

DAVID KENNEDY

ALA PHRYGUM AND ALA VII PHRYGUM

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## ALA PHRYGUM AND ALA VII PHRYGUM

"The mysterious *ala VII Phrygum*" Cheesman called it in 1914 (61 n. 7),<sup>1</sup> problematic enough three generations ago when there were few citations but scarcely improved now that we have 16, perhaps 18. Gracey (1981, 24) described it as "an anomaly ... the only known unit of Phrygians in the Roman army." Cheesman and Gracey, however, reflecting conventional wisdom over the years, assumed that there was only one regiment of Phrygians, sometimes called simply *ala Phrygum* and sometimes, with a numeral, *ala VII Phrygum*. The mystery was not the numeral or lack of it but the curiosity that Phrygia had produced only one unit we knew of and that it might have borne an unexpectedly high numeral—VII rather than I, or none at all.

Now, however, in her recent publication of a new diploma naming *ala VII Phrygum*, Margaret Roxan has again made the proposal that we might rather be dealing with two distinct units (*RMD* III, no. 160 n. 6; cf. I, no. 3 n. 5). She has pointed out that the references might easily allow for an *ala (I) Phrygum* in Syria and an *ala VII Phrygum* in Syria Palaestina. The suggestion is an interesting one and deserves closer consideration.

All but one of the references we have to a Phrygian regiment exist in both inscriptions on stone and on military diplomas. The diplomas are all for Syria or for Syria Palaestina, and one of the inscriptions explicitly locates the unit it names in Syria. The reference in the *Notitia Dignitatum* (Or. 34.41) to a *co-hors IV Phrygum* which was stationed at Praesidium may be relevant. The place in question lies in southern Jordan. This was once the province of Arabia but had become by the fourth century the new province of Palaestina Tertia (cf. Parker 108-109). This is the sole attestation and it could be a late creation or, on balance more probable, the transformation of the former *ala VII Phrygum* into a cohort and its numeral erroneously cited. It is best not brought into the present debate except, perhaps, marginally. Of the remaining references, mainly the careers of equestrian officers on stone inscriptions, several name the unit in lists of other auxiliary units or legions one or more of which have eastern contexts—

<sup>1</sup> References:

- |                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Cheesman                   | Cheesman, G.L., <i>The Auxilia of the Roman Imperial Army</i> (Oxford 1914)  |
| Devijver I, II, III, IV, V | Devijver, H., <i>Prosopographia Militarium Equestrium quae fuerunt ab Augusto ad Gallienum</i> , 5 vols, Leuven 1976-1993.   |
| Devijver, forthcom.        | Devijver, H., "Commanders and Officers of legion III Scythica", in D. Kennedy, <i>Zeugma-on-the-Euphrates</i> , in press   |
| Gracey (1981)              | Gracey, M., <i>The Roman Army in Syria, Judaea and Arabia</i> (unpublished B. Litt., Oxford University)  |
| Gracey (1986)              | Gracey, M., "The Armies of the Judaeian Client Kings", in P. Freeman and D. Kennedy (ed.), <i>The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East</i> , BAR, International Series 297 (Oxford), 311-323.                       |
| Kennedy (1983)             | Kennedy, D.L., "Cohors XX Palmyrenorum—an Alternative Explanation of the Numeral", <i>ZPE</i> 53, 214-216.   |
| Kennedy (forthcom.)        | Kennedy, D.L., "The Mesopotamian Command of M. Valerius Lollianus", in E. Dabowa (ed.), <i>Studies in Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the Department of Ancient History, Uniwersytet Jagiellonski, Krakow</i> . |
| Mor                        | Mor, M., "The Roman Army in Eretz-Israel in the Years AD 70-132", in P. Freeman and D. Kennedy (ed.), <i>The Defence of the Roman and Byzantine East</i> , BAR, International Series 297, Oxford 575-602.              |
| Parker                     | Parker, S. T., <i>Romans and Saracens. A History of the Arabian Frontier</i> , ASOR Dissertation Series 6 (Winona Lake 1986).  |
| <i>RMD</i> I, II, III      | Roxan, M. <i>Roman Military Diplomas</i> , University College London, Institute of Archaeology, Occasional Publications 2, 9, 14 (1978, 1985, 1994).   |
| Spaul,                     | Spaul, J., <i>Ala 2</i> (Andover 1994).  |

