

**Auxiliary Altars: The Intersection of Mobility, Identity, and Cult Practice Among the  
*Auxilia* of Imperial Roman Britain**

Lucy Brenner  
Undergraduate Senior Thesis  
Department of History  
Columbia University  
3 April 2024

Seminar Instructor: Professor Samuel Coggeshall

Second Reader: Professor Sailakshmi Ramgopal

## Table of Contents

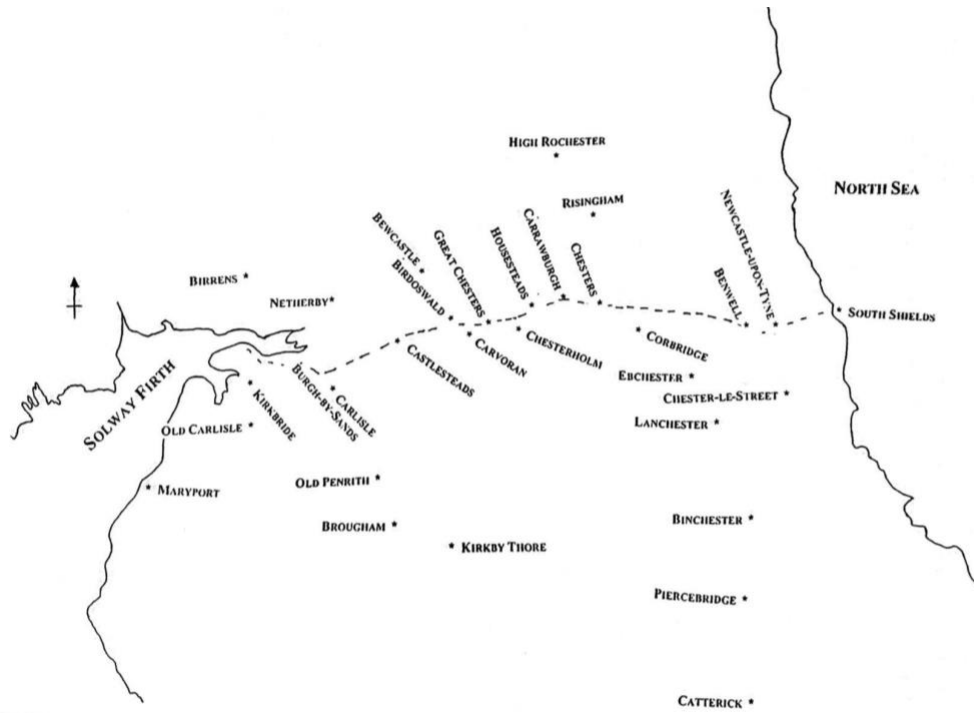
<i>Acknowledgements</i> .....	<b>3</b>
<i>Introduction</i> .....	<b>5</b>
<i>Chapter One: Deities</i> .....	<b>24</b>
The Roman Pantheon.....	26
Celtic Deities Local to Britain.....	35
Non-Roman Deities from Abroad.....	43
Conclusion.....	53
<i>Chapter Two: Worshipers</i> .....	<b>54</b>
Corporate Versus Individual Worship.....	55
The Social Stratification of Worshipers.....	66
Localized Identifications of Worshipers.....	75
Conclusion.....	83
<i>Chapter Three: Communal Worship at the Temple to Mars Thingsus</i> .....	<b>85</b>
The Temple of <i>Mars Thingsus</i> .....	86
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	<b>108</b>
<i>Bibliography</i> .....	<b>112</b>

## Acknowledgements

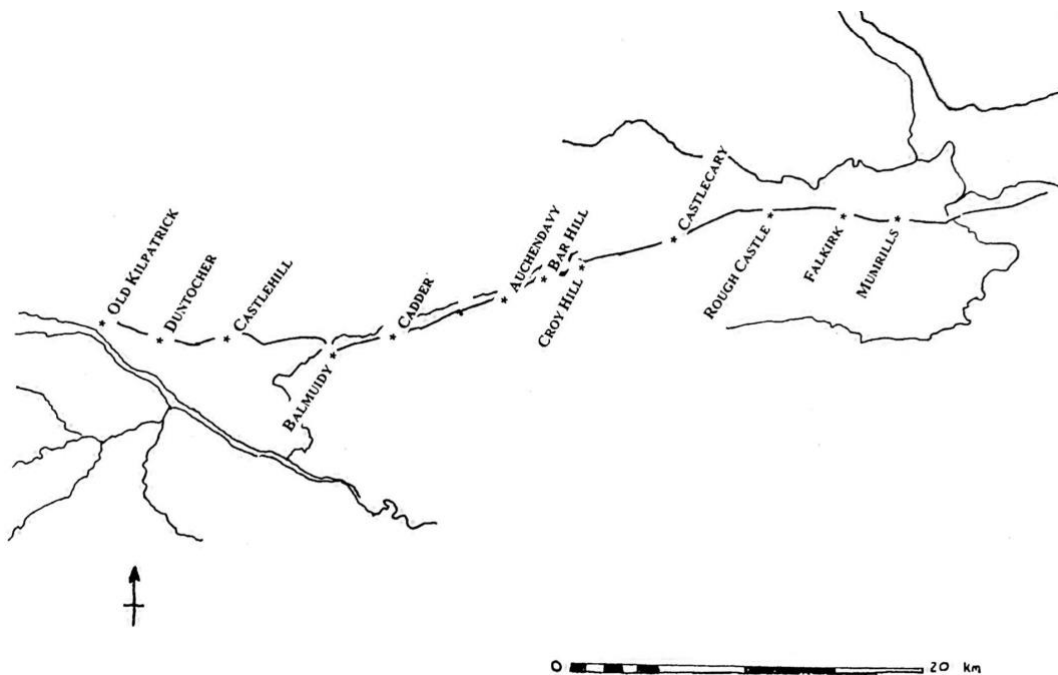
I could not have completed this thesis without the extensive support of my mentors and peers, who guided me through every step of brainstorming, researching, drafting, and editing this project. I would firstly like to thank Professor Sailakshmi Ramgopal, my second reader, whose feedback and expertise served as a thought-provoking source of insight as I worked through complex issues of identity and power in antiquity. I am especially indebted to the two excellent courses I took with Professor Ramgopal throughout my time at Columbia, *The Romans and Their World* and *Mobility and Identity in the Roman World*. These courses solidified my interest in the history of Ancient Rome and provided me with a crucial avenue to begin authoring my own historical analysis and scholarship.

I am also incredibly grateful to Professor Samuel Coggeshall, my seminar instructor, who met with me to discuss all of my questions, big and small, and provided helpful revisions for each iteration of my thesis draft. The organization, discussion, and overall positive atmosphere of Professor Coggeshall's seminar were indispensable to the development of this thesis. Of course, I cannot mention my thesis seminar without also expressing my immense gratitude to the seven peers who made up the seminar itself. To these peers, thank you for taking the time to so thoughtfully provide feedback on all of my drafts, even as you worked tirelessly on your own. I am grateful that the past six months spent working on this thesis were such collaborative ones.

Lastly, thank you to my family and friends, who made my senior year, as well as my broader time at Columbia, so wonderful.



Map 1. The forts along Hadrian's Wall in the northern frontier zone of Roman Britain.<sup>1</sup>



Map 2. The forts along the Antonine Wall in the northern frontier zone of Roman Britain.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Georgia Irby-Massie, *Military Religion in Roman Britain* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1999), 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

## Introduction

“I am pious Aeneas, and I carry in my ships my household gods together with me, rescued from Argive enemies; my fame is known beyond the sky.” Virgil’s *Aeneid*.<sup>3</sup>

In his legendary travels, Aeneas, the Trojan hero and mythical founder of Rome, traversed the wide extent of the Mediterranean world. Accompanied by other Trojan refugees, Aeneas left behind his fallen ancestral city in a quest to establish a new civilization on the Italian peninsula, thousands of miles away from his homeland. Venturing from the destroyed city of Troy to the islands of the Aegean Sea to the northern African coast and finally to the kingdom of Latium, Aeneas completed an epic feat of migration. Although his journey physically and emotionally separated him from his Trojan homeland, Aeneas, throughout his tumultuous migration, brought with him a sole vestige of his past life: the household gods, or the *penates*. So deep was Aeneas’s connection with these deities that he carried them out of the burning city of Troy alongside his own father. Years later, upon his arrival to Latium, Aeneas established these sacred embodiments of Troy in a new land. Aeneas’s journey thus constitutes an epic account of religious mobility, in addition to being a striking tale of human displacement and migration.

Embedded, then, in the legendary founding story of Rome are potent themes of mobility, cult practice, and cultural transformation. This tale of ancient migration, however, was not unique to Aeneas, or to the realm of myth. In fact, stretching temporally from the late first century BCE to the fifth century CE, the Roman Empire, which traced its mythical origins to Aeneas, inhabited a world dominated by high levels of mobility throughout the Mediterranean.<sup>4</sup> Whether motivated by personal interests or state-organized, institutional forces, individuals and

---

<sup>3</sup> Virgil, *The Aeneid*, translated by Allen Mandelbaum (USA: Bantam Books, 1971), I.533-538.

<sup>4</sup> Luuk de Ligt and Laurens Ernst Tacoma, “Approaching Migration in the Early Roman Empire,” in *Migration and Mobility in the Early Roman Empire* (Leiden: Brill, 2016): 5-6.

communities during this time were strikingly mobile. As in the mythical story of Aeneas, the migration of the Roman Empire was not limited to the physical, human level, but also implicated the more abstract realm of religion. The high levels of human mobility from this time period produced a dynamic exchange of beliefs and customs, which particularly impacted the development of different cult practices. Owing to the relatively widespread state tolerance of foreign religions, the empire was home to a rich assortment of cults, deities, and practices. As individuals and communities traversed the boundaries of the empire, diverse systems of religious belief emerged alongside them.

On a state-wide level, the imperial cult and its accompanying array of deities from the Graeco-Roman pantheon permeated the broad extent of the empire, ranging from the northern confines of Britain all the way to Mesopotamia in the East. It was not only state deities, however, that migrated across provinces. Local deities indigenous to non-Roman groups were also transmitted far distances throughout the empire. Along Hadrian's Wall in northern Britain, for instance, a unit of imperial Roman soldiers erected an altar to *Dea Suria*, the divine personification of Syria.<sup>5</sup> On the Iberian peninsula, worshipers made a dedication to the *Matribus Gallaicis*, the Galician Mothers—a fusion of the *Matres* goddesses, who originated from the Germanic provinces, with the local Iberian epithet of Galicia.<sup>6</sup> Given the mass movements that occurred within its boundaries, the Roman Empire thus served as the site for the dynamic interaction, exchange, and coalescing of different religious beliefs.

Within the broad imperial network of movement and exchange, soldiers of the ancient Roman *auxilia* occupied a unique positionality at the intersection between mobility, identity, and cult practice. In contrast to the legions—the units of the imperial army made up of Roman

---

<sup>5</sup> RIB 1792.

<sup>6</sup> CIL II 2776.

citizens—auxiliary soldiers were recruited from among the native populations of territories conquered by the empire. Therefore, from the very conception of the institution, the *auxilia* consisted of distinctly non-Roman, non-citizen military units. Although the Romans had a long history of deploying provincial troops, the *auxilia* only emerged as a regularized feature of the army during the reign of Augustus in the late first century BCE.<sup>7</sup>

Between the age of Augustus and the end of the Severan dynasty in the third century CE, over two million men were likely recruited into the *auxilia*, although their experiences within the extensive Roman military apparatus varied dramatically depending on their specific geographical and temporal position.<sup>8</sup> One drastic reform to the *auxilia* system emerged, for instance, during the reign of Claudius in the middle of the first century CE. Claudius established a reward system in which auxiliary soldiers who completed 25 years of military service and received a “honorable discharge” were granted Roman citizenship, the right to *conubium*, and citizenship for their children born during service.<sup>9</sup> Citizenship was a crucial mechanism through which auxiliaries gained access to the privileges of the Roman legal system, as well as symbolic membership in the broader Roman citizenry. Before completion of service and the subsequent conferral of citizenship, however, auxiliaries possessed the two legal statuses of soldier and *peregrinus*, which barred them from certain marital and inheritance-related privileges.<sup>10</sup> Even as full members of the imperial military, then, auxiliaries remained largely disenfranchised and defined by their provincial, non-Roman origins in the eyes of the law.

---

<sup>7</sup> David Benjamin Cuff, "The *Auxilia* in Roman Britain and the Two Germanies from Augustus to Caracalla: Family, Religion and ‘Romanization,’” (University of Toronto, 2010), 7.

<sup>8</sup> Ian Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces: The Roman Auxilia and the Making of Provincial Society from Augustus to the Severans* (Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2013), 4.

<sup>9</sup> Cuff, 6. *Conubium* conferred auxiliary veterans with the right to legally marry a current or future non-citizen, *peregrinus* wife and still transmit the citizen status to their children. Importantly, *conubium* bestowed the union of the veteran and his foreign wife with the legal status of *iustum matrimonium*, which was the legal status given to a valid marriage between two Roman citizens.

<sup>10</sup> *Peregrini*, or foreigners, were free, non-citizen subjects of the Roman Empire

Despite auxiliaries' seemingly marginal position on the outskirts of the Roman social and legal hierarchy, the *auxilia* were vital to the workings of the imperial military. Following recruitment into the Roman army, auxiliaries were often transferred far distances from their homelands to serve along foreign frontiers. Composed of *alae*, cavalry regiments, and *cohortes*, infantry regiments, auxiliaries played a crucial role in the defense and policing of the empire's vast frontiers.<sup>11</sup> Roman Britain was one such frontier locale that hosted auxiliary troops from abroad. Auxiliary units participated in the Claudian invasion of Britain in 43 CE, after which Rome gradually expanded its territorial control throughout the island. With the construction of Hadrian's Wall in 122 CE, a boundary which physically and socially structured the northern frontier zone, the *auxilia* became entrenched in the military affairs of the region.

Auxiliaries from the continent—particularly soldiers of Germanic and Gallic origin—were often deployed to police the British frontier and quell resistance from local tribes in Britain, while the native Britons were themselves conscripted into the *auxilia* and then transferred to distant Roman borders in the East.<sup>12</sup> Consequently, the *auxilia* garrisoned in Britain comprised a rich cultural mosaic, marked by the convergence of soldiers from several different provinces. Britain emerged as a dynamic site of military mobility and religious exchange on the fringes of the empire. As was common within the ancient Graeco-Roman world, as well as within the Roman imperial army more specifically, cult practice was deeply embedded in the lived experiences of auxiliary soldiers in Britain. On the surface, the imperial religion of the Roman state was the overarching cult system that governed the lives of individual auxiliaries, but there

---

<sup>11</sup> Jonathan James McLaughlin, "The Transformation of the Roman Auxiliary Soldier in Thought and Practice," (University of Michigan, 2015), 1.

<sup>12</sup> Kevin Woram, "The Community of the Matronae Cult in the Roman Rhineland: Provincial Identity in the Western Frontiers," (Tulane University, 2016), 37.

was remarkable scope for diversity and nuance within this broader framework.<sup>13</sup> Scattered throughout Britain are a number of excavated temples and altars that were erected by auxiliary soldiers garrisoned in the region. These religious structures and inscriptions honored a diverse array of deities—Roman, local, and foreign.

This thesis will use the cult practice—in particular, the votive inscriptions—of the *auxilia* in Britain as a lens through which to investigate the dynamic intersection of mobility, identity, and religion among these non-Roman, non-citizen soldiers. In particular, this thesis focuses on the socio-cultural aspects of the lived experiences of auxiliary soldiers. By contrast, historians of the *auxilia* first investigated the topic through the lens of imperial military history. In the late 19th century, German historian Theodor Mommsen produced crucial archaeological discoveries on the camps and fortifications of the *auxilia*. In Mommsen’s time, scholarship was largely framed by the view of the *auxilia* as an instrumental vehicle of the Roman imperial system—“as an arm of imperial governance.”<sup>14</sup> This top-down approach to research on the *auxilia* prioritized investigation into how the military institution was organized, structured, and recruited, thus relegating auxiliary soldiers to the status of passive agents of the army apparatus. George Cheesman’s 1914 book, *The Auxilia of the Roman Imperial Army*, employs a similar framework of analysis as Mommsen’s work in tracing the *auxilia*’s history in terms of the institution’s role as an instrument of the imperial state. As the first survey of the *auxilia*, Cheesman’s work provides a comprehensive overview of the recruitment, distribution, and military tactics of the auxiliary system. Cheesman’s work, however, does not include an analysis of the socio-cultural aspects of the *auxilia*—the daily lives and communities of rank-and-file soldiers.

---

<sup>13</sup> Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces*, 212.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

In his 1980 work *Studies in the Auxilia of the Roman Army from Augustus to Trajan*, Paul Holder provides a limited update to Cheesman's seminal survey of the *auxilia*. Although his work does not wholly sever ties with the military history lens which dominated earlier scholarship on auxiliaries, Holder trains a newfound focus on the individual officers of the *auxilia* and their career development, as well as the issue of citizenship as it pertains to auxiliary soldiers. In particular, Holder devotes an entire chapter of his work to the question of the legal status of auxiliaries, which delves into a number of individual attestations of auxiliary soldiers in order to investigate their citizenship statuses.<sup>15</sup> Although Holder's work began to circumvent this trend, the existing body of scholarship on the *auxilia* overwhelmingly emphasizes the institution's position in the Roman military system, with research focused primarily on auxiliary soldiers' recruitment, deployment, and numbers, alongside supplemental case studies highlighting individual auxiliary units and regions. Although socio-cultural factors are at times incorporated into these studies, as with Holder's analysis of the auxiliaries' citizenship status, they are often overshadowed by the overarching narrative of military history which pervades the body of research.

The first comprehensive work to transcend the imperial military focus of *auxilia* scholarship was Ian Haynes's 2013 book *Blood of the Provinces: The Roman Auxilia and the Making of Provincial Society from Augustus to the Severans*. Revising Cheesman's original survey, Haynes evaluates the dynamic socio-cultural elements of the *auxilia*, paying particular attention to questions of identity and culture among auxiliaries. Whereas earlier scholarship analyzed the structural and organizational features of the *auxilia* institution as a whole, Haynes explores the vibrant, lived experiences of auxiliary soldiers, interrogating critical issues of

---

<sup>15</sup> Paul A. Holder, *Studies in the Auxilia of the Roman Army from Augustus to Trajan* (Oxford: B.A.R., 1980), 77.

ethnicity, cult practice, and cultural transformation. Haynes's focus on reconstructing the daily lives of ordinary auxiliary soldiers is a groundbreaking reframing of *auxilia* scholarship which underlies the analysis of this thesis. Haynes, in effect, liberates *auxilia* scholarship from the constraints of its imperial military focus, directing new pathways of research towards an array of socio-cultural elements and issues.

As a comprehensive, century-spanning survey of the *auxilia*, however, Haynes's work lacks a concise regional focus and does not explore the topic of cult practice beyond an individual chapter. While Haynes's work captures the large-scale patterns of the *auxilia*, the lived experiences of auxiliary soldiers varied greatly between the different frontier locales in which they were stationed. Given its broad geographical and temporal scope, then, Haynes's chapter on the cult practices of the *auxilia* does not encapsulate the rich complexity of the religious landscapes of auxiliaries throughout the empire. In the chapter, Haynes focuses largely on auxiliaries' participation in the common imperial state religion, although he does allow scope for "regional variation within the framework of 'military religion.'"<sup>16</sup> While Haynes references several regionally-specific instances of local worship in this section, the broad sweep of his investigation prevents him from evaluating each example in depth. Furthermore, his analysis of auxiliary worship does not intersect with the potent themes of mobility and identity.

Beyond Haynes's article "The Romanisation of Religion in the 'Auxilia' of the Roman Imperial Army from Augustus to Septimus Severus," which predates his book by two decades, there exist few comprehensive scholarly works which investigate the cult practices of the *auxilia*, and even fewer which narrow the regional focus to Britain. Nonetheless, the broader topic of the cult practice of the Roman military in Britain has been the subject of significant research among

---

<sup>16</sup> Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces*, 212.

scholars. In his 1991 book *The Pagan Religions of the British Isles*, Ronald Hutton extensively surveys the religious landscape of Roman Britain, paying particular attention to the diverse array of deities worshiped in the region. Although Hutton delves deeply into the complex worship of Roman soldiers on the northern frontier of Britain, there is no specific discussion of the *auxilia* in his work. Rather, Hutton treats the Roman army of Britain as an imperial monolith, collapsing distinctions between the legions and the *auxilia*. Georgia Irby-Massie's 1999 volume *Military Religion in Roman Britain* similarly lacks a narrow focus on the religion of the *auxilia*, although her work comprehensively surveys the cult practices of the military in Britain. While her work does not hone in specifically on auxiliary worship, Irby-Massie intersects her survey of cult practice with other socio-cultural elements of the military. Her work, for instance, explores the geographical and temporal distribution of altars across the northern frontier zone and identifies trends regarding the social status of dedicators. Irby-Massie's framework of analysis, which connects soldiers' cult practices with other salient aspects of their identity, will serve as a crucial foundation for the analysis of this thesis.

By centering the cult practice of auxiliary soldiers in Britain, this thesis begins the process of filling the gap in the scholarship of both the *auxilia* and religion of Roman Britain. Research on the *auxilia* has historically been situated within the realm of military history. While Haynes's recent work has begun to amend this trend, there still remains a dearth of research on the worship patterns of the *auxilia*, particularly within the frontier zone of Britain. Specifically, this thesis diverges from existing scholarship on military religion in Britain in how it explores cult practice through the unique positionality of the *auxilia* as non-Roman, non-citizen soldiers. An analysis intertwining the identity, mobility, and cult practice of the *auxilia* forms a crucial

contribution to the growing body of research that attempts to reconstruct the lived experiences of auxiliary soldiers.

This study draws further significance from its position within the broader scholarly discourse on Romanization. Deeply enmeshed in debates about identity and cultural transformation, studies of the *auxilia* have historically been underpinned by the decades-long debate surrounding the theory of Romanization. Throughout the past century, Roman historians have used the term “Romanization” to denote the process in which territories conquered by Rome unilaterally assimilated and adopted so-called “Roman” culture, values, and behaviors. At the core of this theory lies a notion of “Romanness”—the idea that there existed some essential package of cultural concepts and values that made one distinctly “Roman.” Inherent within the conception of Romanization, therefore, are alienating binaries that carve out an “inside” and “outside” group, a distinct “other” within the multicultural Roman world.

In the 1970s, scholars began to challenge the Romanization model, with critiques especially aimed at the colonialist and imperialist undertones pervading the theory. The framework of Romanization, scholars argued, fails to consider the dynamism and pluralism of the complex processes of cultural transformation.<sup>17</sup> Since then, multiple revisionist strands have attempted to supplant the Romanization school but there remains no broad consensus among historians as to the correct replacement. In its contribution to the ongoing Romanization debate, this thesis will both affirm and expand upon recent scholarship that has sought to extricate the study of Roman imperialism from its historically colonialist prejudices. In decentering Rome and destabilizing traditional binaries, however, this study does not simply replicate the work of previous scholars, but rather synthesizes various elements and frameworks of analysis in order to

---

<sup>17</sup> Stephen Chappell, “Auxiliary Regiments and New Cultural Formation in Imperial Dacia, 106–274 c.e.,” *The Classical World* 104, no. 1 (2010): 91.

produce a novel re-envisioning of the *auxilia* and their place in the Roman world. In particular, the exploration of the *auxilia* in this study is fundamentally structured by a theoretical framework cognizant of the intricate functions of power, identity, and cult practice within an imperial frontierland context.

This framework of analysis is premised upon the characterization of the frontier zone as a profoundly pluralistic and transformative landscape. The frontier environment in northern Britain was fundamental to the dynamic socio-cultural transformations undergone by the *auxilia* garrisoned there. That is, Hadrian's Wall—Britain's northern frontier—was not only a physical military boundary, but also a “contested landscape of polyvocalities,” in which multiple, complex identities overlapped and interacted.<sup>18</sup> The intersection of distinct identities at this frontier site was visible in all realms of life. Hadrian's Wall hosted civilians and soldiers, legionaries and auxiliaries, officers and rank-and-file soldiers, Romans and non-Romans, local Britons and individuals from abroad. In this regard, the frontier can be construed not simply as a topographical space, but as a veritable “cultural process.”<sup>19</sup> The Wall formed a site for the creation of novel socio-cultural patterns and practices.

Given the amalgamation of peoples and identities in this frontier zone, it is necessary for the analysis of this thesis to delineate a definition for the crucial concept of “identity” itself. Although his work focuses specifically on the notion of “ethnic identity,” Jonathan Hall's articulation of self-definition in his 1997 book *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* is indispensable for the theoretical framework of this study.<sup>20</sup> Borrowing from Hall's ideas, identity here is

---

<sup>18</sup> Claire Nesbitt, “Multiculturalism on Hadrian's Wall,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Britain*, edited by Martin Millett, Louise Revell, and Alison Moore (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> James McDougall and Judith Scheele, *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012), 77.

<sup>20</sup> Hall's work investigates ethnicity within the context of Greek antiquity, where groupings of *ethne* served as a crucial avenue for self-perception and political organization within the Hellenic world. By contrast, while various

defined as an inherently social and cultural construct, one that is “perpetually renewed and renegotiated through discourse and social praxis.”<sup>21</sup> That is, identity is fundamentally mutable and context-based—a social phenomenon that is constantly in the process of being affirmed, transformed, and reconciled. Within a multicultural environment such as Hadrian’s Wall, this conception of identity as an ever-changing social construct takes on further meaning. In the pluralistic frontier zone, the fluidity of an individual’s identity may result in the development of new cultural forms and adaptations, rendering formerly rigid boundaries suddenly permeable.<sup>22</sup> This framework can be further extended beyond the microscopic level of individual identity. Cultural transformation—whether occurring within an individual or among a wider group—necessarily implicates broader imperial power dynamics.

