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FRAGMENT OF A SEVERAN AUXILIARY DIPLOMA: NOTES ON A VARIETY OF THE “TWO-PROVINCE” DIPLOMATA


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Among several fragments of auxiliary diplomata recently found at Kostolac, the ancient Viminacium (Moesia Superior), there is one which deserves scholars’ special attention – because of its late date as well as the complex structure of its constitutio.

The fragment belonged to the upper lefthand part of the second tablet. The left edge (or the upper edge, when viewed from the inner face) has been preserved; the perforation holes, invisible now, were at the height of the (uninscribed) line following line 6 extr. The text reads (see Fig. 1):

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Extr. [---]
   CALL [32–34 letters]
   sub Egn[atio(?)] 9(–7) letters legato, item ala/coh(orte) 7(–9) letters
   quaer est [in 7(–17) letters sub 20(–10) letters]
   no legat[o, quinis et vicenis pluribusve stipen]
   dis emer[tis, dimissis honesta missione per]
   Varium [31–33 letters]
   [---]
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Fig. 1 Fragment of the second tablet of an auxiliary diploma (AD 202)
Found at Viminacium in Moesia Superior

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2 Discovered at the site of Cair (the legionary camp and the civilian settlement in its immediate neighbourhood: Viminacium 1, Belgrade 1990, 1 f. 4, 35) in the early months of 1992, the bronze has been acquired by the Museum of Požarevac (Serbia). I am indebted to Mr. Dragan Jacanović, the Keeper of the Museum, for his very kind permission to edit it here.

3 Vidi. Dimensions: height: 2.5 cm (max.), width: 2.4 cm (max.), thickness: 0.05 cm. Weight: 4.13 gms.

4 The arrangement of the text of the original diploma’s two tablets was of an unusual type, although not so rare in the production of the late second and early third centuries (cf. RMD 108, 187, 192 and 196, with the editor’s notes on the matter).
Line 1 init. The ends of four letters forming part of the name of an auxiliary regiment. A reading CRH (for [- - -]) 1 (vitium) R(omanorum) et [- - -] (?) seems improbable if not impossible. Line 2 Though not complete, the G is certain; of N, the bottom of the first stroke is extant. This suggests the restoration Egn[atius(?)]; 5 other nomina in Egn.[6] are neither frequent enough nor of convenient length to be envisaged here. As the numeral and the (slightly abbreviated)7 name of the unit written at the end of the line are likely to have occupied some 7(–9) letters at the minimum,8 the length of the first part of the lacuna, having contained Egn[atius(?)]9 cognomen, can be estimated at the complementary 9(–7) letters (for the total length of the lacunae in lines 1–6 extr. see the apparatus ad lin. 4–5). After Egn[atius(?)]10 cognomen, restore [legato] or [legat(o)]9 not [legato] (cf. line 4 extr.), and [item] rather than [et] (cf. CIL XVI 99 quoted below). Line 3 The length of the first lacuna, before the sub, has been determined – at the cost of a circular argument – on the basis of an estimate of the number of letters which the (unabbreviated)10 name(s) of [nus’] province, in the ablative, would contain. As the total number of letters lost in that line may be approximated at c. 32 (cf. lines 4–5 extr.), the “7(–17)” has resulted in the estimate that the lacuna after the sub numbered 20 (correlating with the “7”)–10 (correlating with the “17”) letters. Lines 4–5 can be restored with confidence (which gives us the approximate length of the original lines of extrinsecus: 36–39 letters) and show (line 4: legat. or legat[o]; line 5: -dis) that this diploma, like the majority of the late Antonine – early Severan diplomata, avoided radical abbreviations. Line 6 The trace of a vertical after M?