I am grateful to Margaret Roxan for commenting on this paper and to John Spaul for providing a copy of his discussion of these texts.

Cappadocia and/ or Syria and Egypt. Traditionally that has been taken to imply that the Phrygian regiment was there too.

Firm dates range from 88 to the later 2nd century; indeed, to c. AD 400 if the *cohors IV Frygum* of the *Notitia Dignitatum* is included. The absence of an imperial name before the ethnic implies a pre-Flavian date as does its appearance on a diploma of 88 discharging a soldier who had presumably been recruited, probably to this unit, 25 years before.

The evidence may be tabulated as follows.

**Table 1: References in date order<sup>2</sup>**

Name	Date	Province	Reference	Type
Phrygum	88	Syria	<i>RMD</i> I, no. 3	diploma
Prhygum (sic)	late 80s (Devijver V30)	"in Syria"	<i>ILS</i> 2711	cursus
VII Phrygum (Gr)	early Trajan (Devijver I55)	East?	<i>IGRR</i> III 487, 600	cursus
Phrygum	mid-Trajan (Devijver C143)	East?	<i>AE</i> 1925, 44	cursus
VII Phryg(um)	late Trajan (Devijver A182)	East?/Syria Pal.?	<i>ILS</i> 2727	cursus
VII Phrygum	Trajan (Devijver I123)	?	<i>ILTG</i> 76-81	cursus
[Phry]gum (Gr)	early 2nd c?(Devijver C116)	?	<i>IGRR</i> III 670, 671, 672, 673, 603	cursus
VII [Phry(gum)]	136-137	Syria Pal.	<i>RMD</i> III, no. 160	diploma
VII Phry(gum)	139	Syria Pal.	<i>CIL</i> XVI 87	diploma
[VI]I Phr(ygum)	134-146 ( <i>RMD</i> III, p. 246)	Syria/Syria Pal.	<i>CIL</i> XVI 103	diploma
VII Phrygum (Gr)	first half 2nd c/Hadrian? (Devijver, "Commanders")	East?	Devijver, "Com-manders"	cursus
VII Phrygum	160	Syria Pal.	<i>RMD</i> III, no. 173	diploma
Phrygum	late Marcus (Devijver N6)	East?	<i>ILS</i> 2741	cursus
Phrygum (Gr)	120-194 (Devijver C168)	East?	<i>AE</i> 1933, 270	cursus
V[II Phry]gu[m]	? (Devijver C265)	?	<i>AE</i> 1938, 169	cursus
Septu[ma] PRYG?	2nd c?	Syria Pal.	<i>AE</i> 1905, 55	Epitaph <sup>3</sup>
...P]hryg(um)	1st/2nd c? (Devijver Inc. 86)	?	<i>CIL</i> V 7010	cursus
IV Frygum	c. 400	Palaestina	<i>ND Or.</i> 34.41	

As Table 1 makes clear, it is certainly the case that on both occasions when the unit is in Syria it is named only as *ala Phrygum*; conversely, all the certain references to the unit in Syria Palaestina call it *ala VII Phrygum*. On the other hand, leaving aside the fragmentary diploma of 134-146 which may be for either Syria or Syria Palaestina, the table also shows that the two groups of texts by province are in distinct chronological sequence. In short, we might equally be dealing with a regiment which was known simply as the *ala Phrygum* in Syria but in its next province, Syria Palaestina, was called *VII Phrygum*. That is the most economic explanation and avoids the twin problems then of explaining the absence of the *ala Phrygum* from Syria in later years and the whereabouts of *ala VII Phrygum* before it first appears in Syria Palaestina.

