

THE VALLII IN GOZO

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Two inscriptions – *C.I.L.*¹ ins[criptions] nos. 7507 and 7508 – in the epigraphic *corpus* related to the Roman period in Gozo are of particular significance within the context of the administrative and political set-up of *Gaulos*: the name by which both the island of Gozo itself and its town were known in Roman times.

The inscriptions

One of these inscriptions (*C.I.L.* ins. no. 7507) is dedicated to Caius Vallius Postumus while the other (*C.I.L.* ins. no. 7508) is dedicated to his son Marcus Vallius Rufus although it honours the father (Caius) as well. The exact original provenance of both inscriptions is unknown but, by Abela's times (1647), the former was to be found in one of the corners of the cemetery (or church?) of Our Lady of Victory in Victoria.² This was very probably on the site where now stands the Capuchins' convent (in Victoria) on the way to Marsalforn. Agius (De Soldanis) appears to be in conformity with the above when claiming that the inscription was sited at Tal-Grazzja Valley where the Capuchins' convent stands and that, on his request (probably, when construction of the Capuchins' convent and of the adjoining church was under way or completed, replacing the earlier Our Lady of Victory church), it was re-placed between the door of the said convent and that of the church.³ By the time of A.A. Caruana (1882), the inscription in question appears to have been still in the same place: on the external wall of the 'Addolorata' chapel, between the door of the church and that of the said Capuchins' convent,⁴ until later moved to the Public Library in 1892.⁵ The same inscription, which appears to have been originally framed, is at present kept in the Gozo Archaeology Museum. The latter, on the other hand, is to be found incorporated in the side-wall of the old gate of the

1. *C[orpus] I[nscriptionum] L[atinarum]*, ed. T. Mommsen, x, Berlin 1883.
2. G.F. Abela, *Della Descrizione di Malta Isola nel Mare Siciliano con le sue Antichità, ed altre Notizie*, 1647, published in Malta as a facsimile edition for Melitensia Book Club, Midsea Books Ltd, 1984, 214.
3. G.P.F. Agius, *Il Gozo Antico-moderno e Sacro-profano, Isola Mediterranea Adiacente A Malta Africana*, i, Gozo 1746, p.98. This original unpublished manuscript is kept at the National Library of Malta as Lib. MS. 145.
4. A.A. Caruana, *Report on the Phoenician and Roman Antiquities in the Group of the Islands of Malta*, Malta 1882, 140.
5. *Idem, Frammento Critico della Storia Fenicio-Cartaginese, Greco-Romana e Bisantina, Musulmana e Normanno-Aragonese delle Isole di Malta*, Malta 1899, 292.

Gozo Citadel where it has been since, at least, Quintin d'Autun's times.⁶

The reconstructed texts⁷ of both inscriptions and their respective translations are given hereunder:

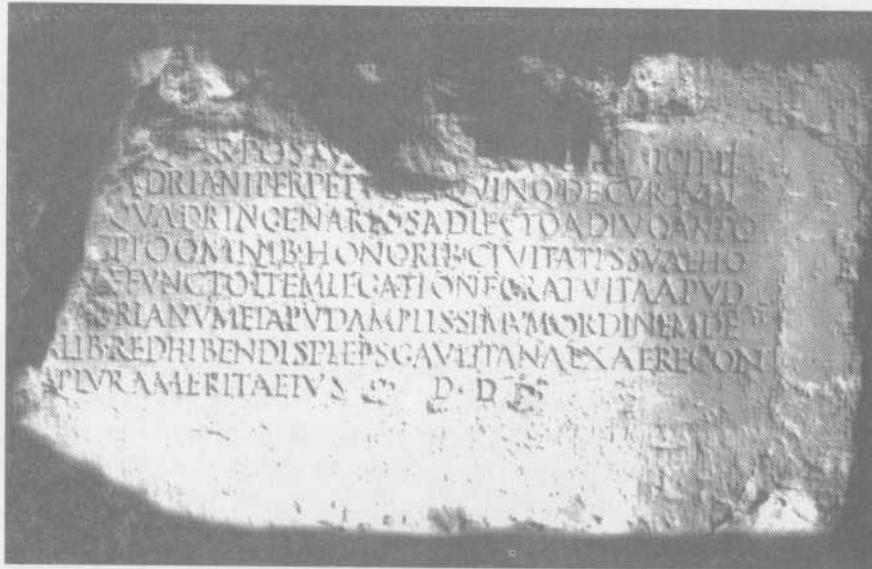


Fig. 1. Inscription dedicated to Caius Vallius Postumus (C.I.L. ins. no. 7507)