Int.

|--| 3ungul|s. A. d. V [10–20(?)] letters: the end of the numeral(?) , the month’s name

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[Imp. Caesar(]r) L. Septimius Severus [Pius Pertinax Augustus) III] [Imp. Caes(ar) M. Aurelius Antoninus [Pius Augustus co(n)s(ules)]

4 [coh(ortis)/alae c. 8(?)] letters: the numeral and the slightly abbreviated name of the unit cui praeest c. 3(?) letters: the beginning of the commander’s gentile|ius [14–25(?)] letters: the commander’s cognomen] [ex equite/pedite/gregale c. 15(?)] letters: the recipient’s name(s) Q[. ALIS [10–25(?)] letters]

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The inner text is difficult to decipher, as it has been less carefully written; moreover, the intus surface of the bronze has suffered from corrosion and accidental cuts resembling letter-traces sporadically. But the a. d. of line 1 and the remains of consular (imperial) cognomina in lines 2 and 3 – the reading of all these being beyond any doubt – make it clear that we are dealing with the dating formula of a Severan diploma. Owing to epigraphical uncertainties (which concern the [varying] breadth of margins and the density of lettering as well as the engraver’s use of vacats and abbreviations), it is impossible to determine the exact lengths of lines. To judge from what can be inferred from the approximate position of the perforation holes (see supra), the righthand lacunae will have been somewhat longer than the lefthand ones, but the former need not have been inscribed complete in lines whose content formed a clear unity (e.g. 1–3), unless there were gross cases of “enjambement”. Our estimate of the maximum lengths of the lost ends of lines 1 (“20[?]”), 4 (“25[?]”) and 5 (“25[?]”); note the line’s dense lettering) should be taken, therefore, to imply so many letter-places rather than letters themselves; actually, at least lines 4 and 5 must have included vacats in their righthand parts. Line 1 The name of the month was probably engraved complete or only slightly abbreviated (cf. RMD 185, 189 extr.). Lines 2–3 Here, as in line 1, the details of restoration and/or the extent of abbreviation may have varied; even the line-division and the line-range of the formula’s elements are not entirely certain (theoretically speaking, Severus’ nomen Imperatoris may have stood at the end of line 1 [cf. CIL XVI 134] or what is now our line 4 init. was transferred to line 3 fin., after the [cos.]).

5 Neither the nomina nor the cognomina of governors cited in the sub clauses of late auxiliary diplomata (extrinsecus) are engraved in abbreviated forms (cf. e.g. RMD 185 and 123).


7 E.g. without the final -um (cf. RMD 187).

8 There is an additional element of uncertainty here: if [nus’] unit is identified as a cohort, the word following the [item] may have been inscribed, instead of the [coh.], complete or only slightly abbreviated.

9 A proc(uratore) (procurat[ore] et sim.) would be prima facie possible, too, but see infra, text and notes 14 ff.

10 Cf. e.g. CIL XVI 131 (AD 178/203): [in Pannonia Inferiore or Inferiori; RMD 123 (AD 179); in Dacia Superiori; RMD 69 (AD 186); in Syria Palestina (!).
Inferior(e) sub Cominio Secundo torem), cum essent in expeditione Mauretaniae Caesarensis. The former is somewhat different, as it omits one governor (the Lower Pannonian, to be exact) from the pair of governors, the gentile from the cognomen (completely lost), as is frequently the case in diplomata. Nevertheless, the space available suggests a short gentile for the number of letters lost in the lefthand lacuna (21–25 is a rough approximation) must have exceeded that of the righthand lacuna or that the above, line 3 is comparatively short. It may, but need not, be assumed that there was a vacat after Caracalla’s titulus. The document, dated AD 202 (lines 2–3 int.), should be attributed to the class of the “two-province” diplomata. Its catalogue of auxilia benefiting from its lex is divided into two provincial commands, that of Egyptian (?) (the section closing with line 2 extr.) and that of a legate with a cognomen in -nus (lines 2–4 extr.). The Varium (line 6 extr.) reminds us of a variety of the class which is represented by constitutiones, preserved through RMD 21+22 (of August 10, 123) and CIL XVI 99 (of August 1, 150) respectively. Their unusual structure throws light on the main body of the text of the Viminacian fragmentary diploma and, by analogy, justifies the restoration, proposed above, of its lines 2–5 extrinsecus. The latter constitutio was issued (equiti quis militaverunt) in alis names of five alae quaer sunt [in Pannonia] Su[p]riore sub Claudio Maximo, item names of three alae quaer sunt in Pa[n(n)ia] Inferior(e) sub Cominio Secundo, . . . dim(issis) honest(a) miss(ione) per Porciu[m] Vetusti[num] proc(urator)em, cum essent in expedition(e) Mauretaniae Caesarensis . . . The former is somewhat different, as it omits the names of one governor (the Lower Pannonian, to be exact) from the pair of governors which the unit list should have cited: (equiti quis et peditibus qui militaverunt) in alis duabus et coh(orte) una qua[e] appell(a)ntur names of three units et sunt in [Dacia P]rolis(s)ensi sub Livio

