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Writing, reading and literacy in Dacia

Articles

PAUL PUPEZĂ

Graphic Signs or Simple Scratches? Marks on Dacian Artefacts from Covasna – Cetatea Zânelor 3

RADU IUSTINIAN ZĂGREANU, DAN AUGUSTIN DEAC, ANGELICA MOLDOVAN

Pottery Vessels with Graffiti Discovered in the Roman Fort from Orheiu Bistriței 23

LUCIANA NEDELEA

Graffiti, Tituli Picti and Manufacturer Stamps Identified on Roman Earthenware from the Potaissa Legionary Fortress (2nd-3rd centuries AD) 39

DAN DANA, PAUL DINULESCU

Graffites sur céramique de Gârla Mare, dép. de Mehedinți (territoire de Drobeta) 71

SORIN NEMETI, EUGENIA BEU-DACHIN, SORIN COCIȘ

On Displayed Writing. Bronze Inscriptions from Napoca 87

SORIN NEMETI, FELIX MARCU

Exit Fanius. About a Brick Stamp from Drobeta 99

IRINA NEMETI

Seal Boxes from Potaissa 107

TIMEA VARGA, PAUL CHIOREAN

Ars scribendi. Writing Implements Discovered in the Legionary Fortress of Potaissa 123

In memoriam

Lucia Țeposu Marinescu (Mihai Bărbulescu) 145

Book reviews

Matthew Symonds, *Protecting the Roman Empire. Fortlets, Frontiers and the Quest for Post-Conquest Security*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2018, 251 p. (Horațiu Cociș) 149

Alina Streinu, *Vase antice de sticlă din colecția "Maria și Dr. George Severeanu". /The Glass Vessels in the "Maria și Dr. George Severeanu" Collection. Seria Colecția "Maria și Dr. George Severeanu" III*. Editura Cetatea de scaun, Târgoviște, 2019, 264 p. (Ovidiu Botiș) 151

Dávid Petruț, *Pottery and Military Life. The Ceramic Assemblages from the Barracks of the Auxiliary Fort at Buciumi, Dacia Porolissensis. Studii și cercetări asupra frontierelor Imperiului roman de pe teritoriul României*, vol. 4, Cluj Napoca, Mega Press, 2018, 198 p. (Alina Ioana Piticar) 155

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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

* The topic of this study was partially published as Pupeză, Crișan 2019.

** 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, Crişan 1999, 71-81; Crişan 2000, 33-36; Crişan 2009, 59-64; Crişan, Sirbu 2010, 266-285; Crişan, Sirbu, Popescu 2013, 22-26; Crişan, Sirbu, Pupeză 2016, 19-41.

² Pupeză, Crişan 2019, 38.

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

⁴ Pupeză, Crişan 2019, 38.

⁵ Pupeză, Crişan 2019, 38.

⁶ Pupeză, Crişan 2019, 38.

⁷ Pupeză, Crişan 2019, 38.

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

⁹ Pupeză, Crişan 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 Greaca¹⁸, 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 Ocnița,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 Ocnița,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 Crişan, 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 Crişan 2000, pl. 68/2.

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

⁹⁵ Beldiman, Szoncz 1992, 259-266.

⁹⁶ Beldiman 1990, 139-151; Sirbu, Oţa 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.

List of plates

Pl. I. Covasna - Cetatea Zânelor. 1. Location 2. Aerial view (photo made by D. Ștefan) 3. Topography (plan made by Z. Bede). 4, 6. The walls (photos made by V. Crișan). 5. The tower on Terraces II (photo made by D. Ștefan). 7. Edifices with wooden pillars (photo by the author).

Pl. II. Covasna - Cetatea Zânelor. 1-4 Pottery fragments with incised signs. 5. Pottery fragment with cursive Latin (photos and drawings made by the author).

Pl. III. Covasna - Cetatea Zânelor. 1. Pottery fragment with a *tamga* sign. 2. Cattle bone with a *tamga* sign. 3-6. *Tesserae* with marks (photos and drawings made by the author).

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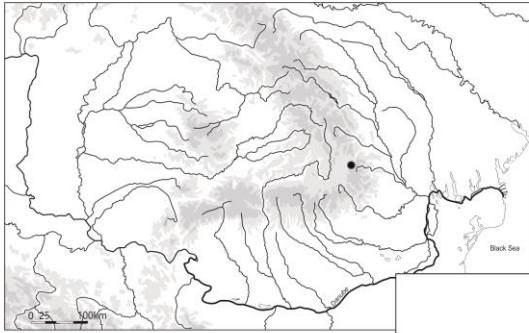
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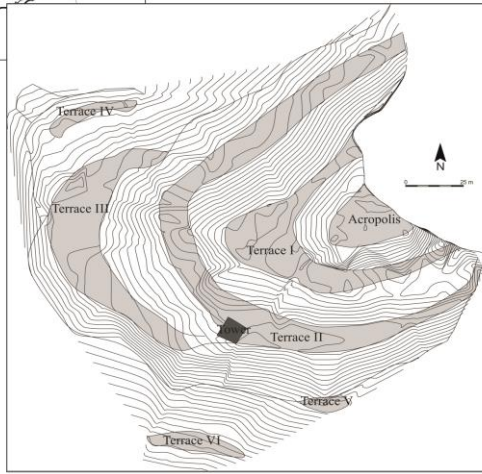


1.

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



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.



1.



2.



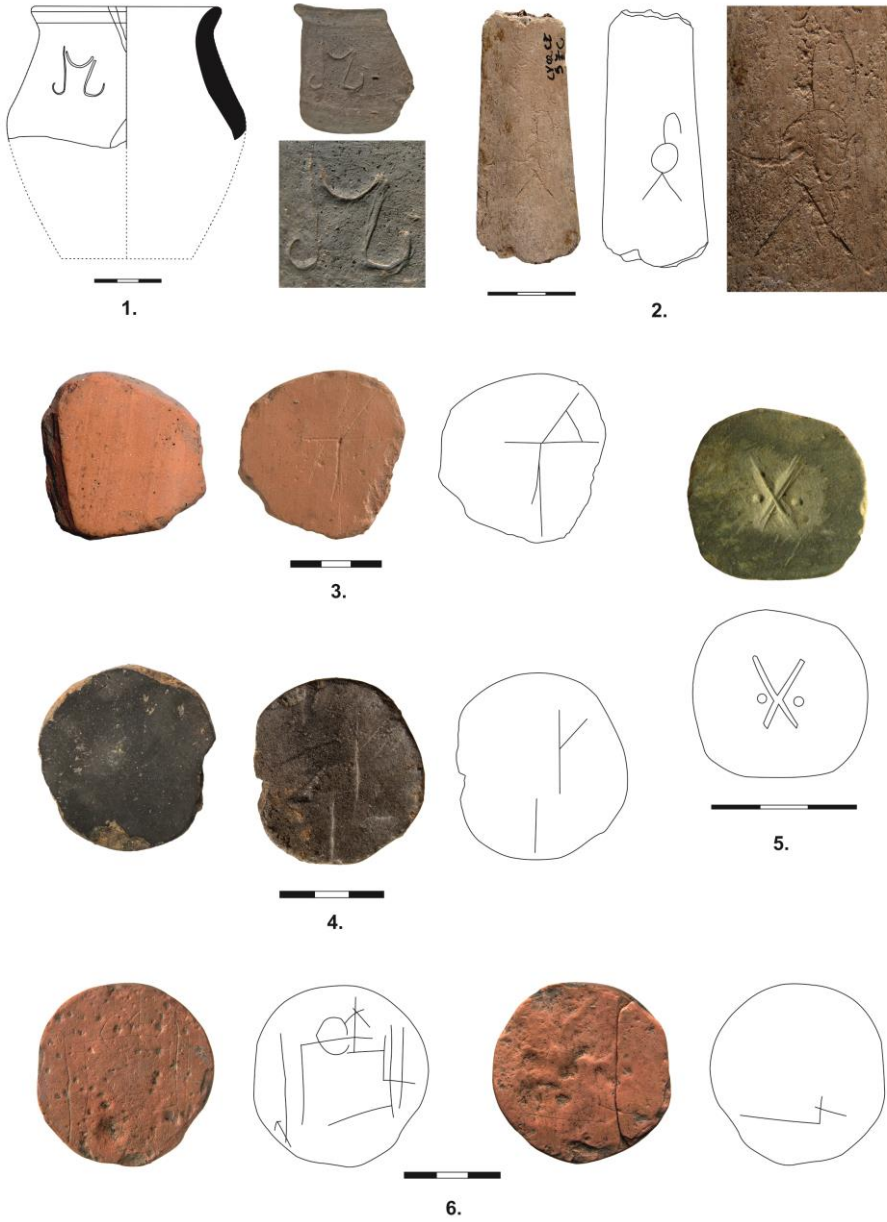
3.



4.



5.



PL. III

Pottery Vessels with Graffiti Discovered in the Roman Fort from Orheiu Bistriței

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Abstract: New invasive archaeological investigations from the inner areas of the Roman fort from Orheiu Bistriței conducted in the summer of 2019 have yielded thirteen pottery vessels with graffiti. The inscribed texts discovered at Orheiu Bistriței are, without exception, written in Latin and were incised after the pots were fired (*post cocturam*). Generally, these depict the name of the owner with one exception, which might depict a number.

Keywords: Roman fort, potsherds, graffito

Rezumat: Noi cercetări arheologice în interiorul castrului roman de la Orheiu Bistriței din vara anului 2019 au dus la descoperirea a 13 fragmente ceramice cu *graffiti*. Textele scrise de la Orheiu Bistriței sunt, fără excepție, redactate în latină și au fost incizate după ce vasele au fost arse (*post cocturam*). În general redau numele proprietarului vasului, cu o singură excepție, care poate reprezenta un numeral.

Cuvinte cheie: castru roman, fragmente ceramice, graffito

Introduction

The Roman fort from Orheiu Bistriței (fig. 1), located in the north-eastern frontier area of Roman Dacia, has benefited from little archaeological investigations so far¹. The historical data regarding the

* We would like to address our gratitude to Dan Dana (CNRS/HISOMA, Lyon) for the observations, corrections of earlier versions of the manuscript and for giving us access to use

fort, its civilian settlement, necropolis or other elements are thus parsimonious. One can outline with certainty the presence of the military unit named *cohors I Hispanorum milliaria*², without advancing any other relevant pieces of information regarding the unit's prosopography or its encampment duration in this fort³.

New invasive archaeological investigations from the inner areas of the fort conducted in the summer of 2019 have yielded thirteen pottery vessels with graffiti which represent the focal point of this paper (fig. 2)⁴. Judging by the archaeological contextualization – which will be discussed in detail on a different occasion – one can state that the pottery shards with graffiti can be dated to the 2nd century CE.

Graffiti in Roman Dacia. A short incursion

The first *corpus* of inscribed pottery vessels discovered in Roman Dacia was created in 1992, comprising of 123 pieces, which were made in both Greek and Latin⁵. Subsequently, a series of new pottery vessels with graffiti have been discovered in the area of Dacia Porolissensis, inscribed either in Latin, Greek or Aramaic at: *Arcobara/Ilișua, Certiae?/Brusturi-Romita; Porolissum/Moigrad-Jac, Buciumi, Gilău, Napoca/Cluj-Napoca* and *Potaissa/Turda*; all these substantially contribute to a better understanding of important aspects related to Roman provincial life, such as the vernacular Latin language spoken on the frontier, onomastic, military prosopography or religion⁶.

the map of Dacia Porolissensis created by him. All mistakes or misjudgements are however our own.

¹ See recent research on the fort in Protase 2008; Marcu 2009, 86-87.

² See Petolescu 2002, 111-112, no. 45 for the historical date and the prosopography of this military unit.

³ For the types of stamped bricks and tiles with the name of the military unit see ILD II 1025 (where a graffito is also mentioned on a pot), respectively IDR App. I XLIV/1-3 and XLV/1. Furthermore, one single epigraphic funerary monument is known so far as being discovered at Orheiu Bistriței: CIL III 7624 = Zăgreanu 2014, 235, O. IF.1, pl. XCVII/ O.IF.1. See also ILD I 805. In regard of the ancient name of the Roman settlement from Orheiu Bistriței, Sorin Nemeti theoretically advanced the idea that it should have been *Triphulum* (see Deac 2013, 265-266 with the previous bibliographic references; Nemeti 2014, 66).

⁴ The archaeological investigations were carried out by Radu Zăgreanu, the scientific coordinator of the excavations and Angelica Moldovan (Museum Complex Bistrița-Năsăud), between June and July.

⁵ Gudea, Cosma 1992, 201-247. For the paleography of these texts see Voloșciuc 2007, 57-68.

⁶ E.g. Deac, Dana 2019, 114, n. 13 for an overview of these occurrences. To this one should add Beu-Dachin, Isac 2019. For pottery vessels with graffiti from other parts of Dacia, recently discovered or reinterpreted, see for example: Dana 2013-2014, 47-48, no. 4; Bondoc 2015, 68, 110-111, nos. 309-411, pl. LVII-LVIII (photos and drawings); Dana 2015, 93-98; Dana 2016, 96-97, no. 6 = AE 2016, 1337; Dana, Tuțulescu 2017, 197-206 = AE 2017, 1197-1199 with the relevant bibliographic references.

Observations related to the earthenware inscribed with graffiti discovered at Orheiul Bistriței

The inscribed texts discovered at Orheiul Bistriței are, without exception, written in Latin and were incised after the pots were fired (*post cocturam*). Generally, these depict the name of the owner with one exception, no. 13, which might depict a number. Given the context of the discoveries all these individuals are likely to have been of peregrine status⁷. One can notice that the names are rendered either in nominative (cat. no. 1, 2 and 5) or in genitive (cat. no. 3, 6, 7 and possibly 9), in the cases where such assertions can be testified. As a general rule one can observe that the chosen method of writing was that with capital letters, nicely shaped and outlined. From a paleographic point of view one can draw a series of conclusions. The form of the letter “E” is cursive, rendered with two vertical parallel lines each time when the letter is encountered (cat. no. 2 and 5 and possibly cat. no. 12)⁸. The “A” letter is rendered without the horizontal stroke (cat. no. 4 and 6). On the other hand, even though there are some similarities in the different graffiti, one can observe that the “S” has slightly an alternating *ductus* different in each of the occurrences (cat. no. 1, 2, 5 and possibly 10) either cursive or capital in style. Thus, one can trace the existence of several handwritings which actually made the incisions. The rather simple or “mechanical” form (e.g. “I” or “N”), the rare occurrence or partial visibility in order to distinguish similarities or differences (for examples “R”, “L”, “B” or “M”), lack of parallels between Orheiul Bistriței and near-by discoveries, do not argue however for a proper paleographic analysis of the aforementioned letters⁹.

The high concentrations of such pottery vessels incised with graffiti discovered practically in the same context raises the question whether it was a common practice or an accident that so many of these finds were located in the *retentura dextra* of the fort. A similar high concentration can be encountered at *Porolissum* in the edifice conventionally labeled as C4, localized in the *latus sinistrum* of the Pomet hill fort, a building which is believed to have functioned as a *fabrica*, or a

⁷ See in detail Varga 2014.

⁸ As a closely located analogy one can point to a jug incised with the name of the owner – *Crescentis* – discovered in the Roman settlement at Cristești, Mureș County (IDR III/4 163 = Gudea, Cosma 1992, 215, no. 80 = Man 2011, 208, no. 1, pl. CLIV/1).

⁹ In the north-eastern area of Dacia Porolissensis few Latin graffiti have been discovered so far in military contexts, just at *Arcobara*, located near-by, slightly to the west of the fort from Orheiul Bistriței (see Gudea, Cosma 1992, 216, nos. 86-89); Dana et al. 2012, 49-56 = AE 2012, 1201). For a graffito in Greek on a piece of pottery from the same settlement see CIGD 56.

valetudinarium, or a (part of a) *praetorium*¹⁰. It is followed by the headquarters (*principia*)¹¹, the personal residence of the fort commander (*praetorium*)¹² or by the isolated discoveries from the *praetentura*, especially from the area of the barracks¹³. In any case, the need of the military to incise their names on the pots indicates that in the case of Orheiu Bistriței, just like at *Porolissum*, the location speaks for an intensively used and circulated area.

Finally, it should be concluded that the ceramic vessels incised with graffiti discovered in the fort from Orheiu Bistriței enhanced our knowledge on the military prosopography and paleography from the north-eastern area of Roman Dacia, both disciplines being in an incipient status at Orheiu Bistriței for the time being.

Catalogue¹⁴

1. Clay vessel incised with graffito. Dimensions: h = 12 cm, l = 8.5 cm, w = 0.7 cm; h_{letters} = 2.5 cm. Letters incised after firing the pot (*post cocturam*). Bistrița-Năsăud Museum Complex, inv. no. 26724 (pl. I/1).

Description: Earthenware shard belonging to the inferior register of the pot; fine fabric, traces of slip distinguishable; reddish color, the inscription being near the bottom of the pot.

Location of discovery: fort, *retentura dextra*, S1, feature 1, depth = 140 cm.

Text: [---]nus, (centuria) Vu[---].

Observations: the sign of the *centuria* is rendered with the typical mark made like an elongated sign shaped like „>“; few of the letters from the end part of the name of the soldier and the beginning of the centurion are visible, resulting in more possibilities and variants when reading the names¹⁵.

¹⁰ See Gudea, Cosma 1992, 218-219, nos. 107, 109, 110, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116. For the edifice conventionally named C4 see Marcu 2009, 92-93; Opreanu, Lăzărescu 2016, 75, 263 (with previous bibliographic references).

¹¹ Gudea, Cosma 1992, 217-218, nos. 93, 94, 96, 98, 99.

¹² Gudea, Cosma 1992, 218-219, nos. 105, 108, 111.

¹³ Gudea, Cosma 1992, 218, nos. 100, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121. Of course, in every of these occurrences one has to bear in mind the hazardous way discoveries of pottery vessels incised with graffiti were made give the methodology of the archaeological research. One can conclude that in reality, such discoveries are purely fortunate.

¹⁴ The technical abbreviations used in the catalogue are: S = archaeological trench; m = meter; h = height; l = length; w = width; h_{letters} = height of letters. Furthermore, the photos and drawing were made by the authors.

¹⁵ For the name of the centurion and varieties of reading it, most likely of a Latin origin, consult Solin, Salomies 1994, 214 (*nomina*) 425 (*cognomina*). For the occurrence consisting of the name of soldier – sign of *centuria* – name of centurion see another example from Dacia

2. Clay vessel incised with graffito. Dimensions: h = 8 cm, l = 7 cm, w = 0.7 cm. H_{letters} = 2.5 cm. Letters incised after firing the pot (*post cocturam*). Bistrița-Năsăud Museum Complex, inv. no. 26727 (pl. I/2).

Description: Earthenware shard belonging to the superior part of the pot, the inscription being placed above the maximum diameter of the pot. Fine fabric, yellowish color.

Location of discovery: fort, *retentura dextra*, S2, m = 4, at 9 m from the western profile, depth = 160 cm.

Text: [T?]eres.

Observations: "E" is incised through two parallel and vertical lines just like cat. no. 5. The left stroke of the first "E" is only partially preserved in its lower side. "R" has a typical form in Latin paleography, with the right stroke slightly elongated and slightly wavy, while the "S" is very neatly done. Teres is a very commonly encountered Thracian name¹⁶.

3. Clay vessel incised with graffito. Dimensions: h = 9 cm, l = 19.5 cm, w = 1.4 cm. H_{letters} = 4.5 cm. Letters incised after firing the pot (*post cocturam*). Bistrița-Năsăud Museum Complex, inv. no. 26735 (pl. I/3).

Description: Earthenware shard belonging to the superior part of the pot; fine fabric; traces of paint are visible; reddish color; the inscription is placed above the maximum diameter of the pot.

Location of discovery: fort, *retentura dextra*, S1, m = 1-3, depth = 30-80 cm.

Text: *Luci*.

Observations: The horizontal stroke of "L" is broken off, being initially slightly elongated similarly to cat. no. 8. The Latin *praenomen* Lucius is commonly attested in Roman Dacia or in other provinces of the Roman Empire, bearing sometimes the role of a *nomen* or *cognomen*¹⁷. In this particular case the name is in genitive.

4. Clay vessel incised with graffito. Dimensions: h = 8.5 cm, l = 11.5 cm, w = 0.5 cm. H_{letters} = 2 cm. Letters incised after firing the pot (*post cocturam*). Bistrița-Năsăud Museum Complex, inv. no. 26734 (pl. I/4).

Porolissensis from the fort of Buciumi, Sălaj County, in Dana, Petruț 2015, 19-24, pl. 4 (photo and drawing = AE 2015, 1165; cf. Petruț 2018, 60 and 165, pl. 7.1 (drawing)).

¹⁶ See Dana 2014, 355-361, with fig. 45 (map of the occurrences of the name). For the Thracians acting in the auxiliary of the Roman Empire see Zahariade 2009.

¹⁷ Solin, Salomies 1994, 107 and 354. Such an example is found in Roman Dacia close-by Orheiul Bistriței at *Samum*/Cășeu where the name of one of the *beneficarii* stationed there is Scantius Lucius (ILD 771-773 = Piso 2019, *passim*).

Description: Earthenware shard belonging to the superior part of the pot; fine fabric; traces of color visible; reddish color; the inscription is placed above the maximum diameter of the pot.

Location of discovery: fort, *retentura dextra*, S1, m = 1-3, depth = 120 cm.

Text: [---]manī sive [---]manī[---].

Observations: Given the fact that the last vertical stroke is rendered parallel with the previous one there is a more likely possibility that the letter should be read as "I" instead of "V". The "A" is rendered without a horizontal stroke just like cat. no. 6. The name has most likely a Latin origin¹⁸.

5. Clay vessel incised with graffito. Dimensions: h = 9.5 cm, l = 8.5 cm, w = 0.6 cm. H_{letters} = 2.5 cm. Letters incised after firing the pot (*post cocturam*). Bistrița-Năsăud Museum Complex, inv. no. 26728 (pl. I/5).

Description: Earthenware shard belonging to the superior part of the pot; fine fabric; reddish color with traces of red paint; the inscription is placed above the maximum diameter of the pot.

Location of discovery: fort, *retentura dextra*, S2, area of the pedestal no. 2, m = 9, at 6 m from the western profile; depth = 180 cm.

Text: [---]mes.

Observations: The "M" letter is partially preserved. "E" is rendered through two vertical and parallel strokes as in the case of cat. no. 2, while the final "S" is incised through an irregular, oblique stroke, which continues to be elongated in the lower part, a common feature in the cursive Latin writing. Judging by the position of the letters the name was incised in nominative. This aspect considerably limits the possibilities of reading the name, with two options previously encountered in Roman Dacia: [*Her*]mes¹⁹ or [*The(i)*]mes²⁰.

¹⁸ For instance, the *nomen* Romanus, is encountered in Dacia at *Apulum* or *Sarmizegetusa* (see IDR III/5, 162, 452 respectively IDR III/3, 209). Consult also Solin, Salomies 1994, 156 and 392; OPEL IV 31. Of course, there are numerous other versions of reading the name, for instance Germanus, Primanus, Romanus, etc. In the case where the letters form the beginning of the name, then it should be read as Manius, unknown previously in Roman Dacia and a rarely encountered name elsewhere (for this Latin name see Solin, Salomies 1994, 112 and 357).

¹⁹ The name is found at *Apulum* (IDR III/5, 42, 380, 452, 489; ILD 457, 458) and *Sarmizegetusa* (IDR III/2, 219).

²⁰ Consult Piso 2015, 199 for this name, followed by relevant bibliographic references.

6. Clay vessel incised with graffito. Dimensions: h = 6.5 cm, l = 12 cm, w = 0.6 cm. H_{letters} = 3.5 cm. Letters incised after firing the pot (*post cocturam*). Bistrița-Năsăud Museum Complex, inv. no. 26731 (pl. II/6).

Description: Earthenware shard belonging to the superior part of the pot; fine fabric; light brown color, the inscription is placed above the maximum diameter of the pot.

Location of discovery: fort, *retentura dextra*, S1, in the area of the western profile of the archaeological trench; depth = 100 cm.

Text: *Fabi*.

Observations: After the last partially preserved stroke, which renders "I", a considerable space was left which alludes to the fact that the name was incised in genitive. Fabius is a Latin name very often encountered in Roman Dacia and everywhere else in the Roman world²¹. The "F" letter is partially preserved on its left side and was made in a cursive manner, while the "A" does not have a horizontal stroke, similar to the case of cat. no. 4.

7. Clay vessel incised with graffito. Dimensions: h = 6 cm, l = 11 cm, w = 0.7 cm. H_{letters} = 4.5 cm. Letters incised after firing the pot (*post cocturam*). Bistrița-Năsăud Museum Complex, inv. no. 26730 (pl. II/7).

Description: Earthenware shard belonging to the superior part of the pot; semi-fine fabric; traces of reddish paint are visible; yellow-reddish color; the inscription is placed above the maximum diameter of the pot.

Location of discovery: fort, *retentura dextra*, S3, m = 10, at 13-14 meters from the western profile of the archaeological trench; depth = 60 cm.

Text: [---]VI sive [---]VI[---].

Observations: there is a considerable chance that the text gives the name of the owner, more precisely the end part of it just like cat. no. 11; due to the low number of letters a coherent reading is at the moment impossible.

8. Clay vessel incised with graffito. Dimensions: h = 5 cm, l = 5 cm, w = 0.3 cm. H_{letters} = 4.5 cm. Letters incised after firing the pot (*post cocturam*). Bistrița-Năsăud Museum Complex, inv. no. 26732 (pl. II/8).

Description: Earthenware shard belonging to the superior part of the pot; broken in two pieces. Fine fabric with traces of engobe applied in

²¹ Solin, Salomies 1994, 76.

a thick layer. The inscription is placed above the maximum diameter of the pot.

Location of discovery: fort, *retentura dextra*, S1, in the area of the western of the archaeological trench; depth = 100 cm.

Text: [---]VL[---].

Observations: One can observe the neat form of the letters. Only the inferior part of the letter "V" is preserved, while the "L" is made in an elongated manner but, just like the "V", it is broken in its superior part. The reading options are diverse. Some examples could be advanced, without excluding other possibilities, such as: [I]ul[ius; -i]; Ul[pius; -i] etc.

9. Clay vessel incised with graffito. Dimensions: h = 14.5 cm, l = 12 cm, w = 0.6 cm. H_{Iletters} = 6 cm. Letters incised after firing the pot (*post cocturam*). Bistrița-Năsăud Museum Complex, inv. no. 26733 (pl. II/9).

Description: Earthenware shard belonging to the superior part of the pot; fine fabric; reddish color; the inscription is placed above the maximum diameter of the pot.

Location of discovery: fort, *retentura dextra*, S1, m = 1-3; depth = 120 cm.

Text: [---]NI sive [---]NI[---].

Observations: We are faced again with a name representing the ownership of the pot without being able to tell precisely if the segment belongs to the beginning, middle or the end of the name (in genitive). Thus further remarks cannot be advanced for the moment. Beneath the letters a series of thin scratches are visible.

10. Clay vessel incised with graffito. Dimensions: h = 12 cm, l = 5 cm, w = 1.5 cm. H_{Iletters} = 4 cm. Letters incised after firing the pot (*post cocturam*). Bistrița-Năsăud Museum Complex, inv. no. 26729 (pl. II/10).

Description: Earthenware shard belonging to the superior part of the pot; brownish color; the inscription is placed above the maximum diameter of the pot.

Location of discovery: fort, *retentura dextra*, S2, m = 1-3; depth = 130 cm, at approximately 5.5-7 m from the western profile of the archaeological trench.

Text: [---]+S(?)R(?) sive S(?)B(?) [---].

Observations: Both letters are partially preserved. One can observe a stroke prior to the "S" (?) letter while after the second letter the oblique line is the result of damage. Other relevant pieces of information cannot be asserted given the fragmentary state of preservation, except for

the fact that, most likely, we are dealing with letters forming the middle part of the name.



Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

11. Clay vessel incised with graffiti. Dimensions: h = 5.3 cm, l =

7.5 cm, w = 1 cm. H_{letters} = 2.2 cm. Letters incised after firing the pot (*post cocturam*). Bistrița-Năsăud Museum Complex, inv. no. 26725 (pl. II/11).

Description: Earthenware shard belonging to the superior part of the pot; fine fabric; traces of reddish paint visible; the inscription is placed above the maximum diameter of the pot.

Location of discovery: fort, *retentura dextra*, S2, depth = 180 cm.

Text: [---]ni.

Observations: Only the upper part of the letter "I" is partially preserved. As in the case of cat. no. 7 we are most likely dealing with the final part of an owner's name, written in genitive.

12. Clay vessel incised with graffito. Dimensions: fragm. a) h = 3.5 cm, l = 4.3 cm, w = 1.4 cm. H_{letters} = 3.5 cm; fragm. b) h = 4 cm, l = 6 cm, g = 1.4 cm. H_{letters} = 4 cm. Letters incised after firing the pot (*post cocturam*). Bistrița-Năsăud Museum Complex, inv. no. 26736 and 26737 (pl. II/12).

Description: Earthenware shard belonging to the superior part of the pot; fine fabric brown-reddish in color.

Location of discovery: fort, *retentura dextra*, S1, m = 1-3; depth = 30-80 cm.

Text: fragm. a) N? sive II; fragm. b) [---]VIN[---] sive [---]VE[---] etc.

Observations: The two fragments were discovered in the same context; there is a high possibility that both were part of the same vessel. In the case of fragment a) two possibilities regarding the interpretation emerge, either reading it as an "N" or the number two, made through two vertical and parallel lines crossed by an oblique one. For the case of fragment b) the reading of the two vertical lines might be interpreted as an "E" letter, rendered cursively just like in other occurrences such as cat. nos. 2 and 5.

