

Graphic Signs or Simple Scratches? Marks on Dacian Artefacts from Covasna - Cetatea Zânelor*

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Abstract:** Fragmentary artefacts with incised signs from the time of the Dacian Kingdom were discovered at Covasna - Cetatea Zânelor (Fairies Fortress). The main issue is whether these signs are simple scratches or graphic signs.

Keywords: graffiti; Dacian Kingdom; Covasna; pottery; letters.

Rezumat: În situl de la Covasna - Cetatea Zânelor au fost descoperite materiale cu semne incizate datând din perioada Regatului Dac. Problema care se pune este dacă aceste semne sunt simple zgârieturi sau sunt semne grafice.

Cuvinte cheie: graffiti; Regatul Dacic; Covasna; ceramică; litere.

Covasna - Cetatea Zânelor

The archaeological site Covasna - Cetatea Zânelor (Fairies Fortress) is located in south-eastern Transylvania, in the vicinity of the town of Covasna, on Dealul Cetății (Fortress Hill) (Pl. I/1). Most of the artefacts found here are Dacian, but also from the Early Iron Age and the Middle Ages.

The Dacians strongly fortified the hill with walls made of irregular and summary processed stones. The ramparts defended and sustained an acropolis and at least six terraces (I-VI) (Pl. I/2-6). The remains of dwellings, workshops and temples have been discovered inside the fortified area (Pl. I/7). The first construction phase started at the end of the 2nd century BC or at the beginning of the 1st century BC. The fortress was destroyed by the Romans during the Dacian wars, at the beginning of the 2nd century AD.¹

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** I want to thank my colleague Cătălin Cristescu who made the translation into English and gave me some suggestions regarding the archaeological material and its interpretation.

Marks on pottery

The materials from the site are numerous and diverse (ceramic vessels, animal bones, whetstones, clay, silver, bronze and iron objects). Among these, some pottery fragments with incised signs were found.

1. *Jug / vessel with elongate neck* (Pl. II/1)². The signs were made on the outside wall: two arches horizontally arranged, one above the other, and two arches vertically arranged, one next to the other. The vertical arches are similar to the Latin letter C or the Greek letter *lunate sigma*³.

2. *Jug / bi-conical vessel* (Pl. II/2)⁴. A small circle was made on the inside wall, similar in shape with the Latin or Greek letter O.

3. *Fruit bowl* (Pl. II/3)⁵. Three incised straight lines, joining in one point, were made on top of the rim. The sign is similar in shape with the Latin or Greek letter Y.

4. *Fruit bowl* (Pl. II/4)⁶. Two straight lines crossing approximately through the middle were made on top of the rim. The sign is similar in shape with the Latin or Greek letter X.

The fragments with incised signs belong to Dacian vessels made of a quality fabric, well fired, used for liquids or for serving food. All these signs were made after burning. A single sign was made on the inside wall (no. 2), the other being placed on visible areas of the vessel (when it was in use)⁷.

All these four pottery fragments were discovered in the same archaeological context. A square tower was erected at the junction of Terraces II and III (Pl. I/3, 5). Near the tower, two edifices with the roof sustained by three rows of wooden pillars were found (Pl. I/7).⁸ The edifices could be rectangular temples, of the column alignments type, but other functionalities cannot be excluded. Most likely the structures are dated in the 1st century BC or at the beginning of the 1st century AD. The potsherds with incised signs have been found in the usage / filling levels of Edifice I⁹.

¹ Székely 1969, 99-122; Székely 1972, 201-214; Sirbu, Crișan 1999, 71-81; Crișan 2000, 33-36; Crișan 2009, 59-64; Crișan, Sirbu 2010, 266-285; Crișan, Sirbu, Popescu 2013, 22-26; Crișan, Sirbu, Pupeză 2016, 19-41.

² Pupeză, Crișan 2019, 38.

³ Thompson 1912, 1-7; Guarducci 2005, Allegato 1, 2.

⁴ Pupeză, Crișan 2019, 38.