11 In the diplomata issued as late as the beginning of the third century, the use of the formula citing consules ordinarii need not imply the dies constitutionis in an early part of the year (cf. W. Eck, “Consules Ordinarii und Consules Saffecti als eponyme Amtsträger”, Epigraphia. Collection de l’École française de Rome 143 [1991] 15–44; RMD 187 note 4; 189 note 8). As argued in the sequel, in the case of the diploma dealt with here, the dies constitutionis is likely to have been in the latter half of 202. It is best put within the habitual season of sailing or immediately after its close (approximately, October) – to allow for a certain interval between the arrival of the eligible soldiers to Rome and the promulgation of the lex itself.

12 As Professor W. Eck kindly notes in a letter, the construction of lines 2–3 may also be explained as a result of the influence of the document’s preamble, where the names of the same Emperors must have figured in the nominative.

13 The parallels of onomastic conventions are not helpful here, either: in the diplomata citing Roman citizens as recipients, the filiation by cognomen approximately occurs as often as the other sorts of filiation (by gentile or praenomen) together.

14 So far published: CIL XVI 28 (see also RMD p. 127 note 3); RMD 9 (+ p. 127 note 12), 10 (+ pp. 127 note 13 and 242 note 11), 21 + 22 (+ pp. 129 note 34 and 244 note 20); CIL XVI 99 (see also RMD p. 25 note 99); for a related case cf. CIL XVI 61. On the “two-province” diplomata in general see (W. Eck and H. Wolff eds.) Heer und Integrationspolitik. Die römischen Militärdiplome als historische Quelle (Köln – Wien 1986) 378 ff. (B. Lörincz) and 205–7, 208 f. (S. Dušanić).

15 For unknown reasons; see B. Lörincz’s discussion referred to in the foregoing note.

16 To judge at least from the parallels of CIL XVI 28 and 99 and RMD 10 adduced above, note 14.
Both constitutiones, it is worth emphasizing, unite the auxilia of neighbouring or virtually neighbouring armies.

A certain progress with the restoration – beyond the elementary one to be found at the beginning of the present paper – of the corresponding part of the Viminacian fragment seems possible, despite its smallness. Its find-spot (Viminacium) suggests that one at least of the two provinces involved was in the Danubian/Balkan area. Thrace and Macedonia may be put aside as unimportant, militarily speaking, to say nothing of the purely epigraphical difficulties which the names of their legates at that time would have created if restored in lines 2–4 extr. Considerations of military history (and prosopography?) tend to eliminate Dalmatia,21 too, though perhaps not unreservedly.20 Moesia Inferior should be also excluded, as neither the Egn[atius (?)] nor the [ / ]nus can be reconciled with the names of the early Severan governors of that province (Ovinius Tertullus in 198/201, Aurelius Gallus in 202/205).21 The fasti of the Tres Daciae would provide a candidate for the [ / ]nus but, as yet, none for the Egn[atius (?)].22 Pannonia Superior had Fabius Cilo (again, neither the consular’s gentile nor his cognomen can be restored in lines 2 and 4 extr.) till the imperial visit to the province in the spring of 202, and Ti. Claudius Claudianus was his successor;23 consequently, Claudianus may have been cited in lines 3/4, if the Viminacian fragment is put in the latter half of 202 and the righthand part of its line 4 extr. is assumed to have contained very crowded lettering or, anomalously, some abbreviations (see infr.).

The problems with Pannonia Inferior and Moesia Superior, a priori our likeliest options,24 are similar. Baebius Caecilianus is attested in Pannonia Inferior in 202 (and the preceding period) but may have left Aquincum before the end of the year.25 Q. Anicius Faustus held Upper Moesia approximately at the time of Septimius Severus’ visit there26 but, in view of our present knowledge (rather, ignorance) of his career, both the beginning and the latter half of the year may have seen in Upper Moesia a legate whose names would accord either with the Egn[ ] or with the [ ]no.

