

A rare variant of Roman wax-spatulae

It is not always easy to identify fragmented objects collected during excavations of some archaeological site. In the case when such a fragment has formal and ornamental characteristics which generally don't appear on any other type of object, a positive identification is possible.

In 1897 L. Jacobi in his excellent publication of the Saalburg castellum in Germany published a nice drawing of a bronze fragment, which according to him could belong to a mirror-handle ("Spiegelgriff" - Jacobi 1897, 455, pl. 61: 4). Its upper part seems to be broken off (fig. 1: 1). The second part from the top has the form of a thick column with octagonal transverse section, the third one the form of a high trapeze with rhombic vertical section and the fourth, which is cleft, the form of a low trapeze. The four parts were divided by three, two and one horizontal ribs.

Another similar fragment, found in Milano (Bolla 1991, 51, pl. 158: 3), was interpreted as a knife handle ("impugnatura di coltello"). It has an almost identical vertical section as the preceding one, but here both upper parts are missing (fig. 1: 2). The Milano fragment still has a part of an iron blade, inserted in the cleft of its fourth part and secured with an iron rivet.

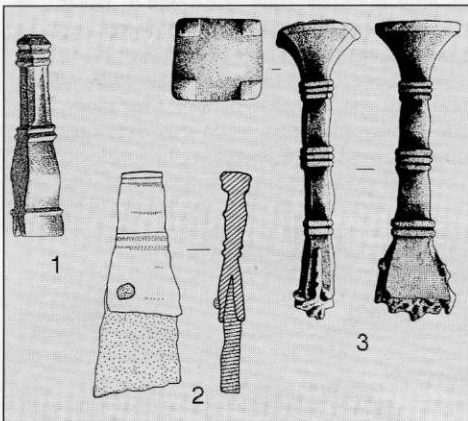


Fig. 1 - Bronze handles of the A4a variant of wax-spatulae: 1 Saalburg (after Jacobi), 2 Milano (after Bolla), 3 Monte do Farrobo (after Alarcão). Scale 1:2.

One complete bronze handle of this type was found in grave 1 of the Roman necropolis at Monte do Farrobo in Portugal (Alarcão 1974, 6, pl. 1: 1). The upper part is extended and has a square upper surface (fig. 1: 3). It differs from the first two examples in having the third part of the same form and section (octagonal) as the second part. In the cleft of the lower, trapezoidal part we can observe the remains of an iron blade. Alarcão's identification of this object as a mirror-handle ("cabo de espelho") was opposed by Boon (1991, 31, fig. 4: f), who claimed it belonged to a special type of razor.

However, another complete handle, found at Porolissum in Roumania and ascribed by Gudea (1992, pl. 10: 10) to the medical instruments, corresponds perfectly by its form to the fragments from Saalburg and Milano. It was Michel Feugère who stated that this handle belonged to a wax-spatula, because it is identical to the handle of a complete spatula, found in grave 21 of the necropolis at Duklja (*Doclea*) in Montenegro (Feugère 1995, 321 s, fig. 1: A4, notes 3 and 8). He ascribed the specimens from Porolissum and Duklja to his type A4 of wax-spatulae, comprising all spatulae with a bronze handle except those having a faceted bronze handle, defined as type A3 (Feugère, Giovannini 2000, 35 s, fig. 3). Although he did not state it explicitly, Feugère obviously claimed that the well-preserved specimen from Duklja was a wax-spatula first, because it has a triangular blade and square head

