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KAI JUNTUNEN

The Lost Books of Cassius Dio

Only one third of the original eighty books of the Roman History by Cassius Dio survive and of these surviving books not all are completely intact. The loss of most of the missing books probably occurred during the last centuries of the Byzantine Empire, when Constantinople and its libraries were subjected to pillage on multiple occasions and the patronage of literature was in decline. It seems quite certain that most of the books were still in existence prior to these calamities, as they were extensively used by Byzantine historians¹ at least up to the late 11th century.

But already during that time, some of the books seem to have been missing, as noted by Ioannes Xiphilinus, the Byzantine epitomizer of Dio. Precisely how many books had been lost is uncertain, but Xiphilinus does inform us that the whole reign of Antoninus Pius and the first half of Marcus Aurelius were missing from the copies of Cassius Dio at his disposal.² The space of this *lacuna* has been assigned to books 70 and 71 in the standard edition of Dio.

A closer examination of the origin of the *lacuna* shows that an identical chronological *lacuna* appears in other, earlier Byzantine sources that excerpted Dio, as well as in the surviving texts of those historians who quoted directly from Dio. Thus, the available evidence would seem to suggest that the loss of these books occurred relatively early. This observation, on the other hand, forces us to take a very critical view of the few excerpts that the previous editors of Cassius Dio have inserted within the space occupied by the *lacuna*.

None of the excerpts in question contain any information that would allow us to pinpoint their precise original location in Cassius Dio's literary construction without a doubt. Instead, the previous editors have allocated them according to their understanding of the historical events the excerpts describe, at the time of editing. These decisions were seemingly made on the basis of historical reconstruction of events, excluding from the analysis all the other factors that influenced the narrative structure of Cassius Dio's work.

I would like to thank the editors of *Chiron* and especially RUDOLF HAENSCH, and the anonymous referee for their comments and suggestions that greatly improved the quality of this paper.

¹ Such as Ioannes Xiphilinus, Ioannes Zonaras and the compilers of the *Excerpta Constantiana*.

² Xiph. S. 256.6–11, 28–32 (Dio 70.1.1, 2.2).

This setting of the excerpts into precise locations has led the later analysis of the events they describe, such as the invasion of Pannonia by the Langobardi and Obii, to assume that the chronological position they hold in the standard edition of Dio is correct. The present examination challenges some of these assumptions, especially against the background of the early appearance of the *lacuna*, which would seem to exclude the possibility that these excerpts could originate from the locations which they have been allocated. Thus, in addition to the analysis regarding the origin of the *lacuna* among the Byzantine copies of Cassius Dio, this study also attempts to enhance our understanding of the complexity of Dio's narrative structure and the chronological sequence of the early phases of the Marcomannic wars, as well as to raise some doubts concerning the true origin of some excerpts of the Suda that are presently assumed to have originated from Cassius Dio.

I. Observations by Ioannes Xiphilinus

In the late eleventh century, Ioannes Xiphilinus, a Byzantine court historian and a nephew of the Patriarch Ioannes VIII Xiphilinus (1064–1075), wrote an epitome of Cassius Dio. Unlike the original work, which was structured as an annalistic history of the Roman Empire, the epitome Xiphilinus wrote was divided into a series of imperial biographies. The original words of Dio were retained in large part, although in an abbreviated form, while certain incidents that were not essential to Xiphilinus' purpose were completely omitted.³ It is uncertain whether he was officially commissioned to carry out the work, as the dedication to the Emperor Michael VII Ducas (1071–1078) was only included after he had finished roughly a fifth of his work, but Xiphilinus seems to have intended the work to function as a memorabilia of just acts and decrees by the famous emperors of the past.⁴

By the time Xiphilinus reached the death of Emperor Hadrian in his epitome, he came across a gap among the copies of Cassius Dio at his disposal. He bluntly states that the books describing the reign of Antoninus Pius were not to be found among the copies of Dio, and he ponders whether they may have been lost because of some unknown accident. He continues with an apology that for this reason not much is known about his reign except that Antoninus had been adopted by Hadrian after the death of Lucius Commodus and that Antoninus, full of tears and lamentations, had pleaded with the Senate when it had been reluctant to bestow divine honours upon the dead emperor on account of the executions of some prominent men.

Xiphilinus specifies that although the members of the Senate were moved by the words of Antoninus and felt respect towards him, it was their simultaneous fear of the soldiers that caused them to change their minds. After this he continues further with another anecdote that he had been able to find from the remaining sections of Dio at

³ MILLAR 1964, 2.

⁴ Xiph. 87.6–13.

his disposal. This second anecdote concerns the honorary name Pius and how it was granted to Antoninus. According to Xiphilinus, the Senate gave this title to Antoninus at the same time they made him Augustus because he was unwilling to begin his reign by prosecuting certain men although punishment was demanded for them.⁵ These few, short statements are all that Xiphilinus was able to extract from the surviving books of Cassius Dio, and as such they will help us to define the precise point at which the *lacuna* began.

The reference to the adoption of Antoninus clearly originates from the narrative section dealing with the actual reign of Hadrian as the decision concerning the adoption was announced during Hadrian's sixty-second birthday, on the 24th of January 138, although the actual ceremony was not held until the 25th of February of the same year.⁶ The two anecdotes referring to Pius' character, on the other hand, clearly refer to the time immediately after Hadrian's demise on the 10th of July 138. Both seem to deal with the same issue, namely Hadrian's responsibility for the executions made during his reign and Antoninus' refusal to begin his in a similar fashion. Both episodes would thus seem to belong to the same first debate in the Senate where Antoninus Pius' claim to power and the honours of Hadrian were confirmed.

The surviving books of Cassius Dio confirm that the change of long-term reigns was also the point when the narrative was divided into separate books. This structural division between books did not necessarily occur at the precise moment of the ruling emperor's death, but instead each volume seems to have included the funeral rites, the legacy of the deceased, and the accession ceremony of the next ruler, thus providing full conclusion to each reign, while the next book began with a character analysis of the new ruler. Thus, book 56 which ends with the death of Augustus, also includes the description of his funeral procession, the delivered speeches, the memory of his rule among the people, and the first acts of the Senate concerning the divinity of Augustus and the rights of Tiberius as his successor, while the next book begins by describing the character of Tiberius.⁷

In a similar fashion, book 58 ended with the death of Tiberius and a short description of his funeral procession and the eulogy presented by Caligula, although here Dio was more interested in the political machinations that occurred around Tiberius at the time of his death than in the actual funeral rites or the speech. The next book begins with a description of Caligula's character, exemplified by the typical actions his nature produced.⁸ It is true that in this case the issue concerning the divine honours for Tiberius, which was debated in the Senate, has been included in the following book, but this seems to have been done because the debate did not occur immediately

⁵ Xiph. S. 256.6–28 (Dio 70.1.1–2.1).

⁶ Dio 69.20.1–5; HA, Hadr. 26.6; HA, Ant. 4.6. For the adoption cf. BIRLEY 1997, 294–295.

⁷ Death of Augustus: Dio 56.30.1–47.2; Tiberius: Dio 57.1.1–6.

⁸ Death of Tiberius: Dio 58.28.1–5, Caligula: Dio 59.1.1–5.5.

after the demise of the emperor, but was instead postponed for some time due to more important matters related to Caligula's assumption of power.

Other sections of Cassius Dio, which described the change of sovereigns, have not survived in full, although the present edition of Dio generally sets them at the division of books. Only the change from the rule of Macrinus to Elagabalus has survived, and here a similar picture also appears, although the death of an equestrian usurper (from Cassius Dio's senatorial point of view) did not merit elaborate funeral rites or speeches. Thus, book 79 ends with the death of Macrinus combined with Dio's thoughts regarding his life and stature, while the next book begins by describing the bloodthirsty nature of Elagabalus and the murders he ordered.⁹

As the two anecdotes concerning the character of Antoninus Pius deal with the debate in the Senate concerning the legacy of Hadrian and the legitimacy of his successor's position, it would seem natural that they would have been included in the same book that also contained the description of Hadrian's death. This hypothesis seems to be confirmed also by the surviving fragments from the end of Dio's book 69, where there are references to the Senate's opposition to Hadrian's deification and to those guilty of excesses during Hadrian's reign.¹⁰ This moment would also make perfect sense from Dio's conceptual point of view as the final narrative event of the book. It thus seems quite certain that the *lacuna* that Xiphilinus noted began where the narrative structure demanded a change of books. This means that the loss of Cassius Dio's books, of which Xiphilinus speaks, concerned complete book scrolls and that chronologically the *lacuna* in the narrative began from the aftermath of Hadrian's death in late summer of 138.

