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A NEW EGYPTIAN DIPLOMA FRAGMENT

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A NEW EGYPTIAN DIPLOMA FRAGMENT

The diploma fragment presented here is reported to have been found in Bulgaria, as many others that have appeared in recent years.¹ Although the fragment is relatively small, it is not without interest. Only four other Egyptian auxiliary diplomata have been published (CIL XVI 29, RMD I 9, CIL XVI 184, RMD III 185).²

The fragment has a dull dark greenish-black patina, and the letters of the *extrinsecus* are largely filled with yellowish clay and green corrosion products. The letters of the *intus* have no such encrustation but have been filled with talc here to photograph clearly.

Height: 49 mm. Width: 38 mm. Thickness: 1.5 mm. Weight: 21.65 g. Letter height *extrinsecus*: 4–6 mm. Letter height *intus*: 4.5–5 mm.



Intus:

- 1 []NIC POTES[]
 []SETPEDITIB[]
 (!) []BVSETGOHOR[]
 4 []ONTIORVM[]



Extrinsecus:

- 1 []VRVOCONTI[]
 []HISPANORVM[]
 []ORVMET.I.FLAV[]
 4 []MET.III.ITVRA[]
 []NAEGYPTOSVB[]
 []NESTAMISS[]
 []VMNOMIN[]
 8 []STERISQVEE[]

The text may be restored as follows:

Intus:

		No. of letters	
	[Imp(erator) Caesar divi Nervae f(ilius) Nerva Traianus]	[33]	33
	[Augustus Germanicus pontifex maximus]	[33]	33
1	[tribu]NIC(ia) POTES[tat(e)...imp(erator)...cos.....p(ater) p(atriciae)]	[5]/8/[11+]	24+
	[equitibu]S ET PEDITIB[us qui militant in]	[8]/10/[15]	33
	[alis tri]BVS ET <C>OHOR[tibus sex qua appell]	[7]/10/[17]	34
4	[antur Voc]ONTIORVM [et Augusta et Apriana]	[8]/8/18	34

¹ I thank the owner, who wishes to remain anonymous, for permission to publish this fragment. It will be donated to a museum in the near future. In addition to the conventional epigraphic abbreviations, RMD I = M. M. Roxan, *Roman Military Diplomas, 1954–1977*, London 1978; RMD II = M. M. Roxan, *Roman Military Diplomas, 1978–1984*, London 1985; RMD III = M. M. Roxan, *Roman Military Diplomas, 1985–1993*, London 1994; Alföldy–Mann = J. C. Mann, *The Development of Auxiliary and Fleet Diplomas, Epigraphische Studien* 9, 1972, 233–241.

² RMD I 9 = H. G. Pflaum, *Un nouveau diplôme militaire d'un soldat de l'armée d'Égypte, Syria* 44, 1967, 339–362; RMD III 185 = C. Römer, *Diplom für einen Fußsoldaten aus Koptos vom 23. März 179, ZPE* 82, 1990, 137–153.

Extrinsecus:

1	[qua appellat]VR VOCONTI[orum et Augusta]	[11]/ 9/[13]	33
	[et Apriana et I]HISPANORVM [et I Thebaeorum]	[12]/10/[13]	35
	[et I Pannoni]ORVUM ET I FLAV[ia Cilicum et]	[10]/12/[11]	33
	[II Ituraeoru]M ET III ITVRA[eorum et class]	[11]/11/[12]	34
5	[icis et sunt i]N AEGYPTO SV[b c. 12]	[11]/10/[c.12?]	c.33
	[item dimissis ho]NESTA MISS[ione qui XXV]	[14]/ 9/[10]	33
	[stip(endia) plur(ave) mer(uerunt) quor]VM NOMIN[a subscripta su]	[15]/ 7/[13]	35
	[nt ipsi liberis po]STERISQVE E[orum civitatem]	[13]/10/[13]	34
	[dedit etc.] <hole>		

Commentary

The fragment comes from mid-section of *Tabella I*. The lines of the *extrinsecus* were about 33–34 letters long. Typically, the letters of the *intus* are larger than those of the *extrinsecus*, often more widely spaced, and less consistently executed. The lines of the *intus* average about 33–37 letters.

Intus line 5: G mistakenly engraved for C.

Extrinsecus line 7: If the troops were discharged exactly at the end of their twenty-fifth year, the word *plur(ave)* would have been omitted and line 7 would contain thirty-three letters each. Other Alföldy–Mann IID diplomata, however, all contain some abbreviation of *plurave*,³ and the lengths of diplomata lines frequently vary.

