



Soldiers and Identity

HPAH 5044/6044 ARMIES AND NAVIES

Aims

- ▶ Discuss scholarly approaches to soldiers' identity in the ancient world.
- ▶ Analyse the individualisation of Roman soldiers.
- ▶ Explore equipment and identity in Dura-Europos.

Task: Three Minute Presentation

- ▶ Each group will have three minutes to outline their support/rebuttal of a particular argument in Houle's thesis.
- ▶ Argue for or against a particular position: What additional evidence would you use to back up your position?
- ▶ In pairs or groups of three, prepare a one slide presentation to give the class.

Soldiers and Identity

Aims

- ▶ Discuss scholarly approaches to soldiers' identity in the ancient world.
- ▶ Analyse the individualisation of Roman soldiers.
- ▶ Explore the interaction between military and civilian life.

Uniformity of soldiers?

- ▶ Trajan's Column, Scene 22:
- ▶ Soldiers assemble for battle.
- ▶ <http://www.trajans-column.org/>



Uniformity of soldiers?

- ▶ Trajan's Column, Scene 98:
- ▶ Soldiers watch Trajan perform religious ceremony.
- ▶ <http://www.trajans-column.org/>



Uniformity of soldiers?

- ▶ Onasander, 28:
- ▶ 'The general should make it a point to draw up his line of battle resplendent in armour — an easy matter, requiring only a command to sharpen swords and to clean helmets and breast-plates. For the advancing companies appear more dangerous by the gleam of weapons, and the terrible sight brings fear and confusion to the hearts of the enemy.'
- ▶ *Spartacus*, Stanley Kubrick 1960:
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u0QM3kMlC9g>

Inscriptions on Equipment

- ▶ Some of the equipment found inscribed with name(s) of soldiers.
- ▶ In camp, soldiers stored their equipment in a central armoury.
- ▶ Stops loss of equipment?
- ▶ Post-mortem identification?

Inscriptions:

- ▶ From MacMullan 1960:
- ▶ No. 41: punched on helmet, 1st cent CE, Nijmegen.
 - ▶ CATULI O CATULI L CORNELI CAII/CAPI.
 - ▶ O Q PETRONI Q VALERI (on another part of the helmet).
- ▶ No. 62: stamped on sword, date unknown, **Norway**.
 - ▶ ///ACIRONIO OR ///ACIRONI///.

Inscriptions:

- ▶ Vegetius, 2.11:
- ▶ 'Lest the soldiers in the confusion of battle should be separated from their comrades, every cohort had its shields painted in a manner peculiar to itself. The name of each soldier was also written on his shield, together with the number of the cohort and century to which he belonged.'
- ▶ Combination of literary and epigraphic evidence.

Locally sourced equipment?

- ▶ Cass. Dio 69.12.2:
- ▶ 'While Hadrian was close by in Egypt and again in Syria, they [the Jews] remained quiet, save in so far as they purposely made of poor quality such weapons as they were called upon to furnish, in order that the Romans might reject them and they themselves might thus have the use of them'.
- ▶ Local craftsmen have control over equipment they supply to Romans?

The need for Individualisation

- ▶ Livy 26.48.5-6: dispute over rewards in battle
- ▶ 'Though every man amongst them deserved all the rewards he [Scipio Africanus] could give, the glory of the mural crown belonged especially to him who was the first to scale the wall, and the man who considered that he deserved it should claim it.[6] Two men came forward, Q. Tiberilius, a centurion of the fourth legion, and Sextus Digitius, one of the marines. The contention between them was not so heated as the excitement with which each body advocated the claim of its own representative.'

Dura-Europos

- ▶ Late 4th cent BCE: Founded as Seleukid town.
- ▶ Late 2nd cent BCE: Captured by Parthians.
- ▶ Mid 1st cent CE: Captured and enlarged by Romans.
- ▶ 256—7 CE: Captured and mostly destroyed by Sassanid Persians.



