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**The *Edictum Diocletiani et collegarum***

The so-called Edict of Maximum Prices was issued in AD 301 as part of a comprehensive administrative and financial reform released in the reign of the Roman emperor Diocletian.\(^1\) Diocletian came to power in AD 284 after a period in Roman history traditionally understood as a time of ‘crisis’, produced by a series of inter-related factors:\(^2\) a frequent turnover of emperors; problems with the economy in terms of production and coinage; incursions by various tribes on the edges of the empire; internal unrest; the rise of Christianity and periodic persecutions. Diocletian’s actions were arguably pragmatic responses to the situation he found the empire in on his accession. The Edict should be seen alongside a number of reforms during his reign and is regarded by some scholars as the most important inscription of Late Antiquity.\(^3\) Several editions and translations have been published thus far. In addition to the continuous publication of new finds of the text itself, commentaries on different aspects of the Edict abound.\(^4\)

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1. Noethlichs 2010, s. v. *Edictum Diocletiani*. The term ‘Edict’ is generally thought to have been coined by Theodor Mommsen, who referred to *dicunt* in the preface of the text; however, it should be noted that W. M. Leake had already used the term in 1826 (Leake 1826). In the text itself *lex* (law) and *statutum* are used, demonstrating that we are dealing with a law that was supposedly valid and, at least according to its own standard, enforced throughout the empire, in the East as well as the West (*Lex: Ed. Diocl. praef.* 15; *statutum: Ed. Diocl. praef.* 15, 18, 19, 20). In the case of any violation (including superelevated prices, illegal negotiations between sellers and buyers as well as the hoarding of goods), transgressors were threatened with capital punishment. The Edict was produced in the names of the two Emperors C. Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus and M. Aurelius Valerius Maximianus and their intended successors Flavius Valerius Constantius and Galerius Valerius Maximianus, but is traditionally named after Diocletian alone. The 18th *tribunicia potestas* of Diocletian mentioned in the text suggests that the Edict was issued between 21 November and 31 December AD 301, according to Corcoran 1996, 206, or between 20 November to 9 December, according to Speidel 2009, 497, note 43. Translations of literary passages are adapted from the relevant Loeb volumes.

2. Recent scholarship questions notions of crisis, recognising that not all of these factors affected all of the empire, all of the time: see *e.g.* Potter 2013; Hekster 2008.


5. Ed. Dioec. praef. 97. The purpose of the Edict and the question of whether the law and its price regulations was ever understood as binding by the population or whether it should rather be considered a more symbolic demonstration of imperial power, remain a matter of scholarly dispute. It is, however, indisputable that the Edict was accompanied by a fundamental reorganization of the tax system and two further edicts regulating coinage. One of the major problems faced by the emperors of the late principate was the dramatic rise in inflation. The second Coin Edict was probably issued on the 1st of September in AD 301, a few months before the Price Edict (Erim 1971). The consequences of this might have been a general increase in prices that demanded quick counteraction. Burkhard Meißner has suggested that there may have been additional factors that made the Edict of Maximum Prices a necessary initiative, in particular the military reforms also undertaken by Diocletian (Meißner 2000, esp. 79-84). As the number of recruits steadily increased and the frontiers of the empire were more intensely fortified, local demand on markets could increase enormously and cause prices to soar. Meißner therefore suggests that the Edict was intended as an ad hoc measure aimed at stabilizing prices, especially in the most militarised regions of the empire (Meißner has been contradicted by Brandt 2004, see below). That the Edict could also be perceived as a measure taken for the welfare of all (as frequently stressed in the praefatio) is confirmed by an inscription commenting on the purpose of the Edict found in the province of Caria and Phrygia (Meißner 2000, esp. 91-94). There, the provincial commander, Fulvius Asticus, added an explanation that the Edict was meant to establish adequate prices. He does not explicitly single out the military, as does the praefatio, but claims instead that the Edict was issued for the welfare of the whole provincial population. Meißner has taken this addition as an indication of the different areas of concern of the provincial governors. He still assumes, however, that the province of Caria and Phrygia was affected by inflation caused by the presence of the military. Hartwin Brandt contradicts this by pointing to inscriptions that give proof of soldiers plundering the houses of civilians, especially in Lydia and Caria and Phrygia. In Brandt’s opinion, an edict aimed to maintain the purchasing power of soldiers with a fixed salary could not have satisfied the people that had been their victims, but, quite the contrary, would have aroused resistance and anger (Brandt 2004, 50-51). Michael Speidel offers yet another interpretation: he assumes that the Edict was motivated by the Emperors’ concerns regarding their solvency, especially towards the soldiers, and their interest in keeping the soldiers content and supportive of their power (Speidel 2009).

6. Noethlichs 2010 argues that soldiers were especially affected by this because they had to spend a considerable amount of their salary on food, clothing and related items. Some researchers deny the impact of Diocletian’s Edict altogether (Meißner 2000, esp. 79-82). They refer to the contemporary of Diocletian, Lactantius, who states that the Edict had to be abrogated (Lactantius, De mort. pers. 7,6f.). Lactantius claims that the Edict did not succeed and that after a short time goods were said to have disappeared from the market as a direct reaction to it, so that it had to be annulled. The hypothesis that Diocletian did not succeed is, however, not confirmed by recent scholarship: the Edict appears to have succeeded in slowing down inflation (Noethlichs 2010). In 1989 Alexander Demandt argued that the maximum prices of the Edict were sometimes well above the market price, as shown by comparisons with prices in papyri and other inscriptions (Demandt 1989, 56-57, cit. by Brandt 2004, 47; for a discussion of the papyri see Mickwitz 1932). Therefore, he concluded that the main intention of the Edict was to stabilize prices, because the margin was not always exhausted. Both Bagnall and Corcoran note that transactions would occasionally adhere to prices stipulated of the Edict, even after the Edict itself had been annulled; this is best documented in connection with military clothing (Corcoran 1996, 233; Bagnall 1985, 69, esp. on the three identical sets of prices in 302, 314 and 323).

for transport. Some aspects of ancient textile technology and clothing have been treated in greater detail, such as the different types of purple mentioned, wool, clothing and cloth, as well as specific terminological questions related to clothes. Despite this interest in the range and types of clothing, scholarship has not yet focused on the textile tools mentioned in the Edict. This contribution proposes to fill part of this gap.

**Greek or Latin original**

The Edict is written in Greek and Latin, and the question of the original language of the Edict is seemingly straightforward. As a law promulgated by an emperor of the Western part of the empire, it was undoubtedly Latin. The elaborate preface of the inscription is so far only known from Latin versions of the Edict, not in the Greek versions. The Greek text(s) that survived cannot be traced back to a single official master document. As Marta Giacchero suggested, local authorities seem to have been rather at liberty to translate the Latin text according to need. This seems to be corroborated by the observations of E. G. Turner. He argues, based on papyri from the reign of Diocletian, that Diocletian did not pursue an active language policy to enforce the use of Latin in Egypt, and that he only imposed very narrow measures to limit the use of Greek through the introduction of “a quasi-Roman municipal and taxation system, Roman coinage, and Roman dating by consuls and by indiction” in order to promote the gradual increase in the use of Latin language and terminology. While an interest in political and administrative terminology is understandable, it is, however, unlikely that one would have stipulated any precise terminology for (items of) trade, except in very general terms. This has to be kept in mind when dealing with questions of tool terminology which might have been influenced by, for instance, misunderstandings by the copyist, misspellings and other factors.

