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NEW READINGS OF THE MULTILINGUAL PETELIA CURSE TABLET


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Petelia 2 is a curse text written on a leaf-shaped lead tablet, 0.028m high and 0.184m wide. It was found on the surface at loc. Cassana, north of modern Strongoli, by Luigi Mazza. The inscription was first published by Lazzarini (2004), with a small amount of further discussion in Lazzarini (2009); it was subsequently re-edited by Crawford (2011: 1475–77) without autopsy. Lazzarini dates the tablet to the fourth or early third century BC (Lazzarini 2004: 674), while Crawford dates it to c.300 BC (Crawford 2011: 1475). The tablet is now in the deposit of the Museo Nazionale Archeologico di Crotone (inventory no. 4016/M), where the members of the ‘Greek in Italy’ project examined it on the 16th September 2014. As a result of our autopsy we propose a different reading in column 4 and several possible reinterpretations of this section of the text.

The inscription is written in the Greek alphabet, split into four columns along the width of the tablet (see Figure 1). The columns are divided by a small gap (of around one to two letters’ width) and a vertical line after each column, including after the final column. The tablet was originally rolled up and is now broken into seven pieces. The majority of these breaks appear to correspond to the points at which the tablet was folded. Contrary to the implication of the drawing in Lazzarini (2004, figure 4), reproduced by Crawford (2011: 1475), the fragments of the tablet do not correspond to the columns. Columns 3 and 4 each have a break through the centre, and column 4 has a further line of damage which has not quite caused another break.

Fig. 1. Drawing of Petelia 2. Drawing by K. McDonald

1. Previous and new readings

Transcription, Columns 1–3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Col. 1</th>
<th>1. καρνοτο στατιο</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>παρσιν και(α)ιδι(ι)ω</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>παρολ στατιεσ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>μαραι(α) στατιεσ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Col. 2</td>
<td>1. γναυ(σ) στατιεσ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ϝιβι(σ) στατιεσ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>εμαυτο στατιω</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>μιναδο καιδικω</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tre(βιο αυδα(ρ)ο</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>μινας καιδικισ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 We are using the numeration of Oscan inscriptions of Crawford (2011). Umbrian forms from the Iguvine Tables (IT) are quoted from Rix (2002).
2 Murano (2013: 192) gives the text of Lazzarini.
3 We are very grateful to Dott.ssa Simonetta Bonomi, Dott. Domenico Marino and the staff of the Museo Nazionale Archeologico di Crotone for their kind assistance in enabling us to examine the tablet. The Greek in Italy project is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Research by Katherine McDonald is funded by Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. The authors would like to thank these bodies for their generous support. James Clackson read a draft of the article; we are grateful for his helpful comments and advice, and to John Penney and Michael Crawford for their observations. Remaining errors are of course our responsibility.
Columns 1–3 of the curse tablet contain a list of fourteen names, each made up of a praenomen (given name) and a gentilicium (inherited family name). We agree with the reading and interpretation of these columns given in Crawford (2011). Crawford identifies the pairs of names ending in omicron or omega, such as καϝνοτο στατιο (column 1 line 1), as female names consisting of a praenomen and a gentilicium in the nominative singular. This interpretation is much more likely than Lazzarini’s suggestion that they are male names in the genitive singular which use a Doric Greek morphological ending (Lazzarini 2004: 676). The names are therefore all Oscan-style names written with Oscan morphology, and there is no code-switching in this part of the text. There are a number of apparent mistakes and inconsistencies in the orthography of the names (for these see McDonald 2013: 185–190 and McDonald 2015). It is not clear whether these are deliberate mistakes written to obfuscate the text and make it more magical, or if they are the result of confusion between letters and sounds on the part of the writer.

