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*Depictions of horses are found upon every variation of monument regarding Roman cavalry, be it of official or private context. This paper investigates depictions of equestrians and horses on the reliefs of six private funerary stelae of members of the Roman military found in Pannonia. The affiliated inscriptions attribute most of the individuals to the alae or describe them as equites. The representation format and significance of the depicted animals and individuals, as well as the value of information regarding Roman equestrian equipment is examined. Furthermore, it is attempted to investigate how certain meanings are expressed by varying equine depictions.*

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*Roman military; Roman cavalry; Iconography; Epigraphy; Funerary stelae; Relief; Equine depictions; Equestrian depictions; Roman Danubian Provinces; Pannonia.*

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# To be a Warhorse. Depiction of Horses on Roman Funerary Reliefs of Members of the Military in the Province Pannonia

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*Depictions of horses are found upon every variation of monument regarding Roman cavalry, be it of official or private context. This paper investigates depictions of equestrians and horses on the reliefs of six private funerary stelae of members of the Roman military found in Pannonia. The affiliated inscriptions attribute most of the individuals to the *alae* or describe them as *equites*. The representation format and significance of the depicted animals and individuals, as well as the value of information regarding Roman equestrian equipment is examined. Furthermore, it is attempted to investigate how certain meanings are expressed by varying equine depictions.*

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## **I. Introduction: Cavalry in the Roman world – Cavalry in Pannonia**

Rome's mounted military played an important part in securing the provincial borders along the Danube. This special position is evident from archaeological remains, with a high density of camps of the *alae*<sup>1</sup> and pieces of cavalry equipment, as well as through pictorial evidence from official monuments both from Rome (e. g. the triumphal columns) and the provinces (e. g. the *Tropaeum Traiani* in Adamklissi, Romania). Another kind of image carriers were private funerary monuments of members of the military, upon which reliefs depicting mounted soldiers and equines led by *calones*<sup>2</sup> can be found. These kinds of images are present in various parts of

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<sup>1</sup> An *ala* (wing) was a auxiliary unit of 500 (*ala quingenaria*) or 1000 (*ala milliaria*) peregrine mounted soldiers. Manfred Clauss, "ala," in *Lexikon lateinischer militärischer Fachausdrücke*, by Manfred Clauss (Stuttgart: Theiss, 1999), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Military servants working as stable hands. Ibidem, "calo," 20.

the Roman Empire, with the stelae from the Rhine region being the most well-known examples.<sup>3</sup> They can also be found on private funerary monuments throughout the Danubian provinces (Raetia, Noricum, Pannonia, Dalmatia, Moesia and Dacia).

Particularly in Pannonia<sup>4</sup> (Fig. 1) there seems to be a concentration of roughly sixty equine depictions on funerary reliefs of military members. For this study, six exemplary, and particularly complete specimens of funerary reliefs were selected to be discussed in a close iconographic analysis with focus on the depicted animals.

Funerary monuments are especially suitable to investigate depictions of identifiable Roman military members, as these private monuments were mostly put up by their peers or families. While these representational depictions do carry a bias, as they are supposed to portray the deceased as heroic or a good military member, the narrative carried is more focused on the personal identity. In contrast, public Roman monuments, such as columns and arches of emperors, depict an “official” ideal image of what a soldier should be,<sup>5</sup> and therefore differ in their narrative.

The earliest evidence of the presence of Roman mounted military in Pannonia dates back to the time of Emperor Claudius, 41-54 A.D.<sup>6</sup> During his reign the *ala Scubulorum* was stationed in Gorsium, while the *ala I Hispanorum* was stationed in Aquincum (Budapest). The strengthening of the Danubian *limes* by building a dense row of military camps along its border mostly took place during the Flavian epoch, from 69 A.D to the end of the first century.<sup>7</sup> Over 30 military camps were built in Pannonia, most of them contained auxiliary troops, but also four legions were permanently stationed here. This was a rather high amount of personnel for a province.<sup>8</sup>

The commemorated military of the investigated funerary monuments all belonged to auxiliary units. Four of them belonged to the *alae*, the other two belonged (at least for a certain time) to the *cohortes*.<sup>9</sup> One of them went on into the *legio XV Apollinaris*. Three of the reliefs depict equestrians on their horses, the other three show horses held by their reins by a person. Most of the time they are interpreted to be a *calo*, sometimes as the equestrian themselves.<sup>10</sup> Details concerning the specific objects will be discussed in the following.

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<sup>3</sup> Mathilde Schleiermacher, *Römische Reitergrabsteine. Kaiserzeitlichen Reliefs des triumphierenden Reiters* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1984).

<sup>4</sup> Nowadays corresponding to vast parts of eastern Austria and western Hungary, as well as minor parts of southern Slovakia, northern Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

<sup>5</sup> Hannsjörg Ubl, *Waffen und Uniform des römischen Heeres der Prinzipatsepoche nach den Grabreliefs Noricums und Pannoniens* (Vienna: UniPress, 2013), XI.

<sup>6</sup> László Borhy, *Die Römer in Ungarn* (Darmstadt: WGB, Zabern, 2014), 46.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, 46.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, 53.