(Photo credit: Manuel Ciantar)

- 1 [C(AIO) VALLIO (----) F(ILIO)] Q[V]IR(INA TRIBV) POSTV[MO
PATRONO MVN]ICIPII
- 2 [FL(AMINI) DIVI H]ADRIANI PERPET[VI EX]
QVINQ(VENNALIBVS) DECVR(IONIBVS) IVDI(CIBVS)
- 3 [INTER] QVADRINGENARIOS ADLECTO A DIVO ANTO(NINO)
- 4 [AV]G(VSTO) PIO OMNIB(VS) HONORIB(VS) CIVITATIS SVAE HO
- 5 [NEST]E FVNCTO ITEM LEGATIONE GRATVITA APVD
- 6 [H]ADRIANVM ET APVD AMPLISSIMVM ORDINEM DE
- 7 [----]A LIB(ERTIS) REDHIBENDIS PLEPS GAVLITANA EX AERE
CON(LATO)
- 8 [O]B PLVRA MERITA EIVS D(ECRETO) D(ECVRIONVM)

6. J. Quintin d'Autun, *The Earliest Description of Malta*, 1536, translated and annotated by H.C.R. Vella, Malta 1980, 46-7. The lower half of the inscription (C.I.L. ins. no. 7508) is missing due to breakage. The fact that Jean Quintin d'Autun reproduces the inscription as it is seen today shows that, by the time his 'Earliest Description of Malta' was published in Lyon in 1536, the lower half was already missing.
7. The textual reconstruction given here follows the epigraphic conventions as in L. Keppie, *Understanding Roman Inscriptions*, London 1991, 140.

Translation

On account of his many merits and by decree of the decuriones, the people of Gozo (set up this inscription / monument) by public subscription in honour of Caius Vallius Postumus of the Quirine tribe and son of ----, patronus of the municipium, priest of the perpetuus and divine Hadrian, one of the quinquennial judges and decuriones, raised to the rank of quadringenarius by the divine Antoninus Pius Augustus, having honourably held every public office of his own town as well as having gratuitously served as a legate both at the court of Hadrian and to the most distinguished class of freedmen(?).

