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Of Belts and Men: The Roman Military Belt of the 1st Century A.D.

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Abstract

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Military belts are a well known piece of gear in 1st Century A.D. Roman military equipment studies. Despite this, these belts have never been studied in depth as a piece of a soldier's panoply. This thesis functions to produce a comprehensive introduction to the 1st Century A.D. Roman military belt and examine what such an item meant to the soldiers. Chapters one through three introduces the art historical material, archaeological remains, and examines the products used in constructing belts, their methods of production, and the process of belt assemblage. Chapter four looks into the history of embellished military belts in Italy prior to the 1st Century A.D. by looking at the Villanovan, Etruscan, Samnite, and Republican Roman uses of belts and how they influenced later styles. The last portion explores the relationship between men and their belts. It begins with chapter five looking at the practical applications in addition to the features of a belt which might be impractical. Chapter six explores the aspects of cost which would be involved with a belt. This includes both the thought required when investing in a belt and the subsequent use of the belt as source of stored income. Chapter seven explores the belt as a method of displaying social connotations from imperial power to personal wealth and status in the community. The final chapter explores the evidence for a Roman connection to belts by looking at texts and art historical material for the views of the soldiery and the populace at large. This study of belts serves to present a detailed study of belts and the evidence for them. In addition, examining belts leads to an understanding of larger issues in the field of classics involving the psyche of soldiers, the use of the military for displays of power, the public understanding of military, and more. Though this work is preliminary, it shows how useful a continued exploration into the world of military belts could be for the realm of classical studies.

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On a more practical level I would like to thank the members of the Dobbs University Center Student Management staff. Their willingness to support me during busy weekends and to store my multitude of books has saved me vast amounts of time and energy.

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All errors are my own.

Dedicated in memory of my father, Larry Craig Magee.

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Introduction

The idea for this project developed during the fall semester of 2009. My interest in the Roman military system initially led me to pursue aspects of supplying military equipment during the 1st century A.D.; a topic about which I understood very little. Subsequent investigation into the available primary and secondary material led me to discover the sheer scope of such research. Topics related to the production of single items used by Roman soldiers were more than adequate for individual theses. From this point, I looked into many possible subjects which could connect production and the Roman military. With the assistance of an exercise encouraged by Dr. Master, I settled on examining Roman military belts.

The decision to pursue belts was intriguing due to my personal familiarity with Roman belts. In my experience as a reenactor of the Roman 1st century A.D. soldier in the 11th Legion, an Atlanta based living history organization, I constructed my own belt as my first task. As a reenactor, the belt is an excellent project because it introduces one to basic tenets of leather and metal work which are integral to completing more advanced pieces of equipment. In the process of construction, I had to decide on many different aspects of the belt's components including plate design, apron configuration, and the color of the leather dye to name a few. Having assembled all the necessary pieces, I constructed the belt from cutting the belt and apron blanks, dyeing, and finally attaching the metal components. Since I had never participated in such a venture before, it was an excellent learning experience. Completing the belt was a proud moment. Not only had I personally constructed it, but every design and decorated piece was there because I wanted it to be.

My own recollection of making and wearing a belt assisted greatly in directing the questions I wished to ask in my thesis. In my experience, a belt was something unique and personalized to suit to my own tastes. In the Roman reenactment community, such a belief often exists in belt production except in the cases in which belts exactly copy ancient archaeological finds. The belt was also paid for by me. I was not given parts to put together; after I chose what I wanted, it was up to me to seek those components and procure them. Finally, wearing my belt around also gave me first hand experience of what such an item would be like to wear during various activities. As I recalled my own reactions to these and other aspects of belt production and usage, I began to wonder how the Roman soldiers felt about these issues in regards to their own belts. Though I had my personal perspective, I understood the inherent inability of such reproductive archaeology to present the true nature of the ancient past. My subsequent venture into the study of Roman belts led me to the diverse field of Roman military equipment studies.

The evolution of the study of Roman military gear began as various pet-projects by men of the late Renaissance. Though many discoveries of military items occurred from this point in time, it was not until the 19th century that a German scholar, Ludwig Lindenschmidt, revolutionized Roman equipment studies. The small illustrated essay Lindenschmidt published, *Tracht und Bewaffnung des Romische Heeres*, was the first serious attempt to combine literary, representational, and artefactual evidence into the study of Roman arms and armor.[1] Since then, the credibility and accuracy of scholars has steadily increased and with it, a better understanding of the Roman military as a whole. The late 20th century brought about vast improvements in both scholarly and

[1] Bishop, M.C., Coulston, J.C.N. 2006. 245. Fig. 149.2.

amateur work with the introduction of Roman military reenactment groups. In addition to these living history organizations, the same time period has experienced great influxes of scholarly work in the form of notable academics such as Peter Connolly, Carol van Driel-Murray, J.C. Coulston, and M.C. Bishop and fora for discussions; the most notable of these being ROMEC (the Roman Military Equipment Conference). The new form of military equipment research which has blossomed from this era combines every facet of potential research data be it archaeological, art historical, statistical, sociological, reconstructive, etc.

Despite the great strides in this field, I discovered that the study of military belts was limited. Individual articles and small sections of books dealt with belts, but these sources either investigated very specific evidence or glossed over broader issues of the belt's importance and simply made conclusions. I felt a concerted study of belts could break new ground on the subject. The end product of this intellectual inquiry was the development of the overarching question this thesis strives to answer: how did a Roman soldier think about his belt?

As no treatise on 1st century A.D. Roman military belts has ever been produced, the task of solving the problem must start by presenting the available data. The first three chapters of this thesis work to provide a broad sampling of the evidence for Roman military belts during this time period. Chapters one and two introduce the two largest sources of military belt evidence: art historical representations and archaeological artifacts. As the amounts of data in these areas are immense, introducing each category separately allows the reader to better understand this evidence when it is used later to

support arguments. The third chapter endeavors to present the resources and methods employed in constructing belts so as to also assist interpreting data later in the thesis.

With the art historical, archaeological, and production evidence for belts thoroughly introduced to the reader, the thesis continues into the discussion of Roman 1st century A.D. belts with a look into the history of belts in Italy. Before the unification of Italy under the Roman Republic, it was a land populated by many different groups of people. Some of these cultures such as the Villanovans, Etruscans, and Samnites developed their own belt designs which can be indentified. As Rome frequently mingled with these others groups in peace or war, different types of belts were brought to the attention of Romans. Whether these other belt types influenced later Romans is uncertain but by the 2nd century B.C., the direct predecessor of the 1st century A.D. Roman belt was beginning to emerge in Roman military contexts.

As the history of military belts in Italy folds into the 1st century A.D., the final chapters will complete the thesis by questioning how the military belt would be viewed by the soldiery who wore it. The first of these chapters questions the pure functionality of these belts. It endeavors to reveal what practical benefit the belt offered soldiers or, alternatively, what part of a belt's design might be debilitating or irritating to soldiers. The final chapters examine the place of belts a more sociological level in regards to cost, indications of status, and personal pride. For the individual soldier, the issue of cost would be a major factor in how lavishly or plainly their belt was decorated. Did it, however, retain any monetary value for the soldier? When military men were present, the belt was visible to the public. What would the display of the belt communicate to the people who saw it? Finally, what indications are there that Roman soldiers cared for their

belts or thought them important? Alternatively, how did the belt fit into the public's perspective on soldiers?

As a piece of Roman military hardware, the belt is often overlooked in favor of more popular items such as swords or armor. By answering the questions presented here, this thesis will endeavor to highlight new, detailed insights into the importance of the association between Roman soldiers and their belts.

Chapter 1: Art Historical Evidence

Art historical representations make up one large portion of the available evidence for Roman belts of the 1st century A.D. This chapter will work to categorize and describe these depictions. This will provide a preliminary introduction into belt imagery for the reader and simplify the analysis in later chapters. In addition, this chapter will take the opportunity available to present a categorization of belts in Roman art historical evidence.[2] The art historical representations of Roman military belts in the 1st century A.D. fall into two primary categories: state commissions and private grave stelai. Within these larger divisions, smaller sections will focus on similar subsets of belt representations; representative and unique samples will be examined in detail in order to present characteristics of these subsets and to discuss pieces which fall into no particular category. For state commissioned pieces which represent a relatively small number of belt depictions, the examples will be divided individually and ordered by date from earliest to latest. Examples of private funerary relief which provide the majority of belt imagery that survives, as a consequence of their significant numbers, will be divided initially between belts being worn and belts depicted independently. Beyond this they will be further divided into monuments to citizen soldiers, auxiliary soldiers, unknowns, and cavalry.

State Commissions

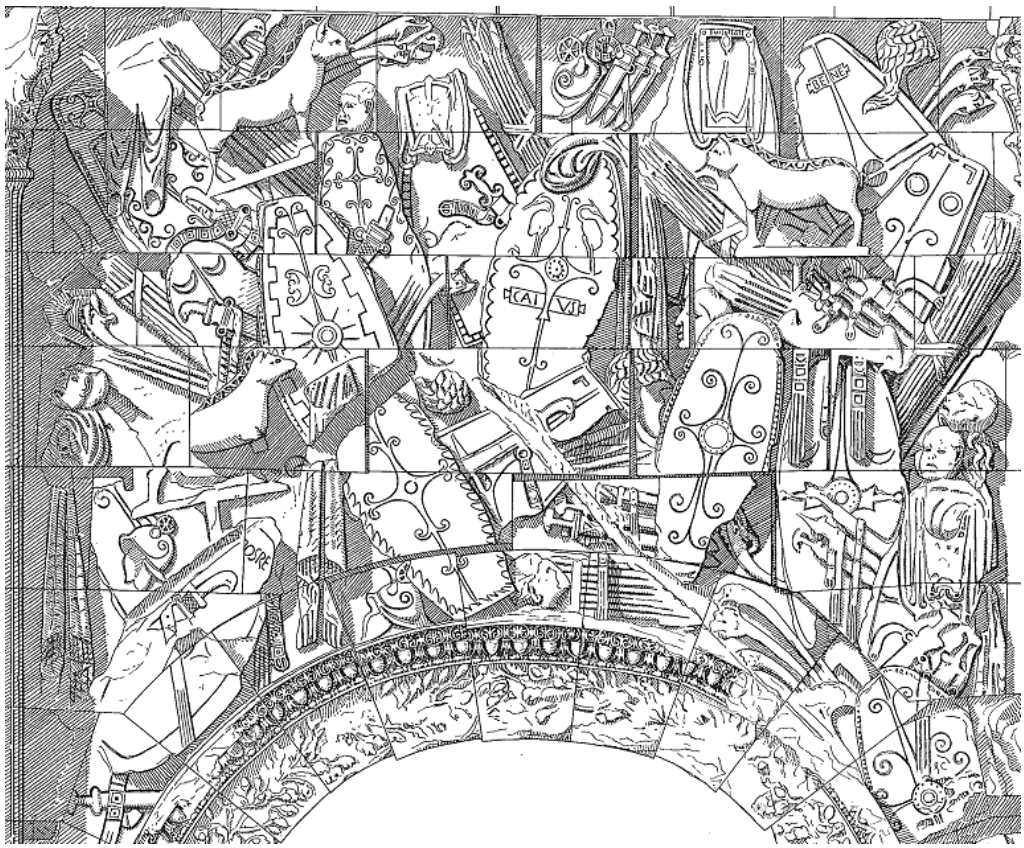
The art historical evidence for military belts in state propaganda commissions provides a particular insight into military belts. These state works allow the viewer to

[2] Due to the nature of this project, an exhaustive list of belts will not be possible to produce.

understand how the specific depictions of the belts were presented to the Roman masses. The amount of specificity of detail varies among the different monuments and differences exist even in the individual monuments. This section will not attempt to reconcile such differences but merely describe the specifics of belts as they appear on these state monuments. Rough descriptions of certain other features of the monuments will be made when it advances the description of the particular belt(s) being discussed. For the sake of simplicity, the monuments will be described in order from earliest to latest.

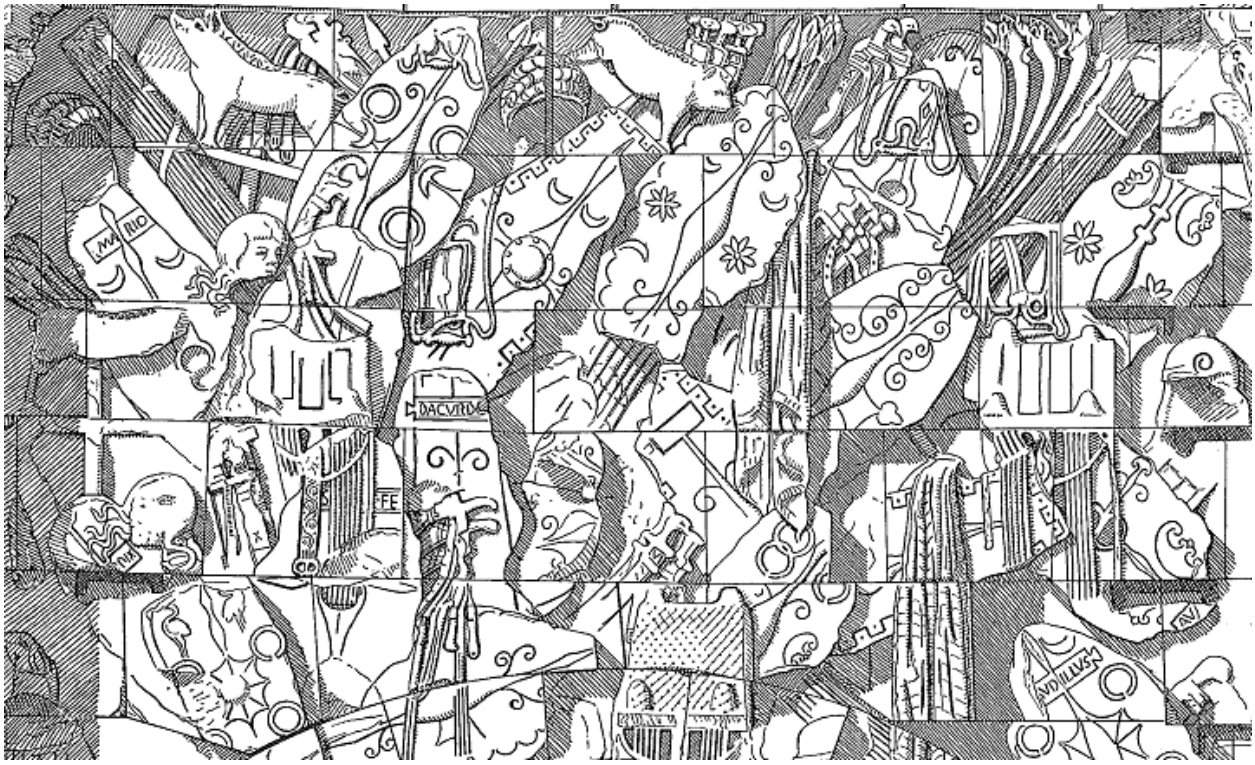
The first state commission of the 1st century A.D. to depict Roman military belts was the Triumphal Arch at Orange. This is a large triumphal arch in the town of Orange (Roman *Aurenio*) in France. It was first constructed by Augustus and later refurbished by Tiberius in the aftermath of his Germanic campaigns. The numerous reliefs across the monument give a picture of the earliest years of belts in state art. On the panel of arms on the north side of the monument, many different belts can be seen (Fig. 1).[3]

[3] Amy, R. 1962. Pl. 16.



Here, there are many different types of arms strewn about with belts amongst them. In the top middle panel, three Roman swords can be seen with a square plated belt around one sword while the same belt can be seen with a Celtic sword elsewhere. The end of this belt and all other belts from this depiction have the terminus – the portion of the belt farthest from the buckle - divided into three parts. The tripled ends largely finish evenly though some have diagonally slanted bits. The same square plated belt appears six times. Another type of belt with square plates and one with crescent moon designs imbedded in it appear twice. Another belt simply has diagonal hash marks across the visible length of the belt. Some belts are either depicted plainly or their designs have eroded away. The belt buckles on the belts are all very plain rounded buckles. Some of the belts are also

bordered. More belts can be seen on the south panel of arms though no differences in type are present (Fig. 2).[4]



Both the northern and southern bases of the monument also depict Roman belts. These belts are actually attached to Roman soldiers battling Gauls. Both Roman infantry and cavalry wear wide belts. The belts have little specific detail but there is enough remaining on some figures to show that belt plate divisions and borders are present.[5]

After the Arch at Orange, the next depiction of military belts comes with the Arch of Claudius at Rome. The reliefs from the Arch of Claudius were discovered in Rome in the 17th century A.D. and date from the mid-1st century A.D.[6] The scene of importance

[4] Amy, R. 1962. Pl. 18.
[5] Amy, R. 1962. Pl. 28 & 29.
[6] Koeppel, Gerhard. 1983. 103-109, Pl. 40-43. 103

here is that of four soldiers. These figures, strongly argued to be Praetorians (if not Praetorian officers), stand in this section of the relief (Fig. 3).[7]

The soldier farthest to the left and the third from the left both display belts. The former soldier wears a muscled cuirass while still wearing his belt with an apron, the dangling collection of straps which hang from the center of the belt. It is a single, undecorated belt with three short straps. The straps themselves do not seem to be adorned. Each strap, however, does end in double, rectangular terminal. The latter figure wears a single, undecorated belt as well. There are three straps on his apron which are not decorated. The straps for this Praetorian, however, end in thin teardrop shaped terminals.

[7] Koeppel, Gerhard. 1983. 107-108.

Belts do not appear in large state monuments following the Arch of Claudius until the Cancelleria Reliefs. The Cancelleria Reliefs date from the late Flavian period. They probably originally belonged to Domitian but were recarved for Nerva (Fig. 4).[8]

The scene depicted on the A relief, the only one containing belt imagery, is of the emperor being led by deities in a procession to war. On the far right side of the relief, four soldiers stand behind the procession of leaders and gods. From this group, only the first soldier shows a portion of his belt. Three apron straps, the divided sections of the front hanging portion of a Roman belt, are visible to the viewer. Flat studs - the decorations on the apron straps which may be plain or ornamented - adorn the apron straps and the straps end with an ivy leaf-shaped terminal, the end piece of the apron

[8] Last, Hugh. 1948. 9.

strap. It is impossible to see the rest of the belt which remains obscured by the *paenula*, the Roman military cloak.

With the induction of Trajan as emperor, many of his military monuments contain belt depictions. A major source for belts is Trajan's Column. Trajan's Column presents the events of the First and Second Dacian Wars (101-102 A.D. & 105 – 106 A.D.). The multitude of scenes of soldiers provides many different belt depictions. Belts are primarily shown on Roman legionaries though they appear on auxiliary infantry and cavalry in a few instances. This does not mean that all soldiers wear them however. In entire sections of the relief, all the soldiers appear without belts; it is more common to see a mix of some wearing belts and others not. In addition, the Roman commanders, depicted in Greek style cuirasses, are never depicted with a belt; occasionally they wear a cloth sash wrapped around where a belt would be buckled. Belts are also rarely shown on soldiers with their backs turned with a few exceptions (Fig. 5).[9]

[9] Coarelli, Filippo. 2000. 121,199.

Soldiers are normally shown with belts while fully facing forward although instances of profile views of belts exist.

Soldiers wear belts during every type of scene in which they appear. They are represented with belts both in and out of battle. The number of the soldiery wearing belts decreases in construction scenes compared to representations of marching and combat. They may also be seen with their belts both in and out of their armor.

The number and decorations of soldiers' belts can also vary. The monument usually differentiates the belt from the bands of the *lorica segmentata*, the segmented legionary armor, with vertical lines along the band which indicates the belt. Soldiers typically wear a single belt though wearing two is certainly not uncommon (Fig. 6).[10]

[10] Coarelli, Fillippo. 2000. 165.

In one instance, a soldier is even seen on the march wearing four belts on (Fig. 7)![11]

[11] Coarelli, Filippo. 2000. 48.

The decoration of the main belt straps can also be very diverse. The use of vertical lines to divide belts acts as an indication of belt plates. This is supported by certain, more detailed representations of the belt in which intricate designs appear on the plates (Fig. 8).[12]

The aprons are also depicted with significant detail. The normal number of straps on the column is four, though occasionally three and, very rarely, only two straps appear. The studs of the straps are most commonly depicted as circular, though some more oval or rectangular in shape do appear. The terminals are usually single ivy leaf-shaped with a few exceptions. One belt is depicted with a double terminal with each apron strap ending with two rectangular pieces, for example. The aprons on the monument are very short and their length is depicted uniformly throughout the entire relief.

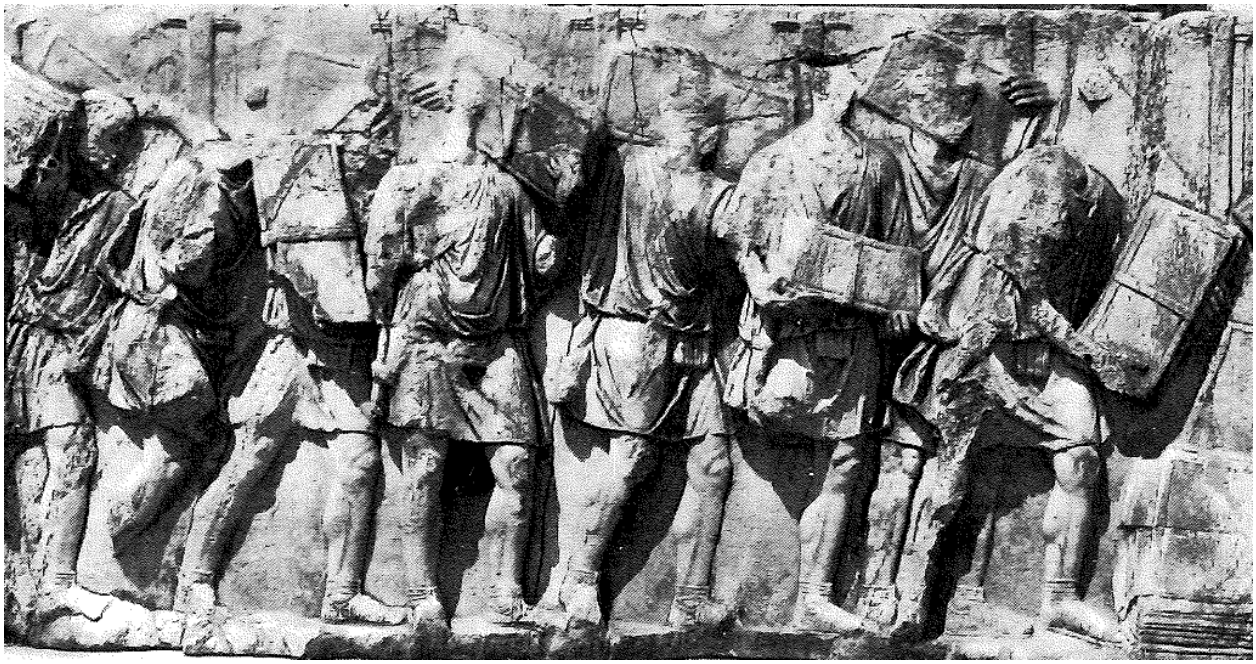
[12] Coarelli, Filippo. 2000. 105 presents an excellent example.

Another excellent source for the representation of belts from the Trajanic period is the Great Trajanic Frieze. The Great Trajanic Frieze is an example of an imperial relief panel from Rome. The panels survive as part of the Arch of Constantine. There are a few figures that can be seen on the frieze with belts. The most notable is a *signifier*, standard-bearer, who stands to the left of the emperor as he strides towards the enemy (Fig. 9).[13]

This soldier wears a single belt decorated with belt plates. The distinguishable belt plate is square with three receding squares carved; the central square contains a small circle in the center. The belt also has clear remnants of an apron. The apron had at least five but possibly six straps. Each of the four fully visible straps contains three flat studs and ivy leaf-shaped terminals.

[13] Leander Touati, Anne-Marie. 1987. Plate 33.

Another example of relief which may be Trajanic or just slightly later is the Plutei Traiani. The Plutei Traiani may date from the reign of Trajan or Hadrian.[14] They are a set of two long reliefs which were located within the Forum Romanum. The left, or A relief depicts scenes of the emperor instituting a charitable organization for orphans while holding a child with him on a podium in the forum.[15] The B relief depicts a group of soldiers carrying records off to the right of the relief, where they are destroying them in front of a figure who may be Hadrian. The B relief and its soldiers are the concern here as all the soldiers are only in tunics with the aprons visible; the folds of the tunic cover the rest of the belt (Fig. 10).[16]



All the aprons are the same. They have four straps and appear to have no terminals. One soldier, however, may have a single teardrop terminal remaining.

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[14] Koeppel. 1986. 23
[15] Koeppel. 1986. 21
[16] Koeppel. 1986. 22

In addition to the aprons, the Chatsworth Relief also gives images of belts. The Chatsworth Relief dates from the Hadrianic period. The scene is akin to the Plutei Traiani B relief where soldiers carry away records. Three of five soldiers are shown with definite belts. The first soldier (beginning from the left of the relief) has a single, plain belt which holds up his *gladius* but does not have a full apron (Fig. 11).[17]

The second soldier with a belt provides a very clear image of an apron (Fig. 12).[18]

[17] Koeppel. 1985. 172.
[18] Koeppel. 1985. 172.

The apron has three straps with ivy leaf-shaped terminals. The straps of the apron are bordered and contain two small flat studs which are spaced quite far apart. The final figure again shows a belt supporting the soldier's weapon. The apron is identical to that of the second belted figure with the exception of the apron being short.

Private Funerary Reliefs

The primary portion of the art historical record for belts consists of private funerary reliefs. The depictions of belts in these reliefs reflect a much more owner-specific view of how the belts were to be viewed since these belts were dedicated by soldiers or their families. The images of belts in these monuments can be separated into categories based on whether or not they are depicted being worn or just by themselves.

Worn Belts:

Most of the belt imagery on grave stelai is of belts being worn by the soldier. This provides an opportunity for the viewer to see how a Roman belt would have been worn by its owner.

Citizen Infantry

Belts are more commonly represented on the stelai of citizen infantry than on auxiliary and cavalry stelai. Despite a general uniformity of legionary equipment, a large variety exists among all the known examples of belt images. The representations of belts for citizen infantry stelai can be separated by whether the soldier wears a single belt or a double belt. Single belt depictions make up a larger portion of the pool of stelai examined for this chapter. These single belt images are not without variation. The majority of the stelai present few details on the belts. There is, unfortunately, so much variation that identifying a particular representative example is impossible. The representations can be roughly divided between reliefs in which only the apron remains or is shown versus reliefs with main belt imagery.

A simple example of a stele with only apron material remaining is that of Quintus Luccius Faustus from the 2nd half of the 1st Century A.D. (Fig. 13).[19]

[19] Selzer, W. 1988. 132.

This stele depicts a soldier in full military garb. The belt here is just barely visible due to wear of the carving though the apron remains. There are five straps which are the length of the tunic. The apron has five straps with flat circular studs which lie in very close proximity to each other and half moon terminals. A similar situation arises in the stele of Caius Valerius Crispus from the 1st Century A.D. (Fig. 14).[20]

[20] Sumner, G. 1997. 56.

The belt itself is nothing but a single, thin carved line. The apron survives though it is weathered. It is four straps wide and hangs down over the belt. It is as long as the tunic and the studs, where depicted well, reveal closely packed circular studs. There seems to have been somewhere between nine and eleven studs per strap. Any sort of variation in number in the specific straps cannot be seen in the apron. The terminals do not survive well enough to determine their shape.

Some of these stelai are not as simple, however. The stele of Caius Castricius Victor from the late 1st Century A.D. is one example of such (Fig. 15).[21]

In this stele only a minute piece of the belt survives in the form of a small nub on the right side of the figure which appears to be the belt frogs for supporting the *pugio,* the military dagger. The apron survives, however. It hangs over the belt and is five straps wide. The unique characteristic of this piece is that each strap is very wide. This creates an apron which covers around seventy-five percent of the soldier's front. There are seven flat studs on each strap which leads to crescent moon terminals.

Another different type of belt like this comes from the stele of Caius Valerius Valens from the mid 1st Century A.D. (Fig. 16).[22]

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[21] Photo © Martin Wieland.
[22] Franzoni, Claudio. 1987. 80, 120. Tav. XXVIII. 1

The only part of the belt which is visible is the apron. The apron comes out from under what may be a portion of a *lorica segmentata* or even a portion of the belt itself. There are two horizontal sections with the top section wide and the bottom section rather thin. Both, however, depict a single stud in the middle and a separation which is not normal for Roman segmented armor. The apron straps are uneven. There are five straps with spaces in between them. The terminals are crescent moons surrounding a small circle. The fourth terminal from the left, however, contains a dimple in the circular area of the terminal. The studs are flat but not uniformly sized, spaced, or numbered. Several studs are much smaller than others. The placement of studs is awkward with some studs being placed off center and others unevenly divided along the length of the apron strap. In addition, the straps have varied numbers of studs. In the same amount of area, the third

strap from the left has five studs while the fourth only contains four, for example. Another odd feature is the lack of belts for the sword and the dagger. These items simply hang without support from outside his cloak.

Though weathering creates a dearth of detail on many belts, even stelai with good depictions of belts do not always have a lot of detail. The stele of Marcus Favonius Facilis from the 1st Century A.D. (Fig. 17),[23] for example has the main portion of the belt depicted but it is plain with no carved decorations or stitching.

[23] Philips, E.J. 1975. 2-5.

The only part visible is a simple belt buckle which rests near the sword this belt supports. The only unique part about this belt is that is lacks the apron commonly seen on belts of the period in question. Another stele belt depiction, that of Caius Valerius Secundus

from the 2nd half of the 1st Century A.D. (Fig. 18),[24] has a belt that is shown well but again not decorated.

It does have an apron which consists of four straps slightly separated which pass behind the belt. A large piece of the relief of the apron has sloughed off leaving no indication of terminals or length. There is a lack of carved decoration on the apron straps at the top end as well which may indicate un-decorated straps or a loss of the decorated portions.

[24] Selzer, W. 1988. 131.

