

# Veteran settlement in the Lower Rhineland: the evidence from the *civitas Traianensis*

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For over four centuries the Lower Rhineland formed part of the northern border of the Roman empire. Throughout this period the Roman administration was faced with the possibility of a potential belligerent threat to the province of *Germania Inferior* from Germanic tribes east of the river. Consequently, there was a permanent need for stationing considerable numbers of soldiers along the Rhine. Over time, this resulted in large numbers of veterans being discharged, many of whom must have settled in the region.<sup>1</sup> I intend to deal with the archaeological and epigraphical evidence for their settlement in the *civitas Traianensis*. The evidence differs from that available in the adjacent Batavian area to the north.

The modern border in the Lower Rhineland between the Netherlands and Germany is an open one that is often (apart from a change in road-signs) hardly discernible. In archaeological research, however, there is a severe disparity between the situation on either side of the border. An example is seen in the case of seal-boxes, which have been collated in order to argue their relevance for the presence of veteran settlement.<sup>2</sup> Unlike the Batavian territory, from which T. Derks and N. Roymans cited 271 seal-boxes, the known number of seal-boxes in the corresponding area on the German side remains negligible. Apart from those mapped by them from the more Romanised centres of Kalkar-Altalkar (*Burginatum*), Xanten (*Colonia Ulpia Traiana* and *Vetera*) and Moers-Asberg (*Asciburgium*), I know of only two new finds from a mid- to late Roman settlement, adjacent to an old arm of the Rhine, at Alpen-Drüpt south of Xanten.<sup>3</sup> This strong discrepancy can hardly reflect the actual situation in Roman times.

The salient differences leading to this discrepancy have already been noted by Derks and Roymans:<sup>4</sup> the mostly poor state of small bronzes in the German sector of the Lower Rhineland, mainly attributable to the acidic sandy soils compounded by phosphate fertilizers, when contrasted with the anaerobic clays of the Batavian area in which metal objects find considerable protection against disintegration; the more intensive use of private metal-detectors in concert with the official archaeological establishment in the Netherlands, when compared with a policy largely of non-tolerance on the German side; and more intensive modern settlement in the Netherlands. This last point seems to be the most pertinent for the general state of our knowledge. Whereas the Dutch side has been settled intensively in recent decades, resulting in a considerable increment of archaeological information, the German side has witnessed only partial new settlement. During the last three decades, in the German part west of the Rhine only one large rural cemetery has been excavated and published (Tönisvorst-Vorst) since the

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*Frequently cited work:*

Alföldy 1968 G. Alföldy, *Die Hilfstruppen in der römischen Provinz Germania inferior* (Epigr. Studien 6).

1 Recent general works include S. Demougin, "Les vétérans dans la Gaule Belgique et la Germanie inférieure," in M. Dondin-Payre and M.-T. Raepsaet-Charlier (edd.), *Cités, municipes, colonies. Les processus de municipalisation en Gaule et en Germanie sous le Haut Empire romain* (Paris 1999) 355-80, and M. Roxan, "Veteran settlement of the auxilia in Germania," in G. Alföldy, B. Dobson and W. Eck (edd.), *Kaiser, Heer und Gesellschaft in den römischen Kaiserzeit. Gedenkschr. Eric Birley* (Stuttgart 2000) 307-26; cf. J. C. Mann, *Legionary recruitment and veteran settlement during the Principate* (Occ. Publ. 7, Institute of Archaeology, London 1983) 25-28 and 93-99.

2 T. Derks and N. Roymans, "Siegelkapseln und die Verbreitung der lateinischen Schriftkultur im Rheindelta," in T. Grünwald and S. Seibel (edd.), *Kontinuität und Diskontinuität. Germania inferior am Beginn und am Ende der römischen Herrschaft* (RGA Erg.-Bd. 35, 2003) 253 f. (prior English version: T. Derks and N. Roymans, "Seal-boxes and the spread of Latin literacy in the Rhine delta," in A. Cooley [ed.], *Becoming Roman, writing Latin* [JRA Suppl. 48, 2002] 87-134); cf. their article above in this issue.

3 Unpublished private finds: one square-shaped, one lozenge-shaped.

4 Derks and Roymans (2003, supra n.2) 256.