

RMD III 194 AND RMD III 201: A NEW REVIEW OF BAETICAN FLEET DIPLOMAS

The military diplomas are one of the most valuable tools we have in order to find out the location of Roman military units, especially those that are not legions.

The finding of these documents in *Baetica* makes difficult in some way their understanding, since the province was *inermis* from the Augustan period onwards, implying in theory that there was no permanent fleet in the area. The military diplomas build a very small part of all the documents on bronze found in *Baetica*: only six. Of them, two are our fleet diplomas, two belong to praetorian soldiers (RMD II 137; RMD V 476), another one is a grant of special privileges to a soldier (RMD III 179) and just one belongs to an auxiliary veteran from *Mauretania Tingitana* (RMD II 107).

The documents

This poster aims to re-analyze two fleet diplomas appeared in *Hispania Ulterior Baetica* and already published (RMD III 194 and RMD III 201). Both documents share similar characteristics: a contemporary issue (c. 225 A. D.), a Danubian background for the beneficiary, and specially their service in the same unit, the *Classis Rauennas*. These facts added to the discovery in the same province allow postulating a relationship between them.

RMD III 194 was found in 1992 in Higuera de Calatrava (Jaén), part of the *territorium* belonging to the city of *Obulco* and the likely town where the veteran had settled. The beneficiary is a veteran of the *Classis Rauennas*, *Marcus Aurelius Capitolinus*, son of *Valens*. His *praenomen* and *nomen* show that he would have benefited from the *Constitutio Antoniniana* for obtaining the citizenship. *Capitolinus'* father is not mentioned by *praenomen*, but by his *cognomen*, in a typical formula of the *peregrini*, which means either the preservation of an epigraphic habit, or that the father had died before 212 and did not become a Roman Citizen.

Capitolinus was from *Cibalae* in Lower Pannonia, a town that became a municipality under Hadrian and is believed that acquired colonial status under the Severan dynasty. Pannonians were numerous in *Classis Rauennas*, as *Tacitus* (*Hist.* III, 12, 1) states: "... magna pars Dalmatae Pannonique erant."

The name of the prefect of the fleet of *Rauenna* in that year, *Valerius Oclatius* has been restored thanks to another military diploma of the same date (RMD IV 311).

We do not know the whole onomastic formula of the beneficiary of RMD III 201, a diploma found somewhere in the province of *Sevilla*, because it is strongly defaced, and we only retain a small fragment which contains the *cognomen* of the soldier, *Quirinalis*, and his *origo*, *Vlpiā Nicopolis*, in *Moesia Inferior*, province to which belongs only after 197 A.D.

The imperial titles and the name of the couple of consuls have also been lost, complicating the dating of this epigraph. Paleographic criteria and the formulas used suggest a date of late second or early third century, although due to the *origo* the beneficiary's service in the fleet could not begin before 197, which together with the 28 years of service puts the date around 225 A.D.

A difficult relationship with the southern frontier and a war for the throne

During the second half of the second century A. D., *Baetica* became a source of instability on the western end of the Empire. In this period the province faced two invasions of the *Mauri* and the civil war between *Clodius Albinus* and *Septimius Seuerus*.

The first invasion took place in 171 when people from the *Rif* region crossed the Strait of Gibraltar and entered in *Baetica* for looting it. The following year were defeated by the *legatus augusti Aufidius Victorinus*, who used in his campaign the *Legio VII Gemina*, the only one in the Iberian Peninsula, and most likely, as noted by *Benabou*, a detachment of the fleet of *Misenum* or the *Syriaca et Augusta* stationed in *Caesarea*.

That situation happened again in 177, and the defeat of the *Mauri* by troops commanded by *Vallus Maximianus* is remembered in two epigraphs of *Italica* (ILS 1354) and *Singilia Barba* (ILS 1354a), which even suffered the siege of the Africans.

Septimius Seuerus and *Clodius Albinus* collided in 197 in the western part of the Empire in their attempt to reach the throne at Rome. Although *Clodius Albinus* was easily defeated, *Seuerus* sent *Tiberius Claudius*

Candidus to crush the rebels who still remained in *Hispania*. To accomplish this task, as an inscription of *Tarraco* (CIL II 4114) points out, he used land and naval forces (*et in ea dux terra marique aduersus rebelles hostes publicos*).

In addition to these events, the general climate of insecurity in *Baetica*, could favour that Rome decided to protect the naval trade of oil and wine from the province, very important for the supplying of the capital of the Empire.

The beneficiaries of the diplomas had begun their service at this time, and after twenty-eight years in the fleet they were discharged in 225 A. D.

A new detachment of the Rauennas fleet in Hispania Ulterior Baetica?

The possible presence of a Roman fleet detachment in *Baetica* has already been suggested by some scholars, as *Kienast* or *Reddé*, prior to the discovery of the diplomas, although all of them assumed they would appertain to the *Classis Misensis*, traditionally in charge of the western Mediterranean. After the discovery, investigators as *Eck*, *Stylow* or *Roxan*, point to a *Rauennas* detachment or even a mixed one in the Strait of Gibraltar, performing surveillance tasks. In this way, we can even explain the presence of the only diploma from a veteran of auxiliary troops (RMD II 107), found in *Baelo Claudia* and belonging to a miles who had served in the other shore of the Strait, in *Mauretania Tingitana*.

