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Initiates in the Samothracian Mysteries, September 4, 100 B.C

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KEVIN CLINTON

Initiates in the Samothracian Mysteries,
September 4, 100 B.C.

The following document was discovered in 1984 by D. MATSAS at the site Papa-Vounos, on the southwestern shore of Samothrace, not far from Mikro Vouni, i.e. on the opposite side of the island from its original location in the Sanctuary of the Theoi Megaloi.¹

Stele of white marble preserved on all sides except above; its back is rough-picked; the tenon for anchoring the stele to a base is preserved below. There is a sharp taper from top to bottom. Now located in the Archaeological Museum of Samothrace (Plate 1). H. 0.505 m. (excluding tenon), W. 0.29 m. (line 1), 0.34 m. (last line), Th. ca. 0.07 m. H. of letters, 0.032–0.038 m. (line 2), 0.028–0.032 (lines 3–10), 0.032–0.036 (B).

4 Sept., a. 100 a.

A

[------] , ,

M. · Fannius · M. · f.

Cor(nelia) vac. praef(ectus)

L. · Tullius · M. · f.

5 *Cor(nelia) vac. praif(ectus)*

P. · Petellius · Q. · f.

Norba v eq(ues)

¹ I am deeply grateful to D. MATSAS for bringing this important document to my attention and to D. TRIANTAPHYLLOS, the head of the 19th Ephoreia of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities, for permission to publish it. E. BADIAN provided much helpful criticism and eliminated several errors; I am grateful also to T. C. BRENNAN and the editors of *Chiron* for their comments. The errors that remain of course are my own responsibility. The following special abbreviation is used: Samothrace 2.1 = P. M. FRASER, *Samothrace, Excavations Conducted by the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University 2.1, The Inscriptions on Stone*, Princeton 1960.

- P. · Gadienus · P. · f.*
Clu(stumina) vvv eq(ues)
 10 *C. · Menenius · C. · f. · Ar(nensi)*
 Σικελὸς vvv Καταναῖος
 Ἀρτεμίδωρος Πανκράτου
L. · Valer(io) · C. · Mar(io) · cos. · pr(idie) · n(onas) Sept.

B

[---]ς vvv *A. · Claudius · C. · f. · Mass°*

Epigraphical Commentary

In addition to the inscription on the front face (A), one line is inscribed vertically on the right side (B). Nearly all Latin words and abbreviations are separated by a mid-line dot or a vacant space.

A, line 1: Of the final letter the lower part of a vertical stroke is preserved, almost directly above the vertical stroke of the final F in the next line. Of the preceding letter the very bottom of a vertical stroke is preserved, centered over the M in the following line; it seems too distant from the next letter to be an I followed by an F (cf. IF in line 5). The space seems too narrow to contain PR. (The narrow R at the end of line 10 is the result of crowding, but there is no reason to assume similar crowding in this line, which presumably holds only the tribal affiliation and a title.)

A, lines 11–12 appear to have been carved by a different hand.

A, line 13 seems to be by the same hand that carved the rest of the Latin text, but its uneven character suggests that it may have been inscribed after the stele had already been set in its base.

B, line 1: The first two letters of the cognomen, MA, are in ligature, as M. WÖRRLE pointed out. I initially took the first letter as a lambda, carved by mistake instead of an L, since the second oblique stroke does not touch the next, and there is no sign at this point that the cutter was concerned about lack of space. It is also conceivable, since there is chiseling within the first two strokes, that the cutter carved two A's by mistake and upon noticing this removed the cross-bar from the first one. The subscript dot under M indicates the ambiguity. The final O is very small, obviously because the cutter had run out of space.

Commentary

Lists of foreigners in Samothrace are generally of initiates or *theoroi*. In this list, where the heading is missing, the Romans, obviously from Italy, are surely not

theoroi but initiates, *mystae pii* (as the heading must approximately have read), like so many others attested in lists at the sanctuary.²

The consular year of L. Valerius and C. Marius and the day of the month (pr. n. Sept.), inscribed in line 13, give us the precise date on which these men were initiated: September 4, 100 B.C. (It was presumably shortly thereafter that the inscription was cut and set up.) It is the earliest securely dated list of Roman initiates in Samothrace.³ In a document dated by consuls to 113 B.C. the list is missing.⁴

