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XXXIV–XXXV

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MEDIEVAL *STILI* FROM ROMANIA*

ADRIAN ANDREI RUSU

Keywords: writing, writing tools, *stilus*, Middle Ages, Romania

Cuvinte cheie: scriere, instrumente de scris, *stilus*, Ev Mediu, România

A number of theories exist about how people in the medieval times wrote however, very few practicalities are actually known. One of the instruments which lived on from the Antiquity was the stilus with which writing on wax tablets was performed. Its use was indirectly proven through the existence of the numerous graffiti found in churches. Then, an inventory of the artefacts found during archaeological excavations is presented which partially have not even been identified as such, from: Vințu de Jos (Alba County), Alba Iulia, Oradea – bone, Târgu Mureș – bronze, Frumușeni (Arad County), Sibiu, Codlea (Brașov County), Remetea (Caraș-Severin County), Baia (Suceava County), Bârlad (Vaslui County) – iron. All these are discussed together with their chronological determination and analogies from the other parts of Europe.

Towards the end of the middle Ages, the ‘perfect’ humanist king Matthias was surrounded by illiterate barons.¹ This information comes from a chronicle, which could immediately be exploited by historians. Nevertheless, it would be a great mistake to apply such an indicator to the whole society of the king’s time, coming from the Hunyadi dynasty. Writing had never disappeared from the circles of the society’s elites. Alongside the same source, in other chapters of culture history, the reluctance of reading and writing of laymen was equally emphasized. It has been written that ecclesiastical institutions held monopoly over intellectual activities.² Besides, the mendicant monasteries,³ schools, fairs⁴ and towns had also used it.

The materialized and preserved writing testifies this, through cursive and faster forms, although less calligraphic. Then, with the introduction of Arabic

numbers instead of the Latin ones, the break in using Latin and entering the premodern world had started, using other rules in communication. Who and how people used writing and reading, except patrimonial law and justice, remained largely a question of logic and numerous presumptions. The truth is that medieval men knew the importance of written culture, and they respected it as such, and even though they did not practice it on a personal level, they did not remove the people, who operated it.

Public bureaucracy was built gradually, shifting from royal chancellery, convent forums and chapters. Judgment seats, administrative and territorial units (counties and seats) started retaining written evidence, where lay noblemen constituted the majority. In urban environment, from which we have the most information concerning schools, we can rely on accidental historic information, which leaves us with the opportunity for a more nuanced interpretation. In 1457 the doors of the parish church in Sibiu contained paper messages, addressed to all (*cedulam in papiro scriptam quam ad valvas ecclesie*).⁵ It was clear that such a type of communication was accounted as successful. The news was to be reaffirmed even

* This work was made possible through the financial support of a grant of the Romanian National Authority for Scientific Research, CNCS – UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-RU-TE-2012-3-0477.

¹ Engel 2006, 339.

² Jakó 1956a, 81–102. The study is old, a revision is needed, but it accentuates the *results* of writing and the *actual tools*.

³ Satu Mare, Baia Mare, Coșeu, Cluj, Târgu Mureș, Oradea, Ineu, Sibiu: Romhányi 1996, 35–38.

⁴ An example at Tășnad. See: Valter 1996, 62–63.

⁵ Urkundenbuch V, nr. 3062, 3063.

after centuries: the German society (Saxon) from Transylvania was probably in the forefront among users of reading and writing.

Even earlier, then the middle of the 15th century, nobles had used their own clerks (notary, proto-notary, clerks) that could be doubled or not by religious personnel (priests-chaplains for private service, confessors, deacons, scribes). They were destined for understanding, interpreting and archiving the documents containing the privileges, to sustain the private correspondence, to record the genealogy and keep the inventory of the assets. For the practice of writing the costs were supported by the lords.

*

The archaeology of intellectual life always relied on very few, non-perishable elements. Even less were analytically collected and grouped.⁶ Particularly, writing had harsh fate due to similar operations. Its tools are frequently repeated but in the same time rarely are identified.⁷ It is still the research season, when contemporary art historians think they could 'read' from a medieval painting that they were writing on paper with a *stilus*,⁸ and not with a quill or a pen.

