New Inscriptions from Nikaia XXII: Roman Soldiers from Nikaia

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Abstract: This article presents two newly discovered funerary inscriptions from the modern districts of Göynük (Bolu Province) and Yenipazar (Bilecik Province), located in the eastern territory of Nikaia, belonging to a *veteranus* of *Legio V Macedonica* and to a possible Roman soldier. The deceased are identified as Lucius Domitius -isicus or Eisi(a)cus/ Isi(a)cus(?) and Marcus Sertorius Vitelianus. It also presents the name Kadas, which appears in the tomb inscription of M. Sertorius Vitelianus and is attested for the first time in Nikaia.

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The two inscriptions presented here were discovered in the eastern territory of Nikaia. The first was found during an epigraphic, historical, and geographical field survey in the Mudurnu and Göynük districts of Bolu Province. The project was initiated in 2012 by Assistant Professor Dr. Filiz Dönmez-Öztürk of Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University. Following her untimely passing in 2014, the General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums granted the present author official permission to continue and complete the project on her behalf.[1] During the ten-day field campaign carried out in 2014 under the author's direction, an inscription belonging to a Roman *veteranus* was discovered.

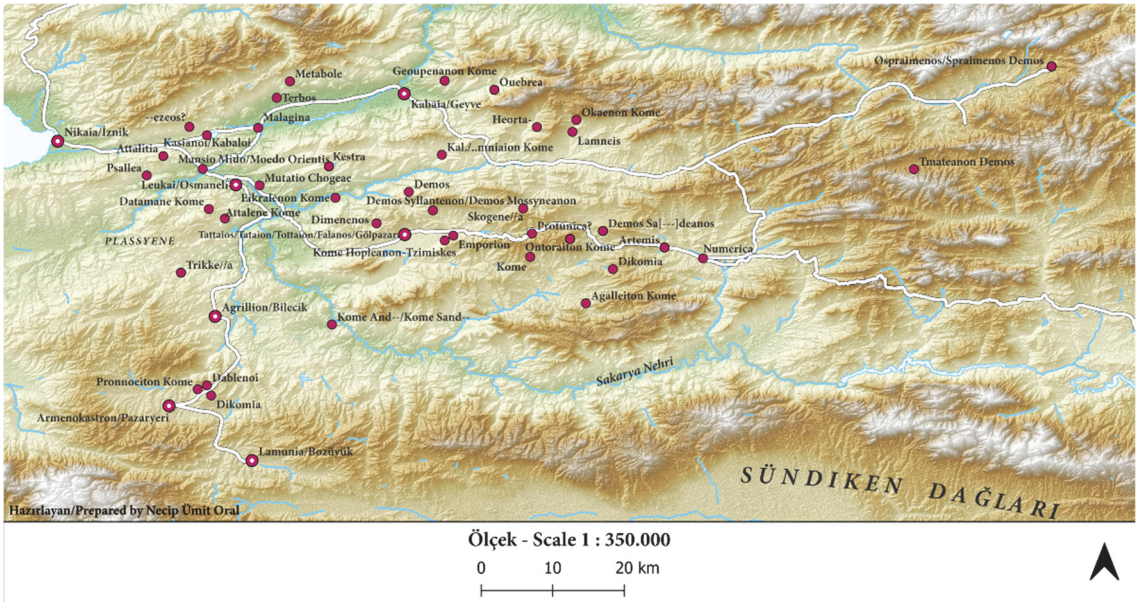
The second inscription was also discovered by the author during a field survey in the village of Nasuhlar in the district of Yenipazar (Bilecik Province) in 2019, and most likely belonged to a Roman soldier from Nikaia. The village of Nasuhlar, where this inscription was discovered, must have been an important settlement in antiquity, as it is remarkably rich in archaeological

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[1] For the newly discovered and published inscriptions in the Göynük and Mudurnu during the survey between 2012-2014, see Dönmez-Öztürk 2012, 67-78 (= *SEG* LXII 964-977); Dönmez-Öztürk – Öztürk 2015, 123-128 (= *SEG* LXV 1162; 1191-1194); Öztürk – Dönmez-Öztürk 2015, 243-256 (= *SEG* LXV 1178-1190); Öztürk 2016, 287-297 (= *SEG* LXVI 1416-1420); Öztürk 2019, 461-471 (= *SEG* LXIX 813 [= *IAM* 3, 2020, no. 006]; 826 [= *AE* 2019, 1419 = *IAM* 3, 2020, no. 007]).

finds.[2] During his surveys in the 1970s, S. Şahin documented three funerary and votive inscriptions here, including one dedicated to Zeus Okkonenos.[3] In the 2000s, the Bilecik Museum recorded an additional funerary inscription from Nasuhlar, which was subsequently published.[4] In 2024, our team discovered two previously unknown inscriptions at Aşağıçaylı Deresi. One honours Menestheus, the chief archon of the city of Nikaia, while the other dates to the Roman Imperial period.[5] Both inscriptions mention a settlement whose name was previously unattested: the demos of the Agelleitans (δῆμος Ἀγελλειτῶν) (see map 1).