13. Clay vessel incised with graffito. Dimensions: h = 11 cm, l = 7.5 cm, w = 1.2 cm. H_{litere} = 2 cm. The letters were incised after firing the pot (*post cocturam*). Complexul Muzeal Bistrița-Năsăud, inv. no. 26726 (pl. II/13).

Description: Earthenware shard belonging to the superior part of the pot; fine fabric; reddish color; the inscription is placed above the maximum diameter of the pot.

Location of discovery: fort, *retentura dextra*, S1, feature 1, next to the wall of the edifice, 5.5 m away from the western profile of the archaeological trench; depth = 160 cm.

Text: [---]X̄.

Observations: The text inscribed most likely mentions a number with a horizontal stroke rendered above X, having a value of nine or another ending in ten.

List of illustration:

Fig. 1. Map of Dacia Porolissensis (courtesy of Dan Dana, modified by the authors with the location of Orheiu Bistriței).

Fig. 2. Aerial photography of the archaeologically excavated area of the fort (photo R. Zăgreanu).

Plates 1 and 2. Photos and drawings of the graffiti (authors).

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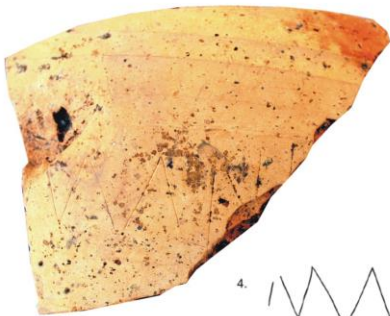
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Pl. I





Pl. II

***Graffiti, Tituli Picti* and Manufacturer Stamps Identified on Roman Earthenware from the Potaissa Legionary Fortress (2nd-3rd centuries AD)**

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Abstract: From the ceramic lot (circa 10.000 Roman wares) identified within the legionary fortress at Potaissa, only 10 of them bear *graffiti, tituli picti* and manufacturer stamps on their body (0,1% of the total). The ceramic wares were recovered from various areas of the fortress, namely the barracks (*praetentura sinistra, praetentura dextra, latus praetorii dextrum, retentura*), the legionary baths (*thermae*), the western gate (*porta decumana*), and the headquarters building (*Principia*). In the present study I will offer an interpretation of the finds, as well as an explanation for the extremely rare occurrence of manufacturer stamps within the Potaissa legionary fortress.

Keywords: *Graffiti*; Roman pottery; Potaissa; *legio V Macedonica*; legionary fortress.

Rezumat: Din întregul lot ceramic (circa 10.000 de vase de factură romană) identificat în castrul legionar de la Potaissa, doar 10 vase prezintă *graffiti, tituli picti* și ștampile de producător pe corpul lor (0,1% din total). Piesele ceramice au fost descoperite în diverse zone ale castrului, respectiv cazărmile soldaților (*praetentura sinistra, praetentura dextra, latus praetorii dextrum, retentura*), termele castrului (*thermae*), poarta de vest (*porta decumana*) și clădirea comandamentului (*Principia*). În studiul de față voi oferi o interpretare a materialului descoperit, cât și o explicație privind problema frecvenței extrem de reduse a ștampilelor de producător în castrul legionar de la Potaissa.

Cuvinte cheie: *Graffiti*; ceramică romană; Potaissa; *legio V Macedonica*; castru legionar.

General Overview

Archaeological investigations within the legionary Potaissa legionary fortress have been extensive throughout time, leading to the

discovery of circa 10.000 individual Roman wares¹. However, my analysis has indicated that only ten (representing 0,1% of the total) of these finds bear *graffiti*, *tituli picti* and manufacturer stamps (Pl. I). These highly interesting wares have been recovered from various areas of the fortress, namely the soldier's barracks (*praetentura sinistra*, *praetentura dextra*, *latus praetorii dextrum*, *retentura*), the legionary baths (*thermae*), the western gate (*porta decumana*), and the headquarters building (*Principia* - its chambers, as well as the *forum militare*).

Of the ten vessels, only three had been previously published (prior to the ceramic analysis for my doctorate thesis), namely those bearing the only three manufacturer stamps discovered within this fortress (Pl. V, VII/2-3). To these, my analysis will add six further *graffiti* and one *titulus pictus*. At the same time, in the light of recent research, I will offer a revision of the three manufacturer stamps, as well as an answer to why these stamps do not occur more frequently within the legionary fortress. The wares will be presented in the second part of the study, divided by their points of discovery. With the exception of the already published wares, each individual find will be presented as following: a) physical characteristics of the ware; b) historical interpretation of the find.

At Potaisa, the most "numerous" are the *post cocturam graffiti* (cut after firing). They are usually *milites* names of the *legio V Macedonica*, rendered with capital letters (Pl. II, IV, VI). Generally, in the military milieu, this type of *graffiti* are very frequent, as most soldiers would try to write their names in the form of simple autographs that marked their property. Due to the fact that most of them were engaged in physical activities and did not require (or put to use) the knowledge of writing very often, it is very likely that many soldiers learned how to formulate certain words by themselves. They used examples of letters similar to what they would see depicted on monuments from their surroundings, usually written in *scriptura monumentalis/capitalis monumentalis*².

This reality of the ancient Roman world is confirmed by the famous *Satyricon* passage, in which the *libertus* Hermeros was only able to recognize letters rendered on public inscriptions (*lapidarias litteras*)³. Early on, at Pompeii, a wax tablet tells us that *Quintus Aelius Romanus scripsi*

¹ See: Nedelea 2020.

² Raybould 1999, 164, referring to "moderate literacy"; At Troesmis, the name FLAVI appears on a small sized pot - See: Opaït 1980, 328-366, Pl. VI/5.

³ Petronius, *Satyricon*, 58: *Non didici geometrias, critica et alogas naenias, sed lapidarias litteras scio, partes centum dico ad aes, ad pondus, ad nummum.*

*rogatu et mandatu Marci Barbati Celeris coram ipso quod is litteras nesciret*⁴. In the year 164 AD, another *tabula cerata* from the Dacian province mentions that, at Alburnus Maior, *Flavius Secundinus scripsi rogatus a Memmio Asclepi, quia se litteras scire negavit*⁵.

Out of the ten analyzed wares discovered in the legionary fortress at Potaissa, four of them bear *graffiti* that denote personal property belonging to individual soldiers. Most of the time, when writing on them, the wares were usually turned upside down for better stability. The words were inscribed on the body or the foot of the vessels by using a sharp blade. As most of the words and letters are deformed, these *graffiti* seem to have been written with great difficulty. Lack of writing exercise, as well as the very durable fabric of the wares, have resulted in the distortion of the inscriptions. These property marks proved to be very useful when dining together within the *contubernia* of the barracks or the legionary baths⁶. The duty of washing the wares befall less experienced soldiers, freshly enrolled in the legion. From various sources we know that most of these new recruits would fulfil menial work, such as cleaning the latrines, procuring firewood and water, animal/stable care (*stabula*), or equipment maintenance⁷. Once cleaned, the wares had to be returned to their possessors. As many of the vessels looked the same, especially the Drag. 44 type bowls (plain *sigillata*, mass produced for the Potaissa legionary fortress), these property marks would help distinguish the goods (Pl. IV, VI/1). In this sense, an extremely interesting case was discovered in the perimeter of the western gate (*porta decumana*). A locally manufactured plain *sigillata* plate was marked with an “X” character (Pl. VI/2). Alongside stars/pentagrams, the “X” character is encountered very frequently on pottery finds within the military milieu. They were either batch markings (while still in the possession of the potters or the *negotiatores*), or had been used as distinguishable symbols by *illitterati* soldiers, who did not know how to spell their names. Researchers class these markings as “Pseudo-Inschriften”⁸, and examples identified at *Colonia Ulpia Traiana/Xanten*⁹ show that even though they were simple symbols, sometimes they were rendered with such clumsiness that characters like “X” and “V” could not be differentiated.

⁴ AE 1971, 92.

⁵ IDR I, 233, TC XI, no. cat. 41; Mrozek 1977, 95; Forrez 2009, 101.

⁶ Nedelea 2019, 148-152.

⁷ Herz 2007, 305-322; Dana *et alii* 2012, 49-56, Pl. I, fig. 1, Pl. II, fig. 2, *retentura sinistra*, C/2009.

⁸ Hanson 1991, 162; Harris 1989, 5.

⁹ Weiß-König 2010, 132; the “X” character = cat. no. 14, 16, 19, 22, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 45, 47, 56, 59, 60 etc.

Besides these four wares that bear *post cocturam graffiti* as property marks written in capital letters (*scriptura monumentalis*), the fortress yielded two cursive *graffiti* as well (Pl. III, VIII). One of them is an imported Curle 15 type plate, with a *post cocturam* message (?) written on its foot. The other is an *ante cocturam graffiti* (cut before firing), rendered on a locally manufactured *dolium* that indicates the name of a potter - Aelianus - who could have activated in the 3rd century AD in one of the workshops at Potaissa¹⁰. The style of the two cursive *graffiti* is similar to „Die Älteren Römischen Kursive“¹¹. The elegance and care with which the *graffito* was executed on the Curle 15 type plate can be compared to that usually observed for *graffiti* discovered at Pompeii¹². This aspect indicates that the individual who wrote the message was used to writing frequently. The fact that this *graffito* had been discovered within the headquarters building is surely no coincidence, and perhaps it was rendered by one of the officers.

To these six *graffiti* we add two manufacturer stamps on two individual Dressel 24 type *amphorae* handles (HPAKAA)¹³ (Pl. VII/2-3), a *titulus pictus* on the same amphoric type („ [---]JJJ“) (Pl. VII/1), and a manufacturer stamp on a Drag. 37 type bowl from Rheinzabern (Ianuarius Fecit)¹⁴ (Pl. V). Functionality-wise, the majority of the *graffiti* and manufacturer stamps from Potaissa fall into the *vasa escaria* group i.e. vessels used for serving food. The triage of pottery finds during archaeological campaigns could have contributed to the low frequency of *graffiti* on *instrumentum domesticum* (wares). On many occasions, only shards that could determine the typology of the wares were kept, whereas shards pertaining to the bodies of these vessels were discarded. Besides the rarity of ceramic *graffiti* within the fortress, the same situation was observed for manufacturer stamps on luxury wares that make their way to Potaissa, especially within the military camp. At first glance, it might seem strange that maker's stamps are almost completely missing from a legionary fortress, as in other smaller Roman military camps, rural settlements or cities within the Dacian province, stamps on Gallo-Roman *terra sigillata* are discovered frequently. However, after the analysis of the

¹⁰ Nedelea 2017, 83-106.

¹¹ Weiß-König 2010, 131.

¹² Milnor 2014, 72, 92, 94; CIL 4. 1852; CIL IV. 1649; CIL IV. 1939; CIL IV. 10619; CIL IV. 9123; CIL IV. 1520.

¹³ Bărbulescu 1987, 142; Bărbulescu 2010, 234-235, no. cat. 45-46, fig. 109-110, no. inv. 7845, 5537.

¹⁴ Bărbulescu 2010, 237, fig. 111, no. 47.

wares discovered within the legionary fortress at Potaissa was completed, the explanation for this phenomenon is quite simple.

Before the arrival of the Vth Macedonian legion, Potaissa was a small, uneventful *vicus*. Luxury products from potteries such as Lezoux, Westerndorf and Rheinzabern made their way here, but only in small numbers¹⁵. The arrival of the Vth Macedonian legion at Potaissa around the year 170 AD (in the context of the Marcomannic Wars)¹⁶ changed the fate of this *vicus* forever, triggering its quick development.

The end of the 2nd century AD also coincided with the decline of some of the most important potteries located in central Gaul. As the Marcomannic Wars extended until ca. 180-182 AD, the connection with workshops from eastern Gaul was temporarily interrupted as well¹⁷.

My ceramic analysis has indicated that for the entire operation period of the fortress, ca. 170-271 AD, *terra sigillata* imports from eastern Gaul made their way to the camp at Potaissa only in the form of approximately 120 individual wares, the vast majority of them being plain products. This represents only 1.2 % out of the total of ca. 10.000 individual wares that have been investigated. *Terra sigillata* from Lezoux is almost inexistent within this fortress. A similar situation was observed at Brigetio (Pannonia), where due to the wars, at the end of the 2nd century AD only very few *terra sigillata* vessels manufactured at Rheinzabern make their way there¹⁸.

Therefore, it is my opinion that the geographical, historical and economic context (at the end of the 2nd century AD and the first half of the 3rd century AD) hindered the supply of the Vth Macedonian legion with luxury wares, or, if the circumstances allowed it, this operation would have been too costly and difficult. This led to the development of a more lucrative affair, in the form of local military workshops at Potaissa, on nowadays Zânelor Hill¹⁹.

These new workshops were specialized in the production of simple luxury wares, in the form of local plain *sigillata* (imitations), meant to fulfill the needs for practical and good quality wares within the fortress. This is proven through the discovery of 2639 (locally manufactured) plain *sigillata* wares (out the total of ca. 10.000)²⁰, manufactured for the legion and purely for local use (from what is known

¹⁵ Cătinaş 2004, 83 - 97.

¹⁶ Eck 2016, 33-46.

¹⁷ CIL III 5937.

¹⁸ Hajdu 2018, 453.

¹⁹ Andone-Rotaru, Nedelea 2018, 69-90; Pîslaru 2011, 167-182; Pîslaru 2014, 95-106.

²⁰ Nedelea 2017, 83-106; Nedelea 2020.

so far). Thus, if the military workshops were producing wares only locally²¹ and for the fortress, manufacturer stamps were no longer needed, as the supplier and client were the same: *Legio V Macedonica*.

None of these 2639 plain *sigillata* wares from Potaissa bear maker's stamps, and this cannot represent a coincidence. Overall, they can be characterized as extremely simplistic, lacking any form of decoration. The basic shapes and plain style can almost denote the austere atmosphere that reigned within the camp. Their typologies imitate the shape repertoires of the famous Gaulish workshops at that time. It is very evident that the manufacturers have opted for a type of luxury ware that was obtained with ease, turning it into an affair that did not involve too many costs.

These wares were therefore a much cheaper version of the genuine *terra sigillata* vessels. Recent research has indicated that during the reign of emperor Marcus Aurelius, a Drag. 37 type bowl with relief decorations, manufactured in Cinnamus' workshop at Lezoux, valued approximately 5 *sestertii*. This was the equivalent of one and a half work days for a legionary soldier, and approximately three days for an auxiliary soldier²². The value of the luxury ware was provided by a *graffito* discovered in Noricum, *municipium Flavia Solva*, on the western bank of the Mur river (in today's Austria). The *graffito* reads: PANNA VIIRICVNDAIIS IIMPTA VIGIIS, *Panna Verecundaes emptā viges(is)*. This was interpreted by R. Noll as "Verecundaes bowl, bought for twenty asses". It is one of the few direct sources regarding the real value of decorated luxury wares during the 2nd century AD. If the cost of this type of relief decorated wares was 20 asses, then surely, a plain *sigillata* vessel could have been acquired for much less. This is confirmed by yet another *graffito*, discovered at Iuvavum, Salzburg, on a LudTb/LudTa type plate, pertaining to the plain *sigillata* class, manufactured at Rheinzabern in the second half of the 2nd century AD²³. The price of the vessel had been inscribed on its foot, namely "AS XII" (12 asses). An exact same price was observed at Colonia Ulpia Traiana/Xanten²⁴.

I can only presume that the locally produced plain *sigillata* wares (imitations) manufactured in the workshops at Potaissa valued much less than the previously mentioned genuine products, be it decorated or plain. Their cost was diminished through the use of visibly cheaper fabric and glaze, fired in ovens that did not reach the 1000 C degrees of the Gaulish

²¹ Greene 1977, 116-123; Ciușescu 2006, 143-146; Petruț 2018, 29-30.

²² Noll 1972, 148-152; AE 2008, 1014.

²³ Wending 2012, 101-108; Kovacovics 1987, 222-225; AE 2002, 1112.

²⁴ Weiß-König 2010, 161, no. cat. 106, XII - Zahlzeichen (Taf. 10).

ovens. Another factor that should be taken into consideration is transport. Supplying provinces along the Danube river with luxury wares produced in Gaul involved expensive transportation costs, which increased the prices of the products. It is my opinion that by locally manufacturing luxury wares at Potaissa, the Vth Macedonian legion was able to therefore obtain much cheaper goods. It also has to be noted that the local military workshops produced only certain types of wares. They pertained preponderantly to the *vasa escaria* group, such as bowls, plates and rarely cups or other shapes, whereas some are missing completely from their repertoire (pitchers and flagons). For example, the Drag. 44 type bowl (local imitation) was mass-produced for the fortress, as over 1000 such wares have been identified so far. Many of the *graffiti* were discovered on this type of bowl, which seems to have been the most popular vessel among the soldiers. It had a very practical shape, and, most likely, every soldier within the fortress used it, as it was ideal for serving the famous *puls*²⁵.

Even though *graffiti*, manufacturer stamps or *tituli picti* within the legionary fortress are not very frequent so far (Pl. I), they offer precious information regarding the level of education among the legion's soldiers, their civilian contacts, as well knowledge regarding the military unit's commercial relations with other provinces. Therefore, they represent a precious insight into the Dacian economy at that time.

A. Legionary Barracks:

1. *Praetentura Dextra*.

▪ *Graffito* - „LVM” (*post cocturam*), indicating the client or owner of the wares (Pl. II).

a) **Physical characteristics**²⁶: Drag. 15/17 type bowl (import); 40% of its initial shape has been recovered (17 shards); oxidized firing; smooth surface; fine, compact fabric (Munsell 2.5 YR, 7/6 Light Red); small-sized inclusions within the fabric composition; a narrow, elegant groove separates the rim from the rest of the body; the wall of the body is oblique and slightly curved; a red metallic engobe (Munsell 2.5 YR, 5/8 Red) has been applied on the whole surface of the body, except the foot; R.d. 24 cm; R. t. 9,03 mm; W.t. 9,90 mm; W. h. 99,56 mm; F.d. 12 cm; F.h. 9,65 mm;

²⁵ Nedelea 2016, 107; Nedelea 2019, 186, fig. 352; for the military diet, See: Roth 1999, chapter I, 18.

²⁶ R.d. = Rim diameter; R.t. = Rim thickness; Rib t. = Rib thickness; Rib w. = Rib width; W.t. = Wall thickness; W.h. = Wall height; F.d. = Foot diameter; F.h. = Foot height; F.w. = Foot width; HMTurda = History Museum Turda.

F.w. 9,85 mm; a *post cocturam graffito* was rendered on the exterior surface of the body, reading: „LVM”; the *graffito* measures: 28,95 mm x 69,59 mm. Location of discovery: Turda (Cluj County); ancient name - POTAISSA; legionary fortress; „west to the *thermae*”; S3; portico hole; depth - not mentioned; 05.08.2002. Stored at the History Museum Turda; Inv. No. 21.652.

b) Historical interpretation: the *graffito* was cut after firing, on the exterior surface of the bowl, with letters specific for *scriptura monumentalis*. The inscription reads “LVM” (similar to *tegulae* stamps), namely the initials of the military unit: LEGIO V MACEDONICA. The letters were inscribed very close to the rim, covering a large surface of the bowl’s upper body. Unlike the *graffiti* etched by soldiers at Potaissa, the initials of the legion were written while the vessel was sitting upright, and not upside down. It is hard to tell if the inferior register, situated right underneath the legion’s initials, could have yielded some additional information, such as the price of the product (similar to those from Iovavum or Flavia Solva²⁷), as this part is missing.

Due to practical reasons, the graphic reconstruction and photographic representations (Pl. II) showcase only two of the seventeen shards pertaining to the bowl. However, it should be noted that the letters LVM are very close to each other and flanked on both sides by large, empty fields. Therefore, it is an absolute certainty that the letters did not represent the middle or the last part of a different word. They stood by themselves as the legion’s initials.

The metallic engobe (Munsell 2.5 YR, 5/8 Red) and the superior quality of the fabric suggest that the vessel was not manufactured at Potaissa²⁸. It is my opinion that the Drag. 15/17 type bowl (imported plain *sigillata*) was brought to Potaissa by soldiers while moving from their old garrison. A handful of other wares, specific to the moesian region, were recovered from the legionary fortress as well. The Drag. 15/17 type bowl was moved to the new location due to its quality and value, and it was most likely a component of an earthenware set. This supposition is strengthened by the discovery of an identical bowl in the *praetentura sinistra* of the fortress (S5/2014; C8-15; h. 0.60-0.70). The second bowl did not bear any *graffiti*.

It is possible that this type of marking, depicting the legion’s initials, could have served as a method through which ceramic batches that had different clients and destinations were separated or distinguished. Before making their way to their customers, the vessels

²⁷ Wending 2012, 101-108; Kovacovics 1987, 222-225.

²⁸ Nedelea 2016, 185-202, pl. 3/1.

were marked by either the potters, in their workshops, or by *negotiatores* who were attracted by the purchasing power of the military units and soldiers²⁹.

Therefore, the Drag. 15/17 type bowl from the legionary fortress could have been a part of a larger order containing more identical wares. One of them was inscribed with the initials of the client, *legio V Macedonica*/"LVM", for transporters to know where the shipment was supposed to be delivered. The order was most likely transported³⁰ to the former fortress at Troesmis, and at least two wares of this larger order have been brought to the new garrison at Potaissa (one discovered in the *praetentura dextra*, the other in the *praetentura sinistra*). Further archaeological investigations will prove if any other similar wares made their way into the camp. The production center of the wares is thus far unknown, but it is certain that they were not produced at Potaissa.

2. *Praetentura Sinistra*.

▪ **Graffito - „[A]elianus” (*ante cocturam*), indicating the name of the potter (Pl. III).**

a) Physical characteristics: *Dolium* (locally manufactured); only one shard remains, representing approximately 15% of the initial forms of the vessel; oxidized and even firing; fine, compact fabric, slightly sandy at touch (Munsell 2.5 YR, 7/8 Light Red); medium quality; small inclusions within the fabric composition (1%); W.t. 8,73 mm; the outer surface was painted with large, brown brush strokes; a *graffito* was inscribed on the outer surface before firing, reading: „[A]elianus”. Location of discovery: Turda (Cluj County); ancient name - POTAISSA; legionary fortress; *praetentura sinistra*; S10/S05 - 2014; G1; depth - 1,75 m; 20.10.2014. Stored at the History Museum Turda; Inv. No. 19835.

b) Historical interpretation: the *dolium* on which the *graffito* was inscribed belongs to the common ware category, and only one shard has been recovered during archaeological excavations. This type of wares were locally manufactured in the workshops situated on nowadays Zânelor Hill, and quite frequently used within the fortress to store grain, flour and other goods. In the headquarters building, on the eastern flank, several *dolia* were placed on the portico, right next to the entrance to room L.

I was able to observe the same pattern and custom for the legionary barracks as well, as the majority of the *dolia* finds concentrate

²⁹ Piso *et alii* 2016, 406, “negotiator/negotiatores”, CIL III 1068 = IDR III/5, 190; CIL III 14216, 11 = IDR II 47 etc.

³⁰ Kuzmová 2008, 143-154.

on their porticos, where they were most likely stored. The shard bearing the *graffito* has been recovered from the barracks situated in the *praetentura sinistra*³¹. The *graffito* reads: „[A]elianus”, and it offers very valuable information, as this is the name of a local, evidently masculine, potter. The inscription was etched *ante cocturam* by the potter itself, who was labelling his work. Obviously, this implies that his work was already known at Potaissa and the potter hoped for people to recognize and buy his wares. An interesting aspect regarding this *graffito* is the use of cursive Latin script (as used in handwriting), with beautifully rendered letters, as opposed to the clumsy property marks inscribed by soldiers, in capital letters. Writing did not seem to be a difficult task for the potter. His precise letter execution expressed a certain level of literacy. In total, I was able to distinguish seven cursive Latin letters, written horizontally, in the same row. The letters follow the line of the small groove that ornates the body of the vessel. The *graffito* was etched into the crude fabric with the help of an improvised writing tool, namely a small branch. The inscription is preserved almost completely, with the exception of the first letter, “A”, and the left half of the second letter “e”, which had been represented by two parallel lines (‘II’). After firing, the *dolium* was decorated with diluted paint, that covered the letters of the inscription as well. It is my opinion that this name represents one of the potters that activated in the 3rd century AD in one of the workshops at Potaissa, on Zânelor Hill. Even though potter names are frequent discoveries within other provinces³², in Roman Dacia, such finds are rare thus far, underlining once more the importance of the *graffito* identified at Potaissa.

3. *Latus Praetorii Dextrum. Cohors I Milliaria.*

▪ *Graffito* - „A NIR[---]” (?; *post cocturam*), indicating the owner of the vessel (Pl. IV).

a) **Physical characteristics:** Drag. 44 type bowl (locally manufactured); 25% of the initial form has been recovered (3 shards); oxidized and even firing; smooth surface; fine, sandy fabric (Munsell 5 YR, 7/8 Light Red); very good quality; R.d. 26 cm; R.t. 17,66 mm; R.w. 19,95 mm; W.t. 9,61 mm; the distance between the rim and the rib equals 28,96 mm; Rib t. 16,49 mm; Rib w. 21,01 mm; small inclusions, in the form of fine, white stones (1%); red metallic engobe on the whole surface of the body (Munsell 2.5 YR, 5/8 Red); *post cocturam graffito* in the lower register

³¹ Nedelea 2017, 83-106.

³² Evans 1987, 202; For example, the names of over 250 potters who activated in Britannia are known to this day. See: Finn 2013, 1-6.

of the body, right underneath the rib, reading: „A NIR[---]” / “A NIA[---]” / „VIN V [---]” (?). Location of discovery: Turda (Cluj County); ancient name - POTAISSA; legionary fortress; S/A, room H; 03.08.1990; Stored at the History Museum Turda; Inv. No. 12.794.

b) Historical interpretation: the *graffito* had been etched by a soldier on a Drag. 44 type bowl, pertaining to the locally manufactured plain *sigillata* group, and mass-produced for the legion. Towards the end of the 2nd century and the 3rd century AD at Potaissa, as well as the military milieu of Roman Dacia, this type becomes one of the most popular wares due to its very practical shape. All the characteristics indicate that the bowls could have been used for communal meals as well. Therefore, it is not surprising at all that this type of inscription was identified in barrack no. IV (Room H) of *latus praetorii dextrum/cohors I milliaria*. Even though the letters are very clear and well preserved, the *graffito* presented several difficulties when deciphering it. The letters are so schematic and distorted that it is uncertain if the bowl should be kept upright or upside down when reading it. If we take into consideration the duct of the letters, the bowl sat upright when the letters were inscribed onto it. The blade of the knife stopped in the rib situated on the middle of the body, specific to the Drag. 44 type bowl. Therefore, there are a few interpretation possibilities: a) A NIR[---]”; b) “A NIA[---]”; c) „VIN V [---]”. It most likely depicted a property mark, namely the *cognomen* of one of *legio V Macedonica*'s soldiers.

4. *Retentura*.

▪ **Manufacturer stamp – IAN[V(arius) F(ecit)]³³ (Pl. V):**

The maker's stamp was placed on a Drag. 37 type bowl, manufactured at Rheinzabern, in eastern Gaul. The bowl was discovered in 1977, in the *retentura* region of the legionary fortress at Potaissa, right outside barrack no. IV of a *cohors quingenariae*³⁴. Only a small portion pertaining to the upper body of the bowl has been recovered during archaeological investigations. The fact that the shard belongs to the upper register of the bowl is indicated by the decorative strip bearing *ovolos*, specific for relief decorated *terra sigillata*. The main ornamental motifs of the bowl appear right underneath this strip, in the form of Cupids and vegetal elements.

Only the first three letters of the stamp have been preserved throughout time, reading “IAN”. Based on the decorative elements and other analogies identified within the Roman Empire, the stamp should be

³³ Căținaș 2004, 83-97.

³⁴ HMTurda inv. no. 4132.

read IAN[V(arius) F(ecit)]³⁵, as initially published in 2004³⁶, even though in the last 2010 publication it appears in the form IAN[V(s) F(ecit), without any further explanations³⁷. This translates to “Ianuarius made this”. The popularity of the name is increased among potters who activated in eastern Gaul workshops, whereas in central and southern Gaul it appears quite rarely. Within the Roman Empire, the name is one of the most preferred calendrical *cognomina*, having auspicious connotations³⁸.

As a decorative motif, Cupid holding a torch in his right hand appears frequently throughout the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. It was often utilized at Rheinzaubern on Drag. 37 type bowls, within the repertoires of potters like SATTO (without torch), BELSVS, CERALIS, COMITALIS and REGINVS³⁹. However, the luxury vessel identified at Potaissa was with certainty produced in Ianu(arius) I’s workshop, based on the following elements: a) Cupid is flanked by two simple vegetal elements; b) the IANVF stamp had been placed within the decorative field; c) the ovolos are coupled with tongues⁴⁰; d) decorative rope strip that dates this product between 130-150 AD⁴¹.

The presence of such early dated wares within the legionary fortress at Potaissa is quite curious, as the garrison was only built after the year 170 AD. In Pannonia for example, Ianuarius I’s wares appear only in the stratigraphical contexts connected to the events between the years 170-180 AD⁴². Therefore, the only manufacturer stamp identified on tableware discovered within the legionary fortress at Potaissa, does not coincide with the interval in which the garrison operated. The “birth” date of the bowl precedes that of the fortress by approximately 20 years. It is known that, due to their high value (around 20 asses), these luxury wares were very well taken care of, repaired in special workshops if needed, and even kept for generations. The bowl could have been brought to Potaissa by the soldiers, or, it made its way into the fortress from areas surrounding it.

³⁵ Ludowici 1942, Taf. 005, 010, Taf. 007, 012, Taf. 001, 004a; Ricken, Thomas 2005, 15-25, Tafel 1-8.

³⁶ Căţinaş 2004, 85, fig. 4, 2.

