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A Curse Tablet from Panticapaeum Necropolis (SEG LXIII 616) Revisited

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Una tablilla de maldición de la necrópolis de Panticapeo (SEG LXIII 616) revisitada

The article is devoted to examining readings and establishing the text of one Bosphoran magic tablet from Panticapaeum. The author proposes a new text of the inscription with a critical apparatus and discusses a new interpretation of this monument given recently by Eleni Chronopoulou against the broader background of ancient magical practice.

Key words: inscription; magical; Panticapaeum; anonymous.

El artículo está dedicado a verificar la lectura y establecer el texto de una tablilla mágica de Panticapeo. El autor propone un nuevo texto con aparato crítico de la inscripción y discute la nueva interpretación ofrecida recientemente por Eleni Chronopoulou desde el contexto más amplio de las prácticas mágicas en la Antigüedad.

Palabras clave: inscripción; mágica; Panticapeo; anónimo.

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It is safe to say that in the past few decades the interest towards ancient magic has not at all dwindled, but in fact increased considerably, as evidenced not only by an increasing number of works on Greek magic papyri, but also by the emergence of many projects dedicated to republishing Greek and Roman spells on lead and ceramics from various regions of the ancient *oecumene* and providing them with a new detailed commentary¹. The epigraphy of the North-

¹ See, for example: <http://www.topoi.org/group/b-defixiones-topoi-1>. For *Defixiones Olbiae Ponticae* project see Belousov 2012.

ern Black Sea region, not very well known to western researchers for many decades due to the overwhelming number of new monuments' publications and their interpretations being published in Russian, is now gradually coming to international spotlight. It is all the more pleasant to note that the Black Sea epigraphy has finally found a place for itself on the pages of such a respected international journal as *Emerita*: the recent paper by Eleni Chronopoulou treats the mysterious magical inscription from the necropolis of Panticapaeum, which my late colleague Nikolay Fedoseyev and I published some time ago in *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*. The article by Dr. Chronopoulou, where she so carefully re-examined² the monument, made me turn my attention again to this interesting document kept in a private collection in Moscow.

The tablet (*Fig. 1*) was unearthed in 2011 in Kerch on the top of the Mithridates Mountain, the site of the ancient Panticapaeum's necropolis. The lead plate containing the inscription was found five-times folded (one can see four bends). In our previous publication my co-author and I stated that «there are some traces of damage made by a nail»³, (*Fig. 2*), but in fact it is impossible to assert it with certainty. Since the only hole that can be seen on the right side of the plate passes exactly along the fourth fold and does not affect the rest of the surface, we can assume that this hole was caused by natural causes and may have been formed when the tablet was unfolded by the people who discovered it. We also stated that «the text of the inscription was scratched in straight lines by a relatively accurate handwriting on the surface of the lead plate (16 cm. long and from 2.5 to 6.5 cm. wide). The earliest date that could have been suggested based on the inscription's palaeography is the 3rd c. BC. This conclusion seems to be supported by the presence of the lunar *sigma*, appearing in Bosphoran inscriptions of this period»⁴. Such a brief lapidary formulation on the letter forms could be misleading for E. Chronopoulou, since she writes about this dating as «post quem»⁵. However, we cannot agree with this unequivocally. The shapes of the letters fully correspond to the northern Pontic epigraphic script of the 4th c. BC, and the appearance of a *lunar sigma* in the Ionian colonies of the Northern Black Sea region can now, almost without

² Chronopoulou 2019, pp. 73-82.

³ Belousov, Fedoseev 2014, p. 145.

⁴ See: Boltunova, Knipovich 1962, p. 9, Pl. II.

⁵ Chronopoulou 2019, p. 74.

any doubt, be attributed to the same time period⁶, so in fact there is a possibility to date the tablet as early as the 4th century, and the 3rd c. date is definitely not *post quem*.



