6 *Capital; *caltula, *castula, *capitula; *calasis – five grammarians’ glosses

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It cannot be denied that this chapter is something like the ragbag of the entire collection. It contains all glosses whose origins can only be traced back to the grammarians. In other words, these are all glosses that are not found in primary texts. In fact, most of them are created by the grammarians themselves. Only the word *capital is of a more venerable age.

The younger glosses—*caltula (Nonius) and *calasis (Paulus Diaconus)—are now enjoying much success among modern scholars and are beginning to pervade dictionaries and handbooks. The intent of this chapter is to counteract and possibly halt this process. It is also about ancient scholars’ methods and about how glosses came to life in the first place. The chapter’s latter sections deal with Late Antiquity. This leads up to chapter D 7. There, we will witness the origin of the youngest member of the group of grammarians’ glosses: the dress gloss *stica. The process of this ‘birth’ took place only a few decades ago and can therefore be viewed ‘in real time’ as it were. This means that we can clearly see all steps of the process and hopefully in the future avoid the mistakes that were made.

The lesson to be gleaned from the grammarians’ glosses is seeing how easily minor corruptions can turn into independent words and then live on in scholarship.

6.1 *capital (Varro)

The word *capital is ancient and venerable.¹ Nevertheless, it never designated a normal female garment in Rome. It probably never designated a garment at all. The gloss goes back to some archaic Latin text, maybe Plautus. However, primary evidence is missing, and we will never know for certain. What remains is only scholarly discussion about what was thought to be some kind of headwear. The etymology of *capital, being related with caput (head), seemed to point to that.

¹ The *capital is missing in Marquardt/Mau (1886) and Blümner (1911) and has therefore not found its way into modern literature.
6.1.1 Varro

The first certain evidence we have is in Varro’s De lingua Latina. There is, however, reason to doubt that a garment called thus ever existed (see below). Varro lists the *capital second among the primeval female Roman pieces of headwear that he says are still in use in religious cult in his own times:²

Varro LL 5.130
*quod capillum contineret, dictum a rete reticulum; rete ab raritudine; item texta fasciola, qua capillum in capite alligarent, dictum capital a capite, quod sacerdotulae in capite etiam nunc solent habere. sic rica ab ritus, quod Romano rito sacrificium feminae cum faciunt, capita velant. mitra et reliqua fere in capite postea addita cum vocabulis Graecis.*

Because it holds hair together, the reticulum (hairnet) was named after the rete (net). The word rete is derived from raritudo (wide mesh). Likewise, the woven headband was named capital after caput (head) because they attached the hair to the head by it. Priestesses (sacerdotulae) still use it nowadays as a headwear. Similarly, rica was named after ritus (cult), because women cover their heads with it when sacrificing in a Roman manner. The mitra and almost all other headdresses were later added together with the Greek terms.

In his list, Varro gives an overview of all Roman pieces of headwear, beginning with the Latin word reticulum and ending with the Greek loanword mitra. The word mitra initiates what Varro thinks to be the second (Greek) period of Roman dress. The pieces of headwear listed become ever more sophisticated: first, a simple net (reticulum), then a headband (*capital), then a piece of cloth (*rica), and finally a kind of headscarf (mitra). The words reticulum (B 12) and the mitra (B 13) are normal designations for two real items of female Roman clothing. In contrast, the words *rica and the *capital are not, despite Varro’s claims to the contrary. Both words are glosses given life by Varro relating them to actual garments which are regularly called by another unspecific name. According to him, the word *rica designates a headscarf (palliolum) women use in sacrifice; the *capital is the name of a woven headband (fasciola) worn by some priestesses.

Varro’s statement about the *rica is mere guesswork and plainly wrong (D 4). His remarks about the *capital cannot be put to the test, but they look somewhat forced. In historical times, there are enough words for similar pieces of headwear. A religious headdress of that type would have been called a vitta (B 16), or as Varro himself says, a fasciola. The origin of the term *capital is likewise obscure. There is reason to believe that it was an old literary gloss put to good use by Varro. It wonderfully filled a gap in his history of Latin terms for ancient female headwear.

² Cf. also B 12 p. 455.
6.1.2 Verrius/Festus

The word *capital was no regular dress term in Varro’s time, but a ‘ghost’ that nevertheless haunted scholars. This is also indicated by our last source. It is an entry in Festus, whose remarks are based on those of the Augustan grammarian Verrius.³ The material thus goes back to at least early Imperial times. Festus (Verrius) has a lemma on the *capital since he regards it as a gloss worthy of explanation. In this case, we have only the abridged version of Paulus Diaconus:

Festus (Paulus) p. 49.24 L.

*capital linteum quoddam, quo in sacrificiis utebantur.

The *capital is a kind of linen cloth that they used in sacrifice.

