

THE ROMAN ARMY AND ROMAN RELIGION¹

By I. A. RICHMOND, C.B.E., Litt.D., F.B.A.

PROFESSOR OF THE ARCHÆOLOGY OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

TERTULLIAN, writing in the early third century, emphasizes² with purposeful awe the reverence accorded by the Roman soldier to his regimental standards, meaning by this not merely the legionary eagle or the auxiliary regiment's chief emblem, but the minor standards of the maniples or other subdivisions. His estimate is not exaggerated: but, intent upon emphasizing Christian regard for the symbol of the cross, he appears to take it somewhat out of context. How extensive and how rich that context was has been revealed in most remarkable fashion by the so-called *Feriale Duranum*.³ This was originally a complete calendar covering the yearly round of official religious observations by the garrison of Dura-Europos on the Euphrates in the third decade of the third century. The surviving fragments cover about five months, and that imperfectly: yet they succeed in bringing home to every student of Roman religion three highly significant points: first, that, however remote the post or whatever the origin of the regiment, Roman official religion, conducted in Latin and worshipping the principal gods of the Roman state, was a vital and systematic part of official regimental life; secondly, that the worship of the Imperial House, Emperors and Empresses alike, both living and departed, was an integral part of this official cult; thirdly, that the ancient army festivals, such as the *Armilustrum*,⁴ still existed, and had been supplemented, but in no sense eclipsed, by newer

¹ A lecture delivered in the Library series of public lectures.

² Tertullian, *ad nat.* i. 12, *castrensis religio . . . signa adorant, signa deierant, signa ipsi lovi praefert*: cf. *Apol.* 16, *religio Romanorum tota castrensis signa veneratur, signa iurat, signa omnibus deis praeponit*.

³ *Yale Classical Studies*, vii (1940), 1-222; R. O. Fink, A. S. Hoey and W. F. Snyder, *The Feriale Duranum*.

⁴ *Armilustrum*, *ibid.* pp. 163, 287; date, 19 October (*XIII Kal. Nov.*).

observances, such as the *Rosaliae Signorum*¹ or the *Natalis Romae*.² The whole surviving calendar, in short, bespeaks the same meticulous care³ as the *Constitutio Antoniniana*, or, for that matter, of Diocletian's Edict almost a century later, for the worship of the principal gods of the Roman State, who had brought her safely through so many crises to an exaltation above all earthly communities, the duration of which depended specifically upon the continuance of regular worship devotedly performed.

No other military site in the Empire has yet yielded a document comparable with that from Doura: and only the desert sands are likely to do so. But so much Imperial territory lay in the more temperate zones, that no discovery of the kind may be expected from them; least of all from the province of Britain, whose climate is more often condemned than praised in classical literature, even if one panegyrist could go out of his way to eulogize it. On the other hand, if the calendar itself was committed to perishable papyrus, its results, the army dedications, were usually altars or other votive objects of solid stone, and these tend to survive, always provided that their environment is not so devoid of building-stone that later generations have laid hands upon them for their monumental buildings. Thus, with the background of the *Feriale*, attesting the regularity of army worship, it is possible to use the dedications of a military province to underline the ubiquitous character and rich variety of official worship.

Two of the most highly remarkable groups from Britain have already been studied in some detail. The first is the group⁴ of sculptures and altars from the legionary supply-depôt at

¹ *Rosaliae*, *ibid.* pp. 115 ff.: dates, 10 May (*VI Id. Mai.*) and 31 May (*Prid. Kal. Iun.*).

² *Natalis Romae*, *ibid.* pp. 102 ff.: date, 21 April (*XI Kal. Mai.*).

³ *Constitutio Antoniniana*, A. Wilhelm, *American Journal of Archaeology*, ser. 2, xxxviii (1934), 180: for Diocletian, see *Mosaicarum et Romanarum legum Collatio*, 6, 4, 1, "ita enim et ipsos immortales deos Romano nomini, ut semper fuerunt, faventes atque placatos futuros esse non dubium est, si cunctos sub imperio nostro agentes piam religiosamque et quietam et castam in omnibus more maiorum colere perspexerimus vitam".

