

Chapter Title: Introduction

Book Title: Armed Batavians

Book Subtitle: Use and Significance of Weaponry and Horse Gear from Non-military Contexts in the Rhine Delta (50 BC to AD 450)

Book Author(s): Johan Nicolay

Published by: Amsterdam University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt46n2g3.4>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



This content is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). To view a copy of this license, visit <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>.



Amsterdam University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Armed Batavians*

JSTOR

1 Introduction

Finds of Roman weaponry and horse gear in rural and especially urban settlements have long been associated with the presence of military guard posts or fortifications.¹ In recent years, however, objects of a military nature have been found in these and other non-military contexts in large numbers, thus opening the way for alternative interpretations. The Roman Military Equipment Conference in Windisch-Vindonissa (2001) was entirely taken up with the subject of Roman soldiers and militaria in the civilian domain.² The conference proceedings present an interesting picture of the current state of research. What stands out is the focus on finds from urban centres, with finds from other non-military contexts generally not taken into consideration.³ Moreover, interpretation tends to confine itself to listing possible explanations, rather than further analysing finds at a site or regional level.⁴ The present study seeks to fill this gap by examining the weaponry and horse gear from the eastern Rhine delta – the territory of the Batavians – for the entire Roman period. Underpinning the research is an extensive inventory of about 2,700 ‘military’ items from urban centres, as well as rural settlements, cult places, rivers and graves.

I . I BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESEARCH

Since the late 1990s, the annual Roman Military Equipment Conference has sparked a growing interest in the study of such equipment.⁵ This particular branch of research has long been part of a broader field of study that could be called ‘Roman military studies’. In a recent article, James sketches the development of this research tradition in recent decades.⁶ His main conclusion is that Roman military studies, already increasingly isolated within current Roman archaeology, risks further erosion of its long-held pre-eminent position unless drastic changes are made. This situation has developed for the following reasons:

1. Military archaeologists have remained quite aloof from the theoretical debate.⁷ Their research has built on subjects with a traditional focus: the structure of the Roman army, career paths for officers and the military infrastructure of the frontier provinces.⁸
2. Archaeological research findings are used only to illustrate information from historical and epigraphic sources, with no attention being paid to the (symbolic) meaning that objects have for soldiers.
3. The army is viewed solely as a machine and an institution (the Roman army) rather than as a social organisation (a body of soldiers).⁹ With the exception of their careers, there has been no focus on the lives of individual soldiers.

¹ See Bishop 1991, 25–26; 2002b, 10–11 (English towns); Lenz 2000, 77–79; 2001, 588–590 (Xanten).

² The conference proceedings are published in *Jahresbericht 2001 of the Gesellschaft Pro Vindonissa* (2002).

³ Deschler-Erb/Deschler-Erb 2002 (Augst); Voirol 2002 (Avenches); Buora 2002 (Aquileia); Lenz 2002 (Xanten); Luik 2002 (Iberian towns).

⁴ Fischer (2002) is the only one who elaborates on the

various possible explanations.

⁵ The research findings appear in the conference publication *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies*.

⁶ James 2002.

⁷ In contrast, for instance, to the theoretical debate about ‘romanisation’ (for a survey, see Derks 1998, 2–9).

⁸ See E. Birley 1988; M.P. Speidel 1984a; 1992a.

⁹ Peddie 1994 and James 2001 respectively.

4. The army is seen as an isolated entity that operates and has meaning within its own world, rather than in a broader, civilian context.¹⁰ Almost no consideration is given to the position and functioning of soldiers in the military-civilian context of the frontier.

In James' view, in order to break out of this pattern of research, we must on the one hand opt for a more contextualised approach, which examines the interrelationship between the army and the larger geographical and social world in which it operates: "I believe the field of Roman military studies needs to be defined in the broadest terms, to include examination not just of the Roman armies and military installations of the state, but also the context of these within Roman society, culture and politics, and their interrelations – in peace as well as war – with societies beyond the frontiers."¹¹ On the other hand, our research should not focus on the army as a military institution, but should include individual soldiers and their experiences. Especially artefact studies, in combination with historical data, has a contribution to make to the "...nature of life and experience in military communities."¹²

The present study seeks to take up James' suggestions, and – in keeping with a long, Dutch tradition – to adopt his proposed contextual and social approach as its starting point.¹³ This study of weaponry and horse gear from the eastern Rhine delta concentrates not so much on the functional use of these objects within the Roman army, but on their use and significance in both the military and civilian contexts of the frontier. I have used a 'life cycle model' to gain an understanding of specific forms of use and significance in the different contexts where weaponry and horse gear are found (army camps, settlements, cult places, rivers and graves).¹⁴ For the different stages in the life of a soldier, this model helps to establish how soldiers dealt with their equipment, together with the archaeological contexts in which this may have been expressed. A key feature of the model is that it enables us to study soldiers and their archaeologically traceable equipment, not just in the context of the army, but also in the wider, social world in which they operated during and after their military service.