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17 Some details of constitutio’s text differ in various editions of RMD 21+22 but differences are immaterial for our purpose.
18 The names of Thracian governors who shared AD 202 (P. M. M. Leunissen, Konsuln und Konsulare in der Zeit von Commodus bis Severus Alexander [180–235 n. Chr.], Amsterdam 1989, 292: C. Caecina Largus, 197/8–201/2; Q. Sicin(n)ius Clarus Pol[itianus?], 202–) cannot be reconciled with the remains of lines 2 and 3/4 extrinsicus. For Macedonia see Leunissen 302. It would be possible to place the Macedonian governorship of M. Antius Crescens Calpurnianus in 202 but with his two cognomina his names are too long for the lacuna of line 3 extrinsicus. On the other hand, an [in Macedonia sub Antio Calpurnia]1no would be too short.
19 We ignore the names of the senator who governed Dalmatia in (the corresponding part of) 202: B. E. Thomasson, Laterculi praesidium I (1984) 94. There is a possibility, however slight, that Fulvius Maximus held that post then (G. Alföldy [apud J. J. Wilkes, Dalmatia, London 1969, 448 no. 31] put Fulvius Maximus’ command of Dalmatia c. 203–206, but see Thomasson 96 no. 60). If so, neither is his gentile compatible with the remains of the sub formula in line 2 nor his cognomen with those at the end of the sub formula in line 4.
20 Professor W. Eck has warned me against a prompt exclusion of Dalmatia.
21 Leunissen (supra, note 18) 251.
24 Note that two Lower Pannonian diplomata, similar in certain remarkable aspects to the fragment dealt with here, have also been found at Viminacium and the vicinity of Viminacium respectively (RMD 22 and 187).
25 Fitz (n. 23) 541 f. no. 323. Cf. Leunissen (n. 18) 279; Heer und Integrationspolitik (n. 14) 558 (W. Eck and H. Wolff).
26 Leunissen (n. 18) 254 f.
Now, Egnatius Victor can plausibly be restored to introduce Egnatius Victor, who was the governor of Pannonia Superior in 207–27 his name would fit in the lacuna of line 2 extr.; if at Aquincum c. 202/205, his transition from the Provincia Inferior to the Provincia Superior may be well paralleled. The question is, whether he obtained the consulate before 202 or at a time much nearer to his Upper Pannonian governorship. In the former case, the province whose troops were cited in the first part of the list of the new diploma from Viminacium should be probably identified with Moesia Superior or even the Tres Daciae (Egnatius Victor successor, for a short tenure, to Octavius Iulianus?). In the latter, the province would be Pannonia Inferior. That possibility appears more attractive, for a variety of reasons. Actually, an inscription from Aquincum, in J. Szilágyi’s convincing reading and restoration, tends to postulate would be Pannonia Inferior. That possibility appears more attractive, for a variety of reasons. Actually, an inscription from Aquincum, in J. Szilágyi’s convincing reading and restoration, tends to postulate would be Pannonia Inferior. That possibility appears more attractive, for a variety of reasons. Actually, an inscription from Aquincum, in J. Szilágyi’s convincing reading and restoration, tends to postulate would be Pannonia Inferior. That possibility appears more attractive, for a variety of reasons.

For the province of the other legate (lines 3–4 extr.), obviously a neighbour of what we think was the Pannonia Inferior of Egnatius Victor, the expected possibilities are Moesia Superior, Pannonia Superior, the Tres Daciae, perhaps even Dalmatia. All of them had a higher rank than Pannonia Inferior but in the present case each of them would be cited after it as if unus’ unit list contained no more than one auxilium; our estimate of the dimensions of the original diploma (more precisely, of the total number of lines lost extrinsice before line 1) suggests, for Egnatius Victor’s (*?)’ section of the list, a small number (three or four?) of auxilia but greater than one unit only. To opt for Pannonia Superior would mean, however, restorations too long for the space available (*in Pannonia Superiore, sub Claudio Claudia/na/), unless the righthand part of line 3 displayed certain exceptional features of an epigraphical order.

