

The Terminology of the Medical Discharge and an Identity Shift among the Roman Disabled Veterans

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1. INTRODUCTION

According¹ to the Digest, a part of the Roman civil law issued under Justinianus I, there were three types of military discharges.² The honorable discharge (*honesta missio*) was granted after the completion of one's military service or as a special imperial gift (*ante ab imperatore indulgetur*), which is a sign of gratitude for a soldier's commitment. Soldiers who became unfit for service due to a mental or physical defect were entitled to a *missio causaria* or a medical discharge. Finally, the dishonorable discharge (*ignominiosa missio*) was issued to soldiers who did not comply to the military discipline and law. These persons would lose their reputation (*inter infames efficit*) and they did not receive any of the veteran privileges (a piece of land or a donation of money, citizenship and the right to marry).³ The introduction of both the honorable and dishonorable discharge can be dated to the end of the republic or the beginning of the imperial era.⁴ The period when the medical discharge took effect, however, is uncertain and modern scholars have not reached a consensus up until now. The key issue in the debate is the seemingly contradictory combination of *causarius* or *ex cause* (terms that are associated with an early medical discharge) and *missio honesta* (terms that are associated with the completion of one's service) in the documents of *causarii* of the first and second centuries AD. The Roman legislators, however, made a clear distinction between the status of a *causarius* and the status of a honorably discharged soldier. The question then arises as to why the same distinction was not consistently made for the use of terminology in documents of *causarii*. First, we will glance through the different opinions and explanations for the peculiar choice of words in the current modern research. Then we will, with the help of new and neglected source material, point to some inaccuracies in previous argumentations and propose another suggestion. The main argument of this article is based upon a possible identity shift among the disabled veterans (*causarii*), who no longer associated themselves with the honorable discharged soldiers (*emeriti*) from the early third century AD onwards.

¹ I would like to express my gratitude to Katelijnn Vanderpe who read several versions of this article and provided valuable comments. I am also indebted to Elisah Van Lommel who helped me to improve my English.

² In fact, there is also a fourth type of discharge for persons who joined the army in order to avoid duties in an office, Dig., 3.2.2.2.

³ Dig., 3.2.2.2; 49.16.13.3; R.F. RENZ, *The Legal Position of the Soldier and Veteran in the Roman Empire*, New York, 1972, 313-314.

⁴ J.H. JUNG, 'Die Rechtstellung der römischen Soldaten: Ihre Entwicklung von den Anfängen Roms bis auf Diokletian', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, II (14), Berlin, 1982, 905.

2. THE MEDICAL DISCHARGE (*MISSIO CAUSARIA*) UNTIL 213 AD

So far, scholars have not reached an agreement on the introductory period of the *missio causaria*. Neumann and Schneider take the medical discharge back to the late republic.⁵ Other researchers such as Davies, Watson and Wolff date the introduction a little later in the first century AD.⁶ An accurate origin's date is difficult to fix due to the scarcity of source material for the first and second century AD.⁷ The oldest juristic commentaries are set in the third century AD and the first testimony of a *missio causaria* on a military document can be dated in the same period (215 AD).⁸ In earlier evidence there are only implicit references to the *missio causaria*. For example, three military diplomas mention a *causarius* that has been granted an *honesta missio* on 7th march 70 AD.⁹ A similar statement is found on a dedication set up by veterans of the *equites singulares Augusti* in 135 AD. It lists a series of men who have received an honorable discharge (*missi honesta missione*), followed by two names that fall under a separate heading '*item ex causa*'.¹⁰ The same wording can be found on the epitaph of Aurelius Dassius (early third century AD) that records the grant of an honorable discharge for medical reasons (*ex causa missus honesta missione*).¹¹

The combination of *causarius* or *ex causa* and *honesta missio* appear to be contradictory, for which modern scholars have given various explanations. According to Watson the *missio*

⁵ A. NEUMANN, 'veterani', *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, Suppl. IX, 1962, 1599; H.C. SCHNEIDER, *Das Problem der Veteranenversorgung in der späteren römischen Republik*, Bonn, 1977, 5.