Map 1) *Nikaia and its Territories*

Not only Nasuhlar but also the nearby villages of Danişment[6] and Aşağıçaylı[7] have yielded a wealth of archaeological and epigraphic material (see satellite image map 2). It is highly likely that these three modern villages were located within the territory of the δῆμος Ἀγελλειτῶν in antiquity. The settlement of the *demos* Agelleiton was situated along an important road network extending from the modern district of Yenipazar to Iuliopolis[8] (see n. 2 above, Nallıhan district, Ankara Province). This route passed through the territory of the *demos* Agelleiton, continued to the ancient settlement of Dableis in the district of Göynük (Bolu Province), and ultimately reached Iuliopolis. Owing to its strategic location on this major communication route, as well as its fertile agricultural land and abundant water resources, the settlement was likely larger and more prosperous than many of the surrounding villages in antiquity. Therefore, it is reasonable

[2] For the settlement, see Belke 2020, 796 *s.v.* Nasuflar.

[3] *I.Mus. Iznik* 1119; 1416 (= Öztürk 2020, 67, no. 2 [*corrigendum*] = *IAM* 4, 2021, no. 015); *I.Mus. Iznik* 1315; 1316 (= Öztürk 2020, 67, no. 1 [*corrigendum*] = *IAM* 4, 2021, no. 014).

[4] Akyürek Şahin 2005, 84-85, no. 4 (= *SEG* LV 1346 = *AE* 2005 [2008] 1424); Akyürek Şahin – Uzunoğlu 2022a, 101-102, no. 30 (= *IAM* 6, 2023, no. 073).

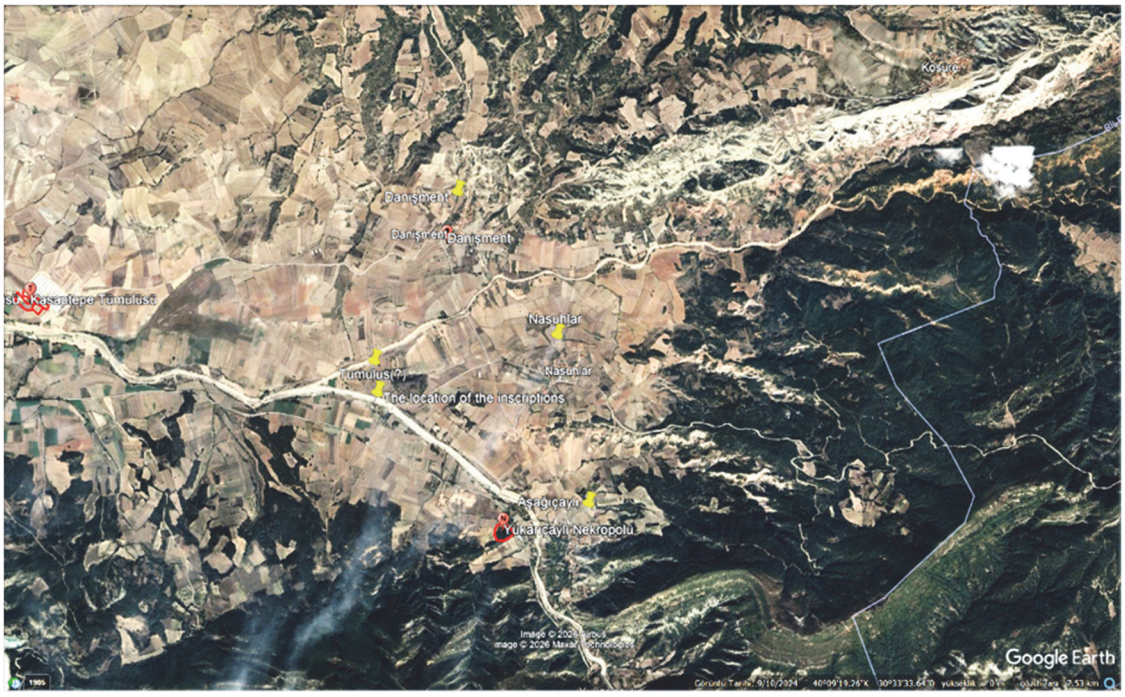
[5] Öztürk 2025, 160; 171.