⁵ Pupeză, Crișan 2019, 38.

⁶ Pupeză, Crișan 2019, 38.

⁷ Pupeză, Crișan 2019, 38.

⁸ Crișan et alii 2017, 49-50; Crișan et alii 2018, 30-31.

⁹ Pupeză, Crișan 2019, 38.

Dacian graffiti

During the Dacian Kingdom, the incised letters or letter-like signs were found mainly in the Orăștie Mountains, area of the capital Sarmizegetusa Regia. The *graffiti* from here were made on ceramic vessels, limestone blocks and metal objects. For the rest of the Dacian Kingdom, the signs were made mostly on ceramic materials. All the signs identified at Covasna have analogies in other sites from the Dacian Kingdom.

Among the signs found at Covasna, the X-like one is the most common in pre-Roman Dacia¹⁰. In some cases, the signs incised on pottery look more like a cross, with lines that intersect in right angles (Barboși,¹¹ Brad,¹² Bordușani,¹³ Căscioarele,¹⁴ Căpâlna,¹⁵ Grădiștea,¹⁶ Grădiștea de Munte,¹⁷ Greaca,¹⁸ Mala Kopanya,¹⁹ Merești²⁰, Ocița²¹, Poiana,²² Pietroasele²³, Racoș,²⁴ Răcătău,²⁵ Sprâncenata²⁶). X-like signs were made on other clay objects, such as game pieces (*tesserae*)²⁷, spindle whorls,²⁸ firedogs,²⁹ lasts³⁰ and figurines.³¹ Rarely, such signs appear on bone objects.³² There are X-like countermarks on coins that circulated in

¹⁰ Crișan 1969, 208, pl. CV/8, CVIII/3; Trohani 1999, 62, 81, 105, fig. 4, 98/1, 126/3.

¹¹ Sanie 1988, pl. 20/8.

¹² Ursachi 1995, 200, pl. 74/1, 275/4.

¹³ Trohani 2006, 32, pl. 178/119.

¹⁴ Trohani 1999, fig. 56/8.

¹⁵ Glodariu, Moga 1989, 90, fig. 65/5.

¹⁶ Sirbu 1996, 52, fig. 12/10, 49/1, 68/8, 70/9, 72/6.

¹⁷ Daicoviciu et alii 1953, 166; Crișan 1969, 155; Glodariu 1974, 166; Florea 2000, fig. 2/1; Gheorghiu 2005, fig. 118/2. Cristescu 2012, fig. 3/18, 17/11, 24/a; Cristescu 2014, pl. 2/2, 12/6.

¹⁸ Sirbu et alii 1996, 67, fig. 107/8.

¹⁹ Kotyhoroshko 2015, pl. 16/4.

²⁰ Crișan, Ferenczi 1994, pl. 28/5.

²¹ Berciu 1981, pl. 15/3, 92/13, 93/3.

²² Beldiman 1990, 149, fig. 4/19.

²³ Dupoi, Sirbu 2001, 67, fig. 94/1, 2.

²⁴ Costea, Savu, Bălos 2008, 159, pl. II, III.

²⁵ Căpitanu 1987, fig. 27/3. Căpitanu 1994, pl. VII/3.

²⁶ Preda 1986, pl. 15/9.

²⁷ Sirbu 1993, fig. 20/15,16, 21/4,5, 22/2-4; Teodor 2011, fig. 14/2; Berciu et alii 1983, fig. 1/1, 2/4.

²⁸ Vulpe, Teodor 2003, fig. 63/1, 8.

²⁹ Costea 2006, fig. 138/3, 4.

³⁰ Glodariu, Moga 1989, fig. 73/1.

³¹ Sirbu 1987, fig. 8/3.

