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The Cult of the Genii in the Roman Army and a New Military Deity

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*Genium dicebant antiqui naturalem deum
uniuscuiusque loci vel rei vel hominis.*

Servius, ad Georg. I, 302

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I. The Cult of the Genii in the Roman army

A deeply religious people, the Romans attributed their dominion over the world to their piety and care for the gods. The most Roman of these, and some of the most widely worshipped ones, were not so much the anthropomorphic Olympian gods of Greece or the fanciful gods of the Orient, prominent as they were, but the multitude of the more shapeless powers and spirits that held in their care every action and event, every person and every place. To these belong the Genii. Their cult was overwhelmingly popular, — yet when measured against its popularity it constitutes one of the least investigated and least understood aspects of Roman religion. Hence it may be of some interest to discuss here this cult of the Genii in

the Roman army and at the same time to publish a new altar from the legionary fortress of Novae, dedicated to the as yet unknown *Genius armamentarii*.

The origins of the cult of the Genii are shrouded in the mist of time, but there is no doubt that the Genii are one of the oldest features of Roman religion, related to the words *gignere* and *gens*. Whether it represents the divine embodiment of a man's power to beget, or whether it is the spirit that begat a person, is disputed¹. In its enlarged sense it stands for the sum of one's vitality, energy, and capability of enjoyment, in short for his personality and his higher, inner self. As such, the Genii of the *pater familias* was worshipped in the households as long as there remained a trace of religious freedom in the empire, i. e. down to the reign of Theodosius².

From this private sphere of the family the cult of the Genii expanded to wider groups of people: corporations and communities recognized and worshipped their Genii. The largest of all communities, the people of Rome, offered public sacrifices to the *Genius populi Romani* by 218 B.C. So much fascination accrued to this Genii that it still served as one of the banners of the old religion in its spirited fight against the deadly intolerance of Christianity, witness Aurelian's building of a temple to the *Genius p.R.* and the long series of coins of the later third century A.D. bearing the likeness of the Genii of the people of Rome.

A new major cult of the Genii in the public sphere emerged with the establishment of the Empire. The *Genius Imperatoris* or *Genius Augusti* was the key vehicle of emperor-worship, the religious acknowledgement of the imperial order. In this, the army was definitely to the fore — its monuments to the Genii of the Emperors are so numerous that they reflect a particular attachment of the army to their supreme commanders, even if one allows for the unusually rich documentation from the army camps³.

Still more numerous are the specifically military Genii. Even though worshipped only by the army itself, they were so manifold and plentiful that one has rightly said no other manifestation of Roman life left more remains of the cult of the Genii than the army⁴. In the following they are

¹ See the literature cited in the bibliography below; for the latter view see W. F. OTTO, *Genius*. For the Greek counterparts of the Genii, *τύχη* and *δαίμων* see M. P. NILSSON, *Geschichte der griechischen Religion II*, *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft V*, 2, 3rd. ed. (München, 1974), 200—218.

² Cod. Theod. 16,10,12 of A.D. 392: *Nullus omnino . . . secretiore piaculo Larem igne, mero Genium, Penates odore veneratus accendat lumina, imponat tuva, serla suspendat.*

³ For the role of the *Genius P.R.* see e. g. H. MATTINGLY, *The Roman 'Virtues'*, *Harvard Theological Review* 30, 1937, 103—117; CALLU, *Genio*; BÉRANGER, *Genius*. For the *Genius imperatoris* in the army see CESANO, *Genius*, 458ff.

⁴ CESANO, *Genius*, 475. For the relative role of the Genii cult in Lambaesis see M. LE GLAY, *La vie religieuse à Lambèse, Antiquités Africaines* 5, 1971, 125—153; worshipped only by the army: TOUTAIN, *Cultes*, 460f.

grouped as Genii of military units and divisions, Genii of military deities, Genii of non-commissioned officers, and Genii of military installations.

1. Genii of military units and divisions

The following units or divisions are known to have had their own Genii⁵:

exercitus
legion
ala
auxiliary cohort
numerus (national or specialist)
vexillation
praetorian cohorts
(urban cohorts)
cohortes vigilum
equites singulares Augusti
centuriae and/or *turmae* of all of the above.

The list dressed here comprises nearly all types of units existing in the Roman army; the fact that as yet no Genii of individual urban cohorts have come to light will be no more than a gap in our knowledge, and certainly the *centuriae* of the *Urbaniciani* worshipped their own Genii. Conspicuously absent from our list are the legionary cohorts. Apparently the cult of their Genius was weak or nonexistent because they had no officers of their own and because the soldiers, as their tombstones show, did not attach strong feelings of belonging to their legionary cohorts⁶. Even so, Genii of legionary cohorts may become known some day — only to remain rare exceptions. In sum, one may be justified in saying that all units of the Roman army had their own Genii⁷.

