Inscribing Near Eastern Mobility in the Hellenistic and Roman Periods

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3 Inscribing Near Eastern mobility in the Hellenistic and Roman periods[1]

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Introduction

The potential for inscriptions to elucidate regional patterns of mobility and migration is well known. Many of the inscriptions surviving from the ancient world hint at mobility or explicitly mention individuals hailing from elsewhere. Such texts are often simple documents, providing merely a name and an origin. However, when placed in a wider context, they acquire meaning and can be used to trace patterns of mobility. They cover layers of society that are normally excluded by the ancient literary tradition. They come very close to individual experiences and occasionally to the life stories of migrants.

At the same time, it is not always clear how representative the epigraphic material is. Formulaic expressions, epigraphic habits, patterns of commemoration, social biases, and selectivity in self-representation determine to a large extent what is and what is not documented in epigraphy. Usually, it is hard to ascertain which information has been left out. Consequently, the extent to which findings may or may not be significant remains difficult to evaluate.

Although the phenomenon of epigraphic biases is well known, it is not always realised that large differences also exist *within* the epigraphic record itself. In this paper, we discuss the possibilities and problems of analysing mobility through epigraphy by studying these differences. In doing so, we juxtapose three different sets of inscriptions, all pertaining to Near Eastern mobility: a series of Greek epigrams, a set of inscriptions from the city of Bostra, and a series of inscriptions from Rome that document soldiers from the Near East who were stationed there (see Map 3.1). All three sets pertain to Near Eastern mobility in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. All cover roughly the same population, yet all reveal very different features. None of these three cases can be said to present the full record of Syrian mobility. All demonstrate biases in what is documented and what is left out. These differences might complicate our understanding of mobility patterns, but we argue that they also help to elucidate how mobility was inscribed in differing contexts.[2]

Greek epigrams

The discussion starts with a series of 14 Greek funerary epigrams that refer to mobility in the Near East (see Table 3.1). These are taken from the relevant
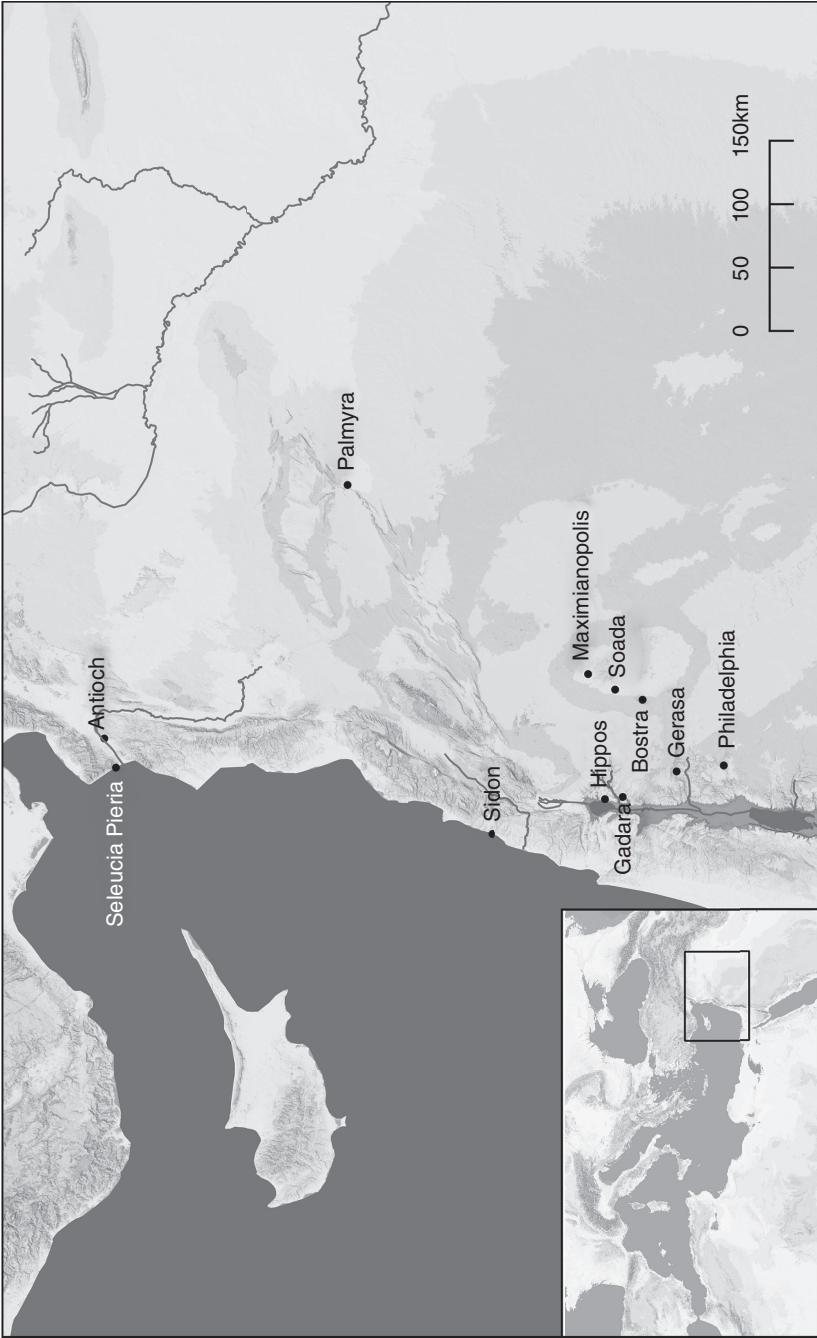
Map 3.1 The main place names cited in this chapter

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Table 3.1 Greek epigrams from the Near East

SGO	Provenance stone	Date of text	Itinerary	Remarks[5]
20/01/03	Seleukia Pieria	1st c. BCE	(1) Seleukia Pieria → Delos (†) (2) Seleukia Pieria → Rhodes (†)	Two brothers, each moving in different directions; an unmarried sister and their mother died at home; commemoration by father; partial cenotaph
20/15/03 = *Anth. Pal.* 7.462	Tyre or Sidon	3rd–1st c. BCE	Tyre → Sidon (†)	Woman, died during pregnancy; burial abroad
20/27/02 = 24/34	prob. first Nisibis, then Rome	114–117 CE	Iberia → Nisibis (†) → later post-mortem transfer to Rome	Caucasian prince participating in Parthian expedition of Trajan who died and was buried near Nisibis; later reburial in Rome (transfer of mortal remains and monument)
21/03/01	Caesarea Maritima	1st–4th CE	Italy → Caesarea Maritima (†)	Imperial freedwoman; burial abroad
21/05/01	Gaza	3rd c. BCE	(1) Anapolis, Crete → Gaza (†) (2) Aetolia → Gaza	Two soldiers serving in the Ptolemaic army, one the father-in-law of the other; burial abroad
21/21/01	Hippos	2nd c. CE	Gadara → Hippos (†)	Adult male (22) who died in the hometown of his mother; commemorated by parent(s); burial abroad
21/23/02	Gerasa	3rd c. CE	Antioch → Gerasa (†)	Woman who left with her husband her hometown; commemoration by husband; burial abroad
*21/23/10[6]	Gerasa	2nd–3rd c. CE	Phrygia → Gerasa (†)	Young woman, unmarried; parents had been born in Italy and moved to Phrygia; burial abroad
22/21/02[7]	Sakkeia/ Maximianopolis	2nd–3rd c. CE	Sakkeia/Maximianopolis → Athens (†) → post-mortem return to Maximianopolis	Sophist; repatriation

(*Continued*)

Table 3.1 (Continued)

SGO	Provenance stone	Date of text	Itinerary	Remarks[5]
22/33/03[8]	Migdala	2nd–4th c. CE	Migdala → Rome (or Constantinople) (†, 50)	Death on an embassy to Rome (or Constantinople); also on record in 22/33/02 as a rhetor who built a tomb for his parents and himself in Migdala; cenotaph
22/36/01	Soada	2nd–3rd c. CE	Antioch → Soada (†, 29)	Woman, married with children; burial abroad; commemoration by husband
22/37/01	Namara	2nd–3rd c. CE	(1) Namara → [abroad] (†) → post-mortem return to Namara (2) Namara → [abroad] (†) → post-mortem return to Namara	Husband and wife, who seem to have moved away from their hometown in different directions; repatriation and commemoration by a nephew
22/43/01	Adraha	Unknown	Hometown unknown → at sea near Adraha† (?) → burial Adraha	Male; probably drowned; burial abroad
22/49/01	Hauran?	3rd c. CE, probably ca. 270 CE	Hauran? → Egypt → Hauran?	Probably soldier; repatriation; commemoration by mother and uncle

sections of a corpus of *Steinepigramme* compiled by Merkelbach and Stauber.[3] Epigrams were written in large numbers, and, as argued in a previous study, they offer stylised but also highly individualised vignettes that make it possible to reconstruct patterns of mobility in some detail.[4] They both record actual mobility and shed light on ancient perceptions of it.

