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A CURSE TABLET FROM EMPORIAE (IRC III 175)

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## A CURSE TABLET FROM EMPORIAE (IRC III 175)

In 1946 a lead tablet (11.7 x 9 cm.) containing a list of names was found on the beach of the ancient Emporiae, modern Empuries or Ampurias. The letter forms suggested a date not later than 1st cent. B.C. After the *editio princeps* of 1947<sup>15</sup> it has been republished several times, but even so there are still some obscure points. The last and best edition of this text is that of G. Fabre, M. Mayer and I. Rodà, *Inscriptions Romaines de Catalogne. III Gerone* (Paris 1991) nr. 175, which will be the basis for the present paper. Their text (in capital letters and without punctuation marks) runs as follows:

VERANIO  
 PVPILIVS STABILION[IS]  
 POLINIDORVS  
 PHILARGVRVS SCAPI  
 5 SVRISCA ALEXAĒ  
 PAPVS  
 AMPHIO PARNACI[S]  
 ZODIA

<sup>11</sup> M. Chelotti et alii, *Le epigrafi romane di Canosa*, Bari 1985, n. 282 (SEG XXXV, 1026).

<sup>12</sup> SEG IX, 872. See also N. Duval, “L’épigraphie funéraire chrétienne d’Afrique”, in *La terza età dell’epigrafia*, ed. A. Donati, Faenza 1988, p. 291 (pl. 23).

<sup>13</sup> See L. Robert, *Hellenica II* (1946) p. 66; *Études anatoliennes*, Paris 1937, p. 556; *OMS I* pp. 560–561, etc.

<sup>14</sup> See E. Kalinka, *TAM II,1* (Wien 1920) pp. 2–3. In the lists of ecclesiastical dioceses the name Μάκρη appears in the 10th cent. (A. Kazhdam – C. F. W. Foss, *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, Oxford 1991, s.v. “Macre”).

<sup>15</sup> M. Almagro, “Plomos con inscripción del museo de Ampurias”, *Memorias de los museos arqueológicos provinciales* 8, 1947, 123.

NA OMNES QUEI  
10 INIMEICI SENECAE

The structure of this curse is among the most common in this kind of documents: a list of names followed by a formule which extends the curse to other persons not mentioned by name<sup>16</sup>. Fabre, Mayer and Roda consider the first name to be a dative, either of an unknown infernal deity or of the Latin family-name *Veranius*. In both cases the structure of the curse would be anomalous. In the first line we expect a nominative, and that is what we have, in this case the nominative of the Latin surname *Veranio*, *-onis*<sup>17</sup>.

The only textual problem lies in the second and third lines, the anomalies of which are only to be explained as the result of an erroneous reading. In fact, in the 1st cent. B.C. a name formed like *Pupilius Stabilion[is]* would have been very strange<sup>18</sup>. Clearly we should read *Pupilius Stabilio*, a correctly formed Latin name (a *nomen* followed by a *cognomen*). Only the final Ñ (not read by previous editors) causes some difficulty, but it can help us to interpret the awkward name *Polinidorus* found in the next line<sup>19</sup>. The ending *-dorus* tells us that we are dealing with a theophoric name, something which limits the possibilities of interpretation. The Latin transcriptions of Greek theophoric names from Ἀπόλλων may be formed with the stem *Apol(l)in-*, as we see in *Apolinius* for Ἀπολλώνιος (CIL II 2859) or in *Apollinides* for Ἀπολλωνίδης (CIL VI 29665)<sup>20</sup>. The Latinized form of Ἀπολλ(ω-ν)όδωρος, in consequence, should have been *Apollinidorus*, which is the form written in our tablet. Since there are no traces of other letters at the beginning of the line, the most simple solution is to interpret as an Æ the troublesome last letter of the second line. In consequence, I propose to read the following text:

Veranio,  
Pupilius Stabilio, Æ-  
polinidorus,  
Philargurus Scapi,  
5 Surisca Alexae,  
Papus,  
Amphio Parnaci[s],  
Zodia-  
na, omnes quei  
10 inimeici Senecae.

<sup>16</sup> See for example E. Kagarow, "Form und Stil der Texte der griechischen Fluchtafeln", *Arch. für Religionswissenschaft* 21, 1922, 494–497.

<sup>17</sup> Up to now only documented in an inscription from Remagen (CIL XIII 7803) known by a copy of the 16th century. Gómez Moreno (*apud* M. Almagro, *Las inscripciones ampuritanas griegas, ibéricas y latinas*, Barcelona 1952, nr. 113), read in our text *He[rm]io* instead of *Veranio*.

