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Joining the Roman Army*

The Roman army has been admired by many people in ancient and more recent times as one of, if not the finest, fighting forces that the world has ever known. And yet the odds were heavily against the Romans, as Vegetius noted in the first chapter of his manual 'On Military Matters'. The Gauls were more numerous, the Germans taller, the Spaniards superior in numbers and in strength, the Africans in cunning and wealth, the Greeks in skill and knowledge. But even so, the Romans defeated all these nations, and the way in which they did so, was simple¹:

'To combat all these disadvantages, it was in the Roman interest to choose the recruits with care, to teach them, I might almost say, the power of weapons, to strengthen them by daily exercise, to learn beforehand in manoeuvres in the field everything that might happen in action and at the front, and to take severe measures against the idle.'

If the present Emperor would only return to the principles of enlistment practised in the Principate, Vegetius was convinced that the army of his day would rapidly become an effective force again. The whole system of joining the Roman army was complex but extremely efficient, and various scholars have studied the different aspects of the process, whereby the *militia provincialis* was enlisted².

It can be shown that there were two separate stages, whereby a civilian was enrolled in the Roman army of the Principate. The first consisted of an examination of his qualifications, which ended in the *probatio*; the second was the entry of the man's name, if he had passed the first stage, on the records of the unit. The most detailed information on the first stage is provided by Vegetius in the first book of his manual,

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The following abbreviations are used:

CPL *Corpus Papyrorum Latinarum* (1958).

CLA *Chartae Latinae Antiquiores* (1954-68).

Enrollment J. F. Gilliam, *Enrollment in the Roman Imperial Army*. *Eos* 48, 1957, 207-216.

¹ Vegetius, *Epitoma Rei Militaris* I 1. - For the size of the Germans and Gauls in comparison with the Romans, see, for example, Tacitus, *Ger.* 20; Caesar, *B. G.* I 39; II 30.

² T. Mommsen, *Die Conscriptiionsordnung der römischen Kaiserzeit*. *Ges. Schr.* VI (1910) 20-117. - W. Liebenam, 'Dilectus', *RE* V (1905) 615-629. - J. Lesquier, *L'Armée romaine d'Égypte d'Auguste à Dioclétien* (1918) 203-226. - G. Forni, *Il reclutamento delle legioni da Augusto a Diocleziano* (1953). - J. F. Gilliam, *Enrollment in the Roman Imperial Army*. *Eos* 48, 1957, 207-216.

I deal only with the recruits joining a legion, ala, cohort, or fleet; for the process for the other arms of the service, see Forni, *o. c.* 11 n. 2; to these, add Mommsen, *l. c.* 103-117; *RE* Suppl. X (1965) 1138-1139.

in which he deals with recruits and then with their training. He states that men should be recruited from the northern climes rather than the south, as the latter are lazy by nature, the former more virile³:

'Therefore, recruits are to be chosen from the more temperate regions, where the people have sufficient blood to inspire a contempt of wounds and death, and also intelligence, which maintains good order in camp and is of considerable advantage to plans in battle.'

Men should be recruited from the countryside and not from the towns, as a life of hard work in the open makes a man more suited to army conditions than a person who has been enervated by the luxurious conditions of a town. Should it on occasions be necessary to enlist men from the towns, they had first to be put through a course of intensive physical training, before they were given weapon-instruction⁴:

'From time to time it is necessary to levy townsmen for the army, who, when enlisted, must first learn to toil, to charge, to carry burdens, to endure the sun and dust. Their food must be frugal and simple, and they must at times live in the open air and at times under canvas. Only then must they be instructed in the use of their arms. If an expedition of any duration arises, they must quite definitely be kept in the country away from the allurements of the town, that their physical and mental strength may thereby increase . . . Therefore the strength of the army should be made up principally from the country.'

Vegetius then devotes a chapter to the ideal age for a recruit⁵:

'Now let us investigate, at what age a soldier should enlist. If the ancient practice is to be maintained, everyone knows that the correct age is the beginning of puberty. Instructions learnt as a teenager are not only more quickly learnt but also more thoroughly. Secondly, the vigour needed as a soldier, jumping and running, must be acquired, before the body becomes slow with age.'

He then discusses the height of a recruit, for which he uses several technical terms (*proceritas, incomma, statura*), and uses the word *probare* in connection with this; in former times, he states, there was a minimum height regulation of six Roman feet, or in some cases, five Roman feet ten inches, for the cavalryman of an *ala* and the men in the first cohort of a legion⁶. He then states that the recruiting-officer must demand certain physical requirements from the potential soldier⁷:

'The officer who is going to hold a levy, must pay particular attention to make his selection of the men who can prove to be suitable fighters, from their faces, eyes, and the whole shape of their limbs. The quality not only of human beings but also of horses and dogs can be seen by many signs, as we are instructed in the writings of the experts. Therefore a young man who is to be selected to be a soldier, should have lively eyes, carry his head erect, his chest should be broad, his shoulders muscular, his arms strong, have long fingers, a modest belly, thin buttocks, and his feet and calves

³ Veget., *Epit.* I 2: *Ex quibus regionibus tirones legendi sint.*

⁴ Veget., *Epit.* I 3: *Utrum ex agris an ex urbibus utiliores sint tirones.* For the sentiment, cf. Cato, *R. R.*, pr.

⁵ Veget., *Epit.* I 4: *Cuius aetatis tirones probandi sint.*

⁶ Veget., *Epit.* I 5: *Qua statura iuniores probandi sint.* – Cf. *Proceritatem tironum ad incommam scio semper exactam, ita ut VI pedum vel certe V et X unciarum inter alares equites vel in primis legionum cohortibus probarentur.*

⁷ Veget., *Epit.* I 6: *Ex vultu et positione corporis agnoscere in eligendo qui meliores possint esse tirones.*

should be sinewy, not over-fat. When one finds these points in a recruit, less emphasis may be put on the height, as it is more important that the soldiers are brave rather than big.⁶

He then deals with the present occupations of a potential recruit; those engaged in effeminate jobs must not be enlisted, but rather those who follow more manly trades, such as smiths, blacksmiths, wagon-makers, victuallers, and huntsmen⁸. The recruit must also have certain moral qualities, such as *honestas*, *verecundia*, and *industria*, and this is most important⁹. He twice uses *probare* in connection with the choosing of the recruits in respect of these qualities. Elsewhere he states that officers *qui tirones probant* must look for height, physical strength, and quickness of mind in all recruits, but in some a good education also¹⁰:

'Since in the legions there are several offices, which require educated soldiers, those who examine recruits should look for height, physical strength, and quickness of mind in all recruits, but in certain cases men should be chosen for their ability in shorthand and skill in making estimates and calculations.'

If a recruit had hopes of becoming a signifer in charge of the accounts and funds of his century, he would have to be of an exceptionally good character and also well educated¹¹.

From what Vegetius says, it is quite clear that the probatio included a thorough medical examination. There is evidence from literature that confirms that there were requirements concerning the age and height of the potential recruit. Nero raised a new legion, legio I Italica, which was composed entirely of Italians, who were six feet tall or over, and which he modestly called 'the phalanx of Alexander the Great'¹². The very fact that Suetonius, who as ab epistulis had full access to all military records at Rome, mentions the height of the recruits, suggests that for a whole legion to be six feet or over was unusual, and that the lower height regulation was probably the norm. Just as the men in the first cohort of a legion and in an ala were to be taller than the troops in the other nine legionary cohorts and also the auxiliary cohorts, so it appears that there were different height regulations for the troops who served in Italy. In the time of Hadrian it is recorded that a man was rejected for service in the Praetorian Guard and had to join an Urban cohort, when it was discovered that he was only five Roman feet six inches tall¹³. The legionary recruits were trained to fence against a post six feet high, which represented an adversary¹⁴; presumably the post and the imaginary enemy were meant to be the same size as the tiro. Maximilianus, who was a

⁸ Veget., Epit. I 7: *Cuius artis tirones vel eligendi sint vel respuendi.*

⁹ Veget., Epit. I 7: *Et hoc est in quo totius reipublicae salus vertitur, ut tirones non tantum corporibus sed etiam animis praestantissimi diligantur; vires regni et Romani nominis fundamentum in prima dilectus examinatione consistunt . . . Numquam exercitus proficit tempore cuius in probandis tironibus claudicavit electio. – Cf. also, tirones per gratiam aut dissimulationem probantium.*

¹⁰ Veget., Epit. II 19: *Praeter corporis robur notarum vel computandi artem in tironibus eligendam. – Cf. Sed quoniam in legionibus plures scholae sunt, quae litteratos milites quaerunt, ab his, qui tirones probant, in omnibus quidem staturae magnitudinem, corporis robur, alacritatem animi convenit explorari, sed in quibusdam notarum peritia, calculandi computandique usus eligitur.*

¹¹ Veget., Epit. II 20: *Et ideo signiferi non solum fideles sed etiam litterati homines eligebantur.*

¹² Suetonius, Nero 19,2: *conscripta ex Italicis senum pedum tironibus nova legione.* – For the role of ab epistulis as Adjutant-General and Military Secretary, see E. Birley, *Roman Britain and the Roman Army* (1953) 142 ff. 148. 151 ff.; Statius, *Silvae* 5, 1, 94 ff.

¹³ Dositheus, *Hadriani Sententiae* 2.

¹⁴ Veget., Epit. I 11; II 23; III 4.

conscientious objector and did not wish to serve because he was a christian, was measured and found to be five Roman feet ten inches, whereupon his appeal against becoming a soldier was dismissed¹⁵. A passage in the Theodosian Code states that the normal minimum in A. D. 367 was five Roman feet seven inches¹⁶. Clearly in the Later Roman Empire a career as a soldier had become increasingly less attractive and had resulted in fewer recruits, as Vegetius noted in his day, and as can be seen in the compulsory military service and the lowering of the height regulations of the Principate. Spartianus in his biography mentions some of the military regulations of Hadrian¹⁷:

'He also passed a ruling on the age of soldiers: no one was to violate the ancient usages by being in military service at an earlier age than his strength warranted or at a later one than common humanity allowed.'

From a passage of Dio it seems that the normal maximum age of a potential recruit was 35¹⁸. This and the other regulations about age are confirmed by epigraphy. Analysis of the ages in some 500 legionary careers has shown that the men enlisted between the ages of 13 and 36, and of these three out of four had joined between the ages of 18 and 23¹⁹. This was in fact in keeping with the regulations mentioned by Spartianus and Vegetius. Fronto confirms that there was a maximum and minimum age for recruiting²⁰. Dio records an instance where an *ab epistulis* was demoted for recruiting soldiers, who were too young for military service²¹. Isidore preserves a reference to the qualities a recruit required²²:

'Recruits are assessed not merely on their own declaration of their personal circumstances, but on their appearance and physical condition.'

