



# TYCHÉ

Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte  
Papyrologie und Epigraphik

Herausgegeben von

Gerhard Dobesch, Hermann Harrauer  
Peter Siewert und Ekkehard Weber

Band 2, 1987

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MICHAEL P. SPEIDEL

## The Rise of the Mercenaries in the Third Century

Foreigners joining an army for private gain are mercenaries, those doing so for political reasons are allies<sup>1</sup>. By these criteria, Rome, during the Republic, used mostly allies rather than mercenaries whenever she needed foreign manpower or special fighting skills<sup>2</sup>. During the first two centuries of the Empire, when her own citizens no longer readily bore arms, Rome could rely on the plentiful supply of recruits from the provinces and client states and thus had little need for mercenaries<sup>3</sup>. Yet the more these erstwhile recruiting grounds became peaceful and their fighting spirit vanished, the more recruitment shrank to a narrow frontier zone<sup>4</sup>, and in time suitable recruits were hard to come by.

Moreover, as Trajan's Column shows, most *auxilia* adopted standard Roman equipment and tactics. Many even of the newer ethnic units (*nationes* or *numeri*) that had been raised to harness native manpower and fighting skills<sup>5</sup>, were also on the road to Romanization<sup>6</sup>, thereby causing a shortage of special fighting skills in such branches as archery, the light horse, and the heavy-mailed horse. Finally, in a crisis, hiring mercenaries was the fastest way of getting an army together.

Thus, from the mid-second century on, the search for fighting men turned more and

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<sup>1</sup> There are shades of grey between these groups as can be seen in Caesar's description of foreigners in Pompey's army (*Bell. civ.* 3, 4, 6): *Bessos partim mercennarios, partim imperio aut gratia comparatos*.

<sup>2</sup> For the occasional use of mercenaries during the Republic see J. Marquardt, *Römische Staatsverwaltung* II, Leipzig 1884, 343; Lammert, *Mercennarii*, RE XV 1 (1931) 972—974; B. Scardigli, *Usurpatori e Barbari*, Annali Fac. Lett. Siena 6 (1985) 47—94.

<sup>3</sup> For the legions see G. Forni, *Il reclutamento delle legioni da Augusto a Diocleziano*; idem, *Estrazione etnica e sociale dei soldati delle legioni nei primi tre secoli dell'impero*, ANRW II 1 Berlin, New York 1974, 339—391. M. P. Speidel, *Roman Army Studies* I, Amsterdam 1984, 45—63 (Mavors. Roman Army Researches 1). For the *auxilia* see G. L. Cheesman, *The Auxilia of the Roman Imperial Army*, Oxford 1914; D. B. Saddington, *The Development of the Roman Auxiliary Forces from Augustus to Trajan*, ANRW II 3 (1975), 176—201; idem, *The Development of the Roman Auxiliary Forces from Caesar to Vespasian (49 B.C. — A.D. 79)*, Harare 1982; P. A. Holder, *Studies in the Auxilia of the Roman Army from Augustus to Trajan*, Oxford 1980; Mavors 1, 91—113; 323—327; 333—335.

<sup>4</sup> J. C. Mann, *Legionary Recruitment and Veteran Settlement during the Principate*, London 1983; K. Kraft, *Zur Rekrutierung der Alen und Kohorten an Rhein und Donau*, Bern 1951.

<sup>5</sup> H. T. Rowell, *Numerus*, RE 17 (1937) 1327—1341 and 2538—2554; H. Callies, *Die fremden Truppen im römischen Heer des Prinzipats und die sogenannten nationalen Numeri. Beiträge zur Geschichte des römischen Heeres*, Berichte RGK 45 (1964) 130—227. For the standard equipment and tactics of the *auxilia* see also Tac., *ann.* 12, 16: *nostris in armis*; idem, *hist.* 3, 47, 2; cf. Cheesman (1914) 132.

<sup>6</sup> Some, however, such as the Mauri and Osrhoeni, kept their ethnic character more unmitigatedly and thereby became elite *vexillationes* of the fourth-century army: Mavors 1, 117—148.

more to foreigners from beyond the borders<sup>7</sup>. Marcus Aurelius, in his bitter need for soldiers during the Marcomanni wars, was the first to enrol large numbers of them<sup>8</sup>. As *gentiles* they served at first in irregular, low-ranking ethnic units<sup>9</sup>. Yet by the time of Aurelianus not only regular units (*alae* and cohorts) were raised from among them, but even elite *vexillationes*<sup>10</sup>. The process is part of the shift from draftees to volunteers, caused by the higher pay and better service conditions of the Severan period, that made enrolling in the Roman army attractive<sup>11</sup>. Mercenaries might bargain for even better terms in pay, furlough, and where they would have to serve<sup>12</sup>.

The rise of the foreigners in the Roman army during the second and third century had the gravest consequences, for during the fourth and fifth century they, as allies and mercenaries, brought the Empire in the West to its downfall. It may be worthwhile, therefore, to trace the beginnings of the use of mercenaries in the imperial army, even though no inscriptions mention them and the few passages in our literary sources let us draw no more than the main outlines of their rise.

