Florent Heintz

A Domitianic Fleet Diploma


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The piece is roughly rectangular and measures 7.2 x 6.5 cm. It presents the usual greenish discoloration typical of corroded bronze and is incised on both sides. When looking at the inner side (intus), only the right and lower edges are original. The left straight edge is the result of later cutting while the upper, jagged, edge shows traces of breaking. The outer side (extrinsecus) has a border of two deeply engraved parallel grooves running along the original edges; they clearly belong to the original manufacturing. After the fragment was cut out, its inner side was punched violently at least twice in the middle using an instrument approximately 1 cm. in diameter, which may account for the slightly concave shape of the fragment as a whole.

This fragment of a Roman military diploma, more specifically the lower right corner of tabella II, appeared in 1993 on the antiquities market. It is in the process of being purchased for the Corine Alice MacDaniel collection at Harvard.¹

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>intus:</th>
<th>extrinsecus:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COX II</td>
<td>LONGINI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CISSO • MARON</td>
<td>IUSTI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ITUM • EX • TABU</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EST • ROMAE</td>
<td>ŞU</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

intus:

[ca. 22 lines]
[T. Aurelio Fulvio II co(nsulibu)s.

2 [ ] vacat

[ Nar]cisso, Maron(eio).

4 [Descrip]tum et recognitum ex tabu-
[la aenea quae fixa] est Ro(vv)mae

6 [in Capitolio. vacat ] vacat

eextrinsecus:

[ C. Iuli] Longini

2 [ C. Iulii] Severi

[M. Calpurnii] Iusti

4 [ Q. Iuni]Syllae

6 [ ]

The issuing date of the diploma can be safely narrowed down to AD 85, probably between January 1 and February 30, by moving from more general to more specific arguments. The names inscribed on the outer side are those of witnesses who signed diplomas on a regular basis between 84 and 88. Both C. Iulius Longinus and C. Iulius Severus appear together on a diploma dated to 85 (cf. CIL XVI 31); M Calpurnius Iustus appears first on a diploma dated to 86 (CIL XVI 32), then, again, two years later, on at least three other diplomas.² Our restoration of the fourth name, although quite precarious compared to that of the three first names, is based on the witness list of a diploma issued in AD 84 (CIL XVI 30). Finally, the consul mentioned in our fragment was Domitian’s ordinarius during the first two month of 85:

¹ I am grateful to David G. Mitten, curator of the collection, for his permission to publish the piece. I also thank Christopher Jones and Margaret Roxan for their editorial support.

The nature of the diploma (fleet, auxilia, urban cohort or praetorian guard) is more elusive. However, on the basis of typological arguments, it may be determined by using the process of elimination. Witnesses of diplomas issued specifically to veterans both of the praetorian guard and the urban cohorts appear to have signed only once in their lifetime. This is clearly not the case in our fragment since the names of its witnesses can be found on several other diplomas spanning at least a four year period. In diplomas issued to veterans of the auxilia, the space in tabella II between the consular names and the recipient’s name is usually filled with three lines of text: the first one mentions the unit of the recipient followed by the words cui praest., the second line has the unit commander’s name in the nominative, the third and final line gives the status of the recipient in the dative (pediti, equiti, etc.) or with ex and ablative (ex pedite, ex pedite, etc.; cf. indices to CIL XVI, p. 188ff.). The words within those three lines are almost always centered. Had our diploma been delivered to a veteran of the auxilia, at least part of this information would have appeared, since our fragment covers just a little less than half of the standard diploma’s width.

After eliminating all other possibilities the only option left at this point is that of a fleet diploma. Positive evidence comes from the standard practice in fleet diploma of either leaving a line blank between the consular names and the identity of the recipient or filling it with a few words indicating the soldier’s rank or function. In the case of our fragment, the sailor’s rank could have easily fit on the lost left half of line 2. In a fleet diploma from the time of Vespasian (AD 79), for instance, the words ex remigibus appear on tabella II in the line directly above the veteran’s name and are centered more to the left than to the right (CIL XVI 24; see drawing in JRS 1926). In addition, one of the lines below has exactly the same word break as our fragment’s line 4: Descriptum et recognitum ex tabu-. If one draws a vertical line starting from where remigibus stops down into this particular line below, one notices that it cuts through the text almost exactly where our own fragment begins (nitum ex tabu-). This demonstrates beyond doubt that there was sufficient space to accommodate the sailor’s rank on the lost part of our diploma.

