

# 1 *\*ricinium (triclinium)* – the Law of the Twelve Tables

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The Law of the Twelve Tables is the origin of the two dress glosses *\*ricinium* and *\*lessus*. The definition of the *\*lessus* as a garment given by Sextus Aelius, the earliest commentator of the laws, was already disputed in antiquity. Stilo, who was the teacher of Varro and an authority in this field, disagreed with Sextus Aelius and defined the *\*lessus* as a wailing cry. This became the prevailing interpretation. The postulated archaic garment called *\*lessus* thus disappeared very early on, and it therefore need not be discussed here.<sup>1</sup> The following chapter only deals with the obscure word *\*ricinium*. As is often the case, the texts which (seemingly) contain it pose difficult problems. In some cases, the transmission is corrupt and needs emendation. Readers will therefore find a significant amount of painstaking discussion of textual matters, hopefully clearing the field for future scholars.

## 1.1 Introduction

The gloss *\*ricinium* has always been much appreciated by scholars.<sup>2</sup> A garment called by this name was even detected in the archaeological evidence.<sup>3</sup> The various guesses ancient grammarians up to Varro made about its meaning have already been dealt with in two other chapters.<sup>4</sup> These argue for the hypothesis that the obscure hapax *\*ricinium* hides nothing more than a historical *triclinium* (couch for three persons), which had fallen victim to textual corruption very early in the text of the law. This chapter presents the explanations given by Imperial and Late Antique grammarians in order to illustrate how the gloss (ever more detached from its origin, the text of the Law of the Twelve Tables, and reality) lived on purely in the grammarians' discourse. The aim is to show the weak foundation on which modern speculation about its meaning is based.

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<sup>1</sup> It is examined in detail in chapter A pp. 35–37.

<sup>2</sup> Becker/Göll III (1882) 264–265; Marquardt/Mau (1886) 575; Blümner (1911) 233; RE 1.1 A (1914) s.v. *ricinium*, col. 799–800 (A. Hug); Wilson (1938) 150–151; L. Sensi, *Ornatus e status sociale delle donne Romane*, in: *Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia* 18 (1980), 64–65; Potthoff (1992) 163–167; Sebesta (1994a) 50; GRD (2007) 161; Edmondson (2008) 13, 27; Olson (2008) 42; Croom (2010) 108.

<sup>3</sup> Kockel (1993) 52.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. A 1 pp. 37–40; C 1 pp. 565–568.

## 1.2 From the beginnings to the Imperial Period (Verrius/Festus)

The earliest commentators of the Law of the Twelve Tables regarded the *\*ricinium* as a *vestimentum quadratum* (square garment). Varro defined it more closely as a primeval square-shaped female cloak. Our next source offers a new explanation. It is the dictionary of Festus which is based on the work of the Augustan scholar Verrius. As usual, it combines several scholarly opinions:

Festus p. 342.20–22 L.<sup>5</sup>

*recinium omne vestimentum quadratum ii qui XII interpretati sunt esse dixerunt, Verrius toga<m>, <qua> mulieres utebantur, praetextam clavo purpureo. unde reciniati mimi planipedes. quam rem diligenter exsequitur Santra lib. II de antiquitate verborum.*

The interpreters of the Laws of the Twelve Tables said that the *\*recinium* is any square cloth. According to Verrius it is a *toga* worn by women and had a purple border. Hence the actors wearing no shoes are called *reciniati*. This matter is carefully explained by Santra in the second book *De antiquitate verborum*.

It is noticeable that Festus offers the form *\*recinium* (not with RI, but with RE at the beginning). This change in orthography could mirror Varro's etymology, who derived the word from *reicere* (to throw back). Festus' lemma starts with the oldest explanation, which was expressed in the early commentaries on the Law of the Twelve (now lost). After the first sentence, the text is defective. The transmitted *vir toga* cannot stand.

Justus Lipsius, the famous scholar philosopher of the 16th century, therefore proposed writing *Verrius togam qua* and changing *praetextum* to *praetextam*.<sup>6</sup> Verrius thus contended that the *\*ricinium* was a *toga* with a purple border that was worn by women in early times. Lipsius' emendation is very attractive because Festus often quotes Verrius as an authority in second place. It also helps to explain how Servius (see below) came about identifying the *\*recinus* (sic) as a kind of female *toga*.

If Lipsius' hypothesis is correct, Verrius departed from the interpreters of the Law of the Twelve Tables and from Varro who regarded the *\*ricinium* as a kind of primeval *pallium*. Maybe, Verrius relied for his opinion on Santra, who is quoted next by Festus and probably lived after Varro but before Verrius, who quotes him elsewhere as if he were a recent source. In his chronicle, Jerome also puts Santra between Varro (117–26 BCE) and Nepos (ca. 95–30 BCE).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Verrius togam qua* Lipsius: *vir toga* F; *praetextam* Lipsius: *praetextum* F.