<sup>9</sup> *Cohortes* were mostly auxiliary infantry troops. Partly mounted troops were called *cohorts equitatae*. Manfred Clauss, “cohors; cohors equitata,” in *Lexikon lateinischer militärischer Fachausdrücke*, by Manfred Clauss (Stuttgart: Theiss, 1999), 28.

<sup>10</sup> Stefanie Hoss, “The military belts of the equites,” in *Waffen in Aktion. Akten der 16. Internationalen Roman Military Equipment Conference (ROMECC)*, Xanten, 2007, 315 (Mainz: von Zabern, 2009).



Fig. 1. Map of Noricum and Pannonia with (estimated) borders 211 A.D.

## II. Depictions of equines on Pannonian funerary reliefs

### A. *Equestrians riding horses*

Depictions of horses are rather common within funerary contexts of the military.<sup>11</sup> That is especially the case when discussing the motif of the galloping rider on his horse. It goes back to Greek funerary depictions, which found their way into the Roman image repertoire during the fifth to fourth century B.C.<sup>12</sup> The most prominent examples of Roman imperial funerary stelae depicting equestrians are the ones from the Rhine area, which have been in depth evaluated by Mathilde Schleiernmacher in her dissertation from 1984. These stelae mostly depict a galloping equestrian holding up a lance, ready to strike. He is accompanied by a *calo* on foot, while the rider tramples down an enemy, who is most of the time positioned under the front hooves of his horse (Fig. 1).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Ann Hyland, *Equus. The horse in the Roman World* (London: Batsford, 1990), 131.

<sup>12</sup> Mathilde Schleiernmacher, "Zu Ikonographie und Herleitung des Reitermotivs auf römischen Grabsteinen," *BOREAS* 4 (1981): 67.

<sup>13</sup> Schleiernmacher, *Römische Reitergrabsteine*, 51; 57.

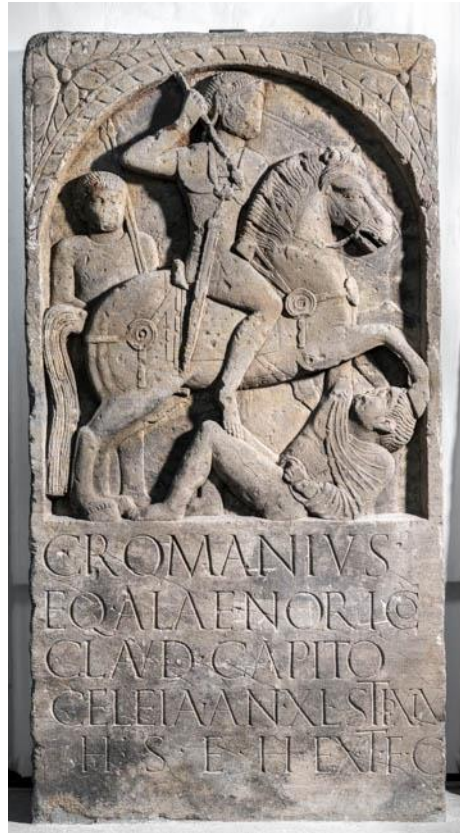


Fig. 2. Example of a funerary stele from the Rhine area.  
Stele of Caius Romanus Capito from Mainz.  
Photo Landesmuseum Mainz/O. Harl 2016.

Schleiermacher has pointed out that the depictions from the Danubian provinces differ from the ones on the Rhine, even though some aspects of the motif had been brought to the region during the first century A.D. by military from the western provinces. The images make up the main reliefs of their stelae in the Rhine region. While this also occurs in the Danubian region, more often they are reduced to minor attributes and therefore smaller depictions. Reductions can also be seen within the motif itself, as it often lacks the depiction of the enemy, the *calo*, or, as is most often the case, both.<sup>14</sup>

What also seems to be reduced sometimes is the depicted gait. While the equestrians from the Rhine area are shown dynamically galloping in the middle of an attack, some of the Danubian equestrians are just striding. So, the motif of rider and horse can be reduced to its bare minimum before becoming indecipherable.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, 51; 57.

For this study three depictions of equestrians have been examined closely. One galloping example from Upper Pannonia and two striding ones. One of them is from Upper Pannonia as well, while the other is from Lower Pannonia.

The portrait stele of Acrabanis (Fig. 3) from Arrabona, Upper Pannonia (near modern Győr, Hungary) dates between 50 and 70 A.D.<sup>15</sup> It is of rectangular shape with a gabled upper close. The funerary inscription is positioned in a framed field in the lower half of the stele. Acrabanis was a member of the *Ala I Augusta Ituraeorum*, of which the epithet *sagittariorum* or *sagittaria* (“of the archers”) is known from military diplomas and bricks.<sup>16</sup> His specific position within the *ala* is not mentioned. Above the inscription field lies a polygonal, roughly rectangular niche. Its lower half is slightly broader, the transition from the narrower higher part is through a right angle. Within the niche a portrait of a beardless male with short hair can be seen. Over his chest, within the lower, broader part of the niche, lies the depiction of an equestrian galloping towards the right and using a bow and arrows. On the right side of the stele, next to the edge of the niche, a target with three bows is depicted.

