Apotropaia and Phylakteria

Confronting Evil in Ancient Greece

edited by

Maria G. Spathi
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Contents

Preface

The present volume is the outcome of the Conference *Apotropaia and Phylakteria. Confronting Evil in Ancient Greece* held in Athens in June 2021 and hosted by the Swedish Institute at Athens. The conference and the edited volume were funded by the Åke Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities, the Åke Wiberg and Magnus Bergvall Foundations. Since it was held during the Covid pandemic, it was a hybrid event: a challenge for both organisers and participants.

Almost all the articles in the volume originated as papers given at the conference, with the exception of the one by D. Paleothodoros and Ch. Karagiannopoulos. Each paper was reviewed by two anonymous peer reviewers.

The idea of holding a conference related not only to the objects but also the rituals and practices applied to ensure the individual and collective protection and prevention against any kind of evil, was born from the clear need for their further investigation, mainly here in the area defined by the modern Greek territory. One might expect that the project would be linked to the editors' engagement with the subject, in fact it was more our 'ignorance' and the need to learn more that encouraged us to hold the conference. This necessity arose from the realization of the influence such items and practices exercised over all aspects of the private and public life of the ancient Greeks. And of course, our desire to present new material from recents excavations was a strong motivating factor, as archaeologists in the field constantly feel. Indeed, the present volume proves once again how important the archaeological context is for the interpretation of all kinds of material, rituals and practices.

The volume addresses the *apotropaia* and *phylakteria* from different perspectives: via literary sources, archaeological material, and iconography. It sets out to cross disciplinary boundaries. As fittingly stated by Ch. Faraone, the title of the volume refers to every object, literary text or any kind of representation that aims to protect, heal or even help fulfill a wish. The chronological period covered in the contributions generally spans from the early Archaic to Late Roman period. The volume cannot be organized strictly chronologically or geographically, but an effort is made to organize it thematically, following a rather loose chronological sequence.

Each contribution is a separate chapter with footnotes and bibliography. The transliteration of Greek words such as names and places is always a complicated matter and complete coherence is not possible. Therefore, the authors have chosen their own preferences.

The first piece by Ch. Faraone serves as a general introduction to this volume. V. Kousoulini refers to the literary evidence of women performing *apotropaia* songs in ancient Greek tragedy; M. Giannopoulou to literary evidence on practices and rituals of apotropaic and prophylactic character from Troizen and Methana. O. Pilz examines the textual sources on competition and envy among craftspeople, as well as the iconographic evidence on the use of apotropaic devices in ceramic production, taking into account the social system that fostered such a behavior.

Apart from the above papers on literary sources, it is the material evidence, i.e. the archaeological finds, that are mostly represented in this volume. And of course we could not omit the terracotta figurines, which represent a group of finds that mainly characterizes sacred contexts. When they come from known archaeological contexts too, they offer valuable information on the character and attributes of the worshiped deities.

A. Touchais investigates early Archaic female figurines from sacred contexts in Argos. M. Chidiroglou discusses terracotta figurines of various types in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens with a possible prophylactic or apotropaic character. E. Peppa Papaioannou scrutinizes a group of terracotta figurines of the Hellenistic period that has been intrigued scholars for many decades and still remains open, namely the interpretation of the figurines displaying deformed features.

M. Spathi writes on the meaning and use of clay gorgoneion roundels found in sacred contexts, amongst which is a foundation deposit in ancient Messene. D. Koletti surveys a number of inscribed sherds found in Piraeus of a probable magic-related character.

E. Lambropoulou re-examines reliefs from Messene with the representation of an open hand from the Late Hellenistic and Roman periods, while E. Pavlidis and A. Giovanopoulou describe a Roman bas-relief from Actia Nicopolis with the depiction of a legged double-phallus with an apotropaic Latin inscription. V. Garaffa deals with

the apotropaic devises and practices, mainly in the form of niches, employed for the defence by sacred means of city walls and gates in Sicily and Magna Graecia.

After the reference to literary sources, practices in the form of inscriptions and niches, as well as those larger archaeological finds like terracotta figurines, clay roundels, and stone reliefs, there follow those smaller objects that belong to the broader category of amulets.

S. Klinger pronounces on some different objects with an amuletic function from the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth, as does A. Avramidou from the sanctuary of Parthenos at ancient Neapolis. D. Grigoropoulos focuses on the use and symbolic significance of bells during the Roman period. D. Paleothodoros and Ch. Karagiannopoulos present an Etruscan Archaic ring with the depiction of a scorpion found in a pit inside a house in Philia, Thessaly. C. Kallintzi and K. Chatziprokopiou offer different kinds of jewelry from Abdera with an amuletic function, dated from the 7th century BC to the early Roman period.

The final set of contributions concern engraved stones, the so-called magical gems, dated mainly to the Graeco-Roman period. Their study has been widely developed in recent years based on the literary sources as much as on the actual gems, most of which come from collections around the world. B. Takács, based on the descriptions of the Graeco-Egyptian magical papyri, recognizes an amulet type used to protect the ritual practitioner and the other participants from the divine agency invoked. D. Barcat studies a small set of gems to decipher the way Greek mythological figures were perceived in the cultural context of Egypt. A. Maravela reviews the verbal process of banishment (as well as a gemstone) used to protect someone when they encounter Empousa. E. Tsatsou presents a gem that has come to light in the Roman cemetery of Pella in Central Macedonia and depicts the serpent deity Chnoubis. P. Vitellozi discusses a magical gem from the Museum in Perugia, that can be recognized as a phylactery against a demon.

As can be seen from the above contributions in the volume, the identification as well as the interpretation of the rituals and practices associated with acts of prevention and deterrence is anything but simple. It requires an inclusive consideration of the results of the excavations, of the sources and even of the historical/social conditions from which they emerged.

It is our hope that this volume will bring this large and complicated topic to the attention of a wider range of scholars and so inspire new conferences and publications.

We warmly thank all the participants and colleagues who contributed to the publication of the volume, as well as the staff of the Swedish Institute and the Swedish foundations for their generous support.

M. Spathi

Confronting Evil at the Boundaries of the City, the House, and the Human Body

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Abstract

This chapter, which serves as a general introduction to this volume about protective amulets, defines an "amulet" as any object, text or image attached to a human or animal body, to a house or city or in fact to any valuable human possession that aims at one of three goals: (i) protection; (ii) healing; or (iii) the acquisition of some abstract goal, such as victory or erotic charm. Phulakteria, a word derived from the verb *phulassein*, "to protect", are amulets that protect and apotropaia, a word derived from the verb *apotrepein*, "to turn away", are a subset of *phulakteria*, that protect by turning evil aside or away. Since *apotropaia* are mainly found at entrances, they are the primary focus of this chapter.

According to a later Roman source, the philosopher Diogenes was unhappy, when he saw two iambic verses inscribed on the house of some newlyweds in the northern Greek city of Cyzicus:[2]

'The son of Zeus, resplendent-in-victory (Kallinikos), Heracles lives here. Let no evil enter!' And when he saw this couplet a second time, written on a different house, he became annoyed and asked a bystander:

> Why, if this practice profits you, do you not inscribe the same text on the doors of the city, but rather on your houses, into which Heracles is unable to go? Is it because you are willing to let the city suffer evilly, but not your individual households?

The philosopher's critique seems to have been two-fold. First, there was the logistical problem that Heracles, because of his great size, would be 'unable' to fit inside of a Greek house, and second was the philosophical complaint—wouldn't it make more sense to put a single copy of these same verses at the gates of the city and thereby protect all of the people of Cyzicus? The bystander admits he is unable to answer and, when Diogenes asks him what kind of evil did these people imagine Heracles to ward off, he responds, 'disease, poverty and death, these sorts of things.'

The inscribed iambic verses that allegedly provoked the philosopher's questions have been discovered, in fact, throughout the Roman Empire in both Greek and Latin, inscribed or painted, on the walls of houses and shops.[3] Because all of the extant examples were at first dated to the Imperial Period, scholars for a long time assumed that this protective inscription was a later invention and that the story about Diogenes was entirely apocryphal.[4] But in the 1960s archaeologists excavating a residential quarter of the Hellenistic city of Gela in Sicily discovered a small terracotta disk that had on its obverse a gorgoneion and on the reverse a shorter trochaic variant of the same inscription that caught Diogenes' attention:[5] **"**Heracles lives here, let no evil enter!" This terracotta disk, then, effectively combined two different devices — the gorgoneion and the poetic verses — into a single amulet. And when another, even earlier version came to light near a doorway on Thasos, it became clear that the anecdotes about Diogenes in the 4th century BC did indeed have some kernel of truth and that this practice was fairly widespread in the Greek world.[6]

These inscriptions also reveal how the Greeks conceptualized evil and the steps they took to confront it. According to the anecdote from Cyzicus, the Greeks thought that evils like death, poverty, and disease could enter the house and that they presumably did so by the doorways where we most often find these inscriptions. That they were thought to come into the house on their own two feet is also suggested by the iconographic traditions of depicting death and poverty, at least, in anthropomorphic form, most famously perhaps in the vase painting of Thanatos and Hypnos carrying away the body of Sarpedon, but even on the Athenian stage, where at the start of his *Alcestis*, Euripides dresses Thanatos in a black robe, arms him with a sword and has him enter the front door to the heroine's palace when she is about to die. It is also no accident that near the end of the play it is Heracles himself who physically

[1] Nearly all of the material in this introduction comes from Faraone 1992 or 2018, to which I direct those who desire further discussion or bibliography.

[2] Diogenes Laertius 6.50. See Weinreich 1915: 8-10 for texts, date and commentary. For more recent bibliography, see Faraone (2003e) and Zellmann-Rohrer (2015: 13-14) who also discusses the later Christian use of the formula.

[3] For more examples, see Faraone 2018.

[4] See, e.g., Weinreich 1915 or Robert 1965.

[5] This inscription is a single trochaic tetrameter catalectic, whereas the other more popular version, is comprised of two iambic trimeters; see Faraone 2009 for full discussion.

[6] Bernard and Salviat 1962: 608-609 no. 23.

stops Thanatos when he returns to the stage and tries to take Alcestis away with him. In what follows, therefore, I examine more fully the idea that the Greeks warded off evils at entrances by examining amulets placed at four different boundaries of diminishing dimensions: at the gates of their cities, at the doors of their homes, at the edges of their beds and finally on the throats or chests of their bodies. I begin at the furthest point out, at the city gate (and beyond), then discuss in turn each of these points of entry, ending with the innermost circle, namely the protective amulets that they hung on their bodies. As we will see, this final category raises an interesting problem: does it suggest a parallel between the house and the human body, between the door and the human throat, or was some other concept in play, one that imagines the body amulet as a shield that simply protects the owner from frontal attack?

Before we begin, however, let me define some of the key terms that appear in the title of this volume, that recur in this essay and that will appear in many of the chapters that follow. For me the most capacious term for the theme of this conference is 'amulet,' which refers to any object, text, or image attached to a human or animal body, to a house or city or in fact to any valuable human possession that aims at one of three goals: (i) protection; (ii) healing; or (iii) the acquisition of some abstract goal, such as victory or erotic charm. *Phulakteria*, a word derived from the verb *phulassein*, 'to protect', are amulets that protect and *apotropaia*, a word derived from the verb *apotrepein*, 'to turn away,' are a subset of *phulakteria*, that protect by turning evil aside or away. Since *apotropaia* are found mainly at entrances, they will be the primary focus of this essay.

The gates of the city and beyond

In his play *Wealth,* Aristophanes brings Hermes on stage as hungry god, who tries to get Cario, a slave of the homeowner, to give him some food. At one point he says, 'By the gods, invite me as a fellow householder (ξύνοικον)!' Cario responds by asking him: 'Well, what's in it for us, if you are here (ἐνθάδ᾽ ὤν)?' and Hermes responds by saying 'Install me (ἱδρύσασθέ με) as Strophaios.' A scholiast on the passage tells us that the word *Strophaios* was 'an eponym of Hermes because of his being placed beside the doors in protection against other thieves.' This is a reference, of course, to the household herm, an amulet that is discussed in the next section, but for now let us notice the language that Aristophanes uses to describe the relationship that the newly installed Hermes will have with the household: Hermes Strophaios is imagined as a fellow 'inhabitant' (ξύνοικος) who is 'here' (ἐνθάδ᾽), just as Heracles Kallinikos is imagined to 'live here' (ἐνθάδε κατοικεῖ).

The scholiast then goes on to say that 'in order to avoid mischief and evil in the house, in the cities and in the fields, even those unaffected by war, they (i.e. the Athenians) set up a statue of Ares in the fields, of Athena in the gates of the city and of Hermes, as we have said, at the doors of buildings.'[7] Here, then, we are given a nice wide-angle view of various points of protection against evils: two statues are to be placed at domestic and civic entrances, and a third 'in the fields.' With regard to this outermost circle, we do have some evidence from the Roman period and much later that the Greeks did place bound images of Ares on or near their territorial boundaries in order to ward off attacks by the Thracians and Gauls.[8] But beyond that there are few signs that the Greeks were concerned with protecting the territory that lay beyond their city walls or that they used images of Ares as protective amulets, although it would make sense to use such a frightening military god like Ares to this effect.

It is also possible that the scholiast is referring to amulets designed to protect agricultural fields. The late fifth-century poet and healer Empedocles seems, in fact, to have used such devices to ward off some kind of blight from the crops of Acragas:[9]

> For, when the Etesian Winds were once blowing violently enough to blight the crops, he (sc. Empedocles) commanded that asses be flayed and bags (*askoi*) be made (i.e. from the skins) and he distended them along the hills and ridges in order to capture the *pneuma* (i.e. of the winds). And after it ceased, he was called 'He who prevents the winds.'

The procedure that Empedocles deploys in this anecdote is not at all clear. Commentators over the years, relying on an outdated understanding of Empedocles as an early scientist, have suggested a kind of massive engineering project that involved stretching an untold number of donkey-skins as a physical barrier to prevent the winds from reaching the crops.[10] But the passage does say quite clearly that the ass-skins were each fashioned into *askoi*, a kind of sack commonly used

[7] Scholion to Aristophanes' *Plutus* 1153; see Faraone 1992: 9-11 for full discussion. Ares is a puzzle here. If it were a bound statue of the god, it might make some sense as an amulet against military invasion — see the next note — but the scholiast specifically says that the statue will protect even those fields 'unaffected by war.'

[8] Faraone 1991.

[9] Timaeus *FHG* 1.215-16 apud D.L. 8.60; the discussion in the paragraph below is drawn from Faraone 2021: 207-10.

[10] E.g., Wright (1981: 261), who stated, '[the wind] is checked by stretching asses' skins along hill (or cliff) tops,' which is also an ancient understanding of the passage, as exemplified by a passing comment of Plutarch's (*Moralia* 515c): 'And Empedocles, the natural philosopher (φυσικὸς), by blocking up a certain mountain gorge, which permitted the south wind to blow a dire and pestilential draught down upon the plains, was thought to have shut plague out of his country.' Timaios, however, writing about a half a millennium earlier and presumably using Sicilian sources, says the wind was causing damage to crops, not plague. Cook (1940: 105 n. 2) notes the tendency of Plutarch and other Second Sophistic authors 'to minimize the marvelous' with respect to Empedocles.

as a wine-skin; we are never told that these sacks were then stitched together as a continuous barrier or wall. In a recent study I have revived the idea of A.B. Cook, published more than a century ago, that Empedocles had created amulets of sort that were thought to bind the winds metonymically in sacks, precisely the way that Aeolus is said to control the winds in the *Odyssey*.[11]

Eustathius, while commenting on Aeolus' activities in the poem, actually reports that Greek farmers, like Empedocles worried about their crops, also bound destructive winds in effigy in a 'consecrated sack' (*askos tetelesmenos*) that in this case was made from the skin of a dolphin.[12] The Greek agricultural handbook called the *Geoponica* tells us about another method, one that uses a powerful image of Heracles:[13]

> If you wish that this plant (= 'lion-pulse') in no way appears (sc. in your fields), take five potsherds and draw on them in chalk or in another kind of white (a picture of) Heracles strangling the lion. Place these in the four corners (of the field) and in the middle.

