

# MATRONIANUS, COMES ISAUURIAE: AN INSCRIPTION FROM THE SEA WALL OF ANEMURIUM

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IN THE SPRING of 1968 heavy seas exposed a portion of the sea wall at Anemurium almost down to what might be its Hellenistic level. Further excavation by Professor Leonard Smith in the summer of 1968<sup>1</sup> revealed an inscribed block no longer firmly embedded in the wall that might have been placed about 1.50 m. above the finely cut blocks forming the lowest courses of the wall. The block is of local limestone, 2.37 m. long, 0.26 m. high, and 0.66 m. thick, and has rather uneven edges and a very worn surface. In 1969, we placed it in an E-W direction to facilitate reading (see Fig. 1, which also shows the stretch of the sea wall where the block came to light).<sup>2</sup> On closer examination it was found that the present inscription is cut over an erased earlier one,<sup>3</sup> the traces of which make the reading of the later text difficult. Squeezes were of no great help because of the poor quality of the cutting; but a few sessions in different lights in front of the stone, along with the study of the excellent detailed photographs taken by Mrs G. Fittschen in the summer of 1970 (Figs. 2-5), produced the following text,<sup>4</sup> which leaves no doubt that the later inscription belongs to the sea wall where the block was found.

1. τείχος ἀμωμήτοιο ταγαῖς ἐτέλεσε τάχιστα
2. λαμπροτάτου κόμητος τοῦτο Ματρωνιάνου·
3. εὖσεβῆς ἀγαθὸς στρατιῆς τε τεταγμένος ἐσθλῆς
4. πρώτων Ἀρμενίων, ὧν κλέος ἐστὶ μέγα.

“This wall was completed at great speed on orders of the blameless Matronianus, the illustrious *Comes*. Pious and good, he was in command of the valiant troops of the First Armenians, whose fame is great.”

<sup>1</sup>See L. Smith, *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi* 17.2 (1968 [1969]).

<sup>2</sup>See E. Alföldi, *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi* 18.2 (1969 [1970]) 38.

<sup>3</sup>The block is certainly in secondary use; its shape and size suggest that it might have been originally a lintel block, such as can still be seen in Anemurium, e.g., in the baths II 11 B (E. Rosenbaum, G. Huber, S. Onurkan, *A Survey of Coastal Cities in Western Cilicia* [Ankara 1967] Pl. IV, 1), and in a similar building in Iotape with a dedicatory inscription to Trajan (*ibid.* Pl. XVIII, 2).

<sup>4</sup>The height of the letters varies from 44 to 55 mm. I should like to thank my colleagues working in Anemurium for checking my reading, especially Professor Hector Williams. My thanks are also due to Miss Joyce Reynolds, who checked my text and gave me valuable advice.

The text consists of two not very elegant distichs which show, however, no blatant metrical errors, the creticus at the beginning of line 3 not being very exceptional for epigrams of the time. The vocabulary and the grammar display archaisms usual in this sort of poetry; note, for instance, the epic genitive ἀωμήτοιο and the intransitive use of τελεῖν, for which LSJ<sup>9</sup> cites only two examples, from Aeschylus and Sophocles. ταγή in the sense of command, order, seems to be rare, but it does occur in other inscriptions.<sup>5</sup> It seems certain that στρατιή must be a poetical rendering of *legio* here; the dictionaries offer no parallels for this usage, but some passages in Josephus might be compared.<sup>6</sup>

Matronianus, *comes* and *vir clarissimus*, must be the person to whom a rescript by Gratianus, Valentinianus, and Theodosius, issued June 12, 382 in Constantinople, is addressed (Cod. Theod. 9.27.3). In this text it is stated that Natalis, a former *comes*, is ordered to return to the province under military guard to make restitutions for all that was stolen by himself and his underlings. The manuscripts term Matronianus *dux et praeses Sardiniae*. Seeck emended this reading to (*I*)*sauriae* on the grounds that, since the rescript is issued in Constantinople, an Eastern province must be meant and that the combination of military and civil power could only apply to Isauria, a view accepted by Ensslin.<sup>7</sup> If any proof for the correctness of Seeck's emendation was needed, our inscription now provides it.

