

COHORT DISLOCATIONS IN PANNONIA IN THE 130S – CONSEQUENCES OF THE BAR KOKHBA REVOLT?

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Abstract: It is generally accepted that vexillations of the *legio I Adiutrix* and *legio II Adiutrix* were sent to Judaea for the repression of the Bar Kokhba revolt, although epigraphic testimonies are missing. We did not know anything about a possible participation of Pannonian auxiliary units. A military diploma from 135 AD shows the lack of a cohort and the presence of another cohort, *cohors I Brittonum*, but probably in a different garrison. The article discusses of the possibility the *cohors I Brittonum* was brought here as a substitution, and the exact identity of this troop. It may have been either the *cohors I Ulpia*, dislocated from Dacia for cca. two years, or the *cohors I Aelia*, which was most likely constituted for the occasion. The probable garrison of this unit was Albertfalva in these two years, where it might substitute a vexillation of the *legio II Adiutrix*; an epigraphic relic of this short period is a little altar in Aquincum dedicated to Mithras for the common welfare of a certain troop called *C I B*.

Keywords: Pannonia; military diploma; *cohors I Brittonum*; Mithras cult; Albertfalva.

Rezumat: Este general acceptat faptul că vexilații din legiunile *I Adiutrix* și *II Adiutrix* au fost trimise în Iudeea în vederea reprimării revoltei lui Bar Kokhba, cu toate că lipsesc mărturiile epigrafice. Nu s-a știut nimic despre o posibilă participare a unităților auxiliare panonice. O diplomă militară din anul 135 p. Chr. indică absența unei cohorte și prezența alteia, *cohors I Brittonum*, dar probabil într-o altă garnizoană. Articolul ia în considerare posibilitatea ca această *cohors I Brittonum* să fi fost adusă aici cu scopul de a înlocui, dar discută și despre identitatea exactă a acestei trupe. E posibil să fi fost *cohors I Ulpia*, dislocată din Dacia pentru cca. doi ani, sau *cohors I Aelia*, cel mai probabil constituită cu această ocazie. În acești doi ani, garnizoana probabilă a unității a fost la Albertfalva, unde ea putea înlocui o vexilație a legiunii *II Adiutrix*; o moștenire epigrafică a acestei scurte perioade de timp o reprezintă un altar din Aquincum, dedicat zeului Mithras pentru bunăstarea comună a unei anumite trupe *C I B*.

Cuvinte cheie: Pannonia; diplomă militară; *cohors I Brittonum*; cultul lui Mithras; Albertfalva.

Pannonian military forces are generally supposed to have been sent to Judaea for the repression of the Bar Kokhba revolt (132-135 AD). In fact, the evidences of such a participation are so rare that we cannot say with certainty which units we speak of (mostly vexillations of the *legio I Adiutrix* and *legio II Adiutrix* are mentioned). The most recent and most elaborate researches do not take this participation as granted, but as a hypothesis presently without satisfactory proofs.¹ The lack of pro and contra arguments is due mostly to the silence of written - literary and epigraphic - sources. But this silence is not decisive, because we are scarcely informed of the organization of Roman forces in this war on the whole.

¹ Mor 2016, 209. On the contrary, Hungarian researchers still assert that the existing arguments for the Pannonian participation are decisive at least for the *legio I Adiutrix* and *legio X Gemina* (based on the career of its commander): Grüll 2017, 347, 350.

