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Cursing the *nomen*

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Very few *defixiones* have been found in Dacia so far.[1] The most significant find was the golden lamella from Dierna, which was first used as an amulet and later transformed into a curse tablet.[2] The new Latin *defixio* from a grave in Apulum is especially important in the history of magical practice in Dacia.

I. Discovery

A curse tablet (*tabella defixionis*) was discovered in 2007 during preventive excavations on the surface of the southern necropolis of Apulum, known today as Alba Iulia. The ancient Apulum includes two towns: the municipium/colonia Aurelia Apulensis and the municipium Septimium Apulensis, and a legionary fort. Up to now two extensive necropolises have been identified and two other possible burial areas were located along the important roads that connected this centre with the rest of the province[3]. In the southern necropolis, the first graves were discovered in 1898 by A. Cserni, the first custodian of the museum from Alba Iulia. Yet his discoveries remained unpublished. Systematical excavations were started in this necropolis in the sixth decade of the last century and the first discoveries were made in the second large necropolis, the northern one[4]. In practice, research campaigns are rare. Preventive excavations were conducted recently on the surface of the two necropolises due to the construction of some buildings in the respective areas.

Our research was carried out in the southern necropolis, approximately in its center (Martini Daniel estate) and focused on the archaeological discharge of the surface in view of constructing a building. On the bored surface 29 graves were discovered, 27 of which are of the Roman period (2nd–3rd centuries AD) and two belong to the early medieval period (according to the chronology of the Carpathian-Danubian area), 9th–11th centuries AD[5]. The Roman graves are mainly of inhumation, 20 in number, and belong to subjects from category infans I and II, juvens or maturus. Funerary inventory is poor; the majority of the graves have been plundered.

Out of the two graves discovered undisturbed, M27 draws our attention. This grave belongs to an adult. The pit has a rectangular shape with rounded corners, with dimensions of 1,80 × 0,80m, sinking up to 1,30m. The W-E axis gives the orientation of the pit, the deceased being deposited with the head to the west. The north side of the pit is affected by a subsequent intervention generated by an inhumation from the early Middle Ages (M29). The deceased was discovered deposited in dorsal decubitus, with the right arm laid on the abdomen and the left one bent over the right shoulder.

The only item of "funerary inventory" discovered is a curse tablet – *tabella defixionis*[6]. This artifact was found in the area of the pelvis, on the left side of the body. Its positioning suggests that it was hidden not beneath the body but under the clothes of the deceased.

II. The inscription

The tablet consists of a lead bar inscribed on both sides. It was discovered folded and in a precarious conservation state, the metal having been greatly corroded. This state has practically destroyed its characteris-

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[2] SEG 27. 415; with a more recent interpretation in SEG 53. 747.

[3] For territorial and chronological limitation of the necropolises see Bounegru 2011, 85–95.

[4] Protase 1959 and Protase 1960.

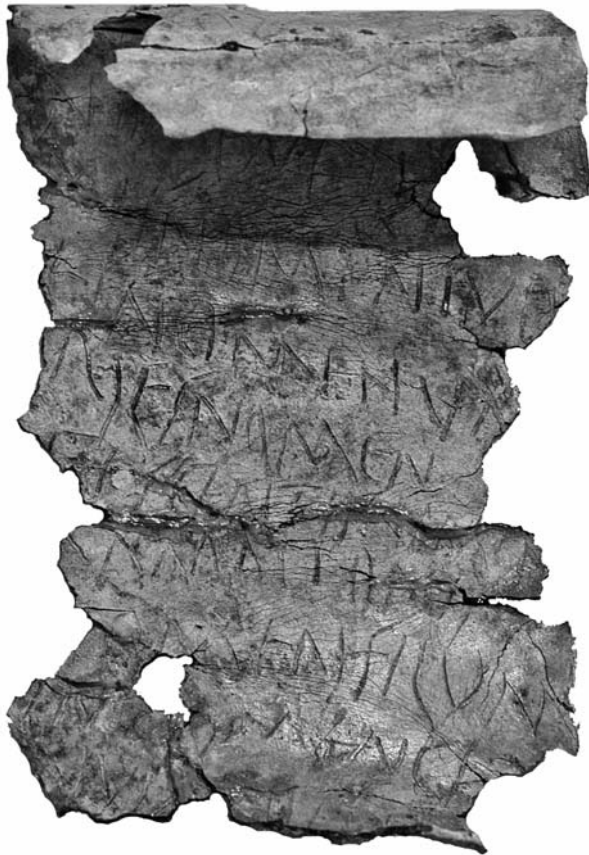[5] Moga et alii 2008, 29–31.

