

Language in the Private Life of Roman Soldiers in Taurica

RADOSŁAW KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI
ADAM ŁUKASZEWICZ

What language was spoken by Roman soldiers?

The answer to this question seems simple. The Roman troops spoke Latin! This is confirmed, among others, by an assemblage of surviving letters and their fragments from the fort of Vindolanda in Hadrian's Wall in Britain.¹ Among numerous inscriptions related to the army, which are found in territories of various provinces of the Empire, a majority are also Latin texts. However, Greek inscriptions also appear. This phenomenon is mostly noticeable in the eastern provinces. Inscriptions found in the area of the legionary fortress in Novae on the Lower Danube include both Latin and Greek texts.² An assemblage of letters, similar to that from Vindolanda, known from the fort of Krokodilô located in the Egyptian Eastern Desert, was written on ostraca in Greek.³ It is obviously possible to give further examples of the use of Greek or Latin.

It is, however, worth asking another question. What language was spoken by soldiers from the Roman garrisons in Crimea in their daily lives?

Chersonesos Taurica, situated in the Pontic borderlands of the *oikoumene*, was formally beyond the frontiers of the Roman Empire. The town was populated by Greeks who were

descendants of Doric settlers from Heraclea Pontica. In the Roman period, local people probably used only *koiné* in their daily lives. On the other hand, the decrees of local authorities continued to be written in the Doric dialect. Traces of the language of their ancestors can be seen in texts carved in stone as late as the 2nd century AD.⁴ Attachment to tradition must have been very important for the inhabitants, as more recent research indicates that the latest known legal act was written in Chersonesos in the Doric dialect as late as AD 174. The text was edited in a pure form of this dialect.⁵

In the first centuries of our era, the Greeks from Chersonesos (or at least the local elite) must have known Latin as well. Legal acts carved in stone mention persons holding prominent offices in the town. The *praenomina* and *nomina* of these persons demonstrate that they held Roman citizenship.⁶ Their knowledge of the Latin language can also be demonstrated by the way in which the correspondence between local authorities and the legate of the province of Moesia inferior was made available to the local population. Excerpts from letters were carved in stone and displayed to the public. It is remarkable that letters from Chersonesos were written in Greek and responses to them were sent from the Danube in Latin. Fragments of these letters were carved in their origi-

1 BIRLEY 1999; 2001; BOWMAN, THOMAS 1983; BOWMAN, THOMAS 1994; BOWMAN, THOMAS 2003; BOWMAN, THOMAS, TOMLIN 2010; 2011.

2 IGLNovae; KOLENDO 1999; DYCZEK, KOLENDO 2012; SARNOWSKI 2005; 2013; ŁAJTAR 2013.

3 CUVIGNY 2005.

4 SOLOMONIK 1983a: 74, no. 6.

5 ANTONOVA, JAJLENKO 1995: 86.

6 ANTONOVA, JAJLENKO 1995: 85–86.

nal languages.⁷ This demonstrates that at least a part of the Greek inhabitants of the town were bilingual. This is also indirect proof that both languages were known by representatives of the Roman garrison. This conclusion results from the fact that the correspondence concerned a dispute over the method of dividing taxes from prostitutes, waged between the authorities of Chersonesos and the Roman garrison which stationed in the town.

Although epigraphic sources yielded traces of the dispute in which the Roman soldiers were a party, it seems that this was a rather exceptional situation. The fact that the local community cared for maintaining as good relations with Rome as possible is confirmed by the afore-mentioned legal act from AD 174. This is a proxeny (admission to citizenship) for a Roman procurator sent from Lower Moesia — Titus Aurelius Calpurnianus Apollonides and his wife Paulina.⁸ It is certain that for similar reasons statues were earlier erected for legates: of Moesia — Sextus Vettulenus Cerialis (74/75 – 78/79) and of Lower Moesia — Sextus Octavius Fronto (89/90 – 92/93).⁹ Material traces of the presence of the Roman army may also suggest that garrisons and posts were deployed beyond areas managed by the *Chersonites*. The town's citadel may have been a place where a part of the Roman contingent was stationed. This area was in all probability not built-up before. This could prove that the area was not intensively used by the inhabitants of Chersonesos before the arrival of the Romans.¹⁰ Beyond the town's walls Roman posts were located in the prominence of Sapun Ridge and in the peripheries of Balaklava.¹¹

In each case the occupied area was not previously managed by the Greek community or it bore minimal traces of earlier settlement. This is probably a material vestige of a conscious avoidance of conflicts by allied troops arriving from the Danube.

