



ARTICLE

Autonomy, martial culture and empire in eastern Gaul during the first century C.E.: The case of the Helvetians*

John Ma 

Columbia University
jtm2179@columbia.edu

Abstract

Thanks to the rich findings of Swiss archaeological practice, Tacitus' narrative for the violent encounter between the Vitellian army and the Helvetians in 69 C.E. (*Hist.* 1.67–9) can fruitfully be embedded in different material contexts from the late first century B.C.E. and the early first century C.E. (funerary practice, numismatic finds, military architecture, consumption, social relations). The resulting picture is that of the Helvetian *civitas* as a political community endowed with autonomy and state-like capacities within the Roman empire: *militaria* are the index of local militarism rather than auxiliary service. This model might be applied more widely within the western provinces and the Roman empire in general.

Keywords: Helvetians; 69 C.E.; Gaul; *militaria*; autonomy; empire

I Looking at the Roman empire from Remetschwil (Aargau, Switzerland)

Switzerland, September 1948. A forestry guard, working on a tree nursery above the village of Remetschwil, uncovers an assemblage of pottery, glass, organic remains and corroded metal. The news excites the interest of a young enthusiast, Albert Conrad. He performs soundings. The find turns out to be a cremation tomb of the first half of the first century C.E. (c. 40 C.E.),¹ in fact, a *Waffengrab* or 'weapons-grave', that rarity in Swiss archaeology, especially for the LTD2 and Roman periods.² The findspot sits in one of the valleys leading

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¹ Berger 2007.

² The prevalent chronology for the La Tène period (LT) descends from Paul Reinecke's scheme (1902); see generally Colin 1998; Barral and Fichtl 2012. The problem is that the labels for periods often designate varying timespans in absolute terms according to geographical region. For the present purposes, Müller and Kaenel 1986; Kaenel *et al.* 1997: 77; Kaenel and Schindler 1999. In brief: LTD1 c. 140 B.C.E.–80 B.C.E., LTD2 c. 80–30 B.C.E., itself divided into LTD2a, 80–55 B.C.E. and LTD2b, 55–30 B.C.E.

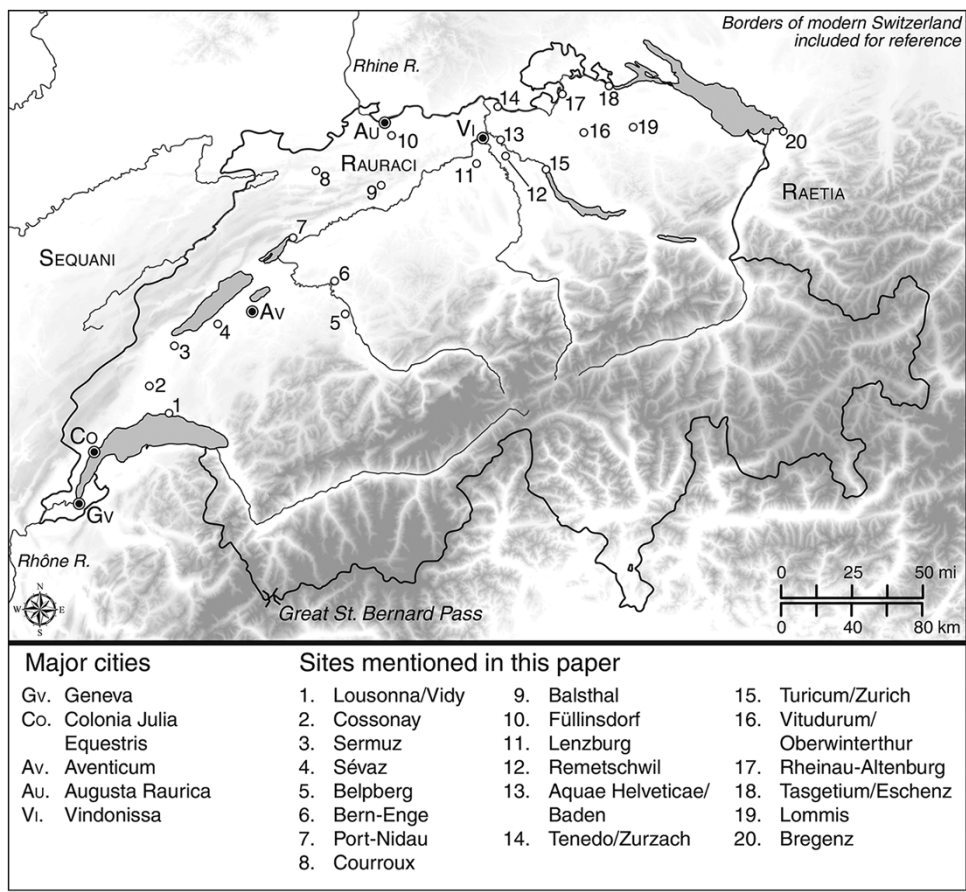


Fig. 1. Sketch-map of ‘Roman Switzerland’ across the Swiss Plateau with rough indications of principal sites mentioned in this paper. Map by Gabriel Moss.

to the *Wasserschloss* where the three great rivers of the Swiss Plateau converge (Aar, Reuss, Limmat) before joining the Rhine (Fig. 1).³

The tomb intrigued the great Swiss archaeologist Rudolf Laur-Belart. In a letter to young Conrad, he interpreted the tomb as that of ‘a Celtic warrior’ in the first century C.E., belonging to the Helvetian army described by Tacitus in the *Histories* (1.67–9). ‘From your fine discovery’, he mused, ‘we can see how in our regions, at the start of the Roman period, the old Gallic weapons culture and military independence had perpetuated themselves, and also how quickly Roman mores were adopted by the fickle Helvetians.’⁴ Such musings about army, independence and identity reflect modern Swiss investments and anxieties; but they also touch upon the interest of the Remetschwil burial in its context.

Here I develop Laur-Belart’s insights. This paper rests on a formidable body of national scholarship by generations of Swiss archaeologists. I supplement the archaeological evidence with literary texts, inscriptions, and the plentiful numismatical material, found during excavation and surveying but also by metal detectorists. Furthermore, I connect the Remetschwil *Waffengrab*, and the archaeological work on ‘Roman Switzerland’ which

³ For the region, see the unforgettable description by C. Jullian 1993 (orig. 1920), vol. 2: 299–300, 719–20.
⁴ Berger 2007: 39.

forms its immediate context, to several important recent developments in the study of the material culture and social history of Gaul in the late Iron Age and early Julio-Claudian period, notably on *militaria*⁵ and wine consumption.⁶ I hence combine a survey of the archaeology with awareness of political history in order to study the Helvetian polity during the transitional period between the conquest of Gaul and the end of the Julio-Claudian dynasty (58 B.C.E.–69 C.E.).

Local agency plays a crucial role in my argument, as manifested in military capacities which should not be described merely as ‘auxiliary’ service. This viewpoint invites us to reinterpret the material record for *militaria* in Roman Switzerland between LTD2 and 69 C.E., and indeed across late Iron Age and early Roman Gaul. The implications go beyond the persistence of ‘militarism’ in eastern Gaul. The capacity of Gallic *civitates* in the first century C.E. to operate as state-like entities shaped the practice and the experience of empire. The present paper is written between event and structure, and between the local knowledge of regional archaeology and the broader perspectives of imperial history.

II The weapons-grave at Remetschwil

These may seem large claims to make before the pit at Remetschwil. The objects themselves are a bit unprepossessing. However, even a summary description reveals their interest. The first weapon is a sword: ritually folded, damaged by fire, corroded. Enough survives to reconstruct a straight lenticular-section blade, originally around 60 cm long, tapering to an elongated diamond-section point, reinforced for thrusting (Fig. 2). Such ‘Type-2’ blades were inspired by late-republican *gladii* but produced in the western provinces. Other examples are found at Port-Nidau (Bern), and at Goeblingen-Nospelt (Luxemburg), in Treviran territory.⁷ (We will return to these places). The sword was accompanied by a round, domed shield boss (Fig. 3), reminiscent of Germanic types particularly well attested in the region of Trier (in Treviran territory, again).

In addition, the finds included a single Hispanic amphora of the Haltern-70 type, which can be dated typologically to the ‘Tiberian-Claudian period’. Its tip was incised with some sort of symbol, the whole vessel broken into small sherds. This sort of offering (harking back to Iron Age practices) was a rarity in the early Roman Empire;⁸ thus the first-century C.E. non-elite cemetery at Avenches at the site *À la Montagne* contains no amphoras.⁹ A large globular ceramic bowl relates to drinking practices. Its dimensions (23.6 cm high, the diameter tapering from 22 cm down to nine, and containing nearly ten litres) suits the mixing of drink from the *defrutum* contained in the amphora. The bowl recalls (at a larger scale) types from late La Tène contexts found (yet again) around Trier. Finally, the soundings produced a fragment of imitation sigillata (from a plate of Drack-2 type) and a fragment of fire-damaged glass.

The amphora situates the tomb in the ‘Tiberian-Claudian’ period, while the Type-2 hybrid *gladius* finds parallels earlier, from the LTD2 and the early Augustan periods.¹⁰ Heirloom or deliberate throwback? The larger question is to whom we should

⁵ Roymans 1996; Metzler and Gaeng 2009; Kaurin 2015.

⁶ *Militaria*: Feugère 1996; Poux 2008a; Pernet 2010. Wine: Poux 2004. For the archaeology of Switzerland in the late Iron Age and Roman periods, Müller *et al.* 1999; Flutsch *et al.* 2002; Kaenel *et al.* 2005. For Iron Age Europe generally: Buchsensschutz 2015; Krausz *et al.* 2024.

⁷ Port-Nidau: Wyss *et al.* 2002: 40 and no. 82; Pernet 2010: 104–5. The lack of corrosion on the point of the Remetschwil blade could be the result of special tempering. I thank R. Fellmann-Bögli for access, A. Devauchelle for discussion.

⁸ Metzler and Gaeng 2009: 393.

⁹ Sauter 2017.

¹⁰ Pernet 2010: 104–6.

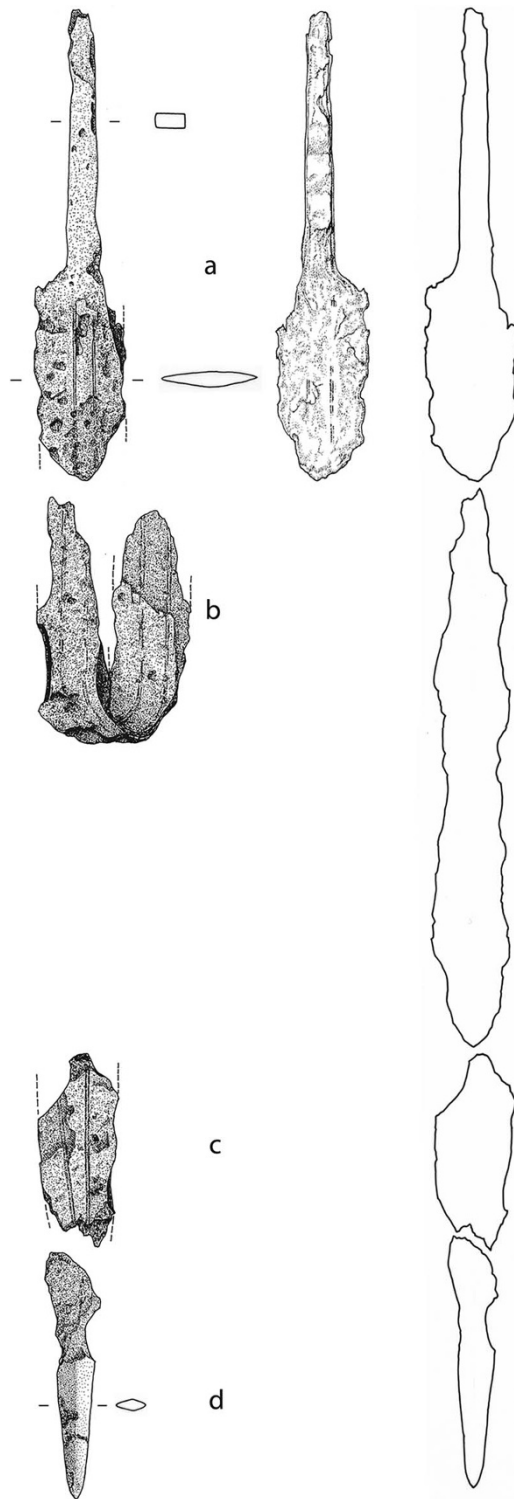


Fig. 2. The Remetschwil hybrid *gladius* (after Berger et al. 2007). © Kantonsarchäologie Aargau.

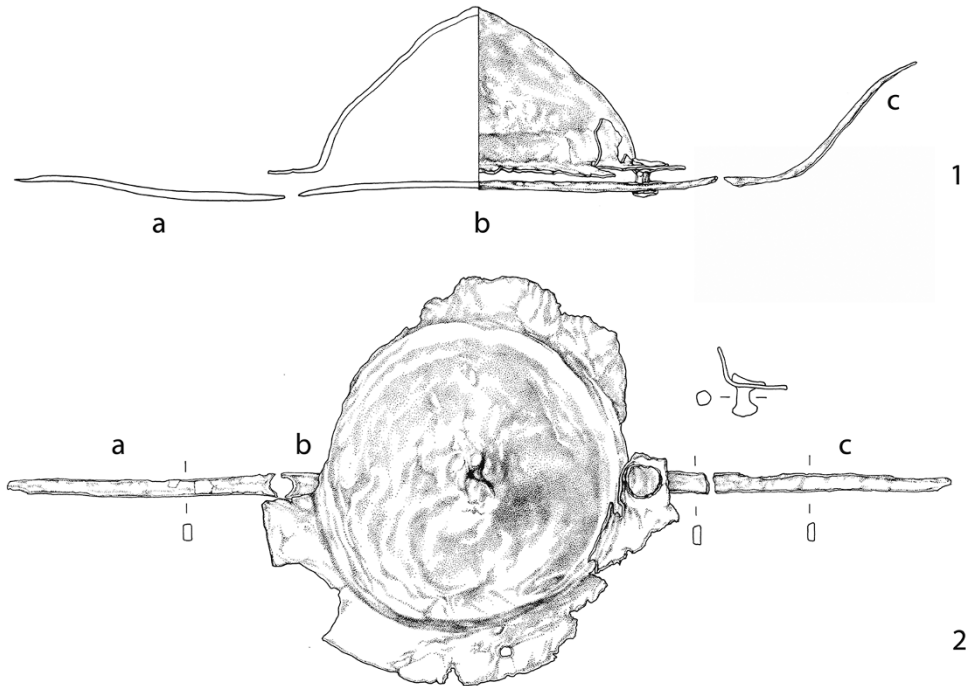


Fig. 3. The Remetschwil shield boss (from Berger et al. 2007). © Kantonsarchäologie Aargau.

attribute this grave. I favour the solution intuited by Laur-Belart: a soldier serving in the Helvetian army, which Tacitus shows meeting a large Roman army with terrible results.

