

# An Epitaph of a Roman Legionary Soldier from the Legio II Traiana stationed in Alexandria

## نقش شاهد قبر لجندي روماني من الفرقة التراجانية الثانية في الإسكندرية ينشر لأول مرة

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### ملخص:

يتناول هذا البحث دراسة أثرية وتاريخية ولغوية في نشر علمي لأول مرة لشاهد قبر لجندي روماني من جنود الفرقة التراجانية الثانية التي كان مقرها الإسكندرية. ويؤرخ النقش وشاهد القبر بالقرن الثاني الميلادي. وينقسم البحث إلى قسمين رئيسيين؛ القسم الأول يركز على الدراسة الأثرية لشاهد القبر وما يحتويه من مشهد متكامل بالنحت البارز. أما القسم الثاني من البحث فيتناول النشر العلمي للنقش اللاتيني في أسفل اللوحة الموصوفة أثرياً.

ويلي هذا النشر في القسم الثاني من البحث تعليق تاريخي مستفيض يتناول جانين؛ الأول: تعليق خاص بالنقش المكتشف 'موضوع البحث' وأهميته. الثاني: تعليق تفصيلي تاريخي عن الفرقة التراجانية الثانية في مصر.

This paper is an archaeological, historical and linguistic study of a tombstone of a Roman legionary soldier from Alexandria, dated to the second century CE.

It is divided into two main sections:

1. The Archaeological Section includes:
  - 1.1 The Provenance, its archaeological finds, and the characteristics of the location.
  - 1.2 An Archaeological Description, commentary and conclusions of the depiction of the deceased soldier in the upper part of the slab.

This section has been prepared by Hasnaa Mahmoud Fahmy, Chief Archaeological Inspector of the Eastern District of Alexandria, together with Inspectors Aia Mohamed Taher and Nesreen Abd-el-Kareem Tawfiq.

2. The publication of the accompanying inscription on the lower part of the slab. This section includes the publication of the Latin text with an English translation and linguistic and explanatory notes. This is followed by detailed commentaries on the discovered inscription and on the Legio II Traiana in Egypt. This is the work of Prof. Mohamed Abd-el-Ghani.

## 1. The Archaeological Section

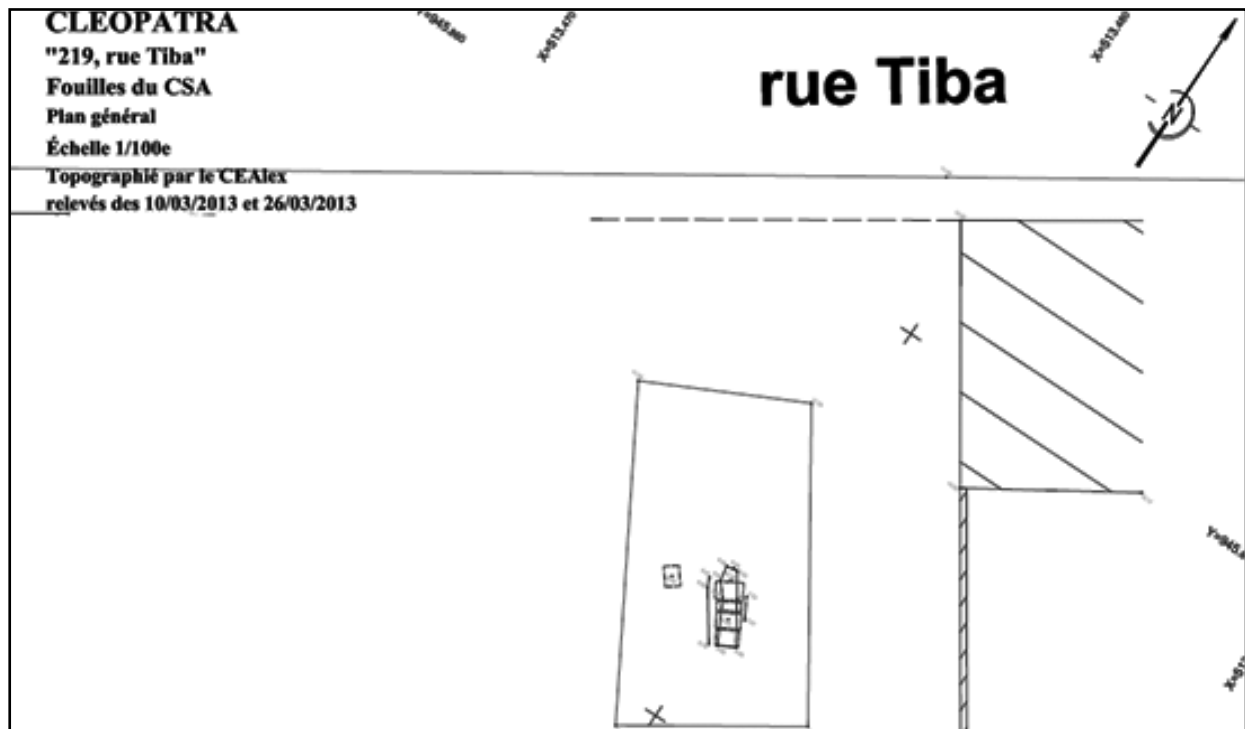
### 1.1 The Provenance, its archaeological finds, and the characteristics of the location

This epitaph is one of the recent discoveries that were found in an unearthed graveyard during the process of digging trial trenches to the foundations (as a part of the required procedures by the municipalities to build or rebuild an empty space of land) at 219, Tiba (Thebes) St., Sporting district,<sup>1</sup> Alexandria. The measurement of the trenched open area is 551.64 square meters, the digging of the trial trenches began in February and ended in June 2013,<sup>2</sup> the epitaph in question was discovered during April 2013. The location of the unearthed graveyard clearly indicated that it was one of the graveyards constituting the Eastern Cemetery of Alexandria during the Greco-Roman Era (Map 1) which was situated beyond the city walls. This Cemetery was the burial place of the Macedonians, Greeks and Romans in Alexandria; it included the graveyards of Chatby, Ibrahimia, Cleopatra, Sidi Gaber, Tigran, El Hadara, Mustafa Pasha to the east of the barracks known as the Roman camp of Mustafa Pasha.<sup>3</sup>

