

ACTA CLASSICA UNIV. SCIENT. DEBRECEN.	LII.	2016.	pp. 63–68.
--	------	-------	------------

**THE CUP OF GAIUS VALERIUS VERDVLLVS FOUND AT
ARCOBRIGA (MONREAL DE ARIZA, ZARAGOZA)**

BY GIULIA BARATTA*

Abstract: In this paper I present two fragments from a fine walled ceramic vase found in *Arcobriga* that are part of the production of *Gaius Valerius Verdullus*, and I advance some views regarding the restoration of the epigraphic text that characterizes it.

Keywords: *Gaius Valerius Verdullus*, *Arcobriga*, thin walled ware, Roman archaeology, Roman history.

During the excavation campaigns conducted by Enrique de Aguilera y Gamboa, the 17th Marquis of Cerralbo¹ in the first decade of the last Century in *Arcobriga*², in the municipality of Monreal de Ariza (Zaragoza), two mating pieces from a fine walled vase that are part of *Gaius Valerius Verdullus*' production came to light, although unfortunately the exact archaeological finding context remains unknown³.

Both fragments (*figs. 1-5*) pertain to the bottom of the vase and to a portion of its body. It is a fine walled small drinking cup of a type that has a certain

* Università di Macerata, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici. This work was made possible thanks to the program “beques de recerca per a professors investigadors/es visitants a Catalunya 2009 (PIV-DGR) funded by Generalitat de Catalunya” and was carried out within the research program FFI2015-68571-P.

¹ The Marquis of Cerralbo (Madrid 1845-1922) was a passionate archaeologist who made several excavations and to whom we owe many publications. About the Marquis and his works see Díaz Andreu – Mora Rodríguez – Cortadella Morral 2009, 63-66 and specifically for the excavations at *Arcobriga* cfr. Jiménez Sanz 2008, 211-221 and Lorrio Alvarado 2010, 187-212.

² About *Arcobriga* see Beltrán Lloris 1987; Caballero Casado 2003, 26-29; Gonzalo 2003-2004, 353-367; Lorrio – Sánchez 2009.

³ Sánchez Sánchez 1987, 58; Mínguez Morales 1989, 184, nr. 11 e 186; Sánchez 1992, 147; Sáenz Preciado 1993, 642; Gil Zubillaga 1995, 160; Gil Zubillaga 1997, 443, nr. 11. The piece is currently preserved at Museo Arquelógico Nacional de Madrid inv. Nr. 0/27/ARC/1118. I take this opportunity to thank the curator María Ángeles Castellano Hernández for allowing me to access and study of the two fragments.

affinity with the shape Mayet XXXIII⁴, characterized by a beige *impasto* and by a brown slip coating, with a metallic sheen and an internal sand blasting (fig. 6). The flat foot (diam. 3.3 cm) not taller than 2 mm followed by a band is framed between two rows of beads, and decorated with flowers, each having a central button and six lanceolate petals that are arranged alternately on two registers. On the bigger fragment, the only one bearing an inscription, is still partially preserved the signature of the potter, among the flowers (fig. 7a-b):

G(aius) VAL(erius) VERDV[llus pi]ngit
Sáenz Preciado 1993: +CIT

As usual, in this production the epigraphic texts are written freehanded directly on the matrix before firing with an object that has a slightly rounded tip, and the words are separated by a point⁵. The name of the potter, as in all his production, presents the *praenomen* abbreviated with a single letter G followed by the abbreviation of the first three letters of the *nomen* VAL in ligature and the full *cognomen* *Verdullus* accompanied by the verb *pingit*, which identifies him as the author of the decorative project for the vase. In this instance it should be noted that only the G, in particular that of the verbal element, is poorly shaped and almost deprived of the vertical rod⁶.

On the second level that follows the one with the flowers, also squarely fit within a row of beads, runs a second epigraph of which unfortunately only two fragments remain (fig. 8a-b)⁷:

---]TIS[---]SATV[---
Sánchez Sánchez 1987; Mínguez Morales 1989, Sánchez 1992, Sáenz Preciado 1993; Gil Zubillaga 1995; Gil Zubillaga 1997 = IS

As indicated, the spaces before SATV and after TIS respectively, concern the final part and the initial one of two words difficult to integrate, and for which it is not possible to establish the exact location within a most extended epigraphic text that is almost completely lost. The circumference of the cup, and therefore the maximum length of the inscription, corresponds to approximately 30 cm for a total of about 120 characters; of course the text could be shorter since it does not necessarily have to occupy all the available space.

