CURSE TABLETS

The South Oscan curse tablets are some of the most recently discovered Oscan texts. By the year 2000, the number of Oscan curse tablets had doubled since Vetter published his *Handbuch* in 1953, and many of these new texts came from Lucania and Bruttium.[1] The eight South Oscan curse tablets now outnumber the six examples written in the Central Oscan alphabet, and the corpus looks likely to grow further, since a number of lead tablets from South Oscan sites have not yet been unrolled.[2]

The discovery of South Oscan curse tablets has radically changed the amount of evidence we have for language contact in the region. Out of all of the Oscan inscriptions written in the Greek alphabet, these are the texts that give us the clearest evidence of ongoing contact with Greek. Curse tablets may also show the written language of a wider range of the population than official or legal texts, though this assumption should be treated very carefully. Curse tablets are also important to our understanding of the South Oscan area because they give us a huge amount of onomastic material: around 50 per cent of all the names attested in South Oscan are found in curses.[3]

The most popular and widely applicable definition of curse tablets is by Jordan: '*Defixiones*, more commonly known as curse tablets, are inscribed pieces of lead or lead alloy, usually in the form of small, thin sheets, intended to influence, by supernatural means, the actions or welfare of persons or animals against their will'.[4] There are over a thousand surviving curse

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[1] Poccetti 2000: 766.

[2] Poccetti and Gualtieri 1990: 139–40; Crawford 2011b: 1334.

[3] McDonald 2012a: 45.

[4] Jordan 1985: 151; Ogden 1999: 3. Ogden points out that 'by supernatural means' could perhaps be omitted from this definition, depending on how curse tablets were

tablets from the ancient world, or as many as 1,500 if examples written on materials other than lead are included.[5] The oldest are found in Sicily and Attica, dating to the sixth and fifth centuries, and are written in Greek.[6] From the second half of the fourth century, curse tablets start to appear in other languages, including Oscan.[7] We know, from the essential continuity of the form and the formulae, that Greek curse tablets were the direct model for Oscan curse tablets.[8]

Most of the earliest tablets written in Greek give only the name(s) of the target. Where a deity is mentioned, it is usually Hermes or Persephone.[9] It is possible that the curse or binding spell was originally said aloud, and the spoken portions of the cursing ritual slowly came to be written alongside the names later.[10] Generally, the majority of Latin and Greek examples refer to 'binding' the victim, rather than to physical harm. The language of the texts can be divided into three basic types, though one tablet may show a combination of elements. These types are: performative, with a first-person verb ('I bind X'); declarative, with a third-person verb ('this curse binds X'); and wishes or commands with an invocation to some kind of agent ('Hermes/Hekate/spirits, come and bind X').[11] In the third category, the requests may be written in the

regarded in the ancient world. There are several terms for texts written on lead tablets which target individuals for some kind of punishment. Often, they are called *defixiones* or *katadesmoi* (sing. *defixio*; *katadesmos*). These terms are derived from the 'verbs of binding' in texts in Latin and Greek respectively, and the terms used in literary sources to refer to 'binding spells' (e.g. Plato, *Republic* 2.364b; *Laws* 10.909a, Pliny, *NH* 28.4; Tac. *Ann.* 2.69; Cic. *Brutus* 217), though we do not know what term would have been given to the tablets themselves. The term *defixiones* is often extended to examples in all languages. However, the use of the term *defixio* for Oscan texts may be misleading, since the Latin tradition shows a number of developments not found in the other languages of Italy, such as the nonsense words known as *voces mysticae*, the use of drawings, and more extensive curse formulae. Some tablets that seek the return of stolen goods, or revenge for theft, are known as 'prayers for justice' or 'judicial prayers'. These typically date to the Roman Imperial period, and so this separate category is not relevant to the Oscan examples. Here, I use the general term 'curse tablets'.

5 Gager 1992: 3.   6 Faraone 1991: 3.
7 Adams 2003: 139. Latin curse tablets begin to appear in the second century BC. The earliest seems to be Kropp 1.5.4/1, from Pompeii. The earliest Etruscan example also appears to be from the second century BC (*ET* Po 4.4).
8 Dickie 2001: 128.   9 Faraone 1991: 4.
10 Faraone 1991: 4.   11 Poccetti 2002: 14.

imperative, or the writer may use persuasive analogies intended to cause the victim to enter a certain state. For example, some ask that the victim become cold or useless like the lead tablet.[12]

After being written and rolled up, the tablets were usually deposited in graves, sanctuaries associated with chthonic deities or wells.[13] It is possible that the association with graves was intended to invoke the spirits of people who had died prematurely, though this is difficult to confirm because information about the graves where curse tablets have been found is often not known or not recorded.[14] Earlier tablets from the Greek world also come with lead or wax dolls, sometimes pierced with pins, and some figurines found at the Kerameikos in Athens from *c*. 400 BC were shut into miniature coffins.[15]

The language of curse tablets can be very unlike the language of other genres of inscriptions. Some tablets show various strategies for obfuscation, probably as a way of increasing the magical potency of the text by removing it from everyday human language.[16] This fits with the cross-cultural tendency to make ritual and magical language distinct from ordinary language by the use of marked forms.[17] In some curse tablets, the names of the targets are scrambled, or the text is written retrograde long after this direction of writing had fallen out of regular use.[18] Some texts also switch the direction of writing, change the order of syllables within a word, or reverse the order of letters within each syllable, e.g. ναιταμοχϛ for αντιμαχοϛ.[19] Sometimes the direction of writing is even used as a representation of the 'reversal' of the activities of the victim: DTA 67 asks that the victim's words be made cold and ἐπ' ἀρισ-τερᾷ 'reversed', like the words of the curse.[20] As we will see,

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[12] Kropp 2010: 367–8.   [13] Jordan 1985: 152; Jordan and Curbera 1998: 31.
[14] Jordan 1985: 152.   [15] Gager 1992: 15.   [16] Adams 2003: 128.
[17] Blom 2012: 124. I use the word 'magical' in this chapter to refer to the language of curse tablets, on the understanding that the boundaries between religion, magic and medicine were blurred and complicated. The less value-laden term 'ritual language' is not specific enough, and does not make clear that there are particular usages found in curse tablets but not in dedications, funerary inscriptions and other texts associated with rituals.
[18] Jordan and Curbera 1998: 33.   [19] Poccetti 2002: 48.
[20] Poccetti 2002: 41; Faraone and Kropp 2010: 382.

features from more than one language may also be combined to create a mixed language. With a few exceptions, mystical non-sense words, sometimes referred to as *voces mysticae*, are not used until the Roman Imperial period.[21]

Because of their unusual manipulation of language, linguistic evidence derived from curse tablets should be used with care. It is tempting to see curse tablets as closer to everyday speech than formulaic official inscriptions because they sometimes appear to be written more spontaneously or by individuals with lower literacy levels. For example, Lambert states that curse tablets 'betray the *language and the concerns of common people*' (original emphasis).[22] This continues to be a common belief in the scholarship on curse tablets.[23]

However, there is not necessarily a closer than usual connection between the language of curse tablets and the spoken language of the non-elite. Curse tablets are not less prone to being formulaic than official, religious or funerary inscriptions; in fact, the practice was controlled by tradition and convention, and texts were often copied from handbooks.[24] Their execution represents a large range of competencies, from very large, awkward letters to apparently professional handwriting.[25] Comments by Plato also suggest that professionals were involved in the production of curse tablets in Greece from an early period.[26] There is also evidence that some curse tablets stuck to the written norms of their times reasonably closely.[27] Where aspects of spoken language are represented in curse tablets, these may belong to any social class, not only the non-elite.[28] Obfuscation is also likely to take the language of the text further away from contemporary spoken language rather than closer to it.

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[21] Gager 1992: 5.   [22] Lambert 2004: 76.
[23] Gager 1992: v, 'Unlike ancient literary texts, they are devoid of the distortions introduced by factors such as education, social class or status, and literary genres and traditions'; Poccetti 2010: 674, 'Ils reflètent la langue parlée locale et les choix personnels des graveurs.'
[24] Arbabzadah 2012: 7; Clackson 2011: 37.
[25] In Roman Imperial times, professional scribes may have taken a larger role in production. Gager 1992: 4–5.
[26] Dickie 2001: 48–9.   [27] Arbabzadah 2012: 269.
[28] Curbera and Jordan 2007: 1,350.