There is one inscription which proves the participation of some auxiliary units from Pannonia Superior, but does not refer to any definite unit (and no legion at all).² All the other arguments are taken from ‘silent’ sources, mostly numismatics. The *legio I Adiutrix* is accepted as a participant because Bar Kokhba’s coins were found in the locality of its garrison, Brigetio.³ But it cannot mean the whole legion but a detachment, since another vexillation showed building activity in Pannonia Superior in the same years, 136–138 AD.⁴ Another vexillation sent to Judaea seems certainly a strong possibility – yet not an undebatable fact, because it is only unlikely and not impossible, that the coins were brought from Judaea to Pannonia in a different way. As for the *legio II Adiutrix*, the situation is far more uncertain.⁵ There are some pro arguments: the presence of Hadrian’s cistophori coins in Aquincum,⁶ and the fact that a few recruits of oriental origin appear in the legion roughly in the same time.⁷ A supposal that they were enlisted during the war, seems reasonable for some of them, but doubtful enough for others. If the numismatic arguments had not been added, I think nobody would have really thought their inscriptions were related to an oriental campaign.⁸ All these soldiers were buried in Aquincum, and therefore if this argu-

² AE 1938, 13 (Samaria).

³ The most recent comprehensive study on the legion was done by B. Lőrincz, who takes it as a fact: „Die Truppe hat am Judenkrieg der Jahre 132–135 (zumindest mit einer Vexillation) teilgenommen” (Lőrincz 2010a, 155). The coins were published by Barkóczi 1958, 19, Bíró-Sey 1977, 47, n. 226.

⁴ That was accepted by Lőrincz loc. cit. too.

⁵ Lőrincz 2010b, 168: ... *sprechen dafür, daß die Legio II Adiutrix ... zumindest mit einer Vexillation teilgenommen hat.*

⁶ Alföldi 1956. Certainly it makes probable some kind of military connection of this region with the Roman Orient in the Hadrian era, because these Asian coins are related typically to wars and military usage, but it cannot be dated inevitably to the three years of the revolt.

⁷ This kind of argument goes back to the observations of A. Mócsy (Mócsy 1959, 82), who found it probable for four soldiers from Aquincum (TitAq 500 from Pelagonia – but P. Kovács in TitAq II, p. 405 recommended Pella –, 507 and 509 from Thessalonica, 511 from Ancyra). We can accept the two cases from Thessalonica unreserved. The soldier from Ancyra (although his citizenship was given by Hadrian, we do not have any information of his age) is related to an ampler group. They are people of Galatan/Ancyran origin, mostly soldiers, from the *Fabia tribus*, coming to Pannonia in the turn of the 1st/2nd centuries and in the Hadrianic period. There are other members of this group who were possibly recruited about 132 AD: TitAq 700 [*P. Ae?*]/I(ius) Eq[- -]us; perhaps TitAq 640, but this inscription could be also earlier. Seemingly people arrived from the region of Galatia sporadically during half a century (cf. Bölcske 40). We cannot be certain that the coming of any of them is connected with an actual military campaign. As for the soldier from Pella or Pelagonia, he certainly was *not* given citizenship for the sake of military service (indeed his father was a citizen too), and consequently he might have come during the whole reign of Hadrian (or even Antonine). There is another possible newcomer: TRHR 216 *T. Ba*[- -]j. He was a legionary born in Ephesus, his gravestone seems to be dated to the first half of the 2nd century. This possibility is debilitated too by the fact that he was not a new citizen either.

⁸ On the contrary, we cannot exclude that the inscription TitAq 682 is another relic of the campaign. It is a cenotaph of a legionary who died in Alexandria. The peculiar monument was interpreted by several scholars, who tried to date it upon stylistic grounds and because of the lack of DM formula. They connected it either with Trajan’s Parthian War (L. Nagy, T. Nagy, B. Lőrincz, M. Németh) or the Jewish revolt repressed by Quietus (B. Lőrincz) or the Egyptian revolt in the same time (J. Fitz). (Strobel 1988, 207, n. 85 denies the possibility of an exact attribution.) Nevertheless J. Fitz was aware of the difficulties of these theories (Fitz 1986, 360, n. 197): this soldier died after 15 years of service, and he was born in Noricum. If he would have died about the end of Trajan’s reign, he must have been just enlisted here in 101/102 AD, and served all his time in other provinces (according to the history of the *legio II Adiutrix*). What was it which connected him with Pannonia so strong, that he had got his epitaph here, and not in the place of

ment is reliable, they must have been enlisted to a vexillation sent from Aquincum. Up to now, there was no acceptable argument for the participation of any auxiliary troop from Pannonia Inferior.