**Textile tools in the Edict**

**Textile tools as a case study**

This investigation of textile tools provides some insights into the use and production of textiles and their producers and consumers and thus allows glimpses at economic implications and the practical application of the Edict in everyday life. It also highlights key aspects of ancient technology invisible in literary sources. Indeed, since the relevant chapters concerning textile tools are preserved in both Greek and Latin, we are offered, in addition, an invaluable bilingual source for textile terminologies for both more common as well as more specialised tools.

**The fragments of the Edict related to textile tools**

The preserved fragments of the Edict testify to several textile tools. Some tools are directly attested by name, others only indirectly through craft terminology and occupational designations. Among the tools explicitly mentioned are needles, pins, spindles, whorls, combs and looms. In this contribution, we focus on the items that are mainly attested in two parts of the Edict so far: chapters 13 and 16. Their translation and interpretation varies widely in philological literature and thus merits a reassessment. The chapters are preserved in both Latin and Greek fragments (Fig. 1). Not all fragments have their bilingual counterpart nor are fully

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attested in even one language. Some lines are attested only once/in one fragment in each language, others more than once in several fragments, others again are missing in both languages, while others are missing only in one language and can sometimes be reconstructed by using their Latin or Greek counterpart.

Of the Latin version we have one fragment of chapter 13 (ll. 1-10) and two fragments of chapter 16 (ll. 12-14). Of the Greek version three fragments have been found of chapter 13 and one fragment of chapter 16. We therefore have 4 fragments of chapter 13 (of which one is in Latin and three are in Greek) and three of chapter 16 (of which two are in Latin and one is in Greek: see Fig. 2 for an example). Two of these fragments (Aezan. IV and Aphr. XXIX) postdate the edition of Siegfried Lauffer\textsuperscript{12} that is still fundamental for studies of the Edict, but \textit{i.e.} change the line numbering of the chapters that are treated in this contribution. We therefore in general follow the edition of Marta Giacchero,\textsuperscript{13} who was able to include the new finds, and have modified our analysis with reference to later scholarship.\textsuperscript{14}

13. Giacchero 1974. Additional information in German and Italian in the following footnotes is taken from Lauffer and Giacchero.
The attested textile tools in chapters 16 and 13

Chapter 16:

16,12[De] Acu
12a Acus sartoria sive subfiscalatoria suptilissima X IV
13 Formae secundae X II
14 Acus ciliciaria sive sagmaria X II

16,12 [Περὶ βελόν]ῶ[ν]
12a [βελόνη] ῥαφικὴ ἰσχνοτάτη X δ’
13 [δευτέρας φώρ(ης) βελόνη α’ X β’
14 [βελόνη] 

The brief chapter 16 is headed De acu and does not mention any other tools than acus in the preserved fragments. The Greek title is badly damaged, but the restoration [Περὶ βελόν]ῶ[ν] is unproblematic since in the following lines only the term βελόνη is mentioned16 which corresponds to the Latin acus. Both terms are commonly translated as ‘needle’, which seems to match the meaning of the chapter very well.

The chapter starts with an acus sartoria, whose translation as ‘sewing needle’ is unproblematic.17 Immediately after the mention of this sewing needle both the fragment from Synnada and the (slightly more damaged) one from Aphrodisias give the information sive (acus) subfiscalatoria suptilissima, “or a very fine subfiscalatoria-type needle”.18 Both cost the same, 4 denarii each. However, the meaning of subfiscalatoria is unclear. It could, analogous to

15. = 16, 8-10 Lauffer.
16. Loring (1890, 320) notes that the restoration [Περὶ βελόν]ῶ[ν] is conjectural, but fairly probable, because “headings are pretty abundant in this part of the inscription”.
16. Terminology of Textile Tools in the Edictum Diocletiani

sartoria, indicate the use of this needle, but it could also indicate the material of the object. For the interpretation, one has referred to the noun fistula, which would refer to a needle in the shape of or (originally) made of a tube or stalk.\(^\text{19}\) The term acus thus presumably distinguishes here either two different uses of the same needle or two distinct needles, distinguished by use and/or material that were sold for the same price. The Greek text is fragmentary but gives ῥαφικὴ for sartoria and ἱσχνοτὰτη that matches the Latin suptilissima, but there is no Greek term corresponding to subfiscalatoria. The question remains open as to whether these needles were similar enough to be grouped together for reasons other than their identical price.

A clue to their interpretation may be found in the next line where the needle is termed formae secundae in Latin, δευτέρας φόρμης in Greek, i.e. of ‘second-grade quality’. This type of needle only costs half the price of the subfiscalatoria-type needles, 2 denarii. Needles of the second quality are therefore presumably contrasted with those of the subfiscalatoria-type that seem to be of ‘first-grade’ quality (forma prima), being finer (suptilissima/ἰσχνοτάτη).

In the last line, we meet a similar phrasing in the first line, an acus ciliciaria sive sagmaria which costs 2 denarii, like the second-grade quality needles in the previous line. This probably denotes a single type of needle that is used for two distinct purposes: first, for rougher textile qualities, the Latin adjective ciliciarius pointing to so-called ‘Cilician’ fabrics that were originally made of goat hair;\(^\text{20}\) and the corresponding Greek word σακκοράφη pointing to bags made of a rough fabric; second, sagmaria for saddle-cloths, confirmed by the Greek σαγματική, with sagma-, according to one editor,\(^\text{21}\) referring to a pack-saddle, but which is probably a saddle-cloth.\(^\text{22}\) With regard to σα<κ>κοράφη, Loring notes that the stone clearly reads σαρκοράφη, but that this is a mistake; he adds that since it was a large needle, and used for sacking, it was probably a packing-needle.\(^\text{23}\)

These kinds of acus may be interpreted as needles in the modern sense of the word, as sharp and pointed objects made of metal (or another hard material that could be formed into a very thin needle), with an eye at one end. They might have been used to stitch fabric together or to apply decorative objects (including pearls, metal ornaments and thread) on fabrics. This interpretation seems to be corroborated by finds of metal needle hoards in different regions of the Roman world. One set of 17 “badly rusted” needles comes from Dura Europos in modern-day Syria, dating probably to the middle of the 3rd century AD, very close in time to the Price Edict (Fig. 3). According to the publication, they were made of iron and tucked into a fragment of undyed wool cloth. Their length varied from 5.2 to 6.0 cm, and the average diameter is 0.15 cm.\(^\text{24}\)

19. Lauffer: sufsclatorius = suffisculatorius ‘rohrförmig’ (fistula, ‘Rohr, Halm, Hohlhadel’), cf. Plin. NH 17,100: sutoriae simili fistula; Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum III 10,48 συριστής fisculator; V 248, 14 tenui havena fistula vulgo fiscla dicitur. CIL VI 4444,4 fistlatori. Perhaps we are dealing with a situation similar to English ‘weaver’s reed’. Macpherson (1952, 73), discussing the Synnada fragment, notes that suffisculatoria could be derived from the form fisculus or from fistula; he furthermore adduces Corpus Glossariorum Latinorum II, 580 for the form fisculator, and Plin. NH 17,100 for the word fistula, referring to a shoemaker’s tool (sutoriae simili fistula); and Festus (308-309 Müller) for suffiscus.


