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## RELIEF TERRA SIGILLATA FROM *CIBALAE* (VINKOVCI, NORTH-EASTERN CROATIA)

Roman *Cibale* (present-day Vinkovci) is situated in the north-eastern part of Croatia. During the Roman period this area belonged to the south-eastern part of the province of Pannonia. It seems that the geographical position of *Cibale* was crucial for its expansion and for the development of its strategic and economic importance. *Cibale* was founded on the river Bosut, a relatively small affluent of the Sava River, in the region surrounded by the rivers Sava, Drava and Danube. All of the major transport through this region was most probably carried out by those rivers. The town of Vinkovci is situated on a narrow elevation between the Požega Mountains on the west side and Fruška Mountain on the east (**fig. 1**). An essential feature for the understanding of the importance of the area in question throughout antiquity is the fact that the regions south and north of the mentioned elevation were swamps covered with dense oak forests. The elevation was therefore a kind of an isthmus through those swamps, providing a safe communication during the season of floods. Owing to that, the location of the town of *Cibale* was a densely inhabited spot since the beginning of the Neolithic and throughout all prehistoric periods. Before the final Roman occupation which occurred in the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, the area of Vinkovci was occupied by a large Celtic settlement. Upon the arrival of the Romans Romanizing procedures were introduced on all levels, turning *Cibale* into a typical Roman town.<sup>1</sup>

In the beginning, the new Roman settlement was part of a broader *civitas peregrina Cornacatum* with the center at *Cornacum* on the Danube. In the time of the emperor Hadrian, *Cibale* gained autonomy and municipal status. During the ascendancy of the Severi, the town was raised to the status of a colony, which instigated its considerable prosperity. A restoration and revival of the city in the time of Constantine and his descendants has been archaeologically proved. The renaissance lasted until the 370s and the arrival of the Huns and Goths, when the city fell into a final decline.<sup>2</sup>

After the foundation of the Town Museum in the 1950s, modern archaeological methods and obligatory rescue excavations were introduced in Vinkovci. Both data and material increased rapidly, due to the fact that the present-day town center, which went through extensive building activity, coincides with the Roman town.<sup>3</sup>

Requirements for a thorough revision of the museum depot and a re-examination of all the archaeological material

were met through a renewal of the Museum and an increased number of its staff, which was instigated by damage caused by bombing during the war in 1991 and 1992. In the course of these activities terra sigillata was separated from the rest of the pottery, enabling thus its examination.

The Museum possesses almost two thousand fragments of terra sigillata. It is hard to estimate their exact number before the revision is completed, so the present total of 1,862 pieces is liable to an increase. A little over 30 per cent of this material is relief-decorated sigillata, numbering 544 pieces. The rest of it is plain sigillata. It is still under examination, and is therefore not included in the present discussion.

The structure of the Vinkovci collection shows a composition similar to the majority of sites in *Pannonia* (**fig. 2**). As is typical for the Danube market, finds of terra sigillata can be divided in three successive periods of importation: (1) before and during the Marcomannic wars; (2) from the end of the Marcomannic wars to the time of the Severan emperors; (3) the final Severan and post-Severan period.<sup>4</sup>

The earliest pieces can be dated to the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Unexpectedly, no earlier relief-decorated pieces from North Italy or South Gaul were found. This is very peculiar for the region in question, especially given that *Cibale* gained some local importance and a presumed prosperity since the time of Hadrian, and was therefore supposed to yield such material.

Relief-decorated terra sigillata found within the parameter of *Cibale* can be therefore divided in two periods: (1) from the time of the Antonines, comprising finds imported from Central and Eastern Gaul, as well as those produced locally in *Pannonia* and *Moesia*; (2) after the end of the Marcomannic wars, containing exclusively terra sigillata from Rheinzabern, Westerndorf and Pfaffenhofen (**fig. 3**).

The Rheinzabern production center was the main supplier of terra sigillata for all Danube provinces. Thanks to its massive and long-lasting production, Rheinzabern products are common on the majority of sites in *Pannonia*.<sup>5</sup> *Cibale* is not an exception, as 53 per cent of all relief-decorated sigillata found there is of Rheinzabern origin. Clearly,

<sup>1</sup> DIMITRIJEVIĆ 1979,

<sup>2</sup> MÓCSY 1974, 136–139.

<sup>3</sup> ISKRA-JANOŠIĆ 2001, 65–104.

<sup>4</sup> GABLER 2002, 72–73.

<sup>5</sup> BERNHARD 1981, 88–90; GABLER 2002, 73.

