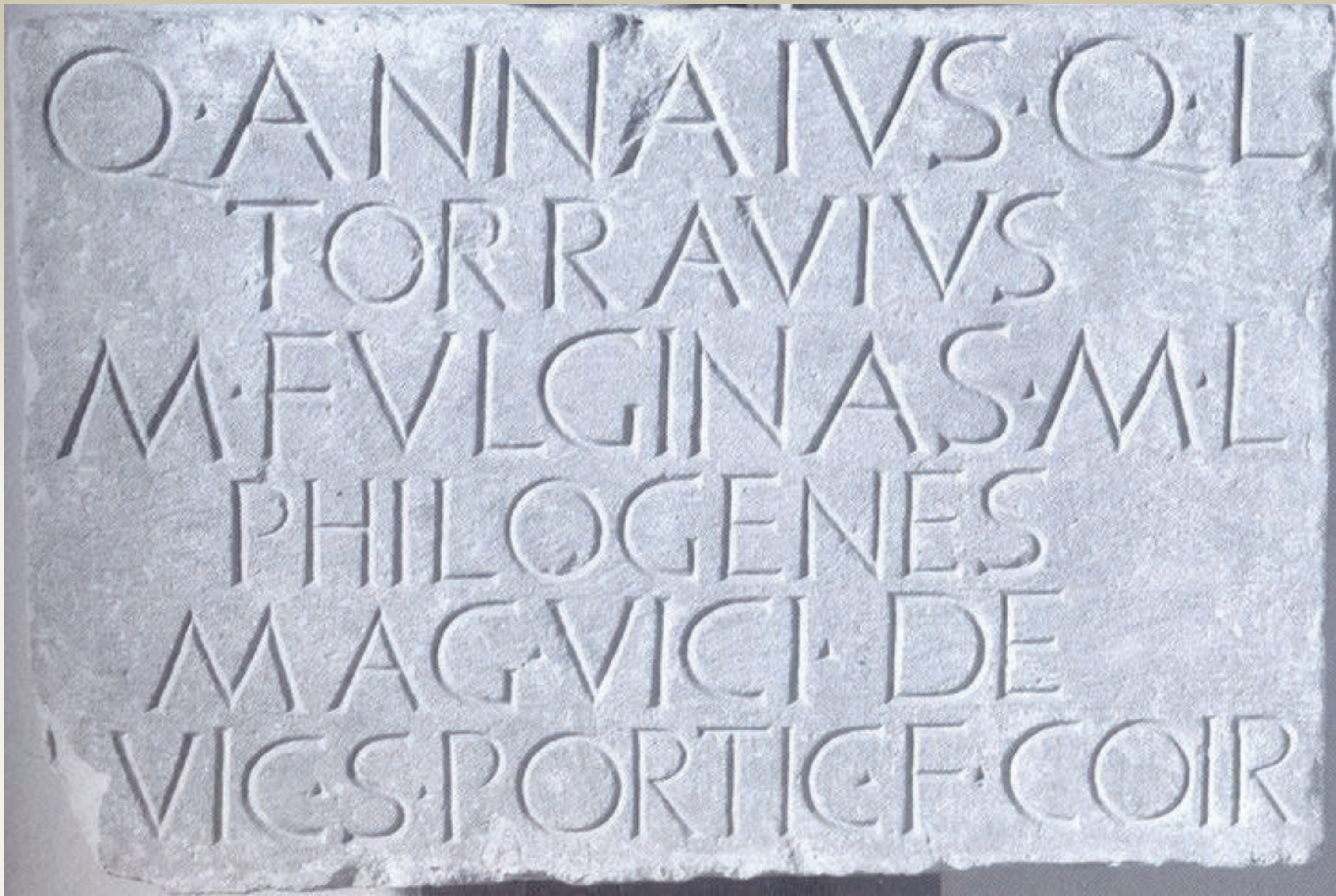


Aquileian Families east of the Alps: Nauportus and Emona.



Aquileian Families East of the Alps: Nauportus and Emona

Aquileia, which is nearest of all to the recess of the Gulf, was founded by the Romans as a fortress against the barbarians;[...] Aquileia has been given over as an emporium for those tribes of the Illyrians that live near the Ister (Danube river); the latter load on wagons and carry inland the products of the sea, and wine stored in wooden jars, and also olive-oil, whereas the former get in exchange slaves, cattle, and hides. (Strabo, *Geogr.*, V. 1, 8)

Strabo's words show clearly the double nature of the Roman settlement of Aquileia, founded in 181 BC at the centre of the Friulan plain. The city arose at some distance from the sea, safe from the incursions of the Istrian and Illyrian pirates and close to the Natissa, a navigable river. It was soon connected to the Roman road network of the Padan plain. Being a peripheral centre of north-eastern Italy and a military outpost, Aquileia developed as a trade centre directed towards the regions east of the Alps.

Already from the end of the 2nd century BC, merchants and businessmen from all over Italy began to settle in the city, lured by the possibilities of profit provided by the Transalpine regions, which were gradually drawn into the Roman sphere of influence. The military conquest of the Illyricum (9-6 BC) granted the Roman traders access to the commerce of Aquileia along the ancient Amber Route, well known and used since early history.

