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TYCHE

Beiträge zur Alten Geschichte
Papyrologie und Epigraphik

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Papyrologie und Epigraphik**

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A military graffito on a pottery plate from the auxiliary fort at Buciumi (Roman Dacia)

Plates 3–4

The Roman auxiliary fort from Buciumi (Sălaj county, Romania)¹, situated in Dacia Porolissensis, was extensively excavated between 1963 and 1976². During the archaeological investigations carried out in 1969, a pottery vessel fragment with an ownership inscription cut after firing (*post cocturam*) was discovered in the southern half of barracks no. 2 (B2) in the *praetentura* of the fort (pl. 3 fig. 1). No further contextual data is available regarding the find, which has until recently eluded the archaeological community, remaining hitherto unpublished. The fragment was part of a medium-sized plate, closely associated from a formal point of view with the type Curle 15 *terra sigillata* vessels³. Based on the characteristics of the fabric and slip, the vessel most likely belongs to the category of local tableware which draws on various types of the aforementioned category, known also as “imitations of *terra sigillata*”⁴. The graffito (pl. 4 fig. 2–3) was placed just below the carination of the vessel, running approximately parallel with it. There is a certain degree of disparity regarding the size of the letters, typically their height varying between 4 and 6 mm, except for the

¹ We wish to express our gratitude to Nicolae Gudea (Cluj) and Horea Pop (Zalău) for the permission to publish the graffito, stored in the County Museum of History and Art, Zalău, inv. no. 237/1969. We are also indebted to Laurent Dubois (Paris), Ligia Ruscu (Cluj) and Robert S. O. Tomlin (Oxford) for their useful comments and suggestions. This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of National Education, CNCS-UEFISCDI, no. PN-II-ID-PCE-2012-4-0618. Abbreviations:

ILD = C. C. Petolescu, *Inscriptii latine din Dacia (ILD)* [*Latin Inscriptions from Dacia (ILD)*], Bucharest 2005.

² TIR L 34 (*Aquincum – Sarmizegetusa – Sirmium*), Amsterdam 1968, 41–42; E. Chirilă, N. Gudea, V. Lucăcel, C. Pop, *Das Römerlager von Buciumi. Beiträge zur Untersuchung des Limes der Dacia Porolissensis*, Cluj 1972; N. Gudea, *Das Römergrenzkastell von Buciumi*, Zalău 1997; C. Găzdac, E. Pripon, *The Roman Auxiliary Fort at Buciumi (Roman Dacia, Romania). Coins in Archaeological Context* (BAR Intern. Series 2381), Oxford 2012, 1–13 (“The Auxiliary Fort and its History”).

³ Diameter: 210 mm, preserved height: 46 mm, thickness: 6 mm. The surface of the vessel shows signs of strong secondary burning.

⁴ See the discussion in C. M. Wells, “Imitations” and the spread of *sigillata* manufacture, in: E. Ettlinger et alii (eds.), *Conspectus formarum terrae sigillatae Italico modo confectae* (MRK 10), Bonn 1990, 24–25.

opening letter which is somewhat larger (8 mm). A total of 16 letters can be identified and, except the last one, all are completely preserved, albeit the graffito continued beyond the perimeter of the currently preserved sherd. In the second part of the inscription the alignment of the letters is defective, possibly suggesting that the author attempted to correct the trajectory of the text. The comprehensibility of this part of the graffito is also affected by surface damage mostly in the form of scratches which often interfere with the letters.

Regarding the palaeography, the graffito consists of relatively roughly cut capital letters, however occasionally the influence of the cursive script is noticeable (I, L, S, Z)⁵. The opening letter, Z, displays a very rare and peculiar cursive form, produced by rotating the upper half of the letter; A is in both preserved instances “open”, i.e. lacking the cross-bar; the first I is rendered through a winding vertical line; L is composed of two oblique strokes in a very similar fashion to the cursive variants; at this point the course of the text changes slightly, the graffito gradually getting closer to the carination, the letters which follow displaying a more casual style; S is typical for the cursive script, although fairly angular, composed of three strokes; G is very similar to an angular C, composed of three strokes ending in a serif, which was crucial in identifying the letter; the third I ends in two serifs as well, while the last visible letter, although poorly preserved can be identified as an A. The remaining letters (N, M, X) correspond essentially to the capital script. In addition to the letters described above, the symbol “7” (usually depicted as an inversed C) indicates the designation of a *centuria*. Based on the identifications outlined above, the following reading can be put forward:

ZANAX MILIS 7 GENIA[---]

Zanax, milis (centuria) Genia[lis].