We will see in this chapter that South Oscan curse tablets show a great deal of influence from Greek. This is not evidence of a highly bilingual or mixed spoken language among the lower classes. Rather, this evidence relates to the practices and traditions of writing curse tablets. On the one hand, the writer of a curse may be motivated to keep a traditional Greek formula, as its effectiveness may be reduced if the formula is translated or changed. On the other hand, writers of curses may use code-switching or graphic borrowings as strategies to put the language of the text at one remove from their everyday language.

Curse tablets in Italy

The use of curse tablets in Italy and Sicily originated in Greek-speaking communities and spread into non-Greek-speaking communities through cultural contact. The earliest tablets from the region are found in Sicily. Almost all of the sites where Oscan curse tablets have been found are coastal cities in Lucania, Bruttium and Campania, especially sites where both Greek and Oscan are known to have been in use such as Laos, Petelia and Cumae. The close connections between Greek, Oscan and Latin curse tablets in Italy are not often dwelt upon apart from in linguistic scholarship on the Oscan examples.[29] Gager mentions the use and influence of various languages other than Latin and Greek in curse texts, but does not mention Oscan.[30]

A complete list of the curse tablets in all languages found in Italy from the sixth to the first century BC is given in Table 17.[31] The languages of curse tablets in Italy appear to change as the practice of writing curses spread northwards into new areas.

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[29] Dickie's account of the spread of curse tablets into Italy does include Etruscan and Oscan examples, though his account is now somewhat out of date. See Dickie 2001: 128–9.

[30] E.g. Gager 1992: 14, 103.

[31] This list includes all Greek and Latin examples found up to approximately 2008, all Etruscan examples listed in Rix 1991, and all Sabellian examples included in Crawford 2011b. The following corpora were used: DT Audollent; Dubois GG I; Dubois GG II; SGD; NGCT; Kropp; *Imagines*; *ET*.

Table 17 *Curse tablets in Italy*

Inscription	Date	Location	Language
DT Audollent 302	Fifth C	Cumae	Greek
SGD 122	Fifth/fourth C	Sicily or Italy	Greek
Lu 47 (Thurii Copia 1)	350–300	Thurii Copia, Bruttium	Oscan (South)
Lu 46 (Laos 2)	330–320	Laos, Lucania	Oscan (South)
Lu 45 (Buxentum 3)	Second half fourth C?	Roccagloriosa, Lucania	Oscan (South)/ (Greek)
NGCT 83	Late fourth C	Locri Epizephyrioi, Bruttium	Greek
Lu 63 (Laos 3)	*c.* 300	Laos, Lucania	Oscan (South)
Laos 4	*c.* 300	Laos, Lucania	Oscan (South)
Petelia 2	*c.* 300	Petelia, Bruttium	Oscan (South)/ Greek
SGD 125	Fourth/third century	Taras, Apulia	Greek
SGD 126	Fourth/third century	Taras, Apulia	Greek
NGCT 82	Fourth/third century	Teuranus Ager, Bruttium	Greek
Lu 44 (Crimisa 3)	300–250	Crimisa, Bruttium	Oscan (South)
Sa 36 (Bovianum 98)	300–200	Bovianum, Samnium	Oscan (Central)
Cp 36 (Capua 33)	300–200	Capua, Campania	Oscan (Central)
DT Audollent 212	Third C	Bruttium	Greek
SGD 123	Third C	Locri Epizephyrioi, Bruttium	Greek
SGD 124	Third C	Metapontum, Lucania	Greek
Lu 43 (Teuranus Ager 1)	Before 200	Teuranus Ager, Bruttium	Oscan (South)

Table 17 (*cont.*)

Inscription	Date	Location	Language
Cp 37 (Capua 34)	200–150	Capua, Campania	Oscan (Central)
Cm 14 (Cumae 8)	200–150	Cumae, Campania	Oscan (Central)
NGCT 81	Late second C	Rhegium, Bruttium	Greek
Kropp 1.5.4/1	Second C	Pompeii, Campania	Latin
ET Po 4.4	Second C	Populonia, Etruria	Etruscan
Kropp 1.1.3/1	Second/first C	Caere, Etruria	Latin
Cm 13 (Cumae 9)	125–50 BC	Cumae, Campania	Oscan (Central)
Cm 15 (Cumae 10)	100–50 BC	Cumae, Campania	Oscan (Central)/ Latin
Kropp 1.4.2/1 (DT Audollent 133)	First half first century	Mentana, Latium	Latin
Kropp 1.4.2/2 (DT Audollent 134)	First half first century	Mentana, Latium	Latin
Kropp 1.4.2/3 (DT Audollent 135)	First half first century	Mentana, Latium	Latin
Kropp 1.4.4/3 (DT Audollent 139)	First century	Rome, Latium	Latin
Kropp 1.4.4/8	First century	Rome, Latium	Latin
Kropp 1.4.4/9	First century	Rome, Latium	Latin
Kropp 1.4.4/10	First century	Rome, Latium	Latin
Kropp 1.4.4/11	First century	Rome, Latium	Latin
Kropp 1.4.4/12	First century	Rome, Latium	Latin
Kropp 1.7.2/1	First century	Ateste, Veneto	Latin
ET Vt 4.1	Late?	Volaterrae, Etruria	Etruscan
ET Vt 4.2	Late?	Volaterrae, Etruria	Etruscan
ET Vt 4.3	Late?	Volaterrae, Etruria	Etruscan
ET Vt 4.4	Late?	Volaterrae, Etruria	Etruscan
ET Vt 4.6	Late?	Volaterrae, Etruria	Etruscan

We should also note that curses in different languages can be produced at the same site, such as NGCT 82 (Greek) and Lu 43 (Oscan) at Teuranus Ager, and that we have evidence for Greek curse tablets being written at sites where Oscan was also in use, such as SGD 124 at Metapontum.

In total, there are fourteen curse tablets written in Oscan, all of which were written between the fourth and first century BC.[32] Eight of the Oscan curse tablets are written in the South Oscan alphabet. South Oscan curse tablets appear to have started being produced before Central Oscan curse tablets. The earlier South Oscan tablets show the most evidence of contact with Greek, while the latest Central Oscan tablets show more evidence of contact with Latin. There is not necessarily clear continuity between South Oscan and Central Oscan texts, as we will see in the rest of this chapter. It seems likely that the production of curse tablets in different Oscan-speaking regions was the result of multiple points of transmission from different Greek-speakers, probably at different periods, resulting in regional differences between Central Oscan and South Oscan curse tablets.

The Oscan texts were written using similar methods to Greek and Latin curse tablets, on thin sheets of lead or lead alloy, which were then rolled up or pierced with nails. The Oscan practice of writing curse tablets sometimes included both a list of targets and an explicit curse formula, e.g. Petelia 2, Cp 36 (Capua 33), Cm 13 (Cumae 9). But very often Oscan curse inscriptions were limited to long lists of name components in either the nominative or the accusative, some of which contained a dozen or more names.[33] Some examples in South Oscan show both nominatives and accusatives, apparently in opposition to each other as subject and object of an elided verb (see below).

It has been noted elsewhere that the earliest Latin curses come from Oscan-speaking areas such as Cumae and Pompeii,

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[32] For full bibliography on all of the Oscan curse tablets, see Murano 2013.
[33] For the nominative, see e.g. Lu 63 (Laos 3), Laos 4, Sa 36 (Bovianum 98), Cm 14 (Cumae 8); for the accusative, see e.g. Lu 46 (Laos 2).

that Latin-speakers may have associated Oscan and related languages with magic, and that they translated existing Oscan formulae when writing curses in Latin.[34] For example, Poccetti compares the Latin expression (*CIL* I² 1012 = *ILLRP* 1144, Rome) *nec loqui nec sermonare possit*, 'may he be able neither to say nor to talk', with the Oscan (Cp 36/Capua 33) **nep deíkum nep fatíum pútíad**, 'may he be able neither to say nor to speak'.[35] However, this theory should be treated carefully: the occasional association of Oscan with magical language does not mean that all Latin curse tablets were derived from Oscan sources. The first-century examples from Rome, for example, are more likely to have arisen from contact with Greek than with Oscan.