Of the remaining three provinces, a Dacia seems to have the best claim, despite the Viminacian provenance of the fragment. The union, within the *constitutio* of 202, of some Lower Pannonian and Dacian regiments would recall the composite unit list of *RMD* 21+22 and, generally, a number of other testimonies on the close collaboration of the regiments from neighbouring armies participating in distant
expeditions.\textsuperscript{38} Octavius Iulianus is already on record in his capacity as governor of the Tres Daciae in 200/201.\textsuperscript{39} The parallel of RMD 123\textsuperscript{40} shows that he may have been cited in lines 3/4 extr. of our fragment along with an \textit{[in Dacia Superiore (or another adjective qualifying the Dacia)]}\textsuperscript{41} formula in line 3. This would produce a complete restoration of lines 3/4 which squares well enough with the length of the lacuna as estimated above; it would be shorter by a single letter-place, actually, than the total of 32 letters calculated in the foregoing comments.

Lastly, if the other alternatives prove unacceptable, between an \textit{[in Dalmatia]} and an \textit{[in Moesia Superiore]} one should prefer the latter restoration. It would imply, however, two prosopographical assumptions: that Q. Anicius Faustus left Viminacium together with Septimius Severus (or shortly after the end of the Emperor’s visit), and that Faustus’ successor (beginning his tenure of the province in the latter part of 202) had a cognomen in -\textit{nus}.\textsuperscript{42}

The analogy of RMD 21+22 may help us eludicate another important point. The \textit{constitutio} of AD 123 has the \textit{dimissi honesta missione per Marcium Turbonem} clause, which seems essentially equivalent to lines 5/6 of the AD 202 fragment. On the one hand, within the context of the early Severan notabilities, it is natural to identify the \textit{Varius} of line 6 extr. with Sex. Varius Marcellus.\textsuperscript{43} His complex post in 202 was that of the \textit{proc(urator) rationis privat(ae)} and the \textit{(trecenarius) vice praef(ectorum) pr(aetorio) et urbi}\textsuperscript{44} (to settle the well-known chronological controversy\textsuperscript{45} in favour of those scholars who propose an early dating of his last equestrian function\textsuperscript{46}). On the other hand, Marcius Turbo had been of course the \textit{praefectus praetorio} after 118/119.\textsuperscript{47} Professor H. Wolff\textsuperscript{48} must be right in assuming – the debate is more than twenty years old now\textsuperscript{49} – that Turbo discharged the beneficiaries of the \textit{lex} preserved through RMD 21+22 in his capacity as \textit{praefectus praetorio}.\textsuperscript{50} Only, Professor Wolff thought
that the *honesta missio* due to Turbo had taken place in a province while the document of 202 makes it probable that both *missiones* – that of Turbo (AD 123?)\(^51\) and that of Marcellus (AD 202?) – were carried out in Italy, most likely in Rome itself, by the dignitaries responsible for the *res militaris* on Italian soil.\(^52\) It would be especially difficult to imagine a *vice praefectorum* praetorio *et urbi* acting outside the Capital and Italy.

This suggests conjectures concerning the troops’ moves. The discharge, in the Capital, of Danubian soldiers presupposes their participation in a distant expedition. If the two *leges* (of AD 123 and 202 respectively) analyzed here – and the implications of *ILB* 138 will have been similar – were rightly assumed to have been issued for auxiliaries having fought a war in the neighbourhood of their permanent garrisons, i.e. on the Danube, the *honesta missio* would have been impractical to perform as far as Rome, and the charge of that ceremony, instead, would have been given to the governor of one of the “Illyrican” provinces. The “two-province” *lex* underlying *CIL XVI* 99 well illustrates the merits of this last claim, though its case is somewhat different (its expeditionary corps did not come from a province in Mauretania’s neighbourhood) from the case of *RMD* 21+22 as commonly interpreted; there is no doubt that *CIL XVI* 99 refers to a *missio* carried out by a local dignitary and in the vicinity of the scene of the West African war. Probably, for some reason, the recipients of the diplomata of AD 150 were not planned to reach their Danubian forts by passing through Rome.\(^53\)

To revert to *RMD* 21+22 and the Viminacian fragment, their *dimissi*, we are inclined to believe (it is little more than a guess), belonged to units returning to the Danube from Mauretania (c. AD 122–123 ?)\(^54\) and the south-east (?Alexandria, c. AD 201-202?)\(^55\) respectively. The route of the former led normally through Rome.\(^56\) The case of the latter, geographically speaking, was not quite the same\(^57\) but

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\(^{51}\) As stressed by Wolff (*supra*, note 48), it would be an uneconomic reconstruction of the prehistory of the constitutio producing *RMD* 21+22 to assume a long interval between the *missio* and August 10, 123.