In AD 143 Aelius Aristeides still praised the Roman army by saying: "You did not trust mercenaries"<sup>13</sup>. By 235, however, Parthian mercenaries fought in the German campaign of Severus Alexander and Maximinus Thrax, "allured by the pay", and in 244 a very large number of Goths and other Germans, surely mercenaries, fought in the Persian campaign of Gordian III<sup>14</sup>. Entire units of mercenaries are first known reliably in 286, the

<sup>7</sup> O. Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt* 1, Berlin 1897<sup>2</sup>, 401f.; M. Bang, *Die Germanen im römischen Dienste bis zum Regierungsantritt Constantins*, Berlin 1906, 60ff.; A. Alföldi, *Die Hauptfaktoren der Geschichtsentwicklung zwischen 249 und 271 nach Christus*, RM 49 (1934) 1ff. and 50 (1935) 1ff. = *Studien zur Geschichte der Weltkrise des 3. Jahrhunderts nach Christus*, Darmstadt 1967, 375—440, esp. 410f.; H. J. Wolff, *Die Constitutio Antoniniana und Papyrus Gissensis 40 I*, Diss. Köln 1976, 35—62; B. Scardigli, *Conueniunt itaque Gothi Romanique*, *Romanobarbarica* 7 (1983) 355—439. In 158, a few years before Marcus, a diploma (CIL XVI, 108) mentions *Mauri gentiles* in Dacia, but it is not certain whether those came from inside or outside the Empire.

<sup>8</sup> Mavors 1, 257. For the *pr[aep](ositus) eq[ui]tium gentium peregrinarum* under Marcus see M. Speidel, *Valerius Valerianus in Charge of Septimius Severus' Mesopotamian Campaign*, CPh 80 (1985) 321—326.

<sup>9</sup> For a *numerus equitum Sarmatarum* enrolled by Marcus see Rowell (above, note 5) 2552, 59ff., for a unit of *Gothi gentiles* in AD 208, Mavors 1, 254f.

<sup>10</sup> *Ala I Quadorum* was raised by AD 273, see CPR VII 21 as read by D. Hagedorn in *Miscellanea papyrologica*, Firenze 1980, 88—99 (Pap. Flor. 2). Alföldi (above, note 7) 410; D. Hoffmann, *Das spätrömische Bewegungsheer und die Notitia Dignitatum*, 2 vols., Düsseldorf 1969/70, 140; an elite *vexillatio* of *equites Marcomanni* is known in Egypt by AD 286: Mavors 1, 139. Th. Mommsen, *Das römische Militärwesen seit Diokletian*, in: *Gesammelte Schriften* VI, 206—283, esp. 247, cf. 468, followed by Bang (above, note 7) 62 and Liebenam, *Dilectus*, RE VI (1905) 639, thought regular units raised from foreigners were not found before the reign of Diocletian, a view that needs to be revised now. Prisoners of war and turncoats, according to Mommsen, would not be reckoned as foreigners: they became Roman subjects; indeed for that view one may cite a Parthian horseman *domo Roma*, CIL III, 8746.

<sup>11</sup> P. A. Brunt, *Conscription and Volunteering in the Roman Imperial Army*, *Scripta Classica Israelica* 1 (1974) 90—115. Cf. Mommsen (above, note 10) 252.

<sup>12</sup> For terms granted to mercenaries see e. g. Zosimus IV, 30f. with Hoffmann (above, note 10) 460. The passage concerns the year 378, but it may illustrate the tendencies of the third century as well. See also Ammianus Marcellinus 15, 5, 31. For enrolment in elite units: Mavors 1, 139.

<sup>13</sup> *Roman Oration*, 74: ξένους δὲ οὐκ ἐπιστεύσατε. The hirelings (ὁ μίσθιος ὄχλος) mentioned by Iosephus for the year 68, *Bell. Iud.* 3, 126 and 5, 49, were not soldiers but were in charge of the train, cf. Lammert (above, note 2). For such men see Mavors 1, 203—205.

<sup>14</sup> Herodian 6, 7, 8: τίνες Παρθυαίων αὐτόμολοι ἢ χρέμασι ἀναπεισθέντες. Goths etc.: Mavors 1, 255f.



*mercennarii cunei barbarorum* of Britain<sup>15</sup>. By then they were fast becoming the main elite units of the field army<sup>16</sup>.

To this outline a number of papyri may add some detail by revealing how, how early, and for what purpose mercenaries became part of the third-century army. Three cases can be made out. They are discussed in the following.

### 1. The [- - -] ξενία βαρβαρική and its *numerus Orientalium* in Egypt in AD 203

Among the twenty-two letters sent out in AD 203 by a high-ranking officer stationed at Babylon in Egypt, letters 18 and 19 explain each other to some extent and thus are here reproduced together<sup>17</sup>:

- 18 Φλαουίω στ[  
 Λόγους σ.[ ]ους και ξενίας μου βαρβαρικῆς  
 τ[ ]η κύριε, διεπεμψάμην εἰς [  
 ]μ... ἀνδρῶν και ἰπέων  
 ]και α χωρίς μου γέ[νηται  
 (Ἔτους) ιβ Θῶθ] κ̅ξ
- 19 ]ιοις [  
 ξενί]ας μου [βαρβαρικῆς ἀρι-  
 θμοῦ ἀνατολικῶν [  
 χωρίς μου γενομ[

Letter 19 mentions an ἀριθμὸς ἀνατολικῶν, i. e. a group of soldiers from the Orient. Such a *numerus Orientalium* is also mentioned on an undated army list from Egypt which reads as follows<sup>18</sup>:

Col. I	Col. II
]υς (turma) ....?.]	(5) (turma) Ε.[.]...
]ϕoces ]ιλί...υς	Iulij[us Item .ο...ί...η.[.]....]. (turma) Saturnini
	5 Aurelius Isidorianus
	(10) (turma) Maximi

<sup>15</sup> Panegyrici 8, 16.

<sup>16</sup> Mommsen (above, note 10) 276ff. G. Gigli, *Forme di reclutamento militare durante il basso impero*, Accademia dei Lincei, Rendiconti sc. mor. 8 (1947) 268—289, esp. 285.