If we do not deny the participation of the legions, the lack of evidences might be partially explained by the peculiarities of the military organization, namely that both legions sent only vexillations. An absent vexillation from the ten cohortes does not leave conspicuous marks either in the epigraphic or in the archaeological material, and probably no supplementary force will come instead, because both the camps of Aquincum and Brigetio remain manned, if only scantily. The occasional absence of an auxiliary troop is far easier detectable. Now, although we did not know about such occasion, we may suppose by pure military logic that a legionary vexillation was accompanied by some auxiliary unit. Then, a supplementary force might become necessary, or else a section of the *ripa* remained undefended. Naturally a period of three years (at the most) is not easy to detect (at least via archaeology). The military diplomas may offer us doubtless testimony: if in the years 132–135 AD they contain such alae and/or cohortes which did not appear before, nor afterwards, or such troops are missing which were garrisoned certainly in Pannonia Inferior.

Of course the major part of the diplomas does not show the entire list of troops: they are mostly fragmentary, and sometimes the soldiers are discharged selectively, only from a part of the existing troops.

Presently only one diploma is useful to us: RMD IV 251 = AE 1999, 1352. Doubtless, it contains the troops of Pannonia Inferior, although it is of unknown provenance. The list is theoretically complete (5 alae, 13 cohortes). Seemingly two units are missing from the typical post-Trajan schematism: the *cohortes I Campanorum voluntariorum*⁹ and the *cohortes VII Breucorum*.¹⁰ Instead of those, two units appear which were stationed habitually in other provinces: a *cohortes I Britt(onum) (milliaria)* and the *cohortes VII Lusitanorum*. The remaining units are as usual. Such is their sequence:

Alae V: 1. I Thr(acum) vet(erana) 2. I Fl(avia) Aug(usta) Br(itannica) ∞ 3. I CR 4. I Aug(usta) Itu(raeorum) 5. (I) pr(aetoria) CR.
cohortes XIII: 1. I Alp(inorum) 2. I Thr(acum) CR 3. I Alp(inorum) 4. I Nor(icorum) 5. I Lus(itanorum) 6. I Mont(anorum) 7. I Thr(acum) CR 8. I Britt(onum) ∞ 9. II Ast(urum) et

his death? But very similar gravestones were made until the middle 2nd century, cf. TitAq 668. I think it is not impossible to date this example to the 130s; if it were so, the deceased soldier would have done all his service in Aquincum, save for the campaign where he died.

⁹ In Pannonia, the first datable appearance of the *cohortes I Campanorum voluntariorum* is known presently from 143 AD (RMD IV 266). In spite of that fact, it is likely it was here in the 120s already, based on the name of one of its *praefecti* (CIL VI 3520): this person was *praefectus cohortis* in Germania too, roughly in this period (according to Lőrincz 2001, n. 287 at the end of Trajan's reign).

¹⁰ According to the former opinions, the *cohortes VII Breucorum* was brought here only in the Antonine period. Recently we have a proof that it was garrisoned in Pannonia Inferior in the early Hadrian period too (AE 2010, 1861: 126 AD). We must mention that this is a sorely fragmentary diploma, and the suppletion of the text, widely accepted since its first publication (Eck, Pangerl 2010), is inevitably mistaken, because it follows the scheme of the presently discussed diploma from 135 AD. It cannot be correct, because the *cohortes VII Lusitanorum* was surely in Africa in 127 and 128/9 AD (RMD V 368, 373). One thing is certain, the cohort could not jump from Africa to Pannonia and back again, to and fro almost every year. As for the suppletion of the name *I Brittonum*, we shall discuss the situation in the following passages.

Call(aeorum) 10. II Aug(usta) Thr(acum) 11. III Batav(orum) ∞ 12. III Lus(itanorum) 13. VII Lus(itanorum).

