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The Roman Physicians in The Light of Some Private Funerary Inscriptions(*)

The major aim of this paper is to illuminate the healers and their art of healing (ars medicinae) at Rome from the beginning till the time of the emperors with the help of some different private funerary Latin inscriptions. It is a contribution into the broader context of the epigraphical and funerary culture of the Romans; it also emphasizes the importance of regarding epitaphs as integral elements within a network of ritual and social contexts. It will mainly pioneer and open up the following topics and try to scrutinize them separately: the historical development of the art of healing and healers at Rome; the various specialities of the Roman physicians; the role of the Roman woman as a physician; the efficiency and skill of the Roman physicians; the ways of payment for the Roman physicians.

Thanks to some Latin epitaphs and literary sources we could know the effective and vivid role played by medicine and physicians of both ancient Greece and Rome. The sources, whether graphic or written, which have recently reached us, ensure that it had existed among the physicians a multitude of healers who were mere sorcerers, magicians and quacks than artists.(1)

The ancient Romans derived their medical knowledge from the Greeks, the Etruscans, the Persians and other conquered peoples. Ancient Roman

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(*) I am very indebted to my professor Theodor Pékary (Münster University) for his remarks and valuable advices in examining the inscriptions dealt with in this paper.

(1) Cic. Divin. I. 132: Cicero mentioned that Ennius had criticized the fraudulent practitioners and complained about an abundance of religious quacks in Rome, including harioli, who were driven by poverty, madness or lack of any other skill, to promise wealth for a drachma. Plaut. Mil. 692. Plautus told us that some of these religious quacks were women.

medicine was divided into two essential kinds: the first, medicine depends upon physical techniques that using various medical tools such as forceps, scalpels, catheters and arrow-extractors etc. the second, holistic medicine that using ritual and religious belief systems. The Romans deeply believed that transcendental practices such as superstitions, rituals and a belief in spells would rid them of diseases which came from the anger of the gods. Therefore, the priests used to read the liver after examining it carefully to reveal good or bad omens from it(1) because the Romans thought that the gods responses were communicated through the liver and other internal organs of a sacrificed animal. They sought healing in the temples of the healing gods where sacrifices were made to them in hopes of receiving emphatic and complete healing.

The historical Development of the Art of Healing and Healers at Rome

Before dealing with some various private funerary inscriptions concerning the Roman medicine and physicians, we should after all throw some lights upon the earliest specimens of the true art of healing and its historical development. There were two principal factors that had helped in the existence and developing the art of healing at Rome:

1. The Greek religious medicine and its transmission into Rome.
2. The arrival of the educated and skillful Greek physicians into Rome.

It has been mentioned in numerous Latin literary sources and inscriptions that both magic and science, alongside with the religious art of healing, were used in curing the patients at Rome.

In ancient Greece the patients were treated by the priests of the healing god "Asclepius", whose temple was in Epidaurus,(2) a town in Argolis, on the Saronic gulf, in which the Sanctuary of Asclepius had been established

(1) Ferguson, J., Greek and Roman Religion, pp. 43-7.

(2) Tomlinson, R. A., Epidaurus, p. 21.

no earlier than the sixth century B. C.,(1) and uninterruptedly visited by numerous pilgrims from many various Greek cities, who were suffering from physical and psychological pains and diseases.(2) The Greek cult of Asclepius was so quickly carried into Rome, especially after the break out of the death-causing pest and its spread among the Romans about 293 B. C.(3)

Moreover, the Greek art of healing and its many various scientific methods of Hippocrates, the most celebrated Greek physician of Cos (flourishing about 430 B. C.) were brought by the Greek wanderers into Rome;(4) in the beginning it could not easily and quickly find its way into the Roman society because the whole Roman medicine was represented by the different Etruscan religious arts of healing,(5) and also by the Greek slaves and freedmen who were mere sorcerers and magicians;(6) in the beginning of the third century B. C. the earliest educated Greek physicians had arrived into Rome, and most of them were slaves. Firstly, they had followed each other in succession in a few numbers, and afterwards they had come in a large numbers when their social conditions had been legally

(1) The temple of Asclepius had been established in the island on the river Tiber, and not in Rome: Gall, J. Le., "Tiberina". Revue Archaeoligique XLVII (1956), pp. 34- 4; Edelstein, L., Asclepius I. 431-52; Asclepius II. 251-5; Wayne, W. A., The Healing Gods of Ancient Civilization, p. 15 ff.; Aston, E., Asclepius and the Legacy of Thessaly. Class. Quart. 54 (2004), pp. 18-32.