⁴ *Arch. Aeliana*, ser. 4, xxi (1943), 127-224, I. A. Richmond, "Roman legionaries at Corbridge, their supply-base, temples and religious cults".

Corbridge (*Corstopitum*); the second is the large collection¹ of altars deliberately buried in pits outside the Roman fort of Maryport (*Alauna*) on the Cumberland coast. These are annual dedications from the parade-ground and its *tribunal*, which were taken thence and buried on the opposite, northern, side of the fort, in a group of pits, set so close as to suggest that their sites may have been marked. Three groups of successive commandants, representing the second-century occupation of the fort by three different regiments, dedicate altars or tablets to Iuppiter Optimus Maximus, protector of the Roman people and its army, and to other deities, of which four representative examples may here be considered. Lucius Cammius Maximus, prefect of the First Cohort of Spaniards, dedicates² a plain altar to Iuppiter Optimus Maximus. This is linked with the New Year vows made annually for the safety and welfare of the Roman State. Postumius Acilianus, prefect of the First Cohort of Dalmatians, erects³ a great tablet to Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Capitolinus, a powerful piece in tall semi-rustic capitals with elaborate bird-headed *peltae* forming ornamental lugs or *ansae* on either side of it. We can almost see behind such a piece the pen-and-ink draft from the office of the regimental clerks that served the mason for a pattern. As for its position, the tablet must have belonged to a built structure, probably a platform or " *suggestus* " upon which the altars stood. Titus Attius Tutor, prefect of the First Cohort of Baetasians, dedicates⁴ not only to Juppiter, but to *Victoria Augusti*, the Emperor's Victory, and to *Mars Militaris*. This represents another range of ideas. The Victory of the Emperor, under whose auspices the army went to war, is understandable enough, and such dedications are frequent⁵ in army circles. *Mars militaris*, however, would seem unnecessarily tautologous, were it not for the fact that the Baetasii from the Lower Rhine came from an area where Mars was as often a god of health and healing as of war, and specification⁶ was therefore

¹ *Trans. Cumberland and Westmorland Ant. and Arch. Soc.*, n.s., xxxix (1939), 19-30, J. P. Wenham, "Notes on the garrisoning of Maryport". ² *CIL*, vii. 385.

³ *CIL*, vii. 367.

⁴ *CIL*, vii. 394 (*Victoria*), 391 (*Mars militaris*).

⁵ Cf. *CIL*, vii. 726 (*Greatchesters*).

⁶ P. Lambrechts, *Contributions à l'étude des divinités celtiques* (Bruges, 1942), pp. 146 ff.

needed. The careful wording is also a reminder of the explicitness required in Roman religious dedications, not so much because it was desirable that the dedicators should understand them as because the dedication must reach the right deity properly expressed. When Mars and Victoria are combined, as on a commandant's dedication¹ from Birrens, there is no need to specify what aspect of Mars is meant. These examples represent about a tithe of the Maryport group as it has come down to us, and no other mass discovery of the sort has been made. Yet it must be realized that burial was the ancient ritual method of disposing of dedicated objects which had been destroyed or had served their purpose. Thus, when an altar² in fresh condition appeared in 1886 in a pit revealed by erosion of the escarpment outside the fort of Birdoswald, it may be regarded as an exactly similar find, a point confirmed by its dedication to Iuppiter Optimus Maximus by the unit in garrison. Another aspect of the parade ground was its use for training. This is introduced by dedications of cavalymen to the *Matres Campestres*, the mother-goddesses who presided over the "campus" or exercise-ground, like that found outside the fort of Newstead on Tweed.³ The decurion Aelius Marcus of the *ala Augusta Vocontiorum* thus emphasizes how the ground was the scene of vital incidents in the existence of a trooper and his mount. There his training taught him how best to be of service to his Emperor, and the divine *Campestres*, like the everyday *campidoctores* or instructors, looked after its aspect of practice rather than parade.