There is also another example of the supposed Roman efforts to maintain the best possible relations with the Greek population of Chersonesos. It should be noted that one of the top-ranking officers, who at least periodically were stationed in Chersonesos or Balaklava, included Publius Veditus Antoninus, a tribune of the First Italic Legion. He came from a well-known Ephesus family.¹² Another tribune who came from the First Italic Legion was L. Arrius Alcibiades, who is attested in inscriptions from Chersonesos and Balaklava-Kadykovka.¹³ It is worth noticing that a partially preserved inscription from Balaklava which commemorates this officer was written in Greek.¹⁴ The afore-mentioned procurator Titus Aurelius Calpurnianus Apollonides was also in all probability of Greek origin. He may have come from Heraclea Pontica – the metropolis of Chersonesos.¹⁵

A selection of officers with Greek roots as commanders of *vexillationes* sent to Greek *poleis* in Scythia and Taurida may be yet another piece of evidence of the care introduced in maintaining good relations with the local community.

Inscriptions found on altars erected to Nemesis, excavated near the theatre in Chersonesos, may be proof of the co-existence of both communities (the Roman troops and Greeks from Chersonesos), and indirectly for the Romanisation of the latter group. Two known dedications to the afore-mentioned deity come from the same area, which may imply that a temple existed there in the Roman period.¹⁶ One of these altars was founded by a non-commissioned officer of the Eleventh

7 IOSPE I² 404 = SOLOMONIK 1983b: 20–27, no. 1, I–VI.

8 ANTONOVA, JAJLENKO 1995.

9 IOSPE I² 421; IOSPE I² 422.

10 Cf. KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI 2001: 62.

11 KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI 2008; KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI, SAVELĀ 2011; KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI, SAVELĀ 2012; KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI, SAVELĀ 2013; KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI, SAVELĀ 2014; SARNOWSKI, SAVELĀ, KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI 2002; 2007; WRÓBEL, PIĄTKOWSKA-MAŁECKA, KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI 2008.

12 IOSPE I² 562; SARNOWSKI 2000a: 204, 210.

13 IOSPE I² 404; SOLOMONIK 1974: no. 2.

14 SAVELJA, SARNOWSKI 2000b.

15 ANTONOVA, JAJLENKO 1995: 83.

16 SOLOMONIK 1983a: 74.

Claudian Legion and it bears a Latin inscription.¹⁷ The other altar erected to Nemesis bears a Greek inscription.¹⁸

This selection of examples concerns the public sphere and it does not bring us any closer to an answer to the question stated at the beginning: what language was used by Roman soldiers in garrisons in Crimea in their daily life? It is obviously known that *vexillationes* came from Lower Moesian legions. Based on this, one can assume a considerable share of recruits/soldiers of Greek origin or Hellenised Thracians. However, it is worth considering what the actual situation was.

Known tombstones of soldiers from Chersonesos and Balaklava bear Latin inscriptions, no matter whether they commemorated legionaries,¹⁹ or soldiers from auxiliary units.²⁰ In some cases it was not possible to determine the detachment of the buried soldier, but the language used was the same Latin.²¹ Exclusively only Latin inscriptions were also found on altars, bases of statues and other parts of the furnishing in the temple of Jupiter Dolichenus in Balaklava.²² It is worth stressing that this temple was erected *extra muros* for the private needs of soldiers from the local garrison. This context may have inclined founders and craftsmen to use Greek as this was their native language.

