

BATAVIAN HERALD

This issue I am looking at the drill training of auxiliaries. (I can already hear Marinus saying "No, can't be done!")

Were the men of the provincial units trained by auxiliary officers, or by soldiers of the legions? When it came to skirmishing and other definite 'auxiliary' methods of deployment and combat, (a good example being Batavian horsemen crossing rivers), I would venture to suggest that whilst under the command of local chieftains, the auxiliary soldiers of our period, (provided the end result was that which was required), would have been more or less left to their own devices. However, after the revolt of 69, the training of the provincially raised cohorts in the Flavian period would have probably been stepped-up and far better 'policed' by transferred legionary *Centuriones*, and to get them into the Roman mindset, drill instructors (*Campidoctores*) also.

When we display our drill, we are instructed and commanded by a legionary officer, be he Centurion, *Optio* or *Tesserarius*. Only occasionally does our own auxiliary officer put us through our paces. (Although when he does, it's usually guard duty, and he forgets to retrieve the men he left behind hours earlier!).

There are many finds of tombstones and grave stele relating to training officers for the legionaries and for the praetorians and praetorian cavalry, but what of training of auxiliary cohortes and alae? Here are the few inscriptions that I could find that mention the training and drill instruction of auxiliary soldiers;

CIL 2, 4083 (From Tarragonna, Spain)

Marti campestri sac(rum) | pro sal(ute) | Imp(eratoris) M(arci) Aur(eli) Commodi | Aug(usti) et equit(um) sing(ularium) | T(itus) Aurel(ius) Decimus | > (centurio) leg(ionis) VII G(eminae) Fel(icis) | praep(ositus) simul et | camp(idoctor) dedic(avit) K(alendis) Mart(iis) | Mamert(ino) et Rufo co(n)s(ulibus)

'Sacred to Mars of the training field. For the sake of emperor Marcus Aurelius Commodus Augustus and the picked horsemen. Titus Aurelius Decimus, centurion of the legio VII Gemina, commander and at the same time drill master has dedicated this on the Kalends of march when Mamertinus and Rufus Were consuls'

Here a legionary centurion is mentioned as commander and instructor of the imperial horse guards. Legionary NCO's, like for instance the famous Tiberius Claudius Maximus, and officers are attested as transferred to positions in auxiliary cavalry units, indicating the elite nature of the small legionary

cavalry force. I would venture to say that this man Decimus was not just a riding instructor, (as most men recruited into provincial alae could already ride extremely well), but also as a trainer of tactics and formations.

CIL 8, 2825. (From Tazoult, Numidia - Algeria).

D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) | M(arco) Aurel(lio) M(arci) f(ilio) | Pal(atina) Sextiano Os | tia > (centurioni) frumenta | rio exercitato | ri singularium | Imp(eratoris) hastato | leg(ionis) III Aug(ustae) | vix(it) an(nos) XLVIII | Paccia Prima | coniunx et he | res eius marito | piissimo

'Sacred to the spirits of the departed. To Marcus Aurelius Sextianus, son of Marcus, from the Palatine voting district from Ostia, centurio frumentarius, training officer of the emperors picked troops, hastatus of legio III Augusta has lived 48 years. Paccia Prima, his wife and heir, to her most dutiful husband.'

A Centurion of the *frumentarii*, or 'grain men'. These men were originally in charge of the food supply, but they developed into a military intelligence unit, which became notorious, as its complement was at times used for political assassinations. The *singulares imperatoris* are again, the imperial horse guard, more commonly called the *equites singulares Augusti*. The *hastatus* probably refers to the centurion's title. Again, in this case it is a legionary officer who is appointed to train soldiers of a unit drawn from auxiliaries.

