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AN INSTANCE OF THE MILITARY GRADE *FLAVIALIS*

The Louvre papyrus first edited by Wessely in 1889¹ and now accessible as SB I 4779 is an extremely fragmentary contract assigned to the Byzantine period. The fact that the document was drawn up ἐν Ἀρσινόῃ ἐπαρχίας Ἀρκαδίας 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):] Ὀριγενίω Φλ(α)βιανῶ νομέρου τῶν [.

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 *gentilicium* 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 ὁ or ἡ καί, 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 Gabriellus Constantinus Theo-

1. *Denkschriften der kaiserl. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, Phil.-hist. Kl.*, 37, 1889, p. 154.

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 Ὀριγενίω with rough instead of smooth breathing.

4. The fullest discussion concerning aliases: R. Calderini, *Aegyptus* 21, 1941, pp. 221-60; 22, 1942, pp. 3-45.

dorus Martyrius Julianus Athanasius, Augustal duke of the Thebaid.⁵

Horigenius, however, was not of such stature, but rather, as indicated by the word *νομέρου*,⁶ a soldier. This in turn suggests that the reading of *Φλ(α)βιανῶ* 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 *-άλιος* for Latin loan words in *-alis* is standard.⁷ For the parallel that both suggests and provides strongest support for the present emendation, see *BGU* 369 (A.D. 531), line 5: *Φλαουιαλίω ἀριθμοῦ*.⁸

This military grade was believed by Vegetius (*Epitoma rei militaris* II.7), writing probably toward the end of the fourth century,⁹ to have been instituted by Vespasian.¹⁰ Moreover, the

5. *P. Cairo Masp.* I 67002 and texts immediately following. For the variations in the catalogue of Marianus' names: J. Maspero, in *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale* 7, 1910, pp. 97 ff.

6. "This word became from the fourth century onwards increasingly common as a general term covering [sc. military] units of all kinds." — A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, Oxford, 1964, p. 610, cf. pp. 654 f. In the papyri, the translation *ἀριθμός* is far more common than the loan word *numerus*; cf. H. Zilliacus, *Vierzehn Berliner griechische Papyri (Comm. Human. Litter. Soc. Scientiarum Fennica XI.4)*, Helsinki, 1941, p. 44 (note on No. 5, line 15).

7. See S. Daris, *Il lessico latino nel greco d'Egitto*, Papyrologica Castroctaviana, Barcelona, 1971, s. vv. *αβγουστάλιος*, *ὄφφικιάλιος*, *κτλ.*; cf. L. R. Palmer, *A Grammar of the Post-Ptolemaic Papyri*, I, London, 1946, pp. 30 ff.

8. Interchange of *beta* and *omicron-epsilon* 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) *α κόμισ καὶ Φλαυιάλιος καὶ ἡγεμῶν* 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 *δοῦξ καὶ Αβγουστάλιος*, 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. *δοῦξ* and *αβγουστάλιος*.

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 f.

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.¹¹ 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.¹² More recently, Professor A. H. M. Jones summarized Vegetius' statement without comment.¹³

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 inscriptions¹⁴ 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 Flavian offices and dignities,¹⁵ the large-scale extension of the imperial *gentilicium* to government officials and military personnel,¹⁶ 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.

11. Robert Grosse, *Römische Militärgeschichte von Gallienus bis zum Beginn der byzantinischen Themenverfassung*, Berlin, 1920, p. 127.

12. Jean Maspero, *Organisation militaire de l'Égypte byzantine*, Paris, 1912, pp. 106 f., with p. 107, n. 1.

13. *Later Roman Empire*, p. 675. He is possibly, though not expressly, sceptical.

14. *Flavialis* is nowhere mentioned in A. von Domaszewski's *Rangordnung des römischen Heeres*. Similarly, *Augustalis*.

15. See A. Mócsy, "Der Name Flavius als Rangbezeichnung in der Spätantike," *Akte des IV. internationalen Kongresses für griechische und lateinische Epigraphik*, Vienna, 1964, pp. 257-63, esp. p. 258 where the *praetor Flavialis* and *comes Flavialis* are mentioned. Cf. above, n. 8.

16. See E. Bickermann, *Das Edikt des Kaisers Caracalla in P. Giss. 40*, Diss. Berlin, 1926, pp. 34-37; Mócsy article cited in preceding note; A. Segrè, "La Costituzione Antoniniana e il diritto dei «novi cives»," *Iura* 17, 1966, pp. 7-9; my own discussion, "The names Flavius and Aurelius as Status Designations in Later Roman Egypt," beginning in *ZPE* 11, 1973, pp. 33-63. Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 44-46, A. Mócsy's contribution to G. Alföldy, *Bevölkerung und Gesellschaft der römischen Provinz Dalmatien*, Budapest, 1965, pp. 217-18, with notes on p. 225, and Gerald M. Browne, *Documentary Papyri from the Michigan Collection*, *Amer. Stud. Pap.* 6, Toronto, 1970, pp. 55-56 for similar use of the name Valerius under Diocletian and his immediate successors (down to A.D. 324).

avored cities after the imperial household¹⁷ – 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 Φλ/.¹⁹

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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 f., 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 f., 61 ff.