The interpretations of column 4 differ considerably between editors. Lazzarini (2004) reads:

Col. 4. 1. Π( ) Αφελιοσ νομο...νσετ

Crawford reads instead:

Col. 4. 1. παϝελιοσ νομο[5]νσ ετ

We read the first three letters of column 4 line 2 as (ησ), which is a well-attested sequence of sounds in Oscan, compared to the previous rather difficult readings (ινσ) and (κιισ). Based on this new reading and the analyses explained below, we propose two possible readings of column 4 of Petelia 2 as follows:

Either:


ησ ουσοσ οραξ[5]ινασ μινασ
καρις ται(?) πισηπιτ ινι[ι]ιι σολλομ ηισιου(μ)

dεκεο, hermα χθωνιε

Or:

Col. 4. 1. παϝελιοσ νομο[νσ ομο][νσ] σετ

ηισου(μ) σοσ οραξ[ινασ μινασ]
καρις ται(?) πισηπιτ ινι[ι]ιι σολλομ ηισιου(μ)
δέκεο, ἡρμι σχόνιε

5. τὰ τὰ καὶ καθέκε σοιτεί

‘The Pauilli, the Numonii; the men of these (families) are: Sos(ς)us, Arcus, Minatus, Minatus, Carius …’

The final two lines of column 4 are in Doric Greek. Crawford has further identified part of the previous line as a relative clause in Oscan, so that we have a curse formula which code-switches from Oscan into Greek: πιστιν ι(ν)υ μαλλούς πησού(υ)/ δέκεο, ἡρμι σχόνιε / τὰ τὰ καὶ καθέκε σοιτεί (where the underlined portion is in Oscan). Based on our autopsy, we now read Crawford and Lazzarini’s ησου (line 3) as ηπου(υ), since there is a clear iota after the eta. However, this causes no changes to the derivation of the meaning of the word as proposed by Crawford.

Apart from the unexplained sequence τατη, the meaning of these lines is more or less clear, based on similar examples from other extant curse tablets. Crawford translates the formula as ‘whoever also (is) of (= associated with) all of them, receive (them), Hermes of the Underworld, things also keep here’ (Crawford 2011: 1476). We could take the Oscan part of the formula as a translation of common Greek formulae cursing those acting on behalf of those named in the tablet (McDonald 2013: 188–190). It is also possible that τατη refers to the names written on the tablet and is the object of both verbs. We would therefore translate this formula: ‘and whoever (is acting on behalf) of all of them, Hermes of the Underworld, receive these (names) and keep them here.’

The main differences of interpretation concern lines 1 to 3. Lazzarini considers lines 1 to 3 to be written in Oscan. She interprets the first line as representing an abbreviated praenomen Π, followed by a gentiliciun Αρελίος, the equivalent of Latin Auelius. She leaves line 2 unexplained, except that it ends with the name Μινασ written twice. Crawford translates lines 1 and 2 as ‘P. Avelius, No. ???, and (?) Ces, Usus, Arax, Minatus, Minatus, Carius, ???.’ He assumes that in line 1 ν, like π, is an abbreviation of a praenomen, in this case νοφεσ (cf. nūvis, Teruentum 43); he treats μο[5]νς, which is not translated, as a separate word. In the apparatus to line 1 he observes that since after a series of double names [i.e. in columns 1–3] there follows a series of single names, some or all perhaps slave names, we wonder whether ετ is not Latin et’. In line 2 he reads κησ in place of Lazzarini’s ησου, noting, however, in the apparatus that the tablet has κις, which he compares to the praenomen κείς (cf. Capua 48). The following ουσο is presumably Latin in his opinion. The translation makes it clear that he interprets ησου as a genitive plural ending in *-m, which is attested with a following particle in εισύνκ (Cumae 8.43).