Although the frontier zones of the empire may have been areas of remarkable fluidity and pluralism, they were nevertheless structured by an imperial system of domination and control. Therefore, although recent postcolonial studies have rightly attempted to confer agency upon non-Roman actors in frontier societies, it is dangerous to overemphasize the fluidity and fragmentation of these locales and subsequently minimize the strength of the power dynamics that generated pervasive inequality within these communities.<sup>23</sup> As with all parts of the empire, members of the frontier zone were significantly exposed to Roman imperial ideology. The values of loyalty and obedience to the emperor were enshrined in this ideology, thus ordering and sanctioning power relations between the empire and its subjects. Imperial ideology, in effect,

---

ethnic groups permeated the Roman Empire, being “Roman” was, above all, a legal and socio-cultural identification, rather than an ethnic marker. Nonetheless, whether studied in its ethnic, legal, or cultural forms, Hall’s notion of identity as discursive is a fundamental framework applicable to many different historical regions and time periods, including that of imperial Rome.

<sup>21</sup> Jonathan M. Hall, *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 19.

<sup>22</sup> Sergio Gonzalez Sanchez and Alexandra Gugliemi, *Romans and Barbarians Beyond the Frontiers: Archaeology, Ideology and Identities in the North* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2017), 14.

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Gardner, “Thinking about Roman Imperialism: Postcolonialism, Globalisation and Beyond?” *Britannia* 44 (2013): 6.

legitimized “a peculiarly Roman notion of social order” based on interconnecting “relations between provinces, cities, individuals, emperors, and empire.”<sup>24</sup> Through routine interactions with spectacle, performance, and ritual, the presence of this imperial ideology was habituated within the empire’s subjects.<sup>25</sup> Auxiliaries, as members of the military, uniquely interacted with imperial ideology. While policing the frontiers, the *auxilia* witnessed and enacted the fortification of the physical boundaries of the imperial ideology. And yet, as non-citizen individuals, auxiliaries were simultaneously the targets of this ideology themselves. That is, through the military rituals perpetuating imperial values, the obedience and loyalty of the *auxilia* to the empire was crucially maintained. Bearing in mind the asymmetric system of power that structured the lives of the *auxilia*, this analysis operates under the assumption that auxiliary soldiers were as much shaped by the Roman imperial state as they shaped it themselves.

The framework of this thesis thus emerges as a complex balance between the one extreme of Romanization, with its unilateral assimilation of all non-Roman elements, and the other extreme of recent postcolonial studies which wholly eradicate the impact of Roman influence upon non-Roman groups. Employing the ideas of Roman historian Greg Woolf, this thesis operates under the guiding principle that the advent of Roman imperial power did not simply replace diversity with uniformity. Rather, where cultural difference had in pre-Roman times been generated by local customs, it now fell subject to the underlying logic of imperial power. The Roman imperial vocabulary, however, was not the sole determinant of cultural transformation, but merely an addition—albeit a significant one—to the preexisting repertoire of local cultural forms that intermingled throughout the Empire. That is, instead of producing monolithic

---

<sup>24</sup> Clifford Ando, *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 5.

<sup>25</sup> Emma Dench, *Empire and Political Cultures in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 31-32.

homogeneity, Roman imperial power created a new ordering of difference.<sup>26</sup> This framework takes into account the problems inherent in notions of “Romanness,” acknowledging the impossibility of any individual subject of the empire to morph into an idealized, uniform conception of a “Roman.” Instead, this framework posits that there existed so many different possible experiences of the Roman Empire that, as Woolf argues, “becoming Roman did not mean assimilating to an ideal type, but rather acquiring a position in the complex of structured differences in which Roman power resided.”<sup>27</sup> During the imperial period, regional variation and cultural transformation continued manifesting vibrantly, but these phenomena increasingly came to be structured by a new imperial vocabulary, which alternately contested and complemented the preexisting cultural vocabularies of the provinces. As a result, disparate currents intertwined in order to create novel cultural forms and social mechanisms, neither fully Roman nor foreign. Within this transformative socio-cultural discourse, the multivalent cultural forms of the *auxilia* served as potent vehicles for the construction and transmission of identity.

The fundamentally asymmetrical power dynamic of the empire, then, did not leave auxiliaries powerless. While the fact of Roman sovereignty inserted itself into all dimensions of imperial life, there emerge many examples across the empire of diverse individuals and communities who sought “to harness the efficacy of Roman power to all sorts of personal and local ends, that, however benign, have nothing to do with loyalty to the Roman center.”<sup>28</sup> In fact, to assume that every cultural artifact borne from a subject of the empire embodies a direct response—either assimilative or resistant—to Roman power only reinforces problematic theories which posit the centrality of Rome at the expense of other provinces and peoples. Viewed in this

---

<sup>26</sup> Greg Woolf, “Beyond Romans and Natives,” *World Archaeology* 28, no. 3 (1997): 10.

<sup>27</sup> Greg Woolf, *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 245.

<sup>28</sup> Dench, 39.

context, this thesis interrogates several converging elements of the multidirectional *auxilia* identity in order to illuminate the range of environments and social categories which shaped auxiliary worship, beyond the dominant imperial structures. With votive inscriptions as the focal point, an analysis of the *auxilia*'s cult practice underscores how auxiliaries strategically operated within the overarching imperial logic in order to dynamically assert and transform their identities.

On the surface, these votive inscriptions may resemble clear-cut expressions of assimilation to Roman culture. The inscriptions are written in Latin, they adhere to the stylistic norms and formulae of Roman cult worship, and above all, they mark participation in the “epigraphic habit,” a hallmark of Roman imperial culture.<sup>29</sup> In contrast with the auxiliaries’ original, non-Roman communities, which often lacked the practice of inscribing in stone, epigraphy has often been associated with imperial Roman mechanisms of culture and power. The act of epigraphy was thus structured by a pernicious “cultural imperialism,” in which one belief system was superimposed upon another.<sup>30</sup> However, votive inscriptions’ place as part of the Roman cultural medium of epigraphy—as part of the underlying Roman imperial logic—does not devalue their analytical potential to highlight the *auxilia*'s dynamic self-fashioning processes. In fact, crucial to this analysis is the concept of “resistant adaptation”—in which acts of resistance may be encoded in material artifacts that externally appear to conform to Roman imperial culture.<sup>31</sup> The employment of the model of “resistant adaptation” in this thesis is not

---

<sup>29</sup> Ramsay MacMullen, “The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire,” *The American Journal of Philology* 103, no. 3 (1982): 238. Macmullen sees “the publishing of statements on stone as a characteristic activity within the Roman (of course, not only the Roman) way of life,” noting that epigraphy was not a characteristic native to regions such as northern Italy, most of north Africa, and much of northwestern Europe.

<sup>30</sup> Jane Webster, “‘Interpretatio’: Roman Word Power and the Celtic Gods,” *Britannia* 26 (1995): 157.

<sup>31</sup> Jane Webster, “A Negotiated Syncretism: Readings on the Development of Romano-Celtic Religion,” in *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism: Power, Discourse, and Discrepant Experience in the Roman Empire*, edited by David J. Mattingly (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Cushing-Malloy Inc., 1997): 170; Jane Webster, “Necessary

intended to further entrench the dichotomy of assimilation and resistance. Rather, this concept highlights how the external appearance of Roman culture does not always translate to the wholesale integration of imperial Roman ideology within subjects. That is, we should not equate the material reproduction of imperial culture with ideological loyalty to the imperial state.<sup>32</sup>

Take, for instance, the altar dedicated to the goddess *Ahwardua* by the First Cohort of Tungrians, an auxiliary unit garrisoned along Hadrian's Wall.<sup>33</sup> This dedication marks the only extant instance of worship to *Ahwardua*, who was likely a local Celtic goddess associated with water and springs.<sup>34</sup> Although the altar physically adheres to Roman stylistic and cultural mechanisms of worship, the actual goddess honored in the dedication bears no affiliations with the Roman state. This is not to say that the altar should be taken as a complete expression of Roman or non-Roman identity, but rather to underscore the multivalent landscape inhabited by the inscriptions, which disrupted clear-cut cultural boundaries altogether. In challenging the typical binaries of Roman and non-Roman or of imperial and indigenous, the votive inscriptions along Hadrian's Wall embody the multivalent and multi-faceted nature of the *auxilia* themselves.

The votive inscriptions which serve as the source of analysis for this study all come from the 1st through 4th centuries CE—the period during which the Roman Empire occupied and militarized the northern frontier zone of Britain. Given the centuries-long occupation of Roman Britain and the significant auxiliary presence on the isle, the mass of votive inscriptions from this locale provide an excellent sample to form the basis of a study of auxiliary cult practice. In fact, the analysis of this thesis compiles over two hundred dedications from the northern Britain

---

Comparisons: A Post-Colonial Approach to Religious Syncretism in the Roman Provinces,” *World Archaeology* 28, no. 3 (1997): 327.

<sup>32</sup> Dench, 35.

<sup>33</sup> *Brit.* 44.5.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

frontier. However, due to the inevitable fragmentation of sources from antiquity, as well as the idiosyncrasies of epigraphic worship in this locale, not all of the dedications within the collection are explicitly attributable to the *auxilia*. In the cases where the auxiliary affiliations are uncertain, the decision to include the altars within the primary source base for this thesis was made based on the presence of other implicit elements in the dedications which testify to the likely auxiliary origins of the artifacts.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, the statistics included in this thesis will indicate the proportion of uncertain dedications included in the dataset. Notwithstanding this caveat, the analysis of the corpus of altars erected by auxiliary soldiers along the frontier of Britain provide a crucial avenue to challenge the traditional conception of the *auxilia* as a simple, “Romanized” instrument of imperialism.

This thesis will employ a dual-pronged method to analyze the complexities of the votive inscriptions of the *auxilia*. The first element of the analysis will apply a mode of statistical analysis to the large body of votive inscriptions in order to identify patterns of worship. Using as a foundation the methodology that Stephen Chappell applies to the *auxilia* of Roman Dacia in his work *Auxiliary Regiments and New Cultural Formation in Imperial Dacia*, this statistical analysis will compare, among the many auxiliary inscriptions in Britain, the different deities worshiped and how they are identified; the military ranks of the devotees; the localized, regional identifications of worshipers; and whether the inscriptions are corporately or individually dedicated. This methodology of statistical analysis allows for a more broad-based, comparative analysis of how the array of different auxiliary units and individuals experienced the complex systems of power within the frontierland environment of Britain.

---

<sup>35</sup> These implicit elements include, most often, the origin of the dedications in or nearby forts with a strongly-attested auxiliary presence, as well as the probable Germanic descent of the dedicators. Germanic soldiers made up a significant portion of the auxiliary population along Hadrian’s Wall.

In contrast with the macro-level approach of statistical analysis, the second prong of analysis will be a close investigation of several altars which possess exceptionally rich content for study. This analysis will employ a close reading of the individual votive inscriptions which appear on the altars, as well as of the accompanying iconographies, when existing. In the more detailed analysis of the inscriptions, this study will deliberately “read against the grain” and draw upon the aforementioned model of “resistant adaptation.”<sup>36</sup> By employing these two prongs of analysis in tandem, this thesis aims to interrogate the cult practice of the *auxilia* from both a macroscopic and microscopic level, identifying larger-scale trends while at the same time uncovering the lived experiences of individual auxiliaries.

As non-Roman soldiers in the multicultural frontier zone of northern Britain, auxiliaries occupied a uniquely mobile positionality, which intersected multiple, salient social categories. Auxiliaries were servicemen within the vast imperial Roman military apparatus and at the same time indigenous members of non-Roman, provincial communities—both imagined and physical. Disrupting contemporary binaries between imperial and indigenous, colonizer and colonized, and insider and outsider, the *auxilia* inhabited a multi-faceted cultural context which informed their divergent experiences of Roman imperial power. This study shows how, through their cult practice, auxiliaries fluidly crossed social boundaries to contest, assert, and reinvent their identities according to the diverse contexts of the frontier zone. In some cases, this socio-cultural boundary-crossing strengthened the *auxilia*'s bonds with the broader, imperial Roman military community, whereas, in other cases, auxiliaries dynamically demarcated ethnic boundaries between foreign, non-Roman groups. Regardless of their origin, rank, or legal status, the

---

<sup>36</sup> Webster, “A Negotiated Syncretism,” 170.

auxiliaries of Roman Britain emerge in this analysis as independent actors with the agency to successfully maneuver and negotiate their identities within the system of imperial power.

Chapter One of this study focuses on the diverse array of deities worshiped by the *auxilia* in order to disrupt the narrative which contends the linear Romanization of auxiliary religion. The diversity of the deities in this frontier zone highlights the striking religious and physical mobility of the empire. In their worship of deities of the Graeco-Roman pantheon, auxiliaries along Hadrian's Wall participated in the transmission and naturalization of imperial power within the military community. Through dedications to local Celtic deities, auxiliaries expressed affiliation with the local frontier context of northern Britain, carving out connections with the natural landscape. And, in altars to non-Roman deities from abroad, particularly from Germanic regions, auxiliaries maintained ties to their ancestral traditions, while also articulating dynamic expressions of cultural difference.

Chapter Two focuses on the identities of the auxiliary worshipers in Britain, highlighting the range of salient social categories that co-existed within these men and shaped their cult practice. The altars of the *auxilia* reveal important distinctions between corporate and individual worship, as well as worship among the stratified ranks of soldiers in the military hierarchy. In their dedications, auxiliaries also displayed striking expressions of narrow, localized identity, aligning themselves with foreign tribes and regions. Honing in on the social affiliations of auxiliary worshipers reveals notable patterns between the dedicator's identity and their chosen deity of worship, illuminating a crucial interplay between identity and cult practice in this locale.

Finally, Chapter Three expands upon the previous two sections to highlight the dynamic intersection of mobility, identity, and cult practice among the *auxilia* in Britain. Using an in-depth case study, with close-readings of votive inscriptions from a temple along Hadrian's Wall,

this chapter illuminates how auxiliaries possessed a unique capacity to navigate the complex range of social structures of the imperial Roman world. Through the choice of deities, the expressions of identity, and the institutional affiliations on their altars, auxiliaries selectively demarcated ingroups and outgroups within the pluralistic environment of Hadrian's Wall.

Ultimately, this thesis will argue that the cult practice of the *auxilia* highlights the dynamic social mobility of the auxiliaries, in addition to their more straightforward physical mobility. This social mobility was marked by the auxiliaries' capacity to traverse and occupy an array of different social categories, combining the imperial Roman cultural vocabulary with other non-Roman ones. In contrast to the Romanization paradigm, which holds that the only salient context for the *auxilia* was the imperial Roman military context, this thesis contends that auxiliaries inhabited a kaleidoscopic environment of intersecting affiliations and identities. Viewed through the lens of their religious practices, auxiliaries fluidly enacted different manifestations of identity according to different contexts, negotiating power on several different levels and across several different spaces.

## Chapter One: Deities

Towards the end of the first century CE, an outpost fort of the Roman imperial army was founded at Birrens, around twenty miles north of Hadrian's Wall (map 1).<sup>37</sup> At some point during the fort's occupation, likely in the late second century CE, an auxiliary cohort of Tungrian soldiers was garrisoned at Birrens under the command of the prefect Silvius Auspex. During their tenure in this northernmost locale of the Roman Empire, a group of Raetian tribesmen serving in the cohort dedicated an altar to *Marti et Victoriae Aug(usti)*—Mars and the Emperor's Victory.<sup>38</sup> Made of red sandstone, and measuring roughly one meter in length and half a meter in width, the altar was relatively unassuming in size. The votive object, however, was accentuated by intricate carvings and decorative motifs in the space above and below the inscribed dedication, featuring spirals and flowing vines with leaves (fig. 1.1). At the fort of Birrens, this altar erected by Raetian tribesmen was accompanied by several other votive inscriptions dedicated by auxiliaries, numbering ten in total. Together, these soldiers erected altars in honor of a diverse array of deities—ranging from Roman gods, like *Jupiter Optimus Maximus* and *Minerva*, to the rarely-attested Germanic deity *Ricagambeda*.<sup>39</sup> At Birrens, auxiliary worship reflected the dynamic plurality of forces which characterized the frontier zone.

Not only at Birrens, but all along the northern Britain frontier zone are located hundreds of altars that were dedicated by auxiliary soldiers garrisoned in the region from the first through fourth centuries CE. While many of the extant altars are preserved only in fragmented form, there are several which survive completely intact. Made of sandstone, the altars typically

---

<sup>37</sup> Alistair Tosh, "Ancient Alamo: Blatobulgium Roman Fort," Aspects of History, November 27, 2022, <https://aspectsofhistory.com/ancient-alamo-blatobulgium-roman-fort/>.

<sup>38</sup> RIB 2100. *Raetia* was a Roman frontier province in central Europe. The province was named after the *Raeti* people, its native inhabitants, who were divided into tribes of probable Celtic and Illyrian origin.

<sup>39</sup> RIB 2097, RIB 2104, RIB 2107.

measure no larger than half a meter in width and 1.3 meters in length. The largest area on the front of the altars is typically taken up by the text of the votive inscription, where information regarding the deity of choice and the identification of the dedicant(s) is carved. Some of the altars are adorned by ornamental imagery above and below the inscription, while others are more nondescript.



*Fig. 1.1. An altar dedicated by auxiliary soldiers to Mars and the Emperor's Victory at Birrens fort.<sup>40</sup>*

In the Roman military context inhabited by the auxiliary soldiers along Hadrian's Wall, altars were a crucial pathway of participation in religious life. As a form of cult practice, votive altars allowed a soldier to express devotion to his deity of choice, as well as convey information about the worshiper himself and his own beliefs. Some altars were erected as part of the official rituals of the imperial state religion. In other cases, soldiers independently dedicated altars of their own accord. In the instances of independent worship, however, the expenses involved in commissioning altars likely posed a high barrier of entry for individual soldiers. As a result,

<sup>40</sup> Mike Bishop, "PLV Inscriptions (Birrens)," Per Lineam Valli, February 3, 2023, <https://perlineamvalli.wordpress.com/2020/12/03/plv-inscriptions-birrens/>.

dedicants were often drawn from the ranks of the officer class, but this did not wholly preclude participation in the practice by rank-and-file soldiers, who at times formed groups to share the cost.<sup>41</sup> Whether individual or corporate in nature, the votive inscriptions along Hadrian's Wall convey crucial information regarding auxiliary soldiers, their beliefs, and their self-representation. Used as indices for the identity and mobility of the auxiliaries, the votive inscriptions provide compelling insight into how auxiliaries interacted with the world and defined themselves. This chapter will investigate the diverse array of deities which were venerated by the *auxilia* within the altars of the northern Britain frontier zone. Auxiliaries in this locale worshiped imperial Roman, local Celtic, and foreign deities, their cult practices intersecting multiple different contexts. In some cases, auxiliaries, in their cult practice, emphasized their membership in the imperial military community, while in other cases, they preserved connections to their ancestral homelands and traditions. Worship thus emerges in this chapter as a powerful pathway through which the *auxilia* asserted their kaleidoscopic identities and affiliations, allowing soldiers to both forge bonds and express differentiation in the multicultural environment of the frontier.

### **The Roman Pantheon**

Given that the *auxilia* were integrated into the Roman imperial military apparatus, it is unsurprising that a bulk of the extant votive inscriptions were dedicated by auxiliaries to deities of the Roman pantheon. In the sphere of public worship, participation in official military rituals and festivals formed a fundamental part of the religious experiences of auxiliary soldiers. The *Feriale Duranum*, a third century CE calendar from Roman Syria, documents the list of official

---

<sup>41</sup> Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces*, 321.

festivals and observances which characterized a Roman soldier's religious year.<sup>42</sup> The document promotes the imperial cult, listing festivals celebrated in honor of deified emperors and the city of Rome. From this official document emerges a picture of auxiliary worship in which cult practice was methodically mediated by the organized apparatus of the imperial state. In particular, the calendar—and its strict control of the temporal realm—implies a standardized method of discipline exerted onto auxiliaries, and the Roman army more generally. In this asymmetrical power dynamic, the regulation of the auxiliary soldier's temporal agency intersected with the regulation of his religious agency. That is, the *Feriale Duranum's* prescription of mandatory rituals throughout the year translated not only into physical control over auxiliary bodies and movements, but also translated into a level of spiritual control over auxiliary worship.

Within militarized zones, and in Britain specifically, votive inscriptions provide tangible evidence of participation by auxiliaries in the organized imperial religion. Although soldiers were likely not obliged to personally participate in every ritual sacrifice of the imperial religion, the repeated exposure to these cult practices doubtless had a significant impact upon the *auxilia*.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, upon enlistment into the Roman army, soldiers undertook a sacred oath of loyalty, the *sacramentum*, which marked their entry into the imperial military community.<sup>44</sup> These oaths of loyalty were renewed annually by soldiers in early January and commemorated by votive altars dedicated to *Jupiter Optimus Maximus* (JOM), the chief deity of the Roman pantheon.<sup>45</sup> 79 extant votive inscriptions to JOM from the frontier zone of Britain appear in the

---

<sup>42</sup> Ian Haynes, "The Romanisation of Religion in the 'Auxilia' of the Roman Imperial Army from Augustus to Septimius Severus," *Britannia* 24 (1993): 142.

<sup>43</sup> Haynes, "The Romanisation of Religion," 143.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Irby-Massie, 209; Ian Haynes, "Identity and the Military Community in Roman Britain," in *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Britain*, edited by Martin Millett, Louise Revell, and Alison Moore (Oxford Academic, 2014).

sample of votives compiled by this thesis, by far the largest number of auxiliary inscriptions to a single deity in the region represented in the sample.<sup>46</sup> Although it is probable that not all 79 inscriptions to JOM were dedicated as part of official military rituals, the vast number of altars to this deity nevertheless indicates widespread adherence to the Roman imperial cult.

The sheer repetition and number of dedications to JOM among the *auxilia* may at first appear to render their significance mundane and unworthy of analysis, as JOM is frequently attested in dedications originating from many different geographical areas and social strata of the empire. These altars, however, critically underscore the omnipresent mechanisms of imperial power underlying the auxiliary experience. In particular, rituals were vital to the propagation of state power, serving as a powerful vehicle through which ideology was rendered concrete and “members symbolically reenacted their commitment to the community.”<sup>47</sup> Through constant rituals and dedications to JOM, repeated to the point of mundanity, the ideological power of the imperial state was effectively manifested, reproduced, and naturalized among the *auxilia*.<sup>48</sup>

Not all of the ceremonial dedications to JOM, however, were straightforward transmissions of the Roman state religion.<sup>49</sup> Although rituals were crucial avenues for the propagation of state power, they nevertheless offered the potential for alternative interpretations, providing the “raw material from which others could forge new, more inclusive definitions of

---

<sup>46</sup> In comparison, the next largest totals were 14 inscriptions dedicated to some variation of the *Genii*, 13 inscriptions dedicated to the *Matres*, and 12 inscriptions dedicated to Mars. Note that, of the 79 compiled inscriptions to JOM, only one was of uncertain auxiliary origins.

<sup>47</sup> Ando, 339.

<sup>48</sup> Louise Revell, “The Roman Emperor,” in *Roman Imperialism and Local Identities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 108.

<sup>49</sup> The imperial Roman state religion was the worship of the official deities of the Roman pantheon, with particular emphasis on the worship of the cult of the emperors. The state religion was largely organized around public rites and ceremonies which venerated the official deities. By contrast, private cult practice in the empire was the subject of personal choice and expense, unrelated to public religious ceremonies. In the realm of private cult, individual worshipers honored an array of deities, including but not limited to those of the Roman pantheon.

emperor and empire.”<sup>50</sup> One votive inscription along Hadrian’s Wall, for instance, was dedicated to *Jupiter Optimus Maximus Heliopolitano*—Jupiter of Heliopolis.<sup>51</sup> Heliopolis was a city located in Roman Syria. Notably, the frontier fort where this inscription was found in Britain hosted several auxiliary regiments from Syria.<sup>52</sup> The dedication to Jupiter of Heliopolis, then, may be interpreted as the attempt by an auxiliary soldier to express loyalty to the Roman state religion, while at the same time preserving ties to his ancestral homeland, even while garrisoned thousands of miles away. The inscription illuminates the complex mobility underlying the auxiliary experience, in which cult practices—in addition to individual soldiers—were displaced, transformed, and reinvented. The ritual dedication to JOM, in this case, may have served as a powerful medium through which Syrian auxiliaries redefined the imperial boundaries of inclusion, asserting divine connections between the province of Syria and the Roman pantheon.

The dedication to Jupiter of Heliopolis was not the only instance in which cultural elements from the province of Syria permeated the northern frontier zone. Four out of the 79 dedications to JOM were dedications to a unique manifestation of the deity—*Jupiter Dolichenus*.<sup>53</sup> The cult of this deity arose out of the town of Doliche in Syria, deriving its origins from an old Hittite storm god. The cult of *Jupiter Dolichenus* presumably diffused into the Roman world following Rome’s annexation of Syria in 64 BCE, after which the deity became extremely popular among soldiers across the empire in the second and third centuries CE.<sup>54</sup> The presence of *Jupiter Dolichenus* in Britain therefore highlights the striking mobility of people,

---

<sup>50</sup> Ando, 339.

<sup>51</sup> RIB 1783. This inscription cannot be directly attributed to an auxiliary soldier. However, it was dedicated by a worshiper named *Iulius Pollio* at the Roman fort *Magnis*, a locale where a strong auxiliary presence has been attested.

<sup>52</sup> David Leslie Kennedy, “The Auxilia and Numeri Raised in the Roman Province of Syria” (PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 1980): 281.

<sup>53</sup> RIB 895, RIB 1896, RIB 916, Brit. 41.4.

