

THE PAY OF THE AUXILIA

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One of Rome's greatest achievements was the successful enlistment of her conquered peoples for the defence of her empire. How much was Roman statesmanship willing to pay for this? Part of the answer lies in the dignity, freedom, and participation which Roman rule granted to these peoples. Another part of the answer will be found in the pay of the *auxilia*; for although they were recruited from among the subject nations they matched the legions in numbers, fighting spirit, and efficiency at integrating the provinces into the Empire.

The pay of the *auxilia* and its relation to the pay of the legions is a vexing problem which has elicited the ingenuity of many scholars. Recently, however, a new reading of the papyrus *P. Gen. Lat.* 1 and a newly-found inscription have increased the scanty evidence. They may now reveal at least part of the answer.

The pay of the legions during the first two centuries A.D. is well known, for Suetonius (*Dom.* 7) reports that about Domitian 'addidit et quartum stipendium militi, aureos ternos.' The legionaries obviously had been paid three instalments of three aurei, i.e. nine aurei a year, and these were now raised to twelve. An aureus being worth 25 denarii, this meant 300 denarii yearly as against 225 before the raise.

The only dispute is whether Domitian simply increased the amount of each of the three payments from 75 to 100 denarii (as Dio 67, 3, 5 says), or whether he temporarily instituted a fourth pay-day (as Suetonius seems to imply). A new sestertius of A.D. 84, with the legend STIP AUG DOMITIAN, points indeed to the actual institution of such a *stipendium Domitiani*. The extra pay-day may have lasted as long as Domitian lived, but the practice afterwards reverted to three pay days a year.¹

A papyrus in the Geneva collection, *P. Gen. Lat.* 4, shows how these sums were credited to the account of a legionary soldier in A.D. 84:²

		QV] ADRATV[S
1		[lvii]
1a		[lvii]
2	(First hand)	] .umia 7 dr [[[lx] xxx. .]
3	[acceptit stip i an	] dr ccxcvii
3a	[ex eis]
4	[faenaria	] dr xiii
5	[in uictum ?	] dr cxxiix
6	[caligas fascias d	] r xvi
6a		] lvii a ii s
7	[in uestimentis ?	] dr [[lxxxiii a ii s]
8		es] t s ss ccxiy a ii s
8a		] ii
9		d] ep dr lxxx[[xvi]] a iii s
10		] . . um dr lxxxii a[
10a]
11	(Second hand)	[acceptit stip ii an
11a		] dr ccxcv[ii
	[ex eis]
12	[faenaria	] dr xiii
13	[in uictum	] dr c
14	[caligas fascia	] s dr xvi
15		] i dr xx
16		] . cx
17		] est s ss dr cxl[viii

¹ The sestertius is published by C. M. Kraay, 'Two New Sestertii of Domitian', *American Numismatic Society Museum Notes* 9 (1960), 109-16. The practice of three pay-days before the raise is documented by *P. Gen. Lat.* 1 = R. O. Fink, *Roman Military Records on Papyrus* (1971), 68. The same

practice was in force again at least by the late second century as shown by *P. Vindob.* L 72 and 82 = Fink, *Records* 71; see Fink's commentary, *ibid.* p. 253.

² The text given here is Fink's (*Records* 69); see also his commentary and bibliography.

17a]	
18		]	dr xxxv[
19	(Third hand)	[acceptit stip iii an]i.	dr cc[xcvii
20		[ex ei]s	
21		?].	dr x[ii]ii a[iii
22		[in uictum]	dr c
23		[caligas fascias]s	dr xvi
24		dr xx]xiii a ii	
25		[summa ss d]r clxiii a v	
25a		] xlvi a ii[i] s	
26		]cxx a ii s	
27		]ccxc[v]ii	
28]. .[

The restoration of much of the lost text is based on *P.Gen.Lat.* 1 (below), but this much is evident from the document itself, that lines 3, 11, 19, and 27 each record a *stipendium* of 297 drachmae, while lines 10 and 18 state the balances remaining after making the deductions itemized in lines 4-8 and 12-16.³

Four Egyptian drachmae correspond to one denarius. Hence one would expect *stipendia* of 300 drachmae, equalling the 75 denarii reported by Suetonius. Without doubt, 300 drachmae were the man's theoretical pay, but a deduction of three *drachmae* was made each pay-day before the sums were credited to his account.