A handwritten cursive version of the inscription 'ZANAX MILIS 7 GENIA'. The letters are written in a rough, capital style with some cursive influences. The 'Z' is rotated, 'A' is open, and the '7' is an inverted 'C'. The text is written in black ink on a light background.

“Zanax, soldier from the century of Genialis”. As expected, the inscription is an indication of ownership⁶. The name of the owner is expressed in nominative, although

⁵ For similar graffiti in Roman Dacia, see N. Gudea, C. Cosma, *Contribuții la paleografia latină romană din Dacia, II. Inscriptiții incizate sau zgâriate pe vase de la Porolissum și problema inscripțiilor pe vase din provinciile dacice* [Contributions to the Latin paleography of Roman Dacia II. The graffiti on the pottery vessels from Porolissum and the problem of inscriptions on vessels from the Dacian provinces], *Acta Musei Porolissensis* 16 (1992) 201–247; regarding the cursive script in the province, see A. Voloșciuc, *Scrierea cursivă în Dacia romană* [The cursive script in Roman Dacia], *Analele Banatului* 15 (2007) 57–68.

⁶ On similar minor inscriptions, see M. Hainzmann (ed.), *Instrumenta inscripta latina. Das römische Leben im Spiegel der Kleininschriften*, Pécs 1991; M. Hainzmann, R. Wedenig (eds.), *Instrumenta inscripta latina II. Akten des 2. Internationalen Kolloquiums Klagenfurt, 5.–8. Mai 2005*, Klagenfurt 2008; M. Reuter, M. Scholz, *Geritzt und entziffert. Schriftzeugnisse der römischen Informationsgesellschaft*, Stuttgart 2004; *idem*, *Alles geritzt: Botschaften aus der Antike*, Munich 2005. On ownership marks on ceramics, see Chr. Schmidt Heidenreich, *Les inscriptions mineures dans les camps militaires romains: l'apport d'une "écriture de la*

in most cases the genitive form is used, e.g. the graffito from Corbridge (*Coria?*), in Roman Britain, bearing the name of a Thracian *eques* of the *coh. I Fida Vardullorum milliaria civium Romanorum equitata: t(urma) Vindalici, Eptacent[i]* (RIB II.7 2501.617).

Ownership inscriptions on pottery vessels are relatively well represented on all categories of Roman provincial sites, however the highest concentration of such graffiti can be found in military installations (forts and fortresses) as well as the adjacent civilian settlements⁷. The number of graffiti reported in Roman Dacia so far is not particularly high, even so a couple of notable instances can be mentioned. Two examples can be quoted from the auxiliary fort at Cristești (Mureș county), in Dacia Superior, garrison of *ala I Bosporanorum*: (1) IDR III.4 163: CRIISCIINTIS, that is *Crescentis*, on a pottery flagon; (2) IDR III.4 165: possibly SITAL (?) (presumably a Thracian name), on a pottery vessel. A further graffito, discovered in the Roman auxiliary fort at *Arcobara/Ilișua* (Bistrița-Năsăud county), in Dacia Porolissensis, and recently published, was inscribed entirely in cursive letters on a pottery beaker: *Prisci duplicarii*⁸.

The category of ownership inscriptions cut after firing is mostly present on tableware, especially bowls and plates, while their occurrence on beakers and cups is somewhat lower. Their prevalence in the military environment can be linked primarily with the communal lifestyle of the *contubernia*, as well as with a higher rate of literacy among soldiers⁹. The ownership marks were most likely intended to aid the possessor in identifying and recovering his vessel after the conclusion of the communal meals, and to avoid theft. In most cases the names of the owners were inscribed in an inverted position, as is the case with the vessel from Buciumi. From a technical point of view, this allowed greater access to the surface of the vessel's wall, also increasing its stability during the process. The high number of graffiti inscribed within the area of the footstand also suggests that the vessels were usually stored in an overturned position, thus facilitating their identification¹⁰.

The name which follows the centurial sign is easily restorable in the form of GENIA[LIS]. This graffito provides the fifth occurrence of the abovementioned name

marge", in: M. E. Fuchs et alii (eds.), *Inscriptions mineures : nouveautés et réflexions. Actes du premier colloque Ductus (19–20 juin 2008, Université de Lausanne)*, Bern 2012, 396.

⁷ See J. Evans, *Graffiti and the Evidence of Literacy and Pottery Use in Roman Britain*, AJ 144 (1987) 196. Similar military graffiti in Roman Britain: RIB II.7 2501.1–14 (and 617) and II.8 2503.116–120.

