

Deabus et Dis Communibus

[Thesis on the religious identity of auxiliary soldiers on the northern frontier of Roman Britain]

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Abbreviations

AE = (1888-...) *L'Année Épigraphique*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.

ANRW = H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds.) (1972-...) *Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

BRGK = (1905-...) *Bericht der Römisch-Germanische Kommission*. Frankfurt am Main: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut.

Brit. = S.S. Frere (ed.) (1970-1982) *Britannia*. London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies.

CIL VI = G. Henzen, I.B. de Rossi, E. Bormann, Chr. Huelsen and M. Bang. (eds.) (1876-...) *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum VI: Inscriptiones urbis Romae Latinae*. Berlin: G. Reimer.

CIL VII = A. Hübner (ed.) (1873-...) *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum VII: Inscriptiones Britanniae Latinae*. Berlin: G. Reimer.

CIL XII = O. Hirschfeld (ed.) (1888-...) *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum XII: Inscriptiones Galliae Narbonensis Latinae*. Berlin: G. Reimer.

CIL XIII = O. Hirschfeld and C. Zangemeister (eds.) (1899-...) *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum XIII: Inscriptiones trium Galliarum et Germaniarum Latinae*. Berlin: G. Reimer.

EE III = E. Hübner (ed.) (1877) *Ephemeris Epigraphica Vol. III, addit. secunda*.

EE VII = F.J. Haverfield (ed.) (1892) *Ephemeris Epigraphica Vol. VII, addit. quarta*.

EE IX = F.J. Haverfield (ed.) (1913) *Ephemeris Epigraphica Vol. IX, addit. quinta*.

JRS XXII = R.G. Collingwood (1932) "Roman Britain in 1931: II. Inscriptions" *Journal of Roman Studies* 22: 223-229.

JRS XXXVII = R.P. Wright (1947) "Roman Britain in 1946: II. Inscriptions" *Journal of Roman Studies* 37: 178-182.

JRS XL = R.P. Wright (1950) "Roman Britain in 1949: II. Inscriptions" *Journal of Roman Studies* 40: 114-118.

JRS XLIII = R.P. Wright (1953) "Roman Britain in 1952: II. Inscriptions" *Journal of Roman Studies* 43: 128-132.

JRS LII = R.P. Wright (1962) "Roman Britain in 1961: II. Inscriptions" *Journal of Roman Studies* 52: 160-199.

RIB = R.G. Collingwood and R.P. Wright (1965-...) *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain I. Inscriptions on Stone*. Online edition.

RMR = R.O. Fink (1971) *Roman Military Records on Papyrus*. Cleveland, OH: American Philological Association, Press of Case Western Reserve University.

Introduction

Religion has always been a major topic in the studies of the ancient world. This is mainly due to the fact that religion was a major topic in the lives of the people that lived in it. Unlike today, religious practices and beliefs were an integral part of society. Religion and politics were intertwined in a way that is almost unimaginable for us right now. One cannot talk about the one without discussing the other. The Roman Emperor was at the pinnacle of power during the Principate and it is generally known that the army was crucial to maintain the balance of power within the Empire. Most scholars talk about ‘the Roman army’ as if all soldiers were the same. However, there was an important division between two groups: legionaries and auxiliaries. This division was a natural product of the fundamental distinction between citizen and non-citizen. During the first two centuries of the Principate provincials were recruited *en masse* as conscripts to form auxiliary units. Initially, recruits would have found themselves alongside men of a similar cultural background, which is reflected in the ethnic names of these *alae* and *cohortes*. Many of these conscripts would have come from places far away from the centres where the transforming impact of Roman rule was most in evidence. For such men the social impact of enlistment into the Roman army was undoubtedly substantial.¹

Traditionally, the Roman army has been seen as one of the main leading forces behind the ‘Romanisation’ of the newly conquered provinces. However, there are some problems with accepting this theory. For the purpose of this thesis, our main hesitation lies with the fact that most of the ‘Roman’ soldiers that were stationed along the frontiers of the Empire, came from the provinces on the continent. They were Batavians, Gauls and Iberians, but also Syrians and North Africans served in the army and so formed a part of the auxiliary units. Auxiliary soldiers gained Roman citizenship after employment in the army for twenty-five years. After this period they received a military diploma of which several have been recovered so far. In short, these men were continental provincials fighting for the Roman Empire and living at the frontiers for decades interacting with locals. Like it is today, their origin, their occupation and their direct environment must have been of influence on their own feeling of identity. It is therefore interesting to see how auxiliary units integrated into the Roman army.

¹ I. Haynes, “Military service and cultural identity in the *auxilia*” in A. Goldsworthy and I. Haynes (eds.), *The Roman army as a community* (Portsmouth, RI 1999), 166; P. Connolly, *Greece and Roman at war* (online edition) (London 1981); S.T. Roselaar, “Introduction: Processes of Cultural Change and Integration in the Roman World” in S.T. Roselaar (ed.), *Processes of Cultural Change and Integration in the Roman World* (Leiden/Boston 2015), 15f.

If we want to determine the overall identity of any group within history, we have to look at their religious identity. It is only in the past 70 years that significant parts of the world have grown more secular, and religion is now becoming a less decisive factor in many people's identity. However, for the Romans and other ancient peoples, religion was heavily integrated in their lives. Religion was not just a private affair with small offerings to house gods and family burial rituals, but even more so a public affair. However, this does not imply a lack of personal devotion as many votive objects and altars found, seem to be made or set up by individuals for themselves and their families. Evidence of the religious identity of auxiliaries are scattered all around the former Roman Empire. Dedications of various kinds can be found from Iberia to Syria and from Egypt to northern Britain. It is exactly the latter we will look at specifically in this study. Three legions were stationed in Britain permanently at *Isca*, *Deva* and *Eboracum* – respectively modern Caerleon, Chester and York – and fifty or more auxiliary regiments served on the island, which together brought the military force in Roman Britain to about a tenth of the total legionary forces and an astounding seventh of the total auxiliary strength. The reason for this can be found in the failure of the conquest of modern Scotland, which made Roman Britain inevitably a frontier province.²

The history of Roman Britain begins with the expeditions of Caesar in 55 and 54 BC, as part of his conquest of Gaul, because he believed that the British tribes were helping the Gallic resistance. Although he conquered no territory and left no troops behind, Caesar created clients in South Britain, which increased the Roman area of influence. Under the reigns of Augustus and Tiberius, the understanding between Rome and the British tribes was primarily based on diplomacy and trade. The failed invasion of Britain by the emperor Caligula in 40 AD famously ended with the collection of seashells by the troops on the Gallic coast as described by Suetonius and Cassius Dio.³

The conquest of Britain was a gradual process, starting with the invasion under Claudius in 43 AD, led by his general Aulus Plautius, who would later become the first governor of the Roman province of Britannia. The main reason to invade Britain was the rise of the Catuvellauni, a British tribe. They had displaced the Trinovantes as the most powerful tribe in South-East Britain and were pressing the Atrebates to the South. The latter were allies of Rome and which forced Claudius to set out to help. From Claudius' point of view, the conquest of Britain was an important part of the consolidation of his reign. Having added territory to the

² M. Hassall, "Epigraphy and the Roman army in Britain" in T.F. Colston Blagg and A.C. King (eds.), *Military and civilian in Roman Britain: cultural relationships in a frontier province* (Oxford 1984), 265.

³ Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum: Caligula*, 44-46; Cassius Dio, *Ρωμαϊκή Ιστορία*, 59.25.

Empire was crucial to the acceptance of the princeps at this time. Claudius therefore needed a great victory and he set out to Britain to accomplish just this.⁴

In the following decade several governors held campaigns against different tribes and gradually the British South up to modern Lincoln was put under Roman control, with parts of Wales following after many attempts. After defeating Boudica and her followers in 60/61 AD, the Romans fought their way to the northern and western parts of the island, subduing the Brigantes in the north and the Silures and Ordovices in the west. Presumably in 84 AD Agricola won the famous battle at Mons Graupius against the Caledonians in modern Scotland. However, from 105 AD on unrest ruled the northern frontier around the Forth-Clyde isthmus and the border was pulled back southwards to the Solway-Tyne isthmus. Here Hadrian had his wall built from 122 to 128 AD, roughly following the Stanegate, an older Roman road from the fort at *Luguvalium* (Carlisle) to the one at *Corstopitum* (Corbridge).⁵ The Antonine Wall in modern Scotland was finished by 154 AD, but the frontier moved back to Hadrian's Wall during the 160's AD.⁶

During their conquest of Britain the Romans founded new towns mainly in the south-east of the island, like modern Colchester. While the army moved on to the north-west, they largely left the local élite, having close ties with the Roman government, in power in the existing towns and the *coloniae*. The army then stayed at the northern frontier, which slowly moved further north during the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian. Although (parts of) legions visited the Stanegate and Hadrian's Wall, the auxiliary units of the Roman army were garrisoned at the different forts more permanently.

Research on the Roman army has focused mostly on the organisational part of its history, the structure, lay-out of camps and on military equipment. In the last two decades of the twentieth century historians have discussed the army in the context of social changes. However, the study of the army as a dynamic community in its own right has often been neglected. It is important to remember that the army consisted of many individuals, all of them with their own thoughts and needs. Although formal structures may influence a person's patterns of social interaction, they do not necessarily determine them. MacMullen⁷ has considered the legion as a society, instead of just being a fighting machine, but has underlined

⁴ P. Salway, *Roman Britain. A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford 2015), 24f.

⁵ In the Vindolanda tablets the Roman fort at Corbridge is mentioned as *Coria*, which was probably the name used locally.

⁶ A.R. Birley, "Britain 71-205: advance and retrenchment" in L. de Ligt, E.A. Hemelrijk and H.W. Singor (eds.), *Roman Rule and Civic Life: local and regional perspectives* (Amsterdam 2004), 99; Salway, *Roman Britain. A Very Short Introduction* (2015), 25-35.

⁷ R. MacMullen, "The legion as society" *Historia* 33 (1984), 440-456.

the interrelation between the two. Shaw suggested a more rigorous approach, seeing a legionary garrison as a ‘total institution’ that was isolated from the civilian society around them.⁸ This, he argued, made it possible for a garrison to act unhesitatingly in support of the emperor, suppressing local rebellions with brute force. Pollard has used the ‘total institution’ model to examine the social distance between the auxiliary unit stationed at Dura-Europos and the civilian society.⁹ Alston, on the other hand, studied the papyrological evidence from Egypt and has pointed out the relaxed patterns of interaction between soldiers and civilians in this province.¹⁰ More recently, research on the topic of identity regarding the Roman army has deepened our understanding of the army as a force in provincial society. James and De la Bédoyère specifically emphasised on the notion that soldiers were people, with human thoughts and needs.¹¹ The latter stressed the importance of microhistory, looking at a common individual or small group rather than at big men to examine bigger patterns in the history of Roman Britain.¹² Gardner extensively discussed identity theory in the context of the army in Late Roman Britain and how this relates to the archaeological evidence.¹³ Haynes has introduced the issue of community and identity already in the late 90’s of the last century, particularly discussing the cultural identity of auxiliary soldiers in the Empire and has extended his research further in his study of 2013.¹⁴ He was the first to look at the identity of auxiliaries in more detail.

Often, Roman army religion is viewed holistically, like in the studies of Helgeland and Eric Birley, without any distinction between legionaries and auxiliaries. A detailed study of the religious identity of auxiliaries and their integration into the army in the military north of Britain however, has not been worked out in detail. This is exactly the purpose of this paper. First we will have to look at the terms concepts of ‘identity’ and ‘Romanization’.

⁸ B. Shaw, “Soldiers and society: the army in Numidia” *Opus* 2 (1983), 148; The ‘total institution’ model was defined by E. Goffman, *Asylums: essays on the social situation of mental patients and other inmates* (Chicago 1961, xiii) as “a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from a wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered life”.

⁹ N. Pollard, “The Roman army as ‘total institution’ in the Near East? Dura-Europos as a case study” in D.L. Kennedy (ed.), *The Roman army in the East* (Portsmouth, RI 1996), 211-227.

¹⁰ R. Alston, *Soldier and society in Roman Egypt: a social history* (London 1995).

¹¹ S. James, “Soldiers and civilians: identity and interaction in Roman Britain” in S. James and M. Millett (eds.), *Britons and Romans: advancing an archaeological agenda* (York 2001), 77-89.

¹² G. de la Bédoyère, *Eagles over Britannia: the Roman army in Britain* (Stroud 2003); G. de la Bédoyère, *The real lives of Roman Britain* (London 2016).

¹³ A. Gardner, *An Archaeology of Identity: Soldiers and Society in Late Roman Britain* (Walnut Creek, CA 2007).

¹⁴ I. Haynes, “Military service and cultural identity in the *auxilia*” in A. Goldsworthy and I. Haynes (eds.), *The Roman army as a community* (Portsmouth, RI 1999), 165-174; I. Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces: The Roman Auxilia and the Making of the Provincial Society from Augustus to the Severans* (Oxford 2013).

In terms of scholarly definition, identity is one of the most complex concepts there is. Identity has increasingly been used in the literature of such social sciences as psychology, where it is most frequently deployed as referring to personal identity, or the idiosyncratic factors that make a person unique, and sociology, in which it mostly refers to social identity, or the collection of group memberships that define the individual. Different types of identity have been distinguished within these sciences, like gender identity, a topic feminists recently have been encouraging historians and others to discuss.¹⁵

How can identity be defined within the theory of history? To answer this question we have to look at the concepts of ‘agency’ and ‘structure’. The definition of agency in archaeology as well as history is a much discussed topic.¹⁶ It can be said that agency is something that people ‘have’, a capacity for acting in a particular, self-conscious way.¹⁷ However, it can also be said that agency is what people ‘do’, the particular way people act in a given environment through a series of interactions.¹⁸ We can encompass both these understandings if we define agency as ‘active involvement’¹⁹, meaning that an individual’s capacity for action only develops through an ongoing exchange with the wider environment.²⁰ This wider environment can be described by the term ‘structure’. Anthony Giddens’ theory of the ‘duality of structure’ pinpoints the mutual constitutive relation between agency and structure.²¹ Actors affect the world around them, but are also constructed by it. Identity works within this frame as a key symbolic medium through which agency and structure interrelate.²² Agents deal with the environment in terms of categorisations of similarity and difference. This is exactly how identities operate. Structures also ‘act back’ on actors in these same categorizations. Andrew Gardner has shown that “connecting agency and structure through identity, as part of a broader concept of ‘sociality’ and in conjunction with concepts of ‘materiality’ and ‘temporality’, provides a powerful theoretical framework for interpreting past social life.”²³

¹⁵ P. Burke, *What is Cultural History?* 2nd edition (Cambridge/Malden, MA 2008), 84.

¹⁶ See M.-A. Dobres and J.E. Robb, “Agency in archaeology: paradigm or platitude” in M.-A. Dobres and J.E. Robb (eds.), *Agency in Archaeology* (London, 2000), 4-6.

¹⁷ A. Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: outline of the theory of structuration* (Cambridge 1984), 9.

¹⁸ A. Giddens, *Central Problems in Social Theory: action, structure and contradiction in social analysis* (Houndmills 1979), 55; Gardner, *An Archaeology of Identity* (2007), 18.

¹⁹ A. Elliot, *Concepts of self* (Cambridge 2001), 2.

²⁰ A. Gardner, *An Archaeology of Identity: Soldiers and Society in Late Roman Britain* (Walnut Creek, CA 2007), 18.

²¹ Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (1984), 25-27.

²² R. Jenkins, *Social Identity* (London 2004), 23-25; K. Woodward, *Understanding Identity* (London 2002), 4; A. Gardner, “Social identity and the duality of structure in late Roman-period Britain” *Journal of Social Archaeology* 2.3, 345f.

²³ Gardner, 18.

I would like to emphasise the importance of this relation to the way historians look at history. In particular, it allows us to appreciate the way the small-scale actions of people in the past were formed by their concerns and how these may have shaped their societies through time. Too often historians seem to forget that history is the history of people, individuals who make human decisions, based on an individual's logic, past experiences as well as emotions. When reading about the movement of armies across the Roman Empire, you rarely hear about the lengthy treks involved, consisting of months of marching, for the thousands of soldiers in that army and the effects it has on their lives. One might stress that the consequent difficulty is that we can only guess at the thoughts of past people, and the motivations behind their actions. However, the concerns of people long gone are reflected in the archaeological evidence they have left behind. Roman Britain has retrieved an astounding amount of epigraphical evidence and this makes it possible to draw conclusions of what the thoughts and concerns of the soldiers were considering religion.

It must also be kept in mind that individuals can have multiple identities, for example based on origin, occupation and place of residence. These connect to factors of identity like religion, but also for example language. Archaeology can help us determine these identities, because it generally lets us get as close to the people of the past as possible. The role of identities in shaping different kinds of actors and by that different kind of structures can therefore be best explored by looking at the archaeology of people's actions or practices. This correlates with the relational model of agency mentioned before and is based on the assumption, that it is possible to understand what people are, from what they do, not just from what they think.²⁴ Therefore, it is not necessary to exactly determine people's thoughts behind their actions, to determine their identity. However, another issue might arise. Are the identities of the individuals we find in archaeology representative of the group, in this case all auxiliaries in the area of Hadrian's Wall? Although there are always exceptions to every rule, group identity is shaped by the individual identities of the people in it. Vice versa, the collective identity shapes the individual's identity within that community. The quantity and quality of evidence is a decisive factor in this issue as well. We will see that for the auxiliaries stationed on and around Hadrian's Wall both the quantity and quality of the evidence is high enough to draw conclusions from. Also, in many cases, although not in all, it is possible to distinguish between a dedication by a civilian, a legionary and an auxiliary.

²⁴ J. Thomas, *Archaeology and Modernity* (London 2004), 191; Gardner, 19.

Now that we have set up the theoretical framework with regard to how identity works, it is important to look at the definition of another term I have briefly mentioned at the start. Because the Roman army is seen as one of the great forces spreading Roman culture throughout all the provinces, which, as I have mentioned before, is problematic when it comes to auxiliary units, it is helpful to shortly look at the term ‘Romanization’. Theodor Mommsen’s fifth volume of his *Römische Geschichte* mentioned the term ‘Romanizing’. Francis Haverfield then wrote *The Romanization of Roman Britain* in 1905 as a reassessment of Mommsen’s work. The main point that is interesting to us in this work is when Haverfield states that “we can argue from the spread of Roman material civilisation that provincial sentiment was growing Roman”.²⁵ For Haverfield, the adoption of Roman culture meant the adoption of Roman identity. Later in the twentieth century the view on the spread of Roman culture shifted towards a more careful approach where Roman and native cultures became mixed over decennia or even centuries.²⁶ Although the term ‘Romanization’ can be very convenient to explain the cultural process of the Roman Empire throughout the years, it can also be dangerous when used in the way Haverfield meant it. Culture and identity are two different concepts and adoption of (parts of) the first, does not necessarily mean the adoption of the latter. Nowadays, globalisation has brought aspects of many cultures to Britain, but that does not mean the modern Brits feel American when they eat their McDonald’s burgers whilst watching *Friends*.

Under the influence of ‘New Archaeology’ in the 1960’s and 1970’s, the idea became dominant that differing material culture assemblages defined distinct peoples. This encouraged the idea that culture is static. Working within the framework of this theory, variations found in regional cultures were played down. It was thought that one standard, well bounded Roman culture spread across the Empire, replacing several well bounded ‘barbarian’ cultures. Roman and native culture were often set out as opposites and ‘Romanization’ was seen as a ‘progress’ towards ‘civilisation’.²⁷ Nowadays, culture is seen as being in a constant state of transition. Modern ideas on culture are heavily influenced by globalization. This results in that culture is no longer thought of in geographical terms.²⁸ Although in some aspects this might be true for modern society, I think that for Roman times it was in ways easier to determine where someone’s origins lay by looking at their cultural behaviour, of course bearing in mind the inevitable exceptions. Something interesting that derives from this idea though, is that cultures

²⁵ F. Haverfield, *The Romanization of Roman Britain* (London 1905), 20.

²⁶ R. Hingley, *Globalizing Roman Culture: Unity, Diversity and Empire* (London/New York 2005), 35f.

²⁷ A. Gardner, *An Archaeology of Identity: Soldiers and Society in Late Roman Britain* (Walnut Creek, CA 2007), 124.

²⁸ Hingley, *Globalizing Roman Culture* (2005), 51-53.

not necessarily only represent territorial entities, but can also define certain groups within a broader society, like elite cultures. The same can be said for identity.

Native identity is a type of identity that many people still feel very strongly today. Patriotism and nationalism are extreme outcomes of this feeling. I choose to use the term ‘native identity’ rather than ‘national identity’, because for many of the communities auxiliary soldiers in Roman times were born in, the term ‘nation’ does not quite fit, mainly because of the term’s modern association with the 19th century’s rise of the nation-state. ‘Native’ then, refers to the geographically and culturally determined community the soldier has grown up in.

