

## Products, trade and logistics

In addition to ceramic building materials and Terra Sigillata, other forms of ceramics were produced in Tabernae, among them so-called Terra Nigra, ware with white, red or black engobe, and clay bodied articles such as amphorae. Indispensable to Tabernae's dominant market position were the sales and distribution of its products by merchants specialized in ceramics (negotiatores rei cretariae). Wherever possible, transport of the fragile wares was by river (Rhine, Danube).



## The pottery market

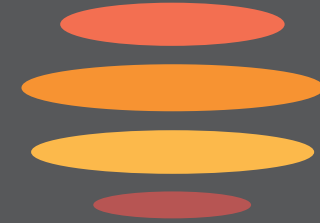
Text: Dr. Holger Trimpert, Fotos: Alexandra Benz, Schnorr-Keramik.  
Layout: Cornelia Frank, Edition of April, 2011

## Terra Sigillata Museum Rheinzabern e. V.

Hauptstrasse 36  
76764 Rheinzabern, Germany  
Telephone: (49) 72 72 / 95 58 93  
E-Mail: [info@terra-sigillata-museum.de](mailto:info@terra-sigillata-museum.de)  
[www.terra-sigillata-museum.de](http://www.terra-sigillata-museum.de)

Opening hours: Wednesday to Saturday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sunday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
Groups accommodated by appointment.  
Guided tours available by prior arrangement.  
The museum is accessible for the physically handicapped. The S-Bahn (light rail) line S51/S52 stops in close proximity to the museum.

## Contact



# Terra Sigillata Museum

Rheinzabern



The principal markets for Tabernae's Terra Sigillata were the region along the right bank of the Rhine and the Danube provinces. However, shipments went also to Britain and to Germanic tribes beyond the limes, as well as to Scandinavia and Poland. Terra Sigillata was affordable for many sectors of the population in the 2nd and 3rd Centuries. A decorated serving dish then cost 20 As, while a legionnaire's daily pay was 16 As.

Pitchers and small amphorae. 1/2 century A.D.

Gold coin (aureus) of Severus Alexander, minted in Rome between 222 and 228 A.D.

Terra Sigillata bowls for daily use



## How to get here

## Roman Industrial Pottery Production Commerce and Living Environment in the vicus



Supported by funding from the Ministry of Science, Adult Education, Research and Culture under professional guidance of the Museum Association of Rhineland-Palatinate

## A chronicle in clay

Founded as a simple way station sometime between 10 and 20 A.D., Tabernae (Rheinzabern) grew into the largest ceramics manufacturing center north of the Alps. Prerequisites for this growth were the area's sufficient natural resources of clay and wood, its advantageous location on both the Rhine River and the principal Roman highway (Italy-Rhineland), a good infrastructure for supporting a population and a trained workforce.

Space and time

## Daily life in the vicus

The residents of Tabernae were common people. They occupied timber and beam houses that were modestly furnished and equipped. Nevertheless, remnants of metal fittings from storage chests, utensils with figured decorations, as well as vessels of bronze and glass attest to a certain affluence. Jewelry, cloak-pins and personal grooming articles constitute additional evidence of prosperity. Virtually every home had an altar to honor not only its household deities, but also Minerva and Mercury, the gods of craftsmen and traders.

Living environments

## Production in a ceramics workshop

Terra Sigillata means „stamped or sealed earth“. This term has been applied since the mid-nineteenth century to Roman tableware with a fine red gloss slip (engobe). From approximately 150 A.D. to the middle of the 4th century Tabernae was the largest Terra Sigillata manufacturing center north of the Alps. Along with the extraction and preparation of the clay and the mixing of the slip, numerous other production steps executed by specialists were involved in the manufacturing of pottery vessels.

Terra Sigillata



Brick kiln discovered at the 1902 archeological digs.

Terra Sigillata goblet with barbotine décor. 3rd century A.D.

1818 map of the Roman Road and the course of the Rhine between Lauterburg and Rheinzabern



Remains of the Roman village and potteries have been preserved in the ground. The archeological excavations of 1901-1914 and 1975 -1995 uncovered some 100 kilns used for producing ceramic tableware, household utensils, Terra Sigillata and building materials.



Iron cameo ring with an image of Mars, the god of war. 2/3 century A.D.

Head of a statuette of the sun god Sol. 3rd century A.D.

Gold ring with gem. 3rd century A.D.



## Ceramic building materials

The production of ceramic building materials was an important economic factor. At one time or another Tabernae had large brickworks capable of producing almost 20,000 bricks monthly. These plants utilized industrial production processes.



Dish-like molds or matrices, into which the vessel blank could be pressed to the desired shape, had to be built. After application of the base rings, the vessels would be dipped in the fine gloss slip and then fired. Finally the finished products had to be stored and their shipment arranged.



Tossing of a vessel on a potter's wheel

Matrix or mold with incised décor applied with punches