\(^{52}\) Cf also *RMD* App., p. 103 = *Ann. ep.* 1980, 647 = *ILB* 138. To briefly define my position in the analyses of this unique document, I should note that I believe that it is genuine, that its beneficiary was the soldier of an *ala* or a *cohors* Tungrorum (a tentative attribution based on the indications of the find-spot of the bronze and its witness catalogue), and that the *honesta missio* carried out by the praetorian prefect Claudius Livianus (on January 19, 108) took place in Rome and was granted, together with some material recompenses, to Lower German participants in the Second Dacian War returning home; M. M. Roxan (*RMD*, loc. cit., note 2) appropriately adds *CIL XVI* 160 (“a special grant made in 106 but apparently not issued until 110”) as a parallel for the lengthy interval – comprehensible in the quite extraordinary conditions of the aftermath of Trajan’s wars against Decebalus – between the end of the fighting and the *honesta missio*.

\(^{53}\) It is legitimate to suppose that they took a purely continental route, through Egypt and Syria, perhaps as a sort of evocati, in order to help check the revolts along the Nile and, if necessary, prevent a Parthian invasion across the Euphrates. On these revolts and the Parthian threat of the 150’s see A. Garzetti, *From Tiberius to the Antonines* (London 1974) 463 f. and 475 (with note 1).

\(^{54}\) On the rather serious *mutus Maurorum* in 122–123 see Garzetti (n. 53) 390; H. Halfmann, *Itinera principum*, Stuttgart 1986, 190 and 196 f. For several reasons – chronological, geographical, military (the troops of the middle and lower Danube were traditionally employed against the Moorish attacks) – it was the likeliest event to result in the discharge of the Lower Pannonian and Dacian auxilia in Rome on August 10, 123. But, alternatively, the *vexillationes* of the beneficiaries of *RMD* 21+22 may have served elsewhere under Hadrian, e.g. in Britain or Syria (cf. Halfmann 196 f.; *infra*, note 75).

\(^{55}\) Severus’ *expeditio secunda Parthica* was over by January 28, 198; in 199, he attacked Hatra for the second time; his stay in Egypt lasted from late 199 to late 200; after that, he spent more than a year in Syria, to begin his journey, *via* the Balkans, to Rome early in 202 (Halfmann [n. 54] 217 f. 220 f.). For those who would find chronological obstacles to our hypothesis that the constitutio of the Viminacian fragment reflected Severus’ *expeditio secunda Parthica* (the expeditio finished by January, 198, the law promulgated as late as the second(?) half of 202), it might be instructive to read E. Ritterling’s words (*RE* XII [1924] 1315) “... der zweite Partherkrieg, der den Kaiser und sein Heer bis zu Anfang des J. 202 in den östlichen Provinzen festhielt...”

\(^{56}\) Cf. M. Speidel, *Roman Army Studies I*, Amsterdam 1984, 169 and note 10 (on Tac. *Ann.* III 9, 1 [of leg. IX Hispana, *e Pannonia in Urbem, dein praesidio Africæ dacebat*] and *CIL VI* 33032): “The Romans are known to have avoided long
administrative reasons – some perhaps connected with the (ex-)soldiers’ *praemia militiae* and the like\(^{38}\) – may have contributed on both occasions to the decision that the formalities should be completed in the Capital, not in a province, as was usually done (including AD 149–150).

Our hypothesis that the diploma grants of 202 had something to do with Severus’ *expeditio secunda Parthica* (principally, with the rôle of the Lower Pannonian *vexillationes* in it),\(^{59}\) as well as the expedition’s aftermath implicating the soldiers’ stay in Italy, may find some support in two further pieces of evidence which it is tempting to combine and add to the *dossier* of the Viminacian bronze. The first is the diploma of AD 203 (August 31)\(^{60}\) for the Lower Pannonian *auxilia*, also found at Viminacium (*RMD* 187). Its recipient, an *ex pedite* of coh. VII Breucorum, was probably of Anatolian origin, to judge from his name ending in *-nna* in the dative.\(^{61}\) As such, he may be presumed to have been transferred to VII Breucorum from an Oriental unit, while the former fought the Parthians.\(^{62}\) The relationship between the *constitutio* of 202, with its complex formulae, and the *constitutio* of 203, which seems to have been issued for the Lower Pannonian army only, would be that of *leges* of many diploma sets sharing the same “qualifying events” and dating from consecutive years; generally speaking, the earlier documents of such sets tend to display more unusual elements in their texts than the later documents, whose beneficiaries need not have all participated in the “qualifying events” in question.\(^{63}\)