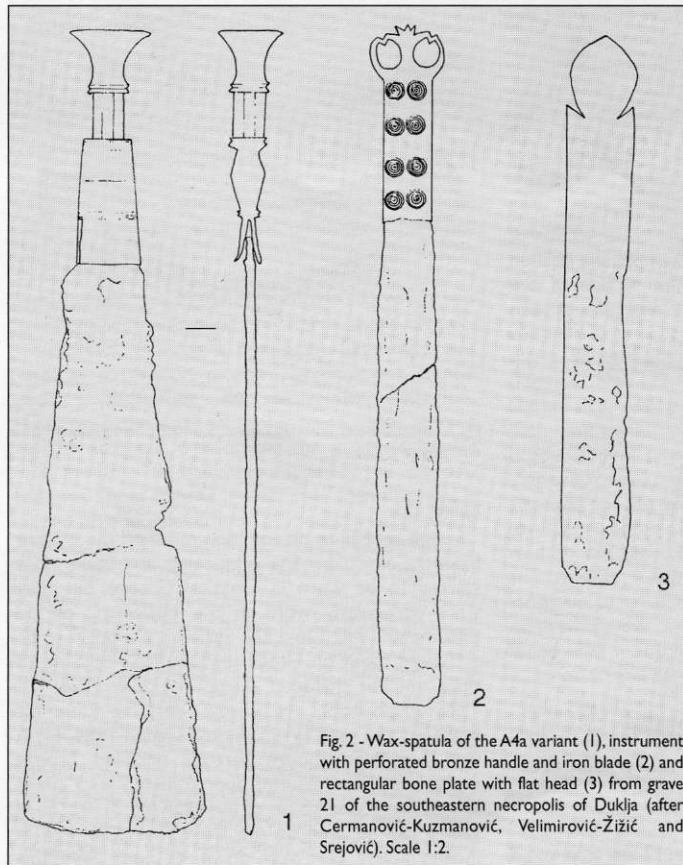


Fig. 2 - Wax-spatula of the A4a variant (1), instrument with perforated bronze handle and iron blade (2) and rectangular bone plate with flat head (3) from grave 21 of the southeastern necropolis of Duklja (after Cermanović-Kuzmanović, Velimirović-Žižić and Srejšević). Scale 1:2.

both corresponding to the most common type of wax-spatulae, that is type A1 (Feugère 1998, 24, fig. 1: 44; Feugère, Giovannini 2000, 35, fig. 1: A1; 2: 1, 2), and second, because grave 21 among others contained a bronze inkwell.

and the spatula blade were lying close together at the left hand (*ibid.* and the grave plan on p. 132). The spatula from cremation grave 71a (*ibid.*, 71, pl. 7) belongs to type B2 (Feugère 1995, 321, fig. 1: B2) and that from grave 21, already mentioned, to type A4.

in memoriam professor doctor Jan Kees Haalebos

The department of Provincial Roman Archaeology of the University of Nijmegen has lost its inspiring professor.

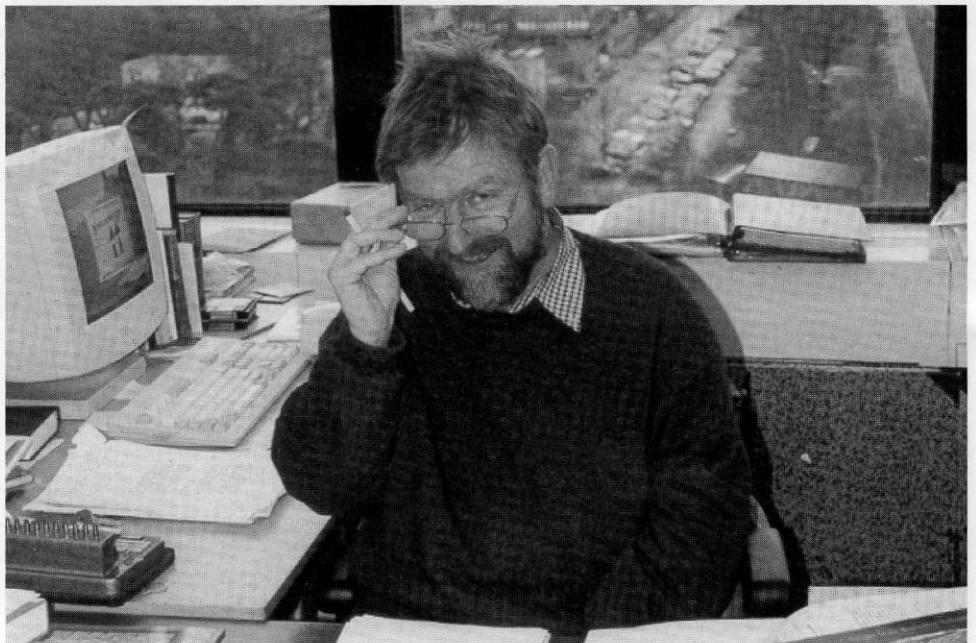
Jan Kees Haalebos, who died only 58 years old, obtained his doctorate *cum laude* in Amsterdam in 1973 on the castella from Zwammerdam (*Nigrum Pullum*). Since 1970 he worked in Nijmegen where he was engaged in several excavations, among which the 10-years excavation on the legionary camp and canabae is well known from the year-

ly publications. In 1995 he became professor, succeeding the famous professor J.E. Bogaers. Not only was he one of the leading archaeologists studying the *limes* in Germania Inferior, he also published on Roman military in general and was well known for his knowledge of ceramics and epigraphy. He was chairman of the *Rei Cretariae Romanae Fautores* and active in many archaeological committees and organisations.

