

Roman Infantry Helmets and Commemoration among Soldiers

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Abstract

It has long been recognized that perceptions of individual posthumous memory and the commemorative devices harnessed to maintain it differ greatly through time. In pre-Christian Rome, the belief that an individual enjoyed an afterlife through the perpetuation of their memory before and after death was central to Roman social identity and encompassed not only the act of reproducing or recalling an individual or an event, but reflected an individual's character and virtues. Recent studies demonstrate that the material correlates of commemorative behavior pervaded the Roman visual landscape. Although the majority of evidence bespeaking commemoration represents the elite, the importance of memory was widely recognized. It would, therefore, be difficult to assume that only the upper classes engaged in such rituals. Roman soldiers, as individuals in a profession that took them far from their native land, also practiced such behavior. Without the means to engage in traditional commemorative practices, Roman legionaries devised unique methods to fulfill their commemorative needs. This investigation argues that the personalization of infantry helmets did more than denote personal property. It also became a tool created by soldiers to safeguard their memory. As objects that pervaded the visual landscape of the military realm, legionary helmets became an ideal medium for commemorative behavior.

Keywords

commemoration; Roman army; infantry helmets; memory; legionaries; ancient warfare

It has long been recognized that perceptions of individual posthumous memory and the commemorative devices utilized to maintain it differ greatly through time. Religious ideologies, the establishment of political institutions and social revolutions are but a few of the modifications to the human condition that initiated changes to notions of posthumous memory. In pre-Christian Rome, the belief that an individual enjoyed an afterlife through the perpetuation of their memory before and after death was central to Roman social identity (Varmer 2004, 2). Thus, in an oration asking the senate to honor his dear friend Servius Sulpicius with a public funeral,

Cicero (*Phil.* 9.4.10) said, “the life of the dead is set in the memory of the living.”¹ To the Romans, posthumous memory was important in both life and death, encompassing not only the act of reproducing or recalling an individual or an event, but by being directly linked to immortality, it reflected an individual’s character and virtues. Immortality and one’s identity survived through memory; if one’s memory existed after death, something of the individual survived. Recent studies demonstrate that the material manifestations of commemorative practices (i.e. sculpture, funerary monuments, inscriptions, monumental structures, portraiture) pervaded all realms of the visual landscape and projected the name, image, and, at times, property of the deceased in order to secure and perpetuate memory in life and death (Varner 2000, 2006; Flower 2006; Carroll 2006; Hedrick 2000).

Although the majority of historical and material evidence of commemoration practices represents the elite, the importance of memory permeated society, and it would be wrong to assume that only the upper classes engaged in such rituals. Indeed, Roman soldiers, as individuals in a profession that took them far from their native land for whom premature death was a real possibility, engaged in commemorative practices through inscribing military gear. Despite the wealth of information related to the armament of the army, few studies have sought to investigate inscribed gear. Beginning in the fourth century B.C., and continuing to the third century A.D., soldiers, craftsmen, and artisans throughout the ancient Mediterranean inscribed military equipment. Individuals inscribed a variety of implements, including swords, spearheads, leaden sling-bullets (actually in low relief rather than inscribed), shields, and helmets. The inscriptions served many functions, ranging from simply denoting personal property to other more socially-charged purposes, such as belittling an opponent or invoking a deity. It is the purpose of this investigation to demonstrate that the personalization of Roman imperial legionary helmets did more than merely denote personal property, but to show that the practice became a tool created by soldiers to safeguard their memory. It is important, however, to recognize that memory in the ancient world, or any society for that matter, was never a static construct. By drawing on Halbwachs’ (1992; cf. Connerton 1989) assertion that memory must be seen as a social, rather than individual, phenomenon, the Roman army becomes a suitable subject of study. Furthermore, in examining memory, Rowlands (1993; see also Bradley 2000)

¹ All literary translations are the author’s unless otherwise noted.

differentiates between inscribed practices, whereby memory is manifested in commemorative monuments that are repetitive and materially visible in public domain, and incorporated practices, characterized by privacy and fleeting symbolism. Inscribed infantry helmets, as repetitive and materially visible, lend themselves to a study of inscribed memory practices. As objects that pervaded the visual landscape of the military realm and projected all three features of the individual (name, image, and property), legionary helmets became an ideal medium for commemorative behavior. They were, as will be discussed below, personal property and projected the individual's name and image as a Roman soldier.