After relating the mentioned anecdotes about Antoninus Pius, Xiphilinus continues his observations about the *lacuna* by stating that the first part of the reign of Marcus Aurelius was also missing. He specifies that the lost sections covered the relations of Marcus Aurelius with Lucius Verus, whom he had made his son-in-law, and the actions performed in the Parthian war.¹¹ This definition of the extension of the *lacuna* would seem to demonstrate that the gap reached all the way up to the death of Verus in the midwinter of 168/169. Again, from the narrative point of view, this chronological location would make perfect sense as a point for a structural division into separate books. Such a division would mean that the joint rule of the two emperors (161–169) was covered in one book, while the sole rule of Marcus Aurelius (169–180) was covered in another.¹²

⁹ Death of Macrinus: Dio 79.40.1–41.4; Elagabalus: Dio 80.1.1–8.3.

¹⁰ Dio 69.23.2–3. For a more detailed discussion concerning these anecdotes, cf. SCHMIDT 1989, 57–58.

¹¹ Xiph. S. 256.28–32 (Dio 70.2.2).

¹² The division of books at this point would have corresponded with the known structure of the biography of Marcus Aurelius by Marius Maximus (HA, Avid. Cass. 9.5), cf. BIRLEY 1998, 2733–2736.

In an attempt to give at least some meagre information about the period of time covered by the *lacuna*, Xiphilinus states that he had searched alternative sources, and that, after providing a short introduction to the lost events from them, he would resume from the extant books of Cassius Dio. The information Xiphilinus produced from these sources contained mainly anecdotes about the three emperors (i.e. Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Lucius Verus), but also some actual historical events, such as the description of an earthquake, that devastated Asia Minor and especially Cyzicus around 160/161, the accession of Marcus and Lucius and an abbreviated account of the Parthian war of Lucius Verus (162–166).¹³

The description of the Parthian war is followed by a very short summary of subsequent events, including the rumours related to the death of Lucius Verus, the exceptional eastern command of Avidius Cassius and the wars of Marcus Aurelius along the Danube, which are said to have lasted almost the whole of his life.¹⁴ This summary would also seem to belong to one of the alternative sources that Xiphilinus had been able to find. At least the suspicious circumstances concerning the death of Lucius Verus should originate from these, as Xiphilinus himself had specified that those books of Dio which dealt with Lucius Verus had been lost.

The general statements that Avidius Cassius was given supreme command over the whole East while Marcus Aurelius spent most of his reign fighting on the northern frontier probably do not originate from Cassius Dio. Instead, they may have formed a postscript in an alternative source that exclusively dealt with the Parthian war of Lucius Verus, as Xiphilinus' alternative historiographical material seems to describe this conflict and the related events only. Such an excursion outside the main subject (i.e. the Parthian war) could have been meant to provide some insight into the later events in the lives of the three main characters (i.e. Lucius Verus, Avidius Cassius and Marcus Aurelius) of the conflict, as in Xiphilinus' summary of the Parthian war it is these three persons alone who are mentioned by name. In a very similar fashion, Cassius Dio himself provided a short postscript where he summarized the deeds done by himself, Ulpianus, and Severus Alexander after the death of Elagabalus, which seems to have been the intended conclusion of his main narrative.¹⁵

The terminology used to describe the extent of Cassius' command and the name of Marcus' base of operations in the original manuscripts would seem to confirm that neither statement originates from Dio. The position of Avidius Cassius is said to have covered all of Asia, while later, when Xiphilinus is again following the text of Dio, the

¹³ Xiph. S. 256.32–259.8 (Dio 70.2.2–71.2.4). For the date of the earthquake, cf. BARATTOLO 1995, 60 n. 15.

¹⁴ Xiph. S. 259.8–13 (Dio 71.3.1¹–1²).

¹⁵ Xiph. S. 355.10–357.9 (Dio 80.1.2–5.3). For the life of Severus Alexander as a postscript, cf. MILLAR 1964, 38–39.

command is every time stated to have consisted of Syria alone.¹⁶ This contradiction is further strengthened by other fragments of Dio, which state that at this time Cappadocia was under the command of Martius Verus and Egypt under that of Calvisius Statianus.¹⁷ Also, the verb (ἐπιτροπέω), which was used to describe Avidius Cassius' position in Xiphilinus, and its related nouns, tend to be used in the sense of economic responsibility and guardianship in Cassius Dio, but never in the sense of high military command. In fact, more than once Dio used this term to distinguish financial procuratorships (ἐπιτροπεία) from military commands (στρατεία) and actual governorships (ἡγεμονία, ἀρχή); or procurators (ἐπίτροπος) from proconsuls (ἀνθύπατος) and (propraetorian) legates (ἀντιστράτηγος).¹⁸ Thus, if Dio had written the section quoted by Xiphilinus, then one could assume that he would have used a different terminology, along the lines of his confirmed terminological practise, to distinguish Avidius Cassius' command (either στρατεύω, ἡγεμονεύω or ἄρχω).

¹⁶ Avidius Cassius (PIR² A 1402): Xiph. S. 249.27–250.1 (Dio 71.4.2); Xiph. S. 262.9–11 (Dio 71.22.2); Xiph. S. 265.24–26 (Dio 71.31.1). Direct quotation(s) from Dio in the Excerpta Constantiniana support the pattern seen in Xiphilinus by defining the provincial command of Avidius Cassius to have consisted only of Syria: Exc. de Leg. (ed. DE BOOR) U^G 61 (p. 433) (Dio 71.17). The issue whether Cassius was provided with *imperium maius* is dealt in length by DĄBROWA (1998, 115–117), who rejects the possibility. For his command, cf. ALFÖLDY 1977, 238; ECK 1997(a), 368; THOMASSON 1984, 312–313 (33:60). The only other source in addition to Xiphilinus who actually states that Cassius was put in charge of the (whole) East is the rhetorical work *Vitae sophistarum* by Philostratus (VS 563), but as DĄBROWA has pointed out it is doubtful that Philostratus was aware what kind of official status his passing reference to Cassius implied and as such it should be taken merely as a rhetorical phrase. On the other hand, the similarity between the phraseology of Philostratus (... ὁ τὴν ἑῶν ἐπιτροπεύων Κάσσιος) and Xiphilinus (... τὸν μέντοι Κάσσιον ὁ Μάρκος τῆς Ἀσίας ἀπάσης ἐπιτροπεύειν ἐκέλευσεν) may insinuate that these statements originate from a common source. This possibility is also supported by the notification that from the surviving sources only Xiphilinus' alternative material (Xiph. S. 258.16–20 [Dio 71.1.2]) and Philostratus (VS 577–578) mention Marcus Aurelius ever attending the lectures of Hermogenes of Taurus.

One should also note that there is a numerical difference between DE BOOR's edition of *Excerpta de Legationibus* and earlier editions. In DE BOOR's edition, the fragments U^G 2 and U^G 3 have been combined, which causes the quotation number to be one figure lower after the second fragment than what has been used in the other editions.

¹⁷ Martius Verus (PIR² M 348): Xiph. S. 262.29–263.2 (Dio 71.23.3); Exc. de Virt. (ed. BÜTTNER-WOBST – ROOS) V 304 (pp. 370–371) (Dio 71.14.2). For his command cf. ALFÖLDY 1977, 221; ECK 1999(b), 966; THOMASSON 1984, 270–271 (29:34). Calvisius Statianus (PIR² C 356): Exc. de Virt. (ed. BÜTTNER-WOBST – ROOS) V 306 (p. 371) (Dio 71.28.3). Dio refers to him as Flavius Calvisius, but the correct form of his name was noted already by KLEBS (PIR¹ C 291). For his tenure as prefect of Egypt (c. 169–175), cf. BASTIANINI 1975, 298; idem 1980, 83; idem 1988, 510; ECK 1997(b), 951; JÖRDENS 2009, 529, 532, 535; THOMASSON 1984, 351 (37:67).

¹⁸ Dio 52.29.2; 52.33.1; 53.13.7; 53.15.4; 60.17.8; 66.2.2; 66.14.3; 72.12.3; 79.18.2. For the instances when the terms were used to mean either procurator, supervisor or guardian, cf. BOISEVAIN's index graecitatis (1931, 337).

In a similar manner, Marcus Aurelius' base of operations during the Marcomannic wars is described in the manuscripts of Xiphilinus with the term Paionia (Παιονία),¹⁹ while on every other occasion when Dio speaks of Pannonia (or the Pannonians), he is confirmed to have used (in total fifty-three times) the term Pannonia (Παννονία) instead in all the manuscripts. This pattern is also manifest in all the Byzantine sources which quoted directly from Dio.²⁰ In fact, Dio himself on an earlier occasion ridiculed those people who had no real knowledge of Pannonia and thus often misspelled the name of its inhabitants as Paeonians (Παίονες) instead of Pannonians (Παννόνιοι).²¹

It is very doubtful that Dio, as a former legate of Pannonia Superior and a meticulous literary intellectual, could have made such a mistake (especially after ridiculing others for it), or that on this single occasion alone his Byzantine epitomizers could have accidentally misspelled the name. Instead, it would seem more likely that these two terminological adaptations originate from the alternative author used by Xiphilinus.

