

Roman Finds from the Slopes of Trnovski gozd East of Ajdovščina

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Abstract

The article presents the results of a preliminary analysis of the Roman artefacts found on the slopes of the Trnovski gozd plateau, above the village of Budanje near Ajdovščina. It was a local from Ajdovščina who unearthed them between 2016 and 2020 with the help of a metal detector, and brought them to the Regional Museum Goriški muzej. The oldest are hobnails of military footwear, which indicate the presence of Roman soldiers during the second third of the 1st century BC. The bulk of the finds, however, points to lively activities in the Late Roman period. This is not surprising given the location along the strategically important road connecting *Aquileia* and *Emona* in the immediate hinterland of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* barrier system, just under four kilometres from the *Castra* fortress (present-day Ajdovščina). The habitation remains located in the vicinity of the present-day regional road date to the 4th, possibly already the late 3rd century, and may have been connected to the Roman army. Evidence further suggests that a battle was fought in this area in the 380s, perhaps as part of the civil war between Theodosius and Magnus Maximus in 388.

Keywords: Vipava Valley; Budanje; *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum*; Late Roman period; Late Roman weapons and military equipment; military conflict

Izvleček

Rimske najdbe s pobočja Trnovskega gozda vzhodno od Ajdovščine

V prispevku so preliminarно predstavljeni rimski predmeti iz zbirke Goriškega muzeja, ki jih je domačin iz Ajdovščine s pomočjo detektorja kovin našel in izkopal na pobočju Trnovskega gozda nad vasjo Budanje pri Ajdovščini med letoma 2016 in 2020. Najstarejši predmeti so okovni žebeljčki z obuval, ki kažejo na navzočnost rimskih vojakov na tem območju v drugi tretjini 1. stoletja pr. n. št. Najdbe pričajo o burnem dogajanju v poznorimskem obdobju, kar povezujemo z dejstvom, da je šlo za lokacijo ob strateško izjemno pomembni prometnici (cesti *Aquileia–Emona*) v neposrednem zaledju zapornega sistema *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum*, oddaljeno le slabe štiri kilometre od trdnjave *Castra* (današnja Ajdovščina). Na območju ob današnji regionalni cesti so bile ugotovljene sledi poselitve iz 4. in morda že poznega 3. stoletja, ki bi lahko predstavljale ostaline vojaške postojanke. V 80. letih 4. stoletja je bilo to območje prizorišče spopada. Hipotetično bi lahko šlo za dogodek v času državljanske vojne med Teodozijem in Magmom Maksimom leta 388.

Ključne besede: Vipavska dolina; Budanje; *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum*; poznorimsko obdobje; poznorimsko orožje in vojaška oprema; vojaški spopad



Fig. 1: Northward view of the slopes above the village of Budanje, with the clearing at Laz in the foreground.

The Regional Museum Goriški muzej Kromberk - Nova Gorica keeps a large assemblage of archaeological finds that Primož Fučka from Ajdovščina unearthed on the slopes of the Trnovski gozd plateau between 2016 and 2020. Using a metal detector, he explored different areas above Ajdovščina and between the villages of Dolga Poljana and Budanje. Since 2022, the National Museum of Slovenia has been carrying out archaeological investigations here.¹ This article brings the results of a preliminary analysis of the artefacts recovered near the village of Budanje, which indicate an important archaeological site.

Description of the area

The artefacts came to light north of the Brith hamlet in Budanje, between the foot of a rocky slope (Reber) and the regional road Ajdovščina–Col, partly also south of the road (*Figs. 1, 2*). This is a landslide area mostly overgrown with mixed forest. Just above the regional road is a clearing or meadow with the microtoponym Laz. The scarp of a large landslide is visible to the north.

¹ Cf. Tratnik, Istenič 2025 (in this volume).

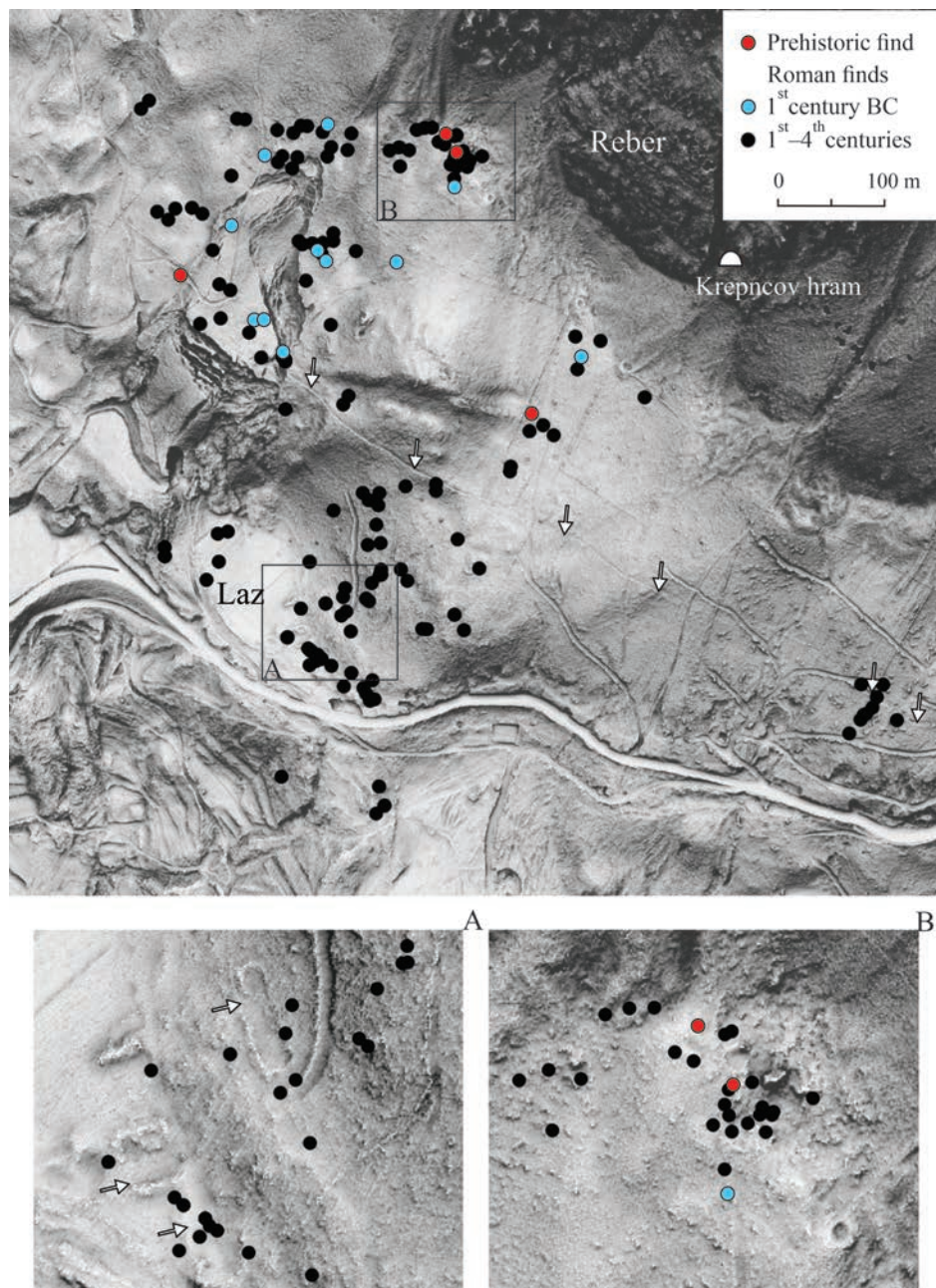


Fig. 2: Distribution of archaeological finds north of the Budanje village. White arrows mark the remains of buildings (A) and a path. Basemap: Lidar ©ARSO.

The analysis of the LiDAR data has shown possible traces of buildings at the eastern edge of the Laz meadow and on the slope further east (*Fig. 2: A*). Trial trenching has revealed the remains of a Late Roman or Late Antique masonry building (roughly dated between the 4th and the 6th centuries).² Higher up the slope, the LiDAR data show a linear feature indicating a path (*Fig. 2*); it is in part still possible to trace this path today. In 2022, a team from the National Museum of Slovenia excavated two trial trenches: the first in the area of the present-day path, next to the landslide, and the second on a levelled terrain approximately 0.5 km to the east. The findings suggest that the path was most probably created in the post-medieval period.³

The rocky slope named Reber holds the Krépnov hram cave (cf. *Fig. 2*) that revealed remains from prehistory⁴ (see Discussion).

Typo-chronological attribution of finds

The finds that Primož Fučka handed over to the Regional Museum Goriški muzej in 2020⁵ comprise four prehistoric, about 460 Roman and many post-medieval or recent finds; a few are also undiagnostic. Most finds come with precise findspot data, though it should be noted that Fučka mostly located the finds (with GPS coordinates) subsequently, by memory, and not in the field. While excavating, he also paid attention to the characteristics of the deposit and the position of the find, which in some cases enabled us to reconstruct the context.

The text below presents the results of a typo-chronological analysis of the Roman finds and also the most diagnostic artefacts. The finds are discussed according to types and chronological order, from the earliest to the latest.⁶

Coins

The assemblage includes 57 Roman coins spanning from the rule of Claudius I (41–54) to Theodosius (379–395), as well as five scatters of bronze coins (group finds) that the finder's data allow to be identified as purse contents (cf. *Fig. 9*).

Two of the scatters were found approximately 17 m apart on the slope east of Laz. The first consists of 44 coins scattered over approx. 1.5 m², at a depth of 0.1 to 0.2 m.

² Tratnik et al. 2023, 47–49, 55–59, Pl. 1; Tratnik, Istenič 2025, 229–231, Figs. 7: A; 8 (in this volume).

³ Tratnik et al. 2023, 47–54, 60; Tratnik, Istenič 2025, 229, Fig. 6 (in this volume).

⁴ Cf. Gerbec, Fabec 2024.

⁵ Fučka also excavated in this area later. With the exception of the finds from Krépnov hram (cf. Gerbec, Fabec 2024), these later artefacts have not yet been handed over to the Regional Museum Goriški muzej.

⁶ All artefacts were drawn by Nataša Grum.

