

ART. IX. – *A Roman Altar from Carlisle Castle*¹

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The Stone and its Medieval Setting

CARLISLE castle, for the past three years, has been the subject of a detailed structural and historical survey by Carlisle Archaeological Unit on behalf of English Heritage. As a part of this work, detailed scale drawings have been prepared of the whole of the ancient fabric. In February 1987, during the survey of de Ireby's Tower (the outer gatehouse), a few letters were noticed on the inner face of the lintel of the north-east door of the solar. They were filled with whitewash, and so rather indistinct, but after cleaning and the removal of some pointing, part of the inscription of a substantial Roman altar was revealed. In March 1987 the stone was disengaged by English Heritage masons. It was found that most of the die survives, together with the focus and a carved relief on the left side. The medieval mason has removed the whole of the plinth and the right face, and has cut a shallow arch into the die. In addition to these primary mutilations there is a hole, probably cut for a gas-pipe when the tower was occupied by the Border Regiment, which pierces the stone in line 9 of the inscription.

The altar is made of close-grained yellow-brown Carboniferous sandstone, and measures 0.45 by 0.98 by 0.25 m. The door which it spanned cuts off the corner of the solar, and gives access to the newel stair; to fit it into this position, the stone was tapered from the focus to the bottom of the die. The inscribed face of the stone was set into the core of the wall, and a plain chamfer on the staircase side removed exposed letters except for a few in the spandrel.

The die (Plate 1) is 0.36 by 0.62 m, and bears an inscription of eleven lines. The face of the capital above is almost entirely lost, apart from traces of human features in the ends of the two bolsters. The carved relief on the left side (Plate 2) is divided into two parts by a cable moulding at the top of the die. Above this is a pair of clasped hands (*dextrarum iunctio*) within a wreath of leaves; below it a figure in a Phrygian cap (Ganymede, the cup-bearer of Zeus) being carried off by an eagle. The bottom of this relief is damaged, but a tree and a large jar can be seen. The carving is crude but vigorous.

Although most of the fabric of de Ireby's Tower dates from the fourteenth century, the building incorporates some parts of an earlier tower. This door belongs to the earlier structure, so the altar has probably been in place since the end of the thirteenth century. Traces of a limey deposit suggests that it may have previously been exposed to the weather; there are also some signs of burning near the bottom of the die. English Heritage masons have now replaced the lintel with a new stone, and the altar is on display in the solar of de Ireby's Tower.

The Text

The text was inscribed within a recessed panel, of which about half the top edge survives, almost all the left edge, and a small part of the right edge, sufficient to establish



FIG. 1.