Festus (Verrius) defines the word *capital in the same way as Varro, but departs from him in an important manner. Unfortunately, the abridged version of Paulus does not tell us who supposedly wore the *capital, nor does he describe its function. It is likely that Festus claimed it to be a female piece of headwear since the word *capital points to a connection with the head (caput). The *capital is again postulated as a garment used in religious cult. However, the *capital is not a headband (fasciola) in Festus, but a piece of linen cloth (linteum). The relationship between his and Varro’s explanations looks quite similar to that in the case of the glosses *ricinium (D 1) and *rica (D 4). There is a common core, but also some difference. The *ricinium and the *rica, for which we have the full entries of Festus, also supposedly designated religious garments. Maybe his entry on the *capital was formed in a similar way. In any case, it shows us that the meaning of the gloss was still a matter of debate from Varro onwards.

6.1.3 Aelius Stilo

The statements of Varro and Festus are all the certain evidence we have on the *capital. However, there could be a third instance where this word was used. It is a passing remark which the grammarian Sextus Aelius Stilo (2nd half of the 2nd century BCE) made in his commentary on the carmen Saliare. The Salii were an old priesthood of the god Mars, famous for their cultic practices consisting of a song and dance in armour. They fascinated scholars in all times as a kind of ancient proto-headbangers. We still have part of their song mediated through Stilo’s commentary on it. As a grammarian, Stilo was mainly interested in the obscure words he found in the lyrics. Stilo’s remarks are again reported to us by Festus. They form the basis of Festus’ article—this time we have the full version—on the obscure word *pescia:

Festus p. 230.12–14 L.

*pescia in Saliari carmine Aelius Stilo dici ait capitis a <al>ia ex pellibus agninis facta, quod Graeci pelles πέσκη vocent neutro genere pluraliter.*

Aelius Stilo says that the word *pescia* in the song of the *Salii* designates *capitalia* made of lamb’s hides because, as he says, the Greeks call hides πέσκη in neuter plural.

The text needs some discussion. It gives us the reading *capitalia*, which is printed without any comment in the editions of the *carmen Saliare*, Stilo, or Festus.⁴ And yet, the word *capitia* does not fit here. Chapter B 22 argues that it denoted a kind of ‘brassiere.’⁵ The context of the priests of Mars also does not fit even the OLD’s definition of the *capitia* as ‘a kind of tunic worn by women’ and not men. The *carmen Saliare* was a cult song of male priests with a very martial appearance (in the most literal sense). It is very unlikely that Stilo told his readers that these men were singing about female tunics—much less about brassieres! An easy solution is to emend the unlikely *capitia* to *capit<al>ia*. This gives a perfect sense. Stilo did not talk about a woman’s brassiere, but about headwear made of lamb’s hide (*ex pellibus agninis facta*). He probably wanted it to designate some type of cap worn by the *Salii*. As ritual caps, these had to be made out of a special material—at least, in the eyes of Roman scholars. However, Stilo was not explaining the gloss *capital* itself, but was trying to explain the word *pescia* included in the priest’s song by means of the gloss. We do not know where Stilo came across the *capital*. We may suppose that it was a gloss to him like to successive scholars. This would mean that Stilo was explaining one gloss through another.⁶

### 6.1.4 Conclusion

The true textual origin of the gloss *capital* is beyond our ability to establish. We can track the word only as far back as the early scholarly debate. Maybe it already belonged to Stilo’s repertoire. The word could be comparatively ‘young,’ if we keep in mind Varro’s distinction between ‘very old’ and ‘old’ words.⁷ He relished what he considered the very old ones, and the rather unspectacular *capital* was perhaps only an ‘old’ one that did not warrant as much attention. This would preclude the ‘very old’ Law of the Twelve Tables and the remnants of ‘very old’ times found in the *carmen Saliare* as the *capital*’s parents. Another option for the gloss’s origins are the writings of Plautus and the Plautine glosses, given that both Stilo and Varro dealt with these in their own work. The *capital* could be seen as a little sister of the Plautine *rica* (D 4).

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⁴ Cf., for example, Carmen Saliare F 5 Blänsdorf/Morel; Aelius Stilo F 3 Funaioli.
⁵ Cf. p. 507.
⁶ We can also watch this phenomenon in the case of the *rica*, cf. D 4 p. 622.
⁷ Cf. C 1 p. 563.
This next section discusses three similar words that supposedly referred to the same article of clothing—a piece of intimate female lingerie. Ancient (and some modern) scholars claim that, despite being identical in meaning and strikingly similar, they were also three distinct words. However, the female ‘brassiere’ (on its exact shape, see B 22) was called a *capitium* in Republican times. Later on, it was called *fascia pectoralis*. If we believe scholarship, the Romans made a big fuss about the simple piece of cloth covering the female breast, using three similar words for the same meaning. In addition to *capitium*, there are three other names for it found in our transmitted texts: *caltula*, *castula*, *capitula*. The similarity of these words should raise some suspicion as to whether these are actually distinct but related terms.

