

# Interpreting Roman military equipment and horse gear from non-military contexts : the role of veterans

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# Interpreting Roman military equipment and horse gear from non-military contexts. The role of veterans<sup>1</sup>

Johan A.W. Nicolay

## Introduction

Military equipment and horse gear have long been viewed as characteristic of military find sites. Recent research, however, has shown that these categories of objects also occur in urban contexts, (military) *vici* and *vil-lae*<sup>2</sup>. In addition to this, there have been substantial finds from rural settlements, a cult place and rivers in the Batavian part of the Lower Rhine region; a provisional inventory has listed about 2000 objects from over 250 find sites (Fig. 1).

The aim of this study is to present a model that will explain the frequent occurrence of military objects in non-military contexts. Central to this model is the life cycle of a Roman soldier. By examining the use of weapons and horse gear during the different stages of this life cycle, I will discuss the times in a soldier's life when parts of his equipment could have ended up in the different civilian

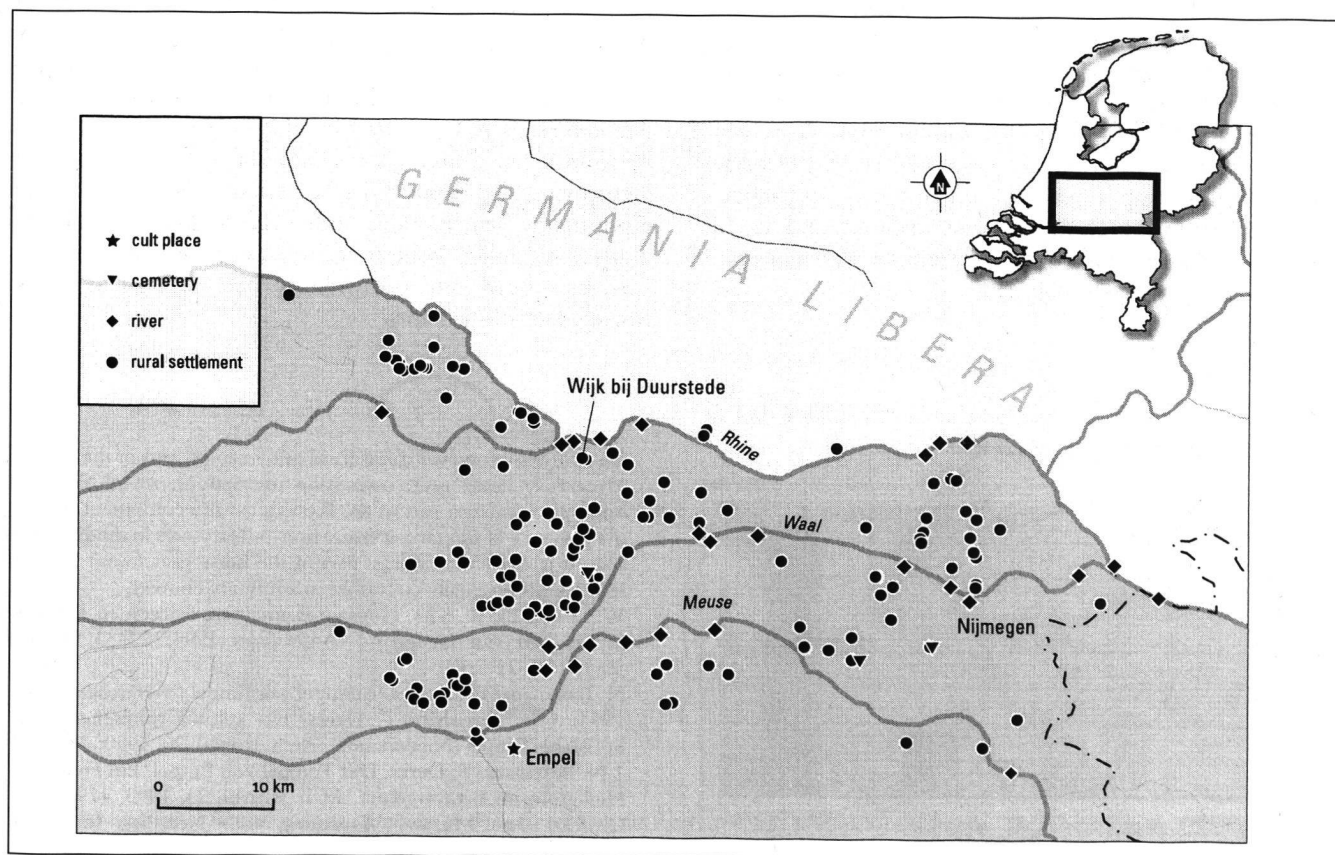
contexts. A key assumption here is that the bulk of the finds from the Batavian region originally circulated in a military setting<sup>3</sup>. A different explanatory model is required to interpret the primary, civilian use of weaponry and horse gear.

<sup>1</sup> This study is part of the project "The Batavians: ethnic identity in a frontier situation", financed by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) and conducted by the Free University of Amsterdam. For their most valuable comments, I am indebted to Nico Roymans, Jan Slofstra, Joris Aarts, Ivo Vossen and especially to Ton Derks, who read several drafts of this paper and corrected the appendix. I also wish to thank Bert Brouwenstijn for his help with the figures. Annette Visser translated the text into English.

<sup>2</sup> As well as the examples in this volume, cf. W. Grabert/H. Koch, *Militaria aus der villa rustica von Treuchtlingen-Weinbergshof*. Bayer. Vorgeschbl. 51, 1986, 325–332 | M. Dawson, Roman military equipment on civil sites in Roman Dacia. *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Stud.* 1, 1990, 7–15 | A. Voirol, "Etats d'armes". *Les militaria d'Avenches/Aventicum*. BPA 42, 2000, 7–92.

<sup>3</sup> This study deals with weaponry and horse gear used in a military context. The author is aware that some 1<sup>st</sup>-century and, in particular, 2<sup>nd</sup>- and 3<sup>rd</sup>-century horse gear was used primarily in a civil-

Fig. 1: Distribution of Roman military equipment and horse gear from rural settlements, a cult place and rivers within the *civitas Batavorum* (1<sup>st</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> century AD).



## The archaeological context: rural settlements, a cult place and rivers

In recent years, thanks to the intensive use of metal detectors both by amateur archaeologists and at excavations, large quantities of militaria and horse gear have been unearthed from non-military settings in the Batavian area (Fig. 2). Most of the documented finds come from rural settlements. In addition, weaponry and horse gear have been found at a cult place near Empel, while dredging activity has generated a substantial number of finds from rivers. Cemeteries, on the other hand, have produced very few finds of military equipment.

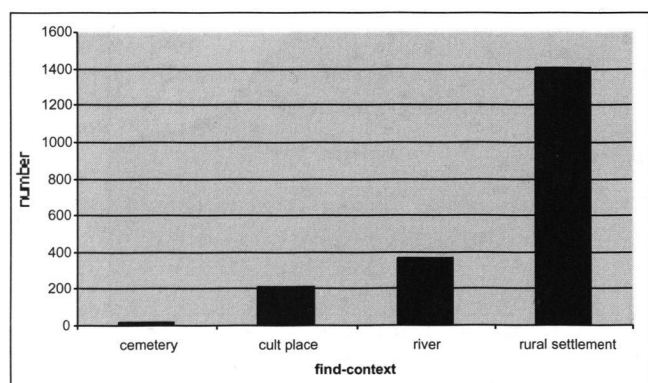
In contrast to many provincial areas, rural settlements in the Batavian countryside are characterised by an almost total absence of Roman *villae*. Although some buildings incorporated elements of Roman architecture, the normal pattern consists of indigenous long-houses clustered together, sometimes surrounded by a common ditched enclosure. Although there are no traces of a military presence, such as barracks or a wall-ditch, almost every settlement has produced several, or larger numbers of military equipment. One of the richer sites is Wijk bij Duurstede-De Horden, a rural settlement that has generated more than 100 parts of weaponry and horse gear. This fully-excavated site, located on the western bank of the Kromme Rijn river, was inhabited uninterruptedly from the Late Iron Age to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD<sup>4</sup>. The settlement is surrounded by a rectangular system of ditches and comprised, in Roman times, no more than four or five contemporaneously inhabited farmhouses. One of the buildings was surrounded by a *porticus* in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The finds from this site, most of which can be dated to the early Roman period, incorporates all types of military equipment, such as fragments of *pila*, catapult bolts, plate armour, and swords (Fig. 3). There have also been regular finds of parts of the military belt (*cingulum*). Most of the finds (66 objects), however, consist of horse gear, including strap junctions, pendants and, in particular, decorative strap mounts. One unusual find is the mouthpiece of a military wind instrument from a boundary ditch near the settlement (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4: Mouth piece of a military wind instrument found near the settlement at Wijk bij Duurstede-“De Horden” (after W.J.H. Verwers, *Roman finds from the area. Spiegel Historiae* 4, 1978, fig. 2).

Substantial quantities of find material also originate from the cult place Empel-De Werf, where a monumental Gallo-Roman temple was built on the site of an open-air sanctuary dating from the Late Iron Age<sup>5</sup>. The temple is dedicated to Hercules Magusanus, believed to be the principal deity of the Batavians. The martial prowess of this god is apparent from the large quantity of military finds at the sanctuary, which can be viewed as ritual depositions. The interpretation of the find material as votive offerings is supported by the occurrence, for both weaponry and horse gear, of several sets of objects that were originally deposited as a part of the same piece of equipment. The Roman finds (210 objects in total) include a complete helmet and elements of plate armour, shields, swords, and the military belt, as well as many horse gear components.

Fig. 2: The number of military equipment and horse gear finds from the Batavian area according to type of find context.



ian context. However, finds from army camps, and in the case of 1<sup>st</sup>-century horse gear, ownership inscriptions, reveal that this horse gear was also part of the Roman cavalry equipment. Given the presence of militaria at many non-military sites in the Batavian area, it is likely that at least part of the horse gear found in rural settlements originally circulated in a military context.