Thus, it would seem quite certain that the *lacuna* that Xiphilinus observed among the books of Dio continued until the death of Lucius Verus in the winter of 168/169. This means that the next narrative sequence that actually originated from Cassius Dio was the description of the Roman victory over the Germans, who had advanced as far as Italy, and Marcus' resolve in the face of the demands made by the troops.²² A much more difficult question is the origin of the gap. Xiphilinus does not explain the fate of the lost books, but only speculates that they had been lost in some unspecified accident. Fortunately earlier authors who used Dio as a source can throw some light on the issue.

¹⁹ Written as such in Xiphilinus' primary manuscripts codex Vaticanus 145 and codex Coislinianus 320 and thus followed by Zonaras. The name form was modified into Παννονία in the modern edition of Dio by REIMAR.

²⁰ All the instances when the term Pannonia (or pannonians) was used in Dio can be found from BOISSEVAIN's index historicus (1926, 482–483). The references in the index are to issues related to Pannonia instead of the actual instances when the terms were used, but these can be found either at the given section or the one next to it. Also, certain sections contain more than one case of the terms in question.

²¹ Dio 49.36.5–6. In addition to the two times Dio uses the forms Παίονες or Παιονία here, and the one time we can find it from Xiphilinus, these same name forms can only be found twice in the works of the sixth-century authors Ioannes of Antioch and Petrus Patricius, who used Dio as a source, but did not follow his terminology or literary style. Ioannes of Antioch: Fr. 118 Müll. v. 17–20 (following Dio 71.27.2); Petrus Patricius: Exc. de Leg. (ed. DE BOOR) U^G 6 (p. 391) (Dio 71.3.1^a). On the latter occasion, the name form was changed into Παννονία in the modern edition of Dio by BOISSEVAIN. The form can also be found from Cedrenus (ed. BEKKER) vol. 1, p. 433, l. 20, who possibly used Dio 68.3.4 as a source.

²² Xiph. S. 259.13–26 (Dio 71.3.2–4).

II. *Pharasmanes in Rome*

Over a century before the days of Xiphilinus, the long narrative of Cassius Dio had been heavily excerpted by the court historians at the request of the emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus (r. 945–959) for his vast encyclopaedia (*Excerpta Constantiana*). Although most of this work is also lost, enough remains to make some general observations. In the surviving collections of this encyclopaedia there are twenty-three fragments taken directly from Cassius Dio concerning the Flavian dynasty (69–96), eighteen fragments concerning the reign of Trajan (98–117) and eleven fragments concerning that of Hadrian (117–138).²³ Similarly there are twenty-one fragments covering the sole rule of Marcus Aurelius (169–180) and sixteen fragments from the reign of Commodus (180–192).²⁴

In total this makes eighty-nine fragments covering a period of ninety-one years (if one includes the two years of Nerva's reign, which did not produce any excerpts). In relative terms that makes a single fragment for each year. From the frequency of fragments, one can easily postulate that the court historians of Constantine VII had complete book scrolls covering these reigns available for their work. It is thus astounding to notice that from the entire *lacuna* spanning thirty-one years that was noted by Xiphilinus, only one excerpt can be found, which in the present edition of Cassius Dio has been assigned to the reign of Antoninus Pius.

Against the background of the regular frequency of excerpts before and after the *lacuna*, the possibility that the court historians of Constantine VII did not find suitable material for quotations from the reign of Antoninus Pius or from the joint rule of Lucius Verus and Marcus Aurelius for that matter seems highly improbable. It would instead seem that the *lacuna*, which Xiphilinus noticed a hundred years later in the copies of Dio, already existed in the mid-tenth century. On the basis of this observation one must wonder whether the single excerpt referring to an incident in the reign of Antoninus Pius has been edited into its correct place.

The excerpt in question describes in a single sentence the honours bestowed upon king Pharasmanes II of Iberia during his visit to Rome, which occurred in 141.²⁵ The previous editors of Cassius Dio inserted this fragment into its present location on

²³ Flavian dynasty: Exc. de Leg. (ed. DE BOOR) U^G 40–44 (pp. 423–426), U^R 14 (pp. 87); Exc. de Virt. (ed. BÜTTNER-WOBST – ROOS) V 270–285 (pp. 359–364). Trajan: Exc. de Leg. (ed. DE BOOR) U^G 45–53 (pp. 426–430), U^R 15–16 (pp. 87–88); Exc. de Virt. (ed. BÜTTNER-WOBST – ROOS) V 286–292 (pp. 364–367). Hadrian: Exc. de Leg. (ed. DE BOOR) U^G 54 (p. 430), U^R 17 (p. 88); Exc. de Virt. (ed. BÜTTNER-WOBST – ROOS) V 293–301 (pp. 367–370).

²⁴ Marcus Aurelius: Exc. de Leg. (ed. DE BOOR) U^G 56–65 (pp. 431–434); Exc. de Virt. (ed. BÜTTNER-WOBST – ROOS) V 302–312 (pp. 370–375). Commodus: Exc. de Leg. (ed. DE BOOR) U^G 66–67 (pp. 434–435); Exc. de Virt. (ed. BÜTTNER-WOBST – ROOS) V 313–326 (pp. 375–379).

²⁵ Exc. de Leg. (ed. DE BOOR) U^G 55 (p. 430–1). On Pharasmanes' visit to Rome, cf. BRAUND 1994, 233–234; CHAUMONT 1976, 146–147; ECK – WEISS 2001, 258–259; NESSELHAUF 1958, 219–228.

chronological factors,²⁶ and no thought seems to have been given to other issues that influenced Cassius Dio's narrative structure. As it is highly improbable that the copies of Cassius Dio would have suffered further damage in the hundred years after the days of Constantine VII, or that Xiphilinus would not have been able to find anything suitable from the narrative of the years 138–141, the easiest explanation is that the excerpt itself has been misplaced in the edition.

The reason for the misplacement would seem to be the complexity of Cassius Dio's narrative structure. Although Dio wrote a chronological history, not all the events in his work followed strict chronological order. This is clear from his surviving books, where relatively minor interconnected events were often interwoven into narrative entities that sometimes cover several years. Thus, instead of breaking his story into strict annalistic entries, Dio tended to continue a chain of events from the beginning to the end before starting another causal sequence.²⁷

A very good example can be found in Dio's book 40 and his description of Crassus' notorious defeat at Carrhae and the events related to it. Here, after describing the preliminary events in 54 BCE and the actual defeat in 53 BCE, Dio continued the chain of events down to 51 BCE to Cassius Longinus' eventual victory over the Parthians and Bibulus' arrival in Syria. After this, he moved back to the year 53 BCE and the campaigns of Caesar in Gallia, which he had passed over, and followed these events down to the year 50 BCE. After finishing the narrative sequence concerning the Gallic campaigns, Dio moved back again to the year 53 BCE and provided a continuous tale of the internal strife in Rome during the years 53–51 BCE.²⁸ Although Dio's chronology suffered a little from this technique, it produced a much more readable narrative.

Another trait of Dio's was to reveal some of the future events in the beginning of his narrative of the subject at hand. Sometimes this measure seems to have been taken in an attempt to reduce the need to return to a given issue later on; or to keep the coherence of the main narrative by not bringing in minor chronological incidents.²⁹ Occasionally future events were told to give further emphasis to a point Dio was trying to make, for example, when he was discussing the negative characteristics of Hadrian in

²⁶ The excerpt was originally inserted into the life of Hadrian by J. LEUNCLAVIUS (1606, Hannover) as the last incident referring to the Alanic invasion (Dio 69.15.1–3), but transferred into the life of Antoninus Pius by BOISSEVAIN 1901, 244 according to the suggestion made by MOMMSEN 1885, 404 n. 4. For a further suggestion that the preceding fragment in LEUNCLAVIUS' edition concerning Pharasmanes (Dio 69.15.2) may actually refer to an incident preceding the actual invasion (Dio 69.15.1), cf. JUNTUNEN 2013, 108f.

²⁷ MILLAR 1964, 40.

²⁸ Crassus: Dio 40.12.1–30.3; Caesar: Dio 40.31.1–43.3; Rome: Dio 40.44.1–58.4.

²⁹ For example, when Papirius Carbo's embezzlements as proconsul of Bithynia in 62–59 BCE were discussed under the year 67 BCE (Dio 36.40.4) in connection with his acts as a prosecutor of another proconsul of Bithynia; or when the building of the Aqua Iulia was mentioned under the year 36 BCE (Dio 49.14.5) in relation to Augustus' other decisions concerning Capua, although the aqueduct was actually not built until three years later.

the narrative section concerning the beginning of his reign. Here, the enmity felt by Hadrian towards the architect Apollodorus of Damascus is told to have led first to the latter's banishment and later on even to his execution, although this does not seem to have actually occurred until nearly twenty years later at the end of Hadrian's reign.³⁰

Given the historical background of the relations between Pharasmanes and the Roman Emperors Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, it is quite possible that the sentence mentioning his arrival in Rome does not belong to the actual description of the events in 141. Instead, it may very well originate from an earlier part of Dio's narrative, which dealt with the larger chain of events in Iberia during Hadrian's reign. After all, the «Iberian incident» that affected the Roman eastern policy in Hadrian's time developed over the course of years and was not officially concluded until Pharasmanes' visit to Rome.