21. Loring (1890, 320) understands the σαγματική in line 14 as another large needle, perhaps a saddler’s needle, σάγμα being a ‘pack-saddle’.


23. Loring 1890, 320.

24. Pfister & Bellinger 1945, 60, cat.no. 293.
Another set of needles was found in Magdalensberg in Austria, ‘Old Virunum’, and might have been produced for trade (Fig. 4). The settlement flourished in the period 50 BC to 50 AD. The ruler in the photo of the publication shows that some of the needles were actually 14 cm long and probably meant for heavy duty sewing. However, we have to keep in mind that finer needles are presumably less likely to be preserved than thicker ones, which might have distorted the statistics of the hoard finds.

While chapter 16 is relatively straightforward, chapter 13 poses several terminological problems. These regard both its internal structure that seemingly does not match the headline; the interpretation of the

![Image of needles from Dura Europos](image1)

Fig. 3. Needles from Dura Europos, from Pfister & Belling 1945, plate XXXI 293.

![Image of needles from Magdalensberg](image2)

Fig. 4. Needles from Magdalensberg, from Gostenčnik 2010, 83, fig. 13b.
different items mentioned; and finally the translation of the terms from Latin to Greek and vice versa. The Latin text is only attested in one fragment that was found in Aizanoi, while the Greek version (containing the lines corresponding to *acus*) is preserved in two fragments from Geronthrai in Laconia and Aidepsos on Euboia.26

Chapter 13 is headed with *De radiis textoribus/* Περὶ κερκίδων. The terms *kerchis* and *radius* are consistently translated in both literature and dictionaries as “(weaver’s) shuttle”. However, research since the 1930s has at regular intervals noted and stressed that this is a highly problematic and anachronistic translation. The term *textoribus* suggests that we are dealing with weaving tools but the chapter does not limit itself to its own headline (this is not unusual in the Edict).27 Instead, after listing several *radia/*κερκίδες specified according to material, it goes on to list combs; spindles with whorls; items specified as “women’s items” – among which are another small comb and also a different kind of needle or pin or tool that has been interpreted as “scraper”, but which is probably better

25. The Latin text follows Crawford & Reynolds 1977, the Greek text Giacchero 1974, 165.

26. Aizanoi IV. This fragment was published by F. Naumann, after Lauffer’s edition, but, as noted by Crawford & Reynolds (1977, 125), the *ed.pr.*, published with admirable speed, was susceptible to improvement in some places, we therefore follow the readings of Crawford & Reynolds. Both Greek fragments of the chapter (*Aedeaps.* and *Ger. II*) are unfortunately badly preserved. Different interpretations, depending on editorial choices of the texts, have not, however, been the subject of sufficient scholarly discussion.

27. See Doyle 1976, 91: “as often in the Edict, covers only one of the items listed”, although he assumes that “the shuttles, spindles, combs, and scrapers, (are) all doubtless made traditionally in the same shop”.

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Chapter 13: On pin-beaters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin Text</th>
<th>Greek Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radium buxeum numero vac. I</td>
<td>Κερκίς πυξίνη α’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radia promisquae materiae vac. N[I]</td>
<td>Κερκίδες β’ ἐκ διαφ(όρων) ξύλ(ων)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pectinem textorium buxeum</td>
<td>Κτένα πύξινον</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pectinem textorium promisquae materiae</td>
<td>Κτένα ἐκ διαφόρων ξύλων ἰς πήν(ην)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fusum buxeum cum verticillo</td>
<td>ἄτρακτος πύξινος μετὰ σφονδύλου</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fusum cum verticillo alterius materiae</td>
<td>ἄτρακτος μετὰ σφονδύλου εξ ἑτέρων ξύλων</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pectinem muliebrem buxeum</td>
<td>Κτένιον γυναικείον πύξινον</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acus osseas muliebres N IIII</td>
<td>Κνῆστρον ὀστὰ(ν) γυναικείον</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acus testudines I</td>
<td>Κνῆστρον χελώ(νον)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acus sucinea I</td>
<td>Κνῆστρον σούκινον</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
translated as “scratcher” if the function is to be emphasised. Prior to the discovery of the Aizanoi fragment, chapter 13 was only known in Greek.

As already mentioned, the headline is usually translated as concerning “shuttles”. According to John Peter Wild, an early advocate against this common interpretation, the shuttle was unknown to the Romans; and Elizabeth Barber hypothesises that the shuttle only came to the Mediterranean area around the 10th century AD. Since the instrument is specified as a weavers’ instrument (textoribus), the solution may be to term it “(weaving) pin”, i.e. a pointed instrument, not necessarily with an eye/hole, that was multi-functional and could serve as: a “weft-carrier/spool” to pass the weft through the warp threads, and as a weft-beater (and even as a hairpin — see below). This interpretation also has the advantage that a pin — in contrast to a shuttle — could be used on different kinds of looms, e.g. warp-weighted, ground, and two-beam looms, which might have been useful in an inscription that was supposed to regulate the prices of tools in a vast empire with different weaving traditions.

It is interesting to note that the Latin headline specifies de radiis textoribus “on pin-beaters for weavers”, while the Greek headline merely states περὶ κερκίδων “on pin-beaters”, perhaps because the tool’s use for weaving was the predominant sense of the Greek word. Crawford and Reynolds note that the form of the adjective textoribus for textoris is “curious”, referring to textorium in lines 13,3 and 13,4. Naumann even assumes that textoribus is an error for textoris, but there is no fundamental problem in reading textoribus, i.e. “radia for weavers”, instead of “weaving radia”. It should be noted that radii (13,1a) and radia (13,2) are the uncommon neuter forms of the word. While they may be in the nominative, the accusative case is of course equally possible, which would conform to lines 3-7 that are in the accusative, making all items listed in lines from 13,1a-7 accusative.

After the heading, the chapter starts with a pin-beater of boxwood, which was the cheapest material for textile tools (buxum, πύξινος), presumably due to its prolific and widespread availability. One pin-beater costs 14 denarii. Boxwood textile tools are consistently indicated apiece, perhaps as a point of reference or default category; conversely it could be due to the fact that boxwood is singularly useful for textile tools: it is smooth and light, and good for working with raw material such as wool, because it does

31. Cf. Crawford & Reynolds 1977, 149: “That the radii listed here were for weaving was regarded as self-evident by the Greek copyists who use κερκίς unqualified.”
34. Crawford & Reynolds (1977, 150) merely note that its gender is “another grammatical mistake”.
35. The Thesaurus Linguae Latinae is, to our knowledge, the only dictionary to mention the neuter form radium. That the neuter was also in use is, however, clear from the premonition of the grammarian Flavius Caper (GL VII 102,1): “hic radius, non hoc radium”. Moreover, Charisius (GL 1.71) includes the word among the words that are masculine in Latin, but feminine in Greek. Outside this passage it is attested e.g. in Corpus Glossariorum Latinorvm III 195, 53, where it translates certides (=cercedes), and in the Vindolanda tablets (II 309,7), where its meaning is ‘spokes’.
36. Of course radium may also be interpreted as a masculine accusative singular, but radia in the subsequent line makes this improbable.
37. For πόξινος cf. 13,1a;3;7; forma, φόρμα cf. 8,1a.
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not splinter.  In the following line the pin-beaters are made of other kinds of wood, a category subsumed by the generic expressions _promisquae_ or _alterius materiae_ and _διαφόρων_ or _έτερων_ _ξύλων_. The number of _radia_ in the Latin text is partly restored, but the Greek equivalent (that also gives the plural: _κερκίδες_) specifies two that cost 15 _denarii_ each. That all wood other than boxwood could be lumped into one category confirms the hypothesis that boxwood was a kind of “default material” for this type of textile tool.

