



ITER
ROMA
NVM



Heritage & Cities

MILITARY ROUTES - DIVINE ROUTES

Epigraphy of Iter Romanum

MILITARY ROUTES – DIVINE ROUTES

The transportation routes of the Roman Empire have always been one of the most characteristic and recognizable elements of this historical period. The Roman road network, as well as the sea routes, made it possible to manage an Empire covering a vast territory with a population in the tens of millions. These roads were not only a means of communication and transportation for people and goods, but also for ideas, customs and religious beliefs. This expansion of new forms of religion, unfamiliar to the local communities, not only enabled the deities of Roman origin to spread and coexist with the local ones, but also allowed certain cults of Eastern origin to expand throughout the Empire, such as some of the well-known Egyptian gods (Isis or Serapis) and deities of Middle Eastern origin (Mithra).

Precisely one of the groups most linked to this expansion of new cults throughout the different territories was the military establishment. Members of the Roman army would have several posts over the course of their careers, in every corner of the Empire, which led them to come into contact with different cults, while at the same time spreading the traditional Roman beliefs they had known since their childhood.

It is specifically this relationship between the military and religion that enables us to observe, through epigraphic sources, the interconnection between the different sites analyzed, which can be traced by taking into account different elements.

This epigraphic record is the result of the different peoples incorporated into the Empire adopting the epigraphic habit. Most of these communities, especially in the western part of the Empire, had not had any previous contact with writing, being mostly illiterate, or, as in the case of Hispania, had had scant contact with Greek or Phoenician-Punic writing. The presence of the written word was transmitted, in the first instance, by the army itself, not only on a private level, with the soldiers themselves erecting the first funerary or religious monuments in the surroundings of their garrisons, but also through public epigraphy, whose function was to show or convey the image of imperial power. This is the case of the dedications to the emperor or the votive inscriptions dedicated in prominent public places by high-ranking army officers or administration officials. In this way, epigraphy became the image of power and of the Empire itself.

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MILITARY PERSONNEL AND CURSUS HONORUM

It is important to differentiate between the professional careers within the military establishment. On the one hand, there was that of the recruits, who began their training as soldiers in the legions or in the auxiliary units. The former generally had citizen origins, although they were plebeians, while the latter had local origins. On the other hand, there was the professional career or *cursus honorum* that members of patrician families and those of senatorial rank pursued. These began their careers holding positions as officers in the military units and alternated civil and military commands in the provinces of the Empire until their return to Rome.

In the case of the former we have, for example, the very interesting case of Lucius Rutius Sabinus¹ (Fig. 1), a soldier in the Legio X Gemina, originally from Italica, present-day Santiponce, which is part of the *Vía de la Plata* Route. However, after 26 years of service in the legions, he ended his days at the age of 50 and was buried in another of the network sites, Aquileia.

It is precisely the third cohort from Lusitania, a whole group of soldiers serving in a unit of Hispanic origin, who together with their companions from the first Montanorum cohort, received Roman citizenship from the emperor as a reward for their outstanding work in yet another of the places in the network, Sremska Mitrovica², again highlighting this relationship, which is also observed in another similar inscription by the second Hispanic cohort in the same site.³

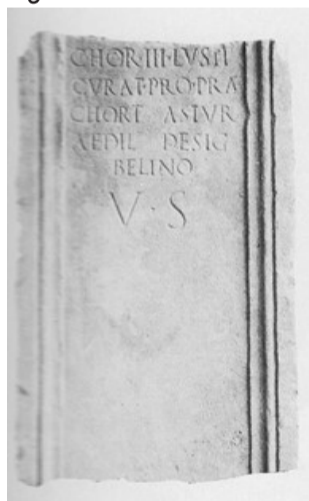
In the case of high-ranking officers, we have several cases of dignitaries in charge of units of clear Hispanic origin, and more specifically from the *Vía de la Plata* area, such as the different Lusitanian auxiliary cohorts, already mentioned above, and the Asturian units. We have several examples of senior officials from these units in Aquileia, such as a prefect from the Asturian cohort⁴ (with a mention of the third Lusitanian cohort) (Fig. 2), whose name has not been preserved and who also dedicates the inscription to Belenus, a sun god originating in the Celtic areas of Western Europe. Precisely this third Lusitanian cohort appears mentioned again in this same city thanks to the sub-prefect Tiberius Iulius Viator⁵ (Fig. 3), who died in the Italian city, and Iulius Festus⁶, prefect of the first Asturian cohort, in the infantry, and of third Asturian Ala (Wing), in the cavalry.