Crawford’s interpretation is superior to Lazzarini’s, since it makes clear the likely word divisions in line 3 and provides a plausible expansion of μι to ι(ν)υ ‘and’, here translated ‘also’, which is a well-attested Oscan word (e.g. ινιμ Abella 1). One of the most striking things about Crawford’s interpretation, howev-

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6 Doric Greek features are noticeable in the absence of contraction in δέκεο, the vocative ἡρμι ‘Hermes’, and the West Greek σοτέι ‘just here’. The spelling δέκεο for Attic-Ionic δέκεο also conforms with the Doric form of the verb, although, in the light of καθέκε in the following line, the writer is apparently unfamiliar with the standard spelling of Greek words containing aspirates. Cf. Lazzarini (2004: 679).

7 Lazzarini identified (ησου) as an original ablative of the demonstrative pronoun whose genitive is εἰσές (Abella 1 A.20) ‘of this’, with the meaning ‘here’. Crawford’s interpretation of (ησου) as a genitive plural from *εισόν rather than a dative singular in *εισόδ is much more convincing, since word-final *-m is quite often lost in Oscan inscriptions (Mancini 2014: 51–53), whereas final *-d is very stable. The new reading as ηπου(υ) does not make a difference to our views on this derivation, but this word should be removed from the list of examples of monophthongisation of the diphthong provided by Mancini (2014: 41–2).

8 Pocetti (2014: 98) reads ιχωριστασιν, which he takes to be a 3rd singular present subjunctive of a cursing verb, with expected -6 assimilated to the π- of the following word.

9 The use of ινιμ to mean ‘also’ rather than ‘and’ is not well attested, but it is also possible to translate this word as ‘and’ in this inscription. It is not clear whether ινιμ has been deliberately abbreviated to μι (which would be unparalleled, since the usual abbreviation is ινιμ) or if this is a mistake based on a haplogy. In this case, the restoration is probably better represented as ινιμ.

10 The elucidation of this line is attributed to Moreed Arbabzadah.
er, is the sudden appearance of the Latin word *et* in column 4 line 1, along with the Latin word *āsus* ‘use’, used as a (slave) name. If this is correct, then this inscription is a unique trilingual Oscan/Latin/Greek curse tablet, as well as providing some of the earliest written evidence of Latin in ancient Bruttium. However, we are doubtful about the existence of Latin in the tablet. This use of a third language for one or two words only would be very unusual, and even though curse tablets can use vocabulary and morphology from multiple languages as a form of obfuscation (Pocchetti 2002: 45–6; Adams 2003: 128, 139), a code-switch involving a single conjunction does not have clear parallels elsewhere. One-word code-switches are possible, but they are most normally found as ‘tag-switches’ at the end of an inscription and not for a conjunction in the middle of a list. It is also unexpected that there is a conjunction used here at all, since the rest of the names on the tablet are listed without conjunctions. The implications of reading Latin *et* here are not discussed in Crawford’s commentary. We will show below that neither *et* nor *ōsos* necessarily exist at all; even if the reading of *ōsos* is correct, it need not be a Latin name rather than an Oscan one.

2. New readings and proposed interpretations

Our new reading of column 4, based on our recent autopsy of the inscription, differs from that of Lazzarini and Crawford in only a few particulars. Nonetheless, our corrections make a significant difference to some of the most problematic words in this curse. Our reading therefore opens up a considerably different spectrum of possibilities for understanding this historically important text. The most important result of our autopsy is that the first three letters of line 2 are clearly legible as *(ηισ)* rather than Lazzarini’s *(ηισ)* and Crawford’s *(χησ)* (restored from *(χισ)*). Going by her mention of ‘mezza acca’, Lazzarini seems to have seen this sequence as *(ΗΙΣ)* (Lazzarini 2004: 674), but her drawing of the inscription looks much more like *(ΚΙΙΣ)*, which is presumably the reason for this reading by Crawford. On the lead itself, however, we see *(ΗΙΣ)*, with a clear second vertical on the first letter. Although there is a very faint second horizontal line at the bottom of the two verticals of the H (lower than is suggested by Lazzarini’s drawing), we are convinced that this is not an intentional stroke. Consequently, we read the first letters as *(ηισ)*. The sequence *(ηισ)* cannot exist by itself as an Oscan word; we therefore suggest two possible interpretations.

