

THE INSCRIPTION OF COHORS III ALPINORUM FROM CECELA NEAR DRNIŠ (DALMATIA) AND THE QUESTION OF THE ROMAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN PETROVO POLJE DURING THE PRINCIPATE

Abstract: New insights about the previously unpublished inscription of cohorts III Alpinorum, located in the Archaeological Museum in Zadar, are brought to light. Previously documented as an inscription from an unknown site, calling upon the diaries of a Friar Lujo Marun, it is now identified as an inscription from Petrovo polje; more precisely from the Cecela hilltop in the village of Siverić near the city of Drniš. So far, eight inscriptions with the record of Roman auxiliary units were found in the area of Petrovo polje, thus the inscription from Cecela should not be considered as an isolated case, but rather as a part of a relatively larger group of epigraphic records of Roman auxiliary units. The inscriptions were found in several locations (Tepljuh, Otavice, Kadina Glavica, Umljanovići) and as such, they represent the foundation of a hypothesis for the existence of several Roman auxiliary forts in Petrovo polje. On the other hand, it has recently been suggested that only one fort should be located in Petrovo polje, i.e. in the wider area of Kadina Glavica. The proposed location for the auxiliary fort is found at the slope below the place name “Glavičina” in the area of the village of Parčić near Kadina Glavica. From that point, several scholars are often mentioning ‘the auxiliary fort in Kadina Glavica’, sometimes even as a proven and undoubted fact. The authors hereby disregard such interpretation and give a new perspective on the presence of Roman soldiers in the area of Petrovo Polje.

Keywords: *cohors III Alpinorum, Petrovo polje, Kosovo polje, Burnum, prata legionis.*

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DOI: 10.14795/j.v7i2.533

ISSN 2360 – 266X

ISSN–L 2360 – 266X

INTRODUCTION

The Archaeological Museum in Zadar, with its Collection of Roman epigraphic monuments, presents one of the most important sources for the study of Roman provincial history in what is today the region of northern Dalmatia. The collection consists of several hundreds of inscriptions, most of which originate from the territory of southern Liburnia. Although most of the inscriptions are registered with basic museological data, such as the circumstances and exact location of the finding, there is still a relatively small group of inscriptions with unclear origins. One of the main reasons for such a thing were the unfortunate events that struck the city of

Zadar during the World War II, when much of the museum's documentation was irretrievably lost.¹

However, due to the existence of certain older records, for some of the inscriptions of unknown origin, it is possible to determine a precise location where they were found. Thus, a Roman inscription documented in the Archaeological Museum in Zadar under the inventory number A7582, belonged to the group of inscriptions of unknown origin; but fortunately, information about the precise location, as well as the time when it was found, was recorded by Friar Lujo Marun, whose "Antiquarian Diaries" (in Croatian "Starinski dnevnici") have recently been published by the Museum of Croatian Archaeological Monuments.²

Marun, as was his usual practice,³ made a simple sketch of the inscription, which enabled its identification

with the monument from the Archaeological Museum in Zadar (Fig. 1), thus establishing that the inscription originates from the area of Petrovo polje;⁴ or, more precisely, from the Cecela hilltop in the village of Siverić near the city of Drniš (Fig. 2).

THE UNPUBLISHED INSCRIPTION FROM CECELA HILLTOP

Marun wrote in his diary:

On the day of July 5, 1911, with the company of co-councillor Vučenović, I have visited the ruins at the Cecela hilltop near Drniš. The owner of the latter, Bruglia, showed me the following fragment of a Roman inscription, which he found



Fig. 1. The inscription from Cecela (photo: O. Harl; sketch by MARUN 1998, 213)



Fig. 2. The Cecela hilltop near Drniš (photo: N. Cesarik)

¹ Cf. BATOVIĆ 1988, 53.

² MARUN 1998.

³ For similar case, where the precise find spot of a Roman inscription was determined by the diaries of Lujo Marun, see CESARIK/ŠTRMELJ 2017.

⁴ The Croatian word "polje" literally means "the field"; thus, "Petrovo polje" could literally be translated as "the field of Peter" or "Peter's field". The word "polje" is often used in this paper, and it refers to the official names of karst fields in the hinterland of Eastern Adriatic.

embedded in the wall of an old demolished building, which still stands on the west side of the old Croatian church our society had dug up before. The inscription is:

Height: 0.31, width: 0.24. Made of white granular limestone.

On April 1, 1912 transferred to the Museum.⁵

Although it is a fragment of an inscription of uncertain character, it seems very likely that it is a part of a funerary monument, presumably a funerary stele. This is emphasised not only by the thickness of the monument,⁶ but also by the proposed reading of the construction [*ex volunta*]te ipsius in the fifth preserved line, which is, in general, only found on funerary inscriptions.⁷

The deficiency of the fragment does not allow a complete reading; however, due to Marun's sketch, it is possible to read the name of the recorded military unit. It is undoubtedly *cohors III Alpinorum*, a unit already attested on the inscription from the nearby Kadina Glavica.⁸ In Marun's time, all of the three graphemes of the ordinal number (III) were visible, as well as the letter A (the initial letter of the unit's ethnic name). Today, only the first and the trace of a ductus of the second grapheme are visible. Given the fact that we cannot be entirely certain of the exact character of the inscription, it would seem uncertain whether the name of the cohort should be read in nominative, genitive, or in some other case. However, since inscriptions mostly refer to soldiers who were enlisted in a certain military unit, but also due to the fact that—as already mentioned—this is probably a fragment of funerary monument, we are proposing the reading in the genitive case.

The reading is as follows:

[---]N[---] / [---]enius [---] / [---] coh(ortis) III A[lp(inorum) ---] / [---]C(?)IRARI[---] / [--- ex volunta]te ipsius [---] / [---]VR[---].

Cohors III Alpinorum is one of the three auxiliary units which have left the majority of epigraphic traces in Dalmatia,⁹ and one inscription of its soldier has already been recorded in the area of Petrovo polje.¹⁰ During the 1st century, the unit was encamped in the area of Ljubuško polje in the hinterlands of Narona.¹¹ This is especially emphasized by several inscriptions with the record of soldiers of Alpine origins, who were probably the original recruits of the unit.¹² Given that these inscriptions cannot be dated more precisely, it is difficult to conclude when the cohort arrived

in Dalmatia; nonetheless, it is evident that this occurred during the Julio-Claudian dynasty, most probably at the end of Augustus' or at the beginning of Tiberius' reign.¹³

One inscription of a member of *cohors III Alpinorum* was found at the site of Kapitul near Knin,¹⁴ where—according to numerous inscriptions of soldiers of *legio XI Claudia Pia Fidelis*—a smaller outpost of the legionary garrison at Burnum was located.¹⁵ The inscription from Kapitul also mentions a member of Alpine tribes (*Bodiontius*), which may indicate an earlier date, but for now, it is not possible to determine whether the entire unit or only a smaller detachment was present in the area of the garrison of Burnum; however, the existence of four auxiliary forts on the right bank of the river Krka,¹⁶ certainly provides a basis for the possibility of an entire unit being located on the Liburnian frontier at some point.

Cohors III Alpinorum is also mentioned in a diploma issued in 94 AD,¹⁷ and on the basis of other epigraphic records, it appears that the unit was transferred to the garrison in the hinterland of Salona, probably at the end of the 1st, or at the beginning of the 2nd century AD.¹⁸ Given the currently available information about the presence of this cohort in Dalmatia, it seems that the inscription from Cecela could be roughly dated to the last third of the 1st, or at the beginning of the 2nd century, although we must be aware that this cannot be said with certainty.¹⁹

INSCRIPTIONS OF ROMAN SOLDIERS FROM PETROVO POLJE

Although the fragment of an inscription from Cecela does not provide much insight into the question of the Roman military presence from the micro-location point of view (Cecela), it certainly represents a significant addition to the corpus of inscriptions of Roman military units in the macro location frame (Petrovo polje). The fact that the inscription was found as a *spolium* makes it impossible to determine the original location where it was placed. However, from a broader perspective, it can be concluded that the inscription was originally placed within the area of Petrovo Polje, which represents a clearly defined and enclosed geographical entirety.