⁴ M.A Sánchez describes it “hemisférico”, Sánchez, «Cerámica de paredes finas», *cit.*, p. 147.

⁵ In this regard, see in particular the matrix fragment with remains of inscription in Mayer i Olivé 2011, 133-136.

⁶ For examples see Mayer Olivé 1998, 187-192; Baratta 2014, 109-156.

⁷ In the transcription we have omitted the first and the last brackets: in fact it is the same gap, being the inscription circular.

Previous publishers have not proposed an integration for the word ending in TIS and have limited themselves to advancing and accepting the hypothesis of reconstituting SATV with *Saturnalia*, identifying this drinking vase and the whole series derived from the same matrix as a present destined to be offered in the well-known festivities⁸. The conjecture is obviously acceptable although there is no indication that it can be confirmed with absolute certainty, considering that the fragments that have come to us have no iconographic elements besides the flowers, which can aid in the interpretation of the vase. However, it should be noted that another set of drinking vases of the potter himself presents an unusual decoration with subjects taken from the food world that seems directly inspired by the thirteenth and fourteenth books of Martial in which literary descriptions of *xenia* and *apophoreta*, verses that accompanied the gifts offered to the guests at the *Saturnalia* and the banquets, are collected⁹.

However, the link with these festivities is less truthful when dealing with another production series by *Gaius Valerius Verdullus*, from which a fragmented specimen with gladiatorial scenes was found in Velilla de Ebro (Zaragoza), *Colonia Victrix Iulia Celsa*. On the bottom of this one we find the rest of the inscription that refers to the *munera*, probably including the indication of the date with the names of local magistrates: [- - - - -]lia · municipio · Calag(orritano o Calagorri)[- - - - -] // [G(aius) Val(erius) Verdullus pingit]. The incomplete word ending in LIA was integrated by Urbano Espinosa as *Saturnalia*¹⁰ and has therefore given rise to the identification of all these containers as gifts given on the occasion of this celebration.

The epigraphical text on the *Arcobriga* cup could be reproducing or be inspired by a passage from one of the literary writers from whom *Gaius Valerius Verdullus* himself seems, on occasions, to have drawn inspiration from. In addition to the above nominated so-called food vase, we can remember the cup with scenes of the myth of Hyppolitus inspired by verses of Seneca¹¹. We can in addition call to mind the series with gladiatorial and circus races scenes, very likely linked to Martial's *De spectaculis* and *Epigrammata*¹². For the cup in question you might think about Seneca's¹³ text *non semper Saturnalia erunt* (Apocol. 12, 2) or a simple phrase as *saturnalia dona* also seems very likely to be influenced by Martial and his many references to the *Saturnalia* (II 85, 2; IV

⁸ See above note 3.

⁹ For this series of cups and for their interpretation see Mayer 2004, 115-128.

¹⁰ Espinosa 1984, 132. For a critical edition of this piece with previous bibliography see Baratta in print.

¹¹ Mayer i Olivé 2010.

¹² Baratta in print; Baratta 2017.

¹³ Mayer i Olivé 2010, 97-108.

46, 1; IV 46, 18; IV 88, 2; V 84, 11; VI 24, 2; VII 53, 1; X 29, 1; XIV 107; XIV 77, 2; 11, 2, 5; XIV 71, 1).

Of course, SATV could also be part of the noun *satyros / satyri*, a hypothesis that would make the epigraphic text a caption of the iconographic elements, as it happens in the case of the zodiac vase¹⁴. In this case, the iconographic program would likely be inspired by the world of the satyrs, the wine and Bacchus, which does not exclude the influence of Martial over the iconographic choice, nor a link with the *saturnalia*; it would suffice thinking about epigram XIV 107 which accompanied the *calathi: nos Satyri, nos Bacchus amat, nos ebria tigris / perfusos domini lambere docta pedes*¹⁵.

However, one cannot totally exclude the possibility that SATV is part of a person's name and refers, for example, to a local magistrate within this time frame, as in the case of the vases with chariot races¹⁶. A limit to the case of onomastic reconstruction is given by the fact that, before SATV, there is a relatively wide space of two letters that would suggest either a text with very much spaced words, or SATV implied in the beginning. The *cognomen Saturninus* is used at *Calagurris* where stood a *Ilvir L. Saturninus* as shown on the coin emissions in the Tiberian reign¹⁷. However, it should be noted that even if the fragments in question are commonly attributed to the Tiberian age¹⁸, the production of *Gaius Valerius Verdullus* appears, for a number of archaeological and iconographic considerations, later and rather referring to the second half of the first century A.D. and the beginning of the second century A.D. It should therefore be thought of a descendant of the *Saturninus* attested on coins from *Calagurris* or other *Saturnini* of the area, such as *Calpurnius Saturninus*¹⁹ of Tricio, from which the only fragment of terra sigillata so far known, with the signature of *Gaius Valerius Verdullus*, a finding that has led to the hypothesis of the existence of a *figlina* of him also in *Tritium Magallum*²⁰.

