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INDEX

ANOTHER SPANISH *ALIENUM* IN CANTERBURY?
NEW INSIGHTS ON *RIB* 2324*

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avunculo benemerenti

Introduction

Among the collections of the British Museum there is a small Roman funerary altar, dedicated by a father to his two deceased children.[1] The monument is carved out of a single block of marble, and measures 37cm (height) by 20cm (width) by 15cm (thickness).[2] It has the formal characteristics of a votive altar, with an *urceus* (right) and *patera* (left) on the sides. The pediment contains a triangular *tympanum*, flanked by two rounded *pulvini*, with a circular *focus* on top. With the exception of the formulaic *D(is) M(anibus) [s(acrum)]* on the pediment, the epitaph is carved directly on the altar's shaft, which is framed above and below by bands of moulding of the *cyma recta* type.

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* I am grateful to Jonathan Edmondson (York University) for his thoughts and recommendations on an early draft. Furthermore, I would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers as their suggestions led to an improvement of this article. All remaining errors are my own.

[1] Museum Number 1951, 0203.1; *RIB* 2324*. A digital edition has been published on the website of the *Roman Inscriptions of Britain Online* (https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/2324), as well as in the *Epigraphic Database Heidelberg* (*EDH*) (https://edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/edh/inschrift/HD071434) by James Cowey.

[2] Both the pediment and the plinth are slightly thicker (both 15.5cm) and wider (19.7cm and 20.3cm respectively) than the shaft (11.8cm thick and 17.8cm wide). The height of the shaft is 17.2cm. Both the *urceus* and the *patera* protrude from both sides of the shaft (1.8cm and 1.1cm respectively). The *patera* has a diameter of 7cm, whereas the *urceus* measures 11.6cm by 8.2cm.

There were two main issues which previous editors addressed and to a large extent agreed on: the interpretation of the unusual abbreviations and interpunctuation in the last line of the inscription ("*pient(issimis) f(i)l(iis)*"), and the doubt cast upon the unsubstantiated claims regarding the altar's discovery ("*around 1840 in Petham*"). In this article, a different reading of the abbreviations in the last line is proposed. Furthermore, the analysis of both the linguistic and formal elements of the altar allows for a substantiated hypothesis regarding its provenance. Finally, an investigation into the previous owners reveals a possible connection with another *alienum* from Canterbury.[3]

Image 1: The so-called Petham Altar - RIB 2324*.
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[3] The lack of any archaeological context reminds me of another funerary monument from Canterbury (*RIB* 2328*), which has been shown to originate from Augusta Emerita (modern Mérida) in Lusitania (Goessens 2016, 59–72). Tomlin (2015, 408) published my initial findings on this possible link.

pient(issimis) f(i)l(iis)?

In the *Roman Inscriptions of Britain* (*RIB*), the text of the inscription has been edited and supplemented to the following extent:

Diplomatic	Edition
D M [S]	*D(is) M(anibus) [s(acrum)]*
C E L I E · M A X S I	*{C} Elie Maxsi-*
M E Q · V · AN X	*me q(uae) v(ixit) an(nos) X*
E T · E L I O · A L E X	*et Elio Alex-*
S A N D R O · Q V	*sandro q(ui) v(ixit)*
A N · I I X E L I V S F E	*an(nos) IIX Elius Fe-*
L V M I N V S P A	*luminus pa-*
T · PIEN · T · F · L · F C	*t(er) pient(issimis) f(i)l(iis) f(aciendum) c(uravit)*

The altar is slightly damaged in the top right corner, and as a result the letter *S* of the formulaic *D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum)* is no longer extant.[4] On the back of the plinth, there are some roughly carved letters.[5] The letters of the inscription itself are cut in a slightly irregular actuarial script.[6] Both the *O*'s and *Q*'s are oval-shaped and the undulating horizontal bars of the *L*'s, *E*'s, *F*'s and *T*'s are more resembling of rustic capitals. The letters found on the pediment measure 1.3cm, whereas they are slightly larger (1.8–2.1cm) in the text inscribed into the shaft.[7] There are four instances of syllabification by dividing words between lines.[8] The inconsistent interpunctuation is characterised by

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[4] This damage has been recorded by all previous editors. It seems thus that it predates the altar's first presentation to the public in 1875 (cf. *infra*).

