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EARLY ROMAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT FROM THE FORTIFIED SETTLEMENTS IN THE NOTRANJSKA REGION (SW SLOVENIA)

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1. INTRODUCTION

The region of Notranjska (Karst landscape in southwestern Slovenia) was traversed by important routes that led from the Italic Peninsula towards the northern Balkans and the central Danube region. The Amber Route, one of the major prehistoric trans-European communication corridors, led across the *Ocra* pass, which, according to Strabo, is where the Alps are at their lowest.¹ The routes leading along the valleys of the River Reka, Pivka and past the Cerknica Lake (*Lugeon palus*) diverged from the Amber Route towards the Kvarner bay, the Kolpa (*Colapis*) Valley and the Krka (*Corcoras*) Valley.²

The Roman establishment of a colony in Aquileia (181 BC) and the conquest of Istria (178/177 BC) was followed by military interventions in the direction of Karst passes.

One of the main results, reflected in the Roman weapons assemblage from Grad near Šmihel,³ was to establish control over the Amber Route in the area of *Ocra* pass and to secure the colony in Aquileia.⁴

¹ ŠAŠEL 1977; SLAPŠAK 2001, 12, fig. 3 and 4; HORVAT 2009, 356; HORVAT - BAVDEK 2009.

² Šašel 1977; HORVAT - BAVDEK 2009, 144-146, fig. 112; LAHARNAR 2009, 97-99.

³ J. Horvat (2002, 135) dated the assemblage of Roman Republican weapons from Grad near Šmihel to the end of the 3rd and the first half of the 2nd century BC (considering the pila with flat haft, everted edges and triangular point with two barbs); while historical situation would certainly indicate the deposition after the foundation of Aquileia (181 BC).

⁴ HORVAT - BAVDEK 2009, 137.

In the Late Iron Age the Notranjska region was the territory of the so-called Notranjska-Kras group; its typical attire suggests that the group belonged to the North Adriatic indigenous cultures.⁵ Ancient literary and epigraphic sources indicate that since the 2nd century BC the neighbouring Friulian Plain, the area of the Carnian Alps and the area of Tergeste were settled by the Celtic Carni;⁶ perhaps their territories were extended to the east as far as the Notranjska region.⁷

Archaeological information comes from several excavations carried out between the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the Second World War and from trial trenches and rescue excavations in the past decades. With the advent of metal detectors most hilltop settlements in the region became the targets of illegal treasure hunters. The National Museum of Slovenia acquired at least some of these, mostly metal, items. The present paper deals with several early Roman military objects recognised among the finds.

⁵ GUŠTIN 1979; BOŽIČ 1999, 202-203; HORVAT - BAVDEK 2009, 132.

⁶ VEDALDI-IASBEZ 1994, 229-239; BANDELLI 2001; SLAPŠAK 2003, 245-246; ŠAŠEL KOS 2005, 413-414; MAINARDIS 2008, 30-32.

⁷ BOŽIČ 1999, 203



Fig. 1. Archaeological sites mentioned in the text (1 Baba near Slavina, 2 Ambroževo gradišče near Slavina, 3 Gradišče at Čepna, 4 Gradišče above Knežak, 5 Stari grad above Unec, 6 Žerovnišček near Bločice, 7 Ulaka above Stari trg pri Ložu, 8 Nadleški hrib near Nadlesk); reconstruction of the main lines of communication and wider geo-political situation in the Early Roman period.

2. SITES

2. 1. Baba near Slavina

According to chance and metal detector finds, the fortified settlement of Baba was settled during the Late Bronze and Iron Age. The latest recorded find is a hoard of Roman and Celtic coins, buried after 74 BC.⁸ The settlement was probably abandoned in the Late La Tène period.⁹

1. Slingshots, lead. 32 of type Völling II, 1 of type Völling IV, weights 25-104.39 g. Fig. 2.
2. Hobnail, iron. Diam. 1.8 cm Fig. 2.

⁸ FMRSI IV, 126-127, 46/3.

⁹ HORVAT - BAVDEK 2009, 138.

2. 2 Ambroževo gradišče near Slavina

The earliest finds from the fortified settlement of Ambroževo gradišče are dated to the Late Bronze Age. Numerous items indicate settlement in the Iron Age. The remains of simple buildings from the Augustan period were discovered by archaeological trenching. Finds from the 1st to 4th centuries AD are scarce.¹⁰

1. Hand (hilt)-guard, copper alloy. L. 4.7 cm. Fig. 5: 1.
2. Tie loop, copper alloy. L. 5.9cm. Fig. 5: 2.
3. Harness pendant, copper alloy. L. 7.9 cm. Fig. 5: 3.
4. Slingshots, lead. 19 of type Völling II, 1 of type Völling IV (Fig. 5: 4), weights 81.10-108.75g.

