

CIG 9155B (Anazarbos): An Epigraphic Record of a *numerus Phalangarium*?

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Introduction¹

Most who study aspects of the Roman army will know of the series of six funerary memorials found at Anazarbos, two in Latin and Greek, the others in Latin only, that honour individual members of the *equites singulares Augusti*, the imperial mounted bodyguard². Five of these men evidently died there while still in service, presumably when the unit was based in winter quarters at or near Anazarbos, while the sixth was a veteran of the same unit who, having qualified for his discharge after 25 or so years of military service, chose to retire to Anazarbos. Three of the texts make reference to a period when there were two joint emperors, so indicating that they were erected during the joint reigns of Severus and Caracalla (197-202), or Macrinus and Diadumenianus (217-218), or Valerianus and Gallienus (253-260)³. It is a reasonable assumption from the overall similarity in their style that all six tombstones belong to the same general period, with Severus' Second Parthian War of 197-198 being the favoured option⁴.

Apart from these six, Anazarbos has produced four other funerary monuments that refer to members of the Roman military. Two are in Latin, the earliest being that recording the death of a soldier named Aemilius Crispus, a member of the *cobors VI Hispanorum*⁵. As shown elsewhere, this auxiliary unit probably constituted the garrison of Cilicia between the Julio-Claudian and Flavian/Trajanic periods⁶. The second Latin text commemorates one Septimius Dizas, a serving member of the *legio II Parthica*, the memorial having been erected by his heir, Septimius Cottius⁷. As both men share the imperial *nomen* Septimius and *cognomina* characteristic of the Danube region⁸, it is likely that they were *peregrini* who received their

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1 Thanks are owed to my colleague Jacques Morin for his great help in the preparation of this article.

2 Speidel 1994, 369-374 nos. 688-688e = Sayar 2000, 57-67 nos. 63-68.

3 Speidel 1994, 370-371 the texts being his 688, 688a and 688b = Sayar 2000, 63, 64, and 65.

4 The fact that some of these men have the *nomen* 'Aurelius' does not necessarily mean they were enfranchised after Caracalla's introduction of the *Constitutio Antoniniana* in 212: the *nomen* was also adopted by those given citizenship by Marcus Aurelius.

5 Sayar 2000, 70 no. 71.

6 Bennett 2012, 120-121.

7 Sayar 2000, 69-70 no. 70.

8 Cf. Laminger-Pascher 1974, 38. For other but probably later recruits to the *legio II Parthica* from the same general region, cf. the following: CIL 6.3761, M.Aurelius Diza; AE 1993.1579, (M.) Aurelius Diza; and CIL 13.6231, (M.) Aurelius Dizza.

citizenship on recruitment into the legion when this was formed between 194-197:⁹ thus they were probably at Anazarbos when the legion participated in Severus' Parthian campaign of 197-198 or that of Caracalla's in 214-217. The third of the three less-well known military epitaphs from Anazarbos is in Greek and is for a Memmius Hippokrates, who describes himself as a ἵππων ἰητήρ or 'horse doctor'¹⁰. The Roman army is known to have had veterinarians who specialised in looking after horses, for example ---lius Quartionius, *medicus veterinarius* with the *cobors I Praetoria* at Rome, and Gaius Aufidius, ἵππώιατρος or 'hippiatros' with the *cobors I Thebaeorum* at Hieran Sykaminon in Egypt:¹¹ and so, the most likely explanation for Hippokrates' presence at Anazarbos is that he was attached to the *equites singulares Augusti*.

We now turn to the focus of this article, namely the fourth of these less-noticed military epitaphs from Anazarbos, that which first entered the formal epigraphic record as CIG 9155B.