But the parade-ground, with its annually-renewed dedications, was not the only centre of official worship in a fort. The *principia*, or headquarters building, with its regimental shrine or *aedes*,⁴ housed not merely the standards but other dedications as well. Newstead on Tweed, when occupied under Antoninus Pius⁵ by a mixed force comprising two legionary cohorts and a wing of cavalry, furnishes a glimpse of the resumption of human activity on the site garrisoned afresh after some

¹ *CIL*, vii. 1068.

² *EE*, vii. 1071 : for find-spot, see *Arch. Ael. ser. 2*, xii. 288.

³ *CIL*, vii. 1080.

⁴ *Antiq. Journal*, xli. 225-7.

⁵ *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, lxxxiv. 19-23.

thirty-five years. The senior centurion Gaius Arrius Domitianus dedicates¹ not only to Iuppiter Optimus Maximus, protector of the Roman army, as a matter of course, but to "the god Silvanus" and "Queen Diana" as well. For the site had reverted to the wild, where Silvanus and Diana, hunter and huntress, reigned supreme; and those deities needed propitiation if man was to enter upon the area which they had taken to themselves. It would be interesting to know whether such scruples assailed the occupants of a virgin site; it can only be said that the comparative rarity of such dedications suggests that they did not.

It is from elsewhere than Newstead that other types of headquarters dedications come. High Rochester fort, further south, has yielded an altar² set up by a tribune to the guardian deity and standards of the unit in garrison, the First Loyal Cohort of Vardulli. *Disciplina*, the personification of disciplined training, occurs at Birrens³ in the last years of Antoninus Pius, at Corbridge later in the century, and at Castlesteads in A.D. 209-11. These dedications are rare in the Roman world, and appear to be confined⁴ to the armies of Britain and Africa. It is easy to understand the Severan dedications as underlining that Emperor's emphasis upon *disciplina*, specifically in provinces which had sided against him with Albinus, his greatest rival. *Disciplina*, as was known by every Roman commander worth his salt, was the proper cure for mutiny or dissidence. But its early appearance in Britain links it with the Hadrianic popularization⁵ of the conception upon the coinage, and it was no doubt the insistence upon it which earned for the Roman army of Britain its reputation of being the toughest of the army groups. Certain it is that throughout the second century the British command was undergoing a constant revision of its frontier arrangements against a

¹ *EE*, ix. 1235 (Iuppiter); *CIL*, vii. 1081 (Silvanus); *EE*, ix. 1234 (Diana); also *RCHM Roxburghshire*, ii. 317-18.

² *CIL*, vii. 1031.

³ *EE*, ix. 1228 (Birrens); *Arch. Ael.* ser. 3, xviii. 117-20, cf. also *op. cit.* ser. 4, xxi. 168 (Corbridge); *CIL*, vii. 896, *EE*, ix. 605 (Castlesteads).

⁴ *Arch. Ael.* ser. 4, xxi. 166. For Severus on *disciplina* see *Mainzer Zeitschrift*, x (1915), 112.

⁵ *BMC*, iii. 318, 466 (Hadrian), iv. 199, 270 (Antoninus Pius).