Although auxiliary units, as well as Roman legions, often seem to move from one end of the Empire to another, serving where they are needed, it is not strange for a unit to be stationed in Roman Britain for at least the amount of time of an auxiliary’s service, which was twenty-five years. After this time they received a military diploma, a document proving that they had earned their Roman citizenship by serving in the Roman army. Gaining Roman citizenship had many advantages regarding social and financial status and social mobility and for many auxiliaries this was probably the reason why they joined the army if they were volunteers. Coming back to the point of cohorts staying in one province for decades, this means that many auxiliaries lived and worked in Britain, if not on the Northern frontier of Britain, their whole service. Even in a globalised world like ours living in a certain country or area for a couple of decades is bound to have an influence on a person’s identity, taking over at least some customs and/or the language. This often happens through regular contact with the existing community and although auxiliaries lived in their own military community within the fort, there was contact with the locals by way of trade, and it is interesting to see if there was any local influence on the identity of auxiliaries on the northern frontier.

We have seen that identity, indicating what group within society a person associates itself with, is not necessarily based on just geographical origins either. This is most apparent in the group that we are discussing here, the Roman army. Being away from home for decades, placed in an unfamiliar environment with an unfamiliar culture must have been hard for many of the men joining the *auxilia*.²⁹ It might be for this reason that these units became great unities. Unifying factors led to a new overarching identity: military identity.

We now have introduced three types of identity with reference to auxiliaries. First, Roman identity, most elaborately demonstrated by scholars by the “process” of Romanization, which, as we have seen, carries many difficulties with it, but nevertheless cannot be overlooked.

²⁹ Haynes, “Military service and cultural identity in the *auxilia*” (1999), 165.

Second, native identity stems from the community and often geographical area a person has grown up in. Another influence on geographically determined identity is a person's place of residence. Local influences on auxiliaries' feeling of identity will probably be minor, but is worth looking at. Third, the occupational identity of a soldier should not be underestimated. Military identity could possibly be the main result of integration and the forming of a unity within the apparatus of the Roman army.

How did auxiliary soldiers stationed at the northern frontier in Britain integrate into the Roman army and how did they form a unity? To answer these questions we have to look at the identity of these auxiliaries. An individual's feeling of identity is almost never based on just one factor but on several, like origins, occupation and place of residence as I have explained above. To determine how these influence an individual's and group's identity I will look at the archaeological evidence present to discuss one of the main factors of identity: religion. Still a very important part of many persons' identity today, religion was even more integral to the lives of not just the Romans, but of all ancient peoples. I will discuss the evidence of religion within the auxiliary regiments in three chapters. Roman army religion will be the main focus of the first chapter. This includes the cults of the Roman pantheon and the Imperial cult as well as the mystery cults of Jupiter Dolichenus and Mithras, which were very popular amongst soldiers throughout the whole Empire. In the second chapter, we will look at the veneration of local deities by auxiliaries in northern Britain. The third chapter focuses on the worship of native deities brought to Britain from the auxiliaries' regimental homelands. Finally, conclusions on the identity of auxiliaries at and around Hadrian's Wall will be drawn from the outcomes of all three chapters.

Of course there are more indicators of identity, for example language, clothing and accessories, architecture, art, burial practices and even food and medicine. There are two main reasons why I will not dedicate a chapter to these factors or discuss them at all. Firstly, the limited scope of this paper limits me to focussing on this indicator that promises to produce results we can work with. Secondly, the amount of evidence for auxiliaries is an important limiting factor as well. Archaeological evidence from the area of Hadrian's Wall regarding to, for example, burial practices, clothing and medicine is too scarce to base any conclusions on. Also, information about art and architecture often comes from civilian contexts rather than military. Forts were set up according to a standardised plan throughout the whole of the Roman empire, differing slightly based on the size of a regiment and the exact location within the direct environment. There might be enough evidence for the particular case of the study of group

identity based on food, however, which is a rather new popular area of interest and I would encourage anyone who would like to look further into this topic.

These issues bring us to the sources we do have for the research on auxiliary identity in northern Britain. These do barely consist of literary sources from ancient historians or others. Epigraphical evidence is the most substantial part of the sources for religion in Britain. Many altars have been found along Hadrian's Wall and its hinterland. I will have to make a selection of these, based on the quality of the evidence and the relevance to the question. Where I can however, I will give all known examples from auxiliaries in the military north of Britain. Other archaeological evidence from excavations in our area will compliment this. With drawing conclusions from any source, it must be kept in mind that it is not just important what is present, but also what is absent.

We should briefly return to the reason why the geographical scope of this paper confines to the northern frontier of Roman Britain, where in the early second century Hadrian's Wall was built. Not just the limited scope, but rather the difference in government between north and south Roman Britain is the main factor in this. Rule on the northern frontier was in the hands of the Roman army, rather than of the local élite like it was in the south. Also, as I have mentioned before, although (parts of) legions visited the Stanegate and Hadrian's Wall from time to time, the auxiliary units of the Roman army were garrisoned at the different forts more permanently. This makes the area of the northern frontier in Britain therefore the best geographical scope for the purpose of this paper. The time scope is confined to the era in which auxiliaries were stationed in northern Britain, which roughly comes down to the second half of the 1st century to the end of the 4th century. It is often hard however, to determine the date of dedications.

Chapter 1: Roman army religion

In this chapter I will first explain why discussing religion is so very important within the scope of our question on the identity of auxiliaries. Secondly, the focus will shift from general Roman religion and its practices to the subject specifically concerning the Roman army. The *Feriale Duranum* is an essential source for our purpose in this regard. Hereafter we will look at religious practices of auxiliaries on the northern frontier of Britain specifically, focusing on geographical as well as functional elements. A distinction has to be made between the several cults practised when discussing Roman army religion. Subsequently, we will look at the Roman State religion, including both the Imperial cult as well as the cults of the standard Roman pantheon and the mystery cults popular in the army. The cults of local deities and the cults of deities native to the auxiliary soldiers' place of origin will be discussed in the next chapter.

Already during the Republic the Roman year was filled with festivals dedicated to many different deities. This continued after the Julian and Augustan reforms of the calendar as we can see in the *Fasti Praenestini*, a calendar inscribed during the reign of Augustus by the freedman Verrius Flaccus. The fragments we have left tell us about many religious festivals, like the *Lupercalia* and the *Robigalia*. These celebrations and rituals were organised by *collegia* of priests, in Rome the *pontifices*. From Augustus on, the Roman emperor held the office of *pontifex maximus*, the head of the *Collegium Pontificum*. *Feriae*, holy days, were state-funded, whilst *ludi*, games, were often paid for by a wealthy individual. Religious practice was not just regulated by the Roman State, it was part of it. Priests were often of senatorial or equestrian rank. They generally held more than one office at the same time. Although the most important priesthoods came with restrictions and obligations which made it impossible to fulfil another function in public affairs, many allowed their priests to hold another office at the same time, like a curatorship.

The main difference between the religious calendar of the Republic and the Principate is the addition of festivals in honour of the Emperor and his family. This entailed both celebrations of major accomplishments and happenings during the reign of the Emperor as well as festivals regarding the Imperial cult. In the eastern part of the Empire lines between the two were rather blurred, since a tradition to venerate the ruler as a god already existed here. In the West however, the difference was very clear. The Imperial cult here did not worship the Emperor as if he was a god, but worshipped his *genius*, his spirit so to say. When the Emperor died and the Senate decided he was worthy of receiving *apotheosis*, the title *Divus* would be added to his name. Augustus, for example, became *Divus Augustus* after his death and was

venerated as a god throughout the whole Empire. Many more emperors received this honour after their death, and their day of death, as well as the day of their funeral, were added to the calendar of the Imperial cult.

A special calendar relating to the Roman army is the *Feriale Duranum*.³⁰ This religious calendar was found in Dura-Europos on the most eastern frontier of the Empire in the area of the river Euphrates in Roman Syria. Although no name is mentioned on the document, it was found amongst other papyri belonging to the record of the *Cohors XX Palmyrenorum*, an auxiliary cohort of Palmyrene soldiers. This was a *cohors equitata milliaria*, a mixed infantry and cavalry regiment of about 800 soldiers. The papyrus was written in Latin during the reign of Alexander Severus, probably between 224 and 227 AD.

There is a general agreement on the idea that a military calendar like this derives from the time of Augustus, who carried out an extensive reorganisation of the army. The *Feriale Duranum* fits into the Augustan idea of a regulated, up-to-date list of divine figures to be worshipped.³¹ Also, although it is a document belonging to a foreign unit, it only mentions army festivals, Roman gods of public festivals and the cults of the ruling Emperor and the *divi*. No local or Palmyrene deities are named. Consequently, most scholars have agreed on the idea that this military calendar was used by every unit of the Roman army.³² Therefore, the *Feriale Duranum* is of utmost importance to our research.

The biggest group of celebrations in the military religious year – 27 out of 43 legible entries – is those held in honour of the Emperor and *divi*. Some twenty personae were worshipped as *divi*, amongst whom six women and Germanicus, the adoptive son of the emperor Tiberius. Although the apotheosis of Germanicus was never confirmed by the Senate, his significance in military history and his status as a military hero make his appearance on this military, religious calendar less surprising.³³ However, the deified imperial women and Germanicus only received a *supplicatio*, a public prayer, during the celebration of their birthday. For the deified emperors an ox was sacrificed, an expensive practice, especially in times of economic constraints.³⁴ It was mainly their birthday that was celebrated, but of a few emperors the dates of accession are also commemorated.

³⁰ RMR 117; For a list of the different dates and celebrations see Y. le Bohec, *The Imperial Roman Army* (London 1994), 241-3.

³¹ L.J. Kreitzer, *Striking New Images. Roman Imperial Coinage and the New Testament World* (Sheffield 1996), 73.

³² R.W. Davies, "The Daily Life of the Roman Soldier under the Principate" *ANRW* II.1 (1974), 315; L. Dirven, *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos. A Study of Religious Interaction in Roman Syria* (Leiden/Boston/Cologne 1999), 184-5; A.K. Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army* (London 2003), 108.

³³ Kreitzer, *Striking New Images* (1996), 73 n. 11.

³⁴ O. Hekster, *Rome and its Empire, AD 193-284* (Edinburgh 2008), 66.

The numerical dominance of the sacrifices for divine emperors and other *divi* is noticeable. However, this extensiveness is not particularly surprising. In Roman tradition, the Roman army fought for the honour of the Emperor. The Emperor was seen as the embodiment of the entire Roman Empire. As the overarching head of the imperial army, soldiers were taught to venerate his *genius*. This created a feeling of connection within the army: all soldiers were fighting for the same cause, namely the greater honour and protection of the Emperor and thus the Empire. The emphasis on the Imperial cult in the military religious year might have given soldiers the feeling that they were being watched over, remotely, by their Emperor.³⁵ Also, the simultaneous celebration of these Roman festivals connected troops throughout the whole empire. As such it led to the integration of soldiers from different backgrounds and the unification of the army.³⁶

In Britain, the most important evidence we have for the Imperial cult is of course the *templum divo Claudio constitutum* (Tacitus, *Annals* XIV.31) at Colonia Claudia Victricensis, modern Colchester.³⁷ This temple was probably dedicated after Claudius' death, as proposed by Fishwick³⁸, against the interpretation of texts by Tacitus and Seneca that the temple was set up for the Divine Claudius during his lifetime. Other than the temple, some finds from southern Britain indicate the presence of the Imperial cult on the island. Large bronze depictions of Claudius, possibly from Colchester, and Hadrian from London have been found.³⁹ *Severi Augustales* have been attested as far north as Lincoln and York.⁴⁰

We know from the *Feriale Duranum* that the Imperial cult must have been a big part of the religious year of any soldier in the Roman army, legionaries and auxiliaries alike. Many sacrifices were made to deified emperors. The present emperor received a *supplicatio* on days special to his reign. This must also have been the reality on Hadrian's Wall. In Britain, many altars were devoted to the *numen*, whether in the singular or the plural, of gods as well as of the emperor(s). Weinstock⁴¹ pointed out that the *numen* signifies the "power of a divinity" rather

³⁵ R. Alston, "Ties that bind: Soldiers and societies", in: A. Goldsworthy ed., *The Roman army as a community* (Portsmouth, RI 1999), 194.

³⁶ Dirven, *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos* (1999), 185.

³⁷ Colonia Claudia Victricensis is often equated with the ancient town of Camulodunum by both modern and ancient authors. The temple to Divus Claudius is often mentioned to be in Camulodunum. However, there is reason to believe that Camulodunum and Colonia Claudia Victricensis were two separate places to the Romans and therefore I mention the lesser known name of the Roman colonia here, instead of Camulodunum. See CIL XIV, 3955.

³⁸ D. Fishwick, "Templum Divo Claudio Constitutum" *Britannia* 3 (1972), 164-181.

³⁹ G. Webster and D. Dudley, *The Rebellion of Boudicca* (London 1962), pl. VIII; British Museum, *Guide to the Antiquities of Roman Britain* (London 1964), 54.

⁴⁰ M.J.T. Lewis, *Temples in Roman Britain* (Cambridge 1966), 122.

⁴¹ S. Weinstock, "Review of H.J. Rose, *Ancient Roman Religion* (London 1949)" *JRS* 39 (1949), 166f.

than the deity itself. This way it could also be used for the divine powers of the emperors, who were, in the West of the Empire, not worshipped as gods themselves. Mann⁴² has noticed that an invocation of multiple Numina not necessarily implies the power of multiple emperors, dead or alive. Some individuals may have found it sufficient to appeal to the overall power of the emperor; others, perhaps aware of the multiplicity of the responsibilities of the emperor, may have felt the need to invoke his powers in plural.⁴³

Although many altars and dedications to the *numen* of the emperor have been found on and around Hadrian's Wall, in each case the emperors are worshipped together with one or more deities. These deities are not just from the Roman pantheon, but also originate from Celtic⁴⁴ and Germanic culture. We will come across both examples when we discuss the epigraphic evidence from Hadrian's Wall regarding Roman army religion, local deities and deities brought from the homelands of the auxiliaries.

The Dura-Europos papyrus also shows the *feriae publicae* or civilian festivals. The ancient festival of the *Quinquatria* was a ceremony dedicated to Minerva. She, Jupiter and Juno together form the Capitoline triad of Rome's most important deities. All three are mentioned multiple times in the calendar. A sacrifice to the triad often relates to (the wellbeing of) the Emperor, the Empire and the Roman people. Other festivals referred to are the *Natalis Urbis Romae aeternae*, the festival for Neptune and the *Rosalia*. These festivals are not just celebrated by soldiers, but were part of the civilian Roman religious year as well. Other Roman deities whose worship is mentioned are Mars, the god of war, and Vesta, the goddess of the hearth, home and family. Special attention to Mars is not surprising, considering his military nature. The same can be said for the *Quinquatria* relating to Minerva, being the goddess of tactical warfare, but it was also a ceremony to purify armour. The *Rosalia* was also a special festival for soldiers at which the standards were adorned with roses.⁴⁵

Before we look at all the different gods and goddesses of the Roman army religion auxiliaries on Hadrian's Wall dedicated to, we should start with discussing the beginning of their career, which was also religious. Like in most armies, soldiers in the Roman army had to take a sacred oath of allegiance to the Emperor. The oath was both legal and sacred, for someone who broke it was considered *nefas*, liable to punishments from both men and gods. Although

⁴² J.C. Mann, "Review of The Oxford Classical Dictionary (Oxford 1970)" *Britannia* 2 (1971), 313f.

⁴³ E. Birley, "The deities of Roman Britain" *ANRW* II.18.1 (1986), 34.

⁴⁴ I understand that the term "Celtic" is problematic. I only use it here to distinguish typically Roman, Germanic and Celtic deities; Celtic meaning "from religion practiced in pre-Roman Gaul and Britain". A further distinction will be made in the next chapters.

⁴⁵ Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army* (2003), 108; Hekster, *Rome and its Empire* (2008), 81.

no copy of the original text survives, Servius gives us a description which probably followed the original quite closely:

“... the sacrament, in which each soldier swears not to retreat except under command of the consuls after the stipendia are finished, that is the time of military service”.⁴⁶

During the Republic a selected individual would read out a lengthy oath, which each man would second by saying *idem in me* (“the same for me”).⁴⁷ Under the Principate the oath was shortened so every man could recite it in its entirety.⁴⁸

The *sacramentum* was recited on enlistment, but also on every 3rd of January and on the anniversary of the accession to power of the current emperor. In the *Feriale Duranum* the entry on the 3rd of January states *vota*, or vows, which is generally agreed to refer to the *sacramentum*. Coins of the late 1st and early 2nd century AD have been found commemorating this military ritual, on which the *Imperator* is shown next to an altar, with a military officer and soldiers with a standard and weaponry behind him.⁴⁹ Just like in many armies today, daily oaths of allegiance were also taken as recorded in morning reports on papyri from Dura.⁵⁰ These oaths were part of the religious structure of the Roman army as much as the dedications we will come across in the next part of this chapter. They were especially important for auxiliary soldiers, since most of these were conscripts instead of volunteers and they were known to rebel more easily than Roman citizens. The most famous example is the Batavian revolt of 69 AD which resulted in the stationing of auxiliary cohorts away from their homelands.⁵¹

On Hadrian’s Wall the most attested deity in dedications is, not surprisingly, Jupiter Optimus Maximus. He attracted widespread worship, but predominantly by the army. He is mentioned various times on the *Feriale Duranum*, often receiving the sacrifice of a bull or ox. I.O.M. altars have been found along the entirety of the wall. However, excavations of the parade grounds in Maryport and Birdoswald, respectively the ancient forts of Alauna and Banna, have resulted in the recovery of around three dozen altars with the inscription of I.O.M.⁵² It seems

⁴⁶ Servius, *In Vergilii Aeneidos Commentarius*, VIII.614: *sacramentum, in quo iurat unusquisque miles se non recedere nisi praecepto consulis post completa stipendia, id est militiae tempora.*

⁴⁷ Polybius, *Ἱστορίαι*, VI.21.

⁴⁸ G.R. Watson, *The Roman Soldier* (Ithaca, NY 1969), 44-50.

⁴⁹ M. Grant, *The Army of the Caesars* (London 1974), 79.

⁵⁰ See G.R. Watson, “Documentation in the Roman Army” *ANRW* II.1 (1974), 502.

⁵¹ Haynes (1999), 166.

⁵² For Maryport see RIB 816-23, 826-831, 833, 834; For Birdoswald see RIB 1874-1881, 1883, 1885-1895 and JRS 51, 1961, p. 194 = A.E. 1962, 263.

like these were buried in pits on purpose. This led Wenham⁵³ to think that it was customary to set up a new altar to Jupiter every year, either during the annual renewal of the *sacramentum* and vows for the health of the emperor on the 3rd of January or, conceivably, also on the anniversary of his accession. Today this view has been widely accepted given the substantial evidence from Hadrian's Wall. Such altars, standing on the edge of the parade grounds, were an important part of the military camp area. The annual renewal of the altar and of the vows of loyalty to the emperor must have been a major event in the year of every legion and auxiliary cohort.

The altars dedicated to Jupiter by auxiliary units on Hadrian's Wall are too numerous to list them all, however it is worthwhile to look at a few in more detail. The inscriptions on the altars from Maryport and Birdoswald all have a similar lay-out. They either give the name of the unit in the nominative followed by the commander's name introduced by *cui praeest*, or the name of the commander in the nominative followed by the unit in the genitive. In the case of the latter the unit's name is sometimes omitted, because it was already attested at the site in question:⁵⁴

CIL VII 379 = RIB 823: *I. O. M. coh. I His(panorum) cui prae(est) M. Maenius Agrip(pa) tribu(nus) pos(uit).*

To Jupiter, Best and Greatest, the First Cohort of Spaniards, which is commanded by Marcus Maenius Agrippa, tribune, set this up.

CIL VII 381 = RIB 825: *I. O. M. et num(ini) Aug(usti) Mae(nius) Agrippa tribunus pos(uit).*

To Jupiter, Best and Greatest, and to the Divinity of the Emperor, Maenius Agrippa, tribune, set this up.

These two altars were dedicated by the same auxiliary cohort, namely I Hispanorum, stationed at Maryport. Clearly, it was not necessary to name the unit in the second inscription again. Mentioning the commander was enough. Another difference is the addition of the *numina Augusti* in the second inscription. Jupiter Optimus Maximus was often associated with the Roman State and the Emperor, both being epitomes of leadership. Many altars dedicated to both Jupiter and the emperor by auxiliary units are found at Hadrian's Wall.⁵⁵

⁵³ L.P. Wenham, "Notes on the Garrisoning of Maryport" *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* 39 (1939), 19-30.