In recent times he excavated in Alphen aan den Rijn, Woerden, Zwammerdam, and Elst in the Netherlands, and also in Tihau and Romita in Romania. These excavations led to many (international) publications.

The archaeological world has lost a dear and much respected colleague and a very creative and original thinker.

drs. Paul Franzen
p.franzen@let.kun.nl



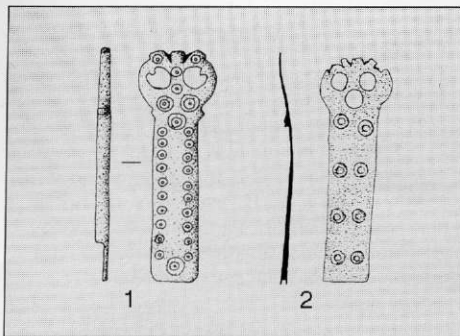


Fig. 3 - Bronze perforated handles from Volubilis (1, after Boube-Piccot) and Niederbieber (2, after Oldenstein). Scale 1:2.

The inventory of the cremation grave 21 is extremely interesting (Cermanović, Srejšević, Velimirović 1965, Y 72; Cermanović-Kuzmanović, Velimirović-Žižić, Srejšević 1975, 58, 325, pl. 3). In cylindrical stone urn with loaf shaped cover were put beside a glass cup several instruments: a bronze inkwell, a wax-spatula (fig. 2: 1), an instrument with narrow iron blade and perforated bronze handle (fig. 2: 2), two rectangular bone plates, one of which has a flat head (fig. 2: 3), a short knife with silver casing and a bronze coin, maybe of the emperor Caracalla. The grave was dated to the first half of the 3rd century, not the 2nd, as Feugère mistakenly wrote (1995, 322, note 8).

The possible function of the instrument with bronze handle, perforated with two peltae and ornamented with eight groups of concentric circles (fig. 2: 2), remains unknown because of the lack of the blade section in the publications. Nevertheless, we can cite some parallels for the handle. Some years ago Ch. Boube-Piccot published 16 examples of very similar bronze objects from two sites in Morocco (Volubilis and Banasa) and interpreted them as strap-ends (Boube-Piccot 1994, 95-98, nos. 146-161, pls. 14-15; 71-72 - here fig. 3: 1). It is much more probable that they are handles of instruments of the same type as the one entirely preserved from Duktja, but have all lost their iron blades, as this also happens frequently with wax-spatulae with a bronze handle and an iron blade. Boube-Piccot noted traces of iron rust in the cleft lower ends of four examples (nos. 146 and 156-158), and even the remains of an iron blade in another (no. 160). The specimens from Morocco, dated by Boube-Piccot on the basis of their decoration to the 3rd century AD, and one handle of the same form and decoration found in the camp of Niederbieber (Oldenstein 1976, 203, 271, pl. 68: 894 - here fig. 3: 2), which was in use from 190 to 260 AD (Boube-Piccot 1994, 95), perfectly confirm the dating of grave 21 from Duktja.

The rectangular bone plate with flat head (fig. 2: 3) in our opinion doesn't represent a bone label, as suggested by the most scholars who deal with Roman bone objects (see for example Carnap-Bornheim 1994, 350 s, fig. 9: 9, 10; Mikler 1997, 27, pl. 18: 1; Deschler-Erb 1998, 153), but an instrument, connected with writing. This is proved by its presence in several other tombs which contained writing instruments, e. g. in the tombs from Berlingen in Belgium and Nijmegen in the Netherlands (Boeselager 1989, 227) as well as from Sinj in Dalmatia (Gabričević 1983, 21, fig. 11 - with a bronze inkwell) and from Salzburg in Austria (Künzl 1982, 114, fig. 90: 7 - with a wax-spatula and a bronze inkwell).