This pattern is repeated in the next two lines that list weavers’ combs (thus deviating from the pin-beaters in the headline and first two lines). First one made of boxwood for 12 _denarii_ is listed, then one made of any other wood than boxwood at 14 _denarii_ each. We do not know what these combs looked like, but, with reference to these lines (13,3-4), Reynolds and Crawford note that “[t]he Roman weaving comb had a wide head and very small teeth (Wild 1970, 67)”. They observe that in this light, it is crucial that it has the same price as the above-mentioned _radius_ (or _fusus_, spindle, see below), as it requires more skill to make it, and it would presumably be larger. They further note that in line 13,4 the Greek fragment from Geronthrai “adds _ις πήνην_, ‘for weft’, _i.e._ for beating up the weft – perhaps a paraphrase of the Latin _textorius_”. It should be noted that ‘combs for raising the nap on woollen cloth’ are mentioned elsewhere in the Edict: 40

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pectines lanari[i..c. 21.. X se]ptingentos quinquagin[a] [pectin]em? m[. c.28..] X quadraginta vacat
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In chapter 13, the following two lines (13,5-6) conform to the pattern of the list that was established for the previous items: They list spindles, first one made of boxwood with a whorl, for the price of 12 _denarii_, then one made of other wood than boxwood, also with a whorl, for the price of 15 _denarii_. While spindles were made of wood, spindle whorls could be made of many types of material: wood, bone, clay, stone, lead. Even if the price for the spindle also covers the cost of the whorl, whose material is not indicated, the prices of 12 and 14 _denarii_ seem extravagant, given the cheap materials presumably employed. All the tools from chapter 16 mentioned so far conform to one pattern, _i.e._ were made of boxwood vs. other woods: pin-beater, comb, and spindle (with whorl). It is curious that pin-beaters of wood other than boxwood are counted in pairs. Otherwise, all are textile tools, and even if they do not fit closely under the headline of ‘pin-beaters’ as a whole, one can comprehend them being listed in this category since they are wooden tools belonging to the textile profession.

The evidence becomes much more idiosyncratic with the following lines. It is rather intriguing that after the weavers’ combs in line 13,3 and 13,4 (both _textorium_), there are two lines which mention spindles, but line 13,7 again mentions a comb. However, this time it is specified as _pectinem muliebrem buxum_. Crawford and Reynolds translate it as ‘woman’s comb of boxwood’, noting that “double-sided boxwood combs were relatively common in the Roman world”. Both Greek passages confirm this reading with _κτένιον γυναικείον πύξινον_. This comb seems to be distinct from the one mentioned in line 13,3 since it is explicitly characterized as a ‘woman’s’, and termed by the diminutive _κτένιον_ in the Greek text, not _κτένα_ like the weaving combs. It is not, however, differentiated as being smaller in the Latin text. It should also be noted that although both one sort of ‘weaving comb’ and the ‘woman’s comb’ are made of (relatively cheap) boxwood, the latter is two _denarii_ more expensive than the boxwood weaving comb

38. Ida Demant, pers. comm.
40. Aphrodisias: _Aphr._ XXIX Col.III, 8-9 (=15.78-9). The editors (Erim & Reynolds 1973, 107) note that: “_Pectines lanarii_ used for raising the nap on woollen cloth were characteristically made of iron, cf. Juvenal vii, 224 _qui docet obliquo lanam deducere ferro_”.
41. Crawford & Reynolds 1977, 150. See Gostenčnik 2010, 76, figure 14.5, for an example of a spindle from Magdalensberg (1<sup>st</sup> century BC to 1<sup>st</sup> century AD).
42. Crawford & Reynolds 1977, 150.
(or as expensive as a weaving comb made of ‘other’ wood). This suggests that, although it was perhaps a smaller item, it may have been more elaborately worked (e.g. with two rows of teeth) or have an altogether different function. Still, we are left without an explanation as to why the composer of the list should have found it necessary to mention a ‘woman’s comb’ under the headline ‘pin-beaters for weavers’.

The text goes on with another item that is qualified as muliebris or γυναικεῖον (‘for women’ or ‘women’s’): an acus in line 8. At first glance, acus leads us to believe that we are dealing with a term that has the same meaning as the acus that we have already encountered in chapter 16: needles in the modern sense of pointed, sharp objects, presumably with an eye for a thread. The adjective would not affect this interpretation, since one could imagine a needle that was, for example, used to execute delicate work that was associated with or carried out by women. On closer examination, this explanation does not stand up to scrutiny. One of the reasons is the Greek translation of the term acus. Acus is never translated in the Edict by ῥαφίς; however, in contrast to chapter 16 where acus is consistently translated as βελόνη,43 in chapter 13 it is translated as κνῆστρον.44 The root κνη- signifies to scrape, scratch, grate or itch, therefore the most plausible translation would be a “scratcher” rather than a needle (see below). The term has thus caused some confusion. The passage could be seen as inconsistent, or the text as flawed, and perhaps the κνῆστρα as unrelated to the other textile items, but a closer look at the etymology and inner structure of the chapter provides some clues.

The other reason why a straightforward translation as ‘women’s needles (sc. for textile work)’ is difficult, is that textile implements made of these materials (bone, tortoise shell, and amber) are not as frequently attested as one may expect in the archaeological record. Bone tools are attested where the soil conditions allow it, but other materials are much more rare than the Edict would suggest. A crucial discrepancy between chapter 16 and chapter 13 is that the latter emphasises the material of the objects rather than their function, while chapter 16 specified their function and use and never mentioned their material. We now turn to the question of how to translate κνήστρον, then discuss the different materials mentioned, and finally consider how these items may fit under the headline of the chapter.