2.1 Interpretation 1: genitive singular

The first interpretation would be to take *(ηισ)* to be the Oscan genitive singular ending of the *-ης* and *-κις* consonant-stems. Since the context is a list of names, we might assume that -*(ηισ)* is the ending of a name. The most straightforward assumption is that the name is a patronymic praenomen. This would fit the common Oscan onomastic formula praenomen + gentilicum + father’s praenomen in the genitive (Lejeune 1976: 39–50; La Regina 2002). In this case, *-ηισ* would have to continue a name begun in the previous line. As Michael Crawford (p.c.) has suggested to us, this would plausibly be *ετ*(ηισ), which allows comparison with the Roman gentilicia *Itieus* (CIL 10.3778, 4185, 4186, Capua) and *Itius* (CIL 6.35502, 11.5757), or *Etius* (CIL 6.17288). Alternatively, it would also be possible to read *σετ*(ηισ) ‘of Sett(i)us’, which might be equivalent to the Latin gentilicia *Settius* (attested as *Settia* CIL 6.10805), *Setius* (CIL 4.1580, 9.629, 14.4104), or *Sittius* (CIL 8.2567), *Sittius* (Ihn 1899: 99 no. 371).¹¹ The form *(σετ)**(ηισ)* looks most likely to be the genitive of an Oscan praenomen ‘Itus’ or ‘Etus’, or ‘Sett(i)us’ or ‘Sitt(i)us’,¹² which is not attested in Latin (or elsewhere in Oscan), though it is implied by the derived Latin forms in -*ius*.³ Although Latin *Settius* and *Sittius* show

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¹¹ The reading with initial σ- would not prevent reading the same word as ending -*(σ)*, since this would show the same avoidance of writing double σ across a word boundary otherwise seen in this inscription at column 1 line 4 *μεθικ(σ)* *στατιερ*, column 2 line 1 *γινε(σ)* *στατιερ* and column 2 line 2 *μεθικ(σ)* *στατιερ*.

¹² In fact, it could also be the genitive of ‘Itius’, ‘Etius’ etc. Although we would expect this to be spelt *(σετ)*, there are frequent examples of τ being omitted after consonants in Oscan written in the Greek alphabet, such as κατα(τζίδιγ(ο) for expected κατάδιγ(ο) in this inscription, column 1 line 2, μεθικ(ε)ν for μεθικ(ε)ν in Numistro 1, *οσος* for *οσος* in Potentia 17. See Zair (forthcoming, Chapter 3).

¹³ Unlike in Latin, where the number of praenomina was quickly reduced to a fairly small number, Oscan maintained a much greater pool of possible praenomina throughout its history. Although gentilicia were normally inherited, the derivational relationship between praenomina and gentilicia remained more productive in Oscan than in Latin. There are two main types of
the spelling <tt>, double consonants are often written single in Oscan inscriptions in the Greek alphabet, even in inscriptions where double letters are written in other words. For example, in this inscription we have μυςαες for μυςαις beside σολλομις.14 We prefer the connection with Iteius, since it is attested in Republican times in Campania, an Oscan-speaking area, but we cannot be sure (Setius is also found in Campania in the Imperial period, as is Sittius, albeit not until the third century AD).

If our interpretation were correct, then the Latin word et would be removed from the reading, making this inscription bilingual and not trilingual. This is historically more plausible, since there is little or no other evidence of Latin in Bruttium as early as 300 BC.15 It is also linguistically more likely, since a code-switch into Latin for the conjunction ‘and’ is, as noted above, unparalleled.