<sup>17</sup> P.Flor. II, 278 = S. Daris, *Documenti per la storia dell'esercito romano in Egitto*, Milano 1964, no. 64. Our text is that of Daris. For the date see Daris, *Due note*, BASP 5 (1968) 133—134.

<sup>18</sup> P.Mich. 454 = R. O. Fink, *Roman Military Records on Papyrus*, Cleveland 1971, 30 = ChLA V, 276. Our text is that of ChLA V, 276.

Aurelius Serenus  
 Item sagit(tarii) ex n(umero) Emesenor(um)  
 Aelius Marinus hordinatus [  
 10 Semproni[u]s Demetrius ses[q(uipticarius)]  
 (15) (turma) Rufi  
 Suaemus Taeni  
 Item ex n(umero) Orientalium  
 (turma) Rufi  
 15 Iulius Ualens

There can be little doubt that the letter as well as the list refer to the same *numerus*<sup>19</sup>. The list shows Iulius Valens enrolled in the squadron of Rufus, which proves that at least part of the *Orientales* were horsemen. What is of the greatest importance, however, and what has been overlooked so far, is that letters 18 and 19 reveal the ἀριθμὸς ἀνατολικῶν as part of a force of foreign mercenaries, a [στρατία or δύναμις] ξενία βαρβαρική. The Roman High Command traditionally distinguished between legionaries, auxiliaries, and barbarians (foreigners), no matter whether the latter were allies or mercenaries<sup>20</sup>, and it seems such a distinction is meant here<sup>21</sup>. Since βαρβαρική already denotes that the force in question is foreign, the word ξενία as part of a description of military units, very likely means here “mercenary”. A unit of foreign, oriental mercenaries thus seems to have served in the Egyptian army as early as the year 203.

The list is generally understood to record transfers of men from several different units into a *cohors equitata*<sup>22</sup>. With transfers, however, it is customary to give the years in which the soldiers enrolled, so that the date of their discharge could be computed. No such years are given here. Perhaps, then, the list does not show transfers, but rather soldiers of ethnic units, or mercenaries, attached to the various *turmae* of the cohort<sup>23</sup>.

Where did the *Orientales* come from? Unfortunately, the one soldier’s name we know,

<sup>19</sup> Thus rightly S. Daris, *Note per la storia dell’esercito romano in Egitto*, *Aegyptus* 36 (1956) 235–246; also J. Bingen, *Latomus* 8 (1949) 72, followed by Fink (above, note 18) and Marichal, *ChLA* V, 276.

<sup>20</sup> Arrian, *Parthica* frg. 52 (Roos): εἰ δὲ καὶ παῖσμά τι γίγνοιτο οὐκ ἐν στρατιᾷ Ῥωμαίων κινδυνεύσειν, ἀλλ’ ἐν ξυμμαχικῇ τε καὶ ταύτῃ βαρβάρων. *Parthica* 81: ὁ δὲ Τραϊανὸς δύο στρατεύματα καὶ τοῦ μεγάλου καταλόγου καὶ ξενικά. „Hyginus“, *De munitione castrorum 2: Legiones, quoniam sunt militiae provinciales fidelissimae, ad vallum tendere debent, ut opus valli tueantur et exercitus gentibus imperatum suo numero corporali in muro teneant*. Idem, 19: *cohortes peditatae vel equitatae ad viam quintanam spectare debebunt; et super symmachiarii et reliquae nationes tendere debebunt; et ita fiet ut omni parte nationes, ut supra scriptum, contineantur*.

<sup>21</sup> Perhaps one may read ξενίας μου βαρβαρικής | τῆς στρατίας τὰ κτήνη, κόριε, διεπεμψάμην ....

<sup>22</sup> See below, note (37); Iulius Valens, with his Roman name, seems indeed a suitable recruit for a cohort. A similar case may be reported in the Brooklyn papyrus of 213–216 (J. D. Thomas and R. W. Davies, *A New Military Strength Report on Papyrus*, *JRS* 67 (1977) 50–61) I, 5, listing transfers into a cohort: *ex n(umero) equitum [sa]l(aratus) I*. Daris, (above, note 19) 244, also wonders whether the list is not „una rosa di soldati scelti per determinati funzioni in seno ai loro reparti.“

<sup>23</sup> Compare the distribution of the legionary horsemen among the *centuriae* of their unit. See also P. Dura 97, discussed below. If Daris (above, note 19) is right in suggesting that letter 20 of P. Flor. II, 278 refers to the *numerus Hemesenorum* of P. Mich. VII, 454, it would constitute an argument for a customary conjoint use of the two *numeri*.

Iulius Valens, gives no clue. *Orientalēs* could come from within the empire<sup>24</sup>. But since the *numerus* was part of a force of foreign mercenaries, there can be little doubt that they came from beyond the Mesopotamian frontier.