[6] Five funerary inscriptions have so far been recorded from Danişment, see *I.Mus. Iznik* 1313-1314; 1329; 1469; Staab *et alii* 2023, 173-177, no. 1 (= *IAM* 7, 2024, no. 003).

[7] Three funerary inscriptions have so far been recorded from Aşağıçaylı, see *I.Mus.Iznik* 1330, 1393; Akyürek Şahin – Uzunoğlu 2022b, 99, no. 27 (= *IAM* 6, 2023, no. 026).

[8] On the road to Iuliopolis, see Onur 2014, 67-68; 73-74.

to assume that M. Sertorius Vitelianus and the other individuals mentioned in the inscription no. 2 were inhabitants of this settlement.



Map 2) *Satellite image showing the location of Nasuhlar (Google Earth)*

1. Tomb of Lucius Domitius –isicus or Eisi(a)cus/Isi(a)cus(?) (Figs. 1a-d)

Rectangular marble tombstone with broken bottom and top.

Findspot: Bolu province, Göynük district, Aşağı Kınık village, Safalar locality, in front of Yaşar Altan's chicken coop. According to Y. Altan, the tombstone was moved from Maskar Çökeyi locality. I would like to thank Y. Altan for allowing us to study the inscription; **Measurements:** H: 45 cm; W: 44 cm; D: 41 cm; LH: 4-4.3 cm; **Inv. No.:** 104 [in 2014]; **Registration:** Author; **Photo:** Author; **Date:** 2nd or 3rd cent. AD

00 [Ἔτους -/--ʹ(?)]
Λ̣(ούκιος) Δομίτιος̣ [.(?)]-
Ε̣ΙΣΙΚΟΣ ο⟨ὐ⟩ετρα[ν]-
ὸς ἐξ λεγιῶνο̣[ς]
4 πέ̣μπτης Μακ̣[ε]-
δονικ̣ῆς, ζ̣ῶ̣ν̣ [καὶ]
- - - - - - - - - - - - -

[In the year of …?] Lucius Domitius –isicus or Eisi(a)cus/Isi(a)cus(?), veteran of the Legio V Macedonica, (had this tomb built), while he was alive - - -

Ll. 2-3: OETPA[N]OΣ *lapis*

Ll. 1-2: [.(?)]Ε̣ΙΣΙΚΟΣ. There may also be space for an additional letter at the end of the first line, while an epsilon is discernible at the beginning of the second line. In this case, the name could be restored as either a cognomen ending in -isicus, or as a form without *alpha*, such as Εἰσι(α)κός/Ἴσι(α)κός.



Figs. 1a-d) *The Tomb of Lucius Domitius –isicus*

l. 3: ἐξ λεγιῶνο̣[ς]: here the preposition appears as ἐξ rather than the expected ἐκ before a consonant. This should not be regarded as a mere error. Among the classical dialects, ἐξ before consonants is regular only in Cypriot.[9] In the papyri of the Roman and Byzantine periods, however, the converse distribution is occasionally attested: ἐξ Σεκουνδ[…], ἐξ μιᾶς, ἐξ τόπου.[10] The same tendency can be observed in inscriptions of the Roman period, e.g. ἐξ τῶν ἐκίνου from Beroia and ἐξ τῶν κοινῶν κόπων from Perinthos.[11]

The closest parallel comes from a military context. In a list of soldiers dated to the mid-3rd century AD, ἐξ πρωτηκ(τόρων) stands alongside ⟨ἐ⟩κ βοηθ(οῦ) in the same text.[12] Two factors may account for the spelling ἐξ in our inscription. The first is the generalisation of ἐξ as the basic form of the preposition. The second is the influence of Latin *ex*, which is used before consonants as well, in military titles and formulae (*ex leg(ione)*, *ex protectoribus*).

[9] Buck 1955, 83 § 100.

[10] Gignac, *Grammar I*, 172-173.

[11] *I.Beroia* 374; *I.Perinthos* 169.

[12] *IGBulg* III,1 884, ll. 16 and 24.

