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A NEW MILITARY DIPLOMA FOR A VETERAN OF THE *EXERCITUS DACIAE POROLISSENSIS*

Florian MATEI-POPESCU

Vasile Pârvan Institute of Archaeology,
Bucharest, Romania
florian.matei@gmail.com

Peter ROTHENHÖFER

Department of History, Sun Yat-Sen
University, Zhuhai, China
p.rothenhoefer@yahoo.com

Abstract: A new military diploma copied after an imperial constitution issued for the auxiliary soldiers of the *exercitus Daciae Porolissensis* during Antoninus Pius' 19th *tribunicia potestas* (the 10th of December, 155 – the 9th of December, 156) is published here. Although fragmentary, the list of the units can be reconstructed following the attestations from other imperial constitutions issued in AD 150 to 160. Unfortunately the name of the recipient and the unit and its commander are not preserved, nor the name of the governor. However, the latter one could be Tib. Claudius Quintilianus, attested for the year AD 157 (CIL III 836) as praesidial procurator of the province.

Keywords: *Military diploma, Dacia Porolissensis, imperial constitution, auxiliary units, veterans.*

With the exception of Egypt, legal documents from everyday Roman life are extremely rare. However, one group, the so-called military diplomas, is an exception. This is the result of the practice of engraving many of these kind of documents on *tabulae aeneae*. Bronze is long-lasting and, unlike wooden tablets, for example, resistant to weathering. On the other hand it was also a valuable raw material and often remelted. Therefore, completely preserved diplomas are much rarer than the large number of fragments.

Military diplomas were issued *ad personam* to soldiers of auxiliary units of the Roman army and the fleets, but also to members of the *equites singulares Augusti*, the *cohortes praetoriae* and *urbanae*.¹ They document the granting of privileges like *civitas* and *conubium* in connection with the *honesta missio*. From the viewpoint of administrative procedure, all diplomas (each one issued for one soldier) were based on imperial constitutions for those soldiers in a province or military district whose discharge was about to take place.

It is particularly the naming of these units in the documents that makes the diplomas extraordinarily important for Roman military history. For instance, this enables us to reconstruct provincial armies. If diplomas from different years and reigns are available, the changes in the composition of provincial armies can be traced. However, more specialised information can also be obtained, such as recruitment and discharge practices. The information on (pairs of) consuls, governors and senior officers listed in the documents is also of general historical interest. It is therefore not surprising that military diplomas have attracted great interest in recent decades.

The well-preserved fragment of a hitherto unknown military diploma is presented below. It consists of the upper left corner of a *tabella* I. The dimensions are 5.64 cm (height) × 3.62 cm (width) × 1 mm (thickness). The fragment

¹ See e.g. ECK 2013; ECK 2017; ARDEVAN 2024.

weighs 11.54 g and is slightly uneven, probably caused by hammer strokes when the tablet was crushed.

As usual, both sides are inscribed. The letter height on the outer face is 4–5 mm and with 3–4 mm slightly smaller on the inner face.

The text on the outer face was framed by double incised lines. Remains of the approx. 4 mm wide framing can be clearly recognised at the top and left. The lines on the outer face are engraved in a very regular and balanced manner. Serifs mainly decorate the lower ends of the letters. As they are generally aligned very neatly to the right, it is reasonable to conclude that auxiliary lines were used, but no remains of these have survived.

Lines 1–4 consist of the emperor's name including the titles.

The first letter both in line 1 and 5 stands out due to its size. The letter I in the first line measures 6.3 mm. In line 5, the letters EQ are also slightly shifted to the left marking the beginning of the *equitibus et peditibus* formula. The Qs in lines 5 and 6 are each designed with a long, slightly curved horizontal lower bar to the right. The symbol ∞ for *miliaria* has open ends on both sides. Numbers are marked with an upper bar.

Like countless other diplomas, the outer and inner faces show striking differences in the way they are inscribed. While the outer face stands out due to the neat, regular design of the text, the words on the invisible inner side were engraved more cursorily and quickly. *Litterae* are clearly more angular there. Serifs, if present, usually point downwards at different angles. And in line 4, the upper bar marks only part of the number.

