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Traditions of Magic in Late Antiquity

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Traditions of Magic



in Late Antiquity

Traditions of Magic in Late Antiquity

Curator: Gideon Bohak

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Traditions of Magic in Late Antiquity

Acknowledgments

The origins of this exhibition lie in my wish to present to students in my survey course, Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World (Winter, 1996), some of the instruments of late antique magic in the University of Michigan's extensive collections. In preparing the exhibition, however, I had not only my students' needs in mind, but also those of any non-specialist who would find ancient magical practices intriguing and would want to know more about them.

In the course of my work on the exhibition and the catalogue I have incurred many debts. My deepest gratitude goes to Robin Meador-Woodruff, at the Kelsey Museum, without whose constant help and support in matters big and small this exhibition would not have been possible. I am also much indebted to James Fox, of the Special Collections Library, for his support and sound advice at every stage of the way, and to Traianos Gagos for his unstinting help in papyrological matters. I would also like to thank Shannon Zachary and Leyla Lau-Lamb who mounted the papyri, Nathan Garcia, Bill Wood, and Fred Anderegg, who painstakingly photographed the Kelsey Museum artifacts, Paul Jaronski, who photographed the papyri, and Veronica Woolridge and Caroline Duroselle-Melish who helped prepare the catalogue and mount the exhibition. Paul Mirecki, Joseph Naveh, Robert Ritner, Timothy La Vallee, and especially Terry Wilfong, have rendered me much useful advice in the preparation of this catalogue. While they have saved me from many pitfalls, whatever errors may remain are entirely my own.

Gideon Bohak
The Michigan Society of Fellows and
Department of Classical Studies
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INTRODUCTION

"Magic," as modern scholars have grudgingly learned to admit, is a very elusive category. No definition of "magic" has ever found universal acceptance, and countless attempts to separate it from "religion" on the one hand and "science" on the other have borne few, if any, fruits. The problem lies, to a large extent, in that what one society may label "magic," another would label "religion," and another "science," so that by choosing one label we are implicitly choosing sides whenever conflicting definitions of magic compete with each other, or run the risk of imposing our own categories upon societies in which these categories would have made no sense.

Given these difficulties, the present exhibition will not attempt any definition of ancient magic. Its goal is much more modest — merely to present some of the materials in the University of Michigan's collections which might prove useful in any discussion of magic and its practitioners in the Mediterranean basin and the Near East from the 1st to the 7th centuries A.D., a period which saw the magical traditions of several different cultures coalesce and merge into an unprecedented form of international, and even multicultural magical praxis, with its own rituals, symbols, and words of power. Presenting the available evidence, and pointing to some of the interrelations between different types of evidence and to the possible origins of some of the motifs and practices embedded in it, are only first steps on the road to understanding, but crucial steps nonetheless. Moreover, the fact that until quite recently this aspect of that civilization which we often call Greco-Roman has received far less attention than it deserves renders such an exhibition even more significant. Finally, the study of ancient magic can teach us much not only about ancient society, but about human nature and human social structures in general, especially as they relate to the generation, accumulation, and transmission of knowledge about the powers above and the powers below. Magic, after all, is just another manifestation of the innate human desire for control — to control our natural environment, to control our social world, and eventually to control our own destiny. The techniques may have changed over the last fifteen centuries, but the goals remain the same.

The current exhibition is divided into three sections: one deals with manuals of magical practices (Cases 1 and 2), another presents various protective devices (Cases 3, 4, and 5), and the third presents some of the more aggressive uses of ancient magic (Case 6). The wall

cases display enlarged photographs of some of the items, allowing a closer examination of even the smallest details.

The present catalogue contains translations of most items, accompanied by brief comments and notes. It must be stressed, however, that both translations and notes are tentative — the texts and images often defy interpretation, and much remains unknown. If the present exhibition will contribute to a growing interest in, and a closer study of these intriguing sources, it will have achieved its goal.

CASES 1 & 2 RECIPE-BOOKS

The practice of ancient magic was quite like that of modern cooking. Just as today, while anyone can cook but only some can cook well, anyone in the ancient world could make a simple amulet or castigate a wayward demon, but only a few specialized in such activities and achieved superior results. And, just like modern cooks, such ancient practitioners had their own private note-books, where their painstakingly accumulated secrets were preserved — collections of recipes, hints, notes, and ideas, whether borrowed or adapted from others or independently developed. Each recipe was tested, improved upon, and in some cases passed on to clients, colleagues, disciples, or successors. Being the main vehicle for the transmission of magical lore, such books often were the target of suppression, especially, but not exclusively, by Christians (cf. Acts 19:19). Fortunately, some of these collections have survived. Since these were normally written on papyrus, a perishable organic material, the specimens which did survive all come from the dry sands of Egypt, and are written either in Greek or in Egyptian. However, similar recipe-books — in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Arabic — were found in the Cairo Genizah (the used-paper store-room of a medieval synagogue in Cairo, Egypt), and numerous medieval manuscripts — in Greek, Latin, Arabic, and many other languages — attest to the vitality of such recipe-books in various forms throughout the Middle Ages.

Being in large part the working-manuals of individual practitioners, such collections vary greatly in length and quality — from an individual recipe scribbled upon a small slip of papyrus torn off a previously used scroll, to large anthologies with dozens of recipes, meticulously copied and lavishly annotated. Moreover, because they were meant for their owners' private use, they often contain such brief

instructions as “(repeat this) three times,” or an “etc.,” when only a few words of a well-known (to the owner, that is) invocation are written down. Such abbreviated notes, and the lack of a systematic ordering of the spells — not to mention a preface or an index — would have made such a recipe book hard to use for anyone who was not intimately familiar with its contents. In rare cases, the recipes were written in a special cipher, apparently invented by one practitioner for that specific purpose, in which case no outsider could make any use of the encoded recipes.

Unfortunately, recipe books never mention their owners' names, though in some cases the identity of the owner can be deduced, at least roughly, from the papyrus' provenance. In rare cases, the book's owner noted where a specific recipe came from, and such notes as “This is a recipe which a physician in the Oxyrhynchite nome gave me” (PDM xiv. 528), or “I have heard from a certain man of Herakleopolis that...” (PGM V.372), can teach us something about the lines of transmission of the recipes themselves. In one case, we even have a practitioner's brief memo to himself (Suppl. Mag. I, 5): “The amulet against tonsillitis for the gold plate — write it on a slip of papyrus, word for word, and send it to Sarmates,” another indication of how such recipes were disseminated.

1. PMich 3, 154 (=inv. 7) = PGM LXX

Egypt

3rd or 4th century A.D.

