

RECRUITMENT TO THE LEGIO II PARTHICA

The Second Parthian Legion was formed, as is well known, by Septimius Severus¹ in the year 197 and named the Alban Legion² because its camp was located on the Alban Mount near Rome. The Legion served as an imperial guard for the capital³, in addition to the Praetorian Guard, and in fact there was little to distinguish the two⁴. The second Legion regularly accompanied the Emperors on their military campaigns⁵. However, in the reign of Diocletian, or at the latest in that of Constantine, it ceased to function as an imperial guard and was transferred to the East⁶. In his discussion of the sources from which the legionaries were recruited, Ritterling asserts that, in so far as it is possible to draw any conclusions from the soldiers' names, the second Legion was composed of Illyrians and, principally, of Thracians⁷. Forni's⁸ fuller statistical list of the extant data shows nineteen legionaries from Thrace⁹, one from lower Pannonia, four from upper

¹ Dio, LV, 24.

² Dio LXXIX, 13, 4.

³ E. Ritterling, *S.V. legio PWRE XII 2* (1925) col. 1478.

⁴ G. Forni, *Il Reclutamento delle legioni da Augusto a Diocleziano*, (Roma 1952), p. 98-9.

⁵ A detailed list of the Legion's campaigns is given by Ritterling, *op. cit.*, col. 1479 ff.

⁶ *Not. Dign. Or.* XXXVI, 30.

⁷ Ritterling, *op. cit.* col. 1471. In cols. 1482-3 the following numbers of recruits from places of origins appear: Dacia — one, Illyria — two, Pannonia — two, Thrace — eight.

⁸ *Op. cit.* (n. 4) 97-98.

⁹ 1) *C.I.L.* X 5652: natione Thrax. 2) *C.I.L.* VI 3397 = *C.I.L.* VI 3372 = XIV 2280: Aulazanus (the soldier's name). 3) XIV 2279: Bitus (the soldier's name). 4) XIV 4214: Bitus (Soldier's name). 5) An as yet unpublished epitaph found on the Alban Mount. The name of the soldier appearing on it is Bitus. 6) XIV 7273: Dis[oni] (the soldier's name). 7) VI 37261: Dizza (the soldier's name). 8) XIII 6231 = D 2360 = Riese 636: Dizza (the Soldier's name). 9) XIV 2284: Dizza (the soldier's name). 10) An as yet unpublished epitaph found on the Alban Mount, with the soldier's name Eptecentus. 11) XIII 6231 = D 2360. Only the beginning of the soldier's name has been preserved: MUC. It is therefore strange that he should be considered a Thracian, even though the name of the other soldier appearing on the same epitaph is Dizza. 12) W.K. Prentice, American

Pannonia¹⁰, three soldiers with Illyrian names¹¹, three Italians¹², one Dacian¹³, two Syrians (or perhaps one)¹⁴, two soldiers from Africa¹⁵, and one from Egypt¹⁶. Forni concludes that, in the third century, only Thracians and Illyrians were recruited into the Legion¹⁷. However, his own list shows that this conclusion is not exact. Moreover, Forni does not make any mention of many inscriptions found in the sixth volume of *C.I.L.*, in the chapter “*Tituli militum legionis II Parthicae*” where soldiers with Italian names are mentioned. In the legionaries’ cemetery, situated between the Alban Lake and Chigi forest beyond Aricia, the following gravestones were found: 1) *C.I.L.* VI 3367, commemorating a soldier named Aelius Marcellus, who is explicitly stated to have served in the second Parthian Legion — “*mil. leg. II P.*” 2) *C.I.L.* VI 3368, commemorating a soldier named Aelius Valepius, who was a veteran — “*vet(eranus) Aug(usti) nos(tri)*” — and evidently served in the legion in

Expedition to Syria, p. 142, 130 = A.E. 1908, 272: Mucapor (name of the soldier). 13) Prentice p. 142, 130 = A.E. 1939, 26: Mucianus (name of the soldier). It is hard to understand how such a typically Roman name as this can be considered Thracian. 14) *Rendiconti dell’ Accademia dei Lincei*, Roma, V.S. XXV (1916), p. 403, 1 = A.E. 1919, 72: Paiba (name of the soldier). 15) *C.I.L.* III 187 — 14393 = Prentice p. 140, 128: Zenas (name of the soldier). 16) *Rend. Lincei* V.S. XXV, (1916) p. 403, 1 = A.E. 1919, 72: Zypyr (name of the soldier). 17) A.E.M. X 1886, p. 239, 3 = I.G.R. I 678 = Kalinka 184: *Μετρία[vos]* (name of the soldier). 18) *N.S.C.* 1902, p. 68 = A.E. 1902/89 = D 9087: Mucatra (name of the soldier). 19) *Rend. Lincei* V.S. XXV (1916), p. 403, 1 = A.E. 1919, 72: Mestrius (name of the soldier).