The following text can be read:

Extrinsacus (Fig. 1):

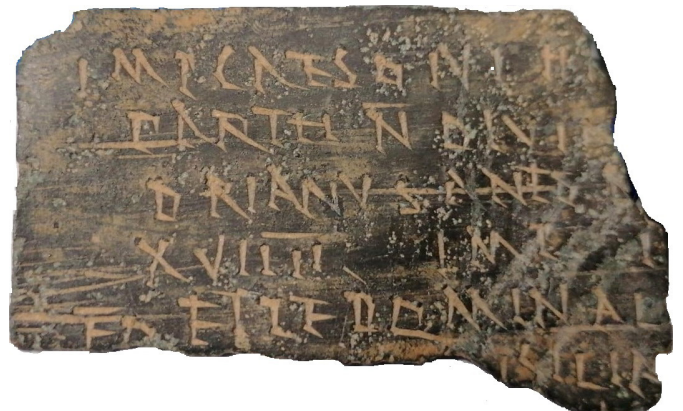


- 1 IMPCAES[- - -]
NIPARTH[- - -]
LIVS HAD[- - -]
MAX TR+[- - -]
5 EQVITIBET[- - -]
QVAEAPPE[- - -]
ETPANNON[- - -]
I VLP BRIT[- - -]
VLP HISPAN[- - -]
10 SAT∞ ET II AV[- - -]
NOR ∞ ET I H[- - -]
ET II HISPAN S[- - -]

5: + Remains of a vertical stroke in the margin. Probably TRI[B POT - - -] due to the reconstructed length of the line of rather 26 instead of 24 (TR P[OT - - -]) or 22 letters (TR P[- - -]). – 10.: Remains of the left oblique stroke of the V have survived.

Intus (Fig. 2):

- IMP·CAES DIVI HA[- - -]
PARTH N DIVI N[- - -]
DRIANVSANTON[- - -]
XVIII IMP I[- - -]
EQ ETPEDQMIN AL[- - -]
---]ISILIA[- - -]



The beginning of lines 1 and 5 moved to the left. – 2: The N with an upper bar. – 4: Only the last three digits of the number with an upper bar.

As military diplomas are typical double documents, the text engraved across the two inner faces is the same as on the outer face of *tabella* I. This is also the case with the fragment presented here. Parts of the beginning of the document can be read on both sides. The text begins with the official, full name of the reigning emperor. It can be found in the first four lines of both pages. Elements such as *divi Ha[driani f(i)lius - - -]*, *Parth(ici) n(epos)* and *[Ha]drianus Anton[inus - - -]* can easily be supplemented and undoubtedly point to Emperor Antoninus Pius (AD 138–161). Fortunately, the number of the *tribunicia potestas*, XVIII, has been preserved on the inner face at the beginning of line 4. It refers to the period 10 December 155 to 9 December

Table 1. Auxiliary units attested in Dacia Porolissensis between AD 150 and 165.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| RMD V 404 – (AD 151) | RMD I 47 = CIL XVI 110 – (AD 154) | RMD I 63 + 64 = IDR I DiplMil 20 und 18; CIL XVI 185 = IDR I DiplMil 19 – (AD 164) |
| Gallorum et Pannoniorum | Siliana | II Gallorum et Pannoniorum |
| Siliana | Gallorum et Pannoniorum catafractaria | Siliana cR |
| Tungrorum Frontoniana | Frontoniana | Tungrorum Frontoniana |
| I Ulpia Brittonum ∞ | I Ulpia Brittonum ∞ | I Ulpia Brittonum ∞ |
| I Britannica ∞ | [I Britannica] ∞ | I Britannica eq. |
| I Flavia Ulpia Hispanorum ∞ | I Flavia Ulpia Hispanorum ∞ | I (Flavia Ulpia) Hispanorum ∞ |
| I Batavorum ∞ cR | [I Batavorum ∞ cR] | I Batavorum ∞ |
| I Aelia Gaesatorum ∞ | I Aelia Gaesatorum ∞ | I Aelia Gaesatorum (∞) |
| II Augusta Nerviana Pacensis Brittonum ∞ | II Augusta Nerviana Pacensis Brittonum ∞ | II (Augusta) Nerviana (Pacensis) Brittonum ∞ |
| II Britannorum ∞ | II Britannorum ∞ | II Britannorum ∞ |
| I Hispanorum | I Hispanorum | I Hispanorum ∞ |
| I Cannanefatium | [I Cannanefatium] | I Cannanefatium |
| II Hispanorum scutata Cyrenaica | II Hispanorum scutata Cyrenaica | II Hispanorum (scutata Cyrenaica) |
| V Lingonum | V Lingonum | V Lingonum |
| VI Thracum | VI Thracum | VI Thracum |

156² and is an important chronological clue, as the actual date of issue is lost. Not so many imperial constitutions are known for that year.³

Line 5 (both on the outer and inner face) then names the addressees of the constitution in general terms: *equitibus et peditibus*, mounted auxiliaries and infantry. This is followed by the units in which they had performed their military service. While on the outer face of *tabella* I names of eight auxiliary troops have been preserved, on the inner face there are traces of the name of only one unit.