The equestrian is clad in a short-sleeved *lorica hamata*,<sup>17</sup> which reaches down to his mid thigh, and pants, which reach his mid calf. He is holding a recurved bow in his left hand,<sup>18</sup> which he draws with his right. Some parts of the horse’s tack are still visible. The frontal and rear horn of the saddle, as well as a small strip of the saddle pad can be seen. The reins are lying upon the horse’s neck, suggesting that the equestrian is riding his maneuver without using them.<sup>19</sup> The depicted movement of his horse suggests great speed. Its hindlegs are stretched back, no more below its body, with the rear hooves seemingly standing on the edge of the niche. Meanwhile its forelegs are covering ground as they reach out, stretching far to the front. This image schema of long, stretched back hindlegs, a rather flat, moved body and long, thrown-out forelegs was rightfully defined by Claudia Knoerle as a so-called racing gallop.<sup>20</sup> It can be assumed, that this kind of very fast paced gallop is what is depicted upon the stele of Acrabanis. Their depiction of such, combined with the fact, that the equestrian is riding his maneuver freehand, concentrating on his archery, could be meant as a display of his excellent skills of horsemanship. Additionally, his skills as an archer are emphasized by the display of the speed of his horse and the depicted target. The target on the right side of the stele is adorned with three arrows. All three of them are in a vertical line around the center of the target, with the middle one sticking in the “bullseye.” The depiction emphasizes his skills and dexterity as an archer and horseman, seemingly almost implying the epithet *sagittariorum/sagittaria* through the image. His representation as a warrior, which could have been emphasized more by depicting him hitting a living target, such as an enemy, seems

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<sup>15</sup> Friederike Harl and Ortoft Harl, *Ubi Erat Lupa*, <http://lupa.at/3367> (accessed November 2022).

<sup>16</sup> E. g. CIL 16, 00057(EDCS-12300261); EDCS-48500200; EDCS-18300308.

<sup>17</sup> Chain mail protecting the torso. Martijn A. Wijnhoven, “Der römische Kettenpanzer,” *Der Limes* 13/1 (2019): 5.

<sup>18</sup> Ubl, *Waffen und Uniform des römischen Heeres*, XXXVI, 51; 202.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>20</sup> Claudia Knoerle, “Zur Rolle des Pferdes in der Bildkunst der römischen Kaiserzeit” (PhD diss., Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich, 2022), 165.

to be secondary. For comparison, the Upper Pannonian portrait stele of Tiberius Iulius Rufus (Fig. 4), found in Walbersdorf, Austria, also shows a mounted archer followed by an eagle, with a fallen enemy in front of him. An arrow sticks out of the enemy's forehead. Behind the equestrian another enemy can be seen lying on the ground with an arrow sticking out of his chest. The archer's horse is also depicted in a race gallop, giving the scene a similar dynamic appearance to the first one, but with an emphasis on his warrior status and actions in battle rather than his skills as an archer.



Fig. 3 Stele of Acrabanis.  
Photo Xántus János Múzeum  
Győr/ O. Harl 1998.



Fig. 4 Stele of Tiberius Iulius Rufus.  
Photo Liszt Ferenc  
Múzeum Sopron/ O. Harl 1998

The stele of Cusides (Fig. 5) from Intercisa, Lower Pannonia (nowadays near Dunaujváros, Hungary) dates between 90 and 114 A.D.<sup>21</sup> It has a rectangular shape closing with a framed gable, which is decorated with a rosette in its center. An equally framed inscription field is positioned roughly above the lower third of the stele. Above it, between inscription and gable, is a shallow rectangular niche containing the only figural image of the monument, making it the main image. It consists of an equestrian riding his horse towards the left. Cusides was a member of the *Ala I*

<sup>21</sup> Ubl, *Waffen und Uniform des römischen Heeres*, XXXVII, 54.

*Tungrorum Frontoniana*, mostly just called *Ala Frontoniana* between 80 and 114 A.D. His position is not specified in the inscription.



Fig. 5 Stele of Cusides. Photo Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Budapest/ O. Harl 2006

The depicted equestrian is wearing a short-sleeved *lorica hamata*, pants, which reach to his mid calves, and boots. His *sagum*<sup>22</sup> is fixated above his right shoulder by a disc brooch. It drapes over his chest, back and bend left arm.<sup>23</sup> He wears no visible offensive weapons. His truncated oval shield is fixated in the crook of the left arm, lying behind it, so the whole body of the equestrian stays visible, giving way of sight and emphasizing his detailed attire as well as the representation of himself. The entire tack assemblage is visible and detailed. A long, fringed blanket hangs down from the saddle. Its frontal horn is visible, while the rear one is covered by the equestrian's shield. The breast girth is adorned with two round *phalerae*,<sup>24</sup> one at the shoulder and one centrally in the middle of the chest of the animal. Behind the saddle a breeching

<sup>22</sup> Cloak, comprised of a rectangular wool cloth, pinned by a *fibula* (brooch) over the right chest/shoulder. Graham Sumner, "cloaks," in *The Encyclopedia of the Roman Army I*, by Yann Le Bohec et al. (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 247.

