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**TERRA SIGILLATA DISCOVERED IN THE ROMAN FORT AT *MICIA*
(VEȚEL, HUNEDOARA COUNTY) FROM THE NATIONAL HISTORY MUSEUM
OF ROMANIA COLLECTIONS: BETWEEN LOCAL PRODUCTION AND IMPORTS**

This study focuses on the analyses of a specific type of archaeological material, terra sigillata found in the Roman fort at Micia.

After the Roman conquest of Dacia, most of the products available at that time were imported into the newly established province. This is clearly the case with terra sigillata, among which the most notable are the imports from Lezoux, Rheinzabern and Westerndorf. In a second phase, along with the population's growth, and therefore the increase in demand, the local officinae began to produce terra sigillata.

Introduction

The collections of the National History Museum of Romania (MNIR) include a large quantity of ceramic material almost unknown, from the Roman fort at *Micia*¹. The study of the material aspects in the military centres of Roman Dacia has progressed a lot over the past two decades by the publishing of monographs which put the importance of the forts in the economic life of the province in a new light². This context requires both the valorization and the scientific circulation of this important museum collection originating from the Roman fort at *Micia*. The present study is dedicated to the analysis of a special category of archaeological material discovered in the camp at *Micia*: terra sigillata. These finds have a special place within the framework of archaeological discoveries due to the fact that the stamps and the decorative details offer the possibility to identify the workshop in which the object was manufactured, such element being significant in establishing the relative chronology. During 1976–1987, a team of the National History Museum of Romania coordinated by Liviu Petculescu carried out archaeological research in the Roman fort at *Micia*. 26 excavation units were excavated and investigated, determining the exact dimensions of the Roman fort: 360×189.5 m (fig. 1,1)³. The analysis was made upon a set of 62 pieces that have been discovered during the above archaeological campaigns (fig. 2,1).

An important aspect in studying terra sigillata is the assignment of this type of material to its manufacturing workshop.

Thus, following the stylistic analysis (in the case of items with decorations) made in conjunction with the typological analysis and the manufacturing clay of the objects (in the case of items without decorations), both imports and local terra sigillata were found. The moulding technique used for the terra sigillata led to the diversification of the Roman pottery by the appearance of specific forms that have evolved over time. Besides manufacturing vessels widespread in terms of form, each workshop also manufactured vessels that differed from the initial form and vessels with a less common form. This is the reason why, in some cases for the plain terra sigillata, the form of the vessel represents the main indication of a certain workshop as well as an indication of relative dating. The form criterion is less important in the case of decorated pottery, where the assignment is made through the decorative elements defining certain styles. Therefore, in order to define the form repertoire of the terra sigillata from the Roman fort at *Micia*, the typologies used were those made by Hans Dragendorff in 1895⁴, Joseph Déchelette in 1904⁵, and James Curle in 1911⁶. The terra sigillata analyzed in this study come under the following forms: Curle 11, Curle 23, Drag. 18/31, Drag. 30, Drag. 33, Drag. 36, Drag. 37, Drag. 39, Drag. 42 and Déch. 72 (fig. 2,2).

Although the imported terra sigillata represents the largest part of our collection, in this paper we will make a detailed study on a distinct category of archaeological material, the local terra sigillata, making only a brief review of the imports. The imported terra sigillata represents the largest category – 59 items accounting for 97% of all the discoveries, of which the decorated terra sigillata represents the largest part. The vast majority of the imported items are from the centre at Lezoux. The great pottery centre at Rheinzabern is also well represented as well as a few fragments of decorated vessels belonging to the Westerndorf workshops. Moreover, another two items could not be assigned to manufacturing centres due

¹ During 2015–2016, only the lamps from the Roman fort at *Micia* were published: BOCAN/NEAGU 2015, 115–174; BOCAN/NEAGU 2016, 537–546. Moreover, nine fragments of terra sigillata were determined and described by Dan Isac in his PhD thesis: ISAC 1985.