<sup>6</sup> Justus Lipsius, *Epistolicarum Quaestionum libri quinque*, Antwerp 1577, I 7 (a letter to the scholar Ludwig Carrion) pp. 16–17.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Hieron. de vir. ill. praef: *apud Latinos Varro Santra Nepos Hyginus et Suetonius*.

The last texts from Classical Antiquity that mention the *\*ricinium* come from the ceremonial protocols of the so-called Arval brethren (*acta Arvalia*).<sup>8</sup> This is a ‘restored’ priesthood closely connected with the imperial cult. The texts range from the time of Nero up to Elagabalus.<sup>9</sup> In the aftermath of intensive scholarly debate, the by then obscure *\*ricinium* was actually brought back to life (or rather born) in Augustan times. The original meaning (a type of female garment) had been lost, and the term was reinvented not as a female but as a male garment purportedly worn by Arval brethren as part of their ceremonial costume. Obviously, this kind of Imperial *\*ricinium* differed significantly from what Varro and the early commentators of the Twelve Tables thought this garment to be. The difference shows how easily a word of unknown meaning can lend itself to various interpretations. It also shows that even a small number of texts spread across a few centuries can result in widely diverging interpretations of a single word. These only proliferated as the centuries went on.

### 1.3 Late Antiquity (Servius, Nonius)

The meaning of the gloss was still a matter of interest for scholars in Late Antiquity, though they discussed the word without any reference to the Twelve Tables or the imperial cult. The textual umbilical cord was now cut, and the word took on a life of its own. The high age of the gloss is felt in the comment made by Servius (5th century CE) on Vergil’s famous verse *Romanos, rerum dominos gentemque togatam*.<sup>10</sup> Servius gives us a lot of heterogeneous material on the *\*ricinium* (which had morphed into the *\*recinus* in his text). This results in a tertiary pseudo-historical combination:

*gentemque togatam] bene “gentem,” quia et sexus omnis et condicio toga utebatur, sed servi nec colobia nec calceos habebant. togas autem etiam feminas habuisse cycladum et recini usus ostendit. recinus autem dicitur ab eo, quod post tergum reicitur, quod vulgo maforte dicunt.*

and the *gens togata*] (sc. Vergil uses) the term *gens* in an apt manner, since every gender as well as every class wore the *toga*. The slaves however had neither *colobia* nor shoes. That the women wore the *toga* as well is shown by the fact that they used the *cyclas* and the *\*recinus* [!]. The *\*recinus* is

<sup>8</sup> For the evidence, the index of the edition of Scheid (1998) s.v. *riciniatus* and *ricinium*.

<sup>9</sup> See on them in general Scheid (1998) in his commentary on the Arval inscriptions; ThesCRA V (2005) 92–93 no. 79–83; and J. Scheid, Gli arvali e il sito ad Deam Diam, in: R. Friggeri et al. (eds.), Terme di Diocleziano. Il Chiostro piccolo della Certosa di Santa Maria degli Angeli, Rome 2014, 49–59; C. Caruso, I rendiconti degli Arvali. Le iscrizioni e l’allestimenti, in: R. Friggeri et al. (loc. cit.) (2014), 61–64; on a possible depiction of their sacrifice I. Scott Ryberg, Rites of the State Religion in Roman Art, MemAmAc 22 (1955), 115–117 with pl. 60.

<sup>10</sup> Verg. Aen. 1.282.

called thus because it is thrown back behind the back (*reicitur*). The garment is commonly called *maforte*.

Servius begins by stating that all Romans, men and women alike, wore the *toga*. If my reasoning in chapter D 2 is correct, this thought does not go back as far as Varro, but started in Imperial times and only took its final form in Late Antiquity. In order to support his hypothesis, Servius then adduces two garments: the *cyclas* and the *\*recinus/\*ricinium*. The term *cyclas* designates a luxury garment that had long since disappeared in Servius' times.<sup>11</sup> Servius (or his source) probably derived the word from *cyclus* and assumed that it had to designate a round garment, i.e. a *toga*. In contrast, the *\*recinus* had always been a dress chimaera. For Servius, however, the status of both 'garments' was identical. They were both pure words he only knew from his books. As to the word *\*recinus*, Servius offers the 'Varronian' etymology, but thinks it to designate a kind of *toga*. In this, he follows Festus (Verrius), though the garbled nature of his account suggests that he did not use Festus' dictionary directly. On top of that, Servius gives us something of his own, comparing the *\*recinus* to a garment of his own time, the *maforte*.

In contrast to Servius, Nonius' entry on the *\*ricinium* does not mirror the *toga*-theory. It is obviously partly based on Varro, and this is probably the reason why the 'correct' orthography *\*ricinium* has been preserved:

Nonius p. 869.1–7 L.

