

POSTUMUS

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LATIN inscriptions of the first and second centuries A.D. record the existence of a *municipium* on the island of Gozo. There was a *civitas* or city enjoying a certain measure of autonomy and with an assembly of the citizens. The representatives of the citizens were the *decurions* who met regularly in the Council or *Curia*. A number of public officials were in charge of the administration. A municipal priesthood was also in existence. At the head of the list of *Decuriones* were put the names of the *Patroni* of the *municipium*: they were influential and wealthy persons, usually of senatorial or equestrian rank, who were adopted by the *Decuriones* to form part of the municipal curia as honorary members. They made frequent visits to Rome and to the Emperor in order to take up the case of the people, of whom they were *patroni*. The municipal authorities had statues erected in their honour in the forum of the city. A Gozitan inscription of the second century A.D. records the services of a certain Postumus, the Patronus of the Gozitan *municipium*.¹

The following is the text:

(C. Vallio . . f.) QVIR. POSTVMo. patroNo. muNICIPII.
flamini divi.² HADRIANI. PERPETVO. (ex).³ QVINQ. DECVR.
IVDICum⁴
inter QVADRINGENARIOS.⁵ ADLECTO. A. DIVO. ANTO
nino AuG. PIO. OMNIB. HONORIB. CIVITATIS. SVAE. HO
nestissime.⁶ FVNCTO. ITEM. LEGATIONE. GRATVITA. APVD.
divum⁷ HADRIANVM. ET. APVD. AMPLISSIMVM, ORDINEM. DE
.....⁸ ALLIB. REDHIBENDIS. PLEPS. GAULITANA.

¹For this inscription Cf. O. Brès, *Malta antica illustrata*, Roma, 1810, p.315. A.A. Caruana, *Report* etc. p.141; C.I.L. No.7507; Ruggiero, *Dizionario epigrafico di antichità Romane*, Vol.III, 1895-1919, p.434; Des-sau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae*, No.6772.

²Brès and Caruana suggest *imp* for *imperator*.

³Id read *IIIIV*.

⁴Id read *IV.DI*.

⁵Id read *quatrigenarios*.

⁶Id read *honeste*.

⁷Id have *imp*.

⁸Caruana reads *navalibus*; Henzen, *vectigalibus*; Mommsen, *callibus*.

EX. AERE. CON.

lato.oB. PLVRA. MERITA. EIVS. D.D.

(Caio Vallio, f. .) Quirina tribu, Postumo, patrono municipii, *flamini* divi Hadriani perpetuo, ex quinque decuriis iudicum inter quadringenarios adlecto a Divo Antonino Augusto Pio, omnibus honoribus civitatis suae honestissime functo; item legatione gratuita apud Divum Hadrianum et apud amplissimum ordinem de . . . libus redhibendis, plebs gaulitana, ex aere conlato, ob plura merita eius, donavit dedicavit.

To (Caius Vallius) Postumus, (son of . . .), of the Quirine tribe, Patron of the municipium, permanent flamen of the divine Hadrian, raised to the rank of a quadringenarius and made ex quinque decuriis iudex by the divine Antoninus Augustus Pius, after having filled all the offices of his city in a remarkable way and after having served on a free embassy to the divine Hadrian and the most honourable Order concerning the restoration of the . . ., the plebs Gaulitana, having collected the money, has donated and dedicated (this statue?) for his many services.

Postumus, according to the inscription, was chosen *ex quinque decuriis iudex* by the Emperor Antoninus Pius (138-161 A.D.). In the days of Augustus capital cases in Rome were tried, perhaps according to the provisions of the *Lex Iulia Iudiciaria*, by juries drawn from four decuries: Senators, Equites, Tribuni aerarii and ducenarii. From Caligula onwards the decuries – and each decury was a thousand strong – were increased from four to five. There seems to have been a number of jurors, the *iudices selecti*, who constituted an élite among those of the four or five decuries. Their full title was *iudex ex V decuriis* or *iudex selectus ex V decuriis*, juror chosen from the five decuries.⁹ Antoninus Pius in person, perhaps, or through a senatorial commission chose Postumus as a *iudex selectus*. When this happened Postumus must have been at least thirty years old.¹⁰ From the nature of their duties the *iudices selecti* had to spend much of their time in Rome. This must have been one of the principal reasons why the Gozitan municipium selected Postumus as its Patron in order to voice the interests of the Gozitans. Furthermore since Nero's time the *iudex selectus* had to be of equestrian rank with the equestrian census of 400,000 sesterces. Postumus was made an *eques* or quadringenarius as he

⁹Cf. A.H.M. Jones, *Roman Administration*, p. 43-44.

¹⁰Cf. *ibid.*

was the owner of at least 400,000 sesterces, i.e. about 4000 Maltese pounds.

