



Fig. 1 Funerary inscription of Tiberius Claudius Mansuetus, IMJ 2014.35.396.

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Legio IV Flavia Felix at Neapolis

The Funerary Inscription of a Veteran

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In Memory of Ada Yardeni (1937–2018)

The funerary inscription of a legionary veteran named Tiberius Claudius Mansuetus, published here, was found some fifty years ago in the area of Roman Neapolis (modern Nablus) near the road leading to the neighboring Sebaste. The gravestone is now in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem (fig. 1).¹

The epitaph is basically in good condition: the upper edge is a bit damaged and the bottom edge a little more so. The sides have been smoothed, as has the back, where one can see the use of a claw-chisel. The small frame shows an ornament composed of leaves, sprigs, and perhaps bunches of grapes. A similar decoration can be seen on the grave-altar of a man known as Marcus Ulpus Magnus, a centurion in the Legio V Macedonica, who died in Neapolis before he retired and was buried there by fellow centurions.² His burial inscription is now on display in the Rockefeller Museum (fig. 2).

It appears that Mansuetus' stone was originally covered with a thin layer of white plaster, part of which has been preserved. Double incised guidelines mark the height of the lines. Inside the letters one can see the residue of a red coloring. The stone's



Fig. 2 Grave-altar of Marcus Ulpus Magnus, IAA 1936–1631. Photo Meidad Suchowolski, Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority

measurements are: height 35 cm, width 39 cm, thickness 16 cm, and the height of the letters ranges from 2.8 to 3.6 cm.

The text reads:

TIBER·CLAV·SERG	<i>Tiber(ius) Clau(dius) Serg-</i>
IA·MANSVETVS	<i>ia (tribu) Mansuetus</i>
VETR LEG·IIII·FL·FE	<i>vet(e)r(anus) leg(ionis)</i>
	<i>IIII Fl(aviae) Fe(licis)</i>
DO·PERG·ASI·VIXI	<i>do(mo) Perg(amo) Asi(ae),</i>
5 ANN·LXI·TIB·CLAV	<i>vixi(t)</i> <i>ann(os) LXI. Tib(erius)</i> <i>Clau(dius)</i>
MAGNI·LIBER·ET E	<i>Magn(us) liber(tus) et (h)e-</i>
RES·FECIT·PATRONO·	<i>res fecit patrono</i>
BENE·MERENTI·	<i>bene merenti</i>

Tiberius Claudius Mansuetus (inscribed in the tribus) Sergia, veteran of the legio IV Flavia Felix, born in Pergamum (in the province of) Asia; he lived 61 years. Tiberius Claudius Magnus, his freedman and heir (erected the tomb) for his patron, who deserves it well.

Despite the care taken in arranging the inscription, the stonecutter made several mistakes: the initial H is missing in the word *heres* line 6/7 and the second E was omitted in *vet(e)r(anus)* in line 3. The cognomen of the *libertus* is rendered as a genitive instead of the correct nominative.

The funerary inscription attests to a veteran of the Legio IV Flavia. One may well ask what made a former soldier of the unit come to Palestine after retirement in order to be buried there?

Legio IV Flavia was established by Vespasian after the Jewish war. From the beginning, it was stationed in the Balkan region: first in the province of Dalmatia, then in Moesia superior, and for some time under Trajan in the newly conquered province of Dacia. In the first years of Hadrian's reign it was settled once again in Moesia superior in Singidunum, where it remained till late antiquity unless it was called upon to participate in campaigns elsewhere (see below).³

This soldier is the third member of the Legio IV Flavia to be attested in Palestine. The funerary inscription of a C(aius) Valerius C(ai) f(ilius) Aemil(ia tribu) Longinus recruited in the city of Stobi in Moesia inferior was also found in Neapolis (fig. 3).⁴ Longinus died while on active duty after spending



Fig. 3 Funerary inscription of Caius Valerius Longinus. IAA 1943–89. Courtesy of the Israel Antiquities Authority

fifteen years in service. He was buried by his brother, probably a soldier in the same legion. Presumably Valerius Longinus came to Iudaea/Syria Palaestina when the legion was sent to the East to participate in a campaign against a foreign enemy – probably the Parthians; we know that the Legio IV Flavia took part in Lucius Verus' campaign against the Parthians between 162 and 165 AD. A date at the beginning of the latter half of the second century is compatible with the appearance of the *tribus* Sergia, as part of the soldier's name – the form known

to have been used in the legion's roster. The very mention of the *tribus* makes a third-century date for the inscription very unlikely, for after the second century, the *tribus* was seldom mentioned in funerary inscriptions or in the *cursus honorum* of Roman officials (but see below on Mansuetus' inscription).