Two texts may be used to illustrate this point:
SGO 22/36/01[9] (Soada/Dionisias; second–third centuries CE):

Farewell beauty, most excellent of all women in all respects,
noblest spouse, model for all beauties who love their men,
Flavia, who got your name from the Charites;
having left your husband children as an image of your virtue,
you were not in time to see again with them your fatherland Antioch,
your beloved kinsmen and also your father who longs for you.
29 years and 10 months old.

Χαῖρε καλή, πασῶν προφερεστάτη εἵνεκε πάντων,
σεμνοτάτη συνόμευνε, καλῶν ὑπόδειγμα φιλάνδρων,
Φλάουια, τῶν Χαρίτω[ν] τοὔνομα κτησαμένη·
εἰκόνα {σ} σῆς ἀρετῆς παῖδας γαμέτη προλιποῦσα
οὐκ ἔφθης μετὰ τοῖσι πάτραν φιλίο[υ]ς τε συναίμους,
Ἀντιόχειαν ἰδεῖν γενέτην θ᾽ ἅμα τὸν σὲ ποθοῦντα.
Ἐτῶν κθ´, μηνῶν ι´

The epigram, commissioned by her husband, commemorates a Flavia Charis who died at age 29. She left behind her children and was said not to be able to revisit her hometown Antioch, where her relatives and father still lived. She was buried in Soada, the place where she must have moved to with her husband.

SGO 20/01/03 (Seleukeia Pieria; first century BCE):

Three children from easy-delivering Hermione Andron lost
and he will see none of them tending his old age;
no, Pamphilos died in Delos, and Andromachos
lies under Rhodes' earth, and Hermione in our fatherland
and the much lamented girl died shortly after her mother:
Pamphile who did not enter the age of wedding;
nor do the deceased share the same dust, for another
earth covers each of them; a single tomb, however, preserves their memory.

Τρισσοὺς εὐώδεινος ἀφ᾽ Ἑρμιόνης λίπεν Ἄνδρων
κηδεμόνας, λεύσει δ᾽ οὐδένα γηροκόμον·
ἀλλ᾽ ὁ μὲν ἐν Δήλῳ θάνε Πάμφιλος, Ἀνδρόμαχος δὲ
νέρθε Ῥόδου, πάτρας δ᾽ ἔνδοθεν Ἑρμιόνη,
ἁ δὲ πολυθρήνητος ἐπέφθιτο ματέρι κούρα

Παμφίλη ὡραίων οὐκ ἐπιβᾶσα γάμων·
οὐδὲ καταφθιμένων αὐτὰ κονίς, ἄλλα γὰρ ἄλλα
γᾶ κατέχει, μνάμαν δ᾽ εἷς ἐφύλαξε τάφος.

This stone was put up by a father named Andron, who lamented the fate of his wife and his three children, all of whom had died. His wife Hermione and his daughter Pamphile died at home, in Seleukia Pieria. His two sons died abroad and were buried there, Pamphilos in Delos and Andromachos in Rhodes. The memorial, the 'single tomb', which was partly a cenotaph, reunited the family at least in an abstract sense.

Such details are interesting, and arguably it is precisely the small biographical details that create a sense of the complexities of mobility patterns. But in view of their exiguous numbers, the vignettes provided by these 14 texts are bound to remain anecdotal if they are not situated in a wider context. One way of doing so is to set them against the epigrams found outside the Near East.[10]

Epigrams are highly stylised texts, both in phrasing and in content. They are therefore selective in what they represent. It is striking that many record itineraries over long distances, such as occurs in the epigram just cited mentioning two brothers who had moved from Seleukia Pieria to Delos and Rhodes[11] or in a fragmentary text attesting to a couple who moved from Italy to Phrygia and, subsequently, to their daughter's move to Gerasa.[12] At the same time, it is remarkable that no texts refer explicitly and unambiguously to permanent migration, though many leave that possibility open. Some texts imply temporary stays of longer duration, such as an epitaph of a sophist who died in Athens.[13] Others refer to short journeys, such as a text referring to an embassy.[14] Some texts refer to continued ties with the place of birth.[15] At the other end of the geographical spectrum, local mobility within the territory of a *polis* is rarely found in the epigrams, and the same can be said of rural mobility in general. Most texts refer to voluntary mobility. Even the imperial freedwoman who appears in one text may have moved as a free person rather than as a slave.[16] Other texts refer to state-organised military expeditions.[17] The general patterns seem to follow those of the distribution of epigrams in general. They suggest a type of inter-*polis* mobility closely connected to patterns of urbanisation, in which permanent resettlement could certainly occur but was not the norm.

Many epigrams mention places that are quite distant from one another, involving itineraries that cover hundreds of kilometres. Yet it is remarkable that most of the itineraries remained confined to the Greek world. Many refer to movement within the Near East, such as a text referring to a move from Tyre to Sidon, or from Gadara to Hippos, or from Antioch to Gerasa.[18] Some concern movement into the larger Greek world, outside the Near East, as in a text documenting a move from Maximianopolis to Athens or a text referring to moves from Seleukia Pieria to Delos and to Rhodes.[19] Italy is mentioned in one inscription, which would seem to refer to migration by parents from Italy to Phrygia and subsequently to Gerasa.[20] Rome is implied as the place of origin in a text for an imperial slave who was said to hail from Italy.[21] While the epigraphic record clearly attests to connections between the Near East and Rome after the former's incorporation into the Empire, other localities of the Western Empire are completely absent from these epigrams. The patterns suggest that the Greek world remained somewhat apart from the rest of the empire.

On *a priori* grounds, it can be assumed that the individuals who commissioned or wrote the epigrams belonged to a cultured substratum of urban society. This substratum was comprised of individuals who wanted to participate in the Greek *polis*-culture and who used epigrams to express their cultural competence. Yet such persons formed a surprisingly large group. Some individuals had a relatively high status, at the level of the local cultured elite. Hence we find, for example, a sophist who had moved from Maximianopolis to Athens.[22] Highest in rank is a Caucasian prince, but his epigram can be regarded as exceptional in a number of ways.[23] More humble people, such as a soldier,[24] are also represented, along with those of more ambiguous status, such as an imperial freedwoman.[25] Almost all texts give only single names. Although this might be explained by metrical requirements, the names that are used are common and do not appear to point to particularly high status.[26] While the people who commissioned the epigrams certainly included only a part of the urban population, it is equally certain that they were not confined to the elite (regardless of how we may define it).