<sup>23</sup> Ubl, *Waffen und Uniform des römischen Heeres*, XXXVII, 54.

<sup>24</sup> Round metal plates used as a decoration placed upon the chest of military, and also as an ornament on horses. Yann Le Bohec et al. "phalerae," in *The Encyclopedia of the Roman Army II*, by Yann Le Bohec et al. (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 745.



is visible. It is also equipped with a *phalera* at the middle of the thigh. Both of the *phalerae* at the side of the horse, the one at the shoulder as well as the one at the thigh have a hanging object, maybe a piece of cloth or leather, attached to them. The bridle and reins are distributed by small discs at the crossing points of the straps.<sup>25</sup>

The horse is depicted striding. It is possible this represents a parade gait, specifically a cadenced or “Spanish walk”. Knoerle defined this gait as the following: “the schema of the cadenced walk is signified by a foreleg being raised in a 90°-angle, with overall parallel step sequence”<sup>26</sup> (translated by the author). This seems to be the only option for the described depiction, as the raised right foreleg is clearly visible and the raised right hindleg is clearly indicating movement, which is not a trot, as that would have a crossed step sequence. What presents an issue here is the lifted right hind leg. The depicted stepping sequence might imply a pace, a lateral two-beat gait, that is not present in all equids. However, we know of pacing horses from the Iberian Peninsula in Pliny's Natural History 8.72, in which he describes their gait as very easy (and therefore advantageous) and mentions the practice of training not naturally pacing horses “to amble”. The depiction may equally be an unintentional execution by the sculptor.

The stele of Titus Flavius Ateboduu (Fig. 6) from Andautonia, Upper Pannonia (modern Odra close to Zagreb, Croatia) is a richly decorated monument from the beginning of the second century.<sup>27</sup> Like the previous monuments it is a rectangular stele with a gable but contains far more decorative elements. Upon each side of the framed gable sits a lion with a ram's head between its paws, within it a Gorgon is depicted with two birds, one on each side. The stele is executed in an architectural style, below the gable on the implied layered architrave is a frieze of lotus. The architrave is held by two scaled semi-columns with Corinthian capitals on the left and the right side of the stele. Between them is the inscription. Below this, in the lower quarter of the stele there are three depictions, each within their own niche. On the left and on the right side, below the columns are two mourning *erotes* (winged geniuses).<sup>28</sup> They frame the central depiction of an equestrian riding to the right. The inscription states that Titus Flavius Ateboduu was a high-ranking official of the *Cohors II Alpinorum equitata*, a partly mounted auxiliary unit. He lived to the age of 75 and had retired from his position as *cornicularius praefectus*.<sup>29</sup> Mentioned with him are his wife Crispina, 55 years old, and his grandson Flavius Augurinus, 5 years old.<sup>30</sup>

The depicted equestrian is similar to the depiction from the stele of Cusides. He is depicted wearing a short-sleeved tunic and probably body armor, though only its

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<sup>25</sup> Ubl, *Waffen und Uniform des römischen Heeres*, XXXVII, 54.

<sup>26</sup> Knoerle, “Zur Rolle des Pferdes,” 145.

<sup>27</sup> Ante Rendić-Miočević, “The Marble Funerary Stele of the Chors II Varcianorum Equitata's Veteran, Titus Flavius Ateboduu from the Odra Village near Zagreb,” in *Sepulkralna skulptura zapadnog Ilirika i susjednih oblasti u doba Rimskog Carstva. Zbornik radova s međunarodnog simpozija održanog od 27. do 30. rujna 2009, Split (Funerary sculpture of the Western Illyricum and neighbouring regions of the Roman Empire. Proceedings of the International Scholarly Conference)*, Split, 2009, 352 (Split: Književni Krug, 2013).

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem, 365.

<sup>29</sup> The *cornicularius* led the office of each military unit. Manfred Clauss, “cornicularius,” in *Lexikon lateinischer militärischer Fachausdrücke*, by Manfred Clauss (Stuttgart: Theiss, 1999), 32-33.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, 356-357.

ends are visible today. At hip level *pteruges*<sup>31</sup> can be seen.<sup>32</sup> Like the before mentioned equestrian he is depicted wearing a *sagum*, that is closed above his right shoulder through a disk brooch. He is also wearing pants, which reach down to his calves, as well as boots. In his lowered right hand, he is holding a short javelin, his arm is slightly bent. On his left side, mostly hidden behind him and his horse, there is a glimpse of the upper round edge of a shield.<sup>33</sup> The bearded equestrian is gazing back to the left, opposite of his riding direction. Just like the equestrian before, he is not shown within attack, but rather striding, accentuating more on his representation as such rather than his skills and actions in battle. This is emphasized by the depiction of his horse in a parade gait.<sup>34</sup> It is a depiction of the cadenced or “Spanish walk”, as was described concerning the monument before this one, but the image at hand fulfills more criteria as a naturalistic depiction of this gait. This kind of dressage can also be observed in long-reining scenes, in which the horse is controlled by a human figure from behind, representing the funeral parade, on stelae from the western provinces.<sup>35</sup>

