

## ROMAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT IN DALMATIA FROM THE TIME OF TRAJAN: SOME REPRESENTATIONAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

<https://www.doi.org/10.17234/9789533790367.10>

Sanja Ivčević  
Arheološki muzej u Splitu  
Zrinsko-Frankopanska 25  
HR – 21000 Split  
sanja.ivcevic@armus.hr

*The period of Trajan's reign was a time of prosperity and peaceful life in the province of Dalmatia. The finds of military equipment from this period are not numerous, which may be seen as due to the fact that the number of soldiers was reduced in comparison to earlier periods, but also because the sites with a military character, at which finds of military equipment from the late 1<sup>st</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries could be expected, have not been excavated. This is why the dating of the materials in the territory under consideration herein is based on a typological and chronological study of military equipment and comparisons to finds from other parts of the Empire. Military equipment from the broader chronological framework was taken into consideration that is those finds are presented that had a duration which may be placed in the latter half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century and the initial decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Parts of Corbridge A and B/C armour types, a Pompeii-type sword sheath mount and certain types of pendants have been highlighted. The stela of a soldier of Cohors VIII Voluntariorum is represented as a possible confirmation for the use of some parts of the Roman military equipment in Dalmatia during the early Trajanic period.*

*Key words: roman military equipment, stela of a soldier Servius Ennius Fuscus, Trajan period, Roman province Dalmatia*

The Roman military conquest of Dalmatia concluded with the Roman victory in the Pannonian-Dalmatian uprising (*Bellum Batonianum*, 6–9 AD), after which two legions of the Roman army remained in the province, even though it had no external borders (Wilkes 1969: 69–77; Bojanovski 1988: 48–54; Zaninović 2015: 439–457). The camps to garrison the legions were built at strategically suitable positions in the hinterland of urban centres on the coast and in the vicinity of the Salona colony,

which by that time had probably already become the seat of the governor's office, and simultaneously closer to the problematic interior. Military fortifications were also organized through Delmataean territory which created a defensive line or, at the very least, sturdy points in a system of control across the quite recently conquered territories.<sup>1</sup>

By the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, i.e., the beginning of Emperor Trajan's reign, the province was politi-

---

<sup>1</sup> For different opinions, discussions and earlier literature see: Tončinić 2015.

cally and administratively organized and secure. *Legio IV Flavia felix* left Dalmatia in the first years of Domitian's reign, so that it became a *provincia inermis*. Auxiliary units of the Roman army and temporary detachments of certain legions remained stationed in the coastal hinterland (Alföldy 1962; Wilkes 1969: 471–480; Bojanovski 1988: 356–357).

The period of Trajan's reign (98–117) was a time of prosperity and peaceful life in the province of Dalmatia, which developed in the economic, administrative and cultural spheres. Trajan's advances into Dacia did not have a great impact on Dalmatia's territory despite the fact that during Trajan's Second Dacian War, in the summer of 105 AD, the emperor probably passed through Dalmatia with his military units. There are a considerable number of vestiges of the emperor's sojourn, or rather his passage through Dalmatia, such as inscriptions, sculpture and architecture (Cambi 2010: 137–138).

The finds of military equipment from this period are not numerous, which may be seen as due to the fact that the number of soldiers was reduced in comparison to earlier periods, but also because the sites with a military character, at which finds of military equipment from the late 1<sup>st</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries could be expected, have not been excavated. There are thus no precisely dated finds which could be used to date the finds to Trajan's time and this is why the dating of the archaeological remains in the territory under consideration herein is based on a typological and chronological study of military equipment and comparisons to finds from other parts of the Empire. The typological development of military equipment does not allow for such narrow dating into the period of Emperor Trajan's reign, while military equipment did not change over such short periods, so military equipment from the broader chronological framework was taken into consideration. Here only those finds are presented that had a duration which may be placed in the latter half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century and the initial decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Parts of Corbridge A and B/C armour types, a Pompeii-type sword sheath mount and certain types of riding harness pendants have been highlighted.