So far, including the inscription from Cecela, a total of nine inscriptions recording Roman auxiliary units have been found in the area of Petrovo Polje (Table 1). These are

⁵ MARUN 1998, 212–213. The “Museum” refers to the Museum of Croatian Archaeological Monuments in Knin, which was moved to Split after the World War II, where it is located today. Not all of the monuments were transferred to Split; some are still located in Knin (in today's Knin Museum), while part of them were moved to the Archaeological Museum in Zadar.

⁶ The dimensions are: h=32, w=25, th=9 cm.

⁷ Cf. CIL III 12798a, CIL VI 12832, 14908, 16594=29194a.

⁸ CIL III 2759.

⁹ Cf. ALFÖLDY 1987, 245–247, 280–282. The other two are *cohors VIII Voluntariorum* and *cohors I Belgarum*.

¹⁰ CIL III 2759 (Kadina Glavica).

¹¹ ALFÖLDY 1987, 245. The area of Ljubuško polje has yielded six inscriptions of active members of *cohors III Alpinorum* (CIL III 8491, 8495, 14632, ILJug 1922, AE 1950, 110, AE 1950, 109 = AE 2009, 1013), while in Narona a veteran of the same unit is attested (ILJug 653). For the auxiliary fort at Gračine in Humac near Ljubuški, cf. MILETIĆ 2017.

¹² CIL III 8491 (*Caturix*), CIL III 8495 (*Bodiontius*), CIL III 14632 (*Salinae*), AE 1950, 109 = AE 2009, 1013 (*Egius*), ILJug 1922 (*Velaunus*).

¹³ Alföldy assumes that the unit has been in Dalmatia since the beginning of the Principate, or at least from the time of the war in Illyricum of AD 6–9 (ALFÖLDY 1987, 245). However, there is no direct evidence that would prove such an assumption.

¹⁴ CIL III 9907 = 14321,5.

¹⁵ CIL III 9903, 9904, 9906, 9908, 9909; DEMICHELI 2018, 118.

¹⁶ Cf. CESARIK 2017; CESARIK 2018.

¹⁷ CIL XVI 38.

¹⁸ CIL III 2746, 14950 (*Andetrium*); CIL III 14935 (*Tilurium*). During the excavations of the legionary fortress of Tilurium, one roof tile with the stamp of *cohors III Alpinorum* was also found (TONČINIĆ 2003, 260, 266, no. 17).

¹⁹ One of the criteria for dating the inscription might be its lettering; however, since there is no palaeographic analysis of Roman inscriptions in the province of Dalmatia, such an attempt would be quite doubtful (cf. CESARIK 2019, 284–285). Even though, we might draw the analogy with the studies of lettering from other parts of the Empire (e.g. GORDON/GORDON, 1957; GORDON/GORDON 1958), but even that would not allow us to claim this statement with certainty. On the dating of inscriptions based on the lettering, cf. KEPPIE, 1991, 28–29.

Table 1. The inscriptions of Roman auxiliary soldiers from the area of Petrovo polje

No.	Inscription	Unit	Findspot	Reference
1.	Surus Sparuci f(i)lius / dom(o) Tribocus / eques alae Claud/iae Novae ann(or)um XXX / stip(end)iorum XIII h(ic) s(itus) e(st) t(estamento) f(ieri) i(ussit) / arbitratu Celati ses/quiplicari(i) heredis	<i>ala Claudia Nova</i>	Kadina Glavica	CIL III 3164 = 9816
2.	Vercaius Me/[n?]di f(i)lius eques / ala(e) Nova(e) Cla/udia(e) [t(ur)ma]? L? icini(?) / domo Varcia/nus anno[r(um) ---] / st<i=U>pendior(um) XX(?) / h(ic) s(itus) e(st) posuit Max/imus Regini f(i)lius	<i>ala Claudia Nova</i>	Otavice	CIL III 9796
3.	[---]Q[---] / [---] equ[es] alae / [Novae] Cla(ud)iae dupli/[car(ius)] annor(um) XL / [stip(end)iorum] XXII h(ic) s(itus) est / [Ti(berius) C]laud(ius) Sabi/[nin] us decurio / [he]res pos(ui)t t(estamento) f(ieri) i(ussit)	<i>ala Claudia Nova</i>	Between Balina and Kadina Glavica	ILJug 756
4.	[--- de]c(urio) ala(e) [Claud(iae)] / [No]v(ae?) [---]	<i>ala Claudia Nova</i>	Balina glavica (Umljanovići)	CIL III 9797
5.	I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) / M(arcus) Iunius / Fadenus / dec(urio) eq(uitum) / coh(ortis) III / Alpinor(um) / v(otum) s(olvit) l(ibens) m(erito)	<i>cohors III Alpinorum</i>	Kadina Glavica	CIL III 2759
6.	[---]N[---] / [---]enius [---] / [---] coh(ortis) III A[lp(in)orum] --- / [---]C(?)IRA-RI[---] / [---] ex volunta[te] ipsius [---] / [---]VR[---]	<i>cohors III Alpinorum</i>	Cecela (Siverić)	Unpublished
7.	I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) / C<l=>(audius) M<a=N>xi<m=A>us / 7(centurio) coh(ortis) <l=E> Be(l)<g=C>(arum) / v(otum) s(olvit)	<i>cohors I Belgarum</i>	Kadina Glavica	CIL III 13229
8.	[Pro sal(ute) d(omini)] n(ostri) Sep[t(imi) Severi] / [Aug(usti) et] Genio l(oci) / [---] Val(erius) Menophil[us] / [---] 7(centurio) coh(ortis) I mil(liariae) cum suis [---]	<i>cohors I milliaria Delmatarum</i>	Klanac (Tepljuh)	CIL III 9829
9.	Flavos Bo/uti f(i)lius mil(es) / coh(ortis) I Luce(nsi)um / ann(or)um XXXI / stip(end)iorum X dom(o) / Luco Aug(usti) h(eres) f(aciendum) c(uravit) / h(ic) s(itus) e(st)	<i>cohors I Lucensium</i>	Klanac (Tepljuh)	CIL III 9834

cohors I Lucensium, *ala Claudia Nova*, *cohors III Alpinorum*, *cohors I Belgarum*, and *cohors I milliaria Delmatarum*.²⁰ The inscriptions do not originate from one place, but from several locations within the present-day villages of Tepljuh, Kadina Glavica, Otavice, and Umljanovići, while one inscription originates between the area of Balina and Kadina Glavica, which would roughly correspond to the area of the villages of Ružić, Gradac, and Otavice (Fig. 3).

It is essential to note that only the inscriptions from Tepljuh have been found *in situ*,²¹ while all of the others were either found in secondary usage, or the exact location of their finding is not known. The aforementioned inscriptions from Tepljuh were found along the area of Klanac, which represents a natural connection between Petrovo and Kosovo polje. It is also important to note that in the area of Klanac, several inscriptions with the record of Roman legions stationed at Burnum were found, such as the funerary monument of M. Valius Maurinus, a soldier of *legio XI Claudia Pia Fidelis*,²² as well as the roof-tiles with the stamp of *legio IIII Flavia Felix*.²³

²⁰ For *cohors I milliaria Delmatarum*, see CESARIK/GLAVAŠ 2017 (the authors mistakenly cite Kadina Glavica as the place where the inscription was found, but it was actually found in the area of Klanac in Tepljuh).

²¹ The inscriptions from Tepljuh were all found at the place name “Klanac” (literally “the passage”), during the construction work on the railroad from Siverić to Knin at the end of the 19th century (cf. BULIĆ 1886, 15-18).

²² CIL III 6419 = 9897.

²³ CIL III 15110 d-e.