South Oscan curse tablets

The details of the findspots and archaeological contexts of the eight South Oscan curse tablets are given in Table 18. Only three of the eight are known to have been found in grave contexts. Of the others, Petelia 2 contains an explicit curse formula, while Lu 45 (Buxentum 3), Lu 63 (Laos 3) and Lu 47 (Thurii Copia 1) are assumed to be curse texts on the grounds of their physical appearance. Lu 45 is not associated with any grave, but could be linked to a cult or ceremonial context.[36] This is comparable to the Greek practice of depositing curse tablets in sacred contexts, especially sanctuaries of chthonic deities. Lu 47 was found in an area with monumental buildings, and other lead tablets, which have not yet been unrolled, were found in the same area.[37]

Curse formulae

In in the following sections, I will discuss some aspects of the language of South Oscan curse tablets. As explained above,

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[34] Dench 1995: 166; Adams 2003: 139. See, for example, Horace, *Epod.* 17.27–9; 17.60; Ovid, *Ars Am.* 2.102; Horace, *Sat.* 1.9.29–30.
[35] Poccetti 1993a: 80.   [36] Poccetti and Gualtieri 1990: 145.
[37] Poccetti 1993b: 214.

Table 18 *Archaeological contexts of South Oscan curse tablets*

Inscription	Context	Details
Lu 45 (Buxentum 3)	Roccagloriosa. Outside SE corner of portico, Complex A.	Found in dumped material in 1977; text read in 1986.
Lu 46 (Laos 2)	Laos. Tomb.	Chamber tomb. Burial of man, woman and horse with high-status grave goods. Found 1963.[a]
Lu 63 (Laos 3)	Laos. None.	Acquired from collector in 1890. Perhaps originally nailed to wall or wall of tomb?[b]
Laos 4	Laos. None.	Acquired from collector in 1890.
Lu 47 (Thurii Copia 1)	Castiglione. Found on surface.	Found near so-called 'theatre' in the 1970s.
Lu 44 (Crimisa 3)[c]	Crimisa. Tomb.	Found near temple of Apollo Aleus in the 1970s.
Petelia 2	Strongoli. Found on surface.	Found near necropolis areas of Fondo Castello and le Manche in 2000.
Lu 43 (Teuranus Ager 1)	Tiriolo. Tomb.	Found rolled up, 1881/2.

[a] Greco and Guzzo 1992.
[b] Crawford 2011b: 1348.
[c] A faked copy of Lu 44 also exists. It misreads the text of Lu 44 in several places, for example, understanding <ΛΛ> as <M>. Poccetti 1984: 82.

curse tablets across the ancient world often used formulaic language to request particular outcomes for the target, though the use of these formulae is rare in South Oscan. In Petelia 2 the list of the targets' names is followed by a curse formula, which begins in Oscan and code-switches into Greek. Both the Oscan and Greek halves of the formula appear to be close imitations of an existing Greek model (see below).

Petelia 2 is the only South Oscan text to include an explicit curse formula. All of the other seven curses consist only of lists of names or, in the case of Lu 45, a list of names following an unrelated text. This contrasts with the Central Oscan curse tablets, in which four out of six examples include some formula or other details besides the names of the targets. Lists of names with no curse formula are fairly common in Greek curse tablets from Italy and Sicily, although explicit curse formulae and verbs of binding become more common during the Hellenistic period.

Given the difference in the use of formulae, it is worth exploring the possibility that there were different customs in writing curses in the South Oscan and Central Oscan areas. The numbers of texts are small in each case, and so the evidence should be taken very cautiously. But if there was indeed a regional difference, there are a number of reasons why this may have come about. The variation may relate in part to the time periods at which the curse tablets were written, since in general later curse tablets tend to contain lengthier and more complex formulae. The difference may also suggest that curse tablets were adopted separately in the South Oscan and Central Oscan areas. The adoption of curse tablets in the Central Oscan area may have taken place at a slightly later period, perhaps in the third or even early second century when longer curse formulae were becoming more common in Greek, rather than in the fourth century.

Nominative/accusative oppositions

Typically, either the nominative or accusative is used for lists of names in curse tablets. There are some examples where the
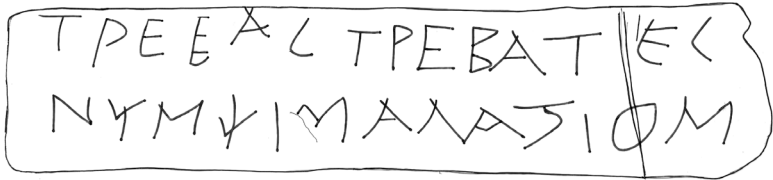
Figure 13   Lu 43 (Teuranus Ager 1). Drawing by F. Murano

writer uses both, starting out in one case before lapsing into the other. This is probably because the list is thought of as a list of names in a default case and not part of the syntax of a sentence.[38]

Three of the eight South Oscan curse tablets show both the nominative and accusative in their list of names. These are not lists in which the writer eventually lapses into a different case, however, since these inscriptions always alternate between nominative and accusative. In Lu 43, there is just one nominative and one accusative.[39] In Lu 44 there are two names in each case; in Lu 47, there are probably three names in each case, depending on the interpretation of the damaged sections.[40] This is normally taken as a structure NOM. (VERB) ACC., where the nominative names the curser, the accusative names the victim and the verb is not stated. This pattern is not found in Central Oscan or in Greek.[41] If this is the correct interpretation, then this would be a uniquely South Oscan or Bruttian development in the structure of curse texts. It is also problematic that this NOM. (VERB) ACC. interpretation makes Lu 47 and Lu 44 read as multiple people cursing multiple targets. This is not a situation that has clear parallels in other curse texts.

There are a number of reasons why NOM. (VERB) ACC. might not be the correct interpretation. First, there is a tendency in curse tablets for the curser to avoid naming himself

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[38] Adams 2003: 682.   [39] Pisani 1952.

[40] Poccetti 1993b: 230. It is just possible that the damaged [-?-]oμ in line 2 of side B is a verb of cursing rather than an accusative name. However, Crawford 2011b: 1462 reads [2–3]ιoμ, so that this is more likely to be an accusative, perhaps [μα]ιoμ.

[41] Poccetti (1993b) 229; Dickie 2001: 128.

in writing to prevent himself from being cursed by accident or, more practically, from being found by the target of the curse if the tablet was discovered. Where there is a verb, it is most commonly a first-person verb without a named subject. The exceptions are 'prayers for justice' and erotic attraction spells.[42] These categories are not applicable here: both prayers for justice and attraction spells tend to give more detail about the target, the wrongs done, and the desired effect of the curse. They also tend to date to a later period; see, for example, the large collection of prayers for justice at Bath.[43] Poccetti suggests that the nominative/accusative opposition might not indicate the curser and the target, but some other distinction, for example, different categories of target.[44]

There are, however, exceptions to the rule against naming the curser. In DTA 55 (Attica, late fourth century BC) a name appears in the nominative at the beginning of the curse, centred above the rest of the text, which is apparently the name of the writer or commissioner of the curse.[45] In SGD 91 (Gela, Sicily, c. 450 BC) the writer curses in the first-person singular (ἀπογράφω) on behalf of another man, Eunikos, who is mentioned by name several times.[46] Although these examples give more extensive detail than the three South Oscan texts, they give a precedent for the curser being named. It is possible that this happened particularly when a curse was written on another's behalf. If Eunikos was not capable of writing his own curse, he could go to someone who would do it for him, possibly a professional, although in this case the friendship between the two men is mentioned. The South Oscan examples may be the result of a similar situation.

At the moment, there is enough of a precedent for the curser being named that the NOM. (VERB) ACC. interpretation remains preferable to reading these as lists of targets in which the case of the name varies. As with other aspects of the curse formulae, it is possible that the name of the curser was normally spoken aloud, but that it sometimes came to be written down

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[42] Ogden 1999: 18.　　[43] Ogden 1999: 37.
[44] Poccetti 1984: 83; Poccetti 1993b: 229.　　[45] Gager 1992: 158.
[46] Jordan 1985: 174; Ogden 1999: 58.

as well. It seems likely, because of the complete lack of this NOM. (VERB) ACC. pattern elsewhere, that this was a new regional development in South Oscan or even just in Bruttium. The use of a NOM. (VERB) ACC. structure shows that Oscan-speakers, even those in continued contact with written Greek models, adapted and altered the practices they borrowed.