For the pay of the *auxilia* at this time there exists only indirect evidence, unless one accepts another papyrus in the Geneva collection, *P.Gen.Lat.* 1, *recto*, part 1, as an auxiliary pay-record. This document is much better preserved and lists the *stipendia* of two soldiers in A.D. 81:⁴

Col. ii

	L	AŞINIO COS	
		Q İVLIVS PROCVLVS ĐAM	
(First hand)		[acceptit] stip i an iii do dr ccxlvii s	
		ex eis	
5		faenaria dr x	
		in u[ic]tum dr lxxx	
		cal[i]gas fascias dr xii	
		saturnalicium k dr xx	
		. . . . r . . torium dr lx	
10		ex [p]ensas dr clxxxii	
		reliquas deposuit dr lxxv s	
		et habuit ex prio d[r] cxxxvi	
		fit sum[m] dr cci s	
(Second hand)		acceptit stip ii anni eiusd dr ccxlvii s	
15		ex eis	
		faenaria dr x	
		in uictum dr lxxx	
		caligas fascias dr xii	
		ad signa dr iv	
20		expensas dr cvi	
		reliquas deposuit dr cxli s	
		et habuit ex pr[or] [] dr cci s	
		fit [su]mma omnis dr cccxli[ii]	
(Third hand)		acce[pit sti]p iii a [nn ei]u[us] [dr] ccxlvii [i] s	
25		[e]x e [i] s	
		faenaria [dr x]	

³ cf. Fink, *Records* p. 251.

⁴ The text given here is Fink's (*Records* 68) except for col. ii, 31 where the figure is 343, not 344, as is

clear from the additions; see Fink's commentary and extensive bibliography.

	[in uictu]m	dr [lx]xx
	[calig]aş [f]aşçias	dr [xii]
	in uestim[e]n[t]i[s]	dr c[xl]v s
30	expensaş	[dr c]cxlvii s
	habet in deposito dr	cccxljii
(Fourth hand)	rennius innocens	
Col. iii		
(First hand)	C VALERIVS GERMANVS TYR	
	acceptit stip i an iii do dr ccxlvii s	
	ex eis	
	faenaria	dr x
5	in u[i]ctum	dr lxxx
	caligas fascias	dr xii
	saturnaliciu[m] k	dr xx
	in uestimen[t]i[s]	dr c
	expensaş	dr ccxxii
10	reliquas depo	dr xxv s
	et habuit	dr xx[i]
	fit summa omni[s]	dr xlvi s
(Second hand)	acceptit stip ii anni eius dr ccxlvii s	
	ex eis	
15	faenaria	[d] r x
	in uictum	dr lxxx
	caligas fascias	dr xii
	ad signa	dr iv
	expensas dr cvj	
20	re[li]quas deposuit	dr cxli s
	et habuit ex priore	dr xlvi s
	f[rit] summa omni[s] dr [c]lxxxvi[ii]	
(Third hand)	acceptit stip iii ann[i] e[i]u[s] dr ccxlvii s	
	ex eis	
25	fae[n]aria	dr x
	in uictum	dr lxxx
	cal[i]gas fascias	dr xii
	in uestimentis	dr cxlv s
29	habet [i]n deposito	dr clxxxviii

The basic arrangement of the accounting here is the same as that of *P.Gen.Lat.4*: after the *stipendium* is credited, recurrent deductions are itemized, and then the balance is stated as the amount in the *deposita*. Only three *stipendia* a year are listed, because the document dates before Domitian's increase of payments.

The amount of the *stipendia* has been read until recently as 248 drachmae. R. Fink has now improved the reading to 247½ drachmae, but this, as he comments, does not seem to lessen the difficulties that have been encountered in explaining a figure that comes to less than five-sixths of the legionary *stipendium* at the time.⁵

Th. Mommsen, seeing in *P.Gen.Lat. 1* a legionary pay-record, thought of a fraudulent exchange-scheme by which the government cheated the legions in Egypt of more than one-sixth of their pay.⁶ He could not then know *P.Gen.Lat. 4*, of only three years later, which records the full legionary pay, and thus renders his interpretation well-nigh impossible. Furthermore, neither is the arithmetic of the

⁵ Fink, *Records* 243.