Arrius Menander in the first volume of his book 'On Military Matters' records a rescript of Trajan, whereby men suffering from a certain physical disability were in fact permitted by military law to enlist²³. However, if, when conscription had been introduced in time of war, a father mutilated his son, to make him physically unfit for service (*inhabilis militiae*), he was to be punished²⁴. Augustus, for example, sold a Roman knight and his property, because he had cut off the thumbs of his two sons, who were adulescentes, to avoid military service²⁵. Vegetius mentioned that a soldier

¹⁵ See below, n. 64.

¹⁶ Cod. Theod. VII 13,3.

¹⁷ SHA Hadr. 10,8: *De militum etiam aetatibus iudicabat ne quis aut minor quam virtus posceret aut maior quam pateretur humanitas.*

¹⁸ Dio LV 23,1: καὶ οὐτε πολιτικῆ οἱ ἡλικία ἀξιόλογος ὑπέλελειπτο. 2. τῶν τὴν στρατεύσιμον ἡλικίαν ἔχόντων. – For 35 as a age limit, see Livy, XXII 11.

¹⁹ Forni o. c. (note 2) 26–27: 54 joined at the age of 18, 54 at 19, 125 at 20, 63 at 21, 41 at 22, 41 at 23. – For the ages of auxiliary infantrymen, see n. 82.

²⁰ Fronto, De Eloquentia 2: *sicut in bello ubi opus sit legionem conscribere, non tantum voluntarios legimus sed etiam latentes militari aetate conquirimus.* – For later age limits, see A. H. M. Jones, *Later Roman Empire* (1964) 616–617, n. 19.

²¹ Dio LXXIX 13: ὅτι μειράκια ἔξωρα ἐς τὴν στρατιὰν ἐπήκτο. – Cf. *Journ. Roman Studies* 57, 1967, 16 n. 102.

²² Isidore, Etymol. IX 3,36: *Tirones... non ex sola professione natiuitatis sed aspectu et valetudine corporis existimantur.* – In 37 he mentions a minimum age in his day of 16.

²³ Dig. XLIX 16,4, pr.: *Qui cum uno testiculo natus est quive amisit, iure militabit secundum divi Traiani rescriptum.*

²⁴ Dig. XLIX 16,4,12.

²⁵ Suetonius, Augustus 24,1. – This was also a common device to avoid military service later; Jones o. c. (note 20) 618 n. 22, for references.

must have good eyesight, and a document from Egypt shows that part of the medical examination of the probatio consisted of an eye-test. One man from a group of recruits was discharged, because he did not pass this²⁶:

'Copy of Discharge.

24th April, A. D. 52.

Discharged by Gnaeus Valerius Capito, Prefect of Egypt:

Tryphon, son of Dionysius, weaver, with weak eyesight caused by a cataract.

From the list of men from the city of Oxyrhynchus.

The examination was conducted at Alexandria.

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There is other evidence that a recruiting-officer looked for certain physical points in a potential soldier. Herodian provides several examples: he notes that in A. D. 215 Caracalla addressed a large number of young men, who had assembled for a festival at Rome from the surrounding countryside; he announced his intention of forming a new unit, a phalanx, to be called after Alexander the Great. The age and background of the potential soldiers agrees with the regulations of Vegetius, and Caracalla probably intended, as had Nero, that the men should all be six feet tall. He then inspected them²⁷:

'He ordered all the young men to be drawn up in rows, in order that he could go and inspect each individual, to see what his age was, the size of his body, and if his health was suitable for military service.'

These were precisely the three points of physique that a recruiting-officer would examine most closely in a recruit. Further information is provided in the case of Maximinus. Herodian states no less than three times that it was because of his physical size and strength that Maximinus joined the army²⁸; because of his height he was assigned to the cavalry, in accordance with the regulation cited by Vegetius; his previous occupation had been a shepherd, and he thus came from the countryside. Later in his career he was appointed to train recruits by Severus Alexander, who considered that Maximinus's physique and experience would make him an admirable model for them. Capitolinus in his biography of Maximinus confirms that he was of outstanding size and that he served first in the cavalry²⁹:

'His first years of service were in the cavalry, because he was conspicuous for the size of his body, famous among all the soldiers for his courage, handsome for his virile build, his character was wild, he was proud, despising, yet often just.'

Elsewhere he records that Maximinus was tall, huge, and of stout build, and twice quotes Cordus as saying that Maximinus was almost eight Roman feet six inches tall³⁰.

²⁶ P. Oxy. 39.

²⁷ Herodian IV 9,5: ὡς ἂν ἐπελθὼν ἕκαστον ἴδῃ πῶς τε ἡλικίας ἔχει καὶ μεγέθους σώματος καὶ εὐεξίας ἐς στρατείαν ἐπιτηδείου.

²⁸ Herodian VI 8,1: διὰ μέγεθος καὶ ἰσχὺν σώματος ἐς τοὺς ἰππεύοντας στρατιώτας καταγείς. – VII 1,2: διὰ μέγεθος καὶ ἰσχὺν σώματος ἐς εὐτελῆ καὶ ἐπιχώριον στρατείαν. – VII 1,6: διὰ σώματος μέγεθος καὶ ἰσχὺν.

²⁹ SHA, Maximinus 2,2: *Prima stipendia equestria huic fuere. Erat enim magnitudine corporis conspicuus, virtute inter omnes militares clarus, forma virili decorus, ferus moribus, asper, suberbus, contemptor, saepe tamen iustus.*

³⁰ 3,6; 6,8; 28,8.

Herodian also records that in preparation for his Parthian campaign Severus Alexander began to recruit from Italy and the provinces³¹:

'All those who were classified as fit for military service because of their physical health and who were in the prime of military age.'

He also records that the troops of Pannonia were taller than those of Syria³². Seneca notes the surprising case of a young man, who, although he was of the right age, height, appearance, and required physical strength, yet did not join up³³. Frontinus, who was one of Vegetius's sources, quotes with approval the dictum that the recruiting-officer should select men who were big and that the general would make them brave³⁴. A document from Dura records that the statura of two recruits had been measured and noted³⁵. Juvenal remarks that a recruit would always be physically stronger than a civilian³⁶. Aristides confirms that the recruiting-officers examined the physique, stamina, ability, and character of a potential soldier³⁷. Josephus several times refers to the physical strength of the Romans and even to the fact that their troops were of good character³⁸.

Although Vegetius does not mention it, there was one other very important qualification that each recruit had to possess, before he could be probatus: free birth. It was only in time of great emergencies that freedmen were recruited, as by Augustus during the Pannonian rebellion and after the defeat of Varus. Even so, these men were not put into normal units but into specially created cohortes voluntariorum³⁹. That such steps were felt to be justified, can be seen from the fact that Tacitus lays much of the blame for the rebellion in the Germanies in A. D. 14 on the large influx of freedmen, who had been recently drafted from Rome to replace these heavy losses; they had been accustomed to a life of ease and were not ready for the hard work of a military career⁴⁰. That it was a very serious matter for a person who did not possess free birth, to attempt to enlist, can be seen from some of Pliny's correspondence, when he was governor of Bithynia in A. D. 111. Sempronius Caelianus, who had already reported the incident straight to Trajan, informed Pliny that two slaves had successfully managed to pass the first stage of the induction ceremony and had been probati. Pliny wanted to know, if they had to be executed, because they had not in fact passed the second stage⁴¹:

³¹ Herodian VI 3,1: ὅσοι σώματος εὐεξία καὶ ἡλικίας ἀμῆ ἔς μάχην ἐπιτήδαιοι ἐνομίζοντο. – For his own physique, SHA, Sev. Alex. 4,4.

³² Herodian II 10,8: σωμάτων μεγέθεσι.

³³ Seneca, de Cons. XXIV 1: *Adulescens statura, pulchritudine, certo corporis robore castris natus, militiam recusavit.*

³⁴ Frontinus, Strat. IV 1,3: *Tu grandes elige, ego eos fortes reddam.*

³⁵ See below, n. 86.

³⁶ Juvenal Sat. XVI 7 ff.

³⁷ See below, n. 127.

³⁸ Josephus, B. J. II 580–582; V 306; cf. VI 38.

³⁹ G. L. Cheesman, *The Auxilia of the Roman Imperial Army* (1914) 65–67, 186–187, cites and discusses the evidence.

⁴⁰ Tac., Ann. I 31: *Vernacula multitudo, nuper acto in urbe dilectu, lasciviae sueta, laborum intolerans, implere ceterorum rudes animos.* – Presumably Pescennius was one of these; they also came from a town, which according to Vegetius (see n. 4 above), was bad. Slaves and freedmen were also excluded from service in the Later Roman Empire, Jones o. c. (note 20) 614, n. 14.

⁴¹ Pliny, Ep. X 29: *Ipse enim dubito ob hoc maxime, quod, ut iam dixerant sacramento militari, nondum distributi in numeros erant.* – For discussion, see Enrollment 211–212.

'Sempronius Caelianus, an outstanding young man, has sent to me two slaves, who had been discovered among the recruits. I have postponed punishing them, so that I could consult you on the precise sentence, as you are the founder and upholder of military discipline. I myself am in great uncertainty on the following point: although they had already taken the military oath, they had not yet been distributed on the records. I therefore request you, Sir, to write to me what course of action I must follow, especially as it involves a precedent.'

Their punishment depended on whether they were *voluntarii*, *lecti*, or *vicarii*; Trajan ruled that if they were conscripts, the recruiting-officer was culpable because of his negligence⁴²:

'Sempronius Caelianus was carrying out my instructions in sending them to you. An investigation will have to be held, to see if they have merited the death penalty. It is of importance to know, if they offered themselves as volunteers, or if they were conscripts, or even if they were offered as substitutes. If they are conscripts, the examination was at fault; if they were offered as substitutes, the blame rests with those who offered them; if they came forward as volunteers and in full knowledge of their status, they must be punished. It is immaterial that they have not yet been distributed on the records. The day, on which they were first approved, required the truth from them as regards their origin.'