(2) Edelstein, op. cit., I. 431-52; Wayne, op. cit., 19 ff.

(3) Livius X. 47; Epit. XI; Ovid. Fasti I. 284-294; Metamorph. XV. 622-745.

(4) Allbutt, T. C., Greek medicine in Rome, p. 14 ff.; Diepgen, P., Geschichte der Medizin I. "Die historische Entwicklung der Heilkunde und des ärztlichen Lebens im Rom, pp. 100, 103; Scarborough, J., Roman Medicine, p. 17 ff.

(5) Sudhoff, K., Kurzes Handbuch der Geschichte der Medizin, p. 92; "Eine so subtile Wissenschaft wie die grieschiche Heilkunde konnte im alten Rom zunächst keinen Boden finden"; Mansuelli, G. A., The Art of Etruria, p. 15 ff.; Herbig, R., Zur Religion und Religiosität der Etrusker Historia 6 (1957), pp. 123-132. It is interesting to know that before the cult of Asclepius was carried into Rome, there was an ancient healing goddess called "Salus", whose temple was erected on the Quirinal hill.

(6) Sudhoff., op. cit., 92; "die ganze Medizin war hier in Rom durch Bader und Gaukler Sklaven und Freigelassene repräsentiert"; Allbutt, op. cit.

and gradually improved in the Roman society. It would be hard to find a clearer and more convincing account of this than that had been given by the historian Suetonius (about 69-140 A. D.), who cited that the rights and conditions of those slave physicians began to be improved by Caesar who had granted them the Roman citizenship.(1)

Now it is fair to lay stress on the fact that those slaves who had worked as physicians at Rome, had not only brought their medical knowledges and experiences which they had acquired in their native land, but they had also applied many different methods of the art of healing at Rome. As a matter of fact, the physicians in ancient Rome were not as highly regarded as the physicians in Greece. The profession of a physician was considered a low social position, fit only for the slaves, the non-free born men and the wanderers.(2)

Numerous Latin inscriptions indicate that most of those who had practiced the profession of a physician in the Roman society were referred to as slaves, and only two physicians appeared to be free-born foreigners.(3) Scarborough,(4) after examining many Latin inscriptions, found out that twelve physicians had been referred to as freedmen, and only thirteen physicians had one name; consequently, he without a hesitation came into the result that a quarter of the Roman physicians were freedmen or their ancestors were so.(5) Gummerus(6) also mentioned that the physicians in hundreds of inscriptions were freedmen. It is noteworthy to say that the most illustrious Roman physicians were foreigners (peregrini), originated to the Hellenistic world,(7) for example; Charicles, the physician of the emperor

(1) Suetonius, Caesar 42.

(2) Diepgen, op. cit., p. 103.

(3) CLL VI. 2. 9562-9617; cf. the inscriptions 9563 and 9597 belonging to two foreign free-born physicians.

(4) Scarborough, op. cit., p. 17.

(5) Duff. A. M. Freedmen in the Early Roman Empire, p. 120.

(6) Gummerus, H., Der Ärztestand im römischen Reich nach den Inschriften, p. 37 ff.

(7) Michler, M., Die hellenistische Chirurgie, Teil I. Die Chirurgen, pp. 23-8, recorded the periods within which the Hellenistic physicians had arrived into Rome.

Tiberius, was a wanderer;(1) Andromachus, who lived in the time of the emperor Nero, came from Crete,(2) P. Sertinius Xenophon, who lived in the time of the emperor Claudius, came from Cos;(3) Galenus, who lived in the second century A. D., came from Pergamum and had been trained at Alexandria. It is not surprising, if we know that the Romans welcomed the arrival of the Greek physicians, who came into Rome to settle in, and granted them clinics "tabernae", in which those Greek physicians could perform their duties and practice their art of healing at Rome without any trouble.(4) Archagathos (about 219 B. C.) was very prominent among the earliest Greek physicians who brought their art of healing into Rome.(5) He owned a private clinic in the city of Rome and worked as a physician and as a surgeon too. Archagathos, diligently and deservedly had won the admiration of the Romans in a very short time because he successfully and skillfully cured a great number of patients.

Our historical and literary sources ensure that the fifteen-year civil war that directly following the assassination of Julius Caesar led to the most profound medical innovations. The emperor Augustus formed a professional military medical corps at Rome. Realizing that the physicians were key in an empire and especially in an army, he gave all physicians that joined his new army medical corps honourable titles, land grants and significant retirements benefits. In the time of Augustus all army physicians were required to attend the new army medical school, and after that in the third century A. D. both civilian and army physicians were required to pass the medical school. The army physicians made their medical researches and advances on the battlefields; and all their discoveries were taught in the

(1) Tacitus, Annales VI. 50.

