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Inscriptions of unknown soldiers of the Roman army

Abstract: This article presents three fragmentary inscriptions of Roman soldiers: no. 1 mentions an officer, probably a prefect of a cohort; no. 2 is the funerary inscription of a legionary tribune and no. 3 belongs to the grave of a soldier of *legio II Parthica*; a fourth inscription is too short to say anything about its content other than that it is funerary in character.

Keywords: Bithynia; *cohors equitata*; legio II Parthica; *miles*; Nikaia; *praefectus*; *protoarchon*; *tribunus*.

1) A Roman military officer

Fragmentary slab of grey limestone, built into the city wall of Nikaia, approx. 300 metres south of Lefke Kapı, with neat, probably second-century CE lettering.¹ The fragment, which was recorded by Sencer Şahin in 1986, no. 5, had originally probably been part of a statue pedestal. At lines 3–8 the right-hand edge of the stone is intact, and the text in these lines is flush at right (and probably was so at left, too). Unfortunately, no other, better photograph of the fragment is available.

Dimensions: H. 32 cm; W. 16 cm; Th. –; Lh. 3 cm. Date: probably 2nd c. CE.

[- - -]
 [- - -].Κ.[..]
 [- - -]ΙΣΕΡΙΟΥ
 [- - -]ΟΝ ΣΠΕΙ
 4 [- - -]Ν Ι Π Π Ι
 [- - -]ΠΡΩΤΗΣ
 [- - -]ΙΕΡΕΑ
 [- - -]Ν ΑΡ
 8 [- - -]ΟΣ
 [- - -]



[- - -] | [- - -].Κ.[..] | [- - -]ισερίου | [- - -]χειλίαρχ or ἑπαρχ]ον σπει|[ρης - - -]ν ιππι|[κῆς - - -]
 πρῶτης | [- - -]καὶ ἀρχ]ιερέα | [- - -]καὶ πρῶτο]ν ἄρ|[χοντα? - - -]ος | [- - -]

To ..., tribune(?) / prefect of the cohorts ... equitata, ... of the first ..., arch-priest, ... prôtos archôn ...

Line 1: The remnants of letters in this line suggest that one of them was a kappa preceded and followed by remnants of vertical hastas, which is too little for any meaningful reconstruction.

Line 2, -ΙΣΕΡΙΟΥ: It appears that the first extant letter in this line is a iôta (or perhaps the right-hand vertical hasta of an êta; cf. line 5 where the horizontal hasta, which might be missing in line 2 because of the fracture, does not touch the vertical hastae in the ligatured T and H). A search of this sequence of letters (ΙΣΕΡΙΟΥ, ΗΣΕΡΙΟΥ) in the ConcEyst database does not furnish any hit, while ΣΕΡΙΟΥ yields

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at least two entries: ... τῷ δὴ|μῷ τῷ Σεριουαδέων (AE 1973, 532 [Çiftlik, Phrygia]) and ... Δροσερίου τριβ(ούνου) (AE 1997, 1551 [Gadara, Syria-Palaestina]).² In addition, IDidyma 56 mentions a Λουκίου Πασσερίου Ῥωμύλου. However, the clearly visible vertical hasta before the sigma rules out any of these findings as a possible reading.³ Again, too little remains for meaningful speculation.

Lines 3–4: The two letters ON belong to a military title in the accusative case. If our man was the unit's commanding officer, he may have been a χειλίαρχος or, more probably, an ἑπαρχος.⁴ The term σπείρης was doubtless followed by the unit's number and ethnic name, of which the nû in line 4 is likely the last letter, presumably in the genitive plural.⁵

Line 5, πρώτης: This was probably the number of a second unit. The inscription obviously mentions (the) two military commands our man had held.

Line 6, -ιερέα: This is presumably the remnant of the word ἀρχιερέα, arch-priest, perhaps of the Imperial cult.⁶ The career of our man bears some similarity to that of a certain Patrokles of Nikaia who served as prefect of *cohors II Hispanorum pia fidelis* and *cohors I Ulpia Afrorum equitata* before becoming «[ἀρχιερέα Τρ]ιαννοῦ Ἀδριανοῦ Σεβαστοῦ καὶ πρώτον ἄρχοντα».⁷

Line 7, N AP: Like Patrokles, our officer may also have held the position of «πρώτος ἄρχων».⁸

The unknown man held at least two posts as commanding officer of military units, one of which seems to have been a *cohors equitata*; later on, probably in Nikaia (his home town?), he seems to have held a priesthood, perhaps that of the Imperial cult, and probably also the position of *prôtos archôn*. The fact that the titles are in the accusative case suggests that the inscription was honorary in character.