On the other hand unfortunately, there are no present parallels in the production of *Gaius Valerius Verdullus* to assume, with certainty, the presence of a consular dating that cannot be excluded a priori. In the limits of the gap between TIS and SATV, and in perfect consistency with the chronology of *Gaius Valerius Verdullus*' ceramics, one could enter the names of eponymous Consuls

¹⁴ Velaza 2009, 363-373; Baratta 2014, 109-156.

¹⁵ The verses are taken from the edition of Martial's epigrams edited by Shackleton Bailey 1990, 470.

¹⁶ Baratta 2017.

¹⁷ Espinosa 1984, 97; Villaronga – Benages 2011, 587, nr. 3128.

¹⁸ Mínguez Morales 1989, 184, nr. 11 e p. 186; Sánchez 1992, 147.

¹⁹ *AE* 1975, 519; *EE* VIII 2, 151; Abásolo 1974, 68-69, nr. 73.

²⁰ Sáenz Preciado 1993, particularly p. 643, fig. 97.

of 92 A.D. [*Imp. Domitiano XVI Q. Volusius*] Satu[*rnino* ---]. This reconstruction, however, shows the limit that Domitian hold the consulate for three months before he was assassinated, a reason why one could prefer the consuls of 87 A.D. *Imp. Domitianus XIII* and *L. Volusius Saturninus* instead of the consuls of 92 A.D. While giving another value to the fragment of the word SATV, the vase could still be intended as a gift on the occasion of the *Saturnalia*.

Regarding TIS, however, it is in fact impossible to reconstruct the term that integrates this ending. Apparently, it is a genitive; we cannot exclude the possibility that it's a part of a date. In this case, only two months should be taken into consideration, either *martius* or *augustus* depending on the *idus*, *nonae* and *kalendae*. If this were the case in both stances, the drinking vase would no longer be tied to the *Saturnalia*, since these festivals were celebrated between the 17th and 23rd of December.

Whichever was the text, at the moment one can only advance with the hypotheses that it is still another original piece by *Gaius Valerius Verdullus*, where the epigraphy explains and contextualizes the decoration of the vases and their purpose. The place of discovery attests to the spreading of his production also outside Calahorra, and perhaps not so much as a result of a commercial transaction but rather in a more sporadic way, such as souvenirs or objects carried by individuals who, for various reasons, had relations with Calahorra or where they were going.

Bibliography

- Abásolo 1974 = Abásolo, J. A.: *Epigrafía romana de la región de Lara de los Infantes*. Burgos.
- Arbués Gracia 2007 = Arbués Gracia, M. J.: Sobre un vaso de paredes finas de *Gaius Valerius Verdullus* en los fondos del Museo de Huesca. *Kalakorikos* 12, 57-264.
- Baratta 2014 = Baratta, G.: Ripetizioni e varianti epigrafiche ed iconografiche nelle serie ceramiche di Gaius Valerius Verdullus: il così detto “vaso dello zodiaco”. A. Donati (cur.): *L'iscrizione e il suo doppio*. Faenza, 109-156.
- 2017 = Baratta G.: Il circo di terracotta: gli aurighi di Gaius Valerius Verdullus. *Epigraphica* 2017, c.d.s.
- c.d.s. = Baratta, G.: *I gladiatori di Gaius Valerius Verdullus*. In: A. Corda, A. (ed.): *Spatha, spada, épée. Ideologia e prassi*. Cagliari.
- Beltrán Lloris 1987 = Beltrán Lloris, M. (ed.), *Arcobriga (Monreal de Ariza, Zaragoza)*. Zaragoza.
- Caballero Casado 2003 = Caballero Casado, C.: *La ciudad y la romanización de Celtiberia*. Zaragoza.
- Díaz Andreu, Mora Rodríguez, Cortadella Morral 1989 = Díaz Andreu, M. – Mora Rodríguez, G. – Cortadella Morral, J. (coords.): *Diccionario Histórico de la arqueología en Hispania (siglos XV-XX)*. Madrid.
- Espinosa 1984 = Espinosa, U.: Calagurris Iulia. Calahorra.