*ricinium, quod nunc mafurtium dicitur, palliolum femineum breve. Varro Ταφή Μενίππου (F 538) nihil[o] magis di<cit de>cere mulierem quam [de muliebri ricinio] pallium simplex; idem De vita populi Romani lib. I (F 333 S.): ex quo mulieres in adversis rebus ac luctibus, cum omnem vestitum delicatiorem ac luxuriosum postea institutum ponunt, ricinia sumunt.*

The *\*ricinium*, now called *mafurtium*, is a short female cloak. Varro says in *Menippos' tomb* that nothing adorns women more than [on the female *ricinium*] a simple *pallium*. The same in the first book *On the Life of the Roman People*: "Therefore, in cases of misfortune and mourning, women take off all more refined and luxurious garments, which were adopted in later times, and instead put on *\*ricinia*."

As usual, Nonius first gives his own definition, comparing (like Servius) the *\*ricinium* to a garment he knew from use: the *mafurtium*. Although he relies on Varro in the following, Nonius regards the *\*ricinium* as a short cloak or shawl (*palliolum breve*) and thus differs noticeably from Varro's opinion.<sup>12</sup> Nonius' guess is based on either the appearance of the historical *mafurtium* or on the orthographic similarity of the

<sup>11</sup> Cf. B 9 pp. 391–394.

<sup>12</sup> According to Varro, the *\*ricinium* was a heavy double *pallium*, cf. C 1 pp. 565–568.

glosses *\*ricinium* and *\*rica* (D 4).<sup>13</sup> Nonius' own definition (like Servius') is only pseudo-knowledge. It is of historical interest only for the clothing worn in Late Antiquity. At best, it can be used as a basis for understanding the later *mafurtium* or *maforte*.

After his own explanation, Nonius adds two quotations from Varro to prove his statement. The second one is taken from Varro's *De vita populi Romani*. It forms the basis of Nonius' lemma and has been discussed in detail in chapter C 1.<sup>14</sup> The following therefore focuses only on the first quotation that Nonius drew from a Varronian satire. Its text offers considerable problems. A lot of effort and patience will be needed to extract a clear sense from it. As usual, the discussion will start with considering other scholars' solutions before proposing a new one.

The text as found in Gatti/Salvadore (2014), who keep to the transmission, has several hurdles to overcome before we can develop a clear sense. The text is Latin words, but not proper Latin! The main difficulty is that the words *quam de muliebri ricinio pallium simplex* do not yield any meaningful sense, and the expression *de muliebri ricinio* (about the female *\*ricinium*) disrupts the rest of the phrase. For this reason, Lucian Müller (1888) in his edition emended *ricinio* to *ricinium*, deleted the preceding *de muliebri*, and restored the following version: *magis ... quam [de muliebri] ricinium, pallium simplex* (more than a *\*ricinium*, a *pallium simplex*). It is a quite common phenomenon in Nonius that remarks or annotations (which were initially written over the text or in the margins) intrude into the main text.<sup>15</sup> However, Müller's solution is not as simple as it seems. It presupposes two different kinds of mistakes: First, that the annotation *de muliebri* had been erroneously taken into the text; and second, that *ricinium* had been misspelled as *ricinio*. Moreover, it is difficult to see what the remark *de muliebri* (about a female) should mean. It is therefore better to take the entire expression *de muliebri ricinio* (about the female *\*ricinium*) out of the main text. In this way, we have to assume only one error (a misplaced annotation), and we get both a meaningful sentence ('more than a *pallium simplex*') and a meaningful additional remark ('about the female *\*ricinium*'). This construction would have Nonius making the connection between the two terms and telling us that Varro's words were about the female *\*ricinium*. If this hypothesis is correct, Varro himself did not expressly talk about the *\*ricinium*, but only about a *pallium simplex* (a simple cloak).

But we are still not at the end. We must now turn to the first part of the quotation, which is also far from clear. So far, all solutions assume that Nonius quoted Varro literally. However, this premise is not necessary, since Nonius occasionally paraphrases Varro.<sup>16</sup> In a verbatim quotation, the transmitted infinitive *dicere* (to say) is hard to accommodate. Some scholars therefore emend *dicere* to *decere* and change the following *muliebre* to *mulierem*, hence restoring *nihil magis decere mulierem quam* (that nothing

<sup>13</sup> Some ancient scholars also believed the *\*rica* to be a *palliolum*, cf. p. 620.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. p. 567.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, D 4 p. 629.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. D 6 pp. 663–665.

adorns a woman more than a ...). The meaning of the words is now clear, but we are left with an isolated fragment that is hard to fit in grammatically. It therefore seems better to understand the sentence as a paraphrase that Nonius gives of Varro's words and to emend the transmission to *di<cit de>cere* (= he, i.e. Varro, says that it adorns). Taking all this together, Nonius wrote: *Varro ... nihil magis dicit decere mulierem quam pallium simplex* (Varro says ... that nothing adorns a woman more than a simple *pallium*). This sentence is finally proper Latin and a quite simple statement indeed.