Line 8 of the outer face starts with I VLP BRIT[- - -]. Without doubt, it refers to the *cohors* I Ulpia Brittonum. A unit with the name *I Ulpia Brittonum ∞* was part of the *exercitus Daciae Porolissensis* around the middle of the 2nd century AD, as was *I Flavia Ulpia Hispanorum ∞* which can be connected with VLP HISPAN[- - -] in line 9. The units I H[- - -] ET II HISPAN S[- - -] in lines 11–12 should be the cohorts *I Hispanorum* and *II Hispanorum scutata Cyrenaica* of the *exercitus Daciae Porolissensis* which appear in the military diplomas RMD V 404 from AD 151, RMD I 47 from AD 154 and RMD I 63 from AD 164 (Table 1).

As the other, shorter unit name fragments can also be easily assigned to auxiliary formations attested in the aforementioned diplomas, there is no doubt that this diploma was also issued to a member of an auxiliary unit stationed in the Dacia Porolissensis.

Taking into consideration also further diplomas for members of the *exercitus Daciae Porolissensis* from the years of Antoninus Pius' reign,⁴ we can conclude that three *alae* and 12 *cohortes* were stationed in Dacia Porolissensis

² See KIENAST/ECK/ HEIL 2017, 128–129.

³ RMD VI, xxix; RMD II 102–103 (Pannonia inferior), in 157 after the consul pair, but in 156 after the number of the *tribunicia potestas*; AE 2006, 1213 = AE 2016, 1366 = AE 2021, 1107 (Moesia inferior); ECK/PANGERL 2017 = AE 2017, 1763 (Dalmatia).

⁴ AE 2016, 1323 (Ilişua-Arcobara, 144–146); AE 2011, 1073 = ILD 830 = (Gherla, 143–153); RMD V 404 = ILD 38 = AE 2001, 1705 (Căşeu, 151); ECK 2022 = AE 2016, 1324 + 1325 = DANA/GAIU 2016, 259–265, nos. 2–3 (Ilişua-Arcobara, 154–156); CIL XVI 110 = IDR I DiplMil 17a+b = IDR III/1, 98a+b = ILD 7 = RMD 47 (Mehadia, 154). See also the table 1 with the nearly complete list of auxiliary units in Dacia Porolissensis during the reign of Antoninus Pius.

under this emperor and that there were obviously no major regroupings.⁵

This makes it easier to reconstruct great parts of text of the new diploma from the end of 155 or 156 AD. The number of letters per line is between 26 and 30/31. The text on the inner face is shorter.⁶ The following reading results for the outer and inner pages:

extrinsecus:

IMP CAES[AR DIVI HADRIANI F DIVI TRAI] (30)
 NI PARTH[ICI N DIVI NERVAE PRON T AE] (28)
 LIVS HAD[RIANVS ANTONINVS AVG PIVS P] (30)
 MAX TR[IB POT XVIII IMP II COS IV P P] (26)
 EQVITIB ET [PEDIT QVI MILIT IN ALIS III] (31)
 QVAE APPE[LLANT I TVNGR FRONT ET GALL] (30)
 ET PANNON[CATAF ET SILIANA ET COH XII] (30)
 I VLP BRIT[T∞ ET I BRITANN ∞ ET I FLAV] (28)
 VLP HISPAN[∞ ET I BATAV ∞ ET I AEL GAE] (28)
 SAT∞ ET II AV[G NERV BRIT ∞ ET II BRITAN] (30)
 NOR ∞ ET I H[ISPAN PF ET I CANNANEF] (28)
 ET II HISPAN S[CVT CYR ET V LINGON ET VI] (30)

[THRAC ET SVNT IN DACIA POROLISSEN] (29)
 SVB CL QVINTILIANO(?) – – –]

intus:

IMP CAES DIVI HA[DRIANI F DIVI TRAIANI] (31)
 PARTH N DIVI N[ERVAE PRON T AEL HA] (26)
 DRIANVS ANTON[INVS AVG PIVS P M TR POT] (30)
 XVIII IMP I[I COS IV PP] (18)

⁵ For the history of each unit see PETOLESCU 2021, 171–180 (*alae*) and 184–186 (*I Batavorum ∞*), 188–194 (*I Britannica ∞*, *I Ulpia Brittonum ∞*, *II Britannorum ∞*), 196–198 (*II Augusta Nerviana Pacensis Brittonum ∞*), 203–204 (*I Cannanefatium*), 216–218 (*I Aelia Gaesatorum ∞*), 227–232 (*I Hispanorum p. f.*, *I Flavia Ulpia Hispanorum ∞*, *II Hispanorum scutata Cyrenaica*), 236–237 (*V Lingonum*), 245–246 (*VI Thracum eq.*).

⁶ For the inner faces of diplomas issued under Antoninus Pius see ECK 2007, 98–99, and HOLDER 2007.

EQ ET PED Q M IN AL [III Q APP TVNG FRONT ET
GALL] (35)
ET PANN CATAF E]T SILIA[NA ET COH XII – –] (28?)

The name of the governor is not preserved. Nevertheless, there are good reasons that it might have been Tib. Claudius Quintilianus. He is attested in a building inscription of the amphitheatre of Porolissum from AD 157 as procurator of Dacia Porolissensis.⁷ However, it is not known whether he was already in office in 156.⁸ But if he would have been the direct successor of M. Macrinus Vindex, the governor between 151 and 154, then Tib. Claudius Quintilianus might have held the office between 155 and 157⁹ and his name may therefore also have appeared in this constitution. However, it is also possible that he entered the office only in 157, being the predecessor of L. Volusius, attested between 160 and 163,¹⁰ and the name of other procurator, who have held the office between 154 and 156, would have appeared in this constitution.

As a result of the discussion above the following reconstruction of the conflated text of the diploma can be suggested:

Imp(erator) Caes(ar), divi Ha[driani f(ilius), divi Traia]ni Parthici n(epos), divi N[ervae pron(epos), T(itus) Ael]ius Hadrianus Anton[inus Aug(ustus) Pius, p(ontifex)] max(imus) tr[ib(unicia) pot(estate)] XVIII, imp(erator) I[I, co(n)s(ul) IV, p(ater) p(atriciae), equitib(us) et pedit(ibus) qui milit(averunt) in alis III, quae appellat(ur) [I Tungr(orom) Front(oniana) et Gall(orom)] et Pannon(iorum) [catafracta e]t Silia[na et coh(ortibus) XII], I Ulp(ia) Brit[t(onum) ∞ et I Britan(nica) ∞ et I Flav(ia)] Ulp(ia) Hispan(orom) [∞ et I Batav(orom) ∞ et I Ael(ia) Gae]sat(orom) ∞ et II Au[g(usta) Nerv(iana) Brit(onum) ∞ et II Britan]nor(um) ∞ et I H[ispan(orom) p(ia) f(idelis) et I Cannanef(atium)] et II Hispan(orom) s[cut(ata) Cyr(enaica) et V Lingonum et VI Thracum et sunt in Dacia Porolissensi sub Cl(audio) Quintiliano ? - -].

ABBREVIATIONS

- AE
L'Année Épigraphique. Revue des publications épigraphiques à l'antiquité romaine (Paris 1888 –).
- CIL
Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (Berlin 1863 –)
- IDR
Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae (Bucharest 1975 –)
- ILD
C. C. Petolescu, *Inscripții latine din Dacia* (Bucharest 2010–2016)
- PIR²
Prosopographia Imperii Romani saec. I. II. III. Editio altera (Berlin 1933–2015)

⁷ CIL III 836: *Imp(erator) Caesar T(itus) Ael(ius) Hadri/anus Antoninus Aug(ustus) Pi/us p(ontifex) m(aximus) trib(unicia) pot(estate) XX imp(erator) II co(n)s(ul) / IIII p(ater) p(atriciae) amphitheatrum vetus/tate dilapsum de n(o)vo fe/cit curante Tib(erio) Cl(audio) Quinti/liano proc(uratore) suo.*

⁸ PISO 2013, 122–123, no. 76.

⁹ PISO 2013, 117–122, no. 75.

¹⁰ PISO 2013, 123–127, no. 77.

RMD

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