

- S. JAMES, *THE EXCAVATIONS AT DURA-EUROPOS CONDUCTED BY YALE UNIVERSITY AND THE FRENCH ACADEMY OF INSCRIPTIONS AND LETTERS 1928 TO 1937. FINAL REPORT VII. THE ARMS AND ARMOUR AND OTHER MILITARY EQUIPMENT*. London: British Museum Press, 2004. Pp. xxxii + 304, illus. ISBN 0-7141-2248-3. £95.00.

The Roman-occupied town of Dura-Europos, located in the arid Syrian desert, fell to Persian besiegers in the mid-third century A.D. Ten seasons of excavations during the inter-War years revealed astonishing details of the deserted town, but the ambitious publication programme ground to a halt in the 1960s. A report on the weapons, drafted in 1963 by the late Donald Wright, was never published, so students of Roman military equipment have been eagerly awaiting Simon James's version ever since he announced ownership of the project in 1983 (M. C. Bishop (ed.), *Roman Military Equipment. Proceedings of a Seminar held in the Department of Ancient History and Classical Archaeology at the University of Sheffield* (1983), 6–7).

Of course, in the interim, the assemblage has not been entirely neglected; many of the more spectacular finds have long been known, either from inclusion in the preliminary reports of the 1930s (e.g., the famous horse armours), or from separate publication by J. himself (e.g., the 'Sasanian' helmet: *Syria* 63 (1986), 107–34). Perhaps conscious of this fact, J. has attempted to add value to *Final Report VII*, by supplementing the obviously military objects with the various mounts and buckles 'which *might* be military' (7, original italics). These in turn permit him to indulge his curiosity about the dress and appearance of Dura's Roman garrison, a curiosity which he has already explored elsewhere (P. Barker *et al.* (eds), *TRAC* 98 (1999), 14–25), but which justifies including colour representations of four paintings from Dura (the Terentius wall painting, two of the Synagogue murals, and the portrait of Heliodorus the *actuarius*) alongside three of J.'s own paintings (three soldiers in 'camp dress', a Roman cavalryman, and a Roman cataphract). And although the accompanying discussion of 'Supplementary Sources for Soldiers and Warfare at Dura' (39–46) is of only peripheral relevance to the subject of military equipment, it is essential preparation for the essays on 'Cultural Distinctiveness, Interaction, Convergence and Identity in Martial Material Culture' (242–54) and 'Reconstructing the Appearance of Third-century Roman Soldiers at Dura' (256–9).

After some lengthy scene-setting (Part One, 3–46), some of which might seem inappropriate in such a specialist work (e.g., 'The Historical and Geographical Context', 10–25, which incorporates a basic introduction to the Roman and Sasanian armies and to Dura itself), the core of the book presents the artefacts, divided into eight categories (Part Two, 49–230): military dress and horse harness; helmets and head protection; armour; edged weapons; shields; shafted weapons; bows, arrows and archery tackle; and torsion artillery. It must be said that J. has crafted an exemplary catalogue: besides organizing and describing the items, he points out parallels and peculiarities, and many readers will be grateful for the overviews which preface each section. The first of these (49–71) is by far the longest (unsurprisingly, given J.'s particular interest in military dress), but shields (159–70), archery equipment (191–8), and artillery (209–15) each receive detailed treatment. The catalogue is supported by two concordances, listing the objects by provenance (where known) and by museum accession number, and the general index is supplemented by an index of catalogued items discussed in the text; finally there is an index of materials of manufacture, an indispensable aid in a catalogue organized by function.

Pervading the entire volume is the question of the material's significance. Certainly, there is a lot of it; the catalogue runs to 851 entries, most of which are clearly illustrated by line sketches or photographs. But its importance has been considerably devalued by several unfortunate factors. Firstly, the local soil chemistry has ensured that leather, textile, and iron items have generally disintegrated, unless preserved beneath the collapsed towers. Secondly, the variable quality of 1930s excavation techniques makes it very likely that many items simply went unrecognized and unrecorded, while much of the surviving assemblage lacks precise provenance. Thirdly, elements of the collection have inevitably disappeared on account of the haphazard division between three museums, at Yale, Damascus, and Ontario, without mentioning the added complication of material discovered by Franz Cumont in 1922.

