

INSCRIBED LEAD TABLETS FROM THE GAMES IN THE SANCTUARY OF POSEIDON

AMONG THE SIGNIFICANT SMALLER OBJECTS excavated on the Isthmus of Corinth by the University of Chicago are five inscribed lead tablets, which I present here. Only one (1) is complete; it has been identified and published as a ballot, probably secret, from the inspection for the admission of would-be competitors in the games in the sanctuary. Cleaning now shows that three (2–4) of the remaining four tablets are also such ballots. The other inscription (5) is a curse directed against runners.¹

THE BALLOTS

In 1958, the clearing of a small reservoir south of the West Waterworks² of the Sanctuary of Poseidon brought to light an inscribed lead tablet:

¹ Professor Oscar Broneer, director of the Isthmia Excavations when the lead tablets were discovered, originally assigned the publication rights for 2–5 to Professor Michael H. Jameson, who generously conceded them in my favor. I have incurred debts to several others as well: to Professor Elizabeth R. Gebhard of the University of Illinois at Chicago not only for encouragement to present these texts but also for a careful reading of this manuscript and many a helpful suggestion; to Dr. Ulrich Hübinger of the German Archaeological Institute at Athens and to Professor Robert D. Lamberton of Princeton University for showing me lists of lead objects excavated at Olympia and at Nemea, respectively (see note 4 below); to Professor Timothy E. Gregory of Ohio State University and to Dr. Jeanne Marty of the University of North Carolina at Asheville for discussion of the building northeast of the Temple of Poseidon (see note 7 below); to Dr. Roy D. Kotansky and to Dr. John Petropoulos of the University of Thrace for discussion of 5; to Professor James R. Wiseman of Boston University for encouragement to restudy the Corinthian lamp L 4607 (see note 17 below); to Dr. Brian Cook, Keeper of Greek and Roman Antiquities of the British Museum, and to Donald Bailey, Assistant Keeper, for permission and encouragement to study the selenite tablets from Amathous (see note 21 below); to Dr. Dennis Haynes, former Keeper, for permission to study Aud. no. 188 and to Professor J. Gwyn Griffiths of University College Swansea for advice about its Egyptological content (see note 22 below); to Paul Broneer and to Philippa M. W. Matheson for their translations of the Russian of Rozanova 1960 and Novosadski 1917, respectively, and to the Reading Room of the British Library for obtaining for me, from the former Lenin State Library, a photocopy of Novosadski 1917 (see note 23 below); and to Dr. Charles K. Williams, II, of the Corinth Excavations of the American School, for his invitation to study the Corinthian lead tablet MF-1986-44 (see note 25 below). My warmest thanks to them all.

2–4 have been announced at Jordan 1985a, p. 167, where the three fragments are mistakenly assumed to belong to one curse tablet and to come from the same well as 5, itself announced at *Isthmia* II, p. 115.

For bibliographical references see the explanations at the end of this article. Dotted lines in the illustrations for 3–5 and Figure 3 represent strokes that I could not be sure whether I saw or not. They are not restorations. Unless it is stated otherwise, all dates are after Christ.

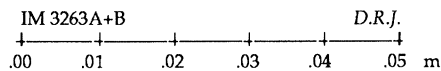
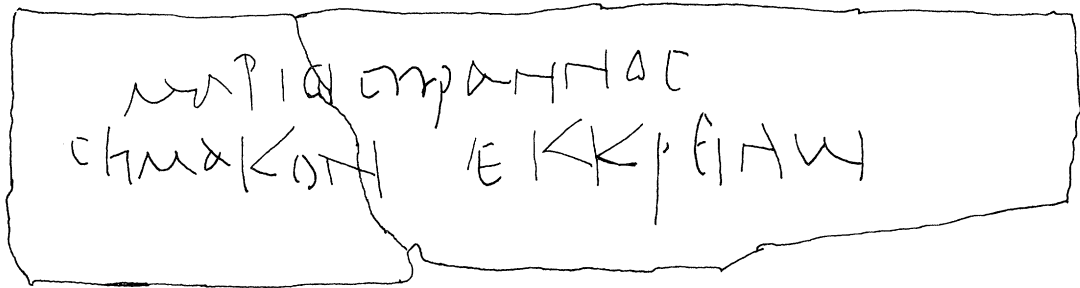
² The part of the reservoir where the tablet was found is located at the letter A in the label WEST WATERWORKS in *Isthmia* II, plan III (= *Isthmia* IV, plan III, Section F). The complex is described at *Isthmia* II, pp. 27–29; there Oscar Broneer notes that the upper part covering the sunken area of the West Waterworks and the reservoir was removed with the leveling of the central temenos in the 2nd century. Of the pottery filling the reservoir, its manholes, and the sunken area, most was Hellenistic, but some pieces of glass and pottery

Hesperia 63.1, 1994

1. IM 3263a + b

H. 0.036, W. 0.141, Th. 0.001 m.

Roman Imperial



Μάριος Τύραννος
Σήμακον ἐκκρείνω.³

“I, Marius Tyrannos, disqualify Semakos.”

In its *editio princeps* (Jordan and Spawforth 1982 = *SEG* XXXII 364; cf. *BullEp* 1982, no. 373), to which I refer the reader for details, it was argued, from the use elsewhere of the verb κρείνω and its derivatives and compounds, that the tablet was the ballot of one of a panel of judges recording his decision not to admit an aspirant into one of the competitions of the Isthmian Games: an inscription from the Isthmus (*IG* IV 203) mentions, for example, ἐγκρετήριοι οἴκοι, rooms constructed apparently for just such preliminary judgments. At the time of its publication the tablet seemed unique, and one naturally wondered why, if ballots were a regular feature of the games, no other such tablets were preserved. The tentative conclusions were that such ballots were secret⁴ and were no doubt meant for defacement or destruction after they were counted and that the survival of Marius Tyrannos’ tablet was “the result of some unusual and happy accident.”

We now have three other such ballots, none more than a fragment; they were excavated in 1960, found together in an area north of the Temple of Poseidon,⁵ but they have only recently been cleaned and read. The original height of **2** is preserved and is approximately

are early Roman. The lead tablet lay at the bottom of the reservoir, *ca.* 2.50 m. below the modern surface of the surrounding bedrock: cf. Notebook 15, p. 126.