<sup>54</sup> Anna Collar and Oliver Nicholson, “Jupiter Dolichenus,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

beliefs, and ideas across the empire, as the cult traveled from the eastern provinces to the northernmost frontiers. At the same time, the cult's popularity among Roman soldiers illuminates the formation of a cohesive, empire-wide military community, of which Roman auxiliaries were a part. Whereas standard dedications to JOM represent base-level participation in the organized state religion, an institution which transcended regional, class, and group differences, worship of *Jupiter Dolichenus* alludes to the more narrow creation of a spiritual community of Roman soldiers. The use of epithets—whether *Heliopolitano* or *Dolichenus*—in the worship of JOM highlights how auxiliaries employed cult practice as a mode of differentiation. In combining JOM with more localized epithets, soldiers carved out specialized affiliations and communities within the confines of the broader imperial Roman world.

In addition to JOM, a range of gods and goddesses from the Roman pantheon were the subject of auxiliary worship in the frontier zone of Britain. *Mars*, *Hercules*, and *Silvanus* were honored with the most altars among the *auxilia*, while other deities—*Apollo*, *Bellona*, *Mercury*, *Minerva*, *Neptune*, *Roma*, and *Salus*—received far fewer.<sup>55</sup> Of the dedications compiled for this thesis, and excluding the monolith of altars dedicated to JOM, inscriptions to *Mars*, *Hercules*, and *Silvanus* make up 75% of the total inscriptions to deities of the Roman pantheon.<sup>56</sup> As deities related to military strength and heroism, *Mars* and *Hercules* were obvious patrons of auxiliary soldiers, entrenched as they were in the frontierland military community. In auxiliary dedications, *Mars* was often equated with other deities, as soldiers took part in the mutable, syncretic processes common to the cults of imperial Rome. In fact, along Hadrian's Wall, 25% of the auxiliary dedications to the Roman pantheon featured syncretic manifestations of deities,

---

<sup>55</sup> *Mars* is attested in 12 inscriptions, *Hercules* is attested in 6 inscriptions, and *Silvanus* is attested in 6 inscriptions.

<sup>56</sup> The inscriptions compiled for this statistic include only altars to anthropomorphized deities of the Roman Pantheon, including *Mars*, *Hercules*, *Silvanus*, *Apollo*, *Bellona*, *Mercury*, *Minerva*, *Neptune*, *Roma*, and *Salus*. 6% of the total inscriptions were of uncertain auxiliary origins.

whereas only 13% of dedications to local Celtic deities and 13% of dedications to non-Roman deities from abroad were syncretized.<sup>57</sup> *Mars*, in particular, underwent syncretism in four extant auxiliary altars—33% of the total dedications to *Mars*. The syncretisms of *Mars* include votives to *Mars Camulus*, *Mars Braciaca*, *Mars Cocidius*, and *Mars Thincsus*, all of which synthesize the war god with deities of Celtic or Germanic origins.<sup>58</sup>

On one hand, the frequency of syncretic manifestations of *Mars* may highlight the popularity and familiarity of this deity among the *auxilia*. Given his militaristic attributes, auxiliaries likely felt intimate associations with *Mars*, perhaps leading to the desire to invoke this god in diverse situations and in collaboration with diverse deities. The melding of *Mars* with Celtic and Germanic deities in the syncretic dedications, then, may underscore the formation of a hybrid, transcultural identity among the auxiliary population of Britain. However, it is crucial not to overemphasize the mutualistic fluidity of the syncretic altars and erase their affiliations with the Roman imperial system. The material form of the altars testifies to the auxiliary dedicants' base-level participation in imperial Roman culture—the act of epigraphy, literacy in Latin, and knowledge of the standard Roman formula of worship being emblematic examples of this participation. While participation in the Roman cultural medium does not necessarily translate to total assimilation to the Roman system, it does signal that the socio-cultural experience of the *auxilia* was to some extent organized by the imperial Roman context. Although auxiliaries undeniably enacted agency in their daily lives and interactions, their worship was nevertheless subject to “imperialist rules.”<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Note that the collection of auxiliary dedications to the Roman pantheon used in this statistic excludes altars to JOM, as well as altars to commonly non-syncretized, abstract deities, including Victory, Fortune, the Emperor, and the *Genii*.

<sup>58</sup> RIB 2166, RIB 278, RIB 2015, RIB 1593.

<sup>59</sup> Jane Webster, “‘Interpretatio’: Roman Word Power,” 157.

Within this imperial environment, cultic syncretisms may be construed as products of the power asymmetries underlying the auxiliary experience. As distinctly Roman articulations of foreign religions, the auxiliary dedications which combine *Mars* with Celtic or Germanic deities may illuminate a broader superimposition of the Roman belief system onto other, non-Roman ones.<sup>60</sup> In what historian Jane Webster deems a mode of “cultural imperialism,” these syncretic dedications likely privileged the Roman context above all others, leading to a form of worship of foreign deities that may have been skewed by the Roman mechanisms through which it was born.<sup>61</sup> The auxiliary dedications to *Mars*, then, highlight the pervasive, imperial power structures underlying this frontier zone.

When viewed through the lens of “resistant adaptation,” however, these syncretic altars take on even further meaning. Although the dedications doubtless bear the influence of the imperial context, the altars can be seen as more than simple translations of non-Roman gods into a Roman context. It is possible that these altars embody “resistant adaptation,” in that the dedicants employed the material form of Roman worship in order to transform and reinvent their potent affiliations with Celtic and Germanic deities. Lacking other options within the imperial environment of Hadrian’s Wall, auxiliaries may have exploited Roman mechanisms of culture and worship as a means of preserving elements of their native traditions. In the process, the auxiliaries likely created cultic objects—the votive inscriptions—which activated unique meanings for a demarcated group of foreign soldiers. In this interpretation, the aforementioned markers of “cultural imperialism” lose some of their salience. Rather than construe the equation of *Mars* with foreign deities as the total superimposition of one belief system onto another, it is possible that the reverse was true. In this alternative interpretation, the syncretic worship of *Mars*

---

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 153, 157.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 157.

by auxiliaries may have represented a more pragmatic expression of fealty to the state, while the references to non-Roman deities in these dedications bore the heightened symbolic, cultural value.

The deity *Silvanus* was another instance of syncretism among the *auxilia*, featuring in combined dedications with the non-Roman deities *Cocidius* and *Vinotonus*.<sup>62</sup> In contrast with the martial associations of *Mars*, however, *Silvanus* was a deity of the countryside and the woodland. The worship of *Silvanus* among auxiliaries, then, appears tied to the soldiers' sense of place within the rural, countryside locality of the frontier zone. In contrast with inscriptions to deities such as Jupiter of Heliopolis, which display the effects of mobility in the form of continued connections to foreign lands, the worship of *Silvanus* alternately suggests a striking fixity among auxiliaries. That is, dedications to *Silvanus* may reflect among auxiliaries a significant connection to the natural world and physical environment of Britain—a product of the immobility of the *auxilia* garrisoned there. This connection to the local frontier environment is reinforced by *Silvanus*'s above-mentioned syncretisms with *Cocidius* and *Vinotonus*, both of which were Celtic deities native to Britain. *Silvanus* thus encapsulates the dynamic interplay between the physical and religious landscapes of the frontier zone. Within this interplay, it was not only the mobility but also the fixity and locality of auxiliaries that manifested within cult practice, thus underscoring the dynamic and multivocal nature of the *auxilia*'s religious life.

The tension between the *auxilia*'s mobility and immobility also manifested in soldiers' worship of the cult of the *genius*. The *genius* was a Roman protective spirit, present in every single person, place, and thing. Notably, five auxiliary dedications in Britain honor the *genius*

---

<sup>62</sup> RIB 1578, RIB 732, RIB 3251.

*loci*—the *genius* of the place.<sup>63</sup> In their reverence of the local land, these dedications indicate a connection and respect between auxiliary soldiers and their surrounding environment, once again reinforcing the salient tension between mobility and fixity among this group. Vague in nature, and lacking any reference to specific deities or locales, dedications to the *genii loci* may have represented appeals by the auxiliaries to the unknown gods and goddesses—and to the entirely new spiritual realm—which they encountered upon arrival to Britain. The auxiliary soldiers, potentially foreign to Britain as a product of their mobility, likely made sense of their new environment through worship of the *genii loci*. In fact, when analyzing the military regiments of Britain, historian Georgia Irby-Massie detects a temporal pattern in which worship of the cult of the *genius* correlates to the “importation of fresh troops to the island and troop transfers within the island.”<sup>64</sup> Dedications to the *genii*, and particularly the *genii loci*, then, may have represented a response by non-Roman auxiliaries to the new military environment which they encountered in Britain. Using Roman mechanisms of cult practice, the foreign auxiliaries made sense of the new locality and military community into which they had been inducted, mediating personal transformations in the spiritual realm in order to reconcile the stressors of their physical environment.

The many votive inscriptions attesting the *auxilia*'s worship of the Roman pantheon in Britain do not serve, therefore, as evidence of the unilateral transfer of Roman culture to foreign auxiliaries. Rather, as displayed by the preceding analysis, the auxiliaries' worship of Roman deities was underscored by complexities and nuances that dispel any notion of a one-sided Romanization process. Cult practice undoubtedly served as a crucial arena in which the socio-

---

<sup>63</sup> RIB 1538, RIB 3316, RIB 792, RIB 812, RIB 3334. Note that RIB 3334 does not bear a direct identification with the *auxilia*, but it was excavated nearby a known auxiliary fort, *Vindolanda*.

<sup>64</sup> Irby-Massie, 203.

cultural values of the Roman world were transmitted to auxiliaries, as is evidenced by the *Feriale Duranum* and the vast corpus of ritual altars erected by the *auxilia* in honor of the imperial cult. Nonetheless, in their dedications to Roman deities, the auxiliaries illuminate the dynamic and multi-faceted cultural context that they occupied in Britain, which went far beyond the state-organized worship of JOM. Auxiliary dedications to the Roman pantheon, in some cases, provided an avenue for the preservation of connections to ancestral homelands. Auxiliary worship was also crucially shaped by the soldiers' state-organized mobility and subsequent fixity within the Roman military apparatus.

### **Celtic Deities Local to Britain**

In addition to their worship of the Roman pantheon, auxiliaries in Britain erected altars in honor of local Celtic deities, gods and goddesses who were at times unattested elsewhere in the empire. Of the 218 auxiliary votives compiled for this thesis, 14% honor Celtic deities local to Britain.<sup>65</sup> This is a remarkable statistic, given that the surveyed collection of inscriptions includes a bulk of official, ritual dedications, including the vast array of 79 dedications to JOM. In contrast with the large number of state-organized manifestations of cult practice, all thirty of the dedications to local Celtic deities must have taken place as independent, private acts of worship, as these deities were not officially recognized within the official state pantheon. An investigation of the local Celtic deities who serve as the subjects of these dedications, then, will provide rich insight into the private lives and multifaceted experiences of auxiliary worshipers.

Seven auxiliary dedications along Hadrian's Wall revere the deity *Cocidius*, making up a significant 23% of the total dedications to local Celtic deities.<sup>66</sup> *Cocidius* was likely a god native to the British isles, as he is not attested elsewhere throughout the empire. Popular among soldiers

---

<sup>65</sup> This thesis compiles 30 dedications honoring local Celtic deities, 40% of which are of uncertain auxiliary origins.

<sup>66</sup> Of these seven dedications, only one is of uncertain auxiliary origins.

of this northern frontier zone, *Cocidius* is often ascribed military attributes.<sup>67</sup> Among auxiliary worshipers, *Cocidius* was at times synthesized with other deities. Notably, a dedication to *Vernostonus Cocidius* represents the only auxiliary altar in which the two deities included in the syncretism are both non-Roman gods.<sup>68</sup> This unique instance of syncretism reinforces the characterization of *Cocidius* as a highly significant god among the *auxilia*, who possessed the capacity to cross between Roman and non-Roman cult contexts, while also fusing the two.

*Cocidius* was also worshiped in combination with gods of the Roman pantheon. One syncretic dedication honors *Mars Cocidius*, while another honors *Silvanus Cocidius*.<sup>69</sup> The coupling of *Cocidius* with the Roman god *Silvanus* suggests a potential attribution of the deity with the woodlands and forests. On the other hand, the affiliation between *Mars* and *Cocidius* cements the martial attributes of *Cocidius*, reinforcing the deity's position as a divine patron of the soldiery of Britain. In fact, a silver plaque from Bewcastle fort (map 1), north of Hadrian's Wall, displays an image of *Cocidius* in full military gear, holding a spear and a shield (fig. 1.2). The warlike connotations of the image suggest that auxiliaries easily identified with *Cocidius* as a militaristic deity, alluding to the *auxilia*'s self-conscious embrace of their position in the broader Roman military community. The presence of the shield and spear in the image are particularly notable, as these weapons were significant to communal traditions in the cultures of Germanic tribes.<sup>70</sup> Likewise, the style of the carving, with its more abstract figural aesthetics, diverges from traditional Graeco-Roman art forms. In fact, this representation of *Cocidius*

---

<sup>67</sup> Irby-Massie, 114.

<sup>68</sup> RIB 1102. Note that this inscription cannot be directly attributed to an auxiliary soldier. However, it was dedicated by the Germanic worshiper *Virilis* at the Roman fort *Vindomara*, a locale where auxiliary presence has been attested.

<sup>69</sup> *Mars Cocidius*: RIB 2015. *Silvanus Cocidius*: RIB 1578.

<sup>70</sup> Cheryl Clay, "Germanic Migrants in Roman Britain: A Preliminary Study and Inter-Disciplinary Approach" (PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield, 2010): 215.

appears more in line with the pre-Roman Celtic artistic tradition, which was largely dominated by “abstract and curvilinear patterns.”<sup>71</sup> In the depiction of the god, then, the cultic and artistic landscapes of local Celtic belief converge, providing a vehicle for the continued expression of non-Roman cultural forms. Coupled with the Germanic and Roman associations also evoked by the votive, the image thus offers the potential for a multidirectional reading, with potent symbols that likely activated different meanings for different worshippers.



Fig. 1.2. Sketch of the embossed silver plaque depicting an image of the deity Cocidius in military attire.<sup>72</sup>

Expanding from the individual image of the god at Bewcastle, the worship of *Cocidius* across different forts in northern Britain likely evoked divergent responses among different auxiliaries. Given the deity’s warlike attributes, it is especially interesting that auxiliaries chose to honor *Cocidius* rather than the standard Roman deity of war, *Mars*. On one hand, it is possible that this choice stemmed from the fact that *Cocidius* held entirely different attributes and

<sup>71</sup> Roger J. A. Wilson, “The Western Roman Provinces,” in *Blackwell Companion to Roman Art*, edited by Barbara Borg (Oxford, Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

<sup>72</sup> “RIB 986. Dedication to Cocidius,” Roman Inscriptions of Britain, <https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/986>.

meanings for worshipers than *Mars*. It is also possible that worshipers honored *Cocidius* and *Mars* in tandem, as in the inscription to *Mars Cocidius*.<sup>73</sup> Alternatively, auxiliary dedications to *Cocidius* may provide striking evidence for the formation of a military identity unique to the northern frontier zone of Britain. Translating these spiritual connections into the physical realm, the worship of the localized deity *Cocidius* also suggests a distinct sense of place among the *auxilia*—a product of their unique positionality as non-Roman soldiers integrated into the imperial army and garrisoned in an overseas frontierland. Within the new environment of Britain, dedications to *Cocidius* may have represented an attempt by auxiliaries to reconcile their physical fixity and negotiate their military identity in a foreign territory.

The possibility of the growth of a unique military identity local to Hadrian's Wall is reinforced by the absence of worship to *Cocidius* in any Roman province other than Britain. Worship to this deity thus emerges as a phenomenon distinct to the imperial regiments of Britain. Furthermore, the auxiliary dedications to *Cocidius* are not clustered in a tight enclave in the frontier zone, but spread across different regions along the length of Hadrian's Wall. The relatively far-flung geographical distribution of the cult throughout Britain's northern frontier implies the widespread identification of soldiers with *Cocidius*. In fact, it was not only auxiliaries who worshiped this deity in the frontier zone. There is also evidence of worship to *Cocidius* among the legions of the Roman army.<sup>74</sup> Thus, worship of *Cocidius* may be construed as a local outgrowth of the standard military religion, which unified legionaries and auxiliaries alike. However, it would be incorrect to wholly depict worship of this deity as simply constituting a "Romanized" manifestation of local Celtic cult practice. Rather, as encapsulated by the image of *Cocidius* at Bewcastle, which combines local Celtic affiliations with Roman and potentially even

---

<sup>73</sup> RIB 2015.

<sup>74</sup> RIB 1577.

Germanic ones, the cult was a product of the unique, multivalent context of the northern frontier zone. Dedications to *Cocidius*, then, do not symbolize unilateral assimilation or rejection of Roman culture. Rather, worship of this deity likely reflects the multifaceted military identity that arose in the region, in which Roman, non-Roman, and local Celtic elements dynamically coalesced under the overarching imperial system of power.

In addition to *Cocidius*, a significant concentration of auxiliary votives along Hadrian's Wall honor the local deity *Coventina*. Dedications to *Coventina* make up 27% of the compiled auxiliary dedications to local Celtic deities in this region.<sup>75</sup> Almost all extant altars to *Coventina* are drawn from the province of Britain, but there are disputed attestations to the goddess in other regions of the empire as well, including in *Hispania Citerior*.<sup>76</sup> In contrast with the dedications to *Cocidius*, which are scattered across the length of Hadrian's Wall, all eight of the auxiliary dedications to *Coventina* in northern Britain come from the same fort at Carrawburgh (map 1), and more specifically, the same religious sanctuary—commonly known as *Coventina's* well. Centered around the well at Carrawburgh, worship of *Coventina* appears to have been deeply related to the natural landscape of the fort, with *Coventina* as the “divine guardian of the spring.”<sup>77</sup> *Coventina's* attributes as a water goddess are particularly highlighted in the relief panel which accompanies one auxiliary dedication to the goddess (fig. 1.3). In this relief, *Coventina* is depicted reclining on the bank of a stream, holding a plant in one hand, while the other rests on a jug from which water is flowing.<sup>78</sup> The naturalistic imagery of the relief, as well

---

<sup>75</sup> Three out of the eight total compiled votives to *Coventina* are of uncertain auxiliary origins.

<sup>76</sup> Irby-Massie, 155.

<sup>77</sup> Ronald Hutton, *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles: Their Nature and Legacy* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991), 218.

<sup>78</sup> “Carrawburgh Roman Fort Collection Highlights,” English Heritage, <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/temple-of-mithras-carrawburgh-hadrians-wall/collection/>.

as the physical site of the sanctuary in a spring, suggests a profound connection between the worship of *Coventina* and the natural environment of the frontier fort at Carrawburgh.

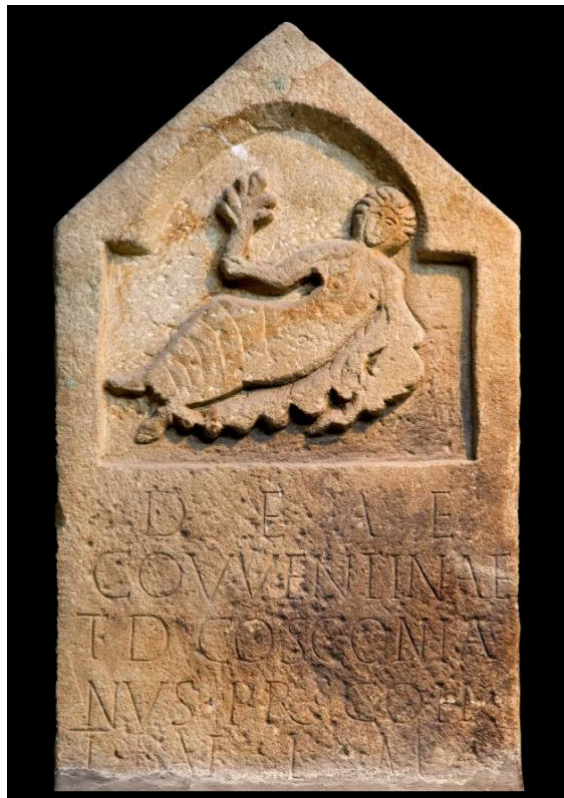


Fig. 1.3. Relief of *Coventina* on an altar dedicated by an auxiliary soldier at *Coventina*'s well.<sup>79</sup>

Thus, whereas the widespread worship of *Cocidius* suggests the emergence of a military identity common to the Roman soldiery of the northern Britain frontier zone as a whole, the dedications to *Coventina* imply a more narrow enclave of worship, confined to one singular fort along the frontier. In fact, Celtic gods, of which *Coventina* was likely one, differed from the deities of the Roman pantheon, in that they were “less specialized than the classical gods, being limited in territory rather than in their sphere of activity.”<sup>80</sup> It is clear from the iconographic emphasis on *Coventina*'s connection to the physical landscape—the one particular spring at Carrawburgh—that worship of this goddess was largely based upon her associations with natural

<sup>79</sup> “Carrawburgh Roman Fort Collection Highlights,” English Heritage, <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/temple-of-mithras-carrawburgh-hadrians-wall/collection/>.

<sup>80</sup> D. Beryl Charlton and Margaret M. Mitcheson, “Yardhope. A Shrine to *Cocidius*?” *Britannia* 14 (1983): 151.

phenomena. Therefore, the limited clustering of votives to *Coventina* around a single fort alludes to the adherence by auxiliaries to Celtic processes of cult practice, in which worship was heavily determined by one's physical locale.

The differences in the worship and meaning of *Cocidius* and *Coventina*, both local Celtic deities, elucidate a crucial distinction within the spiritual world of the *auxilia*. Just as auxiliary worship to the official gods of the Roman pantheon cannot be simplified to monolithic adherence to imperial values, neither can auxiliary worship to local Celtic gods be viewed as wholesale resistance or assimilation to the Roman worldview. Rather, as illuminated by the inscriptions to *Cocidius* and *Coventina*, each deity and each dedication likely activated different meanings for the individual worshiper—meanings which arose out of the dynamic, pluralistic context of the frontier zone. Although worship of these deities may have aided in the formation of group identities, they did so in divergent ways—on one hand fostering frontier-wide, militaristic affiliations (*Cocidius*), and on the other hand, forging bonds between soldiers at one particular fort and their physical environment (*Coventina*).

There is perhaps no better evidence for the divergent manifestations of cult practice within the *auxilia* than the array of local Celtic deities worshiped by the auxiliaries. The *auxilia* in Britain honored the local Celtic deities *Antenociticus*, *Veteris*, *Verbeia*, *Vinotonus*, *Ahuardua*, *Belatucadrus*, *Vanauns*, and *Setlocenia*. Some of these deities were the subject of relatively widespread worship along Hadrian's Wall, although it is probable that not all of the worship originated from auxiliary soldiers in particular. There are over fifty altars, for instance, to the deity *Veteris* scattered across the frontier zone.<sup>81</sup> Only one of these, however, can be directly attributed to an auxiliary soldier dedicant.<sup>82</sup> Likewise, there are over twenty altars to the deity

---

<sup>81</sup> Irby-Massie, 134-136.

<sup>82</sup> RIB 1795.

*Belatucadrus* in northern Britain, none of which bear an explicit auxiliary identification, although several can be traced to likely auxiliary origins.<sup>83</sup> *Belatucadrus* in particular bore martial associations, serving as a warrior god for the soldiers of the Roman army.<sup>84</sup> Worship to *Belatucadrus*, then, like that to *Mars* and *Cocidius*, may highlight the formation of a unique, military-based identity among the auxiliaries of this region.

The diversity of local Celtic deities worshiped by the *auxilia* of Hadrian's Wall suggests the absence of a unifying spiritual worldview in this locale. Although cults appear to have been clustered and concentrated at times, with auxiliaries bonded by shared military attributes or by their physical environment, the survival of one-off dedications to more obscure local deities reveals the kaleidoscopic nature of cult practice in this region. In fact, except for the concentration of auxiliary votives to *Cocidius* and *Coventina* seen above, there were no significant clusters of inscriptions to any of the other local Celtic deities. In fact, of the ten total local Celtic deities honored in auxiliary dedications, six are attested in only two or less dedications directly attributable to the *auxilia*. The deities *Ahuardua*, *Setlocenia*, *Vanauns*, and *Verbeia*, for instance, are each represented in only one dedication by an auxiliary soldier along this frontier.<sup>85</sup> These four deities are by and large unattested elsewhere in the empire, marking them as religious phenomena unique to northern Britain. In contrast with the highly standardized state religion of the empire, the private worship by auxiliaries to local Celtic deities appears highly personalized, its complexities largely dependent upon the soldier's individual context within the frontier zone.

---

<sup>83</sup> Irby-Massie, 137-138.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 108.

<sup>85</sup> The dedication to *Setlocenia* does not bear a direct identification to the *auxilia*, but it was located in a fort with a strongly attested auxiliary presence. Likewise, the dedication to *Vanauns* does not bear a direct identification to the *auxilia*, but it was located in a fort with a strongly attested auxiliary presence, and it was dedicated by a *decurio princeps*, an officer rank which would likely be in command of an auxiliary unit at the fort.

### Non-Roman Deities from Abroad

Beyond the imperial Roman pantheon and the local Celtic deities, auxiliaries garrisoned along Hadrian's Wall also worshiped an array of deities native to regions distant from Britain. The amalgamation of foreign cults in the northern Britain frontier zone illuminates the striking mobility—both physical and religious—which dominated this locale, as well as the preservation of ancestral beliefs among certain auxiliaries. In particular, there is a significant integration of Germanic socio-cultural traditions in the cult practices of the *auxilia* along Hadrian's Wall. Soldiers of Germanic origin were dispatched en masse to the province of Britain as early as the 1st century CE.<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, of the auxiliary units garrisoned along the northern Britain frontier, more were drawn from the two Germanies and *Gallia Belgica* than from any other province.<sup>87</sup> Germanic influences, then, likely played a significant role in shaping the dynamic, multivocal context of the frontier zone.