Ll. 4-5: *Legio V Macedonica*: This legion was first founded by the consul Gaius Vibius Pansa and Octavianus in 43 BC and was based in Macedonia, Moesia and Dacia.[13] According to the sources, the deployments of *Legio V Macedonica* in the East can be summarized as follows: During the reign of Nero, the legion was transferred from the province of Moesia to the East because of the conflict with the Parthians over control of Armenia. Around AD 63, it assembled at Melitene together with Corbulo's other forces, crossed the Euphrates, and took an active part in the campaign against the Parthians (Tac. *ann*. xv 26). The legion remained active in the region throughout the Jewish War (AD 66–73), serving along the Syrian frontier, which functioned as a strategic base during this period (Keppie 2005, 166). The legion also participated in Emperor Lucius Verus' Parthian campaign of AD 162 under the command of legate P. Martius Verus.[14] During the reign of Septimius Severus, it was once again dispatched to the East. These deployments demonstrate that, although *Legio V Macedonica* was primarily stationed in Dacia or Moesia, it was repeatedly transferred to the East to take part in campaigns against the Parthians and, later, the Persians.[15]

Ll. 5-6: ζῶν [καὶ]. In Nikaia, ζῶν is usually followed by καὶ φρονῶν κτλ.[16]

2. Tomb of Marcus Sertorius Vitelianus (Figs. 2a-f)

Limestone funerary altar with a profiled top. There is a sword relief on the right side. On the stone's surface, there are numerous natural cavities. The upper right profile of the altar is intact; however, the profile of the inscribed face has been flattened. The lower part of the altar remains embedded in the ground.

Findspot: Bilecik province, Yenipazar district, Nasuhlar village. It was used as spolia on the outer wall of the village cemetery. The altar must have been brought from Örencik, located 5-6 km east of the village; **Coordinates:** 40° 10.563′ N 30° 35.266′ E; **Measurements:** H: 89 cm; W: 51 cm; D: 52 cm; LH: 1.9-3.1 cm; **Inv. No.:** 441 [2019 year]; **Registration:** Author and E. Demirhan-Öztürk; **Photo:** E. Demirhan-Öztürk; **Date:** Probably late 1st-early 2nd century AD

Μ(άρκῳ) ᵛ Σ ᵛ ερτωρίῳ Οὐϊτε-
λιανῷ Ἄσκ̣[λ]η̣ς, Ἰο[ύ]λ[ιος?],
Καδας, Κ[ό]ϊν̣τ̣ος, [ο]ἱ
ἀνέψιοι, κ̣[ατεσκ]ε̣ύα̣-
σαν τὸ μνημε̣ῖ̣ον
ζήσ[αντι ἔ]τ̣η π̣′.

His cousins, Askles, Iulius(?), Kadas, and Quintus, erected this funerary monument for Marcus Sertorius Vitelianus, who lived 80 years.

Ll. 1-2: Μᾶρκος Σερτώριος Οὐϊτελιανός: The *nomen* Sertorius has previously been documented in an inscription from the territory of ancient Nikaia.[17] This inscription was found in the modern village of Cumalı and is located in the central district of Bilecik, approximately 57 km in a straight line from Nasuhlar in Yenipazar district. Unfortunately, it is not possible to determine

[13] For further information, see Keppie 2000, 91.

[14] *CIL* III 6169 = *ISM* V *15*. For further information, Matei-Popescu 2010, 51.

[15] For further information about the *Legio V Macedonica*, see Matei-Popescu 2010, 35-75.

[16] For examples, see *I.Mus. Iznik* 88, 1236, 1358, 1449, 1452-53, 1465, 1475, 1581.

[17] Doğan 2019, 282 (= *SEG* LXX 753 = *AE* [2019] 1418 = *IAM* 3, 2020, no. 026).

whether there was any connection between the Sertorii mentioned in the different inscriptions found in the two villages.

The *nomen* Sertorius is associated with the *gens Sertoria*, a Roman family. However, the use of this *nomen* does not establish that he was directly descended from this family or that he acquired citizenship through a particular individual. His cognomen, *Vitelianus*, is also noteworthy. It may be connected with the *gens Vitellia*, one of Rome's prominent families, and more specifically with Aulus Vitellius, who briefly ruled as emperor in AD 69. The Latin adjective *Vitellianus* was used to denote persons or things belonging to or associated with Vitellius. Expressions such as *milites*

Vitelliani (the soldiers of Vitellius), *partes Vitellianae* (the party of Vitellius), and *bellum Vitellianum* (the war of Vitellius) are attested in ancient literary sources. The substantivised plural form *Vitelliani* was also used to refer to "Vitellius' soldiers".[18] In this context, it is possible that the cognomen *Vitelianus* was associated with Vitellius and that Marcus Sertorius Vitelianus acquired Roman citizenship during his reign. This, however, remains a hypothesis. Neither the *nomen* Sertorius nor the *cognomen* Vitelianus is sufficient on its own to establish when or under what circumstances he obtained citizenship. Although these elements of his name raise the possibility of a historical connection, further evidence would be required to substantiate it.