¹⁰ HORVAT 1995, 183-188, 194-197, pl. 7-14: 1-7.

2. 3 Gradišče at Čepna

The settlement is situated on the edge of a plateau that ends in a cliff on the western side. The more exposed sites of the settlement are surrounded by a stone rampart. Numerous finds span from the Late Eneolithic to the Late Roman period.¹¹

1. Button-and-loop fastener, copper alloy. Diam. 2.2 cm. Fig. 5: 5.

2. 4 Gradišče above Knežak

The settlement is secured by steep slopes and cliffs on the northern side and by a rampart enclosure on the southern side. According to numerous metal detector finds and trial trenching the site was occupied from the Early Iron Age to the 4th century AD.¹²

1. Button-and-loop fastener, copper alloy. L. 3.2 cm. Fig. 5: 6.

2. 5 Stari grad above Unec

Stari grad is a fortified settlement where finds dated to the Late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman period were discovered. On the central part of the elevation are the ruins of a castle from the second half of the 12th century to the 16th century.¹³

1. Slingshots, lead. 37 of type Völling II, 2 of type Völling III, 1 of type Völling I, 1 of type Völling V, weights 25.70-104.64. Fig. 4 (16 items). Fig. 5: 8.
2. Button-and-loop fastener, copper alloy. L. 2.8 cm. Fig. 4. Fig. 5: 7.
3. Hobnail, iron. Diam. 1.9 cm. Fig. 4. Fig. 5: 10.
4. Hobnail, iron. Diam. 1.9 cm. Fig. 4. Fig. 5: 11.
5. Hobnail, iron. Diam. 1.4 cm. Fig. 4. Fig. 5: 12.

2. 6 Žerovnišček near Bločice

The fortified settlement at Žerovnišček is situated on the eastern edge of the Cerknisko polje. It was settled from the Late Bronze Age to the early Roman period. It seems that after the final Roman conquest of the area of Cerknisko polje the hill-fort of Žerovnišček was abandoned.¹⁴

1. Fitting with hinged buckle (Laharnar 2009, 118, t. 5: 9). Fig. 5: 9.

¹¹ HORVAT 2005, 230-231.

¹² HORVAT 2005, 231-232.

¹³ BAVDEK 2009, 82-83; GASPARI 2009, 315-329.

¹⁴ LAHARNAR 2009.

2. Slingshots, lead. 1 of type Völling I and 1 of type Völling II (Laharnar 2009, 118, t. 5: 5-6).

3. Hobnail, iron (Laharnar 2009, 118, t. 5: 10). Fig. 5: 13.
4. Hobnail, iron (Laharnar 2009, 118, t. 5: 12). Fig. 5: 14.
5. Hobnail, iron (Laharnar 2009, 118, t. 5: 11). Fig. 5: 15.
6. Hobnail, iron (Laharnar 2009, 119, t. 5: 13). Fig. 5: 16.
7. Hobnail, iron (Laharnar 2009, 119, t. 5: 14). Fig. 5: 17.
8. Hobnail, iron (Laharnar 2009, 119, t. 5: 15). Fig. 5: 18.
9. Hobnail, iron (Laharnar 2009, 119, t. 5: 16). Fig. 5: 19.
10. Hobnail, iron (Laharnar 2009, 119, t. 5: 17). Fig. 5: 20.

2. 7 Ulaka above Stari trg pri Ložu

Archaeological finds from Ulaka suggest that there was a settlement from the Late Bronze Age to the La Tène period. Excavations carried out by W. Schmid (1936-1940) uncovered architectural remnants dated between the first half of the 1st century and 3rd century. Several chance and metal detector finds indicate settlement in the 4th and 5th century.¹⁵

1. Slingshots, lead. 23 of type Völling II, 2 of type Völling IV, weights 34,62-103,91 g. Fig. 3: 6-13.
2. Peg, iron. L. 19,2 cm. Fig. 3: 1.
3. Harness pendant, copper alloy. L. 6.3 cm. Fig. 3: 2.
4. Harness pendant, copper alloy. L. 4.5 cm. Fig. 3: 3.
5. Harness pendant, copper alloy. L. 3.5 cm. Fig. 3: 4.
6. Button-and-loop fastener, copper alloy. Diam. 1.4 cm. Fig. 3: 5.

