

Günther Moosbauer und Rainer Wiegels (Hrsg.)

Fines imperii –
imperium sine fine?

Osnabrücker Forschungen
zu Altertum und Antike-Rezeption
Band 14

Herausgegeben von
Günther Moosbauer und Rainer Wiegels

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Römische Okkupations- und Grenzpolitik im frühen Principat
Beiträge zum Kongress ‚Fines imperii – imperium sine fine?‘
in Osnabrück vom 14. bis 18. September 2009



Verlag Marie Leidorf GmbH · Rahden/Westf.

2011

338 Seiten mit 99 Abbildungen

Gedruckt mit finanzieller Unterstützung der
STADT OSNABRÜCK
GÖTTINGER AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN
VARUS-GESELLSCHAFT ZUR FÖRDERUNG DER VOR- UND FRÜHGESCHICHTLICHEN
AUSGRABUNGEN IM OSNABRÜCKER LAND E.V., OSNABRÜCK

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Moosbauer, Günther ; Wiegels, Rainer (Hrsg.):
Fines imperii – imperium sine fine? Römische Okkupations- und Grenzpolitik
im frühen Principat / hrsg. von Günther Moosbauer
Rahden/Westf. : Leidorf, 2011
(Osnabrücker Forschungen zu Altertum und Antike-Rezeption ; Bd. 14)
ISBN 978-3-89646-735-5

Die Deutsche Bibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie.
Detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.ddb.de> abrufbar.

Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem Papier

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Verlag Marie Leidorf GmbH
Geschäftsführer: Dr. Bert Wiegel
Stellerloh 65 · D-32369 Rahden/Westf.

Tel: +49/(0)5771/ 9510-74
Fax: +49/(0)5771/ 9510-75
E-Mail: info@vml.de
Internet: www.vml.de

ISBN 978-3-89646-735-5
ISSN 1863-074X

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Umschlagentwurf: COMPUTUS Druck Service, 55595 Gutenberg
Titelfoto: Buchisstele 13 vom 17. April 29 v. Chr. - Minas Nerpel, Abb. 1 (in diesem Band)
aus: R. Mond/O.H. Myers, The Bucheum III, London (EES) 1934 Taf. 43
Redaktion: Achim Rost und Susanne Wilbers-Rost, Belm
Satz und Layout: Enns Schrift & Bild GmbH, Bielefeld
Internet: <http://www.geschichte.uni-osnabrueck.de/80.htm>

Druck und Produktion: Druckhaus Breyer GmbH, Diepholz

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The Roman conquest of Dalmatia and Pannonia under Augustus – some of the latest research results

Marjeta Šašel Kos

The northeastern hinterland of Cisalpine Gaul was gradually conquered after the founding of Aquileia in 181 BC.¹ Under the proconsulship of Caesar in both Galliae and Illyricum, Cisalpine Gaul was extended across the Ocra Pass (Fig. 1) towards the Emona Basin, where Aquileia founded its easternmost settlement (*vicus*) and an important *emporium* at Nauportus.² After the pact of Brundisium in 40 BC, Octavian acquired almost the entire Illyricum, while the southeastern part was assigned to Antony; in the course of his Illyrian War (35-33 BC),³ Octavian conquered (in addition to many less important peoples) the Iapodes, parts of Pannonia around Segestica/Siscia, as well as the Delmatae and, it seems, the part of Illyricum belonging to Antony.⁴ Most of the future Pannonia and Dalmatia, however, was conquered by Tiberius in his Pannonian War and in the Pannonian-Dalmatian Rebellion.⁵

Noricum

Noricum was more or less peacefully annexed shortly before the outbreak of the Pannonian War. The Ambisontes were the only hostile Norican people, and Dio actually mentioned an incursion by the Pannonians together with the Norici into Histria in 16 BC.⁶ Regardless of who the Norican rebels had been (they cannot be identified with certainty),⁷ their insurrection was the reason for the annexation of the Norican kingdom. Indeed, the independent minting of Norican tetradrachmas ended around 16-15 BC.⁸ A vexillation of the legion *VIII Augusta*, together with a detachment of the *cohors Montano-*