2) The military tribune -fus

Of unknown provenance, but probably from Nikaia, the stone is now in the garden of the Archaeological Museum of İznik, where it was recorded in 2003, no. 31; it is without inventory number.

Broken all round except for the right-hand side, the fragment of a marble stele features very neat second-century CE lettering with conspicuous apices.

Dimensions: H. 25 cm; W. 29 cm; Th. 23 cm; Lh. 2.5 cm (lines 2, 4–5); 4 cm (line 1); 5 cm (line 3). Date: probably 2nd c. CE.

[- - -]
 [- - -]HNVS
 2 [- - -]NO SVO
 [- - -]Ω ΓΑΙΟΥ
 4 [- - -]ΦΩ ΧΕΙΛΙΑΡΧΩ
 [- - -]Σ ΕΥΣΕΒΟΥΣ
 6 [- - -]ΥΣ
 [- - -]



² <http://www.ku.de/ggf/geschichte/altegesch/forschung/conceyst/>, version 7.0, Oct. 2009.

³ For the nomen Passerius see Solin – Salomies, Repertorium 138. Another possibility is the nomen Serius (p. 168).

⁴ E.g. ILS 9472: χειλίαρχον σπείρης πρώτης Μουσουλαιῶν ἱππικῆς; AE 1977, 840: ἑπαρχος σπείρης α' Λυσιτανῶν ἱππικῆς. Cf. Devijver, EORIA I 56–72, esp. 59–60, with examples.

⁵ Cf. fn. 4.

⁶ Cf. TAM IV.1, 33; Fernoux, Notables 353.

⁷ AE 1996, 1416. Cf. Devijver, PME P 120; Spaul, Cohors² 124–125: *cohors II Hispanorum pia fidelis equitata*; 460–461: *cohors I Ulpia Afrorum equitata civium Romanorum*; Fernoux, Notables 420–421. Of the equestrian officers listed by Devijver (EORIA I 321) as hailing from Nikaia, only Patrokles served twice as *praefectus cohortis*. For καὶ... cf. AE 1996, 1416.

⁸ For πρώτος ἄρχων see Fernoux, Notables 323–326; Adak 2007.

[- - -] | [- - - ?Dap]hnus | [- - - patro]no suo, | [- - -]φ Γαίου | [υίῳ? - - - ?Ρού]φω χειλιάρχω | [λεγιῶνος - - -]ς εὐσεβοῦς | [πιστῆς - - -]υς | [- - - τῷ ἑαυτοῦ πάτρωνι?].

... *Daphnus(?)* ... to his patron. To ... *Rufus(?)*, son of *Gaius*, ... *tribune of the legio ... pia fidelis*, ... to his patron(?)

Line 1: A search of *Epigraphik-Datenbank Claus – Slaby* (6th Aug. 2012) for *hnus* furnished four names, all of them typical of slaves and freedmen: *Daphnus*, *Artichnus*, *Hedyphnus*, *Philotechnus*, the first being by far the most frequent one, the second and third occurring only once and the fourth five times.⁹ The *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* contains 79 entries for *Daphnus*, 11 for *Philotechnos* and none for the others.¹⁰ If our *-hnus* bore one of these names, the chances are that he was called *Daphnus*.

Line 2: The lower end of the transverse and vertical hastae of an N and the O probably belong to the word *patrono*. If so, (Dap)hnus was the freedman of the deceased tribune and, as his name and the bilingual text of the inscription suggest, hailed from the Greek-speaking East.

