

On secret paths

Dark spells in Aquincum

Temporally Exhibition

3rd December 2016 – 5th November 2017

Catalogue of the objects exhibited



BHM Aquincum Museum

1. Bullae, amulet capsules and lunullae



1. Amulet capsule (1A)
Golden amulet capsule.
Inv. N.: 51470.
Site: From the western cemetery of Aquincum Military Town, 3rd c. AD
2. Amulet capsule (1B)
Golden amulet capsule.
Inv. N.: 54462.
Site: From the western cemetery of Aquincum Military Town, 3rd c. AD
3. Amulet capsule (1C)
Golden amulet capsule
Inv. N.: 51364.
Site: From the western cemetery of Aquincum Military Town, 3rd c. AD
4. Bulla (2A)
Golden bulla.
Inv. N.:51472
Site: From the western cemetery of Aquincum Military Town
5. Bulla (2B)
Golden bulla.
Inv. N.:51363
Site: From the western cemetery of Aquincum Military Town
6. Bulla (3A)
Bronze bulla.
Inv. N.:2006.2.6063
Site: From the western cemetery of Aquincum Military Town Miklós tér 6, 2006,
2nd - 3rd c. AD
7. Bulla (3B)
Bronze bulla.
Inv. N.:51043
Site: Unknown
8. Bulla (3C)
Bronze bulla on a bracelet.
Inv. N.:2005.40.626
Site: From the western cemetery of Aquincum Civil Town.
9. Bulla (3D)
Bronze bulla.
Inv. N.:51043

Site: Unknown

10. Bulla (3E)

Bronze bulla.

Inv. N.:60.9.147

Site: Albertfalva, 2nd - 3rd c. AD

11. Lunula (4A)

Enamelled bronze lunulla-shaped pendent.

Inv. N.:56.185.210

Site: From the western cemetery of Aquincum Military Town

12. Lunula (4B)

Golden lunulla-shaped pendent.

Inv. N.:

Site: From the western cemetery of Aquincum Military Town, Lajos utca – Cserfa utca, 1995, 2nd c. AD

13. Lunula (4C)

Bronze lunulla-shaped pendent.

Inv. N.:54504

Site: Aquincum

14. Lunula (4D)

15. Bronze lunulla-shaped pendent.

Inv. N.:40053

Site: Aquincum

2. Crepundia chains



1. Medusa head

Medusa-head made of amber, possibly a furniture or carriage fitting Inv. N.:51069
Site: Unknown.

2. Crepundia chain

Amber, bone and glass crepundia (money bag, dolphin, phallus, cicada, foot) pendants..

Inv. N.:2005.40.658-675

Site: From the western cemetery of Aquincum Civilian Town, along the Aranyárok stream, 1st-2nd c. AD.

3. Crepundia chain

Amber, bone and glass crepundia (money bag, dolphin, phallus, comb, cicada, foot, axe and male god shaped) pendants Inv. N.:51166-51169, 51171, 56.185.91 a.-b, 56.185.93 a-b, 56.185.94, 56.185.96 a-b.

Site: From the western cemetery of Aquincum Civilian Town, along the Aranyárok stream, 1st-2nd c. AD.

4. Crepundia chain

A crepundia set composed of green glass beads, dyed amphora-shaped bone pendants and white opal bead

Inv. N.:95.12.1957, 95.12.1965

Site: From the western cemetery of Aquincum Military Town, Lajos utca - Cserfa utca, 1995, 2nd c. AD.