The present study can be seen as a continuation of Roymans' research into late La Tène and early Roman swords and helmets from northern Gaul.¹⁵ Roymans' analysis revealed that militaria from the La Tène period occurred almost exclusively in what we can regard as ritual contexts, namely cult places, rivers and graves (fig. 7.1). The weapons are fairly evenly distributed throughout the research region and are associated with an all-embracing, martial ideology and with various rites of passage in the life of tribal warriors. The military items may have been offered up in rivers and cult places following a military victory or when a man's active life as a warrior came to an end. In addition, it was customary – particularly in the Trier region – to inter warriors and former warriors with part of their weaponry when they died.

Although there is evidence of continuity in the occurrence of swords and helmets in predominantly ritual contexts in the 1st century AD, we see a marked change in the distribution of finds. They are now concentrated in the Rhineland and no longer – or only rarely – in the Gallic interior (fig. 3.12). Roymans sees a connection with the heavy recruitment of manpower for the Roman army in this zone, which led to continuing and probably even stronger martial traditions in native societies. Ritual dealings with weapons are once again explained by a link to transition rituals, this time in the lives of professional soldiers. One such moment would be when veterans returned to the civilian world after 25 years of service. Also, the people in the Treveri territory retained the custom of expressing a deceased warrior's military career – now as a Roman soldier – in the burial ritual.

¹⁰ See also James 1999; 2001.

¹¹ James 2002, 3, and especially 27 ff.

¹² James 2002, 33.

¹³ For a contextual and social approach to Dutch military

archaeology, see in particular Bloemers 1978; Willems 1981; 1984; Roymans 1996.

¹⁴ See chapter 5.

¹⁵ Roymans 1996, 13 ff. See also chapter 7.

To test Roymans' ideas, this study focuses on one specific region in the frontier zone of northern Gaul, namely the eastern Rhine delta, the presumed territory of the *civitas Batavorum*. The research time frame has been extended to cover the entire Roman period (c. 50 BC – AD 400/450). A key advantage of doing so is that it offers a long-term perspective in the observation and interpretation of changes in the use and significance of objects.¹⁶ Further, the study looks at the full range of military equipment, including – in addition to swords and helmets – other weapon types, belts and *baltei*, as well as cavalry harness. This allows us to both observe patterns in the material over the research period and compare the different categories of finds. I have been able to expand on Roymans' research thanks to the use of metal detectors during excavations and by amateur detectorists, which has led in recent decades to substantial finds in the Nijmegen urban centres and rural settlements. Detector finds are an important addition to the items that may have been ritually deposited in cult places, rivers and graves, enabling us to study not only deposition patterns, but also kinds of use.

The primary objective of the research is as follows: *To gain an understanding, through a socio-cultural analysis of weaponry and horse gear from non-military contexts in the eastern Rhine delta, of the different kinds of use, and of the symbolic significance that these objects had for their owners.*

This analysis comprises the following three parts:

1. A comparative analysis of the material from the different archaeological contexts and periods, with a view to gaining an understanding of the 'circulation' of weaponry and horse gear in the research region during the Roman period (chapter 3). This is preceded by a description of the typology of finds from the Batavian territory and a chronological ordering of the material (chapter 2).
2. An interpretation of the observed patterns to determine the extent to which soldiers, ex-soldiers or non-soldiers used weaponry and horse gear in non-military contexts, and what functional and possible symbolic significance these objects may have had for their owners (chapters 5–6). In the case of soldiers and ex-soldiers, I explore a possible connection with specific stages in their lives and the transition rituals associated with them. Assuming that forms of use and types of meaning are closely linked to the organisation of production, and to the symbolism of the decorations, these aspects are discussed in chapter 4.
3. A long-term analysis to shed light on the continuity or discontinuity of the use and significance of weaponry and horse gear, taking as its starting point the situation in the Late Iron Age (chapter 7).

