinciae Daciae. II. Die ritterlichen Amtsträger*, Bonn 2013, 51–53.

¹² I. Piso, *Fasti II*, 52–53 claims that downgrading the status of Moesia Inferior was due to the fact that the province was left by *Legio XI Claudia*, and only a part of *Legio I Italica* remained. However, the Romanian researcher is unable to prove this thesis. It should be noted that both legions could have sent their *vexillationes* for a military campaign, and then 2 legions would still be stationed in the province (although they would be less numerous). Even if we assume (as suggested by I. Piso) that only the main troops of *Legio I Italica* remained, there is no evidence that the status of the province was downgraded from the consular to the praetorian province.

¹³ From Dacia: *CIL* III 1566=ILS 3891=IDR 3, 1, 67.

¹⁴ The reasons for this selection of the functions may be different: 1. Iulianus, when dedicating an inscription to Hercules, among others, listed only those related to the military service, 2. Iulianus, dedicating an inscription also to *Genio loci*, selected functions performed in the Danube region, 3. A combination of both criteria has been applied. Naturally, the most important office of *cursus honorum* – the consulship was not subject to these criteria. In my opinion, it is for this reason that it was taken into account and entered as first. Regardless of the option, the information that Iulianus was the legate of *Legio I Italica* should have been included in this inscription.

¹⁵ My reading of the inscription from Mehadia: [Herc]uli Genio / [loc]i fontibus / [cali]dis Calpur / [nius] Iulianus / [co(n)s(ul) le]g(atus) leg(ionis) V Mac(edonicae) / [leg(atus) A]ug(usti) pr(o)pr(aetore) / [pro]v(inciae) [Moe]siae / [inf]er[io]ris / v(otum) l(ibens) s(olvit). My dating of the inscription is to the period of the independent rule by Commodus, therefore the abbreviation Aug is expanded as the word Aug(usti).

It is hard to assume that the dedication from Novae contains the name of the centurion. If the inscription mentions both emperors and the legate of the province, then – even if he was the legate of the legion at the same time (as suggested by I. Piso) – the next person in the hierarchy was the senatorial *tribunus militum laticlavius*, and he should be the one to be included in the inscription. Thus the concept advanced by I. Piso is, in my opinion, unconvincing. *Alia mihi opinio est*.

In addition, we know very little of Calpurnius. We learned his *cognomen* – Iulianus after identifying the legate mentioned in *titulus pictus* as the senator dedicating the inscription from Mehadia. Nevertheless, we are unable to determine his *origo*, whereas two alternative concepts can be advanced regarding his ancestral origin. According to the first one, he was the descendant of Sex. Calpurnius Agricola, a suffect consul of approx. 159. In line with the other concept, he was the descendant of Sex. Calpurnius Iulianus, a prosecutor from the period of the reign of Antoninus Pius.

In view of my research on the senatorial order, I can state that if Iulianus came from a consular family, the number of his functions after the praetura (and before consulship) as a standard would have ranged between 2¹⁶ and 4, whereas in the case of a more humble origin it should have been higher – from 5 even up to 9 functions. Based on the inscription from Mehadia, we can learn only about one office of the praetorian rank held by Iulianus: *legatus legionis V Macedonicae*; this demonstrates the extent of our lack of knowledge. It is possible that the others included, for instance, curatorships, legateships of legions, legateships of praetorian provinces. Further conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the aforementioned consular function of Iulianus – *legatus Augusti pro praetore provinciae Moesiae Inferioris*. Many senators from this period completed their *cursus* with a consulship regarding this office as the crowning of their careers. Many failed to be promoted further as they proved to be unsuitable for public service. Iulianus (as can be seen) proved to be suitable and chose to pursue further career. It is possible that after the legateship of Moesia Inferior,¹⁷ he assumed the governorship of other provinces (for instance, Dacia).¹⁸ The aforementioned inscription from Mehadia can be treated as evidence of ‘being on leave’ between two legateships.