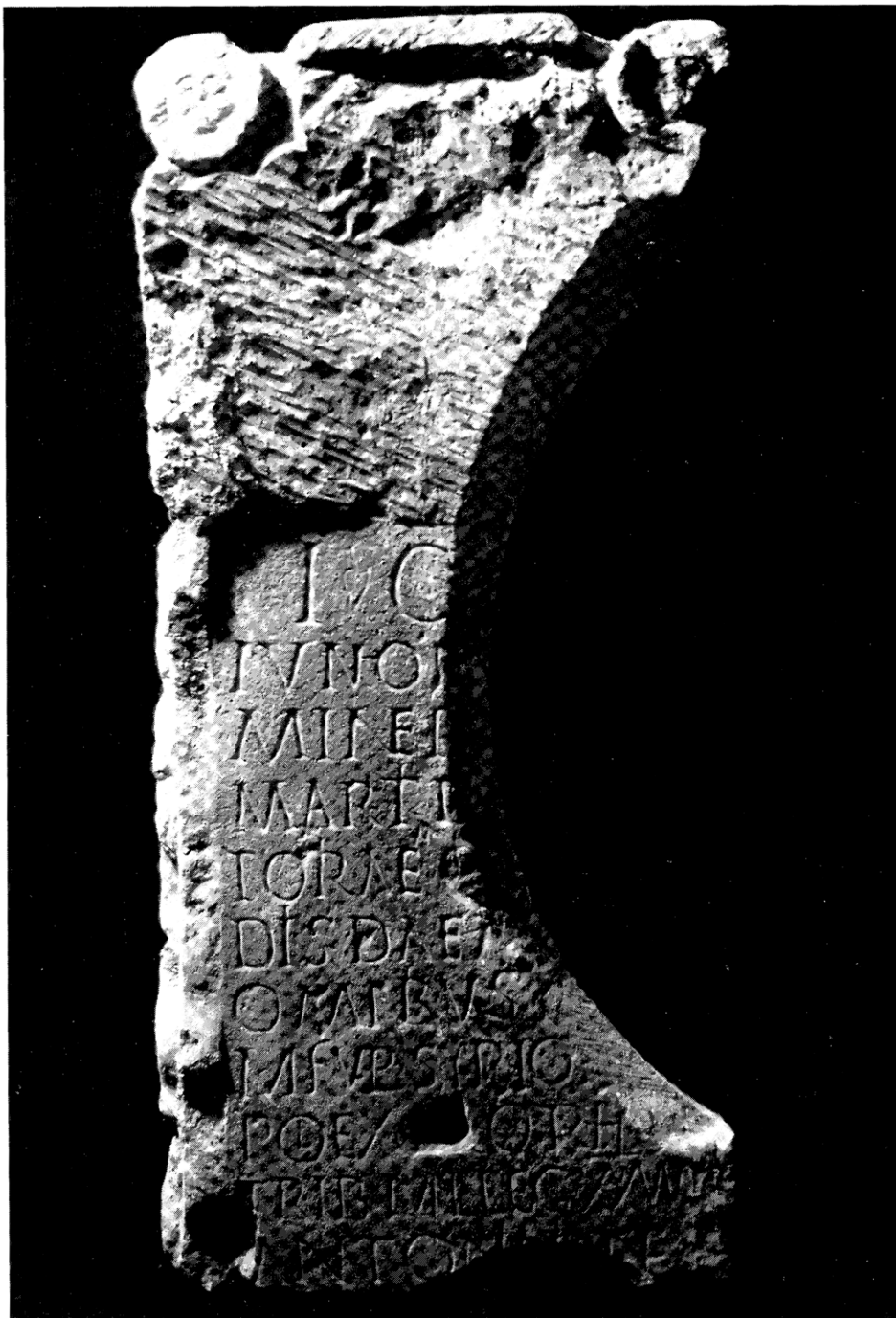


PLATE I – A Roman altar from Carlisle Castle: inscribed die.

the width. The bottom edge is lost, but line 11 may in fact be the last line of the original. The lettering is well cut and regular, the only unusual form being the cursive *F* in line 8, which occasionally occurs in monumental texts.² There is interpunctuation by means of leaf-stop in lines 1-8, but not thereafter, and ligature of letters to save space, most notably in line 9, of a sort to be expected in inscriptions of the early third century.³ About two-thirds of the original text survives:

IϷO [1-2]
 I V N O N [5]
 M I N E R [6]
 M A R T I Ϸ P [6]
 5 T O R I A E Ϸ C [6]
 D I I S Ϸ D A E A [5]
 O M N I B V S [5]
 M F V L P Ϸ S Y R I O . [2]
 P O L I E X [.] R O V T R H [2]
 10 T R I B M I L L E G X X V V
 A N T O N I N I N A N A E
 [?]

The numerals in brackets indicate the number of average letter-spaces lost in each line, not the exact number of letters to be restored, both because letters vary in width (from *I* to *M*), and because two or three letters may be ligatured together. Often this is *I* with the preceding letter, but more elaborate ligatures, notably *LI* within *O*, may be seen in lines 8, 9 and 11. It is not always possible to decide which letters were ligatured in the missing text, or whether there was interpunctuation, but otherwise the text can be restored with fair certainty:

I · O [· M]
 I V N O N [I R E G I N A E]
 M I N E R [V A E A V G]
 M A R T I · P [A T R I V I C]
 5 T O R I A E · C [E T E R I S]
 D I I S · D A E A [B V S Q V E]
 O M N I B V S [M A V R]
 M F V L P · S Y R I O [N I C O]
 P O L I E X [P] R O V T R H [A C]
 10 T R I B M I L L E G X X V V
 A N T O N I N I N A N A E
 [?]

I(ovi) O(ptimo) [M(aximo)] | Iunon[i Reginae] | Miner[vae Aug(ustae)] | Marti P[atri Vic] | toriae c[eteris] | diis daea[busque] | omnibus [M(arcus) Aur(elius)] | M(arci) f(ilius) Ulp(ia) Syrio [Nico] | poli ex [p]rov(incia) Trh[ac(ia)] | trib(unus) mil(itum) leg(ionis) (vicesimae) V(aleriae) V(icticis) | Antoninianae | [. . . ?]

'To Jupiter Best and Greatest, to Queen Juno, to August Minerva, to Father Mars, to Victory, to all the other gods and goddesses, Marcus Aurelius Syrio, son of Marcus, of Ulpia Nicopolis from the province of Thrace, military tribune of the Twentieth Legion Valeria Victrix Antoniniana [. . . ?]'

Commentary

Lines 1–7. *The gods and goddesses*

The deities are Roman and 'official', the Capitoline triad, Mars, Victory, etc. There seems to be no exact parallel, but similar combinations are found in dedicatory inscriptions from this period, the reigns of Septimus Severus and his immediate successors:

(i) *CIL VIII 2465* (Numidia, A.D. 198), *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo), Iun(oni) Reg(inae), Min(ervae), Marti, Vict(oriae) Aug(ustorum)*, by a detachment of Leg. III Aug.

(ii) *CIL III 10109* (Dalmatia, A.D. 211), *[I(o)vi Optimo Max(imo), Iu(noni) Reg(inae), Minervae, Sa(luti), Mar(ti) Patri, [. . . Vic]toriae Aug(ustorum)*, marking the British campaigns of Severus.

(iii) *Acta Fratrum Arvalium* (ed. Henzen) (Rome, 6 Oct. 213), *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo), Iunoni Reg(inae), Minervae, Saluti Publ(icae), Marti Ultori, Iovi Victori, Victoriae, Laribus Militaribus, Fortunae Reduci, Genio imp(eratoris) Antonini, Iunoni Iuliae Piae*, 'for the safety and German victory of the Emperor [Caracalla]'.³

(iv) *CIL XIII 6559* (Jagsthausen, A.D. 221), *[I(ovi) O(ptimo)] M(aximo), Iun(oni) Reg(inae), Marti, et Herc(uli), diis [p]atriis dis deabusq(ue) omnibus . . .*

(v) *CIL XIII 6763* (Mainz, A.D. 238/44), *[I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) ceterisque dis de]abu[sque omnibus]*, for the safety and victory of Gordian III, dedicated by a military tribune of Leg. XXX Ulp. acting legate of Leg. I Min.