Fig. 1

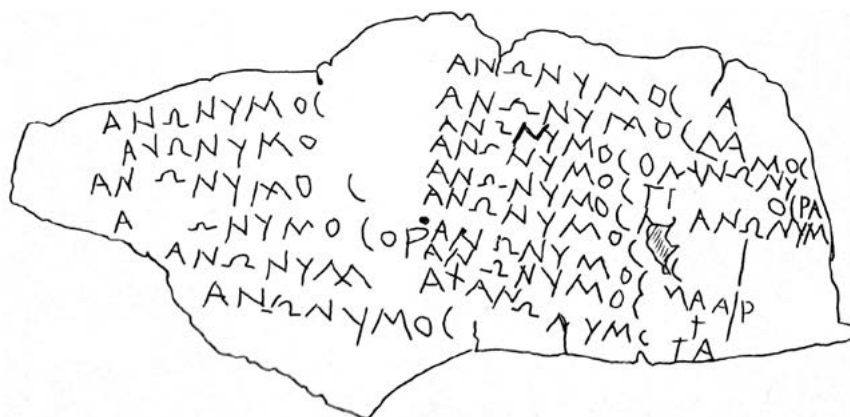


Fig. 2

⁶ See, for example, my thoughts on the lunar *sigma* in Olbia Pontica: Belousov 2018.

The text of the inscription, taking into account the suggestions of Eleni Chronopoulou, is as follows:

Col. 1

- ¹ ἀνόνημος
- ² ἀγόννημο[ς]
- ³ ἀνόνημος
- ⁴ ἀ[ν]όννημος OP
- ⁵ ἀνόνημος
- ⁶ ἀνόνημος

Col. 2

- ¹ ἀνόνημος A
- ² ἀνόνημος ΔA
- ³ ἀνόνημος ON ἀνόνημος¹⁰⁵
- ⁴ ἀνόνημος +I
- ⁵ ἀνόνημος ἀνόνημος¹⁰⁵ PA
- ⁶ ἀνόνημος Σ
- ⁷ ἀνόνημος ΜΑΑΡ
- ⁸ ἀνόνημος Τ
- ⁹ A+ ἀνόνημο[ς] TA

Col. 1: 4 ἀ[ν]όννημος *ed. pr.* ἀ[ν]όννημος OP Chronopoulou; **Col. 2:** 1 ἀνόνημος Μ (?) Belousov, 2 ἀνόνημος ? *ed. pr.* ἀνόνημος ΔA Chronopoulou ἀνόνημος MA ? Belousov, 3 ἀνόνημος OP *ed. pr.* ἀνόνημος O. Chronopoulou ἀνόνημος ON (?) Belousov; ἀνόνημος¹⁰⁵ *ed. pr.* ἀνόνημος¹⁰⁵ Chronopoulou 4 ἀνόνημος .. [ἀνόνημ]ος PA *ed. pr.* ἀνόνημος Π Chronopoulou ἀνόνημος +I Belousov, 5 ἀνόνημος ἀνόνημ[ος] *ed. pr.* ἀνόνημος ἀνόνημος¹⁰⁵ PA Chronopoulou, 9 A† ἀνόνημο[ς] PA *ed. pr.* AT ἀνόνημο[ς] TA Chronopoulou A+ ἀνόνημο[ς] TA Belousov.

After careful autopsy of the tablet I can confirm that some of the corrections proposed by Dr. Chronopoulou are correct. It is necessary, however, to note that in the first line of the second column, where I previously suspected the presence of the letter A, it is quite possible to see the letter M. It is also possible to see the letter M in the second line of second column, where Eleni Chronopoulou suspects the presence of Δ⁷, since the horizontal hasta of the next letter *alpha* is barely visible, if it is there at all. One should most likely read the letter *nu* in the third line of the same column after the letter *omicron*, where I suspected the presence of *rho* before. It is impossible to read the letter Π⁸ after ἀνόνημος in the fourth line, contrary to the opinion of Eleni Chronopoulou: it is a cross-shaped sign not connected with the next letter, which is most likely an *iota*. There is also a clear cross-shaped sign, which can be interpreted, as suggested by Eleni Chronopoulou⁹, as *tau* or *khi* in the

⁷ Chronopoulou 2019, p. 75.

⁸ Ibidem.

⁹ Ibidem.

ninth line after *alpha*, but I would not be in a hurry to ascribe to it any unequivocally literal value.