<sup>4</sup> W.A. Van Es/W.A.M. Hessing, *Romeinen, Friezen en Franken in het hart van Nederland* (Amersfoort 1994) 27–33; 40–45; 58–61; 70–71.

<sup>5</sup> N. Roymans/T. Derks, *De tempel van Empel* (’s-Hertogenbosch 1994) | N. Roymans/T. Derks, *Ein keltisch-römischer Kultbezirk bei Empel (Niederlande)*. *Arch. Korbl.* 20, 1990, 443–451 | N. Roymans/T. Derks, *Der Tempel von Empel. Ein Hercules-Heiligtum im Batavergebiet*. *Arch. Korbl.* 23, 1993, 479–492 | C. Van Driel-Murray, *Wapentuig voor Hercules*. In: Roymans/Derks 1994 (this note).

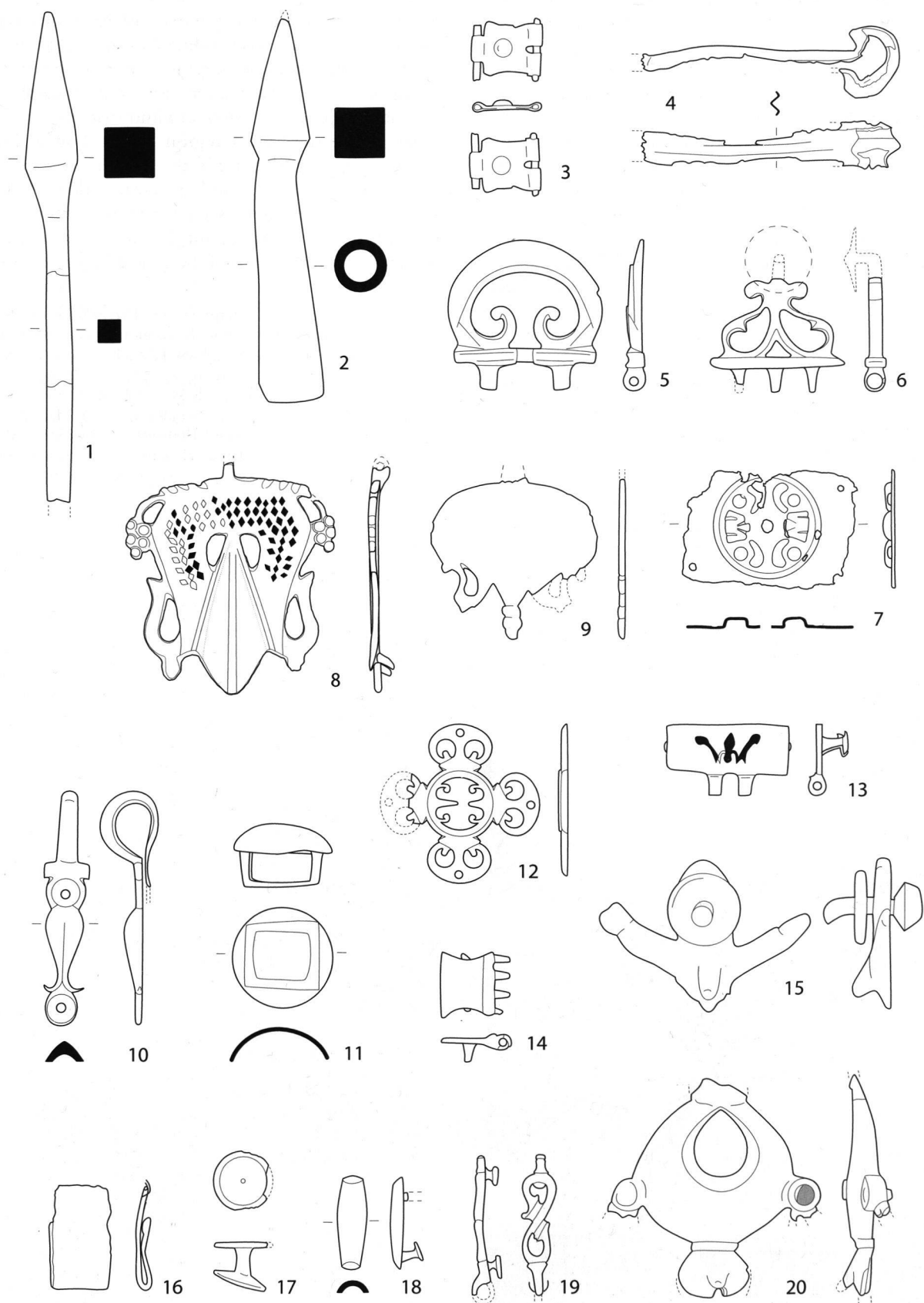
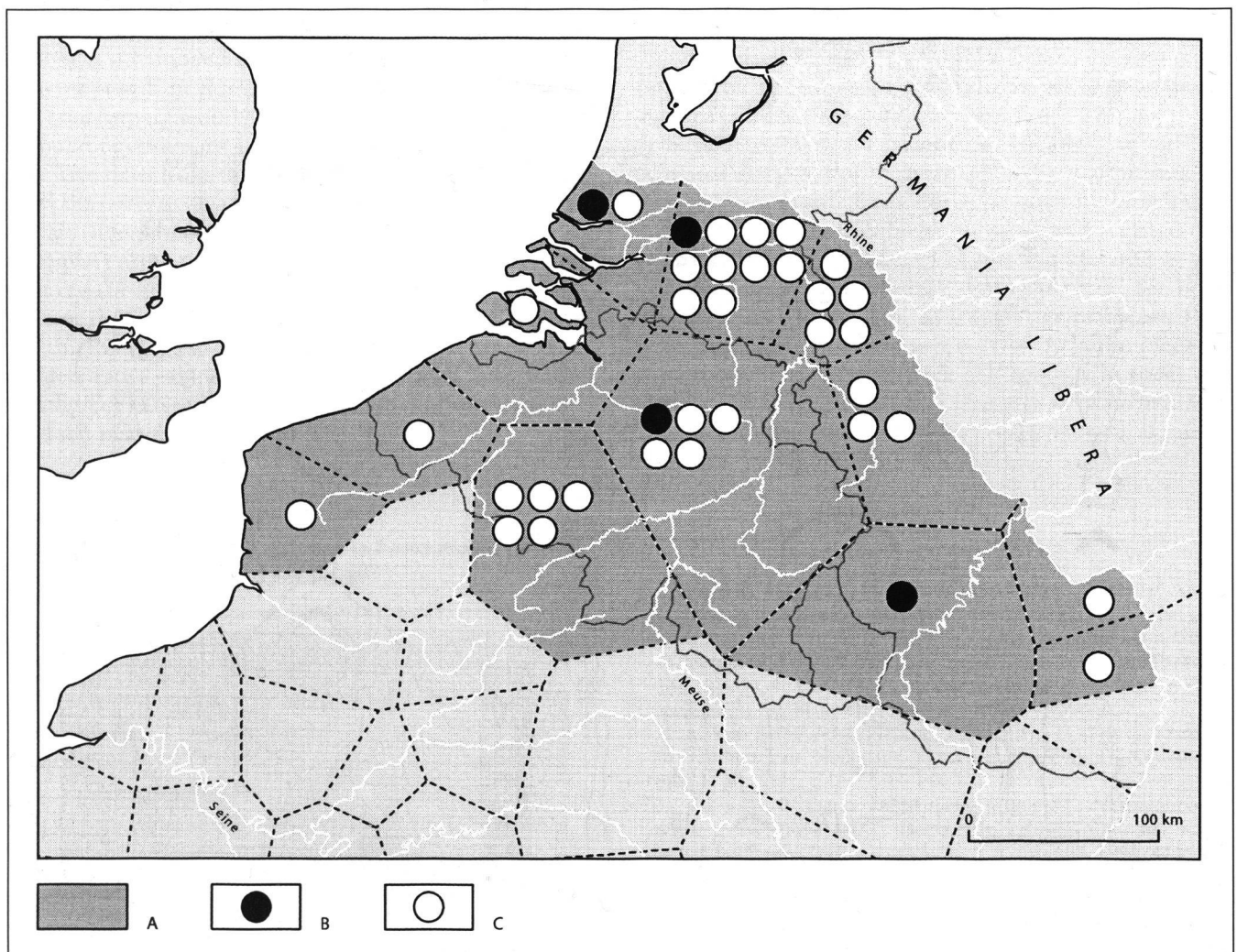


Fig. 3: A selection of Roman military equipment and horse gear from the rural settlement at Wijk bij Duurstede- "De Horden" (scale 2:3).

Rivers are a third context in the Batavian region where we regularly encounter military equipment and horse gear. These tend to be larger pieces that have been well preserved because of their long immersion in water. River finds can be seen as a by-product of intensive dredging for sand and gravel from the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. These dredging activities brought to the surface a considerable quantity of finds, including Roman objects, which found their way into museums by way of antique dealers. Because of uncertainties surrounding the find context and the sometimes unreliable nature of the find location, the study of Roman militaria and horse gear from rivers has received little attention to date. Although river finds are usually interpreted as settlement material that has been washed away or as items lost by accident, at least part of the objects appear to be ritual depositions<sup>6</sup>. Evidence for this are the marked parallels between these finds and the Empel material in terms of their composition and their chronological distribution. In both cases there is a predominance of 1<sup>st</sup>-century weaponry.

Fig. 5: The number of pre-Flavian "national" auxiliary units recruited from among the civitates of Belgic Gaul. A: area of recruitment; B: ala; C: cohorts (after Derks/Roymans, in press [note 64] fig. 1).