³ For ἐκκρείνω here and below.

⁴ I am grateful to the anonymous reader for calling my attention to a passage that went uncited in the *editio princeps*, Pausanias’ report (5.24.10) about secrecy at this preliminary stage of the competitions at Olympia in the 2nd century: “those who examine the boys or the foals which are entered for the races swear that they will decide justly and take no bribes, and that they will keep secret what they know about the accepted or rejected candidate (τὰ ἐκ τῶν δοκιμαζόμενόν τε καὶ μὴ)” (tr. J. G. Frazer). Examination of lists of inventoried lead objects excavated at Olympia and at Nemea shows that of the three Pan-Hellenic sanctuaries in the Peloponnese, so far only that on the Isthmus has yielded lead ballots for judging.

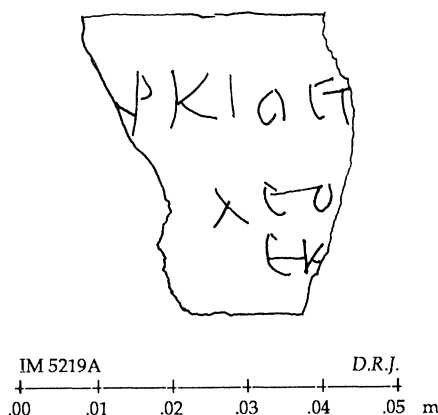
⁵ Trench NE-R (see *Isthmia* IV, plan III), just north of the second and third columns from the east end of the temple (Notebook 27, p. 162).

the same as that of 1, and the lettering of the four pieces is so similar as to suggest that the tablets are all at least roughly contemporary, belonging in a sense to one series. The fragments are from a dump of burned refuse.⁶ Were they in fact deposited there as part of the refuse and was their destruction intentional?

2. IM 5219a H. 0.038, max. p.W. 0.036, Th. 0.001 m.

Roman Imperial

The top and bottom edges are original.



[M]άρχιος Τ[-----]
 Λεο[-----]
 ἐκ[χρείνω]

"I, [M]arcus T[---], disqualify Leo[---]."

In line 1, the restoration of the *nomen* [M]άρχιος is *exempli gratia*. An otherwise unknown family of Marcii is attested on a gravestone at Corinth whose "lettering suggests . . . the first half of the second century" (*Corinth* VIII, iii, no. 286). Other possibilities include Arcius, Barcius, Larcus, and Tarcus, much rarer names (see Solin and Salomies 1988 *s.vv.*) and apparently none of them instanced in the area of the Isthmus. Τ[(or Π[) would be the judge's *cognomen* if the pattern of 1 is followed, and Λεο[in line 2 (e.g. Λεο[δάμαν], Λεό[δικον], Λεό[ντιον]) the name of the disappointed aspirant.

⁶ Pottery Lot 1799, analyzed by John Hayes, included pottery mostly of the 2nd century, with a few intrusions from the 3rd (Notebook 27, p. 161: "Mottled grey to black deposit. It appears to be cooking refuse with many clam, murex, and land snail shells, bits of lead, iron and glass, broken tiles, fragments of water pipe, etc., as well as large quantities of sherds. This deposit lies on top of mottled brown to reddish earth thrown out of the foundation trench for the Early Roman Temenos wall."). Professor Gebhard tells me that "the refuse and a similar deposit to the northeast of it in Trench NE-P filled hollows made in the layer of gravel used to level the temenos at the time of the construction of the East Stoa in the second half of the 2nd century."

3. IM 5219c Max. p.H. 0.032, max. p.W. 0.018, Th. 0.001 m.
The left-hand and bottom edges are original.

Roman Imperial



IM 5219C D.R.J.
+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
|.00|.01|.02|.03|.04|.05 m

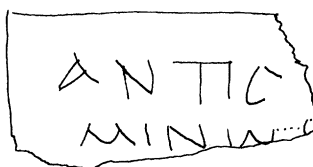
K[-----]
'Ατ[-----]
ἐκκ[ρείνω]
Οὐα[-----]

"I, K[-----] At[-----], *disqualify* Ua[-----]."

If **1** and **2** are enough to suggest a formula, **3** shows a variant, with a word, presumably the name of the disqualified applicant (e.g. Οὐα[λήριον], Οὐα[ληριανόν]: the traces are quite ambiguous), following the verb. K[-] would be the judge's *nomen* and 'Ατ[-] his *cognomen*.

4. IM 5219b Max. p.H. 0.020, max. p.W. 0.041, Th. 0.001 m.
The left-hand and top edges are original.

Roman Imperial



IM 5219B D.R.J.
+-----+-----+-----+-----+-----+
|.00|.01|.02|.03|.04|.05 m

'Αντί[τιος]
MIN...[-----]
[-----]
[ἐκκρείνω].

"I, Antis[tius] Min...[-----, *disqualify* -----]."

The text is restored on the basis of **1** and **2**. Antistius is inevitable for the first name, it being the only *nomen* compatible with the preserved ANTIC[(C or O). An 'Αντίτιος Μάξιμος,

otherwise unknown, is named on a statue base found in the Corinthian Agora (*Corinth* VIII, i, no. 58). The traces of the *cognomen* in line 2 are too ambiguous to suggest any one restoration (among the many possibilities for the letters represented by dots are $\dot{\text{I}}\dot{\text{M}}\dot{\text{O}}$, $\dot{\text{I}}\dot{\text{A}}\dot{\text{T}}\dot{\text{O}}$, $\dot{\text{O}}\dot{\text{C}}$, $\dot{\text{O}}\dot{\text{E}}$); $\text{M}\dot{\text{I}}\nu\dot{\text{I}}\mu\dot{\text{o}}[\text{c}]$, a *cognomen* seen in the Pompeian wall graffito *CIL* IV 5355, *MINIMO* / *FORTUNATUS* / *MINISTER* (so Kajanto 1965, no. 294), is not to be ruled out. The name of the disqualified applicant would occupy line 3; if the arrangement, however, was that of **3**, then $\epsilon\chi\chi\rho\epsilon\iota\omega$ stood in line 3 and the name of the applicant in line 4.