³⁷ Bărbulescu 2010, 237, fig. 111, cat. no. 47; for the etymology of the *cognomen* IANVS, See: Ernout 1956, 117-119.

³⁸ Kajanto 1965, 60-61, 218-219.

³⁹ Oswald 1964, 46, pl. XXIII (Cupids and Putti)/456, no. 456.

⁴⁰ Polak 2000, 59-64.

⁴¹ Gabler *et alii* 2009, 205-324.

⁴² Gabler 1987, 78, 81; Gabler, 2002, 231.

B. Legionary *Thermae*:

▪ **Graffito:** “VIV[---]” (*post cocturam*), indicating the owner of the vessel (Pl. VI/1).

a) Physical characteristics: Drag. 44 type bowl (locally manufactured); only 15% of the initial form has been recovered, pertaining to the foot of the bowl (one shard); oxidized and even firing; smooth surface; fine, compact fabric (Munsell 5 YR, 7/8 Light Red); very good quality; F.d. 104,36 mm; F.t. 6,78 mm; W.t. 6,00 mm; F.w. 12,45 mm; big-sized inclusions, in the form of white stones (1%); red matte engobe, applied in a hurry, which resulted in paint dripping towards the foot of the bowl (Munsell 2.5 YR, 5/8 Red); most of the engobe has been chipped off the surface of the body; *graffiti* on the lower register of the bowl: “VIV[---]”. Location of the discovery: Turda; ancient name - POTAISSA; legionary fortress; *thermae*; basement of room K; depth - 0,90-1,10 m. Stored at the History Museum Turda; Inv. No. 21774.

b) Historical interpretation: so far, within the legionary fortress, the biggest quantity of earthenwares has been discovered inside the military baths, totalling to 2323 individual wares⁴³. One of these vessels is yet another Drag. 44 type bowl, which bears the following *graffito*: “VIV[---]”. It was discovered in one of the most interesting spaces pertaining to the military baths, namely the basement of Room K, which was also heated. Recently, I was able to prove that at Potaissa, the spaces of the *thermae* were not used for purely hygienic reasons. Throughout time, they had also turned into social spaces. The soldiers were enjoying at least some of their free time in the baths, outside the claustrophobic spaces of the *contubernia*.

Based on my ceramic analysis I was able to establish that the soldiers consumed food and drinks within these rooms, similarly to other baths within the Roman Empire. The spaces adjacent to the *thermae* edifice were equipped with *praefurnia*, and had also been turned into small kitchens and bakeries⁴⁴. Due to strong social activity within the baths, it is no surprise that one of the *graffiti* depicting property marks was discovered here. The name had been etched *post cocturam* by one of the soldiers, in the lower part of the body, while the bowl was sitting upside down. It most likely depicted the name of the owner, so that his vessel could be distinguished from other identical wares within the same space.

⁴³ Bărbulescu *et alii* 2019, 182.

⁴⁴ Bărbulescu *et alii* 2019, 187 *sqq.*

C. *Porta decumana*:

▪ **Graffito - „X” (*post cocturam*), indicating the owner of the vessel (Pl. VI/2).**

a) Physical characteristics: Curle 23 type plate (locally manufactured); only 25% of its initial forms have been recovered (one shard); oxidizing firing; smooth surface; fine, sandy fabric (Munsell 2.5 YR, 7/4 Light Reddish Brown); good quality; R.d. ? cm; W.t. 8,05 mm; R.t. 4,38 mm; small-sized inclusions, in the form of little white stones (1%); red engobe with matte aspect, which almost completely flaked off the surface of the body (Munsell 2.5 YR, 5/8 Red); *graffito* - „X”. Location of discovery: Turda (Cluj County); ancient name - POTAISSA; legionary fortress; *porta decumana*, over the middle buttress of the gate; July 1976. Stored at the History Museum Turda; Inv. No. 19570.

b) Historical interpretation: the “X” symbol was cut *post cocturam* into the exterior surface of a Curle 23 type plate (lower register of the body), with relatively long strokes. The plate pertains to the locally manufactured plain *sigillata* group.

Alongside Curle 15, these types of plates were quite popular within the legionary fortress and very frequently used by soldiers. Even though some researchers believe that the “X/cross” *graffiti* could represent batch marks, spindle hole markings, or symbols denoting capacity⁴⁵, it is my belief that our example represented an ownership mark. This supposition is strengthened by the fact that, at Potaissa, most *graffiti* indicating an individual’s property are rendered on the lower part of the body, close to the foot of the vessel. It is possible that the soldier who wanted to mark his property did not know how to write his own name, and therefore utilized a more simplistic way of distinguishing his goods. The lines of the *graffito* are very shaky and clumsy, and it can be classed as a non-literate inscription or “Pseudo-Inschrift”.

D. The Legionary Headquarters Building (*principia*):

Archaeological campaigns within the headquarters building at Potaissa have been carried out between 1974, 1978-1989, 1994-1995, 2008-2011. The ceramic lot identified and analyzed for this edifice totals to 1543 individual wares. Only four bear *graffiti*, *tituli picti* and manufacturer stamps. All of them were rendered on imported products, such as samian ware or *amphorae*.

⁴⁵ Going 1992, 108.

1. "The *amphorae* warehouse" of the headquarters building.

During the 3rd century AD, a series of modifications were undertaken on the eastern flank of the headquarters building. The wall between rooms O (9,20 × 9,90 m) and P (10,40 × 9,50 m) was torn down, transforming the northern wing into a large warehouse⁴⁶. The discovery of 484 *amphorae*⁴⁷ and 199 amphoric lids lead to the conclusion that this part of the *Principia* had been used only for logistical purposes⁴⁸.

My analysis has led to the identification of five main amphoric types (Dressel 20; Dressel 24/Zeest 90/Dyczeck 25; Dressel 24/Similis; Kapitän II; Zeest 84). From previous research, it was believed that the main imported product was olive oil, brought here from the oriental region of the Empire⁴⁹. Indeed, the legionary fortresses' main commodity was *oleum*, much needed for the soldier's daily rations, while wine and fish products were discovered in smaller quantities (for products transported in *amphorae*). Three of the *amphorae* within this warehouse have yielded one *titulus pictus* and two manufacturer stamps.

▪ *Titulus pictus*: „[--]JJJ”, denoting the container's capacity (Pl. VII/1).

The only *titulus pictus* from the legionary fortress at Potaissa has been identified on a Dressel 24 amphora shard. There are only seven such containers in the entire garrison, and all of them have been recovered from the headquarters building⁵⁰. Regarding its origins, some researchers believe that possible production centers could be located along the Pontic shores (Histria), as well as in Dalmatia or the Aegean islands⁵¹. In Moesia Inferior, Dressel 24 *amphorae* have been attributed to the 1st-3rd centuries AD (Novae, Troesmis, Histria, Aegysus, Halmyris, Noviodunum, Dinogetia, Sacidava, Durostorum, Tropaeum Traiani⁵²). In Pannonia, they are known from three main sites along the Limes (Brigetio, Aquincum and Intercisa) and normally associated with contexts pertaining to the 3rd century AD⁵³.

⁴⁶ Bărbulescu 1987, 142, fig. 28, pl. XIV/3; Bărbulescu 1994, 101.

⁴⁷ Initially, it was believed that the warehouse held 100 *amphorae* and 500 lids. See: Bărbulescu 1987, 142.

⁴⁸ Bărbulescu 1994, 125-126; Bărbulescu 2010, 213, no. 25.

⁴⁹ Bărbulescu 1987, 142.

⁵⁰ HMTurda inv. no. 9277, 9253, 9252, 5973, 5945.

⁵¹ Scorpan 1976, 162; Opař 1980, 296, Pl. IV/1; Dyczek 2001, 182-183; Hárshegy 2004, 113-121; Dyczek 2005, 70-80; Dyczek 2016, 563-570; Krapivina 2010, 69-73.

⁵² Paraschiv 2002, 165-207.

⁵³ Kelemen 1993, 50; Hárshegy 2004, 113-121.

In Dacia, similar amphora were recovered from Drobeta, Romula, Buridava, Slăveni, Stolniceni, Sucidava, Corabia⁵⁴, and Cioroiu Nou⁵⁵. At Tibiscum for example, one of them bears a *titulus pictus* that reads “ΛΙVS”, and the find has been largely dated between the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD⁵⁶. At Corabia (Olt County), a dipinto reads “ΔΡΧΠΞ”, the greek equivalent of 82 *sextarii* (44-45 liters)⁵⁷. Other similar *dipinti* have been discovered at *Drobeta, Dierna, Slăveni* and *Angustia*⁵⁸.

At Potaissa, the *dipinto* was discovered only by chance, while cleaning the ceramic material from the amphoric warehouse. One shard stood out due to a little red drop of paint on its surface. I proceeded to remove the layers of limestone with the help of a needle tip and a blade, which revealed three letters or numerals. Unfortunately, the left part of the *dipinto* is missing, and the only part that was preserved contains its last three numerals.

The marking (most likely) denoted the container’s capacity in *sextarii* (or its greek equivalent), reading: “...JJJ”. The letters are parallel and slightly oblique. They are equally sized (3 cm height), and rendered with a thick layer of red, glossy paint.

From the shard that was preserved, which also contains one end of a broken handle, we can tell that the *titulus pictus* was placed in the middle part of the container’s body. The discovery of this marking under layers of limestone indicates the importance of having clean wares while analysing them. The large quantities of wares which are stored in museum warehouses without to be properly cleaned could yield precious information in the future.

▪ **Manufacturer stamps: ΗΡΑΚΑΑ**⁵⁹ (Pl. VII/2-3).

Next to the *titulus pictus*, two of the Dressel 24 amphora bear their manufacturer’s stamp, reading: ΗΡΑΚΑΑ. The writing is encased in a cartridge for both stamps. For one of them, the letters were rendered in mirror reverse on the 'mold', so that the actual design was correctly read when pressed into clay. This allows for a normal lecture of the letters, from left to right. The other stamp was written normally in the “mold”, resulting in a mirrored image of the word when pressed into clay. In past

⁵⁴ Dyczek 2005, 70-80; Tudor, 1968, 467; Bondoc 2016, 215-229, pl. V/fig. 3.

⁵⁵ Bondoc 2014, 105-112, fig. 13 a-b.

⁵⁶ Ardeț 2006, 322, pl. XIV/126; Rusu-Bolindeț *et alii* 2018, 161, no. 431, Tibiscum, MJERGC inv. no. 1735.

⁵⁷ Tudor 1968, 467.

⁵⁸ Ardeț 2006, pl. XIV/126, fig. 137, pl. XV/127, fig. 138, pl. XVI/133, fig. 139, pl. XVII/140, fig.140; XVIII/159, fig. 134; Ardeț 2009, 64; Bondoc 2016, 215-229, pl. VIII/5-7.

⁵⁹ Bărbulescu 2010, 234-235, no. 45-46, fig. 109-110

publications, it was believed that this type of stamp belonged to Dressel 20 *amphorae*⁶⁰. However, based on recent research and numerous similar discoveries, I can with certainty say that our finds are Dressel 24 amphoras. In Dacia, the same manufacturer's stamps have been recovered from Drobeta, Romula etc⁶¹. On other sites, on the same amphoric type, the following manufacturer stamps have been observed: ΠΑΥΛΟΥ (Drobeta and Romula)⁶², ΜΑΡΚΟΥ (Romula and Tibiscum)⁶³, ΤΑΤΙΑΝΟΥ, ΜΑΝΤΕΙΟΥ, ΚΟΠΟΥ, ΣΤΡΑΤΩΝΕΙΚΟΥ etc. (Drobeta, Romula, Sucidava and Tibiscum)⁶⁴.

2. The courtyard (*Forum militare*).

▪ *Graffito*: „Hic Fuit...” (?), cursive Latin script (*post cocturam*) (Pl. VIII).

a) Physical characteristics: Curle 15 type plate (import); oxidized firing; smooth surface; fine, compact fabric; (Munsell 2.5 YR, 7/8 Light Red); R.d. 26 cm; R.t. 8,75 mm; W.t. 7,49 mm; very good quality; small-sized inclusions, in the form of little white stones (1%); red, metallic engobe on the whole surface - slightly flaked on certain areas (Munsell 2.5 YR, 5/8 Red); small groove on the rim; *graffito* - „Hic Fuit...” in cursive Latin script. Location of discovery: Turda (Cluj County); ancient name - POTAISSA; legionary fortress; *forum militare*; C01 - pit. Stored at the History Museum Turda; Inv. no. 20755.

b) Historical interpretation: the *graffito* was inscribed on a Curle 15 type plate, pertaining to the category of plain *sigillata* imports (Rheinzabern). It was discovered in one of the construction pits from the headquarters' building courtyard, which made me conclude that the plate arrived in the fortress in its initial stages of operation. After it broke, it was discarded and buried.

The Curle 15 type plates are known for their specific shape, with a large basin and a wide, horizontal bottom. Their foot was usually tall and very elegant. The plate had been turned upside down to be able to inscribe on the very durable fabric of the genuine luxury ware (in a similar fashion to a recently published vessel from Buciumi⁶⁵), that require brutal force to break. The *graffito* was etched on the lower register of the body, right on the edge of the horizontal bottom, along its

⁶⁰ Bărbulescu 1987, 142; Bărbulescu 2010, 234-235, no. 45-46, fig. 109-110, inv. no. 7845, 5537.

⁶¹ Popilian 1974, 137-146, pl. 3/3.

⁶² Popilian 1976, 172, pl. XV/199; Dyczek 2005, 70-80; Ardeț 2006, fig. 96-97; Ardeț 2009, 64.

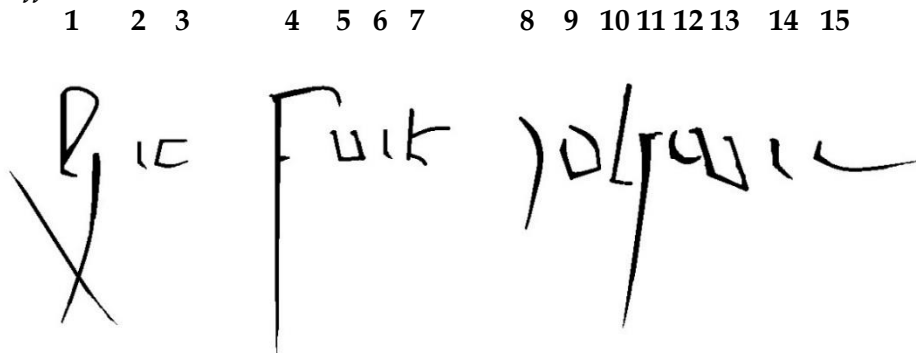
⁶³ Benea 2000b, 438, fig. 2/1; Ardeț 2006, fig. 118-119

⁶⁴ Benea 2000b, 437-438; Ardeț 2006, fig. 117; Ardeț 2009, 64.

⁶⁵ Dana, Petruț 2015, 19-24, *Zanax, milis (centuria) Genia[lis]*.

diameter. A very sharp and pointy object had been used as a writing tool, and it is the only cursive, *post cocturam graffito* on earthenware from the legionary fortress. The field of the inscription is heavily damaged, being overlapped by secondary scratches and limestone deposits. This makes the *graffito* very difficult to read. The letters were rendered in two (?) rows. Their dimensions vary between 0.6 and 6 cm, and they form 3 separate words in the upper register, followed by a “X” symbol (?) in the lower register. All the words seem to start with capital letters (“P”, “S” and “I”), if the first letter of the last word is not an inverted C, representing the symbol for *centuria*/7. The upper register counts 14-15 glyphs. Unfortunately, the plate is broken right in the middle of the *graffito*, which was surely continued along the edge of the vessel. Besides the “X” symbol, all the letters were rendered in cursive Latin script, which denotes a very good knowledge of the Latin language. Also, out of all the *graffiti* identified on pottery within the legionary fortress at Potaissa, this particular inscription is the most complex one, involving grammar and phrasing.

Graffito:



Proposal regarding the lecture of the letters, in their order:

1. **H (or P)** – cursive capital letter with „flowery” aspect, similar to the recently published vessel from *Arcobara/Ilişua*⁶⁶. It could also represent a V (U) or D. The bottom of the main line is emphasised towards the right.

2. **i** – lowercase cursive. The connection between the „X” symbol of the lower register and the letters „H” and „i” is unclear, as it occupies a space between these two.

3. **c** – lowercase cursive, the last letter of the first word.

⁶⁶ Dana *et alii* 2012, 49-56, PRISCI DVPL.

4. **S (or F)** - cursive capital letter, filiform; it is the biggest letter of the entire *graffito*.

5. **u** - lowercase cursive, of rectangular shape, slightly tilted to the left.

6. **i** - lowercase cursive, similar to the second letter of the first word; the main line is emphasised at the bottom, towards the right;

7. **e** - lowercase cursive, a form frequently encountered in *graffiti* etched on *tegulae* within the province (it could also be a **t, k, f** or **g**)⁶⁷.

8. **I** - cursive capital letter; it could also represent an inverted C, the symbol for *centuria*/7.

9. **o** - lowercase cursive, slightly rectangular, most likely due to the durability of the fabric, which much rather permits the etching of straight lines.

10.1 - lowercase cursive, in the shape of an L with a short leg.

11.s - lowercase cursive.

12.a - lowercase cursive; it could also be a „c” or „u”.

13.i - lowercase cursive; it could also be a „u” or „e”.

14.+ 15. = **r** or **R**.

Even though the individual who wrote the *graffito* seems to have been used to writing, many of the glyphs are schematic, and they could be read in more ways:

- **4+5** su[m] - „I am” of... (the vessel pertains to the person who wrote the *graffito*, his name following afterwards in the genitive case). It would therefore represent an ownership mark.

- **1+2+3+4+5+6+7** „Hic Fuit” - „This was...” followed by the name of the individual.

- **5+6+7+8+9+10** „[ante diem] III (tertium) K(alendas) Iul(i)”, considering 5+6 as number III, and the „k” as a „7”. *Graffiti* denoting dates are common on wares, however, in this case it does not make sense after the letter „S”.

- **8+9+10** „7 (*centuria*) OL... (VL)...” - „(from) the *centuria* of..”.

It is unclear if the *graffito* represents a message, title, date, or name. The “X” symbol could denote a batch mark, inscribed on the surface of the plate before it left the workshop by potters, or even by *negotiatores*, who were trying to distinguish certain goods. Otherwise, such symbols represent either ownership marks, etched by illiterate soldiers, or, rarely, a combination between letters as a result of a rushed

⁶⁷ Voloşciuc 2007, 57-68.

inscription. A similar case can be observed at Pompeii. On the walls of a basilica, Pyrrhus expresses his condolences for the fictitious death of his friend Chius, in the form of a joke (*Pyrrhus Chio conlegae salutem moleste fero quod audivi te mortuom itaque vale*)⁶⁸. The last two letters of the word “vale” (be strong) are so deformed and elongated, that the combination between the letters “L” and “E” appears in the form of an “X”, similar to that from Potaissa⁶⁹. It is therefore not excluded that the “X” symbol from the legionary fortress could have represented two elongated lines of two separate letters, one visible (between “H and “ic”), while the other was rendered in the now missing part of the plate.

Conclusions

Even though not numerous, the earthenware *graffiti* discovered within the legionary fortress at Potaissa (Pl. I) give ample evidence that the civilians (potters) as well as the soldiers, were at least somewhat literate or fluent in Latin, especially when paired with *graffiti* and inscriptions on other materials from the same garrison. The earthenware *graffiti* can be loosely divided in two main types, namely literate (names/ownership marks) and non-literate (symbols). They were cut both before or after firing, but the latter are evidently the most numerous. Most of the *graffiti* occurred on locally manufactured *sigillata*, especially Drag. 44 type bowls. So far, most of these are ownership-inscriptions and they only give evidence that some soldiers were able to write their own names. One of the most important names so far, is that of Aelianus, potter in the local workshops at Potaissa, whose common ware products seem to have been valued and sought after by locals, in the 3rd century AD.

The most peculiar *graffito* was identified in the headquarters building. Due to the high value of the genuine luxury ware (approximately 12 asses), the *graffito*'s complexity and Pompeian-like appearance, it was most likely written by one of the officers.

Manufacturer stamps are *rara avis* within the Potaissa legionary fortress, and appear only on long-distance imported ware, such as Dressel 24 *amphorae* and eastern gaulish *sigillata*. Only one *titulus pictus* was identified thus far, by chance. However, I am very confident that future research and the proper mechanical and chemical cleaning of the *amphorae* will result in wider repertoire of *dipinti* within the Potaissa legionary fortress.

⁶⁸ CIL IV. 1852.

⁶⁹ Milnor 2014, 168, fig. 3.5.

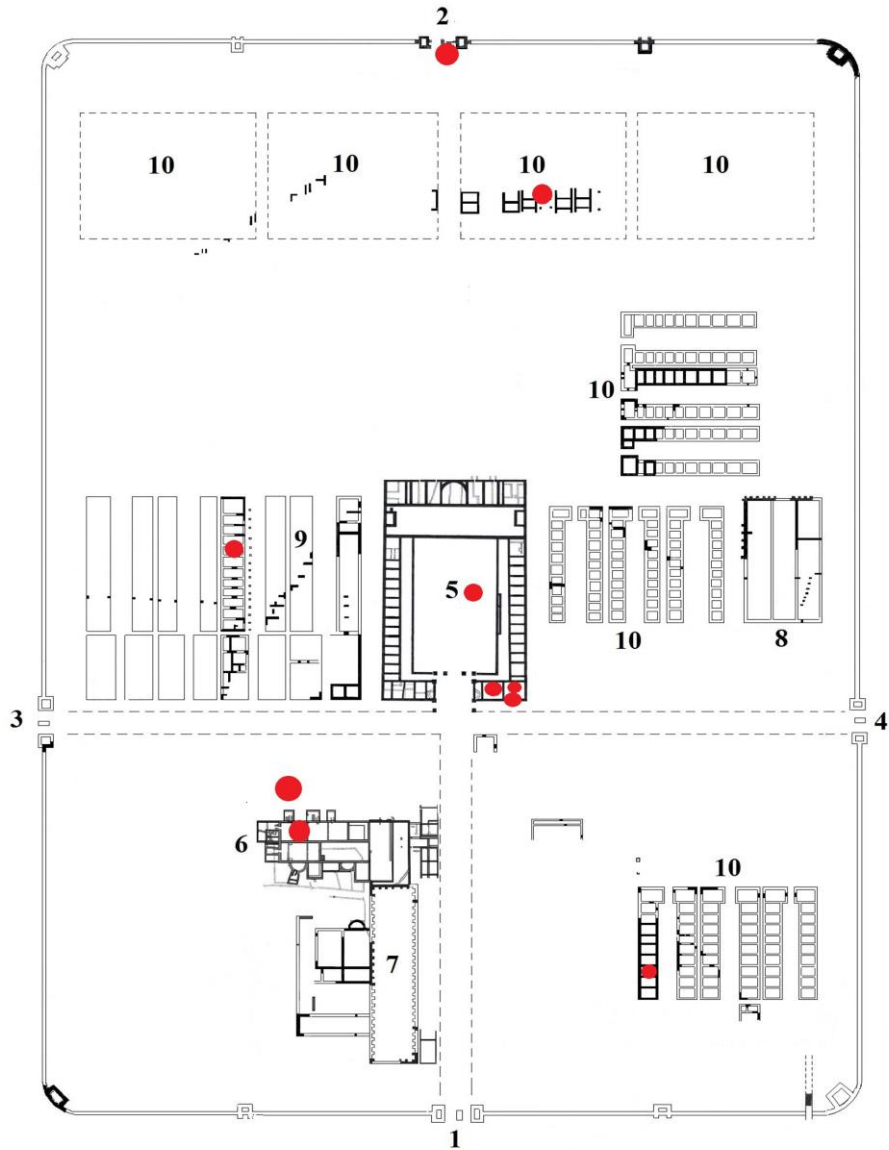
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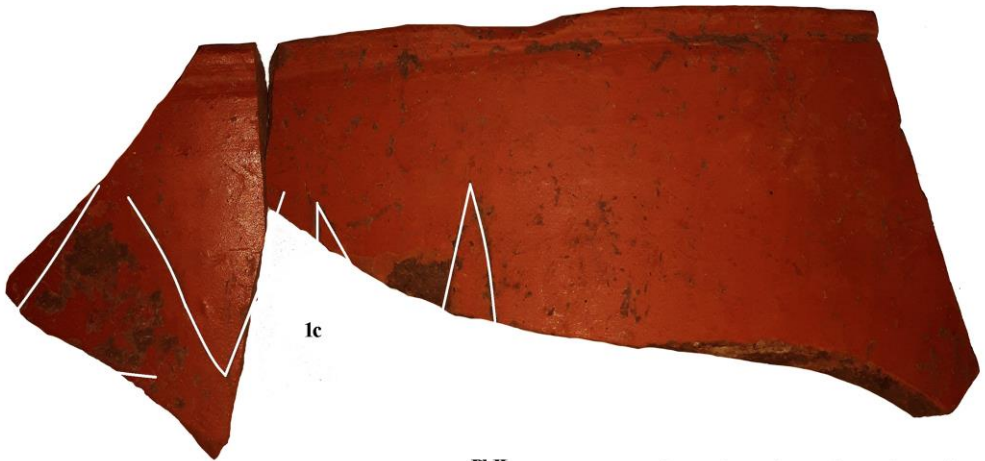
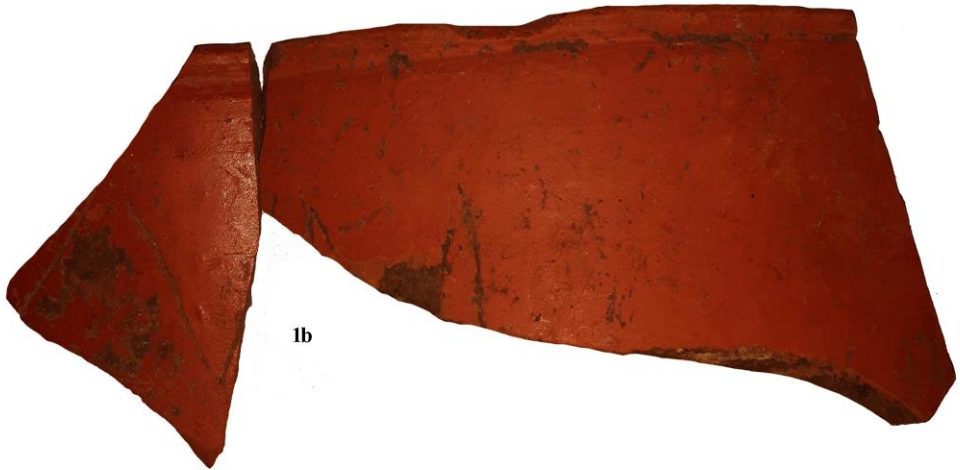
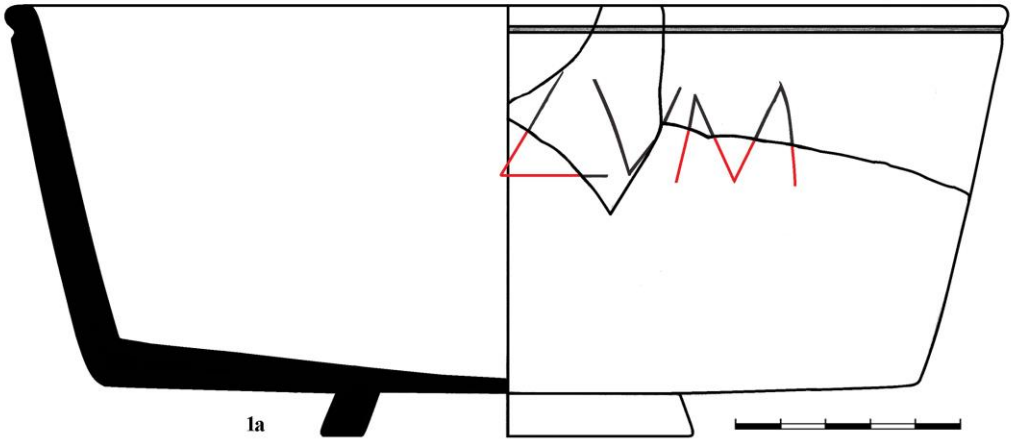


- 1 *Porta praetoria*
- 2 *Porta decumana*
- 3 *Porta principalis dextra*
- 4 *Porta principalis sinistra*
- 5 *Principia*

- 6 *Thermae*
- 7 *Palaestra*
- 8 *Horrea*
- 9 *Cohors miliaria*
- 10 *Cohors quingenaria*

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Pl. II



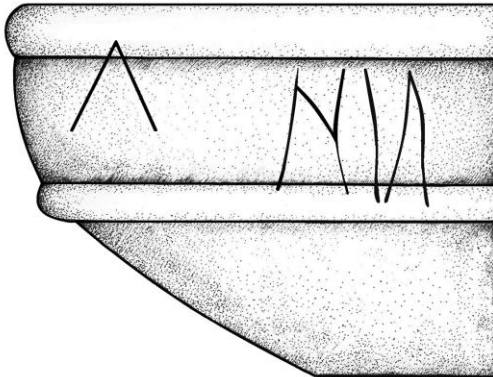
II (I) A N V S

[...] E L I A N V S

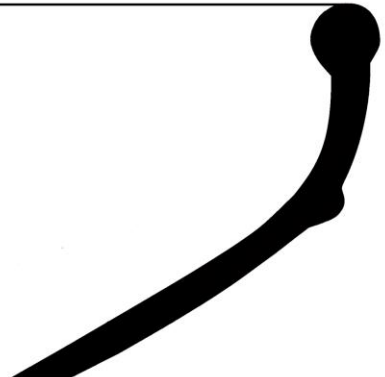




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1b





1a



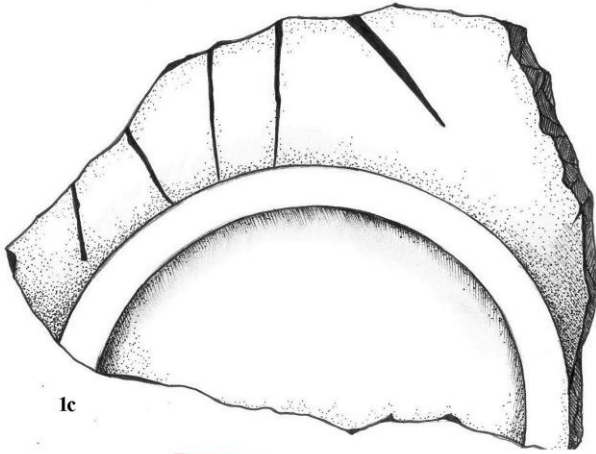
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1a



1c

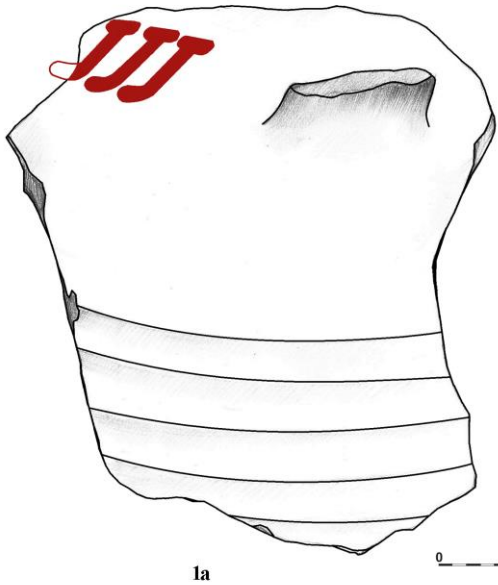


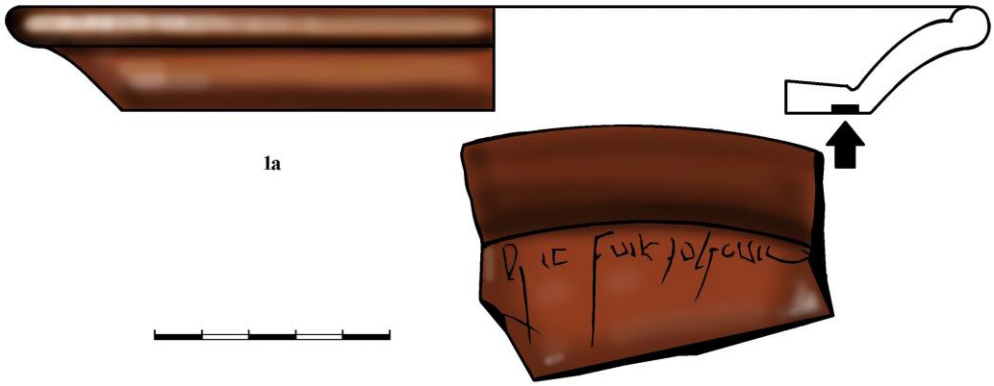
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1b







Graffites sur céramique de Gârla Mare, dép. de Mehedinți (territoire de Drobeta)

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Abstract: Graffiti on ceramics from Gârla Mare, Mehedinți County (territory of Drobeta). Among the inscribed pieces found during the archaeological excavations of a Roman complex at Gârla Mare (Mehedinți County), that lied probably in the territory of Drobeta in Upper Dacia, more Latin graffiti are significant for the diffusion of literacy and the variety of paleography. While most of them are republished with a new reading for the longer one, another example is new.