The question of the numeral may be simply a matter of the way in which it was known—diplomas frequently omit elements of a regiment's name; and, indeed, abbreviate the parts they do include. More likely, perhaps, may be the idea floated some years ago that isolated high numbered regiments had received those when becoming the 10th, 15th or whatever ala or cohort in a particular province (Kennedy, *ZPE* 53; nb n. 20 where *ala VII Phrygum* is cited as a possible example of this). The complementary

<sup>2</sup> References are to Devijver, *Prosopographia*, except where noted.

<sup>3</sup> Spaul, 184, n. 1 prefers Septu[m | P]hrygu[m].

diplomas for Syria of 88, for example, list 19 cohorts at that time and it was argued that when the *cohors Palmyrenorum* was added to the garrison in the mid-2nd century it became the 20th and was assigned that numeral. The evidence for Syria Palaestina is less clear but it is certain that with the possible exception of the reinforcements in time of rebellion, the province never had six *alae* to which the Phrygians could become a seventh.<sup>4</sup> More interesting, however, is the point stressed by Mor some years ago (1986) that contrary to some earlier assertions, there is no evidence for a steep increase in auxiliary forces in Judaea/Syria Palaestina after the First Jewish War of 66-70. The placing in Judaea of an entire legion made that unnecessary. What is noticeable is that there is good evidence that under both Herod and his successors and the early Roman praetorian governors, the regular complement of auxiliary units was a total of six. That is the figure cited by literary sources—an *ala* and five cohorts (Josephus *AJ* 19. 9.1 (356-366), *BJ* 2.12.5 (236), *AJ* 20.6.1 (121), 20.8.7 (176), *BJ* 3.4.1 (66)); and confirmed by a diploma of 86 (*CIL* XVI 33)—two *alae* and four cohorts (Mor 576-578; cf. Gracey [1986]). Only after the Second Jewish War did the number of units demonstrably increase permanently (*RMD* I 60 for c. 149/161 has three (?) *alae* and seven (?) cohorts; *RMD* I 69 for 186 lists two *alae* and seven cohorts). Is it possible that after a century or more with a stable garrison of six auxiliary regiments (albeit not always the same ones—after the First Jewish War ended Vespasian exchanged those there before 66 for others), a seventh was added and, lacking a numeral, was assigned VII?

A second approach is to group the references by the form of their name:

**Table 2: References grouped as  
(a) *ala Phrygum*, (b) *ala VII Phrygum* and (c) Miscellaneous (cf. n. 2)**

Name	Date	Province	Reference	Type
(a) <i>ala Phrygum</i>				
1. Phrygum	88	Syria	<i>RMD</i> I, no. 3	diploma
2. Phrygum ( <i>sic</i> )	late 80s (Devijver V30)	"in Syria"	<i>ILS</i> 2711	cursus
3. Phrygum	mid-Trajan (Devijver C143)	East?	<i>AE</i> 1925, 44	cursus
4. [Phry]gum (Gr)	early 2nd c? (Devijver C 116)	?	<i>IGRR</i> III 670, 671, 672, 673, 603	cursus
5. Phrygum	late Marcus (Devijver N6)	East?	<i>ILS</i> 2741	cursus
6. Phrygum (Gr)	120-194 (Devijver C168)	East	<i>AE</i> 1933, 270	cursus
(b) <i>ala VII Phrygum</i>				
7. VII Phrygum (Gr)	early Trajan (Devijver I55)	East	<i>IGRR</i> III 487, 600	cursus
8. VII Phryg(um)	late Trajan (Devijver A182)	East?/Syria Pal.?	<i>ILS</i> 2727	Cursus
9. VII Phrygum	Trajan (Devijver I123)	?	<i>ILTG</i> 76-81	cursus
10. VII [Phry(gum)]	136-137	Syria Pal.	<i>RMD</i> III, no. 160	diploma
11. VII Phrygum	139	Syria Pal.	<i>CIL</i> XVI 87	diploma
12. [VI]I Phr(ygum)	134-146 ( <i>RMD</i> III, p. 246)	Syria/Syria Pal.	<i>CIL</i> XVI 103	diploma
13. VII Phrygum (Gr)	first half 2nd c/Hadrian? (Devijver, "Commanders")	East?	(Devijver, "Commanders" III)	cursus
14. VII Phrygum	160	Syria Pal.	<i>RMD</i> III, no. 173	diploma
15. V[II Phry]gu[m]	? (Devijver C265)	?	<i>AE</i> 1938, 169	cursus
16. Septu[ma] ( <i>sic</i> ) PRYG?	2nd c ?	Syria Pal.	<i>AE</i> 1905, 55	epitaph