2. 8 Nadleški hrib near Nadlesk

The remains of a Roman stronghold are preserved at Nadleški hrib. The rampart with the entrance in the form of internal clavicula can be recognised.¹⁶ The scarce finds (three lead slingshots, two Celtic silver coins¹⁷ and two halved Roman asses¹⁸) seem to suggest the dating of the site to the Augustan period.

1. Slingshots, lead. 3 of type Völling II.

¹⁵ ŠAŠEL 1975, 155; GASPARI 2000.

¹⁶ GASPARI 2000, 64-65.

¹⁷ I am grateful to Alenka Mišekec (The Numismatic Cabinet, National Museum of Slovenia) for this information.

¹⁸ FMRSI IV, 41.

3. SELECTED ROMAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT FINDS - DISCUSSION

The buckle with a hinged strap fitting (Fig. 5: 9) was used to fasten the shoulder-guard of the Roman composite cuirass (*lorica segmentata*) to the breastplate. Roman legionaries used it from the Augustan period to the 3rd century.¹⁹ The earliest *lorica segmentata* fittings are known from the Roman fortress at Dangstetten, which was in use between 20/15 and 9/8 BC.²⁰ Finds from Kalkriese (near Osnabrück), where Varo's legions were defeated in AD 9, comprise a *lorica segmentata* breastplate.²¹ The armour strap fitting from Žerovnišček is hinged and has vertical ribs and notched edges.²² Examples from the Late Augustan fortress of Haltern²³ and the Middle and Late Augustan settlement situated below Castle Hill in Ljubljana²⁴ are also of this type.

The brooches of the Alesia group were found at Stari grad (Fig. 4)²⁵ and Ulaka.²⁶ Brooches of this group are the earliest brooches with a hinge and among the leading objects of Roman material culture of the latest Republican period, between ca. 60 and 30/15 BC. They were worn by Roman soldiers and possibly also others.²⁷

The soles of Roman military footwear were attached with iron hobnails (Fig. 5:10-20). The hobnails from sites in the Notranjska region comprise all the four types of hobnails known from Alesia, classified according to the pattern on the underside.²⁸ Most of the hobnails fall into a group characterised by a cruciform pattern of ribs and protuberances between them. This type of hobnail is by far the most common in Alesia.²⁹ For the hobnails from Notranjska region, the closest geographically parallels are hobnails from Grad near Reka and Gradišče near Cerčno.³⁰ Roman artillery missiles, lead slingshots, arrow heads, brooches of the

Alesia type, hobnails of the type mentioned above, and the coins from these two sites all indicate Roman military actions in the 4th decade BC, considering the historical situation, at the beginning of Octavian's Wars in Illyricum in 35 BC.³¹ In addition to items mentioned from Alesia, numerous hobnails of this group from other sites in France are known. They are probably related to Caesar's Gallic Wars between 59 and 52 BC.³² Such hobnails were found also at Andagoste in northern Spain, in a military context dated from the numismatic evidence to the 4th decade BC.³³ Hobnails of this type have also been found, in addition to other hobnails, at Gurina in the Gail Valley. The majority derive from a layer with small finds from different periods, mostly from the 1st century BC.³⁴ Peter Gamper connects these hobnails, and other Roman military finds from the site, to the Roman annexation of Noricum in c. 15 BC. Hobnails of this type are also among the finds from the Crap-Ses Gorge in the area of Oberhalbstein in eastern Switzerland. Jürg Rageth relates them, as well as other Roman *militaria* from the site, with the Roman military conquest of the Alps in 15 BC.³⁵ According to Werner Zanier, *militaria* from Döttenbichl (Oberammergau) relate to the same conquest. Among several hobnails, the type under discussion is the most frequent.³⁶ Such hobnails were not found at the well-investigated fortresses at Dangstetten (20/15 and 9/8 BC) and Oberaden (11 and 9/8 BC). Smaller hobnails without patterns or hobnails with protuberances in a circular arrangement on the underside were found there.³⁷ The same applies to the hobnails from the Late Augustan fortress of Haltern³⁸ and the site of Varus' defeat in AD 9 at Kalkriese.³⁹ We can conclude that hobnails with the characteristic pattern of crossed ribs and four protuberances on the underside were mainly in use when Caesar was conquering Gaul and in the period of civil wars after his death. Finds from Crap-Ses

Gorge and Döttenbichl (Oberammergau) seem to suggest that such hobnails were still in use at the very beginning of the Middle Augustan Period. However, the fact that only hobnails of a later type - with a circular arrangement of protuberances, or no pattern on the underside - were found at Dangstetten, dated to 20/15 and 9/8 BC and related to the same military events, calls for caution in the interpretation.

