

## DRESSED FOR THE OCCASION

### Clothes and context in the Roman army

Modern images and reconstructions of the Roman soldier's appearance nearly always show a fully-armed, often grim-looking combatant, wearing helmet and armour and sporting several weapons. Such images have heavily influenced the way in which we think of Roman soldiers and the Roman army. There is, of course, some logic to these representations, as they immediately reveal the person's military profession. It is therefore not surprising to find them in use already by the Roman soldiers themselves.

Images of fully armed soldiers of all ranks can be found in large numbers on gravestones throughout the first three centuries AD (fig 1). They supplement the information given by the inscription and add splendour to the tombstone and the memory of the deceased soldier. The context, however, is that of a monument, designed to impress the onlooker. As the design of gravestones was based on choices made by individual soldiers these monuments can therefore serve as a guide for the importance Roman soldiers attributed to the composition of their last appearance as well as for the meaning conveyed by such images.

Several obvious reasons may have led soldiers to choose representations of themselves in full battle gear for their gravestones: Such images would show the deceased to have been a professional soldier with the Roman army, which means that during his lifetime he had been an agent of the emperor, representing Roman imperial power, and therefore a person to respect (if not to fear). Such images would also serve to impress the onlooker by the wealth and success the soldier had achieved during his time on earth: a splendid appearance in shining armour,<sup>1</sup> perhaps further embellished by military decorations betraying his bravery on the battlefield. Those who had received promotions could show the insignia of higher ranks, revealing their proven capability to be a leader, trusted by their superiors and respected by their comrades, devoted to duty and ready to fight for the Roman empire.

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1 Shining armour and weapons were a soldier's pride and the officers' responsibility: Jos., BJ 5,9,1. Arr., Takt. 38,3. Veg. 2,12. 14. M.P. Speidel, Emperor Hadrian's speeches to the African Army – a new Text (2006) 35.

Surprisingly perhaps, the actual act of killing the enemy was, on the whole, rather unpopular on soldiers' gravestones, as it occurs on only one particular type of image, which shows an armed Roman horseman riding down a barbarian and aiming his spear at the fallen enemy while looking straight ahead (fig 3).<sup>2</sup> This image was chosen primarily (yet not exclusively) by Roman cavalrymen on the northern frontiers. It has recently been recognized, however, that in several cases the enemy, a (half)naked Germanic warrior, is not necessarily fallen, but has willingly dived beneath the horse to stab it from below.<sup>3</sup> That, of course, makes the fight more equal. Perhaps the original meaning of the scene was to show the Roman horseman and his mount jumping over the Germanic horse-stabber rather than riding him down. If correct, jumping, throwing a spear at the enemy underhoof and concentrating on the foe ahead all at the same time is an image which would serve to prove the impressive skills and the courage of the deceased. However, this image also came in less cruel versions, either without the barbarian, or with military decorations or (since the late second century) a wild boar in his stead (thereby turning the picture into a hunting scene). Hence, the emphasis of the message was not so much focussed on the soldier's professionalism at killing but much rather highlighted his heroic and victorious bravery as well as his extraordinary skills as a horseman.<sup>4</sup> That was what he wanted to be remembered for.

The same message as with full portraits of the armour-clad soldiers could also be transmitted in a less martial setting by displaying only selected items of military equipment or military decorations (fig. 4).<sup>5</sup> Again, this type of image was not restricted to any particular rank within the Roman army or any particular frontier. It is revealing that even images of the emperor could make use of the same set of symbols when they were to emphasize the ruler's role as commander-

2 For such images see M. Schleiermacher *Römische Reitergrabsteine* (1984) passim. See also the many examples in M.P. Speidel, *Die Denkmäler der Kaiserreiter* (1994).

3 M.P. Speidel, *Ancient Germanic Warriors* (2006) 151ff.

4 Dio 75,9. For hunting boars and other wild animals as a popular show of skill, bravery and manliness amongst soldiers and officers and suiting even for emperors see HA Hadr. 2,1. ILS 9241. RIB 1041. Speidel (n. 2) 7. M.P. Speidel, *Riding for Caesar* (1994) 131. 145. It is certainly telling that although boar-hunting was, since the late second century, a very popular scene on gravestones of the *equites singulares Augusti* at Rome, only one known gravestone bears the scene of a horseman of the emperor's guard aiming his spear at a kneeling enemy warrior: Speidel (n. 2) no. 540 (the warrior in this case is armed with a sword and aiming to hit the guardsman's horse).

5 For examples cf. e.g. L. Keppie, in: *Documenting the Roman Army* (2003) 31–53. CSIR Carnuntum 319. CSIR Deutschland II 5, Nr. 134 (Mainz). Etc. North-african examples are quoted by Y. LeBohec, *La troisième légion Auguste* (1989) 104. For both weapons and military decorations on one monument: L. Keppie, *Colonisation and Veteran Settlement in Italy 47 – 14 B.C.* (1983) Pl. I c (Ateste).

in-chief of the Roman army.<sup>6</sup> Images of the emperor in military dress or in armour were designed to promote the understanding, that the vigilant ruler successfully used his military power to secure peace and prosperity for the Roman empire. Of course, such images were not carried by gravestones but by different media, such as statues, reliefs or coins. Their messages, however, were much the same: Armour and weapons were used as symbolic representations in public displays of a successful, responsible, and heroic military service for Rome and empire-wide peace by all members of the Roman army, including equestrian and senatorial officers and generals as well as emperors.<sup>7</sup>

A second style of images on gravestones, which were also produced throughout the first three centuries AD, shows soldiers without armour, wearing only a belted tunic and a cloak (fig. 2). Weapons and other military attributes could also be added. The character of these images is obviously less martial in its general appearance and was certainly intended to preserve a memory of the soldier in a context which was not battle or war. It was with great disgust that Tacitus described Roman soldiers without helmet and body armour in the cities of Syria as sleek money-making traders.<sup>8</sup> Tacitus and other Roman aristocrats may have scorned the peaceful appearance of the army in the provinces,<sup>9</sup> many soldiers, however, consciously chose such images for their gravestones. It is therefore certainly revealing, that the images of soldiers wearing only belted tunics and cloaks became ever more popular and finally, by the third century, clearly outnumbered the representations in full armour.<sup>10</sup> This must surely be taken as a sign of the soldiers' increasing will to be remembered not so much as battle-hardened warriors but rather as fellow citizens, or even, when shown with wife and children,<sup>11</sup> as fathers and familymen.