⁶ R.W. DAVIES, *Service in the Roman Army*, Edinburgh, 1989, 227; G.R. WATSON, *The Roman Soldier*, London, 1969, 123-124; H. WOLFF, 'Die römische Bürgerrechtspolitik nach den Militärdiplomen', M.A. SPEIDEL and H. LIEB (edd.), *Militärdiplome: die Forschungsbeiträge der Berner Gespräche von 2004* (Roman Army Researchers. 15), Stuttgart, 2007, 354.

⁷ Multiple inscriptions reporting an early discharge due to health issues cannot be dated. One of them mentions a *causarius* who served in the praetorian guard, see CIL 13.2948; In another inscription is the abbreviation of the 'c' uncertain. Mispoulet suggest it has to be *ex c(ausa)*, Selzer prefers *ex c(ohorte)* and Becker thinks it is *ex c(ustode)*, see CIL 13.7056; J.B. MISPOULET, 'veteranus', C. DAREMBERG and E. SAGLIO (edd.), *Le Dictionnaire des Antiquités Grecques et Romaines de Daremberg et Saglio*, V, Paris, 1919, 774; W. SELZER, *Römische Steindenkmäler: Mainz in Römischer Zeit* (Landesmuseum Mainz. Band 1), Mainz, 1988, 249-250; J. BECKER, *Die römischen Inschriften und Steinsculpturen des Museums der Stadt Mainz* (Verzeichniss der römischen, germanisch-fränkischen, mittelalterlichen und neueren Denkmäler des Museums der Stadt Mainz. Band 1), Mainz, 1875, 67; And finally, there is a epitaph with *missio a causis*, see AE 1916.48; For epigraphic prove, see also A. PASSERINI, 'Legio', E. DE RUGGIERO (ed.), *Dizionario Epigrafico di Antichità Romane*, IV, Rome, 1964, 614-615.

⁸ Many of the juristic commentaries from the Severan dynasty are lost. For a setting of the various jurists in the Digest, see J.E. SPRUIT, e.a., *Corpus Iuris Civilis: tekst en vertaling*, II, Zutphen, 1994, xxi-xxii; For the first known mentioning of a *missio causaria* on a papyrus, see lines three and four of the second column, P.Brookl., 24; J.D. THOMAS and R.W. DAVIES, 'A New Military Strength Report on Papyrus', *JRS*, 67 (1977), 51 and 54.

⁹ CIL 16.10; AE 2002.1733; 2006.1833.

¹⁰ CIL 06.31143.

¹¹ The original wording '*ciusa*' is changed into '*causa*', see CIL 14.2283; H. GRASSL, 'Missio Causaria', E. WEBER and G. DOBESCH (edd.), *Römische Geschichte, Altertumskunde und Epigraphik*, Wien, 1985, 283.

causaria was a temporary classification for a discharged soldier who could be promoted to an honorable veteran or reduced to a dishonorable veteran. The determining factor was the reason why the soldier was invalided out of the army. If he was no longer fit to serve the military due to mental or physical weakness (*vitio animi vel corporis*),¹² he was given a dishonorable discharge. If he, however, struggled with health issues (*propter valetudinem*) caused by his bravery in battle,¹³ he was entitled to an honorable discharge.¹⁴ The legal documents that are at the basis of Watson's theory offer counter-arguments for his interpretation as well. The jurists, indeed, distinguish clearly the three separate types of discharges and they do not make any allusion to a temporary status of the *causarius*.¹⁵