In this connection, it is worth noting a statistical fact which concerns post-Commodan auxiliary diplomata. For some reason, they are very rare\(^{64}\) though their issue continued probably till at least the thirties of the third century.\(^{65}\) A plausible explanation for this rarity would be that the Severan Emperors

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57 They could take the land route, *via* Asia Minor, or sail to Aquileia (cf. my note in *ZPE* 47 [1982] 156 f., on Tac. *Hist* I 31).

58 Cf. Tac. *Ann.* I 37. As a *procurator* *rationis privae* (and, later on, *praefectus* *aerarii militari*) (cf. Corbier [n. 44] 606), Varius Marcellus must have been able to help in such matters.


60 Its day-date coincided with Commodus’ *natalis*, a neglected fact. A simple coincidence is hard to imagine (i.a. *divus Commodus* was cited in the prescript of the diploma, as Septimius Severus’ *frater*); the detail rather had a propaganda rôle (*HA*, Comm. 17, 12; for *CIL* VI 716, of AD 205 and also commemorating a special case of *honesta missio*, see P. Herz, *Untersuchungen zu dem Festkalender der römischen Kaiserzeit nach datierten Weih- und Ehreninschriften*, Diss. Mainz 1975, 264 f. and 527). Cf. e.g. *RMD* 131, of Nov. 27 (Commodus’ *dies imperii*), AD 214 (*Heer und Integrationspolitik* [n. 14] 240 with note 241 [Dušanić]).

61 For the Anatolian male names in *-nna* (lacking proper analogies in Illyricum) see e.g. L. Zgusta, *Kleinasiatische Personenennamen*, Prag 1964, 662 f. (”Rückläufiger Index”). According to the usual Greek declension, their dative ended in *-nna* (the same held of course for other names in *-as* declined in the Greek fashion, cf. e.g. *Zerula* in *CIL* XVI 146), which explains the unexpected form of the fragmentary anthroponym of *RMD* 187. It seems that the recipient’s ethnic began in *ORYNTH* (only the upper parts of the letters are visible, and the editors read the second character as *P*; cf. e.g. H. Wolff, *Ostbairische Grenzmarken*. *Passauer Jahrbuch* 29 [1987] 34 f.). This may be interpreted (and restored) as a reference to the tribe of (to cite the Latin equivalents of the Hellenophone ethnonym) *Oroandenses* (*Oroentic* et sim.) in Pisidia (*W. Ruge, *RE* XVIII [1939] 1130-2; L. Zgusta, *Kleinasiatische Ortsnamen*, Heidelberg 1984, 445–7). An *Oruntico* instead of *Oroandico* or *Orotonico* would recall such doublets as *Perminundula*/*Perminoda* (a toponym in Pisidia, too: Zgusta, *Ortsnamen*, 484 f. no. 1044).


63 Cf. e.g. *Epigraphica* 55 [1993] 36 ff.

64 In addition to ours, *RMD* 187 (Pann. Inf.; AD 203) belongs to their number, perhaps also some of the following four: *CIL* XVI 131 (Pann. Inf.; AD 178/203) and 132 (Pann. Inf.; AD 178/203); *RMD* 186 (Maur. Ting.; AD 162/170 or 180/203) and 190 (? Pann. Inf.; AD 202 or 202–209 [see infra, note 67]).