I . 2 G E O G R A P H I C A L C O N T E X T A N D S P E C I F I C C H A R A C T E R I S - T I C S O F T H E R E S E A R C H R E G I O N

The geographical area that is the subject of the present study is the presumed territory of the *civitas Batavorum* (fig. 1.1). With the exception of the northern Rhine frontier, we do not know its precise boundaries. However, by using Thiessen polygons, based on the location of the central places of the *civitas*, we can gain a rough idea of its dimensions. In addition to the eastern Rhine delta, the Batavian territory may have included part of the sandy soil region of the Southern Netherlands (fig. 1.2). The western

¹⁶ To date there have been almost no regional studies examining the composition of Roman weaponry and horse gear over a longer period. An exception is the work of Feugère and Poux (2002), who have made an inventory of 'military' objects from non-military contexts in three

Gallic regions. However, their analysis combines finds from the 1st to the 3rd centuries AD, making it impossible to distinguish any developments in the composition of the material over that period.



Fig. 1.1. Boundaries of the research region, comprising the assumed territory of the *civitas Batavorum* (dark grey).

and eastern polygon boundary, formed by the Woerden-Gorinchem line and the Dutch-German border respectively, appear to be confirmed by archaeological finds.¹⁷ Interesting here is the distribution pattern of silver or copper ‘rainbow cups’ or *triquetrum* coins, for the most part ‘Batavian’ emissions that show a marked clustering in the eastern Rhine/Meuse delta and the bordering sandy soil region.¹⁸ No coins have been found to the west of Woerden, and relatively few to date in the German Rhineland.¹⁹ Our assumption is that the southern border lies further north than the Thiessen polygons indicate.²⁰ This would mean drawing a straight line, as Vossen does, a little to the south of Cuijck.²¹ Estimates put the number of settlements in the research region at about 1,250, suggesting a population of over 50,000 people.²²

¹⁷ Bloemers (1978) also uses the Woerden-Gorinchem line as the boundary between the Batavian and Cananefatian *civitas*.

¹⁸ Roymans 2004, 67 ff.

¹⁹ It should be noted here that the representativity of the finds from the western Rhine delta and German area is uncertain (see below, aspect 5).

²⁰ See Willems 1984, 236; Slofstra 1991, note 99. The number of *triquetrum* coin finds from the province of North Brabant is certainly not representative. What does stand out, however, is that finds from this region origi-

nate almost exclusively from the presumed territory of the *civitas Batavorum*.

²¹ Vossen 2003, note 5. Finds of weaponry and/or horse gear from several more southerly sites are included in the inventory for the sake of completeness. The material in question comes from Esch-‘De Kollenberg’ (site nr. 87), Gennep-‘De Maaskemp’ (site nr. 102) and Halder (site nr. 106).

²² Willems 1984, 235 ff.; Vossen 2003. This number includes the estimated number of still-unknown sites.