Keywords: ceramics, graffiti, onomastics, paleography, Roman Dacia.

Rezumat: Printre piesele înscrise găsite în urma săpăturilor arheologice ale complexului roman de la Gârla Mare (jud. Mehedinți), situat probabil în teritoriul Drobetei, în Dacia Superioară, mai mulți graffiti latini sînt semnificativi pentru răspîndirea scrisului și pentru varietatea paleografiei. Cei mai mulți sînt republicați aici cu o nouă lectură pentru cel mai lung, în timp ce alt exemplu este inedit.

Cuvinte-cheie: ceramică, Dacia romană, *graffiti*, onomastică, paleografie.

Cet article republie, avec des photos, quatre graffites latins sur céramique, et ajoute un cinquième inédit, tous livrés par les fouilles d'un complexe romain situé sans doute dans le territoire de Drobeta, en Dacie Supérieure. Ces témoignages sont conservés au Musée de la Région des Portes de Fer (MRPF), à Drobeta-Turnu Severin.

Les fouilles menées par Ion Stîngă à Gârla Mare (dép. de Mehedinți), à partir de 1992 et jusqu'en 2005, ont mis au jour un

inventaire d'époque romaine extrêmement varié¹. Ce site est situé au sud du village, sur la rive du Danube (km fluvial 840), en face de Dorticum (auj. Vråv, Bulgarie)². Les fouilles systématiques du complexe de Gîrla Mare ont identifié plusieurs bâtiments, dont un apparemment fortifié (42,5 x 42 m), et un four céramique près d'un atelier. Ce complexe, interprétée tantôt comme une *villa rustica* par son inventeur, tantôt comme une *statio* par Doina Benea³, a livré un riche inventaire qui témoigne d'une occupation à partir du règne de Trajan jusqu'au milieu du III^e s.⁴: on peut citer les monnaies récoltées⁵, la céramique⁶, les *militaria*⁷, un petit fragment d'un diplôme militaire⁸ et notamment plusieurs « inscriptions mineures »⁹ sur céramique (qui font l'objet de cette publication), sur une plaquette de bronze (*tessera militaris*)¹⁰ ou sur la catégorie multiforme communément appelée *instrumentum* (des estampilles¹¹, un miroir en plomb avec une inscription en grec)¹², dont une pièce figurée coulée, avec une seule lettre conservée sur la base (C)¹³.

¹ Nous remercions vivement pour leur aide Ion Stîngă et Marian Neagoe (MRPF).

² Voir Ivanov 2003.

³ Benea 2006.

⁴ Voir la monographie de Stîngă 2005. D'autres publications du même auteur sur ce sujet: Stîngă 1996 et 1999a (présentations), 1997 (centre céramique) et 1999b (parures, objets de culte et d'autres représentations plastiques). En général, voir Stîngă 1998a (sur la vie économique à Drobeta et sur son territoire) et 2001 (sur le territoire rural de Drobeta).

⁵ Oberländer-Târnoveanu 2008 (110 monnaies romaines).

⁶ Stîngă 1998a, 88-91; Stîngă 1997; Hamat 2018.

⁷ Dinulescu 2007 et 2009.

⁸ Stîngă 2005, 97 (avec la lecture de R. Ardevan), Pl. VI.3 (dessin des deux faces); AÉ 2005, 1304 = ILD II 825 (avec une datation tardive); Dana 2019, 162-165, n° 2, avec des photos (pour la province de Dacie, avant l'an 114).

⁹ Signalées dans ILD I 88-90 et II 849.

¹⁰ Inscription en pointillé, signalée par Stîngă 2005, 52 et 135 (dessin Pl. XVIII); C. C. Petolescu, CEPR, XXV, 2005, 1098 (ILD II 849 c); Gudea 2008, p. 250 (dessin fig. 197). Les lectures antérieures – SIR (?) Stîngă: (centuria) IRIB(-) Petolescu – seront corrigées dans le corpus des *tesserae militares* et d'autres inscriptions mineures à caractère militaire de Dacie, préparé par D. Dana et D. Deac.

¹¹ ILD I 89 (en latin, sur un mortarium); ILD I 90 = II 849 a (en grec, sur une anse d'amphore); ILD II 849 b (en latin, sur un mortarium). Malgré la faible qualité des images, la lecture du nom du fabricant sur l'estampille grecque n'est pas Ἐλευθερι(ο)υ, au génitif (ILD II 849 a, C. C. Petolescu et F. Matei-Popescu; Petolescu, Bondoc 2019, 204), mais Ἐλευθερος, au nominatif.

¹² Stîngă 1999a, 98 (dessin p. 102, fig. 13.2). Voir aussi Benea 2007, 239-240 (dessin p. 252, fig. 5b); Benea 2008, 119; Dana 2020 (déchiffrement de l'inscription, en négatif, et typologie).

¹³ Stîngă 1998b, p. 36, dessin fig. 11.12 (dessin).

Tous ces vases et tessons inscrits avant et après cuisson, en partie publiés ou signalés à plusieurs reprises¹⁴, en partie inédits, sont conservés au Musée de la Région des Portes du Fer (MRPF), à Drobeta-Turnu Severin. Les découvertes récentes, que ce soit lors des fouilles systématiques ou de sauvetage, apportent d'autres exemples sur la diffusion de la *literacy*¹⁵ dans la province nord-danubienne.

1. Marque de propriété de Iulius Viator

Fragment de vase à deux anses (une seule est conservée, sur un autre morceau), à fine pâte rougeâtre (type Popilian 4). Dimensions: 18,2 x 12 cm ; lg. lèvre: 1,52 cm ; ép. 0,6 cm. Trouvé dans la fosse n° 2 (S8), avec le graffite n° 2. Graffite incisé après cuisson en lettres capitales et cursives ; on note quelques lettres très cursives, comme sur des supports périssables: A (avec petite traverse oblique), L (avec une haste oblique très longue), R (tracé en deux temps), S (tracé en deux temps), V de forme ondulée (tracé en deux temps). Dans le gentilice IVL, la première et la dernière lettre sont de taille considérablement plus grande ; dans le *cognomen* VIATORIS, la dernière lettre est légèrement plus grande (S) et son prolongement marque la fin de la séquence (similaire au trait que les papyrologues appellent *space-filler*), alors que le dernier I croise la haste oblique du R. Ht. des lettres: 1,5-2 cm, avec des écarts: petit O (1 cm), grands I (presque 5 cm) et L (barre oblique de plus de 6 cm).

Bibl. Stângă 1997, 624 (dessin p. 633, fig. 6.4) ; Stângă 1998a, 311 (dessin Pl. XLI.4) ; Stângă 1998b, 36 (dessin fig. 9.5) (d'où C. C. Petolescu, *CEpR*, XVIII, 1998, 780 ; *ILD I* 88) ; Stângă 2005, 52 et 53 (dessin p. 135, Pl. XVIII) ; Stângă 2006, 12, n° 12 (photo) ; Gudea 2008, 250 (dessin fig. 107) ; Hamat 2018, 183 (dessin p. 186, fig. 13.7).

Drobeta-Turnu Severin, MRPF (inv. II 11630).

II^e s.

¹⁴ Stângă 1997, 624 (dessins p. 633, fig. 6.1-3); Stângă 1998b, 36 (dessins fig. 9.5-8) (d'où C. C. Petolescu, *CEpR*, XVIII, 1998, 780 et *CEpR*, XXV, 2005, 1098; *ILD I* 88); Stângă 1999a, 91; Stângă 2005, 52-53 (dessins Pl. XVIII.10, 12-14); Gudea 2008, 250, fig. 107 (dessins); Hamat 2018, 186, fig. 13.4-7 (dessins).

¹⁵ Pour la Bretagne et les variations régionales, voir Evans 1987. Pour l'exemple des graffites de quelques sites en Gaule Lyonnaise (Augustodunum, Autricum et Agedincum), voir la monographie exemplaire d'Andrieu 2017.



Fig. 1. Marque de propriété



Fig. 2. Fac-similé

IVL VIATORIS

Iul(i) Viatoris.

Selon l'inventeur, il s'agirait du nom du propriétaire (1998), inscrit dans un second temps (2006, « en caractères grecs »). Le dessin donné dans les premières publications, qui n'est pas tout à fait fidèle (cf. **fig. 12**), aurait pu suggérer la lecture PLATORIS du *cognomen* (nom illyrien), alors que C. C. Petolescu lit, d'après ce même dessin, *Iul. Antoni*, ce qui est impossible pour la seconde partie (CEpR, XVIII, 1998, 780). En réalité, cette inscription latine semi-cursive se lit sans l'ombre d'un doute *Iul(i) Viatoris* et offre la formule onomastique d'un citoyen romain, porteur d'un gentilice banal. Quant au *cognomen*, il pourrait indiquer une origine pannonienne, car le nom latin *Viator* est très prisé, comme idionyme pérégrin ou bien comme *cognomen*, en Pannonie (OPEL IV 164-165)¹⁶.

2. Marque de propriété de Iulianus

Fragment d'un bol à lèvre rabattue vers l'extérieur, à fine pâte rougeâtre. Dimensions: 9,34 x 5,78 cm ; lg. lèvre 2 cm (ép. lèvre 2 cm) ; ép.

¹⁶ Voir Dana 2017, 125 et n. 49. Cf., à titre d'exemple, l'auxiliaire *Viator Romani f., Asalus* (diplôme militaire du 19 juillet 146, CIL XVI 178). Parmi les soldats d'origine pannonienne attestés ailleurs, cf. les épitaphes d'Apamée de Syrie de *L. Sept(imius) Viator, lanc(iarius) leg(ionis) II Part(hicae), natione Pannonius* (AÉ, 1993, 1574), et d'Ignius Viatorianus, *stator a(l)ae I Vlp(iae) Contariorum* (AÉ 1993, 1593); en Maurétanie Césarienne, de *C. Cusonius Viator, miles leg(ionis) I Adiutr(icis), nation(e) Pan(nonius)* à Cherchell (CIL VIII 9376), et d'un soldat *ex ped(itibus) s<in>g(ularibus) Pan(n)on(icianis) Pann(oniae) Inf(erioris)*, dont le second héritier est *Viator opt(io)*, à Aquae Calidae (CIL VIII 21453 = AÉ 1971, 532).

0,65 cm. Trouvé dans la fosse n° 2 (S8), avec le graffite n° 1. Graffite incisé dans la pâte molle, en lettres capitale, assez rapidement. Lettres de dimensions inégales ; ht. des lettres: 1-2 cm, à l'exception du L, de forme plus cursive et très allongé (ht.: 3 cm) ; A cursif, sans barre médiane ; petit V, de forme classique.

Bibl. Stângă 1997, 624 (dessin p. 633, fig. 6.1) ; Stângă 1998a, 91 (dessin Pl. XLI.1) ; Stângă 1998b, 36, dessin fig. 9.6 (C. C. Petolescu, *CEpR*, XVIII, 1998, 780) (*ILD* I 88) ; Stângă 2005, 52 (dessin p. 135, Pl. XVIII) ; Stângă 2006, 11, n° 11 (photo) ; Gudea 2008, 250, fig. 107 (dessin) ; Hamat 2018, 183 (dessin p. 186, fig. 13.4).

Drobeta-Turnu Severin, MRPF (inv. II 11631).

II^e s.



Fig. 3. Autre marque de propriété



Fig. 4. Fac-similé

IVLIANI

Iuliani.

L'inventeur donne la lecture IVLIANV(S), reprise par C. C. Petolescu, qui transcrit IVLIANV[S]. En réalité, le nom, d'une grande banalité, se lit au génitif. Pour ce genre de notations, cf. le nom [V]LPIVS incisé avant cuisson sur un fragment de vase découvert à Locusteni (dép. de Dolj)¹⁷, site qui a livré deux autres graffites: la lettre A incisée *post cocturam*, avec deux chevaux, sur une urne funéraire¹⁸; un graffite fragmentaire dont ne subsistent que trois lettres sur un tesson,]MĪĒ]¹⁹.

¹⁷ Popilian 1980, 77, n° 2 (*ILD* I 104); Popilian, Bondoc 2014, 136-137, n° 3 (dessin p. 255, pl. 57.1).

¹⁸ Popilian 1980, 76-77, n° 1, et 131 (dessin pl. 8) (*IDR* II 161 = *ILD* I 103); Popilian, Bondoc 2014, 136-137, n° 1.

¹⁹ Popilian, Tătulea 1992, 236 (dessin fig. 1.2); Popilian, Bondoc 2014, 136-137, n° 2. Ce graffite n'est pas inclus dans *ILD*.

3. Marque de propriété abrégée (?)

Vase complet, à deux anses, retrouvé en plusieurs morceaux jointifs, à fine pâte rougeâtre (type Popilian 4). Dimensions: ht. 30,3 cm ; diam. lèvres 24,6 cm ; diam. base 10,4 cm ; diam. max. 28,5 cm. L'assemblage des morceaux, avec parfois un excès de colle et des endroits retouchés par le restaurateur, a endommagé deux des caractères du graffite. À proximité d'une anse, un graffite a été incisé dans la pâte molle, sur deux lignes, en caractères de taille différente, et avec deux instruments différents (ht. des lettres: 1,5-6 cm). Possible ligatures: AN (l. 1) ; d'autres à la l. 2.

Inédit.

Drobeta-Turnu Severin, MRPF (inv. II 11659).

II^e s.



**Fig. 5-7. Photos d'une
marque de propriété (?)
abrégée**

Fig. 8. Fac-similé

Le caractère du texte, qui plus est gribouillé, reste énigmatique. Possible chiffre à la fin de la l. 2 (IX?), suivi d'un mot abrégé, d().

4. La lettre A

Fragment d'un bol à lèvre rabattue vers l'extérieur, à fine pâte rougeâtre. Dimensions: 10,7 x 5,6 cm ; lg. lèvre 1,86 cm ; ép. 0,56 cm. Une seule lettre a été incisée avant cuisson (ht.: 2,5 cm).

Bibl. Stângă 1997, 624 (dessin p. 633, fig. 6.2) ; Stângă 1998a, 311 (dessin pl. XLI.2) ; Stângă 1998b, 36 (dessin fig. 9.7) (d'où C. C. Petolescu, CEpR, XVIII, 1998, 780 ; ILD I 88) ; Stângă 2005, 52 (dessin p. 135, Pl. XVIII) ; Gudea 2008, 250 (dessin fig. 107) ; Hamat 2018, 183 (dessin p. 186, fig. 13.5).

Drobeta-Turnu Severin, MRPF (inv. II 11632).

II^e s.



Fig. 9. Photo d'un tesson inscrit

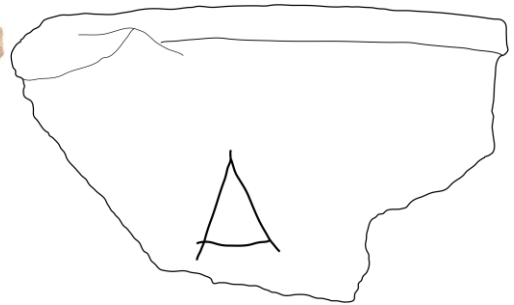


Fig. 10. Fac-similé

Sans doute un A, avec la barre médiane très basse.

5. Une autre lettre

Fragment d'un plat à grandes dimensions, à fonds plat et les parois épaisses, en pâte grumeleuse grise. Dimensions: 4,5 x 8,3 cm. Une seule lettre a été incisée *post cocturam* (ht.: 3 cm).

Bibl. Stângă 1997, 624 (dessin p. 633, fig. 6.3) ; Stângă 1998a, 311 (dessin Pl. XLI.3) ; Stângă 1998b, 36 (dessin fig. 9.8) (d'où C. C. Petolescu, CEpR, XVIII, 1998, 780 ; ILD I 88) ; Stângă 2005, 52 (dessin p. 135, Pl. XVIII) ; Gudea 2008, 250 (dessin fig. 107) ; Hamat 2018, 183 (dessin p. 186, fig. 13.6).

Drobeta-Turnu Severin, MRPF (non retrouvé, sans numéro d'inventaire).

II^e s.

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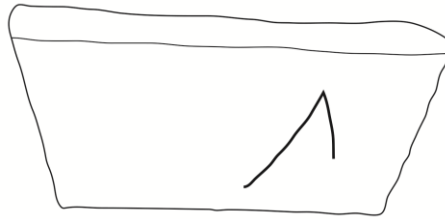


Fig. 11. Fac-similé

Selon l'inventeur, il s'agirait d'une lettre grecque, *lambda* ; selon C. C. Petolescu, d'une lettre latine, M (?). Il s'agit plutôt de la lettre latine A, sans barre médiane, si toutefois le dessin est fidèle – puisque le tesson n'a pas été identifié dans les collections du MRPF.

Le même site de Gârla Mare a livré une amphore à deux anses avec une inscription peinte sur le col, dans un alphabet difficile à identifier (sans doute sémitique)²⁰ ainsi que trois vases de production locale avec des signes cruciformes (fig. 12)²¹. Selon l'inventeur, qui fournit des dessins, deux cruches seraient ornées du « signe de la croix » incisé avant cuisson sur le fond, et un bol comporterait un *chrismon*, incisé après cuisson. Ces trois exemples ont été interprétés comme des témoignages du culte paléochrétien²², ce qui est abusif, car il s'agit de signes banals (en

²⁰ L'inscription n'est pas en grec (Stîngă 1998a, 94; Stîngă 2005, 52, photo p. 178, fig. 13; Stîngă 2006, 10, n° 6, avec photo); l'étude de cette amphore découverte en 2001 mérite d'être reprise ailleurs.

²¹ Stîngă 2005, 93-94, n°s 8, 9 et 10 (dessins Pl. XLIV.5-6 et 9); Stîngă 2003, 34, n° 126 (dessin Pl. XI.10b); suivi par Gudea 2007a (dessin p. 38, fig. 3. 3, 4 et 6).

²² Il s'agit d'une obsession pieuse de l'historiographie roumaine pour la christianisation précoce, voire apostolique («le peuple roumain est né chrétien»), qui s'est développée de manière protéiforme ces dernières décennies. Dans une bibliographie pléthorique, voir à titre d'exemple Gudea, Ghiurco 1988; Gudea 2007b et 2011 (avec des exemples interprétés en clé chrétienne, alors qu'il s'agit de signes et de symboles banals); Moga 2007 (pour Apulum). À ce sujet, on lira toujours avec profit les mises en gardes à la fois érudites et lucides de D. M. Pippidi et N. Zugravu.

forme de X), qu'on peut rencontrer à toutes les époques²³ et, en Olténie romaine, à Romula, Slăveni, Galiciuica, Locusteni etc.²⁴.

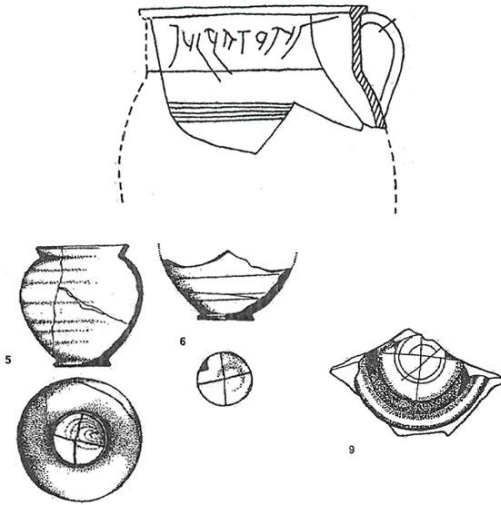


Fig. 12. Fac-similés du graffite n° 1 et d'autres signes sur des vases de Gârla Mare (monographie de 2005)

Ces marques de propriété et ces notations abrégées, parfois en caractères plus ou moins cursifs, témoignent de la variété de la paléographie sur une multitude de supports, dont ceux périssables²⁵. Le mélange de capitales et de cursives n'est pas l'indice d'une alphabétisation limitée, ni d'une écriture approximative ou balbutiante, mais, tout au contraire, des habitudes d'écrire sur d'autres types de support, de différentes manières, y compris par le même rédacteur²⁶.

En Olténie, d'autres sites ont livré des graffites, connus depuis longtemps²⁷ ou plus récemment – ainsi dans le camp auxiliaire de Cătunele (dép. de Gorj)²⁸, ou lors des fouilles récentes d'Ocnița (dép. de

²³ Cf. un tesson d'un vase d'époque dace, à Covasna-Valea Zânelor, publié par Pupeză, Crișan 2019, 38 (n° 4) et 39-41 (avec un inventaire des signes en forme de X ou de croix dans le reste des sites daces) (photo et dessin p. 51, Pl. II.4).

²⁴ Popilian 1976, 131; Popilian, Bondoc 2014, 137.

²⁵ Sur l'écriture cursive en Dacie romaine, voir Voloșciuc 2007.

²⁶ Pour un exemple de mélange d'écriture capitale et cursive, avec une grande diversité des lettres gravées par le même rédacteur (par exemple, la lettre E), voir la republication d'une *defixio* sur une lamelle de plomb opisthographe d'Apulum (Dana, Nemeti 2019). Une lettre privée gravée sur un support céramique, dans un mélange de capitales et de cursives, découverte dans les années 1980 à Ampelum et restée inédite, sera publiée par D. Dana, M. Dana et V. Wollmann.

²⁷ À Cioroiu Nou, voir Dana 2013-2014, 47-48, n° 4 (IDR II 156).

²⁸ ILD I 91, avec une lecture fautive (INTAI[...]) du premier exemple (les deux graffites ont été publiés par Dana, Marinoiu 2020).

Vâlcea), site développé près des salines d'Ocnele Mari²⁹ –, dans une région de la Dacie dont la production épigraphique connue à ce jour reste plutôt pauvre³⁰.

Les graffites de Gârla Mare que nous présentons ici ont été incisés sur des vases de production locale, de facture romaine, étant notés soit par les potiers (n° 2, Iulianus)³¹, soit par le propriétaire (n° 1, Iulius Viator), si l'on se fie aux distinctions *ante/post cocturam*. Appartenant au genre souvent méprisé de l'«épigraphie mineure», dont on commence à mieux apprécier les renseignements des plus divers, ces témoignages sur support céramique complètent l'image très fragmentée de la diffusion des pratiques épigraphiques dans la province nord-danubienne. Ils restent par ensemble mieux connus, et beaucoup plus riches, dans le milieu militaire – surreprésenté et mieux exploré, à vrai dire, en particulier en Dacie romaine. Or, la richesse de ce site sur la rive septentrionale du Danube qui a livré les graffites (re)publiés ici s'explique, du moins en partie, par une présence militaire qui a entraîné la circulation et la production de biens, certains inscrits.

²⁹ Voir trois graffites (dont un en grec) publiés par Dana, Tuțulescu 2017 (= AÉ 2017, 1197-1199).

³⁰ Popilian 1976, 128-131 (dessins Pl. LXXX), signalait une douzaine de graffites sur vases en Olténie romaine; pour la diffusion de la literacy dans cette région, les instruments et les exercices d'écriture, voir Pana, Bondoc 2013.

³¹ Pour les ateliers particuliers de céramique en Dacie romaine, voir Pop 1994. On peut citer, en Olténie, la signature grecque cursive [M]αρτεῖνος sur la lèvre d'un *mortarium* découvert à Slăveni (départ. d'Olt) (IDR II 543), peut-être propriétaire d'un atelier dans la région des fours de céramique, près des thermes du camp; voir Popilian 1976, 130 (n° 19) et 145 (dessin Pl. LXXX); Gudea, Cosma 1992, 211, n° 45; Pop 1994, 45. Parmi les exemples récents, il convient de signaler la signature en lettres cursives avant cuisson (ainsi, pour E, rendu comme « II ») du potier [A]Jelianus à Potaissa, sur un vase à provisions; voir Nedelea 2017, 118 et 251 (dessin Pl. LXXII.1a-b), et Andone-Rotaru, Nedelea 2018, 84 (dessin p. 80, fig. 9.5).

Illustrations

Fig. 1. Marque de propriété (cliché P. Dinulescu).

Fig. 2. Fac-similé (D. Dana).

Fig. 3. Autre marque de propriété (cliché M. Neagoe).

Fig. 4. Fac-similé (D. Dana).

Fig. 5-7. Photos d'une marque de propriété (?) abrégée (cliché P. Dinulescu).

Fig. 8. Fac-similé (D. Dana).

Fig. 9. Photo d'un tesson inscrit (cliché P. Dinulescu).

Fig. 10. Fac-similé (D. Dana).

Fig. 11. Fac-similé (D. Dana, refait d'après le dessin publié).

Fig. 12. Fac-similés du graffiti n° 1 et d'autres signes sur des vases de Gârla Mare (monographie de Stîngă 2005).

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On Displayed Writing. Bronze Inscriptions from Napoca*

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Abstract: We present below two fragmentary texts carved *in aere* from Napoca, one known from the 19th century and the other novel, yielded by recent rescue excavations. The first inscription (Napoca-1) was carved on a bronze tablet discovered in Piaţa Muzeului no. 4. The document here might correspond to an imperial response (*scriptio*), delivered by emperor Hadrian upon a request that might have been made for instance by the representatives of the town at Napoca. A second fragmentary inscription in bronze (Napoca-2) originating still from Napoca was discovered in the area of hill Feleac. The preserved words *formis* and *ratio / procuratio* are indicative of an administrative taxation type text.

Keywords: bronze inscriptions, legal text, imperial rescript, Napoca

Rezumat: Prezentăm aici două texte fragmentare incizate *in aere* din Napoca, unul cunoscut din secolul al XIX-lea și altul nou, provenit din cercetări de salvare recente. Prima inscripție (Napoca-1) a fost incizată pe o tablă de bronz descoperită în Piaţa Muzeului nr. 4. Aceste documente poate fi un răspuns imperial (*scriptio*) dat de împăratul Hadrian unei cereri făcute de reprezentanții oraşului Napoca. A doua inscripție fragmentară din bronz (Napoca-2), provenită tot din Napoca, a fost descoperită în zona dealului Feleac. Cuvintele păstrate - *formis* și *ratio/procuratio* - indică un text administrativ în legătură cu impozitele.