rum prima (both belonging to the Pannonian part of the army of Illyricum), was stationed in the Roman *emporium* at Virunum/Magdalensberg.⁹ In the light of the recent discussion of a passage from the *Roman History* of Velleius Paterculus (who had been Tiberius' officer), where he says that Tiberius subdued "*Raetia and the Vindelici, the Norici and Pannonia, as well as the Scordisci*," and added them as "*new provinces*" to the Roman state,¹⁰ it can be argued that after the Alpine campaigns in 15 BC and the subsequent Pannonian War, all these countries came in one way or another under Roman dominion. However, contrary to the recent opinion that these regions became provinces early in the reign of Tiberius,¹¹ Velleius' claim perhaps implies Augustan involvement after Tiberius' military victories.¹² These provinces were at first under military supervision, and only subsequently were provincial governors installed in them, in Noricum probably as late as Claudius; C. Baebius Atticus may still be regarded as the first presidial procurator.¹³

The Pannonian War

The Pannonian War, conducted by Tiberius, lasted for two years, from 12 to 11 BC,¹⁴ although the quelling of several uprisings in the Pannonian and Dalmatian parts of Illyricum is documented between 14 and 8 BC.¹⁵ By that time, most of Illyricum had been conquered. Cassius Dio is the best authority for this poorly attested war, even if his summary account is short and devoid of all detail.¹⁶ He mentioned that the Pannonians "*again revolted*" in 14 BC, probably referring to their incursion into Histria together with the Noricans two years previously. It seems that the proconsul of Illyricum at

¹ BANDELLI 2003; VEDALDI IASBEZ 2003; BANDELLI 2009; ZACCARIA 2009.

² For Caesar's proconsulship: ŠAŠEL KOS 2000; for the Ocra Pass: Strabo 7. 5. 2 C 314; HORVAT / BAVDEK 2009; for Nauportus: HORVAT 1990; MUŠIĆ / HORVAT 2007.

³ ŠAŠEL KOS 2005, 393 ff.

⁴ MIRKOVIĆ 1968; ŠAŠEL KOS 1999.

⁵ ŠAŠEL KOS 2009a.

⁶ Cassius Dio 54. 20. 2.

⁷ Perhaps the Norican Taurisci, mentioned by Strabo (4. 6. 12 C 208), or the Ambisontes (?) in the Aesontius (Soča/Isonzo) valley, ŠAŠEL 1972 (1992). On the Ambisontes (?) in the territory of Iuvavum, see HÖGLINGER 2004.

⁸ GÖBL 1973, 63; KOS 1977, 20.

⁹ ŠAŠEL 1986 (1992); PICCOTTINI 2003.

¹⁰ Velleius 2. 39. 3.

¹¹ BRAUNERT 1977; ROLLINGER 2001; SCHAUB 2001; GAMPER 2007.

¹² GRAßL 2008.

¹³ See, recently, WEBER 2008; for a different opinion, however, see ZACCARIA 2001, 146-148. MAINARDIS 2008, 135-141, particularly 138-139.

¹⁴ DOMIĆ KUNIĆ 2006.

¹⁵ ŠAŠEL KOS 1986, 154 ff.

¹⁶ Cassius Dio 54. 28. 1-2; 31. 2-4; 34. 3-4; 36. 2; 55. 2. 4.



Fig. 1 The Odra Pass below Mt. Odra (present-day Nanos). From HORVAT / BAVDEK 2009, 21.

that time was M. Vinicius, since it is reported that he fought against them.¹⁷ Probably the military situation in Pannonia, on the fringes of Italy, became so precarious that it demanded the presence of an experienced army leader. One year later, command was given to the best Roman general, M. Vipsanius Agrippa, who inspired such terror among the Pannonians that they acknowledged Roman authority without further fighting. They rebelled again after Agrippa's death in 12 BC, and the war continued under Tiberius; Dio, referring to 12 BC, wrote that Tiberius had put down the rebellion and then conquered most of the country with the help of the allied Scordisci, an important Celtic people living in the broad region around the confluence of the Sava and the Danube (Fig. 2). Tiberius took away all the arms of the Pannonians and sold most of their youth abroad. For his victories he was awarded triumphal honours, although the Senate had voted him a triumph.¹⁸