Procurement of Gear

The procurement of arms and armament varied throughout Roman history. Historical evidence from authors such as Livy indicates that during the early Republican period a soldier typically purchased his own equipment, while during the late Republican through Imperial periods, the creation of a professional army mandated that a soldier be given funds to purchase gear, which they eventually paid back. During the reign of Rome's sixth king, Servius Tullius, 580-530 B.C., the state adopted a new constitution that grouped the populace into seven classes for voting purposes in the assembly. The Servian constitution had both political and military intentions, as the constitution organized the population into groups that were tied to the financial status of individuals and their ability to arm themselves (Keppie 1984/1998, 16). The *Equites*, the first of the seven classes, provided the state with a cavalry. The infantry was served by second through fifth classes, whereas the poorest class, the *Capite Censi*, was exempt from military service. The constitution essentially harnessed the wealth of Rome for its defense.

By the late sixth century B.C., the defensively-minded army diverged from that of the heavier armed Greek-style hoplite, and was gradually streamlined to become a more offensive-minded unit (Keppie 1984/1998, 17). In the late fifth and in the beginning of the fourth century B.C., Gallic invasions had shown that the Roman legion, which greatly resembled a hoplite-style phalanx, was unable to adapt to open-order fighting because it could not maneuver as a single compact unit. The division of the legion into 30 maniples, small loose formations within the legion capable of limited independent action, and the reforms of Marcus Furius Camillus countered the inflexible structure and allowed more offensive maneuvers.

The Camillian System, though still based on wealth, initiated the creation of three infantry types, the *hastati* (spearmen), the *principes* (heavy infantry), and the *triarii* (experienced heavy infantry) (see Livy 8.8-10).

In 123 B.C. the tribune Gaius Gracchus, as a part of his social reforms, introduced many measures that led to the establishment of a professional army, including a requirement for the state to supply arms and armament. This decision to supply soldiers with equipment was a key stepping-stone to the creation of a professional army. Beginning in 107 B.C., under the influence of the general Gaius Marius, the army took further steps towards professionalization by granting all Italian troops citizenship and standardizing the legion through the replacement of the three infantry types with a single unit of heavy infantry. The reorganized legion was maintained well into the Imperial period, and with Marius' reforms, the army became both a cohesive fighting force and a social unit.

Given the importance of the notion that military gear was personal property, rather than state-owned, capable of commemorating an individual, it is important to discuss how soldiers procured their gear. Papyrological evidence from military receipts demonstrates that, upon enlistment, soldiers received a sum of money for equipment and transportation expenses. One notable receipt reads, "Quintus Herennius ... to Longinus Tituleius, *centurio* of the same cohort. I have received from you *denarii* one hundred ninety-two, *obols* twenty, for deposit for twenty-three Asian recruits assigned to the century" (Fink 1971, 280). The document demonstrates that, instead of receiving equipment, the new recruit accepted a sum of money upon enlistment, which he used to purchase gear. However, it is more likely that an official transferred the sum to the recruit's fort where he purchased his gear. Vegetius (*Mil.* 2.19-2.20) describes military records, monetary accounts, and deposits in the later Roman Empire. The overseer of military accounts later placed a deduction for this aid on the soldier's account. In further considering the papyrological evidence, personal letters of the Imperial period preserved in the Tiberianus Archive demonstrate that soldiers procured additional gear while on active duty. The archive consists of a series of letters written in Greek and Latin found beneath a stairway at Karanis in northern Africa. The letters date to the early second century A.D. and offer a glimpse into the daily life and military affairs of Claudius Tiberianus, a Roman veteran who settled in Karanis. One of Claudius' letters reads, "I ask and beg you, father, for I have no one dear to me except you, after the gods, to send to me by Valerius a battle sword, a [...], a pickaxe, a grappling iron, two of the best spears obtainable, a ... cloak, and a girdled tunic, together with my trousers" (Youtie and Winter 1951, n.467). This request shows a recruit in the navy, Claudius Terentianus, asking his father to send