Among the military equipment from sites under discussion lead slingshots predominate (Figs. 2, 3: 6-13, 4, 5: 4, 6). It is widely accepted that in the Roman period only the army used lead slingshots. In his study of slingers in the Roman army, Thomas Völling⁴⁰ categorised types of slingshots and suggested their dating, which later authors have largely accepted. He distinguished between oval (types I a-c), spindle-like (types II a-b) and double-pyramid shaped (type III) projectiles; those with two flat surfaces (type IV), acorn-shaped (type V) and round (type VI) projectiles.⁴¹ According to Völling, the Romans used the oval types from the late 2nd century BC at the latest to at least the second half of the 2nd century AD; the spindle-like ones most probably between the 3rd century BC and the Late Antiquity. He dated precisely the double-pyramid slingshots, which he recognised only at four sites from the first three decades of the 1st century BC. The form with two flat surfaces is also rare: it appears in Perugia, Haltern and Titelberg and is dated to the second half of the 1st century BC and to the first three decades of the 1st century AD.⁴²

Spindle-like (type Völling II) projectiles predominate at sites in the Notranjska region. Only a few are the oval (Völling I) type: from Grad near Šmihel⁴³ and Žerovnišček.⁴⁴ The rare pyramid-shaped (type Völling III) and acorn-shaped (type Völling V) projectiles have been found at Grad near Šmihel⁴⁵ and Stari grad above Unec (Fig. 5: 8), while examples with two flat surfaces (type Völling IV) are known from Ambroževo gradišče (Fig. 5: 4), Baba and Ulaka.⁴⁶ There are no examples of spherical projectiles (type Völling VI).

The observation that slings were mostly withdrawn from use after the Augustan and Tiberian periods⁴⁷ very likely applies also for sites under discussion. Bearing in mind other finds and considering the historical situation, lead slingshots are very probably associated with the presence and activities of Roman troops during the occupation phase (see below).

At Baba near Slavina, outside the ramparts, a group of ten projectiles was discovered, which in our opinion might represent a slinger's complete projectile set (Fig. 6). Although the circumstances of the find are not clear, the uniform patina on the objects and their simultaneous arrival at the museum show that they were probably found at the same time and close together. The set comprises four larger projectiles weighing 89.44 g, 89.10 g, 81.02 g, and 74.39 g; three medium size weighing 57.85 g, 41.70 g and 40.99 g; and three smaller ones weighing 31.27 g, 27.24 g and 25 g.

Ancient written sources mention different-sized projectiles that were used with slings of different lengths.⁴⁸ In his *Bibliotheca Historica* (5. 18), Diodorus Siculus describes slingers from the Balearic Islands armed with three slings: one was worn around the head, another on the torso and the third carried in the hand. Strabo's *Geography* (3. 5. 1) further explains that the long sling was used for distant targets, the shorter for nearby targets and the middle length one for intermediate targets.

The weights of projectiles from the possible set were compared with the Roman weights system.⁴⁹ The weight of the three smallest projectiles from Baba is close to a Roman ounce (27.3 g), two of the medium size ones weighed one-and-a-half ounces (41 g, *sescuncia*, *sescunx*), one weighed two ounces (54.6 g), and the average weight of the heaviest ones is 83.5 g, which is close to three Roman ounces (81.9 g). However, if the weights of all the projectiles from Notranjska are examined it seems that in casting there was no real effort to conform to specific Roman weights. The heaviest weigh between three and four ounces, while the weight of the medium ones is less than three ounces.⁵⁰

⁴⁰ VÖLLING 1990, 48-58: list 5 and 6.

⁴¹ VÖLLING 1990, 34-35.

⁴² VÖLLING 1990, 35.

⁴³ HORVAT 1993, fig. 1: 4.

⁴⁴ LAHARNAR 2009, 141, pl. 5: 5.

⁴⁵ HORVAT 2002, 144-145, pl. 20: 8-9.

