

A Note on *Diogmitae*

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While being transported as a condemned criminal to Rome, Ignatius bishop of Antioch writes to the Christian community in the capital: "From Syria to Rome I am fighting with beasts, being bound on land and sea, by night and day, to ten leopards, that is, a unit of soliders" (ἀπὸ Συρίας μέχρι Ῥώμης θηριομαχῶν, διὰ γῆς καὶ θαλάσσης, νυκτὸς καὶ ἡμέρας, δεδεμένος δέκα λεοπάρδοις, ὅ ἐστιν στρατιωτικὸν τάγμα).<sup>1</sup> In a recent note Barry Baldwin has argued that these "leopards" "will almost certainly have been the so-called *diogmitae*, a tough crowd of vigilantes or enforcers, hardly deserving *LSJ*'s mild description of them as 'mounted policemen'." Baldwin proceeds to discuss some Greek and Latin attestations of this word, and especially the *Historia Augusta*'s *Marcus* 21. 7, *armauit et diogmitas*. "This account . . . may be authentic, given the undoubted existence of *diogmitae* at that time. Yet one has to wonder what the chances are of the *Historia Augusta* independently coming up with the only extant Latin use of the term outside Ammianus" [27. 9. 6]. Baldwin suggests that "we have here yet another small link in the chain of details that betrays the fraudulent nature of the *Historia Augusta*."<sup>2</sup>

The classic discussion of the *diogmitae* is by W. H. Waddington, commenting on an inscription copied by Philippe Le Bas on the territory of Aezanoi in Phrygia; some refinements were added by Wilhelm Dittenberger in his edition of the same text. These scholars established that the *diogmitae* were a form of police, light-armed and operating on foot, attached to municipal officers such as the *eirenarches* and the *paraphylax*.<sup>3</sup> In 1928 Louis Robert discussed some inscriptions from the borderland of Pisidia and Pamphylia which showed *diogmitae* acting in pairs or accompanying

<sup>1</sup> Ign., *Ep. Rom.* 5. 1 (the best edition is by P. T. Camelot, *Sources Chrétiennes* 10 [Paris 1951]).

<sup>2</sup> Baldwin, *ICS* 10 (1985), 281–83.

<sup>3</sup> Le Bas–Waddington III 992, whence J. Franz, *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum* 3831 a 8; Dittenberger, *Orientalis Graeci Inscriptiones Selectae* 511, derives from L–W, G. Lafaye, *Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas pertinentes* IV 580 from Dittenberger. *LSJ* take their definition of "mounted policeman" from Franz and ignore Waddington and Dittenberger: in their *Supplement* they refer to Dittenberger without changing their definition.

*eirenarchae* in threes; some ten years later he was able to add a relief from the Smyrna Museum, several times discussed and reproduced thereafter, which shows a mounted *paraphylax* accompanied by three lightly armed subordinates whom Robert recognized as *diogmitae*.<sup>4</sup> As their name implies, these were “pursuers” usually employed to apprehend fugitives. It is inconceivable that even ten such local constables could constitute the “leopards” who travelled with Ignatius by land and sea from Syrian Antioch to Rome; these must be Roman legionaries, detached in the usual way to accompany a group of important prisoners.<sup>5</sup>

The inscription from the Aezanitis records that a benefactor of the city “provided at his own expense a *diogmites* to fight under the lord Caesar in the proconsulship of Quintilius Maximus” (παρασχόντα τῷ κυρίῳ Καίσαρι σύμμαχον διωγμείτην παρ’ ἑαυτοῦ κατὰ ἀνθύπατον Κουιντίλιον Μάξιμον). The context in which the *Historia Augusta* says that Marcus Aurelius “armed the *diogmitae*” concerns the emperor’s preparations and departure for the German War in 169.<sup>6</sup> Waddington, followed by Dittenberger, argued that the proconsul Quintilius Maximus was the consul of 151, who should have been proconsul in the later 160s, and that the inscription thus confirmed the testimony of the *Historia Augusta*. A milestone from Dascyleion now dates Maximus’ proconsulate to 169/70, and puts Waddington’s hypothesis beyond all doubt.<sup>7</sup> In short, the *diogmitae* were neither “mounted policemen” nor “a tough crowd of vigilantes or enforcers,” but light-armed local constables. That is why the *Historia Augusta* singles out among Marcus Aurelius’ preparations for the German War the fact that “he also (*or even*) armed the *diogmitae*”; its testimony is confirmed by the inscription from the territory of Aezanoi.

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<sup>4</sup> Inscriptions: L. Robert, *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 52 (1928), 407–09 (*Opera Minora Selecta* [Amsterdam 1969], II, pp. 878–80), discussing the inscriptions now *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* VI 688, 690, 709. Relief: Robert, *Études Anatoliennes* (Paris 1937), pp. 102–03 with Plate II 2, adding (p. 103, n. 1) a new *diogmites* from *Monumenta Asiae Minoris Antiqua* III 305; on this relief see most recently M. Speidel, *Epigraphica Anatolica* 5 (1985), pp. 159–60. Robert’s second publication is not cited in Baldwin’s article (above, note 2).

<sup>5</sup> On this function of the legionaries, T. Mommsen, *Römisches Strafrecht* (Leipzig 1899), pp. 315–18. That Ignatius was not the only prisoner follows from Polycarp, *Ep.* 1. 1, 9. 1, 13. 2 (Camelot [above, note 1], p. 9).

<sup>6</sup> *HA, M. Aur.* 20. 6–21. 10.

<sup>7</sup> D. French, *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 21 (1976), 77–78; cf. G. Alföldy, *Konsulat und Senatorenstand unter den Antoninern*, *Antiquitas*, Reihe 1, 27 (Bonn 1977), p. 381; Bengt E. Thomasson, *Laterculi Praesidum* 1 (Göteborg 1984), p. 230, no. 151; C. P. Jones, *Culture and Society in Lucian* (Cambridge, Mass. 1986), p. 165 arguing against an aberrant view of D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* (Princeton 1950), p. 1532, n. 6.