equipment, suggesting that his father must purchase the accoutrements, rather than sending his son gear he may have already possessed, with the exception of his trousers. Since Terentianus' father was also on active duty, he did not receive a timely response, thus prompting a second letter, "I beg you, father, if it meets your approval, to send me from there boots of soft leather and a pair of socks. *Caligae nucleatae* are worthless; I provide myself with footwear twice a month. And I beg you to send me a pickaxe. The *optio* took from me the one that you sent me" (Youtie and Winter 1951, n.468). This letter contains a shorter list of requests for Terentianus' father. Instead of a lengthy list of weapons, Terentianus requested clothing and a replacement pickaxe. Hence, although soldiers received a monetary allowance for equipment, they repaid the stipend, and with the supplementary gear purchased and sent by their loved ones, soldiers undoubtedly saw their panny as personal property.

Production of Gear

The production of Roman arms and armor was region-dependent, rather than centralized. Indeed, no evidence of a centralized production area or a single factory that mass-produced standardized gear exists. The large scale production of arms and armament was carried out by state-controlled factories in established provinces, while along the frontier, smiths employed by legionary camps carried out small scale production and repairs (Bishop and Coulston 2006, 233-40). The diversity of production zones led to a diversity of armament styles, including helmets. Scholars have made attempts to establish typologies of infantry helmets, but neither the type-site identification scheme traditionally employed by Continental scholars, nor Robinson's (1975) somewhat inflexible grouping and implied linear development, adequately reflects the diverse nature of the evidence or takes regional variations into account. Bishop and Coulston (2006, 65-66, 100-106, 142-44, 173-78, 210-16) in contrast, combine both archaeological and literary evidence to produce a typology that moves beyond a reliance on type-site categories. For the purpose of this work, a simplified typology for late Republican through early Imperial helmets is offered—a compromise between the works of Robinson (1975) and Bishop and Coulston (2006)—in order to show the basic technical development of legionary helmets. Three primary helmet types can be discerned in the evolution of this implement over time, as shown in Figure 1, though it is important to note that each helmet form has several sub-types. The Montefortino type, developed in the late third century B.C., is characterized by a bronze elongated bowl with

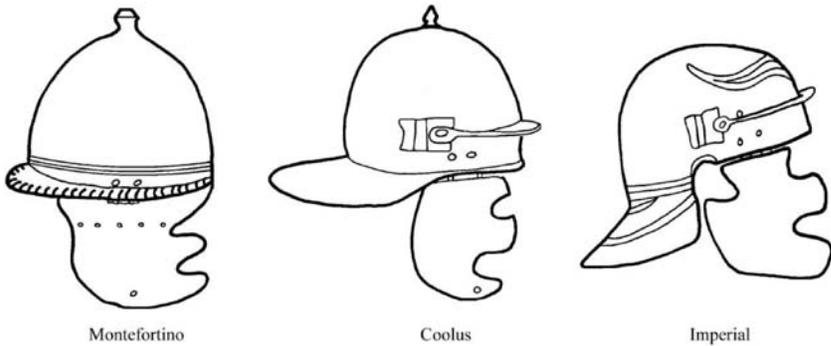


Figure 1. Development of the Roman Infantry Helmet

attached cheek-pieces and a shallow neck guard. The Coolus helmet, developed in the third century B.C., is a broad bowl shaped helmet, hammered to form with an elongated ribbed neck guard, a brow guard, and large hinged cheek guards, which were manufactured separately and riveted together. The Imperial helmet, which includes both Gallic and Italic sub-types, was developed in the late first century B.C. and includes a pair of extensively designed brow-guards and a large neck guard. The elongated neck guards of the Coolus and Imperial helmets became the primary space utilized by soldiers for commemorative behavior.