The text regarding acus/κνήστρον in 13,8-10

The Latin text as preserved on the fragment from Aizanoi initially lists 4 acus osseas, i.e. made of bone, that were used by women (muliebres); the price is unfortunately lost. The next line gives acus testudines, i.e. made of tortoise shell, and lists a price for one piece, but again the price is lost. The final line gives acus sucinea, i.e. made of amber, and again indicates one piece and a price that is not preserved. The Greek term for amber, σούκινος, is a Latin loanword.45

The exact reading of the Greek texts regarding lines 13,8-9 is, however, problematic. Both Greek fragments of the chapter (Aedeps. and Ger. II) are unfortunately badly preserved, but from what can be read and conjectured, the Greek texts differ slightly from the Latin. For line 13,8 in the Aidepsos fragment, Doyle reads46 κνῆστρον ὀστάιν[ον, for ὀστέινον(?), tentatively translating it as “a scraper made of bone or with a bone handle?”. Line 13,10 mentions a κνήστρον σούκινον, but the price is lost. Doyle translates this line as “an amber scraper or a scraper with amber handle?”. Line 13,10 mentions a κνήστρον σούκινον, but the price is lost. Doyle translates this line as “an amber scraper or a scraper with amber handle?”. It is noteworthy that the diminutive form κνήστριον published by Lauffer only appears in the last line related to amber, and has no equivalent in the Latin text that only speaks of acus, not acucula.47

The diminutive form κνήστριον is, however, found in both lines 13,9 and 13,10 in the Geronthrai
fragment. A further problem is also posed by the adjectives in this fragment. Line 8 is badly preserved and the first edition was erroneous. As it turned out, the suggestion of Doyle proved to be right (later confirmed by Lauffer (app. crit.)): ‘κνηστρόν ὀστάιν[ον, for ὀστέινον(?)]’, since it does in fact read ὀστέινον, followed by γυναικεῖον so it matches the muliebres in the Latin text, and gives a price of 12 denarii, again like the Latin text, but does not provide the information that the price is for 4 pieces. Lines 9 and 10 pose another major problem: they have been read as ‘κνήστριον ἱχθύων’, translated as fish scraper, and as ‘κνήστριον σκυτῶν’, translated as leather scraper.48 These interpretations were questioned by Bingen who read the respective terms as χελώ[ινον and σούκινον].49 It is, however, noteworthy that both tools are specified as smaller than the bone item in the Geronthrai fragment, but until this is re-edited, no detailed discussion of terms can rely on it. Our argument will thus focus on the fragments from Aidepsos and Aizanoi.

κνήστρον and its variants

We now proceed to the question of how to interpret the Greek name for the tool that matches the Latin acus: the κνήστρον that is attested in both Greek fragments of chapter 13 and thus cannot be dismissed as a simple mistake of either a modern reading of the fragments, or an individual misunderstanding on the part of the translator or engraver. As stated above, the root κνη- signifies to scrape, scratch, grate or itch. The mention of these ‘scratchers’ in chapter 13 rather than under the ‘needles’ in chapter 16 also suggests that they should be understood as distinct from the βελόνα. Modern scholarship seems still unaware of this issue, for example, Giaccherò translates acus with ‘ago’ (needle) and does not discuss the problems of the Greek term. Crawford and Reynolds, on the other hand, consistently translate acus in lines 13,8-10 as pins (bone-pins for women/tortoise-shell pins/amber-pins). They state that: “the nature of the materials quoted suggest that the acus were ladies’ hair-pins, not another type of weaving implement. They may have been made of a single piece of bone, tortoise-shell or amber; alternatively, they may have had wooden or bone shafts with ornamental heads (...).”50 As noted above, Doyle suggested that they may have been handles.51 Still, the question of how the Latin and the Greek term can be matched terminologically remains unanswered. There are two main hypotheses in trying to determine the potential meaning of the Greek word and the tool that it designated:

1. to assume that it is closely related to textiles since it is listed under the heading of “pin-beaters for weavers” and the other items mentioned in this chapter are also textile-related52

2. to assume that it is part of the female sphere since it is characterized as such and follows the item “comb for women”, and that the Latin acus might give an idea about its shape which was, presumably, a sort of pin.

Let us begin by considering the first hypothesis. Beekes53 (following Chantraine) connects κνήστρον to κνῆσσον (translated by Beekes as ‘scratcher’) which is found in an inscription from Delos, also in a textile context;54 there is also the Latin loanword

49. Cf. also Bingen 1965, 176, n.5: “De même, dans le texte, où aux articles 13 9 et 10 (l. 14 et 15 de la 1ère colonne), il ne peut être question de lire ni κνήστρον [ἰ]χθύων, ni κνήστρον σκυτῶν, qui ont reçu les honneurs suprêmes du Liddell-Scott-Jones. Je proposerais sous toute réserve d’après ma copie sur place et mon estampage : κνήστρον χελώ[ινον et κνήστρον σούκινον, grattoir d’écaille et grattoir d’ambre. Ce qui me ferait suggérer que le OCT du mystérieux article 13 8 appartient sans doute à un κνῆσσον Λ.Α ὀστ[είνον].”
52. We cannot a priori assume that acus and κνήστρον (vel sim.) can be regarded as textile tools (but neither can we exclude it) since their characterization as muliebres/γυναικεῖον might be their main distinguishing element.
54. ID 1444Aa37: “ἐν τοίς κεφαλίωσι κηροδόνας; τρέξσ.”. Cf. also an inscription from Attica, mentioning a silver κνηστρίς in a temple inventory, interpreted by the editors as a variant of κνηστρίον IG II 4511, 9: κνηστρίας ἄργυρο[ν – – – – ] (=IG II/III 4511).
φηστρίόν as hairpin

Joseph Maurer treated pins and needles in an article in 1951, where he argued that pins and needles were one and the same to the Greeks and Romans, and that the nouns βελόνη, ῥαφίς, ἄκος, ἀκουλή, ἀκολὴ signified a needle, when the object had an eye for a thread, and a pin when it had a knob, small globe, or other ornamental termination.58 We would argue the contrary, that Greek could distinguish between the senses of Latin acus by the use of two terms.

In 2008, Janet Stephens, a professional hairdresser and researcher into the hairstyles of the Greeks and Romans, reconsidered the nature of Roman hairpins and arrived at some differing functions for hairpins and needles that have implications for interpreting the Edict.59 She argues that commentators on the techniques of Roman hairdressing demonstrate modern biases that lead to anachronistic speculation, based on a faulty understanding of the technical possibilities of the tools available to Roman hairdressers. According to Stephens, the so-called single prong hairpin (which she terms ‘hair bodkin’) cannot have been used in many contexts and she proposes that Roman women used sewing-needles (with eyes) to stitch together the elements of a hair-style (e.g. rows of plaits) when they were no longer using vittae60 – linen or wool ribbons used to tie the hair together when arranging it – perhaps around 50 BC.61 Stephens carefully defines the terms of ancient Roman (and modern) hairdressing, noting correctly that the Latin acus is often used to define – in her opinion – three similarly-shaped but distinctly different hairdressing tools: namely the ‘hair bodkin’,62 the ‘needle-and-thread’,63 and the