³² Vulpe, Teodor 2003, fig. 84/1.

pre-Roman Dacia.³³ Alone or in combination with other letters, the X was incised on the limestone blocks from the Orăștie Mountains.³⁴

The other signs identified at Covasna were not so numerous in Dacia. The letter Y appears rarely on pottery³⁵ or the limestone blocks³⁶ from the Orăștie Mountains, as in the rest of the Dacian Kingdom (Cetățeni,³⁷ Grădiștea,³⁸). The same is the situation with the letter C³⁹ or O.⁴⁰

It is difficult to uniformly explain the functionality of Dacian *graffiti*. The materials on which they are made, the type of objects, the incision sizes, the location on the objects, the discovery contexts, and their chronology are significantly different. Depending on these factors, the interpretation of the signs may differ from one case to another.

An example of this diversity is that of X-type signs. In some cases, this incised sign might be a simple decorative motif. On some vessels, incised X-shaped lines were arranged horizontally or vertically, on the rim and body.⁴¹ Similar polished decorations, forming a net, were placed on drinking vessels.⁴² Such signs often appear on vessels inside a circle, whether if they are incised, applied⁴³ or painted⁴⁴ motifs. The cross inside a circle was considered to be a solar symbol. As a result, the signs incised in the central area of ceramic bottoms or those incised on circular buttons were interpreted in this way as well. But the existence of a Dacian solar cult is uncertain. However, the possibility that these signs may be part of a figurative composition should be taken into consideration.

The jug from Covasna was incised on the neck with two horizontal arches (no. 1). It is possible that the two C-like signs located on the curved wall have the same (unknown) meaning. The two C-like signs could be two other arches, of similar sizes, but arranged and rendered slightly differently. Or, all these (different) representations could be part of a figurative composition that includes the entire vessel. Incised arches arranged horizontally (2-4) were found in other Dacian sites, often

³³ Preda 1973, 397.

³⁴ Glodariu 1997, fig. 4/23, 5/33.

³⁵ Cristescu 2012, 107, fig. 8/4 (considered to be a "T"), 28/268.

³⁶ Glodariu 1997, fig. 6/81.

³⁷ Măndescu 2006, 59, pl. 16/14.

³⁸ Sîrbu 1996, 52, fig. 40/12.

³⁹ Glodariu 1997, fig. 4/18-20; 6/69, 79. Berzovan, Olteanu, Pădureanu 2009, fig. 1/1. We are cautious in what regards this vessel and the interpretation of the signs on it.

⁴⁰ Glodariu 1997, fig. 5/14, 15, 25, 26; 6/70, 71, 76.

⁴¹ Buzilă 1970, fig. 3/2; Dupoi, Sîrbu 2001, fig. 94/1.

⁴² Crișan 1969, pl. CXIV/4.

⁴³ Casan-Fraga 1967, 7-35.

⁴⁴ Florea 1998, 193-194.

associated with other incised motifs (Bâta Doamnei,⁴⁵ Ocnia,⁴⁶ Sânsimion,⁴⁷ Sprâncenata⁴⁸). Most likely, their interpretation should take into account the entire repertory of motives represented on those vessels.

If the signs are in fact graphic signs, their reading is difficult.⁴⁹ Whether they are Greek or Latin letters, the language behind these graphic signs is uncertain: Dacian, Latin or Greek. At the same time, the authors of these signs are difficult to identify. The actual presence of Greeks or Romans in the Dacian sites is easily to assume but difficult to prove.

The presence of Greek or Latin letters in the Dacian world fits the general context of the period, with many connections between the Dacian Kingdom and the Pontic and Mediterranean spaces. In the case of the Covasna site, these connections are reflected by the discovery of both Greek and Roman materials.⁵⁰ Some of these imported materials come from the same archaeological context as the *graffiti* (Edifice I).

Some of these *graffiti* might be monograms or names' initials. It is difficult to establish if these names were Dacian, Latin or Greek, especially if it is just one letter.⁵¹ Some vessels with *graffiti* discovered in Dacian sites are of Greek origin or imitate Greek forms (Brad,⁵² Merești,⁵³ Ocnia,⁵⁴ Pietroasele⁵⁵). The presence of Greek vessels does not automatically indicate the presence of Greeks in these sites. But some of these vessels may have arrived in Dacian sites already incised with *graffiti*.

