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## A NEW FRAGMENT OF A MILITARY DIPLOMA FOR THE *EQUITES SINGULARES AUGUSTI*

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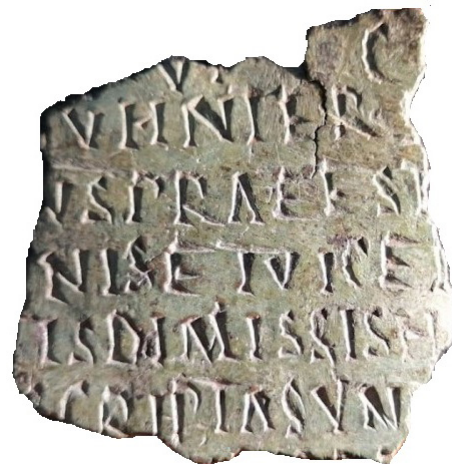
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**Abstract:** A new fragment of a military diploma copied from an imperial constitution concerning the emperor's horse guards (*equites singulares Augusti*) is published here. The authors tentatively propose that Septimius Severus granted it in the summer of AD 195, during his Parthian expedition.

**Keywords:** *Military diploma, imperial constitution, equites singulares Augusti, Septimius Severus.*

Recently, a fragment from the centre of a *tabella I* of a Roman military diploma, could be examined by the authors. The fragment, which is broken on all four sides, bears a green patina. The inner face has suffered corrosion and hammering, so the preserved text is barely legible. Dimensions 5.2 × 5 × 0.2 cm. Weight 28.26 g. Height of letters 6–7 mm. Punctuation: Dots.



Outer face: Remains of 7 lines of text; letters are well engraved (Fig. 1).

- (1) [- -] · VI · C[OS - - -]
- (2) [EQVITIBVS Q]VI-INTER-S[INGVLAR MILITAVER CASTRIS] 10/41?
- (3) [NOVIS QVIB]VS PRAEEST [- - -TRI] 9/?
- (4) [BVNVS QV]INIS E T VICEN[IS PLVRIBVSVE STIPENDIS] 7/39
- (5) [EMERI]TIS DIMISSIS H[ONESTA MISSIONE QVORVM] 5/37
- (6) [NOMINA SVB]SCRIPTA SVNT [CIVITATEM ROMANAM] 9/36
- (7) + + +



Inner face: traces of 6 lines of text (Fig. 2).

- (1) [---]MAX·TR[IB  
 (2) [---]+ COS [---]  
 (3) [EQVITIBVS QVI I]NTER·SINCV[LAR MILITAVR CASTRIS] 13/41  
 (4) [NOVIS QVIBVS] PRAEEST+ [---] 11/?  
 (5) TRIBVNVS] QVINIS ET VI[CENIS PLVRIBVSVE STIPENDIS] 9/43  
 (6) [EMERITIS] DIM[ISSIS HONESTA MISSIONE QVORVM] 8/39?(7)  
 +++

Line 1 on the outer face and lines 1–2 of the inner face undoubtedly refer to elements of the Imperial titles which are usually found at the beginning of Roman military diplomas before the *equitibus et peditibus* formula.<sup>1</sup> The numeral VI in line 1 on the outer face can be understood as either the number of *imperator* acclamations<sup>2</sup> or as part of the *tribunicia potestas*<sup>3</sup>, while the following C can undoubtedly be restored to *cos*. *Cos* can also be read in line 2 on the inner face, but it is impossible to determine whether it was followed by a numeral. The space seems to be empty.

In line 2 on the outer face and line 3 on the inner face *qui inter singulares* can clearly be read. This enables us to restore the formula *equitibus qui inter singulares militaverunt*, rather than the usual *equitibus et peditibus*, which is found in diplomas for members of auxiliary units. This formula was used in diplomas for the *equites singulares Augusti*. Therefore, it can be concluded that the diploma dates back to an imperial constitution for the *equites singulares Augusti*.