CIG 9155B re-assessed

This text was inscribed on a sarcophagus lid later reused for another funerary dedication in the Byzantine period and so only three lines of the original epitaph survive. First reported in 1854 and not, apparently, seen since then, it has been replicated in many later syntheses, usually without further comment. The most recently published record of the text is by M. H. Sayar¹², who offered the following transcription and expansions:

Καὶ ΑΣ
 ΚΑΡ νουμέρο[υ]
 [λ]αγγιαρίων

In his commentary on this inscription Sayar does little more than refer to the *editio princeps* and the earlier published references to the text, along with indicating his belief that this is part of a funerary memorial to a Roman soldier who served with a νουμέρου λαγγιαρίων, a *numerus lanciariorum*. A *numerus lanciariorum* would be a military unit whose members were armed with lances or *lanciae*:¹³ the reader is left to assume that the phrasing νουμέρου λαγγιαρίων represents the best attempt by the lapidary responsible for the text to render that Latin title into manageable Greek.

At first sight this interpretation seems convincing enough. To begin with, there can be little doubt that νουμέρου represents the Latin *numerus*, a term commonly used in Republican times for any group of soldiers either on detached duty from their parent unit for a specific purpose or a specialised section within a regular military unit¹⁴. However, from the mid-2nd century AD onwards the term was more usually applied to those irregular military units raised from tribes outside the formal boundaries of the Roman Empire¹⁵. Whether or not these units subsequently

9 As noted by Laminger-Pascher 1974, 38. Cf. AE 1993, 1574 = 2008, +1523, commemorating Lucius Septimius Viator, also with the *II Parthica*, the combination of *praenomen* and *nomen* surely indicating a man given citizenship by or on behalf of the emperor (Lucius) Septimius Severus on entering the legions.

10 Sayar 2000, 68-69 no. 69.

11 Cf. ILS 9071 and IGR 1.1373.

12 Sayar 2000, 70 no. 72.

13 A *lancia* might be either a long thrusting spear or a shorter missile type of weapon: cf. Tomlin 1998, 60-61.

14 Cf. Southern 1988, 83-4, quoting CIL 10.1202, and AE 1972.77 and 1980.960.

15 Southern 1988, 84-86.

kept their own ‘national’ weaponry and style of fighting, as is often suggested, is debatable¹⁶. Even so, the epigraphic record does include a *numerus* armed with ‘lances’, this being a funerary inscription that names a *numerus lanciariorum* as the parent unit of a soldier who probably died at the Battle of the Milvian Bridge¹⁷. This single text is, however, the only one that refers to a *numerus* of this kind, although the late 4th century *Notitia Dignitatum* lists several legions named *lanciarrii*, and which were presumably units armed in a like fashion¹⁸.

On the other hand, we might reasonably question why the lapidary responsible for this text at Anazarbos choose to render the Latin *lanciariorum* as λαγγιαρίων, with the *gamma-gamma* digraph expressing the sound ‘ng’, and so giving a vocalised version akin to ‘*langiarion*’. To begin with, a direct transliteration of the term *lanciariorum* would be λανκιαρίων, as with the στρατιώται λανκιαρίοι, those troops trained in the use of the lance who were serving with the *II Traiana* and *III Diocletiana* in Egypt in the early 4th century¹⁹. Added to which, even if the lapidary was not familiar with that equivalent, there is a Greek word that is the counterpart of the Latin *lanciariorum*, namely λονκοφόριοι. So, for example, in his description of the marching order used by Vespasian’s forces in Judaea during the First Jewish Revolt of AD 66-72, Josephus states that the commanding officer was escorted by λονχοφόρους, soldiers carrying lances²⁰. Arrian, in his account of his expedition against the Alani in c. AD 135, likewise refers to units of λονχοφόροι then under his command, these including the irregular troops supplied from Rhizia, a town on the Black Sea Coast, and those men (presumably drawn from regular army units) who provided his bodyguard, explaining how these units were to be deployed in the event of a battle²¹.

