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INV. S. R. 3055

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 104 (1994) 69–72

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## A NEW ROMAN AUXILIARY COHORT IN EGYPT? P. EGYPT. MUS. INV. S.R. 3055\*

In a recent paper Alia Hanafi has published “Three Applications from Oxyrhynchus”, all dated 1 July 127 A.D. (P. Egypt. Mus. inv. S.R. 3055).<sup>1</sup> The second of these, an “Application concerning a loan of money”, will occupy us here, and more specifically the equestrian military career of the archidikastes in question, Iulius Vestinianus Asklepiades, qui et Leonidas:

Il. 11-14: Οὐηστιαν[ιανῶ]ι Ἄσκ[ληπιάδῃ] τῶι καὶ Λεωνίδῃ Λεωνίδου ἐξηγητεύσαντος γενομένῳ ἐπάρχῳ σπεί[ρ]ῃς τρίτης Βρακῶν καὶ πρώτης Θρακῶν ἰ[ερεῖ] καὶ ἀρχιδικαστῆι καὶ | πρὸς τῆι ἐπιμελείαι τῶν χρηματιστῶν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων κριτηρίων | παρὰ etc.

A. Hanafi cites another papyrus in which the same archidikastes is mentioned<sup>2</sup>: P. Mil. Vogl. (= P. Primi) I 25, col. v (SB VI Bhft. 2 n. 3 col. v), 127 A.D. (May-June):

Il. 10-13: — Ἰο[ύ]λιος | Ὀηστεινεια[νός] Ἄσκ[ληπιάδῃ]ς, ὁ καὶ Λεωνίδῃ[ς], γε[ν]ο[μ]έν[ος] | ἔπαρχος σπείρα[ς] τρίτης [Θ]ρακῶν καὶ πρώτης [Θ]ρακῶν | ὁ εἰερεὺς [καὶ ἀρχιδικαστῆ]ς etc.

There is, however, yet another papyrus text that Hanafi does not mention and in which the same archidikastes appears: P. Mil. Vogl. VI 264, 127 A.D.:

Il. 1-2: Τιβερίῳ Ἰουλίῳ Οὐεστινιανῶ Ἄσ[κλη]πιάδῃ τῶ καὶ Λεωνίδῃ ἰερεῖ καὶ ἀρχι[δ]ικαστῆ | παρὰ etc.  
(Ad I. 1: BL VII, p. 123: Οὐηστινιανῶ.)

It is therefore evident that all three texts relate to one and the same archidikastes, whose full name was Tib. Iulius Vestinianus Asklepiades, qui et Leonidas. He was the son of one Leonidas, a former exegetes (text 1). The father, designated by his Greek name alone, apparently did not possess the Roman citizenship. The son, on the other hand, was not only a

\* The present paper presents research results of the Belgian Programme of Inter-University Attraction Poles (IUAP/PIA 28) initiated by the Belgian Government, Office of the Prime Minister, Research Policy Programming. With thanks to Margaret M. Roxan (London), W. Clarysse and P. Van Dessel (Leuven), for their assistance.

<sup>1</sup> Proceedings of the XIXth International Congress of Papyrology, ed. A.H.S. El-Mosalamy, Cairo 1992, 557-580, 561-577.

<sup>2</sup> A. Hanafi (n. 1), 563; for the prosopography of the archidikastai see A. Calabi, *L'archidicasta nei primi tre secoli della dominazione romana*, *Aegyptus* 32, 1952, 406-424; P.J. Sijpesteijn, *The Family of the Tiberii Iulii Theones*, Amsterdam 1976, Appendix B, 129-148.

Roman citizen, but had also already ascended to equestrian status, for he mentions two stints as praefectus cohortis (texts 1 & 2: ἑπαρχος σπείρης).<sup>3</sup>

In the present paper I will confine myself to these two military appointments in the career of Tib. Iulius Vestinianus Asklepiades, qui et Leonidas. The social ascent of this archidikastes via his probable patron, L. Iulius Vestinus, ab epistulis Hadriani,<sup>4</sup> will be discussed in a forthcoming contribution on the equestrian officers from Egypt.<sup>5</sup>

Which two equestrian militiae did Tib. Iulius Vestinianus Asklepiades hold? Let us look at the formulation:

Text 1: [ἐπάρχῳ σπείρης τρίτης Βρακῶν καὶ πρώτης Θρακῶν.

Text 2: ἑπαρχος σπείρα[ς] τρίτης [Θ]ρακῶν καὶ πρώτης [Θ]ρακῶν.

A. Hanafi<sup>6</sup> states that the reading Βρακῶν in text 1 is certain, whereas [Θ]ρακῶν in text 2 is a restoration. If Hanafi's reading is correct, what is the meaning of ἑπαρχος σπείρης τρίτης Βρακῶν? Or, in other words, what Latin term is rendered by the Greek word Βρακῶν?

