ITO PATER, ERACURA AND THE MESSENGER

A PRELIMINARY REPORT ON A NEW CURSE TABLET FROM AQUINCUM[1]

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Abstract: This paper publishes a new curse tablet from Aquincum. While the letter-forms are well-preserved, the text requires interpretion through linguistic analysis aided by analogies with other curse tablets and literary sources.

Keywords: binding curse, lead tablet, letter in reply, infernal deities, Aquincum

1. External features

In the spring of 2015 in the course of the complex archaeological examination of the Eastern cemetery in Aquincum civil town, scratches turned into legible letters on the outer surface of one of two lead rolls which had not been studied previously. The multiple folded *laminae* were found back in 2000, among cremation graves dated to the 2nd and 3rd centuries. They were discovered in the same cemetery as the first Aquincum curse tablet (Aq-1)[2], within a distance of 150-200 m[3].
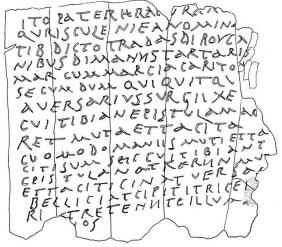
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[2] TitAq III 1436. Recently: Barta – Lassányi 2015.

[3] According to the documentation (inv. nr: 2032-2002 Budapest History Museum Archaeological Archives, Collection of Excavation Documentation), they were found in the southern part of section J7, four spits deep. For excavation report, see Zsidi 2001.

This paper is discussing only one of these two tablets, namely Aq-3 as a working title, while Aq-2 will be published in a future study.

The Aq-3 is a roughly rectangular lead tablet, its maximum size is 7.2 × 8.5 cm. After the text was scratched in, the tablet was folded four times starting from the left side. The letters are well-preserved as they were protected inside the roll. Only the bottom and the fifth, outermost part of the tablet were damaged. Some smaller pieces with a few letters on them were destroyed while it was underground.

1	ITOPATERHRACVRA[---]
2	QVRISCVLENIEANOMIN[Ạ]
3	TIB[-]DICTOTRADASDIROVCA
4	NIBVSDIMANIISTARTARIS
5	MARCVMMARCIACARITON
6	SECVMDVMQVIQVITQV[-]
7	AVERSARIVSSURGIIXE[---]
8	CVITIBIANEPISTVLAMAD[--]
9	RETMVTAETTACITA
10	CVOMODOMANIISMVTIETTA
11	CITISVMSEICCVITIBIANT
12	EPISTVLANATFERIINMV[Ṭ-]
13	ETTACITICINATVERSA[Ṣ--]
14	BELLICIATCIPITITRICE[Ṛ--]
15	RIETRETENIITCILLV[-Ạ--]
16	[-----Ị]OS

The 16-line text must be the work of a trained literate or scribe, it forms a general impression of *papyri* written in capital letters[4]. The letters P, T, R owe their strongly marked features to their vertical leg ending in a right serif. The same can be seen in the letter B. The letter C has two *articuli*, the first one tends downwards to the right, and the second one (starting from the same point as the first) is a small horizontal line above[5]. The letter G resembles a C, but a small bent vertical line is added to the lower end. The letter D may have derived from a cursive form. The right *articulus* is less rounded than the left one. On the one hand, the cursive letter F resembling a K is attested in many hand-written inscriptions from Aquincum[6], on the other hand, the characteristic A has not yet appeared[7]. The letter S looking like standing on a base-line is attested in *papyri* where this lower horizontal line usually tends from left to right[8].

On the basis of some unusual letterforms and meaningless series of letters it can be assumed that the tablet was copied from a draft and the scribe noticeably did not perform his work effectively. The cursive E made up by two vertical lines can be taken as such an unusual letter form, as can be the letters resembling a reversed N in lines 4 and 12 being fast-written variants of the same. In lines 13-16 many letters are doubtful or simply mistakenly written though they have well-marked outlines. In line 15 the word RETENETC (*retinete*) ends in a

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[4] Mallon 1952, 23-31.
[5] According to Fehér's classification, it agrees best with type d, dated to the Severan times (with tolerable uncertainty), Fehér 2013, 33-34.
[6] Fehér 2013, 38-39.
[7] Cf. Fehér 2013.
[8] Mallon 1952, 29.