[5] According to Wright (1965, *RIB* 2324*) the letters are *C? O? T*. Autopsy of the altar reveals that there are in fact traces of at least four letters: *C* (or *O*), O (or possibly *Q*), Ɔ and *T*. It remains, however, unclear when and by whom these letters were cut into to stone, as well as how they should be interpreted or supplemented.

[6] Also referred to as 'librarial' script, cf. Edmondson 2015, 124–125.

[7] The letters in the last three lines of the inscriptions are slightly smaller than those in the preceding four lines.

[8] *Maxsi-me* (l. 2–3), *Alex-sandro* (l. 4–5), *Fe-luminus* (l. 6–7) and *pa-t(er)* (l. 7–8). See also Dennison 1906, 47–68; Bodel 2014, 758. The stonecutter seemingly tried to make as much use as possible of

rather rudimentary *hederae*.[9] The letter *C* at the beginning of the second line appears to be slightly rougher than the other letters in the inscription.[10] This is possibly the result of an unsuccessful attempt by the stonecutter at erasing the letter. The daughter's *gentilicium*, therefore, should be read as '*(A)elia*', not '*C(a)elia*'.[11] Although the latter cannot entirely be excluded, the presence of the *gentilicium* '*(A)elius*' in both the son's and father's name make this interpretation highly improbable. Her *cognomen* '*Max{s}ima*' is commonly found in Latin onomastics.[12] The monophthongisation of *-ae* and the digraph *-xs-* instead of *-x-* for the intervocalic /ks/ are common phonetical and orthographical phenomena.[13] Both are also present in the deceased son's name '*(A)elius Alex{s} ander*'.[14] '*qui / quae vixit annos …*' is twice abbreviated in the exact same manner, i.e. *Q V AN*. Maxima was ten years of age when she passed away, Alexander eight. It should be noted that the number eight is rendered by the numeral *IIX* rather than *VIII*.[15] It seems likely that both children died at or around the same time, for which reason their father commemorated them with a single monument. The father's name consists of the same *gentilicium* '*(A)elius*' and the *cognomen* '*Feluminus*' - a corrupted Latinisation of the Greek 'Φιλουμενός' - which is only

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the available space by breaking up words on the basis of how they were pronounced. The single letter enjambment in *pa/t(er)* is unusual and only attested in this inscription.

[9] In line 2 between *ELIE* and *MAXSI*, in line 3 after *Q* and *V*, in line 4 between *ET* and *ELIO*, in line 5 between *SANDRO* and *Q*, in line 6 between *AN* and *IIX* and finally in line 8 after the initial *T*, after *PIEN*, after the second *T*, after *F* and after *L*.

[10] The only other example of the letter *C* in the inscription at the end of the last line is more elegant with a clear serif in the top corner. The cutting of this letter is more resembling of the rough letters on the back of the plinth (cf. supra n. 5).

[11] Taylor – Collingwood 1929, 241. For the *nomen* '*Aelius*', see Schulze 1991, 116 and 204, and Solin – Salomies 1988, 7. The letter *C* could also be supplemented as the *praenomen C(aia)*, cf. Kajava 1994, 38 and 143–147, although this seems to be less probable.

[12] On this *cognomen*, see Kajanto 1965, 275 and 1972, 28–29.

[13] On the monophthongisation of *-ae-* in inscriptions, see Coleman 1971, 86–92; on the potentially hypercorrective spelling *-xs-* for the intervocalic /ks/, see Adams 2013, 170–171.

[14] On this *cognomen*, see Lörincz – Redö 1994, 41–42; Solin 2003, 191–200.