Except for that, the *cohors VII Lusitanorum* was never mentioned in Pannonia, it did not leave any epigraphic traces. In spite of this fact, B. Lőrincz accepted the cohort as a real Pannonian unit,¹¹ in all probability mistaken. This troop was garrisoned in Africa in the years before;¹² after 135 AD we never find it in Europe. Could it be brought here temporarily as a substituting unit? It was quite irrational to transfer a cohort or part of a cohort all the way from Africa to Pannonia, for only two years. The name appears in the diploma on the spot where we expected the *cohors VII Breucorum*, and the name of the *cohors III Lusitanorum* stands before it (as usual). The palaeographic situation is quite clear: the clerk made a mistake, he contaminated the names *III Lusitanorum* and *VII Breucorum* to *VII Lusitanorum*, while the real Lusitan cohort lived its everyday life in Africa as ever.

The other possibility is *cohors I Brittonum*; one thing is questionable, whether it was garrisoned here for a longer time, against our former knowledge, in the Hadrian era, or it was disposed here only temporarily, for the years of the war.

Now a *cohors I Brittonum* was attested in Pannonia (since Trajan with the name of *Ulpia Brittonum*). It was the garrison troop of *Vetus salina*,¹³ but in the Second Dacian War it left for Dacia,¹⁴ and remained there, at least according to our present knowledge, almost continuously attested until Marcus' reign.¹⁵ We did not know any other *cohors Brittonum* in Pannonia until now, not in far later periods either. Evidently such a unit reappears in Pannonia Inferior only once and only for a short period, in a transitory way – and evidently it is the last year of the war. It is not I who first took note of this appearance, B. Lőrincz did it first,¹⁶ but he did not endeavour to localize the troop. However it is not improbable that it was brought here to fill the gap left by the units disposed to the Judaeian war in these years. It is more questionable, from where. There are three possibilities. In the Danube region several *cohortes I Brittonum* exist in the first half of the 2nd century. One is that which was transferred from here, stationing in Dacia Porolissensis.¹⁷ Another *cohors I Brittonum (Augusta Nervia Pacensis)* is in Dacia Inferior from about the beginning of Hadrian's reign doubtless to the middle century,¹⁸ possibly and credibly to the 3rd century.¹⁹ And there is a less known unit with

¹¹ Lőrincz 2001, 38.

¹² RMD V 368 (127), 373 (128/9); AE 2011, 1807 (127).

¹³ RMD V 339 = AE 1999, 1258.

¹⁴ It appears in Dacia already in 106 AD: RMD V 343 = AE 2002, 1741.

¹⁵ CIL XVI 163; RMD III 148 (110 AD), V 351 (119 AD), I 21 (123 AD); AE 2009, 1177 (128 AD); RMD I 35 (133 AD); AE 2011, 1073, 2012, 1951 (probably after 135 AD); RMD V 404 (151 AD); CIL XVI 110 (159 AD), and so on continuously. For its stationing in Dacia in the 2nd century, see comprehensively Piso, Deac 2016, 66.

¹⁶ Lőrincz 2001, n. 507.

¹⁷ The identity of the cohort is proven not only by the time sequence, but by the fact that Pannonian-born soldiers were dismissed in Dacia (RMD V 404 – moreover he was recruited later from the earlier recruiting field, being enlisted in the middle 120s!)

¹⁸ RMD I 39 (140); AE 2011, 1791 (146).

¹⁹ Probably the same troop was mentioned in AD 200, with an imperial epithet *Aurelia*: IDR II 174 = CIL III 14485a.

the name of *cohors I Aelia Brittonum*, probably appearing from the Antonine period,²⁰ but known mostly from the first half of the 3rd century.

