

THE PHILINNA PAPYRUS AND THE GOLD TABLET FROM THE VIGNA CODINI

In the last number of the *Journal of Hellenic Studies* (LXII, 1942, pp. 33-38) Professor Paul Maas has reconstructed an interesting magical text from what he calls, for convenience, the Philinna papyrus. That document is made up of two fragments, P. Amherst 11 and P. Berol. 7504 (*Berliner Klassikertexte*, V, p. 144). Because of the war the proposed junction could not be demonstrated by photographs of both pieces, but the reconstruction is nevertheless convincing. This note deals with one short passage in the papyrus. I accept Maas's edition of the text (p. 36) and refer the reader to his article for all palaeographical matters and for the details of the reconstruction.

The Philinna papyrus is a collection of charms written in hexameters. The last, which is headed Φιλίννης Θεσσαλῆς ἐπαιοιδῆ εἰς κεφαλῆς πόνου, reads as follows:

- 15 Φεῶν' ὀδύνη κεφαλῆς, φευγειδε [2-4 ll.]
16 ὑπὸ πέτ[ρα]ς, φεύγουσι δὲ λύ-
17 κοι, φεύγουσι δὲ μώνυχες ἴπ-
18 ποι

The Berlin fragment has the words πληγαῖς ὑπ[] in the latter part of line 18 and there are two letters preserved in the line below. No attempt has been made to fill the gaps, and I disregard these remnants.

After φεύγει δέ in line 15, Maas suggests λέων or τε λῆς; Wilamowitz had already supplied τε. I would propose τε πᾶν, following the analogy of another magical text, the gold tablet or lamella found in the Vigna Codini, which was first described by Secchi nearly a century ago, and has been mentioned or briefly discussed by several scholars since. The inscription reads ΑΙΩΝ ΕΡΤΕΤΑ ΚΥΡΙΕ ΣΑΡΑΤΤΙ ΔΟC ΝΕΙ-ΚΗΝ ΚΑΤΑ ΠΤΑΙΝ ΥΠΟ ΠΕΤΡΑΝ. In this *Journal*, *supra*, pp. 30-35, I reported and criticized previous interpretations, and suggested that in spite of obvious grammatical difficulties this text could be explained as a charm against reptiles and scorpions. Instead of ΠΤΑΙΝ we must read ΠΑΝ, and the phrase πᾶν ὑπὸ πέτραν, "everything under a stone," must be referred to lurking vermin (cf. Soph., *Fr.* 37; Praxilla, *Fr.* 4 Bergk). One grammatical irregularity of the gold tablet may have been shared by the papyrus, for πέτραν is said to be a possible reading there. For full discussion of the language and the purpose of the gold tablet I must refer to the article mentioned above.

Nobody, of course, will imagine that my hypothetical interpretation of the tablet

can be made certain by a hypothetical supplement in the papyrus, or *vice versa*, but it is hard to overcome the feeling that these two magical texts are akin in the phrase containing the words *ὑπὸ πέτραν*. Bearing in mind that Philinna's spell is meant to drive away something harmful, one may observe that a snake or scorpion hiding under a stone is as well suited to be the subject of the verb *φεύγειν* as wolves are, and better suited than the harmless *μόνυχες ἵπποι*, which the writer borrowed from Homer to fill the verse. It is true that *τε πᾶν* makes five letters where Maas allows four; but at the end of a line, where the writing is often crowded and the margin not strictly maintained, one letter more makes little difference. The first column (P. Amh.) shows some irregularity in the right-hand margin (see plate II).

The preceding paragraphs are based upon an interpretation of the lamella which I am willing to submit to the consideration of fellow students, although, since they were written, I have received letters expressing different views, which should be examined along with mine. They are concerned only with the text of the lamella, but in so far as they affect our judgment of it, they should be set over against the connection which I thought I discerned between it and the fifteenth line of the Philinna papyrus.

