

The CORTISIBRA and CIB stamps from castellum Trimammium (Abstract)

Sergey Torbatov

The analysis of the building ceramics from the castellum Trimammium has produced three consistent groups of Roman stamped bricks and roof tiles. One group that bears the signs of different types and variant of legio I Italica was already published. The other two groups, with the stamps CORTISIBRA and CIB, are presented here.

The CORTISIBRA group is the most numerous from the site. It includes two complete bricks, one fragmented but restorable tegula, and 32 fragments of bricks, tegulae, and imbrices.

The identical content of the text on the CORTISIBRA stamps, known so far from Trimammium, supports their identification as a single type. However, some differences in the shaping of the text field and some palaeographic specifics allow for distinguishing at least four types. The lack of palaeographic clues means that the dating of the stamps should rely entirely on stratigraphic data.

The fragments from building ceramics Nos. 3-4, 9, 13-14, and 32 are found in secondary layers and cannot be further discussed. The rest are from structures and clear contexts, dated to the third century AD: a collapsed roof construction in Sq. IB that belongs to a still unidentified building; the fill of ritual pits Nos. 1, 3, and 5; a collapsed roof in the central room of Building B; the blocking of the southern entrance of the partywall between the central and the eastern rooms of Building B; a hypocaust in the eastern room of Building B; and the fill of the hypocaust in the eastern room of Building B. The fact that these structures contain both bricks and tiles securely dated by stamps of legio I Italica significantly helps the chronological attribution of the CORTISIBRA stamps.

The construction of Building B is dated to the reign of the Severan Dynasty, at latest in the first decades of the third century AD (the collapsed roof construction in the central room belongs to the initial building). The as yet unidentified building, whose collapsed roof was found in Sq. IB, was constructed at the same time. Building B underwent a serious reorganization sometime in the 3rd c. AD, after some kind of disaster. The reconstruction included blocking of one of the internal entrances, the construction of a hypocaust in the eastern room and a significant raise of the floor level. Building B ceased to function in the last quarter of the 3rd c. AD, at latest. After that, the remains of the hypocaust were filled with compact yellow soil (*terminus post quem* AD 282-283). Pit No. 1 is generally dated to the first half of the 3rd c. AD, if not earlier. Pits Nos. 3 and 5 are dated to the last quarter of the 3rd c. AD.

The signed building ceramics from both the fill of the hypocaust in Building B and the fill of the ritual pits has no chronological value, since there are materials of wide date within the 3rd c. AD.

Production with a CORTISIBRA stamps was used for both the construction and the reconstruction of Building B. This suggests a sustainable production of a brick-workshop for at least several decades in the 3rd c. AD, pointing to a lasting presence in Trimammium of the military unit to which the workshop was affiliated.

It is not difficult to decode the abbreviation in the beginning of the inscription on the stamps t: CORTISI = C(oh)ortis I. Obviously it means a named cohort that was common for other detachments of the same category, which has led to the introduction of a number, in this case: I (prima). More problematic is

the deciphering of the text coded in the last three letters: BRA.

In all publications so far, the auxiliary group with the CORTISIBRA stamps from Trimammium was identified as cohors I Bracaraugustanorum. In fact, it is a different cohort – cohors I Bracarorum civium Romanorum. A detailed discussion of the available data, the nature and the difference between the often wrongly equated cohors I Bracaraugustanorum and cohors I Bracarorum is offered in this paper.

The numerous finds of building ceramics with stamps of cohors I Bracarorum in Trimammium undoubtedly suggest that, at the time of the Severan Dynasty, but also later in the 3rd c. AD, there was a base camp of that cohort. Therefore, cohors I Bracarorum was a subordinate to legio I Italica, whose boundary in 2nd-3rd c. AD was initially from the mouth of the Olt and castellum Dimum to Tegra (included). The arguments put forward suggest that part of the cohort, including at least the Bican centuria as suggested by the gravestone of Marcus Mecilius, was sent to Chersonesos, most probably in the second part of the 2nd c. AD. Another interesting and hardly coincidental fact is that the name of the cohort which is inscribed on the gravestone of Marcus Mecilius has the abbreviation BRA – exactly as on the stamps from Trimammium.

On these grounds, the inscription CORTISIBRA should be read in the following manner: C(oh)ortis I Bra(carorum).

The second group of stamps from Trimammium, CIB, is so far found on just six tegulae. The stamps are identical and

belong to a single type that features some peculiarities. The shape of the text field is unique. It is in the shape of an impression of a soldier's boot (*planta caligaris*), the front part of which depicts in relief the five toes. In terms of the chronology of the stamps, the shape of the boot, whose front part is blunt, is important. The depictions of caligae of this type known so far date from the end of the 2nd c. AD onward.

In contrast to the CORTISIBRA group, decoding of the CIB stamps from Trimammium is very difficult and cannot be solved without ambiguity.

CIB stamps have not been found so far along the Lower Danube limes and its hinterland, but such are known from areas to the north of the river. They come from two sites distant from each other, located in the provinces of Lower Dacia and Dacia Porolissensis – the castella near Slăveni and Căței, the latter having been identified as the ancient Samum.

For the entire period, from the reign of Hadrian to the reforms of Diocletian, the Lower Moesian garrison consisted, as it is presently known, of only one cohort – cohors I Bracarorum that could have used the abbreviation CIB to mark its ceramic production. Hypothetically, the stamps from Trimammium could be linked to a short stay of a building vexillatio of some of the cohorts that were camping to the north of Danube (cohors I Augusta Nervia Pacensis Brittonum milliaria or cohors I F M Bryttonum Malvensis). This, however, is not very likely, since such inter-provincial exchange is not known in the Roman Empire.

The other interpretation possibility is that the CIB stamps from Trimammium are the product of a private manufacturer.