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PTOLEMAIC SOLDIERS UNDER THE ROMANS  
A NOTE ON THE DEDICATION OF AN ILARCHES (ZPE 87, 1991, 53–55)

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The following inscription from the collection of Graeco–Roman Museum in Alexandria has been published by E. Bernand in ZPE 87<sup>1</sup>.

Ἰππέων ἐντοπί-  
ων· Σωσιγένης  
ιλάρχης· Δίδυμο-  
ς προστατῶν ἐ-  
ποίησεν, (ἔτους) ιβ'  
Καίσαρος, Πα-  
χῶν ᾧ vac.  
ἐπ' ἀγαθῶ

The inscription is dated April 27th, 18 B.C.

According to E. Bernand this is a dedication made by indigenous cavalymen remaining under the command of a certain Sosigenes. The person actually responsible for the execution of the dedication was Didymos, prostates. Most probably he was an administrator of a temple who while making the dedication acted to the order of the commander of a by-passing military unit. For E. Bernand the date of the dedication is decisive to connect it with the Roman army.

I disagree with the interpretation of the inscription proposed by E. Bernand. My first and most important objection concerns his regarding of this text as being a testimony for the Roman military activity in recently conquered Egypt. In my opinion, in spite of the Augustean date of the dedication its authors ἰππεῖς ἐντόπιοι were not Roman soldiers. The term ἱλάρχης, characteristic of Hellenistic cavalry officers<sup>2</sup> and here used to denote the commander of the ἰππεῖς clearly indicates that they were descendants of the Ptolemaic army. As was proven recently by E. Van't Dak in contrast to earlier opinions<sup>3</sup>, the number of troops in the command of the last Ptolemies was rather considerable. At the moment of Cesar's intervention in Egypt these included 20 000 of infantry and 2 000 of cavalry<sup>4</sup>. We have very scanty information as for what happened to those

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\* I would like to thank H. E. Stiene for correction of my English.

<sup>1</sup> E. Bernand, Dédicace d'un ilarque (18 av. J.C.), ZPE 87, 1991, pp 53-55. The inscription is of unknown provenance. The note "envoi de la Direction Générale en 1913" present in the inventory of the Graeco–Roman Museum in Alexandria may suggest that it does not come from Alexandria or its vicinity.

<sup>2</sup> If Polybius (6, 25, 1-2) understood εἴλη in the sense of Latin *turma* and saw a Roman *decurion* in Greek *ilarches*, this does not mean that the term *ilarches* was ever in the real use to denote Roman cavalry officer. In Polybius day, the Greek terminology for Roman institutions was still nonexistent and it is normal then that he described Roman army in terms borrowed from armies of Heilenistic kingdoms contemporary to him.

<sup>3</sup> E. Van't Dak L' armée lagide de 55 à 30 av. J. C., JJP XIX, 1983, pp. 77–86.

<sup>4</sup> These are numbers given by Julius Caesar in *De bello civili* III 110, 1–6 and *De bello Alexandrino* 2, 1–4, here quoted after E. Van't Dak, op.cit.

people after the Romans conquered the country. No doubt some of them, for example specialists in different kinds of military art, may have been incorporated into the Roman army by force; others, especially those for whom the Ptolemaic army was only an episode in their life, may have joined the Romans voluntarily. Most probably, those people quickly underwent romanization and are hardly distinguishable in our sources. The situation was quite different with those from among the former Ptolemaic soldiers who through their military service became closely tied with the country and its life. This concerns military settlers in the first line. It is exactly from this milieu that we have two documents very significant for understanding the *ilarches* dedication.

A papyrus found in Tebtunis but drawn in Ptolemais Euergetis, dated probably to 20/19 B.C., is a contract between two brothers, Herakles son of Akousilaos (the elder brother) and Akousilaos son of Akousilaos, concerning the partition of land inherited from their father<sup>5</sup>. In the promise on oath to keep some engagements which follows the contract proper, the elder brother styles himself in a well Ptolemaic manner, ll. 17–18: Ἡρακλῆς Ἀκουσιλάου Μα[κε]δῶν τῶν κατοίκ[ω(ν) ἰππέω(ν)]<sup>6</sup>. In the same papyrus, below the contract and Herakles' promise, another document is contained, "an official notice of a cession of cleruchic land to another Acusilaos, which has no apparent connection with the preceding matter"<sup>7</sup>. The person who cedes the land is a certain Κάστωρ Ἀπολλωνίου Ἀμμωνιεύς ἰππάρχης ἐπ'ἀνδρῶν τῆς α' ἰππαρχείας τῶν (ὄγδοηκοντ)αρούρων<sup>8</sup>. A similar situation is in P.Oxy II 277 (19/18 B.C.). Διονύσιος Ἀλ[ε]ξάνδρου Μακεδῶν ἰππάρχης ἐπ'ἀνδρῶν<sup>9</sup> cedes his land near the village of Pamis to Ἀρτεμίδωρος Ἀρτεμιδόρου Μακεδῶν<sup>10</sup> who is ἰππάρχης ἐπ'ἀνδρῶν too. Obviously in all three cases the active service of the people mentioned is out of question<sup>11</sup>. It is worth of stressing, however, that ten years after the fall of the Ptolemies they still use their Ptolemaic military titles and in the Ptolemaic manner underline with pride their Greek origin. Probably, they also preserve a kind of social solidarity, as the ties between Dionysios son of Alexandros and Artemidoros son of Artemidoros from P.Oxy 277 may prove. Of particular interest for us is P.Tebt II 382 in which Herakles son of Akousilaos calls himself Μακεδῶν τῶν κατοίκων ἰππέων. Originally, these κάτοικοι ἰππεῖς must have been Ptolemaic military settlers obliged to serve in cavalry. If in 20/19 B.C. one of those ἰππεῖς underlines his belonging to this group, this is probably because they still constitute a socio-ethnic reality.

