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"Systems of Reward in  
Relation to Military Diplomas

the fact that they were awarded not by the general in command but by the man's comrades puts them into the category of unofficial presents not official *dona militaria*. The one clear association that we do have between a citizenship grant and the award of *dona* dates many years earlier, to the last century of the Republic and the block grant made in 89 BC to the men of the *turma Salluitana*<sup>38</sup>. There is no imperial parallel.

Thus we return to the basic point that, as a general rule, formal military decorations were not awarded to individual auxiliaries. Instead the units in which they served received block awards, battle-honours commemorated in the epithets *torquata* and *armillata*. It is a distinction which appears to have been first awarded by Vespasian, its introduction coinciding, in all probability, with the complete phasing out of individual awards to non-citizens. Six *alae* and six cohorts are known to have been distinguished in this way, half of them on two occasions, one on three or four. We thus have evidence for the use of this award just twenty or twenty-one times<sup>39</sup>. It is a much rarer distinction than the major battle-honour borne by something like a sixth of all auxiliary units, that of *civium Romanorum*.

The use of Roman citizenship as an individual or collective reward for those who fought for, or in other ways collaborated with Rome is well attested in Republic and Empire, in peace and in war. Its not infrequent use as a reward for valour in battle within the period of the Empire, has its republican precedents, notably in the case of the award referred to above, which was made in 89 BC to cavalymen serving during the Social War in the *turma Salluitana*: the award was made to the men in camp at Asculum, *virtutis causa*<sup>40</sup>. Within the Principate the practice of making block awards of citizenship to auxiliary units is first attested with any frequency in the Flavian period and its introduction has been attributed to Vespasian<sup>41</sup>. There is, however, reason to believe that the practice goes back somewhat further, and significantly, and not coincidentally, to the principate of Claudius<sup>42</sup>. These block awards are clearly and uncontroversially, battle-honours. Their

<sup>38</sup> See below.

<sup>39</sup> V. A. Maxfield, *The Military Decorations* (cf. n. 34), 220–226.

<sup>40</sup> ILS 8888 = ILLRP 515.

<sup>41</sup> P. Holder, *The Roman Army in Britain*, London 1983, 22.

<sup>42</sup> V. A. Maxfield, *The Military Decorations* (cf. n. 34), 231–232, following B. Dobson and J. C. Mann, *Britannia* 4, 1973, 198 and fn. 34.

practical effect as far as the soldiers serving at the time of the award in the units so honoured were concerned, appears to have been to give citizenship, then and there, to all members of the unit (or possibly, more narrowly, just to those soldiers who had taken part in the encounter in which the honour was won). It is a grant of this sort which is commemorated by the special diploma of AD 110, recording a grant made in 106 at the end of the second Dacian war, awarded to one M. Ulpius Novantico, a *pedes* serving in the *cohors I Brittonum milliaria Ulpia torquata pia fidelis civium Romanorum*. The citation for the award which was made at Darnithitis (in Dacia) is specific: *pie et fideliter expeditione Dacica functis ante emerita stipendia civitatem Romanam dedit*<sup>43</sup>. Two points need emphasis. The award, which was purely one of Roman citizenship, was made to a serving soldier *ante emerita stipendia*, and it was made at a time not far separated from the deed it rewards – in its timing it parallels the practice in relation to *dona militaria* where two major contexts emerge for the award of decorations: very soon after a battle or at the triumph<sup>44</sup>. Quite why Novantico's proof of citizenship was four years in coming we cannot know: it may be, for example, that the soldier had no need to acquire the certificate until he left the army, left it perhaps before his twenty-five years were up, without *honesta missio* and therefore without the "normal" diploma. A comrade of Novantico, one M. Ulpius Longinus, did complete his statutory term of service and in July 110 received a diploma of a standard type, recording grants of citizenship and *conubium*<sup>45</sup>. His names, however, betray the fact that he was already a citizen, his citizenship granted four years previously at Darnithitis in 106, *ob virtutem* and *ante emerita stipendia*. An analogous case to that of Longinus is M. Ulpius Fronto, discharged in AD 113 from the *cohors I Batavorum milliaria civium Romanorum*<sup>46</sup>. This is the first and only inscription to record this unit as *c. R.* There can be little doubt that this unit distinguished itself and Fronto received his citizenship in Trajan's Danubian campaigns, at latest therefore in AD 106. Similarly [M. U]lpus Landionis f., a soldier recorded on a fragmentary diploma from Românași, which dates, on the evidence of its witness list, to the

<sup>43</sup> CIL XVI 160.

<sup>44</sup> V. A. Maxfield, *The Military Decorations* (cf. n. 34); 132–134.

<sup>45</sup> CIL XVI 163.

