On the basis of available data, the author shall search for sites of Roman naval bases at the Eastern Adriatic, particularly along the Croatian coastline and on its islands.

In both prehistory and antiquity this part of the Adriatic has always been the preferred one for the maritime traffic, due to its countless islands and islets, and to one of the most indented coasts in the world, which secured numerous shelters and anchorages to ships and their crews. These features alone justify assumption that there must have been some other Roman naval stations, and not just in the main port of the classis praetoria Ravennatium in Ravenna at the western coast of the Adriatic Sea. Epigraphic evidence suggests that naval stations must have existed at least in Salona, and somewhere near Aporus, on Colentum and perhaps in Iader; unfortunately, literary sources and archaeological data are almost completely lacking.

Key words: Roman Dalmatia, Roman imperial fleets, Adriatic Sea, Salona, Aporus, Colentum, Iader

Many things changed in Roman world after the Battle of Actium in 31 BC: not only that Octavian’s victory marked important shift in political and social orders, but other spheres underwent important reforms as well.⁴ One of such things that were reformed shortly after the Battle of Actium was the Roman navy. At the end of 31 BC, Octavian collected his ships (some 700, including cca 400 which he brought from Italy and some 300 of Marc Anthony’s ships, taken at Actium or during the Actium campaign). Most of the captured ships that were in the Gulf of Actium were either dedicated to Actian Apollo or burned or scrapped, while the remainder were formed into a squadron. When Octavian left with his main fleet to finish the conquest of the East, this squadron sailed to Forum Iulii, presumably in the fall of 31. This is the event that marked birth of the Roman standing navy.⁵

It was Forum Iulii (present-day Fréjus near Marseilles) that was the first naval base of the newly created permanent naval force that was the Roman imperial fleet. It was considered equal to Misenum and Ravenna, the two principal bases of the imperial navy. Archaeological evidence suggests that this town was chosen due to its important strategic location at the crossroads of Mediterranean trade routes, and its proximity to the Rhone River, which provided access to the interior of Gaul. Misenum and Ravenna, the two principal bases of the imperial navy, were located further inland, at the mouths of the Po and Po, respectively, providing better protection against piracy and ensuring easier transport of supplies and personnel.

¹ Cf. ECK 2007, 43 ff.
logical excavations have unearthed remains of military camp just south of the colony of Forum Iulii; the camp existed several decades: it was built at the latest at the very turn of the eras (cca 10 BC - AD 15) and was definitely abandoned around the AD 70. A large bay has been presumed existing to its SW, which must have been capable accepting very large ships as were those captured from Marc Anthony. While in existence, the naval base in Forum Iulii was in charge of guarding the coastal regions of Gaul, but it could have also served for transferring the land forces further inland.

On the other hand, imperial bases in Misenum and Ravenna kept their positions as chief naval ports for several centuries. Exact year of their creation still remains a topic of discussion, but it has been a common opinion that it happened early in the Augustus’s reign (i.e. shortly or immediately after the Battle of Actium). Both harbours were designed with only one purpose: to be military naval centres. According to some calculations, the Misenate fleet was stronger than the Ravenate one, and is considered as the most important in the Empire. Ships and sailors of the Misenate fleet were in charge of many tasks and vast territory: dealing with sporadic piracy in Sardinia or Corsica, guarding the Italian littoral and maintaining the peace in the Tyrrhenian Sea, general supervision of navigation and commerce, providing the courier service and some special services (for ex. transport of emperors, their familiares and other dignitaries), tending the awnings which warded off the sun at Colosseum, etc. Because of that some squadrons were detached in other ports and places: city of Rome (with the largest detachment of the Misenate fleet) and the near-by Ostia (or, rather, Portus), Puteoli, Centumcellae, and some others, even at the Eastern Mediterranean (as, for instance, in Piraeus). These fleet detachments (or vexillations) did not necessarily have ships permanently attached.
The Ravennate fleet had smaller area and fewer tasks in its jurisdiction: its ships and crews protected eastern Italian regions from threats that might come either from sea or land, or assisted the Misenate fleet in other seas and/or in preparations for representations of naval battles in Rome. Its detachments were fewer than those of the Misenate fleet; apart from a small contingent in Rome, such stations were in Lorium, and might have been in Aquileia (during the 1st cent. AD), Dyrhachium (in the early years of the 1st cent. AD) and perhaps in Salona. Two inscriptions found at lake Fucinum indicate a presence of a land detachment there.