⁸ D. Dana, C. Gaiu, R. Zăgreanu, *Un nou duplicarius din ala I Tungrorum Frontoniana atestat pe un vas descoperit în castrul roman de la Arcobara/Ilișua* [A new duplicarius of the ala I Tungrorum Frontoniana attested on a vessel discovered in the Roman fort of *Arcobara/Ilișua*], *Revista Bistriței* 26 (2012) 49–56.

⁹ Evans, *Graffiti* (n. 7) 196 and 199; S. S. Frere, R. S. O. Tomlin, in RIB II.7 1995.3 and 7. For Roman Dacia, see Voloșciuc, *Scrierea cursivă* (n. 5) 58, regarding the prevalence of these finds in the military environment.

¹⁰ S. S. Frere, R. S. O. Tomlin, in RIB II.7 1995.3 and 5.

(OPEL II 164–165) in Roman Dacia¹¹. Much more interesting, however, is the name of the owner, *Zanax*, of peregrine status. The name is followed by the indication of his military rank (ordinary soldier, *miles*), and finally by the reference to his subunit within the cohort. The popular form *milis* was preferred instead of *miles*, since the unaccented *e* is prone to substitution with the unaccented *i*¹². This extremely rare name was recorded previously only once, on a Latin epitaph from *Byzantium*, dating to the first half of the 3rd century AD (possibly in 214, on the occasion of the Parthian expedition of Caracalla), the monument being erected by an *aquilifer* of the *legio II Adiutrix* (from Pannonia Inferior, garrisoned at *Aquincum*), named *Aur(elius) Zanax*, for his deceased colleague¹³. Adam Łajtar, the last editor of the inscription, interpreted the name as being part of the well-known series of Greek names compounded with the termination *-αξ*, consisting mostly of nicknames. These forms betray a familiar or expressive language (Βύβαξ, Κλέαξ, Λάλαξ, Πλάταξ, Σάλαξ, Στράβαξ and so on)¹⁴, but the author also highlighted the difficulties of finding an etymological explanation regarding the name Ζάναξ/*Zanax*¹⁵.

¹¹ *P. Aelius Genialis* at *Apulum* (IDR III.5 4, 215, 259 and 440); the soldiers *Aelius Genialis* and [---] *Gjenialis* at *Apulum* (IDR III.5 477 and AE, 2007, 1198); *M. Cocceius Genialis* at *Napoca* (CIL III 7662).

¹² H. Mihăescu, *La langue latine dans le sud-est de l'Europe*, Bucharest, Paris 1978, 173 (§ 114) and 176 (§ 119), with samples from Pannonia, Upper and Lower Moesia, Dacia. This is the fourth known example in Roman Dacia: *milis legionis XIII G(e)m(inae)* (CIL III 7921 = IDR III.2 337, *Sarmizegetusa*); *milis n(umeri) M(aurorum) M(iciensium)* (CIL III 6267 = IDR III.3 166, *Micia*); *milis c(ohor)tis I Sagitt(ariorum)* and *milis co(ho)rtis prima(e)* (IDR II.107, *Drobeta*); *milis l[eg(ionis)]* (CIL 14467,1 = IDR III.4 188, *Daneș*, *Mureș* county).

¹³ AE, 1976, 641 = Pfuhl & Möbius I 307 (Taf. 55) = I.Byzantium 123: *D(is) M(anibus).| T(ito) Fl(avio) Surillioni, aquilifero | leg(ionis) II Adi(utricis) P(iae) F(idelis), militavit | annos XVIII, vixit annos XXXX.| Posuit Aur(elius) Zanax, aquilifer leg(ionis) eiusdem colle|g(a)e bene merenti*. See the comment in M. P. Speidel, *Roman Army Studies*, I (Mavors 1), Amsterdam 1984, 4–6, observing that “of palaeographical interest is the fact that the Z of *Zanax* has an upward hook at its beginning and a downward hook at its end, assimilating it to a lower case Greek zeta which shows that the stone mason was a Greek” (p. 6).

¹⁴ For this type of names, see P. Chantraine, *La formation des noms en grec ancien*, Paris 1933, 376–383; idem, *Notes d'étymologie grecque*, RPh 37 (1963) 21; L. Robert, *Noms indigènes dans l'Asie Mineure gréco-romaine*, I, Paris 1963, 150–155; O. Masson, *Anthroponymie grecque et dialectologie*, RPh 37 (1963) 223 (= idem, *Onomastica Graeca Selecta*, I, Nanterre 1990, 48); idem, *Quelques anthroponymes grecs et leur morphologie : noms composés et noms simples*, *Verbum* 18 (1995–1996) 285 (= idem, *Onomastica Graeca Selecta*, III, Geneva 2000, 319); H. Solin, *Die stadtrömischen Sklavennamen. Ein Namenbuch*, III (*Barbarische Namen, Indices*), Stuttgart 1996, 679 (reverse index); idem, *Die griechischen Personennamen in Rom. Ein Namenbuch*, III, Berlin, New York 2003, 1558 (reverse index); Ch. B. Kritzas, *New Personal Names from Argos*, in: R. W. V. Catling, F. Marchand (eds.), *Onomatologos. Studies in the Personal Names Presented to Elaine Matthews*, Oxford 2010, 240.