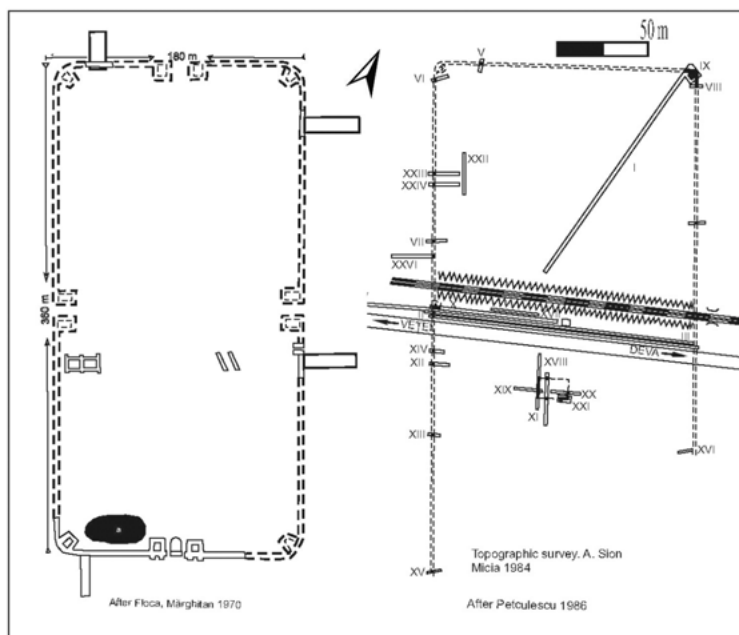
² A series of monographs of Dacian castra have been published during the past three decades: Bologa: GUDEA 1997. – Buciumi: GUDEA 1997a. – Gherla: PROTASE/GUDEA/ARDEVAN 2008. – Gilău: ISAC 1997. – Ilițua: PROTASE/GAIU/MARINESCU 1997. – *Porolissum*: GUDEA 1989. – Răcari: BONDOC/GUDEA 2009. – Românați/*Largiana*: TAMBA 1997. – Romita/*Certiae*: MATEI/BAJUSZ 1997. – Căteiu/*Samum*: ISAC 2003.

³ PETCULESCU/NEMOIANU/ANASTASIU 1981, 70.

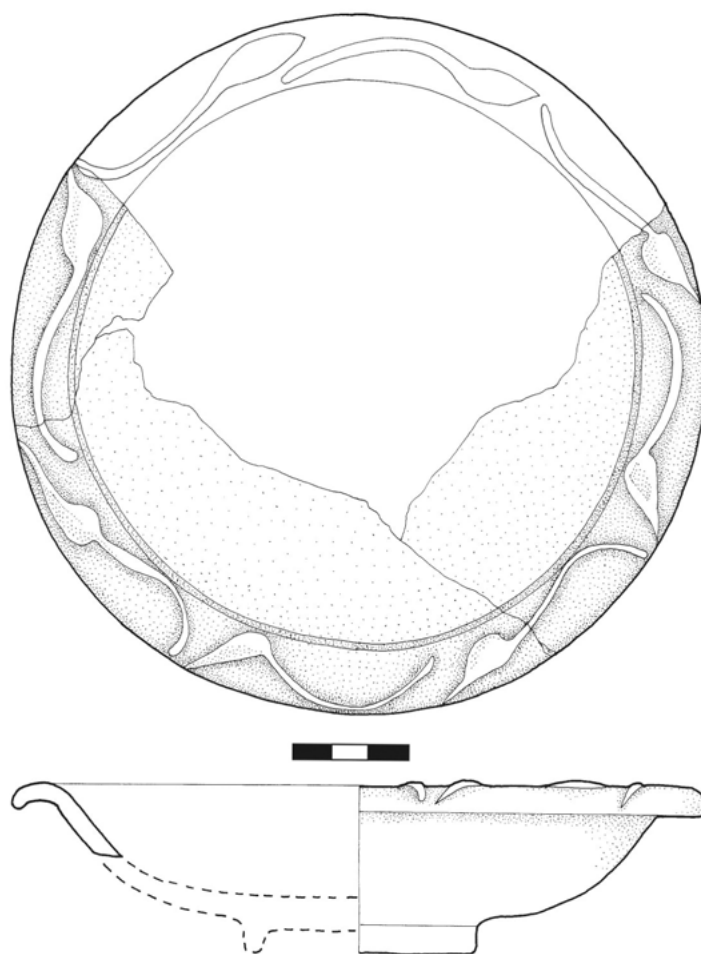
⁴ DRAGENDORFF 1895.

⁵ DÉCHELETTE 1904.

⁶ CURLE 1911.



