

25 *fascia cruralis*, *fascia pedulis*, *impilia* – ‘puttees,’ ‘socks,’ and felt inner shoes

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25.1 Introduction

Emperor Augustus became very frost sensitive in his old age. For this reason, he dressed not only in a thick *toga* in winter, but also in four tunics, an undertunic, a woollen ‘waistcoat’ (*thorax*), and wraps around the upper and the lower part of his legs.¹ Thanks to his biographer Suetonius, Augustus became the person to assemble the most garments on his body in the entire corpus of extant Latin literature. Ancient biography likes clothes, since it shows the true character (*ethos*) of a person. It is an outward expression of the rulers’ vices and weaknesses, unmasking them as passive homosexuals (Julius Caesar), as madmen (Caligula), or—as in case of Augustus—simply as an old bore. The level of truth of these remarks is similar to that of modern tabloids, authors at best generalizing exceptional garb and transforming it into habitual individual preferences. In our case, Suetonius’ description serves to contrast imperial self-representation that showed Augustus as a radiant young man (*iuvenis*) even at the age of seventy. Like the official image of Augustus, it is a caricature that goes back to post-Augustan historiography and anti-imperial pamphlets or jokes about the emperor. As to literature, it shows us that there was a sort of ‘underground’ literature besides the polished pro-Augustan authors. As to dress, the text is interesting because it informs us about some garments worn in everyday life and the social codes pertaining to them.

The following chapter is about Roman bodywear pertaining to the leg and foot.² Most of the articles are not explicitly attested with women, but there is no reason why they should not have used these types of bodywear when needed. Modern research on the diverse *fasciae* is somewhat muddled. Most confusion goes back to an article by Mau (1909) in the *Realencyclopädie* and the entries in the dictionaries. These incorrectly equate the straps of sandals or shoes with the bodywear of the leg since both are called

¹ Suet. Aug. 82.1: *hieme quaternis cum pingui toga tunicis et subucula et thorace laneo et feminalibus et tibialibus muniebatur*; cf. B 1 p. 254.

² Becker/Göll III (1882) 225–226; Blümner (1911) 220–221; RE 6.2 (1909) s.v. *fasciae*, col. 2008–2009 (A. Mau); Wilson (1938) 73–74; N. Goldman, *Reconstructing Roman Clothing*, in: Sebesta/Bonfante (1994), 233; DNP 4 (1998) s.v. *Fasciae*, 433–434; Croom (2000) 113; Olson (2003) 209; GRD (2007) 67.

fasciae in Latin literature.³ In contrast, we will turn to the shoe straps (*fasciae*) in the chapters B 26 and B 29 and will only discuss the evidence here that unequivocally refers to the bodywear of the leg. The individuals wearing it in our texts are all men, and we hear nothing about leg wraps worn by women. However, we may assume that their clothing was no different from that of men at this point.

25.2 *fascia cruralis* – ‘puttee’

The terminology concerning the different leg wraps varies slightly. We either get the noun *fascia* with an attribute that designates the specific part of the leg that is concerned (e.g. *fascia cruralis*),⁴ or a nominalized adjective (e.g. *feminalis*). The noun *fascia* indicates the form of the garment. It is discussed in the chapter on the *fascia pectoralis* (B 22). The term *fascia* designates a strip of cloth (or leather, hence it is also applied to shoe straps) that is wrapped about the respective part of the body. The *fascia cruralis* is wrapped around the leg (*crus*). The Latin term *crus* can designate the entire leg.⁵ However, it often refers only to the lower leg and the shin, and we can individuate the *fasciae crurales* as wraps for the lower leg. We could call them puttees (the leg wraps worn by many soldiers in World War I).⁶ The garment is also attested in the archaeological evidence.⁷ In the case of Augustus (see above), we hear more specifically of wraps around the upper leg (*feminalia*, *femur* = thigh)⁸ and the lower leg (*tibialia*, *tibia* = shin-bone). The author may have done this in order to create the impression that the emperor was wrapped ‘everywhere’ on the body. The passage shows that *fasciae* could be worn around the thighs as well.

The *fascia cruralis* is an exceptional garment that is not normally used. Quintilian tells us that it is on the same level as scarves and earmuffs. Men can only wear it in public when they feel sick, making it *insignia morbi*. As Quintilian explains: “Only illness can excuse it.”⁹ Otherwise, it is a sign of delicacy and weakness, which is why Augustus is shown wearing it. In one passage, a flute-player has a *fascia cruralis* on his broken shin-bone for protection.¹⁰ In this function, it is also used in hunting.¹¹ The puttee is the typical special attire of the hunter, and this is also the reason we find

³ See on this, Blümner (1911) 220–221.

⁴ Digest. (Ulpianus) 34.2.25.4.

⁵ OLD s.v. *crus*.

⁶ Phaedr. 5.7.36.

⁷ See n. 12.

⁸ Cf. in Late Antiquity, Hieronym. epist. 61.1: *feminalia linea*.