Commentators presume that 'lion-pulse' was an invasive weed whose leaves resembled the mane of a lion and that it is by persuasive analogy that the famous image of Heracles strangling the Nemean lion will likewise strangle the lion-pulse, thereby preventing it from invading the field. We should note that Heracles here is not invoked in prayer to protect the field: the presence of his image is all that is needed.

Regarding the second line of defence suggested by the scholiast — an image of Athena at the gates of the city — here, too, little supporting archeological evidence exists for images of Athena set up at the gates of a city, although it would not be surprising, given the fact that the image of her known as the Palladion was believed to have protected many cities, most famously that of Troy, which could not be conquered as long as the statue remained in the city. To my knowledge, we have no evidence of *palladia* being placed at gateways, but because Athena was worshipped widely as a goddess who protected cities, the scholiast may, indeed, have had some reliable information about an otherwise unknown use of her images as gateway amulets.

The earliest attested civic apotropaia were not, in fact, images of gods, but rather frontal depictions of human body parts, especially eyes and faces.[14] In the 6th century BC, someone carved a pair of frontal eyes on the city wall of Thasos, an image called a 'panther mask' by art historians because of the cat-like aspect of the eyes. The position of this panther mask on an exterior wall of the city near an important city gate is indeed precisely where one would expect to find such an apotropaic image. Its large size, moreover — roughly two and a half metres wide — shows us that it was not a casual graffito, but rather a civic enterprise. The image also appears occasionally on the outer surface of military shields. Eyes also appear as a common apotropaic device on ships. Recent discoveries of underwater archaeology have revealed that the irises of these eyes were sometimes painted with concentric circles, much like the frontal eyes of the Gorgon's head.

A frontal face was also used as a protective amulet to ward off the plague. In Hellenistic times, we hear how a 'wonderworker' named Laiios successfully protected the city of Antioch by commanding the city to carve a giant face of Charon into the side of the mountain that overlooks the city. After Laiios inscribed some special words on this face 'for the salvation of the city,' the plague came to an end.[15] This amulet, therefore, had two parts: an image of a frontal face and an incantatory text inscribed alongside it, much like the terracotta disk from Gela, which combined the gorgoneion and the boast about the presence of Heracles Kallinikos in the house. The face carved high above Antioch was in fact called the *charônion* or, in later Greek, *charôneion* (formed like *gorgoneion*).[16] It represented either the face of Charon (the ferryman of Hades), or a death-demon named Charos whom vase painters depicted, like the Gorgon's head, with a frontal face with glaring eyes emphasized with added red paint.[17] Here the aim was probably to repel or avert death from the city by the process of like banning like.[18] Parts of this monumental carving survive and, although archaeologists originally dated them to the Roman period, the most recent excavators assign them firmly to the Hellenistic.

Another rich source of information about protective amulets for cities comes from Roman Anatolia: inscribed oracles and statue bases that allow us to identify plague amulets in the form of statues of Apollo aiming his bow outwards from various city-thresholds.[19] These oracles

[11] Faraone 2019a.

[12] Eustathius 1646.8-11, quoted by Cook 1940: 107 along with Eust. 1645.59-60 and the scholiast ad *Od.* 10.2, who seems to refer to written recipes.

[13] *Geoponica* 2.42.2. For an apotropaic toad in a pot buried in the centre of a field, see Pliny *NH* 18.158 (protecting millet from disease) and 294 (protecting grain from storms).

[14] Faraone (2018: 68-70) provides a full discussion (with bibliography) of the material discussed in this paragraph and the next.

[15] Malalas 205.8-13; cf. J. Tzetzes *Chil.* 2.59.920-24.

[16] Earlier archaeologists dated the mask to the Roman period, but subsequent excavation places it squarely in the Hellenistic period and connects it with the monument created by Laiios; see Downey 1961: 103-104.

[17] The Antioch mask does survive intact, although its present battered condition makes it impossible to identify any distinguishing features that might mark it out as a dangerous or death-dealing divinity, for example, the glaring or extraordinary eyes associated with Greek names, ancient and modern, containing the stem *char-*. The carved image at Antioch is called a *charônion*, an adjectival form that can simply mean 'the one who glares.'

[18] Weinreich 1909: 152.

[19] Faraone (1992: 57-60) has a full discussion (with bibliography) of

emanated from Apollo's sanctuary at Claros during the devastating Antonine plague of the late 160s AD. One oracle, for example, directed the people of Callipolis to 'set up before the gate Phoebus bearing his bow, who is the driver away of the epidemic,' and another for Hierapolis gave similar advice: 'Around all your city-gates install precincts for a holy statue of Clarian Apollo equipped with his bow, which destroys diseases, as though he were shooting at the unfertile plague from afar with his arrows.'[20] These images, of course, also worked by the process of like-banning-like, because Apollo was the pre-eminent plague god in Anatolia, as is most famously described in the first book of the *Iliad*.[21] I should note, however, that although this oracle refers to the 'installation' of the gateway statues, the sacrifices that the oracle goes on to prescribe are not to Apollo, but to the Earth and to other chthonic gods, presumably to ensure that the foundation of the statues will be secure. In short, Apollo is not to be worshipped at the city gate, and these images are not cult statues but rather *apotropaia* designed to frighten away the plague, once again according to the idea that like bans like.

The doors of the house

Lucian, in his diatribe against *Alexander the False Prophet*, tells us that one of Alexander's oracles was used in similar fashion during this same plague, but to protect a house rather than a town or city; it consisted of a single hexametrical verse,[22] 'Unshorn Phoebus keeps away the cloud of pestilence!' Lucian goes on to describe the power of this verse as follows:

> This verse was to be seen everywhere written over doorways as a charm (ἀλεξιφάρμακον) against the plague; but in most cases it had the contrary result. By some chance it was especially the houses on which the verse was inscribed (αἷς τὸ ἔπος ἐπεγέγραπτο) that were depopulated.... [P]erhaps people neglected precautions ... on the grounds that they had the syllables (sc., of the verse) defending them (προμαχομένας αὐτῶν τὰς συλλαβάς).

Scholars have suggested that despite its satirical tone, Lucian's account is probably accurate, because the same inscription seems to have been inscribed on a small circular statue base from Roman Antioch: ... (ν)εφέλην ἀπέλαυνε A E H I O Y Ω. Perdrizet argued rightly that the presence of the seven vowels (a powerful protective incantation in and of itself) pointed to the apotropaic power of the preceding letters, and also suggested that this inscribed base supported a statuette of Apollo, presumably with his bow drawn in the act of "driving away the cloud of plague."

House-amulets loom even larger in our sources. They often take the form of the same images or texts deployed at the city gates, as we have just seen in the case of Apollo the archer in Anatolia and earlier in the suggestion of Diogenes that the people of Cyzicus should move the verses of the Kallinikos inscription from their house doors to the entrance of their city. As it turns out, in addition to invoking Heracles as Kallinikos or as the killer of the Nemean lion, the Greeks placed an image of him as an infant at the entrances of private residences for protection. The best evidence comes from a Roman house near Antioch, whose owner once placed in the vestibule a mosaic of the all-suffering eye, presumably to protect his household from envy or the evil eye.[23] This evil-eye mosaic was, however, discovered lying squarely on top of a pair of earlier mosaics (Figure 1). In the left panel we see another kind of apotropaic image and text, a hunchbacked dwarf with a large phallus and behind him a depiction of a frontal eye being attacked from all sides. Both the all-suffering eye and ithyphallic grotesques were used widely in ancient Greece and Rome to ward off envy or danger.[24] In the right panel, however, we see a kneeling baby grasping a large snake in each hand. The child in the mosaic is not labeled, but many years ago Doro Levi suggested rightly that it was indeed Heracles and argued that its position in the vestibule, next to the apotropaic dwarf and the all-suffering eye, clearly showed that the scene of Heracles and the snakes must have also had some kind of protective purpose, presumably to protect the inhabitants against snakes.[25]

As was mentioned earlier, a much more popular house-door amulet was the herm,[26] which combined — in a somewhat improbable and abstract manner — two of the most common apotropaic images in the Greek tradition: a frontal head and a phallus. Because examples carved in stone survive much more often, we are prone to think that the phalluses and testicles were usually depicted in relief, but some Attic vase paintings suggest that herms with projecting phalli could also be carved from wood on a smaller scale.[27] Regarding the herm,

the material discussed in this paragraph and the next.

[20] Faraone 1992: 62.

[21] Coins and literary references suggest that in this same period similar statues of Apollo, some with the epithet Propylaios ("before the gate"), were placed at the entrances of another half-dozen Anatolian cities.

[22] Lucian, *Alexander* 36. For Apollo the bowman as a threat in other hexametrical verses, see *PGM* XXIIa, which, as a cure for "bloody flux" directs us to recite to the blood a section of a Homeric verse (*Iliad* 1.75): "The wrath of Achilles far-darting lord."

[23] Levi 1941: 220-21.

[24] For ithyphallic or macrophallic grotesques, see Faraone 2018: Section 3.3.

[25] Levi 1941: 220-21.

[26] The following discussion of the herm is based on Faraone 2018: 132-36

[27] *LIMC* nos. 92-186 *passim*. Jameson (1990: 112 n. 21) questions the ubiquity of the stone herm with phallus carved in relief, which he would limit (because of the expense) to the richer families; he suggests the herm with protruding member that appears frequently on vase paintings was probably wooden, which would explain their disappearance from the archaeological record.

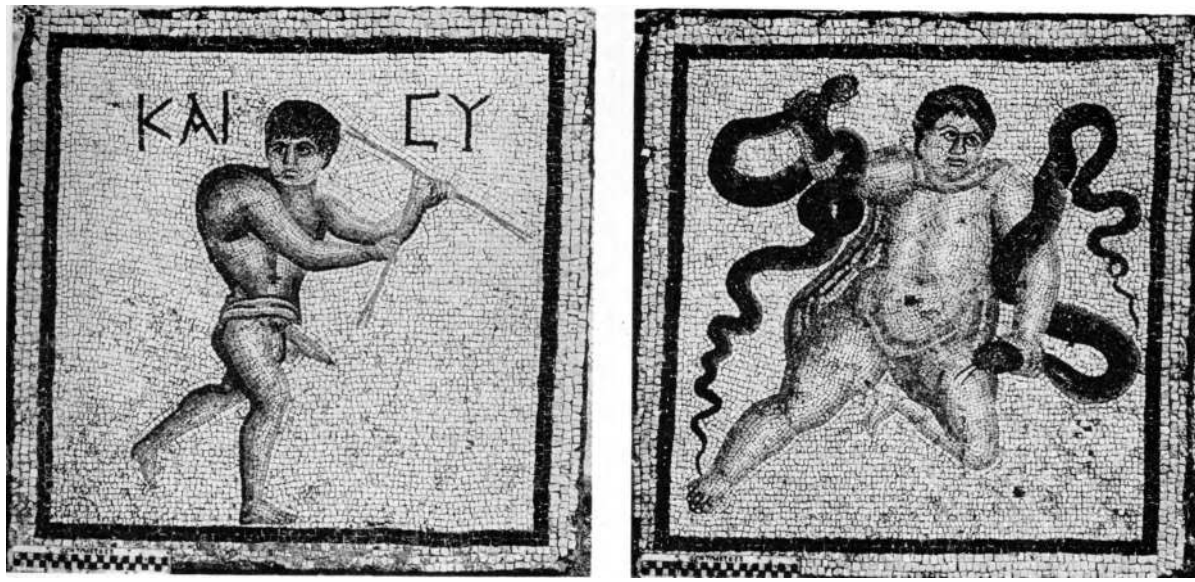

Figure 1. Pair of mosaics, including one of Heracles strangling the snakes. After Levi 1941: no. 120.

the scholiast to Aristophanes' *Wealth* (quoted above) said that *Strophaios* was an epithet of the Hermes who was placed beside the doors. Modern commentators suggest that this epithet refers to the position of the herm statue near the hinge of the house door and thus translate 'Hermes Strophaios' as 'Hermes at the door hinge.' This translation is certainly plausible, because the word *strophaion* can mean the 'turning point" of a door. *Strophaios*, however, is a cognate of the verb *strephein*, 'to turn,' which has another meaning that modern commentators have missed: it can also mean 'to turn something away or aside from someone.' In other words, Hermes' epithet here may be rendered more accurately as the equivalent of *Apotropaios*, 'he who turns away (sc. thieves from the door).'

The verb *hidruein* that Hermes uses to describe his new position (ἱδρύσασθέ με) refers, as we saw in the oracles about the statues of Apollo in city gates, to the act of 'installing' an altar or a temple, an inference made clear by a passage in *Peace*, another play of Aristophanes, where after the statue of Peace has been rescued, the comic hero Trygaeus and his slave discuss what to do next: (*Peace* 923-25):

ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ: ἄγε δή, τί νῷν ἐντευθενὶ ποιητέον;
ΤΡΥΓΑΙΟΣ: τί δ᾽ ἄλλο γ᾽ ἢ ταύτην χύτραις ἱδρυτέον;
ΟΙΚΕΤΗΣ: χύτραισιν, ὥσπερ μεμφόμενον Ἑρμῆδιον;
House Slave: Ok, what has to be done next?
Trygaeus: What else, but to install her (i.e. the statue) with clay pots
House Slave: With clay pots, like a contemptible little herm?

Here the scholiast explains that clay pots, probably filled with offerings, were deposited or perhaps buried as an inexpensive form of foundation ritual when a household herm was 'installed' for the first time.

The rectilinear form of the herm was thought to be the invention of the Athenian tyrant Hipparchus, who in the 6th century BC set up a series of inscribed herms as milestones, marking the halfway point between each of the demes and the Athenian Agora.[28] The discovery of stone herms at Rhamnous that predate Hipparchus' reign show, however, that when he erected his herm-milestones, he was simply adapting an older Athenian practice. And the fact that one of the Rhamnous herms is inscribed, 'Laches set me up as an overseer (*episkopos*) of the herds,' suggests that they were thought to protect the animals in the place where they were erected.[29] These earliest herms, then, seem to serve as protectors of domesticated animals, a designation that fits well with Hermes' important role in animal husbandry. If we return for a third time to the scholion to Aristophanes' *Wealth*, we note how it stressed how the herm was placed beside the door 'to protect the house against *other* thieves,' with the emphasis here on the word 'other' naturally alluding to Hermes' frequent role as a thief himself.

The herms of Rhamnous consequently encourage us to understand that images of Hermes, the accomplished cattle thief of the *Homeric Hymn*, were set up in Rhamnous as guardians of domestic animals, just as in the urban

[28] Older theories suggest that they were originally milestones and good luck charms for travellers or fertility symbols dear to passing farmers, and that when Hipparchus set up his famous herm-milestones with wise maxims carved on their sides, he was adapting this older, perhaps rural tradition.
[29] Parker 1996: 82 n. 61.

world he, the prince of thieves, stands at the doorway of private houses to ward off burglars. This same idea of like-banning-like also explains the placement of Charon over the city of Antioch and Apollo the archer at house doors and city gates during the Antonine plague:

> Charon (death) bans death
> Apollo the archer (plague-god) bans the plague
> Hermes (the cattle thief) bans cattle thieves
> Hermes (the house thief) bans house thieves

Figure 2. Ithyphallic statuette above entrance to kiln on an archaic votive tablet of a Corinthian potter. Drawing after Pernice 1898.