Some belts have more detail. The belt of Rufus Lucilius from the mid 1st Century A.D. is wide and clearly separated into plates but wear makes identification of particular designs impossible (Fig. 19).[25]

The apron of this figure is very short with three separated straps. Each strap is decorated by flat, horizontally laid ovular studs. The terminals are worn beyond recognition. A belt depicted on the stele of Gnaeus Musius from the first half of 1st Century A.D. presents the same level of belt decoration but a unique belt design overall. The belt is buckled across the front (Fig. 20).[26]

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[25] Mosser, Martin. 2003. 220.
[26] Selzer, W. 1988. 128.

The buckle does not perfectly fit in with the portion of the belt directly to its left. A mark different from the straps for the medals exists between the belt plate and the buckle which may indicate the leather portion of the belt hidden by the metal plates or a metal backing to the buckle. There is no apron for the belt. Rather, after the final plate on the belt coming from the left side, the belt is divided into three thin, long straps. These straps hang down to the end of the pteryges, cloth or leather sections attached to the edge of armor. Just above the tips of the straps, small circular pendants adorn the straps. In addition to these straps, another, slightly wider strap extends from behind the highest set of the other three straps. This strap passes through the belt buckle and also hangs down but with no indicated terminal decoration.

Double belt depictions make up a smaller amount of the total number of citizen belts. The surviving examples have the advantage of having more intricate details. The stele of Caius Faltonius Secundus from the mid 1st Century A.D. is a good example (Fig. 21).[27]

One feature common among double belts is that one of the belts holds the sword and the other his dagger. The belts are both plated with square plates containing raised circular ridges in the center. The apron – continued in double belt depictions – hangs off one of the belts and over both. The apron consists of four straps which contain very closely laid round studs. The exact length is hard to determine as the relief is worn around the end of the apron. The stele of Lucius Sertorius Firmus from the mid 1st Century A.D. has a similar situation (Fig. 22).[28]

[27] Selzer, W. 1988. 144.
[28] Franzoni, Claudio. 1987. 80

Firmus is shown wearing two belts. In this stele though, one is plain and the other decorated. The plain belt hangs underneath the other belt at an angle. The other belt lies horizontally across the soldier. This belt displays two types of belt plates. The first is a simple plate with a carved rectangle near the edge of the plate creating a raised central rectangle on the plate. The other type does the same thing but adds an "X" across the middle of the central rectangle. The apron consists of five separate straps. They extend from behind the belts and the horizontal alignment of the rams-head terminals seems to argue for attachment to the horizontal belt. The far right apron strap, however, still travels behind the angled belt which means the apron straps may have been attached to the undecorated belt. The apron straps themselves are undecorated, rounded, and taper down to the terminals at the bottom.

Though these are different in that the soldiers have an extra belt, some present the same characteristics as seen with single belt stelai. One such characteristic is the lack of

any specific belt decorations. The stele of Publius Flavoleius Cordus from the first quarter of the 1st Century A.D. is one such example (Fig. 23).[29]

Cordus wears two belts which are superbly preserved. One belt supports the *pugio* and the other the *gladius*. The *pugio* belt is both simple and elaborate. The main leather portion of the belt is very thin without any decoration. It hangs across the soldier diagonally, leaning towards the right. The frog for the pugio is circular with a circular channel decorating it. Its circumference is greater than the width of the belt. The apron consists of six straps which pass behind the belt. The apron straps are extremely long with 20 flat circular studs. The terminals are leaf-shaped with a nub at the bottom. Small raised relief at the top middle of each terminal indicates decoration in the form or removed or added metal. The *gladius* belt is also undecorated. The end of the belt passes through the simple buckle and hangs underneath the *pugio* belt. The end of the belt is decorated with a leaf-shaped terminal and the same change in relief at the top middle.

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[29] Selzer, W. 1988. 126.

Auxiliary Infantry

Auxiliary belts are depicted less on personal grave stelai than those of citizen infantry. In an auxiliary's particular country of origin, belt depictions are much more similar. Since auxiliary units were not as uniformly equipped as the legions, differences by area are more likely to appear between areas. The separation of legion and auxiliary, however, does not extend as far as belt depictions on grave stelai as many of the auxiliary stelai discussed below parallel types used by citizen soldiers.

Among the examples looked at in this study, one particular type of depiction stands out with at least four examples. The prevalence of this form of belt in funerary stelai may indicate a level of popularity with this design. A very detailed example of this type is the stele of Annaius Daverzus from the early to mid 1st Century A.D. (Fig. 24).[30]

[30] Franzoni, Claudio. 1987. 119. XII.3.

He wears two elaborately decorated belts: one for the dagger and the other for the sword. Both belts are decorated with large plates. Each plate is bordered and contains a central dot and a sunburst pattern around the dot. The sword belt hangs diagonally leaning to the left. The left side has a simple buckle through which the end of the belts goes. The end of the belt tapers into the rest of the relief without any extra decoration indicated. The belt buckle is not as wide as the plates adorning the belt. The dagger belt hangs slightly diagonally leaning to the right. On the right side, the frog is circular and slightly wider than the belt plates. The edge is bordered and in the center is a star or pentagonal design. The apron is very elaborate. The apron hangs underneath the dagger belt. The apron does not divide immediately into straps but begins with a square bordered section which contains some letters. The apron is then divided into eight straps with fifteen flat circular studs. Beneath the studs are flat, undecorated metal plates which cover the apron straps

and end in two raised horizontal ridges. The terminals are thin and leaf-shaped. Though the particular plate depictions and stud and apron strap numbers vary, the double belt with long, detailed apron appears in many other auxiliary stelai from Germany. This type is also very reminiscent of the stele of Publius Flavoleius Cordus discussed above.

Besides this particular type of stele, other auxiliary stelai exist during this period. One such example is that of Genialis from the 2nd half of the 1st Century A.D. (Fig. 25).[31]

He wears a single wide belt which retains no decoration. His apron consists of four straps which come over his belt and end at the line of his *lorica hamata*, the Roman mail coat. Each apron strap has four flat circular studs. Below the studs are small square

[31] Selzer, W. 1988. 155.

undercoated plates. Beneath these lie the leaf-shaped terminals. This stele mirrors many of the single belt types discussed with legionary depictions.

Some auxiliary stelai are also unique. One very good example is the stele of Balaterus from the 1st Century A.D. (Fig. 26).[32]

He wears a single belt which supports his sword and dagger. The belt is wide with some indication of decoration in the form of circular studs across its length. The apron consists of four triangular straps which go under the belt. Each apron strap has indications of circular studs. The terminal is a combination of a small round ball with a tear-shaped section hanging beneath it. Though the description roughly matches that of Genialis and

[32] Sumner, G. 1997. 112.

many citizen soldiers from previous sections, the method of main belt decoration and the shape of the terminals stands out from other art historical examples.

Indeterminable Infantry

These belt examples suffer from a lack of inscriptional evidence. Labeling these stelai as those of citizen infantry versus auxiliary infantry would be very difficult and never definitive due to the similarities in belts already seen between these two classes of Roman infantry. Thus the stelai mentioned in this section will be detailed independently and similarities to types of belts already discussed will be brought forward.

Some of these stelai present trends seen before in citizen and auxiliary depictions. The stele of Unknown Miles Cologne 1 from the mid 1st Century A.D. is one such item (Fig. 27).[33]

[33] Römisch-Germanisches Museum. Cologne, Germany.

The soldier wears either one double wide belt or two identical belts. Regardless of this, the support mechanism for his sword and his dagger is unclear. The belt plates are wide with big square belt plates. Each belt plate is bordered and contains a small dot in the center surrounded by four large ovular objects. This combination of items creates a floral look to the plates. The apron is made up of six straps which pass over both belts. If this is a single belt, the apron must be attached at the back and flipped over the front of the belt. If it is two belts placed horizontally, one atop the other, it is impossible to determine exactly which belt it is connected to. Each strap has six flat, circular studs. Beneath the studs are long, plain metal plates which have a distinct bottom edge. The terminals are leaf-shaped with a small nipple of material at the bottom.

Another notable stele is that of the Unknown Miles Mainz LM 1 from the 2nd half of the 1st Century A.D. (Fig. 28).[34]

The soldier wears a single belt which supports his sword and leans slightly diagonally to his left. The belt is wide and plain. The apron is somewhat awkward. There are four straps which come over the belt and hang. The right three straps look very similar while the left most strap is different. The right three straps have six flat circular studs with a square metal plate beneath. The left most strap is thinner than those to its right and has seven smaller flat circular studs. In addition, as this straps comes over the belt, it rides higher than the other straps. The terminals are diverse. The far right terminal is rounded with a small nipple at the bottom. The next terminal to the left is larger and shaped much like a quarter circle. The other two terminals are leaf shaped though the far left terminal is smaller than the other. Though the stele of the unidentified Mainz soldier may present

[34] Selzer, W. 1988. 148.

some interesting apron characteristics, these two stelai are very similar to types discussed above. Single and double belts, detailed belt plates, metal panels on apron straps, and detailed terminal features are used in both citizen and auxiliary stelai. In addition individual characteristics are also noticeable such as ovular designs on belt plates being seen on the stele of Rufus Lucilius. Thus though these stelai can be dated to the 1st century A.D., the ability to identify them as legionary or auxiliary is difficult.

Some belt imagery on stelai is unique. The stele of the Camomile Street Soldier from the 2nd half of the 1st century A.D. presents such special features (Fig. 29).[35]

The belt is covered up by a fold of the tunic except for a single apron strap. The apron strap is very detailed amongst the surviving art historical examples. The strap is bordered and contains four flat circular studs. The studs cover the entire width of the strap, hiding the bordering. The entire apron has four of these studs which are spaced far apart. The

[35] Bishop, M.C. 1983. "The Camomile Street soldier reconsidered" in *Transactions of the London and Middlesex Archaeological Society*. 34. 31 - 35.

terminal is a half-moon shape with a border around it. The border from the belt continues through, without division, into the terminal's border.

Cavalry

Cavalry belts are not typically depicted even among 1st century A.D. Roman belts. A look at what examples survive for cavalry belts reveals a paltry set of evidence. The Arch of Orange does depict Roman cavalry with belts. These belts have no carved detail, however, and the only noticeable feature is that the cavalry belts are the same width as infantry belts on the arch.[36] The evidence on grave stelai is much less exact.

A representative example of a Roman cavalry monument with belt depiction is that of Vonatorix from the mid 1st Century A.D. (Fig. 30).[37]

[36] Amy, R. 1962. Pl. 16 & 18
[37] Bauchhenss, G. 1978. *Militärische Grabdenkmäler: Germania Inferior. Bonn und* Umgebung. *CSIR* Deutschland III.1. Bonn. 14.

This stele depicts a cavalryman riding his horse in full armor while turning slightly towards the viewer. His belt, which is placed above his *lorica squamata*, a scaled chest piece, is wide but contains no decoration. His sword sits at his right side hung by extra straps. These straps attach to his belt with thin strands or wire or leather or fiber twine. This stele is a nice example of the typical depiction of Roman cavalry belts. The rider sitting atop the horse shows little of his belt and this small portion contains largely no detail.[38]

Certain exceptions always exist such as with the stele of Liccaius and Titus Flavius Mikkalus. This stele of Liccaius from the last quarter of the 1st – early 2nd Century A.D. depicts a dismounted cavalry trooper (Fig. 31).[39]

[38] Other examples of this stele type are: Stele of Annauso: Boppert, W. 1992. 34.; Stele of Danicus: Anderson, A.S. 1984. 56.; Stele of Leubius & Stele of Licinius: Museum der Stadt Worms, Worms, Germany; Stele of Reburrus, Bauchhenss, G. 1978. 17.; Stele of Sextus Valerius Genialis, Junkelmann, M. 1991. 139.; Stele of Titus Flavius Bassus, Anderson, A.S. 1984. 59-60.
[39] Benseddik, N. 1982. 116, fig.16.

His belt is simple with no apron. It is wider at the edge of the figure and gradually tapers down towards the center. Just shy of the center are two semicircular items attached to the belt. These may be some sort of decoration or a depiction of a belt system known to exist at a much later date.[40] This standing soldier provides a good look at what often remains hidden to the viewer.

This stele Titus Flavius Mikkalus from the late 1st – Early 2nd Century A.D. depicts numerous figures (Fig. 32);[41] one of these figures is a linothorax-clad cavalryman.

[40] Such belt items are known from the 2nd and 3rd centuries A.D. as depicted on stele of soldiers such as Lucius Septimius Valerinus and Aurelius Bitus.
[41] Kramer, Susanne. 1994. 108.

He wears a wide, undecorated belt above the base of his armor. In the front, a single strap comes over the belt and dangles on his tunic. The detail of this single strap is nearly worn away. There may be a single, circular attachment at the center of the strap though such an occurrence may be retained from weathering. Though mounted, this relief provides a unique glimpse into what may have adorned cavalry belts like Liccaius' stele while providing the added bonus of showing how such decorations may have been worn in battle.

Independent Belts

Belts which appear independent of any person provide a different opportunity for the viewer. These belts can allow a belt to be viewed as it was in its whole state without the obstruction of any possible wearer or other clothing.

Fewer belts appear separated from their owners. These belts are often depicted alongside other weapons and armor and simply float in open space. These belts give a unique look into how the belt looks as it is stretched out rather than as it is worn by a soldier. From the various depictions, two types of these belts appear. One is a belt without a split at the terminus; the end of the belt farthest from the buckle. In the other kind, the end of the belt is divided into different straps.

The belts without a divided end present some interesting characteristics. The simplest of these belts comes from San Nicolo di Ruda (Fig. 33).[42]

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[42] Franzoni, Claudio. 1987. 21-22, Tav. II.4.

The bordered belt is depicted wrapping around a *gladius*. A round belt buckle adorns one end and a leaf-shaped terminal the other. Two other similar stelai exist which show the bordering of the belt more clearly (Fig. 34).[43]

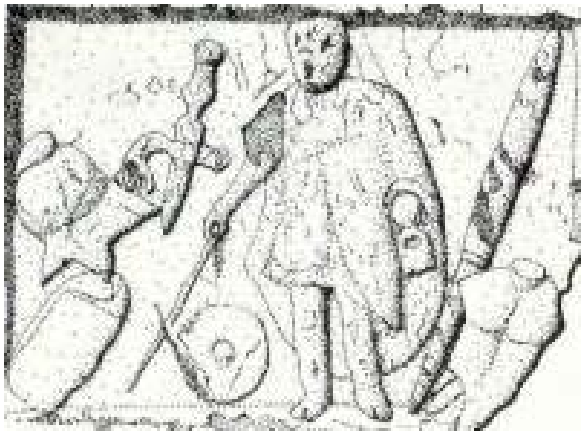
All three of these examples lack detail across the width of the belt. One other example of this type of belt, however, displays exquisite detail. This belt comes from Pola and is also depicted around a sword (Fig. 35).[44]

[43] Franzoni, Claudio. 1987. Tav. III.1.
[44] Franzoni, Claudio. 1987. 18-19. Tav. I.2.

Along the length of the belt there is a single solid line which ends at the beginning of the terminal decorations. The large rounded belt buckle is immediately followed by a belt plate with two thick vertical edges and a circular decoration in the middle. Moving down the length of the belt reveals two rounded frogs with incised circles in the center. Following the frogs is another belt plate. Like the other, it has the heavy vertical edges but the central decoration is floral. The next section is covered by the *gladius*. At the sides of the sword, there are semicircular pieces which may or may not be trying to depict belt parts. Past the sword is the last belt plate. This plate repeats the thickened edges and the circular design in the plate. The circular decoration in the middle of this plate, however, is much smaller than that of the first plate. The terminal is no less intricate. As the belt tapers towards the end, a round pendant is followed by a rectangular plate which contains a small circle in the middle. The terminal is of a basic crescent moon shape.

The belts with split ends have some similar and some different features from undivided belts. These belts still display the bordering, use of terminals, and use of plates seen in belts without divided ends. A simple example of this type is the stele of Publius

Marcius Probus.[45] It shows a belt wrapped around a sword with a rounded buckle at one end and the other end is divided into three straps (Fig. 36).



These straps are thin and end in leaf-shaped terminals. One with a little more detail exists from Pola (Fig. 37).[46]

[45] Bishop, M.C. & Coulston, J. 1993. Frontpiece.
[46] Franzoni, Claudio. 1987. 17. Tav. I.1.

This belt has a rounded buckle and five split ends. Along the length of the belt are two different types of plates. One is filled with a circle in which a smaller circle is incised. The other has a small circle in the middle with four ovular shapes extending diagonally off it. Just above the area with the divided ends, a small bar is depicted. This may represent some sort of extra decoration in metal or leather and/or an item used to stabilize the structure of the belt. The individually divided terminals themselves each contain three round, flat studs and a crescent moon shaped terminal. Thus though the exact method of dividing the end is different, similarities still exist between each of the types presented on independent grave stelai.

One stele depicts a unique type of belt. This example comes from Monselice (Fig. 38).[47]

The belt is dissimilar in nearly every way to other belts seen throughout this chapter. The belt is not bordered and contains three belt plates just below what remains of the belt buckle. The two plates farthest from the buckle are too damaged to make out. The first plate has a small circular incision off center to the left of the plate. From the circle, a

[47] Franzoni, Claudio. 1987. 48. Tav. XIV.2.

small line extended to the end of the belt plate. Beyond the plate characteristics, the belt itself also widens significantly along its middle portion just beyond the plated section and tapers back with a width smaller than the plated section afterwards. The most confusing feature is the terminus. Instead of straps of leather with things attached, the only things that are present are metal decorations. The end has three strings of decorations of the same type. Each begins with a small circular item, goes to a larger circular piece, and finishes with a horseshoe shaped pendant.

Conclusion

The number of art historical examples for Roman belts is quite large. Though some can be grouped together by their similarity, the level of differentiation is very clear and creates a wide variety of shapes, sizes, and particular decorations in the art historical record. These art historical images give a sense of the completed belts and their parts. Thus, in order to complete the material introduction of the Roman belt, the next chapter will look over the archaeological evidence for belts existing throughout the Roman Empire.

Chapter 2: Archaeological Evidence

Archaeological examples make up the second primary source of belt evidence from the 1st century A.D. Roman excavations from Spain to Eastern Europe have produced remains of various pieces of belt equipment. This section will function to introduce the reader to the great variety of belt part sizes and designs. The presentation of these examples will serve to assist the reader in discussion later in the work. The scope of this work does not allow for a detailed categorization of the thousands of belt components which have been excavated. This chapter will rather focus on presenting the breadth of diversity present among belts at this time in Roman history. Consequently, instead of attempting to place examples by ordered date or location, the format will be to organize by the types of belt remains. The first portion will deal with belt plates, followed by buckles, frogs, and apron components. Within these categories, representative and unique cases will be studied in detail in order to provide an understanding of the variability to be found in belt components themselves.

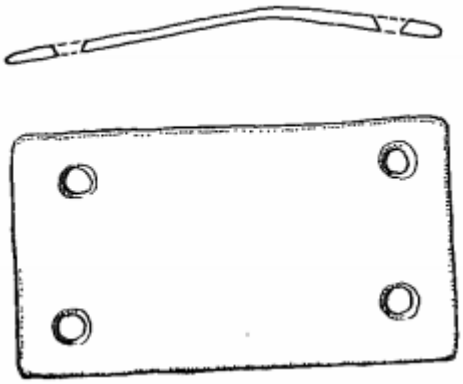
Belt Plates

Belt plates constitute a substantial portion of belt decoration. The plates are the largest visible component of a belt and, consequently, they provide a significant amount of surface area which is able to be decorated. In addition, as Chapter 4 will discuss, this is the oldest purely decorative component of a belt with examples stretching back to the Villanovan period.

The level of variety in belt plates is staggering. Literally hundreds of examples of different belt plates have been found and very few of these are alike. In order to better

present the plate evidence, this section will separate belts into four categories based upon the system developed by Johan Nicolay in his study of Batavian weaponry and horse gear.[48] Type 1 plates are plain, thin, and typically have no decoration. Type 2 plates are heftier, incised, and can contain niello decoration. Type 3 plates are thin with intricate stamped designs. Finally, Type 4 examples are characterized by stamped incised concentric rings and simple decoration.

Type 1 plates are the least common of the different belt plate categories. Despite this, some excellent examples survive in the archaeological record. A belt plate from the fort at Kaiserauguster represents the basic characteristics of this type (Fig. 1).[49]

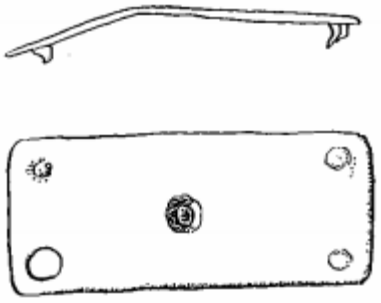


It is around four cm long by two and half cm wide and has no decoration. The only interruption to the flat plane of the piece are four rivet holes. One hole is placed roughly

[48] Nicolay, Johan. 2007. 34.
[49] Deschler-Erb, Eckhard, et al. 1991. 61. # 36.

in each corner. This is a very plain piece made of bronze and has no very special traits on its own.[50]

Some more distinctive examples show that some variety could exist in Type 1 belt plates. At the same site of Kaiserauguster, another Type 1 belt plate was excavated with a unique feature. In the very center of the plate is a small indentation into which niello has been placed (Fig. 2).[51]



No other plates with this particular design have been discovered to say what such a decoration might entail. In addition to extra decorative elements, these types of belt plates could be customized for attaching different belt plates together. This comes in the form of simple hinges created by folding over the edges of the plate. This is done with only a single side as with a plate from Valkenburg (Fig. 3).[52]

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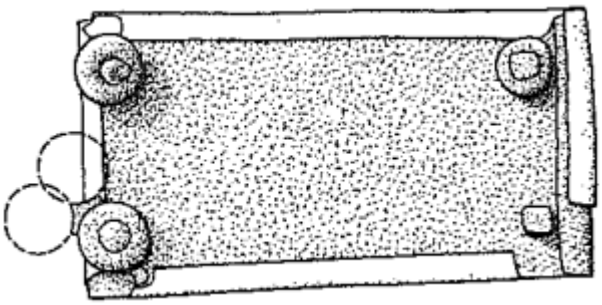
[50] Other similar examples include: Bishop, M.C., Coulston, J.C.N. 2006. 108; Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991Catalog 52 – 57.

[51] Deschler-Erb, Eckhard, et al. 1991. 61. # 37.
[52] Glasbergen, W. 1974. Plate 12, # 18.

One particular set of Type 1 belt plates is famous for its both discovery and the quality of the belt craftsmanship. A Roman burial in Velsen 1 revealed a soldier buried in a well with personal articles; most importantly for this study is the belt from around his waist. This belt was made up of eight Type 1 belt plates, two frogs, and a buckle. The most notable feature of the plates is their construction. Each plate was formed from a thin bronze core and then a layer of silver sheet was wrapped around the front of each plate (Fig. 4).[53]



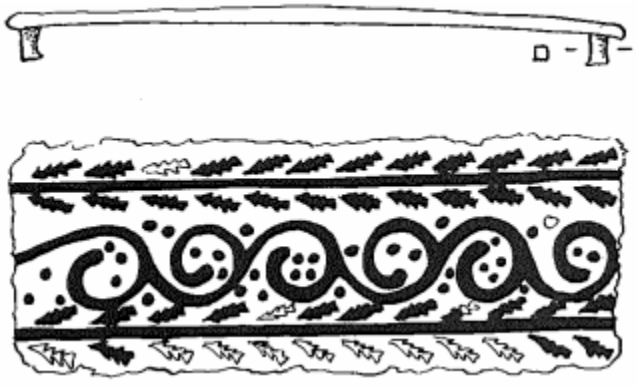
Unlike tinning or silvering – dipping the plates in said molten metals for coating them – the appearance of the silver was confined to the visible face of the belt material. Three of these plates depict the method by which hinged plated would be attached to other belt components. A thin bronze wire would be run through the hinge of the plate and the corresponding plate with sections cut out if needed for the sake of connection. Onto each

[53] Morel, M.A.W., Bosman, A.V.A.G. 1989. 179, Fig. 5.

end would be soldered or riveted a small lump of metal to keep the wire in place. Most of the rivets placed in the corners of the plates remain in place which allows the thickness of the original belt, three mm, to be determined.

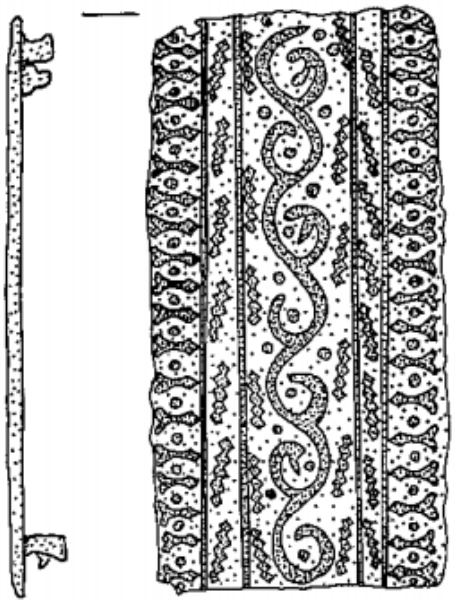
Type 2 belt plates are common during the 1st century A.D. and present a number of different patterns incised into the front. Like any other belt plate, they are prone to be tinned and occasionally silvered, though the inclusion of niello in many of these pieces is rather unique to this type. These belt plates are typically much thicker than the Type 1 examples ranging from two to three mm in thickness. The sheer variety of patterns for this style is daunting but can be subdivided based upon the method of creating the design.

The first category of these are the plates created in a "rolled stamp" style. They are described as such because the design continues beyond the edges of the belt plate without any borders just as if someone were to roll a stamp with ink across a page. The end product has borders running along the horizontal plane of the plates whilst the image simply trails off at the vertical sections of either end. Two good examples of this are one from Kaiserauguster (Fig. 5)[54]



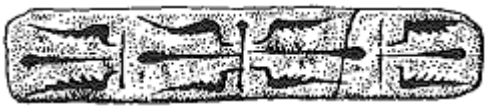
[54] Deschler-Erb, Eckhard, et al. 1991. 65. # 47.

and another from Oberstimm (Fig. 6).[55]



Both belt plates contain imagery of ivy or a vine scroll with "herringbone" patterns which Grew and Griffiths argue could be an idealized laurel leaf pattern.[56] Additionally, the hourglass-like indentations at the top and bottom of the Kaiserauguster plate are known to appear in the context of the "herringbone" imagery.[57]

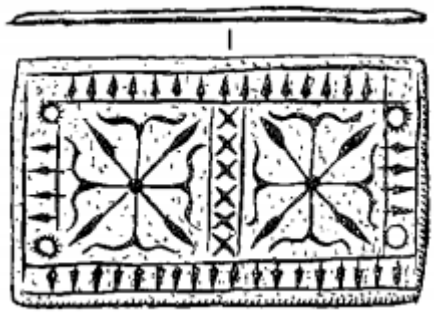
The second category of Type 2 plate is the rarest kind. In this style, there images are incised into the plate without any border whatsoever. A good example of this type comes from Colchester (Fig. 7).[58]



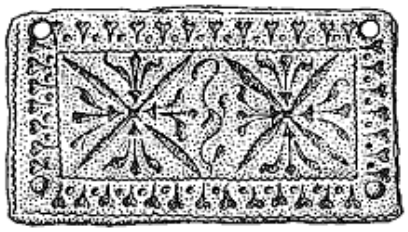
[55] Schonberger, Hans. 1978. Taffel 22, B 145.
[56] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. 56 – 58.
[57] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. 58, Fig. 4.15.
[58] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 43.

It depicts a stylized image of the thunderbolt of Jupiter passing in between two pairs of wings. A much more detailed example of this motif can be seen on a sword scabbard from Rheingonheim.[59]

The third category is by far the most prolific of the Type 2 belt plates. These plates present their incised relief inside either a physical border using a line (Fig. 8),[60]

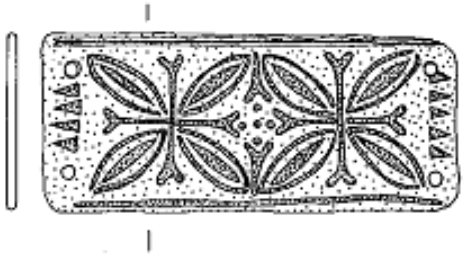


or inside a border created by portions of the image itself (Fig. 9).[61]



Some plates even combine these two styles of bordering (Fig. 10).[62]

[59] Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 6.
[60] Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 27, 21.
[61] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 2.
[62] Schonberger, Hans. 1978. Taffel 22, B 146.



With the method of presenting the style in mind, it is also important to understand the different types of images that can be seen on these Type 2 belts.[63] In addition to the previously described figures, Grew and Griffiths also describe many other types of imagery to be seen on Type 2 belt plates.[64] One prominent design is the floral motif. The basic elements of this style are four leaves emanating from the center in a cross pattern between which dots – possibly indicating berries – or other leafy patterns can be seen. These can range from elaborate examples (Fig. 11 – 12)[65]

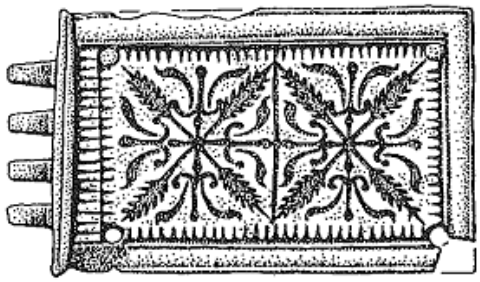


Figure 11

[63] Figs. E – J provide a good initial sampling for the variety of Type 2 plates.
[64] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. 56 – 60.
[65] Fig. 11: Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 1. Fig. 12: Deschler-Erb, Eckhard, et al. 1991. 65. # 46.

