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ALA ANTIANA IN SCYTHOPOLIS. A NEW INSCRIPTION FROM BETH-SHEAN

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ALA ANTIANA IN SCYTHOPOLIS  
A NEW INSCRIPTION FROM BETH-SHEAN\*

In December 1988 a Latin inscription was accidentally found on the football field of the Beth-Shean stadium. Soon after the discovery it was brought to Mr. Pinchas Porat, the inspector of antiquities in Beth-Shean. Since then it has been kept in the storehouse of the Beth-Shean excavations.

The inscription (Tafel IV b,c) is cut on a trunk of a column. The column, now broken at both the top and the bottom, is of local limestone. The present maximum height of the extant fragment is 65 cm, the diameter is 43 cm. The inscription is intact and well preserved. Its first line starts some 10 cm below the upper edge of the surviving part of the column. There are four lines of irregular lettering (height of the letters of line 1: 5 cm; lines 2 and 3: 4 cm; line 4: 3 cm). The distances between the lines vary from 3 to 1 cm. Below the fourth line, in the centre, there is a hederia 10 cm high. The inscription reads:

FLAVI	Flavi
ULPIANI	Ulpiani
DEC	dec(urionis)
ALAE ANTIANE	alae Antian<a>e

The use of the genitive in the name of the decurion poses a problem. The laconic character of the inscription makes it impossible to establish with certainty whether "Flavi Ulpiani" should be understood as "of Flavius Ulpianus", or "by Flavius Ulpianus". The original find-spot of the column is unknown, and its present truncated state prevents its being determined to what kind of a structure it could have belonged. If it was a part of a public building, the inscription might commemorate Flavius Ulpianus' contribution to the project. There is a similar use of the genitive in the Greek inscriptions of the neighbouring Gerasa. There, the names of donors (single individuals as well as professional groups) were cut on the columns of the portico adorning the main street of the city.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from naming the soldier, his rank and his unit, the inscription provides no further detail. Nevertheless, certain characteristics of the decurion's name make a tentative reconstruction of the chronology possible.

The origin of the cognomen Ulpianus can, most certainly, be traced back to the gentilicium of the emperor M.Ulpianus Traianus (98-117 A.D.) - like many others of this type,

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<sup>1</sup> C.B.Welles, apud C.H.Kraeling, *Gerasa, City of the Decapolis*, New Haven 1938, 410-414, nos. 78-104.

such as Claudianus, Flavianus, Aurelianus, etc.<sup>2</sup> Initially, cognomina derived from gentilicia and having the suffix -ianus were due to adoption or inheritance.<sup>3</sup> Judging by that criterion, the cognomen Ulpianus would imply that there was a certain Ulpus among the ancestors of our decurion. Assuming that the cognomen appeared at the earliest possible moment, by the third generation, and that our Ulpianus was the first to bear the name, the terminus post quem for the inscription would be around 150 A.D.

The above dating easily harmonizes with other considerations involving the onomastic data of the inscription. Cognomina derived from gentilicia and ending in -ianus belong to the most numerous group of soldier's names. However, such names appear in fairly significant numbers only after the first century A.D. They are found with growing frequency from the early second century onwards and achieve their greatest popularity in the early third century A.D.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, our decurion's cognomen would best suit the period of the second - third centuries A.D. As to the nomen Flavius, statistics concerning equestrian and legionaries' names show great frequency in its use throughout the same period.<sup>5</sup>

The shortened formula of the decurion's name is another interesting point. During the first and the beginning of the second centuries A.D., decuriones of alae tended to put a special stress on their status as Roman citizens. Such emphasis fairly often manifested itself in listing all the attributes of a true Roman name, i.e. praenomen, nomen, filiation and cognomen. Sometimes, tribus and the place of origin were indicated as well.<sup>6</sup> In our inscription, only the nomen and the cognomen are mentioned. The absence of the praenomen,<sup>7</sup> filiation and tribus<sup>8</sup> might also point to the period sometime after the first century A.D.

Flavius Ulpianus served in an ala - a unit of the Roman auxilia consisting entirely of cavalry. An officer with the rank of decurio usually commanded a detachment of 30, called a turma.<sup>9</sup> We have no means of establishing whether the turma of Flavius Ulpianus was the only part of the Ala Antiana present in Scythopolis. What seems, however, certain is that his detachment was permanently stationed either in the city itself or in close proximity to it. The

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<sup>2</sup> I.Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina*, Helsinki 1965,35; E.Birley, *Roman Britain and the Roman Army*, Kendal (UK) 1961,162.