Dio mentioned for 11 BC that Tiberius conquered the Delmatae, who had meanwhile rebelled against Roman authority. He had to wage war against both peoples, the Delmatae and the Pannonians, march-

ing from one battlefield to another. After the defeat of the Delmatae, Dalmatia came under the supervision of Augustus, since it needed a military garrison both on account of the unstable situation in the country and because of the vicinity to the dangerous Pannonians.¹⁹ For the year 10 BC, Dio reported that the Dacians crossed the frozen Danube and plundered Pannonia, while the Delmatae refused to pay tributes. Tiberius had to return from Gaul to cope with the situation.²⁰ Revolts in both parts of Illyricum continued in the next year, and even in 8 BC the Pannonians had to be subdued by Sex. Appuleius.²¹

Most of Pannonia must have been conquered during the Pannonian War, although no Pannonian peoples are specifically mentioned by name. The immediate neighbours of Tiberius' allies, the Scordisci, were the Breuci and Amantini, thus they were no doubt among the conquered peoples; the latter were settled in the region of Sirmium and Bassianae. Interesting light is shed on this problem by a cenotaph for a ten-year-old boy of the Amantini (found in the village of Putinci in eastern Sirmia), who was drowned in the

¹⁷ Velleius 2. 96. 2; Florus 2. 24; FITZ 1993, 44-46.

¹⁸ Cassius Dio 54. 31. 2-4.

¹⁹ Cassius Dio 54. 34. 3-4.

²⁰ Cassius Dio 54. 36. 2.

²¹ Cassiodorus, *MGH, Chron. min.* I 135. See FITZ 1993, 57.



Fig. 2 The peoples of Upper and Lower Illyricum. From ŠAŠEL, in *Keltoi*, 1983, 13.

river at Emona, where he had been taken hostage.²² The inscription is a unique epigraphic testimony to confirm the Roman practice of taking hostages, very well attested by Appian and other historians. Emona was the last Italian city on the way to Pannonia; that it belonged to Italy is now clear from the recently discovered boundary inscription.²³ The boy was called [S]cemaes of the gens *Undia* (perhaps *Scenas* or *Sceuas*; the names may be corrupt), no doubt belonging to an upper class family. He was from the second *centuria*, either referring to the number of hostages or, perhaps, to a tribal division of some kind among the Amantini.²⁴

Illyricum, then the name of the undivided province, extended as far as the Danube. This was empha-

sised by Augustus in the inscription commemorating his deeds (*Res gestae*): “I subjected to Roman rule, through Tiberius Nero who was then my stepson and legate, certain Pannonian tribes that had not been reached by a Roman army before my reign, thereby extending the frontier of Illyricum as far as the Danube.”²⁵ However, not all of the later Pannonia was subdued during the Pannonian War, and it is not quite clear how these famous words – “*protulique fines Illyrici ad ripam fluminis Danuvii*” – should be correctly understood. How and when did the Romans reach the Danube, and which part of the river was it? Appian had already mentioned that Octavian had ships constructed on the Savus River during his Illyrian War. He intended to use them in his planned campaign against the Dacians to transport provisions for his army to the Danube.²⁶ In the

²² *CIL* III 3224; ŠAŠEL *KOS* 2009, 93.

²³ ŠAŠEL *KOS* 2002.

²⁴ DUŠANIĆ 1967, 67.

²⁵ *Mon. Ancyr.* 30; TÓTH 1977.

²⁶ Appian *Illyr.* 22. 65-66; ŠAŠEL *KOS* 2005, 440.

course of Octavian's actions, which were to a large extent also diplomatic, it would not be impossible that a detachment of Octavian's army might have reached the Danube, as he is said to have expressly claimed before the battle at Actium.²⁷ In this context, we should most probably understand "the Danube" to mean the river's course near Sirmium.

In his *Res gestae*, Augustus was most probably referring to the Pannonian peoples, of which the Andizetes are known to have been the northernmost, and not to the Celtic population of the later Pannonia, living north of the Dravus River.²⁸ Some of these Celtic peoples may have been more or less dependent on the Norican kingdom and consequently not hostile to the Romans; most of their regions may have been peacefully annexed. The Roman frontier in Pannonia shifted along with new conquests, and it may well be that the entire course of the Danube was not firmly in Roman hands before Claudius. Stages in the *limes* development no doubt existed: first of all, a strong military line along the upper Sava River would certainly have been very important in order to capture Segesta/Siscia and annex its territory. The lower course of the river, as well as the Drava and most of the Danube, had not been conquered before the conquests of Tiberius. The legionary camp at Siscia, dating back to Octavian,²⁹ was much earlier than those at Poetovio and Sirmium.³⁰