[6] DAU 2008, 145.

Plate 1

Plate 2

tic flexibility and did not allow unfolding or readjusting of the material by thermal treatment, only through mechanical straining[7].

Today the piece is preserved as a fragment with the following dimensions: length: 11cm and width 6cm (see plate 1 and 2):

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        [defigo ......... NO-]
        MEN MRRA
        NOMEN CLIAN-
        NES NOMEN IVLI-
        ES NOMEN VA[LE]-        5
        RIES NOMEN
        FVSCENTIS NOMEN
        [S]ARMATIONI[S]
        NOMEN FILOM-
        INI NOMEN CIRI-         10
        [..]V VIANVI..
        [.....    NOMEN] CLINI
        NOMEN FLAVIES
        IVLIES NOMEN AU-
        [RELI]ES NOMEN IVLI-    15
        ES NOMEN NAV-
        [I]NVI NOMEN
        [......] NOMEN
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[7] DAU 2008, 146.

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[.....] NOMEN VALER[I]-
[ES] NOMEN FILON-          20
[IS] NOMEN ...
[............ NOM]EN
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The structure of the inscription, which now consists of 22 lines, is very simple. Presumably, the complete text once began (or ended) with the cursing formula, e.g. *defigo*.[8] It is followed by the word *nomen*, then a name in genitive, with the same structure recurring throughout. The beginning and the end of the inscription are lost, so we do not know the reason for cursing these people, if indeed this reason had ever been specified by the inscription.

The names

MRRA: lin. 2. Marra(e) (?) The present form is obviously incomplete, since MRR is clearly visible on the inscription. The female cognomen Marra is attested in Gallia Narbonensis.[9]

Cliannes: lin. 3–4. The reading is uncertain; the form Cliannis is also conceivable. Not attested in other sources. For the genitive ending *-es*, see below.

Iulies: lin. 4–5. The name Iulia is common in Apulum.[10]

Valeries: lin. 5–6. The restored form Va[le]ria seems certain. The name is once more mentioned in ll. 19–20.

Fuscentis: lin. 7. The reading is certain. The name is not attested either in Apulum or elsewhere. In Apulum, the closest parallel is Fuscius Successus, but the *defixio* certainly does not read Fuscius.[11]

Sarmationis: lin. 8. The restored [S]armatio seems indisputable. The name is not known in Apulum but attested in Dalmatia.[12]

Filomini: lin. 9–10. The Latinized form of the Greek name Philoumenus is Philumenus but it was also used in the form Philomenus and Filumenus.[13]

CIRI.V VIANVI: lin. 10–11. The reading is uncertain: perhaps Ciriacus.[14] Only VIAN seems sure from the following word. Though we know a Vianeglus from Hispania and a Vianellius from Italy, neither reading is supported by the remaining traces of letters.[15] It was probably the name of a man and consisted of two parts: Ciriacus and Vian... Ciriacu supposedly stands for genitive Ciriaci.

Clini: lin. 12. The Latin form of Greek Kleinias is Clinias.[16] Clini stands for genitive Cliniae, since no letter was inscribed after *-i*.

Flavies Iulies: 13–14. Nine people called Iulia are attested in Apulum but none of them is identical with Flavia Iulia.[17]

Aurelies: lin. 14–15. The name Aurelia was common in the town.[18]

Iulies: lin. 15–16. The name Iulia is common in Apulum and it is mentioned in the inscription for the second time.

Navini: lin. 16–17. Several Navinii are known from from Italy.[19] Here we have the genitive of Navinus.

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[8] Cf. Kovács 2005–2006, 49–55.

[9] Marra: OPEL III 60, CIL XII 2688.

[10] Cf. IDR III, 5, 551.

[11] IDR 513.

[12] Philumenus and Filumenus: OPEL III 139. Philomenus: CIL X 5715; CIL XI 5715; ICUR VIII 23595; etc.

[13] Philumenus medicus, *De medicina*, versio Latina, 2, 116: *signa disinterciae passionis Filomini*; 3, 140: *De ciliacis Filomini*.