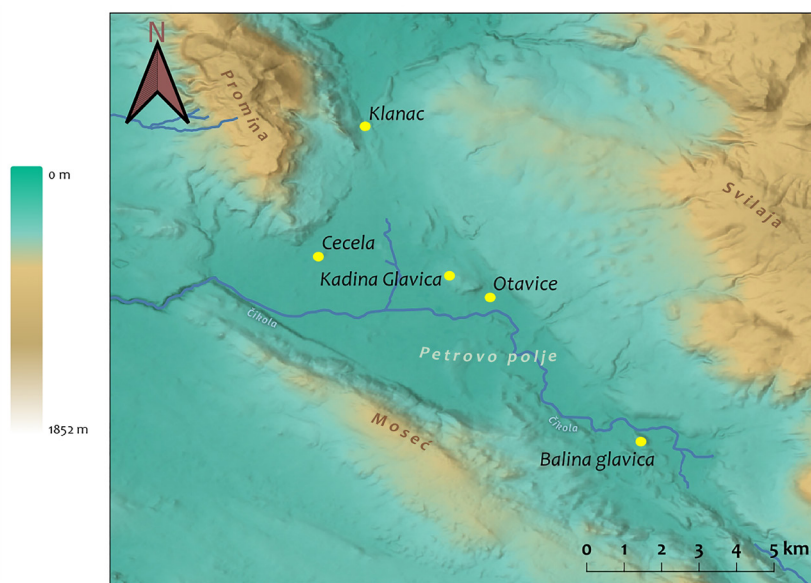


Fig. 3. The find spots of the inscriptions of Roman auxiliary soldiers from the area of Petrovo polje (made by L. Drahotusky-Bruketa)

These facts will be very important for the discussion that follows.

PREVIOUS ASSUMPTIONS

Before continuing, it is essential to return to thoughts on previous interpretations on how the group of inscriptions of Roman soldiers from Petrovo polje should be treated. First and foremost, they come down to the assumption that the Romans have built several auxiliary forts in that area. Consequently, statements about the forts in Promona

(Tepljuh), Kadina Glavica and Magnum (Balina Glavica in Umljanovići) can be found in some works.²⁴ All of them, of course, should be parts of the supposed chain-of-forts from Burnum to Gračine in Ljubuški, a line which was even begun to be called to as “Dalmatian”, or “Delmataan limes”.²⁵

Although there has never been any real and unquestionable evidence for the existence of such a line, as the remains of military architecture, this theory is still actual in archaeological discourse.²⁶ However, it is important to note that the complete theory is based on pure assumptions, or better to say on “wishful thinking”, which is solely based on the occurrence of the inscriptions of Roman auxiliaries from Petrovo polje. Considering that, it is only natural that such thinking has produced a certain wave of criticism.²⁷

However, a new hypothesis has arisen recently, stating that only one auxiliary fort should be located in the area of Petrovo polje. According to these conjectures, such a fort should be sought on the route of the road from Aquileia to Dyrrachium, as is indicated on Peutinger’s map, while all the places in Petrovo polje with the record of military inscriptions should essentially gravitate to that potential military centre. Thus, several years ago, it was suggested that this hypothetical fort should be located below the place name Glavičina, in the area of the village of Parčić near Kadina Glavica.²⁸ Although no archaeological excavations were conducted in the area, nor were there any surface finds that would suggest it was an archaeological site from the Roman era, it was still claimed that this is a certain location of a Roman auxiliary fort.²⁹

However, the facts suggest that such an interpretation is more than doubtful, therefore a new field survey has been made to check whether there are any certain indications for the existence of the auxiliary fort, or whether it is a premise that should simply be rejected.

REVIEW OF THE STATE OF RESEARCH

The first review process started with the consult of aerial photographs and satellite images derived from the existing public browsers (Geoportal DGU, Arkod, ISPU, Google Earth). Preliminary insight into the aforementioned images shows that the location beneath the place name Glavičina clearly differs not only in layout, but especially in the size with other Roman auxiliary forts in Dalmatia (Fig. 4). The hitherto known auxiliary forts in Dalmatia generally have the shape of an elongated rectangle (the so-called “playing-card layout”, fig. 5),³⁰ with clearly rounded corners,³¹

²⁴ See, for example, ŠAŠEL-KOS 2005, 469-470; SANADER/TONČINIĆ 2010, 41.

²⁵ For more detailed overview, see PERIŠA 2008.

²⁶ Existence of the Roman chain-of-forts (so-called “Delmataan limes”) is advocated by PATSCH 1914, 158; ŠAŠEL 1974; WILKES 1977; ZANINOVIĆ 1980, 178; ŠAŠEL-KOS 2004, 468-471, and many others.

²⁷ PERIŠA 2008; DODIG 2011, 331-332.

²⁸ GLAVAŠ/MILETIĆ/ZANINOVIĆ 2010.

²⁹ GLAVAŠ 2011, 63-64.

³⁰ From the reign of Claudius, the auxiliary forts generally begin to have a regular shape, mainly rectangular, but sometimes and square in plan (JOHNSON 1983, 234).

³¹ These are four auxiliary forts on the right bank of the river Krka (CESARIK 2017; CESARIK 2018), two on the river Cetina (CESARIK 2018a; CESARIK 2019a), one on the river Trebižat (Gračine in Humac near Ljubuški, cf. MILETIĆ 2017, 29-32) and one at the confluence of Usora and Bosna rivers (Makljenovac near Doboј), which was, however, built in the second half of the

while the proposed location below Glavičina hilltop has a square shape with northwest, northeast and southwest angles being almost perpendicular, unlike the southeast which is even too rounded.

Of course, the shape of the “enclosure” below Glavičina does not pose a particular problem; indeed, the square-shaped forts are encountered in other provinces, but certainly more doubtful is its size since it encloses the total area of as much as 4 hectares, and as such it completely deviates from the total size of other confirmed auxiliary forts in Dalmatia. The forts on the right bank of the river Krka ranges in size from 0.9 to 2.7 hectares (Fig. 5a-d);³² the ones in the area of the river Cetina occupy the area of 1.6 and 2.2 hectares (Fig. 5e-f);³³ the fort of Gračine in Humac near Ljubuški encloses 1.7 hectares (Fig. 5g); while the one in Makljenovac near Doboј (Fig. 5h) covers an area of about 2 hectares.³⁴

To conclude with, by observation of the aerial footage, on the basis of the layout, and especially the size of the “enclosed” area below the Glavičina, we can conclude that there are no clear indications of an existence of a Roman auxiliary fort.



Fig. 4. The rectangular shape of the slope below the Glavičina hilltop (source: Geoportal DGU)

THE FIELD SURVEY

Nonetheless, in order to confirm or dispute our doubts, we decided to do another procedure, which was a direct field survey. The very first thing that came to light confirmed the doubts of the conclusion drawn from the aerial survey: Namely, it can clearly be seen that the proposed site is completely located on a quite pronounced slope (Fig. 6), which is neither typical nor suitable for positioning a Roman military fort. All Roman auxiliary forts in the province of

2nd century (cf. ČREMOŠNIK 1984). There is also a potential auxiliary fort in Mučko polje, at the site of Ordžija (cf. BEKIĆ 2011, 317), which was never a subject of any kind of archaeological survey. If Ordžija is actually a Roman auxiliary fort, then it is the only known fort in Dalmatia which is built in the middle of a karst field, and the only one with square layout.

³² CESARIK 2017; CESARIK 2018.

³³ CESARIK 2018a, 57-60; CESARIK 2019a, 32-39.

³⁴ All measurements were made using the Geoportal DGU and Google Earth Pro. The assumed fort at Ordžija in Mučko polje (see above, n. 31) encloses the area of about 1.7 hectares.

