

CARVING A PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY.

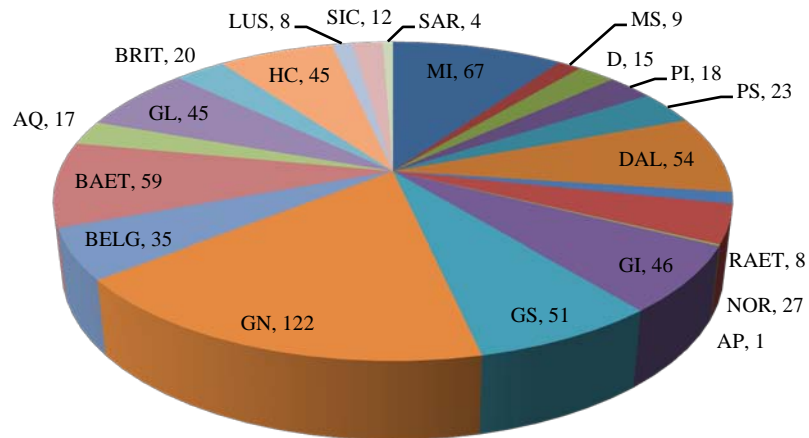
THE OCCUPATIONAL EPIGRAPHY OF THE ROMAN LATIN WEST

Rada Varga

– Fritz Thyssen Stipend –

The project *Carving a professional identity. The occupational epigraphy of the Roman Latin west* focused on collecting, cataloguing and interpreting all the occupational inscriptions from the European Latin-language provinces of the Roman Empire, during the Principate period.

We have registered 729 people whose occupation is registered on a stone inscription, in the investigated area and time span. They come from 722 inscriptions, which register a total of 952 persons - so we have a fairly good and diverse “pool” of relationships to analyze. Interesting enough as well, we believe, only about 200 inscriptions were dedicated by the professionals themselves, the others (with an approximate 10% where we do not have this information) were erected for them, in different contexts – so the association of the man/woman and profession as an identity defining and constructing element came from the exterior.



Graph 1. The provincial distribution of the occupational inscriptions

On the analytical side, we have managed to extract a list of all professions attested epigraphically and their variations. While still in work, the lexicon will look more or less like:

Occupation	Occupation code	Attestations
actor servus actor (00010NOR)	2 2520	00006D Votive 00013D Votive 00014D Votive 00023MI Funerary 00010PS Funerary 00010NOR Votive
capsarius	0 6101	00008GS Votive 00016PI Votive 00017PI Funerary 00023PS Funerary
negotiator negotias (00001PI) negotians (000005PS, 00015PS, 00014DAL) negotians vinarius (00013NOR, 00001MI) negotiator artis cretariae et flaturariae (00005RAET) negotiator cretarius (00008DAL) negotiator lanarius (00006DAL) negotiator oleario (00029DAL) negotiator vestarius (00003RAET)	4 3200/4 5130	00001D Funerary 00002D Votive 00002D Votive 00004D Votive 00005D Votive 00005D Votive 00002PI Votive 00002PS Funerary 00003PS Votive 00016DAL Funerary 00023DAL Funerary 00037DAL Funerary 00041DAL Funerary 00006NOR Funerary 00006RAET Construction 00008RAET Votive 00008RAET Votive 00001MI Funerary 00005RAET Funerary 00008DAL 00006DAL 00029DAL Funerary 00003RAET Funerary

In order to efficiently quantify and analyze the professions, we have resorted to the only historical occupational classification system available so far: HISCO. HISCO means the *Historical International Classification of Occupations* and represents a uniform classified list of the professions attested from the 16th century up to the present time in the western world; it was created and is being developed by the International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam).¹ Implicitly, the system had to be adapted to the Roman realities: we had to give up or ignore some of the very specialized branches and for integrating some professions in an occupational group or another, we had to accept a *mutatis mutandis* process.

¹<http://historyofwork.iisg.nl/>.