As for the date of the ballots, the text of **1**, as we regretted in its *editio princeps*, is too short for its letter forms to admit of any greater precision than “Roman Imperial”. So too, *a fortiori*, the fragments **2–4**. A working assumption might be that the institution of balloting and the construction of the $\epsilon\gamma\chi\rho\iota\tau\eta\rho\iota\sigma\iota$ $\omicron\lambda\chi\omicron\iota$ mentioned above are both the result of a formalization, for whatever reason, of the preliminary part of the competitions; thus the construction might provide a *terminus post quem* for our tablets. The rooms were part of a program of building and repairs undertaken by the distinguished local benefactor P. Licinius Priscus Juventianus, high priest for life. His gifts, listed in *IG* IV 203 and in another inscription from the Isthmus recently published by D. J. Geagan (1989, pp. 351–352, “Stele B” = Isthmia $\text{I}\Sigma$ 261 + *Corinth* I 2194), included the construction and repair of several athletic and religious establishments, among them the Stoa of Regulus with fifty $\omicron\lambda\chi\omicron\iota$ for visiting athletes. Geagan locates Priscus’ building program generally in the latter half of the 2nd century but concludes that we do not have enough evidence to assign precise dates to his individual works.⁷

⁷ Of Priscus’ benefactions listed in the inscriptions, those whose remains have been identified include the Palaimonion (*IG* IV 203, line 8: *Isthmia* II, pp. 99–112), with its pit for sacrifices ($\epsilon\nu\alpha\gamma\iota\sigma\tau\eta\rho\iota\omega$, line 9: *ibid.*, p. 102, note 8). Professor Gebhard informs me that “preliminary analysis of further material from Pit C excavated in 1989 moves the date of the first sacrifices in the pit to the middle 2nd century; areas surrounding Pits A and B of the Palaimonion were also tested” (see Gebhard and Hemans, forthcoming). Geagan’s closing words (1989, p. 360): “As the archaeological evidence suggests, [the construction program] must have been spread over an extended period of time, as one project followed another. The inscription[s] would have been set up upon the completion of the restoration of the Stoa of Regulus as fifty *oikoi*. The evidence for that part of the project must await excavation of the [later] stadium.” There is another source for Priscus’ date that has not, as far as I know, been utilized, two fragments of inscribed white marble revetment, $\text{I}\Sigma$ 70-17 + 71-09 (Clement 1976, p. 230, pl. 170:d = *SEG* XXVI 410, mistakenly referred to by Geagan [1989, p. 357] as a statue base), found in the excavation of a building with a series of rooms northeast of the Temple of Poseidon (Clement 1976, p. 226, plan 2, J19–Q23):

 Π. Λικί]γ[τοϋ
 Π]ρεῖτχ[οϋ Ὀ]υβεντ[ιανὸϋ
]Μ. [-ca. 6--]l-2[

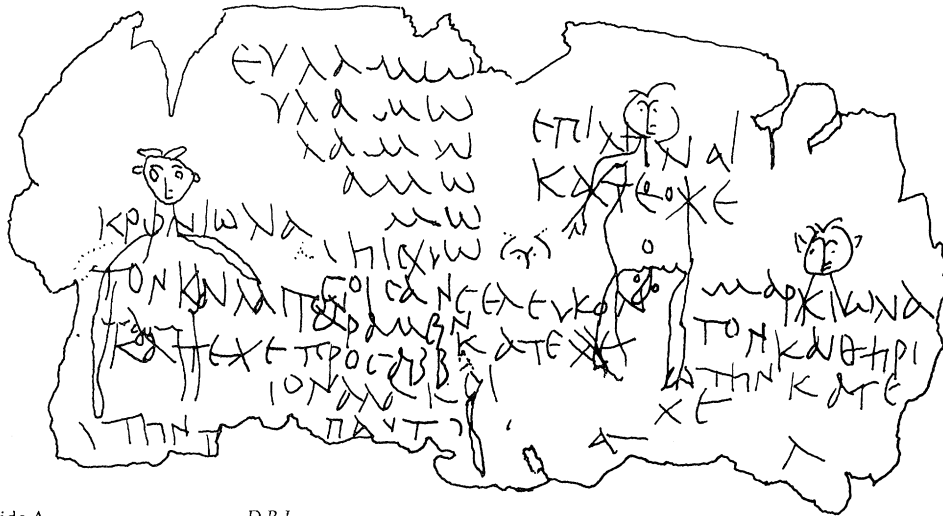
(nominatives restored *exempli gratia*; any estimate of the width of the original inscribed surface would obviously be guesswork). If, as seems likely, the revetment was once attached to the building, then the latter could well have been one of Priscus’ benefactions, and the date of its construction, not yet fully studied, could fix a time for at least part of his activity. The pottery in the building, we may note, was largely domestic coarse ware (Marty Peppers 1979, pp. 215–216; Marty 1989), but the building with its series of rooms, on the other hand, was evidently public rather than private; it is tempting therefore to wonder whether these rooms housed visiting

THE CURSE TABLE⁸

Some 450 meters west of the Temple of Poseidon, located along the modern village road, is an ancient well that was partly cleared by locals in 1914 and then filled again, a result being the loss of the stratigraphic record (*Isthmia* II, pp. 114–115). The well was formally excavated in 1959 and yielded, among many objects of Greek or Roman date, an inscribed lead curse tablet.⁹ The letters (see below) are obviously of the Roman Imperial period, a time when curse tablets are known to have been dropped into wells, presumably in connection with their magical function (Jordan 1985b, pp. 207–210). The well, then, may have been the original place of deposit of the tablet, but one cannot be sure, for the tablet seems to have been part of the filling earlier in this century.

5. IM 2820 Max. p.H. 0.063, max. p.W. 0.123, Th. 0.001 m. 3rd century?

Parts of the top edge (above Cols. II and IV of Side A) seem original. In the text below, I refrain from conjecturing the original width and the amount of text, if any, lost at the left and the right of Side A.