The horse’s left front leg is lifted in the 90°-angle characteristic for the gait, while its hindlegs are shown both standing on the ground, with the farther towards the barrel of the horse. This is probably expressing the hind legs standing wide apart in the two-dimensional genre that reliefs are. Hindlegs, which are standing far apart to counterbalance the wide step of the forelegs, are a common way to express the cadenced walk in Roman image schemes.<sup>36</sup>

The horse’s tack is also executed and still visible in detail. The saddle, upon which the equestrian is mounted, is depicted close to the horse’s neck, with its frontal part adjusting to it. Its edge is described by Rendić-Miočević as ornamented along the whole length,<sup>37</sup> which is hard to make out when using only photographs. The fringed lower end of the saddle pad on the other hand is more distinct, a girth is not depicted. It can be assumed that it would be covered by the equestrian’s boot. Several other straps are depicted on the horse’s body. A breeching runs from the saddle to below the horse’s tail, in its chest and neck area three straps can be seen lying above each other. The upper strap probably belongs to a halter, the middle one might refer to the reins connected to the bridle<sup>38</sup>, which itself is only partly visible today. One can still see the noseband, as well as supposedly a ring-shaped ornament on the horse’s forehead.<sup>39</sup> The mouth of the horse is open, its ears are depicted spread apart. Another roughly ring-shaped object can be found on lowest of the three straps,

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<sup>31</sup> *Pteruges*, latinized from *pteryges*, meaning “feathers/plumage”, are straps made from leather or possibly stiffened linen that are attached to Roman armor to protect the upper arms, respectively the lower abdomen. M.C. Bishop “Body Armor,” in *The Encyclopedia of the Roman Army I*, by Yann Le Bohec et al. (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 98.

<sup>32</sup> Rendić-Miočević, “The Marble Funerary Stele of [...] Titus Flavius Ateboduus,” 366.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibidem*, 367.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, 366; 368.

<sup>35</sup> M. C. Bishop “Cavalry equipment of the Roman army in the first century A.D.” in *Military equipment and the identity of Roman soldiers. Proceedings of the Fourth Roman military equipment conference*, Newcastle, 1986, 67 (Oxford: BAR, 1988).

<sup>36</sup> Knoerle, “Zur Rolle des Pferdes,” 145.

<sup>37</sup> Rendić-Miočević, “The Marble Funerary Stele of [...] Titus Flavius Ateboduus,” 366.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*.

probably a breast girth, in the middle on the chest of the horse. Rendić-Miočević interprets it as a possible *phalera*,<sup>40</sup> but one might also propose that both the forehead as well as the chest ring depict apotropaic pendants meant to protect the horse.<sup>41</sup>



Fig. 6 Stele of Ateboduus.  
Photo Arheoloski Muzej Zagreb/ O. Harl  
2013.

### *B. Horses being led or held by their reins*

The second image category discussed in this paper are depictions of one or more horses, that are held or led by their reins by male human figures. The identities of the latter are not entirely clear to this day. Often, they are interpreted as *calones*, sometimes as the equestrians themselves, which might be presenting their skills in training their horses.<sup>42</sup> Another possibility might be the depiction of the funerary parade, in which horses were presented on a long rein, as can be observed on western funerary stelae.<sup>43</sup> These depictions are mostly attributive images to a main image (e.g. a portrait of the deceased) within their stele in all their known areas of distribution. Just like the motif

<sup>40</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>41</sup> Stefanie Hoss, “Evening the odds. Apotropaic protection for horses,” *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies* 19 (2018): 81-82.

<sup>42</sup> Hoss, “The military belts of the equites,” 315.

<sup>43</sup> Bishop, “Cavalry equipment of the Roman army”, 67.

discussed before, these were popular in the Rhine region during the first century and spread to the Danuban region by military.<sup>44</sup>

The richly detailed portrait stele of Nertus Lingauster (Fig. 7) from Aquincum, Lower Pannonia (nowadays Budapest) dates between 40 and 60 A.D.<sup>45</sup> The upper part closes with a semicircular framed niche, in which the portrait of a beardless male can be seen. Right below the portrait niche is a relief depicting another male figure between two saddled horses. The group is positioned between two pilasters with Corinthian capitals. Below the image is the inscription of the stele between two spiraled semi-columns with Corinthian capitals, which are positioned right below the pilasters on the far left and right side of the stele. At the base of the stele two fighting roosters are depicted within a rectangular niche with one rosette in each corner. Nertus Lingauster was a retired *sesquiplicarius*,<sup>46</sup> who lived for 60 years, of which he served 36 in the *Ala I Hispanorum*. His stele was commissioned by his brother.