We receive a different image if we include the so-called votive reliefs made of marble, limestone, and clay into our analysis. Finds from this category made from marble, limestone or clay are not related to local cults and to the religious tradition of Chersonesos. These are a material trace of cults known from Roman provinces in the Balkans.²³ Finds of reliefs are known, among others, from

Chersonesos.²⁴ However, only four of them come from the citadel and its closest vicinity, that is, from the context in which they may be associated with the Roman army. The majority of wholly preserved finds and their fragments were found in various parts of the town (10 items). Two finds come from the territory of the *chora* of Chersonesos in the Heracleian Peninsula, where it would be difficult to find evidence of the Roman army's presence.²⁵ For the sake of comparison, it is worth stressing that, e.g., altars with Latin inscriptions are known almost exclusively from the citadel and its direct vicinity.²⁶

Votive reliefs were also discovered in the course of excavations of the Roman fort in Cape Ay-Todor, where they are proof for the stationing of Roman troops. From hitherto research no less than 16 reliefs and their fragments are known.²⁷ At least 14 of them were made from marble, which must have been imported, in all probability as ready products. On two reliefs, parts of Latin inscriptions have survived.²⁸ One of these inscriptions mentions a Greek-sounding female name: “[Parthe]nope”. On the other hand, one relief with a Greek inscription mentions a man whose *nomen* and *cognomen* are undoubtedly of Roman origin “Αύρ(ήλιος) Ίουλ(ιανός)”.²⁹

Some dozen fragments of similar reliefs, almost exclusively marble ones, were also discovered in the course of examinations of a supposed temple in the Saki Spit (near present-day Eupatoria). On at least seven finds from this assemblage, fragments of Greek inscriptions have survived, while on one relief a Latin inscription may have been engraved.³⁰

17 SOLOMONIK 1964: no. 59 = SOLOMONIK 1983b: no. 10.

18 SOLOMONIK 1973: no. 126.

19 SOLOMONIK 1983b: nos. 14, 20, 21, 29, 31, 32.

20 SOLOMONIK 1983b: nos. 18, 19, 33, 34, 39; ZUBAR, ANTONOVA, SAVELJA 1991 = SAVELJA, SARNOWSKI 2000.

21 SOLOMONIK 1983b: nos. 17, 26, 28, 40, 41, 44, 46.

22 SARNOWSKI, SAVELJA 2000.

23 Cf. e.g. SCORPAN 1967.

24 ŠČEGLOV 1969.

25 Cf. SARNOWSKI, KOVALEVSKAJA 2004.

26 SOLOMONIK 1983b: nos. 6, 7, 9, 11, 12.

27 ROSTOVCEV 1911; SOLOMONIK 1965: 99–102; NOVYCHENKOVA-LUKYCHOVA: 2014.

28 ROSTOVCEV 1911: 42; SOLOMONIK 1965: 99–102.

29 ROSTOVCEV 1911: 13.

30 LANCOV 1999; 2003: 26–32.

Votive reliefs were portable images of deities which were brought to Taurica in all probability by Roman soldiers or civilians coming from Balkan provinces. The appearance of Greek inscriptions in this group of portable finds may imply that persons who used (or founded?) at least part of these reliefs may have had Greek roots. This, however, cannot be considered to be absolutely certain.

One relief from the Saki Spit seems to be a marble front part of a tombstone.³¹ An inscription on another relief from the same site may have been made secondarily and needs not be related to the original function of the artefact.³² The secondary nature of an inscription on one of the tablets from Chersonesos was also pointed out by Ščeglov. This scholar suggested that the inscription was engraved when the tablet was later used as part of a grave stela.³³

It seems that new information concerning the discussed assemblage of finds from Crimea may be yielded by analyses of stone and clay used for their manufacture. If it turns out that the mentioned raw materials come from the Balkan provinces, the connection between reliefs from different contexts to the Roman army will be more probable. A majority of depictions were made from marble. No types of this raw material occur in Crimea.³⁴ It would be recommended to identify the deposits from which the stone originated. Reliefs made from clay should undergo a physicochemical analysis, thanks to which it will be possible to identify the places where also this raw material was obtained. Similar analyses, carried out in the case of roofing tiles with military stamps from Crimea, demonstrated that at least part of the building ceramics for the needs of Roman garrisons were made locally.³⁵