Alongside the perishable quills, we wanted to allude to the fact that one part of the metal cornets, from bronze sheets, could come from paintbrushes,⁹ from which, at least a few could have been used for writing. To finish the history of metal writing tools, it is worth retaining that in the 16th century the first metal pens appeared together with inks.¹⁰ These, almost certainly, had evolved from the metal cornets of the paintbrushes. Iconography reveals the usefulness of certain special knives, with a more fragile structure and well-sharpened blades, which were used for scraping/erasing of mistakes on parchment. Neither are inkpots named or identified but only later by written sources, and archaeologically any kind of small container or vessel, made from ceramic, bone or metal could have been used for this purpose but unfortunately, together with these a number of other purposes can be raised (toy vessels, vessels used for keeping salt or spices etc.). Extremely rare are the vessels that combine the ink containers and the place for inserting a source of light, like

open lamps or candlesticks.¹¹ Finally, the history of writing cannot be separated from the history of using eyeglasses.¹²

With the transition to epigraphic writing, having entirely different demands and specific tools, the existence of another type of writing, of generous material evidence should also be taken into discussion. Here, we refer to the frequent occurrence of medieval graffiti. Their impressive number, on medieval frescoes, has drawn attention as a chance for *ante quem* dating of the frescoes or even of the architectural ensemble, in which they can be found. As an outcome of ignorance of the graffiti's values, these were silently or even with disregard erased by restorers preoccupied only with the reconstruction of frescoes. It could not be a more unfortunate clearance of historic evidence, some at the expense of others.

The inscriptions on the walls are of different types. It can be clearly seen that some of them are fine and neatly drawn, in a way which betrays the familiarization of their authors not only with writing but also with the technique of scratching. It can be excluded that the finest inscriptions were made with simple knives. The pinch of a knife often produces unwanted gouges at the curve or breaking of letters, and hinders the fluency because it should be twined radically to produce the desired lines. Furthermore, the dimensions of incised inscriptions is so small that it is close to the type of writing found on other materials, thus contradicts its execution with a simple knife blade tip. One can conclude that such inscriptions were produced with precise tips and not blade tips. The easiest is to presume that this tip-tool could be a simple nail. A nail could have been handy as well, but it was not always suitable for writing. From scholarship dealing with the history of writing one finds out that in the coffer of clerks various type of tips could be found, from lead or iron, awls as well as compasses intended to ensure the marking or measurement for drawing aesthetic text frames. In order to be easier held between the fingers and to be handled with safety, the 'nail' or the tip needed a new form, which transformed it in a tool meant for scratched writing that was a *stilus*.¹³ Thus, one should remember that we have

⁶ An interesting exception, although poorly illustrated, is the exhibition catalogue: Magyar iskola 1996.

⁷ For example, see the classic works: Jakó 1956b, 183–184; Jakó – Manolescu 1971, 43–45.

⁸ Jenei 2013, 27, 41.

⁹ Rusu 2002, 92.

¹⁰ Vándor 2002a, 79; Vándor 2002b, 136, cat. 92–93.

¹¹ The only complete piece, which we know can be seen in the exhibition at the Târgu Neamț Museum (15th and 16th? centuries)

¹² A humble start, taken from written sources (1546), see: Strătuțescu – Rusu 2012.

¹³ About the use of *stili* on hard materials, besides wax tablets see: Ginalska 2003, 381.

a significant number of inscriptions on the walls of historic monuments, which can be considered products of special writing tools.

Based on Roman finds the most frequent writing tools from the archaeological inventory were the bronze, iron or bone *stili*. About the ones made from wood has not been written, although theoretically, it would've been the easiest to make by adding a metal needle to a handle. These cannot be recognized undoubtedly but only in the presence of supports for the 'scratched' writing, which are the so-called wax tablets. In the Apuseni Mountains a few wax tablets were preserved, which supplement the history of writing in Roman Dacia.¹⁴ Although mentioned, some of the diptychs (= book covers or other elements, for religious use) were recorded only for their exterior decoration, without mentioning that their interiors were designed for waxed fields, which subsequently deteriorated or were simply thrown away for not having any artistic value. In our historiography, discussions concentrated only on the tools, while it was known that any clergyman or clerk *should have had* wax tablets, and they were also used in schools and correspondence.¹⁵ Real provincial data on the post Roman *stili* are of a very late date.¹⁶ The situation is different in Europe, where writing on waxed surfaces is well documented, including through iconographic representations that start with the 12th century.¹⁷ One of the most relevant images of writing on medieval wax tablet can be found on the Oltenberg altar in Darmstadt, dated around 1425.¹⁸

The above described motivations forced us to diligently cover the tools used for writing. As a consolation, this is also how things went in the research of the Roman period. From here, we have the first methodological warning. As I have mentioned before, the immeasurable delay of medieval archaeological studies lead, in the case of Alba Iulia, to the *automatic* classification of all the finds of such tools or which *seemed* to resemble these, as the Roman heritage of Apulum.¹⁹ In the lack of careful reading of these

pages it can easily happen that this phenomenon lives on.