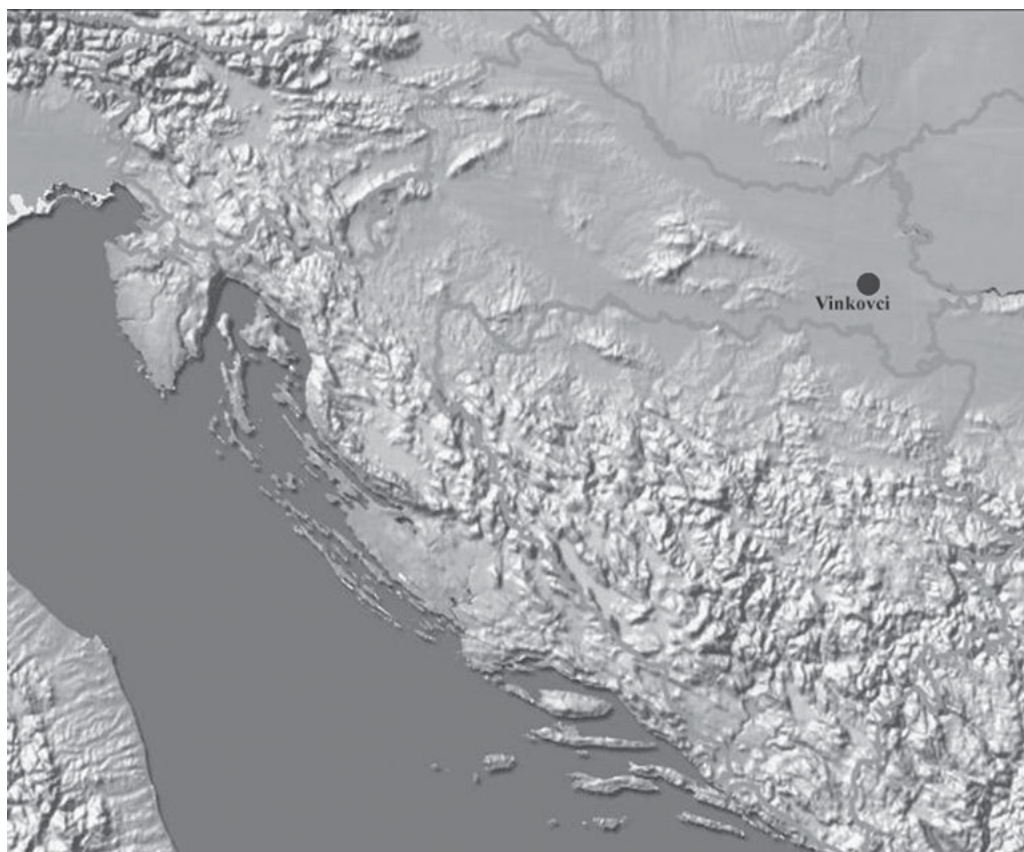


Fig. 1. Location of Vinkovci.

Rheinzabern is the only production center whose ware was found in *Cibalae* during the entire period of terra sigillata importation.

To the fragments of the early period of Rheinzabern production in *Cibalae*, 77 pieces of Central Gaulish production can be added. Of these, 36 (46%) can be attributed to a specific workshop or potter. Of the assigned pieces, 14 fragments (38%) can be assigned to *Cinnamus*, 5 pieces (12%) to *Paternus II*, while *Doiccus* and *Diuxtus* are each represented by three fragments. *Libertus* is represented by two fragments, while *Advocisus*, *Arcanus*, *Caletus*, *Censorius*, *Iullinus*, *Mercator II*, *Servum I & II* and *Sissus II* are each represented by one fragment.

Relief-decorated pieces of Central Gaulish Sigillata<sup>6</sup> found in Vinkovci can be dated to the period between the 140s and the 190s. By acknowledging the fact that the majority of those fragments originates from the workshops of *Cinnamus*, *Paternus II* and *Doiccus* who were not active before 160, it can be concluded that organized importation from Central Gaul was not established before the beginning of the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, and that it lasted until the outbreak of the Marcomannic wars.

Also, 10 fragments and one completely preserved bowl made in the Eastern Gaulish workshop of Ittenweiler can be dated to the third quarter of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. All this ware was made by *Cibisus* (fig. 4), except for one piece which can be attributed to *Verecundus*<sup>7</sup>.

