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REPRESENTATIONS OF WEAPONS ON THE ARCH OF THE SERGII IN PULA, THE SERGII'S LAST RESTING PLACE

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Colonia Pola was instituted between 46 and 45 BC as Caesar's colony for the purpose of becoming a stronghold for Roman conquests in the Adriatic area all the way to Greece¹. After the civil war of 42 BC between the triumvirate of Octavian, Antony and Lepidus against Caesar's assassins, Brutus and Cassius, *Pola*, as a city loyal to Caesar after in the civil war to Pompeus party, was taken, destroyed and ravaged after Octavian's victory at the battle of Actium in 31 BC. *Lucius Sergius Lepidus*, a military tribune and *aedile* of the *coloniae Polae*, participated in the battle as the commander of the 29th Roman legion².

In the course of the 3rd and the 2nd decades BC, the arch of the Sergii family was constructed. It was an inaugural monument, a herald of the economic, political, architectural and artistic flourishing of the Roman city of Pula at the end of the 1st century BC³. The arch was envisaged as a Roman triumphal arch and was located at a prominent spot or, more precisely, at the exit and entrance to the city, on the axis of the main street (*decumanus*). It was an attractive city portal, built just on the inside of the city walls which were fortified by

external, flanking semi-towers⁴. The arch is the result of a dual kind of promotion, one public (the town's) and the other private (the family's), and it represents a unique urban structure which had a twin function, both decorative and protective⁵. *Salvia Postuma Sergi* commissioned the construction of the arch⁶.

With its characteristics and size, the Arch of the Sergii falls into the category of small monumental arches. Its attic is strengthened at both ends and in the middle by bases for the statues of the three Sergii brothers, in whose memory the arch, as a family memorial, was built⁷. More precisely, it was added to the attractive town portal which was itself fortified by two semicircular towers⁸.

In the light of the rich military background of the members of the Sergii family especially *Lucius Sergius Lepidus*, *tribunus militum legionis XXIX* (the complete

¹ JURKIĆ GIRARDI 1987, 65-74; DŽIN 1997, 93, n. 1, 3, 4; MATIJAŠIĆ 2009, 146-147.

² MLAKAR 1968, 15; JURKIĆ GIRARDI 1985, 61-66; JURKIĆ GIRARDI 2000, 30-41; MATIJAŠIĆ 2009, 157-158

³ FISCHER 1996, 58-62; DŽIN 1997, 93.

⁴ MLAKAR 1968, 35-36; DŽIN 2001, 104; MATIJAŠIĆ 2001, 91-100.

⁵ DŽIN 1991, 14-14; DŽIN 1997, 96;

⁶ JURKIĆ GIRARDI 1987, 72.

⁷ MLAKAR 1968, 35; DŽIN 1991, 15.

⁸ TRAVERSARI 1971, 87-88; DŽIN 1991, 14-15; MATIJAŠIĆ 1995, 43.



text: *L(ucius) Sergius L(uci) f(ilius) Lepidus, aed(ilis), tr(bunus) mil(itum) leg(ionis) XXIX⁹*), *Salvia Postuma Sergi* requested that the entablature and the attic be decorated with representations of weapons. There are 119 examples of weapons depicted on four friezes. The motif of irregularly set weapons has its model and origins in the Hellenistic world¹⁰. Some weapons are represented more objectively and are more emphasised compared with the relief representations in later periods, where their value is mostly graphic and decorative¹¹.

The oldest example of a relief representation of weapons is located on the base of the statue dedicated to Aetolia and erected in Delphi¹². Subsequent examples

can be found on the balustrades of *Athena Polias*¹³ temenos in Pergamon, and on the balustrade of the Bouleterion in Miletus¹⁴. It seems that even the represented weapons are typologically similar to those mentioned, in spite of the fact that there is a time distance between the construction of these monuments. Types of spears and arrows, swords with a straight blade (*gladii*), hexagonal shields with a boss, small Greek shields (*pelta*), two-edged axes and armour, all have their parallels with representations on the Bouleterion in Miletus, while there is also a representation of a sword with a curved blade on the balustrade in Pergamon¹⁵. Copied from distant examples, the Hellenistic model was applied with iconographic exactness, acquiring

¹³ BOHN 1885, 38 seq.; REINACH 1909, 211-215; LÖVY 1928, 5, figg. 13-14; AMY-DUVAL -FORMIGÉ - HATT - Ch. PICARD-G. Ch. PICARD-PIGANIOL 1962, 77, fig. 42.

¹⁴ WIEGARD 1908, 80, figg. 89-97, T. XV; LÖVY 1928, 6, figg. 15-20; TRAVERSARI 1971, 75.