One of the tasks of the Ravennate fleet, at least in the early years, was to watch over the eastern Adriatic coast. In addition, the base in Ravenna provided an excellent supply base for wars in Illyricum (especially in the eastern Adriatic hinterland) and its establishment might have well been a step in Augustus’s plans for expansion to the Danube.

Prior to proceeding with the subject-matter of the paper, a brief introduction is in order regarding first appearances of the Roman navy in the Eastern Adriatic. Keeping in mind geography of Adriatic coasts, the eastern one has been the preferred maritime route since the earliest times due to its countless islands and islets and to one of the most indented coasts in the world, which secured numerous shelters and anchorages to ships and their crews. Apart from ships of native populates, foreign - mostly mercantile ships - sailed these waters, as well, which is well attested by literary sources and archaeological evidence. Native peoples were notorious for their piracy (Liv. a. U. c., X.2), which provoked first military interventions of Romans in these parts of the world (Polyb. II.2.1 and II.8). The best way to fight pirates was, of course, with war-ships. Then, as well as later, in other conflicts at the Eastern Adriatic (and its hinterland!), Roman war-ships engaged in naval battles or served as transport-ships, carrying infantry and cavalry for land battles.

The earliest records of the Roman navy in the Eastern Adriatic that we know of are connected with the Illyrian piracy in the late 3rd century BC (First Illyrian war, 229-228 BC). In 229 Roman embassy came to the Illyrian Queen Teuta while she besieged Issa (Polyb. III.18.7). The Battle of Pharos was partly naval, and partly on land (Polyb. III.18.8.12 and III.19.1-8). Roman naval forces were certainly employed in war campaigns that followed in the first half of the 2nd cent. BC: (the Second) Histrian War (178-177 BC), the Third Illyrian War (169-168 BC), as well as in the campaign against Ardiaei and Phlepaiai (136-135 BC). Campaigns against Delmatae were dealt on land both in the 2nd and the 1st centuries BC, but they required ships to transport Roman soldiers to the other side of the Adriatic. Similarly, C. Sempronius Tuditanus must have employed ships to reach the River Titius in 129 BC.

The Adriatic Sea was one of battlefields in the civil war fought between Caesar and Pompey in mid-first century BC. Although it was not one of the major battlefields, control over it was important for both adversaries, since it secured eastern Italian coast and approaches to Rome itself as well as the shortest way from Macedonia to Italy. In addition to several land battles (for which Roman forces were at least partly brought by sea, aboard war-ships and sometimes aboard other types of vessels), such as the Battle of Salona in 49 BC or a terrible defeat A. Gabinius suffered by Delmatae at Synodium in 48/47 BC, some of the crucial battles were fought at sea. Both opposing generals sent admirals and a fleet to the Adriatic so in these years there sailed two fleets which surely engaged each other in battles or
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26 For Octavian’s actions in Illyricum see ŠAŠEL KOS 2005, 393 ff., 435 ff.; MATIJAŠIĆ 2009, 147-158; HOTI 1992, 135-138; WILKES 1969, 46-57 (especially 50 ff.).

27 For that war - “the most serious of all foreign wars since those with Carthage” (according to SUET. Tib. 16.1; translation: ROFFE 197910, 319) - see MATIJAŠIĆ 2009, 158-161; HOTI 1992, 138 ff.; WILKES 1969, 58-69.

28 Cf. WILKES 1969, 92, 95 ff., 471 ff. Further inland, in Pannonian regions, there were other fortresses which were of great importance, such as Siscia (established in 35 BC), Sirmium, Emona etc.; HOTI 1992, 138; MÓCSY 1974, 34 ff., 42 f.; cf. ŠAŠEL KOS 2011, 112 f.


32 According to my research through all the major epigraphic corpora, there are little more than 70 inscriptions of legionaries of various ranks from Burnum.