The right side of the funerary altar is decorated with a double-edged sword with a pointed blade and pommel, closely resembling a *gladius Hispaniensis* or a *Pompeii-type gladius.*[19] Whether the sword relief is contemporary with the inscription is unknown. If the two are assumed to be related, the depiction may suggest that Marcus Sertorius Vitelianus was a soldier who possibly served in the Roman army during the second half of the first century AD.

A comparison is provided by a stele from Nikaia featuring a sword motif (*I. Mus. Iznik* 1382). In this case, the inscription explicitly identifies Aurelius Antipatros as a soldier who served in *Legio IV Scythica*, while the sword and other military equipment depicted on the altar further emphasize his military identity. The reliefs of this equipment, however, are small in scale.

A similar example is known from the village of Himmetli in Saimbeyli district, Adana Province, within the Kappadokia-Kilikia region, probably in the territory of the ancient city of Kukusos. A sword relief is carved inside a tomb structure located near the tomb of an *optio* of *Legio XII Fulminata.*[20] This tomb most probably served as the burial place of another soldier.

L. 2: Ἄσκλης: This name has previously been documented twice in Nikaia, *LGPN* s.v.

[18] Tac. *hist.* i 1; 57; 84-85; iii 79; Suet. *Vesp*. viii; *Dom*. i.

[19] The dimensions of the sword depicted in the relief were calculated as 61 ± 2 cm in length (height) and 7.5 ± 0.5 cm in width through photo-based digital measurement, using the known physical dimensions of the stone (89x51 cm) as a reference. Assuming that the relief was rendered at a 1:1 scale, these measurements, corresponding to an actual sword length of approximately 50-58 cm or slightly more and a width of c. 8 cm, are consistent both typologically and metrically with a *Pompeii-type gladius*, which can be dated to the second half of the 1st century AD. The *Pompeii-type gladius* emerged in the mid-1st century AD and featured a shorter, narrower, and more parallel-sided blade than its predecessor, the Mainz type. Requiring approximately 10–20% less iron to manufacture, this lighter sword was easier to handle and particularly well suited to thrusting, owing to its short, pointed tip. For further information, see Bishop 2016, 45-48.

[20] Takmer – Baz 2017, 187, fig. 4 (= *SEG* LXVII 1294 = *AE* [2017] 1570 = *IAM* 1, 2018, no. 208).



Fig. 2a-f) *The Tomb of Marcus Sertorius Vitelianus*

L. 3: Καδας: This name is attested for the first time in Nikaia. The name Kadas has previously been documented only once in Isauria, in the genitive form as Καδα.[21] The form Καδα(υ)ας, of Lydo-Pisidian origin, is attested in Takina[22] and Kibyra[23]. For the related forms Καδαος, Καδαουας, and Καδαυας, all beginning with Καδ-.[24]

Κόϊντος: The name Quintus has been documented once in the village of Duman,[25] located in the Taraklı district of present-day Sakarya Province, which was within the territory of Nikaia (this village is approximately 17.5 km north of the village of Nasuhlar).

The two inscriptions discussed in this article add to the existing evidence for soldiers from Nikaia and its surrounding territory who served in the Roman army.[26] These findings expand our understanding of Nicaean military service and the region's contribution of manpower to the Roman army.

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[21] See Zgusta, *Personennamen*, § 500-1-12.

[22] Özlem Aytaçlar 2017, 316-317, no. 4 (= *SEG* LXVII 1200 = *IAM* 1, 2018, no. 313).

[23] *I.Kibyra* 225.

[24] See Zgusta, *Personennamen*, § 498; see also *LGPN* VA-C.

[25] Öztürk - Demirhan-Öztürk 2018, 88 no. 7 (= *SEG* LXVIII 1148 = *AE* [2018] 1475).

[26] Inscriptions relating to Roman soldiers in Bithynia were compiled for the first time in a thesis completed under my supervision, see Ardal 2022, 114-142.

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Nikaia'dan Yeni Yazıtlar XXII: Nikaia'dan Romalı Askerler

Özet

Bu makalede, Nikaia'nın doğusunda yer alan günümüz Göynük (Bolu İli) ve Yenipazar (Bilecik İli) ilçelerinde yeni keşfedilen *Legio V Macedonica*'ya mensup bir *veteranus* ile olası bir Roma askerine ait iki mezar yazıtı tanıtılmaktadır. Mezar sahiplerinden ilkinin adı Lucius Domitius -isicus veya Eisi(a)cus/Isi(a)cus(?); diğerininki ise Marcus Sertorius Vitelianus'tur. M. Sertorius Vitelianus'un mezar yazıtında geçen Kadas adına Nikaia'da ilk kez rastlanmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Bithynia; Nikaia; *Legio V Macedonica*; emekli asker.