

New Fragmentary Diploma of the Syrian Army, 22 March 129

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In recent years newly discovered diplomata have added much to the understanding of the organization and evolution of the Roman army. The new fragment published here, issued for the auxiliary units in Syria in 129, provides evidence about the composition of the Roman forces shortly before the beginning of the Bar Kokhba War.¹ As this article was virtually complete, Werner Eck kindly informed me that he and Andreas Pangerl are about to publish another, more complete, diploma also issued for the auxiliary units in Syria in 129.² I thank them for a prepublication copy of that material, which has in part confirmed and in part modified and supplemented the reconstruction and interpretation of the fragment published here.

The fragment consists of the upper right corner of Tabella I. The surface is well preserved and exhibits a gray green patina with small areas of encrustation. The *extrinsecus* has a double incised border and is clearly and carefully engraved with frequent points between words. The *intus*, typically, is less carefully engraved. The hole in the upper right corner was punched from the *intus* side after the text was cut; it impinges slightly on the letter N of PONT on the *extrinsecus* and appears before the beginning of the last line of legible text on the *intus*.

Weight: 19.82 g; Height: 42 mm; Width: 71 mm; Thickness: 1 mm; Letter height *extrinsecus*: 4 mm; Letter height *intus*: 4-5 mm.

Tabella I, *extrinsecus*:

- 1 []NI PARTHICI·F·DIVI NER
[]S HADRIANVS·AVG·PONT O
[]OTEST·XIII COS·III·P·P
[]VI MILITAVER·IN ALIS II ET
5 []NT·AVG·XOITAN ET I·FLAV
[]ONIT·SAGITTAR ET I·VLP·IA
[]·C·R·ET·I·VLP·PETRAEOR S[]



¹ The diploma is in a private collection. It has no reliable provenance, but is likely to have come from the Balkans where so many diplomata have been found in recent years. I thank the owner for permission to publish it.

² W. Eck & A. Pangerl, 'Neue Diplome für die Auxiliartruppen von Syria und Syria Palaestina', *ZPE* forthcoming. In this same article, Eck and Pangerl identify two small previously published fragments as belonging to the same constitution.

intus:

1 GEMIN[]
° °

ET II ITA[]

(!) GALL·LVC[]

IN SVRIA[]

5 VICEN·P[]

MISSQV[]

LIBERI[]

○ CVM VX[]



line 3: GALL for CALL

This may be expanded:

[Imp(erator) Caes(ar) divi Traia(ni) parthici f(ili) divi Ner[vae n(epos) Traianu]s Hadrianus Aug(ustus) pont(ifex) [max(imus) trib(unicia) p]otest(ate) XIII co(n)s(ul) III p(ater) p(atriciae)

[Equit(ibus) et pedit(ibus) q]ui militaver(unt) in alis II et [coh(ortibus) XI] quae appella[n]t(ur) Aug(usta) Xoitan(a) et I Flav(ia) [Agrippiana et I Ascal]onit(anorum) sagittar(ia) et I Ulpia [Dac(orum) et I Ulp(ia) sagitt(aria)] c(ivium) R(omanorum) et I Ulp(ia) Petraeor[um] s[agitt(aria) c(ivium) R(omanorum) et II Classica et II] Gemin[a Ligur(um) et Corsor(um) et II Ulp(ia) equit(ata) sagitt(aria) c(ivium) R(omanorum)]

et II Ita(lica) [c(ivium) R(omanorum) [et III Thra(cum) Syriaca et IIII] {C}all(aecorum) Luc(ensium) [et V Ulp(ia) Petraeor(um) sagitt(aria) et sunt] in Suria [sub Publicio Marcello, qui quinis et] vicen(is) p[uribusve stipendis emeritis dimissis honesta]

miss(ione) qu[orum nomina subscripta sunt ipsis] liberi[s posterisque eorum civitatem dedit et conubium] cum ux[oribus] quas tunc habuissent cum est civitas iis data aut, si qui caelibes essent cum is quas postea duxissent dumtaxat singulis singulas.