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Fig. 1. 1 General plan of the Roman fort at *Micia* (*apud* FLOCA/MĂRGHITAN 1970 and *apud* PECULESCU/FILIPESCU/CRĂCIUN 1986); **2** Roman fort at *MICIA*. Terra sigillata from southern Gaul.

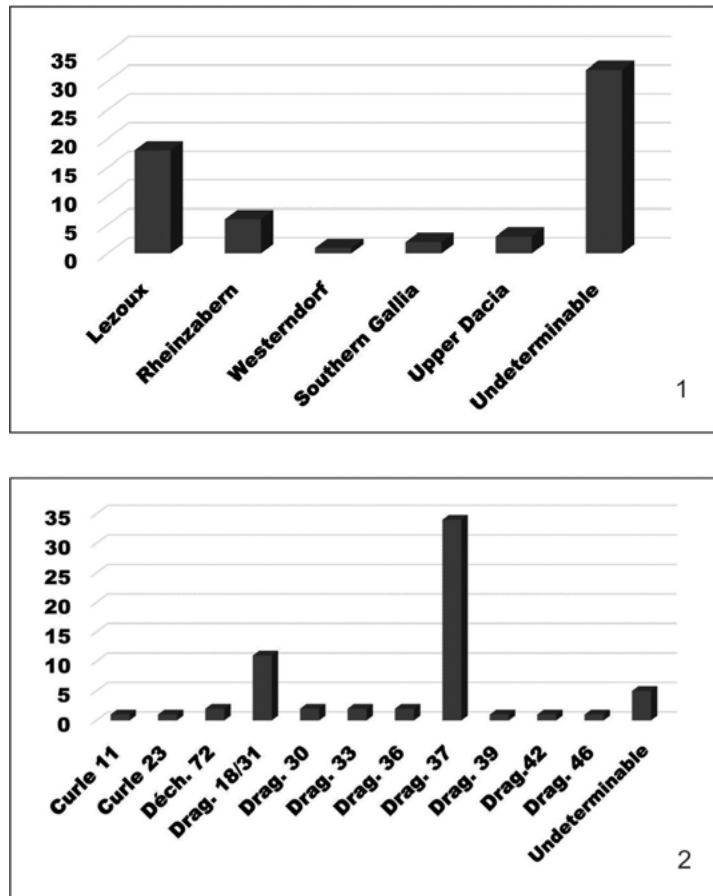


Fig. 2. 1 Overview in percentage of the imported terra sigillata from the Roman fort at *Micia*;
2 Répertoire of terra sigillata forms from the Roman fort at *Micia*.

to their fragmentary state (fig. 2,1; 3,8–9). A particular place is occupied by one fragmentary cup Drag. 33 who kept on the base only the initial letter of the stamp – P.

a. Terra sigillata from southern Gallia

From southern Gallia came two plates of the type Drag. 36 with the rim decorated with lanceolate leaves, manufactured using the barbotine technique, which could not be precisely assigned to a particular workshop of the aforementioned province. Both items are fragmentary, with one preserving approximately 50% and the rest being covered in plaster, while the second is represented by a fragment of the rim and body (fig. 1,2)⁷. We do not exclude the possibility that the two items are either from La Graufesenque or from Banassac, as the two fit chronologically between the years 106–117.

b. Terra sigillata from central Gaul

The *officinae* from central Gaul are best represented in the imports from the Roman fort at *Micia*. Thus, the centre of Lezoux is the place of origin for the largest part of the terra sigillata discovered in the Roman fort at *Micia* – 18 items (29%, figs. 3,3–9; 4,10–11). Most of them belong to vessels

with relief decoration. All of the decorated vessels are cups Drag. 30 and bowls Drag. 37. The majority of pieces are unsigned, but they have been attributed to individual potters or groups of potters. The decorated Lezoux sherds which occur at *Micia* were the products of several groups of potters, whose decorative styles cannot be distinguished individually because their decorative details were held in common: the group of PATERNVS V (PATERNVS V⁸/LAXTVCISSA, LASTVCA) (fig. 4,11), the group of CINNAMVS II (fig. 3,4), early style (CINNAMVS II/CERIALIS II/PAVLLVS IV), the group ATTIANVS II/SACER I/CRICIRO V (fig. 3,3) and the group ADVOCISVUS/DIVIXTVS I. Other Lezoux sherds can be attributed to individual potters: ALBVCIVS II, MERCATOR IV and PVGNVS II. In the case of plain wares the stamps are found on the basal interior. Several wares kept on the base the stamps of potters: CINNAMVS II, CETVS and CVCILLVS I. The CINNAMVS stamp – kept on the plate Drag. 18/31, in a rectangular oblong, with rounded corners (fig. 3,7); on the other plate Drag. 18/31, only the initial letter of the stamp – C is kept. Corroborating the letter kept with the form of rectangular oblong (double, with rounded corners), we believe that the stamp can be completed C [ETI I] (fig. 3,6). On the basal interior of another sigillata, only the letters CVC is kept. Corroborating the letter kept with the form of the vessel in

⁷ The objects' drawings were made by Simona Mateescu.

