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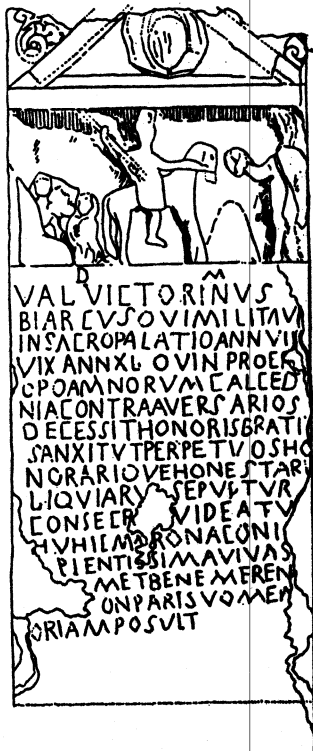
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MICHAEL P. SPEIDEL

A Horse Guardsman in the War between Licinius and Constantine

In the year 324, at Ulmetum in the province of Scythia, the wife of a horseman in the imperial guard set up a gravestone for her husband. The huge limestone stele, with its relief and inscription nearly two meters tall, has been published as follows:¹

The relief on the upper part of the stele is badly wheathered. Hence the above



D(is) M(anibus)
Val(erius) Victorinus
biarcus qui militavi(t)
in sacro palatio ann(is) VII[...]
5 *vix(it) ann(is) XL qui [i]n proe[li]-*
o [R]oamnorum Calced[o]-
nia contra avversarios
decessit honoris grati[a]
sanzit ut perpetuos ho-
10 *norarius honesta r[e]-*
liquiaru[m] sepultu[r]a
consecr[ata] videatu[r].
HVHI (?) M[at]r[on]a coni[ux]
pietissima viva s[e]-
15 *met bene meren[ti]*
conpari suo me[m]o-
riam posuit

¹ E. POPESCU, Inscriptiile grecești și latine din secolele IV-XIII descoperite în România, 1976, 206 (whence AE 1976, 631).

drawing is vague, and photographs are not much better.² In the middle of the sculpted panel a horseman brandishes a spear and is faced by a man with raised right hand – the well-known scene portraying the dead as a «Thracian Rider» hero.³ To the left, behind the horseman, a woman sits in a wicker chair, a motif honoring wife and wedlock, often seen in «funeral banquet» scenes.⁴

The text of the inscription has been read poorly and calls for drastic revisions. To judge from photographs one must read *sive* instead of *que* in line ten and therefore restore *consecr[ar]i* in line twelve. The S after *perpetuo* in line nine seems to be a ligature for *se*. HUHIC in line thirteen surely is *huic*, the dative of *hic*, a spelling with an added H for which there are parallels. At the beginning of line 15 several letters are lost, perhaps the word *sibi*. With these changes the hitherto bewildering text turns out nearly grammatical and fully understandable:⁵

- D(is) M(anibus).*
Val(erius) Victorinus,
biarc(h)us, qui militavi[t]
in sacro palatio ann(os) VII[- -],
 5 *vix(it) ann(os) XL, qui in proe[li-]*
o Roamnorum Calced[o-]
nia contra aversarios
decessit. Honoris grati[a]
sanxit ut perpetuo se ho-
 10 *norari sive honesta re-*
liquiaru[m] sepultur[a]
consecr[ar]i videatu[r].
Huic Ma[t]r[on]a, coni[ux]
pietissima, viva s[e]
 15 *[sibi] et bene meren-*
[ti] conpari suo mem-
oriam posuit.

«To the spirits of the dead. Valerius Victorinus in the rank of biarchus, who served in the holy palace for seven years, lived forty years, and fell in the battle of the Romans against their foes at Kalchedon. For honor's sake he willed that he should be

² Slightly better than POPESCU's photograph is the one in N. HAMPARTUMIAN, *Corpus Cultus Equitis Thracii IV, Moesia inferior and Dacia*, 1979, no. 107. Our readings are based on HAMPARTUMIAN's plate.

³ For the «Thracian Rider» scene, see E. PFUHL – H. MÖBIUS, *Die ostgriechischen Grabreliefs*, 1977, 310–314.

⁴ M. P. SPEIDEL, *Riding for Caesar. The Roman Emperors' Horse Guard*, 1994, 136.