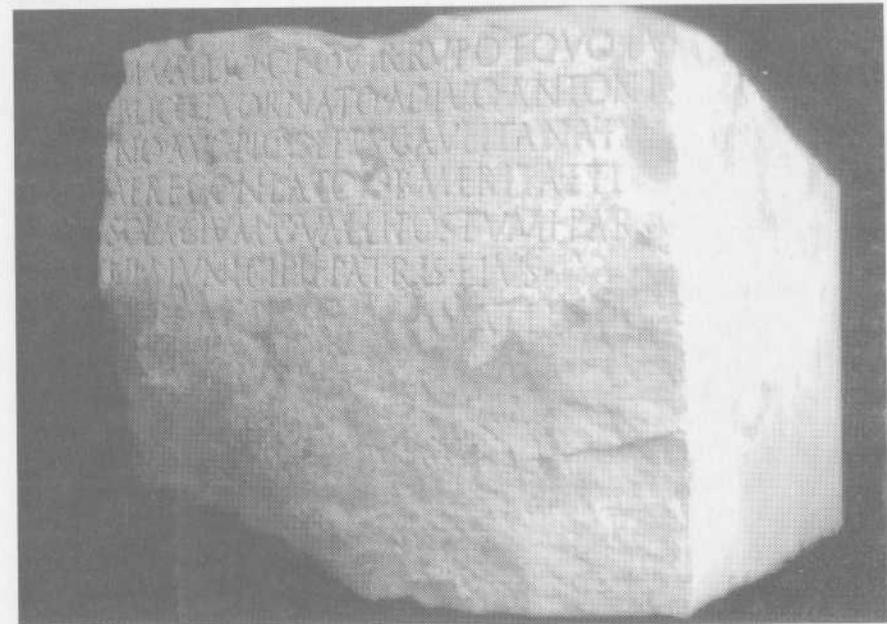


Fig. 2. Inscription dedicated to Marcus Vallius Rufus (C.I.L. ins. no. 7508)

- 1 M(ARCO) VALLIO C(AII) F(ILIO) QVIR(INA TRIBV) RVFO EQVO PV
- 2 BLICO EXORNATO A DIVO ANTONI
- 3 NO AVG(VSTO) PIO [P]LEPS GAVLITANA EX
- 4 AERE CONLATO OB MERITA ET I[N]
- 5 SOLACIVM C(AII) VALLI POSTVMI PATR[O]
- 6 NI MVNICIPII PATRIS EIVS
- 7 [----]ATE[----]

Translation

The people of Gozo (set up this inscription / monument) by public subscription in honour of Marcus Vallius Rufus of the Quirine tribe and son of Caius, raised to the rank of knight by the divine Antoninus Pius Augustus, on account of the merits of and to honour his father Caius Vallius Postumus, patronus of the municipium ----

Dating the inscriptions

Although emperor Hadrian (117-38 A.D.), mentioned and referred to as *divus* in *C.I.L.* ins. no. 7507, had been deified during his lifetime by his adopted son Antoninus Pius (138-61 A.D.),⁸ the mention of Antoninus Pius Augustus (deified after his death) and his being referred to as *divus* in both *C.I.L.* ins. nos. 7507 and 7508, suggest that both inscriptions could not have been made before emperor Antoninus Pius was dead and, thus, they could not pre-date the year 161 A.D. On the other hand, the indication of the voting-tribe (in these inscriptions: the Quirine tribe) to which a Roman citizen belonged tends to disappear from inscriptions in the 3rd century A.D., starting already since the late 2nd century A.D.⁹

Therefore, on the basis of their internal evidence, these two inscriptions must have been made during the second half of the 2nd century A.D.¹⁰

Caius Vallius Postumus

Both *praenomen* / forename and *nomen gentilicium* / family name (as well as the patronymic) of the person to whom *C.I.L.* ins. no. 7507 is dedicated are missing due to breakage on that part of the inscribed stone. However, his remaining *cognomen* Postumus is encountered also in *C.I.L.* ins. no. 7508 in respect of Caius Vallius Postumus, who like him is *patronus* of the Gozo *municipium* and is ascribed to the Quirine tribe. Furthermore, both inscriptions are dated to the same period, during which it is highly unlikely that there could have been another *patronus* ascribed to the same voting-tribe and bearing the same *cognomen*. In view of all this, Caius Vallius Postumus in *C.I.L.* ins. no. 7508 must be, almost undoubtedly, the same person to whom *C.I.L.* ins. no. 7507 is dedicated.

Roman citizens

The distinguishing factor of a Roman citizen was his enrolment in a *tribus* (or one of the 35 Roman voting-tribes / voting-districts into which Roman territory was divided for the purpose of voting in the assemblies) written in an abbreviated form after the patronymic and before the *cognomen* in male official nomenclature, as

