

THE CAREER OF A LEGIONARY

MICHAEL P. SPEIDEL

University of Hawaii

A hundred years ago, during the first systematic excavations at Carnuntum, the capital of Roman Pannonia, a sandstone pilaster came to light inscribed with a dedication to Iuppiter Dolichenus, the sky god so popular in the Roman army.¹ Amandianus, the soldier of legion XIII Gemina who put up the stone with a wish—now erased—for the welfare of the emperor Maximinus Thrax (A.D. 235–238), profited from the occasion to record his career and thus left us an unusually valuable document. The inscription, however, while frequently referred to, is not, I believe, fully understood yet. It is published in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (III, 11135) as follows:

[*I. o. m.*] *Dolich(eno) pro sal(ute) [imp(era-
toris) Caes(aris)] C. [Iul(ii) Ver(i) M]ax[imini
P(ii)] F(elicis) [invic(ti) Au]g(usti) . . [Ulp]us
[?A]m[a]ndianus mil(es) leg(ionis) XIII g(eminæ)
libran[u]s numeris, cus(tos) arm(orum), signi-
f[er], optio o[cta]v[a?] pr(incipis) pr(ioris) can-
didatus numini cum U[l]pio Amando [ve]l(erano)
le[g(ionis)] s(upra) s(criptae) p[ro]s[er]uit[ur].*

¹ CIL III, 11135. For Iuppiter Dolichenus see M. Speidel, *The Religion of Iuppiter Dolichenus in the Roman Army* (Leyden 1978). This paper was researched with the help of a grant by the National Endowment for the Humanities, Research Materials Division; it does not necessarily represent the view of the Endowment.

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The reading given is essentially correct, but line 12 calls for a different expansion. When Domaszewski first published the pilaster he believed Amandianus was promoted from soldier of the fourteenth legion to clerk of the governor's guard, i.e., *librarius numeri s(ingularium)*.² As the guard of *singulares* is never just indicated by the single letter S, however, Th. Mommsen suggested the reading *librarius numeris*, "clerk for the ethnic units,"³ which became the accepted version of the text.⁴ From it, one

² A. v. Domaszewski, "Ausgrabungen in Carnuntum 1885," *Archäologisch-Epigraphische Mittheilungen aus Österreich-Ungarn* 10 (1886) 13–32, esp. p. 22.

³ Mommsen *apud* A. v. Domaszewski, "Zur Laufbahn des Ulpus Amandianus," *Archäologisch-Epigraphische Mittheilungen aus Österreich-Ungarn* 17 (1894) 33; cf. *CIL* III, 11135.

⁴ Domaszewski (above, note 3); *CIL* III, 11135; Dessau, *ILS* 4311; P. Merlat, *Repertoire des inscriptions et monuments figurés du culte de Jupiter Dolichenus* (Paris 1951) no. 108; Speidel (above, note 1) 48. A. v. Domaszewski, *Die Rangordnung des römischen Heeres*

concluded that the “barbarian” ethnic units of the Palmyrenians, Britons, Germans, Moors, etc. (the *numeri*) were made up of illiterates as their clerks had to be seconded by the legions.⁵ That would be a remarkable piece of information, all the more since our monument belongs to a period when the legions themselves were supposed to be “barbarized” so that the difference between them and the *auxilia* had largely disappeared.

Two facts tell strongly against this interpretation of the text. First, in contrast to modern usage no ancient source calls the ethnic units as such *numeri*, for *numerus* means simply “unit,” not “ethnic unit,”⁶ Secondly, Roman inscriptions do not use the dative case in such phrases. If he was clerk for several units, Amandianus would have had to describe himself as *librarius numerorum* rather than as *librarius numeris*.⁷ Hence I suggest one might read here *librarius numeri s(uprascripti)*, “clerk of the above-mentioned unit,” i.e., clerk of the legion.⁸

But can a legion (or an *ala*, or a cohort) be called *numerus*? Th. Mommsen denied this *expressis verbis*. Since then, inscriptions have been found that call an *ala* or a cohort *numerus*, so that the same may be presumed for a legion.⁹ If Amandianus rose through all his positions in the same fourteenth legion, why did he add “in the abovementioned unit” only to his rank as *librarius* but not to his ranks as *custos armorum*,

(Köln 1908), 2nd ed. by B. Dobson (Köln 1967) 213. The letter S after *numeri* is dropped without comment by E. Vorbeck, *Militärinschriften aus Carnuntum* (Wien 1980) 86.

⁵ Domaszewski (above, note 3); Domaszewski (above, note 4) 61.