The second one comprises 61 coins, most of which were scattered over an area measuring about 25 cm across, at a depth of 0.1 to 0.2 m, while two coins lay roughly a metre lower down the slope. The third scatter came to light above the landslide and contains six coins, which were scattered over roughly 1 m², at a depth of 0.1 to 0.15 m. The fourth scatter consist of four coins, if we also include a coin found during the 2022 investigations of the National Museum of Slovenia;⁷ the coins were unearthed roughly 0.1 m under the surface on a slope below the levelling (presumed path) 0.5 km east of Laz. The fifth scatter comprises seven coins, but their context is highly questionable as they were found on the landslide; the finder identified six coins unearthed at a shallow depth in two clusters, as well as one coin discovered at a distance of 2 m from the second cluster.

The results of the numismatic analysis of the coin scatters are presented below (see Discussion).

Brooches

One fragment belongs to a hinged Aucissa brooch (Fig. 3: 1). Such brooches are dated from the beginning of the Augustan period to the mid-1st century AD, with individual examples recorded up to the Flavian period.⁸ Aucissa brooches are common finds at Roman military sites and hence associated with Roman soldiers. However, they were also worn by civilians, both men and women.⁹

The finds include four *kräftig profilierte* brooches. Two identical and complete examples that came to light about 15 metres apart below Reber belong to the Almgren 68 type (Fig. 3: 2). The third example, excavated on the slope east of Laz, is different and has a less curved bow and an unperforated foot; it belongs to the Almgren 69 type (Fig. 3: 3). The Almgren 68 brooches were widely used from the Tiberian/Claudian period to the late 1st century,¹⁰ while those of the Almgren 69 type are believed to have been worn in the second half of the 1st and possibly the early 2nd century.¹¹

The brooch found next to the current path crossing the landslide is of the Almgren 84 type (Fig. 3: 4). The main characteristic of this type of *kräftig profilierte* brooches is the absence of the protective plate above the spring, which is substituted by an expanded head. Such brooches were very common in the Danubian provinces and in Barbaricum (present-day Slovakia, Moravia, Czechia, Poland), and are dated from the early 2nd century to the first half of the 3rd century.¹²

Found several tens of metres northwest was an annular brooch with a simple rect-

⁷ Cf. Tratnik et al. 2023, Cat. No. PN 1390.

⁸ Riha 1979, 114–115; Feugère 1985, 323–324; Laharnar 2022, 304.

⁹ Schmid 2010, 17.

¹⁰ Gugl 2008, 34; Sedlmayer 2009, 32–34.

¹¹ Gugl 2008, 35; Laharnar 2022, 308.

¹² Gugl 2008, 38; Petković 2010, 85.

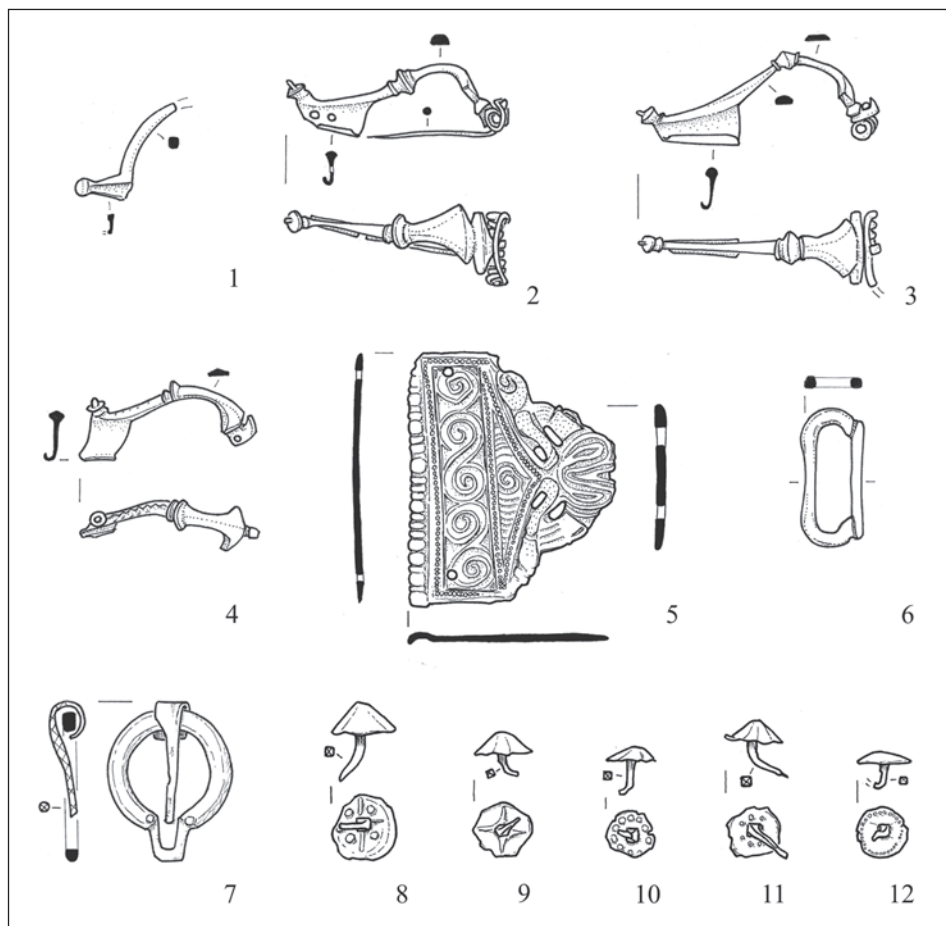


Fig. 3: Brooches, belt fittings, and hobnails. 1–6 copper alloy, 7 copper alloy and iron, 8–12 iron. Scale 1:2.

angular extension, ascribed to the Sellye 1 type (Fig. 3: 7).¹³ Parallels from northern Italy, western Slovenia and Hungary suggest that such brooches date from the late 3rd century to the end of the 4th century.¹⁴ They are associated with soldiers.¹⁵

¹³ Sellye 1990, 25, 29, 53–58, Cat. Nos. 1.2–1.12. For an updated typology, cf. Teegen 2013.

¹⁴ Sellye 1990, 53, 54, Cat. Nos. 1.3, 1.4; Buora 1996, 70–73, Cat. No. 47; Airoldi, Palumbo 2002, 84, Pl. 2: 6; Istenič 2015, 369, Pl. 1: 5–6; Tratnik, Žerjal 2017, 253, 262, Pl. 7: 92.

¹⁵ Teegen 2013, 323–324; Milavec 2020, 71–72.

Belt fittings

Two pieces of military belts were found at the eastern edge of Laz, where the remains of a Late Antique building were excavated in 2022. The first piece is a sub-oval buckle loop that is bent slightly inward on the outer side (*Fig. 3: 6*). Parallels from numerous sites reveal they were usually part of buckles with a rectangular or, more rarely, an oval plate. Both types are dated from the 4th to the first half of the 5th century, with the former supposedly very common in the second half of the 4th century.¹⁶ They are believed to have mainly been worn by ordinary soldiers or soldiers of lower ranks.¹⁷

An outstanding find is a pentagonal belt fitting made of copper alloy and bearing chip carved decoration (*Fig. 3: 5*). The design consists of a rectangular and a triangular field, both filled with a spiral pattern. The triangular field is flanked by a pair of heraldic reclining lions, facing each other and holding a palmette in their muzzle. The fitting was part of a three-piece belt set of Form B according to Horst Wolfgang Böhme. Such belt sets were produced in the last quarter of the 4th century, and were part of officers' outfits.¹⁸ Böhme identified the pentagonal fittings with two decorative fields and heraldic animals as the *Aquileia* form.¹⁹ He presumed them to be the products of as yet unknown workshops in the Danubian provinces.

Hobnails

The assemblage includes 150 iron hobnails, most with a raised pattern on the underside of the head: 19 examples have a cross and large dots (*Fig. 3: 8*), one only has a raised cross (*Fig. 3: 9*), five have a ring of large dots (*Fig. 3: 10*), 63 have a ring of small dots and 42 of these bear a densely spaced ring of very small dots (*Fig. 3: 12*). There are also 62 hobnails on which no pattern could be established, though the poor state of preservation allows for some of them to have originally had a ring of dots. The head diameter of the first two types is between 1.3 and 1.9 cm (most frequently between 1.5 and 1.7 cm), of the type with a ring of large dots it is between 1.3 and 1.5 cm, while of the type with a ring of very small dots it measures 1.2–1.4 cm. Standing out among the hobnails without a pattern are those with a roughly 0.8 cm wide head.

The first three forms could be identified as Alesia D, B, and C types according to the typology of the hobnails from Alesia,²⁰ while Federico Bernardini identified the examples with very small dots (unknown at Alesia) as Type E on the basis of the finds

¹⁶ Böhme 2020, 6, Fig. 1: 2–3.

¹⁷ Böhme 2020, 33.

¹⁸ Cf. Böhme 2020, 40–46, 57–64, 175–177, Figs. 20–21.

¹⁹ Böhme 2020, 58–59, Fig. 32: 1.

²⁰ Cf. Brouquier-Reddé, Deyber 2001, 303–304, Pl. 93.

from the Trieste Karst.²¹ The Alesia B, C, and D types are attested at Late Republican military sites from the time of Caesar's Gallic Wars to the Early Augustan period (20–15 BC), though Alesia D hobnails already began to be used in the late 2nd century BC.²² As for the Alesia C hobnails, they continued into later periods and have been found in the military fortresses from the Mid- and Late Augustan periods,²³ while their upper time limit is not clear. The hobnails of Type E began in the late 1st century BC and were used throughout the 1st and 2nd centuries AD; they are not associated exclusively with soldiers.²⁴ Hobnails without a pattern were used for a long time in the Roman period.²⁵

Precise findspot data exist for only a small number of hobnails, mostly those of the Alesia B and D types (*Fig. 2: blue dots*), while others only come with an approximate location. The hobnails with small dots on the underside and those without a pattern are represented throughout the area under discussion, i.e. everywhere that other Roman objects were also found.