(vi) A similar combination must be restored in the severely damaged first lines of the *Feriale Duranum* (c. A.D. 223/7), the only surviving copy of the religious calendar of the Roman army.⁴ These were the deities honoured by a military unit each year on 3 January, when it redeemed and renewed its vows (*vota*) for the safety of the Emperor and the eternity of the Empire.

In the light of these parallels, therefore, the Carlisle altar is best understood, not as an act of private devotion, but as an official dedication, probably at the *vota* ceremony on 3 January, by a commanding officer acting on behalf of his unit. It may also be compared with the altars found at other forts in Britain, notably the long series from Maryport, which were dedicated by the commandant to Jupiter Optimus Maximus.⁵ The Carlisle altar, with its carved relief of the rape of Ganymede, is unusually elaborate.⁶

The restoration of lines 1–7 is thus quite straightforward, only a few further comments being necessary:

Line 2. [*Reginae*]: various combinations of ligatures are possible, depending on whether



FIG. 2.



PLATE 2 – A Roman altar from Carlisle Castle: left side.

the final *I* of *Iunoni* was ligatured or not; it is assumed here that it was, and that *Reginae* ended with a ligatured *NAE* like line 11.

Line 3. [Aug(ustae)]: there is not enough space after *Miner[vae]* for another deity (e.g. *Salus*), so a title of Minerva should be restored, in keeping with the titles borne by the other three old-Roman gods. *Augusta* is the most common title of Minerva, and is regularly abbreviated to three letters.⁷

Line 4. [Vic-] is certain, in view of *-toriae* (5), which means that *Patri* must have been shortened by ligature, either of *TR* (cf. line 9) or *RI* (cf. line 5).

Line 6. *daea[busque]*: these letters would be cramped, but possible; otherwise, *VE* was ligatured. The divergent spelling (for *deabusque*) is also found in *RIB* 1047, cf. *ILS* 3707 (Spoleto), *daeabusquae*. *-e-* is often found for *-æ-* in 'Vulgar' Latin, since the pronunciation was identical, and *daeabusque* is either an example of this confusion, or a hyper-correction of a suspected confusion.

Lines 7–8. *The name of the dedicator*

Ulp(ia) (8) is a 'pseudo-tribe', only the second or third example to be found in Britain.⁸ This is a convention in the formal nomenclature of soldiers which developed during the second century. In its most developed form, as here, which is found in the late second century and in the third century, the imperial gentilicium (*Aelia*, *Ulpia*, etc.) of the city of origin is separated from it by the man's cognomen, and supplants the voting-tribe. Thus *RIB* 506 (Chester): *M(arcus) Ulp(ius) M(arci) f(ilius) Ulpi(a) Ianuarius Traia(na)*, a legionary from colonia *Ulpia Traiana* (probably Xanten, enrolled in the *Papiria* tribe). The voting-tribe had been obsolete for many years, and recently-enfranchised families from the territories of cities in the provinces may not even have known what their correct tribe was; instead they inserted a 'pseudo-tribe' from their city's full name, to give a truly-Roman look to their formal nomenclature. The convention is most often found in the names of Praetorian guardsmen at Rome, who from A.D. 193 were promoted legionaries, usually from the Danubian armies. The popularity of the convention with soldiers of Danubian origin is striking: of the 283 known instances, only two are soldiers from the Germanies, and just one from Britain.⁹

The 'pseudo-tribe' is helpful in restoring the dedicator's praenomen, nomen, and city of origin. After allowing for the praenomen, only three letter-spaces remain at the end of line 7 for the nomen. It must therefore be an abbreviated imperial gentilicium, and by A.D. 213/22 (see note to line 11) *M(arcus) Aur(elius)* is the most likely. The patronymic *M(arci) f(ilius)* also suggests that the praenomen was *M(arcus)*. Above all, nearly half the known bearers of a 'pseudo-tribe' are *Aurelii*, usually *M(arcus) Aur(elius)*; the exact figure is 127 instances out of 283, the next most common name being *Aelius* (only 16 instances, and requiring the patronymic *P(ubli) f(ilius)*).¹⁰

The dedicator's cognomen is *Syrio* (line 8), more often written *Surio* which belongs to a group of names cognate with *Surus* (e.g. *Sura*, *Surillio*) popular in the Danubian provinces.¹¹ It has also been noted that Thracian personal names tend to develop the suffix *-o* and *-io*.¹² *Surio* is not, however, restricted to Thrace; it is found, for instance, in Noricum.¹³ So it is helpful of the dedicator to tell us that he came 'from the province of Thrace', which would have been a reasonable guess from his name alone; certainly

his namesake M. Aurelius Syrio, a veteran of the Ravenna fleet buried at Classis, should not have been published as an 'Oriental'.¹⁴