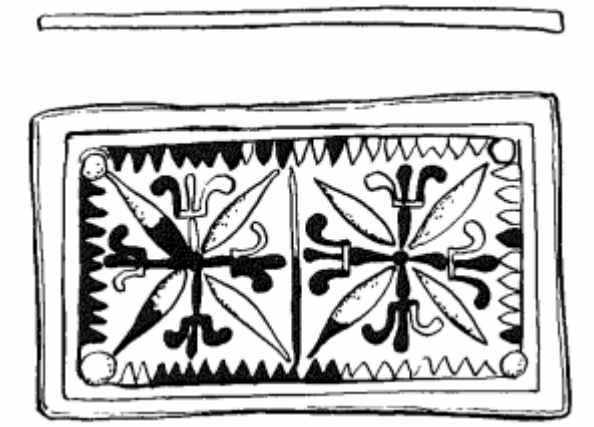


Figure 12

to very schematic (Fig. 13 – 14)[66]

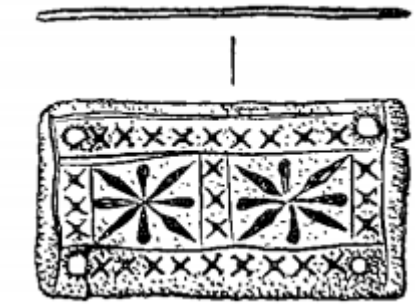


Figure 13

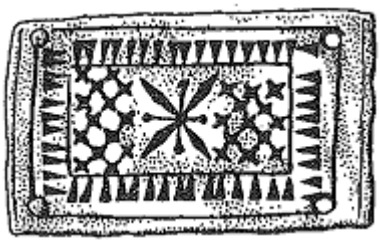
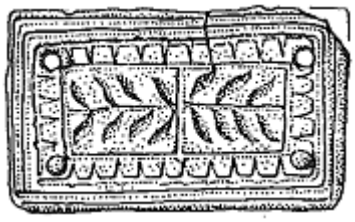


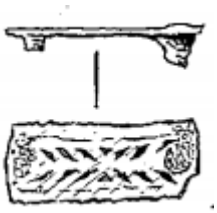
Figure 14

[66] Fig. 13: Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 27, 20. Fig. 14: Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 12.

Another design is the laurel leaf. These are most often portrayed with a single line representing a branch around which are leaves. As with floral motifs, these are done at different levels of workmanship. The way in which the leaves are shown can vary from full, discernable leaves (Fig. 15),[67]



to more abstract versions represented simply by lines (Fig. 16)[68]



or geometric leaf shapes (Fig. 17).[69]

Though the floral and laurel motifs dominate vegetative imagery on these belt plates, there are others to be found. One plate depicts four square leaves connected at the middle just as seen in floral motifs (Fig. 18)[70]

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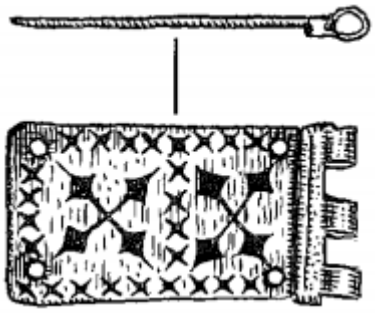
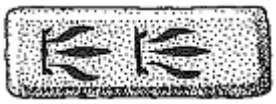
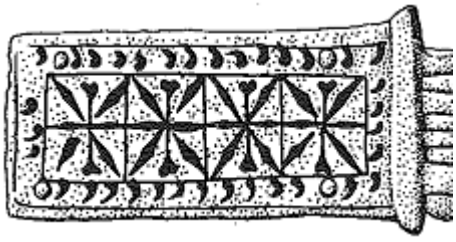
[67] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 30.
[68] Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 27, 14.
[69] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 32.



while another shows three leaves sprouting from vertical lines on the plate (Fig. 19).[71]



Though botanical imagery is very prevalent on these plates, other motifs continue to appear. A very common motif is wave patterns made of S-shaped incised lines. This style of imagery is often relegated to bordering plates (Fig. 20)[72]



but may sometimes compose significant portions of the plate's imagery (Fig. 21).[73]

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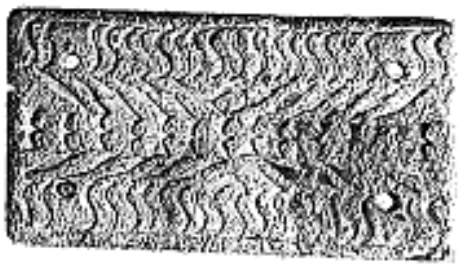
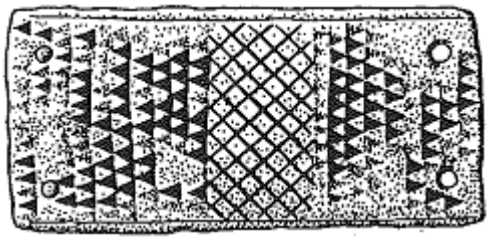
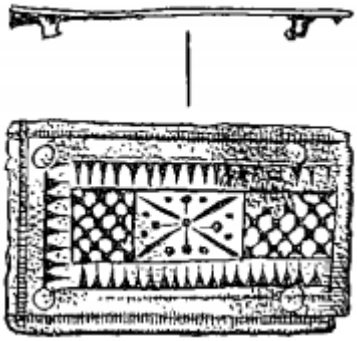
[70] Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 27, 18.
[71] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 46.
[72] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 3.
[73] Glasbergen, W. 1974. Plate 12, # 21.



It is also common to create checkerboard patterns on these belt plates. These patterns are made either by simply carving lines (Fig. 22)[74]



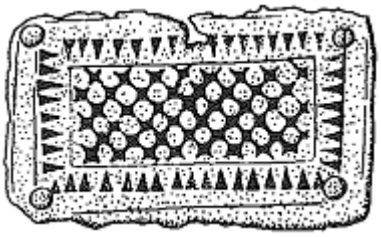
or alternatively, incising small squares in the proper pattern (Fig. 23).[75]



Other decorative styles usually relegated to borders are x-shaped (Fig. 24)[76]

[74] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 23.
[75] Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 27, 19.
[76] Glasbergen, W. 1974. Plate 12, # 8.

and triangular incisions (Fig. 25).[77]

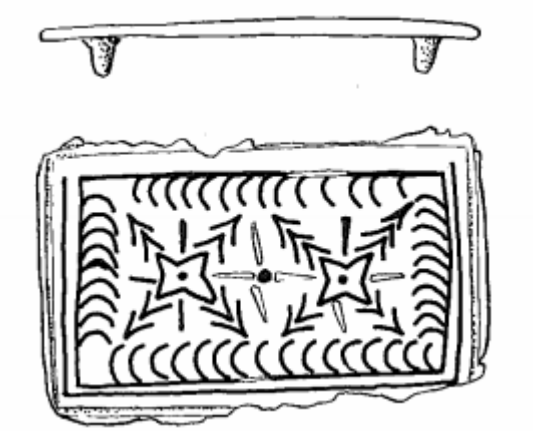


Included among these more common styles of imagery for Type 2 belts is the occasional unique piece. Though there are many that fall into this category, only a few will be depicted here for the sake of time. One such plate depicts two circles in which are six-pointed images which may be stars or foliage. Outside the circles, lines emanate from the circle in the manner of a sunburst. The entire image is then surrounded by a border made from rectangles (Fig. 26).[78]

Another unique piece comes from Kaiserauguster. In this plate, two four-pointed stars with a single dot in the middle of each flank a central dot which itself has four thin leaves

[77] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 20.
[78] Glasbergen, W. 1974. Plate 12, # 29.

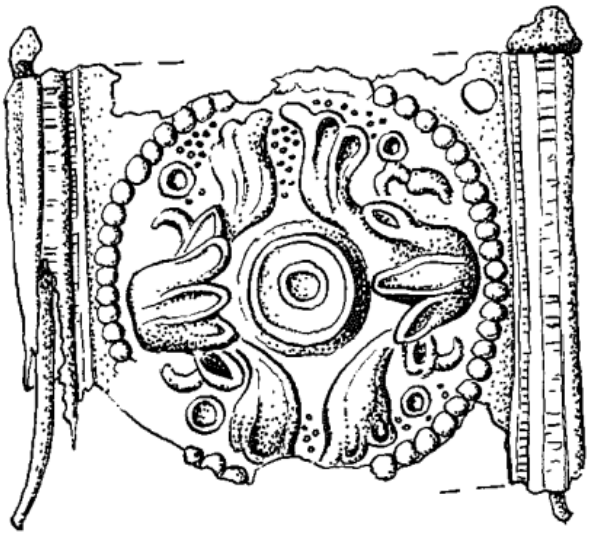
sprouting from it. Then from the corners of the each star, two to three arrows emerge. Finally, a solid line border is decorated with inward facing curved lines which resemble commas (Fig. 27).[79]



Type 3 belt plates are less widespread than those in Type 2, but still fairly common throughout the empire. These plates are characterized by their thin construction and the detailed imagery surrounded by a circular border. Six different types of images have appeared in the archaeological record: vegetative, hunting scenes, portraiture, the Wolf and Twins, gods, and mythology. Scenes of foliage always depict two plants which face towards a small central circle (Fig. 28).[80]

[79] Deschler-Erb, Eckhard, et al. 1991. 65. # 43.
[80] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 61.

Though many of these plates are very plain such as Figure 28, some present more decoration with addition protrusions from the plant and dots inside the enclosed circle (Fig. 29).[81]

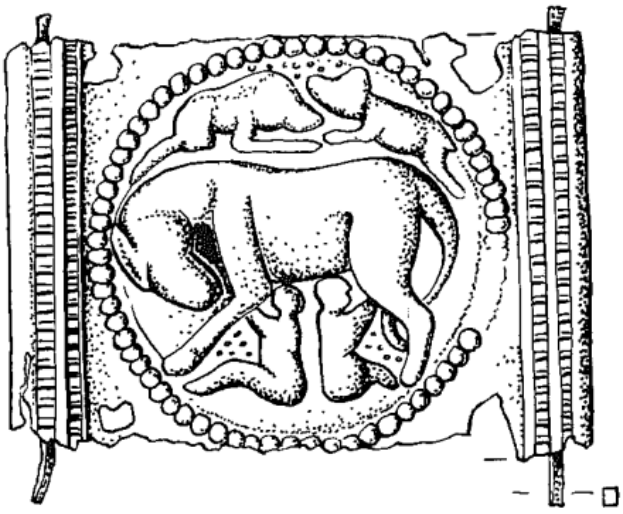


Another popular image is that of the hunt. Though the exact animals can vary, the consistent formula is one or more predators chasing prey animals around in a circle around the center of the plate (Fig. 30).[82]

[81] Deschler-Erb, Eckhard, et al. 1991. 63. # 41.
[82] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 66.

Scenes of portraiture depict the disembodied head of an emperor, two cornucopias sitting on either side of his and crossing each other beneath the head, and finally, a globe at the bottom center (Fig. 31).[83]

The image of the Wolf and Twins on Type 3 belt plates is consistent but not well understood. The twins, Romulus and Remus, are always shown under the she-wolf with two animals above them (Fig. 32).[84]



[83] von Gonzenbach. 1966. 187-208.

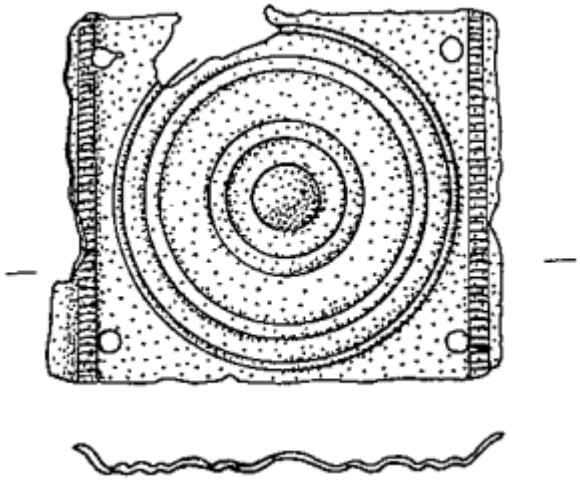
[84] Deschler-Erb, Eckhard, et al. 1991. 63. # 40.

The presence of the animals is a deviation from the grotto or cave which usually accompanies this scene and does not seem to relate any additional information to this scene.[85] Scenes of gods or mythological scenes are especially rare in the archaeological record. An example from Pompeii shows a plate with the god Mars (Fig. 33).[86]

Other examples from Herculaneum, though badly corroded due to their point of discovery at the ship docks, may show both gods and mythological scenes (Fig. 34).[87]

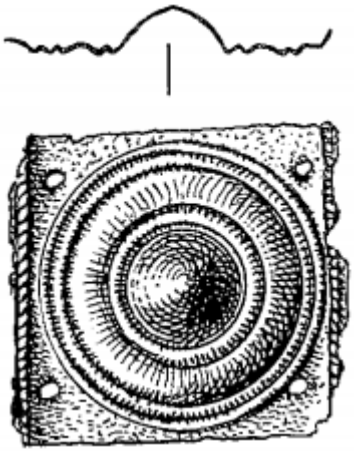
[85] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. 54-55.
[86] Bishop, M.C., Coulston, J.C.N. 2006. 108.
[87] D'Amato, Raffaele. 2009. 45.

Type 4 belt plates are simple but with a wide variety of forms. All Type 4 plates are thin like those in Type 3 and contain some form of circular patterns. The most common variety are stamped, creating raised ridges which form the circular pattern (Fig. 35).[88]



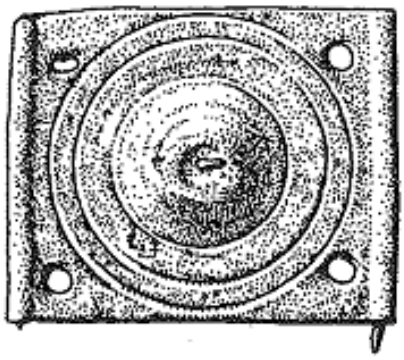
As Figure 35 displays, the interior circle of the plate is lifted farthest above the plane of the belt plate. This difference in the height of the center is frequently exaggerated (Fig. 36).[89]

[88] Schonberger, Hans. 1978. Taffel 22, B 141.
[89] Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 27, 1.



In addition, the exact size of the circle subject to change. In some plates, the circular area takes up only a fraction of the plate's space (Fig. 37).[90]

On other plates, the circle can stretch to the edges of the plate (Fig. 38).[91]

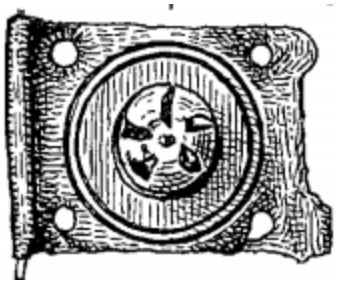


[90] Glasbergen, W. 1974. Plate 12, # 17.
[91] Grew Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 84.

The other variety of Type 4 plates uses the same thin plate but the circles are incised rather than stamped, resulting in a flat surface (Fig. 39).[92]

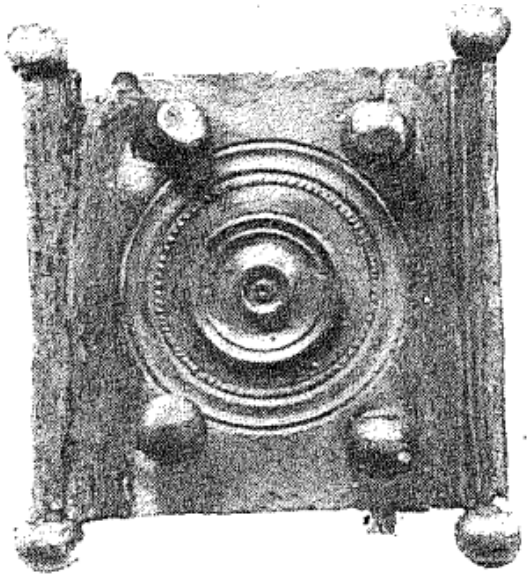
On rare occasions, the two techniques can both be used on a single plate (Fig. 40).[93]

As Figure 40 has shown, details in addition to the circles can be found on these plates. Some plates show additional incisions on the stamped surfaces (Fig. 41).[94]

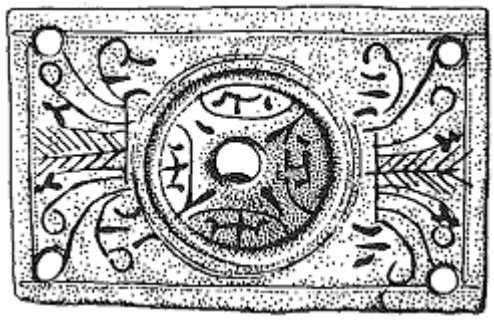


[92] Glasbergen, W. 1974. Plate 12, # 11.
[93] Glasbergen, W. 1974. Plate 12, # 26.
[94] Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 27, 7.

Others display incised lines which are used to highlight the lines of the stamped circles (Fig. 42).[95]

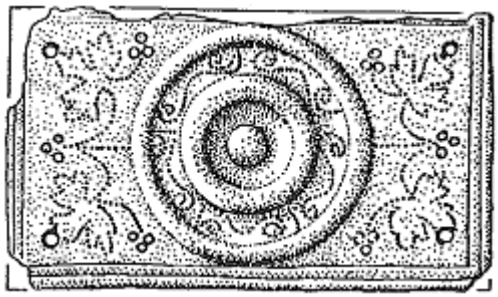


The most elaborate of these extra decorations come in the form of vegetative imagery. Some versions have carved lives (Fig. 43)



while others use a series of small dots to make line images (Fig. 44).[96]

[95] Mano-Zisi. 1957. Tabla XIII. 19.
[96] Fig. 43: Grew Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 71. Fig. 44: Grew Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 67.

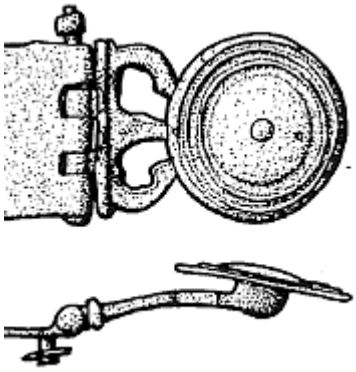


These four styles of belt plate represent the majority of the remaining examples. Though the occasional unique plate is discovered, the variation usually stems from a combination of these types and thus is not prudent to include for this study. What these examples do illustrate however, is that there can be no accurate date or order of evolution assigned for any of these types. At a given time during the 1st century A.D., a Roman soldier could expect to see any one of these plates decorating the belt of his comrades.

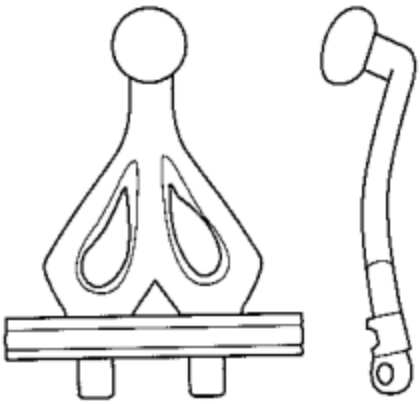
Frogs

Belt frogs served a very particular and important function on a belt. Swords and daggers would be attached to belts using leather straps which were strung around the frog. Throughout the 1st century A.D., belt frogs retain the same basic shape with little variety in their primary design features (Fig. 45).[97]

[97] Bishop, M.C., Coulston, J.C.N. 2006. 108.



The basic form was a level metal base which would lie flat against the leather as plates did. From this, the metal would either curve up or a separate piece of metal would come out perpendicular to the flat section. At the top of this protrusion was one of two pieces. Most common would be a flat disc which was soldered into place. On occasions, a simple knob might be used instead (Fig. 46).[98]



The purpose of this final element would be to give the leather straps a place to wrap around in order to keep weapons from sliding or falling off.

[98] Nicolay, Johan. 2007. 349. 8,4.

The flat portion which would be prone against the belt would be solid metal or, more commonly, have some openwork designs. The solid metal and openwork styles always retain a triangular shape (Fig. 47 – 48).[99]

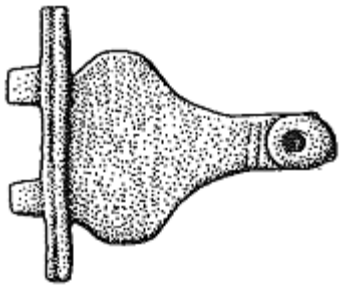


Figure 47

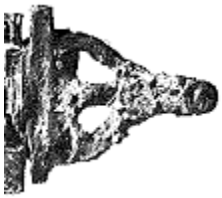
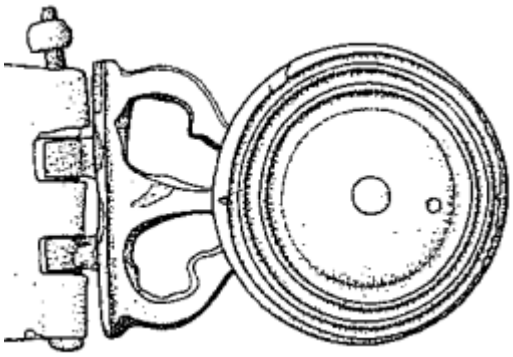


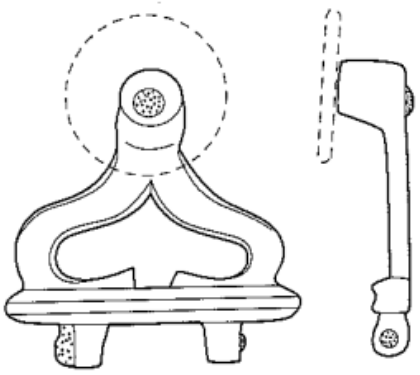
Figure 48

Openwork frogs often incorporate two cut away areas with a bar through the middle bridging the open space (Fig. 49).[100]

[99] Fig. 47: Grew Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 170. Fig. 48: Glasbergen, W. 1974. Plate 12, # 10.
[100] Morel, M.A.W., Bosman, A.V.A.G. 1989. Fig. 5.

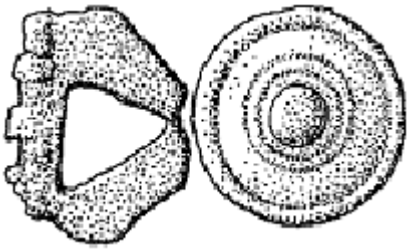


The other method is to omit this connecting bar to create a single blank area on the frog's flat portion (Fig. 50).[101]

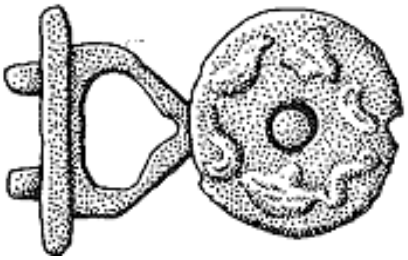


The most prominent portion of the frog is the top of the flat disc. This piece of the frog, more than any other, is where detailed decoration will be placed. The typical frog disc will include some simple, cast concentric circles (Fig. 51).[102]

[101] Nicolay, Johan. 2007. 349. 159,1.
[102] Grew Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 175.



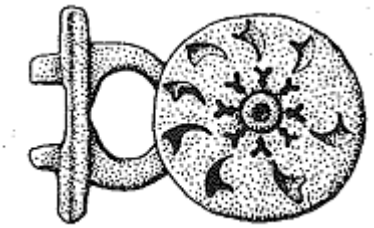
In addition to simple concentric circles, other decorations can be cast such as in this frog disc with a hunting scene around a central incised circle (Fig. 52).[103]



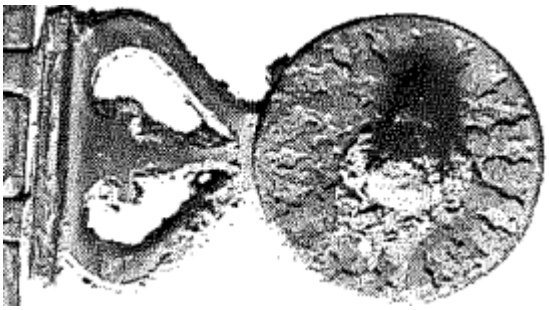
The most elaborate casting can create very fine detail such as in this frog found at Pompeii depicting Helios and his chariot (Fig. 53).[104]

[103] Grew Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 173.
[104] Bishop, M.C., Coulston, J.C.N. 2006. 108.

Many special types of additional decoration can be found on these flat studs. Some pieces, after they are cast, are incised and can even be inlayed with niello (Fig. 54).[105]



Other discs are especially cast to be flat except for a raised section in the middle. An example from Valkenburg not only uses this method, but also includes incised vegetative imagery around the central bulge (Fig. 55).[106]



One of finest examples of belt frogs comes from the metal cache found at Tejike from the late 1st – early 2nd century A.D. (Fig. 56).[107]

[105] Grew Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 166.
[106] Glasbergen, W. 1974. Plate 14, # 43.
[107] Mano-Zisi. 1957. Tabla XI. 15.

In addition to the fine casting, it contains a unique feature among all the pieces presented in this chapter in the form of letters written in punched dots.

Although belt frogs have very little surface area for decorating compared to the full assemblage of plates, this fact did not preclude them from being treated with the same level of detailed work.

Buckles

The buckle is arguably the single most important piece of a belt since it secures the belt into position around the waist of the individual wearing it. Six different types of buckles can be found in the 1st century A.D. archaeological record. There is one rectangular type, four peltate (curved) types, and a sunken square variety. The rectangular belt buckle is rare in the archaeological record (Fig. 57).[108]

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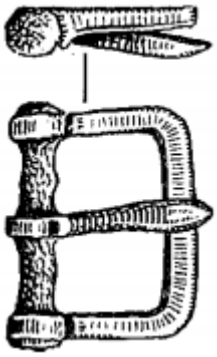
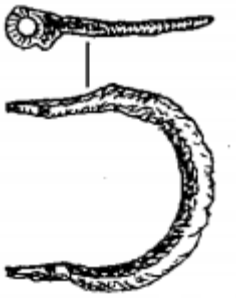
[108] Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 26, 11.



It is characterized by its squared shape and simple, undecorated tongue, the swiveling portion used to tighten the belt. The peltate loop is the simplest type of curved belt buckle (Fig. 57).[109]



These are characterized by a simple curved shape and circular or rectangular hinge transition. This type of buckle ranges greatly in size and level of curvature and uses straight, single spiked, or double spiked tongues (Fig. 59 – 61).[110]

[109] Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 26, 9.
[110] Fig 59: Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 26, 9. Fig 60: Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 26, 14. Fig 61: Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 26, 19.

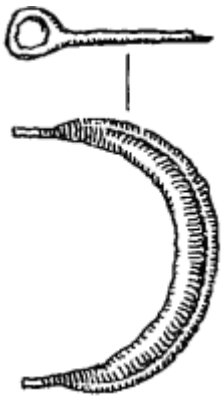


Figure 59

Figure 60

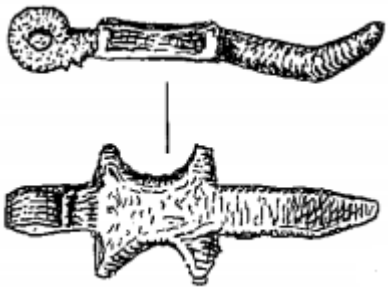
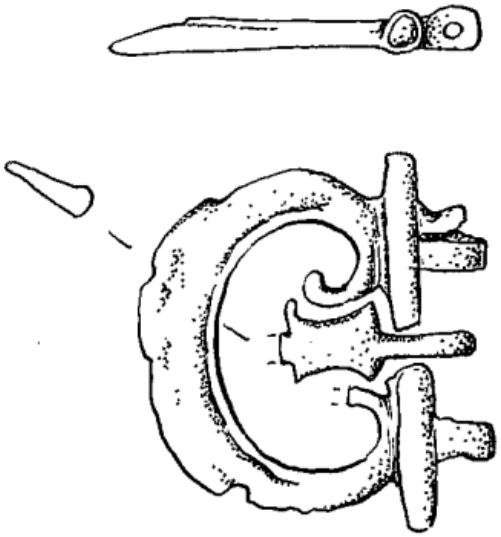
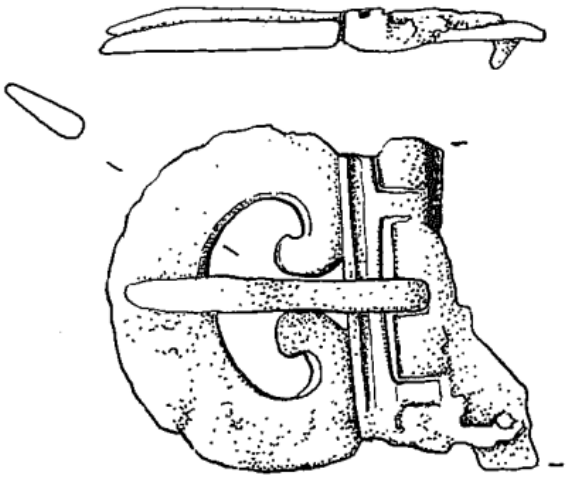


Figure 61

In the second type of peltate buckle, the pelta ends are scrolled inwards and terminate in two volutes.[111] All peltate buckles can use straight and both styles of spiked tongue, depending on the exact shape of the volutes (Fig. 62).[112]

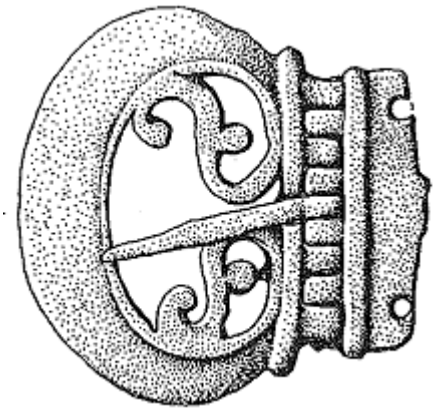


The third style of peltate buckle are like the second style but are much simpler often with a rounder design and smaller volutes (Fig. 63).[113]

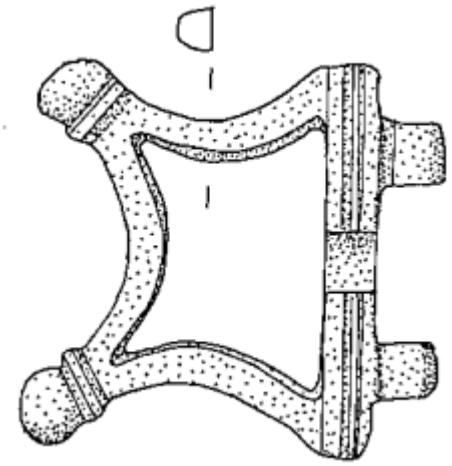


[111] Nicolay, Johan. 2007. 34.
[112] Deschler-Erb, Eckhard, et al. 1991. 57. # 23.
[113] Deschler-Erb, Eckhard, et al. 1991. 57. # 25.