background of native unrest and revolt both behind and beyond the frontier-lines. In these conditions the good morale which *disciplina* inspired was of particular value; while in dealing with such unrest and the robbers or reivers which it encouraged, the Emperor and his agents, the army, could be likened to the demi-god Hercules, whose labours had been specifically concerned with ridding the earth of pests and evil beings. This appears on a famous tablet¹ from Corbridge, found in the third-century headquarters of a vexillation of the Second Legion, which portrays Hercules, assisted by the advice of Minerva his patroness, chopping off the heads of the Hydra. The rather coarse lines of the relief require the coat of painted gesso which once covered them to soften the forms and to change the vehicle of presentation from sculpture into painting, and the single Labour here represented must be supplemented by at least a selection if not all of its fellows. Seen as a dado or a frieze round the sanctuary of the headquarters, it becomes an epitome of the eternal struggle between the forces of civilization and barbarism, and Corbridge participates in the common idiom of the Empire. Such a task afforded few holidays, and it was the religious calendar that provided them. Here Corbridge has furnished another suggestive relief. The flag or *vexillum* of the legionary detachment appears enshrined in an architectural framework² itself embellished with uniquely interesting rose-leaf capitals. Here may be recognized a clear reference to the great military festival of the *Rosaliae Signorum*, when in early May³ the *signa* were taken out of their shrine, garlanded and worshipped amid scenes of general rejoicing and holiday. Another Corbridge dado figures in triumph the splendid eagle⁴ of Juppiter, the bird which served as the standard of the legions and was the messenger and sometimes the embodiment of the god himself. It must indeed be realized that such reliefs are legionary work, and that the ordinary headquarters shrine of the

¹ J. M. C. Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, Pl. 71.

² *Arch. Ael.* ser. 4, xxi. Pls. V, 2 (pilaster completed); XB, 2 (pilaster and relief).

³ *Harvard Theological Review*, xxx. 15-35; *Yale Classical Studies*, vii. 115.

⁴ *Arch. Ael.* ser. 4, xxi. 153, fig. 7.

average frontier post is little likely to have boasted such elaboration. But it can be demonstrated that the religious ideas there expressed were in fact common to both. This is proved by the worship of the Dea Roma, again a cult to which Hadrian gave special new emphasis. It occurs in the auxiliary fort of High Rochester, in the form of a remarkable dedication¹ to Dea Roma, which was set up by a group of non-commissioned officers from the cohort in garrison, the day chosen for the act being the *Natalis Romae*, or Birthday of Rome, still annually celebrated on 21 April. At Corbridge, on the other hand, the legionary commemoration of Rome and her works occur in sculptured form. The most obvious and most direct commemoration is a great relief² of the Wolf and Twins in a vine-clustered cave: burnt now and exfoliated, but once the foundation of a noble painting. But perhaps more surprising is the companion relief,³ depicting the Arcady that was ancient Rome as described by Vergil, where the nymphs and shepherds played. These together must have adorned a shrine of Dea Roma, and are not, as in the auxiliary fort, the mere written record of a vow. Yet the altar of the auxiliaries and the reliefs of the legionaries combine to attest the extension of the standard army cults to the northernmost limits of Empire.

Minor official manifestations of piety must not be forgotten, for they are in no sense less instructive. The goddess Minerva, when occurring among headquarters dedications, is not there in the capacity of patroness or adviser, as she appears in the relief of the Lernaean Hydra. She usually presides⁴ over the labours of the military clerks and accountants. But it must not be forgotten that she was the third member of the Capitoline triad, and that when her altar is dedicated not by clerks but by a regiment, as at Birrens,⁵ it may well be in this aspect that she is worshipped, as the redoubtable warrior goddess who on the coinage⁶ fights for Rome and shields her from harm. Again, just

¹ *CIL*, vii. 1087 (*ILS* 2631): for the interpretation *n(atali) eius*, see *Yale Classical Studies*, vii. 111, n. 426.

² *Arch. Ael.* ser. 4, xxi, Pl. XE.

³ *Ibid.* Pl. XF.

⁴ *EE*, ix. 1142 (*libarius*); *CIL*, vii. 458 (*actarius*); *JRS*, xi. 234 (*actarius*).

⁵ *CIL*, vii. 1071: cf. 1034.

