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*Valentia* seems to have seen a drastic reduction in its urban area in the late Roman and Visigothic periods.<sup>37</sup> The extension of the town from north to south was shorter, and it seems to have sheltered under the shadow of the circus. Its east wall may have formed part of the defensive precinct, a use repeated some centuries later, to judge by an Islamic wall of the 11th c. found placed against the external face of the circus' east wall in calle de les Comedies. It was common in late antiquity for the walls of circuses and other large entertainment buildings to be incorporated into an urban precinct.<sup>38</sup> At Tarragona the new precinct in the 14th c. was built directly against the external wall of the circus.<sup>39</sup> What may be surprising is that the circus of *Valentia* did not leave its trace in the mediaeval or modern town plan: only an occasional discontinuous line conforms to the lines of the circus, chiefly one short stretch which follows the façade. On the east side the later alignments which can be related to the circus seem more likely the result of the Islamic precinct than of the Roman circus. The regular lines of the Roman structure were obscured by the more irregular lines of the Islamic period, a process which had begun already in late antiquity.<sup>40</sup> The disappearance of the Roman alignments is another reason why *Valentia's* circus remained hidden for so long.

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37 Ribera, in press (supra n.34).

38 This happened, for example, at Aquileia, Milan and Thessaloniki (Humphrey [supra n.4] 410).

39 J. Giralt and F. Tusset, "Modelos de transformación del mundo urbano en el nordeste peninsular. Siglos V-XI," *IV Congreso d'Arqueologia Medieval Espanyola I* (Alicante 1993) 37-46.

40 Ribera (supra n.8); Ribera, in press (supra n.34).

## Circus curses and their archaeological contexts\*

Florent Heintz

Curse tablets aimed at charioteers and their horses are often found closely associated with human remains. In the Roman and Late Roman periods, the ghosts of individuals who had died an untimely and violent death were thought to roam about their place of burial.<sup>1</sup> Powerful names, signs and figures engraved on a lead tablet would compel the ghost, or νεκροδαίμων, to perform a certain task, be it ruining a business, binding someone's tongue in court, attracting an unwilling person to one's bed or, in the case of racing curses, destroying chariot teams in the circus.<sup>2</sup> In order to accomplish his mission on a racing day, the *daimon* had to be present at the

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1 J. H. Waszink, s.v. "Biothanati," *RAC* 2 (1954) 391-94; more recently: D. G. Martinez, *A love spell from Egypt* (Atlanta 1991) note for line J4.

2 On circus magic in general, cf. P. Brown, "Sorcery, demons and the rise of Christianity," in M. Douglas (ed.), *Witchcraft: confessions and accusations* (London 1970) 25-27; A. Cameron, *Porphyrius the*