Suzana Matešić, **Die militärischen Ausrüstungen. Vergleichende Untersuchungen zur römischen und germanischen Bewaffnung. Das Thorsberger Moor, volume III**. Published by the Verein zur Förderung des Archäologischen Landesmuseums [Schloss Gottorf] e. V., Schleswig 2015. Part 1, Text, 283 pages, 164 figures. Part 2, Katalog, Konkordanzen, Verzeichnisse, Tafeln. 446 pages with 96 illustrations, 25 plates und 15 tables, 124 colour plates.

In 2015, the publication of the site of Thorsberg Bog in four volumes concluded a major research project. The work on these publications began in 2004 where two key research projects were launched: ›Iron Age in Northern Europe. 400 BC till 600 AD‹ and ›Between Thorsberg and Bornstein‹. In Denmark, ›Iron Age in Northern Europe‹ was a collaboration between the National Museum in Copenhagen, Moesgaard Museum in Aarhus, and Schloss Gottorf in Schleswig. The aim of the project was to shed light on this formative phase of the North European Iron Age by investigating (and re-investigating) the famous weapon deposits of Southern Scandinavia: Illerup Ådal, Nydam bog, Ejsbøl bog, and Vimose, of which most were excavated in the mid-nineteenth century by Conrad Engelhardt. The project's initiators, Jørgen Ilkjær and Claus von Carnap-Bornheim, were well aware that when looking into the Scandinavian weapon deposits it is not possible to avoid the Thorsberg Bog in Angeln, Northern Germany. Consequently, ›Between Thorsberg and Bornstein‹ was launched. In practice, the two projects were closely intertwined and the participants were encouraged to work and collaborate as one. A photo database was created online to facilitate the researcher's need for good illustrations for future publications (the database is no longer available). This is one of the successful achievements of the projects, and readers benefit enormously from the numerous cross-references and comparisons between publications, finds and research results. Today, approximately ten years later, six young researchers have acquired a PhD, and a large number of high quality publications has been produced – both by young and more senior researchers. A part of the Nydam volumes and the Vimose publication is due in 2016, but otherwise, the project has come to an end.

The third volume, the military equipment by Suzana Matešić, is divided in the main weapon types: swords and sword belts (p. 4–149), shields (p. 150–186), helmets and mail (p. 187–224), plus miscellaneous (p. 225–232). Subsequently, early finds (p. 233–239), the intentional destruction of the material (p. 240–243), the inscriptions (p. 244–253), the chronological and the chorological aspects of the find are evaluated (p. 254–260 and p. 261–271), and the volume concludes with a German and an English summary (p. 273–283).

The Thorsberg bog contains a large amount of weapon equipment – more than one thousand five hundred pieces – but because of the chemical composition in the bog iron is hardly ever preserved. This means that there are no spears and javelins (that normally make up the largest part of the war booty sacrifices), and that only the precious metal fittings and the organic parts of swords, scabbards, shields, and others are available for study. The Thorsberg finds comprise a large number of weaponry of different types and variants, but only a few will be dealt with in the following. Most of the material belongs into the early third century (phase C1b), and a smaller part of the equipment can be dated to the transition phase C2/C3, that is approximately 300–330 A.D.

As a rule, iron is absent in the Thorsberg Bog, however, bogs being chemically complex, some parts have preserved a few fragments of iron sword blades, but the bone, horn or ivory grips are missing in the assemblage. There are wooden grips with large silver and copper-alloy rivets – a feature typical of the Barbaric north, where Roman blades were treasured, but where Germanic grips were fitted to the blades locally. In Thorsberg Bog, the leather covering of a sword pommel has been preserved, complete with the imprints of the silver rivets. Matešić convincingly argues that the leather is fastened by a thin leather band running in a groove in the wooden pommel. This is backed up by a couple of finds from Vimose where such fragments were found in the grooves, and by one where ornamented silver sheet metal is still preserved in the groove of the pommel. Leather was also found covering some of the wooden scabbards of the find.

In her thorough evaluation of the scabbard fittings, Matešić identifies a number of well-known types and forms, but even so several surprises turn up: While analysing the scabbard runners, Matešić came across a unique finding. At first sight, one of those items of copper-alloy decorated with silver sheet metal was but another one of the type with a stylised birds' head known from a number of finds. But there was something rattling behind the bird head. The X-ray identified this as a little piece of lead. Small, hidden lead plates are not unheard of in Greek or Roman contexts. They were often inscribed and used as amulets. In a Germanic context, locked away in a Germanic type scabbard runner and found in a Germanic post war deposit, it is indeed an exceptional find. The section on scabbard slides also includes the identification of an earlier form of slide of Roman type IIIC in variant IIIC4. A comparison with the main distribution in Britain and the Upper German-Raetian Limes seems to support this new discovery. Looking at the scabbard runners from a larger perspective, it is one of the most popular Roman fittings in a northern Germanic context. One third of the Thorsberg scabbard slides are of Roman or Provincial-Roman manufacture. As Roman scabbard slides of iron, like the triangular type IIIB, might have been sacrificed as well, the quota could well be close to the fifty percent Roman scabbard slides from Vimose, not sixty as stated in the text.