Fig. 1

Epitaph of Lucius Rutius Sabinus.
Source: EDCS.

Fig. 2



Votive inscription dedicated by a prefect in the Cohors Asturum.
Source: EDCS.



Fig. 3

Inscription by Tiberius Iulius Viator, sub-prefect in the Cohors III Lusitanorum. Source: EDCS.

¹ CIL V, 932. L(ucius) Rutius / L(uci) f(ilius) Serg(ia) / Italica / Sabinus ex / Hispania / mil(es) leg(ionis) X Gem(inae) / [(centuria) Serani / ann(orum) L / aer(orum) XXVI / hic situs est / h(eres) ex t(estamento) / loc(us) mon(umentum) / in fr(onte) p(edes) X / in ag(ro) p(edes) X.

² AE 1992, 01453. [Imp(erator) Caes(ar) M(arcus) Aurelius Aug(ustus) 3 Imp(erator) Caes(ar) L(ucius) Aug(ustus) Verus 3 divi Antonini f(ilius) 3 divi Nervae abnepo]tes / [equiti(bus) et pediti(bus) qui militave]runt in ala / [3 et cohor]tib(us) duabus qua[e] / [appellatur I Montanorum] et III Lusitano[rum] / [et sunt in Pannonia infer]iore sub Cl[audio Pompeiano(?) leg(ato)] / [quinis et] vicenis plur[ibusve] / [stipendiis emeritis d]i[missis] hon[esta mis]s[ione] quorum nomin[a] subscrip[ta sunt] / [civitatem Romanam qu]i eorum non / [haber(ent) dederunt et conubium] cum u[xoribus] // I M]on[t]a[norum] et III] / [Lusitanorum] et sunt] in Pann[on]ia inferi[or]e sub] / [3 le]g(ato) quin[is] et vic[enis] plur[ibusve] / [busve] stipen[di]i[em]eritis d[im]issis] / [honest]a missi[one] quorum n[om]ina.

³ CIL XVI, 2. ----- / caelibes essent cum iis quas postea / duxissent dumtaxat singuli singulas / Idibus Febr(uariis) / cohort(is) II Hispanorum cui prae(e)st / C(aius) Cavarius Priscus / equiti / Dasenti Dasmeni f(ilio) Cornac(ati) / et Iorae(?) Prososii filiae uxori eius / et Emerito f(ilio) eius / et Turunae filiae eius / et Emeritae filiae eius / descriptum et recognitum ex tabula aenea / quae fixa est Romae in Capitolio in aede / Fidei p(opuli) R(omani) latere sinistro / extri(n)secus // L(uci) Vitelli Sossiani / Q(uinti) Vibi Saurici / T(iti) Gratti Valentis / C(ai) Antist(ici) S(ervi) Marini / P(ubli) Servili Adiatoris / A(uli) Cascelli Successi / M(arci) Heleni Primi -----.

⁴ AE 1895, 36. ----- / c(o)hor(tis) III Lusit(anorum) / curat(or) pro prae(fecto) / c(o)hortis I Astur(um) / aedil(is) desig(natus) / Belino / v(otum) solvit.

⁵ EDCS-01401159. Ti(berio) Iulio C(ai) f(ilio) / Fab(ia) Viatori / subpraef(ecto) coh(ortis) III / Lusitanorum / IIIvir(o) iur(e) dic(undo) / praef(ecto) coh(ortis) Ubiorum / equitatae / Erboniae Sex(ti) f(iliae) / Gratae uxori / C(aius) Iulius Aug(usti) l(ibertus) / Linus filio et / nurui.

⁶ AE 1975, 408. L(ocus) p(ublice) / [- - -] C(ai) f(ilius) Pal(atina) Iulius Festus IIvir q(uinquennialis) Campanor(um) / [- - -] praef(ectus) coh(ortis) I Asturum praef(ectus) al(a)e III Asturum / [P(iae) F(idelis) c(ivium) R(omanorum) sub]praef(ectus) vig(illum) advoc(atus) fis(c)i pro(c)ur(ator) di(vi) Hadriani.