⁶ H. T. Rowell, “Numerus,” *RE* 17 (1937) cols. 1327–41 and 2537–54, esp. 1327 ff. with emphasis on inscriptions dated to the early empire. H. Callies, “Die fremden Truppen im römischen Heer des Prinzipats und die sogenannten nationalen Numeri, Beiträge zur Geschichte des römischen Heeres,” *Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission* 45 (1964) 130–227, esp. pp. 173 ff. M. Speidel, “The Rise of the Ethnic Units in the Roman Imperial Army,” *ANRW* II.3 (1975) 202–31, esp. pp. 204–8. M. Speidel, “Citizen Cohorts in the Roman Imperial Army,” *TAPA* 106 (1976) 339–48.

⁷ The same applies if *numeri* be records, as considered by J. F. Gilliam, “Enrollment in the Roman Imperial Army,” *Eos* 48 (1957) 207–16. Gilliam quite rightly rejects any inferences from the fragmentary text *CIL* XIII, 7007. For *librarius* with the genitive case see, e.g., Dessau, *ILS*, index, p. 491, and *Digest* 1.6.7: *horreorum librarii et librarii depositorum, et librarii caducorum*.

⁸ There is a dot between *numeri* and S, but the pitted surface suggests this is not to be relied on. Usually the word *suprascriptus* is abbreviated by a double S, but for another military text of the Severan period abbreviating this word with only one S see, e.g., *CIL* VIII, 2466. The surface of the stone is chipped off at the end of line 12: it seems as if there was no space for a second S unless it was in ligature or written on the moulding. *Numeri s(ut)* is also possible, as a referee of this article reminds me. I am grateful to Dr. Knibbe of the Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut for his advice and help in making a latex squeeze of the monument, and to Dr. E. Vorbeck of the Museum Carnuntinum for his permission to do this work and his hospitality at the Museum.

⁹ Above, note 6. For Th. Mommsen’s statement, see his “Die Conscriptionsordnung der römischen Kaiserzeit,” *Hermes* 19 (1884) 1–79 and 210–34, esp. p. 220 (= *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, 20–117, esp. p. 104).

signifer, and *optio*? The answer is given by a papyrus from Arabia of A.D. 107 where a legionary likewise begins his career as *librarius*. He reports that when he asked Claudius Severus, the governor (and legionary commander) to make him his *librarius*, the governor said “there is no position open, but meanwhile I will make you *librarius* of the legion . . . ”¹⁰ Clearly, there was a distinction between *librarii* of the units and *librarii* on the staff of higher officers. Consequently, in order to be precise, Amandianus had to specify what kind of *librarius* he was, a distinction that was not necessary with his other ranks. A similar distinction is made in an inscription from Dura-Europos:¹¹

I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) Conservatori [cete]risque dis inmor-
[tali]bus pro salutem et victori(am) d(ominorum) n(ostorum)
imp(eratorum) L(ucii) Sep(timii) Severi [P]ert(inacis) Aug(usti)
II (et) D(ecii) Cl(odii) Alb(ini) [Caes(aris)] II, [Min]ervae sanct-
(ae) sacrum feci[t ---]eus Mocimi actuar(ius) n(umeri) per
Tre[b]ium Maximum trib(unum) coh(ortis) II Ulp(iae) eq(uita-
tae) [vo]ltum solvit libens [aetus] meruit.

Here, too, a regular unit is called *numerus*, and the *actuaris* seems to make it clear that he is working in the office of the unit rather than in the office of a commander or a general.¹²

The surprising fact that Amandianus was *signifer* first, and *optio* thereafter, has well been explained by A. v. Domaszewski: Amandianus ranked higher than a regular *optio*, for he was already designated to become a centurion.¹³ This is the meaning of the term *candidatus* which is here apparently not to be taken together with *numini* to mean “candidate for the priesthood, to the deity.”¹⁴ Instead, *candidatus* goes with *optio*,

¹⁰ P. Mich. VIII, 466.26–30 (see the commentary, *ibid.* p. 13):

[καὶ ἔρω]τήσαντός μου Κλαύδιον
Σε[ουή]ρ[ο]ν τὸν ὑπατικὸν εἶνα με
λιβράριον ἑαυτοῦ ποιήσῃ, εἰπόντος
δὲ [α]ὐτοῦ ὅτι τόπος οὐ σχολάζει, ἐν
τοσοῦτῳ δὲ λιβράριόν σε λεγέωνος
ποιήσω ἐφ’ ἐλπίδων, etc.

¹¹ AE (1934) 280 (Dura-Europos).