These four images thus appear to employ a model different from the one lying behind the images of Heracles, who does not seem to be the evil that needs to be protected against, but rather a powerful housemate who will frighten evil and snakes away. At Athens, the herm was usually identified as an image of Hermes, but he was only the most famous variant.[30] On an Archaic votive plaque in Berlin (Figure 2), we see a bearded ithyphallic statuette on the stoking tunnel of a kiln. This statuette is not a rectilinear herm, of course, but has long been understood as an apotropaic image designed to protect the contents of the kiln from damage.[31] The kiln, to be sure, is designed much like a little house with a single entrance, and could therefore also be protected by a single amulet placed above its door.

One final and important domestic amulet remains, images of the so-called triple-bodied Hecate (Figure

Figure 3. Drawing by Richard Cosway of a statuette of the triple-faced Hecate (*hekateion*). Used by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

3).[32] Like the herm, this protective image first appears, as far as we can tell, in Athens at least as early the late Classical period, when the sculptor Alcamenes carved a pair of statues on the Athenian Acropolis: a herm on one side of the entrance and on the other a three-faced image called 'Hecate on the Tower,' where its peculiar triple design may have been a response to its location at an intersection of three ways.[33] Nothing remains of Alcamenes' monumental statues, but much smaller triple images of Hecate do survive, the earliest being a 4th-century image found in a street at Selinous and a 3rd-century example from Brauron.[34] In any event, we have good evidence that the herm and the Hecate could be paired at Greek entrances. When Theopompus reports the special piety of an Arcadian man named Clearchus who offered incense to his ancestral images of Hermes and Hecate, we should probably imagine that these images also stood together at the entrance to his house.

[30] Otherwise, the occasional addition of the caduceus would be unnecessary.

[31] The plaque is Corinthian and dates to the 6th BC. As for the gesture, in Aristophanic comedy characters often grab hold of the enlarged padded phallus attached to their costume and shake it threateningly at their enemies, a visual threat to sodomize them.

[32] The following two paragraphs are drawn from Faraone 2018: 136-141.

[33] Precisely where the statue stood is disputed: some favour the base of an old Mycenaean tower (this explains the name of the statue) and others a spot on the bastion of the Athena Nike, which was rebuilt at this time; Parker (2005: 18-19) offers a thoughtful discussion. For our purposes, it suffices simply that the statue was placed near the entrance of the Acropolis.

[34] *LIMC* 'Hecate,' nos. 113-14. The images on coins (nos. 81-86) also suggest that they, like the wooden herms discussed earlier, were small statuettes, e.g., one that is knee-high to Apollo.

Like the herm, these images have a strange form, depicting Hecate as three maidens in the round who stand on a triangular base facing outwards while resting their backs collectively against a central column and holding a variety of implements associated with the goddess, especially torches and libation bowls, in their hands. By the end of the Hellenistic period, we find these triple images throughout the Mediterranean, including several Attic examples that seem to shed light on a reference in Aristophanes' *Wasps* to such statuettes 'everywhere in front of doorways.'[35] A scholiast explains that the image is placed there 'as an overseer (*ephoros*) of all things and as someone who nourishes children (*kourotrophos*),'[36] using in the first place a term similar to the title 'overseer' (*episkopos*) carved into one of the herms found at Rhamnous. The survival of two wooden Hecates of this type in Alexandria in Egypt suggests moreover that, like the household herm, these domestic figurines of the triple goddesses could have been carved from wood and were therefore much more popular than the archaeological record suggests.[37]

The innermost sanctuary of the ancient Greek home — the bedroom where children were born — was the last line of defence in the architectural sense. For example, the 2nd-century BC writer Apollodorus of Athens apparently mentioned that the feet or extremities of Athenian beds were crafted in the form of miniature herms that were designed to keep away nightmares.[38] And another, rather striking example of a room amulet is a terracotta perfume jar (Figure 4), which was molded in the shape of a phallus, topped with the head of Priapus or Silenus and inscribed with the word *Sosioikos* ('Saviour of the house'), an epithet attested elsewhere for the god Hermes.[39] The jar preserves the two most important features of the rectilinear herm: a frontal face and an erect phallus. Another example from Corinth was used to ban the harmful effects of *invidia* or the evil eye: it shows the frontal figure of Envy (*Phthonos*) strangling himself, an image that appears quite frequently on small gold foil images worn on necklaces. In both cases we may presume that these phallic jars, when hung up in a private room, served a twofold purpose: as a container for valuable perfume and as an image to ward off evil.

Figure 4. Terracotta phallic vase with the frontal satyr face. *CVA* Cracow, Musée Czartoryski [Poland 2], pl. 14, inv. 1239.

Protecting human bodies

Regarding amulets, the innermost circle of defense was not, of course, the bedroom or the bed, but the individual human body. Here, once again, we see considerable overlap between amulets used to protect houses and those used to protect human bodies. It turns out, for example, that the image of Heracles strangling the Nemean lion used in the fields to deter 'lion's grass' was also a popular amulet for keeping colic and intestinal pain at bay, as represented here by a red jasper amulet now in Paris (Figure 5), which commands colic to withdraw in the presence of Heracles.[40] The triple image of Hecate also served as a protective amulet (Figure 6), although this later version differs somewhat from the

[35] A comic oracle quoted in Aristophanic comedy (*Wasps* 804). The term *hekateion* can refer to either statues or miniature shrines; see Parker 2005: 18-19.

[36] Quoted and discussed by Johnston (1999: 212), who rightly stresses the importance of the epithet 'she who nourishes children,' and Zografou (2010: 98).

[37] *LIMC* no. 124 and Alexander 1939 – the latter, which was carved from juniper wood and originally painted, is 23.4cm tall.

[38] Apollodorus *FGrHist* 244 F 129, with the interpretation by Burkert (1979: 161 n. 4). The passage begins by identifying Hermes as the conductor of dreams and mentioning that people prayed to him while falling asleep and thought of him as a guardian of their sleep. Apollodorus then says that they decorated the extremities of their beds with the visage of the god 'in order that they would not fear fearful things' (i.e., at night), because they had 'protectors' (literally 'those who warded off things' [*alexêtores*]). Here, of course, only the face is mentioned, but we have no other evidence that Hermes' face (without the phallus) was used as an *apotropaion* and can easily imagine wooden bedposts carved in relief as herms facing outwards in four directions.

[39] Detailed discussion and bibliography in Faraone 2018: 76-78.

[40] D&D no. 280. See Faraone 2018: Section 9.3 for full discussion of this type of expulsive incantation.

Figure 5. Obverse of a red-jasper gem in the Cabinet des Médailles showing Heracles strangling the lion; inscribed above: 'Flee colic, the divine one pursues you!' Photograph by A. Mastrocinque, used with his permission.

Figure 6. Red jasper gem engraved with triple-faced Hecate (*BM* 69). Photograph by author, used by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

earlier images, which are three-dimensional and hold torches or libation vessels. Her images on gems are necessarily rendered in two dimensions and continue to hold torches, but are also armed with two kinds of weapons: the whip and the knife. This parallel use of house and body amulets was recently confirmed when a version of the hexametrical verse placed at the doors during the Antonine plague — the one that describes Apollo warding off the 'cloud of plague' — turned up on a pewter amulet found in London, suggesting the verse circulated in different versions and around places as far-flung as London and Anatolia.[41]

Some 800 years earlier, the famous statesman Pericles also wore a plague amulet around his neck. Plutarch quotes the anecdote from Aristotle's student Theophrastus (*Life of Pericles* 38): 'Certainly Theophrastus in his *Ethics,* while discussing whether men's character may be changed with their fortune... relates that Pericles showed to one of his friends, who had come to visit him in his illness, an amulet which had been hung around his neck by his women...' Theophrastus uses a common Greek word for a body amulet, *periapton* (literally 'a thing tied around'), to designate this object but gives us no clue as to the amulet's shape or material. The Greeks did in fact hang amulets from all of their limbs, but clearly preferred to suspend protective amulets at the front of the body, as shown in in the string of amulets draped diagonally across the chest of a naked boy (Figure 7).[42] This type of diagonal cord is usually limited to children, and any parent can tell you why — it is nearly impossible for a child to choke itself on such a cord, whereas an amulet around the neck would present a much greater danger. That such amulets were fairly typical for male children rather than simply the custom of a few superstitious families is suggested by a relevant series of small ritual vases called choes, on which male children wear the same diagonal cord.[43] Because these miniature jugs date rather narrowly to the late 5th and early 4th centuries BC, they give us a broad view of childhood in Classical Athens, leaving no doubt about the importance of the amulets in these scenes: the boys wear amulet cords on roughly 250 of the 400 extant miniature vases. These childhood amulets were moreover not limited to Athens. Indeed, similar diagonal cords can be observed on a number of

[41] London amulet: Φοῖβε ἀκερσεκόμα, λοιμοῦ νεφέλη(ν) ἀπέλαυνε ('Phoebus of the unshorn hair, archer, drive away the cloud of plague!') and Lucian, *Alexander* 36: Φοῖβος ἀκειρεκόμης λοιμοῦ νεφέλην ἀπερύκει ('Phoebus of the unshorn hair, archer, drives away the cloud of plague').

[42] For the discussion of childhood amulets in this paragraph and the next, see Faraone 2019b: 12-15.

[43] Hamilton (1992: 98-99) reports that on 253 of the 384 extant choes-jugs known to him (72% of the total) the child wears an amulet cord. Amulets show up in a similarly high percentage on 22 vases of a different style (squat lekythoi) that Hamilton lists earlier on (1992: 93-94).

Figure 7. Amulet string across the chest and back of a Roman-period marble copy of a Hellenistic statuette in the Vatican. After Dölger 1932.

limestone and terracotta votives of roughly similar date from other parts of the Greek world, for example on the chests of small votive statuettes from Cyprus and Sicily.

Single amulets like the one Pericles wore appear elsewhere, on the chests and throats of adults, where we can again see parallels between the types of threshold amulets placed on house facades and doors and those worn on the throat. Stylized versions of the club of Heracles become popular, for example, in the Roman period as a form of women's jewelry, as we can tell from many examples of earrings and pendants [44] and their power as amulets is suggested by their appearance on amulet-strings of the late-Classical period, for example, in Cyme and along the coast of the Black Sea. Some are of high artistic quality: one late-Classical club was carved entirely from chalcedony, while another Hellenistic one had a garnet mounted at the tip, and a third, undated, example from the Crimea that was attached to a child's bracelet held an amethyst in the tip. Phalli were also used to protect the bodies of women and children.[45] Pliny tells us that babies wore them to guard against the evil eye,[46] an idea that is corroborated when texts begin to appear on these phalli that tell us precisely what they were used for: on a Roman-era terracotta of a boy with an oversized phallus we read in Greek, 'I have given the envious one a thorough drilling.'

These parallels between gateway amulets and those worn on the human neck or chest raise one final question. Did the Greeks understand the throat as an entranceway into the body, like a house door or a city gate, or was it simply a convenient spot on the body where they might place a protective amulet? In Roman times, at least, some Greeks apparently thought that the mouth and/or throat could be a point of superhuman attack, because it was the primary gateway for air, food, and drink.[47] From the Roman period onwards there are stories about how exorcists forced demons out of the mouth or nose of a possessed person, or of individuals suffering from epilepsy or mental illness. So it stands to reason that the demons used the mouth and nose to gain entry as well. In the Classical and Hellenistic periods, however, the Greeks seem to have thought that demons, ghosts, and angry gods could strike and damage the body or the mind from the outside, but not by entering into the body itself. Thus it makes sense that the Greeks placed amulets on the doorways to their cities and homes, because these were the entrances through which superhuman predators could indeed physically attack them. This practice suggests to me that at least for the Classical period we should abandon the model of a body amulet as gatekeeper and replace it with the idea of a body amulet as a shield or baldric, both in fact popular spots for affixing frontal eyes or frontal faces, like the *gorgoneion*. Two passages in the *Iliad* suggest that this idea emerged very early on. We are told, for example, that the Gorgon's head was depicted in the center of Agamemnon's shield (*Iliad* 11.35-36) as well as in the centre of Athena's aegis (*Iliad* 5. 738-42).

Conclusions

We have seen, then, that *phylakteria* and *apotropaia* were used by the Greeks to defend a series of peripheries, at least three in number, which may be imagined as one concentric ring of defence within another. The first was at the city gate, a second at the house door, and a third on the front of the human body, on the chest or

[44] Faraone 2018: Section 5.3.

[45] Faraone 2018: 75-76.

[46] Plautus *Miles Gloriosus* 1398-99 (a character threatens to castrate a man to make *crepundia* for a boy to wear around his neck); Pliny *NH* 28.39.

[47] *Testament* 10.3 describes a canine demon called Rhabdos who subdues the hearts of men through their throats. Raven (1997: 280), discussing Pharaonic amulets, proposes that the throat was a favorite spot, because 'it constitutes one of the most vulnerable parts of the human body' — in other words, where the important arteries and nerve ganglia were.

throat. We have also received hints that such amulets could be placed even further outside the city walls, for example an image of Ares set up in the fields, or deeper within the house, like the herms carved into the feet of Athenian beds or the phallic perfume jars suspended on nearby walls. Perhaps most surprising was the idea that verses of poetry that describe Heracles residing in the home or Apollo driving away the plague could be just as effective as an image or a statue of the same deity. This raises, of course, another interesting question. What role did increasing literacy play in the production of amulets? As more and more Greeks learned to write, they began to place inscriptions on their city gates, house doors and accessories for their bodies, perhaps suggesting that evil forces such as disease, poverty, and death were slowly but surely learning how to read.

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Women's Choral Apotropaic Songs in Tragic Contexts of Domestic and Civic Disharmony

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Abstract

In ancient Greek culture, songs had many functions, including *apotrope*. In ancient Greece in times of crisis (domestic or civic), groups of women may have performed ritual prayers and generally ritual actions (involving words, gestures, movement) in order to help avert evil. The use of apotropaic prayers or wishes by female tragic choruses has not been unnoticed by modern scholars. Ancient Greek tragedy probably echoes these women's practices. This paper suggests that the ritual performances of women reflected in ancient Greek tragedy may have been a choral performance, in other words, sung and danced prayers/religious discourse following the pattern of choral performances for other occasions and could well have approached the status of a recognizable lyric 'genre.'

Introduction

In ancient Greek culture, songs had many functions. *Apotrope* was one of them. But what kind of songs were used to ward off evil in ancient Greece? No well-defined lyric genre that focuses on protection from evil is known to exist. Since humans are incapable of warding off disasters, illnesses, and bad luck by themselves, they had to turn to entities that had such power, addressing a divine being in order to request protection. Consequently, ancient Greek songs that have an apotropaic function are either cultic songs or connected with religion (for example, metrical magical texts).[1] But is there any evidence of women performing apotropaic songs?

Knowledge is unfortunately limited. Ancient Greek literary criticism classified songs addressed to the gods as hymns, paeans, dithyrambs, *prosodia*, *partheneia*, and *nomoi*. But these categorizations are not always accurate.[2] Of the surviving corpora of hymns—the *Homeric Hymns*, Callimachus' six hymns, and the Orphic Hymns—only the last-mentioned seems to have been used by worshippers. By contrast, Pindar's and Bacchylides' paeans, dithyrambs, *partheneia*, and *prosodia* belong to public cult poetry, along with some of the lyric poems composed by Alcman, Sappho, Alcaeus, and Anacreon. The same is true of many dramatic lyric poems. Some of Pindar's paeans have an apotropaic function. Iambic poems,[3] work-songs, and lullabies also contained apotropaic elements.[4] Some of these lyric compositions could have had an apotropaic function. Women clearly did not participate in performances of Pindar's apotropaic paeans, however, and seemed to perform only the poems and songs that honored female divinities and contained elements designed to avert evil influences. Except for work songs and lullabies, women are not attested as performing apotropaic songs.[5] Rich corpora of magical texts,[6] dating even from Classical times, also exist.[7] Some of these magical texts are metrical.[8] Women seem to be among those casting erotic spells,[9] and some of the erotic spells cast by women seem to have had an apotropaic function.[10]

[1] For the relationship between various magical practices and Greek religion, see Faraone 1991: 15-18.

