

Colonia Ulpia Traiana and the Occupation of Vetera II

by

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Veterans continued to be settled in colonies down to the time of Hadrian. In many cases such a colony was founded on (or very near) the site of a legionary fortress, after the fortress had been vacated by the legion concerned¹. There is no clear evidence that veteran colonies were ever formed in the immediate vicinity of active legionary stations, although veterans certainly settled there of their own accord, helping to create communities which in some cases later attained the rank of colony. The apparent exception requires discussion. *Colonia Ulpia Traiana* (Xanten) was situated within 4 km. of the legionary fortress of *Vetera II*², which was clearly still garrisoned in the second century A.D. and later. The chronological evidence is complicated.

XXII *Primigenia*

XXII *Primigenia* garrisoned *Vetera II* from 70 A.D.³. Tiles show that it was still there after 89⁴, but that it must have moved to Mainz before 96⁵. This seems to confirm the view that it replaced XIV *Gemina* at Mainz about 92 or 93, after the latter had been transferred to *Pannonia*⁶.

¹ For example, the Tiberian colony at Emona, founded after the departure of XV *Apollinaris* to Carnuntum (B. Saria, *Laureae Aquincenses I*, 1938, 245–255); the Claudian colony *Agrippina*, after the departure of I and XX (Ritterling, RE XII 1252, 1377–1378, 1771); the Flavian colony at Lincoln, after the departure of II *Adjuatrix* (I. A. Richmond, *Archaeological Journal* 103, 1946, 64); the Trajanic colony at Oescus, after the transfer of V *Macedonica* to Troesmis (Ritterling, RE XII 1575–1576).

² For which see H. Scheller, *Bonner Jahrb.* 157, 1957, 272 ff.; H. v. Petrikovits, RE VIII A s. v. *Vetera* and *Bonner Jahrb.* 159, 1959, 89 ff.

³ Ritterling, RE XII 1802.

⁴ Tiles with the titles *pia fidelis Domitiana*, CIL XIII 12378/13, 20 and 21. Similar tiles at Köln are clearly of the same date, CIL XIII 12372/6 and 9, and also at Haltern, cf. CIL XIII Part VI, p. 179.

⁵ Since tiles with the titles *pia fidelis Domitiana* appear both at Mainz (CIL XIII 12348/45) and elsewhere in *Germania Superior* (Nied, CIL XIII 12350/47 and 189; Butzbach, CIL XIII 12357/14; Saalburg, CIL XIII 12358/15). That the legion had reached *Germania Superior* by 97 A.D. is shown by comparing ILS 308 with SHA *Hadrianus* 2. The dedication ILS 3914 seems to indicate a centurion of XXII (Pr.) p. f. D. at Röthenberg, but the evidence of this inscription is really inconclusive. The man may still have been serving in the previously mentioned post, a centurionate in XI C. p. f. That legion was then at *Vindonissa* – no great distance from Röthenberg.

⁶ Ritterling, RE XII 1803.

VI Victrix

The next legion known to have garrisoned Vetera II was VI Victrix. From c. 70 A.D. this legion garrisoned Novaesium⁷. The coin evidence shows that the legionary fortress at Novaesium was occupied to at least 104 A.D.⁸. It was succeeded before long by an auxiliary fort⁹. There is no reason to doubt that VI Victrix remained there as long as it was a legionary fortress. The date of abandonment is presumably the date of the transfer of VI Victrix to Vetera II¹⁰. There is thus a gap of something like ten years in the occupation of Vetera II. But why was Vetera II re-occupied?

X Gemina

The movement of VI Victrix to Vetera is probably related to the transfer of X Gemina from Noviomagus to the Danube. X Gemina occupied the legionary fortress at Noviomagus from shortly after its construction (after the suppression of the Batavian revolt), replacing II Adiutrix¹¹. It was still there after 89 A.D.¹², and after 96 A.D.¹³. There is evidence that it was still in Germania Inferior, and presumably at Noviomagus, at a still later date. Detachments of the legion appear in the Brohl quarries under the governor Q. Acutius (Nerva)¹⁴. He was *c o s. s u f f.* in 100 A.D. and governed Germania Inferior after this date, probably from 101 to 103/104 A.D.¹⁵. The legion can hardly have taken part in the first Dacian War (101–102 A.D.), and was probably transferred in time for the second War (105–106 A.D.)¹⁶. Its removal left a gap in the defences of the lower Rhine, and it was probably this that occasioned the movement of VI Victrix, not all the way downstream to Noviomagus (which now ceased to have a legionary garrison), but to Vetera, about half-way between Novaesium and Noviomagus.