One should note in this place that E. Bernand is most probably mistaken when he understands the term ἐντόπιοι from the *ilarches* dedication as "indigenous". Though in some cases the adjective in question may have the meaning indigenous<sup>12</sup>, in my opinion, however, this meaning cannot be applied with reference to the inscription discussed here, for indigenous people involved in the

<sup>5</sup> PTebt II 382; the contract is dated generally by καίσαρος κράτησις; for its possible dating to 20/19, cf. F. Zucker, RIDA 8, 1964, p. 164.

<sup>6</sup> For the person, cf. PP II 2648, IV 9285.

<sup>7</sup> PTebt II 382, p. 229.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. PP II 2218, IV 9342, VIII 2218add.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. PP VIII 2202b.

<sup>10</sup> The person in PP VIII 2194a.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. E. Van't Dack, op.cit., p. 84.

<sup>12</sup> The classical example registered both in Preisigke's *Worterbuch* and in Liddell-Scott-Jones, s.vv., is PLond 2 192, 94 (1st cent. A.D.), in which ἐντόπιοι (in Fayum) are opposed to Ἀλεξανδρεῖς.

military service of the Ptolemies were always called ἐγγώριοι<sup>13</sup>. To my mind the term ἐντόπιοι should be understood literally here: ἵππεῖς ἐντόπιοι were cavalymen of no matter what origin but living in the same τόπος. This might have been a village, a town or even a wider territory in the meaning of the term close or identical with τοπαρχία<sup>14</sup>.

My second objection relates to the interpretation given by E. Bemand to the term προστάτης and the role played by this man in accomplishing the dedication. E. Bernand rightly points out that the term *prostates* in the period under review had generally two meanings: (1) president of an association both cultic and professional (2) administrator of a temple, and considers the second of the two meanings to be the right one in the inscription in question. In Greek and Demotic documents from Egypt, both in inscriptions and in papyri, when *prostates* of (a temple) of a certain god is meant, then such a person is always described in the words προστάτης + genitive of the god's name<sup>15</sup>. Meanwhile, this is not our case and there is no doubt that only the first meaning of the two, president of an association, may be applied with reference to the text discussed here.

The association of which Didymos was the *prostates* at the moment of accomplishing the dedication can only be the association of ἵππεῖς ἐντόπιοι. The existence of different kind of soldiers' associations is well attested for Hellenistic period. The phenomenon has been studied in detail by M. Launay<sup>16</sup> and there are no need to repeat all his findings. Here I would like to confine myself to Late Ptolemaic Egypt and to cite several examples of soldiers' associations significant for understanding the *ilarches* inscription. These associations are known mainly through various dedications they made. During the reign of Ptolemy XII Auletes οἱ τεταγμένον ἔχοντες ἐν τῷ Ἀρσινοίτη ἵππεῖς dedicated for that king and his wife Cleopatra Tryphaina as is commemorated by the inscription originated from Arsinoe-Crocodilopolis<sup>17</sup>. These ἵππεῖς had their ἀρχισυναγωγός being at the same time ἀρχιερέυς (name not preserved) and this fact clearly indicates that they formed an association (συναγωγή most probably). Another dedication from Fayum dated to the eleventh year of a King (most probably from the 1st cent B.C.) mentions a certain Nicolaos ἱερέυς and the ἀρχιπροστάτης Sosandros, Aetolian, who is described also as *ilarches* and *hipparches*<sup>18</sup>. This allows us to imagine a soldiers' association in which the main role of ἀρχιπροστάτης was played for a certain period by the commander of a tactical unit. In an inscription on a statue base, also from Fayum, there appears a somewhat mysterious [ἡ σύνοδος τῶν (πρώτων) φίλων κ]αὶ χ(ιλ)ιά(ρχων) καὶ περὶ τοὺς [βασιλέας μαχαιροφ]όρων ρμη<sup>19</sup>. This *synodos* had its *prostates* (name not preserved) and *hiereus* Herakleitos. Most probably, the

<sup>13</sup> Cf. for example Fl. Josephus, Antiquit. jud. XIII, 337 (description of the army of Ptolemy IX Soter II in war against Judea): συνήθροισε ... περὶ πέντε μυριάδας τῶν ἐγγωρίων, ὡς δ' ἔνιοι συγγραφεῖς εἰρήκασιν, ὀκτώ.