It has been assumed by some scholars that from the first century on it was customary for the Roman governor of Macedonia or members of his staff to be initiated, but the evidence is not sufficiently abundant to make this more than a hypothesis.⁵ What is clear is that towards the end of the second century the sanctuary was beginning to receive a substantial number of Romans seeking initiation, both private citizens and officials.⁶ It was at this time too that the participation of Romans in the Eleusinian Mysteries is first attested, and as at Samothrace, their fondness for these Mysteries lasted essentially for the rest of the known history of the cult.⁷ The present document, with the names of two *praefecti*, offers another example of the phenomenon, in this case a group of soldiers. Most interesting, though, is the light that the document sheds on the activities of Romans returning from the campaign of M. Antonius against the Cilician pirates.

The date allows us to identify L. Tullius M. f. Cor(nelia) (lines 4–5) as the uncle of Cicero.⁸ He accompanied M. Antonius, the orator and grandfather of

² On Romans at the sanctuary see S. G. COLE, *Theoi Megaloi: the Cult of the Great Gods at Samothrace*, Leiden 1984, 87–103; eadem, *The Mysteries of Samothrace during the Roman Period*, ANRW II 18.2, Berlin 1989, 1579–1588.

³ Samothrace 2.1 25 may be earlier, but its date is not certain (cf. COLE, ANRW II 18.2, 1581, but the name seems most probably L. Iu(u)entius); the same is true of other lists, e.g., nos. 26–29.

⁴ CIL III suppl. 7367, copied by Cyriacus of Ancona.

⁵ So, e.g., FRASER, *Samothrace* 2.1, pp. 15–16, with bibliography. COLE, *Theoi Megaloi*, 90–92; ANRW II 18.2, 1581–1585, does not make a similar generalization, preferring to regard Roman officials in Macedonia as «following the precedent set by the Macedonian royal families who had earlier patronized and supported the sanctuary.» But it is not at all clear that they were consciously following the practice of the royal families. The documents adduced by FRASER and COLE attest only four Roman governors or administrators of Macedonia over a period of approximately three centuries (late second century B.C. to late second century A.D.) who were certainly or very probably initiates: L. Julius Caesar (proconsul), P. Sextius Lippinus Tarquitianus (quaestor), Q. Planius Sardus Varius Ambibulus (proconsul), P. Antipa[. . .]ristis (proconsul).

⁶ COLE, *op. cit.* 93–97, gives the evidence for the late Republic.

⁷ For the late Republic and early Empire see K. CLINTON, *The Eleusinian Mysteries: Roman Initiates and Benefactors, Second Century B.C. to A.D. 207*, ANRW II 18.2, 1499–1539.

⁸ For the prosopography see F. MÜNZER, RE 7A1, 1939, cols. 822–823, s.v. Tullius (25).

Mark Antony, on his expedition against the Cilician pirates (Cic. De or. 2.2). Antonius departed for Cilicia in the year 102, as praetor with *imperium pro consule* (Livy, Per. 68; Obseq. 44; Cic. De Or. 1.82).⁹ After a successful campaign he returned in 100, in time for the consular elections for 99, which he won. During these elections he and his soldiers were stationed outside the city, presumably awaiting his triumph (Cic. Rab. p.r. 26; Plut. Pomp. 24.6; App. BC 1.32).¹⁰

From Cicero (De or. 2.2) we learn not only that L. Tullius Cicero went off to Cilicia with Antonius but also left Cilicia with him (*cum Antonio in Ciliciam profectus una decesserat*). Here *decesserat* should mean, as so often in the case of a magistrate, that Antonius withdrew from Cilicia and returned to Rome.¹¹ The Samothracian list adds the fact that Lucius Cicero stopped at Samothrace during the return trip, and that he was there by September 4. Although it is epigraphically possible that the name of M. Antonius preceded that of M. Fannius in this document, it is far from certain. If he was among this group of initiates, we would have to assume that he took leave of his fleet, as he did on the eastward journey, when he proceeded to Side and left the fleet under the command of Hirrus.¹² Cicero's use of *decesserat*, taken by itself, need mean only that his uncle left Cilicia with Antonius, not that he accompanied him on the entire journey back to Rome. The context in which it was used, however, suggests that on this particular trip Antonius must have accompanied Cicero for at least a good part of the way back to Rome. It seems clear that the clause *cum Antonio in Ciliciam profectus una decesserat* indicates more than merely departing together from Cilicia. The combination of *profectus* and *decesserat* suggests that they not only went to Cilicia together but also returned together.¹³