⁴⁶ HORVAT 1993, 334-335, fig. 1: 11, 13.

¹⁹ BISHOP - COULSTON 2006, 95; RADMAN-LIVAJA 2004, 82.

²⁰ FINGERLIN 1986, 285, 5; FINGERLIN 1998, 681, 2; ROTH-RUBI 2006 (presented arguments for the earlier dating of the fortress).

²¹ BISHOP 2002, 23-29, 91.

²² e. g. DESCHLER-ERB 1999b, 236-237, fig. 8.

²³ MÜLLER 2002, pl. 41: 447.

²⁴ VIČIČ 2002, 204, pl. 12: 2.

²⁵ ISTENIČ 2005b, 191-193, 196-197, pl. 1: 2, 4, 6, 13.

²⁶ ISTENIČ 2005b, 194, pl. 1: 10.

²⁷ ISTENIČ 2005b, 188-189.

²⁸ BROUQUIER-REDDÉ - DEYBER 2001, 303-304, pl. 93: 138 A-D.

²⁹ o.c. 304, D 4-4.

³⁰ ISTENIČ 2005a, 83, fig. 5: 1-13.

³¹ o.c. 83-84; ISTENIČ 2005b, 190, note. 11.

³² POUX et al. 2007, 216, fig. 14: 8, POUX 2008, 376-381, fig. 54 and 56.

³³ OCHARAN LARRONDO - PORTILLA 2002, 322-323, fig. 2: 11-12.

³⁴ GAMPER 2007, 371, fig. 11: 18-61.

³⁵ RAGETH 2004, fig. 5: 6-15; RAGETH 2005, 306, fig. 3: 2-14.

³⁶ ZANIER 2009, 273, 276, no. 3.7.11.

³⁷ e.g. FINGERLIN 1986, set 2: 2, set 54: 14, set 104: 5, set 182: 13; KÜHLBORN 1992, 150.

³⁸ HARNECKER 1997, 87, pl. 69: 754-755.

³⁹ HARNECKER - TOLKSDORF-LIENEMANN 2004, pl. 4: 1110, pl. 5: 2401, pl. 6: 77, 85, pl. 7: 843, pl. 9: 162, 1047, 1089, 1105, 1119, pl. 10: 2551.

4. CONCLUSIONS

With regard to the typological and chronological determination of other finds at sites under discussion and considering the historical situation, we can associate the early Roman military equipment with the presence of the Roman troops during several periods.

The earliest Roman military equipment items from Baba near Slavina, Stari grad above Unec and perhaps also Žerovnišček date to the Caesarian period, the civil wars following Caesar's death and to the early Augustan period (ca 60-15 BC). They might be associated with Caesar's consolidation of the eastern border of the province of Cisalpine Gaul, especially after the incursion of the Iapodes to Tergeste in 52 BC⁵¹, with possible military interventions to the south-eastern Alpine area before the annexation of Cisalpine Gaul to Italy in 42/41 BC⁵² and with Octavian's Campaigns in Illyricum in the years 35-33 BC.⁵³

⁵¹ ŠAŠEL KOS 2000, 282, 301-302.

⁵² GASPARI 2009, 323, 326.

⁵³ ŠAŠEL KOS 2005, 393-471; ISTENIČ 2005a, 77-86.

Several Roman military finds from the area under discussion date to the Middle and Late Augustan periods, when the Notranjska region was most probably under Roman control.

These items probably reflect the presence of Roman forces in the hinterland of main military operations in western Balkans during the Pannonian wars (14-9 BC) and the Pannonian-Dalmatian revolt (AD 6-9). We assume that the Roman garrisons at Nadleški hrib and at the possible strongholds at Ambroževo gradišče, Žerovnišček and Ulaka were controlling routes across the Notranjska region towards the Balkans.

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Fig. 2. Baba near Slavina: slingshots and hobnail. Photo: T. Lauko.