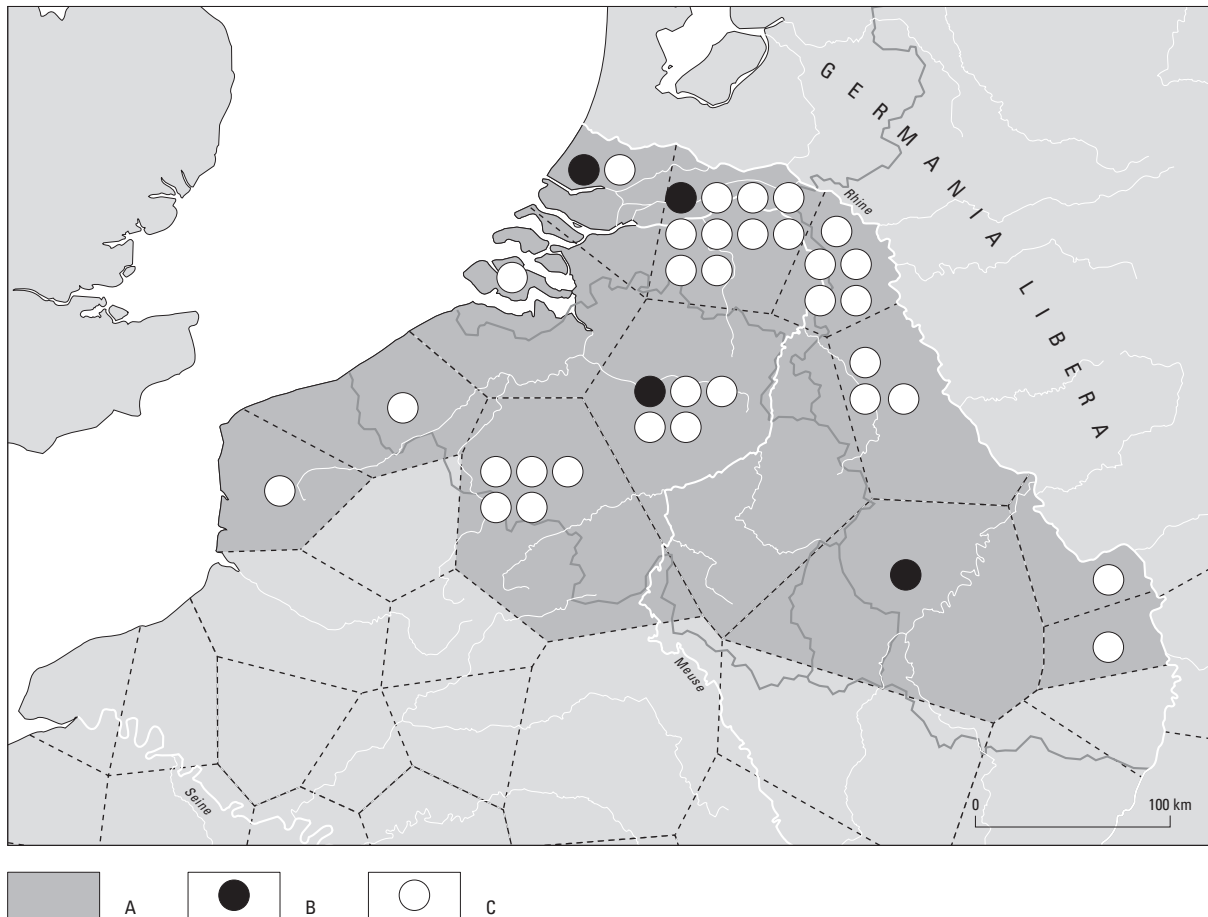


Fig. 1.2. The number of pre-Flavian, ‘national’ or ‘ethnic’ auxiliary units per *civitas* in Gallia Belgica. After Roymans 1996, fig. 4.

A recruitment area; B *ala*; C *cohors*.

With its geographical situation, cultural-historical background and wealth of archaeological data, the *civitas Batavorum* – and in particular the core area between the Rhine and Meuse rivers – occupied a special place in the Roman empire.²³ I briefly outline below the factors that are relevant for the analysis and interpretation of finds from this region:

1. *The location in the militarised frontier zone of the Roman empire*

Immediately south of the Rhine, the *civitas Batavorum* occupied a central position in the Lower Rhine frontier zone. From the time of Roman occupation, there was a constant military presence here, initially in temporary auxiliary camps and later in permanent camps along the Rhine.²⁴ There was also a legionary fortress on the ‘Hunerberg’ near Nijmegen, which was manned for some time during the Augustan period and after the Batavian revolt. We can use Kunow’s calculations to gain an idea of the number of soldiers stationed in the Rhineland during the Roman period. He puts it at between 35,000 and 42,000 in Lower Germany during the 1st century AD.²⁵ Despite a reduction in the 2nd and 3rd centuries, this still

²³ See also Derks/Roymans 2003, 99; 2006.

²⁵ Kunow 1987, fig. 32.

²⁴ For the military structure of the Lower Rhine region, see especially Bechert/Willems 1995.

left a substantial force of over 20,000 men. The many army camps known from the eastern Rhine delta suggest that a considerable proportion of these men were stationed in the research region, which makes it difficult to overestimate the impact that the army had on the day-to-day life of the Batavians.

2. *The situation outside the provincialised core area before the formation of Germania Inferior*

Gallia Comata, which had been conquered by Caesar, was divided into provinces under Augustus (27 BC) and into formal *civitates* a short time later (16–13 BC). Thanks to this political and administrative reorganisation, the Rhineland occupied a unique position, forming a military district that was administered from Gallia Belgica. The intention was to make this region part of a large ‘German’ province (Germania Magna), together with the Germanic territory that was to be annexed as far as the Elbe.

The fact that the Romans regarded the Rhineland as ‘German’ can be explained in the light of the tribal migrations in the period between Caesar’s departure from Gaul (51 BC) and the start of Drusus’ campaigns in Germania (12 BC).²⁶ Some groups from beyond the Rhine, considered trustworthy by the Romans, were transferred to the west bank, in part to fill the vacuum created by Caesar’s annihilation of the Eburones. According to Tacitus, the inhabitants of the research region were a splinter group of the Chatti who merged with the remnants of the Eburones living in the Rhine delta to form a new tribal association.²⁷ This new group bore the name ‘Batavians’.

The Varus disaster in AD 9 brought an abrupt halt to Rome’s ambitions for Germania. Several years later, after Germanicus had recovered some of the lost legionary standards, plans for a large German province were abandoned once and for all. The shift to a more defensive strategy did not mean, however, that the south and west bank of the Rhine was quickly divided into provinces. This did not happen until the time of emperor Domitianus, when Germania Inferior and Germania Superior were created in about AD 84.