Discoveries concerning literacy and the used language are known from Farm 150/227.³⁶ Greek *dipinti* of ΒΑΣΙΛΑ, ΒΑΣ and ΒΑ on four fragments of amphorae discovered there were interpreted as a record of the name of the estate's owner (Basilides).³⁷ On the other hand, roofing tiles used in the roof of this farm in all probability came from the brickyard of a Roman garrison. Stamps on regular finds were atypical, but they were written with Latin letters.³⁸

One should also mention yet another interesting find which testifies to the use of Greek in daily life by Roman soldiers who travelled from the Danube to Crimea or further to the east around the mid-3rd century AD. This is the so-called shield from Dura.³⁹ Some sort of travelling instructions were written on a fragment of leather from the covering of this shield. The preserved fragment contains hints concerning the route from the Danube to Crimea.⁴⁰ The Greek text mentions, among others, towns situated on the southern coast of Pontus: Tyras, Borysthenes (Olbia) and Chersonesos.

All the afore-mentioned inscriptions were not made for the public sphere; however, the texts on tombstones, votive reliefs, and amphorae were addressed to broader groups of people. In each case, an attempt at unequivocally identifying the language used by a given person in one's daily life raises some doubts. However, it seems that a find from the excavations at Balaklava in 2012 does not have such shortcomings.

It is a fragment of clay plaster covering the wall in a supposed hypocaust cellar.⁴¹ An inscription was engraved in raw clay and then it underwent secondary firing. The context allows for dating

³¹ Cf. LANCOV 1999: fig. 2–3.

³² Cf. LANCOV 1999: fig. 4–5.

³³ ŠČEGLOV 1969: 140.

³⁴ ŠČEGLOV 1969: 160.

³⁵ Cf. SARNOWSKI 2006.

³⁶ KUZISČIN, IVANČIK 1998.

³⁷ KUZISČIN, IVANČIK 1998: 212, fig. 4, 5.

³⁸ SAPRYKIN 1981; KUZISČIN, IVANČIK 1998: 213, fig. 7, 8; SARNOWSKI T., KOVALEVSKAJA 2004: 41, 47; SARNOWSKI 2006: 96.

³⁹ CUMONT 1926: 323–337; REBUFFAT 1986.

⁴⁰ GAWROŃSKI 2011.

⁴¹ KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI, SVELĀ 2013: 127–131, figs. 8: 3, 9: 3, 14.



Fig. 1. Fragment of the secondarily-fired clay plaster discovered in the course of excavations of the Roman fort in Balaklava-Kadykovka (Crimea, Ukraine). The letters had been engraved in raw clay before it underwent firing. The find comes from the interior of a supposed hypocaust cellar (photo by M. Baranowski).

Рис. 1. Фрагмент вторично пережженной глиняной штукатурки, открытой во время раскопок остатков римского форта в Балаклаве-Кадьковке (Крым, Украина). Буквы нацарапаны в сырой глине перед ее обжигом. Находка происходит из внутренней части предполагаемого гипocausta (Фот. М. Baranowski).

this find to the Severan period and for relating it to the latest building phase of the Roman fort which existed in Balaklava (Phase 3). The inscription was hand-written in clay, in a room which later became an inaccessible cellar. The text must have originated at the time of construction and was a kind of personal remembrance. The mentioned circumstances allow for the assumption that the person who made the inscription used

his mother tongue for private purposes. Therefore, it is for the first time in the history research on the presence of the Roman army in Crimea that a common soldier from a garrison located *extra fines Imperii* has spoken to us.

Four deeply engraved Greek letters have survived on the mentioned piece of clay (**Fig. 1**):

ΠΗΘΑ[

In all probability, the first letter from the left is the beginning of the word. The last one is incomplete and its interpretation is not quite certain. The letters from the left to the right become increasingly larger, which perhaps does not reflect well on the writing skills of the author of the inscription. The text is fragmentary and it may be part of a proper name which did not need to be written according to the rules of orthography. In the Late Roman Period, the phenomenon of iotacism (the interchangeable use of the letters Η, Ι and Υ and of diphthongs — οι, ει) was common. As a result, the name starting with Πηθα- may be an equivalent of Πιθα- or Πειθα- and Πυθα-. This means that a rather numerous group of names, such as, e.g., Πειθαγόρας, Πειθάνωρ, Πειθαρχος, Πυθαγόρας (Πυθαγόρης), Πυθάγγελος, Πυθᾶς etc., can be taken into consideration.