There is perhaps no better embodiment of the influence of Germanic culture upon the worship of the *auxilia* than the cult of the *Matres*, or the Mother Goddesses. Typically characterized as a triad of matronly women, these female deities were native to the Germanies, enjoying particular popularity in the Rhineland.<sup>88</sup> Likely imported to Britain by soldiers of Germanic origin and conceived of as protector deities, the *Matres* were widely worshiped among auxiliaries in the frontier zone. In fact, of the 34 compiled votives dedicated to non-Roman deities from abroad, 47% are dedications to the *Matres*.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, whereas all of the other

---

<sup>86</sup> Cheryl Clay, "Before There Were Angles, Saxons and Jutes: an Epigraphic Study of the Germanic Social, Religious and Linguistic Relations on Hadrian's Wall," in *Pagans and Christians: from Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Papers in Honour of Martin Henig, Presented on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. Martin Henig and Lauren Adams Gilmour (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2007): 48.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> Hutton, 214; Irby-Massie, 146.

<sup>89</sup> 38% of the compiled votives to non-Roman deities from abroad were of uncertain auxiliary origins.

non-Roman deities from abroad are attested in less than 5 auxiliary dedications, the *Matres* are honored in at least 16 extant dedications.<sup>90</sup> The *Matres* thus emerge as a highly significant cult of the northern frontier zone, on par with—if not surpassing—the popularity of other crucial deities in this region, such as *Mars* and *Cocidius*.

The popularity of the *Matres* among the *auxilia* is noteworthy for several reasons. The worship of these goddesses reinforces the aforementioned notion of a unique auxiliary identity in northern Britain forged through cult practice. As with the worship of deities such as *Mars*, *Cocidius*, and *Coventina*, worship of the *Matres* may have served as a unifying mechanism through which auxiliaries formed bonds of affiliation. Dedications to the *Matres* were widely dispersed throughout the province of Britain, with one altar found as far north as Cramond, in present-day Edinburgh, Scotland.<sup>91</sup> The wide geographical distribution of these deities suggests that worship of the *Matres* served as a communal bond for auxiliaries across the frontier zone, rather than being concentrated in enclaves at certain forts. The dedications to the *Matres* also crucially reveal the preservation and reproduction of Germanic spiritual beliefs within the dynamic context of the northern frontier zone. Given the wide distribution of the *Matres*, it is possible that not every auxiliary worshiper of the goddesses was Germanic in origin. Nevertheless, the persistence of this foreign cult signifies the integration and transformation of Germanic traditions among the *auxilia*.

The role of the cult of the *Matres* as a vehicle for the transmission and preservation of Germanic culture is best illuminated through a close reading of several of the dedications to these deities. Unlike the popular local Celtic deity *Cocidius*, the *Matres* were never syncretized

---

<sup>90</sup> Note that seven of these 16 dedications are of uncertain auxiliary origins, but were found in or nearby forts with strongly-attested auxiliary presence.

<sup>91</sup> RIB 2135.

with classical gods of the Roman pantheon within auxiliary dedications. The marked “purity” of dedications to these goddesses suggests a deliberate preservation of ancestral elements and adherence to traditional spiritual norms. Dedications to the *Matres* thus held the potential to activate powerful meaning for auxiliaries of Germanic origin, who may have seen in these dedications reminders of their ancestral cult practices. Simultaneously, in the absence of Roman syncretisms and signifiers, these dedications may have barred other, non-Germanic worshipers from the full-scale of understanding, in effect carving out a narrow auxiliary identity centered around Germanic traditions. That is, whereas dedications to syncretic deities such as *Mars Cocidius* or *Cocidius Silvanus* may have borne meaning for Roman observers despite containing Celtic, non-Roman elements, it is possible that the non-syncretic dedications to the *Matres* evaded Roman understanding—perhaps deliberately.

Interestingly, although the *Matres* were never equated with other Roman deities in auxiliary dedications, the goddesses were conferred with several epithets, many of which reinforce their associations with foreign, non-Roman elements. Four of the dedications to the *Matres*, for instance, honor the specific divine manifestation of the *Matres Transmarini*—the Mother Goddesses from overseas.<sup>92</sup> The *transmarini* epithet encapsulates the mobility of the *auxilia*, serving as a blunt reminder of the soldiers’ displacement from their homelands and migration overseas to Britain. The epithet also reinforces the foreignness of the deities within the local context of Britain, firmly establishing the characterization of the *Matres* as non-Roman goddesses inhabiting an alien territory. The *transmarini* epithet thus suggests that worship of the *Matres* served as an outlet for auxiliaries to differentiate themselves and articulate a unique identity within the pluralistic context of the frontier. Rather than wholly assimilate to the Roman

---

<sup>92</sup> RIB 919, RIB 920, RIB 1989, RIB 1224.

military system, the auxiliaries here worshiped foreign goddesses and conferred them with epithets denoting distance, in effect aligning themselves with an expression of foreignness.

Other epithets attributed by auxiliaries to the *Matres* in Britain likewise underscore the growth of a unique, non-Roman auxiliary identity. In several inscriptions, auxiliaries refer to the *Matres* with the epithets *Alatervae*, *Ollototae*, and *Hananeftae*, all of which are also found in votives in the Rhineland.<sup>93</sup> Likely derivations of Germanic languages, these epithets may have served to differentiate auxiliary worshipers from the Roman—and perhaps also local Celtic—elements which surrounded them, allowing for the transmission and reproduction of Germanic culture in the multicultural frontier zone. It is important to note, however, that the epithets of the *Matres* cult in Britain mark a crucial point of departure from the worship of these goddesses in the German provinces. In the Germanic territories, votives to the *Matres* frequently bear the distinctive feature of epithets, which indicate the specific group affiliations of the deities, such as the *matronae Afliae* or the *matronae Channinae*.<sup>94</sup> Between 70 to 90 epithets of the *Matres* have been found in the province of Lower Germany, and many of the epithets likely confer upon the goddesses associations with local social groups or tribal groups.<sup>95</sup> In the Germanies, then, the cult of the *Matres* emerges as a highly localized phenomenon, overtly displaying the non-Roman social signifiers of the devotees.

By contrast, worship of the *Matres* in Britain, although in some cases bearing localized epithets, was a far more generalized phenomenon. In fact, only 3 of the 16 compiled altars to the

---

<sup>93</sup> RIB 2135, RIB 1032, Brit. 40.3; Clay, “Germanic Migrants in Roman Britain,” 99.

<sup>94</sup> Greg Woolf, “Local Cult in Imperial Context: The *Matronae* Revisited,” in *Romanisation und Resistenz, in Plastik, Architektur und Inschriften der Provinzen des Imperium Romanum*, edited by Peter Noelle *et al.* (Mainz: von Zabern, 2003): 132. Note that these epithets are combined with the *Matronae* rather than the *Matres*. The two names, however, are synonymous, both signifying the same divine cult of female goddesses.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 133

*Matres* along Hadrian's Wall bear localized epithets of Germanic etymological origin.<sup>96</sup> Thus, an important distinction arises between the worship of the *Matres* in Britain and the Germanies. In the Germanic territories, the use of localized epithets with the *Matres* was likely a form of cultural differentiation, employed as a way for different Germanic social groups and tribes to demarcate themselves from one another. By contrast, in northern Britain, the social structures of the Germanic territories may have been usurped by imperial hierarchies, thus transforming the cult of the *Matres* into a mechanism of unification among Germanic soldiers. This contrast crucially highlights the role of mobility and connectivity in the complex spiritual landscape of the *auxilia*. The cult of the *Matres*, upon its transfer to a different region of the empire, took on transformative new forms and meanings.

Beyond the *Matres*, dedications to other Germanic deities along Hadrian's Wall further highlight how foreign, non-Roman cults permeated the socio-cultural life of the *auxilia* in this region. There exist at least two auxiliary dedications, for instance, to the deity *Mogons*, who may have been imported to northern Britain from the province of Upper Germany.<sup>97</sup> One theory posits that the deity is a divine personification of *Mogontiacum*, the capital of Upper Germany.<sup>98</sup> Given the association with this Germanic territory, worship of *Mogons* may have facilitated continued connections between auxiliaries and their ancestral homelands. The altars to *Mogons* thus participate in a broader network of Romano-Germanic associations, illuminating the complex interplay between mobility and fixity within the *auxilia*'s cult practice. In this interplay,

---

<sup>96</sup> Note that this figure does not include dedications to the *Matres Campestres*, the *Matres Transmarines*, or the *Matres Domesticis*. Although these dedications bear epithets, they do not include localized signifiers of Germanic social groups or tribal groups, as in the *Matres* altars of the Germanies.

<sup>97</sup> RIB 1269, RIB 3334; Irby-Massie, 108.

<sup>98</sup> Clay, "Germanic Migrants in Roman Britain," 98. Like Britain itself, Upper Germany was a frontier province which hosted auxiliaries along its borders, thus constituting its own dynamic site of intersecting Roman, Germanic, and military elements.

the physical separation of auxiliaries from their homeland likely served as a catalyst for the transformation of their cult practices as they acclimated to the foreign locale of northern Britain. Consequently, auxiliary cult practice memorializing a significant city in Upper Germany was dynamically reproduced in the northernmost reaches of the empire.

A similar process of preservation and transmission may have also taken place in an auxiliary dedication to the goddess *Viradecthis*.<sup>99</sup> In this altar, auxiliaries identified as members of the Germanic tribe of the *Condrusi* honored *Viradecthis*, a patron goddess of the Condrustian region.<sup>100</sup> As with the dedications to *Mogons*, worship of *Viradecthis* likely highlights among soldiers the preservation of ties to tribal homelands and religious traditions. In contrast with narratives of Romanization, then, which suggest the total subsumption of foreign elements by imperial Roman culture, the importation of these Germanic deities to the northern Britain frontier zone suggests that the preservation of native traditions formed a significant element of the auxiliary psyche.

Auxiliary worship of foreign, non-Roman cults was not confined to those that originated in Germanic regions, but also included deities from the provinces of the Near East. Despite having their origins in regions on the opposite end of the empire, eastern cults occasionally manifested along Hadrian's Wall in remarkable feats of physical and religious mobility. Foremost among these eastern-born cults in Britain was worship of the deity *Mithras*. Mithraism derived from the Persian deity *Mitra*, but the cult significantly evolved from the original Persian rites and acquired immense popularity throughout the western regions of the empire.<sup>101</sup> In its imperial Roman manifestation, Mithraism was practiced as a mystery religion, complete with

---

<sup>99</sup> RIB 2108

<sup>100</sup> Clay, "Germanic Migrants in Roman Britain," 98.

<sup>101</sup> Irby-Massie, 72-74, 80.

secret rituals and seven grades of initiation. Due to its esoteric rituals, the primary adherents of this cult were an educated class of civil servants and soldiers.<sup>102</sup> Worship of *Mithras* among the *auxilia* of Britain, then, may have forged elite bonds of affiliation between auxiliaries and a broader community of educated soldiers, often of the officer class.

In particular, the nature of Mithraism as a mystery cult served as an overt expression of exclusivity, in which boundaries of entry and understanding were explicitly demarcated between auxiliaries. This exclusion may have been the result of factors of geographical nature, in addition to education. Mithraism was widespread throughout the empire during this period, particularly along the military frontiers and within the Rhineland.<sup>103</sup> Auxiliaries, then, may have been first exposed to the cult not within Britain, but in their native homelands, or perhaps even when garrisoned on a different imperial frontier. Mobility—both of soldiers and belief systems—likely played a significant role in determining the character of the cult’s worshipers. The popularity of Mithraism in the Rhineland, for example, may partially explain the cult’s frequent attestations in Britain, where auxiliaries of Germanic descent, and specifically from the Rhineland, were a common presence. Therefore, while communal worship of *Mithras* likely affiliated groups of soldiers who possessed similar cultural capital and geographical origins, the secretive cult simultaneously bore the potential to alienate those auxiliaries who did not share these commonalities.

One sculpture of *Mithras* from the fort of Housesteads (map 1) particularly illuminates the esoteric nature of the cult, which likely demarcated an ingroup and outgroup among worshipers inhabiting the multifaceted spiritual world of the frontier. The sculpture depicts *Mithras*’s birth from the Cosmic Egg, surrounded by a ring decorated with the signs of the

---

<sup>102</sup> Irby-Massie, 80.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid, 65; Clay, “Germanic Migrants in Roman Britain,” 100.

zodiac (fig. 1.4).<sup>104</sup> Although the zodiac symbolism may have been familiar to a culturally-Roman observer, the striking scene of the deity's birth from an egg likely appeared inscrutable to the uninitiated eye. Thus, in contrast to the fairly malleable cults of the Roman pantheon, which were relatively tolerant of new worshipers, Mithraism, as a mystery religion, necessarily required a high level of knowledge and initiation. Even the local Celtic cults of Britain, such as that of *Cocidius*, possessed a fairly low barrier of entry compared to Mithraism.

In fact, auxiliary worship to *Mithras* diverged even from the exclusive Germanic cults along Hadrian's Wall, in that Mithraism's articulation of difference was not primarily based upon a common military identity, or upon shared tribal origins. Rather, the cult of *Mithras* forged a group identity which was predicated upon a shared cultural capital, one that required a base-level degree of education and wealth, a geographical exposure to the cult, and perhaps membership in the Roman imperial army, and oftentimes its officer ranks. This complex fusion of socio-cultural factors inevitably precluded certain groups from participation in the cult. It is notable, for instance, that there is little evidence of local Celts in Britain worshipping *Mithras*, despite the cult's permeation across the frontier zone.<sup>105</sup> The "cultic isolation" of Mithraism likely conferred a sense of eliteness and distinction upon its worshipers, integrating an element of hierarchy into the spiritual world of the *auxilia*.<sup>106</sup> Despite the physical mobility inherent in its widespread penetration throughout the Empire, then, Mithraism diverges from the other cults of the northern Britain frontier zone in its relative absence of social mobility. The hierarchies inherent within the worship of *Mithras* necessarily inhibited the striking fluidity evidenced in

---

<sup>104</sup> Current Archaeology, "Great North Museum: Hancock," The Past, December 28, 2019. <https://the-past.com/review/museum/great-north-museum-hancock/#:~:text=The%20focal%20point%20of%20the,twin%20torchbearers%20Cautes%20and%20Cautopates.>

<sup>105</sup> Irby-Massie, 131.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 97.

altars to other deities. Mithraism reveals, then, how multiple, salient socio-cultural categories intersected among auxiliaries in Britain to produce more exclusive articulations of religious identity.



Fig. 1.4. Stone relief sculpture of Mithras at Housesteads fort, depicting the deity's birth from the Cosmic Egg.<sup>107</sup>

Whereas Mithraism represented a fairly widespread manifestation of an eastern cult, other dedications by the *auxilia* in Britain highlight significantly more localized forms of worship. In particular, three dedications at the fort of Carvoran (map 1) honor deities associated with the province of Syria, forming the only religious enclave centered around Syrian deities in this frontier zone. Two of the dedications honor *Dea Syria*, the Syrian Goddess, while the other dedication honors *Dea Hammia*, the Goddess Hammia.<sup>108</sup> *Dea Syria* clearly bears associations with the Roman province of Syria, while *Dea Hammia* was derived from the city of Hama in Syria. Crucially, garrisoned for a time at the fort of Carvoran was the *cohors I Hamiorum*

<sup>107</sup> "CIMRM 860 - Mithras and the Egg, from Housesteads. Hadrian's Wall, Britain," The Tertullian Project, <https://www.tertullian.org/rpearse/mithras/display.php?page=cimrm860>.

<sup>108</sup> *Dea Syria*: RIB 1792, RIB 1791; *Dea Hammia*: RIB 1780. RIB 1792 is of uncertain auxiliary origins, as is RIB 1780, but both votives were found at a fort with a strongly-attested auxiliary presence.

*sagittariorum*, the first cohort of Hamian archers, an auxiliary regiment raised from the city of Hama. In fact, one altar to *Dea Syria* was dedicated by Licinius Clemens, a prefect of the cohort of Hamians.<sup>109</sup>

Given the presence of Syrian auxiliary units at the fort, the dedications to *Dea Syria* and *Dea Hammia* clearly show the preservation of cultural links between soldiers and their ancestral homelands. In fact, the dedication to *Dea Hammia* reveals an even more narrow, localized expression of identity, centered around a single city in the province. Therefore, rather than eradicating differences between soldiers, as the homogeneity of the Romanization paradigm would suggest, the pluralistic military environment of Hadrian's Wall may have instead allowed auxiliaries to highlight their individual identities. It is particularly notable that, in Britain, the number of auxiliary units raised from Syria ranked among the lowest of any of the provinces.<sup>110</sup> Given the small number of units of Syrian origin, the expression of Syrian identity through cult practice at Carvoran emerges as a pronounced consolidation of group identity—an articulation of shared cultural affiliation that emerged within an environment that was likely dominated by foreign peoples and cultures.

The use here of cult practice as a mechanism of group formation, particularly on the basis of shared provincial or cultural identity, bears similarities to the auxiliary dedications to Germanic deities. However, whereas the Germanic deities were often highly localized and obscure (i.e. *Viradecthis* or *Mogons*), the goddesses *Dea Syria* and *Dea Hammia* were decidedly more abstract in nature, alluding to broader geographical place-names rather than referencing the actual cult deities of these regions. This may suggest that the auxiliaries worshiping these deities were not freshly-enlisted recruits from Syria, but generational soldiers who had acquired

---

<sup>109</sup> RIB 1792.

<sup>110</sup> Clay, "Before There Were Angles, Saxons and Jutes," 48.

distance—both temporal and geographical—from their ancestral homeland. Once again, mobility—or the lack thereof—appears to play a significant role in determining the cult practice of the *auxilia* in Britain. Rather than replicating specific cultural traditions from Syria, the dedications might represent broader attempts at producing social cohesion among Syrian auxiliaries, or regiment-wide unity among the cohort of Hamians. Within the multicultural context of Hadrian's Wall, cult practice likely played a crucial role not only in shaping auxiliaries' religious lives, but also in forming the groundwork for their everyday social experiences and interactions.

### **Conclusion**

The spiritual landscape of the northern Britain frontier zone was fundamentally characterized by a diversity of deities, ranging from Roman to local Celtic to non-Roman, foreign gods. Although all materially crafted in the Roman cultural medium and influenced by the overarching imperial ideology, the horde of altars examined in this chapter strikingly highlight the diversity of religious possibilities available to the *auxilia* along Hadrian's Wall. In contrast with the homogenizing narratives of Romanization, the cult landscape of this frontier zone emerges as an incredibly multivalent and multicultural world. Within this landscape, auxiliaries employed cult practice as a dynamic mechanism to carve out highly significant, context-based meanings, which alternately affirmed, contested, and transformed imperial Roman norms.

## Chapter Two: Worshipers

The *penates*, the household gods of Troy, did not manifest spontaneously within the foreign lands of the Italian peninsula. These gods were deliberately carried, preserved, and transmitted by Aeneas and his fellow Trojan refugees as they ventured across the Mediterranean. That is, in the legendary epic the *Aeneid*, the worship of the *penates* in Italy was fundamentally determined by the mobility and identity of Aeneas and his comrades. The cult of the *penates* was the product of the complex socio-cultural landscape inhabited by these mobile Trojan exiles. Likewise, the cult practices of the *auxilia* in Britain were not isolated phenomena, extraneous to the imperial military environment of the northern frontier zone. Rather, the worship of the array of deities in this region was shaped by active processes of negotiation and reconciliation among auxiliary soldiers in this frontierland. Among the *auxilia* of Hadrian's Wall, a range of salient social categories coexisted, intersected, and mutated, thereby producing the complex diversity of worship illuminated in the previous chapter.

Having established the multiplicity and significance of the deities worshiped in the northern Britain frontier zone, this thesis will now turn to focus on the actual auxiliaries who were worshiping these diverse gods and goddesses. Whereas auxiliaries have in the past been categorized in the dichotomy of either non-Roman foreigners or "Romanized" vehicles of imperialism, this chapter aims to show the diverse and complex web of affiliations which underpinned auxiliary identities in the frontier zone. Using votive inscriptions as evidence, this inquiry will investigate the range of social categories and contexts which intermingled among the *auxilia*. The analysis will illuminate the presence of both corporate and individual worshipers, of practitioners from various levels of the hierarchy of the military community, and of devotees with localized connections to foreign tribes and regions. This chapter will reveal how disparate

social categories intersected to shape the religious landscape of the *auxilia*, producing certain trends and disparities of worship among this multicultural group.

Above all, the guiding impetus of this chapter is to center the daily lives and affiliations of the individual worshipers who created the altars that serve as the analytical material for this paper. Investigating the socio-cultural identities of the worshipers in tandem with the actual votives and deities being honored produces further insight into the auxiliary experience. Specifically, this chapter reveals that the social forces at work in the frontier zone were far more complex than the simplistic binary of Roman versus non-Roman would suggest. The auxiliary votives in this locale were not simple expressions of unilateral absorption into the Roman state, or conversely, of outright rejection of imperial Roman values altogether. Rather, a complex network of social categories and social contexts dynamically coalesced within these votives in order to produce the diversity of cult practice of the *auxilia* in this region.

### **Corporate Versus Individual Worship**

Perhaps the most defining social characteristic underlying the auxiliary altars along Hadrian's Wall is the distinction between corporate and individual dedications. Within this analysis, corporate worship is defined as cult practice enacted by a group of at least two individuals, while individual worship is cult practice restricted to only one soldier. Of the total votive inscriptions compiled for this thesis, 57%—the majority—represent corporate forms of worship, while, of the dedications to Roman deities compiled for analysis, 61% were corporate dedications (fig. 2.1).<sup>111</sup> These are unsurprising statistics, given that corporate worship was a common element of the official religion of the imperial Roman army.

---

<sup>111</sup> 17% of the votive inscriptions compiled for this thesis are of uncertain auxiliary origins. ~2.5% of the compiled votive inscriptions to Roman deities are of uncertain auxiliary origins.

Communal dedications were an important vehicle through which a cohesive military identity was cultivated in the army. Within the multifaceted social structure of the *auxilia*, the collective worship of Roman deities enabled auxiliaries to form bonds of loyalty and affiliation with their fellow soldiers. In fact, throughout the northern Britain frontier zone, auxiliary units collectively venerated deities of the Roman pantheon. At the fort of Birrens (map 1), for instance, the First Nervan Cohort of Germans worshiped *Fortuna*, the divine personification of fortune.<sup>112</sup> To the east, at the fort of Risingham (map 1), the Fourth Cohort of Gauls venerated the Divinities of the Emperors.<sup>113</sup> The imperial military organization thus formed a crucial social structure underlying auxiliaries daily lives and, in turn, affecting their manifestations of cult practice and identity.

Furthermore, the significant corporate element of the imperial state religion intimately identified the individual auxiliary soldier with the overall destiny of Rome.<sup>114</sup> That is, as auxiliary units collectively dedicated votives and participated in official military rituals, they cemented their sense of group identity not only with their fellow soldiers but also with the broader community of the empire as a whole. Nowhere is the intersection between corporate worship and imperial military identity as clear as in the mass of auxiliary dedications to *Jupiter Optimus Maximus* (JOM) in this frontier zone. Of the 79 extant altars in which auxiliaries worshiped JOM, 81% display corporate, group identities. As the chief deity of the Roman pantheon, JOM was the primary subject of official worship within the imperial state religion. In fact, many of the corporate dedications to JOM were likely created as part of the official rituals mentioned in Chapter One, in which soldiers annually renewed their sacred oaths of loyalty to

---

<sup>112</sup> RIB 2093.

<sup>113</sup> RIB 1227.

<sup>114</sup> Irby-Massie, 4.

the state. The significant expression of corporate identities within altars to JOM, then, emphasizes the state-sanctioned and communal nature of cult practice within the Roman military.

Within this imperial context, then, cult practice emerged not only as an outlet for spiritual expression, but also as a powerful agent for the perpetuation of loyalty to the state. The vast number of corporate dedications to JOM and other Roman deities along Hadrian's Wall serve as striking, tangible evidence of how the Roman military religion subtly naturalized power dynamics among the *auxilia*. The sheer repetition of these corporate dedications was a potent mechanism through which imperial ideological beliefs were strengthened and legitimized within the daily experience of soldiers. On one level, the collective dedications to the Roman pantheon likely inculcated group affiliation between an auxiliary soldier and his unit, as many of these dedications were collectively dedicated by a commander on behalf of his unit. On another level, the group affiliation extended to loyalty to the Roman army more broadly, as this specific form of corporate ritual was common to all members of the imperial soldiery, whether legionaries or auxiliaries. And on the most macroscopic level, the corporate dedications, which revered the Roman pantheon and its accompanying cultural values, affiliated auxiliaries with the more abstract notion of the Roman state. Corporate worship to Roman deities thus ensured that the overarching imperial power structure penetrated multiple salient realms of the auxiliary experience.

This is not to say, however, that the corporate mode of worship unilaterally incorporated and assimilated the *auxilia* into the Roman state apparatus. There are three instances of corporate worship by auxiliaries which occurred outside of military affiliations. In one instance, four Germans, named *Durio*, *Ramio*, *Trupo*, and *Lurio*, dedicated an altar to the Divinity of the

Emperor and the non-Roman deity *Maponus*.<sup>115</sup> Given the presence of the dedication in the northern frontier zone and the Germanic origins of these men, this dedication was likely erected by auxiliaries. And yet, the altar bears no explicit identifications with the Roman military—no mention of a specific military rank or unit. Likewise, at the fort of Housesteads (map 1), a group of Germans who identified themselves as *cives Tuihanti*—tribesmen of the district of Twente—venerated the god *Mars Thincsus*, the two *Alaisiagae*, *Beda* and *Fimmilena*, and the Divinity of the Emperor.<sup>116</sup> Once again, the worshipers here did not explicitly identify themselves with the military, although the altar was found at a shrine next to an auxiliary fort. Lastly, at the fort of *Vindolanda*, certain citizens of Gaul and citizens of Britain dedicated an altar to the goddess *Gallia* in harmony.<sup>117</sup> One theory holds that this altar was collectively erected by soldiers from the same unit, of both Gallic and British provenance.<sup>118</sup> However, the altar bears no reference to a specific auxiliary unit. Together, these three dedications illuminate how worshipers dynamically displayed corporate identities outside of the Roman military context. Extraneous to their military affiliations, auxiliaries forged bonds based on other commonalities—such as shared Germanic origin—which likely took on new, transformed meanings within the pluralistic environment of the frontier zone.