⁵ For an SE ligature see R. CAGNAT, *Cours d'épigraphie latine* (4th ed.), 1913, 25. *Huic*: for the letter H wrongly added before vowels, see DESSAU, *ILS Index* p. 816 (e.g. CIL VI 7308, 18773). Some further adjustments: The eleventh letter in line 5, an I, seems to have another I set on top of it; the word *memoriam* in lines 16–17 is fully preserved.

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seen to be commemorated lastingly, or else be hallowed by a true burial of his remains. To him, to her husband who well deserves it, and to herself, Matrona, his devoted wife, while living, set up this gravestone.⁶

The phrase *perpetuo honorari* may mean 'to be honored with a monument', just as in Rome one might be honored with a gravestone (*titulo honorari*).⁶ Victorinus' gravestone is such a monument in his honor. As a cenotaph,⁷ the text sets it off from a true burial.

Being a palace soldier, Victorinus served in a *schola palatina* of the imperial guard and, in the absence of any further specification, among the *scutarii*. He is the earliest known holder of the rank of *biarchus*.⁸

Victorinus' gravestone not only calls for a better text but also for new understanding of the Romans and their foes in the battle at Kalchedon or Chrysopolis on 8 September 324. There, at Üsküdar on the Asian side of the Bosphorus, Licinius went under and Constantine became ruler of the whole empire.⁹ Victorinus seems to have fought on the losing side, for he bears Licinius' family name Valerius while Constantine's soldiers bore the name Flavius.¹⁰ Further grounds to think that Victorinus was a Licinian are these: As a 'Thracian Rider' hero, Victorinus was a heathen; Constantine's guardsmen were Christians.¹¹ Ulmetum, where the gravestone was found, belonged to the lands of Licinius and may have been the hometown of Victorinus or Matrona, yet Constantine brought his guardsmen from the West. Finally, the widow of a Constantinian guardsman would hardly have ended up in far-away Ulmetum, while worsted Licinian guards, living down their past by patrolling far frontiers,¹² may have brought Matrona there as one of their dependents.¹³

⁶ CIL VI 29580.

⁷ POPESCU, l.c. (note 1) 216 fittingly calls to mind the *tumulus honorarius* of Suetonius, Claud. 1.

⁸ *Scholae*: SPEIDEL l.c. (note 4) 75 f. Earliest *biarchus*: POPESCU, l.c. (note 1) 216. For another pre-Constantinian *biarchus* with the name Valerius see C. C. PETOLESCU, Valerius Livianus, Biercus, ZPE 61, 1985, 238.

⁹ T. D. BARNES, Constantine and Eusebius, 1981, 76 f.

¹⁰ J. C. KEENAN, The Names Flavius and Aurelius as Status Designations in Later Roman Egypt, ZPE 11, 1973, 33–63; D. HOFFMANN, Das spätrömische Bewegungsheer und die Notitia Dignitatum I, 1969–1970, 176, 219, 263, 356 (but see p. 70); M. P. SPEIDEL, Roman Army Studies II, 1972, 407.

¹¹ Licinius' guards: Anon. Vales. 20; Eusebius VC 2, 5; J. BLEICKEN, Constantin der Große und die Christen. Überlegungen zur konstantinischen Wende, 1992, 53. Constantine's guards: Eusebius VC 1, 37; 2, 7–9; A. v. HARNACK, Militia Christi, 1905, 86 f.

¹² In 311 Constantine sentenced his opponent's guardsmen to frontier duty: Paneg. Lat. 12, 21 *Iam obliiti deliciarum Circi maximi et Pompeiani theatri et nobilium lavacrorum, Rheno Danubioque praetendunt, excubias agunt, latrocinia compescunt.*

¹³ For wives as dependents of units see e.g. AE 1969/70, 574; CIL V 8764 (= DIEHL 4857, Concordia, cf. M. P. SPEIDEL, Dumbarton Oaks Papers 1996 forthcoming). R. S. O. TOMLIN,