⁶ Th. Mommsen, 'Ägyptische Legionare', *Hermes* 35

(1900), 443-452 = *Ges. Schr.* vi, 124 ff.

suggested sleight-of-hand exact,⁷ nor is a fraudulent scheme of such magnitude likely in itself. It would certainly have led to an outcry by the soldiers, especially since the transfer of individuals, detachments, and entire units to Egypt (and from it) was quite frequent. Would all these men have accepted a cut in pay?

Scholars felt compelled to adopt this improbable hypothesis because the two men named in *P.Gen.Lat.* 1 have the *tria nomina*, and therefore presumably were Roman citizens, who were supposed to be excluded from service in an auxiliary unit.⁸ It can be demonstrated, however, that in some Egyptian *auxilia* not just a few individuals, but an overwhelming majority of the soldiers had the *tria nomina* as early as the turn of the first century A.D.⁹ Their names, then, do not certify that these men are legionaries.

Thus it seems inevitable that we must recognize in *P.Gen.Lat.* 1 a pay-record for auxiliary soldiers receiving about five-sixths of the legionary pay.¹⁰ This has been suggested before¹¹ but found little credence,¹² not only because of the *tria nomina* of the men concerned, but also because of the oddity of the amount: 248 drachmae are not exactly five-sixths of either 297 or 300 drachmae, and stand in no simple arithmetical relation to the legionary stipendium.

Yet just here Fink's new reading provides a key for the understanding of the stipendia in both papyri: 247½ drachmae is the balance of 250 minus 1 per cent, in the same way as 297 drachmae is the balance of 300 minus 1 per cent. In view of this analogy there can be no doubt that the *stipendia* in both papyri presuppose the full amounts of 250 and 300 drachmae respectively, the kind of round figures one expects in empire-wide soldiers' payments:

legionary *stipendium*: 300 drachmae minus 1 per cent

auxiliary *stipendium*: 250 drachmae minus 1 per cent

The purpose of the 1 per cent deduction made at the outset before the *stipendium* was credited is unknown, nor do we know whether it applied outside Egypt as well. It may have been an exchange-fee for conversion of denarii into drachmae.

The fact that this deduction is common to both papyri confirms that *P.Gen.Lat.* 1 and *P.Gen.Lat.* 4, which resemble each other in so many points, do not represent two different types of accounts, one for *deposita* and one for *stipendia*.¹³

⁷ Mommsen suggested the 75 denarii were reckoned to equal 300 drachmae, but drachmae in billon, worth 6 obols each, i.e. 1,800 obols. But 1,800 obols, reconverted into silver drachmae, worth 7¼ obols apiece, result in 248 drachmae 3 obols, not the 247½ drachmae that *P. Gen. Lat.* 1 records.

⁸ This was maintained first by Th. Mommsen, l.c. (above, n. 6), and in the latest instance by R. Marichal, 'La solde des armées romaines d'Auguste à Septime Sévère,' *Annales de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves* 13 (1953), 339-421; also by Fink, *Records* p. 245.

⁹ *IGRR* i, 1337 gives a long list of soldiers with *tria nomina* in the *cohors I Hispanorum* in A.D. 85, cf. Lesquier, *L'armée romaine d'Égypte* (1918), 88, n. 5. Likewise, *P. Oxy.* 1022 of A.D. 103 (= Fink, *Records* 87) names six recruits of the *cohors II* or *III Ituraeorum*, all have the *tria nomina*. There are other similar cases.

¹⁰ The other four documents on *P. Gen. Lat.* 1 (= Fink, *Records* 9; 10; 37; 58) record men with *tria nomina* exclusively. As has been said, however, this does not prove *P. Gen. Lat.* 1 to refer to a legion. Fink (*Records* 9 and 58) assumes the *verso* to refer to Legio III Cyrenaica, yet conclusive proof is wanting. Even if it could be produced, nothing could be inferred for the *recto*, on which the pay-records were written some ten years later, for by then the *verso* was treated as waste paper, and was glued together and recycled (see

Fink, *Records* p. 107). Legionary and auxiliary detachments often shared a camp, and thus might easily have used each other's ten-year-old waste paper.

