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Caesarea: before and after the Corpus of Inscriptions (CIIP)¹

Benjamin Isaac

Abstract: This paper briefly asses the information provided by the inscriptions from Caesarea, brought together in the Corpus Inscriptionum. On matters concerning the social history of the city, the various elements of the population and language use they tend to confirm the impression created by the inscriptions from other, comparable cities in the Roman Near East. Latin was present, but far from dominant. It was used for a variety of reasons, by those associated with the provincial government, the army and the city magistrature. There is no evidence that Latin was widely spoken in daily life by the population at large.

Keywords: Ammaus, R. Abbahu, Bostra, colonia, decurio, Demetrias, harbour, Herod, inscriptions, Pontius Pilatus, Vespasian, Straton's Tower, Sidon, veteran colony, *vici*

Caesarea-on-the-Sea was the major city of Judaea-Palaestina in the Roman period, although, of course, Jerusalem / Aelia Capitolina always had a special status. The present essay will attempt to assess the essential information on the city of Caesarea afforded by the publication of all the known ancient inscriptions from the city and its vicinity in volume II of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaea/Palaestinae*.

First a brief survey of the essentials provided by the literary sources.²

The predecessor of Caesarea-on-the-Sea, "Straton's Tower", was presumably established in the fourth century by one of the two Sidonian kings named Straton. The name first occurs on a papyrus of 259 BC where it is mentioned as a stop in the journey through Palestine of Zenon, an agent of the Ptolemaic *dioiketes*.³

A. Kushnir-Stein has suggested that an unidentified city in south Phoenicia, named Demetrias, which issued coinage, may in fact be identified with Strato's Tower, the predecessor of Caesarea.⁴

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This paper is dedicated to Rivka Gersht on the occasion of her retirement.

For a systematic survey of the evidence, see CIIP vol. II, pp.17-39.

P. Cairo Zenon. 59004 = Corpus papyrorum judaicarum 1.no2.

A. Kushnir-Stein, 'The Predecessor of Caesarea: On the Identification of Demetrias in South Phoenicia', in J.H. Humphrey (ed.) *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: Some Recent Archaeological Research* (Journal of Roman Archaeology, Supplementary Series no. 14), Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1995, pp. 9-14. Two publications have expressed doubts concerning the proposition: P. Lampinen, 'A Further Note on the Coins of Demetrias which is on the Sea', *Caesarea Papers* 2., 358-359; R. Stieglitz, 'Strato's Tower and Demetrias again: one town or two?' *Caesarea Papers* 2, 359-360. Subsequently it was supported by Oliver Hoover 'A Seleucid coinage of Demetrias by the sea', *Israel Numismatic Research* 2, 2007, 77-87, pl. 14.

The next decisive stage in the history of the city was during the reign of Herod, attested in the works of Josephus and through archaeological remains. Herod built one of his palaces there. According to Josephus, there were two reasons for investing in the city: together with Jerusalem and Samaria-Sebaste it was to be one of the military strongpoints in Judaea. 'And he built a fortress for the entire nation in the place formerly called Straton's Tower but named by him Caesarea.' Second, he made the place an essential hub along the coast by the construction of a large harbour. Following the incorporation of Judaea as part of the province of Syria, Caesarea became its capital, as Tacitus describes it: *Iudaeae caput*. After the organization of the province of Judaea it became the residence of the provincial governor and procurator, familiar from the excavations.

The population of the city was mixed, Jewish and non-Jewish, which caused frequent conflict, as reported by Josephus for the period until AD 70.¹⁰ The local garrison, to which the non-Jewish inhabitants contributed, played a role in these conflicts.¹¹ In the subsequent period the town is frequently mentioned in Talmudic sources. The Jewish community there was prosperous in the third century, when it was the centre of a well-known group called "the rabbis of Caesarea." A prominent sage, resident in the city, was R. Abbahu (c.280-320). Of him it is reported that he allowed teaching Greek to one's daughter and even permitted Kriat Shema to be said in Greek.