6 Cf. e.g. RIC II 582. BMC Trajan 911 for a dupondius showing only Trajan's cuirass on the revers side. RIC III 545. 567. 1404 are examples of coins showing on their revers sides the emperor Lucius Verus on horseback aiming his spear at a fallen Parthian enemy. For the same scene with Commodus and a Germanic warrior on an gem from Biesheim cf. M.P. Speidel, *Germania* 78 (2000) 193–197.

7 For statues of Roman senators *habitu militari* see e.g. CIL VI 1566. ILS 1112. *Statua armata*: ILS 1098. 1326. For equestrian officers H. Devijver, *The Equestrian Officers of the Roman Imperial Army* I (1989) 416ff. II (1992) 298ff. 305ff.

8 Tac., *Ann.* 13,35.

9 Of course, Tacitus was of an entirely different opinion when soldiers in Rome were concerned. Their appearance in armour was a frightful sight to him: Tac. *Hist.* 2,88. Cf. also below.

10 C. Franzoni, *Habitus atque habitudo militis* (1987) 139. H. Ubl, *BVbl* 71 (2006) 262 n. 11.

11 E.g. CSIR Schweiz III Nr. 65 (Augst). CSIR Deutschland I,1 Nr. 31 (Augsburg). J. Wagner, *FÖ* 40 (2001) 454 Abb. 167 (Graz). CSIR Carnuntum 317. M. Nagy: *Lapidarium. Ausstellungskatalog des Ungarischen Nationalmuseums* (2007) 117 Nr. 123. CSIR Mogetiana 112. M.P. Speidel, in: D. Kennedy (ed.), *The Twin Towns of Zeugma on the Euphrates* (1998) 203f. (Zeugma). M. Facella / M.A. Speidel, *AMS* 64 (2011) 208–215. Etc.

If soldiers more and more preferred not to be seen, on their gravestones, as heavily armoured, battle-ready fighters, they would still regularly choose to show the insignia of their profession and their power, and thereby remind us of their former importance in society. On principle, these insignia included belt and cape. By contrast, the soldiers' servants are never shown with swords, although they are known to have joined the soldiers in training and battle.<sup>12</sup> Soldiers with higher ranks would also not shy back from showing their badges of office. Such details added information and therefore played an important role in the composition of the images of soldiers. Hence, under-officers and officers, dressed in tunics and cloaks, could be shown holding a set of writing tablets or a scroll in one hand, and either *lanceae*,<sup>13</sup> standards,<sup>14</sup> a *fustis*,<sup>15</sup> a *hastile*,<sup>16</sup> or a *vitis*<sup>17</sup> etc. in the other. The tablets were surely meant to betray the soldiers' writing-skills and therefore appear to indicate that at some stage in their career they had held positions involving administrative tasks.<sup>18</sup> *Lanceae* and standards, however, were carried in battle and during manoeuvres, the *fustis* was a nightstick which was used as a police weapon, the long *hastile* was the typical staff of an *optio*, with which he was to keep discipline and order amongst the soldiers in the battle lines, whereas the *vitis*, a vine cane, was the badge of office of centurions and *evocati* and their

- 12 M.P. Speidel, *Roman Army Studies II* (1992) 345ff. For clothing in the Roman army in general cf. e.g. E. Sander, *Historia* 12 (1963) 144–166. N. Fuentes, *The Roman Military Tunic*. In: M. Dawson (ed.), *Roman Military Equipment: The Accoutrements of War* (1987) 41–75. M.C. Bishop / J.C.N. Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment* (1993). G. Sumner *Roman Military Clothing I* (2002) 9f. *II* (2003) 7ff. A. Goldsworthy, *The Complete Roman Army* (2003) 118ff.
- 13 E.g. the first-century gravestone of P. Flavoleius Cordus from Mainz: cf. M.A. Speidel, *Die römischen Schreibrtafeln von Vindonissa* (1996) 60 Bild 27.
- 14 E.g. the first-century gravestones of L. Duccius Rufinus from York and of Oclatius Carvi f. from Neuss: cf. Speidel (n. 13) 62f. Bild 29 and 30.
- 15 E.g. the first-century gravestone of C. Valerius Valens from Corinth: cf. Speidel (n. 13) 59 Bild 26.
- 16 E.g. the second-century gravestone of the *optio* Caecilius Avitus from Chester: cf. Speidel (n. 13) 61 Bild 28.
- 17 E.g. the third-century gravestone of the centurion Vivius Marcianus from London: RIB 17. The sign in line 3 of this inscription has been interpreted as a *hedera distinguens* (the only one in this inscription). It was, however, clearly intended to represent the sign for centurion, *7(centurioni) leg(ionis) II Aug(ustae)*, as the rank of the deceased is to be expected before *II Aug.* and would otherwise be missing. The image of the deceased confirms this reading beyond doubt.
- 18 This has occasionally been doubted: cf. e.g. R. Haensch, *Capita provinciarum* (1997) 124 with n. 23 with further literature. However, the symbolic meaning of all other prominently shown items strongly suggests that writing-material, too, was depicted to convey information relating to the military service of the deceased soldier. Any of the countless writing-tasks in the Roman army may have justified the representation of writing-materials. The tablets and scrolls themselves, therefore, can not be taken to indicate any particular rank. It may even be, that in some instances they relate to administrative responsibilities the deceased soldier had held earlier in his career.