Lines 8-9. *The city of origin*

The dedicator comes from [3]||*poli* in the province of Thrace, a city which bears the imperial gentilicium *Ulpia*. The only possibility is *Ulp(ia) [Nico]||poli*, the first *O* being ligatured to the *C* by being enclosed within it.¹⁵ The difficulty remains, however, that there were two cities called Ulpia Nicopolis in Thrace, Ulpia Nicopolis 'ad Nestum' almost in Macedonia, and Ulpia Nicopolis 'ad Istrum' almost, and later in fact, in Lower Moesia. Nicopolis ad Nestum, however, receives the title *Ulpia* only in its local coinage, not in the inscriptions, which are few in number and uninformative.¹⁶ The place is eclipsed by its namesake Nicopolis ad Istrum, whose title *Ulpia* is richly attested, especially in the long series of official dedications in honour of emperors, Septimius Severus and Caracalla in particular.¹⁷ In A.D. 198, for example, Severus wrote to acknowledge its loyal gift of 700,000 *denarii*.¹⁸ With the shift of military emphasis to the Danubian frontier, the city flourished in the second and early third centuries. Despite its name, it was not sited on the Danube (Ister) itself, but on its tributary the Iatrus, c. 45 km south of the legionary fortress of Novae. Its territory, however, which has been estimated at c. 5,050 sq. km in the early third century, extended as far the Danube. Inscriptions from the city itself are in Greek, but funerary inscriptions from its territory tend to be in Latin, suggesting that it was being settled by veterans from the frontier to the north.¹⁹ These included, in the early second century, a retired centurion of the Twentieth and Ninth Legions in Britain, who first enlisted in the other legion of Lower Moesia, Leg. V Macedonica at Oescus.²⁰ During the second century, as elsewhere in the Empire, local recruitment became increasingly important for the legions of Lower Moesia. In the third century they were reinforced by Thracians.²¹ The territory of Nicopolis ad Istrum was just one of the sources of the 'Illyrian' army which made Severus emperor: in A.D. 195 discharged veterans of Leg. VII Claudia made a dedication to Severus and Caracalla at their fortress of Viminacium on the middle Danube; of c. 135 names, four come from *Nicopolis*.²² 'Nicopolis' and 'Ulpia Nicopolis' is the origin of at least ten Praetorian guardsmen at Rome, men promoted from the legions by Severus and his successors.²³ Which Nicopolis is not specified, but all that we know of Nicopolis ad Istrum, and in particular its close ties with the Danubian frontier, suggests that it is the one.²⁴ Where we can be certain, it always turns out to be Nicopolis ad Istrum. Almost one-third of all the known military diplomas issued to Praetorian guardsmen in the third century were issued to Thracian veterans; of these six diplomas, two were found in the territory of Nicopolis ad Istrum.²⁵ Their recipients may be compared with Aurelius Herculanus, a soldier of the Fourteenth Urban Cohort, *natus ex provincia Maesia inferiore regione Nicopolitane vico Sapisara*: he was born at Sexaginta Prista, a town on the lower Danube, in the territory of Nicopolis ad Istrum.²⁶

The dedicator, M. Aurelius Syrio, therefore came from Nicopolis ad Istrum in the province of Thrace. The inscription just cited, however, introduces a doubt: Nicopolis ad Istrum was in the province of Lower Moesia. The transfer of the city and its territory from Thrace to Lower Moesia recognized its ties with the Danubian frontier. The date of the transfer is not known exactly, but it falls within the period bounded by A.D. 184/5 when the governor was still the legate of Thrace, and A.D. 193/7, when he was the

legate of Lower Moesia. In view of his known interest in the area, the emperor responsible was probably Severus, in c. A.D. 193.²⁷ This would be some twenty years before the altar was dedicated at Carlisle. Why, then, does Syrio say that he comes 'from the province of Thrace'? It is possible that he came from the other Nicopolis, ad Nestum, but the evidence for Nicopolis ad Istrum as a likely origin for a third-century officer is much stronger than this possibility. It seems more likely that Syrio is referring to Nicopolis ad Istrum at the time of his birth: as a military tribune who may have risen from the ranks, it can be argued, he is likely to have been in his late 30s at least, and thus in A.D. 213/22 would have been born before Nicopolis ad Istrum was transferred from Thrace to Lower Moesia. If in fact he had spent the last twenty years and more in the army, as legionary, Praetorian guardsman, *evocatus* and officer in a legion, it is even possible that he had not visited Nicopolis ad Istrum since its transfer, and may even not have known about it.²⁸ At all events, it may be that some confusion persisted about the location of Nicopolis ad Istrum. Some time in the fourth century, it seems, a bishop was translated from 'Sexantaprista of Moesia' to 'Nicopolis of Thrace'; surely this translation was from Sexaginta Prista on the Danube to its capital city, Nicopolis ad Istrum, not to the distant Nicopolis ad Nestum.²⁹

Line 9. *ex [p]rov(incia) Trh[ac(ia)]*: the tail survives of the first *R*; there would not have been enough space for *Trhacia* to be written in full. The mis-spelling of *Thracia* is due to the Greek [θ] being pronounced as [t] (hence *RIB* 121, *Tracum*); the mis-spelling which resulted was sometimes 'corrected' by someone who knew there was an *h* somewhere. Hence *alae Trhaec(um)* (*RIB* 109) and *cives Trhax* on a contemporary (A.D. 220) altar from Mainz.³⁰

Line 10. *trib(unus) mil(itum)*, etc.