Date

The diploma dates between c. 98 and 105. The *terminus ante quem* is easily established. In 105, *Cohors I Hispanorum* (Ex. 2) was transferred along with *Cohors II Thebaeorum* to Judaea and from there to Arabia. Two other cohortes, *II Thracum* and *I Augusta Lusitanorum*, were simultaneously transferred from Judaea to Egypt as replacements.⁴ The *terminus post quem* is more difficult. There is not sufficient room to accommodate the phrase *qui quina et vicena plurave stipendia meruerunt*, even radically abbreviated, before *dismissis honesta missione*, and just enough space to accommodate the phrase in highly abbreviated form after it. The only form of diploma that records the length of service in that position is Alföldy–Mann Type IID, in use from c. 98 to c. 105.⁵ Also, the spacing of the extant unit names shows the diploma originally included both auxiliaries and the local fleet. Both appeared together on diplomata beginning c. 98.⁶

Alae and cohortes⁷

Ala Vocontiorum is attested in Egypt first between 37 and 43 (P. Mich. III 159 = Holder 112) and last in 165 (Sb I.4280 = IGRR I.1184), after which it was transferred to Palmyra, where it is recorded in 183

³ Although CIL XVI 33 (Alföldy–Mann Type I) of A.D. 86 and CIL XVI 62 (Alföldy–Mann Type III D) of A.D. 117 both omit *plurave*. For the date of CIL XVI 62, RMD II pp. 122 and 128: 22*62; R. Syme, *Guard Prefects of Trajan and Hadrian*, *JRS* 70, 1980, 71 = R. Syme, *Roman Papers* III, ed. A. R. Birley, Oxford 1984, 1287; RMD III pp. 237 and 244: 19*62; Z. Visy, *Die Entlassungen der Auxiliarsoldaten aufgrund der Militärdiplome*, *AArchHung* 36, 1984, 230–234.

⁴ RMD I 9 = Pflaum, (n. 2) 335; M. P. Speidel, *Nubia's Roman Garrison*, *ANRW* II 10.1, Berlin and New York 1988, 767–798.

⁵ 98 = CIL XVI 42,43; 99 = CIL XVI 44,45; 100 = CIL XVI 46; 103–105 = CIL XVI 54.

⁶ RMD III p. 341.

⁷ For general discussion of the auxiliary units in Egypt, H. Devijver, *The Roman Army in Egypt* (with Special Reference to the *Militiae Equestres*), *ANRW* II 1, Berlin 1974, 452–494; H. Devijver, *De Aegypto et Exercitu Romano sive Prosopographia Militiarum Equestrium quae ab Augusto ad Gallienum seu statione seu origine ad Aegyptum pertinebant*, *Studia Hellenistica* 22; Louvanii 1975; S. Daris, *Le truppe ausiliarie romane in Egitto*, *ANRW* II 10.1, Berlin and New York, 1988, 743–766, and Speidel, (n. 4) 767–798.

(P. Wisc. II 53 2; SB I 4280 = IGR I 1184).⁸ Two other *alae* were in Egypt during the period of this diploma and the available space nicely accommodates their names. [*Augusta*] is first attested in Egypt in 57 (P. Hamb. I.1 = Holder 151) and last attested there in 105 (RMD I 9).⁹ [*Apriana*] is first attested between 37 and 43 (P. Mich. III 159 = Holder 112) and remaining in Egypt until at least the late third century (St. Pal. XX.71.2 of 268/270).¹⁰

The *cohors* of *ex.* line 2 was certainly [*I*] *Hispanorum* rather than [*III*] *Hispanorum*. *Cohortes* with the lowest numbers were regularly listed first, and this unit appears two positions before *I Flav[ia Cilicum]*. Moreover, the sole mention of *II Hispanorum* in Egypt (B.G.U. 114) is probably the result of an error, either ancient or modern. *I Hispanorum* is first attested in Egypt in 83 (CIL III 50; CIL XVI 29) and had left Egypt for Judaea by 24 September 105, from where it moved to the newly established province of Arabia.¹¹

The restoration [*et I Thebaeorum et I Pannoni*] *orum* neatly fills the approximately twenty-three missing letters after [*I*] *Hispanorum*. *I Thebaeorum* was probably raised under Augustus and is first attested under Tiberius (CIL III 6627). It was transferred to Judaea in 105 and then to Arabia along with *I Hispanorum*.¹²

I Pannoniorum was first attested in Egypt in 83 (CIL XVI 29) and still there in the Not. Dign. Or. (XXXVIII.41). This unit appears before *I Flavia Cilicum* in the Egyptian diplomata of 105 (RMD I 9), 156–161 (CIL XVI 184), and 179 (RMD III 185).¹³

I Flav[ia Cilicum] was probably stationed in Egypt when first raised under the Flavians. It is first attested in a diploma of 83 (CIL XVI 29) and then frequently to 218 (AE 1905 54 = ILS 8919).¹⁴