(2) Seneca. De Beneficiis VI, 15. 2.

(3) Tacitus, Annales XXI. 61-67.

(4) Plinius, Nat. Hist. XXXX. 6. 12-13; 'Eigneius Quiritium datum est tabernam in Compito Acilico emptam ob id publice".

(5) Michler, M., op. cit., pp. 23-8.

medical schools and became the mainstay of human medicine until our present day.(1)

Neither the greatness of the effort of the Roman physicians, nor the importance of their achievements in the art of healing should be underestimated. There were some most distinguished Roman physicians who were so deeply interested in scientific medicine, and wrote on medical topics, and their writings were highly revered like Cornelius Celsus,(2) who lived in the time of the emperor Tiberius (14-37 A. D.), and wrote eight books on the art of healing; Galenus (about 130-200 A. D.) owned a private clinic at Rome, in which he, while treating his patients, frequently held a series of lectures on the Greek art of healing and its various attitudes.(3) It is noteworthy to say that Galenus left detailed writings about physiology and surgical processes, including the various medical and surgical instruments then in use. Moreover, his multiple methods of treatment prevailed in Italy for many centuries after his death.

The Roman war physicians knew how to prevent many battlefield epidemics by isolating forts away from insect infected swamps. They installed drains and sewers to carry sewage away from the patients. The Romans established permanent hospitals, with specialized rooms for many different medical purposes. They also isolated some patients from others to reduce the spread of diseases. They also looked for central heating and good ventilation that helped the patients. It is important here to cite that the Latin terminus "medicus" and its synonyms,(4) which means a physician has been frequently found in some ancient sources such as Varro, Cicero, Plautus, Suetonius and Plinius.(5)

(1) Jackson, R., Doctors and Disease in the Roman Empire, pp. 18 ff.

(2) Ibid., p. 22.

(3) Scarborough, op. cit.; Diepgen, op. cit., Sudhoff, op. cit.

(4) Spallaci, A., La medicina in Plauto, pp. 12-19.

(5) Varro, De Ling. Latin. V. 8, X. 46; Cic. Clu. 21, 57; medicum arcessere; Plaut. Men. V. 2. 122; admovere aegro; Sueton. Ner. 37; vulnerum; Plin. 29. 1. 8. 22: caduntur tumidae medico ridente mariscae.

The Various Specialties of the Roman Physicians

Ancient Roman medicine was split among different specialities such as oculists, aurists, veterinarians and surgeons. Of course, all surgical tasks were only performed by specialists. Ancient Roman surgeons had a wide range of painkillers and sedatives to help in surgery, including extracts of opium poppies and of henbane seeds.

The following private funerary inscriptions dealt with(1) will exhibit the various specialities of the Roman physicians and also the different offices and positions held by them, especially in the time of the emperors, such as an ordinary physicians, a library physician (medicus a bybliothecis), a theatre-physician (medicus rationis summi choragi) and a head of physicians (superposito medicorum).

The funerary inscriptions (Roma DE 7810) indicates that Titus Aelius Aminius, the freedman of the emperor Augustus, had worked as an aurist and built up a tomb for himself and for his wife Aelia Lexis:

T. Aelius Aminias Aug (usti) lib (ertus) medicus auricularius fecit sibi et Aeliae Lexi conigui…

The funerary inscriptions (Bononia. DE 7807) mentions that Marcus Latinius Hermes, the freedman of Marcus, had worked as an oculist, and lived for forty years:

M. Latinius M. I. medicus ocularius Hermes vixit annos XXXX.

The funerary inscription (Atina. DE 7791) had been engraved in two languages: Latin and Greek. It indicates that Lucius Manneius was a physician of Quintus. While he was alive, he had erected a grave for Maxima Sadria, the daughter of Spurius, to lie in peace, who was upright and moderate. He had sprung from Menecrates, from Tralles, the son of Demetrius, who was a physician known for his wine-treatment:

L. Manneius Q. medic (us) veives fecit. φύσει δε Μ [ε] νεκράτης Δημτρίου Τραλλίανὸς φυσικὸς οἰνοδότης ζῶν ἐποίησεν.

(1) Müri. W., Der Arzt im Altertum, pp. 103-4; 150.

Maxsuma Sadria S (purii) f (ilia) bona proba salve.

