

## The date and circumstances of Quintus Iulius Vestalis\*

A decree of Istros in honour of the Roman *praefectus* Q. Iulius Vestalis from the Museum of Constanța, casting an important new light on the circumstances of Ovid's exile at Tomi and the situation on the Lower Danube in the last years of Augustus and the beginning of the principate of Tiberius, has recently been published by Maria Bărbulescu and Livia Buzoianu. An improved text, English translation and some further commentary have already been produced by C.P. Jones, who rightly stresses the admirable speed with which this important inscription has been published.<sup>1</sup> In this short note I would like to question the assumptions of the *edd. pr.* concerning the date and context of Vestalis' mission in Lower Moesia and offer an alternative shorter chronology.

The circumstances of Vestalis' mission at Istros/Histria, for which he was honoured by the city, are clearly exposed in the decree, and important aspects of the situation have already been brought out by the *edd. pr.* and by Jones, on whose discussions my own builds. I shall recapitulate the main established points for the sake of convenience, with a few minor adjustments to their account, mainly related to the Alpine background of Vestalis.

Q. Iulius Vestalis was appointed to the region (l. 4: εἰς τοὺς καθ' ἡμᾶς τόπους) by the emperor Tiberius and his *legatus pro praetore*, Lucius Pomponius Flaccus (*PIR*<sup>2</sup> P 715), for the purposes of 'the preservation and safety of the Greek cities in the left-hand parts of the Pontus' (ll. 4–6: ἐπὶ συμ(μ)ονῇ καὶ σω[τ]ηρίᾳ τῶν ἐν τοῖς εὐωνύμοις μέρεσι τοῦ Πόντου Ἑλ[λ]ηνίδων πόλεων). His appointment had been preceded and, according to the decree, caused by an embassy of Istros to the emperor, asking to allow them to abandon the city as too close to the barbarians and relocate (ll. 6–11). Vestalis appears to have taken measures to help the city in its scarcity of inhabitants, which he witnessed on arrival (ll. 12/13: ἰδὼν ὀλιγαδροῦσαν τὴν πόλιν), and inspired high hopes in the community: this ought to reflect some genuine success and not merely conventional praise, as Istros did not relocate and the city's fortunes took a turn for the better in the Early Empire.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bărbulescu and Buzoianu 2014; Jones 2016. I use Jones's text and translation of the inscription throughout. Cf. also Avram 2015–16, 433–4 no. 17 (for an independent suggestion of the reading χρηστάς ἐλ[λ]πίδας in ll. 13/14, adopted by Jones), and id., *BE* (2015) no. 509.

<sup>2</sup> On the situation and status of Istros in the imperial period, see Matei-Popescu 2013; Bărbulescu and Buzoianu 2014, 426–8, with references to earlier literature. As noted by the *edd. pr.* (Bărbulescu and Buzoianu 2014, 420–21), for the situation of ὀλιγανδρία referred to in ll. 12/13 compare, apart from earlier Hellenistic parallels from Olbia and Nikonion (convincingly adduced by Jones 2016, 126–7), an early imperial decree of Chersonesos, introducing a reform of jury courts διὰ τὰν ὀλιγανδρίαν τᾶς πόλιος (*SEGLV* 838, l. 2). The date is arguably as late as the reign of Trajan (rather than 'du milieu du I<sup>er</sup> s. ap. J.-C.', as Bărbulescu and Buzoianu 2014, 420, following Makarov 2005); cf. Kantor 2012 (*SEGLXI* 607) for