⁹ On M. Antonius see E. KLEBS, RE 1.2, 1894, cols. 2590–2594, s.v. Antonius (28); T. R. S. BROUGHTON, TAPA 77, 1946, The Command of M. Antonius in Cilicia, 35–40; idem, The Magistrates of the Roman Republic I, American Philological Association 1952, 568–569 (hereafter, MRR); II, 1952, 1; III, 1986, 19, with bibliography; J.-L. FERRARY, Recherches sur la législation de Saturninus et de Glaucia, MEFRA 89, 1977, 624–627, 639–643, responding to A. N. SHERWIN-WHITE, Rome, Pamphylia and Cilicia, JRS 66, 1976, 1–14; E. BADIEN, The Death of Saturninus, Chiron 14, 1984, 122–124.

¹⁰ P. DE SOUZA, Piracy in the Greco-Roman World, London 1999, 102–110, reviews the campaign of M. Antonius and follows FERRARY in arguing that Antonius returned to Rome in 102 and celebrated his triumph in 101. However, the fact that Antonius was stationed outside Rome with his soldiers in 100 (*cum praesidio*, Cic. Rab. p. r. 26), seems to be best explained by the assumption that he was awaiting his triumph. The current document confirms that Antonius' campaign ended in 100: L. Tullius, who returned with him, was still in the East on September 4, 100, with the title of *praefectus*, which he undoubtedly held during the campaign under Antonius.

¹¹ TLL s.v. decedo II.b.α; cf. n. 14 below.

¹² The journey to Side: ILLRP 1.342, I Side I, TEp 35; cf. DE SOUZA, op. cit. 104–107.

¹³ In the Loeb edition of De Oratore, London 1942, 199, E. W. SUTTON translates: «went out to Cilicia with him, and was with him when he left his province for home»; in the Budé edition, E. COURBAUD, Cicéron, De l'Orateur II, Paris 1959: «parti en Cilicie avec Antoine, en était revenue avec lui.»

The clause would be pointless if Cicero intended to say no more than that they went to Cilicia together but on the return journey immediately went their separate ways. The point he makes here is that the association of his uncle and Antonius was quite close – a closeness that is implied again a few sentences later, when he refers to his uncle's familiarity with Antonius' activities at Athens and Rhodes (*ibid.* 2.3).¹⁴ It seems therefore that *una decesserat* is meant to imply that Lucius accompanied Antonius at least for a significant portion of the return journey, if not for the entire journey; and so it may be rash to preclude the possibility that Antonius was among the initiates in our list. Against it, as Professor BADIAN has pointed out (*per litt.*), is the fact that Antonius would most likely have been eager to reach Rome as quickly as possible so that he would arrive sufficiently in advance of the elections (whose date he would not know) to prepare his candidacy. The presence of Antonius in this list remains at best only a possibility.

The most therefore that we can certainly infer from this list is that the campaign in Cilicia was over at least as early as sometime in late August, and that at least some of the military staff decided to do some touring before returning to Rome, in the course of which they had themselves initiated and perhaps took the opportunity to offer thanks for their success to the Theoi Megaloi, gods who were famous for helping men at sea. After Samothrace they might have taken the Via Egnatia on their way back to Rome.

The date of this document has some bearing on the consular elections. Appian, BC 1.32, described the first day of the elections for 99, i.e. the day Antonius was elected, as the day before the beginning of the tribunician year, namely December 9. E. BADIAN and others have persuasively argued that this is impossible: the elections must have occurred earlier, probably on a warm day in October (*maximo aestu*, according to *De viris illustribus* 73.10).¹⁵ The information provided by the present document is not inconsistent with this earlier date. If members of Antonius' staff were in Samothrace on September 4, the campaign in Cilicia was finished at least a week earlier, and so Antonius could easily have arrived in Rome about six weeks later, whether he went to Samothrace or not. Thus the consular elections could have been held in the Roman month of