¹¹ A. C. Johnson, *Roman Egypt to the Reign of Diocletian* (1936), 670 ff. Ironically, Johnson's thesis may have started from a misunderstanding of Lesquier, *L'armée romaine d'Égypte*, whom he thought to have opted for five-sixths. Johnson's thesis was adopted by A. Passerini, *Le coorti pretorie* (1939), 101, n. 2 and G. Forni, *Il reclutamento delle legioni da Augusto a Diocleziano* (1952), 32 ff.

¹² cf., e.g., Marichal, 'Solde' (above, n. 8); G. R. Watson, 'The Pay of the Roman Army, The Auxiliary Forces,' *Historia* 8 (1959), 372-78; G. Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army* (1969), 260; P. A. Brunt, 'Pay and Superannuation in the Roman Army,' *PBSR* 28 (1950), 50-71; Fink, *Records* 68.

¹³ G. R. Watson, 'The Pay of the Roman Army, Suetonius, Dio and the Quartum Stipendium,' *Historia* 5 (1956), 332-340, and in *The Roman Soldier* (1969), 104 ff. suggested such a difference, but Fink (*Records* p. 245) had rightly pointed out that if this were correct one would expect different sums to be retained at different times, since the expenses they covered varied greatly; also the text says clearly *acceptit stip(endium)*. Above all, Watson's thesis would force one to assume an unlikely basic change in book-keeping between the date of *P. Gen. Lat.* 1 and *P. Gen. Lat.* 4.

Since the one gives the full *stipendium*, this has to be recognized in the other. *P. Gen. Lat.* 1, therefore, unequivocally is a pay record for auxiliary soldiers.

Pari passu with the legionary pay, this auxiliary pay of 750 *drachmae* a year will have been raised by one-third in A.D. 84, so that from then on it will have amounted to 1,000 *drachmae* or 250 *denarii* yearly, i.e. five-sixths of the legionary pay.

Unfortunately, however, we do not know the unit and rank of the soldiers in *P. Gen. Lat.* 1. It seems they were foot-soldiers, for horse-men of an *ala* in A.D. 179 receive more than three times as much pay-money.¹⁴ But is it possible in fact that a *miles cohortis* received five-sixths of a legionary's pay? It is, for the widely-accepted thesis that the auxiliary pay was only one-third of that of the legions rests on no more than an *obiter dictum* of A. v. Domaszewski, who deduced from Suetonius' words quoted above that a (yearly) auxiliary *stipendium* always consisted of 75 *denarii*.¹⁵ The evidence of promotions, however, especially the recently-found career of the captor of Decebalus,¹⁶ clearly shows that there cannot have been such a big difference between legionary and auxiliary pay.

That career records the promotion of a *vexillarius equitum legionis* to the position of *duplicarius alae*. As an *eques legionis* the man concerned was already drawing better pay than a simple legionary, perhaps 400 *denarii*, while as a *vexillarius* he may have received pay-and-a-half, i.e. 600 *denarii*.¹⁷ Transfer from the legion to an *ala* may have brought another pay-raise,¹⁸ so that as *duplicarius alae* he may have earned 700 *denarii*. That may be scaled down to fit the five-sixths thesis: *eques alae* 350 *denarii*, *eques cohortis* 300, *miles cohortis* 250. These figures are, admittedly, wholly conjectural, but they can hardly be changed to such an extent as to accommodate the one-third thesis.¹⁹

P. Berol. 6866, a pay record of auxiliaries of A.D. 192, lists *stipendia* of 84 *denarii*, 15¾ *obols*, which have been shown on other grounds to be not yearly but four-monthly payments.²⁰ The resulting yearly pay of 253-4 *denarii* is not readily explicable arithmetically, but makes it nevertheless very likely that the same pay-scale was in force from A.D. 84 until the pay-rise by Septimius Severus.²¹ The soldiers receiving these *stipendia* were privates rather than higher ranks, since more than eleven of them in a row are all credited with the same amount. Hence the soldiers in *P. Gen. Lat.* 1, receiving a very similar pay, were probably privates too.