[2] See Proclus, *Chrestomatheia* 319b3-320a. His model for dividing ancient Greek lyric poetry has been criticized; see, for example, Harvey 1955: 157-180; Rutherford 1994-1995; Schedtler 2014: 122-123. On issues of genre see Foster 2019.

[3] The possible association of iambic poetry with apotropaic or purificatory rites: Faraone 2009; Rotstein 2010: 118 and (with more bibliography) 171-173.

[4] The apotropaic function of lullabies: Pache 2004: 108-112; Karanika 2014: 179, 196. Karanika (2014: 160-170) also discusses the resemblance of work-songs to various magical practices.

[5] Overviews of the lyric genres that women performed in ancient Greece: Calame 1997: 74-89; Budelmann 2015.

[6] See, e.g., Preisendanz and Henrichs 1973-1974 (*PGM*); Jordan 1985 (*SGD*); Daniel 1990 (*Suppl. Mag.*); Kotansky 1994 (*GMA*).

[7] Examples of some of these texts: Faraone 1985; Faraone 1989; Lamont 2015; Lamont 2021.

[8] See, e.g., the Getty Hexameters; overview in Faraone 2013. Faraone (1995: 11) is also of the opinion that during Classical times, or even earlier, a tradition of hexametrical incantations existed which combined epic vocabulary, performative syntax, and traditional Greek magical praxis. He also provides some examples of metrical magical texts (Faraone 2022: 195-222). Several passages in Greek tragedy use language present in the Getty Hexameters, especially in contexts mentioning incantations and protection of the city; see Battezzato 2022.

[9] As Faraone (1999: 96-131) has observed, women are very often among the casters of ancient Greek love spells to induce or regain *philia* and other forms of affection. Ancient Greek thought associated women with magical *praxis*. Several texts describe women practising magic. They include one of Sophron's mimes (frr. 3 and 4 in Hordern's edition), Theocritus's *Idyll* 2, and Apollonius' *Argonautica* (4.47-53: Medea).

[10] The so-called *philia* spells aim to avert separation between couples. Faraone (1999: 86) notes that this type of magic is often employed to heal a broken or dysfunctional relationship or to protect a working but fragile one, which fits well with the magical techniques employed, such as amulets, ointments, and potions—all popular in

In ancient Greece in times of crisis (domestic or civic), groups of women may very likely have performed ritual prayers and generally ritual actions involving words, gestures, and movement in order to help avert evil. The use of apotropaic prayers or wishes by female tragic choruses has not gone unnoticed by contemporary scholars.[11] Ancient Greek tragedy probably reflects these women's practices. This paper suggests that this ritual performance of women reflected in ancient Greek tragedy could have been a choral performance, prayers and religious discourse expressed in song and dance according to the pattern of choral performances for other occasions and could well have reached virtually the standard of a recognizable lyric 'genre.'

Tragic ritual prayers and women's tragic ritual actions to avert evil

In traditional Athenian religious life, men recited apotropaic prayers relating to war; they were responsible for the prayers and sacrifices performed before and during the departure of the army.[12] Groups of men are also attested performing apotropaic paeans to prevent natural disasters and events, such as earthquakes (Xen. *Hell.* 4.74), eclipses (Pindar, paean 9), and plagues (Ps.-Plut., *De Musica* 1 [1146b] about Thaletas of Gortyn).[13] Pindar mentions *stasis* in one of his paeans (A1.15). The theme of peace and political stability is also found in Pindar's *Paean* D1. Choruses of men perform songs that allude to paeans in the tragedies of Aeschylus (*Ag.* 146-150), Sophocles (*OT* 151-215), and Euripides (*Alc.* 91-92, 220-225; *Herc.* 820-821; *Rh.* 224-232).[14] Most of the tragic songs performed by men to avert evil aim to prevent civic disaster. Domestic disharmony was often caused by excessive or manic love. Since the ancient Greeks often regarded excessive or manic love as an illness,[15] apotropaic songs were needed to ward it off. Evidence for the performance of apotropaic songs pertaining to personal safeguarding from domestic misfortunes is very scarce, though we have apotropaic paeans related to domestic and civic peace.[16] In addition to these, ancient Greeks sang songs with special apotropaic functions associated with purification and healing. The best surviving example of a healing paean is fr. *PMG* 813, a paean to Health by Ariphron of Sicyon (late 5th century BC). The performers of such songs were usually male. Nonetheless, ancient Greek tragedies contain many instances of female apotropaic prayers and rituals embedded in choral songs to avert civic and/or domestic misfortune.

The female chorus sings apotropaic prayers in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* (lines 109-180, 219-222, 251). The army of the Seven is ready to attack when (line 78) the women enter the scene and immediately take cultic action. They perform a ritual supplication and utter ritual speech, offering a *lite* (prayer of lament).[17] They approach the statues of the local gods, fall at their feet, embrace them (lines 94-99), and use gestures that a Greek audience would have immediately recognized as *hiketeia*.[18] The chorus defines its actions as a collective supplication—'see this suppliant band of maidens praying to be saved from slavery'[19]—maidens asking the gods to save them from enslavement. The imminent personal misfortunes of these women are tied to the fate of Thebes, the besieged city. They pray to Zeus, Athena, Poseidon, Ares, Aphrodite, Apollo, Artemis, and Hera for assistance, give Zeus dignified epithets (line 116: ἀλλ', ὦ Ζεῦ † πάτερ παντελές, father Zeus, all-accomplishing), and single out a characteristic of each of the other gods, appealing to them to act on or with it (e.g., lines 128-129, 130-31). They remind the gods that they used to love the city of Thebes with its pious people while also describing the threat that they face (lines 135-136: πόλιν ἐπώνυμον/Κάδμου φύλαξον, guard the city named for Cadmus; lines 144-145: λιταῖσί σε θεοκλύτοις/ἀυτοῦσαι πελαζόμεσθα, we come to you, crying out in prayers for your divine ears). The women's song concludes with a demand for help.

In lines 166-173, the women address the gods with an apotropaic prayer that ends with the request that they hear the 'prayers of the maidens, offered with hands outstretched'; a self-reflexive statement calling attention to their gestures (174-180: ἰὼ φίλοι δαίμονες,/ λυτήριοί τ' ἀμφιβάντες πόλιν,/δείξαθ' ὡς φιλοπόλεις,/μέλεσθέ θ' ἱερῶν δαμίων,/μελόμενοι δ' ἀρήξατε·/φιλοθύτων δέ τοι πόλεος ὀργίων/μνήστορες ἐστέ μοι), 'beloved spirits, encompass the city to deliver it from ruin and show that you love it. Consider the people's offerings, and as you consider, help us. Remember, I beg, our city's worship, rich in sacrifice.' Their last sentence refers again to the city's piety; they ask for divine protection as its reward. The same chorus makes an apotropaic wish that the gods not desert their city, also wishing never to

healing magic.

[11] See, e.g., Mastronarde 2010: 134. Other scholars find apotropaic aspects in many other female-performed songs: Pache 2004: 110-1; Klinck 2008: 69-71; Karanika 2014: 162.

[12] Graf (1984: 245) states that women did not participate in the prayers and sacrifices before and during the army's departure. Only men were responsible for them; see Giordano-Zecharya (2006: 70), with more bibliography.

[13] Rutherford 2001: 37.

[14] Swift 2010: 379-385.

[15] A whole Greek tradition regarded love as a disease; Faraone 1999: 44. The ancient Greeks believed that love had affinities with other intense emotional states, such as madness or intoxication; Calame 1999: 15-21.

[16] Rutherford 2001: 37.

[17] Giordano-Zecharya 2006: 53, 62.

[18] Giordano-Zecharya 2006: 62. When I refer to allusions either to lyric genres or to Greek magical practices, I mean the range of conventions that could evoke these lyric genres and/or various magical practices in Greek drama's 5th-century audience.

[19] Lines 110-111: ἴδετε παρθένων/ἱκέσιον λόχον δουλοσύνας ὕπερ. The text and translation of Aeschylus are taken from Smyth's edition (1922).

witness Thebes in flames (lines 219-222: μήποτ' ἐμὸν κατ' αἰῶνα λίποι θεῶν/ἄδε πανάγυρις, μηδ' ἐπίδοιμι τάνδ'/ ἀστυδρομουμέναν πόλιν καὶ στράτευμ'/ἀπτόμενον πυρὶ δαΐῳ), 'never so long as I live may this divine assembly abandon us, nor may I live to see the city overrun and the army seizing it with hostile fire!' These women link their fates to the fate of Thebes. If the city falls, then their status will change and their domestic life will collapse. Again, apotropaic song or language is a means to prevent catastrophe.

In the second stasimon of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*,[20] the women of Chalcis make an apotropaic wish that they and their offspring will be spared the same fate of enslavement and rape (lines 784-785: μήτ' ἐμοὶ μήτ' ἐμοῖσι τέκνων τέκνοις/ἐλπὶς ἄδε ποτ' ἔλθοι—never may there appear to me or to my children's children the prospect...). They imagine how the domestic life of the women of Troy will be disrupted when the Greeks win the war and invade the city and the Trojan women discuss their future abduction by the Greeks (lines 787-800). As Dué has argued, the women of Troy are emblematic of the suffering caused by war. She mentions an example from Euripides' *Phoenician Women*, its plot in the tradition of the *Seven Against Thebes*. The chorus of captive Phoenician women, whose presence in Thebes is otherwise tangential to the plot of the play, laments the horrors that war brings upon a city.[21]

Euripides' works offer many other examples of apotropaic songs performed by female choruses. In most cases, the women contrast their situation with the main character (hero or heroine) who suffers from excessive or manic love.[22] They explicitly express their hope that they will be spared this malady, which can cause mental confusion, domestic conflict, sorrow, and the destruction of their lives.[23] In the second *stasimon* of the *Medea* (lines 627-662), the female chorus comments on Medea's excessive love for Jason. The women wish that the goddess not afflict them with this kind of manic love, 'never, O goddess, may you smear with desire one of your ineluctable arrows and let it fly against my heart from your golden bow' (lines 632-634: μήποτ', ὦ δέσποιν', ἐπ' ἐμοὶ χρυσέων/τόξων ἀφείης ἱμέρῳ/χρίσασ' ἄφυκτον οἰστόν),[24] that they avoid the urge for any men other than their husbands, and pray for self-control, 'may moderation attend me, fairest gift of the gods! Aphrodite never cast contentious wrath and insatiate quarreling upon me and madden my heart with love for a stranger's bed! But may she honor marriages that are peaceful and wisely determine whom we are to wed!' (lines 636-644: στέργοι δέ με σωφροσύνα, δώρημα κάλλιστον θεῶν·/μηδέ ποτ' ἀμφιλόγους ὀργὰς ἀκόρεστά τε νείκη/ θυμὸν ἐκπλήξασ' ἑτέροις ἐπὶ λέκτροις/προσβάλοι δεινὰ Κύπρις, ἀπτολέμους δ'/εὐνὰς σεβίζουσ' ὀξύφρων/ κρίνοι λέχη γυναικῶν). These women seem to equate domestic disharmony caused by excessive passion to loss of status. They wish never to have to abandon their homeland—like Medea—and on this thought, choose to die: 'O fatherland, o house, may I never be bereft of my city, never have a life of helplessness, a cruel life, most pitiable of woes. In death, O in death may I be brought low ere that, ending the light of my life. Of troubles none is greater than to be robbed of one's native land' (lines 645-653: ὦ πατρίς, ὦ δώματα, μὴ/δῆτ' ἄπολις γενοίμαν/ τὸν ἀμηχανίας ἔχουσα/δυσπέρατον αἰῶ,/οἰκτρότατόν <γ'> ἀχέων./θανάτῳ θανάτῳ πάρος δαμείην/ἀμέραν τάνδ' ἐξανύσασα: μό-/χθων δ' οὐκ ἄλλος ὕπερθεν ἢ/γᾶς πατρίας στέρεσθαι).

The female chorus of the *Hippolytus* has similar thoughts. During a lyrical exchange with Phaedra, they express their wish to die instead of being afflicted by this illness: 'death take me, my friend, before I come to share your thoughts' (lines 364-365: ὀλοίμαν ἔγωγε πρὶν σᾶν, φίλα,/ κατανύσαι φρενῶν). In the first *stasimon*, the women pray to Eros to be kind and spare them from excessive desire: 'Eros, god of love, distilling liquid desire down upon the eyes, bringing sweet pleasure to the souls of those against whom you make war, never to me may you show yourself to my hurt nor ever come but in due measure and harmony' (lines 525-529: Ἔρως Ἔρως, ὁ κατ' ὀμμάτων/στάζων πόθον, εἰσάγων γλυκεῖαν/ψυχᾷ χάριν οὓς ἐπιστρατεύσῃ,/μή μοί ποτε σὺν κακῷ φανείης/μηδ' ἄρρυθμος ἔλθοις). In the third *stasimon*, they wish that the gods safeguard them from sorrow, especially those caused by a false-struck mind: 'O that in answer to my prayer fate might give me this gift from the gods, a lot of blessedness and a heart untouched by sorrow! No mind unswerving and obdurate would I have nor yet again one false-struck, but changing my pliant character ever for the morrow I would share the morrow's happiness my whole life through' (lines 1111-1119: εἴθε μοι εὐξαμένᾳ θεόθεν τάδε μοῖρα παράσχοι,/τύχαν μετ' ὄλβου καὶ ἀκήρατον ἄλγεσι θυμόν./δόξα δὲ μήτ' ἀτρεκὴς μήτ' αὖ παράσημος ἐνείη,/ῥᾴδια δ' ἤθεα τὸν αὔριον μεταβαλλομένα χρόνον αἰεὶ βίον συνευτυχοίην). The female chorus in the *Andromache* desires their husbands to remain untouched by manic love so they may continue to live happily: 'may my husband be content in marriage with a single mate and a bed unshared!' (lines 469-470: μίαν μοι στεργέτω πόσις γάμοις/ἀκοινώνητον ἀμὸς εὐνάν). Furthermore, the first *stasimon* of the *Iphigenia in Aulis* presents a

[20] For Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*, I use the text of Murray (1913) and the translation of Coleridge (1891).

[21] Dué 2006: 58-60, n. 7.

[22] A sympathetic female chorus appears in conjunction with a female character in many Euripidean plays. On the relationship between Euripidean heroines and sympathetic female choruses, see Castellani 1989; Pattoni 1989; Hose 1990, 17-20; Mastronarde 1999, 95; Foley 2003, 20, 24; Weiss 2018, 66; Calame 2020, 782; Kousoulini 2020; Kousoulini 2022a.

[23] Mastronarde (2010: 134) considers these apotropaic prayers or wishes in Euripides' corpus a device to maintain the distance between the elite individual agents and sufferers on stage and the middling or humble persons of the choral group.

[24] For Euripides, I use the text and translation of Kovacs unless otherwise stated.

female chorus wishing to remain unafflicted by excessive love and to live a life of moderation: 'Be mine delight in moderation and pure desires, and may I have a share in love, but shun excess!' (lines 554-557: εἴη δέ μοι μετρία μὲν/ χάρις, πόθοι δ' ὅσιοι,/καὶ μετέχοιμι τᾶς Ἀφροδί-/ τας, πολλὰν δ' ἀποθείμαν).

Towards a female-performed lyric 'genre' of apotropaic songs?

