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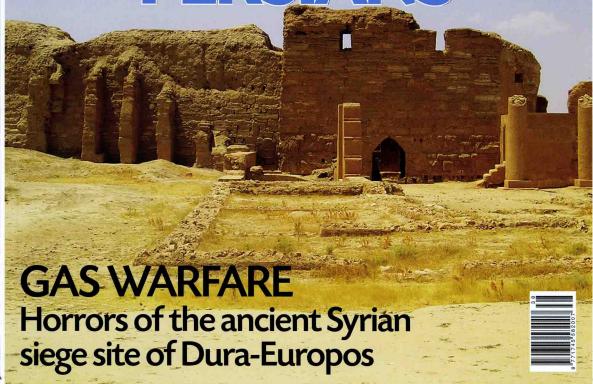
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ROMANS VERSUS PERSIANS



GAS WARFARE

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WORLD NEWS



Equestrian statue of Augustus proves Rome's Germanic ambitions

Parts of a gold-plated bronze horse from an equestrian statue have been found during excavations at Waldgirmes, in central Germany, including the head of the horse, the boot of the rider, and parts of the horse's legs and harness.

Not only is the statue itself of outstanding quality – described by Hesse state archaeologist Egon Schallmeyer as ‘one of the best (pieces) created at that time’ – it is also evidence of Rome's ambitions to create a series of new towns in German territory, plans

that were abandoned after the battle of the Teutoburg Forest of 9 AD.

The Roman name of the town that underlies today's village of Waldgirmes is not known, but for modern Germans, this ancient settlement has great significance: often hailed as Germany's

More temple tales from Tell Tayinat

In CWA 36, we reported on the discovery of a remarkable temple at Tell Tayinat, in Southeastern Turkey, that is throwing light on the so-called ‘Dark Age’ in Near Eastern archaeology. Now, a further season of excavation at the heart of the temple, directed by Timothy Harrison, Toronto University's Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology, has uncovered a cache of cuneiform tablets dating from between 1200 and 600 BC. Found in the temple's

cells, or ‘holy of holies’, among gold, bronze and iron implements, libation vessels and ornately decorated ritual objects, the tablets probably formed part of the temple archive. Professor Harrison is hoping that the tablets, once translated, will provide a rare glimpse into the religious and political beliefs of the period.

Partially uncovered in 2008, the building in which the tablets were found has the classic plan of a Neo-Hittite temple. The

original temple *stela*e had been smashed into tiny shard-like fragments.

Professor Harrison believes the destruction of the *stela*e occurred when Tayinat was conquered by the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III in 738 BC. ‘Scholars have long speculated that the Biblical reference in Isaiah 31 to Tiglath-pileser's devastation of Kunulua is in fact a reference to what we call Tayinat,’ he says.

Tayinat was then transformed into an Assyrian provincial capital, with its own governor and imperial administration, and the Neo-Hittite temple was converted into an Assyrian religious complex. At some later date the temple was burned in an intense fire; heavily charred brick and

'first town', it is the site of the earliest known stone buildings in Germany.

Nationalists also regard the defeat of three Roman legions at Teutoburg as marking the birth of their independent nation, and Germany's Chancellor, Angela Merkel, was one of several high-ranking dignitaries who visited the battle site in September 2009 to commemorate



the 2,000th anniversary

The site of Waldgirmes was identified in 1990 and has been under excavation since 1993, providing the first archaeological evidence to support a reference by the Roman historian Cassius Dio to the foundation of cities east of the Rhine and north of the Danube during the governorship of Varus.

Probably founded around 5 BC, the town had a market, with stables, warehouses and shops; there was also an impressive walled forum that had a stone-built basilica to one side, and

arcades of half-timbered buildings with stone foundations and roofs of wooden shingles surrounding the other three sides of a courtyard. It is from the area of the forum that the latest find comes: the life-sized gilded statue probably depicted the Emperor Augustus and was intended as the monumental focus for the forum. •

ABOVE The Waldgirmes head in detail.
LEFT A conjectural reconstruction of the statue, showing the positions of the various fragments that have been found so far.

wood had fallen onto the temple's inner chambers, ironically protecting the tablets from looting or weathering.

The remarkably complete archive 'promises a richly textured view of the cultural and ethnic contest that has long characterized the turbulent history of this region', Professor Harrison said: 'The tablets, and the information they contain, may possibly highlight the imperial ambitions of one of the great powers of the ancient world, and its lasting influence on the political culture of the Middle East.' •

RIGHT Preparing one of the Tayinat temple tablets for removal.