The fourth type of peltate are again, similar to the second type but these incorporate volutes which extend up and reconnect to the main part of the buckle (Fig. 64).[114]



The final type of buckle is the sunken square variety. The shape of the buckle resembles a square with sides which have been curved inwards (Fig. 65).[115]



As in Figure 64, many of these buckles incorporate small knobs on the far corners.

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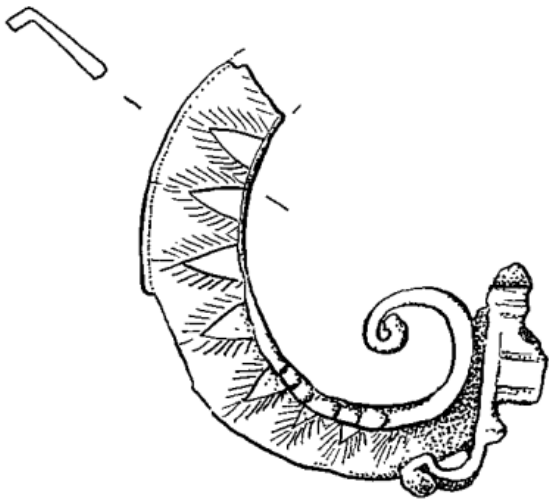
[114] Grew Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 166.
[115] Schonberger, Hans. 1978. Taffel 21, B 139.

This presents the six general types of belt buckles. Buckles, like every belt component, can also be elaborately decorated. Buckles are decorated with incised lines such as a vegetative example from Kaiserauguster (Fig. 66).[116]



Some examples take this idea even further with incised parts inlayed with niello (Fig. 67).[117]

One particular type of niello decorated belt plate which is repeated at a number of sites uses small rectangles along the buckle (Fig. 68).[118]

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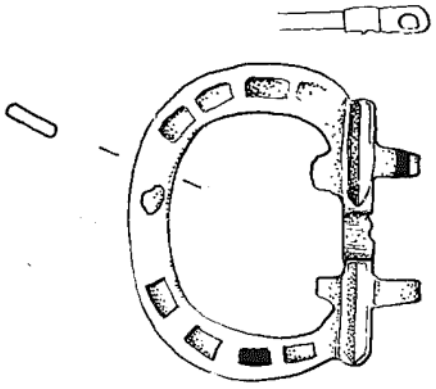
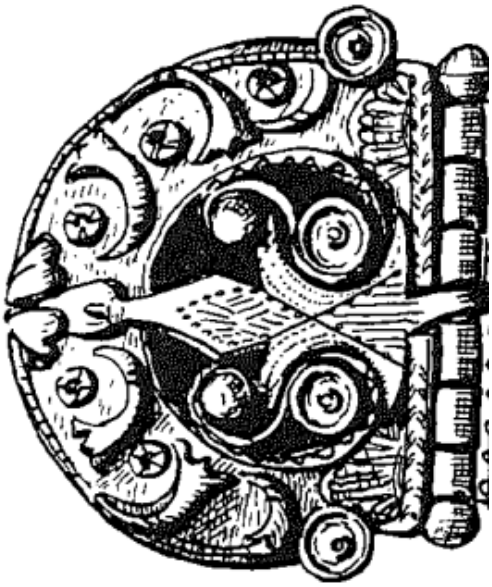
[116] Deschler-Erb, Eckhard, et al. 1991. 59. # 22.
[117] Grew Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 118.



One of the most intricate belt plates from this period comes from the cash at Tejike. This buckle includes rosettes, cornucopias, vegetative imagery, and a customized tongue bearing its own volutes (Fig. 69).[119]



This look at buckles completes the survey of belt components which are placed directly on the belt itself. From here, the chapter will examine the objects which decorated the apron.

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[118] Deschler-Erb, Eckhard, et al. 1991. 59. # 26.
[119] Mano-Zisi. 1957. Tabla XIV.

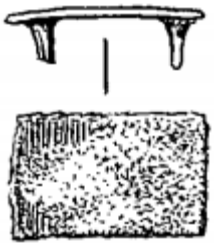
Apron Fittings

Aprons make up the second major component in a Roman belt. Apron fittings can be divided into three categories: studs, plates, and terminals. The order in which these pieces are discussed is determined by the typical order of these parts going from top to bottom as seen on belts in art historical representations.

The apron stud is a very simple item. At the most basic it is a flat piece of metal with a nail or rivet attached to the back for connecting it to the leather behind it. Despite this, they are often decorated in many different ways such as shaping, incising, repousse, and stamping.

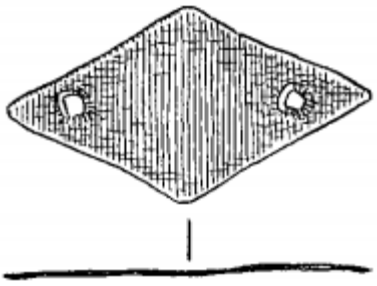
Simple studs come on one of three shapes: circular, rectangular, and very rarely, diamond. Circular studs are by far the most common type of stud (Fig. 70).[120]

Rectangular studs are the second most common type (Fig. 71).[121]

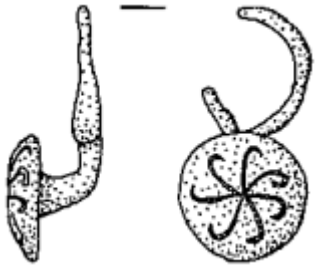


[120] Bosman, A.V.A.J. 1995. 97. # 63.
[121] Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 29, 30.

Despite this, they still make up a small portion of the remaining studs and very few studs are found decorated. The last variety of stud are the diamond type (Fig. 72).[122]



Some circular studs are shaped. This can range from uncomplicated domed heads created by hammering (Fig. 73)

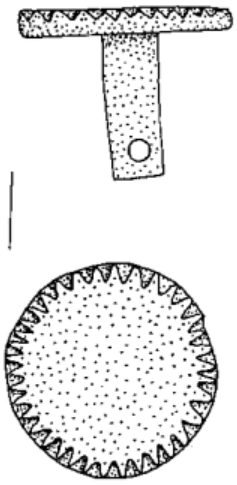


to depressed mushroom cap studs (Fig. 74)

[122] Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 28, 4.

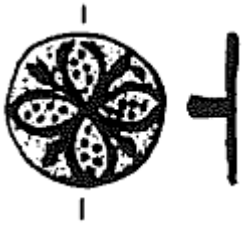
and domed heads with a coiling pattern (Fig. 75).[123]

Other studs incorporate different techniques. Incising is used in two ways on studs. Firstly, it is done directly on the top in order to create some sort of design such as with a stud at Oberstimm which creates a border using small triangles (Fig. 76).[124]



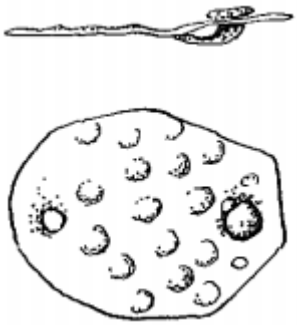
More elaborate drawings can also be made on the surface by the same method (Fig. 77).[125]

[123] Fig 73: Schonberger, Hans. 1978. Taffel 25, B 222. Fig. 74: Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 29, 21. Fig. 75: Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 29, 12.
[124] Schonberger, Hans. 1978. Taffel 21, B 133.
[125] Bishop, M.C., Coulston, J.C.N. 2006. 109.



Secondly, it is incised on the side to give the stud itself a different outline as an example at Rheingonheim shows (Fig. 78).[126]

Another method was repousse (Fig. 79).[127]



This style was rarely used in favor of stamping which was a simpler method. Both circular and square studs were stamped (Fig. 80).[128]

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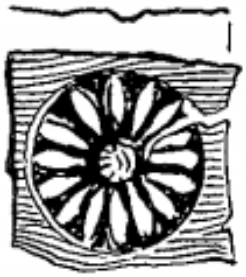
[126] Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 29, 38.
[127] Deschler-Erb, Eckhard, et al. 1991. 65. # 54.



General botanical imagery was popular in addition to more intricate depictions of emperors.[129] On stamped studs of emperors, the men were presented either as only disembodied heads (Fig. 81),

heads with a leafy branch (Fig. 82),

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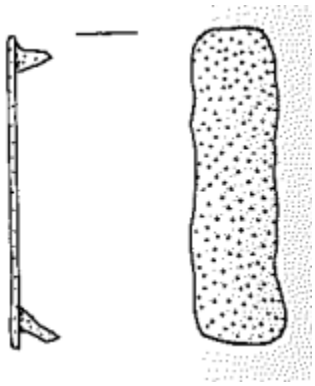
[128] Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 29, 6.
[129] The importance of these types of stud designs will be discussed in Chapter 7: The Social Sphere.

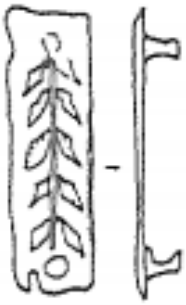
or heads with a club of Hercules (Fig. 83).[130]

Apron plates are the thin, vertical plates which can decorate apron straps in addition to or instead of studs. Though they are rectangular like some studs, apron plates are significantly longer than studs and thus very simple to tell apart. There are two types of apron plates differentiated by whether they have hanging mechanisms for terminals. For those without hanging implements, three different styles of decoration which have been discovered. There are those plates without decoration (Fig. 84),



those with incised designs (Fig. 85),

[130] Fig 81: Feugere, Michel. 1985. 124. Fig. 2.3. Fig. 82: Feugere, Michel. 1985. 124. Fig. 2.7a. Fig 83: Feugere, Michel. 1985. 124. Fig. 2.11.

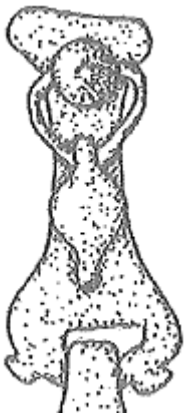


and those with stamped design such as this example from Tejike which also includes repousse work (Fig. 86).[131]

Apron plates which can be identified as hangers use the same decorations as normal plates. Another example from the Tejike hoard displays the mechanism for hanging terminals from these apron pieces (Fig. 87).[132]

[131] Fig. 84: Schonberger, Hans. 1978. Taffel 21, B 151. Fig 85: Bosman, A.V.A.J. 1995. 97. # 57. Fig 86: Mano-Zisi. 1957. Tabla XIV.
[132] Mano-Zisi. 1957. Tabla XIV.

Some hanger plates have been found with additional embellishment in the form of a small teardrop pendant attached to the front of the plate (Fig. 88).[133]



Occasionally, these tear drop pendants on buckle plates will have additional decoration of their own such as with this example from Aznalcazar, Spain which has three dots in a triangular pattern (Fig. 89).[134]

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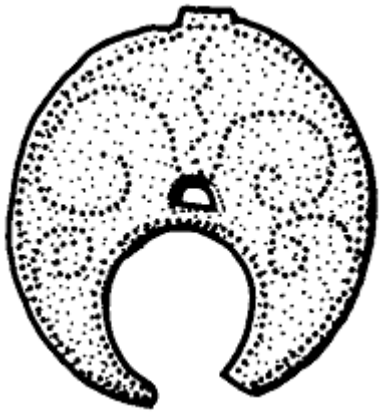
[133] Fernandez, Joaquin Aurrecoechea. 1998. "Apron Fittings from Flavian Times found in Spain" in *The Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies*. 9. 37-44. 39. 2.
[134] Fernandez, Joaquin Aurrecoechea. 1998. 39. 3.

The preservation of the belt from the Herculaneum soldier provides a special opportunity to view how such belt plates would look when they were attached to the apron strap and holding terminals (Fig. 90).[135]

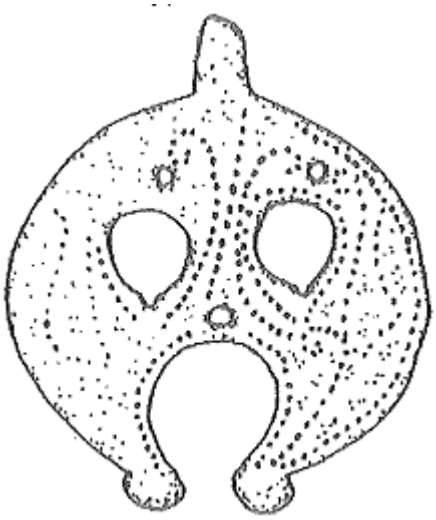
The final portion of the apron which hangs at the very end of each strap is called the terminal. There are two common varieties of terminal during the 1st century A.D.

[135] D'Amato, Raffaele. 2009. 45.

The first type is called the lunate style.[136] All lunate terminals are nearly full circles with the exception of a space missing at the very bottom (Fig. 91).[137]

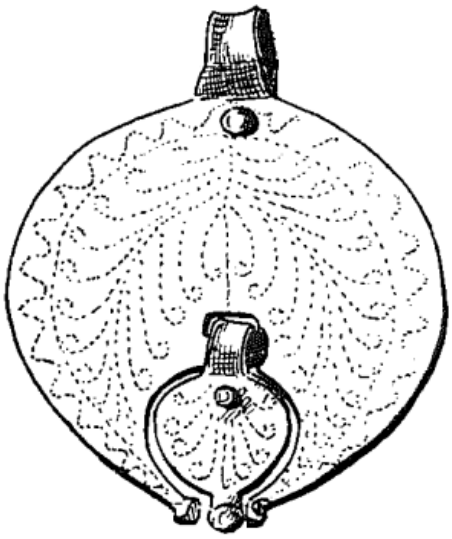


In this space would hang a smaller, teardrop shaped secondary pendant. Though all of these had the bottom trinket, some varieties could have two extra which would hang from similarly shaped cut outs on the main portion of the terminal (Fig. 92).[138]

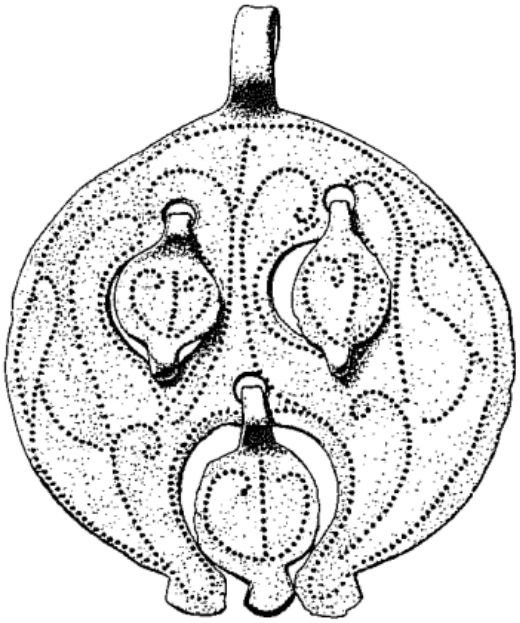


[136] Bishop, M.C. 1992. 98 – 99.
[137] Bishop, M.C. 1992. Fig. 5.5.
[138] Fernandez, Joaquin Aurrecoechea. 1998. 38. 1.

Most of the remaining examples of lunate terminals have punched dot vegetative decoration whether they are single (Fig. 93)

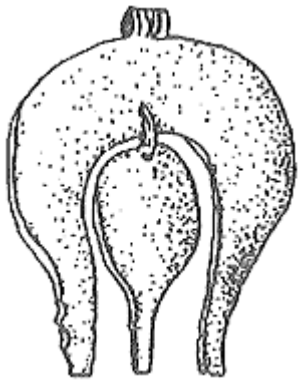


or triple pendant items (Fig. 94).[139]

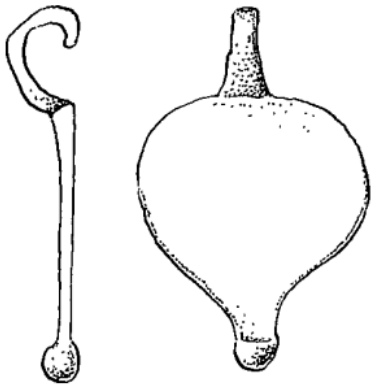


[139] Fig. 93: Mano-Zisi. 1957. Tabla XIV. 23. Fig. 94: Zienkiewicz, J. David. 1986. 182. 132.

Though this design stays very consistent throughout the century, some examples do exhibit variation such as this terminal from Palencia, Spain (Fig. 95).[140]



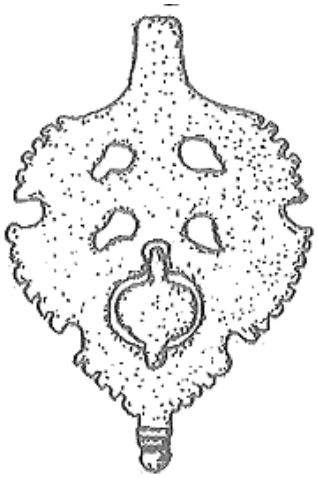
The second variety of terminal is the teardrop shape. The teardrop category has more deviation in width but still is distinguishable in that is has a knob at the base of the piece (Fig. 96).[141]



This style incorporates occasional bits of openwork (Fig. 97)

[140] Fernandez, Joaquin Aurrecoechea. 1998. 41. 6.
[141] Deschler-Erb, Eckhard, et al. 1991. 65. # 57.

and some examples also include a secondary pendant in the center of the piece (Fig. 98).[142]



Thinner teardrop terminals typically lack embellishment though some pieces have been found with incised decoration (Fig. 99).[143]

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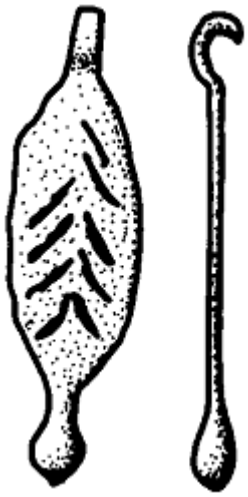
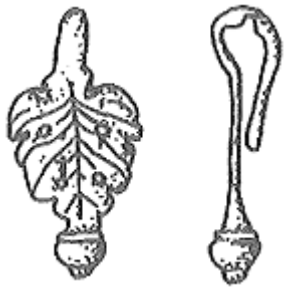
[142] Fig. 97: Bishop, M.C. 1992. Fig. 5.1. Fig. 98: Fernandez, Joaquin Aurrecoechea. 1998. 41. 6.
[143] Bishop, M.C. 1992. Fig. 5.4.



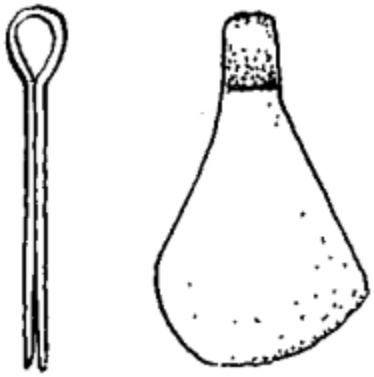
One particularly interesting example from Tejike incorporates repousse heads on teardrop terminals (Fig. 100).[144]

[144] Mano-Zisi. 1957. Tabla XVI. 24.

In addition to these main varieties, some rare styles exist. One such design is the serrated triangle. These terminals often incorporate incised lines to give the impression that it is a leaf (Fig. 101).[145]



Another type is a fan-tail pattern terminal (Fig. 102).[146]



Conclusion

The artefactual evidence for 1st century A.D. belts is immense. Between the four different categories presented here, there are thousands of belt components ranging from the smallest stud to ornate belt plates. The pieces here provide an exact record of the different styles of belt pieces which were worn by the soldiery. As chapters one and two

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[145] Fernandez, Joaquin Aurrecoechea. 1998. 41. 2.
[146] Deschler-Erb, Eckhard, et al. 1991. 65. # 55.

have strived to introduce the materials available for study, neither has taken into consideration the materials involved or the methods of producing these belts. This study will be the purview of the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Belt Materials and Production

When examining any object, a basic question to answer is "how was it made?". Knowing how an object is made can reveal many different things about it such as size, cost, effectiveness, and durability. In the realm of Roman equipment studies in particular, understanding the construction of items such as *lorica segmentatae* and Domitian-era helmets have been integral to determining how these pieces functioned on and off the battlefield.[147] Now that the physical remnants of the Roman military belt have been identified, this chapter will inspect what went into making these items. For Roman belts, the materials have little variation: leather, bronze, niello, silver, and rarely, bone. Among these materials, leather and bronze make up most of the raw materials used in a belt. The methods for producing a belt are two-fold. Since belt components must often be constructed, it is important to look at how both the pieces themselves were constructed and subsequently decorated in addition to how the final product was put together.

This section will function to introduce fully the variables that should be recognized and calculated when studying Roman belt production in order to facilitate the later discussion. Consequently, interpretations based upon the evidence given will be limited to those which satisfy this chapter's goals.

Leather and metal were the basic resources used to construct a military belt. Learning about these materials - the types of materials, their availability, and methods of

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[147] Bishop, M.C. & Coulston, J. 2006. 95-100 & 210-211.

production – gives a better understanding of what choices were available to the Roman soldier when designing his belt.

Materials

The materials involved in belt production are very basic. Leather and metal make up the two primary items in belt production. Leather is differentiated based primarily upon the types of animal skin used and the style of curing the hides. Though various types of metals are found on belts, bronze and its component metals make up the primary types used.

Leather

As a whole, the Roman army used significant amounts of leather for many different things ranging from shoes, shield covers, tents, and belt production. Leather formed the backing of the belt and the main structural support for the entire belt and its apron. Thus, leather would comprise a significant volume of each belt. There are few types of leather which Roman soldiers would have access to for belts. Cattle and goat leather are the most common types used in forts. Both varieties of leather would be sufficient for belt production. The exact proportion of cattle/ goat leather used in belts is not well understood. The only real evidence comes from the regions surrounding the Rhine where goat leather is used for belts and other assorted things while cow leather is

predominantly restricted to shoe and shield production.[148] In addition sheep must also be considered due to their presence in areas of military occupation. Sheep leather, however, has characteristic dermal/epidermal separation when tanned which is noted on few Roman military leather pieces.[149] Consequently, it is most likely that Roman soldiers would have acquired cow or goat leather for their belts.

The sources of these leathers are also not well understood. Military units kept cattle and goats with them. Oxen would provide labor and secondarily meat. Goats – certainly not notable beasts of burden – would provide a constant supply of food in the form of milk and cheese and, due to their ability to thrive on inhospitable soils, would require little maintenance. The amount of cow and goat leather seems to correspond to the osteological material at archaeological sites for the most part. In areas north of Switzerland, however, there is a dearth of osteological goat material for the number implied by leather finds. Here the possibility exists that goats were not eaten in military establishments very much or that, since no permanent Roman military tannery has been identified, excavations have simply missed the deposits of bones. Another possibility to explain this inconsistency is the aforementioned presence of sheep leather which, in archaeological contexts, can be similar enough to goat leather to skew potentially results. A simple explanation to solve such a problem is trade. Goats were farmed considerably in ancient Switzerland and Italy and trading of goat skins could be facilitated through either overland routes or by water.[150] Whether this would solve the problem of the archaeological discrepancy remains to be seen since such transport of material would be

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[148] Gansser-Burckhardt, 1942. 64 – 75. & van Driel-Murray, C. 1985. 59-60.
[149] van Driel-Murray, C. 1985. 60.
[150] van Driel-Murray, C. 1985. 59-60. van Driel-Murray argues against, but does not rule out, overland routes from Italy and Europe.

very slow. This is all the more problematic when looked at compared to the tendency of the Roman military to use local resources for basic necessities.[151] Though the exact sources for leather can only be presumed due to a lack of definitive evidence, it is possible to make a strong argument for the use of cow and goat leather in Roman belt production.

Metal

The second primary material in every Roman belt was metal. Bronze makes up the vast majority of material used in belt parts. Bronze is an extremely common copper alloy which makes up most metal belt parts. Bronze is created by mixing copper with certain other elements. For the purpose of this study, the important style of bronze is gunmetal. This was the most common type of Roman bronze alloy incorporating copper (Cu), tin (Sn), and zinc (Zn) , and sometimes lead (Pb).[152] The amounts for each could vary but the purpose of this mixture was its simple ability to be cast (which will be discussed shortly).

Other metals used independently in belts were tin and silver. Belt components were never made from pure tin. Rather, tin and silver were used to coat the surface of certain pieces in order to make them appear to be entirely made of silver. Other belt components were made directly from silver such as the belt plates discovered on the body of a military man at the ship docks of Herculaneum from the mid 1st century A.D.[153]

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[151] Wild. 1977. 30.
[152] Tylecote, R.F. 1976. 58-59.
[153] D'Amato, Raffaele. 2009. 44.

There are no belt fragments of gold which have been as yet been excavated from the 1st century A.D.

With the metals making up belt pieces introduced, it is important to know where they came from and how they travelled to where they would be finally worked in order to understand the availability of these materials. Copper, the metal needed most, was also the most common of the materials. Large mines were worked in Spain which produced vast quantities of ore and smaller copper operations existed throughout the empire. With the propensity for Romans to get their materials as locally as possible, it is possible that mines from Spain, Gaul, Asia Minor, and Egypt all provided the copper for nearby army communities; mines were certainly active in each area during the 1st century A.D.[154] Tin was mined almost exclusively in Spain during the Roman period. Strabo and Diodorus Siculus mention Lusitania, Gallaecia, and Turdentia in Spain as specific locations from which supplies of tin came.[155] Lead was mined extensively in Spain and Britain during the empire.[156] Zinc deposits were known in Germany and Italy to Pliny the Elder[157] and others existed in Gaul as well.[158] Silver was mined heavily in Spain. Immense quantities of silver were brought to Rome from Spain in the first years of the 2nd century B.C. and, according to Pliny and archaeological evidence, these extensive silver operations continued well into the 1st century A.D.[159] Besides Spain, silver was also mined across the empire in places such as Gaul, Greece, and Sardinia.

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[154] Healy, John F. 1978. 58 – 60.
[155] Strabo iii, 2, 9 & Diodorus Siculus, v, 38, 4-5.
[156] Healy, John F. 1978. 61 – 62.
[157] Pliny. *Natural Histories.* xxxiv, 2.
[158] Healy, John F. 1978. 63.
[159] Healy, John F. 1978. 56.

With the specific sources of these metals in mind, it is important to know how these were transported and who dealt with such transportation in order to better grasp what factors affected supply. Roman mines during the 1st century A.D. were controlled by the state. Augustus was the first Roman leader to appoint people specifically to handle administration in mines though all mines were not under state control.[160] The process by which all mines fell totally under the sway of the government began in the reign of Tiberius. This continued through the 1st century A.D. but strict regulation of mines ended somewhere around the beginning of the 2nd century A.D. With such a monopoly on metal resources during the period pertaining to this study, it is almost certain that metal for belts originated from government controlled sources.

Transport of metals was a rather simple system. Ores of copper, lead, tin, and silver would be extracted on site at their respective mines and formed into ingots. Zinc, however, was transported as raw ore because Romans had no understanding of metallic zinc as people do today. Romans could, however, identify ores containing zinc and understood its properties well enough to use it. Instead of being used from ingots, it would be mixed with copper for brass or bronze as ore.[161] Once these materials had been processed and were prepared for transport, they could be moved by either ship or overland. Due to the sheer weight of metal ingots and ores, unless the particular metal was being transported over a short distance, ship travel would be both easier and faster.[162] Consequently, the metals needed for the production of belt components were both well understood and readily available for creating belts.

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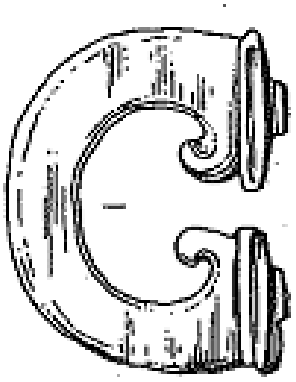
[160] Healy, John F. 1978. 129.
[161] Healy, John F. 1978. 189.
[162] There are many ship wrecks dating as far back as the 14th century B.C. which contain large quantities of metal ingots.

Bone

Belt pieces made from bone are known from a couple of buckles from Britain. These buckles are carved in shapes very similar to metal buckles and do not display any unique features (Fig. 1)[163].



These pieces would simply be carved from a large portion of bone; the sturdier bones of certain wild animals and farm animals would be more than adequate for such a task.

Methods of Production

Now that the various materials have been detailed, it is prudent to analyze the various methods by these materials would be worked into belts and their respective components. Tanning was the process by which leather would be kept from decomposing and made into a viable working material. After obtaining tanned leather, the process for creating belts was very simple. Creating the metal portions and decorations for belt pieces involved more than just one process. All belt items would initially be created by casting. After this, different methods were used on belt plates in

[163] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 129.

order to finish or further decorate them such as filing, repousse, tinning, and niello. With the belt parts created, different methods would be used for putting the entire belt together.

Leather

In order to be worked, leather must first be tanned so as to prevent decay. Theoretically, animal skins would be taken directly to tanneries after the animal was flayed. In this case, the skin would first be treated in order to combat any initial decay and to remove any remnants of flesh. This could be accomplished through salting the skins or by stretching them on a wooden lattice tied with strings.[164] As the skins were salted or strapped up, large knives would be used to remove any excess flesh. Once these skins were prepared they would be sent to the tannery where the chemical process of tanning would take place. No tanning facilities have been discovered near Roman military sites. Areas at Hofheim in Germany and possibly Velsen in the Netherlands seem to have been used for the initial processing of skins. Hofheim contained not only large vats for water storage but also large amounts of cattle horn cores among its refuse.[165] In addition, excavation reports note large amounts of disordered post holes across the area nearby the vats and rubbish.[166] These could be signs of frames set up for drying hides. Despite some possible evidence for leather preparation, neither site reveals any infrastructure necessary to tanning.