IM 2820, Side A D.R.J.
 0.00 0.01 0.02 0.03 0.04 0.05 m

athletes and whether the excavated remains were once part of the Stoa of Regulus. With Priscus I would also tentatively associate an honorific inscription from the Isthmus, ΙΣ 70-2 (Clement 1974, pp. 110–111, pl. 96), broken on all sides and with little connected sense but preserving phrases appropriate for a high priest for life (τῆ)ς πρὸς τοὺς θεοὺς εὐσεβεί[ας ἐνεχεν, line 18), who repaired religious buildings (κ)α[?] ἱερὰ καὶ ὅσια πάντα ἐπανορθ-, line 20).

⁸ As a general introduction to curse tablets and their use Preisendanz 1972 is standard; valuable too, particularly for material published later, is Faraone 1991. There are two basic collections, Wunsch 1897, with tablets from Attica, and Aud., with other tablets from Attica and tablets from the rest of the ancient world. For lists of curse tablets not in these two collections see Jordan 1985a (Greek); and García Ruiz 1967, p. 55, note 1 and Solin 1968, pp. 23–31 (Latin).

⁹ See *Isthmia* II, plan I and pl. 75:a for the location of the well, two meters east of a Roman latrine. Immediately above the tablet was Hellenistic pottery (Pottery Lot 1497), but deeper in the well was much Roman material of the 3rd century. The tablet was recovered at a depth of 4.50 m. from a shaft 12.37 m. deep; see Notebook 21, pp. 509–547 for the entire well and its contents.

Col. I	Col. II	Col. III	Col. IV	Col. V
1]	Ευλαμω			
2]	υλαμω		Ἐπιλήναι[ον]	[
3]	λαμω		κάτεχε.	[
4]	αμω			[
5]	μω			[
6] Κρονίωνα	Μ[ῆ] λχύ- ω	Σέλευκον		Μαρκίωνα
7] τὸν καὶ Λαῖτον	κοισαν	κάτεχε.		τὸν καὶ Θηρι-
8] κάτεχε.	δραμεῖν			ώτην κάτε-
9]	προβάββα-			χε.
10]	τον ἀνδρά (?) καὶ			[
11] ΤΗΝ Π [— c.5 —] Π Α Ν Τ Ο [— c.4 —] [— c.4 —] Α [— min.5? —]				

Col. II, lines 6–7: λχύ/κοισαν: read cωιν

What is preserved of Side A has sketches of four men; two can be seen to wear tunics. Across each man's chest is an inscription with his name in the accusative (left to right: Kronion also styled Laetus, Seleukos, Epilenaïos, Marcio also styled Theriotes¹⁰) plus the imperative *κάτεχε*, "control". The verb *κατέχω* is in fact frequent in curse tablets of all periods; cf., e.g., Aud. no. 109, line 1 *Μανῆν καταδῶ καὶ κατέχω* (Athens, 4th century B.C.), Jordan 1985a, no. 129, lines 1–2 *κατάσχεσ Ἀρτεμίδω/ρον* (Rome, 3rd century?).¹¹ To the right of Kronion is a column including a clause with the specific purport of the tablet, "let them not prevail in running . . .," presumably in a footrace in one of the games held on the Isthmus.

Greece and the rest of the ancient world have yielded some eighty curse tablets directed against athletes,¹² all of them of the Roman Imperial period, and in fact from the Athenian Agora and Oxyrhynchos(?) we have tablets directed against runners.¹³ Certain of these have

¹⁰ Among these names *Ἐπιλήναι[ος]* and the *supernomen* *Θηριώτης* are apparently new.

¹¹ In instructions in papyrus handbooks spells of this type are known as *κάτοχοι*, "controllers" (e.g. *PGM* III 162–163 *κάτοχος ἡνιόχων ἐν ἄ/γῶνι*, "controller of charioteers in a contest"; LXII, col. 3, the label *Κάτοχος*). For general treatments of such "controlling" spells see Ganschinietz 1919 and Hopfner 1938.

¹² Listed at Jordan 1985b, p. 214. Others, all directed against charioteers, include Jordan 1988a, nos. 1, 3 (Carthage, 3rd century), Rengen 1984 (= *SEG* XXXIV 1437, two, Apameia, 6th century), and unpublished examples from Oxyrhynchos (?), 3rd century or later?) and Tyre (late 4th/early 5th century).

¹³ Agora: Jordan 1985b, no. 6 (= *SEG* XXXV 218) plus several unpublished tablets from Well IV there (Jordan 1985b, pp. 208–209), all mid-3rd century. One (IL 106) is directed against a Pergamene long-distance runner, and another (IL 99) curses him and several other men from cities in Asia Minor and the Peloponnese, referring to them as *ἀνάρεστοι* (*addendum lexicis*) *δολιχοδρόμοι*, "displeasing(?) long-distance runners". Oxyrhynchos(?): *SupplMag* II, no. 157, 4th century, against two runners, identifiable as such in the phrase *τῶν ἀθλητῶν* (*sic*) *δρομέων* (line 18).



FIG. 1. Aud. no. 300, Side A. From near Cirta, 3rd or 4th century (*CIL* VIII). Scale *ca.* 3:4

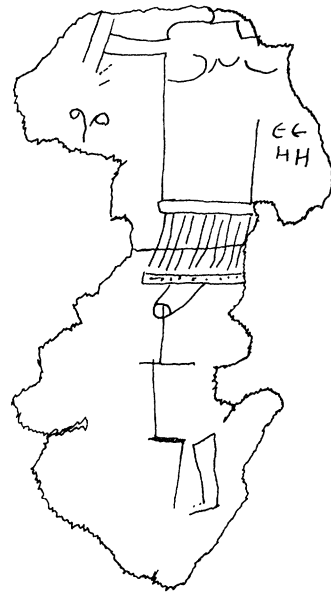


FIG. 2. Aud. no. 149. From Rome, *ca.* 400 (Wünsch 1898, no. 12). Scale *ca.* 4:5

sketches of their victims: charioteers from Carthage and Rome, for example.¹⁴ On the Isthmian tablet, the drawings of the heads are quite stylized: a circle for the head itself, a broad, flowing upsilon for the hair, two small knobs for the ears, a taller, quick upsilon with a dot on each side for eyebrows and eyes, and two blips at the bottom for nose and mouth. Most of what is below the runners' shoulders is covered with writing or is in corroded areas and difficult to discern, and Seleukos below the forehead and Marcio below the neck are altogether lost. Arms hang without articulation; Epilenaïos' right (his left is lost in corrosion) ends in fingers, but Kronion's left does not. There are wiggly lines across the two men's lower abdomens, presumably lower fringes of short tunics. Through Epilenaïos' tunic, one sees nipples and navel, represented by small circles. Beneath the fringes of both tunics appear genitals. Similar sketches of men with short tunics and exposed genitals are to be found on curse tablets from near Cirta in Numidia (*CIL* VIII 19525 = Aud. no. 300, 3rd or 4th century; Fig. 1) and from Rome (Wünsch 1898, no. 10 = Aud. no. 149, *ca.* 400; Fig. 2), both evidently directed against competitors in the circus.¹⁵