<sup>46</sup> RMD II 86.

early years of Hadrian's reign<sup>47</sup>. P. Holder has suggested that this man was the recipient of a *viritim* grant of citizenship<sup>48</sup>, but if M. M. Roxan is correct in identifying the *cohors I Hispanorum* at Românași as the *cohors I Flavia Ulpia Hispanorum equitata civium Romanorum*<sup>49</sup>, a unit which distinguished itself under Trajan, this fourth M. Ulpius's citizenship award falls into place as the product of a block award *ob virtutem*. Three out of the four M. Ulpis completed their term of service, receiving their *honesta missio* a varying number of years after the conclusion of the Dacian Wars. Longinus's discharge and diploma fall some four years after his distinguished service, Fronto's seven years later, that of Landio's son something between twelve and sixteen years later. The significance of these time lapses for the understanding of the nature of diploma grants is discussed below. The grants of Roman citizenship to these men of I Brittonum, I Batavorum and I Hispanorum were clearly made *ante emerita stipendia*, quite closely associated in time with the deeds they commemorate. So too was the award made in AD 71 to one group of men who served in a fleet. The men were given the standard grants of citizenship and *conubium*, but they received it *ante emerita stipendia quod se in expeditione belli fortiter industrieque gesserant*<sup>50</sup>. The special diploma which attests this grant is of particular interest because it records, on the one document, two different categories of recipient: firstly time-expired soldiers, *qui sena et [vice]na stipendia aut plura meruissent*; secondly the serving soldiers who had not completed their twenty-six years, whose award is explicitly linked, as indicated, to their wartime service. If the grants of *civitas* and *conubium* attested in the normal diplomas were associated with war-time service, what need to make it explicit in this case?

The distinction stressed here between grants on completion of term and those made *ante emerita stipendia* is significant, for it raises a crucial issue in relation to the interpretation of standard diplomas as recording *ob virtutem* awards. The special block awards of citizenship to units presumably gave citizenship to participating peregrine soldiers regardless of age and length of service; this was only just, for it

<sup>47</sup> RMD I 20, c. AD 118/122.

<sup>48</sup> P. Holder, *The Auxilia from Augustus to Trajan*, Oxford 1980, 30 no. 11.

<sup>49</sup> M. M. Roxan, in: *Epigr. Stud.* 9, Bonn 1972, 247–250.

<sup>50</sup> CIL XVI 17. The identification of the fleet in question is disputed, but since it is not critical in the present context the issue is not discussed here.

was the unit as an entity which was being honoured, and is in accord with the evidence provided by the M. Ulpian considered above, who had a further four, seven and at least twelve years to serve before discharge. By contrast the standard diploma award was made only to those who had completed their statutory term of service; thus, if one is to assume that the grant follows fairly closely on what Dušanić has termed the "qualifying event" it follows that only old soldiers were rewarded; vigorous experienced warriors, men in their prime, were denied their reward because they still had another five, ten, fifteen years to serve? Either this or the date of the receipt of the diploma must be divorced from the "qualifying event" – an auxiliary soldier who distinguished himself after ten years service receiving his reward a minimum of fifteen years later, a man with twenty years service waiting at least five and so on. Neither scenario is very compelling; neither in its own way is at all compatible with what we know of patterns of reward in the Roman army. One of the fundamental characteristics of the systems of reward is that they were equitable; that is not to say that equal treatment was given to all – it most certainly was not – but that equal treatment was given to equal people within like groups. Discrimination might be made in line with legal and social status and with rank, for these things mattered in a highly stratified society; *liberti* could not receive the same rewards as *ingenui*<sup>51</sup> nor *peregrini* those appropriate to *cives Romani*. The legionary felt himself badly done by when compared with the praetorian; neither could aspire to the rewards appropriate to the senatorial class. Even the absence of moral fibre might be deemed an appropriate reason for denying a soldier a chance to win military distinction (as happened to the unfortunate survivors of the battle of Cannae)<sup>52</sup>. All this is justifiable under the Roman social code. To discriminate because of a man's age is hardly acceptable. The alternative, that a soldier might have to wait for years, even decades before receiving the rewards for his valour is equally out of keeping with what we know of the normal close temporal relationship between deed and recompense, as witnessed for example in the citizenship grants *apud Asculum* and at Darnithitis. In any case this latter view, divorcing "qualifying event" from diploma date, immediately invalidates the bulk of the evidence on which the

<sup>51</sup> Val. Max. 8, 14, 5.

<sup>52</sup> Livy 25, 7, 4; Val. Max. 2, 7, 15.

*ob virtutem* hypothesis is based. The interpretation of the normal diploma grants as being rewards for valour thus creates serious difficulties in the case of the M. Ulpian. The citizenship grant to the soldiers themselves is, in each case, divorced by several years (in the case of Landio's son as much as sixteen) from their discharge and receipt of a normal diploma recording the grants of *conubium* and citizenship for their children. Either the soldiers are receiving bi-partite grants for the same deeds (performed in Dacia), in which case there is no close temporal relationship between "qualifying event" and award of diploma, or a further separate "qualifying event" must be found, subsequent to that which merited the soldiers' citizenship grants and close in date to their completion of service and receipt of diploma grants.