A third soldier of the Legio IV Flavia Felix is attested on an inscription, probably found in Nazareth and first published as a funerary text of an auxiliary soldier.⁵ Here, a close reading of the text made it very clear that one should read C. Iulius Quartus, and not C. I(ulius) Quintus, as it appeared in the first publication. The man served in the Legio IV Flavia Felix and died after nine *stipendia*. His fellow soldier C. Artorius Maximus buried him in Iudaea.⁶

Unfortunately, the funerary inscriptions of Valerius Longinus and Iulius Quartus do not really help us fix the chronology of the new inscription, as Claudius Mansuetus did not die during a campaign, but as a retiree, a veteran. Since he died at the age of 61, he must have lived for a while in Neapolis. The normal retirement age for soldiers in the Roman army was around 45, but Mansuetus could have retired later if he had not joined the army at the age of 20, but somewhat later. In any case, it seems quite likely that he lived for some time in Neapolis before his death. Since the *tribus* Sergia is mentioned in his affiliation, we could conclude that the date of the inscription cannot be later than the second century, as was the one for Valerius Longinus.

However, a piece of information in the inscription makes the observation about his *tribus* less compelling than it would seem at first sight: the fact that a soldier born in Pergamum in the province of Asia who served in the Legio IV Flavia, which was stationed in Singidunum in the province of Moesia superior, should have chosen to retire in Neapolis in Syria Palaestina. Of course, there might have been a personal reason for that choice. With a *missio nummaria*, that is to say, at least 13,000 sesterces (more than ten times his annual salary) as his monetary compensation upon retirement, a veteran could settle wherever he wished.⁷ Yet, although the

missio nummaria was quite normal in the second century, sometimes, even in those years, veterans were given land when they retired.

It happens that this was true in connection with Palestine in the middle of the second century. A papyrus found in Egypt records a judicial decision regarding land assignation in the Peraea, a Roman land grant beyond the Jordan River to the veteran Valerius Serenus shortly before 152 AD.⁸ Valerius Serenus was probably a legionary veteran, who had been stationed in Judea, then called Syria Palaestina, before he retired.⁹ Thus, it seems quite possible that Mansuetus was officially settled in Neapolis, which would explain how a soldier born in Pergamum in Asia who had been serving all his life in Moesia superior came to be settled after retirement in Neapolis in Palestine – where he died.

One should consider therefore the possibility that the veteran could have been settled officially in this province – in Neapolis. Such a conjecture may well be supported by a detail in the man's name: Tiber(ius) Clau(dius) *Sergia* Mansuetus. Whereas the praenomen Tiber(ius) and the nomen gentile Clau(dius) are abbreviated, the man's *tribus*, the *Sergia* is not, and this is most unusual!¹⁰ Of course, it could have been fortuitous. However, during the reign of the Emperor Philippus Arabs (244–249 AD), Neapolis became a Roman colony, and its name was changed to Colonia Iulia *Sergia* Neapolis.¹¹ Both Iulia and *Sergia* point to Philippus Arabs as the founder. According to a widely held scholarly opinion, at that time, cities were turned into colonies only for the sake of prestige, without gaining thereby any new settlers (i.e., newly settled veterans). However, this is no more than an assumption – unsupported by any contemporary evidence. Even at the time of Philippus Arabs, veterans continued to receive “compensation” upon retirement, which normally, but not always, took the form of a sum of money.

In fact, why should one completely rule out the possibility of a *missio agraria*, namely retirement accompanied by a land grant when land was available? I contend that such a possibility

should not be dismissed a priori! In fact, the contrary might well have been true in the case of Neapolis, that is, that veterans were settled there at the time it was founded! Two years after the death of Philippus Arabs, during the reign of the Emperor Trebonianus Gallus (251–253 AD), the new colony issued coins with the emblems of the Legio X Fretensis and the Legio III Cyrenaica.¹² Could the reference to the Tribus Sergia, fully spelled out in Ti. Claudius Mansuetus' name – which was unusual at that time – imply that his stay in Neapolis was connected to the foundation of the colony by Philippus the Arab? Such a hypothesis cannot be proven solely by the nature of this inscription, but it can account for the appearance of the *tribus*' name without the usual abbreviations.

The inscription tells us that the freedman buried his former master, Mansuetus, who had made him his heir. Such testamentary dispositions were not rare in military circles.¹³ The cognomen of the *libertus* is written in the inscription as *Magni*, which should be changed to *Magn^rus*; otherwise *Magni* (the genitive form of *Magnus*) would mean that a Magnus was the patron/master of the *libertus*, which would have been impossible, as it tells us explicitly that Mansuetus was the former *dominus* and now *patronus* of the freedman Magnus. Furthermore, without this correction, the freedman would not have had a cognomen, which would also have been impossible: with the act of manumission, the former personal name of a slave became the cognomen of the freedman that he had become; he then obtained a normal Roman name with three elements: praenomen (Tiberius), nomen gentile (Claudius), and cognomen (Magnus). For various reasons, a former slave being named as his former master's heir was common in Roman society.¹⁴

The letters show a rough shape. One gets the impression that the stonecutter had little experience in engraving Latin letters. This may account for the VETR, rather than the usual VETER or VETERANVS: in Greek inscriptions it is quite normal to write οὐετρανός without an epsilon between the τ and the ρ.¹⁵ These features also point to a relatively later period, i.e. not before the 3rd century, in which the inscription was produced.