B. Lőrincz did not form an opinion of this question either.²¹ Naturally the question is very difficult: we know about the Dacian presence of two troops almost continually, but the existing data do not exclude an interim disposition for about two years. The *cohors I Ulpia Brittonum* was in Dacia in 132/133 AD,²² and about the end of Hadrian's reign too.²³ A detachment for the critical years of the war, 133-135 AD is just possible, and it cannot be excluded either that only a part of the cohort was detached.²⁴ Certainly such motion had had its military sense: a troop which knew the terrain well and had old soldiers recruited here, was most able for a temporary defence. But naturally it is by no means an evidence. The same possibility exists in the case of the *cohors Augusta Nervia Pacensis Brittonum*, because it was attested in Dacia in 133 AD,²⁵ and after that in 146 next time.²⁶ We can object but a poor counter-argument that this cohort lacked the expertness of the terrain.

As for the third one, the *cohors Aelia Brittonum*, its history is almost unknown. We do not know its origin, but the epithet makes it evident that it was established by either Hadrian or Antonine. It appears first during Antonine's reign. Of course, if Antonine was the founder, we cannot take it into account - but we do not see any real reason, why Antonine would have established a new troop in Noricum in a generally peaceful period. If it was Hadrian, he did it probably about the end of his reign (otherwise we would have heard of the troop in his years), and it is an obvious idea he might have formed a new unit then, to compensate the withdrawal of some forces during the Bar Kokhba revolt. Then, the first garrison of this unit might be Pannonia, and after the revolt it was disposed from here to Noricum, where it remained for long. It is a very suggestive supposal, but still it lacks evidence.

(We must concede, that there are sporadic mentions of another troop named *cohors Flavia Brittonum*, but these data are mostly dubious,²⁷ and much dispersed in time and space. Trustworthy mentions of this unit do not occur after the Flavian era,²⁸ therefore, in all likelihood, the unit changed its epithet after the fall of Domitian.)

²⁰ AE 2012, 1080 (145-161 AD), although it is a fragmentary diploma and the name is only probable, not certain.

²¹ Lőrincz 2001, 32.

²² RMD I 35.

²³ AE 2011, 1073 and AE 2012, 1951: they are dated with the 2nd imperial acclamation of Hadrian. Although we have no decisive proof, probably the acclamation was due to the victory in the Bar Kokhba war, 135 AD - by no means earlier.

²⁴ The diploma does not speak about a vexillation of a divided cohort. But we have an analogy: the *cohors III Batavorum* had but a vexillation in Pannonia Inferior, and only roughly a half of the existing diplomas name this half-unit as a vexillation, the others simply as a cohort.

²⁵ AE 2009, 1832.

²⁶ AE 2011, 1791.

²⁷ For example, CIL III 4811 = 11504 (Noricum) is almost certainly a wrong interpretation, instead of (A)elia Brittonum. AE 1973, 431, CIL III 13704 are erroneously read or written in all probability. There is only one example from the 3rd century, Italia, which seems creditable - it is a reasonable supposal that here the stone-cutter made a failure in the name, misspelling either the serial number, or *Britt(onum)* instead of *Brit(annica)*, or even the imperial epithet, incorrectly remembering.

²⁸ CIL III 2024; AE 2009, 993.

Two other questions are easier to answer than the exact identification of the troop. Where was it garrisoned between 133–135, instead of which unit? Did it leave any written monument?

1. Garrisoning between 133–135

As we have seen, the only surely missing troop is the *cohors I Campanorum voluntaria*, which was stationed certainly in Acumincum in the middle 2nd century. For this reason, it is probable enough this troop was dislocated from Acumincum, but not probable that only this and only from here, even if all the other units are the same in these years as in the whole 130s. There are two garrisons the units of which are quite unknown in this period: those of Albertfalva and Campona.²⁹ Evidently it were an absurd presumption that there was no known discharge from these two garrisons in the whole reign of Hadrian; in consequence, the common opinion is that these were manned with detachments of the *legio II Adiutrix*. For such soldiers, there is a good chance to have participated the vexillation in the Judaeian war, and therefore these three camps must be taken into account, as possible transitory garrisons for a *cohors I Brittonum*.