Whichever of the three categories they were in, the official who had passed their probatio, was at fault for not checking the validity of their documents and origin. The recruiting-officer was almost certainly Caelianus, while Pliny as governor had been responsible for the probatio⁴³. There is a distinct impression in reading the letters that each was trying to disclaim all responsibility for the mistake and to pass the blame on to the other. Several military legal writers confirm that free birth was essential⁴⁴: Marcianus stated that slaves were excluded from all military service and it was a capital offence for them to enlist; Ulpian recorded that a person, whose free birth was in doubt, must not enlist, even if he was in fact freeborn, until the matter had been settled. As this evidence shows, recruits were normally volunteers and in most years they offered themselves in sufficient numbers to make good the losses resulting from discharge and other causes, as Arrius Menander notes in theory and Tacitus confirms in fact⁴⁵. In the case of a potential legionary recruit he had to possess, in addition to free birth, Roman citizenship. This is well illustrated by a document dated to A. D. 92 from Egypt⁴⁶. Doubts had been raised whether a legionary, who had by this time been promoted, possessed the necessary qualifications to serve; he himself made a

⁴² Pliny, Ep. X 30: *Neque enim multum interest, quod nondum per numeros distributi sunt. Ille enim dies, quo primum probati sunt, veritatem ab his originis suae exegit.* – Enrollment *ib.*

⁴³ The governor was always nominally responsible for the probatio. – For recruiting-officers, see Forni *o. c.* (n. 2) 22–24; Liebenam, RE V 618–619. – For checking of documents, see Isidore *l. c.* (above, n. 22).

⁴⁴ Dig. XLIX 16,11 (Marcianus); XLIX 16,8 (Ulpian).

⁴⁵ Cf. Liebenam, RE V 615. – Dig., XLIX 16,4,10 (Menander): *Plerumque voluntario milite numeri suppleantur*; cf. Fronto *l. c.* (above, n. 20). – Tac., Ann. IV 4: *Nam voluntarium militem deesse* (A. D. 23). It should be noted that Tacitus is here assigning motives to Tiberius, but from his language it is clear that this was an unusual step. The heavy discharges after the rebellion and the casualties of Germanicus's campaigns would have more than used up the normal supply of volunteers. J. C. Mann, *The Raising of New Legions During the Principate*. *Hermes* 91, 1963, 483–489, shows that whenever a new legion was raised, it was recruited in Italy; this was to avoid disturbing the normal recruiting arrangements in the provinces.

⁴⁶ Chron. d'Égypte 24, 1949, 296–301 = CPL 102: *ingenuum natum et c(ivem) R(omanum) esse iusque*

statement on oath that he did in fact have these qualifications and got three other soldiers to support this affidavit:

'T. Flavius Longus, optio of legio III Cyrenaica, in the century of Arellius, called and gave as guarantors [. . .] Fronto, in the century of Pompeius Reg-, L. Longinus Celer in the century of Cre-, L. Herennius Fuscus, veteran, and declared on oath that he was freeborn and a Roman citizen and had the right of serving in a legion.

Whereupon his guarantors, [. . .] Fronto, L. Longinus Celer, and L. Herennius Fuscus, declared on oath by Jupiter Best and Greatest and the genius of the Emperor Caesar Domitianus Augustus Germanicus that the aforementioned T. Flavius Longus was freeborn and a Roman citizen and had the right of serving in a legion.

Transacted in the Augustan camp in the winter-quarters of legio III. 16th(?) [month], A. D. 92.'

This is in accordance with the view of Ulpian cited above. Because of the complex social system in Egypt, recruits there might well have to produce additional documents to support their claims⁴⁷. Even in the fleets there were normally very few freedmen, but the majority of sailors were peregrines. The qualifications, therefore, for joining the fleets were much the same as those for the auxiliary forces, except that native Egyptians, who were prohibited from serving in the *auxilia*, were able to serve in the Misene fleet but not the *classis Alexandrina*⁴⁸.

Vegetius laid great emphasis on the fact that a recruit must be of a good character. He stated that people employed in certain occupations were not to be enlisted, because they were thus not suitable⁴⁹. There is other evidence that these restrictions were put into effect. In the Digest extracts are preserved from the military legal regulations of Arrius Menander, which list certain categories of men who could not enlist⁵⁰. A man who had been condemned to the wild beasts, or deported to an island, or exiled for a fixed term but had escaped and enlisted, was to be discharged and punished, immediately his past record was discovered. Trajan ruled that a man, who had been tried for a capital offence, or who had been convicted for adultery or any other major crime, was not eligible to serve. A deserter, who subsequently tried to enlist in another unit, was to be punished according to Caracalla. Elsewhere Menander stated that it was a serious crime for a man, who was not eligible for the army, because of his character and past record, to enlist; the more important the branch of the armed forces he entered, the greater the offence. Paulus ruled that anyone, who was being prosecuted and who enlisted in the hope of thus getting out of the case, was to be discharged immediately. Tacitus makes it quite clear that in normal circumstances a professional applause-leader in the theatres of Rome would never have been allowed to become a legionary in Pannonia; Pescennius's only skills were an insolent tongue and the ability to rouse a rabble, and a man of such a character should never have been inducted⁵¹. Tiberius, he also states, complained in A. D. 23 that there was a shortage

militandi in leg(ione) habere. – The inner and outer texts are identical, except that the latter also has a consular dating and the traces of the signatures of the men.

⁴⁷ Cf. BGU 1210, BGU 114 + P. Cattaui.

⁴⁸ Chester G. Starr, *The Roman Imperial Navy* (1960) 66. 77. 99.

⁴⁹ Veget., *Epit.* I 7, and above, n. 8 and 9; II 5, and below, n. 62. – In later times innkeepers, cooks, bakers, and other were to be excluded; Jones o. c. (note 20) 614, n. 14. For the sentiment, cf. Cicero, *de off.* 1,42.

⁵⁰ Dig. XLIX 16,4,1–9 (Menander); XLIX 16,2,1 (Menander); XLIX 16,16 (Paulus).

⁵¹ Tac., *Ann.* I 16.

of volunteers; those who did try to enlist, did not have the bravery and self-discipline that were required, but were mostly penniless vagrants attracted to the armed forces by the good pay⁵². It is quite clear that the authorities wanted recruits with the right calibre of mind as well as body; the legal writers rule that a man could be discharged on medical grounds for mental as well as physical defects⁵³.

There is a certain amount of evidence to show that when a recruit wished to enlist, he had to nominate several people, who would provide him with references as to his character. Some if not all of the three *cautores* of Longus may originally also have provided him with his references, when he offered himself for service. If he were able to do so, a potential recruit would be wise to arm himself with a letter of recommendation from a person, who could influence officials and pull strings for him. That it was advisable to do so, is well illustrated from part of a letter dating to the early second century; it was from Claudius Terentianus to his father Claudius Tiberianus back home in Karanis⁵⁴:

'And if God should will it, I hope to live frugally and to be transferred to a cohort. Here, however, nothing can be done without money, nor will letters of recommendation be of any use, unless a man helps himself.'

An acquaintance of his, Dius, had apparently left home and managed to join a legion. In another letter to his father he elaborates on why he was so disgruntled. Two of his friends, Kalabel and Deipistus, had enlisted in the *classis Augusta Alexandrina*. No one, he noted, gave much for their chances of livelihood. He had wanted to join a legion, but one of his referees, Marcellus, had apparently given him a poor reference, and he had not been successful. Terentianus, however, hastened to add that he did not bear Marcellus any grudge for that reason. He had then sailed and enlisted in the fleet (his two friends, Kalabel and Deipistus, provided him with references), as he did not want his father to think of him as wandering around like a vagabond. He asked for clothing to be sent on to him, as he had worn out his tunic before joining up. His address was the *liburna* 'Neptune'. The technical term, which he uses no less than three times, for attempting to enlist was *se probare*⁵⁵. Whether or not Terentianus managed, with or without recourse to bribes and letters of recommendation, or by using referees more biased in his favour, to obtain his transfer to an auxiliary cohort, is not known. He definitely thought that his qualifications merited a more rewarding branch of the Roman armed forces than the fleet, and he may well have been justified in his view; at any rate, it is known that he later became a legionary⁵⁶. Volusius and Longinus gave Julius Apollinarius such marvellous references, that he could use them to get himself made an *immunis* almost as soon as he had enlisted⁵⁷. Juvenal mentions that a

⁵² Tac., Ann. IV 4: *Non eadem virtute ac modestia agere, quia plerumque inopes ac vagi sponte militiam sumant*. For interpretation of the context, see n. 45 above. – For another potential recruit, who was afraid of seeming to be *vagari quasi fugitom* [sic], see n. 55 below.

⁵³ E. g. Dig. XLIX 16,13,3.

⁵⁴ P. Mich. 468,35–41 = CPL 251: *Et si deus volueret spero me frugaliter [v]iciturum et in cohortem [tra]nsferri. Hic a[ut]em sene aer[e] [ni]hil fiet neque epistulae commandaticiae nihil val(eb)unt nesi si qui sibi aiutaveret.*

⁵⁵ P. Mich. 467,12–13 = CPL 250: *p[ro]b[ave]r[e] se in cl[as(se)] A[u]g(usta) Alex(andrina) [et] Kalab[el] et Deipist[us]. – 16. et per eos me probavi in classe. – 22. antequam me pr[o]barem in militiam.*

⁵⁶ P. Mich. 476. For a letter which mentions his discharge, see *Transact. Am. Phil. Assoc.* 90, 1959, 139–146, on P. Cornel Inv. no. 1, 64.

⁵⁷ See below, n. 103.

recruit should arm himself with the best possible letter of recommendation he could⁵⁸. Terentianus had not done so, but another recruit, Theon, had. A copy of his epistula commendaticia dated to the second century has survived in part⁵⁹:

'To Julius Domitius, tribunus militum legionis, from Aurelius, his beneficarius.

I have once previously recommended my friend Theon to you, and now again, Sir, I ask you to look upon him as if he were me, as he is a man worthy of your regard. He has left his own family, property, and business, and followed me, and through everything he has relieved me from worry. I therefore request an introduction for him to you. He can tell you everything about our business. Whatever he has said, he has done. I have a high regard for the man (several fragmentary lines).

May I wish you and your people, Sir, every happiness and success for many years to come.

Look upon this letter, Sir, and imagine that I am talking with you.'

Vegetius makes it quite clear that once a man had passed this preliminary selection and had shown that his physical fitness, moral qualities, and civic status were satisfactory, and was then probatus, he was still not regarded as a soldier proper⁶⁰:

'The selected recruit must not receive the mark immediately, but must first be examined by exercise, to discover if he is really fit for such work. Both the quickness and strength required in this are thus shown, and whether he can learn the training in weapons, and whether he has a soldier's courage. For very many, although in outward appearance they seem suitable, are nevertheless proved by examination to be unsuited. Therefore the less suitable men must be rejected, and others of greater vigour must be selected in their place, as in every conflict it is not so much numbers as courage that is advantageous. Accordingly, instructions with weapons must be given in exercises each day to the recruits, who then receive the mark.'

Vegetius then cites the list of manuals and military regulations that he has used⁶¹. Elsewhere, after repeating his list of sources, he states how a legion was formed⁶²:

'Accordingly, when the young men had been carefully selected for their outstanding mental and physical qualities, and in addition had been trained daily for four or more months, the legion is formed by the command and under the auspices of the Emperor. The soldiers receive an indelible mark on the skin, are entered on the records, and are accustomed to take the oath.'