The funerary inscription (Roma. DE 1845) had been dedicated to the spirits of the lower world and to the head of the physicians (superposito medicorum), Flavius Paederos Alcimianus, the freedman of the emperor Augustus:

D. M. T. Fl. Paederoti Aug (usti) l(iberto) Alcimiano superposito medicorum…

The funerary inscription (Roma. DE 1846) indicates that Tiberius Claudius, the freedman of the emperor Augustus, was a physician, delegated to the library (medicus a bibliothecis):

Ti. Claudius Aug (usti) lib (ertus) Hymenaeus medicus a bibliothecis.

The funerary inscription (Roma. DE 1770) shows us that P. Aelius Agathemerus, the freedman of the emperor Augustus, had worked as a physician of the theatre's affairs (medicus rationis summi choragi), and built up a grave for himself and for his well-merited wife Aelia Iorte:

P. Aelius Agathemer(us) Aug(usti) lib(ertus) medicus rationis summi choragi fecit sibi et Aliae Iorte coniugi bene merenti.

The funerary inscription (Roma. DE 7795) had been dedicated to Marcus Iunius Dionysius, the physician of Lucilius' properties. It indicates that Titulena had built up a tomb for her well-merited husband and for herself:

M. Iunio Dionysio medico de Lucilianis Titulena Iusta coniugi b(ene) m(erenti) et sibi.

The funerary inscription (Carthago. DE 7816) mentions that Secundus, who lies here in this tomb, was a slave of Bennus, the veterinarian:

Secundus M. Benni ser(vus) veterinarius h(ic) s(itus) e(st).

The funerary inscription (Roma. DE 7814) indicates that Secundinus, the veterinarian had built a house for himself:

Secundinus mulomedicus fecit sibi domum eterna(m).

The Role of the Roman Woman as a Physician

The woman also performed important service to the field of the Greco-Roman medicine. Traditional medical history focuses on pioneering individuals who struggle against the odds and win, and indeed Agnodice fits well into such a tradition. Agnodice was a woman lived in Athens in the third century B. C., and belonged to the realm of myth and folk tale.(1) She was credited with achieving the role of a physician, though it was forbidden to her by law.(2) Before fifth century B. C., and the advent of Hippocratic medicine, childbirth had been entrusted to the informal care of female kin. Some of these women became known for their skills and were accorded the informal title of Maia "midwife". European midwives from the middle ages till now have mentioned and repeated the tale of Agnodice to defend themselves against a male-dominated profession seeking to medicalize childbirth. Agnodice cited as a pioneering midwife, a precedent for women in medicine in general. The story of Agnodice explains the problems in treating ancient female patients, who disliked to confide in male physicians(3) because they were brought up and taught to be ashamed of their bodies.

(1) Chiabó, M. & Robert, L., Hygini Fabularum, 12. We know the tale of Agnodice from Hyginus as follows: Agnodice wanted to learn medicine, although it was forbidden to her by law; she cut her hair and put on the clothes of a man and became a student of Herophilos. After she learnt medicine, she heard a woman crying out in the throes of labor and went to help her. Because the woman thought she was a man, she did not accept Agnodice' assistance, but Agnodice lifted up her clothes and revealed herself to be a woman and could treat the patient. When the male physicians found that their medical service was not accepted by the women, they began to accuse Agnodice, claiming that she had seduced the women and they also accused the women of feigning illness to get help from Agnodice. When Agnodice was brought before the law court, the men condemned her: Agnodice once again lifted up her clothes to show that she was indeed a woman, then, the male physicians began again to accuse her violently of breaking the law forbidding women to learn medicine. The wives of the leading men came into the court at this moment and said: "you men are not husbands but enemies since you are condemning the woman who discovered health for us". Then the Athenians emended the law so that the women could learn medicine.

(2) Hippocrates. De Morbis mulierum 1. 62.

(3) Kampen, N. B., Image and Status: Roman Working Women in Ostia, pp. 107-36; Lefkowitz & Fant, Women's Life in Greece and Rome, pp. 208-24.

The lower class woman used to practice the low-status profession in the Roman society such as a dealer or a physician.(1) It was also easy and possible for her to practice the profession of a physician without formal training because the formal training was not legally required of physician, as Jackson says:(2) "you could become a doctor, man or woman, merely by proclaiming yourself to be one". According to Varro,(3) there was a profession of woman called "praecantrix", which may show female networks in ancient Rome of which we know little. That woman called "praecantrix" had supplanted the physician and collected an honorarium for his medical service. Also, there was an incident in 333 B. C., which showed Roman women with specialized knowledge putting their skills at the disposal of other women;(4) it is that two patrician women were preparing some medicament, i.e., home remedies prepared for women's use, and died trying to prove it; those women may have been pharmaceuticals.(5)

The following funerary inscriptions dealt with will throw some lights upon the role played by the woman as a physician and her medical activities in the Roman society.(6) They also will confirm the existence of female networks who were not merely midwives "obstetrics" (DE 7806; CE 226), and sisters "ad valetudinem" (CLL 9084), but also qualified physicians "medicae" (DE 7804; DE 7802). These inscriptions will also indicate that the Roman woman did not only perform her domestic duties as a wife and a

(1) Treggiari, S., "Lower class women in the Roman economy", Florilegium 1 (1979), pp. 70-3, 86; Lefkowitz & Fant, op. cit.; Kampen, op. cit.