⁵⁴ E. Birley, "The religion of the Roman army: 1895-1977" *ANRW* II.16.2 (1978), 1510.

⁵⁵ See RIB 815, 824, 825, 1317, 1330, 1584-1588, 1882, 1983 and 2042.

Minerva also appears multiple times on the *Feriale Duranum*, as part of the Capitoline triad. Several dedications to her are known from Hadrian's Wall. The reason for this was not just her status as one of the Capitoline Triad, since examples of dedications to Juno by auxiliaries on Hadrian's Wall have not been recovered so far. The nature of the goddess Minerva will probably have appealed to *litterati homines* like clerks, but also to soldiers concerned with weapon training:⁵⁶

CIL VII 458 = RIB 1101: *D[ea]e s(an)ctae Miner]vae Iul(ius) Gr[...]nus actar[ius] coh(ortis) IIII Br[eu]cor(um)] Antoninian[ae v]otum) d(oluit)] l(aetus) l(ibens) m(erito).*

To the holy goddess Minerva Julius Gr[...]nus, actarius⁵⁷ of the Fourth Cohort of Br[eu]ci, styled Antoniniana, gladly, willingly, and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

However, entire cohorts also dedicated to her, for example an altar from Birrens, ancient Blatobulgium:

CIL VII 1071 = RIB 2104: *Deae Minervae, coh(ors) II Tungrorum mil(liaria) eq(uitata) c(oram) l(audata) cui praeest C(aius) Silv(ius) Auspex praef(ectus).*

To the goddess Minerva the Second Cohort of Tungrians, a thousand strong, part-mounted, publicly praised, (set this up) under the command of Gaius Silvius Auspex, the prefect.

It is unsurprising that dedications to Mars, the Roman god of war, are widespread throughout the whole of the Roman army. For Hadrian's Wall this is not different.⁵⁸ This time we come across the First Cohort of Tungrians at Vercovicium, modern day Housesteads:

CIL VII 651 = RIB 1591: *Deo Marti Quint(us) Florius Maternus praef(ectus) coh(ortis) I Tungrorum) v(otum) s(oluit) l(ibens) m(erito).*

To the god Mars Quintus Florius Maternus, prefect of the First Cohort of Tungrians, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

A fragmentary inscription on an altar found at Birdoswald was dedicated by a tribune of a cohort comprised of soldiers originating from farther still than the Tungrians:

⁵⁶ E. Birley, "The religion of the Roman army: 1895-1977" (1978), 1512.

⁵⁷ An *actarius* was the military clerk who ranked second to the *cornicularius*, the chief clerk in a military unit.

⁵⁸ See RIB 900, 1078, 1080, 1081, 1100, 1332, 1592, 1594, 1595, 1986, 1987 and 2100.

CIL VII 826 = RIB 1898: *Deo Mart(i) c(o)hortis pri(mae) [A]el(iae) Dac(orum)
V P V CVI tri[b(unus)]*.

To the god Mars of the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians, ... tribune,

Although this inscription is not complete, it would probably have had a similar formula to the one above of the First Cohort of Tungrians. This counts for most of the dedicatory inscriptions on altars by auxiliaries found on Hadrian's Wall and in the wider Roman Empire in general. Another interesting example from Hadrian's Wall which should be mentioned comes from Housesteads again:

EE IX 1186 = RIB 1597: *Deo M(arti) Calve(...) Ger(manus)*.

To the god Mars Calve(...), a German, (set this up).

Interestingly, this altar was not dedicated by a whole cohort, or by a prefect on behalf of his cohort, but by an individual soldier. It was found lying loose on a flagged floor in block XIII in the north-east of Housesteads fort. The location within the fort implies it was not dedicated by a civilian. It is very well possible that this German was part of the First Cohort of Tungrians, which was stationed in Housesteads for the most of the third and fourth century. Apparently, he felt the need to point out his identity as a native German within a group of men probably mostly from the native area of the Tungri and from Britain itself. The interpretation that this altar was dedicated to Mars and not to Mercury, stems from the fact that this is simply more likely since it was dedicated by a soldier and not a civilian. Most dedications to Mercury from Britain as well as from other areas in the Empire were, unsurprisingly, set up by civilians concerned with trade. Suggestions for the reconstruction of the name of the German, abbreviated as 'Calve...', have been made, but the form remains uncertain. Like Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Mars is sometimes dedicated to in combination with the *numen* of the emperor.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ See RIB 1100, 1596 and 1987.

Dedications to other Roman gods also appear along Hadrian's Wall, especially to Hercules⁶⁰, Apollo⁶¹, Silvanus⁶², Neptune⁶³ and Roma.⁶⁴ The latter involves a dedication made to Roma on her birthday, namely the foundation of the city of Rome, during the festival of *Natalis Urbis Romae aeternae*. This festival is mentioned on the *Feriale Duranum* and was also celebrated by civilians throughout the Empire, more often closer to Rome.

A few of the previous mentioned gods and goddesses were dedicated to, along with the *numen/numina* of the Emperor. A few deities of another category, the personifications, are well represented in combination with the Emperor as well.⁶⁵ In these cases, a dedicant, for example, addressed the Fortune of the Emperor. Three personifications are most commonly dedicated to: *Disciplina*⁶⁶, *Fortuna* and *Victoria*:

EE IX 1228 = RIB 2092: *Discip(linae) Aug(usti) coh(ors) II Tungr(orum) mil(liaria) eq(uitata) c(oram) l(audata)*.

To the Discipline of the Emperor the Second Cohort of Tungrians, one thousand strong, mounted, publicly praised, (set this up).

This dedication to the Discipline of the Emperor was found at Birrens and is probably assignable to the time of Antoninus Pius, when the Second Cohort of Tungrians replaced *coh. I Nervana Germanorum* in Garrison at the fort here.⁶⁷ From the latter an altar for *Fortuna*⁶⁸, although this time not in combination with the Emperor, has been recovered:

CIL VII 1063 = RIB 2093: *Fortunae coh(ors) I Nervana Germanor(um) D eq(uitata)*.

⁶⁰ See RIB 892 and 1580, the latter again dedicated by the First Cohort of Tungrians at Housesteads, now by the prefect Publius Aelius Modestus. For

⁶¹ See RIB 965, 1043, 1165 (this altar was dedicated by a *duplicarius* from Upper Germany, which is explicitly mentioned) and 1198 (on the reliefs on this altar Apollo is equated with Mythras and possibly Maponus).

⁶² See RIB 923, 972, 1041 (together with the imperial *numina*), 1042, 1321, 1790 and 1905 (an altar set up by *venatores*, hunters in a legion or cohort who hunted for wild animals to form a food supply).

⁶³ See RIB 839, 1694, 1990 and 2105. There is no known case from Hadrian's Wall that links Neptune with a Celtic, or other non-Roman, deity.

⁶⁴ See RIB 1270.

⁶⁵ R. Hutton, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles. Their Nature and Legacy* (Oxford/Cambridge, Mass. 1991), 206f.

⁶⁶ See RIB 990, 1128 (this altar was dedicated by the *milites* of the auxiliary cohort stationed at Castleheads, a term normally indicating legionaries. It is possible that it concerns a detachment and that the garrison was incomplete) and 1978 (this altar has two inscriptions, the primary one to Septimius Severus, Caracalla and Geta, mentioned as the three emperors, and the secondary one to Caracalla alone, added several years later).

⁶⁷ E. Birley, "The deities of Roman Britain" (1986), 23 n. 44.

⁶⁸ See RIB 1220, 1423, 1536 (the First Cohort of Batavians is mentioned on this altar from Carrawburgh), 1537 and 1873. For *Fortuna Augusta* see RIB 1073.

To Fortune the First Nervan Cohort of Germans, a thousand strong, part-mounted, (set this up).

An interesting example from the Roman fort of Magnis, modern Carvoran, involves a dedication to Fortuna Augusta. In the inscription on the decorated altar a prefect of the First Cohort of Hamians, archers from ancient Syria, he mentions that he had set this up to the Fortune of the Emperor for the wellbeing of Lucius Aelius Caesar because of a vision. Because Lucius Aelius Verus, the father of the later co-emperor of Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus, was only *caesar* for approximately two years, we can date this altar to 136-8 AD:

CIL VII 748 = RIB 1778: *Fortunae Aug(ustae) pro salute L(uci) Aeli Caesaris ex visu T(itus) Fla(vius) Secundus praef(ectus) coh(ortis) I Hamiorum Sagittar(iorum) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito).*

To the Emperor's Fortune for the welfare of Lucius Aelius Caesar Titus Flavius Secundus, prefect of the First Cohort of Hamian Archers, because of a vision willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

Dedications to Victoria⁶⁹ are also common on Hadrian's Wall. A good example mentioning the consular governor comes from the Roman fort of Condercum, modern Benwell:

CIL VII 513 = RIB 1337: *Victoriae [Au]g(ustorum) Alfenio Senecion[e] co(n)s(ulari) felix ala I Asto(rum) [...] M pra(e)fecto.*

To the Victory of the Emperors while Alfenus Senecio was consular governor. Fortunate is the First Cavalry Regiment of Asturians.

Apart from the personifications and the deities of the Roman pantheon two more cults should be mentioned: the cult of the *signa* and the cults of several *genii*. During the Marian army reforms at the end of the 2nd century BC every legion was given an identity of its own. Each legion was given a number and an *aquila*, an eagle. Throughout the history of the Roman army the eagle was of prime importance. It was the gravest dishonour to lose the eagle standard. The Romans would go to war again to retrieve them. The eagle, as the most auspicious of all birds, was connected to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, who protected the entire state. Therefore, the destiny of Rome and later that of the Emperor as well was represented by the eagle. They often appeared in visions and omens, predicting a fortunate future, like in Suetonius' story about

⁶⁹ See RIB 844 (with a relief of two Victories holding a laurel wreath), 1086, 1273, 1731 (the Sixth Cohort of Nervians is mentioned on this altar from Great Chesters) and 1995 (with a relief of a Victory, a Capricornus and a Pegasus).

Augustus.⁷⁰ The importance of the standards is emphasized by the careful selection of the *aquiliferi*, the standard-bearers. Only the most trusted and experienced soldiers would be chosen.⁷¹ The eagles were so closely connected to success at war that they became fundamental to the *esprit de corps* of the legions, a spirit that was conceived as fully religious.⁷²

However important the eagle was to the legions, cohorts did not have an eagle standard. The standards of the cohorts are called *vexilla*, resembling a modern flag, and its bearer a *vexillarius*. They often showed different animals, possibly related to the ethnic name of the cohort, like wild boars for Gauls. However, there is evidence that these *vexilla* of the cohorts were worshipped just like the *aquilae* of the legions. The standards were installed with sacred power, the same *numen* we have seen connected to the Emperor.⁷³ They were set up in a shrine in the middle of every camp, accompanied by images of the Emperor.⁷⁴ Vegetius tells us that, at least in his time, *imaginiferi* would carry the images of the Emperor, probably to remind the soldiers that they fought under his protection.⁷⁵ This fits well into the idea that the omnipresence of the Imperial cult on the army calendar gave the soldiers the feeling that they were being watched over, remotely, by their Emperor. The images made the person of the Emperor feel more close than he, most of the time, really was. Although probably more celebratory than religious, according to the *Feriale Duranum*, the *Rosalia* were celebrated twice a year by civilians as well as soldiers. Both *aquilae* and *vexilla* were taken out of their shrine and adorned with roses. The standards were that important that the savings bank of each legion as well as every cohort was kept within the same shrine. The sanctity of the centre of the camp, where the shrine of the standards was set up, becomes clear when we note that theft from the savings bank was considered a sacrilege.⁷⁶

A couple of altars from auxiliary cohorts to their *signa* are known to us, one from High Rochester (Bremenium) and one from Birdoswald. Erecting monuments for the standards promised soldiers the good will of the gods, who would award them with success in battle.

CIL VII 1031 = RIB 1263: *Genio et Signis coh(ortis) I F(idae) Vardul(lorum) c(ivium) R(omanorum) eq(uitatae) CD T(itus) Licinius Valerianus [t]rib(unus)*.⁷⁷

⁷⁰ Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum: Divus Augustus*, 94.

⁷¹ Tacitus, *Annales* I.48.

⁷² J. Helgeland, "Roman army religion" *ANRW* II.16.2 (1978), 1474.

⁷³ *Ibidem*, 1476f.

⁷⁴ Suetonius, *Caligula*, 14.

⁷⁵ Vegetius, *Epitoma rei militaris*, II.7.

⁷⁶ Helgeland, "Roman army religion" (1978), 1478.

⁷⁷ This cohort was first recorded with the honorary title of *Fidae* in 98 AD, by then they were also already mentioned as *civium Romanorum*. This title and citizenship were granted to certain units as a result of an act of outstanding conduct, probably in battle. Every soldier in the unit at the point of the granting received citizenship.

To the Genius and the Standards of the First Loyal Cohort of Vardulli, Roman citizens, part-mounted, one thousand strong, Titus Licinius Valerianus, tribune, (set this up).

CIL VII 829 = RIB 1904: *Signis et N(umini) Au[g(usti) coh(ors) I] Ael(ia) [Dacorum ...]*.

To the Standards and to the Divinities of the Emperor the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians

The *Genius* may be described as a general recipient of devotion, whether a protector of a particular type of unit or the supposed guardian of a place of which the particular presiding deity was unknown to the dedicator(s).⁷⁸ However, sometimes, the type of *genius* is not further specified.⁷⁹ The *genius loci*⁸⁰ is best attested in a well-preserved and beautifully decorated example from Maryport:

CIL VII 370 = RIB 812: (front) *Genio loci Fortun(ae) Reduci Romae Aetern(ae) et Fato Bono G(aius) Cornelius Peregrinus trib(unus) coh(ortis) ex provincia Maur(etania) Caesa(riensi) domo Sald[i]s d[e]c(urio) v(otum) s(olvit) l(aetus) [l(ibens)] m(erito)*. (back) *Volanti vivas*.

(front) To the Genius of the place, to Fortune the Home-Bringer, to Eternal Rome, and to Good Fate, Gaius Cornelius Peregrinus, tribune of the cohort, decurion of his home town of Saldae in the province of Mauretania Caesariensis, gladly, willingly, and deservedly fulfilled his vow. (back) Long may you live, Volantius.

This inscription also mentions Fortuna Redux, Roma Aeterna and Fatum Bonum, all typically Roman deities. The dedicator is a tribune of the cohort stationed at Maryport, however, it is unknown to us which particular cohort he refers to. The hometown of the dedicant is in the province of Mauretania Caesariensis, roughly the region of modern Algeria in the Maghreb. No cohort from that particular part of the Empire was ever stationed at Maryport and so this is clear evidence for the fact that most prefects and tribunes of auxiliary cohorts did not come from the

Although the title and addition *CR* remained thereafter, the soldiers serving in the unit after the mass grant would not receive Roman citizenship. Therefore, these units should still be understood as part of the *auxilia*. The group of auxiliary units which were styled citizen units from the moment of their formation, the *cohortes voluntariorum*, were different and should not be confused with the cohorts like the one here; P.A. Holder, *The Auxilia from Augustus to Trajan* (Oxford 1980), 31 and 39.

⁷⁸ E. Birley (1986), 25f.

⁷⁹ See RIB 891 and possibly 1099.

⁸⁰ See RIB 945 and 1984 (together with Jupiter Optimus Maximus).

same region the cohort was named after and thus originally recruited from. This was often also true for (small groups of) soldiers in auxiliary cohorts. The Roman fort of Brocolitia, modern Carrawburgh, was at one point garrisoned by the Second Cohort of Nervians, originally recruited from the modern Belgian area between the rivers Scheldt and Sambre. However, we have an altar from Carrawburgh dedicated by *vexillarii* (members of a detachment) of this cohort who were not *Nervii*, but *Texandri*, a West-German tribe from North Brabant in modern the Netherlands and *Suvevae*, possibly from around the area of modern Sijsele in Belgium. Although the places of origin of these three tribes might be close to each other from a modern point of view, apparently geographical and cultural distances were big enough to these ancient peoples to distinguish themselves whilst dedicating an altar on Hadrian's Wall.

EE III 103 = RIB 1538: *Genio hu(i)us loci Texand(ri) et Suve(vae(?)) vex(illarii) cohort(is) II Nerviorum.*

To the Genius of this place the Texandri and Suvevae (?), members of a detachment from the Second Cohort of Nervians, (set this up).

With regards to religion within the Roman army it is important to look at two mystery cults that became very popular amongst soldiers within the Empire, those of Jupiter Dolichenus and Mithras. These 'oriental' cults were Roman reinventions of the originally Eastern cults. Unlike those of the Roman 'public' cults, the temples of the mystery cults were closed to outsiders and followers had to undergo several rites of initiation before they would be accepted as devotees. As a result, very little is known about the beliefs, practices and rituals of all mystery cults. The worship of these gods was not imposed on the soldiers by the Roman State and Emperor and are in this way different than the cults of the standard Roman pantheon. It could be said that the veneration of these gods then, would be more personal than the worship of the official Roman gods and would therefore fit better in the category of the local and native gods. However, Jupiter Dolichenus and Mithras were worshipped throughout the whole Empire. Their cults were Roman reinventions of the original Eastern cults. This way, it makes more sense to mention these two gods here than in the chapter on local and native cults.

Jupiter Dolichenus was popular amongst soldiers, but also civilians, from the early 2nd to mid-3rd century AD, gaining particular popularity under Severus. The sudden decline in the worship of this god in the second half of the 3rd century is remarkable.⁸¹ We know of the cult from about 430 dedications, of which many inscribed. Traditionally, the popularity of the cult

⁸¹ I. Haynes (1993), 146.

in the Western Empire is explained by three factors: the contact with the cult of Roman legionaries during military campaigns in the East, Dolichenus' veneration by Syrian, especially Commagenian, auxiliaries and the influence of Semitic merchants.⁸² However, Collar points out that these explanations are insufficient. Instead, she suggests that the cult was transferred across a network of military officials along especially the northern frontiers of the Roman Empire.⁸³

In Britain, twenty inscriptions to Jupiter Dolichenus have been recovered. One comes from the legionary fort of Isca, modern Caerlŷn in Wales. The others were all found in the military zone of northern Britain.⁸⁴ However, many of these are set up by legionary officers of senatorial rank and one by a woman.⁸⁵ In the area of Hadrian's Wall a few auxiliaries and equestrian officers of auxiliary cohorts have set up dedications to Dolichenus as well:⁸⁶

CIL VII 216 = RIB 916: *In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) D(olicheno) [...] vetustate co[n]laps[us] Aurel[i]us At[tianus(?)] [praef(ectus) c]oh(ortis) II [Gall(orum) rest(ituit(?))].*

In honour of the Divine House, to Jupiter, Best and Greatest, of Doliche, Aurelius Attianus (?), prefect of the Second Cohort of Gauls, restored this temple fallen in through age.

This inscription was set up after the restoration of a temple by the dedicator, a prefect of the Second Cohort of Gauls, stationed at Old Penrith. An altar from 235-8 AD is dedicated by a tribune of the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians stationed at Birdoswald:

CIL VII 810 = RIB 1896: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) [D(olicheno)] coh(ors) I A[el(ia) Dac(orum)] c(ui) p(raeest) Flavi[us Ma]ximia[nus] trib(unus) ex [evoc(ato) c(ohortis)] I pr(aetoriae) Ma[ximin(iana)].*

To Jupiter, Best and Greatest, of Doliche, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians (set this up) under the command of Flavius Maximianus, tribune, formerly evocatus of the First Praetorian Cohort, styled Maximiniana.

⁸² E. Schwertheim, "Jupiter Dolichenus" in M.J. Vermaseren (ed.), *Die orientalischen Religionen im Römerreich* (Leiden 1981), 195.

⁸³ A.C.F. Collar, "Military Networks and the Cult of Jupiter Dolichenus" in E. Winter (ed.), *Von Kummuh nach Telouch: Historische und archäologische Untersuchungen in Kommagene. Dolichener und Kommagenische Forschungen IV. Asia Minor Studien 64* (Bonn 2011), 217-246.

⁸⁴ E. Birley (1986), 81f.

⁸⁵ RIB 2099.

⁸⁶ See RIB 992, 1219, 1220, (possibly) 1452 and 1782.

It seems to be that the votaries of Jupiter Dolichenus in Britain were generally of a higher rank. Also, in almost all inscriptions he is called *Iovi Optimo Maximo Dolicheno*, resembling the many altars found for Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Just like the latter, Jupiter Dolichenus is often mentioned together with the Imperial family or the Emperor(s).