In the first passage quoted is the only instance where Vegetius uses *signatus*, and the paraphrase of this (*punctis signorum scribendus*) is the only occasion, where he uses *signum* in this sense. The second passage is remarkably similar to the first, and the

⁵⁸ Juvenal, Sat. XVI 5–6: *commendet epistola*.

⁵⁹ P. Oxy. 32 = CPL 249 = CLA 267: *Iam tibi et pristina commendaveram Theon amicum meum et modo quoque peto*.

⁶⁰ Veget., Epit. I 8: *Quando tirones signandi sint*. – Cf. *Sed non statim punctis signorum scribendus est tiro delectus, verum ante exercitio pertemptandus, ut, utrum vere tanto operi aptus sit, possit agnoscere . . . Signatis itaque tironibus per cotidiana exercitia armorum est demonstranda doctrina*.

⁶¹ Cato, Cornelius Celsus, Frontinus, Tarruntenus Paternus; Augustus, Trajan, Hadrian. For works of these authors in connection with recruits, see n. 4, 17, 23, 34, 42, 50, 105.

⁶² Veget., Epit. II 5: *Quemadmodum legio constituatur*. – Cf. *Diligenter igitur lectis iunioribus animis corporibusque praestantibus, additis etiam exercitiis cotidianis quattuor vel eo amplius mensuum, iussu auspiciisque invictissimi principis legio formatur. Nam victuris in cute punctis milites scripti, cum matriculis inseruntur, iurare solent; et ideo militiae sacramenta dicuntur*. Vegetius then quotes the military oath of his day.

answer is inescapable: Vegetius is using a technical term in its correct technical sense in connection with the process of enrolling and examining recruits. This is confirmed by the title of the former passage, *quando tirones signandi sint*. There is no evidence that recruits in the Principate were actually branded⁶³, but clearly the term *signatus* was used for 'passing out'.

Important information about the process of enlisting can be obtained from the *Passio Maximiliani*, which reproduces the minutes of a court hearing, when Maximilianus was tried for refusing to become a soldier in A. D. 295⁶⁴. The governor of the province, Dio the proconsul, was presiding over the enquiry, and he called as witnesses Fabius Victor, the recruiting-officer, and Valesianus, the praepositus Caesariensis and military commander. The defendant, Maximilianus, was the son of Fabius:

'12th March, A. D. 295, at Theveste, in the forum. Fabius Victor, together with Maximilianus, were brought before the court, and the prosecutor Pompeianus addressed the court. ›Fabius Victor has been appointed recruiting-officer with Valesianus Quintianus, the praepositus of Caesariensis. Maximilianus, the son of Victor, is a good recruit, and since he has the qualities to be approved, I submit that he be measured.‹ Dio the proconsul said, ›What is your name?‹ Maximilianus replied, ›What reason have you for wanting to know my name? I cannot serve as a soldier, because I am a christian.‹ Dio the proconsul replied, ›Get him ready.‹ When he was being got ready, Maximilianus replied, ›I cannot serve as a soldier. I cannot do evil. I am a christian.‹ Dio the proconsul replied, ›Let him be measured.‹ When he had been measured, his height was read out by equerry, ›He is five feet, ten inches.‹ Dio said to the equerry, ›Give him the signaculum.‹ Maximilianus resisted and replied, ›I do not do so. I cannot serve as a soldier. I am a christian. I do not accept the signaculum of the age, and if you give me the signaculum, I will break it, because it has no validity. I cannot carry a piece of lead around my neck after the sign of my lord.‹ Dio said, ›Remove his name.‹

The processes in the Later Roman Empire reflect the methods of the Principate. There was no general persecution in this year, and so this presumably is typical of the normal system of the times. The prosecutor said of the defendant, *quoniam probabilis est, rogo ut incumetur*⁶⁵. Maximilianus was measured, found to be five (Roman) feet, ten inches tall, and Dio gave the order, *signetur*, whereupon Maximilianus protested vigorously (*non facio; non possum militare*). *Signetur* does not refer to branding but to the *signaculum*, a piece of lead with a seal and with the man's name, which he carried fastened on a cord round his neck (*plumbum collo portare*), rather like a modern identity disk. Maximilianus stated that *si signaveris, rumpo illud, quia nihil valet*, and it is clear that *signatus* is the exact equivalent of *signaculum acceptit*.

⁶³ For the precise details of what *signatus* involved, see below. It seems quite clear that the same technical term *signatus* was used in the Principate to mean 'to receive the *signaculum*' and in the Later Roman Empire to mean 'to be branded'. – The Maximilianus incident, which occurred only a decade after the end of the Principate, is best interpreted as an isolated recorded example of the practices of former times surviving into the Later Empire, unlike all the other evidence cited by Jones *o. c.* (note 20) 616–617, n. 19. As on both occasions that Vegetius uses the term, he quotes his sources, the answer must be that he is using the term to describe the technical procedure of the Principate, but is giving the meaning of 'branding' of his own day.

⁶⁴ J. de Mayol de Lupé, *Rev. Études Latines* 17, 1939, 90–104, on *Acta Martyrum Sincera* (T. Ruinart, second edition, 1713), p. 300.

⁶⁵ A variant reading is *probatus*.

Thus, when the recruit was shown to be of good character (*bonus*), the right age (21), and had passed the medical and height qualifications, he was *probatus*; he was not a fully trained soldier. He was condemned, because he refused to take the military oath (*sacramentum militiae recusavit*) and wear the signaculum and thus be signatus; accordingly, Dio ordered that his name should be removed from the signaculum (*sterne nomen eius*).

The two passages of Vegetius quoted above in connection with the signatio state that the basic training took place daily and lasted for a minimum of four months. In addition to giving him the foundations of his military training, these exercises were designed to test the quickness and strength of the potential soldier, his capability for learning weapon-training, and his courage. The performance of a recruit in all these aspects would determine, whether he was to be accepted for enrollment as a full miles, or to be rejected, because he did not reach the necessary standards. From another passage of Vegetius it is quite clear that there were proficiency tests, which the recruit had to pass. The language of Vegetius makes it quite clear that this was normal procedure in the army of the Imperial era⁶⁶:

'The Romans of old strictly enforced such a high standard of discipline in training, that weapon-instructors received a double allowance, and soldiers who had not made enough progress in their preliminary training, were compelled to receive barley instead of wheat. They were not supplied with wheat again, until in the presence of the legionary commander, tribunes, or NCOs they had been tested and shown that they were fully proficient in all aspects of military skill.'

This statement of Vegetius seems to fit in well with a reference by Isidore under the heading *De Notis Militaribus*. He mentions the various notations that were placed alongside a soldier's name in the records; one of these was:

'Whenever they wished to signify ›lack of skill‹, they used the letter Lambda.'

It has been suggested that Isidore's reference to *imperitia* means that the recruit had failed a proficiency test, and a note to this effect was made in the records. λ is presumably an abbreviation for $\lambda\epsilon\iota\phi\theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$ ⁶⁷.

Vegetius devoted most of the first volume of his work to giving precise details of the basic training. In discussing the ideal age of a recruit, he provides a summary of the training a recruit would learn during his four months⁶⁸.

'A recruit must have time to learn everything. For the art of weapons – whether you wish to train a cavalryman, foot-archer, or infantryman – must not seem small or light, to teach them all the whole range of arms drill and movements, not to desert their posts, to keep their ranks, to throw their weapons with great force and accuracy, to dig ditches, to plant a palisade with skill, to handle their shield and deflect the oncoming weapons of the enemy by holding it at an angle, to avoid a blow with skill and deliver one with bravery.'

Earlier in the same chapter he had mentioned that recruits were also to be taught running and jumping. This is not an exhaustive list of the exercises that the recruit underwent, and he elsewhere provides more extensive lists; the additional training included marching at the military and rapid paces, swimming, vaulting onto wooden

⁶⁶ Veget., *Epit.* I 13.

⁶⁷ *Etymol.* I 24,1. – *Historia* 9, 1960, 379–383. – Liddell and Scott, *Greek Lexicon*, s. v. $\lambda\epsilon\iota\phi\omega$ B. II. 3.

⁶⁸ Veget., *Epit.* I 4.

horses, felling trees, carrying packs of up to sixty Roman pounds, and going on cross-country route-marches of twenty milia passuum three times a month⁶⁹. In his basic training the recruit used special practice-swords, shields, spears, and helmets, and used a wooden post to represent an adversary. He states that the recruits and younger men were to have training in every type of weapon-exercise both morning and afternoon⁷⁰.

The recruit would do most of his training on the parade-ground, as in fact Herodian records in A. D. 235⁷¹:

'The recruits therefore assembled on the parade-ground with all their equipment for their usual exercises.'

The equipment is presumably the special training-weapons mentioned by Vegetius, who also records that recruits were to be kept busy on the parade-ground and drawn up by the roll. If the weather was very bad, the recruit would be trained under cover in an exercise-hall⁷². There were various specialists, who instructed the recruits in the different aspects of their training: the campidoctor was the drill-instructor, the doctor armorum or armatura the weapon-instructor, the doctor cohortis the drill-instructor of the batallion; the cavalry were trained by exercitatores and a magister campi⁷³.

However, it was also necessary to train the recruits in the field. This was partly so that they could learn the various techniques that would be needed on campaign, partly so that they could become hardened physically. It will be remembered that Vegetius recommended that effete recruits should be made to toil in the open and sleep under canvas, until they were physically fit, and the treatment of the under-trained and enervated army of Syria by Corbulo in the winter of A. D. 57/58 is an extreme example of this policy⁷⁴. However, it also seems that it was part of the basic training of ordinary recruits that they should be taken into the countryside and given various tasks to toughen them and teach them the techniques of building camps, for example, and constructing roads. Quite a few of the fifty practice-camps in the more desolate and exposed parts of Wales will have been constructed by recruits⁷⁵. Two mile-posts from Cyrenaica dated to A. D. 100 record that Trajan *viam fecit per tirones lectos ex provincia Cyrensi*⁷⁶. A few years later the newly joined recruit, Julius Apollinarius, congratulated himself on the fact that he, unlike his comrades, had managed to escape all the hard toil and work in building the new roads in the new province of Arabia

⁶⁹ Veget., *Epit.* II 23; III 4. – For the details, I 9. 10. 18. 19. 27. – The present writer does not believe that the legionary or auxiliary infantry of the Principate were taught to fire arrows, use slings, hurl loaded-javelins.

⁷⁰ Veget., *Epit.* I 11–14; for the training-weapons, R. W. Davies, *Fronto, Hadrian, and the Roman Army*. *Latomus* 27, 1968, 75–95. – Cf. II 23: *Iuniores quidem et novi milites mane ac post meridiem ad omne genus exercebantur armorum*.