⁵ For the documentation see CESANO, *Genius*, 475ff. and ThLL, s. v. *Genius*, p. 1884, 77ff., both now in need of supplements. For the *Genius legionis* add e. g. DESSAU, ILS 2290, 2295. AIJ 267. ILaig I, 2044. RIU 236, 390. AE 1926, 69 (see note 8). AE 1957, 83. AE 1968, 391. AE 1971, 208. AE 1973, 471. RIB 327. For the *Genius vexillationis*, not mentioned by CESANO, see CIL XIII, 7943 (and 7946?). For a recent study with ample documentation see now ANKERSDORFER, *Studien*, 194ff. For the hitherto unattested *Genius turmae* of an auxiliary cohort see AE 1969/70, 605 from Vetus Salina in Lower Pannonia: *Genio [i]urm(a)e [v]otum[s] s[oluit] l[ibens] m[erito]* — no *ala*, only cohorts were stationed at Vetus Salina, see e. g. J. FITZ, *Der römische Limes in Ungarn, Székesfehérvár*, 1967, 99; see also CIL XIII, 6569.

⁶ DOMASZEWSKI, *Religion*, 103. For some exceptional tombstones mentioning the legionary cohort of the deceased see M. SPEIDEL, *Eagle-Bearer and Trumpeter*, *Bonner Jahrbücher* 176, 1976, 123—163, esp. p. 133f.; IDEM, *Legionary Cohorts in Mauretania*, ANRW II, 10, forthcoming.

⁷ DOMASZEWSKI, *Religion* 103f., and following him DÜRRY, *Cohortes*, 314ff. assume the *Genius cohortium praetorianum* to be a late creation and a sign of decay, but that is utterly unlikely in the view of the fact that other large divisions, such as the legions, had their own Genii early on.

The earliest known dedication to the Genius of a military unit is a bronze votive tablet from Vindonissa in Upper Germany with the following inscription⁸:

7 (centuria) Domiti(i) . . . TODI, Val(erius) Terlius, Genio leg(ionis) XI C(laudiae) p(iae) f(idelis) pullum (dedicavit), v(otum) s(oluit) l(ibens) l(actus) m(erito).

Since the eleventh legion was in garrison at Vindonissa only from A.D. 70 to 101, the tablet must belong to the first century A.D. The fact that not more first-century dedications are known is doubtlessly due to the general scarcity of religious dedications extant from that period^{9a}.

The latest known dedication to the Genius of a unit is an altar from the time of Diocletian, found at Singidunum in Upper Moesia^{9b}:

Genio leg(ionis) IIII F(laviae) f(irmae) [et] dd(ominorum) nn(ostorum) Dioc[let]iani [et Maximiani] Augg(ustorum) [A]urel(ius) Maxim[us] . . . jus ex praef(ecto) leg(ionis) eiusdem votum posu[it].

The two examples serve to illustrate the point that such dedications were made equally by soldiers and officers. Both of them are clearly private, but others are official, as for example the following altar from Aballava in Britain¹⁰:

I(ovi) o(ptimo) m(aximo) et numinibus Augg(ustorum), G(enio) n(umeri) Maurorum Aur(elianorum) Valeriani Gallieni q(uorum) c(uram) a(git) Fl(avius) Vibianus trib(unus) coh(ortis), p(rae) p(osi- tus) n(umeri) s(upra) s(cripti), i(n)stante Iul(io) Rufino principe.

There is not the slightest evidence that any one emperor 'introduced' or 'officially chose' the Genius of any kind of unit¹¹. Indeed, the number of these dedications, their reference to all kinds of units, and their varying degrees of being private or official, all betray a widespread, genuine religious experience, independent of government machinations or imperial religious policy. For the cult of the Genii as well as for other cults A. D. Nock's statement holds good that "individual emperors had their preferences, but the individual citizen felt free to follow them or not as he chose.

⁸ H. FINKE, *Neue Inschriften, Römisch-Germanische Kommission, Berichte* 17, 1927, 1—107 and 193—231, no. 100 = AE 1926, 69.

^{9a} The first century army dedications are collected by ANKERSDORFER, *Studien*, 223ff.

^{9b} CIL III, 1646 = DESSAU, ILS 2292.

¹⁰ RIB 2042. For the reading see M. P. SPEIDEL, *The Rise of Ethnic Units in the Roman Imperial Army*, ANRW II 3 (Berlin-New York, 1975), 210.

¹¹ DÜRRY, *Cohortes* 314; «On avait donc choisi officiellement la centurie». J. BEAUJEU, *La religion romaine à l'apogée de l'empire*, I (Paris, 1955), 164; «Peut-être est-ce sous son (Hadrian's) influence aussi que le culte du Genius centuriae destiné à développer l'esprit du corps, a été introduit dans les cohortes prétoriennees, puisque la première inscription qui l'atteste date de l'année 127?». At the same time BEAUJEU realizes that the *Genius centuriae* is worshipped among the *vigiles* already in A.D. 113 (CIL VI, 221).

Except for Elagabal . . . it is hard to see a deliberate religious policy between Augustus and Aurelian¹²."

