



A soldier is decorated with the corona aurea after the Bar Kokhba revolt (CIL X, 3733)

Typology (Honorific / Funerary / etc.): Honorific.

Original Location/Place: Puteoli?/Atella. Found in the eighteenth century, built into the wall of the open-air atrium of a church. The territory in which it was found (Calvizzano) almost certainly belonged to the colony of Puteoli in Hadrian's reign.

Actual Location (Collection/Museum): Lost.

Date: 135 CE to 138 CE

Physical Characteristics: Unknown.

Material: Unknown.

Measurements: Unknown.

Language: Latin

Category: Roman

Publications: CIL X, 3733

(EDR: 161546)

Commentary: The above inscription was set up in Campania by the heirs of Caius Nummius Constans, according to the instructions laid out in his will (*ex testamento*). It records his military career, and the honours he received under the emperors Trajan and Hadrian. The inscription reveals that Nummius Constans had been present in Judea in the 'Jewish War' (*bellum Iudeicum*), which of course refers to the Bar Kokhba revolt of 132-135 CE, and that he had received military decoration from Hadrian in recognition of his actions there. The numbers of similar awards that have been identified in funerary and honorific inscriptions, also given out by Hadrian following the end of the Bar Kokhba war, reveal the difficulty faced by the soldiers and the importance of the victory won by Rome.

The inscription gives the *cursus honorum* (career) of Caius Nummius Constans in a sort of reverse order, beginning with the highest positions he attained before listing his earlier roles, and then ending with the honours awarded to him during the successive reigns of Trajan and Hadrian. He had begun his military service in the urban cohort in Rome (*cohors urbana*) before moving into the praetorian cohort (*cohors praetoriana*), in a move that only first became possible in the reign of Trajan (Domaszewski, *Die Rangordnung des römischen Heeres*, p. 16, n. 6). He rose to the position of centurion in both the Legio III Cyrenaica and the Legio VII Claudia before reaching the more senior role of *primus pilus* – literally the "first spear" – with the Legio II Traiana. This was the 'first' centurion of the Legion, the senior command position and one of some pre-eminence (for the origin and role of *primus pilus*, see Dobson, *Die Primipilares*, p. 15-60).

Nummius Constans received his first military decorations under the emperor Trajan, for his efforts during the Parthian campaigns. He was awarded collars (*torques*), bracelets (*armillae*) and the *phalerae* – sculpted discs of gold, silver or bronze that were worn on the breastplate – which appear to have been the typical ornaments given out to soldiers of praetorian or lower-centurion rank (Maxfield, *Military Decorations*, p. 23-25; 41; 43; 53; 256), meaning that his involvement in the Parthian campaigns occurred at an earlier stage of his career. These same awards, with the addition of the *corona aurea* ('golden crown') were awarded a second time under Hadrian, for his service in Judea during the Bar Kokhba war (*ob bellum Iudeicum*). Brian Dobson has, however, suggested that the second instance of military dedication possibly occurred once Nummius Constans had risen to the position of centurion of the Legio III Cyrenaica or even as *primus pilus* of the Legio II Traiana, detachments of which are known, thanks to inscriptional evidence, to have been moved to Judea to support the Roman war effort (Dobson, *Die Primipilares*, p. 244; for the movement of troop detachments to Judea, see Schürer, *History of the Jewish People*, p. 547-549, n. 150).

The awarding of military decorations, or *dona*, had been in practice since the earliest days of the Republic. They could be awarded for internal and external conflict, although the majority appear to have been given to soldiers who fought in wars outside of Rome (for a full discussion of the different contexts in which *dona* were given, see Maxfield, *Military Decorations*, p. 110-144). The decorations that Nummius Constans received of the usual type: *torques*, or collars, were given in pairs and attached to the soldier's breastplate, just below the collarbone. According to Valerie Maxfield, during the principate there is evidence for it forming part of a collection of awards