¹⁴ Carthage: Grenier 1905, Jordan 1988a, no. 3. Rome: Aud. nos. 148, 149, 151, 152(?), 159, 167, 187.

¹⁵ J. Schmidt, the editor of *CIL* VIII 19525, describes the figure as a demon with hairy goat legs, carrying two snares and a hook, but rather it seems to have leggings much like those worn by circus combatants (e.g. by *mirmillones*, for whom such equipment was apparently standard: see Blanco Freijeiro 1950, p. 135, and fig. 9, showing the "mosaic of Symmachus" at Madrid), and the snares and the hook, if Schmidt has identified them rightly, suggest the arena. The figure is no doubt the intended victim, even if the text itself does not reveal his profession. There is no text on the Roman tablet to identify the figure, but it no doubt represents a

Col. II opens with the word Εὐλαμῶ, repeated in “wing form” (πτερυγοειδές is the *terminus technicus*: cf. *PGM* II 5), i.e., in a column with a letter left off from the beginning each time, until only ω remains. The arrangement is too routine in magical texts to need comment, and we need not add here to the speculation about the meaning of the word itself. Μ[η] ἰχύ/κοῖσαν / δραμεῖν / προκάβα/τον ἄ<λ>λᾶ (?) καί, “May they not prevail in running Friday but (?) indeed . . .”; the sense would no doubt have continued in line 11, both ends of which disappear in corrosion, and there may have been more lines below. The spelling ἰχύκοῖσαν, not quite subjunctive or optative, is worth noting: a similar ending occurs on a mid-3rd-century curse tablet from the Athenian Agora, in the word δυνηθοῖσαν (Jordan 1985b, no. 7, line 17, for -ῶσιν), for which I could not cite a parallel in its edition. Occasionally elsewhere on curse tablets one finds forthcoming competitions dated by week days: Tuesday at Rome (e.g. Aud. no. 163, line 71 ἐξ ἡμέρας Ἀρέως, ca. 400), Wednesday at Carthage (e.g. Aud. no. 253, line 13 in *ζιε Mercuri*, 2nd or 3rd century?), Friday at Athens (Jordan 1985b, no. 1, line 7 ἐν τῇ μελλούσῃ παρασκευῇ, mid-3rd century), and Saturday at Aphaka in Lebanon (e.g. Aud. no. 16, col. I, line 12 ἐν τῷ σαβάτῳ, 3rd century or later?).

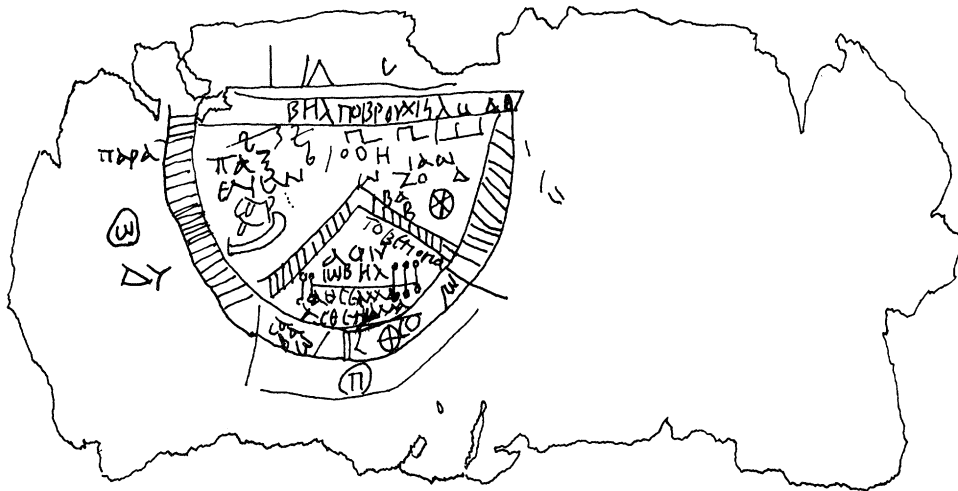
Side B (Fig. 3) has a semicircular diagram with magical *charaktères*¹⁶ at its sides, a wedge inscribed with magical letters and such in its lower central area. We may compare a similar design, from a papyrus formulary assigned to the 3rd or the 4th century (*PGM* VII 217; Fig. 4): a wedge with *charaktères* at each side but in a square, to be scratched on a tin tablet “for love, favor, legal(?) action, and friends.”

A closer, and as far as I know unique, congener of the Isthmian design appears on a fragment of a lead tablet from Hadrumetum in north Africa (Héron de Villefosse 1905; Fig. 5).

The Isthmian and the Hadrumetine designs consist of bands outlining the lower halves of circles and their diameters, each with a wedge-shaped area marked out at the very bottom of the circle; the bands in the Isthmian example are further delineated with crosshatchings. The area above our semicircle is corroded, but one sees there traces compatible with either the name Ἰᾶω (i.e. Yahweh, common in syncretic magic: Fauth 1967, 1968) or zigzags like those standing on the diameter of the Hadrumetine design. Along the diameter run the letters

charioteer, for the tablet belongs to a series of some fifty tablets that were found together; those with enough text to show their purposes curse charioteers.