Remarkably, by far the largest number of chapels, altars and statues are dedicated to the *Genius centuriae*, both in the legions and in the praetorian guard¹³, obviously because the soldiers attached to their *centuriae* the strongest feeling of identity and sense of belonging. There were smaller divisions (the *contubernium*) and larger ones (the cohort) but it was their *centuria* the men wanted to see protected most of all, and to judge from the remains of the legionary camp at Lambaesis, the chapels to the Genii of the *centuriae* were located right next to the living quarters of the units¹⁴. Frequently the dedicants were the main NCO's of the *centuria*, i. e. the *signifer*, the *optio*, the *armorum custos*, and not rarely the centurions themselves. It has been said the cult of the *Genius centuriae* declined during the third century. Our sources, however, do not warrant such an assumption — to the contrary, there is evidence for the cult still long after the end of the Severan period and at a time when monuments altogether become scarce¹⁵.

Next in popularity after the *Genius centuriae* comes the *Genius legionis*. As A. V. DOMASZEWSKI rightly saw, the Genius of an entire unit, such as the *Genius legionis* could be worshipped anywhere, not just in the regimental sanctuary. Accordingly, dedications have been found inside and outside the camps: in the chapels of the *scholae* of the centurions or *mensores*, in the baths, on duty stations, in colonies where veterans had settled, and elsewhere¹⁶, which again proves that the cult was spontaneous, not prescribed.

¹² A. D. Nock, *The Roman Army and the Roman Religious Year*, Harvard Theological Review 45, 1952, 186—252 (= *Id.*, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, ed. by Z. STEWART, II, Oxford, 1972, 736—790). An imperial preference for a military Genius may be seen in the coins of Decius bearing the legend GENIUS EXERCITUS ILLYRICIANI, cf. A. ALFÖLDI, *Die Vorherrschaft der Pannonier im Römerreiche und die Reaktion des Hellenentums unter Gallienus*, Fünfundzwanzig Jahre Römisch-Germanische Kommission (Berlin—Leipzig, 1929), 11 ff. = *Id.*, *Studien zur Geschichte der Weltkrise des dritten Jahrhunderts nach Christus* (Darmstadt, 1967), 230.

¹³ The number of monuments shows that DURRY, *Cohortes 317* wrongly attributed the praetorians more devotion and art in the worship of their *Genii centuriae* than the legionaries.

¹⁴ CAGNAT, *Les deux camps*, 55.

¹⁵ DURRY, *Cohortes 317*, sees a decline of the cult among the praetorians, but the impression is simply due to the fact that the extant documentation for the post-Severan period is much poorer. In the legions the cult is attested e. g. in A.D. 233 (CIL III, 3457) and in A.D. 245 (AE 1905, 242), and at that time the praetorians are recruited from among the legionaries. The comparable cult of the *Genius turmae* among the *equites singulares Augusti* is documented as late as A.D. 250 (DESSAU, ILS 2190). The fact, emphasized by DURRY, that the *Genius centuriae* comes after Hercules on CIL VI, 210 means nothing, compare CIL VI, 226 and 227 where Hercules Irvictus and the Genius of the *equites singulares Augusti* exchange places from one year to another.

¹⁶ DOMASZEWSKI, *Religion*, 96 f. DOMASZEWSKI's examples remain dubious, except, perhaps, the first one, but the idea is beyond doubt as new finds have shown: *schola centurionum*: RIU II, 390; *schola mensorum*: AE 1973, 471; baths: AE 1957, 83; duty stations: AE 1962, 391; colonies: ILS I, 2044 (Madauros) and AIJ 267 (Poetovio); cf. CIL III, 13443 = RIU I, 236; TOUTAIN, *Cultes*, 461 assumed veterans did not worship military Genii. That is unlikely, but not yet explicitly disproved by any document.

The Genii of military units are usually represented young, nude, and beardless, holding a horn of plenty and a bowl (*patera*) for the wine libation due to them. An exceptional piece, therefore, is a *Genius centuriae* clad in the toga, found at the Saalburg in Upper Germany. This Genius in a toga may help to identify the Genius of the *equites singulares Augusti* on a relief plaque from Rome (Plate I). There a large bust of the sun god is balanced by an equally large bust of a bearded, fully dressed man whose garment may also be a toga. The inscription on the plaque reads:

*Soli invicto pro salute imp(eratorum) et Genio
n(umeri) eq(uitum) sing(ularium) eorum, M(arcus)
Ulpi(us) Chresimus, sace[r(dos)] Iovis Doliche[ni],
v(otum) s(olvit) l(aetus) l(ibens) [m(erito)].*

One would think that the gods to whom the plaque is dedicated are also the ones shown prominently on the relief. However, the dress and beard of the second figure induced scholars to assume the Genius of the *equites singulares Augusti* could not be meant and that one had to see in the second figure either the dedicant of the plaque or Iuppiter Dolichenus^{16a}. That assumption is no longer necessary, as the togate Saalburg Genius shows: Plate I seems indeed to depict the 'Genius of the emperors' *equites singulares*. One may conclude, therefore, that such Genii could be cast in different images, — perhaps the Genii of the two units mentioned wore the toga because both the *cohortes II Raetorum civium Romanorum* at the Saalburg and the *equites singulares Augusti* were citizen units.

2. Genii of military deities

Surprisingly, gods had their Genii, too¹⁷. Among the military deities even the standards had their Genii¹⁸. A particularly interesting case is the *Genius sacramenti*. A text from Syria reads¹⁹:

Genio sacramenti, veterani.