<sup>14</sup> For various meanings of the term τόπος, cf references in Preisigke's Wörterbuch, s.v.

<sup>15</sup> Demotic counterpart is *rd-* "agent of the god". About *prostates* as a temple official see generally W. Otto, *Priester und Tempel im hellenistischen Ägypten I*, Leipzig und Berlin 1905, pp. 361-363. To the examples of *προστάται τοῦ θεοῦ* cited by E. Bernand, op.cit., p. 54, note 10, Psenamunis, son of Pekysis, prophet of Isis and *προστάτης τοῦ θεοῦ* may be added. He is known from several Greek and two Demotic ostraca from the region Thebes-Hermonthis, dated to Early Roman period; for his dossier, see W. Otto, op.cit. I, pp. 359-363.

<sup>16</sup> M. Launay, *Recherches sur les armées hellénistiques II*, Paris 1950, pp. 1001-1036.

<sup>17</sup> SB I 623 (=IFayoum I 9)

<sup>18</sup> SB I 626 (=IFayoum I 16)

<sup>19</sup> SB I 624 (=IFayoum I 17); the reading of the association's name is that of E. Bemand in IFayoum, loc.cit.

same unit appears in BGU IV 1190, a papyrus from mummy cartonnage from Abusir el-Meleq: σύνοδος ρμγ' τῶν ἀσφαλῶν καὶ (χιλιάρχων)<sup>20</sup> καὶ περὶ τοὺς βασιλεῖς (sic!) μαχαιροφόρων. Here, two officials of the association, *prostates* Dorion and *grammateus* Dionysios, address Antiochos, γραμματεὺς τῶν δυνάμεων, regarding the munitions. A very interesting example of a military association is to be found in two inscriptions from Hermopolis in which οἱ παραφεδρεύοντες ἐν Ἐρμοῦ πόλει ξένοι Ἀπολλωνιάται καὶ οἱ συνπολιτευόμενοι κτίσται are mentioned<sup>21</sup>. M. Launey gives the following description of this union<sup>22</sup>: "... en même temps que cultuelle, cette association est quasi-ethnique; ... D'un autre côté, l'association garde quelque chose de son organisation militaire: les noms sont classés en six hégémonies, avec les officiers en tête de chacune d'elles. Mais il suffit de compter les noms pour constater qu'il s'en font de beaucoup que tous les garnisaires d'Hermopolis faisant partie de l'association; de plus, les dignitaires de l'association ne sont pas les officiers. Il y a là une curieuse juxtaposition de deux hierarchie distincte l'une valable dans l'ordre militaire, l'autre dans le cadre de l'association culturelle".

Launey's characteristic of the association of οἱ παραφεδρεύοντες ἐν Ἐρμοῦ πόλει ξένοι Ἀπολλωνιάται καὶ συνπολιτευόμενοι κτίσται is also valid for the association of ἱππεῖς ἐντόπιοι. Thus, on the grounds of the material discussed above, the full context of the *ilarches* inscription may be described as follows:

This inscription commemorates a dedication made by the former Ptolemaic cavalrymen. Originally they belonged to the same ἴλη under the command of a certain Sosigenes and as military settlers they lived in the same place. They also formed an association the character of which appears to have been mainly cultic but which must have had some traits of the professional soldiers' corporation too. After 30 B.C. an active service of those peoples ended but still having their homes near each other they continued their social life organised along the lines of by-gone times with institutions and behaviours proper to them. They still preserved, at least in terminology, some traits of their military organization and this is visible e.g when they call, as they did before, Sosigenes their *ilarches*. What has really survived from their life prior to 30 B.C. is their association<sup>23</sup> though this surely changed its character; in 18 B.C. it could not have been a professional corporation any more but only a social recollective club. The association had the *prostates* at its head, which post appears to have been open to all association members; here it is held by certain Didymos and not by the former commander of the tactical unit - Sosigenes. As a *prostates* Didymos was responsible for the common religious and social performances of the association members and it is absolutely intelligible that he overviewed the accomplishing of the dedication.

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<sup>20</sup> E. Bernard's reading (IFayoum I, p. 54) instead of χιλιοδράχμων proposed in BGU IV 1190.

<sup>21</sup> SB I 4206 (stele J), SB V 8006 (stele R); cf. also PGiss 99.

<sup>22</sup> M. Launey, *op.cit.*, p. 1025.

<sup>23</sup> One should note in this place the difference in calling the commander of ἱππεῖς and the president of their association. Sosigenes is generally described as *ilarches*, without defining precisely the time, while Didymos was *prostates* in this very time of dedication, what is indicated by the participle of the present active.