33 Skirmishes that, unfortunately, we know nothing about. However, the literary sources described in some detail the Battle of Curicum in 49 BC and the Battle off the island of Tauris (not far from the island of Hvar) in 47 BC. Caesar’s fleet was heavily defeated in the former, while in the latter it celebrated victory over Pompeian forces and regained control over the Adriatic.25

In 35 BC Octavian attacked by the fleet south-Adriatic islands Melite (present-day Mljet) and Corcyra Niger (Corea) and destroyed their communities because their people practiced piracy; the same reason was the cause for him to seize ships from Liburni in northern Adriatic. In the course of the same year he started his inland campaigns in Illyricum, conquering the Iapodes, Pannonian city of Segestica and, in 34-33 BC defeated the Delmatae. War and transport ships were inevitable during these campaigns, as well; his advance against the Iapodes most probably started in the Adriatic city of Senia (present-day Senj beneath the Velebit Mountain) where he must have arrived by ships. In addition, ships were mentioned in his war plans during his siege of Segestica, which were either to be provided by some socii or built by Octavian.26 Finally, ships most probably transported at least part of Roman forces during the Great Pannonian-Dalmatian Rebellion of AD 6-9.27

As shown above, Roman war-ships were more or less constantly present at the Eastern Adriatic at least since the late 2nd century BC. They still acted against native communities and peoples (as, for instance, in the above mentioned Octavian’s actions against pirates in 35 BC) or transported soldiers to fight against peoples in its hinterland and in the continental Illyricum until the AD 9, i.e., more or less at the same time when Augustus established the imperial fleet base in Ravenna, at the western Adriatic coast. In such circumstances military bases were most probably needed at the eastern Adriatic coast, as well. The earliest permanent military camps were built only few decades later but in the hinterland: legionary fortresses in Burnum and Tilion (present-day Ivoševci near Kistanez at the River Krka and Gardun near Trilj at the River Cetina respectively) were built around the turn of the era (although temporary camps might have existed already for a decade or two), while the auxiliary camps (such as Bigeste, Andetrium etc.) were all most probably created after AD 9.28 In most important Roman cities of the eastern and northern Adriatic, Salona and Aquileia respectively, there must have also been military stations of army and/or navy.29 For a moment, I shall leave Aquileia aside, since it was equally distant from possible centres of disturbances in Dalmatia as Ravenna was, and concentrate on places at the eastern Adriatic coast.

The inscriptions from the Eastern Adriatic mention active soldiers in several places at the coast or islands; the majority of epigraphic monuments come - as one might expect - from Salona, the provincial capital.30 Where they performed various duties, but probably mostly assisting the governor,31 and from military camps (Burnum in particular).32 Some of these active soldiers were sailors in the Roman navy and I shall deal with them in some detail further on. On the other hand, I shall not deal here with inscriptions of Roman knights who brought titles of their posts in fleet in contexts of their cursus honorum, because these posts had nothing to do with places where the inscriptions were erected, but with their ca-
ers and glory.33 Very interesting Late Roman inscription from Podstrana (not far from Salona) has not been analysed here, as well, because the soldier who set up the votive monument (CIL 3, 10107) was sent there with particular mission to supervise obtaining capitals and columns for new imperial baths (thermae Licinianae) in Pannonian Sirmium, thus having nothing to do with stations of the fleet.34

So, there are altogether eight inscriptions of sailors in the Roman imperial navy, five from Salona and three from other cities (Fig. 1), and all of them are sepulchral. Three of five Salonitan monuments belonged to soldiers of the Misenate fleet (CIL 3, 2036; ILLug 679, 2107), one to the Ravennate (CIL 3, 14691), and one did not state the name of the fleet (CIL 3, 2034). Although it is not possible to date them in a narrow time span, they may be dated within a half-a-century or longer, according to their onomastic, epigraphic and stylistic features. The earliest among them has been dated approximately to the last quarter of the 1st and the first half of the 2nd cent. AD.35 Inscription of an optio in the Misenate fleet has been dated to the first half of the 2nd cent. AD,36 similarly as the other inscription of another optio (but from the Ravennate fleet) which was dated approximately to 130-200 AD (Fig. 2).37 The inscription set up by a soldier (miles) of the classis Misenatium to his wife and daughter belongs to the second half of the 2nd cent. or the first half of the 3rd cent. AD.38 Attribute Antoniniana in the fleet’s name date the monument of Caereillus Museus to the first half of the third century (Fig. 3),39 which makes it the latest of the fleet inscriptions in Salona. Such a chronological distribution of inscriptions, along with the fact that they all belong to active soldiers,40 brings us to conclusion that there was a station41 of imperial fleet in the Dalmatian capital42 which was manned by sailors from both fleets, Misenate and Ravennate, and which might have been established at the latest in the last quarter of the 1st cent. AD and lasted at least into the first half of the 3rd century AD. Of course, it might have happened much earlier and/or lasted much longer, but the evidence at our disposal does not permit reaching such conclusions.