<sup>3</sup> Kajanto (note 2), 33-34.

<sup>4</sup> L.R.Dean, *A Study of the Cognomina of the Soldiers in the Roman Legions*, Princeton 1916,83-85; Kajanto (note 2), 109.

<sup>5</sup> H.Devijver, *Prosopographia Militarium Equestrium*, vol.I, Leuven 1976,361-385; Dean (previous note), 120.

<sup>6</sup> A.Holder, *The Auxilia from Augustus to Trajan*, Oxford 1980,264-294, nos. 531, 573, 624, 634, 637, 661, 742, 911, 115, 201, 221, 424, 473, 614, 616, 638; M.Speidel, *Roman Army Studies*, vol.I, Amsterdam 1984,111-113.

<sup>7</sup> Birley (note 2), 158; H.Thylander, *Étude sur l'épigraphie latine*, Lund 1952,77.

<sup>8</sup> Kajanto (note 2), 15.

<sup>9</sup> G.Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army*, London 1979,146-148.

fact that the decurion found it expedient to contribute to a building project in the city would be best explained by such location of his place of service.

The larger unit to which Flavius Ulpianus belonged is known mainly from epigraphic evidence. Its full name, as appears from several military diplomas, was *Ala Gallorum et Thracum Antiana*. The appellation *Antiana* is thought to be a derivative from the name of Germanicus' legate C.Antius, who, together with P.Vitellius, conducted a Gallic census in 16 A.D.<sup>10</sup> Antius was, apparently, responsible for the initial recruitment of the unit. Other components of the *ala*'s name testify to its ethnic background. It would have consisted originally of Gallic horsemen with Thracians joining at some later stage.

There is no information on the whereabouts of the *Ala Antiana* during the first decades of its existence. It first surfaces in Syria in 54 A.D.<sup>11</sup> and is still in that province by November 88 A.D.<sup>12</sup> Then follows a lacuna of half a century. When the *ala* is heard of again - in a military diploma of 139 A.D. - it is already stationed in the province of Syria Palaestina.<sup>13</sup> It is further attested in the same province by military diplomas of 149/161 and 186 A.D.<sup>14</sup> *Ala Antiana Dromedariorum*, mentioned in *Notitia Dignitatum* in the list under *Dux Palaestinae*, is usually also identified with our unit.<sup>15</sup> The only location associated until now with the presence of the *ala* is *Admatha* of the *Notitia*.<sup>16</sup>

The exact date of the transfer of the *Ala Antiana* from Syria to Palestine cannot be determined. Between 88 A.D., when the unit is last attested in Syria, and 139 A.D., when it first emerges in Judaea, the region witnessed several periods of military activity and its administrative map underwent significant changes. The following major events may be suggested as most likely occasions for the transfer.

One would be the doubling of Judaea's legionary strength in or before 120 A.D., when the province was elevated to consular status.<sup>17</sup> A Syrian legion moved to Judaea at that time could have been accompanied by some auxiliary forces. We know, for instance, that the *Cohors I Milliaria Thracum* was transferred from Syria to Judaea not later than 124 A.D. - a papyrus of that date mentions a centurion of the cohort at *Ein Gedi*.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* II 6; R.Mellor, "A New Roman Military Diploma", *The J.Paul Getty Museum Journal* 6-7, 1978/79, 182.

<sup>11</sup> *CIL* xvi 3.

<sup>12</sup> M.Roxan, *Roman Military Diplomas 1954-1977*, London 1978, no.3; Mellor (note 10), 173-184.

<sup>13</sup> *CIL* xvi 87.

<sup>14</sup> Roxan (note 12), nos. 60 and 69.

<sup>15</sup> *ND*, Or. 33 (ed. Seeck, p.73); Roxan (note 12), p.90.

<sup>16</sup> The exact location of *Admatha* is a matter of dispute: J.Eadie, "Humayma 1983: The Regional Survey", *ADAJ* 28, 1984, 211, note 2.

<sup>17</sup> B.Isaac, and I.Roll, "Judaea in the Early Years of Hadrian's Reign", *Latomus* 38, 1979, 54-66. For the view that Judaea's elevation to consular status occurred under Trajan see: W.Eck, "Zum Konsularen Status von Judaea im frühen 2. Jahrhundert", *Bulletin of American Society of Papyrologists* 21, 1984, 55-67.

