

## **GOOD FOR BUSINESS. THE ROMAN ARMY AND THE EMERGENCE OF A 'BUSINESS CLASS' IN THE NORTHWESTERN PROVINCES (1<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY BCE – 3<sup>RD</sup> C. CE)**

By

**KOENRAAD S. VERBOVEN**

Not so long ago, suggesting that anything like a 'business class' existed in the ancient world was enough to be labelled an incurable blockhead modernist, unable to grasp the staggering consequences of using imprecise or inadequate concepts borrowed from that infamous modern-times monster called neoclassical economy, naïvely (and tastelessly) infusing it with marxist nonsense. Fortunately, today, the debate has moved beyond the discussion of which holistic models are intrinsically better to understand the 'nature' of the ancient economy to the more pragmatic approach to make as much sense as possible of the data we have, using intermediate models or relying on plain common sense.<sup>1</sup>

From the minimalist viewpoint the influence of economic institutions and organisations on social differentiation was negligent. The embeddedness of the economy and the constraints it placed on economic activities implied that economic positions reflected social positions rather than vice versa. However, in the classification schemes used in ancient texts and inscriptions to describe social categories and to assign individuals to particular categories, occupational denominations play a central role. Thus, occupational labels are a common feature of sub-elite inscriptions and similarity of occupation is the distinctive criterion for voluntary associations throughout the empire.

The object of this paper is to assess the impact of the Roman army on the emergence of a 'business class' as a social category in the northwestern provinces. Obviously this is not the place to engage in the theoretical debate on the concept of class, but some clarification of what is implied in the concept as used in this paper is called for.<sup>2</sup>

I would venture the following definition: A socio-economic class is an aggregate of social actors who share a (partially) common social identity, signifying a distinctive<sup>3</sup> similarity in basic dispositions, derived from their specific position in or to the social field of market exchange. The social identity of a particular 'class' is based on economic distinctions; quantitative (wealth and income), qualitative (source of wealth

---

<sup>1</sup> Cf. W. Scheidel and S. von Reden (edd.), *The Ancient Economy* (Edinburgh 2002); C. Zaccagnini (ed.), *Mercanti e politica nel mondo antico* (Roma 2003) ; K. Strobel and M. Luik (ed.), *Die Ökonomie des Imperium Romanum. Strukturen, Modelle und Wertungen im Spannungsfeld von Modernismus und Neoprimitivismus* (St. Katharinen 2002) ; J. Andraeu, P. Briant and R. Descat (edd.), *Economie antique. Prix et formation des prix dans les économies antiques* (Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges 1997).

<sup>2</sup> See M. Savage, *Class Analysis and Social Transformation* (Oxford 2000) for this debate (esp. p. 3-22). E. de Ste Croix, *The class struggle in the ancient greek world* (London 1981) provides interesting thoughts on the relevance of the concept (esp. p. 31-111) but relies too dogmatically on 'exploitation' as the key element in class formation: "class ... is the collective social expression of the fact of exploitation, the way in which exploitation is embodied in a social structure." (p. 43). Contra see Savage loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup> In the sense of distinguishing one class from another.

or income) and organisational (investment only, labour only). The objective presence of these criteria is not enough, but neither is conscious class awareness required. What matters is whether and how these criteria influence the habitus of persons, that is the set of (mostly preconceptual) dispositions determining the way people look at their world and structure their perceptions in terms of ethical judgments, utility and veracity.<sup>4</sup>

I'm not claiming that this is the ultimate fit-for-all-purposes definition of the concept of class but the definition allows the concept to be useful in describing, analysing and understanding social differentiation in complex societies with important institutional markets.<sup>5</sup>

Characteristic of a business class, is that its social identity hinges on the following characteristics.

- Its members are actively engaged in market exchange, from which they aim to derive pecuniary profits.
- They are personally committed and occupied in achieving this goal.
- They are willing and prone to take risks.
- Their patrimonies consist primarily of (economic) capital assets and liquidities. Investment in non-economic assets (status goods, political offices, ...) remains secondary.

From this perspective, the genesis of a business class depends on the emergence of a specific habitus. Habitus originates from adaptation to a perceived reality in a socialisation process, that can be primary (education) or secondary (e.g. anticipatory socialisation). External reality is perceived as 'meaningful' and providing an organised social space for social practice, the geography of which is determined by social categories and institutions enjoying social recognition. Therefore, in order to understand habitus formation among businessmen, we need to analyse this social geography, looking for institutional markets, monetisation and modes of participation.

The Roman conquest profoundly changed the social geography in the northwestern provinces by introducing new institutions and breaking or reinforcing existing institutions. Among the new institutions, the Roman army took pride of place. The military and new urban markets institutionalised market exchange at an unprecedented scale. However, the strongest new category introduced was that of 'being Roman', the ultimately acknowledgment of which was Roman citizenship.<sup>6</sup> These three combined – army, market and Roman identity – marked the social identity of businessmen in the northwestern provinces.

---

<sup>4</sup> On 'habitus' see P. Bourdieu, *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique. Précédé de Trois études d'ethnologie kabyle* (Paris, 2000 [= 1972]).

<sup>5</sup> Note Ste Croix op. cit. [n. 2], 42-43: "the disagreement about the best way of using the expression 'class' has been so great that anyone who attempts an analysis of any society in terms of class is entitled to establish his own criteria".

<sup>6</sup> Cf. G. Woolf, *Becoming Roman. The origins of provincial civilization in Gaul* (Cambridge 1998).

