

Italia

The importance of the Italian corpus of *defixiones* rests on not only its age —the earliest curses from the Roman West come from Sicily and the Italian Peninsula— but also on its size: after Britannia, Italia has yielded the greatest number of tablets. The Italian group discussed in this catalogue contains a total of 119 texts, in addition to which several other items must be mentioned (see below). The oldest curses from Italia date to the fourth century BCE, when we first find *defixiones* in Graeco-Oscan contexts (e.g., 74, 77–81). By way of the Oscan context and beginning in the second century BCE, this praxis began to spread throughout the peninsula slowly but relentlessly. By the High Empire, the practice of writing *defixiones* truly flourished. In Late Antiquity there are only a few isolated examples of curse tablets throughout the peninsula (e.g., 57 and 114), although Rome itself notably maintained this magical practice due to the influence of new Graeco-Egyptian practices, as is clearly evidenced by the exceptional discoveries from Porta San Sebastiano and the sanctuary of Anna Perenna.

As mentioned above, in addition to the 119 tablets discussed in this chapter, we must add several others that are either still being studied or were found in older excavations and subsequently lost before being properly published (e.g., the tablets from Aquileia and Capua). Here, I provide a brief discussion of relevant tablets that are not included in the general catalogue, which is organized by *regiones* and the date of any published notification.

Rome: according to Wünsch (1898: 10), among the collection of the so-called Sethian *defixiones*, ‘Spuren von lateinischer Schrift finden sich auch auf Tafel 14v und 34.’

[Regio I, Latium] Ostia: Vaglieri (1912: 22; Squarciapino 1958: 14; Solin 1968: no. 36) mentioned a *defixio*, discovered during the excavation of a grave in Ostia, inside of which ‘si raccolsero tre vasetti a vernice marrone e una lamina di piombo in più pezzi, la cui iscrizione, difficile a leggersi, darò in altra relazione. È evidentemente un'altra *tabella defixionis*’.

[Regio I, Campania] Capua, Santa Maria Capua Vetere: Von Duhn (*apud* Bücheler 1878: 3–4, n. 1= *DT* 194) mentioned the discovery of new *defixiones* in 1860, which were found in Santa Maria Capua Vetere. The texts were uncovered in a Roman grave (la Conocchia, from which 67 and 68 also came): ‘1) lungo palmi 0.20, largo 0.13, in due pezzi ed ossidata; 2) lungo palmi 0.11, largo 0.30, infissa al muro di una tomba della parte dello scritto mercè due chiodi di ferro irruiniti, uno lungo palmi 0.41 l’altro palmi 0.33.’ Although the poor condition of the tablets precluded a full edition, Audollent nevertheless dated

them to the second century BCE. Since then, there has been no mention of these two items.

[Regio I, Campania] Cumae, Cuma: during an 1880 excavation of the necropolis in Cumae archaeologists discovered a folded lead tablet that had been pierced four times with a nail, which could still be seen in a hole at the tablet’s corner. The text contains five lines of capitals, which run from left to right and read: *Barcathes Dasi M(arci) L(ibertus)/ M(arcus) Dassius M(arcus) Allius/ Cerdo salvi nisei ista/ re qua(m) ages qum Q(uinto) Cava(rio?)/ literas perlegerit C(aius) Vitrasius(us)* (see *CIL* X, 8214 = *CIL* I², 3128). As Audollent has pointed out, ‘insueto sane modo conscripta, et in v. 3–4 obscurissima’ (*DT* 197). Recently, Bevilacqua has suggested that the curse is a ‘sorta di “contro-defixio” cautelativa (...) da una minaccia di scongiuro nei confronti dei tre individui nominati’ (2017: 99–100). Although the tablet’s archaeological context, medium and formal aspects all point to an identification as a *defixio*, its true character is still unclear. For that reason, I have mentioned the item here in this introductory section.

[Regio I, Campania] Pompeii: Della Corte (1916: 305, fig. 19) indicated that during the excavation of the necropolis located outside the Porta Stabia another *defixio* was found, which had been placed on top of cinerary urn no. 29, but ‘in così avanzato stato di ossidazione, da non consentire la lettura pur di una lettera de suo brevissimo testo, consistente forse in un semplice nome: in uno dei suoi capi è tuttora infisso un grosso chiodo di bronzo’. The whereabouts of this curse, which was written on a strip of lead measuring 2.3 × 8 cm (with the excavation inventory no. 97= Inv. SAN 142467), are currently unknown.