¹⁶ Careers of patricians were almost exclusively characterized by a smaller number of praetorian rank offices.

¹⁷ Between 177 and the end of 180, i.e. during the joint rule of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus, and during the independent rule of the latter. For the sake of clarity: in the inscription from Novae, Iulianus is featured as the legate of two Augusti, in the later one – from Mehadia, of only one. Since the governorship of a province lasted 2–3 years on average, it may be surmised that the legateship of Iulianus was held in the years 178–180.

¹⁸ This view is based on the examples of careers of such individuals as: P. Helvius Pertinax, L. Marius Perpetuus, P. Septimius Geta. My suggestion stems from the fact that Iulianus commanded *Legio V Macedonicae* in Dacia, thus granting him governorship of a well-known province would be substantiated.

We may assume, based on the *cursus honorum* of Iulianus, that we are dealing with an ambitious *homo novus* – statistically such tenure as commanding a legion and governorship of a frontier province was more frequently encountered in the careers of this group of senators. Given the above, I consider Iulianus as the descendant of Sex. Calpurnius Iulianus, a procurator from the period of the reign of Antoninus Pius.

Another senator included in *titulus pictus* – in the reading by Leszek Mrozewicz: C. Sammucius Maior¹⁹ is a mysterious figure. *Gentilicium* Sammucius (in the female form) is known from one (Greek!) inscription from Rome, which mentions the name of Sammucia Marcia (Σαμμουκία Μαρκία).²⁰ *Gentilia*, containing the clause Sam(m)uc have additionally been attested in 5 inscriptions from the Celtic area; we also know of 3 Pannonian inscriptions containing an abbreviated form SAM, which can be expanded as Sam(uconius).²¹ However, none of these inscriptions refers to the senator. In addition, my research on the senatorial order has provided no evidence of an individual with such a *nomen gentile*. It is therefore necessary to consider whether the reading of Sammucius (widely accepted nowadays) is correct. Moreover, the state of the conservation of the relic from Novae substantiates such deliberations.

My attention was drawn by the similarity of his *nomen* – C. Sammucius Maior with the nomenclature of a known senatorial family from this period – *Caii Sabucii Maiores* (from Etruria). Both *nomina* differ only by the form of *gentilicium*: Sammucius – Sabucius.

Gentilicium Sabucius is derived from Latin words Sabucus/Sambucus.²² The same etymology was featured by the following *nomina*: Saburius, Samuco, Samucinus, and also Sambucius (may be the alternant form of Sammucius).²³ Given this

¹⁹ In addition, it is my chronicler's duty to point that prior to the conservation of the inscription (in 2004) his name was read as Mucius Maior. Joint research by Leszek Mrozewicz and Eryk Bunsch provided for another reconstruction of the legate's *nomen* and advancing hypotheses about its origin. In 2008, the researchers suggested writing the name Sammucius with a ligature of the letters AMMV. In 2010, L. Mrozewicz suggested the ligature of MMV, and in 2014/2015 of AMMV, which does not change the very reading of the name.

²⁰ The inscription IG XIV 1988=IGUR 927 is an epitaph of Sammucia Marcia, the daughter of Petronios Antigonos and Afrania Marcia. The individuals featured in this inscription were definitely not members of any of the higher social ranks, thus assuming any kinship with senator C. Sammucius Maior, known from the Novae inscription, is inadmissible.

²¹ As presented by: Bunsch, Mrozewicz, 'C. Sammucius Maior', 244–245.

²² Regardless of the form, it means 'elder' as a plant from the family *Adoxaceae*.