The vast majority of people mentioned in the epigrams appear to have moved as individual migrants. They were mostly young adult males. Movement by young men is explicitly mentioned in the epigram of Andron of Seleukia Pieria previously cited, where two brothers moved out in different directions but a sister remained (and died) at home.[27] 'Young adult' is admittedly a flexible category, and some of the attested migrants were probably somewhat older, such as a soldier who died on a military expedition in Egypt and the sophist previously mentioned.[28] An ambassador who died during his embassy was commemorated at age 50.[29] Next to male migrants, a number of women also appear. In the general sample of 146 epigrams, which we discussed in a previous article, they constituted about one-fifth of all cases; in the 14 epigrams from the Near East, six women occur.[30] We tend to interpret most female movement as a form of marital mobility.[31] Marital mobility is, for example, implied in an epigram for a woman from Tyre who died in Sidon shortly before giving birth.[32] Conversely, when a female migrant is said to have died unmarried, it seems likely she had travelled with her family of birth.[33]

One other feature, which figures prominently, is that when people died outside their hometown, their relatives took great care to oversee their proper burial.[34] Many of these texts revolved around the contrast between death in foreign lands and the notion of *patris*, the community where one belonged.[35] Death and subsequent burial elsewhere were considered a sign of misfortune.[36] In a number of cases, the body or the ashes were actually brought home;[37] the body of the previously mentioned sophist, for example, was returned to Maximianopolis all the way from Athens.[38] A nephew attests to his efforts in bringing back the remains of his aunt and uncle, who had died in different places.[39] If repatriation was not feasible, a cenotaph could be erected in the hometown.[40]

The epigrams are thus a series of small windows that provide insight on individual patterns of mobility. Wider patterns may be explored by a *mise en série* of these texts. The texts should be understood in the context of a literary culture in which the post-Classical *polis* community was a major point of reference. They portray a world full of mobility in which parts of the urban population moved over

long distances without much difficulty. The individual moves created a network among hundreds of settlements. Issues of zoning apart, there is nothing specifically Near Eastern about the patterns. Even the names of the persons involved are common Greek names. The lack of geographical specificity should be explained by the way these documents functioned. They were a product of Greek *polis* culture, which put strong emphasis on cultural competence in all things Greek. The epigrams convey a sense of belonging to a Greek world in which individual Greek communities were unified through culture. The community of origin remained the major point of reference – hence the negative connotations of dying 'abroad' and the efforts to return the deceased home – but all such communities were supposed to share a number of similar cultural traits.

Roman Bostra

Our second case concerns the city of Bostra. The city is located in southern Syria, on the southern edge of the Hawran, at the border of the Jordanian plateau.[41] Modern Bosra al-Sham is a relatively small town. It is a UNESCO World Heritage site, with important ruins from several historical periods.

Bostra has had a long history and has nearly always had a mixed population.[42] From the beginning of the first century BCE, the city was part of the Nabataean kingdom, which had grown rich through the trade in perfume and spices. Under their last king, Rabbel II (70–106 CE), Bostra became the second city of the Nabataean kingdom after Petra. Following the death of Rabbel II, the kingdom of the Nabataeans was annexed by Rome in 106 CE to form the core of the newly created province of Arabia.[43] Bostra became the prime city of this new province.[44] From the perspective of the newly created province, its location was a-central, but from a Roman administrative viewpoint, its proximity to Syria was an advantage.[45] It became one of the *conventus* centres and the place where the governor resided. More importantly, it was the base of the legion that controlled the province; at least part of Legio III Cyrenaica was stationed there, being transferred from Egypt (with VI Ferrata also having some role).[46] The city held *polis* status from at least 120 CE onwards.[47] By the time of Alexander Severus, its status was elevated to that of a Roman colony, while Philip the Arab turned it into a *metropolis*.[48] Throughout the Roman period, the city seems to have been in competition with Petra, vying for titles and honours.[49] Queen Zenobia of Palmyra sacked Bostra in 270 CE, but the city's epigraphy and archaeology testify to continued prosperity up until the reign of Justinian. The city had town walls, baths, a hippodrome, a theatre, and an amphitheatre.[50]

The size of the population of Bostra is difficult to determine, but it is likely to have grown considerably during the Roman period. It has been estimated that its extraordinarily well preserved theatre could have held 8,000–9,000 spectators.[51] This, in and of itself, may not mean much, as the scale of public buildings primarily reflects urban wealth and status rather than population size. Still, on the basis of the size of the urban territory, we could perhaps posit an urban population of the same magnitude or slightly greater.[52] It has also been claimed that the city was

divided into two ethnic quarters, with one part reserved for the Roman stratum of administrators and another part for the local population.[53] Although the Romans certainly expanded the city, in the absence of information about residential buildings, the argument is highly speculative, and such residential segregation was certainly not the norm everywhere.[54] Be that as it may, it is likely that Bostra had in the second and third centuries CE a sizable and growing population that was ethnically diverse.

Hints for such ethnic diversity have been sought in the onomastic profile of the Bostrians. It should be kept in mind, however, that associating names with clear-cut ethnic categories should be approached with caution. On the basis of an analysis of the names which are preserved in the epigraphy of the Roman period, Maurice Sartre attempted to analyse the ethnic background of the population of Bostra.[55] The roughly 250 different names that are attested fall into two major groups and one small third group. The first includes ca. 140 names that are Semitic, the second had ca. 100 Graeco-Roman names, and the third category includes a handful of other names that fall into neither category. Sartre tried to distinguish within the first group of Semitic names two major subcategories: he distinguished Nabataean from Safaitic names and argued that the latter belonged to nomads who over time had decided to move to the city and had opted for a sedentary life. However, as Macdonald argued in response, the categorisation of Semitic names into these two categories is extremely problematic, the validity of Safaitic as an ethnic category is highly questionable, and there is little positive support for the idea that the nomads settled in the city during this period.[56] In the case of the Graeco-Roman names, assigning ethnic backgrounds is obviously an impossibility: many of the names were assumed by locals, and the Roman citizenship indicated by *tria nomina* might as well have belonged to local residents as to outsiders.[57] The third category, that of other names, is more likely to comprise immigrants, but only few names are preserved in the epigraphic record.[58] While the onomastic analysis is certainly useful, its value for the study of ethnic diversity remains ultimately limited. Sartre's categories cannot be directly translated into locals and immigrants. However, the general patterns do not seem to be in doubt and confirm what we would expect on historical grounds: they suggest a highly diverse population, with many people originating from elsewhere.

How this diversity is expressed in the inscriptions, beyond the onomastic hints that Sartre analysed, must be questioned. Right after the arrival of the Romans, Greek and Latin inscriptions began to appear in Bostra,[59] and a significant number of inscriptions survive from the subsequent centuries. The published corpus contains ca. 1,000 inscriptions, of which approximately 600 stem from the city itself and the rest from its environs.[60]

Given the relative ubiquity of inscriptions and the mixed nature of the city's population, one might expect a fair number of explicit references to foreign origin. Yet the epigraphically attested evidence for migration is surprisingly meagre. We have found in the corpus only 15 cases in which foreign origin is made explicit (see Table 3.2).[61] Eleven of these are epitaphs, the remaining four dedications. Twelve are in Latin, three in Greek. The majority, 12, concern army personnel; the

Table 3.2 Migrants in Bostra and environment

IGLS 13.1–2	Provenance stone	Date[62]	Itinerary	Commentary
9016	Bostra	Undated	Thysdrus → Bostra	Latin dedication, perhaps by merchants in grain,[63] in other wares, or, alternatively, by soldiers[64]
9052–9053 (with addenda)	Bostra	late 2nd–early 3rd c. CE (Julia Domna)	Parthicopolis (possibly in the Strymon Valley) → Bostra	Latin dedication to members of the Severan dynasty, almost certainly by a soldier
9177	Bostra	Undated	Corinth→ Bostra (†)	Latin epitaph, possibly for a soldier, set up by his wife
9179	Bostra	Probably 2nd c. CE	Philadelphia → Bostra (†)	Latin epitaph for an *optio hastati* of Legio VI, commemorated by mother and sister
9183	Bostra	Undated	Mantua, Lombardia, Italy → Bostra (†)	Latin epitaph for a *centurio* of Legio III, set up by his wife
9187[65]	Bostra	2nd half of2nd c. CE	Forum Sempronii, Umbria, Italy → Noricum? → Germania Inferior? → Bostra (†, 39)	Latin epitaph for a *centurio* of Legio III, whose previous career is listed, set up by his brother and his wife
9188[66]	Bostra	Undated	Britannia? → Bostra (†, 30)	Latin epitaph for a *centurio*
9193	Bostra	Second half of 3rd–4th c. CE	Doecis, Pannonia → Bostra (†, 35)	Latin epitaph for a wife of a *centurio*; the *vicus* Doecis is otherwise unknown
9194	Probably Bostra	Undated	Thrace → Bostra (†, 38)	Latin epitaph for a soldier of Legio III; commemoration by his heir

ID	Location	Date	Route	Description
9203	Bostra	Undated	Carthage → Bostra (†, 40)	Latin epitaph for a soldier of Legio III
9396 (with addenda)[67]	Bostra	320–321 CE	Bostra → Mesopotamia (†) → post-mortem return to Bostra	Gr. epitaph for a soldier of Legio III; repatriation of remains
9475	Bostra	139–161 CE	Unknown (probably Italy) → Bostra	Latin dedication of a temple by Roman citizens living in Bostra
9506	Bostra	Undated	Celeia, Noricum (mod. Celje, Slovenia) → Bostra (†, 32)	Latin epitaph for a soldier, possibly a centurion of Legio III by his wife, who might be his freedwoman
9601	Tisiyeh (11 km S. of Bostra)	Undated	Tisiyeh → Rome → Tisiyeh (†,70)	Greek epitaph for a villager who as ambassador went to Rome; probably he was a large landowner who went on behalf of Bostra
9820	Taleh (W. of Suweida)	146 CE	Camerinum?, Marche, Italy → Taleh	Greek dedication of a *praetorium* by a *praefect* of Cohors III *Tracum Syriaca*

other three concern civilians (twice a group of traders [although in one case they may also have been a soldier] and an ambassador). The large military presence no doubt goes a long way to explain the dominance of Latin, though not all Latin inscriptions belong to soldiers.