¹⁴ G. PORTA, *M. Tullio Cicerone, De Oratore, Liber Secundus*, Florence 1970, 6, comments on *una decesserat*: «cioè lo zio Lucio non solo era partito nel 102 con Antonio per la Cilicia . . . , ma anche ne era ritornato insieme con lui; perciò, data la lunga e ininterrotta consuetudine con Antonio, era in grado di offrire valida testimonianza della sua cultura. *Decedere* (scil. *e provincia*) è espressione tecnica per la cessione dei poteri e il rimpatrio di un promagistrato uscente da una provincia.» Similarly, A. D. LEEMAN and H. PINKSTER, *M. Tullius Cicero, De Oratore Libri III 2*, Heidelberg 1985, 191, ad loc.: «. . . dafür konnte L. Cicero als Cic.s Zeuge auftreten (2.3), zumal er die ganze Reise von Anfang bis Ende mitgemacht hatte; *decedere* bezeichnet die Rückkehr des Magistrats aus einer Provinz . . . »

¹⁵ BADIAN, *op. cit.* (n. 9) 101–106; cf. BROUGHTON, *MRR* III, 21–23.

October. The calendar is thought to have been more or less in harmony with the seasonal year in this period.¹⁶

The unqualified title *praefectus* for M. Fannius and L. Tullius suggests that they may have been given various responsibilities by Antonius, as was not uncommon for commanders to do in this period.¹⁷

The appearance here of *equites* is noteworthy. These men are not actual cavalymen; the title should rather indicate that they belonged to the equestrian order.¹⁸ They presumably were members of Antonius' staff. The title occurs only rarely in Republican inscriptions. In 1966 NICOLET was able to adduce only four examples;¹⁹ W. ECK added two more;²⁰ and another can be added from Collatia.²¹ By an odd coincidence Samothrace provides the most examples: in addition to the present two, two more appear in a fragmentary list of initiates set up perhaps around the same time or earlier.²²

A, line 1: In this part of the list, as in lines 2–9, we should expect the name of a tribe and a title. The traces here would be compatible with *pra]it(or)*, but the abbreviation *praet/prait(or)* is not attested at this early date.

A, lines 2–3: M. Fannius is evidently to be identified with the M. Fannius who was praetor in 80 B.C. and plebeian aedile (according to CRAWFORD's and BROUGHTON's assignment) in 86.²³

¹⁶ Cf. A. E. SAMUEL, *Greek and Roman Chronology: Calendars and Years in Classical Antiquity*, Munich 1972, 162–163.

¹⁷ See J. SUOLAHTI, *The Junior Officers of the Roman Army in the Republican Period*, Helsinki 1955, 200–210.

¹⁸ On Roman cavalry around this time see C. NICOLET, *L'Ordre équestre à l'époque républicaine (312–43 av. J.-C.) I–II*, Paris 1966–74; cf. L. KEPPIE, *The Making of the Roman Army*, Totowa 1984, 79; E. BADIAN, *OCD*³, s.v. *equites*, 5550–5551.

¹⁹ NICOLET, *op. cit.* I 243–245.

²⁰ *Iscrizioni nuove dall'Etruria meridionale*, *Epigraphica* 41, 1979, 108–111, no. 16: *C. Rosius C. f. Arn(ensi) eq(ues)*. *Ibid.* 111, n. 32: *Cn. Tituleius C. f. Fab(ia) eques* (CIL IX 3928, Alba Fucens).

²¹ L. Quilici, *Forma Italiae, regio I 10*, Rome 1974, 725, no. 642, col. 2 = AE 1974, no. 198: *C. Agrius C. f. eq(ues)*. Cf. NICOLET, *op. cit.* II 768–769, no. 14, *C. Agrius*, a contemporary of Varro.

²² E. K. SKARLATIDOU, *Κατάλογος μυστών και εποπτών από τη Σαμοθράκη*, *Horos* 8, 1990–91, 153–172: [- -] *Vol(tinia) eq(ues)* and [.] *Caninius C. f. eq(ues) Sab(atina)*. (Whether he is related to the C. Caninius C. f. who was *praetor urbanus* «before the time of Sulla» [BROUGHTON, MRR II, 463; III, 49] is unclear.) SKARLATIDOU dates this list, inscribed on the left side of the stele, after 67 or 61, the date which she assigned to the list on the right side; but it is not inconceivable that the left side was inscribed before the right, and in that case the *terminus post quem* is around the middle of the second century, i.e. the approximate *terminus post quem* of the main list on the face of the stele.