Some of these names are known from the Black Sea region and in Macedonia and Thrace.⁴²

⁴² FRASER, MATTHEWS 1997: 358, 380; 2005: 277; CORSTEN 2010: 363, 385.

Язык в частной жизни римских солдат в Тавриде (Резюме)

В разных частях империи и за ее пределами римское войско оставило многочисленные свидетельства их языка, употребляемого в ежедневной жизни. В западных провинциях они использовали латынь. Подтверждают это, между прочим, таблички, открытые в ходе раскопок форта Виндоланда на Стене Адриана в северной Британии.¹ На востоке в частных контактах доминировал греческий, это доказывают другие источники. Остраконы, открытые в форте Крокодило, Восточная пустыня Египта, написаны по-гречески.²

Какой из этих языков употребляли римские солдаты, которые прибывали, из-за нижнего Дуная на Крым? Ответ на этот вопрос не простой. Кажется, что в т. ч. учитывая поддержание добрых отношений с властями и жителями формально независимого Херсонеса, по крайней мере, часть офицеров была из семей с греческими корнями. К этой группе можно зачислить упоминаемых в эпитафических источниках трибунов I италийского легиона: Публия Ведия Антонина, который происходил с Эфеса,³ а также Л. Аррия Алкивиада, известного по надписям из Херсонеса и Балаклавы-Кадыковки.⁴ Греческое происхождение, имел также, вероятно всего, прокуратор — Тит Аврелий Кальпурниан Аполлонид, который, возможно, происходил из метрополии Херсонеса — Гераклеи Понтийской.⁵

Открытые в Херсонесе и Балаклаве надгробия римских солдат носят однако исключительно латинские надписи.⁶ Только латынь удостоверена в надписях, найденных в храме Юпитера Долихена в Балаклаве-Кадыковке.⁷ Хотя в данном случае можно было ожидать также греческих надписей, потому что святилище представляло частный фонд солдат вне стен форта.

Язык, употребляемый вне публичной сферы, подтверждают также другие находки. К этой группе можно отнести, между прочим, так называемые посвятельные рельефы. Барельефы с представлениями божеств и героев, выполненные в мраморе, известняке и глине, находились, между прочим, в римском форте на мысе Ай-Тодор. На одной из керамических рельефов с этой местности — латинская надпись.⁸ Памятники, зачисленные в обсуждаемую группу, появляются также и в контексте, не связанном непосредственно с римскими гарнизонами, а греческие надписи на некоторых из них — выполнены вероятнее всего вторично.⁹

С языком, употребляемым римскими войсками в Крыму, можно также связывать часть кожаной обивки, так называемого, щита с Дура.¹⁰ На коже записана, вероятно, инструкция для путешествующих солдат из нижнего Дуная в Крым или дальше на восток.¹¹ Сохранный фрагмент греческого текста включает названия городов, расположенных на северных берегах Понта.

Все приведенные примеры, выходят за публичную сферу, но являются также надписями, предназначенными для посторонних лиц (надписи на надгробиях, на посвятельных рельефах, на щите...). В каждом из этих случаев попытка однозначного заявления, каким языком пользовалась в ежедневной жизни конкретное лицо, связана с сомнениями. Этих изъянов, кажется, лишена находка, которая происходит, из раскопок форта в Балаклаве-Кадыковке, с 2012 года.