The relations between the Roman Emperors and their allied kings in Iberia were never easy, but in Hadrian's time they went sour. The relationship seems to have been extremely strained by the rapidly increased hostilities between the Iberian king and his immediate neighbour – the kingdom of Albania – a situation that Pharasmanes eventually solved by unleashing the marauding bands of the Alans across the Caucasus against his antagonists.³¹ It does not seem that the actions of Pharasmanes were viewed unfavourably in Rome, as we know from the fragment of Dio that just a few years later he was rewarded with high honours and his domains were even enlarged. He was also allowed to sacrifice at the Capitol and had an equestrian statue of himself erected in the temple of Bellona, the ancient goddess of war, which would seem to be clear signs of Roman approval to the outcome of the Alanic incident.³²

In the surviving sources there is a strong tendency to stress the difference between the Iberian king's attitudes towards Hadrian and his successor Antoninus Pius.³³ It would seem likely that Cassius Dio was following this same tradition, in which case the out-of-context sentence could derive from a comparison of differences between the relations of Pharasmanes to the two Roman emperors. Such a statement would naturally have added strength to the comparison by pointing out that, while Pharasmanes had been honoured by Hadrian, the former had refused the emperor's invitation to meet in the vicinity of his own kingdom when Hadrian was inspecting the Cappadocian frontier in 129, but, after Hadrian's death, the Iberian king had travelled all the way to the city of Rome itself to show his respect to the new Roman monarch. Could anything more clearly demonstrate the difference of respect towards the two emperors?

³⁰ Dio 69.4.1–5. The death of Apollodorus: BIRLEY 1997, 282–283; RIDLEY 1989, 551f.

³¹ BIRLEY 1997, 224–226; BRAUND 1991, 211–219; Idem 1994, 232; JUNTUNEN 2013, 123–127; SYME 1981, 276–277.

³² BRAUND 1994, 233–234.

³³ HA, Hadr. 21.13, Pius 9.6, cf. BIRLEY 1997, 225–226.

Thus, from the narrative point of view, it is quite possible that the description of Pharasmanes' state visit to Rome in 141 actually originates from Dio's description of the Alanic incident and its aftermath during the final years of Hadrian's reign. When one takes into account the eighty-nine fragments covering the years before (69–138) and after (169–192) the *lacuna* and weighs these against the single fragment that may belong to the period of the gap, such a possibility seems preferable. Otherwise, it is difficult to explain why this single fact was reported from the period of the *lacuna*, while the mass of information concerning the other incidents was disregarded.

III. *The Invasion of Pannonia by the Langobardi and the Obii*

The loss of Cassius Dio's description of the reign of Antoninus Pius and the joint rule of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus would thus seem to have occurred before the middle of the tenth century. Luckily the Excerpta Constantiniana also include several fragments from other historians, such as the sixth-century Petrus Patricius (c. 500–565), who used Cassius Dio as a principal source for the history of the second century.³⁴ Here the existence of the *lacuna* seems to re-occur.

Among the fragments deriving from Petrus, there are thirty-four excerpts from the reign of Nero, eighteen from the short lives of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, and ten from the early part of Vespasian's reign.³⁵ From the reigns of Titus and Nerva there are none, and only one from the reign of Domitian and two from the reign of Trajan. From the latter half of Hadrian there are again seven fragments and two concerning the reign of Antoninus Pius.³⁶ The drastic drop in the number of fragments after the beginning of Vespasian's reign is caused by the loss of some pages in the single manuscript of the Excerpta de Sententiis, which once contained the excerpts from Vespasian to Hadrian.

Again the years 138–168/169 are devoid of excerpts, while from the sole rule of Marcus Aurelius eight fragments and from the reign of Commodus three fragments exist.³⁷ It should also be noted that the two anecdotes about Antoninus Pius are the same two that Xiphilinus records from the debate in the Senate in the summer of 138. This means that they originate from the same book, which was at Xiphilinus' disposal and after which he notes the existence of the *lacuna*.

³⁴ DE BOOR 1892, 17f.; KRUMBACHER 1897, 238; MÜLLER 1885, 182, 184–187.

³⁵ Nero: Exc. de Sent. (ed. BOISSEVAIN) M 45–78 (pp. 248–252). Galba, Otho and Vitellius: Exc. de Sent. (ed. BOISSEVAIN) M 79–96 (pp. 252–254). Vespasian: Exc. de Sent. (ed. BOISSEVAIN) M 97–106 (pp. 254–256).

³⁶ Domitian: Exc. de Leg. (ed. DE BOOR): U^G 3 (p. 390–391), Trajan: Exc. de Leg. (ed. DE BOOR): U^G 4–5 (p. 391). Hadrian: Exc. de Sent. (ed. BOISSEVAIN): M 107–113 (pp. 255–257). Antoninus Pius: Exc. de Sent. (ed. BOISSEVAIN): M 114–115 (p. 257).

³⁷ Marcus Aurelius (169–180): Exc. de Leg. (ed. DE BOOR): U^G 7–8 (pp. 391–392), Exc. de Sent. (ed. BOISSEVAIN): M 116–121 (pp. 257–258). Commodus: Exc. de Sent. (ed. BOISSEVAIN): M 122–124 (p. 258).

As the sections prior to the lost pages in the *Excerpta de Sententiis* reveal a steady quantity of fragments for each monarch, the rough average in the original manuscript seems to have been at least one fragment for each year covered, if not more. This makes the lack of fragments covering the period of thirty-one years after the death of Hadrian, which corresponds exactly to the gap in Xiphilinus' time, noteworthy.

The straightforward conclusion drawn from this phenomenon would be that the *lacuna* existed already in the days of Petrus Patricius. After all, one can hardly assume that the court historians of Constantine VII, who had excerpted so many quotations related to the events before and after the *lacuna* from Petrus' work, fell silent for these years only out of personal disinterest concerning the period. Neither does the manuscript-tradition betray a further loss of pages at this point, which makes the correspondence of this gap with the later *lacunae* in the *Excerpta Constantiniana* and Xiphilinus seem more than a mere coincidence.

Still, once again, a single fragment with a very controversial traditional dating stands in the way of such a straightforward conclusion and demands a closer examination. This fragment concerns the invasion of Pannonia by six thousand Langobardi and Obii and their defeat by a combined force of cavalry under Vindex and infantry under Candidus. The same fragment also describes the subsequent arrival of peace envoys from eleven German tribes under the leadership of Ballomar, the king of the Marcomanni, to Iallius Bassus, the legate of Pannonia (Superior), and the conclusion of (at least temporary) peace.³⁸

The assumption that the invasion of these two tribes was the prelude to the Marcomannic wars is based on the rather literal interpretation of the terminology used in the fragment, which states that the tribes sued for peace when their first actions had met with disaster. This has been interpreted to mean the first actions of the Marcomannic wars and thus the invasion has often been dated to late 166 or early 167. The date has also been supported by another assumption, namely that it was this incident that caused the fifth imperial acclamation of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, which appears for the first time in a diploma dated 5 May 167.³⁹

As the evidence for a *lacuna* in Dio's and Petrus' texts seems to exclude the possibility of such an early date, it is essential to examine thoroughly the arguments used in defence of it. Of these, the literal interpretation of the terms used by Petrus can be dismissed outright as definitive evidence, as one needs to remember that we have lost the

³⁸ Exc. de Leg. (ed. DE BOOR) U^G 6 (p. 391): Ὅτι Λαγγοβάρδων καὶ Ὀβίων ἐξακισχιλίων τὸν Ἰστρον περαιωθέντων, τῶν περὶ Βίνδιχα ἰππέων ἐξελασάντων καὶ τῶν ἀμφὶ Κάνδιον πεζῶν ἐπιφθασάντων, εἰς παντελῆ φυγὴν οἱ βάρβαροι ἐτράποντο. ἐφ' οἷς οὕτω πραχθεῖσιν ἐν δέει καταστάντες ἐκ πρώτης ἐπιχειρήσεως οἱ βάρβαροι πρέσβεις παρὰ Ἰάλλιον Βάσσον τὴν Παιονίαν διέποντα στέλλουσι, Βαλλομάριόν τε τὸν βασιλέα Μαρκομάννων καὶ ἑτέρους δέκα, κατὰ ἔθνος ἐπιλεξάμενοι ἕνα. καὶ ὄρκους τὴν εἰρήνην οἱ πρέσβεις πιστωσάμενοι οἴκαδε χωροῦσιν.