## 2. *Salarati Peregrini* as Mailed Horsemen in Egypt in AD 267

A puzzling papyrus from Oxyrhynchos (P.Oxy. XLI 2951), recording the sale of a slave girl in 267, reads as follows:

- ↑ [evicerit quominus empt]orem heredem[ve e]i[us uti frui]  
 [habere possidere usu]ue capere recte liceat, tunc quantum  
 \* [id erit quod evictum fuerit, si]mplam pecuniam ta[ntam ...]  
 [ c. 10 sine denuntia]tione probam recte da[ri c. 7 ]  
 5 [ c. 18 ].[quo de agitur vendere di[...].[...]  
 ...[ c. 15 quo]uo modo voluerit stipulatus est  
 Αϋ[r]ε[ι]u]s Α[pollo]n[ι]u]s opt]io emptor s(upra) s(criptus), sponndit Barsimes  
 Bass[u]s dec(urio) ...ne filio suo Maria Barsime <e> numero s(upra) s(cripto).  
 vendi—  
 tor et secundus auctor Ruphus Abedsai optio et suo periculo  
 10 esse dixerunt. edidit i[de]m venditor emptori s(upra) s(cripto) pristina  
 strumenta in nomine [.].ta in Pelusio de anno xiii Gallieno  
 a...[ c. 15 ]de Gai Iuli Iuliani Nemesioni q(ui) e(t) Sereni  
 a..a.....[...]......ranum introitu Gerri Pelusi de tradito  
 anno mense Thoth die iiii, et alia pristina strumenta.  
 15 actum in hibe[rnis] leg(ionis) ii Tr(aianae) Fort(is) Germ(anicae) Gallienae vii  
 Kal(endas) Iun(ias)  
 Paterno et Arcesilao coss, anno xiiii Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) Pupli  
 Licin[ni] Γα[1]i[en]i Germanici Max(imi) Persici Max(imi) Pii Felic(is) Aug(usti)  
 μην̄ς Ϝαυν̄ι (m. 2) . die... Max(imi) Persici M<a>x(imi)  
 (m. 3) Μαρίας Βαρσίμις Σαλαράτος ἀριθμοῦ καταφράκτων, δι' ἐμοῦ τοῦ  
 20 πατρὸς κατέχοντος αὐτὸν ὑπὸ τῆς χηρῆς κατὰ τοὺς Ῥωμέων νόμου[ς],  
 Βαρσίμις Βάσσοσ δεκαδάρχου εἴλης τῆς αὐτῆς, πέπρακα τῷ Αὐρηλίῳ  
 Ἀπολλωνίῳ ὀπτίῳ τὴν δούλην Νίκην ἐπικεκλημένην  
 μετεθεν, γένη Ἀράβισσαν, ἀπλῶ χρήματι καὶ οὖσαν ἐκτὸς εἰεράς  
 νόσου [κα]ὶ [ἐπα]φῆς, τειμῆς ἀργυρίου δηναρίων δισχιλίων διακοσίω[ν]  
 25 πενήκοντα Πτολομαεικῶν καὶ ἀπέσ[χο]ν τῆ[ν] τ[ι]μῆ[ν] παρ' αὐτοῦ]  
 καὶ ἀνέδωκα τὰς ἀσφαλίαις, καὶ ἐπερωτιθεὶς ὁμολόγησα [ὅς]  
 πρόκειται. Ῥοῦφος Ἀβεδοσίῳ ὀπτίῳ ἀριθ(μοῦ) τῶν Σαλαράτων περεγρή[νων]  
 ἔγραψα ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ γράμματα μὴ εἰτότος, τῆς χιρὸς αὐτοῦ]  
 κατεχομένης, καὶ βεβεῶ τὴν δούλην Νίκην ἐπικαικλημένην

<sup>24</sup> Like the λεγεῶνες διάφοροι ὀριεντάλιαι of P.Beatty Panop. 2, 187 and 192, cf. Mavors I, 306. Ξένοι might even come from within Egypt, see J. Lesquier, *L'armée romaine d'Égypte*, Cairo 1918, 27f.; 31.

30 Σαπρίκιν, καὶ <ἐ>περωτιθὶς ὁμολόγησα ὡς πρόκιτε.

(m. 4) Βαρσίμις Βάσσος δεκάδαρχος πέπρακα καὶ ἀπέσχον τὴν τιμὴν καὶ ὁμολόγησα ὡς πρόκιτε.

(m. 5) Aurelius Heraclianus q(ui) e(t) Macarius eq(ues) Romanus conductor  
librariae

kastrorum leg(ionis) s(upra) s(criptae) accep[

35 .çoh i aug p̄ann... Galli[

ñus[...].[...].....[

\* \* \* \* \*

The editors of the papyrus thought the *salarati* mentioned in lines 19 and 27 might be foreigners from the river Salarus in the Carmania region of Iran, yet the Semitic names of the men make an origin from middle Iran unlikely. Moreover, as the editors observed, the morphology of the Greek word σαλαρᾶτος does not suggest ethnic origin, and the expression “foreign Salarati” in line 27 would make little sense, since no contrasting Salarati lived within the Roman empire. Finally, none of the other men in the papyrus is identified by his ethnic origin which makes it unlikely that this should be the case with Marias Barsimis in line 19. *Salaratus*, then, was Marias Barsimis’ rank.

The term *salaratus* is not known from anywhere else<sup>25</sup>, but it seems to have been the equivalent of the term *salararius* in the same way as the term καταφράκτος in this papyrus is the equivalent of the more usual *catafractarius*, and as *ordinatus*, in army language, is the equivalent of *ordinarius*<sup>26</sup>.

*Salararii* are known in the Roman army as specially paid men, receiving *salaria* instead of the regular *stipendia*. Apparently, they were not fully enrolled, but received money for special services like the *evocati*, who also reckoned their pay as *salaria*<sup>27</sup>. Several *salararii legionis* are known. Yet these men were individual specialists such as a water-organ player, an architect, or an interpreter<sup>28</sup>. As such they would hardly form a group or a unit (an ἀριθμός), or emphasize that they were foreigners, *peregrini*.

The term *peregrini* could mean “men seconded from the legions to the *castra peregrina* in Rome<sup>29</sup>, but the word’s general meaning “non-Roman” gave rise to another use of it in

<sup>25</sup> But perhaps CIL III, 7926 should be expanded *salara(tus)*, and likewise CIL VI, 37262.