The inscription, no doubt, refers to the oath of service, worshipped as a deity by soldiers²⁰. A hint for the interpretation of this Genius is found in

^{16a} For the usual Genii of military units see KUNCKEL, *Genius*, C I. For the Saalburg Genius: KUNCKEL, *Genius*, C I, 88; cf. CIL XIII, 7448 and E. ESPERANDIEU, *Recueil général des bas-reliefs, statues et bustes de la Germanie romaine*, Paris 1931, 160. For bearded Genii see e. g. KUNCKEL, *Genius*, C I, 85 and C I, 12. For a discussion of the Rome plaque see SPEIDEL (below, n. 47) 16 ff.; 'Iuppiter Dolichenus': CIL VI, 81181. 'Dedicant': P. MERLAT, *Répertoire des inscriptions et monuments figurés du culte de Jupiter Dolichenus*, Paris, 1951, p. 234. For attributes of *Genii* taken from the peoples, groups, or things they stand for, see the general discussion in P. VEYNE, *Ordo et Populus, Génies et chefs de file*, MEFR 73, 1961, 229—274, esp. p. 269.

¹⁷ See e. g. CESANO, *Genius*, 479.

¹⁸ CIL III, 7591. RIB 1262.

¹⁹ AE 1924, 135.

²⁰ See e. g. the *sacramenti cultores* AE 1960, 8, 3.

Apuleius' 'Metamorphoses' (9, 41) where a soldier is described as in fear of the *Genius sacramenti* because he lost his sword: *militaris . . . sacramenti Genium ob amissam spatham verebatur*. Important for military discipline, the *Genius sacramenti* here functions as an externalized conscience, a role the less personifiable oath itself could have taken only with difficulty²¹.

3. Genii of non-commissioned officers and their clubs

The non-commissioned officers maintained *collegia* or *scholae* where they met, among other things, for religious purposes. There they erected chapels, altars, and statues to the Genii of their associations. Genii of the following ranks or *scholae* are known:

<i>beneficiarii</i> ²²	<i>praepositi</i>
<i>capsarii</i>	<i>secutores</i>
<i>centuriones</i>	<i>signiferi</i>
<i>decuriones</i>	<i>speculatores</i>
<i>exploratores</i>	<i>tectores</i>
<i>immunes</i>	<i>veredarii</i>
<i>mentores</i>	<i>vexillarii et imaginiferi</i> ²⁴
<i>optiones</i> ²³	

The variety of this list lets one assume that the *collegia* and *scholae* of all other NCO ranks worshipped their Genii as well and that they may be found some day. With some dedications it is not so obvious whether they are to the Genius of the soldiers in that rank or rather to the Genius of the *schola* as a building. An inscription with the following text

Genio opt(ionum) coh(ortis) III Aquil(anorum) Philippianae

was taken to refer to a *schola* of *optiones*²⁵ while in another case a *schola* in the sense of a building cannot be meant²⁶:

²¹ A comparable case where also the possibility to personify mattered is AE 1939, 38 from Lambaesis: *M. Aurelio Cominio Cassiano leg(ato) Augg(ustorum) pr(o) pr(atore) c(larissimo) v(ivo), praesidi, Genio virtutum omnium, Clodius Lucifer, praefect(us) classis, v(ir) e(gregius)*. A similarly vindictive role of a Genius is emphasized in the threat *[si] quis hanc avam laesent habeat Genium iratum populi Romani . . .*, quoted by CESANO, *Genius*, 468; contra: TOUTAIN, *Cultes*, 442.

²² CIL III, 876; 7626; VIII, 17628. XIII, 6127. AE 1971, 218.

²³ *Capsarii*: CIL XIII, 11979. *Centuriones*: CIL III, 7631. *Immunes*: AE 1905, 241. *Mentores*: CIL III, 17796 = RIU II, 391. AE 1973, 471. *Optiones*: CIL XIII, 6566. *Exploratores*: RIU 424. *Decuriones*: DESSAU, ILS 2545.

²⁴ *Signiferi*: AE 1927, 89 = RIB 451. AE 1958, 303. *Speculatores*: CIL VIII, 2603. *Tectores*: DESSAU, ILS 9183. *Veredarii*: CIL XIII, 7439. *Vexillarii et imaginiferi*: CIL XIII, 7533. *Praepositi*: U. SCHILLINGER-HÄFLE, *Neue Inschriften aus Osterburken*. *Fundberichte aus Baden-Württemberg* 1, 1974, 533–544, no. 7, probably a fragment of CIL XIII, 11766, mentioning the Genius of the *secutores*.

²⁵ DOMASZEWSKI, *Religion*, 90 on CIL XIII, 6566.

²⁶ DESSAU, ILS 2401. The inscription, moreover, was found in Altrip, not in Mainz where the headquarters of the staff of Upper Germany was located.

In h(onorem) d(omus) d(ivinae) Genio b(ene) f(ictiariorum) co(n)s(ularis) G(ermaniae) s(uperioris) et loci . . .