⁸ For determining the names of patters we use HARTLEY/DICKINSON 2008–2012.

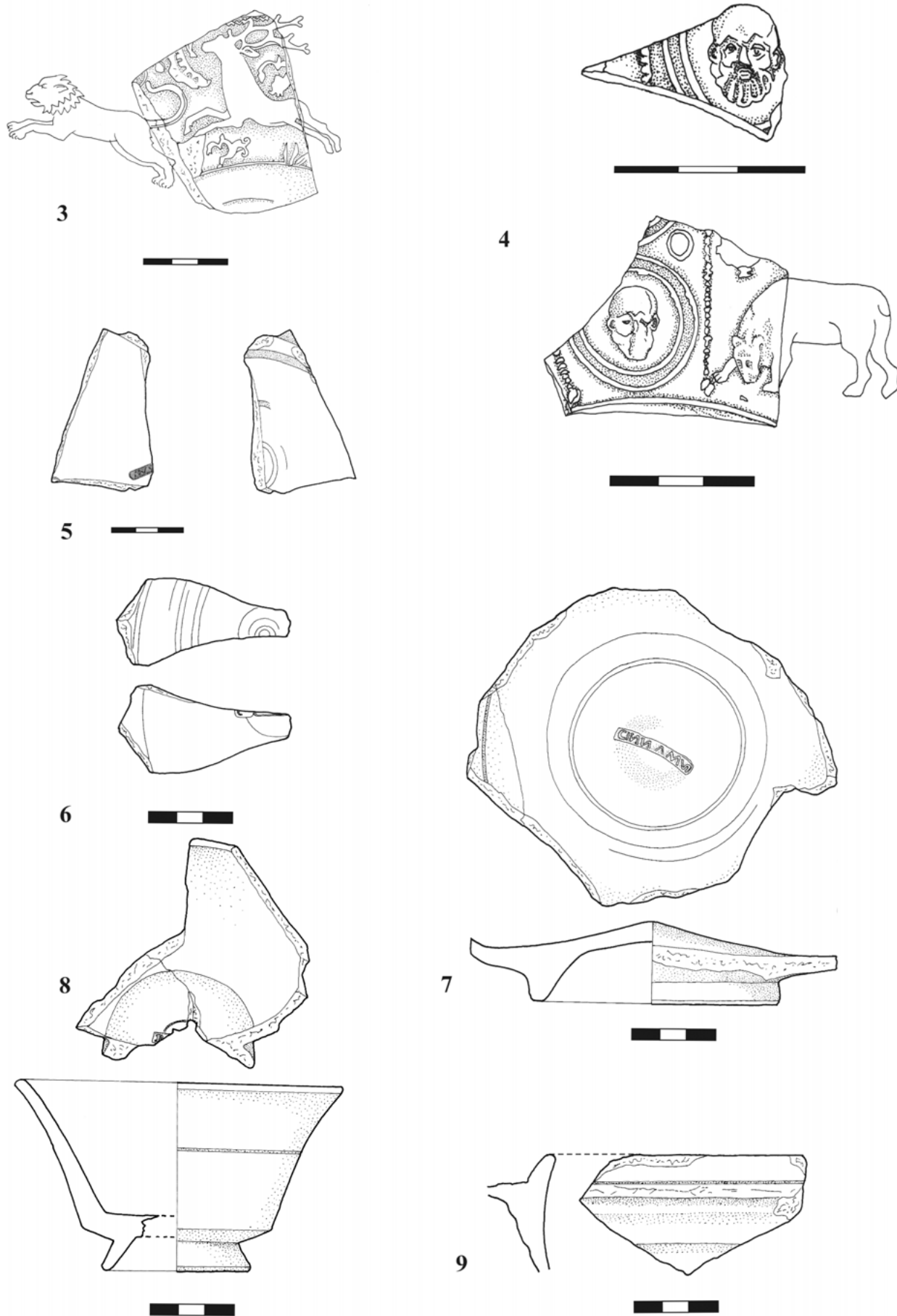


Fig. 3. Roman fort at *Micia*. 3–9 Terra sigillata from Lezoux.