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Cuvinte cheie: inscripții de bronz, texte legale, rescript imperial, Napoca

Introduction

The topic of book writing and science in the Roman Empire is regularly revived by novel inquiries into written productions and their reception. In provincial towns like Napoca, there is a rich production of official texts inscribed on stone, either votive or funerary, minor epigraphs (like pottery, lamps, tile material stamps and graffiti etc.). Less known is, however, the major epigraphic production, like for instance the legislative and administrative texts carved *in aere*, designed for public display, preyed during the subsequent practice of reuse as raw materials. Texts in bronze designed for remembrance that, owing to their support, should have passed the test of time, survived in fact less than graffiti. We present below two such fragmentary texts, one known from the 19th century and the other novel, yielded by recent rescue excavations.

Bronze inscription Napoca-1. (Pl. I)

The first inscription was carved on a bronze tablet discovered in Napoca, at Piața Muzeului no. 4, during the performance of rescue archaeological excavations.

Location and find conditions:

The investigated building lies on the northern side of the Piața Muzeului, near the “Carolina” monument. The building, also called the “Mikes palace”, took its current architectural shape by the end of the 18th century and early 19th century, undergoing several internal and external improvements (one major in 1870’ies) over the course of its existence. The 2016 rescue excavations yielded foundations of modern buildings, four medieval wells, a part of the Roman town street (on its entire width together with the sidewalk and sewerage) and partially, of a building (*domus*) with inner courtyard dated to the same period. Of the Roman building could be noticed the enclosure wall on the street side, partially two rooms and a stone slab paved courtyard. The room on the southern side of the paved interior courtyard was relatively well preserved, with an antechamber and a *hypocaustum* – heated room being found. The room on the northern side was destroyed to a great extent by modern interferences. It could also be noted how during said improvements (possibly those of the 1870’ies), the builders excavated the Roman structures in search for reusable materials, fragments of the slabs paving the Roman street being discovered incorporated in the “palace” foundations. The medieval wells were filled in the modern period and some even destroyed, their stones being also reused. The rescue

archaeological excavations conducted in the courtyard of the building located at Piața Muzeului no. 4, Cluj-Napoca, Cluj County identified for the first time in the town of Napoca a street that survived completely, on its entire width. Concurrently, the inhabited area from the northern side of the town, very rich and likely with public edifices starts to be delimited. The inscribed bronze plate fragment was discovered in the western gutter of the Roman road.¹

Technical data

Sizes: 9.2 x 5.4 cm; wall thickness varies between 0.16-0.22 cm.

Weight: 52 gr.

Letters: 1.06 cm. Capital letters, carefully carved, uniform. *Hasta* heads end in lines starting from left to right, slightly thickened on the left side, according to the L letter foot pattern.

Text:

[---]DRIA[---]
[---]SIO · AD[---]
[---]VTA · DEF[---]
4 [---]ET · RES · PV[BLICA? ---]
[---]CVM · DI[---]
[---]

Five lines have survived. It is almost certain that the one at the beginning is also the first line of the original text. Words are always divided by *interpunctiones*.

The plate thickness varies, thus in the upper part – surface covered by the first two lines – it is thicker, with such level difference also visible overleaf, the limit between the two registers being represented by an approximately 0.6 mm deep step.

Since the text is carved on a bronze tablet, it could be an official text of legal value. Among texts designed for long-lasting display and issue, the most important are the legal and administrative documents. Religious texts are rarer and generally copy the content of official deeds (*leges templorum*, *Acta fratrum Arvalium* etc.). As a rule, the goal of these displayed texts was to inform all the citizens, effectively or potentially, on certain elements of law and legislation (municipal, provincial *leges*), city planning and monuments' maintenance (*decreta* of the *ordo decurionum*),

¹ <http://cronica.cimec.ro/detalii.asp?k=5784&d=Cluj-Napoca-Piata-Muzeului-Nr-4-2016>.

administration and finances (edicts and imperial rescripts, the so-called *constitutiones imperatorum*).²

Documents of imperial petitions type survived in a rather small number, owing to several factors. The imperial correspondence, drafted on perishable material³ and deposited in archives, did not survive for the most part. The fact that some of these petitions would be carved in stone or bronze is due to the emperor's response to a mainly collective request, submitted in the name of a group, like town inhabitants etc., a rescript (*rescriptum, subscriptio*) which, as it contained an imperial ruling, became a legal document.⁴ Circumstances described in the document usually impacted a group of citizens. There are mentions which record that transcription of the text on a displayed monument required official approval.⁵ Occasionally, the document designed for public display contained both the petition and the response of the authority, like the case of an inscription from Histria.⁶ A bilingual Latin-Greek text dated to the time of emperor Tiberius, originating from Sagalassus in Pisidia and issued by the emperor's legate, Sextus Sotidius Strabo Libuscidianus, references the requisition related to the transport in the area.⁷ This imperial edict is one of the most important within a series of over twenty texts on the topic.⁸ In a territory where the dominant culture was Greek, bilingual display of legal texts was necessary. It is worth mentioning that the issue of such edicts was not always in response to a petition or upon the governor's or local leaders' taking notice, but is sometimes the result of repeated abuse that weakened the system, thus requiring official interference in order to stop *malpraxis*. In the case of edicts concerning the

² Corbier 1987, 38-39.

³ For correspondence in general, various materials were used, papyrus (especially in Egypt), wood (the tablets of Vindolanda published in Bowman, Thomas, I-III, 1983, 1994, 2003) or parchment, yet also pottery (ostraca) or even lead.

⁴ See Trapp (ed.) 2003, 10.

⁵ Hauken 1998, 203-214, especially 207: a Greek inscription incised on a marble block, discovered at Tabala (Lydia, Asia) in 1987 and representing an excerpt of Pertinax's letter and that of proconsul Aemilius Iuncus, addressed to the magistrates, council and inhabitants of Tabala in 193, mentions the pledge to publicly display the ruling enclosed in the deed: l. 25-26: τὸ δίκαιο[ν δὴ δόξαθε προθήσασ] | θαι κοι[νῆ ἐν τῇ πόλει ὑμῶν] = [You may display] this ruling [in a public place in your town].

⁶ The inscription was discovered nearby the temple of Aphrodite (later proven the temple of Zeus Polieus) from Histria and contains a complaint (*libellus*) addressed by the inhabitants of the settlement of Dagis, whose location (Moesia inferior) remains unknown to date, to Iulius Severus, *legatus Augusti pro praetore*, as well the authority's response (*subscriptio* of Antonius Hiberus). The text was carved on a limestone monument. The complaint is drafted in Greek, while the consular's response is in Latin (see: ISM I 378; Hauken 1998, 170-178).

⁷ Mitchell 1976, 106-131.

⁸ Mitchell 1976, 111-112.

requisition of transport, for instance, it was aimed at settling the abuse by which civil and military officials requested accommodation and free transport means from the inhabitants at a smaller rate than regulated, hence abusing their capacity of state officials, despite the fact such expenses were state discounted.⁹

Other inscriptions discovered at Ephesus and Aphrodisias,¹⁰ compose a lot of legal texts that comprised emperor or other high officials' rulings.

In the first line of the inscription here, three letters may be clearly distinguished: RIA, from the first letter being visible only the central curved part of what could be an O or rather D. The possible letter O should be excluded because of the ORIA succession that appears in words like *memoria, praetoria, gloria, victoria* etc., hardly justified in line 1 of such a text. Instead, letter D is more appropriate. The letter group DRIA is likely part of the emperor's name Hadrian, while the first text line could represent the imperial titulature: IMP. CAESAR TRAIANVS HADRIANVS AVG. PONTIF. MAX., namely *Imperator Caesar Traianus Hadrianus Augustus pontifex maximus* etc.

It is less likely that sequence -DRIA- belongs to the town's name, written in line 1: MVNIC. AEL. HADRIAN. NAPOC., namely *municipium Aelium Hadrianum Napocensium*. This might have occurred in a votive text from the sphere of the civic religion like the *Genio ordinis municipii vel similia* type, however not in a text carved on a bronze tablet.

Since it is the first inscription line and contains letters -DRIA- we may attempt to restore the presumptive original sizes of the monument starting from the imperial titulature. Because the tablet is thin, of 1.5-2 mm, we do not believe that the monument was too large. If line 1 includes the imperial titulature, some of the parts could pass by the beginning of line 2. However, below the name of Hadrianus are letters -SIO, the ending of a feminine noun (of type *possesio, cessio* etc.) which no longer belonged to the titulature. Thus, lines 1-3 might read:

[EX AVCTORIT. IMP. CAESAR. TRAIAN. HA]DRIA[N. AVG. PONTIF. MAX.]
[TRIB. POT. ? COS. ? ...]SIO AD[...]

Thus, in line 1, 35 characters might be found, whereas, if we add an introductory phrase of type EDICTVM or EX AVCTORIT., 42-45

⁹ Mitchell 1976, 114-115.

¹⁰ For decrees and letters from Aphrodisias, see: <http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/iaph2007/inscriptions/toc/text/D.html>, <http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/iaph2007/inscriptions/toc/text/L.html>; see also: Reynolds 1982; Reynolds 2000, 5-20; Reynolds, Roueché, Bodard 2007.

characters. Letter widths vary from 2-5 mm (letters I, E), to 1-1.2 mm (letters A, R, T, O etc.). With an average of 1 cm (letter and space between two letters) a ca. 40-45 cm width of the bronze plate might be obtained.

The name and imperial titulature in the Nominative, the bronze plate sizes and surviving letters which do not frame standard and stereotype law texts are rather indicative of a rescript of emperor Hadrian, an epistle addressed to the authorities of the town at Napoca.

The answer of emperor Titus from AD 79 to the duumviri and decurions of *Munigua* is written on a bronze plate sized 20.5 x 30 x 0.4 cm, with 0.8-0.5 cm high letters. The *Munigua* inscription was displayed in a public place, as evidenced by the perforations in its four corners.¹¹ A recently published fragment, discovered at Seilh, near Toulouse, is 12 x 8 x 0.4 cm, with 1.5 cm, respectively 0.5 cm high letters, being an *epistula* addressed by an anonymous emperor to the *decuriones Tolosanorum*.¹² The restored sizes of this monument are similar to those of *Munigua*.

In lines 2-5 there are groups of two or three letters from the start or ending part of some words. The only complete word is RES, in line 4, from the syntagm RES PV[BLIC-].

In line 2: -sio is the ending of a feminine noun (e.g. *possessio*); there follows an *interpunctio*, then letters AD, which could be a preposition or a composed word containing *ad*-.

In lines 2 and 3 are possible fragments of words *ad[versus]*, *ad[versario]* and *def[ensor]*, *def[endit]* as well as other declensions of verb *defendo*, typical for imperial responses referencing litigation between various communities.¹³ In line 3: -uta - the ending of the perfect passive participle, feminine N. sg. or neuter N. Ac. pl. (*instituta*, *constituta*, *soluta*?); it is nonetheless possible that the first letter from line 3, fragmentary, might be an N, hence we would have the ending of a neuter noun, N. pl. (of type *frumenta*, *monumenta* etc.) or of a plural numeral adjective (of type *quadraginta*, *sexaginta* etc.); there follows an *interpunctio* and letters *def*-, of a composed word, which included the preposition *de*. In line 4, -t could be the inflexion of the third person singular of a verb of type *fecit*, *constituit*, *instituit* etc.; still visible are the traces of a *hasta* of a letter which might be only a vowel, namely E and hence conjunction *et* would result. There follows an *interpunctio*, then the letter group RES PV[, certainly *res pu[blica Napocensium?*]. Since the single completely preserved word is *res* and because the form might be either in the Nominative singular, yet also in the plural Nominative-Accusative, we do not know

¹¹ CILA II, 1052 = AE 1962, 147 = AE 1962, 288 = AE 1972, 257.

¹² Armani 2012, 267-282.

¹³ Hauken 1998, 22 (Saltus Burunitanus, II.1: *adversarius*; III.7: *adversus*; CIL VIII 10570).

for certain which is the ending of the adjective *publica*. In line 5 survive fragmentarily letters VM, one *interpunctio*, then letters DI.

Letters VTA and DEF may be completed as [*destit*]VTA and DEF[*essa*] with reference to the *civitas Napocensium*,¹⁴ in line 4 ET RES PV[*blica Napocensium*], and in line 5 a phrase of type [c]VM DI[*ligentia restituit*]¹⁵ or [ipse loc]VM DI[*xit*].¹⁶

Thus, a hypothetical partial completion suggestion would be the following:

[Imp(erator) Caesar Traianus Ha]DRIA[nus Augustus pont(ifex) max(imus) —
tribun(icia) pot(estate) —]
[salutem dicit?]SIO AD[]
[?civitatem nostram destit]VTA DEF[*essa*?]
4 [ET RES PV[BLICA?]
[]CVM DI[*ligentia restituit*?]
[]

Formally, the document here might correspond to an imperial response (*subscriptio*), delivered by emperor Hadrian upon a request that might have been made for instance by the representatives of the town at Napoca. Because of the fragmentary state of the piece, the document's content is impossible to ascertain, however in general, the reasons for which an appeal was made with the emperor were of financial, urban or legal nature, the emperor being the one to guarantee privileges and benefits or resolve territorial disputes and litigation related to magistrates' rulings.¹⁷ The structure of such a document was supposed to include a few key parts: the issuer's imperial titulature, the form of address, the addressees,¹⁸ the ruling, the closing phrase (*formula valedicendi*) and date. Since this imperial ruling was of collective importance, the petitioners transcribed it on a bronze plate for public display.

¹⁴ CIL X 520.

¹⁵ CIL VIII 8826.

¹⁶ CIL V 7781.

¹⁷ Armani 2012, 273 and note 20.

¹⁸ If the text was addressed to the town of Napoca, then the form of address must have referenced the magistrates, council and inhabitants, alike inscriptions SEG XXXVIII 1244 (see also Hauken 1998, 203-214) or Reynolds 1982, 33-41 (the same inscription also commented in Trapp 2003, 151, 300-302).

Bronze inscription Napoca-2

A second fragmentary inscription in bronze originating still from Napoca was discovered and published as early as the 19th century. The findspot is mentioned as being the town of Klausenbug towards the summit on Fellek (von Hornmayr)¹⁹ or the road to hill Feleac, rising south Cluj city (Neigebaur).²⁰ In CIL, the information becomes *close to the summit of mount Feleac, nearby Clausenburg (in ipso fere vertice montis Felek prope Clausenburgum)*. The piece is published for the first time by von Hornmayr in 1825 and later resumed in various corpora with a slightly different transcription.

J. von Hornmayr describes it as a copper plate («cupfernen Tafel»), slightly rounded (convex), as if it stood on a column (in CIL *curva et olim fortasse columnae alicui affixa*). He also specifies that the large letters are silvered and transcribes the text as follows:²¹

[---]VS · AEL[---]
 [---]FORMIS[---]
 [---]RATIOC[---]
 [---]D · D · D

Additional information is provided by Neigebaur, who states that the fragment is 9 Zoll high (nine inches), namely 23.7 cm. In Neigebaur and the inscription corpus of M. J. Ackner and Fr. Müller, in line 2 appear letters RORMIS.²² CIL resumes the reading FORMIS, after von Hornmayr.²³ Ackner and Müller wonder whether in line 4 we are or not dealing with a *ratio c[astrens]*.

In line 4 may be read [*l(ocus)*] *d(atus) d(ecreto) d(ecurionum)*, which makes it the last line of the inscription.²⁴

This is the lower, central part of a large, bronze inscription. The fragment is almost 24 cm, which means that letters are ca. 4-5 cm high (if we also include here the line spacing). An inscription of such sizes could not have comprised only four lines. The imperial titlature entails at least 30 characters and, if with letters of 4-5 cm we assume an average width of ca. 3 cm/letter and space, we obtain a 90 cm wide bronze plate. For symmetry, it should be at least 60 cm high. An inscription of such sizes was visible from distance being designed for an *en mouvement* reading. Most likely, the convex shape is due to the fragment's reuse, being

¹⁹ von Hornmayr 1825, 322.

²⁰ Neigebaur, 227.

²¹ von Hornmayr 1825, 322.

²² Neigebaur, 227; Ackner, Müller, 157, no. 745.

²³ CIL III 871.

²⁴ In <https://edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/edh/inschrift/HD048959>, F. Graf reads *d(onum)? d(edit)? d(edicavit)?*

originally a bronze plate with silvered letters displayed in a public space from the town at Napoca, as evidenced by the final phrase *locus datus decreto decurionum*. In line 1 survive letters AEL, which might belong to an imperial *gentilicium*, Aelius, held in the official titulature by Hadrian, Lucius Aelius Caesar and Antoninus Pius (Imp. Caes. T. Aelius Hadrianus Antoninus Aug. Pius). Letters VS indicate an ending in the Nominative, yet not an imperial *praenomen* (Lucius, Titus), which in official inscriptions appears always in abbreviated form. *Formis* is the Dative or plural Ablative of the first declension feminine noun, *forma*, -ae. It may reference public land like in the inscription of *Canusium*: *fines agrorum publicorum ex formis publicis restituit*.²⁵ Letters RATIO may be the third declension feminine noun *ratio*, -onis, yet also the ending of nouns like *procuratio*, *exploratio*, *comparatio*, or even a *nomen* of type *Horatio*, *Veratio*, *Speratio* etc.²⁶ Words *formis* and *ratio* / *procuratio* are indicative of an administrative taxation type text. The fragmentary state and the fact it is known only by transcription, unfortunately hinder the completion and reading of this important official text.

Conclusions

Both inscriptions discussed here are official texts carved in bronze, designed for public display, *celeberrimo loco* (CIL X 4643). Quoting W. Harris, Napoca too *was full of things to read*. Beside the multitude of votive and building dedicatory texts carved in stone, an important place among texts designed for public display and reading was also held by these texts engraved *in aere*, imperial edicts and *ordo decurionum* decrees, of which regrettably only small, barely legible fragments have survived.

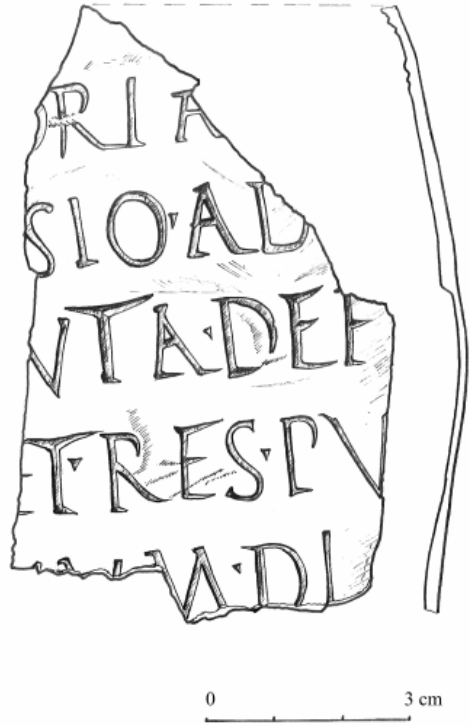
²⁵ AE 1950, 83; AE 1959, 267.

²⁶ The inscription has been recently also mentioned by D. Dana (Dana 2018-2019, 373, n. 16), in an inventory of the bronze inscriptions from Dacia, preserving in line 3 the reading suggestion from CIL: *ratioc[īn-*, thus presuming the completion *ratiocinium*, -i.

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Pl. I

Exit Fanius. About a Brick Stamp from Drobeta

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Abstract: The present study undertakes a reinterpretation of the tile stamp published for the first time by D. Tudor in 1965 with the reading FANIUS, interpreted as a civilian tile workshop owner. Even though no other stamps pertaining to this civilian tile manufacturer have been discovered at Drobeta, this particular stamp was interpreted in the same way in all subsequent publications. Our reading shows that is a tile stamp with the abbreviated name of the Legio V Macedonica, in the form V (quinta) Mac(edonica) retrograde. This new type completes the series of legion's abbreviated name on tile stamps known from Drobeta.

Key-words: tile stamp; Drobeta; Legio V Macedonica.

Rezumat: Se reia lectura unei ștampile tegulare publicată de către D. Tudor în anul 1965, care citea FANIUS și considera că este un antroponim, un producător civil de material tegular. Deși nu s-au mai descoperit la Drobeta ștampile aparținând acestui producător civil, ștampila apare reinterpretată astfel în toate publicațiile ulterioare. În realitate este o ștampilă cu numele legiunii V Macedonica abreviat V (quinta) Mac(edonica) în redare dextrogradă. Noua variantă se adaugă ștampilelor tegulare ale legiunii V Macedonica cunoscute la Drobeta, completând repertoriul acestora.

Cuvinte cheie: ștampilă tegulară; Drobeta; Legio V Macedonica.

The civilian brickyards are known in Dacia mainly from the tile stamps with the abbreviation of the owner's name. Many three or five letter stamps were interpreted as belonging to some civilian tile workshop owner, as for example CIV or CIVAL, QCC, MCC from

Sarmizegetusa¹ identified with *C(aius) I(ulius) Val(ens) / Val(erius), Q(uintus) C(ornelius) C(ornelianus)* and *M(arcus) C(ominius) C(elerinus)*?².

Based on a tile stamp published for the first time by D. Tudor in 1965 (pl. I/1), several scholars stipulated the existence of a private *officina* in Drobeta owned by a certain *Fan(n)ius*. D. Tudor had found the brick type *bessalis* (measurements 28 x 18 x 7.5 cm; stamp letters 2 cm) within the museum from Drobeta, lacking references concerning the finding spot or context of the discovery. In the second series of epigraphic restitutions he offers the reading *Fan(n)ius?*, interpreting the name as that of the *officina's* owner (despite the fact that the restitution shows the name in the Nominative case)³.

The stamp is mentioned in a study regarding the tile stamps from the Drobeta museum collection, along with 148 stamps belonging to *Legio V Macedonica*, maintaining the reading FANIUS (?) which was considered a private stamp. One can find new information about the inventory number (Inv. II 7388), the measurement of the stamp's frame (9.2 x 2.7 cm) and the height of the stamp's letters (2.7 cm)⁴.

The stamp of the so-called FANIUS is discussed again by M. Grec, who tried to read it similarly to a civilian stamp from Sarmizegetusa, previously read IANV(arius)⁵. M. Grec remarks the fact that the FANIUS stamp is «the only civilian stamp known» from Drobeta. However he compares it with the fragmentary stamp IANV[...] from Sarmizegetusa and came to the conclusion that this was in fact a workshop owner, FANIUS, who manufactured civilian bricks and tiles at Sarmizegetusa⁶.

The brick stamp from Drobeta portrays the same reading, FANIUS, in the national corpus of inscriptions⁷. The stamp was meant to showcase particular aspects of Drobeta's economic life, such as local pottery and building material manufacture, as well as the existence of private *officina*, supposedly owned by Fanius.⁸ Fanius or Fannius is a well-known Latin *nomen* with many occurrences in the Western and Danubian provinces⁹. A fragmentary inscription reused in the fortress from Turnu Măgurele attests a family with the *nomen* Fanius¹⁰. However,

¹ Christescu 2004, 69-70; Macrea 2007, 268; Petolescu 2010, 257-258.

² Branga 1974-1975, 84, 87-88; Piso 1996.

³ Tudor 1965, 181-182, no. 6, fig. 1/5 (drawing).

⁴ Benea 1978, 207, no. 199, fig. 26 (photo).

⁵ IDR III/2 555a.

⁶ Grec 1993, 185-186, fig. 1-3.

⁷ IDR II 112 (p. 71).

⁸ Stângă 1998, pl. XXVI; Iliescu 2018, 169, fig. 11/12 («private stamp of the potter Fanius»).

⁹ OPEL II, 134.

¹⁰ IDR II 638.

we do not believe that a person with that name was a workshop owner from Drobeta.

Firstly, one has to start with the unique stamp bearing the name of a bricks manufacturer, Fanius, while keeping in mind the latin adagio *testis unus, testis nullus*. This uniqueness is due to an erroneous reading of the stamp. D. Tudor had published only a drawing of the stamp, which was far from the original. The stamp, in Tudor's opinion, should be read from left to right, and the first letter F is in fact the border of the stamp's cartouche. From the stamp's photo (pl. I/2-3, II/4) it is clear that this letter never existed. From the published photography one can observe a trapezium-shaped cartouche and three or four letters, with two reading variants, both of them from right to left:

- a) A sign that suggests a *tabula ansata*, the letter V (the Roman numeral five), an inverted M, an eventually, the letter A. The reading could be then: VMA, an abbreviation for V (*quinta*) Ma(*cedonica*).
- b) The letter V (the Roman numeral five), the letters MAC, in normal position. The reading runs as it follows: V (*quinta*) Mac(*edonica*).

In both cases we have a retrograde stamp that abbreviates the name of the *legio V Macedonica*. A similar stamp, with the trapezium-shaped cartouche and the elongated letters is known from the excavations at the headquarter building (*principia*) from Potaissa (pl. I/4)¹¹. Given the great variety of the *legio V Macedonica*'s stamps from Potaissa (Turda, Cluj County), finding an identical stamp is very likely improbable, but one should search for the stamp series¹². Four variants of the so-called Potaissa type (the short abbreviation LVM) were found out Drobeta, namely 148 tile stamps discovered in the Roman camp and in the civilian settlement. Only one came from the Late Roman settlement from Hinova¹³. Three of the illustrated variants I/1, I/2, I/3 (pl. II/1-3) correspond to very similar stamp series discovered in Potaissa: two of them are known from the headquarters building (pl. II/5-6) and only one within the baths (pl. II/7)¹⁴. If we add the retrograde stamp with the trapezium-shaped cartouche from *principia* (pl. II/8) we can reach the conclusion that soldiers charged with the tiles and bricks production from Potaissa worked in the fort from Drobeta as well. In fact, several funerary

¹¹ Nemeti 2020, 92, P. VI.108; 324, pl. IV/P.VI.108; 325, pl. V.2.

¹² Nemeti 2020, 94 (about the stamp series from headquarter's building from Potaissa).

¹³ CIL III 8066, 14216,24; Tocilescu 1896, 79, no. 3, 84, no. 14; Tocilescu 1902, 331, no.46 a, b; Benea 1978, 201-202, fig. 2-4; IDR II 99 a-i.

¹⁴ Nemeti 2000, pl. II/P.VI.87, pl. IV/P. VI. 104; Nemeti 2019, 134, fig. 309/5.

inscriptions mentioning veterans from legio V Macedonica at Drobeta are known as well. We know a *veteranus* (Iulius Bassus)¹⁵, a *veteranus candidatus* (Aurelius Atellanus)¹⁶, but mostly officers and *optiones*. Maecius Domitius was a *centurio*¹⁷, C. Domitius Alexander a *signifer*¹⁸, M. Valerius Alexander a *strator consularis*¹⁹, C. Valerius Victorinus a *beneficiarius tribuni*²⁰, and C. Iulius Melcidianus, a *beneficiarius consulari*²¹. All these veterans²² could belong the staff of a *vexillatio* dispatched here from Potaissa in the first half of the IIIrd century A. D.²³ The elements which help date the inscriptions are: the mention of *colonia Septimia Drobeta*²⁴ (*terminus postquem* the reign of Septimius Severus) and the epithets *pia constans* for *legio V Macedonica* which indicates the reign of Caracalla²⁵. The high frequency of the *legio V Macedonica* stamps with variants related with the series used from the *tegulae* and *lateres* from the *principia* at Potaissa could indicate the existence of an *officium* and some *figlinarii* involved in building activities in the Roman camp from Drobeta and the neighboring civil area.

¹⁵ IDR II 40.

¹⁶ IDR II 67.

¹⁷ IDR II 36.

¹⁸ AE 2005, 1303.

¹⁹ IDR II 38.

²⁰ IDR II 39.

²¹ IDR II 41.

²² A soldier or a veteran is mentioned in the fragmentary inscription AE 2015, 1193.

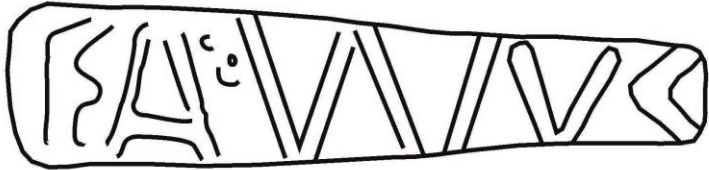
²³ A similar dating in Tocilescu 1902, 332-33.

²⁴ AE 2005, 1303.

²⁵ IDR II 38. Nemeti 2019, 141-146 (for dating of the legion's epithets).

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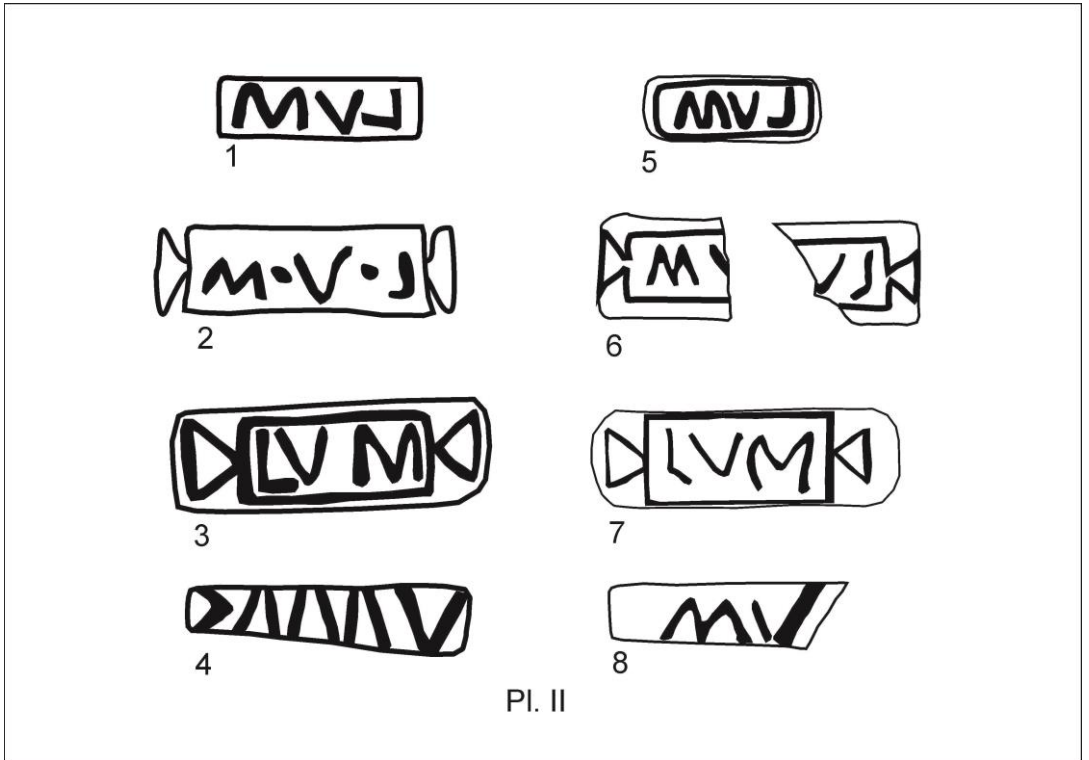


3



4

Pl. I



Seal Boxes from Potaissa

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Abstract: The publication of a previously unpublished seal box discovered in Potaissa supports the reopening of the “dossier” of such items found both in the fort of the V Macedonica Legion and the city. One current knows of 10 artifacts in this category. Together with the other known writing implements, seal boxes complete our current knowledge regarding the use of writing and implicitly literacy in provincial society.