3. Various amulets



1. Pendant
Faience amulet in the shape of the Egyptian hippopotamus goddess Thoeris, the protector of pregnant women and delivery.
Inv. N.:56.185.98
Site: Aquincum Military Town, the area of the amphitheater
2. Amulet
Horus eye (udjat eye)-shaped amulet, diorite Inv. N.:37387
Site: Aquincum katonaváros, Selmecsi utca.
3. Pendant
Bronze pendant made of thin twisted bronze wires in the shape of a Celtic knot found in a burial ,
Inv. N.:95.12.1858
Site: From the western cemetery of Aquincum Military Town, 2nd-3rd c. AD.
4. Amulet (4A)
Amber Hercules' club type amulet.
Inv. N.:82.9.14
Site: From the Northern cemetery of Aquincum Military Town.
5. Amulet (4B)
Golden Hercules' club type amulet, amber.
Inv. N.:R2252
Site: From the Western cemetery of Aquincum Military Town, 4th c. AD.
6. Amulet (4C)
Golden earring with Hercules' club type pendant.
Inv. N.:48844
Site: From a burial in the Aquincum Military Town, 3rd- 4th c. AD
7. Amulet (4D)
Hercules' club type amulet made of bone,
Inv. N.:80.9.1115
Site: From the Northern cemetery of Aquincum Military Town.
8. Amulet (5A)
Bronze phallic amulet.
Inv. N.:57.50.822
Site: Albertfalva vicus, 1st- 3rd c. AD
9. Amulet (5B)
Bone phallic amulet.
Inv. N.:2002.7.13740

Site: Southern part of the Military town of Aquincum. Lajos utca 71-89, 2002, 1st-3rd c. AD

10. Amulet (5C)

Bronze phallic amulet.

Inv. N.:2006.23.18207

Site: Albertfalva vicus, 1st- 3rd c. AD

11. Amulet (5D)

Ceramic phallic amulet.

Inv. N.:1/1937

Site: From the Western cemetery of Aquincum Military Town, Bécsi út 82, 1936, 2nd^d- 3rd c. AD

12. Amulet (5E)

Bronze phallic amulet.

Inv. N.:95.1.991

Site: Albertfalva vicus, 1st- 3rd c. AD

13. Amulet (5F)

Bone phallic amulet.

Inv. N.:2006.23.18156

Site: Albertfalva vicus, 1st- 3rd c. AD

14. Amulet (6)

Drilled antler roundel pendant, Aquincum. These circular amulets manufactured from antler burr were especially popular in the areas inhabited by the indigenous Celtic population. Due to their cultural influence, the antler roundel pendants became a popular pendant type in the Roman period.

Inv. N.:54517

Site: Albertfalva vicus, 1st- 2nd c. AD

15. Amulet (7A)

Animal bone phallic pendants found in an infant burial found together with amulet No. 16.

Inv. N.:

Site: From the western cemetery of Aquincum Military Town, Bécsi út 64, 2nd- 3rd c. AD.

16. Amulet (7B)

Drilled amulet imitating a bear tooth made of antler found together with amulet No. 15.

Inv. N.:

Site: From the western cemetery of Aquincum Military Town, Bécsi út 64, 2nd- 3rd c. AD

17. Amulet chain (8)

Animal bone amulets imitating bear teeth and a circular bone pendant which might have hung on the same necklace.

Inv. N.:R2538.1-3, R2537

Site: Unknown

5. Bullae and their contents



1. Bronze bulla

Bronze bulla with a coin and an inscribed, folded silver plate. The letters and marks scratched on the plate are barely legible, their exact meaning and purpose are uncertain. The bulla contained a silver coin of Emperor Trajan (AD 98–117) with a depiction of the sun god Sol on the reverse, as such strengthening the symbolic power of the coin.

Inv. N.:30236

Site: The western (Aranyhegy-Stream) cemetery of the Aquincum Civil Town, beginning of the AD 2nd c.

2. Bronze bulla

Bronze *bulla* and pieces of buckthorn wrapped in textile found in it. From a child's grave.

Inv. N.:R2632b

Site: From a child's grave, Aquincum Military Town, AD 4th century

3. Magic texts on metal and papyrus



1. Amulet capsule

Amulet capsule made of gold and the copy of the gold plate found in it. The thin gold plate found in a tiny capsule bears a Greek inscription and magical symbols addressing infernal creatures, which was meant to protect its wearer against migraine.

Inscription: “(Magic signs), ASTHENIRAS {of sickness} O { A } BRAAŌTH SAB/AŌ{TH } {A}, the King, {TH},protect from {the sickness} of the migraine headache.”