Tanning (the exact process of which will not be detailed in full here) involves chemical treatment of the skins in order to prepare them for industrial use. Skins could

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[164] Aten. et al. 1955. Fig. 42.
[165] van Driel-Murray, C. 1985. 62 – 63. The same type of cattle horn deposits at Velsen possibly associate it with pre-tanning leather working.
[166] Ritterling, E. 1912. 61.

be tanned by using vegetable solutions, oil, or alum. Oiled and alum-treated leather do not survive as well in the archaeological record as do vegetable tanned leathers since they cannot survive wet conditions.[167] The lack of belt remnants from archaeological sources may suggest that oiled or alum-treated leathers were used for this purpose. The process of chemically tanning leather would have been and is still today a very odorous procedure. The stench of such an establishment meant that they were often placed downwind of settlements if there was ample room (a trend followed even in modern times). It is not surprising that tanneries are rarely discovered through excavations since the strength of these odors would lead them to be placed away from the center of towns or forts and subsequently out of the excavated areas of a site.

Though the exact process of tanning leather around the frontiers where soldiers lived is not well understood, the final processing of leather for belts is a very simple task. For creating belt blanks, tanned leather would be cut into long strips of a substantial length which could be trimmed down as necessary as leather shops do in the modern age. The only complicated procedure comes with understanding just how the apron for belts would be cut. As the art historical evidence showed, there could be two types of belt decorations called aprons. One style of apron involved splitting the end of the belt away from the buckle, the terminus, and decorating these split strips of leather (Fig. 2 bottom).

[167] van Driel-Murray, C. 1985. 45.

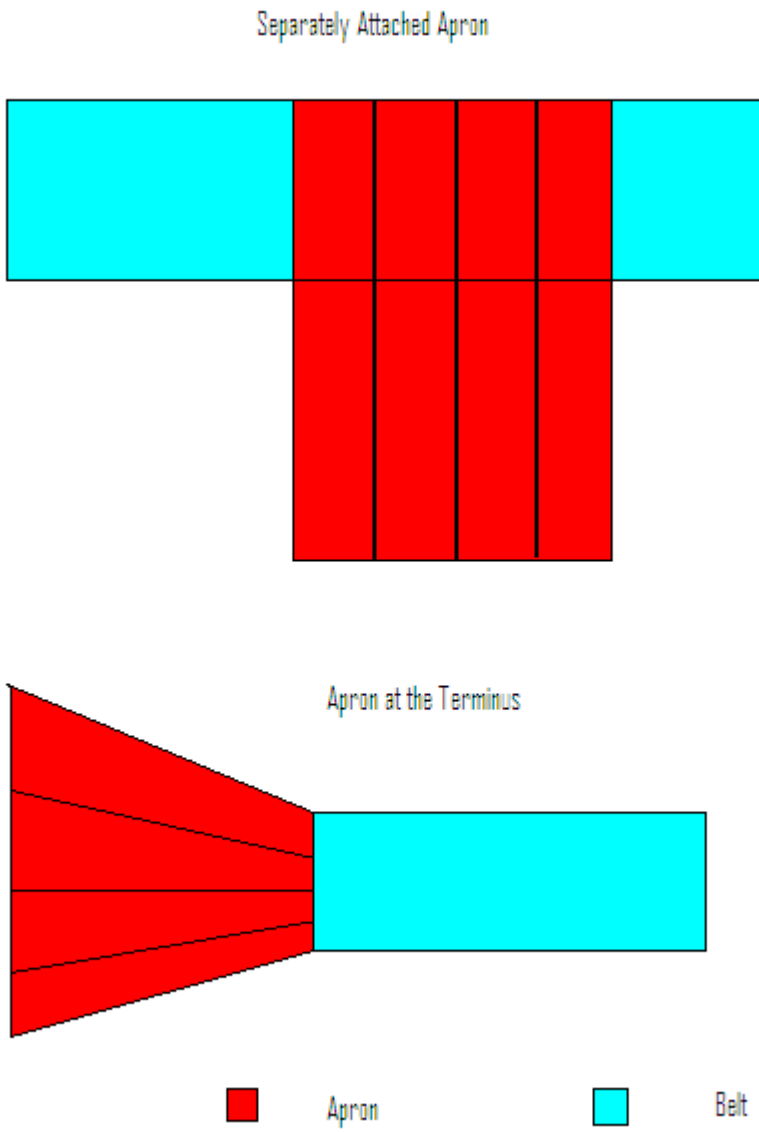


Figure 2

One of these strips would then be passed through the belt buckle in order to secure the belt. The other type of apron was one which was formed of a separate piece of leather from the rest of the belt. This apron would be cut out separately and later attached to the

belt either on the interior or exterior of the belt depending on particular preferences (Fig. 2 top & Fig. 3).

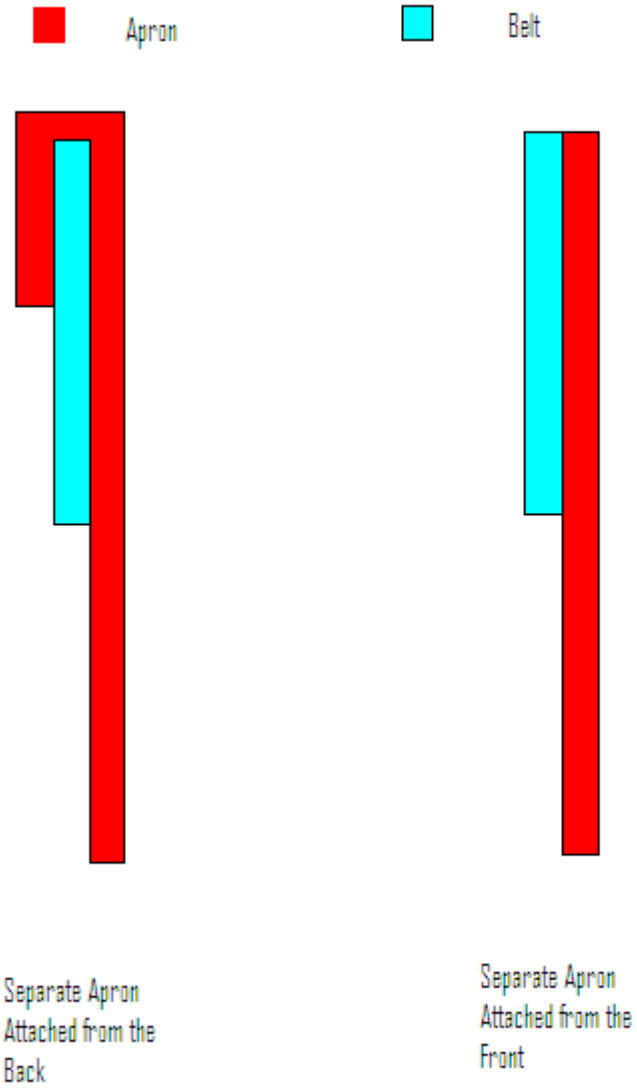


Figure 3

For belts with separately attached aprons, the terminus would also be tapered in order to fit through the belt buckle. Despite the apparent complexity of preparing aprons, getting

leather belt pieces ready largely remained a simple matter of cutting out leather with a knife.

Metal

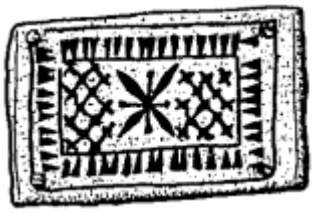
The metal components of a belt involved many different production methods in order to complete each part and then simple techniques would be used to put together the entire belt.

Each of the various metal belt components was first cast. Very basically, casting involves creating a mold, pouring in the liquid metal, and waiting until the metal has cooled to remove the object. Though there are different methods for casting metals, the important thing to note for belt parts is that they could be made in bulk or on a more individual scale. For example, a mold of a generic belt plate could be made and subsequently reused for mass production. Despite the different appearances of many belt pieces, their unique features are often the result of additional decoration which was later applied (as was seen from examples in Chapter 2: Archaeological Evidence). This did not have to apply to all items, however. Molds for buckles, frogs, hinges, plates, terminals, etc. could easily be destroyed since they were made of clay. Doing so would help to ensure a piece would be unique for its owner.

Regardless of whether a piece was made unique or mass produced, after casting, it would have to go through certain processes to be completed to the desired specifications. All cast pieces would need to be filed after they cooled to remove the excess material which would remain on the outside as a result of channels in the mold or excess metal

being poured into the mold. After the large chunks of material were broken off, gradually smaller files would be used to smooth out the piece to the intended shape.

Decorative elements were primarily made by two processes. A method often seen in Type 2 belt plates and other thicker belt pieces was incision. This was a very basic process where in special tools of varying sizes and shapes would press into or carve into the raw bronze. Incising bronze in such a way could be a time consuming experience due to the sheer number of incisions required for certain designs in buckles or plates such as in a plate from Hod Hill (Fig. 4).[168]



Many thinner belt pieces such as the Type 1 belt plate used a different method for adding decorative elements called repousse. Repousse involves using punches and a hammer to bring portions of metal sheets into relief and pushing other areas into concavity. The finest repousse work involved drawing out the desired design on the back and then using the hammer and punches to work the image out over a bed of pitch for support.[169] For the sake of mass production, however, repousse design could be hammered or pressed into pre-designed repousse molds, which is called stamping.[170]

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[168] Bishop, M.C. & Coulston, J. 2006. 108.

[169] Maryon, H. 1971. 113-126.
[170] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. 54.

Another method applied to belt pieces for decoration was plating. This was a very simple process. Since some metals melted at a temperature below that of bronze, they were melted and finished bronze pieces dipped in. This would leave a coat of the plating metal on the surface of the product. This was very commonly done with tin. Pliny the Elder says such decoration was meant to make items look like silver.[171] In the same passage Pliny states that the same was done with items made of silver. Though no belt parts have been found to be plated in silver, the process has been discovered in a military context with horse trappings.[172]

A final decorative element incorporated into belt fittings was niello. Niello is the black sulfides created with a mixture of silver, copper, or lead with sulphur in some combination thereof.[173] The exact mixture of niello varies throughout the different time periods in which it was used. In the period pertaining to this study, the only recorded recipe for niello comes from Pliny the Elder who calls for "equal parts silver and sulphur to be mixed with one third of the same amount of copper".[174] Niello in this form could be warmed to a sticky consistency and then smoothed into prepared grooves on a piece. The only belt piece with niello to be analyzed, however, contains a niello mixture of pure copper and sulphur. This alloy, however, has a higher melting point than bronze and consequently it may have simply been pre-cut, heated, and hammered into place.[175]

With these decorations in mind, we now will address the methods by which belts were completely put together. Attaching the metal components to a belt was a slow but

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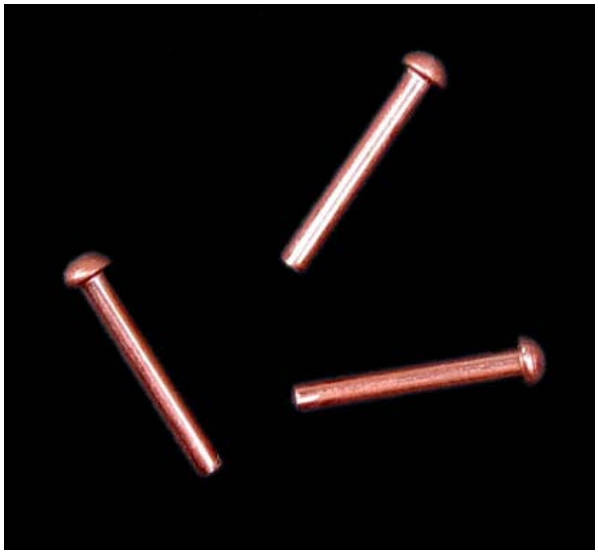
[171] Pliny the Elder, *Natural Histories*. xxxiv, 48, 162-163.
[172] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. 54.
[173] Moss, A. A. 1953. 49
[174] Pliny the Elder, *Natural Histories*. xxxiii, 486, 131.
[175] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. 56.

easy process. The first step would be to carefully lay out where each belt part would be placed in order to regulate mistakes. As has been seen from the archaeological evidence, belt components were either glued or attached with metal pieces. There are two basic types of metal attachment seen in the archaeological record: nailing and riveting. The additional step of punching holes in the leather would be required for either of these. If nails were being used, the method was to push the nail through the hole in the plate and belt and then to fold over the end of the nail. The bent portion of the nail could then be hammered down to secure the joint (a bent nail for such a purpose can be seen in Fig. 5).

The other process is riveting. In riveting a soft metal nail such as copper or iron is made with a flat or rounded head and a flattened opposite end (Fig. 6).



The rivet is then inserted through a hole in the object being attached and the end of the rivet is trimmed so that only a few millimeters of the rivet remain above the surface. A tool such as a ball-peen hammer is then used to flatten the end, or buck-tail of the rivet. This flushes out the metal and essentially creates another nail head which secures the item to its particular medium (Fig. 7).[176]

[176] Untracht, Oppi. 1968. 111-113.

Back Rivets of Personal Belt

Each method creates a strong connection between the belt pieces and the backing and could be used interchangeably.

Conclusion

The creation of a single Roman military belt requires the use of many resources and many methods of production. Despite this, each belt does not contain very much material. As the art historical and archaeological records show, however, the sheer diversity of forms and amounts of different materials that make the military belt something more. Each belt contains its own unique balance of the special belt materials and the various methods of production. The art historical and archaeological evidence

that has been presented along with this discussion on the “how to” of belt making shows that belts are not just a piece of equipment to carries a man’s weapons or knick-knacks. In the mind of each soldier his belt meant something particular to him. With the evidence readily available, the second section of this work will tackle how each soldier viewed the belt he wore. To begin, the history of belts in Italy prior to the 1st century Roman will be examined to understand how/if previous Italians influenced later Roman belt developments.

Chapter 4: The Pre-Roman Military Belt

The military belt is not a unique invention of the Romans. Well before the 1st century A.D., belts were an established commodity for men and women on the Italian peninsula.[177] Thus the belts of Roman soldiers may descend directly from the various types of belt in circulation. Unfortunately, determining any specific descent of the Roman 1st century A.D. belt from previous Italian belts is a topic well deserving of its own thesis and cannot be covered here.

The purpose of this chapter will be to examine the Italic traditions that preceded the use of belts by the soldiers of the 1st century A.D. Roman armed forces. The first section will look at the archaeological and art historical evidence located in Villanovan and Etruscan contexts. The second part will examine the intriguing belts of the Samnites and analyze their specific importance to the society's warrior class. Finally, the presence of belts in Republican Roman contexts will be looked at in order to provide immediate background to the belts seen in the 1st century A.D.

To fully understand the purpose of an object, it is necessary to look into every medium by which its development could be influenced. Examining the history of belts in pre-Principate Italy will better the understanding of what was unique about the belts which Roman soldiers wore during the 1st century A.D.

Villanovan and Etruscan

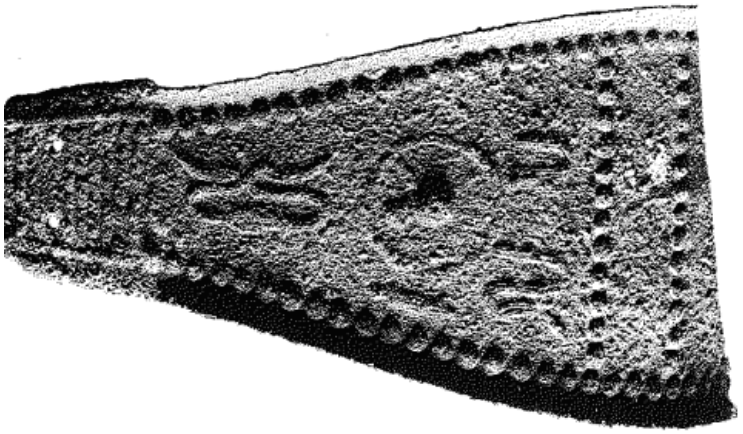
[177] Bonfante, Larissa. 1975. 22.

The Villanovan culture of Iron Age central and north Italy and their Etruscans successors designed belts which were elaborately decorated and functional. Three general types of belt exist in these two cultures. These belts do not change much during the transition between the Villanovan and the Etruscan time periods, though changes in belt typology occur in Etruscan society during the Orientalizing period when influences from the eastern Mediterranean began to shape Etruscan culture. These belts are often uniquely and elaborately decorated with much wealth invested in their manufacture. Besides the functional nature of these belts, their particular usage in society is not completely clear. This comes as a result of the differences in evidence from art historical and archaeological contexts. Though Villanovan and Etruscan belts are not fully understood, it is clear that they hold a place of importance in Etruscan society.

Three forms of belts are detected among Villanovan and Etruscan peoples. The most common of these belts is the wide, tapering bronze belt. The basic features of this belt are a wide front portion which tapers to the buckle at the back. At their widest point, these belts are around 12 – 15 centimeters wide, and they can taper down to as few as three centimeters at the buckle. Due to the conditions of the graves in which these belts have been discovered, the bronze-work survives but not the original fabric or leather backing which was attached by stitching or glue.[178] Along the edges, however, indications of attachment such as small diameter holes exist frequently. The belts as they

[178] Bonfante, Larissa. 1975. 22.

survive do not always fit completely around a person's waist but simply cover the front of the body (Fig. 1).[179]



These belts would have been completed by the organic backing.

Many of these belts can be seen in the archaeological and art historical record. Graves of the Villanovan II (8^{th} – 7^{th} centuries B.C.) contain many well preserved examples of these broad belts (Fig. 2 – 4).[180]

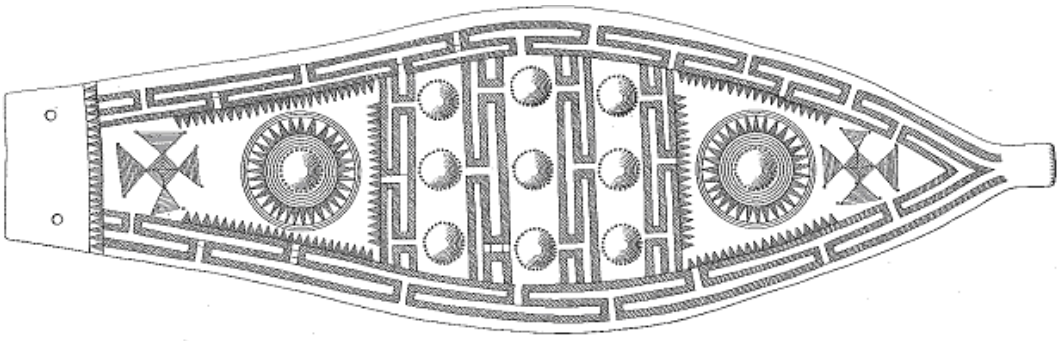


Figure 2

[179] Bronze girdle of the "Monterozzi, Cassa with a Bronze Amphora and Girdle" collection as discussed in *Tarquinia, Villanovans, and Early Etruscans* by Hugh Hencken as example.
[180] Fig. 2: Selciatello Sopra, grave 137 (Hencken 1968, 167 – 169); Fig. 3: Monterozzi, Dolio with a Girdle with Turtle (Hencken 1968, 188-189 & 191-194); Fig. 4: Monterozzi, Cassa with a Bronze Girdle (Hencken 1968, 273-274). These provide good examples of the general shape of these belts from the Villanovan II.

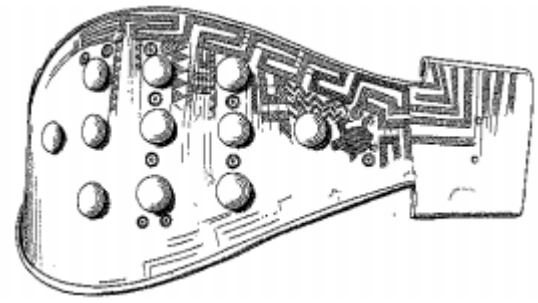


Figure 3

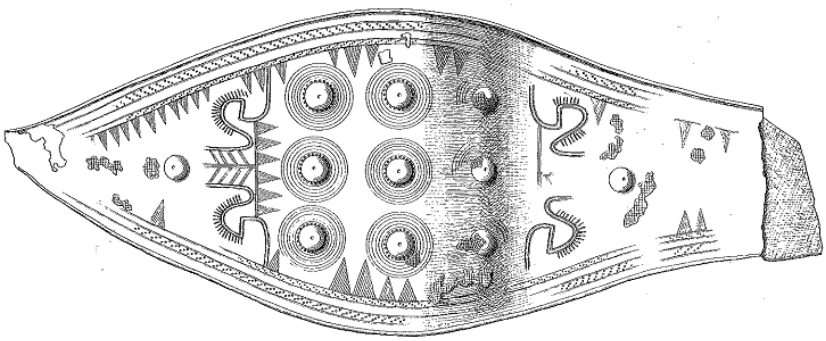
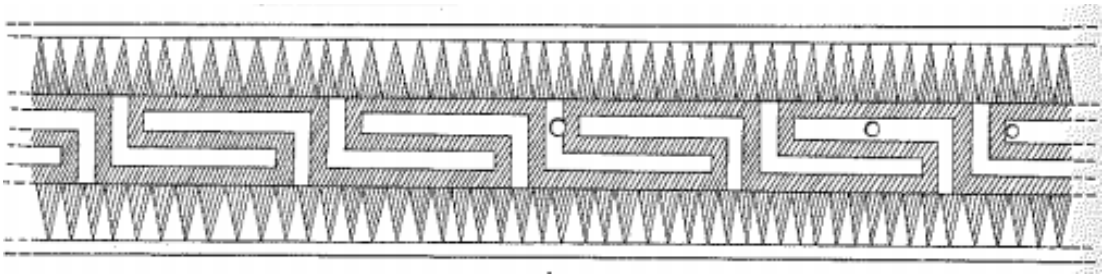


Figure 4

The type is not limited to this time period nor the geographical limits of the Villanovan culture with many such belts found at later Etruscan sites and exported as far as Greece, in Euboea.[181] Besides archaeological evidence, art historical representations also exist. Good examples come from Etruscan small bronzes and three-dimensional ceramic figures which show these types of belts being worn by active male figures.[182]

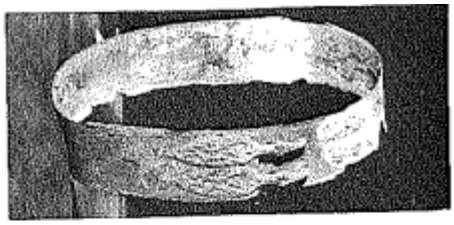
[181] Close-Brooks, Joanna. 1967. 22-24.
[182] Richardson, E.H. 1962. Figs 80 – 83. Pollotino, Massimo. 1955. No. 58, Pl. 13.

The two other types of belts to be found among the Villanovans and Etruscans are much rarer. The first type is the solid bronze straight belt. One such belt comes from Selciatello Sopra, grave 160, of the Villanovan II period (Fig. 5).[183]



Like the wider belts, this also has a hook for attachment and holes indicating backing. In the Etruscan record, these belts are referred to as "orientalizing belts" and have multiple archaeological and art historical examples (Fig. 6 depicting Pl. 26 top and Pl. 57 bottom).[184]

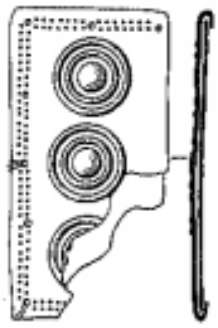
[183] Hencken 1968, 141 – 144.
[184] Bonfante. 1975. 23-24; Pl. 26, 57, 58, 60.



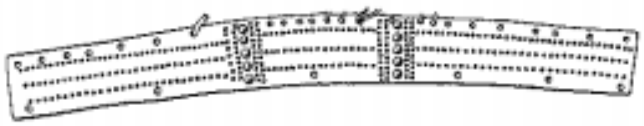
The other type of belt is a uncomplicated leather belt with an attached buckle. The buckles are found at many early Etruscan sites and are typically of a simple square design (Fig. 7).[185]

[185] Poggio Civitate Excavation Project. PC19770024.

Like later Roman belts, it is possible that these belts were also decorated with metal plates. One bronze piece from Altri with open bronze work has been identified as a belt plate.[186] Other good evidence comes from finds in Villanovan II graves. Two separate graves present bronze fittings which have features of belt plates. The first from Impiccato, grave 78a, is a small bronze plate with repousse decorations which is bordered with small holes (Fig. 8).[187]



These holes contain remnants of fabric which would correlate to its attachment to a backing such as a belt. Another similar but longer bronze plate comes from the site of Monterozzi in the grave deposit known from Hencken as "Dolio with a Girdle with Turtle" (Fig. 9).[188]



[186] Connolly, Peter. 2006. 93.
[187] Hencken 1968, 153, 156, 158.
[188] Hencken 1968, 188-189 & 191-194

Like the Impiccato example, this also has holes along the edges with fabric remnants. Based on the strong similarities of these pieces to later belt components, it is likely that these bronze fittings also decorated belts.

The importance of these belts to the Villanovan and Etruscan peoples is a matter of their practicality and cost. At the very basic level, all the different belts would perform the function of keeping pieces of clothing in place. Beyond this, however, the belts could function in other ways. For men wearing these belts into battle, they would act as protection. Though the bronze was not particularly thick, in combination with a backing of cloth or leather (used as armor in and of itself) belts could provide a certain amount of defense against blows. In the case of the large tapering belts, given their great width, a significant portion of the lower torso could be covered.

Beyond their direct usefulness, these belts would have served to represent a certain height of attainable wealth for the wearer. The level of craftsmanship used on the tapering belts, for example, is very high. Large bronze studs, repousse geometric patterns and rosettes, ridging, and decorated animal depictions adorn the front of many belts. In addition to the sheer quality of the belts themselves, their purposeful deposition into graves represents a display of disposable wealth by the family of the deceased. This disposable wealth also correlates to another possible feature of these belts which is their importance as personalized items.

One particular difference of Villanovan and Etruscan belts compared to those of the Roman military is that these belt types were worn by both sexes. Unlike the Samnite and Republican Roman belts to be discussed later, the type of belt found in male graves

and art contexts appears exactly the same in female contexts. This fact, however, does not weaken a conclusion that Villanovan and Etruscan military men used these belts. In Villanovan contexts, many graves can be found with belts and male military tools. A good example is the belt in Figure 3. In addition to the belt, there are weapons present which indicate the tomb of a warrior.[189] Besides archaeological finds, small Etruscan bronzes also show men in acrobatic and military displays wearing belts.[190] Consequently though it is impractical to assign any single military context to the belts used by Villanovans and Etruscans, it is clear that belts would be a part of the warrior's kit.

Samnite

Orientalization in Etruscan culture coincides with the disappearance of most belts in the archaeological and art historical record around the 6th century B.C. Following this change, a scarcity of belt evidence occurs in the areas north of Rome. The central highlands of Italy, however, produced the Samnite culture which revived bold belt forms. As the Samnite peoples moved from the central mountains of Italy south into the territories of Greek colonies, they brought their distinctive belt technology with them. The Samnite belts contain high levels of craftsmanship and individuality despite a general uniformity at the very basic level. Many of these belts survive as part of grave deposits, painted scenes, and small figurines. The particular placement of these items in Samnite art and graves speaks to their importance to the society's warriors.

Some of the features of Samnite belts are seen on nearly all the belts, while other parts can be individualized. The clearest general feature of these belts is their

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[189] Hencken 1968, 188-189 & 191-194
[190] Bonfante. 1975. Pl. 35-38.

composition. The Samnite belt is made just as the Villanovan tapering belts were: a bronze exterior with a leather or cloth backing. The bronze layer varies in thickness throughout the belts' regional distribution from 1 – 3 mm with the result that some of the bronze layering is flimsy and other examples very sturdy.[191] The method of attaching the backing is also consistent in the examples available. The backing was simply sewn on using small holes seen along the edges of the belt. The exact method by which the backing was attached comes in two forms. The more common form is the backing placed behind the bronze front and revealing none of the backing medium (Fig. 10 – 12).[192]

Figure 10

[191] Suano, Marlene. 1986. 1.

[192] Examples come from vase and tomb paintings as no backings survive in any large portion on belts. Examples include the "Procession Fresco" of Paestum, a neck amphora by the Ixion Painter, and a hydria of the Libation Painter. Schneider-Herrman, G. 1996. Pl. 5, 14, 15.

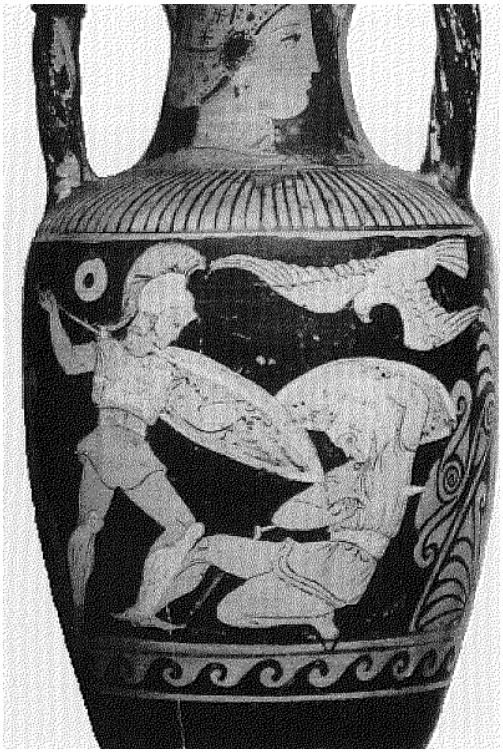
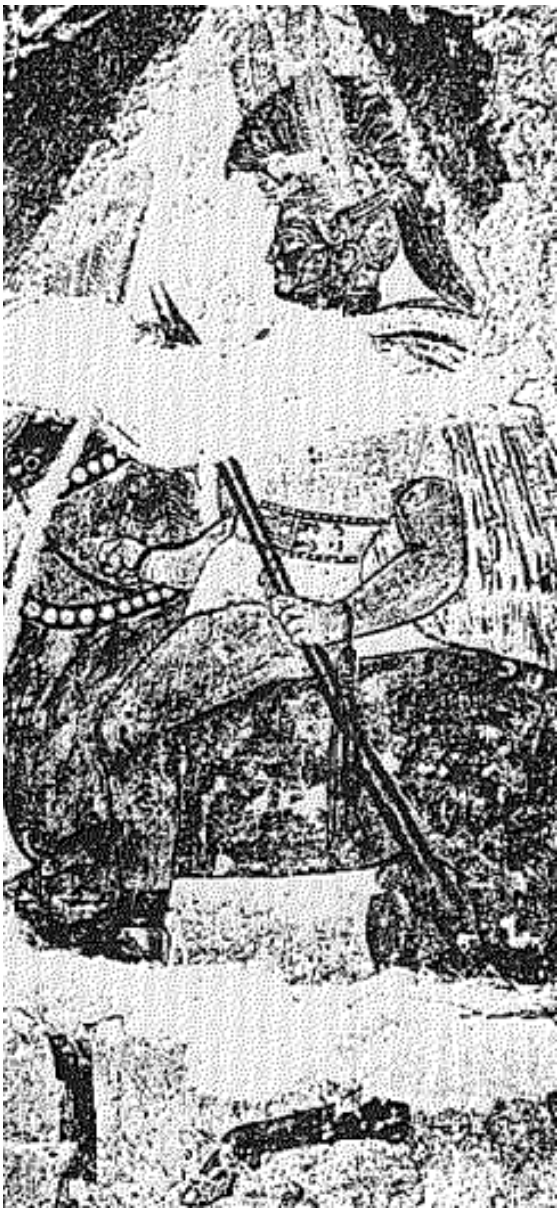


Figure 11

Figure 12

The other method revealed through art historical depictions is wrapping the backing around from the back of the bronze section and creating a thickened border (Fig. 13 – 16).[193]



[193] Examples include scenes from Capuan and Paestan tomb paintings in addition to a small bronze statuette from Sicily. Schneider-Herrman, G. 1996. Pl. 47, 70, 101, 127.