A variety of different chapes are found in Thorsberg, and similar to the scabbard runners some are of Germanic and some of Roman origin. Roman chapes are cast in one piece, and of these the Thorsberg find holds twenty-six specimens. The copper-alloy chapes with volutes and pelta shaped incisions, named type Novaesium after the find in the legion fort of Neuss, deserve special mentioning. They vary in size, but as the find of two quite small specimens mounted on sword scabbards from Illerup Ådal show, this does not mean they belong to knives. Matešić divides the seventeen Novaesium chapes from Thorsberg into four groups regarding to size (large and small) and the existence of outer studs. A fifth variant with small humps at the front is also identified. By analysing comparative material, she identifies different distributions of the types. Even though Novaesium chapes without the outer studs are found distributed widely along the limes and in Barbaricum, the larger specimens build a cluster in south-eastern Britain, along Hadrian's Wall and in lower Germany, whereas the smaller specimens seem to be restricted to the lower Rhine and Northern Germany. In the case of the chapes with outer studs, the larger variant builds a cluster in Germania Inferior with only few sites in Barbaricum. The smaller variant, however, is especially common near the upper Rhine and in Barbaricum near the limes. The different distributions are illustrated by two distribution maps, but it is a bit confusing that the maps were not differentiated according to the text (with or without studs), but by size. Generally, it is not a statistically large number of comparative finds, but the variations are interesting. If Matešićs conclusions are right, a production site just outside the limes could not be ruled out. Of course, as Matešić rightly points out, a Provincial-Roman production specialised towards Germanic customers is also one possible entry. Another approach to follow up on these results would be to analyse the chapes in order to identify different moulds used for casting. As there are other differences and similarities to be identified in the material, it would be relevant to see the varying network of distribution this kind of examination could provide.

In a number of earlier articles, Matešić discusses the adoption of various Roman elements in Germanic militaria. The subject is also part of this publication, and here she proposes a typological development from the Novaesium chapes to the drop shaped examples and a parallel development chain from the Novaesium pieces towards round chapes with a house shaped extension on the top. The typology or development series apparently does not mirror a chronological development as many of the types are found within a very short period of time. This development relies on the material from Vimose, and it would have been nice to see where, for instance, the semi-circular chapes with pelta shaped incisions or other Germanic forms from Thorsberg fit in this typology.

The idea to examine Roman-Germanic interactions and how material culture was adapted and adopted is a research field that has been flourishing the last five to ten years. The weapon deposits in Northern Europe with their vast material are central to understanding the many implications of the contact between not only Romans and Germanic tribes, but the interaction between the different Germanic tribes. For this reason, it would have been absolutely fascinating to see material from contemporary grave finds included in the discussion on the material from Thorsberg in general and in the Roman-Germanic discussion specifically.

The special preservation conditions in Thorsberg allowed for a number of spectacular leather finds of which the baldrics are briefly discussed in this volume. The leather finds, meanwhile, are discussed thoroughly in both the first (horse harness) and above all in fourth volume of the Thorsberg series. The two leather baldrics were supplemented by six round baldric fittings. Matešić analyses the various constructions of the fastening loop and the design of the plate itself. Most baldric fittings are round with some marking of the centre, but some are elaborately decorated. Two of the Thorsberg pieces stand out: one is with an open work decoration in the form of a swastika, one is with incisions not very different from the Novaesium chapes. The swastika baldrics are known from a few eastern finds, most famous the piece from Dura Europos in Syria, whereas the other openwork baldric might have originated from the province of Noricum. The limited distribution to Noricum might indicate that they were produced exclusively in this area.

There is a number of different fittings designed for fastening the scabbard to the baldric. The simplest are the Roman double knobs or buttons cast in copper-alloy, but they seem both cheap and mass-produced in comparison to the round fittings of gilded silver with elaborate ornamentation of the Germanic manufacture. All the different types are studied in the publication.

The analysis of the different fittings and buckles leads to a discussion of how the swords were carried, i. e. on the left or in the right side. Matešić challenges the established position that the Germanic tribes carried the sword on their right in the third century, but it is probably not the last time we discuss this element of Germanic warfare. The analyses also result in the reconstruction of a number of sword belts – at least six Roman (based on the balteus clasps) and eight to eleven Germanic sword belts (on the basis of buckle sets of strap fittings etc.). Matešić convincingly re-interprets one of the buckles to belong to the shoulder part of the sword belt. The different sword belts are finally discussed in regard to their position in the Thorsberg bog.

The next part of the publication is dedicated to shields and shield fittings (bosses, rim fittings, grip fittings). There is a thought-provoking comparison with the material from Illerup, as the material from Ille-

rup A comprises 350 iron shield bosses, thirty-six of copper-alloy and four of silver. In Thorsberg, no iron umbos were preserved, but thirty-six of copper-alloy and two of silver. According to the shield bosses, the amount of sacrificed equipment actually matches the much larger Illerup A deposition, where almost nine out of ten shields and belt fittings were made from iron. One can only speculate on how many iron umbos were originally sacrificed at Thorsberg.