Key-words: seal box; writing; Potaissa.

Rezumat: Publicarea unei capsule de sigiliu inedite descoperită la Potaissa, a permis reluarea „dosarului” acestui tip de obiecte provenite atât din castrul Legiunii V Macedonica cât și din oraș. Se cunosc în prezent zece artefacte din această categorie, artefacte care împreună cu celelalte instrumente de scris cunoscute completează imaginea noastră despre folosirea scrierii și implicit știința de carte în societatea provincială.

Cuvinte cheie: capsulă de sigiliu; scriere; Potaissa.

Such boxes were used to protect seals authenticating documents and consisted of a box and a lid, usually decorated with enamel. Few such items are known from Roman Dacia, both because they were relatively expensive and uncommon and because they were discovered in fragmentary states, thus not always allowing for their correct identification; in fact, seal box fragments were often mistaken for appliques or pendants. The publication of certain lots of seal boxes has led specialists to correctly identify similar artifacts from various museum collections that had been previously ignored. New items were thus included in the scientific environment due to published analogies. 11 seal boxes were known from Dacia and Moesia Inferior until 1984,¹ while one can currently repertory 10 in Potaissa alone. A study from 2006 synthesized 29 items from Dacia².

¹ Mușețeanu 1984, *passim*.

² Benea et al. 2006, 137-150, pl. XX/4, pl. XXI/1-23, pl. XXVIII/1-3.

I. Bajusz has published a typology of such artifacts from the province of Dacia. Based on item shape, he has suggested the existence of eight main types, each with several variants.³ Seal boxes are known from all areas of the Roman Empire, often in the Moesias and the Pannonias, and can be dated to the entire existence period of the province of Dacia (the 2nd-3rd centuries).⁴ Generally, in the Empire, the spread of seal boxes with enameled lid is connected to the production of enameled items that reached a peak during the 2nd century and until the middle of the 3rd century AD.⁵

The present article starts from a previously unpublished seal box discovered in the fort baths that I have decided to present in the context of all similar artifacts from Potaissa grouped in an extensive catalogue of the type.

1. Heart-shaped seal box, almost entirely preserved. The item has two parts, the box and the lid, connected with a hinge. The hinge consists of a loop in the central upper part of the lid and two loops on the base, meant to fit together. All three vertical loops are provided with a central circular perforation where a pin was inserted. Such pins were usually made of iron, and this was probably also the case with the item under discussion, as the pin has not been preserved. At the lower end, opposite the hinge, the lid displays a locating pin, a prominence that fit in a corresponding lock on the base, allowing for the box to be shut closed. The decoration of the lid has been created by pouring enamel into bronze

³ Bajusz 1995, 40, pl. II – I. square-shaped type; II. rectangular-shaped type; III. lozenge-shaped type; IV. triangular-shaped type; V. circular-shaped type; VI. oval-shaped type; VII. heart-shaped type (or oil lamp-shaped); VIII. crescent-moon-shaped type. In a typology suggested for a lot of artifacts discovered in Augusta Rauricorum, A. R. Furger and E. Riha (Furger, Riha 2009, 48-49, Abb. 23, Tabelle 2) have repertoried the following formal types (with several subtypes): 1. tongue-shaped; 2. leaf-shaped; 3. lozenge-shaped; 4. triangular-polygonal; 5. circular; 6. oval; 7. square. M. Feugère, P. Abauzit have published another general typology (Feugère, Abauzit 1995, 43, fig. 1), with the following main types according to the shape of the artifacts: bag-shaped, circular, rectangular, and teardrop-shaped.

⁴ Furger, Riha 2009, 47-89, Tabelle 3; Seal boxes presumably appeared in the Mediterranean area and were initially made of bone; the first known bronze item was dated around the year 100 BC. During the Imperial Era these artifacts spread to the northern and western provinces. Square-shaped seal boxes have been found starting with the first half of the 1st century AD in North Italy and Germania. Circular and heart-shaped items started to be used during the Augustan Period and were especially attributed to the military environment (and are frequent finds in frontier forts), though they have also been attested in civilian settlements, temples, and necropolises. During the Flavian Era, seal boxes spread to the Empire, especially in Gallia and Germania, subsequently also spreading to Noricum, Pannonia, Moesia, and Dacia starting with the 2nd century.

⁵ Benea 1982, 341-343; Bajusz 1995, 62-66.

cases. In the central area one notes a teardrop-shaped motif with two symmetrical, lateral volutes inside and a dot-shaped motif below. The enamel has been largely destroyed, but the small preserved areas allow for the reconstruction of the original colors: red enamel in the inner decoration, alternating with turquoise-green enamel in the outer areas. The box is fragmentarily preserved, but its shape can be fully reconstructed. The box once contained seal wax. One notes the three securing circular orifices placed according to a triangular pattern. The closing system is located in the upper part, consisting of a hinge with two semicircular loops, though only one has been preserved. On the lower part, opposite the hinge, one notes a small locket, used in the close fitting of the lid (Pl. I/1-6).

Type: Bajusz VIIIf = Furger, Riha 2b, heart-shaped, the oblong variant; bronze, enamel; dimensions: L. total, with hinge 3.9 cm, L. lid 3.5 cm, width 1.9 cm, T. 0.2 cm; LD: in the fort baths, C15, the eastern control profile, the B/north area, in the extension of the *basilica*, h. 0.30-0.50 m; MIT, inv. no. 24574a, b.

Analogies: Apulum, Porolissum (Ciugudean 1997, 132, no. 3, fig 1/3, no. 4, fig. 1/4; Bajusz 1995, 67, no. 15, pl. IV/15).

Two items of a similar type (Bajusz VIIIf) and with similar decoration were also found in the fort of the V Macedonica Legion, in the *principia*. A seal box lid was uncovered in one of the *armamentaria* from the northern side (room 10), a room that has revealed diverse artifacts, some very special such as a bronze candle holder with the depiction of a Silenus⁶ and an altar for the Genius armamentarii.⁷ Another seal box lid, to be included in the same type, was discovered in the *basilica* of the commandment building. Generally, items of this type are dated to the period between the end of the 1st century and the middle of the 3rd century AD.⁸

2. Oblong heart-shaped seal box, only the lid of which has been preserved. The decoration consists of a heart-shaped motif with a circle inside and another small circle above. The cases that contained the enamel have tall, cast edges. The item is decorated with turquoise-green enamel in the central part and red on the margins. The enamel has not been preserved in the inner circle, but it was likely red. The circular loop

⁶ Bărbulescu 1990, 821-831; Bărbulescu 1994, 138, pl. X/3; Petculescu 2003, 162, no. 280; Bărbulescu 2015, 144-146.

⁷ Bărbulescu 2004, 375-376; Bărbulescu 2012, 216, no. 28, fig. 92; ILD 502.

⁸ Furger, Riha 2009, 53, Tabelle 3, 61.

of the hinge, that fit between the two loops of the box, has been preserved in the upper central part of the item. In the lower part, the lid displays a circular protuberance that is slightly prominent on the inside, forming the securing system of the item (**Pl. II/1**).

Type: Bajusx VIIIf = Furger, Riha 2b, heart-shaped, the oblong variant; bronze, enamel; dimensions: L. 4.2 cm; LD: *principia*, the northern side, room 10; MIT, inv. no. 6772.

Analogies: Apulum, Porolissum (Ciugudean 1997, 132, no. 2, fig 1/2; Bounegru, Bolog 2012, 100, fig. 2; Bajusz 1995, 67, no. 15, pl. IV/15).

Bibliography: Bărbulescu 2015, 188-189, 295, nr. 120, fig. 343; Bărbulescu 2017, 17, Tav. I/6.

3. Oblong heart-shaped seal box, only the lid of which has been preserved. The decoration consists of a heart-shaped motif with a circle inside and a small circle above. The tall contours that formed the decoration and subsequently held the enamel were cast. Alternating turquoise-green and red enamels have been set thus: green in the inner circle, red in the heart-shaped motif, and again green on the margins. The hinge element is broken. The same circular protuberance that corresponded to a prominence inside the lid, with the role of closing the seal box tight, can be noted on the lower part (**Pl. II/2**).

Type: Bajusz VIIIf = Furger, Riha 2b, heart-shaped, the oblong variant; bronze, enamel; dimensions: L. 3.5 cm; LD: *principia*, the southern side (*basilica*); MIT, inv. no. 6773.

Analogies: Apulum, Porolissum (Ciugudean 1997, 132, no. 2, fig 1/2; Bounegru, Bolog 2012, 100, fig. 2; Bajusz 1995, 67, no. 15, pl. IV/15).

Bibliography: Bărbulescu 2015, 188-189, 295, nr. 121, fig. 344; Bărbulescu 2017, 17, Tav. I/7.

Three other seal boxes discovered in Potaissa can be included in the heart-shaped type (or oil lamp-shaped type), the variant with the lower part ending in a trefoil pattern (Bajusz VIIe). Two of them were discovered in the fort (in the baths and in the *principia*), while the third was found during a rescue excavation performed in 2017 in the civilian area of Potaissa. As for the decoration, analogies in the bibliography dedicated to this type of artifacts have been described as phallus-shaped. Depictions of phalluses were interpreted as good luck charms, as well as fertility symbols. In the western provinces, phalluses usually feature on enameled heart-shaped seal boxes (the variant with the decoration consisting of an enameled circle placed around a disk that was also enameled, inside which the relief decoration was applied) that are dated

to the period between the second half of the 2nd century and the 3rd century AD.⁹

4. Heart or oil lamp-shaped seal box, the variant with the lower part ending in a trefoil pattern; only the lid has been preserved. The lid is decorated with the depiction of a phallus riveted to the body of the item and covered in green enamel. The central decoration is placed in a sunken circular field surrounded by a stripe decorated in the *millefiori* technique. A succession of small rectangular cases divides the surface of the circular band and one can note the alternate use of two decorative motifs. The first consists of flowers with eight blue petals around a white disk with red border set against a white background. The second motif, against a red background, consists of a square checkered field with nine blue-gray and white squares. A V-shaped enameled motif decorates the top of the lid, consisting of alternating rectangular red and green elements (**Pl. II/3**).

Type: Bajusz VIIe = Furger, Riha 2a; bronze, enamel; dimensions: L. 4 cm; LD: baths (*latrina* II), h. 90 cm; MIT, inv. no. 15608.

Analogies: Apulum, Potaissa, Porolissum, Tibiscum (Benea 1982, 337-338, no. 2, fig. 2, 3; Bajusz 1995, 67, no. 14, pl. IV/14; Bărbulescu 2015, 186-187, 295, no. 118, fig. 338-340; Bărbulescu 2017, 16, Tav. I/1, 2).

Bibliography: Bărbulescu 2015, 188, 295, no. 119, fig. 341-342; Bărbulescu 2017, 17, Tav. I/4-5.

5. Heart or oil lamp-shaped seal box, the variant with the lower part ending in a trefoil patterns, with the box, the lid, and the hinge. The lid displays a circular prominence that fits into a circular concavity placed symmetrically on the long end of the box. These elements allowed for the seal box to be closed shut. It is placed between two small circular protuberances. The decoration consists of a relief phallic depiction riveted onto the body of the lid. The phallus motif is filled with burgundy enamel. It is followed by a tall circular band case covered in enamel. Six white rectangular cases with inserted black vegetal decorations alternate with six other cases in red. A lunula-shaped decoration covered in turquoise enamel has been placed towards the pointy end of the lid, with incised circular elements on top and below (**Pl. II/4**). On the body of the box one notes two lateral perforations, placed symmetrically, three circular orifices on the bottom, and two circular protuberances on the long end, flanking the closing orifice. Much of the seal is preserved inside

⁹ Boucher, Feugère 2009, 11, fig. 5; Furger, Riha 2009, 54, 61; Milovanović, Raičović Savić 2013, 221.

the box, consisting of beeswax mixed with vegetal oil and resin, as well as linen strings. During restoration, specialists have noted under the wax mass the string that entered through one of the orifices on the bottom of the box. Biologist Aurelia Igna performed the analyses and the investigations in 1983.¹⁰

The discovery of this seal box has clarified the function of items that have been published over time as pomanders or, due to their fragmentary state upon discovery, as pendants, amulets, etc. Roman seals guaranteed the origin of documents and preserved their secrets, as they were only meant to be opened by the intended recipients. Seal boxes protected the seals that authenticated documents in the form of wax tablets or scrolls. Tablets were tied across with a string. The ends of the string were inserted into the box through the two lateral notches and were knotted inside. The sealing material was subsequently poured in and the seal applied to the soft wax. The tablets could then only be opened by cutting the string. In the case of scroll-type documents, the string was rolled on top, but the document could have been extracted. Still, the seal box could be sewed to the document through the orifices on the bottom of the box. The document was subsequently rolled, tied with string, and sealed. The box remained attached to the document even after it was opened, thus still confirming its authenticity.¹¹

Type: Bajusz VIIe = Furger, Riha 2a; bronze, enamel; dimensions: L. 4 cm; LD: *principia*, in one of the *armamentaria* located on the northern side of the edifice (room 9); MIT, inv. no. 6737.

Analogies: Apulum, Potaissa, Porolissum, Tibiscum (Benea 1982, 337-338, no. 2, fig. 2, 3; Bajusz 1995, 67, no. 14, pl. IV/14; Bărbulescu 2015, 188, 295, no. 119, fig. 341-342; Bărbulescu 2017, 16, Tav. I/1, 2).

Bibliography: Bărbulescu 1994, 138; Bărbulescu 2015, 186-187, 295, no. 118, fig. 338-340; Bărbulescu 2017, 13-14, fig. 1-2.

6. Heart or oil lamp-shaped seal box, the variant with the lower part ending in a trefoil pattern; only the lid has been preserved, displaying the same type of decoration.

Type: Bajusz VIIe = Furger, Riha 2a; bronze; LD: I. I. Russu St., the civilian area of Potaissa; MIT, inv. no. 23630.

Bibliography: previously unpublished; information kindly provided by P. Chiorean.

¹⁰ Analysis report March 12, 1983, MNIT, biologist Aurelia Igna.

¹¹ Bărbulescu 2015, 185-186; Bărbulescu 2017, 15; see also Furger, Riha 2009a, 18-25.

Four other seal boxes discovered over time in Potaissa are only known from the bibliography. Three of them are of the circular type, one decorated with the relief depiction of an eagle (Bajusz Va), the other two with enameled geometric decoration (Bajusz Vc).

According to M. Feugère and P. Abauzit, the circular seal box with the depiction of an eagle preserved in the collection of the museum in Debrecen marks on the map the easternmost border of the distribution area of circular seal boxes. Such items are dated to the period between the middle of the 1st century and the beginning of the 2nd century AD.¹² A. R. Furger and E. Riha mention the fact that items of this type discovered in Augusta Rauricorum were found in archaeological features that can be dated between the middle of the 1st century and the first quarter of the 3rd century AD, while on the level of the Empire they are generally dated between the 1st century and the end of the 3rd century AD.¹³

The following seal box displays the only zoomorphic depiction in the catalogue of items from Potaissa. In the iconographic repertory of seal boxes, eagles are the most frequent zoomorphic depictions,¹⁴ certainly in connection to the official symbolic repertoire of the Roman army.¹⁵

7. Circular seal box; the lid is ornamented with an applied, riveted decoration depicting an eagle.

Type: Bajusz Va? = Furger, Riha 5a?; bronze; dimensions: 2.1 cm; Déri Museum Debrecen.

Bibliography: Selye 1939, 38, no. 6;¹⁶ Feugère, Abauzit 1995, 53, nr. 18; Bărbulescu 2015, 188.

Two other circular seal boxes with enamel decoration are mentioned in Téglás' manuscript. Artifacts of this type are dated between the middle of the 1st century and the end of the 3rd century AD.¹⁷

¹² Feugère, Abauzit 1995, 50-51.

¹³ Furger, Riha 2009, 74-75.

¹⁴ Feugère, Abauzit 1995, 43 - out of a total of 57 items with applied zoomorphic decoration, 21 feature the depiction of an eagle; see also Feugère, Abauzit 2000, 21.

¹⁵ Boucher, Feugère 2009, 10; Milovanović, Raičović Savić 2013, 221.

¹⁶ I. Selye mentions a circular seal box lid with zoomorphic decoration consisting of an eagle, identical in decoration with other items discovered in Siscia, Novi-Banovici, as well as Carnuntum; the item is not illustrated and the author mentions the fact that it was found in Turda, providing no other details regarding its place of discovery.

¹⁷ Furger, Riha 2009, 68-69, 76.

8. Circular seal box; only the lid and probably the box have been preserved. The lid displays a slightly heightened geometric decoration made of cast bronze, consisting of a central dot surrounded by a circle and eight other dots placed symmetrically in a second circular field. The enamel poured in these two circular cases has not been preserved and one can only suspect that two different colors were used. A box seems to belong to the same item, as it has similar dimensions (though one cannot exclude the possibility that the fragment belongs in fact to another, similar artifact, in the light of clear details regarding the discovery of artifacts in question). The bottom of the circular box displays three circular orifices (**Pl. II/5**).

Type: Bajusz Vc = Furger, Riha 5e;¹⁸ bronze; dimensions: D. lid: 1.8 cm; D. box 1.7 cm; LD: fort ("inside the fort, on Bakucs' plot" during agricultural works performed in 1903.¹⁹)

Analogies: Porolissum, Potaissa (Bajusz 1995, 66, no. 5, pl. III/5; Bajusz 2005, 513, no. 1, fig. 29/97).

Bibliography: Bajusz 2005, 512-513, no. 2, 3, fig. 29/97.

9. Circular seal box with an extension in the lower part; only lid has been preserved. The lid displays a slightly heightened cast bronze geometric decoration consisting of a central dot surrounded by a circle and eight other dots placed symmetrically in a second circular field. The enamel cast in the two circles has not been preserved; one can only suspect that two different colors were used. A fragmentarily-preserved seal box seems to belong to the same item (though one cannot exclude the possibility that the fragments belong to a similar artifact, in the case of clear details regarding the discovery of the artifacts). The bottom of the circular box displays three circular orifices (**Pl. II/6**).

Type: Bajusz Vc = Furger, Riha 5e; bronze; dimensions: L. lid: 2.1 cm; LD: fort ("inside the fort, on Bakucs' plot" during agricultural works performed in 1903.²⁰)

Analogies: Porolissum, Potaissa (Bajusz 1995, 66, no. 5, pl. III/5; Bajusz 2005, no. 3, fig. 29/97).

Bibliography: Bajusz 2005, I/2, 512-513, no. 1, fig. 29/97.

¹⁸ I believe that the item also displayed a small extension of the lid, that was subsequently lost, and thus can be included it in variant Bajusz Vc - circular seal boxes with an extension in the lower part. I cannot exclude the possibility that the item has a simple circular shape, variant Bajusz Va, but the decoration of the lid features mostly on items that can be included in variant Va.

¹⁹ Bajusz 2005, 512.

²⁰ Bajusz 2005, 512.

A single item discovered in Potaissa can be included in the lozenge-shaped type. Such artifacts are generally dated during the period starting after the middle of the 1st century and ending during the first third of the 3rd century AD.²¹

10. Lozenge-shaped seal box; only the box holding the seal has been preserved, with the orifices on the bottom, placed symmetrically, in a triangular pattern. The loops of the hinge have been broken and a semicircular locket for the securing pin of the lid has been preserved (Pl. II/7).

Type: Bajusz IIIc = Furger, Riha 3a; bronze; LD: Potaissa (the precise place of discovery remains unknown; Téglás István mentioned the item in 1911 in a manuscript besides other artifacts discovered in the area of Sândului Valley, in the civilian area of the Roman city).

Analogies: Porolissum, Apulum (Bajusz 1995, 66, no. 1, pl. III/1; Mușețeanu 1984, 362, II, 363, no. 3, fig. 1/3²²).

Bibliography: Bajusz 2005, I/2, 711, fig. 45/66; Bărbulescu 2015, 188, footnote 342.²³

*

The catalogue of seal boxes discovered in Potaissa currently includes 10 artifacts. From a typological perspective, the following categories have been attested: the lozenge-shaped type – Bajusz IIIc (no. 10), the circular type – Bajusz Va (no. 7), the circular type, the variant with an extension in the lower part – Bajusz Vc (nos. 8, 9), the heart-shape type, the variant with the lower part ending in a trefoil pattern – Bajusz VIIe (nos. 4, 5, 6), and the heart-shape type, the oblong variant – Bajusz VIIf (nos. 1, 2, 3).²⁴ The decoration of such items is enameled (nos. 1, 2, 3, 8, 9), enameled and riveted (nos. 4, 5, 6), or riveted (no. 7).²⁵ The lids display stylized vegetal decoration (nos. 1, 2, 3), geometric decoration (nos. 8, 9), the depiction of a phallus (nos. 4, 5, 6), while zoomorphic

²¹ Furger, Riha 2009, 64.

²² C. Mușețeanu published the item mentioning that it was found in Transylvania. The seal box was taken over by the National Museum of Romanian History from the National History Museum of Transylvanian History (MNIT). At the latter institution, the inventory documents mention the entire item, with both lid and box, and record the place of discovery in Apulum (Partoș); the lid is still preserved in the collection of the MNIT.

²³ I. Téglás has not identified the function of the item, but it is interesting to note that he noted in his diary the fact that the three orifices probably allowed for the artifacts to be sewed onto garments.

²⁴ Bajusz 1995, 62-65, 70, pl. II.

²⁵ Feugère, Abauzit 1995, 43.

decoration is only signaled once, consisting of the depiction of an eagle (no. 7). All repertoried types can be dated to chronological intervals that cover the existence period of the province of Dacia.²⁶

As for the geographic distribution of the artifacts, one notes that most were found in the fort of the V Macedonica legion. Seven items were discovered on the surface of the fort, in the baths and the *principia*, or were found by chance on the site before the start of the archaeological excavations. Only two of the artifacts were found in the civilian settlement and the context of discovery of one of them remains unknown.

Seal boxes were used more frequently in the military environment, but such items were also found in public or private areas, temples, and necropolises. Seal boxes were precious artifacts, indicating the significance of the documents they were attached to: contracts, last wills, letters, and official documents, administrative or military in nature. The presence of seal boxes in graves attests the deposition of sealed documents besides the bodies of the deceased, while those found in temples attest the practice of writing requests to the gods.²⁷ One knows that other types of objects were also sealed, such as coin boxes or bags, as noted in the case of a hoard discovered in Trier.²⁸

From a technical perspective, the manufacture of these artifacts required specialized skills. The two parts were cast in molds and then finished through cutting and polishing. They were then enameled by inserting glass plates or crushed glass into decorative fields cast as such. Glass was colored by adding iron and copper oxides to the glass paste. Monochrome or *millefiori* rods were also used, cut into small segments and applied to the fields already set with molten glass. The items were then reinserted into an oven for a brief secondary firing that allowed for the glass mass to melt and adhere to the metal case. The enameled decoration was subsequently finished.²⁹

One cannot decide if the items discovered in Potaissa were locally produced or were among the commercial goods manufactured outside the province. Doina Benea has argued for the existence in Tibiscum of a workshop that produced enameled items, including seal boxes.³⁰ The items found in Dacia are generally highly unitary from a typological and decorative perspective, with close analogies in the Pannonias and in

²⁶ Furger, Riha 2009, 47-87.

²⁷ Bajusz 1995, 62; Boucher, Feugère 2009, 51; Furger 2009a, 38-41; Milovanović, Raičović Savić 2013, 220-221; Bărbulescu 2017, 188.

²⁸ Gilles 1994, 19, fig. 8.

²⁹ Benea 1982, 340-341.

³⁰ Benea 1982, 342-343.

Germania. For this reason, I. Bajusz believes they were manufactured in a workshop from Gallia or Germania that provisioned the Danubian provinces with enameled bronzes.³¹ The distribution of these artifacts is connected to the exchange of correspondence, thus spread between particular regions and settlements, more intense in the military environment, without close connection to the main directions of the trade network.³²

List of plattes:

Pl. I/1. Heart-shaped seal box, type Bajusz VIIIf, MIT, inv. no. 24574; drawing by Luciana Nedelea.

Pl. I/2-4. Heart-shaped seal box (lid), type Bajusz VIIIf, MIT, inv. no. 24574; photo S. Odenie, ©MIT.

Pl. I/5-6. Heart-shaped seal box (box without lid), type Bajusz VIIIf, MIT, inv. no. 24574; photo S. Odenie; ©MIT.

Pl. II/1. Heart-shaped seal box (lid), type Bajusz VIIe, MIT, inv. no. 6772; taken from Bărbulescu 2015, 188-189, 295, nr. 120, fig. 343.

Pl. II/2. Heart-shaped seal box (lid), type Bajusz VIIe, MIT, inv. no. 6773; taken from Bărbulescu 2015, 188-189, 295, nr. 121, fig. 344.

Pl. II/3. Heart-shaped seal box (lid), type Bajusz VIIe, MIT, inv. no. 15608; taken from Bărbulescu 2015, 188, 295, nr. 119, fig. 341-342.

Pl. II/4. Heart-shaped seal box, type Bajusz VIIe, MIT, inv. no. 6737; taken from Bărbulescu 2017, 13-14, fig. 1-2.

Pl. II/5, 6. Circular seal boxes, type Bajusz Vc; taken from Bajusz 2005, 512-513, nr. 1-2, fig. 29/97.

Pl. II/7. Lozenge-shaped seal box, type Bajusz IIIc; taken from Bajusz 2005, I/2, 711, fig. 45/66.

³¹ Bajusz 1995, 65-66.

³² Boucher, Feugère 2009, 50-53.

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Pl. I



***Ars scribendi.* Writing Implements Discovered in the Legionary Fortress of Potaissa**

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Abstract: Other than the already renowned 25 *tabulae ceratae* discovered at Alburnus Maior, the province of Dacia has also yielded numerous monumental or minor inscriptions, including both basic, as well as more informative graffiti. In the legionary fortress of Potaissa, besides numerous monumental inscriptions, eight *tegulae scriptae*, as well as a few ownership marks, the presence of other written documents can be deduced both from the existence of certain specialized personnel and especially from the presence of writing implements dispersed in the commandment building, the military baths and the soldiers' barracks. Thus, even though papyri, parchments or waxed tablets have not been preserved due to their perishable material, their use in the legionary fortress could be indirectly attested by the discovery of eight styli, two inkwells, three rulers, four seal boxes and six lead seals.

Keywords: *instrumenta scriptoria*, styli, inkwells, *litterati milites*, Potaissa.

Rezumat: Pe lângă deja bine cunoscutele 25 de *tabulae ceratae* descoperite la Alburnus Maior, în provincia Dacia s-au descoperit și numeroase inscripții monumentale sau minore, ce redau atât cuvinte simple, cât și texte mai informative. În castrul legionar de la Potaissa, pe lângă numeroase inscripții monumentale, opt *tegulae scriptae* și câteva mărci de proprietar, prezența altor documente scrise poate fi dedusă din existența personalului specializat în scris și mai ales din prezența instrumentelor de scris găsite în clădirea comandamentului, în băile militare și în barăcile soldaților. Astfel, chiar dacă fragmente de papirus, de pergament sau tăblițe cerate nu au fost descoperite, datorită materialelor perisabile din care erau făcute, utilizarea lor în fortificația legionară poate fi dedusă indirect prin descoperirea a opt styli, două călimări, trei liniare, patru capsule de sigilii și șase sigilii de plumb.

Cuvinte cheie: *instrumenta scriptoria, styli, călimări, litterati milites, Potaissa*

R. O. Fink's notable collection of Roman military records on papyrus, parchment and *ostraca*, reassessed and improved more recently by S. E. Phang and M. A. Speidel among others, shows the vast variety of the written word within the Roman army¹. The high importance of the written documents within the legion was quintessentially determined by the need to keep a well-coordinated, disciplined military machine². Nevertheless, besides reports, duty rosters, passwords for night watch and different lists, written documents also included school exercises, personal letters, and even literary texts. However, I. Haynes "emphasized that the aim is not to suggest the existence of mass literacy within the army, but rather to demonstrate that the military environment was essentially defined by writing and was accordingly highly conducive to the acquisition of writing skills"³.

Litterati milites

Because military success often depended on the precise communication and understanding of a written order or signal, soldiers needed to have sufficient knowledge, at least in order to read a simple message. In provinces like Britannia and Germania soldiers were frequently depicted on funerary monuments either holding writing equipment in their hands or next to a servant scribe⁴. Moreover, the analysis of the Vindolanda tablets showed that besides clerks, officers and even lower-ranked soldiers were capable of writing⁵. In the province of Dacia, most of the informal inscriptions consisting in graffiti made on vessels, tiles or bricks, come from military sites and can be further attributed to the existence of a certain degree of literacy among lower-ranked soldiers as well⁶. Moreover, better skills in writing could have represented a real desideratum among soldiers given that literacy worked as a ladder of promotion to *principales*, and implicitly the best way to be

¹ Fink 1971; Phang 2007; Speidel 2018.

