In Maehly’s Footsteps: *iterum* better than *etiam* in Aurelius Victor, *Liber de Caesaribus* 1.1?

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In all modern editions, the beginning of Sextus Aurelius Victor’s *Caesares* reads thus: *Anno urbis septingentesimo fere vicesimoque duobus etiam, mos Romae incessit uni prorsus parendi.*¹ The date to which the historian refers is clearly 31 BCE, when Octavian defeated Mark Antony in the battle of Actium. Of course one can argue that Aurelius Victor could have chosen another date as the starting point for his imperial history, but the problem lies elsewhere.² On the one hand, the pairing of an ordinal (*septingentesimo vicesimoque*) and a cardinal number (*duobus etiam*) sounds, at the very least, odd. On the other hand, it is questionable that the Roman custom of obeying one man alone began under Augustus. In view of these issues, the aim of this contribution is to offer new evidence in favour of the conjecture *iterum*, proposed by Maehly 1855, 264 but rejected by all modern editors, instead of *etiam*.

In his (perhaps too) short note, Maehly first prints the text as follows: *anno urbis septingentesimo fere vicesimoque secundo etiam mos Romae incessit uni prorsus parendi.* He then claims categorically that the presence of *etiam* makes the sentence incorrect. Taking for granted that *etiam* is linked to *mos Romae* (or better to *mos Romae*), thereby meaning ‘also in Rome’, Maehly rightly states that this cannot be the right reading, since Rome had already obeyed one man during the Kingdom.³ Accordingly, he goes on to say, we should print *iterum*

¹ See Pichlmayr 1911 *ad loc.* and Dufraigne 1975 *ad loc.*
² Suffice it to say here that Suetonius’ *De vita duodecim Caesarum*, undoubtedly a main source for Aurelius Victor’s first eleven chapters (see Dufraigne 1975, xxviii-xxix), begins with the life of Julius Caesar.
³ Of course we would expect that *etiam* would come immediately before or after *Romae*, if it went with *Romae*. But the presence of *secundo* instead of *duobus* in Maehly’s text prevents him from thinking that *etiam* could refer to what precedes.
instead of *etiam*, thus echoing the *mos Romae repetitus uni prorsus parendi* of *Epitome de Caesaribus* 1.1, an epitome written some thirty or forty years after Aurelius Victor’s *Caesares*. The reasons why this conjecture has long been ignored are easily deducible. First, the manuscripts of Aurelius Victor read *duobus*, not *secundo*. Given the unusual pairing of an ordinal and a cardinal number, all modern editors tend to link *etiam* to the first part of the sentence, as a means of connecting the cardinal to the ordinal. Secondly, taken alone, *repetitus* provides weak evidence for the *Epitome*’s allusion to the Roman Kingdom. However, despite these weaknesses and, in the case of *secundo*, despite an allegedly wrong precondition, I hope to prove not only that Maehly’s conjecture was right, but also that *secundo* is preferable to *duobus*.

Let me start from the number. Maehly took for granted that the right reading should be *secundo*, not *duobus*. This conjecture dates back to Gruter’s edition (1670) and there seems to be enough evidence for it to be considered correct. To begin with, analogous instances of the pairing of ordinal and cardinal numbers are not attested. One might seek to defend the plural *duobus*, thereby overcoming the problem of its concordance with the singular *anno ... septingentesimo ... vicesimo*, by comparing it to the case of *duo(et)vice(n)simus / duo et vice(n)simus*, which appears in Pliny the Younger and Tacitus, and is discussed by Gellius. However, it is more logical to think that it results from *duoetviginti* being treated as a single word, with the same ordinal ending as *viginti*. Nor would this use of *duobus* be consistent within Aurelius Victor’s work, as *Caes.* 41.16 reads *ita anno imperii tricesimo secundoque*. It is true that *fere*, which is usually found in case of round numbers (multiples of ten), might raise further doubts over the presence of the idea of ‘two’, whether it is expressed as a cardinal or as an ordinal. However, one parallel at least can be found in another historian who was roughly contemporary with Aurelius Victor, Eutropius. In fact, at 7.1.1 his *Breviarium historiae Romanae* reads: *anno urbis septingentesimo fere ac nono*. Accordingly, we can reasonably argue that at some point in the textual tradition of the *Caesares* ‘ii’ was wrongly expanded into *duobus* instead of *secundo*.

4 On the date of the *Epitome* see Festy 1999, liii.
5 See Plin. *Nat.* 2.87, Tac. *Hist.* 1.18, 1.55, 1.56, 2.100 and 4.24, and Gel. 5.4. See also the entry on *duoetvicesimus* in *TLL* 5.1, 2252, 72-78. The genuineness of the archaic *duovicesimus* as an alternative to *duo et vicesimus* has persuasively been shown by Verbrugghe 2008.
6 Along with the *Epitome*’s opening (for which cf. the main text), *Caes.* 41.16 provides sufficient evidence to exclude that in 4th-century Latin *alter* is to be expected instead of *secundus* in compound ordinal numbers.