Regarding Middle Ages, to find an identic writing tool in Romania looked almost impossible. In fact, it is not more than a simple orientation problem of the research. Due to the various possibilities of production from different materials, one should not expect to find writing tools *exactly identical but made from different materials*. For example, only in the case of some of the bronze rods/holders small terminal holes were found, sometimes supplemented/associated or not with clamping rings²⁰ which continued with fragments of chains.²¹ These are the only indication that in this way they could have been tied to writing tablets. This is perfectly plausible for all *stili* since, these were probably made from perishable materials (from cloth to strings), thus avoiding their unexpected loss. It should first be set that writing tools made from silver,²² which belonged to prelates and aristocrats will have to be placed on a waiting list. Likewise, it seems that lead was also among the materials used for production.²³

Not long ago, in a preliminary introduction to these pages, I already drew attention to some *handles* or fragments of parts that could have been extracted from old writing tools, from Vințu de Jos (Alba County).²⁴ We can write it as an excuse that neither in Hungary the identification of such objects was successful from the beginning.²⁵ On a general level, in the case of bone artefacts, as it had been written the risk to confuse them with other tools is quite high, especially if only fragments are available: the tip can come from a nail, pricker or needle, and its other end could come from a medical or cosmetic tool.²⁶

Basically, with the typology fever, the writing tools for/in wax or other less durable materials, were already wilfully deconstructed in writing tips, fastening rods and heads for erasing.²⁷ As mentioned above, each production material

classified as a 'probe spatula', from bronze; 237/7.

²⁰ Lungershausen 2004, Taf. 20.

²¹ Krabath 2001, 666, Taf. 12/1–2; 667, Taf. 13/1, 3.

²² Sołton-Kościelecka 2005, 229.

²³ See a tip at: Bakay 2011, 351, fig. 1354. As we mentioned in the text, the metal tips could also be used for writing on paper or parchment.

²⁴ Rusu – Mărginean 2005, 128.

²⁵ See: Czeglédý 1988, 68, fig. 47/d (although fragmentary and unfit for sewing, were identified as 'needles').

²⁶ Krabath 2001, 231; Bitterli-Waldvogel 2006, 130. A medical tool from bone, 16th century, also see: Vándor 2002b, 189 cat. 240.

²⁷ One of the first typologies was made by Medvedev 1960, 76–78.

¹⁴ Among the latest studies, Voloșciuc 2007, 60–61, with older bibliography.

¹⁵ Jakó – Manolescu 1971, 34. As illustration, a corpus of tablets taken over from a German environment from outside Transylvania, was used (p. 52, fig. 15).

¹⁶ Teutsch 1928, 230.

¹⁷ Sołton-Kościelecka 2005, 225–228, illustration at p. 228, fig. 3.

¹⁸ Image replicated by Mellinkoff 1993, III 79.

¹⁹ Ciugudean 1997; Bounegru – Bodog 2012, 88–89; Marcu-Istrate 2009, 25 – the piece that interests us was

enables the execution of compositional variations that cannot be found in others. For such reason we have to discuss them combined by classes of forms, with different basis.

The first actual metal finds from Romania were only recently identified. These were made from bronze and belonged to the 14th century material of the Franciscan friary from Târgu Mureș.²⁸ Concerning their place of production only suggestions were put forward, admitting that a more simple one was probably a local production while the other one had unknown origins (Fig. 1/b-c).²⁹ Since these are described in a catalogue we shall not repeat it. Still, the one categorized as 'local' (Fig. 1/b) has features that urges us to reconsider its interpretation. The tip is very carelessly treated, while its other end is much widened and sharpened, like a real knife blade. For these reasons, we consider that this could have belonged to another monastic tool but not to a writing tool. More can be written about the second find (Fig. 1/c). The piece is definitely the most elegant writing tool found in present day Romania. At the level of the Hungarian Kingdom, analogies are almost impossible to find, because of the lack of finds.³⁰ The treatment of the handle of the imported *stilus* has very good analogies in Lübeck (Germany).³¹ Typologically, it is similar to the 2nd form, set by Klara Sołton-Kościelecka's analysis.³² However, its opposed end imitates a type of execution, in which the long handle, made from different material, was provided with a short needle, usually made from iron. Such ending shapes can be found on other pieces that do not have similar tips.³³

From all that we know, even on a European level, not much can be written about centers that could have produced bronze *stili* in large series, which then, could geographically spread out. One can rather think of the local workshops on which the task fell to supply the bishoprics with bells and liturgical inventory of all kinds. After the 14th century, such products were most certainly undertaken also by craftsmen from towns.