The *graffiti* on Dacian pottery can be considered to be potter's marks.⁵⁶ That means manufacture of serial products, special vessels or even unique pots. At Covasna, vessels almost identical (shape, fabric, firing) to those marked with signs were found in the same context (Edifice I). Moreover, similar incised vessels were not discovered in other features of the site. Therefore, the signs from Covasna are unlikely to be potters marks.

⁴⁵ Buzilă 1970, fig. 23/5.

⁴⁶ Berciu 1981, pl. 82/3.

⁴⁷ Beldiman, Szoncz 1992, 259-260, pl. III/3.

⁴⁸ Preda 1986, pl. XIV/5.

⁴⁹ Glodariu 1974, 166; Florea 2000, 274.

⁵⁰ Pupeză, Găzdac, Zăgreanu 2009, 64-7; Crișan, Sirbu 2010, 272, pl. 9.

⁵¹ Florea 2000, 274-275.

⁵² Ursachi 1995, 200

⁵³ Crișan, Ferenczi 1994, pl. 28/5.

⁵⁴ Berciu 1981, pl. 92/13.

⁵⁵ Dupoi, Sirbu 2001, 67, fig. 94/2.

⁵⁶ Glodariu 1974, 166; Florea 2000, 277; Cristescu 2018, 15-33.

Monograms or initials incised on vessels could indicate property.⁵⁷ The graffiti from Covasna were found in a most likely public edifice. There are many examples in the Greek and Roman world where, in public buildings, differentiation between users was made by such graffiti.⁵⁸ The Dacian fruit bowls of large sizes were “table-vessels” probably used by several table-companions.⁵⁹ The fruit bowls with graffiti from Covasna have the cups diameter of 28 cm (no. 3) and 46 cm (no. 4). At least the larger one was probably use for several table-companions.

If Edifice I is a temple, the signs might suggest the name of the devotee or the name of the divinity to which the dedication was made.⁶⁰ It is worth mentioning that at Covasna, in usage / filling levels of Edifice I, there were many fruit bowls of the same types and sizes of those with signs (no. 3 and no. 4). Only marking the two distinguishes them from the others.

Some Greek and Latin letters can have numerical values. In the Roman system, X = 10 and C = 100. There are two ways for Greeks to assign numeric values to letters: acrophonic (decimal, Attic) and alphabetical (Milesian). In the acrophonic system X = 1000. In the alphabetical system C = 3, O = 70, X = 600, and Y = 400. Greek letters were also used in the price system, where C = a half obol and X = an eighth of an obol.⁶¹ If such notation were used in the Dacian Kingdom, it is difficult to determine what these numbers represented: capacities, weights or prices.⁶² For the vessels from Covasna, the contents and capacities are unknown (given the fragmentation state in which they were found).

Graphic signs

Another fragment with incised signs was found at Covasna, but its exact discovery context is not certain.

5. *Jug / bi-conical vessel / amphora* (Pl. II/5)⁶³. The signs were made before firing, on the exterior of the wall: points and straight, oblique or curved lines. The signs seem to be part of a partially preserved inscription.

⁵⁷ Florea 2000, 276-277; Cristescu, Suciu-Mateescu 2016, 24.

⁵⁸ Lang 1976, 51-52; Stolba 2002, 234; Guarducci 2005, 359-378.

⁵⁹ Cristescu, Suciu-Mateescu 2016, 24.

⁶⁰ Lang 1976, 52-55; Stolba 2002, 229; Guarducci 2005, 254 -258; Florea 2000, 277.

⁶¹ Thompson 1912, 91-92; Lang 1976, 21-23, 55-81; Stolba 2002, 234-236; Guarducci 2000, 84-87.

⁶² Glodariu 1974, 166; Florea 2000, 275; Cristescu, Suciu-Mateescu 2016, 25.

⁶³ Pupeză, Crișan 2019, 44.