Wolff and Mispoulet have given another interpretation of the seemingly contradictory terminology. They suggest that these *causarii* never received a *missio causaria* but they were immediately granted an *honesta missio* as the emperor's sign of gratitude (*ex indulgentia imperatoris*) for the soldiers' exceptional merits. For the foundation of this argument Wolff refers to a military diploma of 71 AD, in which an early honorable discharge (*ante emerita stipendia*) is issued to a soldier because of his merits in battle (*quod se in expeditione belli fortiter industrieque gesserant*).¹⁶ This argument, however, lacks a solid basis. In the first place, the diploma of 71 AD does not report a *causarius*, though Wolff does not exclude that the soldier was in fact a *causarius*. Secondly, the diplomas of 70 AD, with the combined terms *causarius* and *honesta missio*, only mention that the soldier was made unfit for military service during the war (*qui bello inutiles facti*).¹⁷ In case he was granted an honorable discharge because of particular merits then, according to the jurist Ulpianus, this reason should have been explicitly noted to legitimize the adjudgement of an *honesta missio*, which does not apply to the diplomas of 70 AD.¹⁸

The most convincing thesis formulated by Davies, Campbell and Grassl starts from the assumption that the privileges of both the *missio causaria* and the honorable discharge were identical at first (the right to contract a legal marriage, citizenship, a piece of land or a donation of money and an exemption of taxes).¹⁹ Indications for this assumption can be found in the definition of the military testamentary rights to which both soldiers with a medical and an honorable discharge are entitled. Contrary to civilians, these soldiers could make their will free from any formal or legal requirements (*libera testamenti factio*). After they left the service, they had one year to seek the advice of a jurist and to adjust the testament's wording consistent with the juridical instructions, which was obligated to all

¹² Dig., 49.16.13.3.

¹³ Dig., 3.2.2.2.

¹⁴ WATSON, *The Roman Soldier*, 123-124.

¹⁵ Dig., 3.2.2.2; 49.16.13.3; J.B. CAMPBELL, *The Emperor and the Roman Army*, Oxford, 1984, 312.

¹⁶ CIL 16.17; WOLFF, 'Die römische Bürgerrechtspolitik', 354; MISPOULET, 'veteranus', 774.

¹⁷ CIL 16.10; AE 2002.1733; 2006.1833.

¹⁸ Dig., 3.2.2.2.

¹⁹ For instance, Dig., 49.16.13.2; DAVIES, *Service in the Roman Army*, 227; Ibid., 'The Roman Military Medical Service', *SJ*, 27 (1970), 100; CAMPBELL, *The Emperor*, 312-313; GRASSL, 'Missio Causaria', 282-284.

civil testaments.²⁰ This all changed in 213 AD when Caracalla decided that only *causarii* who served at least twenty years in the army – which was basically the complete service time of a legionary – were entitled to the same privileges the honorable discharged soldiers enjoyed.²¹

The *missio causaria* as such, however, came into use early on as is shown in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*.²² This literary work was written between 158 and 180 AD and clearly mentions the medical discharge which suggests this type of discharge was already established and commonly known for some time.²³ The question then arises as to why the documents of *causarii* prior to 213 AD all mention, nevertheless, an honorable discharge. Given the fact that the juridical status of the *causarii* was considered honorable in the first and second century AD,²⁴ the disabled soldiers preferred to state expressively the more prestigious *honesta missio* in their documents. In this way, they ascertained that they did not receive an early dishonorable discharge and that they were part of the broad veteran community.²⁵ The term *causarius*, however, revealed the actual reason of the dismissal.²⁶

New evidence, a military diploma (70 AD) published in 2006, confirms that there was a difference between the disabled veterans' early *honesta missio* and the *honesta missio* granted after the completion of the military service.

Recognitu(m) ex tabula aenea quae fixata est Romae in capitolio ante emeritorum ante aram gentis Iuliae intrinsecus podium lateris dexteriori(s) contra signum Liberi(s) Patris tabula II

Authenticated from the bronze tablet which is affixed at Rome on the Capitoline, in front of the tables with the names of the soldiers who have completed their service, before the

²⁰ Dig., 29.1.1, 4 and 26; CAMPBELL, *The Emperor*, 210-215.

