An Instance of the Military Grade Flavialis

James G. Keenan
Loyola University Chicago, jkeenan@luc.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://ecommons.luc.edu/classicalstudies_facpubs

Part of the Classics Commons

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Publications and Other Works by Department at Loyola eCommons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Classical Studies: Faculty Publications and Other Works by an authorized administrator of Loyola eCommons. For more information, please contact ecommons@luc.edu.

This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial-No Derivative Works 3.0 License. © 1973 James Keenan.
AN INSTANCE OF THE MILITARY GRADE FLAVIALIS

The Louvre papyrus first edited by Wessely in 1889 and now accessible as SB 1 4779 is an extremely fragmentary contract assigned to the Byzantine period. The fact that the document was drawn up \( \text{ἐν \ Αρωνοίτη \ ἐπαρχίας \ Αρκαδίας} \) provides a reasonably specific terminus post quem toward the end of the fourth century when the province of Arcadia was established.\(^2\) With one slight change,\(^3\) the name and description of one of the parties to the contract, as published, begin (line 3): \[
\Omega \rho \gamma \varepsilon \nu \iota \nu \ Φ \lambda (a) β \iota \alpha \nu \pi \acute{o} \ ν \varphi \varepsilon \nu \epsilon \rho \iota \nu \ τ \omega \nu \ [\ldots]
\]

The name Horigenius Flavianus raises immediate suspicion. To begin with, the normal means of naming a person in Egypt in the fifth-seventh centuries (to, and in many instances beyond, the Arab conquest), in formal situations, was by the gentiliciun Flavius (for government officials, military personnel and prominent individuals in general) or Aurelius (for the remainder of the population) plus a personal name. Use of aliases, usually connected to a name by \( \dot{o} \) or \( \dot{\eta} \) \( \kappa \acute{a}i \), is less frequent in the late period than in the first three centuries of the Empire;\(^4\) and use of additional — even multiple — personal names without connectives was confined to individuals of extraordinary prestige, e.g., to cite an extreme, though not unique case, Flavius Triadius Marianus Michaelius Gabrielius Constantinus Theo-

2. A.D. 386 at the earliest, according to M. Gelzer, whose discussion (*Studien zur byzantinischen Verwaltung Aegyptens*, Diss. Leipzig, 1909, pp. 8 f.) is the most detailed on this question.
3. I here print \( \Omega \rho \gamma \varepsilon \nu \iota \nu \) with rough instead of smooth breathing.
Horigenius, however, was not of such stature, but rather, as indicated by the word νομμέρου, a soldier. This in turn suggests that the reading of Φλ(α)βιανίω as a personal name is incorrect, and that what we have here instead is a previously unnoticed instance of the military grade Flavialis.

Read then: Φλ(α)βιαλίω.

The original reading is explicable because of the palaeographical similarity between lambda-iota and nu. Use of the termination -αλως for Latin loan words in -alis is standard. For the parallel that both suggests and provides strongest support for the present emendation, see BGU 369 (A.D. 531), line 5: Φλανυιαλίω άριθμον.

This military grade was believed by Vegetius (Epitoma rei militaris II.7), writing probably toward the end of the fourth century, to have been instituted by Vespasian. Moreover, the


8. Interchange of beta andomicron-upsilon as labial fricatives is, of course, very common; cf. for example the variant spellings of the names David and Victor given in Preisigke’s Namenbuch,Cols. 84 and 248 respectively. The only evidence for the position of the grade Flavialis, and its counterpart Augustalis, in the scheme of late imperial military ranks and dignities is furnished by Vegetius, Epitoma rei militaris II.7, the relevant citation from which is quoted below in n. 10. According to his testimony, Augustales and, by later extension, Flaviales had some connection with ordinarii; but his statement, though perhaps accurate in this respect, is as a whole vague, brief, and quite possibly tainted with anachronism; see following discussion. The only other reference to the word Flavialis in the papyri is in BGU 1027 (= WChr 424, a mid-fourth-century text where [Col. 1.9] a κώμες καὶ Φλανάλως καὶ γημύων is mentioned. In this case, Flavialis does not designate “ein Priester der Flavier” of the House of Constantine, as held by Wilcken (note on Chr. 424 1.9; cf. Preisigke, WB III, p. 385); rather, it signifies that the count is a comes Flavialis. See below, n. 15 and, for an appropriate parallel, the far more commonly attested δοξ καὶ Αβγουστάλως, i.e. dux Augustalis: P. Cairo Masp. texts cited above, n. 5, additional references in Daris (above, n. 7) and WB III, Abschnitt 10, s. vv. δοξ and αμαυστάλως.