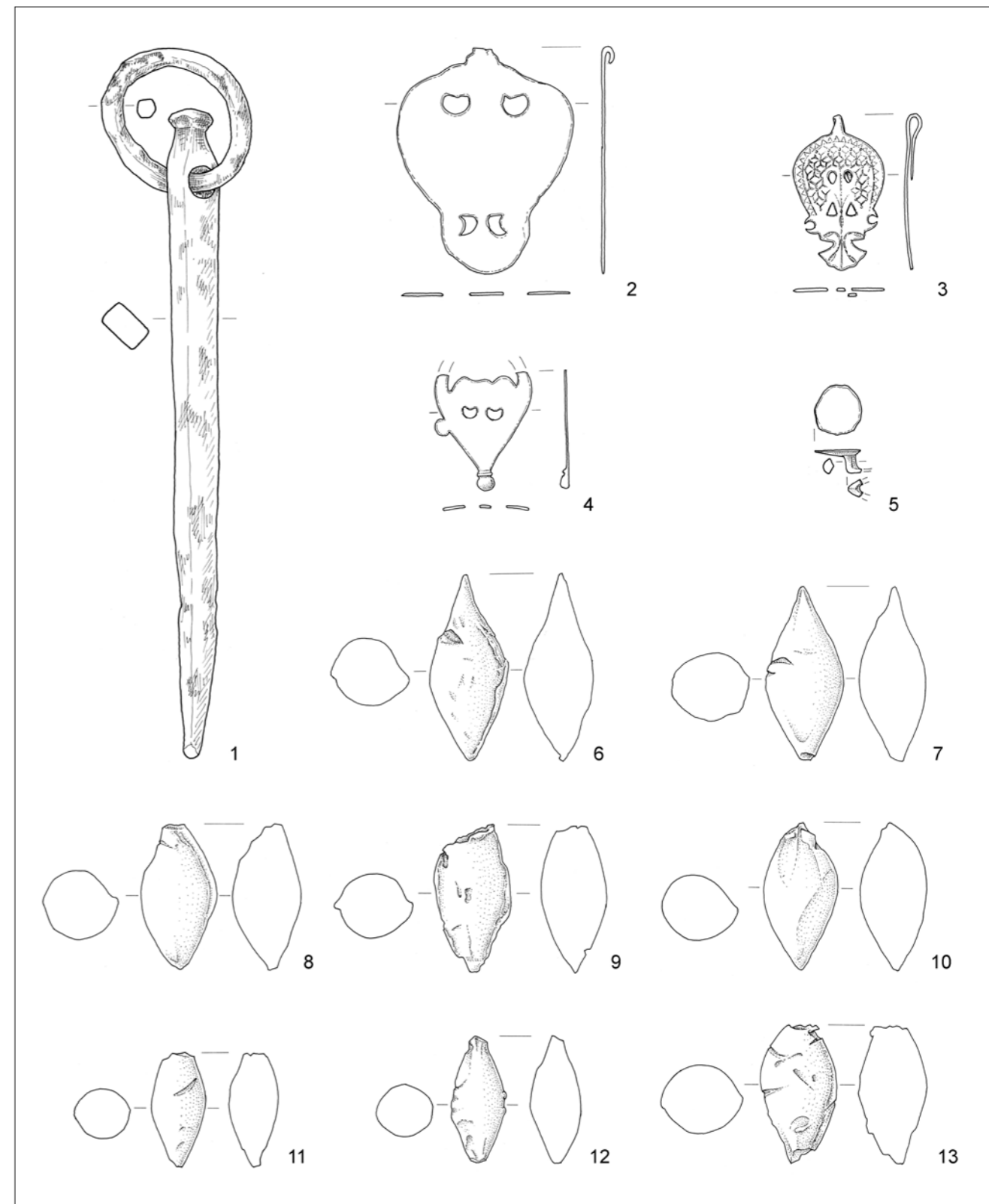


Fig. 3. Ulaka above Stari trg pri Ložu. Drawing: I. Murgelj.



Fig. 4. Stari grad above Ubec: slingshots, brooches of the Alesia group, button-and-loop fastener and hobnails. Photo: T. Lauko.