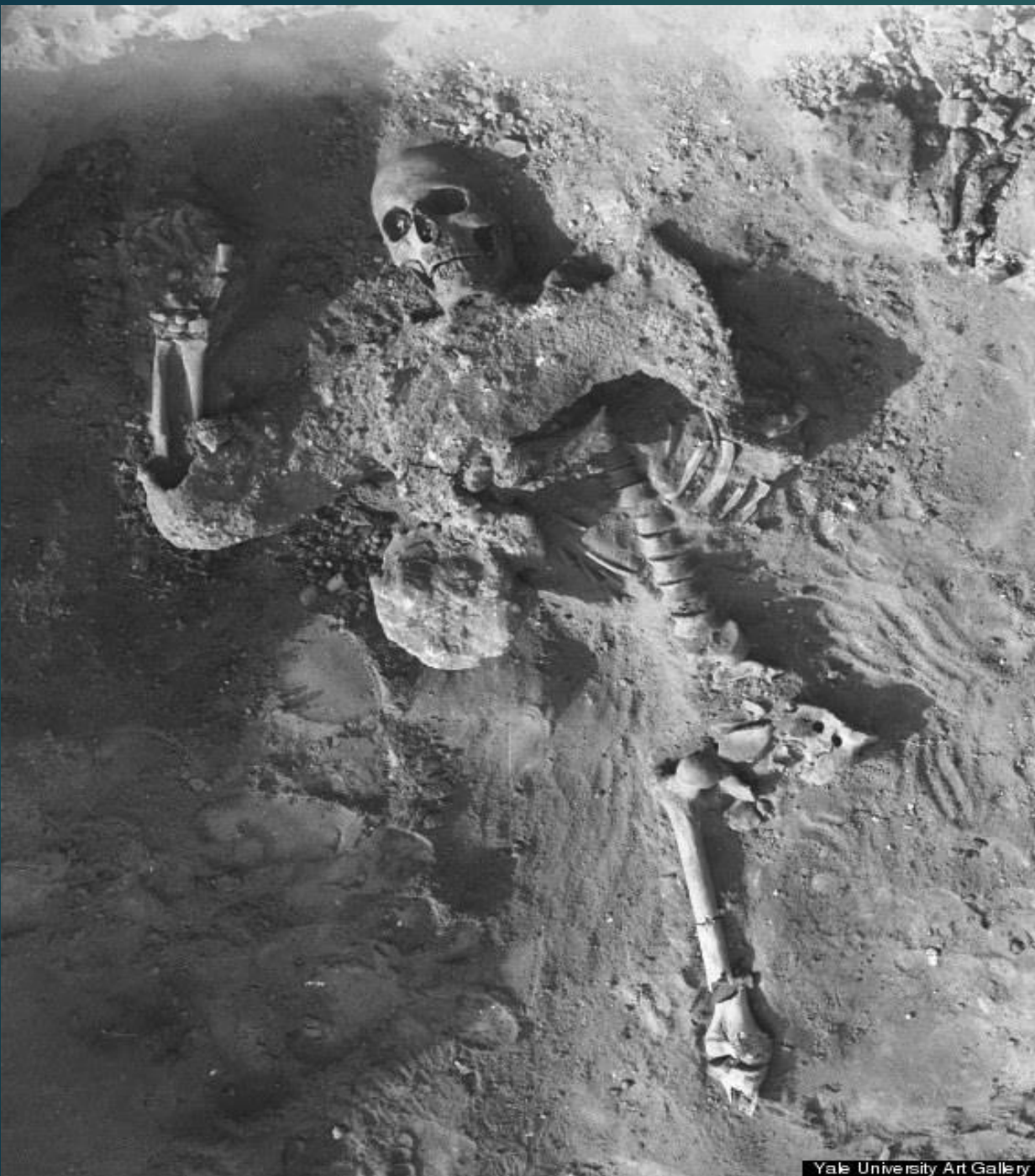
The Site



Tower 19

- ▶ Evidence of undermining and countermining.
- ▶ Evidence of 'chemical' warfare.
- ▶ Underground chamber with remains of 'soldiers'.





