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THE IDENTITY OF THE IGNOTUS IN CIL VIII 1578


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This inscription from Mustis (Africa Proconsularis) is a fragmentary dedication in honour of a third-century emperor and empress whose names have been erased and not reinstated, probably Elagabalus and his mother Iulia Soaemias. The dedicators were a lady and her two sons, Maria Lucina flam(inica) et L(ucius) Fulvius Kastus Ful[vianus fisci advocatus patrimoni tr]act(us) K[art(haginiensis)] et Galliae Narb[one his ... et ... ] Britanniae inferior(is) fili eius. The restoration is due to H.-G.Pflaum (Carrières, No.311); and for the second son, the ignotus, an equestrian post in Lower Britain is required. Pflaum offers trib. mil. leg. VI Victricis (?), a tribunate in the province's only legion. He draws attention to two other third-century African inscription which refer to military postings to Lower Britain in this way: praef. coh. II Astu(rum) prov. Britt. infer. and ex leg. VI Vi(ctrice) [pia] fidelis (sic) provinci(a)e Britann(a)e inferior(is).1 The suggestion is noted by H.Devijver (Prosopographia, F 91). A.R.Birley, however, has suggested (Fasti, 194-5) that the ignotus may be M.Valerius Fulvianus, praefectus equitum at Binchester (RIB 1029).

A recent discovery, not at Binchester, but at the neighbouring fort of Lanchester (Longovicium) now offers a better solution. In October 1986 the greater part of the base and die of a buff sandstone altar was ploughed up on the site of the vicus.2 The surviving text (Fig. 1) reads:

[...LING
[...]Q[.]C-P.
[...]VLVIVS
[...]IXPRAEF

The A is open, the G and Ls are of cursive form, the Q with horizontal tail is found in another inscription from Lanchester (RIB 1092).

The text, although fragmentary, is straightforward. The formula c(ui) p(raeest) indicates an altar dedicated officially by a military unit and its commanding officer. The god is usually Jupiter, a dedication confirmed by the eight-spoked wheel carved in high relief on the right-hand side of the column.3 The unit responsible must be the Coh. I Lingonum, already attested at Lanchester in the third century.4 A second-century inscription from High Rochester (RIB 1276) informs us that the cohort was equitata. The name of its commanding

1 CIL VIII 2766 with 18131 = ILS 2762 (Lambaesis); VIII 5180 with 17266 = ILAlg. 539.I (Zattara).
2 By Mr. A.N.Greenwell of Greenwell Ford, Lanchester, in whose possession the stone remains. I am grateful to him for allowing me to examine and publish it.
3 Inscribed altars bearing the wheel-symbol in Britain (RIB 827, 1877, 1981, 1983) are all dedicated to Jupiter by military units: see M.J.Green, The Wheel as a Cult-Symbol in the Romano-Celtic World (1984),345-7.
4 RIB 1091, 1092 (both A.D. 238/44, 1075).
officer at Lanchester is [...]ulviuix [...ix]. The cognomen can only be Felix, thus determining the width of the missing portion. The previous line has therefore lost three letters, including the damaged V; and if we allow one letter for the praenomen, the nomen can only be Fulvius or Mulvius. It is long odds on Fulvius. A.Mócsy in the Nomenclator collects 107 instances of Fulvius to 14 of Mulvius (men and women). The rations in the indexes of CIL VI and VIII are c. 240:10 and c. 50:2 respectively. [F]ulvius also fits the space available better than [M]ulvius. In the light of these considerations, therefore, the text of the altar can be almost completely restored:

[I O M]
[COH I] LING
[-E][Q][-]C-P:
[.] [F]VLVIVS
[FEL]IX PRAEF
[I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)] / [Coh(ors) (prima) ] Ling(onum) /[e]q(uitata) c(ui) p(raeest / [.]
[F]ulvius / [Feli]x praeffectus

The prefect's name, [.] Fulvius Felix, is not distinctive, but he could well be the ignotus in the Mustis inscription. The nomen is common in the western provinces, Africa included. Felix likewise is a popular cognomen, but was favoured in Africa: I.Kajanto (Cognomina, 273) notes that 1,238 of a total of 3,542 instances come from Africa. The combination Fulvius Felix is notably common in CIL VI (9 instances, none of them an eques); otherwise it occurs only twice in CIL: XI 5228 (Fulginiae, in a list of names) and VIII 1601 (Mustis, as it happens). The latter is C.Fulvius C. filius Cornelia Felix, presumably a native of Mustis, since it was enrolled in Cornelia. Since he died at age 65 without further details being recorded, he is not to be identified with the prefect at Lanchester, but he proves that the name Fulvius Felix was current at Mustis, and a tie of kinship or descent might be surmised. These considerations support the compelling reason for identifying the ignotus of Mustis with the prefect at Lanchester they are both called Fulvius, and they both held an equestrian military post in Lower Britain in the third century. To Pflaum's restoration of CIL VIII 1578 we can surely add: [et [.] Fulvius Felix praef. coh. I Lingonum eq. (or similar)] Britanniae inferior(is).

Two small benefits accrue to the history of Roman Britain. First, yet another equestrian officer from Africa, or rather, his name. Second, a likely date of A.D. 218/22 for the new altar, and thus a record of the Coh. I Lingonum at Lanchester twenty years earlier than the two building inscriptions of A.D. 238/44. In default of excavation, they have been taken as evidence of the fort's reoccupation after many years, perhaps half a century, of disuse. They record the construction of baths with basilica, and the restoration of the principia and

5 RIB 1091, 1092.
armouries. In the light of this new inscription, they need only be seen as evidence of necessary maintenance work, or, if *conlapsa* (RIB 1092) be taken literally, as evidence of the neglect of essential buildings by a garrison which had been there already for at least twenty years.

Fig. 1. Altar from Lanchester. Scale 1:4.

Oxford

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