With the following interim report I will outline the type and extent of the military presence in the Vesuvius-area, focussing especially on Herculaneum and Pompeii. I am grateful to Stefano DeCaro, Pier-Giovanni Guzzo and Antonio D’Ambrosio as well as Mariarosaria Borriello, who gave me full assistance in the assessment of this material and the finds.

The ultimate aim of this study is not a mere antiquarian study of Roman arms and weaponry, but, on the basis of material from the cities in the Vesuvius area, to compare and contrast archaeological and historical evidence in order to assess the role of the military in a primarily civilian region of the Roman Empire. There is a significant amount of evidence—both epigraphical and iconographical—that attests the presence of regular military personnel in the Vesuvian cities. Numerous graffiti primarily indicate the presence of Praetorians and Fleet soldiers. Honorific and dedicatory inscriptions regularly attest the presence of higher ranking officers. Occasionally, however, these are also attested by funerary monuments, such as the one of the Octavii near the Porta di Nocera at Pompeii (fig. 1).

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1 The study of military equipment from the towns in the Vesuvius area goes back to a research project funded by the Fritz-Thyssen-Foundation which started at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich. It is now continued at the Department of Archaeology of the University of Cologne. We owe thanks to Christoph Rummel, Nottingham, for checking the English version of this contribution.

2 Vgl. CIL IV 1994; 2145; 8405.

3 Turranius Proculus Gellianus: CIL X 797; G. Fiorelli, Descrizione di Pompei (Napoli 1875), 256.

Of special interest in this respect is the funerary district of the Praetorians in front of the Porta di Nola. This small cemetery, situated on a narrow and apparently public strip of land, was in use for an extended period of time. Both the funerary monuments, as well as numerous Graffiti attest the mainly occasional presence of Praetorians.

Apart from regular bases and forts, the best way to identify soldiers archaeologically is through their equipment, and especially through their weapons and armour. A general outline of the types of artefacts recovered during excavations allows a first insight in the presence of military forces in the Vesuvian cities.

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