The activities of Vestalis have been known to us already from a poem dedicated to him by Ovid (*Ex Ponto* 4.7).<sup>3</sup> Ovid's epistle attests him as a descendant of the Cottian dynasty of Alpine kings (4.7.6: *Alpinis iuuenis regibus orte*; 4.7.29: *progenies alti fortissima Donni*), as a *primus pilus* (4.7.15: *tendisti ad primum per densa pericula pilum*), and extols his bravery at the re-capture of the fortress of Aegissos on the Danubian riverbank (probably in AD 12) under the command of P. Vitellius, for which he was promoted to the primipilate.<sup>4</sup> A re-capture of Aegissos (presumably the same event) is also celebrated by Ovid in *Ex Ponto* 1.8.11–24, and in *Ex Ponto* 4.9, addressed to Pomponius Graecinus, *cos. suff.* AD 16, he extols the success of Graecinus' brother Pomponius Flaccus (the same as mentioned in the Istros inscription) in re-capturing another Danubian fortress not far from Aegissos, Troesmis, arguably a few years later, in AD 15 (I shall return to the chronological problem below). Most significantly for the interpretation of the Istros inscription, the occasion for Ovid's poem was the return of Vestalis to the Black Sea region due to an appointment to a position of jurisdiction over local communities, most probably, as has been universally recognised, that of a *praefectus* of some description (4.7.1–2: *Missus es Euxinas quoniam, Vestalis, ad undas, / ut positis reddas iura sub axe locis*).<sup>5</sup>

Interestingly, the Cottian dynasty managed to transform their position as rulers of their Alpine kingdom into that of hereditary Roman *praefecti*, which might offer some useful parallels to the model of government implied by Vestalis' Pontic appointment, a theme to which I shall return below. It might also be worth noting in passing, even though this is of relatively little significance for the Istros situation, that although his mission as a prefect (and indeed the fact that he was the addressee of an encomiastic poem from Ovid) certainly show that Vestalis was a person of some significance, there seems to be little reason to take him as a son of the king-prefect Cottius I (following

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its possible historical context. The similarity of expression is nonetheless worthy of note and the circumstances may have been not dissimilar.

<sup>3</sup> For a general overview of Ovid's evidence for the history of the West Pontic cities, Podossinov 1987 and a convenient short summary in Gaertner 2005, 20–24. For a detailed commentary on the poem, Podossinov 1985, 223–6; Helzle 1989, 156–74, both hedging their bets on historical issues. The present inscription reinforces the view that the poem is grounded in local realities, cf. Helzle 2006. The career of Vestalis is discussed on the basis of Ovid's evidence by Syme 1978, 82–3; Demougin 1992, 193 no. 220; Schäfer 2000, 125–6 no. 31. For detailed summaries of earlier opinions, cf. Reidinger 1958; L. Petersen, *PIR*<sup>2</sup> I 621. As stressed by Avram, *BE* (2015) no. 509, the *praenomen* of Vestalis is not mentioned by Ovid and is for the first time attested as *Quintus* here; Gardthausen 1891–1904, II.394–5, suggested *Lucius* on the basis of *CIL* III 2371 (a funerary inscription of a *L. Iulius L. lib. Narcissus* and his son *L. Iulius Vestalis*). The name Vestalis was relatively widespread (*OPEL* IV 162; Jones 1976, 190 n. 7) and this inscription now has to be dissociated from Ovid's Vestalis.

<sup>4</sup> For the position of the equestrian *primus pilus* being normal for the Augustan period, Syme 1978, 82. On centurions *ex equite Romano* and their career path, see further Dobson 1978, 364 s.v., and most recently Duncan-Jones 2016, 105 n. 4. This was, as stressed by Duncan-Jones, a slower career route than being directly appointed to one of the *militiae equestres*, which would seem an additional argument against placing Vestalis too high in the Cottian line of succession (see note 6 below). For the identity of a Vitellius mentioned in the poem, Syme 1978, 90–91; K. Wachtel, J. Heinrichs, *PIR*<sup>2</sup> V 743 (brother of L. Vitellius, *cos.* 34, 43 and 47, rather than of the emperor Vitellius, as Jones 2016, 131).

<sup>5</sup> See most recently Jones 2016, 130. For doubts between *praefectus orae maritimae* or *riparum Danuvii*, Syme 1978, 82–3 (the debate goes back to Domaszewski 1891). I return to the question of Vestalis' exact title and remit at the end of this paper. Jones 2016, 125, rightly points out that in a significant contrast to this inscription Ovid presents Vestalis' appointment 'in thoroughly Roman terms'.