²¹ Cod. Iust., 5.65.1; 12.35.2; CAMPBELL, *The Emperor*, 175; G. WESCH-KLEIN, 'Recruits and Veterans', P. ERDKAMP (ed.), *A Companion to the Roman Army*, Oxford, 2007, 440; It is somewhat remarkable he saves on the army because he is known as a person who was generous to the Roman troops, see M. CRAWFORD, 'Finance, Coinage and Money from the Severans to Constantine', *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, II (2), 565-568.

²² Apul., Met., 4.4.4; GRASSL, 'Missio Causaria', 283.

²³ The exact date of Apuleius' work leaves room for debate, see S.J. HARRISON, *Apuleius: A Latin Sophist*, Oxford, 2004, 9-10; R.G. SUMMERS, 'A Note on the Date of the Golden Ass', *AJPh*, 94 (1973), 375-383.

²⁴ The jurist, Modestinus, states the *missio causaria* is also honorable (ἔστιν γὰρ καὶ αὐτὴ ἐντιμὸς), Dig., 27.1.8.4.

²⁵ DAVIES, 'The Roman Military Medical Service', 100; Campbell's argument, however, is less convincing. He thinks the officials in the provinces were suspicious towards the term *causarius*. That is why the diploma mentions a honorable discharge. Though it sounds highly unlikely, it may have been the case in the period immediately after the introduction of the *missio causaria*. However, this phenomenon is attested for a time span from 70 AD to the beginning of the third century AD, see CAMPBELL, *The Emperor*, 314.

²⁶ DAVIES, 'The Roman Military Medical Service', 100; CAMPBELL, *The Emperor*, 312-313; GRASSL, 'Missio Causaria', 282-283.

altar of the gens Iulia, on the inside of the elevated place of the right side, opposite the statue of *Liber pater*, table number two.²⁷

The name of the *causarius*, Zurazis, son of Decebalus, is written on a separate table other than the ones that list the names of honorable discharged soldiers. The dedication set up by the veterans of the *equites singulares Augusti* in 135 AD records a similar phenomenon since the soldiers who were discharged due to health problems (*ex causa*) and received an *honesta missio* are separately listed at the end.²⁸ From the year 213 AD a more clear distinction is made between the two types of discharges.²⁹ That explains why the inscription (248/9 AD) of M. Aurelius Mucianus, who has served only nine years, does not mention an *honesta missio* although he was discharged due to health problems (*propter adversam corporis valitudinem*).³⁰

Based on the thesis of Davies, Campbell and Grassl, supported by new convincing evidence, we can conclude the *missio causaria* was already in use in 70 AD. With all due reserve, less explicit literary sources can place it even a little earlier in time.³¹ Corbulo, for instance, dismissed all soldiers who were unfit for military service because of old age or bad health in 55 AD.³² Furthermore, Suetonius writes that Vespasianus' father retired due to ill-health (*sacramento solutum per causam valitudinis*), which can be dated around the beginning of the Christian calendar.³³ It would be no coincidence that the introduction of the *missio causaria* is set in a period in which the emperor set out a uniform and general policy concerning veteran privileges.³⁴ During the preceding civil wars in the late republic there have been indications of an equal treatment of disabled soldiers and of veterans who

²⁷ All translations in this article are my own, AE 2006.1833; N. SHARANKOV, 'A Military Diploma of 7 March 70 AD for Legio II Adiutrix', *Archaeologia Bulgarica*, 10 (2006), 37-46.

²⁸ CIL 06.31143; M.P. SPEIDEL, *Die Denkmäler der Kaiserreiter. Equites singulares Augusti* (Beihefte der Bonner Jahrbücher. Band 50), Keulen, 1994, 40-41.

²⁹ GRASSL, 'Missio Causaria', 284-285; G. WESCH-KLEIN, *Soziale Aspekte des römischen Heerwesens in der Kaiserzeit*, Stuttgart, 89.