Legal language

It has been observed several times that Oscan curse tablets may relate to judicial processes, or more generally to a *polis*-type context in which personal and political competition were an important part of everyday life.[47] This would suggest that Greek and Oscan curse tablets were similar in their social context as well as in their language and form. However, this connection is not uncomplicated, particularly in the South Oscan examples.

Greek examples of curse tablets are often related to judicial processes. Judicial or legal curses are the second largest sub-group of Greek curse tablets, after those in which the context is not given; judicial curses are also found very early, with two examples from around 500 BC on Sicily.[48] All judicial curses seem to take place before the trial and not afterwards, suggesting that commissioning a curse tablet was part of the preparation for a trial.[49] Crawford states that the corpus of Oscan curse tablets attests to a developed culture of legal writing, since four out of fourteen relate to legal procedure.[50] This would suggest that, as in Greek, lawsuits often provided the motivation for the curses that were written. Poccetti, arguing along these lines, also makes a wider point about the adoption of curse tablets into Oscan. He sees curse tablets as stemming from a certain type of organised society specific to Greek *polis* states, so that the adoption of the curse tablet model assumes the adoption of a wider social and political model.[51]

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[47] Lazzarini 1994: 169; Poccetti 2010: 675; Crawford 2011b: 1.
[48] Gager 1992: 117.   [49] Gager 1992: 117.   [50] Crawford 2011b: 1.
[51] Poccetti *et al.* 1993: 190; Poccetti 2010: 675; also Lazzarini 1994: 169.

The references to court cases and legal procedure in Central Oscan curses are similar to those in Greek examples. For example, some seek to prevent the target from speaking: **nep fatíum nep deíkum putíans**, 'may he be able neither to say nor to speak' (Cp 36/Capua 33). Some specifically curse the speech or tongue: **aginss urinss úlleis fakinss fang<v>am**, '(I curse) the actions, the speeches of that man, the deeds, the tongue...' (Cm 13/Cumae 9); *fancua(s) recta(s) sint*, 'May their tongues be rigid' (Cm 15/Cumae 10).[52] A similar Greek curse referring to the tongue has been found in Teuranus Ager (NGCT 82).[53] There are also echoes of legal language, such as the repeated use of **nep** 'not', and the use of multiple synonyms, such as **fatíum, deíkum** 'say/speak', in Cp 36, and the piling up of multiple similar items without conjunctions, for example **aginss, urinss úlleis, fakinss, fangvam, biass, biítam, aftiím, anamúm, aitatúm, amirikum**, 'the actions, the speeches of that man, the deeds, the tongue, the strengths, the life, the ability, the spirit, the age, the wealth', in Cm 13. The Greek curse found in Teuranus Ager shows a very similar list of targeted attributes: ψυχάν, σῶμα (or στόμα), ἰσχύν, δύναμιν, 'spirit, body (or mouth), strength, power'.[54] Curses also show imitation of the conditional structure used in legal texts, for example **svai: neip: dadid lamatir: akrid eiseis dunte[d]**, 'if one should not give, may he be torn by his (Cerberus') sharp bite' (Cp 37/Capua 34), which we might compare to the South Oscan legal text Lu 62 (Buxentum 1): σϝαι ειοκ νειπ ϝακτιεδ 'if he should not do these things...'[55] Whether this choice of language relates clearly to the adoption of a *polis*-state political system, as Poccetti suggests, is less obvious.[56]

This kind of legal language appears in four out of six of the Central Oscan curse tablets. It also appears in Greek

[52] Cm 15 is written in a mixture of Oscan and Latin.   [53] Lazzarini 1994: 164.

[54] Lazzarini 1994: 164. It is not impossible that this Greek curse is in fact based on an existing Italic curse formula, and not the other way round, given the parallels between Cm 13 and the Umbrian curse Tab. Ig. vib 60/viia 49 noted by Brent Vine, Vine 2004.

[55] See also *lamatir* as a legal punishment (Tabula Bantina, line 21).

[56] We might also consider some aspects of these curses, such as alliterative lists and the phrase 'strength (and) life', to be derived from an Italic poetic tradition. See Watkins 1995: 155, 220–1; Vine 2004: 616–18.

curse tablets from Southern Italy, including the example from
Teuranus Ager mentioned above. However, we do not have
any clear evidence of legal language or legal context for the
South Oscan curse tablets. It is possible that the formula used in
Petelia 2 makes an ambiguous reference to legal procedure. The
Oscan section of the curse formula, which reads πισπιτ ι(νι)μ
σολλομ ηισου, may be a translation of a common Greek curse
formula including anyone acting on behalf of those already
named in the curse (see below). This wording could relate to
a legal case, though this is not made explicit. It is also possi-
ble, though speculative, that the long lists of names found in
South Oscan curses relate to lists of witnesses in a court case,
since this is a context in which someone might want to target a
number of people simultaneously.

However, we do not have enough context in any of the South
Oscan examples to say what kind of conflict motivated them.
For example, Lu 45 might relate not to legal procedure but to
trade, since the same sheet of lead had previously been used
to record a sale; curses with commercial motivations were also
typical of Hellenistic Greece.[57] Although they are quite differ-
ent from the Central Oscan examples, the South Oscan texts
are not unusual in the context of the contemporary practice
of curse tablets overall. The frequency of judicial curses in
Classical and Hellenistic Greece should not lead us to for-
get that the most common sub-group of Greek curses at this
period is those where the context is not known at all. The
lack of context in South Oscan curses is therefore not partic-
ularly unexpected, and may be the result of normal variation
in the amount of detail provided at this period. The difference
between the South Oscan and Central Oscan curse tablets is
nevertheless striking, even though both are based on Greek
models.

There have been other interpretations of the motivations of
those writing the South Oscan curse texts. Pugliese Carratelli
states that it is 'evidente' that the curse tablet Lu 46 (Laos 2) is
the work of an Italiote Greek who resented his subjugation to

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[57] Faraone 1991: 10; Ogden 1999: 33.

the new Lucanian conquerors.[58] As he sees it, the curse was targeting the new Oscan-speaking elite, and this is supported by the fact that some of the names in the curse are also found in the coinage of Laos of this period. This claim has more recently been refuted by Crawford.[59] The overall likelihood is that these texts were not driven by dislike of the new Oscan-speaking elite as Pugliese Carratelli claimed, but that they were motivated by the same kinds of conflicts as motivated Greek-speakers around Sicily and Italy to write similar texts, relating to lawsuits, commerce and other disagreements.

Texts

Lu 45 (Buxentum 3)

Transcription

δυϝο [με]διμνο πολε'ν' τα[3–4]ει[2–3]σ μετ[ισ ι]ανισ {δ}
υ[ϝισ] ḥερισ πολλ[ιε]σ
[γ]αϝισ φοινι[κισ] μαχιεσ
μαμερεξ [4–5]ϝιδισ
γανα[τ]σ
πακισ [-?-]
αντ[-?-]
μιν[-?-]

Translation

two-NOM.DUAL medimno-NOM.DUAL sold-3.SING./PL.PRES.PASS. Herens-NOM.? Mettis-NOM.? Bannis-NOM.?
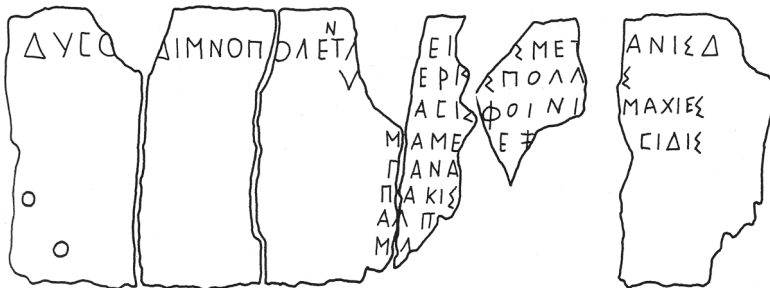
Figure 14   Lu 45 (Buxentum 3). Drawing provided by P. Poccetti

58 Pugliese Carratelli 1992: 18.   59 Crawford 2011b: 1345.

Ovis-NOM. Heris-NOM. Pollis-GEN.
Gavis-NOM. Phoinikis-NOM. Makkis-GEN.
Mamerex-NOM. [4–5]vidis-NOM.
<E>gnats-NOM.?
Pakis-NOM.
Ant[?-]
Min[-?-]