Segmented armour, very well represented in the depictions on Trajan's Column (Coulston 1989: 31–33), was used by Roman soldiers since the reign of Augustus, and it fell out of use after the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century. In Dalmatia's territory, only components of one type of segmented armour, Corbridge type, have been found thus far. Its appearance has been

placed during the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and it endured through the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, when it was gradually replaced by the later Newstead type (Bishop 2002: 91).

The most numerous finds of this armour type in Dalmatia are from the military camp of the Seventh Legion *Tilurium* (Gardun). Armor parts of the type otherwise normally found at archaeological sites (Bishop 2002: 37) were discovered, such as two tie-loops (Ivčević 2010: 135, cat. 4, P. 1. 4; 2014: 166, cat. 20, P. 3. 20) that connected the left and right sides of an armour's lower section. One of them belongs to type Thomas Hi, and the other to category H type vi (Thomas 2003: 91, 93, fig. 61. 17; 107, fig. 66). Three shoulder hinges (Šeparović 2003: 238, cat. 36, 37, T. 3. 5, 6; Ivčević 2017: 270, cat. 15, P. 3. 15) that connected the breast and rear shoulder plates to the neck-piece according to the Thomas classification would fall into category F type iv (Thomas 2003: 62–71).

Also in *Tilurium*, four hinged fittings to fasten the leather straps used to connect the sections of the armour (Ivčević 2014: T. 3. 19; 2017: T. 4. 19–21) and seven hinged buckles to link these straps (Ivčević 2004a: p. 166, T. 1. 13–15; 2014: T. 3. 13, 14; 2016: T. 7. 69; 2017: T. 3. 15) have been found.

When dating type Corbridge armour parts from *Tilurium* we should take into account that segmented armour was probably only worn by legionnaires and pretorians (Coulston 1988: 12–15; Bishop 2002: 90; Bishop & Coulston 2006: 255–259), so we have to assume that fragments from *Tilurium* mostly belong to the time before the departure of the legion. Although the Seventh Legion had departed from *Tilurium* by the third quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> century at the latest, the detachments of certain legions were stationed there afterward, so the possibility of dating the finds to the period after the legion's departure is possible. Finds of this armour type at sites defined as camps for auxiliary units have sparked debate on whether this type of armour was worn by auxiliary units as well.<sup>2</sup>

Salona yielded a considerably smaller number of finds of this type of equipment: one shoulder hinge and one buckle (Ivčević 2013a: T. 2. 23, 24) and the buckle mount from *Andetrium* (Muć) is the sole find from the site that may have originated in the latter half of the 1<sup>st</sup> and early 2<sup>nd</sup> century (Bekić 2002: T. III. 3; Ivčević 2016: T. 7. 75). Three armour buckles are from the legionary camp in *Burnum* (Šeparović & Uroda 2009: 38, cat. 36, 37; Borzić *et al.* 2014: 199, cat. 25), and four were found in Gračine near Ljubuški (Dodig 2011: 342, fig. 9).

<sup>2</sup> Frere & Joseph 1974: 40; Maxfield 1986: 68, 69; Poulter 1988: 39–43; Sauer *et al.* 2000: 23–29.



Figure 1. Pompeii-type sword sheath mount from Tilverium (Gardun) (inv. MCK B-870, Museum of the Cetinska Krajina Region, Sinj, Croatia).

Fragments of weapons that could be dated to the latter half of the 1<sup>st</sup> and the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (although they were in use longer than that period) includes a mount for the sheath of a Pompeii-type sword from Tilverium (Fig. 1) (Ivčević 2013b: 443, 444, cat. 10, fig. 1) and the bone sword handguard from Salona (Ivčević 2013a: 309, T. 1. 1). Pompeii-type sword began to be used as of the Claudian era and most dated finds are from the latter half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, but they were probably also used in the first decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> The typical palmette-shaped mount that adorned the sheaths for this sword type was used during the entire period these swords were in use (Künzl 1994: 51–53; 1998: 426–433; Mackensen 2000).