Clearly here the Genius of the soldiers is set off from the Genius of the place. Since *schola* can mean the members of the club as well as its building, it may be wise to leave open the possibility that all *Genii scholae* refer to soldiers rather than to buildings.

4. Genii of military installations

A large variety of military installations was equipped with a cult of their Genius²⁷:

campus
castra
domus
excubitorium
horreum
praesidium
praetorium
statio
tabularium
valetudinarium.

Certainly far more such installations, and possibly all of them, had a cult of their Genius as is shown e. g. by the new *Genius armamentarii* described below. The meaning of the *Genius castrorum* has been solved recently: A. v. DOMASZEWSKI had assumed this to be a very late cult, so late, in fact, that it came to life only when the old legions had been split up and their camps were now housing a motley of different units united only by the physical installation of the camp — then, and then only would the cult of the *Genius castrorum* emerge, i. e. under Diocletian²⁸. In the meantime an altar of the year A.D. 216 has come to light at the legionary camp of

²⁷ *Campus*: CIL VIII, 16728. *Castra*: CIL VI, 230. 231. 36776–36777 and CIL XIV, 7 (= DESSAU, ILS 2216. 2215. 484. 9080. 2217), CIL VIII, 2529 (= DESSAU, ILS 2291). M. BESNIER, *Inscriptions et monuments de Lambèse et des environs*, MEFR 18, 1898, 461–489, esp. p. 468. H. G. KOLBE, *Neue Inschriften*, 88ff. = AE 1963, 45. *Domus*: DOMASZEWSKI, *Religion*, 189. *Excubitorium*: CIL VI, 8010. *Horreum*: CIL XIII, 7749. *Praesidium*: CIL III, 215, revised AE 1953, 171. RIB 1577. *Praetorium*: CIL II, 2634. 4076 G. ALFÖLDY, *Die römischen Inschriften von Tarraco* (Berlin, 1976), no. 34. CIL III, 1019. RIB 1075. 1685, 1686, 1687. M. LEGLAY, l. c. 136f = AE 1973, 637. AE 1939, 36. *Statio*: CIL III, 8178, VI, 36779. 36781. CIL VIII, 17623. 17625. 17626. CIL XII, 144. CIL XIII, 6127. *Tabularium*: CIL VI, 30886. VIII, 18060. XIII, 7752. *Valetudinarium*: CIL III, 10403. There is no *Genius valli* or *Genius praetenturae* as suggested by CESANO: see RIB 2015 and 1152.

²⁸ DOMASZEWSKI, *Religion*, 113 — his interpretation of CIL III, 11111 is misleading: the text is not dated, there are no *officium-notae* and, above all, the letters G.C. may refer to a *Genius centuriae*, *collegii*, or *cohortis* rather than *castrorum*.

Bonn, constituting proof that the *Genius castrorum* was worshipped already at a time when the legions were still fully intact and the cult of the *Genius legionis* still in full swing²⁹:

I(ovi) o(ptimo) m(aximo) et Genius d(omini) n(ostri) M(arci) Aur(elii) Antonini et Genius castrorum, Aur(elius) Veratius Titus et Aur(elius) Geminius Severus, b(eneficiarii) lega(t)i Sabino II et Anullino IU- NIINO co(n)s(ulibus).

Like the Genii of some other installations, the *Genius castrorum* cannot be seen as referring to persons: it follows a pattern observed also in non-military contexts, namely that the concept of the Genius as the deity of a person frequently evolved to become the deity of a place, a *Genius loci*. Underlying this evolution seems to be a change in the notion of all collective Genii to the effect that they no longer represented the character, the personality, or even the 'Lebensgeist' of their constituency³⁰, but instead became objective deities per se, gods who devoted their special care to a particular group regardless of the subjective character of that group. Unlike the standards and the Emperors, the Genii were worshipped as real gods in that vows were made to them and even demanded by them, as one would expect of gods conceived as real and objective³¹; what one wanted of them was protection³². It seems, therefore, that the praetorians who worshipped their *Genius centuriae* did not adore themselves «en divinisant ce qu'il y a de meilleur en chacun d'eux, qui obscurément devaient sentir là je ne sais pas quoi d'exaltant»³³. Else, how would one explain the Genii of military installations and the *Genius castrorum* next to the *Genius legionis*? Still, there is an inscription from Alexandria in Egypt that keeps one from rashly excluding all personal character aspects from the cult of the Genii in the army³⁴:

Genio sancto legionis et commanipulorum bonorum, Q(uintus) Caecilius Kalendinus, optio posuit.

Possibly Kalendinus considered all his colleagues *boni* and hence simply invoked the *Genius centuriae*, but it cannot be excluded that he called upon a Genius only of his good colleagues as distinguished from others, less virtuous ones. On balance, though, one may consider the cult of the military Genii not so much the divinization of the best qualities of the Roman army,

²⁹ KOLBE, Neue Inschriften, whence AE 1963, 45. For a *Genius legionis* in Lower Germany see AE 1962, 391.

³⁰ For 'Lebensgeist' see DOMASZEWSKI, Religion, 108.

³¹ A. D. Nock, l. c. 240f. Cf. AE 1971, 208 (León): *Genio [l(egionis)] VII G(eminae) f(elicis) Tib(erius) Cl(audius) Pompeianus, tr(ibunus) ex iu(ssu) G(enii) v(otum) solvit*.