²³ See, for instance, H.G. Tüchel, *Studien zur italienischen Phytotoponomastik*, Geneva 1962. The words 'Sabucus/Sambucus' were the basis for creating many local names. In the case of southern Italy, they tended to shift the -mb cluster to the -mm form (op. cit. 149). In addition, first names with the -mb cluster could shift to the simplified form of -mm – see: M. Leumann, *Lateinische Laut- und Formenlehre*, München 1977, 216. Thus the Sambucius *nomen* could have assumed the alternant form of Sammucius.

variety of names, however derived from the same linguistic base, one can advance a hypothesis that the legate from *titulus pictus* was a member of the *Sabucii* family, and his name was in fact C. Sabucius Maior.

However, how can the writing of his name in *titulus pictus* be explained?

Three possible explanations come to mind:²⁴

- *titulus* contained the inscription Sammucio (as read by L. Mrozewicz), which was a provincial, transformed form of the Italic *nomen* Sabucius created on the basis of the alternant form Sambucius (Sabucius → Sambucius → Sammucius), thus the legate in fact had the *gentilicium* of Sabucius,
- *titulus* is not very clear, it featured the form of Sabucio, and not Sammucio from the very beginning,
- *titulus* contained the alternant form of the proper *nomen* from the very beginning: Sabucius, i.e. Sambucius, with a ligature of MBV.

Conservation and laboratory studies conducted in 2004 by Eryk Bunsch and supplemented in 2008 by Leszek Mrozewicz point to the first of the aforementioned options and the form, which is unambiguously suggested, is Sammucio. Technical considerations preclude the second option – with the reading as Sabucio, whereas the third option – the form Sambucio with the letters MBV in ligature – is in my opinion plausible.



Ryc. 2. Reconstruction made by author based on E. Bunsch's 2008 drawing.

It cannot be ruled out that *nomen gentile* found on the stone (Sammucius or Samucius or Sambucius) is due to the erroneous input by the scribe²⁵ of *gentilicium* Sabucius; regardless of the reading the affiliation of the legate with *gens Sabucii Maiores* seems to be the fact. In the period under discussion, the family was represented by:

²⁴ I hereby wish to thank professors: Ch. Bruun, O. Salomies and R. Rosół for critical comments regarding my concepts and E. Bunsch for sharing photos of *titulus pictus*. I extend my special thanks to prof. Leszek Mrozewicz for inspiration to write this text and for corrections to the first version of the paper.

²⁵ For examples of similar errors, see: *CIL* VI 14672=*ILS* 8156; *CIL* XIV 850=*ILS* 8209; *CIL* VI 13102=*ILS* 8089; *CIL* VI 27593=*ILS* 8210.

- C. Sabucius Maior Caecilianus, [...], *tribunus plebis, praetor candidatus, curator viae Salariae et alimentorum, iuridicus per Flaminiam et Umbriam, legatus iuridicus Britanniae, praefectus aerarii militaris, legatus Augusti pro praetore Belgicae, proconsul Achaiae, sodalis Augustalis Claudialis, consul suff. a. 186*.²⁶
- (C.) Sabucius Maior (Caecilianus?), *curator rei publicae Mediolanensium*,²⁷ probably the son of the aforementioned *cos. suff. a. 186*.
- C. Sabucius Maior Plotinus Faustinus, *clarissimus iuuenis*,²⁸ a grandson of *cos. suff. a. 186*.²⁹

Given the above information, one should ask whether we can find the legate from *titulus pictus* from Novae among any of the aforementioned ones?

Definitely, this could not have been the oldest Sabucius – his *cursus* is fairly well known and it does not feature any legateship of a legion or any other function in Moesia Inferior. The last of the *Sabucii* should also be ruled out – in this case the reason is timing.³⁰ Thus the remaining candidate is (C.) Sabucius Maior (Caecilianus?) – the son. We know that he was the curator of Milan, probably just before commanding *Legio I Italica*. It is the timing that substantiates this hypothesis,³¹ thus it can be assumed that the legate from Novae was C. Sabucius Maior (Caecilianus?).³² Regrettably, we know nothing of the further career of this senator.³³

Before I present the suggested reading of *titulus pictus*, let me recall the general conditions: the text of the inscription is preserved in 1/3 of the whole; we are

²⁶ *CIL* VI 1509=*ILS* 1123; *CIL* VI 1510=*ILS* 1123 a.