Site: Around Római fűrdő, Aquincum

2. Silver amulet with a magic inscription in Greek from the grave of a woman

The tiny silver plate was originally placed in a capsule, folded, but only fragments remained from it. The amulet, the text of which is still uncertain today, was – based on the fragmentary word elephantiasis written in the last line – probably made against a disease that resulted in hardening of the skin or perhaps against manginess. The lines contain magical symbols, pseudo-hieroglyphs, and Greek and Latin letters. The interpretable words are Oriental names of demons and magical terms known from other texts. The recurrent word Romulus must be the misunderstood form of the Greek word rómaleos meaning “strong.”

Inscription: „(Magical signs) Sesegenbarphaanges; O great (and) perfect and invincible name, Romulus, the mother Bona (magical signs and letters), Borko (magical signs), manos Zaboeb (magical signs) Romulus (magical signs) Chasteios Romulus thentos Kebraoth Eophao Sesengbarbrngs Bndach (magical signs and letters) Romulus, the mother Bona (magical signs), invincible Romulus (?), Orphapthi our Bounb.lalnta Photh Ra Phphakonaoch Ra ouat.mai ai ... West, hand, East, Thou (magical signs),, .. Romulus ... (magical signs and letters) .. from all ... phylactery ... Romulus (?), it is necessary to carry the Romulus(?) ... amulet .. name (?) Romulus to carry (for?) elephantiasis...”

Inv. N.:: 9.1939.4, from the collection of the Hugaraian National Museum
Site: Tricciana / Ságvár, AD 4th century.

3. Greek inscription written on a papyrus

The tiny strip of papyrus, which, based on the marks, was originally folded multiple times must have been worn as an amulet in a case. The seven-lined text written in Greek and comprising magical terms and the names of demons was a kind of healing spell, which was meant to deliver its wearer called Ammon from fever and cold shivers.

Inscription:

„PHĒG GĒ ... BALOCHRA THAMRA ZARACHTHŌ, I conjure you all by the bitter compulsion: MASKELI MASKELO PHNOUKENTABAŌTH OREOBAGAR RHĒZICHTHŌN HIPPICHTHŌN | PYRIPĒGANYX. Deliver Ammon from the fever and shivering fit that restrains him, immediately, immediately; quickly, quickly; today!”

Inv. N.:86.3.A, Egypt, from the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest
Site: unknown site in AD 3rd-4th century

6. Magical artifacts



1. Bronze ring

Bronze ring used to arouse sexual desire (?) with an inscription VENI ATTO (“Come Atto!”).

Inv. N.:2013.11.91.

Site: From the western part of the Aquincum Civil Town, AD 2nd -3rd century

2. Magical amulet

This rare bronze artefact comes from an unknown Pannonian site. On the basis of similar objects, two of the engravings on the rectangular bronze prism strung on a ring must depict the Virgin and Scorpion Constellations. The other two poorly designed human figures must represent another two groupings of stars, decans. In Egyptian astrology, each decan belonged to a 10-day period of the year. The exact function of such items is unknown, but they were probably worn suspended.

Inv. N.:RR 83.24.13 . From the collection of the Hungarian National Museum

Site: Unknown provenance. AD 2nd -4th century

3. A thin sheet of silver with magical inscription

The razor-thin silver plate was found under the skull of a woman and had probably originally been placed in the mouth of the corpse. The plate is engraved with a Greek text, magical formulae, and drawings. Based on the position of the object and the skeleton, as well as the meaning of the text, it seems likely that the plate got into the mouth of the corpse as a part of a magic necromancer ceremony (*nekromanteia*), since the grave was disturbed shortly after the burial. The tiles covering the grave were smashed so as to gain access to the head of the corpse, and a bone pin was also placed on the mouth. Several recipes for necromancer ceremonies are known from ancient magic books, and a lot of references are made to such rites in ancient literary texts. During these they wanted to resurrect the body or to summon the soul of the deceased in order to request a prophecy, or perhaps so that it would reveal some secret known in its lifetime.

Inscription: *Should suffer together (...)/ and (...)/ (...)/ MNO / (...)/ (...)/ I am Aquilina*

Inv. N.:R.2004.2.123. , from the collection of the Janus Pannonius Museum

Site: Pécs, AD 4th century

7.