C, not in an E. In line 13 CIN (*sint*) begins with a C, instead of an S which could be a semi-finished S or a Greek sigma. (Greek makes its influence felt on the very usage of the word *antepistula* and as well as on its Greek accusative ending *-an*, in lines 11-12.) The situation can be the same regarding the word ATCIPITI (*accipite*, line 14) where the word-ending -I can be a misinterpreted half E, while, indeed, we cannot exclude one of the most frequent vulgar Latin features namely the E-I confusion in unstressed position[9]. The word SVM (*sunt*, line 11) might have had originally an NT ligature, misinterpreted by the ordinator as M being the predicate to *manes*. Similarly, DIROV (line 3) is meant to be *diris* because of the following word *canibus* which is taken by *tradas*. This form can be explained either by the simultaneous misinterpretation of an unusually curved I of the draft and a V-like (or checkmark-like) cursive S, or by a Vulgar Latin mistake. In this latter case *diros canibus* could have been written in the draft which is a mix-case adjectival construction (attesting the decline of the declension system[10]) for which we can find numerous examples on inscriptions[11]. There may be different reasons why T is missing in the word ANEPISTVLAM (*antepistulam*, line 8) and in CIN (*sint*) mentioned above. In the first word it is a technical mistake, due to simple omission. In the latter, it may testify the instability of the word-ending *-t*[12]. The very end of our text is hardly understandable. The surface is injured, some letters have disappeared and we must assume a miswritten letter, too: the last fully legible letter is not similar to any of the alphabet used in this tablet.

2. People cursing and cursed

The text is formulaic, it consists of the typical elements of curse tablets. Similarly to Aq-1, it contains not only the names of the *defixi* but of the *defigens*, too.

In lines 5-6 there are four names: MARCVM MARCIA CARITON[--?] / SECVMDVM, most likely representing four persons. *Marcus* is one of the most common praenomina among Romans, but from the 2nd century on it was used as a cognomen also in Pannonia[13]. As a praenomen it could be used alone too as it can be seen on Aq-1: *Gaius Mutilius* (line 1) later in the text is referred

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[9] Herman 2000, 34.
[10] Herman 2000, 49-68.
[11] E.g.: RIU 889: „… ADIVTANTIBVS NEPOTES SVOS FILIES FILIOS GREGORIO ET LAVRENTIO FRATRES…”; AE 1963, 182: „… CVM FILIBVS SVVOS…”
[12] Herman 2000, 41.
[13] RIU 1187, 1191, 262 etc., from Aquincum only TitAq 900 *[Mar]cus*.

to just as *Gaius*, without any other names (lines 2, 5, 9). *Marcia* is a common female nomen gentile, it was also used as a cognomen from the 2nd century in both Pannonia and in Aquincum too[14]. The man's name of Greek origin, *Chariton* is not yet attested either in Aquincum, or in Pannonia. *Secundus* is a very common cognomen also in Aquincum.

The apparently asyntagmatic names standing beside each other must be the resumption of the sentences in line 2-3 (*Ea nomina tib[i] dicto, tradas dir⸢is⸣ canibus*), most likely as their objectival complements. They are lead up by the interjected, tension increaser invocation *Di Manes Tartaris*. There are more ways for listing names in Latin, so are there in curse tablets: they can be enumerated indirectly, used as nominative or accusative, not subordinate to any other sentence element[15] according to inscriptions; moreover, they can be subordinate, usually to the predicate as object or to the word *nomen* as genitive. Two of the four names are formally accusative (*Marcum*, *Secundum*), while the other two are nominatives. It could be such kind of inconsistency which can be observed on one of the Nomentum tablets (i.e. some nominative forms were inserted in the list of accusative case words). From another aspect, it can be explained by Vulgar Latin features too, namely, along with the two accusative forms *Marcia* is also an accusative without the unstable word-ending *-m*[16], while *Chariton* is not inflected since it is not a Latin but a foreign, Greek-origin name[17]. However, the most plausible reason why CARITON is formally nominative can be its line-ending position – the last letters may have disappeared in the course of time, turning the original correct case into a wrong one.

The names, moreover, bear marks of phonetic evolution and technical mistakes, too. Usually Greek *χ* was transcribed as *ch* in Latin, but because of the loss of the aspirated element often only a C was written in inscriptions[18] – this can be seen in the word CARITON. In SECVMDVM there is a mistakenly written M instead of N which was not a unique feature in similar positions (SECVMDINA, VENERAMDVM, CAMDIDA, and FVMDAMENTO).