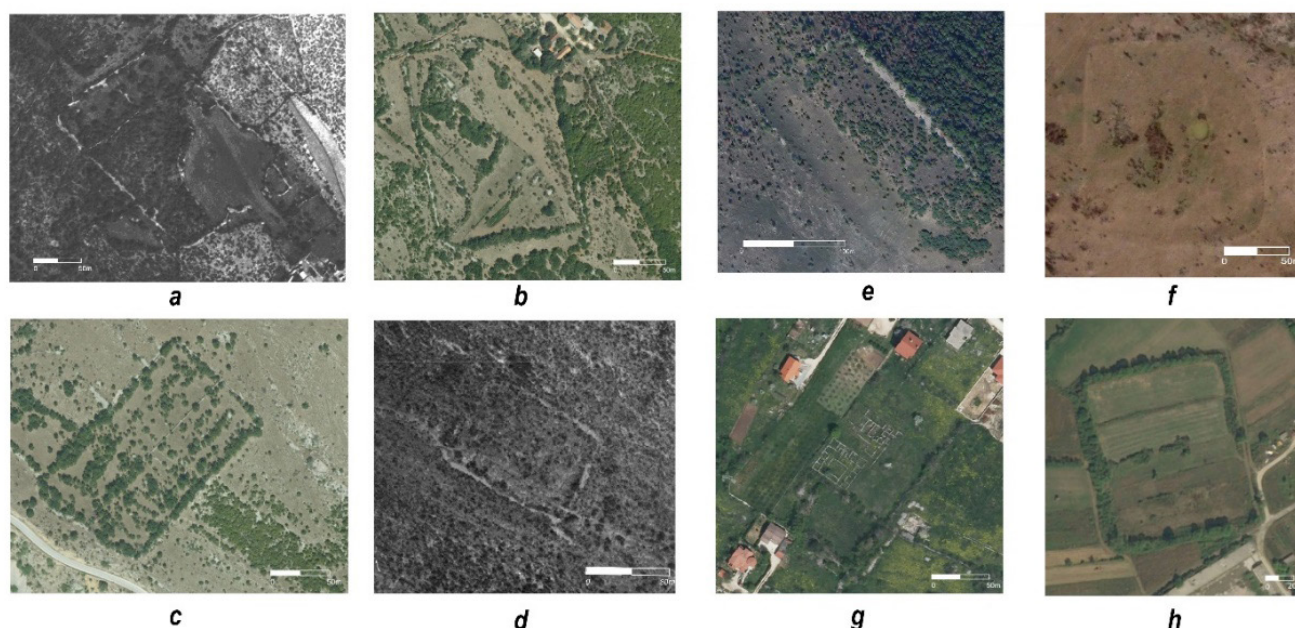


Fig. 5. Auxiliary forts in Dalmatia. a-d: forts on the river Krka; e-f: forts on the river Cetina; g: fort at Gračine in Humac near Ljubuški; h: fort at Makljenovac near Doboj (source: a-d—Geoportal DGU; e,f,h—Google Earth; g—Geoportal FGU)

Dalmatia, that are known to this day, have been built on a ground level,³⁵ so the slope on which the formation below Glavičina lies does not support the premise that this is the location of a Roman auxiliary fort.

What is more, the further survey firmly extended our suspicions, because the site does not represent a consistent enclosure which would be expected in a Roman auxiliary fort built in the karst area. The original premise was based on the fact that the hypothesized encampment consists of drywall structures that were built on the ruins of the original Roman wall, on which stones were subsequently piled to clean the interior surfaces.

In other words, the hypothesis suggested that there used to be solid walls on the site, which were formed with two lines (inner and outer face) of regular stones, filled

in between with smaller amorphous stones. After the abandonment of the fort, the walls became a source of “free stone material”, which was subsequently used by the local population for the construction of various structures, and over the time, a collapse of upper structure eventually covers the foundations, thus almost nothing remained of the original walls on the surface.

In this way, piles of stone are formed at the borders of the fort, upon which later drywall structures may eventually form. There are two main reasons for forming the drystone walls over the earlier constructions: the first is the case in which the later population easily marks the fences for livestock; while in the second, in order to gain agricultural potential of the land, it is necessary to dispose the stones from the interior, which are—in general—piled up on already formed stone constructions.

This is valid, at least in theory, but the situation on the field is far from true. The north side is actually an agricultural ditch which is directly followed by the trees surrounded by shrubs (Fig. 7a). The eastern and western sides are the edges of elevated earthen terraces, also overgrown with trees and shrubs (Fig. 7b-c). Only on the south side can a drystone wall be seen, along the edge of what are the remains of a smaller stone structure from more recent times. This dry stone wall largely follows the line of the proposed fort’s position, with a considerable decrease in height from the east to the west, while on the westward parts it completely vanishes, due to a formation of a plain agricultural ditch (Fig. 7d).

Therefore, it is not a drystone wall enclosure at all, but a combination of an agricultural ditch (north), the edges of earthen terraces (east and west), and a pile of stone (south), which lines are accompanied by the trees and shrubs, so that together they form an apparent square shape noticeable on aerial footage. But with all of the above, the fact that is most important in this case, is that upon a thorough inspection of all the terraces within the proposed site, no surface



Fig. 6. The slope below the Glavičina hilltop (photo: N. Cesarik)

³⁵ The only exception to this rule might be found in the potential fort on the Radašuša hilltop near Turjaci; but here we observe a fortification on two levels, the top one being laid out on a flat ground, allowing a great visual control of whole of the area of Sinjsko polje (CESARIK 2018a, 57-60).

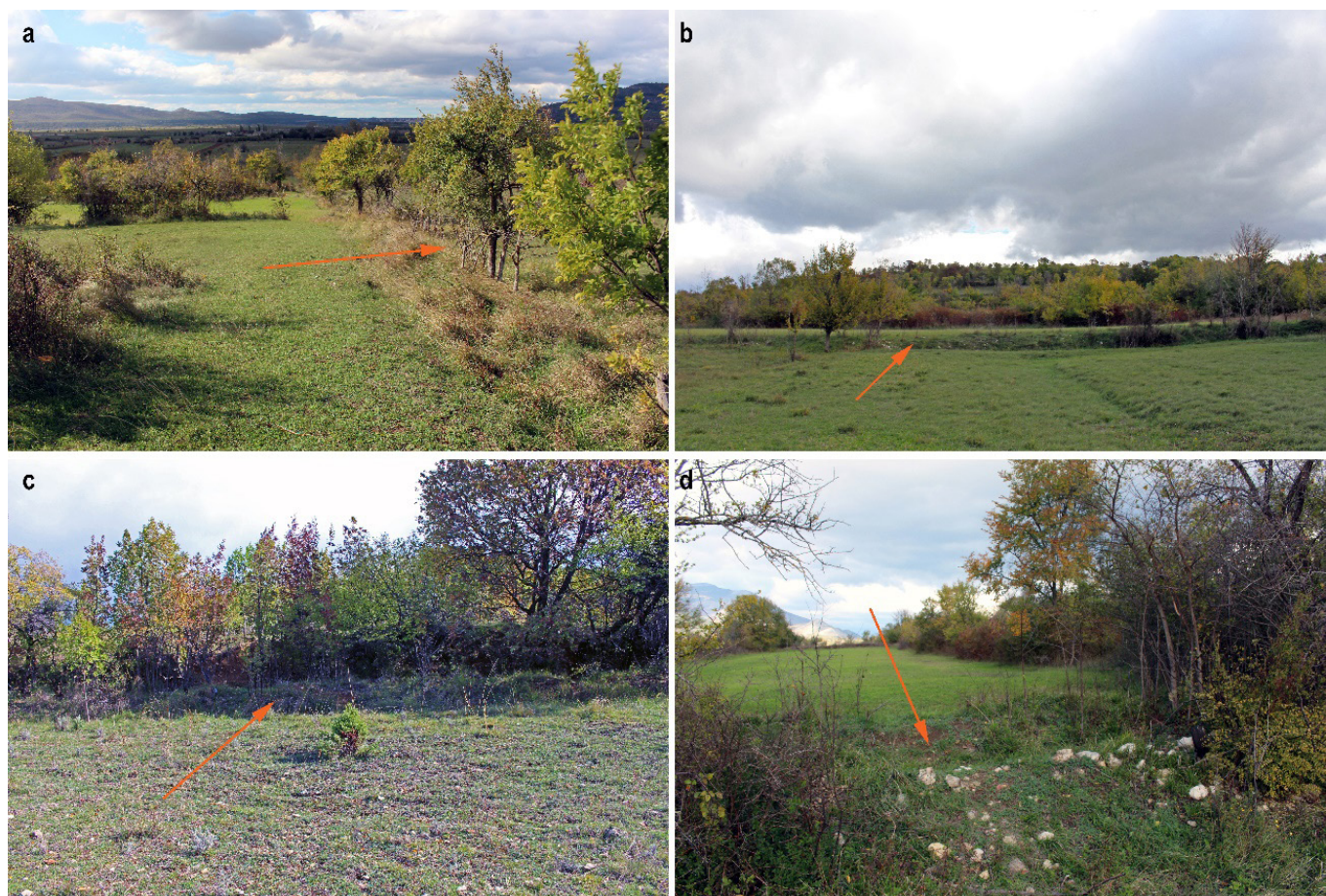


Fig. 7. The view at the edges of the slope below the Glavičine hilltop: agricultural ditches at northern (a) and southern (d) side; edges of the earthen terraces on eastern (b) and western (c) sides (photo: N. Cesarik)

finds were found which would indicate that the slope below Glavičina hilltop was an archaeological site from the Roman era, let alone ruins of Roman military fortification.