Weapons and military equipment

The slope east of Laz revealed a combat knife with a 18.6 cm long blade, a long tang terminating in a separately made pommel (*Fig. 5: 1*), a curved back that is highest at mid-section, and an elaborate guard. The same type of knife was found about 15 km away, at Malovše near Gojače, together with metal objects interpreted as fittings of horse gear and a military belt, dating to the second half of the 3rd century.²⁶ Geographically close is also an almost identical knife from a grave at Unec, as well as two similar knives, one found at the hilltop settlement at Ajdovščina above Rodik and the other in a grave from the second half of the 3rd or early 4th century unearthed at Javor near Dolnji Zemon.²⁷ Both the grave from Javor (which included a crossbow brooch) and the assemblage of finds from Malovše indicate that such knives were part of soldiers' equipment.²⁸

The assemblage further includes 54 pieces of throwing weapons (primarily *plumbatae*) and different projectiles. Several *plumbatae* and projectile heads are bent or have damaged tips, which are clear signs of use.

Plumbatae are a type of Late Roman throwing weapon characterised by a lead weight attached to the shank/socket. They were in use from the late 3rd to the 5th cen-

²¹ Bernardini et al. 2023, 23–24, Fig. 4: E.

²² Istenič 2019a, 274–277; Bernardini et al. 2023, 24, 44; Laharnar, Istenič 2024, 180.

²³ Istenič 2019a, 276 with references.

²⁴ Bernardini et al. 2020, 7; Bernardini et al. 2023, 24, Fig. 4: E; Laharnar, Istenič 2024, 180, Fig. 4: 1, 9.

²⁵ Bernardini et al. 2020, 7.

²⁶ Horvat, Žbona Trkman 2016, 100–104, Fig. 3: 15.

²⁷ Slapšak 1999, 162, bottom left figure; Horvat, Žbona Trkman 2016, 113, 115, Figs. 9: 8; 13.

²⁸ Cf. Horvat, Žbona Trkman 2016, 104, 114–116.

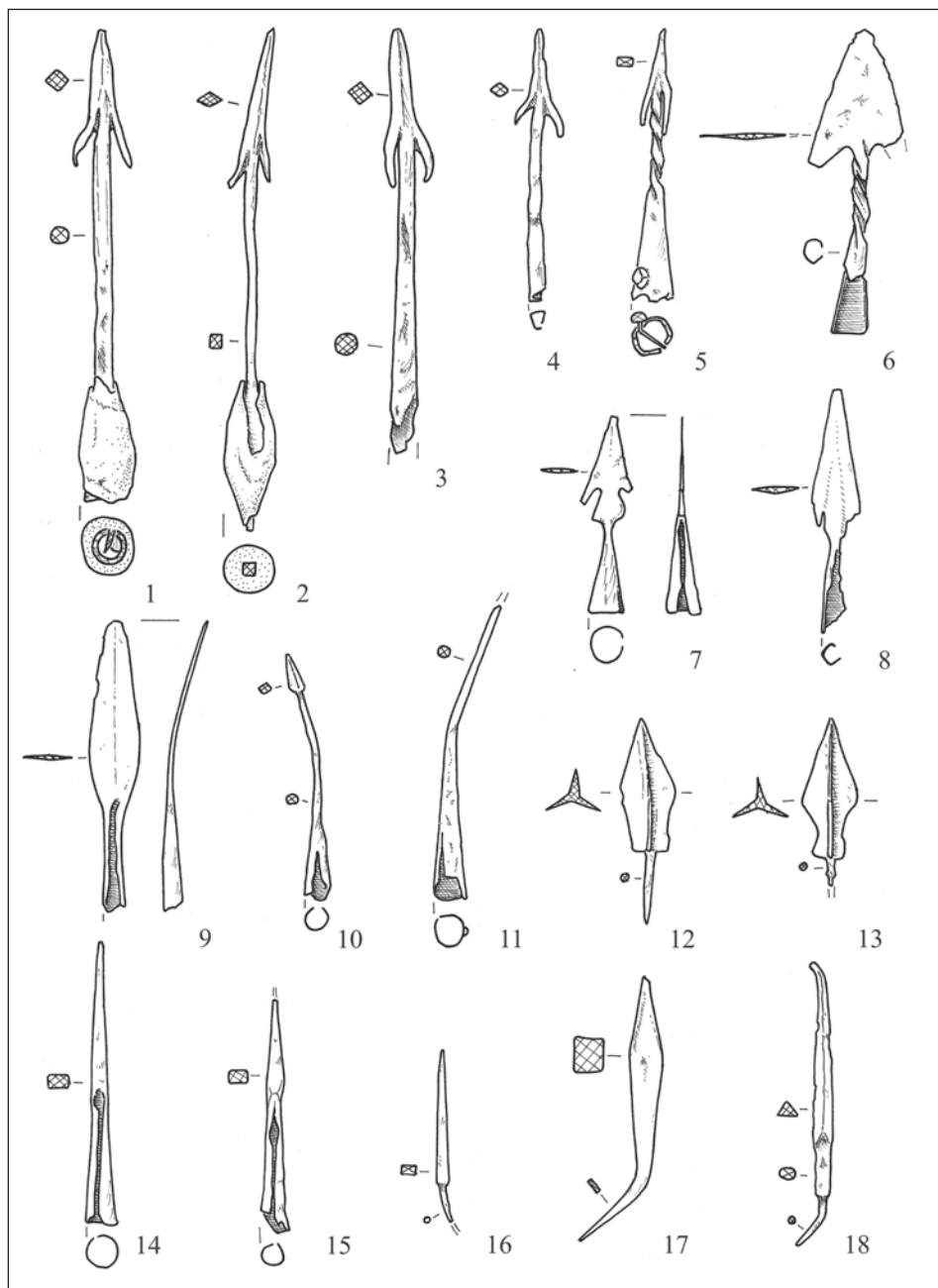


Fig. 4: Plumbatae and projectiles. 1–2 iron and lead, 3–18 iron. Scale 1:2.

ture.²⁹ The assemblage includes 16 examples, of which only a part of the lead weight has been preserved in four examples, while ten survive with a socket at the end of the shank. Their length varies between 9.7 and 16.7 cm. Most have a lozenge-sectioned barbed point and a round-sectioned shank (Fig. 4: 1). The lead weights are biconical. As a rule, they were fitted so as to cover the socket and part of the wooden shaft.

Three of the *plumbatae* differ slightly in that a spindle-shaped lead weight was mounted on a thin rectangular-sectioned shank (Fig. 4: 2). Their poor preservation does not allow us to ascertain the method of hafting. They could be similar to the 27 cm-long *plumbata* found in Sisak, which has a very long socketed shank.³⁰

Three socketed iron heads have the same barbed points as the *plumbatae*. One of these, surviving 11.3 cm in length (Fig. 4: 3), may actually be a damaged *plumbata*. The other two are smaller; one has a flat point, a short, twisted shank, and a socket measuring around 1 cm across (Fig. 4: 5), while the other has a lozenge-sectioned point, a longer rectangular-sectioned shank and a slender, 0.6 cm wide socket (Fig. 4: 4).

Other projectiles include two socketed arrowheads with prominent barbs and a twisted neck (Fig. 4: 6). Such arrowheads with or without a twisted neck are generally dated from the second half of the 5th century until the Middle Ages,³¹ although examples with shorter barbs were already in use in the Late Roman period (late 4th century).³²

Four arrowheads show a stepped transition from a flat barbed point to the socket. With one exception, the barbs are small (Fig. 4: 7, 8). Similar arrowheads are known from nearby sites (Hrušica area, Vodice near Kalce, Žlovberski vrh near Šmihel pod Nanosom), but also from Sermin in Slovenian Istria and Otok near Dobrava in the Dolenjska region.³³ The arrowhead from Sermin is broadly dated to the Roman period,³⁴ while others come from unknown contexts and are hence undatable.

There are three socketed arrowheads with a flat oval or deltoid point (Fig. 4: 9). This type of arrowheads was used for a long time, from Antiquity to the Middle Ages.³⁵

No close parallels could be found for the socketed head with a pyramidal point on a round-sectioned shank (Fig. 4: 10).

The socketed iron head with a round-sectioned point (Fig. 4: 11) is similar in the shape of the point to two javelins from the nearby sites of Ajdovščina and Hrušica.³⁶

There are also three socketed heads with a rectangular-sectioned point (Fig. 4: 14).

²⁹ Pflaum 2007, 296–297; Keszi 2018, 23.

³⁰ Radman-Livaja 2004, 32, 127, Pl. 9: 35.

³¹ Cf. Böhme 1974, 110, 157, Pls. 77: 15, 91: 5, 132: 5; Horvat 2002, 146–147, Fig. 6: 18–19, Pl. 21: 4; Bitenc, Knific 2021, 223, Pl. 2: 18–26.

³² Bierbrauer 1987, 170, Pl. 60: 6; Gschwind 2004, 189, Pl. 94: D481; Istenič 2015, 371, 373, Pl. 1: 16.

³³ Horvat 2002, 147, Pl. 21: 3; Stare 2004, 51, 57, Pl. 2: 11; Žerjal et al. 2012, 76, Pl. 7: 843; Švajncer, Švajncer 2024, 150, 151, 299.

³⁴ The arrowhead was found in the layer SE 3014, which contained several finds from the Roman period (Plestenjak 2012b, 37, 39; Žerjal et al. 2012, 76–77).

³⁵ Radman-Livaja 2004, 58, Pl. 20: 88–89; Milavec 2011, 49, Pl. 10: 10, 13–15.

³⁶ Giesler 1981, 172, Pl. 22: 178; the unpublished example from Ajdovščina is kept in the Regional Museum Goriški muzej.

Such heads had a long tradition in Roman weaponry, used from the Republican to the Late Roman period, but also in Late Antiquity (late 5th–early 7th century), as shown for instance by the finds from Tonovcov grad and Invillino.³⁷

The socketed head with a short rectangular-sectioned point (*Fig. 4: 15*) is similar to the projectiles found at Mali Njivč above Novaki and Gradišče above Trebenče near Cerčno.³⁸ The chance finds from Mali Njivč indicate habitation in the last third of the 3rd century and the last third of the 4th century.³⁹ The adjacent site at Gradišče mainly revealed early medieval (9th–11th centuries) finds.⁴⁰

Two heads have a rectangular-sectioned point and a tang (*Fig. 4: 16*). Similar heads, only with a larger point, were found at Castellazzo di Doberdò/Gradina pri Doberdobu, Concordia Sagittaria (*Iulia Concordia*) and Sisak (*Siscia*).⁴¹ The finds, primarily coins, suggest an outpost at Castellazzo that existed in the late 4th and the first half of the 5th century,⁴² while stratigraphic data from Concordia Sagittaria date the heads from the 4th to the 7th century.⁴³

There is also one tanged head with a pyramidal tip (*Fig. 4: 17*). Such heads, which are frequently defined as arrowheads but are probably mostly crossbow bolts or projectiles of some other artillery, are known from several hilltop settlements or outposts in the south-eastern Alps and generally date to the late 4th and the first half of the 5th century.⁴⁴ With the exception of Ajdovščina,⁴⁵ they are unknown at nearby sites from the Late Roman times (e.g. Hrušica, Vodice near Kalce, Brst near Martinj Hrib).