III The events of 69 C.E.

After Vitellius' acclamation as emperor in early January 69 C.E., in Lower Germany, two battle groups marched down towards the passes into Italy, Fabius Valens striking through eastern Gaul, Caecina Alienus leading the second battlegroup down from Moguntiacum (Mainz) along the Rhine valley. Caecina reached the Swiss Plateau by early February.¹¹ Tacitus' extensive narrative of both marches abounds in dramatic detail.¹² Caecina comes down the Rhine in haste, reaching the bend at modern Basel. There he crosses into the Plateau. He destroys the *vicus* at Baden (*in modum municipii extructus locus, amoeno salubrium aquarum usu frequens*, 'a place built in the fashion of a town, frequented for the pleasant use of healthy waters', 1.67.13). Modern excavation at the site of Baden (*Aquae Helveticae*) has revealed traces of destruction serious enough to alter the urban fabric.¹³ The civilian settlement next to the legionary camp at Windisch went up in flames. Though there seem to be no clear archaeological traces of wholesale destruction across the western part of the Swiss Plateau, destruction layers c. 70 C.E. in eastern Switzerland, at Vitudurum/Oberwinterthur

¹¹ Fellmann 1992: 42–6; M. Tarpin in Flutsch et al. 2002: 56–7; Zingg 2012. For general context, Cosme 2012: 105–8; Schucany 2016. On chronology, Paschoud 1982.

¹² Tac., *Hist.* 1.67–9; Gwyn Morgan 1996.

¹³ Unz 1972; 1975; Schucany 1984; Deschler-Erb 2008a; Schucany 2016.

(Zurich), could relate to the Vitellians' march.¹⁴ Scattered burials of *aurei* down to Nero across the Plateau might also be connected.¹⁵

Legio XXI Rapax plays an important role in Tacitus' narrative in provoking Caecina's vengeful progress (*ultum ibat*, 1.67.2).¹⁶ Some legionaries hijack a convoy carrying the pay of a garrison maintained 'of old' by the Helvetians (*rapuerant pecuniam missam in stipendium castelli quod olim Helvetii suis militibus ac stipendiis tuebantur*, 1.67.1). Disastrously, the Helvetians respond by arresting envoys from the Germanic legions, bearing letters to the Danubian troops. Much is obscure here concerning motivations and topography. The location of the Helvetian fort is still uncertain, as is that of the final battle. What did *Legio XXI* do before Caecina's arrival? Was it blockaded in Vindonissa? Caecina summoned reinforcements from Raetia (*missi ad Raetica auxilia nuntii ut versos in legionem Helvetios a tergo adgrederentur*, 1.67.2), but how were these supposed to attack the Helvetians 'in the rear', arranged as the latter were 'against the legion' after the sack of Baden (east of Vindonissa)? Does *legionem* designate *Legio XXI* or Caecina's infernal column? Only the final scenes are securely located at *Aventicum*, modern Avenches (Vaud), the *gentis caput* (1.68.2).

Yet Tacitus' narrative, despite unclarities and tendentious effects, provides an entry into provincial life,¹⁷ starting with the initial incident. For Tacitus, the seizure of the pay of the Helvetian garrison is an act of greedy haste by *Legio XXI Rapax* — part of the general anarchy of civil war. But Tacitus notes that the Helvetian fort and its garrison were an ancient institution by 69 C.E. (*olim*).¹⁸ Both the existence of this fort and its history are highly instructive for the workings of the Helvetian *civitas* and its place within the development of Roman imperialism in Eastern Gaul.

IV Helvetian institutions and autonomy 58–15 B.C.E.

In Caesar's account, we see that the Helvetians in 58 B.C.E. had political institutions which allowed them to organise their attempted migration. These institutions are particularly striking because the Helvetian polity itself only emerged around 100–80 B.C.E.¹⁹ Among these institutions were officeholders with the capacity to put on trial the powerful aristocrat Orgetorix; when he called in his partisans, the Helvetians responded by mustering military forces. The tensions of a segmented, competitive society existed within the framework of an organised and capable state. The Helvetians must have had their own financial institutions, namely taxes and tolls, comparable to those mentioned for the Haedui. These might have been collected at fortified points at the sites near modern Avenches and Zurich.²⁰

Financial and political institutions are implied by the numismatic evidence. Even before the emergence of the Helvetian polity, the Swiss Plateau had used coins from eastern Gaul, perhaps for military and political purposes, for instance hiring mercenaries or paying

¹⁴ Western Switzerland: Schucany 1998, categorical (ceramic dating rules out a number of possible sites). Eastern Switzerland: Hänggi *et al.* 1994: 206; Jauch and Janke 2022: 209–10 on destruction at Vindonissa, Vitodurum and Tasgetium/Eschenz (which, however, belonged to Raetia: Ptol., *Geog.* 2.12.3).

¹⁵ Appendix 3d.

¹⁶ On this ill-famed unit, *RE* 12: 1781–91 (E. Ritterling, s.v. *Legio*); Bérard 2000.

¹⁷ Syme 1977: 131 posits 'eyewitnesses present in the two armies.'

¹⁸ Chilver 1979 on Tac., *Hist.* 1.67.6: '*olim*, as often in Tac. (cf. I. 60. 3 and A. Gerber, A. Greef and C. John, *Lexicon Taciteum* (Berlin, 1903) s.v. *olim*), means for a long time past'.

¹⁹ Aberson *et al.* 2017; Castella 2019; Pernet *et al.* 2023; Fichtl 2024: 62–4.

²⁰ On social tensions in Iron Age polities, Goudineau 1990; Verger 2009; on the *civitas* as multidimensional social form, Fernández-Götz 2014: 31–71. Taxes and tax-farming among the Haedui: Caes., *BCiv.* 1.18; generally, Reddé 2022a: 255 ('proto-état'); Fichtl 2024. Possible toll-station at Avenches: Blanc *et al.* 2014–15: 193–205 (fortified gate, decorated with human skull); I thank D. Genequand for this reference. Zurich: Balmer 2009: 162.

tribute.²¹ Such practices continued after c. 80 B.C.E., when the Helvetians struck their own silver *quinarii* (inaugurating what Swiss numismatists call the *Silberhorizont* in the material record).²² Payment for troops may have been particularly necessary in eastern Gaul because of the turbulent political competition between powerful Gallic polities and the involvement of violent actors from across the Rhine. These circumstances would provoke the intervention of a particularly active Roman proconsul in 58 B.C.E. Finds of silver coins from fortified sites at the eastern end of the Plateau, namely Bern-Enge and Rheinau (Zurich), may be connected to military activity in the first part of the first century B.C.E.²³

Analogously, the neighbouring nation of the Rauraci may have kept paid troops (even though they were subordinate to the Sequani). This is suggested by two large hoards of silver coins dating to the first half of the first century B.C.E. These were found at strategic points of Rauracan territory, namely Balsthal (Solothurn) and Füllinsdorf (Basel) at both ends of the route from the Plateau through the Jura to the Rhine bend.²⁴ Additionally, I suggest that Republican *denarii* deposited at Füllinsdorf in the first century C.E. circulated earlier as payment for troops.²⁵ The large size of the hoards and their strategic location reinforce the 'military' interpretation.²⁶ Other finds of silver coins at urban sites such as Basel and Tarodunum/Kirchzarten (Baden-Württemberg) could likewise be military in purpose.²⁷ In addition, hoards found in the countryside, some very substantial like that from Nunningen (Solothurn), could have paid for rural garrisons or patrols.²⁸

The troops paid by the Helvetians and Rauracans might have been local rather than mercenaries. Celtic polities likely raised standing contingents of 'crack troops' comparable to the late Classical Greek *epilektoi*; we might call such salaried troops 'guardsmen'.²⁹ It is also possible that the Helvetians compensated conscripts in cash during campaigns, as Greek *poleis* and Italian medieval communes did. After 52 B.C.E., the Helvetians probably continued to pay for locally recruited troops, as suggested by late first century B.C.E. and early first century C.E. concentrations of silver coinage at the fortified sites of Sermuz (Vaud) and Bois-de-Châtel near Avenches.³⁰ A similar interpretation may apply to hoards dating to the 40s or 30s B.C.E. and found at Deitingen (Solothurn) and especially Belpberg (Bern). The latter hoard combined 61 Helvetian *quinarii* with 40 Roman *denarii* and was buried between 42 and 32 B.C.E.³¹ Later on, Helvetian guardsmen were doubtless paid with Roman currency after the disappearance of the *quinarii*, though there is no numismatic evidence.³²

²¹ On mercenaries in the Celtic world, Baray 2014.

²² Nick 2015: 1.137–8 on *Silberhorizont* and likely use of silver coinage for military purposes. For earlier connections between coinage and war in the Celtic world, Sills 2003: 117–19.

²³ Appendix 3a.

²⁴ Appendix 3b. The strategic role of Balsthal is shown by the famous *Kluserhandel* of 1632 when Catholic Solothurn tried to prevent Protestant Bernese volunteers from marching to fight in the Thirty Years' War.

²⁵ M. Peter in Ackermann *et al.* 2024: 145–57, 25 *denarii*, struck between 149 and 42 B.C.E., found probably deposited with an *aureus* of Tiberius and one of Nero.

²⁶ The Balsthal and the Füllinsdorf hoards may have a religious connection. Balsthal included a solid silver deer's antler (Frey-Kupper 1999; Müller *et al.* 1999: 319). Füllinsdorf was a hilltop shrine and has produced no *militaria* except for one second-century B.C.E. spearhead (Ackermann *et al.* 2024). But sacred contexts are not incompatible with military function.

²⁷ Basel: Appendix 3b. Tarodunum: Wagner 2001: 7.

²⁸ Appendix 3b.

²⁹ *Epilektoi*: Konijnendijk 2017: 153–62.

³⁰ Appendix 3c. (Puzzlingly, the site also yielded a die for a Republican-era *denarius*: Geiser and Capt 2011). Sermuz: Müller *et al.* 1999: 327; Curdy 2007; the wall is not dated stratigraphically. As is well known, a small stretch of the *muris gallicus* was reconstructed in 1987, on top of the original embankment.

³¹ Appendix 3c. Deitingen: Nick 2017a: 51.

³² The hoard found at Dombresson (Neuchâtel) dates to the right period, with 420 coins dating from the late Republic to Nero (CHRE 6417, <https://chre.ashmus.ox.ac.uk/hoard/6417>, accessed 7 July 2025). But the findspot, high in the Jura, is difficult to relate to a garrison.

The assumption that silver coinage was in the main meant for military purposes is difficult to substantiate conclusively.³³ Yet it is worth emphasising that the abundant numismatic evidence from the Swiss Plateau after 80 B.C.E., if interpreted as military payments, gives crucial background to the events of 69 C.E. Conversely, the presence of pay for Helvetian guardsmen in 69 C.E. provides support for the military uses of silver coinage in earlier periods. The pay chest seized by *Legio XXI* belonged to an ancient institution connected with the martial history of Celtic polities. Additionally, Tacitus shows that the Helvetian *civitas* could muster a levy numbering in the thousands (just as they did in 58 B.C.E. during civil unrest). The *civitas* had administrative institutions to manage its manpower, as part of its state-like apparatus.³⁴ The epigraphical evidence, characteristically eloquent on elite benefaction and civic honours, remains silent on the mechanisms of local self-government.³⁵

Traces of state-like capacity are relevant to the specific *crux* in the history of the Helvetians, namely whether in 69 C.E. the *civitas* was *foederata*. The status is attested in Cicero but Pliny the Elder, in his list of Gallic *civitates* (and specifically in the section surveying Gallia Belgica), does not mention it for the Helvetians.³⁶ I propose that an alliance with Rome came as a reward for activities during the Civil Wars or Triumviral period; for instance, the capture of Caesar's murderer Decimus Brutus in 43 B.C.E.³⁷ This is exactly the period of the Belpberg hoard. The omission of the status in Pliny would then be due to either faulty transmission, or Pliny's source predating the alliance.

Autonomy had its role to play within the Roman Empire. In 58 B.C.E. already, Caesar envisioned the Helvetians (resettled home after their defeat) as a bulwark against the Germans.³⁸ Additionally, the Helvetians contained Raetian incursions along the Rhine or down Alpine corridors.³⁹ The fort mentioned in Tacitus as held by a Helvetian garrison could have worked to this end, if it was located at Turicum/Zurich, on the Walensee–Zurich corridor (Fig. 1), or further east.⁴⁰ In addition, I would like to suggest (in contrast with current interpretations) that the archaeology of the early phases of Vindonissa fits the presence of a Helvetian garrison. The Windisch spur was protected by a set of LTD2-dated timber-framed fortifications. These were refaced, in the early Augustan period, with a new, Roman-inspired technique (the timber posts are embedded in a continuous trench rather than individual post-holes); yet the whole site does not seem to have been occupied by Roman troops (Fig. 4).⁴¹ The new wall likely protected a fortified position of the Helvetian *civitas*. The substantial presence of silver coins, mostly *quinarii*, may have paid Helvetian

³³ For a multi-dimensional model of monetisation, Howgego 2013.

³⁴ On stateness in local communities under the Roman empire, Nörr 1966; already Fustel de Coulanges 1994 (orig. 1891): 167 for the Gallic *civitas*: 'en résumé, la cité sur son vaste territoire était constituée comme un véritable État ... Sans doute elle n'était pas un État libre; elle était du moins un État.'

³⁵ E.g. *CIL* 13.5110 (*TitHelv* 242; Avenches, mid-first century C.E.). Generally, Raepsaet-Charlier 2021: 138–43 for Helvetian public epigraphy.

³⁶ Cic., *Balb.* 14.32; Plin., *HN* 4.106; Frei-Stolba 1975 (doubtful); van Berchem 1982: 123–51; Tarpin 1997: 15.

³⁷ van Berchem 1982: 55–9, on the capture of Decimus Brutus; Demierre *et al.* 2015 for archaeological traces of action in the Jura (*Col des Étroits*, Vaud).

³⁸ Caes., *BGall.* 1.28.4; Chilver 1979 on Tac., *Hist.* 1.67.6.

³⁹ Wells 1972: 59–89 on Strabo 4.6.8.

⁴⁰ On the Helvetian fort, Zingg 2012: 28–40, notably discussing Deman 1956: 95. Zurich–Walensee corridor: Wiedemer 1966; Roth-Rubi *et al.* 2004; Martin-Kilcher 2015: 266. Zurich: the hilltop site at the Lindenhof was fortified c. 40 B.C.E. but the usual interpretation of the ambiguous remains as relating to Roman troops seems to me unjustified: the *militaria* found in the 1937–8 excavations are not dated precisely (Balmer 2009: 24–8, 232 and cat. nos. 30, 140, 218, 219, 221).

⁴¹ The importance of early Vindonissa receives emphasis in Reddé 2008: 435; 2022b: 303–13; 2023: 40–1. Windisch-Breite and Windisch-Römerblick: Hagendorn *et al.* 2003: 32–3; Trumm 2011; Flück 2022a: 51–102.