³⁹ Diploma: CIL XVI 123. Date of the invasion: BIRLEY 1987, 149; BOISSEVAIN 1901, 250; MÓCSY 1974, 186; ZWIKKER, 1941, 77, 87, 99–101. For an extended bibliography concerning the debate of the date, cf. DOBESCH 2001, 490.

original context of the fragment and cannot thus know which actions Petrus referred to in his narrative. Thus, instead of referring to the whole war, as has so often been understood, Petrus seems to have stated that the tribes decided to seek peace as their first actions had failed in their present predicament, whatever that was.

Also, the association of the relatively minor invasion of Pannonia by a «mere» six thousand Germans with the fifth imperial acclamation is not easy to accept. When one examines the other imperial acclamations, it is clear that they were all adopted by the emperors at the conclusion of successful large scale campaigns. The second acclamation was accepted at the conclusion of the Armenian campaign in 163 CE with the title *Armeniicus*, the third at the conclusion of the Northern Mesopotamian campaign in 165 with another title *Parthicus maximus* and the fourth at the final conquest of the Parthian capitals Seleucia and Ctesiphon and the conclusion of the Parthian war in 166 with yet another title *Medicus*.⁴⁰ All these campaigns concerned massive troop concentrations involving tens of thousands of troops on both sides. The numbers involved in the battle with the Obii and the Langobardi pale in comparison.

The situation is similar when one also examines the later acclamations. The sixth was given in late 171 seemingly over the conclusion of the (first) successful campaign against the Marcomanni, which was further glorified by the adoption of the title *Germanicus* a little later. The seventh acclamation was adopted in 174 evidently from a victory over the Quadi, and the eighth was added a year later with the very suggestive imperial title *Sarmaticus*. Obviously, this latest acclamation was added at the conclusion of the campaign against the Sarmatian Iazyges in 175.⁴¹ After a short break caused in part by the rebellion of Avidius Cassius in the East, the war was renewed on the northern front, which led to two additional acclamations in late 177 and in 179, seemingly from victories over the Marcomanni and the Quadi, who both received an occupation force of twenty-thousand Roman soldiers in their territories.⁴²

All of these other campaigns were much more massive in scale than the incident reported by Petrus, and one has to conclude that it alone does not suit the example set by the other imperial acclamations at the end of successful major campaigns. Then again, it is true that the incident described in the fragment does not tell the whole story. In fact it suggests much more serious hostilities between the Roman Empire and the Germanic tribes at the time than just an isolated incident. Why else would eleven tribes, including the powerful Marcomanni, sue for peace for something done by the Langobardi and Obii alone?

⁴⁰ BIRLEY 1987, 129, 140, 144; DODD 1911, 216–222, 234–239, 248–254; KIENAST 1996, 139, 144.

⁴¹ BIRLEY 1987, 165, 176–178, 183, 189–190; DODD 1913, 183–192, 282–291, 292–294; KIENAST 1996, 139. The adoption of the title *Germanicus* was also mentioned by Dio (71.3.5).

⁴² BIRLEY 1987, 198, 205–209; DODD 1913, 305–315; KIENAST 1996, 139. Roman occupation north of Danube: Dio 72.20.1–2, cf. BIRLEY 1987, 208–209.

But here lies the contradiction this episode contains. If the Romans would have been able in a previous moment of time to inflict such serious defeats on the Marcomanni and the other tribes, which would equal in measure to those major campaigns that caused imperial acclamations, it is doubtful that the smaller tribes such as the Langobardi and Obii would have dared to invade Pannonia anymore. Then again, if the other tribes were still undefeated then the Romans could hardly claim total victory over the tribes after the defeat of two minor tribes alone. Also, the fact that all the other acclamations were achieved by defeating the enemy on their own soil, but the defeat of the Langobardi and Obii happened on Roman soil casts a serious doubt to identifying this incident as the cause of the fifth acclamation.

Recently, the early date of the fifth acclamation has been doubted due to the controversy between the diploma dated 5 May 167 and the appearance of the designation in the coinage roughly a year later (the earliest coins of 168 being still struck with the legend *imperator IV*). It has also been noted that the coinage of 167 does not indicate any success against the Germans or any kind of conflict at all for that matter.⁴³ This has led to a belief that the testimony of the diploma is only a mistake,⁴⁴ and that the fifth acclamation should more likely be associated with the fighting against the Sarmatians and the free Dacians that seems to have been on-going since late 167.⁴⁵

The loss of this argument has nevertheless not changed the assumption concerning the date of the invasion, but instead it is now defended on the basis of the career structures of the principal men involved.⁴⁶ This in its turn is highly problematic, as the reconstructions of these careers were based upon the original assumption of the early date confirmed by the fifth imperial acclamation. It would thus seem that the present hypothesis of the date is based purely on self-authenticating evidence. As it comes to datable facts, the only thing that the fragment does state is that the German tribes approached the legate Iallius Bassus and not the emperors, which would be the case if Marcus or Lucius had been in the area.

The legate in question is hardly in doubt, and it has been commonly accepted that he was M. Iallius Bassus Fabius Valerianus, a man with a long and spectacular career holding in succession the legateships of Pannonia Inferior and Moesia Inferior before he was transferred to the eastern frontier in 162 as a personal adviser (i.e. *comes Augustorum*) to Lucius Verus during the Parthian war.⁴⁷ Although none of our sources state anything about the length of Bassus' tenure in the East, there is no reason to doubt that he remained at Verus' side until the conclusion of the Parthian war in 166. Thus, he most likely returned to Rome with the Imperial entourage in early autumn

⁴³ SCHEIDEL 1990, 3f.

⁴⁴ BIRLEY 2010, 39 n. 7; ZWIKKER 1941, 96f.

⁴⁵ BARTA 1966, 86; SCHEIDEL 1990, 5.

⁴⁶ BIRLEY 2011, 15.

⁴⁷ Iallius Bassus (PIR² I 4): ALFÖLDY 1977, 237; ECK 1998, 846; FITZ 1993, 492; KOVÁCS 2009, 184; THOMASSON 1984, 105 (18:38).

166 and may very well have participated in the triumphal celebrations of 12 October 166.⁴⁸

At that point, the value of an experienced administrator was undoubtedly recognised by Marcus Aurelius, who was by now facing increasing pressure on the northern frontier. The appointment of Bassus as the next legate of Pannonia Superior was probably made during the autumn of the same year, but if he did participate in the Triumph in October, he could not have assumed his new command until the end of the year at the earliest. The length of his command is equally uncertain, but he seems to have been superseded by C. Iulius Commodus Orfitianus roughly around 169/172,⁴⁹ which means that the invasion could have occurred anytime between late 166 and early 170's.

Little help with the problem of the date can be obtained from the next fragment of Petrus Patricius in the same Constantine collection of excerpts. This rather short excerpt concerns the peace envoys from the Quadi to Marcus and the amount of tribute they were willing to pay for peace. Although this fragment does not reveal anything helpful for determining a more precise date, the same event is fortunately reported also by another fragment of the *Excerpta Constantiniana*, which was taken directly from Cassius Dio and is much richer in details.⁵⁰

The excerpt from Dio makes it clear that at the time of this second embassy, Marcus was a sole ruler and that there were still hostilities between the Roman Empire and the Marcomanni and the Iazyges. The excerpt continues to report that at this time peace was granted to the Quadi, and as the war against the Marcomanni led to an imperial salutation before the end of 171, the embassy from the Quadi most likely arrived either in that same year or a little earlier. In fact, a Roman victory over the Marcomanni could have very well prompted the Quadi to ask for a separate peace and thus extricate themselves from the war.

In the end, this second fragment can only help to determine by what date the previous embassy had already occurred, but something of the general situation during the invasion of Pannonia by the Langobardi and Obii can be postulated from the few observations the fragment in question relates. First of all, the text is adamant that the peace was negotiated by the tribal envoys with the legate, which in technical terms could mean only a temporary truce, as a permanent peace agreement would still need to be negotiated with the Emperor and ratified by the Senate.⁵¹ The text does not confirm whether such steps were taken, but the fact that eleven tribes in all sued for peace

⁴⁸ HA Marc. 12.7–10; Comm. 11.13, cf. BIRLEY 1987, 145–147.

⁴⁹ Iulius Commodus Orfitianus (PIR² I 271): ALFÖLDY 1977, 237; ECK 1999(a), 34; FITZ 1993, 493; THOMASSON 1984, 105; 2009, 39 (18:39).

⁵⁰ Petrus: Exc. de Leg. (ed. DE BOOR) U^G 7 (p. 391); Dio: Exc. de Leg. (ed. DE BOOR) U^G 56 (p. 431).