Yale University Art Gallery

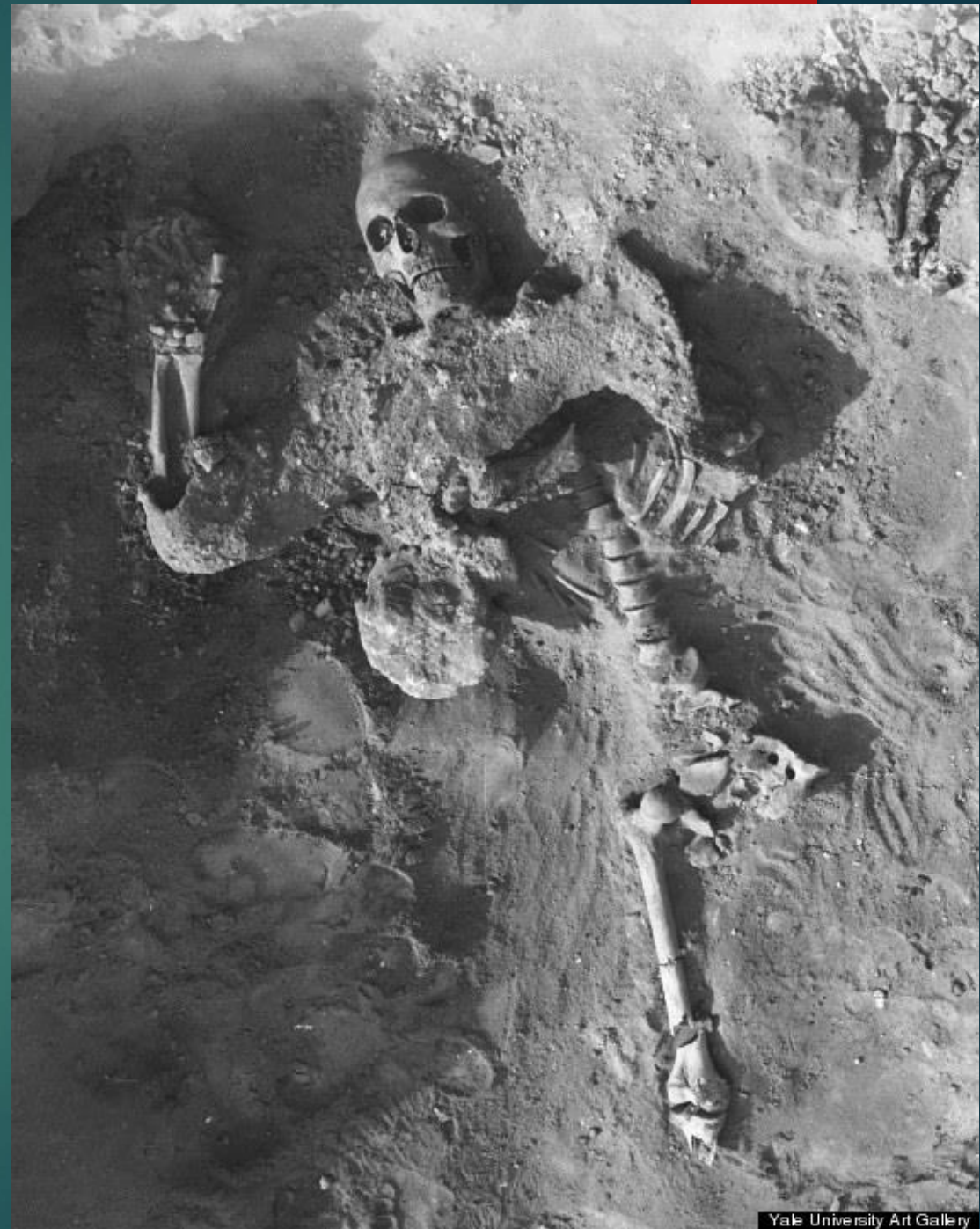


Figure 10: A fossil of a human skull, from the left side.