What was a military tribune of the Twentieth Legion doing at Carlisle in A.D. 213/22? It is rare to find an equestrian (*angusticlavius*) military tribune named in an inscription from Britain, no doubt because they were (so to speak) staff officers, and did not usually exercise independent command. However, in the emergency of the Jewish revolts in the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian, equestrian military tribunes were given command of legionary detachments (*vexillationes*).³¹ In the reign of Marcus, a tribune of Leg. I Italica in Lower Moesia seems to have been the regular commander of a detachment in the Crimea; one such tribune was promoted to command a unit on active service, a detachment of Leg. III Augusta in the Marcomannic War.³² In the same reign, a detachment of the Cappadocian legion XV Apollinaris was outposted in Armenia under the command of one of its tribunes and a centurion.³³ Later evidence is lacking, but in view of the increasing tendency to place legionary units under officers of equestrian rank, it may be assumed that equestrian military tribunes still commanded legionary detachments in the third century. In Britain military tribunes are twice attested far from the legionary headquarters, apparently in command of a legionary detachment. The best evidence is a dedicatory inscription probably from the headquarters building of a detachment of Leg. VI Victrix at Corbridge, under the immediate command of a tribune, *per L(ucium) [. . .] trib(unum) [mil(itum) . . .]*.³⁴ The other evidence is the tombstone of a military tribune's 13-year old foster-son at Old Penrith; it implies the man was accompanied by his family, and the most reasonable explanation for his presence is that he was commanding the detachment of Leg. XX Valeria Victrix also attested there.³⁵

M. Aurelius Syrio easily fits this picture: he was commanding a detachment of Leg. XX Valeria Victrix at Carlisle, and dedicated an altar on its behalf at the *vota* parade. This detachment can be glimpsed in the fragments of evidence, more or less undated, it is true, which have been accumulating at Carlisle:

- (i) *CSIR* I 6, Nos. 524 and 525: two carved stone boar's heads, the symbol of the Twentieth Legion, found when extending Tullie House in 1892 and 1893.
- (ii) *RIB* 954: the other altar found in the Castle, only a fragment, probably dedicated by an officer or men of Leg. XX Valeria Victrix.
- (iii) *Britannia* xiii (1982), 83 and *Current Archaeology* No. 101, 176-7: stamped tiles of Leg. II Augusta and Leg. XX Valeria Victrix found at Annetwell Street, in association with barrack-like buildings from the (military?) redevelopment of the fort. The date of these tiles is uncertain, both because they may be residual like one or two tiles of Leg. VIII Hispana found with them, and because the redevelopment itself is not yet closely dated.
- (iv) *CSIR* I 6, No. 526: carved stone relief of a boar, the symbol of the Twentieth Legion, found at Annetwell Street in 1981.
- (v) *Britannia* xiii (1982), 410, No. 13: a dedication slab found at Annetwell Street, of which only the first letter survives, V[. . .], arguably the record of a legionary vexillation.
- (vi) *Britannia* xvii (1986), 437, No. 11: fragment of a dedication slab found at Annetwell Street, naming Leg. XX Valeria Victrix, and maybe a vexillation.

It is possible, therefore, that the fort at Carlisle was redeveloped by the Twentieth Legion; or rather, that a detachment of the legion was stationed there in the third century, like the legionary detachments in the two compounds at Corbridge.³⁶ When Britain was divided in c. A.D. 213, Hadrian's Wall lay within the Lower province, but the Twentieth and the Second Legions belonged to the Upper province.³⁷ Yet they seem to have provided detachments for service in the neighbouring province, a response perhaps to the northern frontier's overriding need for engineers and craftsmen. Upper Britain after Caracalla's reorganization was unique in possessing a two-legion garrison without an open frontier for it to guard and maintain. Two legions at full strength in the Welsh marches would surely have been extravagant provision. One legion in the north, on the other hand, may have been over-extended; there was at least a short-term shortage of legionaries in Lower Britain after the withdrawal from Scotland and the division of the province, to judge by the evidence of detachments from the Rhine armies in c. A.D. 217 under the command of a centurion from Upper Britain.³⁸ Individual legionaries were also seconded for service in Lower Britain as *beneficiarius consularis*.³⁹ It is even tempting to press the evidence of the stamped tiles, and to wonder whether the putative Carlisle detachment commanded by Syrio was one of two detachments drawn from the legions of the Upper province, the Twentieth and the Second. This would give point to the carved relief on the left face of the altar, a pair of clasped hands, the symbol of concord. At Corbridge a dedication had been necessary to the *concordia* of two legions.⁴⁰ It is worth noting that detachments of the Second and Twentieth Legions may have assisted the regular garrison of Netherby in building something in A.D. 219, at least according to a plausible restoration of a doubtfully valid text.⁴¹ If so, they may have been based at Carlisle.

Line 11. *Antoniniana*: the final *NAE* is ligatured. No trace remains of the cross-bar of

the A, and the 'Vulgar' spelling *ANTONINIANE* could be read; but this is unlikely, in view of the correct spelling of *[Vic]toriae*, and the hyper-correct *daea[busque]*. The title was awarded to many, if not all, army units both by Caracalla and by Elagabalus, and a closer dating is impossible. In Britain it seems to have been awarded after Caracalla had taken the title *Germanicus Maximus* (presumably 6 Oct. 213), and thus belongs to A.D. 213/7 or 218/22.⁴² This is the first inscription to give it to the Twentieth Legion, but it was already tested on stamped tiles at Chester.⁴³

Line 12ff. Not enough of the die survives to be sure that 11 is the last line of the original, which it may have been, since the sense is complete as the text stands, assuming an ellipse of *posuit* or similar. At the most, there would only have been a concluding formula like *v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*.