## The Batavians: large-scale recruitment

In order to explain the presence of large quantities of military objects in non-military contexts, I must first briefly outline the geographical setting and historical background of the Batavian region. With regard to location, it is important to bear in mind that the *civitas Batavorum* lays in the border region of the Roman Empire, and that it formed part of the military frontier zone. From the Claudian period onward, a dozen auxiliary forts were located there, set up at regular intervals along the Rhine<sup>7</sup>. In addition, the Flavian period saw a legionary camp on the Hunerberg near Nijmegen.

<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the interpretation of river finds, cf. N. Roymans, The sword or the plough. Regional dynamics in the romanisation of Belgic Gaul and the Rhineland area. In: N. Roymans (ed.), From the sword to the plough. Amsterdam Arch. Stud. 1 (Amsterdam 1996) 32–34 | L.B.M. Verhart/N. Roymans, Een collectie La Tène-vondsten uit de Maas bij Kessel, Gemeente Lith (Prov. Noord-Brabant). Oudheidkde. Mededel. 78, 1998, 80–81 | cf. however, E. Künzl, Wasserfunde römischer Gladii: Votive oder Transportverluste?. Caesarodunum 33–34, 1999/2000, 547–575. Space constraints prevent me, however, from discussing in greater depth the evidence in support of the ritual nature of river finds.

<sup>7</sup> T. Bechert/W.J.H. Willems, Die römische Reichsgrenze zwischen Mosel und Nordseeküste (Stuttgart 1995).

The Batavians occupied an exceptional position in the Lower German frontier zone, thanks to a special alliance with Rome, which appears to date back to the time of Caesar<sup>8</sup>. Under the terms of this alliance, the Batavians were granted considerable internal autonomy and were exempt from paying taxes. In return, they were required to supply large numbers of auxiliary troops. Although it was customary for auxiliary troops to be commanded by Roman offices, members of the Batavian elite were permitted to recruit manpower from among their own clientele and to command the troops themselves<sup>9</sup>.

The prominent position of the Batavians is revealed most clearly in troop figures (Fig. 5). If we compare the number of so-called “ethnic” or “national” auxiliary units supplied by the different *civitates* of Belgic Gaul, the Batavians emerge as by far the largest supplier of men. We know of at least eight cohorts and one *ala* in the pre-Flavian period, and of the many Batavian men who served in the bodyguard of the Julian-Claudian emperors<sup>10</sup>.

Although the Batavians were not required to pay taxes and occupied a special place within the army, the large-scale recruitment of young men meant that every Batavian family had on average at least one son serving in the Roman army<sup>11</sup>! This must have placed immense pressure on the local population and it is therefore hardly possible to overestimate the impact of the Roman army on economic and socio-cultural developments in the Batavian area.

The military character of the Batavians and other frontier communities in the Lower Rhine area is most clearly reflected in the large number of weapon finds from civilian contexts in the Empire’s border regions. Roymans has pointed out that there is a clear overlap between 1<sup>st</sup>-century weapon distribution and the recruitment areas in Northern Gaul<sup>12</sup>. The weapon finds occur mainly in the border zone of the Empire, suggesting a relationship between the presence of a large army force, the recruitment of young men for the Roman army, and the occurrence of military equipment in non-military contexts.

## The life cycle of a Roman soldier

I have used a so-called life-cycle model (Fig. 6) to determine the extent to which locally and non-locally recruited soldiers affected the circulation of military equipment and horse gear in non-military contexts, during or after their period of service<sup>13</sup>. In the following analysis of the occasions when a Roman soldier’s equipment – or parts of it – ended up in the various civilian settings, I will discuss in turn the life cycle of a soldier in the Roman army, the right to ownership of military equipment, and the use of weaponry during and after the period of military service. We can make a distinction here between the military use of equipment by *milites* and social use by *veterani*. Although finds from the Batavian area are central to this study, the life-cycle model applies to Roman soldiers in general from both the auxiliary troops and the legions. Using historical and epigraphic sources, it is possible to reconstruct the life cycle of male individuals in the Ro-

man context. Key stages connected with specific rites of passage are birth, reaching maturity, and death. For young men who entered military service, often before attaining adulthood, the beginning and end of their military service marked the key stages in their lives as a Roman soldier. Alongside birth and death, an epitaph from Lyon erected for the legion veteran Vitalinius Felix emphasises entry into military service and discharge from

<sup>8</sup> For the dating, cf. N. Roymans, The Lower Rhine Triquetrum coinages and the Ethnogenesis of the Batavi. In: T. Grünewald (ed.), *Germania Inferior. Besiedlung, Gesellschaft und Wirtschaft an der Grenze der römisch-germanischen Welt* (Berlin/New York 2001) 96–99.

<sup>9</sup> Roymans 1996 (note 6) 24–28; for the command of Batavian auxiliary troops, cf. G. Alföldy, *Die Hilfstruppen der römischen Provinz Germania inferior* (Düsseldorf 1968) 87–89.

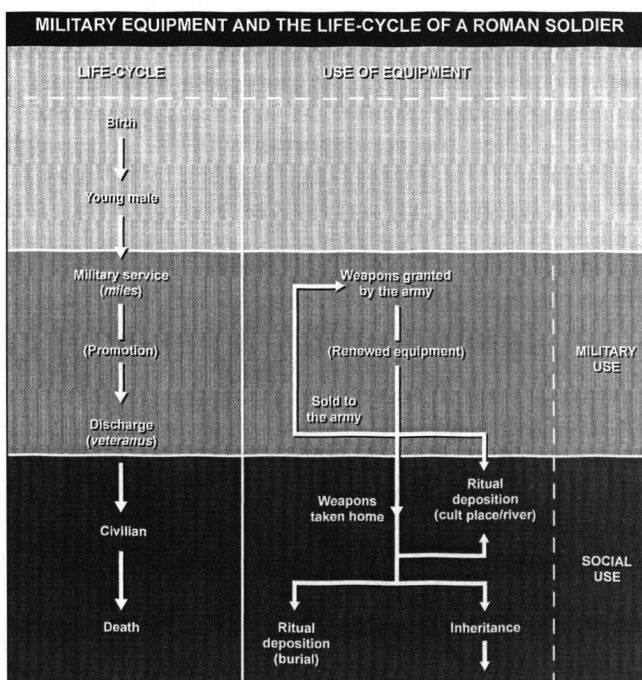
<sup>10</sup> Roymans 1996 (note 6), table 1; after Alföldy 1968 (note 9) 13–14; 45–48 | M.P. Speidel, *Riding for Caesar. The Roman Emperors’ horse guard* (London 1994) 12ff.

<sup>11</sup> W.J.H. Willems, *Romans and Batavians. A regional study in the Dutch Eastern River Area II*. Ber. ROB 34, 1984, 235. For a discussion of the number of Batavian units and men supplied, cf. I. Vossen, *The possibilities and limitations of demographic calculations in the Batavian area*. In: T. Grünewald (ed.), *Germania Inferior. Die Niederrhein-Region am Beginn und am Ende der römischen Herrschaft* (provisional title). In press. The calculations relate to the pre-Flavian period.

<sup>12</sup> Roymans 1996 (note 6) 20ff. figs. 6–7.

<sup>13</sup> The ideas underpinning this model are based on studies by Roymans and Derks: Roymans 1996 (note 6) 13–41 | T. Derks, *Gods, temples and ritual practices. The transformation of religious ideas and values in Roman Gaul*. Amsterdam Arch. Stud. 2 (Amsterdam 1998) 45–54.

Fig. 6: The use of military equipment during the life cycle of a Roman soldier.



the army as important stages in his life<sup>14</sup>. In addition, funerary inscriptions often refer to a soldier's military career, with promotions being relevant stages for each individual soldier.

Life as a soldier began from the moment a man entered military service. Recruits were usually about twenty years old, although boys of barely fifteen and men in their late thirties were taken on as well<sup>15</sup>. Admission to the Roman army was preceded by a rigorous examination. Both a young man's medical and physical condition, as well as his background and civil rights status determined whether and, if so, to which unit he could be admitted<sup>16</sup>. The first test was the medical examination to establish the recruit's age, size and health. If he passed the medical and was deemed suitable for military service, he acquired the status of *probatus*, which meant that he was sent to his particular unit to undergo a physical test. This examination lasted at least four months and involved tests of speed, strength, weapon handling and courage. If a recruit also passed this stage, he received a *signaculum*, a lead seal bearing his name, which was worn on a cord around his neck. He thus acquired the status of *signatus*. Finally, the recruit was admitted to his future unit, which marked the beginning of his career as a soldier (*miles*). This was also the time when he swore the military oath, the *sacramentum*.

When it came to selection for one of the units, the Praetorian Guard was the most prestigious<sup>17</sup>. However, admission to this unit, with its relatively short period of service and high pay, was almost the exclusive preserve of men of Italian origin. The legion offered the next best prospects. To be admitted to the legion, a recruit had to possess not only certain medical and physical qualities, but civil rights as well. Men without civil rights and those who failed to pass the rigorous test for the legions could join the auxiliary troops. Preference here went to the *alae*, because they received higher pay than the cohorts. However, a recruit's height helped determine whether he was sent to an *ala* or a *cohors*. Short men were not admitted to the cavalry and could only join the relatively poorly-paid cohorts. Within these different units, depending on their abilities and in particular their background, soldiers had the opportunity to rise up through the ranks and thus improve their position in the army<sup>18</sup>. For both legionary and auxiliary soldiers, once they had completed their 25-year service (16 years for the Praetorian Guard), their term as a *miles* came to an end and they left the army as *veterani*<sup>19</sup>. It was customary for legionaries to receive a reward at their *missio honesta*. This initially consisted of land, and later, from the time of Augustus onwards, a sum of money<sup>20</sup>. The situation was different for auxiliary troops. After completing their service, their main rewards were being granted civil rights (*civitas Romana*) and the right to legally marry a peregrine woman (*conubium*)<sup>21</sup>. In addition, veterans from the auxiliary troops enjoyed the same privileges as those from the legions, the most important of which was exemption from various forms of taxation<sup>22</sup>.