What all this means is that it seems unlikely that the lapidary responsible for this text from Anazarbos would have transliterated the Latin *lanciariorum* as λαγγιαρίων, a word vocalised as *langiarion*, instead of using the Greek counterpart, λονκοφόριοι or even a Latinised version as λανκιαρίοι. In which case we should seek an alternative to Sayar’s suggested λαγγιαρίων and specifically one that accounts also for the *gamma gamma* digraph. Given that the epitaph references a military unit of some kind, then a conceivable explanation is that it originally read νομέρος [Φολ]αγγιαρίων, that is to say, a *numerus Phalangarium*, or ‘unit of phalanx-men’. In other words, a military unit in which the soldiers were trained and armed in order to fight in a phalanx formation, that is to say, with a front line making use of a long spear and a shield to form a shield wall capable of operating as an offensive or defensive formation in emulation of the phalngical tactics used by the ancient Greeks.

16 Southern 1988, 109.

17 ILS 2791 - a text not, incidentally, referenced in Southern 1988.

18 In the west, the *legiones lanciarii Sabarienses* and *lanciarii Gallicana Honoriani*, under the *Magister Equitum*, and the *lanciarii Lauriacenses* and *lanciarii Comagenenses* under the *Comes Illyricum*. In the east, the *legiones lanciarii seniores* under the *Magister Militum Praesentalis I*; the *lanciarii iuniores* under the *Magister Militum Praesentalis II*; the *lanciarii iuniores* and *lanciarii Augustenses* under the *Magister Militum per Illyricum*; and the *lanciarii Stobenses* under the *Magister Militum per Thracias*.

19 P. Beatty Panop. II, 260, 286, 301.

20 Josephus BJ 3.120. Josephus perhaps deliberately used the archaic-looking λονχοφόρους to associate these men with the δορυφόροι or spear-carriers of ancient Greece.

21 E.g., Arr. Ekt. 7 and 14, with 23.

Discussion

It is often forgotten that the legions of the Republican period developed from phalangeal-type formations and it is likewise rarely appreciated that the legions continued to use phalangeal tactics into the Imperial period²², especially when facing large-scale cavalry formations of the type so characteristic of Rome's eastern enemies. The classic example of the use of this tactic in Imperial times is to be found in Arrian's battle plan for his campaign against the Alani in 135. To begin with, Arrian's account makes it clear that the legionaries in his army were equally divided between those carrying a long spear or *κοντός* and those armed with the *λόγχη*, or javelin. In battle formation, these legionaries would form his centre force with his auxiliaries on the flanks, the legionaries being arranged in eight ranks, the first four consisting of those armed with the *kontus*, the rear four those armed with the javelin. In the event of an Alanic cavalry charge the front row would interlock their shields to form a *πρόβολος* or shield wall, their projecting spears hindering the Alanic cavalry, while the rear four ranks provided missile fire, throwing their lighter javelins over this *πρόβολος*²³. Then, once the Alanic charge had been broken, the shield wall would move forward against the Alanic centre, while the auxiliaries on his flanks attempted a pincer movement.

Although Arrian's employment of this phalangeal formation against the Alani is the best known case of its use by the Roman army there are several other late Republican and Imperial-period examples of its employment, if most usually against the heavily armoured cataphract cavalry deployed by the Parthians and their successors, the Sasanians²⁴. Indeed, there are two near-contemporary literary texts which claim that Caracalla specifically raised a phalangite unit for his Parthian War of 214-217²⁵, one of these sources even specifying that this 'Macedonian phalanx' was equipped in the 'ancient fashion' with a helmet of raw oxhide, a three-ply linen breastplate, a bronze shield, a long and a short spear (*δόνυ μακρόν* and *αίχμη βραχεῖα*), high boots, and a sword²⁶. Finally, we might add a third text that reports how Severus Alexander also formed an 'Alexander phalanx' for his Sasanian War of 230-232, although in this case, the men were armed as regular Roman soldiers²⁷.