Figure 13

Figure 14

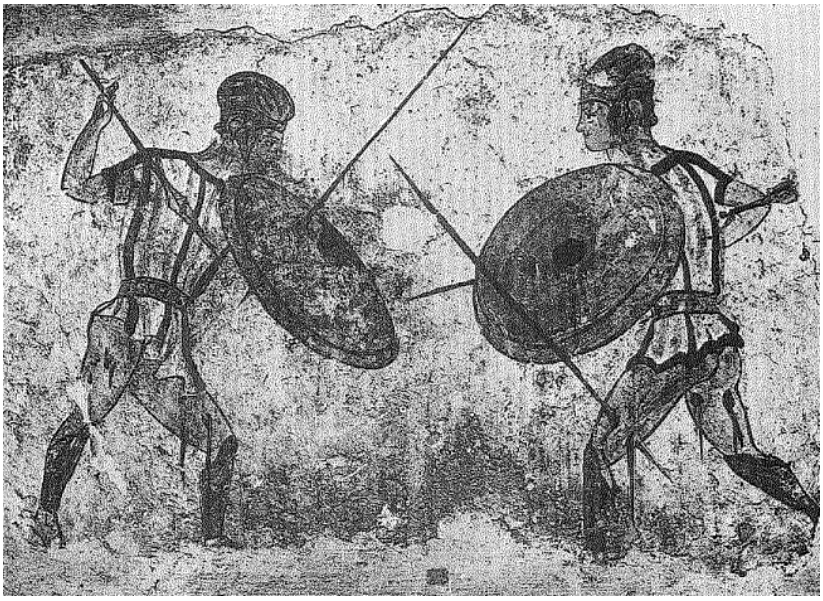


Figure 15

Figure 16

The final consistent feature of these belts is their width. Samnite belts are broad with widths ranging from 7 cm to 12 cm.[194] These belts retain the same breadth without any tapering as both art historical and archaeological evidence make clear.

Though all Samnite belts are very similar, differentiating between them is done based upon the most individualized portion of these belts, the clasps, as well as occasional other features. The clasps features a wide variety of detail including flat palmettes with rounded and triangular ends, slender palmettes, single and double animal shaped, single and double human figures, and many more. These many varied types of clasps have been set into a typology to differentiate them from one another; the exact features of the individual types will not be dealt with in this section (Fig. 17 presents the types as shown by Suano).[195]

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[194] Suano, Marlene. 1986. 1.
[195] For a detailed list of the different clasp types and their individual features, see Suano, Marlene. 1986. 2-5.

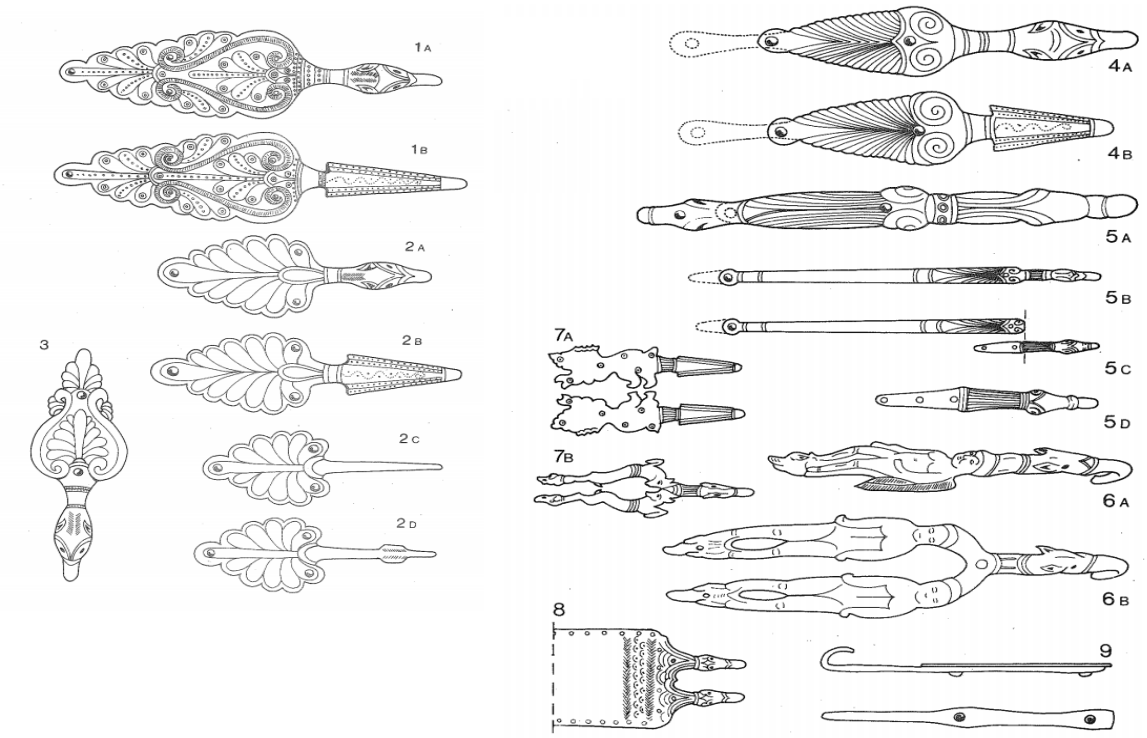
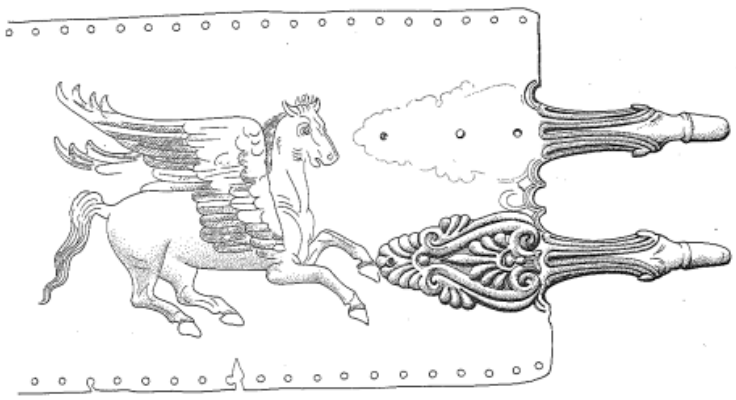


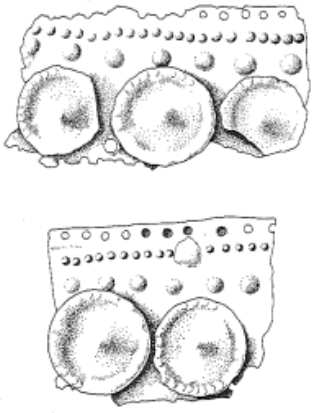
Figure based upon Fig. 1 – 2 of Marlene. 1986.

These clasps were often created as separate pieces and fixed to the belt at a later time. Some belts, however, have the clasps made as one continuous piece of the band. In addition to the clasps, other types of unique decorations sometimes appear on these belts. Some belts have repousse or incised decoration on the flat portions of the belt (Fig. 18).[196]

[196] An example from the British Museum shows a repousse Pegasus figure just shy of the clasps. Suano, Marlene.1986. 19 Pl. 36.



Others can be seen with small attached items such as bronze discs seen on a British Museum belt (Fig. 19).[197]



These two cases present only some of the small variations that can make a particular belt unique amongst the available examples, but the limitations of this section do not allow for an exhaustive list.

The Samnite belt is well attested in the archaeological and art historical record. Sites ranging from the central highlands of Italy to its southern most shore have recovered both belts and belt parts as well as pieces of art which depict these belts in use.

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[197] Suano, Marlene. 1986. 21 Pl. 46.

The first clear examples of the broad Samnite belt appear in the 6th century B.C. with an fine belt found at Castiglione di Conversano from this period.[198] Many more belts were extracted from graves surrounding Samnite sites such as Capua and Paestum. The problem in examining these belts is that many to be found in collections have no or questionable provenance.

Beyond the physical evidence, there are many representations of belts to be found in art. The famous Capistrano Warrior of the 6th century B.C., though not identified as Samnite, gives an idea of what belts of the central highlands could have looked like in this early period.[199] The belt this warrior wears is unique with no surviving examples of such a belt type present in any Samnite contexts. The belt is very wide and goes completely around the figure. The belt is divided horizontally into five sections. No additional decoration is present and any sort of buckle or clasp is not represented or hidden by the arms in the front. With very few examples of belts from the central Italian highlands region, it is impossible to say with any certainty that Samnites did or did not know about or use a belt of this type. By the late 5th century B.C., however, in both the archaeological and art historical record, the typical broad bronze belt had become the only type to be associated with Samnite culture.

Beginning with the 4th century B.C. incursions into the southern regions of Italy, Samnites begin to depict themselves more commonly in their ceramic art. Vase paintings are the most widespread media for this new type of art. In these painted vase images, belts are distinctly portrayed on most Samnite men and less commonly on women. In

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[198] Degrassi, N. 1962. 232.
[199] Holland, Louise Adams. 1956. 244.

addition to these belts being pictured, it is very clear on many of these vase paintings that the belts in question are bronze and not some other material. This comes from the uniformity of coloring on these vases for things like skin, fabric, and bronze. Thus when belts are depicted in bright white, so will all other pieces of bronze equipment (Fig. 20).[200]

There are also the artistic works created directly by Samnite hands. Of all Samnite art, nothing depicts the belts as well as their tomb paintings. The tomb paintings at Capua and Paestum are particularly well preserved and numerous. The variety of these scenes with men wearing belts is wide-ranging. Belts can be seen in hunting scenes, large battle scenes, one on one scenes, procession scenes, and on both infantry and cavalry. The vase and funerary paintings make up the primary group of art historical evidence for Samnite belt use. Other media such as three dimensional pottery or bronzes are much rarer. One notable small bronze piece of a Samnite warrior is from Sicily. The belt of the warrior is

[200] Hydria by the Astarita Painter, Bell krater by the Detroit Painter, and a Hydria by the CA Painter provide good examples. Schneider-Herrman, G. 1996. Pl. 18-20.

very detailed showing a bordered edge and the clasps connecting the belt at the front (Fig. 21).[201]

The broad belt is a popular and recognizable image in artistic depictions of the Samnite people.

The Samnite belt is a notable piece of equipment which combines practicality and individual importance. At a functional level, the Samnite belt, like the bronze belts of the Etruscans and Villanovans, was a piece of armor. The thickness of a Samnite belt in combination with a square muscled pectoral, rounded pectoral, or triple disc cuirass could create a very effective system of defense for the torso. On a more broad functional level, these belts would help to keep the tunic in place.

Beyond practicality, the Samnite belt was a very important piece of equipment for warriors. In nearly every depiction of a Samnite warrior, a broad bronze belt can be seen. The only exception to this is the depiction of warriors in the heroic nude Greek style. Even then, nude warriors sometimes are depicted with a belt (Fig. 22).[202]

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[201] Schneider-Herrman, G. 1996. 45 - 46 Pl. 70a, 70b.
[202] Two good examples come from Bail Amphorae of the Three-Dot Group. Schneider-Herrman, G. 1996. Pl. 99, 113.

If a Samnite soldier has only one piece of decoration or armor, in every case available to the author, the belt was the only piece. In addition to the primacy of belts for general Samnite military equipment, the importance of the belt can also be seen by its use in situations in which the belt would serve no practical function. For example, many tomb paintings from Paestum depict cavalry with these prominent belts on horseback. With the position of a rider on a horse, the belt would provide a limited amount of protection given the requirements of riding without stirrups. On another similar note, Samnites depicted with Greek-style stiffened linen cuirasses also commonly wear the belt (Fig. 23).[203]

[203] An Apulian volute krater by the Arpi Painter is a good example of this. Schneider-Herrman, G. 1996. Pl. 79.

The rigid nature of the linothorax makes the use of such a belt unnecessary for supporting the cuirass, unlike the typical method of wearing them where belts hold up clothing. By virtue of the common portrayal of Samnite belts on warriors and their depiction beyond sheer practicality, it is clear that the broad bronze belt was more than a piece of Samnite military equipment. This belt was rather the defining item in the Samnite warrior's panoply.

Despite the importance of these belts to the Samnite people, they appear to have had little structural effect on the later belts worn by Roman military men. Roman belts are never created in a single sheet of bronze like Samnite belts nor are they fastened in such a manner. One possible effect of the Samnite belt usage could be the importance of the belt to the individual soldier. At the time of the Romans' interaction with the Samnite peoples, Rome was converting its military from a Greek-style hoplite phalanx to the much more fluid manipular system which would define the Middle Republican Roman

army.[204] In keeping with the Etruscan trends as Rome did for its early history, after Orientalization, belts were no longer as useful to the soldier. This was due to the types of armor used in Greek style combat. Greek body armor consisted of linothorax, composite linen armor, and bronze cuirasses all of which were stiff armor with no elasticity. Consequently, a belt would give no support to the armor and could even be difficult to secure due to the inability of the armor to give. In addition to the impracticality, by copying Greek forms of armor, Italians inherited a system which did not naturally use belts. Thus it is possible that as Roman men were moving towards a system which featured belts as a piece of practical equipment, they noticed the special place that belts held in the warrior class of their great Italian enemy, the Samnites, and subsequently followed the trend themselves. Regardless of whether Samnite belt models influenced later Roman trends, it is important to understand the Samnite belt and its place in Samnite society as a piece of military garb.

Republican Rome

Apart from Rome's predecessors, it is also important to look into what Romans of the Republican era did regarding belts. Since this section will deal with Rome itself and the periods directly leading up to the focal point of this paper, the focus will remain on belts directly involved with some aspect of Roman militarism instead of a general trend of belts for the culture. Republican Roman evidence for military belts is sporadic with large swaths of time without any evidence available to the scholar. The first discussion

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[204] Keppie, Lawrence. 1984. 19.

of belts in Republican Rome comes from the developmental stages of the early monarchy. After this, there is a long hiatus in the evidentiary record. The resurgence of belt evidence comes around the middle of the 2nd century B.C. with artistic depictions and archaeological evidence. In the end, the Republican period produces a clear transition into the belts of the 1st century A.D.

The first definitive B.C. evidence for belts in a Roman context comes from the Salii priests. The Salii priesthood was established by the second Roman king, Numa Pompilius according to Livy.[205] The Salian priests were dedicated to Mars and wore special military style gear. Two versions of their equipment remain available to scholars through the literary record. One of the sources is Livy and the other Dionysius of Halicarnassus.[206] Livy makes no mention of a belt in his list of equipment while Dionysius clearly does. Dionysius even goes so far as to describe the way they look and what they are made of. With the description in mind, it is possible to get a rough picture of what these belts would look like. When this depiction is examined, the belt shape that arises is a familiar style; it matches both the Villanovan and Samnite wide bronze belts. If one rules out the Samnite connection due to the early nature of this tradition and the lack of Roman-Samnite interactions near this point in history, it seems likely that the belt Dionysius describes was very similar to the broad bronze belts used by Villanovans and early Etruscans. Thus men of military importance in Roman society by this point embraced the use of belts as military equipment; scholars have not been able to determine whether this equipment was designed for aesthetics or practicality. With the presence of

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[205] Livy 1.20.4.
[206] Livy 1.20.4.

these belts with priests of war in mind, however, it is very likely that some military men without priesthoods would have used these. The question which cannot be completely answered is whether the belt in wide-spread military use descended from initial priestly development or the use by religious bodies reflected already established customs of the society surrounding them. Despite the plethora of questions concerning the exact nature of the Salian belts, they are important for their position as the first Roman military belts.

Besides the discussion of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the military belt is absent from other Roman contexts until the 2nd century B.C. Following the reworking of the military systems during the regal period to reflect Greek style combat tactics, the use of military belts disappeared for the same reasons that were discussed with the Etruscans. The change to a manipular system during the 4th century B.C. coincided with the Samnite Wars which consumed most of the military energy of Rome at the time. The switch to this system entailed a change in combat dress for the Roman military. Instead of rigid metal and linen armor which required no belt to stay in place properly, the costume of Roman military men was more flexible. Roman armor of this period at the common soldier's level consisted of pectorals strapped above a tunic or flexible mail vests. These materials – as will be further examined in Ch. 5: Practicality & Impracticality – do not hold their shape as well and the addition of a belt assists in the dress of the warrior. Consequently, Roman soldiers shifted their uniforms to include belts. As will be seen with examples later in this section, these are not only simple, functional belts. The belts and their respective parts frequently exhibit unique appearances rather than a common style. Such a trend of individualization has already been seen with the Samnites and their belts. As Romans had a great propensity for copying whichever traits of their

enemies seemed beneficial, it is possible that Romans mirrored Samnite traditions in their belts. The Romans definitely did not copy the particular type as Roman belts were flexible with metal plates attached unlike stiff Samnite bronze belts. From the Samnite belt legacy, however, there remains the issue of personal decoration. As Samnite belts used specially made clasps and repousse on the body, so to did Romans use crafted buckles and delicately incised belt plates. With the lack of Roman belt evidence from this critical transitional period in Rome's military development, it is impossible to connect these two traditions exactly. Thus that the Romans copied Samnite individuality in their own belts remains but a speculative argument.

When Roman belts begin to reappear in the historical record, it is first through art. The defeat of Perseus by Aemilius Paulus at Pydna in 168 B.C. ended the Third Macedonian War, and Paulus celebrated his victory with a relief monument. This relief monument contains the first known images of Republican Roman soldiers in combat dress. The marble of the monument has not survived well so small details, such as in the face, have disappeared. There remains enough to see the belts of the Roman soldiers, however. Many of the Roman figures, cavalry and infantry, wear belts and all of them look exactly the same (Fig. 24).[207]

[207] Connolly, Peter. 2006. 132-133.

The belts have no decorations and no indications of bordering. Two figures have holes drilled into their belts along the side of the figure (Fig. 25).

What exactly this functioned for is unclear; it is possible that, as with other ancient stone work, metal would have been inserted to add to the overall work in addition to paint. It is

possible that something attached to the belt such as a dagger could have been portrayed or something as simple as a buckle. It is unfortunately impossible to determine.

As the period of the Republic continues, Roman belts appear in few other art pieces. One very nice example of belts in Republican art comes from the Altar of Domitius Ahenobarbus. This depiction of a military census from around 100 B.C. gives the latest depiction of Roman soldiers in full military garb in art before the turn of the millennium. Four infantry and one cavalryman are present and are shown wearing belts. The belts of the infantry and cavalry support their swords but there is little detail besides (Fig. 26).[208]

[208] Connolly, Peter. 2006. 226 & 234

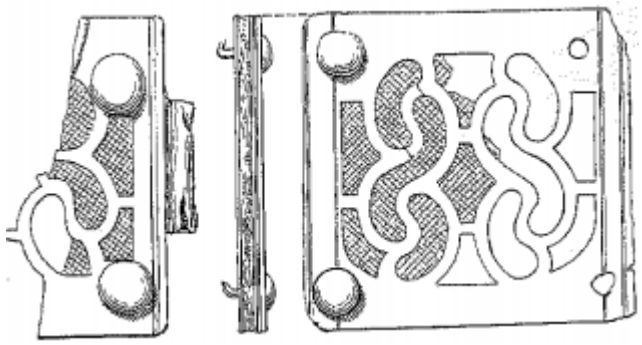
The only figure with any detail on the belt is the cavalryman. His carved belt uses vertical lines to designate belt plates; the same techniques are seen for representing plates on Trajan's Column (Fig. 27).

This large public monument is not the most detailed B.C. belt depiction available, however. The most intricate belt can be seen on the grave stele of the Centurion Minucius Lorarius (Fig. 28).[209]

[209] Bishop, M.C. & Coulston, J.C.N. 2006. 50.

This belt has a very distinct border and the belt is strapped with a very simple round belt buckle at the front. While his sword is supported on his side, his dagger is held in place by straps from his belt which hang down around the buckle. Each of these six straps are clearly bordered; two wrap around the dagger to hold it in place and the other four dangle around it. Besides the buckle, no other portion of the belt appears to be made in metal. These three pieces make up the entirety of useful Republican belt images. For a better understanding of the available evidence, it is necessary to look at the archaeological evidence.

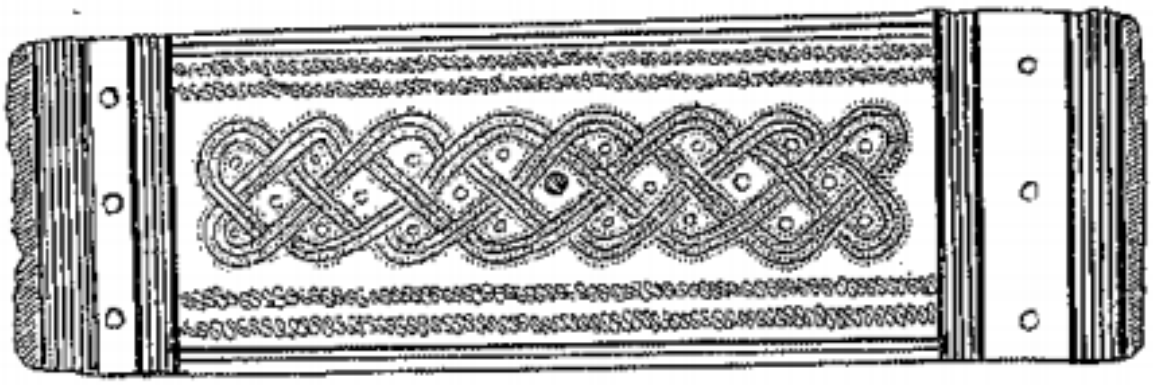
The artifact evidence for Roman belts begins in the late 2nd century B.C. The bulk of the archaeological material comes from Spain during the solidification of Roman control in the second half of the 2nd century B.C. and the later Sertorian Revolt in the 80's B.C. The camps located around Numantia and at Renieblas provide very nice examples. The discoveries from Numantia come primarily from the Castillejo camp. This camp was located around 1.5 km from Numantia and has three phases, all relating to various stages of use during the conquest of Spain. The finds to be discussed here date from the Scipionic Fort around 133 B.C.[210] The belt parts found here include a few buckles of little substance and plate components. The belt plates are very nice with many varieties found. One type of plate found was made with a copper alloy and used an openwork which forms a particular pattern (Fig. 29).[211]



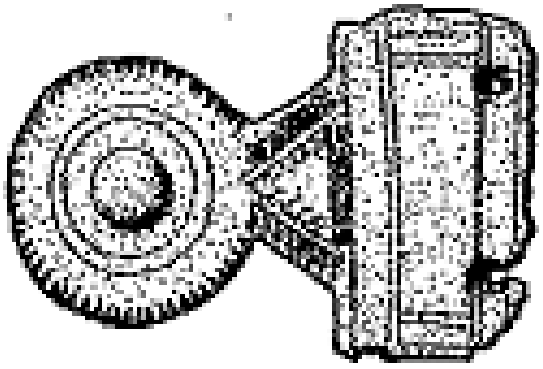
It is bordered on the vertical edges with incised lines and has a hole in each corner. In these holes were copper rivets with rounded heads used to attach the plate. Two other, incomplete versions of this style also appeared on the site. In addition to openwork plates, solid plates also come from this site. Some use only incised lines in simple hash mark designs while others can be much more intricate. One very large belt plate was

[210] Cheeseman, G.L. 1911. 182.
[211] Schulten, Adolf. 1927. Taffel 46. 31, 46. 32

14.8 long by 4 cm wide featuring an interwoven design with drilled portions, lined borders, and three connecting rivets per side (Fig. 30).[212]

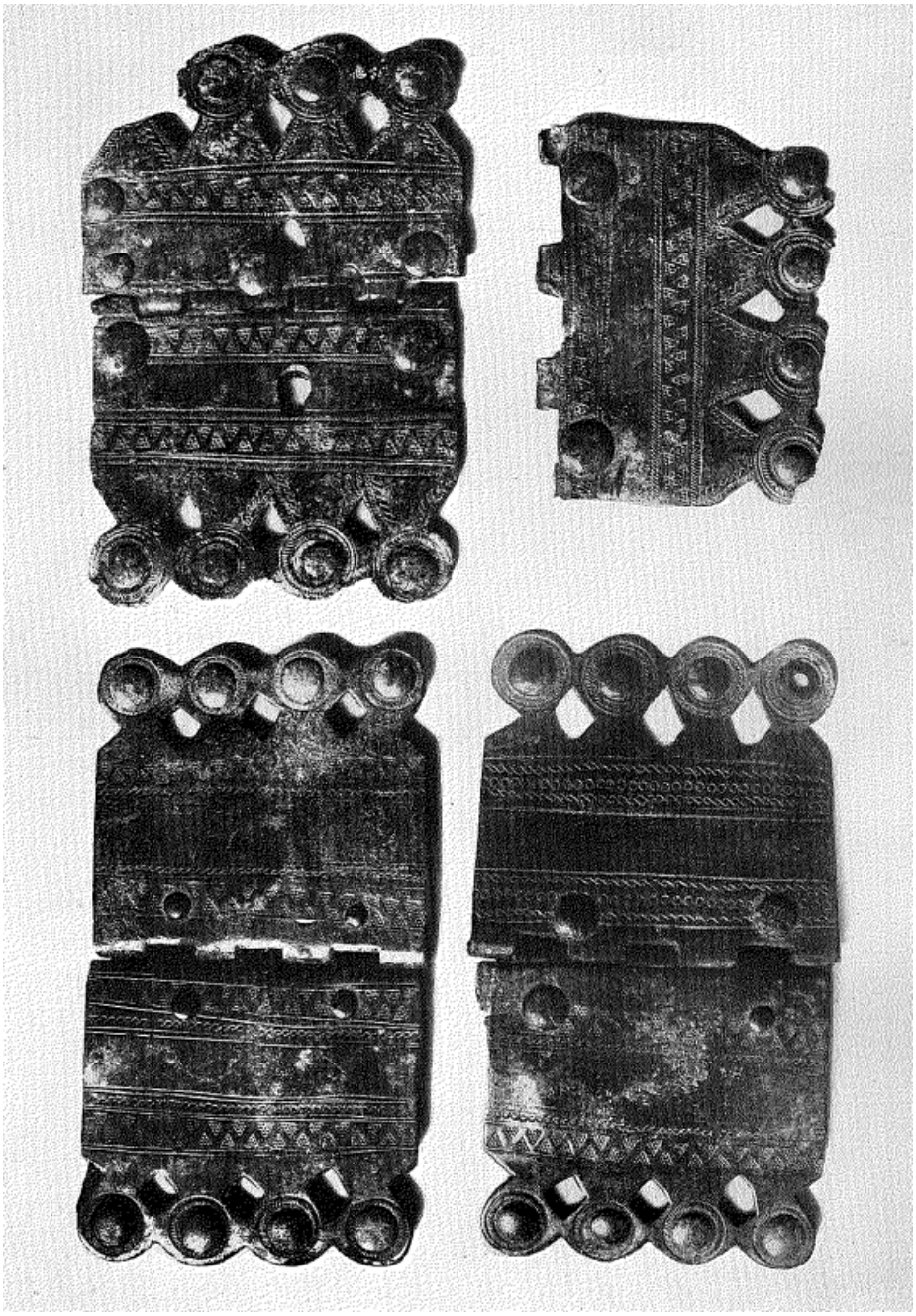


In addition to the normal rectangular plate, Castillejo reveals a unique type of belt plate. This plate is rectangular on one end and then tapers sharply to a circular portion. Though this looks similar to frogs used in later belts, the back piece contained a rivet indicating direct connection to the backing (Fig. 31).[213]



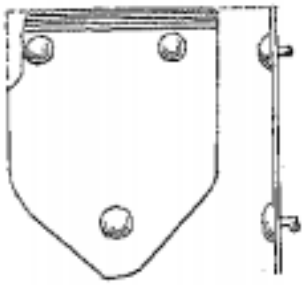
[212] Schulten, Adolf. 1927. Taffel 46.2 ½.
[213] Bishop, M.C. & Coulston, J.C.M. 2006. 67.

In addition to this piece, other plates display the same feature of circular portions. Good examples of this are some plates which are hinged together (Fig. 32).[214]



[214] Schulten, Adolf. 1927. Taffel 46. 23 ½.

These identical plates are connected by a simple folded hinge on their respective rectangular sides which contain vertical incised decoration. On the opposite ends, the plates taper in four places to connected circles with circular lines adorning those. The holes between the tapering portions would serve as the places for riveting along with holes near the hinge. The last type of belt part from here is a special belt plate. This is the plate that covers the tapered end of the belt (Fig. 33).[215]



These typically incorporate three rivets for connection though some use open work similar to the previously mentioned plates and others incised bordering. From these examples, it is clear that by this time, the use of plates was recognized and practiced by soldiers. The amounts and locations of evidence, however, make it difficult to understand just how wide-spread this practice. In addition, belt aprons as they appear in the 1st century A.D. are absent from the archaeological and art historical records.