Finally, the presence in Aquileia of a high-ranking figure should be highlighted. While he held various leadership positions in the provinces and in different units, he maintained an intense relationship with Hispania. This is Publius Cominius Clemens⁷ (Fig. 4), who, among other positions, became procurator Augusti provinciae Lusitania and procurator Augusti XX hereditatum per Hispaniam citeriorem (in charge of collecting the inheritance tax from Roman citizens), that is to say, two senior positions directly appointed by the imperial court (procurator Augusti) in two of the three Hispanic provinces and, more specifically, in the two related to the Vía de la Plata Route.

Similarly, although with no confirmation of the military element, we have the case of Boutius Alctus⁸, an anthroponym typical of Lusitania which we find, however, in a funerary inscription in Arlon, another of the project sites, which supports this relationship with the Vía de la Plata area.

Thus, through the army, we observe how it is possible to verify the relationship between the different territories and towns involved, a relationship that is even more pronounced in the religious sphere.



Fig.4 Inscription by the procurator Publius Cominius Clemens. Source: EDCS.

DEITIES OF THE EMPIRE

As previously mentioned, the cults and beliefs within the Roman Empire were enormously diverse and varied, with cults of Roman origin, spread by Roman citizens themselves to all the provinces, coexisting with the local cults of each area and with other types of cults, such like those of Eastern origin. Among the latter, the most successful case due to its territorial expansion is that of the deity of Iranian origin, Mithra. In our sphere of study, we find about a dozen inscriptions in Aquileia, well-known for its Mithraeum, with various distinguished people making dedications to this god, among which we must highlight the figures of Lucius Septimius Cassianus signifer (standard bearer) of the Legio IIIII Hispanensis and Publius Porcius Faustus primus pilus⁹ (commanding centurion of the first centuria of the first cohort of the legion), from a unit about which little is known, but which seems to have been recruited around the end of the 2nd century AD and disappeared after a heavy defeat in the middle of the 3rd century AD. From this military sphere, also closely linked to the Mithraic cult, comes another inscription from the same town, in which various figures connected to the Legio III Pia Fidelis Philippiana and the Legio XIII Gemina¹⁰ appear. The realm of civil power is well represented by the Vlvir Caius Calidius Agathopus¹¹. Precisely in Hispania, and in the surroundings of the Vía de la Plata Route, the Mithraic cult is well known and directly linked to soldiers and oriental merchants (Alvar 1981: 60), as in the case of Emerita Augusta.

⁷ EDCS-01300236. [P(ublio) Cominio P(ubli) f(ilio)] / [Cl(audia) Clementi] / [praef(ecto) classium praet(oriarum)] / [Misenens]is et Ravennat(is) / [praeposit]o a cens(ibus) proc(uratori) / [Aug(usti) XX her(editatium)] proc(uratori) Aug(usti) prov(inciae) / [Lusitania]e proc(uratori) Aug(usti) prov(inciae) / [Daciae Apu]lens(is) subpraef(ecto) / [annonae] pr(oc)uratori Aug(usti) ad famil(ias) / [gladiator(ias)] Tra(n)spad(anam) proc(uratori) / [Aug(usti) XX her(editatium) per] Hisp(aniam) citer(iorem) / [omnibus] eq(uestrib(us)) militi(i)s / [functo] p(ontif(ici)) patron(o) / [colon(iarum)] Concord(iensium) Aqu(ileiensem) / [Parmens]ium Venafran(orum) / [Des]ticia(?) T(iti) f(ilia) / [Ploti]na(?) c(larissima) f(emina).

⁸ CIL XIII, 3988. D(is) M(anibus) / Boutius Alctus sibi et Cop(po) fratri vi(vus) f(ecit).

⁹ EDCS-01300140. D(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) / L(ucius) Sept(imius) Cas(sianus) sig(nifer) / leg(ionis) IIIII His(panensis) / agens in / lustro P(ubli) / Por(c)i Fausti / p(rimi) p(ili) v(otum) p(osuit) I(ibens) m(erito).