Let us start from the interpretation of A. Hanafi<sup>7</sup>:

“First in our document the word Βρακῶν in line 13 is a certain reading... Consequently in P. Mil. 25 col. V, L. 12, the word must be restored [Β]ρακῶν as in our document.

Secondly, the dictionaries say that the word Βρακῶν originally is the Latin word ‘braccae’ meaning “breeches or trows” worn by the Gauls (see LSJ, Βρακαὶ s.v.). Its synonym in Greek is ἀναξυρίδες which is of Persian origin...

Consequently, we may conclude that the term Βρακῶν here should mean “trows-wearers” although it is not an epithet, and we have to consider it as a generic term form for barbarians. In other words, we can say briefly that this term “trows-wearers” here means the “Gauls”.

Turning back to our document, I think that γ[ενομένῳ] ἐπάρχῳ σπείρης τρίτης Βρακῶν should be translated “formerly prefect of the third cohort of the Gauls”. Consequently we can say that in 127 A.D. there was a cohort of Gauls in Egypt and this must be added to the list of cohorts and alae...”

This line of thought is in its entirety rather strange. Why would a Greek translator of the Latin ‘Gallorum’ follow such a reasoning? Would an officer accept that an official unit of the Roman army in which he served was named with a Greek term carrying the negative connotation of ‘barbarian’? What proof is there that these ‘barbarians’ were ‘Gauls’? What proof is there that this ‘cohors III Gallorum’ was ever stationed in Egypt?

The point of departure that the term Βρακῶν must be a Greek rendition of a Latin term is,

<sup>3</sup> H. Devijver, PME I, IV, V, I 138.

<sup>4</sup> PIR<sup>2</sup> I 623, I 622; H.-G. Pflaum, Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain, Paris 1960-1961, no. 105, no. 19; S. Demougine, Prosopographie des chevaliers romains julio-claudiens, Rome 1992, no. 683.

<sup>5</sup> H. Devijver, A New Papyrus (P. Egypt. Mus. inv. S.R. 3055) and the Equestrian Officers from Roman Egypt, forthcoming in Ancient Society 25, 1994.

<sup>6</sup> A. Hanafi (n. 1), 563.

<sup>7</sup> A. Hanafi (n. 1), 563-564.

my view, the only correct finding in Hanafi's argumentation. On the other hand, it is far from likely that the translator was looking at the Latin word "braccæ". Indeed, the cohortes and alae of the Roman auxilia are commonly designated with an ethnic. And we know that equestrian officers of Egyptian origin (mainly from the Alexandrian elite – Alexandria ad Aegyptum) served mainly in Egypt itself or in a neighbouring (Oriental) province.<sup>8</sup> It is therefore obvious that one must look for a cohort in this eastern region with an ethnic that can be related to **Βρακῶν**.

More specifically the 'Bracari' come to mind, the inhabitants of Bracara, the capital of Spanish Callaecia. The town was also called 'Bracara Augusta' and its citizens 'Bracares Augustani' or 'Bracaraugustani'. And in the literary sources we find the Greek equivalent **Βράκαρες – Βρακάριοι**.<sup>9</sup>

The region supplied several cohorts for the Roman auxilia which were designated as 'cohortes Bracarum' or 'cohortes Bracaraugustanorum'.<sup>10</sup>

A distinction must be drawn between the 'cohortes Bracarum' (or sometimes 'Bracarorum') and the 'cohortes Bracaraugustanorum'. According to J. Benes, the former were recruited from the tribal area of the Bracari, Callaecia, while the Bracaraugustani were drawn from the capital of the territory, viz. the town Bracara Augusta; but P. Le Roux holds that the words Bracari and Bracaraugustani could refer to the same entity.<sup>11</sup>

Now if there was a 'cohors III Bracarum' stationed in the East, it enters into consideration for the unit that was commanded by Tib. Iulius Vestinianus: ἑπαρχος σπείρης τρίτης **Βρακῶν**. The Greek translator regarded the Latin word "Bracarum" as a plural form of the Latin "Braccæ", which would normally be rendered in Greek as **Βρακῶν**. However, I have not managed to find a second attestation of **Βρακῶν**, not in the inscriptions nor in the papyri.<sup>12</sup>

Yet it would seem more than likely that it is the "cohors III Bracarum" that is meant here. A check of the 'praefecti cohortis Bracarum / Bracaraugustanorum' assembled in the PME<sup>13</sup>

<sup>8</sup> H. Devijver, *The Equestrian Officers of the Roman Imperial Army*. *Mavors VI*, Amsterdam 1989, 141-181, 273-389, 357-361.

<sup>9</sup> RE III, 1899, 802 s.v. Bracara Augusta, Bracari.