If σεττις or εττης is the correct reading, what is the implication for the rest of the sentence in which it is found? If we follow Crawford’s analysis of the first line of column 4, it is a series of names, π (?<) αελλιως νοις (Iteius, No. ???). Since the first three words consist of an abbreviated praenomen, a gentilicium and an abbreviated praenomen, it is reasonable to assume that μωνύμις is also a gentilicium. For gentilicia ending in σολλομις and compare it with the Latin gentilicium Pauliliius (e.g. CIL 10.2829–2833). The possibility of reading παελλιως rather than π αελλιως results in a much greater range of plausible interpretations of column 4 than has been identified by previous editors. One analysis would be to take παελλιως as a praenomen (inflected as a Greek nominative singular),16 and treat the entirety of the following sequence νομυμις as a gentilicium. For gentilicia ending in -νις cf. aadirans ‘Adiranus’ (Pompeii 24), while νομις brings to mind the series of Oscan names derived from a ‘root’ num-. We might compare for example the praenomen niummis (e.g. Cumae 8), the praenomen νυμπηθησ (Messana 4, Messana 5), the gentilicium niumdises (Bouianum 116), the divine name νυμψδοι (Potentia 20). The vowel in the ‘root’ could be spelt with ⟨o⟩, as shown by νομης (Thurii Copia 1) beside νυμψμ (Teuranus Ager 1). This would then give a single name formula ‘Pauillius Num....nus, son of It(i)us’.

Yet another possibility arises from the reading of παελλιως rather than π αελλιως. Since, in the latter π must represent a praenomen, which is used to identify an individual, the accompanying gentilicium αελλιως can only be in the nominative singular. And since -οης is not an Oscan nominative singular ending, this would have to be a Greek ending (‘nominativo, declinato alla greca’, Lazzarini 2004: 679). Thus, after three columns of names in the nominative singular with Oscan morphology, column 4 would see a switch into Greek morphology. However, if we read παελλιως, then the ending -οης could represent the Oscan o-stem nominative or accusative plural (from *-oησ > and *-oss respectively).17 There are several examples

dervational relationship, the first exemplified by praenomen heirens (Campania or Samnium 6) beside gentilicium heirensis (Nola 3), the second exemplified by the praenomen statis (Bouianum 98) beside gentilicium statis (Campania or Samnium 2). The Latin equivalents of the gentilicia do not distinguish between the -is and the -iis types. Consequently, the Latin gentilicium Settius could correspond to an unattested Oscan gentilicium *settis or *settii, to which the equivalent praenomina would be *setts and *settiis respectively.

14 Cf. μεδεικα[τιν] ‘in the magistracy’ beside μεδεικς ‘magistrate(s)’ in Buxentum 1 and σπελλης beside αδμαμετεδ in Potentia 9.

15 Though it is possible that small numbers of Latin speakers were present in Bruttium from an early period, Latin inscriptions are found in Bruttium mainly from the second century BC onwards. There are no surviving curse tablets written wholly or partly in Latin from anywhere in Italy dated to before the second century, and most are first century BC or later: see McDonald (2013: 162–64).

16 When writing names in Greek, as in Latin, no distinction was made between the -is names and the -iis name. Consequently, παελλιως could be the Greek spelling of the Oscan praenomen ‘Pauillius’ corresponding to the gentilicium ‘Pauliliius’, the Latin equivalent of which was Paulilius (the praenomen, if it existed in Latin, would also have been spelt Pauliliius).

17 In the Greek alphabet the letter ⟨o⟩ is one way of writing the results of both *-oησ > /u/ and *-oησ /u/ in Oscan. Cf. ροτοριες = Latin Hortorius in Laos 3. Note that in Petelia 2 /u/ is written both with ⟨o⟩ and ⟨o⟩ in column 4 line 3 in the consecutive words σολλομησου, both genitive plurals in *-οτης. Cf. also the same variation in Potentia 40, which has both πλαμετοδο <
in our Oscan inscriptions of the same family being referred to by means of a plural gentilicium without praenomina, such as kluvat(i)um (Capua 4) ‘iovil(а)’ of the Clouatii, vir(i)um (Capua 10–13) ‘iovila’ of the Virii, diuvilam,tirentium / mag(i)uum,sul(um), munikam (Capua 15) ‘common iovila of all the Terenti Magii’, beriument, anei (Teanum Sidicinum 27) ‘in the workshop of the Berii’. So if we read παξελιοσ, we could understand this as an example of a whole family being cursed: ‘the Pauillii (are to be cursed)’. However, the following υομ[5]vs could not also be a gentilicium in the nominative or accusative plural, since we would expect nominative plural *-nος and accusative plural *-nοσς, not -νς. Thus, we would probably need to follow Crawford in reading υομ[5]vs to give a translation ‘the Pauillii, No(uis) Mo.....nus, son of It(i)us’.19