### Coming of the Romans - Becoming Roman

Wherever the Roman army went, a train of merchants, contractors and hangers-on followed.<sup>7</sup> The texts call them *lixae*, *negotiatores* or *mercatores*. Festus says they followed the army *quaestus gratia*.<sup>8</sup> Roth argued for a proportion of one slave/servant for every 4 soldiers, but these were attached to the army and would themselves be in need of supplies.<sup>9</sup> Livy claims 40,000 *lixae* and *calones* (slaves) were killed after the battle at Arausio, in which 80,000 soldiers perished.<sup>10</sup> The number of merchants following the army varied, since they were attracted mainly by the spoils of war. Livy describes how the legions in Liguria had few sutlers to rely on, because of the poverty of the country.<sup>11</sup>

Although sensible commanders made sure food and vital supplies were provided for, they relied on private contractors and merchants to cater to any further needs of the soldiers. When supply lines were stretched prices rose accordingly. In 49 the price of wheat in Caesar's camp in Spain rose to an astronomical 50 denarii a *modius*.<sup>12</sup>

When permanent army bases were constructed the sutlers settled in *cannabae*, forming the nucleus of Roman immigrant communities.<sup>13</sup> Gradually *cannabae* became a familiar part of provincial life, but the integration process was slow. Until the late first century Roman products in northern Gaul are mostly confined to military sites.<sup>14</sup> Their privileged contacts with Roman governors and tax farming companies, often gave *carte blanche* to businessmen supplying the army to abuse the indigenous population. Not surprisingly, they were among the first victims of the revolts of Florus and Sacrovir in 21 CE and of Civilis in 69 CE.<sup>15</sup>

A drastic change occurs around the turn of the first century, illustrated by the inscriptions recording *negotiatores* or communities *qui negotiantur*.<sup>16</sup> Whereas the presence of *negotiatores* in the western provinces in the Late Republic and under the first emperors is documented mainly in literary texts and archaeological finds, epigraphy comes to the fore in the late first century.

---

<sup>7</sup> Cf. J. P. Roth, *The logistics of the Roman army at war : (264 B.C.-A.D. 235)* (Leiden 1999), 96-101; see also Josephus, *Bellum Iudaicum* 3.5.83.

<sup>8</sup> Festus s.v. *lixa*. Strictly speaking, *lixae* were army servants; cf. K. Strobel, 'Handwerk im Heer – Handwerk im zivilen Sektor', *Ktèma* 16 (1991), 21-22; J.E. Thornburn, 'Lixae and calones: Following the Roman army', *Classical Bulletin* 79 (2003), 47-61.

<sup>9</sup> Roth 1999, op. cit. [n. 7], 113-114.

<sup>10</sup> Livius, *Periochae* 67.

<sup>11</sup> Livius, *Ab urbe condita* 39.1.7.

<sup>12</sup> Caesar, *Bellum civile* 1.52.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. L. Wierschowski, *Heer und Wirtschaft: Das römische Heer der Prinzipatszeit als Wirtschaftsfaktor* (Bonn 1984), 123 ; L. Wierschowski, 'Das römische Heer und die ökonomische Entwicklung Germaniens in den ersten Jahrzehnten des 1. Jahrhunderts', P. Erdamp (ed.), *The Roman army and the economy* (Amsterdam 2002), 284-288; C. R. Whittaker, 'Supplying the army. Evidence from Vindolanda', Erdamp 2002, op. cit., 216-217.

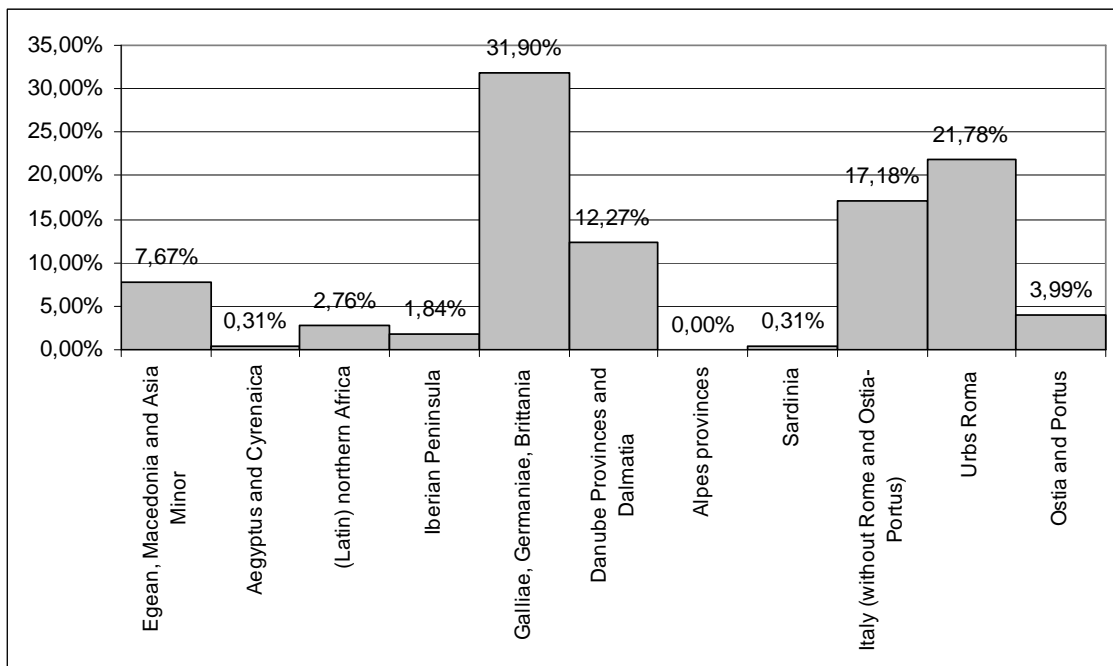
<sup>14</sup> I thank Michael Erdrich for pointing this out to me.

<sup>15</sup> Tacitus, *Annales* 3.42; *Historiae* 4.15.

<sup>16</sup> On *negotiatores* see K. Verboven, 'Ce que *negotari* et ses dérivés veulent dire', J. Andraeu & J. France & V. Chankowski, *Vocabulaire et expression de l'économie antique* (Bordeaux forthcoming).

326 inscriptions attesting 240 individual businessmen record *negotiatores*. Almost 32% of these come from the Gallic and German provinces or from Britain, compared to only 17% for Italy outside Rome which is otherwise much better epigraphically documented. The Danube provinces and Dalmatia provide a handsome 12%. The Spanish and African provinces are virtually absent (1.84% and 2.76% respectively).<sup>17</sup> This contrasts sharply with the general epigraphic low density patterns characteristic for the Tres Galliae, Britain and the German provinces.<sup>18</sup>

Within the northwestern provinces we find a pronounced concentration in the German provinces and the city of Lugdunum. Only Rome itself yields more epigraphic



references (71) to *negotiatores* than Lugdunum, which provides 22 out of 23 inscriptions from Gallia Lugdunensis.<sup>19</sup> Germania Inferior, with 35 inscriptions, is exceptionally well attested thanks to the 14 inscriptions honouring Nehalennia. Cologne and Mainz each furnish 12 inscriptions, rivalling the 13 inscriptions from Ostia and Portus.<sup>20</sup>

Virtually all these inscriptions are second or early third century. All are in latin and the names of the *negotiatores* – although often of indigenous origin – almost always follow Roman patterns (with the *tria* or *duo nomina*). Apparently, most *negotiatores* enjoyed Roman citizenship.