[15] The preference for the numeral *XII* might be explained due to the lack of space. In fact, the spacing in line 6 of the inscriptions suggest that the stonecutter added the numeral after the name of the father had been cut.

attested in this inscription.[16] Although his social status is not mentioned, it is possible that he is an imperial freedman of Greek origin (or a descendant).[17] If this is the case, the *gentilicium* would suggest the earliest approximative dating to the second half of the second century C.E.[18] The lack of any *praenomina* in the inscription seems to confirm this observation.[19]

Image 2: Detail of the letters cut into the back of the plinth.
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[16] Φιλουμενός / Φιλουμένη is well attested throughout the Greek world (224 occurrences in the online database of the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names (LGPN)* – http://www.lgpn.ox.ac.uk/). For Latin inscriptions, there are in total 311 occurrences (including this one) in the *Epigraphik Datenbank Clauss-Slaby* (*EDCS*) – http://db.edcs.eu/. The most common Latin transcription is *Philumen-* (172 occurrences). Other alternative spellings are *Philumin-* (65) and *Filumen-* (51). Less frequently we find *Filumin-* (11) and *Philomen-* (8), whereas uncommon forms are *Filomen-* (*CIL* VIII 17220; *ICUR* IV 10091 = *ILCV* 3024), as well as the unique *Filomin-* (*AE* 2013, 1308) and, as already mentioned, the present *Felumin-*. The name is commonly found for slaves and freedman, mostly in Rome and Italy (cf. Solin 1996, 459–460), with a few occurrences in Southern Gaul, Spain and Illyria.

[17] Weaver 1972, 80–87.

[18] Weaver 1963, 277.

[19] Salomies 1987, 390–413.

The main difficulty in the inscription, however, is the rather problematic last line. Most editors agreed that it should be supplemented as *pient(issimis) f(i) l(iis) f(aciendum) c(uravit)*.[20] There should be no doubt about both *pien(tissim-)* and *f(aciendum) c(uravit)*. Yet, for the remaining letters (*T F L*), there are several objections to the generally accepted interpretation. The anomaly of *pien·t(issimis)* and *f(i)·l(iis)* could only be explained as a '*lapsus mentis*' of an otherwise rather literate stonecutter. The first issue is the unusual separation of *PIEN* and the letter *T*, as a result of which both the interpretation *pient(issim-)* and *pien(tissim-) t(---)* are possible.[21] In the other lines of the inscription, the interpunctuation is used – although not in a consistent manner – to separate words or abbreviations between them, not to cause syllabification within a word or abbreviation.[22] This would suggest that interpreting these letters as *pien(tissim-) t(---)* should be preferred. Furthermore, it is worth noting that most previous editors attributed this adjective to the deceased children, rather than to their commemorating father.[23] Although the epithet *pientissimus* is usually referring to the deceased, it is not uncommon as a qualification of the commemorator dutifully fulfilling the funerary honours towards the deceased.[24] In addition, the word order '*pientissimis filiis*' is rather unusual.[25] This suggests that in this case the adjective

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[20] It was suggested by Watkin (1876, 365–366) and accepted by Hübner (1881, 195) and Taylor – Collingwood (1929, 216). According to Hübner (*op. cit.*) "*sine dubio aut in lapide est FIL·F·C aut certe ita dare debebat quadratarius*".

[21] The *EDCS* has 104 occurrences of *pient(issim-)*, whereas there are 39 for *pien(tissim-)*.

[22] Cf. note 8.

[23] As suggested by Watkin (1876, 366) and Haug (1886, 148–149). Hübner (1881, 195), as well as Taylor – Collingwood (1929, 216) tacitly avoided the issue by not supplementing the abbreviation. In the *RIB*, on the other hand, the supplented texts reads *pient(issimis)*.