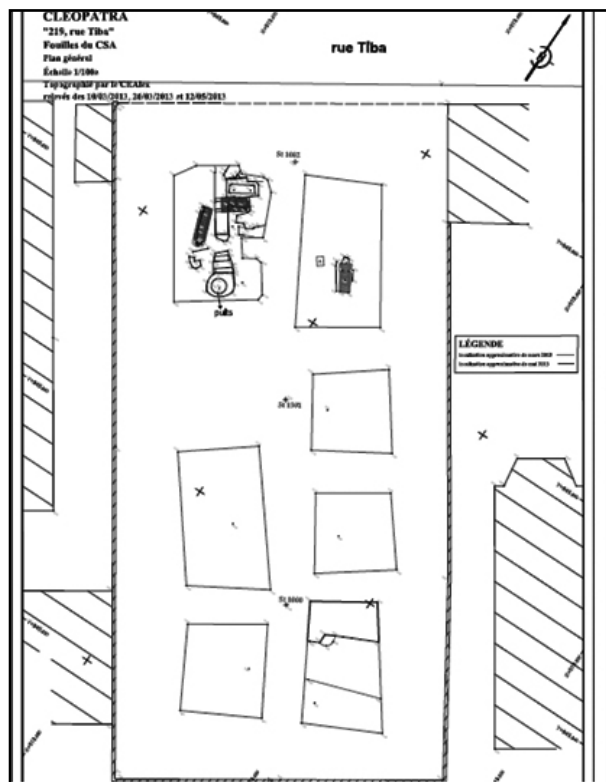
The epitaph in question was discovered above one of the tombs hewn in the rock in the trench



(Map 1a) General map of Alexandria.



(Map 1b) The Location of the excavation by SCA.



(Map 2) The Location of the Discovered archaeological finds (including our epitaph in Trench no. 7).

no. 7 (Map 2) at the depth of 4.70 m. (Fig. 1b). One of the significant features of this particular tomb is that the shape of the skeleton of the buried person inside which appears, though in a bad state of preservation, putting his left hand on his chest (Figure 2). As will be shown later in this paper the tomb and its epitaph, the subject of the present study, belonged to a legionary soldier, a horn-blower of the Legio II Traiana in Alexandria from the second century CE. The graveyard in question was a burial place for many others, as is attested by the discovery of several other skeletons in tombs of the graveyard; such tombs differ in architectural styles and burial techniques. Several other archaeological finds were unearthed in such tombs such as burial jars (which contained the mortal remains of the deceased) close to the right of the deceased's head, as well as lacrimal tubes in the size of a finger, close to the burial jars (Fig. 3).



(Fig. 1a) Trench no. 7 (from outside)



(Fig. 1b) Trench no. 7 (from inside).

The location of the graveyard (Map 2) is a slope far from the flume (gully) of water; it might have been overlooking the domicile (estate) of the grave-owner. It is remarkable that the skulls of the deceased persons were oriented towards



(Fig. 2) Trench no. 7. Skeleton of the deceased soldier of our epitaph placing his left hand upon his chest.



(Fig. 3) Burial jars and lacrimal tubes.

the East (the sunrise direction), while the feet were oriented to the West; the difference of the directions might be attributed to the seasons in which the burials took place. It is also observed that most of the burials in this graveyard were not deep in the soil, they almost do not exceed the depth of about 1.20 m except in few cases for the purpose of misleading, camouflage (mystification)



(Fig. 4) The relief before restoration.



(Fig. 5) The relief after restoration.

or protection against grave-robbers; in such cases the depth of the burials range between 2.20 m and about 5 m from the earth surface.

## 1.2 The Archaeological Description and Commentary of the Epitaph

### 1.2.1 Description

The epitaph in question is a rectangular slab of veined dark grey marble, one of the most well-known types of Attic marble.<sup>4</sup> Its dimensions are 59 cm tall, 34 cm in breadth, 3 cm thick, a small part of the upper right corner is missing and its rims are uneven. It is in a good state of preservation, it was treated in the restoration lab of the Roman Amphitheatre of Kom el-Dikka, and transferred recently to the National Museum

of Alexandria where it is on display there. (Fig. 5)

The marble slab of the epitaph is divided into two sections: the larger one on the upper part of the slab is outlined on its two vertical sides by a thin frame encircled from above by a semi-circular (crescent) shape and contains the depiction of the deceased soldier in relief; while the smaller one on the lower part contains the commemorating inscription engraved in 5 lines in Latin. (Fig. 6 and its enclosed facsimile)

In the upper section the deceased legionary soldier is depicted from the front, standing and resting the weight of his body on his right foot; while his left foot rests





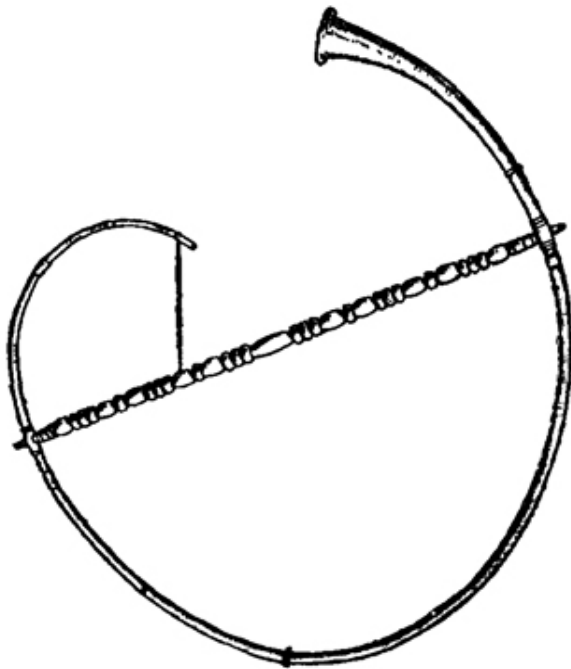
(Fig. 6) The inscription below the relief.

