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AUDOLLENTIANA

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Abstract: The archival bequest of Auguste Audolent, one of the most distinguished students of ancient *defixiones*, includes numerous drawings of North African curse tablets. His drawings are the only reliable sources for the shape and appearance of inscriptions that have been lost or have become illegible. *Defixiones* once owned by Audolent are now in the Musée Bargoin in Clermont-Ferrand. This study presents both groups of sources with one characteristic example from each.

Keywords: Audolent, *defixio*, lead container, Laelianus.

The archival bequest of Audolent

Auguste Audolent, one of the most distinguished scholars of ancient *defixiones*, died in 1943 in Clermont-Ferrand.¹ On 27 January 1972, his considerable written bequest was given to the Departmental Archive of Clermont-Ferrand (Archives Départementales du Puy-de-Dôme), where it is kept in Fond “19 J”.² Box Nr. 12 contains not only his notes and drawings that were made while he was working on his dissertation published in Latin in 1904³, together with the photos of some lead tablets, but also the drawings and/or photos of further *defixiones* published between 1905 and 1933. This material is of special significance, since most lead tablets have been either lost, or hidden, or have become

¹ I would like to thank the Archives Départementales du Puy-de-Dôme in Clermont-Ferrand for all due help and allowing me to publish the results. I would like to express my gratitude to the head of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Michel Amandry and his chief assistant, Mathilde Avisseau-Broustet, for allowing me to study the tablets in their collection and for giving me all the information they had in their records. I owe a debt of gratitude to Mme Chantal Lamesch, the conservateur of the Musée Bargoin, for her support of my research, and also to the mayor of Clermont-Ferrand, who consented to the publication of the photos taken from the finds, which are the property of the town. The photos of the container and of the Falernum *defixio* were taken by Marion Veschambre. This study forms part of OTKA [Hungarian Scientific Research Fund] programme no. K 81332 (Ancient magic, parallel researches: Curse tablets and magic gems), and the Zaragoza project titled Espacios de penumbra: Cartografía de la actividad magico-religiosa en el Occidente del Imperio romano (Ref. FFI 2008–01511 / FISO).

² For the bequest, see Németh 2011, 99–100.

³ Audolent 1904.

illegible due to corrosion.⁴ Audollent recorded the identification number (DTAud nr.) of the inscriptions from his book at the margin or on the back side of some of the drawings.⁵ This proved very useful, since besides outlining the contour of the tablet, which renders the exact measuring possible, Audollent usually copied occasional figural representations (demons, animals, human figures) on the tablets, but he merely marked the presence of inscriptions and of magic symbols (*charakteres*) with short lines, thus certain drawings offer only a few legible words, others none. He identified the photos only in certain cases, either by writing the DTAud number on the back side of the image, or by writing it onto a small slip of paper, which was partly put under the lead tablet, thus the photo itself includes the number as well (Fig. 8.). All these indicate that Audollent determined the exact position of individual inscriptions in his collection while he was processing the data. It took two years to match the unidentified inscriptions and photos with texts published in the *Defixionum Tabellae*. Identification was facilitated by particular words deciphered from certain drawings, the topic of the images (which Audollent always thoroughly described in his volume), and letters or words that remained legible on certain photos. The size of tablets could be used to confirm identification.⁶

Identifications rendered it possible to establish what tablets Audollent personally examined before publication, preparing a schematic drawing as well.⁷ It appeared that these items are North African *defixiones* without exception, mostly from Carthage (DTAud 215–262) and Hadrumetum (DTAud 263–304). However, his bequest does not contain the drawings of those Hadrumetum lamellae that he worked on several times recurrently (e.g. DTAud 276–285).⁸

I found only three drawings in Audollent's archival bequest that I could not match with any *defixio* of DTAud. One of these items, an inscription written in a *tabula ansata* in Latin alphabet on both sides is probably not a *defixio* but rather an amulet, the photo of which allows us to read significantly more than Audollent's drawing. The provenance of the amulet is unknown, yet by reason of the provenance of other items, it is presumably also from North Africa, more closely from Carthage or Hadrumetum.

⁴ See Németh 2011, 98–99.

⁵ I include the list at the end of the present study.

⁶ Audollent (1904) consistently recorded the size of each lamella, except for a few instances. On the basis of his drawings, these latter items measure as follows: DTAud 218: H. 0.07, W. 0.042; DTAud 222 A: H. 0.121, W. 0.09; DTAud 225: H. 0.0377, W. 0.029; DTAud 256: H. 0.079, W. 0.106.