Gardthausen and Syme) or indeed to assign him any definite place on a Cottian family tree.<sup>6</sup> Nothing seems to prevent seeing him as a member of a junior branch of the royal house (say, a nephew of Cottius I) seeking his fortune on imperial service.<sup>7</sup>

In what exact relation, however, does the appointment celebrated in the Istros decree stand to that mentioned in the opening lines of Ovid's poem? The *edd. pr.*, followed in that regard by Jones, argue for a date in AD 18 or 19, and connect it to the return of L. Pomponius Flaccus to Moesia after his consulship (in AD 17) as a legate of Tiberius under the overarching command of C. Poppaeus Sabinus, which is known to us from Tacitus.<sup>8</sup> The argumentation is two-fold. First, it is assumed that Flaccus' earlier appointment in the region was that of a legionary legate, of the *legio IV Scythica* or *V Macedonica*, and therefore would not fit the circumstances described in the Istros decree.<sup>9</sup> Secondly, Jones further adduced in support that 'sufficient time had passed since Tiberius' accession for the city to petition him through an embassy, and for him to send Julius Vestalis to remedy the situation' (*ibid.*).

Both assumptions seem somewhat insecure to me. As regards the timing of the embassy, we know from two letters of the Bosporan king Aspourgios (*PIR*<sup>2</sup> A 1265) to the city of Gorgippia dating from April-May AD 16 that Aspourgios had previously been absent from his kingdom to pay a visit to Tiberius, at some point in AD 14 or more probably AD 15.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, king Archelaos of Cappadocia was summoned by Tiberius to Rome as soon as Tiberius accepted the principate, and perhaps spent the last three years of his life there.<sup>11</sup> There does not seem to be any strong reason why the citizens of Istros could not be just as prompt in addressing the new emperor in person as the client

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<sup>6</sup> On the Cottian dynasty and their re-invention as Roman *praefecti*, see now Cornwell 2015; for the genealogy see esp. pp. 50–52. For Vestalis as a son of Cottius I (prefect between before 13 BC – ca. AD 13) and a grandson of the *rex Donnus*, the founder of the dynasty (*CIL* V 7231, l. 2; *An. Ép.* (1994) no. 753, l. 1), Gardthausen 1891–1904, I.712, followed by André 1977, xxix, Syme 1978, 82, Podosinov 1985, 223 n. 714, and most recently Jones 2016, 130 (whose ascription of the arch at Segusio to Donnus rather than Cottius I is a slip of pen). As pointed out by Letta 1976, 49 and 66–8, however, only two sons of Cottius I are otherwise attested, in two joint dedications separated by a quarter of a century, Donnus (who was, if Letta's epigraphic reconstruction is correct, his successor and *praefectus* in ca. AD 13–44) and Cottius (*An. Ép.* (1904) no. 173 = (1996) no. 971; (1976) no. 264 = (1994) no. 753, with an improved reading of l. 2). His own solution, to make Vestalis the son of Donnus II (accepted by Demougin 1992, 193 no. 220, who suggests that he could even have been Donnus II's grandson), while more attractive, is also not without potential difficulties: even though Vestalis is called a *iuvēnis* by Ovid, he should have been born by 10 BC at the latest, and it is not clear how old Donnus II, who seems to have lived to AD 44, would have been by that date.

<sup>7</sup> Pace Letta 1976, 67, there is no reason to privilege the 'literal meaning' of 'child' over 'descendant' in our translation of *progenies ... Donni*; for *progenies* in the sense of 'quilibet posterī' see the examples assembled by Foucher 1999, 1758–9.

<sup>8</sup> Bărbulescu and Buzoianu 2014, 422–6; Jones 2016, 129–30.