A few years ago, in Sibiu an iron object was unearthed by the team of Daniela Marcu-Istrate, which as many times as it had been published,



Fig. 1: a. *stilus* from Oradea (bone); b. presumed *stilus* from Târgu Mureș (bronze); c. *stilus* from Târgu Mureș (bronze)

was considered to be a 'hairpin'.³⁴ So that the discussion can be better understood, besides images (Fig. 2/b), we should give a short description of the object. It is a tiny iron object with the appearance of a nail, but twisted in the middle, and the opposite end of the tip is fitted with a transversal flattening in the shape of a small chisel. The easiest way to identify the function of the object would be to use it on a modern day coiffure. Certainly only in imagination, because in reality the central twist of the pin would only entwine in the hair strands and would not hold a hairdo.

The mistaken classification of the object could originate from the fact that other similar pieces were not identified by other author-archaeologists. However, as it can be read in the publication about the find from Sibiu, no analogies were identified nor were earlier works used for its correct identification. This means that sadly neither was the general local literature mastered. In the following we shall present the published group to which this piece belongs to.

At the earth fortress in Bârlad (Vaslui County) another tool (Fig. 2/c) was presumed to be a fishing hook.³⁵ The opposed end of the tip was actually decorated with two or three groups of small transversal incisions, which must have been too redundant for a simple fishing hook. The possibilities that the two extremities of the rod were in an altered state as a result of an accident

²⁸ Soós 2011, 321, 324, 325 (catalogue), 333, pl. 1/3-4.

²⁹ Soós 2011, 324.

³⁰ For example, from the Benedictine abbey at Somogyvár only one tip was identified as coming from a *stilus*. See: Bakay 2011, 351, fig. 1352.

³¹ Lüdecke – Drenkhahn 2002, 65, Abb. 2/3.

³² Sołton-Kościelecka 2005, 231.

³³ Krüger 2002, pl. 10/2.

³⁴ Marcu-Istrate 2007, 82-83; Crângaci-Țiplic 2007, 105, fig. 146; 146, nr. 75, 279, pl. 55/22; 283, pl. 59/22.

³⁵ Matei – Chițescu 2002, pl. 44/2.

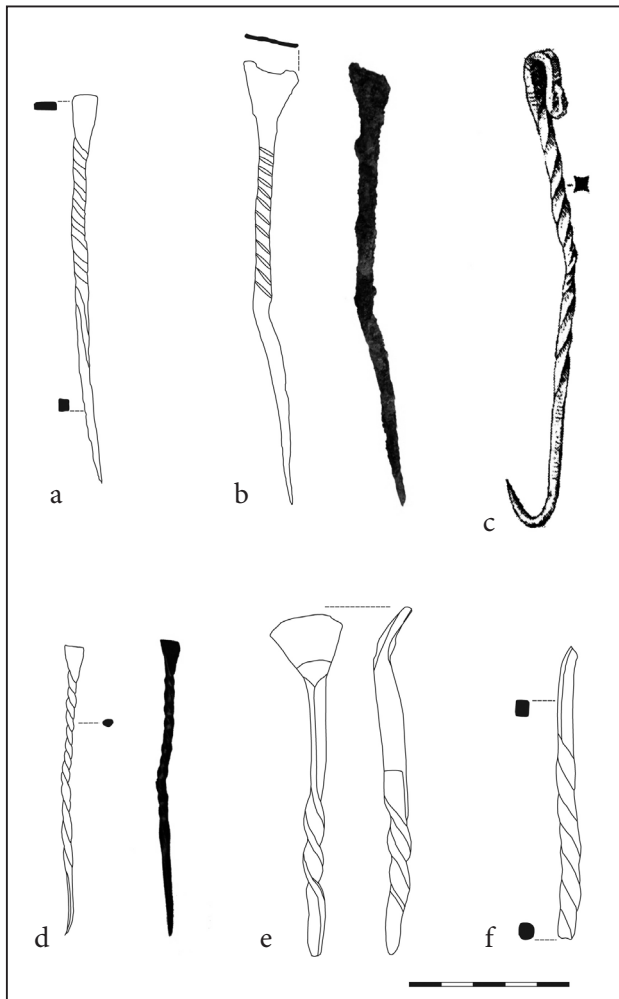


Fig. 2: a. *stilus* from Remetea-Berzovia (iron); b. *stilus* from Alba-Iulia (iron); c. the find from Bârlad (iron); d. *stilus* from Frumușeni (iron); e-f. finds from Codlea (iron)