Two *medimnoi* are sold [for ??? *nomoi* (?) H]e[ren]s (?) Mett[is B]annis (?)
O[vis] Heris, son of Pollis
Gavis Phoinikis, son of Makkis
Mamerex [-?-]vidis
<E>gnats (?)
Pakis [-?-]
Ant[-?-]
Min[-?-]

The first line of the Roccagloriosa inscription, unlike the list of personal names that follows, is written across the whole width of the tablet. The line is recognisably in Greek, and reads δυϝο [με]διμνο πολεντα[ι], i.e. δυϝο μεδιμνō πōλεͷται, meaning 'two *medimnoi* (a measure of corn) are sold [for amount X]'.[60] Though he originally suggested that this could be a magical formula of some kind,[61] Poccetti later noted that the two texts are by different hands and that the unfinished Greek text is the beginning of a record of a commercial transaction, which was then discarded.[62] The sheet of lead appears to have been re-used at a later time for a list of names, which is plausibly a curse text. We do not know how much later the second text was written, or what relationship the writer of the curse may have had with the writer of the record of the transaction. While the curse text itself therefore does not show code-switching, it is nevertheless a sign of the bilingual context at this site.[63]

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[60] The addition of <ν> may be a way of 'correcting' the verb from singular (πωληται) to plural, resulting in πωληͷται, instead of the plural πωλοῦͷται. Note that the emendation in Crawford (2011b) 1334 to [με]διμνο(ι) is unnecessary, since the noun may be dual (μεδιμνω) rather than plural. Thanks to Torsten Meißner for this observation.

[61] Poccetti and Gualtieri 1990: 146.   [62] Poccetti 2010: 676.

[63] Greek and Oscan were both in use at Roccagloriosa, as seen in the use of both Oscan and Greek in official texts: Oscan in a legal text (Lu 62/Buxentum 1) and Greek in the label 'public' on a bronze handle (Buxentum 2).

As already mentioned, curse tablets not only give us a large amount of onomastic information, but they also show more Greek-derived names than other kinds of inscriptions in this corpus.[64] In Lu 45, one particular personal name has attracted attention: [γ]αϝισ φοινι[κισ] μαχιεσ. This name shows two unusual features, which have raised questions about its structure.[65] First, the name φοινι[-] is not part of the usual repertoire of Oscan names, and is derived from the Greek φοῖνιξ 'Phoenician, crimson (dye)'.[66] Second, the name μαχιεσ is spelled with <χ> and has an unusual ending (if it is genitive).

Campanile suggested that the second component of the name could be an ethnic, with the third element as an alternative name of Semitic origin – so 'Gavis the Phoenician, known as Machies'.[67] However, Crawford has pointed out that φοῖνιξ, the ethnic for 'Phoenician', would not be long enough to fill the lacuna, which needs two to three letters.[68] The idea of μαχιες as an alias is also a difficulty, since this is not a phenomenon found anywhere else in our corpus. Crawford prefers to translate the name as 'Gaius Phoenicius Maccius', a three-part name with praenomen, gentilicium and cognomen. Another alternative would be to assume that this name has the same structure as other three-part Oscan names. Thus, φοινι[κισ] remains a gentilicium, as in Crawford's interpretation, but μαχιεσ would be the genitive of the father's name. Although the genitive would normally be –*ieis*, there is a recognised variant –*ies*, which may be a social variant.[69] In this case, the name could be a non-standard spelling of the genitive of the common praenomen **mais** or the rarer **makis**.[70] The use of phi in φοινι[κισ] may be an effort to maintain the spelling of the original Greek name, even though the name has become fully integrated into the Oscan

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[64] McDonald 2012a: 49–50.
[65] Campanile 1992a; Poccetti 2000: 757; Crawford 2011b: 1335.
[66] This name is incorrectly transcribed ποινι[κισ] in Rix (2002).
[67] Campanile 1992a: 370; Poccetti 2000: 757.
[68] Crawford 2011b: 1335.   [69] Rix 1996: 246.
[70] For **mais**, see for example Sa 58 (Aquinum 3), Aeclanum 14, Cp 39 (Capua 49); also the gentilicium **mahiis** in Sa 37 (Atina 1). For **makis**, see Surrentum 6, and the gentilicium **makkiis** in Campania Coin 1.

gentilicium system. The use of phi and chi is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.

Lu 46 (Laos 2)

Transcription
Side A:

μαραειν [ᵛᵃᶜ] γαϝιν
οϝι(ν) σαβιδι(ν) νοψιν
νοψιν [ᵛᵃᶜ] μεδεκον
ϝαρ(ιν) ϝαριε(ι)σ οψιον
σπεδι(ν) [ᵛᵃᶜ] νοψιν
ϝιβιν [ᵛᵃᶜ] σαβιδιον
μαραειν [ᵛᵃᶜ] μεδεκον
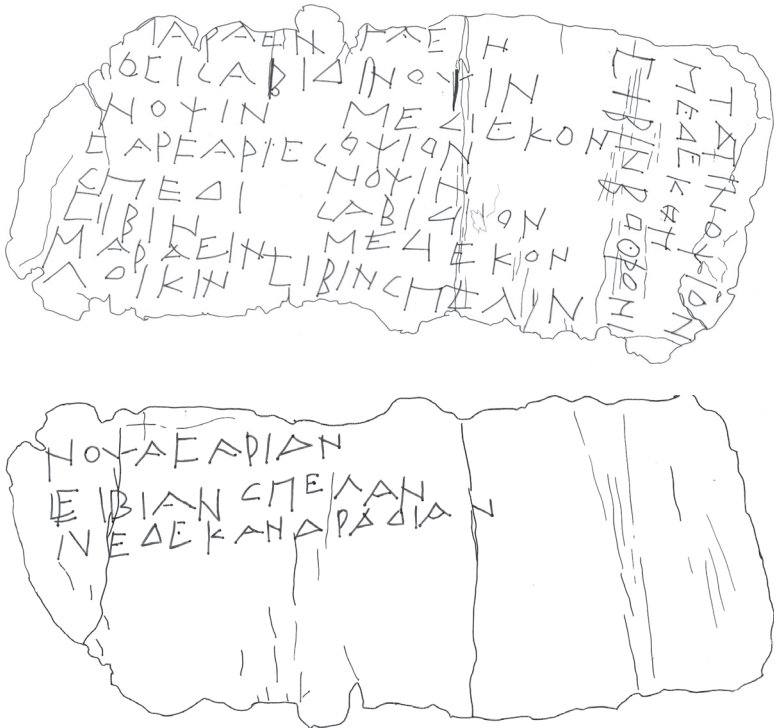λοικιν ϝιβιν σπελιν

Figure 15   Lu 46 (Laos 2). Drawing by F. Murano

RH margin: στατιν οψιον
              μεδεκον
              Ϝιβιν βοθρονι[ον]
Side B: νοψ(ι)α(ν) Ϝαριαν
              Ϝιβιαν σπελ(ι)αν
              μεδεκαν αραδιαν

The reading of this inscription is complicated by the fact that we do not know which name components are meant to go together. While the reading given by Rix in *ST* implies four columns of names, Crawford prefers to read down the columns initially, and then across the whole tablet from Ϝαρ(ιν) Ϝαριε(ι)σ οψιον onwards.[71] There are particular problems with how the names in the right-hand margin fit with the names in the main columns of the text.[72] Murano argues for a reading such that the inscription starts with the portion in the right-hand margin. She suggests that the letters of the first two columns get smaller towards the right-hand side because the margin section was already there.[73] However, the lettering of some of the horizontal lines which do not reach the right-hand margin section also grows smaller, suggesting simply that the change in size was just a tendency of this writer.[74]

Crawford's reading, reproduced above, is not without difficulties. His reading means that the name in the fourth line reads Ϝαρ(ιν) Ϝαριε(ι)σ οψιον,[75] with the genitive of the father's name apparently placed between the praenomen and the gentilicium.[76] While it was once thought that this was a relatively common feature of South Oscan texts, in imitation of the syntax of Greek names, it has been shown that all but

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[71] Crawford 2011b: 1345.

[72] Poccetti prefers a reading where some of the names have two components, and others only one, so that some of the praenomina or gentilicia function as stand-alone idionyms, on the basis that this is a possibility in this kind of Greek/Italic bicultural environment. It is not clear whether this interpretation is correct. Poccetti *et al*. 1993: 163–4.