This is not the place to discuss the veracity of these reports of how Caracalla and Severus Alexander both formed phalangeal units²⁸. It may well have been that when planning their respective eastern campaigns, they both visualised themselves as following in the footsteps of Alexander the Great, and so revived the idea of the Hellenistic phalanx in order to emulate the deeds of that exemplary conqueror of the Persians. However, there is no evidence at all to support the idea that either of these claimed phalangite units ever functioned as serious

22 Cf. Wheeler 1979.

23 Arr. Ekt. 15-17 and 25-26.

24 Wheeler 1979, 311-313.

25 Dio 77.7.1-2, and 18.1; Herod. 4.8.2.

26 Dio 77.7.2. The linen cuirass, or *linothorax*, made using glue-stiffened layers of linen, was developed in the Greek-speaking world and was certainly adopted by the Etruscans and presumably by the early Republican Roman legions also. It evidently provided a reasonable degree of protection, and might well have been 're-invented' under Caracalla as a means of providing body armour of a kind appropriate for dealing with the heat of the Near East.

27 HA Sev.Alex. 50.4.5.

28 But note that in the case of Dio's report on Caracalla's 'Macedonian phalanx', this comes to us at second hand in the form of the epitome of his *History* prepared by John for Michael VII Parapinaces (1071-1078): aside from the fact that Xiphilinus was using a damaged copy of the original text, he might well have embellished Dio's account of this 'Macedonian phalanx'.

fighting formations in any form whatsoever. Apart from which we should note how both Greek and Latin writers were wont to use the term 'phalanx' as a literary conceit when referring to otherwise regular Roman legions and legionary formations²⁹.

On the other hand, it is clear that by the early 3rd century, some of the leading lights of Rome were discussing the possible adoption of Hellenistic military methods and tactics as a means of dealing with the 'Persian' armoured cavalry. This is best shown in the surviving parts of a treatise written by Julius Africanus in about 230, and which ostensibly provides, *inter alia*, advice for Severus Alexander on the tactics to adopt for his forthcoming Sasanian War³⁰. Having noted that the usual Roman tactics adopted in a pitched battle against the 'Persians' ended in either defeat or a stalemate, because of Rome's reliance on infantry against cavalry using missile weapons, Africanus suggested that Rome's generals should adapt to this by introducing javelins and a longer spear³¹. Although not spelt out as such, Africanus clearly envisaged the adoption of a tactical approach similar to that used by Arrian against the Alani. That is to say, those soldiers armed with the longer spear would form a phalangite-like shield-wall to hinder or forestall a cataphract charge while those with javelins would throw these over the heads of the shield-wall to break the enemy charge, so allowing the Roman 'phalanx' to advance in an offensive mode.

Of course, the existence of a literary work promoting the adoption of Hellenistic phalangite tactics and weaponry does not prove that Severus Alexander or his advisers took any notice of such ideas: but it does point to an on-going familiarity with the concept of phalangical tactics and their potential use in warding-off attacks by armoured cavalry. And if the notion of such tactics was familiar enough for Arrian to consider making use of them when planning his expedition against the Alani in 135, then we can be reasonably sure the concept was equally familiar amongst military theoreticians in the decades leading up to the reign of Caracalla, even if we lack any corroborative evidence for this in the form of surviving military treatises.

Be that as it may. Much more to the point are the clear signs that by the later 2nd century, certain regular units of the Roman army contained individual soldiers who had been trained in specialised weaponry and fighting tactics. The earliest evidence for this dates to 185, when the three British legions sent a body of 1,500 'spearmen' to Commodus to report a plot against him:³² although the exact type of weapon these men carried is not specified, the implication is that each legion had 500 troops who were trained in the use of a particular type of thrusting or throwing spear. More solid evidence for the existence of such specialist troops comes in the form of two funerary texts from Syrian Apamea that date to the time of Caracalla or Severus Alexander. One of these records a Lucius Septimius Viator, who is described in his epitaph as a *lanctarius* and shown in relief as holding five lances, the second being for (M.)Aurelius Mucianus, his epitaph noting that he was a *discenti(s) lanctiari(um)* or trainee *lanctarium*, his relief also showing him holding five lances³³. To all of this we might add the previously mentioned *numerus lanctariorum* referenced at Rome, evidently a group of soldiers trained in the use of the 'lance'; the likewise specialist troops of the *II Traiana* and *III Diocletiana*, the

29 E.g., Jos. BJ. 3.95; and Suet, Nero. 19.2 (Nero's 'Alexander phalanx').

30 Cf. Wheeler 1997.

31 Wheeler 1997, 576-77.

32 Dio 72.9.2.

33 AE 1993, 1574, and 1575. Although a detailed publication of the military inscriptions from Apamea was promised in 1993 (Balty - van Rengen 1993, 3), this not yet appeared.