Papyrus

Text: ... name ... a favor charm, a charm to dissolve a spell, an amulet, and a victory charm: “aa emptôkom basum, protect me.”

Charm of Hekate Ereschigal against fear of punishment: If she comes forth, let her say: “I am Ereschigal,” holding her thumbs, and not even one evil can befall her. But if she comes close to you, hold your right heel and say: “Ereschigal, virgin, dog, serpent, wreath, key, herald's wand, golden is the sandal of the Lady of Tartaros,” and you will prevail upon her.

“Askei kataski erôn oreôn iôr mega semnuêr bauï,” (three times), “Phobantia, remember, I have been initiated, and I went down into the chamber of the Dactyls, and I saw the other things down below, virgin, dog,” etc. Say it at the crossroads, and turn around and flee, because it is at those places that she appears. Say it late at night, about what you wish, and it will reveal it in your sleep; and if you are led away to death, say these things while scattering seeds of sesame, and it will save you.

“Phorba phorba breimô azziehua.” Take bran of first quality and

sandalwood and vinegar of the sharpest sort and mold cakes. And write his name upon them, and so hide them, saying into the light the name of Hekate, and “Take away his sleep from so-and-so,” and he will be sleepless and worried.

Against fear and to dissolve spells: Say, ...

A fragment of a larger collection of Greek recipes, whose original scope cannot be determined (note the broken column on the right). The recipes are separated by short horizontal strokes — known in Greek as “paragraphoi,” whence our “paragraph” — at the beginning (left) of the column. The first recipe is a short, all-purpose spell; the second offers protection against Hekate, a chthonian goddess who haunted crossroads and frightened passers-by; the third invokes Hekate's help for divination and against a death penalty (?!); the fourth invokes Hekate's help for aggressive purposes; the fifth is a counter-spell, to dissolve an enemy's spell against oneself. The whole collection is thematically organized around the figure of Hekate, here equated with the Babylonian goddess Ereschigal. Note the lack of distinction between “protective magic” — recipes 1,2,3, and 5 — and the “aggressive magic” of the fourth recipe. Clearly, Hekate's power was there to be used — whether it was used to protect oneself or to hurt another made little difference to the spells' owner.

Embedded in the invocations are *voces magicae*, “magic words,” (i.e., non-Greek words and names which were considered to possess great power). The origins of most *voces magicae* remain obscure, but in some cases they must have been no more than playful gibberish (i.e., the “*phorba phorba*” in the fourth spell, for which cf. no. 20), while other *voces* have been identified as Greek transliterations of Egyptian, Hebrew, and Aramaic words. Regardless of their individual origins, the fact that numerous such “words” reappear time and again, in sources of varied date and provenance, clearly demonstrates how such esoteric knowledge was passed from one practitioner to the next, and from one culture to another, to become an almost international “language” of ritual power. In the third spell, for example, we find the words “*askei kataski*,” part of a longer formula, of unknown provenance, known in antiquity as “Ephesian letters,” and found in numerous magical sources.

Bibliography: PMich; PGM; GMPT.

2. PMich inv. 534 = PGM LVII

Egypt
Papyrus

1st or 2nd century A.D.

Text: .. [...] *These are the words: "[Accomplish] for so-and-so all that I have written you [...], and I will leave [the ea]st and the west [where] they were established [formerly], and [I will preserve] the flesh of Typhon [always] and I will not break [the] bonds with which you bound Osi[ris], and I will not call those who have died a violent death but will leave them alone, and I will not pour out the cedar-oil, [but] will leave it alone, and I will save Ammon and not kill him, and I will [not?] scatter the limbs of Osiris, and I will hide you [from the] giants, ei ei ei ei [ei ei] ei ei choin [...]juth chennoneu aphouth anou aôth ei ei ei peooe ... ôb mannoz arannouth chal... aph koulix noê n... k bornath loubeine aouêr oueire itin lotol. Recite the secrets of the many-named goddess, Isis."*

[The] compulsive spell in order to show you whether the thing was done: Burn cypress with the strip of papyrus and say: "[Isis?], holy maiden, give me a sign of the things that are going to happen, reveal your holy veil, shake your black [...] and move the constellation of the bear, holy [...]ê pnoun gmoêrmendoumba great-named ia[kô] phthoêri, thermoêr, phthaô, great-named iothê [...]thouêr bôb helix, great-named iakô." When you have said this and at the same time have opened your hands, [...] of your hand from your breast. For you will see a star [...] by necessity, at which you are to look [intently], as it flashes [a picture] while rushing [toward you], so that you become god-stricken. Wear the above picture [for protection]. [...], it is a [...] of Kronos who encourages you. After you have received this sign, rejoice at [your fortune] and say once: "chaitrai." For when you have said it, she will cooperate with you [in whatever] you pray for. And say these words immediately, [lest] there occur a removal of the stars and your lucky day: "Tha... [ou]sir phnouch mellanchiô kerdô melibeu... kasp... nebenthtrichgarn... ô thraô sau trais trais basum; immediately (twice), accomplish this, do it within this hour. Very glorious Pronoia, make the one who yesterday was [un]lovable beautiful [to all], make...."

This fragment from a Greek recipe-book is written in a unique cryptic alphabet, probably intended to add to the spells' mystique and to prevent them from falling into the wrong hands. The preserved section contains a spell, and a ritual to verify its efficacy. Note how the practitioner threatens the god(s) and alludes to familiar events of Egyptian mythology, such as the scattering of the body of the good god

Osiris by Seth, the god of chaos and destruction. Such language was considered normal in Egyptian religious utterances, which is one reason why non-Egyptians viewed Egypt as the land of magic *par excellence*.

Bibl.: A.S. Hunt, "A Greek Cryptogram," Proceedings of the British Academy 25 (1929), pp. 4-10; PGM; GMPT.

3. PMich 3, 156 (=inv. 1463) = PGM LXIX

Egypt
Papyrus

2nd century A.D.

Text: "Phnounebeê (2 times), give me your strength, iô Abras[ax,] give me your strength, for I am Abrasax." Say it 7 times while holding your two thumbs.

This short Greek spell, written on a piece of scrap-papyrus, may have been copied out of a larger recipe book — presumably, one practitioner was sharing spells with another, or providing a spell for a client in need. We do not know what exactly the spell was meant to achieve, and this information probably was transmitted orally. The spell invokes Abrasax, a deity who appears often in every sphere of ancient magic (see nos. 21, 40, etc.), and whose origins remain obscure.

Bibl.: PMich; PGM; GMPT.

4. PMich 3, 155 (=inv. 193) = PGM LXXI

Egypt
Papyrus

2nd or 3rd century A.D.