²³ BROUGHTON, MRR III, 90; M. H. CRAWFORD, *Roman Republican Coinage I*, Cambridge 1975, 367, no. 151.

A, lines 4–5: On L. Tullius see above. He evidently married shortly after his return from Cilicia in 100, but did not live long after the birth of his son Lucius.²⁴ The son was very close to his cousins, the brothers Marcus and Quintus, and went with them to Athens in 79 to complete his education.²⁵ Like his father, he too died at an early age, in 68.

A, lines 6–7: P. Petellius omitted his tribal affiliation and gave instead the name of his city of origin. Caesar, BC 3.71.1 provides a good example of the practice: . . . *notos equites Romanos Tuticanum Gallum senatoris filium, C. Felginatem Placentia, A. Granium Puteolis, M. Sacrativirum Capua*.²⁶ It is curious, however, that Petellius, in listing his city instead of his tribe, departed from the practice of the other Roman citizens in this list.

This gentilicium in -ellius, as opposed to -il(l)ius, is very rare but probably merely a variant.²⁷

A, lines 8–9: Gadienus is to my knowledge an otherwise unattested gentilicium.²⁸

A, line 10: The gens Menenia was plebeian in this period.²⁹

A, lines 11–12: The form of line 11 appears to imitate ethnics heading sublists in lists of initiates, but it looks odd here with a sublist containing only one member. The vacant spaces in line 11 may also imitate the lines above that record tribal affiliation and title. Artemidoros son of Pankrates from Catane may have performed a function on board the Romans' ship.

A, Line 13: The order of the consuls is the reverse of the usual.³⁰

²⁴ Cf. MÜNZER, RE 7A1, 1939, cols. 822–823, s.v. Tullius (25).

²⁵ Cf. MÜNZER, *ibid.*, cols. 823–824, s.v. Tullius (26).

²⁶ I am grateful to Prof. BADIAN for drawing my attention to this passage.

²⁷ Examples known to me, all from the empire: Petellia Prisca, AE 1977, no. 174; Petellius Fortunatus, CIL VI 1056, left, II, line 89; M. Petell(ius) Felix, CIL VI 1057, left, VI, line 62. This spelling is listed by W. SCHULZE, *Zur Geschichte lateinischer Eigennamen*, Göttingen 1964, 443, as a variant of Petil(l)ius. The editor of AE 1977, 174, wrongly believed that Petil(l)ius was related to Petelia in Bruttium, inappropriately citing H. G. PFLAUM, BSAF 1970, 265–272 (= *La Gaule et l'Empire romain, Scripta Varia II*, Paris 1981, 4–11), on the cognomen Petelinus as ethnic. Professor BADIAN notes (per litt.) the antiquity of Petillius as a Latin name: cf. *lucus Petelinus*, just outside the *pomerium* of Rome, and the Petillii who supplied a consul in 176 (Q. Petillius; BROUGHTON, MRR I, 400).

²⁸ H. SOLIN – O. SALOMIES, *Repertorium nominum gentilium et cognominum Latinarum*, Hildesheim 1988, list only a Cadienus, CIL XI 389 (Ariminum). SCHULZE, *op. cit.* 148, cites a Gaudiemus, CIL VI 2912 (= XI 156*, no. 7).

²⁹ MÜNZER, RE 15.1, 1931, col. 838, s.v. Menenius.

³⁰ A. DEGRASSI, *InscrIt XIII* 1, 478–479; cf. E. BADIAN, *The Consuls, 179–49 BC*, *Chiron* 20, 1990, 387. Only Plin. 2.100 gives them in the order of our document. On the significance of the order of the consuls see L. R. TAYLOR – T. R. S. BROUGHTON, *The Order of the Two Consuls' Names in the Yearly Lists*, *MAAR* 19, 1949, 3–14.