⁶ *BMC*, i. clvii.

as the standards of a unit are many, comprising not only its main emblem but the emblems of its subdivisions, so the protector deities are multiplied. The *genius cohortis* is matched by the *genius centuriae*, and the minor deity may be represented in humbler guise, none the less attractive because it is the more homely. The little *genius* of the *centuria*¹ at Carlisle has an appeal which more conventionally perfect representations lack. Nor is it always easy to draw the line between ornament and dedication. It can be no accident that the water-tank associated with the front of the headquarters building at High Rochester should have yielded a bold relief² of Venus and the nymphs. Without the classical analogy³ upon which it is based, and of which a better sketch in line or colour may have supplied the pattern to a sculptor whose skill was overestimated by his ambition or his patron, it would be difficult to be sure that Venus was represented at all. And here it must be freely admitted that no amount of painting could disguise or relieve the clumsiness of outline. What matters is the intention: and it is likely that, conventional though such decoration might seem to an age of wilful secularization, the hallowed message conveyed by the relief would be that which reached those who viewed it when it was new. There is at least no doubt whatever about the sacred character of the delightful relief of a water-nymph or spring-goddess which decorates a small capital⁴ from Corbridge. This must have decorated either a fountain or a shrine of the nymphs, and it states in more gracious language the message of the High Rochester slab. At Corbridge, the nymph, distributing her life-giving water from a conventional vase, reclines upon its waves as the similar nymph Coventina,⁵ worshipped at Carrawburgh (*Brocolitia*), some nine miles to westward along the Wall, lies at ease upon the leaf of a water-lily. The High Rochester relief evokes the lonely pools in forest or wild that might be harnessed by man yet used by the gods themselves, and were thus hallowed spots, awe-inspiring and demanding proper respect.

¹ *EE*, vii. 1082, ix. 606; J. M. C. Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain*, Pl. 30.

² J. M. C. Toynbee, *op. cit.* Pl. 67.

³ For a mosaic prototype from Timgad, see A. Ballu, *Les ruines de Timgad* (1911), plate facing p. 98.

⁴ J. M. C. Toynbee, *op. cit.* Pl. 101.

⁵ J. M. C. Toynbee, *op. cit.* Pl. 80.

This spirit, which revered and cherished Nature's gifts by associating them with myth and cult, is no less strongly expressed in the semi-official or non-official cults of springs associated with the regiments of the army and their men. Coventina of Carrawburgh (*Brocolitia*) is seen to be worshipped¹ by all from the commandant of the cohort to the humblest serving soldier or camp-follower. But it would be wrong to pass her by in this audience without some allusion to her origin, which was once most learnedly discussed² by the late Dr. Rendel Harris, in the fruitful garden of whose mind it may justly be said that learning and ingenuity walked hand in hand. Dr. Harris connected the cult with the Batavian cohort, The Low Countries and the cult of St. Quentin. But he did not take into account that the only other part of the Roman world where the cult of Coventina is known³ is Celtiberia, and that the earliest garrison of *Brocolitia* is the First Cohort of Aquitanians, who can thus be accepted as having imported the cult in the fourth decade of the second century, just as the Vettones⁴ brought with them to Binchester their own Matres Ollototae in the third or as the Tungrians⁵ took to Birrens in A.D. 158 their homeland goddesses Ricagambeda, Viradecthis, and Harimella. The dedicators of the Corbridge nymph-capital are unknown, though the expensive shrine implied by the design and quality of the work would suggest legionaries. But the man who vowed the Chesters river-god,⁶ perhaps the God of the Tyne himself, was presumably the garrison commandant, a *praefectus equitum*, in whose house the relief was found.

The shrine of Mars Thincsus⁷ at Housesteads (*Borcovicium*) is another importation, which came with the Frisian or German cavalry unit based on the fort. This remarkable cult, in which

¹ *EE*, iii. 185 (*praefectus cohortis*), 188 ("soldier"), 191 ("camp follower").

² *Arch. Ael.* ser. 3, xxi. 162-72.

³ *Archivo español de Arqueología*, lxvi (1947), 68-74; L. Monteagudo, *Ara de Parga dedicada a Convetina*.

⁴ *CIL*, vii. 424, 425; *EE*, ix. 1133.

⁵ *CIL*, vii. 1072 (Ricagambeda), 1073 (Viradecthis), 1065 (Harimella).

⁶ J. M. C. Toynbee, *op. cit.* Pl. 36.