The person in between the two horses is positioned centrally on the stele. All three depictions take up roughly the same amount of space on the stele, while most is filled with the inscription. The horses are shown sideways. Both are facing towards the person in the middle, so the left horse is facing to the right and the right horse is facing to the left. The depicted figure is holding them very close to where their snaffle would be, his arms are raised to about shoulder height and slightly bend, as he is not much taller than the withers height of the horses. Due to his grip their heads are pointing down. He is clad in a girthed tunica, otherwise hardly any details of his attire can be seen. The horses are saddled with four-horned saddles. Possible pads laying below them cannot be distinguished from the saddles themselves due to the condition of the relief. Each saddle is fixed by several straps. The main girth leads down from the frontal lower corner of the saddle along the barrel of each horse. It's positioned quite far in the front, just behind the horses' forelegs. On the left horse both a chest girth and a crupper are visible, on the right one only the chest girth is clearly identifiable, though a crupper could have been within the possibilities as well. The reins of the left horse are lying upon the middle of its neck. The same might be the case for the right horse, where the reins can be assumed to be depicted right upon the bending of its neck, but just like its crupper it is less unambiguous on this animal due to its state of preservation. Bridles cannot be identified based on the photographic evidence alone. The inner foreleg of each horse is raised at a high angle, the other legs standing straight down on the ground. Based on their posture alone one could of course identify this as the horses performing a cadenced walk as it has been discussed before concerning the monuments depicting equestrians. This, however, would seem counterintuitive when one considers the whole image. As described before, the depicted person is holding the horses quite tightly, leaving

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<sup>44</sup> Hoss, "The military belts of the equites," 315.

<sup>45</sup> Barnabás Lőrincz, *Die römischen Hilfstruppen in Pannonien während der Prinzipatszeit. Teil I, Die Inschriften* (Vienna: Forschungsgesellschaft Wiener Stadtarchäologie, 2001), no. 126.

<sup>46</sup> Officer of the *ala*, who earned 1,5 x the loan of a regular military. Manfred Clauss, "sesquiplicarius," in *Lexikon lateinischer militärischer Fachausdrücke*, by Manfred Clauss (Stuttgart: Theiss, 1999), 78. Might have held the right to more than one military horse together with the *duplicarius* and other higher ranks. Hoss, "The military belts of the equites," 314.

hardly any room for possible movement. Also, the horses are positioned opposite each other, leaving no space for possible forward movements of either, especially when considering the short lead they are kept on again. Therefore, it could be argued that these horses are being presented as standing. This would be further supported by the positioning of their hindlegs, which stand together more closely than the ones of the horse on the stele of Titus Flavius Ateboduus, with their inner hindlegs standing straighter and not slightly angled toward the walking direction of the horse. What could be depicted here is what Knoerle described as scraping or stomping horses. These behaviors occur in horses out of impatience, for example during waiting periods.<sup>47</sup>

To conclude, the depiction seems to show two horses fully equipped for their deployment as mounts, eagerly standing by while being held closely by a *calo*. The group suits the representation of Nertus Lingauster well, who, as a *sesquiplicarius*, was not only entitled to a higher pay, but also probably had the right to own more than one horse, as opposed to regular equestrians of the Roman military.<sup>48</sup>



Fig. 7 Stele of Nertus Lingauster.  
Photo Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Budapest/O. Harl 2008

<sup>47</sup> Knoerle, “Zur Rolle des Pferdes,” 135-136.

<sup>48</sup> Hoss, “The military belts of the equites,” 314.

The stele of Titus Calidius Severus (Fig. 8) dates between 71 and 80 A.D.<sup>49</sup> and was found at Carnuntum, Upper Pannonia (modern Bad Deutsch Altenburg, Austria). It is rectangular shaped with a framed gable. Within it a rosette is depicted, on its sides are bare acroters. Below the gable is the framed field of inscription. It takes up the upper half of the stele. The red paint of the letters is still visible. In the lower half two depictions are staked in two rectangular, vertical registers. The upper niche shows some pieces of equipment of the deceased. It is roughly twice as high as the lower niche, which is of a more elongated shape. Within the niche a human figure is standing frontally on the left side. To his right a horse is depicted, which the person restrains on a short leading rein.<sup>50</sup>



Fig. 8 Stele of Titus Calidius Severus.  
Photo Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien/O. Harl.

Titus Calidius Severus was an equestrian, later an *optio*<sup>51</sup> and a decurion within the *Cobors I Alpinorum*. Later he went on to be centurion in the *Legio XV Apollinaris*. He lived for 58 years, 34 years of those were in the Roman military. His stele was commissioned by his brother.

The *militaria* shown in the upper register below the inscription emphasize his identity as a centurion: on the left side a short-sleeved *lorica squamata*<sup>52</sup> with *pteruges*

<sup>49</sup> Harl and Harl, *Ubi Erat Lupa*, <http://lupa.at/80>.

<sup>50</sup> Ubl, *Waffen und Uniform des römischen Heeres*, XXXIV, 42.

<sup>51</sup> Officer below the centurion (legions)/ decurion (auxiliary). Manfred Claus, “optio,” in *Lexikon lateinischer militärischer Fachausdrücke*, by Manfred Claus (Stuttgart: Theiss, 1999), 62.