The career of M. Aurelius Syrio

Only one post is known in Syrio's career, the military tribunate, but his name and origin prompt speculation. His name is that of a first or second-generation Roman citizen. Since he was already a military tribune by A.D. 213/22, he is unlikely to have been one of the mass of *MM. Aurelii* created by the 'constitutio Antoniniana' of A.D. 212, but his citizenship may well have dated from his enlistment in a legion. The reign of Marcus Aurelius (161-80) is perhaps too early; the *M. Aurelius* would derive from Commodus (180-92) or even from Septimius Severus after his fictive adoption into the Antonine family. Alternatively, if his patronymic *M(arci) f(ilius)* is not a fiction, he would have been the son of an auxiliary veteran enfranchised after A.D. 161.⁴⁴ He cannot have been of equestrian birth. This is clear from his name, his place of origin, and from the 'pseudo-tribe'. This, it has been said already, is borne by legionaries, Praetorian guardsmen, and other soldiers at Rome, most of them of Danubian origin. It is borne by a few centurions, including a *primus pilus* of Leg. I Italica, and another who became a procurator, but Syrio is the first instance of a military tribune.⁴⁵ These officers all no doubt rose from the ranks.

Syrio must have enlisted in a Danubian legion, most likely the one nearest to his birthplace, the Leg. I Italica at Novae. In the third century equestrian commissions were once more being granted to former other ranks.⁴⁶ In Britain M. Valerius Speratus died at the age of 55, as a prefect of Coh. I Aquitanorum; he was a veteran of Leg. VII Claudia who had become a councillor of Viminacium adjoining the legion's fortress on the middle Danube.⁴⁷ Instances can be found of legionary veterans who were promoted military tribune at about the same time as Syrio.⁴⁸ If, in fact, he was a legionary in A.D. 193, he would have taken part in Septimius Severus' invasion of Italy, and might well have been promoted into the new Praetorian Guard, one of the uncouth soldiers who dismayed the senatorial historian Cassius Dio.⁴⁹ His full name, *M. Aur. M. f. Ulp. Syrio Nicopoli*, would pass without comment in the third-century lists of veterans discharged from the Guard. He would have served only the balance of sixteen years since his enlistment in the legion, before being retained as an *evocatus*, and finally promoted to the military tribunate.⁵⁰ There is already an interesting group of such careers in Britain, all of them in the Carlisle 'sector':

- (i) *RIB* 966 (Netherby or Bewcastle): *tribunus coh. I Nervan(a)e ex evocato Palatino*.
- (ii) *RIB* 988 (Bewcastle): *tribun(us) ex evocato*.

(iii) *RIB* 989 (Bewcastle): *trib(unus) ex corniculario praef(ectorum) pr[a]etorio*.

(iv) *RIB* 1896 (Birdoswald): *trib(unus) (of coh. I Aelia Dacorum) ex [evoc(ato) c(ohortis)] I pr(aetoriae) Ma[ximin(ianae)]*.

The Birdoswald tribune was evidently promoted by the emperor Maximinus (235-8) 'the Thracian', whose own career offers a parallel to that of Syrio.⁵¹ He came from what a Greek writer calls 'innermost Thrace', which can be taken to be 'a part of Moesia that was originally Thracian'. It is easy to be reminded of Nicopolis ad Istrum. He enlisted as a common soldier, perhaps in c. A.D. 190, if he was indeed aged sixty-five when he died, and rose to a series of commands of which we know virtually nothing. In A.D. 235 he was still an officer of equestrian rank, only the second (after Macrinus in 217) to achieve the Purple. He was the first emperor of Danubian birth, the first of the 'Illyrian' strongmen who mastered the third-century crisis of the Empire. His career, like that of Syrio his contemporary, was 'a symptom of social transformation, a manifestation of the potency now gathering among the Danubian military'.⁵²

Notes and References

¹ The altar was discovered by Annis, who is responsible for the line drawings and the first section. The other sections (text and commentary) are by Tomlin. The authors wish to thank English Heritage, David Sherlock and Paul Austen in particular, for disengaging the altar and inviting them to publish it; and Mike McCarthy and Ian Caruana, Carlisle Archaeological Unit, for their advice and encouragement. Brian Young, British Geological Survey, commented on the geology of the stone. Alan Griffiths and his staff, English Heritage, Carlisle, provided invaluable assistance during the disengagement of the altar.

² e.g. *RIB* 1180, cf. 955, 1492, 1919.

³ e.g. *RIB* 977 (Netherby), 989 (Bewcastle).

⁴ *P. Dura* 54 = R. O. Fink, *Roman Military Records on Papyrus* (1971), No. 117.

⁵ *RIB* 815-831. G. Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army* (1985), 277.

⁶ The composition resembles that in a mosaic at Bignor (M. Henig, *Religion in Roman Britain* (1984), 177-8, with pl. 85), but this is its first appearance on an altar from Britain. It has been understood as a symbol of the soul's ascent to heaven (J. M. C. Toynbee, *Art in Britain under the Romans* (1964), 260-1, but in the present context it seems no more than a vague allusion to the principal deity honoured.

⁷ See Dessau, *ILS* III, p. 544.