[73] Murano 2006: 350; Murano 2013: 173–4.   [74] Crawford 2011b: 1347.

[75] Pugliese Carratelli suggests that ϜαρϜαριες is not a name, but a magical word or invocation of demons. This seems unlikely, given the structure of the text and the date, since magical words appear mainly in Roman Imperial-era texts. See Pugliese Carratelli 1992: 18.

[76] Campanile 1992c: 373.

one of the inscriptions that were thought to show this syntax had been misread.[77] So, while this syntax is possible here, it would be exceptional. It would suggest that either the inscription was written in the context of very strong social pressure from Greek, which was beginning to affect the naming system used in the area, as at Messana, or that the writer had another exceptional reason for using this unusual syntax.

However, in Oscan as a whole, curse tablets can take an unusual approach to naming cursed individuals, for example in the use of the mother's name in Cp 37 (Capua 34, 200–150 BC).[78] Crawford suggests that the unusual order here reflects the fact that the writer first wrote the three praenomina ϝαρ(ιν), σπεδι(ν), and ϝιβιν, the first with its filiation, and then afterwards filled in the three gentilicia.[79] An alternative might be to see ϝαριεσ as nominative, where the distinction between nominative and accusative is not considered syntactically relevant and the names are simply in a default case. However, the obfuscation techniques of curse tablets mean that it is possible that the name components here have been written deliberately out of order. I have therefore not given a translation – the possibility that the names have been intentionally scrambled means that any reading can only be based on guesswork.

Despite the problems of reading this inscription, we can see for certain that the morphological endings are unusual: this inscription uses final –ν instead of –μ in the accusative endings of the list of names. In some of the names, the final nasal is completely absent. The intention behind this can be read in a number of different ways.

First, one could read this as a Greek text. The idea that this text was written by a Greek-speaker, and intended as

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[77] La Regina 2002.
[78] This is unlikely to be linked to the later practice of metronymic naming in Greek curse tablets, which begins only in the Imperial period, inspired by some Egyptian naming practices. The motivation behind the sporadic use of metronymics in earlier Greek and Oscan curse tablets is not clear, but may relate primarily to curses written by or targeted at women, where female networks were of increased importance – Curbera 1999: 195–7. Alternatively, it could be seen as a way of guaranteeing the correct identification of the victim, since paternity is less certain than maternity.
[79] Crawford 2011b: 1345.

a Greek text cursing the new Oscan-speaking elite of Laos, was the interpretation of Pugliese Carratelli in the original publication of this text.[80] The spelling –ιν for –ιον is not unusual as a variant in Greek of this period.[81] If the text is Greek, then we should see the choice between <–ιν> and <–ιον> in this text as more or less random. However, for this to be a Greek text, the Oscan word μεδεκον 'magistrate' would have been borrowed into the local variety of Greek, and would be an unusual example of Oscan influence on Greek.[82]

In contrast, Poccetti states that he sees some kind of consistency in the usage of <–ιν> for names in *-yo- (mainly praenomina) and <–ιον> for names in *-iyo- (mainly gentilicia) in this text, and that this differentiation suggests that the text is written in Oscan.[83] Seeing consistent usage here relies on being able to identify which names are praenomina and which gentilicia, which may be impossible given the scrambling of the order of the names. Six of the names are written without a full morphological ending, which makes certainty even harder. If we are to read this as an Oscan text, it would have to be because of the use of the Oscan word μεδεκον 'magistrate', and the Oscan morphological ending on ϝαριεσ, though it is not clear whether this is meant as nominative (ϝαριεσ) or genitive (ϝαριεισ).

If Lu 46 is read as an Oscan text, this would suggest an environment where final nasals had been lost, probably with nasalisation of the preceding vowel. This could in turn lead to confusion among speakers about the correct orthography, with either <ν> or <μ> being used to represent the nasalisation. Although we do not have an exact parallel to this in other texts, there is sporadic loss of final <-M> in other

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[80] Pugliese Carratelli 1992: 17.
[81] Pugliese Carratelli 1992: 17; Campanile 1992c: 372; Poccetti 2010: 674.
[82] The meaning of μεδεκαν αραδιαν is also not clear. The most obvious solution is that this woman had some kind of familial relationship with the meddix – but since several men are named as a meddix, which one is this referring to? It is possible that αραδιαν is an adjective specifying the meddix's position, but this is not found anywhere else. It is possible that this was an official status that the woman held in her own right, but we do not hear of such a position elsewhere. Poccetti *et al.* 1993: 173.
[83] Poccetti *et al.* 1993: 177.

Oscan texts.[84] The omission of final <-M> in Oscan texts was identified by Buck as a phenomenon found mainly in Pompeii in inscriptions after 200 BC.[85] However, we now know that omission of final <-M> is not limited to Pompeii or to the latest period of Oscan writing.[86] In Laos 2, therefore, the spelling with final <-ν> may indicate that final /-Vn/ and /-Vm/ have become indistinguishable as /-Ṽ/ in Oscan in this area. It could also be that the writer, making an association between magic and Greek-language texts, has borrowed Greek morphology onto an Oscan text.

Another alternative is that this is a form of graphemic borrowing. The text has been made visually more Greek by replacing final <−μ> with <−ν>, but without affecting the pronunciation of the text when read aloud. We might compare, for example, the Latin/Greek bilingual curse tablet from Barchín del Hoyo, in which a Latin text has Greek accusatives in <−ν>. This has been understood as an orthographic borrowing, which did not affect the sound of the Latin, since at this period the <-M> indicated only nasalisation of the preceding vowel.[87] A further possibility is that the text is deliberately ambiguous, and intended as a mixed-language text. If this is the case, the lack of endings on some of the names could be a strategy which allows the names to be read in different languages depending on the reader.[88]

Laos 4

Transcription

1.   [πα]κιοσ καιλιοσ
ϝι[λ]λ[ιο]σ ασελλιοσ
νυμψιοσ ποππαλαιοσ
μινιοσ ϝαριοσ

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[84] Campanile 1992c: 372. Note that there is also evidence of loss of final /-s/, /-m/ and /-n/ in post-Classical Greek. Poccetti 2000: 755.

[85] Po 1 (Pompei 13) 200–100 BC; Po 34 (Pompei 2) and Po 35 (Pompei 3), 91–89 BC. Buck 1928: 71.

[86] It is also found in He 3 (Anagnia 14) **esu(m)**, 300–275 BC; Lu 5 (Potentia 1) ρεγο(μ), 125–100 BC; and Petelia 2 ησου(μ) = **esú(m)**, *c*. 300 BC.

[87] Adams 2003: 56; Arbabzadah 2009: 193.   [88] Poccetti 2010: 674.

5.   [τ]ετοσ ϝαριοσ
        vacat

Translation

        Pakios Kailios
        Villios Asellios
        Numpsios Poppalaios
        Minios Varios
        Tetos Varios

This inscription consists of a list of two-part names of Oscan origin in the nominative, but with the Greek morphological ending –ιοσ, rather than the South Oscan –ιεσ.[89] Many of the same considerations apply as in the discussion of Lu 46, above. This could be a further example of Greek morphology being used to make the curse text visually or orally more Greek. In this example, however, the lack of Oscan vocabulary means that
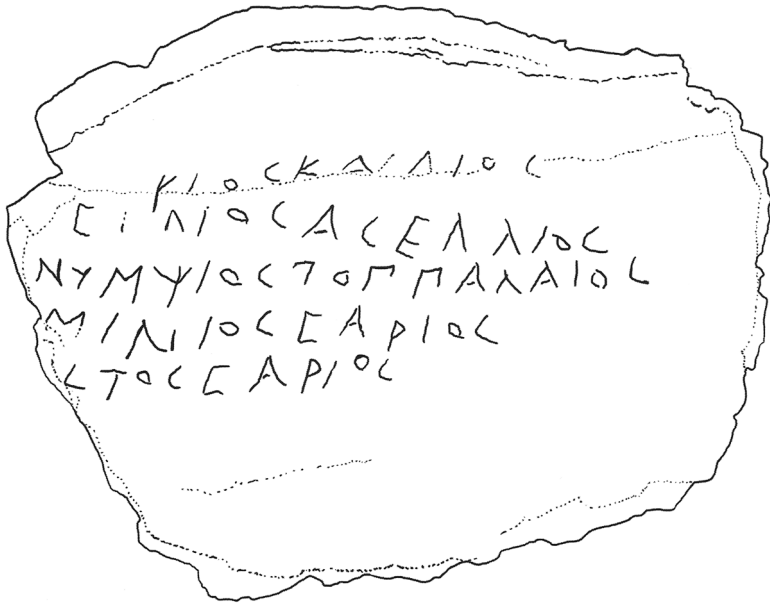
Figure 16   Laos 4. Drawing provided by P. Poccetti

[89] Poccetti 2000: 762.

the text should probably be taken as a Greek-language text which happens to include names of Oscan origin.