It could be expected that the veneration of Jupiter Dolichenus would be dominated by Syrian soldiers, since in origin he is a Syrian god. However, as can be seen, of the only known Syrian cohort serving at Hadrian's Wall, The First Cohort of Hamians, no dedication by it is known to us. The dedications mentioned above are from a prefect of a cohort of Gauls and a tribune of a Dacian cohort. It is important to stress however, that the place of origin of equestrian officers of auxiliary cohorts was often if not always, with the exception of some Batavian cohorts, different from the original area of recruitment of the cohort, of which its name was derived. It is therefore very likely that the prefect and tribune mentioned here were not a Gaul or a Dacian themselves. It is possible that they were from the Eastern half the Empire if not from Syria. With epigraphy, it is often also hard to determine if dedications were set up by an officer on behalf of the whole cohort or for personal purposes. We have already seen that the worship of the cults on the official Roman army calendar were witnessed by the whole cohort. Participation in the mystery cults by these officers however, as well as the cults of local and native deities as we will see in the next chapter, may well have been out of personal devotion rather than religious duty. We cannot possibly determine the origin of every equestrian officer mentioned in the inscriptions, but it is nevertheless important to keep this notion in mind.

Mithraism was a mystery cult around the god Mithras practices throughout the whole of the Roman Empire from about the 1st to the 4th century AD. The cult was inspired by the worship of the old Persian god Mithra, but the continuity between the Persian and Greco-Roman cult is debated.⁸⁷ Materials related to the worship of Mithras have been recovered from about 420 sites. These include about 1000 inscriptions, 700 depictions of the tauroctony, the bull-killing scene, and some 400 other monuments.⁸⁸

From the area of Hadrian's Wall not just epigraphic evidence for the worship of Mithras has been recovered, but also the foundations of four Mithraea, one at Housesteads, Carrawburgh, Rudchester and Maryport. However, the latter has retrieved no altars to Mithras.

⁸⁷ For a more detailed discussion of this (dis)continuity see R. Beck, "Mithraism" in *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (online edition, 2002). Consulted on 12 June 2017. <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/mithraism>.

⁸⁸ M. Clauss, *The Roman cult of Mithras: the God and his mysteries* (transl. from German by R. Gordon) (Edinburgh 2000), xxi.

Two other certain Mithraea are found in Britain, one in London and one in Caernarvon in North Wales. Many more must have existed on the island, but have yet still to be located.⁸⁹

The area inside and close to the Mithraeum of Housesteads has yielded a few altars to Mithras as well as to Jupiter Optimus Maximus, Cocidius and some *genii*. However, most of these are set up by legionaries and of the others it is unknown whether they were dedicated by legionaries or auxiliaries, since soldiers from several legions and auxiliary cohorts are attested at this fort.⁹⁰ Three altars from the Mithraeum at Carrawburgh fort were set up by prefects of the First Cohort of Batavians and found still in situ.⁹¹ The central altar can be dated to 213-222 AD because of the titulature of the cohort:

JRS XL 114 = RIB 1544: *Deo Inv(icto) M(ithrae) L(ucius) Antonius Proculus praef(ectus) coh(ortis) I Bat(avorum) Antoninianae v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*.

To the Invincible god Mithras Lucius Antonius Proculus, prefect of the First Cohort of Batavians Antoniniana, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

All three inscriptions start with *Deo Invicto Mit(h)rae*, “To the invincible god Mithras”. The third altar set up by the prefect Marcus Simplicius Simplex, who was probably originally from the Rhineland, shows a relief of the front-facing torso of Mithras being born from a rock.⁹² He wears a cloak around his body and left arm and in his right hand he holds a whip, which identifies him with Sol. The rays of his crown are formed by pierced openings through which a lamp placed in a recess cut at the back of the stone could emit light. There are still traces of red paint found on the god’s cloak and hair and the inscribed letters.⁹³

Other examples come from the Mithraeum at the Roman fort of Rudchester, ancient Vindovala. A prefect of possibly The First Cohort of Frisians stationed here has set up a similar altar to the one dedicated by Lucius Antonius Proculus above.⁹⁴ Another prefect here dedicated an altar *Deo Soli Invicto*, “To the invincible Sun-God”, meaning Mithras.⁹⁵ A third inscription from this Mithraeum states *Soli Apollini Aniceto [Mithrae]*, “To the Sun-god Apollo invincible Mithras, but it is possible that the word *et* has been simply omitted, emphasising the assimilation

⁸⁹ A.R. Birley, *Life in Roman Britain* (London 1964), 141ff; E. Birley (1986), 84.

⁹⁰ RIB 1600 and 1601 might be set up by an auxiliary centurion and an auxiliary soldier respectively, but could just as well be dedicated by a legionary centurion and a slave.

⁹¹ See RIB 1545 (an altar set up by a prefect from Colonia Septimia Aurelia Larinum in Italy).

⁹² E. Birley, “The prefects at Carrawburgh and their altars (1951)” in E. Birley, *Roman Britain and the Roman Army. Collected papers* (Kendal 1961), 176f.

⁹³ RIB 1546, E. Birley (1986), 85 n. 439.

⁹⁴ RIB 1395.

⁹⁵ RIB 1396.

between Mithras and Sol Apollo.⁹⁶ Notably, three altars to Mithras were recovered from the fort at Castlesteads, ancient Camboglanna, although the Mithraeum here has not been located yet.⁹⁷ Two of these, and possibly the third as well, were set up by prefects of cohorts not mentioned. One more notable example of a dedication to Mithras from 213 AD should be mentioned:

CIL VII 1039 = RIB 1272: *Deo Invicto [et] Soli soc(io) sacrum pro salute et incolumitate imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) M(arci) Aureli Antonini Pii Felic(is) Aug(usti) L(ucius) Caecilius Optatus trib(unus) coh(ortis) I Vardul(lorum) cum con[se]craneis votum Deo [...] a solo exstruct[um ...].*

Sacred to the invincible god [and] the Sun companion, for the welfare and safety of the Emperor Caesar Marcus Aurelius Antoninus Pius Felix Augustus: Lucius Caecilius Optatus, tribune of the First Cohort of Vardulli, with his fellow-devotees [erected this building], vowed to the god, built from ground-level.

This dedication-slab from the outpost fort at High Rochester was set up by a tribune of the First Cohort of Vardulli. He states that he erected a building for the invincible god and his Sun companion, who seem to be Mithras and Sol, also called Sol Invictus. The dedication is also set up for the welfare and safety of the Emperor, at that moment Caracalla. Interestingly, the tribune does not just name himself, but also his fellow-devotees, very probably (partly) soldiers of the auxiliary cohort he commanded.

The evidence of dedications to Mithras in the military zone of Hadrian's Wall seems to be dominated by those set up by prefects and tribunes of auxiliary cohorts. The same issue as already mentioned before with dedications to Jupiter Dolichenus applies here: equestrian officers often came from different parts of the Empire than the cohort they commanded. As noted before, within the Roman army worship of mystery gods was more personal than the worship of the gods mentioned on the official religious army calendar. The mysteries of the cults were available to members only. Therefore rituals of the dedications to Mithras and Jupiter Dolichenus were not witnessed by the whole cohort, as was the case with dedications by officers to the deities of the official Roman pantheon and the Emperor. However, where their origin can be determined, the commanders seem to come from all over the Empire as well. Also, the main altars of the Mithraea might be set up and paid for by the richest devotees highest in rank in the cohort as well as possibly within the hierarchy of Mithraism, but as the dedication-slab from

⁹⁶ E. Birley (1986), 85.

⁹⁷ RIB 1992-4.

High Rochester shows, there were many devotees that did not leave any traces, most probably being auxiliary soldiers of the cohorts the officers commanded. Although there is no direct evidence, this might also count for the worship of Jupiter Dolichenus on Hadrian's Wall.

It is clear that, for auxiliaries, epigraphic sources from Hadrian's Wall cannot be called scarce. Already seventeen inscribed altars to Jupiter Optimus Maximus dedicated at the ceremonies held on the 3rd of January each year were found in Maryport alone. Although it would be impossible for me to discuss every example individually, I have tried to make a representative selection, giving many other known cases in the footnotes.

The *Feriale Duranum* is one of the most important sources on religion in the army, especially regarding to auxiliaries. It has been generally accepted that such a calendar was used by at least every auxiliary cohort throughout the Empire, if not by the legions as well. The religious calendar was therefore part of the army organization. What then was the motive behind its imposition on the *auxilia*? Hoey was convinced that it was part of the deliberate Romanization of the foreign troops by the Roman State.⁹⁸ However, this view was countered by Nock who rightly noted that such attempts to 'direct the religious lives' of ordinary people would not correspond to Roman policies and would be very unusual in the ancient world overall.⁹⁹

One could argue that soldiers were not treated as ordinary people. Their status distanced them from their civilian counterpart in the Empire. Several decades ago the general view on interaction between the army and the local community was that it was rather hostile if not non-existing. More recently however, scholars like Alston have showed that this was not the case everywhere.¹⁰⁰ Also, just like legionaries, auxiliaries were not allowed to marry. However, they did form lasting partnerships that were, although not official, regarded as marriages by all concerned. The Emperor accepted this bond by not just granting the auxiliary soldier Roman citizenship after twenty-five years of service, but also his children.¹⁰¹ The *vici* around the forts held a civilian community that could not be completely isolated from the soldiery within the fort. Food supplies and other trade goods were constantly being moved back and forth, not just between fort and *vicus*, but on Hadrian's Wall also between *vicus* and the land beyond the Wall. Veterans of both legions and *auxilia* settled in *vici* attached to forts as well as in other parts of the Empire, becoming civilians. Therefore, I would say that soldiers were seen as ordinary

⁹⁸ R.O. Fink, A.S. Hoey and W.F. Snyder, *The 'Feriale Duranum'* (New Haven, NY 1940), 209.

⁹⁹ A. Nock, "The Roman army and the Roman religious year" *Harvard Theological Review* xlv 4 (1952), 208.

¹⁰⁰ Alston, *Soldier and society in Roman Egypt: a social history*.

¹⁰¹ Hassall (1984), 268f.

people, but with a special duty or status for as long as they were in service. Although they were a most powerful ally to have during civil war or a fight for succession, the Emperors also realised that soldiers were people. For example, Severus Alexander made himself popular with the soldiers by increasing leave and pay. Several additions to the *Feriale Duranum* came from his reign. He knew that improving the lot of the common soldier would be the quickest way to their hearts.¹⁰²

The Roman State was, especially compared to later monarchies and states in history, tolerant towards the religious beliefs of its subjects. The general rule was that everyone could worship their own deities as long as they were also willing to worship the Roman pantheon, participate in the Imperial cult and did not disturb the peace of society or promote practices the Romans regarded as immoral.¹⁰³ The only religious group suppressed by the Romans before the Jews and Christians were the druids, who participated in human sacrifice, a practice not accepted within the Empire.¹⁰⁴ We will see in the next chapters that soldiers were also allowed to worship other gods than those from the standard Roman pantheon.

To return to the question what motive lay behind the imposition of the religious calendar on the *auxilia*, I would say that the Roman State did not purposely mean to Romanise the auxiliary soldiers religiously. However, it is certain that the Emperor preferred an at least outward religious conformity to the official gods. Many ceremonies suggest that this idea started as an Augustan conception. The army, responsible for the security of the whole Empire, formed the first sector of society to which this idea of conformity towards the old gods was applied. During the Principate, the subsequent emphasis was on the Imperial cult, which connected the Emperor with both men and gods. This way the emphasis on both the worship of official gods and the Imperial cult in the *Feriale Duranum* can be seen as a logical result of the political environment.¹⁰⁵

To the Romans, politics and religion were not separated: there was one world ruled by the gods. Cicero eloquently describes the Roman view in one of his orations:

“However good an opinion we may have of ourselves, yet we do not excel the Spaniards in number, the Gauls in strength, the Carthaginians in cunning, the Greeks in art nor the Italians and Latins in the inborn sense of home and soil. We do however excel all peoples in religiosity and in that unique wisdom that has

¹⁰² J.B. Campbell, *The Emperor and the Roman Army, 31 BC-AD 235*. (Oxford 1984), 302.

¹⁰³ Helgeland, “Roman army religion”, 1496.

¹⁰⁴ Plinius Maior, *Naturalis Historia*, 30.13; Suetonius, *Divus Claudius*, 25.5.

¹⁰⁵ I. Haynes, “Religion in the *auxilia* of the Roman imperial army from Augustus to Septimius Severus” *Britannia* 24 (1993), 142f.

brought us to the realisation that everything is subordinate to the rule and direction of the gods.”¹⁰⁶

Scepticism about whether some gods were more powerful than others and even on the existence of a particular god did occur, but there was little doubt in the army that the system of the gods was there. Worship, especially sacrifice, was the way of communication between men and gods. In this system both were supposed to receive what they deserved, libation and sacrifice for the deities and favours or punishments for men.¹⁰⁷ In this type of society outward religious conformity within the army, the most crucial instrument for power, is of great importance.

If we look at the evidence from Hadrian's Wall, we see that many inscribed altars for the *numen/numina* of the Emperor were set up, mostly mentioned together with gods like Jupiter Optimus Maximus and Mars. Auxiliaries also dedicated to the Discipline, Fortune and Victory of the Emperor in this regard. Ceremonies concerning the Imperial cult are most numerous on the *Feriale Duranum*. It is true that the Emperor, at least in the first century AD, was physically far away from the frontiers. From Hadrian on emperors did travel more throughout the Empire and visited important military areas, like the frontiers. It could in this regard be argued that the Emperor might have been a very abstract phenomenon for the soldiers stationed thousands of kilometres away from Rome, who were also not from the area of Rome themselves. However, we have seen that images of the Emperor were displayed close to the standards of the legions and cohorts and they were carried into battle as if the Emperor led the army himself. Most importantly, the Emperor was the one that payed the troops. The social distance between soldier and Emperor was in this way smaller than that between the Emperor and the other ordinary people.¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, the money the army was payed with showed the head of the Emperor, emphasizing the fact that it was the Emperor's money that the soldiers received. Reverses on coins also often focused on the army, for example depicting *Concordia militum* or the emperor addressing the troops. The soldiers relied on the Emperor to provide their living during service and afterwards in the form of savings and the Emperor relied on the army for the security of the Empire from threats from outside as well as inside, as has been the case throughout Roman history. This direct relation of dependence between the head of the state and every individual in the army together with the presence of the image of the Emperor within the centre of the

¹⁰⁶ Cicero, *Oratio de Haruspicum responsis*, 19: *Quam volumus licet, patres conscripti, ipsi nos amemus, tamen nec numero Hispanos nec robore Gallos nec calliditate Poenos nec artibus Graecos nec denique hoc ipso huius gentis ac terrae domestico nativoque sensu Italos ipsos ac Latinos, sed pietate ac religione atque hac una sapientia, quod deorum numine omnia regi gubernarique perspeximus, omnes gentes nationesque superavimus.*

¹⁰⁷ Helgeland, "Roman army religion", 1471.

¹⁰⁸ J.J. Jansen, "Het geschenk des konings" in H.J.M. Claessen (ed.), *Macht en Majesteit. Idee en werkelijkheid van het vroege koningschap* (Utrecht 1984), 56.

camp as well as the ceremonies of the Imperial cult throughout the year must have formed a feeling of connection and solidarity for soldiers towards the Emperor.

Dedications to the official Roman gods are well attested on Hadrian's Wall. The *Feriale Duranum* also mentions many sacrifices to the main deities. The official army religion as guided by the calendar was not consciously designed to Romanise the auxiliaries. I would say that the calendar itself was a conscious creation, but it was meant to do several things more concerned with practicality and functionality of the army. Helgeland has given a convincing summary of part of these. First, the connection of the lives of the individual soldiers with the destiny of Rome was emphasised by the festivals dedicated to the Roman state gods, the Emperor and the birth of the city. Also, through the celebration of the same festival at the same time, military units throughout the whole Empire were connected with each other as well as with Rome itself. Second, the *esprit de corps* was maintained through sacrificing for and honouring the gods, who would grant favours to the cohorts, aiding them in battle. Third, Helgeland is right in noting that it created a social structure for the lives of the soldiers. These men were stationed far away from home, undoubtedly living a very different life to what they were used to before they became soldiers. A soldier's life, then and now, is no fairy tale and the religious festivals provided a structure which entailed communal activities, celebration and a sense of time passing. It also offered necessities like discipline, rewards for merit or sanctions for dishonour, explanations for Roman traditions, loyalty and a new orientation within society. To sum things up, the official army religion helped soldiers, both auxiliary and legionary, to make their lives more tolerable. It also offered a feeling of significance, giving a purpose to the soldier's life within the army and the Empire.¹⁰⁹

The calendar was meant as a standardisation by Augustus of already existing practices throughout most of the Empire. Religion was not the only field in which Augustus standardised proceedings. He did this for many aspects of military life, like pay scales and length of service.¹¹⁰ Even more practical than the intentions mentioned above, Nock has rightly pointed out that the standardised religious year was also intended to give soldiers days off from work. During festivals, soldiers would receive free meat and wine. This was another way to keep the men happy and the spirits high.¹¹¹

Although often only the names of the commanding officers appeared on the altars to Roman deities and the *numen* of the Emperor, they were dedicated by them on behalf of the

¹⁰⁹ Helgeland, "Roman army religion", 1473 and 1487.

¹¹⁰ Ibidem, 1487.

¹¹¹ Nock, "The Roman army and the Roman religious year" (1952), 203.

whole unit. This would be done during a ceremony all soldiers would have witnessed.¹¹² A fresco from, again, Dura-Europos probably depicts such a ceremony, showing a queue of soldiers parading, watching their tribune, Julius Terentius, sacrifice before a military standard and three statues, possibly representing Palmyrene gods or deified Roman emperors. Kreitzer notes, “Such observance of the entire unit would have been standard practice throughout the empire and was an important part of the discipline of the Roman army. It was one means of showing the soldiers’ continued obedience to the Emperor and the Empire.”¹¹³ The two I.O.M. altars from Maryport discussed above show us that even when the cohort is not mentioned at all and only the officer’s name appears, the altar was most probably still dedicated by the whole cohort.¹¹⁴

Even though there was no special integration drill for auxiliaries, these activities unified the regiments and made the soldiers more familiar with Roman culture. Religion in this way, can be seen as an integrating factor. Individual soldiers may not have been obliged to participate in the rituals of the Roman ceremonies. But, they would have witnessed it repeatedly, being an important part of the environment the soldiers lived and worked in and of the discipline of the military. Therefore, these ceremonies would most certainly have had an impact on their world-view.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Goldsworthy (2003), 108.

¹¹³ Kreitzer, *Striking New Images*, 72.

¹¹⁴ RIB 823 and 825.

¹¹⁵ Haynes (1999), 169.

Chapter 2: Local deities

In the previous chapter we focused on the official army religion as handed down to us in the *Feriale Duranum* and on the many inscribed altars to the deities of the Roman pantheon found on Hadrian's Wall. We have seen that the official religious system cannot be seen separate from the political plan as well as army discipline. It also offered practical advantages, like holidays for the soldiers, to keep the spirits high, the men happy and so the Empire safe. It was the outward religious conformity as imposed by the Emperor that underlay the system of Roman army religion and it is therefore understandable that the soldiers sought personal religious satisfaction elsewhere.

Where then could auxiliaries out their personal devotion? Often this satisfaction was found in the worship of local deities, not Roman nor from the soldier's place of origin, but originally British.¹¹⁶ As we will see, the attributes of these deities were often either relatable to the military life of auxiliaries or they were residing local deities who were thought to protect the land the soldiers were serving in. Also, unique to the auxiliaries as opposed to the legionaries is the veneration of the gods of their regimental homelands, which we will discuss in the next chapter. Before we look at the evidence for the veneration of local gods by auxiliaries on Hadrian's Wall, we should discuss *Interpretatio Romana* and 'middle ground'. Especially local deities were often equated to Roman gods, like Mars. This is especially true for dedications by auxiliaries rather than legionaries.¹¹⁷ In the second part we will look at the worship of deities on Hadrian's Wall from the auxiliaries' homelands, ranging from the Rhineland to Syria and northern Africa.

Interpretatio Romana is a term used to describe the Roman habit of replacing the name of a foreign deity with that of a Roman deity considered in some way similar to the foreign one. The best known examples are the Roman names for Greek gods, like Minerva for Athena and of course Jupiter for Zeus. Only a few cases are known where the Romans took over the foreign name, like 'Apollo' and 'Isis'.¹¹⁸ The term comes directly from Tacitus, who uses it in his

¹¹⁶ G. Webster, *The British Celts and their gods under Rome* (London 1984), 73-79; M. Henig, *Religion in Roman Britain* (London 1984b), 47f; M. Green, *The gods of the Celts* (Gloucester 1986a), 103-109; Hutton, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles* (1991), 217f.