<sup>9</sup> The view that Flaccus was in Moesia for the first time as a legionary legate has a long pedigree in modern scholarship: see most recently Franke 1991, 301 (tentatively); A. Avram, *ISCM* III, p. 55 n. 219. The possibility mentioned already by Domaszewski 1890, 5, though with a preference for a provincial governorship.

<sup>10</sup> *An. Ép.* (1994) no. 1538 = *SEG* XLVI 940, with Heinen 1999. The visit was followed by the adoption by Aspourgios of the title φιλορῶμαιος, first attested for him in AD 16, cf. *CIRB* 985 and *An. Ép.* (2006) no. 1231 = *SEG* LVI 932 (with further references to recent discussions). The very tentatively restored *SEG* LIX 842 is better kept out of any discussion of Aspourgios' relations with Tiberius.

<sup>11</sup> Tac. *Ann.* 2.42, with Goodyear 1981, 319.

kings were, particularly if their situation was so desperate. Cities elsewhere were quick to move: in AD 15 Tiberius was replying to Gytheion about the divine honours offered to him (*SEG XI* 922). As regards Flaccus' first Moesian appointment, a legionary legateship would ill fit the references to him in Ovid's epistle to Graecinus: both *praefuit his ... locis modo Flaccus* (*Ex Ponto* 4.9.75) and *is quoque, quo Laeuus fuerat sub praeside Pontus* (4.9.119) would much more naturally refer to a governor than to a legionary commander.<sup>12</sup> The period of his first Moesian command is more likely to have covered AD 15, rather than be brought together with the fighting at Aegissos in AD 12, as Syme at one point suggested, and so would at least in part belong to the principate of Tiberius: Ovid's *modo* is unlikely to refer to events almost four years in the past, and the suggestion that Flaccus will tell Graecinus of the circumstances of Ovid's life would have lost most of its dramatic force if he had returned to Rome that long in the past.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, several significant arguments seem to me to speak against a date in AD 19 for the Istros decree. First, we need to posit that not only Pomponius Flaccus himself but Iulius Vestalis as well had two identical appointments in the same area with a similar interval. While this is certainly not impossible – the highly personalised nature of Roman provincial government compelled the governor to try to use experienced men from his own past – it should have been somewhat unusual for an equestrian officer, particularly one as well-connected as Vestalis must have been, to linger in the same frontier region for so long in essentially the same capacity (almost ten years by AD 19, if, as it seems from Ovid, AD 12 was not his first campaign season). Nor would an imperial legate in Moesia (subordinate not only to Tiberius himself but also to C. Poppaeus Sabinus, the emperor's *supremo* in the Balkan region) have such a free hand in choosing his high-ranking subordinates as Cicero in Cilicia in 51 BC or even Fronto in the Antonine province of Asia (*ad Pium* 8.1, p. 167.2–13 van den Hout): a *praefectus* in charge of a number of Greek cities was not just any member of the governor's *cohors*. While this is not in itself a strong argument against the later date, it should put us on our guard and make us explore the possibilities for a more economical explanation, particularly as the Istros decree does not mention any earlier appointment (a strange omission if this was a return performance for Vestalis) and even seems to imply that the local scarcity of inhabitants became known to Vestalis for the first time on arrival (ll. 12/13).

Secondly, and more significantly, dating Vestalis' activities at Istros to AD 19 would necessitate the assumption that the military crisis on the Lower Danube

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<sup>12</sup> This has been observed already by Stein 1940, 19: 'Auch das erstemal dürfte er schon als Statthalter, nicht nur als Legionslegat in Moesien gekämpft haben'. On the geographical term *Laeuus Pontus*, the fullest discussion in Podosinov 1985, 162–3 n. 211.