¹⁰ CIL V, 808. D(eo) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) / Fl(avius) Exuperat(us) / agens in lus(tro) / Fl(avi) Sabini p(rimi) p(ili) / Ael(ius) Severu[s] / agens lustr(o) / Aur(eli) Flav(iani) pr(incipis) / signif(er) leg(ionis) III P(iae)

Regarding the former, those cults originating in Rome itself, we have, in the first place, those most related to road routes, as is the case of Mercury, god of commerce and messenger of the gods, or that of Apollo, a god characterized by his multifaceted nature, as we will see later. In this respect, we have ruled out the inscriptions dedicated to Jupiter, in any of his invocations, due to the official nature of this deity as representative of the Roman State itself and therefore his presence in all corners of the Empire is well known and would not provide much information as to the relationship between the different areas of study. In the case of Mercury, we are dealing with a god directly linked to roads and one of his virtues was to act as a guide for mortals and immortals in the afterlife. Additionally, he possessed a certain dark quality as a thief, or even as a warrior, since he was the one responsible for murdering Argos, or as the owner of the sword that Jason used to kill Medusa (Morillas et al., 2001: 257-275).

Fig.5

We have examples of his cult in Arlon¹², Braga¹³ and Aquileia¹⁴, among which we must once again highlight the figure of a soldier, Valerius Valens, standard bearer in the Legio XIII Gemina (Fig. 5), who also stands out for his piety, since in Aquileia he participated in two other inscriptions of a religious nature, one to Mithra, already mentioned above, and another to Liber Pater (AE 1991, 778). Likewise, we have a double dedication to Mercury and Mars¹⁵. In the Vía de la Plata area, Mercury had an important presence as evidenced by the cases of Italica (Santiponce) with a flamen augustal¹⁶ (Fig. 6) or a procurator of Augustus in Legio (León)¹⁷.



Inscription by Valerius Valens, standard bearer in the Legio XIII Gemina.
Source: Superintendencia.

Although clearly of Greek origin, Apollo is a deity whose multifaceted nature made him one of the most widespread gods in the Empire. Apollo had a distinct healing quality, especially in the first centuries of the Republic, to which must be added his prophetic attributes and his relationship with the arts, not to mention his more warlike aspect related to the bow and his relationship with the solar cult, especially fomented by Augustus (Bayet 1984: 139). In this sense, among the association members we have several examples in Alesia¹⁸, while in the Vía de la Plata area we must highlight the case of Italica¹⁹ (Santiponce), with a dedication by Marcus Sentius Maurianus, who held a local senior post in the colony, and several inscriptions in Aquileia²⁰, among which a military leader once again stands out, in this case, Caius Petolius Venustus, tribune of the Praetorian Guard²¹ (Fig. 7). Finally, Apollo is also mentioned in Arlon²².



Fig.6

Inscription by the flamen augustal from Italica.
Source: Hispania Epigraphica On Line.

¹¹ CIL V, 806. S(oli) I(nvicto) M(ithrae) / C(aius) Calidius / Agathopus / Vlvir Aqu(ileiae) / v(otum) s(olvit).

¹² CIL XIII, 3981. Deo Mercurio - - -.

¹³ AE 1983, 556. Mer[c]uri[o] / - - - - -.

¹⁴ CIL V, 797. Mercurio / sacrum; CIL V, 8245. Silvano / Aug(usto) / et Mercuri(o) / v(otum) s(olvit) I(ibens) m(erito); EDCS-01300134. Mercurio / v(otum) s(olvit) / L(ucius) Satonius / Liberalis;

¹⁵ CIL V, 795. Deo Ma[rti] et / Merc[urio] / Leonti[us] ara(m) / consti[tuit].

¹⁶ HEp 1, 528. Mercurio / Aug(usto) / L(ucius) Brutt[us] L(ucii) I(ibertus) / Barga[thes] / Firmus F[lam(en)] / Augusta[lis] / d(ecreto) d(ecurionum)

¹⁷ CIL II 5678. Mercurio / [sac]rum / [- - -] Flaccus / [Ae]lianus / proc(urator) Augusto(rum) / v(otum) s(olvit) I(ibens) m(erito); también otro caso HEp 17, 85. [M]ercurio / [sac]rum / - - - - -.