Otherwise we know another evidence of the *Classis Rauennas* in *Hispania*: an undated gravestone from *Dertosa*, *Hispania Citerior* (CIL II 4063 = CIL II² 14, 798), erected to a *mil(es) cl(assis) pr(aetoriae) Rauenn(atium)*, who died during his thirteenth year of service, so he was in the course of a mission in the Iberian Peninsula.

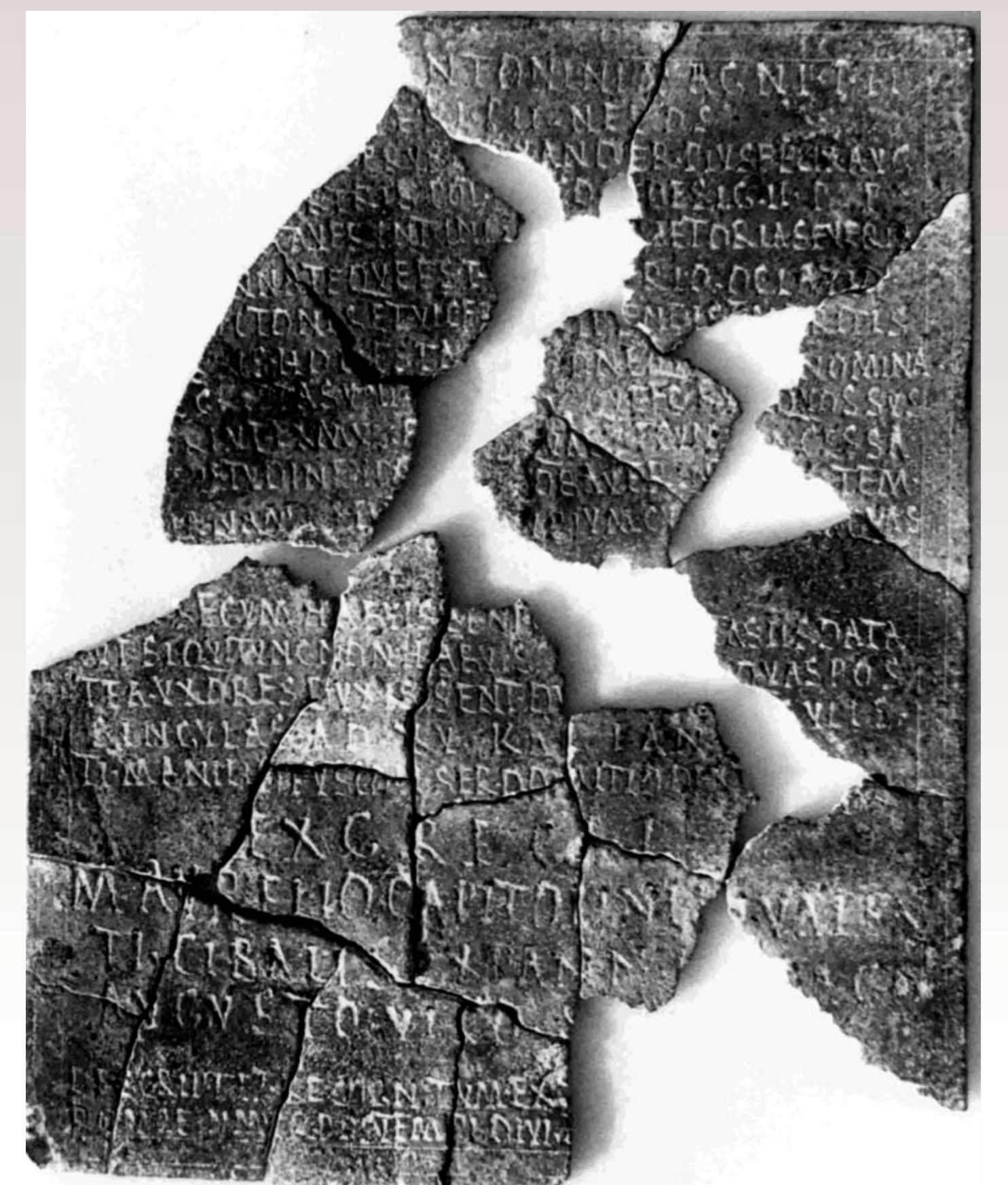
In any case the diplomas cannot belong to the fleet based in *Mauretania Caesariensis*, since this was made up of detachments of the *Classis Alexandrina* and the *Classis Syriaca*.

The fact that almost 80% of veterans of the *auxilia* establish themselves in the place where they served is also an argument in favor of the existence of a detachment of the fleet on the shores of the *Baetica*.



Fleet diploma found somewhere in *Sevilla* province (RMD III 201)

Only beneficiary's *cognomen*, *Quirinalis*, and his *origo*, *Nicopolis ex Moesia Inferiore*, are conserved.



Fleet diploma from *Higuera de Calatrava* (RMD III 194)

The beneficiary is *Marcus Aurelius Capitolinus*, a Pannonian veteran from the *Classis Rauennas*, possibly settled in the Baetican city of *Obulco* after his discharge in 225 A.D.



Findings associated with a possible presence of the Roman Imperial Navy in the Iberian Peninsula and bases of the fleets in the western Mediterranean.



Gravestone from *Dertosa* (CIL II 4063)

Erected to *Lucius Numisius Liberalis*, a Corsican soldier who was serving in *classis Ravennas* when he died. Dedicators are *Marcus Didius Polio*, comrade and his heir, and *Gellia Excitata*, probably his widow.