¹⁵ WEGNER 1961, 273; TRAVERSARI 1971, 75.

nonetheless a different aesthetic function. Namely, the relatively high relief work stands out for its play of light and shade, while the examples from Asia Minor exhibit low relief which gains prominence by being applied to large surfaces and by an even disposition of light¹⁶. The weapon representations from Pula are set in four fields in the manner stated by G. E. Pons¹⁷ and G. Traversari¹⁸: Frieze A - south 2,097 cm x 39.5 cm, 45 weapon representations; Frieze B - north 2,060 cm x 39.5 cm, 60 weapon representations; Frieze C - left outside façade, 41.5 cm x 39.5 cm, 7 weapon representations; Frieze D - right outside façade, 7 weapon representations. All the friezes should be observed from a distance of 7.78 m from the level of the Roman road.

An analysis of the weapons on the friezes from Pula leads to the conclusion that all the represented examples served as weapons for combat, both on land and sea, given that the monument was erected to *Lucius Sergius Lepidus* (son of *Lucius*) who was an *aedile* and a military tribune of the 29th Roman legion¹⁹. This legion is mentioned in antique written sources only at the battle of Actium, in the Ambracian Gulf in Greece, on 2 September 31 BC²⁰.

- *Aplustrum* - as a bow decoration, it is present in two places (45 and 59) together with trophies as war booty²¹.

- *Bows, arrow quivers* - various shapes are represented. Bows are of the *patulus* type, and quivers have lids for protecting the arrows from rain and dust. Ancient peoples used a quiver without a lid. The archers of the Roman army were customarily not Greeks or Romans. They were barbarians who were also auxiliary soldiers. They would enter the Roman army either coming with allies or as mercenaries. The best archers were Cretans, Persians, Syrians, and then, Parthians, Scythians and Ethiopians. In the Roman Army, even from the time of Caesar, there was a difference between foot and horse archers, that is, between *sagittarii* on foot and *sagittarii eques* = *hippotoxote*²².

- *Pilum / heavy javelin* - being a long range weapon, it is represented in large numbers. Warring sides attempted to engage in battle from a distance, avoiding losses as much as possible. The Roman army usually started attacks from a distance by hurling javelins, before engaging with short range weapons and in hand-to-hand

¹⁶ DŽIN 1991, 21.

¹⁷ PONS 1910, 9-25.

¹⁸ TRAVERSARI 1971, 73-75.

¹⁹ MLAKAR 1968, 36.

²⁰ PONS 1910, 5; DEGRASSI 1971 (in: Traversari 1971, 39-44).

²¹ PONS 1910, 10.

²² PONS 1910, 10-12.

combat. The importance of javelins was seen in the fact that great thought was put into how they were made, and the shank was so refined that it would stuck in a shield firmly, and would bend upon impact, preventing the *pilum* from being easily removed, thus rendering a soldier incapable of combat. From the times of Caesar, the *pilum* was increasingly improved, taking into account the opponents and their military tactics²³.

- *Belts - cinetorium* leather belts are most often represented with all the additions necessary for carrying weapons²⁴.

- *Armour - (lorica)* protected the body. Pectoral armour can be observed on friezes with representations of military equipment. A special type of armour is the Greek style armour worn by generals and emperors. The representation of this particular armour does not show the usual decorations of imperial armour, but folds of the tunic edge are visible. A *lorica lintea* is also visible, which has been deduced from the observed folds of fabric above and below the waist²⁵.

- *Helmets* - are represented in relatively large numbers and vary greatly in form; there are those that could be tied under the chin, light ones used by the navy, those with a mouth guard, those with cheek pieces, those with reinforced ear guards, and heavy helmets for difficult weather conditions, as well as one-piece helmets²⁶.

- *Fasces* - symbol of the lictor - consisted of a bundle of birch rods tied together with a red leather ribbon into a cylinder. A *lictor* carried the fasces in his left hand, setting them on his left shoulder. After the battle, the winners would take the enemies' *lictor* symbols as trophies²⁷.

- *Armguard* - there were several models of this armour for the arm. Very often it protected the arm all the way to shoulder and represented a part of the defensive equipment²⁸.

- *Military insignia* - have been used since the most ancient times and were already present with the Greeks in the Trojan War. Military insignia started being used out of the need to make the troops visible from a distance. At the beginning, the Romans used the palm of the hand (*maniple*). The most common insignia is a flag of different shapes. The official legionary symbol was the legionary eagle with spread wings (*signum legionis*) and it was first made of bronze, and later on

²³ PONS 1910, 12.