AE 1933, 214. (From Cardak, Syria)

dedicante] | [C(aio) Do]m[i]t(ia) Dextro leg(ato) Aug(usti) | p(ro) pr(aetore) per Ser(vium) Tinae(um) Iust(um) | > (centurionem) leg(ionis) II Traianae fort(is) praep(ositum) | al(ae) Vocontiorum) Sextus Xenocrat(is) | decurio exerc(ikator) al(ae) eiusdem | campum cum trib(unali) nov(u)m feci(t?) | | Imp(eratore) Commodo Aug(usto) n(ostro) IIII p(atre) p(atriciae) | Aufidio Victorino II co(n)s(ulibus)

'With Caius Domitius Dextrus delegate of the emperor with the powers of praetor as a dedicant represented by Servius Tinaeus Iustus, centurion of the legio II Traiana fortis and commander of the ala Vocontiorum, Sextus Xenocratis, **decurion and training officer of the same ala** has built the training ground with the tribunal as new when our emperor Commodus Augustus, father of the fatherland, was consul for the fourth time and Aufidius Victorinus for the second time.'

This is a rare mention of a training officer belonging to a regular auxiliary unit (cavalry ala) of the provincial armies rather than to one attached to a guard unit. Appropriately, Sextus Xenocratis, the officer in charge of training has taken care of rebuilding the exercise ground.

CIL 05, 08773 = ILCV 00457a-b = D 02803 (from the late Roman period military cemetery at Iulia Concordia, Venetia).

Arca{m} Vassioni camped(octoris) / numeri Bata(v)or(um) sen(iorum) quem se{e}pe/livit coniu{x}(!) Vandacca q(ui) vixit cum / [e]o(!) ann(os) XXII milit(avit) ann(os) XXXV feret a/pud se ann(os) LX si quis eam arcam vo/luerit movere virib(us) fisci dabit sol(idos) XXV

'(This is) the urn of Vassionus, Drill Instructor of the senior troop of Batavi, whom his wife Vandacca, who lived with him for 22 years, buried. He served 35 years. He carries with him (i.e. lived) 60 years. If anyone wishes to move the urn, he shall pay to the men of the fiscus (the imperial treasury) 25 solidi (gold coins).'

Another apparently quite rare example of a training officer belonging to a regular auxiliary unit of the provincial armies. By the fourth century, many of the 'Legio' units had been replaced by the field army *comitatenses* and the *limitanei* (frontier troops). The memorial does not state whether Vassionus was a Batavian himself, although it is very unlikely, as by this time troops were recruited from throughout the empire, and not recruited from the home province of the unit, the designation of which it bore.

With the evidence I have so far found, it is rather inconclusive as to whether more auxiliary troops were trained by legionary officers than by their own auxiliary officers. I shall however endeavour to keep looking for more information, but If anyone else out there has any more evidence, please let me know.

New Member.

I would like to welcome our newest recruit, Chris Carr to the Batavian ranks. Chris joined us for the Chester event. He has chosen the Batavian name "Titvs Flavivs **Germanvs**". Welcome Germanvs!

This soldiers name comes from a grave stele from Weisbaden (Aquae Mattiacorum) Germania Superior. A Batavian citizen recruited into the XXII legion as opposed to the provincial cohorts. Germanvs' father (or grandfather) obtained his citizenship during the reign of the Flavian emperor Titus, taking his prenomen and nomen/gens names.

CIL 13, 07577 (4, p 128)

D(is) M(anibus) Tito / Flavio Germano / veter(ano) leg(ionis) XXII Pr(imigeniae) / P(iae) F(idelis) natione / Bata(v) us / annorum / L Ulpius Arvatius / h(eres) f(aciendum) c(uravit)

'To the spirits of the departed, Titus Flavius Germanus, a veteran of the loyal and faithful XXII 'First-born' legion, a Batavian national, aged 50. Ulpius Arvatius was charged with making this'.

Auxiliary Helmet Cresting.

There has literally been a flurry of horsehair plumes appearing among the Batavian ranks of late. Fatalis asked for evidence of auxiliary cresting.

The first picture below comes from an early second century frieze from Trajan's Dacian campaigns (within our timeframe) currently on display at the Hungarian National Museum, Budapest. It depicts what appears to be two auxiliary soldiers wearing simple helmets reminiscent of the *coolus* type from Schaan with mail shirts and carrying an oval *clipeus*. The leading soldier is sporting a horsehair crest.



The second is an auxiliary cavalryman depicted on the Bridgeness Slab in the national Museum of Scotland. It shows an Antonine period (138 – 161CE) trooper with a flowing horsehair plume. As our period covers up to 150CE this is also within our timeframe.



Peronis