The list of *defixi* is followed by a formula to insure the *defigens* against any more persons who may act threateningly: QVIQVITQV[-] / AVERSARIVS SVRGIIXE[---] / CVI TIBI ANEPISTVLAM AD[--]/RET. The first word

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[14] TitAq 512.

[15] „L'accusatif s'introduit à côté du nominatif dans las énumérations." Ernout – Thomas 1964, 24.

[16] Herman 2000, 39-40.

[17] Cf. CIL III 4804: DEO INVICTO MITRAS, CIL XII 987: Q. CAPRII HERMES (Hofmann – Szantyr 1965, 28.) Furthermore, *Charito/Chariton* was a common name according to inscriptions, and they do not seem difficult to be declined.

[18] Väänänen 1966, 55.

should have been *quicumque* normatively, in curse tablets generally used to denote unknown delinquent or enemy. The reason why not this form was used and how the other one was developed is still under examination. *Quicumque* together with *adversarius* appears twice in curses, both instances are from Pannonia: dfx 8.2/1 *quicumque adversarii sunt, omnes*, as well as Aq-2 (to be published soon), inner side, line 8-9: QVICVNQVA ATVERSARIVS / SVRGE-SERIT. The two words following the pronomen on the curse tablet at issue are misspelled. While the missing -*d*- in *adversarius*[19] is obvious, the fragmentary SVRGIIXE[---] raises several questions. The context of Aq-2 makes it evident that SVRGIIXE[---] is a misspelled and fragmentary variant of SVRGESERIT. Besides the cursive E marked with two vertical lines vulgar Latin phonetic evolution can be the clue for the sound marked with X and S respectively. The confusion of S and X is attested on many inscriptions, the reason for which was hesitation due to the general weakening of geminates and the reduction of the cluster *ks* into a simple *s*[20]. This form is a *hapax legomenon* (used in both of the new Aquincum curse tablets), but it is presumably either a hidden variant yet unknown or a newly built form of the verb *surgo*[21]. Further investigation is required to prove the exact way it was formed[22].

The *defixi* (or *quicumque adversarii*) are specified by a relative clause CVI TIBI ANEPISTVLAM AD[--]/RET expounding the possible threats to which the *defigens* may be submitted. The pronoun CVI must be regarded as a nominative case since the letters *qu* were often written as CV without any phonetic changes behind[23]. ANEPISTVLAM can be interpreted with the help of its repe-

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[19] The phrase mentioned in Aq-2 and the form ATVERSA[--] in line 13 of Aq-3 verify *a<d>versarius* (it has nothing to do with *aversus*, a very common word denoting the inverse circumstances of the world of magic).

[20] Herman 2000, 47-48.

[21] The nearest analogy is dfx 5.1.5/4: *Amentita surgat, amentita suas res agat. Quidquid surget, omnia interversum surgat*. In literary sources *surgo* was used to say 'to get up to speak, to give evidence': *peroravit aliquando, adsedit; surrexi ego* Cic., *Rosc. Am.* 59. *ad respondendum surrexi* Cic., *Clu.* 18.51. The usage of *adversarius* at the same time can attest that this curse was made because of a judicial procedure (Graf 1996, 91).

[22] It cannot be excluded that this form was created by more linguistic analogies simultaneously. For example, the remarkably similar perfectum of *gero/suggero* might have had an effect on it (*gesserit/suggesserit*), or maybe another perfectum, the one of the semantically similar *suggredior* could influence it (*suggressus erit* > **suggresserit*), or perhaps it was anaptyctically created following the perfectum forms of *spargo*, *mergo* (*surgsi* > **surgesi*); or it might be conceivable in the archaizing context of curse tablets that this irregular perfectum form goes back to an imperfectum *surgesso* by analogy of the types *peto – petesso, facio – facesso, capio – capesso*. At last, it should be examined whether it could originate from a metathesis, i.e. whether *surgexi/surgessi* could be created from the standard *surrexi*.

[23] Väänänen 1966, 54.

tition in line 11-12, this time without any misspelling. *Antepistula* is not attested in classical Latin, and there is only one single instance in Greek from the 4[th] century AD, meaning a 'letter in reply'[24]. The fragmentary AD[--]/RET can be completed by the same recurrent formula in line 11-12, again[25]. Although the tablet at the end of the line is broken there could be room for two more letters, so *ad[fe]ret* could be read here, too.

