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Aucissa and Enamelled Brooches in Pannonia and the neighbouring Barbaricum

Abstract of the PhD thesis

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Introduction

The inquiry, the research objective, and the chronological framework

The dissertation discusses the use and distribution of two Roman brooch types, the hinged Aucissa brooches of the early Roman period, and the later, 2nd–3rd century enamelled brooches in Pannonia. The choice of this rather narrow subject-matter is in part a consequence of the current state of Pannonian fibula studies. Although a series of major, comprehensive monographs appeared on the brooches from Pannonia some fifty years ago, which were groundbreaking in all respects, an evaluation of more recent finds according to modern standards is lacking. True enough, a monographic treatment of the finds in question is difficult owing to the fact that the material from the towns, villas, *vicus* and *castella* of Pannonia are still largely unpublished. Given this situation, a viable approach was the collection and monographic evaluation of one or more particular brooch types.

The analysis of brooches can shed light on not only ancient costume and technology, but can also contribute to the analysis of settlement patterns, as well as certain aspects of economic and social history. Major advances have been made in the analysis and publication of Roman brooches over the past few decades through the evaluation and publication of the brooch finds from major Roman settlements such as Augst and Dangstetten, and from larger regional units such as Meseta and Gaule Méridionale. The publication of the brooches from Pannonia and other provinces of the Roman Empire will no doubt promote the comparative analysis of the brooches from various regions of the Roman Empire.

Source material

Although I have tried to make the corpus of finds as complete as possible, data collection was restricted by the accessibility of the relevant finds and the occasional shortcomings of the published material. My analysis and discussion of Aucissa and enamelled brooches is based on earlier assemblages and the finds from more recent excavations. The catalogue contains a list of 184 Aucissa brooches from 23 Pannonian sites, and 493 enamelled brooches from 52 sites. I added the brooches recently published by Andrea Vaday to my original list of enamelled brooches from the Barbaricum (196 pieces from 34 sites). Altogether three Aucissa brooches are known from the neighbouring Barbaricum (19 pieces from 11 sites).

Research methods

Based on the corpus of finds, I divided the Aucissa and enamelled brooches into various groups. It became clear that in order to set these finds within the cultural context of the Empire, a detailed comparison with similar brooches from other provinces would be necessary. I therefore compared each group, type, sub-type, and variant with the known typological sequences (K. Exner, E. Ettliger, E. Riha, S. Rieckhof, M. Feugère, R. Erice Lacabe) in order to establish possible correspondences, alongside a critical analysis of these sequences.

The creation of a chronological framework for the typological sequences presented here was made possible by the few assemblages containing finds with a dating value. The chronology of Aucissa and enamelled brooches is based on assemblages with coin finds and pieces recovered from secure contexts. The precise dating of the finds found together with these brooches is crucial in this respect, and called for an examination of the chronology of other brooch, vessel and ornament types.

An analysis of how Aucissa and enamelled brooches were worn can obviously only be based on professionally excavated, well documented burials. I mapped the distribution of individual types in order to examine whether the concentrations of these brooches can be explained by population or troop movements, by social stratification, by trade or by the location of workshops.

I. Aucissa brooches

Aucissa brooches can be assigned to the category of two-piece hinged brooches. One technical innovation in the manufacture of these brooches was that unlike one-piece sprung brooches, the bow and the pin were not made in one: the bronze or, more rarely, iron or silver body was cast separately, as was the bronze or iron pin. A bronze or iron axis bar linked the two.

With their many variants, Aucissa brooches (Almgren 242) were one of the most widespread types during the early centuries of the Roman Empire. Most can be dated to the rule of Augustus and Tiberius, although their use can be traced from the last quarter of the 1st

century BC to the close of the 1st century or the beginning of the 2nd century AD (Ettliger 1973; Demetz 1999).