After the end of the first Jewish revolt, Caesarea was re-founded as a *colonia civium Romanorum*. The date is not quite certain. The foundation is recorded in literary sources, first by a contemporary, the elder Pliny:

⁵ Ant. 14.293-4: τῷ δὲ ἔθνει παντὶ φρούριον ἐνφκοδόμησεν τὸ πάλαι μὲν καλούμενον Στράτωνος πύργον, Καισάρειαν δ' ὑπ' αὐτοῦ προσαγορευθέν.

Ant. 15.333-4: κεῖται μὲν γὰρ ἡ πόλις ἐν τῆ Φοινίκῃ κατὰ τὸν εἰς Αἴγυπτον παράπλουν Ἰόππης μεταξὺ καὶ Δώρων, πολισμάτια ταῦτ' ἐστὶν παράλια δύσορμα διὰ τὰς κατὰ λίβα προσβολάς, αι ἀεὶ τὰς ἐκ τοῦ πόντου θῖνας ἐπὶ τὴν ἡόνα σύρουσαι καταγωγὴν οὐ διδόασιν, ἀλλ' ἔστιν ἀναγκαῖον ἀποσαλεύειν τὰ πολλὰ τοὺς ἐμπόρους ἐπ' ἀγκύρας. Similarly: BJ 1.409-14.

⁷ Tacitus, Hist. 2.78.4.

E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, revised ed. by G. Vermes & F. Millar, i (1973), p.361 with n.37. R. Haensch, *Capita Provinciarum. Statthaltersitze und Provincialverwaltung in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (1997), 227-37 and testimonia: 548-56.

⁹ References in CIIP II, pp.21-2 with notes 36, 37.

¹⁰ E.g. Jos., Ant 20, 173-178; 182-5; BJ 2.266-270; 284-292; cf. CIIP II, p.23f.

¹¹ Cf. Schürer, op.cit., 361-5; CIIP II, pp.23-4.

[&]quot;Rabbanan de Qisrin". Cf. S. Lieberman, The Talmud of Caesarea, *Tarbiz* 1, 1931, Supplement (Hebr.). See also Lieberman, Greek in Jewish Palestine, 1942 and: Hellenism in Jewish Palestine, 1962. Cf. CIIP II, Introduction, 28-30.

M. R. Niehoff, 'A Hybrid Self: Rabbi Abbahu in Legal Debates in Caesarea', in: Niehoff, and J. Levinson (eds.), Self, Self-Fashioning and Individuality in Late Antiquity. Tübingen, 2019.

- (1) '... the Tower of Strato, otherwise Caesarea, founded by King Herod, but now the colony called Prima Flavia, established by the Emperor Vespasian; this is the frontier of Palestine, 189 miles from the confines of Arabia....' ¹⁴
- (2) Approximately a century later Ulpian, as cited in the Digest, writes: 'The Divine Vespasian made the Caesarienses *coloni* without adding the *ius italicum*, but remitting the poll-tax; but the divine Titus decided that the soil had been made immune also.'15

Neither source implies that veterans were settled in the colony. Essential, however, is a third source, Josephus, because he ignores Caesarea as a Flavian (re-) foundation:

(3) 'About the same time Caesar sent instructions to Bassus and Laberius Maximus, the procurator, to dispose of all Jewish land. For he founded no city of his own there while keeping their territory, but merely assigned eight hundred veterans a place for settlement called Ammaus, which lies at a distance of thirty stades from Jerusalem.' 16

Thus Josephus explicitly denies that veterans were settled anywhere in Judaea apart from 800 at Ammaus near Jerusalem. Even so there is disagreement on this matter.¹⁷

Next we shall consider whether the inscriptions brought together in Volume II of the *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae* add information on this question. Also we shall attempt, more generally, to see what other insights the inscriptions, now collected in one volume, have to offer on cultural and social relations in the city.

Before we focus on this particular theme it is essential briefly to point out that there are inscriptions which give us information on various aspects of the history of the city that is lacking in literary sources. For instance: (1) CIIP II, no. 1241, a dedication by the *vicus Victorinus* for a governor. This is interesting in particular because it shows that the colony was organized as usual, on the basis of *vici*, as shown also in the case of Ptolemais. Then there is the famous inscription, (2) no. 1277, mentioning Pontius

Pliny, NH 5,69 (trans. Rackham): ... Stratonis Turris, eadem Caesarea ab Herode rege condita, nunc colonia Prima Flavia a Vesasiano Imperatore deducta, finis Palaestines, CLXXXVIII p. a confinio Arabiae. Dein Phoenice; ...