<sup>18</sup> H.J.Polotsky, "The Greek Papyri from the Cave of the Letters", *IEJ* 12, 1962, 259. The cohort is last attested in Syria on May 12, 91 A.D. (Roxan, note 12, no. 44). If the transfer of the two units from Syria to

The alternative would be that the Ala Antiana initially arrived in Judaea with the Syrian forces sent to suppress the Bar Kokhba revolt. Two inscriptions from Ancyra prove that Publicius Marcellus, then the governor of Syria, temporarily left his province for Judaea on account of the Jewish war.<sup>19</sup> There is evidence that he took part of the Syrian army with him, notably the legion III Gallica,<sup>20</sup> and probably also the fleet.<sup>21</sup> Part of these forces could have remained in Judaea after the suppression of the revolt.

The inscription appears to be the first firm evidence for the permanent presence of an Judaeian army unit in Scythopolis itself. Other pieces of evidence bearing on the subject all have elements of uncertainty about them. A dedication to Hadrian by the first cohort of the legion X Fretensis was said to have come from the city. Unfortunately, the inscription's exact provenance is a matter of contention. Although it certainly derives from that part of the country, other find-spots such as Samaria have also been suggested.<sup>22</sup> An inscription commemorating P.Claudius Capito, a Macedonian who served in the legion XI Claudia unquestionably originated in Scythopolis.<sup>23</sup> The evidence, however, does not prove that the soldier's unit was permanently stationed in Scythopolis. A vexillation of XI Claudia is known to have participated in the suppression of the Bar Kokhba revolt,<sup>24</sup> and we might have here a case of an individual soldier who happened to die in or near Scythopolis.

There was a military camp at Tel Shalem,<sup>25</sup> 11 km south of the city.<sup>26</sup> A bronze statue of Hadrian was found in the vicinity,<sup>27</sup> as well as an undated inscription of a vexillation of the legion VI Ferrata.<sup>28</sup> The area of Tel Shalem may well have been within the city's territory, but final proof to that effect is still lacking.

The new inscription, confirming for the first time the permanent presence of a Judaeian army unit in Scythopolis itself, may shed an important light on the still obscure question of the administrative division in the region during the second century A.D. There is little doubt that Scythopolis, together with other cities of the Decapolis, belonged to the province of

Judaea was simultaneous, this date would serve as the terminus post quem for the departure of the Ala Antiana as well.

<sup>19</sup> IGRR III, 174-175.

<sup>20</sup> ILS 2313, cf. also ILS 1092.

<sup>21</sup> E.Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C. - A.D. 135)*, edited and revised by G.Vermes and F.Millar, Edinburgh, vol. I, 1973, 547-548, note 150.7; E.M.Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule*, Leiden 1976, 449, note 81.

<sup>22</sup> CIL 13589 claims Samaria as its place of origin, cf. correction under CIL 14155.14.

<sup>23</sup> M.Avi-Yonah, "Greek and Latin Inscriptions from Jerusalem and Beisan", *QDAP* 8, 1939, 57-59.

<sup>24</sup> Schürer (note 21), 547, note 150.6.

<sup>25</sup> Identified by most scholars with CAAEIM in Eusebius (On. 40,1) and Salim in Hieronymus (153,6).

<sup>26</sup> *Hadashot Archeologiot*, 57-58, Apr. 1976, 17-18; 65-66, Apr. 1978, 9 (Hebrew).

<sup>27</sup> G.Foerster, "A Bronze Statue of Hadrian in Armour", *Qadmoniot* 8, 1975, 38-40 (Hebrew).

<sup>28</sup> N.Tzori, "An Inscription of the Legio VI Ferrata from the Northern Jordan Valley", *IEJ* 21, 1971, 53-54.

Syria until Trajan's annexation of the Nabataean kingdom in 106 A.D.<sup>29</sup> At that moment, however, the Decapolis was dismembered. There is firm evidence that Gerasa and Philadelphia were incorporated into the new province of Arabia, apparently from the very beginning.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, our information as regards the fate of other Decapolis cities is rather meagre and permits no final conclusions to be drawn.