required by the Gracchan *lex repetundarum*.¹¹ Both Caius Vallius Postumus and his son Marcus Vallius Rufus had, at some earlier stage, been granted Roman citizenship and subsequently enrolled in the Quirine tribe which was one of the rural tribes / districts. Together with the Veline tribe, the Quirine tribe had been established in 241 B.C.¹² specifically for enfranchised (Roman) citizens. The Vallii were granted Roman citizenship (and enrolled in the Quirine tribe) at a time when Roman citizenship was still a distinction and privilege. It was later, in 212 A.D., that Roman citizenship came to be extended to almost all the free population of the Roman empire by emperor Caracalla,¹³ very probably including also the native population of the Maltese islands. Thus, not having been Roman citizens by birth, Caius and his son Marcus must have been granted Roman citizenship as a form of honour and privilege bestowed upon them; perhaps (at least, in the case of Caius who was one of the *decuriones* as we shall see later on) when, in the 2nd century A.D., many *municipia* which were close to colonial status were given an "enhanced" form of Latin status (*Latium maius*), whereby all local *decuriones* or members of the *Ordo Decurionum* / local senate (and magistrates / public officials) automatically received Roman citizenship: a privilege given either as a reward for some form of co-operation with Rome or else as a more gratuitous sign of imperial favour.¹⁴

Members of the Equestrian Order / Equites

As indicated in both inscriptions, both father and son were *equites* / knights. *C.I.L.* ins. no. 7507 shows us that Caius was a *quadrigenarius*. The *quadrigenarius* was a *iudex* (like Caius himself, as we shall see below) who was in possession of 400,000 sesterces and, therefore, was of equestrian rank.¹⁵ On the other hand, his son Marcus is shown by *C.I.L.* ins. no. 7508 to have been furnished with a horse supplied by the state (... *equo publico exornato* ...) like those ranked as *equites* / knights,¹⁶ therefore, implying that he also belonged to this rank. As shown by their wealth which has enabled both of them to acquire an equestrian status,¹⁷ they could not have belonged to the inferior classes. Moreover, as they exercised the right of including the patronymic (i.e. their respective fathers' names) in their official nomenclature,

11. A. Lintott, *Imperium Romanum: Politics and Administration*, London 1993, 162 and *idem*, *The Constitution of the Roman Republic*, New York 2003, 30, 50-1.

12. E. Coleiro, *The Story of Rome*, Malta 1974, 158; Lintott 2003, 50 and *A Companion to Latin Studies*, 3rd edition, ed. J.E. Sandys, Cambridge 1921, 264.

13. Lintott 1993, 154, 164, 167, 191.

14. Lintott 1993, 165.

15. *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, ii, ed. P.G.W. Glare, London 1976, 1531 and *A Latin Dictionary*, ed. C.T. Lewis and C. Short, New York 1991, 1500. See also Lintott 2003, 71.

16. *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, 2nd edition, ed. M.C. Howatson, Oxford 1989, 220.

17. D. Earl, *The Age of Augustus*, London 1980, 83 and Howatson, 220.

8. J. Busuttill, 'Postumus', *Journal of the Faculty of Arts*, v, 3, 1976, 280 and W. Smith, *The Wordsworth Classical Dictionary*, 19th edition, Hertfordshire 1996, 38.

9. I. Calabi Limentani, *Epigrafia Latina*, Milano - Varese 1968, 160 and Keppie, 19.

10. Busuttill (280-1) suggests the same dating.

they were freeborn citizens.¹⁸ On the other hand, however, as among the families of the *liberti* / freedmen (and also of the inferior classes), *cognomina* were not inherited,¹⁹ the different *cognomina* of Caius and his son Marcus seem to suggest that, although freeborn, they hailed from the class of the *liberti* / freedmen; perhaps, as some ancestor of theirs managed to gain the free status which, then, remained to be enjoyed by all his future descendants, including Caius and Marcus.