³⁰ AE 2003.2040; F. SALDERN, 'Ein kaiserliches Reskript zur Entlassung eines Angehörigen der vigiles', *ZEP*, 156 (2006), 300-301; for an earlier commentary on this inscription, see B. PFERDEHIRT, 'Ein kaiserliches Reskript aus dem Jahr 248/249 n.Chr.', *AKB*, 33 (2003), 403-419.

³¹ For an example that can be dated during the reign of Vespasianus (69-79 AD), see Frontin., *Str.*, 4.6.6; WESCH-KLEIN, *Soziale Aspekte*, 88; For an example of 65 AD during the reign of Nero, see Tac., *Ann.*, 16.13.3.

³² Tac., *Ann.*, 13.35; SALDERN, 'Ein kaiserliches Reskript', 302; DAVIES, *Service in the Roman Army*, 227; GRASSL, 'Missio Causaria', 282.

³³ Suet., *Vesp.*, 1.2; Y. LE BOHEC, *L'armée romaine sous le Haut-Empire*, Paris, 1989, 239; DAVIES, *Service in the Roman Army*, 227.

³⁴ B. CAMPBELL, *War and Society in imperial Rome 31 BC-AD 284*, London, 2002, 4-5; J. RICH, 'Introduction', J. RICH and G. SHIPLEY (ed.), *War and society in the Roman world*, London, 1993, 5; K. KRÓLCZYK, 'Veterans in the politics in Rome in the late Roman Republic (from Marius to Octavian)', *Eos Commentarii Societatis Philologiae Polonorum*, 88 (2001), 298.

had served out their time.³⁵ Pompeius, for example, founded the city Nikopolis (city of victory) in memory of his victory over Mithridates VI in 66 BC. As a reward for his troops, he populated the city with his veterans together with the soldiers who had become unfit for service.³⁶ This, however, was an individual and irregular decision since the various generals had their own private armies with their own set of rules and benefits at that time. It became only possible to introduce a universally applicable set of rules concerning the treatment of veterans with Octavianus' seizure of power because the entire army came in the control of one man who had both the highest political and military jurisdiction. The assurance that soldiers who had risked their lives for the emperor were legally provided for, lowered the risk of protest and of revolt among their fellow combatants. In addition, military service became even more attractive to new recruits and the emperor consolidated his position.³⁷

3. A SHIFT OF IDENTITY DURING THE EARLY THIRD CENTURY AD

In current studies about veteran privileges and more specifically about the *missio causaria*, a gravestone from the early third century AD is often interpreted the same as and bracketed together with other testimonies such as the diplomas from 70 AD. Except for a vague dating, the tombstone lacks an elaborated commentary and interpretation in modern research.³⁸ If we take a closer look at the epitaph and bear in mind the date and context, the gravestone requires its own approach and interpretation.

D(is) M(anibus) / Aurelius / Dassius milit/avit in leg(ione) II Part(hica) / Antoniniana Ae(terna) Pi(a) [F(elice)] / Fi(deli) annis XVIII ex c<a=I>u/sa miss(us) hon(esta) m(issione) ex leg(ione) / s(upra) s(cripta) vix(it) annis L m(ensibus) III / d(iebus) XXVI fec(it) m[e]m/ori(a)e Aurelius / Sever(us) d(e)d(icavit) l(ibens) m(erito) s(olvit) / heres eius b(ene) m(erenti) f(ecit)

To the gods of the dead. Aurelius Dassius served in Legio II Parthica Antoniniana Aeterna Pia Felix Fidelis for nineteen years and he was honorably discharged from the above mentioned legion for medical reasons. He lived for 50 years, three months and twenty-six days. His heir, Aurelius Severus, made a memorial, dedicated it, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow and erected it to the well-deserving.³⁹

³⁵ Grassl, however, correctly claims war veterans were mostly dependent on their relatives and close acquaintances, see GRASSL, 'Missio Causaria', 281-282; Ibid., 'Behinderte in der Antike. Bemerkungen zur sozialen Stellung und Integration', *Tyche*, 1 (1986), 125.