56. Chantraine 2009, 525 (κνηστρίον as read by Lauffer).
58. Maurer 1951, 161.
60. She adduces Isid. Etym. 19.30.4; Ov. Am. 3.6.56,Ars. Am. 1.31, Met. 1.477, Pont. 3.351, Rem. Am. 386; Pl. Mil. 792; Prop. 4.11.34; Tib. 1.6.67; Val. Max. 5.2.1; Verg. Aen. 7.403. According to Stephens (2008, 111, n.5) the vittae can be seen in both Etruscan sculpture and the Hellenistic art of Southern Italy and the nodus hairstyle epitomised by Livia was presumably the most influential in promoting hair-sewing, after which the vittae became associated primarily with ceremonial (i.e. bridal) and hieratic (i.e. Vestal) hairstyle.
62. Stephens 2008, 112; their basic design being similar to modern knitting needles and made in various lengths; they are mentioned in ancient sources as made of gold and silver and decorated with precious stones (cf. Ulpian. Dig. 34.2.25.10: acus cum margarita, quam mulieres habere solent “acus set with pearls which women are accustomed to have”), but most surviving Roman hair bodkins are made from bone. Also termed discerniculum, cf. Varro LL 5.29.129.
63. Needle-and-thread: Stephens defines a ‘needle’ as a rod-shaped object “pointed on one or both ends and drilled through with one or more small, circular or elongated holes (eyes)”, designed to carry the thread. Furthermore, a needle must, by Stephens’ definition, “have a hole meant to carry thread, and it cannot have an enlarged head meant to inhibit its passage through the material to be sewn”. This does not accord with current archaeological evidence, where bone sewing needles with enlarged heads have been found (E. Andersson Strand, pers. comm.).
‘curling iron’.\(^{64}\) According to Stephens, the definition in Festus, *acus dicitur, qua sarcinatrix vel etiam ornatrix utitur *“acus refers to the tool used by the cloth-mender as well as the hairdresser”,\(^{65}\) indicates that ‘sewing needle’ is the “default definition of the unmodified noun *acus*.\(^{66}\) Thus, this is another example of textile technology used in a non-textile craft. In both textile craft and hairdressing, a needle with an eye is used for the same function (sewing).

The hair bodkin can have an enlarged (and decorative) head in order to maintain adequate isometric tension in the hairstyle.\(^{67}\) They could also add glamour to finished hairstyles, if they were made of precious metals, gems, ivory, or bone; and the tortoise shell and amber mentioned in the Edict could very well denote decorative heads on such hair bodkins.

To return to the problem of κνήστρον: Stephens makes the pertinent and rarely (never?) observed comment that the hair bodkin would probably also have been used as a “genteel head-scratcher, which could reach deep into elaborate styles where fingers could not reach”, conforming to the statement of Festus: *cnasonas acus quibus mulieres caput scalpunt*.\(^{68}\) As stated above, the *cnasonas* of Festus reflect the same root as κνήστρον. We also have evidence that the root *kna-/*kne-* could be related to a pin-shaped object that was driven into something and that was called a κνηστίς.\(^{69}\) The *acus* of the Edict translated by κνήστρον makes perfect sense in comparison to the κνηστίς mentioned in a passage of Plutarch and to a gloss in Hesychius:


Both texts confirm that a κνηστίς or κναστήριον is an object that was ‘driven into something’, in the case of Plutarch’s text, into the hair. It is noteworthy that Hesychius speaks of a Laconian word, and that the inscription from Geronthrai is also from Lacedaemon, while Aidepsos is situated on Euboia where one could perhaps rather expect an Ionian term. Regardless of any potential Laconian basis for the term, it seems safe to claim that ‘pin’ would be an appropriate translation both for Plutarch and Hesychius, and that the κνήστρον in the Edict is etymologically related and might refer to pins, which can also be used as scratchers.

If we accept that one of the functions of the κνήστρον in chapter 13 could be as a hairpin (bodkin) which could also act as a scratcher, then we need also to add this to the functionality of the Latin *acus*. Even if in chapter 16 the use of *acus* and its translation as “needle” (matching Greek βελόνη) in the modern sense seems to be justified, we have to be aware that there can also be other possibilities of translation and use of the word. The *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (s.v.) proposes the following distinctions in the term *acus* (noting that it is equivalent to Greek ραφις\(^{70}\) and βελόνη):\(^{71}\)

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68. Stephens 2008, 117, Festus 52.17 (Müller).

69. The term κνηστίς (note the accent) denotes a cheese-grater.

70. ραφις does not occur in the Edict, but so does the adjective ραφική in 16,12a, qualifying βελόνη, and translating sartoria, cf. below. The root is also attested in ράπτης/ὑποραφή/ὑπόραψις (7,48-51).

These all have in common that they are ‘sharp’ or pointed instruments. Acus are also used for putting up and ornamenting the hair. The problem of understanding the semantic field is perhaps influenced by/connected to the modern sense of the term ‘needle’ which indicates a very sharp and pointed pin-like metal object.

**Materiality of the acus and archaeological finds**

That our “pins” in chapter 13 are of a different quality than the “needles” in chapter 16 might also be confirmed by the materials they are made of. With the exception of tortoise-shell objects (which might not be preserved) we have archaeological finds of pin-shaped objects made of bone and of amber.

**Evidence of bone pins**

The “bone pins for women” in chapter 13 might find a match in the archaeological evidence. A set of bone pins comes from the Roman settlement at Magdalensberg in Austria.72 The objects have rounded and/or decorated heads and are interpreted as spindles and distaffs and show, according to the excavators, signs of use. These objects are sometimes elaborately decorated. One could well assume that they might have been multifunctional: perhaps used by women as a decorative item, e.g. as hairpins, and pins that held garments together.

Finally, a bone pin might also have been good for working with soft threads and tapestry weaving since the smooth surface does not damage the thread. As Eva Andersson Strand points out, bone needles do not leave a hole in certain types of woollen fabrics when used.73 Thus the “bone pins for women” might indeed refer both to pins used by women in textile work (spindles, distaffs, spools and pin-beaters) or decorative items like hairpins, or pins that held clothing in place. In the so-called Tomb of the Embroideress, dating to the late 5th–7th century, a wonderful array of textile tools was found. These include weaver’s combs, spindles with whorls and spun thread attached and a series of spools with linen thread still wound round them, and some similar shaped ‘pins’ which are wooden and ivory rods tentatively identified as weaving implements, but also perhaps as styloi.74

**Amber**

Archaeological evidence may also attest to the acus sucinea, amber pin. We know amber distaffs (or rather distaffs that were made of metal and had amber elements) from Etruscan tombs in Verrucchio. Amber spindle whorls were found in Magdalensberg,75 and Pliny notes the use of such whorls in Syria.76

While there are examples of amber tools, they are dated much earlier than the Edict,77 however, they do attest to the fact that there were pin-shaped textile tools made of amber. Whether the amber pins were merely status symbols that were put into the graves, or whether they were used in life, remains a matter of dispute. Their practical use would depend on the task since amber is a very soft material (that would on the other hand also be very gentle with fine textile fibres). This might actually match the characterization of the amber acus as “small” (or: more delicate)

72. Gostenčnik 2010, 76. See also Trinkl 2007, 81-86, for a discussion of textile tools from Roman Imperial times in Ephesus, including bone needles (fig. 13.4) and finely decorated bone distaffs (fig. 13.7).
73. Eva Andersson Strand, pers. comm.
75. Gostenčnik 2010, 73.
76. Plin. *NH* 37, 11, 37.
77. See the Etruscan amber spindle or distaff from Grave 43, Verrucchio, in Ræder Knudsen 2007, 110, fig. 17.14.
in both of the Greek fragments, since a small amber pin for e.g. tapestry weaving might have worked well, but a longer tool fully made of amber might have been too soft and fragile for heavier work like sewing or spinning (not to mention the price for such a piece — unfortunately none of the fragments of the Edict have preserved any numbers regarding amber so far).