Who were the Romans at Kalchedon and who were their foes? To the modern observer both sides were Roman. A recent study of Roman war terminology therefore saw in our inscription an expression of grief over the tragedy that Roman fought Roman in a civil war.¹⁴ If that were so, or if Matrona merely meant to say that Victorinus fell in civil war, the phrase *contra avversarios* would lack meaning. Matrona, it seems, meant to distinguish Romans from foes,¹⁵ and her reason for doing so is not far to seek: in civil wars it helped to call one's own side Roman and thereby to cast the other side as enemies of Rome (*hostes*). The practice grew during the third century,¹⁶ and by the early fourth century it was in full swing. Constantine's propaganda maligned Maxentius' forces as having turned against Rome (*milites ... paulo ante Romani*). In 351 Magnentius, though in possession of Rome, was told by Constantius II not to war against the 'Romans'. And when in 388 Maximus' guard surrendered to Theodosius, the emperor allowed it 'to be Roman again' (*esse Romanam*).¹⁷ In the same spirit, Licinius and Constantine called one another 'unroman'.¹⁸

Romani, then, are one's own side in civil war. In our inscription they are likely to be Licinians, while the *aversarii* are Constantinians. Matrona skirted danger in choosing these words, for by the time she set up Victorinus' gravestone, Constantine was the legitimate ruler, his soldiers the *Romani*, hailed on gold coins with the legend *Gloria Romanorum*.¹⁹ Matrona got away with her slight since Ulmetum lay

Notitia Dignitatum Omnium, Tam Civilium Quam Militarium, in: Aspects of the Notitia Dignitatum, BAR Suppl. 15, 1976, 189–209.

¹⁴ V. ROSENBERGER, *Bella et expeditiones. Die antike Terminologie der Kriege Roms*, 1992, 124 and 155. Constantine's war of 311 is called *bellum civile* by a guardsman, see CIL III 9835 = ILS 2776 (Dalmatia, prope Teplje): *D(is) M(anibus). Val(erio) Va[l]lenti, [p]rotectori defu[ncto] bello civile in [It]alia, ann(or)um L---*. The war of 324 likewise was a *bellum civile*: Anon. Vales. 22; Ammianus 15, 5, 33; Eusebius (VC 2, 49, 2; 2, 54) calls it πόλεμος ἐμφύλιος i. e. *bellum civile*.

¹⁵ *Adversarii* as enemies in civil war: ThLL s.v. 845–846.

¹⁶ CIL VI 234 = ILS 2011 (Rome): *Genio exercitus qui extinguendis saevissimis latro-nib(us) fideli devotione Romanae e[x]spectationi et votis omnium satis fecit*; CIL VIII 2170 = ILS 8499 = ILS 3598: *D. M. s. L. Aemilius Severinus qui et Phillyrio, v. a. LXVI p. m. et pro amore Romano quievit ab hoc Capeliano captus, memor amicitiae pietatis Victor-icus qui et Verota*. For casting others as *hostis* see ROSENBERGER, l. c. (note 14) 153 ff., though in the above inscriptions, as in ours, he wrongly sees loyalty to the city of Rome rather than to a side in civil war. Likewise Christians were charged with *odium populi Romani*, see A. WLOSOK, *Die Rechtsgrundlagen der Christenverfolgungen der ersten zwei Jahrhun-derte*, in: R. KLEIN (ed.), *Das frühe Christentum im römischen Staat*, 1971, 275–301.

¹⁷ Maxentius: Paneg. Lat. 12, 5. Magnentius: Zosimus 2, 46; see also Themistius Or. 1, 43 a; Maximus: Paneg. Lat. 2, 36, 3; M. P. SPEIDEL, *Die Garde des Maximus auf der Theodosius-säule*, Ist. Mitt. 1995 forthcoming.

¹⁸ Licinius 'unroman': Eusebius, HE 10, 8 (396) and VC 1, 55. Licinius 'barbarian': Euse-bius, Laud. Const. VII. Constantine 'unroman': Eusebius VC 2, 5.

¹⁹ RIC VII, p. 474; MARIA R. ALFÖLDI, *Die constantinische Goldprägung*, 1963, 104. Ro-

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in faraway Scythia, halfway between the Danube and the Black Sea. If her husband's unit of former Licinians was stationed there, that would have helped, too, and perhaps her words meant different things to different people. In her defiance she breathes the steadfast loyalty of guards on whom the late emperors came to rely for winning their wars. As Julian said, «wars are won with luck, guards, and troops» – in that order.²⁰

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mani in such context are Roman soldiers rather than just Romans, see FRANZ ALTHEIM, *Niedergang der Alten Welt. Eine Untersuchung der Ursachen*, vol. 2, 1952, 511, note 2, 282.

²⁰ Guards taking sides in 324: Eusebius VC 2, 5 and 2, 7–9. Julian: Or. 1, 5, A.