³⁶ Str., 12.3.28; Oros., 6.4.7; Cass. Dio, 36.50.3; WESCH-KLEIN, *Soziale Aspekte*, 89; Ibid., 'Recruits and Veterans', 447.

³⁷ CAMPBELL, *The Emperor*, 314.

³⁸ L.R. DEAN, *A Study of the Cognomina of the Soldiers of the Roman Legions*, New Jersey, 1926, 165; GRASSL, 'Missio Causaria', 283; CAMPBELL, *The Emperor*, 313; WATSON, *The Roman Soldier*, 123.

³⁹ CIL 14.2283.

The stele was found near Rome in Alba (currently known as Albano) at the stationary post of Legio II Parthica.⁴⁰ The date of the gravestone can partially be derived from Aurelius Dassius' years of service. About 196 AD, Septimius Severus decides to incorporate three new Parthian legions – I, II, and III Parthica – in the Roman army to secure the eastern borders of the empire.⁴¹ Aurelius Dassius has served nineteen years and so he could have retired in 215 AD at the earliest. A gravestone of another soldier of Legio II Parthica, Vivius Batao, who died after nineteen years of service, is also set in 215 AD.⁴² The legion's epithet does not provide additional information for a *terminus post quem* because it was already attested in 212 AD after the murder of Geta. The title 'Antoniniana', however, shows that Aurelius Dassius served during the reign of Caracalla and/or of Elagabalus because Severus Alexander (222 AD) changed the entitling to 'Severiana'.⁴³ In view of this time limitation, Aurelius Dassius' retirement can be dated between 215 and 222 AD. During this period, two events attract attention and possibly specify the date of his dismissal if we assume he was disabled because of a war related accident. On the one side, there is Caracalla's military campaign in Parthia in 214 AD in which the danger of a serious injury with permanent consequences was substantial. On the other hand, there is the battle of Imma (8 June 218 AD) fought between Elagabalus and Macrinus which may have caused Aurelius Dassius' invalidity.⁴⁴ Dependent on his age when he joined the army, the erection of the gravestone can be dated fourteen years after his dismissal at most, supposing he started his service in Legio II Parthica not before the age of seventeen.⁴⁵

Thus, Aurelius Dassius' dismissal is set at least two years after Caracalla's rescript (213 AD) in which the emperor states that only *causarii* who have served twenty years or more are considered honorable and are entitled to the veteran privileges.⁴⁶ Aurelius Dassius received a *missio honesta* as well although he already retired after nineteen years of service. The explanatory model that Campbell and Grassl applied to the diplomas of 70 AD is therefore not applicable to the gravestone's epitaph.⁴⁷ Was Aurelius Dassius awarded an honorable discharge as a sign of goodwill (*ex indulgentia*) because of his extraordinary merits in battle? That is highly unlikely because the epitaph clearly gives *ex causa* as reason for the early

⁴⁰ GRASSL, 'Missio Causaria', 283.

⁴¹ For studies of Legio II Parthica, see G. FORNI, *Il reclutamento delle legioni da Augusto a Diocleziano*, Rome, 1953, 97-99; W. VAN RENGEN, 'La IIe Légion Parthique à Apamée', Y. LE BOHEC (ed.), *Les légions de Rome sous le Haut-Empire*, I, Paris, 2000, 407-410.

⁴² AE 1993.1572; J.C. BALTJ and W. VAN RENGEN, *Apamea in Syrië: Winterkwartieren van Legio II Parthica*, Brussel, 1992, 23.

⁴³ VAN RENGEN, 'La IIe Légion Parthique à Apamée', 408.

⁴⁴ BALTJ and VAN RENGEN, *Apamea in Syrië*, 14.

⁴⁵ Seventeen was a common age to join the army, Plut., *Vit. C. Gracch.*, 5.1; JUNG, 'Die Rechtstellung', 912; In a society without birth certificates or registrations it is problematic to verify someone's age, see S.E. PHANG, 'Military Documents, Languages, and Literacy', P. ERDKAMP (ed.), *A Companion to the Roman Army*, Oxford, 2007, 288.