Text: *An amulet: Great heavenly one who turns the universe, the God who is, Iaô, Lord, ruler of all, ablanathalaabla, grant, grant me favor. I shall have the name of the great God in this amulet; and protect me from every evil thing, me whom NN bore, NN begot.*

This individual Greek spell was to be written on an amulet (Gk. "phylaktêrion," whence our "phylactery"), and the client's identity would have been specified in place of the NN. It was an all-purpose amulet.

Note the appeal to Iaô (probably pronounced Iaho), the Jewish God, as well as the (misspelled) "*ablanathanalba*" palindrome (a word which reads the same forwards and backwards), one of the commonest *voces magicae* in late antique magic — see nos. 5, 7, and 40.

Bibl.: PMich; PGM; GMPT.

5. PMich inv. 593

Egypt
Papyrus

4th to 7th century A.D.

Text: *chararn larouth rourouth outh êthith chôchôô ...*
(2 pages of *voces magicae*).

Pages 18 and 19 of a well-preserved, 20-page codex (i.e., booklet, not scroll), written in Coptic. This codex is one of several Coptic magical texts which came from one "workshop" and provide an interesting example of one text being copied and used by several different practitioners — note, for example, the change on p. 19, line 3, with a different handwriting and different word-divisions. The text itself begins with a spell, including an invocation of God and of the seven archangels, after which the practitioner introduces himself as Seth, the son of Adam, and performs a purification ritual. Next comes a long list of instructions on the various ways to use the spell — to cure reptile bites, recite it over some water and have him drink it; to relieve a headache, recite it over oil and anoint his temples; to treat insomnia, recite it over water and wash the area around the patient's bed; to cure impotence, recite it over wine and have the patient drink it; to protect a house, recite it over water and sprinkle it throughout the house; to protect a ship at sea, write it on a clean papyrus sheet and tie it to the tip of the mast; to help a woman whose milk does not flow, recite it over something sweet and let her eat it when she comes out of the bath; etc.. Next comes a second spell, which begins with a prayer to God and quickly moves on to a long string of *voces magicae*, including the ones shown here, after which the spell, and the text as a whole, come to an end.

Although this is a Christian text, it incorporates many practices and motifs of pre-Christian magical traditions, such as the practitioner's self-presentation as someone else (in this case, Seth the son of the biblical Adam; cf. no. 3: "I am Abrasax"), as well as many of the older

voces magicae, such as the mutilated "*sesengenbarpharangês*" formula (for which see no. 40) at the second and third lines of p. 19, or the misspelled "*ablanathanalba*" (cf. no. 4, etc.) at the end of p. 19 and the beginning of p. 20. All the *voces magicae* on these two pages contain none of those Coptic letters which find no parallel in the Greek alphabet, and must have been copied literatim from a Greek original.

Bibl.: Paul Mirecki, "The Coptic Wizard's Hoard,"
Harvard Theological Review 87 (1994), pp. 435-460.

CASES 3 & 4 PROTECTIVE MAGIC Amulets and Gems

Amulets — protective devices worn around the body, or placed next to other objects, to protect them from various evils — were common in all societies and all periods of antiquity, and their use was accepted as normal by secular, religious, and "scientific" authorities (i.e., the physicians). Almost anything could serve as an amulet — a red string wound around the wrist, a stone carried in a small pouch around the neck, or a piece of iron tied to one's bed. Such amulets could be prepared at home, and called for no special knowledge or technical skills. Given their mundane nature, such amulets often are hard to identify — for when we come across a decorated ring, for example, how can we tell whether it was an amulet or merely a piece of jewelry?

The items presented in the next two cases, however, are of a very different nature. On a technical level of execution they range from the crude to the exquisite, but are mostly too elaborate to have been manufactured by mere amateurs. In their contents — both visual and textual — they disclose their manufacturers' access to the technical literature (such as the recipe-books in cases 1 and 2), and familiarity with the images, methods, and idiom of the other media of the "international" magic of late antiquity. Thus, one can fruitfully compare the instructions embedded in various recipe-books with the thousands of ancient amulets and gems which have come down to us. Unfortunately, such studies are hampered by the fact that such artifacts often surface in the antiquities markets rather than in documented archeological excavations, leaving us without any external indication of date and provenance, and with the additional difficulty of separating the authen-

tic pieces from modern fakes and forgeries. Given these difficulties, no attempt has been made to assign specific dates to most of the gems and amulets presented here.

6. PMich inv. 6666 = PGM CXXX

Egypt 3rd century A.D.
Papyrus

Text: [ia]rbath agrammê fiblô chnêmeô
[a e]e êêê iiii ooooo uuuuuu ôôôôôô[ô]
Lord Gods, heal Helena, daughter of [...]
from every illness and every shivering and [fever],
ephemeral, quotidian, tertian, quar[tan],
iarbath agrammê fiblô chnêmeô
aeïiouôduoiêea
eëïouôduoiêe
êïouôduoiê
iouôduoi
ouôduo
uôdu uuuuu
ôô

This papyrus amulet, written in Greek, was folded (note the horizontal cracks), rolled, and carried by Helena in a small metallic tube, to protect her from the onslaught of fever. For the "iarbath" formula compare no. 17, and for the vowel-triangles — a "squeezed" triangle on line 2 and a fully-developed one at the bottom — compare nos. 16 and 40. Note also the star and the lunar crescent on the right.

Bibl.: R.W. Daniel, "P. Mich. Inv. 6666: Magic," Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 50 (1983), pp. 147-154.

7. PMich inv. 3023a

Structure 113 I/Z, Karanis, Egypt 4th century A.D.
Papyrus

Text: . . this amulet, akrammajamari ablanaphanalbaa. . . axeeeeee
[characteres], Jesus, Jesus, great mind [. . .], Jesus, Jesus, . . . Michael,
Gabriel, . . . nuel.

A Coptic amulet, excavated in Karanis, Egypt, in a room whose contents date to the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. Note the "akrammachamari" and "ablanathanalba" formulas (cf. nos. 4, 40, etc.), both slightly misspelled. For the *characteres*, cf. the notes to no. 10, and for their appearance in Christian amulets, cf. no. 32.

Bibl.: Meyer-Smith, no. 124.

8. Kelsey Museum 24255

Karanis, Egypt 3rd or 4th century A.D.?
Lead

A lead amulet, folded around the string with which it was worn, presumably around the wrist or ankle. Excavated in Karanis, Egypt, in a room whose contents date to the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D. It has never been unrolled, and its contents remain unknown.

Bibl.: Unpublished.

9. Kelsey Museum 29883-7

Iran or Iraq 5th to 7th century A.D.?
Lead

Lead amulets, written in Mandaic (an Eastern Aramaic dialect), on both sides. The texts have never been read.

