

**HISTORICAL AND EPIGRAPHIC CONSIDERATIONS
CONCERNING A GLASS DATING FROM THE ROMAN TIMES
DISCOVERED IN THE HABITAT OF MEDIAȘ
– GURA CÂMPULUI-HĂȘMAȘ**

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**CONSIDERAȚII ISTORICE ȘI EPIGRAFICE PRIVIND UN PAHAR
DIN EPOCA ROMANĂ DESCOPERIT ÎN AȘEZAREA DE LA MEDIAȘ
– GURA CÂMPULUI-HĂȘMAȘ**

ABSTRACT

Historical and epigraphic considerations concerning a glass dating from Roman times discovered in the habitat of Mediaș – Gura Câmpului-Hășmaș. This article presents the interpretation of an inscription with ancient Greek lowercase found on a glass dating back to Roman times, discovered in the habitat of Mediaș – Gura Câmpului-Hășmaș, județul Sibiu. In our opinion, the inscription presents the following characters: omicron, miu, omega, phi, theta and upsilon and, probably, represents a graphonumeric or graphotextual code, or a possible writing exercise. We do not exclude the possibility of a writing with Greek characters of a West-Semithyan language, but we are not of the opinion that the text omophy could represent the name of a person.

Keywords: Mediaș, Gura Câmpului-Hășmaș, Roman era, Greek characters, habitat, graphonumeric.

The artefact (Image nr. 1), the inscription of which will be discussed in this material, was presented exhaustively recently in a study published by dr. Viorel Ștefu, in the collective volume number V of the „Mediaș 750” scientific collection⁴. This article gives us all the information about the object: the place of discovery, the technical dates, the context of the cover, the description of the piece. The glass (the cup), chronologically dated from Roman times, was discovered during the archaeological excavations made in the Roman settlement of Gura Câmpului-Hășmaș during two campaigns in the years 1975-1977, when 21 sections were traced and were disco-

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⁴ Viorel Ștefu, *Un pahar roman cu inscripție descoperit la Mediaș – Gura Câmpului-Hășmaș. Cazul recuperării unui artefact de patrimoniu (Studiu preliminar)*, in „Mediaș 750. Studii”, vol. V (îngrijit de Vasile Mărculeț și Helmuth Knall), Mediaș, 2019, BHM, XXXII, p. 7-16.

veries, whole or partial, 10 surface dwellings and a blacksmith's workshop⁵. The excavations were initiated by Cluj professor Dumitru Protase and were organized by the Municipal Museum of Mediaș, with the collaboration of the Institute of History and Archeology of Cluj Napoca⁶.

Short Description

The glass has the shape of a truncated cone, was made of a fine paste with reddish and brown shades and the main decorative motifs are: the round edge and slightly bent outwards, the cylindrical body, slightly domed, the bottom is well profiled and annular, according to information from the author already mentioned⁷.

Typologically, according to the archaeological findings of researcher Viorica Rusu-Bolindeț from Cluj-Napoca, the piece was framed in the type category Isings 21⁸ of the Roman glassware repertoire or in the Dechelette shape 64 of the repertoire frame of type jars terra sigillata with relief decoration⁹.

The registration comment

At first it was assumed that it is a script with Latin characters¹⁰, but on closer analysis of the piece we realized that it is a script with tiny ancient Greek characters. In our opinion, the succession of letters is as follows: omicron, miu, omega, phi, theta and upsilon (Image nr. 2). Thus there will be the word omoophy (we put two o's for omega), from which we do not yet know what word it could derive from. With this interpretation in mind, we propose the following variants:

Either it is a mark of the pot or it is a graphonumeric or grapholexical code which attested, perhaps, the workshop and/or the craftsman who modeled it, as is the case with the marks of the amphorae of the archaic, helenistic Greek world until Roman or even Roman-Byzantine times. One could exemplify identical cases of the canabae legionis municipium Septimium Apulense, where the names of the craftsmen Protos and Sozon are indented, written in the Greek language¹¹. These two names appear on the marks printed on the amphoras¹². It is important that the two Greek names are documented elsewhere, the proof of trade with the Greek world; thus the name Protos has been attested in Histria¹³, while Sozon is an exporter of amphoras from the city Tyras, which had a fairly large sales market in Dacia, according to the

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 8.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 10.