The notion that only a time-expired soldier can qualify for reward contains within it the seed of its own undoing, for it throws the stress away from the "qualifying event" on to the number of years served. If the qualifying event were of primary importance the length of service would be of lesser significance. This conflicts with the primary evidence of the diploma formulae. In the case of the normal auxiliary and fleet diplomas, the bronzes state, clearly and unequivocally that they are awarded to those who have completed twenty-five (or in the case of the fleets, twenty-six) or more years of service. It is completion of service which is stressed as it is in the case of the references made to the bronzes in the epikrisis documents<sup>53</sup>: no mention whatever is made of particular war-time services. It would seem extraordinarily perverse of Roman officialdom if all these documents were designed to say one thing but to mean another, regularly to make explicit the normal, unchanging factor, but to leave unspoken, hidden, the factor which will be different in every case, that is the "qualifying event". The more so in view of the fact that diploma formulae could be, and were, amended to suit individual circumstances: it is not a matter of standard forms and formulations: they could be (and as legal documents were bound to be) very precise in their wording.

The traditional view of the military diploma as a reward for service fits well with the overall pattern of reward in the Roman army, with the trend which saw the exclusively war-time awards of the part-time, non-professional Republican army adjusted to the circumstances of a full-time professional army. Citizen soldiers were rewarded for their

<sup>53</sup> Cf. CIL XVI App. 6 = BGU III 780.

service in peace as well as in war; in addition to *dona militaria*, awarded for valour, land grants or gratuities on discharge eased the transition back to civilian life, while periodic donatives came their way during service. The non-citizen units shared in none of this. Block awards *ob virtutem* acknowledged their contribution in wartime, but what recognition was made of their twenty-five or twenty-six years of peacetime soldiering? The grant which gave Roman citizenship to the soldier himself and added citizenship for his heirs and the *conubium* which legitimized them, would seem to be a most appropriate reward for a man who had spent a quarter-century or more protecting Rome's empire and absorbing her mores. In this context it is relevant to note the special wording of the diploma of AD 93 recording a grant made to soldiers serving in two cohorts in Dalmatia<sup>54</sup>. The second of the two cohorts is the *cohors VIII Voluntariorum civium Romanorum*, a unit normally recruited from Roman citizens. The wording of a standard grant is prefaced by the statement that the award is made to those: *qui peregrinae condicionis probati erant*. The normal citizen recruits are thus specifically excluded from the grant: they, as citizen members of a citizen cohort, were eligible for other rewards to which their peregrine fellows did not have access<sup>55</sup>.

What then of the appropriateness of an *ob virtutem* grant of *conubium* to the citizen soldiers of the Rome cohorts? While the praetorians certainly had plenty of opportunity to distinguish themselves in battle, the same is hardly true of the urbanicians, particularly in view of the fact that with one exception it is men from the four Rome-based cohorts who received the diploma grants<sup>56</sup>. The praetorians were far and away the most favoured of Rome's soldiers: they enjoyed the shortest term of service in the most civilized and comfortable station; they received the highest pay and the most generous and frequent donatives. As far as wartime rewards were concerned they were eligible to receive military decorations and won them in numbers out of all proportion to their overall size – as the emperor's bodyguard they were in the best position for their exploits to be seen and reported. Why should the valour of such a group of men be rewarded with the right to contract a legal marriage with a woman of non-Roman

<sup>54</sup> CIL XVI 38.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Tac., Ann. 1, 8.

<sup>56</sup> The one exception is coh. XIII *qu(a)estio Lugduni*, on a diploma of AD 192, CIL XVI 133.

(peregrine or Latin) status? What need had the bulk of praetorian or urban soldiers for such a grant, when their prolonged sojourn in Rome would ensure that much the greater majority of them married Roman women? The most satisfactory explanation for this grant is that adduced by M. M. Roxan who has drawn attention to the fact that a grossly disproportionate number of praetorian and urban diplomas belong to soldiers who originated in and/or retired to places outside Italy<sup>57</sup>. Remarkably few of the diplomas derive from Rome; of the two that do, one belonged to a soldier of unknown origin, the other to a man from Spain<sup>58</sup>. There is clearly a bias in these figures, and the bias is towards soldiers who, for one reason or another, may have had actual need of the grant of *conubium* because they had already contracted a union with a non-Roman woman or had prospects of so doing.

Such then are some of the general considerations underlying the systems of reward to which the military diploma belongs. The context is clearly one in which rewards came to those who served *pice et fideliter*, in peace as well as in war, in which the recompense for lengthy military service has to be there for *all* soldiers; the man who signs up for a quarter century of service cannot know whether that period will be one of unbroken peace, prolonged war or a combination of the two; he needs to know that half a life-time in the service of Rome will bring some reward, whether or not he raises his sword against anything other than the practice-pole. In this he contrasts markedly with the warrior of the Republic who was called to arms only when Rome was going to war. The acknowledgement on the auxiliary diploma of twenty-five or more years soldiering sums up the essence of imperial military service – twenty-five years come what may.

<sup>57</sup> M. M. Roxan, The Distribution of Roman Military Diplomas, Epigr. Stud. 12, Köln-Bonn 1981, 265–286 esp. 269–273 and Fig. 2.

<sup>58</sup> CIL XVI 25, AD 72: origo Clunia; CIL XVI 140, AD 222: origin unknown.

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