Public offices of Caius Vallius Postumus

As we are told in *C.I.L.* ins. no. 7507, Caius Vallius Postumus had held every public office in *Gaulos*. He was one of the *decuriones* or members of the *Ordo Decurionum* / local senate of the Gozo *municipium*. Not only that, but he appears to have been also one of the two senior magistrates (senior public officials) or quinquennial judges dispensing justice (*duumviri iure dicundo*, assuming the function of censors every five years; thus, known as *quinquennales*).²⁰ He was *patronus* / patron of the same *municipium* to defend the interests of the latter in Rome and to serve as a channel of communication with the imperial court and other Roman authorities.²¹ Thus, he offered his services as an ambassador besides being also a *flamen* / priest of the imperial cult of Hadrian. As a *flamen* / priest, Caius may have also formed part of the *collegium* of *augustales* the vast majority of whom were freedmen and who, chosen by decree of the local council / senate, were originally dedicated to the worship of the Julian family but, later, seem to have extended their functions to the worship of the other emperors too.²² His forming part of the *collegium* of *augustales* may, therefore, also confirm his hailing from the class of the *liberti* / freedmen (*supra*) to whom he may have also offered his services as a legate as possibly indicated in *C.I.L.* ins. no. 7507.

18. While freedmen and freedwomen (i.e. ex-slaves or freed slaves) carried the name of their former master in their official nomenclature, generally also adding a Greek *cognomen*, freeborn men and women enjoyed the right of carrying their father's name (patronymic) in their official nomenclature.

19. Calabi Limentani, 158.

20. *Municipia*, whether Roman or Latin (the Maltese and Gozitan *municipia* were of a Latin status), were governed by two senior magistrates known as *duumviri* (alternatively, as *quattuorviri*) *iure dicundo*, assisted by two *aediles*: two junior magistrates known also as *duumviri* (alternatively, as *quattuorviri*) *aedilicia potestate*. The two senior magistrates dispensed justice while the two junior ones were responsible for roads, drainage, religious buildings, public baths, markets, and for ensuring the continuity of food supplies. Often added to these, there were *quaestores* responsible for the financial affairs. Every five years, the two senior magistrates assumed the function of censors (thus, known as *quinquennales*) to revise the census roll (i.e. the lists of property as a basis for the yearly local taxation) of the citizens and of the town council. (See Keppie, 52-3; Lintott 1993, 145; and *idem* 2003, 115-7, 130-1, 136). The municipal *duumviri iure dicundo* seem to reflect a continuation of the concept of dual magistracy exercised in Gozo (and, presumably, even in Malta) since at least the third century B.C. under the form of two *rabs* (*Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*, i, Paris 1883, ins. no. 132) continuing under the form of two *archontes* (in Malta but, presumably, even in Gozo) in the 1st century B.C. (G. Kaibel (ed.), *Inscriptiones Graecae*, xiv, Berlin 1890,

None of the magistrates / public officials mentioned in all the documented inscriptions from Malta and Gozo has such an elaborate *cursus honorum* as his. He is not only the best documented magistrate / public official that we have in *Melite* and *Gaulos* but, as shown in both inscriptions under review, he is attached great importance and, in his lifetime, he appears clearly to have been the most important magistrate / public official in *Gaulos*.

The dedication in the inscriptions

Both inscriptions (*C.I.L.* ins. nos. 7507 and 7508) are dedicated by the *plebs Gaultitana* / the people of Gozo (occasionally, *plebs* is given as *pleps* in certain inscriptions as in these two). *C.I.L.* ins. no. 7507 honours Caius Vallius Postumus himself, while *C.I.L.* ins. no. 7508 can be said to be honouring Caius (...[i]n] *solacium C(aii) Valli Postumi* ...) through his son Marcus because, ultimately, the reason behind both dedications are Caius' merits: [*o*]b *plura merita eius* ... (*C.I.L.* ins. no. 7507) and ... *ob merita* ... *C(aii)* ... *patris eius* ... (*C.I.L.* ins. no. 7508).

Therefore, none of the inscriptions is celebrating their promotion to the equestrian status as one may get the impression from a first glimpse of the inscriptions. Both Caius and his son Marcus had already been raised to this status by emperor Antoninus Pius who, by now, was dead and deified (in both inscriptions, Antoninus Pius is referred to as *divus*). Thus, both inscriptions, set up after the death of Antoninus Pius, must have been set up for a different purpose. This purpose, as already shown, must have been to honour Caius on account of his many merits (*C.I.L.* ins. no. 7507) and to honour Marcus – or rather to honour Caius through his son Marcus – on account of his father's (i.e. Caius') merits (*C.I.L.* ins. no. 7508). Perhaps we may safely assume that Caius' merits derive from the services he rendered to the Gozo *municipium* through his public offices outlined above. The mention of the promotion to the equestrian rank simply forms the *cursus honorum* of Marcus in *C.I.L.* ins. no. 7508 and part of the more elaborate *cursus honorum* of Caius in *C.I.L.* ins. no. 7507.