¹⁶ For general introductions to such *charaktères*, see Hopfner 1924 and Rengen 1984, pp. 216–219. *Charaktères* and many of the magical syllables (*voces magicae*) that will be met with below remain difficult to interpret. In a review of the first edition of *PGM*, volume I (Leipzig 1928), A. D. Nock (1929, p. 232) wrote: “I would close by remarking on three tasks which await accomplishment. First, the proper study of the *voces magicae*; second, the making of a Corpus of magical drawings in the papyri and an accompanying study of their iconographic bearings; third, the making of a Corpus of the so-called Abraxas gems. In this region of shadows there is room for more workers, and the exploration of these byways of the human mind should not be regarded as unworthy or as likely to prove fruitless.” Four decades later, Grumach (1970, p. 174, note 50) stressed the same need. Twenty more years have passed, and we still lack such corpora. Of greatest help so far in studying the *voces magicae* are the indices of Aud., *PGM*, and *SupplMag* II; those of *PGM* have never been formally published, the plates having been destroyed when Leipzig was bombed in the Second World War, but Karl Preisendanz, the editor, had received proofs, which he allowed to be photocopied for private distribution. William Brashear tells me that for a forthcoming volume of *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* he has compiled a list of possible etymologies (Egyptian, Hebrew, Persian, etc.) that scholars have proposed for these often baffling vocables.



IM 2820, Side B D.R.J.
 .00 .01 .02 .03 .04 .05 m

FIG. 3. Curse tablet 5, Side B

ΒΗΛΠΟΒΡΟΥΧΙΗΛ Ω ΑΘ, with a blank space at the left; the occurrence twice of ΗΛ (Hebrew *ʾel*, *ל*) invites an articulation of the first thirteen letters as divine names, Βηλ Ποβρουχηλ. Βηλ occurs in a magical papyrus in a formula for an invocation of a cosmic god whose names include Iao and Sabaoth (*PGM* IV 1010, 1051);¹⁷ we may compare Παβηλ in this

¹⁷ Βηλ is the transcription of the name of the god Baal, e.g. *LXX* Daniel 13.4. An apparent instance of the name in a graffito on a lamp, L 4607, of the 6th(?) century from the Fountain of the Lamps at nearby Corinth (Wiseman 1972, pp. 29–31, no. 22, fig. 10) is the result of a misreading (*vidi*). The published text and translation:

[ὀρχιζω] σε τὸν
 [μέγαν] θεὸν Καβάω,
 [τὸν] Ἰάωα, τὸν
 Βήλ, ὅπως
 5 ποιήσῃ(= εἰ)ς <καλ>ῶς
 ὥς ταῦτα φύσων
 ἔτος ὦ ἀτ[έκμ]αρ[τον].

“I adjure you, great God Sabaoth, Iao, Baal, that you kindly bring it to pass that the 800th boundless year swell to fullness with these things.”

I would transcribe and translate differently (but I have not made sense of the end):

[Ἐπικαλ]οῦμέ (for -μαί) σε τὸν
 [μέγαν] θεὸν Σαβαωθ,
 [τὸν Μι]χαηλ, τὸν Γα-
 βρ<ι>ηλ, ὅπως



FIG. 4. Papyrus formulary (*PGM* VII 217). Scale 1:1

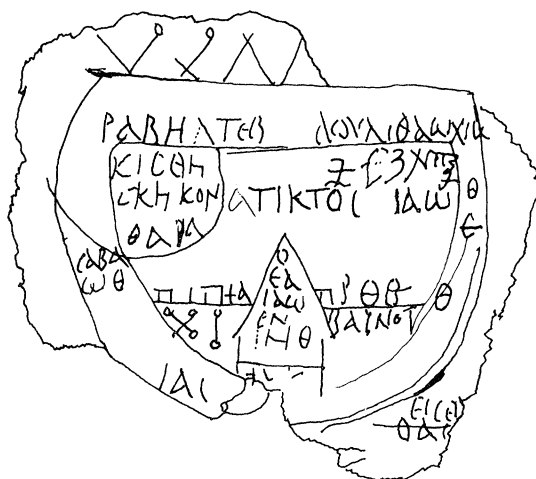


FIG. 5. Lead tablet. From Hadremetum (Héron de Villefosse 1905). Scale *ca.* 1:1

position on the Hadrumetine tablet and $\text{I}\omega\beta\eta\lambda$ below in our diagram. I have no good parallel for $\text{Π}\sigma\beta\rho\upsilon\chi\eta\lambda$, but initial Π- may be the Egyptian masculine article and not integral to the word, and $\text{Ο}\beta\rho\eta\lambda\upsilon\sigma\chi$ (3220) among magical words invoking Aphrodite in another formula in the same papyrus must therefore be considered related; cf. also $\text{Ο}\beta\rho\iota\sigma\upsilon\lambda\eta\mu$ on two 3rd-century(?) curse tablets from Carthage, Aud. no. 253, line 7 and Jordan 1988a, no. 1, lines 6–7. The last letters in the line, $\Omega \text{A} \Theta$, suggest a permutation on the name of the angel $\text{I}\alpha\omega\theta$ (Michl 1962, p. 217, no. 107), itself formed by the addition of θ to $\text{I}\alpha\omega$ (Baudissin 1876, pp. 194–195).

Just beneath the diameter in the Isthmian diagram is a string of magical *charaktères*, some of them similar to those in the Hadrumetine drawing. In the field beneath the *charaktères* we read the vocables

<i>Col. I</i>	<i>Col. II</i>	<i>Col. III</i>
Παξ	Ιοθη	Ιαω
Ελτων (λ ₁ or ν)	Ω	Ζο Δ
Cap		Ba
A		B

with a boat- (or moon?-) shaped *charaktêr* beneath the $\text{C}\alpha\rho$ / A in Col. I and, at the right of the $\text{B}\alpha$ / B of Col. III, a six-spoked cartwheel. To this last we may compare the spoked *charaktêr*

5 ποίησε ΩC
ΩC ταῦτα ΦΥCON
[-^(?)-] καὶ (for καί) τὸ CΩΔΥ[.] ΔP[-³⁻⁴-] ON

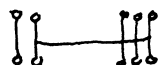
"I invoke you by the great god Sabaoth, by Michael, by Gabriel, in order that you do . . ."

at the upper right of the wedge in the papyrus design (Fig. 4). In Col. I, Ελιων transliterates 'Elyōn (עֲלִיֹן) "Most High", one of the mystical names of God.¹⁸ I have no parallels for the other members of the column, but in the corresponding position in the Hadrumetine design stand the vocables Κιςθη / Κηκον / Θαρα: the last and our Cαρ / A may have the same origin, Θ and C being easily confused in copying. Nor do parallels offer themselves for the syllables in Col. II, although Ιοθη may be related to the Ιαωθ mentioned above. Corresponding to our Ιαω in Col. III is Ιαω or Ιαωθ in this position on the Hadrumetine tablet.