⁵¹ This normal procedure of affairs is emphasized by Cassius Dio (72.17), who noted that during the revolt of Avidius Cassius, Marcus had been unable to conduct the peace terms with the Iazyges to the Senate as he had done on all other previous occasions.

clearly indicates that the Roman Empire had hostile relations with all these German tribes at the time and not just with the Langobardi and Obii.

The fact that the defeat of a relatively minor force of six thousand warriors was enough to break the will of all the tribes tells an entirely different story than just an isolated incident. The whole issue becomes much more understandable if viewed in a larger context, where both parties were already exhausted and the latest incident was just the last straw which broke the camel's back. A chain of events of such a magnitude could hardly have taken place already in 166 or 167, although our sources do state that the Marcomannic war had already begun before the conclusion of the Parthian war.

These same sources also state that the war was delayed for a long time by the diplomacy of the men in charge on the scene, which strongly suggests that no serious hostilities occurred until the final years of the Parthian war.⁵² The creation of the two new legions in 165–166 also point towards the conclusion that the Romans were preparing for a major confrontation in those years, but not that such a confrontation had already begun.⁵³ With several legions and auxiliary units in the East, the Romans could hardly have had enough muscle to break the will of the tribes at this point in time.

The situation changed in 166 when the news of the final victory over the Parthians arrived and the central government could begin to anticipate the return of the army. But even if the decision to return the troops had been made immediately after the conclusion of peace with the Parthians, the logistical requirements for the transfer of several thousands of troops back to the Danube and Rhine frontiers would still have taken months to arrange. On the other hand, the simultaneous inauguration of the new legions could have prompted the Romans to change their conciliatory tone towards the tribes, which in turn could have led to open hostilities.

The evidence for a *lacuna* in Petrus Patricius' text and the most likely career structure of Iallius Bassus raise serious doubts against a date as early as 166/167 for the invasion of Pannonia and the conclusion of peace between the German tribes and the Roman Empire. The issue whether the first open breach had occurred already by the end of 166 is uncertain, but even if the hostilities had begun by then, it would still be far from the point when the tribes would need to sue for peace. As the war against the Marcomanni was clearly fought in 168 when the two Emperors were needed at the front and again in 171 when Marcus assumed the sixth imperial acclamation with the title *Germanicus*, there can be only a few options for a peace treaty with the Marcomanni, which could be in agreement with all the presented factors related to the issue.

Taking into account all the presented facts, the simplest solution to the mystery can be found in re-adjusting the invasion by the Obii and Langobardi to a time after the death of Lucius Verus, when Petrus would again have been able to consult Cassius Dio. By then the fighting between the German tribes and the Roman Empire would have lasted a few years which would explain why both parties were at least willing to discuss

⁵² HA, Marc. 12.13.

⁵³ DIETZ 2000, 133; LÖRINCZ 2000, 145–147.

about peace. Naturally, one could argue that Petrus had found this fact from a different source, but in that case, it is again hard to explain how the compilers of the *Excerpta Constantiniana* had not been able to find anything else for the rest of the years 138–168/169 originating from this alternative source. This re-adjustment of the invasion and the subsequent truce with the German tribes to 169 (or early 170 at the latest), on the other hand, causes us to revise some of our other dates and theories concerning the Marcomannic wars.

IV. *M. Macrinus Avitus Catonius Vindex*

The identity of the Roman commanders, who defeated the German tribesmen, has been one of the main issues that has affected the whole debate concerning the incident. The fragment of Petrus Patricius does not provide their full names, but simply refers to them as Candidus and Vindex. The identity of Candidus remains unknown, but Vindex is widely believed to have been one M. Macrinus Avitus Catonius Vindex, who is known to have commanded in succession two auxiliary *alae* in Pannonia Superior and who was also highly decorated by Marcus Aurelius for his actions in the Marcomannic wars.⁵⁴

The extraordinary career of Macrinus Avitus gives at least some credence to the assumption that he was the cavalry commander mentioned by Petrus. The beginning of his career followed the rather standard pattern for an equestrian official, as he held four military commands and the procuratorship of Dacia Malvensis. The last post was followed by the rather vague post of *curator* of Ariminum, which during the Marcomannic wars may have been connected to the supervision of supply lines to the front along the *via Aurelia*.⁵⁵

It is uncertain whether this last post belonged to the equestrian or senatorial career, but his next task as the legate of Moesia Superior clearly shows that by then he had already been raised into the senatorial position. Although the legateship of Moesia Superior was usually a consular post, the evidence suggests that during the Marcomannic wars it was a praetorian task, just as Pannonia Inferior seems to have been

⁵⁴ The dedication (CIL VI 1449 = ILS 1107) to Macrinus Avitus (PIR² M 22) states that he served as the prefect of *cohors VI Gallorum*, tribune of *legio VI Victrix*, prefect of *ala III Augusta Thracum* and as his *militia quarta* as prefect of *ala (I Ulpia) contariorum milliaria*. As *cohors VI Gallorum* is not reported in any other source, ERIC BIRLEY 1985, 79 has suggested that the stonemason intended to inscribe *cohors VII Gallorum* (which served in Syria), but SPAUL's 2000, 168–169 idea of *cohors V Gallorum* in Britannia seems preferable as Vindex's next command would then have been in the same province. Although both of his cavalry commands were in Pannonia Superior, the general opinion tends to favor the assumption that he was in command of the *ala I Ulpia contariorum* at the time of the invasion.

⁵⁵ BIRLEY 1987, 157; PISO 1993, 111–112.

temporarily assigned as consular province.⁵⁶ This was followed by a suffect consulship and a consular legateship of Moesia Inferior. It was during this last position that he seems to have died at the young age of forty-two.

None of these positions can be dated with certainty, but based on the assumption that his *militia quarta* took place in 166 or 167, it has been postulated that his command in Dacia Malvensis was around 169/170, followed by the curatorship and the post at Moesia Superior roughly in 173/175.⁵⁷ The consulship has been assumed to have been around 175 and his last post in the year after that, followed by his death.⁵⁸ Such a rapid promotion from a seemingly regular equestrian career into a consular position is truly exceptional and hard to explain except by Imperial favour caused by some extraordinary incident.

It is thus easy to see why the idea, that the prefect of *ala I Ulpia contariorum milliaria* was the same Vindex who commanded the cavalry against the Langobardi and Obii, has been so widely accepted. Still, dissenting voices have been raised against this identification, pointing out that the military decorations (which included a *corona muralis*, *corona vallaris*, two *hastae purae* and two *vexilla*) would have been more suitable for an equestrian official in command of a province.⁵⁹ The readjustment of the invasion of Pannonia does not cause many problems for this reconstruction, except that if Macrinus Avitus' *militia quarta* occurred as late as 169, then his tenure as procurator of Dacia Malvensis should be moved forward roughly by one year. Also, it does solve at least one issue of this debate, namely why the decorations were awarded by Marcus Aurelius alone.

On the other hand, the identification of the Roman cavalry during the invasion as a single *ala* under the command of Macrinus Avitus has led to further hypotheses concerning the Roman forces. Based on the assumption that the general term of cavalry in

⁵⁶ Moesia Superior: ALFÖLDY 1977, 235, 373; BIRLEY 1963, 110; DORUȚIU-BOILĂ 1987, 247f. Pannonia Inferior: Ti. Claudius Pompeianus, the legate in 167 is now known from a recent diploma discovery to have held his consulship already in 162, thus making his tenure in Pannonia Inferior a consular legateship. ECK – PANGERL 2010, 229 have postulated that the recently formed *legio II Italica* could have been the second legion in the province, but if Moesia Superior had been downgraded at the time into a praetorian position, it is then equally possibly that the second legion in Pannonia Inferior had been transferred temporarily from Moesia Superior instead.

⁵⁷ Dacia Malvensis: ALFÖLDY 1977, 373; BIRLEY 1987, 161. Moesia Superior: ALFÖLDY 1977, 373; PISO 1993, 125; THOMASSON 1984, 128; 2009, 46–47 (20:46).

⁵⁸ ALFÖLDY 1977, 190, 373–374; THOMASSON 1984, 137; 2009, 52 (20:96). This reconstruction has been objected by DORUȚIU-BOILĂ (1987, 251–252; 1992, 32–33), who has argued that Macrinus Vindex's legateship of Moesia Inferior was already in 169/172 as his name can be found in an inscription on altar, which has also another inscription, datable to those years. She is followed in this argument by ROSEN 1994, 103–104, but G. ALFÖLDY has rejected this interpretation because the inscription bearing the name of Vindex seems to have been added later, cf. CIL VI.8, p. 4700.

⁵⁹ NAGY 1969, 536f. Objected by MAXFIELD 1981, 179–180.

Cassius Dio (via Petrus) meant a singular unit, it has even been suggested that the Roman infantry on its turn was composed of a single auxiliary cohort.⁶⁰ The idea that slightly over a thousand Roman soldiers would have been enough to defeat a force of six thousand German tribal warriors is a little far-fetched, but it does show how the rhetorical style of Cassius Dio has been occasionally interpreted to mean exact things.