lightly backwards. He is wearing the Roman tunic,<sup>5</sup> and above this tunic he is depicted wearing a cloak called the *Paludamentum*, which originated from the Greek 'Himation i(n)ation'.<sup>6</sup> This cloak here is known as *sagum*: it is a military cloak which the officers and soldiers used to wear; it was rectangular in shape, folded above the tunic and fixed with a clasp above the right shoulder.<sup>7</sup> In this depiction the soldier in question is seen extending his *sagum* to cover his left arm, while fixed on his right shoulder with a clasp (*ponannular*)<sup>8</sup> and hanging down his back

until below the knees; remains of yellow color could be seen on the *sagum*.<sup>9</sup> The soldier (in his capacity as a horn-blower/*cornix*) is holding a horn (*cornu*) with his left hand and carrying it on his left shoulder. His right arm, however, is extended down with a sacrificial plate (*patera*) used to pour wine on a burning altar underneath.

### 1.2.2 The Archaeological Commentary and Conclusions

The depiction of the deceased soldier in this epitaph represents one of the examples



(Fig. 7) The horn (corn).

which express the characteristics of the Trajanic era sculpture. The Trajanic sculpture is considered the actual start of the integration of the art of Roman sculpture, apart from the artistic dualism which combined the characteristics of the Hellenistic sculpture with those of the Roman. In this example of the Trajanic sculpture in this epitaph the realistic lines in depicting the personal portrait of the soldier are clearly observed: the wrinkles of the face and front, the prominence of the cheekbones as if he had no flesh, and the swollen eyes<sup>10</sup> show the soldier older than his actual age (40 years as is shown in the inscription), and he seems to have been in fact so. His hair is well groomed in the Trajanic style which was represented as if it were a crown above the head, with an ideal representation of the beard and moustache, a reflection of the political peculiarity of the



(Fig. 8) A Slab of an epitaph in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina Museum of Antiquities.

Trajanic age. In the depiction of the soldier's portrait one can notice the disappearance of light and shadow (although a trace of shadow appears near the end of the left foot). One can also observe the disappearance of the nervous expressions<sup>11</sup> which dominated during the Flavian era, here there is a return to the absolute simplicity which could amount sometimes to immobility (inertness).<sup>12</sup> The artist here carefully observed the symmetry and conformity of the proportions and measurements of the body and the other elements of the portrait.

If we have a closer look at the deceased soldier's clothing as represented on the tombstone we notice that the tunic here is

different from the tunic of the Republican era which had short sleeves or without sleeves.<sup>13</sup> The folds of the clothes indicate the interest in the decorative aspects in an elaborate way. It is a continuation of the decorative sides of the Flavian era and were maintained during the Trajanic age (some of the best examples, apart from the current epitaph, are the decorations of the clothes of the horn-blowers represented on the famous pillar of Trajan).<sup>14</sup> (Figures 9, 10) The cloak *sagum* was also represented with meticulous and realistic folds (plies) which conform with the movements of the hands; this is a good representation of the *sagum*.<sup>15</sup> Although the Roman *toga* was the official Roman uniform during the Roman Empire, it was used only in times of peace during the festivals and other similar occasions. Such official uniform required special skills for its manufacture and was exclusively confined to the Roman citizens.<sup>16</sup> Necessity imposed, however, the use of a less sophisticated cloak *sagum* to replace the *toga* in the time of military service, and in military and civil life at large.<sup>17</sup> There were two types of the *sagum*: a regal one for the Emperor and highest magistrates, and a regular one to be worn by the soldiers and ordinary people. This latter is the one worn by the soldier in our epitaph, and the same cloak is worn by the soldiers represented on Trajan Pillar.<sup>18</sup> The *sagum* was in various colors such as purple, red, white, yellow, blue and violet; here the *sagum* appears to have been in yellow.

Various opinions were stated about the significance of the use of this yellow color in the manufacture of the military cloaks *saga*. Some viewed it a normal color grading

of the wool (or linen) from which the *saga* were made, this color was worn, according to this viewpoint, by men of higher esteem.<sup>19</sup> Other views would think that it expresses sobriety and dignity,<sup>20</sup> while others suggest that the colors of the *saga* differed in the Roman army according to the rank: the *saga* in white pertain to commanders, those in red to ordinary soldiers, while those in yellow to the military who were entrusted with special tasks.<sup>21</sup> Others would view the yellow color a symbol of the light and the sanctity of the gods.<sup>22</sup> It is fortunate that all such views are in accordance with the qualities of the soldier in our epitaph: his special task as a horn-blower, his sobriety and piety are apparent in the depiction and the inscription, as we are going to see later on.

Finally, as regards the Roman clothing, as is obvious in the depiction of this epitaph, two remarks are noteworthy 1) although the Romans were influenced by the Greek costumes, the artist in our topic managed to distinguish between the Greek costumes which were characterized by the straight lines and the right angles, and the Roman ones which became characteristic with their curves and folds which bestow upon the costume luxury, clarity and realism;<sup>23</sup> 2) the artist seems to have been influenced by the Spanish art. This could be attributed to the fact that Trajan was one of a few Emperors who did not belong to the Italian Peninsula; although of Italian origin, he was born and brought up in Spain. This Spanish effect appeared clearly in the military cloak *sagum* which was of Spanish origin.<sup>24</sup>

As for the musical instrument (the horn/*cornu*) held by the deceased soldier in the





(Fig. 9) horn-bearers on Trajan's Pillar.



(Fig. 10) horn-blowers on Trajan's Pillar.

depiction and referred to in the inscription, a covering commentary will be found later on in the notes and comments on the text of the inscription. A simple description of that musical instrument can be put forth as follows: 'It had a narrow, evenly conical bar in the shape of a round letter G with a slender bell; a wooden crossbar, forming the diameter, rested upon the player's left shoulder and was grasped by his left hand. While the right hand pressed the mouthpiece against his lips'.<sup>25</sup> (Figure 7) It is noteworthy, however, to highlight the distinguished position which the horn-blowers enjoyed in the Roman army. In addition to their significant role in the Roman barracks and camps, the sacrifices

and libations to the gods took place in the presence of trumpeters and horn-blowers as is attested in the sacrificial scenes of Trajan Pillar.<sup>26</sup> (Figures 9, 10) The soldier in our epitaph is represented holding the *cornu* on his left shoulder and the (*patera*/the sacrificial plate) with his right hand, thus achieving the full functions of a *Pius* (note on line 3 of the text, and the further subsequent commentary) horn-blower. The scenes of horn-blowers on Trajan Pillar commemorated the events of the Dacian Wars and their battlefield, while here the scene is meant to commemorate the deceased horn-blower of our epitaph.