sign of authority with which they could beat and punish insubordinate soldiers.<sup>19</sup> In some instances such combinations of writing-materiel and different types of staffs could serve to illustrate the soldier's rank (*signifer, beneficiarius, optio*, etc.) by showing typical items of their office. Obviously, however, both instruments were never used at the very same time. Such cases must therefore serve as a warning, not to interpret these images as snap-shots of a former reality. They were not composed as guides to the appearance of Roman soldiers at any particular occasion.<sup>20</sup> We should much rather understand the images on soldiers' gravestones as sources for the symbolic meaning of their (often very accurately shown) military equipment and dress. This has, perhaps, not yet been fully appreciated, but the point is worth making, as we need to assume that during the soldiers' life-times, too, their dress was often consciously chosen with the intent to express certain messages.

Obviously, war and battle was the main occasion to wear full battle gear. Military training and manoeuvres, such as the *ambulatio*, were another,<sup>21</sup> although there was also special training equipment occasionally used for weapons-training. Finally, a number of festive parades and military shows could call for full battle gear. The most frequent amongst these was the pay parade, which took place three times per year and which was, at the same time, a weapons and armour inspection. Titus deliberately held such a parade in view of the enemy for four days during the siege of Jerusalem in order to awe the Jewish defenders with the shine of so much gold, silver, armour and weapons.<sup>22</sup> In AD 14, on the other hand, the mutinous legionary soldiers in Pannonia met Tiberius' son Drusus, according to Tacitus, 'not as usual with glad looks or the glitter of military decorations, but in unsightly squalor'. Thus, the condition of a soldier's dress was understood to reflect the state of his morale and discipline, 'for who would believe a soldier to be warlike, when he carelessly lets his arms get stained with dirt and rust'.<sup>23</sup>

For the performance of certain cavalry shows it was officially recommended not to wear armour, for full battle gear would have taken away from the intended

19 For *lanceae*, standards and the *hastile* see M.P. Speidel, The Framework of an Imperial Legion, in: R.J. Brewer (ed.), The Second Augustan Legion and the Roman Military Machine (2002) 125–143. For the *fustis*: idem., Ant.Afr. 29 (1993) 137–149. The *vitis* as a badge of office: Dio 55,24,8. Euseb., HE 7,15. Beating: Tac., Ann. 1,23. Dig. 49,16,13,4. Cf. also Apul., Met. 9,39 where a civilian was beaten with a *vitis* by a legionary whose rank is not mentioned.

20 That, however, was the understanding of E. Sander, Historia 12 (1963) 144–166, and others, and still seems to be that of J. Thorne, in: P. Erdkamp, A Companion to the Roman Army (2007) 227.

21 Herod. 6,8,5. Veg. 1,27. HA Max, 6,2. Tert., Ad Martyras 3.

22 Pay parade and inspection: Jos. 5,9,1. Arr., Peripl. 6,2. 10,3. Three times per year: cf. the contribution 'Roman Army Pay Scales' (I.), in this volume. Titus: Jos. 5,9,1.

23 Mutinous legionaries: Tac., Ann. 1,24. Dress and morale/discipline: see above n. 1 and Onasander 10,14. 28. HA Sev.Alex. 52,3. Maurice, Strat. 1,2,25. 'Dirt and rust': Veg. 2,14.

elegance and grace of the manoeuvres.<sup>24</sup> This was also true for the horsemen riding in funerary *decursiones* as the ones shown on the base of the Antonine column.<sup>25</sup> Whether military parades were held in full armour or not, was often a political decision made by the emperor. Vespasian, for instance, had his unarmed soldiers dress in silk for his triumph in AD 71,<sup>26</sup> which put the emphasis of the victory-parade on the peaceful and prosperous times he was promising for the future.<sup>27</sup> Nero, in AD 66, on the other hand, ordered his praetorians to appear on the forum in full and shining armour for Tiridates' coronation. As Nero himself was wearing his triumphal outfit he had obviously (and successfully) set the scene to impress the Armenian king with Rome's military power. Tiridates was duly frightened and the cheering crowds were delighted.<sup>28</sup>

Tiridates' coronation is just one example to show, that the shine of weapons and armour was also intended to 'strike terror' into the enemy.<sup>29</sup> The appearance of fully armed soldiers outside the appropriate contexts must therefore have been a fearsome sight to the civilian population of the empire as well. If we are to believe Apuleius, even a single soldier travelling on his own in the provinces could instil fear into unlucky passers-by, simply by tying his shiny helmet, shield and weapons ostentatiously to the top of his luggage.<sup>30</sup> To Pliny the Younger, for one, it was certainly a truly comforting fact well worth mentioning in his praise for Trajan that this emperor and his soldiers, when entering Rome in 98, were hardly discernible from the inhabitants of the capital due both to their civilian dress and their orderly behaviour.<sup>31</sup> Vitellius, on the other hand, is reported to have entered Rome in quite a different style in the summer of 69: with trumpets sounding and surrounded by the standards of his troops Vitellius, armed with his sword, appeared together with his companions, all wearing their military cloaks. His soldiers are described as a frightful spectacle, as they were fully armed, aggressive, and moving about the city in haste and in large numbers.<sup>32</sup>