Это фрагмент глиняной штукатурки, покрывающей стену внутри мыслимого гипокауста.¹² В сырой глине была высечена надпись, которая потом поддалась вторичному обжигу. Контекст позволяет датировать памятник на период правления Северов и связывать с последней фазой застройки функционирующего в Балаклаве римского форта (Фаза 3). Надпись выполнена от руки на глине, в помещении, которое представляло

1 BIRLEY 1999; 2001; BOWMAN, THOMAS 1983; 1994; 2003; BOWMAN, THOMAS, TOMLIN 2010; 2011.

2 CUVIGNY 2005.

3 IOSPE I² 562; SARNOWSKI 2000a: 204, 210.

4 IOSPE I² 404; SOLOMONIK 1974: no. 2.

5 ANTONOVA, JAJLENKO 1995: 83.

6 SOLOMONIK 1983b : nos. 14, 17–21, 26, 28, 29, 31–34, 39–41, 44, 46; ZUBAR, ANTONOVA, SAVELJA 1991 = SAVELJA, SARNOWSKI 2000.

7 SARNOWSKI, SAVELJA 2000.

8 NOVYCHENKOVA-LUKYCHOVA: 2014.

9 ŠČEGLOV 1969: 140; порей. LANCOV 1999: figs. 2–5.

10 CUMONT 1926; REBUFFAT 1986.

11 GAWROŃSKI 2011.

12 KARASIEWICZ-SZCZYPIORSKI, SAVELJA 2013: 127–131, figs. 8: 3, 9: 3, 14.

потом недоступный подвал. Текст должен был возникнуть во время стройки и представлял вид личного сувенира. Упомянутые обстоятельства позволяют утверждать, что исполнитель надписи употребил язык, который вынес из дома и применял в частной жизни. Впервые в истории прежних исследований присутствия римских войск в Крыму с нами заговорил, следовательно, простой солдат из гарнизона расположенного *extra fines Imperii*.

На упомянутом куске глины сохранились четыре глубоко нацарапанные греческие буквы (**рис. 1**):

ΠΝΘΑ[

Вероятнее всего, первая сохраненная буква слева представляет начало выражения. Последняя некомплектна и не полностью определенная. Буквы от левой к правой увеличиваются, что, наверное, не свидетельствует о хорошем мастерстве автора надписи в умении писать. Текст — фрагментарен, может быть частью собственного имени, которое не должно было быть записано с сохранением правил

орфографии. В позднеримском периоде явление йотачизма (заменяемого употребления букв: Η, Ι и Υ, а также дифтонгов – οι, ει) было повсеместно. В связи с вышеупомянутым, имя, которое начинается на Πηθα- может быть записью, представляющей эквивалент Πιθα- или Πειθα- также Πυθα-. По отношению к тому можно назвать достаточно многочисленную группу имен, напр.: Πειθαγόρας, Πειθάνωρ, Πείθαρχος, Πυθαγόρας (Πυθαγόρης), Πυθάγγελος, Πυθαῖς и тому подобное.

Некоторые из этих имен встречаются в районе Черного Моря также в Македонии и Фракии.¹³

Перевод Н. Рудыка

Radosław Karasiewicz-Szczypiorski
radoslaw.szczypiorski@gmail.com

Adam Łukaszewicz
adlukasz@adm.uw.edu.pl

University of Warsaw
Institute of Archaeology
ul. Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28
00-927 Warszawa, Poland

Abbreviations

HSb / ХСб	<i>Hersonesskij Sbornik / Херсонесский Сборник</i>
IGLNovae	J. Kolendo, V. Bozilova, <i>Inscriptiones Graecae et Latinae de Novae (Mésie inférieure)</i> , Bordeaux 1997.
IOSPE I ²	ЛАТЫСЧЕВ, В. 1916. <i>Inscriptiones antiquae Orae Septentrionalis Ponti Euxini. Inscriptiones Tyrae, Olbiae, Chersonesi Tauricae aliorum locorum a Danubio usque ad regnum Bosporanum, Petropoli.</i>
IAK / ИАК	<i>Izvestija imperatorskoj Arheologičeskoj kommissii / Известия императорской Археологической комиссии</i>
MIA / МИА	<i>Materialy i issledovanija po arheologii SSSR / Материалы и исследования по археологии СССР</i>
RA / РА	<i>Rossijskaja Arheologija / Российская Археология</i>
VDI / ВДИ	<i>Vestnik Drevnej Istorii / Вестник Древней Истории</i>

¹³ FRASER, MATTHEWS 1997: 358, 380; 2005: 277; CORSTEN 2010: 363, 385.

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