In that respect, it is perhaps best to compare the situation observed in Roman fortifications along the river Krka. Namely, in the area of the legionary fortress in Burnum, even in its surroundings, an extremely large and dense quantity of surface finds (pottery, roof tiles, nails, glass, etc.) is visible. In contrast, a lower concentration of surface finds is noticeable in the area of auxiliary forts, but they are nevertheless present within each fort. In addition, at all forts on the river Krka, exactly the same pattern is observed in terms of accommodation, layout, levelling of the terrain, conservation of walls, etc.

Concerning the field survey, the conclusion is that there is no evidence, nor even an indication, that the slope below the Glavičina hilltop presents the remains of the auxiliary fort from the Principate, as previously assumed. As was the case with the aerial survey, all the field facts indicate that the above-mentioned location has nothing to do with the Roman fort; so, in our view, the premise that there was a Roman auxiliary fort on that slope should be completely rejected.

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTION

In fact, we must note there is no need at all for the looking of the assumed Roman auxiliary fort in Petrovo polje, since, in our opinion, it was never located there. In addition,

it is necessary to understand that any attempt at justifying the hypothesis of the existence of the so-called “Delmataan limes” is, in its essence, methodologically incorrect. Namely, it is a process in which scholars are searching for the evidence based upon unproven assumptions, in contrast to the process in which the theory should be based on facts. In such cases, one must be extremely careful, since such “methodology” can easily lead to pointless argumentation.

However, as we already noted, it is our opinion that there is no need for the search of the Roman auxiliary fort(s) in Petrovo polje, since the presence of Roman soldiers in that area can be explained alternatively. In doing so, it is necessary to bear in mind several key facts.

IN SITU FINDS

Earlier it was mentioned that only the inscriptions from Tepljuh (at the place name “Klanac” which connects Petrovo and Kosovo polje) were found *in situ*, wherefore only the site of Klanac can be viewed as the original place where the funerary monuments of Roman soldiers were located. The rest of the inscriptions, just like the one from Cecela hilltop, were either found in secondary usage, or the exact place of their finding is unknown.

For example, the funerary stele of a soldier of *ala Claudia Nova* is embedded in the public well in the village of Kadina Glavica (Fig. 8a), while the other one is immured in the well in the nearby village of Otavice (Fig. 8b). Furthermore, an altar dedicated to Jupiter Optimus



Fig. 8. Inscriptions from Petrovo polje (after GLAVAŠ 2011, 66-67); a— stele of Surus (Table 1, no.1) embedded in the public well in Kadina Glavica; b— stele of Vercaius (Table 1, no. 2), immured in the public well in Otavice; c— altar from Kadina Glavica (Table 1, no. 5).

Maximus, set up by a decurion of *cohors III Alpinorum*, is located in the backyard of a private household in Kadina Glavica (Fig. 8c), while for one inscription we only know that it was found somewhere between Balina and Kadina Glavica, without any information whether it was found *in situ* or immured in a more recent building, as is very often the case with the Roman monuments in Dalmatia. Furthermore, the inscription from Balina glavica, which is usually mentioned as another record of *ala Claudia Nova* from Petrovo polje, represents a fragment with questionable reading, known only through transcript.

All in all, it is highly possible that all of the mentioned inscriptions were originally placed at some other place, from where they were brought to various villages and used in as secondary building material. For instance, if the funerary stele is embedded into the public well in the village of Kadina Glavica, with what certainty can we claim that it was originally placed in the vicinity of that place? Theoretically, it could be found anywhere in Petrovo polje (even wider) and subsequently immured in the local well. Therefore, all of the inscriptions for which we do not know where they were originally placed, cannot be used as a foundation for the premise of the existence of military fortifications. The only thing that could be concluded is that all of them were obviously erected somewhere in the wider territory of Petrovo polje, which by itself represents a clearly defined and closed geographical entirety.

PRATA LEGIONIS

However, the location of Klanac in Tepljuh yielded not only the inscriptions of auxiliary soldiers but also the inscription of a soldier of *legio XI Claudia Pia Fidelis*.³⁶ At the same place, several roof tiles with the stamp of *legio IIII Flavia Felix* were recorded,³⁷ which clearly suggests that a

certain military object (probably an outpost of the legionary garrison at Burnum) was located there.

Another fact worth noting is that at the exit from Klanac, or at the very entrance to the Kosovo polje, one encounters a place name “Lužine”, where *terminus pratorum legionis XI Claudiae piae fidelis* has been found.³⁸ A couple of kilometres to the north, again on the very edge of Kosovo Polje, there is a place name “Brijeg” (literally meaning “the hill”), located above the ploughland named “Vedro polje”, at which bottom an inscription has been found, testifying the boundary *inter prata legionis et fines roboreti Flavi Marciani*.³⁹ Furthermore, at the northern entrance to the Kosovo polje, on the position of Kapitul near Knin (situated on the confluence of Kosovčica and Krka rivers), a significant presence of legionary inscriptions has been documented.⁴⁰

Thus, the very fact that the boundary inscriptions of legionary meadowlands (*prata legionis*) are found at the very edges of a clearly defined and closed geographical entirety such as the Kosovo polje, clearly indicates that Kosovo polje itself was the enclave separated as the *prata legionis*. The presence of inscriptions of Roman legionaries and roof tiles with legionary stamps, on its southern (Klanac near Tepljuh) and northern entrance (Kapitul near Knin), clearly indicates that the soldiers at these positions controlled the entry to the legionary meadowlands (Fig. 9).

Aside from Kapitul and Klanac, there is a possibility for the existence of other military outposts, which potentially controlled the eastern entrance to the Kosovo polje. In that case, we should note that during the excavations of a Roman site near the hamlets of Kekići and Gopci in the village of Orlić a roof tile with the stamp of *cohors VIII Voluntariorum* was found (Fig. 10).⁴¹ Of course, the find of a sole roof

form the beginning of Vespasian's reign until the first years of the rule of Domitian (cf. BETZ 1939, 46-48).

³⁶ AE 1988, 923.

³⁷ CIL III 13250.

⁴⁰ Soldiers of *legio XI (Claudia Pia Fidelis)*: CIL III 9903, 9904, 9906, 9908, 9909; soldier of *cohors III Alpinorum*: CIL III 9907 = 14321,5.

⁴¹ RADIĆ/BUDIMIR 1990, 45, 47, sl. 17/2.

³⁶ CIL III 6419 = 9897. *Legio XI Claudia Pia Fidelis* garrisoned the fortress of Burnum from the end of Augustus' until the end of Nero's reign (cf. BETZ 1939, 17-39).

³⁷ CIL III 15110d-e. *Legio IIII Flavia Felix* garrisoned the fortress of Burnum

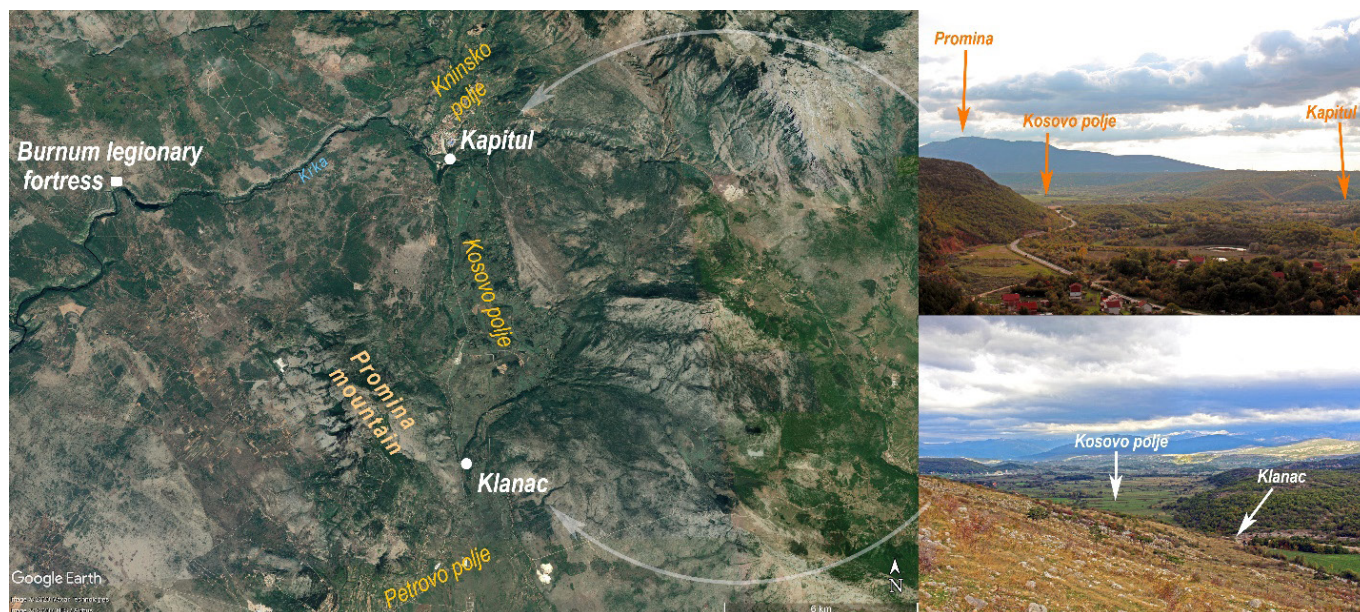


Fig. 9. The positions of the outposts at Kapitul and Klanac (photo: N. Cesarik)

