

This substantial volume provides a detailed summary of Johan Nicolay's doctoral research, which was undertaken at the Archaeological Centre of the Vrije Universiteit, where it formed part of the research project 'The Batavians. Ethnic identity in a frontier situation'. Nicolay's important monograph is a further significant addition to the archaeological knowledge of the Roman period in the Lower Rhine Delta and builds on earlier volumes published in the same series, including important studies by Nico Roymans and Ton Derks. This current book explores the use and significance of Roman so-called military items, including weaponry, signalling instruments and horse gear from non-military contexts in the eastern Rhine delta, across the area that is thought to have included the territory of the tribe or civitas called the Batavi. Nicolay's substantial database includes more than two-thousand seven hundred items of Roman military equipment, including weaponry and horse gear, derived from garrisons, urban centres, rural settlements, cult places, rivers and graves across this territory.

In the past, Roman military equipment has usually been associated with the idea of a military presence on the sites of discovery. In recent years, however, such equipment has been found in large numbers on a variety of apparently civilian sites, including rural settlements. It has been proposed that objects of these types indicate the involvement of military in the life of civil populations, but the increasing frequency of such finds casts doubt on such straightforward explanations. Nicolay explores the Roman military equipment dating to between 50 B. C. and 50 A. D. that occurs on a variety of non-villa settlements across this territory, adopting a contextual and social approach to the analysis of the material that addresses the use and significance of these objects in civil and military contexts. Adopting a 'life cycle model' for the parts of equipment, Nicolay conducts a detailed chronological and regional assessment of the material that emphasises how widely military equipment is distributed over the survey area. The finds from the Rhine Delta are also compared to those from northern Gaul, trans-Rhenish Germania and Britannia, leaving this reviewer wishing that data in these regions had been collected in the same exemplary fashion.

The detailed analysis conducted in this report leads Nicolay to conclude that the items in civil contexts formed personal memorabilia brought back to the homeland of the Batavi after twenty-five years of service in the Roman auxiliary forces. These pieces in indigenous contexts, therefore, came to symbolise the newly acquired veteran status of these retired soldiers. The relative frequency of military equipment in civil context, therefore, reflects the large-scale recruitment of Batavians into the Roman army as auxiliary soldiers as well as the return of surviving soldiers to their native communities after their period of service. Nicolay's study provides a full assessment of the complexity of the relationship between military and civil identity amongst

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the Batavi, an issue of relevance to other provincial populations that witnessed large-scale military recruitment.

The detailed study also explores the cases in which individual finds can be related to excavated structures and archaeological contexts, indicating the frequency of such objects on a significant number of excavated rural settlements and at the temple site of Empel. The occurrence of military equipment at a temple site and the frequency of swords and weapons from river deposits lead to the suspicion that certain of the objects deposited in ditches and on house sites in settlement context might also derive from ritual acts that had been conducted on site. Nicolay addresses this idea, stressing the occurrence of military objects in peripheral parts of the settlement, their deposition in purpose-dug pits and the incomplete nature of the sets deposited. Fragmentary pieces are also frequent on settlements but the author does not address the potential significance of the fragmentation of such objects and the potential relevance of such information for the interpretation of the life cycle of objects (see J. Chapman *Fragmentation in Archaeology* [London 2000] and B. Croxford, *Britannia* 34, 2003, 81–95).

A major element of the author's research and a substantial element of this publication is the highly impressive inventory of military equipment that fills about one third out of the roughly four-hundred pages. These items include those held by museum and also a large number of finds made by metal detector users. This material, which includes some previously unpublished finds, is fully described and well illustrated by line drawings and photographs. It emphasises the importance of finds collected by metal detector users and the impact of these discoveries on the scholarly understanding of the Roman period across Western Europe. In conclusion, this highly impressive volume summarizes an excellent piece of research that has added substantial new knowledge to the understanding of the assimilation of a particular ethnic group into the Roman empire.

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