A few modern scholars assume that Scythopolis was assigned to the province of Judaea sometime at the beginning of the second century A.D.<sup>31</sup> Admittedly, the evidence to that effect is mostly circumstantial. The inscriptions concerning the military have already been cited. To these may be added milestone-inscriptions from around the city, none of which ever mentions a name of a provincial governor. The regular absence of such names is a peculiarity of Judaeian milestones. On those of Arabia, legates are almost always mentioned, while on the milestones of Syria they are also a fairly regular feature, although exceptions do exist.<sup>32</sup>

The new inscription may provide further support for the view that Scythopolis belonged to the province of Judaea/Syria Palaestina in the second century A.D. A part of the Judaeian army could not have been permanently stationed in a city belonging to another province. As for the time when Scythopolis could have been annexed to Judaea, the most likely occasion seems to be Trajan's reorganization of 106 A.D.<sup>33</sup> Although the territory of Scythopolis always constituted an awkward enclave within the Judaeian province, until 106 A.D. the Romans may have had their reasons for maintaining the existing arrangement. The creation of the new province to the east of the Jordan changed the situation. By joining Gerasa and Philadelphia to Arabia, Trajan certainly had it in mind to regularize provincial borders. Assigning Scythopolis to the province of Judaea could have been another logical step in the same direction.

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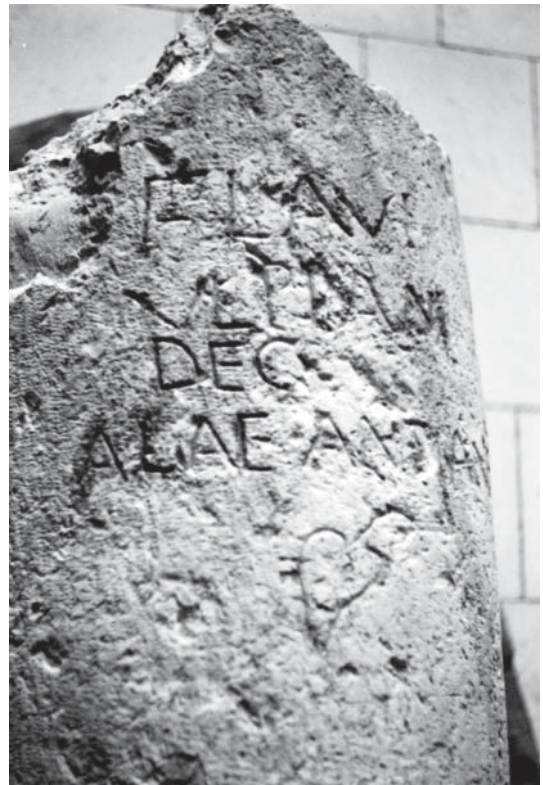
<sup>29</sup> B.Isaac, "The Decapolis in Syria, a Neglected Inscription", ZPE 44,1981,67-74; Schürer (note 21), vol. II, 1979,153.

<sup>30</sup> Schürer (note 21), vol. II, 1979,153-154, 157-158.

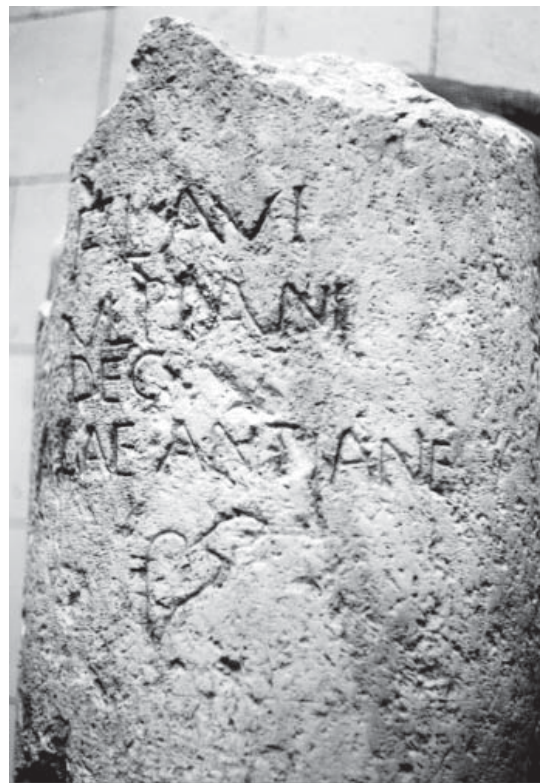
<sup>31</sup> Avi-Yonah places the event in the years immediately following the First Revolt: *The Holy Land*, Jerusalem 1966, p.110, note 6. See also notes 32 and 33 below.

<sup>32</sup> B.Isaac, "Milestones in Judaea, from Vespasian to Constantine", PEQ 110,1978,56.

<sup>33</sup> For the view that Scythopolis was incorporated into Judaea upon the elevation of this province to consular status see: G.Fuks, *Scythopolis - A Greek City in Eretz-Israel*, Jerusalem 1983, 100 (Hebrew).



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b, c) Lateinische Inschrift aus Beth-Shean