It is unclear to what extent Rhineland frontier societies in the preceding period were administered in terms of the Roman *civitas* model. Roymans suggests that, although less systematically than in the Gallic interior, the Rhineland also underwent political and administrative reform, with the urbanisation that this entailed.²⁸ With regard to the research region, the founding of the *oppidum Batavorum* in the late-Augustan period would have gone hand in hand with the creation of a formal *civitas* structure. The report of a *summus magistratus* of the *civitas Batavorum* on a c. mid-1st century votive stone from Ruimel shows that the new system initially allowed room for divergent elements.²⁹ Instead of the usual, two-headed magistrature, there was a monocratic structure, perhaps derived from an older, native form.

Slofstra suggests that up until the Batavian revolt the political restructuring was less sweeping in nature.³⁰ It was confined to the appointment of *praefecti*, some of whom were members of the native elite, and whose job it was to control the frontier societies, collect taxes and oversee the recruitment of manpower for the *auxilia*. For the rest, the pre-Roman administrative structure was left more or less intact. Slofstra gives the term ‘frontier’ to the zone controlled by prefects, where no formal *civitates* yet existed.³¹ He includes in this frontier the buffer zone of ‘Germanic’ tribes outside the empire.³²

²⁶ Responsibility for this probably lay with Agrippa during his first (38 BC) or second governorship of Gaul (19 BC). See Derks 1998, 37–38.

²⁷ Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.12; for the ethnogenesis of the Batavians, see Roymans 2004, 55 ff.

²⁸ Roymans 2004, 195 ff.

²⁹ See also Bogaers 1960/1961, 268–271; Roymans 1990, 22–23, 36; 2004, 201.

³⁰ Slofstra 2002, 26–28.

³¹ However, the term ‘frontier’ is used more generally in this study to refer to the frontier zone of the Roman empire.

³² According to Slofstra (2002, 24 ff.), there was a shifting frontier which incorporated Gallia Comata after Caesar’s conquests, the later Germanic provinces and the neighbouring ‘Germanic’ area after Augustus’ reforms, and the east-bank tribes ‘controlled’ by means of diplomatic relations after the Batavian revolt.

3. The large-scale recruitment of manpower for the Roman army

The number of historically and epigraphically documented ‘national’ or ‘ethnic’ units, as they are called, gives us an idea of the regional recruitment of men for the *auxilia* (fig. 1.2). The societies in the frontier zone of the empire played a key role here, with the Batavians as the principal supplier in Northern Gaul: in addition to an *ala Batavorum*, there were eight *cohortes Batavorum*.³³ A significant proportion of the emperor’s personal bodyguard was also made up of Batavians and we know of Batavian oarsmen in the Rhine fleet. The large-scale supply of troops occurred in the context of a special treaty (*antiqua societas*) which the Batavians, according to Tacitus, maintained with Rome.³⁴ At the heart of this alliance was exemption from taxation, in return for which the Batavians had to supply soldiers for deployment in defence of the empire:

“...they still retain an honourable privilege in token of their ancient alliance with us. They are not subjected to the indignity of tribute or ground down by the tax-gatherer. Free from imposts and special levies, and reserved for employment in battle, they are like weapons and armour – ‘only to be used in war’.”³⁵

Given the units mentioned above, it is likely that a total of 5,000 to 5,500 Batavian men served in the Roman army at any one time during the pre-Flavian period. In order to maintain this number of troops, estimates suggest that on average every Batavian family must have had at least one son in the army.³⁶ The fact that the treaty with Rome was restored following the revolt in AD 70 means that this situation would probably have continued largely unchanged until the 2nd century.³⁷ Clearly, such a supply of manpower must have had an enormous impact on the local population and its social and cultural development, with the military and civilian spheres probably being strongly interlinked.

4. The location in a ‘non-villa landscape’

The Batavian countryside was characterised by a specific settlement structure. Almost all of the approximately 1,250 settlements consisted of simple farms, ranging from scattered farmsteads (*Einzelhöfe*) to larger settlements with five or six contemporaneous farms.³⁸ The houses were of a traditional byre-house type, with people and animals living under one roof, a building tradition linked to an agrarian system whose primary focus was cattle breeding, though always in combination with arable farming.

In contrast to the southern loess soils, villas were the exception in the Batavian countryside.³⁹ A traditional method of building and settlement structure was closely adhered to, with the occasional addition of *villa*-type elements: a fully or partly tiled roof, a wooden *porticus*, a stone cellar or stone bathhouse.⁴⁰ This combination of traditional and new, Roman elements is evident in Druten-‘Klepperhei’ (fig. 1.3).⁴¹ In the latter half of the 1st century AD a settlement developed here whose layout matches that of Gallo-Roman villa complexes. The settlement had a regular arrangement of a central main building with out-

³³ For an overview, see Roymans 1996, table 1; more recently Vossen 2003, 418–420.