**Tortoise shell**

Unfortunately we do not know of any archaeologically attested pin-like items made of tortoise shell, but as already stated, this may also be due to the preservation conditions in the Mediterranean areas where fragments of the Edict were found. The use of the tortoise shell pins might have resembled that for amber (also because these acus are mentioned in the diminutive in the Greek texts), since the material seems equally unsuitable for the heavier tasks of textile production. But they might have worked as smaller decorative items like hairpins that might as well have been a specifically female form of adornment.

**Gold**

Precious metals are not listed among the materials in the Edict, but it should be mentioned that according to literature golden acus were used as adornment for the hair. Thus a certain extravagance in hairpins like amber or tortoise shell ones (or elaborate bone pins) fits well into the historical context.

**Wood**

The chapters discussed here refer to at least two types of wood: boxwood that seems to have been a kind of standard material for textile tools and that was used both for pin-beaters and other textile tools, and other types of wood. As with pin-beaters, spindles are subdivided into those of boxwood and those of other kinds of wood, those of boxwood being three denarii cheaper, i.e. 12 den. The same varieties in wood are repeated regarding combs, where we have two items that are explicitly qualified as weaving combs in Latin (pectinem textorum; only the second one is so termed in Greek: κτένα ἰς πήνην). The last variety is a comb, made of boxwood, which is termed muliebren. We cannot be sure whether this last item is in fact a textile tool. It may also simply be the first item in a list of female accessories, which brings us to another interpretation of lines 7-10 in chapter 13 of the Edict.

‘muliebris’

Concerning the group specified by the adjective muliebris that is used for pecten and acus made of bone (osseas), it is doubtful whether they were used as textile tools. The subsequent acus made of tortoise shell and of amber are not specified as muliebris respectively, but they could well fit into the category anyway, since the Edict often lists items of the same kind or different qualities in subsequent lines. An amber or tortoise shell acus could presumably well be conceived of as a hairpin (especially since, like a bone pin, it could be worked very smoothly and thus would not hurt the scalp), and the material might also have been specifically connected with female adornment like in the case of amber, and thus accrue the qualification γυναικεῖα.

The prices of textile tools

The price of the textile tools from the most expensive to the cheapest are shown in Table 1. The pricing of the different items in the Edict is not easy to follow. This is to a large degree due to problems with the preservation of the inscriptions.

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79. See Stauffer 2008, 12, fig. 4, for late antique wooden acus with yarn still wound around them.
80. Whorls are in both cases sold with the spindle (13, 5; 6).
82. The qualification γυναικεῖα recurs in three further sections of the Edict: 7,54; 9,21; 13,8. γυναικεῖα cf. 13,7.
83. The materials of the needles in chapter 16 are left unspecified, the only possible exception being sufiscalatoria in line 12a which may denote reed. However, it seems cogent, judging from the uses specified in the text itself, to strictly relate them to sewing, which might, of course, also have implications for the material they were made from.

84. I.e. 4 for 12 den.

85. I.e. 9.

86. Chapter 12,29a. What is the distinction between promisquae (materiae) and alterius (materiae)? It is noteworthy that not only is this distinguished in the Latin fragment, but also both Greek fragments that attest these lines (Aidepsos and Geronthrai) are uniform in using ἐκ διαφόρων ξύλων (of different types of wood) in lines 13,2 and 13,4, but ἐξ ἑτέρων ξύλων (of other types of wood) in line 13,6.

As Crawford and Reynolds note: “The formula numero I, II etc. (lines 2, 8, 785, 10 [in the Latin version of chapter 13]) is reproduced in the Greek as simple α’ and β’ in lines 1a and 2, but is missed out elsewhere.” Crawford and Reynolds’ statement that “the pricing policy is hard to interpret” also stems from the fact that they assume certain qualities of material to be better than others, without the text corroborating it. This is the case, for example, for boxwood. Crawford and Reynolds state: “The best sort of radius, in boxwood, cost 14 denarii each; but in ordinary wood they cost 30 denarii for 2, or 15 denarii each! Similarly, a weaver’s comb of boxwood was cheaper than a comb of ordinary wood (lines 3 and 4) and a boxwood spindle was cheaper than its ordinary wood counterpart (lines 5 and 6).” To explain the price differences of the supposedly cheaper “other wood”, they come to the conclusion: “It may be that the boxwood tools were smaller than those for everyday use.” They do not take into consideration that boxwood might have been the cheaper material as opposed, for example, to walnut wood, which is mentioned for beds in the Edict.86 Crawford and Reynold’s criticisms of the Greek version of the prices for pins in chapter 13, however, are justified. In the Latin fragment the numbers of pins that cost a certain price (that is unfortunately lost) are indicated (4 bone pins, and 1 tortoise shell

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Table 1. Prices of textile tools from the Edictum Diocletiani

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Specification</th>
<th>Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 den. each</td>
<td>Pin-beater</td>
<td>Other wood</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 den.</td>
<td>Spindle</td>
<td>Other wood</td>
<td>Including whorl</td>
<td>13,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 den.</td>
<td>Pin-beater</td>
<td>Boxwood</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>13,1a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 den.</td>
<td>Comb</td>
<td>Other wood</td>
<td>For weaving</td>
<td>13,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 den.</td>
<td>Comb</td>
<td>Boxwood</td>
<td>Women’s</td>
<td>13,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 den.</td>
<td>Comb</td>
<td>Boxwood</td>
<td>For weaving</td>
<td>13,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 den.</td>
<td>Spindle</td>
<td>Boxwood</td>
<td>Incl. whorl</td>
<td>13,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 den.</td>
<td>Pin?</td>
<td>Tortoise shell</td>
<td>Small (maybe also women’s item)</td>
<td>13,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 den. each</td>
<td>Pin?</td>
<td>Bone</td>
<td>Women’s item</td>
<td>13,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No price</td>
<td>Pin?</td>
<td>Amber</td>
<td>Small (maybe also women’s item)</td>
<td>13,10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 den.</td>
<td>Needle</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>sartoria sive subfiscalatoria suptilissimae/ ῥαφικὴ ἱσχυοτάτη</td>
<td>16,12a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 den.</td>
<td>Needle</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Second grade</td>
<td>16,13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 den.</td>
<td>Needle</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>ciliciaria sive sagmaria/σακκοράφη ἢτοι σαγματικῆ</td>
<td>16,14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and amber pin respectively). The Greek texts do not mention the numbers of items, only the price: 12 denarii for 4 bone pins, i.e. 3 denarii for each, and 4 denarii for one tortoise pin. But, as Reynolds and Crawford observe: “one would expect a tortoise-shell acus to cost more, not less, than one of bone [NB: that was actually cheaper, but only when one knows that the bone pins came as a set of 4]!”

With regard to the prices listed in chapter 13 in the fragment from Aidepsos, Doyle notes that the price listed in 13,2, for two κερκίδες, is α…ʹ (1) in this fragment, but that the price λ’ (30) of the Geronthrai fragment makes better sense; the price in line 13,4 for combs of wood other than boxwood is η’ (8) in Aidepsos, but ιδ’ (14) in Geronthrai; in 13,6, referring to spindles with spools made of wood other than boxwood, he states that again the Aidepsos price, α’ (1), makes no sense, referring to Geronthrai, which has ιε’ (15); in 13,7 the Aidepsos price for a small comb for women made of boxwood is β’ (2), while Geronthrai has ιδ’ (14); in 13,9, referring to the tortoise shell pin, Doyle states that the price δ’ (4) is too low to be credible (also noting that Mommsen & Blümner read κνῆστρον ἰχθύων [i.e. in the very same Geronthrai fragment]).