Commemoration and Memory in the Roman world

The surviving funerary inscriptions, personal sculpture, monumental inscriptions, certain forms of architecture, portraiture, death masks, and historical evidence demonstrate that Roman society openly engaged in commemorative behavior in order to perpetuate memory in life and preserve it in death. Commemorative practices focused on an individual's name, image, and property to identify, preserve and perpetuate one's memory. The *tria nomina*, the Roman system of personal names that included a *praenomen* (given name), *nomen* (the family name), and *cognomen* (nickname or personal name), was encoded with one's family background, patronage, and social status. The Roman name truly represented one's character and often conveyed their position in political or military affairs. Therefore, commemorative inscriptions, whether funerary or monumental, included a *titulus*, introducing the subject by presenting their

name in connection to supplemental information, such as patronyms, tribal affiliations, geographic origins, and military units, depending on the status, profession, and citizenship of the subject.

Images, including marble busts, statues, paintings, and other forms of portraiture—although reserved for individuals who possessed the resources to commission them—played an important role in commemorative practices. Emperors and aristocrats plastered civic, religious, and domestic spaces with their image because society recognized the media as anthropomorphic representations of the individual (Varner 2004, 9-10). Many literary accounts comment on the destruction of imperial images after the condemnation of an unfavorable emperor, and the material evidence of intentional damage to portraiture attests to the connection between an individual and their image. In many cases, plebes attacked representations of the condemned as if they were the actual person. Pliny the Younger (*Pan.* 52.4-52.5) recorded the destruction of the Emperor Domitian's image during which the populace attacked the representation with such ferocity, as if the individual would suffer pain and injury from every blow. The plebes in Rome were not the only group to participate in such behavior. Tacitus (*Hist.* 1.55) recounts how, after the assassination of Galba, four of his centurions were overpowered by opposing soldiers when they tried to protect Galba's image. The mutinous legionaries put the four centurions in chains and proceeded to stone Galba's image and throw down his statues. Though much later, the *Historia Augusta* preserves an incident attesting to the power of an image representing an individual. A portrait of Celsus, a North African usurper, was hoisted on a cross while the mob acted as if they were seeing Celsus himself under duress (*Scriptores Historiae Augustae Tyranni Triginta*, 29.4). Attacks against memory through images were so prevalent that every generation during 500 years of Roman history witnessed the symbolic destruction of imagery in a public space (Stewart 1999, 161).

Personal property also played a role in preserving memory. Hales (2000, 44) argues that it is important to interpret the house as the man because Roman society saw the two as inseparable. After the Catilinarian conspiracy in the middle of the 60s B.C., the tribune Publius Clodius Pulcher indicted Cicero for the illegal execution of Catiline's conspirators. As a result, Cicero became a public enemy and went into exile. Plutarch (*Cic.* 33) recounts how, after driving away Cicero, Clodius burned his villas, pulled down his house, and erected a temple to Liberty where his house once stood. Returning in 57 B.C., Cicero asked the senate to rebuild his home, but the reluctance of the senate to approve the request and Clodius' continued attempts to block the measure indicates just how important the physical

reminder of Cicero's property, as representative of the individual, was thought to be.

The importance of memory and the display of the name, image, and property in commemorative devices are further attested to by acts of memory censorship and erasure. A ban on one's memory was considered the most severe penalty imposed by the Roman legal system (Flower 1998, 155; see also Flower 2000, 58; Varner 2004, 2, 11; Mustakallio 1994, 13). Although condemnations were initiated by the senate, the emperor, and the army, the Romans did not possess a term for the disparate sanctions used to eradicate or dishonor memory (Varner 2001, 41). Modern scholars of memory erasure have preferred the term modern *damnatio memoriae*, a term that first appeared in a Christoph Schreiter and Johann Heinrich Gerlach thesis of 1689. Whether *damnatio memoriae* was an official systematic process or a disparate set of sanctions practiced on an *ad hoc* basis, the process served to either eradicate or dishonor the memory of the target.