In my opinion, the most significant success that Dr. Chronopoulou has achieved is her interpretation of the incomprehensible syllables in the ends of a number of lines: «Es probable que sean abreviaturas o voces mágicas o, mejor, letras mágicas. El paralelo más cercano y seguro que he podido encontrar (porque su lectura no presenta demasiados problemas) es el de *DTA* 11, que contiene una lista de nombres de víctimas. Al lado de los nombres, en las ll. 2 y 3, aparecen las letras ΔN y MM respectivamente. Wunsch los comentó del siguiente modo: “ΔN MM litterae additae uidentur, ut magicam auferent speciem”. Entre estas letras sin sentido que pueden tener valor mágico encontramos MAAP en una secuencia de *uoces magicae* en *DT* 38 y también en *PGM* XII 168»¹⁰. She rightly says that «sin embargo, si estas identificaciones son correctas, parece que fuera del contexto egipcio no tienen sentido»¹¹. However, there are two circumstances that prohibit us from seeing actual *uoces magicae* here: 1) the artefact dates to the 4th or 3rd century BC, which seems to be too early for such magical devices; 2) strictly speaking, *uoces magicae* are sequences of vowel sounds, so the incomprehensible syllables could be interpreted here only as *nomina barbarica* at best. In any case one should be very careful if postulating the actual presence of either device in the text: neither *uoces magicae* nor *nomina barbarica* are attested on any curses from the North Black Sea region, they are to be found here only on amulets of the Roman era¹².

In my opinion, although Eleni Chronopoulou did an excellent work with the text of the inscription and offered an interesting interpretation of incomprehensible places, her opinions on the meaning of this monument and the meaning of the seventeen-fold repetition of the word ἀνώνυμοι are left without convincing evidence.

We noted in our *editio princeps* that «there is a special group of the dead called ἀνώνυμοι¹³, a group that includes the souls of people who died prematurely, usually in a violent manner. These souls, to our opinion, have another

¹⁰ Chronopoulou 2019, p. 76 and note 6.

¹¹ Ibidem.

¹² See, for example, Yaylenko 2005, pp. 484-496.

¹³ About anonymity of the gods see also Bader 1989, pp. 306-354.

special name — ἄωροι¹⁴. These ἄωροι, the dead hunting the living in search for revenge, are identified with the Erinyes by Erwin Rohde, and Albert Henrichs supports this conclusion¹⁵. According to Rohde, ἄωροι are the type of dead souls who are not yet mature, who don't yet possess individuality and self-awareness, that is why they are — ἀνώνυμοι, the “warriors of Hecate”, always craving for the blood of the living—. “Not” is the inalienable morphological attribute of their aliases: they are ἀνάριθμοι, ἄψυχοι, ἄωροι, etc. This is exactly the type of creatures (which are also called νεκυδαίμονες), to whom (or, more precisely, to whose graves) those seeking revenge or love should commit their messages, at least according to the creators of the magical papyri (so *PGM* V.304-369). The papyri mention these ἄωροι about twenty times¹⁶. In addition, these ἄωροι are also found in *defixiones*, so on two lead tablets from Apamea we find the following text: μη κοιμηθῶσιν ἀλλὰ βλέπέτωσαν [ἀ]πὸ θυρῶν δέμ[ο]νας ἄωρο[υ]ς, δέμονας βιέους Ἡφέστου πῦρ¹⁷. Addresses to ἀνώνυμοι in particular are not common for epigraphic monuments: in fact, we have only the batch of judicial spells from Kourion on Cyprus¹⁸. It is also possible to add the *defixio* from Olbia, first published by V. Shkorpil in 1908¹⁹». The aggregate

¹⁴ For more details on ἄωροι see Johnston 1999, pp. 127-150 and Garland 2001, pp. 77-88.

¹⁵ Rohde 1898, vol. II, pp. 411-413, 424; A. Henrichs 1994, pp. 54-58. See also Henrichs 1991, pp. 161-201. It is worth pointing out that the ancients called the Erinyes ἀνώνυμοι in apotropaic sense, i.e. thinking that uttering their true names was dangerous. Nevertheless, this does not prohibit us from stipulating that (and this point of view is confirmed by the later tradition) this word, along with other adjectives with *a-/an-* prefix, becomes the name for chthonic demonic forces.