[24] In the *EDCS*, there are 325 occurrences in which this adjective is referring to the commemorator. Regarding the word order, the analysis of the cases of "commemorator (*pater/mater/parentes*) + '*pientissimus*' + deceased (*filius/filia/filii*)" have revealed no clear preference. There are 30 such cases (of which 12 have an abbreviated adjective): the adjective refers to the deceased in 9 instances (*AE* 1955, 25 and 1964, 31; *CIL* VI 13553 = XI 259 11*; VI 15876; VI 20694; VI 20725 = III 239 14*; VIII 9389; IX 305; IX 3058 = *CLE* 1479); it equally refers to the commemorator on 9 occasions (*CIL* VI 18171; VI 19945; VI 25890; VI 26329; VI 35067; VI 38691; XI 00169; XIV, 634; *IRC* I 47).

[25] This would be the only case in which the word order *pientissimis filiis* is present (possibly also in *CIL* XII 489, yet the reading is doubtful). The word order 'adjective – noun' is also uncommon in the combinations of *pientissimus* with other commemorative terminology (17 occurrences for *filius/-a*, 3 for *coniux* (m/f), 5 for *pater/mater*, 2 for *maritus/uxor*).

is more likely to refer to the commemorating father. If we accept *pien(tissimus)* rather than *pient(issimis)*, the letter *T* could be supplemented as *t(itulum)* - a form which is well attested, especially in formulaic constructions.[26] Hence, the last line should be supplemented as *pa/t(er) pien(tissimus) t(itulum) f(i)l(iis) f(aciendum) c(uravit)*.

This interpretation still leaves the problematic suggestion of *f(i)·l(iis)* by previous editors. Although the abbreviation *f(i)l(ius/a)* is attested – albeit scarcely – in other inscriptions, this would be the only case in which the letters are separated by means of interpunctuation.[27] If, however, we accept the interpuncts to be separating words or abbreviations, the last line could be tentatively supplemented as *pa/t(er) pien(tissimus) t(itulum) f(iliis) l(ibens) f(aciendum) c(uravit)*. This suggestion is epigraphically, however, not without its problems. It would be the only instance of the construction *titulum libens faciendum curavit* in a Latin inscription. Moreover, the adjective *libens* is, unsurprisingly, relatively rare in inscriptions of a funerary nature.[28]

Image 3: Detail of the last line of the inscription: [TER PIEN]·T·F?·L·F·[C].
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[26] This abbreviation is normally found with the verbs *p(osuit)*, *f(ecit)* and – although less frequently – *f(aciendum) c(uravit)*. The latter is found in *CIL* III 3629, 3680, 4282, 8218, VII 920 (= *RIB* 2029), X 4226 and XIII 3693.

[27] There are only 30 occurrences in the *EDCS* of the abbreviated *f(i)l(i)-*.

[28] Although the adjective is present in many votive inscriptions in the formulaic *votum solvit libens merito*, it should be noted that both *libens* and *libens merito* managed to make their way into a small number of funerary inscriptions (e.g. *CIL* VI 3575, *CIL* VI 4924, *AE* 1980, 799), similarly to votive altars being used as funerary monuments. The combination of *titulum* and *libens* is only attested in two other funerary inscriptions (*CIL* III 13014 and VIII 27850).

Moreover, the autopsy of the altar reveals that the formal aspects of the first *F* in the last line do not seem to be in line with the other examples of the letter present on the altar. In fact, upon closer inspection the letter appears to be more resembling of the other examples of the letter *T*. It remains unclear, however, whether what appears to be the lower stroke of a letter *F* is down to some slight damage to the altar or discolouration of the marble, or if the stonecutter did indeed intend to cut a letter *F*. If this were indeed a letter *T*, we would be left with more questions than answers. All attempts of sensibly supplementing the letters *T T L* would prove to be futile. The first *T* could again be the abbreviation of *t(itulum)*, but supplementing the following letters as *t(estamento) l(ibens)* would be problematic to say the least and impossible to justify given the age of the deceased and their relationship to the commemorator. We could, perhaps, assume that there is an unusual abbreviation. When disregarding the interpunctuation, *T T L* could be supplemented as *t(i)t(u)l(um)*. But again, it would be impossible to support it with any other epigraphic parallels.[29] On the other hand, the anomaly could perhaps be ascribed to an error, either in the draft of the inscription or in the cutting of the letters. An individual involved in the production of the inscription could have been unfamiliar with an abbreviation such as *titul(um)*.[30] Or the interpunctuation between the letters could have been the result of the fact that an earlier draft had the common formula *[s(it)] t(ibi) t(erra) l(evis)*, which the stonecutter diligently copied on the stone.[31] A similar form of confusion resulting in unintelligible abbreviations can be found in a Latin inscription from Quinta de Marim in Portugal.[32]

