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TWO DANUBIAN EPITAPHS

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1. A Nicomedeian near Istros

Near the mouth of the Danube, at Vadu at the southern entrance to Istros' protected lagoon, is the grave of a merchant from Nicomedeia, who died at the age of sixty and was buried by his brother and son:¹

'Ασκληπιάδης Μηνοφίλου Νεικομηδεὺς
ὁ καὶ 'Αζανείτης ἔνπο4 ρος Μηνοφίλφ Βά[σ][σ]φ ἀδελφῷ ἐνπόρφ,
καὶ 'Ασκληπιάδης Μηνοφίλου τῷ πατρὶ
8 [ἔ]ζη ἔτη ξ΄ τὸν βωμὸν μνῆς χάριν.²

The deceased was named for his father; he named his own son for his brother. These are familiar courtesies. But his full name is surprising: Menophilus Bassus. For a simple Greek name followed by a simple Roman name there are parallels; but it is an unusual sequence, and not to be restored lightly. There is nothing Roman in the names of the brother and the son. Other names, not Latin, could be envisaged: Bacch(i)us, Battus, etc. But in fact we do not expect a second name at all; what we expect is a patronymic. Finally, $\mathring{\alpha}\delta\epsilon\mathring{\lambda}\varphi\mathring{\phi}$ in line 5 needs an article as in $\tau\mathring{\phi}$ $\pi\alpha\tau$ $p\acute{\epsilon}$ in 7.

Latin Bassus must be jettisoned. At the end of 4 one sees in the photograph part of B, perhaps with a line across the top (unless this is random damage), one way of marking abbreviation. The photograph published by Pippidi in 1983 shows that the stone is weathered and difficult on the right. Točilscu reported after B doubtful traces of Λ , which cannot be confirmed on the photograph. Perhaps there was only a tick, also a sign of abbreviation (as in line 8 ξ' or e.g. I. Scyth. 196.20 $\Phi(\lambda \iota \pi \pi \sigma \varsigma)$ At the beginning of 5 Točilscu saw Ω . The information that the inscription has already supplied about the deceased's father gives us the solution, the patronymic: Mηνοφίλ ω B' | $\tau \hat{\omega}$ $\hat{\omega}$ δελφ $\hat{\omega}$. This family of merchants from Bithynia, whose trading ranged from the Danube to Phrygia, was purely Greek.

2. A Frank near Aquincum

A funerary epigram of a soldier, discovered in the vicinity of Aquincum (Budapest), was first published by Mommsen; the first of its two lines has become famous. Since Dessau (1892) the epigram has been presented as follows:³

¹ E. Točilscu, *AEM* 8 (1884) 24, with a drawing; Pippidi, *I. Scyth.* I 356, with a photograph; writing of II A.D. Nicomedeians abroad, including ours, are tabulated by L. Robert, *BCH* 102 (1978) 423–424 (= *Documents d'Asie Mineure* 119–120).

 $^{^2}$ μνής for μνήμης, as was common. For funerary *bomoi* among Nicomedeians see J. Kubińska, *Les monuments funéraires* (Warsaw 1968) 68–69.

³ Mommsen, CIL III 3576 (without punctuation), with no description of the monument; Dessau, ILS 2814; Buecheler, Carm. Lat. epigr. 620; Ihn, RE 7 (1910) 86; T. Burns, History of the Ostrogoths (Bloomington 1984) 8; E. James, The Franks (Oxford 1988) 42; A. D. Lee, Information and Frontiers (Cambridge 1993) 76; P. Southern, K. Dixon, The Late Roman Army (New Haven 1996) 48. The last two I owe to the learning of E. L. Wheeler.

176 *K. J. Rigsby*

Francus ego cives, Romanus miles in armis, e 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.⁴ 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.

Boston Kent J. Rigsby

⁴ 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.