After being discharged from military service, veterans either returned to their area of birth or settled in the vicin-

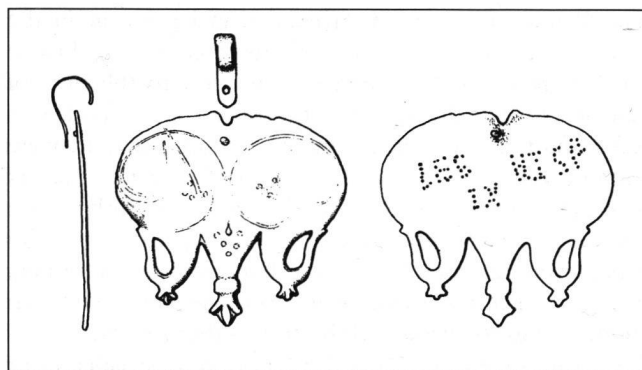


Fig. 7: Pendant of early-Roman horse gear with the inscription *Leg(io) IX Hisp(ana)* (after Haalebos 2000 [note 24] fig. 11).

ity of their last military posting<sup>23</sup>. Epigraphic sources reveal that legionary and auxiliary veterans had different preferences when it came to choosing a place to live. Inscriptions for legionary veterans show that they primarily went to live in a town or the *canabae* near their army camp. Some veterans moved into houses in the countryside, often close to the army camp where they completed their service. One such example can be seen at Ewijk, where a horse gear pendant was found on the site of the *villa*, inscribed with the text *leg(io) IX Hisp(ana)* (Fig. 7). The pendant probably belonged to a cavalryman from

<sup>14</sup> CIL XIII 1906 (Lyon): ... *natus est die martis / die martis probatus / die martis missionem / percepit die martis defunctus est* ...

<sup>15</sup> Legions: R.W. Davies, *Service in the Roman army* (Edinburgh 1989) 7, for references note 19 (min. 13, max. 36, av. 21); auxilia: Alföldy 1968 (note 9) 96–99 (min. 14, max. 36, av. 22).

<sup>16</sup> For a description of the admission procedure, cf. Davies 1989 (note 15) chapter 1. The procedure was the same for potential under-officers (cf. Davies 1989 [note 15] 25).

<sup>17</sup> For a survey of the advantages of the different units, cf. Davies 1989 (note 15), esp. 23–24.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. various articles in E. Birley, *The Roman army papers 1929–1986* (Amsterdam 1988); for a diagrammatic overview, cf. V.A. Maxfield, *The military decorations of the Roman army* (London 1981) fig. 4.

<sup>19</sup> Legions: H.M.D. Parker, *The Roman legions* (Chicago 1985) 212–214 | J.C. Mann, *Honesta missio from the legions*. In: G. Alföldy et al. (eds.), *Kaiser, Heer und Gesellschaft in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Stuttgart 2000) 153–161. Auxilia: Alföldy 1968 (note 9) 90 | P.A. Holder, *Studies in the auxilia of the Roman Army from Augustus to Trajan*. BAR Internat. Ser. 70 (Oxford 1980) 46–48 table 4.1.

<sup>20</sup> L. Keppie, *Legions and veterans. Roman army papers 1971–2000* (Stuttgart 2000) esp. 263–264; 301–302.

<sup>21</sup> M. Mirković, *Die Entwicklung und Bedeutung der Verleihung des Conubium*. In: W. Eck/H. Wolff (eds.), *Heer und Integrationspolitik* (Köln/Wien 1986) 167–186 | F. Vittinghoff, *Militärdiplome, römische Bürgerrechts- und Integrationspolitik der Hohen Kaiserzeit*. In: Eck/Wolff 1986 (this note) 535–555.

<sup>22</sup> H. Wolff, *Die Entwicklung der Veteransprivilegien vom Beginn des 1. Jahrhunderts v.Chr. bis auf Konstantin d. Gr.* In: Eck/Wolff 1986 (note 21) 44–115 | G. Wesch-Klein, *Soziale Aspekte des römischen Heerwesens in der Kaiserzeit*. Heidelberger Althist. Beitr. u. Epigr. Stud. 28 (Stuttgart 1998) 191–194.

<sup>23</sup> E. Birley, *Veterans of the Roman army in Britain and elsewhere*. *Ancient Soc.* 13–14, 1982/83, 265–276. Reprinted in: Birley 1988 (note 18) 272–283 | M. Roxan, *Veteran settlement of the auxilia in Germania*. In: Alföldy et al. 2000 (note 19) 307–326.

that legion, who acquired a *villa* near his former army post at Nijmegen<sup>24</sup>. The preference of this veteran for a *villa* is probably linked to his origin in a part of Gaul that had been romanised early.

We observe a different pattern for the auxiliary troops. Although we know of some veterans who went to live in towns and military *vici*, the majority appears to have moved to the countryside. In contrast to the home of the legionary veteran from Ewijk, these tended to be simple, rural settlements with an absence of *villa* structures. The same applies to soldiers from the auxiliary troops who were stationed elsewhere and who returned as veterans to their homeland. For example, we know of two soldiers, probably Batavians, who moved to a settlement in the Batavian countryside after serving in *Britannia* (Fig. 8). The Cananefatian cavalryman from the *ala I Noricorum*, who was probably stationed in Dormagen<sup>25</sup>, also returned to the *civitas Cananefatium* to live in the countryside.

Unlike the legionaries, we see no evidence that these veterans preferred to live near their former army post. This can be explained by the fact that a large proportion of soldiers completed their service in their homeland, and simply returned to their families when their 25-year period ended. We see a similar picture following the Batavian revolt, when most of the Lower Rhine units were stationed outside their province. Although the names of the replacement units tend to suggest a distant place of origin, the fact that the various “ethnic” units were supplemented by local recruits in the course of the 1<sup>st</sup> century meant that they gradually became “regionalised”<sup>26</sup>. The same applied to the “Batavian” units who were sent to distant regions after the revolt in 69, while units from elsewhere who were stationed in the Batavian area acquired an increasingly Batavian character. This meant that soldiers were usually able to complete their military service in their homeland, and that veterans could stay in their own province after completing their service. Alongside veterans who settled in a town or military *vici*, a substantial number of these locally recruited soldiers will have returned to their homes in the countryside<sup>27</sup>.

For the legionary veterans, we see a clear division in the type of work they undertook after completing their military service<sup>28</sup>. Some of the veterans will have used the sum of money received at the *missio honesta* to buy a piece of land and to earn their living as farmers. Others seem to have used the money to buy a house in a town or in

the village adjacent to the fort and to set up business as an artisan or merchant. We know, for example that the legionary veteran Gentilius Victor began a trade in *gladii* after his “honorary” discharge: *C. Gentilius Victor vet(eranus) leg(ionis) XXII Pr(imigeniae) p(iae) f(idelis) m(issus) h(onestus) m(issione) negotiator gladiarius*<sup>29</sup>. In his business dealings, Gentilius Victor was able to make good use of the contacts he had built up during his military service.

On the basis of the geographical distribution of military diplomas and veteran inscriptions, we can make a similar division for veterans from auxiliary troops, although, with the exception of the *civitas Romana* and the *conubium*, they did not receive a reward that they could use to purchase land or start a business after their discharge. A large proportion of the diplomas have been found in rural areas, which suggests that the recipients turned to farming when they completed their service<sup>30</sup>. We also know of military diplomas and, in particular, inscriptions from *vici* and towns. As with their legionary counterparts, we can assume that auxiliary troop veterans entered a wide range of trade and artisan occupations, and that some of them supplied goods to the army.

Despite the small number of examples, finds of military diplomas from the *civitates Batavorum* and *Cananefatium* suggest that recruits from the Lower Rhine region tended to settle in the countryside and to earn their living as farmers after completing military service (Fig. 8). The habitation of these simple, rural settlements, which often go back to the Late Iron Age or early-Roman period, shows that these were not new settlements founded by veterans. Instead, Batavian soldiers were returning to their homes to resume their lives as Batavians or Cananefates, only this time with Roman civil rights. Fragments from one, possibly two, diplomas from Nijmegen provide further evidence that veterans from the auxiliary troops also settled in towns like *Ulpia Noviomagus*.

Fig. 8: Date, unit, probable province where stationed, recipient's home, and find context of military diplomas found in the *civitas Batavorum* (nrs. 1–4) and the *civitas Cananefatium* (nr. 5)<sup>31</sup>.

find spot	date	unit	province	home	find context
1. Elst-Lijnden	98	( <i>ala I Bat</i> ) <i>avorum</i>	<i>Germ. inferior</i>	<i>civ. Batavorum</i>	rural settlement
2. Delwijnen-Eendenkade	98–117	<i>cohors Batavorum</i> (?)	<i>Britannia</i>	<i>civ. Batavorum</i> (?)	rural settlement
3. Nijmegen-Ulpia Noviom.	114–125	<i>cohors Batavorum</i> (?)	<i>Britannia</i>	<i>civ. Batavorum</i> (?)	urban settlement
4. Nijmegen(?)	98–117(?)	–	–	–	urban settlement(?)
5. Monster-Poeldijk	160/167	<i>ala I Noricorum</i>	<i>Germ. inferior</i>	<i>civ. Cananefatium</i>	rural settlement

<sup>24</sup> J.K. Haalebos, Romeinse troepen in Nijmegen. *Bijdragen en Mededelingen Vereniging Gelre* 91, 2000, 20–24.

<sup>25</sup> J.E. Bogaers, Ein römisches Militärdiplomfragment aus Monster-Poeldijk. *Ber. ROB* 29, 1979, 357–371.