The rest of line 2 contains the form υοςος, which Crawford considers to be the Latin word *asus ‘use’, used as a slave name. As far as we are aware, there is no evidence that this word was ever used as a name in Latin. However, there is a gentilicium attested as both Usius (e.g. CIL 10.6283) and Usiuss (e.g. CIL 5.4344), and we would prefer to connect υοςος with this. It could either be the Oscan praenomen corresponding to the gentilicium found in Latin, with a Greek nominative in -ος, or the Oscan version of the gentilicium in the Oscan nominative or accusative plural, just as for παξελιοσ, with (ι) omitted, as often (see fn.12).

There remains one last, bolder, possibility for understanding this part of the text. This rests on the suggestion of James Clackson (p.c.), that υοςος in line 2 is the Oscan equivalent of a demonstrative pronoun found in Umbrian, e.g. ures ‘of that’ found in IT IV.33 (Untermann 2000: 804; Dupraz 2012: 169),20 in the nominative (or accusative) plural. If this were correct, the sequence ετ/ηισ υοςος αραξς μινσ / καρισ would be translated ‘those (sons/relatives/slaves) of Et(i)us: Arcus, Minatus, Minatus, Carius’.21 However, this comes at the serious cost of positing a pronoun otherwise unattested in Oscan, and, while it cannot be completely ruled out, it is not our favoured interpretation.

Altogether, the supposition that ετ/ηισ is to be understood as the genitive of a praenomen provides a variety of possible ways of translating the first two lines of column 4, most of which result in the presence of a standard, and completely unexceptional, Oscan name formula: either ‘P. Auelius, No(uis) Mo.....nus, son of It(i)us’, or ‘Pauillius Numero.....nus, son of It(i)s’, or ‘the Pauillii, No(uis) Mo.....nus, son of It(i)us’. However, there are also disadvantages to this analysis. First, all the other names in the tableau seem to consist either of a praenomen and gentilicium (those in columns 1–3), or of simply a praenomen (αραξς μινσ / καρισ in column 4); it is not clear why the father’s praenomen should be used only for a single person. Second, and more important, is the question of the spacing of the letters. As can be seen in Figure 1, the writer had plenty of space after (σετ) to write (ηισ) on the same line, and lines 2 and 3 of column 4

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* *-tόδ and υοςος < *fλοσος. On the large amount of variation in spelling of vowels in Oscan inscriptions in the Greek alphabet in general, see Zair (forthcoming, Chapter 2).

18 There are no examples of consonant-stem gentilicia (Lejeune 1976: 119–21).

19 The use of the accusative to name curse victims is found in another Oscan curse tablet in the Greek alphabet (Laos 3). There are switches between nominative and accusative in some other Oscan curse tablets from Bruttium (Thurii Copia 1, Crimisa 3, Teanurus Ager 1). In these texts, the case of the name shows a strict alternation between nominative and accusative, suggesting a NOM (VERB) ACC structure where both curser and cursed are named but the verb is elided (McDonald 2013: 169–71; McDonald 2015). Petelia 2 shows no such alternation, and it is not plausible that the long list of names in the nominative in Petelia 2 could all be cursing the relatively small number of individuals in the accusative whom they precede and follow on the tablet. This suggests that the NOM (VERB) ACC structure is not the best explanation in the case of Petelia 2, and instead the writer would have to have briefly slipped into the accusative. This switch into the accusative for two names (or three, depending on how many letters the damaged part of the tablet contained) would be unmotivated. However, unmotivated switches between nominative and accusative are quite common in curse tablets cross-linguistically, since when writing a long list the writer may forget which case (s)he was using, sometimes using the nominative as a ‘default’ case and sometimes imagining a syntax such as ‘I curse X (accusative)’ (Adams 2003: 682). A short lapse into the accusative before switching back to the nominative for the following ροσς, μινσ and καρισ would therefore not be surprising in this inscription, considering the list of names is comparatively long; although there is no reason why these names should not be in the nominative.