(2) Jackson, R., Dectors and Disease in the Roman Empire, p. 85, n. 21.

(3) Varro. Cato. Vel de liberis educandis (logistorici fr. 15, cited Nonius p. 494): ut faciunt pleraeque, ut adhibeant, praecantrices nec medico ostendant. It is noteworthy to cite here that "praecantrix" was a woman's profession because no masculine form had been attested and all regular practitioners appeared to be women, Cf. Varro. Sat. Men. 152: ego medicina Serapi utor, cotidie praecantor; Horat. Carm. I. 27. 1; Boyle, A. J. Ovid. Fasti. Ad. 2. 271-82.

(4) Livius. 8. 18; Bauman, R., A., Women and Politics in Ancient Rome, pp. 221-2, n. 5.

(5) Purcell, N., "Livia and the Womanhood of Rome". PCPS 212 (1986), p. 95.

(6) Treggiari, S., "Jobs for women". AJAH (1976), pp. 76-104.

mother, but she could also exhibit her skill and efficiency as a physician (DE 7802).(1)

The funerary inscription (Roma. DE 7804) had been dedicated by a husband to his god-like, devoted wife, Primilla, the physician, the daughter of Vibius Melito, who lived forty four years, and spent thirty years from them with him, Cocceius Apthorus without a complaint:

Deae sanctae meae Primillae medicae, L. Vibi Melitonis f(iliae), vixit annis XXXXIIII, ex eis cum L. Cocceio Apthoro XXX sine querella…

The funerary inscription (Emerita. DE 7802) had been dedicated by a husband to his incomparable wife, the best physician, whose name was Julia Saturnina, who lived for forty five years:

Juliae Saturninae ann(orum) XXXXV uxori

Incomparabili medicae optimae…

The funerary inscription (Treverorum. CE 226) indicates that Julia Pieris, who was a midwife and helpful to everybody, lies here:

Iulia Pieris obstetrix

hic iacet nulli gravis

The funerary inscription (Roma. CLL VI 9084) mentions that Helpis, the slave maid of Livia, was a nurse;

Helpis Liviae ad valetudinar (ium).

The funerary inscription (Roma. DE 7806) had been dedicated to the spirits of the lower world and to Valeria Verecunda, the medical-trained midwife, the second to none in her region, who lived thirty four years, nine months, twenty eight days … :

D. M. Valeriae Berecundae iatromeae regionis
suae primae, q(uae) v(ixit) ann(os) XXXIIII
m(enses) VIIII d(ies) XXVIII….

(1) Müri, W., Der Arzt im Altertum, pp. 106-7.

The Efficiency and the Skill of the Roman Physicians

The physicians in ancient Rome were not as highly regarded as the physicians in Greece. The profession of a physician was considered a very low social position at Rome, fit only for slaves, freedmen and non-Latin citizens, i.e., the Greeks. Before the first century A. D. the Roman physicians were self-taught and apprenticed practitioners. Some of them tried to find effective treatments and perform a useful service to the community; others cheated their patients. As there were no licensing boards, no formal requirements for entrance to the medical profession, anyone could call himself a physician.(1) If his treatments were effective, he could attract more patients, but if his methods and treatments were not successful, he easily moved to another professional career. The ancient Romans appreciated what the Hellenistic medicine had performed to them and esteemed indeed the skillful physician who efficiently diagnoses the disease.(2) Some ancient sources such as Hippocrates, Plato, Cicero, Galenus and Seneca expressed their views concerning the ideal physician and tried to define him.

Jones(3) renders to us in his fine and elegant style the idea of Hippocrates, the most famous Greek physician (flourishing about 430 B.C.)

(1) Jackson, R., op .cit., p. 85.

(2) Galenus XIV. 599: ἀρ ου γαρ οι τό δοκεῖν μᾶλλον ἢ εἰναι σπουδασαντες οὐ κατα τὴν ἰατρικην μόνο, ἀλλὰ καὶ τας ἄλλας ἐπλεόνασαν.