¹⁰ The soldiers from Pannonia are mentioned on the following epitaphs: 1) *C.I.L.* III 6700: Poetovio (native town). 2) *C.I.L.* VI, 2579: Poetovio (native town). 3) XIV 2272: Savaria (native town). 4) Prentice p. 145, 134: Savaria (native town).

¹¹ The soldiers from Dalmatia are mentioned on the following epitaphs: 1) *C.I.L.* VI 3401 = XIV 2255 = D 2398: Dasimius (name of the soldier). 2) *C.I.L.* VI 3403: Dasumius (name of the soldier). 3) *Rend. Lincei* V.S. XXV 1916 p. 403, 2: Varzo (name of the soldier).

¹² The soldiers from Italy are mentioned on the following epitaphs: 1) *C.I.L.* VI 32540 (?). 2) *C.I.L.* VI 3396 = XIV 2284. 3) *C.I.L.* V 5824.

¹³ The Dacian soldier: *C.I.L.* VI 3277.

¹⁴ The Syrian soldier is named on the epitaph *C.I.L.* XIV 2282. The other had a Semitic name: Iamianus — *C.I.L.* XIV, 2268, 8.

¹⁵ The two soldiers from Africa are mentioned on the epitaphs: *C.I.L.* VI 232, 37262.

¹⁶ The soldier from Egypt is mentioned on the epitaph *C.I.L.* VI 37263. His name: Serrapio.

¹⁷ He expresses his conclusion in the following sentence: “*Durante tutto il III secolo esta rimase composta esclusivamente di Tracie Illyri.*”

question. 3) *C.I.L.* VI 3369, of the veteran Aelius Vitalis — “vet(eranus) Aug(usti) nos(tri).” 4) *C.I.L.* VI 3375, — of the man’s name only the nomen, Val(erius), was preserved. The epitaph states that he served in “II Par Severi”. It is very possible that he was a soldier. His son and daughter, who are mentioned in the epitaph, had typically Italian names. The son was called Valerius Martinianus, and the daughter Valeria Flavia.

The next group of gravestones were found between the Alban Lake and the road running down from Castel Gandolfo: 1) In *C.I.L.* VI 3295 there is mention of a soldier by the name of Septimius Licianius, who was “immunis librator leg II Par.” 2) In *C.I.L.* VI 3398 there is mention of a veteran from the legion in question named Aurelius Frunitus. 3) In *C.I.L.* VI 3399 the name of the soldier Valerius Maximus occurs, and it is explicitly stated that he served in the Second Parthian Legion Severiana.

The following inscriptions were found in the environs of Rome, though the exact place where they were discovered is not known: 1) In *C.I.L.* VI 3403 there is mention of a soldier by the name of Aurelius Romulus, who is stated to have served in the legion in question. 2) The name of the soldier mentioned in *C.I.L.* VI 3407 was Marius Maximus, who was a *duplicarius* in the legion in question. 3) In *C.I.L.* VI 3408, mention is made of a soldier named Ulpius Silvius, who was transferred from the legion in question to the Praetorian Guard (he was a strator of the Praetorian prefect). 4) In *C.I.L.* VI 3894 = 32690 a soldier named Aurelius Pompeianus is stated to have served in the second Parthian Legion. There are also other epitaph inscriptions which appear in the chapter “tituli militum legionis II Parthicae” and in which men with Italian names are mentioned, though it is not stated that they were soldiers in the Second Parthian Legion. However, seeing that they were buried in the legionaries’ cemetery, this was almost certainly the case. In the cemetery between the Alban Lake and the Chigi forest the following epitaphs were found: 1) *C.I.L.* VI 3376, commemorating a man by the name of Aelius Secundus. 2) *C.I.L.* VI 3379. The man’s name has not been preserved, but that of his son is typically Latin: Aurelius Clementianus. 3) *C.I.L.* VI 3380, bearing the name Aurelius Iustinus. 4) *C.I.L.* VI 3382, bearing the name Cesium Secundus. 5) *C.I.L.* 3388 bearing the name Titus Flavius. 6) *C.I.L.* 3390, commemorating a man named Valerius Restutus.