¹⁸ AE 1965, 181. Deo Apollini Moritasgo [et] / Damonae P(ublius) Pontius Apollin[aris]; CIL XIII, 11240. Aug(usto) sac(rum) / deo Apollini / Moritasgo / Catianus / Oxtai; CIL XIII, 11243. [Apollini] et S[er]v[us] n[on] n[on] a[nt]e(?) / AE 2016, 1058. Deo Apollini / Moritasgo // Aug(usto) sac(rum) // Veio Natalis fil(ius).

¹⁹ AE 1983, 520. Apollini Aug(usto) sac(rum) / M(arcus) Sentius M(arci) f(ilius) Serg(ia) Maurianus / Italic(ensis) aedil(is) Ilvir augur perpetuus / colon(iae) Ael(iae) Aug(ustae) Italic(iae) ex arg(enti) p(ondo) C d(onum) d(edit).

However, if there is one god that perfectly combines the two spheres analyzed, the military and the religious, this is Mars. This warrior deity was especially popular among the military, as is logical, and is usually present in many of the towns where the army had been present, in addition to being directly linked to the city of Rome itself as the father of the two founding brothers, Romulus and Remus (Morillas et al., 2001: 95-113). Notwithstanding, he is by no means the most popular deity in the Empire, but it should be noted that in our field of study his presence is confirmed in every area of the network, which is of great interest. Thus, and starting with the Vía de la Plata Route, we can point out the inscription from Emerita Augusta (Mérida), again from a procurator²³, Iulius Maximinus, who also participated in the improvements made to the local temple to Mars. In Alesia we find an inscription by Sestius Nigrinus²⁴ dedicated to Mars and Bellona (Fig. 8), the Roman goddess of war.

However, the dedicator does not mention any connection to the military establishment, despite which we cannot rule out that he belonged to the army, taking into account that another dedication to Victory and some inscriptions referring to members of the Legio II Traiana are preserved in this same town. In Arlon we have an inscription to Mars Camulus²⁵, which is the Roman god identified with the warrior deity of the Remi, one of the Belgic tribes. The inscription is dedicated by Lelius Settus and does not mention his belonging to the army either, although in this same place there are mentions of the Legio VIII. In Aquileia several examples are preserved, including one already mentioned above, a double dedication to Mercury and Mars, as well as a votive altar to various deities (Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno, Minerva, Victoria and Mars Protector) in support of the emperors by members of the cohorts I Ulpiana Galata²⁶.

Fig.7



Inscription by the praetorian tribune Caius Petolius Venustus. Source: Soprintendenza.

Fig.8



Inscription to Mars and Bellona by Sestius Nigrinus. Source: EDCS.

²⁰ CIL V, 741. Apollini / Beleno Aug(usto) / Tib(erius) Cl(audius) Aristio / et Cornelia Eutychie(n)e / coniunx cum fili(i)s Claud(is) / Constante Ferocian<e=O> / Eutychie(n)e Aristione / ex voto posuer(unt) signum / Cupidinis I(ocus) d(at)us d(ecreto) d(ecurionum); CIL V, 749. Apollini / Beleno Aug(usto) / in honorem / C(ai) Petti C(ai) f(ili) Pal(atina) / Philati eq(uitis) p(ublici) / prae(f)ecti aed(ilicia) pot(estate) / prae(f)ecti et patroni / collegiorum / fabr(um) et cent(onariorum) / Diocles lib(ertus) / donum dedit / I(ocus) d(at)us d(ecreto) d(ecurionum); CIL V, 753. Apollini / Beleno / Aug(usto) / C(ai) Volusius / - - - - -; AE 1975, 413. Apollini / Beleno / P(ublius) Aem(ilius) Eu(ty)ches / cond(uctor) VII[I] / et XX ripae / flum(inis) Da(nu)vi p(ecunia) s(ua) v(otum) s(olvit)

²¹ CIL V, 748. Apollini / Beleno / Aug(usto) sac(rum) / C(ai) Petilius / Venustus / trib(unus) / praetorian(us) / v(otum) s(olvit).