Colonia Ulpia Traiana

As the name indicates¹⁷, the foundation of the colony was at least completed after 98 A.D. But it had taken place before the departure of X Gemina to the Danube, and probably some little time earlier, since an inscription found at Carnuntum records a recruit from Traiana who quite certainly

⁷ Ritterling, RE XII 1602–1603.

⁸ H. Lehner, Bonner Jahrb. 111/112, 1904, 250–251.

⁹ H. v. Petrikovits, Das römische Rheinland (1960) 42 and 49–50.

¹⁰ Tiles of VI Victrix from the Vetera region all have the titles *p i a f i d e l i s*, CIL XIII 12160; the supposed exceptions CIL XIII 12160/1 and 2 are too doubtful to affect this conclusion.

¹¹ Ritterling, RE XII 1681.

¹² Tiles 1. X G. p. f. D., CIL XIII 12214/23–26.

¹³ Tiles 1. X G. p. f., CIL XIII 12214/17–22, 29 and 31. The tombstones CIL XIII 8715 and 8735 do not prove that the legion was still at Noviomagus after 96 A.D.

¹⁴ CIL XIII 7697, 7715–7716.

¹⁵ PIR I² A 101.

¹⁶ R. Syme, *Laureae Aquincenses I*, 1938, 273–274.

¹⁷ The evidence for the name is collected in CIL XIII Part II p. 602.

joined X *Gemina* before the legion left Germania Inferior¹⁸. The foundation of the colony thus took place after the departure of XXII *Primigenia* from Vetera, and before the arrival of VI *Victrix*.

The sequence is now clear. The stabilisation of conditions on the German frontier after the annexation of the Wetterau and the campaigns of 83 and 89 A.D. resulted in the legionary garrison of each of the German provinces being reduced from four legions to three, the legions thus made available going to the Danube, where they were needed. In Germania Inferior, XXII *Primigenia* left Vetera II in c. 92 A.D., and the legionary fortress there was abandoned. As so often happened, a veteran colony succeeded. Sometimes such a colony was founded on precisely the same site as the fortress, as for example at Lincoln¹⁹, elsewhere a site was chosen a short distance away, as for example at Aequum²⁰. When Vetera II was abandoned, the more favourable site at Xanten was chosen for the colony. So far the sequence was normal. But the Dacian Wars made heavy demands on manpower. I *Minervia* may have left in time for the first Dacian War of 101–102 A.D.: its name is missing from the Brohl inscriptions which date to this period²¹. Instead, the name of XXII *Primigenia* appears there, and perhaps a vexillation of this legion temporarily took the place of I *Minervia* at Bonn²². This did not upset the balance of forces on the lower Rhine too seriously. But before the second Dacian War other withdrawals became necessary. Not only was XI *Claudia* transferred from Germania Superior (Vindonissa) but also X *Gemina* from Germania Inferior (Noviomagus). The only full-strength legion on the lower Rhine now was VI *Victrix*. To have allowed it to remain at Novaesium would have left a long gap downstream. The only site which was effectively placed to supervise routes into free Germany and at the same time was not too isolated from the legionary garrison upstream was Vetera, and the site was chosen for VI *Victrix* in spite of its proximity to Colonia Ulpia Traiana. No doubt some adjustment of the *territorium* of the latter was necessary.

Thus what happened at Vetera took place in two stages. The first stage was quite normal: the departure of a legion was followed by the foundation of a veteran colony. But the subsequent stationing of a legion in the immediate vicinity of the colony was something that cannot have been envisaged when the colony was founded: it was enforced by circumstances. It has no parallel, at least before the withdrawal of V *Macedonica* to Oescus and of XIII *Gemina* to Ratiaria under Aurelian.

¹⁸ AE 1929. 223 = R. Li. Ö. 16, 1922, 122 no. 55 (R. Egger, who noted, p. 123, the importance of the inscription for this point).

¹⁹ G. Webster, *Journ. Rom. Stud.* 39, 1949, 57–78.

²⁰ The Claudian colony at Aequum (Čitluk) was founded after the departure of VII *Claudia* from the fortress at Gardun, 15 km. away at the other end of the fertile Sinjsko-polje.

²¹ See note 14 above.

²² Ritterling, RE XII 1803–1804; R. Syme, *Laureae Aquincenses I*, 1938, 273. I *Minervia* certainly took part in the second Dacian War, ILS 308.