In the Notitia Dignitatum (Or. 29.6) Isauria is *sub dispositione viri spectabilis comitis rei militaris . . . et praesidis*. But in an inscription from a city named Antiochia, the precise location of which is unknown but must be in the region of Isaurian Germanicopolis (Ermenek), a *comes et praeses Isauriae*, Bassidius Lauricius, is *v(ir) c(larissimus)*.<sup>8</sup>

The στρατιή πρῶτων Ἀρμενίων must refer to the *legio pseudocomitatensis I Armeniaca* listed in the Notitia Dignitatum (Or. 7.13.49) as *sub dispositione viri illustris magistri militum per orientem*. This legion belongs to the earliest *legiones pseudocomitatenses* and was, as D. Hoffmann has shown, formed shortly after 364, when, after Jovianus' treaty with

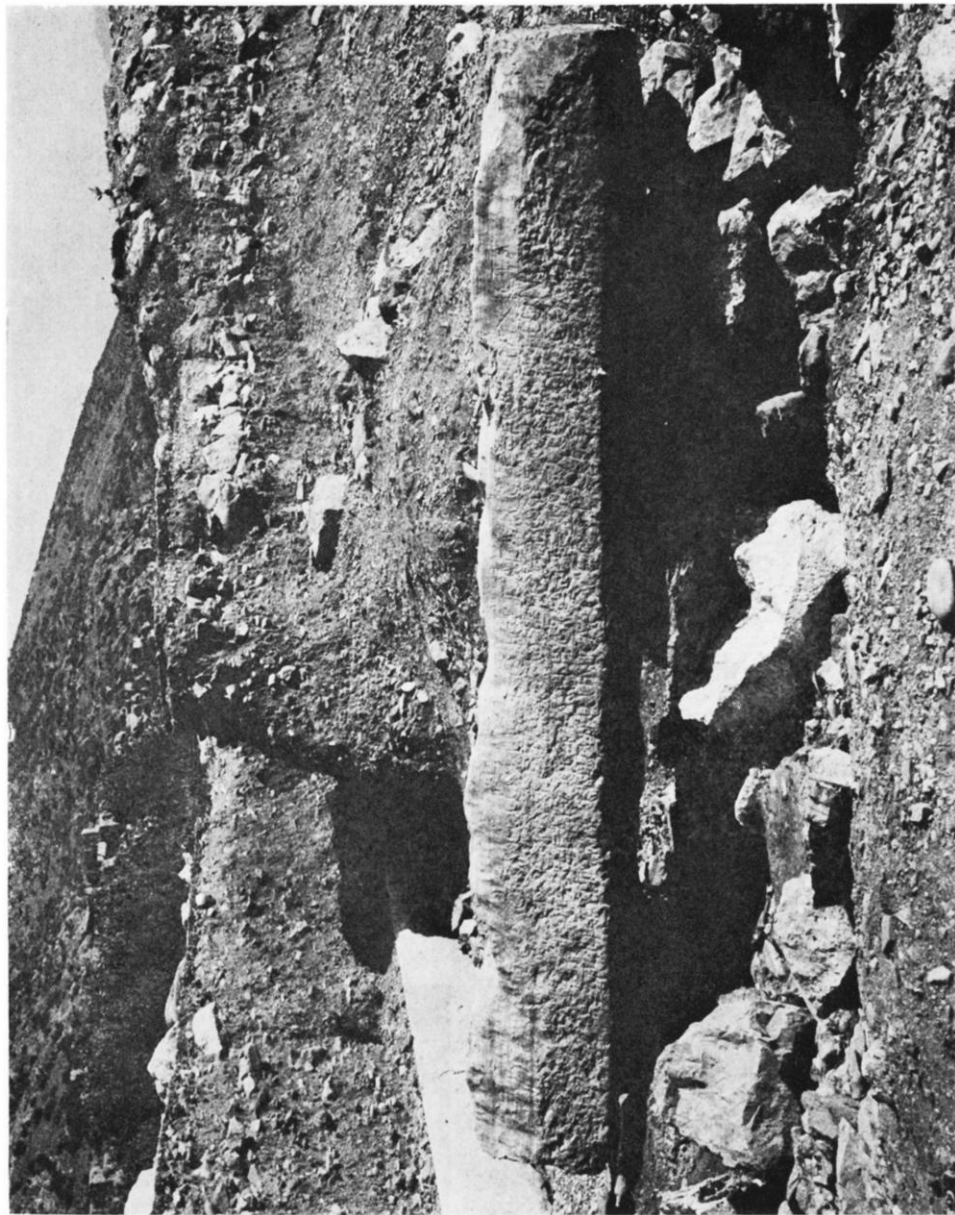
<sup>5</sup>An inscription from Branchidae of the 3rd c. A.D. is quoted in LSJ<sup>9</sup>; see also SEG 4.667; L. Robert, *Hellenica* (Limoges 1940–1965) 4.68, line 3. On epigrams commemorating the building of fortifications in the East see L. Robert, *ibid.* 60 f.