[Regio III, Bruttium et Lucania] Roccagloriosa: during the excavation in which 76 was found, archaeologists also uncovered the remains of 13 lead sheets, some of which were stilled rolled up, while others were inscribed. Many were extremely fragmentary (see Gualtieri 1990: 139–41). The editors did not determine whether these remains were actually curse tablets. As Poccetti (1990: 145) has rightly pointed out, if these are indeed *defixiones*, the accumulation of these tablets in a cultic area at such an early date (the fourth century BCE) would chronologically situate the curses from Roccagloriosa just after those from the sanctuary of Demeter Malophoros in Selinunte. Accordingly, this would be an extremely important cache for understanding the evolution of magical practices on the Italian peninsula. That said, Poccetti (*per litt.*) has recently said, ‘...all’epoca (1990) avevo visto alcuni frammenti di laminette che erano insieme alla *defixio* che ho pubblicato, ma queste erano così frammentarie che era impossibile

vedere se erano iscritte o no. Mi avevano assicurato che avrebbero fatto un restauro per vedere se si poteva vedere qualcosa, ma questo non solo finora non è stato fatto, ma dopo mie ricerche nessuno mi sa dire che fine abbiano fatto questi frammenti.' I thank P. Poccetti for this information.

[Regio VIII, Aemilia] Mutina, Fiumalbo: Calzolari (2006) has mentioned that in 1883, while preparing for the construction of an observatory on the peak of Monte Cimone, 19 fragments of a lead sheet were found alongside various coins from the Republican and Imperial periods in an area that was thought to be the site of some sort of cultic worship. Eight of these fragments (the largest measuring $(6) \times (8)$ cm and the smallest $(2.7) \times (3.8)$ cm) preserved the remains of a Latin text. These could very well be the remains of a *defixio*. The fragments are currently housed in the Museo Civico Archeologico di Modena.

[Regio VIII, Aemilia] Sant Ilario d'Enza (Reggio Emilia): during a land survey of the villa I Moruzzi conducted either at the end of the 1990s or in the early 2000s, two fragments of an inscribed lead sheet were discovered. The tablet, which is still being prepared for publication, appears to belong to the group of curses against thieves and to date to the second century CE. For a preliminary note, see Sánchez Natalías 2017b.

[Regio X, Venetia et Histria] Iulium Carnicum, Lagole di Calalzo: Pellegrini and Prosdocimi (1967: Ca XIII) mention in their catalogue a square lead sheet that is opisthographic, perforated in one corner and difficult to read. They note that its appearance recalls that of a curse tablet. The perforation in one corner, however, opens up the possibility that this item is actually a label.

[Regio X, Venetia et Histria] Altinum, Altino: Scarfi (1972: 55, n. 2) has pointed to the existence of another *defixio*, mentioned by J. Marcello in *La via Annia alle porte di Altino* (1956), where among the discovered objects made of lead there was 'una tavola rettangolare (cm 15×10) con graffiti non ancora decifrati (*tabula defixionis?*).' Today the tablet's whereabouts are unknown.

[Regio X, Venetia et Histria] Aquileia: G. Brusin (*apud* Scarfi 1972: 56, n. 7) referenced a 'una tavoletta di piombo con scarabocchiatevi in corsivo delle imprecazioni contro persona odiata per gelosia od altro. Vi si scorge anche, distintamente sulla copia posta accanto, una figura in piedi ed altra prona, e vi si legge il nome di *Cottius*.' According to Scarfi, the tablet's whereabouts are unknown.

[Regio X, Venetia et Histria] Acellum, Montebelluna: F. Sartori (*apud* Scarfi 1972: 56, n. 9) mentioned that during the excavation of some Roman graves three fragments of a lead sheet were found, which could have belonged to a *defixio*.

[Sardinia] Alghero: La Fragola (2015) has pointed to the discovery of a small cache of lead and bronze fragments found during a rescue excavation at La Purissima sanctuary.

The tablets, apparently not inscribed, were found together with other remains dated between the second and fourth centuries CE.

[Corsica] Mariana, Lucciana: Morachini-Mazel has referred to what appears to be another *defixio* discovered in grave no. 16 in the I Ponti necropolis. This inhumation, whose grave goods are dated to c. 75 CE, contained 'une plaque de plomb très érodée qui comporta, peut-être, des lettres gravées' (1974: 27).

Locus Incertus: Olivieri (1899: 197; Besnier 1920: no. 5), mentioned the existence of a fifth *defixio* currently preserved in the Museo Archeologico Civico di Bologna, that came together with **117–18** to the museum. Olivieri states, 'tre frammenti e forse un quarto derivano da altra tavoletta, ma il loro contenuto non si può assolutamente decifrare perché il loro stato è assai deperito'. The autopsies that I have carried out, however, have not confirmed that these fragments belong to a single curse (for a preliminary analysis, see Sánchez Natalías 2017a: 52–54).