The so-called topographic order of the diplomas will not help us. On one hand, it was never used without exceptions: a few diplomas totally violate the order from an unknown reason.³⁰ On the other hand, this topography does not date back before 140 AD,³¹ some segments were arranged at random in the diplomas before that (unless in the 130s troops were constantly dislocated within a province, without other traces left). Certainly the above discussed diploma has such segments: anyway the *cohortes I Lusitanorum, I Montanorum, III Lusitanorum* are written in an unreasonable order.³² The *cohors I Brittonum* is mentioned formally in the position where the later diplomas locate the *cohors VII Breucorum*, but the *VII Breucorum* appears too, at the end of the list, and therefore it was present somewhere in the province. Evidently the recently arrived troop was written in a random position; if its garrison was a camp otherwise unmentioned in diplomas (that means, Albertfalva/Campona), it is no great wonder.

²⁹ The garrison troop of Lugio was not identified by B. Lőrincz, but only because he did not accept that the *cohors VII Breucorum* was here before 138. This mistake occurred because of the phantom presence of the *cohors VII Lusitanorum*. Ulcisia is a still debated garrison; T. Nagy and after him B. Lőrincz put here the *cohors I Thracum CR* in the Hadrian era, based on their brick stamps (Nagy 1973, 41; Lőrincz 2001, 42). I think they were quite right, but it is not universally accepted; anyway there is scarcely any other place left for this cohort.

³⁰ AE 2009, 1079 (RMD II 103 is faultless, from the same year), CIL XVI 112, 113.

³¹ The topographic order becomes (mostly) consistent from 148 AD, but, according to Zs. Visy (Visy 1986, 507, 510), we may take it into account earlier too. That is evidently true for the diplomas RMD V 397, AE 2008, 1116 (144 and 146 AD); but the system of the diploma CIL XVI 175 from 139 AD is certainly partially disordered.

³² I do not think we must count with a dislocation within the province, because this variant is much alike to the atypical variant from 157 AD (AE 2009, 1079); now we know the correct positions of 157, which are much different. The similar atypical variants originate probably from the same source, that is, a non-topographical tradition of the clerks.

2. Inscriptions left by the transitory troop

A negative answer seemed far more likely to our question, because all the possible units had their weak side in leaving inscriptions. The *cohors Nervia Pacensis* is known almost exclusively from military diplomas.³⁵ As for the *cohors Ulpia*, one gravestone remained in Pannonia from the beginning of the century,³⁴ and three other sure data from Dacia,³⁵ where it was stationed far longer. Several altars of the *cohors Aelia* are known from the 3rd century, but no lapidary monument from the 2nd century until now.

Beyond all hope, yet there is an inscription from Aquincum which cannot be dedicated but by one of these cohorts. It is a short and almost unintelligibly abbreviated inscription of a poorly formed altar, consequently it was never accurately deciphered.³⁶ The poor elaboration is not strange: we must suppose the cohort was never accustomed to erecting stone monuments or even to writing. They must have had no competence to order a stone-cutting work of high standards, in spite of the fact that it was a communal altar of the cohort.

The bare letters of the inscription were easily legible:

INVICTO
DEVO
V S L M
PBOCO
M CO I B

Triangular interpunctuations appear in the verses 4-5 but inconsequently.

Although all the former solutions contained misinterpretations, it was at least guessed since Mommsen,³⁷ that the abbreviations refer to a well-known Mithraic formula, *pro bono communi*.³⁸ The more recent solution of the TitAq, with a proper name in v. 4,³⁹ although theoretically possible, yet not convincing, because a dialectal variation is needed, which was rare in Pannonia, mostly known from the 4th century (*Voconius* > *Boconius*).⁴⁰ This gentilicium is known from West Pannonia,⁴¹ but rare; an abbreviated form were not intelligible, even to an antique reader. Not to mention a supposed abbreviated cognomen CO(- - -), the solution of which is missing from the TitAq too.