The belt tradition continues without much deviation at sites such as Renieblas and Caceres el Viejo. At the Renieblas camp, during the fifth phase of occupation associated with the late 2nd or early 1st century B.C.,[216] some more belt material was discovered. Nothing new appears at the Renieblas camp compared to its counterpart near Numantia.

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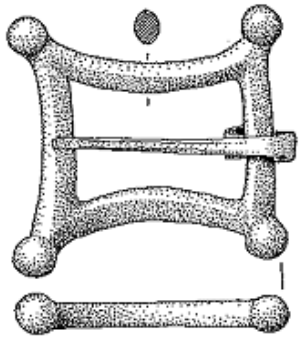
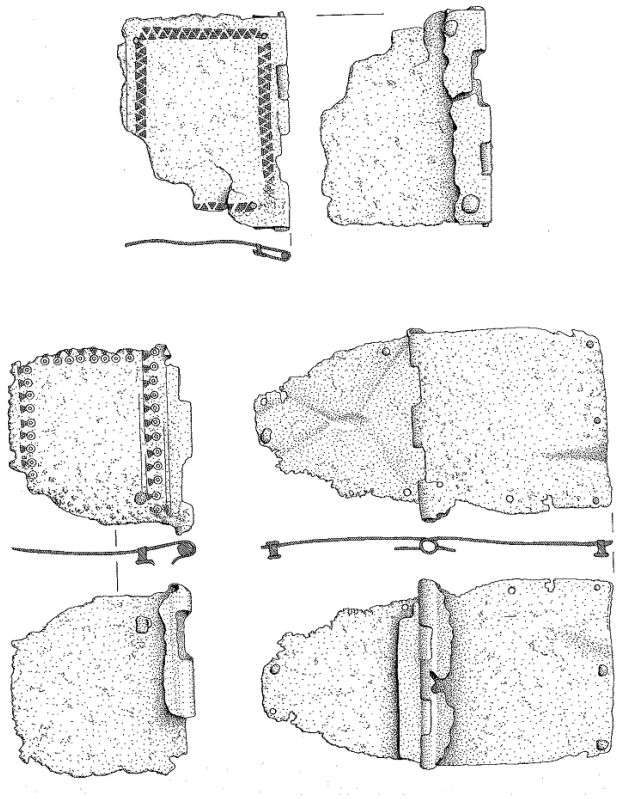
[215] Schulten, Adolf. 1927. Taffel 52.
[216] Curchin, Leonard A. 2004. 62-63.

It does have very intricately worked material such as a belt plate with a dotted border, three vertical rows of circles, rows of squares at each end, and two different styles of hatched vertical bars all in one plate.[217] Caceres el Viejo, from the later Sertorian period, contains some changes to the previously seen styles of belt pieces. Belt buckles for the most part stay consistent with the simple, rounded examples seen beforehand. One belt buckle, however, deviates significantly. This buckle is rectangular with the horizontal portions sunk in towards the middle and each corner is capped with a small knob of metal (Fig. 34).[218]

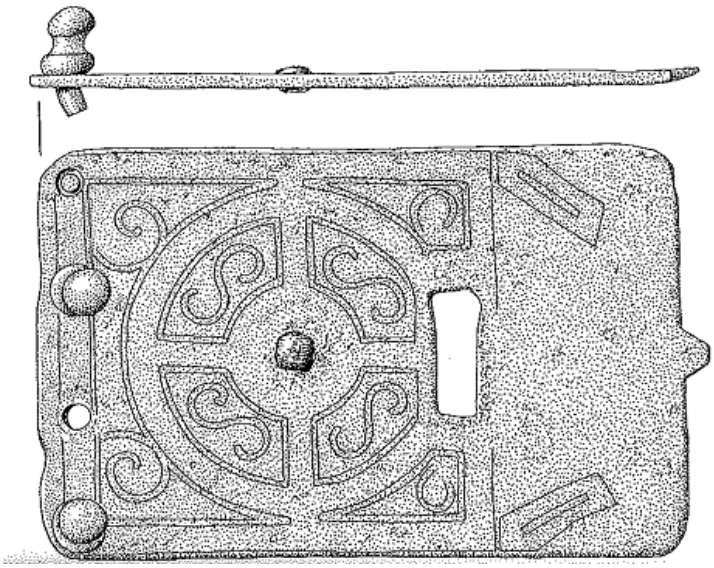


Belt plates from this site range from simple to elaborate. The simplest plates are bronze sheets with no central decoration or small borders made with triangles or rectangles and hinged ends (Fig. 35).[219]

[217] Bishop, M.C. & Coulston, J.C.M. 2006. 67.
[218] Ulbert, Gunter. 1984. 216 & Taffel 10.62.
[219] Ulbert, Gunter. 1984. 218 Taffel 11.



Others are more distinctive. One particular belt plate is rectangular except for one small triangular protrusion at one end (Fig. 36).[220]



[220] Ulbert, Gunter. 1984. 216 Taffel 10.65.

It has incised decoration along two-thirds of the plate with four rivet holes opposite the protrusion. One rivet is placed directly in the center of the plate along with a small, vertical hole which contained no inserted items. What this extra slit in the plate was for has not been determined. These two camps show only slight variation in belt styles as the 1st century B.C. begins. One thing that can be determined from this is that Marius, in the institution of his reforms around the turn of the 1st century A.D., did not feel the need to change anything regarding the design of the belt.[221] As Marius was keen to advance the old methods of the military system, if the belt had been deemed unfit in its current form, there most certainly would have been a shift in the belt record at this time.

As the 1st century B.C. continues, the available belt material in the archaeological record dwindles significantly. This can be attributed to the lack of large, well excavated fort sites such as Numantia throughout the rest of the Roman domain. Even large military sites such as Alesia have provided little to no belt material. When the 1st century A.D. comes around, many of the features seen from the 2nd century B.C. onward such as rounded buckles, square plates, end plates, and the use of rivets continue. Such continuity of forms makes it certain that Republican belt systems influenced later designs.

Conclusion

The Roman military belt of the 1st century A.D. did not emerge from a previous vacuum of belt technology in Italy. The Villanovans and Etruscans used belts of various kinds with varying levels of wealth involved up until Orientalization eliminated that

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[221] For a more comprehensive look into the specific army reforms, see Eric Hildinger's *Swords Against the Senate: The Rise of the Roman Army and the Fall of the Republic* for an overview of the life of Marius.

tradition. These belts, however, were not specifically those of their society's military men. The Samnite culture produced a large, flashy belt designed specifically for their warriors. These belts displayed great amounts of individuality with their unique features and decorations. Finally, the earliest of Roman belts come from few sources hundreds of years prior to the 1st century A.D. belt forms and with a significant gap in the entire belt record. Belts emerge again in art and archaeology in the late 2nd century B.C. Henceforth, belts present features seen in later designs though there is less complexity of design, and aprons do not exist by 1st century A.D. standards. Continuing from here, this paper will move into its focus with an in-depth examination of the nature of Roman military belts of the 1st century A.D. As this chapter has done on a smaller scale, determining the practicality or impracticality of the 1st century A.D. belt will be the first destination for this analysis.

Chapter 5: Practicality and Impracticality

The primary factor by which people judge a tool is its effectiveness. In trying to appreciate how Roman soldiers viewed their belts, it is imperative to understand if they felt it was practical or impractical to wear on a purely functional level. The dilemma in such an examination is a lack of textual evidence supporting either set of arguments. Consequently, this section will rely on art historical examples, archaeological material, and reconstructive archaeology in order to better understand how belts would help or hinder those who wore them. Though such determinations must remain theoretical, the well established notion of practicality in Roman armor and weapons gives strong support to these arguments for belt use.[222]

Practical

The Roman military belt performs certain fundamental tasks. The first of these is supporting weapons. In the early 1st century, as the art historical evidence shows, there was a greater propensity for two belts such as in the stele of Lucius Sertorius Firmus (Fig. 1).[223]

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[222] The Romans are known for their willingness to adapt their combat strategies to face particular types of enemies. An example of this is the double layering of mail coats and additions of neck guards, brow guards, and ridging to helmets over time in order to combat downward strikes of northern peoples.
[223] Franzoni, Claudio. 1987. 80

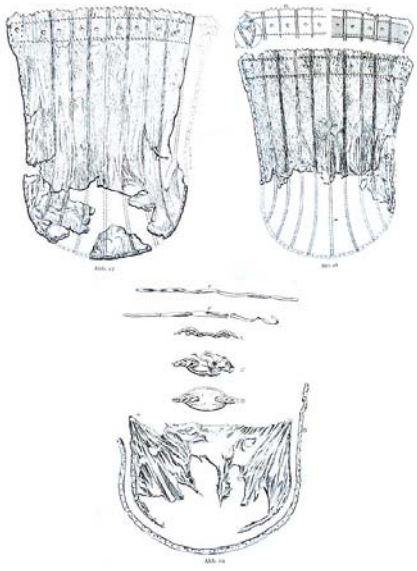
As seen in his and other stelai, each belt holds a weapon: one his sword and the other his dagger. Though his stele does not show the specific method of attachment, the presence of belt frogs, the metal components from which swords and daggers hung from the belt, in even the earliest 1st century A.D. archaeological finds is a strong suggestion for their widespread use. Besides frogs, cavalry used a simple hanging strap by which to attach swords from their belts. A depiction of such a piece exists in the stele of Vonatorix.[224] The sword hangs with a leather strap tied around it. This leather strap is connected to a small, possibly metal item to support the sword (Fig. 2).

[224] Bauchhenss, G. 1978. 14.

Unfortunately, no such piece identified as such survives from the archaeological record. Besides these metal pieces, a simple alternative would be to hang weapons only using leather or even cloth straps. In addition to the rarity of these materials as a whole in the archaeological record, the small amounts of material needed to support a belt makes it even less likely for remnants to have survived. Thus Roman soldiers could rely on their belts for bearing their tools of war.

In addition, however, the belt could serve to carry more than just weapons. Pouches such as the one discovered at Bargercompascuum would be very simple to tie around the belt for carrying any number of small items (Fig. 3).[225]

[225] Schlabow, K. 1956. 87.



Such bags could conveniently carry bits of food in a very convenient location so as to eat on the march. In addition, while on duty in a fortress, for example, the belt could suspend pouches to hold nails or other small items needed for a soldier to perform his duties. If the modern carpenter or construction worker is any parallel, the belt would even fulfill the function of holding tools by inserting the tool between the belt and the garment underneath. Thus the belt retained a utilitarian purpose outside its more obvious function as a weapon rack.

The 1st century military belt would also provide some semblance of protection as its Italian predecessors would. When it comes to Roman soldiers of the early Principate, in battle, the belt/s would inevitably be worn over armor; be that mail, scale, or segmented plates. Previously in Italy, full cuirasses were never the staple of armies – even the Republican Roman forces – until the 1st century B.C. Many soldiers wearing belts would have no additional protection between the belts and their bodies save a tunic. Thus the armor a belt provided was much more substantial in a relative sense. With

protection underneath, the rudimentary "armor" function of a belt in the 1st century A.D. was markedly less important. This does not, however, rule out its ability to improve, however slightly, the defensive capability of the soldier's kit. The author's belt created with 1:1 scale reproductions of belt plates from Hod Hill (with slight variation in decoration) is a very thick item along the front section.[226] Each of the plates measures 3 - 4 mm in depth with an additional 3 mm of leather as the backing.[227] Even with thinner styles of belt plate, the end result would still be a very sturdy piece of metal-covered leather and give some protection. Admittedly, the Roman soldier did not wear his belt at the most optimal place for defending against many attacks since Rome's more common Germanic and Celtic enemies attacked from above with cuts or thrusts. Romans, however, also frequently fought amongst themselves. Against another Roman the placement of the belt around the waist could prove to be more useful. This stems from the Roman fighting style which called for thrusts to the lower torso. Consequently, the chance that the belt would be struck is much greater. In fighting any opponent, the sheer thickness of the belt could serve as an extra layer of armor which could deflect or even absorb blows all on its own. Despite this, the belt was certainly not relied upon as a primary defensive mechanism.

Though belts provided little protection, they do serve to support the main battle armor of soldiers. Reconstructed examples of *lorica hamata*, *lorica squamata*, and *lorica segmentata* benefit from using a belt with the armor. The *hamata* and *squamata*, with their similar flexibility, benefit with the placement of the belt around the waist because of

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[226] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalogue Entries 11 – 17.

[227] This thickness of the leather for this belt is based upon measurements taken of early 1st century belt plate rivets in order to determine the distance between the back of the plate and the riveted end. This distance would be the original thickness of the belt such a plate was attached to.

the distribution of the armor weight it allows for. Consequently, instead of the full weight of the body armor being placed solely on the shoulders, a significant portion of the weight below the waist is transferred to and supported by the hips.[228] More spread out weight means that there is less strain on a single portion of the body, and men will not become as exhausted as quickly. For the *segmentata*, the reconstructive evidence is not as concrete. One noted benefit of a belt with segmented armor is keeping the lower portions of the armor in place while moving around. With a *subarmulis* underneath the armor to prevent chafing, the effect of this bonus diminishes somewhat.

Another excellent benefit belts provided was their noise. A belt decorated with an apron or with a studded terminus makes an impressive amount of racket. The author's belt, for example, makes sound with every step and, due to overlapping terminals, even slight movement creates a clang of metal (Fig. 4).

[228] Garlick, M. 1980. 8.

Though every belt is not made in this exact style, it is important to take into consideration that apron straps are never secured in ancient depictions. Unless secured, these straps and their metal bits would flail around with every step, let alone during a charge when soldiers are running.

The noise made by a belt would have two benefits to the soldiery. The first is battlefield intimidation. The Roman method of conquest did not involve stealth and subtlety. If the Roman army intended to attack a group of people, they would march into their territory with confidence in the hopes of finding and crushing all opposition. Intimidating the enemy through psychological warfare was a method well known among the Romans.[229] The sounds of 5,000 or more belts, pairs of boots, and armor marching

[229] Goldsworthy, Adrian. 2000. 125.

towards a city or field of battle would have been a very clear message to the enemy that the Romans were coming and meant business. With the stellar reputation the Roman army held throughout most of its history, it is hard to imagine how someone would have felt hearing such a chorus of sounds and knowing they were coming to eliminate them.

The second benefit would be announcing the presence of a soldier as he walked. If a soldier were to walk through the *vicus*, the towns which grew up around military establishments, the jingle of belt pieces would tell those around that a soldier was present. The sound of a military belt, being unique to the soldiery, must have been easy to recognize.

Impractical

Roman military belts were by no means perfect pieces of equipment. Though the main portion of the belt provided functional assistance to the soldier in battle, the apron was no such help. As mentioned above, the sounds a belt made mostly emanated from the loose apron straps dangling and jingling in response to the soldiers' movements. While these sounds were beneficial in some ways, in others, the apron straps could be a hindrance.

In a battle situation, the apron did nothing beneficial for the soldier. The construction of the apron meant it provided no armor as has been commonly thought.[230] As Bishop points out, a weapon thrust would go through the straps as there is nothing keeping them together.[231] Conversely, an apron would fare no better against a slashing

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[230] Webster, G. 1985. 125.
[231] Bishop, M.C. 1992. 101.

attack. As apron pieces do not overlap nor connect in any fashion, any cut that did hit metal would simply deflect onto the leather and likely sever it.[232] Besides being useless for protection, if reconstructive archaeology is any guide, aprons could also be annoyances for soldiers. As Bishop gathered through personal correspondence with the famous Ermine Street Guard, flailing apron straps hindered running and the aprons disintegrated rather quickly.[233] This latter fact would be especially nagging to soldiers as all funding for belt repair came from their own money.

Conclusion

As this chapter has shown, the potential practical benefit of the belt to the soldier was certainly great. The art historical evidence proves certain features were indeed important for the soldier in battle and in every day life. Sensible reconstructive archaeology also provides a lot of good information for how these belts assisted and possibly irritated the men who wore them. As the combination of these two forms of evidence has shown, the main portion of the belt seems to have only helped a soldier with various tasks. The apron, on the other hand could present problems for the soldier. Such a state of affairs, however, underlines the fact that any such inconvenience was seen as tolerable in the eyes of the Roman soldiers wearing the belts. Though the military belt was not a perfectly functional piece of equipment, any negative effects did not outweigh the benefit it provided to the Roman soldier.

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[232] Bishop, M.C. 1992. 101.
[233] Bishop, M.C. 1992. 101.

Chapter 6: Cost – Benefit

With the functional benefits and problems in mind, it is clear that the amount of dedication put into decorating belts did not have practicality as its major driving force. What was it, then, that encouraged soldiers to put so much effort into their belts? The following set of chapters will endeavor to answer this question and reveal what it was that drove soldiers to care so much for their belts.

This section will examine the factor of belt cost and the manner in which it affected the individual soldier. Availability was integral to the cost of belts for the soldier during the 1st century A.D. This accessibility did not remain constant, however; as the century went on, the ease of access to military belts changed for the better. In addition to this, the value of belts was also a major factor in how they affected the lives of soldiers. For the 1st century A.D. soldier, their military belts presented them with many challenges and benefits in regards to cost.

When a Roman citizen or ally became a soldier, getting equipped would be a necessity. Both of these groups tended to come into the military without the gear they would inevitably need.[234] Just as in the modern United States military today, equipment would be given to soldiers or, alternatively, they would be required to acquire certain gear. The army, however, would not cover the expenses. Instead, deductions would be taken from the soldier's pay. Papyrus records from Egypt in 143 A.D. present deductions made for weapons, clothing, boots, and other incidental expenses.[235] Unfortunately,

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[234] Non-citizens joining as auxiliaries often came in as groups and brought certain amounts of their own equipment which would slowly be replaced for more Roman-style equipment.
[235] Bishop, M.C., Coulston, J.C.N. 2006. 262.

though this does establish a tradition of accurately kept records for deductions, it does not detail just how substantial the expenditure would be for the individual soldier. There is nothing that describes exactly what percentage of equipment cost was deducted per pay period. Also, since certain pieces of gear could be made by army *fabricae*, the military fort workshops, and no records from this period give the cost for basic equipment, it is hard to estimate how difficult it would be for soldiers to pay. Regardless of this, there is also the possibility that the military allowed many years for such costs to be paid off.[236]

Though belts were not included in these required deductions, to better understand how soldiers could acquire belts, it is important to try to understand this system. Any amount of money taken away from the soldier during his initial period in uniform would reduce the amount which he was able to spend on his belt. If large sums were removed from the first few payments a soldier received, he likely did not immediately acquire a belt with fancy decorations. Some men were luckier than others in this category, however. When an associate of Pliny the Younger attained the rank of centurion, Pliny gave him 10,000 *denarii* "*ad instruendum se ordandumque*."[237]

When a soldier went to get a belt, he had a few different options depending on his status entering the military and the time period in which he joined. As the story of Pliny's associate indicates, there was always the option of getting money from family or possibly a cordial patron in order to offset the cost of getting personal equipment. Another alternative could be receiving items passed down from the family or even purchasing belts from veterans or others who no longer had a use for them. If a soldier

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[236] Gilliam, J.F. 1967. 240
[237] Pliny *EP* VI. 25. 2-3.

came to the military without a belt, however, he would have to get his own belt. For these soldiers, there would be a large amount of design choices and sources.

A soldier of the very early 1st century A.D. would likely have gotten belt pieces through imports. Since Rome had little in the way of industrial complexes near the areas of conflict – northern Gaul and Germany – the military as a whole was required to have equipment brought in from the south. Since there was little proximity to these places while deployed on campaign, soldiers would need to use these facilities in southern Gaul and northern Italy beforehand to get their belts.[238] Despite this, military men certainly did use these industrial centers for getting custom gear.[239] As Roman-controlled land became more stable, areas in much closer proximity to the frontiers began to be used for producing weapons and defensive items at places such as Magdalensberg (Roman *Claudium Virunum*) and Cologne (Roman *Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium*). At Magdalensberg specifically there were finds of belt components and other trinkets for embellishing such as horse fittings.[240]

Following the establishment of the *limes* – the set of defenses delineating the borders of the Roman state – around the time of Claudius, the place of production for military equipment switched. Instead of importing gear, legions and auxilia became more self-sufficient in regard to producing equipment. Especially convenient evidence for this

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[238] There is no evidence that personal equipment was transported with that gear paid for by the army for soldiers. In any event, it is hard to think that Roman leaders would willingly allow their caravans of official supplies to act as personal curriers for soldiers.
[239] Nicolay, Johan. 2007. 130 – 131.
[240] Dolenz, H., Flugel, C. Ollerer, C. 1995.

practice comes from the writing tablets at Vindonissa and Vindolanda.[241] Amongst the various letters remaining are ones which mention men probably assigned to work with the production and upkeep of particular items such as *gladiarii*, presumably those who worked with swords, and *scutarii*, those who worked with shields. [242] Letters from Vindolanda not only show that auxiliaries also performed these tasks but that many hundreds of men could be available to assist in work in such production centers at some times.[243] There is also clear archaeological evidence for metal production in the camps. One pertinent item that indicates specific production of belts on military sites is a stamp from Sheepen for belt plates depicting a hunting scene (Fig. 1).[244]

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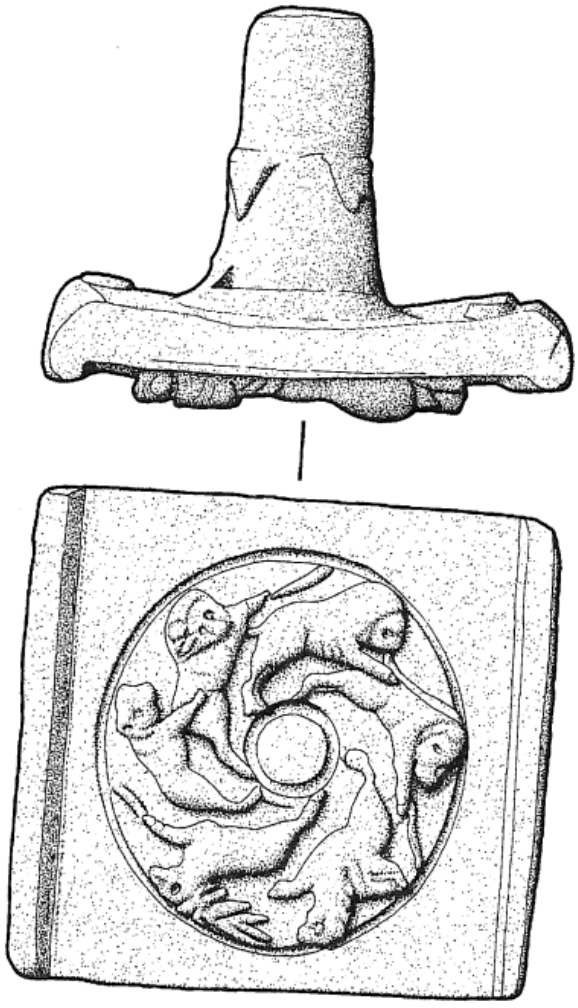
[241] Vindonissa was a legionary fortress located in modern day Windisch, Switzerland and Vindolanda was an auxiliary fort located close to the area of Hadrian's Wall located in modern day Chesterholm, United Kingdom.
[242] Speidel, M.A. 1996. # 35 for *gladiarius* and # 34 for *scutarius*.
[243] Bowman, A.K., Thomas, J.D. 1983. 77-79 & 81-83.
[244] Bishop, M.C., Coulston, J.C.N. 2006. 245 Fig. 149.1.



Also, among unfinished pieces to be found at military sites are belt items such as buckles and frog components (Fig. 2 – 3).[245]

[245] Fig. 2: Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 26, 19. Fig. 3: Ulbert, Gunter. 1969. Taffel 26, 20.

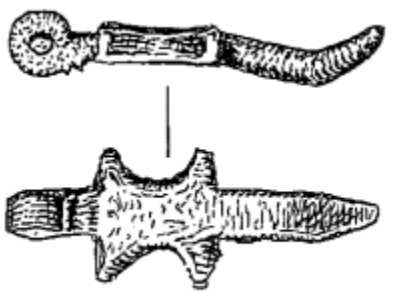


Figure 2

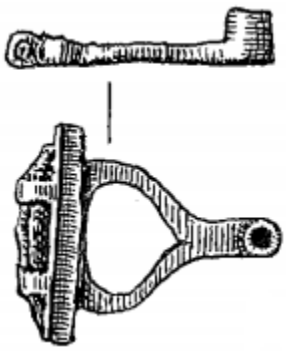


Figure 3

In addition, other examples of blacksmithing waste (crucibles, slag, etc.) have appeared at sites showing a general trend of metal working.[246] There is also evidence for leather workers on site who could easily produce the leather materials needed for belts.[247]

Around the Flavian period, the *castra* began to lose its place as the predominant producer of military goods.[248] By this period, firmly established Roman military outposts developed fully functional communities around them known as *vici*. These *vici* contained nearly everything a soldier could need including places to make custom military gear.

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[246] Nicolay, Johan. 2007. 132.
[247] Van Driel-Murray. 2002. 113.
[248] Nicolay, Johan. 2007. 134.

Thus, while much of the fighting gear could still be and was produced in house, many smaller components, including belt parts began to be produced outside the *castra* as well.[249]

To get a belt from any of these environs required the soldier to conduct a personal cost-benefit analysis which may have helped influence his decisions. Such thinking would be especially pertinent to repairing belts and their components. In the first part of the century, belt pieces had to be acquired from afar. This meant that any damage suffered while on campaign was very hard to fix. If the campaign were active, there was little chance that the soldier could get metal parts fixed. If the army was at winter quarters, there was a better chance since places for field repairing gear would be set up where a soldier might be able to convince the group's blacksmith for assistance. Regardless, unless these were undecorated items such as Type 1 belt plates, any field repair would heavily detract from the continuity of the belt design.

The establishment of more permanent army residences during the second phase of military equipment production created an easier situation for soldiers. At this time, any damages could be repaired very easily while off campaign; all it required was a short visit to the blacksmith and likely a little monetary compensation. As the Sheepen tool shows, items created by stamping designs could be remade without much effort while more complex Type 2 belt plate incisions could be easily worked by the expert craftsman of the legion.[250] The same ease of repair would extend into the third phase of equipment

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[249] Nicolay, Johan. 2007. 134-136.

[250] The author has reproduced these same types of incisions under candlelight in order to see if it could be done after dark. The experiment was a success which means soldiers doing this work could easily keep

production wherein a military man only had to travel just outside the fort to have his items fixed or replaced. The only problem for a soldier in the third period could be deployment from one area to another. Unlike in the second period where the craftsman who did the work travelled with the army, even if people of a vicus followed the troops as they transferred areas, it would be a long time before anything could be done. As the Sheepen stamp shows, however, there was always the possibility of bringing a personal stamp for plates along or, alternatively, another skilled blacksmith could always reverse engineer or create a stamp for belt components.

In addition to reparability, the cost of each different type of belt would have also been a factor. The different styles of belt equipment likely represented varied costs for production. With the basic idea of "more expensive to make, more expensive to sell" in mind, some reasonably accurate reconstruction of relative expenditures required for belt components can be made. Very basic Type 1 belt plates, square and round studs, and cast buckles and apron fittings would be the least expensive as these required the least amount of work and could be mass produced. The next level up would likely include Type 3 and 4 plates, Type 2 plates lacking niello, incised buckles and studs, and decorated apron fittings. Though these pieces required more work than first tier priced pieces, some of these were definitely mass produced as well (Fig. 4).[251]

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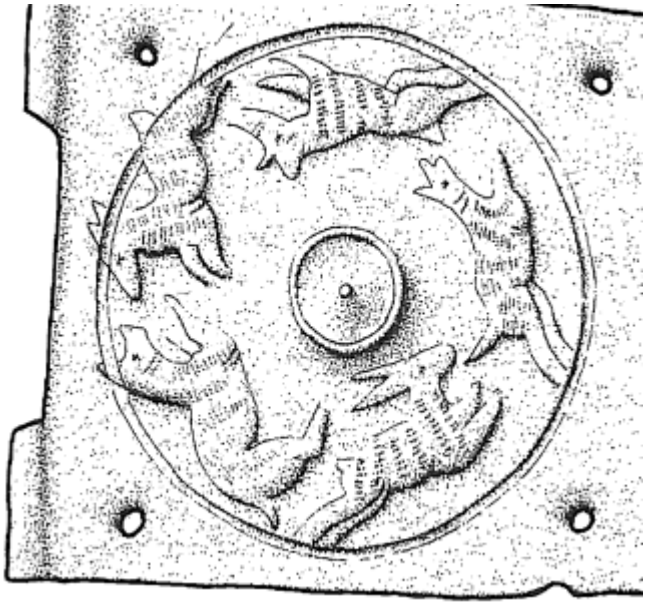
their daily work repairing military gear while making money on the side making or repairing belt plates at night.

[251] Note the missed stamping done with this Type 3 belt plate. Bishop, M.C., Coulston, J.C.N. 2006. 245 Fig. 149.2.



The top tier expensive equipment would then include those pieces which incorporated niello design and precious metals, all of which required more expert craftsmanship. On all levels, these pieces could also be tinned which would naturally raise the price.[252]

When a soldier finally received his belt, because of the personal investment into the belt, he likely worked to keep it in the best condition possible. If we are to understand that forcing soldiers to pay for their own equipment helped them take better care of it,[253] it is interesting to think about how dedicated a soldier would have been towards his belt, an item which contained much more personal investment to create and just as much money to maintain. In addition to personal attachment to the belt, there are other good reasons related to cost which may explain Roman soldiers' desire to both get good quality belts and keep them in good condition.

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[252] This probably did not include pieces covered in silver as tinning would defeat the purpose of it being tinned!
[253] Bishop, M.C., Coulston, J.C.N. 2006. 263.