The senate or, in fact, anyone looking to eradicate the memory of a condemned individual must have realized that total erasure was not possible. Yet, given the importance of memory, total eradication was certainly attempted (Kajava 1995, 203). A recent archaeological discovery sheds light on the case of Cnaeus Calpurnius Piso, a governor of Syria and close friend of the emperor Tiberius. After Germanicus' assassination in 19 A.D. in Antioch, the senate charged Piso, a bitter rival of Germanicus, with his murder (Cass. Dio, 58.11; Tac. *Ann.* 3.10-3.18). Piso, however, committed suicide and, as a result, the senate condemned him as a public enemy. The discovery of a *senatus consultum* in Spain dating back to 10 December 20 A.D. outlines six post mortem sanctions against Piso. These included: (1) women were forbidden to mourn Piso's death, (2) Piso's public and private portraits were to be destroyed, (3) Piso's family, the Calpurnii, were restricted from displaying his wax death mask at his funeral and subsequent processions, (4) Piso's name was to be removed from an inscription on a statue of Germanicus on the Campus Martius, (5) Piso's property was to be confiscated, and (6) all additions commissioned by Piso on his private houses were to be destroyed (Damon and Takács 1999; Flower 1998; Griffin 1997; Kajava 1995). The sanctions are clearly aimed against the devices used by Piso (public and private portraits, a death mask, nominal inscriptions, and private homes) to safeguard his memory in life and death by attacking his name, image, and property. The sanctions essentially eradicated Piso's memory, and his family was forced to continue as if he had not existed.

Attacks that sought to publicly dishonor memory often proscribed selective destruction, thus the target could still be identified from the context. The intentional defacement of imperial busts typically concentrated on

the sensory organs (eyes, nose, mouth, and sometimes the ears), while the rest of the image was left intact and remained legible (Varner 2001, 42). The attacks typically left a “T” shaped path of destruction that transformed the portraits from commemorative monuments into graphic reminders of an emperor’s fall from grace (Varner 2000, 14). Inscriptions also suffered the same fate, as attempts to erase one’s name from a text or inscription rarely left the name illegible, thus publically dishonoring the target (Flower 2000, 59).

The surviving evidence for the aforementioned commemorative behavior represents the Roman elite. The importance of memory and the prevalence of commemorative practices throughout the visual landscape, however, reveal that one cannot assume that the remaining social groups did not engage in such behavior. Soldiers on active duty could not participate in traditional modes of commemorative behavior. Unlike emperors or aristocrats, soldiers did not have the resources to place their image or name in civic space for all to see and interact with. Roman legionaries on active duty existed outside of the social environment of established civic spaces, but they understood the importance of memory and the need for commemoration. Soldiers, therefore, devised unique practices to serve their commemorative needs and ensure a lasting memory.

Commemoration in the Army

The rise of unique soldierly commemoration practices was not possible without a strong supportive social environment. While separated from their natal homes, legionaries were surrounded by comrades who acted as a pseudo-family, providing a support network for its members. The camaraderie shared between troops encouraged an environment where they took care of each other in life as well as after death by providing a proper burial, when possible, and carrying out any requests outlined in a will (Champlin 1991). These relationships not only alleviated the army’s responsibility of disposing bodies, but also strengthened the camaraderie in the ranks through their unique commemorative practices, which at times included erecting funerary monuments, but more often inscribing their most valuable personal property, their military gear.

Recent studies of Roman funerary practices have shown that soldiers on active duty erected funerary monuments (Carroll 2006; Gilchrist 2003; Hope 2003; Saller and Shaw 1984). Of the surviving military tombstones representing legionary soldiers, most are composed of two parts, an epitaph consisting of a *titulus* and short text (*verba*) and a pictorial motif.

The epitaphs are mostly formulaic, presenting the name, age, rank, years of military service, legion, century, and place of origin of the deceased soldier. The pictorial motifs presented the soldier in military garb often with some form of arms and armament. The monuments commemorate the subject on multiple levels—as a person, a soldier, a member of a military unit, and a member of a tribal/ethnic group. Most soldiers, however, did not utilize funerary monuments to preserve their memory. According to Hope (2003, 85), erecting funerary monuments was a camp-based activity characteristic of peace time, and the thousands of surviving military tombstones do not belong to soldiers who died in combat. Due to the vagaries of time, not all such monuments survive; furthermore, only soldiers with sufficient resources capable of erecting a tombstone were commemorated in such a manner (Hope 2003, 2001). There was a need, therefore, to develop a more accessible system of commemoration.