<sup>18</sup> Fabre, Mayer and Roda translate "Pupilius esclave de Stabilio" and think *Pupilius* to be a variant of *Pupillus*.

<sup>19</sup> The explanation proposed ("déformation de Polydorus?") is unlikely.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. I. Kajanto, *The Latin Cognomina*, Helsinki 1965, 53.

The most striking name in this list is *Zodiana* (8–9), which is not Latin and could hardly be Greek. According to the editors it is a “*hapax absolu*”, and it is certainly a difficult name. However, we can try to explain it. It is known that in late Latin the spellings *-z-* and *-di-* represented a very similar sound (something like [z] or [dz]), as we see in their interchangeable use: *oze* or *Azabenicus* (for *hodie* and *Adiabenicus*), *baptidio*, *exorcidio* (for βαπτίζω, ἐξορκίζω), *Sodion* (for Σώζων, ICUR I 633), etc.<sup>21</sup>. We can suppose, in consequence, that a name written *Zodiana* was pronounced [zozana] or [dzodzana]. This form can be interpreted as the Semitic name *Sosana* or *Susanna* (“Lily”)<sup>22</sup>, in which *z* and *di* transcribe the *sh*-sound, unknown in Latin, of the original name *shoshan*. The forms *Sosana* and *Susanna* are the product of a fixed and learned rule of transcription which mechanically transliterated the *shin* with an *s*, although these signs did not represent the same sound. According to this interpretation, *Zodiana* is an attempt of phonetic transcription made by an illiterate person who did not know about the traditional orthography of this foreign name<sup>23</sup>. One may object that the first certain cases of confusion between *z* and *di* are seen in the 2nd cent. A.D., but it should not be surprising to find an early example of the phenomenon in this kind of document.

The social status of the people listed cannot be established with certainty. If my position is correct, both the name as well the phonetics show that *Zodiana* was a Semitic woman. The easiest way of explaining her presence in Emporiae is to suppose that she was a Jewish or Syrian slave<sup>24</sup>. *Pupilius Stabilio* may have been a freeman. The rest of the people could have been slaves, as Fabre, Mayer and Roda think, and the genitives would correspond to the owners. The names *Papus*, *Phylargurus*, *Surisca* and *Amphio* can support this view, for within the Roman world they may have been good slave names. But the same thing could be said about the names of the supposed owners: *Scapus*<sup>25</sup>, *Alexa*<sup>26</sup> and *Parnaces*. Thus, it is also possible that some of these people were simply *peregrini* and not slaves, and that the genitives corresponded to the fathers.

<sup>21</sup> See V. Väänänen, *Introduction au latin vulgaire*, Paris 1967, 54; M. Leumann “Griechische Verben auf *-ίζειν* im Latein”, *Kleine Schriften*, Zürich 1959, esp. 166–168, etc. Also in late Greek there is a similar phenomenon (cf. Ζόδωρος for Διόδωρος), see F. Th. Gignac, *A Grammar of the Greek Papyri of the Roman and Byzantine Periods I*, Milan 1976, 75, etc. Examples from Greek Christian inscriptions collected by D. Feissel in *BCH* 105, 1981, 490.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Σωσαν (E. Littmann, *Greek and Latin Inscriptions. Southern Syria*, Leyden 1907, nr. 268), Σωσσηνη (CIJ I 637), Σοσανα (CIJ I 627), Σωσανες (ICUR IV 11044), *Sosanes* (ICUR II 6333), etc. The forms Σουσαννα and *Susanna* (used in the Greek *Septuaginta* and in the Latin *Vulgata*) are more frequent.

<sup>23</sup> Perhaps there is a similar case in a Greek Christian inscription from Jerusalem, *ZDPV* 44, 1921, 101 (nr. 148): Σουζανα.

<sup>24</sup> For the Jewish and Syrian slaves at this period, see H. Solin, “Juden und Syrer im westlichen Teil der römische Welt”, *ANRW* 29.2, 1983, 587–789, esp. 612–613.

<sup>25</sup> It is a Greek name of the family of Σκαφίας and Σκάφων, see F. Bechtel, *Die historischen Personennamen der Griechen*, Halle 1917, 602. The unaspirated form is also documented in Greek: Σκόπων (SEG VI 325).

<sup>26</sup> Of course, *Alexae* is the genitive of the masculin *Alexa*, Greek Ἀλεξᾶς, a shortened form of Ἀλέξανδρος.