Out of 304 fragments of Rheinzabern decorated sigillata pieces (fig. 5), only 50 per cent is attributable to individual

potters.<sup>8</sup> For the rest of them it is either completely impossible to determine the origin or else several possible manufacturers come equally into consideration. Using systems of grouping individual potters, which again can be used for the chronological division of material and potters, it was possible to attribute the fragments which were unclassifiable according to the producer into Bernhard's groups<sup>9</sup>, resulting in the decrease of the unclassified material to 30 per cent.

**Bernhard group I a**, which refers to the earliest phases of production at Rheinzabern, is represented in *Cibalae* by 24+1 fragments (8%), with the biggest portion ascribed to *Reginus I*. The beginning of group I b, dated from around the 170s till the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, is represented by 42 pieces, showing a rise of the Rheinzabern importation.

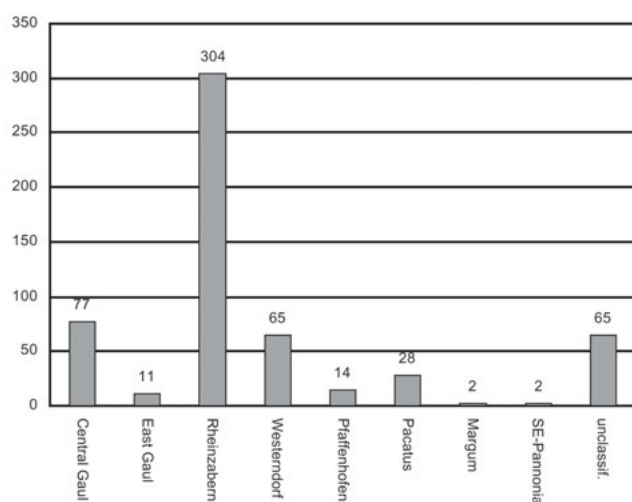
Bernhard group II, and especially II a, is the most numerous group in *Pannonia*, *Cibalae* included, with a portion of 29 per cent of all Rheinzabern sigillata. The potters of this group were probably active in the period of the Severi, economically the most prosperous period of the city. This favourable situation was further reflected in an abundant importation of sigillata. Subgroup of II b is relatively rare in *Pannonia*, while subgroup II c is more widespread. In *Cibalae*, however, both of these subgroups are represented by only 2 per cent (II b) and 3 per cent (II c) respectively of

<sup>6</sup> See CGP.

<sup>7</sup> DEMAROLLE 1986, 175; KUZMOVA 2005, 53–57.

<sup>8</sup> See RICKEN/FISCHER 1963.

<sup>9</sup> BERNHARD 1981.



**Fig. 2.** Sources of the decorated terra sigillata from the area of Vinkovci.

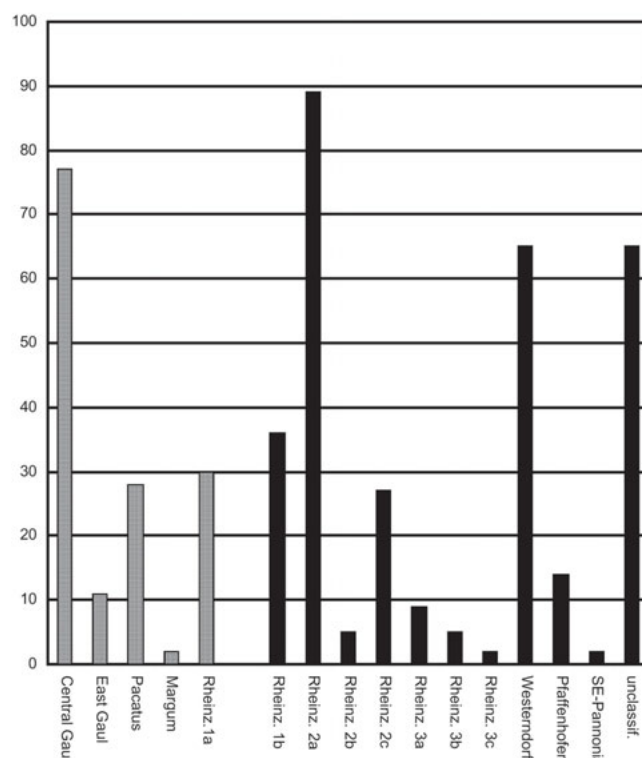
the total Rheinzabern ware. Although absolute chronologies for these two subgroups differ, arguably they can both be dated broadly to the first two decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

Bernhard group III represents the production of Rheinzabern from 210/220 until the Alamannic catastrophe. 35 fragments (around 12 per cent of all Rheinzabern ware) of sigillata found in Vinkovci stem from the 210/220s.

