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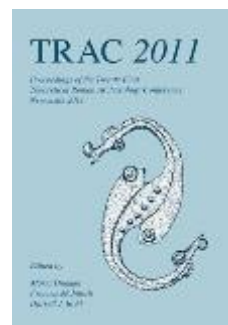
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Batavians on the Move: Emigrants, Immigrants and Returnees

Carol van Driel-Murray

Scholars of the Roman army have always been acutely aware of the continuous displacement experienced by military personnel. Tombstones, inscriptions and diplomas record the career mobility of officers, who changed stations every two to four years, accompanied by their families and households. Such transfers undoubtedly formed an important conduit for the spread of knowledge concerning lifestyle, fashion and the material expression of appropriate behaviour to far-flung provinces. During campaigns whole armies criss-crossed the Empire, leaving individuals stranded in unlikely stations. Fifty years ago, Professor Jules Bogaers charted the movements of the Legio X Gemina zigzagging between Spain, Carnuntum, Nijmegen and Vienna (Bogaers 1960/61: Fig. 5), journeys which help explain the appalling mortality amongst young recruits which coloured Saller and Shaw's grim view of soldiers' personal lives (Saller and Shaw 1984). Similar demographic effects are recorded in the early deaths of the Batavian lifeguard in Rome, but rather than illustrating a 'lack of family life' such monuments bear witness to the high mortality following forced marches and transfers to new environments (Bellen 1981).

Auxiliary units were equally mobile. Maarten de Weerd (2006) has shown that the Batavian units operated outside the lower Rhineland almost continuously throughout the first century. Britain was their arena for much of the later first century, but by the time of Trajan most had been deployed along the Danube and in Dacia. From this point on, the conventional view is that replacements would be found locally and the ethnic character of the Batavian units would gradually wither. Conversely, forts along the Rhine would be expected to draw increasingly on recruits from the surrounding tribes. The concept of 'local recruitment' has achieved almost universal acceptance and is the basis for many of our ideas concerning military deployment, strategy and demography. But is it true?

Here I will attempt a reconsideration of the 'local recruitment' thesis in particular with regard to the Batavian units. These are especially well studied, and though I believe a wider case can be made for continuing ethnic recruitment, with the regular transfer of men—and indeed women—to distant garrisons, it may be that this particular tribe is exceptional. In an impressive analysis of the epigraphic evidence for the development of Batavian concepts of ethnic identity and the motivation leading to its public display, Ton Derks (2009: 262) argues convincingly that the neighbouring tribes—Cugerni, Ubii and even the Treveri—did indeed lose their tribal consciousness by the end of the first century, and this may in fact also be true of the *Cohors I Batavorum* which remained in Britain.

Local recruitment?

The travels of a single Batavian family are illustrative: in A.D. 113 the Batavian M. Ulpius Fronto was discharged from the milliary *Cohors I Batavorum*, then stationed in Pannonia

Superior. His wife Mattua, also a Batavian, and their three daughters, Vagatra, Sureia and Sata are recorded on his diploma (RMD 2.86). With three children to her name, Mattua must have joined her husband no later than 107: it is, however, not inconceivable that they had been together long before. The diploma itself was discarded some 60 years later in Regensburg, implying further mobility for the women in this particular family and a forceful reminder that diplomas continued to be relevant to descendants of veterans. These were not the only Batavian women to make the journey eastwards (cf. Derks 2004: table B and E; 2009: 249). Both Procula in the early second century and Romana in the early third century set out, though from their names alone we might not have suspected Batavian origins. Procula, who died aged 26, is specified as ‘Batava,’ while Romana was born in Noviomagus/Nijmegen. She was the wife of [...]us Severus, *praefect* of *Cohors III Batavorum*, and presumably a Batavian himself (Bogaers 1960/61: 283; Haalebos 1999: 199). Batavian units, were, therefore, apparently maintaining links with the original tribal recruiting area into the third century, and were also seeking wives from the home region. Significantly, at the garrison towns the origin is only recorded for the women, thus inadvertently providing a clue to the origin of their menfolk. Soldiers do not need to specify their tribal affiliation, for it is self evident in the title of the unit in which they served and only exceptions would need to identify themselves as different. It is certainly no coincidence that most of the Batavian soldiers known by name from tombstones were either serving in other units, or died far away from their garrisons (e.g. *Ala Hispaniorum*, CIL III, 3681; *Ala Augusta Ituraeorum* CIL III, 4368, or Celerinius Fidelis who died in Lyon, CIL XIII, 1847) and the useful lists of individual soldiers compiled by Spaul confirm this tendency more generally (1994: 2000). The appearance of ‘foreigners’ in national units cannot therefore be taken as evidence for the end of ethnic recruitment. Far from recording the gradual erosion of national units, such inscriptions often attest to a continuing ideal of ethnic recruitment, even if numbers had to be made up from other sources when expedient. Obviously, certain units—like the Batavians—may have clung to their national identity more fiercely than others, and there is clearly a great need to focus on the experience of individual units from other regions of the Empire (cf. Ivleva 2011)