στρατιώται λανκίριοι, in early 4th century Egypt; and no less than four more funerary texts of 3rd and 4th century date from other parts of the Roman Empire that name men who were or had been *lanciarium* in the legions or in the Praetorian Guard³⁴. That said, there is only one text on record which describes a man as a *phalangarius*, namely a funerary memorial from Apamea honouring one Magninius Atto, another member of the *II Parthica*, whose epitaph describes him as a *discens phalangarius*, a soldier training to fight in a phalanx-like manner³⁵.

It is clear from the above that by the late 2nd century, some at least of Rome's legions and also the Praetorian Guard no longer conformed to the traditional model of military units with men armed with identical weapons and who were trained in identical combat tactics. Instead, these units contained specialist sub-groups - *numeri* in fact if not by name - of men armed and trained in different methods for explicit tasks in a fixed battle, even if these men normally remained with their centuries until their skills were needed in such a battle³⁶. In effect, then, it may have been that by the early 3rd century there had been a partial resurrection, as it were, of the Republican battle formation based on three successive lines of *bastati*, *principes*, and *pili*, but in this case using *phalangarii* and *lancearii*, with - on the basis of Arrian's deployment against the Alani - *sagittarii* (archers) in the rear line³⁷. In other words, just as the phalanx of early Republican times was replaced by the maniples of the mid-Republican legions, these in turn being exchanged for the cohort formation of the later Republican and early Imperial period, so the later Imperial army began to cast off the traditional battle tactic of the thrown *pilum* followed by close combat with the *gladius* in favour a solid phalangite-like shield-wall backed with missile-throwers that could function as a defensive or an offensive formation as was required.

Conclusion

The use of the *gamma-gamma* digraph in the epithet of the military unit named in the Anazarbos inscription CIG 9155B can best be restored as [Φαλ]αγγιάρων, indicating that this text originally referred to a person who was a member of a *numerus Phalangarium* and not a *numerus lanciariorum* as has been suggested. Whether this *numerus* was a *numerus collatus*, a group of specialist troops with a larger formation³⁸, as with the στρατιώται λανκίριοι of the *legiones II Traiana* and *III Diocletiana*, or whether it was a quite separate and independent unit, as may have been the case with the *numerus lanciariorum* recorded at Rome, cannot be determined. On balance, however, given that there is a tombstone for a member of the *legio II Parthica* at Anazarbos and given that this legion is known to have contained soldiers specifically trained as *phalangarii*, then we might reasonably conclude that this particular *numerus phalangarium* was a sub-section within that formation.

34 Cf. CIL 3.6194; CIL 6.2759 and 2787; AE 1981.777.

35 Cf. Balty 1988, 101, and Balty - van Rengen 1993, 26.

36 Speidel 2002, 132.

37 Cf. Speidel 2005, 290-291.

38 Cf. Southern 84, quoting AE 1972. 77, and 1980. 960.

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Özet

CIG 9155B (Anazarbos): Bir *numerus Phalangarium*'a Ait Epigrafik Kayıt mı?

Bugün kayıp olan Anazarbos'tan CIG 9155B Yunanca yazıtın bir νομέρο[υ] [λ]αγγιαρίων yani *numerus lanciariorum*'a – birincil silahı kargı (*lancia*) olan düzensiz bir Roma ordu birimine (*numerus*) – atıfta bulunduğu düşünülmüştü. Epigrafik kayıtlardan bilinen bir *numerus lanciariorum* bulunmasına karşın, Anazarbos'taki bu özel birliğin epithetinde kullanılan *gamma-gamma* digrafi, terimin [Φαλ]αγγιαρίων şeklinde restorasyonunu akla getirmektedir ki, bu durumda, Hellen falankslarının Romalılaşmış versiyonu olan νομέρο[υ] [Φαλ]αγγιαρίων, veya *numerus phalangariorum* birliği söz konusu olacaktır.