The piety (piousness) of the horn-blower in our case is apparent through representing him pouring a libation of wine from his *patera* on a burning altar as an expression of glorification and gratitude to the gods; that sort of libation was of milk, wine or water<sup>27</sup> to be poured over a burning altar or hearth. Most of the cities had public hearths where the sacred fires blaze. In Roman religion, Vesta was the goddess of the sacred hearth. She was a peaceful goddess who did not take part in conflicts nor strifes, she even extended her protection on those who sought the refuge of her sacred hearth. Every meal of food would begin and end with an offering for her sake, her name was the first to be uttered in prayers and in oath, and it was believed that her sacred fire secured peace and tranquility for Rome.<sup>28</sup> The altars of the public hearths of Vesta were erected in open areas, since the ritual of burning sacrifices or libations or throwing incense would make the fire blaze even more.

### 1.3 Additional Notes

1. In spite of the accuracy and precision of the

artist in carving the details of the soldier's body one can find fault with him in that he did not manifest the details of the soldier's toes, if he meant to represent him barefooted although this is unusual to the Romans. If the artist's intent was to represent the soldier wearing shoes, there is nothing of lines or shades to confirm that.

2. The artist used a deep perspective and produced a background void of any representation. It seems that the artist here resorted to fanciful architectural elements: he made the frame (outline) carry the crescent ceiling instead of the columns in real architecture. Perhaps this representation is further evidence, as proposed earlier, of erecting the altars of the public hearths of Vesta in open areas, and not in the precincts of the goddess temple.
3. This apparent libation to Vesta in our epitaph, in addition to the yellow cloak *sagum* of the soldier in question: yellow, as the symbol of light and sanctity, according to some; as well as the crescent ceiling, make the soldier appear surrounded with an aura resembling that of Christian saints in Byzantine art.
4. The soldier is represented without his armour nor the full military uniform. This might imply some sort of focusing on his peculiar task as a horn-blower or just to commemorate his personal memory without highlighting certain particular military exploits.

## 2. Publication of the Enclosed Inscription (with translation, notes and commentaries)

### 2.1 The Text

D (iis) (vac.) M(anibus)

Pribi(us) Bulbasia(nus) cornix leg(ionis) II  
Tra(ianae) For(tis) Ger(manicae) (centuriae)  
VIII. Pii pos(uerunt).

Mil(itavit) ann(os) XXI vix(it) an(nos) XXXX  
(vac.) Fr(ater) L(egionis) (centuriae) fecit  
b(ene) (vac.) M(erente)

### 2.2 Translation

To the sacred spirits of the deceased Pribius Bulbasianus, the horn-blower of the Legio II of Trajan, the strong, the Germanic, of the ninth centuria. The pious (fellows) erected it. He spent 21 years in military service, lived 40 years. His brother in the legio and centuria made it (the tombstone), well deserving.

### 2.3 Notes

Line 2 Cornix-icis, f., crow: in this context, it is certainly equivalent to 'cornicen-cinis, m., horn-blower. This is absolutely confirmed by the (cornu/horn) carried by the deceased on his left shoulder and held by his left hand, in the depiction accompanying the inscription from above on the slab.

Line 3 › or › is a sign used for the word 'centurio'; a centurion or commander of a century; or 'centuria': a division of 100; a company of soldiers, especially as a military technical term, a century or one-sixtieth of a legion. This meaning is clear and frequently included in the inscriptions, although the origin of the sign is uncertain.<sup>29</sup>

*Pii pos(uerunt)*: From the full-length representation of the deceased legionary soldier in his uniform and equipment, it is obvious that he led a pious life as is clear from the *patera* (the libation dish or saucer) in his right hand, and the burning altar beneath. This is what he wished his comrades and the future generations to remember

him by. This explains the phrase *Pii pos(uerunt)* which means that his fellow comrades, and in particular, the pious among them, cared to erect this fitting tombstone to commemorate this pious fellow.

Line 5: if the fellow comrades of this deceased soldier were so careful to erect (*ponere*) this tombstone for him, his brother who survived him and was still serving in the same unit (the same Legion and *centuria*) was the most appropriate person to prepare the draft work of the sheet of paper to be handed to the stone-cutter (*faber lapidarius*) and the writer of the text of the inscription (*scriptor titulorum*) in the stonemason's workshop (*officina titulorum*) to execute as an end-product of the gravestone. If this understanding is correct, the phrase *fr(ater) l(egionis) (centuriae) fecit* does not literally mean that this brother executed the tombstone himself, but rather took the preparatory steps to its execution and supervised the manufacture until its end product. This makes sense, as the brother is supposed to be the closest one to his deceased brother, and the most capable to satisfy his wishes as to the best way of his commemoration. This evidence comes to confirm. L. Keppie's statement (n. 29, *loc. cit.*) that: '*the epitaphs were erected sometimes by a brother also serving, or by a fellow soldier designated as an heir*'.

The space left between the two abbreviated words *b(ene)* and *M(erente)* is most likely intentionally done as a way of decoration and coordination on the part of the (*scriptor tituli*) to complete the last line. The same could be said of the large space left between the two words of the first line: *D(iis)* and *M(anibus)* at the beginning and end of that line, just below the full-length depiction of the deceased soldier.

A further and final note in this concern is that the writer of the inscription reflected the importance of some of the abbreviated words by writing the letter of the abbreviation in larger size (Capital Letter): *D M* in the first line which is traditional on tombstones in general to express the sanctity and supplication to the souls of the deceased; and *M(erente)*, the last word of the last line, to express and emphasize the worthiness of the deceased of the commemoration.