<sup>17</sup> cf. Verboven forthcoming, op. cit. [n. 16]

<sup>18</sup> cf. Woolf 1998, op. cit. [n. 6], 82-94. Number of inscriptions per km<sup>2</sup>: Gallia Narbonnensis: 6.1 ; Aquitania and Lugdunensis 1.1 ; Belgica and Germania Inferior 1.9 ; Germania Superior 4.8.

<sup>19</sup> E. Frézouls, 'Les noms de métiers dans l'épigraphie de la Gaule et de la Germanie romaine', *Ktèma* 13 (1991), 66-67.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. P. Stuart, P. & J. E. Bogaerts, *Nehalennia. Römische Steindenkmäler aus der Oosterschelde bei Colijnsplaat. 2 Bd.* (Leiden 2001).

Galliae, Germaniae, Britannia	104	
Aquitania	4	3.85%
Gallia Belgica	11	10.58%
Gallia Lugdunensis	23	22.12%
Gallia Narbonnensis	5	4.81%
Germania Inferior	33	31.73%
Germania Superior	26	25.00%
Britannia	2	1.92%

This distribution contrasts sharply with the general distribution map of inscriptions, where narbonnese Gaul stands out as an epigraphically rich province compared to the Tres Galliae and the German provinces. More than a third of the occupational inscriptions in Gaul and the German provinces come from Gallia Narbonnensis.<sup>21</sup>

The dominance of the Rhine area and Lugdunum is strengthened even more if we take a detailed look at the inscriptions elsewhere. One of the four Aquitanian inscriptions is dedicated to Mercurius Arvernus by a group of *cives Romani negotiatores*.<sup>22</sup> The remaining inscriptions mention three *negotiatores*, among whom one *civis Treverus negotiator Britannicianus* and one person whose son became *decurio* in Lugdunum.<sup>23</sup> The only Sardinian inscription is a funerary inscription for a *negotians gallicanus* who died while on business in Sardinia.<sup>24</sup>

Britain, on the other however, is badly represented. One of the two only British 'inscriptions' is in fact a writing-tablet from Vindolanda mentioning a *negotium gestum*.<sup>25</sup> However, seven businessmen elsewhere are identified as *negotiatores* linked to Britannia. Five erected inscriptions in honour of Nehalennia, one was the Treverer residing in Burdigala and another was a *negotiator ex provincia Britannia* residing in Castellum Mattiacorum in Germania Superior.<sup>26</sup>

Lugdunum shows a varied pattern, with clear trading links to the North and South. At least six out of twenty *negotiatores* epigraphically recorded in Lugdunum<sup>27</sup> had links with the north.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Frézouls 1991, op. cit. [n. 19] 39, 66-67.

<sup>22</sup> CIL 13, 1522.

<sup>23</sup> CIL 13, 634 ; AE 1945, 15; cf. L. Wierschowski, *Fremde in Gallien - 'Gallier' in der Fremde. Die epigraphisch bezeugte Mobilität in, von und nach Gallien vom 1. Bis 3. Jh. n. Chr.* (Stuttgart 2001), 437, no. 633.

<sup>24</sup> CIL 10, 7612.

<sup>25</sup> AE 1994, 1137 = AE 1996, 960 = AE 1999, 971.

<sup>26</sup> P. Arisenius Marius (AE 1983, 721) ; C. Aurelius Verus (AE 1953, 269 = CIL 13, 08164a ; AE 1983, 722); Fufidius (CIL 13, 7300); Placidus Viduci f. and/or L. Viducius Placidus (AE 1977, 512 ; Stuart & Bogaers 2001, op. cit. [n. 20], A 6); M. Secundinius Silvanus (ILS 4751; AE 1973, 370); Val(erius) Mar[...]-] (AE 1983, 720); L. Solimarius Secundinus (CIL 13, 634).

<sup>27</sup> Three of the twenty-two inscriptions from Lugdunum refer to Cn. Danius Minuso (CIL 13, 1948; 2120; 2121).

In Italy we find concentrations in Latium-Campania and the northern regions. Of the eleven *negotiatores* from Transpadana at least seven had connections with the German or Gallic provinces, among whom three dealers in military cloaks (*saga*), and one *negotiator lentiarius et castrensarius*.<sup>29</sup> Two of the twelve *negotiatores* from Venetia-Histria had migrated from over the Alps.<sup>30</sup>

Italy (without Rome and Ostia-Portus)	56	100%
Italia Regio 01, Latium et Campania	13	23.21%
Italia Regio 02, Apulia et Calabria	3	5.36%
Italia Regio 03, Bruttium et Lucania	1	1.79%
Italia Regio 04, Samnium	1	1.79%
Italia Regio 05, Picenum	2	3.57%
Italia Regio 06, Umbria	3	5.36%
Italia Regio 07, Etruria	5	8.93%
Italia Regio 08, Aemilia	5	8.93%
Italia Regio 10, Venetia et Histria	12	21.43%
Italia Regio 11, Transpadana	11	19.64%

If we plot the data on a map, we see the Rhine axis emerge from the Alps to the North Sea, radiating to northern Italy and Raetia.