<sup>13</sup> For a suggestion that Flaccus' re-capture of Troesmis should be placed together with the re-capture of Aegissos in AD 12, see Syme 1971, 47, coalescing into certainty in Syme 1981, 192 (= *RP* III, 1353); followed by L. Vidman, *PIR*<sup>2</sup> P 715. The strength of *modo* emphasized already by Domaszewski 1890, 5, followed in that regard by most Ovidian scholars; cf. most recently Gaertner 2005, 23. As pointed out by Jones 2016, 130 n. 25, K. Wachtel, *PIR*<sup>2</sup> P 847, p. 360, in his account of subordinate legates under C. Poppaeus Sabinus (followed by Bărbulescu and Buzoianu 2014, 425), cannot be right in putting two Moesian appointments of Flaccus in AD 15/16 and 18 respectively: the second is clearly placed by Tac. *Ann.* 2.66 in AD 19 and the first would have been over by the time Ovid composed *Ex Ponto* 4.9.

continued, without any further attestation in literary sources, for several years beyond the victories recorded by Ovid, with the situation of coastal cities continuing to be so dire as to merit thinking of relocation. This seems unlikely. While Ovid may have been dead by the end of AD 17, *Ex Ponto* 4.7 and 4.9 clearly look at the victory on the Danube as something already achieved.<sup>14</sup> The impression is confirmed by the willingness of Tiberius to expand the remit of C. Poppaeus Sabinus, precisely in AD 15, to cover Achaia and Macedonia (Tac. *Ann.* 1.80.1), presumably as his tasks on the Danube border had become less onerous and the settlement of Moesia as a province (still an obscure process) was brought to completion for the time being.<sup>15</sup> This does not of course mean that there were no raids across the river after AD 15, but more serious trouble would seem to be required for the relocation of the *polis* to be on the cards. It is notable, furthermore, that our decree seems (in an unfortunately somewhat lacunose sentence) to connect the repulse of the barbarians with deified Augustus (lines 14–17).<sup>16</sup>

Nor does it seem particularly plausible that if in the immediate aftermath of victory no meaningful action was taken to relieve the situation of the Greek cities, it would have taken them as long as three years to petition the emperor or that the emperor's response would have been to send back the very same officer who neglected to take the necessary measures in the first place. While one might perhaps adduce the iterated proconsulship of P. Paquius Scaeva on Cyprus at the time of unrest under Augustus (*ILS* 915, ll. 7–8) as a parallel, the differences are obvious and decisive: Scaeva returned to Cyprus after at least five years in public service in Italy, in changed circumstances for which he could not in any way be held responsible, and arguably following a major earthquake in 15 BC.<sup>17</sup> Vestalis and Flaccus in AD 18 or 19 would have been exactly the men that the citizens of Istros would have needed to complain about. An embassy attempting to put Istros on the new emperor's radar early, similar to

<sup>14</sup> For the date of Ovid's death, Syme 1978, 46–7. A convincing new chronology of Ovid's exile proposed by Hutchinson (forthcoming 2017) does not affect this date; for the edition of the *lex Troesmensium* and a discussion of its evidence on the *lex Papia Poppaea* on which Hutchinson's chronology rests, Eck 2016, with preliminary publications in *An. Ép.* (2013) no. 1345.

<sup>15</sup> For the date at which the province of Moesia was formally set up, Stein 1940, 15–19, still fundamental; Goodyear 1981, 180–81, on the evidence of Tacitus; Wilkes 1996, 555–6; A. Avram, *ISCM* III, pp. 54–60. (The discussion in Harris 2016, 52, criticizes his own misreading of Wilkes: a Claudian date for the conquest of Moesia has not been considered by Wilkes or anyone else.) The dating of its creation to the sole reign of Tiberius in App. *Illyr.* 86 is perhaps connected to the rearrangements of AD 15. The progression of Flaccus to the ordinary consulship in AD 17, following his brother's in the second half of the previous year, also perhaps speaks to the 'mission accomplished' feeling in Rome, but that is in itself much less important: the example of Q. Iunius Blaesus in Africa suffices to show how such feeling could be premature or dictated by court politics (Tac. *Ann.* 3.74; 4.26). The dating of a *Dacorum commotio* to AD 11 by Orosius (6.22.2), while conveniently coinciding with the Ovidian chronology, is probably irrelevant connected as it is with his calculations for the closure of the gates of Ianus at his date for the Nativity, cf. Syme 1971, 47 and 66. For troop movements see most recently Whately 2016, 12–19; the evidence is insufficient to influence the chronological discussion here.