20 If this is correct, Dupraz’s derivation of the Umbrian pronoun from *oys- cannot be correct, since Oscan υοςος could come from *νος, *νοσς or *νος, but not *ος-.

21 The name ροσς is the praenomen corresponding to the Latin gentilicium Arcius (CIL 8.9683, albeit in Africa, but cf. the related name Arcaeus at Pompeii, CIL 10.793).
extend much further to the right. The writer also does not split words over two lines anywhere else in the
inscription. The top surface of the tablet is now damaged so that we do not have the original top edge; it is
possible that there was some existing damage or flaw at the top of the tablet that would have motivated the
writer to move to the next line, but this is speculative.

2.2 Interpretation 2: demonstrative pronoun
The second interpretation we suggest would obviate these difficulties, respecting the integrity of the line-
ends, and avoiding the problem of the single instance of a father’s praenomen. We would propose to read
lines 1–3 as παρελισσ νομο[5]ν(σ) σετ / ηισου(μ) σοσ αραξ μισ / καρω, taking σετ as the 3rd
plural of the verb ‘to be’, well attested as sent (e.g. Teanum Sidicum 26) and, with the common Oscan loss
of the nasal before -t-, set (e.g. Capua 25), and ηισου(μ) as the genitive plural of the demonstrative pronoun
already attested in this column at the end of line 3. The word σοσ would be the expected Oscan form of
the praenomen corresponding to the Latin gentilicium Sossius (e.g. CIL 9.2303) or Sossius (e.g. 9.422), since
*sos(s)os would give *soss by syncope of the vowel in the final syllable. The translation of these lines would
then be ‘The Pauillii, … of these are Sos(s)us, Arcus, Minatus, Minatus, Carius’. Such an analysis would
have the same advantage as the first interpretation, removing the implausible Latin forms et and īsus. It
would also explain why the praenomina in line 3 are not followed by gentilicia, as in columns 1–3, because
the gentilicium has already been given; and also the double occurrence of μισ, which may now refer to
two different people with the same name in one or two different families.

However, there is also a difficulty in this analysis, which is the interpretation of νομο[5]ν(σ). As dis-
cussed in the previous section, if a gentilicium, it could only be the nominative singular of a gentilicium
in *-ānos or *-īnos, which would not fit into the necessary understanding of ηισου(μ) as referring to
something in the plural in the previous line.22 The only possibility, if the word is in the plural, is that it is
a consonant stem. In context, a speculative suggestion might be the word for ‘humans, men’, attested as
humuns in Capua 34;23 there might just be space for a reading of lines 1–2 as παρελισσ νομο[νοσ oμo]ν(σ) σετ / ηισου(μ) ‘the Pauillii, the Numonii, the men of these (families) are: …’.24 The use of this pronoun to
refer anaphorically to something in a previous clause is attested in line 3 of our tablet, and also paralleled
in Cumae 8.43–4, which, after a long list of names, reads īnīm eisunk ulftis / sullum [s]ullas ‘and all
wishes (?) of all of them’. The pronoun *eys-leys normally goes at the beginning of the clause, but Dupraz
(2012: 236) suggests that this is a stylistic feature of solemn or official texts rather than a syntactic rule; one
of the few attested exceptions is in Capua 34, another curse tablet from about the same time as Petelia 2. In
general, Oscan is a subject-object-verb language, but there are clearly cases where the subject or predicate
is moved to after the verb, presumably with pragmatic effect (cf. puf.faamat / ma(ar)as, aadirius, vibeis),
Pompei 2, ‘where commands Mr. Adirius, son of V.; κωσ(τ)τ ν̄(ωμο)σ Η(Η)ΔΠ, Potentia 1, ‘they cost 350
nummi’). Consequently, the order σετ / ηισου(μ) rather than ηισου(μ) σετ is not problematic.