<sup>26</sup> For 3rd- and 4th-century army use of these terms see BGU 316, b καταφράκταιοι, and P.Beatty Panop. II, 28 καταφράκταιοι, cf. J. F. Gilliam, *Roman Army Papers*, Amsterdam 1986, 1–22 (Mavors 2).

<sup>27</sup> CIL VI, 2678 contrasts *stipendia militaria* with *evocati(iva) XII*; cf. CIL VI, 2495; 2589; 3419; etc. See A. v. Domaszewski, *Die Rangordnung des römischen Heeres*, 2nd. ed. by B. Dobson, Köln 1967, 77. The centurion Claudius Iustianus, CIL VI, 8275, who mentions his twelve *salaria* may have been an *evocatus* before he became centurion, and thus may count only his service years as a centurion (cf. *stipendia centurionika* AE 1937, 101); for such careers see E. Birley, *Evocati Aug.: A Review*, ZPE 43 (1981) 25–29.

<sup>28</sup> CIL III, 10501: *hydraularius salarius legionis II Ad(iutricis)*; AE 1936, 12: *archite[c]tus salarius legionis VII Cl(audiae)*; AE 1947, 35: *sq(ariarius) leg(ionis) I Ad(iutricis) p(iae) f(idelis) interpres Dacorum*. See T. Nagy, *Salararius Legionis — Salararius Coloniae*, Acta Arch. Hung. 28 (1976) 79–91. See also RIU II, 422; 475.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. P. K. Baillie-Reynolds, *The Troops Quartered in the Castra Peregrinorum*, JRS 13 (1923) 168–189.

the Roman army, namely “men from beyond the borders of the empire”<sup>30</sup>. This, surely, is the meaning of the word here, also in view of the Semitic names of the men serving in Egypt.

As the presence of a father and his son shows, these foreign *salarati* were hired not singly but as a group, i.e. a *numerus*. The term *salarati* of our papyrus thus may be understood in the light of an incident told by Ammianus Marcellinus: in AD 365, Mesopotamian Saracens had offered Julian their services for his Persian campaign, but when the emperor haughtily refused to pay them *salaria muneraque*, they turned to harassing his expeditionary army<sup>31</sup>. It follows from this passage that *salaria* were paid not only to time-expired soldiers serving on as specialists, but also to foreigners when they joined the Roman army as mercenaries. The *salarati peregrini* of our papyrus thus were foreign mercenaries. Not all of them, though, need have been *catafractarii*. Some may have been bowmen or even regular horsemen<sup>32</sup>.

It is, however, very appropriate that such foreigners should have served as *catafractarii*, for the Parthians and Arabs were the best heavy-mailed horsemen. From them Rome raised such catafractarian regiments as the fourth-century *equites Persae clibanarii*, the four regiments of *equites clibanarii Parthi*, and the *equites clibanarii Palmireni*<sup>33</sup>. Our papyrus, then, is the oldest preserved document recording the hiring of mailed cavalymen from beyond the eastern frontier, although the hiring or recruiting of such men may have been older still, as suggested by the very similar names of men serving in the *catafractarii* regiments during the German campaign of 235<sup>34</sup>.

Perhaps, there is some truth in what Severus Alexander is said to have reported (SHA, *Alex.* 56,6): *Catafractarios quos illi clibanarios vocant, decem milia in bello interemimus, eorum armis nostros armavimus. Multos Persarum cepimus eosdemque vendidimus*. If indeed Roman horsemen were fitted out with clibanarian equipment taken from the Persian fallen, some of the captured Persians must have been retained as instructors, and these may be the Persian prisoners of war known to have served in the Roman army at the time<sup>35</sup>.

To what unit did the *catafracti* of the papyrus belong? Barsimis Bassus, the father of Marias Barsimis, is called δεκάδαρχος εἰλης τῆς αὐτῆς, i. e. decurion, squadron leader of

<sup>30</sup> Panegyrici 8, 12 *peregrinorum militum cunei* (AD 286), cf. Bang (above, note 7) 62; see also Speidel (above, note 8) — the new reading of the inscription concerned (AE 1969/70, 612) excludes the suggestion by M. Christol, in H. G. Pflaum, *Les carrières procuratoriennes équestres, Supplément*, Paris 1982, 77, that the [*gentes*] *peregrinae* mentioned were [*vexillationes*] *peregrinae* recruited in the non-oriental provinces of the empire.

<sup>31</sup> Ammianus 25, 6, 10: *Hos autem Saracenos ideo patiebamur infestos, quod salaria muneraque plurima a Iuliano ad similitudinem praeteriti temporis accipere vetiti, questique apud eum solum audierant imperatorem bellicosum et vigilantem ferrum habere, non aurum*.

<sup>32</sup> The fact that in line 19 Marias Barsimis is said to be a *salaratus* of the *numerus* of the catafracts, while in line 27 Rufus Abedsai is an *optio* of the *numerus* of the foreign *salarati*, does not necessarily mean the two *numeri* were the same. The term *numerus* may mean no more than “group” or “number”, see Oxford Latin Dictionary s. v. Hence not all *peregrini* need have been *catafractarii*, nor all *catafractarii peregrini*.

<sup>33</sup> *Notitia Dignitatum*, Oriens, 5, 40; 6, 32; 6, 40; 7, 32; 7, 34. Cf. M. P. Speidel, *Catafractarii Clibanarii and the Rise of the Later Roman Mailed Cavalry. A Gravestone from Claudiopolis in Bithynia*, EA 5 (1984) 1–7.