Handguards like the one from Salona were components of long cavalry swords and they appeared throughout the 1<sup>st</sup> century and even beyond, and here one is being included because they were depicted on Trajan's Column (Deschler-Erb 1999: 26, fig. 19) which proves their use during that emperor's reign. The example shown herein has no basis for dating to the period in question, and analogous examples can generally be found in the context of the 1<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>4</sup>

The most numerous group of military equipment finds in Dalmatia consists of riding harness pendants which have mainly been dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Some of these types date to the latter half of the 1<sup>st</sup> and beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century such as peltae, leaf-shaped and tear-shaped pendants.

The leaf-shaped pendants were classified as type 4 in M. C. Bishop's typology. Their dating begins in the Claudian era, and they remained in use to the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century at least (Bishop 1988: 147, fig. 45a–h; Deschler-Erb 1999: 56). They were hung on the straps all down the horse's body, which is clearly depicted on Trajan's Column in Rome. Thirteen such pendants were found in the *Tilverium* camp (Ivčević 2016: 246–251, P. 12. 114–126), while they were somewhat less numerous in *Burnum* (Nedved 1981: 156, cat. 6; Borzić *et al.* 2014: 223, cat. 4; 7), and not found at all in Salona. They belong to various variants of Bishop type 4 (Bishop 1988: 147, sl. 45, T. 6).

Pelta-shaped pendants (Bishop type 3) belong to the second group of pendants that fit into the chronological framework set forth herein; their dating begins in the Claudian/Neronian period, and they were mostly present during the Flavian era, but also used in the first decades of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century as well (Bishop 1988: 96, 147, fig. 45. 3c; Deschler-Erb 1999: 56, 57; Radman-Livaja 2004: 110). Such pendants were found in smaller numbers than the other groups, and only three such pendants were found in Dalmatia. The pendant from *Aequum* (Koščević 2008: 261, 262, cat. 53) and *Burnum* (Šeparović & Uroda 2009: 47, cat. 71) belongs to Bishop type 3c (Bishop 1988: 96, 147, fig. 45. 3c), while the one form Podgrađe at Podstrana, near Omiš (Ivčević 2016: 239, cat. 98, P. 10. 98), is Bishop type 3d.

Tear-shaped pendants, which adorned riding harnesses, but also military aprons (Bishop 1992: 82, 97) and *signum* (Ivčević 2013c, 456, fig. 18) have been dated to a broader chronological framework than the one set herein.<sup>5</sup> Besides riding harnesses, they were also used to adorn military aprons, on which they were hung as belt pendants, as reflected in the depictions of soldiers on stone monuments. Although they do not fit into the chronological framework set for this work, because they lasted longer, there is a confirmation for the use of such pendants in Dalmatia during the early Trajanic period because they can be seen depicted on a gravestone from *Andetrium* (Muć) dated to the early

<sup>3</sup> Ulbert 1969b: 123–125; Meystre 1998: 188–190; Deschler-Erb 1999: 23; Feugère 2002: 109; Bishop & Coulston 2006: 80, 81.

<sup>4</sup> Ulbert 1969a: 56, T. 60. 1, 2; Unz & Deschler-Erb 1997: 14, 15, T. 2. 22–24; Deschler-Erb 1999: T. 9. 103; Bishop & Coulston 2006: 80, fig. 40. 5, 6.

<sup>5</sup> They appeared during the Claudian era at the latest and their use endured throughout the entire 2<sup>nd</sup> century at the very least.