One of the main characteristics of the curse tablets is that they were regarded as letters to infernal deities, containing the names of persons to be cursed[26]. That is the reason why *antepistula* in the context of curse tablets is not so much a 'letter in reply' as it is a 'curse in reply, a counterspell'. The pronoun *tibi* can be the clue for this meaning: *tibi* refers to the deity addressed in this tablet, and the *antepistula* is another possible letter containing a curse in reply which might be sent to this deity by the enemies of the *defigens* of the curse tablet at issue.

Before defining this deity the *defigens* should be the last to be identified among the persons involved. The phrase ATVERSA[--] / BELLICI (lines 13-14) can refer to *Bellicus*[27], the person who ordered the curse. These two words follow a complete, meaningful phrase (to be discussed below), presumably they grammatically belong together in a possessive construction. The end of the word denoting the enemies is destroyed; the last legible letter might be an S. If it is so, disregarding the unique abusage of *adversa*, instead of *adversaria* the text would become incoherent, because among the enemies mentioned above only *Marcia* is a woman, the other three (*Marcus*, *Chariton* and *Secundus*) are

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[24] Liddell and Scott's Greek-English Lexicon mentions only the 4th century Church Father Epiphanius by name (ἀντεπιστολή). At the same time, the verb ἀντεπιστέλλω, is attested many times, at much earlier authors as well (Josephus Flavius, Aelius Aristides, Pausanias, Arrianus, Harpocration, Aelianus, Lucianus, Diogenes Laertios, Basilius Magnus).

[25] ATFEREN: Praeverbs were written etymologically in some archaic Latin sources, official documents and in the Augustan period (*inperium*, *conlega* etc.). Instead of using the assimilated forms they prefer those which were thought to be the original ones. So did they in many other cases by which practice wrong, mistaken word-forms were created. This kind of hypercorrection and sometimes pseudo-etymological dissimilation can be observed in words beginning with *ad-*: *atversarius*, *atvocatus*, even *atnis* (Leumann – Hofmann – Szantyr 1977, 200.) About the unstable word-ending -*t*, see Herman 2000, 41.

[26] dfx 3.22/36: *Charta, quae Mercurio donatur, ut manicilis, quae perierunt, ultionem requirat…*; dfx 3.22/3: *Commonitorium deo Mercurio a Saturnina muliere de linteamine, quod amisit.* For curses as letters to the underworld, see Graf 1996, 95.

[27] *Bellicus* is known as a cognomen in Pannonia: *Lucius Antistius Bellicus* is mentioned as the soldier of *legio II adiutrix* (RIU 514, 3rd c., Brigetio), on an inscription from Intercisa only a cognomen is mentioned (BELICVS, RIU 1248, first half 2nd c.). The fragmentary form from Aquincum is doubtful; maybe it is a nomen gentile *Bellicius* (BELLIC FIRMINO, TitAq 359).

men. If the following word ATCIPITI belongs to these two words then more letters should be missing to get a correct standard Latin sentence beside the misspellings. After emending the text is as follows: *aˈdˈversa<rio>[s] Bellici aˈccipitˈˈeˈ*.

3. The underworld powers invoked

Usually when using second person singular or plural in curse tablets, the deity or deities are named. The above-mentioned *tibi* can presuppose the same practice, in the first lines. For identifying them we must assume, beside the missing letters, some misspellings again.

When *Pater* is named in curses, generally *Dis Pater* is invoked. In this curse tablet Aq-3 *Ito* can be read before *Pater*, without any more letter fragments even in the beginning of the line, and it may partially correspond to Vulgar Latin changes. There are two inscriptions offered to 'DITO PATRI'. Furthermore, there are four instances for the vocative DITE of which three are used in curse tablets[28]. Relying upon these findings it is obvious that the classical adjective *dis* (*ditis*) used to have a variant o-stem form in Vulgar Latin[29]. On the tablet at issue none of these common forms appear, but a third one does. Tablet Aq-2 can prove it is not an accidental mistake or a misspell, because in line 3-4 the dative ITO PATR/I is used, in line 12 PATRI alone. So, perhaps here we can see a Vulgar Latin word compound by the analogies of *mulomedicus*, *vicomagister*[30] ('doctor of mules', 'master, guard of some streets' respectively, and