Despite being less in number than the corporate dedications, individual worship was nonetheless enacted by auxiliaries to a meaningful extent. This thesis compiles 87 altars that were individually dedicated by the *auxilia* along Hadrian's Wall.<sup>119</sup> Of this collection of

---

<sup>115</sup> RIB 2063.

<sup>116</sup> RIB 1593. This altar, along with others at the fort of Housesteads, will be the subject of further analysis in Chapter Three.

<sup>117</sup> RIB 3332.

<sup>118</sup> Alexander Meyer, "Approaching 'Ethnic' Communities in the Roman Auxilia," in *New Approaches to Greek and Roman Warfare*, edited by L.L. Brice (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020), 165.

<sup>119</sup> 36% of the compiled votives are of uncertain auxiliary origins.

individualistic altars, a striking 72% were dedicated by worshipers of some degree of military rank, marking them as part of the officer class of the imperial military hierarchy.<sup>120</sup> By contrast, only 7% of the individual inscriptions were dedicated by rank-and-file soldiers with no officer status, who identified themselves merely as *miles*.<sup>121</sup> The remaining 21% of votives in this collection originate from individuals with no explicit military associations at all. In these altars, the dedicators identify themselves neither as an officer nor as a *miles*.<sup>122</sup> The absence in these votives of a distinct military identification does not necessarily mean that the dedicators were not soldiers, or ranked members of the officer class. It is therefore notable that these dedicators chose to omit any identificatory affiliation with the *auxilia* or the military hierarchy, especially in contrast with the array of dedications which do bear explicit military associations.

Furthermore, the significant collection of individual dedications which omitted military identifications—21%—contrasts with the relatively small number of corporate dedications of the same nature. This disparity illuminates a more fundamental distinction between corporate and individual identities among the *auxilia*. As demonstrated above, collective worship was likely a crucial mechanism of the official imperial religion, employed to consolidate loyalty among the disparate members of the Roman state apparatus. Thus, the vast majority of corporate dedications from the northern frontier zone bear identifications with a specific auxiliary unit, as an emblem of the imperial military community. On the other hand, individual worship may have provided an avenue for worshipers to express alternate forms of identity, distinct from their affiliations with the imperial army. Granted, military-based identifications still make up the

---

<sup>120</sup> The stratification of military ranks which appear in the altars along Hadrian's Wall will be explored in depth later on in this chapter.

<sup>121</sup> *Miles* was the conventional Latin term used for a foot soldier in Ancient Rome.

<sup>122</sup> As with the three corporate dedications above, these votives, despite having no explicit attribution to the military or to the *auxilia*, were found nearby forts with a strongly attested auxiliary presence. It is thus likely that the votives were erected by auxiliary soldiers.

majority of the individual votives of this collection. Nonetheless, the 21% of dedications which lack an explicit military context are a testament to the dynamic capacity of individual worship to carve out alternative spaces for self-representation.

As a site for non-communal expressions of identity, individual worship may have allowed auxiliaries to enact significantly more agency compared with corporate worship. Collective dedications were, by nature, reductive; in consolidating the multivocal character of a regiment into a singular inscription, they inevitably flattened the complexities of the unit's members. By contrast, individual dedications, although by no means allowing complete access to a dedicator's internal life, provided for a more streamlined and direct expression of identity.<sup>123</sup> The distinction between the corporate and individual modes of religious expression, then, emerges as a crucial factor which shaped the dynamic affiliations of the frontier zone.

<b>CATEGORY OF DEITY</b>	<b>NUMBER OF CORPORATE DEDICATIONS</b>	<b>NUMBER OF INDIVIDUAL DEDICATIONS</b>
<b>Roman Pantheon</b>	100	63
<b>Local Celtic</b>	4	24
<b>Non-Roman, Foreign</b>	12	22

*Fig. 2.1. Comparison of corporate versus individual inscriptions between the three categories of deity.*

A comparison of the number of corporate and individual votives among the three categories of deity (deities of the Roman pantheon, of local Celtic origin, and of non-Roman, foreign origin) illuminates several trends which carved out the unique religious landscape of the *auxilia* (fig. 2.1). As examined above, worship of deities of the Roman pantheon was largely a

<sup>123</sup> The distinction between individual and corporate dedications may also reflect the different elements of identity being expressed in the different cases. Altars with individual worship, for example, may display individual, more personal affiliations, while altars with corporate worship may display group affiliations.

collective phenomenon, with corporate inscriptions figuring 61% of the total collection, compared to 39% being individual inscriptions. Votives to deities of non-Roman, foreign origin were characterized by a slightly different pattern of worship. Of the non-Roman, foreign inscriptions compiled for this thesis, 35% were corporate, while 65% were individual.<sup>124</sup> Votives to deities of Germanic origins—a significant subsection of the non-Roman, foreign deity category—largely mirror this broader trend. 45% of inscriptions honoring Germanic deities were corporately dedicated, while 55% of the inscriptions were individually dedicated.<sup>125</sup> Thus, corporate and individual worshipers appear relatively balanced in their worship of Roman deities, non-Roman, foreign deities, and Germanic deities, although the worship of Roman deities slightly leaned towards collective cult practice, while the worship of non-Roman, foreign deities slightly leaned towards individual cult practice. This balance implies that the worship of this diverse array of deities was both a vehicle for the cultivation of communal identities, as well as a mechanism for more personal expressions of affiliation.

Honing in on Germanic deities, for instance, there is a notable mixture of corporate and individual associations. At the fort of Lanchester (map 1), for instance, a *vexillatio* of Suebians honored the Germanic deity *Garmangabis*.<sup>126</sup> The Suebians were a Germanic people who lived east of the Rhine river. This collective dedication, then, fuses the imperial military context of the soldiers with a distinctly Germanic deity, employing a synthesized form of Roman and Germanic cult practice in order to establish communal bonds among these foreign soldiers. This altar is the only extant votive to *Garmangabis*, implying that the worship of this deity among these soldiers was highly localized, perhaps carving out a narrow group identity.

---

<sup>124</sup> 38% of the non-Roman, foreign votives are of uncertain auxiliary origins.

<sup>125</sup> Eight of the 20 votives to Germanic deities are of uncertain auxiliary origins.

<sup>126</sup> RIB 1074. Lanchester was an auxiliary fort located 32 kilometers south of Hadrian's Wall. *Vexillati* were irregular units of the Roman army that served as detachment forces of larger regiments.

On the other hand, at the fort of Mumrills (map 2), Valerius Nigrinus, a *duplicarius* of the Cavalry Regiment of Tungrians, honored with an altar the deity *Hercules Magusanus*, a syncretic deity of Germanic origins.<sup>127</sup> This dedication to *Hercules Magusanus* is the only extant altar to the god from Britain, suggesting that Valerius Nigrinus was a markedly solitary practitioner of the cult within this locale. In contrast with the one-off dedication to *Garmangabis* above, the cult of *Hercules Magusanus* was firmly established in the Germanic provinces. In fact, seven of the eight other extant dedications to *Hercules Magusanus* come from Lower Germany, a region directly adjacent to Tungrian lands.<sup>128</sup> In Lower Germany, sanctuaries of *Hercules Magusanus* were at times used for the initiation of males into military service.<sup>129</sup> Thus, this dedication may reveal an individual auxiliary soldier's agency in the process of transmitting and preserving ancestral, Germanic practices—the dynamic fusion of Roman, Germanic, and military elements within a single soldier. From this comparison of two altars to Germanic deities, one corporate and one individual, it is clear that, despite sharing common origins and traditions, the worship of Germanic deities among the *auxilia* was not uniform in nature. Although both of the above dedications indicate the perpetuation of Germanic elements within the multicultural context of the frontier zone, the cult practices were executed in divergent ways, according to the corporate versus individual character of the worshipers, among other salient social factors.

In contrast to the relatively balanced mixture of corporate and individual dedications among deities of the Roman pantheon and deities of non-Roman, foreign origin, the auxiliary worshipers of the Celtic deities local to Britain displayed a markedly different pattern of cult practice. Of the 28 compiled inscriptions to local Celtic deities, 86% included individual forms

---

<sup>127</sup> RIB 2140; Clay, “Germanic Migrants in Roman Britain,” 82.

<sup>128</sup> Haynes, “The Romanisation of Religion,” 156.

<sup>129</sup> Clay, “Germanic Migrants in Roman Britain,” 82.

of identification, while only 14% displayed corporate identities.<sup>130</sup> This pattern marks a striking departure from the altars of the Roman and non-Roman, foreign deities, which included a relatively balanced mixture of corporate and individual dedications. The dominance of individual worship among the local Celtic altars thus warrants close examination. At first glance, this trend of individual worship may appear to suggest a cult context entirely extraneous to the consolidated military community of the *auxilia*. And yet, dedications to local Celtic deities such as *Veteris* and *Belatucadrus* were found within the walls of imperial forts, despite bearing no identifications with specific auxiliary units nor any indication of corporate worship.<sup>131</sup> Thus, this pattern of individual worship coexisted with the more communal, imperial elements which also permeated the auxiliary experience of the frontier zone.

In particular, there are several instances of individual worship in which local Celtic deities are attested in only one auxiliary altar in the frontier zone. Take, for instance, the dedication to the goddess *Verbeia* by Clodius Fronto, prefect of the Second Cohort of Lingonians; or the dedication to the goddess *Setlocenia* by Labareus, a German and likely auxiliary soldier; or the syncretic dedication to *Vernostonus Cocidius* by Virilis, another German and likely auxiliary soldier.<sup>132</sup> All of these dedications feature obscure deities native to Britain as the subject of individual cult practice. Interestingly, several of the local Celtic deities worshiped in these individual dedications are intimately associated with the natural landscape of Britain. *Verbeia*, for example, is the divine personification of the River Wharfe, which runs through

---

<sup>130</sup> ~40% of the votives to Celtic deities local to Britain are of uncertain auxiliary origins.

<sup>131</sup> Irby-Massie, 114.

<sup>132</sup> RIB 635, RIB 841, RIB 1102.

northern Britain.<sup>133</sup> Likewise, *Vernostonus* is associated with the alder tree.<sup>134</sup> There emerges, then, a potent connection between local Celtic deities, individual worship, and the physical landscape of Britain, alluding to the influential force of the locality of the frontier zone. Amid the complex, multivocal environment of this region, individual worship of local Celtic deities—concretely embodied in the physical landscape—perhaps served as a medium through which foreign auxiliaries reconciled with their new surroundings.

Therefore, auxiliaries' sense of place—their experience of the natural landscape of Hadrian's Wall—likely played a crucial role in their individual worship of local Celtic deities. This connection is particularly illuminated in contrast with the other deities of Roman and foreign origins worshiped along the frontier. Deities of the Roman pantheon and of non-Roman, foreign origin necessarily possessed a degree of abstraction and detachment from the physical locality of worshipers in northern Britain. Many auxiliaries revered deities of the Roman pantheon which were moralizing, abstract virtues, such as Fortune, Victory, and the Discipline of the Emperor. Likewise, non-Roman, foreign deities, despite at times preserving potent ancestral connections, nevertheless maintained a degree of separation from worshipers due to the topographical fixity of the auxiliary practitioners in a distant land. In these cases, corporate worship may have been employed as a mechanism to more tangibly materialize connections between worshipers and the deities. In the absence of other material phenomena, the physical collectivities of worshipers may have served as necessary substitutes to concretize cult practice.

---

<sup>133</sup> RIB 635; Andrew Charles Breeze, "The River Wharfe and Verbeia, Celtic Goddess," *Traduction et Langues* 17, no. 1 (2018): 8. *Verbeia* may have been a formidable female river goddess. In particular, Breeze analyzes the Celtic etymology of the name *Verbeia*, suggesting a potential interpretation of the goddess as the "Powerful Striker, she who is Strong in Hitting."

<sup>134</sup> RIB 1102; "Vernostonos," Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias, <https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/1036531>. Very little is known about the deity *Vernostonus*. His name may be derived from the Proto-Celtic term *\*Werno-stonos*, which means "the groaning of Alder-trunks."

By contrast, the local Celtic deities attested along Hadrian's Wall manifested daily within an auxiliary's physical experience—in every grove, spring, or forest. There was no need for the intermediary of corporate worship to materialize one's connection with local deities; that connection was readily accessible in the natural landscape. The dominance of individual worship to local Celtic deities, then, appears to have been the product of intimate, personal connections to the natural world among the *auxilia*, which bypassed the need for the social structures of corporate worship. The auxiliaries' sense of locality therefore emerges as a significant factor which shaped their experience of both the spiritual and natural worlds of the frontier zone.

The distinction between corporate and individual worship also underscores significant trends among the syncretic dedications made by auxiliaries. Of the 13 compiled syncretic inscriptions, 69% were individually dedicated, while the remaining 31% were corporately dedicated.<sup>135</sup> In all but one of these syncretic dedications, the worshiper venerated a deity of the Roman pantheon. And yet, the proportion of corporate and individual syncretic dedications does not mirror the proportion of corporate and individual dedications to deities of the Roman pantheon—in fact, it almost completely reverses the trend.<sup>136</sup> The higher proportion of individual dedications among the collection of syncretisms indicates a significant level of personal agency involved in the mechanisms of syncretic worship. The unique and highly personalized nature of syncretic dedications likely allowed individual worshipers to synthesize multiple elements of their identity, creating a dedication with a diverse range of meaning.

It must be noted, however, that syncretism within imperial contexts may encode asymmetric power structures, facilitating the superimposition of a dominant belief system upon

---

<sup>135</sup> Of these 13 syncretic inscriptions, one was of uncertain auxiliary origins.

<sup>136</sup> There are 61% corporate inscriptions versus 39% individual inscriptions among the dedications to deities of the Roman Pantheon. Compare this with the 31% corporate inscriptions versus 69% individual inscriptions among dedications to syncretic deities.

another.<sup>137</sup> That is, although foreign, non-Roman deities were venerated within the syncretic dedications, these non-Roman elements were to some extent mediated by imperial Roman cultural forms. As Roman articulations of foreign cult practices, the syncretic dedications underscore the processes of imperialism at work within the religious realm. Notwithstanding the fundamental power imbalance underlying the auxiliary experience, however, the religious syncretism of the *auxilia* along Hadrian's Wall may nevertheless be understood as a dynamic form of "resistant adaptation." In particular, the significant proportion of individual dedications to syncretic deities emphasizes the dynamism of this form of worship, highlighting the active role taken by individual soldiers in negotiating the complex spiritual arena of the locale. Despite the external facade of Roman material culture and cult practice which characterize these syncretic altars, the dedications—individual, as well as corporate—also convey dynamic narratives that may conventionally be deemed non-Roman.

### **The Social Stratification of Worshipers**

In addition to the distinction between corporate and individual worship, social rank played an important role in shaping the patterns of cult practice among the *auxilia* of Hadrian's Wall. Within the imperial military community, there existed a hierarchy of soldiers, with officers at the top and rank-and-file soldiers at the bottom. In this hierarchical structure, prefects and tribunes were typically the commanders of auxiliary units, thus ranking the highest. Next in the hierarchy were the ranks of centurions and decurions, who were the senior officers of the units, oftentimes leading subsections of the broader regiments.<sup>138</sup> These senior officers were followed

---

<sup>137</sup> Webster, "A Negotiated Syncretism," 172.

<sup>138</sup> McLaughlin, 33.

by several miscellaneous ranks which were distinguished from the lowly rank-and-file auxiliaries but not as influential as the upper echelons of the power structure.<sup>139</sup>

Of the 87 individual inscriptions compiled for this thesis, 72%—the majority—were dedicated by auxiliaries with some degree of military rank (fig. 2.2). The significant skew of these dedications towards ranked officers is unsurprising given the expenses involved in commissioning altars.<sup>140</sup> In the collection of corporate inscriptions, too, a vast number of altars feature references to the commanding officers of the auxiliary units. While the corporate military dedications appear to nominally democratize worship, spreading it equally amongst the soldiers of the unit, the explicit identifications of the units' commanding officers nevertheless superimpose the military hierarchy onto these votive objects.

<b>WORSHIPER'S IDENTITY IN THE MILITARY HIERARCHY</b>	<b>NUMBER OF DEDICATIONS</b>
<b>Ranked Officer</b> <sup>141</sup>	63
<b>Soldier of No Rank</b>	6
<b>Individual with No Explicit Military Associations</b>	18

*Fig. 2.2. Comparison of the positionalities of individual worshipers within the military hierarchy.*

Adhering to the formulaic style followed by most of the corporate military inscriptions, one altar to JOM from the fort of Birdoswald (map 1), for example, identifies its dedicators as “the First Aelian Cohort of Dacians...which its tribune Aurelius Verinus commands.”<sup>142</sup> At first

<sup>139</sup> The lesser ranks of the military hierarchy include, for instance, the position of *duplicarius*, a low-ranking officer who received twice the basic rate of pay, as well as the position of *optio*, the second-in-command officer to a centurion.

<sup>140</sup> Haynes, *Blood of the Provinces*, 321.

<sup>141</sup> The military ranks attested in these dedications include *prefect*, *tribune*, *decurion*, *optio*, *centurion*, *legate*, *imaginifer*, *princeps*, *actarius*, and *duplicarius*.

<sup>142</sup> RIB 3438.

glance, this altar materializes a less sharp invocation of hierarchy, as it enacts the collective worship of a unit of auxiliaries. Yet, the reference to the commanding officer of the unit alludes to the omnipresence of social stratification in this religious context. Thus, in both the individual and corporate dedications of the *auxilia*, the social rank of soldiers was materialized concretely in the physical altars and in turn influenced the specific character of the votives.

On a material level, the prerequisites of wealth and exposure to Roman cultural processes that were involved in the erection of altars likely barred a large number of rank-and-file auxiliaries—especially recent recruits—from taking part in the act of religious monumentalization. However, rather than writing off all auxiliary altars as the sole arena of the higher ranks of the military community, the significant skew towards the upper echelons renders the smaller number of altars from rank-and-file soldiers all the more significant and worthy of analysis. That these ordinary auxiliaries amassed the resources to expense altars at all is a testament to both their willpower and their dedication to their worship. Furthermore, despite making up the majority of the individual dedications, the officer dedicators of the *auxilia* in Britain were not a monolith. Within this mass of ranked auxiliary worshipers, the stratification of the officers themselves added another salient element of identity to the complex social landscape of the *auxilia*. It was not simply the distinction between officer and rank-and-file soldier that produced meaning in cult practice, but also the distinction between the different ranks of officers.

Of the various military ranks attested in individual and corporate inscriptions along Hadrian's Wall, prefects and tribunes formed the largest two proportions of ranks—54% and 25% of the ranked inscriptions respectively.<sup>143</sup> The predominance of the two highest ranks of the officer class is unsurprising, given that the privileged positionality of prefects and tribunes

---

<sup>143</sup> The inscriptions which make up this sample include the total mass of auxiliary inscriptions in which the military rank of the worshiper is identified.

offered them access to significant wealth and influence. Furthermore, in their capacity as commanders of auxiliary units, prefects and tribunes were often obliged to take part in the official rituals of the imperial state religion, which included annual dedications on behalf of their units. Thus, a significant number of the corporate dedications which identify ranked auxiliary officers were likely expressions of adherence to the official state religion. In these cases, the forces of hierarchy and imperialism dynamically intertwined, as both the social and imperial hierarchies of the frontier zone were reproduced through the same vessel.

After prefects and tribunes, centurions and decurions predictably had the next-largest proportion of the combined collection of individual and corporate dedications. These ranks, however, notably had far fewer dedications than prefects and tribunes. Centurion worshipers were identified in 8% of the compiled votive inscriptions, while decurion worshipers were identified in only 4%. It is possible that this disparity in dedications was the result of the unequal distribution of wealth and resources among the ranks of officers. The significant drop in inscriptions between the highest echelons of the officer class and the ranks below may also provide evidence for the larger involvement of the prefects and tribunes in the official state dedications of the *auxilia* in comparison with senior officers like centurions and decurions.

This trend takes on further significance when viewed in the context of the abovementioned intersection between hierarchy and imperial power. The altars of the *auxilia* were not obscure objects, but public monuments, intended to be viewed. As objects of visibility, the dedications thus transmitted and perpetuated the different hierarchies which they encoded. On a macroscopic level, this meant the imperial hierarchy, of which Rome—and all of its accompanying socio-cultural values—was at the top. On a more microscopic level, however, these dedications also reproduced the stratified social structure of the auxiliary military

community. The visibility of the dedications within the auxiliary context of Hadrian's Wall rendered the supremacy of the prefects and tribunes unquestionable. Through the sheer physical abundance of dedications identifying prefects and tribunes, these high-ranked officers were rendered omnipresent in the social life of the *auxilia*. Even when not physically present, their status was permanently enmeshed in the spiritual and topographical fabric of the frontier zone.

The collection of dedications to *Mars*, a prominent deity of the imperial army, particularly illuminates this dynamic intertwining of hierarchies in cult practice. Of the nine compiled dedications to *Mars* which identify a ranked auxiliary, eight include a prefect or tribune, while only one includes a centurion. Rather than being simple vehicles of Romanization, then, the dedications of ranked auxiliaries emerge as powerful mechanisms through which complex imperial hierarchies were negotiated and reproduced by soldiers. The altars to *Mars*, for instance, may be construed as more than simple expressions of fealty to the imperial state. The votives to *Mars* allowed high-ranking auxiliary officers to assert their positionality within the hierarchy of the imperial community, perhaps leveraging their proximity to a chief military deity of the Roman pantheon as a way of enhancing their own prestige.

By contrast, in dedications to the *Matres*, the triad of Germanic goddesses, there is a higher proportion of lower-ranking officers in comparison with prefects and tribunes. Among both the corporate and individual dedications to the *Matres*, there is only one altar which identifies a prefect dedicator, while there are three altars erected by individuals of the lower officer ranks, including dedications by a centurion, a decurion, and a *signifer*.<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, within this collection, there are four individual dedications to the *Matres* in which the worshiper omits reference to military rank completely. Thus, whereas dedications to the imperial Roman

---

<sup>144</sup> RIB 1334, RIB 2135, RIB 586, RIB 2141.

deity *Mars* were dominated by the upper echelons of the military hierarchy, dedications to the non-Roman deities the *Matres* skewed more heavily towards the lower levels of the social structure. This pattern may highlight the disproportionate distribution of soldiers of Germanic origins in the lower levels of the military hierarchy. The pattern also underscores the crucial role of social identity—in this case, social rank—in shaping the cult practice of auxiliaries in this locale. The differences between the dedicators of *Mars* and the *Matres* may more broadly reflect a distinction between the worship of the higher and lower ranks of the imperial apparatus.

This distinction between the different levels of the social and imperial hierarchies in cult practice is particularly illuminated in the dedications of the lower ranks of auxiliary officers. Several altars dedicated by *duplicarii* along Hadrian's Wall, for instance, may be construed as efforts by low-ranking officers to negotiate their identity within the stratified social structure of the frontier zone.<sup>145</sup> One of these altars was dedicated by a group of *duplicarii* to the goddess *Roma*, on the occasion of her birthday.<sup>146</sup> The inscription notes that the altar was set up under the charge of the tribune Caepio Charitinus.<sup>147</sup> Possibly dedicated as part of an official ritual of the imperial state religion, the votive may represent the forging of communal bonds among the *duplicarii* on the basis of Roman values. Interestingly, there are no other official altars dedicated by groups of auxiliary *duplicarii* in the northern Britain frontier zone. This altar, then, suggests the cultivation of a unique *duplicarius* identity specific to the auxiliary context at this frontier fort. Furthermore, the group of *duplicarii* dedicators in this dedication strikingly juxtaposes with the simultaneous identification of a higher-ranking tribune. The *duplicarii* assert their identity, linking themselves to the divine personification of Rome, and yet, they do so within the confines

---

<sup>145</sup> *Duplicarii* were low-ranking officers of the imperial military who received twice the basic rate of pay.

<sup>146</sup> RIB 1270.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

of the imperial military hierarchy, which is given tangible form in the epigraphic attestation of the tribune in command of their unit. The dedication thus underscores the tension underlying the *duplicarii*'s alternate assertion, negotiation, and contestation of their place in the complex social hierarchy of Hadrian's Wall.

Another crucial *duplicarius* altar is the above-mentioned votive to *Hercules Magusanus*, dedicated by Valerius Nigrinus, *duplicarius* of the Cavalry Regiment of Tungrians.<sup>148</sup> As examined earlier in the chapter, the syncretic deity *Hercules Magusanus* was firmly entrenched within the Germanic provinces. And yet, despite the high concentration of Germanic auxiliaries along Hadrian's Wall, the dedication by Valerius Nigrinus is the only extant altar to this deity in Britain. As an isolated instance of worship in the locale, the dedication illuminates the complex interplay of social categories within Valerius Nigrinus's identity, which likely produced this unique religious manifestation. Given his worship of the Germanic deity *Hercules Magusanus* and his position within an auxiliary unit of Tungrians, a Germanic tribe, it is probable that Valerius Nigrinus was of Germanic origin, or was at the very least exposed to Germanic cultural elements. Furthermore, Valerius Nigrinus was part of the officer class of the imperial army. He was not, however, within the upper echelons of the hierarchy. Absent the status of prefect or tribune, he was likely not beholden to the official military rituals, which obliged high-ranking officers to make annual dedications to Roman deities on behalf of their units. Nevertheless, as a *duplicarius*, Valerius Nigrinus was also not a rank-and-file soldier, and thus possessed more status and resources than the ordinary auxiliary. His dynamic positionality, in which he straddled the Germanic and Roman worlds, while also moving fluidly within the stratified military social structure, thereby gave him the flexibility to erect this distinctive altar to *Hercules Magusanus*.

---

<sup>148</sup> RIB 2140.