or because of staying in the ground, were not taken into account. A similar object, discussed in another publication by a different author, due to the author's ignorance was never identified. It was found in the ruins of the manor house from Remetea (Berzovia) (Caraș-Severin County), and dated to the 14th century (Fig. 2/a).³⁶ Recently, the same object was associated with finds from the fortress of Carașova, and were published as 'hackle needles'.³⁷ The ones from Carașova besides having an angular section, they do not have heads with ears to confirm their utility. In Hungarian historiography such an object, discovered at Buda, was considered to be a possible dressing tool and dated to the end of the 15th and the beginning of the 16th century.³⁸ The identity of all these finds must be restored in favor of writing tools.

³⁶ Țicu 1998, 264, fig. 102/4.

³⁷ Oța et al. 2011, 88, footnote 37.

³⁸ Magyar iskola 1996, 227–228 (without illustration); Paloták 2011, 56, I.6.32.

Chance had brought in the way of archaeological research at the Bizere monastery (Frumușeni, Arad County) another similar object. It was found in 2008, and the result can be seen on the following image (Fig. 2/d). It is an iron object of 12,5 cm length, at one end a small trapezoidal widening can be seen, with a sharp tip and a central twisted part. It was clear that the to identify the object did not require finding general similarities with 'something' better known but lay in its special features, such as the small 'chisel' at its end. The twisted central part of the object excludes it from the family of 'nails' but it has to be noted that it was almost impossible to bash in and a socket was needed for a better grip. Therefore, it becomes evident that it was a 'tool' that could not be inserted anywhere only superficially. The grip could have been obtained directly from the metal but it could also have been aided with a piece of cloth or skin wrapped around it. In a perfectly similar situation can the handles of razors be found.³⁹ The same must have happened in the case of incendiary arrows, where the twist was meant to hold the burning wisp during flight. The authors from Moldova were not greatly mistaken, in putting forward the presumption that these were dressing tools. Those also needed a very good socket. The opposed end of the tip, could have been modelled as a small spoon. It can well be compared to medical tools, which remained unchanged since the Roman period until the middle Ages.⁴⁰ All types discussed here have Type 3 heads (according to Klara Sołton-Kościelecka)⁴¹ and are slightly misaligned so that smoothing the wax on the tablets was more easily done.

We also have the opportunity to add unpublished finds to the repertoire. First, let us mention a find from years ago (1966–1968) from Codlea⁴² fortress. The object's length was 10,4 cm and had a small trapezoidal spatula (2,2 x 2 cm) at the end of the rod, and a part of it was twisted on approximately 4 cm. The tip was broken (Fig. 2/e). A second find exists as well, which seems to be complete (L = 8,9 cm, with flattened head transversal on the axe, approximately oval 1,9 x 1,1 cm). The third find, is only a fragment (8,3 cm) with majority of its body twisted, it straightens to a sharp tip from a quadrilateral section,

³⁹ See: Mizgan 2002, 183, 186–187.

⁴⁰ See as well: Gilchrist 2012, 78, nr. 12923.

⁴¹ Sołton-Kościelecka 2005, 231.

⁴² The excavation of Florea Costea. Non-inventoried finds, to which I had access in the Brașov Historical County Museum.

while its opposed end had a circular section (Fig. 2/f). The iron on both ends of the *stilus* was exposed to heavy corrosion. For such reason, caution in handling the central parts could be explained. Another piece comes from the Kladruby monastery (Czech Republic).⁴³

In the middle of this tool classification one can find an iron object from Baia (Suceava County).⁴⁴ Although it has a twisted center, its ends indicate another special group of objects. Even though it resembles a medical tool (*spatula*) it has to be mentioned that such tools were finely made from bronze or bone, just as in the Roman period, and was probably known that in this way after surgical interventions infection was more easily avoided. Finally, we mention a find from Enisala fortress, which was anything else but a 'drill' as it had been published.⁴⁵

Going even further, specialized literature helps us to safely delimitate the objects and the writing tools (*stili*). The analogies come from a part of Germany, which was never part of the Roman Empire, so that there is no ambiguity. These are finds coming from Lübeck.⁴⁶ 'Penholders' from iron were found at Novgorod (Russia) and dated to the 12th century⁴⁷ or the 14th century at Konstanz⁴⁸ (Switzerland). The similarities of some with the 'Romanian' finds are very striking, so that all doubt can be eliminated. Strikingly similar are the forms from iron dating as early as the 9th and 10th century, from the Czech Republic.⁴⁹ The iron finds from Berzovia, Frumușeni and Sibiu are identical with a find from Poznań⁵⁰ (Poland), with a dating for the 13th and 14th century. These are evidence that shows the persistence of the form throughout centuries. We found only one chronological classification, which evaluated the existence of *spatula*-shaped ends between the 8th and 14th centuries.⁵¹