One tanged head has a long triangular-sectioned point with a rounded base (*Fig. 4: 18*). Similar, though somewhat smaller, projectiles are known from Mali Njivč and Castellazzo di Doberdò.⁴⁶

The finds include 15 three-bladed tanged arrowheads, of which 13 are considered a group find because they were found close together (in a 5 m-large area) on the slope below the levelling (presumed path), approximately 0.5 km east of Laz. Their position suggests the arrowheads were not fired, but rather deposited under different circumstances. They share the same shape, with blades that are widest in the mid-section, slightly concave near the base and clearly separated from the tang (*Fig. 4: 12–13*). Such heads, which include examples with a slightly longer and narrower points with blades that are mostly concave in the bottom third, are known from several Late Antique

³⁷ Cf. Bierbrauer 1987, 171, Pl. 58: 1–7, 9–10; Gschwind 2004, 187, Pls. 85–89: D216–D384; Milavec 2011, 50, Pl. 10: 1–2; Istenič 2015, 371, Pl. 1: 14.

³⁸ Istenič 2015, 376, Pl. 1: 13; Bitenc, Knific 2021, 233, Pl. 2: 14.

³⁹ Istenič 2015, 372–375.

⁴⁰ Bitenc, Knific 2021, 230.

⁴¹ Montagnari Kokelj 1989, Pl. 20: 6; Radman-Livaja 2004, 56, 128, Pl. 17: 64–68; Di Filippo Balestrazzi, Vigoni 2016, 72, Fig. 10: 1–3.

⁴² Maselli Scotti 1989; Buora 1991, 67–68.

⁴³ Di Filippo Balestrazzi, Vigoni 2016, 72, Fig. 10.

⁴⁴ Cf. Milavec 2020, 80, Pls. 13: 15, 27: 1–4, 33: 22.

⁴⁵ Unpublished finds, kept in the Regional Museum Goriški muzej.

⁴⁶ Buora 1991, 67, Pl. 3: 31; Istenič 2015, 371, Pl. 1: 12.

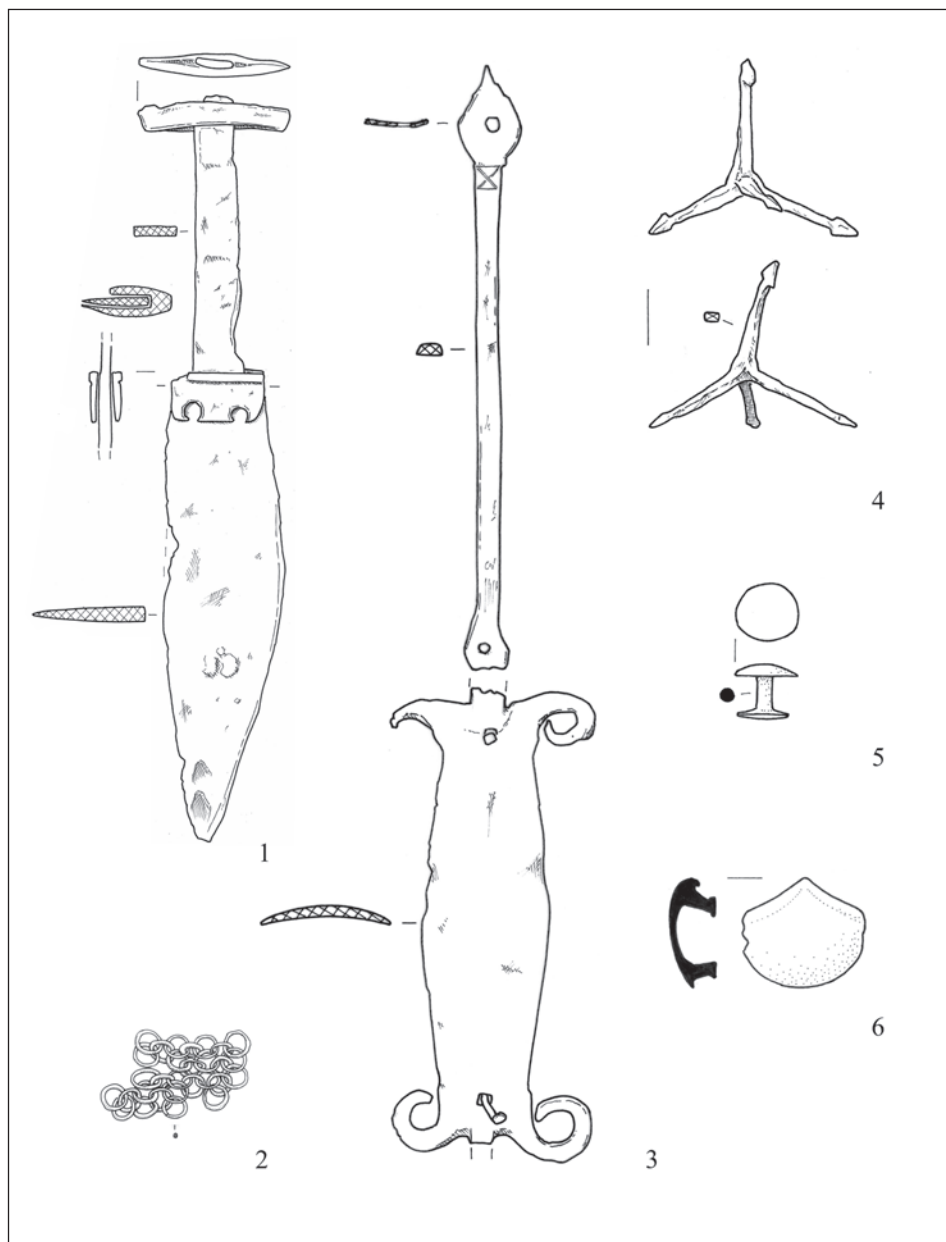


Fig. 5: Combat knife, parts of a shield grip, fragment of a chain mail, caltrop, as well as stud and fitting presumably belonging to horse gear. 1–4 iron, 5–6 copper alloy. Scale: 1= 1:3, rest 1:2.

sites in the area of the eastern Alps, but only rarely in contexts which would allow for narrower dating.⁴⁷ Parallels for the 13 arrowheads also come from Mali Njivč and Castellazzo di Doberdò,⁴⁸ two Late Roman sites that also yielded parallels for other types of projectiles (see above).

The remaining two examples of three-bladed arrowheads, one found on the slope east of Laz and the other higher up the slope above the path, are too damaged for a more precise typological identification, but certainly belong to a different type.

Two pieces of an iron grip of a shield (*Fig. 5: 3*) came to light below Reber. A shield grip of the same shape, but more valuable (the iron base is covered with a thin silver sheet), was discovered in a rich grave from the late 4th century in Vermand (France), the grave goods indicate the burial of an officer of the Roman army, who was most probably of Germanic origin.⁴⁹

A fragment of chain mail, made by interlocking five iron rings (*Fig. 5: 2*), was found east of the landslide. It is most probably the remains of a *lorica hamata*. Such protective equipment is attested in Roman armament from the Republican to the Late Roman period, and continued to be used into the Middle Ages.⁵⁰

The finds further include 14 caltrops (*tribuli*). With the exception of one piece found near Laz, all were recovered in the area of the eastern levelling (presumed path) and on the slope below it (see the description in the Discussion). Several caltrops have triangular spike ends (a single caltrop survives with all four spikes; *Fig. 5: 4*). The largest example has 3.1 cm long spikes, those on the smallest measure 2.2 cm. Some of the spikes are bent. Caltrops were used as effective obstacles against infantry and cavalry from the Republican to the Late Roman period, but also in the Middle Ages and the Modern Era.⁵¹

Horse equipment

Two copper-alloy studs (*Fig. 5: 5*), found in different spots on the slope above the regional road Ajdovščina–Col east of Laz, could have been parts of horse equipment or military belts. Such studs are a frequent find at sites dating between the second half of the 2nd and the mid-3rd century.⁵²

A copper-alloy fitting in the shape of a shell with two studs on the underside (*Fig. 5:*

⁴⁷ Cf. Buora 1991, 64, 67, Pl. 2: 14–15, 18–20, 26–27; Horvat 2002, 146, Fig. 6: 22; Milavec 2011, 49, Pl. 9: 16–17, 19; Istenič 2015, 370, Pl. 1: 11; Milavec 2020, 79, Pls. 3: 7, 19: 4, 33: 24.

⁴⁸ Buora 1991, Pl. 2: 14–15; Istenič 2015, Pl. 1: 11.

⁴⁹ Böhme 1974, 330–332, Pl. 137; Schorsch 1986, 18, Figs. 4–5.

⁵⁰ James 2004, 110–111; Radman-Livaja 2004, 76–77, Figs. 18–19.

⁵¹ James 2004, 70, 100, Cat. No. 370; Radman-Livaja 2004, 85, 131, Pls. 34: 191–199, 35: 200–201; Flügel 2010.

⁵² Oldenstein 1976, 170, Pl. 47: 494–503; James 2004, 54, 91–93, Fig. 42: 239–246, 254; Radman-Livaja 2004, 95, 134, Pl. 45: 299.

6) probably decorated a horse strap. Such fittings were widely used during the second half of the 3rd and the first half of the 4th century.⁵³

Equipment related to animals and vehicles

The two copper-alloy objects found below Reber were fittings of a (possibly the same) harness.⁵⁴ The first is a simple terret ring with a loop fitted into the wooden yoke (the loop is set perpendicularly to the ring) (*Fig. 6: 4*). The second terret ring was attached via a tang (*Fig. 6: 5*). Such fittings were used over a long period and can only be broadly dated to the Roman period.

