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THE CASTRA PEREGRINA AND THE ‘PEREGRINI’


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On the basis of an inscription from Tuccabor, it has been argued\(^1\) that there existed a separate category of (citizen) troops known as 'Peregrini'. The inscription refers to C.Sulgius Caecilianus as optioni peregrinorum et exercitatori militum frumentariorum. On the face of it, this looks like a man in charge of one class of troops being involved in the training of men from another group. But a closer look suggests that there is no real evidence for these 'Peregrini'. Wherever the word peregrinorum appears, it can more plausibly be regarded, not as a genitive plural of peregrini, but as a genitive plural of peregrina with castra understood. Thus Caecilianus in the inscription above was optio (castrorum) peregrinorum.

Although the title princeps peregrinorum (and subprinceps peregrinorum) commonly appears, the full correct form of the title is demonstrated by the dedication by L.Ceius Privatus (CIL VI 354 = ILS 2218): ....quod....subprinceps voverat, princeps castr(orum) peregrinorum v.s.l.m. Princeps was a title which could be combined with the name of an organization (rather than a body of men), e.g. princeps praetorii, and the full formal title of the head of the castra peregrina is clearly princeps castrorum peregrinorum. The correct title of the Rome headquarters of the frumentarii was not castra peregrinorum, as often given, but castra peregrina, as is confirmed by Ammianus Marcellinus.\(^2\) And although the wording of CIL VI 3328: optio mil. peregr. suggests the possibility that milites peregrini may have been wrongly applied, in popular usage, to the men who served in the castra peregrina, 'Peregrini' can be dismissed as the official name for any formal body of troops.

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\(^1\) CIL VIII 14854 = ILS 2764: P.K.Baillie Reynolds, JRS XIII, 1923,173-4, accepted by W.G.Sinniogen, MMAR 27.1962,213 note 3.

\(^2\) XVI, 12,66: in castris peregrinis, quae in monte sunt Caelio.