Obviously, these figures don't accurately reflect the actual presence or importance of businessmen. Their numbers are likely to have been considerably larger around the Mediterranean than in the northern provinces. The *navicularii marini* from Arles were undoubtedly more influential and richer than the North Sea merchants of the Nehalennia shrine or the *negotiatores salsarii* from Vindonissa. The distribution does illustrate, however, how businessmen in the northern provinces were more prone to publicly avow their business activities and how business activities here played a greater role in the construction of social identity.<sup>31</sup> The same tendency may be seen in the grandiose funerary monuments in the Trier region that equally display pride in business activities or investments.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>28</sup> C. Apronius Raptor, *decurio* in Trier CIL 13, 1911 ; AE 1904, 176 = CIL 13, 11179 ; Wierschowski 2001, op. cit. [n. 23], 318-319 ; M. Sennius Metilus, *treverus* CIL 13, 2029 ; Wierschowski 2001, op. cit., 355, no. 492; Illiomarius Aper *ex civitate Veliocassium* CIL 13, 1998 ; Wierschowski 2001, op. cit., 338-339, no. 468; Murranius Verus CIL 13, 2033, Wierschowski 2001, op. cit., 357-358, no. 494 ; Popillius CIL 13, 02023, Wierschowski 2001, op. cit., 353, no. 489; Victorius Regulus, AE 1982, 709 Wierschowski 2001, op. cit., 45-46, no. 44.

<sup>29</sup> AE 1906, 171 ; 2000, 632 ; CIL 5, 5911 ; 5925 ; 5928 ; 5929 ; 5932.

<sup>30</sup> Pais 1096 = InscrIt 10-01, 163; CIL 05, 1047.

<sup>31</sup> A. Cristofori, *Non arma virumque. Le occupazioni nell'epigrafia del Piceno* (Bologna 2004<sup>2</sup>), 96-103 (esp. 100) ; J.-P. Morel, 'Élites municipales et manufacture en Italie', M. Cébeillac-Gervasoni, *Les élites municipales de l'Italie péninsulaire des Gracques à Néron* (Actes table ronde Clermont-Ferrand, 1991) (Naples 1996), 184.

<sup>32</sup> cf. J. France, 'Les monuments funéraires et le « capitalisme »', J. Andreau & J. France & S. Pittia, *Mentalités et choix économiques des Romains* (Bordeaux 2004), 149-178.

Roman inscriptions – funerary, votive or other – don't usually mention the professional activities of a deceased or a dedicator. The decision to mention these must be seen as a conscious deviation from normality. Why were businessmen in the northwestern provinces more likely to mention their occupational activities than elsewhere?

Chevallier suggested that the inclination to include reliefs referring to the deceased's occupation reflected the high esteem enjoyed by artisans and businessmen in Celtic culture. But there is little evidence to support this idea. Moreover it doesn't explain the concentration along the Rhine axis, which can hardly be considered the heartland of Celtic culture and it leaves a gap of over a century between the conquest and the emergence of the inscriptions.<sup>33</sup>

I believe the inscriptions tell a different story. As noted by Meyer and others, inscriptions signify romanisation, which in turn is a form of status expression.<sup>34</sup> This accords well with what is generally recognised as the reason why freedmen mention their occupational status in inscriptions more often than freeborn. It allowed them to display economic independence and wealth and to claim social respectability in the absence of family descent.<sup>35</sup>

Likewise, businessmen in the northwestern provinces may have mentioned their business activities as a way to affirm the social status they derived from their association with the 'might and majesty' of Rome. This interpretation of course implies that businessmen as a group in the northwestern provinces were closely affiliated to Roman political and social institutions. To assess the role of the armies in this respect, we will first look at their demographic impact, and then focus on the role of military markets, monetisation, credit facilities, technology transfer and law of obligations.

## **Demography**

During most of the first century Germania Inferior and Superior each had 4 legions. Domitian halved this number. The province of Britain always had 3 legions. If we take an average number of 5,000 soldiers per legion we obtain a number of 40,000 legionaries in the German provinces during most of the first century and 20,000 in the second, and 15,000 in Britain. The numbers of the auxiliary units were roughly comparable. This implies a total of roughly 80,000 soldiers in the German provinces in the first century and ca. 40,000 in the second, and approximately 30,000 in Roman Britain.

---

<sup>33</sup> R. Chevallier, 'Perspectives de recherche sur les scènes de métiers (Gaule Cisalpine et Transalpine),' G. Colonna (dir.), *Le province dell'impero. Misc. in onore di Maria Floriani Squarciapino* (Rome 1997), 47-63 (esp. p. 52-53). Cf. J.-C. Béal, 'La dignité des artisans: les images d'artisans sur les monuments funéraires de Gaule romaine', *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* 26 (2000), *passim* (esp. p. 165-166); Cristofori 2004, op. cit. [n. 31], 100.

<sup>34</sup> E. A. Meyer, 'Explaining the epigraphic habit in the Roman empire: the evidence of epitaphs', *Journal of Roman Studies* 80 (1990), 74-96; R. Gordon & M. Beard & J. Reynolds & Ch. Roueché, 'Roman inscriptions 1986-1990', *Journal of Roman Studies* 83 (1993), 131-158.

<sup>35</sup> S. Joshel, *Work, Identity and legal status at Rome. A study of the occupational inscriptions* (London 1992), 60-61, 163-166; M. L. Bonsangue, 'Aspects économiques et sociaux du monde du travail à Narbonne, d'après la documentation épigraphiques (1 s. av. J.-C. – 1 s. ap. J.-C.)', *Cahiers du Centre Glotz* 13 (2002), 222; Cristofori 2004, op. cit. [n. 31], 96-103; Béal 2000, op. cit. [n. 33].

Duncan-Jones estimated that approximately 120 soldiers were discharged per legion per year.<sup>36</sup> For the Rhine legions this implies ca. 960 veterans a year in the first century, 480 in the second, to which we should probably add about the same number of auxiliary-veterans. If we take into account an average life expectancy of another 15 years, we arrive at 28,800 living veterans from the Rhine armies in the first century and 14,400 in second century.<sup>37</sup> The same calculation for Britain works out to ca. 10,800. Many of these settled in the neighbourhood of their former camps, while veterans from other armies returned and settled in Gaul or the German provinces.<sup>38</sup>

To assess the demographic impact of the armies and the social networks of their soldiers and veterans, we must add close family, slaves and freedmen. Their numbers must be estimated in the order of hundreds of thousands of men, women and children.

Soldiers and veterans enjoyed much prestige, radiating on their family and friends. They were or – in the case of the *auxilia* – would become Roman citizens, had social networks to fall back upon often including or indirectly stretching to influential officials, had cash at hand and followed Roman consumption patterns. In networking terms, they were interesting links to cultivate, offering considerable opportunities for businessmen.