The outer aspect of the inscription is unusual when compared with the two other funerary monuments for Roman legionaries found in Neapolis: the one for C. Valerius Longinus, soldier in the Legio IV Flavia, and the other for M. Ulpus Magnus, centurion in the Legio V Macedonica;¹⁶ in both, the letters are much more elegant and were clearly executed professionally. This may also imply a relatively late date for the inscription of Tiberius Claudius Mansuetus. Be that as it may, it is quite remarkable that the patron, or his freedman, wished to have it written in Latin. Almost all of the other inscriptions for or by retired soldiers in Iudaea/Syria Palaestina were written in Greek, whereas all those for soldiers who died while in service were, without exception, written in Latin, as were all the other public inscriptions associated with the army in the province.¹⁷ Soldiers in the Roman army in this area normally – and quite naturally – used Latin, but the veterans used the language familiar to the majority of the population, that is, Greek, as most of these graves were found outside the big urban centers. Tib. Claudius Mansuetus (or his freedman) acted differently. For Mansuetus, Latin, even after death, remained a part of his identity, and he must have left an instruction in his testament to use the Latin language for the inscription on his funerary monument.

It goes without saying that the inscription was inserted into the much larger structure that was the funerary monument, but unfortunately we cannot tell what type of monument that might have been. It could have been a mausoleum with more burial places, in which case the inscription would have been set above the entrance. However, it could have been a large funerary pillar. Hopefully, future archaeological discoveries may teach us more about such funerary monuments in Roman Palestine.

Notes

- 1 Gift of Jeannie and David Hendin, New York, to American Friends of the Israel Museum, whom we thank for this important gift. I have known about this text since the year 2000, at which time I corrected and in part rewrote a manuscript by Asher Keshet, the previous owner of the tombstone, composed in the late 1990s, which had never been published. I am grateful to David Mevorach, senior curator of Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine archaeology for asking me to undertake the final publication of this text and to Hannah Cotton for reading and improving my manuscript.
- 2 Année Épigraphique (= AE) 1927, 146: *D(is) M(anibus) M(arco) Ulpio Cl(audia) Magno Sav(aria) (centurioni) leg(ionis) V Mac(edonicae) h(ic) s(itus) e(st). Fl(avius) Moderatus et Iul(ius) Ingenu(u)s centur(iones) f(aciendum) c(uraverunt).*
- 3 Ritterling 1924, 1540 ff.; Le Bohec and Wolff 2000, 239 ff.; Piso 2000, 208ff.
- 4 AE 1948, 147: *D(is) M(anibus) C(aius) Val(erius) C(ai) f(ilius) Aemil(ia) Longinus Stob(is) mil(es) leg(ionis) IIII Fl(aviae) stip(endiorum) XV vix(it) ann(os) XXXV. C(aius) Val(erius) Valens fratri b(ene) m(erenti) p(osuit).*
- 5 Cumont 1913, 197 ff. Nr. 168.
- 6 See Eck and Koßmann 2015.
- 7 The sum of money could have been considerably larger, depending on the time Mansuetus retired. For the payments at the time of retirement, see Speidel 1992.
- 8 Maehler 1974; Rea 1977, 218ff.; Chartae Latinae Antiquiores vol. XI no. 466. See also Haensch 1997, 237.
- 9 See Eck 1998 = Eck 2014, 266 ff.; Eck 2000 = Eck 2014, 275–283.
- 10 In the Clauss-Slaby database, there are more than 200 inscriptions with the abbreviations *Serg(ia)* or *Ser(gia)*, but only 11 examples with *Sergia* fully written out.
- 11 Galsterer-Kröll 1972, 140 no. 530.
- 12 Isaac 1992, 431.
- 13 See, e.g., CIL III 6592 = 14123 = Dessau 2345 (Alexandria): *D(is) M(anibus) Aurel(ius) Alexandrus quondam signifer leg(ionis) secundae Traianae for(tis) Ger(manicae) coh(ortis) II hastati pr(ioris) natione Macedon stipendiorum XIII annos, vixit an(nos) XXXI. Aurel(ius) Heliodorus libertus et heres monumentum fecit dignissimo patrono suo; AE 2009, 1015 (Salona): *C(aius) Iulius Mara veter(anus) coh(ortis) II Cyrrhestar(um) ann(or)um XC dom(o) Berea t(estamento) f(ieri) i(ussit). Magnus lib(ertus) idemque heres posuit.**
- 14 See, in general, Champlin 1991.
- 15 I am grateful to Dirk Koßmann for this valuable suggestion. A new example can now be seen in Eck 2015.
- 16 AE 1927, 146.
- 17 For this observation, see Eck 2010; Eck and Koßmann 2015; specifically, Eck 2016.

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