³⁵ Not counting here the building inscription IDR II 174. Here the unit bears the imperial epithet *Aurelia*, maybe it was re-established.

³⁴ RIU 1457, Vetus Salina.

³⁵ Piso 2015, 209-210, n. 29; ILD 685, 697. (The name of the unit is only a reconstruction in the building inscription ILD 656.)

³⁶ Its last publication was TitAq 78, with references to all former editions.

³⁷ CIL III 3476: num latet in extremis *pro communi bono*?

³⁸ It was in use in Aquincum, cf. TitAq 186.

³⁹ TitAq 78: *P(ublius) Bo(conius) Co(- - -)*.

⁴⁰ Fehér 2007, 386. The form Boconius is known only from Rome, with one exception (CIL XII 1940, Gallia Narbonensis).

⁴¹ CSIR (Österreich I-III), Suppl. 1, 715, *P(ublius) Voc(oni)us Valens*.

If v. 4 contains a Mithraic formula, surely v. 5 must refer to them who dedicated the altar; since there is a clear numeral note I, it had to be a military unit. But as far as we know there was never any *cohors I B(- -)* in Aquincum or the neighbourhood. Three such units were known from Pannonia up to now: the above discussed *cohors I Brittonum* in Vetus salina, a *cohors I Batavorum* in Solva, and a *cohors I B(ritannorum)* in Rittium.⁴² Theoretically, we may suppose that a cohort from Solva or Vetus salina erected an altar in Aquincum, but they were stationed there too early:⁴³ it were a bold venture to date the little altar to the turn of the 1st-2nd centuries. It is quite another thing if the *cohors I Brittonum* reappears in 135.

The characteristics of the monument do not contradict a date of around the middle of the 2nd century, even if the edition of TitAq puts it to the 3rd century - in an assertoric style without argumentation; indeed one cannot find any arguments for a late date. There are practically no linguistic or palaeographic clues to datation (the linguistic variant *devo* is unique in Pannonia and consequently not applicable). The only existing clues are the formal criteria of the stone-work. Similar abaci (a roughly triangular pediment between simple polylobe rosettes) are unfrequent in Aquincum as much as similar proportions of the pillar of the altar and the cymatium. It may be characteristic when both occur together: and such examples appear in Aquincum and its territory mostly in altars which must be dated to the 2nd century.⁴⁴ Even distantly parallelous examples are more frequent in the 2nd century,⁴⁵ including those of similar proportions, the pediments of which are different.⁴⁶ That makes likely enough that this altar must be attributed to the 2nd century. Those parallels which can be exactly dated originate from the 160s: TitAq 38, 83, 92, but according to Á. Szabó's publication in the TitAq, 92 contains a palimpsest inscription. Consequently, the sculptural work of the altar must be some decades earlier. In Sirmium, the altar Mirković 1994, n. 49 can be dated back to the first half of the century. Regrettably, that period is so poorly attested in Pannonia Inferior in terms of sacral monuments, that it is no great wonder we knew no more examples until now. Thus it is really possible and indeed probably to date the discussed inscription to the 130s or 140s.

Regarding all these facts, I read the inscription as follows:

*Invicto
de{v}o
v(otum)
p(ro) bo(no) co(mmuni)
5 m(īlites) co(hortis) I B(rittonum).*

⁴² Lőrincz 2001, 29-32.

⁴³ The *cohors I Batavorum* remained until 118/119, the dislocations made after the death of Trajan: Lőrincz 2001, 81-82, 87-89. And they were in Pannonia Superior. Why would they not have gone better to Brigetio for sacrificing to Mithras?

⁴⁴ TitAq 38 (162-166), 101; RIU 834 (end of 2nd century), 1491 (?). Those beneficiary altars from Sirmium which have closer resemblances are all from the 2nd century (Mirković 1994, n. 36, 42, 49 [first half of the century], 70, and mostly the further resembling ones too: n. 24, 25, 36; for the datings see *ibid.* p. 348).