Basically, the HISCO classification has nine major groups, each divided in a number of sub-groups, divided further on, until we get to five-figures numbers. The HISCO charts obtained for the modern periods are quite complex, with a clear male-female distinction in various occupational fields. Ours won't be so, as the Roman epigraphic realities are not so minute. Getting to our database, we have tried to make it as efficient as possible and finally, the major categories in which our professionals were integrated are:

Major groups 0-1: Professionals trained in "hard" sciences and related fields & Professionals trained in arts and sports-related fields

Major group 2: Administrative personnel

Major group 3: Clerical workers (private)

Major group 4: Sales workers

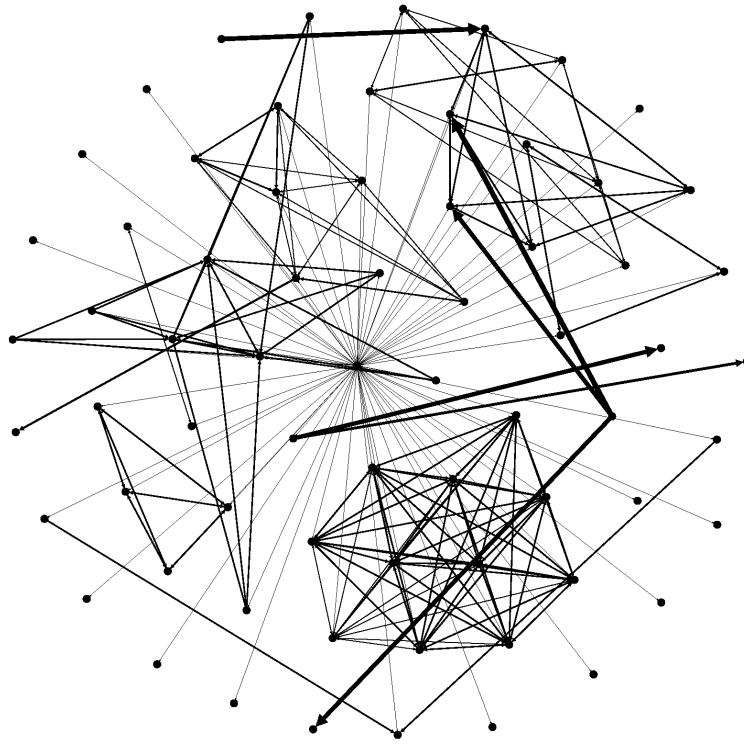
Major group 5: Service workers

Major group 6: Agricultural, animal husbandry and forestry workers, fishermen and hunters

Major group 7-8-9: Processors of natural raw materials & Craftsmen

More details on this classification and encoding system, as well as the first case-studies results obtained by working on the professions from certain provinces, are available in the article *The occupational epigraphy of provinces Moesia and Dacia*. While this case-study had a geographical focus, we have also worked on specific professional groups: the medical personnel and the merchants/traders attested in Moesia, Dacia and Pannonia. Both types of analyses were very convincing and for the planned book we intend to follow both directions and to undertake research focusing on certain areas, as well as transversally, focusing on professions or professional groups.

The groups' studies led us, inevitably, to SNA – social network analyses. For this, we are currently employing Gephi and the results look quite promising. We will thus present one example of a resulted graph, the first one presenting the network of professional relations from Moesia Inferior. While the graph might look rather "primitive", as we have just begun to learn how to employ the SNA tools, we can clearly see the crystallization of the large professional groups: Groups 0/1 and 4 (according to HISCO), in the right-lower part of the image and respectively right-upper part. While in this stage the network visualizations only



Graph 2. The professionals' network from Moesia Inferior

underline the information we already hold, we are sure that deeper and more complex analyses can bring forth important and relevant data on the professionals of the Roman Empire and their relationships.

The last strictly scientific side of our work which we want to touch is connected to prosopographic reconstruction. Of course, one of the most appealing parts in working with people, regardless the historical period, is the possibility to reconstruct micro-historical images, regarding the lives of given individuals. A very interesting case of this sort is that of Aurelius Aquila, a *negotiator* who moved from Dacia to Salona and which we were able to identify, along with family members and business associates, on different inscriptions.