(3) Jones, W. H. S., Hippocrates. Vol. II. p. 311; "The dignity of a physician requires that he should look healthy, and as plump as nature intended him to be; for the common crowd consider those who are not of this excellent bodily condition to be unable to take care of others. Then he must be clean in person, well dressed, and anointed with sweet-smelling unguents that are not in any way suspicious. This in fact, is pleasing to patients. The prudent man must also be careful of certain moral considerations, not only to be silent, but also of a great regularity of life, since thereby his reputation will be greatly enhanced; he must be a gentleman in character, and being this he must be grave and kind to all. For an over-forward obtrusiveness is despised, even though it may be very useful. Let him look to the liberty of action that is his; for when the same things are rarely presented to the same persons there is content. In appearance, let him be of a serious but not harsh countenance, for harshness is taken to mean arrogance and unkindness; while a man of uncontrolled laughter and excessive gaiety is considered

about the ideal physician and his attributes such as his look, character, manners, appearance and intimacy.

Plato, the founder of the Academic philosophy (about 429-347 B. C.) dealt with the cleverness of the educated physician, his social status and compared the profession of a physician to some other professions existed in the Greek society.(1) He also defined the ideal physician as the one who can master his profession through his personal experiences.(2) Plato delivered some examples for both the ideal physician(3) and the bad one who out of personal motives conspires against his patients and does not provide them with the right medicament and drugs.(4) Cicero, the most celebrated orator (106-43 B. C.) was very sad when he was informed of the death of both his free-born physician Asclapon, and his slave because he lost a good physician and a faithful slave, and because he missed the sympathy and love of both(5). Galenus, the most illustrious Greek physician (about 199- 129 B. C.) mentioned that the ideal physician is the one who can elaborately diagnose the disease according to the symptoms, and define exactly and precisely the pain that the patient's body suffers from.(6) Seneca (4- 65 A. D.) wrote about his friendship with his physician and cited the required matters which anyone expects from the physician. He did not only mention

vulgar, and vulgarity especially must be avoided. In every social relation he will be fair, for fairness must of great service. The intimacy also between physician and patient is close. Patients in fact put themselves into the hands of their physician, and at every moment he meets women, maidens and possessions very precious indeed. So towards all these self-control must be used. Such then should the physician be, both in body and in soul".

(1) Plato. Polit. III. 408; V. 459.

(2) The attributes of the ideal physician are found in many dialogues of Plato, e.g., Politikes. 293; Nomoi. IV. 720, IX. 857; Gorgias. 478. 48; Sophistes. 230.

(3) Plato. Politioia I. 34-42.

(4) Ibid., Politikos. 298.

(5) Cic. Ad Att. XV. 1: "o factum male de Alexione ! Incredibile est, quanta me molestia adfecerit, nec mehercule ex ea conferes? Quid mihi iam medico?".

(6) Galenus. XIV. 599.

the duties of the physician, but he also described the good character and manners of the ideal physician.(1)

The following funerary inscriptions dealt with point out that some physicians in ancient Rome did not only perform their duties by treating the patients with their different medical methods and drugs, but they could also win their patient's trust with their kindness, mercy, love and faith. The Roman physicians were honourable and trustsworthy because of their skill and efficiency in the art of healing. It is noteworthy to say that there were some Roman physicians who had practiced the profession of a physician in order to help the poor people in the first place.

The funerary inscription (Iguvium. CE 1252) indicates that the physician who sprang from Iguvium, visited many cities, was well-known for his art, and won the trust of his patients:

Ortus ab Iguvio medicus fora multa secutus

Arte feror nota, nobiliore fide.

The funerary inscription (Moguntiacum. CLL XIII 7094) had been dedicated to Peregrinus Heliodorus, who was a physician with complete knowledge, and a young man of a wonderful dutifulness. His unhappy mother, Cominia Faustina erected this tomb for him:

Peregrinio Heliodoro consummate peritiae et mirae

Pietatis iuveni Cominia Faustina mater infelicissima f(aciendum) c(uravit).