The *negotiator vestiarius* Iulius Victor, based in Augusta Vindelicum (Augsburg) in Raetia had a brother, Clemens, who was an *aquilifer* in the *legio III Italica*, stationed in Raetia.<sup>39</sup> The *negotiator purpurarius* Victorius Regulus, a native from the neighbourhood of Noviomagus Nemetae in Germania Superior, had established himself in Durocortorum (Reims), while his brother, a veteran from the *legio XXII Primigena Pia Fidelis* (stationed in Moguntiacum), resided in Lugdunum. Together the geographic scope of the two brothers covered a good part of Belgica, Lugdunensis and Germania Superior.<sup>40</sup>

## Market

The market as an institutional phenomenon was omnipresent in Roman society and culture; the basics of market exchange were taken for granted, legal rules and regulations were developed to support them, the production and provisionment of key-products as wine, olives, *garum*, farm equipment and textiles was largely commercialised and monetised, huge sums were involved in market exchange.<sup>41</sup> Romanisation entailed the spread of this system by Roman *negotiatores*. Cicero's remark in his oration *Pro Fonteio* that not a single coin in (narbonnese) Gaul changed hands unless through the books of Roman *negotiatores* testifies to the extent to which

---

<sup>36</sup> R. Duncan Jones, *Money and Government in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge 1994), 34.

<sup>37</sup> Average age at discharge is here assumed to be 45; Frier estimates life expectancy at 45 at 15.63 years, Coale-Demeny West Level 2, 15.54 years ; cf. B. W. Frier, 'Roman life expectancy: Ulpian's evidence', *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 86 (1982), 237-245.

<sup>38</sup> cf. Tacitus, *Annales* 14.27.1.

<sup>39</sup> CIL 03, 5816.

<sup>40</sup> AE 1982, 709 ; Wierschowski 2001, op. cit. [n. 23], 45-46, no. 44.

<sup>41</sup> P. Temin, 'A market economy in the early Roman empire', *Journal of Roman Studies* 91 (2001), 169-181.



Roman businessmen dominated monetised trade.<sup>42</sup> Although pre-Roman Gaul had a more complex society than once thought, markets had never existed on such a scale and had never been so thoroughly monetised.<sup>43</sup>

The army played a crucial role in this process. While it is true that the army produced much of what it needed in its own workshops, at a quite early date individual soldiers and units bought large quantities of goods and services from civilians.<sup>44</sup> The army may have produced its own shoes, it didn't produce the leather needed to make these shoes. There is no indication that army workshops produced clothes or other textiles. The army produced its own common ceramics, but no *terra sigillata* or other better quality ceramics.

In the northwestern provinces, military markets were at the start and the heart of what Woolf called the 'consumer revolution' that signified romanisation of the provinces by setting new patterns of consumption closely linked to Roman social identity.<sup>45</sup> Many of the products sold were typically mediterranean, including wine, olives, *terra sigillata*, *fibulae*, weapons, food etc, that were originally not locally produced and had to be imported from the south. In first century Vindonissa *negotiatores salsari leguminari* imported salted vegetables.<sup>46</sup> Gradually, however, producers and traders responded to the new opportunities offered by the military markets and local production of the same or comparable wares was organised.

At some time in the early Flavian era, the *salinatores* of the Morini and Menapii set up two honorary inscriptions for a *centurio primuspilus*, L. Lepidius Proculus *ob merita eius*. Although he was not formally co-opted as patron, Lepidus clearly had helped (or so it is claimed) the *salinatores*, who for their part, in keeping with Roman custom, honoured their benefactor.<sup>47</sup>

Basic necessities were provided by the army. But the Vindolanda tablets show that this did not exclude the involvement of private traders. In stead of sending out soldiers to the *villae* and production centres, the tablets indicate that the officers in charge employed civilian businessmen closely connected with the camp as intermediaries.<sup>48</sup> One tablet mentions a *homo transmarinus* (whose name is unfortunately not preserved) associated with his brother and father (?), delivering 320.5 modii of wheat.<sup>49</sup> Another

---

<sup>42</sup> Cicero, *Pro Fonteio* 11.

<sup>43</sup> J. Drinkwater, 'Prologue and epilogue. The socio-economic effect of Rome's arrival in and departure from Gaul', L. De Blois & J. Rich (edd.), *The transformation of economic life under the Roman empire (Proceeding 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop of the international network Impact of Empire (Roman Empire, c. 200 B.C. – A.D. 476), Nottingham 2001)* (Amsterdam 2002), 128-140.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Wierschowski 1984, op. cit. [n. 13], p. 139.

<sup>45</sup> cf. Woolf 1998, op cit. [n. 6], 169-205.

<sup>46</sup> CIL 13, 5221 = AE 1998, 978. Cf. O. Schlippschuh, *Die Händler im römischen Kaiserreich in Gallie, Germanien und den Donauprovinzen Rätien, Noricum und Pannonien* (Amsterdam 1974), 20-21; M. A. Speidel, *Die römischen Schreiftafeln von Vindonissa. Lateinische Texte des militärischen Alltags und ihre geschichtliche Bedeutung* (Brugg 1996), 77. Whittaker 2002, op. cit. [n. 13], 219-220 ; Wierschowski 2002, op. cit. [n. 13], 290.

<sup>47</sup> CIL 11, 390-391 ; L. Wierschowski, *Die regionale Mobilität in Gallien nach den Inschriften des 1. bis 3. Jh n. Chr.* (Stuttgart 1995), 200.

<sup>48</sup> Whittaker 2002, op. cit. [n. 13].

<sup>49</sup> Tab. Vind. 2.180 and its verso 2,344.

tablet contains a letter written to an officer by a merchant called Octavius dealing in grain, hides and sinews.<sup>50</sup> A third tablet lists wooden articles (hubs, axles, spokes, planks, seats, knots, boards and benches) together with a lot of goat skins, sent by a civilian named Metto through his agent Saco to his 'brother' Advectus, who appears to have been attached to the camp.<sup>51</sup> Elsewhere, the situation was presumably comparable. The Nervian *negotiator frumentarius* M. Liberius Victor, active in Nijmegen in the second century, probably supplied the troops here (and elsewhere?) in Germania Inferior.<sup>52</sup>

Wine had been imported since pre-Roman times, but never before were such quantities shipped so far. The presence of the Rhine armies sparked a demand that ultimately pushed wine production as far north as the Moselle banks.<sup>53</sup> The centre of the wine trade was Lyon, where the important *corpus vinariorum* had its seat. Here wine from Italy, Southern Gaul and Spain shipped up the Rhône was sent to the Rhine and North Sea area.