One element to set the material from Thorsberg aside from the Scandinavian weapon deposits is the existence of Roman shield bosses. However, the Thorsberg shield bosses seem to be of plainer quality. Generally, the shield fittings from Thorsberg seem to differ slightly from, for instance, Illerup and Vimose. Matešić interprets this difference as regionally significant, and suggests that the origin of the Thorsberg warriors differs from that of the warriors whose equipment is found in the almost contemporary deposits of Illerup A and Vimose 3.

The most iconic finds from Thorsberg are the Germanic and Roman helmets. The author has dealt with these in a number of earlier articles. She argues convincingly for a re-interpretation of the Germanic silver helmet with the use of comparative material of mask helmets of the so-called feminine type and a critical approach to the conservation history of the helmet. She also reconstructs two helmets of the type Niederbieber variant Heddernheim. The fact that the Thorsberg helmets are the only helmets from the Scandinavian region in military context (until now) leads Matešić to the conclusion that they might have been carried by Germanic soldiers in (after?) Roman military service. The frame of a Phalera also supports the Roman connection in Thorsberg.

Ring mail is known from quite a few finds in northern Europe, but none as well-preserved as in the Vimose and Thorsberg bogs. Thorsberg comprises at least three variations of mail, which are reconstructed into at least four specimens. Three of these are probably of Roman provenance, but they had all been altered or reworked by Germanic craftsmen who added beautiful clasps and fittings with embossed sheet metal of the highest quality.

Another interesting element is the destruction of the equipment made from precious metal. It is a general feature in the third century weapon deposits that the finest equipment was the most thoroughly destroyed, and Thorsberg is no exception. But the thorough analysis again confirms, that this is not done in a frenzy, but as part of a carefully planned ceremony.

Inscriptions are always spectacular in a non-literary society. Roman and Greek writing has turned up occasionally from the beginning of our era in southern Scandinavia, and the Latin alphabet served as model for the construction of the runic alphabet. It is typical for the early inscriptions from the Roman Iron Age that most of them were found in military context in the bog finds. The inscriptions from Thorsberg are well-known – both the Roman name of Aelius Aelianus on a shield boss and the two runic inscriptions. Furthermore, Matešić proposes four new possible inscriptions with runes or runic imitations.

In a relatively short chapter, the chronology and affiliation of the equipment with the different deposits in Thorsberg is presented. Matešić is leaning on both her own results and analyses and the work in the previous two volumes of the Thorsberg series, so her analysis of the weaponry is supported by analyses of both the personal equipment and the horse equipment. She concludes that there are only few indications of a deposit from Ilkjærs weapon group 4, that is phase C1a or second half of the second century. The bulk of the material (including the Roman militaria) belongs to the deposit in phase C1b in the early third century. Matešić places the Thorsberg deposit between the deposit Illerup A and Vimose 3, also from the early third century. She also interprets the origin of the Germanic equipment to derive from regions south of Thorsberg – an interpretation that is supported by the personal equipment. A small deposit in phase C2/C3 around 300 A.D. (weapon group 9) also contains militaria, but she concludes – contrary to earlier publications – that later finds do not occur.

The volume is beautifully illustrated with high quality distribution maps, diagrams and photos of details of the Thorsberg material alongside with analogous finds. Even though the Vimose find is highly relevant as comparison to the Thorsberg material, the find does seem to dominate the illustrations with twenty-two out of thirty-six illustrations of comparable finds. The reader might have benefitted if a wider range of finds were illustrated, for instance similar grave finds. A Scandinavian audience would also have profited if the equivalent Roman material was to a greater extent illustrated with finds from the limes area.

The Catalogue volume provides the scholar with the necessary documentation for the text. A number of find lists complement the distribution maps, and the diagrams of the special analyses are also found here. The Catalogue comprises not only the description of each artefact, but also a correlation between Engelhardt, Raddatz and the new inventory numbers. The high quality colour plates with each item illustrated from two sides and with cross-sections are especially useful.

The North European weapon deposits have been crucial to our understanding of a Germanic tribe system during the Late Roman Iron Age. In the third volume of the Thorsberg series we catch yet another glimpse of the military organisation on a high level – the Germanic tribes were not wild warriors with an assorted set of farming implements that did war upon everything that moved. The applied import of Roman quality swords in combination with the work of Germanic weapon smiths created an assembly of weapons uniquely suited for organised and professionalised war-

fare. Furthermore, the Thorsberg series again disprove the notion of the Germanic ritual frenzy. On the contrary, the careful selection of the equipment to be destroyed, the bundling and sorting of the weaponry, and the sheer size of the deposits visualise meticulously planned rituals with a high level of political impact. Suzana Matešić's publication of the military equipment from Thorsberg is an important contribution to the understanding of war and cult in the Barbaric North. It can easily be read in its own right, but if in any way you are interested in the interaction between Rome and her neighbours or the Germanic tribes of the North, you should buy all four volumes.

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