tile cannot be the evidence for the existence of military fortification, but it should be noted that the tile was found on the very eastern edge of Kosovo polje, on a place which represents a natural connection between Kosovo polje and the valley of the river Cetina.⁴² Furthermore, a considerable amount of fragmentary Roman inscriptions have been



Fig. 10. Roof tile with the stamp [C]oh(ortis) VIII [Vol(untariorum)] (Knin Museum; photo: N. Cesarik)

recorded in the nearby village of Biskupija,⁴³ some of which may belong to the Roman legionaries.⁴⁴ Since both Orlić and Biskupija are located on the eastern edge of Kosovo polje, on a natural connection between the Kosovo polje and the valley of the river Cetina (via Kijevo and Polača), it would not come as a surprise if these sites were under the watch of Roman soldiers at some point.

However, regardless of these notes, it is our opinion

⁴² The hamlets of Kekići and Gopci in the village of Orlić are naturally connected with the valley of Cetina via Kijevo and Polača (following the route: Pržine – Klanac between Kozjak and Tutnjevina – Turići – Malići – Kekića draga).

⁴³ PATSCH 1897, 204–207.

⁴⁴ PATSCH 1897, 205, Nr. 59–60.

that the earlier hypothesis, by which the term *prata legionis* should be equalized with the term *territorium legionis*,⁴⁵ cannot be accepted. The term *territorium legionis* is found only on one inscription from the entire Roman world, and is not mentioned in the legal but rather in the descriptive context.⁴⁶ The term *prata legionis*, in our opinion, should clearly be identified with the meaning what *prata legionis* literally represents, and these are the meadowlands set aside and for the purposes and use of legionary livestock.⁴⁷ Since the first inscription mentioning the legionary meadowlands is found on the southern entrance to the Kosovo polje, while the second is found at its south-eastern edge, it should be clear that the whole area of Kosovo polje (as clearly defined and closed geographical entirety) was set aside as meadowlands for the purpose of the legion garrisoned in Burnum.

The assumption that Zaninović proposed about the size of the territory of the legionary fortress at Burnum, from this point of view, is difficult to accept. Specifically, Zaninović took into account all of the places where the presence of soldiers of *legio XI* was attested, on a relatively large and broad area around the legionary fortress (Mokro Polje, Pađene, Kapitul kod Knin, Tepljuh, Strmica, Roški slap), adjoined by the area of Plavno (from where the aqueduct towards the fortress had started), Kosovo polje (*prata legionis*) and Smrdelje (where a brick workshop was confirmed). Taking the legionary fortress as a starting point and calculating the extreme horizontal and vertical distances of the inscription's findings, Zaninović made one large area (21 x 26 km) and determined the potential area of legionary territory, which according to him covered the hypothetical area of 446 square kilometres;⁴⁸ which of course, should be corrected to the number of 546 square kilometres.

However, the presence of legionary inscriptions

⁴⁵ M. ZANINOVIĆ, 1985, 65–66.

⁴⁶ CIL III 10489. A detailed overview on the subjects of legionary territory (*territorium legionis*) and legionary meadowlands (*prata legionis*) is recently presented by ČAČE 2013, 29–33.

⁴⁷ For the meaning of the noun *partum*, see GLARE 1968, 1450.

⁴⁸ ZANINOVIĆ 1985, 68–73.

at these locations cannot be the direct evidence that the soldiers covered the entire area between these points. On the contrary, it seems quite clear that soldiers only controlled the aforementioned positions because all the areas, in which their inscriptions have been found, have the utmost importance of controlling the natural communications, especially the river crossings.

Thus, in the area of Mokro Polje, one of the major crossings over the river Zrmanja can be found, which opens a natural pathway to the valley of upper Zrmanja and further to Gračac in southern Lika.⁴⁹ The area of Strmica, that is, the Butižnica valley, is of twofold importance: Situated at the foothills of mountains Orlovica and Derala, as well as the confluence of Mračaj stream and Butižnica river, Strmica is located on a natural path leading through the valley of Mračaj towards the Grahovsko polje in Bosnia.⁵⁰ Somewhat further south, in the area of Golubić, is the entrance to the canyon of Radljevac stream,⁵¹ which connects the valley of Butižnica and the extremely important area of Plavno, which was—essentially—also followed by the aqueduct leading towards the legionary fortress.⁵² Thus, the military presence in Strmica clearly had the role of controlling the entrance into the lower valley of the Butižnica river, which paved the way towards Kapitul and especially to the Radljevac valley.

The second natural pathway to Plavno is the one via Pađene and Oton, which leads through the hamlet of Čupkovići in Oton Bender, between the Čupkovića kita and Žabinac hills; and right at the starting point of this path, there is a church of Saint George in Pađene, where an inscription of a legionary soldier has been found.⁵³ Thus, the position of Pađene—besides being on the road to Prevljes and the crossing over the Zrmanja at Kravja draga—also

controlled the alternative passage to the very important area of Plavno.

In addition to being located at the crossing over the river Krka, the location of Kapitul near Knin is also placed on the confluence of Kosovčica and Krka rivers, by which it controlled the natural entrance to Kninsko from Kosovo polje. Furthermore, it also watched over the communication that—via Kijevo and the valley of the Krčić stream—connects Kninsko polje with the valley of the river Cetina. The importance of the Roški slap should not be particularly emphasized since it is an important travertine barrier, which today makes the only crossing over the middle course of the river Krka.⁵⁴

Therefore, all of the above-mentioned areas—where inscriptions of soldiers of legio XI have been found—had significant roles in controlling the entrances into the south Liburnia; or into the legionary meadowlands in Kosovo polje. There is no foundation, whatsoever, for the thesis that the entire area around the legionary fortress—which endpoints would be the above-mentioned locations—represents the legionary territory. The aforementioned soldiers in these areas were most likely deployed to control the movement of people and goods from the interior towards the area of Liburnia; or to counter natural pathways towards strategically important areas such as the area of Plavno. In summary, all these positions appear to represent certain kinds of enclaves separated from the legionary fortress (Fig. 11).

The hypothesis of Zaninović actually stands on a single argument, based solely on the analogy with the potential territory of *legio IIII Macedonica* in Hispania Tarraconensis, where the *terminus* from the time of Augustus—between the colony of Juliobriga and the *pratorum legionis IIII Macedonicae*—has been confirmed in as many as nineteen identical inscriptions;⁵⁵ while in another case, there is also a boundary between the legionary meadowlands and the town of *Segisamo*.⁵⁶ All these inscriptions led to the conclusion that the land allocated to *legio IIII Macedonica*, spread over an impressive 600 square kilometres. This, in fact, is the main strong point for the hypothesis that the territory of *legio XI Claudia Pia Fidelis* in Dalmatia spread around the area of a potential 546 square kilometres.

However, what was the methodology for calculating the area of the territory of *legio IIII Macedonica* in Hispania Tarraconensis? Practically the same as the one which has been used in Dalmatia. The fortress of the Fourth legion—*Pisoraca* (present-day Herrera de Pisuerga)⁵⁷—has been determined as a starting point, from which the total distance to the find spots of the inscriptions was measured latitudinally and longitudinally (60x10 km), thus obtaining the total measure of approx. 600 square kilometres.⁵⁸ However, the geographical determinants and variables of the terrain were not taken into account.

