

KENT J. RIGSBY

TWO DANUBIAN EPITAPHS

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 126 (1999) 175–176

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*Francus ego cives, Romanus miles in armis, ✎  
egregia virtute tuli bello mea dextera sem[p]er. ✎*

The date is vague, but this is certainly among our earliest evidence of Franks; Dessau placed it last in his series of “Tituli militares”. The first line has been evoked for its double claim, Frank and Roman both, a paradoxical polarity and a sign of the times: “both Frankish citizen and Roman soldier” (so Southern and Dixon), like the “I am two things” of Lattimore’s Archilochus.

The second line fails to scan or to construe: let it go.<sup>4</sup> But has the first been rightly understood? *Civis Romanus sum!* (Cic. *Verr.* 2.5.162). No ancient reader would look at the most potent expression in the Latin language and divide its two components so as to point away from each other. Nor in turn would one speak of a “Frankish citizen”, any more than a “Ptolemaic citizen” or a “Swiss subject” – there is no such person or status, and this is an impossible contradiction in terms.

I suggest that the deceased is saying of himself not two claims that are meant to sound paradoxical, but three that are rather more familiar and self-satisfied: origin, status, profession. This was the natural sequence of a life and career. For a modern reader this triad will be made clear by punctuating

*Francus ego, cives Romanus, miles in armis,*

“I, a Frank, a Roman citizen, a soldier in arms, with exemplary courage brought to war . . .” He does not tell us his name, a pity. Perhaps this was given on a separable piece of art that has not survived.

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Kent J. Rigsby

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<sup>4</sup> Only Buecheler seems to have addressed it. He would have preferred *tulit* with *dextera* as subject (“my right hand always brought [arms] to war . . .”) but deferred to Mommsen’s reading and took *dextera* as ablative (“I brought [arms] to war with my right hand . . .”). Either way, a direct object is wanted. Perhaps the line reflects the beginnings of two hexameters (*egregia . . . | bello . . .*), ineptly combined.