Caius' appearance in both inscriptions also seems to give further testimony to a greater importance being attached to him rather than to his son Marcus appearing only in *C.I.L.* ins. no. 7508. The same impression is attained by way of Caius' magistracy as a *patronus* / patron of *Gaulos* being also mentioned in both inscriptions, and in *C.I.L.* ins. no. 7507 it even tops his *cursus honorum*. Undoubtedly and as it is evident from both inscriptions, Caius must have been very – if not the most – prominent and distinguished in *Gaulos*.

ins. no. 953), eventually developing in the form of the two municipal senior magistrates (*duumviri iure dicundo*) later in Roman times.

21. *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 3rd edition, eds. S. Hornblower and A. Spawforth, Oxford 1996, 1127 and Lintott 1993, 168, 171-2.

22. P. Harvey, *The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*, Oxford 1984, 65-6 and Hornblower and Spawforth, 215.

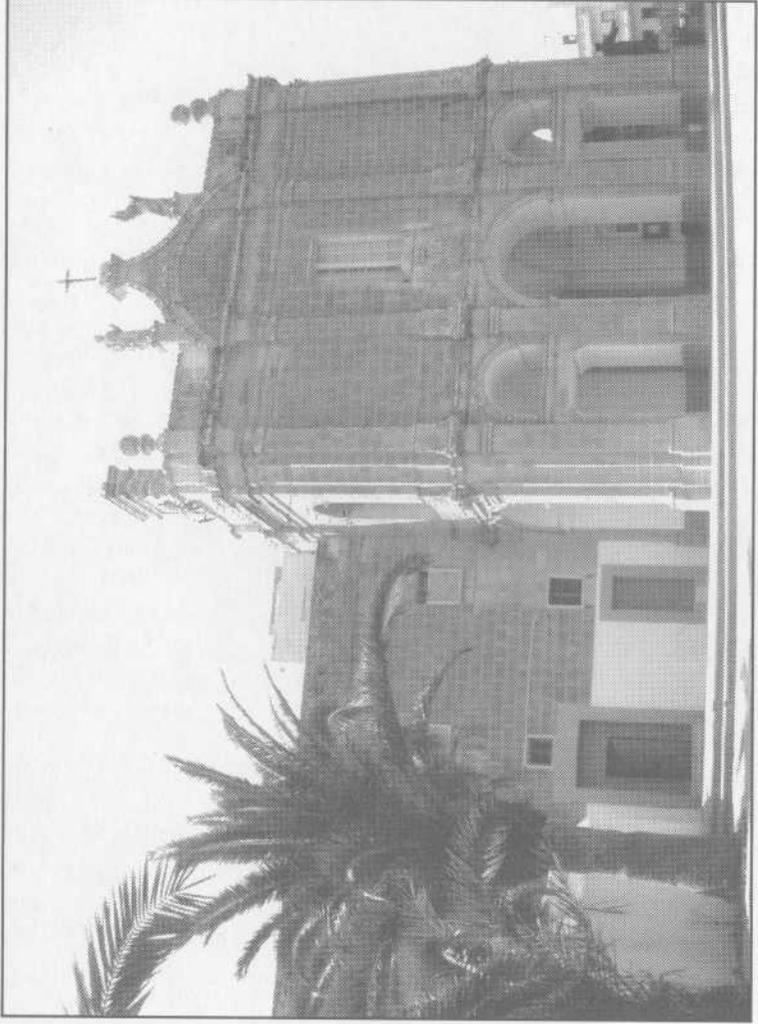


Fig. 3 The Capuchins' convent and church (Victoria); the earliest documented location of *C.I.L.* ins. no. 7507.