⁸ See *RIB* 506 and perhaps 1292. For what follows, see G. Forni, *Le Tribù Romane, III.1: Le Pseudo-tribù* (1985).

⁹ Forni, *op. cit.* (see no. 8), 23. The British instance is *ILS* 2365 (Rome), M. Ulpius Ner. Quintus Glevi mil(es) fr(umentarius) leg. VI V, a legionary seconded for service at Rome, who came from the Nervan *colonia* at Gloucester.

¹⁰ Forni, *op. cit.* (see n. 8), 25.

¹¹ M. Buzalkovska-Aleksova, "The name *Surus* in the ancient Balkan anthroponymy", *Živa Antika*, xxxiv (1984), 199-204.

¹² V. Beševliev, *Untersuchungen über die Personennamen bei den Thraken* (1970), 43.

¹³ G. Alföldy, "Die Personennamen in Noricum", in N. Duval (ed.), *L'Onomastique Latine* (1977), at pp. 257-8.

¹⁴ *AE* 1980, 485.

¹⁵ e.g. *RIB* 989 (Bewcastle).

¹⁶ *IG Bulg.* IV 2335-48.

¹⁷ *IG Bulg.* II 601-94. G. Mihailov, "Septimius Severus in Moesia Inferior and Thrace", *Acta Antiqua Philippopolitana: Studia Historica et Philologica* (1963), at pp. 121 ff.

¹⁸ *IG Bulg.* II 659.

¹⁹ A. G. Poulter, "Town and Country in Moesia Inferior", in A. G. Poulter (ed.), *Ancient Bulgaria* (1983), II, at pp. 90-4. For the extension of its territory to the Danube, see below, n. 26.

- ²⁰ *ILS* 2666b.
- ²¹ J. C. Mann, *Legionary Recruitment and Veteran Settlement during the Principate* (1983), 38.
- ²² *CIL* III 14507, with improved text in *JOAI* iv (1901), Bbl, 82ff. cf. III 4458, a third-century veteran of Leg. XIV Gem. *domo Nicapolis* (sic); and *Inscr. Tac. Rom.* III.2, 120, a centurion of Leg. XXII Prim. honoured at Sarmizegethusa, who was decurion of the *civitas Nicopolitanorum*.
- ²³ *CIL* VI 32623, 10 and 21; 32523a, 31; 32624d, 12; 32627, 3; 32630 (three names); 32634, 9; 32640, 3; 32912 (four soldiers, not necessarily Praetorian guardsmen). These lists are Severan or later.
- ²⁴ Nicopolis in Epirus seems to have contributed recruits, including the legionary buried at Bath (*RIB* 160), only in the pre-Hadrianic period (G. Forni, *Il Reclutamento delle Legioni da Augusto a Diocleziano* (1953), 183). The Praetorian guardsman P. Aelius P. f. Sergia Apollinaris Nicop(oli) (*CIL* VI 375), who enlisted in A.D. 127 (although A.D. 132 may be correct), should probably be numbered with them; he shares their tribe, *Sergia*, but his name suggests that he was the son of an auxiliary veteran, and thus a Thracian origin cannot be excluded.
- ²⁵ M. M. Roxan, *Roman Military Diplomas 1978 to 1984* (1985), 207. The two diplomas are *RMD* 132 (7 Jan. 228), issued to M. Aurelius M. f. Ulp. Secundus Nicopoli (an example of the 'pseudo-tribe'), found at Butovo near Nicopolis ad Istrum; and *CIL* XVI 143 (7 Jan. 226), issued to M. Aurelius M. f. Ulp. Marcus Nicopoli (another example of the 'pseudo-tribe'), found near Nicopolis ad Istrum. There is evidence of earlier recruitment in another diploma (*RMD* 67, c. A.D. 167), issued to an auxiliary veteran, which was also found at Nicopolis ad Istrum.
- ²⁶ *CIL* VI 2933. That Sexaginta Prista lay within the territory of Nicopolis ad Istrum is confirmed by the discovery there of a statue base (published by G. Velkov in *Arkheologiya* 1986, 2, pp. 24-8), dedicated to Septimius Severus by *Ulp(ia) [Nico]polis* in Greek.
- ²⁷ G. Mihailov, *op. cit.* (see n. 17), 121 ff. B. Gerov, "Die Grenzen des römischen Provinz Thracia bis zu Gründung des Aurelianischen Dakien", in H. Temporini (ed.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II, 7.1 (1979), at pp. 224-5.
- ²⁸ The possible career of Syrio is discussed below. If he entered the Praetorian Guard, however, he may well have accompanied Septimius Severus in his return from the East in A.D. 202, when he must have visited Thrace and Lower Moesia.
- ²⁹ Socrates, *Church History* VII 36.
- ³⁰ *AE* 1941, 107.
- ³¹ R. Saxer, *Untersuchungen zu den Vexillationen des römischen Kaiserheeres von Augustus bis Diokletian, Epigraphische Studien* i (1967), No. 45 (*ILS* 9491), No. 49 (*CIL* VI 3505).
- ³² R. Saxer, *op. cit.* (see n. 31), No. 269 (*CIL* III 13750), No. 74 (*ILS* 2747).
- ³³ R. Saxer, *op. cit.* (see n. 31), No. 276 (*ILS* 394).
- ³⁴ *RIB* 1132 with *Britannia* iii (1972), 363. The *trib(unus)* [. . .]rnius who dedicated *RIB* 1121, if he is not the tribune [. . .]nius Vic[tor] who commanded a milliary cohort at Corbridge (*RIB* 1128), may have been a military tribune of Leg. VI Victrix, since altars to the same god (Apollo Maponus) were also dedicated by the legion's *praefectus castrorum* (*RIB* 1120) and a centurion (*RIB* 1122). But if the three altars were dedicated by officers of the same legionary detachment, either the tribune would have been *laticlavus* or the *praefectus castrorum* (since senior to the *angusticlavii*) would have been in command.
- ³⁵ *RIB* 937, 940. *Beneficarii tribuni* are attested at Chester (*RIB* 532) and Piercebridge (*Britannia* xvii (1986), 438, No. 20), but neither inscription is evidence of a military tribune exercising an independent command. This is a possibility, however, at Piercebridge.
- ³⁶ I. A. Richmond, "Roman legionaries at Corbridge, their supply-base, temples and religious cults", *AA* xxi (1943), 127-224. One compound evidently housed a detachment of the Second Legion (*RIB* 1154). The parallel has been drawn by Ian Caruana (*Current Archaeology* No. 101, 177).
- ³⁷ The Twentieth is explicitly located in Upper Britain: *CIL* VIII 2080; Cassius Dio, *Roman History* iv 23.6. The evidence for the division of Britain, and the problems that remain unresolved, are lucidly summarized by A. R. Birley, *The Fasti of Roman Britain* (1981), 168-72.
- ³⁸ *JRS* lvii (1967), 205, No. 16 (Piercebridge), with *RIB* 1022, 1026, *Britannia* xvii (1986), 438, No. 20. The evidence is collected and discussed by E. Birley, "Troops from the two Germanies in Roman Britain", *Epigraphische Studien* iv (1967), 103-7. He suggests that the German troops were intended to reinforce the loyalty of the army in northern Britain, perhaps in question during the recent governorship of C. Iulius Marcus, rather than to make good losses in battle (cf. *RIB* 1322). However, the division of Britain was also