## 2.4 The Commentary

### 2.4.1 On the Discovered Inscription

E. Breccia published, early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, more than a dozen funerary inscriptions from Alexandria pertaining to members of the Legio II Traiana,<sup>30</sup> the principal—and almost the only—Roman legion in Egypt during most of the second and third centuries CE. Those deceased soldiers, for whom the tombstones had been erected, were of different military ranks: most of them were soldiers *milites*, while a few were of specific functions assigned to them in their units, such as the *signifer*/standard-bearer<sup>31</sup> (in nos. 480 and 484 in Breccia), and the *imaginifer*/bearer of the bust of the emperor<sup>32</sup> (no. 483 in Breccia). Our inscription is unique, however, in that it is the only military tombstone in Egypt, so far as I know, which testifies the occurrence of a *cornicen*/horn-blower<sup>33</sup> of the Legio II Traiana from its main headquarters in Alexandria, although the term used for that rank in our current inscription is different in form *cornix* (see note in line 2 above).

Among the points of interest in the present inscription is to find two brothers performing their military service in the same

unit (note on line 5). Their ethnic origin is not stated in the contents of the inscription, nor even the name of the brother who supervised the manufacture of the tombstone. One cannot know for sure their province of origin from the name of deceased: *Pribi(us) of Bulbasia(nus)*, if my reading is correct.

It is noteworthy that if a group of pious fellows *Pii*, comrades of the deceased horn-blower, erected this tombstone for this late *Pius* fellow, as his representation clearly portrays, this might raise a probable question: Did such *collegia* within the Roman army units ever exist? In case of their actual existence, did they take an official form which was being overlooked by the authorities so long as they adhered to the Roman traditional religion and the imperial cult? L. Keppie alludes in a quick reference to a sort of clubs that might have paid attention to the burials of the fellow military members, who happened to pass away while in harness away from their homeland; soldiers in such units paid contributions to such clubs to ensure their proper commemoration following death.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, in relation to the present inscription, it might probably, date back to the second century CE. The Legio II Traiana in our inscription simply bears the traditional titles and identification of the second century CE: *Legio II Traiana Fortis Germanica*, with no other (additional) titles indicating any of the Emperors of the third century CE. Such titles as Antoniniana, Severiana, Gordiana, Philippiana, Galliena, and more, were frequently added and employed in the documents in the identification of that Legio in the third century to link it closely to the ruling emperor.<sup>35</sup>

#### 2.4.2 On the Legio II Traiana in Egypt

First, I agree with M.P. Speidel's statement that '*Egypt is not only the richest of all provinces in sources for the Roman army, its army is also the best researched. Nevertheless, its wealth of sources is far from fully put to use*'.<sup>36</sup> This is confirmed by the increasing researches on the topic, the latest of which is the current publication as a slight contribution in a large field.

Immediately following the Roman occupation of Egypt, one year following the battle of Actium in 31 BCE, the Roman army was well established in that province during 29 BCE, at the latest. The Roman rulers of Egypt tightened their grip over the country in a way quite contrary to their weak Ptolemaic predecessors. The security and pacification of the province was ensured through the deployment and effective use of three Roman legions which were, at first stationed in Nicopolis near Alexandria, Babylon and Thebes.<sup>37</sup> These legions were namely: the Third Cyrenaica, the Twelfth Fulminata, and Twenty-Second Deiotariana. Under Tiberius in 23 CE the legion 12 Fulminata left Egypt, and the same happened with the Third Cyrenaica later, possibly under Hadrian (since it is attested in Egypt in a letter sent by Hadrian to the prefect Rammius Martialis in 119 CE: B.G.U. 140, l. 6). Thus, for most of the first century CE, two Roman legions were stationed in Egypt, mostly concentrated at Nicopolis. Furthermore, the Twenty-Second Deiotariana was destroyed during the second century,<sup>38</sup> but after that there still remained at Nicopolis the Legio II Traiana, which was created by Trajan at the start of the second century; and from

that time onwards the destiny of that legion became the same as that of Egypt.<sup>39</sup> Nicopolis camp was the principal headquarters of the Roman army legions, mostly composed of the Legio II Traiana during the late second and third centuries CE. From there detachments were sent upriver, as and when necessary, to various key places: frontiers, road junctions, depots of grain supply, mines and quarries.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to the local functions assigned to the Legio II Traiana of securing peace and tranquility within Egypt, it also played a significant role in campaigns and expeditions outside Egypt. Since its creation by Trajan, at the beginning of the second century CE, the Legio II Traiana played a significant role in the suppression of the Jewish revolts of 115–117 and 132–135 CE. This issue has been thoroughly dealt with in various previous studies.<sup>41</sup> This legion, or at least considerable detachments of its troops—must have taken a significant part in the Roman confrontations against the Parthians (161–166 CE) under the titular command of Lucius Verus, the Co-Emperor with Marcus Aurelius, and the active and actual command of the Roman General Avidius Cassius. It must also have shared the troops of Marcus Aurelius in their extended war against the Danubian and Germanic tribes of the Quadi, Marcomani and Sarmatians (167–175 CE).<sup>42</sup> Their partial absence from Egypt at the time must have encouraged and prompted the serious revolt of the Egyptian farmers and shepherds (*Bucolici* / *BOUKOI* oi) in the northern parts of the Egyptian Delta (170–172 CE); a revolt which had actually been crushed by the above-mentioned General Avidius Cassius, the defender of the eastern Roman frontiers

against the Parthians.<sup>43</sup>

On account of his distinguished war against the Parthians, and later against the Bucolics; Cassius, on a false report of Marcus Aurelius' death on the Danube front, was proclaimed Emperor in the East for three months in 175 CE, before he was murdered and beheaded by one of his officers. It seems clear, from the sequence of events, that Cassius seized the opportunity of the absence of a large part of the Legio II Traiana beyond Egypt during the hard times of the Danube confrontations to suppress the Bucolic revolt. His success in that mission, as well as the extended absence of the Legio II Traiana, were apparently among the factors which nurtured the ambition and greed that led to his rash step of claiming the imperial throne for himself. Thus, the absence of a large part of the Legio II Traiana from Egypt during the hard times of the decade of the seventies of the second century CE might have played some role in enhancing such serious events such as the Bucolic revolt and its consequences, both in Egypt and in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire.