Under normal circumstances, the heavy armour and most deadly weapons (apart from daggers and swords) of the Rome cohorts were locked away.<sup>33</sup> Hence, ancient reports of fully armed troops in the streets of the imperial capital are set in

24 Arr., Takt. 34,6. Speidel (n. 1) 9. 14f. 37f. 61ff. 91.

25 G.M. Koeppl, BJ 189 (1989) 26ff. 60ff. Cf. also the contribution 'Albata decursio', in this volume.

26 Jos., BJ 7,5,4.

27 Jos., BJ 7,5,6f.

28 Suet., Nero 13. Dio 63,4f.

29 Veg., 2,14: *Plurimum enim terroris hostibus armorum splendor inportat*. See also Jos., BJ 5,9,1. Ps.Quint., Decl.mai. 3,12. Amm. 18,2,16. 27,2,6. 31,10,9 and Veg. 2,12. Amm. 31,12,12.

30 Apul., Met. 10,1,2.

31 Plin., Paneg. 23,3: *nam milites nihil a plebe habitu tranquillitate modestia differebant*.

32 Tac., Hist. 2,88. See also Suet., Vit. 11.

33 Tac., Hist. 1,38. 80. Cf. HA Sev. 6,11 and Herod. 2,13,2 and 12 with the text to n. 41 below.

narrative contexts which aim to illustrate events of illegal or inappropriate violence.<sup>34</sup> The weapons city-Roman soldiers would normally use within the city were the *fustis*-nightstick, a *virga*-rod, the butt of spears or the bladeless *hastile*, all of which were intended for non-lethal police duty.<sup>35</sup> Only as a last resort were iron weapons used against civilians.<sup>36</sup> Even issuing axes to the city-Roman soldiers for breaking into the houses of suspected criminals was seen as the decision of a tyrant emperor.<sup>37</sup> While on duty within the city, the soldiers of these units normally wore the *toga*, a belted tunic<sup>38</sup> or a *subarmalis*, the felt shirts originally designed to be worn underneath the cuirass.<sup>39</sup> Whereas many reliefs show soldiers wearing belted tunics, images of soldiers wearing just the *subarmalis* do not appear to have been deemed worth recording for eternity. However, the fourth-century Anonymus, *De Rebus Bellicis* recommends to wear a leather shirt over the felt-made *thoracomachus* (his term to describe the *subarmalis*) in bad weather in order to protect it from getting wet and heavy in the rain.<sup>40</sup> The *subarmalis*, therefore, must also have regularly been worn without cuirass. Thick felt was lighter than armour and would yet have offered some protection. A *subarmalis* was therefore an ideal garment for police duty. An incidence reported by the *Historia Augusta* can be understood to show that the *subarmalis* was indeed a standard garment of the Praetorian Guard at least on certain occasions:<sup>41</sup> when Septimius Severus reached the gates of the imperial capital in 192, he ordered the praetorians to come out and meet him *cum subarmalibus inermes*, ‘wearing only felt-shirts and unarmed’. It was Severus’ intention to assemble the guardsmen only to send them home in dishonour for their involvement in the murder of the emperor Pertinax and their disgraceful conduct in the events which followed. As the praetorians were fearing that Severus might punish them, he took great care not to arouse any suspicion of his true intentions.<sup>42</sup> Had it been entirely unusual for praetorian soldiers to leave their camp unarmed (i.e. without swords) and dressed only in *subarmales* (not tunics),

34 E.g. Tac., Ann. 14,61. 16,27. Herod. 2,5,1ff. For soldiers in Rome not normally wearing heavy armour cf. also Herod. 4,5,1. 7,11,2.

35 Suet. Cal. 26. R. Davies, *Service in the Roman Army* (1989) 88. M.P. Speidel, *Ant.Afr.* 29, 1993, 137–149. Idem (n. 4) 33f. 130f.

36 Cf. Tac., Ann. 14,8. 14,61.

37 Herod. 2,4,1. 2,6,10. Juv., 16,7ff. P.Mich. VI 425. Jos., BJ 2,306. Speidel (n. 4) 52f.

38 Toga: Tac., Ann. 16,27. Belted tunics: Herod. 7,11,2. G.M. Koeppl, BJ 186 (1986) 2ff. 21ff. (*Anaglypha Traiani*. No swords are shown and only very few daggers). Cf. also HA Marcus 27,3.

39 AE 1998, 839. Tab.Vindol. II 184,7. 17. 38. HA Sev. 6,11. HA Claud. 14,8. HA Aur. 13,3. Martianus Capella, *De Nupt.* 5,426. H. Ubl, BVbl 71 (2006) 262–276. M.P. Speidel, *Britannia* 38 (2007) 237–240.

40 Anon., *De Rebus bellicis* 15. H. Ubl, BVbl 71 (2006) 270ff. M.P. Speidel, *Britannia* 38 (2007) 238f.

41 HA Sev. 6,11.

42 Dio 74,17,3. 75,1,1. Herod. 2,13,1ff.

they would surely have recognized the plot immediately.<sup>43</sup> The contrary must therefore be true.