As already noted, even Forni recognizes that there are epitaphs of soldiers who were recruited into the legion in Italy. Thus, he mentions the epitaph *C.I.L.* V 5824 which was found in Mediolanum on a gravestone set up by a mother in memory of her son, who had served in the Second Parthian Legion. She laments that she cannot give a proper burial to her son who had died in distant lands. Clearly, then, the soldier in question was born in Mediolanum. In the epitaph *C.I.L.* VI 3396, also referred to by Forni, it is explicitly stated that the soldier Aurelius Comastus, who served in the Legion in question, was a native of Verona — “d(omo) Ver(ona).” The name Comastus is not Italian. It could be Gallic or even Greek, and thus exemplifies the possibility that, even if a soldier’s name was not Italian, this still does not prove that he was born outside Italy, since his parents could have settled there before his birth. There are still other gravestones of soldiers evidently born in Italy which were not mentioned by Forni. Thus, the gravestone *I. It.* IX 1, 26 was set up by the wife and children of a veteran who served in the second Legion. The stone was found in Augusta Bagiennorum, and it is hard to explain why the veteran chose to make his home in this town if it was not his birthplace. Then there is the epitaph *C.I.L.* IX 1459, which was found at Ligures Baebiani, in the second region of Italy and commemorates a veteran of the legion in question, who was a decurion and a patron of decurions in that town. Although we cannot be certain that he was actually born in Ligures Baebiani, it is very likely that he owed his high social standing to his being the son of a long-established local family. In this connection, it is noteworthy that, in the army, he did not receive any promotion at all, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that his advancement in his home town was due to his birth, and not to his talents.

If we take the soldiers’ names to be an indication of where they were born, as Ritterling and Forni do¹⁸, we can assert that there was a far from negligible Italian element in the Second Parthian Legion. As

¹⁸ While this is a reasonable enough procedure, it certainly does not accurately reflect the origins of the soldiers themselves, since, in consequence of shifts of population, people with Thracian names could have been living in Italy. See *C.I.L.* V 893, and the commentary to the Inscription. In Praetoria Augusta not a few epitaphs were found commemorating people with non-Italian names — Greek, Syrian, and Gallic. see: *I. It.* vol. XI fasc. I n. 1, 5, 12, 21, 35, 36, 37, 47, 116.

against the thirty soldiers¹⁹ that Forni states were recruited outside Italy, we can present two soldiers whose Italian origin is beyond doubt — one from Verona (*C.I.L.* VI 3396) and the other from Milan (*C.I.L.* V, 5824) — in addition to two more who were probably born in Italy, one from Ligures Baebiani (*C.I.L.* IX 1459) and the other from Augusta Bagienorum (*I. It.* IX, 1, n. 26), as with the twelve veterans with Italian names, and six more men with Italian names, who, to all appearances, served as soldiers in the Legion. It is true that Italian names were spread all over the Balkan region²⁰ and that therefore maybe not all the soldiers with such names mentioned above were actually born in Italy. But there are no objective grounds for assuming that most of them were *not* born in that country.²¹

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¹⁹ Of his list I am prepared to accept twenty nine. His identifications of Mucianus as a Thracian is completely unfounded, as is that of the soldier only the first part of whose name (MUC ...) has been preserved.

²⁰ A. Mocsy, *Die Bevölkerung von Pannonien bis zu den Markomannkriegen*, (Budapest, Akademie 1959), *passim*; G. Alföldy: *Bevölkerung und Gesellschaft der Römischen Provinz Dalmatien*, (Budapest, Akademiai Kiado 1965) p. 118 = n. 115. Moreover, it is possible that the Aureli mentioned in *C.I.L.* VI, 3379, 3380, 3398, 3403, 3894, were provincials who received Roman citizenship under the *constitutio Antoniniana*. But the example of the soldier Aurelius Comastus who served in the legion in question and was born at Verona (*C.I.L.* VI 3396) shows, that it is equally possible that they were Italians.

²¹ The data are meagre for statistical conclusions. Nevertheless the number of inscriptions is large enough to give the impression that a not negligible Italian element served in the Legio II Parthica.