Two pyramidal spikes of hipposandals (*Fig. 6: 3*) were found on the slope east of Laz and below the eastern levelling (presumed path), respectively. Hipposandals were primarily used on drought and pack animals. They appeared in the mid-1st century BC and were used in various forms until the end of the 4th century.⁵⁵

A cast copper-alloy bell with a circular base (*Fig. 6: 1*) was found in the vicinity of the path that today leads across the landslide. The exterior shows two bands comprising a pair of horizontal parallel incisions. The clapper and loop are missing. An identical bell, though tinned, was found during excavations in Ajdovščina, in a deposit containing coins from the late 3rd to the beginning of the 5th century.⁵⁶ Fragments of a slightly larger bell of the same shape were found above the regional road Ajdovščina–Col, just under 1 km west of our site.⁵⁷ More distant parallels come from *Vindobona* (Vienna) and a site in Lower Austria, dated broadly to the Roman period.⁵⁸ The size of the bell from Budanje suggests it was attached to a draught or pack, possibly even a riding animal.

The assemblage also comprises three almost complete bells of sheet iron (*Fig. 6: 2*), one found above the regional road east of Laz and the other two higher up the slope, near the path. The four iron clappers found in different spots below Reber and above or in the upper part of the landslide could also be parts of the same type of bells. The three bells mentioned reveal a typical manner of manufacture:⁵⁹ a single sheet of iron with symmetrical halves was folded and fastened together on both sides with a rivet at the bottom and folded over at the top. An iron loop was inserted through the top so that its upper part served for suspension and the lower, interior part served to hold the iron clapper. All the bells show the remains of copper-alloy plating. In the south-eastern

⁵³ Gschwind 1998, 116–120, 130–132; Vanhoutte 2023, 251, 282–283, Cat. Nos. CA.A/H52–CA.A/H57.

⁵⁴ According to the data of the finder, the objects were found a few metres apart.

⁵⁵ Pflaum 2007, 305–308; Horvat 2015, 182, Pl. 2: 4.

⁵⁶ Osmuk 1988, 234; unpublished, kept in the Regional Museum Goriški muzej.

⁵⁷ Unpublished, kept in the Regional Museum Goriški muzej.

⁵⁸ Pomberger 2016, 272, 273, 275, Pls. 37: 1, 11, 38: 8; Pomberger, Mühlhans, Mehofer 2022, 359, 368, 384, 387, Cat. Nos. 10, 22, Figs. 4b: 1, 8: 4.

⁵⁹ Cf. Knific, Murgelj 1996, 45; Hanemann 2014, 224, Fig. 191.

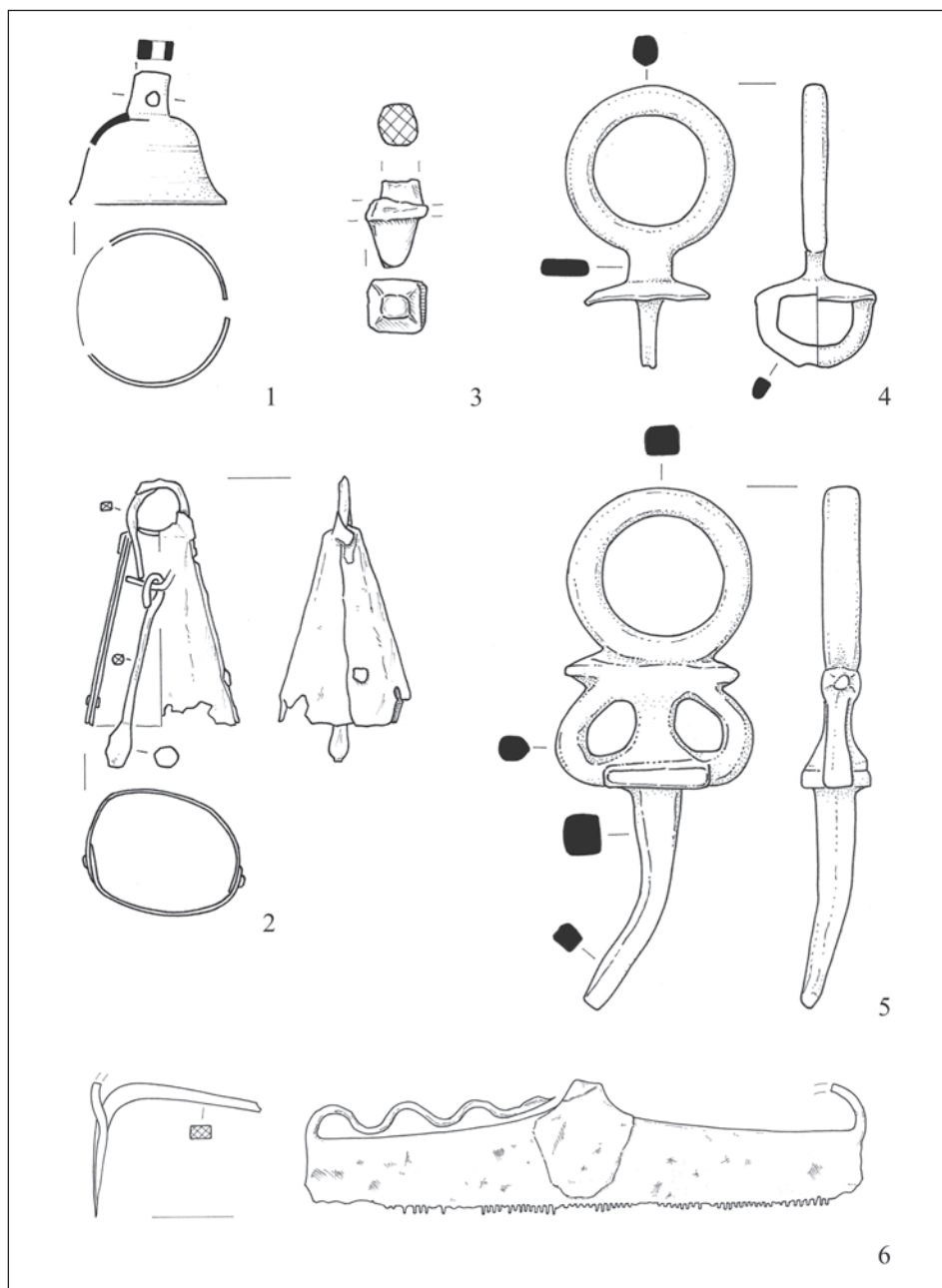


Fig. 6: Bells, fragment of a hipposandal, terret rings, serrated implement (presumed weaving tool). 1, 4–5 copper alloy, 2 iron and copper alloy, 3, 6 iron. Scale: 6= 1:3, rest 1:2.

Alpine area, such bells are known from numerous sites from the Late Roman or Late Antique periods.⁶⁰ It is assumed that most were used for livestock or draught animals.⁶¹

Tools and implements

The assemblage includes more than 20 examples of tools and implements used for everyday chores, with only a few of the diagnostic pieces presented below.

Several woodworking tools were recovered on the slope east of Laz, such as a fragment of an iron saw blade, a fragment of an axe blade, an auger, and a tool with a solid handle possibly used as a bradawl⁶² (Fig. 7: 1,2,4). There was also a group find comprising an iron adze and a peening hammer recovered southeast of Laz, a few dozen metres south of the regional road.

A 30 cm long double-sided tool (*dolabra*) (Fig. 7: 5) was discovered at the eastern edge of Laz, in the area where the 2022 trial trenching revealed the remains of a Late Antique building. It is a combination of axe and adze blades. The mid-section with an oval-shaped shaft hole is reinforced on both sides with lugs. Such double-sided tools (axe-pick, axe-adze, double axe) were used by soldiers, as well as civilians.⁶³ Parallels suggest that our *dolabra* was used for tillage. Similar tools are known primarily from civilian contexts, already appearing in the Early Imperial period, though most examples date to the 3rd and 4th centuries.⁶⁴

An implement with an elongated rectangular iron blade, finely serrated along one of its longer edges, with an iron tang for the handle and a prong in both upper corners that runs in a wavy line toward the handle (Fig. 6: 6), was found in the same spot as the *dolabra*. Similar objects are known from the south-eastern Alps to the Balkans and the Pannonian Plain, individual examples also from Italy, France, and Asia Minor.⁶⁵ They appeared in the second century and were most common between the 3rd and the 7th century.⁶⁶ Their purpose has not yet been clarified; they are most frequently identified as curry combs for horse grooming, or as wool combs.⁶⁷ However, Judit Pásztoókai-Szeőke analysed the archaeological contexts from Hungary and modern ethnographical parallels, and convincingly argued they were most probably implements used for beating the weft while weaving textiles on a vertical two-beam loom.⁶⁸

⁶⁰ Knific, Murgelj 1996, 46, Fig. 1.

⁶¹ Cf. Vanhoutte 2023, 274, 348, Cat. Nos. IR.H16–IR.H19.

⁶² Cf. Humphreys 2021, 185–187, Fig. 14.6: Types 2.1 and 3.

⁶³ Istenič 2019b, 102; Hanemann 2014, 419–424.

⁶⁴ Pietsch 1983, 17, Pl. 3: 46, 47; Hanemann 2014, 422–423, Fig. 357: 5.

⁶⁵ Bitenc, Knific 2001, 40–41, 55, Cat. Nos. 109–111, 153; Pásztoókai-Szeőke 2010, 3–4; Busuladžić 2015, 87–88, 181–182, Pls. 78–79.

⁶⁶ Pásztoókai-Szeőke 2010, 4.

⁶⁷ Cf. Harej 1989, 10, Pl. 1: 2; Pásztoókai-Szeőke 2010, 4–5; Busuladžić 2015, 86–87.

⁶⁸ Pásztoókai-Szeőke 2010, 5–10.

