DAVID MACDONALD

A NEW EGYPTIAN DIPLOMA FRAGMENT


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The diploma fragment presented here is reported to have been found in Bulgaria, as many others that have appeared in recent years. 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).

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[ ]
1 (!) [ ]BVSETGOHOR[ ]
4 [ ]ONTIORVM[ ]

Extrinsecus:

1 [ ]VRVOCONT[ ]
   [ ]HISPANORVM[ ]
1 [ ]ORVMET.I.FLAV[ ]
4 [ ]MET.III.I.TVRA[ ]
 [ ]NAEGYPTOS[ ]
 [ ]NESTAMISS[ ]
 [ ]VMNOMIN[ ]
8 [ ]STERISQVEE[ ]

The text may be restored as follows:

Intus:

[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(atriae)] [5]/8/[11+] 24+
[equitiu]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

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Extrinsecus:

1 [qua appellant]VR VOCONTI[orum et Augusta] [11]/ 9/[13] 33
[et Apriana et I]HISPANORVM [et I Thebaeorum] [12]/10/[13] 35
[et I Pannonii]ORVUM ET I FLAV[ia Cilicum et] [10]/12/[11] 33
[II Ituraeorum]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 dimisset ho]NESTA MISS [one 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

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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.
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). [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).

The cohors of line 2 was certainly [I] Hispanorum rather than [II] 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.

The restoration [et I Thebaeorum et I Pannoniorum] 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,

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 diplomas of 105 (RMD I 9), 156–161 (CIL XVI 184), and 179 (RMD III 185).

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).

[et II Ituraeorum] fits exactly the lacuna before m et.III.Itura[eorum]. The two units are listed together in the form et I<II> Ituraeorum et III Ituraeorum 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.

The final cohort is III Ituraeorum. 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).

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 diplomas issues 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 diplomas issued between 98 and 138.

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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.
13 Daris, (n. 7) 762–763.
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 *prefectus Aegypti* is missing from the fragment. There were about twelve spaces available to accommodate the name. The recorded prefecti 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

Normal, Illinois

David MacDonald

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