The small group of five wax-spatulae described in this article represents a rather rare variant of the A4 type according to Feugère, who in a letter written to us on 13th March 2001 proposed for it a denomination "variant a, or variant Duktja" of A4 type of the Roman wax-spatulae. This variant can be dated to the first half of the 3rd century AD, perhaps also running into the beginning of the second. This dating is supported by the date of grave 21 from Duktja, by the presence of one specimen in the castellum of Saalburg, which Roman troops left at the latest in the year 260 AD (Böhme 1972, 9), and by the fact that one handle was found in Porolissum in the

province of Dacia, which was abandoned during the reign of the emperor Aurelianus (270-275; Fitz 1964, 1356).

Dragan Božič
Inštitut za arheologijo ZRC SAZU
Gosposka 13, SI-1000 Ljubljana, Slovenija
Dragan.Bozic@zrc-sazu.si

Bibliography

Alarcão 1974 : J. de Alarcão, A necrópole do Monte do Farrobo (Aljustrel). *Conimbriga* 13, 1974, 5-32.

Boeselager 1989 : D. von Boeselager, Funde und Darstellungen römischer Schreibzeugfalterale. *Kölner Jahrbuch für Vor- und Frühgeschichte* 22, 1989, 221-239.

Böhme 1972 : A. Böhme, Die Fibeln der Kastelle Saalburg und Zugmantel. *Saalburg Jahrbuch* 29, 1972, 5-112.

Bolla 1991 : M. Bolla, Reperti metallici. In : D. Caporusso (ed.), *Scavi MM3. Ricerche di archeologia urbana a Milano durante la costruzione della linea 3 della Metropolitana* 1982 - 1990, Milano 1991, 51-56.

Boon 1991 : G. C. Boon, Tonsor Humanus: Razor and Toilet-knife in Antiquity. *Britannia* 22, 1991, 21-32.

Boube-Piccot 1994 : Ch. Boube-Piccot, *Les bronzes antiques du Maroc 4, L'équipement militaire et l'armement*, Paris 1994.

Carnap-Bornheim 1994 : C. von Carnap-Bornheim, Die beinernen Gegenstände aus Kastell und Vicus in Niederbieber. *Bonner Jahrbücher* 194, 1994, 341-395.

Cermanović, Srejšević, Velimirović 1965 : A. Cermanović, D. Srejšević, O. Velimirović, *La nécropole romaine à Duktja (Doclea) près de Titograd en Monténégro* (Inv. Arch. Jug. 8), Beograd 1965.

Cermanović-Kuzmanović, Velimirović-Žižić, Srejšević 1975 : A. Cermanović-Kuzmanović, O. Velimirović-Žižić, D. Srejšević, *Antička Duktja. Nekropole [The Roman cemetery at Doclea]*, Cetinje 1975.

Deschler-Erb 1998 : S. Deschler-Erb, *Römische Beinartefakte aus Augusta Raurica* (Forsch. in Augst 27), Augst 1998.

Feugère 1995 : M. Feugère, Les spatules à cire à manche figuré. In : *Provinzialrömische Forschungen. Festschrift für Günter Ulbert zum 65. Geburtstag*, Espelkamp 1995, 321-338.

Feugère 1998 : M. Feugère, Ecrire aux morts? A propos des boîtes à sceau en contexte funéraire. *Instrumentum* 7, 1998, 24-25.

Feugère, Giovannini 2000 : M. Feugère, A. Giovannini, Spatole da cera in Aquileia. *Instrumentum* 12, 2000, 35-36.

Fitz 1974 : J. Fitz, Dacia. In : *Der kleine Pauly* 1, Stuttgart 1964, 1355-1357.

Gabričević 1983 : B. Gabričević, Antička nekropola u Sinju [Nécropole antique de Sinj]. *Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju dalmatinsku* 76, 1983, 5-101.

Gudea 1992 : N. Gudea, Instrumente medicale si ustensile fosilite de medicii si farmacistii romani din Dacia Porolissensis contributii la studiul medicinei romane. *Acta Mus. Porolissensis* 16, 1992, 249-291.