The inscriptions are not as uniform as in the other two cases discussed in this chapter. An example of the military epitaphs reads as follows:

IGLS 13.9179 (Bostra, prob. 2c CE)

T(itus) Flavius M(arci) f(ilius) / *Col(lina) Marcianus,* / *domo Philad(elphia),* *op(tio)* / *hast(ati) leg(ionis) VI Ferr(atae). Fl(avia) Lu*/*culla mater et Fl(avia)* / *Ialla soror her(edes) eius.*

Titus Flavius Marcianus, son of Marcus, of the Collina tribe, home town Philadelphia, *optio hastati* of the 6th legion Ferrata. His mother Flavia Luculla and his sister Flavia Ialla, (who are) his heirs, (made this monument).

Titus Flavius Marcianus held the rank of a subaltern officer. It is not known for certain which Philadelphia was his hometown, but the city in Arabia (modern Amman) is the most likely option. Soldiers were often buried by their fellow soldiers, who were also often their heirs. In this case, the heirs who were responsible for the epitaph were his mother and sister. The absence of the mention of a father suggests that the latter had died previously. The absence of a wife suggests Titus Flavius Marcianus died unmarried; presumably he was still in his twenties. It is possible that his mother and sister had come over with the specific purpose of taking care of the burial, especially if Philadelphia was the nearby city of Amman, but one may also envisage a scenario in which the entire family had settled in Bostra, for example, because the sister had married another soldier and the mother, after the death of her husband, had moved into the household of her son-in-law. Obviously, such reconstructions must remain highly speculative; the inscription fits more than one scenario.

Among the other inscriptions attesting to foreigners at Bostra, we find a dedication by a community of outsiders, possibly Roman citizens, living in Bostra;[68] Thusdritani (from modern El Djem, Tunisia) are mentioned,[69] as is a Bostrian ambassador who had travelled to Rome on unknown business and died at home shortly afterwards.[70] The other cases concern military personnel and their wives, mentioning various places and regions of origin:[71] Celeia, Parthicopolis, Philadelphia (previously cited), Pannonia, Thrace, Carthage, Britannia,[72] and, within Italy, Mantua, Forum Sempronii, Camerinum and Rome (see Table 3.2). In addition, there is a soldier who died in Mesopotamia and whose remains were returned to Bostra.[73] As the example previously cited demonstrates, even the simpler texts contain some interesting details. However, the texts are too few in number to merit sustained analysis. Apart from the fact that a relatively high number of Italians served in the army, little else can be determined.[74] Although the texts themselves can easily be reconciled with the mobility patterns of soldiers, traders, and administrators, the most noteworthy feature is that so little mobility is documented.

Somewhat ironically, the very few extant external texts in which Bostrians occur document the expected levels of mobility much better. For example, a registration of a slave sale at Oxyrhynchus by a woman from Bostra mentions a slave who was probably born in Bostra and subsequently was sold and resold multiple times.[75] A letter written by a soldier enrolled in a cohort in Bostra to his father in Karanis testifies to frequent contacts with the home community: letters were apparently brought regularly with persons who went to Karanis. In addition, it mentions daily visits to the legion by merchants from Pelusium who brought supplies.[76] In a second letter to his mother, he refers to the wealth of goods on sale at Bostra, implying lively trade connections.[77] It is, of course, precisely the fact that texts concerned with Bostrians are found outside of Bostra that implies movement, but still the difference with the epigraphy from Bostra itself is striking. Whereas the small number of external texts immediately offers insights on patterns of mobility, the much more numerous inscriptions from Bostra itself offer mere glimpses.

Explaining this absence of evidence is hazardous. Bostra clearly had a relatively well developed epigraphic tradition, especially by Syrian standards. In view of its late incorporation into the Roman world, it is noteworthy that the practice of setting up inscriptions quickly caught on. The fact that most epigraphy is of relatively late date (second century onwards) is noteworthy, but it is difficult to see how it can serve as an explanation for the fact that outsiders are mentioned in only in ca 2 per cent of the texts from Bostra.[78] What is clear is that, in the case of Bostra, the absence of epigraphic evidence for mobility does not constitute an absence of mobility. In this case, mobility is severely under-documented.

Near Eastern soldiers in Rome

Our third and final case concerns the evidence for soldiers from the Near East who are epigraphically attested in the city of Rome. Various troops were stationed in the city of Rome in the imperial period, of which the three most important divisions were the praetorian guard, the urban cohorts, and the imperial horse guard. In addition to these, military subdivisions of the fleet were assigned to moving the awnings at the Colosseum, while various other soldiers stopped in the city for different periods of time. The permanently stationed troops were of vital importance for the emperor, and these soldiers found themselves in a privileged position, receiving higher pay and obtaining earlier release from service than other soldiers.[79] As a rule, soldiers for these troops were recruited from outside the city. In the case of the imperial horse guard, horsemen came from the provinces (initially Batavians from the Rhine areas, later also from other frontier zones); in the case of the praetorian guard and the urban cohorts, they were initially recruited from Italy, with the recruitment pool later widened to include the provinces. Consequently, a fair number of people from the Near East entered the troops, especially in the later centuries.

The evidence for Near Eastern soldiers has been set out in Table 3.3; it is based on a list compiled by David Noy.[80] It concerns people appearing in inscriptions found in Rome belonging to a military unit who mention a place or region of origin in the Near East.

Table 3.3 Near Eastern soldiers attested in Rome

Reference	Provenance stone	Date	Itinerary	Commentary
CIL 6.2627	Rome, *Via Salaria Nuova*	1st–2nd c. CE	Laodikeia → Rome (†, 32)	Latin epitaph, praetorian guard
CIL 6.2910	Rome	1st c. CE (Solin)	Berytus → Rome (†, 40)	Latin epitaph for a member of the urban cohorts
CIL 6.3114	Rome		Syria → Rome (†, 30)	Latin epitaph, fleet Misenum (Reddé)
CIL 6.3138	Rome		Syria → Rome (†, 37)	Latin epitaph, fleet Misenum
CIL 6.3151	Rome		Syria → Rome (†)	Latin epitaph, fleet Ravenna
CIL 6.3174; Speidel 1994b, no. 41	Rome	2nd c. CE (Speidel)	Palmyra, Syria → Rome	Latin dedication, imperial horse guard
CIL 6.3197; Speidel 1994b, no. 115	Rome	138–193 CE (Speidel)	Syria → Rome (†, 30)	Latin epitaph, imperial horse guard
CIL 6.3644	Rome		Antioch → Rome (†, 57)	Latin epitaph, veteran of Legio XII
CIL 6.32776[81]	Rome or Campania?	2nd c. CE	Syria → Rome (†, 30)	Latin epitaph, fleet. Misenum
CIL 6.32795; Speidel 1994b, no. 432	Rome	2nd–3rd c. CE (Speidel)	Syria → Rome (†, 35)	Latin epitaph, imperial horse guard
CIL 6.33009; Speidel 1994b, no. 328	Rome	138–193 CE (Speidel)	Syria → Rome (†, 40)	Latin epitaph, imperial horse guard
CIL 6.330039	Rome		Syria → Rome (†)	Latin epitaph, unit unknown
CIL 6.37254; Speidel 1994b, no. 350	Rome, *Via Labicana*, near graveyard of the *equites singulares*	138–193 CE (Speidel)	Syria → Rome (†, 30)	Latin epitaph, imperial horse guard