Most of the suggestions outlined above will remain purely speculative. They would not in any way, however, dramatically change the interpretation

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[29] There is only one other occurrence: *CIL* VI 9162 (= *ILCV* 311; 694; 3766 = *ICUR* II 4280). In this instance, however, *titulus* refers to a church.

[30] *titul(-)* has 34 occurrences in the *EDCS*, mainly in inscriptions from the Danubian provinces and Northern Italy, while it is also attested in Roman Spain, North Africa, and Gaul.

[31] A similar 'error' might be attested in an inscription from Mérida, in which the letters of *t(i)t(ulum)* are also separated from one another by means of an interpunct (*ERAE* 161). Another interpretation of these letters, however, is *t(itulum) t(estamento)*, as suggested by Álvarez Sáenz de Buruaga (1945, 6) and Curchin (2010, 28).

[32] *IRCP* 45. In this inscription, in fact, the execution of the formula *hic situs est* and *sit tibi terra levis* by a seemingly illiterate stonecutter goes completely awry. See Hübner 1872, 354–355 (n. 1), d'Encarnação 2016, 56–58 and 2019, 118–120.

of the altar, nor of the last line of its inscription. It remains intriguing why an otherwise seemingly competent and literate *lapicida* would cut the letters and use interpunctuation and abbreviations in the way he did in the last line of this particular inscription. As a result of what has been discussed the following revised edition of the inscription is proposed: *D(is) M(anibus) [s(acrum)] /{C} Elie Maxsi/me q(uae) v(ixit) an(nos) X / et Elio Alex/sandro q(ui) v(ixit) / an(nos) IIX Elius Fe/luminus pa/t(er) pien(tissimus) t(itulum) f(iliis) l(ibens?) f(aciendum) c(uravit)*

"a modern import from the continent"?

Not only the interpretation of the last line proved to be problematic. From the beginning, the scarce details regarding the precise circumstances of the monument's discovery have raised more questions than answers. It is said to have come to light in the small village of Petham in Kent around 1840. It was presented for the first time at a Summer Meeting of the Royal Archaeological Institute in Canterbury in July of 1875.[33] As early as the following year, when it was published for the first time by Watkin, the use of marble – a rare material in Roman Britain especially in a funerary context – raised the suspicion that the monument had most likely been imported.[34] A few years later, Emil Hübner suggested that it should be included in a future addendum to the seventh *CIL* volume among the inscriptions from *Portus Lemanae* (Lympne).[35] In 1891, Haverfield mentioned this inscription as an example of a modern import.[36] Taylor and Collingwood proposed a number of emendations to both Watkin's and Hübner's editions, yet with no mention of the monument's provenance.[37] In 1948, it appeared

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[33] Morgan 1875, 516.

[34] Watkin 1876, 365–366. He suggested that it was either a modern-day import from the continent (quoting Roach Smith), or that the altar itself was imported from Gaul in ancient times with the actual inscription having been carved locally.

[35] Hübner 1881, 195 (no. 622). He also reiterated Roach Smith's claim that it was likely a modern-day import.

[36] Haverfield 1891, 241. He added that this particular altar had been unjustly considered a local production.