Line 3–4: The *omega* is probably the last letter of the deceased's *nomen* (in the dative case) followed by his filiation and, perhaps, his *tribus*. If he bore his father's *praenomen*, then his was *Gaius*.¹¹ The man's *cognomen*, of which the last two letters *-ΦΩ* (l. 4) are extant, is written in smaller letters. A possible Latin *cognomen* ending in *-fus* is *Rufus*, a name attested for soldiers from or in Asia Minor.¹² It appears that the first and, perhaps, only military post mentioned is a tribunate. In this context it is worth recalling that many autochthonous knights from Asia were «usually content with a single legionary tribunate – the most administrative of the *militiae*.»¹³

Line 5: Our tribune (Ru)fusus most probably served in a *λεγιῶν ... εὐσεβῆς πιστῆ* or *legio ... pia fidelis*.¹⁴ There are numerous legions honoured with this epithet at different times by different emperors.¹⁵ The name of the legion stood in the genitive, of which only the final letter (*Σ*) is extant, which is not at all helpful for identifying the unit since the genitive of the Greek version of many, if not all, names of legions ends in a sigma.

The inscription is bilingual, the Latin text preceding its Greek version. Latin was the deceased's official language and therefore presents him in his official capacity as a Roman officer. It need not necessarily have been his mother tongue, as he may have hailed from a Greek-speaking province.¹⁶ The fact that the text was also given in Greek shows that it was meant to be read and understood by the Greek-speaking inhabitants of the city (*Nikaia?*) or area where the stone was set up. (Ru)fusus was to be remembered by the locals.

⁹ <http://www.manfredclaus.de/>. *Daphnus*, e.g., AE 1975, 79; AE 1979, 116; CIL II 2486; *Artichnus* CIL X 1747; *Hedyphnus* CIL II 530; *Philotechnus* CIL VI 10395, 19365; CIL XIV 1466, 1642; 3709.

¹⁰ <http://www.lgpn.ox.ac.uk/database/lgpn.php> (search: 16th Aug. 2012).

¹¹ This was not necessarily so, cf. e.g. CIL III 386: C. Antonius M. f. Volt(inia) Rufus; Cf. Devijver, PME A 143; also see: L 36; P 81; T 12; T 45; V 31; V 79; AE 2008, 1328 (Asia, Cos): Μάρκος Ἀντώνιος Γαίου υἱὸς Ροῦφος.

¹² E.g. CIL VIII 18084.66: C. Manilius Rufus (*miles*, Prusias ad Hypium); AE 1997, 1418: C. Aelius Rufus (*centurio*, Alexandria Troas); MAMA IV 340: Iuuentius Rufus (*miles*, Eumeneia); CIL III 6580, col. I 9: -nius Rufus (*miles*, Nicomedia); CIL III 971: T. Fl. Rufus (*veteranus*, Amasia).

¹³ Devijver, EORIA I 293. Cf. -pus Severus of Nikaia, who was only *tribunus legionis* in Cappadocia: «this perhaps points to a member of the local elite, content with a tribunate in an Eastern province» (Devijver, EORIA I 321).

¹⁴ Theoretically, he could also have commanded a milliary *cohort* honoured with the title *pia fidelis*. However, there were very few such cohorts; cf. Spaul, *Cohors*².

¹⁵ Ritterling, *Legio*, 1371; Le Bohec – Wolff, *Légions*; Farnum, *Legions*.

¹⁶ See the compilation of Roman military officers from/in the East: Devijver, EORIA I 273–389; EORIA II, 66–100.

3) A soldier of *legio II Parthica*

Broken all round and of unknown provenance, but probably from Nikaia, the fragment of a white marble slab is now in the garden of the Archaeological Museum of İznik, where it was recorded in 2003, no. 25; it is without inventory number.

Dimensions: H. 30 cm; W. 43 cm; Th. 30 cm; Lh. 3 cm. Date: 3rd c. CE.

.[- - -]
 2 MIL LEG II P[- - - P]
 FFA QVI V[- - -]
 4 [- - -] I AV[- - -]
 [- - -]



[- - -] | mil(es or iti) leg(ionis) II P[arth(icae) - - - p(iae)] | f(idelis) f(elicis) a(eternae), qui v[ix(it) ann(is) - - - , mil(itavit) ann(is) - - -] | [- - -] I AV[- - -]

(To?) ..., soldier of *legio II Parthica pia fidelis felix aeterna*, who lived ... years, served ... years...