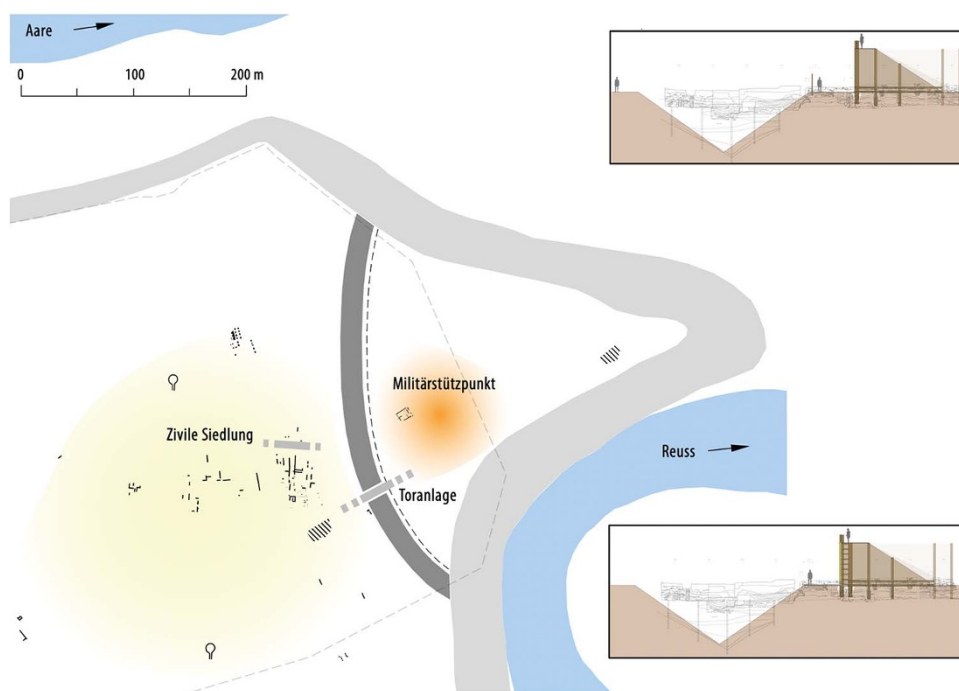


Fig. 4. The Windisch spur with the two stages of its timber-faced fortifications (after Flück 2022a).
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guardsmen.⁴² In other words, I propose that this fort, protecting the Rhine frontier, was one anchor of the Helvetian military system, the second being the fort mentioned by Tacitus, set further back in Helvetian territory and directed mainly against the Raetians from the East.

Such an arrangement fits within the historical and military geography of the Swiss Plateau (Fig. 1). Colonia Julia Equestris, at Nyon (Vaud), founded in the 40s, kept watch over the Plateau and the route towards Geneva and the Little St Bernard Pass. A colony founded by L. Munatius Plancus in 44 B.C.E. (probably on the site of modern Basel) was meant to control the strategic bend of the Rhine. The Helvetians (granted autonomy and alliance during the Triumviral period) stood to fend off Germans and Raetians in the early Augustan period.⁴³ They hence existed as a free and allied state within Gallia Belgica. Likewise, the Rauraci (granted freedom from the Sequani) held a fortified settlement at Basel-Münsterhügel, fulfilling the military functions of Munatius Plancus' foundation once the latter had disappeared.⁴⁴ The Balsthal and Courroux hoards (above) could date to this context. A parallel for the role of Helvetians and Rauraci is the

⁴² Nick 2015, 2.505–52 (AG-26); M. Nick in Flück 2022a: 333–4. 36 *quinarii* were found at Windisch, of which 8 come from the area inside the trace of the LTD2 wall. In addition, 9 *quinarii* found in Brugg washed down from the Windisch plateau: Nick 2015, 2.487–91, AG-14.

⁴³ van Berchem 1982: 47–54; but his notion that the *praefectus arcendis latrocinii* at Colonia Julia Equestris (TitHelv 19, 21) was meant to control Helvetian guerillas after 52 B.C.E. is dubious (Grzybek 2002). Colony at the bend of the Rhine: van Berchem 1982: 247–52; Tschudin 2021. Generally, Kraft 1957; Reddé 2010 for the whole context of Roman military control in Gaul.

⁴⁴ Deschler-Erb 2011. Late Republican *militaria* from Basel might date to Munatius Plancus' evanescent colony: Deschler-Erb 2008b.

contribution made by the Batavians at the other end of the Rhine frontier zone. Despite obvious differences (the Batavians were a Germanic community which was displaced and installed on the hostile lower Rhine, in a process of imperially sponsored ethnogenesis), the Batavians also developed a martial culture connected to their position on the Roman frontier.⁴⁵

V Autonomy, obsolescence and *charivari*: 15 B.C.E.–69 C.E.

By 69 C.E., the Helvetians' role had long been an anachronism, their contribution superseded by more recent developments in Roman imperialism, namely the conquest of the Alps in 15 B.C.E., the subsequent campaigns in Germany, the creation of a military frontier zone along the Rhine and the emergence of regular auxiliary units integrated in the Roman army.⁴⁶ The Helvetian fortress was rendered obsolete by the conquest of Raetia and by military posts in the Walensee corridor. Turicum/Zurich probably received a Roman military detachment at this point.⁴⁷ Roman establishments appeared in the Rhine valley, at Basel-Münsterhügel and at Kaiseraugst (soon succeeded by the colony of Augusta Raurica). The military contribution of the Rauraci now ceased: at Füllinsdorf, the appearance of *caliga* hobnails, dated typologically to the mid- or late Augustan period, suggest that Roman troops took over from a Rauracan garrison.⁴⁸ At Vindonissa, the reinforced late La Tène fortified spur was taken over by a Roman detachment.⁴⁹ Konstanz and Bregenz also received Roman forts. The whole stretch of the Rhine from Basel to Lake Constance was militarised and manned by regular Roman troops.

The Helvetians kept their military institutions, but under conditions of rapidly increasing irrelevance. Roman forts appeared on the right bank of the Rhine when the Roman frontier shifted yet further away from what had been the Helvetian advanced positions. Under Tiberius, the fortified spur at Vindonissa was abandoned, its walls demolished, and the large new legionary camp was built on the Plateau to the west of the spur, to be occupied by *Legio XIII Gemina*, then *Legio XXI Rapax*. Under Claudius, the opening of the Great St Bernard Pass facilitated direct communications between Italy and the Rhine (as illustrated in 69 C.E.). An anachronism along the Roman frontier, the Helvetian fort — the sole remnant (I believe) of a mightier in-depth defence system — continued to fulfill its role for the Helvetians, namely expressing autonomy and partnership in empire. On those grounds, the Helvetians staked out their territory, especially at the northern end where it was fluid and meshed with the Roman military zone, and where the fort at Vindonissa threatened to cut off the eastern territories from the rest of the *civitas*. The eastern fort and the regular conveying of military pay from Aventicum to the fort made clear the Helvetians' conception of their territory. Furthermore, the Helvetians could claim on the basis of their military contribution that they should be exempt from contributions to support the Roman army on

⁴⁵ Tac., *Germ.* 29.2–3. *manet honos et antiquae societatis insigne; nam nec tributis contemnuntur nec publicanus atterit; exempti oneribus et collationibus et tantum in usum proeliorum sepositi, velut tela atque arma, bellis reservantur*, 'they keep an honorific marker of their ancient alliance: they are neither humiliated by tribute, nor does a publican grind them down; exempt from burdens and levies, and only set aside to be used in battle, they are destined for war, like missiles and weapons.'

⁴⁶ E.g. van Berchem 1982: 79–102, 185–218; generally, Reddé 2022b. See below, Section IX, on the question of auxiliaries.

⁴⁷ Balmer 2009: 121 and cat. no. 1057 on a find of 189 hobnails in an early Augustan ('30–20 BCE') context (fill of earlier fortification trench).

⁴⁸ Fischer 2024: 171–4; Fischer *et al.* 2024: 2019.

⁴⁹ Augst: Deschler-Erb *et al.* 1991. Vindonissa: Flück 2022a: 71–5 (material from the fill of the ditch of the late La Tène fortification, when the latter was dismantled, attests a late Augustan-era military settlement, still unlocated).

the Upper Rhine frontier. Mommsen suggested that the Helvetian troops served to guard the communications between the Great St Bernard and the Rhine.⁵⁰

The seizure of pay by men of *Legio XXI Rapax* was not merely plunder, but an act of political communication, contesting the Helvetians' claims and making clear that local resources, which the Helvetians drew on for their own antiquated military arrangements, should rightfully go to the Roman army. The convoy of military pay, journeying past the great legionary camp to the eastern fort, had long been an irritating statement as well as a concrete temptation. The heist of 69 C.E. was a piece of serious *charivari* by the legionaries, in whose eyes there was perhaps no difference between the Helvetians and the Raetians who garrisoned their own fort.⁵¹ The response by the Helvetians was equally symbolical. The arrest of the Vitellian couriers demonstrated autonomy within their territory, just as the arrest and execution of Roman citizens was sometimes attempted by Greek cities during the Julio-Claudian period.⁵² Furthermore, the Helvetians showed their autonomy by deliberately intervening in imperial politics (supporting Galba, whose death they had not yet heard of, against the German legions), just as the Lingones and Treviri actively had opposed Vindex the previous year.⁵³ Things got out of hand once the actual Vitellian armies burst onto the scene, leading to violent and ironical outcomes: plunder by the Raetians whom the Helvetians had once been set up to contain, massacre by units from other frontier provinces such as Thrace.⁵⁴

VI Military culture on the Swiss Plateau 52 B.C.E.–50 C.E.

What were the cultural consequences of militarism and local autonomy? It would be tempting to turn to the religious sphere and look for traces of military identity and political autonomy – for instance to the cult of Mars Caturix, preserving the name of a Celtic god of war.⁵⁵ However, the evidence is scanty and inconclusive (the few inscriptions are impossible to date). A fragmentary bronze inscription from Avenches, a metrical dedication addressed to Mars Gradivus mentioning the dedicatory's fatherland and fellow-citizens (*hanc patriam cive[s] ?*), is also impossible to date and remains enigmatic.⁵⁶

Hence the interest of the Remetschwil weapons-grave. It prolongs late La Tène practice, asserting 'martiality' (N. Roymans) alongside high social status.⁵⁷ The inclusion of an amphora and of a mixing-bowl with the grave goods harks back to old claims to status based on consumption and feasting, characteristic of the 'Wine Age' of independent Gaul.⁵⁸ These echo Tacitus' remark about the Helvetian memory of a glorious military past (*Gallica gens olim armis virisque, mox memoria nominis clara*, 'a Gallic nation, famed in the past for its weapons and its men, then for the illustrious memory of its name', *Hist.* 1.67.1). The Remetschwil warrior fits within the martial culture and the institutions of the

⁵⁰ Mommsen 1966: 35. Conversely, Tac., *Hist.* 4.73, makes the logic explicit by which heavy taxation was justified by the presence of troops.

⁵¹ Mommsen 1887: 553–4, on *ILS* 2531.

⁵² Fournier 2010: 493–5, on Rhodes, Kyzikos and the Lykian League.

⁵³ Paschoud 1982, arguing for Helvetian partisanship towards Vespasian; Zingg 2012, esp. 43–9.

⁵⁴ Mentions of *Legio XXI Rapax* were chiselled out on official inscriptions around Windisch: *TitHelv* 469–471. This has been interpreted as local execration after 69 C.E. (Ritterling in *RE* 12: 1788, widely followed; e.g. Hartmann and Speidel 1992: 14–15, also adducing the destruction of the funerary stele of an auxiliary centurion). However, it is better connected to disgrace after Saturninus' rebellion in 89 C.E. (Bérard 2000; Benoist 2003: 239).

⁵⁵ *TitHelv* 80, 94, 106–7; Luginbühl 2006; van Andringa 2017: 164–6. On the name 'battle-king', d'Arbois de Jubainville 1891: 19–34; Maier 1997 s.v. Caturix.

⁵⁶ *TitHelv* 154 (AE 1991.1255; on the basis of the script, second-century C.E.?).

⁵⁷ Martiality: Roymans 1996. Weapons-graves are still scantily attested on the Plateau: Kaenel 1998; Jud 2014; but note the late La Tène weapons burial recently located at Baden-Kappelerhof: Lanzicher *et al.* 2023.

⁵⁸ Poux 2004.



Fig. 5. Vachères warrior. Limestone, preserved height 1.53 m. © Institut Calvet.

free *civitas* of the Helvetians. At the same time, the hybrid *gladius* (Fig. 2) reflects Roman influence since it implies shifts in body technique but also in visible material identity and masculinity.⁵⁹

The cultural meanings of the hybrid *gladius* are brought out by L. Pernet's brilliant analysis of an earlier statue (late first century B.C.E.) found far from Switzerland, at Vachères (Vaucluse), in the Roman province of Gallia Narbonensis (Fig. 5). The torc-wearing figure has a hybrid *gladius* on his right hip, in a Roman-style scabbard with four suspension rings. But these hang empty: the sword is rigged up with a leather sleeve which, we are to understand, allows the man to hang his weapon off a separate side strap: he wears his *gladius* like a La Tène sword with its complex suspension system. The statue carefully represents this arrangement, complete with unused suspension rings.⁶⁰ *Militaria* result from practical choices, political constraints and identity-performance.⁶¹

⁵⁹ On earlier swords found at La Tène: e.g. Anastassov *et al.* 2019. On the Celtic panoply and its meanings, Lejars 2015.

⁶⁰ Pernet *et al.* 2006: 48; Pernet 2010: 104.

⁶¹ For parallels from Iron Age Gaul and Spain, Tranoy 1988; Bertaud 2022.

In reflecting the paradoxes of military autonomy under empire, the Remetschwil weapons-grave invites similar analyses for other weapon finds in Switzerland. Instead of interpreting them as products of the Roman army,⁶² we should read them in relation to the long-standing Helvetian militia. (Naturally, I will not consider material contexts clearly connected to the Roman military, such as the legionary fort at Vindonissa and nearby sites.)⁶³ The survey below proceeds chronologically, starting in the late first century B.C.E. and ending with 69 C.E., with attention to the context of retrieval.