The Remains

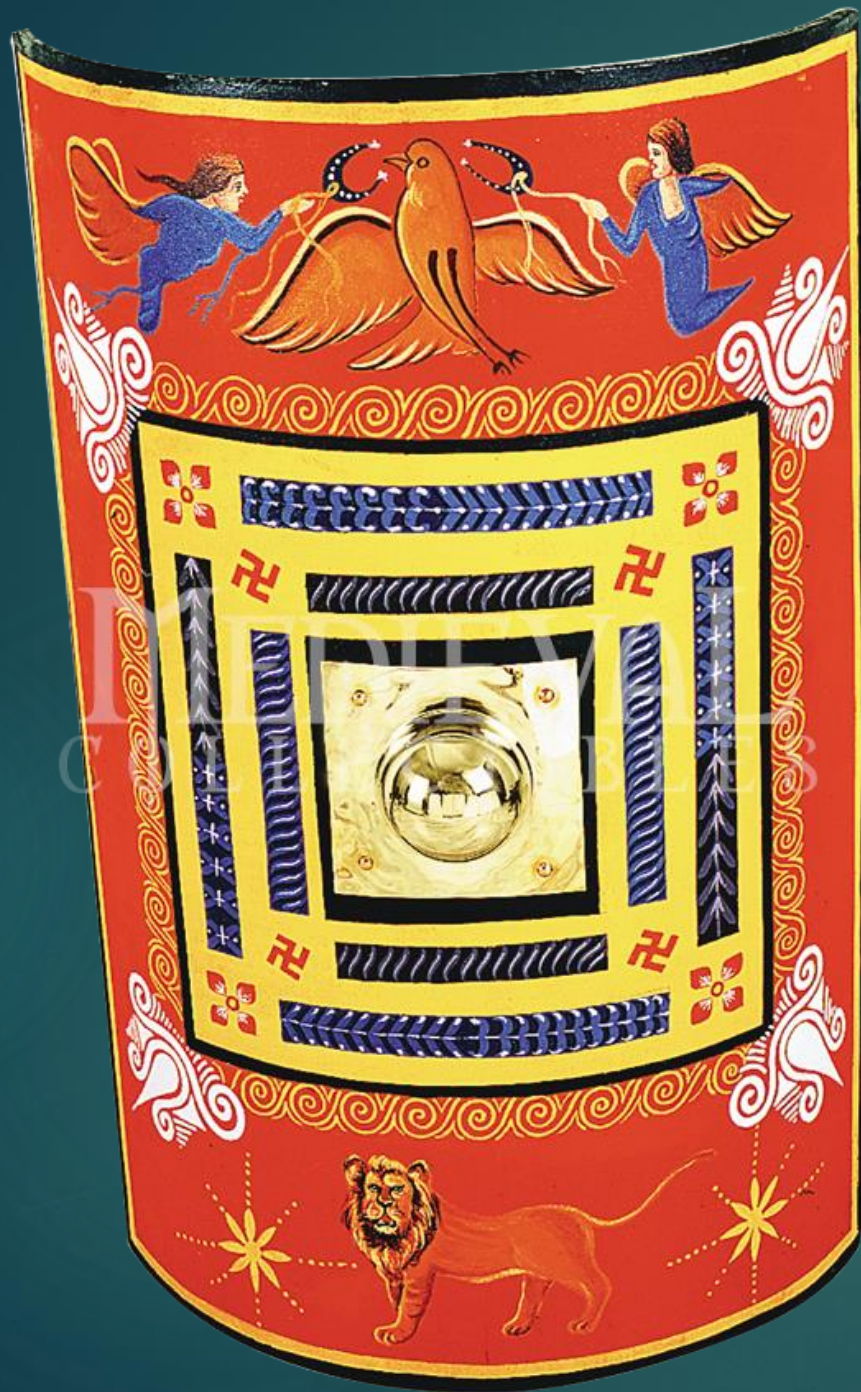
- ▶ Context: found at centre of fire lit beneath Tower 19.
- ▶ Sword: Jade pommel.
- ▶ Helmet: Sassanid Persian style.



Numismatics – Gordian III (238-244 CE)







Reading

- ▶ Coulston, J. (ed.), 1988, *Military Equipment and the Identity of Roman Soldiers*. Proceedings of the Fourth Roman Military Equipment Conference: BAR International Series 394.
- ▶ Giliver, K. 2007, "Display in Roman Warfare: The Appearance of Armies and Individuals on the Battlefield", *War in History*, Vol. 14(1), pp. 1-22.
- ▶ James, S. 2011, "Stratagems, Combat, and 'Chemical Warfare' in the Siege Mines of Dura-Europos", *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 115 (1), pp. 69-102.
- ▶ James, S. 2014, "Blood and Dust, Death in the Dark: Combat and Chemical Warfare at Roman Dura-Europos, Syria". Paper given at Augustana College. Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zNC360PFJyg>
- ▶ MacMullen, R., 1960, "Inscriptions on Armour and the Supply of Arms in the Roman Empire", *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 64, No. 1, pp. 23-40.



Questions?