Taken together, Lu 46 and Laos 4 show the writers of curse tablets at Laos making an atypical choice. At other sites, such as Cumae and Teuranus Ager, the language of the curse and the morphology of the names vary depending on the origin of the names, and therefore perhaps reflect the L1 of the targets.[90] The difference in practice at Laos may suggest an unusually bilingual environment in which the choice of language was freer.[91] If the targets and the writer of the curse all spoke both Greek and Oscan, and they were used to seeing Oscan written in the Greek alphabet, then perhaps the distinction between the two written languages was less clear.

Petelia 2

Transcription

Col. I. 1.   καϝνοτο στατιο

πακϝιω και<δ>ι<κ>ω

πακολ στατιεσ

μαρα(σ) στατιεσ

Figure 17   Petelia 2. Author's photo 16/09/2014. By kind permission of the Museo Archaeologico Nazionale di Crotone
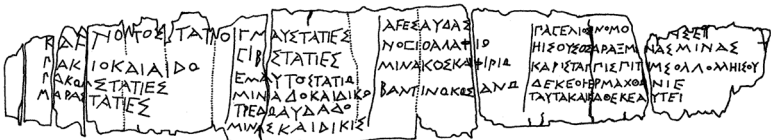
Figure 18   Petelia 2. Author's drawing

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90 Poccetti 2000: 767.   91 Poccetti 2000: 768.

Col. II. 1.   γναυ(σ) στατιεσ
            Ϝιβι(σ) στατιεσ
            εμαυτο στατιω
            μιναδο καιδικω
    5.   τρε<β>ω αυδα<ϝ>ο
            μινασ καιδικισ

Col. III. 1.   αϝεσ αυδαισ
            νοϝιο αλαφιω
            μινα<δ>ο σκαφιριω
            βαντινω κωσσανω

Col. IV. 1.   παϝελιοσ νομο[-5-]νσ ετ
            ηισ ουσοσ αραξ μ[ι]νασ μινασ
            καρισ ταπ(?) πισπιτ ι(νι)μ σολλομ ηισου
            δεκεο hερμα χθωνιε
    5.   ταυτα και καθεκε αυτει

Translation
[List of names, all nominative]
Oscan: whoever-MASC.SING. and. all-MASC.GEN.PL.
them-MASC.GEN.PL.
Greek: receive-IMP. Hermes-VOC. of-underworld-VOC.
these-NEUT.ACC.PL. and. keep-IMP. here-ADV.

Kaunoto Statio, Paquio Kaidiko, Pakol Statiis, Maras Statiis, Gnaus Statiis,
Vibis Statiis, Emauto Statio, Minado Kaidiko, Trebo Audauo, Minaz
   Kaidikis, Aues Audais, Nouio Alaphio, Minado Skaphirio, Bantino
   Kossano
The Pauelii, Nomo[?] [?]ns, ?and those ?of X: Arax, Minaz, Minaz, Karis, ???
and whoever (is acting on behalf) of all of them,
Hermes of the Underworld, receive these (names) and keep them here.

This text was first published by Lazzarini, and some changes
to the reading of the fourth column of the text have been
proposed by the 'Greek in Italy' project based on autopsy in
September 2014.[92] Before dealing with the language of the text,
it should be acknowledged that there are a number of apparent

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[92] Lazzarini 2004; McDonald, Tagliapietra and Zair forthcoming. The changes to the
reading mainly affect names listed at the beginning of column IV, and will not be
discussed in detail here. The word ετ remains problematic, but may be a part of one
of the names rather than the Latin word 'and'. We prefer to see the name παϝελιοσ
as an Oscan nominative or accusative plural rather than a Greek ending. The word
ουσοσ is probably also a nominative or accusative plural, perhaps equivalent to the
demonstrative pronoun found in Umbrian, **ures** 'of that', and not the Latin word
Usus used as a name as stated by Crawford.

mistakes and inconsistencies in the orthography of Petelia 2. These include καιαιδω for και<δ>ι<κ>ω, τρεδω for τρε<β>ω, αυδαδο for αυδα<ϝ>ο, and μινακο for μινα<δ>ο.[93] These do not seem to be mistakes made by someone unused to the Greek alphabet, since the confusion is not between letters of similar shapes, apart from alpha for delta in καιαιδω, nor is there confusion between sounds which might be phonetically similar except perhaps delta for beta in τρεδω. Several of the names appear spelled both correctly and incorrectly. These unusual mistakes only appear in the name section of the inscription and not the final formula. Though there are non-standard spellings in the final formula, they are confusions of phonetically similar sounds, mainly aspirated and unaspirated stops. The use of phi in the two names νοϝιο αλαφιω and μιναδο σκαφιριω could be intended to represent /f/ voiced between vowels, but could also be used represent /p/ or /pʰ/.[94] There is other evidence that, despite the errors, this text was not written by someone with very low levels of literacy, such as the organisation of the text into columns, which is suggestive of higher literacy than writing the names continuously across the page.[95]

The mistakes that are made do not seem to relate to a lack of knowledge of the Greek alphabet, Greek orthographic practice or the Oscan language. It is possible that these spellings are the result of deliberate obfuscation of the names. Spellings such as καιαιδω for και<δ>ι<κ>ω almost recall strategies such as the reversed order of letters within each syllable, such as ναιταμοχς for αντιμαχος, though executed imperfectly, writing -ιδω[κ] for -δικω. But if anything, the confusions are not frequent enough to be conclusive proof of this kind of deliberate obfuscation.

Other points of the orthography have been subject to debate. The names ending in omicron and omega have been interpreted in two different ways. Lazzarini stated in the original publication of the text that these are Doric Greek genitive endings, and that the list of names shows a mixture of Oscan morphology in

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[93] This name should perhaps be spelled μινατο if related to the masculine form **minaz**.
[94] See the discussion in Chapter 3 for more detail.   [95] Gordon 1999: 255.

the nominative and Greek morphology in the genitive.[96] If this is the case, then both the list of names and the final formula show code-switching between Oscan and Greek. This interpretation has been followed by Poccetti and Murano,[97] but disputed by Crawford, who reads them as female names in the nominative.[98]

It is difficult to see why some of these names should be read as genitives. Where curse tablets have lists of names, they are consistently in the nominative or accusative, or sometimes both, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The use of a mixture of nominative and genitive names is not found anywhere else. If the names in the genitive are meant to relate to the fathers or owners of the names in the nominative, this text would be exceptional among Oscan inscriptions in giving both praenomen and gentilicium of the father's name in the genitive, rather than just the praenomen. The order of the names would also cause problems for this interpretation, since it would be difficult to make sense of the times when two or three names in the genitive are listed in a row. It is much more likely that all of the names are in the nominative, and that the names ending in –o and –ω are female names. The omicron and omega would be the expected representation of the sound found in Oscan feminine names ending in **–ú**.

The curse formula that follows the list of names reads as follows: πισπιτ ιμ σολλομ ηισου <u>δεκεο ηερμα χθωνιε ταυτα και καθεκε αυτει</u>. The first clause is in Oscan, and the second underlined clause is in Greek. Crawford's translation of the whole curse formula is: 'Whoever also (is) of (= associated with) all of them, receive (them), Hermes of the Underworld, these things also keep here.'[99] The syntax of the Oscan part of the phrase is not completely clear. Crawford assumes ηισου = **esú(m)**, so that σολλομ ηισου means 'of all of them'.[100] This is the best suggestion proposed so far, and will be followed here. But

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[96] Lazzarini 2004: 676.   [97] Poccetti 2010: 674; Murano 2013: 195.
[98] Crawford 2011b: 1475.   [99] Crawford 2011b: 1476.
[100] We have suggested a reading ηισου rather than ησου, since the iota after the eta is clear, but this does not change the meaning of the text. McDonald, Tagliapietra and Zair forthcoming.

the question remains how we should take the genitive standing alone in this context.