Line 1: The lower end of a diagonal hasta (right above the outer left-hand diagonal hasta of the M in line 2) is still visible and may have belonged to an A or M as part of the soldier's name.¹⁷

Lines 2–3, MIL: Both the nominative and the dative cases are possible.¹⁸ PFFA: It is not known when exactly the epithet *Pia Fidelis Felix Aeterna* was conferred upon the legion; it is, however, attested for 215 CE when the unit took part in Caracalla's Parthian expedition.¹⁹ The epithet is given in the shortest possible fashion (PFFA²⁰), while in most other inscriptions its last element (*Aeterna*) is abbreviated with *Aet*; occasionally, it is also written out in full.²¹ Most *legio II Parthica* inscriptions with variably abbreviated versions of *Pia Fidelis Felix Aeterna* also indicate another honorary title (*Antoniniana*, *Severiana*, *Gordiana*).²² It was typical of soldiers of this legion also to indicate, often immediately after the legion's name (and honorary title), the century (or occasionally the cohort) in which they had served.²³ This information was either absent from our inscription or given elsewhere in the now missing text.²⁴

Line 3, QVI V: This line gave the soldier's age at the time of his death and probably also contained the verb *mil(itavit)* as reference to the number of years he had served in the army. The actual number may have been indicated at the beginning of line 4 where the upper end of a vertical hasta (I) is still visible.

The fragment of the stone is too small to say whether it originally contained also a Greek version of the Latin text, like the foregoing inscription. At any rate, the use of Latin shows that our legionary soldier

¹⁷ Many soldiers of *legio II Parthica* bore the *nomen* Aurelius and had only their *nomen* and *cognomen* indicated on their gravestones; cf. Balty – Van Rengen, Apamea.

¹⁸ Cf. Balty – Van Rengen, Apamea, e.g. 31–33 Pls. 9–11.

¹⁹ Balty – Van Rengen, Apamea 23 Pl. 2 = AE 1993, 1572. Cf. Speidel, Heer & Herrschaft 252 fn. 16. The only precisely dated inscription with this epithet is CIL VI 3734 = XIV 2257. After its return to Rome with Elagabal the legion set up a monument, dated 220 CE, in honour of the emperor's *Victoria aeterna*. Cf. Cass. Dio 79,2,3; Ritterling, *Legio*, 1480; Van Rengen 2000, 408.

²⁰ A search of the Claus – Slaby database (15th June 2012) yielded only three inscriptions with PFFA: CIL VI 3408; AE 1908, 206; AE 1992, 1686. Of these, only AE 1992, 1686 features an additional honorary title, again in abbreviated fashion: *S(everianae) A(lexandrianae)*.

²¹ Cf. Balty – Van Rengen, Apamea = AE 1993, 1571–1597.

²² Balty – Van Rengen, Apamea 19; also consult the Claus – Slaby database (see fn. 9).

²³ An abundance of examples is readily retrievable from the Claus – Slaby database.

²⁴ The indication of the century is typical of expeditionary forces composed of contingents from several different legions. It is therefore probable that the core of the newly established *legio II Parthica* was taken from the field army that took part in the First Parthian War (195 CE); cf. Speidel, Heer & Herrschaft 188.

was to be remembered in his official capacity; perhaps he died an active soldier while his unit was in transit through Bithynia and was buried there.

4) A Latin funerary inscription

Of unknown provenance, probably from Nikaia, the slab of greyish marble, which is broken on all sides, was reworked for secondary use as a column base. It was recorded in 2009, no. 3, and is now in the Archaeological Museum of Ľznik.

Dimensions: H. 47 cm; W. 41 cm; Th. 11 cm; Lh. 6.5–9 cm. Of all inscriptions presented here, this one features the largest letters. Date: 2nd–3rd c. CE.

[- - -]
 [- - -] OMVS [- - -]
 [- - -] P F O [- - -]
 [- - -] VIXIT AN [- - -]
 [- - -] XX [- - -]



[- - -] | [- - -] omus [- - -] | [- - -] P F O [- - -] | [- - -] vixit an [n(is) - - -] | [- - -] XX [- - -]

... omus... P F O..., lived ... years... XX ...

Line 1: A search of the Clauss – Slaby database (7th Aug. 2012) for *omus* furnished over 400 inscriptions with a host of names that have this sequence of letters in them. Almost all of them sound very much like the names of slaves and freedmen.²⁵

Line 2, P F O: The comprehensive lists of epigraphic abbreviations of neither Sandys, Calderini, Almar or Lassère contain this present sequence of letters.²⁶ The Clauss – Slaby database comes up with two enigmatic abbreviations: SPFOFAT (CIL IX 5206) and MIRPFO (CIL XV 2939b), but this does not mean that the present three letters formed part of the one or the other. If our abbreviation follows more conventional lines, the chances are that the O does not belong to the foregoing P F but may be the first letter of the next word.