MacMullen (1982, 1984) argues that inscriptions are useful windows through which we may examine the Roman world, and contends that the production of inscriptions in the Roman Empire was not constant through time. During the first and second centuries A.D., a considerable boom in epigraphic production occurred with noticeable lulls before and after. Rome's "epigraphic habit" occurred during a 200-year span in the early Imperial period. During most of the Republican era, soldiers did not envision their military exploits as a career, and fully expected to return home after a relatively short period of military duty. Accordingly, after the second century A.D., when many military camps became permanent bases, the use of funerary monuments declined (Jones 1964/1986, 1025-68). The late Imperial period saw permanent forts where many soldiers were either locally recruited or became locals over time. Thus, the ties of camaraderie within the army declined in importance, as military bases became permanent homes capable of sustaining a supportive social network based on familial bonds. The apex of commemoration through inscribing equipment, thus, occurred in the first two centuries A.D., which is consistent with the climax of the epigraphic habit, and roughly correlates to the *floruit* of the Coolus and Imperial helmet types.

Soldiers did not use every piece of their equipment as commemorative monuments. For several reasons, the infantry helmet was the most conducive item in the legionary panoply for commemoration through inscriptions. First, the helmet was a valuable piece of personal property that was also an item featured in other non-utilitarian forms of ritual behavior, including votive deposition (Roymans 1995, 28-31; Bishop and Coulston 2006, 26-34; Frielinghaus 2011) and hoarding (Bradley 1998; Wait 1985; Rald

1994). Second, unlike funerary monuments, every soldier had a helmet. Third, soldiers, on occasion, recycled their helmets, which, coupled with nominal inscriptions, provided a form of commemoration that circulated throughout the army. New helmet owners recognized and respected the inscriptions of a former comrade. Although the commentary presented in the *Roman Inscriptions of Britain* of the Thames Helmet (Frere and Tomlin 1991; *RIB* 2425.2) suggests that a few inscriptions have been erased, my own examination of the helmet found no evidence of deliberate erasure may just as well have been abbreviations. Finally, the development of an elongated neck guard provided ample writing space for a soldier's name, making the commemorative inscriptions visible in public space. When soldiers wore their helmets, whether on parade or in combat, they were in an organized formation. Thus, as the inscribed neck guards were large and slightly tapered downward allowing easy access for the spectator, each soldier—with the exception of the individuals in the first row—had the ability to see the commemorative inscriptions. Legionary soldiers were continually reminded of colleagues who came before and the soldiers fighting or celebrating with them in the present. Infantry helmets were, therefore, not only protective gear, but also commemorative monuments.

The most insightful helmets are those that bear multiple inscriptions. Most scholars, however, have neglected to examine these pieces in detail. The only works to address and somewhat interpret the inscription tradition are those of MacMullen (1960) and Bishop and Coulston (2006, 43-45). In discussing the supply of arms, MacMullen (1960, 23) examined the tradition of inscribing arms and armor. He identified three categories of inscribed equipment: those inscribed with the owner's name and unit, items inscribed with multiple names, and those that bear the name of a manufacturer. MacMullen argues that since soldiers did not keep their gear with them, as it was the responsibility of an overseer of arms who stored the equipment in a designated storeroom until needed, nominal inscriptions were meant to differentiate personal property. Bishop and Coulston (2006) acknowledge the value of inscribed gear for dating individual pieces, but agree with MacMullen that nominal inscriptions primarily served to mark ownership. For MacMullen and for Bishop and Coulston, inscriptions on gear were, with little question, meant to denote personal property and, in instances where items present multiple names, the evidence merely demonstrates that valuable gear was extensively circulated and recycled. Although multiple inscriptions do show a conscious act of marking personal property, they also indicate a unique commemorative practice.