The Pannonian-Dalmatian Rebellion

However, war preparations against Maroboduus, particularly the recruitment of soldiers, triggered the outbreak of the rebellion in Illyricum (Fig. 3), towards the end of which the large area with five legions was divided into an upper (Dalmatia) and a lower (Pannonia) province.³¹ According to Velleius Paterculus, who himself took part in the war, bringing new recruits from Rome to Tiberius, the collective number of rebels would have amounted to 800,000, including 200,000 infantrymen and 9000 cavalry.³² Expe-

rienced commanders of this army planned – with part of it – to attack Italy, which was connected to their territory by the border areas of Nauportus and Tergeste; part of the army would invade Macedonia, while the third part was intended to defend their own territories.³³ Their leaders, both Batos and Pinnes, enjoyed great authority; the army was disciplined – some even knew Latin and were acquainted with Roman culture.³⁴ They attacked Roman citizens, killing merchants and many veterans, who were settled at some distance from the Roman garrisons. They occupied (parts of) Macedonia, causing great damage everywhere.³⁵

Velleius first mentioned the victory of M. Valerius Messalla Messallinus, *praepositus* of Illyricum, who had been trapped by the enemy with half of the 20th legion. Next he narrated the battles near Mons Claudius (Požeška brda [Požeška Hills], northeast of Siscia), occupied by the rebels, who almost defeated the army brought from the transmarine provinces by A. Caecina Severus and M. Plautius Silvanus. This army consisted of five legions with auxiliary soldiers, accompanied by a detachment of horsemen under the Thracian king Rhoemetalces. For a short time, the entire army was stationed in one camp at Siscia, composed of ten legions, more than seventy cohorts, ten *alae*, and over ten thousand veterans. Since it was impossible to control such a huge force, however, Tiberius accompanied the new legions back to their provinces, returning to Siscia at the beginning of the winter. The next summer, Pannonia capitulated and the rebels deposited their arms at the Bathinus River (the Bosna). Command over the army in the winter camp at Siscia was given to M. Aemilius Lepidus.³⁶

At the beginning of the summer of AD 9, Lepidus set off to join Tiberius in Dalmatia, traversing regions as yet untouched by the war, where he had to fight the enemy on all sides. Germanicus and C. Vibius Postumus, *praepositus* of Dalmatia, also successfully fought in the Dalmatian part of Illyricum. That summer saw the end of the war, with the Perustae, Desidiates and the Delmatae decisively

²⁷ Cassius Dio 50. 24. 4; ŠAŠEL KOS, *ib.*

²⁸ FITZ 1998; *id.* 1993, 13–14.

²⁹ RADMAN-LIVAJA 2007, 161 ff.

³⁰ Poetovio: some time after 15 BC, see HORVAT et al. 2003, 156; Sirmium: a Roman stronghold attested in AD 6: MIRKOVIĆ 2004, 147.

³¹ KOVÁČS 2008, with earlier literature; ŠAŠEL KOS 2010.

³² Velleius 2. 110. 3. Appian, however, noted that there had been a total of 100,000 men capable of fighting among the Pannonians at the time of Octavian's Illyrian war (Appian *Illyr.* 22. 63). This is closer to reality, cf. also DŽINO 2006.

³³ DŽINO 2010, 147 refuses to give credit to this plan, which, however, is partly confirmed by subsequent Roman strategy and actions, and indirectly also by the account of Cassius Dio (see *infra*).

³⁴ Velleius 2. 110. 5: Velleius' optimistic remark could have referred to a few only, cf. ALFÖLDY 1995, 26.

³⁵ Velleius 2. 110.

³⁶ Velleius 2. 111–114; commentary in RADMAN-LIVAJA / DIZDAR 2010; some aspects in DŽINO 2009.



Fig. 3 The outbreak of the Pannonian-Dalmatian rebellion in AD 6. Following ŠAŠEL KOS 1986, 191 (computer graphics M. Belak).

defeated.³⁷ Velleius intended to describe the “Pannonian and Dalmatian war” – as he calls it – in a special volume. Shortly after the war in Illyricum ended, news came of the defeat of P. Quinctilius Varus in Germany.