<sup>6</sup>*Bell. Iud.* 7.17, 18–20, 31: the *legio X*, one of the four used by Titus in the autumn of 70, is referred to as στρατιά. I owe these references to the kindness of Miss E. M. Smallwood.

<sup>7</sup>See Ensslin in *PW* 14.2.2309, No. 2, and A. H. M. Jones, *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge 1971) s.v. Matronianus. Cp. also Ensslin, *PW* 16.2.1799, s.v. Natalis No. 3. In general, see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602* (Oxford 1964) 608 and n. 2 (= 3.181 f.).

<sup>8</sup>*CIL* 3.6733. See Grossi-Gondi in de Ruggiero, *Dizionario Epigrafico* (Rome 1961) 2.519 f.; O. Seeck, *PW* 4.1, s.v. Comites, 656 f., No. 45.

FIGURE 1



ANEMURIUM, SEA WALL AND MATRONIANUS INSCRIPTION (photo E. Alföldi)



FIG. 2. ANEMURIUM, SEA WALL, MATRONIANUS INSCRIPTION, DETAIL 1



FIG. 3. ANEMURIUM, SEA WALL, MATRONIANUS INSCRIPTION, DETAIL 2



FIG. 4. ANEMURIUM, SEA WALL, MATRONIANUS INSCRIPTION, DETAIL 3

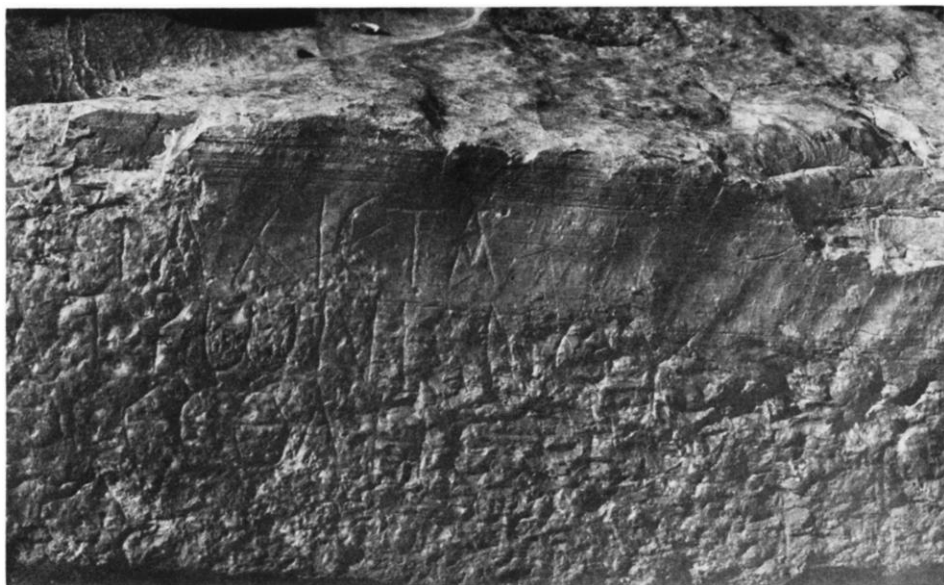


FIG. 5. ANEMURIUM, SEA WALL, MATRONIANUS INSCRIPTION, DETAIL 4

FIGURE 6

ΤΕΙΧΟCΑΜΩΛΗΤΟΙΟΤΑΓΑΙCΕΤΕΛΙCΙΧΙCΤΑ  
 ΛΑΜΠΡΟΤΑΤΟΥΚΟΜΗΤΟCΤΟΥΤΟΜΑΤΡΩΝΙΑΝΟΥ  
 ΕΥCΕΒΗC ΑΓΑΘΟCΤΡΑΤΗCΤΕCΤΕΤΑΓΜΕΝΟCΕCΘΑΗC  
 ΠΡΩΤΩΝΑΡΜΕΝΙΩΝΚΑΤΟCΕCΤΙΜΕΓΑ

Figure 6 is a transcription of the four photographs which are reproduced in Figs. 2-5. I have attempted to omit all traces of the earlier inscription. The very uneven spacing, height, and width of the letters are partly caused by the not quite complete erasure of the earlier text. The letter forms are on the whole consistent, only one alpha (line 3 in *σπαρτῆς*) being different from the rest. There is one certain case of HC in ligature (line 3, in *εὐσεβῆς*); in *κόμῃτος* (line 2) we probably have HT in ligature.

Line 1: *ἐρέλασε* would be the correct form, but the metre requires a long syllable, either *ἐρέλασσε* or *ἐρέλησε*—the latter being a faulty aorist. Since there are rather conspicuous traces of the earlier inscription

in this section of the stone it is difficult to establish whether we have HC in ligature or EC.