From sacred contexts at Port-Nidau (Bern) and Bern-Enge come artifacts dated typologically to the late first century B.C.E. (LTD2b): a long hybrid Type-2 *gladius* and iron helmets of late La Tène style, showing that Helvetian military men of this period might have looked like the Vachères statue, combining Celtic with Roman(-inspired) equipment (Fig. 6).⁶⁴ In spite of the Roman inspiration of the *gladius*, and the late emergence of the Port-Nidau type helmet (see below, Section IX), there is no reason to consider this as the equipment of Roman soldiers; it rather equipped the men who held the Swiss Plateau against Raetian raids, before 15 B.C.E. Similar *militaria* (including a helmet fragment and shield edging) dated to LTD2b and the early Augustan period have appeared to the south-west of the later Roman city at Aventicum. These finds show the existence of a 'Celtic' predecessor settlement (Fig. 7).⁶⁵ The Remetschwil *gladius*, buried c. 30–40 C.E., might reflect deliberate continuity in self-fashioning with the military style of this era; the folding of the blade is another old-fashioned trait (this must be the latest example of the practice in the Swiss archaeological record). As emphasised by Daniel Goldhorn, the details of the weaponry suggest a combination of indigenous traditions and Roman influence.⁶⁶ The material is contemporary with numismatic finds of silver (Belpberg, Sermuz, Avenches, Bois de Châtel)⁶⁷ and the first phase of fortifications at the Windisch fortified spur.

In a different register, around 10–20 C.E., a burial near Sévaz (Fribourg) contained a rather old-fashioned looking spearhead (reminiscent of second-century B.C.E. examples), a single-edged knife and a belt with a decorated metal buckle; the cremated remains were placed in an amphora (Fig. 8).⁶⁸ Rather than hunting-gear as Dominique Bugnon proposes, the material might be the military equipment of a local big-man. The spear might allude to military status, and the big knife and amphora to feasting, i.e. wine-drinking and meat-carving. Despite differences in contexts and appearance, the Sévaz burial and the Remetschwil weapons-grave share an antiquarian orientation, linked with social structure and community identity.

If one leaves aside the occasional appearance of *militaria* in single farmhouses and the isolated Remetschwil burial, the most important finds come from secondary settlements,

⁶² Soldiers or veterans: Voirol 2000: 38–9; Reddé 2009: 177.

⁶³ Zurzach: Hänggi *et al.* 1994. The *militaria* from Baden mostly relate to the sack of 69 C.E.: Unz 1972; 1975.

⁶⁴ Port-Nidau (riverine deposition of whole artifacts starting in LTD1): Pernet 2010: 242–3, analysing the material in Wyss *et al.* 2002 (especially nos. 82, 159, 160); Martin-Kilcher 2015: 257–8. Some typologically indeterminate spearheads and arrowheads could date to the end of first-century B.C.E. Bern-Enge: Martin-Kilcher 2015: 254–7 (fragmentary finds from fill in a sacred area, including spearheads, pieces of helmet cheekpieces and possible shield reinforcement pieces).

⁶⁵ From recent rescue excavations south-west of the Roman urban site: Bündgen *et al.* 2008; Blanc *et al.* 2014–15; 2018. Pre-Roman settlement: Amoroso *et al.* 2019; 2023. The *militaria* are studied in Denis Goldhorn's unpublished MA thesis (2017).

⁶⁶ I hence do not accept the suggestion of 'Roman military presence' at Avenches c. 20 B.C.E. in Amoroso *et al.* 2019: 68.

⁶⁷ Appendix 3c.

⁶⁸ Bugnon 2006; the dating rests on the Dressel 7/11-type amphora (from Hispania, used for *liquamen*!). Bugnon (2006: 189) argues against a strictly military interpretation of the grave, because of the absence of a sword or shield.



Fig. 6. Port-Nidau weapon finds. Sword, L. 740 mm. Top helmet (Alesia type), H. 150 mm. Bottom helmet (the name helmet for Port-Nidau type), H. 175 mm. (Bern Historical Museum inv. 13714, 26452, National Museum Zurich inv. A5520). From Pernet 2010, figure 188, drawing on Vyss et al. 2002: nos. 82, 159, 160. Courtesy of L. Pernet.

namely Lenzburg (Aargau) or Turicum/Zurich.⁶⁹ Vitudurum/Oberwinterthur (Zurich) constitutes a particularly rich case. At this last site, excavations of several neighbourhoods

⁶⁹ Farmhouses, secondary settlements: Deschler-Erb 1996: 134–5 (these finds need closer study). Turicum: Balmer 2009: cat. 765, 822 (harness pieces), 874 (sword furniture), 871 (D-ring belt buckle), 872 (rivet from *cingulum*); all c. 30–60 C.E.

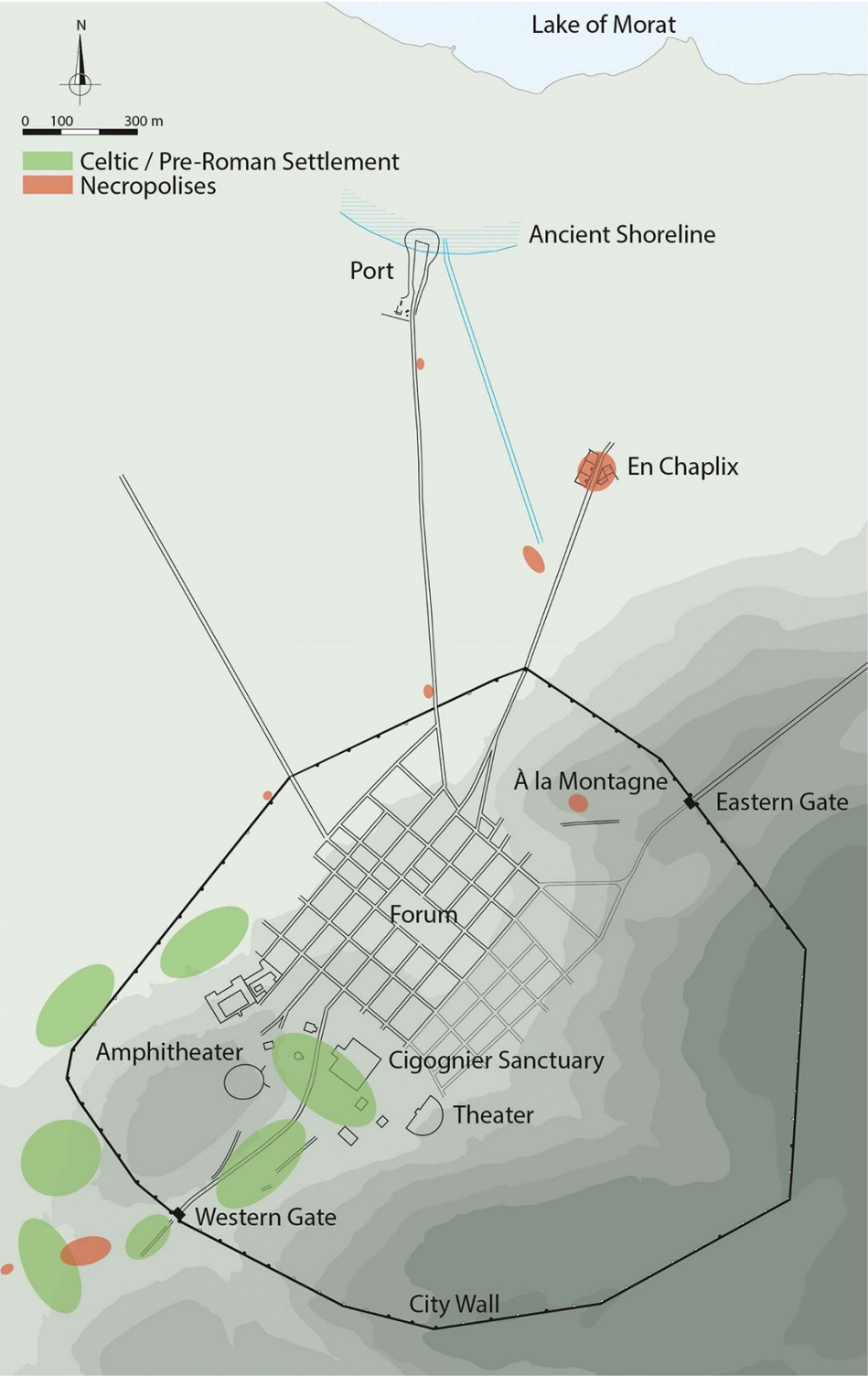


Fig. 7. Avenches with recent explorations of the pre-Roman city. © Site et Musée romains d'Avenches.

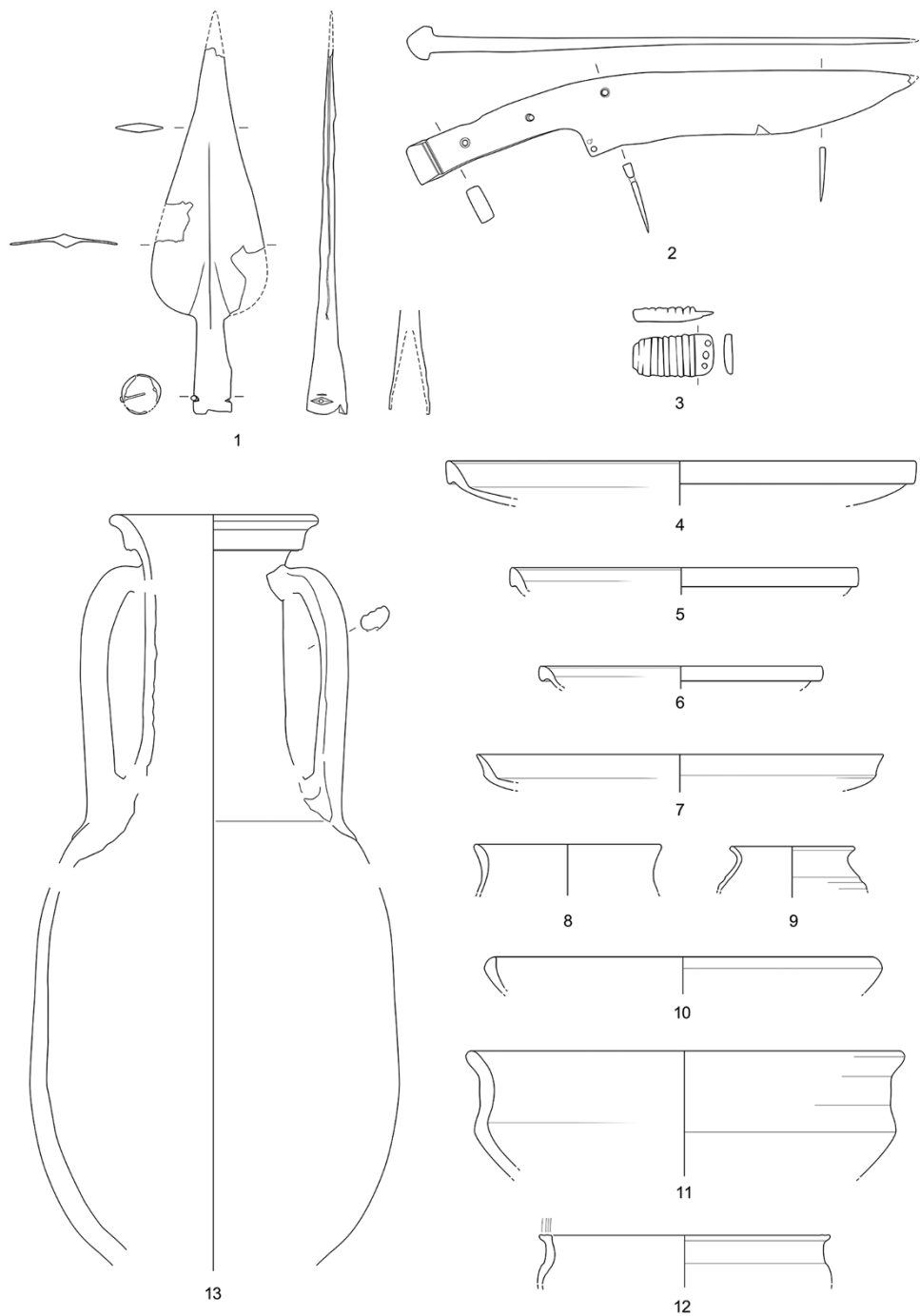


Fig. 8. Material from the grave of the Sévaz 'big man'. Drawing by M. Humbert and R. Marras. © Service archéologique de l'État de Fribourg (SAEF).



Fig. 9. 'Pompeii'-type *gladius*, Avenches. Iron, bone, ivory, L. 690 mm. Avenches Museum, inv. 96/9933-01. © Site et Musée romains d'Avenches.

have revealed over the last decades a remarkable concentration of first-century C.E. *militaria*, including fragments from *gladius* furniture, a variety of iron points, belt-plaques, equestrian harness-pieces, fittings for chainmail, and even helmet fragments and segmented armour.⁷⁰ About 20 km east of Vitudurum, near Lommis (Thurgau), a cremation grave contained a well-preserved Pompeii-type *gladius*, datable to 60–80 C.E. on the basis of typology.⁷¹

The largest assemblage of *militaria* is found at Avenches (Fig. 7).⁷² Chronologically relevant finds include spears, two *gladii* of the 'Pompeii' type of which one is datable stratigraphically to the second half of the first century C.E. (Fig. 9), and *gladius* scabbard furniture datable stratigraphically to c. 50 C.E.⁷³ Recently, a fragment from another *gladius* (specifically a piece of the bronze backing of the wooden guard) and an iron javelin head or bolt point with a quadrangular section have been found in a mid- to late first-century C.E. context of habitat and workshops.⁷⁴ Finds of defensive armament and kit include two elements of segmented armour (but the stratigraphical dating of these fits loosely between the first and second centuries C.E.), elements from the Roman-style belt apron (one piece is datable to the Augustan period), and decorations from horse-harnesses (perhaps paralleled in finds from the settlement at Bern-Enge).⁷⁵ A complete glass military medal (*phalera*) represents Agrippina Maior, likely Claudian in date; it likely rewarded military service in a Roman unit.⁷⁶ This find reminds us that, as shown by an honorific inscription, the Helvetian notable C. Julius Camillus served as a military tribune in a Roman legion on the Rhine, *IIII Macedonica* (under — the future emperor! — Ser. Sulpicius Galba, legate of Upper Germany), and was recalled to serve in Britain with Claudius, who decorated him with the *hasta pura* and a golden crown.⁷⁷

VII Interpreting Late Julio-Claudian *militaria* in the Helvetian context

It is immediately noticeable that the profile of the Vitudurum and Aventicum material does not look like that from Port-Nidau, Bern-Enge, Sévaz or Remetschwil. It simply appears more 'Roman'. The usual reflex has been to assign such material to the Roman army. But the view that the Swiss Plateau saw a sustained Roman military presence is problematic. I would like to reexamine the evidence and argue for an at least partially different interpretation.

⁷⁰ Appendix 1a; generally, Reddé 2009: 177.

⁷¹ Berger 2007: 40–1 (illustrated). The finds still want definitive publication.

⁷² Voirol 2000; 2002.

⁷³ Appendix 1a. The 'folded blade' on one of the *gladii* (Voirol 2000: no. 42) was not slighted by ritual action, but simply exhibits a mild kink in its upper part (I thank A. Devauchelle for checking).

⁷⁴ Presset et al. 2021–2: 212.

⁷⁵ Appendix 1a. Enge: Wells 1972: 40 n. 1.

⁷⁶ Voirol 2000: no. 83.