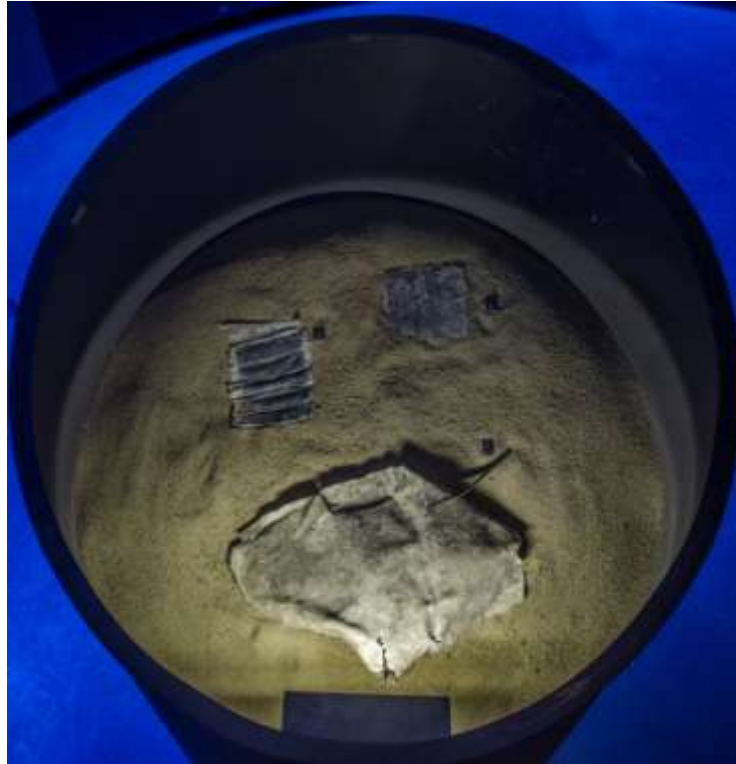


1. Fragment of a false door from the Old Kingdom of Egypt.

This special carved stone covered with a hieroglyphic inscription was made at the time of Egypt's Old Kingdom. Originally it belonged to a symbolic false door formed in a rich tomb, through which the soul of the dead could leave its grave to receive the funerary offerings. The artefact was discovered in the territory of the Roman Military Town, in Óbuda, during the 1850s. It was certainly brought to Pannonia in the Roman period. According to literary texts, ancient carvings were believed to have magical powers. Thus, although it cannot be excluded that the stone monument was placed at the cult place of an Egyptian deity, it is quite possible that it was in private possession as a kind of relic or magical object.

Inv. N.:51.2141, From the collection of the Museum of Fine Arts
Site: Óbuda.

Curse tablets



1. Lead curse tablet and stylus

Based on the wording, the tablet was made to influence the outcome of a trial by magic. The curse was ordered by a certain Oceanus, Amoena, Felicio and some slaves against Iulia Nissa, Gaius Mutilus, Respecta, Eunicus Surus, Decibalus, Ammi, Asellio, and Annianus. What makes the tablet unique is that the tool of the magic ritual, the bent stylus mentioned in the text also came to light.

Inscription: *“May Iulia Nissa and Gaius Mutilus be unable to do harm to Oceanus and Amoena. May Gaius be un able to do harm to Felicio. May Respecta’s tongue be unable to do harm to the fellow slaves. May Eunicus Surus’ tongue be unable to speak against Oceanus. May Gaius, or Iulia, be unable to do harm to Annianus. And may Decibalus’ tongue {and name} be un able to do harm to Oceanus. Just as I write this with a bent, twisted stylus , so, too, may their bent and twisted tongues be unable to do harm to these ... whom I mentioned above. May Gaius or Iulia or Eunicus Surus be unable to ... their bound tongue against Oceanus... May Asellio’s tongue be unable to ...against Amoena.*

<With smaller letters between lines 3 and 5>

May Ammio’s tongue be unable to ... against ...

May Asellio’s tongue {and name} be unable to do harm to Oceanus.

May Annianus’ tongue be unable ...”

Inv. N.:2007.3.44, 2007.3.862

Site: The Eastern Cemetery of the AquincumCivil Town, AD 2nd-3rd c.