The following remarks try to first unravel the knot of the three glosses. The section will end where it began, with the *capitium*. It maintains that the *caltula* is a hapax from the dress catalogue of Plautus’ *Epidicus* and has only been inflated to become a veritable garment in Nonius. Both scholarly playfulness in dealing with words and scribal error subsequently led to the variants *capitula* and *castula*. The study will be based on a close textual analysis of Nonius’ entry on the *caltula* because he is the author who has the most to say about the garment. He also refers to other grammarians, especially to Varro.

The nature of the term *caltula* was dealt with in chapter A 4. It is part of a Plautine pun. In the *Epidicus*, the *caltula* and the *crocotula* form a comic pair of dresses taking their names from flowers. All Antique grammarians understood this joke. The *caltula* is therefore not among the early Plautine glosses (it was understood well enough as a pun). In Late Antiquity, all this changed with Nonius—who no longer saw the pun or at least did not want to accept the word as just a pun. Like in the case of the *rica*, Nonius offers several instances for the word that are all, as we will see, pseudo-parallels. He comments on the *caltula* in his 17th book, which concerns the colour of clothes (*de colore vestimentorum*) and is a quickly compiled addendum to Nonius’ more comprehensive 14th book (*de genere vestimentorum*). The double entry on the *caltula* and *crocotula* contains many quotations from poets. Only one refers to the *caltula*. The other quotations are therefore omitted here. Nonius’ relevant text runs as follows:

caltulam et crocotulam, utrumque a generibus florum translatum, a calta et a croco.
Vergilius in Bucolicis (Ecl. 2.50): ... Plautus in Epidico (231): ... Novius Paedio (71): ...
Naevius Lycuro (43): ... sed castulam [!] Varro de vita populi Romani lib. I palliolum

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9 Cf. p. 78.
10 Cf. D 4 p. 625–638.
breve voluit haberi. castula (!) est palliolum praecinctui, quo nudae infra papillas praecinguntur; quo mulieres nunc et eo magis utuntur, postquam subuculis desierunt.

caltula and crocotula: Both terms are derived from species of flowers, from the marigold (calta) and from the crocus. Virgil in the Eclogues ...; Plautus in the Epidicus ...; Novius in the Paedium ..., Naevius in the Lycurgus ... But Varro contends in the first book On the life of the Roman people that the castula (!) is a short piece of cloth. The castula (!) is a small piece of cloth functioning as a wrap. They gird themselves with it naked underneath the breast. Women use it even more now that they have stopped using the undertunic (subucula).

Nonius was prompted to create the double entry caltulam et crocotulam by verse 231 from the dress catalogue in Plautus’ Epidicus, which he also used in two other places. He leaves quotation from Plautus unchanged and does not even bother to transfer it to the nominative. Regarding Nonius’ evidence, it turns out that the comic playwright Plautus is the only evidence for the dress term *caltula. The quotation from Vergil concerns the flower called calta. The fragments from all other archaic poets up to Naevius deal with the crocota.¹¹

Nonius then proceeds and suddenly changes the orthography: “But Varro calls the castula…” Instead of *caltula (with an additional L), we twice find the L changed into an S in *castula. Editors of Nonius usually harmonize the spelling, changing the S of *castula to the L of *caltula in both cases, and gloss over the discrepancy. This is probably in part due to the meaninglessness of *castula. Harmonizing the two forms leaves one fewer gloss to explain. However, this approach is questionable because the orthography of keyword and of the quotation sometimes diverge in Nonius.¹² Moreover, Nonius does not simply quote Varro like the other authors, but adds the word sed (but). This could indicate that the topic changes and Nonius is now talking about what was called *castula by Varro (as opposed to the *caltula of Plautus). We should therefore keep to the (meaningless) form *castula.

But there is also another problem. In all editions, Varro’s words, which are adduced as often as the last evidence, are made to extend until the end of the lemma.¹³ However, there is a serious obstacle to this solution. The subucula was still in use among women at the time of Varro.¹⁴ This is contrary to the statement that women stopped wearing the undertunic. For this reason, the last part of the sentence (quo mulieres ... desierunt) cannot belong to Varro, but must be attributed to Nonius. But what about the preceding remarks (castula ... praecinguntur)? Do they form part of a direct quotation from Varro or do they also belong to Nonius? The choice between these two alternatives is difficult,

¹¹ Cf. on them A 3; A 7 p. 169.
¹² Cf. also A 3 p. 57.
but the form of the sentence that resembles other definitions in Nonius and the fact that a definition is still missing in this entry are in favour of the latter hypothesis. It seems that Nonius felt obliged to comment on Varro's opinion and to define the garment called *castula* more closely.