The production of beer evolved from being a home brewed beverage intended mainly for autoconsumption, to a commercial consumer product brewed by specialised breweries. Here too the army (mainly the auxiliaries) played an important role, as illustrated by the anonymous soldier from the *classis Germanica* who was active as *negotiator cervesarius artis affecturae*.<sup>54</sup>

The trade and production of quality ceramics (mainly *terra sigillata*), was decisively influenced by the demand from the military markets. Whereas initially the army was supplied with original Italian or Mediterranean ceramics relayed at Lyon, local imitations sprang up early in the Julio-Claudian period. The distribution map of the La Graufesenque *terra sigillata*, produced close to the Mediterranean in the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century and enjoying a wide distribution in Narbonnese Gaul and the western Mediterranean shores, shows the huge demand for these products by the Rhine and Upper Danube armies. As time went by, major production centres tended to shift northwards, first in the early and mid second century to central Gaul, after ca. 150 CE to the Rhineland. Whereas the finds are initially largely limited to military sites, from the Flavian period onwards they emerge in civilian contexts.<sup>55</sup>

Military camps often organised their own production of bricks and tiles. The technical and practical skill required was small and the essential condition – large amounts of unskilled labour – was often more easily fulfilled by the army than by private contractors. However, in the second century civil *figlinae* emerged, occasionally working for the army. In 167 CE the *Legio XX Valeria Victrix*, had its tiles made near

---

<sup>50</sup> Tab. Vind. 2.343; Whittaker 2002, op. cit. [n. 13], 214-215.

<sup>51</sup> Tab. Vind. 2.309 ; cf. Strobel 1991, op. cit. [n. 8], 29-30.

<sup>52</sup> CIL 13, 8725; cf. Wierschowski 2001, op. cit. [n. 23], 411, no. 581. cf. also the second century *frumentarius* Victorius Ursus from the *civitas Taunensium* operating in Moguntiacum, CIL 13, 11810 cf. G. Jacobsen, *Primitiver Austausch oder freier Markt? Untersuchungen zum Handel in den gallisch-germanischen Provinzen während der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Stuttgart 1995), 145.

<sup>53</sup> cf. Schlippschuh 1974, op. cit. [n. 46], 26-33.

<sup>54</sup> AE 1928, 138.

<sup>55</sup> Woolf 1998, op. cit. [n. 6], 187-189, 195-201; cf. Wierschowski 1984, op. cit. [n. 13], 128-131 ; Jacobsen 1995, op. cit. [n. 52], 44.

Tarbock by a businessman of Velioecassian origin, A. Viduc(i)us, whose son (?) dedicated an altar to Nehalennia at Colijnsplaat and an *arcus* and *ianua* to a local deity associated to the *Numina Augustorum*.<sup>56</sup>

In the textile sector, the *sagarii* provide an eloquent example of how Roman military markets allowed producers of and dealers in an originally indigenous product (gallic cloaks) to come to the fore of Roman business.<sup>57</sup> The demand for military cloaks created a blossoming trade. Lyon, where the *corpus sagariorum* had its seat, was the central place for the *sagarii* in Gaul.

The *negotiator sagarius* Littavius (?) from the Carnutenses, resided in Lugdunum in the second half of the second century.<sup>58</sup> The *sagarius* C. Latinius Reginus, from the Remi likewise settled in Lugdunum somewhere in the first or early second century.<sup>59</sup> The *sagarius* C. Rusonius Secundus even became *sevir augustalis* in Lyon, although he appears to have resided in Vienne, where he was buried by his fellow freedman, heir and likewise *sagarius* C. Rusonius Myron.<sup>60</sup> Another *negotiator sagarius* from roughly the same period, who presumably started his career supplying the Rhine armies, was M. Matutinius Maximus from the Mediomatrici in Gallia Belgica, who died and was buried in Milan.<sup>61</sup>

Weaponry and costume were provided by the army and deducted from the soldier's pay. But Egyptian papyri show that soldiers who wished could buy these items privately outside the camp.<sup>62</sup> The veteran C. Gentilius Victor, who established himself as *negotiator gladiarius* in Moguntiacum may have found his clientel among his former comrades.<sup>63</sup>

### **Monetisation**

Throughout the Early Empire, army pay and expenses constituted the main gateway through which currency entered the economy.<sup>64</sup> Although the army made requisitions in kind and although soldiers are recorded making illegal requisitions, most of the products other than grain had to be paid for. The military market – from retail business to large official orders – was profoundly monetised. Moreover monetisation among the military went beyond the simple use of coins. The army provided a cashier service to its soldiers,

---

<sup>56</sup> AE 1977, 512 (= AE 1983, 643) and AE 1975, 651; see V. G. Swan & R. A. Philpott, 'Legio XX VV and Tile Production at Tarbock, Merseyside', *Britannia* 31 (2000), 55-67.

<sup>57</sup> cf. Schlippschuh 1974, op. cit. [n. 46], 51; see also Wierschowski 1984, op. cit. [n. 13], 127.

<sup>58</sup> CIL 13, 2010; Schlippschuh 1974, op. cit. [n. 46], 49-50.

<sup>59</sup> CIL 13, 2008; Wierschowski 2001, op. cit. [n. 23], 345; Schlippschuh 1974, op. cit. [n. 46], 50.

<sup>60</sup> CIL 12, 1898.

<sup>61</sup> CIL 5, 5929; Wierschowski 2001, op. cit. [n. 23], 64-65, no. 67; Schlippschuh 1974, op. cit. [n. 46], 50.

<sup>62</sup> Wierschowski 1984, op. cit. [n. 13], 121.

<sup>63</sup> CIL 13, 6677 (p 107).