Until recently, the existence of medieval *stili* made from bone was unimaginable, at least at Alba Iulia.⁵² Meanwhile, the fortress of Oradea provided such a 10,5 cm length piece (Fig. 1/a). The material used for its production has imposed certain differences compared to the ones made

from metal. The execution of the handle continued to facilitate an easy grip. Such decorations can still be found⁵³ but not at the scale of the pieces from Criș. From the small spatula for erasing only a small fragment was conserved. The bone pieces had the best rounding of the ends. For a more efficient use some of the bone sockets were equipped with iron tips from the beginning.⁵⁴ Probably the find from Oradea had such a tip, and it is one of the most beautiful bone objects found in our area of material culture.

We find ourselves in a situation, where we could reinterpret a large number of fragments, which have been identified as needles. At Sânmiclăuș (Alba County) a fragmentary needle was found without a clear dating, but based on the context the latest would be the 12th century.⁵⁵ Without any precise dating a tip was found at Alba Iulia (Apor Palace, Alba County).⁵⁶ Other such fragments come from Vornicenii Mari (Suceava County) interpreted as awl⁵⁷ and from Baia (Suceava County) dated to the 15th century.⁵⁸ Then, other finds from the Grădețului fortress (Mehedinți County) with a 13th century dating.⁵⁹ Another tip was found in the donjon of Dăbâca fortress (Cluj County) from the 13th and 14th centuries,⁶⁰ another one from Bârlad-Prodana (Vaslui County) dated to the 13th century and the middle of the 14th century.⁶¹ Chronologically, further finds come from Coconi (Călărași County)⁶² and Bacău (Bacău County).⁶³ Such sharp tips could theoretically come from writing tools from Râșnov⁶⁴ (Brașov County) (14th and 15th century) and Șiria (Arad County) (16th century).⁶⁵

The broken bone finds preserved without their sharp end can be easily confused with other groups of objects, such as: comb tooth, buckle axes, hairpins, and handles for other tools with metal tips. Even in the case of complete tools it would be unwise to draw any conclusions on

⁴³ Nováček 2010, 125, fig. 125/33.

⁴⁴ Neamțu et al. 1984, 194, fig. 42/10.

⁴⁵ Dragomir 1972/1973, p. fig. 5/5, fig. 6/2.

⁴⁶ Lüdecke – Drenkhahn 2002, 65.

⁴⁷ Rybina 1992a, 165.

⁴⁸ Oberrhein 2001, 241, nr. 479b.

⁴⁹ Beranová – Lutovský 2009, 264, fig. 291.

⁵⁰ Sołton-Kościelecka 2002, 124, fig. 1/b.

⁵¹ Bitterli-Waldvogel 2006, 131.

⁵² Their supposition: Rusu – Rusu-Bolindeț 2007, 91.

⁵³ Krüger 2002, pl. 10/2.

⁵⁴ See: Rybina 1992b, 200, fig. VI. 2/6.

⁵⁵ Anghel – Blăjan 1977, 292, 293, fig. 6/5.

⁵⁶ Unpublished. Research by Adrian A. Rusu.

⁵⁷ Matei – Emandi 1982, 177, fig. 9/2.

⁵⁸ Neamțu et al. 1984, 9–95, 203, fig. 51/4.

⁵⁹ Davidescu 1978, 120, 122, pl. 2/4.

⁶⁰ Iambor 1984, 208, pl. IV/5.

⁶¹ Spinei 1982, fig. 41.

⁶² Constantinescu 1972, 79, 80/12–14.

⁶³ Artimon 1998, 219, fig. 39/10.

⁶⁴ Unpublished. Found in S 41, □4, -2,54 m, fragmentary state (L = 5 cm).

⁶⁵ Greffner 1976, 24.

the usage of the object⁶⁶ in situations, when the research does not dispose of a clear context.