[14] OPEL II 58, referring to two occurrences, in ICUR there are six more items.

[15] OPEL IV 164.

[16] IDR III, 5, 542.

[17] IDR III, 5, 551.

[18] IDR III, 5, 549.

[19] OPEL III 96.

Filonis: lin. 20–21. Genitive form of the Greek Philon written with an F. Especially Filo is attested in many inscriptions.

The names on the inscription do not enable us to determine the social status these people.

Nomen on the curse tablets

Cursing the *nomen* (or the *onoma* on Greek tablets) is not unheard of. Even the *onomata* of horses are often cursed on Greek *defixiones* from North Africa.[20] Casting curse on the *nomen* is clearly understandable if we cannot exactly identify the thief we would like to punish:

> *Nomen / furis qui / latera // irqvet donat{u}/ur …*[21]
> *Nomen furis / [qu]i frenem involaverit / si l[i]ber si servus si baro / si mulier deo dona/tor.*[22]

Sometimes the sorcerer wants to delete the name of the cursed one:

> *Nomen delatum Naeviae L(uci) l(ibertae) Secunda(e) s{e}ive ea alio nomin<e> est.*[23]

In certain cases the curse is confined to uttering the *nomen* or the personal name:

> *Quinti nomen.*[24]
> *Pr[i]ssiae nom/en de/posi[tum].*[25]

It is more interesting, however, when the *nomen* is mentioned as almost equivalent with parts of the body, like head, heart or limbs:

> *Dis imferis vos rogo ut{e}i recipiates nomen / Luxsia(e!) A(uli) Antesti filia(e) caput cor co(n)s[i]lio(m) valetudine(m) / vita(m) membra omnia accedat morbo(s) cotid(i)e{a} et / s{e}i faciatis votum quod fac{c}io solva(m) vostris(!) meritis.*[26]

The Apulum *defixio* can be categorized along with the "*Quinti nomen*" or "*Prissiae nomen depositum*"-type of curses, since no trace of other magical elements are found in the inscription, except for a presumable cursing formula (e.g. *defigo, depono*).[27]

Female genitive ending *-es*

There are seven female names ending in genitive *-es*: Clianes, Iulies, Valeries, Flavies Iulies, Aurelies, Iulies, Valeries. The reading is certain in six cases (the ending of Valeries having broken off the inscription). This ending, supposedly generated as an analogy of Greek -ης, gained ground in the 1st–2nd centuries AD, and several examples have been revealed in Dacia and Pannonia.[28] The Dacian examples have been recently collected by E. Beu-Dachin:[29]

Nices   IDR III/1, 141
Getaes   IDR III/3, 15
Beronices   IDR III/5, 14

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[20] DTAud 234; 238; 239; 240.

[21] Kropp 2008, 3.2/15. Bath, 3rd cent. AD., AE 1982, 663. See Kropp 2008, 2.3.1/1, DTAud 122 = AE 1959, 30: *cu/ius [no]m[en] ignaro*; Kropp 2008, 3.2/81: *numen fur/ti si se[r]<v>us si l[ibe]r / si puer, si pue/lla …*

[22] Kropp 2008, 3.22/6; AE 1989, 486, Uley.

[23] Kropp 2008, 1.5.3/1; CIL X 1604 = ILS 8746.

[24] Kropp 2008, 5.1.5/12; Blänsdorf 2005, 23, Mainz.

[25] Kropp 2008, 4.1.3/9; CIL XIII 11340, 08, Trier.

[26] Kropp 2008, 2.2.2/1; AE 1993, 1008 = AE 1995, 770 = AE 1999, 894, Carmona (Hispania).

[27] For *depono*, see Blänsdorf 2005, 23, Mainz.

[28] The phenomenon is more common in Pannonia, where 17 examples have been attested. The origins and incidence of female genitive ending *-es* is thoroughly examined by Kovács 2001, 108–115. For the dating of the inscriptions and a possible Celtic origin of the phenomenon, see 111; 115.

[29] Beu-Dachin, E., *The Latin Language in the Inscriptions from Roman Dacia*, PhD Thesis, Abstract, Cluj-Napoca, 2011.

Superes   IDR III/5, 242; 349
S[co]/l(a)es   CIL 7631
Now we can supplement Beu-Dachin's list with seven new items.

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