Bibl.: Unpublished.

10. Kelsey Museum 26052

Purchased in Egypt
Lapis lazuli

Obverse: *Ouroboros* enclosing *characteres*.

Reverse: Plain.

As on many other gems, the image is encircled by an *ouroboros* — a snake devouring its own tail — an Egyptian symbol of regeneration and eternity. The signs engraved on this gem were known in antiquity as *characteres*, and were considered very powerful. Their origin and meaning remain obscure, and seem to have been obscure to the ancient practitioners themselves. The commonest *characteres* have rings at their tips, but other forms are also found frequently, and new forms seem to have been created all the time, both due to corruption of existing forms through careless copying and due to deliberate innovation.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, *Studies*, no. 292.

11. Kelsey Museum 26059

Purchased in Egypt
Haematite

Obv.: Two-headed god (snake and ibis heads), holding an Egyptian *was* scepter and the *ankh* symbol. Below, a crocodile with a disk on its back.

Inscription: *arpon chnouphi br[nta]tênôphiermioouth.*

Rev.: **Inscrip.:** *iaêô baphrenemoun othilarikriphiae u eaiphrikiralitho nuomenerphab êeai phrikira. Digest! Digest! (Chnoubis-sign) Chnoubis.*

A digestive amulet, which would be carried in a pouch, as close as possible to one's ailing stomach. Animal gods, and hybrid gods, were typical of the Egyptian pantheon and of its Greco-Roman adaptations, but the hybrid god on the obverse is not found elsewhere. The "*arpon chnouphi*" formula appears on other gems as well as in recipe books, and probably is of Egyptian origins ("Hor(us) - Khnoum..."). The obverse

contains a slightly mutilated version of a well-known palindrome, "*iaêô baphrenemoun*"-etc. (cf. the fine example in no. 40), as well as the command, "*Digest*," the divine name *Chnoubis*, and the zzz sign, which often accompanies *Chnoubis*' name.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, *Studies*, no. 264.

12. Kelsey Museum 26169

Purchased in Egypt
Gray agate

Obv.: Cock-headed, snake-legged god, with a kilt, shield, and whip. **Inscrip.:** *Jaô.*

Rev.: **Inscrip.:** *tala araiô ôaraoro ntoko nbai.*

The cock-headed, snake-legged god — whose origins are unknown — appears frequently on magical gems, often identified with *Jaô*. This gem might be a modern fake, modeled after a well-known ancient design. The meaningless inscription on the reverse may have been meant to sound like Coptic.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, *Studies*, no. 173.

13. Kelsey Museum 26054

Purchased in Egypt
Green jasper

Obv.: *Ouroboros* enclosing cock-headed, snake-legged god, with a military tunic, kilt, shield, and whip. **Inscrip.:** (on shield) *iaêio uôêiê êôiii*; (above shield) *Michaêl Rephaêl Gabriêl Ouriêl*; (over whip) *aieê*; (below whip) *sêmea kenteu konteu kengeu kêrideu darunkô lukuêxi*; (under the snake legs) *semeseilam lathramaphta iô iô iô iê iê iiiiiiiiiiiii aêaêaê aaiiai eiô*; (lower margin) *psinôtherthernô.*

Rev.: Eagle-headed god wearing only an apron, calathus on head, six wings, bird tail. In its hands, Egyptian *sa* amulets. **Inscrip.:** *asasam adouram*.

Bevel: Seven scarab beetles, a star, a cynocephalus, a crocodile, and several obscure figures.

Note especially the international character of this gem — the images are mostly Egyptian, the letters Greek, the god's dress is Roman, the angelic names (Michael, etc.) are Jewish, and some of the *voces magicæ* (e.g. "*semeseilam*," which probably means "Eternal Sun") are of a Semitic, non-Jewish, origin. Note also the fine execution of every detail — this gem took much time to produce, and must have cost accordingly.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, Studies, no. 172.

14. Kelsey Museum 26196

Origins unknown
Haematite

Obv.: Cock(?) -headed, snake-legged god, with kilt, shield, and whip.

Rev.: **Inscrip.:** *Digest!*

On this gem, the snake-legged god was invoked to relieve indigestion.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, Studies, no. 185.

15. Kelsey Museum 26061

Purchased in Egypt
Green jasper

Obv.: Osiris as mummy wearing the Egyptian *atef* crown, between Isis and Nephthys, on a papyrus boat with hawks on each end.

Rev.: **Inscrip.:** *aeèiouô* (surrounded by meaningless hieroglyphics).

Whoever produced this gem was familiar with Egyptian iconography, as well as the appearance — but not the meaning — of Egyptian hieroglyphic signs. The seven Greek vowels were supposed to possess special power — perhaps because they "breathe life," as it were, into dead consonants, and because Egyptians, whose writing systems provided no vowels, found them most intriguing — and were "sung" aloud in numerous magical rituals.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, Studies, no. 2.

16. Kelsey Museum 26099

Purchased in Egypt
Green jasper

Obv.: Pantheos figure with four wings, bird tail, a human face wearing an Egyptian *atef* crown, and additional animal heads projecting sideways. Egyptian *was* scepters, and two birds.

Rev.: **Inscrip.:** *Iaô eulamô ieuêêu a ee êêê iiii ooooo uuuuuu ôôôôôôô.*

Pantheos figures — hybrid deities incorporating the traits and forms of numerous gods — are found in Egyptian iconography from before the Macedonian conquest in the 4th century B.C. and throughout the Greco-Roman period. For "*eulamô*," a common *vox magica* whose meaning is unknown, cf. no. 21. Note that the inscription on the reverse contains a "squeezed" vowel triangle (cf. no. 6).

Bibl.: C. Bonner, Studies, no. 254.

17. Kelsey Museum 26109

Purchased in Egypt
Haematite

Obv.: Papyrus boat, with Harpocrates sitting on a lotus, his head encircled by a nimbus with seven double rays. Under his feet, a cynocephalus. Isis and Nephthys holding lotus scepters and *ankh* symbols, wearing the Egyptian *atef* and *hemhem* crowns. Triads of hawks, snakes, crocodiles, scarabs, and goats. Two stars and two crescents.

Rev.: Scarab between two crowned hawks. **Inscrip.:** *arbath agramnê phiblô chnêmeô*.

Both obverse and reverse display typical Egyptian motifs, such as the gods sailing on the solar barque, or the sacred animals, symbols of individual deities. For the "(i)arbath" formula, cf. no. 6. The gold setting and suspension loop are modern.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, *Studies*, no. 210.

18. Kelsey Museum 26072

Purchased in Egypt
Green jasper

Obv.: *Ouroboros* enclosing a seated Sarapis, with Cerberus (?) at his feet. On his head, a winged scarab.