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[28] DITO PATRI: Aquincum, TitAq 49 and Sarmizegetusa AE 1908, 47. DITE: *Dite pater, Rhodine<m> tib{e}i commendo* (dfx 1.4.4/3, Rome, 1st c. BC), *Dite, inferi, ... recipite* (dfx 1.5.1/1, Campania, first half 1st c.), *Dite pater, Proserpina dia, Canes Orcini… vos precatur et petit, rogat vos …* (AE 2010, 109, Rome, 1st c.). And a stucco inscription from a columbarium in Rome: *Dite pater, Ceres, Cupido* (CIL VI 36769). According to the most plausible opinion, the vocative *Dite* is very similar to *Iuppiter* and *Marmar* from *Carmen Arvale*, i.e. the vocative of some deities corresponds to their root. Furthermore, it could be formed on the base of contamination of the 2nd declension, which can be attested by the 3rd declension vocatives of *Harpage* (Plaut., *Pseud.* 665) and *principe* (CIL VIII 17612) (Leumann – Hofmann – Szantyr 1963, 265-266.).

[29] It cannot be excluded that the variant **Ditus* was created because of the loaded usage of *Dis* (*dis*). Two of the main principles of lexical changes in vulgar Latin may be observed in this particular word: to a difficultly declinable word an easier one is preferred, while instead of a short word disposed towards homonymy usually a longer one was used (Herman 2000, 97-100.). Nevertheless, *dis* (*ditis*) used to have another three-ending variant: *dis – ditis – dite* (masc. Ter. *Ad*. 770; fem. Priap., 75, 2; neutr. Val. Fl. II 296) (Leumann – Hofmann – Szantyr 1977, 449.)

[30] Leumann – Hofmann – Szantyr 1977, 389–390.

Ditopater 'father of the underworld') [31]. The only disturbing element is the missing *d-* at the beginning of the word. Through palatalization the letter D could disappear from words beginning with *di* followed by a vowel[32], but in the present instance it is followed by a consonant (both in *Dis* and in *Dite / Dito*). This form (*Ito*) cannot be explained on linguistic grounds, there must be another reason which is going to be examined in the course of further studies.

Many times *Dis Pater* is invoked together with his wife, *Proserpina*. By analogies, HRA as a word-beginning can refer to the goddess *Aeracura* (written here as HRACVRA)[33]. According to the latest investigations, the goddess herself might be originally a Celtic chthonic deity, sometimes depicted with symbols of fertility, and treated as the goddess of the underworld besides *Dis Pater* by the *interpretatio Romana*[34]. *Aeracura* appears in curse tablets as well, its nearest analogy being the one from Carnuntum (dfx 8.3/1 now lost), both for its location and its context[35].

The Carnuntum tablet appeals to *Cerberus* right after *Dis Pater* and *Aeracura*. In Aq-3 (line 3), the above-mentioned sentence *Tradas diris canibus* clearly refers to *Cerberus*. The plural form is not unusual, for because of his three heads he is treated either as singular or as plural[36]. Moreover, this plural form affords proof for the completion of the fragmentary word in line 14-15. TRICE[---]RI beside the imperative *accipite* might be supplemented as *Trice[rbe]ri*. Up to the present, *Tricerberus* has been thought to be a word first used in the Late Antiquity and only some instances are known from the early Middle Ages and the Byzantine period. It appears in Latin – besides the complicate Servius Auctus (as regards textual tradition) – for the first time in Ful-

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[31] It should not be rejected that the ending *-o* instead of *-us* can attest the decay of the declension system (it can be regarded as confusion between dative-ablative and nominative-accusative cases (Herman 2000, 52-53).

[32] Herman 2000, 42-45.

[33] Since the etymology of the goddess' name is still unclear, this paper mentions her as *Aeracura* (as given in the Thesaurus Linguae Latinae). Olmsted 1994, 303-304, and Beck 2009 collect and summarize all the plastic representations, epigraphic evidences and etymological deduction of *Aeracura*.

[34] The word-beginning H can be a Greek *η*, which would agree with her Greek origin (nowadays generally refuted) (cf. CIL XIII 6360 HRQR). Moreover, there are at least three instances from Germania Superior where the name begins with HE. The incongruity can be due to the well-known AE-E linguistic confusion, or the H-A technical confusion.

[35] dfx 8.3/1 SATE DITE PATER ET VERACVRA ET CERBERE AVXILIE QI TENES LIMINA INFERNA SIVE SIVE SVPERNA… (Carnuntum, Pannonia) dfx 6.1/1 ERACVRA (Favianae, Noricum).