Line 2: *κόμῃτος*. It is not certain whether we have here HT in ligature or IT; either spelling would be acceptable.

Line 3: At first sight the stone appears to show CTPATHC THC, but on examination TE, or possibly TEC, with one superfluous letter can be seen—the later cutter's strokes are here again difficult to distinguish from those left from the earlier inscription. For help with the decipherment at this point I am grateful to Professor Santo Mazzarino.

Line 4: The traces of letters after *μέγα* clearly belong to the earlier erased inscription.

Shapur II, the defence of the kingdom of Armenia was abandoned, and the two Armenian frontier legions withdrawn from their stations and incorporated as *pseudocomitatenses* into the field army.<sup>9</sup> These legions no longer had permanent camps and were not regular units of the field army, but served as reinforcements.<sup>10</sup>

Our inscription shows that the First Armenians in or not long after 382 were placed under the command of the then *Comes Isauriae*, Matronianus, obviously for a special task. At this time, we know of no major military engagement in the south-east of Asia Minor, and thus we may safely assume that the reason for the presence of the First Armenians at Anemurium was one of the many raids by Isaurian brigands, of which a number are recorded during the 4th and early 5th centuries.<sup>11</sup> None, it is true, is mentioned in our literary sources for the years in which Matronianus was in office, but in view of the scanty nature of our evidence this is not surprising. The situation which prompted Matronianus to have the walls of Anemurium restored or re-built could have been similar to that in which one of his predecessors, the *Comes Castrius*, found himself in 353 in Seleucia on the Calycadnus, the capital city of the province of Isauria. Ammianus Marcellinus' vivid description (14.2.14 ff.) of this event gives us a very good idea of an Isaurian attack. The surrounding country-side was totally abandoned to the raiders, who were even allowed to seize the ships that brought the food supplies up the river, and any soldier eager to fight was called back into the safety of the city by the commanders. Castrius had three legions *bellicis sudoribus induratae* at his disposal, and Seleucia had a very strong fortress. But even so, these forces were not sufficient, and by order of the Caesar Gallus, Nebridius, the *Comes Orientis*, sent reinforcements (*contractis undique militaribus copiis ad eximendam periculo civitatem amplam et opportunam studio properabat ingenti*). At the time of Matronianus, only two legions were stationed in Isauria, and Anemurium was a far more vulnerable city than Seleucia, being open to attack from the north and from the sea.

<sup>9</sup>D. Hoffmann, *Das spätrömische Bewegungsheer und die Notitia Dignitatum*. Epigraphische Studien 7 (Düsseldorf 1969) esp. 420 f., 423.

<sup>10</sup>D. Hoffmann, *op. cit.* 424; on the nature of the *legiones pseudocomitatenses* see 405 ff.

<sup>11</sup>On Isaurian raids see, e.g., A. H. M. Jones, *The Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford 1971) 212 f. (in the 4th c.: 353, 359, 368); *id.*, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602* (Oxford 1964) 25, 116, 192; on the particularly serious and widespread Isaurian troubles under Arcadius (404–408) see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire, 284–602* (Oxford 1964) 192; E. Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire* (édition française par Jean-Remy Palanque) (Amsterdam 1968) 1.238, 2.545, n. 99; O. Seeck, *PW* 2.1151. See also J. Rougé, "L'Histoire Auguste et l'Isaurie au IV<sup>e</sup> siècle," *REA* 68 (1966) 282–315, esp. 292 ff., 296 ff., 305 (*Metronianus* is obviously a misprint), 309 (our inscription shows that Matronianus had the title of *comes*).

It is, of course, also possible that Matronianus had the First Armenians brought to Anemurium in order to help rebuild the defenses of the city after possible damage from previous raids, that is, as a prophylactic measure: the threat of the Isaurian brigands must have been always present in his time.

Our excavations in some areas of the civic centre of the city of Anemurium have shown that some public buildings underwent alterations towards the end of the 4th or early in the 5th century. It is not certain whether these breaks in continuity are contemporary with the Matronianus inscription; they could also have been caused by the very extensive Isaurian raids in the first decade of the 5th century. But new defenses were obviously needed towards the end of the 4th century.

The new inscription from the sea wall of Anemurium is of importance beyond the boundaries of that city. It provides the first epigraphic evidence for the person and rank of Matronianus, and it throws some further light on the functions of the *legio pseudocomitatensis I Armeniaca*. Moreover, it is a welcome addition to our extremely meagre sources for the history of those troubled times in the eastern Mediterranean regions.

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