²² AE 1939, 46. In h(onorem) d(omus) [d(ivinae) d(eo)] / Apol(lini) v[ic]ani? / Orol(aunenses?) p[ro]suerunt / - - - - -.

²³ AE 2007, 721. Deo Marti A[ug(usto)] / Iul(ius) Maximinu[s] / v(ir) p(erfectissimus) proc(urator) Aug(usti) n(ostri) / a(gens) v(ice) p(raesidis) p(rovinciae) [L(usitaniae) ex] voto ac [p(ro)] / incolum[is]ta(te) temp[or]um / templ[is] p[ro]t[ect]ic[is] res[er]v[at]is / in q[ua] b[us] sig[n]a [dei] cum imag(inibus) / eius cl[aus]ula dedecavit(it).

²⁴ CIL XIII, 2872. Marti et Bellonae / Sestius Nigrinus ex / iussu reposuit.

²⁵ CIL XIII, 3980. Marti / Camulo / Lellius / Settus / v(otum) [s(olvit)] I(ibens) m(erito).

²⁶ AE 1934, 230. I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) / Iunoni Minervae / Marti Protector(i) Victor(i) / pro salute et victoria / ddd(ominorum) nnn(ostrum) / Imp(eratorum) Caesarum / [[M(arci) Clodi Pupieni]] / [[D(ecimi) Caeli Calvinii]] / [[Balbini Au]]gg(ustorum!) et / M(arci) Antoni Gordiani / nobiliss(imi) Caes(aris) / ex voto / Fl(avius) Servilianus a mil(itis) / et Fl(avius) Adiutor / praef(ectus) coh(ortis) I Ulpiae / Galatarum praeposit(i) / militum agentium / in protensione Aquileia(e).

²⁷ AE 1994, 1455. Marti / Aug(usto) sac(rum) / C(ai) Iul(ius) Valens / b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) / v(otum) s(olvit) I(ibens) m(erito).

As for Mitrovica, we find four inscriptions dedicated by a beneficiarius consularis, a position linked to the provincial government. The first by Caius Iulius Valens²⁷ is dedicated to Mars Augustus, as is the one by Tiberius Claudius Fortis²⁸, while the third one by Titus Flavius Aulus is dedicated to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Juno Regina, Minerva, Fortuna and Mars Campestre, as well as other gods and goddesses²⁹ (Fig. 9). The fourth is dedicated by Tiberius Claudius Postuminus³⁰. Finally, in Braga there is an inscription dedicated by a woman, although in this case there are doubts regarding its/her origin.

Thus, the epigraphic record reveals the intense relationship between the different areas of the cooperation network, despite the great distances separating them.

Fig.8



Inscription by Titus Flavius Aulus.
Source: Sremska Mitrovica - Muzej Srema.

Summary Table	Military Status or Relationship with Hispania	Apollo	Mercury	Mithra	Mars
Arlon	X	X	X		X
Vía de la Plata Route	X	X	X	X	X
Braga	X		X		X
Alesia		X			X
Sremska Mitrovica	X			X	X
Aquileia	X	X	X	X	X

Online databases consulted:

EDCS. Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss / Slaby. Manfred Clauss; Anne Kolb; Wolfgang A. Slaby; Barbara Woitas. <http://www.manfredclauss.de/gb/index.html>.

EDH. Epigraphic Database Heidelberg. Univ. Heidelberg. <https://edh.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/>.

HEpOL. Hispania Epigraphica On Line. UCM. <http://eda-bea.es/>.

TM. TRISMEGISTOS. <https://www.trismegistos.org/>

²⁸ AE 1994, 1439. Marti / Aug(usto) sacr(um) / Ti(berius) Claud(ius) / Fortis b(ene)f(iciarius) / co(n)s(ularis) / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito).

²⁹ AE 1994, 01446. I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) / Iunoni Reg(inae) / Min(ervae) Fort(unae) Mart(i) / Cam(pestri) dis dea(bu)s/que sacr(um) T(itus) / Fl(avius) Aulus b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) / ex n(umero) fr(umentariorum) / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito).

³⁰ AE 1994, 1442. Marti / Ti(berius) Cl(audius) / Postuminus / b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito). Fl(avius) Aulus b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) / ex n(umero) fr(umentariorum) / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito).

To find out more:

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