Nevertheless, more recent surveys, including GIS

⁴⁹ It should be noted that this is the most natural connection between the regions of Dalmatia and Lika (including the whole inland of modern-day Croatia). The importance of that route is especially perceived through the disposition of medieval fortifications, such as the fortresses of Keglevića gradina in Mokro polje, Zvonigrad in Palanka, and Rakovnik in the village of Zrmanja, which were all built along that communication. The inscriptions of soldiers of *legio XI* from Mokro Polje: CIL III 6416, 9905; ILJug 2811. Another important crossing over the river Zrmanja is found at Kravja draga between Pađene and Prevljes, which was—as indicated by the inscription of a soldier of *legio XI Claudia Pia Fidelis*, found at the church of Saint George (Sv. Đorđe) in Pađene—apparently also under the control of the legionaries from Burnum.

⁵⁰ In the hamlet of Matos (or Matas) in the village of Strmica, a pre-Roman hillfort of Stražbinica is situated, which controlled the lower valley of Mračaj stream, i.e. the confluence of Mračaj stream and river Butižnica. Next to the pre-Roman hillfort, there is also a medieval fort, known as “Matas gradina”. The importance of that area is also highlighted by the fact that in the hamlet of Grab in Strmica there was a Venetian and later Austrian *rastellum* (in Croatian: “raštel”; in earlier works known as *Rastello di Grab*), which was an integral part of a former sanitary cordon between Dalmatia and Bosnia (cf. JELIĆ/ZORIĆ 1978). Today, a modern border crossing between Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina is located on the same place. The only inscription of a soldier of *legio XI Claudia Pia Fidelis* from the territory of Strmica, was found in the hamlet of Dragaši, at the foothill of Orlovica mountain (CIL III 6417). Next to the hamlet of Dragaši, there is a hamlet of Vidovići where W. Buttler has identified a fortification with the finds of Roman roof tiles (BUTTLER 1931, 190). Both Dragaši and Vidovići are hamlets located at the confluence of Mračaj stream and Butižnica river, so it is highly probable that some minor Roman fortification was built there, in order to control the entrance to the lower valley of Butižnica river.

⁵¹ Previously, the entrance to the Radljevac canyon was controlled by the pre-Roman hillfort of Velika Gradina between the hamlets of Kablari and Torlaci in Golubić.

⁵² Cf. ILAKOVAC 1980; ILAKOVAC 1984, 25.

⁵³ CIL III 13251.

⁵⁴ Legionary veterans in the area of Roški slap (i.e. Roški waterfall): CIL III 2817, 2818, 9885.

⁵⁵ CEPEDA OCAMPO/IGLESIAS GIL/RUIZ GUTIÉRREZ 2008, 313; FERNÁNDEZ VEGA *et alii* 2012.

⁵⁶ CIL II 5807.

⁵⁷ About the legionary fortress at Herrera de Pisuerga, see PÉREZ-GONZÁLEZ/ILLARREGUI 2006.

⁵⁸ GARCÍA Y BELLIDO 1960, 380, fig. 4.

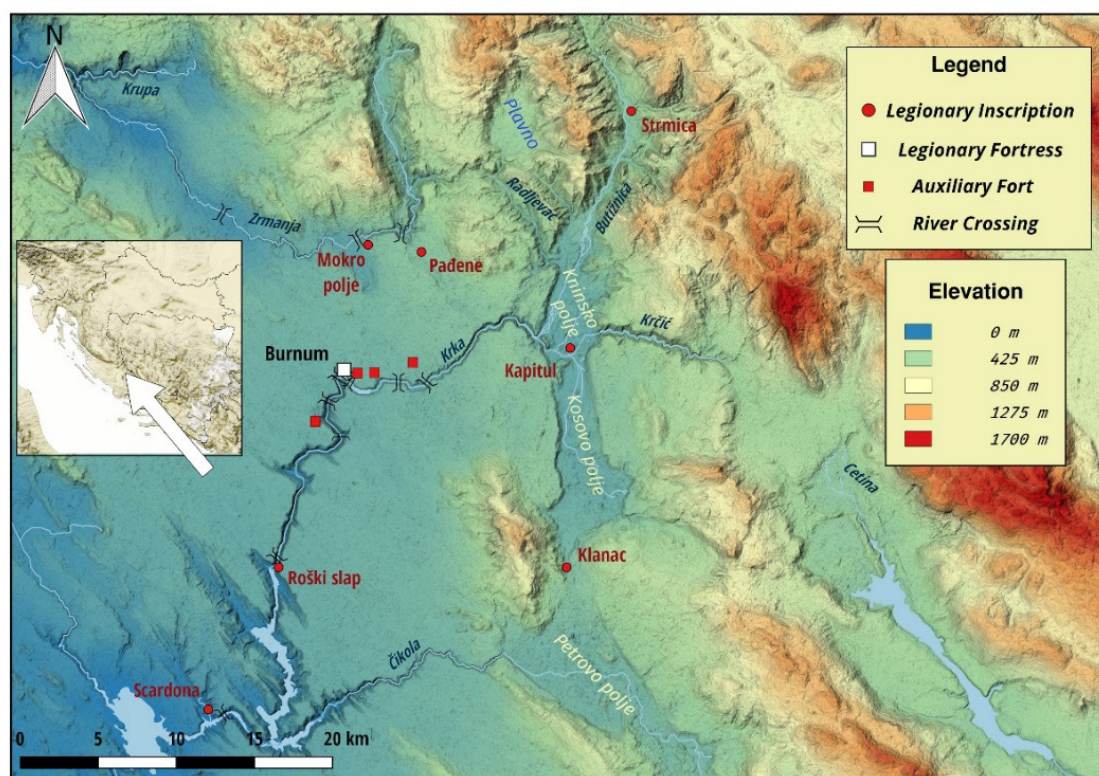


Fig. 11. The system of the Roman military garrison at the edge of Liburnia (made by L. Drahotusky-Bruketa)

analysis, completely refuted the earlier hypothesis, since all of the inscriptions there—just like those from Kosovo polje in Dalmatia—were placed on the edges of clearly defined geographical entireties. The further analysis showed that the boundary inscriptions, recording the *terminus pratorum legionis IIII Macedonicae*, did not mark a large legionary territory with the fortress at Pisoraca as its nucleus, but instead they marked two relatively smaller enclaves, which formed enough land for the usage of the legionary livestock.⁵⁹ The northern enclave, which bordered the colony of Juliobriga and was marked by as many as nineteen *termini*, made up a total area of about 30 square kilometres.⁶⁰

To conclude with, the hypothesis about the territory assigned to the legion stationed at Burnum, as suggested by Zaninović, no longer stands on firm arguments. Therefore, it should be clear that legionary detachments were deployed on key strategic points, in order to control the entrances into south Liburnia and other important enclaves, such as the area of Plavno, as well as the legionary meadowlands located in Kosovo polje. For the needs of the army, a large karst field—situated about 15 kilometres east of the fortress⁶¹—was allocated to the legionary garrison as *prata legionis*.⁶² At its southern (Klanac in Tepljuh) and northern

entrances (Kapitul near Knin) a considerable amount of soldiers' inscriptions was found, which clearly suggests that these soldiers were dispatched there in order of guarding the entrance to the aforementioned karst field (Fig. 12).

THE AUXILIARY FORTS ON THE RIVER KRKA

The third and key fact on the question of the hypothetical Roman auxiliary fort in Petrovo polje is to be found in the evidence that the Roman garrison of Burnum, situated on the right bank of the river Krka, was organized in quite a different manner than previously thought. Namely, in earlier works it was stated that the garrison of Burnum consisted of legionary fortress and one auxiliary fort; however, a more recent analysis showed that the legionary fortress was—at some point—accompanied with four auxiliary forts, located above the key crossings over the travertine barriers on the upper flow of the river Krka.