³⁴ For the possible Caesarean origin of this treaty, see Roymans 2004, 55–61. A clue to the Batavians’ special status is the Julian citizenship of the most important members of the Batavian elite (Roymans 1996, 24–28).

³⁵ Tacitus, *Germ.* 29; for the special treaty with Rome, see also *Hist.* 4.12.

³⁶ Willems 1984, 235; the calculations are based on Bloemers (1978, chapter 5). It should be noted that some of these men would probably have been supplied

by client tribes during the pre-Flavian period (Roymans 2004, 205–208; see also Vossen 2003, 422–424).

³⁷ Tacitus, *Germ.* 29.

³⁸ General, see Vossen 2003, 424–425.

³⁹ According to Roymans’ terminology (1996, 42 ff.), the eastern Rhine delta forms part of the ‘non-villa landscapes’; see also Derks 1998, 55–66.

⁴⁰ For a survey, see Slofstra 1991, 159 ff.; Roymans 1996, 72 ff.

⁴¹ Hulst 1978.



Fig. 1.3. Overview of the 'proto-villa' at Druten-Klepperhei'. After Slofstra 2002, fig. 4.

buildings grouped into two wings.⁴² Although the main building had a stone cellar, mural decorations and a separate bathing area, the house – in keeping with native tradition – was constructed entirely of wood and divided into a living and a stable area.

The development of these settlements, called 'proto-villas', is traditionally explained from an ecological and socio-economic perspective: because of the lack of a flourishing market-oriented, agrarian mode of production, the local elite could not afford 'real' villas.⁴³ Roymans believes that ideology also played a role, and points to the deeply-rooted tradition of the byre house, which in his view reflects the high cultural value placed on cattle.⁴⁴ A 'pastoral ideology' prevailed, which consciously clung to the native tradition of building.

Slofstra recently argued that the landscape of the Rhine delta, dominated by simple rural settlements, should be included in the villa system.⁴⁵ Although the customary stone or half-timbered buildings and

⁴² Hulst (1978, 148) roughly distinguishes two habitation stages: stage 1 (second half of the 1st century AD), buildings 1-2, 8-10, 16, 20); and stage 2 (2nd century), buildings 1-4, 12-15, 17-19, 22. Not all buildings from the two periods were inhabited contemporaneously and building

21 cannot be dated more precisely than to the Roman period.

⁴³ See Slofstra 1991, 184; Wesselinhg 2000, 223-224.

⁴⁴ Roymans 1996, 51-58; see also Derks 1998, 55 ff.

⁴⁵ Slofstra 2002, 36-38.

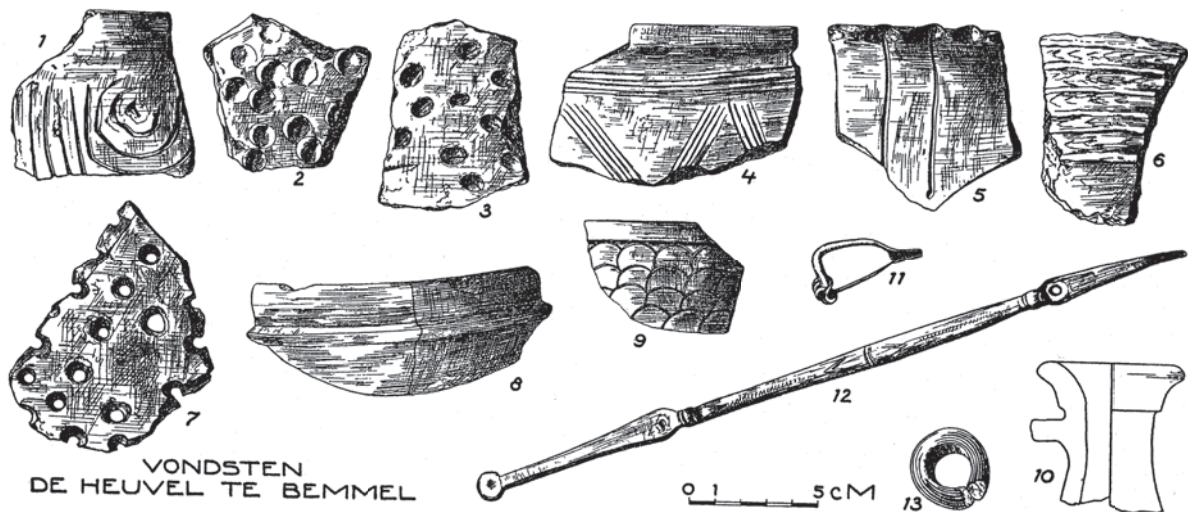


Fig. 1.4. Pottery, a fibula and a shield grip of the 'Germanic' type (nr. 12: 24.1) from the rural settlement of Bommel-De Heuvel', found during a small excavation in 1942. The grip is one of the few items of weaponry found in the period before metal detectors were introduced. After Braat 1949, fig. 11.