From the Danube river the main road went westwards meeting the Sava and following the Liubljanica as far as the Roman settlements of *Emona* and *Nauportus*, placed before the mountain passes through which it was possible to reach Italy. *Nauportus* (Vrhnika) was a Roman *vicus* which was granted an almost municipal autonomy. It arose on the site of an ancient Celtic market place, about half way between Aquileia and *Segesta/Sciscia*.

For some decades it played the role of last Roman trade post on the route going to the East. From Aquileia cargoes were transported there on wagons. At *Nauportus* they were transferred to boats and conveyed down the rivers *Emona* (Liubljanica) and *Savus* (Sava) and further downstream to the Danube. (Tac. *Ann.*, I. 10; Plin. *Nat. Hist.*, III, 22). After the foundation of the city of *Emona* at a distance of only 15 miles from *Nauportus*, between the end of the Republican period and the early Principate, *Nauportus* gradually lost its former importance and decayed.

Emona was also founded on a preexisting Celtic site as a Roman *castrum* at the beginning of the 1st century AD (around 14 AD). The importance of the city increased in the following years until it became a *colonia* under the emperor Claudius. A recent epigraphic discovery demonstrated that both these towns belonged to the territory of the Italian *X Regio*, which thus extended itself over both sides of the Oriental Alps.

From their foundation several members of Aquileian families or from Italic families with close relations with Aquileia, began to settle both in *Nauportus* and in *Emona*. Usually the *liberti* of a family got the task of creating the most favorable circumstances in order to establish commercial relations between the new territories and Aquileia's leading families. These *liberti* due to their remunerative activity were soon able to gain an important role within the local societies and the city administrations.

At *Nauportus* for example an inscription (CIL III. 3777) mentions a certain *P. Petronius P. libertus* and a certain *C. Fabius C. libertus Corbo*. Both were *magistri vici*, local low rank officers with police duties and the faculty of

administrating justice concerning questions of minor relevance. Another couple of *magistri vici* from *Nauportus* (CIL III. 3776) *Q. Annaius Q. libertus Torravius* and *M. Fulginas M. libertus Philogenes*, are responsible for the building of a *porticus*. Some years later *L. Servilius L.f. Sabinus* (CIL III. 3778) belonging to the Aquileian tribe *Velina*, contributes to the building of a temple for *Neptunus Augustus*, a divinity probably connected with the navigation along the river. This seems to be the field of activity of another *L. Servilius* who dedicates an altar with his pilots in correspondence of a very dangerous point for the navigation along the Sava river (AIJ 26). All these families, the *Petronii*, the *Fabii*, the *Annaii*, the *Fulginates* and the *Lucii Servilii* are attested and well known in Aquileia.

The Aquileian families attested in *Emona* after that centre took the place of *Nauportus* in the trade eastwards are completely different. *T. Caesernius Diphilus* is a freedman, *sexvir* of Aquileia, buried in *Emona* (AIJ 176). Other attested Aquileian *sexviri* are members of the *Caesernii* family, like the freedman *Ianuarius*, (CIL III. 3850) or belong to the *Marcii* or *Vellii* like the freedman *L. Marcius Philotimus*, (CIL III. 10772) and *T. Vellius Onesimus*, who deserves a special attention because he was *sexvir* and *Augustalis* in *Emona* and *sexvir* in Aquileia (CIL III. 3836). Other Aquileian families attested in the texts are the well known *Barbii*, a group mainly active in the trade with *Noricum*, the *Cantii*, the *Clodii* and the *Dindii*.

After having taken into consideration the epigraphic documents from both *Nauportus* and *Emona* some important elements emerge. It seems clear that the families that were able to create and organize the trade traffic from Aquileia to the east through *Nauportus*, were not able to maintain their prerogatives once *Emona* has become the new main point on the route to Pannonia and the Danube. Probably more prominent Aquileian families already active or developing in those same years their trade networks in Noricum and Dalmatia were able to take control on the traffics from and to *Emona*. The fact that many administrative officers of the Aquileian community were deeply involved in the economic and social life of the new foundation, suggests that the relationships between the Aquileian leading classes and *Emona* where more closer then what happened for *Nauportus*.

Research Framework

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(1) CIL 03, 3777 = CIL 01, 2286 (p. 1111) = ILLRP 34 = RINMS 1 = AE 1998, 548

Q(uintus) Annaius Q(uinti) l(ibertus) / Torravius / M(arcus) Fulginas M(arci) l(ibertus) / Philogenes / mag(istri) vici de / vic(i) s(ententia) portic(um) f(faciundam) coir(averunt)

(2-3) CIL 03, 3836a (p. 1734) = RINMS 9a

Dianae / Aug(ustae) sac(rum) / in memor(iam) / T(iti) Velli Ones(imi) / IIIIVir(i) et / Aug(ustalis) Emon(ae) / IIIIVir(i) Aq(uileiae) / [A]ug(ustalis) Paren(tii)/Eythicus et / Perigenes / lib(erti)



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