If we look downstream, the first fort is located on the location Dračevica in the hamlet of Ljevaje in Radučić,⁶³ enclosing the total area of approx. 2.7 hectares (Fig. 5a), and controlling the most important river crossing on the upper Krka, the one over the travertine barrier of Čavlinov buk. The second fort is also to be found in the village of Radučić, situated in the hamlet of Bjelobrci in Donji Radići (Fig. 5b).⁶⁴ It encloses a similar surface area (2.6 hectares) as the first fort, and it watched over the crossing over the travertine barrier of Bilušića buk. The third auxiliary fort, covering

on seaports that could accommodate a large number of ships which could supply such a complex demand. The Liburnian port at Scardona, situated at the Krka estuary, is often mentioned as the main port of the garrison of Burnum (cf. GLAVIČIĆ/MILETIĆ 2011, 144-148). Maybe the inscription of a soldier of *legio XI* (CIL III 6413) proves such a statement.

⁶³ CESARIK 2017, 366-368; VITALE 2017, 874-875.

⁶⁴ VRKIĆ 2017, 206-211; VITALE 2017, 871-873; CESARIK 2017, 366.

⁵⁹ CORTÉS BÁRCENA/IGLESIAS GIL/JIMÉNEZ CHAPARRO 2014.

⁶⁰ CEPEDA OCAMPO/IGLESIAS GIL/RUIZ GUTIÉRREZ 2008.

⁶¹ The total surface area of Kosovo polje (approx. 32 square kilometres) is almost identical to that of the northern enclave of *legio IIII Macedonica* (cf. CEPEDA OCAMPO/IGLESIAS GIL/RUIZ GUTIÉRREZ 2008).

⁶² It should be noted that, almost thirty years ago, Professor Slobodan Čače came to a similar conclusion (ČAČE 1989, 89). In our opinion, it should be clear that the area around the legionary fortress could not technically be the main source of supply for the soldiers stationed in Burnum. The legionary garrison was obviously dependent on the all sort of supplies that were brought from various places in the Empire, especially from Italy, Hispania and Gallia Lugdunensis (cf. BORZIĆ 2018). Therefore, the garrison evidently depended

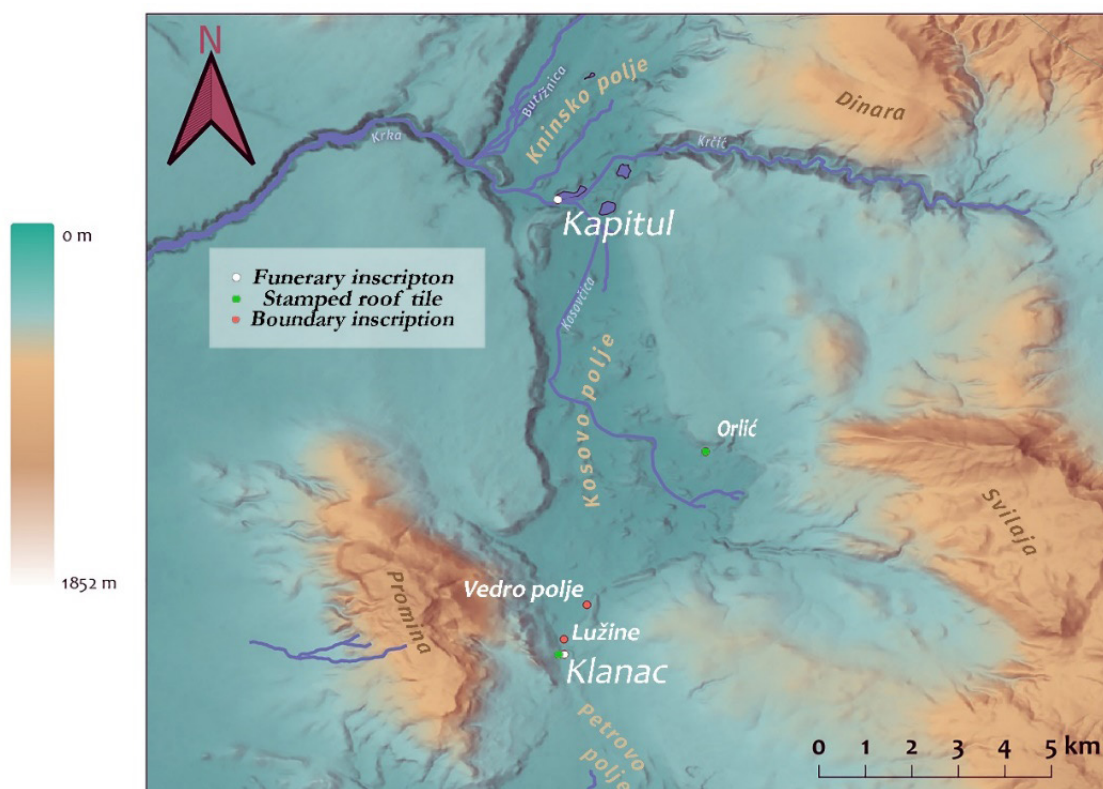


Fig. 12. Military presence at the entrances to the *prata legionis* at Kosovo polje (made by L. Drahotusky-Bruketa)

an area of about 2 hectares, is located over the travertine barrier of Brljanski slap (i.e. “Brljan waterfall”), on the place called Jurine ograde in the village of Ivoševci (Fig. 5c).⁶⁵ The fourth auxiliary fort is to be found on the area of Čučevo, next to the place name Čičinovac (Fig. 5d).⁶⁶ It encloses an area of approx. 0.9 hectares, and was built for the control over the crossings over the Miljacka slap, Daljenski buk, and Mostine between medieval fortresses of Trošenj and Nečven.

CONCLUSION

If we take into consideration the concentration of auxiliary forts on the river Krka, it should be clear that the previous propositions for the chronology of the presence and shifting of auxiliary units in Burnum can no longer stand. Particularly, it is evident that several auxiliary units formed the garrison of Burnum during the same time, and that they were most likely shifted in larger contingents to (or from) other provinces of the Empire. It is also likely that the auxiliary forts on the river Krka were garrisoned by a different variety of auxiliary units, which is also showed by the inscriptions recording not only the cavalry and infantry units,⁶⁷ but also a specialized unit composed of Syrian archers.⁶⁸

Since there is no clear evidence which would support the idea that the slope beneath the Glavičine hilltop represents the remains of a Roman fort, it is our opinion

that the hypothesis for the existence of a Roman auxiliary fort in the area of Petrovo polje—built during the time of the Principate—should be rejected. Such an assumption is not only disproved by the field survey; it is also refuted by the simple comparison with other auxiliary forts in Dalmatia, which showed that there is no connection whatsoever between the known forts and the slope beneath the Glavičine hilltop. It is our opinion that all of the presented facts (*in situ* finds in the area of Klanac in Tepljuh; Kosovo polje = *prata legionis*; the existence of four auxiliary forts on the river Krka) indicates that the Roman auxiliary units, recorded on the inscriptions from Petrovo polje, were originally stationed at the auxiliary forts on the river Krka. The members of the auxiliary units from these forts were—together with legionary soldiers—evidently dispatched to the outpost at Klanac in Tepljuh, located on the very entrance to the legionary meadowlands (*prata legionis*) in Kosovo polje. That the location of Klanac in Tepljuh served as an outpost of the legionary garrison in Burnum is primarily shown by the presence of inscriptions with the records of Roman legions that garrisoned Burnum during the Julio-Claudian (*legio XI Claudia Pia Fidelis*) and Flavian dynasties (*legio IIII Flavia Felix*). This outpost evidently served as an equivalent of a sort to the northern outpost—Kapitul near Knin—which controlled the other important entrance to the *prata legionis*.

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⁶⁵ MILETIĆ 2010, 130; MILETIĆ 2011, 267-268; CESARIK 2017, 365.

⁶⁶ CESARIK 2018, 13-20.

⁶⁷ Cavalry unit: *Ala Hispanorum* (AE 1971, 299; CESARIK/ŠTRMELJ 2016); infantry unit: *cohors Montanorum* (CIL III 15003; ILJug 841). Cf. also the fragments recording the unknown auxiliary cohorts: CIL III 14321,20; CIL III 14321,21 = 15007,2.

⁶⁸ *Cohors II Cyrrhestarum* (AE 1925, 132 = ILJug 2820; AE 2009, 1034; ILJug 842).

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ABBREVIATIONS OF EPIGRAPHIC CORPORA

AE

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CIL

Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (Berlin, 1863-).

ILJUG

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