⁷ In such cases, Audollent used the following formula in his publication: *legi et descripsi*. However, it does not mean that the drawing necessarily survived, since the description of e.g. DTAud 262 includes *legi et descripsi*, still, its drawing is not found in the bequest.

⁸ For more details, see Németh 2011.

Defixiones in the Musée Bargoin

Audollent did not only publish but also collected *defixiones*. He obviously acquired some items in North Africa, whereas others were sent to him for publication.⁹ These inscriptions are kept in Clermont-Ferrand either by the Musée Bargoin or by the Archive. In January 1972, Dominique Audollent, the son of the scholar bestowed 62 lead tablets of different physical condition upon the museum. A part of these items, especially the ones that had been rolled up, are so severely corroded that they are definitely unpublishable. Nevertheless, there are some (more or less) published lamellae that I would like to draw attention to. Two of these were found in the Fountain of Thousand Amphorae (Fontaine des milles amphores) in Carthage.¹⁰ Audollent dated these to the 2nd or 3rd c. AD. The two large, exceedingly thin lead lamellae were glued to a piece of brown paper, thus their back side cannot be examined. Inv. 72.1.275 contains a well-legible curse in Latin against the Falernian bath.¹¹ The bath, which its competitor tried to hamstring, was supposedly maintained by the waters of the Fountain of Thousand Amphorae (Fig. 1–3).¹²

ARTHU LAILAM SEMESEILAM AEËIOYÔ BACHUCH BAKAXICHUCH MENE
BACHUCH ABRASAX¹³ BAZABACHUCH MENE BAICHUCH ABRASAX *Domini dei
tenete detinete Falernas nequis illoc accedere possit obligate perobligate Falernaru(m) ba
lineu(m) ab hac die nequis homo illoc accedat.*¹⁴

ARTHU LAILAM SEMESEILAM AEËIOYÔ BACHUCH BAKAXICHUCH MENE
BACHUCH ABRASAX BAZABACHUCH MENE BAICHUCH ABRASAX, **Lord Gods**, re-
strain and hinder the Falernian baths, lest anyone should be able to approach that place; bind and
bind up the Falernian baths from this day, lest any person should approach that place.¹⁵

A fragmentary *defixio* in Greek (inv. 72.1.276) was used against a Carthaginian chariot racer named Strabonianus and his horses, in order to hinder their victory (Fig. 2).¹⁶

⁹ See Németh 2011, 99–100.

¹⁰ Inv. nr. 72.1.275 and 72.1.276. Inv. nr. 72.1.273 is problematic. On the basis of its size, I assume that this latter belongs to the same group of finds, though no writing can be traced on it.

¹¹ Measures 0.058 x 0.055 m.

¹² Gager 1992, 173–174

¹³ So far the spell is identical with a 4th c. AD curse tablet from Rome, which was prepared by a slave woman named Politoria against the leader of an ergastillon, Clodia Valeria Sophrone, see Gager 1992, 169–171.

¹⁴ Audollent 1933, 11.

¹⁵ English translation by Gager 1992, 174. Nr 82.

¹⁶ Audollent 1933, 4. SEG IX 838. Jordan 1985, Nr 119. Measures 0.13 x 0.17 m.

In the Musée Bargoin, there is also a lead container (height 0.08 m, diameter 0.05 m) from the collection of Dr. Louis Carton, leading archaeologist of the excavations in Carthage, whose widow gave the item (inv. 72.1.201) to Audollent.¹⁷ This fact leads us to the conclusion that the group of sources is from Carthage. The container contained a lead tablet broken into three parts (probably damaged when opened) and a 0.07 long, sharp bronze needle (Fig. 4–5.). The African mage obviously wrote down the inscription of the *defixio* with this needle.¹⁸ Accordingly, Dr. Carton’s bequest preserved a tool-kit of a wizard for us. The letters are rather blurred, yet the text seems to be written in Latin. A microscope could help to decipher considerable details of the writing. Nevertheless, Audollent published only the photo of the container but not the text of the *defixio*. Presumably, he could not make any sense of it, either. This find was unparalleled until a whole sequence of similar objects was excavated in 1999. The cave shrine of Anna Perenna was found in Rome, the fountain of which concealed 18 lead and 3 terracotta containers, which contained *defixiones* and 6 magic dolls of wax or flour. These items can be considered as the closest parallels of the magic container kept in the Musée Bargoin.¹⁹

DTAud 263

I found a well-preserved, perfectly legible lead lamella in an envelope among the documents of the archive (Fig. 6–7.). The lamella measures 0.039 x 0.043 m. The text of the 4-line inscription reads as follows:

*Laelianus
Saturninus
quos peperit
Aquila Satu-
rnina*

The *defixio*, which curses two sons of Aquilia Saturnina for unknown reason, is entirely identical with DTAud 263 in its text, and roughly the same in size as well.²⁰ According to Audollent, this inscription was found by General Paul Henri Goetschy in Hadrumentum, in the Roman cemetery that lies along the road towards Kairouan, and Goetschy donated the item to the Bibliothèque Nationale in 1903. The collection of the library made a list of *defixiones* from Hadrume-

¹⁷ Audollent 1933a, Plate II and III.