Given the extreme skewing of the archaeological record, it is not surprising that J.'s attempts to draw out general themes (Part Three, 233–63) are largely inconclusive. If, as seems likely, the surviving sample cannot be taken to represent what once existed, then J.'s attempt to reconstruct the original extent of the assemblage (236) is bound to fail, particularly when we have only the

vaguest idea of the Roman garrison's size and composition. Similarly, the general lack of recorded provenance for much of the assemblage invalidates any attempts to analyse patterns of distribution, and J. can only conclude that 'the probability is that most [items] were deposited around the time of the siege [given elsewhere as 'say 255–7'] ... [and] most of the remains will have belonged to the defeated Roman defenders' (238–9). The cultural meaning of military equipment is a topic which clearly fascinates him, but the lengthy excursus which follows (242–54) might have found a more appropriate home in, for example, the *Doura Études* series. Many readers, wishing only to learn what was discovered at Dura, will disagree with J. when he writes that 'it would be strange, for example, to study the swords ... without considering all the evidence for soldiers' dress which was inextricably bound up with the bearing of arms' (6).

There is space to mention only one or two peculiarities. The conical shape of the 'arming cap of woollen cloth and felt' (no. 378) is judged to be 'consistent with a protective liner for wearing under a helmet' (109), but an item designed for this purpose would perhaps have been more rounded on top. The fragmentary Greek sword (no. 523) is presumed to predate the Roman occupation because 'there is no evidence that such weapons were still current in the third century AD' (149); but there is an element of circularity in this reasoning, and J. elsewhere notes a 'renewed interest in Greek culture' (247) in the later second and early third centuries A.D. The foot-long socketed spike (no. 643) interpreted as an 'iron *falx muralis*' (188) only vaguely resembles the 'reaping hook' from Gamala, cited as a parallel here; in fact, the projection running out perpendicularly to the spike immediately recalls the tread epigraphically depicted on standards, to facilitate their grounding and subsequent extraction. Even the famous horse armours (nos 449 and 450) remain an enigma: were they a truly Eastern phenomenon, or have they simply failed to turn up on European sites? And are we to assume that the garrison's part-mounted cohort included (or comprised) heavily-armoured cataphracts? J. offers the observation that, 'since both sides used armoured horses, it is feasible that the trapper [i.e., horse armour no. 451] was captured from the Persians' (115).

Students of Roman military equipment will certainly find much of interest here, and firm foundations have now been laid for a study of material from the current Franco-Syrian work at Dura.

Glasgow

D. B. CAMPBELL

N. K. RAUH, *MERCHANTS, SAILORS AND PIRATES IN THE ROMAN WORLD*. Stroud: Tempus, 2003. Pp. 224, 33 pls, 70 figs. ISBN 0-7524-2542-0. £17.99.

Nicholas K. Rauh is well known for his excellent study of Delian business communities, *The Sacred Bonds of Commerce: Religion, Economy, and Trade Society at Hellenistic Roman Delos 166–87 B.C.* (1993), reviewed in *JRS* 75 (1995), 278–9. His second book examines the wider Mediterranean economic and political world in the second and first centuries B.C. The first of five chapters briskly surveys Hellenistic and Roman political history from Alexander to Sulla and outlines the physical and commercial context of Mediterranean maritime trade. Ch. 2, 'Cities in the Path of Roman Economic Expansion', describes how 'Roman trade expanded across the Mediterranean in the wake of Roman arms, in essence expelling competing goods and maritime communities from its midst' (33). The cities in question are Carthage, Corinth, Athens and Piraeus, Delos, Rhodes, and Alexandria. Ch. 3, 'The Material Remains of Roman Maritime Commerce', is an ambitious attempt to document the conclusion that, 'The history of Roman conquest of the Mediterranean world was to no small degree a history of Roman domination of foreign trade' (133). R. synthesizes and re-interprets an impressive range of archaeological evidence, especially shipwrecks and amphora distribution patterns. He occasionally stretches his interpretations too far, for example when he uses Parker's observations on the relative numbers of republican and late Roman shipwrecks off the southern coast of France to substantiate his claim that, 'By every indication the Late Hellenistic/Republican era was the greatest era of ancient Mediterranean maritime commerce' (107; cf. A. J. Parker, *Ancient Shipwrecks of the Mediterranean & the Roman Provinces*, BAR S580 (1992), 7–15). Nevertheless, the case for commercially-driven expansion is persuasively argued and lays the groundwork for R.'s thesis that the expansion of Roman influence in the period 167–48 B.C. caused huge social and economic dislocation among the merchants, slave-traders, sailors, and labourers who operated the maritime economy of the Mediterranean.