[37] Taylor – Collingwood 1929, 216; cf. *supra*.

alongside *RIB* 2328* (= *CIL* II 585) in the *Quarterly Bulletin* of the Canterbury Royal Museum and Public Library in Canterbury.[38] During all of that time, the monument had been in a private collection in Canterbury.[39] In 1951, it was auctioned by Sotheby's and purchased by the British Museum.[40] Collingwood and Wright included the inscription among the *aliena* in the first volume of the *Roman Inscriptions of Britain* (1965).[41] Although there is agreement that we are dealing, in all likelihood, with a modern import, no attempt has been made to substantiate a hypothesis on its origin, based on both the linguistic aspects of the inscription and the formal characteristics of the monument.

There are several elements in the inscription which allow us to identify the most likely provenance of this imported altar. First of all, the formula *Dis Manibus sacrum* is primarily found in the Spanish and North African provinces, where it is much more frequently used in funerary inscriptions than *Dis Manibus*.[42] Secondly, the abbreviated *f(aciendum) c(uravit)* is in geographical terms primarily found in Roman Spain, and to a lesser extent in the Balkan provinces and in Gaul (including Britain and in the Rhine provinces).[43] For the latter two regions, most occurrences are found in or around military settlements along the Danube and the Rhine. An assessment of the combined presence of both *D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum)* and *f(aciendum) c(uravit)* reveals that the combination is

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[38] Wright 1948, 27 (photograph) and 29. No new information is provided, yet Wright mentioned the apparent year of discovery to be 1849.

[39] Haverfield (1891, 241) stated that it was in a private house in Canterbury. Taylor – Collingwood (1929, 216) confirmed that it was in the possession of Dr. Frank Wacher (1849–1935), cf. *infra*.

[40] British Museum, *Antiquities Register*, Vol. 26 (February 1948 – December 1958), Prehistory and Roman Britain, Registration Number 1951, 0203.1; Wright 1952, 109. The information in the Register provides no new elements except for "*apparently Luna marble*" (also mentioned in the *RIB*). The register seems to agree with Watkin (cf. *supra*) and considers the altar to be a Romano-British production.

[41] *RIB* 2324*. Collingwood and Wright, concurring with Roach Smith and Haverfield, believed the altar to be an import as it was found some five miles from a major Roman settlement (Canterbury).

[42] Judging by to total number of occurrences in the *EDCS*, *Dis Manibus* is more than twice as common than the alternative *Dis Manibus Sacrum*. In the Spanish provinces, on the other hand, *Dis Manibus Sacrum* is preferred to *Dis Manibus* by a ratio of approx. 3:2. For North Africa, the preference in favour of *Dis Manibus Sacrum* is even more outspoken by a ratio of approx. 3:1.

[43] Horster 2015, 522–523. Originally, the formula was used mostly in building inscriptions. Later, it appeared in epitaphs as an alternative to *fecit*. In a funerary context it is most common in the Spanish provinces and in the Balkans.

strikingly predominant in inscriptions from Spain.[44] Non-Spanish occurrences of both *formulae* are scarce.[45]

A closer look at the formal aspects of the monument further strengthens the hypothesis of a Spanish provenance. The marble altar is characterised by a plain shaft and undecorated *pulvini* and *tympanum*. In chronological terms, the earliest example of this particular type of funerary monument from Rome dates back to the late Julio-Claudian period. Most other surviving examples are dateable to the first half of the second century C.E.[46] The monument is also found throughout Italy and in the those provinces with a large number of Roman colonies. It is a common occurrence in the Spanish provinces, especially in Baetica and Lusitania.[47] Furthermore, the use of both local and imported marble for the production of funerary monuments is well attested in these regions.[48] It is worth mentioning that two *taurobolium* altars from Córdoba, dateable to the 230s C.E., are of similar typology to the Petham altar.[49] If a Spanish origin for the latter were accepted, the proposed dating of the altar would be the first half of the third century rather than the second half of the second century C.E.[50] The use of the superlative *pientissimus* would also support such dating.[51] Finally, as a result of these findings, a Spanish origin would also strengthen the case for the aforementioned possibile error or confusion in the last line.[52]

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[44] They account for almost 80% of the total number of occurrences, with by far the largest concentration from Lusitania.