Rev.: **Inscrip.:** *iaôanarabaranaôai sthombaolê baol sthombalakamoth ombalê*.

The inscription on the reverse contains one palindrome, which might be based on an Aramaic phrase meaning "I am the great Iaô," and the "*sthombaolê*" formula, found elsewhere.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, *Studies*, no. 17.

19. Kelsey Museum 26111

Purchased in Egypt
Bloodstone

Obv.: The six-rayed *characteres* and an amphora with two branches.
Inscrip.: *euthem*.

Rev.: Plain.

The amphora-and-branches design was a common symbol of prosperity. The meaning of the inscription is unclear.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, *Studies*, no. 273.

20. Kelsey Museum 26067

Purchased in Egypt
Haematite

Obv.: *Ouroboros* enclosing uterine symbol, with Khnoum, the ram-headed god touching the knob of the key. Above, Isis and Nephthys flanking Anubis and an unidentified figure (the patient?). **Inscrip.:** (inside *ouroboros*) *iariaiaiiieôîô Sabaôth êi* (outside) *soroor merpher ga[rmar maphreiour]igx*.

Rev.: *Ouroboros*, enclosing inscription, *characteres*, and Chnoubis symbol. **Inscrip.:** *orôriouth iaêdiaô (3 characteres?) Sabaôth (character) iaêôieai borbor parphor phorbar phorphor rai*.

A uterine amulet, meant to control contraception and childbirth by "opening" and "closing" the womb with its special "key." On such amulets, the uterus-scene often is accompanied by "*orôriouth*" which must be the name of the power which controls uterine activities (or of the uterus itself), and by the "*soroor*" formula, whose meaning and function remain unknown. Note the appearance of the Jewish divine name Sabaôth ("(Lord of) Hosts") amidst the Egyptian iconography.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, *Studies*, no. 142.

21. Kelsey Museum 26050

Purchased in Egypt
Rock crystal

Obv.: Lion and star. **Inscrip.:** *Iaô eulamô Abrasax.*

Rev.: Plain.

For "*Iaô eulamô*," cf. no. 16; for Abrasax, cf. no. 3.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, *Studies*, no. 237.

22. Kelsey Museum 26091

Purchased in Egypt
Glass paste?

Obv.: A rectangular prism, inscribed on all four sides.

Inscrip.:

A. *Iaô*

B. *Sabaô*

C. *Michaël*

D. *Thôth* (2 characteres?)

Note the longitudinal perforation, for a cord to go through. While *Iaô*, *Sabaô*(th), and *Michaël* are of Jewish origins, *Thôth* is an Egyptian god, usually equated with the Greek god Hermes, and in some cases even with the biblical Moses.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, *Studies*, no. 361.

23. Kelsey Museum 26121

Purchased in Syria
Haematite

Obv.: Reaper cutting stalks of grain. Tree behind him, snake below.

Rev.: *Characteres.* **Inscrip.:** *For the hips.*

An amulet against hip pains (sciatica). The reaper imagery must have been chosen for this well-attested type of amulet because of the agricultural laborer's perceived immunity to hip- and back-ache.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, *Studies*, no. 123.

24. Kelsey Museum 26153

Purchased in Syria
Sard

Obv.: *Ouroboros.* **Inscrip.:** *Salamaxa* (three characteres) *bameaza.*

Rev.: Plain.

Note the perforation. The meaning of the *voces magicae*, probably of Semitic origin, is unknown.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, *Studies*, no. 286.

25. Kelsey Museum 26125

Purchased in Syria
Stactite

Obv.: *Ouroboros?*, enclosing an unidentified figure, holding an unidentified object towards a large snake. Between them, a small altar?

Rev.: **Inscrip.:** unknown.

The script on the reverse has not been identified. It may be a pseudo-script or a cipher, but more probably it is a real, as yet unidentified, alphabet.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, *Studies*, no. 340.

26. Kelsey Museum 26129

Purchased in Syria
Lead

Obv.: Inscript.: Sabaô.

Rev.: Inscript.: Rephaël.

Note the suspension loops — this amulet was made to be hung, presumably around the neck. Note that both sides are written in mirror-letters — apparently this, too, was thought to increase the amulet's efficacy.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, Studies, no. 342.

27. Kelsey Museum 26092

Purchased in Egypt
Haematite

Obv.: Rider spearing a prostrate female demon. **Inscript.:** *Solomon.*

Rev.: A key. **Inscript.:** *Seal of God.*

Rider-amulets such as this one were popular, possibly among Jews and certainly among Christians, as all-purpose protective devices. The imagery — a mounted warrior subduing a prostrate enemy — is common enough in many cultures, and its adoption as a symbol in the fight against demons is readily understandable. On this amulet, as on many others, the rider is identified as Solomon, the wise biblical king whom post-biblical traditions turned into an expert in all occult sciences, and especially the subjugation of demons. Thus, Jews and Christians alike invoked Solomon's name in exorcism rituals, and told stories of the wonderful seal with which he "muzzled" and "sealed" every evil spirit. On this amulet the key, like God's seal, symbolizes the power to shut the demons in and prevent them from doing any harm.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, Studies, no. 294.

28. Kelsey Museum 26140

Purchased in Syria
Haematite

Obv.: Rider spearing a prostrate demon.

Rev.: **Inscript.:** *Seal of God.*

Bibl.: C. Bonner, Studies, pp. 208-210.

29. Kelsey Museum 26114

Purchased in Syria
Bronze

Obv.: Rider with nimbus, spearing a prostrate (female) demon.
Inscript.: *One God, who conquers ev(il).*

Rev.: Lion and snake. **Inscript.:** *Iaôth, Sabaôth, Michaël.*

On the obverse, the engraver forgot the last two letters of the word "evil." Note also the erroneous spelling Iaôth, clearly influenced by Sabaôth. The "One God" invocation — here coupled with the powerful names Iaô, Sabaôth, and Michaël — appears often on this type of amulet.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, Studies, no. 309.

30. Kelsey Museum 26115

Purchased in Syria
Bronze

Obv.: Rider with nimbus, spearing a prostrate female demon. Below, a lion. **Inscript.:** *One God who conquers evil.*

Rev.: The "evil eye" design — a human eye, attacked by a lion, an ibis, a snake, a scorpion, a leopard?, a trident, and a spear. **Inscript.:** *Iaô Sabaôth Michael, help.*

Here the rider-motif is coupled with the so-called "evil eye." Throughout the ancient world, the notion prevailed that a person's envious or malicious glance at other persons, or at their property, can cause them much damage. To protect against this effect, the drawing of such an "evil eye," attacked by various monsters and weapons, was considered especially effective. The "evil eye" design was an extremely popular apotropaic (protective) device, appearing not only on amulets but on mosaics and other forms of artistic expression as well.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, *Studies*, no. 299.