¹¹⁷ D.J. Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power and Identity. Experiencing the Roman Empire* (Princeton/Oxford 2014), 231.

¹¹⁸ M. Green, "Iconography of Romano-British religion" *ANRW* II.18.1 (1986b), 119ff; J. Rives, "Interpretatio Romana" in *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (online edition, 2015). Consulted on 2 June 2017. <http://classics.oxfordre.com/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780199381135.001.0001/acrefore-9780199381135-e-3303>.

Germania. When describing the cult of the twin gods of the Nahanarvali practiced in a sacred grove, Tacitus says:

“A priest in female attire has the charge of it, but the deities are described in Roman language as Castor and Pollux. Such, indeed, are the attributes of the divinity, the name being Alcis.”¹¹⁹

The association of the Alcis with Castor and Pollux is understandable, since both pairs are twin brothers.

A related term with regards to religion and contact between different peoples is religious syncretism, the “fusion” of diverse religious beliefs and practices. This term is often used for the cultural and religious developments following the conquests of Alexander the Great and his successors. Many articles have been written on just the definition of, or rather the complications with defining, religious syncretism. The discussion around this matter is too extensive for the purpose of this paper. However, I would like to briefly offer a different approach coined by Richard White and applied to especially Archaic Greek colonialism by Irad Malkin. The theory of ‘middle ground’, Malkin explains, “refers to what emerges from the encounters between colonists and ‘native populations’. White is interested in how various ‘sides’ reached an ‘accommodation’ and constructed a common and mutually comprehensible world beyond a mere ‘contact zone’. ... The middle ground is characterized as a field with some balance of power in which each side plays a role dictated by what it perceives to be the other’s perception of it, resulting from mutual misrepresentation of values and practices.”¹²⁰ Power in the Roman Empire was in the hands of the Emperor and the Senate and on a smaller scale the status of soldiers also put them above the civilian inhabitants of *vici* in terms of power.¹²¹ One could therefore say that there was little balance of power in the Empire and between soldiers and civilians. However, the religious tolerance of the Roman State allowed a type of balance which offered room for natives and various kinds of immigrants to find their ‘middle ground’. Unfortunately little more can be said about middle ground in Roman Britain, because evidence from British natives is not sufficient. The habit of depicting deities and dedicating altars and inscriptions to them is very Roman in the way that before their arrival only few examples of depictions of native deities are known from northern Britain.

¹¹⁹ Tacitus, *Germania*, 43: *Praesidet sacerdos muliebri ornatu, sed deos interpretatione Romana Castorem Pollucemque memorant. Ea vis numini, nomen Alcis.*

¹²⁰ I. Malkin, *A Small Greek World. Networks in the Ancient Mediterranean* (Oxford 2011), 46.

¹²¹ James, “The Community of the Soldiers: a major identity and centre of power in the Roman empire” in P. Baker, C. Forcey, S. Jundi and R. Witcher (eds.), *TRAC 98. Proceedings of the Eighth Annual Theoretical Roman Archaeology Conference* (Oxford 1999), 15.

Through *Interpretatio Romana* and the creation of ‘middle ground’ immigrants also dealt with Celtic deities native to Britain. We will see however, that the name of the Roman deity does not always downright replace the name of its Celtic equivalent. Often the Celtic name is used as some sort of epithet to the Roman name. Before the Romans entered and conquered Britain, the native people venerated gods and goddesses comparable, in character as well as in name, to the Gallic ones. The collective term used today is ‘Celtic’, which is a problematic term in its own right, many scholars arguing that no such things as ‘Celtic’ or ‘Celts’ existed. Because many aspects of culture between different people sometimes called ‘Celts’ differ, and because it is not necessary, I will refrain from using the term ‘Celts’. With regards to religion, I would rather use the term ‘British’ to explain the gods most certainly originally from Britain.

In the military north of Roman Britain, for three British deities there is more abundant evidence than for the others, who are often only attested by single inscriptions, either by auxiliaries, legionaries or civilians. They are Cocidius, Belatucadrus and Veteris. The numbers of dedications to them are not just much bigger than for the others, but also more is known about the status of their votaries. Dedications to these gods are only attested in Britain, which lets us conclude that they developed, or even originated on the island itself, rather than being brought over from the continent. We will discuss these three and a few significant dedications to others by auxiliaries in this order. Since these British gods are less well-known to many, an introduction to all will be given. It must be kept in mind that most of the evidence we have for the cults of the deities mentioned below comes from the era of the Roman occupation. The cults as they existed before they came into contact with soldiers and civilians from the Continent probably changed through time because of the intensive cultural contact with Roman as well as other Continental cultures. Although I use the term ‘British’ here, one could also call their cults ‘Romano-British’.

Dedications to Cocidius are mostly found in Northern Britain and almost exclusively on Hadrian’s Wall. This is not strange since Cocidius was a warrior god, attracting soldiers more so than civilians. Apart from being mentioned in several inscriptions, he is also most probably depicted on at least ten recovered reliefs from Hadrian’s Wall of which about half from Maryport. Although most of these lack an inscription, it is certain that a ‘Celtic’ god is portrayed. Charlton and Mitcheson point out that “the head, with its jutting brows, its elongated lentoid eyes, its close-fitting cap, or perhaps, ... hair represented as a slightly raised plane, and

its pointed, possibly bearded, chin, is wholly native in treatment.”¹²² Most importantly, two silver plaques found in the underground strong-room in the Headquarters Building of the fort at Bewcastle have very similar figures to the other images of warrior types found along Hadrian’s Wall. These two plaques are the only examples with inscriptions, one simply stating *Deo Cocidio*, “To the god Cocidius” and the other *Deo D(e)o Coc(i)dīo Av(e)ntinus f(ecit)*, “To the god: to the god Cocidius Aventinus set this up”.¹²³ The combination of the inscriptions and the striking similarity of the images of both these plaques with the others make it very probable that the other images also portray Cocidius. The warrior figures are portrayed front-facing and all but two are naked. On the other two the god wears what appears to be a cuirass. The figure on one of the Bewcastle plaques also wears a very similar cuirass. The details on some of these images are unfortunately hard to determine. From what is possible to establish, all carry a shield in their left hand, almost all round, but one of the Maryport examples has a rectangular shield. In their right hand they carry a spear. Interestingly, five of the figures have horns and three are phallic. Two are both horned and phallic. Phallic representations are very scarce in pre-Roman art from Britain.¹²⁴ Horned deities and creatures are more common in Britain as well as Scotland and Ireland. On the continent the horned god is often called Cernunnos.

As a warrior god, within the Roman army Cocidius was equated with Mars.¹²⁵ A few inscribed altars to Mars Cocidius have been found on Hadrian’s Wall both by legionaries and by auxiliaries.¹²⁶ Of the latter a dedication of a centurion from the area west of milecastle 59 has been recovered:

CIL VII 886 = RIB 2015: *[D]eo Marti [C]ocidio [...] Martius [...] [c]oh(ortis) I Ba[t(avorum)] [et] Genio [...]vali [v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens)] m(erito).*

To the god Mars Cocidius ... Martius, centurion of the First Cohort of Batavians, and to the Genius of ...]valium (willingly and) deservedly (fulfilled his vow).

Cocidius is also mentioned together with Silvanus¹²⁷ and in one case an altar is dedicated to Silvanus Cocidius by a prefect of the First Cohort of Tungrians:

CIL VII 642 = RIB 1578: *Deo Silvano Cocidio Q(uintus) Florius Maternus praef(ectus) coh(ortis) I Tung(rorum) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito).*

¹²² D.B. Charlton and M.M. Mitcheson, “Yardhope. A Shrine to Cocidius?” *Britannia* 14 (1983), 148.

¹²³ Respectively RIB 986 and 987.

¹²⁴ A. Ross, “The horned god of the Brigantes” *Archaeologia Aeliana* 4 (1961), 74 n. 10.

¹²⁵ Hutton, 213f.

¹²⁶ For the ones probably by auxiliaries see RIB 993 and 1017. The latter was found somewhere in Cumbria and also mentions Jupiter Optimus Maximus and the Gallic gods Riocalatis and Toutatis.

¹²⁷ See RIB 1207.

To the god Silvanus Cocidius Quintus Florius Maternus, prefect of the First Cohort of Tungrians, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

Another unique case is the dedication to Vernostonus Cocidius from the Roman fort of Ebchester (Vindomora) by a German:

CIL VII 9* = RIB 1102: *Deo Vernostono Cocidio Viri[l]is Ger(manus) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens).*

To the god Vernostonus Cocidius, Virilis, a German, willingly fulfilled his vow.

Vernostonus was another British deity associated with the alder tree. Otherwise not much is known about Vernostonus. Most ‘Celtic’ deities were associated with natural features like springs, the sources of rivers and wells and, of course, the sacred grove. These were the places where the mythical beings dwelled in contrast with the temples built by men for the classical gods.¹²⁸

Dedications to Cocidius are mainly found on the west side of the Wall. A high concentration comes from Bewcastle, just north of Hadrian’s Wall, where the silver plaques mentioned above were found. He was not just worshipped by soldiers as an epithet to Roman or other gods, but also on his own.¹²⁹ An inscribed altar was found at Hardriding, close to the Roman fort of Vindolanda, modern Chesterholm.

CIL VII 701 = RIB 1683: *Deo Cocidio Decimus Caerellius Victor pr(aefectus) coh(ortis) II Ner(viorum) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito).*

To the god Cocidius, Decimus Caerellius Victor, prefect of the Second Cohort of Nervians, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

Another dedication to Cocidius of the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians was found in Birdoswald:

CIL VII 803 = RIB 1872: *Deo Cocidio coh(ors) I Aelia [Dacorum c(ui) p(raeest)] [Tere]ntius Valerianus [trib(unus) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)].*

To the god Cocidius the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians, under the command of Terentius Valerianus, tribune, willingly and deservedly fulfilled its vow.

¹²⁸ Charlton and Mitcheson, “Yardhope. A Shrine to Cocidius?” (1983), 147.

¹²⁹ See RIB 966 (This inscribed altar from either Netherby or Bewcastle was dedicated by the tribune of the First Cohort Nervana, Paternius Maternus, who is mentioned to have been promoted from *evocatus Palatinus*, a soldier of the praetorian guard retained after 16 years for promotion to centurion or above), 988 (This inscription from Bewcastle also mentions that the dedicating tribune was promoted from *evocatus*), 1633 and 1963.

These two cohorts come from completely different parts of the Empire. Another inscription by the same cohort as the latter was found at Birdoswald as well:

CIL VII 823 = RIB 1885: (primary) *Deo Co[c]i[di]o*. (secondary) *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) coh(ors) I Ael(ia) D[a]c(orum) Tetricianorum c(ui) p(raeest) Pomp[oni]us D[eside]rat[us ...] t[ri]b(unus) ...*.

(primary) To the god Cocidius (secondary) To Jupiter, Best and Greatest, the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians, styled Tetrician, (set this up) under the command of Pomponius Desideratus ..., the tribune

Here an altar with an earlier inscription to Cocidius was reused by the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians, who at this time were commanded by a different tribune than during the time the previous altar to Cocidius was set up. The honorary title *Tetricianorum* was also added, which the cohort probably received during the Roman victory over the Tetrici, two emperors of the Gallic Empire in the late 3rd century AD. The new dedication was set up for Jupiter Optimus Maximus.

It must be noted that the altars dedicated to Cocidius on Hadrian's Wall, in both auxiliary and legionary context, as well as the one example from further south near Lancaster from a *beneficarius consularis*¹³⁰, are of a considerable size and skill and all mention the names of the dedicants. Altars came in different qualities and sizes and therefore in different price classes. Most of the dedicators to Cocidius were of rather high status, being equestrian officers, the *beneficarius* and a centurion, and therefore could afford more expensive altars which offered more space for an inscription and more decorations.¹³¹

Dedications to the two other deities are clearly less elaborate. These often consist of smaller altars with sometimes no room for the dedicant's name. Some of the votaries mention their occupation. It becomes clear that they are all evidently *humiliores*. Apparently Cocidius appealed more to a higher class whilst Belatucadrus and Veteris appealed more to the lower. So far we can only guess why this is the case as no solid evidence exists.

Belatucadrus' altars are, just like the ones dedicated to Cocidius, more found on the west side of Hadrian's Wall. The greatest concentration of dedications however, is found at Brougham, ancient Brocavum, about 30 kilometres south of Carlisle. Not much is known about the Roman fort here, since it has not been excavated yet. Since Brougham is rather far away

¹³⁰ A *beneficarius consularis* was an officer on the governor's staff, who might be outposted, as was the case here.

¹³¹ E. Birley (1986), 59.

from the area of Hadrian's Wall, especially in Roman times transport going as fast as a man or horse could walk, and because evidence from the actual Wall area is sufficient we will not discuss the altars found here.

Belatucadrus was also a warrior god. Although no depictions of him are linked with inscriptions, it cannot be excluded that he was one of the horned gods Cocidius also belonged to, represented on so many of the uninscribed stones in the same general area.¹³² As a warrior god he is, just like Cocidius, equated with Mars. Several inscribed altars to Mars Belatucadrus from the area of Hadrian's Wall have been recovered, although in most cases it cannot be said with certainty if it was dedicated by auxiliaries, legionaries or civilians.¹³³ However, the names of the votaries that can be deciphered are all male. Also, as a warrior god Belatucadrus was more likely to appeal to soldiers than to civilians. One altar stands out, set up by an *actor*¹³⁴ of a prefect and found within the walls of Voreda, the Roman fort at Old Penrith, about 20 kilometres south of Carlisle:

CIL VII 318 = RIB 918: *Deo Marti Belatucadro et Numinib(us) Aug(ustorum) Iulius Augustalis actor Iul(i) Lupi pr(a)ef(ecti).*

To Mars Belatucadrus and to the Divinities of the Emperors Julius Augustalis, actor of Julius Lupus, the prefect, (set this up).

Just like Cocidius, Belatucadrus is also mentioned many times on his own, without *Interpretatio Romana*.¹³⁵ An inscription on an altar found within the walls of the auxiliary fort at Maryport shows mentions that the dedicator was an *optio*¹³⁶:

CIL VII 369 = RIB 809: *Belatucadro Iul(ius) Ci/vilis opt(io) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito).*

To Belatucadrus Julius Civilis, *optio*, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

Another comes from Kirkbride, 6,5 kilometres from Bowness, from the Trajanic fort. It is dedicated by a *miles*, a soldier. Usually the term *miles* and *milites* are used only for legionaries.

¹³² Ibidem, 61f.

¹³³ For Mars Belatucadrus see RIB 948, 970, 1784 and 2044. It is unsure whether these are dedicated by legionaries or auxiliaries.

¹³⁴ An *actor* was probably not so much a military rank, but rather an agent or steward.

¹³⁵ See RIB 887 for a dedication by a veteran, most probably a former auxiliary soldier. Of the other dedications to Belatucadrus on Hadrian's wall it is uncertain to say whether they were set up by auxiliaries or legionaries. Civilians would be less likely, but still remain as a possibility. See RIB 888, 889, 914, 1521, 1775, 1776, 1976, 1977, 2038 and 2045.

¹³⁶ An *optio* was an officer second-in-command of a century.

However, cases are known of auxiliaries calling themselves *militēs*.¹³⁷ Also, because this *miles* only mentions one name instead of two or three, evidence suggests he was an auxiliary, although from unknown origin.

CIL VII 333 = RIB 2056: *Deo Belatocairo Peisius m(iles) solvit votum l(ibens) m(erito)*.

To the god Belatocairus, Peisius, a soldier, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

As can be noted, the spelling of Belatucadrus differs widely between inscription, although this is the most common one. Other variations are *Balatocadrus*, *Balatucadrus*, *Balaticaurus*, *Balatucairus*, *Baliticaurus*, *Belatucairus*, *Belatugagus*, *Belleticaurus*, *Blatucadrus* and *Blatucairus*.

Little is known about the character of the god Veteris. Just as in the case of Belatucadrus, the spelling of Veteris varies widely, other options being *Veteri*, *Veteribus*, *Vetiri*, *Vetri*, *Vicribus*, *Viteri*, *Vitire*, *Vitiri*, *Vitiribus*, *deab[us] Vitiribus*, *Votri*, *Hveteri*, *Hveteribus*, *Hvitiri*, *Hvitiribus*, *Hvitri* and *Vheteri*. As can be noted, he is sometimes mentioned in the singular form and other times in the plural. Two cases from Chester-le-Street, ancient Concangium, are even known in which the goddesses Vitires are mentioned.¹³⁸

However, altars to this god/these gods are most numerous. About fifty examples from northern Britain are known. Only one of these has reliefs, possibly telling us something about the character of Veteris. RIB 973 only bears the inscription *deo hveteri*, or “To the god Hveter”, on the front. On the left side however, we can see a scene of a tree and a snake encircling it. The right side shows another tree and the snout and forefeet of a boar, which is all that remains of a fuller representation. These scenes are often interpreted as alluding to two of the works of Hercules, that is the apple tree of the Hesperides guarded by the serpent-like dragon Ladon and the Erymanthian boar.¹³⁹ Herakles or Hercules is an interesting case because he was the only god who was (partly) incorporated in other religious systems, especially in the Hellenistic East, already from the 7th century BCE. However, no other evidence of an equation of Veteris with Hercules is known and therefore the certainty with which most scholars present this case of

¹³⁷ See for example RIB 2109: *Dib(us) Deab(us)q(ue) omnib(us) Frumentius mil(es) coh(ortis) II Tungr(orum)*. See also RIB 418, 619, 1060, 1249 and 1667.

¹³⁸ See RIB 1047 and 1048.

¹³⁹ Birley interprets the snake on the left relief saying “... a snake, no doubt intended for the Lernaean hydra”. However, it is a lot more likely that the snake-like dragon Ladon is depicted, since he is connected to the apple tree of the Hesperides, unlike the hydra. Also, Birley, as well as others, do interpret the tree as being the apple tree of the Hesperides, E. Birley (1986), 63 n. 323.

Interpretatio Romana is not as substantiated as one would like. The boar and snake, especially within scenes set in nature, in this case the forest, were also common elements in Celtic religion and mythology. However, the Romano-British context of the find in Netherby, where the soldiers of the Roman fort *Castra Exploratorum* were stationed, does suggest that *Interpretatio Romana* would be likely. Also, the altar shows two spiralled columns between both sides and the middle panel and the top is decorated with a frieze of geometrical shapes. This gives the altar the look of a Roman temple, which was a practice unknown to the people of Britain before the Roman conquest. This altar is made with an incredible skill not seen on any other altar to *Veteris*, which are all rather plain. However, it is similar in size. The elaborate decorations show that its anonymous dedicator was willing to spend a lot more on this dedication than others would or could.

There is one example known of a direct equation of *Veteris* with another god, *Mogons*.¹⁴⁰ *Veteris* appears as an epithet to the god on this altar. Again, little is known about the character of the god *Mogons*, who will be discussed in the next part about ‘Celtic’ deities brought to Britain by immigrants. No case of *Interpretatio Romana* is known for *Veteris*. Just like *Belatucadrus*, it seems like humbler folk mostly dedicated to him/them.¹⁴¹ On many altars no name of the dedicator is given and only on a couple their status is specified.

The first of these two inscribed altars was found at the auxiliary fort of *Longovicium* on *Dere Street*, the main Roman road between *Eboracum*, modern *York*, and *Hadrian’s Wall*. Although the fort was situated about 30 kilometres south of *Hadrian’s Wall*, *Dere Street* was a very important road for military transport. Also, more is known about the auxiliary fort and its garrisons here than for example the one in *Brougham*.

CIL VII 444 = RIB 1088: *Deo Vitir[i] VNTHAV[.] pr(inceps) pos(uit) [p]ro se e[t] sui[s].*

To the god *Vitiris* ..., princeps, set (this) up for himself and his own.

Unfortunately, the name of the dedicant is illegible. The combination of the starting letters of his name, ‘*Vnthav...*’, is not particularly Roman. Therefore, he was probably an auxiliary.

¹⁴⁰ RIB 971, see the next chapter on *Mogons* and this inscription.

¹⁴¹ For altars from *Hadrian’s Wall* presumably set up by auxiliaries, based on the find spot within, for example, the walls of a particular fort, see RIB 1047, 1335, 1336, 1456, 1602, 1603, 1604, 1605, 1697, 1698, 1699 and 2068. For other dedications to *Veteris* from *Hadrian’s Wall* of which it is unsure whether they were set up by auxiliaries, legionaries or civilians, see RIB 925, 1046, 1048, 1087, 1103, 1104, 1140, 1141, 1455, 1457, 1458, 1548, 1549, 1606, 1728, 1730, 1793, 1794, 1796-1803, 1805 and 2069.