The use of the genitive seems to be derived from Greek models for this formula. Many Greek curses put this kind of phrase at the end of a list of names, to make sure that no one whom they might have forgotten would be spared. For example, SGD 106 (Selinous, late fifth century) has three names in the nominative, followed by καὶ ὅσστις ὑπὲρ τήνων μέλλει ἢ λέγειν ἢ πράσειν, 'and anyone about to speak or act on their behalf'. Closer to the wording used in Petelia 2 are phrases such as καὶ τοὺ<ς> ὑπέρ ετους (= αὐτοὺς) ἄπαντας, 'and those (acting) on behalf of all of them' (SGD 110, Selinous, first century BC or first century AD); or κἄλλος ἢ ἐστι μετ᾽ αὔτων, 'and if any other person is with them' (NGCT 50, Lesbos, fourth or third century BC).[101] In these phrases, ὑπέρ or μετά tends to be the preposition used, often with the genitive. In the case of ὑπέρ, the meaning is not 'with' but 'on behalf of'. The Oscan phrase in Petelia 2 seems to be based on a Greek phrase similar to these.[102] In translating the phrase from Greek, the writer has kept the genitive case from the Greek, rather than translating ὑπέρ or μετά with the Oscan preposition **kúm**, which would have to take the ablative.[103] To preserve the use of the genitive, the writer has missed out the preposition altogether.[104] Therefore, I suggest the alternative translation of the Oscan clause in the curse formula: 'and whoever (is acting on behalf) of all of them'. This keeps the meaning relatively close to the Greek phrases on which the formula appears to be based.

The expansion of ιμ to ινιμ is problematic. This was suggested by Crawford in his reading,[105] but would be a unique way of abbreviating ινιμ, which is usually shortened to ιν. Crawford's translation also assumes that ινιμ can be used to mean 'also' as well as 'and', though we have no other evidence for this. It

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[101] Dale and Aneurin 2011.
[102] Thanks to Moreed Arbabzadah for this suggestion.   [103] Buck 1928: 207.
[104] The genitive could also mean something like 'belonging to them', i.e. their wives/husbands and children. Cf. DTA 55 (Attica, late fourth century BC), which refers to the wives and children of the targets at the end of the formula.
[105] Crawford 2011b: 1475.

seems plausible that ινιμ or the abbreviation ιν might be written as ιμ in error, but this should perhaps be represented in transcription as (ιν)ιμ rather than ι(νι)μ, as Crawford represents it. The translation 'and' is preferable to 'also', based on how this conjunction is used elsewhere.

The Greek clause is a relatively common Greek curse formula, asking Hermes to receive something or someone.[106] There are several features in this clause which have been identified as Doric,[107] such as the spelling δεκεο rather than Attic δέχου, the vocative hερμα 'Hermes' and αυτει for αυτου 'just here'.[108] There are also a number of non-standard spellings in the Greek. The use of omega for omicron (χθωνιε for χθόνιε) shows the same interchangeability of ω/ο as found throughout the list of names. The other non-standard spelling is καθεκε for κάτεχε, with a metathesis of the aspiration. These spellings may reflect a lack of familiarity with Greek, suggesting that the writer was an L2 speaker of Greek who could not reliably hear the difference between aspirated and non-aspirated stops. The form καθεκε may also show a false analogy being made with the stem in verbs such as ἀνέθηκε, which would have been familiar from Greek dedicatory texts.

The translation of the Greek clause of the formula is relatively straightforward. Crawford's translation suggests that the object of δεκεο is not expressed and that ταυτα is the object of καθεκε, but it is also possible to take ταυτα as the object of both verbs. The word ταυτα may refer to the unnamed people in the Oscan part of the formula (the 'whoever'), but since it is neuter plural it may instead refer to the names listed on the tablet. This clause could then be translated, 'Hermes of the Underworld, receive these (names) and keep them here.'

We might also consider what motivates the code-switch in the formula. One way of looking at this is to consider the hypothetical interlocutor. At the point where the formula becomes a request to Hermes, with an imperative and the vocative, the

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[106] Poccetti 2010: 674.   [107] Lazzarini 2004: 679.
[108] Found in West Greek and Boeotian; see Buck 1955: 102.

writer switches into Greek. This may be because Greek was the language associated with Hermes, and therefore was appropriate for speaking to him directly.[109] The code-switch may also be used because the formula was familiar to the writer in Greek, and he did not want to translate the whole thing away from the original language.

Overall, Petelia 2 shows some of the clearest evidence of Oscan/Greek contact of all of the South Oscan curse texts. The mistakes in the spelling of the names do not necessarily suggest a writer unfamiliar with Oscan names or one unfamiliar with writing Greek, since the 'mistakes' are idiosyncratic, though some of them might suggest an L2 speaker of Greek. The final Greek formula and the Oscan formula translated from Greek may be part of the same effort to use the Greek language wherever possible. Whoever translated the Greek formula partly into Oscan must have had some knowledge of both languages, but we cannot know whether this was the writer of the curse or the writer of a handbook of formulae.

Conclusions

The eight South Oscan curse texts give us some of our clearest evidence for Greek/Oscan contact between the fourth and second centuries BC. The practice of writing curse tablets was without question transmitted to Oscan-speakers from the Greek-speakers of Sicily and Southern Italy, but possibly also from those travelling from further afield. In the texts known so far, a wide range of contact phenomena are in evidence: Greek/Oscan code-switching (Petelia 2), two texts in different languages being written on the same object (Lu 45), translations of Greek curse formulae into Oscan (Petelia 2), and Oscan names in apparently Greek-language inscriptions (Lu 46 and Laos 4). The use of characters such as phi, theta and chi is also considerably higher in these texts than elsewhere in the corpus. This may relate to the fact that more Greek-derived

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[109] Cf. other tablets in Greek that address Hermes directly, and request that Hermes restrain the targets: DTA 52 (Attica, third or second century BC), DTA 109 (Attica), DTA 87 (Attica, fourth century BC).

names are used here than elsewhere. But since some of these names (μαχιεσ, βοθρονιον, αλαφιω) are not easily identifiable as Greek names, the use of these characters may instead relate to a desire to imitate Greek orthography.

While the overall practice of writing and depositing curses remained fundamentally unchanged in the appearance of the tablets, the places where they were deposited and the use of lists of names, we also get glimpses of ways in which South Oscan-speakers may have adapted the practice. The limited amount of information given in South Oscan curse tablets differentiates them from Central Oscan examples, suggesting that these regions borrowed the practice of writing curse tablets from Greek independently. The gap of a century or more between the earliest South Oscan and the earliest Central Oscan curses may also help to explain the difference in practices. Since Greek curse tablets became lengthier and more likely to use extended curse formulae throughout the Hellenistic period, the models available to the first writers of Oscan curses in Campania may have been rather different from those in Lucania and Bruttium. Overall, the use of curses in the languages of Italy shows continued interaction with Greek across several centuries and a large number of sites, with multiple points of transmission and contact.

Other features of South Oscan curse tablets may be the result of independent regional development. Three of the eight South Oscan texts show a syntactic structure – NOM. (VERB) ACC. – not found elsewhere. This is not just a matter of syntax, but also of belief, since the writers of these curses did not seem to fear divine or human retribution as a result of including their name on the tablet. While there are some Greek precedents for this to a limited degree, it is likely that writers of curses in Oscan in Bruttium had developed a new way of writing curse texts.

The story of curse tablets in South Oscan therefore has two distinct threads: on the one hand, the desire to stay close to Greek models; on the other, the possibility of moving away from those models to create new, local traditions within this genre. In magical texts, there is a desire to use the right kind of language for the situation, in the sense of both the right

linguistic variety and the right formulae, because the right language has the power to make the curse stronger and more effective. On the other hand, not all writers felt compelled to keep close to the Greek models. For example, while Petelia 2 addresses Hermes, other Oscan writers may have chosen to harness the power of local chthonic deities, or to deposit their curses in local graves. In these situations, they may have seen the Oscan language as more appropriate than Greek. Certain writers might not have seen a problem in naming themselves, or the people for whom they were writing the curse. In this way, new regional norms could arise within South Oscan even while drawing on Greek models.