If the soldier had carried a peregrine name only, by far the most common occurrence on Roman diplomas, the line mentioning his name, father’s name and geographical origin would have opened with: the peregrine name proper in the dative, the name of his father in the genitive followed by diplomas, the line mentioning his name, father’s name and geographical origin would have opened with: diploma. Beyond doubt that there was sufficient space to accommodate the sailor’s rank on the lost part of our

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3 I am particularly indebted to Margaret Roxan for the following discussion (letter from March 8, 1995).
5 CIL XVI 32; for a photo, see A.E. Gordon, Illustrated Introduction to Latin Epigraphy (Berkeley 1983) #51, pl. 32.
6 For this type of sequence, see tab. II, line 27 of the diploma quoted in n. 5. Dassio Dasentis filio, Pannonio.
7 For another example of this sequence, see M. Roxan, Rom. Mil. Dipl. 1985-1993 (London 1994) #38, line 16.
Mommsen noticed very early on how sailors tend to retain their native, peregrine, name in all fleet diplomas issued until at least AD 79 (Hermes 16 [1881] 467ff.). Later on, some rather debatable epigraphic evidence emerged outside of the realm of diplomas seemingly pointing to a slightly earlier date (ca. AD 71) than the one chosen by Mommsen for the adoption of the tria nomina by sailors. However, from Mommsen’s time up to now, no fleet diploma was known showing a recipient’s tria nomina before AD 129. Around this chronological conundrum revolves a much thornier issue: do tria nomina indicate that their bearer enjoyed full Roman rights as well? This is not the place to engage in this debate, but providing our reconstruction of a full Roman name for our sailor is right and our estimated date of issue is accurate, our small fragment might very well be the earliest attestation of a sailor bearing a full Roman name on his diploma.

The veteran’s hometown, abbreviated Maron., is otherwise unknown in military diplomas; it is probably Maroneia, a Greek port city on the coast of Thrace which was a civitas libera linked to Rome by treaty since the 2nd century BC. The ancient city is currently under excavation. Notably, the soldier’s place of origin is highly specific instead of being absorbed in the usual abbreviated ethnic as in most diplomas. Here, for instance, one would expect Thrac. instead of Maron. There are two possible explanations that could account for this oddity. First, because Maroneia was a free Greek city in Thrace, bound to Rome by treaty, it was not officially part of the province of Thrace. The second explanation is far more convoluted and is based on the assumption that Narcissus served in a provincial fleet. As a rule, provincial fleets would draft extensively from their home province (C.G. Starr, op. cit. [n. 10] 108) and their diplomas tend to be more specific when it comes to naming the veteran’s hometown than in those of the more cosmopolitan Italian fleets.

The last two lines on the inside fragment contain the standard formula usually incised at the end of tabella II in the reign of Domitian. It was a reminder that the document delivered to the soldier was only the individualized copy of the original Imperial decree on display in Rome on the Capitoline. Such formulas are traditionally less specific on tabellae II than those on tabellae I which can be extremely detailed in their description of the publication site. The question raised by our fragments is how did the text end, with Romae at the end of line 5 or with in Capitolio in an hypothetical line 6? Tabellae II of Domitianic diplomas, at least until 88, always mention in Capitolio (CIL XVI 29, 31, 32, 33, 35); it is only from 90 onwards that Romae alone begins to appear (CIL XVI 36, 38, 39). Since our diploma dates to AD 85, one can reasonably assume that it ended with a mention of the Capitoline. The formula in Capitolio, incidentally, did not have to be centered even with a whole line’s space available; it could be confined to the left hand side of the line, as exemplified in another, earlier, fleet diploma (CIL XVI 24).

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13 See M. Speidel, "The Soldiers’ Homes” in Heer und Integrationspolitik (abové, n. 10) 467-481.

14 In diplomas of the Classis Alexandrina, for instance, Egyptian sailors’ Latin names are followed by their individual nomes (cf. C.G. Starr, op. cit. [n. 10] 111).

15 For a list of specific publication sites on tabellae I of Domitianic diplomas, cf. M. Roxan - W. Eck, ZPE 96 (1993) 73-74; e.g. Romae in Capitolio in tribunali Caesariu Vespasiani, T(itii), Domitian(i) (CIL XVI 28), Romae in Capitolio in latere dextro tabularii publici (dipl. dated 21/21 Feb. AD 85, published in same article).