⁴⁶ Cod. Iust., 5.65.1; WESCH-KLEIN, *Soziale Aspekte*, 89; Ibid., 'Recruits and Veterans', 440.

⁴⁷ CAMPBELL, *The Emperor*, 312-314; GRASSL, 'Missio Causaria', 282-283.

discharge. Aurelius Severus, the heir of Aurelius Dassiis, would have probably preferred the more prestigious phrasing *ex indulgentia* over *ex causa* if the former was the true motive of his dismissal. A dedication (197 AD) set up by an early honorable discharged soldier to Septimus Severus supports this argumentation. In the inscription, the veteran proudly emphasizes the reason of his dismissal, *ex indulgentia* (*missus ante tempus ex indulgentia eius honesta missione*).⁴⁸

An alternative explanation starts from the assumption that Aurelius Dassiis was actually granted a *missio causaria* instead of an *honesta missio*, and that Aurelius Severus relied on the legislation prior to Caracalla's amendment of 213 AD when he erected the stele. On the one hand, he was possibly not aware of the status' change of *causarii*. This argument is not very convincing because he probably had knowledge of the type of discharge Aurelius Dassiis received. On the other hand, Aurelius Severus might have deliberately ignored the strict minimum of twenty years' service as a condition for the grant of an honorable discharge. Since a gravestone's epitaph is not considered as an official document, he could draw up the inscription according to the tradition of the first and second century AD without restraint. Aurelius Severus' motive must be put in the proper context of a sudden identity crisis among the disabled veterans who were legally no longer part of the honorable discharged veterans.

At the end of the second century BC when Marius' military reforms took place, veterans genuinely became aware of the separate social class they belonged to in Roman society. They experienced that if they stood up as one group, they were able to make demands on more privileges and on a better treatment after their dismissal.⁴⁹ Until the beginning of the third century AD, both soldiers who received a *missio causaria* and an *honesta missio* were part of one coherent entity. This is shown by early discharged soldiers who presented themselves as honorably dismissed veterans in their use of terminology (*honesta missio*), just like their fellow combatants who had served out their time.⁵⁰ Considering the separate lists on monuments for retired soldiers *ex causa* (the dedication set up by veterans of the *equites singulares Augusti* and the official list of *causarii* on tables in Rome), there seem to be a few indications that *causarii* were credited a slightly different and lower status.⁵¹ But generally spoken, they were legally and socially treated the same as honorable discharged soldiers. With the introduction of Caracalla's rescript of 213 AD, war invalids got a more disadvantageous treatment which damaged the status' perception of *causarii*. This

⁴⁸ CIL 08.4594; G. ALFÖLDY, 'Kaiser, Heer und soziale Mobilität im römischen Reich', A. CHANIOTIS and P. DUCREY (ed.), *Army and Power in the Ancient World*, Stuttgart, 2002, 139; J.C. MANN, 'Honesta Missio from the Legions', G. ALFÖLDY, B. DOBSON and W. ECK (edd.), *Kaiser, Heer und Gesellschaft in der römischen Kaiserzeit*, Stuttgart, 2000, 159; H.G. PFLAUM, 'Inscriptions impériales de Sila', *AntAfr*, 3 (1969), 138; WESCH-KLEIN, *Soziale Aspekte*, 181.

⁴⁹ J. PATTERSON, 'Military organization and social change in the later Roman Republic', J. RICH and G. SHIPLEY (edd.), *War and society in the Roman world*, London, 1993, 102; SCHNEIDER, *Das Problem*, 61; KRÓLCZYK, 'Veterans in the politics', 286-287.

⁵⁰ CIL 16.10; AE 2002.1733; 2006.1833.

