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

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Introduction

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 bodyguard. 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 indi-
cating 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). It is a reason-
able 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 option.

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 cohors VI Hispanorum. As shown
elsewhere, this auxiliary unit probably constituted the garrison of Cilicia between the Julio-
Claudian and Flavian/Trajanic periods. 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 Cottius. As both men share the imperial nomen and cognomina characteristic of the Danube region, 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.
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 citizen-
ship 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
Aurelius Dizza.
citizenship on recruitment into the legion when this was formed between 194-197: 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 ἵητηρ or ‘horse doctor’. The Roman army is known to have had veterinarians who specialised in looking after horses, for example ---lius Quartionius, medicus veterinarius with the cohortes I Praetoria at Rome, and Gaius Aufidius, ἵπποιατρος or ‘hippiatros’ with the cohortes I Thebaeorum at Hieran Sykaminon in Egypt: 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. Sayar, who offered the following transcription and expansions:

Καὶ ΑΣ
ΚΑΡ νοῦμέρο[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 νοῦμέρου λαγγιαρίων, a numerus lanciariorum. A numerus lanciariorum would be a military unit whose members were armed with lances or lanciae: the reader is left to assume that the phrasing νοῦμέρου 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 νοῦμέρου 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 unit. 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 Empire. Whether or not these units subsequently

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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.
15 Southern 1988, 84-86.
kept their own ‘national’ weaponry and style of fighting, as is often suggested, is debatable. 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 Bridge. 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 *lanciarii*, and which were presumably units armed in a like fashion.

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 λανκιαρίων, 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 century. 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 λονχοφόροι. 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 ΛΟΝΧΟΦΟΡΟΣ, soldiers carrying lances. Arrian, in his account of his expedition against the Alani in c. AD 135, likewise refers to units of ΛΟΝΧΟΦΟΡΟΣ 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 battle.

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, λονχοφόροι or even a Latinised version as λανκιαρίων. In which case we should seek an alternative to Sayar’s suggested laggiarvion 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 νομήρος ΦΑΛΛΑΓΓΙΑΡΙΩΝ, 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 phalangical tactics used by the ancient Greeks.

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17 ILS 2791 - a text not, incidentally, referenced in Southern 1988.
18 In the west, the *legiones lanciarii Sabarienses* and *lanciarii Gallicanae Honoriani*, under the *Magister Equitum*, and the *lanciarii Lauriacenses* and *lanciarii Comaginenenses* 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 λονχοφόρος to associate these men with the δοριφόροι 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 phalangical-type formations and it is likewise rarely appreciated that the legions continued to use phalangical tactics into the Imperial period, 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 kontos and those armed with the lóngiē, 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 kontos, 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 probolos or shield wall, their projecting spears hindering the Alanic cavalry, while the rear four ranks provided missile fire, throwing their lighter javelins over this probolos. 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 phalangical 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 Sasanians. Indeed, there are two near-contemporary literary texts which claim that Caracalla specifically raised a phalangite unit for his Parthian War of 214-217, 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 (dôru makrōn and αίχυμ βραχεῖα), high boots, and a sword. 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 soldiers.

This is not the place to discuss the veracity of these reports of how Caracalla and Severus Alexander both formed phalangical units. 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

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 linataborox, 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 formations.  

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 War. 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 spear. 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; 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 *lanciarius* and shown in relief as holding five lances, the second being for (M.) Aurelius Mucianus, his epitaph noting that he was a *discenti(s) lanchiari(um)* or trainee *lanciarium*, his relief also showing him holding five lances. To all of this we might add the previously mentioned *numerus lanciariorum* 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
stratiótai lánciáři, 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 lancerii 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 Partbica, 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 [Φα]λαγγαρίων, indicating that this text originally referred to a person who was a member of a numerus Phalangarium and not a numerus lanceriorum as has been suggested. Whether this numerus was a numerus collatus, a group of specialist troops with a larger formation38, as with the stratiótai lánciáři 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 lanceriorum recorded at Rome, cannot be determined. On balance, however, given that there is a tombstone for a member of the legio II Partbica 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.
36 Speidel 2002, 132.
Bibliography


Sayar 2000  M. H. Sayar, Die Inschriften von Anazarbos und Umgebung (= IK 56 [2000]).


Özet

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


Açıktır ki, bu savaş taktiği ancak her lejyonda bu tür dövüş eğitimi almış yeterli sayıda adam varsa gerçek savaşa işe yarayabilirildi. Gerçekte, falanks tipi uzun mizrak veya atış kargısı gibi spesifik birincil silah kullanmanın uzman birliklere atıf olmayıp, geç Principatus döneminde epigrafik ve yazılı kayıtlarda gittikçe artıyor. Örneğin, yazılı kaynakların bildirdiği göre Caracalla kendi ordusunun en azından bir parçasını Parth seferi için falanks taktiklerinde eğittiği, onlara bu tür dövüşe uygun ekipman vermişti. Severus Alexander da Sasanilere saldırmak için kendi ordusunu falankstaki yöntemde eğitti fakat onun savasçılıkları kendi geleneksel silah ve zırhlarını kullanmayı sürdürdü.

en azından bir kısmı falanks taktikleriyle döüş eğitimi aldığı, uzun mızraklarla kalkan duvar halinde falanks-benzeri ön hat oluşturarak gerilerindeki taş atıcıları korudukları düşünülebilir. Böyle 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 phalangiariorum'una atıfta bulunuyor olabilir ve yine aynı yerden bir mezar anıt da legio II Parthica'nın bir askerini onurlandırdığından bu numerus phalangiariorum, adı geçen lejyonun bir alt birimi olabilir.