The first period of importation is characterized also by the use of local Pannonian and Moesian products. Although opinions about chronologies of local workshops differ<sup>10</sup>, the activity of workshops in *Aquincum*, *Viminacium*/*Margum* and elsewhere in the Danube provinces most probably can be dated in the time 120–180. For local workshops it was possible, in that period, to endure on the market, but after the Marcomannic wars, local production ceased to exist because of the massive importation from Rheinzabern and Westendorf.<sup>11</sup>

The most numerous of all local products, with 28 pieces assigned to *Pacatus*, are those of the *Aquincum* workshop. Although one fragment can be assigned to the “First Master”, the majority of the fragments is connected to the first period of *Pacatus*’ production. There are no concrete dates for these periods, but the period between 160 and 180 is the most probable, while the products of the first phase of *Pacatus*’ workshop found in *Cibale* can be dated to the beginning of the 170s<sup>12</sup> (fig. 6).

Geographically, the closest workshop of terra sigillata is that of *Viminacium*/*Margum*. Although opinions of the date and duration of this workshop differ, it is presumed that the production was operational from the 120s to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The peak of production was in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, in which time *Viminacium*/*Margum* ware was distributed over a large area of *Moesia* and *Pannonia*.<sup>13</sup> Only two fragments of sigillata from the Vinkovci Museum can be connected with the workshop of *Viminacium*/*Margum*. This is odd, given that a much larger quantity of these products was found in *Siscia*<sup>14</sup>, relatively distant from *Viminacium* in comparison with *Cibale*.



**Fig. 3.** Sources of the decorated terra sigillata from the area of Vinkovci divided into two groups of importation; before and after the Marcomannic wars.

Although the recent excavations did not yield concrete evidence for the existence of local production, two fragments found in the territory of *Cibale* imply the possibility of local production of terra sigillata. This ware is quite distinctive by the very pale color of its slip and a very rough style. The quality of production is low, but these fragments stand out for their elaborate ornament, especially one called *Ulix*. It probably features a scene from the *Odyssey*, i.e., the fight between Ulysses and the Cyclops. Within this scene an inscription ULIX is incised, but it is not known if this is part of the decoration or the mark of the producer. Similar fragments have been found in *Sopianae*<sup>15</sup>, *Mursa*, *Sirmium* and in other sites surrounding these cities, which led Olga Brukner to the conclusion that this ware was produced in the region between *Mursa*, *Cibale* and *Sigidunum*, that is, in south-east *Pannonia*<sup>16</sup>. A recent major rescue excavation showed a large pottery quarter within the city walls of *Cibale*, possibly the production site of the group in question. Dating is based on the finds from *Sirmium* and *Sopianae*, which in these cities came from the layers dated to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>10</sup> NAGY 1945, 305–338. – RUTKOWSKI 1968, 21.

<sup>11</sup> BJELAJAC 1990, 147.

<sup>12</sup> KISS 1938, 212, 227.

<sup>13</sup> BJELAJAC 1990, 145–147; 174.

<sup>14</sup> MAKJANIĆ 1995, 73.

<sup>15</sup> GABLER 1982, 326.

<sup>16</sup> BRUKNER 1981, 25–26.

<sup>17</sup> MAKJANIĆ 1995, 74. – BRUKNER 1981, 26. – GABLER 1982, 326.

The second stage of the importation of sigillata in *Cibalae* started with the normalization of the political and economic situation on the Danube, due to which the influx of Westerndorf sigillata become visible. The importation of terra sigillata from this production center can be dated to between 175 and 233/244.<sup>18</sup> Until now, the excavations in Vinkovci have yielded 73 Westerndorf pieces. One completely preserved bowl and 34 fragments were produced in the workshop of *Comitalis*; 8 pieces were produced by *Comitalis* himself, as can be hypothesized from the absence of characteristic stamps of the tenant artisans, 8 of them were done by Decminus, 6 by *Erotus* and 2 by *Lupus*. The number of *Helenius*' pieces is 28, while the number of *Onniorix* pieces is relatively low (4), as is expected given the late date of this workshop. From the workshops of Pfaffenhofen 14 relief-decorated pieces have been found, out of which 11 are made by *Helenius* and 3 by *Dicanus*.

The main task of my work is to discuss the organization of the supply of sigillata ware in *Cibalae*. Although the material from Rheinzabern is a key to understand the influx of sigillata from the West, the Westerndorf sigillata seemed more appropriate material to start with for several reasons: it was distributed within a short period of time; the structure of its production was fairly simple and therefore easily comprehensible; good references to this material are available, contrary to the Rheinzabern workshops.