<sup>64</sup> Cf. K. Hopkins, 'Taxes and Trade in the Roman Empire', *Journal of Roman Studies* 74 (1984), 101-125; cf. J. Van Heesch, 'Coins for the army', F. Vermeulen & K. Sas & W. Dhaeze (edd.), *Archaeology in confrontation. Aspects of Roman military presence in the Northwest (Studies in honour of prof. em. Hugo Thoen)*, (Gent 2004), 247-258; T. Pekary, *Die Fundmünzen von Vindonissa von Hadrian bis zum Ausgang der Römerherrschaft* (Brugg 1971), 11-12; Wierschowski 1984, op. cit. [n. 13], 140-147.

making them accustomed to thinking in monetary terms even when no physical coins were at hand.

Speidel estimated the yearly import of coins to the camp at Vindonissa in the Flavian era (where a legion, a *cohors quingenaria* and a *cohors equitata* were stationed) to approximately 8.8 million sesterces.<sup>65</sup> Only a limited part of this money was actually paid out to the soldiers. The rest was deducted to pay for food, clothing and other commodities, which were partly imported, partly locally acquired.

By Speidel's reckoning the 8 legions stationed at the Rhine in the first century would have required ca. 49 million sesterces a year before Domitian's pay rise. The four remaining legions in the second century – after Domitian's pay rise – would still have required ca. 32 million sesterces a year. Assuming the auxiliary forces to have been of roughly the same strength but an auxiliary soldier receiving 5/6 of a legionaries pay, the cost for the auxiliary may have amounted to ca. 40 million sesterces before Domitian's pay rise and ca. 27 million in the second century.<sup>66</sup> According to these estimates, regular pay alone – not taking into account donatives or non-personnel related expenses (building materials, wagons, boats etc.) – would have required ca. 89 million sesterces in the first century to 59 million sesterces in the second century. The same calculation for Britain works out at ca. 34 million sesterces before Domitian's pay raise and ca. 45 million afterwards.

These figures are not very reliable and shouldn't be taken at face value. Levies in kind were commonly used to supply the soldiers' rations, the monetary value of which (calculated at official 'prices') was deducted from their salaries. Nevertheless, clearly huge sums in the order of tens of millions of sesterces every year were involved in supplying the northwestern armies and paying salaries and donatives.<sup>67</sup>

The monetising effects of army presence are well documented in the Vindolanda tablets, dating mostly to only a few decades after the Claudian conquest. The tablets show a wide range of local and non-local products available for purchase against money. To a large extent, the production and trade was left to private traders. Some of the persons involved bear Roman names, others typically celtic names.<sup>68</sup>

The soldiers provided a source of money also as moneylenders. Numerous papyri document loans extended by soldiers in Egypt.<sup>69</sup> Sources from the western provinces are of course much poorer, but given the relative abundance of money among the soldiery,

---

<sup>65</sup> Speidel 1996, op. cit. [n. 46], 76.

<sup>66</sup> cf. for Germania Inferior G. Alföldy, *Die Hilfstruppen der römischen Provinz Germania Inferior* (Dusseldorf 1968), 151.

<sup>67</sup> Whittaker 2002, op. cit. [n. 13], 228-229 ; J. Reynolds & T. Volk, 'Gifts, curses, cult and society at Bath (Review Article)', *Britannia* 21 (1990), 388-390 ; J. Van Heesch 2004, op. cit. [n. 64], 247-258 ; K. Hopkins 1984, op. cit. [n. 64].

<sup>68</sup> Cf. A. Bowman & D. Thomas, *The Vindolanda Writing Tablets (Tabulae Vindolandenses II)* (London 1994), *passim* ; Whittaker 2002, op. cit. [n. 13], 228-230; Pekary 1971, op. cit. [n. 64], 11-12 ; Wierschowski 1984, op. cit. [n. 13], 140-147 for the impact of army units on coin circulation.

<sup>69</sup> cf. Wierschowski 1984, op. cit. [n. 13], 17-30.

we may assume the situation here to have been comparable. One tablet from Vindonissa from 90 CE records a loan by or to a soldier.<sup>70</sup>

Soldiers were encouraged to save part of their pay and Egyptian papyri show that many did. Veterans investing their discharge bonus of 12,000 sesterces (for legionaries) in interest bearing loans at 6% took in an annual rent of 720 sesterces. This was well above subsistence minimum.<sup>71</sup> It meant easy living for moderate veterans and readily available credit for consumers and entrepreneurs.

Not surprisingly, the first bankers appear in close proximity to the legions. Already in the first century a certain Sulla, son of Sennus, from the people of the Remi settled in Bonna as an *argentarius*.<sup>72</sup> Whether the late second or early third century *negotiator nummularius* T. Aelius Viperinus still focused on the soldiers is less sure.<sup>73</sup>

### **Technology transfer**

No organisation in the Roman world could muster as much technical skill and resources as the Roman army, which numbered trained workmen among its ranks, ranging from engineers to blacksmiths and stone cutters.<sup>74</sup> A report from Vindolanda mentions 343 men at work in the *fabricae*, among whom 12 shoemakers and 18 construction workers. Presumably, at least some of these were civilians.<sup>75</sup> Another Vindolanda tablet mentions revenues of the camp, suggesting that camp products were occasionally sold.<sup>76</sup>

Although skilled civilian workmen may sometimes have been recruited, most artisans in the camps presumably learned their trade in the army.<sup>77</sup> Many undoubtedly invested their savings and discharge bonus in a private workshop. Constantine allowed veterans investing their discharge premium in a business enterprise to enjoy fiscal immunity.<sup>78</sup>

The discharge bonus amounted to a considerable sum and investing it in a private enterprise boosted the average size of commercial organisations. Q. Atilius Primus made a career in the army as interpreter, climbing up to the rank of *centurio*. He

---

<sup>70</sup> AE (1996) 1124 = Speidel 1996, op. cit. [n. 46], 98-99, no. 3; cf. also *ibid.* p. 80. Wierschowski 1984, op. cit. [n. 13], 20, 38.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Wierschowski 1984, op. cit. [n. 13], 89; R. MacMullen, *Roman Social Relations* (New Haven 1974), 12-13 estimated 250 drachmai as the Egyptian minimum income

<sup>72</sup> CIL 13, 8104; Wierschowski 2001, op. cit. [n. 23], 406 no. 574; J. Andrau, *La vie financière dans le monde romain. Les métiers de manieurs d'argent* (Rome 1986), 116-118.