<sup>52</sup> Scale armor. M.C. Bishop “Body Armor,” in *The Encyclopedia of the Roman Army I*, by Yann Le Bohec et al. (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 100.

on the lower hem is depicted. The register is parted in the middle by the vertical depiction of a *vitis*, the centurion's vine-staff. On the right side a helmet is depicted above two greaves, which are decorated with masks above the knees. The helmet itself, a *cassis* typical for centurions, features a sideways plume and broad cheek flaps.<sup>53</sup>

In the register below the human figure on the left side is wearing a *paenula*<sup>54</sup> over his tunica, which reaches down to his knee. He is protected by a *lorica hamata* with *pteruges* and a simple *cingulum*.<sup>55</sup> He is standing frontally; his arms are both angled away from his torso and bend towards the right so both forearms are held horizontally. With his left hand he is leading the horse on his right, which is moving towards him. The horse is wearing a horned saddle, from which three ornamental straps are each hanging down in the back and in the front. Below the saddle is a small pad. No girth below the saddle is visible, only a breast grith and a breeching depicted as broad linear straps. The reins, leading from the snaffle to the withers of the horse, are executed in a similar fashion. The right, inner foreleg of the horse is slightly raised of the ground. The same is true for its left hind leg, which indicates the diagonal two-beat step sequence of a trot. It is one of the few examples of depicted trotting in Roman contexts and beyond that, replaces the parade gait that is otherwise typical for horse depictions on funerary monuments.<sup>57</sup> The positioning and gesticulation of the person combined with the movement of the horse indicates that a so-called *Pferdevorführszene* is depicted, where the horse as well as the skills as a horseman of the person training it are represented.<sup>58</sup> This aspect of the deceased, whether it referred to his own skilled horsemanship or his privilege to own both a well-trained horse and a skilled *calo*,<sup>59</sup> was emphasized additionally to his rank as a centurion.

Just like the stele of Nertus Lingauster the last stele was found in Aquincum, but it dates a century later, in the middle of the second century A.D.<sup>60</sup> The stele of Caius Cominius Cominianus (Fig. 9) is of a rectangular shape. In contrast to the other monuments its gable is not executed three-dimensionally but as a relief within the basic shape. It consists of a profiled triangular gable with a palm branch and semipalmette in the triangular shapes above each corner of the gable. The gable sits upon a stepped architrave, which is held up by two semi-columns on the left and the right side of the stele. Between the columns lies the main image of the monument. Depicted is a so-called *Totenmah*<sup>61</sup>.<sup>62</sup> The deceased is presented lying on a *klinē*,<sup>63</sup> holding a cup in his left hand. Below him on the right side, raised slightly above the

<sup>53</sup> Ubl, *Waffen und Uniform des römischen Heeres*, XXXIV, 42.

<sup>54</sup> Cloak made from a semicircular wool cloth with an attached hood.

<sup>55</sup> Military belt with metal fittings. Manfred Clauss, "cingulum," in *Lexikon lateinischer militärischer Fachausdrücke*, by Manfred Clauss (Stuttgart: Theiss, 1999), 26.

<sup>56</sup> Ubl, *Waffen und Uniform des römischen Heeres*, XXXIV, 42.

<sup>57</sup> Knoerle, "Zur Rolle des Pferdes," 150.

<sup>58</sup> Hoss, "The military belts of the equites," 315.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>60</sup> Barnabás Lőrincz, "Zu den Besatzungen der Auxiliarkastelle in Ostpannonien," in *Römische Städte und Festungen an der Donau. Akten der regionalen Konferenz*, Belgrad, 2003, 61 (Belgrad: Kompromis-design, 2005).

<sup>61</sup> (commemorative) meal for the dead.

<sup>62</sup> Harl and Harl, *Ubi Erat Lupa*, <http://lupa.at/3032>

<sup>63</sup> Furniture upon which meals were eaten in a lying position by the Greeks and later the Romans.

ground level of his seating by a small platform is a three-legged table. On its right side a servant is standing by. On the left side, next to the platform and on ground level stands a *calo* with a round shield and a saddled and bridled horse on his left. Below the image lies the framed inscription field. The lower part of the monument is lost.

Caius Cominius Cominianus was an equestrian of the *Ala I Brittonum*. He only served for four years before dying at the young age of twenty. His brother commissioned the stele. The youthful, beardless appearance of the man lying on the *klinē* clad in a tunica and cloak seems fitting to the circumstances. The other figures, the servants as well as the horse, appear miniscule compared to him, as he is depicted several times their size. The *calo* is depicted frontally. He seems to be clad in a tunica reaching down to his mid thighs, though details are hard to make out due to the state of preservation and the execution of the monument. In his left hand he is holding a round shield. He is holding it up in front of his body at roughly the height of his hip. With his right hand he is grasping near the reins of the horse. His arm is slightly raised and bent at a right angle, as the horses' muzzle is around the height of his head.



Fig. 9. Stele of Caius Cominius Cominianus.  
Photo Aquincumi Múzeum Budapest/O. Harl 2006.