⁸ Viorica Rusu-Bolindeț, *Ceramica romană de la Napoca. Contribuții la studiul ceramicii din Dacia Romană*, in „Bibliotheca Musei Napocensis”, XXV, 2007, p. 610, fig. 225-226; p. 652, fig. 535-536; V. Ștefu, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

⁹ V. Ștefu, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

¹¹ Radu Ciobanu, George Bounegru (eds.), *Între Util și Estetic – Scrisul la Apulum. Catalog de expoziție*, Alba Iulia, 2012, p. 113.

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ Vasile Canarache, *Importul amforelor ștampilate la Istria*, București, 1957, nr. 336, 340, 343; A. Popa, *Quelques estampilles d'amphores attestées dans la Dacie*, in „Apulum”, XIX, 1981, p. 74, nr. 4, fig. 3, 1; *Inscripțiile Daciei Romane*, III/6, p. 329, 331; R. Ciobanu, G. Bounegru, *op. cit.*, p. 113-114, 463.

findings of Romula and Sucidava¹⁴. Either it is a random/random writing exercise, with characters chosen after the advice of the potter.

We do not exclude the possibility of writing with Greek characters from a West-Semitic language, such as Aramaic, Phoenician, Nabathenian (the last two of the Arab-Aramaic dialects), or the signs could resemble with forms of the Syriac or Copt script. Influenced by cursive Greek writing (lowercase, as in our inscription), but the letters are Greek. According to our opinion, it would be a bit early for Syriac or Copta in Dacia of the II-III centuries p.Ch., in full Roman times, in a rural area, poor in epigraphic remains.

Conclusion

The characters inscribed on the glass discovered in the perimeter of the habitat of Mediaș – Gura Câmpului-Hășmaș are lower case Greek cursives, with ligatures, and their order is as follows: omicron, miu, omega, phi, theta, upsilon, but, if the signs are part of a word, this one does not appear to be Greek, but rather Semitic, counting the number of consonants, it is a triconsonnate word. Our opinion is that it is possible a graphonumeric code or the pot/workshop/potter mark with Greek cursives (lowercase with ligatures) or even a writing exercise with random terms.

It seems that this potter, craftsman, could have been located in the important pottery center of Micăsasa, considered one of the most important rural centers of Roman Dacia by Ioan Mitrofan, the author of the research in this representative site for the Roman rural world¹⁵. We cannot know, after the current information, what was the origin of this presumed craftsman and no hypothesis, could become an exercise of imagination, a supposition that could arise from ramblings, but, we consider that this person, although he does not didn't speak the Greek language, she knew the Elene characters.

Images list:

Image nr. 1 – Roman glass (Mediaș – Gura Câmpului).

Image nr. 2 – Roman glass (Mediaș – Gura Câmpului). Detail.

¹⁴ Gheorghe Popilian, *Ceramica romană din Oltenia*, Craiova, 1976, p. 42-44; A. Popa, *op. cit.*, p. 74, nr. 5, fig. 3; *Inscripțiile Daciei Romane*, II, p. 288.

¹⁵ I. Mitrofan, *Serapis pe un țipar din așezarea romană de la Micăsasa*, in „Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie”, 43, 1, 1992, p. 55-61; Idem, *Fibulele romane de la Micăsasa*, in „Acta Musei Napocensis”, 31/1, 1994, p. 431-444; Idem, *Cercetările arheologice din așezarea romană de la Micăsasa (campania 1991)*, in „Acta Musei Napocensis”, 31/1, 1994, p. 523-527; Idem, *Cercetările arheologice din așezarea romană de la Micăsasa (campania 1992)*, în „Acta Musei Napocensis” 31/1, 1994, p. 529-531; Idem, *Cercetările arheologice din așezarea romană de la Micăsasa (campania 1993)*, in „Acta Musei Napocensis”, 31/1, 1994, p. 533-536; Idem, *Marele centru de ceramică de la Micăsasa*, in vol. „Napoca 1880”, Cluj Napoca, 1998, p. 166-172.



Image nr. 1

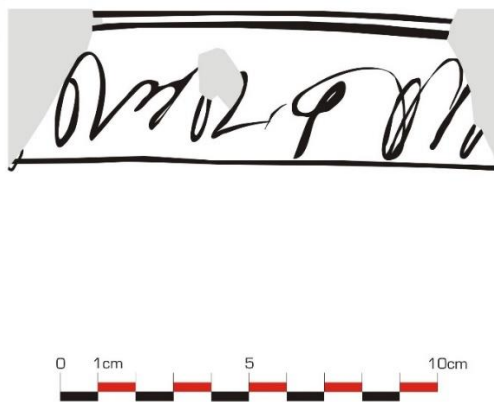


Image nr. 2