⁵¹ CIL 06.31143; SPEIDEL, *Die Denkmäler*, 40-41; AE 2006.1833; N. SHARANKOV, 'A Military Diploma', 44-45.

insecurity expressed itself in multiple petitions addressed to various emperors (Caracalla, Gordianus III, Philippus Arabs) in which veterans questioned their own reputation.⁵² Inconsistencies in jurists' commentaries possibly caused even more confusion. In his definition of the *missio causaria*, Macer uses *vitio* (due to a weakness), a phrase with a negative connotation, as legitimate reason for this early discharge. Ulpianus, however, is more neutral in his choice of words: *propter valetudinem* (due to health issues).⁵³ As Grassl's study suggests, this uncertainty is possibly related to the war invalids' desire to return to their military service and to receive an *honesta missio*.⁵⁴ The epitaph on Aurelius Dassius' gravestone can therefore be understood as a response to and an appeal against this shift of identity among the veteran community. After all, he only came one year of service short to be awarded an honorable discharge. Official documents later than 213 AD, however, make a regulated and clear distinction between the *honesta missio* and the *missio causaria* which lasted for the centuries to come.⁵⁵

4. CONCLUSION

The introduction of the *missio causaria* can probably be dated during the reign of Augustus. For the first time in Roman history, soldiers who properly performed their duty but were forced to retire early from the army due to a mental or physical impairment were looked after by the Roman state. They enjoyed initially the same privileges as the veterans who served out their time.⁵⁶ Legally, both groups of retired soldiers shared the same status which explains why the diplomas of the *causarii* also mention an honorable discharge. The combination of *causarius* or *ex causa* and *honesta missio* was therefore not contradictory until the third century AD. In 213 AD Caracalla, however, makes a clear distinction between the two types of discharges because he decided that the *missio causaria* no longer held the

⁵² Caracalla is emperor from 211 to 217 AD, Gordianus III from 238 to 244 AD and Philippus Arabs from 244 to 249 AD, Cod. Iust., 5.65.1; 12.35.7 and 8; D. KIENAST, *Römische Kaisertabelle*, Darmstadt, 1996, 162, 195 and 198; Also the jurist, Modestinus, serving under Gordianus III comments on the reputation of the *causarii*, see Dig., 27.1.8.5.

⁵³ Dig., 3.2.2.2; 49.16.13.3; RENZ, *The Legal Position*, 114; WATSON, *The Roman Soldier*, 123.

⁵⁴ Cod. Iust., 12.35.6; GRASSL, 'Missio Causaria', 285; SALDERN, 'Ein kaiserliches Reskript', 304.

⁵⁵ A strength report of 215 AD lists one soldier invalidated out of the army (*dismissus causarius*), see P. Brookl., 24; THOMAS and DAVIES, 'A New Military Strength Report', 50-61; The emperor does not mention an honorable discharge in his imperial rescript (248/249 AD) carved in stone in which he commands the dismissal of M. Aurelius Mucianus after nine years of service because of health issues, see AE 2003.2040; PFERDEHIRT, 'Ein kaiserliches Reskript', 403-419; SALDERN, 'Ein kaiserliches Reskript', 293-307.

⁵⁶ As an indirect remark, the world of gladiators seems to have adopted this special treatment for war invalids from the military context. Normally a gladiator was issued a *ludus* (a wooden sword), that represents his freedom, after a long successful career in the arena. An inscription, of which the date and location is unknown, lists three names as *καυσάριοι*, the Greek equivalent of *causarii*. Apparently, some gladiators who were no longer able to fight, were occasionally granted their freedom, see I. AVOTINS, 'On the Greek Vocabulary of the Digest', *Glotta*, 60 (1982), 262; L. ROBERT, 'Monuments de gladiateurs dans l'orient grec', *Hellenica*, 5 (1948), 92.

same privileges as the *honesta missio*. This resulted in an identity crisis among soldiers who risked their lives for Rome but unfortunately had to retire due to health issues before they served twenty years. From that moment on, the *causarii* no longer felt connected to the veterans (*emeriti*) because of the juridical changes, though Aurelius Dassius' epitaph can be seen as an attempt to claim a rather social than legal position in the prestigious group of the latter.

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