The geographic dispersion of the finds in today's Romania is another valuable sign. One can find them being used in monasteries (Bizere, Frumușeni), in urban environment (Sibiu), and even in manor houses (Himfy, Berzovia) or fortresses (Codlea). Practically they are missing only from the rural environment but still, there are signs that letter writing was taking place with these.⁶⁷ In one case only, from Berzovia, the chance to link the find to the information concerning lay writing seems likely, directly to the ruling noble family.⁶⁸

After such detailed discussion we owe a few historic conclusions. Everyone that has dealt with the history of writing in Romania almost never had anything else to note on Latin writing, besides parchment and paper, then on hard and durable materials (medieval epigraphy). Medieval wax tablets were presumed to have existed in *schools* but they have never been seen just as they were not mentioned by written sources. All this, in the time when the Roman tablets had just been found in the abandoned mines of the Apuseni Mountains. If one really wants to find the medieval wax tablets, they can be found. One can see, for example, that in some cases they were bound together just as the sheets of a book.⁶⁹ These were used in a Slavic environment as well, such as Novgorod (Russia).⁷⁰ Suddenly, another form of writing of Roman origins found its lost place. The iron tools were *cheap* and easy to produce, and a smith could be found almost everywhere.

The problematic is still open for debate since the same sources that provided the analogies, inform us that independent 'erasers' existed, designed for wax tablets.⁷¹ Those did not resemble the 'hairpins' but more the 'spindle whorls'. We have opened another subject, also driven by the archaeological finds from Frumușeni, to which we promise to get back to in detail.

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⁶⁶ See the case of two finds in the form of decorated needles, but with different dimensions, discovered at Buda. See: Holl 2005, 64, Abb. 28/2–3.

⁶⁷ See the letter of Margareta Dóczy addressed to her *serfs* on her estate from Banat: Diplome 2014, 136–137.

⁶⁸ Popa-Gorjanu 2006, 63–69.

⁶⁹ Tremp et al. 2003, 101 (probably from the 15th century).

⁷⁰ We specify the ones from Novgorod: Rybina 1992a, 166.

⁷¹ 6th and 7th century Rome: Delogu et al. 2001, 407; 14th century Lübeck: Jaritz 1986, 172, Abb. 217.

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Fig. 1: a. *stilus* from Oradea (bone); b. *stilus* from Târgu Mureș (bronze); c. presumed *stilus* from Târgu Mureș (bronze)
Fig. 2: a. *stilus* from Remetea-Berzovia (iron); b. *stilus* from Alba-Iulia (iron); c. *stilus* from Frumușeni (iron); d. the find from Bârlad (iron); e-f. finds from Codlea (iron)

Rezumat

Despre cum anume scriau medievalii știm destule lucruri teoretice, însă foarte puține practice. Unul dintre instrumentele care și-au prelungit viața din Antichitate, respectiv acela cu care se scria pe tăblițe cerate, a fost *stilus*-ul. Se relevă că utilizarea sa este dovedită indirect prin numeroase *graffiti* din biserici. Urmează apoi un inventar al pieselor descoperite, însă în parte nici măcar identificate ca atare, de la Vințu de Jos (Alba), Alba Iulia, Oradea - os, Târgu Mureș - bronz, Frumușeni (Arad), Sibiu, Codlea (Brașov), Remetea (Caraș-Severin), Baia (Suceava), Bârlad (Vaslui) - fier, împreună cu încadrările și analogiile din restul Europei.