Like Valerius Nigrinus, other low-ranking officers of the *auxilia* also capitalized off of their unique positionality within the imperial social structure in order to express affiliation with deities of non-Roman origins. At the fort of Carrawburgh (map 1), for example, Mausaeus, an *optio* of the First Cohort of Frixiavenes, erected an altar to the local Celtic goddess *Coventina*.<sup>149</sup> At the fort of Carvoran (map 1), Julius Pastor, an *imaginifer* of the Second Cohort of Dalmatians, honored the local Celtic deity *Veteris*.<sup>150</sup> Likewise, Cassius, a *signifer* most likely from an auxiliary unit at the fort of Mumrills (map 2), dedicated an altar to the Germanic goddesses the *Matres*.<sup>151</sup> These dedications mark the only extant examples of dedications by auxiliaries of these three lower ranks—*optio*, *imaginifer*, and *signifer*—along Hadrian’s Wall. Given the isolated instances of worship by these low-ranking officers, it is notable that all three individual dedicators honored non-Roman goddesses. As with the case of Valerius Nigrinus above, this pattern suggests a connection between the dynamic positionality of low-ranking officers within the social hierarchy of the *auxilia* and their capacity to monumentally worship non-Roman deities.

Furthermore, these dedications underscore the broader intersection between the social categories of auxiliary worshipers and their choice of deity to worship. In particular, there emerges a notable concentration of low-ranking worshipers among votives to certain non-Roman deities. For instance, the above-mentioned altar to *Veteris* dedicated by an *imaginifer* of the *auxilia* is one of only two extant instances in which ranked soldiers of the Roman army venerated this deity.<sup>152</sup> Of the 61 total dedications to *Veteris* from the northern Britain frontier

---

<sup>149</sup> RIB 1523. The rank of *optio* was the second-in-command officer to a centurion. Note that the orthography of *Coventina* in Mausaeus’s inscription diverges from other comparable votives to the goddess.

<sup>150</sup> RIB 1795. The rank of *imaginifer* was the standard-bearer who carried the image of the Emperor.

<sup>151</sup> RIB 2141. There is no explicit identification of an auxiliary unit in this inscription. However, the dedication was found near a fort with a strongly-attested auxiliary presence.

<sup>152</sup> Irby-Massie, 114.

zone, 59% feature Celtic names without military rank, while 39% provide no name at all.<sup>153</sup>

*Veteris*, then, was likely a deity popular among the lower social stratum of this locale—the mass of rank-and-file auxiliary soldiers. The probable low-class social origins of the worshipers of *Veteris* are further emphasized by the variant orthographies which pervade dedications to this deity.<sup>154</sup> The irregularity of the orthography of *Veteris* suggests lower levels of literacy among the cult’s worshipers, as well as the absence of a standardized cult structure governing the worship of this non-Roman god.

An examination of the orthography of another local Celtic god worshiped in this locale, *Belatucadrus*, also illustrates the potent intersection between auxiliaries’ social positionalities and chosen deities of worship. 14 orthographical variations of *Belatucadrus* appear across 27 inscriptions to the god.<sup>155</sup> Furthermore, there is no extant altar to *Belatucadrus* which explicitly identifies its dedicator with a specific military rank or unit of the *auxilia*, although many of the dedications do come from auxiliary contexts. The closest identification of a *Belatucadrus* votive with an auxiliary military context comes from the altar of Peisius, who refers to himself merely as a *miles*.<sup>156</sup> The absence here of identifications with military rank—and oftentimes with the military context completely—contrasts starkly with the examination above of the abundant altars with identifications of ranked officers, in which the imperial and social hierarchies of the frontier zone were reproduced.

Whereas the altars of ranked officers likely allowed higher-status auxiliaries to assert their position in the imperial social order of the frontier zone, dedications to deities such as

---

<sup>153</sup> Irby-Massie, 114.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, 118-119. There are 17 variations of *Veteris*’s name attested across 56 inscriptions.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid, 119.

<sup>156</sup> RIB 2056. This dedication bears no explicit identification with an auxiliary unit. However, the altar was found at a fort within the northern frontier zone, which likely hosted an auxiliary presence.

*Veteris* and *Belatucadrus* may have enabled lower-ranking soldiers to carve out their own unique affiliations beyond the confines of the military hierarchy. That is, altars to *Veteris* and *Belatucadrus* certainly facilitated the negotiation and assertion of identity among auxiliary worshipers, but they crucially did so in the absence of identifications with military rank, perhaps forging connections through other salient social pathways. It is evident, then, that an auxiliary's positionality within the frontier military hierarchy, whether high-ranking, low-ranking, or lacking rank at all, played a significant role in determining the character and meaning of his cult practice.

### **Localized Identifications of Worshipers**

The final social category that will be examined in this chapter is the expression of certain localized and regional identities among the *auxilia*. These localized identifications can be sorted into three primary forms: (1) affiliations with a certain *pagus*—a district of a territory; (2) tribal affiliations; and (3) specifically among ranked soldiers, identifications of the officers' home region. Among the higher ranks of the military hierarchy, and of Roman society generally, inscriptions which included an identification of the dedicator's origins were not uncommon. Many of the identifications on standardized officer inscriptions enmesh the auxiliary dedicators in the social fabric of Roman society, as they state the soldier's status in his distant home province, or his voting-tribe. Several of the non-ranked auxiliary dedications, however, display less conventionally-Roman signifiers of identity. These altars include, for instance, affiliations with certain regions or tribal territories of the provinces, as well as, in some cases, the seemingly ethnicity-based epithet of *Germanus*. This section will explore in-depth the auxiliary dedicators who displayed localized manifestations of identity which diverge from the traditional modes of Roman self-ascription found on other altars.

This thesis compiles 20 total instances in which auxiliaries employed localized identifications on altars.<sup>157</sup> Five out of these 20 votives were dedications by auxiliaries of military rank—officers who adhered to the typical Roman epigraphic norm of stating one’s province of origin. Of the collection of 20 votives, 12 dedications involved worship of deities of the Roman pantheon, seven dedications involved worship of non-Roman, foreign deities, and five dedications involved worship of local Celtic deities.<sup>158</sup> At first glance, these numbers appear to indicate a potential correlation between the worship of Roman deities and the expression of localized identities. However, the high concentration of Roman deities among the dedications with localized identifications is likely due to the overall high concentration of dedications to Roman deities throughout the entire collection of auxiliary votives, rather than implying a causal relationship between these two factors.

In fact, within each of the three major categories of deity, an examination of the percentage of the total dedications that include localized identifications illuminates a new trend. Of the total dedications to deities of the Roman pantheon, votives with localized identifications make up just 7% of the total corpus of sources. On the other hand, among the total dedications to local Celtic deities, 17% were votives with localized identifications. Likewise, among the total dedications to non-Roman, foreign deities, 21% were votives with localized identifications. The phenomenon of localized, regional identification, then, appears to have manifested more frequently within dedications to non-Roman deities—gods both local to Britain as well as native to foreign regions abroad. Although these localized identifications by no means took up the

---

<sup>157</sup> 50% of the votives with localized identifications are of uncertain auxiliary origins.

<sup>158</sup> Note that the summation of these three groups is larger than 20 (the total number of dedications), because some of the dedications worshiped multiple categories of the deities at once.

majority of altars to non-Roman deities, the concentration of these identifications among cult practices venerating foreign deities in particular is notable.

The connection between the worship of non-Roman deities and the expression of localized identities is underscored in several altars from along Hadrian's Wall. Examined in Chapter One, a group of auxiliaries at the fort of Birrens (map 1) erected an altar venerating the goddess *Viradecthis*.<sup>159</sup> On the inscription, the auxiliaries identified themselves as "(the men of) the Condrustian district serving in the Second Cohort of Tungrians, under Silvius Auspex, the prefect."<sup>160</sup> Beyond this altar at Birrens, the only other extant dedications to the goddess *Viradecthis* come from the Rhineland.<sup>161</sup> In fact, *Viradecthis* was a prominent goddess within the communities of the *civitas Tungrorum*, the territories of the Tungrians.<sup>162</sup> This dedication to *Viradecthis* by auxiliaries serving in the Second Cohort of Tungrians, then, indicates the preservation of spiritual ties to an ancestral homeland within a military context.

The dedication, however, goes beyond the mere perpetuation of cultural identity within the Cohort of Tungrians. That is, it is crucial to note the specific regional identification of the men as members of the "Condrustian district" (*pagus Condrustis*). The lands of the *Condrusi* fell within the broader territory of the *civitas Tungrorum*. Rather than simply cultivate communal ties to Tungrian cultural elements, then, this dedication articulates a far more narrow expression of localized identity, honing in on one particular subregion of the Tungrian territory. The auxiliary dedicators of this altar collectively associated themselves with a more exclusive *Condrustian* identity, instead of adhering to the broader cultural identity of the regiment. This localized identification indicates the emergence of "distinct cliques" within the auxiliary unit, in which

---

<sup>159</sup> RIB 2108.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. The *Condrusi* were a Germanic tribe which resided in the province of Lower Germany.

<sup>161</sup> Clay, "Germanic Migrants in Roman Britain," 150.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, 98.

micro-regional identities were asserted as a means of differentiation.<sup>163</sup> This phenomenon gains particular significance within the context of identity as a situational construct, which only gains currency in specific contexts.<sup>164</sup> In auxiliary units of mixed origins, ethnic and tribal commonalities between subsections of group members likely took on heightened relevance, resulting in more frequent collective expressions of localized identity.

In fact, within the Second Cohort of Tungrians serving at Birrens, two other altars have been found with similar regional expressions of identity. For instance, soldiers of this cohort from the Vellavian district (*pagus Vellaus*)—another subregion within Tungrian lands—dedicated an altar to the goddess *Ricagambeda*.<sup>165</sup> Likewise, a group of Raetian tribesmen (*cives Raeti*) serving within the unit erected an altar to *Mars* and the Emperor's Victory.<sup>166</sup> These three altars not only highlight the dynamic intermixing of different Germanic tribes within a singular unit, but also the powerful mechanisms through which these tribesmen carved out their unique group identities. Here, two salient social categories—corporate and localized identity—collapse onto each other in order to produce a dynamic articulation of affiliation through cult practice.

As with the other social categories analyzed in the sections above, the localized identifications expressed in the auxiliary altars possessed a diverse range of meaning. On one hand, the dedication to *Viradecthis* suggests the significant transmission and reproduction of Germanic beliefs within the multicultural military context of Hadrian's Wall. However, it may be too simplistic to assume that the preservation of native cultural beliefs was the only reason for

---

<sup>163</sup> Haynes, "The Romanisation of Religion," 156.

<sup>164</sup> Ton Derks, "Ethnic Identity in the Roman Frontier: The Epigraphy of Batavi and Other Lower Rhine Tribes," in *Ethnic Constructs in Antiquity: The Role of Power and Tradition*, edited by Ton Derks and Nico Roymans (Amsterdam University Press, 2009): 265.

<sup>165</sup> RIB 2107. Not as much information is known about *Ricagambeda* as *Viradecthis*. It is probable, however, that *Ricagambeda* was a goddess of Germanic origins.

<sup>166</sup> RIB 2100.

this dedication. Just as the worship of Roman deities cannot be construed as complete assimilation to the imperial apparatus, the dedication to *Viradecthis* cannot be viewed as a wholesale rejection of Roman culture.

In fact, neither ideological acceptance nor resistance to the imperial Roman value system was likely the motive behind the erection of the altar to *Viradecthis*. As evidenced by the highly narrow, localized identification of the *Condrustian* auxiliaries, as well as the other inscriptions from the unit which displayed specific expressions of regional affiliation, cult practice served as a dynamic means of articulating and negotiating identity within the pluralistic community of the frontier. In these contexts, cult served as a “shared point of cultural reference,” around which auxiliaries were able to embrace hyper-local identities and, in so doing, differentiate themselves from other worshipers.<sup>167</sup> As a result, the specific nuances of both regional and imperial social structures played a crucial role in shaping the character of auxiliary worship. This is not to say, however, that the two modes of reasoning—preservation of cultural beliefs and differentiation of identity—did not coexist in this manifestation of cult practice. In fact, it is vital to regard the two strands of analysis in tandem in order to illuminate the complex arrangement of social dynamics which shaped the daily experiences of auxiliary soldiers.

In addition to associations with certain tribes and regions, the auxiliaries in northern Britain also employed localized identifications in the form of the *Germanus* epithet. The term *Germanus*, which will be explored further in Chapter Three, is often perceived in contemporary scholarship as a Roman construct imposed upon disparate Germanic tribes by external groups.<sup>168</sup> In the frontier zone of Britain, however, *Germanus* may have been a more self-ascriptive label,

---

<sup>167</sup> Andrew C. Johnston, *The Sons of Remus: Identity in Roman Gaul and Spain* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017), 61.

<sup>168</sup> Cheryl Clay, “Developing the ‘Germani’ in Roman Studies,” *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal* 2007 (2008): 131.

exploited by auxiliaries of Germanic origin themselves. In fact, the *Germanus* label is found in 12 inscriptions along Hadrian's Wall, nine of which are compiled for analysis in this thesis.<sup>169</sup> Regardless of whether the *Germanus* identification was imposed from above or self-ascribed, these inscriptions are rich for analysis, as they underscore the formation of a salient group identity, premised upon territorial and perhaps even ethnic commonalities, within the *auxilia*. As a significant social category in the northern frontier zone, the *Germanus* label illuminates the dynamic mechanisms which intersected identity and cult practice among auxiliaries.

Of the 20 votives with localized identifications compiled for this thesis, 45%—nine inscriptions—include the *Germanus* label. The identifications with the *Germanus* label thus comprise a strikingly high proportion of the localized affiliations, indicating that the *Germanus* construct held a significant degree of meaning among the *auxilia*. Furthermore, the *Germanus* epithet, which grouped together several diverse Germanic tribes under one label, strikingly contrasts with the highly localized modes of identification evidenced above within the Cohort of Tungrians. Whereas cliques of auxiliaries in the Cohort of Tungrians aligned themselves with specific tribal regions, the identifications with the *Germanus* epithet appear to do the opposite, collapsing inter-tribal distinctions to cement a broader, pan-Germanic identity.

Given this distinction, it is particularly notable that six out of the nine altars with the *Germanus* identification represent forms of individual worship. By contrast, all three of the localized, regional identifications in the Cohort of Tungrians above occurred within the context of collective worship. This pattern appears to cement the theory that the regionalized forms of identification in the Cohort of Tungrians were forms of communal social differentiation—the emergence of localized cliques within the unit. On the other hand, the significant skew of the

---

<sup>169</sup> Clay, "Developing the 'Germani' in Roman Studies," 138.

altars with the *Germanus* label towards individual worship may indicate that participation in this social construct was a more personal act. Rather than replicating the collective tribal associations of the ancestral homeland, self-ascription with the *Germanus* label may have represented a potent act of individual agency from a single auxiliary soldier.

Instead of assuming that any association with the *Germanus* label indicates a wholesale absorption of Roman values, then, as the epithet may have been imposed upon auxiliaries from above, the social construct may be regarded as indicative of an entirely new dynamic at work. It is possible that the use of the term *Germanus* among the *auxilia* carved out an avenue for individual auxiliaries to craft new forms of association and identity. The identifications with the *Germanus* term may not represent complete acceptance of imperial Roman culture, nor total preservation of traditional Germanic beliefs. Rather, the use of the epithet emerges as a wholly new phenomenon produced in response to the imperial military context of the frontier zone.

The novelty of the *Germanus* label along Hadrian's Wall is further illuminated through an examination of the deities which worshipers using this epithet chose to venerate. If we take as our models altars such as those to *Ricagambeda* and *Viradecthis*, in which the regional identities expressed mirror the origins of the deities themselves, the assumption would likely be that dedications employing the *Germanus* epithet necessarily coincide with the worship of Germanic deities. This, however, is not the case. Of the nine dedications with the *Germanus* label, five worship deities of the Roman pantheon, four worship local Celtic deities, and three worship non-Roman, foreign deities. More specifically, of the three altars to non-Roman foreign deities, only two are dedications to Germanic gods. Thus, there emerges no direct connection between the use of the *Germanus* epithet and worship of Germanic deities—in fact, the reverse trend seems more likely. Although at first glance surprising, this pattern makes sense within the theoretical

framework of identity as a distinctly context-based construct. Within the multicultural frontier zone, the cultural affiliations of worshipers venerating Germanic deities was likely self-evident. In fact, it was probably only within the context of worship to *non-Germanic* deities, such as those of the Roman pantheon or of local Celtic origins, that the Germanic identifications of worshipers took on distinct social relevance and currency.<sup>170</sup> It was crucially *outside* Germanic social structures that the *Germanus* epithet was employed as a mode of differentiation and identification by the *auxilia*.

The *Germanus* label, then, emerges as a dynamic social signifier for auxiliaries along Hadrian's Wall, serving as a powerful avenue through which soldiers articulated a communal, pan-Germanic identity within an environment full of foreign elements. Interestingly, of the nine votives with the *Germanus* epithet compiled for this thesis, eight are of uncertain auxiliary context, meaning that they possess no explicit affiliation to the *auxilia*.<sup>171</sup> By contrast, all but one of the other 11 localized identifications compiled for analysis included direct references to units of the *auxilia*. The *Germanus* epithet, then, appears to have uniquely operated outside the confines of the standard military affiliations of the *auxilia*. This is not to say that the dedicators who took on the *Germanus* label were not auxiliaries; rather, this trend indicates that the *Germanus* label may have not derived its significance from the collective spiritual connections forged between soldiers of the same unit, as has been evidenced for other social categories above. The highly individual nature of worship with the *Germanus* epithet, coupled with the lack

---

<sup>170</sup> A phenomenon of similar mechanisms is analyzed by Ton Derks in his article "Ethnic Identity in the Roman Frontier. The Epigraphy of Batavi and Other Lower Rhine Tribes." Derks analyzes the geographical distribution of inscriptions with explicit identifications of Batavian descent. He highlights how these inscriptions are only found abroad, rather than within Batavian territory, where this identification would have been self-evident. Likewise, nearly all of the inscriptions in which Batavian soldiers identified their tribal affiliations originated from non-Batavian units.

<sup>171</sup> Despite their uncertain auxiliary origins, these altars were found in or around forts with strongly attested auxiliary presence, indicating that they were likely dedicated by worshipers of the *auxilia*. The one *Germanus* altar with an explicit auxiliary affiliation is RIB 1594.

of direct attributions to the *auxilia*, render this form of localized identification a dynamic phenomenon which operated independently of some of the other important social categories which permeated the frontier zone.

In fact, if we regard the absence of direct references to the *auxilia* in these altars as a deliberate omission, the individualized use of the *Germanus* epithet emerges as a mechanism through which auxiliaries carved out an identity that was not only extraneous to their imperial military context, but an identity that perhaps transcended that imperial military context altogether. Of course, no form of worship occurring within the frontier zone could wholly sever ties with the imperial power apparatus, given how embedded imperial ideology was in the Roman military community. Nonetheless, the use of the *Germanus* label embodies how, within the multifaceted social context of Hadrian's Wall, different forms of social affiliation alternately competed, coalesced, and asserted themselves within the cult practice of the *auxilia*. In the case of the *Germanus* epithet, pancultural affiliations with the broader notion of a Germanic people or Germanic territory may have eclipsed other potent social categories of the pluralistic frontier zone, such as those tied to the imperial *auxilia* or to specific tribal regions.

### **Conclusion**

The cult practitioners of the *auxilia* along Hadrian's Wall displayed a multiplicity of social identities, which alternately competed and intertwined as they were expressed in the dedicatory trends of the group. Together, the various social categories which governed the lived experiences of the *auxilia* along Hadrian's Wall created a dynamic network of affiliations and identities. This complex web of affiliations was given tangible form and spiritual currency in the votive inscriptions erected by the soldiers. Viewed in the context of this dynamic intermingling of social structures, the diversity of worship in the northern Britain frontier zone emerges as a

unique product of specific socio-cultural contexts and nuances, rather than as a straightforward expression of either assimilation or resistance to the imperial power system.

### **Chapter Three: Communal Worship at the Temple to *Mars Thingsus***

Within the multicultural frontier zone of northern Britain, a diverse array of socio-cultural forces intersected among the *auxilia*. One outcome of this dynamic commingling is the horde of auxiliary votive inscriptions left to us today. As the preceding chapters showed, these altars highlight deities which occupied a spectrum of interpretations, as well as social categories that alternately competed and coalesced with each other. However, it was not solely the choice of deity that possessed value in these altars, nor simply the identity of the worshiper. Rather, these socio-cultural forces worked in tandem to produce unique manifestations of meaning and self-representation among auxiliaries. Guided by the unique interplay of mobility, identity, and cult practice, the analysis of this thesis reveals how auxiliaries in Britain melded their expressions of worship and selfhood in order to negotiate power along different levels and across different spaces. Centering the intersection of worship and identity in this frontier locale challenges the Romanization paradigm and its conception of cult practice as the unilateral integration of foreign individuals into the imperial Roman apparatus.

This chapter will complete the thesis's analysis with a case study honing in on one temple along Hadrian's Wall and its accompanying altars. As the site of dynamic fusion between Roman, Germanic, and martial elements, this temple shows how soldiers in Britain engaged with divergent social structures and beliefs in order to navigate the complex intersection of cult practice and identity. In so doing, the soldiers affiliated themselves with the overarching imperial Roman order and simultaneously carved out an arena for the reproduction of Germanic cultural practices. This analysis will highlight, above all, how the mobility of the *auxilia* was not confined to their state-organized physical displacement, but also extended, perhaps more crucially, to their social fluidity. As non-Roman, non-citizen soldiers, auxiliaries occupied a

unique positionality within the social structure of the empire. In their cult practice and self-representation, auxiliaries enacted dynamic boundary-crossings and navigated imperial power dynamics through multiple avenues.

### **The Temple of *Mars Thingsus***

In the first half of the third century CE, a circular temple sat at the foot of a slope slightly to the south of Housesteads Fort—or, as it was known in ancient times, Vercovicium (map 1). Nestled in the outskirt regions of the fort, the temple was enveloped by a vast expanse of hilly, green landscape, as were most military outposts in the northern frontier region of Britain at this time. Although quite small in physical size, the temple and its altars existed as part of the broad, kaleidoscopic landscape of social and spiritual relations at Housesteads. The circular arena of the structure measured only 4 meters in diameter, but its dramatic, sculpted entryway likely figured large in the sacred imagination of worshipers. The arched entrance to the temple featured a compelling cosmic scene: in the center, the Roman god *Mars* stood proudly bearing a shield and spear, while a goose arched its neck to look up at him; on either side of *Mars* floated two nude, cross-legged figures carrying laurel wreaths (fig. 3.1). Below, inscribed pillars built of buff sandstone held up the decorated entranceway. The left-hand jamb featured, on one side, the image of a female figure with a raised hand, while the other side bore a dedication to the god *Mars Thingsus*, the two *Alaisiagae*, *Beda* and *Fimmilena*, and the Divinity of the Emperor (fig. 3.3).<sup>172</sup> The dedicators of this votive pillar identified themselves to be German tribesmen of *Tuihanti*.<sup>173</sup>

---

<sup>172</sup> RIB 1593.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.



Fig. 3.1. Sculptured entrance archway to the temple at Housesteads, depicting the god Mars flanked by two nude figures.<sup>174</sup>

Incorporated within the sacred complex at Housesteads were two additional altars (fig. 3.2). One, a dedication to the god *Mars*, the two *Alaisiagae*, and the Divinity of the Emperor, was once again vowed by German tribesmen of *Tuihanti*, who in this instance identified themselves as soldiers within the *cuneus Frisiorum Vercovicianorum*, an irregular unit of Frisian soldiers garrisoned at the fort (fig. 3.4).<sup>175</sup> The other altar venerated the goddesses the *Alaisiagae*, *Baudihillia* and *Friagabis*, as well as the Divinity of the Emperor.<sup>176</sup> Unlike the first two altars, this inscription identified its dedicators to be the *numerus Hnaudifridi*, another irregular unit of Germanic origins.<sup>177</sup>

Located along the extensive, militarized frontier of Hadrian's Wall, Housesteads fort hosted at least two irregular military units of Germanic origin—the *cuneus Frisiorum* and the

<sup>174</sup> "File:Arch depicting the war god Mars flanked by two male attendants, it may have framed a cult statue of Mars Thincsus, from the shrine of Mars Thincsus at Housesteads, Clayton Museum, Chesters Roman Fort, Hadrian's Wall (44858023031).jpg," Wikimedia Commons.

<sup>175</sup> RIB 1594.

<sup>176</sup> RIB 1576.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

*numerus Hnaudifridi*, identified in the altars above.<sup>178</sup> While the bulk of the imperial army was composed of the legions and the *auxilia*, these troops were at times supplemented by smaller contingent forces of irregular military units, which did not fit into the standardized structure of the army. Although the specific composition of these irregular forces is still debated by scholars, one type of irregular unit, the *numerus*, is often thought to have been a kind of “ethnic unit” made up of soldiers from non-Roman tribes.<sup>179</sup> Another irregular unit was the *cuneus*, which literally translates to “wedge formation,” but likely denoted an organizational unit of soldiers.<sup>180</sup>

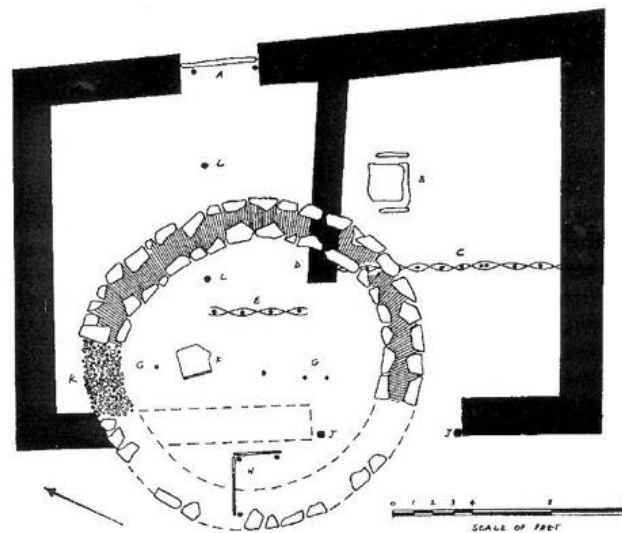


Fig. 3.2. Plan of the excavated temple complex at Housesteads.<sup>181</sup>

The presence of these irregular units in northern Britain was not uncommon. In the early third century CE, several irregular units were raised from Germanic regions on the continental mainland and then sent to garrison Roman forts in Britain, resulting in a renewed influx of

<sup>178</sup> Clay, “Germanic Migrants in Roman Britain,” 208-209.