The inscription seems to be made with cursive Latin letters.⁶⁴ From left to right, the first sign is a line curved at the ends that could be the letter *S*. After this sign, it seems that a point was incised (*interpunctus?*). It follows a sign similar to the first, which could also be considered as *S*, even if it is interrupted by 2 (3?) points. The two oblique unequal lines (?) could be the letter *e* or *a*. The following sign, a slightly curved line at the bottom, can be read as the letter *l*. The last preserved part of the inscription is difficult to read: the two oblique lines (?) could be the letter *a* or *e*. In the upper side of the last sign, a thin line was incised. Its shape is similar to that of the sign considered to be the letter *l*. The depth and thickness of the line are different than the other signs. If it's also a letter, it might be a previous, subsequent or different writing.

The fabric and colour of the vessel are not typical for the Dacian pottery found at Covasna. It might be a particular case of a Dacian vessel, but it might be also an imported vessel (roman amphora?) and related with a different phenomenon. If it is a Dacian vessel, it is not the only one in Dacia that have a Latin inscription (Cladova,⁶⁵ Divici,⁶⁶ Grădiştea de Munte,⁶⁷ Ocniţa,⁶⁸ Piscul Crăsani⁶⁹). Also, Greek inscription on local pottery were found in Dacia (Cârlomăneşti,⁷⁰ Cetăţeni,⁷¹ Grădişte,⁷² Grădiştea de Munte,⁷³ Ocniţa,⁷⁴ Pietroasele,⁷⁵ Pecica⁷⁶).

Following these examples, we can assume that a name was incised on the vessel from Covasna. The letter *S* could be an abbreviation of a first name. The other part of the inscription could be completed with names like *Sele(ucus/ucia)* or *Sele(ne)*. However, some features of the signs make their unitary reading difficult. The letters seem to be cut (overlaid) by a series of deep dots, arranged in a relatively straight line. The most obvious case is that of the second letter *S*. The role of these dots cannot be

⁶⁴ CIL III 2, Tab. A; IDR I, fig. 79. I want to thank my colleagues Eugenia Beu-Dachin, Sorin Nemeti, Dan Dana and Florian Matei Popescu who saw the inscription and gave me suggestions for its reading.

⁶⁵ Boroneanţ 1978, 142, pl. 8/1.

⁶⁶ Gumă, Luca, Săcărin 1987, 213-214.

⁶⁷ Daicovicu et alii 1955, 201-202, fig. 8, 9. Florea 2001, 183-185, pl. 2/3; ILD I 303.

⁶⁸ Berciu 1979, 488-496, fig. 4/1, 2, 4; 5/1, 2; 6/1-4. These discoveries should be treated with caution because their authenticity was questioned.

⁶⁹ Conovici 1981, fig. 4.

⁷⁰ Babeş et alii 2004, 76-77, fig. 16; Matei 2009, 96, 100.

⁷¹ Măndescu 2006, 59, pl. 16/17.

⁷² Sîrbu 1996, 52, fig. 91/4,5; 95/4,5.

⁷³ Florea 2000, fig. 4/3.

⁷⁴ Berciu 1979, 481-487, fig. 1, 3.

⁷⁵ Dupoi, Sîrbu 2001, 67, fig. 95/2, 3.

⁷⁶ Berzovan, Olteanu, Pădureanu 2009, 274-284.

specified (a separation of rows?). The signs do not have the same depth. The upper part of the letter *l* is thinner than the lower part. A similar sign, just as thin, appears above the last letter (another letter?).

The missing discovery context of the vessel, its exact form or content and the lack of clarity of some signs make all our assumptions only hypothetical.

Tamga signs

In other two cases from Covasna, the signs could have a different meaning.⁷⁷

6. *Bi-conical vessel* (Pl. III/1)⁷⁸. The sign was made before firing, under the rim: two vertical lines curved at the lower ends, with an arch in between at the upper ends.

Similar Dacian vessels from Covasna, wheel made, of grey fabric, are mainly deposit vessels, fruit bowls, cups or *kantharoi*. By shape, the vessel mentioned above could be a local *kantharos*, but, in the absence of the handles, this classification remains hypothetical, without excluding other possibilities. The fragment was found in the area of Edifice I.