⁷¹ Herodian VIII 1,5.

⁷² Veget., *Epit.* I 26; II 23; III 2. – For the various places where the troops exercised and trained, see my paper, *The Training Grounds of the Roman Cavalry*. *Arch. Journ.* 125, 1969, 73–100.

⁷³ Veget., *Epit.* I 13–15; II 23; III pr. 6. 8. 26; CIL II 4083 = ILS 2416; CIL VI 533 = ILS 2088; RE VI (1909) 1588. For further details, see A. von Domaszewski, *Die Rangordnung des römischen Heeres* (1908), revised edition by B. Dobson (1967) s. v.

⁷⁴ Tac., *Ann.* XIII 35; the army on these exercises also included newly joined recruits from Galatia and Cappadocia. Cf. also, Vegetius I 3, and above, n. 4.

⁷⁵ R. W. Davies, *Roman Wales and Roman Military Practice-Camps*. *Arch. Camb.* 1968, 103–120.

⁷⁶ AE 1951, 210; AE 1957, 133. – For Julius Apollinarius, see below, n. 103 and 104; for Claudius Terentianus, P. Mich. 467,8, and above, n. 54 and 55.

Petraea. At much the same time Claudius Terentianus, who had just joined the *classis Alexandrina*, complained that he was about to leave with a detachment for Syria; as men of the fleet were often used to construct roads, he, unlike Julius Apollinarius, may have been less fortunate.

The Roman military legal writers confirm the statement of Trajan that there were two distinct stages in the process of enlisting, and add that the responsibilities and privileges of a recruit who had been *probatus*, differed from those of a man who had been *signatus* and *in numeros relatus* and was thus a *miles*. Ulpian makes this very clear in a section on the wills of soldiers; he notes⁷⁷:

'An individual starts to have the right to make a will from the time when he has been entered on the records; before that time, he does not have the right. Accordingly, men who are not yet on the records, even although they are selected recruits and travel at public expense, they are not yet soldiers. To be classified as soldiers, they must be entered on the records.'

There are several other instances of the phrase *in numeris* in its military sense in Ulpian and Paulus⁷⁸. In other examples recorded by the legal writers recruits were punished less severely than fully qualified soldiers, because they were not so thoroughly acquainted with military regulations⁷⁹. Arrius Menander, for example, in dealing with the enquiry that was to be held, when a soldier had overstayed his leave, adds:

'But pardon is granted to a recruit, who is as yet ignorant of the discipline.'

Modestinus ruled that if recruits deserted but later returned after a certain time, they were to be pardoned. However, if they did this a second time, they were to be punished with the full legal penalty, as they were no longer ignorant of the law. Paulus states that it was a very severe crime for a soldier to sell his equipment; however, in the case of a recruit, there might well be mitigating circumstances:

'Pardon is more readily granted to a recruit on this charge, and the blame for that ascribed to the *custos armorum*, if he has entrusted weapons to a soldier not at the fit time.'

The implication is that once more the *probatus* recruit was treated leniently, because he was not yet a *miles*, and that the armourer-sergeant would be at fault in giving equipment to a man, who was not yet entitled to be in possession of it.

At the end of this second stage, after the minimum of four months basic training, the *tiro* was, if he had passed all his proficiency tests, *signatus*. He was then ready to be put on the books of a unit as a fully trained soldier. The technical term for this stage was *in numeros referre*⁸⁰. The two slaves, whose enlistment had been discovered in Bithynia, were *probati* but had not yet passed the second stage and *nondum distributi in numeros erant*⁸¹. A letter was sent in A. D. 103 from the Prefect of Egypt to the commanding officer of an auxiliary cohort. He had approved six recruits, who had thus

⁷⁷ Dig. XXXIX 1,42: *Ex eo tempore quis iure militari incipit posse testari, ex quo in numeros relatus est, ante non; proinde qui nondum in numeris sunt, licet etiam lecti tirones sint et publicis expensis iter faciunt, nondum milites sunt; debent enim in numeros referri.* – The technical phrase *in numeros referre* is well attested elsewhere; see n. 41, 42, 78, 80, 82, 121, 125, 126, and cf. n. 62; Enrollment, passim. – *Lecti tirones* is obviously a paraphrase of *probati*, cf. Vegetius I 8, and n. 60 above; II 5, and n. 62 above. – *Publicis expensis iter faciunt* is a reference to the *viaticum*; see below, n. 93 ff.

⁷⁸ Enrollment 210, n. 15, cites and discusses them; ib., 211, cites fifth century usage.

⁷⁹ Dig. XLIX 16,4,15 (Menander); XLIX 16,3,9 (Modestinus); XLIX 16,14,1 (Paulus).

⁸⁰ Enrollment, passim. Gilliam also shows that the procedure was the same in the sixth century, ib., 210.

⁸¹ Pliny, Ep. X 29; cf. 30: *nondum per numeros distributi sunt*. Cf. also above, n. 41 and 42.

passed the first stage of the enlisting process, and gave orders that they were to be entered on the unit's records with effect from a certain date. A copy of the letter is preserved from the cohort's files⁸²:

'Copy.

C. Minicius Italus to Celsianus.

Give instructions that the six recruits approved by me for the cohort under your command be entered on the records with effects from 19th February. I have appended their names and distinguishing-marks to this letter.

C. Veturius Gemellus,	aged 21,	no distinguishing-mark.
C. Longinus Priscus,	aged 22,	scar on left eyebrow.
C. Julius Maximus,	aged 25,	no distinguishing-mark.
[.] Julius Secundus,	aged 20,	no distinguishing mark.
C. Julius Saturninus,	aged 23,	scar on left hand.
M. Antonius Valens,	aged 22,	scar on right side of forehead.

Received 24th February, A. D. 103, through Priscus, singularis.

I, Avidius Arrianus, cornicularius of cohors III Ituraeorum, state that the original letter is in the records office of the cohort.'

It will be noticed that all the recruits have Roman names and that the document provides additional evidence that the age of a recruit was established, when he enlisted. The ages of these six recruits to an auxiliary infantry battalion match those of the legionaries⁸³. The probatio also included a record of any physical peculiarities that could be used as distinguishing-marks (*iconismi*). Although a recruit with money to burn in his pocket might commission a small portrait of himself, it would obviously be impossible to keep a portrait of each soldier at provincial headquarters or even in the records office of a unit; accordingly, a record was kept of any scars or other marks by which the man could always be identified. The pridianum of cohors I Lusitanorum quingenaria equitata shows another part of the process. The accessions to the cohort in A. D. 156 include, in addition to men transferred from other units, nine recruits, all volunteers, and all approved by the Prefect. The centuria or turma, into which each man was put, is recorded, and also a date by day and month and year, as well as the recruit's names. The Prefect had also appointed a centurion by a direct commission from civilian status⁸⁴. The pridianum of cohors I Hispanorum quingenaria equitata in A. D. 105 may also record that recruits were probati by the two successive governors of the province⁸⁵.

The information that was attached to the governor's letter would also be quoted in the acta diurna after a note of the arrival of the recruits at the unit, to which they had been assigned. Thus there are two entries to this effect in the morning report of cohors XX

⁸² P. Oxy. 1022 = CPL 111. I have followed the revised readings of R. Marichal in CLA 215,4-9: *Tirones sexs (sic) probatos a me in coh(orte) cui praees in numeros referri iube ex XI kalendas martias. nomina eorum et icon[i]smos huic epistulae subieci.* - On balance, it seems that the missing praenomen was probably Caius. Cf. Enrollment, 208-209.

⁸³ See above, n. 19.

⁸⁴ BGU 696 = CPL 118. I have followed the improved text of R. O. Fink, Am. Journ. Phil. 63, 1942, 61-63, and commentary, 64-71. i. 31-33: *TIRONES PROBATI VOUNTARI A SEMPRONIO LIBERALAE (sic) PRAEF(ECTO) AEG(UPTI) IN IS EQ(UES) I DROM(EDARIUS) I*; the numeral VIII is in the margin.

⁸⁵ P. Lond 2851 = CPL 112; revised edition by R. O. Fink, Journ. Rom. Studies 48, 1958, 102-116, text on 104. I have followed the readings of R. Marichal in CLA 219, i. 32-33.

Palmyrenorum milliaria equitata stationed at Dura-Europos in Syria Coele for 28th May, A. D. 239⁸⁶. The first entry records the arrival of recruits, who had been approved by the governor, whose name is given, and their number; the names of the two recruits are then given and the date by day, month, and year, from which their status is to be effective; the whole entry is in fact an abstract of the letter the governor sent with the recruits. The second entry is a copy of the actual instructions contained in the letter; it specifies the number of recruits, and adds that their names and heights, and probably their distinguishing-marks and perhaps ages also, were attached to the letter; the document probably also adds that they were skilled Arab camel-drivers; they had been approved and were for this cohort. The entry is lost from there, but presumably continued with additional information, including the effective date, and perhaps also a copy of the names and heights etc of the attached list. In Syria it had taken eighteen days for the recruits to reach their unit, although in Egypt it had taken them only five.

In both the letters, from the Prefect of Egypt and the governor of Syria, which accompanied the recruits to their unit, it is noted that their nomina were attached to the document. The two lists both contained the full names of each recruit⁸⁷. In the pridianum of cohors I Lusitanorum the full Roman name or the native name and filiation of each of the nine recruits was given, as also were the three names of the newly commissioned centurion. It was, of course, of the utmost importance, that when a recruit was entered on the records, his full and correct name had been established; otherwise there would be inevitable confusion. In some cases a recruit would be given a new name, when he was assigned to his new unit⁸⁸. Thus Apion, when he arrived at Misenum, wrote to tell his father, that his new name was Antonius Maximus and his new unit was the Athenonican century or ship. In a later letter sent to his sister Sabina he uses only his Roman name⁸⁹. Another soldier, Valerius Paulinus, added that he was born Ammonas, when he wrote to his own brother; it is interesting to note that he should still give both his native and military names when writing to a relative, especially since he had served his full twenty-five years in the army⁹⁰.

After he had been probatus, the recruit received basic training for a minimum period of four months, and only after he had been signatus and put on the books of his unit as a fully trained soldier, could he be paid as such. The recruit would, of course, have many expenses during this time, and would need to receive some money. Deductions

⁸⁶ P. Dura 89. i. 14-15. 14: —[*tirones probati ab* [. . . .] *nio v(iro) c(larissimo) co(n)s(ulare) n(ostro) n(umero) II* [—12—] *Abbas* . . . [*vi vvvvvv Aurel(ius) Germanus ex VI Idus Maias d(omino) n(ostro) Gordi[an]o Aug(usto) co(n)s(ule)*]. 15: [*e(xemplum)*] *e(pistulae)* [—8— *tirones duos quorum nomi[na] —15—*]. *item staturas subici pr[a]ecepti. Arabes agitare expertos probatos . . . in c[o]h(ortem) XX Palm(yrenorum) Gor[d]ianam* [. . . .]