The generally accepted view is that Aucissa brooches originate from Italy and that their manufacture was begun in a northern Italian workshop during the late republican period. Their mass manufacture falls into the 1st century. Under Caesar and Augustus, Aucissa brooches were worn mainly by the military and their widespread distribution can thus be linked to the Roman conquests. These brooches can be regarded as one of the type finds of the Augustan–Claudian period.

Aucissa brooches were first distinguished by Oskar Almgren in 1897 (his Type 242), while the label “Aucissa brooches” was introduced by Emil Ritterling in 1901, in his publication of the finds from Haltern. About 1 per cent of the Aucissa brooches were inscribed with 20 names.

More recent publications tend to assign different type numbers to Aucissa brooches, depending on their position in the sequence of analysed brooches from a particular site. However, these analyses do not challenge the original “Almgren 242” label and the name “Aucissa brooch” continues to be consistently used: Patek C1 (1942); Lerat II,1,B (1956, 1979); Böhme 8 (1972); Ettliger 29 (1973); Rieckhoff 11 (1975); Jobst 1 (1975); Riha 5.2 (1979); Hattatt Aucissa (1982); Feugère 22b2 (1985); Faudet III 18 (1992); Erice Lacabe 20 (1995); Mariné Isidro 10 (2001).

Although Aucissa brooches were distributed from Britain to the Euphrates, in both legionary camps and civilian settlements, no monographic evaluation of this brooch type has yet been written. A monograph on Aucissa brooches, whose lack is lamented by many scholars, would enable the creation of precise and reliable typological and chronological sequences, and the identification of local workshops.

Conforming to the international research standard, I have retained Almgren’s type number and distinguished the sub-types from Pannonia within this broad category (A 142.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6). I distinguished the variants within one particular sub-type based on differences in the section of the bow, the presence of longitudinal or cross ribs, the form of the knob on the foot and the ornamentation.

I used the following sequence for the formal groups: I divided Almgren’s Type 242 into six sub-types, according to their chronological sequence. The sub-types are numbered as follows: A 242.1, A 242.2, A 242.3, A 242.4, A 242.5 A 242.6.

Sub-type Almgren 242.1

This sub-type represents the earliest Aucissa variant of hinged bow brooches, characterised by a ribbon-like, triangular bow, widening above the head and tapering toward the catch-plate. The bow is short, straight and generally D sectioned above the catch-plate. These brooches have principally been found in the earliest-occupied areas of Pannonia, mostly on the settlements of the conquerors (military forts) in the southerly region (Siscia, Carnuntum, Poetovio).

Sub-type Almgren 242.2

This sub-type represents the classical Aucissa brooch. The pin is hinged on an iron pivot secured in a casing held in place by knobs. The arched bow has a D shaped or almost circular section. A raised or flattened rib extends down the length of the bow. Brooches of this type are generally found together with the earliest sigillata wares in the legionary camps established under Augustus (Vindonissa, Haltern, Oberhausen). This sub-type was by far the most widespread in the heartland of the Roman Empire and in Pannonia too. Some pieces reached the neighbouring Barbaricum along the Danube (Staré Hradiško). Their use extended from the beginning of the Augustan period to the mid-1st century, although in some instances their use can be documented up to the late 1st century and early 2nd century (e.g. Augst, Courroux, Grave 118, found together with a coin of Trajan).

Sub-type Almgren 242.3

This type is made up of smaller specimens. The bow narrows above the pin mechanism. Brooches of this type were probably manufactured on the Dalmatian coast and in Pannonia, in the region between Siscia, Emona and Salona. Their use spanned the Claudian–Flavian period (Siscia, Hrtkovci, Emona, Novi Banovci).

Sub-type Almgren 242.4

The bow of these Aucissa brooches is decorated with one to five parallel perforations. They generally occur together with Sub-type 242.2 in the early legionary forts in the freshly conquered territories. This sub-type first appeared in the early Augustan period, becoming widespread during the Claudian period. Their use ceased by the later 1st century and they disappeared altogether by the mid-2nd century (Giubiasco, Vindonissa; Carnuntum, Siscia, Brigetio, Emona in Pannonia).