<sup>34</sup> H. Nesselhauf, *Neue Inschriften aus dem römischen Germanien und den angrenzenden Gebieten*, Berichte RGK 27 (1937) 51–134, no. 103 (Cannstadt): *D(is) M(anibus). Aurelis Saluda et Regretho fratrib(us) quond(am) equitib(us) n(umeri?) alae Firm(ae) catafr(actariae), Aurel(ius) Abdetathus frater e(orum) f(aciendum) c(uravit)*. Dessau, ILS 9148: *Memoriae Biribam Absei dec(urionis) alae firm(ae) catafract(ariae), bello desiderati, oriundo ex provincia Mesopotamiae, domo Rac[—]*.

<sup>35</sup> Herodian 7, 2, 1: τίνες Παρθυαίων ληφθέντες αἰχμάλωτοι Ῥωμαίους ἐδοῦλεον.

the ala mentioned. If the word *ala* is used here in a technical sense, as is likely, Barsimis Bassus belonged to a cavalry regiment mentioned in the lost beginning of the papyrus, probably one of the *alae* stationed in Lower Egypt<sup>36</sup>, and the *salarati catafracti*, including his son, may have been attached to that ala. Other eastern ethnic groups and specialists attached to regular units are known<sup>37</sup>, and the example of a certain Barsemis Abbei, *decurio ala firma katafractaria ex numero Hosroruorum* shows that men of an ethnic numerus could indeed become decurions of a regular ala, just like Barsimis Bassus<sup>38</sup>. The attachment of groups of foreigners to regular units at this time is also known to our literary sources<sup>39</sup>.

The rise of the heavy-mailed cavalry of the *catafractarii* and *clibanarii* announces the dominant role horsemen were to play in late antiquity and foretokens the rise of the medieval knights<sup>40</sup>. Recent finds have revealed that often only a few chosen horsemen in a given unit were thus armed and trained<sup>41</sup>, men who might fight in the first line when their regiment rode out to attack. This was so in AD 300, for a papyrus mentions two *catafractarii* in a group of seven horsemen of *ala II Herculia Dromedariorum*<sup>42</sup>. It was still so in AD 395 and 401 when a further papyrus has not only *equites* but also a *schola catafractariorum* among the soldiers of an unnamed unit (*ala II Assyriorum?*) in the camp at Psoftis in Egypt<sup>43</sup>. Our papyrus of AD 267 is the oldest document showing such a group of mailed horsemen attached to a regular unit. It also shows that mercenaries were hired as specialists in unusual fighting skills.

### 3. *Salparati ?*] at Dura-Europos in 251

In the light of the Egyptian *salarati*, a papyrus from the archives of *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* at Dura-Europos, written in 251, may take on new meaning. The document reads as follows<sup>44</sup>:

<sup>36</sup> *Ala nova firma catafractaria* is also possible, if it came to Egypt for some purpose; see above, note 34; below, note 38; Mavors I, 246f. For the auxiliary regiments stationed in Egypt see S. Daris, *Le truppe ausiliarie romane in Egitto*, ANRW II, 10, 1 (1987) forthcoming.

<sup>37</sup> E. g. the Orontarses ChLA X, 443, or the *Palmyreni sagittarii* attached to *cohors I Chalcidenorum* at Calceus Hercules in Numidia, AE 1900, 197 = Dessau, ILS 9137, cf. J. Carcopino, *Le limes de Numidie et sa garde syrienne*, Syria 6 (1925) 118—149, esp. 120. See also above, p. 194f. and below, p. 200f.

<sup>38</sup> CIL III, 10307 = Dessau, ILS 2540 = *Intercisa I*, 341, cf. Mavors I, 145f. The numerus may have been attached to the ala, just as in the case of the *salarati peregrini*. Later the promotion *cataphractarius*—*decurio* becomes regular, see CPR V 13.

<sup>39</sup> Zosimus I, 46, 2; SHA, *Probus* 14, 7.

<sup>40</sup> M. I. Rostovtzeff, *The Excavations at Dura-Europos*, Fourth Season of Work, ed. P. V. C. Baur et al., New Haven 1933, 215—221; J. W. Eadie, *The Development of Roman Mailed Cavalry*, JRS 57 (1967) 161—173; O. Gamber, *Kataphrakten, Clibanarier, Normannenreiter*, Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien 64 (1968) 7—44; Hoffmann (above, note 10) 265—277; Speidel (above, note 33); J. M. Diethart, P. Dintsis, *Die Leontoklibanarier. Versuch einer archäologisch—papyrologischen Zusammenschau*, in: *Byzantios, Festschrift für H. Hunger*, ed. W. Hörandner et al., Wien 1984, 67—84.

<sup>41</sup> Speidel (above, note 33). The same was true for the *contarii* with their long lances, see M. P. Speidel, *Horsemen of the Pannonian Alae*, Saalburg-Jahrbuch 1987, forthcoming.

<sup>42</sup> P. Beatty Panop. II, 28. For AD 309 see now P. Giss. inv. 126 published by J. D. Thomas, *The Earliest Occurrence etc.*, YCS 28 (1985) 115—124.

<sup>43</sup> J. Rea, *A Cavalryman's Career, AD 384 (?)—401*, ZPE 56 (1984) 79—88.

<sup>44</sup> P. Dura 97; J. F. Gilliam, *Some Latin Military Papyri from Dura*, YCS 11 (1950) 171—252, esp. 189—209; CPL 325; Fink (above, note 17) 83; R. Marichal, ChLA VII 352. Our text is that of Marichal.