ABBREVIATIONS

Acta	Acta. Anuarul Muzeului Național Secuiesc și al Muzeului Secuiesc al Ciucului, Sf. Gheorghe
ActaAntPhilippo	Acta Antiqua Philippopolitana, Sophia
ActaArchHung	Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae, Budapest
ActaHistSzeged	Acta Historica. Acta Universitatis Scientiarum Szegediensis, Szeged
ActaMM	Acta Moldaviae Meridionalis, Vaslui
ActaMilMed	Acta Militaria Mediaevalia, Sanok
ActaMN	Acta Musei Napocensis, Cluj-Napoca
ActaMP	Acta Musei Porolissensis, Zalău
ActaSic	Acta Siculica, Sf. Gheorghe/Sepsiszentgyörgy
Aluta	Aluta, Sf. Gheorghe
AnB	Analele Banatului, Timișoara
Apulum	Apulum. Acta Musei Apulensis, Alba Iulia
ArbFberSächs	Arbeits- und Forschungsberichte zur sächsischen Bodendenkmalpflege, Dresden
ArchÉrt	Archaeologiai Értesítő, Budapest
ArchKözl	Archaeologiai Közlemények, Budapest
Aregia	Alba Regia. Annales Musei Stephani Regis, Székesfehérvár
Areopolisz	Areopolisz. Történelmi és társadalomtudományi tanulmányok, Székelyudvarhely
ArhMed	Arheologia Medievală, Cluj-Napoca
ArhMold	Arheologia Moldovei, București
Banatica	Banatica. Muzeul Banatului Montan, Reșița
BrukenthalAM	Brukenthal. Acta Musei, Sibiu
Carnuntum Jb	Carnuntum-Jahrbuch. Zeitschrift für Archäologie und Kulturgeschichte des Donaupraumes, Wien
Carpica	Carpica, Bacău
Castrum	Castrum. A Castrum Bene Egyesület Hírlevele, Budapest
CCA	Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România, București
CCDJ	Cultură și Civilizație la Dunărea de Jos, Călărași
CercArh	Cercetări arheologice, București
Colloquia	Colloquia: Journal of Central European History, Cluj-Napoca
CommArchHung	Communicationes Archaeologicae Hungaricae, Budapest
Corviniana	Corviniana, Hunedoara
Crisia	Crisia, Oradea
CsSzMÉ	A Csíki Székely Múzeum Évkönyve, Csíkszereda
Cumidava	Cumidava, Brașov
Dacia	Dacia. Revue d'Archéologie et d'Histoire Ancienne, Bucarest
Danubius	Danubius, Galați
DissArch	Dissertationes Archaeologicae ex Instituto Archaeologico Universitatis de Rolando Eötvös Nominatae, Budapest
Dolg	Dolgozatok az Erdélyi Nemzeti Múzeum Érem- és Régiségtárából, Kolozsvár
Drobeta	Drobeta, Drobeta-Turnu Severin
EL	Erdővidéki Lapok, Barót
EphNap	Ephemeris Napocensis, Cluj-Napoca
Emúz	Erdélyi Múzeum, Kolozsvár
FVL	Forschungen zur Volks- und Landeskunde, Sibiu/Hermannstadt
HOMÉ	A Hermann Ottó Múzeum Évkönyve, Miskolc
Istros	Istros. Muzeul Brăilei, Brăila

ABBREVIATIONS

JAMÉ	A Nyíregyházi Jósza András Múzeum Évkönyve, Nyíregyháza
JbRGZM	Jahrbuch des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums, Mainz
JromMilSt	Journal of Roman Military Equipment Studies
KHKM	Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej, Warszawa
Marisia	Marisia (V-). Studii și Materiale, Târgu Mureș
Marmatia	Marmatia, Muzeul Județean de Istorie și Arheologie Maramureș, Baia Mare
MatCercArh	Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice, București
MedArch	Medieval Archaeology, London
MemAnt	Memoria Antiquitatis. Acta Musei Petrodavensis, Piatra Neamț
MFMÉ	A Móra Ferenc Múzeum Évkönyve, Szeged
MIMK	A Molnár István Múzeum Közleményei, Székelykeresztúr
MNMAK	Magyar Nemzeti Múzeum Adattárának Közleményei, Budapest
OH	Opuscula Hungarica, Budapest
PRS	Proceedings of the Royal Society A: Mathematical, Physical & Engineering Sciences, London
PZ	Praehistorische Zeitschrift, Berlin
REA	Revue des études anciennes, Bordeaux
RMM-MIA	Revista Muzeelor și Monumentelor. Monumente istorice și de artă, București
RevBist	Revista Bistriței, Bistrița
Sargetia	Sargetia. Acta Musei Devensis, Deva
SCIV(A)	Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche (și Arheologie 1974–), București
SCN	Studii și Cercetări de Numismatică, București
SlovArch	Slovenská Archeológia, Bratislava
SMMIM	Studii și materiale de muzeografie și istorie militară, București
SSz	Soproni Szemle, Sopron
StCercIstorCluj	Studii și Cercetări de Istorie, Cluj
StComSM	Studii și Comunicări, Seria Arheologie, Satu Mare
StComSibiu	Studii și comunicări. Muzeul Brukenthal, Sibiu
StudUCH	Studia Universitatis Cibiniensis, Series Historica, Sibiu
StudUClujH	Studia Universitatis “Babeș-Bolyai” – Historia, Cluj-Napoca
Terra Sebus	Terra Sebus. Acta Musei Sabesiensis, Sebeș
Thraco-Dacica	Thraco-Dacica, București
UPA	Universitätsforschungen zur Prähistorischen Archäologie, Bonn
VAH	Varia Archaeologica Hungarica, Budapest
VjesAMuzZagreb	Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu, Zagreb
VMMK	A Veszprém Megyei Múzeumok Közleményei, Veszprém
VTT	Veszprémi Történelmi Társaság, Veszprém
WA	Wratislavia antiqua, Wrocław
WiadA	Wiadomości Archeologiczne. Bulletin archéologique polonais, Warszawa