The letters within the wedge are smaller than the others and hard to make out. Those running beneath the right-hand sloping divider I tentatively read as τοβεποπα (β, π, or η; π or γι), hitherto apparently uninstanced; they may be related to the Πο/ποπ/πυ at the right of the wedge in the papyrus design. In the center are four lines of text, two above and two below a magical figure:

ΑΟΙΥ (Ο or misshapen Φ)

Ιωβηλ



Αθσελμα (λ or Ϸ)

Ασθενιαμα

In Ιωβηλ we see two letters that begin numerous magical vocables (e.g. the *logos* Ιωερβηθ, etc., discussed by Moraux 1960, pp. 15–23) and Βηλ as above. The letters Ασθενιαμα plainly embrace the Greek word ἀσθέν(ε)ια, "weakness"; cf. the curse tablet Jordan 1988a, no. 1, line 15 (Carthage, 3rd century), where the condition is wished on charioteers.

In the rim of the semicircle stand Cα/βα/ωθ, magical signs, and again Ιω; the Hadrumetine diagram has Cαβα/ωθ and Ιαω here.

¹⁸ The name 'Elyōn appears often enough in the Old Testament (see *RE* VIIIB, 1914, col. 445, s.v. Hypsistos [Cumont]), notably in Psalms 90(91).1: "He who dwells in the help of the Most High," a verse often quoted in contexts of coercion of and protection from the supernatural (see Feissel 1985 and Jordan 1991). In an evidently post-Scriptural tradition (contrast Exodus 10.23), 'Elyōn was the name that Moses invoked to bring down hail on Egypt; cf., e.g., an office of exorcism preserved in an 18th-century manuscript on Mount Athos (Delatte 1957, p. 33): ἐξορκίζω ὑμᾶς ... διὰ τοῦ ὀνόματος Ελιων δ Μωϋσεῖς ἐκάλεσε καὶ ἐγένετο χάλαζα οἷα οὐ γέγονέ ποτε, "I adjure you ... by the name 'Elyōn, which Moses named and there was such hail as had never been." The Hebrew name is thus transliterated at Origen, *Hexapla*, *ad loc.*; cf. also Philon of Byblos *apud* Eusebios, *Praeparatio evangelica*, 1.10.15 (= *FGrHist* 790 F 2), 'Ελιοῦν καλούμενος Ὑψιστος, "'Elyōn called 'Most High'." The "Most High" frequently appears as Ὑψιστος in spells in Greek that have Jewish elements, e.g., on a 3rd- or 4th-century(?) silver phylactery from Egypt whose text begins: "I adjure every spirit wicked and evil, by the great God Most High (κατὰ τοῦ μεγάλου Ὑψίστου Θεοῦ) who created heaven and earth," etc. (Jordan and Kotansky, forthcoming, where other examples are given).

At the left of the semicircle, on a level with the magical signs, are the letters ΠΑΡΑ, which I cannot explain in this context,¹⁹ and outside the rim are an encircled Ω and the letters ΔΥ at the left, an encircled Π below, and traces of what may have been magical *charaktêres* at the right. If the Hadrumetine diagram had such *charaktêres*, they are now lost.

The date? The excavation context of our Isthmian tablet, dump within a well, is unfortunately not diagnostic. It is unfortunate too that the Hadrumetine design, which has letters quite like those of the Isthmian tablet, comes from an unrecorded excavation and has no chronological context.²⁰ On both tablets the letter forms, obviously Roman Imperial, to my eye seem roughly contemporary with or perhaps a little later than those of the mid-3rd-century tablets from the Athenian Agora (from Wells IV, V, and VII; see Jordan 1985b, pp. 209, 212–213, pls. 65–68); I would prefer a better criterion, though. The similar misspellings in δυνηθοῖσαν on one of these Athenian tablets and in λχύκοισαν on the Isthmian (see p. 119 above) may be significant here.

The trench and the market provide more and more evidence, often from coastal cities with heterogeneous populaces, of a community of superstition in the *oikoumenê* in the time of the Empire. Increasing too is the evidence that the medium through which details of such lore passed from one end of that world to the other was often the papyrus codex or scroll of magical recipes, of which we have dozens from Egypt. Several mid-3rd-century lead tablets from the Athenian Agora, for instance, whose magical names have Hebrew and Coptic elements, seem to have been professionally produced, copied from a papyrus handbook now lost (Jordan 1985b, pp. 233–236). Amathous on Cyprus has yielded an inscription on selenite, of the 3rd century or later, with a magical invocation parallel to one prescribed in a papyrus formulary from Egyptian Thebes (*PGM* IV 1443–1456).²¹ A curse tablet from Rome (Aud. no. 188, 4th century?) ritually accuses its intended victim of eating a Nile fish and burning the papyrus boat(?) of Osiris, neither of which could he easily have done beside the Tiber, but we now have a version (*PGM* LVIII 6–14) of the formula from Egypt that was its model.²² From Rome and from distant Afghanistan come gemstones inscribed with virtually

¹⁹ Perhaps they signify παρά, “beside (*sc.* the diagram)”, and are an intrusion from a set of instructions telling where the encircled Ω and ΔΥ below and the two *charaktêres* should be put. (Compare the texts mentioned in notes 22–25 below for instances of intrusions from formularies.)

²⁰ Other tablets from Hadrumetum, Aud. nos. 263–298, Jordan 1985a, nos. 144–148, have been assigned to the 2nd and 3rd centuries on the basis of their letter forms, but there are few published illustrations from which one might control such dating. No Hadrumetine tablet, as far as I am aware, has a recorded stratigraphy.