¹² Contrast also the *librarius legati*, Dessau, ILS 9092 a, with the *librarii legionis*, Dessau, ILS 2426; 9100; 2398. The account by Domaszewski (above, note 4) 38 on the *officium legati legionis* is confusing. See also the legionary soldiers who were *librarii consularis*, e.g., CIL III, 1318; 5814; 6246; 10521.

¹³ Domaszewski (above, note 3), confirmed by the new discovery of AE (1937) 101. Cf. D. J. Breeze, “The Organization of the Career Structure of the Immunes and Principales of the Roman Army,” *Bonner Jahrbücher* 174 (1974) 245–92, esp. p. 267. Dobson-Domaszewski (above, note 4) XIV.

¹⁴ Contra: Merlat (above, note 4) 101, note 5; Speidel (above, note 1) 48—I am now converted to Domaszewski’s view because of the parallel case of AE (1937) 101.

denoting the rank of *optio ad spem ordinis*,¹⁵ while *numini* states to whom the altar is dedicated.

If the reading of line 16 is correct, Amandianus describes himself as *optio o[cta]v[i] pr(incipis) pr(ioris)*, i.e., deputy of the second centurion in the eighth cohort.¹⁶ Since this is a rather low ranking centurion no matter what scheme of ranking legionary centurions one may follow,¹⁷ Amandianus will not have sought status by indicating the specific position of the centurion with whom he served: instead he shows here the same concern with precise detail as in the phrase *librarius numeri s(uprascripti)*.

Amandianus' inscription should thus read:¹⁸

[I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo)] / Dolich(eno) / pro-sal(ute) / [im-
p(eratoris) Caes(aris)] C(aii) / [Iul(ii) Veri M]ax/[imini P(ii)]
F(elicis) / [invic(ti) Au]g(usti) / [--- Ulp]ius / Amandianus /
mil(es) leg(ionis) / XIII· G(eminae) / librari[u]s / numeri-
s(uprascripti) / cus(tos) arm(orum) / signif[er] / optio / o[cta]-
v[i] / pr(incipis) pr(ioris) / candidatus / numini / cum U[l]pio
/ Amando / [.]S S / [---]

Admittedly, no third-century inscription has been found yet that would call a legion a *numerus*.¹⁹ However, since *alae* and cohorts, even praetorian cohorts,²⁰ could be called *numerus*, the same may be safely presumed of legions. If our reading of Amandianus' inscription is correct, it will have cleared up a misunderstanding about the staff and the illiteracy of the ethnic units of the Roman army (the "national *numeri*"),²¹ and it

¹⁵ E.g., *RIB* 544; *AE* (1937) 101.

¹⁶ In a paper entitled "The Centurions' Titles" (*Epigraphische Studien*, forthcoming) I argue that the form *octavi principis prioris* is correct rather than (*cohorte*) *octava principis prioris*.

¹⁷ For the discussion see Dobson-Domaszewski (above, note 4) XXIII.

¹⁸ Minor differences between my reading and that of *CIL* III, 11135 are based on my inspection of the stone itself and on a latex squeeze. Thus, while otherwise following the *CIL* edition, I observe that the A and X at the end of line 4 are certain; no letters are missing at the beginning of line 8; in line 22 the third letter cannot be a T as it definitely lacks the left half of the top bar—it could be an E or an F; it is followed by a dot and a letter with a vertical bar (maybe an F), but nothing certain can be expanded from those remnants; in particular, one need not deduce that *suprascriptus* is here written with a double S. Line 23 shows no reliable letters.

¹⁹ For the fourth century see Mommsen (above, note 9) 104, note 3.

²⁰ "Hyginus," *De munitionibus castrorum* 39: *Viae autem abesse poterint, si pedatura strictior fuerit, inter cohortes praetorias et alas equitum, ideo quod, disciplinam militarem si observent ita ut dico ad suum quisque numerum coniuncti convenient.* (For the date and the text of "Hyginus" see now M. Lenoir, *Pseudo-Hygin, Des fortifications du camp* [Paris 1979].)

²¹ On the staffs of the national *numeri* see Domaszewski (above, note 4) 59 ff., M. Speidel, "Eine Weihinschrift aus Osterburken," *Fundberichte aus Baden-Württemberg* 6 (1981) 565–70. This is not to deny that there were cases where indeed regular or experienced soldiers were added to ethnic units (*CIL* XVI, 108; XIII, 6592) but that was done to

will have clarified the career of a legionary, one of the most detailed we have and the last one firmly dated in the principate.²²

strengthen the discipline, cf. H. T. Rowell, "The Honesta Missio from the Numeri of the Roman Imperial Army," *YCS* 6 (1939) 73–108, esp. p. 105; cf. Tacitus, *Agricola* 28.1.

²² Breeze (above, note 13) 263 ff.