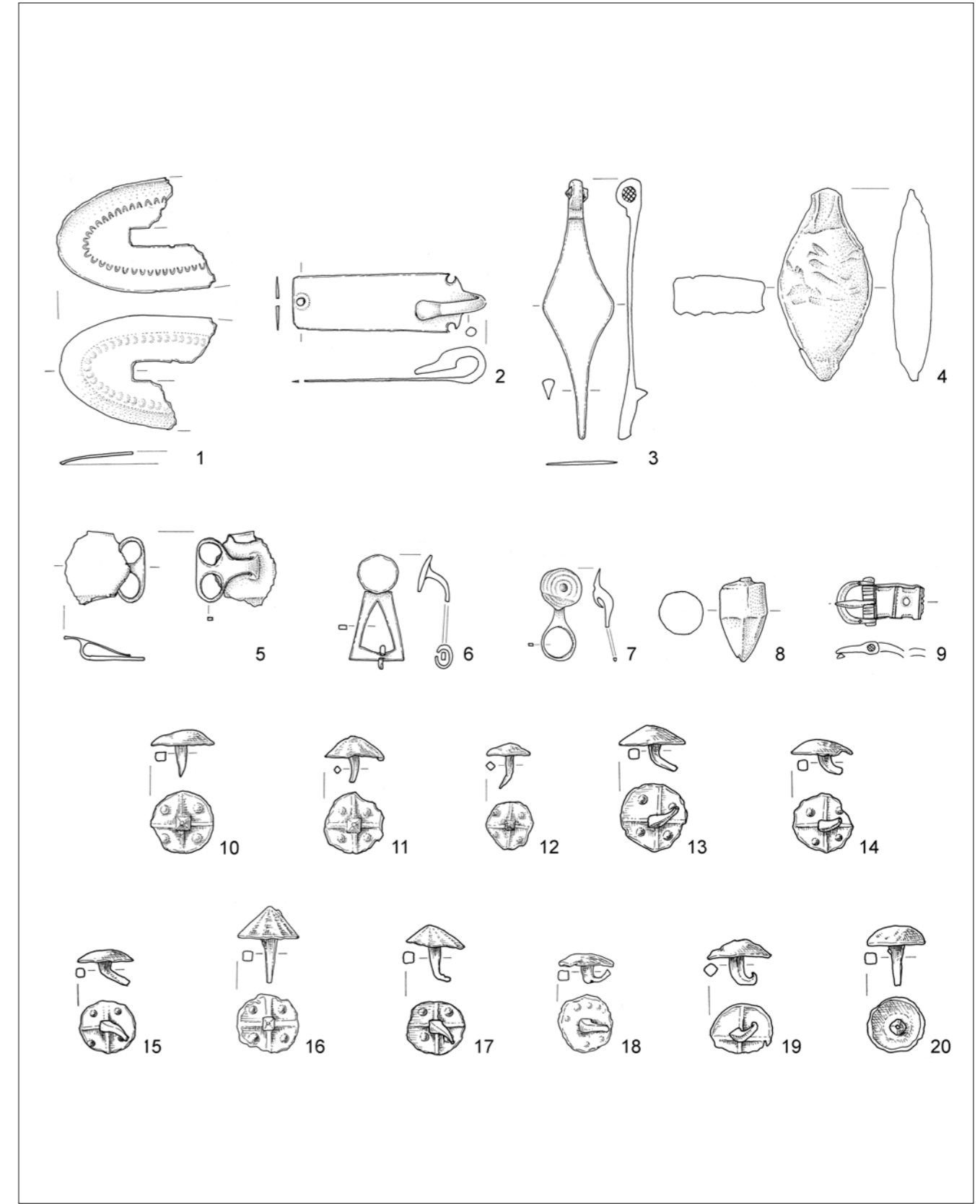


Fig. 5. 1-4 Ambroževo gradišče near Slavina; 5 Gradišče at Čepna; 6 Gradišče above Knežak; 7-8, 10-12 Stari grad above Ubec; 9, 13-20 Žerovnišček near Bločice. Drawing: I. Murgelj.