The day of the month, if given, usually occurs at the head of a list of initiates. In the present list it was apparently added as an afterthought (see Epigraphical Commentary). The following lists preserve the day of the month:

- 1) Samothrace 2.1, no. 51: April 22, A.D. 116 (X K. Mai.).
- 2) Hesperia 34, 1965, p. 115, line 4: May 1, s. II–III (K. Mais).
- 3) IG XII 8 215, line 9: May 8–14, A.D. 65 ([(?)] Id[us] Maias).
- 4) BCH 86, 1962, pp. 278–9, no. 5, line 4: May (?) 12, A.D. 65 (IV Idu[s] - -).
- 5) IG XII 8 173, lines 1–2: June 3, 66 B.C. (A.D. III Non. Iunias).
- 6) Samothrace 2.1, no. 36, line 4: June 6, A.D. 19 (VIII Idus Iunias).
- 7) CIL III suppl. 12321, line 4: June 7, 48 B.C. (VII Idus Iun.).
- 8) Samothrace 2.1, no. 28, A, line 2: June 13 ([vv] Id. Iunieis).³¹
- 9) Samothrace 2.1, no. 34, line 4: June 20, 35 B.C. (A.D. XII K. Iul.).
- 10) IG XII 8 210, line 5: August 8, before 8 B.C. ([A.D.] VI Eid. Sex.).
- 11) Samothrace 2.1, no. 40, line 4: September 1, A.D. 66 or 77 (?) (K. Sept.).
- 12) IG XII 8 214, line 4: September 13, A.D. 14 (Idibus Septembr.).
- 13) Samothrace 2.1, no. 33, II, line 13: October 18, 46 B.C. (A.D. XV K. Nov.).
- 14) Samothrace 2.1, no. 53, line 5: November 9, A.D. 124 (V Idus Novembr.).

No discernible pattern emerges, except the obvious one that they occur during the time of year when the weather was most favorable for sailing.

B, line 1: The sigma is either the end of a name or μύστης εὐσεβῆ[ς] or, as in line 11, an ethnic. A. Claudius C. f. Masso is preferable to reading Lasso (see Epigraphical Commentary) and assuming a Greek cognomen, Λάσσων, which confused the cutter into starting it with a lambda. The cognomen Maso/Masso occurs among the Papirii in the third and second centuries B.C.³²

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³¹ FRASER read «. . . id», but there seems to be space for only two letters before «id»; surely nothing was inscribed here.

³² See the list in BROUGHTON, MRR II, p. 599.

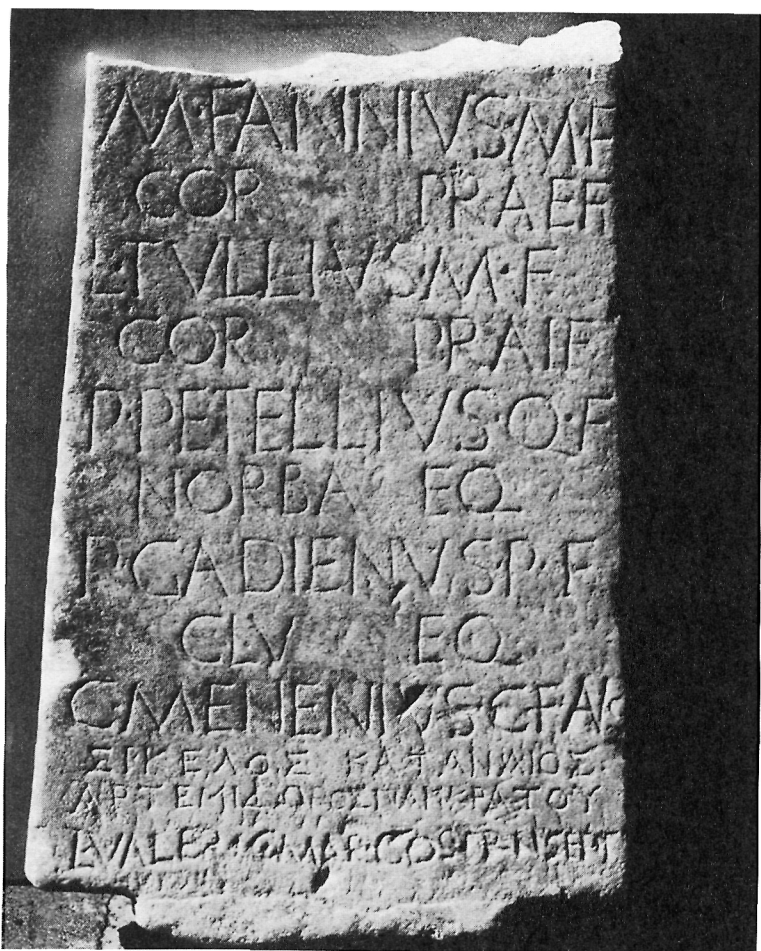


Abb. 1



Abb. 2