Now, we refer to the Legio II Traiana in Alexandria to shed some light on its constitution, activities and its relations with the supreme authorities of Egypt and the Empire (the prefect and the emperor). Some epigraphical evidence from Alexandria cast some favorable light on such aspects. Most significant of this evidence is an inscription published for the first time by A.A. Aly in 1955,<sup>44</sup> and thoroughly commented and cited by many subsequent scholars.<sup>45</sup> It is a large statue-base of white marble found in 1939 at Mustafa Pasha (the legionary



Roman Camp of Nicopolis) in honor of Emperor Antoninus Pius by a number of Roman veterans of the Legio II Traiana who were honorably discharged from service in 157 CE,<sup>46</sup> after 26 years of active service. Those discharged veterans, at least 130 in number, were inscribed on the slab, each with his name and place of origin. The majority of them (89) were from Africa and the Danube, a minority (25) from the Eastern provinces, and only 15 from Italy, including 3 from Rome itself. G.F. Gilliam<sup>47</sup> raised an issue in need of interpretation concerning the ratios of such ethnic origins of the veterans listed in the inscription. Such ratios are in obvious contrast with the other epigraphic evidence which generally asserts the attitude (or policy) of the Roman army of local recruitment of enlisted soldiers from the province in which a legion is stationed, or from nearby places, which is not at all the case in the document in question! Gilliam suggested as a solution to this paradox and odd case the date of the release of the former soldiers in the document, 157 CE. It means that their recruitment took place 25 years or 26 years earlier, 132 or 133 CE. This latter date corresponds with the outbreak of the second Jewish Revolt in Palestine which the Legio II Traiana took part in crushing. Thus, necessity and emergency imposed the resorting to unusual sources of recruitment of new troops. It is a logical and convincing assumption which some other scholars adopted.<sup>48</sup>

The difference in this specific point is quite clear in an inscription which is similar in content, though smaller in size, from Alexandria, and from Nicopolis in particular. It is also a dedication by a group of honorably

discharged former soldiers of the Legio II Traiana to the Emperor Septimius Severus, early in his reign during 194 CE.<sup>49</sup> While the recruitment of newly-enlisted soldiers in the former inscription of 157 CE came from faraway provinces, the majority from the West: Africa, the Danube lands, and a few from Italy; the case in the present document of 194 CE is totally different. The released former soldiers who had been enlisted as new recruits, as is manifestly stated in the inscription—in the consulship of Apronianus and Paulus, 168 CE, came from local origins in their majority, and few from near places. To reflect this situation explicitly and statistically from the numbers of the released as shown in the document, about 40 names enumerated whose origins are stated and known: 31 among them came from Egypt, 6 from Syria, 2 from Africa, and one from Bithynia, a striking contrast with the case of 157! A closer look to those recruited from Egypt in the document of 194 CE reveals that 23 from the 31 cases are designated as *castris*, belonging to the camp, 3 from Alexandria, 3 from Paraetionium, one from Tanis and one from Thebes.<sup>50</sup> Those under the category 'castris' could probably be citizens of the Greek cities of Egypt such as Naucratis, Ptolemais and Antinopolis, who were permitted to enlist in the Roman legions after being granted registration in the Roman tribe of Pollia, before the Constitutio Antoniniana of Caracalla in 212 CE. The Alexandrians were naturally allowed to join the Roman legions; and Paraetionium might have enjoyed, under the Romans, a privileged status, somewhat like the Greek cities. Ambiguity involves, however, the two cases of the legionary former soldiers from

Thebes (col. I. line 10) and Tanis (col. I., line 15), whose towns of origin were beyond the sphere of the Greek cities in Egypt. This indicates that the rule (of the Greek cities) was not always strictly applied.<sup>51</sup>

A final point of interest in the present inscription of 194 CE is to encounter among the released veterans a ‘*tubicen*/trumpeter’ (col. I. line 7); his city of origin is Antioch in Syria. This brings to our attention the ‘*cornix* = *cornicen*/horn-blower’ in line 2 of our epitaph, the topic of this article.

In addition to the two above-commented most significant inscriptions of 157 CE and 194 CE, from the headquarters of the Legio II Traiana at Nicopolis, Alexandria, that legion honored the emperors, prefects and other eminent personalities in other varied occasions. In another inscription from Alexandria dated 174 CE,<sup>52</sup> a dedication is offered to Emperor Marcus Aurelius on the occasion of the restoration of a fortress *praesidium* which had collapsed due to its antiquity *vetustate dilapsum*. This renovation was performed under the auspices of Gaius Calvisius Statianus, prefect of Egypt at that time, the implementation of the work was performed by Valerius Maximus, one of the centurions of the Legio II Traiana. F. Kayser suggests that at that time, 174 CE, that legion was, no doubt, outside Egypt, taking part in the wars of Marcus Aurelius against the Marcomani; and that the remaining soldiers, left to maintain peace and security of the province, undertook the task of renovating the collapsing fortress, by orders of the prefect of Egypt.<sup>53</sup>

There are two other dedications left by

the Legio II Traiana from Alexandria to some eminent magistrates in Alexandria and Egypt: the first is erected by Titus Voconius, prefect of the Legio II Traiana in 185 CE to honor Titus Longaeus Rufus, prefect of Egypt, a Praetorian prefect and a very eminent man. This dedication might have taken place in the occasion of his nomination to the magistracy of Praetorian prefect while he was still prefect of Egypt between January and October 185.<sup>54</sup> The second is dedicated, 223 CE by a certain Pacilius Tychianus, a centurion of the ‘*Leg(ionis) II Tr(aiana) f(ortis) [G(ermanicae) Sever(ianae)]*’ to Lucius Domitius Honoratus, the Praetorian Prefect and Very Eminent Man. The occasion of this dedication is most likely similar to the previous one, the promotion and nomination of Lucius Domitius Honoratus, who held the prefecture of Egypt in 222 CE to the higher magistracy and the title of *vir eminentissimus* in 223 CE.<sup>55</sup>

I hope that such sketches and stations of the Legio II Traiana in Egypt during the second and early third centuries CE are adequate in shedding some light on its existence, recruitment and some of its activities within and outside Egypt.