9. For the date of composition of the Epitoma rei militaris, certainly between A.D. 383 and 450, and probably (not unquestionably) under Theodosius I (†A.D. 395), see A. R. Neumann, RE s. 10, 1965, Cols. 992 ff.

10. Augustales appellantur qui ab Augusto ordinariis iuncti sunt. Flaviales item,
ancient authority has been followed in this belief by modern scholars. So, for example, Grosse cites Vegetius and goes on to consider the occurrence of *Flavialis* in *BGU* 369 as an instance of conservatism characteristic in the field of technical military terminology. Somewhat earlier, Maspero, without citing, but obviously following Vegetius, had written that certain non-commissioned officers in the early Empire were decorated with the honorary title *Flavialis* in remembrance of Vespasian. Nonetheless, in a footnote, he suggested the possibility that the grade *Flavialis* might have been re-instituted in the fourth century in honor of the accession of the second Flavian Dynasty — that of the Emperor Constantine. More recently, Professor A. H. M. Jones summarized Vegetius' statement without comment.

It is noteworthy, however, that Vegetius receives no corroboration on this point from the documentary sources. *Flavialis* as a military rank is not recorded in inscriptions or in papyri of the first three centuries of our era. This in itself is not absolutely decisive. On the other hand, there are certain positive indications from the fourth century — the creation of certain Flavial offices and dignities, the large-scale extension of the imperial *gentilicium* to government officials and military personnel, the renaming of

tamquam secundi Augustales, a divo Vespasiano sunt legionibus additi. (Ch. Lang, Teubner ed., 1885, pp. 40.24-41.3.) The doubt that will be cast on Vegetius' accuracy regarding institution of the grade *Flavialis* may also shake confidence in his statement regarding the grade *Augustalis*. Cf. below, n. 14.

13. *Later Roman Empire*, p. 675. He is possibly, though not expressly, sceptical.
favored cities after the imperial household\(^{17}\) – which, when added to the silence of earlier testimony, suggest that Vegetius may here be guilty of an anachronism, and that the creation of the military grade *Flavialis* – its first and only institution – should also be assigned to the fourth century.\(^{18}\)

Finally, the consistency with which soldiers had the name Flavius from the second quarter of the fourth century on suggests that Horigenius' *gentilicium* was also Flavius. The *gentilicium* no doubt appeared in the lacuna before the personal name, perhaps, as frequently, abbreviated $\Phi\lambda\alpha\iota\nu\alpha$.\(^{19}\)

17. E.g., Hispellum in Umbria renamed Flavia Constans: Dessau, *ILS* 705 (A.D. 333/7).

18. For Vegetius to be charged with an anachronism depends in large measure on whether he is himself responsible for this point and for the discussion in II.7 in general. The matter would seem to be beyond doubt: at the beginning of II.7 he writes that he has finished his exposition of the *antiqua ordinatio legionis* and will now proceed to set forth the more important military ranks and titles *secundum praesentes matriculas*. This clearly means that Vegetius, on his own authority and as a result of his own research, is about to describe the ranks and titles current at the time of his writing. Nonetheless, owing to certain discrepancies later in the chapter, scholars have refused to give credence to Vegetius' opening statement. Arguments against assigning credit to Vegetius as a primary source on contemporary ranks and titles in II.7 are presented by D. Schenk, *Flavius Vegetius Renatus: Die Quellen der Epitoma rei militaris*, *Klio*, Beiheft 22 (N.F. Heft 9), 1930, pp. 9 and 26, who holds Paternus (†A.D. 183) as the source behind II.7; cf. E. Sander, *Klio* 32, N.F. 14, 1939-40, pp. 386 ff., in favor of an unnamed source from the time of Constantine. The few problems that are adduced, however, are minor and, in my opinion, more suitably attributed to Vegetius' frequent use of archaic terms to describe the military institutions of his own day (for this feature of Vegetius' work, see the brief, yet pertinent assessment by C.W.C. Oman, *The Art of War in the Middle Ages, A.D. 378-1515*, rev. and ed. John H. Beeler, repr. Ithaca, N.Y., 1963, pp. 7-9). At any rate, the difficulties are not serious enough to warrant rejection of Vegetius' avowed intention as set forth at the beginning of the chapter. For discussion of Vegetius' sources and the modern scholarship thereon, see A. R. Neumann, *RE* s. 10, 1965, Cols. 1005 ff.

19. Cf. text, lines 4 and 10 where the name is so abbreviated. For late imperial soldiers with the *gentilicium* Flavius, see the literature cited above, n. 16, esp. *ZPE* article, pp. 49 ff., 61 ff.