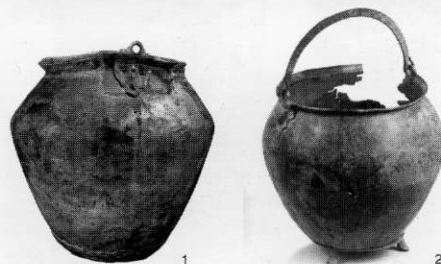
Jacobi 1897 : L. Jacobi, *Das Römerkastell Saalburg bei Homburg vor der Höhe*, Homburg vor der Höhe 1897.

Künzl 1982 : E. Künzl, Medizinische Instrumente aus Sepulkralfunden der römischen Kaiserzeit. *Bonner Jahrbücher* 182, 1982, 1-131.

Mikler 1997 : H. Mikler, *Die römischen Funde aus Bein im Landesmuseum Mainz* (Monogr. Instrum. 1), Montagnac 1997.

Oldenstein 1976 : J. Oldenstein, Zur Ausrüstung römischer Auxiliareinheiten. *Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission* 57, 1976, 49-284.

XV Congresso internazionale sui Bronzi antichi «Produzione e tecnologia» Aquileia e Grado, 22-26 Maggio 2001



Stutles en bronze, Ye-Vie s., Gaule méridionale

CALL FOR PAPERS

Il XV Congresso Internazionale sui Bronzi Antichi, con il tema «Produzione e Tecnologia» si terrà nei giorni 22-26 Maggio 2001 nelle sedi di Grado ed Aquileia; sarà organizzato dal Corso di Diploma Universitario per Operatore dei Beni Culturali, Università di Udine, sede di Gorizia, in collaborazione con i Comuni di Grado e Aquileia e potrà essere per molti colleghi l'occasione di conoscere il ricco e significativo patrimonio archeologico, storico ed artistico della regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

Le tematiche del congresso lasciano volutamente ampio spazio ai temi, sia nell'approccio, archeologico o archeometrico, che nei materiali di ricerca.

Si invitano gli interessati ad inviare la loro adesione, entro il 30 Novembre 2000 preferibilmente via e-mail, se possibile con titolo provvisorio della relazione proposta, a:

BRONZE CONGRESS
DUOBC Università di Udine,
Palazzo Alvarez, Via Diaz 5
I - 34170 GORIZIA (Italia)
Tel.: 0039 0481 580333; Fax.: 580322
e-mail: archeo@cego.uniud.it

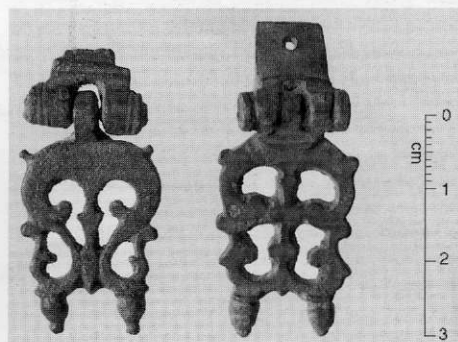
con i seguenti dati:

Nome e Cognome
Ente di appartenenza
Indirizzo postale
Telefono e Fax
e-mail

Si richiede inoltre, entro il 31 Gennaio 2001 e preferibilmente via e-mail, un riassunto dei contributi in formato A4, con titolo, autore/autori ed ente/enti di appartenenza. Si prega di sottolineare il nome del relatore. Un volume con gli abstracts delle comunicazioni verrà distribuito all'inizio del convegno. È prevista inoltre la pubblicazione degli Atti del Congresso.

Per i partecipanti provenienti dai paesi dell'Europa Orientale sono previsti, previa richiesta, contributi per il finanziamento del viaggio e per la sistemazione alberghiera.

Per il Comitato Organizzatore
Alessandra Giunilia-Mair



Pendants articulés en bronze; St-Saturin (Hérault); Montagnac, maison du patrimoine.

Cotisation, abonnement :
adresser 100 FF à *Instrumentum*,
(38 rue Lafayette, 34530 Montagnac).
Libeller les chèques à l'ordre
d'*Instrumentum*; paiement de l'étranger:
merci d'utiliser un Mandat International.
Payment from abroad : please
use an International Money Order or a
Giro Transfer (Eurocheques can be charges
to *Instrumentum* up to 60 FF !)