⁷ *EE*, vii. 1040 (*Thincsus*, *Beda* and *Fimmilena*), 1041 (*Thincsus* and *Alaisiagae*), *AA*³ xix, 186 (*Thincsus*, *Baudihillia* and *Friagabis*).

the *interpretatio Romana* makes of the war-god and his attendants a Mars and youths or *amorini* with wreaths of Victory, is a notable example of the importation of their native cult by levies from the outlands of the German frontier, perhaps the fruits of the victories of Maximinus Thrax, as were certainly the Suebian cavalry¹ of Lanchester with their own goddess Garmangabis. Here the striking feature is the Roman aspect given to the cult and its association with a declaration of loyalty to the Emperor. These are first lessons in the meaning and implication of Romanization. In the same way the cult of Juppiter Dolichenus and his consort Iuno Regina² is connected with the worship of the Emperor and Empress at Chesters, as at Carnuntum. But this important Eastern deity from Commagene was also worshipped in his own right, and the elaborate frieze from Corbridge³ must have belonged to a shrine of particularly sumptuous design. The association of the Sun and Moon with this cult is well-known, and either it or a closely similar form of worship, of which there were several, must explain the third-century Corbridge relief or the well-known metope.⁴ Sun worship was already established there in A.D. 163, and supplies one of the oldest dated inscriptions⁵ in the west for this particular cult. Its relative rarity, or at least the lack of general understanding of it, is attested by the fact that the text of the dedication could be maltreated in A.D. 193 on the mistaken supposition that it referred to Commodus. No such mistake at least could be made about another equally striking Eastern cult at Corbridge, whose Greek dedications⁶ to the Tyrian Hercules and to Astarte respectively mention a chief priestess Diodora and one Pulcher, who is either another priest or ministrant. This cult is so exotic that it is difficult not to connect it with the presence at

¹ *EE*, ix. 1135.

² I. A. Richmond, *Fritz Saxl Memorial Essays* (1957), pp. 47-52; J. M. C. Toynbee, *op. cit.* Pl. 41.

³ *Arch. Ael.* ser. 4, xxi. 181-6, Pl. 7, fig. 3; J. M. C. Toynbee, *op. cit.* Pl. 95.

⁴ *Arch. Ael.* ser. 4, xxi, Pl. vii, 2: cf. *JRS*.

⁵ *EE*, ix. 1381: since the stone was involved in the destruction of A.D. 197 Haverfield's suggestion, of an erasure after the *damnatio* of Commodus, is to be accepted.

⁶ *CIL*, vii, p. 97: *C.I.G.* 6806 (Hercules), 6807 (Astarte).

Corbridge of a Palmyrene merchant. These are not indeed Palmyrene gods : but the Palmyrene religious pantheon was very full of Eastern importations; and, if this explanation fails to satisfy, it may be remarked that where one Eastern merchant appeared others may positively be expected to have congregated. Native British gods also came in for their share of worship at Corbridge. Maponus,¹ who was interpreted in Roman terms as Apollo, and whose dedications are confined to northern Britain, in conformity with the geographical location² of his sanctuary in Dumfriesshire, was worshipped by no less an officer than the *praefectus castorum*, second-in-command, of the Sixth Legion. It has been conjectured that the austere and Druidical countenance,³ of which the vehicle is a votive head, may preserve for us the native aspect of this harper god of poetry and healing. On the other hand, Brigantia,⁴ the goddess of the North, appears in an *interpretatio Romana* which is the most complicated imaginable. Minerva, Victoria, a territorial goddess, and the aniconic Caelestis of Africa all enter into her representation, the last out of compliment to the Empress Julia Domna.

Lastly, there is Mithras. On Hadrian's Wall three sanctuaries⁵ of this deity, in whose worship initiation, hardihood and moral integrity were principles enshrined in rich and elaborate myth⁶ and ritual, are now known, apart from evidence for the existence of the cult and its sanctuaries in other military centres. This is not the place to discuss either the worship of Mithras or its archaeological manifestations. But the crucial point to be made in relation to social life is the small size of the congregations and their relatively high social grading. It is the commanding officers⁷ and lower ranking officers that the cult attracted, if we

¹ *CIL*, vii. 1345 (*praef. castr.*): two more dedications come from Corbridge (*CIL*, vii. 471, 483, the first treated afresh in *JRS*, xv. 218).