In ancient Greek tragedy, women in groups perform songs and describe their involvement in actions with ritual connotations. These songs are to some extent similar to apotropaic songs performed by men both in drama and in real-life situations. However, they have some characteristics which appear less often, or not at all, in apotropaic songs performed by men. Many of these women are overcome by excessive emotions (for instance, in *Seven Against Thebes*) or wish to ward off an overwhelming emotion (as in most of the tragedies of Euripides). Many of them connect the upheaval in their own domestic life or the lives of other women with civic instability or the fall of a city (for example, in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes* and Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* and *Medea*). Domestic and political order are also often linked in lyric songs performed by women.[25] But could these songs reflect real-life songs performed by women to avert evil? Are we anywhere close to discovering a female-performed lyric 'genre' of apotropaic songs in ancient Greece?

The chorus of *Seven Against Thebes* consists of unmarried women of the citizen class, the kind of young Theban women who would have performed *partheneia*;[26] and evokes the choruses of public ritual. Their song, however, seems not to conform to the standards of public ritual prayer.[27] These women are in a panic: they dash onto the stage, singing in dochmiacs, a meter that makes them sound excited and afraid.[28] In ancient Greek tragedy, furthermore, dochmiac is the meter of lament.[29] They make the dangers outside their city visible and vividly present them using a synesthetic language that turns sounds into sights.[30] Synesthetic language may allude to more private facets of Greek cultic life, since it is also used in a description of ecstatic cult practice in Aeschylus' *Edonians* (fr. 57.10-11 Radt), where a strong emotive experience is expressed through a fusion of aural and visual imagery.[31] Synesthesia is also a standard feature of Greek lyric.[32] The women speak of their fear and the likelihood of suffering rape in the future, before vividly describing the coming fall of Thebes. Even when they address the gods, they seem to do it with less formality. As Stehle has observed, in calling the gods 'dear' (φίλοι δαίμονες) the women may be using colloquial language.[33] This language may be akin to that used in an Athenian prayer made to Zeus for rain collected in the *Carmina Popularia*.[34] Even when these women seem to have calmed down and are singing an apotropaic prayer, they do not completely suppress their fear when mentioning the fate of women and children in a captured town.

These women are suggestive of artistic and literary representations of lamenters in conquered cities.[35] Unfortunately, very little remains of laments for captured cities.[36] We encounter literary laments[37] for fallen cities in Aeschylus' *Persians*, Euripides' *Trojan Women*, and in an anonymous tragic lament on the fall of Persia (909.372 Nauck).[38] Women were the usual performers of ritual lament, and we shall suppose that they also performed those for conquered cities.[39] Some of the elements appearing in the *parodos*, also appear in these literary examples of ritual lament for captured cities. One of the most eminent is repetition (e.g., lines 124-125: ἑπτὰ and line 125: ἑβδόμαις; line 128: σύ τ', ὦ, line 135: σύ τ', line 145: καὶ σύ, line 147: σύ τ' ὦ and line 164: σύ τε; line 149: ἔ ἔ ἔ ἔ, line 153: ἔ ἔ ἔ ἔ, and line 158: ἔ ἔ ἔ ἔ; lines 166-167: ἰὼ and ἰὼ and line 174: ἰὼ; line 167: τέλειοι τέλειαί τε; line 161: κλύετε .... κλύετε; lines 177-178: μέλεσθέ .... μελόμενοι).[40] Repetitiveness is an element of ritual performance. Other characteristics of ritual lament, such as the use of dochmiacs and the astrophic, asyndetic fashion of the beginning of the *parodos* make this choral ode akin to other ritual laments.[41] Women,

[25] *Partheneia* contain myths implying that domestic and political order are closely interwoven. Kousoulini 2022b, with additional bibliography.

[26] Stehle 2005: 102.

[27] Stehle 2005: 103.

[28] All three tragedians use this meter to express strong feelings such as grief, fear, despair, horror, excitement, and, occasionally, triumph or joy; Dale 1968: 110. De Poli (2018: 52-53) also notes that dochmiacs in Greek tragedy express intense emotions like panic, sorrow, or at least some sort of excitement.

[29] Suter 2003: 8-9.

[30] Marinis (2012) discusses the synesthetic quality of the song performed in the *parodos*. Trieschnigg (2016) addresses how the chorus uses sounds to visualize the enemy in the *parodos*.

[31] Marinis 2012: 38, n. 56.

[32] Bierl 2011; Peponi 2013: 32-34.

[33] Stehle 2005: 108.

[34] 'rain, rain dear Zeus, on the fields of the Athenians and their plains' (*PMG* 854: ὗσον ὗσον ὦ φίλε/Ζεῦ κατὰ τῆς ἀρούρας). I use Campbell's text and translation (1993).

[35] Bakewell (2016: 113-116) applies the distinction, developed by Wright (1986: 117-124) and made by Suter (2003: 3-4), between full laments and reduced laments to laments for fallen cities, suggesting that this *parodos* is a reduced lament for a fallen city. Bachvarova (2008: 27-28) calls the song performed in lines 321-368 of the same tragedy a city lament, proleptically sung.

[36] Laments for the fall or destruction of cities: Alexiou 1974: 83-101.

[37] Bakewell (2016: 107) prefers the term 'represented lament,' borrowed from Suter (2008: 3, citing Wright 1986).

[38] Alexiou 1974: 83-85.

[39] Dué (2006: 11-20, 152-153) discusses the participation of women in laments for fallen cities in ancient Greek tragedy.

[40] Repetition as a characteristic of ritual lament: Alexiou 1974: 135-136. Repetitions also exist in the surviving literary laments for fallen cities. See, e.g., Aeschylus, *Persians* lines 249-250: ὦ ... ὦ and 550-552: Ξέρξης ... Ξέρξης ... Ξέρξης; Euripides, *Trojan Women* lines 511-514: βέβακ' ὄλβος, βέβακε Τροία; fr. 909.372 Nauck: Ποῦ ... ποῦ. Alexiou (1974: 84-85) observes that repetition (repeated questions) seems to have been a characteristic of ritual lament for fallen cities.

[41] Bakewell 2016: 114.

and especially Trojan women, as emblematic figures of the misfortunes caused by war may have been used in ancient Greek laments for conquered cities as symbols of suffering. This is likely true of the second *stasimon* of Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis*.

Euripides' choral apotropaic songs performed by female choruses present Eros or Aphrodite as quasi-daemonic powers.[42] Aphrodite in the *Medea* can smear her inescapable arrows with desire and let them fly from her golden bow into the victim's heart (lines 632-634). This Aphrodite can also be terrible since she has the power to cast wrath and quarreling upon the victim, and madden her heart with love for a stranger's bed. This love, according to the tragedy's chorus, can make women abandon their fathers' house and homeland to mingle with strangers (lines 645-653). These women describe excessive love as a force that can lead a woman from her house to a lover's bed. In the *Hippolytus*, we learn that Eros can be immoderate and cause harm to those he afflicts. We also learn that he targets people and wages war against them. Eros enters through the eyes of his victims and distills liquid desire in them, bringing sweet pleasure to their souls (lines 525-529). In the *Iphigenia in Aulis*, we learn that Aphrodite can inspire frenzied passions (554-557). Aphrodite is again called excessive or disproportionate. Some of these choruses also place conditional curses on themselves to prevent unwanted action. The chorus of the *Medea* wishes death upon themselves before having to abandon their fatherland (lines 645-653). The chorus of the *Hippolytus* prays that Death take them before they come to share Phaedra's thoughts (lines 364-365). We encounter similar references in metrical and non-metrical magical texts.

Many of these magical texts have no apotropaic function but are erotic *defixiones*.[43] Tragic apotropaic songs performed by women represent Eros and Aphrodite as able to do what divine entities enact in erotic spells: mentally and physically torture the victim until she mingles with the caster of the spell. These spells torment the heart, and less often, the *thymos* of the victims.[44] Some of these texts, *agōgē* spells, also imply that the victim can be dragged to the caster's house.[45] The same thing is suggested in the *Medea*. Conditional curses are often placed on people in magical texts.[46] One of these songs: one, performed by the chorus of the *Andromache*, has the same aims as a *philia* spell. The female chorus members wish that their husbands be untouched by manic love (lines 469-470) so they will continue to live happily. These women use the verb στέργω (line 469: στεργέτω), a verb devoid of erotic associations used primarily to describe the love of family members for one another.[47]

These tragic songs have an apparently ritual character. They belong to the same 'genre' as long as we define a lyric genre as the set of rules which produce a speech act constituting a narrative significant for a community performed as 'ritual.'[48] Nonetheless, these occasions are fictitious ones. The members of these female choruses do not use recognizable, well-practiced ritual forms. The lamenting prayer of the chorus of the *Seven Against Thebes* does not conform to the standards of public prayer.[49] One of the chorus's prayers includes a verbal allusion to a popular prayer to Zeus, a prayer probably performed to ward off an evil power that had brought a period of drought to Athens.[50] The choral performances of these women in Aeschylus' *Seven against Thebes* and Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* have affinities with ritual laments for fallen cities. Many of Euripides' choral apotropaic songs performed by women have affinities with metrical and non-metrical magical texts, in other words, with the formulas used for more private aspects of ancient Greek religion.[51] Women's choral apotropaic songs in tragic contexts of domestic and civic disharmony are not examples of a pure genre in performance, but products of dynamic play with genre within texts.[52]

These apotropaic songs are a good example of the generic interaction between Greek tragedy and lyric poetry. Ancient tragedy is a choral genre, and a mimetic one.[53] In Greek tragedy, traditional genres do not always correspond to real-life ritual occurrences; they allow the tragedians to play with the expectations of their audiences[54] and transform long-established performance practices into new configurations.[55] When a piece of

[42] From the earliest centuries, Greeks describe the onset of Eros either as an invasive demonic attack or using ballistic imagery in which Aphrodite hurls and hits someone with *eros* or *pothos*; Faraone 1999: 29; Sappho fr. 47 V; Ibycus fr. 286.8-13 *PMG*; Anacreon fr. 413 *PMG*.

[43] We should nonetheless be cautious. The influence is reciprocal: recent research on spells and curses (Faraone 2021) shows that composers of such texts used material from Classical texts.

[44] See, e.g., *PGM* IV.376-381; *PGM* IV.1525-31; *PGM* XIXa.50-54; *PGM* LXI.24.

[45] The *agōgē* spell, the most popular Greek erotic charm, has a consistent narrative: it 'leads' the woman immediately from the house of her father or husband to the practitioner, a movement that mimics in some obvious ways the transfer of a bride from her old home to her husband's house: Faraone 1999: 56. Some examples: *PGM* IV.1412-13; *PGM* VII.471-472; *PGM* VII.611-612; PGM XIXa.50-54. A god or another divine entity is called upon to bring the victim to the house of the caster.

[46] Conditional curses, used in oaths and on tombstones and other property-related inscriptions, aimed to prevent future misconduct. See Faraone 1996 and 1999: 81.

[47] *LSJ* s.v. στέργω: 'Seldom of sexual love.' Faraone (1999: 119) also remarks on the use of this verb in Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*.

[48] For this definition, Nagy 1994-1995: 13. Foster (2019: 8-9) comments on the limits of the oralist-performance-occasion paradigm and the emergence of new models.

[49] The canons of public prayer: Stehle 2005 (especially at 103).

[50] Drought could be prayed away; Versnel 2015: 452, with further bibliography.

[51] Faraone (1999: 15-18) points out that magic in ancient Greece was not in a category distinct from religion.

[52] This view of Archaic lyric genres is put forward by Foster (2019: 10-11).

[53] Swift 2018: 119.

[54] Bagordo 2015: 38-39, 53; Swift 2022: 380-381.

[55] Rodighiero 2018: 137.

ritual lyric is transplanted into tragedy, it brings with it a set of shared associations and values rooted in the world beyond the play, allowing the tragedian to use these generic triggers.[56] Ancient Greek tragedy is also a voracious genre:[57] it can incorporate multiple lyric genres simultaneously to serve its own purposes.[58] Anyone who wishes to find traces of a lyric genre in tragic choral lyric should proceed with caution.

If these women's choral apotropaic songs in tragic contexts of domestic and civic disharmony attest to lost genres of ancient Greek poetry, they may indicate the possible existence of apotropaic songs performed by women.[59] Unfortunately, whether the generic ambiguities that we encountered in these tragic passages were one of the characteristics of the 'original' lyric genre to which these songs belonged is impossible to ascertain. This is mere speculation, but these songs might have had an oral character not unlike ritual lament, and might even have accompanied any kind of ritual *praxis*, even of a magical nature. Faraone has found evidence of the existence of a female form of metrical binding spells composed in hexameters.[60] We know so little about the songs that went with women's rituals and magical *praxis*. That a lyric 'genre' of apotropaic metrical spells and songs existed that were performed by women, especially women in groups, is not impossible to envision.

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[56] Swift 2018: 119. Exemplary discussions of how tragedy can engage with ritual lyric are offered by Herington (1985), Rutherford (1994-1995), Swift (2010), and Rodighiero (2012).

[57] Swift (2010: 26) observed, 'The mimetic nature of tragedy makes it a particularly voracious genre, adept at incorporating and referring to other forms,' while Weiss (2020: 168, 182, 189) calls tragedy a 'hybrid genre' because it allows us to find complex generic hybridity within a single choral song.

[58] Swift 2018: 120; Fanfani 2018.

[59] Sourvinou-Inwood 2003: 281-282; Giordano 2011: 730.

[60] Faraone 2010.

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Apotropaic and Prophylactic Practices at Troizen and Methana

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Abstract

Ancient textual sources provide some information about apotropaic and prophylactic practices at Troizen and Methana. According to myth, two major heroes, Orestes and Theseus, were purified at Troizen from the miasma of shedding kindred blood. Local rituals for the protection of crops, aiming to appease the powers of nature by sprinkling blood on the ground, are recorded at both Troizen (stone-throwing by the celebrants of the Lithobolia festival) and Methana (tracing a circle around vineyards with the blood of a slaughtered cock). Furthermore, three bronze bells discovered in adult burials excavated at Troizen offer material evidence for an apotropaic-prophylactic practice that formed part of the local funerary customs, probably connected with Dionysos' cult in the city.

Introduction

The main source of information on apotropaic and prophylactic practices at Troizen and Methana is the description of these regions by Pausanias. He mentions a number of monuments in the agora of Troizen connected with the myth about Orestes' purification in that city and records local rituals for the protection of crops at both Troizen and Methana. Moreover, in his description of Attica Pausanias refers to the myth of Theseus' purification at Troizen after the murder of the Pallantidai. In addition, an apotropaic-prophylactic practice forming part of the Troizenian funerary customs may be recognized in the presence of bronze bells in three adult burials excavated in the city's cemeteries.

The cults and monuments of Troizen are known primarily from Pausanias' lengthy account (Paus. 2.30.5-32.10), which mentions numerous temples and other places of worship as well as various stories relating to the city's mythical past and local traditions.[1] To date, very few of the recorded monuments have been identified, as no systematic excavation has been carried out in this area since those of Legrand in the late 19th century and Welter in the early 1930s.[2] Taking into account the findspots of inscriptions recording decrees of the city and dedications to deities, both scholars concluded that the agora occupied the area between the churches of Aghios Georghios and Aghios Ioannis, extending northward as far as the church of Aghia Soteira (Figure 1). Two large cemeteries spreading east and west of the city were partly explored through salvage excavations by the Greek Archaeological Service that brought a total of 54 graves to light, distributed in 14 locations (Figure 1, I-XIV) and ranging in date from Proto-Geometric to Roman times.[3]

Although brief, the description of Methana by Pausanias (2.34.1-3) includes a full account of a magical rite that local farmers performed to protect the young shoots of vines from being scorched by the hot south-westerly wind. Archaeological findings from the ancient city, situated on the western coast of the peninsula, are known mainly from the published results of the Methana Survey Project carried out by the University of Liverpool from 1984 to 1987.[4]

Purificatory rituals At Troizen

The purification of Orestes

As is well known, people in ancient Greece believed that kin-killing polluted the individual who committed this abominable act. The murderer was excluded from sacred places and expelled from his homeland but could seek refuge in a foreign place, where someone would undertake to purify him. Until then, he was not allowed to visit, talk, or dine with other people because anyone who came in contact with him would be contaminated.[5] The mythical purification of Orestes at Troizen after he murdered his mother may be perceived as an apotropaic-prophylactic ritual, as it was intended to ward off the Erinyes pursuing him and to prevent contamination of other people with the miasma he carried. Pausanias recounts the story of

[1] For the known monuments of Troizen and an overview of its history, see Giannopoulou 2022.
[2] Legrand 1897; 1905; Welter 1941: 5-42.
[3] Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2003: 129-34; Giannopoulou 2006: 232-36; 2009: 526-33; 2013: 111-16; 2014: 138-229; 2019.
[4] Mee and Forbes 1997.
[5] On the miasma entailed in homicide and the methods used for its cleansing, see Parker 1983: 104-43, 370-74; Burkert 1985: 80-81; Burkert 2000; Hoessly 2001: 52-55; Robertson 2012: 232-37; Salvo 2012.