31. Kelsey Museum 26165

Purchased in Syria
Bronze

Obv.: Rider with nimbus, spearing a prostrate demon. **Inscrip.:**
ogurak mareot ufzezo uzerbe.

Rev.: Plain.

Bezel of a ring, hoop broken away. The meaning of the inscription — if it is not merely gibberish — is unknown.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, *Studies*, no. 323.

32. Kelsey Museum 26119

Purchased in Syria
Bronze

Obv.: Rider with nimbus spearing a lioness with a human, female face. An angel with nimbus blesses the rider with his raised wing.
Inscrip.: (in field) *One God who conquers evil*; (in margin) (cross) *He who dwells in the help of the Most High will abide in the shelter of the God of heaven. He will say to the Lord...*

Rev.: Above: Christ enthroned, surrounded by the four animals of the Apocalypse — an ox, a man, an eagle and a lion. Below: A lion,

a snake, two cobras?, and a crab. **Inscrip.:** (in field) *Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord Sabaôth (characteres)*; (in margin) (cross) *The seal of the living God, Guard from every evil him who carries this amulet.*

Note the cross on the tip of rider's spear, and the crosses at the beginning of the marginal inscriptions. The "He who dwells" formula is the first verse of Psalm 91, a hymn stressing God's protection of the pious, which was extremely popular as a protective incantation in Jewish and Christian amulets. Psalm 91's explicit mention of the lion, the asp, the cobra, and the snake as monsters of whom the pious will know no fear could explain their appearance — with a crab substituting for the asp — on this amulet. Note especially the *characteres*, so popular in pre-Christian magic, which are here incorporated into an otherwise Christian image (cf. no. 7).

Bibl.: C. Bonner, *Studies*, no. 324.

33. Kelsey Museum 26198

Purchased in Syria
Bronze

A bracelet with four medallions (the fifth would have been glued under the first).

- A. **Inscrip.:** *He who dwells in the help.*
- B. The Virgin with the Child, and one of the Magi?
- C. The women at the empty tomb?
- D. Rider with nimbus spearing a prostrate demon.

This bracelet displays some well known motifs of Christian amulets, such as Psalm 91 (cf. no. 32) and the rider (cf. nos. 27-32), as well as New Testament scenes which were thought to protect the wearer from harm.

Bibl.: C. Bonner, *Studies*, no. 321.

CASE 5
PROTECTIVE MAGIC
Babylonian Demon Bowls

Within the wide category of protective magic, one local tradition stands out as unique, namely the so-called Babylonian demon bowls. These inscribed earthenware vessels were found in several sites in Iraq and Iran, dating from the 6th to the 8th centuries A.D. and are unknown outside that region. They are normally inscribed in one of three Aramaic dialects — Jewish-Aramaic, Syriac, and Mandaic — though some bowls are known which are inscribed in Persian (Pehlevi). The form and direction of the writing varies — the most common form being spirals, beginning from the bowl's rim and moving toward the center. Some bowls are inscribed on the outside as well as the inside. Moreover, numerous bowls are inscribed in various pseudo-scripts, either because the person who manufactured them was illiterate, or because the text itself was deemed only a secondary component of the bowl, and could be recited orally, or dispensed with altogether. While many bowls show little sign of outside influence, others display the well-known motifs of “international” magic — common divine names, familiar *voces magicae*, and symbols such as the *ouroboros* or the *characteres*.

Those bowls which are found *in situ* often are positioned face-down, and in some cases two bowls are found glued together with pitch, the space enclosed between them containing such items as inscribed eggshells or human skull fragments. From their positioning, and from the images of bound demons which adorn numerous bowls, it would seem that these were demon traps, meant to lure, trap, and disable any malevolent demons, preventing them from hurting humans or causing damage to property. It seems that such traps often were placed in room corners, since the meeting of walls and floor created cracks through which the demons could sneak in — a fact which is also verified in contemporary literary sources. However, in some cases the bowls' inscriptions reveal them to have been not so much “environmental protection” devices, but rather aggressive instruments aimed at sending the demons upon an enemy's head. Such bowls could be buried in cemeteries — where ghosts and demons were abundant — and perhaps also next to the victim's house and property, to enhance their efficacy and accuracy.

34. Kelsey Museum 19501

Seleucia-on-Tigris
Clay

6th or 7th century A.D.

Note the repetitive signs, perhaps meant to imitate writing.

Bibl.: Unpublished.

35. Kelsey Museum 19502

Seleucia-on-Tigris
Clay

6th or 7th century A.D.

The “text” is written in a pseudo-script, in lines emanating from the center. The meaning of the design at the center is unclear, but it might be a drawing of a room with demon-bowls at the four corners.

Bibl.: Unpublished.

36. Kelsey Museum 19503

Seleucia-on-Tigris
Clay

6th or 7th century A.D.

This bowl is “written” in a pseudo-script, clearly meant to imitate Syriac (an Aramaic dialect and alphabet, used on many demon-bowls).

Bibl.: Unpublished.

37. Kelsey Museum 19504

Seleucia-on-Tigris
Clay

6th or 7th century A.D.

Text: (Panel 1) [...] *Negray daughter of Denday and from her male sons and [...] I have heard and the voice of the weak [...] of the men who are fighting [...] of raging women who curse and afflict and cause pain they have descended against them [Azdai], Yazdun and Yaqrun, Prael the*

great and Ruphael and Sahtiel and seized them and by the tufts of hair and the tresses of their heads and broke the horns which were high and tied them by the tufts of hair of their heads and said to them "remove that which you have cursed" and they said to him "from the pain of our heart we cursed and from the bitterness of our palate we resolved to curse" I have made you swear and adjure you in the name of Azdai and Yazdun and Yaqrun and Prael the great and Ruphael and Sahtiel that you release (Panel 2) and free [...] Negray daughter of Denday and [...] male and female from [...] all the curses [...] cursed and from the curses of [...] and the mother and from the curse of the prostitute [...] and the fetus and from the curse of the employee and employer who stole the wage and from the curse of the brothers who did not divide truthfully among themselves and from the curses of all people who curse in the name of idol demons and their surrenderings you are the healer you are the healer who heals sicknesses with words you are the healer who turns away the sicknesses and the curses of those who cursed Negray daughter of Denday in the name of Azdai and Yazdun and Yaqrun and Prael and Ruphael and heal and annul the curses of those who curse Negray daughter of Denday. And upon a stone (Panel 3) which is unsplit I sat [...] and I wrote all of the curses upon a new bowl of clay and I sent back the curses of those who cursed Negray daughter of Denday to their masters until they release and bless in the name of Sariel the angel and Barakiel the angel and in the name of Sariel and Barakiel you release from the curses of those who curse Negray daughter of Denday as a man as a man is freed from the house of bondage and from the house of weapons amen amen selah [...] may there be health and sealing [...] and to the house of Negray daughter of Denday and to the male sons [...]