<sup>73</sup> CIL 13, 8353 = RSK 327 (foto Taf. 72); cf. Andrau 1986, op. cit. [n. 72], 217-218

<sup>74</sup> cf. Vegetius 2.11; O. Stoll, 'Der Transfer von Technologie in der römischen Antiken', O. Stoll, *Römisches Heer und Gesellschaft. Gesammelte Beiträge 1991-1999*, (Stuttgart 2001), 395-420; O. Stoll, 'Reform der Marotte? Zur sogenannten "Bauhandwerkerreform" Kaiser Hadrians (Epitome de Caes. 14,5)', O. Stoll 2001, op. cit., 127-394; O. Stoll, 'Römische Militärarchitekten und ihre Bedeutung für den Technologietransfer', O. Stoll 2001, op. cit., 300-368. Strobel 1991, op. cit. [n. 8].

<sup>75</sup> Tab. Vind. 2.155; cf. Tab. Vind. 2.156 for 30 construction workers and 19 lime stone burners. Whittaker 2002, op. cit. [n. 13], 207-208.

<sup>76</sup> Tab. Vind. 2.178. Whittaker 2002, op. cit. [n. 13], p. 223.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. L. Wierschowski, 'Soldaten und Veteranen der Prinzipatszeit im Handel und Transportgewerbe', *Münstersche Beiträge zur Antiken Handelsgeschichte* 1 (1982), 31-48; Wierschowski 1984, op. cit. [n. 13], 66-68. Perhaps they sometimes worked off hours for their own account.

<sup>78</sup> Cod. Theod. 7.20.3; cf. Wierschowski 1984, op. cit. [n. 13], 89

afterwards became a *negotiator* in Pannonia Superior and built up a considerable enterprise, leaving at least three freedmen and one freedwoman as heirs.<sup>79</sup>

C. Gentilius Victor, a veteran from the 22<sup>nd</sup> legion, settled as *negotiator gladiarius* in Moguntiacum, investing his discharge bonus in producing and selling swords and other arms. His business thrived. When he died (under Commodus) his testament stipulated that 8,000 sesterces were to be spent on a monument in honour of the emperor.<sup>80</sup> Victor may have been in charge of the *armamentarium* of the 22<sup>nd</sup>, as Ti. Iulius Agilis was at Vindonissa a century before.<sup>81</sup>

The arms industry was not the only sector undergoing changes. Military *lapidarii* were probably the first to produce inscriptions in the northwestern provinces.<sup>82</sup> The veteran *ex beneficiarius consularis* C. Iulius Aprilis – who dedicated a votive altar to Nehalennia in 223 CE – invested his discharge bonus in the North-Sea trade between Britain and Rhine estuary.<sup>83</sup> Vitalinius Felix, a veteran from the *legio I Minervia*, stationed in Bonn, settled in Lugdunum as *negotiator artis cretariae*.<sup>84</sup>

Of course not all entrepreneurs following Roman ways were soldiers or veterans. Many no doubt simply imitated Roman techniques. Thus the A. Viduc(i)us we encountered before, who produced tiles for the 20<sup>th</sup> legion Valeria Victrix, was more than likely no veteran. Pottery and brick stamps found near Eburacum and elsewhere in Britain suggest that private entrepreneurs regularly worked in a 'legionary tradition'.<sup>85</sup>

The army thus created a technical and organisational spinn-off effect, with Roman techniques and professions emerging from the soldiery.

### **Roman law**

Roman citizenship enjoyed by soldiers and veterans implied that the rules of the Roman law of contract – although no doubt in a simplified form – gradually received general acceptance.

A nice example is provided by the famous *emptio bovis frisica* tablet, found in Friesland, and dating most likely to the first half of the first century CE. It records the purchase of a cow by a Roman citizen Gargilius Secundus from a man named Stellus, son of Reperius. Two centurions witness the sale's agreement. A veteran soldier Lilus Duerretus, presumably of frisian origin, was asked to write down the text for Stellus, who was apparently illiterate. The tablet explicitly notes that the right of *redhibitio* according to *ius civile* will not apply, which proves of course that the rules of *ius civile*

---

<sup>79</sup> AE 1978, 00635 = AE 1988, 00938. See also Wierschowski 1982, op. cit. [n. 77], 38-39. T. Kollnik, 'Q. Atilius Primus – Interpret centurio et negotiator', *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 30 (1978), 61-75.

<sup>80</sup> CIL 13, 6677 (p 107; cf. Jacobsen 1995, op.cit. [n. 52], 145.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Speidel 1996, op. cit. [n. 46], 72; Vind. 34 ; CIL 13,11504.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Wierschowski 1984, op. cit. [n. 13], 135-137

<sup>83</sup> Stuart & Bogaers 2001, op. cit. [n. 20] A5.

<sup>84</sup> CIL 13, 1906.

<sup>85</sup> cf. Swan & Philpott 2000, op. cit. [n. 56], 63-63.

– when soldiers or veterans were involved – were usually applicable.<sup>86</sup> The loan recorded in the Vindonissa tablet mentioned before, was formulated as a *stipulatio*.<sup>87</sup>

### **Conclusion**

The military market in the northwestern provinces was both quantitatively and qualitatively different from anything that preceded the Roman occupation. To the locals, the emerging military market was a culturally foreign phenomenon ; its wares and ways, organisation and actors were thoroughly Roman – although necessarily of Roman descent. As romanisation progressed, the market became clearly distinct social field the northwestern provinces.

The emergence and growth of 'the' market as a distinct social field had its corollary in the emergence and growth of a business class, which originally and until deep into the first century, was prevalently of Roman nationality. As indigenous merchants and producers entered the military markets they swiftly adopted Roman ways. By the second century business in the northwestern provinces was thoroughly marketised, monetised and romanised.

Ghent (Belgium), Sept. 2005

---

<sup>86</sup> FIRA 137 ; cf. E. Slob, 'De koopakte van Tolsum', *Tijdschrift voor Rechtsgeschiedenis* 66 (1998), 25-52

<sup>87</sup> AE (1996) 1124 = Speidel 1996, op. cit. [n. 46], 98-99, no. 3.