¹⁶ Muñoz Delgado 2001, p. 19. For example: Μοίραις, Ἀνάγκαις, ... καὶ φθιμένοις ἄωροις, βιομόροις πέμπω τροφάς (*PGM* IV 1401), τὰν Ἐκάταν σε καλῶ σὺν ἀποφθιμένοισιν ἄωροις (*PGM* 2731, SM 44.14, SM 45.3), παρακατατίθεμαι ὑμῖν τοῦτον τὸν κατάδεσμον, ... θεοῖς καὶ δαίμοσι καταχθονίοις, ἄωροις τε καὶ ἄωραις (*PGM* IV 342), ὁ δὲ κρίκος καὶ εἰς φρέαρ βάλλεται ἀχρημάτιστον ἢ παρὰ ἄωρον (*PGM* V 347), τίθεσαι ἡλίου δύνοντος παρὰ ἄωρου ἢ βιαίου θήκην (*PGM* IV 333), etc.

¹⁷ See *SGD*, pp. 192-193; *NGCT*, n. 99 [Heintz 1998, p. 340, n. 23]. The second *defixio* from Apamea [*NGCT*, n. 100] is a shorter version of the first.

¹⁸ See Mitford 1971: 127.37, 129.21, 131.26, 134.24, 135.30, 136.23, 137.24, 138.28, 139.28, 140.23, 142.25: ὅμῃς οἱ ὄδε κάτω κίμενοι ἄωροι κὲ ἀνώνυμοι.

¹⁹ Shkorpil 1908, pp. 71-72; *IGDOP* 109, pp. 176-178; Jordan 1997, pp. 212-219; Belousov 2017, pp. 48-62: [ᾶ]σπερ σὲ ἡμεῖς οὐ γεινώσκομεν, οὕτως Εὐπο[λ]ις καὶ Διονύσιος, Μακαρεὺς, Ἀρι[σ]τοκράτης καὶ Δημόπολις, [Κ]ωμαῖος, Ἡραγόρης, ἐπ' [ὄκο]ϊον πρᾶγμα παραγίνονται, κ[α]ὶ Λεπτίνας, Ἐπικράτης, Ἐστιαῖος, ἐπ' ὅ τι πρᾶγμα [παρα]γίνονται, ἐπ' ὅ

context of the artifact, which is a lead tablet found on the necropolis, indicates that we are, probably, dealing here with the appeal to the spirits of prematurely deceased people, to whom persons (or person) are entrusted, whose names are not mentioned in this spell, but were pronounced, perhaps, in the ritual. The multiple repetition of the word ἀνώνυμος could be due to the fact that the grave into which this spell was put could have been the common burial of many people who were ἄωροι²⁰, or we could be dealing with a ritual «magic repetition» of the nameless deities²¹.

Of course, unequivocal identification of ἀνώνυμοι with ἄωροι could seem to be too bold a hypothesis; it is quite possible that there was in fact some kind of a difference between these two groups of chthonic creatures. I think, however, that in this magical context, i.e. the curse being sent to the vengeful dead, both adjectives have the same reference (the untimely departed) and point to different yet connected aspects of the image of the deceased. The word ἄωρος refers to a person who died before reaching their maturity (ῶρα), i.e. physical human perfection. As for the ἀνώνυμος adjective, it describes the loss of personal identity (in form of the personal name — ὄνομα) after death. Personal names were no less important in the Hellenic society than among the ancient Egyptians. In *defixiones* the name in essence replaces or even materializes its bearer on the lead tablet. Therefore, the practice of cursing the enemies' names does not seem to be accidental to me. For instance, we can find the following examples in Attic curses: ὄνομα[α κατ]αδ(ῶ) (*DTA* 57₂₀); Ἐρμῆ κάτοχ(ε) κάτοχος / ἴσθι τούτων τῶν ὀνομάτων / καὶ τῶν τούτων πάντων (*DTA* 100a). There are similar examples from other regions, e.g. from Antipolis (τὰ ὀνόματα)²² and from Hadrumetum (ἄρον τέ[ν] ψυχὲν κέ τὸ

τινα μαρτυρίην οἴ[δ]τοι ἴνῳσαν ὠ[σπερ] ἡμεῖς σέ. [ἦ]ν δέ μοι αὐτοῦς κατάσχησ και κ[ατα] λάβησ, ἐπ' ᾧ δέ σέ τειμήσω και σο[ι] ἄριστον δ[ῶ]{ρ}ρον παρασκε[υῶ].