²⁴ PONS 1910, 14, 15.

²⁵ PONS 1910, 15.

²⁶ PONS 1910, 16.

²⁷ PONS 1910, 17-18.

of precious metals without additional decorations. The only addition to this symbol might have been a coloured piece of cloth on a stick immediately under the eagle²⁹.

- *Lituus* - was a crooked wand (*baculum sine nodo aduncum*) used by Roman augurs to mark out a ritual space (*templum*). It was also used to mark out a space in the sky to be observed, and also to set regional divisions. The state could not carry out an undertaking either in times of peace or in times of war without consulting divine will. Military augurs were members of military units as right-hand men of the general, or, more precisely, of the commander, and this was also reflected in the augur's position in a military camp (*praetorium*). Military camps also had a special space for audiences and oblations³⁰.

- *Military hammer* - was used by peoples from the east, especially the Scythians. It came in various shapes, and, apart from being a military tool, was also used to finish off the enemy. On one side it had a spike, and on the other a blade. It was also used in naval battles for climbing the adversary's ships by being chopped into the side of the vessel³¹.

- *Round shields - clipei* - they were usually very large and had a defensive function, although during close combat they could be used as weapons of attack³².

- *Round shields - parme* - were small shields and were used by the Roman cavalry (*equites* and *velites*). They might have been lined with metal sheets³³.

- *Crescent - shaped shields - pelte* - were common military equipment of the Thracians and the Amazons³⁴.

- *Elongated shields* - were the usual equipment of the hoplites. *Polybius* mentioned they were 4 feet high³⁵.

- *Rectangular shields* - during their history, they varied in proportions, although they usually covered the whole body except the head. They are also called the Samnite shield because they were used by Samnite gladiators, and they slightly narrowed towards the lower end³⁶.

²⁸ PONS 1910, 18.

²⁹ PONS 1910, 19-20.

³⁰ PONS 1910, 20.

³¹ PONS 1910, 20.

³² PONS 1910, 21.

³³ PONS 1910, 22.

³⁴ PONS 1910, 22.

³⁵ PONS 1910, 23.

³⁶ PONS 1910, 24.

- *Military axe* - this frequently appears represented on our monument. Like some already mentioned elements of military equipment, double-edged axes with two semicircular blades (crescent-shaped blade - *bipennis*) were typical of the Amazons and barbarian peoples such as the Scythians and the Thracians. The *dolabra* is a subtype of this kind of axe. It has a long handle, a large semicircular blade and a hook turned upwards. It acquired its name from an inscription from Aquileia *Dolabrarius colleghi fabrum*, and it was a standard piece of sailor's equipment³⁷. It proves the presence of S. Lepidus at Actium.

- *Swords, sabres, daggers* and *knives* - are the most numerous represented on the monument of Sergii Arch. The sword *gladius* acquired its functional form after the Punic wars when the Roman army adopted the *gladius hispaniensis* with a double blade and a tip for thrusting. With the development of the cavalry, the *spatha* became a necessary weapon. There are different types of knives, called by different names in written sources: the *machaera*, *copis*, *ensis falcatus* (the blade from the outside, top side), *pugio* and *parazonium* were very frequently used knives, and the *acinaces* was frequently used in eastern Roman parts. South frieze A carries representations of a *gladius*, a *sica*, a dagger, and a knife. North frieze B depicts representations of a sheathed knife and an *ensis falcatus*³⁸.

Musicians and their *musical instruments* were regular followers of military campaigns. Thus, the Arch of the Sergii carries representations of some types of musical instrument. The most numerous are wind instruments, such as a small, bent *trumpet* which was used to announce gatherings. A variant of this instrument is also frequently observed with pastoral peoples. The military trumpet was made of metal. This wind instrument was commonly used by the inhabitants of southern Italy and Magna Graecia. The *horn* is represented on a small east frieze C as a twisted tube with transversal reinforcements. The sound was produced by regulating exhaled air, and the horn had no holes or valves. The Romans adopted this instrument from as early as the time of the Etruscans. The *tuba*, as an extended wind instrument, yielded long but fragmented tones. This instrument is represented on the Arch of the Sergii in the hands of a winged Victoria with a crown, a messenger of the victory at the battle of Actium³⁹.

³⁷ PONS 1910, 25.

³⁸ PONS 1910, 25-27.

³⁹ PONS 1910, 28, 29.

In sum, we can observe three groups of musicians on the Arch of the Sergii: *trumpeters*, *hornists* and *tuba* players who formed a *centuria*. They were important because they sounded the attack or the retreat⁴⁰.