Reference	Location	Date	Origin → Destination	Description
IG 14.1661; *IGUR* 590	Rome	193–211? CE	Ascalon → Rome (†)	Greek epitaph, praetorian guard
Ferrua 1939, 154 no. 4	Rome		Berytus → Rome (†)	Latin epitaph, *frumentarius* of Legio II
Ferrua 1951, 112 no. 54; Speidel 1994b, no. 311	Rome, *Via Labicana*, graveyard of the *equites singulares*	Before 193 CE (Speidel)	Syria → Rome (†, 45)	Latin epitaph, imperial horse guard; perhaps *natio(ne) Surus* / [*Damasc(enus)*] (Speidel)
Speidel 1994b, no. 206	Rome, *Via Labicana*, graveyard of the *equites singulares*	138–193 CE	Caesarea Maritima → Rome (†, 28)	Latin epitaph, imperial horse guard
Speidel 1994b, no. 215	Rome, *Via Labicana*, graveyard of the *equites singulares*	2nd c. CE, before 193 CE (Speidel)	Syria → Rome (†, 46)	Latin epitaph, imperial horse guard; the deceased occurs possibly as commemorator for a freedman *nat(ione) Syrus Apamenus* in *CIL* 6.13021
Speidel 1994b, no. 265	Rome, *Via Labicana*, graveyard of the *equites singulares*	2nd c. CE, before 193 CE (Speidel)	Philadelphia → Rome (†, 35)	Latin epitaph, imperial horse guard
Speidel 1994b, no. 424	Rome, *Via Labicana*, graveyard of the *equites singulares*	2nd–3rd c. CE (Speidel)	Damascus → Rome (†)	Latin epitaph, imperial horse guard; l.4 *Damas[co* or *Damas[cen(us)* (Speidel)
Speidel 1994b, no. 524.	Rome, *Via Labicana*, graveyard of the *equites singulares*	After 193 CE	Syria → Rome (†, 40)	Latin epitaph, imperial horse guard

One text, which we have excluded, nevertheless merits some separate discussion. Its interest lies in the fact that it shows that the category of military migrants was not completely separated from that of civilians. It also demonstrates that even simple texts present real difficulties in the reconstruction of migration patterns.

CIL 6.3251[82]

D(is) M(anibus) / Domit(ius) Lucius qui vixit an(nos) / p(lus) m(inus) XXII nation(e) Surus / Dom(itius) Herenianus eq(ues) si(n)g(ularis) / d(omini) n(ostri) Aug(usti) et Dom(itius) Italu[s] / fratri b(ene) m(erenti) fecerun[t].

To the gods of the underworld. Domitius Lucius, who lived about 22 years, from Syria. Domitius Herenianus, member of the imperial horse guard of our lord emperor, and Domitius Italus for their brother, well deserving.

One of the two commemorators is a member of the imperial horse guard, but his origin is not indicated; the deceased, commemorated as 'brother', is from Syria, but his profession (military or otherwise) is also not stated. The uncertainty about his age ('about 22') is uncharacteristic for military epitaphs and may support civilian rather than military status. Speidel argued that the text concerned a family of three brothers, whose father Domitius became a member of the horse guard under Aurelian, with one of his sons following in his footsteps. Another son, Italus, was, to judge by his name, born in Italy.[83] However, it can be assumed that the sons were born after service as the marriage ban among the imperial horse guard was strictly enforced. Since the imperial horse guard was stationed in Rome, this would imply that in the inscription, *nation(e) Surus* would be used for a second-generation migrant. This cannot be excluded, but certain cases of such usage are very rare, and the contrast with the use of the name Italus for another son would be remarkable indeed. Perhaps the father served in Syria in some other unit, obtained his name there, and subsequently – after the birth of one son – moved to Italy. In addition, the name 'Italus' was perhaps given as an expression of loyalty rather than as a reference to birthplace.

From the city of Rome, there are 21 other inscriptions concerning soldiers from the Near East (see Table 3.3). They span the first to the third centuries CE. Eleven are for members of the imperial horse guard, two for members of the praetorian guard, one for a member of the urban cohorts, four for members of the fleet (three for the fleet at Misenum, one for the fleet at Ravenna), two for legionaries, and one from an unknown unit. One is written in Greek, the remainder in Latin.[84]

A typical example of a military migrant is *CIL* 6.3197 = Speidel (1994b) nr. 115:

D(is) M(anibus) / T(ito) Aurelio Claudiano / eq(uiti) sing(ulari) Aug(usti) tur(ma) Iuli / Maximini nat(ione) Surus / v(ixit) a(nnos) XXX m(ilitavit) a(nnos) X / M(arcus) Ulp(ius) Tiberinus / signifer her(es) eius / amico optimo / b(ene) m(erenti) c(uravit)

To the gods of the underworld. For Titus Aurelius Claudianus, member of the imperial horse guard, squadron of Iulius Maximinus, from Syria, who lived

30 years, and served 10 years. Marcus Ulpius Tiberinus, *signifer*, his heir, for his good friend, well deserving, took care [for the monument].

In contrast with the previous inscription, the interpretation of this text is straightforward. It concerns a soldier from Syria who was commemorated by his friend. On epitaphs from Rome, the naming patterns of commemorated soldiers were highly standardised and included, as a regular feature, the soldier's origin. Consequently, a great number of ethnicities are attested in the epigraphic record of these soldiers. Precisely because of their uniformity, even small variations in the epitaphs make it possible to offer broad dates. Compared with the civilian migrants attested in Rome, the military inscriptions are therefore both better dated and more precise, at least for the purposes of studying mobility.

Although caution is needed, there is no obvious reason why a particular group of soldiers in Rome would be more or less prone to record their origin than other groups of soldiers. This implies that the percentage of surviving epitaphs can be taken as an indicator of a region's overall contribution to the military population in Rome. The evidence compiled by Noy suggests that, among the provincials serving in Rome, about 4 per cent came from the Near East.[85]

This suggestion can be refined, as it is clear that recruitment patterns varied significantly from unit to unit. For the imperial horse guard, the percentage of Near Easterners is 5 per cent, which is very similar to Noy's estimate of the overall presence of Eastern soldiers in Rome.[86] However, the urban cohorts were mainly recruited from within Italy; only one person from the Near East is attested. Consequently, the percentage of Near Easterners among the urban cohorts is extremely low, below 0.3 per cent.[87] In principle, such percentages could be even further refined, as it is also clear that recruitment areas shifted over time. However, for the present series of inscriptions, the numbers are so small that, with the fragmentation of the sample, they lose meaning.

The actual percentages are perhaps less relevant, and we may leave the question open as to what the limited participation of Near Eastern soldiers stationed in Rome implies. The crucial point is that a relatively small set of 21 inscriptions can, with some confidence, be used for such calculations. Whereas the epigrams cannot be turned into statistics and the inscriptions from Bostra certainly underrepresent migration, we can make relatively precise calculations in this third case, despite the fact that each of the three sets comprises roughly equal numbers of texts. One is reminded of the statistical rule that the size of a sample does not matter, as long as we can be confident that it is representative. In the case of the soldiers stationed in Rome, we can; in the case of the epigrams and the inscriptions from Bostra, we cannot.

Yet there is more to say about the Roman military inscriptions. Despite the factual appearance of the statements of origin, in recent years the malleability of ethnic descriptors has been emphasised.[88] This applies also to the seemingly straightforward military epitaphs. In the case of our list, two features stand out: soldiers are very often simply described broadly as 'Syrian' (or, in one case, as 'Arabian'), and in the cases where more specific information is given, usually

only one of the larger cities occurs.[89] Both phenomena can be observed for all provincial groups that are mentioned in the military inscriptions. An ethnic descriptor like *Syrus* was probably not meant as a precise reference to the administrative province but rather referred to the broader region of that name.[90] It is further most unlikely that all soldiers only originated from the larger cities of the empire. In fact, it makes more sense to assume that they often, if not normally, originated from the countryside.[91] Part of the explanation is no doubt to be sought in the practicalities of the military administration, for the naming patterns of the epitaphs are very similar to the ones used in official military documents like *diplomata*.[92] Although the extent to which ethnic identities were assigned by the army administrators or assumed by the individual soldiers remains an open question, it is clear that identities were subject to construction. Soldiers from the Near East were not 'Syrian' or 'Arabian' by nature; being a Syrian or Arabian was not an ontological and immutable fact. In fact, it might be assumed that, in their home region, the primary allegiance would have been with their home community rather than with a wider region. When they entered the army and left their place of origin, such points of reference lost their relevance – both to the army administrators and to their fellow soldiers – just as, within the Near East, *natione Surus* or *natione Arabus* would appear superfluous. In that sense, soldiers from the Near East became Syrian or Arabian when they served in Rome.