regular settlement layout are largely absent, he points out that a 'villa mode of production', characterised by a system of dependent labour and the production of surplus for a market, is very much in evidence. However, the Lower Rhine villas did not specialise in arable farming, but in cattle breeding, with the Nijmegen urban centre and above all the army camps as their major markets.

5. The impact of intensive metal detecting on the quantity of finds

In the area of material culture too, the Lower Rhine region – and in particular the core area of the Batavians – occupied a unique position thanks to the relative wealth of metal objects known from this area, rather than the kinds of objects found. Illustrative of the role of intensive metal detecting is the increase in the number of known *triquetrum* coins since the metal detector was introduced in about 1980. Prior to that, only 31 coins from nine sites were documented in the eastern Rhine delta. After 1980, the number increased exponentially, with over 600 coins from 129 sites in the Netherlands now documented.⁴⁶ We observe a comparable development in the finds that are the subject of this study. With the exception of river finds, 'military' objects from non-military contexts were a rarity until recently (fig. 1.4). This picture changed completely in the 'detector era'. Systematic use of metal detectors during excavations at the settlement of Wijk bij Duurstede-De Horden' (1977-1986) and the cult place of Empel-De Werf' (1991-1993) have brought to light a large volume of metal finds, including weaponry and horse gear.⁴⁷ The inventory presented here of almost 2,700 finds from over 300 sites demonstrates that these were not exceptional circumstances. The majority of finds were discovered during excavations using metal detectors (39%) or by amateurs conducting surface surveys (44%).

The wealth of metal finds from the *civitas Batavorum* is also due to a combination of factors quite unique to this region.⁴⁸ Firstly, the eastern Rhine delta was especially heavily populated during the

⁴⁶ Roymans 2004, 67-68.

⁴⁷ Van der Roest 1994; Van Driel-Murray 1994. The finds from Wijk bij Duurstede and Empel are published in their entirety for the first time in chapter 3.3.

⁴⁸ A somewhat similar situation occurs in the Northern Netherlands terp region (Bazelmans/Gerrets/Pol 2002).

Roman period, resulting in many sites containing Roman material. Secondly, the settlements were situated on fluvial, largely sandy clay or clayey deposits, in which metal is relatively well preserved. In some cases the settlement was covered by a layer of river sediment, which further aids preservation. Thirdly, the settlements in the eastern river delta were located quite close to the surface, thus greatly increasing the chance that ploughing would bring settlement material into the topsoil. This factor is crucial, as metal detectors do not generally penetrate deeper than this top layer. Finally, the Netherlands has a flourishing metal-detecting culture, with the eastern Rhine delta being very intensively worked over by amateur detectorists. Relevant here are the good relations between amateur archaeologists, who are in possession of a significant share of our Roman heritage, and professional archaeologists, who wish to use this information source for research purposes.

The exceptional circumstances in the core area of the *civitas Batavorum* are most apparent if we look at the surrounding areas. In the southern sandy soils, fewer settlements are known, metal is poorly preserved and many settlements lie under thick, artificially-raised *essen* layers. The use of ammonia-rich pig and chicken manure has led to the rapid degeneration of metal objects brought up into the topsoil through deep ploughing. Metal finds are also scarce in the western Rhine delta, despite the fact that metal is well preserved there. This can be explained by the smaller number of settlements, but above all by the location of the sites under a thick layer of river sediment and/or peat and their inaccessibility under large numbers of glass houses. Outside the Netherlands, metal-detecting policy is primarily responsible for the meagre density of finds. Because it is illegal to use metal detectors in Germany and France, fewer people do so and any finds that are made are usually not available for research.