Digest 50,15,8: Divus Vespasianus Caesarienses colonos fecit non adiecto, ut et iuris Italici essent, set tributum his remisit capitis; sed divus Titus etiam solum immune factum interpretatus est.

Josephus, BJ 7.217 (trans. Isaac): Περὶ δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν καιρὸν ἐπέστειλε Καῖσαρ Βάσσφ καὶ Λαβερίφ Μαξίμφ, οὖτος δὲ ἦν ἐπίτροπος, κελεύων πᾶσαν γῆν ἀποδόσθαι τῶν Ἰουδαίων. οὐ γὰρ κατφκισεν ἐκεῖ πόλιν ἰδίαν αὐτῷ τὴν χώραν φυλάττων, ὀκτακοσίοις δὲ μόνοις ἀπὸ τῆς στρατιᾶς διαφειμένοις χωρίον ἔδωκεν εἰς κατοίκησιν, ὃ καλεῖται μὲν Ἀμμαοῦς, ἀπέχει δὲ τῶν Ἱεροσολύμων σταδίους τριάκοντα. For Ammaus – Motza, see M. Fischer, B. Isaac, I. Roll, Roman Roads in Judaea II: The Jaffa-Jerusalem Roads, 1996, 222-9; CIIP I,1, 15.

Werner Eck has argued that veterans were settled in Caesarea in the seventies: 'The Presence, Role and Significance of Latin in the Epigraphy and Culture of the Roman Near East' in: Hannah M. Cotton et al., From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East (Cambridge 2009), pp.13-42. Isaac denies this was the case: 'Latin in Cities of the Roman Near East' in Empire and Ideology in the Graeco-Roman World: Selected Papers (Cambridge, 2017), 257-284, at 271-5; id. 'Caesarea-on-the-Sea and Aelia Capitolina: Two Ambiguous Roman Colonies' in: C.Brélaz (ed.), L'héritage grec des colonies romaines d'Orient: interactions culturelles dans les provinces hellénophones de l'empire romain (Paris, 2017), pp. 331-343.

¹⁸ M. Avi-Yonah, QDAP 12, 1946, 85-6

Pilatus, recording the restoration by the *Praefectus Iudaeae* of a *Tiberieum*, which probably was a lighthouse. Here we have an example of the governor taking care of what otherwise might have been a regular urban structure. These are two important inscriptions, well-known before the publication of the *Corpus* which, of course, makes those and other previously published texts more easily accessible. The same is true for the inscriptions recording work on the aqueducts by army units in the reign of Hadrian¹⁹ and inscribed milestones along the roads leading to Caesarea.²⁰ At the level of provincial history, (3) no. 1227 is significant: an honorary monument for a consular governor of Iudaea, Cossonius Gallus, ca.120. In addition to other pieces of evidence, this proves that Judaea was a province with a consular legate by that time and therefore must have had a garrison of two legions.²¹ We should note also no. 1262, attesting the existence of a Hadrianeum in the city, a temple or precinct, named after the emperor.

If we turn now to the consideration of the *Corpus* as a source for social history, then, for a proper historical perspective, it is essential to keep in mind that Caesarea was not only a town with colonial status. It was also the residence of both the provincial governor and the procurator. The paper will therefore conclude with a brief comparison with the material from Bostra which, like Caesarea, was provincial capital and seat of the governor (but not of the procurator) and, besides, a legionary base, which Caesarea was not

The total number of inscriptions from the city is 986. We should distinguish here between a) official texts, associated with the imperial and provincial government, the legate, the procurator, the army and military men; b) texts set up by the colony and city-officials; c) texts by private, local citizens. Here it will be useful to mention the cautionary statement by J.N. Adams about Latin in the army. It was not the "official" language, as often asserted, but rather "a sort of supreme or super-high language in the army, which was bound to be used in certain circumstances."