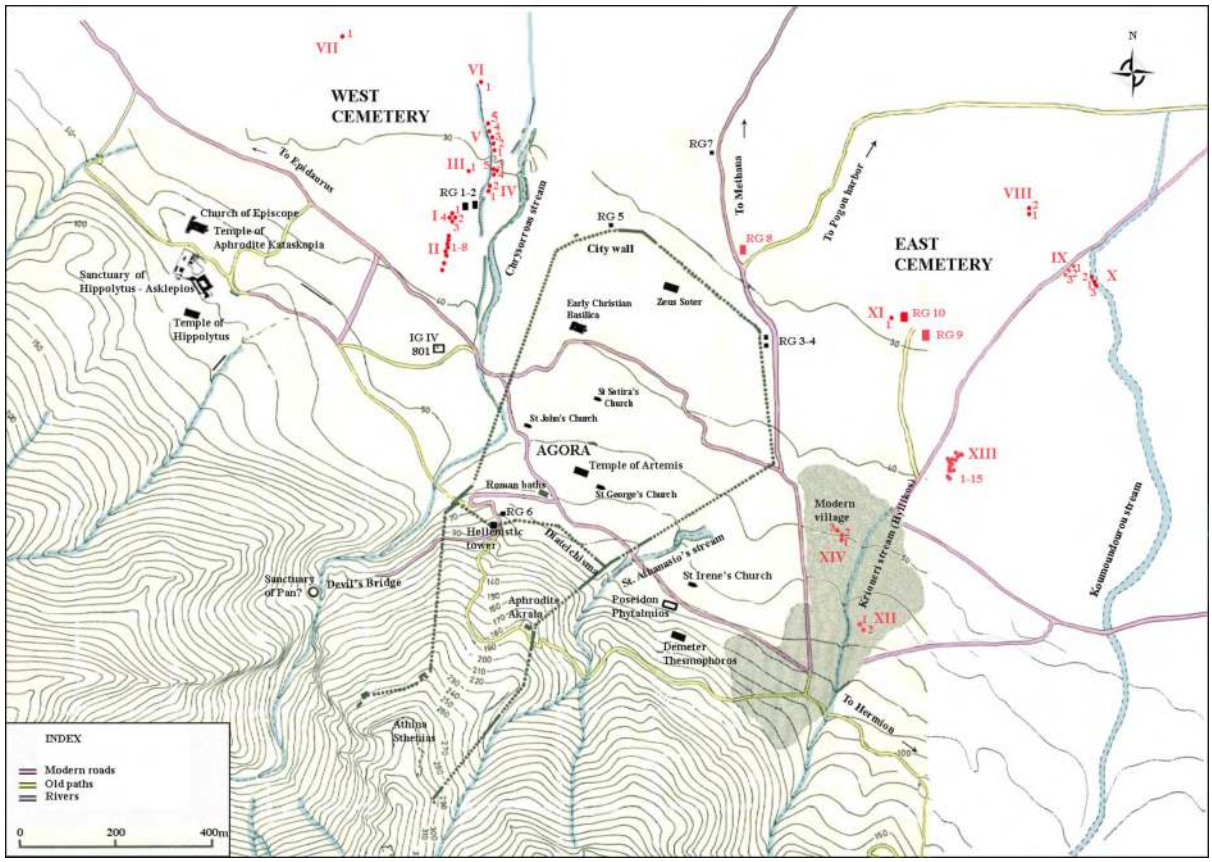

Figure 1. Map of ancient Troizen indicating the locations of excavated monuments and tombs (after Welter 1941: pl. 2; modified and updated by M. Giannopoulou).

Orestes' purification in some detail while describing the monuments in the agora.[6] According to local mythical tradition, Orestes took refuge at Troizen after the matricide. Upon his arrival, the locals lodged him in a tent set up in front of the sanctuary of Apollo Thearios, and entertained him there while they cleansed him, as no one would receive him in their home before his purification was completed. The polluted hero was purified by nine men on the so-called Sacred Stone, located in front of the temple of Artemis Lykeia. The ritual was performed with water from Hippokrene, as well as by other means, and everything that had been used for this purpose was buried in a spot near the tent. A bay tree that Pausanias saw in front of a building called 'Tent of Orestes' was said to have grown from the instruments used to cleanse him.

The purification ritual performed at Troizen finds correspondences on certain South Italian vases with representations of Orestes' purification at Delphi, where Apollo is shown cleansing the hero with water from a large phiale, which he holds in one hand, and a laurel branch, which he uses to sprinkle the murderer.[7] An implement held by Apollo in one such representation has been regarded as a pair of scissors that were used to cut off a lock of Orestes' hair during the purification process.[8] This object, however, is more likely to be a sprig of laurel, since the laurel was considered to expel and cleanse from evil.[9]

Water is documented as the most widely used agent of purification in the Greek world from the Archaic period onwards.[10] The use of a laurel branch for sprinkling water on the defiled person is illustrated in the aforementioned depictions of Orestes' purification at Delphi, and is moreover confirmed by Pausanias' reference to the bay tree he saw in front of the so-called 'Tent of Orestes' in the agora of Troizen. The disposal of instruments of purification in special ways

[6] Paus. 2.31.4, 8-9. For a critical analysis of this myth, see Pucci 2016.

[7] Dyer 1969: 51-52, pl. III.3, IV.5; *ThesCRA* 2: 16, nos 70a-b.

[8] Frazer 1898: 3. 278, and 4. 357-58. Cf. Paus. 8.34.3, mentioning an Arcadian sanctuary called *Koureion* because Orestes was said to have cut off his hair there when he was cured of insanity.

[9] For the laurel's purifying properties, see Parker 1983: 228-29, with nn. 119-121.

[10] Ginouvès 1962: 319-25; Burkert 1985: 76; Parker 1983: 226-27, 371; Jameson, Jordan and Kotansky 1993: 33; *ThesCRA* 2: 19-20; Pucci 2016: 82.

— either burying them, or removing them from the city, or throwing them into the sea — was common practice in ancient Mediterranean religions.[11] A similar prophylactic practice is observed in Christianity, when the water used to wash away original sin in the sacrament of Baptism (as performed in the Orthodox Church) is poured away not into the regular sewer but into the *choneuterion*, a special construction designed for the purpose.

Some depictions of Orestes' purification in South Italian vase-painting show Apollo holding a piglet over the matricide's head.[12] Aeschylus' passage on the hero's purification at Delphi,[13] and these representations — probably inspired by the play — indicate that purification from homicide often included the sacrifice of a piglet whose blood would flow directly onto the defiler's head. The lustration with pig's blood and the employment of this animal in various cathartic rites were probably connected to the popular belief that the pig was closely associated with chthonian powers.[14] The perception that the miasma of bloodshed could be cleansed with other blood (from a sacrificial animal) is recorded in a surviving fragment of Heraclitus' *On Nature*.[15] This practice has been interpreted as a harmless repetition of the bloodshed in order to neutralize the previous deed.[16]

The tent where Orestes stayed at Troizen until he was cleansed had a preventive-prophylactic function, since it was meant to isolate the polluted person and prevent the spread of his miasma to others.[17] Pausanias actually saw a building called 'Tent of Orestes' in front of the sanctuary of Apollo Thearios, and records that the descendants of the nine men claimed to have purified the hero dined in it on appointed days. This collective practice perpetuated the memory of that mythical event, which may well have included a communal meal following the purification in order to foster the hero's reintegration into society.[18] Pausanias provides no specific information about the status of the nine Troizenians who performed the ritual, but this task was normally undertaken by men of distinction, either mythologically or historically.[19] In those nine men, Musti and Torelli saw features of a more archaic polis organization in the cultic, political, and judicial sphere, whereas Pucci viewed their descendants meeting in Orestes' Tent as a traditional college of men whose internal structural rationale derived from the city's territorial organization.[20] The number nine occurs repeatedly in ancient magical rites and magical-apotropaic practices,[21] and for this reason is supposed to have a special symbolic significance.

As regards the Sacred Stone on which Orestes was purified at Troizen, in antiquity unwrought stones were not uncommonly designated as sacred, or associated with a myth and turned into monuments.[22] Stones credited with a cathartic function are recorded in various regions of ancient Greece.[23] A close parallel to the Troizenian myth is the Laconian legend that Orestes was cured of his insanity when he sat upon the stone of Zeus Kappotas at Gytheion.[24] Concerning the temple of Artemis Lykeia, Pausanias mentions two temples of Artemis in the agora of Troizen, one where she was worshipped with the epithet Lykeia, and another where she was venerated as Soteira.[25] The temple of Artemis Lykeia was most probably the one excavated by Legrand in the area north-west of the church of Aghios Georghios (Figure 1).[26] Welter attributed this temple to Artemis Soteira because the inscribed base of a votive to Artemis was unearthed in its vicinity.[27] His identification is, however, debatable, since that inscription contains no cult epithet attached to the name of the goddess. A strong indication that this was indeed the temple of Artemis Lykeia is the 4th-century BC votive relief with a representation of Zeus Meilichios (Figure 2) found near the temple.[28] Given that the worship of Zeus under this epithet was pre-eminently associated with purifications,[29] the cult

[11] Kazen 2019: 225.

[12] Dyer 1969: 51-52, pl. II.1-2, IV.6; *ThesCRA* 2: 16, nos 69a-d.

[13] Aesch. *Eum.* 280-83. Cf. Apoll. Rhod. *Argon.* 4.704-07. Burkert (1999) provides an analysis of this myth as narrated in Aeschylus' play.

[14] Farnell 1896-1909: 4. 303-04.

[15] Diels and Kranz 1960: 151, Fragment 5.

[16] Burkert 1985: 81. Cf. Parker (1983: 372-73), who discusses the concept of 'wiping out blood with blood' in various contexts.

[17] Paus. 2.31.8; Pucci 2016: 83.

[18] On this issue, see Pucci 2016: 82-83. Cf. Plutarch's passage (*Thes.* 12.1) mentioning that the Phytalidai feasted Theseus at their home after they purified him from the murders he had committed on his way from Troizen to Athens. Cf. also the table hospitality (*theoxenia*) prescribed for the 'pure' Tritopatores in a *lex sacra* from Selinous (460-450 BC): Jameson, Jordan and Kotansky 1993: 29, 53, 64; Robertson 2010: 155-58, 160-61. Troizen shared in the cult of the Tritopatores (or Tritopatreis), as shown by a fourth-century BC inscription (*SEG* 46.370) found in the ruins of an Early Christian church located in the agora area (Figure 1).

[19] Parker 1983: 374.

[20] Musti and Torelli 1986: 319; Pucci 2016: 81-82, and n. 34.

[21] E.g., Hdt. 7.114.1 (nine children sacrificed in an apotropaic ritual); Burkert 1985: 194 (funerary banquets on the ninth day of the mourning period); Faraone and Obbink 1991: 42, 113, 115, 178 (magical-apotropaic practices); Jameson, Jordan and Kotansky 1993: 31-32 (burning the ninth part of a sacrificial animal for the 'impure' Tritopatores).

[22] Pfister 1909-1912: 364-65; Burkert 1985: 85, 381, n. 15; *ThesCRA* 3: 317-318.

[23] Farnell 1896-1909: 4. 302-03.

[24] Paus. 3.22.1; Pucci 2016: 81.

[25] Paus. 2.31.1, 2.31.4.

[26] Legrand 1905: 286. On the identification of this temple with that of Artemis Lykeia, see Giannopoulou 2014: 327-29.

[27] *IG* IV 763, 4th cent. BC; Welter 1941: 19.

[28] Poros Museum no. 357. Legrand 1905: 19; Palagia 2003: 173-75; Giannopoulou 2014: 88, with pl. 23a.

[29] Cf. Theseus' purification by the Phytalidai at the altar of Zeus Meilichios near the Kephisos River: Plut. *Thes.* 12.1; Paus. 1.37.4. Purificatory rites connected with the cult of Zeus Meilichios are also mentioned in the *lex sacra* from Selinous: Jameson, Jordan and Kotansky 1993; Burkert 1999: 28-33; Robertson 2010: 4-6, 15-255. For the cult and properties of Zeus Meilichios, see Farnell 1896-1909: l. 64-74, 117-18; Jameson, Jordan and Kotansky 1993: 81-103; Robertson

Figure 2. Fragment of a votive relief depicting Zeus Meilichios holding a phiale, found near the temple of Artemis in the agora of Troizen. 4th century BC (Giannopoulou 2014: pl. 23a).

place of Zeus Meilichios, the temple of Artemis Lykeia, and the Sacred Stone may be reasonably assumed to have formed a compact cultic nucleus in the southern part of the agora.[30] The sanctuary of Apollo Thearios and Orestes' Tent were most probably located a short distance west of those monuments, judging by the fact that an honorific decree once erected in this sanctuary and the inscribed base of a statue dedicated to Apollo were found in the area south-southwest of the Aghios Ioannis church (Figure 1).[31]

The Sacred Stone and the Tent of Orestes were two important monuments in the Troizenian agora; the latter had a notably civic-ceremonial function in Pausanias' time. Farnell hypothesized that the aristocrats who met periodically in this building performed certain lustral rites for the community.[32] The proximity of those monuments to the temple of Artemis Lykeia and the sanctuary of Apollo Thearios respectively suggests that the cult of these deities is likely to have included some purificatory rituals. An association of Artemis with cathartic rites is also apparent in other mythological instances, such as the purifications of the Proitidai at her sanctuary at Lousoi in Achaia and of Orestes at the sanctuary of Artemis Hiereia in Arcadia.[33] The cleansing function of Apollo is well known from literary sources, but his connection, on the level of cult, with purification from murder has been rejected by certain scholars.[34] In the case of Troizen, the mythic-cultic traditions that were alive in Pausanias' time allow for the hypothesis that some cathartic rites may occasionally have been performed in this city in connection with the cults of Artemis Lykeia, Zeus Meilichios, and Apollo Thearios.

The purification of Theseus

Theseus' purification at Troizen after killing his uncle Pallas (brother of Aigeus) and his sons is mentioned in both Euripides' *Hippolytos Stephanephoros* and the Troizenian mythical tradition as recounted by Pausanias.[35] Neither of these sources, however, provides specific information about the mode of his cleansing. Plutarch (*Thes.* 13.1-3) situates the murder of the Pallantidai in Theseus' early adulthood, when they rebelled against the decision of his father (Aigeus) to declare him successor to the throne; by contrast, Euripides and Pausanias place this event and Theseus' self-exile at Troizen to expiate the murder of his kinsmen much later, when he was ruling over Athens and married to Phaidra. This mythical purification remains controversial, as a number of scholars argued that it was invented by Euripides in order to set the action

2010: 129-53, 185-212.

[30] For a recent revision of the topography of Troizen's agora, see Giannopoulou 2014: 327-37, with pl. 220.

[31] Legrand 1893: 110, no. 28; 1900: 182-84, no. 2; *IG* IV 755, 766.