At Vindolanda the names of individual men provide a link with soldiers serving in the Imperial Guard two to three generations previously (Birley 2001; Van Driel-Murray 2003: 210), while the fact that a legionary of the *II Parthica* was keen to emphasise that his eight month old son was ‘Batavian born’ as late as 244 (CIL III 14403a, from Cnidus) further reinforces the consciousness of long family traditions of military service within the Batavian community. In this particular case, the name—T. Fl(avius) Maritimus—suggests a very long tradition indeed. This could not be maintained without continuing ties with the homeland communities and some care in the choice of marriage partners.

The actual origin of men becomes increasingly difficult to establish as Roman nomenclature becomes widespread, and soldiers are absorbed into military communities where clothing, equipment and diet are conditioned by army provisioning systems rather than personal choice. But when dependents are fully integrated into the discussion, a rather different picture emerges. As has been argued elsewhere, soldier’s families, in particular the womenfolk, preserve regional traditions in dress, food preparation and presentation. Focussing on women reveals a far more complex situation, with women participating in the mobility of their menfolk and contributing to the formation of expatriate identities (Van Driel-Murray 2009).

In general it would seem that female attributes are more likely to preserve ethnic identity abroad: items of dress, pottery, modes of food preparation. From this perspective, awkward

local copies of fibulae or pottery take on a particular importance since they reflect the importance placed by individuals on such modes of expression. To mention but a few examples: copies of Pannonian fibulae and dress accessories at Velsen and other Rhineland forts (Haalebos 1986: 61), Germanic stemmed cups and distinctive footwear bear witness to the long-term presence of Germanic troops at Birdoswald and the Saalburg (Van Driel-Murray 2009), while Vivien Swann has identified a whole industry in Britain copying North African casseroles and Gallic tripods which can be associated with movements of people from these regions (Swan 2009). Her concept of ‘cuisine’ to denote a complex of eating and preparation habits opens new perspective on the potential of pottery (and other small finds) to characterize distinct areas where such groups settled, such as the promontory at Birdoswald where the Frisian pottery is concentrated. In contrast, at the Saalburg, Germanic attributes are scattered throughout the *vicus* area (Moneta 2010: Taf. 89), and such differences in location may well reflect the value placed on distinct tribal identities by both these communities themselves and the military apparatus under which they served. The evidence for the source of recruits lies in the settlements surrounding the forts, but because ‘local recruitment’ has become such a fixed assumption, much of the diversity within military communities is being overlooked.

Veterans and Returnees

‘Diaspora’ is an emotive term, resonating with yearning for a lost homeland and by implication is one-way. I would prefer ‘mobility’ as a more neutral term, particularly as the return home was a distinct possibility for some of the soldiers. The continuance of ethnic recruitment can, therefore also be approached from the perspective of those who returned to their native country and their legacy in the archaeological record. Any assessment of the number of recruits from the Rhine delta required to stock the Batavian and Cananefatian units and the numbers of veteran survivors can be disputed, but for the sake of argument, the following gives an indication of the annual toll that the Roman army might have exacted:

	Recruits	Veterans
Batavians	260–80	125
Cananefatians	24	12

Even if only 50 men returned home to the Lower Rhine this still represents a steady influx of Roman citizens throughout the first and second centuries. Never the less, life in the Rhine delta region seems to be remarkably unaffected. It may be that citizenship was not as life-enhancing as we have come to believe, and in a traditional, poorly urbanised region, may have been regarded more as a hindrance to social intercourse with non-citizen kin. Ideas of veterans changing the face of society seem unrealistically rosy and are certainly not substantiated in the archaeological record of the Rhine delta (Derks and Roymans 2002; Van Driel-Murray 2008). We must also remember that, by contemporary standards, many must have been old and ill anyway). Neither are such profound effects noticeable amongst more recent examples of ethnic soldiering, such as Gurkha communities, or the homelands of Scottish regiments. On the other hand, the lack of material expression of changing status is perhaps predictable when tribal identity is so strongly related to military service. The close bonds of mutual support and loyalty in soldiering communities such as the Gurkhas are reflected in an egalitarian ethos, with elaborate ceremonies of redistribution rather than individual displays of wealth (Van

Driel-Murray 2003: 208–9). This restraint may be seen in the continuing tradition of wooden longhouses: building stone villas was either not possible or socially not acceptable. Within this tradition, Wouter Vos has drawn attention to the appearance of a distinctive type of house, which is embellished with an additional veranda (Vos 2009: 248–51). He seeks the inspiration for this feature in military architecture, in particular the typical porticos in front of barrack blocks. Whether veterans are indeed harking back to the happiest years of their lives, and whether it is correct to refer to these constructions with the value-laden term ‘veteran farmsteads’ is another matter: nevertheless, this is an intriguing case of worldly success having to conform to an anti-elitist tradition, which again finds parallels in Gurkha ideology. To avoid social disapproval success cannot be overtly displayed, and a wooden veranda may have been the limit of the acceptable. This is not ‘resistance’ but an adherence to a moral code formed by service in the Roman army. In such societies the distribution of foodstuffs and textiles at important events such as marriages, funerals and homecomings also structures mutual dependency, and though these are pretty well invisible to the archaeologist, the contrast between the wide availability of fibulae in settlements and their virtual absence in the burial rite, reinforces this egalitarian tradition (Stijn Heeren, study in preparation).

A number of recent studies of the Batavian homeland have drawn on the idea of returning veterans to explain other distinctive features of communities in the Rhine Delta. Chief of these is the deposition of military equipment and horse gear both in rural settlements and in rural shrines such as Empel, a practice that goes back to riverine deposition during the later Iron Age (Nicolay 2007; Roymans 2004: 108–111). Though slightly less visible after the first century, the practice is maintained till the destruction of the temple in the early third century. Amongst the latest offerings are some spectacular and highly specific Germanic shield fittings, originating from Central/Eastern Europe (Nicolay 2007: 120–24, pls 12–13). Since this is the very region in which Batavian units were stationed, it is possible that such exotics were trophies brought back by veterans and displayed as thank offerings in their tribal sanctuary. The implication is, once more, that men were still being sent out to join their national units, and some of them at least, were able to return home after 25 years service.

Another category of metalwork which has been discussed in relation to returning veterans are seal-boxes as evidence for written communication, but items such as the large number of male finger rings, and keys suggestive of personal possessions of value, may also hint at different lifestyles adopted by veterans and families with military connections (Derks and Roymans 2002; Heeren 2009: fig. 64 and 72; Wesselingh 2000: fig. 219). Although a good case can be made for continuing deployment to units in Eastern Europe, two serious objections may be raised. Firstly, it is unclear how representative the distribution of metal work is. Find circumstances and the legal attitude to metal detection differ greatly in the regions to the west and east of the central river area, and the survey results do need replicating in other regions where heavy recruitment is suspected. Equally, if porticos do hark back to barrack construction, we would expect similar structural manifestations in other provinces. More seriously, the pattern of distribution and the types of metalwork concerned could well be interpreted as evidence for the billeting of soldiers on the rural population, a practice which would have had the same depressing effects on the economy as the loss of manpower to recruitment (Van Driel-Murray 2008).

Local stations?

That recruitment is a factor in the control of potentially unruly populations was clearly recognised by the Romans themselves and though the tax on Batavian manpower was cast in honourable terms as a 'special relationship,' we need have no doubts as to the unequal relationship of the contract, nor its actual effects. Virtually every household in the Rhine delta lost at least one male member to the Roman army. Conversely, this drain probably supported a degree of peace and prosperity that would not otherwise have been possible in the old tribal situation. Continued national recruitment probably reflected lingering uncertainty as to the stability of the region, and it is surely telling that the troops occupying the Rhineland forts were drawn from other regions with a similar lack of economic and social perspective for an increasing population.