³² Cf. LATTE, Religionsgeschichte 331f. AE 1954, 90: *Genio defensori*, ILAG I, 2086: *adivmentum*. CIL XIII 6631: Σοφελς εκ πολάμ[ου] και άμερτήτων μάλα μόχθων Εύξάμενος άπεθήκα Γενίου εκόου σαμήν.

³³ DURRY, Cohortes, 317.

³⁴ CIL XIII = DESSAU, ILS 2290.

but the worshipping of gods that protected individuals, groups, and places³⁵. This, moreover, is the framework that explains best the new *Genius armamentarii* discussed in the following.

II. An altar to the new *Genius armamentarii*

Novae in Lower Moesia, at the southernmost point of the Danube, was of outstanding strategic importance for the Roman frontier protecting the Balkan provinces. Situated on the southern high bank of the river, it controlled the east-west road along the Danube as well as the south road through the mountains into Thrace. The site, therefore, served for some four hundred years as a legionary fortress. From A.D. 70 until the time of the 'Notitia Dignitatum', *legio I Italica* had its headquarters here. Then, after an attempt by Justinian to restore its walls, the town fell into ruins and was deserted. Relatively unobstructed by modern buildings, it is now being systematically excavated by Bulgarian and Polish teams³⁶. Among the finds made by the Bulgarian archaeologists in the eastern sector of the town there is an intriguing sandstone altar which is published here because of the interest its inscription has for the cult of the Genii in the Roman army.

The altar (see plate II) was found in secondary usage in a depth of one meter below the surface in a building on the *via sagularis* along the southern wall³⁷. It is 0.45 m high, 0.24 m broad and 0.20 m deep. The upper right-hand corner is broken off and missing. The inscription, on a field measuring 0.195 m by 0.18 m is written in letters 0.035 m high and continues on the lower socle. It reads:

*Marti [et] | Genio a[r] | mamen[t(arii)] |
[V]al(erius) Cresc(ens) | c(ustos) a(rmorum).*

The reading is clear in all places except for the first letter of the dedicant's name where one should perhaps read *A(e)l(ius)* instead of

³⁵ Similarly OTTO, *Genius*. LATTE, *Religionsgeschichte*.

³⁶ For Novae and its excavations see M. ČRČIKOVA, Les fouilles de Novae, Moesia inferior, secteur est: campagnes 1960—1968, in: *Roman Frontier Studies* 1969, ed. E. BIRLEY et al. (Cardiff, 1974), 226—234. See also the report by the same author in the forthcoming acta of the Roman Frontier Congress in 1974. K. MAJEWSKI, Novae, Sektor Zachodni, *Archeologia* (Warsaw) 26, 1975, 123—164. For inscriptions from Novae: J. KOLENDO, Études sur les inscriptions de Novae, *Archeologia* (Warsaw) 16, 1965, 124—147 and IDEM, Inscription de l'an 227 en l'honneur de Jupiter Depulsor découverte à Novae, *Archeologia* 19, 1968, 117—144. For *legio I Italica* and its predecessor at Novae, *legio VIII Augusta*, see E. RITTERLING, *Legio*, RE 12, 1924, 1407—1417 and 1647—1652; add AE 1966, 545; AE 1968, 454bis; 511; AE 1969/70, 552; 553; AE 1971, 226; AE 1972, 505; 512; 527—532; 565; AE 1973, 478—480.

³⁷ Quadrangle XXXIX/291, East 2,00 m, South 1,85 m. 1967, Inv. nr. 331.

[V]al(erijs). There are no criteria for dating the find except the uneven letters that point to the late second or the third century A.D., i. e. certainly to the time when *legio I Italica* was in garrison at Novae.

The *armamentaria* are known to be part of the central buildings of the camps. It is very likely, therefore, that our altar once stood in or near the *principia* of the legionary fortress and was removed thence sometime during the fourth century to serve as building material for a new structure on the *via sagularis*³⁸.

Our altar would be the first document to link the rank of *custos armorum* with the *armamentaria* were it not for the remote possibility that the rare rank of *conductor armamentarii* is here drastically shortened to *c.a.*³⁹. The distinction is important, for if we have here a *custos armorum*, a rank found in each *centuria*⁴⁰, then our altar would establish the fact that part of the soldiers' weapons were kept by him in the *armamentarium* as was done with the weapons of the Rome cohorts⁴¹. By contrast, if we have here a *conductor armamentarii* then we may visualize the *armamentaria* of the provincial armies mainly as storehouses for ammunition and spare weapons. Unfortunately, our altar does not provide sufficient evidence to decide this question.