The possibility cannot be excluded, however, that *P. Gen. Lat.* 1 and *P. Berol.* 6866 refer to *equites cohortis*. If so, this would point to a relation of two-thirds between auxiliary and legionary pay, putting the pay of an *eques alae* on a par with

¹⁴ *P. Hamb.* 39 = Fink, *Records* 76.

¹⁵ A. v. Domaszewski, 'Der Truppensold der Kaiserzeit,' *Neue Heidelberger Jahrbücher* 9 (1899), 218-241. Domaszewski's argument that *stipendium* denotes 75 *denarii* was demolished by Brunt, l.c. (above, n. 12), 54. Brunt's own three-fifths thesis collapses with the new date (A.D. 192) for *P. Berol.* 6866, cf. Fink, *Records* 70.

¹⁶ *AE* 1969-70, 583.

¹⁷ M. Speidel, 'The Captor of Decebalus,' *JRS* 60 (1970), 142-153. D. Breeze, 'Pay Grades and Ranks below the Centurionate,' *JRS* 61 (1971), 130-5 even argues that a *vexillarius* received double pay—but the evidence is tenuous; especially since *P. Dura* 100 and 101 show that *vexillarius* was not a permanent rank.

¹⁸ cf. Speidel, l.c. A cut in pay, as suggested by Breeze, l.c., would be totally unparalleled. A time of warfare certainly does not mean 'abnormal conditions' for a soldier of Domitian and Trajan, nor does this man's career (or any other) indicate that promotion prospects in the *auxilia* were better than in the legions.

cf. the commentary to *AE* 1969-70, 583.

¹⁹ The demand of the Batavian cohorts in A.D. 69 for *duplex stipendium* (Tacitus, *Hist.* 4, 19) cannot be taken as a demand to double the auxiliary pay in general, nor, therefore, as evidence that it must have amounted to less than half the legionary pay, as Watson, l.c. (above, n. 12), 373, assumes; cf. also Brunt l.c. (above, n. 12), 64 f. It will rather have been a demand for some special favour similar to *augeri equitum numerum*: perhaps double pay for merit (cf. Dessau 9098, of the time of Septimius Severus), or wholesale promotion in the ranks. For *duplicarius* as a pay-grade encompassing several ranks, cf. J. Gilliam, 'The Moesian Pridianum,' in *Hommages à A. Grenier* (*Collection Latomus* 58, 1962), 747-756 and Fink, *Records* p. 16 f.

²⁰ For the text and interpretation see Fink, *Records* 70.

²¹ No pay-raise seems to have occurred during the second century A.D. before Septimius Severus. cf. A. Passerini, 'Gli aumenti del soldo militare da Commodo a Massimino,' *Athenaeum* 24 (1946), 145-159.

that of a *miles legionis*, which is indeed how a papyrus recording military payments in A.D. 300 has been explained.²²

Pridiana, preserved on papyri, suggest that in auxiliary units there were only three different pay grades below the centurion and the decurion, namely basic, *sesquiplicarius* and *duplicarius*.²³ The same seems to be true for the legions.²⁴ Accordingly, one may now dress two alternative pay scales in denarii for the period from A.D. 84 to Septimius Severus.²⁵

(a) $\frac{5}{6}$	<i>miles cohortis</i>	<i>eques cohortis</i>	<i>eques alae</i>	<i>miles legionis</i>	<i>eques legionis</i>
basic	250	300	350	300	400
<i>sesquiplicarius</i>	375	450	525	450	600
<i>duplicarius</i>	500	600	700	600	800
(b) $\frac{2}{3}$	<i>miles cohortis</i>	<i>eques cohortis</i>	<i>eques alae</i>	<i>miles legionis</i>	<i>eques legionis</i>
basic	200	250	300	300	350
<i>sesquiplicarius</i>	300	375	450	450	525
<i>duplicarius</i>	400	500	600	600	700

For lack of certain evidence on the rank and kind of unit of the two soldiers in *P.Gen.Lat.* 1, these tables remain conjectural. We may now, however, safely accept that *P.Gen.Lat.* 1 is an auxiliary pay-record, that a deduction of 1 per cent was made from the *stipendium* of both legionaries and auxiliaries, at least in Egypt, and that the pay of the *duxilia* was five-sixths or two-thirds of the legionary pay.