The funerary inscription (Roma. CE 1414) indicates that Dionysius, the physician lies here in this grave. He performed his duty as a physician. His trained hand was bound by the charm of his fame: he refused to get unclean deserved gains. Often the success in his art was completed by his talent. The poor felt his generous hand. He helped for nothing every poor patient who comes up to him. He performed in fact what he had learnt indeed. His moral faith of a heavenly word prevents every deed that curls the heart, and that looks as a sin. He lost his money, but he did not lose his

(1) Seneca. De Beneficiis VI. 1-4.

self-confidence; nevertheless, he was rich. His self-confidence came through his art, and his art came through his self-confidence. This shows how studious he was: that show how sure he was. How he was to both his citizens and his allies, was shown when his victorious enemy loved him. After he, as a captive had left the city of Rome, soon he as a master conquered the Getes (a people of Thrace living near the Danube) by his art. He rescued the life of those whose fear threatened him before:

Hic levita iacet Dionysius artis honestae
functus et officio quod medicina dedit.
huius docta manus famae dulcedine capta
dispexit pretii sordida lucra sequi.
Saepe salutis opus pietatis munere iuvit,
dum refovet tenues dextera larga viros.
Obtulit aegrotis venientibus omnia gratis,
inplevit factis quod docuit monitis.
Laudibus aetheriis famulatus mente fideli
destitit inlicitis actibus esse reus.
Amissis opibus robur non perdidit ullum.
quo patiens praedae tempore, dives erat.
Ars veneranda fidem, fidei decus extulit artem,
haec studii titulos, altera mentis habet.
Civibus ac sociis qualis fuit, inde probatur,
quem potuit victor hostis amare suus.
postquam Romana captus discessit ab urbe,
mox sibi iam dominus subdidit arte Getas.
Hosce suis manibus vitam committere fecit,
quorum mortiferos pertulit ante metus.

The Errors of the Roman Physicians

When the earliest Greek Physicians had come into Rome to settle in, they were heartly and eagerly welcomed by the Romans. Plinius(1) citied that the Romans had welcomed them, and provided them with the clinics, in which they received their patients. But later, some Romans distrusted the

(1) Plinius. Nat. Hist. XXXX. 6. 12-3.

efficiency of the Greek physicians, especially the Hellenistic physicians, as the strong invective of Porcius Cato (about 234- 149 B. C.) shows us.(1) The Romans were skeptical and scornful of many physicians who were slaves, freedmen and Greeks because they considered them as quacks and cheaters. Greek and Latin literatures record to us several tales of their quackery and chicanery. The epigrams mentioned in the Greek anthology(2) obviously indicate that the physicians were distrusted by the public, for example: Alexis the physician purged by a clyster five patients at one time, and five other by drugs; he visited five, and again he rubbed five with ointment. And for all there was one night, one medicine, one coffin-maker, one tomb, one Hades, one lamentation.(3) The epigrams of Martialis(4) exhibit many tales of the quackery and chicanery of some Roman physicians. Martialis mentioned that some Roman physician charged very excessive prices for useless medicines and drugs; others tried to treat diseases of which they did not know(5); consequently, this led to technical, medical, and fatal mistakes. It is noteworthy to mention here one of the interesting and ridiculous epigrams of Martialis:

I felt a little ill and called doctor Symmachus. Well, you came; Symmachus, but you brought hundred medical students with you. One hundred ice cold hands poked and jabbed me. I did not have a fever, Symmachus, when I called you, but now I do.(6)

In spite of the presetige that surrounded the Roman medical corps was so immense that it radiated all round Italy; and in spite of the skill and efficiency of the Roman physicians in the art of healing, some fatal medical mistakes had been undertaken by them, and caused the death of the patients

(1) Ibid., XXIX. 6-8.

(2) Greek Anthology. XI, 118, 120, 122.

(3) Ibid., XI. 120.

(4) Gargilius Martialis, Epigram. 1. 47, 5. 9, 8. 74.

(5) Ibid., Preface 7.

(6) Ibid., 5. 9.

just as it happens today everywhere. Plinius(1) disliked the Greek physicians, and distrusted their medical theories; he cited that the Romans distrusted the Greek physicians who work only for the sake of money, and do not care about the health of their patients. He also represented them as vain self-publicists, who try out their too-clever theories at the cost of their patients' lives.

The following funerary inscriptions dealt with will exhibit the errors of the Roman physicians caused by the unsuccessful operations, negligence, and wrong diagnose.(2)

The funerary inscription (Atala. CLL 3355) had been dedicated to some wife by a husband who described her as the rarest and most modest woman. It indicates that the husband lamented the death of his wife that happened because of the negligence of the physicians during his absence:

> Feminae rarissimIaeI ac pudicissimae, cuius
> mortem dolens per absentiam mei contigisse
> per culpam curantium conqueror, vix (it) an(nis)
> XXVIII m(ensibus) X dieb(us) XXIIII.

The funerary inscription (Roma. DE 9441) had been dedicated to the very innocent soul, to whom the physicians made an operation and killed:

Anima innocentissima, quem medici secarunt et occiderunt.