In line 14 the lacuna after the numeral might, for example, have been *relati in num(eros)*. In 15 the first lacuna might have contained the word *voluntarii*, perhaps abbreviated or the name of the governor in the genitive; the second was probably *et iconismo*]; after *probatos*, a *me* is to be expected, but cannot be read. — I am indebted to Professor J. F. Gilliam for discussion of this passage.

⁸⁷ All six in the former have Roman names, in the latter one has native, the other Roman names.

⁸⁸ Lesquier o. c. (note 2) 220. — Note that in the trial of Maximilianus the first thing that was established was his military name, see above, n. 64. In one century two soldiers had identical tria nomina and had to be distinguished by their origo; P. Gen. lat. I verso V. X-XI.

⁸⁹ BGU 423,22-23: ἔστ[τ]ι [δέ] μοι ὄνομα Ἀντωνίου Μάξιμου, and below, n. 96. — For the letter to his sister, see n. 96.

⁹⁰ P. Cornell Inv. no. 1, 64,1: Οὐαλέριος Παυλεῖνος ὁ καὶ Ἀμμωνᾶς. See above, n. 56.

were made from the pay of a fully trained soldier for such expenses as food, clothes, and equipment⁹¹. Although a recruit might not be issued with all his equipment as soon as he was probatus, he would obviously need to eat and would be given a certain amount of uniform and equipment. Claudius Terentianus, for example, when he joined the fleet, asked his father to send him clothes and equipment, to avoid having to pay for new ones⁹². Accordingly, a recruit received *viaticum* or 'travelling-money' as an enlistment-bonus, rather like the King's shilling. It is not known if the amount varied from service to service; Apion, for example, at some time in the second century received three gold pieces, when he joined the fleet. It is known that recruits in an auxiliary cohort received the same amount of seventy-five denarii in the second half of the second century in Egypt⁹³. This amount had at one time been the annual pay of a *pedes* in such a unit and was the amount a legionary received in each *stipendium*. It is possible that a recruit, who joined an *ala* or legion, which had higher basic rates of pay, may have received a correspondingly larger enlistment-bonus⁹⁴. The *viaticum* would give the recruit some spending money and help to defray his expenses, particularly as he had often to travel some distance before he became a fully qualified soldier on the records of a unit⁹⁵. Apion is a good example of this. He had enlisted in Egypt as a sailor, where he had been *probatus* and accepted. He then travelled to Italy, where he received his *viaticum*; when he arrived there at Misenum, he was assigned to a specific ship and received an official Roman name⁹⁶.

'Apion to Epimachus, his father, very many greetings. First and foremost, I pray that you are in good health, and that you, my sister, her daughter, and my brother are completely well and prosperous. I thank the lord Serapis that when I was in danger at sea, he straightway saved me. On arrival at Misenum, I received from Caesar three gold pieces for travelling-money. Things are going well for me. I beg you, therefore, father, to drop me a short note, firstly about your health, secondly about that of my brother and sister, and thirdly so that I can give thanks to your handwriting, because you gave me a good education, and I therefore hope, if the gods are willing, to advance quickly.

⁹¹ Tac., Ann. I 17: *hinc vestem arma tentoria*. – Examples in documents include P. Gen. lat. I recto Ia+b = CPL 106 = CLA 7.Ia+b; P. Gen. lat. I recto IV = CPL 107 = CLA 9; a similar Roman document has been found at Masada, Israel Explor. Journ. 15, 1965, 82, 110 (I owe further information to the kindness of Professor Y. Yadin); P. Fay. 105 = CPL 124 = CLA 208 shows a retiring *eques* receiving 103 denarii for his weapons; P. Col. Inv. 325 shows a deceased *pedes*, who had paid 21 denarii 27½ obols for weapons, 20 denarii for a tent, and 93 denarii 15 obols for a third item, cf. Bonner Jahrb. 167, 1967, 233–243.

⁹² P. Mich. 467, and above, n. 55; P. Mich. 468, and above, n. 54. – A soldier might have to pay towards the special training-equipment he used in his basic training, cf. above, n. 70.

⁹³ BGU 423,9–10: *ἔλαβα βιατικὸν παρὰ Καίσαρος, χρυσοῦς τρεῖς*, and n. 96 below. – P. Berlin 6866 = CPL 122, dated to A. D. 192, shows that more than a score of men, who had joined an auxiliary cohort between A. D. 172 and 192, had received in *viatico* (denarios) LXXXV.

⁹⁴ Cf. Historia 8, 1959, 372–378, especially 375. – P. Fay. 105 = CPL 124 = CLA 208 gives an average for 23 *equites* of 62 denarii for enlistment-bonus. However, they were able to withdraw money from the *viaticum*: Pasion 2 denarii 12½ obols, Crispus 25 denarii.

⁹⁵ People regularly travelled from Egypt to Italy to serve in the fleet, as in the examples of Apion and Apollinarius cited below. – Cf. also PSI 1063, and n. 99 below; Tac., Ann. I 31, and n. 40 above; II 78; XIII 35, and n. 74 above; XVI 13.

⁹⁶ BGU 423. – For another letter from this man, where he uses his new name of Antonius Maximus, to his sister Sabina, see BGU 632; he again stresses that he is keeping all right.

Give my regards to Capiton, my brother and sister, and Serenilla and my friends. I have sent you by Euctemon a little picture of me. My name is Antonius Maximus, my century the Athenonican. I pray for your health.

P.S. Serenus, the son of Agathodaemon, sends his regards, as do [], Turbo, son of Gallonius, and [].

Address: To Philadelphia, to Epimachus, from his son Apion. Deliver to cohorts I Apamenorum, to Julianus, clerk, from Apion, to be forwarded to his father Epimachus.⁶

A not dissimilar picture, also in the second century, is revealed in the case of Apollinarius in two letters, which he sent on the same day. He too was an Egyptian, who had enlisted for the fleet and had been sent to Italy. In the first letter on 20th May he wrote to his mother Taesion from Ostia⁹⁷:

'And now I am writing to you from Portus, for I have not yet gone up to Rome and been assigned. As soon as I have been assigned and know to which [fleet] I am going, I will immediately write to you.'

He was soon informed, however, for he adds as a postscript:

'Know that I have been assigned to Misenum, for I learned it later.'

On the same day he wrote a second letter, as he had now been moved to Rome and told that he had been assigned to Misenum⁹⁸:

'I want you to know, mother, that I arrived safe and sound in Rome on 20th May and have been assigned to Misenum. But I have not yet learned my century, for I had not gone to Misenum, when I wrote this letter. I beg you, therefore, mother, to look after yourself, and don't worry about me, as I have come to a fine place.'

In the address at the end of the letter he already counts himself as being in service at Misenum. A document from Egypt records the amount of money 126 recruits had to their credit; tirones Asiani had been sent to bring cohorts I Lusitanorum up to strength in A. D. 117 after the Jewish rebellion. The signifer of each of the six centuries issued a receipt to Tituleius Longinus, the officer who had brought the recruits to Egypt, for the deposita of the men distributi in centuria⁹⁹. If the reading is correct¹⁰⁰, Tituleius was also a doctor, and would thus be well qualified to select the recruits. The last receipt is:

'Quintus Erennius, signifer of cohorts I Lusitanorum, in the century of Longianus, to Longinus, centurion of the same cohort.

I have received from you 192 denarii, 20 obols, for the savings of the twenty-three recruits from Asia distributed in the century. 3rd September, A. D. 117.'

⁹⁷ P. Mich. 490,9–12: καὶ νῦν ἀπὸ Πόρου σοι δηλῶ, οὐπω γὰρ ἀνέβην εἰς Ῥώμην καὶ διετάγην. ἐπὶν διαταγῶ καὶ γνῶ εἰς ποῖαν ἡμεῖς εὐθέως σοι δηλῶ. 22–23: γείνωσκε ὅτι εἰς Μεισηνοῦς διετάγην, ὕστερον γὰρ ἐπέγνων.

⁹⁸ P. Mich. 491,4–11: οὐπω δὲ τὴν κεν<ν>τυρίαν μου ἔγνων. – In the fleet the centuria means the ship; cf. Starr o. c. (note 48) 57–61. That is, the centuria is to be equated with the unit in the infantry and cavalry.

⁹⁹ PSI 1063. The document is in Greek, but many of the technical terms are transliterated from the Latin. For interpretation of the document, see J. F. Gilliam's remarks in *Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium*, 1964/1965 (1966) 91–97. – 20 men are distributed in the first century, 17 in the second, 20 in the third, 22 in the fourth, 24 in the fifth, 23 in the sixth. The average amount of money for each man in the six centuries is 21, 14, 23, 10, —, 8 denarii respectively.

¹⁰⁰ ἰατρ[οῦ] (ἐλατοντάρχω). If the medicus ordinarius was a medical officer with the status of a centurion, this might be additional evidence; however, the whole question is uncertain. Gilliam l. c. (note 99) 92, n. 5, doubts the reading.

It is possible that it was traditional for the viaticum actually to be paid in three aureii, whereas the pay was issued in silver¹⁰¹.

Vegetius had specified that some of the recruits were to be well educated, so that they could do the clerical work of their unit¹⁰². Consequently, some of the recruits had high hopes of obtaining advancement through their educational qualifications. Apion, for example, paid thanks to his father's handwriting, because he had given him a good education, which he hoped would give him quick promotion. Another recent recruit, Julius Apollinarius, very quickly took the opportunity of putting into practice Vegetius's recommendation and of getting transferred from the status of *munifex* to *librarius*, which made him an *immunis*, as he was delighted to report to his father, Sabinus, on 26th March, A. D. 107¹⁰³:

'Things are going well for me here. Thanks to Sarapis, I got here quite safely, and while others [two fragmentary lines] the whole day long are cutting stones and are engaged on other tasks, I so far have suffered none of this. I asked Claudius Severus, the governor, to appoint me as a clerk on the governor's staff. He replied, 'There is no vacancy in that post at the moment, but in the meantime I shall appoint you legionary clerk with hope of advancement.' With this appointment, then, I went from the commander of the legion to the *cornicularius* . . . I thank Volusius and Longinus Barbarus. Tell the firm of Aphrodis, the son of the condiment-dealer, that they have enrolled me in the cohort at Bostra, which is eight days' journey from Petra.'

