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## REVIEWS

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- REVIEW: ALEXEY V. BELOUSOV, *DEFIXIONES OLBIAE  
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# Reviews

**Review: Alexey V. Belousov, *Defixiones Olbiae Ponticae*, Peeters, Leuven [Colloquia Antiqua. Supplements to the Journal Ancient West & East 30], 2021, 124 p., ISBN 978-90-429-4295-0; eISBN 978-90-429-4296-7.**

The present edition of the corpus *Defixiones Olbiae Ponticae* by A.V. Belousov has been published at the beginning of 2021, the first edition, in Russian, was published a year before.<sup>1</sup> It is a valuable result of many years of serious work and an important step promoting epigraphical studies of materials from the territory of the former USSR for those who cannot read Russian and Ukrainian. The corpus is compiled according to the best traditions of the Classical scholarship: Latin and English introductions, *lemmata*, *apparatus criticus*, which provides all the possible readings, detailed commentary to each inscription, photos and drawings, palaeographic tables, bibliography, and several indexes.

The corpus consists of an introduction, the main part containing 25 Olbian curses divided into six groups, and a grammatical outline.

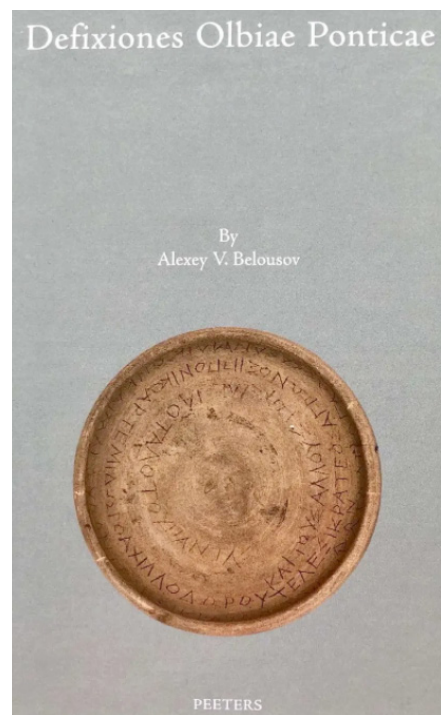
In the introduction A.B. briefly reviews the publications of curses in the Northern Black Sea region, from the works of I. Pomialovsky and E. Pridik to the most recent research (pp. XXI-XXII). Before the appearance of the Corpus, the publications of Olbian curses were scattered in various journal articles; even compiling these materials required much effort. A.B. surveys the materials used for curses (ceramics and lead), the shapes of the curse tablets (round and rectangular), the main formulae types, such as *nomina deuotorum leguntur sola* (solely the names of the cursed persons); *nomina deuotorum et membra corporisque eorum et uis leguntur* (names, body parts and powers of the cursed persons); *nomina deuotorum et personarum aliarum, membra corporisque eorum leguntur* (names of the cursed and other persons, as well as their body parts); *nomina deuotorum leguntur et deuouendi uerbum* (names of the cursed persons with conjuring verbs); *similia similibus* (formula based on the principle *similia similibus*); *dubia et spuria* (unclear and dubious) (pp. XXII-XXIV). The analysis of formulae is followed by the paleographic review (pp. XXIV-XXVI), which allows an understanding of the principles of dating. However, several dates can be revised in favour of a later date (see below). Palaeographic tables for each period and even for some inscriptions (pp. XXVII-XXX) help to navigate the Olbian material.

The first group (*nomina deuotorum leguntur sola*) contains twelve inscriptions (1-12), the earliest is dated to the mid-5th century BCE, and the latest to the second half of the 4th century BCE. The most interesting is inscription no. 1, which was scratched on a round black-glazed ostrakon. The convex side contains a drawing, while the inscription is on the concave side: Ἀριστο/τέλης : ἰέρ(εως) / Ερμέω : <εως> / καὶ Ἀθ<η>ναίης / ξυγών Ηρογέ/ νης : Ηροφά/ νης (Aristoteles, joint priest of Hermes and Athena; Herogenes, Herophanes). The inscription is the subject of an ongoing discussion. A.B. (with reference to S. Tokhtasiev) discusses the image on the convex side of the

<sup>1</sup> BELOUSOV 2020.

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ostrakon, which has been interpreted as a profile of Athena,<sup>2</sup> or a portrait of an oriental magician:<sup>3</sup> “depiction of a human head, often turned left, together with some magical signs and sometimes inscriptions” has multiple parallels from the Northern Black Sea region, as well as from other regions of the Greek world (p. 5). I suggest that ξυνών = Ξένων was a personal name<sup>4</sup> and Αθ<η>ναίης = Αθηναῖος, also a personal name, rather than the name of Athena, which is untypical of curses. Thus, the inscription can be interpreted as “Aristoteles, the priest of Hermes, and also Athenaios, Xenon, Herogenes, Herophanes”. The interpunction after the names Aristoteles, Hermes, Herogenes presents a difficulty, whatever interpretation is adopted.

