**201.103 Module Two: The Classical World. Assignment One - Question Two.**

***The spell:***

I bind Ioulianos, whose mother is Ioulia and bind his tongue and his speech so just as this corpse is silent, so Ioulianos will be silent and not speak out against Seppius. I bind Paullus, whose mother is Mucia, and bind his tongue and his speech and his eyes and his ears. I bind the lawyer ueisArlo, whose mother is Auria, to be of no account in word and in deed. OOOOOOAOÊÊÊÊÊAÔOÔÔÔÊIÊ UÊÊE AAA ÊIÊÔAIAA ÔOÔÔ make all their associates become cold and useless, just as this tablet is cold and useless, so that they are unable to act as witnesses or lay a counterclaim.

***The following incantation is to be spoken as the tablet is deposited into grave:***

*I hand over my legal case to this restless soul, and I invoke Hermes, and Hekate of the triple face, and Persephone of the Underworld to enact the magical words inscribed on this tablet, so that my accusers and opponents are as mute as this corpse and cannot speak or act against me.*

The above spell is a defixio, or binding spell. It is categorised as a legal and political defixio because the magic targets judicial accusers and opponents (Gager 1992 p. 117). Legal and political defixiones were a common part of the legal process in ancient Greece and Rome, and were cast by the defendant during the preliminary preparation for a guaranteed favourable outcome of his, or less frequently her, upcoming trial (Gager 1992, p. 118). The magical features and elements that I have used in my spell include a binding formula, repetition, naming by matrilineal descent, palindrome, simile, *voces mysticae*, and an incantation to invoke the divinities. The verbs of binding in my defixio are to constrain the verbal (tongue, speech) and cognitive functions of the targets, both named and unnamed, from speaking, or thinking or acting clearly, thus rendering them unable to give evidence or to argue in court. Similar verbs of binding appear on a tablet that “bind the hands and feet and tongue and soul and speech that he is practicing” (Gager 1992, p. 131 no 44).

Although the defendant casts the spell, it was often with the assistance of a professional, who wrote the words and inscribed them onto a tablet (Gager 1992, p. 117). I am the magos who wrote this defixio for the defendant, my client, for a small fee of course, to assure him success against his accusers at his trial. I have inscribed the spell onto a lead tablet, which is cheap and readily available, and is soft and easy to inscribe. Whilst I have many tablets that are pre-inscribed and are suitable for most defendants, my client faces possible ruin, so I have used a combination of magical features and elements to increase the potency of the magic. Although the defendant is Roman, the words I inscribe onto the tablet are in Greek, in ritual tradition of the defixiones.

Unlike other types of spells such as competitive or erotic, which usually only name the target, legal and political defixiones name both the target and the caster of the spell (Gager 1992, p. 117). In my defixio, the caster, who is the defendant in the court case, is Seppius. The targets are his accusers Ioulianos and Paullos, and their unnamed associates, and the lawyer Aurelios. I have scrambled the order of the letters in the lawyer’s name when I inscribed the tablet to read as ueisArlo. The intention of this symbolic scrambling is to scramble the lawyer’s reasoning and speech so that he will be unable to orate at the trial. Gager (1992, p.91 no 24) cites a curse tablet concerning competition and jealousy, that also features symbolic scrambling. Some of the names are inscribed on the tablet scrambled and in the correct order. Because the precise identification of the target for the binding spell is vital, I have inscribed the matrilineal descent of each of the named targets on my defixio. Although most Romans are identified by their father’s name, the only way to know their identify for certain is by matrilineal descent (Gager 1992, p. 14). An ancient spell that uses matrilineal identification concerns the wrestler Eutuchianos, whose mother’s name was Eutuchia (Gager 1992, pp. 50-51 no 3). It is a competitive spell, to constrain Eutuchaianos from wrestling or to fall if he does wrestle, cast either by his opponent or by someone who has gambled on the outcome, so it is important that the correct wrestler is properly identified. I have used the mother’s name of the targets in my spell in a similar way; to correctly identify those who need to be constrained from speaking up in court.

I have inscribed the direct binding formula “I bind X” (Gager 1992, citing Faraone p. 13) to bind and constrain the targets in my defixio. This formula is used in other types of defixiones, including separation spells. An example is found on a curse tablet that begins “I bind Theodora” (Gager 1992, p. 90 no 22), with the aim of separating Theodora from her lover. The aim of my spell is to bind and constrain each of the target’s verbal and mental abilities. The extended formula of “I bind X, whose mother is Y” is repeated three times in my spell. Repetition, especially in multiples of three, is considered a powerful magical element. A similar formula appears in an erotic spell which had been written on a papyrus sheet and deposited in a pot, along with two wax figurines. In this attraction spell the formula “Theon, to whom Proechai gave birth” (Gager 1992 pp. 103 -105 no 30) is repeated three times within the spell.

Another magical element is a palindrome. The palindrome “deed” appears not only in my spell, but also in a legal defixio regarding an apparent dispute between butchers and cooks. The last line of the spell is “let them seem to be of no account, either in word or in deed” (Gager 1992, pp. 131 no 44). I have used a very similar phrase in my own defixio. A prominent feature of my spell are the magical words in capitals, and known as the *voces mysticae.* Intelligible only to divinities and daemons, and therefore considered very powerful (Gager 1992, p.9), *voces mysticae* are only known to magos such as myself. These magical *voces mysticae* appear in many types of defixiones, such as the binding of the wrestler Eutuchianos, discussed earlier. The string of vowels that I have modelled the *voces mysticae* for my own defixio are drawn from a separation spell (Gager 1992 p. 110 no 35).

In addition to binding using words, the targets are also symbolically bound to the tablet. After the tablet is inscribed, it is folded and then a nail, or nails, are often inserted through the folds, to symbolically bind the spell, and I have indeed placed one nail through my defixio. A curse tablet (Gager 1992, pp. 125 no 38) similarly contained one nail hole. In contrast, a lead tablet (Gager 1992, pp. 131 no 44) had five nail holes, perhaps symbolising the multiple targets named in that spell. Another way in which I have symbolically bound the targets to the tablet is through persuasive analogies. Faraone, in Gager (1992, p.13) proposes that this is when the target takes on the characteristics of something mentioned in the spell. In my spell, I attribute the cold and useless characteristics of the lead tablet to the unnamed associates, so that they cannot interfere with the legal proceedings. A similar comparison appears in another legal defixio that assigns the cold and out of true characteristics of the tablet to the target Krates, as well as to his accusers and lawyers (201.103 Study Guide Johnston 2004, p. 132).

As the professional, I am responsible for depositing the defixio. I have chosen to place the tablet in the grave of a young boy who was murdered before his time. His restless soul will act as an intermediary for the magic as I invoke the divinities during my incantation (Gager, 1992 p. 119). The divinities I have chosen to invoke Hermes, messenger of the gods, Hekate the goddess of magic and witchcraft and Persephone, Queen of the Underworld. These divinities frequently appear in defixiones (Gager 1992, p. 12), emphasising their power and importance to the magical operations. The corpse within the grave can provide another form of persuasive analogy, as the target is given the attributes of the corpse. In my spell, I have wished that the target is as silent as the corpse. Similarly, the idleness of a corpse named Posianax is attributed to the target Neophanes (Gager 1992, p. 130 no 43). The ritual of placing the tablet in the grave, or in a well or river, is particularly chosen so that the target will not be able to find it, and therefore unable to cast a counter spell or wear a protective amulet.

**Bibliography**

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