Line 3: The extant letters show that this was a funerary inscription.

Line 4: At least two Xs are vaguely discernible right below the second I and the T in *vixit*, l. 3.

It appears that the fragment formed part of a funerary inscription, but it is too short for any meaningful reconstruction. However, the fact that the text is written in Latin in a Greek-speaking environment may suggest that the deceased was a servant of the state. If *omus* is anything to go by, the bearer of the name with *omus* in it may have been a slave or freedman, perhaps of a Roman official or of the *familia Caesaris*²⁷; even a military background cannot be ruled out, in which case P F may stand for *pia fidelis*.²⁸ This, however, is only speculation.

²⁵ E.g. Amomus, Bromus, Callidromus, Comus, Eunomus, Philomusus (a very frequent one).

²⁶ The abbreviations which come closest are PFCC for *Pia Fidelis Constans Commoda*; PFCR for *Pia Fidelis Civium Romanorum* and PFCV for *Pater Faciendum Curavit*: Sandys, *Epigraphy* 305; Calderini, *Epigrafia* 312, Almar, *Inscriptiones* 477; Lassère, *Épigraphie* 1089.

²⁷ Cf. CIL XIV 1877: a Callidromus, an *ex disp(ensatore)*, is mentioned together with a *-tianus Aug(usti) lib(ertus) adiutor proc(uratoris) sum[mi choragii?]*; CIL VIII 12792: a Nicodromus Aug(usti) buried his wife.

²⁸ Cf. AE 1938, 97 (Moesia superior, Makreš): A man called Romus served in the *numerus Dalmatarum*. In addition, a P. Marc(ius) Chrysocom(u)s (*centuria* Taurisci, l. 17) and a C. Iulius Callidr(omus) (*centuria* Auluporis, l. 129) are known from the *cohors V vigilum* in Rome (CIL VI 1057).

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Özet

Adı bilinmeyen Romalı ordu mensuplarına ilişkin yazıtlar

Makalede Nikaia kentinde bulunmuş ve bugün İznik Müzesi'nde korunan 4 adet yazıt tanıtılmaktadır. Yazıtların ortak noktası; her birinin Roma ordusunda görev yapan kişilerle bağlantılı olmalarıdır. Yazıtlar parça halinde ele geçtiği için ilgili ordu mensuplarının adları kayıptır. No. 1 süvari mensubu bir şahsın onurlandırılma yazıtıdır. Bu şahıs orduda en az iki komutanlık yaptıktan sonra memleketi Nikaia'ya geri dönmüş ve orada başarkhonluk ve rahiplik gibi üst düzey memuriyetler üstlenmiştir. Adını bilmediğimiz bu şahsın kariyeri İNikaia no. 56'dan tanınan Patrokles'inkiyle büyük benzerlik göstermektedir. No. 2 yine üst rütbeli bir ordu mensubunun çift dilli kaleme alınmış mezar yazıtıdır. Bu şahıs yazıtta lejyon *tribunus*'u olarak tanıtılmaktadır. Başka rütbelerinin anılmamasından dolayı bu şahsın görev sırasında vefat ettiği tahmin edilmektedir. Latince ve Yunanca kaleme alınan mezar yazıtı subayın azatlısı [Da]phnus tarafından dikilmiştir. No. 3, II. Parth Lejyonu'nda görev yapan bir erin mezar yazıtıdır. Bu er olasılıkla Parth seferleri sırasında lejyonuyla Bitinya'dan geçerken vefat etmiştir. Latince kaleme alınan yazıtta erin yaşı ve ordudaki hizmet yılı belirtilmiştir. Söz konusu lejyon Caracalla tarafından Parth seferleri için kurulmuştur. Tanıtılan son yazıt yine Latince kaleme alınmış bir mezar yazıtıdır. Burada da vefat eden lejyon erinin adı, yaşı ve hizmet yılı verilmiştir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Bithynia; *cohors equitata*; legio II Parthica; *miles*; Nikaia; *praefectus*, *protoarchon*, *tribunus*.