There are floral motifs, anthropomorphic images and symbols, minutely made and thoughtfully placed on the Arch, and also friezes with representations of military combat equipment. All of the above would not have such a high symbolic value if the Arch, apart from its monumental, triumphal and commemorative function, did not also have a sepulchral purpose shown by Selene⁴¹.

The practical and aesthetic problem of mounting the three statues of the Sergii on the attic of the arch was resolved by the visual as well as practical division of the attic by three protruding bases in the style of Hellenistic theatrical art. Such an attic also had a sepulchral function. The urns of the deceased would thus be stored at the highest, unreachable point, above which the statues would rise. When the attic was examined, it was observed that the attic had remained intact from the moment it was constructed. This indicates the possibility that the remains of the deceased could still be present there and undisturbed. Such a revelation would not come as a surprise in respect of the examples of urns with the remains of the deceased being placed into magnificent public monuments as a token to the everlasting memory of their deeds, especially military campaigns⁴². One such example is Trajan's Column in Rome.

The Arch of the Sergii, as a plastic, colouristic and dynamically unified project of a triumphal, sepulchral and public monument after naval battle, reflects the pro-Augustan spirit of the time when *Colonia Iulia Pola* was rebuilt⁴³.

The Sergii family is mentioned in Virgil's Aeneid, where the writer mentions Sergestus, Aeneas's friend, in the line: *Sergestusque, domus tenet a quo Sergia nomen*⁴⁴. In any case, regardless of the family's origin, *Salvia Sergi* gave us a monument which offers an inexhaustible source for investigation in all archaeological fields. The monument still guards plenty of mysteries, and it is our duty to safeguard this monument located in the urban core of a dynamic city for future generations⁴⁵.

⁴⁰ PONS 1910, 28, 29.

⁴¹ TRAVERSARI 1971, 56, 72.

⁴² TRAVERSARI 1971, 83-84; DŽIN 1991, 23.