²⁰ It is interesting to note in this connection that, according to Jutta Stroszeck's presentation at the workshop on the ancient *defixiones* organized by Prof. Martin Dreher and his team in Magdeburg (Germany) in 2016, child or family burials containing multiple *defixiones* were discovered on Athenian Kerameikos. This confirms that 1) there were common burials of persons, 2) whose death was considered by the Athenians as unnatural, and 3) the Athenians knew about such graves and put *defixiones* in them. The most prominent example of such a grave is the burial of Lissos, see Vierneisel-Schlörb 1966, Beil. 51,1.

²¹ See *BullÉp.* 2015: 542: «il a écrit dix-huit fois ἀνώνυμος, étant convaincu que la puissance chthonienne saurait quels étaient les ἀνώνυμοι qu'il fallait punir» (A. Avram).

²² *SGD*, p. 183.

ὄνομα α[ὐτοῦ - -])²³. Euripides' Orestes also talks about the inevitable changes in personality after death: ἀνώνυμοι θανόντες οὐ γελώμεθ' ἄν (*IT* 502 Diggle)²⁴.

Eleni Chronopoulou thinks that the word ἀνώνυμος written on the tablet 17 times could mean one of the following: «a) que el *defigens* no conoce cuántos son sus enemigos y escribe todos los que caben en la tablilla; b) que había un único ἀνώνυμος y el *defigens* pensaba que con la repetición se reforzaba la maldición; o c) que sabía exactamente cuántos eran pero no conocía sus nombres. En mi opinión, la primera opción es la más probable»²⁵. This thesis is justified by the fact that the plate does not contain the actual names

²³ *SGD*, n. 146. Cf. also Attic *defixiones* *DT* 51, *SEG* XXXV 213 (ὡς ταῦτα τὰ ὀνόματα ψύ[χε]τα<ι>, οὕτω ψυχέσθω Εὐτυχιανός, ὄν [ἔ]τεκεν Εὐτυχία, ὄν ἀπολύει Αἰθάλης), 214, 215, 216 (ὡς ταῦτα τὰ ὀνόματα ψύχετε, οὕτως καὶ Αττάλου ψυχέσθω τὸ ὄνομα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ, ἡ ὄργη, ἡ ἐπιστήμη, ἡ ἐπιπομπή, ὁ νοῦς, ἡ ἐπιστήμη, ὁ λογισμός), 217, 218 (ὡς ταῦτα τὰ ὀνόματα ψύχεται, οὕτω καὶ Αλκιδάμου ψυχεῖσθω τὸ ὄνομα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ, ἡ ὄργη, ἡ ἐπιστήμη, ὁ λογισμός), 219 (ὡς ταῦτα τὰ ὀνόματα ψύχεται, οὕτως Καρποδώρας ἐπὶ Τροφιμῆ ψυχέσθω τὸ ὄνομα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ, ἡ ὄργη, ἡ ἐπιπομπή, ὁ [νοῦς], ἡ ἐπι[στή]μη, [ὁ] λο[γισμός]), 220 (ὡς ταῦτα τὰ ὀνόματα ψύχεται, οὕτως 15 καὶ Λεοσθένου καὶ Πείου [ψυχ]έσθω τὰ ὀνόματα ἐπὶ Ἰουλιανῆ καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ, ἡ ὄργη, ἡ [ἐπισ]τήμη, ἡ ὄργη, ἡ ἐπιπομπή, ὁ νοῦς, ἡ ἐπιστήμη, ὁ λογισμός), 221 (ὡς ταῦτα τὰ ὀνόματα ψύχεται, οὕτω καὶ Ἰο[υ]λιανῆς ψυχέσθω τ[ὸ] ὄνομα ἐπὶ Πολυ[ν]είκου καὶ ἡ ψυχ[ῆ] καὶ ἡ ὄργη, ἡ ἐπιστήμη, [ὁ] νοῦς, ὁ λογισμός) 222 (ὡς ταῦτα τὰ [ὀ]νόματα [ψύχεται, οὕτως] Ἰουλιαν[οῦ] καὶ [τ — c.3 —] ψυχέσθω τὸ ὄνομα καὶ ἡ ψυχὴ, ἡ ὄργη, ἡ ἐπιστήμη, ἡ ἐπιπομπή, ὁ νοῦς, ἡ ἐπιστήμη, ὁ λογισμός), 223 (ὡς ταῦτα) τὰ ὀνόματα ψύχεται, οὕτως Σερῆνου τοῦ καὶ Ἀρχιβί[ου] τοῦ ἀγ[δ]ρός), 227 (ὡς ταῦτα ν [τὰ ὀνόματα] καταγράφα καὶ καταψύχεται, οὕτως καὶ τὸ σῶμα [κα]ὶ [αἰ σ]άρκες καὶ τὰ νεῦρα καὶ τὰ ὀστέα καὶ τὰ μέλη καταψύγοιτο καὶ τὰ σπλάγχνα Τύχης, [ἦς] ἔτεκεν Σοφία).