If we want to gain an impression of society in Caesarea, we have to look for inscriptions from individuals in their private life, not for public monuments and dedications to governors by the city as a community.²³ Similarly, inscriptions referring to the staff of the governor provide valuable information on the provincial leadership, but not on social life in the city.²⁴

Let me give a few examples: (4) 1228: L. Valerius Martialis, *duovir* of the colony and an *eques* who had had his *secunda militia* (as tribune of a legion). He was the son of Martialis, a former *primus pilus* and dedicated a statue to the governor, ca. AD 165. This is an example of the social mobility and integration of the local elite into the Roman

²¹ Cf. CIIP vol. V, introduction to Legio – Caparcotna, forthcoming, for the evidence concerning the establishment of a legionary base there.

Nos. 1200-9, units of the Leg. X, XXII Deiot.; II Traiana Fortis; and VI Ferr...

²⁰ CIIP vol. VII, forthcoming.

J. N. Adams, 'Language use in the army in Egypt', in Adams, M. Janse and S. Swain (eds.), Bilingualism in Ancient Society: Language Contact and the Written Text (Oxford, 2002), 599-623; J. N. Adams, Bilingualism and the Latin Language (Cambridge, 2003).

E.g. CIIP II 1234: the colony honours a governor.

E.g. 1273: officium custodiarum (office dealing with the prison, prisoners); 1274: frumentarii (couriers, messengers); 1275: cust(os) sc(olae) (centurionum), the club-room of the centurions.

administration via army service. This inscription is dated some 90 years after the colony foundation and does not therefore say anything about a veteran settlement. It is what one would expect in the capital of a province with two legions. The language used in the inscription is Latin, of course, as dictated by custom and social expectations, and does not necessarily reflect the actual language spoken at home by the dedicant and his father. No less important: this seems to be the only case encountered in Caesarea of a "mixed" career: military and urban.²⁵

(5) No. 1248 marked the console for a statue of a governor or procurator set up by Iulia Agrippina, the daughter of Iulius Agrippa, a *primus pilus*, who apparently settled in Caesarea after his discharge. Again, the Latin of the inscription would have been fitting for the statue of a provincial official, whatever the language spoken at home. A statue is not a private affair. Inscriptions honouring officials usually were in Latin. That was not an aspect of colonial culture, but of officialdom in the capital of a province.²⁶

The same, in my opinion, is true for no. 1358 a fragmentary inscription which mentions a *duumvir* and a *decurio* who put up a statue for a person or a god in Latin. It has been argued that this is significant because the text demonstrates the use of Latin by members of the decurional class in their private affairs and not only in the public sphere.²⁷ As I see it, they still are colonial officials and a statue for a god or a magistrate is not a private matter. When urban officials set up a statue, this is an issue of epigraphical culture and social convention.

An apparent, but not a real exception that proves this rule, is (6) no. 1266 (2nd century?): a statue base from the palace of the governor: Varius Seleucus, "responsible for the ships of the *colonia*" (κουράτορ πλοίων = *curator navium*), honors his patron, Titus Flavius Maximus, a philosopher, in Greek. As noted in the comments on CIIP 2, p.212: "the use of Greek for honoring a philosopher, is hardly surprising, even in a Roman colony." This reinforces the impression that the language of inscriptions is socially and culturally determined.²⁸ Another piece of evidence supporting this approach is the inscription on a statue base found at Kfar Shuni, 6 km. north of Caesarea, (7) no. 2095, pp.810-812:

M. Fl. Agrippam pontif / IIviralem / col I Fl Aug Caesareae ora/torem ex dec dec pec publ

As noted in the comments in CIIP, the name "Marcus" indicates that it probably dates to the second century. This concerns an urban official, honoured in Latin by the city, but, as observed by W. Eck: "The use of the accusative case for naming the honorand evinces the influence of a Greek turn of phrase." The penetration of Greek syntax and idiom is a frequent phenomenon in Latin inscriptions in the East for obvious reasons. The texts were formulated by those whose first language was Greek.

W. Eck in his comments on the inscription, CIIP Vol. II, p.318

²⁵ Cf. B. Isaac, op. cit., above, n.17, p.277. As pointed out there, cases of mixed careers: army and urban have been found in Berytus and Heliopolis, but not in Bostra.

²⁶ See 1251, -2, 1282; 1284-7.