The text is written in Mandaic, an Eastern Aramaic dialect and script, in three wedge-shaped panels, each panel beginning on the bowl's rim and moving inward. The text itself is a copy of a long spell which appears on several such bowls, and into which the client's name — in this case Negray daughter of Denday — was inserted in the proper places. It was meant as a counter-spell, to protect the client against all her enemies' curses, whatever they may have been.

Bibl.: Unpublished. The translation and notes were provided by Timothy La Vallee, who is preparing these bowls for publication.

38. Kelsey Museum 19505

Seleucia-on-Tigris
Clay

6th or 7th century A.D.

Meaningless signs, or badly effaced Aramaic letters.

Bibl.: Unpublished.

39. Kelsey Museum 33756

Seleucia-on-Tigris
Clay

6th or 7th century A.D.

This bowl was found on top of another bowl (the excavation report does not specify which one), with an "inscribed" egg shell between them; unfortunately, the egg shell never made it to Ann Arbor. The "text" on the bowl is written in a pseudo-script, but the bowl's general appearance — with the figures surrounded by a "text" (real or imaginary) — is typical of the genre. Note the bound male demons — their hands are tied, their feet are chained — a clear sign of what the bowl itself was meant to achieve.

Bibl.: Unpublished.

CASE 6 AGGRESSIVE MAGIC

Of all issues connected with ancient magic, none has evoked more fascination, attraction, or revulsion than the image of the lone magician, closed in his or her room, manipulating voodoo dolls and chanting hymns of violence and destruction. From ancient literature to modern scholarship, this aspect of the magical praxis — often labeled "Black Magic" — has received more attention than any other type of magical activity, apparently because it is here that the practitioners' otherwise innocuous activities acquire a very sinister tone. For the ancient, practitioners themselves, however, the distinction between "protective" and "aggressive" magic seems to have made very little

difference, as can be seen from the intermingling of both types of recipes in the extant recipe-books (cf. no. 1), and from the many similarities between both types of praxis.

Aggressive magic could take many different forms, the commonest one — of those that were committed to writing — being the lead tablets known in Greek as *katadesmoi* and in Latin as *defixiones*. These cursing and binding tablets seem to be a specifically Greek invention, known in Greece from the 5th century B.C. and spreading from there throughout the Mediterranean world. The earliest ones consist merely of the victim's name, scratched on a thin sheet of lead and thrown into graves, pits, or wells, thus handing the victim over to the care of the chthonian demons and the ghosts of the dead. As time went on, such tablets became more elaborate, with long texts and elaborate designs, and their preparation often entailed complex rituals, including the binding, piercing, or burning of wax, clay, or lead voodoo dolls, representing the spell's intended victim.

Defixiones appear in many different social contexts, from the disgruntled lover who wishes to coerce the object of his or her desire, to the chariot-races, theaters, courtrooms, and business transactions, where one participant would try to ensure his or her victory by "binding" or "fixing" a rival. Thus, such texts not only provide us with valuable information on ancient magical practices and beliefs, they also allow rare glimpses of the social tensions and everyday conflicts of ancient society.

While *defixiones* — written on lead, a non-perishable material — are common, they certainly were not the only form of cursing practiced in late antiquity, and examples are also known of curses being written on gems, papyri, wooden tablets, and Babylonian demon bowls (cf. above).

40. PMich 757 (=inv. 6925)

Egypt

Lead

2nd to 4th centuries A.D.

Text: (Top): vowel-column, followed by *ablanathanalba*-triangle, *aeëiouô*-triangle, *iaeôbaphrenemoun*-etc.-triangle, *ôuoiêea*-triangle, *akrammachamarei*-triangle, two vowel-columns. (Bottom) *aberamenthô oulerthexa n axethreluo ôthnemareba, I deposit this binding spell with you, chthonian gods — Pluto and Kore uesemmeigadôn and Koure Persephone Ereschigal, and Adonis, also called barbaritha, and chthonian*

Hermes-Thoth phôkensepseu earektathou misonktaich, and mighty Anubis psêriphtha, who holds the keys to those in Hades, and chthonic spirits (and) gods, and those who suffered an untimely death, boys and maidens, year by year, month by month, day by day, night by night, hour by hour. I adjure you, all spirits in this place, to assist the ghost. Rouse yourself for me, ghost, whoever you are, whether male or female, and go into every place, into every quarter, into every house, and bind Kopria, whom her mother Taesis bore, the hair of whose head you have, for Ailourion, whom his mother named Kopria bore, that she may not submit to vaginal nor anal intercourse, nor gratify another youth or another man except Ailourion only, whom his mother named Kopria bore, and that she may not even be able to eat nor drink nor ever get sleep nor enjoy good health nor have peace in her soul or mind in her desire for Ailourion, whom his mother Kopria bore, until Kopria, whom her mother Taesis bore, whose hair you have, will spring up from every place and every house, burning (with passion), and come to Ailourion, whom his mother named Kopria bore, loving (and) adoring with all her soul, with all her spirit, with unceasing and unremitting and constant erotic binding, Ailourion, whom his mother named Kopria bore, with a divine love, from this very day, from the present hour, for the rest of Kopria's life. For I adjure you, ghost, by the fearful and dreadful name of him at the hearing of whose name the earth will open, at the hearing of whose name the spirits tremble with fear, at the hearing of whose name the rivers and seas are agitated, at the hearing of whose name the rocks are cleft, by barbaritham barbarithaam chelmobra barouch ambra Adônaiou and by ambrath Abrasax sesengenbarpharângês and by Iaô Sabaôth Iaeô pakenpsôth pakenbraôth sabarbatiaôth sabarbatianê sabarbaphai mari glorious marmaraôth and by Ouserbentêth and by Ou(s)erpatê and by marmarauôth marmarachtha marmarachthaa amarda maribeôth. Do not disobey my commands, ghost, whoever you are, whether male or female, but rouse yourself for me and go into every place, into every quarter, into every house, and bind Kopria, whom her mother Taesis bore, the hair of whose head you have, for Ailourion, whom his mother named Kopria bore, that she may not submit to vaginal nor anal intercourse, nor gratify another youth or another man; and that she may not even be able to eat nor drink nor get sleep nor be at peace in her soul or mind in her desire, day and night, for Ailourion, whom his mother named Kopria bore, loving (and) adoring him with all her heart, with all her spirit, like her own soul, Kopria, whose hair you have, loving with a divine love, until death, Ailourion, whom his mother named Kopria bore. Now now quickly quickly! (characteres and vowels). (Top, right) (vowels) marza maribeoth. Do not disobey my commands, ghost, whoever you are, but rouse yourself