The account of Cassius Dio, although fragmentary in parts, is nonetheless more comprehensive; it is partially different, but also partially complementary. However, it is only possible to combine their differing data in a hypothetical manner.³⁸ Dio mentioned the attack of the Breuci under Bato on Sirmium, which must have become an important Roman stronghold after the Pannonian War; it was

saved by Caecina Severus, commander of the army from Moesia. Meanwhile, the Delmataean Bato, who had been injured during the siege of Salona, where he had achieved nothing, plundered the coast as far as Apollonia, where he defeated the Romans. In a joint action with the Breucian Bato, they took Mt. Alma (Fruška gora, to the far north of Sirmium), but were defeated by Thracian Rhoemetalces, who had been sent ahead by Caecina Severus. Severus, however, was unable to conquer them, and, moreover, had to return to Moesia, which had been invaded in his absence by the Dacians and Sarmatians. Rhoemetalces also checked the rebels’ invasion of Macedonia.³⁹

The next year, AD 7, the young Germanicus was sent with new recruits to Illyricum and eventually conquered the Maezaei. Severus came from Moesia

³⁷ Velleius 2. 115-117.

³⁸ The course of the rebellion is usually presented as a combined narrative in modern commentaries, from the earliest (cited in ŠAŠEL KOS 1986, 180-182) to the latest in DZINO 2010, 142 ff. Some of the hypotheses, however, already figure as facts, which is misleading.

³⁹ Cassius Dio 55. 28. 7 – 31. 2.

to the Volcaean Marshes, where he was attacked by both Batos, and defeated them. The Delmatae and Pannonians, who were suffering from hunger and diseases, wanted to negotiate for peace the next year. At this point there is a lacuna in Dio's text. Shortly afterwards, Bato the Breucan betrayed Pinnes and was rewarded with command over the Breuci. However, the other Bato attacked him in an ambush and had him killed. After the defeat of the Breuci by Silvanus, Bato lost all hope of being able to retain Pannonia, so he installed guards at all routes leading to Dalmatia and plundered the country. Soon the other Pannonian peoples also surrendered.⁴⁰

Dio's account of the conquest of Dalmatia in the last year is much more detailed than that of Velleius, ending with the description of Germanicus' conquest of Arduba, the fall of Andetrium, a naturally fortified hilltop stronghold not far from Saloniae, and the surrender of Bato and his son Sceuas. Bato gave a long speech in defence of his people, and on being asked why they had started the rebellion, he replied with the famous words that the Romans had sent wolves instead of shepherd dogs to the province.⁴¹

Very few small finds can be directly related to Tiberius' wars in Pannonia, mainly because Roman or Celtic weapons cannot be defined chronologically in an exact way. A coin hoard was found between Osijek and Valpovo, in the territory of Mursa (Osijek), the region of the Andizetes, where an auxiliary camp may have been located after Tiberius' Pannonian War.⁴² The hoard, which mainly contained coins from the late Republican period (1st century BC), but included a few coins minted by Augustus between 19 and 2 BC, may have been hidden during the great rebellion. There are pieces of weapons from Cibalae (Vinkovci), such as a sword, two long narrow-headed spears, a short spear and a conical spear mount that could have belonged to an indigenous Celtic warrior or an auxiliary soldier.⁴³ A Weisenau type helmet of the early 1st century AD was found in the Sava River near the site of ancient Marsonia (Slavonski Brod). Some weapons, particularly helmets, are known from Siscia (Sisak).⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Cassius Dio 55. 34. 3 – 7.

⁴¹ Cassius Dio 56. 11 – 17. 2; Bato's speech, although fictitious, tells much about Roman organisation of the province and brutality after the Pannonian War.

⁴² FILIPOVIĆ 2004, 157.

⁴³ DIZDAR / RADMAN-LIVAJA 2004.

⁴⁴ RADMAN-LIVAJA 2004, 17-18.