Genel bağlamda Hellen falankslarının ve Roma lejyonlarının çok farklı dövüş yöntemleri kullandıkları doğru olmasına karşın yazılı belgelere göre doğudaki Roma ordusu, ana savaş formasyonu hafif ve ağır silahlı süvariler olan düşmanlarla karşılaştığı zaman falanks taktiklerinden yararlanıyordu. Böyle bir durumda Roma lejyonu en önde uzun mızraklı adamlardan müteşekkil derin bir ön hat konuşlandırır, böylece düşmanın geleneksel süvari saldırısını durduracak falanks-benzeri bir kalkan duvarı oluşturur, ki bu noktada lejyonun geri kalanı bu kalkan duvarının üzerinden saldıranların asıl kesimine taş veya ateşli oklar atacaktır. Düşmanın süvari saldırısı bu şekilde bir kere kırıldıktan sonra Roma lejyonu falankslar gibi ilerleyerek düşmanın hayatta kalan elemanlarına saldıracaktır.

Açıktır ki, bu savaş taktiği ancak her lejyonda bu tür dövüş eğitimi almış yeterli sayıda adam varsa gerçek savaşta işe yarayabilirdi. Gerçekte, falanks tipi uzun mızrak veya atış kargısı gibi spesifik birincil silah kullanan uzman birliklere atıflar, geç Principatus döneminde epigrafik ve yazılı kayıtlarda gittikçe artıyor. Örneğin, yazılı kaynakların bildirdiğine göre Caracalla kendi ordusunun en azından bir parçasını Parth seferi için falanks taktiklerinde eğitirmiş, onlara bu tür dövüşe uygun ekipman vermişti. Severus Alexander da Sasanilere saldırmak için kendi ordusunu falanks yönteminde eğitti fakat onun savaşçıları kendi geleneksel silah ve zırhlarını kullanmayı sürdürdü.

Hiçbir yazılı veya başka kaynak, bu iki imparatorun ordusunun söz konusu seferlerde Hellenlerin falanks tekniğini birebir kullandıklarına dair bir kayıt içermez. Ne var ki, kimi yazılı kanıtlara göre dönemin Romalı elitlerinin bazıları Parth ve Sasanilerin tercih ettiği ağır zırhlı süvarilere karşı savaşta Roma ordusunun başarılı olabilmesi için en iyi yolun falanks yöntemlerinin kullanılması olduğunu görmüştü. Ayrıntıya girersek, epigrafik kanıtlara göre 3. yy.'da, Roma versiyonu falankslarda dövüşmek üzere eğitim alan lejyon askerleri Syria'daki *legio II Parthica*'da görevli idi. Bu adamların çoğu *lanciarii* yani kargı atıcıları olarak tanımlanmakta veya zikredilmektedir, ancak bir tanesi açıkça *discens phalangarius*, yani falanks-benzeri tarzda dövüş eğitimi alan bir asker olarak zikredilmiştir. Buna göre erken 3. yy. *legio II Parthica*'sında

en azından bir kısmın falanks taktikleriyle dövüş eğitimi aldığı, uzun mızraklarla kalkan duvar halinde falanks-benzeri ön hat oluşturarak gerilerindeki taş atıcıları korudukları düşünülebilir. Böylesi uzman birliklerin lejyon genelinde kendi alt birimleri bulunması akla yatkın geliyor ki, bu durumda uygun terim *numerus* olacaktır. O halde Anazarbos CIG 9155B metni bir lejyonun *numerus phalangariorum*'una atıfta bulunuyor olabilir ve yine aynı yerden bir mezar anıtı da *legio II Parthica*'nın bir askerini onurlandırdığından bu *numerus phalangariorum*, adı geçen lejyonun bir alt birimi olabilir.