Inscription no. 8, which was first edited by S. Tokhtasiev following the drawings of the illegal finders,<sup>5</sup> is now in a private collection. The text of the inscription is as follows: Διονύσιος / Αριστ(ο)μένης / {Σ} Κρίτων / [.]ONON / Εκατέων / Εύμένης / (Ηγημων) Ηγήμων? / Φίλιστος / Αριστομέ(ν)ης / Επικράτης / Ηρόδοτος (Dionysios, Aristomenes, Kriton, [.]ONON, Hekateon, Eumenes, Hegemon(?), Philistos, Aristomenes, Epikrates, Herodotos). If the drawing is not quite accurate, and the third line begins with K, and not with Σ, the name in the fourth line can be read as [K]όνων (= Κόνων, Konon), a name common in the region. This idea is suggested by A.B., but in an overly cautious manner. Ο for Ω has an analogy in the seventh line: Ηγημων for Ηγήμων.

The curses of the first group, especially if the new inscriptions are added to them, can be divided into three sub-groups: 1) solely a personal name in Nominative, sometimes with patronym (2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12); 2) solely a personal name in other cases (4, Accusative); 3) a personal name with additional words (1, 11).

The second group of the curses (*nomina deuotorum et membra corporisque eorum et uis leguntur*) is represented by a single very important inscription no. 13: τὰμ πάρμη(ν) / Σιττυρᾶ / τὴν γλῶσσαν / τὰμ πάρμη(ν) / καὶ Θεμιστᾶ / καὶ Επικράτους / καὶ τὴν δύναμιν (The shield of Sittyras, his tongue, the shield of Themistas and of Epikrates, and their strength). A.B. dates the inscription to the 4th – 3rd centuries BCE, I suggest however to date it to the 2nd century BCE. The peculiarities of the spelling partly noticed by A.B., such as vocal declension of the hypocoristics on -ᾶς, and Genitive -εως of the personal names on -ης (p. 45),<sup>6</sup> are indicative of the 2nd century BCE. In the absence of a good photograph or a possibility of examination of the inscription, the palaeography cannot support the dating, but if the reading of E. Pridik is correct or at least close to the original, the script corresponds to the 2nd century BCE, rather than to the 4th-3rd centuries BCE.

The reading of the words ΤΑΜΠΑΡΜΗ in the first and fourth lines presents a major problem. E. Pridik, N. Novossadsky, E. Diehl (who supposes its Scythian origin), and L. Dubois could not explain it. A.B. suggests reading

2 VINOGRADOV/RUSJAEVA 1998, 156.

3 LEBEDEV 1996, 273.

4 SEG 34, 770.

5 SEG 50, 702.

6 Cf. IOSPE I2 no. 32 and Olbian lapidary inscriptions of the 2nd century BCE.

τὰμ πάρμη(ν) (shield, Accusative). The research of the author on the Greek word πάρμη and possible variants of its origin (pp. 45-46) is interesting, but it seems that the problem can be solved easier if the inscription is dated to the 2nd century BCE, when the word is attested in Polybios as a transliteration of the Latin *parma*. A.B. also mentions intensive military activities (p. 46), which did not take place in Olbia in the late 4th – early 3rd centuries BCE, but were prominent in the 2nd century BCE.

The third group of the curses (*nomina deuotorum et personarum aliarum, membra corporisque eorum leguntur*) includes four inscriptions (14-17). Inscription no. 15, an opistograph on a lead plate without traces of nails, is the most interesting item. The text of the inscription: Ἀρτεμίδωρος / Ηροφίλου, / Θαλαϊώ, δύο παῖδες, / Επικράτης Ηροσώντος, / Διοσκῶριδης Φιλογήθεος, Κιλλ(ος?), / Εἰκαρπος, / Ηρόφιλος, / καὶ ἄλλοι οἱ ἐναντίοι ἐλμοί· / Καφακης, / Δημοκῶν, Ἀτάης, / Θατόρακο\ς/, / Ηραγόρη(ς?), / Ηγησαγό(ρ)ης (Artemidoros, son of Herophilos, Thalaio, two children, Epikrates son of Heroson, Dioskorides son of Philogethes, Kill(os?), Eokarpos, Herophilos, and other my enemies. Kaphakes, Demokon, Ataes, Thatorakos, Heragores, Hegesagores). Before this tablet was inscribed with the curses, another text had been written on it (p. 54). Although there is enough space on the tablet, the text is arranged partly vertically, partly horizontally (fig. 26). The formula of the inscription contains curses that are exceptional in Greek, but common in Latin, namely καὶ ἄλλοι οἱ ἐναντίοι ἐμοί (cf. *et quisquis adversarius; inimicorum nomina...* and other my enemies) (p. 55), notwithstanding the early date, the 4th century BCE. The last name of the fourth line can be read as Σκίλλος (Scillus, cf. σκίλλα – sea-onion, Σκίλλους – a city in Sicily), and the Genitive of the previous patronym ends in -εο, rather than -εος (A.B.: Διοσκῶριδης Φιλογήθεος, Κιλλ(ος?), I suggest Διοσκῶριδης Φιλογήθεο, Σκιλλ(ος?)). The words δύο παῖδες after a female name can mean “two children”, but in the context of a curse they may probably mean “two slaves”.