However, because the altar is severely damaged, nothing can be said with certainty. His function of *princeps* means that he was probably an officer in command of a detachment.

The second altar for Veteris that has an inscription that states the function of the dedicator comes from Carvoran:

CIL VII 760 = RIB 1795: *Deo sanct[o] Veteri Iul(ius) Pastor imag(inifer) coh(ortis) II Delma(tarum) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito).*

To the holy god Veteris Julius Pastor, imaginifer of the Second Cohort of Dalmatians, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

Only a handful inscriptions by *imaginiferi* are known from Roman Britain and this is the only example by an auxiliary soldier. Julius Pastor was one of the men of the Second Cohort of Dalmatians that would carry the image of the Emperor along with the *vexillarii*, who would carry the cohort's standards. It was an honour to be one of the bearers of the standards or the images of the Emperor. Only the most trustworthy and best soldiers would be chosen for this task and so it formed a chance for a common soldier to gain a higher status.

Other British deities have been attested as well, although most of them only in one or a few inscriptions.¹⁴² The god Antenociticus is thought to have been worshipped as an intercession in military affairs. In a temple next to Benwell fort three altars dedicated to this god have been found of which two by auxiliary officers.¹⁴³ One of these mentions the First Cohort of Vangiones:

CIL VII 515 = RIB 1328: *Deo An[t]enocitico sacrum coh(ors) I Va[n]gion(um) quib(us) prae est [...]c(ius) Cassi[anus] p[raef]ectus [v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens)] m(erito).*

Sacred to the god Antenociticus: the First Cohort of Vangiones, under the command of ... Cassianus, prefect, willingly and deservedly fulfilled its vow.

The temple also held a statue of the god. The sandstone head of this statue has been found during excavations in the 19th century. The British-Celtic character of the god is represented in the torc that can still be seen around the neck. Also, the hair on top of his head slightly curls

¹⁴² See RIB 2195 (although not from Hadrian's Wall, but from Antonine's Wall, this altar for Britannia was set up by the prefect of the Fourth Cohort of Gauls)

¹⁴³ See RIB 1329. The inscription on the altar states that the prefect of a cavalry cohort had been promoted to *quaestor* and therefore was allowed to wear the senatorial broad stripe on his toga.

forward as to represent two horns. Part of the lower leg and forearm of the figure were also found. This indicates that a life-sized statue of Antenociticus once stood there.¹⁴⁴

Fourteen altars to the goddess Coventina have been found near Carrawburgh, ancient Brocolitia, in an area surrounding a wellspring. Inside and around the well 13,487 coins ranging in time from Mark Anthony to Gratian were also found together with a relief of three water nymphs, the head of a male statue, two dedication slabs to the goddess, two clay incense burners and many votive objects.¹⁴⁵ It is noteworthy that, apart from two altars dedicated by two prefects of the third-century garrison the First Cohort of Batavians, the area has retrieved altars set up by men from three other auxiliary cohorts and amongst the men who do not specify a connection with the military, but just as well could have been soldiers, there are two Germans, another with the Germanic name Vinomathus and a man with a name of African origin.¹⁴⁶

EE III 186 = RIB 1524: *Deae Coventine coh(orti) I Cubernorum Aur(elius) Campester v(otum) p(osuit) l(aeto) a(nimo).*

To the goddess Coventina for the First Cohort of Cubernians Aurelius Campester joyously set up his votive offering.

Two small altars, one from Birdoswald and one from Chesters, ancient Cilurnum, are dedicated to the goddess Ratis, whose Celtic name probably translates to “Goddess of the Fortress”.¹⁴⁷ Together with the find spots of the altars it is likely that the dedicators were soldiers. A goddess worshipped in Maryport is called Setlocenia, translating to “the Long-lived One”.¹⁴⁸ Although the dedicant, a German, does not state his function, it is possible that he was connected to the military, dedicating to a goddess that would offer a long life. However, he might also have been a sailor or merchant, since Maryport was an important Roman port. A *decurio princeps* of an unnamed Tungrian cohort from Castleheads, the Roman fort of Camboglanna, set up an altar to Vanauntes, also called Vanauns.¹⁴⁹ This example is interesting because the capital of the altar possibly represents the three central rooms of an auxiliary unit’s *principia*, the headquarters. The middle of the relief shows the *aedes principiorum*, the room

¹⁴⁴ Ross (1967), 83 and 163f.

¹⁴⁵ “PastScape entry for Coventina’s Well” English Heritage (2007). Consulted on 8 June 2017. http://www.pastscape.org.uk/hob.aspx?hob_id=1013364&sort=4&search=all&criteria=coventina&rational=q&recordsperpage=10.

¹⁴⁶ See RIB 1522, 1523 (altar by an *optio* of the First Cohort of Frisiavones), 1525, 1526, 1527 (dedication by a decurion to the nymph Coventina), 1528, 1529 (altar by a soldier from a cohort of which the name is illegible, but could possibly be the Fifth Cohort of Raetians), 1530-1533, 1534 (dedication by a prefect of the First Cohort of Batavians) and 1535 (altar by another prefect of the First Cohort of Batavians).

¹⁴⁷ See RIB 1454 and 1903; A. Ross, *Pagan Celtic Britain* (London, 1967), 231.

¹⁴⁸ RIB 841.

¹⁴⁹ RIB 1991.

where the standards were kept. It is flanked by the offices of the *cornicularius*, the chief clerk, and the *signiferi*, the standard-bearers.¹⁵⁰

Little is known about the most attested British gods Cocidius, Belatucadrus and Veteris. Cocidius and Belatucadrus are both warrior gods, often equated with Mars. The character of Veteris is unknown. We have one inscription in which he is equated with another god, Mogons, of whom we also do not know much. Other British gods venerated by soldiers seem to be appealing to the men because they could be associated with army life, like the goddess of the fortress and the long-lived goddess.

One could wonder why men would worship gods not indigenous to their regimental homelands and also not introduced to them by the Roman emperor and state. Henig notes that “Roman piety simply demanded that her armies should win over foreign deities to the Roman cause and there were ritual formulae to be pronounced when enemy cities were besieged to this effect.”¹⁵¹ He quotes Macrobius on the conquest of Carthage in which he mentions the Roman will for foreign gods to desert the people they were protecting and come to Rome.¹⁵² However, the British gods were only venerated within Britain itself, by both natives and immigrants. They were never taken to Rome. Henig concludes that the army life was dangerous and therefore soldiers were most anxious to befriend local deities who ruled the lands they were stationed in.¹⁵³ Although this conclusion is logical, it is too simplistic to explain the abundance of epigraphical evidence found in northern Britain. Another explanation would be that many of the cohorts recruited from Britain, since it was the closest source of new recruits. The British men coming in to the regiments probably brought the worship of their gods with them. This way many auxiliaries came into contact with the local gods. However, most of the dedications to local gods are by auxiliaries from elsewhere than Britain, as sometimes deduced from the explicit mentioning of ones origin and sometimes from onomastics. This explanation would also be too simplistic.

‘Celtic’ mythology, as well as for example Germanic, Syrian and African mythology, was concentrated around sacred places. These natural phenomena, like springs, rivers, wells, hills and groves, were the places where a certain god or goddess would have visited or would reside. The construction of temples for gods was brought to Britain by the Romans. Even in

¹⁵⁰ E. Birley (1986), 73.

¹⁵¹ M. Henig, “Throne, altar and sword: Civilian religion and the Roman army in Britain” in T.F. Colston Blagg and A.C. King (eds.), *Military and civilian in Roman Britain: cultural relationships in a frontier province* (Oxford 1984a), 227.

¹⁵² Macrobius, *Saturnalia*, III.9.7-8.

¹⁵³ Henig, “Throne, altar and sword” (1984a), 136.

Roman mythology certain places were sacred because gods were supposed to have visited it, like the famous example of Lake Nemi, also called Diana's Mirror, in the Lazio region in Italy. A sanctuary to Diana was built next to the lake in the sacred grove of Aricia.

In his study on the introduction of Hellenic cults in Seleucid Syria Strootman has pointed out that “communal identities in the ancient world are based most of all on collective religious practices, but also on shared ideas about the past *and* the relationship of the community with the landscape it inhabited. The identification of mythic *lieux de mémoire* in the Syrian landscape, and of sacred space, brought together these three aspects and provided a basis for the rituals by which collective identities among the new (settler) communities could be fashioned and negotiated. In this process, the mutual translation of Syrian and Greek deities was instrumental in the creation of local cults that could accommodate different migrant groups and indigenous populations.”¹⁵⁴

In northern Britain, the cults of deities like Cocidius and Belatucadrus already existed. However, coming into contact with thousands of new immigrants over centuries must have changed the cults thoroughly. *Interpretatio Romana* did not just involve changing the name of an indigenous deity, or combining its name with its Roman equivalent, but also changed the way he or she was worshipped. The Roman army brought their gods with them, either having grown up with them or having been introduced to them through their conscription. We have already seen in the previous chapter that the religious practices laid upon them by the army discipline united them within a military identity new to them all.

The new immigrants did not just bring with them the Roman gods and the gods from their homelands, as we will see in the next part, they also needed a place for the gods to reside and connect to them. These sacred places were found in the sacred places already existing in the British landscape. The centre of worship for Cocidius was probably Fanum Cocidi, a place mentioned on the Ravenna list.¹⁵⁵ This list was a tabular list of Roman way-stations set up by a priest at Ravenna in northern Italy in the 7th century AD. It was based on a collection of older source-material. The entry Fanum Cocidi, “Shrine of Cocidius”, is usually identified with the Roman fort of Bewcastle, just north to the Wall. The abundance of epigraphical evidence for the worship of Cocidius found at Bewcastle strengthens this assumption. Not just dedications

¹⁵⁴ R. Strootman, “The introduction of Hellenic cults in Seleucid Syria: colonial appropriation and transcultural exchange in the creation of an imperial landscape” (Forthcoming), 9. I would like to thank Dr Rolf Strootman for his kindness in granting me an early draft of his article still to be published and for his general guidance during the process of writing this paper.

¹⁵⁵ I.A. Richmond and O.G.S. Crawford, “The British Section of the Ravenna Cosmography” *Archaeologia* 93 (1949), 34.

to Cocidius were found here, but also to Mars Cocidius. The army might have built a temple at this site, but the worship of Cocidius was probably already existing connected to a natural feature close to Bewcastle. The same might count for the centre of worship of Belatucadrus at Brougham, south of the Wall.

Although we cannot be sure, evidence of the worship of British gods in the rest of northern Britain does make this assumption more likely. A group of altars and bases found just south of Bowes Roman fort, ancient Lavatrae or Lavatris, were all set up for the British god Vinotonus. Foundations of a circular temple have been found in Scargill Moor, close to a small river, where these altars were found. There is no doubt that the sacred place connected to Vinotonus already existed before the auxiliary cohort were stationed at the Roman fort. The First Cohort of Thracians was stationed at Bowes from the Severan age onwards. Their prefect dedicated an altar to Vinotonus of outstanding quality:

JRS XLIII 132 = RIB 733: *Deo Vinotono L(ucius) Caesius Frontinus praef(ectus) coh(ortis) I Thrac(um) domo Parma v(otum) s(olvit) l(aetus) l(ibens) m(erito).*

To the god Vinotonus, Lucius Caesius Frontinus, prefect of the First Cohort of Thracians, from Parma, gladly, willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

Here we have another explicit example of a prefect who came from a different area of the Empire than the men in his cohort. This inscription probably comes from the third century. By this time the First Cohort of Thracians would have still had Thracians in them, but would also include many British men and handfuls of men from other areas around the Empire. In and near the same temple where this altar was found, at least six more dedications were recovered, all in a very fragmentary state.¹⁵⁶ Some now only show the word *Deo*, “To the god”, but another shows the letter V, most probably of [*Deo*] V[*inotono*]. Interestingly, another shrine was built close by, on the west bank of the East Black Sike, a tributary flowing into the Eller Beck. It lies about 3 kilometres south of Bowes fort. The long west wall of this small rectangular shrine was built into the slope of the valley side. Two altars have been recovered from this location. One is by a centurion of the same cohort we came across on dedications from the circular temple:

JRS XXXVII 179 = RIB 732: [*Deo*] *Vinotono Silvano Iul(ius) Secundus coh(ortis) I Thrac(um) v(otum) s(olvit) l(aetus) l(ibens) m(erito).*

¹⁵⁶ See RIB 734-738.

To the god Vinotonus Silvanus, Julius Secundus, centurion of the First Cohort of Thracians, gladly, willingly, and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

The centurion Julius Secundus equated Vinotonus with Silvanus. Again, little is known about Vinotonus. The only evidence we have for him are the altars found near Bowes. His name may mean “God of the Vines”. This correlates well with his equation to Silvanus who was the Roman tutelary deity of woods and the protector of fields. The sacred space already existing connected to Vinotonus was used by the new immigrants for the gods they already knew.

An inscription found at Nettleham near Lincoln was set up by Q. Neratius Proxsimus who had provided an arch presumably for the *temenos* of the temple to Mars Rigonemetes.¹⁵⁷ Rigonemetes is only known to us from this inscription and was probably a local god. His name means something like ‘king of the sacred grove’, which suggest a sacred place connected to him in the vicinity.¹⁵⁸ The dedicator apparently found a similarity between Rigonemetes and the Roman god Mars known to him and therefore equated them. He therefore could use the sacred space connected to Rigonemetes to worship Mars in a landscape far from his own. Another dedication to Mars, now as Mars Alator, was probably looted from a shrine along Ermine street, the Roman road from Londinium (London) to Lindum Colonia (Lincoln) and Eboracum (York).¹⁵⁹ This silver-gilt votive plaque shows the figure of Mars in panoply with a spear and shield. He stands in the centre of a shrine formed by two twisted columns with leaf-capitals with a pediment enclosing a wreath on top. The rest of the plaque is also ornamented with a leaf pattern. As is the case with many other British gods, we do not know much about Alator. His name has been interpreted variously as meaning “hunter” or “he who rears or nourishes”. Either way, he was clearly connected to nature, either as a hunter or a cultivator. This plaque was found together in the Barkway hoard in Rookery Wood with two very similar votive plaques inscribed to the Roman god Vulcan. These plaques also show leaf patterns and wreaths in their decoration. It is very well possible that the shrine these plaques were dedicated at was a local sacred grove connected to Alator. Again, the dedicators used this presumably existing natural sanctuary as a place of worship for the gods they brought with them, connecting both the figures of the British and Roman god as well as the Roman god to the sacred place in the foreign landscape. Although evidence from Hadrian’s Wall itself is less conclusive, considering the case of Fanum Cocidi and the examples from elsewhere in (northern) Britain,

¹⁵⁷ JRS LII, 192.

¹⁵⁸ Ross (1967), 174.

¹⁵⁹ RIB 218. For the only other known dedication to Mars Alator see RIB 1055, an altar from South Shields, the Roman fort of Arbeia at the east end of Hadrian’s Wall.

it is very well possible that the auxiliaries and officers stationed at the Wall would have made similar connections to give their gods a place in the already existing religious landscape, figuratively and literally.

To conclude, auxiliaries on Hadrian's Wall worshipped local British gods and goddesses. The characters of many of these are unclear to us. However, unsurprisingly, the majority of the evidence points at deities that could be related to army life, like warfare, the fortress and a long life. The dangerous life of a soldier, especially in a frontier zone, may as well be one of the reasons why auxiliaries would worship local deities, wanting to be in their good books in a landscape so far away from their homes and ruled by these British gods.

We know that although the auxiliary cohorts had ethnic names, this would only have been of most significance in the first decades of the cohorts' existence. Next generations were recruited from sources closest to the location the cohort was stationed. British men were therefore recruited into the auxiliary cohorts of for example Dacians, Tungrians and Nervians. However, there were so many auxiliary cohorts in Britain that recruitment from Britain alone was not sufficient. There were simply not enough men to be recruited and men from elsewhere would still come to Britain to serve, if possible in the cohorts that originally recruited from their area of origin.¹⁶⁰ Since the Roman army was religiously very tolerant as long as soldiers would participate in the worship of the Roman gods and the numen/numina of the Emperor(s), British men probably brought the worship of their local gods with them as well. This way, it is possible that other auxiliaries from elsewhere in the Empire and officers would have come into contact with these local gods through their brothers in arms recruited from the natives, if they were not familiar with the local gods already.

Interpretatio Romana is a phenomenon clearly present in the evidence on Hadrian's Wall. Many British gods were equated by auxiliaries with Mars, some with Silvanus and even possibly one with Hercules. In the ancient world, mythology was strongly connected with sacred places. In British religion and in the old Roman religion these were natural features where gods would have visited or would even reside. Later, the Romans started building houses for their gods in the form of temples. In Britain the immigrant soldiers found places to venerate the Roman gods in the sacred places already existing in the British religious landscape. Local gods associated with these sacred groves, wells and springs were worshipped alongside the Roman gods or equated with them based on certain similarities in character.¹⁶¹ The local cults

¹⁶⁰ Hassall, "Epigraphy and the Roman army in Britain" (1984), 268.

¹⁶¹ H.J. Rose, *Ancient Roman religion* (London 1948), 17 and 27; Henig, *Religion in Roman Britain* (1984b), 32f, 66 and 85; Hutton, 206.

changed coming into contact with the new immigrants. Temples and shrines were built for them, most probably at the spots of the original sacred space attached to them. Altars were set up and depictions of British gods are mostly attested from Roman times. It is important to note that these religious practices were all Roman and not British. So although the gods worshipped might be British in name, the act of dedicating in this way was Roman in origin and came to Britain with the immigrant dedicators, soldiers and civilians.¹⁶²

¹⁶² Henig (1984a), 240.

Chapter 3: Native religion

In the previous chapter we have seen that soldiers and officers of many auxiliary cohorts in the military zone of northern Britain dedicated to local gods. *Interpretatio Romana* often occurred, especially in the case of the Roman war god Mars, which is understandable considering the area and the occupation of the dedicators. The British gods that were worshipped by the soldiers along Hadrian's Wall were often relatable to military life, like the warrior-gods, or were the protecting local deities of specific places, residing in sacred groves, wells and springs.

An important part of a person's or group's identity is often their place of origin. Now the world is considerably more globalised some people might feel like they do not belong to any geographical place and consider themselves 'citizens of the world'. There are also people and groups that consider themselves part of a certain heritage even though they did not come from that particular place themselves, for example the descendants of European immigrants in the US, Canada and Australia. As people travel, religion travels with them. This was certainly the case in the auxiliary cohorts of the Roman Empire. All over the Empire dedications to gods not indigenous to the area of the find spot nor Roman in origin are found, left by soldiers as well as civilians. We will see that this is no different in the case of the occupants of Hadrian's Wall. The number of deities of different origin found in this area is substantial. To structuralise the abundance of evidence we will discuss the deities divided into roughly the 'culture groups' they were part of, being Gallic-Celtic, Germanic and African and Eastern.

I already briefly discussed the term 'Celtic' with regards to religion in the previous chapter. In the next part I will try to be as precise and detailed in the geographical analysis of the origins of different gods as possible. Of many deities we are unsure where their origin lies and I understand that 'Gaul' as such is not as precise an indication as one would like. However, where many scholars use 'Celtic', I would still rather say Gallic, just to offer a clear distinction between 'Celtic' deities originally from Britain or 'Celtic' gods brought to the island by immigrants. As mentioned before, these immigrants were not always our auxiliaries. Many civilians from the mainland settled in Britain and more importantly, trade and contact already existed between the Gallic tribes on the one coast and the British tribes on the other long before the Romans came to conquer.¹⁶³ The distinction is therefore not always clear and it is possible that some deities mentioned in this chapter originally came from the British isle, being imported into Gaul.

¹⁶³ Salway, 15.

Let us start with a god I have already mentioned briefly in the previous chapter when discussing Veteris: Mogons. On the altar from Netherby Veteris appears as an epithet to this god:

CIL VII 958 = RIB 971: *Deo Mogont(i) Vitire san(cto) Ael(ius) [Secund(us)] v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*.

To the holy god Mogons Vitiris, Aelius Secundus willingly and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

From this inscription it has become customary to deduce the name to the nominative Mogons, although Mogontes is preferred by some.¹⁶⁴ Other variations on the spelling of his name can be found elsewhere, for example on an altar from Chesterholm where *deo Mogunti* is mentioned.¹⁶⁵ Two altars to him are known to us from Old Penrith.¹⁶⁶ The first only bears the inscription *Deo Mogti* and the second starts with *Deo Mounti*. On an altar found at Risingham *Deo Mouno* can be read. These three are traditionally seen as abbreviations and in RIB they are transcribed to *Deo Mog(on)ti*, *Deo Mo(g)unti*, and *Deo Mo(g)uno* respectively. To me, however, this is not necessary. As we have seen, variations in the spelling of a deity's name are common for the British gods as well. It is possible that people spelled and pronounced the name of this god differently, but that the same deity was referred to. Another interesting example comes from High Rochester. The dedicator here is a decurion, which implies that there was a *cohors equitata* stationed at the fort here, but we do not know which one specifically:

CIL VII 1036 = RIB 1269: *Dis Mountibus Iul(ius) Firminus dec(urio) f(ecit)*.¹⁶⁷

To the gods the Mountes Julius Firminus, decurion, made this.