The horse's neck is raised straight up. It is wearing a horned saddle of oval shape, below it a small pad is visible. At the back of the saddle two ornamental straps are hanging down. The saddle is fixated by a crupper being depicted in form of a thin line and a broader collar girth. The reins lead from the horse's bridle to its withers. The bridle is formed by a snaffle visible at the corner of the horse's mouth, a possible cheek piece (unclear, as it might also merely be a part of the rein, which leads from the snaffle towards the neck close to the horse's face) and a throat lash with a head piece. The horse is positioned slightly lower than the *calo*. Its left foreleg is raised at a high angle, while its left hindleg is brought forward and stands slightly higher than the other hindleg. This gives the impression as if the horse is about to step up on the level of the *calo*, towards the higher platform. However, the positioning might also merely be the practical result of a lack of space within the stele. In this case it cannot be determined for sure if the depicted horse is supposed to be presented in a parade gait or scraping/stomping,<sup>64</sup> though the latter seems slightly more reasonable when considering the whole scenic setting.

This is an example of the horse and *calo* being reduced to a mere attribute within a different image schema. This seems to be the case often during times of peace, when the identity of the soldier as such fades into the background in favor of other, more civil forms of depiction, e. g. within portraits or scenes of the *Totenmahl*.<sup>65</sup> However, the horse and *calo* could still be deemed important enough to integrate them on a smaller scale within the image, underlining the deceased's identity as an equestrian.

### III. Conclusions

By closely observing six depictions of horses and equestrians on Roman funerary steles of members of the military found in Pannonia several insights concerning the representation format and significance of both animals and individuals could be gained. Different aspects of the deceased were emphasized through the equine depictions on their stelae. One obvious aspect could be their identity and privilege of being an equestrian. This is probably applicable to all the examined images, but it seems more apparent within the images of the equestrians Titus Flavius Atebodius and especially Cusides, on whose stele it represents the main image. It can also be found within the group of depictions of horses being led or held by their reins by individuals. The closer inspection of those showed, that this aspect is in and of itself multifaceted: while it is depicted on the stele of Titus Calidius Severus *additionally* to his identity as a centurion of a legion, in the case of Nertus Lingauster his privilege as a *sesquiplicarius* to own more than one horse is emphasized. On the stele of Caius Cominius Cominianus on the other hand the depiction of a horse and *calo* might seem less prioritized, as they are reduced to a component of the *Totenmahl* scene. However, they are still considered important enough to be added specifically, even though the inscription already identifies the deceased as an equestrian. Concerning the

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<sup>64</sup> Knoerle, "Zur Rolle des Pferdes," 145-146.

<sup>65</sup> Schleiermacher, *Römische Reitergrabsteine*, 11.

interpretation of these depictions one must of course keep in mind that more than one symbolic meaning might be carried through each image, and not all might be recognized by modern research. The depicted equines might (additionally) partake in the role of psychopomps.<sup>66</sup> Other aspects that could be emphasized through these depictions are certain sets of skills of the commemorated. Whether it was their skills as horsemen in general or more specific sets, as the example of Acrabanis shows him as an excellent archer, who can hit his target while riding his horse free-handedly at the high speed of a fast gallop. This differentiates him from the compared mounted archer Tiberius Iulius Rufus, whose skills in battle are emphasized by depicting him while shooting and killing enemies.

By closely observing the representation format of the horses themselves and categorizing the provincial Pannonian images based on the hippological framework concerning the depictions of horses in Roman art put down recently by Claudia Knoerle<sup>67</sup> it became clear that in most cases naturalistic movements of the animals are implied and differences can be distinguished quite certainly. Therefore, the provincial horse depictions are not as formulaic as they might appear at first glance due to the large amounts of similar images. Though one of course must also consider that the quality of the images varies strongly within the provinces and the selected examples were of good quality.

Regarding the value of information concerning the equipment shown upon horses and equestrians alike many pieces of equipment could be identified in detail. This comes as less of a surprise, as provincial funerary monuments might have been of a lower technical quality compared to the Roman ones, but the depictions were often more detailed and therefore more informative about the equipment of horses and equestrians alike.<sup>68</sup>

The selected depictions seem to underline visually the meanings transported by the affiliated inscriptions. For example, Caius Cominius Cominianus is identified as an equestrian within the inscription of his stele. However, it is stressed again by the added depiction in his *Totenmahl* scene. The same is true for the *sesquiplicarius* Nertus Lingauster, whose entitlement to more than one horse should be clear when reading his rank (at least for military personnel), but two horses are specifically depicted nevertheless. In one case, upon the stele of Acrabanis, the depiction seems to complement what is left out of the inscription. Acrabanis is shown to be an excellent mounted archer. His unit, the *Ala I Augusta Ituraeorum* held the epithet *sagittariorum* or *sagittaria*. The information about the significance of archery in his unit seems to have been added to the image.

To conclude, the investigated stelae showed that different aspects of the deceased military member could be expressed through the equine depictions. They seem to have played an important role in the mounted soldiers' identity.

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<sup>66</sup> Bishop, "Cavalry equipment of the Roman army", 67.

<sup>67</sup> Knoerle, "Zur Rolle des Pferdes."

<sup>68</sup> Hoss, "The military belts of the equites," 314.

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### Databases

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EDCS	<i>Epigraphik-Datenbank Claus-Slaby</i>