Figure 2. The stela of *Servius Ennius Fuscus* found in *Andetrium* (*Muč*) (inv. AMS A-1102, Archaeological museum in Split, Croatia, photo: T. Seser)

Trajanic era. The stela of *Servius Ennius Fuscus* (Fig. 2), a soldier of *Cohors VIII Voluntariorum* was dated to the very end of the 1<sup>st</sup> or the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century, i.e., to the beginning of Trajan's reign, given that the woman's hairstyle is typical of Flavian dynasty's era, while the man has a Trajanic hairstyle (Cambi 2000: 50). The soldier depicted on the stela wears a *paenula*, with a sword at his right hip and a military apron (Ivčević 2013c: 451, 459, fig. 5) consisting of three straps, each adorned by six round mounts, with a tear-shaped pendant at the end of each belt (Bishop 1992: 89–90, fig. 10. 33). Similar pendants can be seen on stone monuments generally from the Trajanic and Hadrianic periods. The apron on the monument of *Ennius Fuscus* is not entirely reduced as on certain other monuments of this period, which points to dating in the early Trajanic era. Such pendants were found on different sites in Dalmatia; *Tilurium*, *Salona*, *Burnum*, *Narona* (Vid), Čaporice (Ivčević 2004b: P. 1. 2; 2016: T. 13, 14. 141; Borzić *et al.* 2014: 272, fig. 37).

The finds which may be said to have been used during the time of Trajan were found at several sites in Dalmatia (Fig. 3). Some of them are military (the legionary camps at *Burnum* and *Tilurium* and the camps of the auxiliary units in Gračine near Ljubuški and *Muč* (*Andetrium*), while some are urban sites (Roman colonies of *Salona*, *Narona* and *Aequum*). In the case of two sites, Čaporice and Podgrađe at Podstrana, there are thus far no evidence that the military units were stationed there.

We have already stressed that the classification of materials to the Trajanic era is not possible on the basis of typological study so finds from a wider dating framework was taken into consideration. Dating within a framework narrower than this is possible only on the basis of finds in a precisely dated archaeological context for which we may hope in future excavations, particularly at sites at which inscriptions confirm that the military units were stationed in Trajanic period.



Figure 3. Distribution map of the Roman military equipment finds from Dalmatia (visualization by Z. Podrug, Archaeological museum in Split, Croatia).

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alföldy 1962 G. Alföldy, "Die Auxiliartruppen der römischen Provinz Dalmatien", *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* XIV, Budapest, 1962, 259–296.
- Bekić 2002 L. Bekić, *Ilirski i rimski Andetriji* (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Zagreb), Zagreb, 2002.
- Bishop 1988 M. C. Bishop, "Cavalry equipment of the Roman army in the first century A. D.", in: J. Coulston (ed.), *Military Equipment and the Identity of Roman Soldiers* (BAR International Series 394), Oxford, 1988, 67–195.
- Bishop 1992 M. C. Bishop, "The early imperial 'apron'", *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies* 3, Oxford, 1992, 81–104.
- Bishop 2002 M. C. Bishop, *Lorica Segmentata, A Handbook of Articulated Roman Plate Armour*, Berwickshire, 2002.
- Bishop & Coulston 2006 M. C. Bishop & J. C. N. Coulston, *Roman Military Equipment from Punic Wars to the Fall of Rome*, Oxford, 2006.
- Bojanovski 1988 I. Bojanovski, *Bosna i Hercegovina u antičko doba* (Djela ANUBiH 66, Centar za balkanološka istraživanja 6), Sarajevo, 1988.
- Borzić et al. 2014 I. Borzić, N. Cambi, M. Glavičić, Ž. Miletić, I. Jadrić Kučan & J. Zaninović, *Arheološka zbirka Burnum*, Šibenik, 2014.
- Cambi 2000 N. Cambi, *Imago animi, Antički portret u Hrvatskoj*, Split, 2000.
- Cambi 2010 N. Cambi, "Dalmatinski gradovi na Trajanovom stupu u Rimu", in: J. Dukić, A. Milošević & Ž. Rapanić (eds.), *Scripta Branimiro Gabričević dicata*, Trilj, 2010, 135–158.