⁷⁷ CIL 13.5093–4 (TitHelv 186–7) with Frei-Stolba 1998: *hasta pura et corona aurea donato a Ti. Claudio Caesare Aug(usto) Ger(manico) cum ab eo evocatus in Britannia militasset*. On the family, van Berchem 1982, esp. 61–5; Syme 1977: 133–6. TitHelv 169, a statue base for Britannicus, suggests familiarity with the imperial house.

The material at Vitudurum has been explained variably, but always in connection with Roman presence: a Roman outpost complete with workshops, troops on the march, or settled veterans. Strikingly, a fragment of writing-tablet explicitly relates to the Roman army: it bears the mention of (*centuria*) *Exomni*, '(e.g. soldier) of the *centuria* of Exomnus/Exomnius'.⁷⁸ At the very least, the evidence is compatible with the passage of elements from the Roman troops based at Vindonissa. M. Reddé has observed, in the context of Gaul, how Roman military units travelled far afield on logistical missions.⁷⁹

However, the isolated and undated writing tablet cannot by itself constitute a decisive argument. There might have been a temporary outpost set up during the campaign of 15 B.C.E., but, as noted by Thomas Pauli-Gabi, 'there is up to now no positive evidence for a durable presence of the Roman military'.⁸⁰ Many of the *militaria* are found mingled with 'civilian' artifacts such as jewellery or mirrors, which argues for their being the property of members of the local population. The Lommis *gladius* has been interpreted as that of a Roman veteran,⁸¹ but this interpretation is doubtful on the grounds of distance from Vindonissa (about 60 km away as the eagle flies). Additionally, there is no clear epigraphical evidence for the passage or presence of soldiers or veterans in eastern Switzerland, in the form of votives, building inscriptions or tombstones (whereas such inscriptions abound at Windisch and its environs).⁸²

Likewise, the scanty *militaria* at Turicum have been interpreted as the sign of a Roman military detachment stationed there. The main argument is that they coincide with massive changes in material culture, namely the importation of ceramics and containers from a much wider horizon than prevalent in the late Iron Age site: amphoras from the eastern Mediterranean, *dolia*, Italian *sigillata*, etc. Yet this new profile coexists with traces of older material culture (notably ceramics), which hint at the continuity of population with the older Celtic settlement and generally share traits with sites on the remainder of the Swiss Plateau. As at Vitudurum, the *militaria* are found in civilian contexts.⁸³

At Aventicum, the *militaria* have been interpreted as the property of legionaries detached from Vindonissa or of veterans retaining their weaponry. In addition, as in north-eastern Switzerland, it is possible formations kept watch over supply routes and communications. But it is difficult to imagine a massive presence of Roman detachments and Roman veterans over 110 km away from Vindonissa, without any separate infrastructure for command, logistics, or supply. Such an interpretation is difficult to reconcile with the description in Tacitus of a polity with a strong military identity and institutions. In addition, the same dearth of epigraphical evidence for the presence of the Roman army can be seen for the area around Avenches as for north-eastern Switzerland (of three tombstones of soldiers from Avenches, two date to the Flavian period).⁸⁴ Mommsen's suggestion (see above, [Section V](#)),

⁷⁸ *TitHelv* 422.4 (no stratigraphical context). Another fragmentary first-century C.E. mention of a *centuria* appears on a writing tablet at Tasgetium/Eschenz in Raetia: *TitHelv* 707.3, (*centuria*) *Auffidii* ?).

⁷⁹ Reddé 2009: 173.

⁸⁰ Pauli-Gabi 2002: 181 n. 50. Outpost of 15 B.C.E.: Zürcher 1985: 182, 232.

⁸¹ Deschler-Erb 1996: 126–35; Jauch and Janke 2022: 208.

⁸² *TitHelv* 383–6 (Zurzach), section 21 *passim* (Windisch). *TitHelv* 383 (*CIL* 13.5243), a dedication by *ursarii* from Zurich, might have been set up by a military detachment (so Staehelin 1948: 468), but could also concern *venatores* in the arena (on which see L. Robert, *OMS* 7.520–30) or huntsmen. *CIL* 13.5247 might be a dedication by a *sign(ifer) c(ohortis)* at Rapperwil on Lake Zurich. I leave aside 'military' stamped tiles, whose circulation may reflect recycling or exchange rather than forts or vexillations (e.g. Trumm 2002).

⁸³ Balmer 2009: 163–7 on the possible presence of Roman soldiers.

⁸⁴ *TitHelv* 191, 192 (both after 68 C.E. since naming *Legio I Adiutrix*), 193 (first century C.E. based on formula); 67, the tombstone of the *emeritus* C. Iulius Lucanus found at Vidy presumably dates to the first or early second century C.E. *TitHelv* 14 (with Bérard 2000: 61–7) concerns the only known veteran of *Legio XXI Rapax* in Switzerland. He retired to *Colonia Julia Equestris* where he served on the Council; that is, he did not settle in the territory of the Helvetian *civitas*.

namely that the Helvetian polity watched over the security of communications on the Swiss Plateau, retains its attraction.

Obviously, the Helvetians' territory was not sealed off. The presence of the military frontier and the huge camp at Vindonissa entailed contact with the Roman state and army. But even if it is possible that some of the *militaria* at Avenches, Zurich and Oberwinterthur (along with the writing tablets mentioning *centuriae*) relate to movements by Roman troops across Helvetian territory, it is unclear on what scale. At any rate this explanation cannot account for all the *militaria*. Many or most of the first-century C.E. Roman-looking *militaria* of Avenches likely were used by Helvetian militiamen, living in the urban settlement of the *civitas*. I favour a similar explanation for the *militaria* from Vitudurum and Turicum. Such an analysis is consistent with a finding by Michel Feugère and Matthieu Poux: *militaria* in Gaul from the first century C.E. onwards tend to concentrate in urban contexts.⁸⁵ The material record of *militaria* in civilian context suggests that Vitudurum might have been the site of the Helvetian fort of 69 C.E., though there is currently no evidence of fortifications.⁸⁶ At Aventicum, the 'Roman' *militaria* should be viewed as a prolongation of the LTD2b and Augustan-era *militaria* found at the Celtic settlement next to the site of Aventicum. The likeliest explanation is that the population of this settlement (including its military men) relocated to Aventicum, and that the 'Roman' *militaria* belonged to their descendants.

A possible objection to this interpretation is the lack of any numismatic evidence which could be associated with military payments (already noted in Section IV), in contrast with the plentiful silver Celtic coinage found on the Swiss Plateau and indeed at Avenches itself. However, it may be that the need for military pay, and indeed the rate and frequency of mobilisation, was less intense in the Julio-Claudian period than during the tumultuous first century B.C.E. Another objection is the presence of elements of segmented armour at Aventicum and Vitudurum, since this is usually associated with legionary troops.⁸⁷ We could assign these fragments to the Roman troops passing through Helvetian territory that even my reconstruction admits. Alternatively, we could imagine the Helvetian militiamen experimenting with such equipment.

The upshot is that by c. 50 C.E., the Helvetian militiamen had adopted a 'Roman' look with *gladii* and military 'apron'. Paradoxically, the Helvetian army, embodying an autonomous *civitas* allied to Rome, was converging with the Roman imperial army in terms of material culture. This is the outcome of a process starting with the Roman-style 'second wall' at early Vindonissa and the hybrid *gladii* at Port-Nidau and Remetschwil. It may have been furthered by members of the Helvetian elite serving in the Roman army (see below, Section VIII). For the Helvetians, the dilemma concerned the appearance and functions of autonomy: in different ways, both the old LTD2 style and the more modern style threatened to reveal the obsolescence of their institutions.

VIII Military institutions and social structure

Perhaps diversity survived, if the old hybrid style of the Remetschwil warrior and the Roman-style guardsmen overlapped. The Lommis *gladius*, though found in a rural burial, might be explained by (relative) proximity to the urban settlement at Vitudurum. The picture of diversity could be enriched by supposing (without any direct evidence, true) that

⁸⁵ Feugère and Poux 2002.

⁸⁶ Already suggested by Julian (1993, 2.719 n. 66, discussed by Zingg 2012: 37). Tacitus speaks of Helvetian fortifications generally being in disrepair (*Hist.* 1.68.1), rather than those of the *castellum* (Chilver 1979 *ad loc.*). Balmer 2009: 165–6 speculates that the fortified site at Turicum served as a militarised toll-station into the mid-first century; if so, I would assign it to Helvetian militiamen rather than Roman troops.

⁸⁷ E.g. Fischer 2019: 127–31. There also is a possible *pilum* shaft from Roggwil (Bern): Lanzicher 2022: 156 and cat. PK139 (found in survey).

the epigraphically attested boatmen of the Arar and Lake Lemannus were armed like their Parisian counterparts with shield, spear and bulbous helmet.⁸⁸ Such differences, if they persisted, would have reflected the nature of the Helvetian troops as a 'national' army.

The connections between social structure, elite display, antiquarianism and local military means are strikingly illustrated by the finds at a site near Avenches, 'En Chaplix' (Figs 7, 10).⁸⁹ At this spot, excavation during highway works revealed a cultic and funerary ensemble from the first century C.E., located on either side of a road leading out of the urban site towards the modern Lake of Morat. A late first-century B.C.E. female burial was covered by an early first-century C.E. cultic zone structured by two temples (of the central *cella* and peripheral gallery type). Most astonishingly, on the other side of the road, two monumental multi-storied tombs were erected, each in its own enclosure, one in the 20s and one in the 40s C.E. (they are thus contemporary to the Remetschwil burial). The mausoleums, executed in a highly ornate post-hellenistic style, carried at their top aedicula protecting limestone statues in Roman dress and naturalistic style. Among the sculptural fragments figures a vividly executed male head which once wore a metallic crown, perhaps a military decoration comparable to that bestowed on C. Iulius Camillus (Fig. 11). A find from the shrine at Thun-Allmendingen (Bern) offers a parallel: a limestone fragmentary head, originally from an over-lifesize statue, with an attachment hole for a metal wreath, and dating to c. 40 C.E.—another Helvetian elite individual with a Roman military career?⁹⁰

Yet the cultural horizons of the En-Chaplix mausoleums were also local and ancient. Three funerary deposits reflect rituals accompanying the erection of the monuments: large-scale cremation on timber structures, the destruction of luxury grave goods of Mediterranean origin (including a dining couch), the sacrifice of a horse, and feasting, as shown by masses of amphora fragments (of Dressel 2-4 type, carefully smashed after use).⁹¹ The remains of at least eleven amphoras were found at the northern monument, and of at least eight at the southern burial, equalling 330 and 240 litres of wine. The amphora deposits hark back to the aristocratic feasts of the La Tène Iron Age and the 'Wine Age'.⁹² The archaising practices at En-Chaplix lie on a spectrum with the offerings, at a much more modest scale, in the tombs of Sévaz and Remetschwil.

Finds also establish a connection with the Helvetian militia. Elements from Roman-style belts and thong-aprons, decorative pieces from cavalry harness, and a possible bronze phalera, were found in the area, one in the Augustan-period shrine.⁹³ Military parades or musters were perhaps held along the road: the shrine and mausoleums, though associated with a family, may have been the venue for the demonstration of Helvetian military capacity. Elite status and social hierarchies were clearly bound with local autonomy and cultural identity, in a way which we can suspect for the cities of the Greek East but which is harder to substantiate.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Boatmen: *TitHelv* 56, 61 (*lacu Lemanno*, dated paleographically before 200 C.E.), 220 (Aare boatmen, datable to the early first century C.E. by the formula *in honorem domus divinae*). On the famous *Pilier des Nautes* exhibited in the Cluny Museum (a Tiberian-era relief monument set up by the *nautae Parisiaci*: RIIG PAR-01-01), Feugère and Poux 2002: 90–1.

⁸⁹ Flutsch 2013. The funerary sculpture is studied in Bossert 2002.

⁹⁰ Martin-Kilcher 2015: 274–5; Martin-Kilcher 2009: 244–5 and Martin-Kilcher and Schatzmann 2009: cat. no. 103. In the case of Thun-Allmendingen, the dedication of a statue in a shrine does not necessarily mean it was that of a priest.

⁹¹ Castella *et al.* 2002.

⁹² For a recently discovered example (late second or early first century B.C.E.) at Regensburg (Zurich), Lanzicher *et al.* 2023.

⁹³ Voirol 2000: nos. 65, 72, 75, 78, 122, 123, 142, 156, 176, 200, 231, 232, 238, 241, 260 (*phalera?*).

⁹⁴ The question of elites and social structure in the Greek East is complicated by the overwhelmingly honorific nature of the epigraphical evidence: e.g. Veyne 1976; Zuiderhoek 2009; Heller and van Nijf 2017; Heller and Hallmannsecker 2024.



Fig. 10. En-Chaplix mausoleums. From left to right: reconstructed Northern Monument (23–8 c.E.; H. 23.52 m); reconstructed Southern Monument (c. 40–5 c.E.; H. 25.20 m); plan of the area (1. northern temple; 2. southern temple; 3. 'chapel'; 4. Augustan-era ditch; 5. northern enclosure; 6. southern enclosure; 7. boundary wall of private estate ('Villa du Russalet'); 8–9. road and ditches; 10–11. Northern Monument and enclosure; 12–13. Southern Monument and enclosure; 14. necropolis). © Site et Musée romains d'Avenches.



Fig. 11. Head from funerary statue, Southern Monument, En-Chaplix. Limestone, H. 345 mm. Inv. 89/7888/15: Bossert 2002: 36. © Site et Musée romains d'Avenches.

Military autonomy perpetuated not just the collective memory of the Helvetians, but also social hierarchies within the community. This is the lesson of the coexistence, within the same social space-time (around 40 C.E.) of the En-Chaplix mausolea and their offerings-rich precincts, the non-elite and austere cemetery of *À la Montagne*, the Remetschwil weapons-grave and its grave goods and the Roman-influenced *militaria* of Aventicum, Vitudurum and Thommis. The Helvetian militia symbolised local history and identity, but also worked as a token of social structure, namely the close relationship between autonomy, a large militarisable class, and an elite whose horizons looked to past, present and imperial horizons at the same time.

