

J. E. H. SPAUL

T. FL. NEON – A FIRST CENTURY PREFECT?

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 94 (1992) 281–282

© Dr. Rudolf Habelt GmbH, Bonn

T.FL.NEON - A FIRST CENTURY PREFECT?

In November 1889, Henry de La Martinière found at Ain Schkour in Morocco, a limestone altar of which the top left hand corner had been broken off. The altar to the Spirit of the Locality (Inscriptions Antiques du Maroc, tome 2, 821) was set up by a Prefect of the Cohort of Asturians and Callaecians, whose name is missing the first letters. What remains are the letters --L NEON. The same unit - also numberless - was building at Volubilis, 4 km. to the south, (IAM2, 498) in the reign of Nero. It was therefore one of the first units to serve in Tingitana.

Altars dedicated to *genio Loci* were studied by Rene Rebuffat in an article "Inscriptions militaires au génie du lieu d'Ain Schkour et de Sidi Moussa bou Fri" (Bulletin d'Archéologie Marocaine X, 1976, 151-160). He associates such dedications with the "praetorium" of a camp, a building in which a commandant would take a special interest. He also takes the phrase *per manus commil.* to mean that, as it was the duty of the unit to build in the first instance, the inscription refers to a rebuilding. Rebuilding of the bathhouse at the same site under Severus Alexander (IAM2, 824), however, has no such phrase, from which I deduce that rebuilding was as much of a duty as initial construction. More important as far as dating is concerned is the absence of a numeral which suggests that at this period other units of the Asturians and Callaecians had not yet been raised; in other words, this inscription ought to be from the First Century and the original building of the camp.

I assume that such an altar would probably be the second altar to be erected after the loyal altar in the *principia*, and should be associated with an early commander of the unit. A priori, such an altar should be evidence of an early pre-69 holder of the post. This makes it all the more surprising that Louis Chatelain (Inscriptions Latines du Maroc, no. 43) should have decided that the name of the Prefect had been abbreviated to Fl. Such an abbreviation might be common in the late Second and is in the Fourth Centuries, but not in the First. Hermann Dessau (CIL viii 21820) suggested that the Prefect's nomen might be Claudius or even Aelius. The latter name would fit a late Second Century date, while the former is hardly likely, since Tib. Cl. is too long for the space. The obvious solution to this problem is the name Caius Iulius Neon, abbreviated to C. IVL. NEON. Such a man, descendant of one of Caesar's enfranchised legionaries whose family could have acquired equestrian rank before the reign of Claudius, might well abbreviate his nomen in the sure knowledge that it would be recognised as such. Many other examples of this abbreviation have been found (e.g. ILS 2032, 2109, 2182, 2317, 2319, 2356, 2362 to list only a few).

I suggest that the inscription did read

[GE]NIO LOCI
[C. IV]L. NEON PRAEF
[C]OH ASTUR ET CALL
PRAETORIUM PER M[A]
NVS COMMIL A S[O]
LO COMPOSVIT ET FECIT

Ihsan Çizakça Lisesi, Bursa

J.E.H.Spaul