Despite the favourable detecting climate in the research region, it is not improbable that the large number of militaria from the *civitas Batavorum* is more or less representative of the Roman situation. We can assume that there is a link with the historically documented role of the Batavians as the chief Rhine-land suppliers of manpower for the *auxilia* and imperial bodyguard.⁴⁹

1.3 'MILITARY' AND 'CIVILIAN' DURING THE ROMAN PERIOD

'Military' and 'civilian' are key terms in the present study, denoting the distinction between settlements, people and objects in the context of the Roman army on the one hand and in a non-military context on the other. Although each refers to clearly distinct concepts in modern, western culture, this distinction did not always hold true in Roman times. A complicating factor in the study of weaponry and horse gear is that, including the period when there was a clearly definable professional army, pieces of 'military equipment' could be used in a civilian context, rendering a specifically military association uncertain. I will briefly outline below the extent to which the military and civilian spheres were separated in northern Gallic societies during the research period and the extent to which weaponry and horse gear can be regarded as military or military-civilian items.

Caesar's conquest of Gaul brought Rome into contact with a tribal world whose military and civilian spheres were strongly intertwined.⁵⁰ Political leaders, who were at the same time military leaders, headed retinues of warriors that could be deployed as military units for looting or in times of war. These units were temporary in nature, which meant that men who were farmers in everyday life lent their leaders military assistance for a short period during wartime. Nor is the weaponry and horse gear from this period unequivocally military or civilian. It comprises objects that warriors received from their leader or

⁴⁹ The use of their military equipment by Batavian veterans is particularly relevant here (see chapter 5).

⁵⁰ See chapter 7.1.

father and which expressed their social status and position. At the same time, however, they were military objects that had a function in the context of looting or war.

The auxiliary units deployed by Caesar at the time of the Gallic war still had an irregular, temporary character. This situation probably changed under Augustus, who transformed the existing *auxilia* into regular *cohortes* and *alae*, making them a permanent part of the Roman professional army.⁵¹ Semi-military warriors were replaced by professional soldiers, who served for longer periods.⁵² The soldiers had a clearly defined status which distinguished them in a legal sense too from non-soldiers. The same was true of veterans, who make their first appearance in the Gallic world during the Roman period. Unlike the warrior retinues of the preceding period, there are now clearly distinguishable functions for non-soldiers, soldiers and ex-soldiers. For some time, Roman soldiers are also archaeologically recognisable from their equipment. They received weaponry and horse gear from the army, which symbolised their status as soldier or ex-soldier.⁵³

Although the principle of a professional army was preserved throughout the Roman period, we see a gradual blurring of the line separating military and civilian in the material culture.⁵⁴ Belts and horse gear appear to have been acquired to an increasing degree by civilians during the 1st century. Perhaps as early as the Augustan period, swords belonged to more vulnerable groups such as traders and travellers. With the exception of helmets, armour and shields, especially after the Flavian period, there no longer appear to be strictly military objects, but rather objects with a military-civilian use.

When the *limes* yielded under pressure from 'German' incursions in the 3rd century, we also observe a change in the status of army camps and soldiers. The role of the army camps was taken over by fortified towns and *burgi* on villa terrains. Alongside regular units who found new accommodation in the towns, veterans and civilians – some in private militias – seem to have become involved in defending the frontier provinces.⁵⁵ Once again, it is not possible to attribute military objects to soldiers or to armed civilians in this period.

The dividing line between military and civilian became even more blurred during the late-Roman period. From the early 4th century, army camps were almost entirely replaced by fortified, semi-military 'towns', while irregular units in the form of *foederati* again became part of the Roman army.⁵⁶ This overlap is also reflected in the use of the belt characteristic of this period: the belt initially symbolised the status of military and civilian officials, soon replaced by a more general, military-civilian use.⁵⁷

When the imperial borders finally gave way to the 'Germans' in the 5th century, we can no longer speak of a separation between military and civilian. The vacuum created by the loss of Roman rule was filled by native leaders, who began maintaining groups of warrior bands. Professional soldiers were supplanted by temporary warriors, who once more were given military equipment by their leaders or fathers.⁵⁸

In any event, we may conclude that the terms 'military' and 'civilian' cannot be satisfactorily applied during the earliest and latest phases of the Roman period. Although a clearly definable standing army existed in the intervening period, it would be true to say that horse gear and specific types of weaponry can only be regarded as exclusively military in the pre-Flavian era. In the other periods, 'military' objects cannot be unequivocally attributed to either soldiers or civilians and should therefore be referred to as 'military-civilian objects'. In other words, we should not label stray finds from these periods as specifically military or civilian. This would require an analysis of larger assemblages, such as the data set presented in this study.

⁵¹ See chapter 2.3.

⁵² Although irregular units were still formed in times of crisis, such as the Batavian revolt (for examples, Roymans 1996, 27, note 60).

⁵³ See chapter 5.

⁵⁴ See chapter 6.

⁵⁵ MacMullen 1967; see also chapter 6.1.3.

⁵⁶ See Nicasie 1997.

⁵⁷ See chapter 6.2.

⁵⁸ See Bazelmans 1999.