Ovid, while in exile at Tomis, was terrified at the daily sight of local tribesmen entering the city in arms, ever-ready to get into a fight.<sup>44</sup> In Ovid's judgement, therefore, daily life in Rome was, in general, less violent than in some far-away frontier cities. However, with very few exceptions, it was the responsibility of the local magistrates to organize and to equip their own police forces and militias.<sup>45</sup> (Ovid was less than enthusiastic when he had to join the militia of Tomis).<sup>46</sup> According to Aelius Arisitides, soldiers of the Roman army were employed as police forces in urban centers of the provinces only 'if anywhere a city is so large that it cannot police itself'.<sup>47</sup> When on duty in such cities as Alexandria, Carthago, Lugudunum, and a few others, or in the provincial hinterland, soldiers would again regularly use wooden rods, clubs or nightsticks for riot-control and for punishing individuals.<sup>48</sup> The normal dress for such duty was again the belted *tunica* with a cloak or perhaps also the *subarmalis*.<sup>49</sup> The latter certainly belonged to a soldier's standard equipment in the provinces by the end of the first century at the latest, as a military document from Carlisle reveals.<sup>50</sup> The same document also shows that the cavalry soldiers at Carlisle each seem to have had at least two *subarmales minores*, perhaps one made of felt, the other of leather.<sup>51</sup> Their description as *minores* makes sense, as one would expect the

43 Cf. above n. 34. Severus Alexander, when speaking to his soldiers, also appears to have had them assemble unarmed, even during expeditions: Herod. 6,9,3f.

44 Ovid., Trist. 5,7,11f. 5,10,44. It should, however, be remembered that Ovid's account was not free of exaggeration and fiction.

45 E.g. ILS 6087,103. CIL XII 3296. See esp. Apul., Met. 9,41,3ff. where even soldiers turn to the local magistrates after having been robbed. The magistrates then sent *lictores ceterique publici ministerii* to search the house of the accused and finally to arrest him. The soldiers, in this incident, took no part in the local police work. Cf. also Plin., Ep. 10,19f. Sel.Pap. II 254 reports the story of two guards unlawfully flogging a veteran with rods at the orders of the strategus Hierax in the village of Philadelphia in Egypt. Local police in Asia Minor used clubs and maces: M.P. Speidel, Roman Army Studies II (1992) 190f. For armouries in provincial cities see e.g. Strabo 14,2,5. Dio Chrys., or. 77/78,12. Tac., Hist. 1,57,2. 1,66,1. 2,52,2. See also C. Brélaz, La sécurité publique en Asie Mineure sous le Principat (2005).

46 Ovid., Trist., 4,1,71f.

47 Arist., Or. Rom. 67.

48 Jos., BJ 2,9,4. 2,15,5. Apul., Met. 9,39f. Acts 16,22. 22,23ff. Tab.Vindol. II 344 (*virgis castigatum esse*). ILS 6870 = T. Hauken, Petition and Response (1998) 2ff. Nr. 1 II 11ff.: *missis militib(us) / [in eu]ndem saltum Burunitanum, ali[os nos]trum adprehendi et vexari, ali[os vinc]iri, non<n>ullos cives etiam Ro[manos] virgis et fustibus effligi iusse[rit]*. M.P. Speidel, Ant.Afr. 29 (1993) 141ff. Naturally, whenever an uprising was suspected and Roman control was seen to be threatened, the authorities would order the use of deadly iron weapons. This is well illustrated e.g. in Josephus' account of the events leading to the Jewish revolt of AD 66.

49 Jos., BJ 2,12,1.

50 AE 1998, 839. Tab.Vindol. II 184 i 7. i 17. iii 38.

51 M.P. Speidel, Britannia 38 (2007) 238.



*subarmales* of horsemen to be shorter than those of footsoldiers. Horsemen may also have worn *subarmales* without cuirass for military training and there may even have been different kinds, either for training, police duty and battle, or for summer and winter. For the countless other non-combat duties of his military service, a Roman soldier would normally just wear a belted tunic and perhaps a cloak. If he carried any weapons at all, he may have been armed with just a dagger or perhaps with a dagger and a sword.<sup>52</sup> On the whole, therefore, soldiers wearing full armour must have been a much rarer sight than suggested by the images on gravestones and other monuments, let alone Hollywood productions or most documentaries on television. And even if soldiers were clad in armour, it might not have been obvious from afar, as weapons and armour were often hidden by protective coverings and coats.<sup>53</sup>

Still, even if unarmed, soldiers could be recognized by their clothing and their behaviour, *habitus atque habitudo*, as Apuleius put it.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the evidence leaves no doubt that the military belt, *balteus* or *cingulum militare* (as it was later called), was considered to be a distinctive mark of military service and it was therefore regularly shown on soldiers' gravestones.<sup>55</sup> Images on gravestones also commonly show soldiers wearing cloaks: either a heavy hooded cloak for cold and rainy weather<sup>56</sup> or a light cape for the warmer seasons.<sup>57</sup> Neither type of cloak, however, seems to have been worn in battle.<sup>58</sup> Still, such cloaks were a distinctive sign of military service, for 'taking the cloak', as a figure of speech, meant 'going to war', just as 'wearing the cloak' was an expression for 'being at war'.<sup>59</sup> Hence, Vitellius and his companions were not forgiven for entering Rome in their military cloaks, whereas the emperor Marcus Aurelius (according to the *Historia Augusta*) was praised because he would not allow his soldiers to wear their military cloaks in Italy.<sup>60</sup> Finally, the hobnailed military footwear was also specifically related to the army. Petronius, in his *Satyricon*, tells the story of Encolpius who, by girding on a sword and putting on ferocious looks, tried to disguise himself as a soldier but was soon unmasked because of the greek slippers he was wearing.<sup>61</sup>

52 Tac., Ann. 11,18. Jos., BJ 2,12,1. Amm. 28,2,8. See e.g. also the scenes XCII, XCVII, CIII on Trajan's column, and above n. 38.

53 Plut., Luc. 27. Cf. Cras. 23f. Jos., BJ 5,9,1. H. Ubl, BVbl 71 (2006) 262 with n. 15.

54 Apul., Met. 9,39. Cf. Also Petr., Sat. 82. Plin., Paneg. 23,3. Veg. 1,6.

55 Petr., Sat. 82. Tac., Hist. 1,57. 2,88. Herod. 2,13,10. Servius, Aen. VIII, 724: *omnes qui militant, cincti sunt*. Cod.Just. 1,1,4,3. Suda, s.v. ἀθηναῖοι. Isid., Or. 19,33,2. Etc.