## Notes

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- 1 The address is inaccurately recorded in the archives of the Eastern District of Alexandria as being in Sporting area; in fact it is located near the Mosque of Al-Tawheed in Cleopatra Hammamat.
- 2 The teamwork members of the trenches and excavation of this discovery are: Hasnaa Mahmoud Fahmy, Chief Inspector of the Eastern District of Alexandria, together with Inspectors: Aia Mohamed Taher, Eman Mohamed

- Abd-el-Zahir, Mahmoud Ahmed Mahmoud, Marian Samir Moreid, Marwa Adel Hussein and Nesreen Abd-el Karim Tawfiq (in alphabetical order).
- 3 A.S. Mahmoud, *Ancient Alexandria and its Antiquities* (in Arabic) (Alexandria, 2001), 40.
- 4 M. Haggag, *Lectures in Hellenic Architecture* (in Arabic) (Alexandria, 1998), 30. This sort of marble was cut from the quarries of Mount Hymettus near Athens. See: H.W. Pullen, *A Handbook of Ancient Roman Marble* (London, 1894), 12, 14-15.
- 5 The Roman tunic is a loose shirt composed of two pieces of cloth, one above the other, sewn together. It had long sleeves and a belt tied to the waist. See: O. Seyffer, *Dictionary of Classical Antiquities, Mythology, Religion, Literature and Art* (New York, 1895), 660.
- 6 I.F. Abd-el-Raheem, *The Aesthetic Values of Fashions in the Roman Mural Painting from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD — A Comparative Study* (in Arabic), (Unpublished PhD Diss., Cairo University, 2006), 38.
- 7 Abd-el-Raheem, *The Aesthetic Values of Fashions in the Roman Mural Painting from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to the 4<sup>th</sup> Century AD*, 44.
- 8 S. Ashour, *Presentation of Male Officials and Craftsmen in Egypt during the Ptolemaic and Roman Ages, A Study in Plastic Arts* (PhD Diss., Alexandria University, 2007), 418.
- 9 The yellow color was, unfortunately, removed by mistake in the Conservation Laboratory.
- 10 Ashour, *Presentation of Male Officials and Craftsmen in Egypt during the Ptolemaic and Roman Ages*, 414.
- 11 E. Kadous, *A History of Art* (in Arabic) (Alexandria, 2001), 297-298.
- 12 Ashour, *Presentation of Male Officials and Craftsmen in Egypt during the Ptolemaic and Roman Ages*, 420, 425.
- 13 J. Carcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome* (London, 1994), 154.
- 14 Ashour, *Presentation of Male Officials and Craftsmen in Egypt during the Ptolemaic and Roman Ages*, 428.
- 15 Ashour, *Presentation of Male Officials and Craftsmen in Egypt during the Ptolemaic and Roman Ages*, 428.
- 16 S. Henri, *Styles of Fashions in Ancient Times* (in Arabic) (Cairo, 2001), 76, 88.
- 17 Th. Hope, *The Costume of the Greeks and Romans* (New York, 1949), 63.
- 18 J. Sebasta, L. Banfante, *The World of Roman Costume* (Wisconsin, 2001), 232.
- 19 Hope, *The Costume of the Greeks and Romans*, 62.
- 20 Kybalova, Idmila, *et al.*, *The Pictorial Encyclopedia of Fashion* (London, 1972), 58.
- 21 G. Summer, *Roman Military Clothing: 100 BC – 200 AD* (London, 2002), 8.
- 22 W.M. Abd-el-Rahman, *Colours and their Significance in the art of Painting in Roman Egypt* (in Arabic) (Unpublished MA thesis, Alexandria University, 2011), 314.
- 23 Corcopino, *Daily Life in Ancient Rome*, 154.
- 24 W. Cornish, *A Concise Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities* (London, 1898), 502.
- 25 C. Sachs, *The History of Musical Instruments* (New York, 2006), 147.
- 26 Alexander Scu, Cristina, 'The Iconography of wind instruments in ancient Rome: cornu, bucina, tuba and Litus', *Music in Art* 32 (2007), 33-34.
- 27 Cornish, *A Concise Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, 546.
- 28 L. Roman, M. Roman, *Encyclopedia of Greek and Roman Mythology*, (New York, 2010), 233-34.
- 29 L. Keppie, *Understanding Roman Inscriptions* (London, 1991), 81.
- 30 E. Breccia, *Inscriptiones Graecae Aegypti, Inscriptiones nunc Alexandriae in Museo, Greek and Latin Inscriptions in the Alexandrian Museum* (Alexandria, 1911), 480-496.
- 31 Y. Le Bohec, *L'armée romaine sous le Haut-Empire* (Paris, 1989), (in its English translation: R. Bate, *The Imperial Roman Army* (New York, 1994), 49. 'Each manipule (composed of two centuries) had a signum kept by a *signifier*, who led the way on the march and in combat, and who supervised in camp the money deposited under the shrine of the ensigns and also the market where soldiers bought their provisions'.