Evidence of the Roman army in Illyricum

According to current estimation, the following five legions were stationed in Illyricum at the outbreak of the great rebellion in AD 6: *IX Hispana*, *XIII* and *XIV Gemina*, *XV Apollinaris* and *XX*. Aquileia retained its great strategic role as an important military, administrative and logistic base during the Pannonian War and the great rebellion; Roman troops were temporarily stationed in or around the city, particularly *legio XX*, before it was transferred to Burnum in Dalmatia under Augustus.⁴⁵ Emona was not a camp of *XV Apollinaris*,⁴⁶ since at that time the town was almost certainly a Roman colony, probably founded early in Augustus' reign, if not soon after Actium. However, legions, or parts of them, must have been temporarily stationed in and around Emona as well; it, too, must have had a significant logistic role.⁴⁷ *IX Hispana* was probably stationed in Siscia, where more than two legions had already been left by Octavian in 34 BC, and where the summer camp of the three Pannonian legions in AD 14 (the year of their revolt after the death of Augustus) was most probably located.⁴⁸

The Emona Basin was situated at the far border with the Pannonian part of Illyricum, and had to be protected. Archaeological evidence indicates that Nauportus was fortified in the Augustan age (Fig. 4).⁴⁹ Recent excavations and new finds also confirm the logistic role of Emona in Tiberius' Pannonian War.⁵⁰ A camp from this period was located close to the Ljubljanica River,⁵¹ which in addition to connecting Nauportus and Emona, could – since it flows into the Sava – easily have been used to convey cargo and even troops directly from Nauportus to Segestica/Siscia.⁵² Many important finds were discovered in the Ljubljanica, such as a medalion with a portrait of Augustus that could have been worn by a Roman soldier fighting in the Pannonian War.⁵³ Further camps have recently been

⁴⁵ WILKES 1969, 92-93.

⁴⁶ According to the epigraphic, numismatic and other archaeological evidence, Emona was most probably never a legionary fortress on any permanent basis: ŠAŠEL 1968, 561 ff. (1992, 571 ff.); ŠAŠEL KOS 1995; GASPARI 2010, 113 ff.

⁴⁷ GASPARI 2010, *passim*, particularly 113 ff. and 141 ff.

⁴⁸ ŠAŠEL 1974, 732-734 (1992, 615-616).

⁴⁹ MUŠIČ / HORVAT 2007.

⁵⁰ MIŠKEC 2009.

⁵¹ HVALEC et al. 2009.

⁵² ISTENIĆ 2009.

⁵³ ISTENIĆ 2003; ISTENIĆ 2009a.