<sup>179</sup> P. Southern, “The Numeri of the Roman Imperial Army,” *Britannia* 20 (1989): 84-85. Southern notes that some *numeri* units may have defied classification as legionaries, auxiliaries, or ethnic units.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, 115. As with the *numeri*, scholars still debate the specific use and composition of the *cunei* forces.

<sup>181</sup> Clay, “Developing the ‘Germani’ in Roman Studies,” 143. Clay’s extensive scholarship on the development of Germanic peoples, religion, and culture in Roman Britain provided a crucial foundation for the analysis of this chapter.

soldiers of Germanic descent to the frontier zone.<sup>182</sup> Given that the Germanic soldiers of the irregular units shared the same cultural background as many of the auxiliaries and were similarly detached from the standard legionary forces of the army, an analysis of the religious expression of these irregular units will largely overlap with the above analyses of the *auxilia*. As foreign soldiers serving on a frontier a far distance from their homelands, subject to the dominant imperial power structure, both groups partook in a dynamic interplay of social categories and affiliations, which manifested differently according to different contexts.

With a group of foreign soldiers from irregular units as the focal point, the broad themes of identity, cult practice, and power will be illuminated through an investigation of the temple at Housesteads and its corresponding modes of worship. An in-depth analysis of the deities venerated by the soldiers at Housesteads, coupled with a close reading of the ways in which the soldiers expressed their identities, will underscore the multivalent social landscape inhabited by these men, and the complex methods through which they navigated and negotiated the power dynamics underlying that landscape. Viewed through the lens of cult practice, soldiers at Housesteads bridged multiple, intersecting elements of their identities, as they formed common identifications with the broader Roman military community while at the same time demarcating an exclusive Germanic ingroup.

The diverse array of deities worshiped in the altars of the Housesteads temple highlights how these soldiers of irregular units coalesced several different aspects of their identities. It is noteworthy that Germanic deities, in particular, are the center of worship at the temple. The sanctuary features the deities *Mars Thingsus*, the *Alaisiagae*, *Beda*, *Fimmilena*, *Baudihillia*, and *Friagabis*, all of which derive their etymologies from Germanic origins.<sup>183</sup> These specific deities

---

<sup>182</sup> Clay, "Developing the 'Germani' in Roman Studies," 192.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, 143.

are not attested in religious inscriptions by auxiliary soldiers anywhere else in Britain. The absence of other dedications to these Germanic deities is striking when compared, for instance, with the large quantity of extant auxiliary dedications to the *Matres*, a different Germanic cult along Hadrian's Wall. It is thus clear from the highly isolated dedications of the soldiers at Housesteads that not all auxiliaries of Germanic origin shared similar patterns of worship in this locale, nor did all deities of Germanic origin hold the same value for auxiliary worshipers.

One possible explanation for the limited distribution of *Mars Thingsus* and the *Alaisiagae* in Britain is that the worship of these deities was concentrated around Housesteads fort, with the Housesteads temple acting as a miniature cult center. In fact, throughout the frontier zone of Britain, patterns of cult localization can be identified, in which votive inscriptions to specific deities are geographically clustered around certain areas of Hadrian's Wall.<sup>184</sup> The temple at Housesteads, then, may represent a cult enclave which was formed by the unique intermixture of socio-cultural elements at one frontier fort. Another possible explanation for the limited distribution of these deities is that *Mars Thingsus* and the *Alaisiagae* were directly imported to Britain by Germanic soldiers who had recently arrived from the Continent. Whereas many auxiliary units remained garrisoned in Britain for decades and some units had their ranks consistently replenished with local, non-Germanic conscripts, the irregular units at Housesteads may have been freshly recruited from the Germanic regions, meaning that these soldiers still remained largely engaged with the traditional practices of their homelands.

Recent recruitment from mainland Germanic regions may also explain why these soldiers chose to worship *Mars Thingsus* and the *Alaisiagae*, rather than the more typical, widely-distributed Germanic deities of the auxiliary pantheon in Britain, such as the *Matres*. As newly-

---

<sup>184</sup> Irby-Massie, 112. For another instance of cult localization along Hadrian's Wall, recall, from Chapter One, the sanctuary of Coventina's Well at the fort of Carrawburgh.

arrived soldiers, the units at Housesteads may have not yet been introduced to or completely immersed in the auxiliary cult practices that pervaded the frontier zone. Mobility thus played a crucial role in shaping the religious patterns of these soldiers, as the physical displacement of the units across provinces likely led to the transmission of their native cult practices to Britain. Furthermore, the temporal dimension of the units' mobility may have influenced the extent to which the soldiers maintained a strong connection with their native cult practices, as well as the extent to which they came into contact with the preexisting cult practices of the *auxilia* in Britain. The altars at Housesteads therefore highlight how an analysis of either the deities worshiped or the identities of the worshipers in isolation does not encompass the full complexity of auxiliary cult practice. As evidenced, other crucial elements of the soldiers' lived experiences, such as temporality and mobility, significantly influenced their religious patterns.



*Fig. 3.3. Inscribed pillar bearing a dedication to the god Mars Thingsus, the two Alaisiagae, Beda and Fimmilena, and the Divinity of the Emperor by the German tribesmen of Tuihanti.*<sup>185</sup>

<sup>185</sup> "File:Mars Thingsus, Beda and Fimmilena altar, Housesteads.jpg." Wikipedia, accessed January 8, 2024. [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mars\\_Thingsus,\\_Beda\\_and\\_Fimmilena\\_altar,\\_Housesteads.jpg](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mars_Thingsus,_Beda_and_Fimmilena_altar,_Housesteads.jpg).

A closer examination of the etymologies and traits of the Germanic deities at the Housesteads temple illuminates the social significance which this particular manifestation of cult practice may have had for participants. The temple itself is dedicated to *Mars Thingsus*, a syncretism of the Roman and Germanic pantheons. As the Roman god of war, the worship of *Mars* here appears grounded in the essential military context of the *auxilia*, suggesting that the soldiers wished to emphasize their affiliations with the wider, imperial military community. In fact, dedications to *Mars* were relatively common among auxiliaries stationed on the British frontier. There are at least nine extant dedications to *Mars*, *Military Mars*, and *Mars Victor* originating from auxiliaries in this region.<sup>186</sup>

It is notable, however, that *Mars Thingsus* was a syncretic deity combining the Roman and Germanic traditions. The act of syncretism itself is not surprising, as Roman religion was fundamentally syncretic and relatively absorptive of foreign deities. Along Hadrian's Wall, auxiliaries also made pluralistic dedications to *Mars Camulus*, a syncretism with a Celtic deity; *Mars Braciaca*, a syncretism with a deity potentially derived from Gaul; and *Mars Cocidius*, a syncretism with a deity local to Britain.<sup>187</sup> Although there is evidence of auxiliaries in Britain worshipping these other syncretic variations of *Mars*, the altar at the Housesteads temple is crucially the only auxiliary context in which the epithet *thingsus* is applied to the Roman deity, as well as the only instance in which *Mars* is fused with cult practices of Germanic origin. The dedication to *Mars Thingsus* therefore represents a unique expression of intertwined Roman and Germanic affiliations, seemingly unparalleled elsewhere on the British frontier.

As discussed in the preceding chapters, the act of syncretism may connote the presence of underlying power asymmetries. However, if we view the syncretic manifestation of *Mars*

---

<sup>186</sup> See RIB 1898, RIB 1591, Brit. 46.6, RIB 2100, RIB 1691, RIB 1594, RIB 838, RIB 837, and RIB 897.

<sup>187</sup> Mars Camulus: RIB 2166; Mars Braciaca: RIB 278; Mars Cocidius: RIB 2015.

*Thingsus* as an act of “adaptive resistance,” the one-time synthesis of *Mars* with the *thingsus* epithet confers significant agency upon the Germanic worshipers, highlighting their active role in the process of negotiating the spiritual landscape of Hadrian’s Wall. Rather than viewing the syncretism of *Mars Thingsus* as the total superimposition of Roman ideology onto Germanic religion, or as an unequal marriage between the two belief systems, the worship of this deity can instead be viewed as a wholly new phenomenon—the dynamic product of the frontier military environment. That is, auxiliary cult practice need not always be defined by its assimilation or rejection of external elements. The syncretic processes of auxiliary altars were an intricate and complex form of worship in their own right, underscored by transformative socio-cultural mechanisms that transcended the normative imperial framework.

The epithet *thingsus* is especially interesting when considering the etymological roots of the term. *Thingsus* is a phonetically-Germanic term that is likely related to a Germanic word meaning “assembly” or “meeting.”<sup>188</sup> Assemblies were crucial social institutions among Germanic groups of this period, particularly within the martial and juristic affairs of the communities. In fact, assemblies can be directly linked to the history of the conscription of conquered Germanic communities into the Roman imperial army. In the Rhineland, tribal assemblies were often the site where troops were raised for service in the Roman army.<sup>189</sup> The epithet *thingsus* used here with *Mars* thus represents a potent link to the traditional institutions which structured life in native Germanic communities. The use of this epithet suggests that the soldiers at Housesteads maintained attachments—religious, social, and institutional—to their homelands. Furthermore, coupled with the choice of *Mars*—the Roman war god—as the deity worshiped, the martial undertones of the Germanic assemblies associated with the *thingsus*

---

<sup>188</sup> Clay, “Before There Were Angles, Saxons and Jutes,” 56.

<sup>189</sup> Clay, “Developing the ‘*Germani*’ in Roman Studies,” 145.

epithet suggest that the soldiers self-consciously identified themselves with the frontier military context which they inhabited. Crucially, though, the use of the *thingsus* epithet reveals that this military context was not wholly defined by imperial Roman values, but may have also integrated non-Roman, Germanic elements.

The *thingsus* epithet, however, holds not only martial connotations, but also profoundly social and communal ones. Assemblies were sites where Germanic communities came together, interacted, and made decisions—a source of political legitimacy. It is possible that, given the relation of *thingsus* to the term “assembly,” the temple at Housesteads was perceived and used as a *de facto* assembly space for Germanic groups at the fort.<sup>190</sup> This theory is bolstered by the presence in the temple of the deities *Beda* and *Fimmilena*, whose etymologies—although debated—may similarly reveal underlying associations with Germanic assemblies.<sup>191</sup> It is also notable that all of the altars at the Housesteads temple were corporately dedicated, with the devotees identified as either entire military units or groups of tribesmen. Thus, at Housesteads, corporate worship manifested both through the explicit regimental identifications on the Latin inscriptions and in the underlying communal associations of the Germanic elements, through which the boundaries of the Germanic political community were delimited.

Thus, rather than express their collective cult practice only within standard Roman cultural forms, or only through ties to their native Germanic beliefs, the soldiers at this temple fluidly navigated multiple cultural contexts, and, in so doing, asserted a multivalent intersection of affiliations. The epithet *thingsus* is therefore not only significant in how it highlights a continued connection between the soldiers and their homelands. The epithet crucially also sheds light on the mechanisms through which soldiers of Germanic origin, once in Britain, forged and

---

<sup>190</sup> Clay, “Developing the ‘*Germani*’ in Roman Studies,” 144.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

maintained complex social networks that were structured by both imperial Roman and native Germanic institutions. This theory is especially compelling given that the altars in the Housesteads temple were not all dedicated by the same military unit. The temple, then, may have served as a meeting point that fostered inter-unit and intra-Germanic connections for soldiers garrisoned far from their homelands.

In addition to *Mars Thingsus*, the other deities worshiped in the temple further cement the martial and Germanic affiliations collectively cultivated by the soldiers at Housesteads. The deities *Baudihille* and *Friagabis*, worshiped in the temple by the *numerus Hnaudifridus*, have etymological roots in martial affairs. *Baudihille* may derive from the Germanic words meaning “battle” and “war,” while *Friagabis* may be loosely translated to “freedom giver.”<sup>192</sup> The title *Alaisiagae*, used in all three altars from the temple, may be an honorific term meaning “all honored,” which appears to have been typically used as a collective form of address for female Germanic divinities.<sup>193</sup> The consistent use of this honorific title in the altars suggests that the soldiers adhered to the traditional forms of address and modes of worship from their homelands, implying a continued spiritual link with their native cult practices. It is also crucial to note that, unlike *Mars Thingsus*, the deities *Beda*, *Fimmilena*, *Baudihille*, and *Friagabis*, along with the honorific title *Alaisiagae*, were all non-syncretic, strictly Germanic terms.

The temple in which these Germanic terms were present, however, was not an isolated spatial entity, but part of the broader Roman imperial fort complex of Housesteads. It is integral, then, to consider the reception of these votive inscriptions by non-Germanic soldiers. Whereas a dedication to *Mars Thingsus*, despite featuring a Germanic term, may have nonetheless held meaning for a worshiper familiar with the Roman pantheon, it is unlikely that the non-syncretic,

---

<sup>192</sup> Clay, “Developing the ‘*Germani*’ in Roman Studies,” 144.

<sup>193</sup> Clay, “Germanic Migrants in Roman Britain,” 213.

purely Germanic deities would have constituted a legible socio-cultural symbol for non-Germanic worshipers in the sacred space. In considering the temple and its altars as sites of identity formation, then, it is possible that the dedications to non-syncretic Germanic deities represented a demarcation of ingroup and outgroup—a drawing of boundaries that was predicated upon the linguistic and cultural barriers one might face in understanding the inscriptions. Within imperial systems, the epistemic plane forms a powerful interface between knowledge and power, both for the upper echelons of the empire, as well as its subjects. At Housesteads, then, the striking visibility—and subsequent legibility, or lack thereof—of the purely Germanic deities likely constituted an avenue for the cultivation of social networks outside the bounds of imperial conventions. Although materially adherent to Roman epigraphic forms and written in the Latin language, the inscriptions may have nevertheless been impenetrable to a non-Germanic observer. When considered in full, the martial and Germanic associations of the *thingsus* epithet, the potential use of the temple as a social assembly space, and the presence of non-syncretic Germanic terms all combine to crystallize an understanding of the Housesteads temple as a site where certain cultural commonalities were articulated in order to assert difference from other—perhaps more “Roman”—groups.

Although the presence of foreign, Germanic institutions and deities is certainly remarkable, it is crucial not to overemphasize the significance of the Germanic, non-Roman identities expressed at the Housesteads temple. The overarching organization of power that structured the lives of these soldiers was, ultimately, the imperial apparatus of Rome, along with its accompanying modes of culture and religion. The Housesteads temple itself bears the marks of the Roman imperial system through its usage of Roman imperial deities, iconographies, and cultural mediums. In one altar, for example, the German tribesmen of *Tuihanti* venerate the

Divinity of the Emperor, while the other two altars include the Roman god *Mars*.<sup>194</sup> In two altars, the dedicators are identified using the names of their units—the *cuneus Frisiorum* and the *numerus Hnaudifridi*—which conform to the imperial military system of organization.<sup>195</sup> The general form of corporate worship employed in these altars adheres to the norms of communal cult practice within the imperial state religion, although in this case the collective worship was largely directed towards non-Roman deities.

Furthermore, the epigraphic medium through which these soldiers expressed their devotion is itself a distinctly Roman practice. Many of the Germanic soldiers at Housesteads likely came from communities where monumentalization and epigraphy were not integral parts of the traditional religious system.<sup>196</sup> The cult practice of the Germanic territories in the pre-Roman Iron Age, for instance, predominantly featured ritual acts of deposition, in which worshipers deposited objects of value, such as weapons, cauldrons, and coins, into sacred enclosures.<sup>197</sup> While the individual act of inscribing words in stone may appear unremarkable, the broader institution of epigraphy can be construed as a potent vehicle of imperial Roman culture. Epigraphy was a medium which articulated words, identities, and beliefs in a way that was legible to a Latin-literate and culturally Roman populace, thus encoding power structures within its boundaries. Implicit within the act of epigraphy was engagement with and perception by culturally Roman individuals who had the capacity to interpret the inscription. Thus, both

---

<sup>194</sup> RIB 1593, RIB 1594, RIB 1576.

<sup>195</sup> RIB 1594, RIB 1576.

<sup>196</sup> Clay, “Germanic Migrants in Roman Britain,” 207.

<sup>197</sup> Susanne Sievers, “The Lands of *Germania* in the Later Pre-Roman Iron Age,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Roman Germany*, edited by Simon James and Stefan Krmnicek (Oxford Academic, 2015): 22-23.

participation in epigraphy and adherence to the formulaic Roman phrasing of altar inscriptions already imply a base level engagement with the institutions of the Roman imperial system.<sup>198</sup>

Although it is impossible to determine the exact sincerity of the worshipers in their dedication to Roman imperial values, the mere presence of these imperial features would have inevitably shaped and transformed how the soldiers experienced the sacred space, despite its significant Germanic features. That is, at Housesteads, the preservation of native, Germanic elements did not preclude the simultaneous reproduction of Roman values and affiliations. For the *auxilia* along Hadrian's Wall, the imperial cult was not so much a system of belief as "a set of ritual observances," rendered concrete in the various religious ceremonies that ordered life in the empire.<sup>199</sup> The tangible elements of imperial Roman culture and religion which permeated the temple, then, likely conjured frequent invocations—perhaps subconscious, but nonetheless potent—of the emperor and the empire within the mind of an auxiliary worshiper.<sup>200</sup> Even amidst a web of Germanic elements, the integration of imperial symbols likely provided a crucial vehicle through which imperial Roman ideology was reproduced and naturalized in the temple. And yet, despite the power of the imperial Roman features, it would be far too simplistic to describe the worship at Housesteads as merely the imperial cult occurring against a Germanic backdrop. Nor is the converse true—Germanic cult veiled under an imperial Roman guise. Rather, it is precisely the dynamic intermixing of multiple elements of identity—Roman, Germanic, and martial—that is underscored at the temple. Worship at Housesteads represented a wholly new spiritual system, which merged disparate cultural vocabularies into one consolidated, albeit complex, whole.

---

<sup>198</sup> The standard Roman formula of dedication was marked by the Latin phrase *votum solvit libens merito*, which indicated that the devotee erected the altar "willingly and deservedly in fulfillment of a vow."

<sup>199</sup> Ando, 408.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.



Fig. 3.4. Dedication to the god Mars, the two Alaisiagae, and the Divinity of the Emperor by German tribesmen of Tuihanti, who were soldiers within the *cuneus Frisiorum Vercovicianorum*.<sup>201</sup>

Building upon the analysis of the deities at the Housesteads temple, an examination of the methods through which the soldiers expressed their affiliations in this sacred space will further highlight the processes of cultural exchange and differentiation at work. Two of the three altars from the temple identify their dedicators to be irregular military units. One of these military dedicators was the *cuneus Frisiorum*, or the *cuneus* of Frisians.<sup>202</sup> The Frisians were a Germanic group who lived north of the Rhine river and had been regularly conscripted into the Roman army from an early period.<sup>203</sup> The identification of the *cuneus Frisiorum* consequently alludes to the violent act of physical displacement underlying the soldiers' presence in Britain—a marker of the Frisians' foreignness in this frontierland. The unit title also grounds these soldiers firmly within a Roman military context, an environment in which men were identified and documented primarily by their position within the broader imperial system.

<sup>201</sup> "File:RIB 1594 — Budge 1903 page 187.png," Wikimedia Commons. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RIB\\_1594\\_%E2%80%93\\_Budge\\_1903\\_page\\_187.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RIB_1594_%E2%80%93_Budge_1903_page_187.png).

<sup>202</sup> RIB 1594.

<sup>203</sup> Clay, "Developing the 'Germani' in Roman Studies," 142.

The other military dedication in this temple comes from the *numerus Hnaudifridi*, or the *numerus of Hnaudifridus*.<sup>204</sup> Unlike the previous dedication by the *cuneus Frisiorum*, this unit was likely named after its commander, *Hnaudifridus*, an uncommon practice within the imperial military system.<sup>205</sup> The unusual name of the unit suggests that *Hnaudifridus*—a name likely with Germanic phonetic origins—was of particularly high social standing, perhaps a native king or tribal chief.<sup>206</sup> This form of identification therefore affirms the unifying Germanic affiliations of the unit, while simultaneously establishing an element of social stratification. That is, if *Hnaudifridus* was indeed a high-ranking native leader, this dedication perpetuates the traditional hierarchies of the Germanic communities, transmitting them into a Roman military context. As with the *thingsus* epithet and its associations with Germanic assemblies, this altar, through its elevation of the unit's commander, highlights the mobility of Germanic social institutions and their importation to Britain. Furthermore, the altar represents the dynamic convergence of Germanic and imperial hierarchies, which collapse onto each other in the figure of *Hnaudifridus*. Germanic signifiers of status, in addition to imperial Roman ones, were relevant at Housesteads. This synthesized manifestation of rank encapsulates the multidirectional and multivalent social structure inhabited by the soldiers.

The altars in the Housesteads temple, however, contain more than only military-based identifications. In fact, two of the inscriptions express a more narrow, localized form of affiliation. In these two altars, the worshipers are identified as German tribesmen of *Tuihanti*—*Germani cives Tuihanti*.<sup>207</sup> Drawing upon place-name evidence, scholars have posited that the region of the *cives Tuihanti* is the district of Twente in the central-eastern part of the present-day

---

<sup>204</sup> RIB 1576.

<sup>205</sup> Clay, "Germanic Migrants in Roman Britain," 210.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> RIB 1593, RIB 1594.

Netherlands.<sup>208</sup> Like the Frisians, the eponymous group of the *cuneus Frisiorum*, the tribesmen of *Tuihanti* were Germanic inhabitants of the lands beyond the Rhine frontier who were recruited into the Roman imperial army.<sup>209</sup> The *cives Tuihanti*, however, likely did not overlap with the lands of the Frisians, making the two groups distinct tribes of Germanic origin.

The distinction between the two groups of Germanic descent is reinforced by the altar at Housesteads in which the dedicators are identified as the tribesmen of *Tuihanti* serving within the *cuneus* of Frisians.<sup>210</sup> It is likely that a group of soldiers from the *cives Tuihanti* were mobilized into the *cuneus Frisiorum* at Housesteads, marking an intermixing of Germanic tribes within the unit. Operating under the conception of identity as inherently context-based, then, it is likely that this expression of narrow, regional identity was the product of the *Tuihanti* soldiers' positionality in a military unit where their tribal identity was the exception, rather than the norm. If all of the other soldiers in the *cuneus Frisiorum* had also been tribesmen of *Tuihanti* in addition to being Frisians, this localized, tribal affiliation would have been rendered redundant. Thus, the *cives Tuihanti* identification emerges as a significant expression of cultural and tribal differentiation between Germanic groups, revealing how the soldiers at Housesteads asserted their micro-regional identities within broader Germanic and military contexts.

The second altar which uses the *cives Tuihanti* identification at Housesteads is particularly interesting, because it does not link the *Tuihanti* tribesmen with a specific military unit at all. Rather, this inscription identifies the dedicators simply to be tribesmen of *Tuihanti*.<sup>211</sup> Although the tribesmen of *Tuihanti* dedicating this altar may have conceivably been the same

---

<sup>208</sup> F.M Morris, "Cross-North Sea Contacts in the Roman Period," *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 34, no. 4 (2015): 415-438.

<sup>209</sup> Clay, "Developing the 'Germani' in Roman Studies," 142.

<sup>210</sup> RIB 1594.

<sup>211</sup> RIB 1593.

tribesmen who dedicated the previous altar and identified themselves as soldiers in the *cuneus Frisiorum*, the absence of military identification here is nevertheless significant. In Latin, the term *cives* translates to “people” or “citizens,” carrying an intrinsically political connotation. The identification of *cives Tuihanti* therefore delineates a Germanic socio-political group, likely representing the importation and preservation of a political institution from the soldiers’ home region. Crucially, this political designation marks the maintenance of non-military affiliations at the Housesteads temple. Contrary to the Romanization paradigm, which would suggest a total subsumption of auxiliaries into the Roman military community, the altars with the *cives Tuihanti* identification reveal how soldiers forged and preserved their native identities outside of a Roman military context. At Housesteads, soldiers activated multiple potent dimensions of their identity, expressing affiliations with divergent social categories—Roman, military, and Germanic. Rather than solely identify as either a soldier, a Roman, or a tribesman of *Tuihanti*, the soldiers exerted significant flexibility and fluidity in their expressions of selfhood.

It is particularly noteworthy that the altar carrying the non-military expression of identity—in which the dedicators only represented themselves as *cives Tuihanti*, with no corresponding military unit—is the one that decorates the pillar holding up the entryway to the temple. Thus, immediately upon entry to the temple, a worshiper was greeted not with signifiers of militaristic, imperial Roman identity, but rather with native, Germanic ones. This entryway perhaps carved out a hierarchy of affiliations, in which a soldier’s identity as a tribesman of *Tuihanti* carried more social capital than his identity as a member of a certain military unit. If identity was inherently context-based and mutable at the Housesteads temple, the decision to emphasize Germanic socio-political affiliations at the entrance to the sacred space may have represented an attempt by the soldiers to define certain parameters of inclusion and exclusion.

Working in tandem with the presence of the non-syncretic Germanic deities in the arched entryway, the epigraphic markers of Germanic identity at this temple may have facilitated relationships between soldiers of Germanic origin, leading to the cultivation of a narrow, cultural community within the broader Roman imperial military system.