- 1                    amisit eq(uum) ex prid[ie..... co]s(ulibus)
- 2 Oge[us Malchi [eq(uum) quadrimum cer[.....]us albis [ n(ota) f(emore) ]  
n(otae) . f(emore) a(rmo) . d(extris) prob(atum) . a tunc pref(ectis) XIII Kal(endas)  
Nouembr(es) Pres(ente) et Albino cos(ulibus) (denariis) CXXV ] 20-X 246
- 3 [M]alchus Gora ami[si]t eq(uum) I[
- 4 [Aur]el(ius) Alex[and... eq(uum) a]equatu[m.....]prob(atum) . ab  
Attilio Cosmino tunc cos(ulare) XVII Kal(endas) April(es) III et I cos(ulibus)  
(denariis) CXXV 16-III 251
- 5 [.....]... bimum nigrum n(otae) f(emore) a(rmo)  
d(extris) prob(atum) . a tunc pref(ectis) IIII Kal(endas) Ianuarias Tittiano cos(ule)  
(denariis) CXXV 29-XII 245
- 6 [.....][.....][.....][.....][a]mi[si]t eq(uum)..... ]
- 7 [.....]ci[.....]us An[ton]ini amisit [eq(uum)..... ]
- 8 [.....][A]be[da]l[m]e eq(uum) cum .....[.....] prorostratum pedibus pos-  
terioribus albis s(ine) n(ota) prob(atum) . ab Atilio Cosmino tunc cos(ulare)
- 9 XVII [K]al(endas) April(es) III et I cos(ulibus)  
(denariis) CXXV 16-III 251
- 10 [.....]rnab[us]... eq(uum) e.....[.....] murinum n(otae) f(emore)  
d(extro) . et a(rmo) . s(inistro) . prob(atum) a tunc p[re]f(ectis) IIII Kal(endas)  
Ianuarias Tittiano cos(ule) (denariis) CXXV 29-XII 245
- 11 [.....]o a.us a. eq(uum) .....[.....] prob(atum) . a tunc  
pref(ectis) die e[t cos(ule)] s(upra) s(criptis)——(denariis) CXXV 29-XII 245
- 12 [.....]us Uhabalathi e[q(uum) [.....][.....] ] probatum a tunc pref(ectis) IIII  
Idus Septembr(es) Aemil(liano) II et Aqu(i)l(ino) co[s](ulibus)  
(denariis) CXXV 10-IX 249
- 13 A[ur]el(ius) Bars[.....]s amisit eq(uum) [.....]co]s —— [ (denariis) ..X ]
- 14 [.....] [.....] [.....] eq(uum) q[u]a[drim]um ..... pe]dibus posterioribus albis  
s(ine) n(ota) prob(atum) ab Atilio Cosmino tunc co[s](ulare) XI K[al](endas)  
Febr(uarias) II[I] et I cos(ulibus) (denariis) CXXV 22-I 251
- 15 A[.....]abumarius .....[.....] russeobadium n(ota) a(rmo) . d(extro)  
. aestimatum a P[ro]mp[er]io Letiano u(iro) e(gregio) pro[ce]r(uratore) Aug(ustor-  
um) n(ostorum) I[d]ib(us) April(ibus)
- 16 III et I cos(ulibus) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ (denarii) XXXXV e. quaesur (denarii) LV 13-IV 251
- 17 A[ur]el(ius) Ma[n]boge[us] [eq(uum) qu[a]drim[um] .....][.....]a] Pomponio  
Letiano u(iro) e(gregio) pro[ce]r(uratore) Aug(ustorum) [n(ostorum)] ..... [I]dus  
Maias III et I cos(ulibus)——(denariis) CXXV 8/14-V 251
- 18 I[te]m sal[.....]
- 19 Barhathes Maesum eq(uam) aequ[atam] [.....][.....] calidam s(ine)  
n(ota) . prob(atam) . a tunc pref(ectis) XI Kal(endas) Octobr(es) Aemil(liano) II et  
Aqu(i)l(ino) co[s](ulibus) 21-IX 249
- 20 A[ur]el(ius) Theodorus
- 21 [.....][.....]thi eq(uam) qu[ad]rim[um] bad[i]o[.....]nam pedib[us] prioribus inalbis  
s(ine) n(ota) . signata a L[ic]innio [P]acatiano tunc duc(e) IIII Idus Aug(ustas)  
Tittiano cos(ule) 10-VIII 245

- 22 Ian[...][...][...][...] eq(uum) prid[i]e Ka(endas) Septembr(es) I[I]I et I cos(ulibus)  
31-VIII 251
- 23 Ba[.....]e]q(uam) aequatam russeosordidam n(ota) [.] s(inistro) signata a Li-  
cinnio Pacatiano tunc duc(e) III Idu[s Aug(ustas)] Tittiano çoş(ule) 11-VIII 245
- 24 [[B...]]eb[.....]. eq(uum) aeq[ua]tu[m]m cerin[eu]m gla[....] n(ota) f(emore) .  
s(inistro) . probatum ab Ulpio Tertio tunc duc(e) XV [.....]ias III et II çoş(ulibus)  
?-? 248

The list of men and their horses of *cohors XX Palmyrenorum* is divided by the heading *item sal[—]* of line 18, the meaning of which has been much discussed. Gilliam wrote: “The heading, if complete and intelligible, might have explained a great deal. For the fragmentary *sal[—]* the two most obvious suggestions appear to be either a name, possibly an unknown but convenient place-name (i.e. “cavalrymen at Sal—”), or *salvus* in some form. One possibility which may be worth considering is *item sal[vi]*, perhaps balancing *occisi in expeditione* or the like above”. But “... another point remains to be taken into account. This is the fact that the figures which always conclude the longer entries above the heading are omitted in all four cases below it ... The heading apparently introduces a new category of men or horses against whom or for which such charges were either not made or perhaps simply not recorded here”<sup>45</sup>.