Sub-type Almgren 242.5

The brooches assigned to this sub-type are no longer decorated with perforations, but have a beadrow on the bow. This sub-type was chiefly distributed in the western provinces (August, Vitudurum); they are rare finds in Pannonia (Siscia, Carnuntum, Emona). They can be dated to the earlier 1st century.

Sub-type Almgren 242.6

This sub-type represents the latest Aucissa brooch variant, made up of the smallest specimens. The bow has a low arch and is square sectioned; it is often adorned with a wavy line down its length. This sub-type was quite widespread in the western provinces and was also popular in Pannonia (Arrabona, Mursella, Brigetio, Carnuntum, Emona, Poetovio, Siscia). It was used from the mid-1st century to the first third of the 2nd century.

Findings

The pieces from the Rhine region clearly show that the distribution of Aucissa brooches can be linked to the appearance of the military and thus finds of these brooches in a particular region reflect a military occupation. In Pannonia, the early variants of Aucissa brooches can be dated to the military conquest under Augustus. The brooches first appeared along the radial roads connecting the region with Italy: the Amber Road leading to Carnuntum, the Poetovio–Aquincum and the Poetovio–Sirmium road, and in the forts and veterans' settlements along the *limes*. The earliest Aucissa brooches came to light on the major sites in the Drava–Sava Valley, on the one-time settlements of the Roman conquerors. Other finds of the early Roman period in Pannonia (early amphorae, sigillata wares and metal vessels of the Augustan period) have also been recovered from these sites.

The high number of Aucissa brooches in Emona suggests a major concentration of troops and we know that veterans were first settled in the Emona area in Pannonia. Siscia lay in a strategic location at the confluence of the Sava and Kulpa rivers, where a military fort existed from the Augustan period. The many Aucissa brooches known from this site include both early and later types, and it seems likely that Sub-type A 242.3 had been locally manufactured here. The Aucissa brooches and the sigillata wares of the late Augustan–Tiberian period found in the Mursa area indicate an early Roman military presence in this region, which can probably be explained by the need to control the crossing place over the

river. Aucissa brooches have been reported from the forts along the Danube section between the Drava and the Sava (*Ripa Danuvii*), which can likewise be interpreted in a military context (Burgenae, Rittium, Teutoburgium).

Poetovio was one of the first legionary forts established by the Roman army advancing northward from Aquileia along the Amber Road in what later became the province of Pannonia. Most of the Aucissa brooches found here can be assigned to the early sub-types (A 242.1 and A 242.2), with only one specimen representing the latest sub-type (A 242.6). There was a temporary military base at Salla at the time of the Roman occupation, where Aucissa brooches of Sub-type A 242.2 and Augustan sigillata wares reflect a brief military presence. The Aucissa brooches from Savaria can be associated with the events of the military occupation or the settlement of veterans, while the pieces from Carnuntum, representing Sub-types A 242.1–3, can – together with the early sigillata wares and amphorae – be linked to Tiberius' campaign against Maroboduus in 6 AD.

The remains of the early fort of the Augustan–Claudian period (Carnuntum I) have still not been identified; the coin and pottery finds date the currently known earliest levels of the fort to the Claudian period. Several Aucissa brooches have been found in the *municipium* of Mursella, where the location of the early military fort was identified on the basis of aerial photographs. While Aucissa brooches have also been reported from the auxiliary *castellum* of Arrabona, where they were found together with early pottery, sigillata wares and gravestones, only the remains of the Claudian period fort built around 25–30 AD have been identified, where the ala Pannoniorum was stationed. Three brooches from Brigetio can be assigned to the early, Claudian–Flavian types (A 242.2–4), and three to the types dating to the mid- or later 1st century. The lack of Aucissa brooches from Aquincum can probably be explained by the shortcomings of research since the type has been found in the early *castella* (Viziváros, Bem Square). The ala I Hispanorum was stationed in Aquincum around 45–50 AD.