Unfortunately, no names can be found on the fragment. This includes the names of the issuing emperor, consuls, soldiers (including officers) and witnesses. As previously mentioned, the number VI of the *tribunicia potestas* or the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. HOLDER 2007, 151.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. CIL XVI 56 from Charchell (AD 107): *Imp(erator) Caesar divi Nervae f(ilius) Nerva Tra[i]an(us) / Aug(ustus) Germanic(us) Dacic(us) pontif(ex) maximus / tribunic(ia) potestat(e) XI imp(erator) VI co(n)s(ul) V p(ater) p(atr)iae / equitibus et peditibus qui militaverunt in ...*

<sup>3</sup> E.g. CIL XVI 147 from Lyon (AD 243): *Imp(erator) Caes(ar) M(arcus) Antonius Gordianus Pius Fel(ix) / Aug(ustus) pont(ificus) max(imus) tr(ibun)icia pot(estate) VI co(n)s(ul) II p(ater) p(atr)iae proc(onsul) / nomina militum qui militaverunt / in ...*

imperial acclamation, as well as the indication of an emperor's consulship, are preserved. It seems that no number was added to the consulship on the inner face. Nevertheless, we must take into consideration the possibility of larger spaces between the different segments of the imperial titles. Therefore, we cannot exclude that the number of consulship was given.

It is possible to make an assumption about the length of both line 2 (the outer face) and line 3 (the inner face). We can therefore conclude that there were probably 39–41 letters in each line. A similar number of letters can be seen in diplomas issued at the end of the 2nd century and during the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.<sup>4</sup> This could be considered as a first chronological indication.

Another observation supports this. Of all the known diplomas issued to veterans of the *equites singulares Augusti*, the largest number were issued during the reigns of Septimius Severus, Caracalla, and Severus Alexander.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, we must consider whether this fragment may have come from a diploma copied from a constitution issued during that period.

Regarding this possible dating, another argument is important: Within the suggested restoration of lines 2–3 (outer face) and 3–4 (inner face), there is no space for *castris prioribus*, *castris novis Severianis*, *castris Alexandrianis* or *castris Maximianis*. These expressions can be found in diplomas from the reigns of Alexander Severus (AD 222–235) and Maximinus Thrax (AD 235–238).<sup>6</sup> Conversely, *castris novis* would fit into the remaining space quite well. This term was used during the reigns of Septimius Severus and his successors, Caracalla and Geta.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, if the proposed restoration is correct, the fragment must come from a diploma issued during the reign of Septimius Severus alone, Septimius Severus and Caracalla together, or Caracalla alone.

The combination of the numeral VI and the mention of the consulship could appear as follows: for example, in 203, when Caracalla held the *tribunicia potestas* for the sixth time, having first been consul in 202.<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, in the summer of 195, Septimius Severus was hailed as *imperator* for the sixth time, having been consul for the second time in 194.<sup>9</sup>

Year	Emperor	<i>tribunicia potestas</i>	<i>Imperator</i>	<i>Consul</i>
195	Septimius Severus		VI	II
203	Caracalla	VI		Cos
185	Commodus		VI	IIII

From the way the letters are arranged on the fragment, we are inclined to consider the second option, Septimius

<sup>4</sup> E. g. RGZM 45 (December 20, AD 202); RGZM 46 (April 30, AD 202 or 203);

<sup>5</sup> ECK 2021, 323; ECK/PANGERL 2015, 222; ECK/PANGERL 2023, 257.

<sup>6</sup> *Castris prioribus*: e.g. RMD V 453 (AD 205); ECK/PANGERL 2023, 257–260, no. 4 (AD 196/197); *castris novis Severianis*: e.g. CIL XVI 144 (AD 230); RMD II134 (AD 223 – 235); RMD V 471a-b (AD 232/236). – *castris novis Alexandrianis*: e.g. AE 2015, 1879 and 2019, 2076 (both AD 235). – *castris novis Maximianis*: e.g. CIL XVI 146 and RMD III 198 (both AD 237). See also ECK 2019, 254–259.