- Coulston 1988 J. C. Coulston, "Three legionaries at Croy Hill (Strathclyde)", in: J. C. Coulston (ed.), *Military Equipment and the Identity of Roman Soldiers, Proceedings of the Fourth Roman Military Equipment Conference* (BAR International Series 394), Oxford, 1988, 1–29.
- Coulston 1989 J. C. Coulston, "The value of Trajan's Column as a source for military equipment", in: C. van Driel-Murray (ed.), *Roman military Equipment: the Sources of Evidence. Proceedings of the Fifth Roman Military Equipment Conference* (BAR International Series 476), Oxford, 1989, 31–44.
- Deschler-Erb 1999 E. Deschler-Erb, *Ad arma! Römisches Militär des 1. Jahrhunderts n. Chr. In Augusta Raurica* (Forschungen in Augst 28), Augst, 1999.
- Dodig 2011 R. Dodig, „Rimski kompleks na Gračinama. Vojni tabor ili.....?“, in: A. Librenjak & D. Tončinić (eds.), *Arheološka istraživanja u Cetinskoj Krajini* (Izdanja HAD-a 27), Zagreb, 2011, 327–343.
- Feugère 2002 M. Feugère, *Weapons of the Romans*, Gloucestershire, 2002.
- Frere & Joseph 1974 S. S. Frere & K. St. Joseph, "The Roman Fortress at Longthorpe", *Britannia* V, London, 1974, 1–129.
- Ivčević 2004a S. Ivčević, „Dijelovi opreme rimskog vojnika iz Garduna“, *Opuscula Archaeologica* 28, Zagreb, 2004, 159–176.
- Ivčević 2004b S. Ivčević, with contribution E. Višić-Ljubić, "The Metal and Bone Objects", in: E. Marin & M. Vickers (ed.), *The Rise and Fall of an Imperial Shrine*, Split, 2004, 235–243.
- Ivčević 2010 S. Ivčević, „Dijelovi vojničke opreme iz Garduna u Arheološkom muzeju u Splitu“, *Opuscula archaeologica* 34, Zagreb, 2010, 127–144.
- Ivčević 2013a S. Ivčević, "First-century Military Gear from Salona", in: M. Sanader, A. Rendić-Miočević, D. Tončinić & I. Radman-Livaja (eds.), *Weapons and Military Equipment in a Funerary Context. Proceedings of the XVII<sup>th</sup> ROMEC 2010*, Zagreb, 2013, 299–316.
- Ivčević 2013b S. Ivčević, "Project Tilurium – Roman Military Equipment" in: M. Sanader, A. Rendić-Miočević, D. Tončinić & I. Radman-Livaja (eds.), *Weapons and Military Equipment in a Funerary Context. Proceedings of the XVII<sup>th</sup> ROMEC 2010*, Zagreb, 2013, 435–454.
- Ivčević 2013c S. Ivčević, "Roman Military Gear Depicted on Grave Monuments from the Archaeological Museum in Split", in: N. Cambi & G. Koch (eds.) *Funerary sculpture of the western Illyricum and neighbouring regions of the Roman Empire. Proceedings of the International Conference 2009*, Split, 2013, 443–479.
- Ivčević 2014 S. Ivčević, „Metalni nalazi“, in: M. Sanader, D. Tončinić, Z. Buljević, S. Ivčević & T. Šeparović, *Tilurium III. Istraživanja 2001.–2006. godine*, Zagreb, 2014, 147–223.
- Ivčević 2016 S. Ivčević, *Tipologija i kronologija rimske vojne opreme u doba principata na području između rijeke Krke i Cetine* (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Zagreb), Zagreb, 2016.
- Ivčević 2017 S. Ivčević, „Metalni nalazi“, in: M. Sanader, D. Tončinić, Z. Šimić Kanaet, S. Ivčević, Z. Buljević, T. Šeparović & I. Miloglav, *Tilurium IV. Arheološka istraživanja 2007.–2020. godine*, Zagreb, 2017, 239–358.
- Košćević 2008 R. Koščević, „Metalni i koštani nalazi“, in: M. Topić (ed.), *Pax et bonum FF-AM. Arheološka zbirka Franjevačkog samostana u Sinju*, Sinj, 2008, 229–280.
- Künzl 1994 E. Künzl, "Dekorierter Gladius und Cingula: Eine ikonographische Statistik", *Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies* 5, Oxford, 1994, 33–58.
- Künzl 1998 E. Künzl, "Gladiusdekorationen der frühen römischen Kaiserzeit: Dynastische Legitimation, Victoria und Aurea Aetas", *Jahrbuch des römisch-germanischen Zentralmuseums Mainz* 43/2 (1996), Mainz, 1998, 383–474.