Julius Apollinarius had first tried to obtain a post of *librarius legati pro praetore*, where the opportunities of advancement would be considerable. However, he had to be content with the post of *librarius legionis* with the hope of advancement that Severus held out. Apollinarius accordingly went to the headquarters of his legion at Bostra and reported to the adjutant, under whom he would now work with the clerical staff of the first cohort. Clearly his two referees, Volusius and Longinus, had given him a glowing report. He seems to have lived up to this and to the hopes of advancement mentioned by the governor. A year later in a letter to his mother, Tasoucharion, he wrote on 19th February, A. D. 108¹⁰⁴.

'I give thanks to Sarapis and Good Fortune, that while everyone is toiling away the whole day through cutting stones, I, as a *principalis*, walk around doing nothing.'

He had thus been promoted with the status *principalis* within twelve months of enlisting, a not inconsiderable achievement, and was consequently a recruit of the calibre specified by Vegetius. Tarruntenus Paternus in his list of *immunes* quoted in

¹⁰¹ As suggested by G. R. Watson in connection with the hoard found at Thorngraston; CW2, 54, 1954, 61–65, esp. 64–65. Cf. Num. Chron. 1963, 61–66.

¹⁰² See above, n. 10.

¹⁰³ P. Mich. 466, 18–32. 47–48: ἐστράτευσάν <με> ἰς χώ[ρ]την εἰς Βόστραν. Cf. also G. R. Watson, *Immunis Librarius*, in: M. G. Jarrett and B. Dobson (ed.), *Britain and Rome* (1966) 45–55. I have followed the accepted interpretation that the first cohort was responsible for most of the clerical work of the unit. Mr. D. Breeze kindly informs me that he is shortly to discuss the question in print.

¹⁰⁴ The year of P. Mich. 465 is missing. I cannot agree with the dating of the editors that 465 is earlier than 466. The context of each letter makes better sense to my mind to suppose that 465 is eleven months later than 466, not that 466 is one month later than 465. This removes the anomaly of Apollinarius informing his father of the events of his enlistment five weeks after he could have told his mother. It also enables us to take Apollinarius at his word, when he says he was a *principalis*; as a *librarius* he was not such. I first proposed this dating in CW2, 68, 1968, 26, n. 23. The passage quoted is P. Mich. 465, 13–17.

the Digest includes in a group of four categories of clerks *librarii quoque qui docere possint*¹⁰⁵. Clearly they must have been exceptionally well educated, and probably were employed to raise the standard of education of any recruits, who did not quite reach the required level. There are other examples of recruits, whose outstanding educational abilities on enlisting brought them rapid promotion. Petronius Fortunatus, for example, was soon promoted to be a clerk (*librarius*), then an orderly sergeant (*tesserarius*), then as *optio* he assisted his centurion in his administration of his company, then as *signifer* he was in charge of the accounts of his century. After only four years he was commissioned, and spent the next forty-six years of his life as a centurion. He was an African by birth, but so good were his educational qualities, that he was transferred as soon as he was *probatus* to a legion in Lower Moesia, where there were comparatively few *literati homines*¹⁰⁶.

Most recruits would prefer to join the branch of the armed services, in which their own qualifications would provide them with the best openings and rewards. This was why Italians joined the Praetorian Guard, which had considerably shorter service, higher pay, and better prospects than the legions¹⁰⁷. Most young men, who had the necessary physical, educational, moral, and other qualities, would choose to enlist in a legion, which had a far higher rate of pay than the auxiliary forces. A legionary other rank received three times as much as a private in an auxiliary cohort¹⁰⁸. If he did not possess the Roman citizenship or other qualifications, or if there were not sufficient openings in the legion when he applied, he would have to join an auxiliary unit. Even then a man would opt, if possible, to join an *ala* rather than a *cohortis*, as the pay of the former was exactly twice that of the latter¹⁰⁹. The main criterion for deciding, whether a man would become an *eques* in an *ala* or a *pedes* in a *cohortis*, was a physical one: there was, as Vegetius records, in the Principate a minimum height of six Roman feet, or in exceptional cases, five Roman feet ten inches, for an *eques alaris*¹¹⁰. If a recruit was smaller than this, he would have no option but to enlist in a *cohortis* as a *pedes*. Very few men were enlisted as *equites cohortales*¹¹¹. If, however, a *pedes* showed suitable qualities, he would be upgraded to become an *eques cohortalis* after ten or more years service, and would thus obtain a rise in pay of 50%¹¹². It is not known for certain, whether *dromedarii* were normally recruited directly or were

¹⁰⁵ Dig., L 6,7.

¹⁰⁶ CIL VIII 217 = ILS 2658 + add. E. Birley, Promotions and Transfers in the Roman Army II: The Centurionate. *Carn. Jahrb.* 1963/64, 22–23. – Petronius is the only epigraphic example of a man commissioned by the vote of the soldiers. Dr. B. Dobson suggest to me that the *tesserarius* is to be equated with an orderly sergeant.

¹⁰⁷ Mann l. c. (note 45). – The better prospects of the Guard aroused considerable jealousy in the legionaries; cf. Tac., *Ann.* I 17.

¹⁰⁸ Cf. G. R. Watson's studies in *Historia* 5, 1956, 332–340; 8, 1959, 372–378, and n. 94 above. – It was a punishment for a man to be downgraded from a legion to an auxiliary unit.

¹⁰⁹ See previous note. This is best illustrated by contrasting P. Fay. 105 with P. Berlin 6866.

¹¹⁰ Veget., *Epit.* I 5, and above, n. 6.

¹¹¹ E. g., of the nine volunteer recruits, who joined *cohortis I Lusitanorum* in A. D. 156, 7 were *pedites*, 1 an *eques*, 1 a *dromedarius*; see above, n. 84.

¹¹² As convincingly shown by J. F. Gilliam, *Historia* 14, 1965, 74–78, esp. 78. – The passage of Vegetius quoted by me in n. 110 solves the difficulty observed by Gilliam on 80. – For *pedites* upgraded to *equites*, cf. BGU 696. ii. 32–37: two or more men, one of whom had 15 years service. another 4; P. Dura 94,7. – For a discussion of this type of unit, see my note, *Cohortes Equitatae*. *Historia* 18, 1969, forthcoming.

pedites upgraded to that job¹¹³. It is possible that higher qualifications were required in recruits for a milliary cohort or ala; the commanding officers of these units were certainly men of outstanding ability¹¹⁴. Pliny discovered that the accountants of the ala milliaria in Syria were the only ones of all those in the auxiliary units, who were efficient¹¹⁵. The statement of Vegetius that the men in the milliary first cohort of a legion had higher physical standards than the men in the other nine quingenary cohorts, has already been mentioned; elsewhere he twice notes that the men of the first cohort had a better education, physique, and character¹¹⁶. Vegetius does note that in his day many young men, even although they had high qualities, chose to serve in the auxilia, where the work was less hard and the rewards more quickly obtained, in comparison with service in the legions, which was onerous with the heavier equipment, more numerous fatigues, and stricter discipline¹¹⁷. This change in attitude probably started in the third century, when the reforms of Severus in particular and of later emperors made the differences between the legionaries and auxiliaries very much less than they had been. Perhaps the best illustration of this change is another private letter referring to a young man, who had enlisted at some time in the third century. Claudius Terentianus originally tried in the opening years of the second century to enlist in a legion, but without success, and had been assigned to the fleet; he expressed the hope that he would be able to transfer to an auxiliary cohort, but would need money and letters of recommendation. Pausanias, on the other hand, had enlisted in a legion, but soon found life there too hard; his frequent letters home eventually made his father pull the necessary strings to get him transferred. The father's influence even extended to getting his son a spell of leave while changing units¹¹⁸:

'Pausanias to his brother Heraclides. I think that our brother Sarapammon has informed you of the reason why I went down to Alexandria. I have already written to you about young Pausanias enlisting in a legion. As he no longer wished to serve in a legion but in an ala, I was obliged on learning of this to go and see him, even though I did not want to. So, after many entreaties from his mother and sister to get him transferred to Coptos, I went down to Alexandria and used many ways and means, until he was transferred to the ala at Coptos. Although I wanted to pay you a visit on the voyage up, we were limited by the leave granted to the lad by the Prefect, and for this reason I did not manage to visit you.'

Terentianus had spent some time, before reluctantly deciding to join the fleet, and his worst fears about life in that branch of the forces were soon realised. At much

¹¹³ Gilliam, *Historia* 14, 1965, 76, n. 6, shows that at Dura the evidence of the great rosters seems to suggest that they had been promoted from pedites. However, note P. Dura 89. i. 15, and n. 86 above, for two recruits who were experienced Arab camel-drivers (*Arabes agitare expertos*); BGU 696. i. 33 and ii. 10–12, for a dromedarius recruit joining cohort I Lusitanorum in A. D. 156.

¹¹⁴ E. Birley, *Roman Britain and the Roman Army* (1953) 133–153, esp. 148–149; id., *Alae and Cohortes Milliariae*, in: *Corolla Memoriae Erich Swoboda dedicata* (1966) 54–67, esp. 57–60, 61–64.

¹¹⁵ Pliny, *Ep.* VII 31; ILS 1418.

¹¹⁶ Veget., *Epit.* I 5, and above, n. 6. II 6: *Sciendum autem est in una legione decem cohortes esse debere. Sed prima cohors reliquas et numero militum et dignitate praecedat. Nam genere atque institutione litterarum viros electissimos quaerit. II 12: Decem cohortes habere diximus legionem. Sed prima erat milliaria, in qua censu genere litteris forma virtute pollentes milites mittebantur.*

¹¹⁷ Veget., *Epit.* II 3.

¹¹⁸ P. Oxy. 1666: ὡς εἰς λεγιῶνα στρατευσάμενον. – For στρατεύομαι, which seems to be the equivalent of *probari*, see P. Mich. 466 and n. 103 above, 478, and 514; BGU 1680; BGU 114 + P. Cattai and n. 47 above; P. Abin. 19.

the same time another son had decided not to enlist in the fleet, but his father proved more stubborn and less influential than Pausanias¹¹⁹:

'Sempronius to my son Gaius, many greetings and continued health and prosperity. First of all, I pray for your health. I heard from Tilis that he had persuaded you not to join the fleet. I spent two days grieving. In the future see that you are not persuaded like that, or I will disown you. You know that in all respects you are easily better and superior to your brothers. You will do well to enter a fine service. Do not neglect my words.'