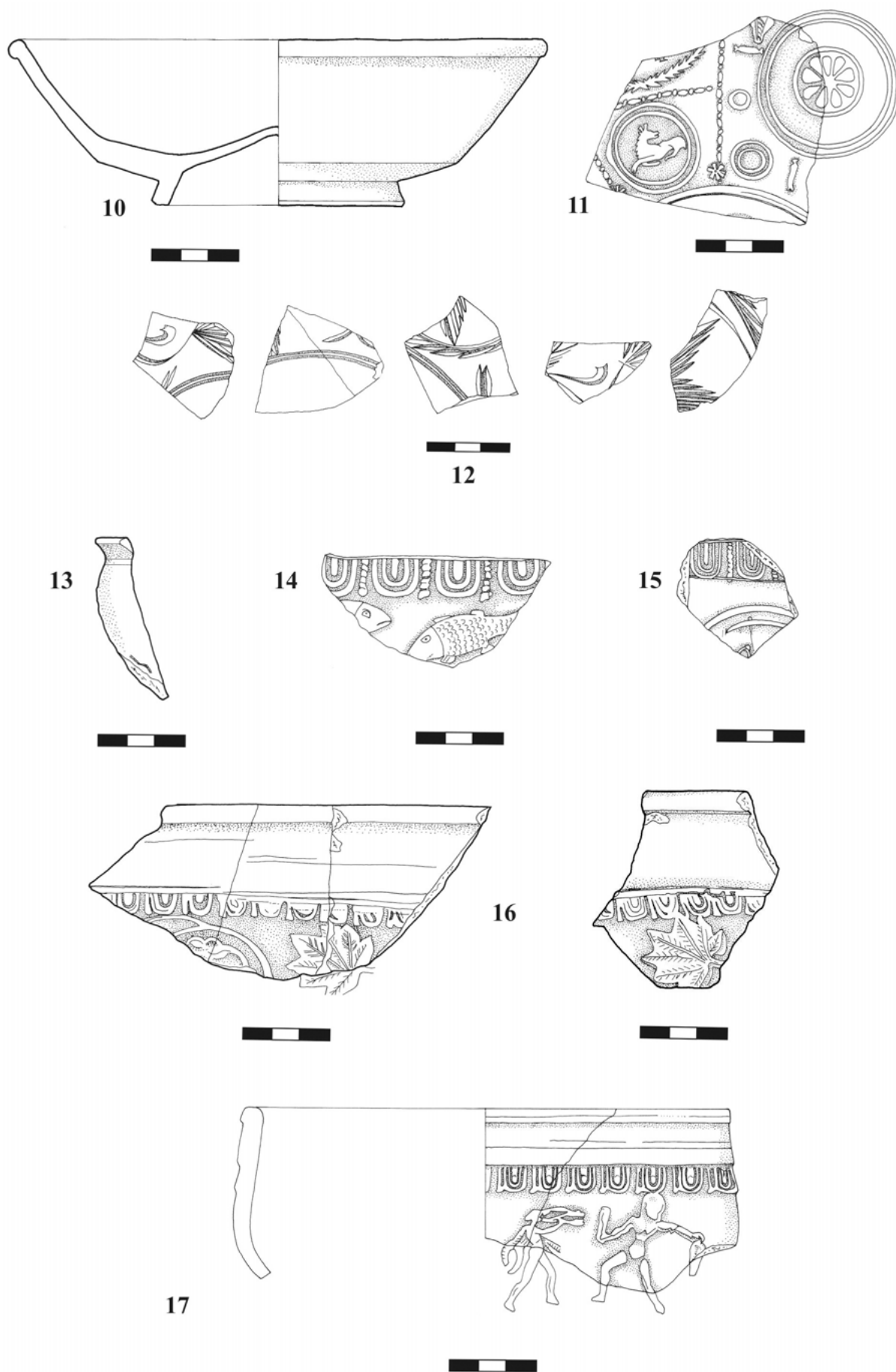


Fig. 4. Roman fort at *Micia*. 10–11 Terra sigillata from Lezoux; 12–14.16–17 Terra sigillata from Rheinzabern; 15 Terra sigillata from Westerndorf.