¹⁵ See the pertinent commentary of A. Łajtar, *Die Inschriften von Byzantion, Teil I* (Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien 58), Bonn 2000, 118. Speidel, *Roman Army Studies* (n. 13) 11, noticed that the two *Adiutrix* legions apparently received a fair number of oriental recruits (origin, oriental names) by the end of the 2nd century AD, but recognizes that

There is possibly another occurrence of the name *Zanax*, hitherto unnoticed (pl. 4 fig. 4). A catalogue of names from Rome, presumably of soldiers (CIL VI 32923, from the 3rd century AD), contains the transcription AVRELIVS ZANA (col. B, l. 10). In fact, no other occurrence of a masculine name *Zana* is known up to now; the right edge of the plaque is lost, and the last letter of each *nomen* and *cognomen* is relegated to the end of the column, cf. the next name, col. B, l. 11, OTACILIVS FELI[X]; therefore, it is quite certain that the complete *cognomen* was in fact ZANA[X]. Together with the new example from Roman Dacia, the total number of known occurrences of this enigmatic name amounts to three, all in Latin.

Similar names starting with *zan-* can be traced to different linguistic areas without providing however much assistance in explaining the variant at hand: a) the peculiar name *Závatoς*, attested at *Beroia* in Macedonia (I.Beroia 134, line 23, from 118 BC) (*LGPN* IV 141) and at Beit Nattif (Pella/Betholetepha) in Judaea (IEJ 61 [2011] 210); b) the Illyrian name *Zanatis*, with three occurrences: twice in Dalmatia (CIL III 14620 and ILug I 106); and a sailor from Ravenna, *Murcius Zanatis* (CIL XI 111); c) the Semitic name *Zanis*, attested at *Arrabona*, in Pannonia Superior (CIL III 4371 = RIU I 141), *decurio* of the *ala I Augusta Ituraeorum sagittariorum*; d) another Semitic name, *Zava* (feminine name), attested in Palaestina (SEG XXXVII 1489).

A further possibility is the Iranian origin of the name, given the Persian dialectal differentiation /x/, cf. *zanax* “chin”, from OP **zanaka*-¹⁶, but this is quite improbable. We may invoke the curious variant *Pharnax*, occurring instead of the well-attested *Pharnaces*/Φαρνάκης. Several instances can be reported: the freedman *A. Barbuius P(h)arnax* at *Aquileia* (CIL I 3411 = I.Aquileia I 3); a legionary [*U*]p(ius) *Pharnax* at *Viminacium*, in Moesia Superior (CIL III 8110 = IMS II 51). This interesting variant occurs twice in Roman Dacia: *C. Iulius Farnax*, Augustalis of the *municipium Aurelium Apulum* in 180 AD (CIL III 986 = IDR III.5 20); a legionary *Aur. Farnax* at *Potaissa* (CIL III 7688).

It is difficult to pass judgement regarding the origin of the name at this moment. At any rate, whether the name is Greek (with an expressive suffix)¹⁷ or Iranian, the soldier in question came most probably from a Hellenophone region, even from the Near East, being recruited and enlisted to a cohort garrisoned at Buciumi in Dacia Porolissensis, sometimes during the second century AD.

the name *Zanax* “seems not to be known anywhere else, which leaves the ethnic origin of his bearer in the dark”.

¹⁶ A. Pisowicz, *The Development of the Middle Persian System of Obstruents*, in: W. Sklamowski, A. van Tongerloo (eds.), *Middle Iranian Studies. Proceedings of the International Symposium organized by the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven from the 17th to the 20th of May 1982* (Orientalia Lovanensia Analecta 16), Leuven 1984, 21.

¹⁷ See L. Ruscu, *Die griechischen Namen in der Provinz Dakien*, *Acta Musei Napocensis* 35 (1998) 147–186.