Conclusions

Our analysis does not intend to suggest that epigraphy is less suited to the study of migration and mobility than the other methods explored in this book. Epigraphy certainly is a useful source, and much of the evidence still awaits further exploration. However, it needs to be realised that, between different series of inscriptions, there exist significant variations in the way mobility is inscribed. We presented three series of texts that concern roughly the same area yet show radically different characteristics. The differences almost immediately raise questions of representativeness, comparison, and context.

It seems a coincidence that the three series show no direct overlap. There are no Greek epigrams (case 1) for soldiers stationed in Rome (case 3), no people from Bostra (case 2) among the soldiers in Rome (case 3), no epigrams concerning migration (case 1) found in Bostra (case 2). However, such overlap certainly could have occurred.[93] Soldiers appear in some numbers in the epigrams (but not soldiers stationed in Rome), epigrams were set up in Bostra as well (but no movement is referred to in the Bostrian epigrams), and as Bostra was the most important city of the province Arabia, there is no reason that someone among the soldiers who were stationed in Rome could not have mentioned Bostra as his place of origin in his epitaph. It follows from the potential overlap that the population represented by the three series is more or less the same. The differences between the documented patterns of mobility thus cannot be explained away by assuming that they concerned completely different groups of people with different patterns of mobility.

All three series are small: 14 epigrams, 15 texts from Bostra, and 21 inscriptions from Rome. The small number of each almost immediately requires us to place the texts in a wider context, to compare them with larger series of texts. In the case of the epigrams, the obvious context is that of Greek epigrams produced elsewhere. In the case of the migratory inscriptions from Bostra, the point of reference is that of the complete epigraphic record of Bostra. The military epitaphs of Near Eastern soldiers stationed in Rome acquire meaning when they are set against the remainder of the military epigraphy of Rome. The crucial point is that the required context for each of these series is different. Simply lumping the inscriptions together under a single heading of 'Near Eastern mobility' would obscure this.

However, to emphasise complexity without further analysis is ultimately not the most satisfactory of intellectual strategies. The differences still need an explanation. Although only brief remarks can be offered here, it seems highly likely that epigraphic expressions of ethnic origin are context dependent and that in each of the three sets, they played a different role.

One might describe the world of the epigrams as fundamentally open. The epigrams present a network of cities, strung together by a shared set of cultural values, which were elitist in nature but open to those who wanted to participate in them. Travelling and living elsewhere are mentioned without hesitation, perhaps even with pride, and movement abroad was certainly not conceptualised as problematic (though one's own *patris* remained the point of reference). Inscribing one's movement between such centres can be understood as an expression of sharing in this culture and thus, paradoxical though it may sound, rather as a claim to belong to this Greek world than as a sign of foreignness.[94]

In the case of Bostra, the explanation for the relative absence of attestations of migrants is less easy and must remain tentative. Despite the fact that the city must have had a very mixed population, epigraphic references to outside origin are few and present a rather fragmented picture. It is clear that in Bostra, ethnic origin did not feature high on the list of identity markers. Perhaps the sense of belonging to a newly created Roman community was very strong and overrode expressions of ethnic identity. It may further be assumed that, within such a community, status will have been more important than origin. In the case of Roman citizens and Roman soldiers, expressions of origin might in fact have been regarded to detract from the claims rather than to add to them.

The military epitaphs from Rome present a case in which ethnic markers were used widely and in a very uniform way. It is known that in Rome military ethnic groups sometimes made collective dedications. It might also be relevant that most soldiers after discharge returned home.[95] Considering that at least some of the troops are known to have used their own burial grounds, we can assume that the epitaphs were primarily directed at an internal audience, consisting of members of one's own unit. The uniform format of the epitaphs emphasised the coherence of the army. The inclusion of origin simultaneously communicated that it consisted of members of various parts of the Empire, grouped together into broader regions. They showed unity in diversity.

In themselves, the patterns analysed in this paper fall within the contours of what we know about Roman patterns of migration and mobility.[96] We see a world in which significant parts of the population were relatively mobile. Part of this movement was forced or organised by the state, and part of it was voluntary. Mobility between cities was common, and some of this mobility led to temporary or permanent migration. Much – but not all – of the migratory movement was by young adult men, while female mobility often seems related to marriage. Movements were normally confined to one's own region. Rome (and to a lesser extent Italy in general) represented an exception in that it functioned as the node connecting zones that remained otherwise separate.

The three cases fit with such a broader pattern, yet none of the three cases can be said to present the full record of Near Eastern mobility. All demonstrate biases in what was documented and what was left out. Obviously, it is the task of historians of migration to turn the disparate sources into a coherent narrative, but before such a task can be undertaken, the pitfalls must to be taken into account. Despite appearances, epigraphy is not a monolithic category.

Notes

1 This paper is one of the by-products of a research project on Roman migration and labour conducted at Leiden University from 2010 to 2014. We wish to thank the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) for funding our Moving Romans project. We would further like to thank the editors of this volume, the anonymous referees, and, at Leiden, Miriam Groen-Vallinga and Paul Kloeg for suggesting improvements to this paper.

2 For an argument along similar lines, see Noy 2010, who compares epigraphic evidence for immigrants in Rome and Roman Britain. For a comparison between epigraphic, literary and isotopic evidence for migration and mobility on the basis of a study of the Isola Sacra necropolis at Ostia/Portus, see Tacoma 2017. For a general discussion of sources of migration, Tacoma 2016, ch. 1.

3 *SGO* = Merkelbach and Stauber 1998–2004, vol. 4, sections on Syria, Palaestina, and Arabia, with addenda in vol. 5. Merkelbach and Stauber include in their corpus some texts that are only preserved as part of literary collections but that they believe were originally set up as stones in an identifiable place. We have added epigrams that have appeared after the publication of *SGO*. These are also provided with an *SGO* number and are marked with an asterisk (*).

4 See Tacoma and Tybout 2016, with full details and further bibliography. In our analysis, we have limited ourselves to the funerary texts and excluded honorary epigrams on the grounds that the latter are bound to focus on local achievements rather than mobility. For an interesting though exceptional other variety of mobility attested by epigrams, see Eck 2013, who discusses the reuse of a Latin epigram from Pannonia in Raphia, probably copied by a soldier who had moved from one area to the other.

5 In the column Remarks, we use the following shorthand notations: Burial abroad = Death, burial and monument outside the *patris*; Cenotaph = Death and burial abroad; monument (cenotaph) in the *patris*; Repatriation = Death abroad; repatriation of mortal remains (ashes or bones); burial and monument in the *patris*; Return prior to death = Death, burial and monument in the *patris*; travel/migration in earlier years.

6 Not in Merkelbach and Stauber; *SGO* – no. assigned by us. Edd.pr. Agusta-Boularot, Seigne and El Majjid Mujjali 2011, 103–106 = SEG 61, 1487.

7 See Tybout 2016, appendix.

8 See now Angiò 2010 with further comments by Tybout in *SEG* 60 1755.

9 In L. 4, in view of the rareness of ὅς used as a possessivum of the second person singular and of εἰκόνας σῆς being metrically impossible, we read εἰκόνα {σ} σῆς (with the singular as a collective reference: 'children, an image of your virtue'), instead of εἰκόνας {σ} ἧς (Merkelbach-Stauber, following Peek, *GV* 1404; εἰκόνας σῆς, previous editors, but cf. Kaibel, *EG* 435 app.cr. ad L. 4: '*in archetypo olim fuit* εἰκόνα σῆς ἀρετῆς τέκνον γαμέτη προλιποῦσα'; the latter correction seems unnecessary); in L. 6, we read τὸν σὲ ('emphatically') rather than τόν σε (previous editors). We thank G. J. Boter (VU University Amsterdam) for suggesting these readings to us.