<sup>10</sup> RE IV, 1901, 255-257; P.A. Holder, *The Auxilia from Augustus to Trajan*, BAR Int. Ser. 70, Oxford 1980, 235.

<sup>11</sup> J. Benes, *Bracares (Bracari) im römischen Heer an der unteren Donau*, LF 93, 1970, 239-245; P. Le Roux, *Les auxilia romains recrutés chez les Bracari et l'organisation politique du Nord-Ouest hispanique*, *Revista de Guimarães*, *Actas do Seminario de arqueologia do Noroeste peninsular III*, 1980, 43-65.

<sup>12</sup> AE 1965, 347: [eques coh(ortis) II Bra]c[aug[us]tarom (*sic*) — ἵππεὺς χώρτης δευτέρας **Βρακατῶν** (*sic*); AE 1969/1970, 572: στρ(ατιώτη) χώρ(της) ἀ' **Βρακάρου** (Moesia Inferior); these two examples of Greek translation perhaps demonstrate that the Latin genitives "Bracaraugustanorum / Bracarum" sounded strange to a Greek speaker.

<sup>13</sup> PME I, IV, V, A 10: praef. cohort[is - -] Bracara (*sic*) Augustanor[um]; PME I, IV, V, A 44: praef. coh. I Augustae Bracarum; PME I, IV, A 182: praef. coh. II Bracar(um) Augustan(orum); PME I, V, A 197: praef. cohort. III Bracarum in Iudaea; PME I, IV, V, C 133: praef. c[oh.] I Bracar(um) August(anorum); PME I, IV, V, C 143: praef. coh. equitatae II Bracar(um) Augustanorum; PME I, IV, V, C 174: praef. coh. II Bra(carum); PME I, IV, V, C 220: praef. cohort[is] tert(iae) Bracaraugustano(rum); PME IV, C 257bis: praef. coh. III Bracar[um] in Syr(ia) Pal[ae]stina; PME I, V, F 10: praef. coh. III Bracar(um); PME I, IV, V, F 100: [praef.]

yields two cases relevant to the present context:

- [C. Cupp]ienus C.f. Pol(lia) [Terminalis] (PME IV, C257bis): praef(ectus) coh(ortis) III Bracaru[m in Syr(ia) Pal]jaes(tina) (medio II s.); see also:
- C. Aufidius C.fil. Q(uirina) Maximus (PME I, V, A197): praef(ectus) cohort(is) III Bracarum in Iudaea (aet. Hadriani).

Tib. Iulius Vestinianus was, in my opinion, praefectus cohortis III Bracarum (ἑπαρχος σπειρης τρίτης Βρακῶν) in Syria about 120 A.D.; thereafter he held a second militia prima as praefectus cohortis I Thracum (ἑπαρχος σπειρης πρώτης Θρακῶν). It is not so easy to pinpoint the station of a cohors I Thracum, for several homonymous units are attested.<sup>14</sup> In view of the overall context we may well be dealing here with the cohors I Thracum (Augusta equitata), which first was stationed in Syria,<sup>15</sup> later in Egypt.<sup>16</sup>

Thus it would appear that Tib. Iulius Vestinianus Asklepiades, like the other equestrian officers from Egypt, never served outside the eastern provinces of the Empire.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, like his colleagues from Egypt, he was not a true *vir militaris*. He was content with the first rank of the militiae, which he held twice. Such officers, with a literary-legal background, probably harboured no military ambitions, but considered the holding of a single militia as the confirmation, so to speak, of their entry in the *ordo equester*.<sup>18</sup>

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coh. Bracarum in Brit[annia - -]; PME IV, V, L 38bis: praef. coh. II Bra(carum); PME II, P 13: praef. coh. III Bracar(um) August[an(orum)] q(uae) e(st) in Raetia; PME IV, V, P 71bis: [coh.] III Bra[caraugust(anorum)]; PME II, S 14: praef. cohort. III Bracaraug(ustanorum); PME II, IV, V, S 81: praef. coh. V Bracar(um) Augustanorum in Germania; PME II, IV, Inc. 222: pra[ef. coh. I(?) Bra]clarum Augustanorum.

<sup>14</sup> RE IV, 1901, 335-338; P.A. Holder (n. 10), 227-228.

<sup>15</sup> M.M. Roxan, *Roman Military Diplomas*, London 1978, no. 3; M.P. Speidel, *The Roman Army in Arabia*, ANRW II 8, 1977, 710-711.

<sup>16</sup> S. Daris, *Le truppe ausiliare romane in Egitto*, ANRW II 10.1, 764; M.P. Speidel, *Nubia's Roman Garrison*, ANRW II 10.1, 788-789.

<sup>17</sup> H. Devijver (n. 8), 360-361.

<sup>18</sup> H. Devijver (n. 8), 208, 360.