²¹ The text is one of several Amathuntine *inedita* announced by Aupert and Jordan 1981, where the stone is incorrectly called talc, not selenite. For the parallels with the papyrus formula see Jordan, forthcoming I.

²² For ritual accusation of impiety as a means of harming one's enemy in ancient magic, see in general Eitrem 1925b. The papyrus, to whose writer I should tentatively assign a scroll of magical recipes (Eitrem 1925a, no. 1) at Oslo and perhaps also a leaf (Pintaudi 1980) at Florence, the latter once part of a codex of such recipes, is itself a leaf from a codex; it is fragmentary and has had to be restored on the basis of the curse tablet, which was known to its editors only from a faulty sketch on a slip of paper glued into a notebook kept at Rome by E. Q. Visconti in the 18th century (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, cod. Lat. 9697, f. 110.1; *vidi*). In 1973 I was able to identify a lead tablet in the British Museum (1878.10-19.2) as that of Visconti's sketch and to arrive at a better text, which I shall publish in full elsewhere. I translate:

“I speak to you who died prematurely . . . and have been taken over by the wicked Typhon, for the Great Osiris who has assumed power and kingship over the nether gods commands you. Take over Nikomedes,

identical texts that must have derived, as mistakes in them show, from their being directly copied from a set of such instructions.²³ The text of a bronze phylactery from Acre in Sicily actually includes the title and the instructions from the recipe from which it was copied.²⁴ Most recently excavations at Corinth have brought to light evidence for the existence in the Corinthia of a handbook from Egypt. It is an inscribed lead tablet of the 3rd or 4th century, the writer of whose text, like the writer of the text of the phylactery from Acre, was also so ignorant, fortunately for us, as to copy instructions and all from his recipe book: the tablet is fragmentary, but the instructions mention a mummy and a thread apparently from its

drive daily incurable (fevers) onto this wicked and impious one, for he it is who burned the papyrus boat (? παπυρών) *of Osiris and ate the flesh of the alabês fishes* (κα[ι] / φαγών τὰ κρέα τῶν ἰχθύων τῶν / ἀλαβήτων)—*Nikomedes, whom—bore* (Νεικωμήδην, ἦν ἔτεκα[ι] / [.] αμμεινα for Νικομήδης, δὲν ἔτεκε . . .). *I adjure you, then, ghost, to . . .*”

The παπυρών may be a papyrus boat (cf. Plutarch, *Isis and Osiris* 18: Isis searches for Osiris’ dismembered body in such a craft) or grove (apparently uninstanced in Egyptian mythology, but this is the readier meaning of the Greek: cf. ἄμπελος/ἀμπελών, “vine/vineyard”, κύαμος/κυαμών, “bean/beanfield”, etc.; Παπυρών too, the name of two inland cities, one between Jerusalem and Philadelphiea [Josephus, *AJ* 14.33, *BJ* 1.130] and the other near Damaskos [*AJ* 14.2, *BJ* 1.6], is unlikely to refer to a boat). In Egyptian religion it was forbidden, for one reason or another, to eat certain fishes (Gamer-Wallert 1970, pp. 75–85). The *alabês* (line 13), to be identified as the Nile carp *Labeo niloticus* (Thompson 1947, p. 8; Gamer-Wallert 1970, pp. 37–38), which Nikomedes is charged with eating, is now seen, as a result of the new inspection (editors have transcribed the sketch in Visconti’s book as τῶν ἰχθύων τῶ[ν] ἱερῶν? / παρ[α]λάβη [for -βε] τὸν Νεικωμήδην in lines 12–13), to have been among those fishes banned. Immediately afterwards, in the phrase Νεικωμήδην, ἦν ἔτεκα[ι], the wrong case of the noun, the wrong gender of the relative pronoun, and the misspelling of the verb are consistent with the assumption that the papyrus model from which the lead text was taken had some common abbreviation of the expression for maternal lineage, e.g. Δ ἢ Δ for δεῖ(ν)α (δν/ῖν) (ἔτεκεν) ἢ δεῖ(ν)α; see Jordan 1988b, pp. 239–241 for a discussion of such abbreviation of formulas for identification through the maternal line in magical texts.

²³ Rome: Pomyalovski 1873, p. 66 (stone unspecified). Afghanistan: Novosadski 1917, Rozanova 1960 (red jasper). The printed texts are incorrect, as Rozanova’s excellent photograph shows; I hope to publish detailed observations elsewhere. I translate from the photograph:

“This (is) the spoken logos (οὗτος ὁ λ(εγόμενος) λόγος): *‘Abaichôrmyid. Muzzle so-and-so* (τὸν δεῖ(ν)α) *whom so-and-so* (TONO) *bore, so that he may not object to me in anything that I object to him’.*”

Betraying the use of a formulary here are not only the identity of the two texts but also the opening phrase οὗτος ὁ λ(εγόμενος) λόγος, from the instructions in a recipe (so Preisendanz *apud* Preisendanz and Vogliano 1948, p. 79), the common abbreviation for δεῖ(ν)α, and the letters TONO, which no doubt derives from the abbreviation □ or □, frequent in formularies, for δνομα, (see, e.g., *PGM* II, p. 270). I would mention also a curse tablet from Beirut, Jordan 1985a, no. 167 (late 2nd century), with the label Κάτοχος Ἱππων καὶ Ἡνιόχων, “Controller of Horses and Charioteers”, which has other indications (Jordan 1988a, p. 127; Jordan, forthcoming, II) of being copied from a formulary; cf. note 11 above.

²⁴ Bronze: Preisendanz and Vogliano 1948 (= *SEG* XIV 593). Lines 8–13, for example, run:

“The phylactery of Moses when he went up on the mountain. . . . If you wear this you will fear no magician, no binding-spell, no evil spirit, nothing at all. Wear it in a pure state and don’t share it except with lawful descendants.”

Preisendanz (*op. cit.*) and Peterson (1953) diagnose some of its mistakes.

wrappings.²⁵ The curse from the Isthmus, with the close affinity of its magical diagram to one from the farther shores of the Mediterranean, is another element of this *koinê*.

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²⁵ MF-1986-44; see my preliminary notes, Williams and Zervos 1987, p. 31, note 43. I hope to present the tablet in full soon.

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D. R. JORDAN