10 Tacoma and Tybout 2016, where we discuss a total of 146 epigrams, including the 14 texts relevant to the Near East.

11 *SGO* 20/01/03.

12 *SGO* *21/23/10 (presumably she moved together with the parents).

13 *SGO* 22/21/02.

14 *SGO* 22/33/03.

15 *SGO* 22/36/01 (previously cited).

16 *SGO* 21/03/01.

17 *SGO* 20/27/02; 22/49/01.

18 *SGO* 20/15/03 (Tyre to Sidon); 21/21/01 (Gadara to Hippos); 21/23/02 (Antioch to Gerasa). See also *SGO* 22/36/01 (Antioch [unknown which] to Soada).

19 *SGO* 22/21/02 (Maximianopolis to Athens); 20/01/03 (Seleukia Pieria to Delos and Rhodes).

20 *SGO* *21/23/10.

21 SGO 21/03/01.

22 *SGO* 22/21/02.

23 *SGO* 20/27/02, for which, see note 33.

24 *SGO* 22/49/01.

25 *SGO* 21/03/01.

26 Single names occur, for example, in *SGO* 20/01/03; 20/15/03; 21/03/01 (for an imperial freedwoman who must have been in possession of Roman citizenship); 21/23/02; *21/23/10; 22/36/01; 22/43/01. For Roman names (without citizenship), see 21/21/01 (Quintus) and 22/36/01 (Flavia).

27 *SGO* 20/01/03; had the daughter lived long enough, she would have married out of the house, of course (though not necessarily out of her city).

28 *SGO* 22/49/01 (soldier); 22/21/02 (sophist).

29 *SGO* 22/33/03.

30 Tacoma and Tybout 2016 for the general sample; see Table 3.1 for the epigrams of the Near East. In view of the small numbers, the difference in percentages is meaningless.

31 Woolf 2013; see also Foubert 2016 for other possible motives. See, for example, *SGO* 21/21/01; 21/23/02; 22/36/02. A possible explanation of the move of the imperial freedwoman from Italy (Rome, presumably) to Caesarea Maritima is that she did so in the context of a marriage; see 21/03/01, though see the edition for other possibilities. This is not the case in 22/37/01, where each of a husband and wife apparently died in different places and were subsequently brought back to their hometown Namara by their nephew.

32 *SGO* 20/15/03.

33 *SGO* *21/23/10.

34 Tybout 2016.

35 For example, *SGO* 20/15/03. The general theme and its relevance for migration studies are discussed by Tybout 2016.

36 *SGO* 22/43/01; 22/49/01.

37 With persons of particularly high status, political considerations could take over, as is demonstrated in the (hypothetical) *Werdegang* of the body of the Caucasian prince of

20/27/02, as discussed by Merkelbach and Stauber (with further bibliography). After the Parthian campaign of Trajan, this prince was buried in Nisibis, but his body was later brought to Rome. This might have been taken place in the context of an embassy of King Pharasamanes in 142 CE, when the body was transferred as a visible token of past and continuous loyalty to Rome.

38 *SGO* 22/21/02.
39 *SGO* 22/37/01.
40 *SGO* 22/33/03 for someone who had earlier built a monument for his parents and himself at home in Migdala; see also *SGO* 22/33/02.
41 Bowersock 1983, 7 and see 1–11 for a description of the geology of Arabia as a whole.
42 Sartre 1985, 43–48 for a brief overview with further references. Bosra appears i.a. in the Amarna letters of the fourteenth century BCE and in *1 Macc.* 5.24–28; 45.
43 Negev 1978, 640–642; Sartre 1985, 63–72, also on the date (mainly determined on the basis of the beginning of a newly created era starting at 22–3–106) and discussing possible motives for the annexation. For the latter, see also the sobering comments of Millar 1993, 93: speculation is fruitless.
44 The precise chronology of the shift from Petra to Bostra is debated; see Haensch 1997, 238–242.
45 Sartre 2007a, 25.
46 Lenoir 2007, with previous literature. The precise chronology of the movements of the legions is complex and disputed. According to Kennedy 1980, *VI Ferrata* stayed in Bostra only in 119–123 CE, when *III Cyrenaica* was temporarily back in Egypt. Sartre 2007a, 25 has *VI Ferrata* moving to Bostra in106 CE, to be replaced by *III Cyrenaica* in 123 CE or slightly later. As Kennedy 2004, 48 emphasises, the legion was frequently employed elsewhere, and as separate units were often employed in the province, it is unlikely that it was often at full strength at Bostra itself.
47 Sartre 2007a, 25.
48 Bowersock 1983, 121–123.
49 Haensch 1997, 242.
50 Dentzer et al. 2010 for an overview of archaeological work with further references; also, Dentzer et al. 2002. For descriptions of monuments, see also Ball 2000, 198–204, though arguing that much of Bostra's monumental architecture actually dated to the later Nabataean rather than early Roman rule; cf., however, Andrade 2013, 11 for doubts about the underlying agenda.
51 Dentzer-Feydy 2007, 173; cf. Ball 2000, 200–203 for an estimate of 15,000.
52 Our thanks to our Leiden colleague Paul Kloeg for discussing this with us. Archaeology suggests significant expansion of the city after 106 CE. At the end of the third century CE, the walled area was ca. 80 hectares (see Dentzer et al. 2010, 164 fig. 24, giving 64.8 hectares for the civilian part and 15.1 hectares for the camp). With, say, 10,000 inhabitants, the average population density would be 125 persons/hectare. With 15,000 people, it would be 187.5 persons/hectare; the latter figure may be regarded as a reasonable upper limit.
53 Ball 2000, 203–204.
54 Tacoma 2013.
55 Sartre 1985, 141–152, with *Index onomastique commenté*.
56 Macdonald 1993, esp. 377–382, cf. 310 ('there was no such group as "les Safaïtes"'). Cf. Sartre 2007b who, though not discussing directly his previous study and Macdonald's criticism, now also emphasises the difficulties in classifying names.
57 Furthermore, Sartre 2007b adds the general argument that some of what may seem to be Graeco-Roman names on closer inspection turn out to be local ones.
58 Sartre 1985, 152.
59 There is no indication that any text dates from before the creation of the Roman province in 106 CE. For internally dated texts run from the second to the seventh centuries, see *IGLS* 13 index *Inscriptions datées*.

60   From Bostra itself come *IGLS* 13.1 nos. 9000–9473 and *IGLS* 13.2 nos. 9473–9570k; from its environment (for which see the comments in *IGLS* 13.2 p. vii–ix) originate *IGLS* 13.2 nos. 9571–9960. Some numbered *lemmata* have remained empty, and others are subdivided into a, b, c, etc. As the latter occurs more often than the former, we use the figure of 1,000 texts (600 urban, 400 rural) as a convenient round number.

61   In view of a new reading discussed by Sartre in his addenda, we have removed *IGLS* 13.9177 from our list. Initially, *d(is) m(anibus) s(acrum). Chresto sanctissimo M(?) ṇạṭọ Corinthias dulcissima uxor benemerenti fecit* was read, but *marito Corinthias* ('husband of Corinthia') makes better sense.

62   Dates based on the commentary of Sartre in *IGLS* 13.1–2. All undated texts can be assumed to post-date the creation of the Roman province Arabia in CE 106; in the absence of counter-indications, they are likely to belong to the second–third centuries CE, though a later date cannot be completely excluded.

63   So Mouterde 1942–1943, 50–53.

64   So Speidel 1978, 720 n. 134.

65   See also Paci 2008, 42–49.

66   See Tacoma, Ivleva, and Breeze 2016.

67   Tybout 2016, no. G.40.

68   *IGLS* 13.9475: *[Pro salute et victoria M(arci) Aeli Aur]eli Veri Caesaris [. . .] [. . . cives Romani] consistentes Bostrae templum [. . .] [. . . de s]uo fecerunt. Consistentes* certainly implies an outsider group, but *cives Romani* remains a conjecture.