56 Dio 57,13,5. HA Hadr. 3.

57 Cf. HA Trig. Tyr. 23,5.

58 Speidel (n. 4) 103. G. Sumner, Roman Military Clothing I (2002) 15.

59 For *saga sumere, ad saga ire, or in sagis esse* see e.g. Cic., Ver. 5,94. Cic., Phil. 5,31. 6,9. 8,32. 12,16. 14,3. Vell., 2,16,4. Cf. also Dio 50,4,4.

60 Suet., Vit. 11. HA Marc. 27,3.

61 Pet., Sat. 82.

On rare occasions, soldiers could also be ordered to dress as civilians so they would not be recognized. Thus, Pontius Pilatus fearing an unruly crowd at Jerusalem, once had his soldiers disguise as civilians. Armed with hidden swords and wooden rods they mixed with the locals who were gathering around Pilate and beginning to shout in anger, because he was planning to use the temple treasure to build an aqueduct for the city. When riots broke out he gave his soldiers a sign to draw their rods and to restore order.<sup>62</sup> Epictetus reports another occasion (from the reign of Domitian?): a soldier in civilian dress sits down next to someone in Rome and starts to revile the emperor. As soon as that person, unaware of his interlocutor's military profession, begins to join in on the abuse, he is immediately arrested.<sup>63</sup> It appears, however, that the use of soldiers disguised as civilians for such sinister purposes was a rare exception. On other occasions, a soldier's public appearance without the insignia of his military service was due to entirely different reasons. For soldiers and officers could be ordered to line up in front of their comrades with unbelted tunics as a form of punishment for cowardice.<sup>64</sup> Extreme disgrace, considered 'worse than death' was Julian's punishment of a cavalry unit which had fled during battle: for such cowardice the soldiers were ordered to march through the camp in women's clothes.<sup>65</sup> Pride, honour and shame played an eminent role in the community of the Roman army.<sup>66</sup> Hence such sentences, which aimed to publically humiliate cowards, reveal the great symbolic importance attached to the soldier's dress and to the insignia of his military service. Belt, cloak, sword and shoes belonged to the official military equipment for which soldiers had to pay.<sup>67</sup> The symbolic act of publicly laying down these insignia or being ordered to hand them in meant leaving or having to leave the army.<sup>68</sup>

Colours, of course must have played an important role as well, but the evidence is scanty and difficult to interpret. Although we know of striped tunics,<sup>69</sup> for example, it has so far remained impossible to recognize whether the stripes or their colours carried any meaning at all. Next to their normal tunics made of wool

62 Jos., BJ 2,9,4.

63 Epict. 4,13,5. Incidentally, the story proves, that a soldier could normally be recognised by his clothes. Contra: E. Sander, *Historia* 12 (1963) 153.

64 Suet., Aug. 24,2. Front., Strat. 4,1,26ff.

65 Zos. 3,3,4f. Cf. also BHL 7599.

66 Cf. e.g. J. Lendon, *Empire of Honour. The Art of Government in the Roman World* (1997) esp. 237ff.

67 Cf. the contribution 'Roman Army Pay Scales', in this volume.

68 See e.g. Dio 75.1,1f. (weapons, horses, belts). Herod. 2,13,10 (daggers, belts, clothes and other military insignia). Tertullian, *De Corona* 1,3 (cloak, sword and shoes). HA Sev.Alex. 54,4 (weapons and cloaks). For military equipment identifying Roman soldiers see also Bishop / Coulston (n. 12) 196ff.

69 For the *sticharion* see J. Sheridan, *Columbia Papyri IX – The Vestis Militaris Codex* (1998) 76f. For stripes and other decorations cf. also G. Sumner *Roman Military Clothing I* (2002) 9f. II (2003) 7ff.

or linen, soldiers may also have had a special red battle tunic (*tunica russa militaris*).<sup>70</sup> It is certain, however, that every soldier and officer possessed an additional shining white tunic, a *tunica alba*, which must have been a bleached tunic. Such tunics belonged to the soldiers' standard out-fit, as is shown by a pay-receipt on a papyrus from Masada, where a *tunica alba* is listed among the items for which money was deducted from the soldier's pay.<sup>71</sup> The *tunica alba* was worn by all ranks for special, festive occasions such as victory games or religious ceremonies.<sup>72</sup> The emperor, too, had a *vestis alba triumphalis*.<sup>73</sup> Equestrian officers are also known to have had white capes as well as a special dinner tunic, a *tunica cenatoria*.<sup>74</sup> Its looks are unknown, but judging by its name, it must have differed from the officer's usual tunic. Caligula was ridiculed by Suetonius, because during his northern expedition he ordered his officers, who had stepped in to report the safe return of a group of soldiers, to join him for dinner immediately, clad in armour as they were.<sup>75</sup> The story implies, that for the officers of the Roman army, it was normal, or generally required, to have the appropriate dinner dress even when on campaign. Common soldiers also wore tunics for dinner, though whether they differed by name or by looks from those they wore for work is not clear. (It is, however, probably safe to assume, that they did not normally wear the same tunics on both occasions.) The funeral banquet scenes on many gravestones of Roman soldiers show the image of an ideal dining scene, which celebrated the good moments of the soldier's life, moments the deceased was hoping to continuously repeat in his after-life. These scenes show the dining soldier lying on a couch, wearing a tunic and a cloak.<sup>76</sup> That must therefore have been the appropriate dinner dress for a soldier, at least when he was attending an elegant banquet. The *Historia Augusta* adds a curious detail: in the second half of the third century, a Roman general supposedly ordered his soldiers to appear at dinner (*convivium*) in a warm cape (*sagum*) in winter, and in a light one in summer, in order to prevent the lower parts of their bodies from getting exposed.<sup>77</sup> The story is fictitious, and it remains unclear whether the order was issued mainly out of concern for the soldiers' health or to enforce appropriate table manners. At any

70 HA Claud. 14,5. HA Aur. 13,3: *tunica russa ducalis*. Isid., Or. 19,22,10.

71 P.Yadin 722. A white belted tunic for the army in Cappadocia is also listed in BGU 1564 = Sel.Pap. II 395. However, it is not clear in this case, whether the tunic was simply to be left undyed or whether it was to be bleached.