The incised sign is most likely a *tamga*.⁷⁹ Similar but not identical signs were found east of the Carpathians (Dumbrava⁸⁰, Holboca⁸¹) on Sarmatian objects. Signs of this type are relatively rare in the Sarmatian sites north to the Black Sea.⁸² When appearing in elaborate compositions, the sign is also represented upward, resembling some horns.⁸³

The sign also appears in the composition of more elaborated *tamga* signs from Dacian sites.⁸⁴ Very close analogies for these sign appears on a Dacian painted vessels from the Orăștie Mountains.⁸⁵

7. *Cattle bone* (Pl. III/2). The sign was superficially incised: two straight lines united in a sharp angle, with a circle above the intersection and an arch on top. The bone was discovered near the tower erected at the junction of Terraces II and III, along with other similar (unmarked) cattle bones.

⁷⁷ I want to thank my colleague Vitalie Bărcă for the analogies found for these signs and for the suggestions regarding their interpretation.

⁷⁸ Pupeză, Crișan 2019, 42-43.

⁷⁹ Sirbu, Oța 2019.

⁸⁰ Sanie, Sanie 2011, fig. 12/11.

⁸¹ Beldiman 1990, fig. 5/17.

⁸² Solomonik 1959, 168; Drachuk 1975, Tab. V, VI; Yatsenko 2001, fig. 3, 5-7.

⁸³ Solomonik 1959, 21.

⁸⁴ Beldiman 1990, fig. 1.

⁸⁵ Florea, Palko 1991, 42-52, pl. II/1, 4; III/1. Florea 1998, 161-162, pl. 42, 58/8, 9; Gheorghiu 2005, fig. 141/1; Cristescu 2012, fig. 15/6; Cristescu 2014, pl. 10/1, 2.

As in the previous example, the incised sign is most likely a *tamga*. In the Sarmatian world, *tamga* signs on bones were common, some similar with the one from Covasna.⁸⁶ In the Dacian Kingdom bone objects were frequently decorated, but rarely marked with signs of some special meaning. A few *tamga* signs on bone were discovered, especially in sites east of the Carpathians.⁸⁷

In the Sarmatian world, there are signs similar to the letter O, X (cross) or Y as well, on various materials including ceramics.⁸⁸ Sometimes these *tamga* signs have one or all arched extremities. Similar signs were found also in Dacia (Jigodin,⁸⁹ Pecica,⁹⁰ Sânsimion⁹¹). The presence of *tamga* signs in the Dacian world can be a result of the connections with the Sarmatian space. Most of the *tamga* signs were discovered in the eastern part of Dacia.⁹² The presence of *tamga* signs at Covasna and its surroundings (Cernat,⁹³ Jigodin,⁹⁴ Sânsimion⁹⁵) could be related to the location of this area, a link between the Carpathian Basin and the East Carpathian space.

Most likely, this types of *tamga* in the Sarmatian world indicates property, sometimes in a very restrictive way. The most *tamga* signs found in the Dacian sites were incised on Dacian vessels. It is difficult to determine if these signs had the same utility as in their origin area or the signs acquired new meanings in the Dacian world.⁹⁶

Marking the game

At Covasna, more than 500 *tesserae* made of pottery walls were discovered. Some were cut from decorated pottery walls, others were perforated or have an incised point in the central area, but the vast majority of these *tesserae* are simple. Four *tesserae* have incised marks made probably after cutting.

8. *Tessera* (Pl. III/3). Four straight lines joining in a point and a line connecting other two lines were incised on one side. It was found near the wall of Terraces II.

⁸⁶ Solomonik 1959, 114, pl. 54. Drachuk 1975, Tab. XI, XIV, XX, XXIII. Yatsenko 2001, fig. 16.

⁸⁷ Ursachi 1995, pl. 29/1. Vulpe, Teodor 2003, fig. 83/1, 84/1.