for me and go into every place, into every quarter, into every house and bring Kopria, whom her mother Taesis bore, whose hair you have, to Ailourion, whom his mother named Kopria bore, burning, blazing, melting away in her soul, her spirit, her feminine part, loving (and) adoring with a divine love, until death, Ailourion, whom his mother named Kopria bore. Now now quickly quickly! I am barbadōnaiai barbadōnai who conceals the stars, who preserves heaven, who establishes the cosmos in truth. Iattheoun iatreoun salbiouth aōth aōth sabathiouth iattherath Adōnaiai isar suria bibibe bibiouth nattho Sabaath aianapha amourachthê satama Zeus atheresphilauô.

This elaborate *defixio* is unique for its size (most *defixiones* are much smaller) and complexity. It is also unusual because several different “versions” of it are known, and there is an extant recipe-book — like the ones in cases 1 and 2, only much longer — which contains instructions for the preparation of these very tablets (PGM IV.296-434). A comparison of these *defixiones* shows no two to be identical, and none follows exactly the instructions in the extant recipe-book — a vivid testimony to the great variations which occurred when recipes were passed on from one individual to the next and each practitioner found ways to improve a recipe’s efficacy or adapt it to changing circumstances. The extant recipe calls for the preparation of two voodoo dolls — of an armed male and a naked female, down on her knees with her hands tied behind her back — and for the penetration of the female figurine with 13 copper needles, in key points of her body. (One of the other *defixiones* of this type indeed was found together with a clay female figurine, with the needles still sticking out of her body.) Both the (now lost) figurine and the lead tablet (folded, to judge from the cracks) were deposited in the grave of someone who had died violently or prematurely, so that the restless ghost — “whoever you are, whether male or female” — would search for Kopria and “deliver” her into Ailourion’s hands. To help the ghost in its task, something intimately connected with the victim — in the present case, some of Kopria’s hair — was attached to the figurine. The mention of the protagonists’ mothers, rather than fathers, is the normal procedure in such instances, presumably because one’s mother is known for certain, while one’s real father is not.

Bibl.: David G. Martinez, *PMich 757: A Greek Love Charm from Egypt* Ann Arbor, 1991.

41. **PMich inv. 1444**

Egypt
Papyrus

1st to 3rd century A.D.

An incantation, written in Demotic (late Egyptian script), against a private individual, invoking a spirit of the dead and the jackal-headed god Anubis, who is noted in the text and depicted at the bottom, shooting the victim with a bow and arrow. Given the mutilated condition of the text, many details remain in doubt.

Bibl.: Unpublished. The above information provided by Robert K. Ritner, who is preparing the text for publication. For the invocation of a ghost, cf. no. 41.

42. **PMich inv. 3565**

Egypt
Papyrus

6th century A.D. or earlier

Text: † Al † o † daughter † of Ae † se † † and Phibamon e ô ô ô ô ô ô ô ô I write; I adjure you, Saôt Sabaôt, that you receive this incense from me and speak a word to my advantage over Alo daughter of Aese. Ha[.].jouel, you must bring loss and grief. May the adjuration go (up) to heaven until you act on my behalf against Alo daughter of Aese. Upon Alo shall (the) curse (of) God come. May the darkness take her, Alo daughter of Aese. From afar (?) you (pl.) must beg this one (?) to receive this incense from me (?). The curses of the Law and Deuteronomy will descend upon Alo daughter of Aese. May hunger and misery rule the body of Alo and Phibamon. May their eyes May furnace flame(s) come from the mouth of Alo daughter of Aese. May (the) curse (of) God descend upon Alo and her entire house(hold). May the fear of death be in Alo’s house. May you make them bedridden. Amen, Amen, Sabaô[th]! Apa Victor son of Thibamon.

A Coptic curse of Apa Victor against Alo daughter of Aese and against Phibamon. Why exactly he wanted to curse them is unclear. Note that Apa Victor invoked the curses of the Law (the Pentateuch) and Deuteronomy (cf. esp. Deut 28:15ff) upon his enemies’ heads — a not uncommon practice among both Jews and Christians. Although this

Christian curse employs no *voces magicae* or *characteres*, it does display vestiges of pre-Christian, "international" magic, such as the vowel-sequence in line 2.

Bibl.: Meyer-Smith, no. 104.

WALL-CASES

- I "Vorderer Orient, Relief und Gewässer=Middle East, Relief and Hydrology (AI1)," *Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients*, Wiesbaden : Reichert, 1977-
 - II Photographic Enlargement of No.13, obverse and reverse
 - III Photographic Enlargement of No.32, obverse and reverse
 - IV Photographic Enlargement of No. 27, obverse
Photographic Enlargement of No. 25, obverse
 - V Photographic Enlargement of No. 8
Photographic Enlargement of No. 35
 - VI Photographic Enlargement of No. 37
Photographic Enlargement of No. 39
- Poster in Graduate Library Lobby:
Photographic Enlargement of No. 16

Abbreviations:

Bonner = Campbell Bonner, Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950.

GMPT = Hans Dieter Betz, The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986 (2nd ed., 1992).

Meyer-Smith = Marvin Meyer & Richard Smith, Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power, San Francisco: Harper, 1994.

PDM = Demotic Magical Papyri, translated in GMPT.

PGM = K. Preisendanz, Papyri Graecae Magicae, 2 vols., Leipzig: Teubner, 1928-31 (2nd ed. Stuttgart, 1973-4).

PMich = The Michigan Papyri, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1931- .

Suppl. Mag. I = Robert W. Daniel and Franco Maltomini, Supplementum Magicum, vol. I, [Papyrologica Coloniensia XVI.1], Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990.

Suggestions for further reading:

Christopher A. Faraone & Dirk Obbink (eds.), Magika Hiera: Ancient Greek Magic and Religion, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Valerie I.J. Flint, The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

John G. Gager, Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Michael A. Morgan (tr.), Sepher Ha-Razim: The Book of the Mysteries, Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983.

Joseph Naveh & Shaul Shaked, Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity, Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985.

Joseph Naveh & Shaul Shaked, Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity, Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993.

Geraldine Pinch, Magic in Ancient Egypt, London: British Museum Press, 1994.

Robert K. Ritner, The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice, [Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization, 54], Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1993.

This exhibit is also available on-line at:
<http://www.hti.umich.edu/exhibit/magic>

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