65 *Heer und Integrationspolitik* (n. 14) 566, 575 (W. Eck and H. Wolff).
changed the criteria for their distribution in difficilius, somewhat similar to the criteria regulating the pre-Flavian and early Flavian practice, whose diplomata seem to reveal clearer links with the recipients’ participation in wars and related events than the less exclusive diplomata of the later Flavians and the Antonines. An aspect of the Severan change, it seems, bore on the geographical distribution of diplomata, which had already shown a tendency to favour the Danubian armies: during the early 200’s, Pannonia Inferior will have received more diplomata than the numbers of its auxiliaries would have required according to an unqualified statistical assessment. Now, of the two, possibly three, Severan diplomata published so far, whose exact date and nature (privileges for the auxiliary soldiers) can be determined with certainty or a high degree of probability, two, possibly all three, seem to belong to the AD 202–203 period and the exercitus Pannoniae Inferioris. This striking state of affairs may have had something to do with the importance Septimius Severus and his Lower Pannonian legate(s) accorded to the expeditio secunda Parthica and its effects. To venture a comparison with the early years of Vespasian’s reign, an analogous concentration can be observed in the case of their numerous diplomata for the Italian Fleets, reflecting what the Emperor’s coins advertised as the Victoria Navalis of AD 69.

The second piece of evidence just announced is Ulpius Victor’s cursus, ILS 1370. It begins with two posts antedating AD 205 and hard to dissociate: the praef(ectura) of VII Breucor(um) and the command over the vexill(ationes) auxiliar(orum) Pann(oniae) Infer(ioris). There are reasons to think that Victor’s vexillationes were sent against Parthia and included the men of VII Breucorum, who will have accompanied their former prefect; perhaps, they formed the core of his expeditionary corps and in that capacity became a group (including the |f|unas of RMD 187), possibly the most numerous group of all those rallying the members of the same units, within the collectivity of the beneficiaries of the constitutio passed in 203 (and of that passed in 202 [the Viminacian fragment], too?). Victor’s third post in time was the tribunate of leg. II Parthica at Albanum. His promotion to it was a remarkable step, presupposing the officer’s special merits. We are entitled to assume that he was chosen both for his war record and the fact that he was in Italy, Rome itself, in 202 at the head of his returning vexillations. Varius Marcellus – who had possibly met Ulpius Victor in the East – may have been instrumental in the promotion. In any case, the tribunate of II Parthica, too, was obtained before AD 205.

If the epigraphical and historical comments on the Viminacian fragment set forth in the foregoing pages prove correct, a number of observations of a wider interest would follow. Let us stress, in conclusion,
one point only. Together with the related documents analyzed here, the fragment shows that some military constitutiones grouped as diploma recipients those soldiers who had served together in distant and dangerous war expeditions.75 A variety of indications suggest that such recipients were specially rewarded, though neither the expedition nor the reward are explicitly mentioned in the text of the constitutio; in the case of the beneficiaries of the lex underlying the Viminacian bronze it is natural to assume that their passage through Rome in 202 resulted from, precisely, the Central Command’s wish to give them praemia militiae and some other recompenses.76 Seen in that light, the Viminacian fragment, RMD 21+22, and the other “two-province” diplomata, belong to the large group of aera which tend to connect what has been commonly and not very fortunately labelled “normal” and “special” diplomata. Recently published,77 an early Vespasianic diploma for the beneficiarii (they alone!) serving in the Ravennate Fleet is a clear, if different representative of that intermediate group. The very existence of diplomata whose formulae and other features seem to connect the so-called normal and special classes does not support, in the present author’s opinion, the popular notion that the former class should be qualified as automatic grants.

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75 The crucial fact that a distant expedition caused the issue of the constitutio of RMD 21+22 was insisted upon as early as Germania 52 (1974) 425 (cf. Roman Frontier Studies 1979, BAR Int. Series 71, III [1980] 1061 and 1965 note 2) but has been generally discarded by later scholarship (true, the argument from the honesta missio carried out by Marcius Turbo [~ Varius Marcellus in 202] at Rome was unavailable up to now). In 1974, the expedition seemed identifiable with Trajan’s Parthian War, in which at least some of the constitutio’s auxilia had taken part. For chronological reasons, the alternative of Hadrian’s Mauretanian campaign seems preferable now (cf. note 53 above); however, the contrast between the two “expeditionary” interpretations of RMD 21+22 need not be very sharp in certain respects, as the cavalry vexillationes which had served with distinction in the Parthian War were liable to preserve something of their operative identity and soon be reemployed on a different front – there is more than one parallel for such a practice.

76 Above, text and note 58.

77 M. M. Roxan, JRA 1996, 247–256.