This altar is dedicated to Mogons in the plural. It is noteworthy that Veteris, with whom Mogons was equated at Netherby, also frequently appears in the plural. Unfortunately, the characters of both deities are unknown to us. However, apparently they had certain similarities and were therefore equatable, at least according to the dedicant. Ross suggests that Mogons means something like "The great one" or "the powerful one".¹⁶⁸ The evidence for his origin is thus far only indirect, but it seems reasonable that he was imported from Upper Germany. Modern

¹⁶⁴ E. Birley (1986), 52.

¹⁶⁵ Brit. 4, 1973, p. 329 no. 10. It is unsure whether this altar was dedicated by an auxiliary or not.

¹⁶⁶ RIB 921 and 922 respectively. Again, it is unsure whether these were set up by an auxiliary or not.

¹⁶⁷ RIB transcribes the god's name to *Mo(g)untibus*, but because I do not think this is necessarily closer to what was meant by the dedicator, I have decided to keep the original form of *Mountibus*.

¹⁶⁸ Ross (1967), 375.

Mainz was called Mogontiacum and an inscription from Metz mentions Dea Mogontia.¹⁶⁹ Also, a graffito from the Saalburg Roman fort mentions Mogons and might be votive.¹⁷⁰

Mars can again be found equated with other deities, this time from the Continent. Mars Camulus is well known as the god of the Remi.¹⁷¹ An interesting altar to him was found near Bar Hill fort on the Antonine Wall. We have come across this cohort at Carvoran on Hadrian's Wall earlier:

CIL VII 1103 = RIB 2166: *Deo Marti Camulo [m]ilites coh(ortis) [I] Hamioru[m] [...]CIV[.]SC[...] [...]IVI[...]*.¹⁷²

To the god Mars Camulus the soldiers of the First Cohort of Hamians ...

The combination of a Gallic deity with a Syrian cohort can be called peculiar at the very least. One could suggest that their prefect might have been a Gaul from near Reims originally. However, the soldiers of the cohort are mentioned specifically instead of only the commanding officer. This point is not discussed by anyone mentioning this dedication so far and we can only speculate on the reasons behind this combination. Considering the previous chapter, I think it might be most probable that the First Cohort of Hamians came to Bar Hill and found similar dedications to Mars Camulus here. It is possible they presumed Camulus to be a local deity protecting the area, especially being equated with the war-god Mars. The Antonine Wall has been subject to a series of attacks, especially at the end of the 2nd century, and one can imagine that a cohort stationed or visiting here would dedicate an altar to the residing god for their own safety and protection. So far no other dedications to (Mars) Camulus from Britain have been recovered.

Another case of *Interpretatio Romana* can be found in an inscription on a bronze bowl from the fort of South Shields, ancient Arbeia, which mentions the god Apollo Anextlomarus.¹⁷³ Anextlomarus also appears as an epithet of Apollo on an inscription from Gallia Celtica, near modern Le Mans, where the Gallic tribe of the Aulerici Cenomani lived. The name of the goddess Anextlomara on a dedication also to the Emperor from Aventicum, modern Avenches

¹⁶⁹ CIL XIII 4313; E. Birley (1986), 52.

¹⁷⁰ BRGK 5, 1909, p. 59.

¹⁷¹ Cf. CIL XIII 8701 from Rindern and AE 1935, 64, p. 20 from Reims.

¹⁷² E. Birley (1986), 47, thought this to be an inscription by *legio II Augusta*, however, after cleaning the altar it became clear it belonged to *cohors I Hamiorum*, as proposed by L.J.F. Keppie, "Roman inscriptions from Scotland: some additions and corrections to RIB I" *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 113 (1983), 393ff, and accepted by RIB.

¹⁷³ EE VII 1162.

in Switzerland, has been interpreted as meaning “great protectress”.¹⁷⁴ Anextlomarus must have also been a protector-god.

Other Gallic gods are attested on Hadrian’s Wall, like Digenis on two altars, also attested in Baeterrae Narbonensis and Cologne.¹⁷⁵ One would perhaps expect many dedications to Epona, the protector goddess of horses, also associated with fertility. Epona was very popular throughout the whole Empire and is the only ‘Celtic’ deity that was worshipped in Rome as well. However, only three, possibly four, inscriptions from Britain mentioning her are known to us and only two of them are on Hadrian’s Wall.¹⁷⁶ It is unsure whether the dedicators were civilians or soldiers, let alone auxiliaries. Another Gallic deity that must be mentioned here is Maponus, the god of youth. Formerly, it was thought that he was a purely British deity, however, more recent discoveries also attest him in Gaul. All but one of the British dedications come from Hadrian’s Wall, especially from Corbridge. On these altars he is almost always present as an epithet of Apollo. Reliefs of (Apollo) Maponus, sometimes flanked by Luna and Sol, have been found on and near Hadrian’s Wall as well. Looking at the reliefs in more detail, Maponus was mostly identified with Apollo the harpist, rather than Apollo the hunter.¹⁷⁷ However, four of the six inscriptions mentioning this god are from commanding officers of the Sixth Legion rather than of an auxiliary unit.¹⁷⁸ A silver *lunula* from Chesterholm bears the text *Deo Mapono* and was probably worn by a young girl.¹⁷⁹ An altar near Brampton was set up by four *Germani*, but their status and occupation remains unknown.¹⁸⁰ Therefore, considering auxiliary identity not much can be based on the evidence for Maponus.

An important group of deities attested in Britain are the Matres. Almost sixty dedications to the Matres can be found on the island. The Matres were mother-goddesses, mostly worshipped in the regions of Germania and eastern Gaul. Throughout the Empire, about 1100 inscriptions and various kinds of depictions of the Matres were found. About half of the known names of their votaries are Germanic. The other half seems to bear Continental ‘Celtic’, mostly Gallic, names. Returning motifs are baskets of fruit, depictions of sacrifice, decorations relating to nature, snakes, children and one of the three women wearing her hair down whilst the other two wear head dresses. The snakes seem to indicate an association with death or healing and

¹⁷⁴ AE 1916, 2, p. 1; F. Stähelin, *Die Schweiz in römischer Zeit*. Second edition. (Basel 1931), 480f.

¹⁷⁵ For the dedications in Britain see RIB 1044 and 1314, for Baeterrae Narbonensis see CIL XII 4216 and for Cologne see CIL XIII 8176. Outside of Britain Digenis is only mentioned in the plural.

¹⁷⁶ See RIB 967 and 1777 for the altars from Netherby and Carvoran. Another was found at Auchendavy (RIB 2177) and a fourth at Alcester on a buff jar (AE 1966, 239, p. 65).

¹⁷⁷ E. Birley (1986), 55-58.

¹⁷⁸ RIB 583 and 1120-1122.

¹⁷⁹ Brit. 2, 1971, p. 291 no. 12.

¹⁸⁰ RIB 2963.

the children may refer to the protective qualities of the Matres, especially over the family.¹⁸¹ The children and fruit are also often interpreted as referring to fertility. They always appear as a triad, behind which possibly lay the fundamental Celtic belief in the threefold power of a god or goddess in whom the functions of war, fertility and healing were incorporated.¹⁸²

The Matres appear on their own, without any epithets, in several inscriptions from Hadrian's Wall. One commemorates the setting up of a temple and an altar to them at milecastle 19, between Rudchester and Halton Chesters:

JRS XXII 224 = RIB 1421: *Matrib(us) templ(um) cum ara vex(illatio) coh(ortis)
I Vard(ullorum) instante P(ublio) D(...) V(...) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito).*

To the Mother Goddesses the detachment of the First Cohort of Vardullians erected the temple with this altar, and willingly and deservedly fulfilled its vow, under the direction of Publius D(...) V(...).

This altar is only small and according to Birley the man of which only the initials of the *tria nomina* are given was probably of relatively low rank.¹⁸³ Another cohort, the First Cohort of Tungrians, has dedicated an altar to the Matres at Housesteads.¹⁸⁴ One found at Chesterholm also mentions *Numini domini nostri* and another from Mumrills, on the Antonine Wall, to the Matres was set up by a *signifer alae*, the standard-bearer of a cavalry garrison. Of the other dedications to the Matres, without further definition, found on Hadrian's Wall it cannot be said with certainty whether the dedicators were auxiliary soldiers.¹⁸⁵

Often, the Matres are mentioned with a certain epithet. A dedication to the *Matres Suae* from Hadrian's Wall, near milecastle 79, indicates that soldiers would sometimes dedicate an altar to their own mother-goddesses specifically, probably meaning from their own place of origin.¹⁸⁶ This epithet might imply that the dedicators were of the same origin. The epithet *Communes*, which is given to the goddesses in two occasions from Chesters and Carrawburgh, on the other hand presumably implies that the dedicants came from different geographical backgrounds.¹⁸⁷ Some men worshipped the Matres of their own people, like a German probably originally from the Rhineland, whilst others dedicated an altar to the mother-goddesses of all

¹⁸¹ R. Simek, *Dictionary of northern mythology* (transl. from German by A. Hall) (Cambridge 2007), 204ff.

¹⁸² G.L. Irby-Massie, "The Roman Army and the Cult of the *Campestres*" *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 113 (1996), 293f.

¹⁸³ E. Birley (1986), 49 n. 234.

¹⁸⁴ RIB 1598.

¹⁸⁵ See RIB 901, 1033, 1034, 1424, 1540 (although set up by a *miles*, the dedicator might be a legionary), 1785, 1902 and CIL VII 1299.

¹⁸⁶ See RIB 2055.

¹⁸⁷ RIB 1453 and 1541; E. Birley (1986), 50.

people.¹⁸⁸ From these examples we can conclude that the Matres were goddesses that could be widely used to both unite people from different backgrounds under one group of deities and specifically set apart a smaller segment of people of the same origin from the bigger group of men.

One more epithet of the Matres confirms that they were specifically connected to the place of origin of the dedicators: *Transmarinae*, literally “from overseas”.¹⁸⁹ A dedication-slab from Old Penrith was set up to the mother-goddesses and the imperial family:

CIL VII 319 = RIB 919: *Deabus Matribus Tramarinis et N(umini) imp(eratoris) Alexandri Aug(usti) et Iul(iae) Mammeae matr(i) Aug(usti) n(ostri) et castrorum to[tique eorum] domui divine ae[dem ruina dilapsam vexil]latio M[a]r[sacorum ...].*

To the Mother Goddesses from overseas and to the Divinity of the Emperor Alexander Augustus and to Julia Mammea, mother of our Emperor and of the army, and to their whole Divine House, the detachment of Marsacians [restored] this ruined shrine

We do not know of which cohort these Marsacians were a detachment, but the *vexillatio* certainly seems military. The Marsacii were a German tribe living in Zeeland at the mouth of the Rhine in modern The Netherlands. Other detachments were less specific in the naming of their origin, possibly to include all votaries under one name, like on an altar again found at Old Penrith:

CIL VII 303 = RIB 920: *Deabus Matribus Tramari(nis) vex(illatio) Germa[no]r(um) V[o]r[re]d(ensium) pro salute R[.] F v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito).*

To the Mother Goddesses from overseas the detachment of Germans of Voreda for the welfare of ... willingly and deservedly fulfilled their vow.

The last quality of Matres that should be mentioned here is the one indicated by the epithet *Campestres*. These goddesses were associated with the *campus*, the parade ground, which was a permanent part of the fort of a *cohors equitata*, a cavalry cohort. Here soldiers did

¹⁸⁸ RIB 2064 (altar mentioning *Matribus Germanis*) and RIB 1988 (inscription starting with *Deabus Matribus omnium gentium* on an altar set up by a centurion).

¹⁸⁹ See RIB 1224 (altar set up by Julius Victor, the tribune of The First Cohort of Vangiones), 1318 (dedication starting with *Deabus Matribus Tramarinis Patriis*, “To the mother-goddesses of his native land from overseas”, however it is unclear whether the dedicator was an auxiliary or not. It includes a relief of the three goddesses) and 1989. N.B. The epithet *Ollototae* on RIB 1032, an altar set up by the cavalry regiment of Vettonians at Binchester, might also refer to the Matres Transmarinae, as is the case on RIB 1030.

not just train, the parade ground was also used for assemblies of the men, demonstrations with ceremonial equipment and the yearly dedications of an altar to Jupiter Optimus Maximus discussed in the first chapter.¹⁹⁰ This special ‘form’ of the mother-goddesses is, unsurprisingly, almost only attested in relation to cavalry regiments and appears often in dedications made by the *equites singulares* in Rome, who were largely, but not exclusively, recruited from the Rhineland. The *Campestris* originally came from Gaul and were worshipped on the Continent on their own. They were brought into the Latin speaking world by their Latin name through the auxiliary cavalry recruited in Gaul.¹⁹¹ Birley notes that the *Campestris* are only connected to the *Matres* in Britain.¹⁹²

A few examples of dedications to the *Campestris* and the *Matres Campestris* have been recovered in the military north of Britain.¹⁹³ An altar set up by the Fourth Cohort of Gauls was found at Castlehill on the Antonine Wall. It was not only dedicated to the *Campestris*, but also to *Britannia*, the divine personification of the province. The *Matres* are not mentioned in this inscription:

CIL VII 1129 = RIB 2195: *Campestribus et Britanni(ae) Q(uintus) Pisentius Iustus pr(a)ef(ectus) coh(ortis) IIII Gal(lorum) v(otum) s(olvit) l(aetus) l(ibens) m(erito).*

To the Goddesses of the Parade-ground and Britannia Quintus Pisentius Justus, prefect of the Fourth Cohort of Gauls, gladly, willingly, and deservedly fulfilled his vow.

On Hadrian’s Wall a dedication to the *Matres Campestris* can be found at Benwell. It can be dated to March-June 238 AD exactly, because of the cohort’s titulature, particularly the erasure of the names of the *Augusti* Pupienus and Balbinus.

CIL VII 510 = RIB 1334: *Matri<ri>bus Campes[t]r[i]b(us) et Genio alae pri(mae) Hispanorum Asturum [...] [...] Gordi[a]nae T(itus) [...] Agrippa prae(fectus) templum a so(lo) restituit.*

¹⁹⁰ Arrianus, *Techne Taktike*, 34.1-8 and 35.1-7; Herodianus, *τῆς μετὰ Μάρκον βασιλείας ἱστορία*, 1.5.2, 2.8.1, 2.10.1, 2.13.4, 6.9.3 and 8.7.3; Ammianus, *Rerum Gestarum Libri*, 20.5.1, 20.9.6 and 21.13.9.

¹⁹¹ Irby-Massie, “The Roman Army and the Cult of the *Campestris*” (1996), 293f.

¹⁹² E. Birley (1986), 50.

¹⁹³ See RIB 1206 (dedication to the *Campestris* at Gloster Hill by a detachment either of the *cohors I Vangionum* stationed at Risingham or *cohors I (Fida) Vardullorum* from High Rochester), 2121 (altar for the *Campestris* by a decurion of the *ala Augusta Vocontiorum*) and 2135 (dedication to the *Matres Campestribus* by the Second Cohort of Tungrians).

To the Mother Goddesses of the Parade-ground and to the Genius of the First Cavalry Regiment of Asturian Spaniards styled ... Gordian's Own Titus ... Agrippa, prefect, restored this temple from ground-level.

Interestingly, this altar was set up by a prefect of the Asturian Spaniards and not of Gauls or Germans. One could argue that the commander was a Gaul or German himself. By this time however, the worship of the Matres as well as the Campestres had already spread across the Empire and dedications to both separately are found in modern Spain as well as elsewhere in the Empire. Therefore, we do not have to assume that the prefect here came from Gaul or Germania.

The Matres originally came from Germania. Other Germanic deities have been attested in northern Britain, especially on inscriptions left by the cohorts of Tungri. They lived in Gallia Belgica in the area around modern Tongeren, but were Germanic themselves. According to Tacitus, after Caesar had defeated the Eburones, the Tungri crossed the Rhine and settled in the area previously inhabited by the Eburones.¹⁹⁴ One of the gods venerated by them is Hercules Magusanus. Magusanus was the Germanic god of vitality and wisdom. These qualities are represented in his name, which is a combination of both: youth, “Magu-” and old, “san(us)”.¹⁹⁵ It is clear that *Interpretatio Romana* connected Magusanus and the strong Hercules. In the Rhineland the foundations of several temples for Hercules Magusanus have been recovered including a couple of reliefs of the god with a club and lionskin.¹⁹⁶ On the Antonine Wall one altar set up for him has been found. It was dedicated by a *duplicarius* of the cavalry regiment of Tungrians at Mumrills.¹⁹⁷

The name of the goddess Ricagambeda is unquestionably Germanic and might mean something like “queen of the (battle)field”. She is only attested in Britain in one inscription from Birrens:

CIL VII 1072 = RIB 2107: *Deae Ricagambedae pagus Vellaus milit(ans) coh(orte) II Tung(rorum) v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)*.

To the goddess Ricagambeda (the men of) the Vellavian district serving in the Second Cohort of Tungrians willingly and deservedly fulfilled their vow.

¹⁹⁴ Tacitus, *Germania*, 2.

¹⁹⁵ J. Lendering, “Empel” (2015). Consulted on 17 June 2017. <http://www.livius.org/articles/place/empel>.

¹⁹⁶ See CIL XIII 8771 for a dedication by a Batavian at Ruimel and CIL VI 31162 for one by Batavians of the *equites singulares* at Rome. Two rings from Tongeren bear the text *Herc(uli) Mag(usano)*, CIL XIII 10027 212a and 212b.

¹⁹⁷ RIB 2140. A *duplicarius* was a soldier receiving twice as much pay as a normal auxiliary. He was often the second-in-command of a *turma*, a ‘band’ of thirty cavalymen commanded by a *decurio*. Sixteen *turmae* made up one *ala*.

The Vellavians may have been a subdivision of the *civitas Tungrorum*. Both the First and Second Cohort of Tungrians were milliary, which means they consisted of about eight hundred to a thousand men. The first generation of soldiers in these cohorts would have been brought into the army life together with their fellow conscripts from their own or neighbouring tribes within the area of the Tungri. Later however, it seems probable that new recruits would mostly mingle with the men coming from the same tribe as well. When such a large group of men is put together, it is inevitable that smaller communities form. When the occupation of all men is the same, these smaller groups often form based on geographical background. This is a universal phenomenon unconstrained by time. Even in a globalised world like ours, people from similar areas tend to bond over their origin or culture. The bigger the diversity of the group, the more general this origin becomes. Two Tungri from different tribes would feel closer to each other within a group of Gauls and Romans. Within a group of mostly Tungri however, men seem to connect with people even closer to their own origin, like men from their own tribe. This seems to be the case here and also in another inscription again from Birrens from the same cohort:

CIL VII 1073 = RIB 2108: *Deae Viradecthi pa[g]us Condrustis milit(ans) in coh(orte) II Tungror(um) sub Silvio Auspice praef(ecto)*.

To the goddess Viradecthis (the men of) the Condrustian district serving in the Second Cohort of Tungrians under Silvius Auspex, the prefect, (set this up).

The Condrusi were another subdivision of the Tungri from the Ardennes. The name of the goddess Viradecthis might be compiled from “wirja-/wiro-”, truth and “dekos-”, honour, but this cannot be said with certainty. An altar to her set up by a group of Tungri was also found in modern Vechten in The Netherlands, where a Roman fort was present.¹⁹⁸ In this inscription no further specification of the tribe of the dedicators was given, implying that they were either from different tribes and all Tungri or no further specification was needed because they were the only Tungri there.

Moving away from the Tungri, soldiers from other Germanic peoples have also left their traces in northern Britain. The goddess Garmangabis was, for example, venerated by the cavalry unit of Suebians at Lanchester, a few kilometres south of Hadrian’s Wall. Little is known about Garmangabis, but her name seems to be a compound of “garman-”, possibly meaning desire,

¹⁹⁸ CIL XIII 8815.

and “-gabis”, probably meaning to give, The latter is also found in the name Friagabis, a goddess attested in another inscription from Hadrian’s Wall. Her name is etymologically close to Freyja, the Norse goddess of love, fertility and war. Garmangabis and Friagabis presumably had a similar quality of giving what was wished for.