question (Drag. 18/31), the stamp can be completed C VC [ILI M] (?) (fig. 3,5). Chronologically, the vast majority of the imports of Lezoux belong to the Antonine period.

c. Terra sigillata from eastern Gaul (figs. 4,12–14; 16–17)

The workshops of Rheinzabern are also one of the main sources of terra sigillata for the Roman fort at *Micia*, ranking second after those of Lezoux, with a total of 6 items, representing 18%. Following the analysis of the ornamentation style of the items, three styles were identified: CERIALIS V (fig. 4,14), MAMMILIANVS (fig. 4,16), and REGINVS II (fig. 4,17). Standing out among the items from Rheinzabern are two fragmented cups type Désch. 72, decorated with the cut glass technique (figs. 4,12–13). The imports from Rheinzabern were manufactured between the second half of the 2nd and the early 3rd century.

d. Terra sigillata of Noricum (figs. 4,15)

The workshops in Westerdorf arising after the Marcomannic wars are underrepresented in the Roman fort at *Micia*, comprising two items, representing 1.7% of all the discoveries in the fort. One of the items is manufactured in the style of COMITIALIS, one of the three leading craftsmen in Westerdorf and is dated between 200 and 250.

e. Local terra sigillata (figs. 5,18–20)

In the collection of terra sigillata found in the Roman fort at *Micia* and preserved in the National History Museum of Romania a small group consisting of four fragments was produced in the local workshops of Upper Dacia, possibly in the workshops of *Micia*.

The catalogue of local terra sigillata⁹

- 1. Bowl Drag. 37** (fragment of the upper body, 9.5 × 7.5 cm). *Micia* 1977, Roman fort, S III, square 45, d = 1.00 m. Reddish yellow fine clay (Munsell 5YR 6/6)¹⁰. Red varnish (Munsell 10R 4/6) partially preserved. 1. Simple ovules, without rodlet. 2. Rhinoceros to the left. 3. Horse to the left. 4. Lion to the right (head, part of the body and the upper limbs are preserved). 5. Lion to the right (only the lower limbs and the tail are preserved). Inventory no. MNIR 131728 (fig. 5,18). – Bibliography: ISAC 1985, 185 no. cat. 649 pl. 75,649; ISAC 2000 Abb. 4,6.
- 2. Bowl Drag. 37** (fragmentary, two body fragments, 11.3 × 7.2 cm). *Micia* 1979, Roman fort, S XVI, square 3, bottom of the ditch. Red fine clay (Munsell 2.5YR 6/8). Red varnish (Munsell 2.5YR 5/8), partially preserved. 1. Partially preserved rosette. 2. Partially preserved lion to the left. 3. String of split, stylized leaves. 4. String of stylized leaves. The decorated register is bordered in the

lower part of the vessel by a circular, cut nervure. Inventory no. 357607 (fig. 5,19). – Unpublished

- 3. Bowl Drag. 37** (fragment of the body, 7.4 × 3 cm). *Micia* 1976, Roman fort, S I, square 1, d = 1.50 m. Red fine clay (Munsell 2.5YR 6/8). Partially preserved yellowish red varnish (Munsell 5YR 5/6). Circular medallion, with nervures. A protuberance in the centre. Imitation in the style of Reginus II from Rheinzabern. Inventory no. 357580 (fig. 5,20). – Unpublished

Conclusions

The fact that the terra sigillata discovered at *Micia* is preserved in the collections of three Romanian museums – National History Museum of Romania (MNIR), National History Museum of Transylvania Cluj-Napoca (MNIT), Museum of Dacian and Roman Civilization, Deva (MCDR) – gives our conclusions a provisional nature. In the collections of the MCDR there are 18 terra sigillata vessels, discovered on the archaeological site at Vețel, originating especially from the Roman fort¹¹, while two other items are in the inventory of the MNIT¹². Following an analysis of the 20 items made in a doctoral thesis in 1985, Dan Isac reached the conclusion that five of them represent products of local potteries. Thus, the number of local terra sigillata vessels at *Micia* amounts so far to eight.