IX Materiality and martiality in first-century C.E. Gaul

The Helvetian test-case is connected with the question of martiality in the north-western provinces of the Roman empire. L. Pernet has systematically interpreted Roman-influenced weaponry (for instance the hybrid Type-2 *gladius*), and generally any weaponry at all as an index of military service as auxiliaries to the Roman army.⁹⁵ But the categories need reconsideration.⁹⁶ The story of emergence of auxiliary units in the Roman army is well known. For military aid, the Roman Republic drew extensively on local communities, starting with the Italian communities but also including various polities encountered abroad.⁹⁷ Local communities were especially put to contribution during the late decades of the Republic and their civil wars. Their contingents are the ancestors of the standing auxiliary units (cohorts or *alae*) recruited locally in the provinces and serving for fixed periods in return for Roman citizenship. This system, a corollary of the Augustan standing army, emerged during the early Julio-Claudian period. The legionary forces at Vindonissa were supported by various auxiliary cohorts, billeted with them but also distributed along the Rhine frontier.⁹⁸ Individuals enrolled in regular auxiliary units, without necessarily coming from the area of original recruitment. Thus, in the first century C.E. two Helvetians served in the *Ala I Hispanorum*.⁹⁹

Pernet remains careful to take the concept of ‘auxiliaries’ in its broadest sense as any provincial fighting-men serving the Roman empire, especially in the earlier periods and in allied or *ad hoc* units. Yet even this broad definition obscures the importance of locally recruited troops under the authority of a *civitas* rather than the Roman army. Mommsen in 1887 already underlined the importance of *Provinzialmilizen*, as the ‘third military branch’ (*dritter Heerteil*) alongside legions and auxiliary cohorts. Local associations of young men were often paramilitary in nature, and the cities across the empire needed forces to keep order within their territories.¹⁰⁰ The Helvetian militia is only one example. The Raetian *iuventus* constitute another case, all the more striking because Raetia did not enjoy autonomy. The Raetian militia trained alongside Roman forces and fulfilling military duties shows how local military forces operated within the overarching military system of the Roman empire. Other examples include the Batavians and generally the ‘Germans living on this side of the Rhine’ which Germanicus drew upon during his campaign of 15 C.E.¹⁰¹ The Pannonian rebels of 6 C.E. are said by Velleius to have had some experience of ‘Roman discipline’ (as well as Latin), surely acquired in similar contexts.¹⁰² In other words, the old system of allied contingents persisted into the Julio-Claudian period, overlapping with the new system of standing auxiliary units.

Yet the *raison d’être* of local militias was not limited to service to Rome. In 69 C.E., the uprising of the Boian prophet Mariccus was suppressed by the armed *iuventus* of the Haedui,

⁹⁵ Pernet 2010, esp. 27–30; see also Reddé 2022b: 281–302.

⁹⁶ On the history of the *auxilia*, e.g. Cheesman 1914; Kraft 1951; Haynes 2013.

⁹⁷ Livy 32.37 gives an explicit justification for the practice.

⁹⁸ Hartmann and Speidel 1991.

⁹⁹ Kraft 1951; 1957; *CIL* 13.6234, 7026.

¹⁰⁰ Cagnat 1880; Mommsen 1887; Kraft 1951: 38 (reconstructing local ‘guards’ organised formally; *contra*, Alföldy 1968: 86–93); Brunt 1990: 255–66. On the paramilitary activities of associations of young men, Laes and Strubbe 2014: 73, 127–9. Local forces to protect order and property: van Wees *et al.* 2008.

¹⁰¹ Tac., *Ann.* 1.56.1: *tumultuarias catervas Germanorum cis Rhenum colentium*, ‘emergency warbands of the Germans living on this side of the Rhine’.

¹⁰² Vell. Pat. 2.110: *omnibus autem Pannoniis non disciplinae tantummodo, sed linguae quoque notitia Romanae ... erat*, ‘all the Pannonians had notions not only of Roman training but also of Roman language’; Cass. Dio 55.29; Kraft 1951: 38–40.

a social elite.¹⁰³ Just as Laur-Belart sensed that the Remetschwil tomb was connected to a Helvetian militiaman, T. Fischer, in his survey of *militaria* in ‘civilian’ context, already raised the possibility that many such finds, usually assigned to the Roman military, equipped local military forces.¹⁰⁴ Though Feugère and Poux have interpreted *militaria* in ‘civilian’ contexts in Gaul as showing the continuous presence of Roman military units in inland Gaul down into the first century C.E., I would rather interpret this material, especially in urban context, as relating to local militias.¹⁰⁵

The material record can be reread within this paradigm. Suggestive cases occur in LTD2b and early Roman Gallia Lugdunensis.¹⁰⁶ In the free *civitas* of the Bituriges, defensive and offensive weaponry (including the Type-2 *gladius*) in funerary context during the early Augustan period need not imply direct auxiliary service under Roman command. One of the Biturigian graves (at Fléré-la-Rivière) is a rich élite burial, dating to 20–1 B.C.E. The *gladius* was found with two other swords of the late La Tène long type; the grave goods included thirteen amphoras but also paraphernalia for feasting and iron-working. The whole assemblage expresses persistent claims to elite status in a style which emerged in the second century B.C.E.¹⁰⁷ Among the Bituriges as the Helvetians, military activity tied in with social relations. *Militaria* among other free *civitates*, especially in LTD2b and the early Augustan periods, can be related to militias, for instance at the fortified site of Gondole (Puy-de-Dôme), in Arvernian territory,¹⁰⁸ or Bibracte and Autun, among the Haedui.¹⁰⁹ The finds include Port-Nidau type helmets.¹¹⁰ Such examples take on particular interest when considered alongside funerary representations of men wearing long swords in ‘civilian’ context.¹¹¹ The evolution of the material profile, tending towards Roman equipment (with finds of ‘apron’ pendants), parallels that at Aventicum.

The record of *militaria* is particularly dense in Gallia Belgica (of particular interest since, as mentioned above, the Helvetian *civitas* belonged to this province).¹¹² Some military funerary material occurs in the western parts of Belgica, away from the Rhine, here too mostly dated to the LTD2 and Augustan periods.¹¹³ The weapons-tombs of the Augustan era at St-Nicolas (Pas-de-Calais, in the ancient territory of the Atrebatas, a stipendiary community) included *cingula* among their finds of *militaria*. The great shrine at Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Somme), in the territory of the Ambiani (also a stipendiary community) yielded weapons from LTD2b and the Augustan period (including a Port-Nidau type helmet). The material parallels the late Iron Age material from Port-Nidau in Switzerland, and could have equipped local military men without them having served as ‘auxiliaries’.¹¹⁴

The Helvetian test-case acts as a touchstone for my rereading of the *militaria*. The late first-century B.C.E. context of the find of the eponymous iron helmet at Port-Nidau (with iron bowl, ‘brows’ and nape protector), at a time of Helvetian political autonomy and military capacities, argues against Feugère’s interpretation of this type of

¹⁰³ Tac., *Hist.* 2.61: *gravissima civitas electa iuventute, adiectis a Vitellio cohortibus, fanaticam multitudinem disiecit*, ‘the considerable *civitas*, with a select troop of young men and units sent by Vitellius, dispersed the fanatical crowd’.

¹⁰⁴ Fischer 2002: 13–14 (see also Feugère 1996). I leave out Roman military camps such as Corent (probably), and *dubia*.

¹⁰⁵ Feugère and Poux 2002.

¹⁰⁶ Appendix 2a for sites and references.

¹⁰⁷ Pernet 2010: 237; on the burial and the long story of Iron Age aristocratic burials among the Bituriges, Ferdière and Villard 1993.

¹⁰⁸ Deberge 2008, arguing for Roman auxiliaries; the site has not yielded any *caliga* hobnails.

¹⁰⁹ Pernet *et al.* 2008; Fort and Labaune 2008.

¹¹⁰ Pernet 2010: 113 (Gondole, Bibracte).

¹¹¹ Deyts 1993.

¹¹² On *Belgica*: Wightman 1985; Raepsaet-Charlier 2021; Hoët-van Cauwenberghe 2022.

¹¹³ Appendix 2b.

¹¹⁴ Pernet 2010: B34.

helmet as Roman.¹¹⁵ My argument is reinforced by the fragments of Port-Nidau helmet cheek-pieces found at Aventicum and Bern-Enge. The presence of the Port-Nidau type at Bibracte, Gondole or Ribemont-sur-Ancre does not imply the presence of Roman troops or past service as auxiliaries for the Roman army, especially since the first two sites belonged to the free *civitates* of the Haedui and the Arverni. Furthermore, if my interpretation of the *militaria* of Aventicum and Vitodurum is correct, even clearly Roman artifacts (such as the ‘apron’ pendants or the *gladius*) are not necessarily an index of the presence of Roman troops or auxiliary service, as opposed to the adoption by local military forces of certain ‘modern’ pieces of equipment.

A remarkable artifact comes from St Maur (Oise), in the territory of the Bellovaci (yet another stipendiary *civitas* in *Belgica*). A statuette of hammered bronze, probably dating to the late first century B.C.E. or the early first century C.E., shows in a distinctive non-Classical style a figure wearing a torc, textile armour and a Roman-style belt with a D-buckle, and holding a shield with the round, ‘Germanic’ *umbo*, like that known from Remetschwil (Fig. 12).¹¹⁶ Jenny Kaurin speculates that the 55 cm tall statuette (whose technique resembles that of earlier boar-ensigns) adorned a military standard. This would imply some form of local army in a LTD2 or early Augustan context (or perhaps an armed procession in honour of an impressively military deity) rather than Roman auxiliary service. The cultural profile recalls the hybridity of the Helvetian finds at Port-Nidau or Remetschwil. The possible context of parades parallels the military musters which I propose for En-Chaplix outside of Avenches.

Across Gaul, martial culture is mostly visible in the LTD2 and early Roman periods. Subsequently, military identity was no longer commemorated in funerary ritual and offerings.¹¹⁷ The free and allied *civitas* of the Lingones and its stipendiary neighbour the Sequani had military capacities and used them repeatedly during the first century C.E., down to the clashes of 68 and 69–70 C.E.; yet the archaeological record for these two *civitates* is devoid of *militaria* or weapons-tombs.¹¹⁸ The mysterious massacre of 4,000 Mediomatrici (*socia civitas* according to Tacitus) in 69 C.E. might have occurred during an *accrochage* between a local militia and Valens’ column (similar to the débâcle of the Helvetians).¹¹⁹ Yet they are absent from Pernet’s archaeological gazetteer of *militaria*. Remarkably, the Batavians, who served extensively in the Roman army, did not practise burial with weapons.¹²⁰

However, local autonomy could find another means of expression, namely the maintenance of urban fortifications, such as those Suetonius tells us that Galba ordered demolished as a punitive measure.¹²¹ The phenomenon is noticeable in Gallia Narbonensis where it may be linked to the status of autonomy, but also in northern Gaul. The Lingones and the Mediomatrici likely had fortified urban centres in the early first century C.E. (Andematunnum/Langres for the former, Divodurum/Metz for the latter). At Durocortorum/Reims, the urban centre of the free *civitas* of the Remi, the Iron Age

¹¹⁵ Deberge 2008: 232, based on arguments by Feugère (now Feugère 2011: 80–2); but see Poux 2008b: 342 and Pernet 2010: 112, for nuances. On the Port-Nidau helmet and its influence on the Roman Weisenau helmet-type, T. Fischer 2019: 106–7.

¹¹⁶ Kaurin *et al.* 2017. The statuette, excavated illegally, is dated only by the typology of the shield with its round *umbo* and the shape of the belt buckle.

¹¹⁷ Noted by Roymans 1996; on the general disappearance of weapons-graves in central and south-west Gaul, Blaizot and Bonnet 2010.

¹¹⁸ Lingones, Sequani: Raepsaet-Charlier 2021: 130–8. The second-century C.E. Lingonian aristocrat who in testament mentions spears, swords and knives used these implements to hunt (CIL 13.5708; Le Bohec 1991).

¹¹⁹ Tac., *Hist.* 1.63 with Hoët-van Cauwenberghe 2022: 270–1 on the Mediomatrici; generally Raepsaet-Charlier 2021: 119–25.

¹²⁰ Fernández-Götz 2014: 34–5.

¹²¹ Marc with Blin 2011: 231; Reddé 2022b: 531–46; Suet., *Galb.* 12.1 (Tac., *Hist.* 1.53.3 only mentions punishment *atrocibus edictis aut damno finium*, ‘by frightful edicts or the loss of territory’).



Fig. 12. Saint-Maur warrior. Copper alloy, H. 55 cm Musée de l'Oise, inv. no. 85.16. Photo Frank Raux. © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, NY.

fortification works were reinforced c. 15–1 B.C.E.; in Hoët-van Cauwenberghe's words, 'its Celtic system of defence and display would survive until the reign of Trajan.' Similarly, older fortifications were maintained by the Carnutes, a free *civitas*, at Autricum/Chartres in the late Augustan period.¹²²

Some stipendiary *civitates* also maintained walls. Vesontio, the capital of the Sequani, was protected by its Iron Age fortifications at least down to the Tiberian period (perhaps

¹²² Reims and the Remi: Raepsaet-Charlier 2021: 73–7; Hoët-van Cauwenberghe 2022: 306–7. See Appendix 2a–b for weapons-graves among Remi and Carnutes.

allowing the city to fend off Vindex in 68 C.E.). The stipendiary Ambiani surrounded their urban centre, Samarobriua/Amiens, with fortifications, including an impressive ditch dating to the first half of the first century C.E.¹²³ Amiens' walls came after the earlier (LTD2 and early Augustan) *militaria* deposited at the shrine of Ribemont-sur-Ancre. Strikingly, even a secondary settlement such as Alisia/Alise Sainte-Reine (Côte-d'Or) maintained and actually extended its fortifications (building in the old *muris gallicis* style in the early decades of the first century C.E.).¹²⁴ Such practices cannot be related to 'auxiliary' service: rather, they offer striking statements of local communal identity.

X Treviri, Helvetians and martiality under the Roman empire

Among the rich record of *militaria* in eastern Gaul, particularly noticeable is the case of the Treviri.¹²⁵ The material resembles, at a much greater density of finds, the picture on the Swiss Plateau: high popularity at the very end of the first century B.C.E. (LTD2, the same as for the finds at Port-Nidau), persistence in the Augustan period, tailing off in the Julio-Claudian period.¹²⁶ Like the Helvetian finds, Treviran weapons-graves are characterised by a wide diversity.¹²⁷

It is true that Tacitus mentions (in the context of the unrest of 21 C.E.)¹²⁸ a unit of Treviran auxiliary cavalrymen serving locally alongside other such units and trained in Roman style. The great mausoleum of Bartringen/Bertrange (Luxemburg) might be that of a Treviran aristocrat who served in a Roman unit. Its astonishing fragmentary frieze shows Roman (?) cavalry defeating Germans or Celts; a fallen 'barbarian' is shown being despoiled of his torc and decapitated.¹²⁹ Nonetheless, according to the principles I posit above, there is no *a priori* reason to call auxiliaries all the occupants of Treviran tombs containing simple spear-and-shield assemblages in, such as the two LTD2b tombs from Mayen (Rheinland-Pfalz). In three of the four elite tombs of Goeblange-Nospelt (Luxemburg), the deceased were buried with swords: one was an early 'hybrid' *gladius*, but two were magnificent La Tène-style swords with decorated scabbards. If the context for one of these Celtic swords dates to LTD2b, the other tomb dates around 15 B.C.E., later than the *gladius*. The scabbards show bold, innovative lattice-work decoration at the scabbard-top.¹³⁰ Here, too, the category 'auxiliaries' is arguably not the right one. Rather, we are dealing with members of local elites with military pretensions, claiming continuity with the past. A similar interpretation might be formulated for the tombs from Lebach (Saarland), where a single *gladius* appears among seven weapons-graves, or from Koblenz-Neuendorf (Rheinland-Pfalz) where *gladii* appear in two out of five weapons-graves.