But which word is hiding behind the meaningless *castula?* Other unparalleled word forms in Nonius go back to unresolved or falsely dissolved abbreviations.¹⁵ A similar error may be assumed in this case. It seems likely that the letter S is a sign for an abbreviation. It leads us to *capitula* as the word form written in Varro's original. Nonius tells us in his entry on the word capitium that Varro called the capitia by the alternative name *capitula.*¹⁶ The similarity of the item of clothing—a brassiere in both cases—also suggests that Nonius is influenced here by the remarks of Varro, which he quoted on the capitium: neque id ab orbita matrum familias institutum, quod eae pectore ac lacertis erant apertos nec capitia habebant (and this invention did not originate from the circle of mothers, because these were naked on the chest and on the upper arms and did not wear a capitium). The definition quo nudae infra papillas praecinguntur looks like it was inferred from Varro's words on the capitium. For these reasons, Nonius' castula (fem. sg.) is very likely identical with Varro's capitula (neutr. pl.). It should not disturb us that the neuter plural is converted into a feminine singular, since we can observe the loss of the neutral form elsewhere.

In conclusion, the fate of the three glosses can be summarized as follows: The *castula* is a comic Plautine hapax; *castula* is an orthographical mistake; and *capitula* is a Varronian variant for capitia only attested in Nonius. Looking at what Varro does in De lingua Latina, we should trust Nonius on the form of Varro's variant, but we should not take the variant itself too seriously. Varro often playfully suggests an orthographic variant—for example, intusium and indusium—without having common usage on his side. Here, he may have said something similar. In the mind of Nonius and his successors, the *capitulum* became a real new word to be acknowledged and discussed with all scholarly seriousness. In the end, there remains only the capitium as a proper term to designate the Antique brassiere, and its story is told in chapter B 22.¹⁷

### 6.3 *calasis = calas<ir>is* (Paulus Diaconus)

The final section covers the gloss *calasis. It has secured a firm place in dictionaries (OLD) and modern archaeological handbooks.¹⁸ It is thought to designate a specific form of tunic. The following section argues that the calasis is a chimaera. It owes its

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¹⁵ Cf. D 4.
¹⁶ Nonius p. 870.27 L.: haec et capitula appellavit [Varro also called these garments *capitula*].
¹⁷ Cf. p. 507.
origin to a textual corruption of the word *calasis*. Evidence for the word *calasis* is very weak. It is attested only once: in the condensed version Paulus Diaconus gives of an entry of Festus. The full entry is as follows:

Festus (Paulus) p. 44.28–30 L.

calasis tunicae genus, quod Graeci καλάσιριν dicunt. alii dicunt nodum esse tunicae muliebris, quo connexa circa cervicem tunica submittitur.

The *calasis* is a type of tunic which the Greeks call *calasiris*. Others say that it is a knot on the female tunic on which the tunic, fastened in the nape, hangs down.

The καλάσιρις is a special Egyptian type of tunic (*tunicae genus*). It is first attested in Herodotus.¹⁹ It was worn in the cult of Isis,²⁰ but was also widespread throughout the Greek Mediterranean world as a festive female garment. It was worn, for example, by women in Ephesus and by the female participants in the mysteries of Andania.²¹ Aristophanes lists it among the female luxury garments in his dress catalogue.²² Herodotus says that it was long and had tassels; sometimes it had stripes.²³ It turns out that the first explanation given in Festus is correct, and the second one is false. The alternative definition of the *calasiris* as a knot may go back to a misunderstanding of Herodotus’ classic account of the garment. At least the odd *nodus* looks a bit like the tassels mentioned by him.

However, Paulus does not give us the form *calasiris*, but the form *calasis* as the keyword of the dictionary entry. Lindsay, in the critical apparatus of his edition, rightly suspects that it is a simple corruption of *calasi<ri>*s. It is probably a very late one and may be due to Paulus Diaconus himself or to a scribe. The keyword *calasiris* was probably still correct in Festus since it is not a complicated archaic Latin gloss and the Greek (albeit corrupted) word in the entry—the older manuscripts give us καλάσινον—still points to the longer and correct form. In any case, the non-word *calasis* should be banned from modern research.

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¹⁹ Herodot. 2.81.1: ἐνδεδύκασι δὲ (sc. Αἰγύπτιοι) κιθῶνας λινέους περὶ τὰ σκέλεα θυσωωτούς, τοὺς καλέουσι καλασίρις [The Egyptians wear linen tunics around the legs with tassels, which they call *calasiris*].

²⁰ Kratinos F 32 K.-A.

²¹ Democritus von Ephesus FGrHist 267 F 1; Syll.³ 736.15ff.

²² Aristoph. F 332.7 K.-A.

²³ Cf. Kassel on Cratin. F 32 K.-A.