[45] North Africa: 40 occurrences (16 are from the *municipium* of Lambaesis alone), Italy: 8; Balkans; 4, Rome: 3, Gaul (including Britain): 3 (excluding *RIB* 2324* and 2328*).

[46] Boschung 1988, 14–22.

[47] Gamer 1989, 112–123. Altars of similar typology were found in Badajoz (*CIL* II 5357), Évora (*CIL* II 5195), Villafranca de los Barros (*CIL* II 5355 and 5356) and Córdoba (*CIL* II 2236).

[48] On the import of Italian marble in Spain, see Russell 2013, 154–161; on local Spanish marble, see Cisneros Cunchillos 1988, 85–120.

[49] *CIL* II²/7 233 and 234 – dateable to 234 and 238 C.E. respectively.

[50] Cf. supra, based on the analysis of the onomastic elements present in the inscription.

[51] Curchin 1982, 179.

[52] Most of the funerary inscriptions in which the formula *sit tibi* (or *vobis*) *terra levis* is attested, originate from Roman Spain (Hartke 1901, 32–38; Lattimore 1942, 66-74).

"in Petham, around 1840"?

The likelihood of a Spanish origin necessitates a reconsideration of the claim about the altar's discovery. It was said to have been found around 1840 in Petham when it was presented for the first time in 1875.[53] In the proceedings of that meeting, it is mentioned that "*a Roman inscribed altar found at Petham, some glass unguentaria, etc., fibulae, and bronze objects of various kinds were sent by Miss Pout, Mr. Parry, Mr. Brent and others.*"[54] It has been possible to identify Miss Pout as Fanny Ellen Pout (1840–1909), a spinster from Canterbury. Prior to her death she had appointed the surgeon Frank Wacher (1849–1935), also from Canterbury, as one of the executors of her will, yet it remains unclear as to how the latter came into possession of the altar.[55] Upon Frank Wacher's death in 1935, it was passed on to his eldest son Dr. Harold Wacher (1876–1949).[56] Two years after his death, it was aqcuired by the British Museum.[57]

Having established its owner as far back as 1875, the year in which it was first presented, the question remains as to how Miss Pout obtained the altar. It seems likely that she inherited the artefact from her father, John Pout (1801–1875), "*upholsterer and auctioneer living in 6 High Street at Canterbury*".[58] He had died just a few months prior to the Summer Meeting of the Royal Archaeological

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[53] In and around the small village of Petham some other Roman finds had come to light in the late 18th and 19th century (cf. Roach Smith 1857, 173–175; Payne 1893, 197; Taylor 1932, 162). In 2012, a Roman balsam vessel was discovered near the village (Richardson 2013, 41).

[54] Morgan 1875, 516.

[55] *National Probate Calendar 1909*: "Pout, Fanny Ellen at Myrtle Cottage, Westbere, Kent, spinster, died 18 August 1909. Probate Canterbury 22 October to Frank Wacher surgeon and Frank Amos auctioneer." In the actual will, there is no specific reference to the altar. It is stated that "all jewellery, trinkets and personal ornaments and also [her] wearing apparel and all of [her] household furniture, plate, linen, china, glass, books, prints, pictures and other household effects" were to be bequeathed in equal shares to her nieces. As per the will, her "friend" Frank Wacher in his capacity as executor, was to be bequeathed the sum of £20. This suggests that Frank Wacher had either come into possession of the altar prior to Fanny Ellen Pout's death, or that perhaps the item had been purloined by him.

[56] On Dr. Harold Wacher, see Obituary, *British Medical Journal* 4605 (1949); Wilmot 1993, 3.

[57] Cf. *supra*.

[58] *National Probate Calendar 1875*: "Pout, John [Probate] 22 March. The Will of John Pout late of the City of Canterbury, Upholder, who died 22 February at the said City, was proved at Canterbury by Fanny Ellen Pout, Spinster, the Daughter, and Charles Holttum, Surgeon, both of the said City, the Executors." In the actual will there is no reference to the altar.