<sup>4</sup> Spaul, 184 suggests it may have appeared as the seventh on a list sent to Rome and thereafter assigned the numeral VII in error.

Name	Date	Province	Reference	Type
(c) Miscellaneous				
17. ..P]hryg(um)	1st/ 2nd c? (Devijver Inc.86)	?	<i>CIL</i> V 7010	cursus
18. IV Frygum	c. 400	Palaestina	<i>ND Or.</i> 34.41	

If Roxan is correct that there are two distinct units then we may be able to argue that those references to a Phrygian regiment found in career inscriptions can be localised by examining the form of the name. Let us begin with group (a):

1. M. Valerius Propinquus Grattius Cerealis (Table 2, no 2) helpfully tells us where his military commands were held: *praef. coh. secund. Astur in Germ(ania), trib. leg. V Mac in Moesia, praef alae Prhygum (sic) in Syr[ia], item praef alae III Thracum in Syr[ia]*.

The other careers are characteristic of all the others in this table in giving no such location. We must surmise from the career as a whole.

2. According to Devijver (C143), five of the six auxiliary commands of Ti. Claudius Helvius Secundus (Table 2, no. 3) were held in the East:

the second command, *coh. I Flavia c. R.*, was certainly in Syria in 88 (*CIL* XVI.35) but was in Syria Palaestina by 139 (*CIL* XVI.87). Our man held the post in 99 or soon after;

the third, *leg. III Scythica*, was certainly in Syria at that date;

likewise, *leg. XII Fulminata* was in Cappadocia;

then comes *ala Phrygum*;

and finally, *ala II Gallorum* which Pflaum thought belonged to Cappadocia.

3. Ti. Claudius Agrippinus (Table 2, no. 4) had just the three posts: *leg III Gallica* was a long-time part of the garrison of Syria. He then moved to a second legionary tribunate—with *leg. I Italica* in Moesia—before taking up his prefecture of *ala [Phry]gum*.

4. C. Nasennius Marcellus (Table 2, no. 5) in the last years of Marcus Aurelius, was:

*praef. coh. I Apamena* (sic) which can with certainty be placed half a century before this time in Cappadocia (*AE* 1974, 226; Devijver V28). Some time later (depending on whether one dates the special command of M. Valerius Lollianus [*ILS* 2724; Devijver V17] to Trajan, Marcus or somewhere in between (Kennedy, forthcoming) the unit was still in Syria or near by. By 144 it is appearing in Egypt (*BGU* III, 729) where it seems to remain<sup>5</sup> till a final attestation in the *Notitia Dignitatum* (Or. 31.60);

then followed the command of the *coh. I Italica civium Romanorum* which is listed by Arrian in the *Ektaxis* (3.13) for Cappadocia in AD 134; P. Valerius Priscus (*AE* 1974, 226; Devijver V 28) records as noted above his command of, first, the *coh. I Apamenorum*, then of the *coh. I Italica*, both of which he helpfully says are "in Cappadocia". His career is placed in the mid-2nd century;

finally comes the *ala Phrygum*.