[*et II Ituraeoru*] fits exactly the lacuna before *m et. III. Itura[eorum]*. The two units are listed together in the form *et I<I> Itureorum et III Itureorum* in RMD III 185 and in the form *II et III Ituraeorum* in CIL XVI 29 and RMD I 9. The *II Ituraeorum* is first attested in Egypt in 39 (CIL III 14147 = ILS 8899) and was still there in Not. Dig. Or. XXVIII.44.¹⁵

The final cohort is *III Itura[eorum]*. The unit is well-known, attested in Egypt first in 83 (CIL XVI 29) and last in 243/244 (P. Mich III 161 = RMR 20).¹⁶

Fleet

The restoration [*et classicis et sunt i]n Aegypto* fits the available space. The fleet was, of course, the Egyptian, which is also mentioned on the Egyptian auxiliary/fleet diploma of 105 (RMD I 9), as well as on two first century diplomata issued solely to the Egyptian fleet (CIL XVI 24; CIL XVI 32). As restored, this diploma makes no reference to a different length of service for the sailors than for the soldiers. Roxan points out that this is characteristic of auxiliary/fleet diplomata issued between 98 and 138.¹⁷

⁸ Daris, (n. 7) 754–755.

⁹ Daris, (n. 7) 751.

¹⁰ Daris, (n. 7) 750–751.

¹¹ R. Cavenaile, *Cohors I Hispanorum equitata et cohors I Hispanorum veterana*, *ZPE* 18, 1975, 179–199; Daris, (n. 7) 758–759; Speidel, (n. 4) 786; RMD I 9 = Pflaum, (n. 2) 339–362.

¹² Pflaum, (n. 2) 339–362; Daris, (n. 7) 763–764; Speidel, (n. 4) 787–788; M. Speidel, *The Roman Army in Arabia*, *ANRW* II.8, Berlin and New York, 1977, 709–710 = *Roman Army Studies* I, Amsterdam 1984, 251–252.

¹³ Daris, (n. 7) 762–763.

¹⁴ H. Devijver, *Cohortes Cilicum in the Service of Rome*, *ZPE* 47, 1982, 173–183; S. Daris, *P. L. Bat. XIX 11 e* le cohortes Cilicum, *ZPE* 39, 1980, 185–189; Daris, (n. 7) 756–757; Speidel, (n. 4) 785.

¹⁵ E. Dąbrowa, *Cohortes Ituraeorum*, *ZPE* 63, 1986, 228–229; Daris, (n. 7) 759; Speidel, (n. 4) 786.

¹⁶ Dąbrowa, (n. 15) 229–230; Daris, (n. 7) 759–760.

¹⁷ RMD III 341.

Governor

The name of the *praefectus Aegypti* is missing from the fragment. There were about twelve spaces available to accommodate the name. The recorded praefecti in the period 98–105 are M. Junius Rufus (1.7.94 – 21.6.98), C. Pompeius Planta (Autumn 98 – 14.2.100), C. Minicius Italus (100/101 – 19.5.103), and C. Vibius Maximus (30.8.103 – 26.3.107).¹⁸ C. Vibius Maximus fits the available space best, but none seems definitely eliminated.

Recipient

The name and origo of the recipient are not preserved, but the fragment comes from Bulgaria. It is likely the recipient's home was in Thrace or Moesia Inferior and he returned there after retirement. By the second century, recruitment was largely local, but there were many exceptions, and Thracians in particular were sent to many units far from their home province.¹⁹

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¹⁸ P. Bureth, Le préfet d'Égypte (30 av. J.C. – 297 ap. J.C.): Etat présent de la documentation en 1973, *ANRW* II 10.1, Berlin and New York, 1988, 472–502; G. Bastianini, Il prefetto d'Egitto (30 a.C. – 297 d.C.): Addenda (1973–1985), *ANRW* II 10.1, Berlin and New York, 1988, 503–517.

¹⁹ RMD II 144–145; RMD III 255, 258; M. P. Speidel, A Thousand Thracian Recruits for Mauretania Tingitana, *Antiquités Africaines* 11, 1977, 167–173 = *Roman Army Studies* I, Amsterdam 1984, 341–347; M. P. Speidel, The Soldiers' Homes, in W. Eck and H. Wolff, *Heer und Integrationspolitik. Die römischen Militärdiplome als historische Quelle*, Köln und Wien 1986, 467–481. See also M. P. Speidel, Thracian Horsemen in Egypt's *Ala Veterana Gallica* (*P. Lond.* 482), *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*, 167–169 = *Roman Army Studies* I, Amsterdam 1984, 333–335, indicating the surprisingly small number of Thracians attested in Egyptian units.