that were only issued to those of centurion rank and below (*Military Decorations*, p. 86-88). *Armilla* (bracelets) were also part of this award and, like the *torques*, were probably intended to represent the men and women of the tribes that Rome had fought against and conquered during her earliest phase of expansion (Maxfield, *ibid*, p. 89-91). The small metal discs, the *phalerae*, that made up the third part of the combination of awards were attached to the breastplate by a harness and appear to have been used as an indication of rank (Maxfield, *ibid*, p. 91-95). C. Nummius Constans, however, received a further honour under Hadrian, the *corona aurea*, or 'golden crown,' an award used to celebrate courage in battle. It was the simplest of the different military crowns that could be awarded, and because of its lack of precise or limited award, was considered the lowest of the four crowns that might be given; Valerie Maxfield has noted that it was usually given to soldiers or equestrian or senatorial rank in combination with the honours listed above, but was typically given to an *evocatus*, one who had almost, but not quite reached the level of centurion (Maxfield, *Military Decorations*, p. 80-81). From the first century CE the term *evocatus* had come to be used for praetorian soldiers who had completed their sixteen years of service in the lower ranks, and who had been identified as suitable candidates for the centurionate, which explains the confusing status of Nummius Constans rank that the inscription implied. There is a minimum gap of fifteen and a maximum of twenty-one years between the two wars for which Constans was honoured by Trajan and Hadrian; if he had enlisted shortly before he was transferred to Parthia by Trajan it is feasible that he had been designated *evocatus* by the time of the Bar Kokhba revolt. However, if he had already served for a number of years before the Parthian wars broke out, he had almost certainly reached the rank of centurion by 132 CE, and perhaps already then held the leadership of the *Legio III Cyrenaica*, making the same set of awards he received from Hadrian somewhat problematic given their 'typical' distribution (Maxfield, *Military Decorations*, p. 211-213).

The individual ornaments awarded to Nummius Constans were an indication of the significance of his contribution in each of the wars for which they were given. However, those given out following the Bar Kokhba revolt should perhaps receive closer attention, particularly given the number of other soldiers who were also awarded similar honours. The epigraphic record for this period is particularly rich, and provides good evidence for the severity of the war that Hadrian's soldiers were fighting; soldiers were drafted in to fight in Judea from all over the empire, and they were rewarded for their service accordingly. The *Legio III Cyrenaica* in which Nummius Constans was a centurion had been brought to Judea from Arabia, but there are attestations of detachments from legions in Syria, Moesia, Dalmatia as well as the soldiers that accompanied Sextus Iulius Severus from Britain. Even praetorian cohorts from Rome appear to have accompanied the emperor to Judea, based on the description of military honours awarded by Hadrian to a *trecenarius*, or their most senior centurion (*CIL* XI, 5646). The geographic impact of the war appears, therefore, to have been enormous, with potentially huge numbers of soldiers moved across major distances in order to support Rome's suppression of the Jews (Eck, "The Bar Kokhba Revolt", p. 82-3. For a contrary argument, see Mor, "Geographic Scope of the Bar Kokhba Revolt", p. 107-131). The heavy losses suffered by Rome are well known from the literary record, but for those soldiers who survived there was some significant recognition of their contribution; just as Nummius Constans received honours for his role in the conflict, a tribune from the same *Legio III Cyrenaica* received *donis militaribus a divo Hadriano ob Iudaicum expeditionem* ('military gifts from deified Hadrian, on account of the Jewish campaign', *CIL* XIV, 610). A veteran from the *Legio III Gallica* was awarded the same "*torquibus et armillis*" ('collars and bracelets') bestowed twice upon Nummius Constans (*CIL* XII, 2230). A commander of an auxiliary cohort was also decorated with a "*vexillum mil. donato a divo Hadriano in expeditione Iudaica*" (*CIL* VI, 1523). It is clear from the extent to which Hadrian honoured the soldiers that had survived the war, that their contribution to Rome's victory was enormously significant; their military decorations immortalised the victory and recognised the severe nature of the conflict in which they had fought.

Keywords in the original language:

- Traianus
- Parthicus
- Hadrianus
- centurio
- primuspilus
- legio
- miles
- evocatus
- cohortes praetoriae
- cohortes urbanae
- donum



- torquis
- armilla
- phalera
- corona aurea
- bellum
- Iudaicus
- heres

Thematic keywords:

- Bar Kokhba
- Bar Kokhba Revolt
- Jewish rebellion
- Judea
- Hadrian
- Roman army
- soldier
- golden crown
- military
- Roman awards and decorations
- Roman triumph
- Roman victory
- Roman power

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Inscription

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The governor of Arabia, Titus Haterius Nepos, is honoured as a benefactor after the Bar Kokhba revolt.

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Inscription

Iulius Severus, Hellenistic descendant, and Roman Governor in the Bar Kokhba Revolt

Career of Iulius Severus, one of the Roman officials in the East during the Bar Kokhba revolt.

- Read more about Iulius Severus, Hellenistic descendant, and Roman Governor in the Bar Kokhba Revolt

Architecture

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Arch of Hadrian - Jerash– General View





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[Arch of Hadrian - Jerash– General View \[2\]](#)



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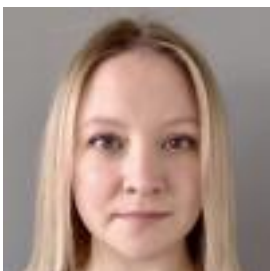
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