5. Ti. Claudius Pius (Table 2, no. 6) held four posts between c. 120 and 194:

*coh. equitata Romanorum civium* (sic) may be identified with either a unit in Cappadocia or Syria Palaestina.

*leg IV Scythica*, however, was certainly in northern Syria.

likewise his second legionary tribunate in *leg. III Gallica*.

finally he was prefect of *ala Phrygum*

In summary, we cannot deduce much with certainty beyond the likelihood that the Phrygians in question were in Syria rather than Syria Palaestina. The key inscription, however, is the penultimate one of these since it certainly post-dates the appearance of an *ala VII Phrygum* in Syria Palaestina. The dates

<sup>5</sup> *P. Fay.* 105 (c. 120/150), *P. Lond.* 138 (145), *BGU* II 462 (150/ 156), *CIL* XVI 184 (156/161), *BGU* III 888 (159/160), *AE* 1952, 237 (2nd century), *BGU* II, 423 (2nd century), *JRS* 67 (1977) 50-61 (213/216), *AE* 1965, 143 (c. 200/225), *P. Oxy.* XII 1511 (first half 3rd century), *P. Mich.* IX 542 (3rd century), *P. Beatty Panop.* 1 46ff (298).

and sequence of posts here could allow for C. Nasennius Marcellus to have moved progressively northwards from Egypt to Cappadocia, but the intervening command of the Phrygian regiment could then be in either Syria Palaestina or Syria.

Group (b) can be examined in the same fashion:

1. C. Julius Demosthenes (Table 2, no. 7) moved from the tribunate of *leg. VI Ferrata*, which at the time in question—early Trajan—may have been in either Syria or recently moved to the new province of Arabia if post-106. His next post is with the Phrygian regiment.

2. After a prefecture in, perhaps, Moesia inferior, C. Atinius Paternus (Table 2, no. 8) was decorated by Trajan during the Parthian War while a tribune of the garrison legion of Judaea, *X Fretensis*. His next post was as prefect of *ala VII Phrygum*.

3. The recently discovered acephalous career inscription from Sagalassos in Pisidia shows the equestrian officer concerned (Table 2, no. 13) with a succession of eastern postings: *cohors III Bracarum* was in Judaea/Syria Palaestina in the 1st and 2nd centuries, then he was tribune of *III Scythica* at Zeugma in Syria, and finally prefect of the Phrygian cohort (Devijver, forthcoming).

The last two texts in this group and the sole career inscription in the last group give no context for their citation of a Phrygian regiment.

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Once again the evidence offers no clear solution to the problem. The first, however, may hint at Syria and imply that the regiment was already bearing the numeral. The second, however, either hints at Judaea for the Phrygians and would imply the unit there already long before the Second Jewish War. The third could be read as a hint at Syria as the base of the *ala VII* at the time.

**Discussion:** No clear solution emerges. There is evidence to support Dr Roxan's suggestion and her expertise and "feel" for the subject matter deserves respect. However, the arguments set out above for explaining the numeral and the oddity of having two *alae Phrygum*, both apparently created in the pre-Flavian period and bearing an implied numeral I and an actual numeral VII seem to me to best explained by supposing in fact an un-numbered *ala* subsequently receiving a number. Add to that the (admittedly shaky) problem that two units would leave us without any explanation for where each was based in the lengthy periods when it is not attested. Finally, there is the fact that the special cavalry command of M. Valerius Lollianus referred to above included troopers from five cavalry regiments but not from the *ala Phrygum* (Kennedy forthcom.). While not conclusive and the command itself is variously dated from Trajan to Marcus Aurelius, it is best explained by supposing that Lollianus was drawing wholly or largely from Syria and the *ala Phrygum* was already transferred to Judaea/Syria Palaestina.