<sup>26</sup> Alföldy 1968 (note 9) 99–104 | Holder 1980 (note 19) 109ff., esp. 118–123.

<sup>27</sup> An argument to support this is that young men will have claimed their right of inheritance to land and other property after their military service (N. Roymans, personal communication).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Birley 1982/83 (note 23) 265–268.

<sup>29</sup> CIL XIII 6677 (Mainz).

<sup>30</sup> Birley 1982/83 (note 23); specifically for the Germanic provinces, cf. Roxan 2000 (note 23).

<sup>31</sup> References nr. 1: J.K. Haalebos/W.J.H. Willems, Recent research on the limes in the Netherlands. *Journal of Roman Arch.* 12, 1999, 254–259; nr. 2: M. Roxan, Roman military diplomas 1985–1993 (London 1994) nr. 151; nr. 3: J.E. Bogaers, 5. Nij-

## The acquisition of weapons and horse gear, and the question of ownership

For every recruit, life as a soldier began when he entered military service and when he received his weapons after a period of training<sup>32</sup>. With the exception of the pre-Augustan and possibly the pre-Claudian period, in which members of the auxiliary troops used their own, traditional weaponry, the find material shows that Roman soldiers were issued with standardised equipment by the army<sup>33</sup>. It has long been assumed that this often uniform equipment was the property of the state, and that it was given to the soldier on loan during his period of service<sup>34</sup>.

Information from literary sources, papyrus documents and ownership inscriptions, however, reveals that the equipment was the private property of the soldier, which he had to purchase himself<sup>35</sup>. During the initial period of service, a portion of the soldier's wages was withheld until the equipment was paid off<sup>36</sup>. In addition, soldiers were themselves responsible for repairing, and where necessary, replacing parts of their equipment<sup>37</sup>. Tacitus reports that salary was withheld for clothing, weapons and tents<sup>38</sup>. Polybius, writing in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-century BC, also points out that a fixed portion of a soldier's pay was withheld for food, clothing and weapon replacement<sup>39</sup>. Important clues to suggest that military equipment, once it had been paid off, was in actual fact the property of individual soldiers can be found in various papyrus documents that relate to the inheritance of equipment<sup>40</sup>. One document from Egypt deals with a mother taking possession of the inheritance of her son Ammonius, a soldier from the *cohors II Thracum*, who died in 143 AD. The inheritance was a sum of money amounting to 235 denarii and 14½ obols, which was made up in part of 100 denarii *depositum*. In addition, 21 denarii and 27½ obols were paid out for *arma*, which probably refers to military equipment. A further sum (20 denarii) was paid out for the *papilio*, which suggests that soldiers had to pay not only for their equipment, but also for their tent. As an army tent was occupied by eight people, this sum probably represents one eighth of the total value of the tent. Another document from Egypt (ca. 120–140 AD) names the cavalryman Dionysus, who received 1563 denarii when he completed his military service, including 103 denarii for his weaponry<sup>41</sup>. The considerable discrepancy between the amount received for military equipment by Dionysus and by Ammonius' mother in the same period may be due to Ammonius dying a short time after entering military service. The weaponry would in that case not have been fully paid off, which meant that his family received only part of its value.

The third and final document is a will found in Alexandria and belonging to Antonius Silvanus, a cavalryman from the *ala I Thracum Mauretana*. Under the terms of his will, Silvanus left all his "military and household possessions" to his son (142 AD)<sup>42</sup>. This probably included his weaponry, although it is not clear whether this refers to the weapons themselves or to their value in monetary terms. These documents provide indirect clues that a sol-

dier had to finance his military equipment himself, as he did his share of the tent, and that when he was discharged or died, its value was paid out to him or to his surviving relatives.

A document from Alexandria (27 AD), which relates to a loan, presents a similar picture of equipment as the private property of soldiers<sup>43</sup>. The document concerns a loan of 400 drachmes, which the soldier C. Pompeius borrowed from cavalryman L. Caecilius Secundus. The cavalryman used as security his silver-plated helmet, a silver-plated military medal and a silver sheath with ivory inlays. Such use of equipment as security for a loan can only be explained if the objects were the possession of the soldier in question.

Ownership inscriptions are also central to discussions of ownership rights to Roman military equipment<sup>44</sup>. These inscriptions, which are found mainly on helmets and shield bosses, usually mention the division and/or the unit to which the soldier belonged (Appendix 1, fig. 7)<sup>45</sup>.

megen. Bijdragen en Mededelingen Vereniging Gelre 86, 1995, 206–208 fig. 3,5; nr. 4: Bogaers 1979 (note 25) 368–369 nr. 2 (= CIL XVI 65). This diploma fragment has been lost. The exact find location is not known; nr. 5: Bogaers 1979 (note 25) | M. Roxan, Roman military diplomas 1978–1984 (London 1985) nr. 120. The units mentioned on the diplomas from Delwijnen and Nijmegen-Ulpia Noviomagus suggest that the owner was stationed in *Britannia*. Given that the Batavian cohorts, in any case after the Batavian revolt, were quartered in *Britannia* until the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, it is very likely that the owners were of Batavian origin and served in one of the Batavian cohorts.

<sup>32</sup> Speidel points out that newly-recruited *milites* were only issued with weapons once they had been trained in their use. M.P. Speidel, The weapon keeper, the *fisci* curator, and the ownership of weapons in the Roman army. In: M.P. Speidel (ed.), Roman army studies II (Stuttgart 1992) 134–135.

<sup>33</sup> For standardised sets of equipment, cf. M.C. Bishop/J.C.N. Coulston, Roman military equipment from the Punic Wars to the fall of Rome (London 1994) chapters 4–8.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Horn on the frequent absence of weapons from graves: "Die römischen Soldaten erhielten keine Waffen mit ins Grab, da diese nicht ihr Eigentum, sondern im Besitz der Truppe und damit Staatseigentum waren." H.G. Horn, Totenkult und Grabsitten. In: H. Chantraine et al. (eds.), Das römische Neuss (Stuttgart 1984) 164–165.

<sup>35</sup> R. MacMullen, Inscriptions on armor and the supply of arms in the Roman Empire. *Am. Journal Arch.* 64, 1960, 23–40 | H.U. Nuber, Zwei bronzene Besitzermarken aus Frankfurt/M.-Heddernheim. *Chiron* 2, 1972, 483–507 | D.J. Breeze, The ownership of arms in the Roman army. *Britannia* 7, 1976, 93–95 | J.F. Gilliam, The deposita of an auxiliary soldier. *Bonner Jahrb.* 167, 1967, 233–243. Reprinted in: J.F. Gilliam, Roman Army Papers (Amsterdam 1986) 317–327 | Wesch-Klein 1998 (note 22) 63–67.

<sup>36</sup> MacMullen 1960 (note 35) 24.

<sup>37</sup> M.A. Speidel, Sold und Wirtschaftslage der römischen Soldaten. In: Alföldy et al. 2000 (note 19) 75–76.

<sup>38</sup> Tacitus, *Ann.* 1,17.

<sup>39</sup> Polybius, VI, 39.

<sup>40</sup> Gilliam 1967 (note 35).

<sup>41</sup> Breeze 1976 (note 35) 94.

<sup>42</sup> *Fontes Iuri Romani Ante-Justiniani* III, nr. 47, 4–6: *bona castrensia et domestica*.

<sup>43</sup> H. Harrauer/R. Seider, Ein neuer lateinischer Schuldschein: P. Vindob. L 135. *Zeitschr. Papyr. u. Epigr.* 36, 1979, 109–120.

<sup>44</sup> MacMullen 1960 (note 35) | Nuber 1972 (note 35).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. also Nuber 1972 (note 35) Fundliste.

Sometimes only the soldier's name is given. It is interesting to note that in some instances two, three or four names of successive generations of owners appear. These cases probably involve items of weaponry that soldiers sold back to the army when they completed their service. The items are then issued to a new recruit, who, just like the previous owner, inscribed his name on the same piece of equipment.

Although soldiers generally had to purchase weapons themselves, in exceptional cases they were presented with weapons and horse gear as *donativa*<sup>46</sup>. Several name plates and a shield boss from the Wetterau, bearing the text *Imp(eratore) Com(mod)o Aug(usto)*, provide evidence that *donativa* consisted not only of money but also of weapons<sup>47</sup>. First-century swords, belts and helmets that depict members of the imperial family may be further examples of equipment that was presented as *donativum*. Künzl has demonstrated convincingly that this was a form of political propaganda relating to the glorification of the imperial house and the question of succession<sup>48</sup>. Given that similar busts occur on the glass medallions of military decorations, it would appear that this weaponry was also a form of imperial gift<sup>49</sup>.

We may conclude from the above that regular soldiers in the Roman army had to pay for their own weapons and, in the case of cavalrymen, for their horse gear as well, and that, once paid off, this equipment became their private property. The sole exception is the Praetorian Guard, who occupied a privileged position and who were probably given their equipment without having to pay for it<sup>50</sup>. However, this weaponry was taken back by the army as state property when the soldier died or completed his service<sup>51</sup>.

### *Milites*: military use of equipment

After completing the selection process and being trained in the use of weapons, a recruit became an armed *miles*. Apart from times of war or rebellion, a substantial portion of the soldiers will have had few direct dealings with wartime activity. Although in peacetime soldiers on patrol were armed and all available troops were required to attend the daily weapon training sessions, this does not mean that Roman soldiers spent their service period heavily armed. Speidel assumes that soldiers were only permitted to bear arms when they actually needed them<sup>52</sup>. The rest of the time, weaponry was kept in the army camp's *armamentarium*, under the supervision of the *custos armorum*. As regards heavier weaponry, such as artillery and perhaps *pila*, helmets, shields and armour, we should perhaps assume that, with the exception of times of war, it was only taken out of storage for training purposes and for certain ceremonies or parades<sup>53</sup>.