Marichal objected that the list cannot be concerned with the men because it gives no detail at all about them, and no place-name Sal— is known among the *stationes* around Dura. He thus comes back to another possibility, raised but rejected by Gilliam, namely that *salariarii* are meant, “des soldats servants au-delà de la durée réglementaire ainsi appelés par ce qu'ils recevaient une rémunération (*salarium*) différente de la solde réglementaire”<sup>46</sup>. *Salariarii*, however, are not just time-expired soldiers<sup>47</sup>.

*Salarati* or *Salariarii* as mercenaries make far better sense here. Since they are known from Egypt only sixteen years later, it seems possible that a group of them served also at Dura-Europos with *cohors XX Palmyrenorum*. If the papyrus lists the horses of the entire cohort, those of the *salarati* may have come at the end of the list, as did the *dromedarii* in 219 and 222<sup>48</sup>; alternatively, they may have been distributed among the squadrons of the cohort<sup>49</sup>.

If the men from line 18 on were mercenaries, one would understand why no prices for their horses are listed. Perhaps they brought their own horses along and were alone responsible for them<sup>50</sup>. Alternatively, if those sums were to be deducted from the soldiers' pay, they may be lacking here merely because the *salarati* were paid differently. At any rate, it would be of interest to learn that a mercenary's horse had to be approved by the duke, for if so, then Rome still kept a close rein on such troops.

<sup>45</sup> J. F. Gilliam, *P.Dura*, p. 297.

<sup>46</sup> Marichal (above, note 44) p. 64; cf. Gilliam (above, note 44) p. 196.

<sup>47</sup> Above, p. 196. Th. Mommsen, *Evocati Augusti*, *EE* 5 (1884) 142–151 (= *Ges. Schriften* 8 [1913] 447–456) had concluded that *salariarii legionis* were *evocati*, but Nagy (above, note 28) refutes this.

<sup>48</sup> *P.Dura* 100 and 101 (= Fink 1 and 2) XXXIII, 28ff. and XXXII, 26ff.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *P.Mich.* 454 = Fink 20.

<sup>50</sup> For the army's role in regular soldiers' horses see R. W. Davies, *The Supply of Animals to the Roman Army and the Remount System*, *Latomus* 28 (1969) 429–459; A. E. Hanson, *Private Letter (P.Cornell Inv. I, 34)*, *BASP* 22 (1985) 87–95.



Perhaps one may take the comparison with the Egyptian *salarati* one step further and surmise that the Dura *sal[—]*, too, were catafracts. At Dura, drawings of Parthian-looking catafracts as well as catafractarian horse-armour have been found. There must have been catafracts among the garrison, and they seem to have been foreigners<sup>51</sup>. They need not have been many, for, as shown above, small numbers of catafracts could be attached to regular units.

Of the two names known of the *sal[—]* at Dura, one, Barhathes Maesum, is Semitic, hence Mesopotamian rather than Iranian. The other, Aur(elius) Theodorus, is Greek and Latin and shows the man was a Roman citizen. Whether he was a foreigner who had adopted a Roman name, or whether he was a Roman enrolled among the *sal[—]*, he would make it clear that the Dura mercenaries were on the road to Romanization, — if indeed they were mercenaries.

\* \* \*

The emperors recklessly turned the tax screw, willing to pay whatever *salaria muneraque* it took to hire the needed first-rate soldiers. Even the former military decorations were replaced by cash awards and golden torcs, more appealing to the mercenary spirit<sup>52</sup>. Rewards other than gold they were even more willing to grant. The papyri showing third-century *peregrini* soldiers joining the army make it likely that Caracalla in his famous edict meant just such foreign soldiers when he awarded Roman citizenship to certain people “whenever they join my men”<sup>53</sup>.

Vegetius, around 380, advised that training one’s own men was cheaper than hiring foreigners<sup>54</sup>. Instead, the emperors bought regiments *ubi merent omnes ingenui barbari armorum viriumque firmitudine inter alios eminentes* (Ammianus 18,9,4). In doing so, they divorced the army from the people, surely one of the causes for the fall of the Western Empire<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> Rostovtzeff (above, note 40); Speidel (above, note 33).

<sup>52</sup> M. P. Speidel, *The Master of the Dragon Standards and the Golden Torc: an Inscription from Prusias and Prudentius’ Peristephanon*, TAPhA 115 (1985) 283—287, cf. Plin., NH 33, X (37): *auxilia quippe et externos torquibus aureis donavere, at cives non nisi argenteis*.

<sup>53</sup> P.Giess. 40, I. H. Wolff (above, note 7) lacked documented *peregrini* and, a fortiori, *peregrini* soldiers, hence he did not decide for soldiers, but outlined the possibility. Soldiers: M. P. Speidel, *Guards of the Roman Armies*, Bonn 1978, 67. P.Oxy XLI, 2951 thus confirms that Caracalla’s edict was not automatically continued by later emperors.

<sup>54</sup> *De re militari* I, 28: *Vilius enim constat erudire armis suos quam alienos mercede conducere*.

<sup>55</sup> For the discussion, at the time, about the use and the danger of hiring foreigners for the army see J. Vogt, *Kulturwelt und Barbaren, zum Menschheitsbild der spätrömischen Gesellschaft*, Mainz 1967. For a modern assessment see E. Gabba, *Per la storia dell’ esercito Romano in età imperiale*, Bologna 1974, 68ff.