⁹ Quint. inst. or. 11.144: *fascias, quibus crura vestiuntur, et focalia et aurium ligamenta sola excusare potest valetudo*; cf. also Hor. sat. 2.3.254 (*insignia morbi*).

¹⁰ Phaedr. 5.7.6.36.

¹¹ Grattius 338: *tegit imas fascia suras* [a *fascia* shall cover your calves]; Petron. 40.5 (a mock hunt).

it represented in art.¹² Beyond hunting, a *fascia cruralis* is not respectable attire you would be want to be depicted in. We may assume that the usage in the case of women might have been even more reduced than in the case of men both for reasons of fashion and functionality. In contrast to men, the longer female tunic could provide a level of protection and warmth for the wearer’s legs. The need for an extra garment for the legs was therefore not as great.

25.3 *fascia pedulis* – ‘sock’

There term *fascia pedulis* is only attested in Ulpianus. There is no other reference to this garment in all other Latin literature. In a definition, Ulpianus tells us that the *fasciae cruales pedulesque* should be reckoned among the garments (and not among the ornaments) because they cover a part of the body. The term *fascia pedulis* implies that the garment concerned the foot (*pes*). It could refer to a strip of cloth that is wrapped around the foot or what we would call a ‘sock’ (as opposed to the seemingly obvious *soccus*). It thus designates a garment that modern scholars seem to have been desperately looking for. A foot wrap easily takes on the shape of a sock if it is sewn together at the ends (like the *fascia pectoralis*) to form a ring. There is material archaeological evidence on socks,¹³ and we also see some on the shroud of an Egyptian women dating to the third century CE. In contrast to modern Europe, socks were certainly not a regular dress item in Rome, and they were as exceptional as *fasciae cruales*.

25.4 *impilia* – ‘inner shoes’

L. Cornelius Eros, a Greek freedman, was a specialist craftsman living in the *Subura* of Rome. He was an *impiliarius*, i.e he made *impilia*, and found this profession important enough to put it on his grave stone.¹⁴ Latin literature, however, was less benign towards Lucius Cornelius’ craft. The term *impilia* (neuter plural) is mentioned only twice, and its exact meaning is difficult to determine.¹⁵ Ulpianus lists *impilia* next to the *fasciae pedules* and defines both as garments. Pliny uses the word, translating by it the Greek

¹² B. Andreae, Die römischen Jagdsarkophage, ASR 1,2, Berlin 1980, 164 n. 112, pl. 112.1; U. Pappalardo/R. Ciardello, Die Pracht römischer Mosaiken, Darmstadt 2018, p. 20, 30, 120, 121, 122, 125, 133.

¹³ See C. Fluck, Von Haute Couture bis Pret-à-porter. Damenmode im römischen Ägypten, M. Tellenbach et al. (eds.) (2013), 148 n. 15.

¹⁴ CIL 6.33862: L. Corneli[us] Eros impiliar[ius] de Subur[a].

¹⁵ Plin. NH 19.32; Digest. (Ulpian.) 34.2.25.4; cf. also Charisius vol. I p. 552.34–35 Keil, who does not seem to know the meaning of the word.

term πόδεια.¹⁶ This is all the literary evidence we have. The etymology shows that *impilia* were made of felt (*pilus*).¹⁷ It is also clear that they must have something to do with the foot. But are they felt slippers (OLD) or rather inner shoes, as used in Europe with rubber boots? The Greek term *podeia* does not help because its meaning offers the same problems.¹⁸ The prefix *in-* in *impilia* suggests that we should distinguish it from a simple felt slipper for which we have no Latin word, but which is called πῖλος in Greek.¹⁹ The prefix seems to denote that *impilia* are worn *in* something else, in this case in another shoe or sandal. We should hence assume that they were inner shoes or insoles consisting of felt, and they may have been more common than we think. While they are not a suitable subject matter for high literature, the existence of specialized craftsmen like the freedman Eros suggests that *impilia* were widely used in Rome and beyond. They were probably part of the normal life that is so difficult for us to track.

16 Pliny NH 19.32: *Theophrastus auctor est esse bulbi genus circa ripas amnium nascens, cuius inter summum corticem eamque partem, qua vescuntur, esse laneam naturam, ex qua impilia vestesque quaedam conficiantur* [Theophrastus writes that there is a kind of onion that grows on riverbanks. Between its outermost skin and the part that is eaten, there is a woollen mass, from which *impilia* and some garments are made]; Theophr. Hist. Plant. 7.13.18: ὑφαίνεται δὲ ἐξ αὐτοῦ πόδεια καὶ ἄλλα ἱμάτια· δι’ ὃ καὶ ἐριώδες τοῦτο [but *podeia* and other garments are woven from it, for it is also woolly].

17 On felting, cf. Marquardt/Mau (1886) 502; Blümner I (1912) 222–224.

18 Kritias VS 88 B 65 D.-K.; Crates com. F 41 K.-A. Both parallels are adduced by Pollux 7.91. He did not know the exact meaning of the term *podeia*, but posed the same question as we do.

19 LSJ s.v.