No. 1258, a ring inscribed in Greek Τιβερίου τριβ(ούνου) would be interesting if it were securely dated. The comments, p.195, point out that it may be from late antiquity.

Wholly in Greek is an inscription of the end of the second century from Mount Carmel: Δu Ήλιοπολείτη Καρμήλ ϕ / Γ . Ἰούλ. Εὐτυχ $\tilde{\alpha}$ ς / κόλ(ωv) Καισαρεύς. 29 We have here a citizen of Caesarea, describing himself as *colonus* in Greek, dedicating a statue to Zeus Heliopolitanus of the Carmel. That is an example of a remarkable mixed identity and culture. Moreover, the location of the statue and the epithet of the god may indicate that Iulius Eutychas lived in the territory of the city rather than in the city.

There is not too much scope for a statistical analysis. Many inscriptions are fragmentary and / or undated. However, there are some numbers that are worth mentioning. Of the possibly, or probably, pre- 4c funerary inscriptions there are 13 in Latin, 56 in Greek; 1 in Hebrew; 3 bilingual- Greek and Hebrew; 2 Aramaic. This is a very rough estimate, for I have counted as possibly early all those that are not dated in the Corpus to a later period (c3-6 or 4-7).

The fragmentary inscriptions show a similar proportion: 49 are in Latin, 221 in Greek.³⁰ These results are not basically different from those in other cities in Judaea. The Jewish population in Caesarea, extensively attested in literary sources, is amply represented in the epigraphic material as well.

Among the inscriptions mentioning decurions and the colony there are 9 in Latin and 9 in Greek.³¹

Of inscriptions set up by the population of the colony, some may be mentioned here. Clearly pagan inscriptions are nos. 1128-1138. Nine of those are in Greek; two in Latin. Among the Greek, we might note no.1134, a dedication by a man called Victor, a Roman name, to Zeus Dolichenus, a Roman re-invention of an eastern god.³² Another inscription reflecting a cultural mix is no.1129: a dedication in Latin to Turmasgade, a North Syrian god, by a serving centurion of the legion XII Fulminata.

The synagogue inscriptions are mostly too late for the present investigation, roughly from the 4th until the 7th century. Still it is worth mentioning that they are all in Greek (1139-1145), apart from no. 1145, a list of the 24 priestly courses, which is in Hebrew.³³ The *instrumentum domesticum*, namely amulets and rings, not explicitly datable to 4c or later, are all in Greek without exception (1681-1724). This is important, for the objects represent the population of the city at large. The same is true for weights: nos 1725-1751 (including the later ones). There is only one in Latin: 1736. It mentions the *colonia*. Note also (12) 1740 which mentions in Greek two *agoranomoi* with Roman names: Rusticianus and Iuncus. It antedates the fourth century.³⁴

For many weights it cannot be determined whether they were originally from Caesarea. However, Greek is predominant anyway.

Founder's coins with legionary vexilla and symbols invariably appear on coins of the eastern veteran colonies. Accordingly, they are frequent on the coins of Berytus, Acco

M. Avi-Yonah, IEJ 2 (1952), 118; AE 1952.206; SEG XIV. 832. Cf. F. Millar 'The Roman *Coloniae* of the Near East' in id., *Rome, the Greek World, and the East, H.M.* Cotton and G.M. Rogers (eds.), vol.3, ch. 8, 164-222, at 186-7.

³⁰ 1802-1851, Latin; 1852-2073, Greek; 2078, Hebrew., 2079, Hebrew or Greek.

³¹ 1359-60; 1363-9: 9 in Latin; 1361-2 in Greek; 1361-2 (both probably mention decurions); 1370-5: 7 in Greek. 1363: Latin dedication of a sevir Augustalis.

For religion in Caesarea: see R. Gersht, in Raban – Holum, Caesarea, 1996, 208-27.

And nos. 1146 and 7 which say "shalom" in Hebrew.

³⁴ Weights antedating AD 70, in Greek: 1725-1729; 1733-4 (?).

and Aelia Capitolina, but they are absent on those of Caesarea which, as I have argued, reinforces the argument that this was not a veteran colony.³⁵

Some more numbers: fragments are mostly undatable, by definition. However, it should be emphasized that 49 are in Latin and 221 in Greek.³⁶

The division of Latin inscriptions in general is as follows: colonial: 12; provincial and imperial: 44; military: 11.