By far the most important contribution of the altar is that it adds a new deity to our knowledge of the religion of the Roman army, the *Genius armamentarii*. Not that the *Genius* of the armory was unexpected,



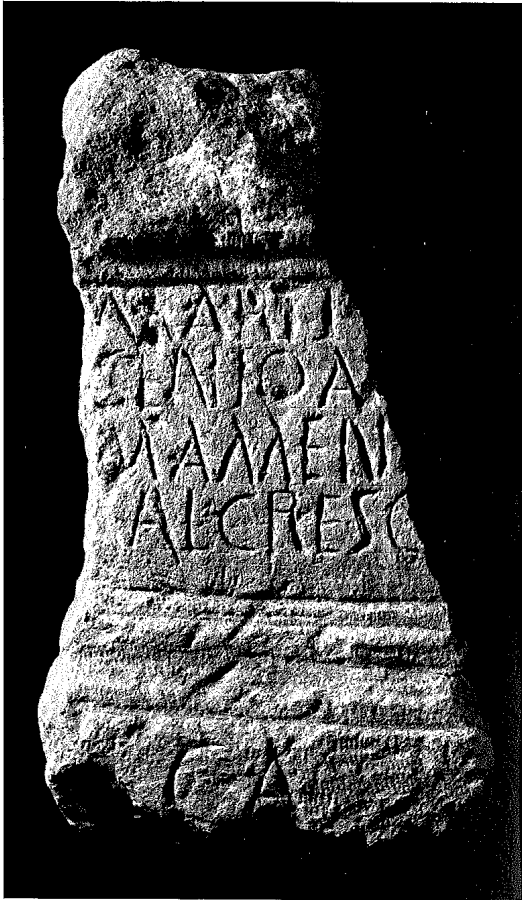
I. Dedication slab to the Sun God and the *Genius equitum singularium Augustorum*. Rome, camp of the *equites singulares Augusti*

³⁸ For *armamentaria* see R. CAGNAT, *L'armée romaine d'Afrique* (Paris, 1913), 493—496. H. v. PETRIKOVITS, *Die Spezialgebäude römischer Legionslager*, in: *Legio VII Gemina* (León, 1970), 229—252, esp. p. 235. H. v. PETRIKOVITS, *Die Innenbauten römischer Legionslager während der Prinzipatszeit*, *Wiss. Abh. der Rhein.-Westf. Akad. der Wiss.* 56 (Opladen, 1975), 73 and note 74. See *ibid.* for the emplacement of altars for the *Genii*: their location is known only in a very few cases. Both CAGNAT and v. PETRIKOVITS identify the *principia* and the *armamentaria*, but an inscription from Britain shows they were considered two different things: CIL VII, 446 = DESSAU, 2621 = RIB 1092: *Imp. Caesar M. Antonius Gordianus P.F. Aug. principia et armamentaria conlapsa restituit. per Macellium Fuscum leg. Aug. pr. pr. curante M. Aur. Quirino pr. coh. I. L. Gor.* Nevertheless, the two were close to each other and in the center of the camp. At Novae stone balls for the artillery were found near the forum (MAJEWSKI, l. c. p. 143, fig. 44): there must have been the *armamentaria* of the late antique town, and perhaps already of the legionary camp.

³⁹ For *conductores armament(arii)* see CIL III, 1121. *C(wam) a(gens)* makes no sense here. For *c. a.* see e. g. CIL III, Index p. 5202 or DESSAU, ILS vol. 3, p. 477.

⁴⁰ A. v. DOMASZEWSKI, *Die Rangordnung des römischen Heeres*, 2nd. ed. by B. DOBSON, *Beihefte der Bonner Jahrbücher* 14 (Köln, 1967), 44f. Two dedications by *armorum custodes* to the *Genius centuriae* are found in E. VORBECK, *Militärschriften aus Carnuntum* (Wien, 1954), 66 and 69.

⁴¹ For this question see A. v. DOMASZEWSKI, *Ausgrabungen in Carnuntum 1885*, *Archäologisch-epigraphische Mitteilungen aus Österreich-Ungarn* 10, 1886, 12—32, esp. p. 20. His opinion is followed by DUNN, *Cohortes*, 115, but now a *discens armorum custodem* has come to light in the *praetorium* as well, see DOMASZEWSKI, *Rangordnung*, X, — perhaps an assimilation of the third-century *praetorium* to the legions?



2. Altar to Mars and the *Genius armamentarii*. Novae, Moesia inferior

though. A. v. DOMASZEWSKI in A.D. 1895 observed that other buildings in the army camps had their Genii, such as the

Genius valetudinarii

and the

Genius horrei.

From this he concluded that the armory, too, should have had a Genius of its own⁴². His inference is now confirmed by our altar. The new Genius graphically illustrates the degree of permanence the stone-built legionary fortresses and their organization had acquired by the second and third centuries A.D. — both in reality and in the minds of the soldiers.

The invocation of Mars on our altar is also remarkable, for there exists the as yet unproven hypothesis that only late, during the mid-third century did the legions develop a more intense cult of Mars⁴³. Unfortunately, the absence of reliable criteria to date our altar prevents one from seeing what importance it may have for the development of the cult of Mars in the army. Even so, the altar adds some weight to the cult of Mars among the legions.