[32] Farnell 1907: 4. 296.

[33] Burkert 1985: 80; Pucci 2016: 76, with n. 10.

[34] For the cleansing function of Apollo, see Farnell 1896-1909: 4. 295-306, 411-12, n. 222; Nilsson 1967: 615-25, 632-37; Burkert 1985: 77, 147; Robertson 2012: 212-18. A connection of Apollo and Artemis with cathartic rites is also evident in a *lex cathartica* (purity regulations) displayed in the former's sanctuary at Cyrene, *SEG* 9, 72; Robertson 2010: 259-374; Salvo 2012: 143-50. Dyer (1969) and Parker (1983: 139-43) argue against Apollo's involvement in purification from murder.

[35] Eur. *Hipp*. 34-37; Paus. 1.22.2.

of the second version of *Hippolytos* at Troizen,[36] while others conjectured it was a pre-existing Troizenian legend that Euripides borrowed and incorporated into the plot of his play so as to link the tragedy's events more closely to the place where Hippolytos was a pre-eminent cultic figure.[37]

The Athenian mythical tradition contains no mention of a ritual purification of Theseus after killing his uncle and cousins. According to a legend recounted by Pausanias (1.28.10) and Julius Pollux (8.119), Theseus was tried for homicide before the court of the Delphinion in Athens and acquitted, because he convinced the court that his acts were justified. The employment of a legal solution to the moral problem of shedding kindred blood suggests this story is a late variant of the myth about his purification at Troizen.[38]

Rituals for protecting crops

The Lithobolia festival at Troizen

Agriculture was of great importance for the prosperity of Troizen, as the official cults of this city demonstrate. Poseidon, the principal god of the *polis*, was venerated under the surname Phytalmios, which signifies his vegetative function as a nature deity presiding over the watery element that fertilized the earth.[39] In addition, the Troizenians worshipped Demeter Thesmophoros and two other, minor divinities of fertility, Damia and Auxesia, who were considered to correspond to Demeter and Kore.[40] According to local mythical tradition, Damia and Auxesia were two maidens who came from Crete but were stoned to death during an insurrection that arose in the city. These two divinities were also worshipped at Aegina and Epidauros, where their cult was connected with a different story.[41]

A festival called Lithobolia ('Stoning') held in honour of Damia and Auxesia at Troizen is assumed to have included stone-throwing during symbolic battles among the celebrants. Similar acts of worship are inferred to have been performed during the Balletys festival at Eleusis, where a priest 'bearing the sacred stone' is recorded among other officials in an honorific decree dated *c.* 24/3–20/19 BC.[42] Fertility rites including symbolic battles among the participants are attested in other cultures as well.[43] Although the Lithobolia may not have involved real bloodshed, it echoes the primordial belief that blood offerings appeased the chthonian powers, thus conducing to the fertility of the earth and the rebirth of nature in general.[44] Various aspects of ancient Greek religion, notably the ritual of the Thesmophoria, display this widespread perception.[45]

Pausanias mentions the cult of Damia and Auxesia while describing the large building complex constituting the extramural sanctuary of Hippolytos (Figure 1), where several other divinities were also worshipped.[46] Given that the cult place of Damia and Auxesia appears to have been adjacent to the temples of Hippolytos and Apollo Epibaterios, the stone-throwing ritual is very likely to have been performed somewhere in the unexplored area south and south-east of the temple which Welter attributed to Hippolytos.

Cock slaughter at Methana

As Pausanias (2.34.2) records, what astonished him most when he visited Methana was a magical rite performed by local farmers to protect the buds on their vines from being blighted by the hot south-westerly wind (called *Lips*). While the wind was still blowing, two men ripped a white cock in two, then ran round the vineyard in opposite directions, each carrying one-half of the bloody cock; when they reached the starting point, they buried the torn pieces of the bird in the earth. This rite contains four elements that are often found in magic: tracing a circle, bloodshed, cock slaughter, and a white victim. Such magical practices were intended to demonstrate power, demarcate limits, or overcome obstacles.[47] Rituals involving animal sacrifice or prayers that aimed to ward off destructive winds or other adverse natural phenomena are attested in various regions of ancient Greece.[48]

Tracing a circle is frequently found in both ancient and modern magical practices.[49] If traced under specific conditions, the circle is thought to have apotropaic-prophylactic properties, protecting anything enclosed within it from evil. The circle was often drawn with the blood of a ritually killed animal in magical practices of ancient cultures.[50] Cock slaughter was also common

[36] Barrett 1964: 33; Parker 1983: 391; Mitchell 1991: 100, n. 6.
[37] Lesky 1983: 236; Jeny 1989: 401.
[38] Mitchell 1991: 100, n. 6.
[39] For the qualities of Poseidon Phytalmios, see Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 675f. On his worship at Troizen: Plut. *Thes.* 6.1; Paus. 2.32.8; Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2016: 63-67; 2017: 149-52.
[40] Paus. 2.32.2; Zen. 4.20; Frazer 1898: 3. 266-68; Nilsson 1906: 414-16. For the etymology of these two names, see Danielssohn 1896.
[41] On the Aeginetan-Epidaurian legend: Hdt. 5.82-85; Paus. 2.30.4; Polinskaya 2013: 456-58, 466-73.
[42] Ath. 406d; Hsch. s.v. Βαλλητὺς; Farnell 1896-1909: 3.93-94; *SEG* 30:93, lines 15-16.
[43] See, e.g., Frazer 1898: 3. 267-68.
[44] Frazer 1898: 3. 267-68, 289; Collins 2002.
[45] Burkert 1985: 244-45.
[46] For the excavated monuments of the Hippolyteion, see Legrand 1897: 543-51; 1905: 290-302; Welter 1941: 25-37; Giannopoulou 2014: 341-63; 2018: 124-43.
[47] Burkert 1985: 82.
[48] Cf. Paus 2.34.3, referring to people trying to keep off hail by sacrifices and spells. Similar cases in Burkert 1985: 175, 265-66.
[49] Stewart 1994.
[50] Frazer 1898: 3. 288-89. Cf. the purification of the land of Mantineia, where sacrificial animals were led all around its boundaries before they were slaughtered, Polyb. 4.21; Burkert 1985, 82.

practice in magical and occult rituals,[51] as this bird was generally considered to symbolize masculine strength and male fertility, qualities that ensured the perpetuation of life. Ritualized killing of animals in magical practices was not a sacrifice in the normative sense, since no part of the victim was burnt for a divinity, nor was its meat eaten by people participating in the rite. Killing an animal in magic was most probably intended to make some particular quality that the specific victim possessed available through its death and to instrumentalize it for the purpose of the ritual.[52] In his description of the magical rite at Methana, Pausanias emphasizes the colour of the cock, specifying that it had all-white feathers.[53] Frazer hypothesized that in this case the white bird was expected to chase away the black clouds brought by the south-westerly wind.[54] The selection of a cock of this colour as a victim, however, is more likely related to the rarity of all-white birds, given that the components of magical rituals usually included hard-to-find elements.[55]

Cock slaughter survived as an apotropaic-prophylactic practice in many parts of modern Greece, including Methana, until the recent past. When the foundation of a new building was being laid, it was customary to slaughter a cock and to let its blood flow onto the foundation stone, under which the sacrificial victim was afterwards buried; the object of this practice was to give strength and stability to the structure, and to protect its occupants from misfortunes.[56] In some cases, this pagan rite was paradoxically combined with the blessing of the foundation stone by an Orthodox priest.

The magical rite attested at Methana corroborates the archaeological evidence for the importance of viticulture in this region. Vine and olive cultivation constituted the basis of the agrarian economy of Methana, as demonstrated by the unusually large amount of pressing equipment for wine and olive oil production registered on the peninsula during the Methana Survey Project.[57] Poseidon's worship under the cult epithet Phytalmios, recorded by Pausanias at Troizen, recurs on Methana, where it is documented by a sanctuary's boundary stone inscribed *Ποσειδᾶνος Φυταλμίου*, discovered at the site of Oga on the peninsula's east coast.[58] This sanctuary is assumed to have been founded in the Early Iron Age or the Archaic period at the latest and to have been abandoned in Roman times.[59] After the sanctuary ceased to function, any fertility rituals that may have been performed in the context of the cult of Poseidon Phytalmios were apparently succeeded by magical rites in which the local farmers placed their hopes for a good harvest.

Bronze bells in burial deposits at Troizen

The function of ancient bronze bells was similar to that of modern ones: their forms were designed to produce a metallic reverberating sound through resonance in order to attract attention in a variety of contexts.[60] In Greek literary sources they are mentioned particularly as signal instruments carried by town guards, or as part of the equipment of barbarian troops in battle, in which case they were hung on shields or horses' harnesses to arouse fear in the enemy through their clanging.[61] Archaeological evidence from excavations in Greece indicates that bronze bells were deposited predominantly in sanctuaries, and only sporadically in tombs; terracotta bells, produced as cheap substitutes for bronze ones, appear primarily in graves, but occur in some sanctuaries as well, especially in those where bronze bells were also found.[62] The prominence of bells in the votive offerings brought to light in the sanctuary of Athena Chalkioikos at Sparta has been suggested to be connected mainly with the apotropaic quality of their sound; an apotropaic-protective function was also attributed to bronze or terracotta bells found in children's graves.[63]

Given that bells intended for funerary use were normally made of clay and regularly deposited in children's graves, the occurrence of three bronze examples in adult burials at Troizen is of special interest. A small bronze bell was included in the furnishings of two Classical and one Early Hellenistic burials.[64] In tomb I-2 (cist grave) of the western cemetery, containing a single adult skeleton (Figure 3), the bell was deposited next to the deceased's right elbow. Apart from the bronze bell, the grave gifts included mainly bronze and clay vases for ladling and consuming wine. The retrieved pottery dates the burial to the second quarter of the 4th century BC. Two other bronze bells were recovered in tombs XIII-1 and XIII-2 (cist graves) of the eastern cemetery. Tomb

[51] Cf. *PGM* II.74-76, III.694-95, IV.40, IV.2191, XII.213; Johnston 2002: 353-57; Swartz 2002: 314; Collins 2008: 99, 158.

[52] Johnston 2012: 219-20. The same may be true for the use of piglets' blood in purifications.

[53] White animals were often used as sacrificial victims in magical rituals, see *PGM* II.74-76, III.694-95, IV.40, XII.35, XII.213. Cf. Hdt. 7.113.2, referring to the sacrifice of white horses by the Persians.

[54] Frazer 1898: 3. 289. For the beneficial properties of the colour white, see also Frazer 1898: 4. 357.

[55] LiDonnici 2002.

[56] Lawson 1910: 263-65; Frazer 2010: 122.

[57] Mee and Forbes 1997: 257-68.

[58] Mee and Forbes 1997: 59, 67-68, 270, no. 5 (4th-2nd centuries BC). For the cult of Poseidon Phytalmios on Methana, see especially Konsolaki-Yannopoulou 2016: 52-53, 57-59; 2017: 148-49.

[59] Mee and Forbes 1997: 146-48 (MS67); Giannopoulou 2021: 108-09.

[60] For the manifold uses of bells among the Greeks and Romans, see Pease 1904; Villing 2002: 275-95; *ThesCRA* 2: 399 and 5: 379-81; Grigoropoulos, this volume.

[61] For the use of bronze bells as signal instruments, see Ar. *Av*. 841-42, 1158-60; Thuc. 4.135.1; Dem. 25.90; Plut. *Arat.* 7.5. Their function in battles: Aesch. *Sept.* 386-87; Eur. *Rhes*. 383-84.

[62] Villing 2002: 274-75, 277.

[63] Villing 2002: 289-92, 294-95.

[64] Giannopoulou 2006: 232-33; 2009: 529; 2013: 115; 2014: 146-48, 191-202, 287; 2019: 661.

Figure 3. Tomb I-2 in Troizen's western cemetery. Second quarter of the 4th century BC (courtesy of E. Konsolaki-Yannopoulou).

XIII-1 contained four consecutive adult burials, placed one on top of another and ranging in date from the 4th century BC to the Early Roman period. The bell most probably belonged to the earliest burial, since it was deposited down near the floor of the tomb, by the left knee of the lowest, poorly preserved skeleton (Figure 4). The furnishings of the deceased consisted mostly of bronze and clay sympotic vessels. The ceramic finds situate this burial in the third quarter of the 4th century BC. Tomb XIII-2, dated to the second quarter of the 3rd century BC, contained a single adult skeleton (Figure 5); the bell was uncovered under the deceased's left wrist. In addition to the bell, several bronze and clay vases for wine consumption were among the grave gifts.

Each of the three bells belongs to a different type.[65] The bell from tomb I-2 (Figures 6a-b) has a cast conical body with rounded top; at the lower rim of the mantle is a small, roughly rectangular cut-out; the rectangular handle was cast with the body.[66] The bell from tomb XIII-1 is also cast, but has a truncated conical body; a bronze wire, suspended from a stick-like handle cast with the body, has been inserted into a hole at the bell's top to hold the iron clapper (Figure 7). The bell from

[65] For the typology of ancient bells, see Bouzek 1974: 87-93; Villing 2002: 247-75.

[66] For the shape of the bell, cf. Robinson 1941: 519, no. 2614, pl. CLXVII.

Figure 4. Remnants of the first burial in tomb XIII-1, eastern cemetery. Third quarter of the 4th century BC (Photo M. Giannopoulou).

tomb XIII-2 is slightly larger than the other two and has a cast hemispherical body[67] with an offset rim (Figure 8); the clapper is lost, but traces of corrosion on the inside show that it was made of iron. The findspots of the bells from Tombs I-2 and XIII-2 indicate that they were tied to the deceased's forearm or wrist; in the case of tomb XIII-1, the bell perhaps rested on the palm. Figures carrying or holding bells in a similar manner are depicted in Dionysiac scenes on South Italian vases from the 4th century BC.[68]

Bronze bells were usually credited with apotropaic qualities in antiquity, as the metallic sound they produced was supposed to repel evil spirits.[69] The slits or cut-outs appearing occasionally in the sides of some bells (among which the bell from tomb I-2) were probably made to transform their 'friendly' sound into something 'dark' and 'menacing' in order to enhance their apotropaic powers.[70] Textual sources mention the sound of bronze as an essential part of funerary ritual, with specific references to cases where bells were used

[67] Cf. Deonna 1938: 324-25, pl. XCII.816; Villing 2002: 254, fig. 21.
[68] See below, n. 77.
[69] Cook 1902: 16-20; Pease 1904: 35; Borell 1989: 133; Villing 2002: 285, 289-95.
[70] Villing 2002: 272, with n. 156.

Figure 5. Tomb XIII-2, eastern cemetery. Second quarter of the 3rd century BC (Photo M. Giannopoulou).

in burial practices.[71] In some regions, such as Attica, Boeotia, Messenia, Cyprus, and the Caucasus, bells were customarily deposited in children's graves to provide protection against evil spirits of the underworld.[72] The three bronze bells from Troizen, however, were found in adult burials, furnished mainly with vases for wine consumption; these grave gifts and the four iron arrowheads furthermore recovered in tomb XIII-2 suggest that the deceased were male.

A probable connection of the bells found in funerary contexts at Troizen with the cult of Dionysos may be inferred from the bronze and clay vessels for wine consumption contained in the same burials.[73] The worship of the god in this city is recorded by Pausanias (2.31.2, 2.31.5), and moreover, a reference to a Dionysia festival appears in an honorific decree dated to 287 BC.[74] Although specific information about Dionysiac rituals taking place at Troizen is lacking, the establishment of Dionysos' cult and its possible influence on the local burial customs are justified by the fact that

[71] Cook 1902: 14-16; Pease 1904: 35; Villing 2002: 292 with nn. 279-81.
[72] Goldman and Jones 1942: 400; Villing 2002: 289-93.
[73] Giannopoulou 2014: 311.
[74] *IG* IV 750, lines 38, 44; Meyer 1939: 650.