On an altar from Housesteads, Friagabis appears to be one of the Alaisiagae, the Germanic victory goddesses.¹⁹⁹ Her counterpart here is Baudihillia. The altar was set up by the *numerus Hnaudifridi*. Hnaudifridus seems to be a Germanic name, but further significance is unknown to us at this point. The Alaisiagae are mentioned twice in other inscriptions from Housesteads. In both cases they are associated with Mars:

EE VII 1040 = RIB 1593: *Deo Marti Thincso et duabus Alaisiagis Bede et Fimmilene et N(umini) Aug(usti) Germ(ani) cives Tuihanti v(otum) s(olverunt) l(ibentes) m(erito)*.

To the god Mars Thincsus and the two Alaisiagae, Beda and Fimmilena, and to the Divinity of the Emperor the Germans, being tribesmen of Twenthe, willingly and deservedly fulfilled their vow.

EE VII 1041 = RIB 1594: *Deo Marti et duabus Alaisiagis et N(umini) Aug(usti) Ger(mani) cives Tuihanti cunei Frisiorum Ver(covicianorum) Se(ve)r(iani) Alexandriani votum solverunt libent[es] m(erito)*.²⁰⁰

To the god Mars and the two Alaisiagae and to the Divinity of the Emperor the Germans being tribesmen of Twenthe of the *cuneus* of Frisians of Vercovicium, styled Severus Alexander's, willingly and deservedly fulfilled their vow.

The first inscription on a pillar mentions Mars Thincsus. The Germanic god Thincsus was related to the sky-god Tius and is generally seen as a war-god. His equation with Mars is therefore not surprising. It is very probable that Mars Thincsus was also meant in the second inscription on an altar. Both dedications were set up by the tribesmen of Twenthe from the east of modern The Netherlands. These Germanic men served in a unit of Frisians, a neighbouring people with similar cultural roots. It is noteworthy that the Alaisiagae are called Beda and Fimmilena in the first inscription, whilst we have seen the names Friagabis and Baudihillia before. Birley suggests that Beda was connected with prayer whilst Fimmilena possibly means clever or skilful. Siebs points out that Baudihillia relates to “battle-commanding” or “ruler of

¹⁹⁹ RIB 1576; E. Birley (1986), 77.

²⁰⁰ A *cuneus* is a third-century unit which significance is uncertain, but it was most probably always auxiliary and maybe also consisted of cavalry.

the battle” and Friagabis, similar to what we have seen before, “the giver of freedom”.²⁰¹ These qualities of the goddesses, as well as their status as victory deities and their association with Mars Thincsus clearly shows their relevance to military matters. The lintel that belonged to the doorway of the temple the pillar of the first inscription was also part of, shows a relief of Mars with sword, shield and spear flanked by the two naked, cross-legged *Alaisiagae* carrying a palm branch and laurel wreaths, very classical attributes of victories.

Apart from the several cohorts of Gauls, Tungrians, Batavians and other ‘Celtic’ and Germanic peoples, there was at least one cohort from the Eastern Empire stationed at Hadrian’s Wall, namely the First Cohort of Hamians. Its archers were originally recruited from Hama in Roman Syria. Especially the Gauls had already been in contact with the British isle before the Romans united them both under their rule, but Roman Syria lay entirely on the other side of the Empire and for the Hamians serving in Britain, it must have been an extreme shock to be confronted with a wholly different culture as well as having to acclimatise to a completely different landscape.

Let us first discuss a few unique finds. An altar to Astarte was set up at Corbridge by a man of peregrine status called Pulcher.²⁰² It is unsure whether he was a civilian or a soldier. Astarte was the Hellenised form of the Mesopotamian goddess Ishtar. Her qualities lay with love, fertility and war. The inscription on the altar forms a hexameter verse in Greek similar to an altar dedicated by a priestess to Heracles of Tyre at the same shrine.²⁰³

Another find from Corbridge is a signet ring with the depiction of Jupiter Heliopolitanus, the local god of Heliopolis, modern Baalbek in Lebanon. Henig proposes that the ring was brought to Corbridge by a *vexillarius* or merchant from Carvoran, since the cohort of Syrian archers was stationed here.²⁰⁴ An altar to Jupiter Heliopolitanus was found at Carvoran starting with *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) Heliopolit(ano)*, similar to the inscriptions of Jupiter Dolichenus.²⁰⁵ The only dedication to Dea Hammia, the local goddess of the Hamians, was unsurprisingly found at Carvoran fort as well, probably set up by an auxiliary of the cohort with the Latinised name Sabinus.²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ E. Birley (1986), 77; Th. Siebs, “Note 2” in R.C. Bosanquet, “On an altar dedicated to the *Alaisiagae*” *Archaeologia Aeliana* 19 (1922), 194f.

²⁰² RIB 1124.

²⁰³ See RIB 1129.

²⁰⁴ Henig (1984b), 120.

²⁰⁵ RIB 1783.

²⁰⁶ RIB 1780.

Between 163 and 166 AD a prefect of the First Cohort of Hamians set up an altar to Dea Syria.²⁰⁷ It can be dated quite precisely because the propraetorian legate of that time is mentioned in the inscription. About thirty to fifty years later a panel with an inscription to, amongst others, this same goddess was set up by another officer of the First Cohort of Hamians at Carvoran.²⁰⁸ The elements within the inscription as well as the outstanding beauty of it allow us to look at it in more detail. The text forms ten iambic senarii. This is why I have put a slightly more detailed transcription down below.

CIL VII 759 = RIB 1791:

*Imminet Leoni Virgo caeles / ti situ
 spicifera iusti in / ventrix urbium conditrix /
 ex quis muneribus nosse con / tigit deos:
 ergo eadem mater divum / Pax Virtus Ceres
 5 Dea Syria / lance vitam et iura pensitans.
 in caelo visum Syria sidus edi / dit
 Libyae colendum: inde / cuncti didicimus. /
 ita intellexit numine inductus / tuo
 Marcus Caecilius Do / natianus militans
 10 tribunus / in praefecto dono principis.*

The Virgin in her heavenly place touches on the Lion; bearer of wheat, inventor of law, founder of cities, by whose gifts it is man's good lot to know the gods²⁰⁹: therefore she is the Mother of the gods, Peace, Virtue, Ceres, the Syrian Goddess, weighing life and laws in her balance. Syria has sent the constellation seen in the heavens to Libya to be worshipped: thence have we all learned. Thus has understood, led by thy godhead, Marcus Caecilius Donatianus, serving as tribune in the post of prefect by the Emperor's gift.²¹⁰

Virgo Caelestis was the deification of the constellation Virgo and the patron goddess of the Roman colony of Carthage in North Africa, founded after the Romans had defeated and destroyed the Punic city in 146 BC. The patron goddess of the old Carthage, Tinnit, was brought to Rome and renamed Iuno/Virgo Caelestis. Tinnit originally came from the Phoenician motherland. Her attributes were primarily celestial, being pre-eminently a sky-goddess. From

²⁰⁷ RIB 1792.

²⁰⁸ A.R. Birley, *Life in Roman Britain* (1964), 140.

²⁰⁹ *Contigit* + dat (i.e. *muneribus*) is often translated as “he falls to his lot”, but since this is a fortunate lot instead of an unfortunate one, it is here translated as “it is man’s good lot”.

²¹⁰ I have changed RIB’s original translation of *Imminet Leoni* from “rides upon the Lion” to “touches on the Lion”, since it makes more sense astrologically and is closer to the meaning of the word *imminet*. I have also changed the original translation of *spicifera* from “bearer of corn” to “bearer of wheat”, since it literally translates to “ear-bearing”.

temples and inscriptions in Carthage we can derive that Tinnit appears to be an offshoot from the Syrian goddess Astarte, symbolized by the evening star.²¹¹ During the Hellenistic and Roman periods Astarte was subsumed with the ancient Syrian goddess Anat into Dea Syria, who is mentioned in line 5 of the poem.²¹² The identification with the Roman goddess Ceres has to do with the entering of the sun into the sign Virgo during the harvest season of wheat and other grains. Ceres, on her turn, was equated with Cybele or here Mater Divum, both being mother-goddesses and protectors of agriculture. Ultimately, Dea Syria also became a nature-goddess, analogous to Ceres and Cybele, being associated with fertility and the earth. Apart from the fact that both Pax and Virgo hold olive branches and the virgin has always been closely related to the concept of virtue, Pax and Virtus might also be mentioned as general personifications often appearing in inscriptions of soldiers in the Roman Empire.

Because Syria and Libya are mentioned together in line 6 and 7 and because previously Dea Syria has been mentioned, this poem was for a long time interpreted by Thomas Hodgkin²¹³ and later others as a dedication to Julia Domna, the wife of the emperor Septimius Severus. However, any direct link to Julia Domna is absent from the text and no other direct evidence of the equation of Julia Domna with Virgo Caelestis or Dea Syria has been found yet. An explanation for a dedication to Virgo Caelestis on Hadrian's Wall mentioning Libya might be found in the dedicant's name. Nothing is known about Marcus Caecilius Donatianus outside of this inscription. However, the *nomen* Caecilius is especially common in the African provinces. Also, twenty-four of the thirty-one people attested in Roman inscriptions around the Empire with the *cognomen* Donatianus came from Africa.²¹⁴ Therefore, it is almost certain that M. Caecilius Donatianus came from Africa, which was called Libya in Roman times. The emphasis on the origin of Virgo Caelestis from Syria and the fact that the text *Dea Syria* in line 5 is inscribed in slightly taller letters, standing somewhat separate from the previous words on the line, might suggest a special importance of the Syrian goddess to Donatianus, or he might wanted to appeal to or connect with the Hamian archers. The emphasis on (Dea) Syria might also have been added for the soldiers of *I Hamiorum*. As I have noted before, on many of the altars we have found in Britain only the names of the commanding officers appeared, but in

²¹¹ H.-P. Müller, "Tinnit" in H. Cancik and H. Schneider (eds.), *Brill's New Pauly Antiquity volumes* (2006, online edition). Consulted online on 18 June 2017 http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e1215430.

²¹² H. Niehr, "Astarte" in H. Cancik and H. Schneider (eds.), *Brill's New Pauly Antiquity volumes* (2006, online edition). Consulted online on 18 June 2017 http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e204430.

²¹³ T. Hodgkin, "The Caervoran Inscription in Praise of the Syrian Goddess" *Archaeologia Aeliana* 22 (1899), 289-292.

²¹⁴ I. Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina* (Helsinki, 1965), 18 and 298.

some cases they were probably dedicated on behalf of the whole cohort during a ceremony all soldiers would have attended.²¹⁵ This might have been the case here as well.

The most obvious importance of this hymn is that it is a perfect example of ‘middle ground’. Looking at the multiple goddesses mentioned in the text, all can be compared to each other in different aspects, for example their celestial nature, their connection with agriculture or their attributes. The several layers of middle ground created by natives and immigrants in the Mediterranean had now moved to Britain with this poem and clearly shows the connectivity within the Empire through immigration. It is clear that Donatianus preferred using the name Virgo Caelestis, but was well aware of the manifestations of the same deity or similar deities across the Empire. Virgo Caelestis being Punic, he also mentions the Roman Pax, Virtus and Ceres, the Syrian Dea Syria and Cybele. This not only reflects the reality of religion within the Roman Empire, but also in the army and on Hadrian’s Wall specifically.²¹⁶

Several conclusions can be drawn from the evidence for the worship of “native” gods in northern Britain. I put “native” here in between quotation marks, because we have seen that not all dedications to non-local and non-Roman deities were set up by men from the area the deity was originally from. The prefect of the Asturian cohort that set up an altar to the Matres Campestres at Benwell did not have to be a Gaul or German himself, because the cults of the Campestres and the Matres had spread across the Empire by the second century already and both groups of deities were venerated by various peoples. Also, the Germanic Mars Camulus venerated by a Syrian cohort on the Antonine Wall was clearly not a case of men worshipping their native god. As I have proposed, it may be possible that the soldiers found similar dedications to the god around the fort and thought of him as a protective local deity. They were familiar with the Roman Mars and therefore a dedication to Mars Camulus seems less abnormal.

Interpretatio Romana also happened here with examples like Mars Camulus, Mars Thincsus and Apollo Anextlomarus. Again, the relatability of the deities worshipped with military life is striking. Mars, the triad of Matres, the Campestres and goddesses of victory all have this quality. However, one could argue that in this case that the *interpretatio* was not Roman, but actually for example Gallic or Germanic.²¹⁷ It was the provincial auxiliaries who equated their gods from home with the Roman gods they had become familiar with during their

²¹⁵ Goldsworthy (2003), 108.

²¹⁶ For further discussion of various aspects of this inscription see G. Stephens, “The Metrical Inscription from Carvoran, RIB 1791” *Archaeologia Aeliana* 5.XII (1984), 149-156; P. Kruschwitz, *Undying voices: the poetry of Roman Britain* (Reading, 2015), 56f; E. Birley, “The Beaumont Inscription, The Notitia Dignitatum and the Garrison of Hadrian’s Wall” *Classical World* 39 (1939), 190-226.

²¹⁷ For *Interpretatio Celtica* in Romano-British religion see Green, “Iconography of Romano-British religion” (1986), 119-121.

time of service. Especially the Matres are attested widely, probably because of these qualities, but also because they were relatable for everyone and often referred to a geographical area which could be made smaller or bigger based on who the dedicators wished to include. One would expect the goddess Epona to be attested more than she is and the reasons why no certain auxiliary dedications to her have been recovered so far, can only be guessed at.

Conclusion: military identity

Religion was, and still is for many people, a very important part of one's identity. The auxiliary soldiers grew up far away from Rome in the provinces of the Roman Empire. The first generation even grew up without being part of the Roman Empire, forced to fight for the Emperor when they were defeated and their lands annexed. If they survived their service, for twenty-five years they would be part of a cohort mainly made up by men of a similar cultural background, but later also of British recruits and men from other parts of the Empire. Although we do not exactly know how ethnically diverse a certain cohort was, it is sure that they were auxiliaries and therefore from outside of modern Italy.

The evidence from the military north of Britain is not scarce. Although we cannot be sure that the ratio of evidence for the worship of Roman, local and native gods is representative of the actual reality, it does become clear that dedications to the Roman gods and the *numen* of the Emperor are most numerous. I think this might be the case because the worship of the Roman pantheon was structuralized by the religious calendar. The calendar of the *Feriale Duranum* and the altars to Jupiter from Maryport and Birdoswald show that an altar was set up to him every year by every cohort. Also, setting up an altar cost money and the ones set up on behalf of the whole cohort to Roman deities and the Emperor were most probably paid for by the State, the whole garrison or the equestrian officer. Soldiers had to pay for personal dedications themselves. In the case of the altars to local deities we have seen a difference in the quality of the dedications. Where altars to Cocidius were often bigger and more elaborate, ones to Belatucadrus and Veteris often did not leave space for the dedicators name. Dedicators to Cocidius were of a higher status than those to the latter two and therefore could spend more on their altars.

How then did auxiliary soldiers stationed at the northern frontier in Britain integrate into the Roman army and how did they form a unity? One of the answers, but certainly not the only one, is through religious practices. Part of these were imposed on the regiments by the Roman State. From Augustus on the Emperor sought for an outward religious conformity. The *Feriale Duranum* makes clear that the cohorts' year was structured by religious festivals and obligations. It was not meant by the Roman State to 'Romanise' auxiliaries by imposing the calendar on them, but its contents, the ties it evoked and its creation within a larger political plan did ensure that it played a crucial role in this process. Throughout the year commanding officers would set up altars to several Roman gods on behalf of the whole cohort, which would witness the ceremonies year after year. The celebration of festivals on the same day as other

cohorts and legions connected the army religiously. The emphasis on the Imperial cult in the religious calendar of the army connected the soldiers with the Emperor, who was also always present by means of his images and the soldier's pay.

Auxiliaries on the northern frontier of Roman Britain also dedicated to local and native deities. These were often gods and goddesses with attributes relating to military life, like warfare, victory and the forts. Some local deities can be traced back to certain natural features, which were the sacred places in which they would reside. They protected the area in which the auxiliaries were stationed and the dangerous military life might have been one of the reasons why soldiers worshipped the local gods. Also, *Interpretatio Romano* equated several Roman gods with local deities, who would then both be worshipped at the sacred places already existent in the religious and geographical landscape of northern Britain.

Native deities were also equated with Roman gods and in both cases Mars is the god who is mostly attested in this way. In the case of native deities equated with Roman gods, one could say that the *interpretatio* was not Roman, but for example German or Gallic, since the native deities were already known to them before they came in contact with their Roman counterparts. The case of the poem from Carvoran shows clearly that deities from several origins could be equated with each other, which in this case connected the soldiers with their commander as well as with the Roman State and the Emperor. As we have seen, 'middle ground' was found between immigrants and natives, but also between immigrants from different backgrounds. In the case of auxiliaries, 'middle ground' was also found within themselves, connecting deities from their homeland with the ones they learnt to worship within Roman army religion. The mother-goddesses especially seem to have been popular because of their attributes, but also because they were relatable to everyone. By this time they were worshipped throughout the whole western Empire and we have seen that their epithet could be adjusted based on the diversity of the group of dedicators. Several dedications are known to us in which the dedicator(s) state(s) their origin. These appear on dedications in all categories, Roman, local and native.

The tolerance of the Roman State made it possible for auxiliaries to worship their own deities. This way many auxiliaries stayed in touch with their old gods and many integrated them in their lives in the Roman army by equating them with Roman deities. However, the act of dedicating for example an altar to a god or goddess is a primarily Roman practice. Depictions of local and native deities as well as temples and shrines built for them, often as a counterpart of a Roman god, are also almost entirely attested from the time after the Roman conquest of

Britain and were not part of native and local religion before coming into contact with Roman culture. These practices were part of the discipline of army life of auxiliaries on the frontiers.

One could argue that the world-view of auxiliaries became more 'Roman' over time, being exposed to Roman deities, practices and rituals that might have been completely alien to the soldier at first. Even the typically military cults, like that of the standards, were typically *Roman* military cults, in ancient times not existing outside of the Roman army in this manner.²¹⁸ I would not deny this notion. However, I would like to point out that the unifying factors of religious practice can at the same time be seen as creating a certain military identity. Although contact with the civilian community living in the *vici* was inevitable, being a soldier was, and still is, an occupation that strongly connected a man with his brothers in arms. Both the danger in battle, but also the daily reality of Roman army life structured by discipline through, for example, religious ceremonies primarily connected the auxiliaries with each other more so than with anyone else. Also, we should not forget that these auxiliaries were immigrants and together with their special status as part of the army this fact made that the men could relate most to each other. This way the military community or communities within a cohort must have been of great influence on the auxiliary's feeling of identity. Influences on their religious identity came from multiple directions, their occupation, their upbringing and their place of residence. These three came together within the auxiliaries' being and they managed to find a 'middle ground' within themselves to deal with these multiple influences and the world around them.

The previous findings can be connected with the theoretical framework of 'agency' and 'structure'. The agency of auxiliaries in Northern Britain, their 'active involvement', helped them deal with the structure of military life on the frontier they were part of. The impact of the change of structure for auxiliaries must have been immense. Actors affect the world around them, but are also constructed by it. There is no doubt that the arrival and settlement of the military, and also civilian, immigrants from other parts of the Empire changed the existing religious structure of Northern Britain, but evidence for the religious beliefs and practice of the natives of Britain before the arrival of the Romans and others is unfortunately not sufficient to come to any certain conclusions. The various aspects of the religious structure in which auxiliaries found themselves certainly had an influence on their identity. Their agency led them to find 'middle ground' and interpret non-native deities and sacred spaces in a way they would understand. This way auxiliaries made sense to the world around them after joining the Roman

²¹⁸ Haynes (1993), 143f.

army. The change in their religious identity made their lives more tolerable and offered them a feeling of significance in a world vastly different from their previous lives.

It would be interesting to look at the question of the integration and identity of auxiliary soldiers in Roman Britain from other angles. Especially language is a factor of identity worth exploring. The Vindolanda tablets, for example, should shed an interesting light on this matter. Although the 'Celtic' and Germanic languages were not written languages before coming into contact with Romans and the Latin alphabet, I am sure much can be said about the use of Latin within the auxiliary cohorts looking at the many tablets found at Vindolanda and Carlisle now as well. Also, cases of bilingualism and loanwords like the ones known from for example Gaul, northern Italy and of course the eastern half of the Empire, could also be found in Britain. A rather new trend within our field is the relation between food and identity. The notion that what people consume and how they do it can say something about their feelings of identity can still be explored much further. For the military zone of northern Britain this has yet to be done. Again, the supply lists from Vindolanda might be a valuable source here, as well as basic isotope research and mapping the network of supplies imported from the Continent and provided by the British isle itself. I would invite anyone to look further into these matters, as it would be necessary to compare and reflect on the findings of other such studies to the ones on religion presented here, to create a more complete image of the identity and integration of auxiliary soldiers on and around Hadrian's Wall.

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