While consulting the literature on the field of terra sigillata, it seemed to me that the accent was placed heavily on questions concerning the organization of production and the issues of workshops, i.e. production centers. Apart from D. Gabler's works, very little could be found on the methods of observing and evaluating sigillata recovered from sites other than workshop areas, that is, from settlements as places of consumption rather than of production. Thanks to discussions of the Westerndorf material by Dénes Gabler, it was possible to find parallels to the material from Vinkovci.<sup>19</sup>

Dénes Gabler was able to establish that Westerndorf sigillata was not evenly distributed, as he noticed certain differences between regions to which this ware was exported. He further postulated that among the Westerndorf ware in the area of Noricum, products of *Comitalis* dominated. At the sites in western Pannonia, products of *Comitalis* and of *Helenius* are represented equally, while in eastern Pannonia and Barbaricum the ware of *Helenius* outnumbers that of *Comitalis*. An uneven distribution of *Onniorix*' production in Pannonia can also be noticed, with rare frequencies in its western part and larger quantities (10–12% of the total of Westerndorf sigillata finds) in the eastern portion.<sup>20</sup>

The workshop of *Onniorix* is represented in *Cibalae* by only 4 pieces (3% of overall Westerndorf material), which is not typical for the rest of eastern Pannonia. The ratio of products of *Comitalis* to those of *Helenius* is 34 : 28.

These proportions in *Cibalae* as given above are not typical for the rest of Pannonia. On the other hand, Lj. Bjelajac attained similar results for Upper Moesia. She mostly studied sigillata from the cities of *Singidunum* and *Viminacium*, where the proportions were 104:85 in favour of *Comitalis*. A very low percentage of *Onniorix*'s products is distinctive for both Upper Moesia and *Cibalae*.<sup>21</sup>

Based on these results, however, a possibility for the existence of a fourth area of distribution of Westerndorf ware appears, covering Upper Moesia and southeast Pannonia. This hypothesis corresponds with the suggestion of a distribution centre in *Singidunum*, put forward by B. Rutkowski. It was hypothesized that merchandise was transported from *Singidunum* up the Danube to *Siscia* and *Cibalae*, downstream to *Viminacium*, as well as across the river to Barbaricum.<sup>22</sup> Present results imply that the Westerndorf exportation to the region in question was strongest in the first period of production, during the activity of *Comitalis*' workshop. Later, in the time of *Helenius* and *Onniorix*, Westerndorf exports diminished, most probably in favour of a re-established presence of Rheinzabern exports.

As long as there is no data from the most important cities in the region – *Mursa*, *Sirmium* and *Sopianae* to confirm or conflict with these assumptions, it is not possible to draw any further conclusions. Hopefully, comparative data will soon be available at least for *Mursa*.

When similar distribution analysis was applied to the entire material the results were not satisfactory. When compared with results from *Moesia*<sup>23</sup> and *Aquincum*<sup>24</sup>, the importation of samian ware to *Cibalae* seems completely different from that to the rest of the region. The paucity of material from the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, especially the absence of South Gaulish terra sigillata, is highly unusual.

An evaluation of the Vinkovci material is limited by its questionable scientific basis. The entire terra sigillata collection of the Museum was formed during the past 5 decades, the majority of pieces having been gathered from various large rescue excavations. Those excavations were undertaken in difficult conditions in the parts of the modern town where the strata were greatly disturbed by construction works. Given these facts, it is necessary to question the reliability of conclusions about life in *Cibalae* based on data from these excavations only.

Although the evidence presented in this paper is insufficient for any final conclusions to be drawn about the importation of terra sigillata to *Cibalae*, some of my hypotheses can hopefully be used as a starting point in future work on the new material from *Cibalae* and neighbouring *Mursa*. With anticipated further research it will hopefully be possible to further clarify the questions regarding the production and importation of sigillata in the broader south-east Pannonian region.

<sup>18</sup> GABLER/KELLNER 1993, 266–267.

<sup>19</sup> GABLER 1983. – GABLER/KELLNER 1993, 270.

<sup>20</sup> GABLER 1983, 354–355.

<sup>21</sup> BJELAJAC 1990, 77–79.

<sup>22</sup> RUTKOWSKI 1967, 63.

<sup>23</sup> BJELAJAC 1990. – DIMITROVA-MILČEVA 2000.

<sup>24</sup> GABLER 1976.



**Fig. 4.** Vinkovci: a bowl by *Cibisus* of Ittenweiler.



**Fig. 5.** Vinkovci: Rheinzabern ware.



**Fig. 6.** Vinkovci: a cup by *Pacatus* of Aquincum.



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