Postumus, says the inscription, was made *iudex selectus*, after having filled all the public offices, *honores*, of his civitas, that is Gozo. Therefore, he had been in charge of the public works in Gozo as an *aedile* or of the treasury as a *quaestor*. He must have been one of the two *duoviri* in charge of the administration of justice. Perhaps he was a *quinquennialis*, an officer who conducted the municipal census. He had been elected or coopted *decurio*, or member of the municipal Parliament. In the inscription, which is incomplete, we read *Hadriani perpetuo* ... to the permanent ... of Hadrian. The adjective *perpetuus* following the Emperor's name in the genitive, normally qualifies the word *flamen*. The missing words seem to have been *flamini divi Hadriani perpetuo*, to the permanent flamen of the deified Hadrian.¹¹ Contrary to the wishes of the Roman Senate, Antoninus Pius decided in 138 A.D. that the late Emperor Hadrian should be declared a god and that flamines of Hadrian should be instituted.

If the missing words in the inscription are *flamini divi*, then it follows that Postumus occupied one of the highest offices in the Gozitan municipium, that of flamen or priest of the deified Hadrian. In his capacity as flamen he must have sacrificed to the dead Emperor on certain fixed days. This is of the greatest interest for the religious history of Gozo. It shows that when the inscription was made, i.e. after 161 A.D. there was the official cult of the dead Emperors in Gozo and that there was an official priest, the flamen, who looked after that cult. This means that the *curia* or *Council* of the Gozitans was still made up of pagans who were still following and fostering the pagan religion. It means also that the Gozitans, the *plebs gaulitana*, were honouring a pagan priest. Hence in the middle of the second century after Christ, that is, about a hundred years after St. Paul had been shipwrecked in Malta, the Christians in Gozo, if there were any, must have constituted a minority.

Postumus is said to have discharged his other duties well and to have been sent on an embassy to the Emperor Hadrian and to the Roman Senate (*amplissimus ordo*). The word *gratuita* (voluntary) after *legatione* (embassy) implies that it was Postumus himself who met the necessary expenses. We do not know the expenses a

¹¹ Brès and Caruana read simply *imp* for *imperatoris*. But in that case the genitive would be governed by no noun.

legatio urbica, an embassy to Rome, entailed; Postumus however, could afford to shoulder them himself. Unfortunately we cannot know for certain what the mission was all about. Half a word *LLIB* (us) and the word *Redhibendis* are all that survive. *Redhibendis*, however, provides a clue. *Redhibeo* means *I take back* or *I give back*. In legal terminology the verb *redhibere* means to receive back on the part of a vendor the articles that the vendor has sold.¹² If the articles sold were found to be damaged they were to be taken back by the vendor and the money was to be handed back to the buyer. Postumus, therefore, seems to have gone to Rome to discuss commercial or financial matters. He seems to have been successful. The Gozitans made him Patronus of their *municipium* and they contributed money out of their own pockets to have his statue (?) erected in the forum or at least to have the inscription made.

It is open to conjecture when Postumus was received in audience by the Emperor Hadrian. Hadrian spent almost his whole life inspecting the provinces, and he was therefore away from Rome for long periods of time. In 118 Hadrian remitted great amounts of arrears which the provincials still had to pay, and he decreed that a similar cancellation should be made every fifteen years. If the mission of Postumus was somehow connected with these financial matters then there is reason to think that the Patron of the *municipium* of Gozo called on Hadrian either in 118 A.D. or more probably in 133 A.D., that is five years before Hadrian's death. The inscription itself seems to have been made after the apotheosis of Antoninus, as that Emperor is referred to as *Divus* or *divine*.

The inscription mentions the *cognomen* Postumus; the praenomen and the nomen are missing. In another inscription discovered in Gozo¹³ we come across the name of a certain Marcus Vallius who was raised to the equestrian order by the Emperor Antoninus Pius, the same Emperor who appointed Postumus *iudex selectus*. We read also that Marcus Vallius was the son of a Caius Vallius Postumus, who had been the Patron of the Gozitan *municipium*. Probably, then, the full name of Postumus was Caius Vallius Postumus.¹⁴

¹²Cf. Digest, 21, 1, 21: *Redhibere est facere ut rursus habeat venditor quod habuerat, et quia reddendo id fiebat, idcirco redhibitio est appellata quasi redditio*. Cf. also A. de Zulueta, *The Roman Law of Sale*, Oxford 1966, p. 50 and *passim*.

¹³Cf. C.I.L. 7508.

¹⁴Caruana, *op.cit.*, p. 142.

In the second century after Christ there was in Gozo a very flourishing municipium. There were all the *honores* or posts of civil responsibility, there was a municipal Parliament, there was a Patron. Besides the senatorial class, made up of members of the the municipal Parliament and of public officials, there was another class, the *plebs gaulitana*, which comprised probably all those citizens who were not of the senatorial class. It is the latter that had probably been benefitted by the services of Postumus and it is that class that contributed money for having an inscription and probably a statue raised in his honour.

This is one of the few inscriptions which throws some light on the relationship of the Gozitan municipium with Rome. Postumus was sent on an embassy to the Emperor to discuss financial matters. Postumus was later raised to the rank of an *eques* and appointed *iudex selectus* in Rome. In other words posts like that of *iudex selectus*, which had once been the monopoly of Romans, became now open also to provincials; and a provincial, although belonging to a municipium of a small island, could now be called to occupy higher posts in the capital of a world-Empire.