Considering their actual functions, the difference between legions and *auxilia* was not large enough to warrant any great discrepancy in pay. The fact that their pay did not differ very much makes it now easier to understand why so many citizens preferred to join the *auxilia* rather than the legions, as is shown, e.g., by the new formula on military diplomas from A.D. 140 onwards, 'civitatem Romanam qui eorum non haberent, dedit'.²⁶ Apparently soldiers in the *auxilia* generally did quite well: many had large sums on deposit, and some of them could afford not only a wife but a concubine as well.²⁷ This, it seems, they were able to do not only by illegal extortion,

²² In *P. Beatty Panop.* 2, 36 ff. and 291 ff. the *stipendium* of the cohorts amounts to twice their *annona*, the *stipendium* of the *alae* to three times their *annona*. If the *annona* was the same for both kinds of units, then their *stipendium* was in a relation of 2:3, which would fit better the two-thirds thesis. But perhaps the *annona* of the *alae* was higher, too, so that this ratio need not apply. A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire* (1964) II, 623, commenting on this papyrus, assumes the pay of a *miles legionis* to equal the pay of an *eques alae*, and two-thirds of this to be the pay of a *miles cohortis*. His figures, however, are not meant to be more than hypothetical, because the number of men in each detachment or unit could vary widely. (E.g., the donatives for the *alae* could be the same as those for the legions; if so, the detachment of the *ala II Herculiana dromedariorum* in lines 168 ff. was 43 men strong rather than 211, which is not in itself impossible.)

²³ *P. Brit. Mus.* 2851 = Fink, *Records* 63; *BGU* 696 = Fink, *Records* 64; see Gilliam, l.c. (above, n. 19).

²⁴ Breeze, l.c. (above, n. 17).

²⁵ We follow Watson's convincing proposition that the figures be divisible by 25 so as to be accountable in aurei as was the *viaticum* (in *BGU* ii, 423 and *P. Berol* 6866) and the legionary pay throughout. This assumption is now confirmed by the new figures for auxiliary pay: 7½ aurei before A.D. 84 and 10 aurei thereafter.

²⁶ cf. Forni, l.c. (above, n. 11), 33. 25% of the recruits for the *alae* on Rhine and Danube were citizens by Trajan's and Hadrian's time, as is revealed with some precision by the number of *equites singulares Augusti* that do not change their names to that of the ruling Emperors, cf. M. Speidel, *Die Equites Singulares Augusti* (Bonn, 1965 = *Antiquitas* ii, 11) 67.

²⁷ Deposits: *P. Fay.* 105 = Fink, *Records*, 73. Wife and concubine: *P. Wisc.* 14, cf. J. Gilliam, 'P. Wisconsin 14,' *BASP* 5 (1968), 91-8.

trade and other business on the side,²⁸ but also because of a pay that kept them above the poverty-line.

Obviously, Roman statesmanship was willing to spend enormous sums to enlist the support of the subject peoples for the Empire, despite a chronically tight financial situation. It becomes evident also that the crushing taxation weighing down the later Roman Empire was but the continuation of a long-standing and successful tradition of heavy military spending.²⁹

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²⁸ Extortion: *Luke* 3, 14; trade: Tacitus, *Ann.* 13, 35 and 51; other business: e.g. *BGU* ii, 462 = Wilcken, *Chrest.* 376. The argument that soldiers had a rather low standard of living (Forni, l.c. above, n. 11), does not convince, cf. Brunt, l.c. (above, n. 12), 65 f.

²⁹ For the effect of military expenses in the third century see Th. Pekary, 'Studien zur römischen Währungs- und Finanzgeschichte,' *Historia* 8 (1959), 443-489.

A short version of this paper was presented at the Thirteenth International Congress of Papyrologists, Marburg, in August, 1971. I am grateful for the enlightening remarks offered by my colleagues there, but especially to Prof. E. Birley, Durham, and Dr. J. F. Gilliam, Princeton, who read the manuscript and made valuable suggestions.