<sup>16</sup> A connexion with the re-capture of Aegissos and Troesmis, suggested by Jones 2016, 130–31, seems inevitable.

<sup>17</sup> L. Petersen, *PIR*<sup>2</sup> P 126. For the circumstances of Paquius Scaeva's second appointment, Bekker-Nielsen 2004, 56–7, with earlier bibliography. Tiberius was, of course, notorious for keeping governors in the job for a very long time (Poppaeus Sabinus, in charge of Moesia, Macedonia and Achaia till his death in AD 35, would be the prime example of that), but that would not be similar to re-appointing Vestalis as a reward for failure.

Aspourgos's trip to Rome, seems more probable. One would notice that the cities of Achaia and Macedonia expected a lightening of their *onera* from a transfer to the imperial jurisdiction (Tac. *Ann.* 1.76.4): hardly a testimony for major neglect of Greek cities in Poppaeus Sabinus' erstwhile command.

Thirdly, to corroborate the preceding point, the Tacitean account of Pomponius Flaccus' second Moesian appointment in AD 19 and events leading to it (Tac. *Ann.* 2.64.2–67), while emphasizing his local connexions and reputation, puts it entirely in the context of the dynastic crisis in the client kingdom of Thrace and of the unexpected death of his predecessor, Ti. Latinus Pandusa. Projections of a conflict with the trans-Danubian tribes used by Rheskouporis to justify raising the army, in imitation of the achievements of Kotys celebrated by Ovid (*Ex Ponto* 2.9), are dismissed by the Roman historian as just a false pretext. No invasion seems to have taken place and all of Flaccus' recorded actions take place to the south, in the territory of Rheskouporis.<sup>18</sup>

Fourthly, and perhaps most importantly in the circumstances of AD 19, there is a significant absence from the account of the Istros decree. Even though Tacitus chooses not to link the dots, in the immediate run-up to the crisis of AD 19 in Thrace the imperial heir Germanicus stopped at the free city of Byzantium for a while and made it his base for reorganising neighbouring provinces, probably including Moesia, if the plural in Tacitus is anything to go by (Tac. *Ann.* 2.54: *pariterque prouincias internis certaminibus aut magistratuum iniuriis fessas refouebat*). As Katie Low has convincingly argued recently, the significance of his mission in the Black Sea region was probably underplayed by Tacitus for the purposes of his construction of Germanicus' image and that 'a focus on the contemporary events in the region', including the crisis in Thrace, helps provide a context for the stay at Byzantium.<sup>19</sup> Even though Germanicus certainly did not reach the Danube delta, his presence in the region would have been a natural occasion for Istros to appeal for imperial help in their predicament, but there is certainly no trace of any involvement from Germanicus, who is not name-checked, in the decree for Iulius Vestalis.<sup>20</sup> Rather than assuming that a half-ruined city on the edge of the Roman world was unexpectedly discriminating in its treatment of court politics and addressed Tiberius over the head of Germanicus, or decided to omit mentioning Germanicus either when he was still alive or in the atmosphere of the general outpouring of grief after his death, it might be easier to separate the two events chronologically.

A simpler solution presents itself immediately. We already know that Q. Iulius Vestalis was appointed *praefectus* in charge of West Pontic cities in AD 15, at the same

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<sup>18</sup> He may have been also active further south in Achaia, note a honorific inscription from the Athenian Areopagos for his wife Memmia, *An. Ép.* (1971) no. 438.

<sup>19</sup> Low 2016 (quotation from p. 236). For the possibility that the *ciuitas libera* status of Byzantium and Perinthus was granted at the time of Germanicus' visit, Low 2016, 229 n. 33. Compare the promotions of the cities of the Pontic *koinon* to the *ciuitates liberae* status (at least some of which may have dated as early as the command of P. Vinicius in Thrace and Macedonia in 3/2 BC), on which see A. Avram, *IScM* III, pp. 52–3. For a senatorial decree concerning Rheskouporis and preceding the mission of Flaccus, cf. *An. Ép.* (1998) no. 1333.