¹⁸ Audollent 1933a, 38. I could not find the needle in the collection of the Musée Bargoin.

¹⁹ See Piranomonte 2002; 2009; 2010. For the images of the containers, see Piranomonte 2010, Plate 9–11; 14–17; 20.

²⁰ Audollent determines its size as 0.035 x 0.045 m, see Audollent 1904, 362.

tum in 1906, yet DTAud 263 was not among them.²¹ Audollent probably forgot to send back the inscription to the Ministère de l'Instruction Publique, which lent him the whole sequence for publication. I found neither drawing nor photo of this lamella in Audollent's bequest. In his edition, he added the following remark: *Legit et descripsit Cagnat; una contulimus.*²² Cagnat did not publish DTAud 263 but sent his reading to Audollent in a letter.²³ I set forth my photo and drawing (both made in the archive) to present this enigmatic inscription to scholars of *defixiones*.

DTAud 259

The drawings and photos found in the archive do not merely produce a figurative manifestation of *defixiones* that had been known only in their texts. Sometimes they enable us to correct minor mistakes in Audollent's edition. I would like to present one example of this. A lead lamella (0.055 x 0.003 m), damaged at its bottom, was found in the cemetery of Carthage, presumably in the tomb of a magistrate of the imperial family. The tablet includes a peculiar illustration that Audollent interpreted as a sword or cross (Fig. 8–11.). In my view, the length of the horizontal hasta excludes the former option. According to Audollent's description, a dog or some other animal is depicted at the top of the vertical post (*ensis aut crux ita figuratur cum canis aut bestiae cuiusdam imagine in summa hasta*). The position of the animal is indicated by a lower case *x* on the rough sketch in the volume.

The drawing and the photo in the archive make it obvious that the letter *x* is ill-positioned on the sketch. The aforementioned beast is not sitting on the right side of the cross and within the arch but to the left of the cross, outside the arch, facing inwards. The photo also reveals that there is an owl-like creature placed on the right side of the horizontal hasta, yet it is not represented on the sketch. Traces of letters found on side B do not give us a meaningful text.²⁴ Anyway, the unfamiliar illustration and the lack of legible text queries interpretation of the lead tablet as a *defixio*. The item could well be an amulet. Today we have several examples for amulets written on lead tablets, which fact was not widely known or accepted in Audollent's time.²⁵

²¹ Németh 2011, 98.

²² For the details of the uncovering see Cagnat 1903, 264.

²³ Audollent 1904, 361.

²⁴ The identification of DTAud 259b on the back side of the drawing is incorrect. Audollent wrote 246. It is possible that the order of the items in the volume was not fixed yet when Audollent processed DTAud 259.

²⁵ Giannobile, Jordan 2006.

The complete edition of the drawings in the archive will be published in 2012 under the title *Supplementum Audollentianum*.

The list of photos identified by Audollent (DTAud)

215	232	245	255	273b
217	234	246b	256	274a
219	236	247	259	274b
220	237	248	260	293a
221	238	249	267	293b
223a	239	250a	271	294
225	242	250b	272a	304
226	243	251	272b	
229	244	252	273a	

The list of drawings identified by Audollent (DTAud)

218	239	249	259	293a
220	243	250a	261?	293b
221	244a	250b	271	294
223a	244b	251	272	299
226	245	252	273a	
232	246a	254	273b	
236?	246b	255	274a	
237?	247	256	274b	

Drawings erroneously identified by Audollent
246 (identical with drawing 259b)

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Subpictures

- Fig. 1. Musée Bargoin 72.1.275. Audollent's drawing
- Fig. 2. Musée Bargoin 72.1.275. Photo
- Fig. 3. Musée Bargoin 72.1.276. Audollent's drawing
- Fig. 4. The lead container and the three fragments of the *defixio*
- Fig. 5. The open lead container
- Fig. 6. The photo of DTAud 263
- Fig. 7. A DTAud 263. Drawing by György Németh
- Fig. 8. The photo of DTAud 259a
- Fig. 9. DTAud 259a. Audollent's drawing
- Fig. 10. Edition of DTAud 259
- Fig. 11. Drawing of DTAud 259b