72 See the contribution 'Albata Decursio', in this volume.

73 ILS 1763.

74 Tab. Vindol. II 196 with A.R. Birley Garrison life at Vindolanda (2002) 138f. Cf. HA Max. 30,5 (*vestis cenatoria*). White capes for the army in Cappadocia are also listed in BGU 1564 = Sel.Pap. II 395.

75 Suet., Cal. 45.

76 Speidel (n. 2) 5. Idem (Anm. 4) 145.

77 HA Tyr.Trig. 23,5: *nec inferiora nudarentur*.

rate, it is revealing that the funeral banquet scenes on soldiers' gravestones always show legs and hips covered by a cloak.

The evidence leaves no doubt, that it mattered to most soldiers to be wearing what was considered to be dashing dress. Thus, military tunics ordered in Egypt for the Cappadocian army were to be 'from fine, soft, white wool without any dirt, well-woven and well-edged, pleasing and undamaged'.<sup>78</sup> Egypt is known to have been a major source for military clothing.<sup>79</sup> Gaul, which was also famous for its extensive range of dyestuffs,<sup>80</sup> appears to have been another.<sup>81</sup> With the increasing numbers of soldiers from outside Italy serving in the Roman army on far-away frontiers, the preferences for certain styles of clothing also began to change. In AD 69, the Roman general Aulus Caecina, arriving from the frontier on the Rhine, shocked the toga-clad Roman citizens of Northern Italy by wearing Germanic trousers and a cloak of various colours.<sup>82</sup> It still did not pass unnoticed in the early third century, that the emperor Caracalla preferred to wear the same Germanic outfit when he took the field. That eventually gave him his nickname, as the word *caracalla* denotes a Germanic cloak. Dressing like his soldiers on the northern frontier (or more precisely: like the German soldiers he had raised for his bodyguard from north of the frontier) was a strong message, that he wanted to be seen as their comrade, and by continuing to wear such dress (as well as a blond wig in German hairstyle) in Syria and Mesopotamia, Caracalla may indeed have been the one responsible for making this style of dress popular with soldiers throughout the empire.<sup>83</sup> At any rate, long-sleeved tunics, tight trousers and brightly coloured cloaks, all previously considered effeminate and barbarian, became the new third century dress, worn in all branches of the Roman army.<sup>84</sup>

78 BGU VII 1564 = Sel.Pap. II 395. Cf. P.Oxy. 4434.

79 E.g. BGU VII 1564 = Sel.Pap. II 395. P.Ryl. II 189. P.Oxy. 4434. Cf. in general Sheridan (n. 69).

80 Plin., NH 22,2.

81 R.O. Fink, Roman Military Records on Papyrus (1971) 63 ii 18. Tab. Vindol. II 255 + add. = III p. 157 with Birley (n. 74) 101 and idem, in: R. Haensch / J. Heinrichs, *Herrschen und Verwalten* (2007) 320f. Cf. also Tab. Vindol. II 154 + add. = III p. 155 with Birley (n. 74) 79.

82 Tac., Hist. 2,20. For a Roman description of Germanic clothes see Tac., Germ. 17. cf. also 6.

83 See esp. Herod. 4,7,3. Caracalla as 'fellow soldier' etc.: Dio 77,13,1. 77,17,4. 78,3,1f. 78,9,1. 78,16,7. 78,24,1. Cf. Herod. 4,4,7f. 4,7,4ff. HA Carac. 2,1. 2,3. 9,3. 11,5. Speidel (n. 4) 65. 104. Caracalla's portraits as sole ruler regularly show him wearing a military cloak. Even his fierce looks (cf. also Dio 78,11,1<sup>2</sup>f.) should be understood to show him as a soldier. Cf. Petr., Sat. 82. Apul., Met. 9,39. and esp. Herod. 7,1,12 likening the emperor Maximinus' frightening appearance with that of a barbarian élite warrior. Compare also the facial expressions of the Roman soldiers on the Great Trajanic Frieze. On the subject see A.-M. Leander Touati, Portrait and historical relief. Some remarks on the meaning of Caracalla's sole ruler portrait, in: Idem et al. (eds.), *Munuscula Romana* (1991) 117–131.

84 Effeminate and barbarian: cf. e.g. Cic., Fam. 9,15,2,6. Verg. Aen. 9,615. Gell., Noct. Att. 6(7),12,3ff., compare also Suet., Div. Iul. 45. Third century dress: Speidel (n. 4) 103f. Even at the end of the third century the pretender Allectus was accused of wearing Germanic dress and long hair: Paneg. Lat.8,16,4.