The presence of ownership inscriptions also led MacMullen and Nuber to surmise that soldiers did not have free access to their equipment, but were only issued with weapons on particular occasions<sup>54</sup>. In other words, the inscriptions were linked to the storage of weapons that were indistinguishable without a specific identification

mark. Although not all items of equipment bear such marks, it is likely that they originally did. It is precisely the – largely unpreserved – organic materials that lend themselves to ownership inscriptions, as examples on leather shield covers demonstrate<sup>55</sup>.

Although part of the military equipment may be stored in the *armamentaria* for the greater part of a soldier's period of service, this does not mean that it did not serve as a means of expressing his status and wealth. In imitation of Hellenistic and La Tène examples, the equipment was usually richly decorated, the decorative elements being tinning, niello and enamel decoration, the addition of crests and the use of more expensive materials. Yet in spite of the widely ranging type and manner of decoration for weaponry and horse gear, it has proved extremely difficult to assign types of equipment to specific ranks in the Roman army<sup>56</sup>. The above-mentioned document, which tells us that the "simple" cavalryman Secundus possessed a silver dagger sheath with ivory inlays, shows for example that richly decorated equipment was not the exclusive preserve of officers.

Nevertheless, militaria and horse gear had an important symbolic significance in terms of expressing membership of a particular group, in this case, professional soldiers. The importance of this military status, and the role played by military equipment, is most clearly manifested in the often very detailed representation of weapons and horse gear on soldiers' gravestones. In this respect an im-

<sup>46</sup> N. Hanel, Militär als Wirtschaftsfaktor in den Nordwestprovinzen in der frühen und mittleren Kaiserzeit. In: H. von Hesberg (ed.), *Das Militär als Kulturträger in römischer Zeit* (Köln 1999) 120.

<sup>47</sup> Nuber 1972 (note 35) 486–489; 501–503.

<sup>48</sup> E. Künzl, Dekorierter gladii und cingula: eine ikonographische Statistik. *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Stud.* 5, 1994, 33–58 | cf. also V. von Gonzenbach, Tiberische Gürtel- und Schwertscheidenbeschläge mit figürlichen Reliefs. In: R. Degen et al. (eds.), *Helvetia antiqua. Festschr. Emil Vogt* (Zürich 1966) 183–208.

<sup>49</sup> For glass medallions cf. D. Boschung, Römische Glasphalerae mit Porträtbüsten. *Bonner Jahrb.* 187, 1987, 193–258.

<sup>50</sup> Speidel 1992 (note 32) 134–136. The state probably also paid for the repair and replacement of weapons: M.P. Speidel, The prefect's horse-guards and the supply of weapons to the Roman army. In: M.P. Speidel (ed.), *Roman army studies I* (Amsterdam 1984) 329–332.

<sup>51</sup> Speidel 1992 (note 32) 135, cf. esp. note 14; we do not know to what extent officers from the regular units were subject to a similar regulation. Cf. MacMullen 1960 (note 35) 24 | Wesch-Klein 1998 (note 22) 65.

<sup>52</sup> Speidel 1992 (note 32) 131.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. M.C. Bishop, On parade: status, display, and morale in the Roman army. In: H. Vetter/M. Kandler (eds.), *Akten des 14. internationalen Limeskongresses* (Wien 1990) 21–30.

<sup>54</sup> MacMullen 1960 (note 35) 23 | Nuber 1972 (note 35) 493.

<sup>55</sup> Nuber 1972 (note 35) 492; for shield covers with ownership marks, cf. C. Van Driel-Murray, A fragmented shield cover from Caerleon. In: J.C. Coulston (ed.), *Military equipment and the identity of Roman soldiers. BAR. Internat. Ser.* 394 (Oxford 1988) 53 figs. 2a; 4.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. J. Obmann, Waffen: Statuszeichen oder alltäglicher Gebrauchsgegenstand?. In: Von Hesberg 1999 (note 46) 189–200. Exceptions are middle-Roman belts and late-Roman helmets. T. Fischer, Zur römischen Offiziersausrüstung im 3. Jahrhundert n.Chr. *Bayer. Vorgeschbl.* 53, 1988, 167–190 | H. Klumbach (ed.), *Spätromische Gardehelme* (München 1973).

portant distinction can be made between infantry on the one hand and cavalry on the other. For the infantry, emphasis lay on the sword, dagger and military belt, while the helmet and horse gear were the key military symbols for the cavalry. Strikingly, it is especially these items of equipment that also had an important symbolic value in terms of their decorative elements.

Apart from the military-symbolic use of these objects by Roman soldiers, it is important to determine the extent to which equipment could have ended up in non-military contexts during the period of service. Finds of bronze seal-boxes in almost every rural settlement seem to suggest that the Batavian soldiers maintained close contacts with their families while on service<sup>57</sup>. Certainly if these soldiers were stationed in their own region, they will also have made regular visits to their home. It is unlikely, however, that they will have left their weapons behind with their family or deposited them in a cult place while on leave. During his military service, a soldier could simply not get by without his equipment, and he would have had to pay for new weaponry and horse gear himself. Moreover it seems probable that the equipment will have been placed in the care of the *custos armorum* during the leave period, so there would have been no opportunity for equipment to be left behind at home.

### *Veterani*: social use of equipment

Although several papyrus reports suggest that it was customary for Roman soldiers to sell their weaponry and probably also their horse gear back to the army after the completion of their military service, finds of military equipment in ritual contexts and rural settlements show that this was not their only option. Because the equipment was the soldiers' personal property, they were not obliged to sell their equipment back to the army when discharged. It seems that soldiers were free to choose what they did with it: they could opt to return it to the army in exchange for a sum of money on the one hand, or retain it to be dedicated at a cult place or kept at home on the other.

In order to understand why soldiers chose to take their military equipment home, it is important to distinguish between the military and social use of weapons and horse gear (Fig. 6). In contrast to military use in a Roman army context, "social use" refers to the use of military equipment in a civilian setting<sup>58</sup>. It is important here to note that an object's significance is not only determined by its shape and manner of decoration, but to a significant extent by its cultural biography, its individual history: "Not only do objects change through their existence, but they often have the capability of accumulating histories, so that the present significance of an object derives from the persons and events to which it is connected". During their history, objects acquire a significance which can be associated with ideas and emotions for both the owner and others in his environment.

With regard to the cultural biography of an object, we can make a distinction between the generalised biogra-

phy of objects and the specific history of an individual object<sup>59</sup>. The generalised biography refers to general patterns of use applicable to the same kind of objects within a specific cultural context over a given period. In fact, we are dealing here with an ideal biography, in which the object passes through culturally accepted and desired stages of use. A specific biography, on the other hand, refers to the particular history of one specific object. This history deviates from the general pattern and evokes memories of a particular person or event.

Two examples of objects with a specific history are mentioned in Suetonius' biography of Vitellius. The first is a *gladius*, which was placed as an offering in a Mars sanctuary near the *Ara Ubiorum*. After Vitellius was proclaimed emperor by an army unit, probably in *Colonia Agrippina*, he was carried around with the sword of the Deified Julius, which someone had taken from the sanctuary of Mars<sup>60</sup>. The second example is the dagger that Otho used to commit suicide<sup>61</sup>. By way of thanks for his victory, Vitellius decided to send the dagger Otho used to take his own life to Cologne to be dedicated to Mars<sup>62</sup>. Both cases involve weapons that were significant because of their specific cultural biography. Although we cannot rule out the possibility that these personal weapons belonging to a military elite were exceptional examples of craftsmanship, they derived their special significance from their association with the actions of two key figures in Roman history.

Both examples relate to an exceptional situation, in which individual weapons were associated with imperial figures. In the case of weaponry and horse gear from non-military contexts in the *civitas Batavorum*, however, we are dealing with large numbers of objects that were commonly taken home by veterans. There is evidence of a general pattern, which seems to be significant in the context of the Batavian frontier zone during the Roman period. In contrast to the objects mentioned by Suetonius, we can view the way in which common soldiers

<sup>57</sup> T. Derks/N. Roymans, Seal-boxes and the spread of Latin literacy in the Rhine Delta. In: A. Cooley (ed.), *Becoming Roman, writing Latin*. *Journal of Roman Arch.*, suppl. (in press).

<sup>58</sup> I. Kopytoff, The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process. In: A. Appadurai (ed.), *The social life of things. Commodities in cultural perspective* (Cambridge 1986) chapter 2. The whole of volume 31–2 of *World Archaeology* is also devoted to this subject: Y. Marshall/C. Gosden (eds.), *The cultural biography of objects* (London 1999) | C. Gosden/Y. Marshall, *The cultural biography of objects*. In: Marshall/Gosden 1999 (this note) 170.

<sup>59</sup> Gosden/Marshall 1999 (note 58) 169–178 | D.R. Fontijn, *Objects in the landscape. Metalwork deposition in the Bronze Age of southern Netherlands* (provisional title). Ph.D. thesis University of Leiden (to be published in *Analecta Praehistorica Leidensia* 33, 2002).

<sup>60</sup> Suetonius, *Vitellius* 8.

<sup>61</sup> Suetonius, *Vitellius* 10.

<sup>62</sup> For the significance of these objects for Roman Cologne and the foundation myth of the Ubii, cf. T. Derks, *Ethnicity, imperial power and the individual. Ethnic ascription and ethnic self-identification in the epigraphy of the Lower Rhine frontier*. In: T. Derks/N. Roymans (eds.), *Ethnic Constructs in Antiquity. The Role of Power and Tradition*. *Amsterdam Arch. Stud.* (in press).

dealt with their weapons as a generalised biography. After a period of military use, it was customary for Batavian soldiers to offer up their equipment at a cult place or to take it home, thus making the social use of weapons an essential stage in the ideal, culturally valued history of military equipment.