[36] *Mihi mittas arcessitum canem tricipitem*, dfx 1.4.4/8-1.4.4/12 Rome; *tradito tuis canibus tricipitibus et bicipitibus* dfx 1.7.2/1, Venetia; *Dite Pater, Proserpina dia, Canes Orcini …* (AE 2010, 109, Rome).

gentius' works from the 5th-6th century[37]. With respect to Greek, Johannes Malalas and Johannes Antiochenus in the 6th century are the first to use Τρικέρβερος. Further examination is required to find the reason how this form can be explained on a tablet found among graves from the 2nd and 3rd century. In addition, future studies may reveal whether this plural form is related to the singular one of later times or it is an accidental, independent word-formation[38].

Di manes (line 4) appears in six more curse tablets, even in earlier pieces[39]. The following word *Tartaris* might be regarded as ablativus loci. Although these three words belong to the same ideas, they are not attested as a common set phrase neither in literary sources nor in inscriptions. The reason for this could be that adjectives were generally used to denote the residence of gods (cf. *Iuno inferna*, dfx 6.1/1, *daemones infernales*, dfx 11.2.1/31)[40]

In this curse tablet *Manes* occur one more time, where they are the central figures of a persuasive analogy, together with another goddess who was considered (worshipped) as the responsible infernal deity for binding curses.

Muta Tacita is invoked in two other curse tablets[41]; the third instance from Siscia has given rise to much controversy[42]. In Aq-3, after a clear address an analogy is readable in full-length: *Muta et Tacita! Quomodo manes muti et taciti sunt, sic[43] qui tibi antepistulam adferent, muti et taciti sint.*

This sentence resembles Ovid's lines from Fasti[44]. As demonstrated,[45] the same ideas can be found behind the silencing curses and the myth of the nymph

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[37] Servius Gramm., *Comm. Aen*. 1,1 ad versum 133, and Fulg., *Myth* I 6; I 22, and *Exp. Virg*. 22.

[38] Manca 2011 discusses the origin, antecedents and further usage of the word *Tricerberus*.

[39] Sánchez 2013, 308.

[40] At the same time, since this curse text is full of mistakes, another one might be expected here. If *di manes* were emended as *demandes* (assuming that the less competent scribe might have been mistaken again), then the text becomes more coherent: *ea nomina tibi dicto, tradas diris canibus, demandes Tartaris!* 'I dictate the following names to you, hand them over to the dreadful dogs, entrust them to *Tartara*'. The emendation can be refuted by the fact that this verb is always used as first person singular in curses, i.e. it is the speaking magician who entrusts the opponents to the underworld, and never demands anybody to do the same.

[41] dfx 7.2/1: *Mutae Tacitae, ut mutus sit Quartus. Agitatus erret ut mus fugiens, aut avis adversus basyliscum…*; Stylow 2012: *Marcellus Valerius mutus, tacitus sit adversus C. Licinium Gallum. Quemadmodum rana sine lingua muta, tacita est, sic Marcellus mutus, tacitus, debilitatus sit adversus Licinium Gallum.*

[42] I can assert by autopsy that this part concerned is illegible today.

[43] S{E}IC: writing -*ei*- in the place of a long -i- it is due to archaizing or Greek features, both are the characteristics of curses.

[44] Ov., *Fast*. V 607-609: *Iuppiter intumuit, quaque est non usa modeste / eripit huic linguam, Mercuriumque vocat: / duc hanc ad manes: locus ille silentibus aptus…* 'Jupiter was angered, and tearing that tongue from her mouth / That she had used so immoderately, called Mercury to him: "Lead her to the shadows: That place is fitting for the silent…" '(transl. by A. S. Kline)

Lara who was deprived of speech (Jupiter cut out Lara's tongue and ordered Mercury to conduct her to the silent infernal souls).