A(nte) d(iem) XI k(alendas) Apr(iles) G(aio) Iuventio Celso II Q(uinto) Iulio Balbo co(n)s(ulibus)

--- cui praest --- f --- tribu ---

Descriptum et recognitum ex tabula aenea quae fixa est Romae

in muro post templum divi Aug(usti) ad Minerva(m)]

The diploma was issued for Roman forces in Syria during the thirteenth year of Hadrian's tribunician power, which fell between 10 December 128 and 9 December 129. The new diploma to be published by Werner Eck and Andreas Pangerl preserves the exact date of the constitution, 22 March 129. The *consules ordinarii* of 129 were P. Iuventius Celsus T. Aufidius Hoenius Severianus, cos II, and L. Neratius Marcellus. In February, Q. Iulius Balbus replaced Marcellus, and Iuventius and Balbus continued together in office until the end of April. The governor, attested in the other diploma, is C. Quinctius Certus Publicius Marcellus. Publicius was consul in 120 and subsequently served as governor of Germania superior before his command in Syria. He is also attested in Syria on an inscription of April 132, and W. Eck suggests he served in Syria until 134/135.³ Publicius took part in the Bar Kokhba War and received the *ornamenta triumphalia*.

As Eck and Pangerl's forthcoming article will contain a thorough overview of auxiliary units serving in Syria, remarks will be confined here to a few short notes and observations. The diplomata of 129 list two *alae* and eleven *cohortes*. Of the thirteen units, only five are attested in Syria on earlier *diplomata*, the *cohortes I Ascalonitanorum sagittaria, II Italica c. R., II Classica sagittaria, III Thracum Syriaca sagittaria*, and *III Callaecorum Lucensium*. Six of the remaining seven certainly became part of the Syrian army either under Trajan or Hadrian. Little is known of *ala I Flavia Agrippiana*; its history cannot be traced. The four units designated Ulpia, the *cohortes I Ulpia Dacorum, I Ulpia sagittaria c. R., II Ulpia equitata sagittaria c. R.*, and *V Ulpia Petraeorum*, were first raised under Trajan. The *cohors II Gemina Ligurum et Corsorum* is last attested in Sardinia in 96,⁴ and the *ala Augusta Xoitana*'s last appearance in Egypt is on a diploma of 105.⁵ Trajan may have transferred that *ala* to Syria in connection with the annexation of Arabia of 106 or the beginning of the Mesopotamian campaign in 113. It is unlikely that he would have transferred the unit out of Egypt in 110, when Alexandria experienced some sort of disturbance,⁶ or at the time of the Jewish revolt in Cyrene and Egypt, 115-117, or during its immediate aftermath. If Hadrian transferred the unit to Syria, he most likely did so in response to apprehensions about Parthia or the increasing tensions in Judaea which led to the Bar Kokhba War. In 123, war almost broke out between Rome and Parthia, and the death of Osroes in 128/9 strengthened Vologases III's hold on the western portion of his kingdom and appeared to increase the potential threat to Rome's

³ C. Quinctius Certus Publicius Marcellus: *PIR*² P 1042; *SEG* xv 849; W. Eck, *Senatoren von Vespasian bis Hadrian*, Prosopographische Untersuchungen mit Einschluß der Jahres- und Provinzialfasten der Statthalter, München, 1970, 204-5, 225, 249; idem, 'Jahres- und Provinzialfasten der senatorischen Statthalter von 69/70 bis 138/139 — 2. Teil', *Chiron* 13 (1983), 169-71; idem, 'The Bar Kokhba Revolt: The Roman Point of View', *JRS* 89 (1999), 89; idem, 'Hadrian, the Bar Kokhba Revolt, and the Epigraphic Transmission', in P. Schäfer (ed.), *The Bar Kokhba War Reconsidered. New Perspectives on the Second Jewish Revolt against Rome*, Tübingen, 2003, 153-70.

⁴ *CIL* xvi 40.

⁵ *RMD* 9.

⁶ G. Alon, *The Jews in their Land in the Talmudic Age*, trans. G. Levi, London, 1989, 375-6.

eastern frontier.⁷ In reality, Vologases III was too occupied with other problems to prove a significant threat to Rome, but that was not yet apparent in 129. In Judaea, there were disturbances well before the full outbreak of the Bar Kokhba War in 132,⁸ and, although literary sources indicate that the outbreak of the war was unexpected, it is difficult to believe that the Roman authorities failed to realize that Hadrian's actions would provoke even greater disorders. The discovery of new *diplomata* may provide evidence to clarify the circumstances under which this unit (and others) were transferred to Syria.

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⁷ *SHA*, Hadrian xii, 5 makes reference to a heightening of tensions between Rome and Parthia that almost led to war. Although this has sometimes been thought to refer to the situation in 128/9, it is now generally conceded that the position in the narrative indicates events of 123. The death of Osroes in 128/9 certainly altered the situation in Parthia, apparently strengthening the position of Vologases III.

⁸ Alon (n. 6), 570-89.