<sup>20</sup> For Germanicus not visiting Moesia, Low 2016, 229 n. 34.

time as L. Pomponius Flaccus was Tiberius' legate in the region, the trans-Danubian tribes were being pushed back beyond the river and client kings from the Black Sea coasts were making their way to Rome to pay homage to the new princeps (as indeed must have done Vestalis' relatives from the Cottian dynasty, a not impossible – if obviously unprovable – context for his promotion, given Ovid's prominent stress on his royal ancestry). Nothing prevents us from putting the Istros embassy to Tiberius in this same context, as the reason behind Vestalis' appointment celebrated by Ovid in *Ex Ponto* 4.7, particularly since, as mentioned above, the decree does not know of any earlier tenure.<sup>21</sup> If this is so, it is perhaps futile to ask, following Syme and earlier scholarship, whether the post to which Vestalis was appointed was that of a *praefectus orae maritimae* or of a *praefectus ripae Danuuii*: a one-off appointment in response to local requests, to a province still in the process of its initial organisation, need not have fitted in later administrative patterns. While both titles are attested elsewhere early and are certainly not impossible, the title of Vestalis could equally be that of a *praefectus ciuitatum*, as conceded to his dynasty back in the Alpine region, or, to provide closer and non-dynastic parallels, similar to the prefect *ciuitatum Moesiae et Treballiae*, appointed for a time further to the west later in the principate of Tiberius, or to the prefect *ciuitatum Barbariae in Sardinia*, another Tiberian appointment.<sup>22</sup> While his position was naturally quite different from the second-century AD curatorial appointments, it is significant that Vestalis' tasks, at least as seen from Istros, were not primarily military, whatever his exact style of address was.

While definite conclusions are impossible at this stage of our knowledge, as a working hypothesis the context at the beginning of Tiberius' principate is certainly preferable to constructing a second exactly similar appointment for Vestalis and further major trouble on the Lower Danube to provide a suitable context for the later date.

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<sup>21</sup> Note that Jones 2016, 125, effectively treats *Ex Ponto* 4.7.1–2 as referring to the same mission of Vestalis as our inscription, which the *edd.pr.* date, accepted by him, makes impossible.

<sup>22</sup> For debates on the title of Vestalis, see note 5 above. For the early history of the title of *praefectus orae maritimae*, see Demougin 1992, 51 no. 37, note 2, with earlier bibliography. The earliest attested holders of the office in Lower Moesia are Asiaticus and Arruntius Flamma during the governorship of T. Flavius Sabinus in AD 50–57 (*SEGI* 329, ll. 13 and 20, with Demougin 1992, 440–41 nos. 528 and 529). For C. Baebius Atticus, *praefectus ciuitatum Moesiae et Treballiae*, probably under Tiberius, see *CIL* V 1838 and 1839, with Demougin 1992, 404–5 no. 492, and for the geographical area of his responsibility, to the west of Oescus, Zwicky 1944, 14 note 17; for Sex. Iulius Rufus, *praefectus I cohortis Corsorum et ciuitatum Barbariae in Sardinia*, cf. *CIL* XIV 2954. For other *praefecti ciuitatum* from that period, Zwicky 1944, 11–17, and Cornwell 2015, 52–3. The *praefectura ciuitatum* had already been suggested as the office held by Vestalis by Avram, *ISCM* III, p. 55 (reviving a suggestion of Domaszewski 1891, 194–5), prior to the publication of this inscription; Bărbulescu and Buzoianu 2014, 424, also mention, among other possibilities, a parallel with Baebius Atticus, whom they date to the reign of Claudius (in fact only his last appointment, a procuratorship in Noricum, dates from it). Avram's view now carries more conviction.

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