- 32 Y. Le Bohec, *L'armée romaine sous le Haut-Empire*, 49. '... mention must also be made of the *imaginifer* whose duty was to present the imperial bust or busts in ceremonials. It is not known whether there was one for each legion or for each deified Emperor'.
- 33 Y. Le Bohec, *L'armée romaine sous le Haut-Empire*, 49-50. 'Music was used for reveille and the changing of the guard, but its main function was tactical. In combat three instruments were used: the straight trumpet *tuba* had to be obeyed by every soldier as it gave the signal to charge, or to retreat as well as to leave the camp. It was also used for sacred ceremonies. The horn *cornu*, a curved tuba reinforced with a metal bar, was obviously different. In combat it was blown for the bearers of the *signa*. Normally, trumpets and horns were played together to order the soldiers to advance towards the enemy or engage in hand-to-hand combat ....'. For a more detailed, though simplified, description of the peculiar and specific functions of certain soldiers and officers of the Roman legions, see the account provided by Flavius Vegetius, from the Fourth century CE, in his 'Epitoma Rei Militaris' (OCD under Vegetius) in a passage cited by Y. Le Bohec, 46-47.
- 34 L. Keppie, *Understanding Roman Inscriptions* (London, 1991), 81.
- 35 For the details of this point see: P. Sanger, 'Die Nomenklatur der Legio II Traiana Fortis im 3. Jh. n. Chr.', *ZPE* 169 (2009), 277-286.
- 36 M.P. Speidel, 'Centurions and horsemen of Legio II Traiana', *Aegyptus* 66 no. 1/2 (1986), 163-168.
- 37 A.K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs, 332 BC – 642 AD* (London, 1986), 40.
- 38 M. Mor, 'Two Legions – The Same Fate? (The disappearance of the Legions IX Hispana and XXII Deiotariana', *ZPE* 62 (1986), 267-278; L. Keppie, 'The History and disappearance of the Legio XXII Deiotariana' in A. Kasher, U. Rappaport, G. Fuchs (eds.), *Greece and Rome in Eretz Israel: Collected Essays* (Jerusalem, 1990), 54-61.
- 39 Y. Le Bohec, *L'armée romaine sous le Haut-Empire*, 174.
- 40 A.K. Bowman, *Egypt after the Pharaohs*, 40; N. Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman Rule* (Oxford, 1983), 16, 19-20.
- 41 E. Ritterling, 'Zur Geschichte der Legio II Traiana unter Traian', *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* 58/2 (1903), 476 ff.; R.K. McElderry, 'The Second Legionary Camp in Palestine', *CQ* 2 (1908), 110-113; L. Keppie, 'The Legionary garrison of Judaea under Hadrian', *Latomus* 32 (1973), 859-864; B. Isaac, I. Roll, 'Legio II Traiana in Judaea', *ZPE* 33 (1979), 149-155; idem, 'Judaea in the early years of Hadrian's Reign', *Latomus* 38:1 (1979), 54-66; J. Rea, 'The legio II Traiana in Judaea', *ZPE* 38 (1980), 220-221; B. Isaac, I. Roll, 'Legio II Traiana in Judaea – a reply', *ZPE* 47 (1982), 131-132; M. Mor, 'The Roman Legions and the Bar-kokhba Revolt (132–35 AD)', in H. Vetter and M. Kandler (eds.), *Akten des 14. Internationalen Limes-kongresses 1986 in Carnuntum* 1 (1990), 163-178.
- 42 For a brief account of the Roman wars against the Parthians, and later against the Germanic tribes across the Danube during the reign of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus see: M. Grant, *The Roman Emperors* (New York, 1985), 88-95.
- 43 Cassius Dio – Epitome of Book 72. 12. 4. 1 - 2.
- 44 A.A. Aly, *Annals of the Faculty of Arts, Ain Shams University* 3 (1955), 113-146.
- 45 For the list of scholars who further studied this important inscription after its first publication by A.A. Aly see: E. Birley, 'Some Legionary Centurions', *ZPE* 79 (1989), 114-128, 120; F. Kayser, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines (non funéraires) d'Alexandrie impériale (I<sup>er</sup>-III<sup>e</sup> s. apr. J.-C.)*, (Le Caire, 1994), no. 102, 305-306.
- 46 F. Kayser, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines (non funéraires) d'Alexandrie impériale (I<sup>er</sup>-III<sup>e</sup> s. apr. J.-C.)*, ll. 7-15 (of the dedicatory introduction): V e t e r a n i | leg(ionis) II Traian(ae) Fortis | qui militare coeperunt | Augurino et Sergiano co(n)s(ulibus) stip(endiorum) XXVI | et Hiberno et Sisenna co(n)s(ulibus), stip(endiorum) XXVI | missi honesta missione sub | M(arco) Sempronio Librale | (vac.) praef(ecto) Aegypti (vac.) | L(ucio) Iulio Crescente praef(ecto) castror(um).
- 47 J.F. Gilliam, 'The Veterans and Praefectus Castrorum of the II Traiana in AD 157', *AJPh* 77 (1956), 359-375, 362 (on the Bar-kokhba revolt).
- 48 The same view is adopted by L. Keppie, *Understanding Roman Inscriptions*, 84; F. Kayser, *Recueil des inscriptions*

- grecques et latines (non funéraires) d'Alexandrie impériale* (I<sup>er</sup>-III<sup>e</sup> s. apr. J.-C.), 316.
- 49 CIL III. No. 6580 = F. Kayser, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines (non funéraires) d'Alexandrie impériale* (I<sup>er</sup>-III<sup>e</sup> s. apr. J.-C.), no. 105, pp. 322-333.
- 50 F. Kayser, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines (non funéraires) d'Alexandrie impériale* (I<sup>er</sup>-III<sup>e</sup> s. apr. J.-C.), commentary p. 333.
- 51 F. Kayser, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines (non funéraires) d'Alexandrie impériale* (I<sup>er</sup>-III<sup>e</sup> s. apr. J.-C.), commentary p. 333.
- 52 Breccia, *Inscriptiones Graecae Aegypti*, no. 73; F. Kayser, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines (non funéraires) d'Alexandrie impériale* (I<sup>er</sup>-III<sup>e</sup> s. apr. J.-C.), no. 104, pp. 318-321.
- 53 Breccia, *Inscriptiones Graecae Aegypti*, no. 73; F. Kayser, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines (non funéraires) d'Alexandrie impériale* (I<sup>er</sup>-III<sup>e</sup> s. apr. J.-C.), 321.
- 54 Breccia, *Inscriptiones Graecae Aegypti*, no. 161, F. Kayser, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines (non funéraires) d'Alexandrie impériale* (I<sup>er</sup>-III<sup>e</sup> s. apr. J.-C.), no. 18.
- 55 E. Breccia, no. 160 = F. Kayser, no. 19.