We do know, however, that Salona played important role as a naval base (again?) in the Late Antiquity: it was the base of powerful fleet of comitatus Misenati since AD 454, and of Ostrogoths at the end of the 5th and in the first half of the 6th centuries.43

In addition to these five inscriptions from Salona, there are three others, two from islands that are very important ports at the long-Adriatic maritime route, while the finding place of the third is unknown (most probably ancient Iader). At Punta Križa site at the island of Cres (ancient Crexa), not very far from Osor (ancient Apsorus) situated at isthmus between islands Cres and Lasing, a stele with portrait of Liccaeus Vei f, centurio de liburna Lucusta was found (Fig. 4). This monument is the only inscription of a soldier (either active or dismissed) from the island of Cres. It is dated in mid first century AD,44 which makes it the earliest (or one of the earliest) inscription among all discussed in this paper. Liccaeus was rather high in command at his time, since he somehow indebted the people of Apsorus (ancient Pituntium) near Salona and was set up for the Roman knight who was, among his many other military posts, praepositus classis Misenatium (CIL 3, 12813; cf. Kurilić forthcoming), and the other is from Salona and it was set up for the Roman knight who was, among other posts, praepositus classis (CIL 3, 14691). The inscription CIL 5, 328 from Parenzania (in Italian X region) at the western coast of Istrian peninsula falls in the same category, because E. Abadía Vélez’s post of subpraepo-actus classis Ravennatis must be understood as a step in his career, and not as a service he performed in that city.

33 One such inscription is from Polistrana (ancient Pituntium) near Salona and was set up for the Roman knight who was, among his many other military posts, praepositus classis Misenatium (CIL 3, 12813; cf. Kurilić forthcoming), and the other is from Salona and it was set up for the Roman knight who was, among other posts, praepositus classis Ravennatis must be understood as a step in his career, and not as a service he performed in that city.

34 Cf. Wilkes 1969, 408 ff.

35 EDH HD054811 (= CIL 3, 10107): Diop(h)antus [a]lexandri [f]ilius / d(e) liburna / M[iserita] / natione / vix(it) an(nos) XLI / militav(it) an(nos) XXI / [---.]


37 EDH HD054813 (= CIL 3, 2036): [D. M. s. / Iulie / Cre]cententio / com(ing) ann(um) / XXX et Iulie Mai/ cricis / VII / praet/oriae Mi[senitum] / natione / vix(it) ann(os) XVI / militavit ann(os) XXI / [---.]

38 EDH HD054814 (= CIL 3, 2036): [D. M. s. / Iulie / Cre]cententio / com(ing) ann(um) / XXX et Iulie Mai/ cricis / VII / praet/oriae Mi[senitum] / natione / vix(it) ann(os) XVI / militavit ann(os) XXI / [---.]


40 There are some inscriptions of veterans (as, for instance, CIL 3, 2010 and 14695; cf. also Wilkes 1969, n. 3 at p. 233), but they, not being indicative for ongoing military service, have not been taken into consideration here.

41 According to Pansieri (2006, 1350), the term ‘stationes’, when used in this context, may be applied solely to indicate a detachment consisting of several ships on a permanent base in some city other than Ravenna or Misenum.