Whereas the exceptional objects, mentioned by Vitellius, were meaningful for many people other than the original bearers, the items taken home by ordinary veterans had value above all for the bearers themselves. As personal objects, the weapons and horse gear were associated with the owner and his life as a soldier. They evoked stories and memories of the veteran's military service and can be viewed as "personal memorabilia", having considerable emotional value for their owner.

Because of their biographical history, items of equipment played a key role in the outward display of the personal history of veterans and hence their identity. Inscriptions relating to veterans on graves and other monuments, which almost always refer to the period of service, demonstrate the importance that veterans and their families attached, in their expression of identity, to a career as a soldier. The use of weapons and horse gear in the Batavian area can be explained in a similar fashion. Just as it did during military service, the equipment brought home expressed membership of a certain group, namely the veterans.

The role of veterans in the social use of military equipment in civilian contexts is most clearly reflected in various diplomas found together with weapons and horse gear in rural settlements. The best example is the site at Delwijnen-Eendekade, where, in addition to a diploma fragment, sixty items of equipment were found<sup>63</sup>. The weaponry included many bronze components of a plate-armour, which had probably been fully intact at the time of deposition. In addition, at the cult place of Empel, a votive inscription was discovered of a probable Batavian legionary veteran, who may have offered up part of his equipment to Hercules Magusanus (Fig. 9)<sup>64</sup>. This example perhaps shows that legionaries, as well as soldiers from the auxiliary troops, had the option of taking their weapons home after being discharged.

### Ritual behaviour and symbolic meaning: continuity from the Late Iron Age

In order to understand the importance of this stage of social use of military objects, we can best compare the finds from civilian contexts with the ways weapons were dealt with during the Late Iron Age. For the Late La Tène period (ca. 150–15 BC) as well, we know of relatively large numbers of weapon finds from Northern Gaul and the Rhineland. According to Roymans, the predominance of these weapons in ritual contexts (graves, cult places and rivers) can be seen as an expression of an ideology in which warriorship played a key role<sup>65</sup>. The conducting of raids was an important activity of the Iron Age communities where this ideology prevailed<sup>66</sup>. These martial operations offered young men and



Fig. 9: Votive inscription from the temple complex Empel-De Werf, dedicated to Hercules Magusanus by the legionary veteran Julius Genialis (after Roymans/Derks 1994 [note 5] pl. 5).

their leaders an opportunity to acquire status and booty, and hence to triumph as warriors.

When the Gallic and neighbouring Germanic regions were incorporated into the Roman Empire following Caesar's conquest, the Romans were determined to put an end to the violence caused by this tribal warfare<sup>67</sup>. Indigenous warrior societies were pacified, and raids and other intertribal conflicts were outlawed. Pacification was not a uniform process, however; there were distinct regional differences. From the distribution of 1<sup>st</sup>-century weapons, we are able to divide the North-Gallic and neighbouring Germanic area into two zones based on the presence and absence of weapons<sup>68</sup>. In the frontier region of the empire, weapons continue to occur after the Roman conquest, whereas 1<sup>st</sup>-century weapons are virtually unknown in the interior of Northern Gaul.

According to Roymans, the absence of weapons in this area points to a break with the pre-Roman tradition of depositing weapons in sanctuaries, rivers and graves. Roman pacification seems to have prompted rapid demilitarisation in the interior of Gaul, with the disappearance of traditional martial values as a logical consequence.

<sup>63</sup> To be published by J.A.W. Nicolay, Roman military equipment from non-military contexts. Use and significance of weaponry and horse gear in the Batavian area (provisional title). PhD. thesis Free University of Amsterdam. For the military diploma cf. Fig. 8, nr. 2.

<sup>64</sup> *Année Epigr.* 1990, 740. For the probable Batavian origin of this legion soldier, cf. Derks 1998 (note 13) note 152. Roymans and Derks 1994 (note 5) 28 also assume that the militaria from Empel can be linked to veterans.

<sup>65</sup> Roymans 1996 (note 6) 13–20.

<sup>66</sup> H.A. Hiddink, *Germaanse samenlevingen tussen Rijn and Weser. 1<sup>ste</sup> eeuw voor–4<sup>de</sup> eeuw na Chr.* PhD. thesis University of Amsterdam (Amsterdam 1999) 190–191 table 7.1.

<sup>67</sup> Derks 1998 (note 13) 45.

<sup>68</sup> Roymans 1996 (note 6) 28ff.

Along the imperial frontier, on the other hand, finds of large quantities of Roman militaria from non-military contexts reveal a quite different outcome of the pacification process. Roman weaponry finds show a distinct peak in the early Roman period, which seems to tie in with the relatively large number of weapon finds from the Late La Tène<sup>69</sup>. Although these military objects are of Roman origin, just as in the preceding period, depositions were made in sanctuaries, rivers and, in some areas, in graves. Rural settlements also produced large quantities of 1<sup>st</sup>-century weapons, some of which appear to be ritual depositions. This suggests continuity in ritual dealings with weaponry, with weapons, as well as military horse gear, being the material expression of an ideology that still was essentially martial<sup>70</sup>.

The Batavian temple complex at Empel is a good example of the continuing ritual use of both weaponry and horse gear<sup>71</sup>. A Gallo-Roman temple complex was built here in the Flavian period on the same location as an open-air sanctuary from the Late Iron Age and possibly a stone predecessor from the early Roman period. The fact that the weaponry and horse gear found at this site included objects of a military nature from both the Late Iron Age and the early Roman period gives us important clues to their interpretation. It appears that both periods show a similar ritual deposition, which points to continuity in the use and significance of military objects. We encounter a comparable pattern in various river complexes, which have produced weaponry finds from both the Late Iron Age and the early Roman period<sup>72</sup>.

Alongside equipment and horse gear from rivers and the cult place at Empel, we frequently encounter military objects in rural settlements of the early Roman period<sup>73</sup>. Although some finds may be interpreted as ritual depositions, the bulk of the material consists of settlement waste. These objects are often found broken and scattered over the settlements, which suggests that they were lost or discarded as rubbish rather than ritually deposited<sup>74</sup>. However, the mere fact that large amounts of militaria and horse gear occur on rural settlement sites suggests that these military objects had a symbolic significance. As military symbols, the objects should be seen as personal memorabilia that referred to the military career of their owners. They may have been displayed in the veteran's home and worn during specific ceremonies. These military objects probably lost their symbolic significance a generation or more after they were brought home. If not melted down, they would then simply have been discarded as rubbish around the settlement<sup>75</sup>.

The social use of weapons and horse gear by Batavian soldiers can be linked to the continuing existence of martial values in indigenous communities at the imperial frontier. This continuity of a martial tradition can be explained in the light of the massive recruitment of Batavians for the Roman auxiliary troops. Because manpower for the *auxilia* was recruited from local groups, young men still had opportunities after the Roman conquest to display their military skills and to acquire honour – no longer as tribal warriors but as Roman soldiers<sup>76</sup>. In addition, Batavian auxiliary troops were led by their own

elite, which meant that the local aristocracy could continue to present itself as a military elite in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

The military symbols taken home at the completion of military service constituted key elements in this “military presentation”. They were valuable as personal memorabilia that expressed membership of a particular identity group. In addition, in the context of the local community in which veterans settled, weapons will have bestowed status and prestige on the veterans during the initial stage of recruiting for the *auxilia*. However, because large numbers of young men were recruited among the Batavians and because weapons were frequently taken home, we can expect that military objects quickly lost their exclusiveness, and hence their significance as prestige goods.

## A breakdown of martial traditions

The 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries witnessed significant changes in the use and deposition of weaponry and horse gear in the frontier zone. There is a decline in the number of military finds from rural settlements, and there is clearly less evidence for this period of ritual deposition. We note a similar pattern in other regions where weapon deposition in graves had been customary<sup>77</sup>. After the 1<sup>st</sup> century, which still saw substantial numbers of weapon finds in graves, the tradition of interring weapons with the body seems to have waned. By the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, we see almost no weapons in burials any longer.

Two pivotal events may explain this decline in the number of weapon finds from civilian contexts: the Batavian

<sup>69</sup> J.A.W. Nicolay, Use and significance of military equipment and horse gear from non-military contexts in the Batavian area: continuity from the Late Iron Age into the early Roman period. In: Grunewald, in press (note 11).

<sup>70</sup> Roymans 1996 (note 6) 31–35.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. note 5.

<sup>72</sup> A good example is Kessel-Lith. For La Tène-weapons, cf. N. Roymans/W. Van der Sanden, Celtic coins from the Netherlands and their archaeological context. Ber. ROB 30, 1980, 191–199. The Roman finds will be published by Nicolay (note 63).

<sup>73</sup> This contrasts with the Late La Tène period, where swords, for example, seldom occur in rural settlements.

<sup>74</sup> In addition, the majority of the excavation finds come from the topsoil, rather than from pits, which is further evidence that they were discarded as rubbish.

<sup>75</sup> Military objects might also have been gathered from abandoned army camps, or have been bought up as “military scrap”. An argument against the first possibility, however, is that all periods, rather than a single one, are represented in the find material. In addition, the material occurs in virtually every rural settlement within the area under study, and not solely in settlements directly surrounding military sites. Although we cannot rule out the possibility of bought-up scrap, finds from graves, cult places and, in some cases, from settlements reveal that militaria and horse gear at least partly ended up at settlement sites in complete condition.

<sup>76</sup> Roymans 1996 (note 6) 24–28; 37 | Derks 1998 (note 13) 49–52.