⁴⁵ TitAq 102, 245; RIU 1298.

⁴⁶ TitAq 83 (162-166 AD), 92 (162-166 AD, but the inscription is secondary), 400 (if it is true that it is a primary inscription of a palimpsest).

The imperial epithet is missing, but it is not unprecedented, whichever of the three possible cohorts is mentioned. As for the *cohors I Ulpia Brittonum*, its name was sometimes abbreviated exactly so, *C I B*, similar even in the form of the number note.⁴⁷ Naturally, it is no decisive argument, since the other two units are so poorly attested.

As far as we know, there was no other occasion in the whole history of the three cohorts when a communal altar was erected. Probably it was an event of great importance. Although a dedication *p(ro) bo(no) co(mmuni)* is typical for the Mithras cult, this time it might have a special meaning: an inauguratoral offer for the welfare of the cohort in a new garrison or even when it was established, and/or for the successful end of the war, which might bring the end of the out-of-home garrisoning too. It is a pity that the cohort could order a monument of such inferior quality, but they were far from expertness in literacy. Probably they did not recognize the low quality, and the stone-cutters of Aquincum would not help the newcomers in an altruistic way, to win the bliss of Mithras.

What can be our conclusion, which cohort transferred was and where?

The findspot of the altar speaks for a troop in the relative neighbourhood. It seems to have been futile to travel from Acumincum to Aquincum for the sake of a cultic object of the huge dimension of 58 cm. On the contrary, such a travel could be quite easily done from Campona or Albertfalva. Either of the two garrisons is possible, more probably Albertfalva, because Campona was later used as an *ala* camp, it were unreasonable to station a cohort or even a part of a cohort here this time.

It is unlikely that the unit was the *cohors Nervia Pacensis*: a) we could not explain the lack of the epithet, b) there is no acceptable reason why this troop were transferred.

The *cohors I Ulpia* is far more acceptable: a) we know the exact analogy of the name form, b) it was reasonable to bring them here, from a military aspect: the older soldiers were acquainted with the terrain. This reason is not quite flawless, because such translations do not fill the gap left by a unit but move it to another province; but if several units left for Iudaea from Brigetio to Albertfalva, here the weakening of the defence system was unproportionally greater and had to be mended, even at the cost of the presently peaceful Dacia Porolissensis.⁴⁸ Moreover, possibly we may suppose the transposition of half a cohort too.

Yet the most likely unit of the three remains the *cohors I Aelia*. Then we may suppose a brand-new troop established for the sake of reinforcement, in order of filling the gap, while the well exercised original cohorts of Albertfalva went to war (we must not forget: if it was a legionary vexillation, Hadrian personally knew them since his governorship). When the war was won, the original unit came back, and the *cohors I Brittonum*, if it was a Dacian troop, went back too; if it was the *cohors Aelia*, a new

⁴⁷ Piso 2015, 209-210, n. 29. Nevertheless, the name was abbreviated differently in brick stamps: Piso, Deac 2016, 66-69.

⁴⁸ It is unlikely Hadrian would have left a gap open just on the Sarmatian frontier! (By the way, it is another argument against the *cohors Nervia Pacensis*, which was stationed on the other Sarmatian frontier zone.)

garrisoning place was found for them, in all likelihood in Noricum, because we hear of its existence nowhere but in Noricum since the reign of Antoninus Pius.

Our conclusion is that both the military diploma and the inscription make more probable the interpretation and date of each other, according to which the inscription was erected between 133-135, and both prove that one or more than one units were brought from Pannonia to the oppression of the Bar Kokhba revolt (most probably a troop from Albertfalva too, perhaps as part of a vexillation of the *legio II adiutrix*), and a new cohort was transferred or indeed newly established as a transitory solution for the problem of the weakened Pannonian frontier.

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