² *Archaeologia*, xciii. 39.

³ D. B. Harden, *Dark Age Britain*, p. 11 ; J. M. C. Toynbee, *op. cit.* Pl. 49.

⁴ J. M. C. Toynbee, *op. cit.* p. 157, and Pl. 77.

⁵ Housesteads, *Arch. Ael.* ser. 2, xxv. 255-63 ; Carrawburgh, *Arch. Ael.* ser. 4, xxix. 1-92 ; Rudchester, *Arch. Ael.* ser. 4, xxxii. 176-219.

⁶ As expressed, for example, in the Housesteads relief, J. M. C. Toynbee, *op. cit.* p. 154, Pl. 74.

⁷ *CIL*, vii. 541 (*praefectus cohortis*), 542, 831, 889, also *JRS*, xl. 114-15, 1-3 ; *CIL*, 544, 646 ("centurion"); 645 (*beneficiarius consularis*).

are to judge from the dedications, and the size of the shrines themselves, capable of holding no more than a score of devotees, does not permit the adherence of many men of lower ranks. Thus, the cult emerges as highly select, appealing to those whose education enabled them to appreciate its tenets. It was emphatically not of ubiquitous social range, however widely its geographical range may have extended in a military world where a minimum number of adherents was normally guaranteed. Even then, however, the cult might have its ups and downs, as is shown by the history¹ of alternate activity and neglect at Carrawburgh.

In fact, the unofficial cults are too much the matter of individual choice, or even caprice, to serve as a useful criterion of religious feeling in the Roman army. They reveal, indeed, a rich and chequered catholicity of belief rather than a solid continuum; and this is understandable when not only the choice, but the motives for choice, were themselves so wide. With the official cults it is otherwise: and a bridge between the two is provided by the imported cults brought into the Roman world by forced levies from outside it, such as Mars Thincsus at Housesteads or Garmangabis at Lanchester. For with these cults or their dedications is regularly associated an expression of loyalty to the reigning Emperor. Furthermore, however such cults may have been expressed iconographically or linguistically in their original habitat, they are portrayed within the Roman world by an iconographical *interpretatio Romana* and verbally defined by inscriptions in Latin. They thus become, at the very heart of the religion of the transported folk, the vehicle of Romanization, a *gradus ad Capitolium*. But if this is true of the outward and visible form accorded to the religion of levies, who were normally the fruits of conquest, what must be said of the official religion of the regular regiments? Granted that the legionaries were by requirement Roman citizens, it is yet clear that their cults were so expressed in imagery that the ritual connected with them, in word and deed, must have been calculated to express and to signify not only Roman manners but Roman thoughts and beliefs in such a fashion as to convey their

¹ *Arch. Ael. ser. 4, xxix. 28.*

significance to the provincial recruit who had never seen the southern side of the Channel, let alone that of the Alps. This must have been a matter of pride to the legionary, however thinly or however crudely the lesson was inculcated. But much more was it evidently a matter not of pride but of specific Imperial policy—one of the “*arcana imperii*”, if we will see it so—to imbue the auxiliary regiments, Gauls, Spaniards, Dacians, Britons or Germans, with the traditions of the Roman world. For these men, if discharged with good-conduct sheets unblemished (*honestam missione*), were then to become Roman citizens, having earned by services rendered what they could never otherwise have attained. The military religious calendar can thus be seen not merely as an ordination of worship, but as having its effect upon not merely Roman citizens *in esse*, but Roman citizens *in posse*; as charging with loyal belief not only the existing but the potential citizen body. If its function is thus conceived it becomes a broader and bolder instrument of Imperial policy than might at first appear. Not a Test Act but an act of faith, a broadening of the political body coupled with a liberal diffusion of ancient and well-tried religious beliefs.