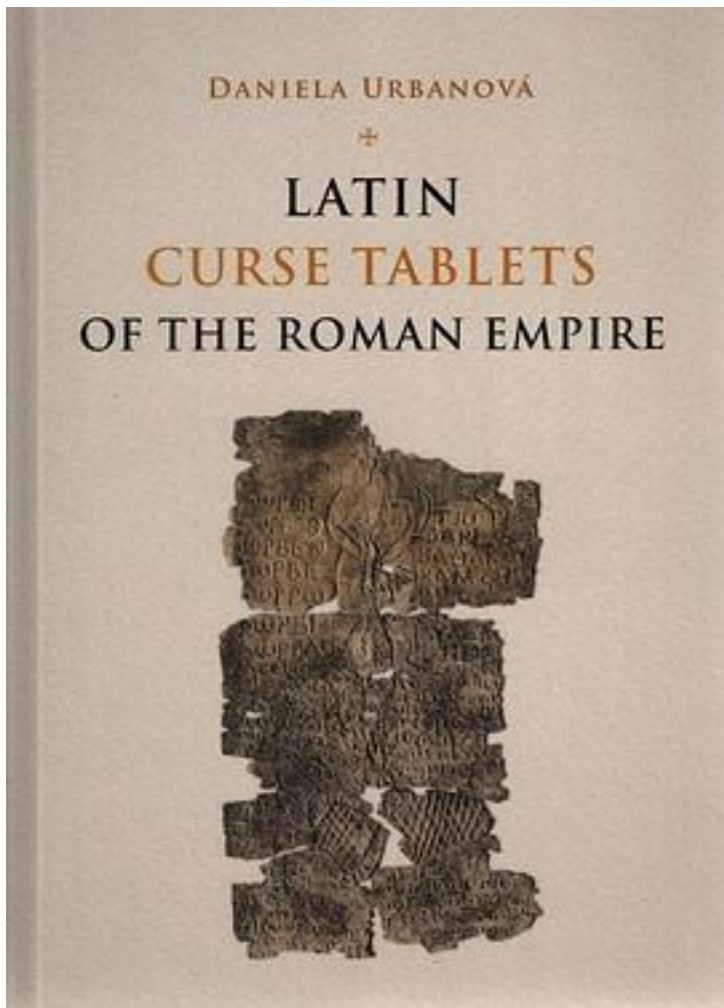


Latin curse tablets of the Roman Empire



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著者:Daniela Urbanová

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The aim of this work is to map and analyse the extant Latin 'defixiones' whose

production within the Roman Empire is attested from the 2nd cent. BCE to the end of the 4th/beginning of the 5th cent. CE. There are altogether five hundred Latin curse texts most of which are inscribed on lead tablets. These were intended to affect the actions or health of people/animals against their will and with the help of supernatural powers. As such, they provide the epigraphical evidence of magical practices which were widespread throughout the whole Mediterranean of antiquity. They are often aimed at rivals e.g. in circus or in love, opponents in lawsuits, or enemies, in general. Additionally, there is a special category of so-called 'prayers for justice' which are traditionally classified among 'defixiones' and share several characteristics with them. They are predominantly used against thieves, and are meant to harm or eliminate the culprit. At the same time, their aim is to achieve justice: returning the stolen property, a ?just? punishment, or revenge for the damage suffered (usually a theft, treachery, or fraud).

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