2. Lead curse tablet

The tablet was prepared again on account of a case brought before the court. Claudia, Flavia, Zosimus, who are not specifically named, turned to a magician in order to ask the infernal

gods to punish their opponents in the lawsuit (Titus Alexander, Candidus, Marcellinus, Marcian, as well as every other potential enemies).

Inscription:

Inner side:

“Claudia, Flavia, Zosimus ask Aeracura, and Zosimus as for himself requests Dis Pater <to concentrate on> those names which I am handing over to you: of Titus, Alexander, Candidus, Mama(?), Marcellinus known as Attanius as well, Marcianus, whoever will act like an opponent, whether slave or freeman, if someone new will act like an opponent, we ask Aeracura and Dis Pater: do concentrate on their names, (too).”

Outer side:

“... to Mercurius. As a messenger, hand over to Tartarus those who will hand letters to you ... will hand letters ... just as ... so may our opponents speak, oh infernal souls, against Beroe and against Zosimus, who will hand letters to you, so the infernal souls may ... them mute and silence, we ask you.”

Inv. N.:2000.11.2973a

Site: The Eastern Cemetery of the Aquincum Civil Town, AD 2nd-3rd c.

3. Lead curse tablet

The fiercest of the three Aquincum curse tablets was ordered by a person called Bellicus against his opponents in a lawsuit, called Marcus, Marcia, Chariton, and Secundus. Invoking deities known from classic mythology and their equivalents adapted to the local population, the magician asks for dark infernal torments for all the enemies of the commissioner.

Inscription:

“Dis Pater, Aeracura, Mercurius Cyllenius, I dictate the following names to you, hand them over to the dreadful dogs! Infernal souls in Tartarus! Marcus, Marcia, Chariton, Secundus, and whoever may act like an opponent who will bring a curse-in-reply to you. Mute and Silent goddess! Just as the infernal souls are mute and silent, so those who will bring a curse-in-reply to you may be mute and silent. Three-headed Cerberus, catch the opponents of Bellicus and keep them ...”

Inv. N.:2000.11.2973b

Site: The Eastern Cemetery of the Aquincum Civil Town, AD 2nd-3rd c.

Stone monuments



1. Relief

Relief representing a group of underworld deities, the area of the Aquincum Military Town, AD 2nd-3rd c. The relief that could have belonged to a funerary monument shows a whole group of infernal deities. Dis Pater is seated, and holds a tall staff terminating in a hammer and the keys of the underworld. Next to him is his wife, Proserpina, holding a basket in her hands. Both deities have a grain measuring cup, *modius*, on their heads, which also equates them with the Alexandrian divine couple, Serapis and Isis. At the side of Dis Pater stands Mercury, who escorts the deceased to the underworld, holding a herald's staff and wearing a hat; at his feet lies Cerberus, the three-headed dog of the underworld. By Proserpina's side another female figure is visible, who is perhaps one of the underworld goddesses.

Inv. N.:10483

Site: The area of the Aquincum Military Town, AD 2nd-3rd c.



2. Altar stone

Altar stone erected for the underworld couple, the area of the Aquincum Military Town, AD 2nd-3rd c. The altar stone was erected to Proserpina, the goddess queen of the underworld, and her partner Pluto out of gratitude by an unknown person.

Inscription: *“For Proserpina and Pluto as a votive offering. The one who made an oath and kept it willingly because the gods deserved it.”*

In the Roman world people often erected altar stones to various deities when their wishes were fulfilled, when their prayers were heard. These were usually well-defined events, when, for example, somebody recovered from an illness or his enterprise was successful. But what could have been the tangible event that made someone erect an altar stone to the divine couple of the netherworld? And what is the reason why the commissioner did not have his or her own name engraved on the stone as opposed to the customs? Since these gods are often addressed in curse texts, it is possible that this altar stone from Aquincum commemorates a secret destructive ceremony considered to have been effective.

Inv. N.:85.9.4

Site: The area of the Aquincum Military Town, Óbuda, Kiscelli u./Magyar Lajos u., AD 2nd-3rd c.,