The distribution of Aucissa brooches in Pannonia and their proportion on Roman period sites indicates that these small finds were all found along the Roman military roads (none have been found in province's interior) and they can thus contribute much to the study of Roman military presence and the chronology of the Roman occupation. The few Aucissa brooches known from the Sarmatian lands in the Barbaricum are individual types suggesting personal contacts, while the pieces found in the Barbaricum north of Pannonia can be associated with the early Roman military presence (Dévény, Staré Hradiško).

II. Enamelled brooches

In Italy, brooches were used by the military for fastening cloaks. In the Celtic lands, however, brooches were worn by both men and women, and when these regions became part of the Roman Empire, new brooch types blending native and Roman traditions appeared. One of these was the enamelled brooch, which was mass produced in the Roman provinces.

The initial classification system introduced by Almgren was to a great extent refined by G. Collingwood, K. Exner, Patek E., E. Ettliger, E. Riha, J. D. Bateson, A. Böhme, W. Jobst, M. Feugère and R. Erice Lacabe, and it therefore seemed prudent to correlate their groupings with each other. I did not retain Almgren's original numbering for this brooch type, partly because it could not be derived from one particular earlier type and partly because this type was not as uniform either regarding its structure or its form as the Aucissa brooch.

The grouping of these brooches was based on structural and formal differences. Three main types of pin mechanisms could be distinguished: the first was a Roman technical innovation: a hinged mechanism with a long, narrow catch-plate and its more advanced variant for plate brooches, on which the hinge mechanism is enclosed within short wings and the brooch is fitted with a high catch-plate. Alongside these two mechanisms, the Celtic spring mechanism appears on some plate brooch types.

Two basic bow types could be distinguished: arched (I) and plate or disc (II) bows, representing the two largest typological groups. These two groups can be further divided into sub-groups reflecting differences in the pin mechanism and the bow (A, B, C, D), while the sub-groups can be divided into types (1, 2, etc.) based on the finer details of the bow typical for a particular sub-group. The types were sub-divided into sub-types (a, b, c, etc.), and the latter into variants (1, 2, etc.).

Enamelled brooches can be dated to between the mid-1st and the 3rd century, with their heyday falling into the 2nd century.

Group I includes the bow brooches, whose bow ranges from the strongly arched pieces typical for Aucissa brooches to more angular, moulded forms.

Sub-group IA includes enamelled brooches with a symmetry axis representing a transitional type, whose development is made up of two phases. The early pieces of this sub-

group have a more robust bow, recalling the form bow brooches, and a light enamelling. The earliest pieces with a symmetry axis and an encased hinged pin mechanism appeared before the mid-1st century. Brooches with a moulded bow began to be produced later and they gradually superseded earlier types since their bow became wider and more suited to ornamentation; these brooches retained the encased hinged pin mechanism. Later, the bow became narrower and flatter, and increasingly larger areas were enamelled in various colours. Brooches with a hinge mechanism enclosed within short wings too made an appearance. Over one-half of the 71 brooches of this type from Pannonia originate from the Rhine region, while 21 per cent comes from Gaul. The proportion of pieces without a known parallel is rather high (20 per cent). Eight of the brooches in this sub-group were found in the Barbaricum; two of these, assigned to variants IA/14b and 16b, are unparalleled.

Sub-group IB is made up of bow brooches with a moulded bow and two symmetry axes, and they have a hinge mechanism enclosed within short wings. Brooches of this type, usually taking a geometric form, appeared at the close of the 1st century and attained their greatest popularity during the 2nd century, although they began to be supplanted by plate and disc brooches from the last third of the century. The Pannonian group is made up of 57 pieces: 30 per cent represent general Roman types, 20 per cent originates from Britain, 25 per cent from Gaulish workshops, while the remaining 25 per cent is unmatched.