In the surviving sections of Dio there are clear stylistic patterns relating to descriptions of battles and Roman troop formations in battles. The description of the action is always highly rhetorical and the troops are described only along the lines of the most basic terms as (heavy) infantry, cavalry, or archers. Not once is Dio confirmed to have identified separate auxiliary units, which is not surprising as he very rarely identifies individual legions either.⁶¹ In fact, the only occasion when Dio is known to have identified a specific unit in combat is when he described the Second Battle at Bedriacum. Here, the reason for the exception was the religious custom of the soldiers belonging to the *legio III Gallica* that caused the tide of battle to turn as they greeted the rising sun with a cheer as was the custom of the worshippers of the eastern sun god (i.e. Elagabalus).⁶² But even this was caused only by the need to explain a peculiar eastern religious custom.

Dio's descriptions of actual battles follow his highly rhetorical model and are often void of any reliable details. As for strategy and tactics, he never mentions how many legions were present at any given campaign or battle or how the battle progressed from the tactical point of view. Instead, although his narratives of campaigns are often quite long, they mainly contain religious portents that occurred before and during the battle, characteristics of the leaders involved in the struggle, and long elaborate speeches.⁶³

The actual moment of battle is reduced to a rhetorical show of words, where the infantry bangs their shields together, the cavalry engages the opposing cavalry and the armies keep moving frantically from one direction to another, but a description of the

⁶⁰ MOCZY 1974, 186.

⁶¹ The few occasions when Dio refers to precise units or the amount of units in a given situation, concern his rhetorical speeches: 38.41.4 (four legions); 38.46.3, 38.47.2 (Tenth legion); the general aspects related to Caesar's Gallic command and the Civil war: 38.8.5 (Caesar's force of three legions reinforced with one additional legion); 40.65.1–4 (Pompeius' loan of a legion to Caesar); 40.64.4 (the two Pompeian legions protecting Rome); mutinies and disgrace: 45.13.3 (the defection of the Martian and Fourth legions); 49.34.3 (mutinous men formed as a separate unit); 54.11.5 (Augustan unit disgraced); 60.15.4 (the origin behind the names of the Seventh and Eleventh *Claudiae*); 79.7.1–3 (the defection of the Third and Fourth legions); the size of the Roman army: 55.23.1–24.4 (the legions of Rome). On two occasions Dio also refers to specific units in his narrative with a generic name: 36.14.3–4, 36.16.3, 36.46.1 (Valerians); 78.13.4, 78.34.2, 79.2.3, 79.4.3 (the Alban troops).

⁶² Dio 65.14.3.

⁶³ For example, battles of Pharsalus (Dio 41.52.1–63.6), Philippi (Dio 47.37.1–49.4) and Actium (50.15.1–35.6), which all cover nearly a third of a book are mainly composed of rhetorical speeches or character analysis instead of the actual incidents.

true tactics applied at the battle is rarely given.⁶⁴ The extensive influence of Thucydides as an ideal literary model occasionally caused Cassius Dio to distort his own descriptions into a level of plagiarism as observed in the case of battle at Lilybaeum, which is clearly just a rhetorical imitation of Thucydides' description of the final battle at Syracuse.⁶⁵

It is thus obvious that the general terms of 'cavalry' and 'infantry', which were used to describe the Roman forces that defeated the Langobardi and Obii, cannot be interpreted in any precise manner. More likely, the Roman forces were roughly equal in strength to the Germans, which taking into the consideration the garrison of Pannonia Superior probably meant that the infantry under Candidus was composed of a strong legionary vexillation reinforced with one or two auxiliary cohorts, while the cavalry under Vindex may have contained only this single *milliaria ala*.⁶⁶ In any case, it does not seem that any particular aspect of Vindex's career could produce any objections to the new date.

Neither does the re-adjustment of this incident into the year 169 in any way contradict the generally accepted chronology of late 168 and the following winter. The course of these events is clear, and our sources state that Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus advanced first to Aquileia and then across the Julian Alps into Pannonia, which had been affected by the war. At the approach of winter, the two Emperors first returned to Aquileia with the intention of wintering there, but eventually the fear of plague caused them to decide to return to Rome. It was during this fateful return voyage that Lucius Verus succumbed to the illness.⁶⁷

This basic chronology of events includes several issues that have already been discussed in connection with the fragment of Petrus Patricius. First, the war between the Roman Empire and the German tribes had obviously continued for some time already at this point of time, which would explain why all the eleven tribes would have been willing to negotiate for peace after the unsuccessful invasion of Pannonia by the Langobardi and Obii in 169. Also, as Marcus Aurelius returned to Rome after the death of Lucius Verus, the legates on the frontier would have again taken charge of affairs, and it is thus natural that the tribal envoys approached Iallius Bassus instead of the Emperor.

Although the fragment states that the peace agreement was made with the legate of Pannonia Superior, it remains uncertain whether a more permanent peace agreement was concluded with the Emperor. But with the recent death of Verus, the effects of the plague and the devastation caused by the warfare so far, it is understandable that the

⁶⁴ Such as, in his descriptions of the battle against the Veneti (Dio 39.41.1–43.5), or the battle of Pharsalus (Dio 41.59.1–61.1).

⁶⁵ Lilybaeum: Dio 49.9.1–11.1; Syracuse: Thuc. 7.70.1–72.5. Rhetorical imitation, cf. MILLAR 1964, 42; SCHWARTZ 1899, 1690f.

⁶⁶ As the garrison of Pannonia Superior was composed of three legions, five *alae* and only seven cohorts, the main part of the infantry was probably composed of legionary troops.

⁶⁷ HA, Marc. 14.1–8, cf. BIRLEY 1987, 155–158.

Romans would have been willing to at least discuss the possibility of peace. Still, as we have no way of knowing how long the truce with the German tribes lasted, a temporary peace sometime in 169 does not prove any of the suggested scenarios for the following years false.

V. *Suda: Martius Verus and Avidius Cassius*

In addition to the fragments taken directly from Cassius Dio, the modern editions of Dio also include material for which the true origin cannot be confirmed, but which has been assumed to originate from his work. Two such fragments have been added from the late-tenth-century Byzantine encyclopaedic lexicon *Suda* to the edition of Dio under the section concerning the Parthian war of Lucius Verus. Neither one of these fragments state clearly the source from where they were excerpted. Thus one must doubt their connection to Dio in the light of the *lacuna* in the copies of Cassius Dio at the time of *Suda*'s compilation.

The first fragment concerns the Roman general P. Martius Verus.⁶⁸ This entry in the *Suda* is very complex and seems to contain numerous references to Verus' actions and character, which may not all belong to the same chronological occasion.⁶⁹ The first part of the entry states that Martius Verus sent one Thucydides to conduct Sohaemus into Armenia, while he himself kept pressing forward. The context of this reference is missing, but Sohaemus was the Roman client-king of Armenia, who received his crown from Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus in 163/164 after the Romans had been able to retake Armenia from the Parthians.⁷⁰ The other person in the entry, the one named Thucydides, is unknown, but it is obvious that he was a subaltern of Martius Verus. The installation of a Roman client-king in Armenia is confirmed by coins to have occurred in 164, and thus the entry from *Suda* has been allocated under this same year in the edition of Cassius Dio.⁷¹

This incident has also been connected to the disturbances in Armenia around 172, and suggestions have been made that Sohaemus needed to be reinstalled on his throne at that time.⁷² The entry seems to imply that while Martius Verus was responsible for Sohaemus' safety, he chose to delegate this task to one of his subalterns, while he himself pressed forwards on matters that seem to have been part of an on-going military campaign. The matter is a difficult one, as Martius Verus is known to have been in a position of power in this sector of the Empire on both occasions. During the Parthian war of Lucius Verus, Martius commanded the *legio V Macedonica* on the Armenian front, and sometime after the war he was made the legate of Cappadocia.

⁶⁸ *Suda*, s. v. Μάρτιος (edited between Dio 71.3.1¹ and 71.3.1²).

⁶⁹ ASTARITA 1983, 47 n. 121.

⁷⁰ BIRLEY 1987, 131.

⁷¹ RIC III (Lucius Verus) 511–513; 1370–1375; DODD 1911, 231–233.

⁷² BIRLEY 1987, 175; MITFORD 1980, 1205.

Without a proper context this is a difficult issue, but the general impression of the entry is that Martius Verus was in general command. This does not make matters any easier, as although in the beginning of the Armenian campaign in 162/163 the general command of the Roman troops in Armenia rested with M. Statius Priscus, who was also made the legate of Cappadocia, towards the end of the war Martius Verus seems to have assumed the responsibility of military affairs in Armenia.⁷³ It does not seem that Verus was made the legate of Cappadocia until after the war, which raises the possibility that after the disappearance of Priscus from our sources after 163 and the installation of Iulius Severus as the new legate of Cappadocia around 164, the Cappadocian province was soon returned to regular administration, while the military affairs in Armenia were separated as an independent command under Martius Verus.⁷⁴ If this is so, then it would be easier to understand why the safety of Sohaemus has been assigned to Martius Verus, instead of Statius Priscus or Iulius Severus.