The pairing of Mars with the Genius of the armory conforms to a pattern, namely that the Genii as gods of a narrow sphere of protection are very often joined with a god of a large, overall sphere of protection, frequently one of the Olympian *dii militares* Iuppiter, (Iuno), Minerva, Mars, and Hercules⁴⁴. Four closely comparable dedications to Mars and a military Genius are known e. g. from Africa⁴⁵:

Deo Marti [Aug(usto)] Genioque sancto scolae b(ene)f(iciariorum) Paconius Castus, b(ene)f(iciarius) cons(ularis) leg(ionis) III Aug(ustae) cum suis exacta statione v(otum) s(olvit).

Gradivo patri, Genio stat(ionis) Vazaivi et diis conservatoribus, M. Baebius Speratus cor(nicularius) praef(ecti) [leg(ionis) III] Aug(ustae) p(iae) v(indicis) vol(um) s(olvit) l(ibens) a(nimo).

[Ge]nio 7 (centuriae), Marti Aug(usto) sacrum, C(aius) Apon(ius) Saturn(inus), optio, v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) a(nimo). Fel(icit)er.

[Ge]nio 7 (centuriae) Marti Aug(usto) pro salute dominorum n(ostro- rum) Imp(eratorum) Severi et Antonini Aug(ustorum) [et Getae Ca]es(aris) . . .

Similar dedications come from Germany and Rome and provide suitable parallels to our altar⁴⁶. By contrast, oriental gods, heirs of a very different

⁴² DOMASZEWSKI, *Religion*, 108.

⁴³ DOMASZEWSKI, *Religion*, 33—37. For the rarity of dedications to Mars see e. g. A. PASSERINI, *Legio*, in: E. DE RUGGIERO, *Dizionario Epigrafico* 4 (1949—1950), 618.

⁴⁴ For the *dii militares* see DOMASZEWSKI, *Religion* 19 ff. and the studies by E. BRILEY and J. HELGELAND in this volume, 1470—1506.

⁴⁵ DESSAU, *ILS* 2400. 2399. 9102a. CAGNAT, *Les deux camps*, 55a.

⁴⁶ *CIL* XIII, 6740a. *CIL* VI, 31151.

tradition, seldom appear with Genii⁴⁷. Modern interpreters occasionally identified these gods of a larger protection sphere with the Genii themselves as for example on an altar from Hatra⁴⁸:

*Erculi Sanct(o), pro salute domini nostri Au[g(usti), Q(uintus)]
Petronius Qu[in]tianus, dom(o) [Nico]midia, trib(unus) mil(itum)
leg(ionis) I P(arthicae), trib(unus) coh(ortis) IX Gordianae, Genio
coh(ortis).*

However, it seems better to regard such juxtapositions as asyndetic, referring to different deities (god and Genius) — that, at least is suggested by the many dedications separating the deities by an explicit *et* as our altar does. It might seem natural that the greater god is named first as in our dedication, but two of the four dedications to Mars and the Genius cited above name Mars on the second place, which shows there is no hierarchy, no *Rangordnung der Heeresgötter* to be derived from such arrangements⁴⁹, nor do they reflect a breakdown of the old-time religion⁵⁰.

The occasion for setting up a monument to a military Genius is often the promotion to the new rank in which the dedication is made⁵¹, or the retirement from that rank⁵². However, other occasions are conceivable as well. Valerius Crescens gives no indication as to why he set up his altar, but it certainly is a welcome addition to our still surprisingly small body of documents concerning *legio I Italica* and to our understanding of the cult of the Genii in the Roman army.

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⁴⁷ E. g. CIL VI, 31181 = M. SPEIDEL, The Religion of Iuppiter Dolichenus in the Roman Army, EPRO 63 (Leiden, 1977), 15, no. 17; AE 1952, 248 seems to identify the Genius with Ammon because Genius stands here for the Semitic city-protector Gad.

⁴⁸ A. MARICQ, Les dernières années de Hatra, Syria 34, 1957, 288—296, esp. 289f. (= ID., Classica et Orientalia, Institut français d'archéologie de Beyrouth, Publication hors série II [Paris, 1965], 18f.), whence AE 1958, 240; cf. H. J. W. DRIJVERS, Hatra, Palmyra and Edessa, ANRW II 8 (1977), 799—906, esp. p. 826. See also CESANO, Genius, 481, where the military Genii, at least, are not to be taken in his sense as identified with the gods.

⁴⁹ Contra: DOMASZEWSKI, Religion, 22; 96.

⁵⁰ DOMASZEWSKI, Religion, 113 saw such a breakdown where the Genius took the first place, DURRY, Cohortes, 316f. where the Genius was relegated to the third place.

⁵¹ RIU II, 390 (Brigetio): *Genio leg(ionis) I adi(utricis) p(iae) f(idelis) [...] scolae 77 (centurionum) ob honorem ad(ominorum) m(ostrovum), C(aius) Silo(in)ius, C(ai) filius Luf...jus, ex optione leg(ionis) II Aug(ustae) d(ionum) d(edit)*. The former *optio* obviously had just been promoted centurion in the Brigetio legion.

⁵² Thus DOMASZEWSKI, Religion, 104. Add, for example, RIU II, 412 (Brigetio): *I(ovi) o(p)timo m(aximo) et Genio schol(a)e sig(niferorum), Homonius Quintianus quod sig(nifer) vovit 7 (centurio) solvit lib(ens) mer(ito)*.

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