Following the analysis of the three items regarded by us as local products, it can be noticed that, in terms of ornamentation and stylistic opulence, they are not inferior to the Western products. The manufacturing and the ornamentation technique is identical to that used in the western workshops. The decoration has a touch of originality both in terms of zoomorphic motifs and vegetable motifs. Regarding the clays they are made of, the varnish and the firing technique, they clearly differ from the products of the Western workshops. The local craftsmen failed in obtaining a good paste and especially a quality varnish. As a matter of fact, the red glaze is the main feature of the imported terra sigillata. In most cases, the red engobe of the local wares is not durable, probably due to having been fired in technically low performance pits. The slip of the local terra sigillata analysed in this study is partially or even totally damaged. Another particular aspect of the local products is their. And this feature clearly differentiates the local products from the imported ones.

Based on the discovery of terra sigillata moulds and potter's tools combined in some cases with certain pottery workshop features (firing pits, clay extraction pits, clay processing basins), it has been possible to identify 12 terra sigillata production centers in Roman *Dacia*: *Apulum*¹³, *Ampelum*¹⁴, *Alburnus*

¹¹ ISAC 1985, 100–101; 111; 119; 124; 127; 132; 147; 164; 170–171; 176; 177; 178; 184–185 cat. no. 38; 46; 100; 157; 183; 206; 247; 352; 496; 550; 580; 585; 592; 648; 650–653 pl. 4,38; 5,46; 12,100; 18,157; 22,183; 24,206; 27,247; 37,352a–c; 54,496; 64,550; 65,580; 66,585; 592; 75,648; 51–52; 76,53.

¹² ISAC 1985, 142; 144 cat. no. 319; 327 pl. 34,319; 35,327.

¹³ ISAC/RUSU/BĂLUȚĂ 1979, 228–229; 237–239; 258–259 cat. no. 65–78 fig. 1–3 pl. 6,66; 9,65; 10,67–77; 11,78; RUSU-BOLINDEȚ 2014, 160 (workshop, three moulds, hallmarks, 12 fragments of local terra sigillata vessels).

¹⁴ ISAC 1985, 77; 180 cat. no. 605 pl. 69/605 (small-scale fragment of a mould).

⁹ Abbreviations: S = trench; d = depth.

¹⁰ For determining the colours of the pastes we used MUNSELL 1994.