⁸⁸ Solomonik 1959, 169; Drachuk 1975, Tab. II, III, XI; Yatsenko 2001, fig. 5/ 47, 60.

⁸⁹ Crișan, Gheorghiu, Popescu 2004, pl. 17/2.

⁹⁰ Grumeza 2018, fig. 1/1b, pl. 1/1, 2/1-4.

⁹¹ Beldiman 1990, 149, fig. 4/10.

⁹² Beldiman 1990, 139-151.

⁹³ Crișan 2000, pl. 68/2.

⁹⁴ Crișan, Gheorghiu, Popescu 2004, 116-118, pl. 17/2.

⁹⁵ Beldiman, Szoncz 1992, 259-266.

⁹⁶ Beldiman 1990, 139-151; Sirbu, Oța 2019.

9. *Tessera* (Pl. III/4). Two lines united in an angle and a straight line (?) were superficially incised on one side. One mark is similar in shape with the Latin or Greek letter Y. It was found in the area of Edifice I.

10. *Tessera* (Pl. III/5)⁹⁷. Two straight lines crossing approximately through the middle and two points on either side of the intersection area were deeply incised on one side. The mark is similar in shape with the Latin or Greek letter X. It was found on the Terraces I.

11. *Tessera* (Pl. III/6). Lines that intersect in right angles, an arch and two “arrows” were incised on both sides. It was found on the Terraces II.

As in the case of other similar discoveries from the Dacian Kingdom, the *tesserae* found at Covasna were most likely game pieces.⁹⁸ In Roman world, games that used such pieces were “mill” or *ludus latrunculorum*.⁹⁹ In the particular case of *ludus latrunculorum* not all pieces were equal; those representing the “officers” were of greater value than the “soldiers”. The differentiation was probably made by colour, size or marking.

These differentiations could be assumed in the case of some *tesserae* found at Covasna, including those with markings mentioned above (no. 9 and 10). However, the elaborate marks (no. 8 and 11) seem to have had a different purpose than to point out a simple difference in a game. But what these drawings represent is difficult to presume, especially since the context of discovery is not well determined.

Graphic signs or simple scratches

The incised signs found at Covasna are part of a wider phenomenon from the Dacian world. The materials with incised signs are diverse and relatively numerous. In some cases, the marks were probably simple signs, with a decorative role; others play a part in large figurative compositions that are difficult to decipher. Some signs could be in fact letters. But we lack important details to determine their meaning (authors, alphabet, content or capacity of the vessels). Often the discovery contexts are unknown; so, their chronology is uncertain.

In the particular case of Covasna, additional information about the incised signs will be provided when the research in Edifice I will be finished. The material associations, the chronology and especially the functionality of the feature are key elements in the interpretation of the signs found here.

⁹⁷ Crişan, Sirbu 1999, fig. 1/2.

⁹⁸ Pop 1996, 71-75. Mihăilescu-Bîrliba 2016, 41-42.

⁹⁹ Paki, Cociş 1993, 149-161.

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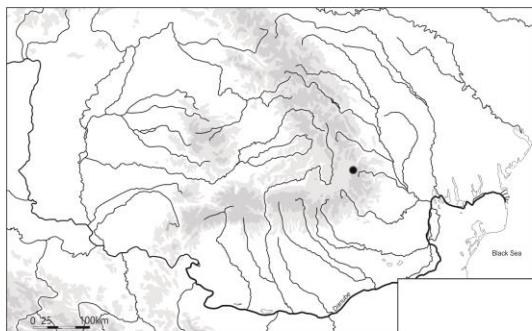
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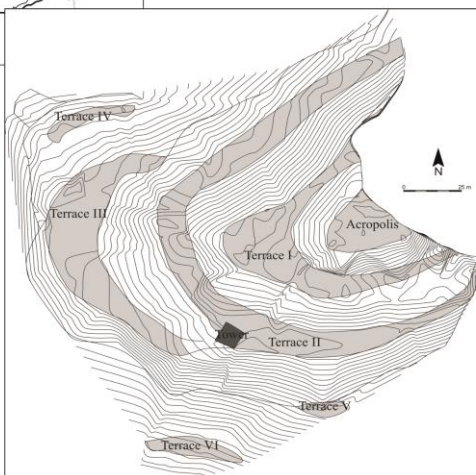


1.