69   *IGLS* 13.9016: '*Mercurio Aug(usto) sacrum. Thusdr<i>tani Gen(io) col(oniae) s(uae) f(ecerunt)*'.

70   *IGLS* 13.9601.

71   See further the remarks of Speidel 1978, 720–722 and the older list of Forni 1953, 221–222. Cf. outside our epigraphical sample *P.Mich*. 8.466 (107 CE) and 465 (108 CE) (to be discussed) concerning a soldier from Karanis in Egypt.

72   Initially we thought that in *IGLS* 13.9188 the somewhat uncertain reading *dom(o) Britaṇ(nia)* was suspect, as *domo* is normally followed by a city, not a wider region, and the exact combination is unattested elsewhere. But there are some cases in which *domo* does occur together with a region (or with a tribe) rather than with a city, also from the Near East: *RHP* 115 (Apamea) for *domo T(h)racia*; *AE* 1958, 240 (Hatra) for *dom(o) [Nu]/midia*. The text of *IGLS* 13.9188 is discussed in detail in Tacoma, Ivleva, and Breeze 2016.

73   *IGLS* 13.9396 (with addenda): Φλ(άουιος) Μάξιμος στρ(ατιώτης) λεγ(ιῶνος) γ΄ Κυρ(ηναϊκῆς) στρατευσάμενος ἔτη κγ΄ ἀποθανών [ἐ]ν Μεσοπ[οταμί]ᾳ, [ο]ῦ τὰ ὀ[σ]τᾶ ἐν[θ]άδε κ[ῖτ]ε . . . ἔτι σιε΄.

74   The argument of Paci 2008, 47 that the *evocatus* and centurion of *IGLS* 13.9187 from Forum Sempronii first had joined the praetorian guard before embarking on the extensive career recorded in his inscription loses much of its force in view of the fact that in Bostra a number of other Italians are found who did enter legionary service straightaway. A significant presence of Italians is also suggested by the onomastic profile of Legio III that can be deduced from a list of names preserved on a Latin papyrus dating from the years shortly before its transfer to Arabia, see Kramer 1993 on *S.B.* 22.15638 = *Ch.L.A.* 43.1242.

75   *P.Oxy*. 42.3054 mentions four different Bostrian owners, among whom two councillors; as the female registrant is the seller, it is implied that the slave is now owned by a fifth person in Oxyrhynchus.

76   *P.Mich*. 8.466 (107 CE) mentions several carriers of letters and in addition states that ἀπὸ Πηλουσίου γὰρ καθ' ἡμέραν ἔρχονται πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἔμποροι. As Millar 1993, 93–94 observes, the distances that these merchants travelled were great indeed.

77   *P.Mich* 8.465 (108 CE) (Engl. transl. Apis): 'And I received some money and wanted to send you a gift of Tyrian wares; and since you did not reply, I have not entrusted it to anyone on account of the length of the journey. For fine garments and ebony(?) and pearls and unguents are brought here in abundance(?)', καὶ χαλκὸν [ἀ]πέσχον, καὶ

ἠθέλησα ὑμῖν πέμψαι θαλλὸν ἐκ τῶν Τυρίων, κα[ὶ] διὰ τὸ μὴ ἀντιγράψαι ὑ[μᾶς οὐ
πε]πίστευκα οὐθενὶ διὰ τὸ μέγεθο[ς τ]ῆς ὁδοῦ. ὧδε γὰρ ἱμάτια καλὰ καὶ ἔβ[ε]νος καὶ
πινάρια καὶ μύρα ἀγ[άγετα]ι [εὐ]πόρος.

78 15 foreigners in ca.1,000 inscriptions = 1.5 per cent; or, for the city of Bostra alone, 13
    foreigners in ca. 600 texts = 2.2 per cent, a negligible difference.

79 The literature on these troops is large; key works include Durry 1938; Freis 1967; Spei-
    del 1994a. A useful overview (written from an archaeological perspective) is provided
    by Coulston 2000.

80 Noy 2000, 318–320; Syria and Palestine (military). We have added *CIL* 6.3174. We
    have retained *CIL* 6.32776, whose Roman provenance is somewhat uncertain. For an
    older list, see Solin 1983.

81 Brief republication in Thomasson 1997, no. 141; full republication with copious com-
    mentary in Henriksén 2013, no. 10.

82 Categorised both by Solin 1983, 672 and by Noy 2000, 319 as military. This was cer-
    tainly not without reason, but strictly speaking the text belongs to the civilian category
    and hence has been omitted from our list.

83 Speidel 1994b, nr. 713

84 The exception is *IG* 14.1661 for a member of the praetorian guard.

85 Noy 2000, 59–60 table 1. Noy counted persons rather than inscriptions, hence 22 (not
    21) Syrians on a total military population of 568 individuals = 3.87 per cent. Note that
    Noy excludes the Italians, which means that the evidence is slanted towards the impe-
    rial horse guard, whose members came from the provinces.

86 Speidel 1994a, 81–86; Speidel 1994b, 16, listing 12 texts under Syria and Arabia on a
    total 234 stones = 5.13 per cent. Note that a small number of his 234 inscriptions were
    found outside Rome.

87 Freis 1967, 53–61, lists 368 soldiers from the urban cohorts (320 from Italy includ-
    ing Rome, 48 from the provinces). These figures exclude the officers; if they were
    included, the percentage of Near Easterners would drop further.

88 e.g. Ivleva 2012; for what follows we also rely on unpublished work by Lloyd Hopkins
    on the use of ethnic descriptors in the Roman fleet.

89 Twelve texts have *natione Surus* without further specification: *CIL* 6.3114; 3138; 3151;
    3197; 32776; 32795; 33009; 330039; 37254; Ferrua 1951, p. 112 nr. 54; Speidel 1994b,
    nr. 215; Speidel 1994b, nr. 524. Eight texts mention cities (with or without the addition
    of Syria): *CIL* 6.2627 (*domo Laudicia*); 2910 (*domo Beryt(o)*); 3174 (*Palmyrenu[s]*);
    3644 (*domo Antiochia Syria*); *IG* 14.1661 (Σύρος Ἀσκαλωνείτης Παλαιστείνη, note the
    specificity); Ferrua 1939, 154 nr. 4 (*domo Beryt(o)*); Speidel 1994b, nr. 206 (*nat(ione)
    Syrus c[o]l(onia) Caesarea*); Speidel 1994b, nr. 424(*n[at(ione)] [Sy]rus, Damas[c –]*).
    One text, Speidel 1994b, nr. 265 has *natione] Arabus Filadelf[ia]*. There might be
    changes over time in the use of such ethnic descriptors, but for the present argument
    they are of less importance.

90 Solin 2007.

91 Ivleva 2016 and Veg. 1.3.

92 As in *RMD* 5.454 (207 CE): *M(arco) Valerio M(arci) fil(io) Apolli[nari] Antiochia
    ex Syria* for a member of the imperial horse guard. His *diploma* was found in Moesia
    inferior (mod. Pelovo/Iskar, Bulgaria).

93 We do not think the arguments of Paci 2008, 42–49 are particularly forceful, but if he
    is right, such overlap does in fact occur in *IGLS* 13.9187 from Bostra, which according
    to Paci concerns a member of the praetorian guard.

94 In an important study of cultural identity in Roman Syria, Andrade 2013 warns that
    'what modern scholars uniformly label Greek culture is not necessarily what inhabit-
    ants of the ancient Near East experienced as Greek culture, or the idioms that expressed
    Greek social affiliations' (4), and that '[t]he categories of "Greek," "Roman," and "Syr-
    ian" were therefore not essential and unchanging classifications articulated through a

stable or universal set of symbols' (5). No doubt this is correct, but we still tend to see the world view expressed in our Greek epigrams as relatively uniform and closely attached to the value system of the Greek post-Classical *polis*, though the meaning and usage for participants may have differed individually and surely will have depended on the cultural context in which the epigrams were produced. On *a priori* grounds, it can be assumed that participating in this culture meant something different in the fully Greek *poleis* along the coast of Asia Minor than it did in the Near East.

95 Noy 2010, 14 for both observations.
96 Zerbini 2016 for the Near East. Woolf 2016 for general principles underlying Roman patterns of mobility, with salutary warnings against over-optimistic assessments.

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