recent, and may have stretched the resources of the Sixth Legion. Hence the legionaries from southern Britain.

³⁹ *RIB* 745, 747(?), 1696.

⁴⁰ *RIB* 1125, undated, but the plain ansate panel resembles *RIB* 1163 (c. A.D. 197). Since the above was written, it has been possible to examine an inscribed relief found at Carlisle Cathedral, which will be published, like Syrio's altar, in *Britannia* xx (1989), forthcoming. It reads: *C[o]ncord[iae] | leg(ionis) II Aug(ustae) et (legionis) XX V(aleriae) [V(ictricis)]*, 'To the Concord of the Second Legion *Augusta* and the Twentieth *Valeria Victrix*'. It thus confirms the hypothesis that detachments of these two legions were stationed, or at least active, at Carlisle. It cannot, however, be dated in itself.

⁴¹ *RIB* 980 with A. R. Birley, *Fasti* (see n. 37), 187. The editors of *CSIR* I 6, No. 276, note that the same pair of detachments may have been active at Maryport (*RIB* 852).

⁴² G. R. Stephens, "G. Julius Marcus", *CW* 2, lxxxvii, 53-60.

⁴³ *JRS* xli (1951), 143, No. 15. [*Antoniniana*] might be read on a fragmentary altar from Annetwell Street, Carlisle (*Britannia* xii (1981), 379, No. 12), but the restoration is not certain. The unit's name, if any, is lost.

⁴⁴ cf. *RMD* 67 (see above, n. 25). The chronology is too tight for him to have been the son of a legionary veteran (himself enfranchised on enlistment), but he could have been a legionary's son born out of wedlock.

⁴⁵ Forni, *op. cit.* (see n. 8), 71ff., collects instances of the fully developed 'pseudo-tribe'; the *primi pili* are Nos. 120 and 128.

⁴⁶ E. Birley, "Septimius Severus and the Roman Army", *Epigraphische Studien*, viii (1969), at p. 76. The instances cited in the next two notes are collected by him. See also A. R. Birley, *The people of Roman Britain* (1979), 70; P. A. Holder, *The Roman Army in Britain* (1982), 64-5.

⁴⁷ *ILS* 7173, with improved text in *JOA* xv (1912), 184, fig. 123. cf. *CIL* VIII 4800 (Numidia), P. Licinius Agatopus, a veteran (whether legionary or auxiliary) promoted *praefectus alae* in Britain.

⁴⁸ (i) *CIL* III 15188² with *AE* 1962, 110, Aelius Carus veteran of Leg. II Adi. p.f. Antoniniana (i.e. A.D. 213/22), promoted trib. mil. of Leg. XXX Ulp. (ii) *CIL* II 4137 with 4122 (Tarraco), L. Alfidius Urbanus *speculator* of Leg. VII Gem. p.f. promoted trib. mil. in the same legion now *Antoniniana* (i.e. A.D. 213/22).

⁴⁹ *Roman History* lxxv, 74.2.6.

⁵⁰ For transfers into the Guard and length of service, see D. L. Kennedy, "Some observations on the Praetorian Guard", *Ancient Society* ix (1978), 275-301.

⁵¹ R. Syme, *Emperors and Biography* (1971), 179-93, "The Emperor Maximinus". The evidence amounts to little more than Herodian vi 8. 1-2.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 190.