²⁴ Anastasia Srghidou (2010, p. 311) comments on this verse as follows: «Il faudrait par ailleurs rappeler que la mort d'un personnage anonyme relève de l'absurde car, mourir c'est se séparer de son âme, de son corps mais aussi de son nom. Comme le remarque Oreste dans *Iphigénie en Tauride*, quand il se présente comme un anonyme, un nommé "malheureux" ("mon nom juste serait infortuné", dit-il), "On ne veillera point la mort des anonymes" (Ἀνώνυμοι θανόντες οὐ γελώμεθ' ἄν). Or, la possibilité d'une séparation entre le corps et le nom est là; elle est explicite et bien réelle: "Est-ce moi, ou mon nom, que tu veux immoler?" (Τὸ σῶμα θύσεις τοῦμόν, οὐχὶ τοῦνομα), demande Oreste. Il se tisse ainsi entre le corps vivant du héros et le fait de porter un "nom" un lien que l'on ne saurait écarter de l'analyse et de la compréhension d'identités sociales. C'est en ce sens que Polyxène, dans *Hécube*, par exemple, déplorant son statut d'esclave (νῦν δ'εἰμὶ δούλη), souligne que "ce nom" d'abord lui fait désirer la mort (πρῶτα μὲν τοῦνομα / θανεῖν ἐράν).

²⁵ Chronopoulou 2019, p. 80.

of the author's damned opponents, and the word ἀνώνημος cannot refer to the demon or the spirit of a prematurely deceased person because it is given in the nominative case.

First of all, it should be noted that it was Benedetto Bravo who first suggested that the word ἀνώνημος on the plate could refer to unknown enemies of the spell's author²⁶, and I already had the opportunity to make a brief comment on his assumption²⁷. Here I would like to note only that the thesis of B. Bravo repeated by E. Chronopoulou cannot be supported by any parallels in sources presently available. In the context of ancient magic, and I am almost absolutely convinced of this, the word ἀνώνημος is used exclusively as a reference to the spirit of a prematurely deceased person, and there are simply no other meanings registered by the texts. The absence of personal names of the cursed people on the tablet is indeed puzzling, but as E. Chronopoulou herself notes, «la estructura de nuestra *defixio* de Panticapeo parece que corresponde a una etapa de magia menos elaborada en lo que se refiere al texto de la tablilla»²⁸. The lack of personal names on the tablet can be explained, firstly, by the magical ritual itself, in which the names were obviously spoken orally, but are not recorded in the text of the inscription²⁹, and secondly, by the intention of the *defigens* not to leave any evidence against himself.

Furthermore, I cannot understand why Eleni Chronopoulou is so convinced that «el término ἀνώνημος aparece en nominativo»³⁰: the Greek grammar

²⁶ Bravo, Wolicki 2015-2016, p. 235 (see also *SEG* LXIII 616): «L'opérateur était convaincu de l'existence de plusieurs personnes». See also *BullÉp.* 2017, p. 388.