²⁷ *AE* 1974, 345. In *AE* 1974, it was concluded that C. Sabucius Maior Caecilianus became the curator of Milan after his consulship in 186. I disagree with this opinion – the majority of town curators held this office after the praetura.

²⁸ *CIL* VI 1510=*ILS* 1123 a.

²⁹ His mother was probably Plotia (Faustina?), the daughter of P. Plotius Romanus, a senator and a consul in the Severan period.

³⁰ Since (as a young man) he dedicated an inscription (*CIL* VI 1510=*ILS* 1123 a) in honor of his late grandfather-consular.

³¹ This is based on the following calculations: his father C. Sabucius Maior Caecilianus was *homo novus* and after 6 functions of the praetorian rank reached the consulship in 186 (probably at an advanced age). The son, starting his career already as *clarissimus*, could be promoted faster and take command of the legion at the end of the joint rule of Marcus Aurelius and Commodus. For this to be true, it needs to be assumed that his father reached consulship at the age of about 60, and his son was born when he was at an early age – around 20. Obviously, there are other interpretation options, however given the lack of data I refrain from creating further versions of history.

³² *Praenomen* C. is reconstructed on the basis of the inscription from Novae, whereas *agnomen* Caecilianus is suggested based on the nomenclature of the legate's father.

³³ Bearing in mind the fact that he was the son of a senator, it can be assumed that after a standard career (quaestor, plebeian tribune, praetor) and 2–4 functions of the praetorian rank (of which we know of 2) he could have expected consulship.

unable to recover the name of the dedicated building and provide precise dating for the dedication. The inscription was laid out in five lines of varying height. The interlines are uneven, at times they disappear, the same letters are executed in a different way, there are ligatures, and also division marks (*littera distinguens*) – sometimes in atypical locations (VE]/TVS•TATE). The letters become increasingly smaller – 11 letters of the first line correspond with 13 letters in the second line, 15 in the third, and 17 in the fourth.³⁴ This shows that if we wanted to adhere to the principle of proportionality, then up to 33–35 letters would be missing from line 4. Line 5, as the last one, would not be written entirely to the end.

Given the above, I would like to suggest (let me remind you once again that in my opinion the inscription dates back to 177–180)³⁵ the following reading of *titulus pictus*:

1. IMPERATORES [CAES(ARES) AVRELIVS ANTONINVS]
2. ET AVRELIVS COM[MODVS AVGVSTI --- VE]
3. TVSTATE CONLABSV[M A SOLO RESTITVERVNT PER]
4. LEG(IONEM) I ITAL(ICAM) P. CALPVRNI[O IVLIANO LEG(ATO) AVGG(VSTORVM) PR(O) PR(AETORE) PROV(INCIAE) MOESIAE INF(ERIORIS)]
5. ET C. ŞAMBVCIO MAIORE [CAECILIANO? LEG(ATO) LEG(IONIS) I ITAL(ICAE) ---]

In line 5, I do not rule out the reading of SAMMVCIO with the letters AMMV in ligature (as read by L. Mrozewicz). In this situation, the inscription would read as follows:

6. ET C. ŞAMMVCIO MAIORE [CAECILIANO? LEG(ATO) LEG(IONIS) I ITAL(ICAE) ---]

Both options (Sambucio or Sammucio) are, in my opinion, equivalent suggestions of the writing of *gentilicium* for the same person – C. Sabucius Maior (Caecilianus?).

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³⁴ Mrozewicz, 'A letter of contention', 152–156.

³⁵ If we assume that P. Calpurnius Iulianus was the legate of Moesia Inferior in the years 178–180, the dating of the inscription should be limited to these very years – see note 17.