3. Conclusions
Our new readings and interpretations reveal a number of things about the inscription and its writer. Firstly,
the Latin word et ‘and’ does not necessarily appear in this text. This means that we do not have to struggle
to explain why the writer would make such an unusual one-word code-switch into a language that had
donot yet been used in the inscription for a single conjunction. Both our possible readings of ετ/ηισ ορ σετ /
ηισου(μ) provide a much better explanation than the unmotivated use of Latin et. We also see no reason to

22 An ethnic adjective would fit well into the formula at this point: ‘The Pauillii from Numo …’, but ethnic adjectives end
in *-ānos or *-īnos (cf. bantins ‘Bantine, Bantia’ 1.19) and would consequently also have a nominative plural in *-n̄ōs.
23 We are grateful to James Clackson (p.c.) for this suggestion.
24 Crawford identifies the gap in line 1 as being of five letters. On the basis that Oscan gentilicia almost invariably end
in -ans, -ins, -is or -ins, the shortest possible continuation of vuo[ ], if it is a gentilicium, is three more letters. We compare
the Latin gentilicium Numònius, whose nominative plural could be spelt in Oscan as νομονοσ, with absence of (i) after a consonant
as discussed above. For missing (h) in oμo(ν(σ) cf. eλ[ι]oμ (Thurii Copia 1) ‘Helius’, oρτομεν (Laos 3) ‘Hortorius’, (h)ορτομ (Cirimisa 3) ‘Horium’ etc.
see οὐσος as a Latin personal name ‘Usus’ rather than an Oscan name ‘Uss(i)us’. We have therefore made a trilingual curse into a bilingual one, and solved the problem of finding isolated Latin words in an inscription from ancient Bruttium at such an early date.

Secondly, our new interpretation of the first line of column 4 changes the way we see the use of code-switching in this text. If, as we have argued, it is more likely that words ending in -οσ are Oscan nominative or accusative plurals rather than Greek nominative singulars and we accept Crawford’s interpretation that the words ending in -o and -ω in columns 1–3 are Oscan feminine nominative singulars and not Doric Greek genitive singulars, then this means that there is no code-switching between Oscan and Greek until the final curse formula. If the majority of the curse is entirely in Oscan, and the writer has not been switching between languages throughout the curse as an obfuscation device, then we need to explain why (s)he felt the desire to code-switch in the final formula.

The confusion of aspirates and non-aspirates in the Greek portion of the text suggests that the writer may not have been a first-language speaker of Greek (Poccetti 2010: 675). Nevertheless, the curse formula is based on Greek models, as even the Oscan clause appears to be a translation from Greek produced by the writer or by the author of the handbook (s)he was following (cf. SGD 106, SGD 110 or SEG 49:1358 for Greek examples with comparable wording from Sicily and Calabria). The switch could therefore be motivated by reducing effort: reproducing a familiar Greek formula might have been easier than continuing to produce a translation, even for a second-language speaker of Greek. However, the switch from Oscan into Greek may also be motivated by the fact that this clause directly addresses Hermes, a Greek god – not the most usual choice in Greek curse tablets in Italy and Sicily, but not unknown elsewhere (see e.g. DTA 52, DTA 97, DTA 109). If the desire to address a Greek-speaking deity, and not general obfuscation, is the primary motivation for the code-switch in the formula, this gives us a significant insight into how Oscan-speakers in Bruttium adapted Greek models of writing curse tablets.

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