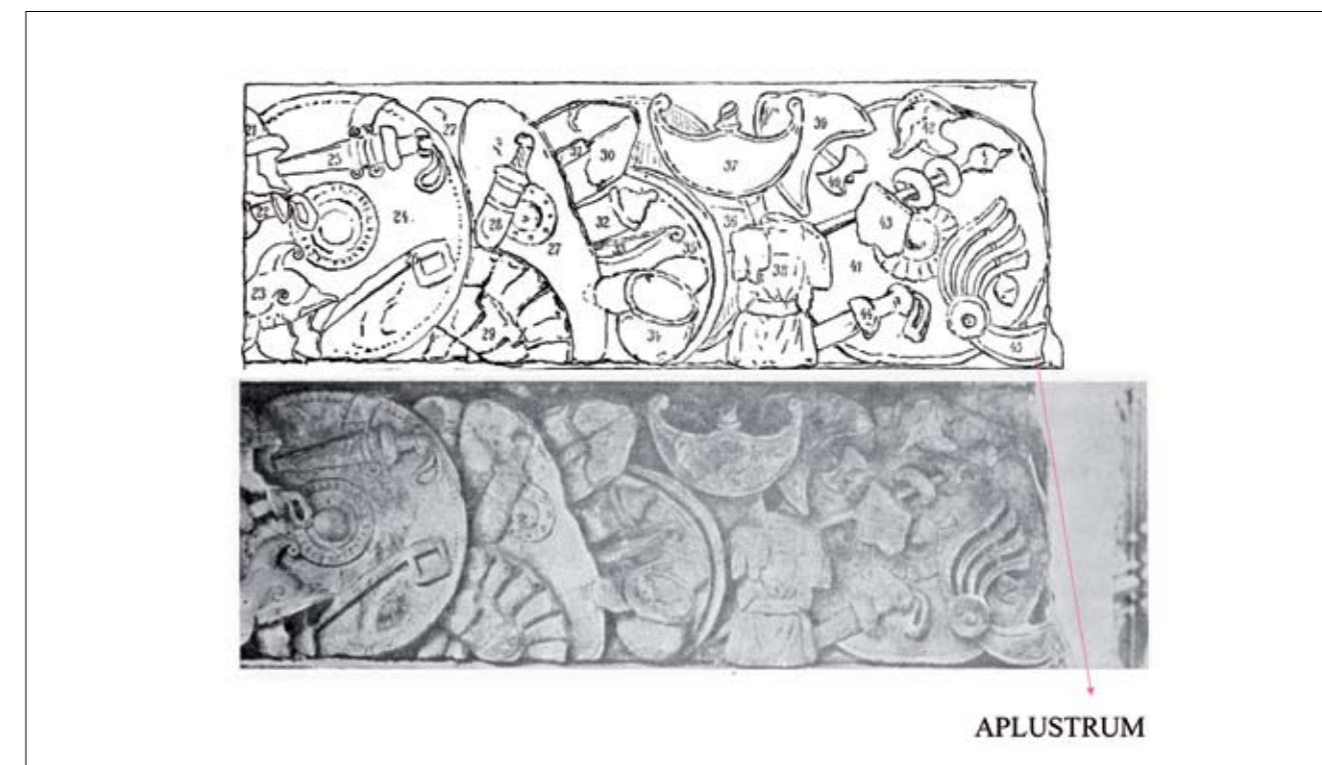
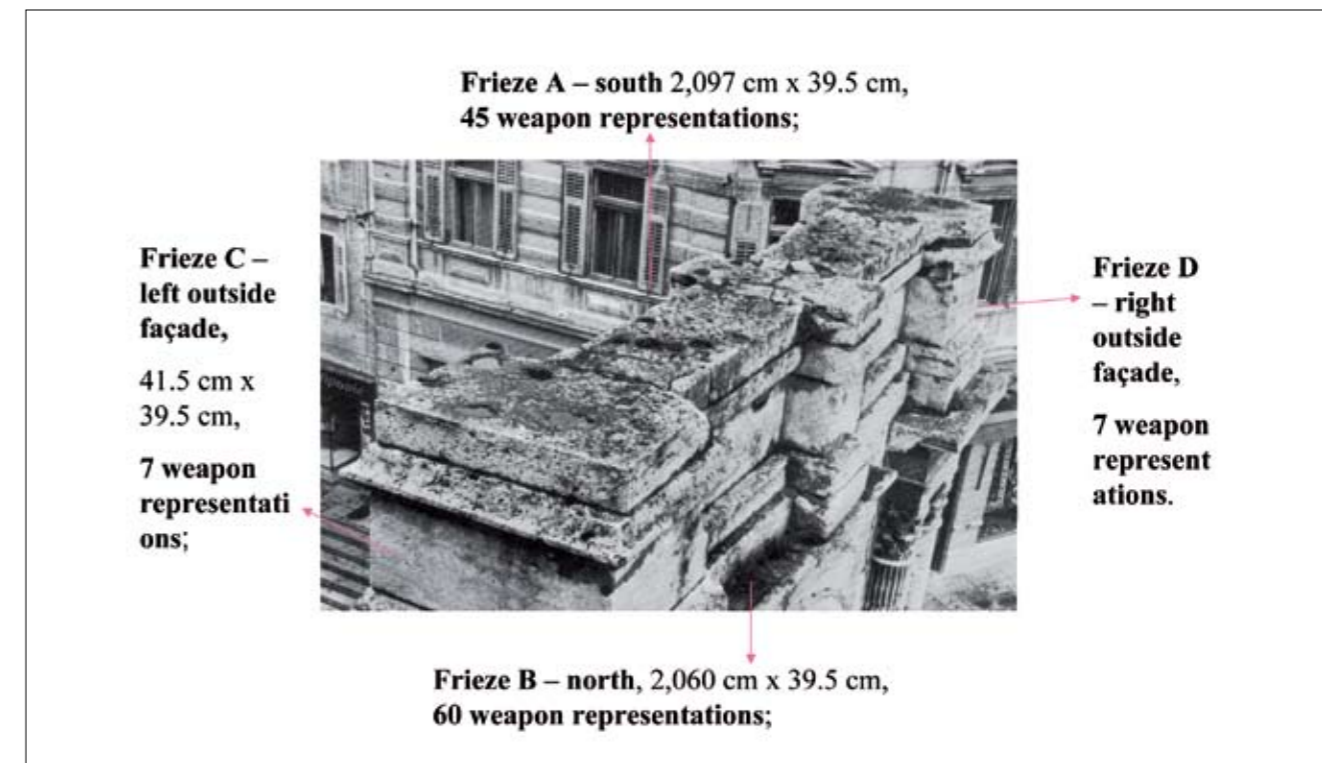
⁴³ PONS 1910, 30.