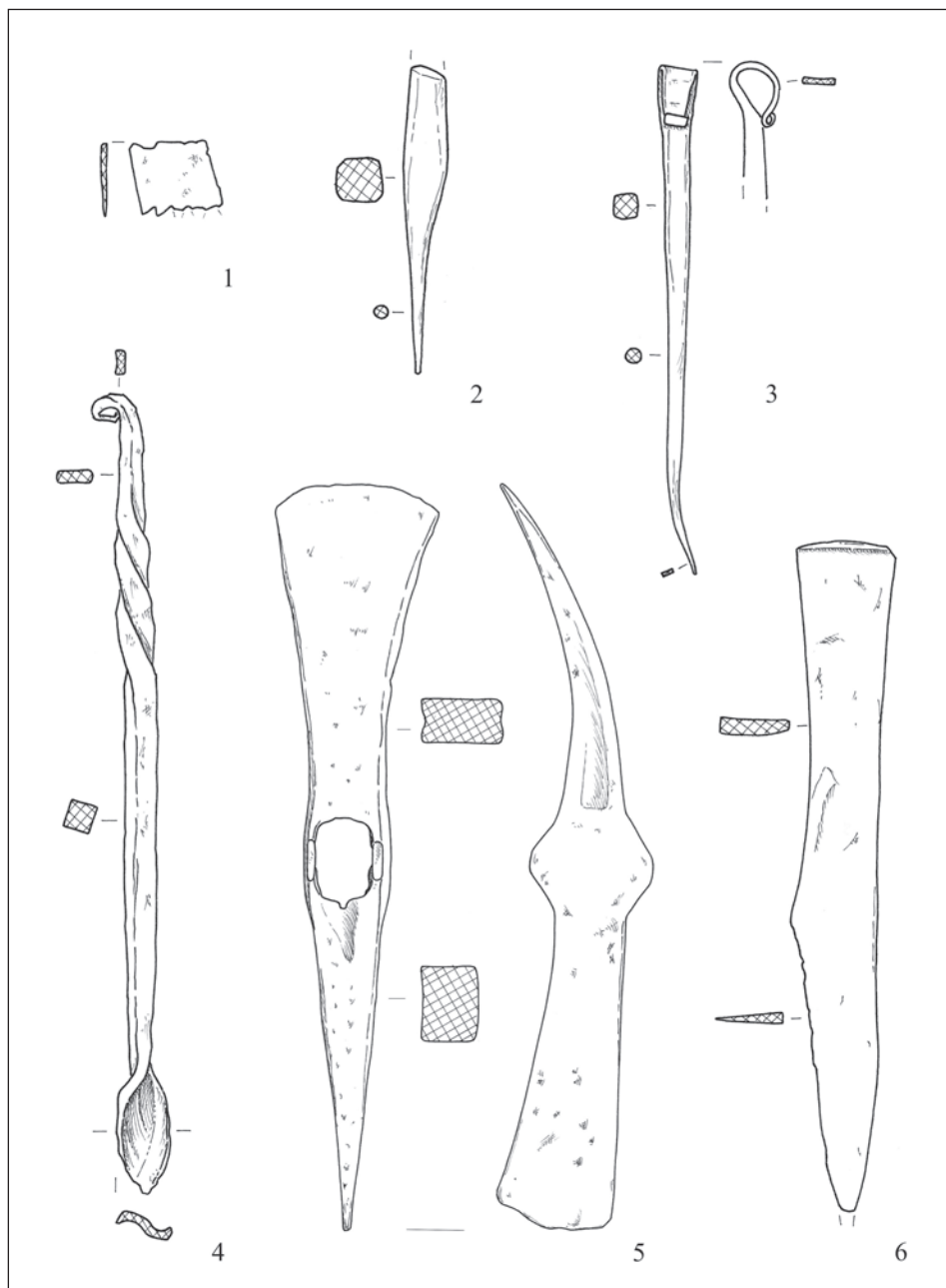


Fig. 7: A selection of tools comprising a fragment of a saw blade, bradawl, pointed object with a loop, auger, *dolabra*, and knife. All iron. Scale: 5= 1:3, rest 1:2.

A knife with a flat handle (Fig. 7: 6) was unearthed a few dozen metres southeast of the Late Antique building and near the regional road. It has close parallels from nearby sites in the Vipava Valley, Notranjska, and Cerkljansko, which are mostly dated to the Late Roman period.⁶⁹

There are also three pointed objects with a loop (Fig. 7: 3), two of which were excavated at different locations below Reber and one was found near the path above the regional road. Such objects are known from numerous sites, both graves and settlements, from the Late Roman period to the Middle Ages. Their identifications differ, from an awl to a fire striker, an object for sharpening blades or a peg.⁷⁰

Keys

The assemblage includes four iron keys with a flat loop handle that were used for pin tumbler locks (Fig. 8: 1).⁷¹ Two were excavated on the slope near Laz and the other two at different spots below Reber; their size suggest they were used to fasten doors or furniture. Tumbler slide keys were used throughout the Roman period.

Metal vessels

Especially interesting are two solid handles of *Blechkannen*, i.e. forged-sheet copper-alloy jugs (Fig. 8: 2).⁷² One handle was found at Laz and the other, only partially preserved, more than 450 metres further north below Reber. Margeritha Bolla classified jugs with such handles as Type IIc,⁷³ which have a biconical body and a conical neck terminating in a funnel-shaped rim, and were made from pieces of sheet metal fastened together with rivets. The solid cast handle was attached to the neck of the vessel via a strip of sheet metal, while the lid (also cast) was hinged to the handle. Bolla dated the production of such jugs, supposedly primarily used for hot water,⁷⁴ to the late 2nd and the 3rd century, though emphasising they could have been in use for a long time.⁷⁵ In fact, they are also known from the 4th–6th-century contexts, with several

⁶⁹ Harej 1989, 14, Pl. 1: 3; Slapšak 1999, 162, the left bottom figure; Pflaum 2007, 287, 299, Fig. 10: 13–14; Istenič 2015, 372, Pl. 3: 25; Laharnar 2022, Pl. 17: 73; Ajdovščina: 3 examples, unpublished, kept in the Regional Museum Goriški muzej.

⁷⁰ Horvat, Žbona Trkman 2016, 113, Fig. 9: 10; Milavec 2020, 82, Pls. 14: 9, 35: 9–10.

⁷¹ Cf. Hanemann 2014, 119, 121, Figs. 101: 6; 102.

⁷² Although generally defined as bronze vessels in the literature, analyses suggest that most of these jugs were made of copper (Bolla 2012, 288).

⁷³ Bolla 1979, 34–36, Pl. 5; Bolla 1989, 99–100, 108–109, Figs. 19–30.

⁷⁴ The remains of a calcite crust in the interior of some jugs indicate they contained hot water (Bolla 1989, 98, 100; Bolla 2012, 294).

⁷⁵ Bolla 1989, 99–100.

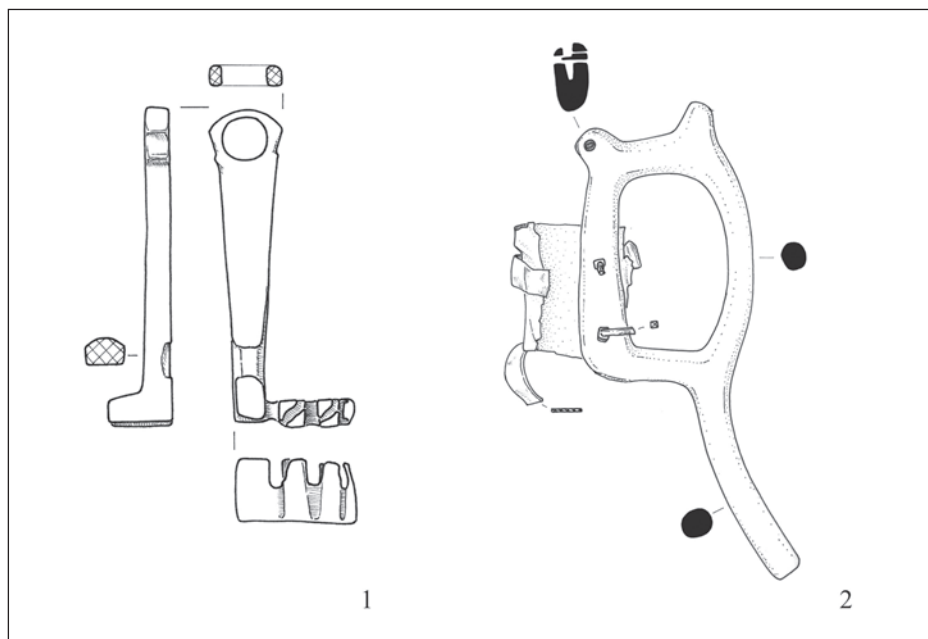


Fig. 8: Key and parts of a metal jug. 1 iron, 2 iron and copper alloy. Scale: 1= 1:2, 2= 1:3.

examples showing signs of antique repairs. Such signs are also seen on the example discovered at Laz, as two iron bands were subsequently attached to the metal strip wrapped around the neck of the vessel (Fig. 8: 2).⁷⁶

Other (metal) objects

The assemblage includes several finds which could indicate activities connected to metal processing or the manufacture of small metal objects. Pieces of bronze and molten lead were recovered in the Laz area, while an unworked piece of iron was found at the site where the 2022 trial trenching revealed the remains of a Late Antique building.

⁷⁶ The drawn reconstruction considered the finder's data about the position of the fragments upon discovery.

Discussion

Using the results of the typo-chronological analysis and the distribution of finds, we attempted to reconstruct past events in the discussed area, taking into consideration that we are working with finds from unknown contexts and with unreliable location data.

The fragment of a bronze flanged axe and a blade fragment of a bronze sickle indicate human presence in the area below Reber already in the Bronze Age. More reliable traces come from the early 1st millennium BC. These are surface finds of pottery sherds discovered in the interior and in front of the Krépnov hram cave (cf. Fig. 2), dated to the end of the Late Bronze and beginning of the Early Iron Age, i.e. between the 10th and the 8th century BC.⁷⁷ A bronze band earring discovered below Reber, less than 300 m west of the cave, is attributable to the 6th and 5th centuries BC. An iron wire brooch of the Middle La Tène construction could also indicate human presence in the Middle La Tène period.

The oldest Roman finds are hobnails (Alesia B and D types), which reveal the presence of Roman soldiers in the time between the 50s and 20s BC. The distribution map (Fig. 2: blue and red dots) shows that hobnails were found in the same area as prehistoric finds, i.e. from the path visible on the LiDAR visualisation to the foot of Reber. The 2022 trial trenching suggested this path dates to the post-medieval period.⁷⁸ However, we believe the finds indicate that a path might already have existed here in prehistoric times.