The fourth group of the curses (*nomina deuotorum leguntur et deuouendi uerbum*) includes three inscriptions (18-20), the first of which (no. 18) is dated to the 4th century BCE. The curse is scratched on the bottom of a clay cup, in three rows of a counterclockwise spiral. A.B. particularly stresses the importance of the spiral in Greek curses and cites a papyrus containing instructions for creating such a curse; he also refers to parallels from different parts of the Greek world (pp. 69-72).

Inscription no. 19 reads from right to left, as if in a mirror reflection (figs. 38-41). Retrograde spelling was very frequent in curses, but the North-Western Black Sea region yields a single additional case.<sup>7</sup>

Inscription no. 20 is the most famous among all the Olbian curses. It was scratched on the bottom of a black-glazed cup. A male profile turned left, and multiple lines appear in the middle of the bottom, and the inscription runs along the perimeter of the rim: Φαρνάβα[σ]ζος / φιλόκαλος· / πρόοιδα τέθνηκας· / ἠρέμε ὦ θεοπρόπος / Ερμού (Pharnabazos, the beauty-lover, I know beforehand –

7 STOLBA 2016, 263-292.

you are already dead. Be at rest, inquirer of Hermes' oracle!). Having analyzed the research concerning this inscription, A.B. argues that it either contains a new unknown magical formula, or is unique (pp. 85-90). The inscription is dated to the late 5th – 4th centuries BCE, but its language features obvious elements of *koine* (p. 85), therefore the later date is preferable. A.B. suggests interpreting the word θεοπρόπος as “inquirer to oracle”, rather than as “augur” or “prophet”. The form of the Vocative equal to Nominative, which has been a subject of a long discussion, is typical of Greek compound nouns.

In his article on Olbian curses, B. Bravo paid special attention to the headwear of Pharnabazos: it is a headband of a victim dedicated to Hermes Chthonius.<sup>8</sup> The head of Pharnabazos is turned left, which is typical of Greek curses with images. A.B. compiles a list of similar images, most of which are from Olbia (pp. 88-90; figs. 44-50). Thus, the beauty-lover Pharnabazos was doomed to die for sins unknown to us.

The fifth group (*similia similibus*) consists of one inscription (no. 21), which is dated to the late 4th – early 3rd centuries BCE. This inscription is a juridical curse in the form of appeal to a vengeful spirit (νεκροδαίμων) of prematurely deceased (ἄωρος) (p. 96). It is composed according to the well-known formula of *similia similibus*. A.B. cites parallels for this formula from the Russian curse practice (pp. 98-100).

The last sixth group (*dubia et spuria*) contains four inscriptions (nos. 22-25), three of which are now lost (nos. 22, 24, 25) and their photos are also not available. Inscription no. 23 is a curse consisting of the list of the names in Nominative and an additional formula καὶ ὄσοι, typical of the Greek curses in the Classical time (pp. 106-107).

Several indexes at the end of the Corpus (*indices deorum, nominum et vocabulorum*) allow a simple and convenient search of necessary words, important for the reader of the traditional printed book. One may wish that the catalog of the personal names contains the dates. In some cases, when the names are rare (like Ἀρίζηλος, Θαρσῆς) or non-Greek (like Καφάκης, Τυκοτα), a more detailed commentary would have been useful.

*Defixiones Olbiae Ponticae* contains all the available Olbian curses, takes into consideration a vast amount of publications and scholarly discussions of the subject, beginning from the classical works and up to the most recent editions. The publication of this corpus will undoubtedly serve as an impetus for a comprehensive study of the magical practices in the Northern Black Sea area, a field that has formerly been undeservedly neglected.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

*IosPE Inscriptiones antiquae orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini graecae et latinae*, ed. Basilius [Vasilii] Latyshev. Vol. 1, 2nd edn., *Inscriptiones Tyriae, Olbiae, Chersonesi Tauricae* (St. Petersburg, 1916).

*SEG Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*

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<sup>8</sup> BRAVO 2001, 161.