- Mackensen 2000 M. Mackensen, "Ein vergoldetes frühkaiserzeitliches Gladiusortband mit figurlisch verziertem Scheidenblech aus Kleinasien oder Nordsyrien", *Bayerische Vorgeschichtsblätter* 65, München, 2000, 125–142.
- Maxfield 1986 V. A. Maxfield, "Preflavian forts and their Garrisons", *Britannia* 17, London, 1986, 59–72.
- Meystre 1998 C. Meystre, "Un glaive du type Pompéi découvert à Avenches", *Bulletin de l'Association Pro Aventico* 39.1997, Avenches, 1998, 187–192.
- Nedved 1981 B. Nedved, „Nakit rimskog razdoblja“, katalog, in: Š. Batović (ed.), *Nakit na tlu sjeverne Dalmacije od prapovijesti do danas*, Zadar, 1981, 151–182.
- Poulter 1988 A. G. Poulter, "Certain doubts and doubtful conclusions: the lorica segmentata from Newstead and the Antonine garrison", in: J. C. Coulston (ed.), *Military Equipment and the Identity of Roman Soldiers. Proceedings of the Fourth Roman Military Equipment Conference* (BAR International Series 394), Oxford, 1988, 31–49.
- Radman-Livaja 2004 I. Radman-Livaja, *Militaria Sisciensia, Nalazi rimske vojne opreme iz Siska u fundusu Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu*, Zagreb, 2004.
- Sauer *et. al.* 2000 E. W. Sauer, N. J. Cooper, G. B. Dannell, B. Dickinson, P. Erwin, A. Grant, M. Henig, A. W. McDonald & M. Robinson, "Alchester, a Claudian 'Vexillation Fortress' near the Western Boundary of the Catuvellauni: New Light on the Roman Invasion of Britain", *Archaeological Journal* 157, 2000, 1–78.
- Šeparović 2003 T. Šeparović, „Metalni nalazi“, in: M. Sanader, *Tilurium I. Istraživanja 1997.–2001.*, Zagreb, 2003, 219–256.
- Šeparović & Uroda 2009 T. Šeparović & N. Uroda, *Antička zbirka Muzeja hrvatskih arheoloških spomenika (izbor)*, Split, 2009.
- Thomas 2003 M. D. Thomas, *Lorica segmentata II. A catalogue of finds*, Duns, 2003.
- Tončinić 2015 D. Tončinić, "Der Limes in Kroatien – von Augustus bis Claudius – von Dalmatien zur Donau", in: L. Zerbini (ed.), *Culti e religiosita nelle province danubiane. Atti del II Convegno Internazionale, Ferrara 20-22 Novembre 2013*, Bologna, 2015, 335–345.
- Ulbert 1969a G. Ulbert, *Das früherömische Kastell Rheingönheim* (Limesforschungen 9), Berlin, 1969.
- Ulbert 1969b G. Ulbert, "Gladii aus Pompei, Vorarbeiten zu einem Corpus römischer Gladii", *Germania* 47, Berlin, 1969, 97–128.
- Unz & Deschler-Erb 1997 C. Unz & E. Deschler-Erb, *Katalog der Militaria aus Vindonissa* (Veröffentlichungen der Gesellschaft pro Vindonissa 14), Brug, 1997.
- Wilkes 1969 J. J. Wilkes, *Dalmatia*, London, 1969.
- Zaninović 2015 M. Zaninović, *Ilirski ratovi*, Zagreb, 2015.