Somewhat paradoxically, it may have been the assertion of cultural difference at the Housesteads temple that facilitated the forging of a common, Germanic network at this sanctuary. In the syncretism of *Mars Thingsus*, in the use of an assembly space as a social site, in the worship of Germanic deities, and in the identification with Germanic leaders and tribal groups, a distinct Germanic group identity was carved out amidst the pluralistic context of the northern frontier zone. Perhaps the best evidence of the emergence of a self-conscious Germanic community in this locale is the use of the term *Germanus* at the Housesteads temple. Two of the three altars at the temple identify their dedicators to be Germans, or *Germani*.<sup>212</sup> The altar in the entranceway, for instance, identifies the worshipers to be “German tribesmen of *Tuihanti*.”<sup>213</sup> While scholars have at times thought the term *Germanus* to be an insignificant construct imposed onto soldiers of different tribes from above, the presence of this term at the Housesteads temple opens up potential for a different interpretation.<sup>214</sup> At Housesteads, soldiers of Germanic origin appear to enact processes of self-ascription and collective consciousness in their use of the *Germanus* label. In the entryway altar, for example, the *Germanus* title is a crucial consort to the *cives Tuihanti* identification.<sup>215</sup>

Regardless of whether the term *Germanus* originated among the upper echelons of the Roman imperial administration or with the individual soldiers themselves, the act of self-

---

<sup>212</sup> RIB 1593, RIB 1594.

<sup>213</sup> RIB 1593.

<sup>214</sup> Clay, “Developing the ‘*Germani*’ in Roman Studies,” 131.

<sup>215</sup> RIB 1593.

ascription—and perhaps reclamation—of this term at Housesteads alludes to larger processes of community formation at work. Rather than solely express their tribal affiliations, these soldiers deliberately chose to attach themselves to a macro-label, tying themselves to a broader network of Germanic connections. In fact, the mere existence of the temple at Housesteads is a testament to the connective strength of this label, as the altars here attest to at least two distinct Germanic tribal groups—the Frisians and the *Tuihanti*—being brought into close contact within this context. The use of the *Germanus* label at Housesteads, alongside localized tribal identifications, thus highlights the transformative potential of the cross-group interactions which occurred in the frontier military community. Amidst the frontier environment of converging elements and pressures, these soldiers developed a “new symbol of collectivity” in the form of the *Germanus* label.<sup>216</sup> In contrast with other instances where worshipers enacted the unilinear preservation of traditional institutions from their homelands as a means of community cultivation, the soldiers’ dynamic positionality at Housesteads, it seems, facilitated the creation of entirely new forms of social organization and identification.

In fact, the *Germanus* epithet was employed as a connective mechanism not only at Housesteads, but at several forts across the northern Britain frontier zone. At the fort of Carrawburgh, for instance, a group of Germanic soldiers worshiped the water goddess *Coventina*. At *Coventina*’s sacred well, three different auxiliary units of Germanic origins are attested, and two of the dedicators explicitly identified themselves as *Germanus*.<sup>217</sup> Notably, none of the epigraphically-attested dedicators at *Coventina*’s well expressed tribal affiliations,

---

<sup>216</sup> Ursula Rothe, “Treveran Women’s Dress and the ‘Gallic Ensemble,’” *American Journal of Archaeology* 116 (2012): 244. Rothe’s article specifically focuses on the context of Roman Gaul, but she speaks of “new symbols of collectivity” as a more general phenomenon.

<sup>217</sup> RIB 1524, First Cohort of Cubernians. RIB 1535, First Cohort of Batavians. RIB 1523, First Cohort of Frixivones. The votives with the use of the *Germanus* epithet are RIB 1525 and RIB 1526.

thus indicating that the worship of this goddess may have coalesced a collective consciousness among the auxiliary worshipers of their identities as “Germans.”<sup>218</sup> At both *Coventina*’s well and the temple at Housesteads, then, worshipers likely employed the *Germanus* epithet as a means of forging communal networks which revolved around shared cult practice and cultural belonging.

The coalescing of a unique Germanic identity under the *Germanus* label at Housesteads, and perhaps all throughout the frontier zone, was not an isolated, static process. Rather, it was embedded in a complex system of meaning, in which Germanic deities, institutions, and political organizations were intertwined in order to activate meaning for worshipers. The reliefs accompanying the dedications, in addition to the epigraphic content, contributed to this system accentuating a common Germanic identity. The relief of *Mars Thingsus*, for example, depicts the war god armed with a shield and spear (fig. 3.1). The presence of the spear is significant, for the term *Germanus* may be etymologically related with the Germanic term for “spear,” and spears were weapons often associated with soldiers of Germanic origin.<sup>219</sup> These allusions to common Germanic military characteristics likely took on particular currency within the militarized context of the northern frontier. Furthermore, the shield and spear accompanying *Mars Thingsus* in the relief may have been a reference to the male initiation ceremonies carried out at Germanic assemblies, in which young men were given a shield and spear upon their entrance to manhood.<sup>220</sup> This relief, then, likely worked in tandem with the *thingsus* epithet to spark associations with the Germanic assemblies that held weight in the soldiers’ homelands. The temple at Housesteads was thus steeped in both visual and epigraphic signifiers of Germanic

---

<sup>218</sup> Clay, “Developing the ‘*Germani*’ in Roman Studies,” 139.

<sup>219</sup> Clay, “Germanic Migrants in Roman Britain,” 219.

<sup>220</sup> Clay, “Germanic Migrants in Roman Britain,” 215.

culture, which likely held potent value for soldiers of Germanic descent who were able to identify these cultural cues.

The presence of Germanic elements at the Housesteads temple, however, was far more than a simple indicator of the preservation of connections to ancestral Germanic institutions. That is, the complex system of Germanic associations at Housesteads did not represent the unilinear transmission of Germanic culture to Britain—a potential “Germanization” to counteract the problematic paradigm of Romanization. Rather, the use of the novel *Germanus* label by soldiers at this temple suggests that these Germanic elements were not so much used as a conservative safeguarding of traditional culture, but were more so employed as a wholly new phenomenon in response to the unique pressures and power dynamics of the frontier zone. The cult practice of the soldiers at Housesteads cannot completely be defined as Roman, nor can it be defined as Germanic. In fact, to attempt to categorize this form of cult practice within strict cultural vacuums would be to replicate the shortcomings of both the Romanization school, as well as more recent post-colonialist studies. The worship of the soldiers at Housesteads represented a transformative and unique reconciliation of the disparate elements that made up life within the military community of Hadrian’s Wall.

The *Germanus* label, then, appears to be far more complex than a simple construct forced upon the soldiers at Housesteads by the upper ranks of the Roman imperial system. This is not to say that the *Germanus* label was certainly emic in nature—a conclusive argument on that topic falls out of the scope of this paper. Nonetheless, it is clear from the worshipers at Housesteads that the *Germanus* label was dynamically exploited by auxiliaries in northern Britain in order to forge new connections based on a common cultural background. Whether the use of this term was a self-ascriptive assertion of ethnicity or a creative manipulation of a

construct imposed from above, the *Germanus* label at Housesteads highlights the dynamic conjoining of at least two distinct cultural vocabularies—imperial Roman and Germanic—within the cult practice of the *auxilia*, employed for the construction and negotiation of group identity.

Under the *Germanus* framework of identification, the temple at Housesteads—and its accompanying signifiers of Germanic identity—likely formed the foundation for the cultivation of a complex social and ideological network for soldiers at the fort. Within the militarized context of the frontier, processes of differentiation and unification worked in tandem, as soldiers carved out an exclusive web of affiliations in order to construct a shared, Germanic military community for themselves. The boundaries of cult practice, here, extended far beyond the individual relationship between a soldier and his deity. Cult practice at Housesteads implicated several converging elements of identity and involved diverse groups of people, both Roman and not. In fact, the Germanic markers of identity at the Housesteads temple may have functioned beyond the realm of cult practice altogether, allowing soldiers to gather in communal assemblies and engage in their traditional socio-political processes. Within this multifaceted context, the temple marked a site where soldiers fluidly interacted across different domains—physical, spiritual, and social—in order to confront and negotiate their pluralistic identities as members of the Roman imperial system.

## Conclusion

*“I O M DIS DEABUSQUE HOSPITALIBUS PENATIBUS Q OB CONSERVATAM SALUTEM SUAM SUORUM Q P AEL MARCIANUS PRAEF COH ARAM SAC F NC D”*

“To *Jupiter* Best and Greatest, to the gods and goddesses of hospitality and to the *Penates*, for having kept safe the welfare of himself and of his household, Publius Aelius Marcianus, prefect of the cohort, had this altar set up ...”<sup>221</sup>

Over a millennium after the mythical fall of Troy and the subsequent dispersal of Aeneas and his fellow Trojan refugees across the Mediterranean, a prefect of an auxiliary cohort garrisoned in Britain erected an altar to the *penates*, the household gods. Separated from Aeneas by the chasm of time, distance, and myth, the auxiliary officer Publius Aelius Marcianus, inhabited a vastly different landscape than the legendary founder of Rome. Marcianus erected his votive inscription in Eboracum, a fort and provincial capital of Roman Britain, in the northernmost reaches of the empire. Marcianus was an officer within the highly complex and stratified hierarchy of the imperial Roman army. He likely inhabited a diverse frontier environment, in which peoples of different origins and cultures intermingled. In brief, the militarized frontierland of northern Britain was a far cry from the regional kingdom of Latium which formed the site of arrival for Aeneas upon completion of his epic journey.

And yet, at the same time, Marcianus differed very little from the mythical Trojan hero. As part of the imperial military apparatus which enacted state-organized mobility throughout the empire, Marcianus was likely part of mass movements across the Mediterranean, much as Aeneas’s own life was characterized by displacement. Likewise, as an auxiliary soldier stationed in a frontier zone, Marcianus’s military career would have revolved around the pacification and suppression of local Britons, much as Aeneas’s own story is intertwined with the conquest of

---

<sup>221</sup> RIB 649.

local Italic settlements. And, perhaps most relevant for the purpose of this thesis, both Marcianus and Aeneas venerated the *penates*, the household gods carried from Troy to Rome.

At first glance, the altar dedicated by Marcianus appears to be a straightforward transmission of the cult of the *penates* from Rome's earliest mythic days. And yet, the worship of Marcianus—and of the *auxilia* more generally—was anything but linear. As a mobile soldier and worshiper, Marcianus was likely part of the mass exchange of beliefs, customs, and cultures throughout the empire. Marcianus's altar to the *penates*, in particular, highlights the mobility of cult practice which took place on both a geographic and temporal level, as the cult to the household gods diffused a far distance from Italy and persisted for several centuries.<sup>222</sup> The *penates*, however, were just one of many different manifestations of cult practice which permeated the expanse of the empire. Defying the restrictive narratives of Romanization, cult practice represented a potent mechanism through which auxiliaries dynamically negotiated the power structures of the frontier zone. The inscriptions and iconographies of altars formed a vital mode of self-representation, in which auxiliaries alternately asserted, contested, and transformed their affiliations amidst the multicultural social landscape of Hadrian's Wall.

The diverse array of deities which occupied the spiritual landscape of northern Britain particularly illuminates the dynamic web of meaning navigated by auxiliaries. The sheer diversity of deities is, above all, a testament to the mobility—both physical and social—which dominated the locale. More specifically, within this assortment of gods and goddesses, crucial patterns of worship emerge. Dedications by the *auxilia* to deities of the Roman pantheon provide evidence not only of the significance of the official imperial religion within this region, but also of the powerful mechanisms through which state ideology was reproduced and naturalized

---

<sup>222</sup> Although the story of Aeneas bringing the *penates* to Latium is mythical, the *penates* were present within Roman religious life at least as early as the Republic. The specific temporal origins of the cult are unknown.

among soldiers. By contrast, among the auxiliary altars to local Celtic deities, there emerges a distinct connection between worship and locality, as auxiliaries reconciled their new physical surroundings within the spiritual realm. And finally, among dedications to non-Roman, foreign deities, particularly Germanic deities, there is evidence of preservation of ties to distant homelands, as well as dynamic processes of cultural differentiation.

Combining the analysis of deities with an examination of the social categories of the worshipers further underscores the complex processes of self-representation at work in these altars. The distinction between corporate versus individual worship emerges, for instance, as an important determinant of cult practice. Among deities of the Roman pantheon, corporate worship often solidified loyalties to the imperial army and to the more abstract notion of the empire. By contrast, altars to local Celtic deities were dominated by individual worship, indicating heightened individual agency and sense of place among these devotees. Furthermore, auxiliary worship was stratified by the imperial military hierarchy, as worshipers' different social statuses—varying from the highest ranks of the officer class to the lowest rank-and-file soldiers—shaped their experience of the spiritual landscape. Likewise, localized and regional affiliations permeated the auxiliary experience in this locale, allowing for the articulation and demarcation of narrow subgroups within the broader military community. In the dynamic intersection between the social, imperial, and cult structures of the frontier zone, auxiliaries exploited their unique positionality in the broader Roman apparatus of power, reconciling and transforming multiple convergent elements of their identity in the process.

In highlighting the array of diverse contexts which shaped the cult practice of the *auxilia* along Hadrian's Wall, this thesis contests the confining narratives of both the Romanization paradigm and more recent post-colonialist studies, which seek to ascribe to auxiliaries either total

assimilation or resistance to the imperial power structure. As shown by the diversity of altars and identities constructed by auxiliaries in Britain, the reality was not that simple. In fact, the shortcomings of many of the Romanization and postcolonialist theories lie in their fundamental assumption that the socio-cultural artifacts of the *auxilia*—in this case, the votive inscriptions—represent, in each and every aspect, a direct reaction to the auxiliaries' subject status within the imperial military power apparatus. I argue that this preconception must be challenged in order to gain a more complex understanding of the lived experiences of auxiliary soldiers.

Along Hadrian's Wall, and throughout the other frontier zones of the vast Roman Empire, auxiliaries worshiped, married, bore children, and died. Oftentimes, they spent their entire lives outside the boundaries of the city of Rome—outside of the Italian peninsula as a whole. It is incontestable, of course, that the *auxilia*, like all subjects of the empire, inhabited a world fundamentally shaped by Roman imperial structures. Nonetheless, it would be incorrect to assume that all of the intricacies of auxiliary lives revolved fully around some abstract notion of empire.<sup>223</sup> In their lived experiences, auxiliaries prospered, declined, and transformed, sometimes because of the Roman Empire, and sometimes completely irrespective of it. The cult practice of the *auxilia*, in turn, must be regarded in scholarship as a phenomenon which defies the dichotomy of assimilation and resistance and perhaps shatters the process of categorization altogether.

---

<sup>223</sup> For the Roman Empire as an ongoing product of discourse, rather than a "reified totality," see: John C. Barrett, "Romanization: A Critical Comment," in *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism*, edited by David J. Mattingly, 51-64 (Portsmouth, Rhode Island: JRA, 1997).

## Bibliography

### Primary Sources

Collingwood, R.G, and R.P Wright. *Roman Inscriptions of Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965.

### Secondary Sources

Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias. “Vernostonos.”

<https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/1036531>

Ando, Clifford. *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

Barrett, John C. “Romanization: A Critical Comment.” In *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism*, edited by David J. Mattingly, 51-64. Portsmouth, Rhode Island: JRA, 1997.

Bishop, Mike. “PLV Inscriptions (Birrens).” Per Lineam Valli, February 3, 2023.

<https://perlineamvalli.wordpress.com/2020/12/03/plv-inscriptions-birrens/>.

Breeze, Andrew Charles. “The River Wharfe and Verbeia, Celtic Goddess.” *Traduction et Langues* 17, no. 1 (2018). <https://doaj.org/article/1e46fa8b74c845dd99acd45bb422dc1c>

Chappell, Stephen. “Auxiliary Regiments and New Cultural Formation in Imperial Dacia, 106–274 c.e.” *The Classical World* 104, no. 1 (2010): 89–106.

Charlton, D. Beryl, and Margaret M. Mitcheson. “Yardhope. A Shrine to Cocidius?” *Britannia* 14 (1983): 143–53. <https://doi.org/10.2307/526345>.

Clay, Cheryl. “Before There Were Angles, Saxons and Jutes: An Epigraphic Study of the Germanic Social, Religious and Linguistic Relations on Hadrian’s Wall.” In *Pagans and Christians: From Antiquity to the Middle Ages: Papers in Honour of Martin Henig, Presented on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, edited by Martin Henig and Lauren

- Adams Gilmour, 47-61. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2007.
- . "Developing the 'Germani' in Roman Studies." *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal* 2007 (2008).
- . "Germanic Migrants in Roman Britain: A Preliminary Study and Inter-Disciplinary Approach." PhD Thesis, University of Sheffield, 2010.
- Collar, Anna, and Oliver Nicholson. "Jupiter Dolichenus." In *The Oxford Dictionary of Late Antiquity*. Oxford University Press, 2018.
- <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198662778.001.0001/acref-9780198662778-e-2582>.
- Cuff, David Benjamin. "The *Auxilia* in Roman Britain and the Two Germanies from Augustus to Caracalla: Family, Religion and 'Romanization'." Order No. NR72422, University of Toronto, 2010.
- <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/i-auxilia-roman-britain-two-germanies-augustus/docview/870399520/se-2>.
- Current Archaeology. "Great North Museum: Hancock." *The Past*, December 28, 2019.
- <https://the-past.com/review/museum/great-north-museum-hancock/#:~:text=The%20focal%20point%20of%20the,twin%20torchbearers%20Cautes%20and%20Cautopates>.
- de Ligt, Luuk, and Laurens Ernst Tacoma. "Approaching Migration in the Early Roman Empire." In *Migration and Mobility in the Early Roman Empire*. Leiden: Brill, 2016.
- <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=e025xna&AN=1160162&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Dench, Emma. *Empire and Political Cultures in the Roman World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018.

- Derks, Ton. "Ethnic Identity in the Roman Frontier: The Epigraphy of Batavi and Other Lower Rhine Tribes." In *Ethnic Constructs in Antiquity: The Role of Power and Tradition*, edited by Ton Derks and Nico Roymans. Amsterdam University Press, 2009: 239–82. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46n1n2.14>.
- Eckardt, Hella, Gundula Müldner, and Mary Lewis. "People on the Move in Roman Britain." *World Archaeology* 46, no. 4 (2014): 534–50. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26619392>.
- English Heritage. "Carrawburgh Roman Fort Collection Highlights." <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/temple-of-mithras-carrawburgh-hadrians-wall/collection/>.
- Gardner, Andrew. "Thinking about Roman Imperialism: Postcolonialism, Globalisation and Beyond?" *Britannia* 44 (2013): 1–25. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/42751502>.
- Hall, Jonathan M. *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. <https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=e025xna&AN=55704&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Haynes, Ian. *Blood of the Provinces: The Roman Auxilia and the Making of Provincial Society From Augustus to the Severans*. Oxford: OUP Oxford, 2013.
- . "Identity and the Military Community in Roman Britain." In *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Britain*, edited by Martin Millett, Louise Revell, and Alison Moore. Oxford Academic, 2014.
- . "The Romanisation of Religion in the 'Auxilia' of the Roman Imperial Army from Augustus to Septimius Severus." *Britannia* 24 (1993): 141–57. <https://doi.org/10.2307/526726>.

- Herz, Peter (Regensburg). "Feriale Duranum." In *Brill's New Pauly*, edited by Hubert Cancik and, Helmuth Schneider, English Edition by: Christine F. Salazar, Classical Tradition volumes edited by: Manfred Landfester, and English Edition by: Francis G. Gentry. 2006. doi:[http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347\\_bnp\\_e410900](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1574-9347_bnp_e410900).
- Holder, Paul A. *Studies in the Auxilia of the Roman Army from Augustus to Trajan*. Oxford: B.A.R., 1980.
- Hutton, Ronald. *The Pagan Religions of the Ancient British Isles: Their Nature and Legacy*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1991.
- Irby-Massie, Georgia. *Military Religion in Roman Britain*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1999.
- Johnston, Andrew C. *The Sons of Remus: Identity in Roman Gaul and Spain*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017.
- <https://search-ebshost-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=e025xna&AN=1491809&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Kennedy, David Leslie. "The Auxilia and Numeri Raised in the Roman Province of Syria." PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 1980.
- MacMullen, Ramsay. "The Epigraphic Habit in the Roman Empire." *The American Journal of Philology* 103, no. 3 (1982): 233–46. <https://doi.org/10.2307/294470>.
- McDougall, James, and Judith Scheele. *Saharan Frontiers: Space and Mobility in Northwest Africa*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2012.
- <https://search-ebshost-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=e025xna&AN=458422&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- McLaughlin, Jonathan James. "The Transformation of the Roman Auxiliary Soldier in Thought and Practice." Order No. 3708300, University of Michigan, 2015.

- Meyer, Alexander. "Approaching 'Ethnic' Communities in the Roman Auxilia." In *New Approaches to Greek and Roman Warfare*, edited by L.L. Brice. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2020.
- Morris, F.M. "Cross-North Sea Contacts in the Roman Period." *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* 34, no. 4 (2015): 415-438.
- Nesbitt, Claire. "Multiculturalism on Hadrian's Wall." In *The Oxford Handbook of Roman Britain*, edited by Martin Millett, Louise Revell, and Alison Moore. Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2014.
- Revell, Louise. "The Roman Emperor." In *Roman Imperialism and Local Identities*, 80-109. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- <https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=e025xna&AN=254500&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Roman Inscriptions of Britain. "RIB 986. Dedication to Cocidius." <https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/986>.
- Rothe, Ursula. "Treveran Women's Dress and the 'Gallic Ensemble.'" *American Journal of Archaeology* 116 (2012): 235-252.
- Sanchez, Sergio Gonzalez, and Alexandra Gugliemi. *Romans and Barbarians Beyond the Frontiers: Archaeology, Ideology and Identities in the North*. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2017.
- <https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=e025xna&AN=1605902&site=ehost-live&scope=site>.
- Sievers, Susanne. "The Lands of *Germania* in the Later Pre-Roman Iron Age." In *The Oxford Handbook of the Archaeology of Roman Germany*, edited by Simon James and Stefan

- Krmnicek. Oxford Academic, 2015.  
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199665730.013.2>.
- Southern, P. “The Numeri of the Roman Imperial Army.” *Britannia* 20 (1989): 81–140.  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/526158>.
- The Tertullian Project. “CIMRM 860 - Mithras and the Egg, from Housesteads. Hadrian’s Wall, Britain.” <https://www.tertullian.org/rpearse/mithras/display.php?page=cimrm860>.
- Tosh, Alistair. “Ancient Alamo: Blatobulgium Roman Fort.” *Aspects of History*, November 27, 2022. <https://aspectsofhistory.com/ancient-alamo-blatobulgium-roman-fort/>.
- Virgil. *The Aeneid*. Translated by Allen Mandelbaum. USA: Bantam Books, 1971.
- Woolf, Greg. *Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- . “Beyond Romans and Natives.” *World Archaeology* 28, no. 3 (1997): 339–50.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/125023>.
- . “Local Cult in Imperial Context: The *Matronae* Revisited.” In *Romanisation und Resistenz, in Plastik, Architektur und Inschriften der Provinzen des Imperium Romanum*, edited by Peter Noelke *et al.*, 131–138. Mainz: von Zabern, 2003.
- Webster, Jane. “A Negotiated Syncretism: Readings on the Development of Romano-Celtic Religion.” In *Dialogues in Roman Imperialism: Power, Discourse, and Discrepant Experience in the Roman Empire*, edited by David J. Mattingly, 165–84. Ann Arbor, Michigan: Cushing-Malloy Inc., 1997.
- . “‘Interpretatio’: Roman Word Power and the Celtic Gods.” *Britannia* 26 (1995): 153–61. <https://doi.org/10.2307/526874>.
- . “Necessary Comparisons: A Post-Colonial Approach to Religious Syncretism in the

Roman Provinces.” *World Archaeology* 28, no. 3 (1997): 324–38.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/125022>.

Wikimedia Commons. "File:Arch depicting the war god Mars flanked by two male attendants, it may have framed a cult statue of Mars Thincsus, from the shrine of Mars Thincsus at Housesteads, Clayton Museum, Chesters Roman Fort, Hadrian's Wall (44858023031).jpg."

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arch\\_depicting\\_the\\_war\\_god\\_Mars\\_flanked\\_by\\_two\\_male\\_attendants,\\_it\\_may\\_have\\_framed\\_a\\_cult\\_statue\\_of\\_Mars\\_Thincsus,\\_from\\_the\\_shrine\\_of\\_Mars\\_Thincsus\\_at\\_Housesteads,\\_Clayton\\_Museum,\\_Chesters\\_Roman\\_Fort,\\_Hadrian%27s\\_Wall\\_\(44858023031\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arch_depicting_the_war_god_Mars_flanked_by_two_male_attendants,_it_may_have_framed_a_cult_statue_of_Mars_Thincsus,_from_the_shrine_of_Mars_Thincsus_at_Housesteads,_Clayton_Museum,_Chesters_Roman_Fort,_Hadrian%27s_Wall_(44858023031).jpg)

———. "File:RIB 1594 — Budge 1903 page 187.png."

[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RIB\\_1594\\_%E2%80%93\\_Budge\\_1903\\_page\\_187.png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:RIB_1594_%E2%80%93_Budge_1903_page_187.png).

Wikipedia. "File:Mars Thincsus, Beda and Fimmilena altar, Housesteads.jpg."

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mars\\_Thincsus,\\_Beda\\_and\\_Fimmilena\\_altar,\\_Housesteads.jpg](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mars_Thincsus,_Beda_and_Fimmilena_altar,_Housesteads.jpg).

Wilson, Roger J. A. "The Western Roman Provinces." In *Blackwell Companion to Roman Art*, edited by Barbara Borg, 496-530. Oxford, Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015.

Woram, Kevin. "The Community of the Matronae Cult in the Roman Rhineland: Provincial Identity in the Western Frontiers." Order No. 10162122, Tulane University, 2016.  
<http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www-proquest-com.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/dissertations-theses/community-matronae-cult-roman-rhineland/docview/1842431307/se-2>.