The point of what precedes is not to minimise the impact of the Roman empire. In arguing for militias rather than auxiliaries, I may seem to quibble about mere terminology. In the end, the debate is one of perspective: whereas Pernet takes military service for

¹²³ Amiens: Bayard 2015, esp. 159–60 on the ditch.

¹²⁴ Colin 2010 (*muris gallicis* dated between in the first third of the first century C.E. by a fragmentary Italian *sigillata* plate of Haltern 3 type); Grapin 2011: 188. On the status of ancient Alisia (a secondary settlement in the territory of either Haedui or Lingones), Reddé 2022b: 547–58; Raepsaet-Charlier 2013. There is a likely parallel at Vertault (Côte-d'Or), whose *muris gallicis* however cannot be dated precisely within the first century C.E. Generally, Buchsenschutz and Ralston 2014, esp. 175 on the *muris gallicis* as an ostentatious, metal-rich genre, connected with Gallic elites and euergetism.

¹²⁵ Roymans 1996; Pernet 2010: 165–7, 245–60; Raepsaet-Charlier 2021: 101–19.

¹²⁶ Pernet 2010: 251–4. For the sites discussed below, Appendix 2c.

¹²⁷ Kaurin 2015 notes the association of the full panoply (sword and shield) with high-status consumption and meat-eating.

¹²⁸ Tac., *Ann.* 3.42.

¹²⁹ Kremer 2009; the monument is not discussed in Pernet 2010.

¹³⁰ Metzler and Gaeng 2009; Fernández-Götz 2014: 188–9 (interpreting the tombs as hero-cult).

the Roman empire as his lodestar, I read his gazetteer as a portfolio of snapshots of local martial society. The important point is that the Helvetian muster of 69 C.E. is not some trivial, obscure episode involving ‘tribesmen’ (as Gwyn Morgan regrettably writes).¹³¹ It is of a piece with the history of Gaul in the transition from LTD2b to Julio-Claudian periods, and of its diverse communities endowed with political identities. These traits explain the unquiet history of northeast and central Gaul for a century after conquest, its violent convulsions until the Flavian period.¹³² Instead of the material traces of Roman *empreinte militaire* or service within the Roman *auxilia*, the *militaria* reveal a political, institutional and cultural *koine* in the last lights of a long late Iron Age.

XI Political community, material culture and empire

In concluding my paper, I wish to prolong what has proven its central impulse, namely to explore the connections between the findings of a particular ‘national’ archaeology (that of the Swiss Plateau) with ever broadening historical contexts. As an empire-wide phenomenon, the militias of first-century C.E. Gaul find significant parallels in the eastern Mediterranean provinces of the Roman Empire. Many Greek *poleis* and small principalities of the East were warlike during the Hellenistic age and retained military capacities into the Triumviral period, fighting in their own defence and providing troops (‘auxiliaries’ if you will) to the Roman state. The Galatian ruler Amyntas drew on allied contingents from free cities such as Termessos as auxiliaries against other Pisidian cities such as Sandalion. A Termessian officer was even decorated by the king for bravery, before falling in battle.¹³³ The Lykian League kept military institutions until Lykia was reduced to provincial status in 43 C.E. As studied by Cédric Brélaz, even under the Roman Empire, Greek cities kept paramilitary forces to control their territory (and never forgot their glorious military past). Even under Hadrian, the *polis* of Trapezous supplied forces to fight with the Roman army against the Alani.¹³⁴ In the Roman Near East, as so strikingly shown by Fergus Millar, imperial control during the first century C.E. was surprisingly hesitant and variable, and coexisted with or even depended on local political actors such as client kingdoms; the armies fielded by these kingdoms and free cities play a notable role during the Jewish War.

In the north-western provinces as well as the eastern Mediterranean, the combination of imperial structure and local autonomy results in a noticeable messiness of arrangements on the ground throughout the early Principate, with considerable leeway for unrest and violence.¹³⁵ The Roman senatorial historian Dio Cassius shows awareness of this situation, even as he simplifies it away, in the programmatic speech he assigns to Maecenas: ‘if we allow all our subjects who are of military age to possess arms and undergo a military training, there will be a continual series of riots and civil wars.’¹³⁶

The parallel between West and East suggests that the study of Roman power in the Gallic provinces should not just focus on individuals and their choices, nor just listen to the elites, but also integrate communities endowed with corporate political existence and hence the capacity for fundamental interaction with an imperial state. This viewpoint is standard in the study of the eastern Mediterranean (where written sources make local corporate existence abundantly clear), but needs greater emphasis in the case of the western provinces.

¹³¹ Gwyn Morgan 1996.

¹³² Tac., *Ann.* 3.40–2; Tac., *Hist.* 1.63, 67–9; 4. 56, 66–9; Cass. Dio 65.3; Raepsaet-Charlier 2021: 18–20; Reddé 2022a: 310–27.

¹³³ Mitchell 1994 (*SEG* 44.1113).

¹³⁴ On the armies of the Hellenistic cities, Boulay 2014; on paramilitary forces and persistent military memories in the Greek cities of the Roman East, Brélaz 2008; 2021. Trapezous: Arr., *Ektaxis* 7.

¹³⁵ Millar 1993; Reddé 2022a.

¹³⁶ Dio Cass. 53.27; Millar 1964: 139–40.

It would be merely piquant to draw a parallel between, on the one hand, the virtuoso swordsmiths of Goebblange, the builders patiently maintaining the *muris gallicus* of Vesontio and Alisia, or the militiamen of Port-Nidau and Remetschwil, and on the other, the performers and thinkers of Hellenic antiquarianism, or other manifestations of the Greeks' 'struggle for identity' under the Roman Empire: the long late Iron Age and the long Hellenistic, both persisting within an empire of domination.¹³⁷ It is more important to keep in focus the political community, be it western *civitas* or Greek *polis*, when looking at landscapes of empire. Bringing back (something like) the state when considering the western communities goes beyond the traditional narrative of 'becoming Roman'.¹³⁸

The importance of the *civitas* as the crucial level of interpretation has long been promoted for the study of religion in the western provinces, notably by William van Andringa and Thérèse Raepsaet-Charlier, in explicit dialogue with similar approaches in the study of ancient Greek culture ('*polis* religion').¹³⁹ Another example of interpretive work focusing on the importance of local state-like agency and identity is Andrew Johnston's *Sons of Remus*, which combines the archaeological evidence dear to historians of western Europe with an awareness of collective identity and institutions, explicitly inspired by work on the Greek East.¹⁴⁰ It is at this level of the life of *communities* within empire that concepts such as elites, social complexity, nodal connectivity, region and territory, or imperial landscape come into their own, as ways to view the theatre of power and culture. For instance, according to my interpretation of the first-century C.E. *militaria* of the Swiss Plateau, 'Romanisation' of specific areas of material culture can be seen to happen at the level of the *civitas*. It results from its institutional and ideological needs, combined with the proximity of the military frontier, the homeostatic pressures of Roman administration, and the impact of elites engaged in the curation of social structure.

XII Exploring the political turn

This is not the place for a social and cultural history of the Helvetian *civitas*.¹⁴¹ Here I would simply insist on the importance of grasping the political and the institutional factors when reading the material record. For instance, the story of urbanisation and settlement is a political one.¹⁴² At Baden, the shift from the La Tène settlement at Kappelerhof (a cluster of shrines, tombs and enclosures) to the new *vicus* with its grid plan is not just a story of the erection of a city *in modum municipii* (in Tacitus' phrase). An excavated section of the first-century C.E. *vicus* is characterised by the tight succession of deep, narrow-frontage timber houses: unparalleled in Italian municipal urbanism, this mimics the military architecture of the Rhine frontier (Fig. 13). It matches the situation of the northern fringe of the Helvetian territory as a middle ground of ambiguous encounters with the military frontier.¹⁴³

¹³⁷ Struggle for identity: e.g. Bowie 1970; Schmitz and Wiater 2011. Long Hellenistic: Chaniotis 2018.

¹³⁸ E.g. Woolf 1998: 63–7; van Andringa 2017.

¹³⁹ van Andringa 1993–4; 2017 on the 'poliadic' dimension of religion in Roman Gaul; Raepsaet-Charlier 2022, with earlier bibliography.

¹⁴⁰ Johnston 2017.

¹⁴¹ See already Flutsch *et al.* 2002.

¹⁴² On urbanisation and Romanisation in 'Roman Switzerland', Flutsch 2010; Pauli-Gabi, Steiner and Wibl 2002; Martin-Kilcher 2015. On urbanisation in the north-western provinces generally, Marc with Blin 2011; Hoët-van Cauwenberghe 2022: 304–47 for Gallia Belgica. On the complex story of Aventicum, de Pury-Gysel 2011; 2012a; 2012b; Castella 2015; van Andringa 2017: 71–2; Frey-Kupper *et al.* 2018 for the archaeology of the multitude of shrines and sacred areas.

¹⁴³ Baden-Kappelerhof: Hartman *et al.* 1989; Lanzicher *et al.* 2023. Baden: Schucany 1996. The picture is complicated by stone-built elite housing, destroyed in 69 C.E.: Deschler-Erb 2008a (on a house *lararium* containing bronze statuettes and, remarkably, an archaic Greek bronze reworked into an apotropaic ithyphallic figure); Martin 2020 (houses on terraces).

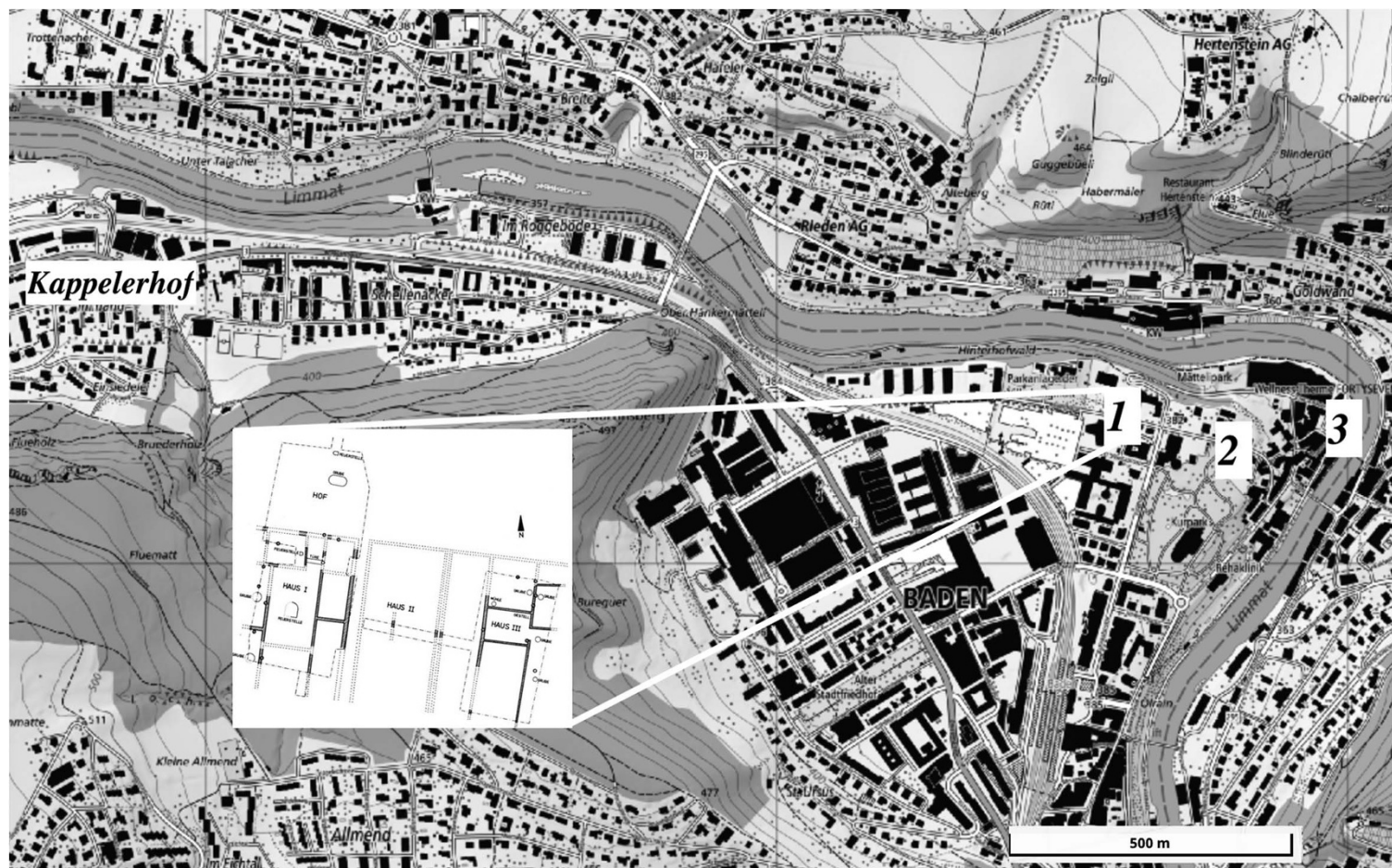


Fig. 13. *Aquae Helveticae/Baden*. Base map from Swiss Federal Office of Topography/swisstopo. (1) 1970s rescue excavations, vicus with timber houses, pre-69 C.E. (illustrated by inset plan from Schucany 1984, figure 2); (2) Stone terracing and buildings on slope; (3) Thermal area, hot springs.

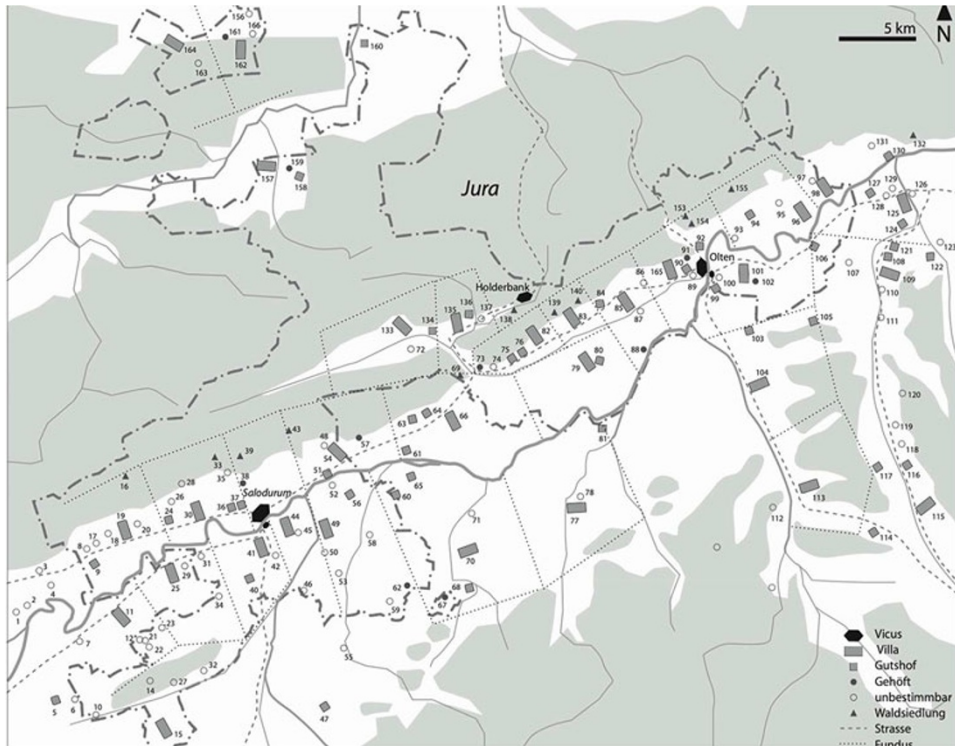


Fig. 14. The middle Aar valley. From Schucany and Wullschleger 2013, figure 3, courtesy of C. Schucany.