It should, moreover, be noted that if we leave aside the amber and tortoise shell acus whose price cannot be established with any certainty, at least the bone acus are approximately equal in price to the needles mentioned in chapter 16. As already stated, the bone acus cost 3 denarii each and they are sold in sets of 4. This suggests that they are either used in larger numbers or that they are more likely to wear and get disposed of or be lost, a point which is corroborated by the archaeological evidence of bone pins with traces of use. They might have been used, for example, for tapestry weaving, or spinning. The needles in chapter 16 range from 4 denarii for a very fine sewing needle (16,12a) to 2 denarii apiece for so-called second grade needles (16,13), and 2 denarii apiece for needles for the sewing of coarser items such as sacks and packsaddles (16,14), necessitating a much stronger needle. Their material is not mentioned, but archaeological finds seem to indicate that they were most likely made of metal.

The most expensive items are pin-beaters, spindles and combs, which might have been related due to their size. The (probably also smaller) bone and tortoise-shell pins come at the end of the list. We have to take into consideration that certain kinds of wood may have been much more precious than commonly assumed in an Empire that spanned desert regions where wood was extremely scarce, but needed for tools of indispensable everyday tasks like textile production.

### Conclusion and further perspectives

A survey of the textile tools in chapters 16 and 13 of the Edict has yielded the following with regard to terminology: headlines do not always mirror the entirety of items listed below them, as already noted by Doyle. While chapter 16 exclusively deals with needles, as it states in its headline, chapter 13 does not only comprise the pin-beaters of the headline, but goes on to other textile tools and even, in lines 7-10, to items that may be only vaguely related to the above-mentioned tools, because they were made in the same or similar workshops. The texts mention different kinds of textile tools, of which the term acus posed the biggest challenge because it was translated differently in the two chapters treated here. In chapter 16 of the Edict where Latin acus is translated into Greek as βελόνη, these tools are:

- qualified by function and by quality
- presumably monofunctional
- presumably referring to a pointed (metal?) object with an eye that would fit the definition of a modern "needle"

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87. It is a problem that the prices here are all supplemented from the Greek; there are no prices attested in the Latin fragment.


89. Doyle 1976, 91.

90. They are presumably still fine needles, as they follow immediately after line 16,12a.
In chapter 13 of the Edict where Latin *acus* is translated into Greek as κνῆστρον, these tools are:
- qualified by material that varies considerably, even in textile tools
- presumably multifunctional (not merely pin-beaters or hairpins etc.)
- presumably pointed objects without an eye.
- not to be interpreted as scrapers, but rather as scratchers

The term *acus* in the Edict thus denotes two distinct objects:
- when it corresponds to Greek βελόνη, it can be interpreted as a ‘needle’ in the modern sense, *i.e.* as a pointed pin-like tool made of metal, maybe even with an eye
- when it is translated into Greek as κνῆστρον, it can be interpreted as a ‘pin’ that might have served different functions depending on its actual use, ranging from female hair adornment, to spindles, distaffs and maybe even tapestry spools.

Looking into texts on the uses of needles, we can state that an *acus* in the sense of Greek βελόνη was used for:
- *a*) sewing and stitching (even repair), and as a needle for a tailor, as indicated by the adjectives in chapter 16 itself; *b*) decorating, probably tapestry, taquété and maybe even embroidery, though the latter technique was much scarcer in antiquity than the first two mentioned.91

There is one passage in the Edict (7,53) where the use of an *acus*/βελόνη is attested to ornate garments, in this case a centuclum, a blanket. The Latin text reads: 
[C]entuclum primum ornamentum ab acu ponderis supra script[ī], the Greek text: κέντουκλον πρωτεῖον κεκοσμημένον ἀπὸ βελόνης λ(ιτρῶν) γʹ. The crucial terms are ornatus ab acu/κεκοσμημένον ἀπὸ βελόνης. If the Greek term βελόνη is related to a sharper, needle-like tool as in chapter 16, the technique referred to here might very well have been embroidery and not tapestry weaving. Of course, this assumption rests on a consistent use of βελόνη.

The *acus* in the sense of a pin was probably, if used as a textile tool, rather a spool both for tapestry and taquété weaves (in lieu of a “shuttle”).92 Famous passages for tapestry weaving use the terms acu pingere,93 *e.g.* Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* where he tells the story of the famous weaver Arachne, who dared to enter into a weaving contest with the goddess Minerva and was turned into a spider:

\[
\text{Nec factas solum vestes, spectare iuvabat} \\
/ \text{tum quoque cum fierent (tantus decor adfuit arti), / sive rudem primos lanam glomerabat in orbis, / seu digitis subigebat opus repetitque longo / vellera mollibat nebulas aequantia tractu, / sive levi terr tem versabant pollice fusum, / seu pingebat acu: scires a Pallade doctam.} \\
(\text{Met. 6, 17-23})
\]

“And it was a pleasure not alone to see her finished work, but to watch her as she worked; so graceful and deft was she. Whether she was winding the rough yarn into a new ball, or shaping the stuff with her fingers, reaching back to the distaff for more wool, fleecy as a cloud, to draw into long soft threads, or giving a twist with practised thumb to the graceful spindle, or to paint with her *acus*: you could know that Pallas had taught her.”

This technique is also employed by the *plumarii*, interpreted as tapestry weavers by Wild and Droß-Krüpe.94 Lucan describes Cleopatra’s splendid palace furnishings as a backdrop to the seduction of Caesar, but does not mention which tools were used to create the stunning effects in the fabric:

\[
\text{strata micant, Tyrio quorum pars maxima} \\
/ \text{fuco / cocta diu virus non uno duxit aeno, /}
\]

91. See also Droß-Krüpe & Paetz gen. Schieck 2014 on terms for and the rare examples of embroidery in antiquity.
93. See also Droß-Krüpe & Paetz gen. Schieck 2014.
The coverlets were shining bright, most had long been steeped in Tyrian dye and took their hue from repeated soakings, while others were decorated in the “feather-technique” with bright gold(thread), and others blazed with scarlet, as the Egyptian manner is of mingling threads in the web.

The question arises as to why the Latin text used only a single seemingly indistinct term like acus. Future studies may reveal whether we can determine a chronological development in the terminology of acus, and whether we are dealing with a development that was confined to certain areas and only spread because the term was used in an imperial inscription.

Finally, the question of regional linguistic and functional variations of terms in the Edict arises. The Latin texts seemed quite standardized, at least in the fragments discussed, and can with a good degree of probability be traced back to a single document issued by a central imperial authority. The Greek versions, however, might have been subjected to several iterations and deviations, depending on the ability of copyists and engravers who might have misread and misinterpreted the template. Last, but not least, it would be interesting to look further into the question of how language and terminology correspond to the multifunctionality of textile tools in different regions and epochs.

Bibliography