The funerary inscription (Nicomedia. CLL 14188) points out that Flavius, the senator and the shield-maker, built up this tomb to his son, Octemus, who lived five years, fifteen days, and was killed by the physician's knife: he lies here among the martyrs:

> Fla(vius) Maximinus scutarius sinator levavi
> statu filio meo Octemo, vicxit annos V dies XV
> precisus a medico. (H) ic pos(i) tus est ad martures.

(1) Plinius. Nat. Hist. XXVI. 7. 12-3, XXIX. 7. 17.

(2) Müri., W., op .cit., pp. 104, 105.

The funerary inscription (Roma. CE 902) indicates that the wrong medical treatment multiplied the death-bringing pains of somebody, and his disease was increased by the human art:

> Irrita letiferos auxit medicina dolores
> crevit et humana morbus ab arte meus.

The Ways of Payment for the Roman Physicians

Before dealing with the ways of payment for the Roman physicians, it is noteworthy to mention that there were in ancient Rome three types of physicians: Slave physicians working as servants in the houses of the Aristocrats; Poor private physicians who were freedmen and Greeks: they advertised their medical services in the streets. Most of them were illiterate, quacks and cheaters. Wealthy private physicians who owned their clinics, in which there were office and staff.

The Roman physicians got their fees as a honorary "honorarium" for their medical services.(1) Some of them, before examining their patients, insisted on having their money; others considered it unfair. There were some Roman women who worked as “praecantrix”,(2) i.e., the woman who supplants the physician and collects an honorarium for his medical services. Probably in the beginning of the Roman empire,(3) the state began to pay salaries for the physicians when they were delegated to various state governments, and were graded to a rising scale of office.

Some wealthy patients paid for their physicians very noble honoraries: Manilius Cornutus, the praetor and legate of Aquitania, when healed from some skin disease, granted his physician 200.000 sesterces;(4) the physician Charmis obtained the same sum of money from his patient;(5) the physician

(1) Mommsen, Th., Römisches Staatsrecht. II. 3. 892-6; III. 1. 517-20; Jackson, R., op. cit., p. 57; Müri, W., op. cit., pp. 107-8.

(2) Borkowski, A., Textbook on Roman law, pp. 266 7.

(3) Varro. Cato, vel de liberis educandis (logistorici fr. 15, cited by Nonius, p. 494.

(4) Plinius. Nat. Hist. XXVI. 3. 4.

(5) Ibid. XXIX. 8. 22.

Galenus got four hundred golden coins from the consul Boethius because he could cure his wife.(1) Galenus cited that it was legal for the physician to take his fee for his diagnosis, even in case that he could not cure his patient.(2)

The funerary inscription (Asisium. DE 7812) indicates that Publius Decimius Eros Merula, the freedman of Publius was a physician, a surgeon, an ophthalmologist, a member of the six-men. He paid 50.000 sesterces for his liberty. He granted the treasury 2000 sestecres for his candidature for the office of "seviratus". He distributed 30.000 sesterces in the temple of Hercules for erecting the statues. He paid 37.000 sesterces to the treasury for plastering the roads. He left 500.000 sesterces after his death.

P. Decimius P. I. Eros Merula medicus clinicus, chirurgus, ocularius, sevir. Hic pro libertate dedit HS quinquaginta milia. Hic pro seviratu in rempublicam dedit HS duo milia. Hic in statuas ponendas in aedem Herculis dedit HS triginta milia. Hic in vias sternendas in publicum dedit HS triginta septem milia. Hic pridie quam mortuus est, reliquit patrimomi HS quingenta milia.

(1) Galen XIV. 647.

(2) Ibid., VII. 224.

Conclusion

The private funerary Latin inscriptions dealt with concerning the Roman physicians have indicated that the prestige that surrounded the Roman medical corps was so immense that it radiated all over Italy: they also have ensured that the physicians were before the time of the emperors either servants belonging to the aristocrats or private physicians who were freedmen and Greeks.

Some Roman physicians were specialized in one branch of medicine, others in two branches or more, especially in the time of the emperors. Though there were many famous, efficient Roman physicians mentioned by the literary and historical sources, there were also some physicians who worked only for the sake of money and made many fatal mistakes that led to the death of their patients. According to the inscriptions dealt with there were Roman female networks with specialized knowledge who worked either as self-trained or qualified physicians, sisters and midwives. Moreover there were physicians who were salaried officials, delegated to the government and paid to make treatment to all purses, especially in the time of the emperors; some of these held numerous various positions in the Roman society. There were also ordinary physicians who became very famous and wealthy and helped the poor, and spent a great sum of their own money for the welfare of their country.

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