Group II comprises a wide range of plate and disc brooches, most of which come with a hinge mechanism enclosed within short wings, although the sprung pin resurfaces in this group.

Sub-group IIA is made up of disc brooches fitted with a hinge mechanism enclosed within short wings, which remained a characteristic feature of 1st and 2nd century enamelled plate and disc brooches. The combination of the form with this pin mechanism enabled the creation of sophisticated enamelled designs with several symmetry axes. The last phase in the development of disc brooches was marked by the appearance of millefiori and chequerboard types, worn from the late 2nd century to the first third of the 3rd century. Roughly the same number of these brooches was found in Pannonia as in the Barbaricum; one-half of the known pieces originates from the Rhine region, one-fifth from Gaul and Britain, while about one-quarter represent general Roman forms.

Sub-group IIB is made up of plate brooches. Lozenge shaped brooches covered with variously coloured enamels appeared at roughly the same time as disc brooches and were followed by polygonal, oval and a variety of arched shapes and their combinations. About one-quarter of the 114 pieces from Pannonia can be regarded as general Roman types; one-

fifth were made in the Rhine region, one-third have their counterparts in Britain, and one-quarter are unparalleled. Elements of the latter can be found separately on other brooches, but not in the combination appearing on the Pannonian pieces. A few pieces of the brooches from the Barbaricum are similarly unmatched (IIB/1c4, 6, 8). The roughly 20 per cent proportion of British brooches can also be noted among these pieces, as can pieces from the Rhine region and Gaul, each accounting for about 10 per cent. Most of these brooches represent general Roman forms. One piece (IIB/13) may have been locally made in Brigetio.

The zoomorphic plate brooches from Pannonia (Sub-group IIC) show a rich diversity. Most are fitted with a hinge mechanism enclosed within short wings, although some pieces have a sprung pin. One part of this large group, made up of 115 pieces, conforms to the general distribution pattern across the Empire (IIC/1a1–2, 1a4, 2a, 9a, 10a, 11). One-third represent imports from Gaul (IIC/1c, 1e, 5b, 8a-b), while two smaller variants have their origin in the Rhine region (IIC/1d1, 9c1) and one can be derived from Britain (IIC/1d1). A possible local manufacture is suggested by the high number of pieces assigned to variants IIC/b2 and 5a. The remarkable similarities between an unprovenanced dog brooch and its counterpart from Zurndorf too point toward local production, as do finely crafted pieces (IIC/9b, IIC/12c9) and their simpler versions (IIC/2c). Three pieces of this type come from the Barbaricum: one can be regarded as a local product (IIC/10b), while the other two represent general Roman types (IIC/1a1, IIC/2a).

Plate brooches bearing various depictions, assigned to Sub-group IID, mark the emergence of a new brooch style. The entire fibula body is enamelled, but the simple geometric designs are replaced with animal and human figures. These brooches have a hinge mechanism enclosed within short wings and an external cord mechanism. One of the eight pieces from Pannonia represents a general Roman type (IID/6), one comes from the Rhine region (IID/1), one from Gaul (IID/8), and two were made locally in Pannonia (IID/2, 7). One of the two brooches from the Barbaricum was modelled on British pieces.

List of publications:

K. Berecz, *A térdfibulák Pannoniában* [Knee brooches in Pannonia]. University thesis. ELTE. Budapest 1987.

K. Berecz, Römerzeitliche Fibel aus Zalalövő. *ActaArchHung* 42, 1990, 77-96.

K. Berecz, Római kori fibulák Zala megyéből I [Roman brooches from County Zala]. *Zalai Múzeum* 3, 1991, 163-183.

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K. Berecz: Local Metallurgy at Salla/Zalalövő. *Actes du XII Congrès International des Sciences Préhistoriques et Protohistoriques*. Réd.: J. Pavúk. Bratislava 1993, 351-356.