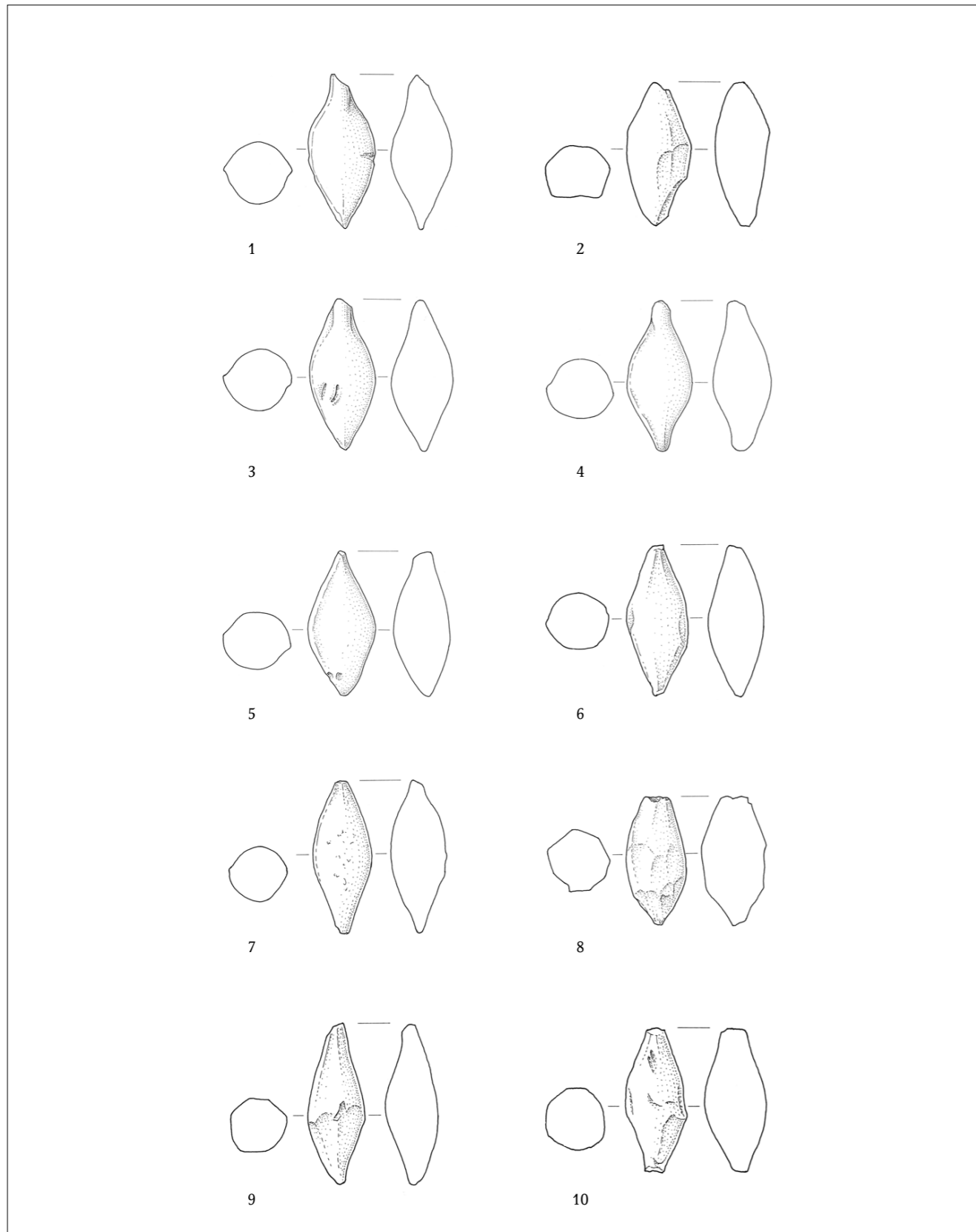


Fig. 6. Baba near Slavina. Supposed slinger's complete set. Drawing: I. Murgelj.

ROMAN STONE AND CLAY SHOT FROM THE VIMINACIUM AMPHITHEATRE

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The study of Roman military equipment from Viminacium is important to an understanding of the constitution of the Roman army and the life of soldiers and civilians not only in this camp and city, but also at other sites along the Danube limes in *Moesia Superior*. In this paper, stone and clay shot found during recent excavations of the Viminacium amphitheatre will be presented. Based on the size, shape and exact location, I will discuss the function of missiles and their connection to the amphitheatre.

VIMINACIUM AMPHITHEATRE

Viminacium is located in eastern Serbia, close to the confluence of the Mlava and Danube Rivers (Fig. 1). It was initially a military camp, where the *legio VII Claudia* was stationed from turn of the sixth into the sev-

enth decades of the first century AD.¹ A city grew next to the camp and became the capital of the province of *Moesia Superior* and later of *Moesia Prima*.²

Based on archaeological excavations, the areas of the legionary fortress and the city of Viminacium were defined on the right bank of the Mlava River. The Viminacium amphitheatre is situated in the north-eastern corner of the city, approximately 60 m from the north-western corner of the legionary fortress (Fig. 2). At the end of nineteenth century, M. Valtrović conducted the first small-scale excavations of the amphitheatre.³ Systematic archaeological investigations began in Septem-

¹ ПОПОВИЋ 1968, 36; МИРКОВИЋ 1968, 25; 1986, 35-36.

² The city was raised to the rank of *municipium* during the reign of Hadrian and to the rank of *colonia* during the reign of Gordian III.

³ ВАЛТРОВИЋ 1884, 11-12, 100-103.