Another phenomenon that can be read politically is the intense settlement of the Helvetian landscape, starting early in the first century C.E. and intensifying in mid-century, namely the development of a regular network of *vici*, large farms and smaller settlements (Fig. 14). The phenomenon has notably been investigated in Western Switzerland (Aare valley, valley, pre-Alps, Aventicum area).¹⁴⁴ Schucany relates these changes to the economic demands of the Roman military frontier.¹⁴⁵ Here too I would also point to the pretensions of the Helvetian *civitas*: the deep social and economic mutations must have interacted with, and perhaps fuelled, the aspiration for autonomy. The *vicus* at Vitodurum, which emerges in the eastern part of the Swiss Plateau in the early Augustan period on an orthogonal plan, is part of an urbanising boom driven by endogenous developments within the *civitas*.¹⁴⁶ The processes may be connected to the social basis for a ‘middling’ element, which may in turn relate to Helvetian militarism. These examples illustrate the scope of a ‘political turn’ in classical archaeology (if the concept can be proposed non-ironically).

A final issue is that of evolution across time. At first sight, community agency seems outmatched by the staying power of empire. The first-century C.E. empire fraught with messiness gives way to greater imperial control. The systematisation of empire in the Roman Near East, and the social consequences, constitute a major theme in Millar’s survey

¹⁴⁴ Ebnöther and Schucany 1999: 74, on sites such as Salodurum/Solothurn, Petinesca/Studen (Bern), Otten (Solothurn), Lenzburg (Aargau) on the Swiss Plateau; Sursee (Lucerne), Kempraten (St-Gallen) in the pre-Alps. Aare valley: Schucany 2010; Schucany and Wullschleger 2013. Aventicum: Flück 2022b: 380, based on Pilloud 2015 (*non vidi*).

¹⁴⁵ Ebnöther and Schucany 1999; Schucany 2021; cf. Reddé 2023.

¹⁴⁶ Pauli-Gabi in Pauli-Gabi, Ebnöther *et al.* 2002: 1.179–82.

of the region.¹⁴⁷ In the case of the Helvetians, the *civitas* was refounded by Vespasian as Colonia Pia Flavia Constans Emerita Helvetiorum Foederata. The epithet *emerita* seems to indicate that the city received a deduction of veterans, and epigraphical material indicates a double civic structure of *coloni* and *incolae*.¹⁴⁸ The foundation might reflect punitive intentions after the uprising of 69 C.E. Yet the title *foederata*, illogical for a colony, connects with the long past of the Helvetian *civitas*. This past is also evoked in the fortification of the city on a massive scale¹⁴⁹ (Fig. 7) and lives on in the *militaria* of Avenches and Vitodurum occurring in second-century C.E. contexts.¹⁵⁰ Political community continued to work as the framework for communal identity and social structures; that was the point of it.

Abbreviations

CHRE Coin Hoards of the Roman Empire, <https://chre.ashmus.ox.ac.uk>

OMS L. Robert, *Opera Minora Selecta*, 7 vols, Amsterdam, 1969–90.

RIIG Recueil Informatisé des Inscriptions de la Gaule, <https://riig.huma-num.fr>

TitHelv A. Kolb, *Tituli Helvetici. Die römischen Inschriften der West- und Ostschweiz*, Bonn, 2022.

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¹⁴⁷ Millar 1993.

¹⁴⁸ van Berchem 1982: 123–50; Tarpin et al. 2002: 57–9; van Andringa 2017: 292–5; Flück 2022b: 362–72. On the complex question of the *incolae*, see now Aberson 2020.

¹⁴⁹ Fortifications of Aventicum: Flück 2020; 2022b (dated dendrochronologically).

¹⁵⁰ Appendix 1b.

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Appendix I: Some finds of militaria from the Swiss Plateau

a. First century C.E.

Turicum

Balmer 2009, cat. 765, 822 (harness pieces), 874 (sword furniture), 871 (D-ring belt buckle), 872 (rivet from *cingulum*). All c. 30–60 C.E.

Oberwinterthur

Rychener and Albertin 1986: 84 (lone phallus-shaped pendant from southern part of *vicus*, late Augustan); Deschler-Erb 1996: 78–104, 169–70 (stratigraphically dated first-century C.E. finds, from Unteres Bühl in western part of the *vicus*, to wit: cat. ME 300–301, gladius furniture; 304, helmet piece; 305, hamata hook; 313–14, 'segmentata' hinges, dated 40–60 C.E.; 313–31, 336–9, 342–5, 350, 353–7, 359–60, 365, 367, harness decorations; E 331–6, 340–7, points); Hedinger *et al.* 2001: 230–2 (stratigraphically dated finds from the north-east quarter, to wit: cat. ME 22, Claudian-era javelin point; 33, Augustan-era bridle fragment; 25, piece of military belt dated 50–100 C.E.; 26, 30–1, pieces of harness decorations, 'Neronian-Flavian'); Jauch and Janke 2022: 201–3 (militaria from north quarter, of which half date to the first century C.E. down to c. 60 C.E.). Generally, Reddé 2009: 177.

Avenches

Voirol 2000, cat. 21, 24 (spears), 42, 43, 45 (swords), 47–8 (segmented armour), 65, 66, 67, 68, 70 (belt elements), 72, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80 (elements from military apron), 259 (phalera), 84, 89, 90, 92–9, 101, 103, 105–10, 117 (harness decorations), 231, 243, 247 (12 separate rivets/buttons).

b. Later *militaria*

Avenches

Voirol 2000, cat. 16, 23, 44, and many pieces of horse harness among the finds nos. 100–246.

Vitodurum

Deschler-Erb 1996, e.g. for *militaria* in second-century C.E. contexts cat. ME 306–10, 315 (segmented armour), 337–8 (iron points); Hedinger *et al.* 2001, cat. ME 24 for ‘*segmentata*’ hinge dated 80–100 C.E.; Jauch and Janke 2022: 201–3.

Appendix 2: LTD2 and early Roman *militaria* from Gaul, possibly relating to militias in the early Imperial period

a. *Gallia Lugdunensis*

Cemetery of the ‘Vaugrignon’, at Esvres-sur-Indre (Indre-et-Loire): Riquier 2004, with Pernet 2010: C10 and generally Marton 2021 (Turones).

Malintrat-Chaniat (Puy-de-Dôme), weapons-grave dating to 50–25 B.C.E. and found inside a precinct with traces of burnt offerings: Pernet 2010: C17 (Arverni).

Feurs (Loire) two weapons-tombs, of LTD2 and early Augustan date: Pernet 2010: C11 (Segusiavi).

Ménestreau-en-Villette (Loiret), early Augustan-period weapons-grave: Pernet 2010: C19 (Carnutes).

Berry-Bouy ‘Fontillet’ (Cher), early Augustan weapons-graves: Pernet 2010: C3 (Bituriges).

Fléré-la-Rivière (Indre), early Augustan elite burial: Pernet 2010: C12 (Bituriges).

Chassenard (Allier), rich Tiberian-era tomb: Pernet 2010: C5 (Haedui).

Gondole (Puy-de-Dôme), LTD2b *militaria* in urban context: Pernet 2010: C14 (Haedui).

Bibracte (Saône-et-Loire), *militaria* in urban context: Pernet 2010: C21 (Haedui).

Autun (Saône-et-Loire), *militaria* in urban content: Fort and Labaune 2008 (Haedui).

b. *Gallia Belgica* generally

Notre-Dame-de-Vaudreuil (Eure), LTD2 tomb with sword and western Celtic helmet: Pernet 2010: B29 (Veliocassi).

Cottévrard (Seine-Maritime), LTD2a tomb with sword: Pernet 2010: B8 (Caletes).

Saint Aubin-Routot (Seine-Maritime), LTD2a necropolis with one weapons-grave: Pernet 2010: B37 (Caletes).

Ribemont-sur-Ancre (Somme), *militaria* in sacred context (offerings at shrine): Pernet 2010: B34 (Ambiani).

St Nicolas (Pas-de-Calais), Augustan-era tombs with Roman-style *militaria*: Pernet 2010: B38 (Atrebates).

Ronchin (Nord), *gladius* in Augustan-era grave: Pernet 2010: B35 (Menapii).

Ville-sur-Retourne (Ardennes), LTD2 (but possibly pre-conquest) 40 tombs, 4 with weapons: Pernet 2010: B45 (Remi).

c. *Treviri*

Goebingen-Nospelt (Cappellen, Luxemburg), 4 elite tombs (LTD2b to Augustan): Pernet 2010: B11.

Mayen (Rheinland-Pfalz), two LTD2b weapons-tombs: Pernet 2010: B25.

Koblenz-Neuendorf (Rheinland-Pfalz), 5 Augustan-era weapons-tombs: Pernet 2010: B17.

Lebach (Saarland), 8 weapons-graves (2 from LTD2b, 6 from Augustan and Julio-Claudian periods): Pernet 2010: B21.

Appendix 3: Numismatic evidence discussed in this paper

a. Early first-century B.C.E. finds of silver coins on the Swiss Plateau

Cossonay (Vaud), 59 *quinarii*: Geiser 2015 (possible votive deposit, c. 100 B.C.E.?)
 Mont-Vully (Fribourg), 14 *quinarii*: Nick 2015: 2.1042–8 (FR1/9).
 La Tène (Neuchâtel): Nick 2015: 3.1218–25, awaiting separate publication.
 Bern-Enge (Bern), 7 *quinarii*: Nick 2015: 2.945, 946, 950, 952, 956, 957–8, 985 (BE-4).
 Roggwil (Bern), 145 *quinarii*: Nick 2022.
 Niederbipp (Bern), c. 60 B.C.E., 7 *quinarii*: Nick 2015: 2.1007–10 (BE-20, 21).
 Eppenber-Wöschnau (Solothurn), c. 90–60 B.C.E., 4 *quinarii*: Nick 2015: 3.1272–3 (SO-6).
 Stray finds of individual *quinarii* from the Swiss Plateau within canton Solothurn: Nick 2015: 3.1274–6 (SO-7, 8, 9);
 Benken (Zurich): Nick 2015: 3.1565 (ZH-1).
 Rheinau (Zurich), 131 *quinarii*, 8 ¼ *quinarii*: Frey-Kupper and Nick 2009: 73–6; Nick 2015: 3.1583–1621 (ZH-19 to 23).

b. Early first century B.C.E. coin finds from the territory of the Rauraci

Balsthal, 150–60 coins, c. 60–40 B.C.E.: Nick 2015: 3.1263–7, SO-1.
 Füllinsdorf, 335 silver coins, 90–80 B.C.E.: Nick 2015: 2.620; Nick 2024.
 Basel-Gasfabrik, 2 *quinarii*: Nick 2015: 2.699 (BS-1/25).
 Basel-Münsterhügel, 9 *quinarii*: Nick 2015: 2.820–2, 845–8 (BS-2/9 and 18).
 Nunningen (Solothurn), at least 50 coins c. 90–70 B.C.E.: Nick 2015: 3.1278–89 (SO-11); Nick 2017a: 49–50.
 Basel canton, 9 *quinarii*: Nick 2015: 2.623, 624, 643–5 (BS-7, 8, 23/1).
 Courroux (Jura) ? 9 *quinarii*, one *denarius*: Nick 2015: 3.1189–94 (JU-7). Possibly to be dated to the second half of the first century B.C.E.

c. Late first-century B.C.E. and early first-century C.E. silver coin finds from the Swiss Plateau

Sermuz (Vaud), 57 *quinarii*: Geiser 2007; Nick 2015: 3.1455–66 (VD-57); Geiser 2017.
 Avenches (Vaud), 23 *quinarii* across the site: Nick 2015: 3.1344–68 (VD-1 to 11).
 Bois-de-Châtel (Vaud), 11 *quinarii*: Nick 2015: 3.1369–72 (VD-12).
 Belpberg (Bern), 54 *quinarii*, 38 *denarii*, hoard buried between 42 B.C.E. and 32 B.C.E.: Nick 2015: 2.927–39 (BE-2); Nick 2024, interpreting the hoard as military.
 Bern-Enge (Bern), 64 silver coins, made up for 2/3 of *quinarii* and 1/3 of *denarii* struck under Augustus (located by detectorists in 2022): CHRE 21274; Lanzicher and Puthod 2023.
 Studen/Petinesca (Bern), 3 *quinarii*: Nick 2015: 2.1015–16 (BE-25).
 Deitingen (Solothurn), 4 *quinarii* and 2 *denarii* struck between 47/6 and 42 B.C.E.: Nick 2015: 3.1270–1 (SO-5); Nick 2017a: 51.
 Windisch (Aargau), 36 *quinarii*, of which 8 come from the area inside the trace of the LTD2 wall: Nick 2015: 2.505–52 (AG-26); Nick in Flück 2022a: 333–4. In addition, 9 *quinarii* washed down from the Windisch plateau down to Brugg: Nick 2015: 2.487–91 (AG-14).

d. Deposits of single aurei dating before 69 C.E. on the Swiss plateau (from west to east)

CHRE 12217 Murist (Fribourg), 12218 Granges-de-Vesin (Fribourg), 12174 Avenches, 6403 Villarepos (Fribourg), 12524 Bern, 12211 Burgistein (Bern), 12232 Opplingen (Bern), 12208 Bern-Enge, 12190 Meikirch (Bern), 12522 Niederosch (Bern), 12209 Biel, 9322 Bibern (Solothurn), 9334–5 Solothurn, 6614 Zuchwil (Solothurn), 6416 *ibid.*, 12237 Roggwil (Bern, with Nick 2022: 214–15), 6418 Suhr (Aargau), 6419 Gränichen (Aargau), 6617 Aarau, 6619 Remigen (Aargau), 6620 Bad Zurzach (Aargau), 6409 Umiken (Aargau), 1220 Herliberg (Zurich), 12529 Meilen (Zurich), 12235 Rickenbach (Zurich).

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