²⁷ *EP* 2016: 24: «B. Bravo disputes our (*ZPE* 190 (2014) 145-148; *EP* 2013: 18; 2014: 38) interpretation of the eighteen-fold repetition of the word ἀνώνημος on the Panticapaeum spell as a case of *repetitio magica*. Bravo believes that the *defigens* did not know the names of his opponents in court, and therefore he repeated ἀνώνημος eighteen times. In our opinion, the idea of Bravo is not proven, and it would be more logical to assume that the *defigens* appeals to the vengeful spirit of a prematurely deceased person with the help of the word ἀνώνημος, and not in order to designate in such a way a living enemy. As for the repeated name of the deity or its replacement, it is quite natural for the practice of prayer in the ancient and modern religions. Is it possible that the phrase "Lord, have mercy", repeated 40 times in orthodox Christian practice, could be understood by B. Bravo as an appeal to forty gods?» (A. Belousov).

²⁸ Chronopoulou 2019, p. 79.

²⁹ On the delay in the design of the structure of a magical text in relation to the oral ritual on amulets, for example, see Faraone 2012, p. 6.

³⁰ Chronopoulou 2019, p. 79.

teaches us that the vocative case of complex adjectives of 1-2 declensions is identical with the nominative, so ἀνώνυμος can also be a vocative form. Dr. Chronopoulou states that «si se tratase de una invocación, sería de esperar que apareciera en vocativo ο, en el caso de que hubiera un verbo de invocación o conjuro en la fórmula oral (que no aparece en la tablilla), el término tendría que ir en acusativo»³¹; but taking into account the fact that the monument could be attributed to the 4th century BC, we can assume that the word ΑΝΩΝΥΜΟΣ, in fact, could also be interpreted as an accusative case with the typical Ionic spelling of -ου through Ο³², which is very usual in Bosporan inscriptions of the epoch. In other words, it seems impossible to come to an irrefutable conclusion on the grammatical case of ἀνώνυμος.

The joint efforts of Dr. Eleni Chronopoulou and myself seem to have significantly refined the text of the inscription on the mysterious Bosporan *lamella*. However, I dare to argue that the evidence in favor of the initial interpretation of the inscription as a *defixio*, in which the *defigens* calls upon the demonic spirit of prematurely deceased, is much weightier than the arguments of B. Bravo and E. Chronopoulou in favour of the idea that the word ἀνώνυμος on our lead plate refers to some persons unknown to the author of the spell, but still cursed by him. Beyond any doubt, the inscription of the lead tablet from Panticapaeum remains an enigmatic document, so any discussion of its contents, meaning and purpose is extremely useful. Within the frames of such a discussion all the arguments should be carefully pondered. As this epigraphic document does not have any direct parallels, it is necessary to start from existing analogues. Unfortunately, E. Chronopoulou did not cite any examples from known texts in support of her point of view and limited her arguments to logic not grounded in source material. The presence of the adversary's names on a *defixio* is undoubtedly necessary, however, should we then leap to the conclusion that the only word of the text —ἀνώνυμος— is in fact how the author of the document designated his enemies? This conclusion might seem logical, but only at first: the curses always operate with actual names, and it was vitally important for the success of the charm to use the right name, ideally, accompanied by a patronym or a metronym, so to call the adversaries ἀνώνυμοι would mean to condemn the curse to failure from the very begin-

³¹ Chronopoulou 2019, p. 79.

³² This possibility is also mentioned in *editio princeps*, see Belousov, Fedoseev 2014, p. 146: ἀωνύμῶς.

ning. If we, however, depart from the examples of the use of this word in magical inscriptions (κάτω κίμενοι ἄωροι κὲ ἀνώνυμοι) and papyri, we shall come to a conclusion that the ἀνώνυμοι of our text might refer to chthonic demons, possibly, the dead, whom the ancients also called ἄωροι. It is true that it is impossible to unambiguously identify this document as a *defixio*; however, if it is in fact a *defixio*, one might suggest that the names of the enemies were called out orally in the course of the ritual or, alternatively, that the tablet served as a «cover» for another medium³³, which did not survive (or is not unearthed yet), where these names were written. Be as it may, I am grateful to Dr. E. Chronopoulou for her excellent paper that made me return to the document I published a while ago and give more thought to its implications.

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³³ Cf. for example, a lead box from Bosphorus, which probably contained some other *tabella* or voodoo doll inside: Preisendanz 1930.

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