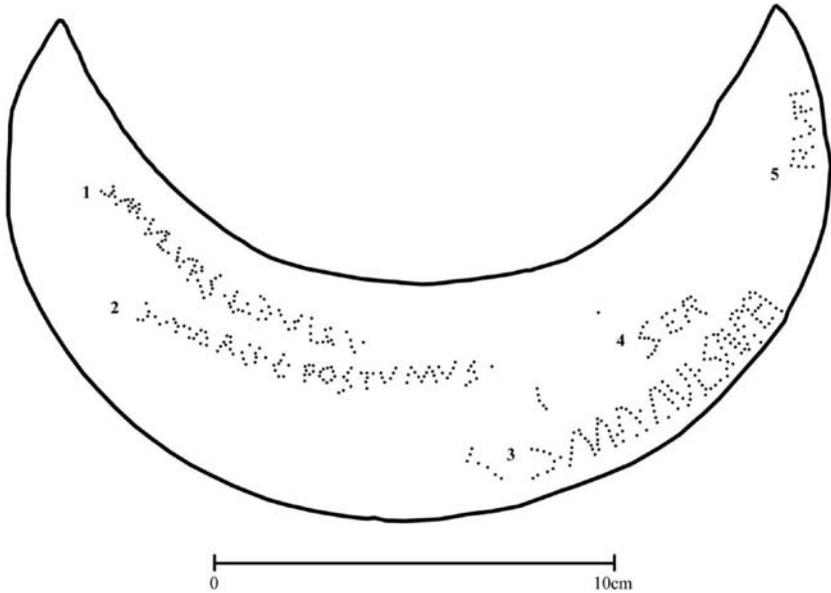


Figure 2. Thames Helmet Neck Guard

The “Thames Helmet,” housed at the British Museum in London, is a Coolus-type helmet dating to the first century A.D. (Frere and Tomlin 1991; *RIB* 2425.2; MacMullen 1960, 36; Wright 1951, 142-43; Robinson 1975, 32). The British Museum purchased the helmet in 1950 from a private collector, who stated that the helmet was dredged from the Walbrook River, a tributary of the Thames River.² The neck guard bears several inscriptions indicating at least four different owners, see Figure 2.

1. $\text{C} \cdot \text{M} \cdot \overline{\text{VAL}} \cdot \text{VRS} \cdot \text{L} \cdot \text{DVLCI}$ ³
C(enturia) M(arci) Val(eri) Urs(i) L(uci) Dulci
 “(Property) of Lucius Dulcius in the century of Marcus Valeris Ursus”

² I would like to thank Ralph Jackson and Richard Hobbs of the British Museum for permission to examine the Thames Helmet during the summer of 2007 and for access to the museum acquisition records.

³ The epigraphic conventions employed are selective and based on the systems of John Bodel (2001) and Lawrence Keppie (1991).

[---] Four dashes within brackets represent missing letters, the exact number of which cannot be ascertained.

The inscription follows a pattern: abbreviated century designation with a C in retrograde, abbreviated *tria nomina* of the centurion, and an abbreviated *praenomen* followed by an unabbreviated *nomen* in the genitive case indicating the owner. The centurion's *nomen* appears in ligature.

2. Ɔ · MARCI · L · POSTVMVS

C(enturia) Marci L(ucius) Postumus

“Lucius Postumus in the century of Marcus”

Like the first inscription, the century designation is abbreviated with a C in retrograde and the owner's *praenomen* is abbreviated. The centurion's *praenomen* is not abbreviated and in the genitive case, while his *nomen* is not given. The owner's *nomen*, however, is unabbreviated and in the nominative case.

3. Ɔ · MA · AVL · SAVFEI

C(enturia) Ma(rtialis) A(uli) Aul(i) Saufei

“(Property) of Aulus Saufeus in the century of Martialis”

The inscription is similar to the first in that the century designation is abbreviated with a C in retrograde and the centurion's *praenomen* is abbreviated. The owner's *praenomen* is abbreviated and his *nomen* is unabbreviated in the genitive case. The centurion's name is problematic, as there appears to be a dot separating the “M” and “A” following the century designation. If this is the case, the inscription would read: “(Property) of Aulus Aulus Saufeus in the century of Martialis.” Although Aulus can be abbreviated with a single letter “A” and as “AUL,” the name is a well-attested *praenomen*, but not *nomen*. The owner's name, therefore, should be read as Aulus Saufeus and the “A” is most likely associated with the centurion's praenominal abbreviation. Wright (1951, 142-43) and Frere and Tomlin (1991, 45) also interpret the second and third letters as an abbreviation for Martialis.

4. SER

Ser(vius)

“Servius”

The inscription is a standard *praenomen* abbreviation denoting the nominative case.

\overline{ABC} Overlined characters represent letters joined in a ligature.

(abc) Letters within parentheses represent missing letters that have been supplied by the editor.