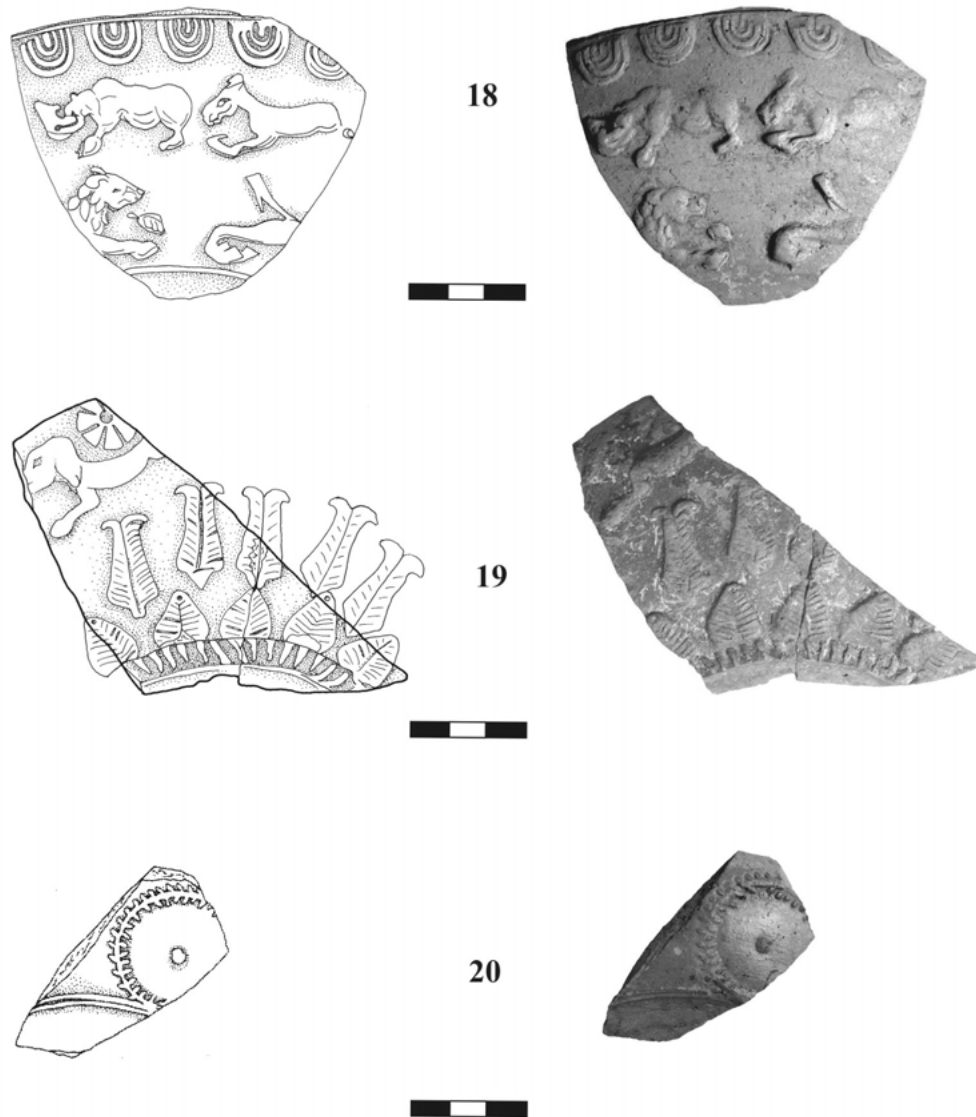


Fig. 5. Roman fort at *Micia*. 18–20 Local sigillata.

*Maior*¹⁵, Războieni-Cetate¹⁶, Micăsasa¹⁷, Cristești¹⁸, *Tibiscum*¹⁹ in Upper Dacia, *Porolissum*²⁰ and *Potaissa*²¹ in *Dacia Porolissensis*, respectively *Romula*²², *Sucidava*²³, *Acidava-Enoșești*²⁴ in Lower Dacia.

Although the settlement at *Micia* is known in the archaeological literature as one of the centres of pottery production²⁵,

this fact being confirmed by the discovery of two moulds (the upper valve of a lamp mould and the lower valve from a statuette mould)²⁶, the specific elements to identify terra sigillata workshop were missing, namely moulds and poinçons (*sigilla*). Although no mould was discovered following the archaeological research at *Micia*, there are indications of the existence of a terra sigillata workshop. There are the eight fragments assigned to the local workshops and the National History Museum of Romania holds a rich collection of stamped pottery, still unpublished, originating from the Roman fort at *Micia*. Some decorative elements of the stamped pottery from *Micia* (vegetal decorations) are identical to those on the terra sigillata fragments analyzed in this study.²⁷

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¹⁵ PESCARU ET AL. 2003, 125 fig. 8,3; 9,3-4; 10,1-2 (two fragments of a mould); ZIRRA ET AL. 2005, 292 (a local terra sigillata jug).

¹⁶ RUSU-BOLINDEȚ 2014, 164 (mould).

¹⁷ ISAC 1985, 71-73 (workshops, moulds, hallmarks, local terra sigillata).

¹⁸ MAN 2011, 73-89 (workshops, eight moulds, hallmarks, local terra sigillata).

¹⁹ ISAC 1981, 116-118; 121 cat. no. 19-20 pl. 4,19-20 (one fragment of a mould and one fragment of a local terra sigillata vessel).

²⁰ ISAC/GUDEA 1980, 196; 201 cat. no. 44-45 pl. 6,45 fig. 3,44 (fragmentary mould and local terra sigillata).

²¹ RUSU-BOLINDEȚ 2014, 164 fig. 9,3 (mould).

²² ISAC 1985, 78-80; 180; 186-188 cat. no. 606; 609-610; 666; 668-669; 672; 674-676; 678-682; 685-688; 690-691; 693; 697 pl. 69,606; 70,609-610; 77,666; 78/668-669,672,674-676; 79,678-682; 80,685-688,690-691; 81,693,697 (workshops, moulds, hallmarks, local terra sigillata).

²³ ISAC 1985, 180 cat. no. 607 pl. 69/607 (mould fragment).

²⁴ POPILIAN/CIUCĂ 1992, 19-26 fig. 1,1-2; 2,1-2 (two fragmentary moulds).

²⁵ FLOCA/FERENCZI/MĂRGHITAN 1970.

²⁶ The objects are novel and in the collections of the National History Museum of Romania, Bucharest.

²⁷ We are grateful to Alexandra Decu who translated this paper.

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