The disturbances of 172 in Armenia, on the other hand, do not suggest that the Romans needed to participate in active military campaigning. The whole incident seems to have taken place between a powerful and arrogant Armenian magnate named Tiridates and a Roman client-king of the Heniochi. The excerpt of Dio that mentions this incident specifies that Martius Verus (who was by now the legate of Cappadocia) only rebuked Tiridates for killing the king of the Heniochi, and in response the hot-blooded Armenian thrust his sword in Verus' face. For his behaviour, Tiridates was exiled into Britannia, but it has nowhere been stated that these disturbances affected Sohaemus or that there was a need to reinstall him.⁷⁵

The entry in Suda continues with a description of the martial prowess and general characteristics of Verus, and after these concludes with a reference to his arrival in Kainepolis, where the soldiers installed by Priscus were at the state of near mutiny. This second incident clearly refers to a point later in time than 164. Kainepolis itself was only built after the Romans sacked the previous Armenian capital Artaxata in 163, while the Roman troops continued to garrison the new Armenian capital at least until 185.⁷⁶ The reason for the mutinous state of the Roman soldiers has not been ex-

⁷³ In a letter to Fronto, Lucius Verus (*Ad Verum Imp.* II.3) defined Martius Verus and Avidius Cassius as the principal men, who could provide detailed accounts of the actual campaigns. This seems to suggest that these were the men in charge of the Roman forces in Armenia and Mesopotamia at the end of the war. A similar image is provided by a speech of Marcus Aurelius (*Dio* 72.25.3) during the revolt of Avidius Cassius, where the accomplishments of Martius Verus are raised on an equal level with those of Cassius.

⁷⁴ The succession of commanders in the Armenian front during the Parthian war is suggested by the funerary stone (CIL III 7505 = ILS 2311) of a soldier belonging to *legio V Macedonica*, which states that he served in the eastern expedition under Statius Priscus, Iulius Severus and Martius Verus. For the legates of Cappadocia during this time, cf. ALFÖLDY 1977, 220–221; THOMASSON 1984, 270–271; 2009, 110.

⁷⁵ *Dio* 72.14.2.

⁷⁶ CIL III 13627.

plained, but the reference to Priscus suggests that they had been stationed at Kainepolis at least for some years.

Originally this excerpt was argued to originate from Cassius Dio purely on the basis of stylistic matters, but clearly there are aspects which make this association uncertain.⁷⁷ The connection of Sohaemus' conduct to Armenia with the disturbances of 172 cannot be confirmed, while the possibility that the Armenian monarch did not enter his kingdom until the Roman hold of Armenia was secured and the building of the new capital was well on its way, could mean that this incident should be dated to those years when Martius Verus was in charge of the military affairs (c. 165/166). If the references are to the period before the death of Lucius Verus, then the association with Cassius Dio seems to be impossible. In this case the excerpt may originate from the same alternative source that Ioannes Xiphilinus used for his abbreviated account for the Parthian war.

The second excerpt describes the Roman method of building pontoon bridges by anchoring ships in the river side by side and then constructing a continuous platform on top of these ships.⁷⁸ The construction work is explained to have been conducted under the protection of a few ships carrying catapults and archers facing the opposite bank. The effect of this method is further elaborated with a quotation stating that when Cassius gave the order to discharge the catapults and missiles, the barbarians (on the opposite bank) gave way. The identity of this Cassius has not been elaborated, but as Avidius Cassius is the only Roman commander known to have crossed any rivers, the quotation has been associated with his command in Northern Mesopotamia in 164/165.⁷⁹

The issue is further obscured by the insertion of Eunapius' name in the beginning of this entry, which would seem to indicate that the compilers of the Suda found it in the work of the fourth-century author, who is known to have written at least a continuation of the history of Dexippus in addition to his other writings.⁸⁰ As Dexippus' work ended with the reign of Claudius Gothicus (268–270), it is puzzling how a quotation referring to Roman bridge building and a specific incident in 164 could have ended up in a historiography dealing with the affairs of the late third and the fourth centuries. It is of course always possible that at some point in his work Eunapius explained the Roman bridge-building method with a historical reference from another source.

In this latter case, it is possible that the quotation could have originated from Cassius Dio, as Eunapius' work predates the earliest evidence for the *lacuna*. But even with this possibility in mind it does seem rather odd that Cassius Dio would have chosen this particular occasion to explain the Roman bridge building-method after passing

⁷⁷ BOISSEVAIN 1890, 338.

⁷⁸ Suda, s. v. Ζεῦγμα (edited between Dio 71.3.1¹ and 71.3.1²).

⁷⁹ WEBSTER 1985, 235.

⁸⁰ WRIGHT 1952, 319f.

over so many more famous occurrences when the feat of building bridges was glorified by the Roman historians. For example, the bridge that Caesar built over the Rhine in 57 BCE is noted simply by mentioning that he crossed the river by bridging it.⁸¹ Only the great stone bridge that Trajan built over the Danube seems to have been worthy of Dio's attention.⁸²

One should also note the rather educational style in which the bridge-building method has been described in the *Suda*. If the original wording has been retained, then it would seem that the original author of this passage intended to inform his readers of the Roman method of building, which he assumed that they were not acquainted with. Such an approach is not very common in Dio. Instead, when he included descriptions of more noteworthy buildings or peculiar phenomena into his narrative, the subject at hand tended to be written from the perspective of one who marvelled or admired such things.⁸³

The same bridge-building method is also described by Arrian, and the similarities between the versions given by him and *Suda* are striking.⁸⁴ Both versions describe the same technique with so many identical details, that it leaves one to wonder whether the *Suda*/*Eunapius* version could have originated from a source, which was familiar with Arrian. Alternatively, the *Suda* version must have originated from an unknown author who was well acquainted with the technical specifics of Roman military bridge-building techniques.

There would thus seem to be good reasons to doubt the association of these two excerpts with Cassius Dio. One cannot conclude anything with absolute certainty, but the presented factors would favour an alternative source. Possibly both of these fragments should be associated with the alternative source that survived to the days of Xiphilinus and clearly dealt with that war exclusively.⁸⁵ At least in that case it would be understandable why the original author of the passage chose the crossing of the Euphrates in 164 as a suitable moment to describe Roman building methods.

⁸¹ Dio 39.48.4. The bridge built by Caesar (BG 4.17) was quite different in construction than the one described in the fragment of *Suda*.

⁸² Dio 68.12.1–5.

⁸³ A good example of this behavior can be found from the description of the stone bridge built by Trajan, which Dio praises as a marvel and a further proof of Trajan's excellence.

⁸⁴ Arr. *Anab.* 5.7.

⁸⁵ This alternative source was most likely a work written by Asinius Quadratus, whom Xiphilinus (S257.12–14 [Dio 70.3.3]) mentions by name as one of the alternative sources. The work itself was more likely the *Parthica* instead of the *Ῥωμαϊκῆ Χιλιατηρίς* to which the reference of Antoninus Pius' death has been credited (F. JACOBY, *FGrHist* II 451 [fr. 25]; MÜLLER 1883, 662 [fr. 29]).

VI. Conclusion

What happened to the books of Dio? The evidence for an identical *lacuna* in Xiphilinus and the tenth-century collections of Cassius Dio and Petrus Patricius seems to be quite compelling. The substantial quantity of quotations that were excerpted from the works of Dio and Petrus, and the equal lack of quotations from these same works covering the same period of time as the *lacuna*, would seem to testify that the loss of Dio's books occurred relatively early. Neither do any of the few fragments that are presently edited inside this *lacuna* present overwhelming objections for this conclusion. Instead, they all seem to be more understandable in a context outside the space occupied by the *lacuna*.

If the books describing the reigns of Antoninus Pius and the first half of Marcus Aurelius did not survive to mid-sixth century, when they would have been available to Petrus for consultation, then one must conclude that the unspecified accident that Xiphilinus mentioned must have occurred prior to this date. The reason could have been a simple scribal error,⁸⁶ or possibly these books fell victim to one of the great fires of Antiquity, such as the one in Constantinople in 475, which according to Cedrenus and Zonaras burnt the Imperial library containing 120,000 book scrolls.⁸⁷ But whatever the cause, the unfortunate conclusion would seem to be that these books of Dio did not survive longer than a quarter of a millennium after their original publication.

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⁸⁶ SCHMIDT 1989, 59.

⁸⁷ Cedrenus (ed. BEKKER) vol. I, p. 616, l. 4–10; Zon. (ed. DINDORF) 14.2 (p. 256, l. 23–p. 257, l. 3).

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