42 Already the editors of CIL (CIL 3, 14691) had reached that conclusion and it was accepted by Starr (1993, 23 and Map at p. vi) and later authors (Wilkes 2006, 571).

or perhaps that there might have existed a separate military cemetery placed at the public grounds given by the municipal orlo. Since the monument was found re-used in a construction of a later Roman grave and not in its original position, it is not possible to identify that presumed cemetery with the finding place of the stele; however, it seems plausible that it should not have been far both from the finding place itself and from Liccaeus’s statio which was most probably somewhere at the south-western coast of Cres, east of Osor. The most plausible points for the statio should probably be looked for either at prominent promontories near Osor (at the south-western coast of the island of Cres or at north-eastern coast of the island of Lošinj) or in well protected bays or in Osor itself. A very closed bay (almost a lake), measuring some 100 by 75 m, half a kilometre north of Rt Suha (the southernmost promontory of Cres) looks like a perfect place for a harbour. Now we can only rely to archaeological investigations to inspect whether there can be some truth in it.

Another Liburnian island, the island of Murter, was also very important with regard to the maritime routes.
A very narrow channel separating this island from the mainland was very convenient passage for many vessels. At Gradina at the north-eastern end of the island still stand remains of ancient Liburno-Roman town Colentum. Not far from its southern city-walls, in 1907 a badly preserved (and now lost) first century Latin inscription was found mentioning a miles of a unit the name of which was not preserved. Therefore, he might have been a legionary, auxiliary or navy. His onomastic formula clearly shows that he was the Roman citizen (C. Volu[m]nius C. f.[-]), but this cannot be of much help, since we find citizens in all three military corps. Although infantry or cavalry soldiers cannot be completely left out of consideration, the finding place itself of the monument makes it more plausible that C. Volumnius was miles of a war-ship. The fact that he died while still in active service in a place of such strategic importance may be taken as strong indicator that in Colentum existed a military station, most probably a naval one. Here too, as in Aporsus (and the rest of the island of Cres), there are no other military inscriptions.

In an epitaph from the second half of the 2nd or the first half of the 3rd century there is a Roman citizen for whom there are no doubts that he had served aboard military vessels, which is more than obvious from the verb militavit used in the inscription. In addition, he was a governor aboard III Fortuna, and governor was one of the few who were in charge of commanding the war-ships, the one who was particularly in charge of navigation. The time he spent in the navy (19 years) shows that in the time of his death he was still in the active service. Unfortunately, we do not know the exact finding place of that monument, but it seems most probable that it can be put among the inscriptions from the name of which was not preserved. 50 A narrow channel separating this island from the island of Cres, there are no other military inscriptions. The name itself makes it more plausible that C. Volumnius was miles of a war-ship. The fact that he died while still in active service in a place of such strategic importance may be taken as strong indicator that in Colentum existed a military station, most probably a naval one. Here too, as in Aporsus (and the rest of the island of Cres), there are no other military inscriptions.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAH 8

CAH 10

EDH

Epigrafi, epigrafia, epigrafisti...

Les Routes...

LGPN

ILLug

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SAŽETAK

RIMSKE VOJNE POMORSKE BAZE NA ISTOČNOM JADRANU

Anamarija KURILIĆ

Na osnovu dostupnih podataka, autorica nastoji locirati položaje rimskih vojnih pomorskih baza na istočnom Jadranu, a osobito uzduž hrvatske obale i na njenim otocima.

Taj dio Jadranu kroz cijelju prapovijest i antičko doba uvijek bio povoljniji za plovidbu od zapadnoga zbog svojih bezbrojnih otoka i otočića te jedne od najrazvedenijih obala na svijetu, što je sve osiguravalo brojna utočišta i sjevernoj uzduž obale sjeća na sebe opravdavaju pretpostavku da su se tu morale nalaziti rimske vojne pomorske postaje, a ne samo u glavnoj luci classis praetoria Ravennatium u Raveni na zapadnoj obali Jadran. Epigrafska svjedočanstva sugeriraju da su se vojne pomorske postaje morale nalaziti barem u Saloni, negdje nedaleko od Osora (Apsorus), na Murteru (Colentum), a možda i u Zadru (Iader), dok gotovo posve nedostaju književni izvori i arheološka svjedočanstva.