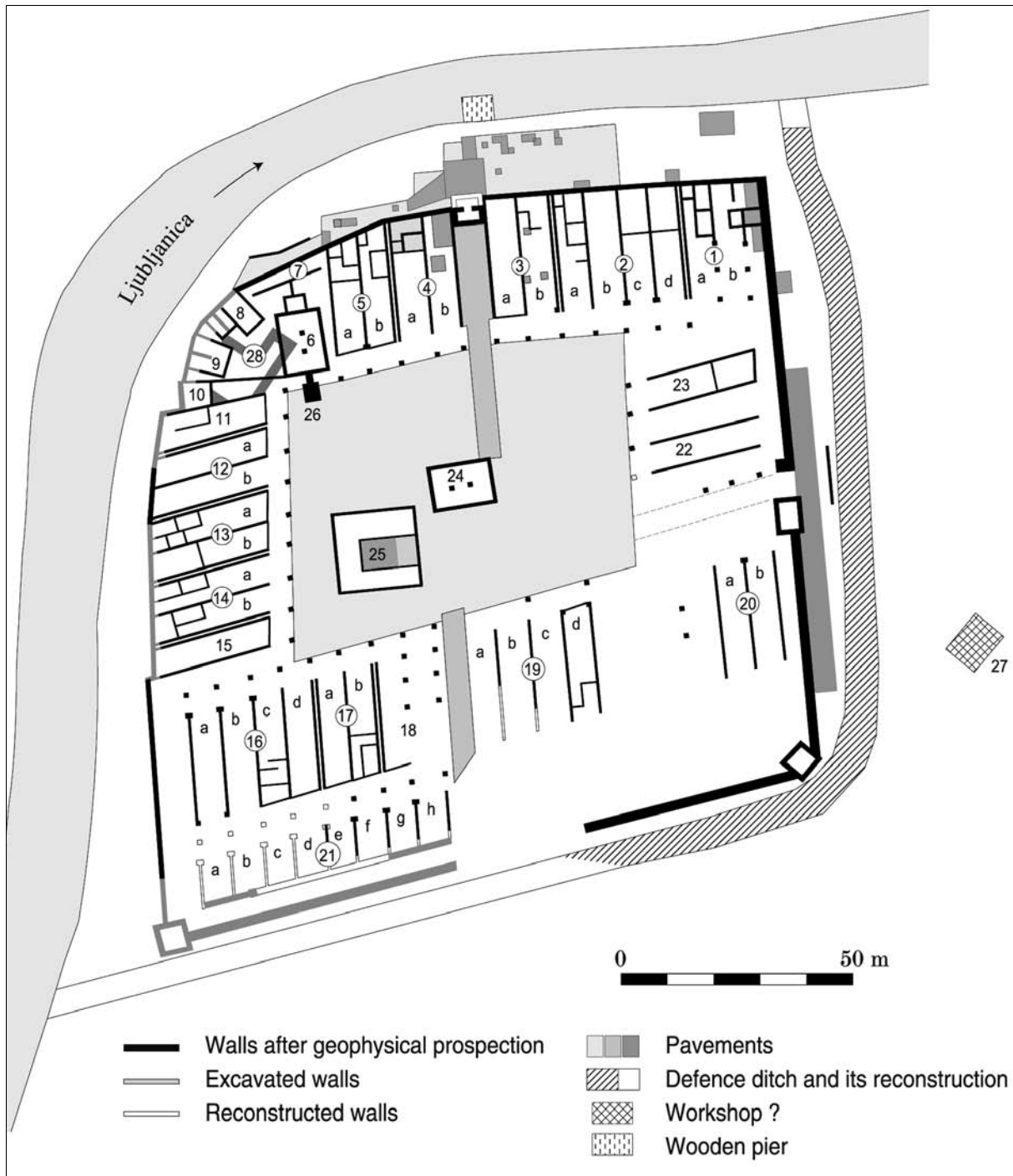


Fig. 4 Nauportus was fortified in the Augustan age. From HORVAT 2008, 114, Fig. 4 (computer graphics M. Belak).

discovered at Sv. Urh and Čatež near Brežice, as well as at Obrežje (Fig. 5), all three of them along the Sava River.⁵⁴ According to the coin finds from the excavations, the latter should almost certainly be placed in the period of the great rebellion;⁵⁵ it is situated at the present-day border between Slovenia and Croatia.

Legion XX was stationed at Burnum (Šuplja Crkva on the Krka River), having been brought there by M. Aemilius Lepidus from Lower Illyricum (Pannonia) in AD 9, on the great march to Dalmatia in the final year of the rebellion. It has recently been proposed that the native fortress at Puljane opposite Burnum, usually regarded as pre-Roman Burnum, may have been Arduba, conquered by Germanicus.⁵⁶ Soon,

⁵⁴ MASON 2008.

⁵⁵ MIŠKEC 2009.

⁵⁶ PERIŠA 2008, 513.



Fig. 5 The Augustan military camp at Obrežje along the Sava River. From MASON 2008, 190.

still in the same year, the legion had to leave Illyricum for Germany, after Varus' defeat, and legion *XI* came to replace it. Excavations are continuing in the camp of legion *VII*, at Tiliurium (Gardun near Trilj),⁵⁷

where a *tropaeum* commemorating Roman victory in Illyricum in AD 9 was found;⁵⁸ before this legion, the *IX Hispana* may have been stationed there. Tiliurium is located near an important crossing of the

⁵⁷ SANADER et al. 2003.

⁵⁸ CAMBI 1984; CAMBI 2007, 99 Fig. 89.

Cetina River that flows beneath it, *Pons Tiluri*, on the road linking Saloniae and the capital of the Delmatae, Delminium, in Duvanjsko plain.

All Tiberius' wars in Illyricum had ended, as had the short-lived revolt of the Pannonian legions in AD 14. Urbanisation and the creation of provinces went hand in hand; the coastal part of Dalmatia was urbanised under Caesar and Augustus;⁵⁹ Illyricum was a Roman province under Augustus at the latest. After the rebellion, it was divided into Upper and Lower Illyricum.⁶⁰ Noricum was urbanised under Claudius and organised as a province at the same time;⁶¹ an analogous process took place in Pannonia, the former Lower Illyricum, but one generation later, under Vespasian.⁶²

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⁵⁹ WILKES 1969, 192 ff.

⁶⁰ See, recently, KOVÁCS 2008 and ŠAŠEL KOS 2010.

⁶¹ WEBER 2008.

⁶² ŠAŠEL 1989, 57–60 (1992, 690–693).

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