It is important to consider the beneficial monetary implications of a belt for Roman soldiers. Regardless of how much was spent on any military belt, they still represented a source of disposable income for soldiers to have around in the case of desperation. Thus it is prudent to think briefly about how effective the belt could be as a source of wealth. The belt was, at the core, a composite item incorporating leather, which was useless for further use, and metal, a significantly more desirable item. Metal could have tangible value in two ways. Firstly, metal objects could be made into basic tools which would always remain practically valuable.[254] Secondly, metal had worth as currency. This is especially notable since much of the Roman money of the 1st century A.D. would be found in the form of bronze coin. Indeed when silver was involved in belt design, the value of the metal components would be even more powerful. Though bronze or silver coin could lose value as a result of inflation, belt parts would always retain some semblance of monetary value. With the assured value of the metal components established, it is good to remember that the media for holding this wealth was rather safe. Unlike coins which could drop from bags or be pick pocketed, the majority of a belt's metal was in the form of riveted metal pieces which very rarely fall off and, due to the sturdiness of riveted items, are impossible to quickly remove from anyone's person. Consequently the Roman military belt could be metaphorically described as a secure and well decorated savings account!

There is direct evidence to show that Roman soldiers did take advantage of the monetary value of their belts when the time suited them. The most famous of these incidents occurs during the Year of Four Emperors in 69 A.D. As Tacitus tells us, when

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[254] A bronze ax, for example, will always be an *ax* which can be used to for chopping, fighting, etc.

Vitellus needed money for his attempted coup against Otho, the soldiers under his command were very willing to assist. In lieu of money, the soldiers gave their belts and phalerae, military decorations for personal achievement.[255] Tacitus also makes a point to mention that these military items were decorated in silver. Though this additional bit seems to be included to emphasize the great love these soldiers had for their commander, it also shows the wealth these soldiers could carry. Another interesting feature of this section is how it speaks to the mentality of the soldiery. When the men want to show their dedication to the cause with a monetary donation, the first things they turn to for stored income is not any hoard of coinage, but rather their belts.[256]

On a more mundane scale are records of using equipment as collateral in loans. One papyrus tells of a soldier who borrowed 50 *denarii* against the amount of his weapons.[257] Another describes a cavalryman, Caecilius Secundus, who used plated and inlaid equipment as collateral on a loan of 100 *denarii*.[258] Though no belts are specifically mentioned, it does not preclude their use as such.

Other possible scenarios certainly existed for using belts. A single belt plate or parts of an apron could be removed and used for money when needed. In addition, when a soldier retired and inevitably brought his belt to wherever he settled down afterwards, the belt could be used for any number of things in addition to wearing it including giving it as a gift to someone entering the military, as money for a dowry, or even as part of the soldier's final inheritance to his family.

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[255] Tacitus. *Hist*. I. 57. "sed manipuli quoque et gregarius miles viatica sua et balteos phalerasque"
[256] In this case it is nice to imagine that they did not give everything but rather only those components which did not directly influence the ability of the belt to be functional for fighting.
[257] Cavenaile, R. 1958. # 189.
[258] Harrauer, H., Seider, R. 1977. 113.

The military belt was not an item to be thought of lightly by the men who owned it. As this chapter has endeavored to show, a significant amount of care would be put into planning a belt and a lot of money could be put into making it. The belt was never a monetary burden; on the contrary, for the soldier who needed it, the belt could provide substantial financial power. As this work continues, the examination of belts moves on from their place as financial investments to a look at their power in the social realm.

Chapter 7: The Social Sphere

A Roman soldier constantly interacted with the society around him. The community would include both his fellow soldiers and the civilians in the *vici* or other towns the soldiers were assigned to. In this social interaction, the belt played a major role as an indicator of position in society. As Chapter 5 discussed, the noisiness of a belt would immediately draw the attention of the masses as a soldier passed by. After attracting the gaze of the people, how did the belt function to influence community contact? This chapter will examine two different roles of the belt for social interaction. In the first case, the importance of the belt as a specific method of identification will be examined in the context of political influence. In the second instance, the role of the belt as a means of social aggrandizement will be inspected. Though the Roman military belt was a soldier's item at heart, it functioned at a much greater level in the social context of the Roman world.

When a soldier or soldiers approached an area, their belts would immediately draw attention to them. If all the belt did was identify them as military men, was it useful for sending larger political messages? The most important statement the military could make was its presence in the area. This could mean different things to groups of people depending on their situation in the empire at the time. For towns which were in well established Roman areas, the presence of soldiers could be both good and bad. If the town were beleaguered by bandits, the arrival of troops clearly signaled by their distinctive marching sound would reassure the residents. In the same regard, if troops marching through a city were heading off to an area of conflict ahead of the town, the

arrival of troops must have been cause for celebration.[259] Alternatively, an influx of soldiers could annoy citizens who feared bullying of the locals by troops.[260]

For newly conquered territory or areas of civil unrest, the distinctive announcement of approaching soldiers would be a different feeling. In a similar manner to how belt sound would intimidate on the battlefield, the presence of soldiers in the area would inform a community of dissident people that Rome was serious about holding their territory. Once these towns were made privy to the Roman arrival, they could expect patrols of soldiers in addition to individual men coming for personal reasons. Regardless of whether the soldier was on official duty or simply on his own time, the distinct sound of his approach would be a stark reminder of who was watching their community and who the real forces in control were. The purpose of all this would be to diminish any desire for rebellion at the basic level.[261] If the region were rather new to the empire, such an influx of Roman troops would also serve to begin bringing such places more firmly into the Roman sphere of control.

One political tool for subduing new or unruly communities was the use of army units to impress the local populace of an area. As soldiers marched about towns and other problem areas, an important feature that would be immediately important to those who saw them was the high quality gear they held. During the 1st century A.D., none of the territories which Rome acquired or which caused unrest were nearly as wealthy as Rome. Consequently, the German, Spanish, British, Dacian, and other enemies which

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[259] One can imagine this sort of reaction when Vitellus' men travelled down to battle Otho's troops through the territories which staunchly supported him as Tacitus describes in *The Histories* 1.57.
[260] Haynes, Ian. 1999. 167.
[261] Alston, Richard. 1999. 187.

Rome encountered were not as well equipped as Roman soldiers. As Roman soldiers marched through these areas, it is not hard to imagine how dumbstruck these different groups of people would have felt. Not only was each Roman soldier equipped as well as or better than these peoples' best warriors, but they also had the ability to spend extra money to decorate their gear with tin, silver, niello, and other inlayed metals and stones. An effect of such a display could be the intimidation of the locals into believing any attempt at rebellion would end poorly as a result of the great power Rome wielded.

More specifically, the belt could announce many things about a soldier. A man wearing a military belt around his waist made a clear statement about his status. Many of Rome's legionary soldiers rose from the lowest ranks of the citizenry where there was no guarantee of food, medicine, or in some cases a place to sleep. As a soldier, a Roman citizen would be never be without these amenities. In fact, the medical treatment provided to soldiers was actually better than for most of the Roman populace. In addition to this improvement in life, with the induction into the military, a soldier would effectively leave his old social world and become part of the exclusive army society. In this group, merit in battle could lead to promotions, or he could have the chance to learn a trade such as shoe making or blacksmithing. Also importantly, the soldier became more than a single man in a uniform. The soldier gained special recognition in the provinces as a representative of imperial power and majesty.[262] If a soldier survived his enlistment, he could leave the army more prosperous and better respected than he ever would have had the chance to be otherwise. For auxiliary troops, this could have even more benefits. While a Roman citizen could enter the military poor and retire well endowed, he

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[262] Haynes, Ian. 1999. 167.

effectively returned to the same Roman society he had left. For the auxiliary, it could be a more complex case. As the he entered, he was subject to the same separation from his old community and given the same ability to form new status and relationships.[263] In addition, to survive one's enlistment meant citizenship. The coveted status of a Roman citizen meant an auxiliary soldier's family would become citizens with all the benefits that conferred. Consequently, when an *auxilium* received his diploma of discharge, the society he returned to was one in which he was guaranteed greater rights than he ever would have had before the military.

As the military belt qua a piece of equipment announced a person's status, the quality of the individual soldier's belt would function as a sign of his personal prosperity and pride. The large quantities of metal which decorated a belt were not only a store of wealth but a very clear indication of it. The more precious the metal, the greater its worth and the more effective the display of riches was. Pliny describes this state of affairs in his discussion of metals in the *Natural Histories*. He takes the chance to discuss his disillusionment with the military men who parade about with many different items made of silver, including their belts.[264] Though Pliny despised such actions by the soldiers, it also shows that the men themselves liked the attention. Any person who could walk around covered in silver ornaments was going to stand out in groups. The goal of that person would be to impress those present with a show of the wealth he/she commanded. The desire to appear rich was likely the encouragement Roman soldiers kept in mind when they tinned or silvered their gear. Dipping different pieces of equipment in tin or

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[263] Haynes, Ian. 1999. 167.
[264] Pliny the Elder, *Nat. Hist.* 33. 57.

silver would lead people to believe that the entire thing was made of silver, and thus worth much more. The warrior from the Velsen 1 burial could not be bothered to completely coat his plates, but, when it came to decoration, he chose to enclose the front of his plates in silver for the effect of silver equipment.[265] In addition to wearing this flashy gear around their waists, Roman soldiers also probably kept this equipment very well polished and shimmering. Though no sources can confirm this theory, if Roman soldiers would go as far as tinning items to make them appear silver, it is likely they would not be inclined to let their items appear dingy. A Roman soldier walking around with gleaming silver or bronze colored metal belts would present both his wealth and his level of personal responsibility to keep his items in good condition.

In addition to the appearance of the belt in general, minute details on a belt could relay even more information about soldiers. Though belt components showed the type of metal a soldier wore, it was the pieces with incised decoration or stamped images that highlighted the personal beliefs of a soldier. The vegetative and other simple images depicted on Type 2 and 4 belt plates, studs, and buckles relate to typical Greco-Roman or Imperial art motifs (Fig. 1).[266]

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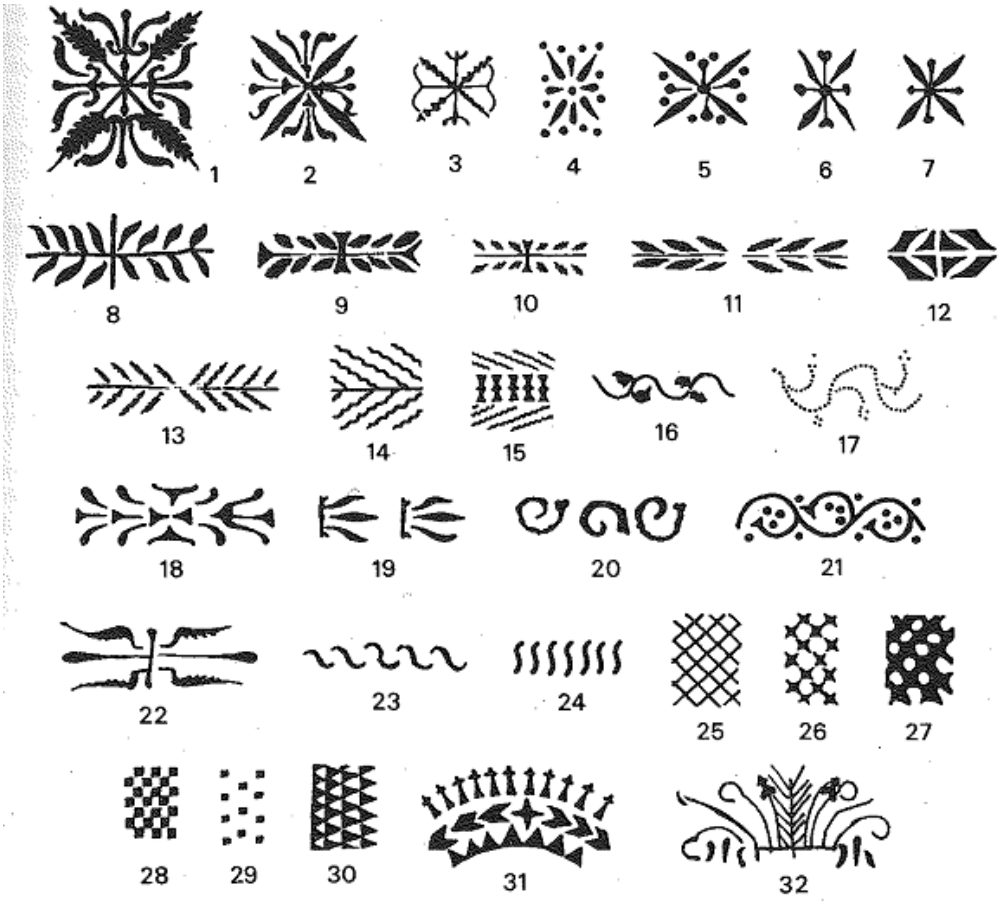
[265] Morel, M.A.W., Bosman, A.V.A.G. 1989. 178, Fig. 5.
[266] Fig. A: After a collection of these design features seen in Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. 56-57.



It is general art motifs and not the individual meanings of each that are truly significant. The most important thing to note in this is that so these items were meant to present the Roman-ness of the owner to the public. Type 3 belt plates present much greater detailed images relating to personal associations which consequently demand greater attention. Some of these simply present nicer vegetative imagery which holds the generic, imperial connotations (Fig. 2).[267]

[267] Grew, Frances & Griffiths, Nick. 1991. Catalog 61.

Four other types of depictions can be found on these plates with their own individual meanings. First are depictions of the emperor. In the most common form, these depict the head of an emperor in between two cornucopias (Fig. 3).[268]

The position of the emperor between the cornucopias, symbols of abundance, makes sense for the 1st century A.D. soldier. Unlike during the Republic, the soldiers are directly paid from the treasury of the emperor and thus, everything they own comes from the emperor. Augustus instituted this system in order to keep soldiers from becoming

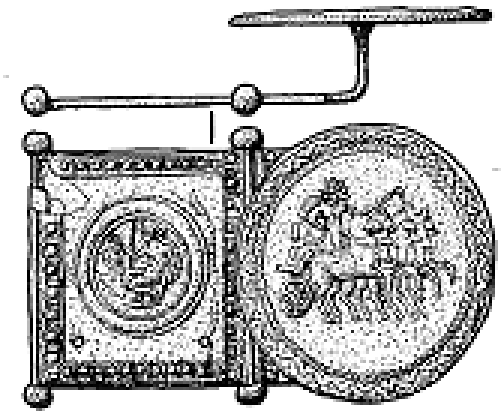
[268] The archaeological dating of these plates suggests that Tiberius was the emperor being depicted in many of these pieces. Von Gonzenbach. 1966. 187.

loyal to anyone other than the emperor by means of others paying soldiers.[269] Wearing such a design shows that the soldier recognizes and respects such an arrangement. The belt plate is a clear indicator of where the soldier's loyalty lies. The second of these depictions are those of deities. The identities of these deities is often difficult to determine due to deterioration of the plates such as those at Herculaneum (Fig. 4).[270]

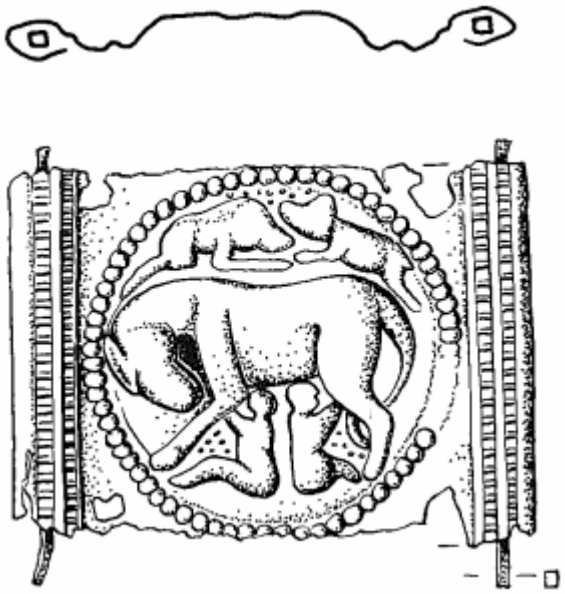
Since one of the Herculaneum plates seems to show a scene of Europa and the Bull, D'Amato has speculated that the belt plates for this soldier may continue with other mythological scenes. Other items in a soldier's gear would depict images of powerful gods, such as Helios, or war-like gods, such as Mars, possibly in order to invoke their

[269] Keppie, Lawrence. 1984. 148-149.
[270] D'Amato, Raffaele. 2009. 45.

blessing and strength. For example, both of these gods can be seen in this set of a plate and frog found at Pompeii (Fig. 5).[271]

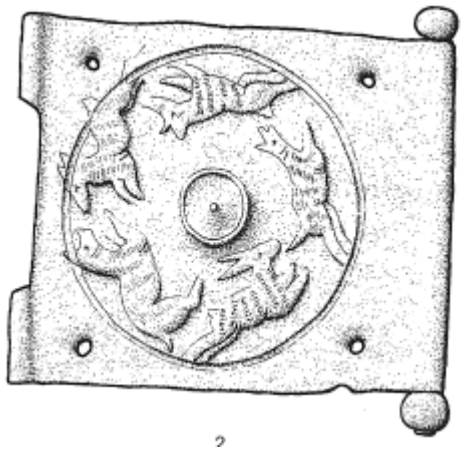


These types of characters would be desirable for soldiers to decorate their belts with taking into the sheer power or martial prowess they represented. The third set of imagery is that of the Wolf and Twins (Fig. 6).[272]



[271] Bishop, M.C., Coulston, J.C.N. 2006. 108. Fig. 62. 13.
[272] Deschler-Erb, Eckhard, et al. 1991. 61. # 40.

This scene harkening back to the humble beginnings of Rome represents a clear patriotic theme for the piece. Finally there are the hunting scenes (Fig. 7).[273]



These come in a few different varieties depending on what animals are chasing other animals. The martial nature of the scene and the powerful nature of the predatory animals in the picture helped draw the soldier to such imagery.

A very interesting study by Michel Feugere has revealed that some studs depicting emperors may have special meanings for the soldiers who wore them (Fig. 8 – 9).[274]

[273] Bishop, M.C., Coulston, J.C.N. 2006. 245. Fig. 149.2.
[274] Feugere, Michel. 1985. 124. Fig. 2.3 & 11.

Figure 8

Figure 9

In his examination of decorated studs from the second half of the 1st century B.C., he used analysis for the study of diffused objects. This revealed a strong possibility that these studs all came from a single workshop at Besancon.[275] Feugere argued that these would then be given out as propaganda on certain occasions to the troops.[276] If this idea

[275] Feugere, Michel. 1985. 117.
[276] Feugere, Michel. 1985. 123-125.

is true, these individual studs could be special markers for certain groups of legionaries and auxilia. If they were given to a unit based on excellence in battle, having the stud would forever immortalize your achievement. On the other hand, if the studs were just given out based upon year, they could be indicators of years of service and thus represent experience. No one of these studs is particularly more grand than another so it is difficult to say whether the type of stud given changed by rank of the soldier receiving it. Though other possibilities exist for the exact time or reason for which these would be given out, the important fact is that wearing the studs represented a soldier's dedication and service to the emperor who gave out these trinkets.

As a soldier marched or walked through a town, the jingle of his belt attracted the attention of those around. The purpose of this was not to annoy the people who turned to look, but rather to send a message. As the owner of a belt, the soldier was immediately recognized as was his position in society. For those faithful to Rome, the presence of a soldier would generally be welcomed, but for those whose loyalty was questionable, it could be a very pointed message that Rome was there to stay. On a smaller scale, the fineness of the belt was an immediate message of the wealth – or perceived wealth – that soldier commanded and possibly even that Roman's connection to the greater power of Rome and the gods. Thus as a soldier made his way through people, his belt not only told the people where he was, but acted as a sort of billboard, telling everyone one where he stood in society.

Chapter 8: Pride

The previous three chapters have looked into the various practical, financial, and sociological benefits a belt provided a soldier during his career as a soldier and beyond. This chapter now asks: did these men appreciate their belts for the benefits they conferred upon them? This chapter will address this final problem by looking for evidence of a sentimental connection of soldiers to their belts. Though texts reveal only a few things about belts, in this area physical sources provide excellent materials in support of the idea that soldiers appreciated the benefits provided by belts. Especially helpful in proving this point are the various types of art historical evidence. The personal stelai of soldiers speak directly to their attitude on the subject and even state images reveal at the very least, the perception the community had on soldiers and their belts. As the evidence will show, Roman soldiers took great pride in their belts and the community at large understood this.

Primary sources from the period reveal how important it was not only to own a belt, but also to able to wear it. In a letter to one Terentianus from his sister Apollonous from roughly the late 1st century A.D. she specifically congratulates him for acquiring a pair of belts for himself.[277] The pleasure Apollonous takes from her brother getting belts means she either understood better than everyone else in the community that belts were important to soldiers or that the knowledge of belts being valuable pieces of a soldier's kit was commonplace. With the very distinct design, sound, and decoration of these belts which have been discussed above, the latter scenario seems much more likely. Two other texts are also integral to seeing how soldiers judged their belts. Both of these documents

[277] Youtie, H.C., Winter, L.G. 1951. #464.

imply the pride a soldier felt when wearing their belt or the shame they might feel without it. The first example comes from Suetonius' Life of Augustus. While Suetonius describes the innovations in the army, he discusses Augustus' punishments for centurions who have committed minor offenses which includes "*variis ignominiis*" such as "*stare per totum diem iuberet ante praetorium, interdum tunicatos discinctosque, nonnumquam cum decempedis vel etiam caespitem portantes.*"[278] Thus it was Augustus' goal to deter criminal behavior of centurions through public humiliation. It was not simply being forced to stand at the *praetorium*, the camp headquarters, which was demeaning. Since belts were part of a soldier's civilian dress, it was taking those away which would make a man stand out to everyone around. The second source comes from Juvenal. When the Satirist discusses his scruples with court hearings, he is quick to note that "*illis quos arma tegunt et balteus ambit quod placitum est ipsis praestatur tempus agendi*".[279] Though his joke likely exaggerates the benefits a soldier received, it certainly hints that a soldier might feel somewhat culturally naked without his precious belt around his waist.

Though these texts give us some information, to understand fully the extent to which soldiers thought about their belts requires looking at art. Beginning with the soldiers' monuments themselves reveals belts as a central concern for them to include on stelai. If soldiers desired to be depicted on a stele in their military gear, they typically chose one of two different ways to do so. They could either show themselves in full armor, as if prepared for battle such as with Gnaeus Musius (Fig. 1),[280]

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[278] Suetonius. *Aug*. 24.2
[279] Juv. 16. 45-50.
[280] Selzer, W. 1988. 128.

or they could represent themselves in civilian dress with only a tunic, sword, dagger, and belt such as with Annaius Daverzus (Fig. 2).[281]

[281] Franzoni, Claudio. 1987. 119. XII.3.

In some cases, however, soldiers chose to show themselves in a combination of fighting gear and civilian dress such as with of Marcus Favonius Facilis (Fig. 3).[282]

[282] Philips, E.J. 1975. 2-5.

Regardless of their choice, they consistently included two elements: the sword and belt. It was only when a soldier or his family desired that no military imagery be depicted that a belt and sword were not shown. We see such an example in the stele of Titus Iulius Tuttius where he is concerned with showing his prosperity in the form of leisurely dining (Fig. 4).[283]

[283] Galsterer, H., Galsterer, B. 1975. 228.

With the prominent display of the belts in these stelai in mind, one wonders who commissioned these pieces and how they chose the particular representation which would be used on the stele. For some stelai, one must look no farther than the accompanying inscription. The inscription of Firmus, a member of the Cohors Raetorum, says the monument was set up "[e]x tes[t(amento)]".[284] This same declaration can be found on many other stelai inscriptions, which have a belt laden figure presented in relief.[285] Consequently for these men, it was their explicit wish to be presented on their stelai. Since no 1st century A.D. soldiers' wills survive, it is hard to determine exactly how explicit requests for their portraits on stelai would be. The intricacy of the carved details on belts and other military equipment, however, may argue in favor of soldiers including concise orders in their wills on how to depict them in death.

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[284] CIL XIII 7684.
[285] The stelai of Caius Valerius Valens, AE 1978, 777, and Publius Flavoleius Cordus, CIL XIII 7255, include the same declaration.

The alternative was that an heir dedicated the monument with apparently no direction but his own. The end to a very heartwarming inscription from the stele of Gaius Castricius Victor reads "L(ucius) Lucilius f(ilius) / et he(res) posuit p(atri) p(iissimo)".[286] Here we see that an heir has simply set up the stele after the death of his father. Though he was not specifically directed to do so, when he produced an image of his father in military gear, like those who might have clear orders to do so, the belt was very intricately detailed in its presentation. The results of both of these possible commission choices were very fine belt depictions which, due to the level of detail, could easily be exact replicas of the belts these soldiers wore in life. Thus when it came to showing a belt in a funerary relief, it was likely important to both the soldier or those who were honoring him to get his belt made neatly and accurately. Exerting so much effort for the sake of one piece of equipment makes a good argument for soldiers being proud of their belt/s.

When examining state monuments, the picture is somewhat different. Though some projects went as far as to depict individual detail on belts, the placement of the monuments often precluded any ability to see the detail.[287] If the intricacies of belt design would be lost to the distance at which these monuments would be viewed, what was the point of all the work? A study of the accuracy of military equipment on Trajan's Column by J.C. Coulston provides a good answer to this question.[288] Coulston very reasonably argues that when it came to presenting the figures on the column, it was not the accuracy – or lack thereof – which was important but that people could identify the

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[286] AE 1933.
[287] The likelihood that decorated belt plates on soldiers in the top tiers of Trajan's Column is quite small..
[288] Coulston, J.C. 1989.

legionaries as legionaries, auxilia as auxilia, etc. When looking at other monuments Roman monuments with soldiers depicted, the same formula applies. When examining the Arch of Claudius reliefs, for example, though the soldiers' gear is quite stylized instead of being strictly accurate, it gets the point across that they are soldiers (Fig. 5).[289]

In another example, the Cancelleria Reliefs, the soldiers could be misconstrued as any generic type of person were it not for the distinguishing shields, pila, and belt worn among the group of men (Fig. 6).[290]

[289] Koeppel, Gerhard. 1983. 107-108.
[290] Last, Hugh. 1948. 9.

Throughout the reliefs studied for this thesis, any depiction of soldiers is guaranteed to have some visible representation of only one item: the military belt. This cannot be said for any other piece of equipment unless one was to include the tunic!

From this fact, it is reasonable to assume that the belt played a major role perception of Roman soldiers. It is not hard to imagine that people across the empire and in Rome especially could relate to the military belt as the clear indication that a figure was a soldier. As the archaeological and art historical evidence has shown, military belts kept the same basic design throughout the 1st century A.D.: that being one or two decorated main straps supporting an embellished, dangling apron. The items recovered from Pompeii and Herculaneum indicate that such belt types were surely in close proximity to Rome if not often visible to the populace of Rome through the presence of the Praetorian Guard.

In addition, it is important to note that most citizens would not experience soldiers dressed for battle. On the contrary, most of the interaction between soldiers and citizens

would involve the soldiers being in their non-combat dress: the tunic, belt, dagger, and sword. These belts were both available for the majority of the public to witness and they would be one of the few items visible on a soldier's person at any time, be it war or peace. Thus when it came to depicting a soldier on state monuments, artists would be encouraged to use imagery that people associated with the soldiery; the belt fulfilled this purpose very well.

In examining this sentimental connection between a soldier and his belt, this chapter has shown that men held their belts in high esteem. There was a sense of personal pride connected with wearing these belts which was powerful enough to extend all the way into death. The *perceived* relationship of military men to their belts had even more cultural reach in Roman society as it was the background for a stereotype of soldiers that would last the entirety of the 1st century A.D. Thus the military belt became more than an item, but rather, a social icon for the Roman soldier.

Conclusion

As this study of Roman belts comes to a close, it is prudent to understand what it has accomplished in the field of Classical studies. The initial interest in the project was driven by a lack of broad research into belts as a component in the Roman soldiers' every day panoply. For the sake of Roman equipment studies, this thesis has attempted to the best possible degree to produce a comprehensive examination of the representational and artefactual evidence while also incorporating an understanding of the specifics of production for belts in this period. Though the exact purview of this project has prevented the formation of all-encompassing lists of information, a study of such breadth of military belts during the 1st century A.D. Roman world has never been completed. Consequently, this thesis represents a move in the right direction for the examination of belts in the strictest sense of Roman equipment studies.

Despite the obvious gains for the study of military equipment, the broader intention of this research was to gain an understanding of the relationship between the individual soldier and his belt. The ensuing venture through the evolution of belts into the 1st century A.D. and the various ways soldiers interacted with their belts led to a deeper insight into various fields of classical studies. The study of this single item has revealed interesting aspects of the mentality of individual soldiers in regards to functionality, investment, social display, and personal pride. As Chapter 5 demonstrated, the military belt functioned effectively for the soldier in combat and presented no significant hindrance to him in battle. Despite the number of ornate features a belt could contain, it is clear that practicality remained of major concern to the soldier. The personal investment necessary for a belt and the great number of factors which needed to

be calculated before purchase introduce the soldier as a more calculated, thinking man instead of a simpleton bent on displaying the prettiest item possible. As belts displays a level of intelligence, they also serve a particular function in way soldiers present their social status. With the military representing a step up the social ladder for the lower classes of the citizenry and non-citizens of the empire, the attention grabbing design of the Roman belt shows a desire by these soldiers to publically present their newfound status in the Roman world. As the final chapter has shown, each soldier was fully aware of the benefits his belt brought him and subsequently celebrated their belt both in life and in death.

Beyond the realm of the individual soldier, the issue of men and belts reveals certain aspects of greater areas in Roman studies. In an effort to maintain order in the provinces and along the boarders of the empire, the military high command used the presence of the legions and auxiliary units to deter and react to conflict. As the noise of military belts drew attention to the soldiers, the army could rely on the distinct rhythm of jingling belts to constantly reinforce the presence of the soldiers and consequently, the knowledge of Rome's control in the area. In the study of artistic stereotypes of the Roman period, the regular depiction of belts specifically on soldiers shows that people not only knew about these belts, but they identified the use of them in art to military men.

The goals of this thesis were two fold: to present an overview of 1st century A.D. belts which had never been accomplished before and to look beyond the strict limits of military equipment and discover what the relationship of men and belts meant for the Roman world at large. As this thesis has accomplished these goals, it has revealed the great potential of belt research to the wider realm of classical studies.

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