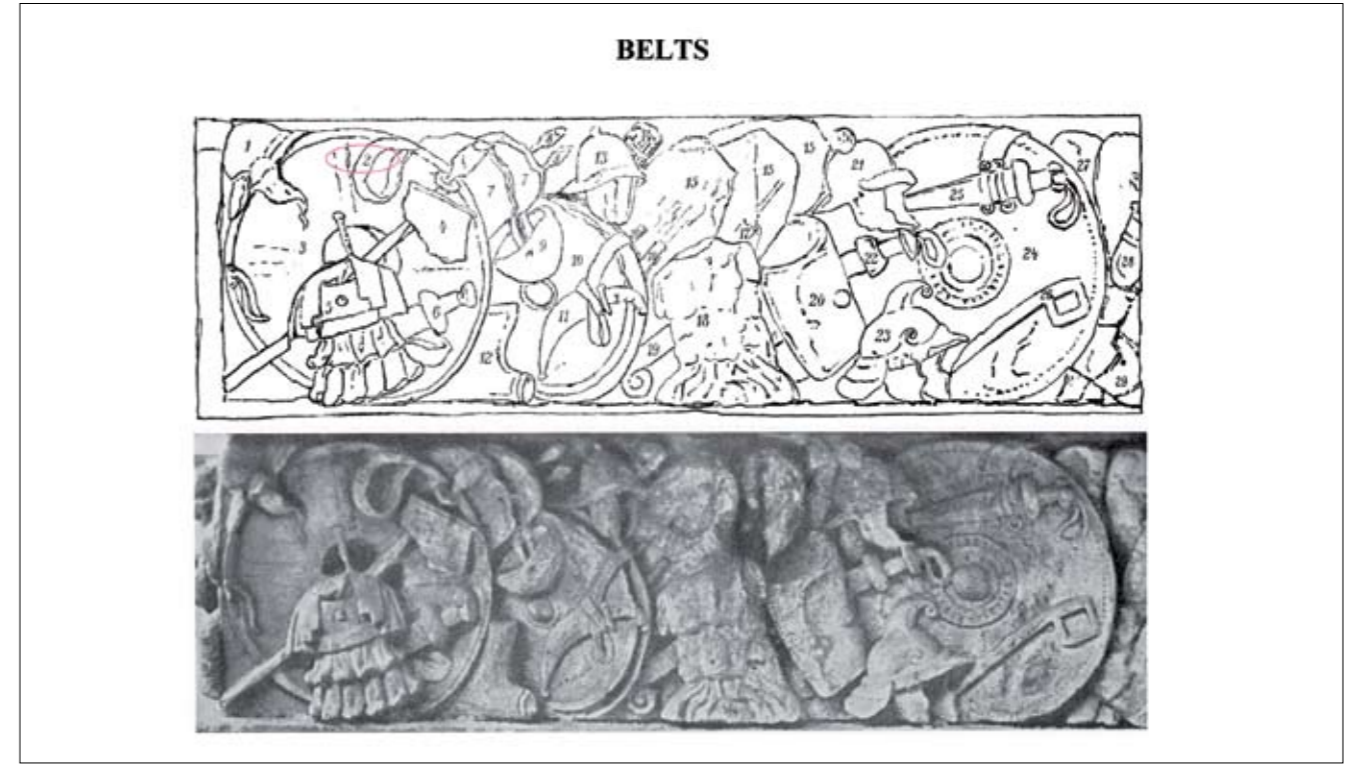
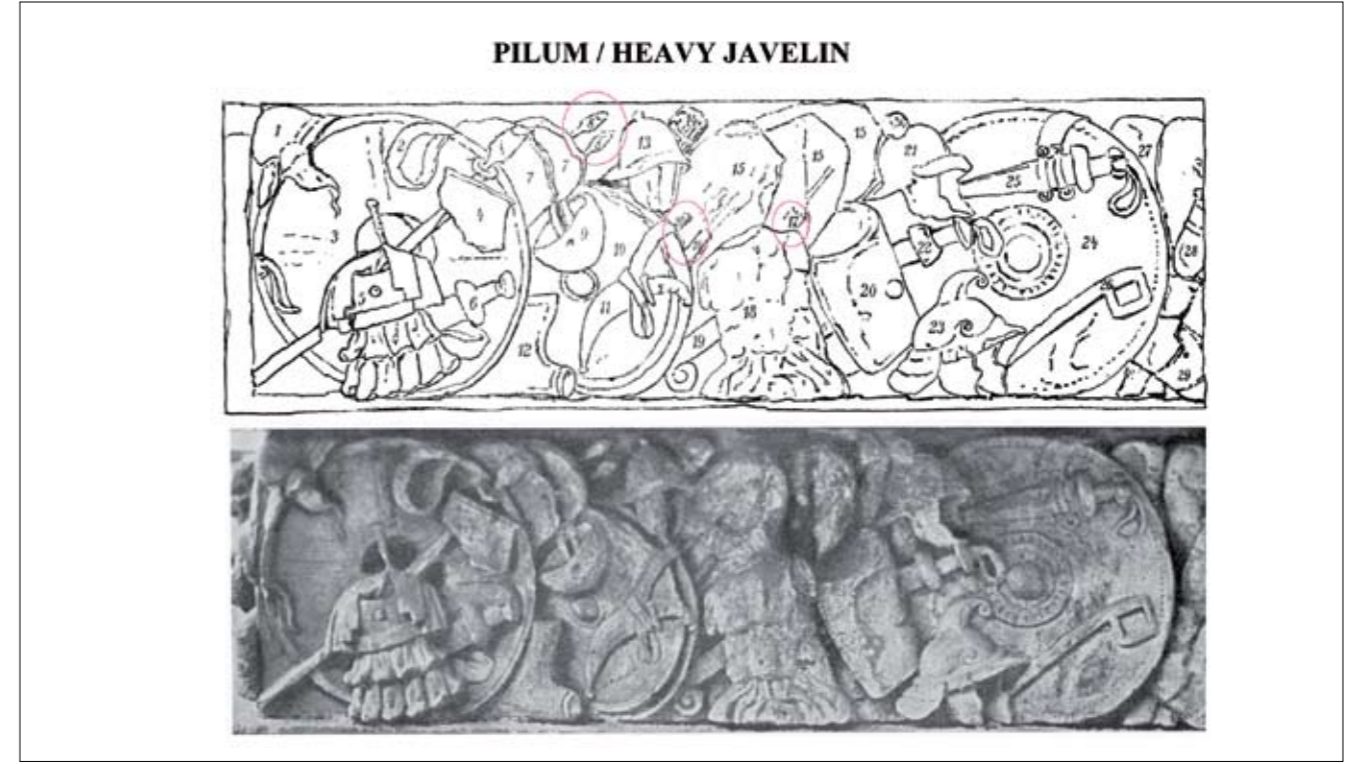
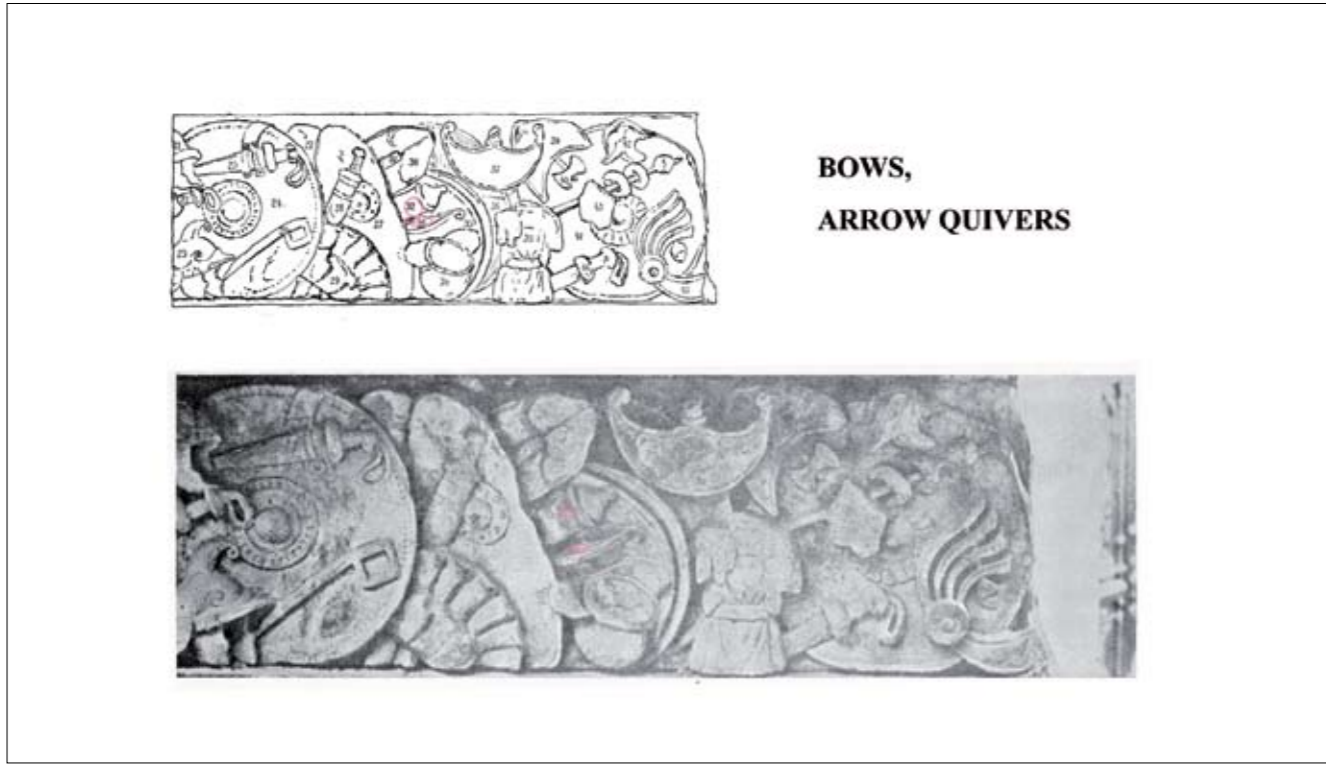
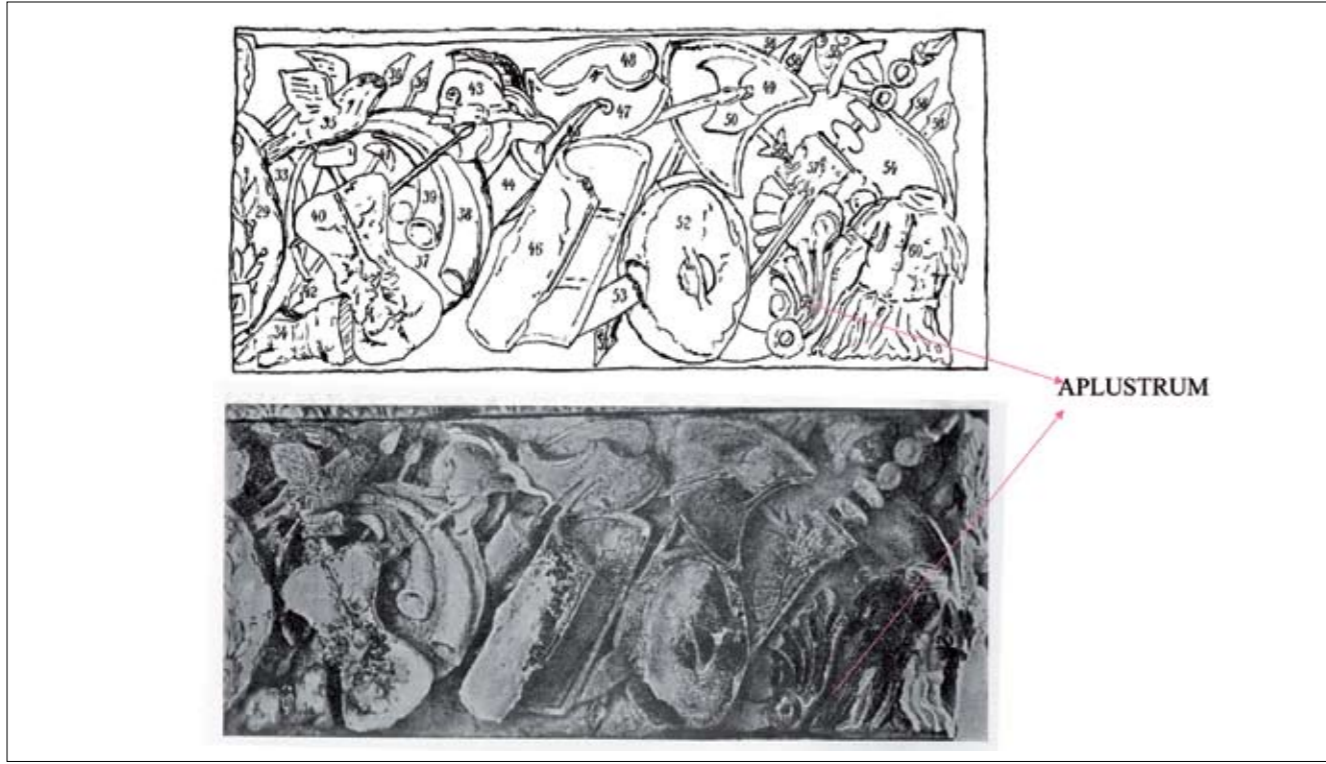
⁴⁴ VIRG., V, 121, *Aen.*

⁴⁵ TRAVERSARI 1971, 100-102, DŽIN 1997, 94-98.

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ARMOUR



FASCES – SYMBOL OF THE LICTOR



HELMETS



MILITARY INSIGNIA



LITUUS



MILITARY AXE



ROUND SHIELDS – CLIPEI, PARME, PELTE
ELONGATED SHIELDS, RECTANGULAR SHIELDS



SWORDS, SABRES, DAGGERS AND KNIVES



BENT TRUMPER, HORN