This military graffito reveals thus the names of a new soldier and centurion in the fort at Buciumi, *Zanax* (a *miles* of peregrine status) and *Genialis*¹⁸. However, since the auxiliary unit is unnamed, it is impossible to decide between the *coh. II Augusta Nervia Pacensis Brittonum milliaria*, garrisoned at Buciumi since Hadrian's reign¹⁹, and other auxiliary units present probably temporarily at Buciumi, such as *coh. I Flavia Ulpia Hispanorum milliaria civium Romanorum equitata*²⁰ and *coh. I Brittonum milliaria Ulpia torquata equitata pia fidelis civium Romanorum*²¹, some of them mentioned on bronze labels (*tesserae militares*)²².

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¹⁸ Other inscriptions discovered so far at Buciumi: CIL III 842, 1633⁵ (= 8074^{22a}) and 7645; ILD 633–649 (among them, more *tesserae militares*, nos. 640–647); and more military diplomas: IDR I 12 (= RMD I 31 = ILD 6), 17 (CIL XVI 110 = RMD I 47 = ILD 7), 22 (= RMD I 65 = ILD 8); RMD II 116 (= ILD 42), 109 (= ILD 47).

¹⁹ C. C. Petolescu, *Auxilia Daciae. Contribuții la istoria militară a Daciei romane* [Auxilia Daciae. Contributions to the study of the military history of Roman Dacia], Bucharest 2002, 90–91 (no. 26); O. Țentea, F. Matei-Popescu, *Alae et Cohortes Daciae et Moesiae. A Review and Updating of J. Spaul's Ala² and Cohors²*, Acta Musei Napocensis 39–40 (2002–2003) 277.

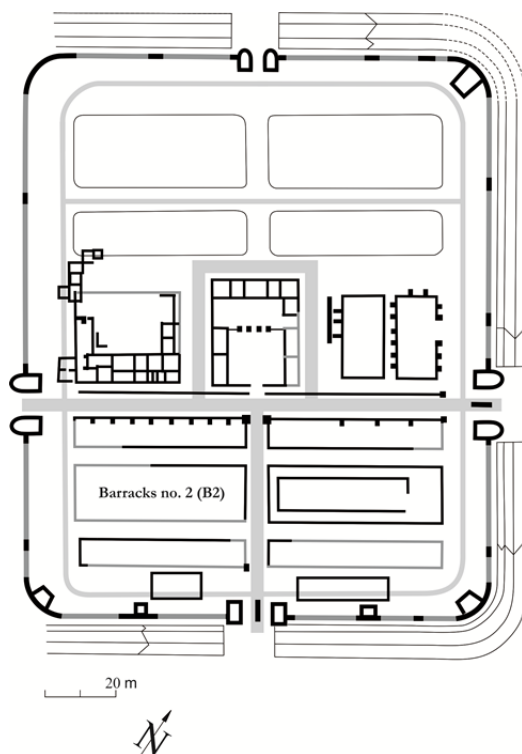
²⁰ ILD 640, 644, 646 (*tesserae militares*); Petolescu, *Auxilia Daciae* (n. 19) 111–112 (no. 45).

²¹ Petolescu, *Auxilia Daciae* (n. 19) 87–88 (no. 23); Țentea, Matei-Popescu, *Alae et Cohortes Daciae et Moesiae* (n. 19) 275.

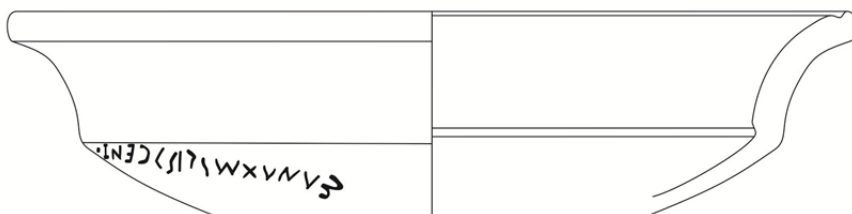
²² N. Gudea, *Despre câteva donaria și aplici-disc cu inscripție din Dacia* [Comments on some donaria and disc-appliques with inscription from Dacia], Acta Musei Porolissensis 6 (1982) 51–57.



zu R. Ast, R. S. Bagnall, S. 4, Fig. 4: The dipinto



zu D. Dana, D. Petruț, S. 19, Fig. 1: Plan of the auxiliary fort at Buciumi



	FVLVIV	S	IVLIAN	u	s
10	AVRELIV	S	ZANA		
	OTACILIV	S	FELI		x
	FLAVIV	S	PHILIP	pu	s
	IVLIV	S	FORTVN	atu	s
	AVRELIV	S	MAXIM	u	s

Fig. 2: The vessel with the graffito

Fig. 3: Drawing of the vessel with the graffito

Fig. 4: CIL VI 32923 (detail)

zu D. Dana, D. Petruț, S. 19 und 23