Writing from Oxford on May 9, Professor Paul Maas remarks that if *παντός* had been written where *παιν* stands on the tablet, "the two cola would be identical—a kind of limping phalaecean, - - - ~ ~ - ~ ~ - ~." I infer from this that he inclines to regard *παιν* as a mere blunder for *παντός* rather than for *πᾶν*. He finds *ἐρπέτα* puzzling and thinks that [*ρ*] *αίων ἐρπετά*, "crushing reptiles," may be preferable. To me the use of the participle in that position is a difficulty.¹

A different line of approach is taken by Mr. Henri Seyrig, formerly Director of the Service of Antiquities in Syria, in a letter of June 28. Noting the discrepancies in the alphabet of the inscription (as Secchi published it), he says that we should expect to find on such an object the form *Ω* or *W* for omega, not *Ω*, as in Secchi's report.

"If the engraver used *W*, the explanation becomes rather obvious: ΠΑΙΝ is but a misreading, by Secchi, of the article ΤΩΝ, perhaps carelessly engraved, like ΤΙΑΙΝ. Presumably Secchi's printer had no *Γ* or *W*, and therefore printed *С* and *Ω*.

¹ Professor Maas has now seen a typed copy of the first paragraphs of this communication. In a letter of June 29 he observes that the presence of *ὑπὸ πέτραν* in both the gold tablet and the Philinna papyrus is noteworthy; but he thinks it better to attempt no restoration in line 15 of the papyrus until the Berlin fragment can be examined again. For stylistic reasons, he adds, *φεύγ' εἶδε* [might be preferred to *φεύγει δὲ*]. This recalls a suggestion made by B. D. Meritt (letter of March 9), *φεύγ', εἶδε* [α πᾶνθ', which he would render "Flee, headache, flee in all your shapes and forms, beneath the stone(s)."] I had put this aside, perhaps too hastily, because of some doubt whether a singular imperative would be used with a plural noun, even a neuter plural. But if *εἶδεα* be regarded as in loose apposition with *ὀδύνη*, to which, in Meritt's view, both imperatives are addressed, my objection loses its weight. *φεύγ' εἶδο* [ς ἅπαν would be easier, but the *ε* before the torn margin is reported as certain.

“The meaning, then, could be: ‘Give victory over those under the slab.’ Perhaps the writer meant all the enemies, physical or spiritual, which the deceased had to face in the tomb. The charm would, in that case, definitely be meant for the after-life, which would explain that it was put into the deceased’s mouth.

“Another curious feature is that the text is an hexameter, into which some words have been inserted *παρὰ μέτρον*. The original verse may have read:

αἰὼν ἔρπέτα δὸς νείκην κατὰ τῶν ὑπὸ πέτραν,

or perhaps also:

ἔρπέτα κύριε δὸς νείκην κατὰ τῶν ὑπὸ πέτραν.

“I should prefer the first reading, and suppose that the charm was taken from some liturgy of Αἰὼν and adapted to the personal beliefs of a follower of Sarapis-Αἰὼν. Hence *κύριε Σάραπι*.”

Mr. Seyrig’s suggestion is very ingenious and it agrees perfectly with the epigraphical characteristics of many magical amulets; consequently it may be approved by competent judges. I hesitate to accept it, chiefly because the word “all” is so commonly used in apotropaic formulas; thus we find *φύλαξον ἀπὸ παντὸς κακοῦ* on an amulet in the British Museum, *φυλάξατε . . . ἀπὸ παντὸς κακοῦ δαίμονος* on a stone published by Du Molinet, and in the silver lamella edited by Froehner the operator exorcises “all spirits,” and then mentions in particular “all epilepsy,” “every fever,” and so on through a list of six items.² There is also the possibility that the Philinna papyrus had *πάν* in a somewhat similar context.

Mr. Seyrig introduces a new element into the discussion with the idea that *τῶν ὑπὸ πέτραν* refers to the enemies or dangers that the dead person would encounter in the other world. I should like, however, to see evidence that the phrase conveys such a suggestion elsewhere. Perhaps others may be able to throw more light upon this obscure text.

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² British Museum 56010; Du Molinet, *Cabinet de la Bibliothèque de Sainte Geneviève*, p. 127, plate 29, 7-8; Froehner, *Sur une amulette basilidienne* (Caen, 1867); see also for further illustration of this point the long text (a phylactery against demonic visitations) from a silver lamella found in a tomb at Beirut and published by Héron de Villefosse (*Florilegium Vogüé*, pp. 287-295).