By the late third century the soldier's taste for luxurious clothes had reached a point where a heavy coloured cape cost more than a fine war horse and the élite soldiers of the emperor's bodyguards would wear capes embroidered with threads of gold and silver called *barbaricae*.<sup>85</sup> Yet even in the preceding centuries, ordinary soldiers would have needed to spend a considerable percentage of their pay for clothing. In the case of one auxiliary soldier in AD 81, the expenses for clothing reached 245,5 drachmae.<sup>86</sup> That was nearly one third of the soldier's annual pay.<sup>87</sup> What type of clothes he bought is not known, but the money would have been enough for nearly ten woollen tunics<sup>88</sup> or nine linen tunics<sup>89</sup> or 12 *sagacia* cloaks.<sup>90</sup> It is true, of course, that the amount of such payments varied, depending partly on personal needs and tastes, but also on the soldier's type of unit and his rank. Pliny the Younger, for example, helped out a friend of his who needed 40'000 sesterces to buy a centurion's outfit.<sup>91</sup> That sum would have equalled over 33 annual salaries of a legionary soldier or well over twice the centurion's own annual salary.<sup>92</sup> Soldiers, under-officers and centurions in particular also had to pay for their servants' clothes.<sup>93</sup> Thus, a centurion at Vindolanda ordered six *sagacia*-cloaks, an unknown number of *saga*-cloaks, seven *palliola*-cloaks and five or six tunics for his servants.<sup>94</sup>

The conclusion to be drawn from the evidence presented above is that the Roman soldier's every-day appearance was more varied, more context-related and more capable of expressing symbolic meaning than has so far generally been recognized. Taken together, the evidence clearly shows, that Roman soldiers needed a substantial number and variety of clothes for summer and winter, different weather and various occasions both for themselves and for their servants. It is hardly surprising, therefore, to find clothing playing such a prominent role in both private and official military documents, and to see this particular need of the Roman army leading to the creation of the *vestis militaris* – tax.<sup>95</sup>

85 S. Lauffer, *Diokletians Preisedikt* (1971), *sagum*: 4'000 *denarii* and *equus optimus militaris*: 3'000 *denarii*. Bullion capes (*barbaricae*) worn by the emperor's bodyguard since Caracalla: Herod. 4,7,3. M.P. Speidel, *Ant.Tard.* 5 (1997) 231–237.

86 Fink (n. 81) 68 iii.

87 For soldiers' pay see the contribution 'Roman Army Pay Scales', in this volume.

88 25 drachmae (= sestertii) each (= 6,25 *denarii*): BGU VII 1564.5.

89 7 *denarii* each (= 28 sestertii): P.Yadin 722.

90 5 *denarii* (= 20 sestertii) 2 asses each: Tab.Vindol. II 184.

91 Plin., Ep. 6,25.

92 Cf. the contribution 'Sold und Wirtschaftslage', in this volume.

93 For soldiers' servants see Speidel (n. 45) 342ff.

94 Tab.Vindol. II 255. Birley (n. 74) 101.

95 Cf. Sheridan (n. 69). For the importance of supplying the army with clothing see *Historia Augusta*, Sev. Alex. 52. Cf. also Veg. 3,2. etc. Summer and winter: e.g. P.Oxy. 4434. For earlier imperial contributions towards the soldiers' expenses for clothing (or for demands thereof) cf. e.g. Tac., *Hist.* 3,50. Suet., *Vesp.* 8,3. HA Sev.Alex. 40,5. In general: see the contributions 'Roman Army Pay Scales' and 'Sold und Wirtschaftslage', in this volume.



Fig. 1

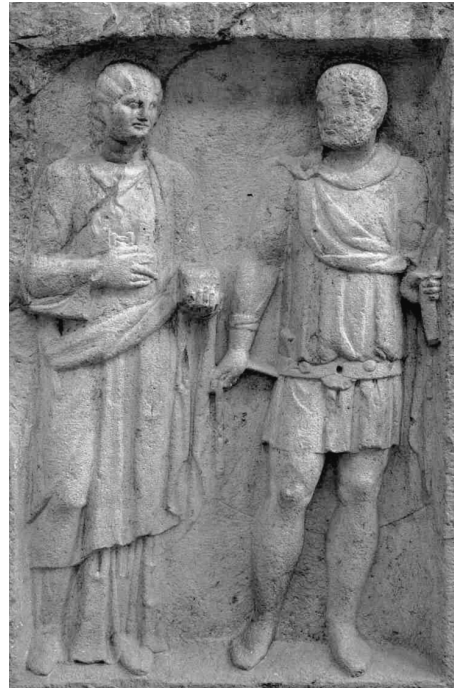


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

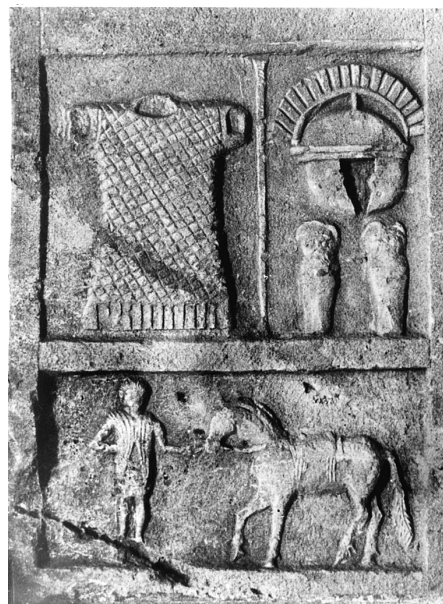


Fig. 4

#### Roman military gravestones (details):

Fig. 1: Fully armed legionary. 1st c. AD (Wiesbaden). Fig. 2: Soldier and his wife in civilian clothes. 3rd c. AD (Augsburg). Fig. 3: Auxiliary horseman and horse-stabber. 1st c. AD (Gloucester). Fig. 4: Legionary centurion's military equipment, servant and horse. 1st. c. AD (Carnuntum).