² Albana 2013, 5.

³ Haynes 2013, 318.

⁴ Speidel 1996, 57-64; A military *librarius* is depicted on his tombstone holding both a scroll, as well as a small set of wax tablets in his hands, suggesting that he was capable of writing on both of these materials: Austin 2015, 15-16.

⁵ Bowman 2003, 85 apud Eckardt 2017, 120.

⁶ A few writing exercises performed on tile fragments have been found within the legionary fortress of Potaissa as well: Bărbulescu 2012, 224-231.

exempted from *munera graviora*⁷. This is perhaps best illustrated by a papyrus letter dated in 107 A.D., in which a soldier praises himself that he is no longer compelled to cut stones, since he acquired the job of *librarius* in *legio III Cyrenaica* due to his ability to read and write⁸. However, it is worth mentioning that while legionary soldiers are believed to have generally been either fully literate or semi-literate, the great majority of the soldiers from the auxiliary units are envisaged as slow writers or more likely even illiterate⁹.

“A Roman army without bureaucracy would not have been a Roman army”¹⁰. The existence of specialized personnel that was assigned with secretary, accounting, writing and archiving tasks was necessary in order to keep track of the great quantity of documents that were edited, used, distributed, consulted and stored within a legionary fortress. Among the specialized personnel, four *librarii*¹¹, one *actarius*¹², one *cornicularius*¹³ and one *adiutor officii corniculariorum*¹⁴ are attested within the legionary fortress of Potaissa.

Although most certainly the preference for a certain writing material was dictated by local availability, the finds from Dura Europos suggest that when accessible, papyrus might have been reserved for officers' letters or formal military reports, while tablets or other materials were used for internal purposes.¹⁵ Unfortunately however, besides a few notable exceptions, military sites usually do not meet the required environmental conditions necessary for the preservation of papyri, parchments or waxed tablets. Nevertheless, the existence of styli, wax *spatulae*, inkwells, *calami* or other *instrumenta scriptoria* can indirectly attest the use of these writing materials within the provincial armies. These can be identified in various military sites from the province of Dacia as well, including the legionary fortress of Potaissa (**Pl. I**) and portray a great variety in the art of writing, dictated by different writing materials.

Besides indirect evidence, in the province of Dacia written documents discovered in military context usually refrain to ownership

⁷ Albana 2010.

⁸ Speidel 2001, 56-57.

⁹ Phang 2007, 300.

¹⁰ Haynes 2013, 318.

¹¹ CIL III 885, 909 (= ILD 494), 7684, 7688.

¹² CIL III 7706.

¹³ CIL III 887.

¹⁴ CIL III 894.

¹⁵ Austin 2015, 16.

marks, widely encountered on pottery and military equipment, as well as other more informative graffiti that record lists of soldier names, military functions or unit names, important events or even jokes. On some bricks discovered in the legionary fortress of Potaissa and the auxiliary fort of Gherla we notice proper writing exercises, consisting in repetitions of the alphabet¹⁶. A joke related to a centurion punishing soldiers with the vine-stick has been incised on a brick recovered from the *praetorium* of the governor at Apulum¹⁷, while the text of a will was rendered on another brick discovered near the western gate of the auxiliary fort from Românași¹⁸. A votive dedication for Fortuna Redux could perhaps be read on a ceramic fragment discovered near the military baths at Slăveni¹⁹, while the invocation of a Genius was noticed on a pottery shard in the southwest corner of the auxiliary fort from Bologa²⁰.

Styli

The styli discovered within the perimeter of the legionary fortress of Potaissa vary from simple forms shaped like slender rods, with one pointed end and the other flattened, to more complex ones heavily decorated with nodules, rings, hatched and multifaceted portions²¹. Out of the eight styli that were identified, three were made of iron (**Pl. II / 1-3**), while the others were casted in bronze. The iron ones preserve simple shapes²², only one of them having a twisted shaft²³. The bronze ones have either a simple shape, with the shaft heavily thickened at the extremity where an iron pointed tip was mounted (**Pl. II / 4-5**), or are heavily decorated with moldings of various shapes²⁴ (**Pl. II / 6-8**).

As M. A. Speidel has finely noticed, the number of styli discovered within a military site is not necessarily edifying in establishing an approximate volume of lost documents, but rather to “remind us of

¹⁶ Bărbulescu 2012, 228-229, no. 37; Dana 2016, 100-103.

¹⁷ IDR III/6, 165.

¹⁸ IDR App. I, LXXXII/2.

¹⁹ Tudor 1975, no. 7 = Gudea, Cosma 1992, no. 44.

²⁰ Gudea, Cosma 1992, no. 78.

²¹ Out of the 8 styli identified, three come from the *thermae*: Bărbulescu *et al.* 2019, 287, pl. LXXXI/1-3, two from the commandment building: Bărbulescu *et al.* 2020, 214, pl. LXXXVIII/2, one from the barracks situated in the *praetentura sinistra*: Nemeti, Nemeti *et al.* 2017, 61, pl. XXV/4 (=erroneously identified here with the handle of a medical instrument), while two unpublished ones, that are illustrated here, were retrieved from the barracks of the *cohors I milliaria*.

²² Bărbulescu *et al.* 2019, 287, pl. LXXXI/2; Bărbulescu *et al.* 2020, 214, pl. LXXXVIII/2.

²³ Bărbulescu *et al.* 2019, 287, pl. LXXXI/3.

²⁴ Nemeti, Nemeti *et al.* 2017, 61, pl. XXV/4; Bărbulescu *et al.* 2019, 287, pl. LXXXI/1; Bărbulescu *et al.* 2020, 214, pl. LXXXVIII/2.

the infinite loss of records, official and private, from the Roman soldiers' everyday lives"²⁵. Moreover, we should also bring into equation that besides writing on wax tablets, styli could have also been used for incising letters on pottery shards or lead tablets.

Although it is assumed that Romans preferred to use styli and waxed tablets for writing, the importance of ink has been proved by notable discoveries like the Vindolanda and Carlisle tablets²⁶. Unfortunately, such finds have been preserved only in exceptional environmental conditions, thus the use of ink either on parchment, papyri or leaf tablets confectioned from locally available woods in Dacia, can only be guessed based on the inkwells that were discovered within the province. However, it is worth mentioning that although inked letters were usually reserved to these perishable materials, annotations in black ink can be observed on three of the waxed tablets that have been discovered in the Roman gold mines of Alburnus Maior²⁷.

Inkwells

Even though papyri and parchments have not been preserved due to their perishable material, their use in the legionary fortress seems suggested by the discovery of a few Roman inkwells. Although not necessarily an indicator of wealth and status, ink-writing was presumably more widespread in the Roman army, administration or among the elites as it implied the use of several consumables, some of which were rather expensive²⁸. In Roman period, inkwells were confectioned mainly out of copper alloys or pottery, but on occasion they could also be made out of glass, bone or other organic materials. The metal ones are usually more reduced in size and have a cylindrical shape, although on occasion they can also be multifaceted, hexagonal or octagonal. The central part of the closely fitted disc-shaped lid usually has a circular opening, provided with a hinge closure system, necessary both in order to prevent the ink from drying out and from spilling whenever it was handled or transported²⁹.

H. Eckardt identified several main types of inkwells, in which she recognized a high level of standardization and probably a small number of workshops. Among these, we can include the workshop of Longinius Socrates³⁰, whose stamp was identified on an inkwell found in Dacia, at

²⁵ Speidel 2018, 184.

²⁶ Pearce 2004, 44.

²⁷ IDR I, III, XXIII, XXIV.

²⁸ Willis 2005, 100.

²⁹ Eckardt 2017, 30.

³⁰ Eckardt 2017, 63-64, fig. 4.6.

Micia³¹. The other few inkwells discovered in the province of Dacia, can be placed in four distinct categories, with different characteristics and dating. An inkwell identified among the finds discovered in the barracks of *cohors I milliaria* at Potaissa draws our particular attention. Typologically speaking, the inkwell belongs to the so-called Biebrich type³² (**Pl. III / 1**), primarily distinguishable by a considerable weight, especially if we compare them with those made of bronze sheet. The considerable weight of the Biebrich inkwells, occurs both due to their confectioning by casting and lathe-finishing, as well as to the use of a bronze alloy rich in lead, which would have increased the malleability of the metal in order to cast it in the mold³³. Around 50 specimens of this type were recovered from the whole Empire. The height of these inkwells varies between 3,4 and 5,3 cm, while the diameter ranges from 2,6 - 4,3 cm. The body of the Biebrich inkwells is usually decorated with horizontal lines, at least 2-3 or more rarely a single one situated in the central part³⁴. Although the superior part is missing, based on the analogies we can assume that it was initially provided with a separately molded lid, ornamented with concentric circles, central opening of the lid was closed by a hinge mechanism, decorated with a small button of semicircular, square or poppy shape³⁵. A similar inkwell was once part of I. Téglás' collection as well, recovered from the Sândului Valley³⁶. From a chronological point of view, these inkwells can be dated in the 1st century A.D³⁷.

Another inkwell type identified in Dacia is the Noll type, represented by two lids discovered in the auxiliary camp at Porolissum³⁸. These inkwells are especially notable for their highly decorated lids with silver inlays, or less often gold, which render vegetal elements, usually representations of vines³⁹. From a chronological point of view, they seem to have been used in the 1st and 2nd century AD⁴⁰. A somewhat similar type, but with less decorated lids than the Noll type, is represented by two inkwell caps discovered in the auxiliary camps of Buciumi and

³¹Cvjeticanin 2004, 120, n. 16.

³² Named after two well-preserved examples found near Biebrich, on the Rhine: Božič 2001a, 30.

³³ Eckardt 2017, 71.

³⁴ Božič 2001a, 30.

³⁵ Božič 2001b, 33-34.

³⁶ Bajusz 2005, 702, 30/24/1 ábra.

³⁷ For dating evidence see Eckardt 2017, Table 5.1.

³⁸ Bajusz 2004, 369-370, fig. 7-8.

³⁹ Noll 1988, 86.

⁴⁰ Eckardt 2017, 80.

Romita⁴¹, which can be placed chronologically at the end of the 2nd century AD.

The most common encountered type at Potaissa is however the inkwell with the body decorated with incised lines and the opening shaped like a keyhole, provided with a hinge closure system. Such a lid was recovered from the barracks of the *cohors I milliaria* (Pl. III / 3), while specimens identical in shape are known both from the *cannabae* and in the settlement (Pl. III / 2)⁴². However, the specimen from the *cannabae* seems to have had the lid made of a bronze and copper alloy, wrapped in a silver foil, while the one in the settlement was made of a thicker bronze sheet, which adds a plus weight compared to the other two specimens. It is not excluded that at least some of them were provided with a closing button in the shape of a human mask, presumably representing the goddess Minerva or Medusa, glued to the lid or inserted directly into the opening⁴³. This typology is often found in the North Danube provinces and dates to the middle of the 3rd century A.D.⁴⁴.

Notable differences between the dimensions of the metal inkwells recovered from the legionary fortress of Potaissa, as well as from the auxiliary forts of Porolissum, Buciumi and Romita and a ceramic one discovered in the civilian settlement of Micăsasa⁴⁵, raise questions regarding the exact functionality of these inkwells. If metal ones had a capacity of 21-59 ml, an amount that could be enough for a user from a few days to a month, the ceramic ones could reach a capacity of 352 ml⁴⁶. It should be borne in mind that due to the narrow opening of the ceramic inkwells were usually not glazed on the inside; therefore, the paste that these inkwells were confectioned of is usually a less porous one⁴⁷. Thus, one of the main arguments that was offered to explain the considerable differences between the dimensions of ceramic and metal inkwells, considered the higher degree of permeability of pottery, which would have absorbed more ink than metal inkwells. Other explanations took into account the possibility of their use by people who consumed larger amounts of ink in a relatively short time (archivists and scribes)⁴⁸, conceivably even by several scribes at once, or perhaps the use of ceramic

⁴¹ Bajusz 2004, 370, fig. 9-10.

⁴² Both unpublished.

⁴³ Eckardt 2017, 86.

⁴⁴ Eckardt 2017, 87.

⁴⁵ Rusu-Bolindeț, Botiș 2018, 136, no. 361.

⁴⁶ Eckardt 2017, 111.

⁴⁷ Willis 2005, 97.

⁴⁸ Božič, Feugère 2004, 36.

inkwells for storing ink, which was then poured into smaller metal inkwells, easier to handle and transport⁴⁹.

Finally, perhaps some of the stone palettes, as well as spoon probes that were discovered within the legionary fortress of Potaissa⁵⁰ were used not only for preparing different ointments, but also for grinding down dried ink sticks, prior to mixing it with water and gum⁵¹.

Rulers⁵²

A well-polished rectangular bone item, resembling a modern ruler, was discovered in the E room, located on the western side of the commandment building of the legionary fortress (**Pl. III / 4**). The piece has one side flat, the other with a slightly convex surface, displaying a circular cutout at one of its extremities. Similar bone objects have been discovered within the province of Dacia at Apulum⁵³, as well as in the auxiliary camps of Ilişua⁵⁴, Răcari⁵⁵ and Cioroiu Nou⁵⁶. Two other bone plates with finely polished surface come from the same room and could have had the same functionality as the piece provided with the circular appendix (**Pl. III / 5-6**).

The exact functionality of these objects is rather enigmatic, but their close association with writing implements, especially in funerary contexts, remains rather undeniable⁵⁷. In an article dedicated to bone objects of this type discovered in southern Dacia, Gabriela Filip interprets them as *tesserae* and attributes their presence in the military milieu due to their use in transporting payments to soldiers, by sealing money bags, after checking the weight and purity of the coins⁵⁸. Presumably, the two sides of the bone plates were inscribed with details regarding the date and the identity of the one that performed the check (*nummularius* or more often one of his slaves)⁵⁹. The absence of any actual inscription engraved on the surface of the *tesserae* was attributed to letters painted in ink, which would have had easily erased in time.

⁴⁹ Eckardt 2017, 112.

⁵⁰ Bărbulescu 2019, 285, nr. 2, pl. LXXX/2.

⁵¹ Eckardt 2017, 28-29.

⁵² Recently published in Bărbulescu et al. 2020, 213-214.

⁵³ Ciugudean 1997, pl. XXVIII/8 - 9.

⁵⁴ Protase et al. 1997, 27, pl. LXXXIII/1.

⁵⁵ The items were discovered within the commandment building: Filip 2018, no. 2-4, fig. 3/1-3.

⁵⁶ Filip 2018, no. 1, fig. 3/4.

⁵⁷ Božič 2002, fig. 2; Small, Small 2007, 168, fig. 16; La Fragola 2015.

⁵⁸ Filip 2018.

⁵⁹ Mainardis 2001, 166; Cinti 2005, 296-297.

Indeed, similar anepigraphic objects have often been included in the category of labels such as *tesserae nummulariae*, used to authenticate the contents of money bags⁶⁰, but more recent studies argue for the classification of these objects in the category of *instrumenta scriptoria*. Glynn J. C. Davis analyzes the bone plaques discovered at Londinium and mentions in this context other possible interpretive theories that have been advanced in the last 15 years regarding the functionality of these items⁶¹. G. J. C. Davis concludes that bone spatulas with well-defined, sometimes perforated head, are a distinct category from *tesserae nummulariae*, which although are of similar shapes, have much smaller proportions. On one hand, the perfectly straight edges of these objects, as well as their dimensions that correspond largely to the width of wax tablets, represent plausible arguments for using these items as rulers (*regulus*)⁶². On the other hand, the fact that not all of them are perfectly flat but show longitudinal traces of wear that can be observed on the entire surface, suggests the repeated rubbing of these objects on its length⁶³. In this sense, other possible functionalities include polishing the surface of a waxed tablet by shaving material excess on its surface or even smoothing a papyrus or parchment. These theories seem rather plausible, taken into consideration the close association of these bone objects with *instrumenta scriptoria*. The connection between these objects can be noticed both archaeologically and iconographically, in Roman sculptural art⁶⁴ or mural painting⁶⁵. Therefore, whether they are labels, rulers or smoothing tools for parchment, the bone rectangular objects discovered in the commandment building of the legionary fortress of Potaissa must be related to writing. Moreover, the archaeological context could offer further clues in this regard, considering that all three bone rulers were discovered⁶⁶ in the E room, located on the extremity of the western side of the commandment building. Both the E room and the corresponding E' room on the opposite side, are believed to have served as *scholae* or *tabularia*⁶⁶.

⁶⁰ Deschler-Erb 1998, 153-154, Kat. Nr. 1968-1974, Taf. 28; Hrnčiarik 2012, XI.1.

⁶¹ Davis 2016; For an exhaustive list of bibliographic references regarding the various functionalities assigned to these bone items, see also Prévot 2010, 540, n. 2.

⁶² For examples of writing *ad lignum* on waxed wooden tablets see: Prévot 2010, 541.

⁶³ H. Eckardt also mentions that these objects “could have functioned as line guides for both reading and writing”: Eckardt 2017, 33.

⁶⁴ Zimmer 1982, 181; Boeselager 1989, 227.

⁶⁵ La Fragola 2015, fig. 4.

⁶⁶ Bărbulescu et al. 2020, 58-59; For the possible purpose of these rooms as *scholae* see also Nedelea 2020.

According to a typology realized by D. Božič and M. Feugère in 2004, "the ruler" from Potaissa would fall into type II, dating from the second half of the 2nd century – 3rd century A.D.⁶⁷ Unlike the previous type, these pieces were provided with a circular appendix, which usually has the same width as the plate, being sometimes perforated. "Rulers" of this type are also easily distinguishable by a considerable length, which varies between 16 and 19 cm, compared to 13-14.5 cm attributed to earlier pieces. A workshop for manufacturing type II rulers was discovered in the Gallo-Roman *villa* from "La Perte" Cuperly (Marne), enabling us to better understand the process of manufacturing these items⁶⁸. Based on the "rulers" discovered in this workshop, Ph. Prévot noticed that the average width of these rulers corresponds to subdivisions of *pes monetalis*, varying between *digitus* (1,85 cm) and *uncia* (2,46 cm)⁶⁹. Thus, the average width of the ruler from Potaissa would correspond to approximately one *uncia*.

Seals and seal boxes

Two lead seals bearing the imprint of the Vth legion Macedonica and other four anepigraphic ones, recovered from the commandment building⁷⁰ (PI. IV / 6-7), the military baths⁷¹ (PI. IV / 5) and the barracks of the *cohortes quingenariae*⁷², were probably used for sealing official correspondence or for authenticating products marketed for the legion.

Seal boxes discovered in the *principia* (PI. IV / 1-2) and the military baths (PI. IV / 3-4) feature among the archaeological discoveries that can be directly linked to the use of *papyri*, parchments, or wax tablets within the legionary fortress⁷³. The purpose of these small bronze boxes had been completely clarified based on an integral find, having the mass of wax kept intact, in which the seal had been imprinted⁷⁴. Laboratory

⁶⁷ Božič, Feugère 2004, 40.

⁶⁸ Prévot 2010.

⁶⁹ Prévot 2010, 556.

⁷⁰ Fodorean, Mărincean 2020, 107, no. 2, fig. 3a-b = Bărbulescu et al. 2020, 210, no. 7, pl. LXXXVII/17; Bărbulescu et al. 2020, 210, no. 8-9, pl. LXXXVII/18-19.

⁷¹ Fodorean, Mărincean 2020, 108, no. 3, fig. 4 a-b.

⁷² Nemeti, Nemeti et al. 2017, 63, pl. XXXIX/6 = Fodorean, Mărincean 2020, 107, no. 1, fig. 2 a-b.

⁷³ For an exhaustive analysis and bibliography regarding these finds see Irina Nemeti, *Seal Boxes from Potaissa* in the present volume.

⁷⁴ Bărbulescu 2015, 185-187; In a review of the monograph devoted to the seal boxes found at Augusta Raurica, T. Derks confided that although the true character of these objects was already known in the 1880s, he felt rather confused upon discovering his first seal box during an archaeological excavation conducted in the 1980s: Derks 2010, 722. This situation reflects the poor state of knowledge that existed for a long period of time regarding these objects. At the time of the discovery of the seal box from Potaissa, the functionality of these

analyses revealed that both the mass of wax, as well as the base of the box contained traces of textile fibers coming from a linen cord, with 1 mm in thickness. Moreover, the analyses determined the exact composition of the seal box, which contained beeswax, a little resin and oils. Thus, it could be established that the holes visible on the bottom were used for "sewing" the seal box on a rolled paper (papyrus or parchment) or for securely attaching two or more wax tablets held together by a string, in the same way that a seal box was attached to a wax tablet discovered at Panopolis, in Egypt⁷⁵. Nevertheless, it is not excluded that they were also used for other purposes that have nothing to do with writing, given that at Trier and Kalkreise seal boxes had been attached to leather bags containing coins⁷⁶, while a seal box with enameled lid, discovered at Wood Burcote, in Britannia, housed a denarius of Trajan⁷⁷.

objects was either neglected, or considered to be rather enigmatic, generating many erroneous determinations.

⁷⁵ Devijver, Harrauer, Worp 1985, 19-21.

⁷⁶ Furger et al. 2009, 22-23.

⁷⁷ Pearce, Worrell 2013, 16-17, no. 14, fig. 14.

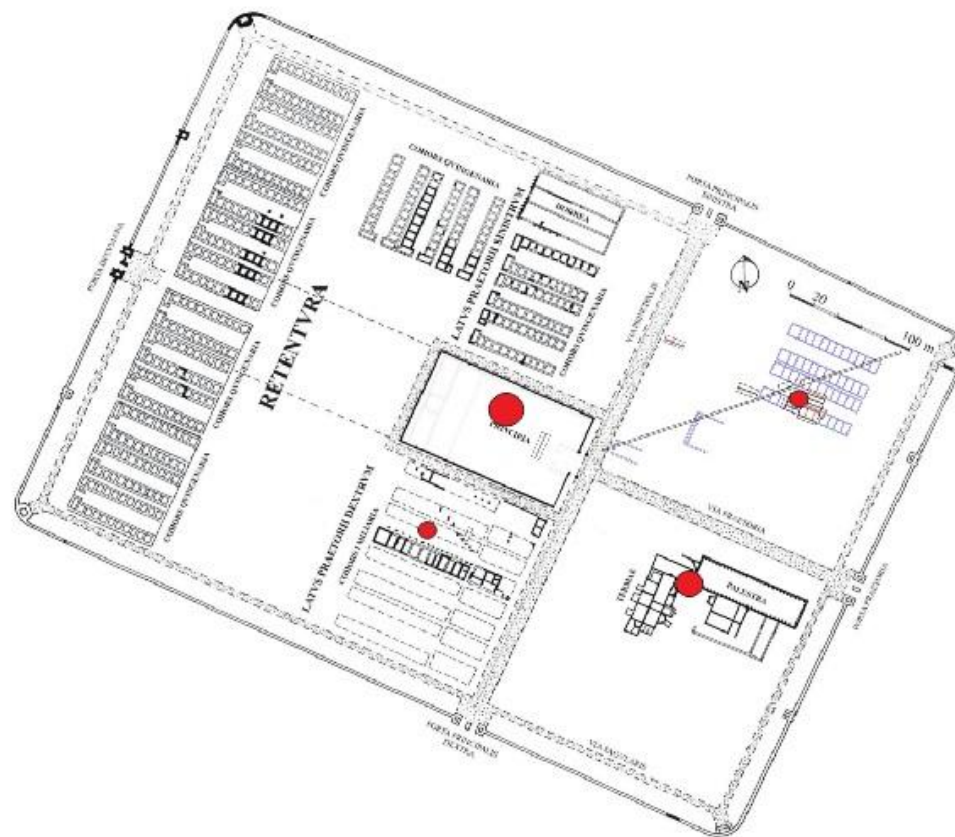
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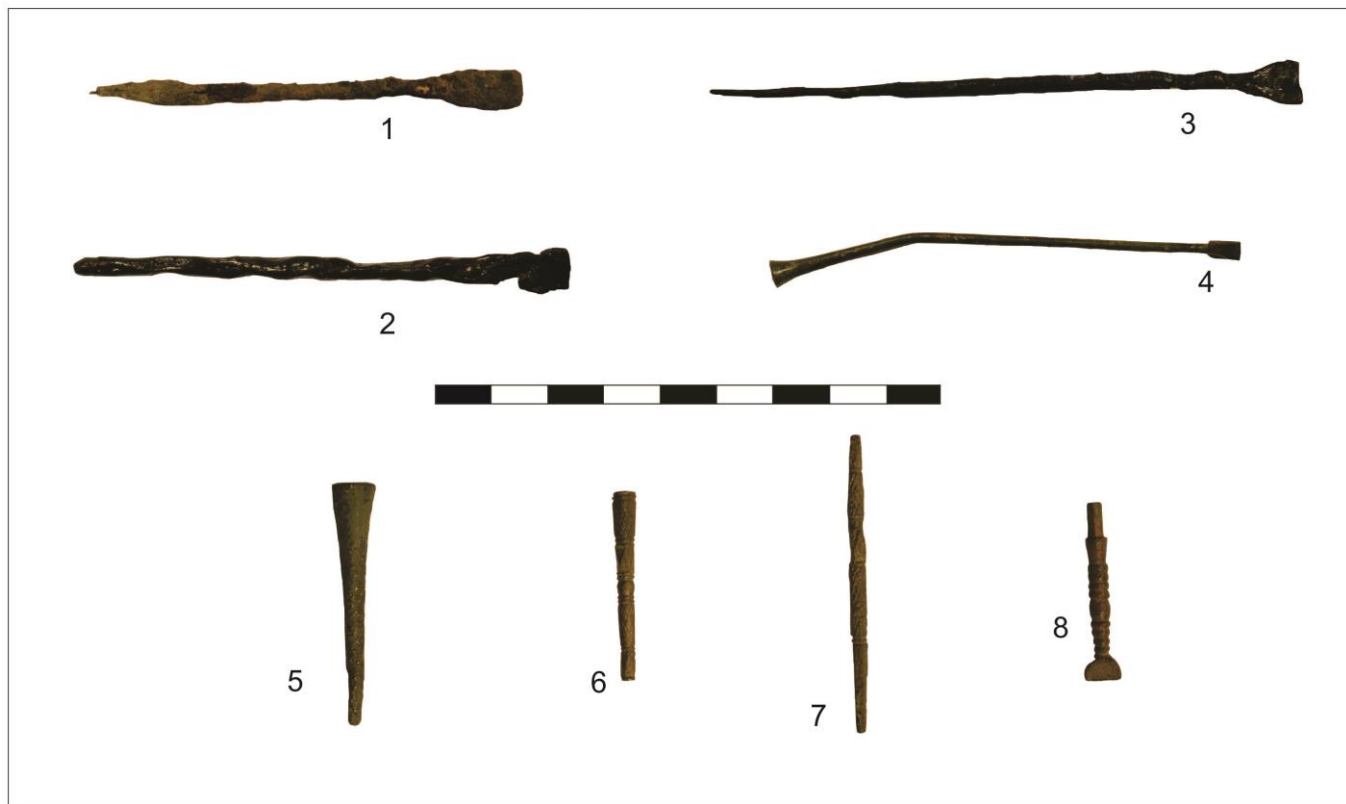
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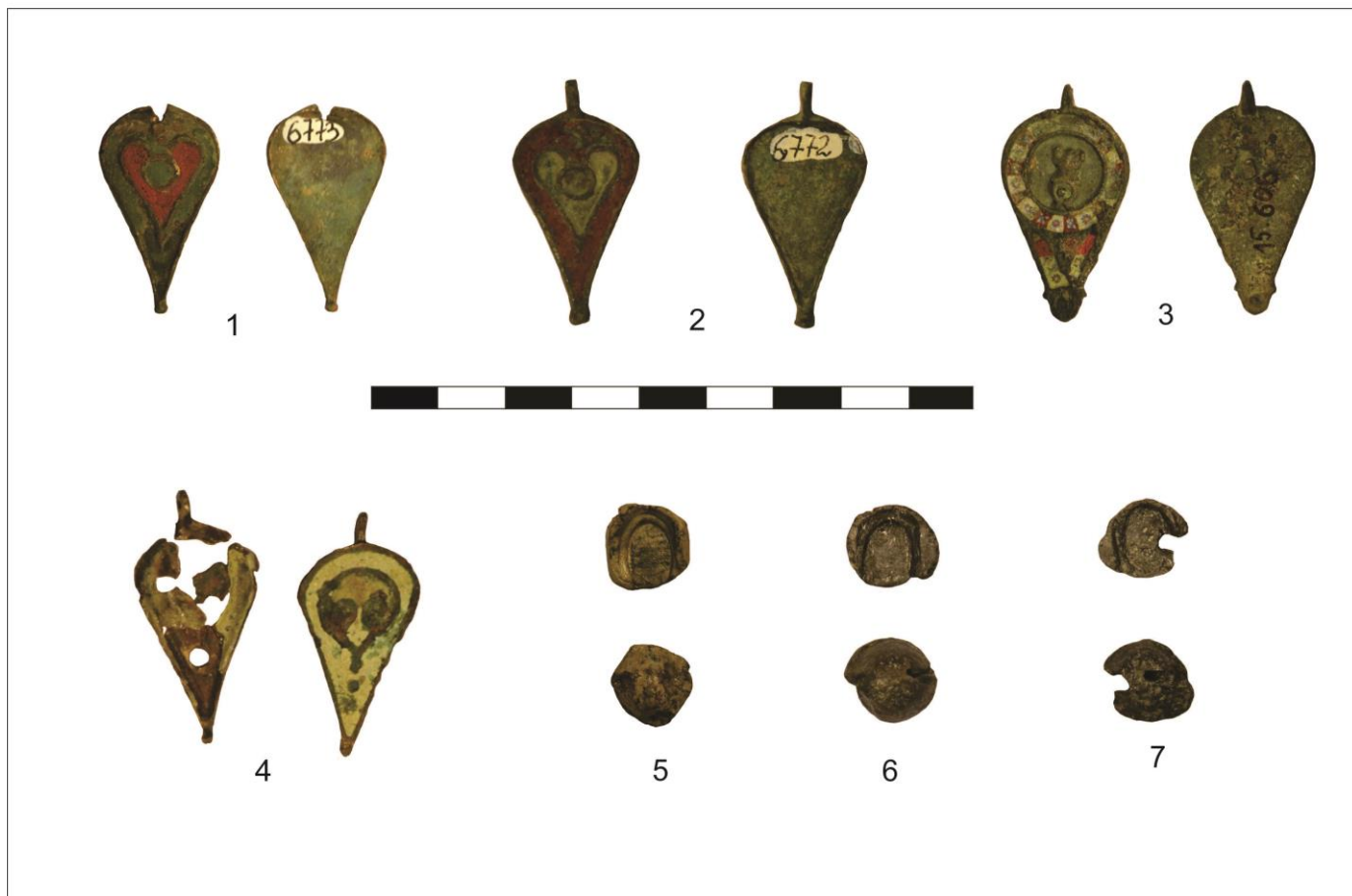
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Lucia Ana Țeposu Marinescu

(6 September 1935 – 31 August 2020)

Through Lucia Țeposu Marinescu („Lucia David” for us, the former students, then „Luci”, and for very few „Anișoara”) an aristocrat of the spirit has disappeared. Because this is how she was educated at home, by two professor parents. Because this is how she carried herself. She knew what, and how much to talk, similarly to a minister, even if she was dealing with a cleaning lady or a royal highness, a postman or a foreign savant. She would do it in Romanian, German, French and Italian. She was an aristocrat because she was able to gift science and friendship, help and compassion. Because she opened doors for others. Because she knew how to be happy for other people’s success. Because she knew when it was time to stop, and she knew that at a certain stage in life it is preferable for former colleagues to ask about yourself „I wonder how she is doing?”, rather than „is this one never going to give up its position?”.