- Gil Zubillaga 1995 = Gil Zubillaga, E.: Las cerámicas de Aco en la Península Ibérica. Un nuevo centro productor de cerámicas de paredes finas “tipo Aco” en el valle del Ebro”. *Actas XXI Congreso Nacional de Arqueología*. Zaragoza.
- 1997 = Gil Zubillaga, E.: La cerámica de paredes finas con decoración a molde de Viana (Navarra). Las producciones de G. Val. Verdullus y su problemática. Estado de la cuestión. *Isturitz* 8, 427-466.
- Gonzalo 2003-2004 = Gonzalo, L. A.: Arcobriga, avance de las intervenciones 2003 y 2004. *Kalathos* 22-23, 353-367.
- Jiménez Sanz 2008 = Jiménez Sanz, C.: Las investigaciones del Marqués de Cerralbo en el «Cerro Villar» de Monreal de Ariza: Arcobriga. *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma, Serie I, Prehistoria y Arqueología* 11.
- Lorrio Alvarado 2010 = Lorrio Alvarado, A. J.: Arcóbriga y la colección Cerralbo. Nuevas interpretaciones arqueológicas. *Estudios varios y ponencias del XXV seminario de lenguas y epigrafía antiguas*. Valencia.
- Lorrio – Sánchez 2009 = Lorrio, A. – Sánchez, M. D.: *La necrópolis celtibérica de Arcobriga (Caesaraugusta 80)*. Zaragoza.
- Mayer 2004 = Mayer, M.: Los Xenia de Marcial clave de interpretación de un vaso figurado del Alfar de La Maja (Calahorra, La Rioja) In: Iso Echegoyen, J. (ed.): *Hominem pagina nostra sapit. Marcial, 1900 años después. Estudios XIX centenario de la muerte de Marco Valerio Marcial*. Zaragoza, 115-127.
- 2010 = Mayer i Olivé, M.: El mito de Hipólito según la versión de la Fedra de Séneca, representado en un vaso de cerámica producida en La Maja (Calahorra, La Rioja) hallado en Vareia. *Kalakorikos* 5, 7-108.
- 2011 = Mayer i Olivé, M.: Notas preliminares y conjeturas sobre el posible significado de algunos de los letreros presentes en los vasos de Gayo Valerio Verdulo del alfar de la Maja. Introductory notes and hypotheses on the possible meaning of some of the inscriptions on the Gaius Valerius Verdullus’ vases found in a Maja’s pottery site. *Kalakorikos* 16, 123-138.
- Mayer Olivé 1998 = Mayer Olivé, M.: Propuesta de lectura para el vaso de los *circenses* del alfar de la Maja. *Kalakorikos* 3, 187-192.
- Mínguez Morales 1989 = Mínguez Morales, J. A.: La producción de paredes finas con decoración a molde del ceramista *Gaius Valerius Verdullus* y su difusión por el Valle del Ebro. *Actes du Congrès de Lezoux 4-7 mai 1989*, Marseille, 81-189.
- Rüger 1968 = Rüger Chr. B.: Römische Keramik aus dem Kreuzgang der Kathedrale von Tarragona. *MM* 9, 237-258.
- Sáenz Preciado 1993 = Sáenz Preciado, M. P.: *La terra sigilata hispánica en el Valle Medio del Ebro: El centro alfarero de Tritium Magallum (Tricio, La Rioja)*, tesis doct. univ. de Zaragoza.
- Sánchez 1992 = Sánchez, M. A., Cerámica de paredes finas. Caballero Zoreda, L. (ed.): *Arcóbriga II. Las cerámicas romana*. Zaragoza, 145-150.
- Sánchez Sánchez 1987 = Sánchez Sánchez, M. A.: In: Paredes finas, Beltrán Lloris, M. (dir.), *Arcobriga (Monreal de Ariza)*. Zaragoza, 58.
- Shackleton Bailey 1990 = Shackleton Bailey, D. R.: *Martialis Epigrammata (Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana)*. Stuttgart, 470.
- Velaza 2009 = Velaza, J.: El ‘Vaso del Zodiaco’ de Gayo Valerio Verdulo = problemas de reconstrucción y de interpretación. *Espacios, usos y formas de la Epigrafía Hispana en épocas antigua y tardeoantigua, Homenaje a A. U. Stylow*. Mérida, 363-373.
- Villaronga – Benages 2011 = L. Villaronga – J. Benages: *Ancient Coinage of the Iberian Peninsula. Greek / Punic / Iberian / Roman. Les monedes de l’Edat Antiga a la Península Ibèrica*. Barcelona.

(ISSN 0418 – 453X)