Several finds are dated to the second half of the 1st century. They include two Almgren 68 brooches, one Almgren 69 brooch, and three coins minted in the Claudian-Flavian period (cf. Figs. 3: 2–3; 9). A fragment of an Aucissa brooch and hobnails with small dots on the underside (cf. Fig. 3: 1,11–12) could also be dated to this period, though their general timespan is wider and they could be earlier, from the first half of the 1st century AD or even the late 1st century BC.

Attributable to the 2nd century are two individually recovered coins, as well as a *kräftig profilierte* brooch of the Almgren 84 type (Figs. 3: 4; 9), though the timespan of this brooch type is broader and it could also belong to the 3rd century.

There are several artefacts, such as those belonging to the equipment of draught or pack animals, that can only be broadly dated to the Roman period and could potentially be connected to the events taking place here in the 1st and 2nd centuries.

The distribution area of the finds from the 1st and 2nd centuries (cf. Fig. 9), including the hobnails with small dots on the underside,⁷⁹ is quite extensive. It reaches from the foot of Reber to the regional road, and partly also south of it. An archaeologically prominent area lies at the foot of Reber (Fig. 9: B), which is an area of levelled terrain

⁷⁷ Gerbec, Fabec 2024, 224.

⁷⁸ Tratnik et al. 2023, 47–51, 60; Tratnik, Istenič 2025, 227, Fig. 6 (in this volume).

⁷⁹ These hobnails are not mapped as we lack precise findspot data (see the description under *Hobnails*).

immediately below the scree, overgrown with sparse forest, with large rocks and boulders on the surface. Two Almgren 68 brooches and a coin of Claudius were excavated here. It is possible that other objects found in this part, currently only broadly attributable to the Roman period, date to the Early Roman period.

The interpretation of traces from the Early Roman period must also take into account historical and archaeological data for the wider area of the Vipava Valley.

The Vipava Valley came to the attention of Roman interests after the foundation of the Latin colony *Aquileia* in 181 BC. In the west, the valley opens towards the Friuli Plain, while in the east, via the Razdrto Pass, it affords the easiest passage towards the Ljubljana Basin. This was the principal connection between the Northern Adriatic and the Danubian region, which hosted a major trade route since prehistoric times.⁸⁰ Being the easiest also made it the most dangerous access to Italy and the Romans were keen to conquer it as soon as possible.

The Romans probably controlled the corridor to the Razdrto Pass (called *Ocra* in Antiquity) by the end of the 2nd century BC.⁸¹ The valley was likely annexed to Gallia Cisalpina, forming part of the territory of *Aquileia*.⁸² Gallia Cisalpina became a Roman province at the end of the second or in the first two decades of the 1st century BC. In 42 or 41 BC, it was annexed to Italy.⁸³

The trade route up to the Ljubljana Basin was under Roman control during Caesar's proconsulship of Gallia Cisalpina and Illyricum (59–49 BC). However, the situation in the region remained unstable as areas in the wider hinterland were home to indigenous communities hostile towards the Romans.⁸⁴ They were ultimately defeated during Octavian's War (35–33 BC).⁸⁵ These turbulent times are reflected in the finds from the sites around the Razdrto Pass and in the area from Planinsko polje to Loška dolina, which indicate conflicts between the locals and the Roman army.⁸⁶

In this period, as well as during the military campaigns in the Augustan period that include the Pannonian War (14–8 BC) and the Pannonian-Dalmatian rebellion (AD 6–9), we presume a strong presence of the Roman army in the Vipava Valley. Throughout this time, *Aquileia* was an important military and logistical base, and a point of departure for the military movements and the military supply route that continued across the valley to Razdrto and beyond.⁸⁷

A new section of the main road between *Aquileia* and *Emona* was constructed across Hrušica, presumably towards the end of the Augustan period.⁸⁸ It is believed that

⁸⁰ Cf. Horvat, Bavdek 2009, 129–130; Šašel Kos 2020, 37, 55, 86.

⁸¹ Šašel Kos 2020, 78, 102–103; Laharnar 2022, 358.

⁸² Žerjal, Tratnik 2020, 11.

⁸³ Šašel Kos 2020, 78, 90, 92.

⁸⁴ Šašel Kos 2020, 78, 92, 99, 102–105; Laharnar 2022, 358–360, 364.

⁸⁵ Šašel Kos 2020, 118–121; Laharnar 2022, 360.

⁸⁶ Laharnar 2022, 346, 348, 358–364, Fig. 4.24.

⁸⁷ Cf. Šašel Kos 2020, 118, 120–121, 147–148.

⁸⁸ Horvat, Bavdek 2009, 148.

it branched off the road towards Razdrto in the area of present-day Ajdovščina, led along the slopes of Trnovski gozd to the Hrušica Plateau and the Logatec Basin, where it joined the old road that ran further south across Planinsko polje, Postojnska vrata, and Razdrto.⁸⁹ The remains of the new road have so far been archaeologically documented in the areas of the present-day settlements of Col, Podkraj, Kalce and Logatec,⁹⁰ while its initial section between Ajdovščina and Col is as yet undocumented.

We presume that the initial section above the village of Budanje led south of and partly under the present-day regional road. Finds indicate human presence in this area from the mid-1st century onwards, when we assume the new road was already built and being used. Material evidence, especially coins and a brooch from the 2nd century, as well as later Roman finds, also indicate that the earlier, prehistoric path, which led higher up the slope, remained in use even after the new construction (cf. Fig. 9).

According to our analysis, almost two thirds of Roman finds from the discussed area date from the second third or second half of the 3rd until the end of the 4th century.

We used the type of artefacts, their distribution, the topographic characteristics of the area, and the archaeological features established by analysing LiDAR data to define several “areas of activity”. The combined evidence indicates the existence of the previously mentioned earlier path, a habitation area along the present-day regional road, as well as clear traces of a military conflict. It should be emphasised that, considering the available data, our findings remain at the level of hypotheses to be confirmed or rejected by new archaeological research.

Late Roman habitation is indicated by the finds excavated at Laz and on the slope immediately east of it (Fig. 9: A). The analysis of LiDAR data suggests at least two buildings, while trial trenching in the area of one of these revealed the remains of a Late Roman or Late Antique masonry building.

In addition to coins, objects that point to human habitation include various tools and implements of everyday use (woodworking tools, presumed weaving tool, knives, fire-making implement), keys, and parts of vessels⁹¹ (cf. Figs. 6: 6; 7–8). There are also finds associated with metal working or manufacturing small metal objects, as well as artefacts related to animal husbandry (iron bells). There is a clear concentration of finds in the area of the partly researched masonry building and around the rectangular structure/building slightly higher up the slope (Figs. 2: A; 9: A), though the age of the latter cannot be identified without further research. Several tools (an adze, a hammer and a presumed hone) also came to light roughly 100 m southeast of Laz (cf. Fig. 9).

There are a few finds from this area that point to the presence of Roman soldiers.

⁸⁹ Bosio 1991, 207, 209–210; Horvat, Bavdek 2009, 148–149; cf. Šinkovec 2020, 78, 83–84, Fig. 1.

⁹⁰ Pflaum 2007, 286; Svoljšak 2015, 359–361, Figs. 25–27; Košir 2020; Šinkovec 2020, 83–84, Figs. 1, 2, 4; Tratnik 2021, 161, Fig. 8; Tihle 2023, 12–13, 18, Fig. 5.

⁹¹ In addition to a metal jug (Fig. 8: 2), the handle of a pottery jug was also found in the area of the Late Antique masonry building that belongs to common tableware and can only broadly be dated to the Roman period.

Standing out among these are parts of military belts discovered in the area of the masonry building and a combat knife found slightly higher up the slope (Figs. 3: 5,6; 5: 1). Given that the finds recovered in the immediate vicinity, i.e. on the slope east of Laz, point to a battle, these and several other objects may also be associated with battle rather than with human habitation. Having said that, some of the finds from the Laz area may also be linked to road traffic if we assume that the road *Aquileia–Emona* ran in the vicinity.

Several Late Roman objects were found in proximity to the presumed earlier path higher up the slope (cf. Fig. 9): an annular brooch with a rectangular extension, several coins, a pointed object with a loop, two bells associated with draught/pack animals or grazing livestock, and a bronze bell possibly linked to horse equipment (Figs. 3: 7; 6: 1,2; 7: 3). Although the finds were most probably not found in their original position (excavated on the slope and in the landslide area), they could hypothetically still be objects lost or discarded while travelling along the path in the Late Roman period. An alternative interpretation proposes that at least some of the objects, such as the annular brooch associated with military outfit, the bronze bell as part of horse equipment, and coins, could be the remains of a battle.

The battlefield can be identified based on the finds of weapons. *Plumbatae* and various projectiles (Fig. 4) are especially indicative, with quite a few showing typical battle damage. Other obvious remains of a battle are parts of protective military equipment (shield grip, chain mail fragment) and *tribuli* (Fig. 5: 2–4). The distribution map reveals that these pieces were lying across a fairly extensive area, with two discernible concentrations, one on the slope below Reber, north and east of Laz, and the other approximately half a kilometre to the east, at the levelling where a path is presumed (Fig. 9). The same type of projectiles is represented in both areas, which supports the assumption that they belong to the same military event.

An important question is whether there are any other finds, in addition to weapons, that could be associated with a battle. This question is especially pertinent for coin finds, which offer a good time reference. As already indicated, such an interpretation is particularly risky for the finds from areas that revealed traces of other activities in the Late Roman period, for example the Laz area that was presumably inhabited and the area higher up the slope that held the earlier path. Another such location is below Reber, which yielded finds from the Early Roman period, but also some from the Late Roman period (cf. Fig. 9: B) that are not necessarily connected to a military event. Additional research is therefore needed to clarify the archaeological picture.

The types of weapons show that the battle took place in the second half of the 4th century. The coins can narrow down this dating. Some were found individually, though most significant are the four coin scatters interpreted as purse contents (see the description under *Coins*) (cf. Fig. 9). The presumed group find consisting of seven coins excavated in the landslide area was not considered due to an unclear context and apparent incompleteness.

The remains of two purse contents were found on the slope east of Laz; in the area

south of the path and near the habitation area. The numismatic analysis revealed that the first purse was lost after 383 and the second after 379. Based on the latest coin, the third purse, excavated above the landslide, where no other contemporary activities have been documented except the battle, is estimated to have been lost after 375. The fourth purse contents were found on the slope below the eastern levelling (presumed path), approximately 500 m east of the first two coin scatters, and are estimated to have been lost after 378.