The solution implies that Varro did not mention the *\*ricinium* in his satire. He only talked about a *pallium simplex*. It was Nonius who identified it with the *\*ricinium*. It was then the negligence of a scribe, as can be observed in other entries of Nonius, that added it to the large bulk of pseudo-evidence modern scholarship has been haunted by since.

## 1.4 The Migration Period (Isidore of Seville)

The last scholar talking about the gloss *\*ricinium* is Isidore of Seville (ca 560–636 CE). He does this in the 19th book of his *Etymologiae* (Etymologies).<sup>17</sup> This copious work, which seeks to unite all 'knowledge' of Antiquity, contains a separate section on female clothing (*de palliis feminarum*). This section contains the following remarks about the *\*ricinium*:

Isid. Etym. 19.25.3–4

*stola matronale operimentum, quod cooperto capite et scapula a dextro latere in laevum humerum mittitur. stola autem Graece vocatur quod superemittatur. idem et ricinium Latino nomine appellatum eo quod dimidia eius pars retro reicitur; quod vulgo mavortem dicunt. vocatum autem mavortem quasi Martem; signum enim maritalis dignitatis et potestatis in eo est. caput enim mulieris vir est; inde et super caput mulieris est.*

The *stola* is a garment of a matrona. It covers head and shoulder-blades and is drawn up from the right side to the left shoulder. It is called by the Greek word *stola* because it is let down from above. The same is also designated by the Latin name *\*ricinium*, because half of it is thrown backwards. It is commonly called *mavors*. It is called *mavors* like Mars; for it is a sign of the dignity and power of the husband. For the man is the head of the woman; therefore, it is also on the head of the woman.

As the title of his work (*Etymologiae*) indicates, Isidore is not primarily concerned with dress, but with the etymology of dress terms. This intent governs the entire account. To start with, it is safe to say that Isidore probably did not know any of the garments

<sup>17</sup> On Isidore's account about garments, cf. most recently M. Müller, *Das Thema Kleidung in den Etymologien Isidors von Sevilla*, Berlin/New York 2013.

he described in real life. His knowledge of the historical garments was just as limited as ours, being restricted to a few manuscripts of dubious authority and quality. He is a Spanish grammarian talking about literary ghosts from an ancient (and long lost) past. Accordingly, Isidore begins with the *stola* of the *matrona* (B 4)—the most famous female garment in Latin literature. He mistakenly describes this as a kind of cloak (equating it with a *pallium*). He therefore believed that it covered the woman's head. He had perhaps seen statues showing women with a *pallium* worn in that way (*capite velato*). The term *stola* leads him to a first etymology, which is based on the supposed way of draping the garment by letting it fall over the head (*superemittere* ~ στέλλειν). In the second step, the term *\*ricinium* comes in as a Latin word for the same garment. Again, we are given an etymology, this time based on Varro's *De lingua Latina*.<sup>18</sup> After that, Isidore introduces a third alternative dress term, *mafurtium* or *maforte*. This is a garment worn in Late Antiquity, which we know through Servius and Nonius (see above). Isidore changes its orthography to *mavors*, maybe because the word was no longer in use by his time. In this way, he can establish an etymological link with the god Mars (Mavors). He then adds, following Paul the Apostle,<sup>19</sup> a few paternalistic remarks about the dominant role of the husband (Mars and Venus are a famous couple). According to him, this is expressed in the custom that the female cloak is worn over the head.

From a historical point of view, Isidore's remarks are completely worthless as to the real, historical meaning of dress terms. They only show the kind of pseudo-historical erudition abundantly offered by this author. The sloppiness of his etymology combined with his paternalistic attitude demonstrates a deplorable lack of scholarly judgement. At best, Isidore can be adduced as a witness for the culture of his own times. Modern scholars should no longer use his statements to prop up their own views.

The continuous history of the gloss *\*ricinium* ends at this point. It is only taken up again in the Early Modern Period. In general, the assumptions of modern scholars about the *\*ricinium* are not better than those of Isidore. Hopefully this chapter demonstrated the pitfalls of trying to decipher such old, short, and oftentimes corrupted texts. This may help to slightly restrain scholarly fantasy. We will never know what a *\*ricinium* was. This assumes that some such garment existed at all, which might not have been the case. In fact, if my hypothesis on its origin in chapter A 1 is correct, it never existed outside of scholars' imagination.

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<sup>18</sup> Varro LL 5.132; cf. C 1 p. 565.

<sup>19</sup> Paul. ad Eph. 5. 22–24.