**Covasna
Cetatea Zânelor
(Fairies' Fortress)**



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



1.



2.



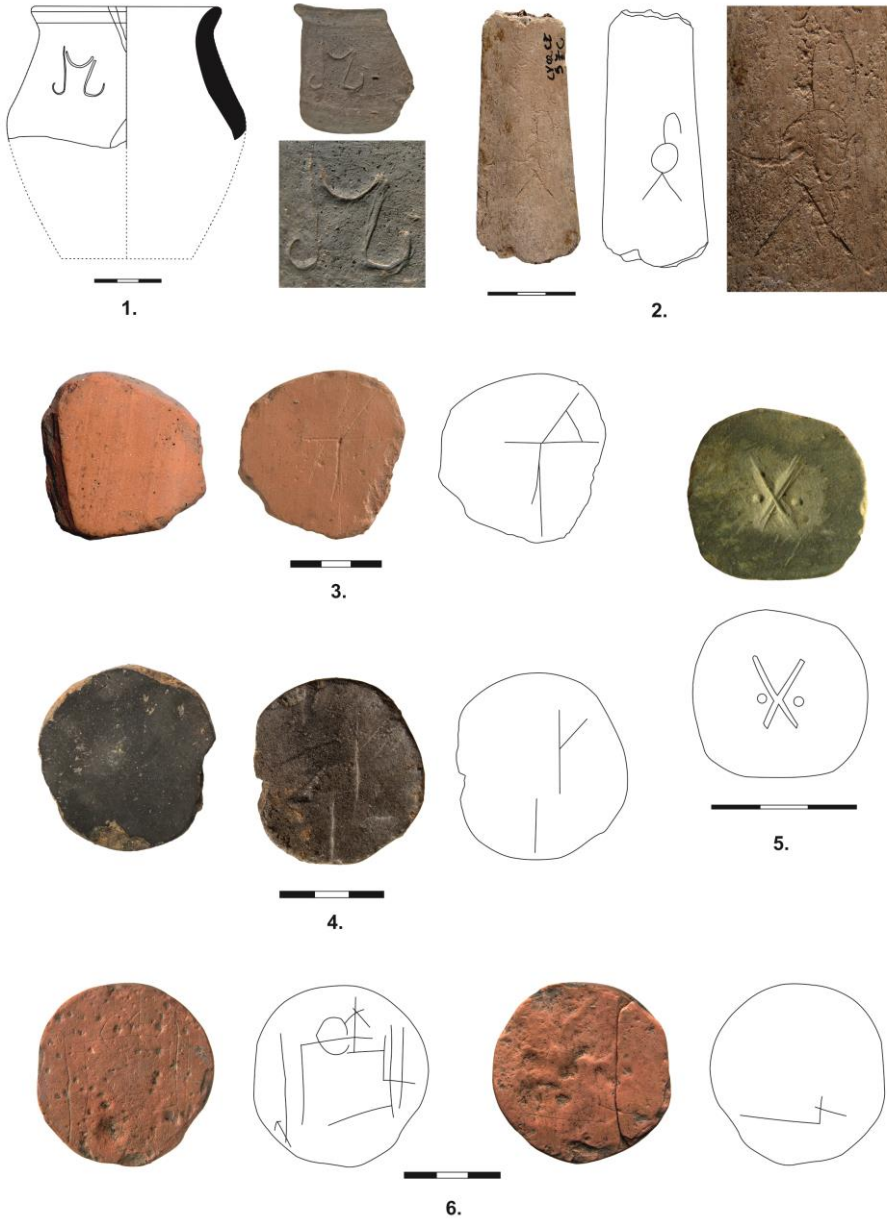
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4.



5.



PL. III