Finally, it is instructive to compare these numbers with those known from inscriptions found in Bostra.

The total number of published inscriptions from Caesarea and vicinity is 986, compared with that of Bostra numbering 472. Like Caesarea, Bostra was also a provincial capital, but unlike Caesarea, it was not the seat of the provincial procurator: in Arabia this was Gerasa.³⁷ No less important, Bostra was overbuilt over the ages and it was a legionary base, both of which Caesarea was not. Yet, unlike Caesarea, Bostra was not an important commercial hub. It received colonial rank in the third century, in the reign of Severus Alexander, far later than Caesarea.³⁸

Quite a few inscriptions in Bostra have been set up by or for serving military men of all ranks, 24 altogether.³⁹ Twenty Latin epitaphs have been found of military men⁴⁰ as compared with seven of private persons.⁴¹ Five inscriptions mention veterans – note that Bostra was no veteran colony.⁴² Four inscriptions are set up in honour of governors or by them.⁴³ Members of the governor's entourage are mentioned on two.⁴⁴ Only one inscription in Latin has indigenous names: Marus and Iamleilus (9199).

Out of a total of 472 inscriptions from Bostra, 64 are in Latin. We may compare this with the material from the town of Heliopolis which – with Berytus – was occupied by veterans of the legions *V Macedonica* and *VIII Augusta* in the time of Augustus. There are 305 inscriptions from the town, the sanctuary, and the vicinity, of which 131 are in

L. Kadman, *The Coins of Caesarea Maritima* (Jerusalem 1957), p.64. Cf. W. Eck, 'The Language of Power: Latin in the Roman Near East', in H.M. Cotton et al. (eds.), *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East* (Cambridge, 2009), 15-42, at 34. Eck regards the absence of *vexilla* on founder's coins from Caesarea not as significant.

³⁶ 1802-1851, Latin; 1852-2073, Greek; 2078, Heb., 2079, Hebrew or Greek.

Note, however, one inscription set up by a procurator: 9019.

M. Sartre, *Bostra des origines à l'Islam* (1985), 76; Millar, 'The Roman *Coloniae* of the Near East', above, n.29, pp.215-6.

³⁹ Sartre, IGLS XIV, 9015; 9036; -1; 9064; -5; -9; -70; 71; -72; -73; -78; -9; -81; -2; -6; -7; -90; -95; 9096; -99; 9169 (list of soldiers of the legion). Total: 20. Military, fragments: 9449; 9450; -1; -3. Total: 4.

⁴⁰ IGLS XIV, 9170; 9172; 9173; 9174; 9175; 9176; 9178; 9179; 9180; 9181; -2; -3; -5; -6; -7; -8; 9192; -3; -4; -8.

⁴¹ 9171; 9177; 9184; 9189; 9190; 9195; 9197.

⁴² 9050; 9067; 9085; 9097(?); 9098.

⁴³ 9068; 9069; 9060; -2.

⁴⁴ 9075; -7.

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Latin.⁴⁵ This is a relative number of Latin inscriptions that exceeds by far those in Caesarea and Bostra.

To conclude this survey, the inscriptions from Caesarea, brought together in the *Corpus Inscriptionum*, provide a wealth of information on numerous aspects of the history of the city. On matters concerning the social history of the city, the various elements of the population and language use they tend to confirm the impression created by the inscriptions from other, comparable cities in the Roman Near East. Latin was present, but far from dominant. It was used for a variety of reasons, by those associated with the provincial government, the army and the city magistrature. There is no evidence that Latin was widely spoken in daily life by the population at large.

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These numbers derive from the collection in *IGLS* VI. Cf. Isaac, above, no.17, 264. There is no corpus of inscriptions for Berytus that would allow us to compare the results for this city. For Berytus and Heliopolis: F. Millar, 'The Roman *Coloniae* of the Near East', above, n.29; for Latin in inscriptions from Palmyra, a Roman colony: id., 'Latin in the Epigraphy of the Roman Near East' in op.cit., ch. 9, 223-242