... Dots represent missing letters.

5. RVFI

Rufi

“(Property) of Rufus”

The inscription is a *praenomen* in the genitive case.

The Verulamium Museum in southeast England holds a Coolus-type helmet with multiple inscriptions on the neck guard.⁴ Archaeologists recovered the helmet from Nijmegen, a Roman city in what is now the eastern part of the Netherlands. The original fort, founded in the first century A.D., is situated on the bank of the Waal River. The helmet dates to the first century A.D. and bears two nominal inscriptions on the neck guard.

1. PP · · PAPIRI

(Centuria) p(rimi) p(ili) . Papiri

“(Property) of Papirius (in the century) of the first maniple.”

The inscription is not well preserved. It is most likely that PP is an abbreviation referring to a centurion. A letter representing the *praenomen* of the owner has been lost.

2. ○VICTORSI M · VS.R[----]

C(enturia) Victoris M(arci)[----]

“(Property) of Marcus [----] in the victorious century.”

The inscription contains a century designation abbreviated with a C in retrograde and the centurion’s *praenomen* is likely an erroneous genitive. Frere and Tomlin (1991, 45) also argue for an erroneous genitive. The owner’s *praenomen* is abbreviated, and *nomen* cannot be reconstructed with certainty.

The Bavarian State Archaeological Collection in Munich, Germany houses a Coolus-type helmet discovered in 1959 near the small Roman fortress of Burlafingen.⁵ Similar to the two previous examples, the helmet dates to the first century A.D. and bears two nominal inscriptions and a specific legion on the neck guard: “Publius Aurelius,” “Marcus Munatius in the century of Arabus,” and *legio* “XVI Gallia.” The name Publius Aurelius is not associated with a century or *legio* XVI Gallia.

The previous examples not only indicate evidence of a soldierly tradition of commemoration on expensive gear, but also provide insight as to how the individuals sought to commemorate themselves. Some soldiers

⁴ The helmet has been published in the *Roman Inscriptions of Britain* (RIB 2425.3) and Robinson 1975, 32-33 (pls. 58-61).

⁵ The helmet, inventory number 1965/801, was published in Klein 2003, 33 (abb. 7).

associated themselves with a specific century, whereas others list a legion or a maniple, all of which are organizational distinctions utilized within the army. The forms of commemoration reflected through this gear also demonstrate camaraderie at multiple levels. Soldiers understood the well-established tradition and commemorated themselves how they wished, whether that be with the roughly 5,000 men in a legion, the 120 men in a maniple, the 80 men in a century, the eight men in a *contubernium*, or the individuals who previously commemorated themselves on the helmet. Roman infantry helmets were truly multifaceted commemorative monuments. By leaving the names of previous soldiers intact and adding their own, soldiers commemorated themselves while preserving the memory of another.

Conclusions

Infantry soldiers were as preoccupied with memory as other Romans. The first two centuries A.D. comprise the height of commemoration practices in the army and the infantry helmet, with the evolution of a sizable neck guard, became the medium through which legionary soldiers on active duty engaged in commemorative practices. Soldiers before this period believed that they would return home and continue their civilian lives, whereas those that served later often found themselves at permanent forts where, over time, they became locals. Thus, in both cases, the need for soldierly commemoration within their pseudo-family ceased to exist once a soldier could turn to his civilian family for support. During the first two centuries A.D. soldiers saw the army as a career and looked to each other for camaraderie and familial support.

A soldier's unique lifestyle and position in society prevented him from adopting traditional commemoration practices. To fulfil this need, legionaries devised unique commemorative methods based on their name, image, and property. Indeed, few soldiers possessed elaborate tombstones and they knew, from burying comrades on the battlefield, it was possible that they would not have a lasting memory after death. They, therefore, inscribed their names on their helmets to commemorate themselves and each other. Since Roman officials recycled gear, new legionary recruits gained possession of equipment bearing the names of those who served before them. Soldiers understood the importance of this custom and practiced it, memorializing their names for themselves and future soldiers and veterans. During an engagement or parade, these inscriptions were visible,

and soldiers were constantly reminded of their comrades during times of stress, fear, and celebration, which provided the essential elements for the commemoration of memory.

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