<sup>77</sup> Roymans 1996 (note 6) 41, note 84 | cf. also F.-J. Schumacher, Grab 982. Eine römische Kriegerbestattung mit Schildbuckel. In: A. Haffner (ed.), Gräber, Spiegel des Lebens. Totenbrauchtum der Kelten und Römer (Mainz 1989).

revolt in 69 AD and the establishment of the province of *Germania inferior* in 84 AD. First of all, the privileged position of the old elite families was curtailed, possibly because of the role they had played during the Batavian revolt. Although the Batavian aristocracy was still allowed to command auxiliary troops<sup>78</sup>, the Roman authorities took over the recruitment of new soldiers<sup>79</sup>. This prevented the local aristocracy from recruiting soldiers from among its personal clients. In addition, the auxiliary troops lost their "national" character. Most troops were stationed far from their home territory, and were augmented by local recruits from the area where they were stationed. For soldiers, this meant that being part of a "national" unit gradually became less important.

This breakdown in traditional, martial values was probably accelerated by the establishment of the Lower Germanic province. The institution of a formal, Roman province will have separated still further the military and civilian spheres of life, which had been so closely intertwined in pre-Roman and early-Roman times<sup>80</sup>. It probably became less attractive for the Batavian aristocracy to present itself as a military elite, while being a soldier was no longer regarded as a great privilege associated with traditional values and prestige. As a consequence, there seems to have been less need for soldiers to parade their military career through their weaponry and to shape their identity in this way. Nevertheless, some veterans continued to take their weapons and horse gear home – though to a lesser extent – because these items served as reminders of an important stage in their lives.

Not until the arrival of new, Frankish groups in the late-Roman period did martial values once again make their mark upon the empire's frontier zone. Together with a significant number of finds from rural settlements, we observe the frequent reappearance in ritual contexts – in water settings such as rivers, but especially in graves – of late-Roman military belts, the most important military symbol of this period<sup>81</sup>.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, within the Batavian area, Roman military equipment and horse gear are commonly found in rivers, specific cult places and especially rural settlements. The presence of these mainly 1<sup>st</sup>-century objects outside mil-

itary camps probably ties in closely with the large-scale settlement of Batavian and other veteran soldiers in the *civitas Batavorum*. Most veterans seem to have taken their equipment home as personal memorabilia relating to their identity; as a reminder of their life as a soldier and as an expression of their status as a Roman veteran.

An important question for further research is the extent to which the situation outlined here for the Batavian area is representative of other frontier areas of the Roman Empire. Although we can expect military equipment and horse gear in other frontier zones as well, variation will occur too, among other reasons due to differences in pre-Roman traditions and in recruitment intensity.

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## Zusammenfassung

Der Autor zeigt am Beispiel des Batavergebietes auf, wie militärische Objekte (Waffen und Pferdegeschirrtteile) in nichtmilitärische Zusammenhänge gelangen können. Er skizziert dafür den Werdegang eines römischen Soldaten und dessen militärischer Ausrüstung (Abb. 6). Die Waffen und Pferdegeschirrtteile wurden im Laufe der Dienstzeit von den Soldaten erworben und blieben bei deren Entlassung in deren Besitz. Nach der Entlassung konnte der Veteran sie der Armee wieder verkaufen, sie in ein Heiligtum weihen oder aber sie behalten. Diese Ausrüstungsteile waren nicht nur persönliche Erinnerungsstücke an den vergangenen Militärdienst, sie zeichneten ihren Besitzer auch als Veteranen aus. Sie waren aber auch ein Zeichen für kriegerische Tüchtigkeit – eine Tradition, welche ihre Wurzeln in der späten Eisenzeit hat. Im Verlaufe des 2. und 3. Jh. n.Chr. werden Funde von militärischer Ausrüstung in nicht militärischen Kontexten spärlicher.

(Zusammenfassung D. Käch)

<sup>78</sup> Strobel points to the exceptional status of the Batavian units, who continued to be commanded by Batavians after 69 AD: K. Strobel, Anmerkungen zur Truppengeschichte des Donaupraumes in der hohen Kaiserzeit IV. Zeitschr. Papyr. u. Epigr. 70, 1987, 259–292 | cf. however Alföldy 1968 (note 9) 101–102; 110–116.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Alföldy 1968 (note 9) 98–99.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Roymans 1996 (note 6) 41.

<sup>81</sup> H.W. Böhme, Das Ende der Römerherrschaft in Britannien und die angelsächsische Besiedlung Englands im 5. Jahrhundert. Jahrb. RGZM 33, 1986, 469–574 | F. Theuvs/M. Alkemade, A kind of mirror for men: sword depositions in Late Antique Northern Gaul. In: F. Theuvs/J.L. Nelson (eds.), Rituals of power. From Late Antiquity to the Early Middle Ages (Leiden 2000) 401–476, esp. 404.

## Appendix 1

find spot	object	unit	sub-unit/command	owner
1. Ewijk-De Grote Aalst	pendant	<i>Leg(io) IX Hisp(ana)</i>	-	-
2. Nijmegen-Waal	helmet gladiator	<i>L(egio) XV (Primigenia)</i>	-	-
3. Nijmegen-Hunerberg	chamfron	<i>L(egio) XV (Primigenia)</i>	-	-
4. Nijmegen-Hunerberg	<i>tabula ansata</i>	<i>L(egio) X G(emina)</i>	<i>(Centuria) [...].cinnae</i>	<i>[...]amonius [...].iullus</i>
5. Nijmegen-Hunerberg	<i>tabula ansata</i>	<i>[Leg(io) X] Gem(ina)</i>	-	<i>M. S[...] Strate[us]</i>
		-	<i>C(enturia) Flavi(i) Amadis (?)</i>	<i>Acil(ius) Sencundus</i>
6. Lobith-Rhine	helmet	-	<i>C(enturia) Firvi (?)</i>	<i>Iuni(us) Sencundus</i>
7. Kesteren	<i>tuba/cornu (?)</i>	-	<i>C(enturia) P.</i>	<i>Pli(...) Es(...) (?)</i>
8. Nijmegen-Hunerberg	<i>tabula ansata</i>	-	<i>C(enturia) Epotis</i>	<i>C(aius) Marcus Materni(us)</i>
9. Amerongein-'t Spijk	helmet	-	<i>C(enturia) Reburni</i>	?
10. Nijmegen-Waal	helmet	-	<i>C(enturia) Sex(ti) Dulli(i)</i>	<i>T. Vettius</i>
		-	<i>C(enturia) Piionii</i>	?
11. Alem-Maas	helmet	-	<i>C(enturia) Servati</i>	<i>V(alerius) M(a)ximus</i>
		-	<i>C(enturia) Grati</i>	<i>M. Rufus</i>
12. Nijmegen-Waal	helmet	-	<i>C(enturia) Q. Petroni(i)</i>	<i>Q. Valerius</i>
		-	<i>C(enturia) Catuli</i>	<i>C. Apius</i>
		-	<i>C(enturia) Catuli</i>	<i>L. Cornelius</i>
13. Rijswijk-Rhine	helmet	-	<i>C(enturia) Antoni Frontonis</i>	<i>T. Allienus Martial (n) is</i>
		-	<i>C(enturia) Antoni Front(onis)</i>	<i>Statorius Tertius</i>
		-	<i>C(enturia) Antoni Frontonis</i>	<i>Stator(ius) (Ter)itius (sic)</i>
14. Bijlandse Waard	scabbard <i>gladius</i>	-	<i>C(enturia) Reburni</i>	<i>Acio (?)</i>
		-	<i>C(enturia) L. Boni</i>	<i>Acio</i>
15. Nijmegen-Waal	helmet	-	-	<i>Vannus</i>
16. Nijmegen-Waal	face mask-helmet	-	-	<i>Marcian[us]</i>
		-	-	<i>C. N(...) T(...)</i>
17. Nijmegen-Waal	<i>umbo</i>	-	-	<i>Verinius Rufus</i>
18. Doorwerth-Rhine	saddle plate (2x)	-	-	<i>M. Muttienu(s)</i>

Ownership inscriptions on military equipment and horse gear from military and non-military contexts in the Batavian area. Legionary camp: nrs. 3–5, 8 (J.K. Haalebos, *Opgravingen op het terrein van het voormalige Canisiuscollege te Nijmegen*, 1993. *Jaarboek Numaga* 41, 1994, 16–19, fig. 5.1 | H. Brunsting and J.E. Bogaers, *Nijmegen. Legerplaats 10de legion. Bull. Koninklijke Nederlandse Oudheidkde. Bond* 15, 1962, \*4–5, \*79–80 | H. Brunsting, *Nijmegen. Legerplaats van het 10de legioen. Bull. Koninklijke Nederlandse Oudheidkde. Bond* 65, 1966, \*16–17 | J.E. Bogaers et al., *Noviomagus, Op het spoor der Romeinen in Nijmegen*, fig. 47) – Military vicus: nr. 7 (R.S. Hulst, *Een signaal van de limes. Nederlandse Archeologische Rapporten* 3, 1986, 37–41, fig. 1) – River: nrs. 2, 6, 9–18 (H. Klum-

bach, *Römische Helme aus Niedergermanien* (Köln 1974) nrs. 19, 22–24, 33, 51, 57 | W.J. van Tent/F. Vogelzang, *Amerongen: 't Spijk. Archeologische kroniek van de provincie Utrecht over de jaren 1970–1979*, 1996, 4–5 | W.C. Braat, *Römische Schwerter und Dolche im Rijksmuseum van Oudheden. Oudheidkde. Mededel.* 48, 1967, 57–58 (nr. 4) | W.A. Van Es, *Romeinse helmen uit de Rijn bij Rijswijk*. In: A.O. Kouwenhoven et al., *Geplaats in de tijd* (Amsterdam 1984) 259–265, figs 7–10 | M. Brouwer, *Römische Phalerae und anderer Lederbeschlag aus dem Rhein, Oudheidkde. Mededel.* 63, 1982, 165–166 Table 9 (nrs. 216, 236) | nr. 14 unpublished) – Rural settlement: nr. 1 (J.K. Haalebos, *Romeinse troepen in Nijmegen. Bijdragen en mededelingen Vereniging Gelre* 41, 2000, 23, fig. 11).