Institute. Quite possibly, Miss Pout wanted to gather expert advice on the item which had recently come into her possession. Therefore, we can assume that the information regarding archaeological context provided in both the report of the meeting and in Watkin's account were, in fact, based on her claims. This, of course, raises the question as to why the altar was said to have been found in Petham around 1840.

Both the village of Petham and the figure of John Pout reveal a possible connection with another Spanish *alienum* that ended up in Canterbury (*RIB* 2328* = *CIL* II 585). John Pout had served as the librarian for the Canterbury Philosophical and Literary Institute in the 1830s. As such he was acquainted with William Henry Baldock, Esq., of Petham (1786–1844), who had donated the Spanish altar from Mérida to the the institute's museum in 1833.[59] Baldock was a banker in Canterbury as a partner in the Halford, Baldock & Co (also known as the Canterbury Union Bank).[60] Pout and Baldock were both members of the local branch of the Conservative Party. Perhaps most revealing of their acquaintance, as well as their personal and professional ties is the role both played in the voter fraud and bribery during the 1841 Canterbury by-election and general election.[61] After the Union Bank filed for bankrupcy later that same year, Baldock was forced to move from his Petham estate to Godmersham near Ashford, where he died in 1844.[62] Both these biographical elements are strinkingly similar to the claim that *RIB* 2324* was found in Petham around 1840, and could unintentionally reveal that W. H. Baldock was in possession of the altar.

Unfortunately, no will of W. H. Baldock has survived, and therefore his ownership of the altar cannot be ascertained. In the months that followed the

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[59] Goessens 2016, 62.

[60] William Henry Baldock was the nephew of William Baldock, known for having been a smuggler and later in life a property developer in Canterbury. William Baldock was born in Petham and would die there in 1812, leaving a legacy of more than £ 1,100,000. William Henry was the main beneficiary of his uncle's legacy and moved to Petham. See Thompson 1988, 61–62 (on the Petham estate); Osborne 2015, 1–9 (on the Baldock family).

[61] Slade *et al.* 1853, 509–513

[62] Cf. "*In the matter of Richard Halford, William Henry Baldock and Osborn Snoulton of Canterbury, Kent*", Bankers (Dealers and Chapmen), Bankrupts. Volume 3. Date of Commission of Bankruptcy: 1841 October 6; renewed 1841 October 8, currently held at the National Archives in Kew, Ref. B 3/2624.

bankrupcy of the Canterbury Union Bank in 1841, W. H. Baldock was forced to sell his Petham estate in order to pay the bank's creditors.[63] It is possible that John Pout obtained the altar at that time given his involvement as auctioneer in the sale of a number of properties and possessions that were once owned by Halford, Baldock and Snoulton.[64] In both cases the vagueness of the claims "*some time during the 1840's*" and "*Petham, along Stone Street*" might be deliberate in order to conceal the true nature of the altar's acquisition by both Baldock and Pout. Due to the circumstantial nature of the evidence, however, it has proven to be impossible to ascertain the precise circumstances under which this Roman altar made it into the private collection of the Pout family.

Conclusion

A closer examination of the small funerary altar believed to have come to light in the Kentish village of Petham around 1840 has revealed new insights relating to the inscription, as well as to its origin. In this contribution, a new possible interpretation has been offered for the uncommon abbreviations and interpunctuation in the last line. Furthermore, as a result of the linguistic analysis of the inscription and the altar's formal aspects, a number of arguments have been put forward in favour of a Spanish origin. This hypothesis is even further strenghtened thanks to new information regarding the altar's previous owners. In fact, there is a possibility that this altar (*RIB* 2324*) can be linked to another *alienum* from Canterbury (*RIB* 2328* = *CIL* II 585), which unquestionably originates from Augusta Emerita (Mérida). Perhaps there might be more to the indication "*in Petham around 1840*" than previously thought.

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[63] *Kentish Gazette*, 21st May 1844, 2–3.

[64] *Kentish Gazette*, 14th June 1842, 2.

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