At this point, only Mercury is left to be examined. In curse tablets he was invoked in many aspects, but usually as a messenger. In Lara's myth he is regarded as a kind of messenger or guide, he is a *psychopompos*, conductor of souls. In Aq-3 (line 1-2), Mercury also appears: [---]/QVRISCVLENI conceals the vocative of *Mercurius Cyllenius*. This epitheton was not used often, mainly 1st- and 2nd-century authors resorted to it[46]. That is why it is odd to see it on a curse tablet. Usually a deity's infernal aspects were named, classic epithetons were avoided in the reverse world of magic. Misspellings make it difficult to identify Mercury among these letters. Starting from the end, I is a standard vocative ending of *-io* stem words. The confusion Y-V is a common feature from archaic times (cf. *Syrus-Surus*), so is the simplified version of geminates. The confusion Q-C appears in CVI also (mentioned above, but this time inversely). The nominative-vocative form *-is* of Mercury is known from inscriptions[47], furthermore the generally mistaken use of *die Mercuris* (as dating on inscriptions) might have led to this unusual form. Mercury's identification made lines 2-4 clearer. The second person singular summons are directed only to Mercury: the magician dictates the names to Mercury, demands him (as a guide) to conduct them to the dreadful dogs. The text structure is similar to the one from Carnuntum. In that curse out of the three invoked deities only *Cerberus* was specified by a relative clause using a second person singular predicate.

4. Conclusion

Aq-3 is a binding curse written in order to silence opponents in court with the help of infernal deities.

The text itself and the dating of the tablet require further investigation. Perhaps Aq-2 and the general archaeological examination contribute to resolve contradiction between the complexity of deities named, the linguistic and formulaic features and the letter-forms of the tablet.

To sum up what has been discussed above, the text of Aq-3 runs as follows:

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[45] Marco 2010 compares silencing curses to Ovid's story about *Muta Tacita*.

[46] *Cyllenius* is mentioned together with *Mercurius* only twice in Latin literary sources (*templum Mercurio Cyllenio ...fecit* Hyg., *Fab*. 225, 2; *Cyllenius Mercurius dictus* Paul. Fest. p. 52. M), otherwise it is used as an adjective only referring to him.

[47] CIL XIV 4105. The -IS ending of words instead of the usual *-ius* is explained two ways: in earlier, Italic inscriptions it could be due to Osco-Umbrian influence, but the parallel Greek *-ις* ending may have influenced it, too (Leumann – Hofmann – Szantyr 1977, 423).

1　ˈDis=ITOˈ Pater, ˈAe=Hˈracura! [Ṃer]-
2　ˈc=Qˈcuri{s} Cˈy=Vˈ‹l›leni, ea nomin[ạ]
3　tib[i] dicto, tradas dirˈis=OVˈ ca-
4　nibus. Di manes Tartaris!
5　Marcum, Marcia‹m›, C‹h›ariton[em]
6　Secuˈn=Mˈdum, ˈquicum=QVIQVITˈqu[e]
7　a‹d›versarius surˈrexerit=GEXE[RIT]ˈ
8　ˈq=Cˈui tibi an‹t›epistulam ad[fe]-
9　ret. Muta et Tacita!
10　ˈQ=Cˈuomodo manes muti et ta-
11　citi suˈnt=Mˈ, s{e}ic ˈq=Cˈui tibi ant-
12　ˈe=Cˈpistulaˈm=Nˈ aˈd=Tˈferent, mu[ti]
13　et taciti ˈS=Cˈin‹t›. Adversa‹rio›[ṣ]
14　Bellici aˈc=Tˈcipitˈe=Iˈ, Trice[ṛbe]-
15　ri et retˈi=Eˈnetˈe=Cˈ illu[---]
16　[-----ị]os
The text arranged in a classical standard version, without diacritical marks:

Dis Pater, Aeracura! Mercuri Cylleni, ea nomina tibi dicto, tradas diris canibus!
Di Manes Tartaris! Marcum, Marciam, Charitonem, Secundum, quicumque
adversarius surrexerit, qui tibi antepistulam adferet.
Muta et Tacita! Quomodo manes muti et taciti sunt, sic qui tibi antepistulam
adferent, muti et taciti sint.
Adversarios Bellici accipite, Tricerberi, et retinete ill[---] [---]os

Translation:

Dis Pater, *Aeracura*! *Mercurius Cyllenius*, I dictate the following names to
you, hand them over to the dreadful dogs!
Infernal souls in *Tartarus*!
Marcus, *Marcia*, *Chariton*, *Secundus*, and whoever may act like an opponent
who will bring a curse-in-reply to you.
Mute and Silent goddess!
Just as the infernal souls are mute and silent, so are those who will bring a
curse-in-reply to you may be mute and silent.
Three-headed *Cerberus*, catch the opponents of *Bellicus* and keep them …

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