Her XIXth century ancestors were peasants, priests and notaries from the Apuseni Mountains and Mărginimea Sibiului, very much aware of the fact that they needed to build a good future not just for themselves, but also for the entire generation, through hard work, temperance, and education. The maternal grandfather, Ștefan Stroia, a peasant from Cacova with studies in Vienna became the Prothonotary of Sibiu County. The maternal grandmother, was a 'moși' descendant from Abrud. The paternal grandfather was a priest. The paternal grandmother had been a descendant of the Pușcariu family: she was a first cousin of Sextil Pușcariu. The parents studied mathematics (her mother) and history (her father) at the Budapest University.

Life had been very beautiful on Tipografilor street of Sibiu, in a house situated in the „upper town”, where Anișoara, like a well-educated child, was bowing and quoting poems to guests. And what guests... ministers, the leaders of „Astra”, the metropolitan Nicolae Bălan and many others. But the happy days did not last long. It is not easy for a little girl to be left without a mother at the age of 13. It is not easy for a teenager to lie in wait, cold, at the window, for her father’s return from school, as it was uncertain if, after 1948, someone responsible for the recently abolished „Astra”, like professor Silviu Țeposu, would not be lifted off the streets only to return back years later, or maybe never again.

She wanted to study Medicine – under the impact of her mother’s death. However, this was not possible as long as her uncle, professor Emil

Țeposu, the leader of the Urology Clinic of Cluj, was a well-known anticommunist. She studied at the faculty of history of the „Victor Babeș” University in Cluj (1952-1956). Some of her professors, among others, were Constantin Daicoviciu, Virgil Vătășianu and Mihail Macrea. The former had been a pupil at the „Gheorghe Lazăr” highschool in Sibiu, having her father, Silviu Țeposu, as his history teacher. Constantin Daicoviciu then made a great decision by choosing the young, very young, 21-year-old Lucia Țeposu as a junior teaching assistant at the same university. Here, at the Romanian History Department, she had come a long way until 1968-1969, becoming a university assistant and lecturer. She was assigned the seminar of general ancient history of Romania, seminars and special courses of ancient art, the art of Roman Dacia, and epigraphy. Lucia Țeposu was a teacher with a vocation her entire life, be it directly at the University in Cluj and later (to not say too late) at the University in Bucharest (called there after 1993, as an „associate”! professor), or indirectly, for her younger colleagues at the National History Museum of Romania. However, she used to say that the years spent at the University in Cluj had been the happiest of her life.

How was she a teacher with a vocation? It was the beginning of October 1965 and I had been a student for only a couple of days. As a freshly enrolled student, at that time I did not yet get to know my other colleagues. It was shortly before the beginning of the Ancient History of Romania seminar. We were curiously looking at the odd boy or girl that was coming through the door, seeing these colleagues for the first time in our life. A girl entered the room and went to the main desk. She stopped, surprised, wondering why we were not standing up. „Stand up” she said (with a serious intonation!), after which she introduced herself. It was her, the assistant from which I learned, in the first month of my student life, how to read a scientific paper, how to elaborate a file, what a „critical apparatus” and a footnote was. Today, masters degree students are offered courses which initiate them in the art of scientific writing, the "A-B-C's" which us, as students, had learned in the first month of university.

In her personal and public life, there have been happy, as well as sad days. It was the joy of the first research years in the field of ancient art: she caressed gems and cameos, she knew how *to see*, like no one else, the small bronze statues, and then focused her attention towards the stone sculptures of Dacia. This was then followed by the archaeological site close to her heart, the *thermae* of Micia, and the months of studies in the quietness of the genevese fields at the „Fondation Hardt pour l'étude de l'Antiquité Classique” from Vandoeuvres.

In the year 1969, in Bucharest, together with other specialists in the same field she began organising the National History Museum of Romania. There, she was the leader of the Ancient History Department, and in the last years of the 80s she even became the deputy director. It was not easy to pretend to not see the shadows lurking from the hall with gifts dedicated to Ceaușescu, and at the same time to maintain a level of normality through archaeological research, scientific publications and exhibitions. At the beginning of the year 1990 she became the general director of the first museum in Romania, knowing how to bring a fresh breath into the institution which she was shepherding, with an until then un hoped opening towards the large public, as well as the scientific world. She initiated research for preventive archaeology in Romania.

In 1977 she attained her doctorate at the University of Bucharest with a thesis regarding the funerary art in Roman Dacia, having professor Dionisie Pippidi as her mentor. A few years later, the thesis was published in a prestigious series, remaining until today a reference work in the field (*Funerary monuments from Dacia Superior and Dacia Porolissensis*, British Archaeological Reports, International Series, 128, Oxford, 1982). One should also not forget the book dedicated to ancient bronze statues, *Statuete de bronz din Dacia romană/Bronze statues from Roman Dacia*, Bucharest, 2000 (in collaboration with Constantin Pop), the studies regarding the gems from Micia and Porolissum, bronze and stone statues from Dacia, published in Romania, but also Paris, Vienna, Stuttgart, Nijmegen and Geneva. She organised or helped organise archaeological exhibitions in Köln, Rome, Vienna, Frankfurt, Ancona, and also represented Romania in the International Scientific Committee of the *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* from Basel (LIMC), she was a corresponding member of the German Archaeological Institute. She tied scientific and soul friendships with Olivier Reverdin and André Hurst (Geneva), Lili Kahil and Annemarie Kaufmann-Heinimann (Basel), Lietta de Salvo, Bruno Tripodi and Lucietta Di Paola (Messina), Jean-Charles and Janine Balty (Paris), Ernst Künzl (Mainz), Walter Meier-Arendt and Siegmund von Schnurbein (Frankfurt am Main), Michał Gawlikowski (Warsaw) and many others.

The scientific world will preserve her through the printed pages. Those who were her pupils, friends and colleagues will keep her in their hearts, especially those who *she turned into real humans*, of course, those who still remain, as some hurried and left before her.

Farewell, Lucia Ana Țeposu Marinescu.

Mihai BARBULESCU

(Translated from Romanian by Luciana Nedelea)

Book Reviews

Matthew Symonds, *Protecting the Roman Empire. Fortlets, Frontiers and the Quest for Post-Conquest Security*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2018, 251 p.

There is no doubt that the most common subjects of the historiography regarding the military aspects of the frontiers of the Roman Empire are, by far, the major military sites such as legionary fortresses, auxiliary forts and the civilian cores that developed in their vicinity (generally known as *cannabae legionis* and *vici militares*). However, in the past several years, some researchers focused their interest on the so-called minor fortifications, known as watchtowers and fortlets, ubiquitous physical components within each distinct sector of the Roman *limites*. Their functionality is so particular that the only way to (truly) understand them in relation with the micro landscape of each distinct frontier area is to analyze them within the larger context of the Empire, using every available source, from written records and old archaeological excavations to geophysics and geo-statistical data. The book that we want to present it briefly in the following pages focuses precisely on this type of minor frontier fortifications, not in a descriptive manner but in a way that tries to understand their functionality in relation with the general Roman policy of ensuring and consolidating their post-conquest frontier security, commonly known as *pax Romana*.

Matthew Symonds' *Protecting the Roman Empire. Fortlets, Frontiers and the Quest for Post Conquest Security* published in 2018 at Cambridge University Press is an extended and well documented monograph built around the subject of the Roman provincial security and the network of the so-called *outpost* - the fortlets (medium-sized military installations called, *praesidia* or milecastles) and the watchtowers (commonly known as *turres*). The studied area is represented by the western part of the Roman Empire, the *limites* located on the modern territory of Germany, Britain, Switzerland and France, within a timespan falling between the 1st - 4th centuries CE.

In his quest to understand how the frontier control is strengthened, Symonds argues that these *outposts* (freestanding fortlets, frontier fortlets and watchtowers) are absolutely necessarily in the *longue durée* process of consolidating the control of borders and their communities, along with the disintegration of the small-scale threats such

as reduced barbarian riders or different types of thieves and insurgents (the so-called *hit and run* bands, as P. Southern named them).

A strong point of the book is that Symonds analyses the outposts in frontier context (linear frontiers, river frontiers, coastlines and *limes* roads), combining the archaeological data from the western frontiers of the Roman Empire with the subtextual data (papyri and *ostraca*) from the Eastern Desert *praesidia*, in an attempt to reconstruct the everyday life of the soldiers garrisoned in these minor fortifications.

The book is divided into three main parts, eight chapters and an introductory section, through which the author acquaints us with the main concepts of the monograph: *fortlet* and *tower*. According to Symonds, the fortlets are small military enclosures designed to hold a reduced number of soldiers drawn from the auxiliary forts (the number varies from type to type) in order to ensure the security of certain border areas. Their construction pattern is less predictable compared to the auxiliary of legionary camps, thus, their planning being different from case to case (the barrack blocks or the gateways are, however, common aspects). The watchtowers on the other hand are the smallest military installations within the Roman frontier security system, their main purpose being the surveillance of certain border areas and transmission of messages to fortlets or even auxiliary forts.

In Part I, *Consolidating Conquest*, the author pointed out the fact that, in various regions of the Empire, the number of the outposts grew rapidly as a direct consequence of changing the imperial policy in terms of Rome's boundaries, the focus being moved from the territorial expansions and offensive campaigns on the process of consolidating the frontiers. Following these aspects, the component chapters of this part discusses the presence of the outposts in two specific frontier landscapes: the river frontiers or the *Waterways* (Chapter 2) and the *limes* roads or the *Highways* (Chapter 3). The case studies from the 2nd chapter are the Danube *limes* in Raetia, the Lower Rhine sector and Exmoor Coast, questioning the planning and the changing architecture of the fortlets, their relations with the main military bases but mainly their main role within the coastal control and surveillance. The 3rd chapter follows the same interpretations based on case studies, this time being analyzed the spatial pattern along the *limes* roads from Wales, Germany and Scotland (the Gask Ridge system and the southwestern area of Scotland). Symonds highlights the so-called *fort-fortlet-fort* pattern developed especially as a road security system in which the fortlets played a major role in the commutation network, being rather security installations than trading outposts.

Border Control is the 2nd part of the monograph in which Symonds makes a very intelligent and interesting comparative analyses between the three most illustrative artificial frontiers of the Roman Empire: *Hadrian's Wall* (Chapter 4), *The Antonine Wall* (Chapter 5), *The Upper German and Raetian Limites* (Chapter 6). The major similarities and differences are given by the fact that each artificial system is designed to respond to a specific situation, defined mainly by the landscape, the military pattern, the late Iron Age background and the local population.

By analyzing their design and function separately, Symonds underscores the fact Hadrian's Wall was constructed not as a frontier that regulated the *intra* or *extra provinciam* traffic but more as a complete architectural novelty designed to stop the small-scale attacks by the rapid interventions of the troops garrisoned in the milecastles, with the help of the turrets' surveillance. In turn, the Antonine Wall is argued to be not a mechanical import of the Hadrian's Wall design (a design which took almost no account of the landscape) but a new and adapted frontier system to the realities of Scotland. Hence the irregularity of the Antonine fortlets compared to the milecastles, the flexibility of the inner planning and spatial distribution of the minor installations being a strong argument for Symonds to consider the Antonine Wall a more efficient and well-planned frontier system.

The Upper German and Raetian *limes* is considered to be a more flexible system compared to the other to artificial frontiers. This frontier system is dominated by *localism*, its dynamics creating an irregular spatial distribution in the use of the outposts. The geographical conditions and the human factor, together with the military tactics and decisions created a responsive frontier, a system that is characterized by a fully adaptation to the indigenous dynamics, being, as the author mentioned, *a mercurial frontier*.

Finally, for the analyses to be complete, Symonds outlines the purpose of the fortlets and the watchtowers in the 3rd and the 4th centuries. In the part called *Provincial Collapse*, the author focuses on the use of the outpost in a series of areas that were not previously included in the Roman security system. In contrast to the 1st - early 3rd outposts, Symonds considers that the late ones are more adapted to the local context, although they play the same security role, countering the reduced threats. The *Late Highways* (Chapter 7) and the *Late Waterways* (Chapter 8) are shaped in such way to fit the local terrain for local purposes, giving the examples of the outpost near Cologne or Stainmore pass.

Returning to the title of the book, we can say the main idea of the author is that the outposts – the fortlets and the watchtowers were more than necessary in those areas where the *pax Romana* needed an increased level of security. The density of such military installations is a conclusive barometer for the security of a particular region. The role and the daily life of the garrisoned troops is highlighted by the means of internal planning and the written records of the soldiers that served on the Roman frontiers.

The aspect which I do not necessary fully agree with is that Symonds does not consider the possibilities that the fortlets could have played a role in establishing trade relations with the indigenous barbarian populations, aspect confirmed by several discoveries from the frontier of Dacia Porolissensis.

In the end, we want to underscore that the work of M. Symonds is of great importance and a step forward in understanding the complex mechanism of the Roman frontiers and their security. We believe that by adding new data from other provinces that were not included by the author in his study, like Pannonia, Dacia, Moesia, Thracia or Asia, the established analysis model will be both reconfirmed and refined.

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Alina Streinu, Vase antice de sticlă din colecția “Maria și Dr. George Severeanu”. /The Glass Vessels in the “Maria și Dr. George Severeanu” Collection. Seria Colecția “Maria și Dr. George Severeanu” III. Editura Cetatea de scaun, Târgoviște, 2019, 264 p. (212 p. text with illustrations + 50 coloured plates). ISBN 978-606-537-447-8.

The Glass Vessels in the “Maria și Dr. George Severeanu” Collection represents the third volume of “Maria și Dr. George Severeanu” Collection Serie aiming to an as complete publication of the artefacts from this collection as possible in the near future. The above-mentioned collection represents probably one of the largest private collections of antiquities from Romania, today being part of the Bucharest Municipal Museum. The Collection is displayed in George Severeanu Museum, the house owned by the Severeanu family, recently restored, being one of the most beautiful History Museums in Bucharest and

Romania. The collection includes numerous artefacts from Prehistory up to the Middle Ages.

This book represents the hard work of Alina Streinu, an archaeologist and curator at the above-mentioned museum, she took the challenge of publishing the glass vessels from the museum collection in a manner that is accessible to a large public that visits the museum, but at the same time, the book represents a useful instrument for the scientific community as well. The volume consists of 264 pages, containing three main chapters, a detailed catalogue, a large bibliography list, a consistent English abstract, and 50 plates.

The first chapter, Ancient glass production is an introduction of the reader to the history of glass manufacture in Antiquity starting with the third millennium BC up to the Roman period where the author spends enough time explaining the entire technological production process along with the evolution of technology during the Greek and Roman time. This chapter is enriched with pictures making it easier to understand the different techniques used by the glassmakers to create the exquisite vessels. Techniques such as the modelling on a hard ceramic core, the mould-blowing technique, and finally the free-blowing technique, representing the technology that revolutionized glass manufacture around 1st century BC. Using the ancient literary sources, archaeological evidence, along with chemical and technological analysis, the author manages to summarize the entire *chaîne opératoire* and the glass manufacture, especially for the Roman period. The subchapter on the chemical composition represents an asset of the book, where the process of obtaining the beautiful colours of the ancient glass vessels are explained in an easily understandable manner. Following next is a subchapter on the ancient glass commerce in the Roman period, where once again, using the ancient literary and the epigraphic sources, A. Streinu creates a vivid description of the dynamic of the Roman society along with its acquired taste for luxury and the aesthetic of the vessels used in the daily life. The chapter ends with the description of the organisation of a Roman glass workshop, the recycling process, the condition of the glassworkers, their organisation as a guild within the Roman system of craftsmanship, along with a shortlist of the glass workshops archaeologically identified on the territory of Romania.

The second chapter represents a natural continuation of the first one, where the author explains the functionality and the forms of the glass vessels, their content, and their use in daily life. Here, once again using all the available literary sources, we are discovering the frequency of the glass vessels used as containers for a large variety of

pharmaceutical or cosmetical mixtures used in the daily life by the Romans, men, and women alike. The reader throughout this chapter discovers that by studying a single category of artefacts, the glass vessels, in this case, an archaeologist or a historian can offer an overly complex image about an ancient society with all their daily practices, and therefore discovering once more the importance of historical studies.

The third chapter is a description of the 154 glass vessels from the museum collection and the classification of the vessels into different groups based on their functionality. The glass vessels collection is a rather special one because almost all the vessels are complete, only a few being fragmentary. George Severeanu had a special appreciation for the antiquities, and he tried to obtain as much information as possible about the vessels he purchased. Information such as the discovery place and if there were some other artefacts connected to them. Numerous glass vessels from his collection represent grave goods discovered in different parts of the country, especially in the Dobrogea and Pontic area. Each category of vessels is described accordingly by the author. The main category of vessels (84) is represented by the *unguentaria* vessels, featured accordingly to their morphological characteristics, followed by the containers for transport, storage, and tableware (54), and other less numerous glass vessels such as glass candles, relief decorated vessels, and an *alabastron* and an *aryballos* vessel.

A fourth part is represented by a detailed catalogue of the vessels with typological identifications, analogies, and the dating of the vessels, appealing to the interest of the scientific community. The typological classification follows Isings' criteria along with other well-established typologies of the glass vessels. The catalogue has an easy to follow and coherent structure which makes it a useful scientific tool along with the detailed plates at the end with drawings and pictures of the vessels. The large bibliographical list with all the ancient sources, catalogues, corpora, and the general up-to-date bibliography is another important asset. The book ends with a very consistent English abstract and a second catalogue entirely in English which makes the book even more accessible to both the general public and the scientific community.

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Dávid Petruț, *Pottery and Military Life. The Ceramic Assemblages from the Barracks of the Auxiliary Fort at Buciumi, Dacia Porolissensis*. Studii și cercetări asupra frontierelor Imperiului roman de pe teritoriul României, vol. 4, Cluj Napoca, Mega Press, 2018, 198 p. ISBN 978-606-020-043-7.

Dr. Dávid Petruț is a lecturer at the Faculty of History and Philosophy of Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj Napoca. His main research interests include Roman provincial archaeology, Roman material culture, daily life in the Roman military, Roman funerary art as well as the history of archaeology in Transylvania. In 2018, Petruț has also co-edited "The Atlas of Roman Pottery Workshops from the Provinces Dacia and Lower Moesia/Scythia Minor (1st-7th centuries AD)".

The book presented here, "Pottery and Military Life. The Ceramic Assemblages from the Barracks of the Auxiliary Fort at Buciumi, Dacia Porolissensis", exhibits the results of his PhD research carried out between 2010 and 2014 at Babeș-Bolyai University, namely his study of the ceramic findings from the barracks of the Buciumi auxiliary fort in Dacia Porolissensis, focusing particularly on material from 1971 – 1976.

In the first chapter, Petruț defines the study of the 'everyday life' of the Roman soldier. He discusses the trends and evolution of the research concerning the Roman military, emphasizing a shift from regarding soldiers as mere fighting units to studying them on a more personal level. The study of their everyday life can be classified into various aspects, namely the *supply of goods, military architecture and use of space, military production (manufacture and crafts), military diet and conviviality, daily routine and recurrent activities and aspects of military identity*. Petruț exhibits different points of view pertaining to the topic and successfully observes the limitations and biases of earlier studies which occasionally hinder contemporary research in the field.

The second chapter stresses the importance of sub-literary sources, such as wax tablets, ink tablets, ostraca and papyri, in the research concerning the soldiers' life. Different types of military documents as well as the military daily life are succinctly but clearly outlined in the chapter, advancing the idea that soldiers had reached uniformity to some extent in the way in which they self-administered.

The third chapter, albeit brief, presents the auxiliary fort at Buciumi and the history of its research, from the earliest observations in the 19th century by Károly Torma to the systematic archaeological excavations in 1963 – 1976. Finally, the last two subsequent excavations from 1997 and 2015 are also documented.

The fourth chapter introduces the pottery assemblages found at Buciumi between 1971 – 1976. Petruț presents a classification system and gives an overview of the pottery from the barracks, focusing on shapes connected to food and drink preparation and consumption, while also including other vessels used in everyday life for personal hygiene, artificial lighting and ritual activities among the soldiers. The chapter also includes a concise review of the pottery assemblage presented in the 1972 monograph, describing the latter as one of the earliest attempts to collect valid data about ceramics in a military context in Dacia. Lastly, the text assesses functional aspects of the findings, among which culinary practices and conviviality, both of which were treated rather briefly.

The fifth chapter discusses the small finds from the barracks, which demonstrate a variety of activities taking place at the site related to metalworking, textile-working, religious ritual and different fighting techniques.

The analysis is followed by a series of drawings and photographs of the findings which are for the most part clear and serve their purpose, except for a few cases where the illustrations from older studies are more difficult to perceive due to their quality. Nonetheless, the book also presents some good detail photos of the findings, especially of the ceramic fabric types, which perfectly illustrate their texture and inclusions. In terms of the presentation of the findings, each type of vessel and its functionality is defined and explained in an easy-to-understand manner. The content is overall well-organized and rendered in such a way that it could be accessible to field experts and non-experts alike.

While the study was subject to some limitations due to the very fragmentary nature of the assemblage examined by the author, as well as the latter's working constraints, I consider that the book nevertheless achieved its purpose to a great extent. Overall, the book provides a comprehensible assessment of the findings and their functionality, enriching our knowledge of Roman soldiers' daily lives at the Buciumi fort.

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Corpora

- CEpR C. C. Petolescu, Cronica epigrafică a României. In: SCIVA (Bucarest), 1981–.
- IDR Inscriptiile Daciei Romane, București, I, 1975 – III/5, 2001.
- ILD C. C. Petolescu, Inscriptii latine din Dacia, București, I, 2005 ; II, 2016.
- ILS Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae, Berlin, I, 1892 – III, 1916.
- LIMC Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae, Zürich and Munich, 1974–.
- OPEL B. Lőrincz, F. Redö (éds.), Onomasticon Provinciarum Europae Latinarum, I-IV. Budapest-Vienne, 1994-2002 (et I², Budapest, 2005).

Abbreviations

- AB (SN) Analele Banatului. Muzeul Național al Banatului, Timișoara.
- ACD Acta Classica Universitatis Scientarum Debreceniensis, Debrecen.
- ActaMN Acta Musei Napocensis, Cluj-Napoca.
- ActaMP Acta Musei Porolissensis, Zalău.
- AEM Archäologisch-epigraphische Mitteilungen aus Österreich-Ungarn, Wien.
- Angustia Angustia. Journal of the National Museum of Eastern Carpathians, Sfântu Gheorghe, I, 1996–
- Annali della Facoltà della formazione, Università degli Studi di Catania Annali della Facoltà della formazione, Università degli Studi di Catania, Catania.
- Apulum Apulum. Acta Musei Apulensis, Alba Iulia.
- Archaeologica I Journal The Archaeological Journal. Royal Archaeological Institute, London.
- ArhMold Banatica Arheologia Moldovei, Iași.
- Banatica Banatica. Muzeul Banatului Montan, Reșița.
- BVBl Bayerische Vorgeschichtsblätter, München.
- BHAUT Bibliotheca Historica et Archaeologica Universitatis

	Timisiensis, Timișoara.
Britannia	Britannia, London.
BudRég	Budapest Régiségei, Budapest.
Caiete ARA	Caiete ARA. Arhitectură. Restaurare. Arheologie, București.
Carpica	Carpica, Bacău.
CCA	Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România, București.
CercNum	Cercetări Numismatice, București
Cumidava	Cumidava, Brașov.
Diss Pann	Dissertationes Pannonicae, Budapest.
Drobeta	Drobeta. Muzeul Regiunii Porților de Fier, Turnu-Severin.
EN	Ephemeris Napocensis. Institutul de Arheologie și Istoria Artei, Cluj-Napoca.
Funde und Ausgrabungen im Bezirk Trier	Funde und Ausgrabungen im. Bezirk Trier: Aus der Arbeit des Rheinischen Landesmuseums Trier, Trier.
Gallia	Gallia. Fouilles et monuments archéologiques en France métropolitaine, Paris.
Germania	Germania: Anzeiger der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Frankfurt am Main.
Instrumentum	Instrumentum: bulletin du Groupe de travail européen sur l'artisanat et les productions manufacturées dans l'Antiquité, Le Musée du Traditions Populaires et d'Archéologie de Chauvigny.
Istros	Istros, Brăila.
JAHA	Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology, Cluj-Napoca.
JRA	The Journal of Roman Archaeology, London.
KJ	Kölner Jahrbuch für vor-und Frühgeschichte, Köln.
London Archaeologist	London Archaeologist London Archaeologist Association, London.
MCA	Materiale și cercetări arheologice, București.
Memoria Antiquitatis	Memoria Antiquitatis. Acta Musei Petrodavensis, Piatra Neamț.
Oltenia	Oltenia. Studii și comunicări, Craiova.
PBSR	Papers of the British School at Rome, Rome.
Peuce	Peuce. Studii și cercetări de istorie și arheologie, Tulcea.
Picus	Picus: studi e ricerche sulle marche nell' antichita, Tivoli.
RAE	Revue archéologique de l'Est, Dijon.
RB	Revista Bistriței, Bistrița.

RCRF Acta	Rei Cretariae Romanae Fautorum Acta, Abingdon.
HiMA	HiMA: revue internationale d'histoire militaire ancienne, Presse Universitaire de Franche-Comté.
Sargetia (SN)	Sargetia. Buletinul Muzeului județului Hunedoara, Acta Musei Devensis, Deva.
SCIV(A)	Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie, București.
SEBarc	Sylogae Epigraphica Barcionensis, Barcelona.
Starinar	Starinar. Treća Serija. Arheološki Institut, Beograd.
Studi di antichità	Studi di Antichità. Rivista del Dipartimento di Beni Culturali dell'Università del Salento, Salento.
Studia UBB. Theologica Catholica	Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai. Studia Theologica Catholica, Cluj-Napoca.
TD	Thraco-Dacica. Institutul Român de Tracologie, București.
Tyche	Tyche. Contributions to Ancient History, Papyrology and Epigraphy, Vienna.
Ziridava	Ziridava. Studia Archaeologica, Arad.

Museum abbreviations

MIT	Museum of History, Turda.
MNIT	National Museum of Transylvanian History, Cluj-Napoca.
MRPF	Muzeul Regiunii Porțile de Fier [Musée de la Région des Portes de Fer] (Drobeta-Turnu Severin).

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Contents

- PAUL PUPEZĂ *Graphic Signs or Simple Scratches? Marks on Dacian Artefacts from Covasna – Cetatea Zânelor*
- RADU IUSTINIAN ZĂGREANU, DAN AUGUSTIN DEAC, ANGELICA MOLDOVAN *Pottery Vessels with Graffiti Discovered in the Roman Fort from Orheiu Bistriței*
- LUCIANA NEDELEA *Graffiti, Tituli Picti and Manufacturer Stamps Identified on Roman Earthenware from the Potaissa Legionary Fortress (2nd-3rd centuries AD)*
- DAN DANA, PAUL DINULESCU *Graffites sur céramique de Gârla Mare, dép. de Mehedinți (territoire de Drobeta)*
- SORIN NEMETI, EUGENIA BEU-DACHIN, SORIN COCIȘ *On Displayed Writing. Bronze Inscriptions from Napoca*
- SORIN NEMETI, FELIX MARCU *Exit Fanius. About a Brick Stamp from Drobeta*
- IRINA NEMETI *Seal Boxes from Potaissa*
- TIMEA VARGA, PAUL CHIOREAN *Ars scribendi. Writing Implements Discovered in the Legionary Fortress of Potaissa*
- MIHAI BĂRBULESCU *In memoriam Lucia Țeposu Marinescu*
- BOOK REVIEWS