The fourth scatter is particularly significant for the interpretation of the event. A *plumbata* was discovered on the levelling (presumed path) and a group of *tribuli* a few metres east of it (cf. Fig. 9). The scatter was found some 17 m below the levelling and 13 three-bladed arrowheads in its immediate vicinity, scattered across an area measuring roughly 5 m in length, while six *tribuli* were found some 5 m further down the slope. Of the weapons, we should also mention an arrowhead with prominent barbs and a twisted neck (Fig. 4: 6), which came to light a few metres northeast of the three-bladed arrowheads. After the assemblage was handed over to the Regional Museum Goriški muzej, several other artefacts (projectiles, two caltrops, coins, etc.) were found in this area that could also be associated with the battle.⁹²

Although the purses included coins of Constantine's family (Constantine II, Constantius II, and Constans; 337–361), their use can be placed in the early period of the Valentinianic-Theodosian dynasty (364–455) as they characteristically remained in circulation for a long time. Considering the latest coins (383) and the absence of the coins of the *Salus Reipublicae* type (388–403) that were minted in large numbers, we can date the loss of the purses and thus the battle between 383 and 388.

At the time outlined by the finds mentioned above, this area was the hinterland of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* defence system ("the barriers of the Julian Alps"). The system was established in the late 3rd or at the beginning of the 4th century at the latest, with the purpose of protecting Italy from incursions from the east.⁹³ It consisted of a series of linear walls with towers closing the passages, as well as forts and fortresses defending the exposed sections.⁹⁴ The main route, from *Emona* to *Aquileia*, was fortified with three lines of defence. The first was a roughly 7 km long barrier wall with towers (Ajdovski zid) above Vrhnika, the second was a barrier wall with a fort at Lanišče in the vicinity of Kalce (this one was associated with the barrier wall that incorporated a fort at Brst near Martinj Hrib and protected the old road toward Razdrto), while the third, most heavily fortified, was the barrier wall with the *Ad Pirum* fort at Hrušica.⁹⁵ The *Castra* fortress in present-day Ajdovščina, located in the hinter-

⁹² Fučka found some artefacts (e.g. two caltrops and a socketed projectile with a rectangular-sectioned point) in autumn 2020. The 2022 investigations by the National Museum of Slovenia revealed a coin belonging to the fourth scatter, as well as a three-bladed arrowhead in its vicinity (Tratnik et al. 2023, Cat. Nos. PN 1389, PN 1390); Tratnik, Istenič 2025, Fig. 10: 4 (in this volume).

⁹³ Kusetič 2020.

⁹⁴ Kusetič 2020, 18–31, Fig. 1.

⁹⁵ Kusetič 2020, 18.

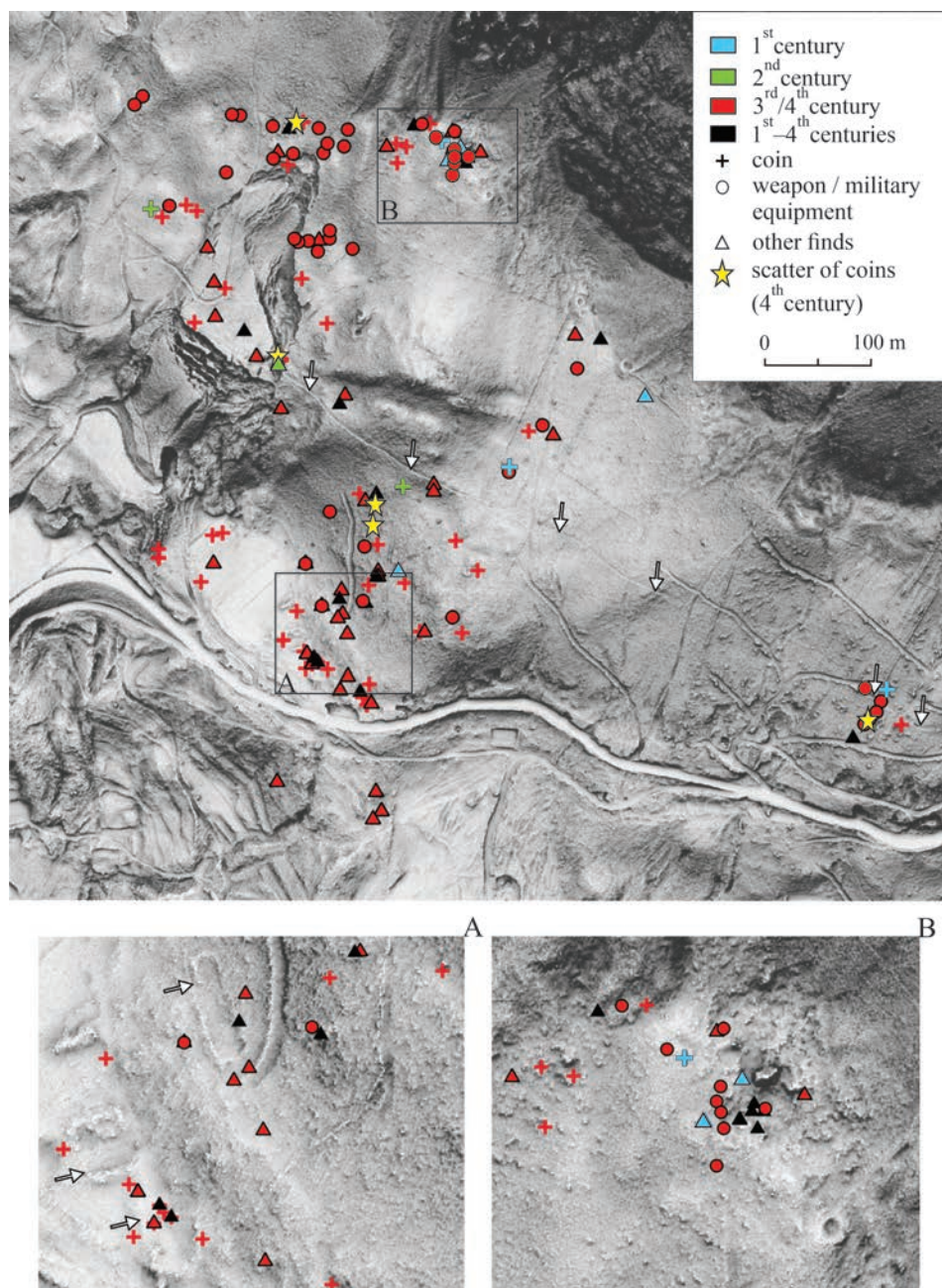


Fig. 9: Distribution of Roman finds north of the Budanje village. White arrows mark the remains of buildings (A) and a path. Basemap: Lidar ©ARSO.

land and approximately 18 km west of the fort at Hrušica, probably had a command and supply function.⁹⁶

When interpreting the Late Roman traces near Budanje, we must therefore keep in mind the location along a strategically vital road in the hinterland of this barrier system. The Budanje area is located some 14 km west of the last, third barrier wall at Hrušica with the *Ad Pirum* fort, which was probably the principal point of the entire system,⁹⁷ and in the vicinity of *Castra*. The data available for the habitation remains does not allow us to identify their exact nature. Given their location and the finds of a military character recovered here, it seems reasonable to presume that the remains were connected with the Roman army.

In regard to the military conflict dated between 383 and 388, the question arises whether it could be connected to any of the events mentioned in written sources as taking place in the area of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* barrier system. One such event was the civil war between Emperor Theodosius and usurper Magnus Maximus, which broke out in the spring of 388. In the summer of 388, Theodosius' army crossed this area on its march towards *Aquileia*, where Magnus Maximus took shelter after his army was twice defeated in the Battles of Siscia and Poetovio.⁹⁸ According to literary sources, Maximus previously made a strategic mistake and decreased the defence of barriers, which enabled Theodosius' army to move quickly from *Emona* to *Aquileia*.⁹⁹ Especially based on Ambrose's Letter 40 to Emperor Theodosius from the end of 388,¹⁰⁰ in which he mentions the victory over Maximus, we can assume that the advance of Theodosius' army across the barriers likely involved minor conflicts.

Conclusion

The finds excavated on the slope above the village of Budanje near Ajdovščina shed light on the events in this area from prehistory to the Late Roman period. Since they were unearthed neither systematically nor from stratigraphically documented contexts, our findings remain at the level of hypotheses to be confirmed or refuted by future archaeological research.

They indicate that a path led here in prehistoric times, presumably traversing the slope approximately 200 m north of the present-day regional road. The finds of hobnails indicate the later presence of Roman soldiers and probable movements along this prehistoric path between the 50s and 20s of the 1st century BC. Considering the political situation at that time, when there was a strong presence of the Roman army in the region, this is not surprising. During Caesar's proconsulship (59–49 BC) and

⁹⁶ Kusetič 2020, 28.

⁹⁷ Kusetič 2020, 26.

⁹⁸ Bratož 2014, 150–157.

⁹⁹ Bratož 2014, 154, 156–157.

¹⁰⁰ Šašel 1971, 27.

Octavian's War in Illyricum (35–33 BC), several military operations were conducted in the hinterland of *Aquileia*. During these, the main body of the Roman troops moved from the military base in *Aquileia* along the road through the Vipava Valley and over the Razdrto Pass. They engaged the locals in the wider surroundings of the site, near the Razdrto Pass and Postojnska vrata, where several Roman battle sites have been documented.

Presumably in the Augustan period, a new section of the main road between *Aquileia* and *Emona* was constructed across the slopes of Trnovski gozd and Hrušica. Its route in the initial part (between Ajdovščina and Col) has not yet been established. The assemblage unearthed above Budanje includes no finds that could be reliably connected to the time of the new road's construction, and habitation traces are only attested after the mid-1st century.

Intense activities are evident in the Late Roman period, when this was the immediate hinterland of the *Claustra Alpium Iuliarum* defence system. There is a presumed habitation area at Laz, located some 4 km from the *Castra* fortress, dating to the 4th or possibly already in the late 3rd century. The available data do not reveal the nature of the habitation remains; they may represent an outpost, connected with the Roman army. The recovered finds also indicate that a battle took place in its vicinity between 383 and 388. Based on historical evidence, it may have been connected with the civil war between Theodosius and Magnus Maximus fought in 388.

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