The process whereby a potential officer wished to join the Roman army, was basically the same as for a private. There is abundant evidence to show that there were regulations about the age, character, physique, intelligence, and education that were required, and a man who did not meet these requirements, would be refused a commission¹²⁰. It is clear, that even when a provincial governor offered a commission to someone and this had been accepted, the potential officer had to undergo a probatio; this may have been carried out by the Emperor, as in the case of Vespasian and the prefecture granted to a dandy, or perhaps by *ab epistulis*. After Pliny had obtained the post of *tribunus angusticlavus* for Suetonius, the latter changed his mind, and was able to resign the commission before taking it up, because his name had not yet been entered on the records. The same technical term is used as for the ordinary recruits. Suetonius had thus passed part one of the process, but not as yet the second stage¹²¹. Letters of recommendation and influential contacts were just as important to a potential officer as to someone like Terentianus, as is well illustrated in the letters of Pliny¹²². The whole process of enlisting in the Roman army was complex and took quite some time. At every stage it was closely documented. A young man, who wished to enlist, would present himself at the recruiting centre. Most of them would prefer to join whichever branch of the armed services their qualifications could bring them the best opportunities and privileges. The young man would provide himself with all the necessary documents to prove his claims that he was eligible (*probatoria*)¹²³, and with the names of several people, who would give him good references. If he were wise, he would also obtain a letter of recommendation from a person, who could influence matters in his favour. If all his documents and character reports proved to be satisfactory, he would then be subjected to a stiff medical examination. If the recruit passed this, the governor would then approve him for military service and the recruit would be *probatus*. At this stage a dossier on each *tiro* would be opened at provincial headquarters, which would contain the records of the recruit's status, character, references, and medical reports, with the date that he was *probatus*, and the name of the governor, who had approved him. Appian states that an individual file was kept on each soldier, and that it contained reports on his character and health¹²⁴. Each recruit would then be given his *viaticum* and sent to a specific unit. The governor

¹¹⁹ *Class. Phil.* 22, 1927, 245–246, no. III.

¹²⁰ For requirements, e.g. SHA, *Hadr.* 10,6; Vegetius I 14; Juvenal, *Sat.* XIV 193–195; E. Birley, *Roman Britain and the Roman Army* (1953) 133–153. – For rejection, e.g. Suetonius, *Vesp.* 8,3; SHA, *Pert.* 1,5.

¹²¹ *Ep.* III 8: *neque enim adhuc nomen in numeros relatum est*; cf. *Enrollment* 209. – For *ab epistulis*, see n. 12 and 21 above; for the Emperor, Suetonius, *ib.*; *Journ. Rom. Stud.* 57, 1957, 9–19.

¹²² *Ep.* II 13; III 8; IV 4; VII 22; Birley *o. c.* 141.

¹²³ This technical term does not seem to be attested before the Later Roman Empire; Jones *o. c.* (note 20) 617, n. 20, citing *Cod. Just.* XII 25,17,472.

¹²⁴ Appian, *B. C.* III 43; cf. 45.

would send a letter with the recruits to the commander of their new unit. To the letter would be appended a list containing the names, ages, and any physical characteristics, which could be used to identify the men. The letter would also specify the precise date, from which their status was to be recorded. A copy of the list was, of course, kept at provincial headquarters, and additional copies were made in the records office of the unit, when the recruits arrived, as well as of the letter itself; presumably the original would be filed in the correspondence from the governor to the commander, and the copy would go into the records, and perhaps one to the section on accessions to the unit's strength. On the day the recruits reached their unit, their arrival would be noted in the *acta diurna*. The names, ages, distinguishing-marks, and heights, as well as any additional information, would be recorded, and a copy would be made of the actual instructions of the governor, and in particular the effective date. An individual file for each recruit would then be started, which would contain all the information entered in the *acta diurna* and the letter from the governor, who probably also forwarded a copy of the dossier kept at provincial headquarters. A list with the names and dates of the recruits would be drawn up, and this would be used to form several other documents¹²⁵. The recruits would be given an intensive course of basic training for at least four months. During this time the recruit would be given proficiency tests, the results of which would be entered on their files, with any other appropriate information, such as assessments of his character and stamina. At the end of four or more months of this basic training, if the recruit passed all his proficiency tests, he would then attend a passing-out parade, where he would receive the signaculum and be *signatus* and then be entered on the records of his unit as a fully-trained and qualified soldier, and henceforth would be treated as a *miles* legally and receive a private's pay. At this stage he would take the full military oath. So successful was the system for a human recruit joining the army, that the Roman authorities used a very similar process for the way the supply of cavalry horses were collected, examined, trained, and sent to the units¹²⁶.

There is one civilian writer, who studied the system of recruitment employed by the Romans. Aristides, the Greek orator, delivered a speech in honour of Rome in A. D. 143 or 144, in part of which he dealt with the recruitment to the army, and in particular the effect it had on the civilians¹²⁷:

'All are so far inferior to you in weapons, and are even further behind in the concept. On the one hand, you considered it unworthy of your Empire for those from the city to be enlisted and to suffer hardships and not to gain any enjoyment from the present prosperity, on the other hand you did not put your trust in alien mercenaries. But an army was wanted before the hour of crisis. What did you do? You found an army, and in this way did not cause the cities any bother. This possibility was

¹²⁵ Cf. P. Dura 121 (A. D. 241), a list of accessions by transfer to the cohort, which is very similar to the process given in CLA 215 and BGU 696; the phrase *relatus in numeros ex epistula Atti Rufini v c cos n* should be noted, and the name of the century, and the effective date, as well as the year of enlistment. Clearly a similar document concerning accessions by enlistment must have been kept, as is mentioned by Veget., *Epit.* I 26. Cf. also P. Dura 120 and 122.

¹²⁶ R. W. Davies, *The Supply of Animals to the Roman Army and the Remount System*. *Latomus* 28, 1969, 429–459; J. F. Gilliam, *Yale Class. Stud.* 11, 1950, 171–209. – Note that the terms *probatus*, *signatus*, the entering into the records, and the effective date, are all closely modelled on the human system.

¹²⁷ Aristides XXVI K 74–78. – On this work see J. H. Oliver, *Transact. Am. Phil. Soc. N. S.* 43, 4, 1953.

provided for you by the policy you have for the whole Empire: you classify no one as an alien, when you accept him for any employment, where he can do well and is then needed.

Who then were enlisted? What was the procedure? You went to every one of the provinces, and then examined who were to undertake this service. When you had found them, you released them from their native land and gave them your own city in exchange. Consequently, they actually became reluctant for the rest of their lives to call themselves by their original ethnics. Having made them fellow-citizens, you also made them soldiers, in such a way that those from the city are not enlisted, while those that do enlist, are in no way the less citizens. On the day they join the army, they lose their original city, but from the very same day become fellow-citizens of your city and its defenders.

In this way all follow and no city is disaffected. You ask from each only as many as would cause no inconvenience to the givers, and would not be enough to provide the individual city with a full quota of an army of its own. The result is that all the cities are well pleased with the dispatch of these men to be their own representatives, while each city has no local militia whatsoever, nor does it look for military protection to any other quarter than to you, because it is for this reason and no other, that those who went out from the cities, have been organised so well.

Furthermore, after selecting the most suitable men from every quarter, you had this extremely profitable idea: you thought that since those who are specially selected for their excellent innate ability and physical superiority, must undergo exercises for the festivals and prize contests, then those who would be contenders in the greatest engagements of real war and victors in as many victories as one might chance to win on behalf of such an Empire, these people, I say, you thought ought not to come together only in a crisis. You thought that these men, selected from the strongest and especially from the most suitable from the whole world, ought to be trained, so that they might be superior, the moment they took their stand.

These men, then, after you have eliminated the morally and socially unsuitable, you introduced into the community of the ruling nation, not without the privileges I have mentioned, nor in such a way that they would rather envy those who stay in the city, because they themselves did not have equal rights as originally, but in such a way, that they would consider their share in the citizenship as an honour. When you had found and treated them in this way, you posted them on the frontiers of the Empire, where you stationed them at intervals and assigned them areas to guard, some to some, others to others.'

Although Aristides is delivering an eulogy and may be prone to a certain amount of exaggerating in favour of Rome, all the other evidence shows that his account is substantially correct. Aristides confirms that the Roman recruiting-authorities went to considerable trouble to acquire the best possible talent available throughout the Empire: there were quotas for the various cities; the selection was vigorous, and was based on a careful examination of the physique, stamina, ability, and character of the recruit, and ones who did not meet all these stringent requirements, were rejected; if a man passed all these requirements and was selected, he received his military training, and if he passed this, he was posted to a unit. Aristides is quite clearly referring to the two stages, the *probatio* and the *signatio* and entering on the records

of the new unit. He also notes that great importance was placed on the status of the man joining the army and to the effective date; he also appears to mention the official name, by which the soldier was known, when he was put on the records of his unit. Throughout his description Aristides stresses that the system of enlistment was most equitable both for the man who joined up as a recruit, and equally for the man who wished to remain a civilian.

It only remains to ask, why so many men chose to serve in the Roman forces. Clearly, as most of them were in fact volunteers, the vast majority of them must have found the prospect of serving for a quarter of a century a not unpalatable thought, and service conditions must have been reasonably attractive. The prospect that a young man could envisage a military career providing, must have lain somewhere between the two extremes of view held by Claudius Terentianus and Juvenal. The former joined to avoid being classed as a runaway slave by his father and saw nothing but misery in store; the latter devoted the whole of his last remaining work to the *praemia militiae* a recruit could expect, and held out the prospects that no civilian would dare to strike him but that he could beat up a civilian with impunity, he could avoid all the delays of the law courts, make a will while his father was alive, and be a man of great wealth. Initiative and ability were quickly recognised and rewarded: Terentianus got his transfer, became a legionary, and on his discharge was referred to as 'a man of means'; Hadrian told the disappointed recruit, whose physique did not meet the required standard, that if he showed promise, he could be promoted in his third year of service; Juvenal says that hard work well done would bring the recruit promotion and rewards¹²⁸. Conditions in the army in the third century must have been as good as in civilian life and the prospects were probably far better, as a woman, writing home from Alexandria to her mother, said¹²⁹:

'And if Aio wishes to join the army, let him come, for everybody is in the army.'

Aristides felt that the organisation of the Roman army and its system of recruitment was perfect¹³⁰:

'So too, concerning your military system, one is justified in thinking and stating this fact: for as long as man cannot move the earth itself from its foundations and leave a vacuum on its departure, for as long as the civilised world itself must remain in its place, then it is impossible for your military bodies to fail you, but from the four corners of the earth all your needs are supplied.'

In his discussion on the organisational skills of the Roman army and the system of joining the Roman armed services, he asks a question, which to him was rhetorical in more ways than one¹³¹:

'Surely this rises beyond all mortal powers of organisation?'

¹²⁸ Juvenal, Sat. XVI 56–57: *Hunc labor aequus provehit et pulchro reddit sua dona labori*. – For Terentianus, see above, n. 54–56; for Hadrian, see above, n. 13.

¹²⁹ BGU 1680.

¹³⁰ XXVI K 86.

¹³¹ XXVI K 88; cf. 72b.