Given the assumption of 'local recruitment' it is significant that local tribesmen hardly show up in the forts along the Rhine frontier. Indeed, locally produced pottery is virtually absent from military sites, despite its ubiquity everywhere else (Collins, Van Enckevort and Hendriks 2009). Not only were local men not entering the garrisons, but local women were not apparently being sought as marriage partners by the soldiers manning the forts: in many respects these forts seem to be curiously isolated from the hinterland. The occasional name 'Batavos' scratched on a pottery vessel does not suggest otherwise, for such a name could hardly be used amongst compatriots (Derks 2004: table E). The national units stationed here were drawn mainly from Gaul, Hispania and the Danube/Balkan area, with one British unit (Polak 2009: fig.3; Weerd 2006). Very little work has been undertaken on forts in this region with ideas of diversity in mind, but there are some signs that in the case of Thracians, national recruitment continued. The spectacular *bustum* cremation ritual is strongly correlated with the arrival of units from Thrace and Pannonia, and was used throughout the second century, and not only for men, but also women and children (Smits 2006:184). Whether this is a statement by new arrivals or the construction of an expatriate identity over the generations by leading families is unknown, but it does seem that there was a continual flow of recruits from the Balkan region. Both Margaret Roxan and John Mann have previously drawn attention to the tendency of Thracian soldiers to return home on retirement, and this is but another aspect of this mobility (Roxan 1997: 487; Mann 2002: 184). The lack of much obviously 'foreign' material perhaps reinforces the scale of the movement, with a high degree of personal mobility resulting in a homogenous material culture.

Ex-patriot communities

Considering the complexity of ex-pat identities in colonial situations, this is an aspect that clearly demands attention. These people re-create their homeland, or specific elements from it, in a new environment, not necessarily as a complete or even consistent package. Returning to Fronto: both he and his wife were officially Batavians, but how would the daughters view themselves? As Roman citizens, or as Batavians of pure blood? Were they sought-after partners for Batavian men serving in Dacia or stationed in the Danube forts? And is this why the diploma turned up in Regensburg? This was a legionary fortress with associated auxiliary camp, and also near Passau, the station of the *Coh. IX Batavorum*. Such ex-pat families would give a misleading impression of 'local recruitment,' though to all intents and purposes, the tribal character was in fact being maintained. Such derived communities may have become increasingly important for recruitment purposes by the end of the second century. A curious

group of inscriptions record no fewer than four officers of Batavian units in Pannonia and Dacia who had ties to *Noviomagus/Nijmegen* (Derks 2004: table E). These men possibly wanted to emphasise their aristocratic, urban origins, but it is more likely that the mere fact of an authentic link to a now almost mythical homeland is the point at issue. By the beginning of the third century an unmistakable decline in population had set in throughout *Germania Inferior*, a demographic crisis I have elsewhere associated with changes in recruiting practice (Van Driel-Murray 2008). Without additional evidence for the station provinces, it is difficult to assess the relationship between population decline at home and a greater role for the ex-pat communities surrounding the garrisons, but the continuing evidence for officers drawn from the *civitas* capital could be seen as good strategic policy, reinforcing traditional command structures while masking greater diversity in the unit itself.

Conclusion

Extreme mobility was part of the life experience for tribes exploited for military service and not only men were affected. This mobility can be traced into the third century, and was neither one-way nor irreversible. To maintain the family links essential for units concerned to preserve their ethnic character, systems of leave must have been in place, and journeys, perhaps in conjunction with regular recruitment drives (as is attested for both Gurkhas and Sepoys in the British army) must have been possible. However, the Roman army was a highly flexible institution, and there is no standard template: though some units evidently lost their regional character, others clung tenaciously to their regional identity. Whether this was a result of deliberate Roman policy or due to social and economic structures within these tribes can only be resolved by a closer focus on individual national units and their histories. The frontier zone was one of intense mobility, not only of the military units themselves, but also of the civilian dependents of the forces. We must expect to find diversity in these communities, diversity best represented through the archaeological record. As far as this is concerned, the potential of detailed study of finds such as pottery and fibulae in the settlements surrounding the forts has still to be tapped.

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