<sup>7</sup> RMD V 454 (AD 207) and AE 2015, 1877 (AD 213).

<sup>8</sup> KIENAST/ECK/HEIL 2017, 157.

<sup>9</sup> KIENAST/ECK/HEIL 2017, 150.

Severus in AD 195. In the diplomas in which Septimius Severus appears alongside Caracalla, Caracalla's number of *tribunicia potestas* and consulship are mentioned at the end of the line above the formula *equitibus qui inter singulares militaverunt*.<sup>10</sup>

We also have to consider the possibility that the diploma was issued under Commodus. He was hailed as *imperator* for the sixth time in 183 and was consul for the fourth time that year.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, we believe there is a much higher probability that the constitution was issued under Septimius Severus, particularly if we take into consideration the large number of letters in lines 2–3.

Therefore, we propose dating the diploma to the summer of 195, during Septimius Severus' first expedition against the Parthians.<sup>12</sup>

Based on the above discussion, the following reconstruction of the conflated text of the diploma can be tentatively suggested:

*[Imp(erator) Caes(ar) divi M(arci) Antonini Pii German(ici) Sarmat(ici) f(ilius) divi Commodi frater divi Antonini Pii nep(os) divi Hadriani pronep(os) divi Traiani Parthici abnep(os) divi Nervae adnep(os) L(ucius) Septimius Severus Pius Pertinax Aug(ustus) Arabic(us) Adiabenic(us) pont(ifex) max(imus) trib(unicia) pot(estate) III imp(erator)] VI co(n)s(ul) [II p(ater) p(atriciae) proco(n)s(ul)]  
[equitibus q]ui inter singu[lar(es) militaver(unt) castris novis, quib]us praeest [- - tribunus], quin[is] et vicen[is pluribusve stipendis emer]itis dimissis h[onesta missione, quorum nomina sub] scripta sunt [civitatem Romanam dedit] etc.*

## ABBREVIATIONS

### AE

L'Année Épigraphique. Revue des publications épigraphiques à l'antiquité romaine (Paris 1888 –).

### CIL

Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (Berlin 1863 –).

### RGZM

Pferdehirt, B., Römische Militärdiplome und Entlassungsurkunden in der Sammlung des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, I–II (Mainz, 2004).

### RMD

Roxan, M. M./Holder, P., Roman Military Diplomas, I–VI (London, 1978 – 2024).

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Septimius Severus. Eine Bestandsaufnahme und ein Erklärungsversuch, *Athenaeum*. Studi di Letteratura e Storia dell'Antichità 100, 321–336.

### ECK 2019

Eck, W., Beinamen für stadtrömische Militäreinheiten unter Severus Alexander und dessen angeblicher Triumph über die Perser im Jahr 233, *Chiron. Mitteilungen der Kommission für Alte Geschichte und Epigraphik des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 49, 251–269.

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### ECK/PANGERL 2023

Eck, W./Pangerl, A., Vier neue Diplome aus Konstitutionen von Vespasian, Traian, Hadrian und Septimius Severus, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 225, 251–260.

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Holder, P., Observations on the Inner Faces of Auxiliary Diplomas from the Reign of Antoninus Pius. In: Sekunda, N. (ed.), *Corolla Cosmo Rodewald* (Gdansk: Foundation for the Development of Gdansk University), 151–171.

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Kienast, D./Eck, W./Heil, M., *Römische Kaisertabelle. Grundzüge einer römischen Kaiserchronologie*. 6., überarbeitete Auflage (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft).

<sup>10</sup> See e. g. RGZM 47 = RMD V 453 = AE 2003, 1543; RMD V 454 = AE 2003, 1544.

<sup>11</sup> KIENAST/ECK/HEIL 2017, 141–142.

<sup>12</sup> On Septimius Severus' Parthian expedition see BIRLEY 1972, 182–184. The constitution from December 196 – February/March 197 was also issued during this expedition, ECK/PANGERL 2023, 257–260, no. 4.