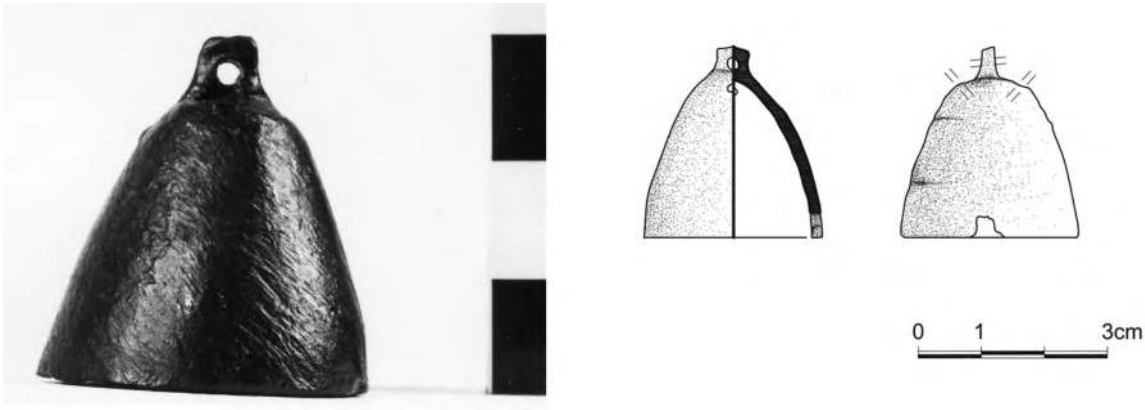

Figure 6a-b. Bronze bell from tomb I-2 (Photo M. Giannopoulou; drawing A. Papadogonas).

Figure 7. Bronze bell from tomb XIII-1 (Photo M. Giannopoulou).

Figure 8. Bronze bell from tomb XIII-2 (Photo M. Giannopoulou).

wine production was an integral part of the daily life of the Troizenians, as demonstrated by textual and archaeological evidence. According to Athenaeus (31c), three different types of wine were produced at Troizen; this was most probably why a bunch of grapes or a grapevine was depicted next to Poseidon's trident on the reverse of some silver coins issued by the city in the 5th-4th centuries BC.[75]

The association of bells with the cult of Dionysos is well attested in textual sources and ancient iconography alike.[76] A number of 4th-century BC South Italian vases illustrate Dionysos and members of his thiasos with bells, either in their hands, or tied to their wrists, or hanging from a thyrsos they hold.[77] These representations indicate that bells had an important role in South Italian Bacchic rituals, probably related to death and the afterlife. The bells in those scenes were supposed to call the deceased to a happy Dionysiac afterlife; furthermore, their sound was imagined to provide magical protection during the ecstatic abandon of Dionysiac ritual.[78] In some cemeteries of Southern Italy, for instance at Taras (Taranto), the offering of grave gifts evoking Dionysos was regarded as an influence of Bacchic rituals on funerary customs.[79] The deposition of bells in tombs at Myrina and Kymi in Asia Minor was also proposed to be linked with the worship of Dionysos.[80]

Furthermore, a connection of bells with Dionysos' cult is illustrated on Roman funerary steles and sarcophagi depicting religious officials identified as the *boukoloi* ('cowherds') and *archiboukoloi* who served the god; these officials are portrayed as shepherds wearing a short chiton with rows of bells attached.[81] In some representations they appear to be dancing while participating in a Dionysiac procession.[82] Similar dramatic performances are enacted in certain villages of modern Greece during the Twelve Days (the festive season between Christmas and Epiphany) and during the Carnival period: a group of men wearing goatskin capes on which rows of bronze goat bells are affixed parade through the village streets dancing and leaping so that the bells clash and clang with their every move. This popular custom has been considered as a survival of religious festivities that once formed part of the cult of Dionysos.[83]

The bronze bells from burial deposits at Troizen are among the numerous objects with Dionysiac connotations that were found in the city's cemeteries, such as sets of bronze sympotic vessels, various clay vases used in the consumption of wine, and terracotta female figurines of dancers.[84] The custom of offering the deceased grave gifts of Dionysiac character seems to reflect common beliefs about life after death probably linked with the god's cult in this city. Heraclitus equates Dionysos with Hades,[85] a statement attesting to his close connection with the underworld. Taking into account the possibility that grave gifts may not be associated with the deceased's actual life — in some cases they are more likely to allude to a desired afterlife — we may ultimately assume that the metallic sound of the bronze bells deposited in tombs at Troizen was expected to repel evil spirits who resided in the underworld and might disrupt the deceased's bliss in an ideal Dionysiac afterlife.

Concluding remarks

The purification of Orestes from the miasma of matricide was conceived by the Troizenians as a ritual performed at an official level, since his cleansing was said to have taken place in front of the temple of Artemis Lykeia and the sanctuary of Apollo Thearios. The formal character attributed to this cathartic rite can also be inferred from the fact that on appointed days the descendants of the nine men purported to have purified the hero gathered for a celebratory dinner in the so-called Tent of Orestes, a building erected in the agora to commemorate that mythical event. The importance attached by the Troizenians to this specific legend suggests that these aristocrats are very likely to have performed some cathartic rites for the community on certain occasions.

By contrast, local rituals for the protection of crops were practiced by common people, particularly farmers, and linked to minor divinities (Damia and Auxesia at Troizen, Lips at Methana), although Poseidon Phytalmios, a major god of fertility, was worshipped at both Troizen and Methana. The primordial popular belief that sprinkling blood on the ground appeased the powers of nature and protected the crops from divine wrath may be recognized in the stone-throwing

[75] Imhoof-Blumer 1883: 182, 184, no. 140; Gardner 1887: 166, nos 8-9, pl. XXX:21-21.
[76] On this matter, see Pease 1904: 54-55; Garezou 1993: 114; Villing 2002: 285-89; *ThesCRA* 5: 379.
[77] See, e.g., Sichtermann 1966: 36-37, no. 41, pl. 67; Trendall 1967: 74, 1020, nos 374, 3020, pl. 393; Trendall and Cambitoglou 1978: 97, 167, 535, nos 4/233, 7/33, 18/297, pl. 200; Cambitoglou, Aellen and Chamay 1986: 53-54; Trendall 1987: 26, 44-45, 66, 72, 92-94, 157, nos 23, 1/91, 1/98, 2/24, 2/41, 2/129, 2/252, pl. 3a, 11a, 12d, 21c, 50, 95c; Villing 2002: 285-87, fig. 45.
[78] Villing 2002: 287.
[79] Gräpler 1997: 186-93.
[80] Wiesner 1941-1942: 48.
[81] Turcan 1966: 549-50; Robert 1983: 597-99, no. XXVIII; Koch 1990: 118-20, figs 9-11.
[82] Villing 2002: 287-88, fig. 46.
[83] Lawson 1910: 224-32.
[84] Giannopoulou 2006: 232-34, figs 46-49; 2009: 528-32, figs 15-24; 2013: 111-16, figs 9, 12-14; 2014: 319-20; 2019: 652-55, 657-59, figs 10-13, 19, 21. For the connection of similar finds with Dionysos, see Leroux 1913: 79-80; Gräpler 1997: 178-80; Themelis and Touratsoglou 1997: 163; Rumscheid 2006: 254-56.
[85] Diels and Kranz 1960: 154-55, Fragment 15. On the chthonian dimension of Dionysos, see also Farnell 1896-1909: 5. 127-29; Burkert 1985: 293-95.

ritual performed by the celebrants of the Lithobolia festival at Troizen and in the cock slaughter recorded by Pausanias at Methana.

The presence of bronze bells in adult (presumably male) burials at Troizen offers new evidence for the apotropaic function of bells in funerary contexts. Given that the furnishings of those burials consisted mainly of bronze and clay vases for wine consumption, the bells can legitimately be assumed to have been meant to repel malevolent underworld spirits who might harass the deceased and spoil his enjoyment of a happy Dionysiac afterlife. The specific funerary custom and underlying beliefs — possibly arising from the cult of Dionysos — appear to have been adopted by some upper-class wealthy Troizenians, as all three tombs in which a bell was found also contained several other intrinsically valuable bronze items.

Finally, certain ideas reflected in the cathartic and apotropaic-prophylactic practices discussed above seem to have outlasted antiquity. They find echoes in the Christian sacrament of baptism and in popular customs that are part of the Greek folk tradition, such as cock slaughter at the foundation of a new building, and dramatic performances by villagers dressed in goatskin capes with rows of bells attached, recalling ancient Dionysiac rituals.

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Figures 1-8, included in the author's PhD dissertation, are already available online (see Giannopoulou 2014).

Some Thoughts on Apotropaic Devices in Greek Pottery Production[1]

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Abstract

Textual sources indicate that the life of ancient Greek craftspeople was often characterized by competition and envy (*phthonos*). This paper presents the argument that the communities of small artisans in Greek cities closely correspond to the social system of the 'small group' as defined by Mary Douglas. Douglas showed that the social climate of rivalry and jealousy prevalent in 'small groups' is usually associated with a firm belief in the efficacy of magic and witchcraft. Such a social setting is therefore likely to foster both occult practices to harm competitors and protective measures against envy, which is indeed the case among Greek craftspeople. The paper then examines the literary and iconographic evidence for the use of apotropaic devices (*baskania*) in ceramic production. As will become clear, grotesque figures and masks appear to have been prominently employed as protective charms. By making people laugh, these devices were able to avert the effects of envious ill-will.

Introduction

The scholion to Aristophanes' *Ecclesiazusae* 253 comments on the meaning of κεραμεύειν, literally 'to be a potter' or 'to make pottery.'[2] The first sentence explains the general sense of κεραμεύειν with the verb κατεργάζομαι 'to work on something,'[3] followed by a brief reference to one Kephalos, who was the father of a potter. Finally, the figurative meaning of κεραμεύειν is explained: 'They would also say "pottering" for dealing badly with public affairs.' In the passage of the *Ecclesiazusae* to which the scholion refers, the same Kephalos, apparently the Athenian democratic politician Kephalos of Kollytos prominent in the early 4th century BC, is derided as a madman.[4] Immediately afterwards, Aristophanes mocks Kephalos by stating not only 'that he makes his pots shoddily,' but also 'that he's making the City go to the pot all right, good and proper!' (trans. A. Sommerstein).[5]

Aristophanes' verses speak volumes about the scorn members of the Athenian elite felt for the lower social classes engaged in manual labour.[6] Although Kephalos probably owned a pottery business rather than actually worked as a potter,[7] he is satirized with the expression κεραμεύειν as a metaphor for the mishandling of public affairs. As Alan Sommerstein suggested, the metaphor may derive from the messiness of the potter's work or the fast spinning of the wheel, as if the potter was making the state dizzy.[8] At any rate, throwing pots on the wheel was rather arduous and dirty work. In the *Birds*, Aristophanes groups the potters with other small craftspeople such as blacksmiths, tanners, and shoemakers, all starting their work before daylight.[9] Including citizens and metics, but also freedmen and slaves, the class of small artisans in Athens and Attica was far from being socially homogeneous.[10] As regards the metics and citizens involved in the pottery business, significant differentiation in their economic status can be observed. A person owning a pottery business was certainly better off than a self-employed potter or vase painter.[11] In general, smaller pottery workshops may have relied primarily on family labour, while larger businesses likely employed several slaves.

Dedications by potters and vase painters on the Athenian Acropolis suggest that a thriving business could generate considerable prosperity for the proprietor or proprietors of the workshop.[12] On the whole, however,

[1] I wish to thank the organizers and participants of the conference for the stimulating discussion. Furthermore, I am grateful to Liana Gkelou and Christina Ziota for permission to reproduce the skyphos from Petres. Martin Bentz kindly provided a photo of the terracotta figure from Selinunte. I am indebted to Robert Schick and Stefanie Kennel for improving the English text. All remaining errors are my own.

[2] Schol. Ar. *Eccl.* 253 = Suda s.v. κεραμεύειν (κ 1353): κεραμεύειν· κοινῶς ἀντὶ τοῦ κατεργάζεσθαι. ἦν δὲ καὶ κεραμέως πατὴρ ὁ Κέφαλος. ἔλεγον δὲ κεραμεύειν καὶ τὸ κακῶς ποιεῖν τὰ κοινά.

[3] Citing the Suda entry, Scheibler (1995: 120) misleadingly translates κατεργάζομαι by 'schwer arbeiten' ('work hard').

[4] Ar. *Eccl.* 248–252. For Kephalos of Kollytos, see Engels 1999.

[5] Ar. *Eccl.* 252–253: ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ τρύβλια | κακῶς κεραμεύειν, τὴν δὲ πόλιν εὖ καὶ καλῶς. See Sommerstein 1998: 161–162.

[6] For disparaging references to the trades of democratic politicians in Aristophanes, see Lind 1990: 247–248.

[7] Keuls 1989: 153.

[8] Sommerstein 1998: 161–162.

[9] Ar. *Av.* 489–492.

[10] In general, see Philipp 1990: 89; Tanner 1999: 139; Acton 2014: 270–288. Williams (1995: 151–157, 159) reviews the evidence for potters and vase painters.

[11] For investment in manufacturing, including pottery workshops, see Acton 2014: 253–270.

[12] Raubitschek 1949: 465; Scheibler 1995: 124–127; Keesling 2005: 401–403, 415–418.

this might have been the exception rather than the rule. In fact, the dedicators of the aforementioned votive monuments, dated mainly to the late 6th and early 5th centuries BC, have usually been identified, though in some cases only tentatively, with potters and painters producing black- and red-figure vases. Although vases with figured decoration represented only a small segment of Attic pottery production, they might have enabled higher profit margins compared to undecorated or black-gloss vessels.[13]

Competition and envy among craftsmen

The overall picture for Classical Athens is that small-scale, family-run pottery businesses existed alongside somewhat larger workshops where slave labour probably played a significant role.[14] Altogether, this was a small and rather closed world characterized presumably by rather harsh working conditions for the craftspeople and their unskilled assistants as well as by considerable economic uncertainty in many cases, in particular for self-employed artisans and their families.[15] Much the same is true, by the way, for coroplasts producing terracotta figurines. Like potters, coroplasts also used kilns heated with wood for firing their products. Due to the perils of fire, both pottery and coroplastic workshops clustered in specific areas on the urban periphery or immediately outside the fortification walls.[16] The concentration of workshops in potters' quarters implies a social reality marked by face-to-face relations between the craftspeople working there. As we will see in the following discussion, these personal relations were not always friendly and cooperative, however. Interactions were often charged with fierce competition and poisoned by envy. That Hesiod chose the malevolent anger (κότος) among potters to illustrate the role of Eris ('Strife') as the governing principle of social life is probably no coincidence.[17] Yet jealousy (φθόνος) also arises between joiners and singers respectively, and even beggars might envy their counterparts.[18] The inscription ὡς οὐδέποτε Εὐφρόνιος ('as never Euphronios') on an amphora signed by Euthymides has frequently been cited as evidence for rivalry between Attic potters and painters, but intricate interpretative problems remain that cannot be solved here.[19] More instructive is a scene on an Attic red-figure kalpis by the Leningrad Painter in Vicenza, dated to 460-50 BC.[20] Athena and two winged Nikai have intruded into a pottery workshop and are about to crown the young craftsman sitting on a diphros as well as the two assistants beside him. Wreaths were awarded for military or civic merits; equally, victors in athletic or musical contests received crowns.[21] As personifications of victory, the two Nikai may in fact suggest that the vase painter had an agonistic context in mind.[22] At any rate, they epitomize the widespread competition between craftspeople. Intriguingly, more than a hundred years later, in the second half of the 4th century BC, an Athenian grave epigram for a potter named Bakchios mentions contests explicitly designated as ἀγόνες.[23] The inscription claims that Bakchios won *stephanoi* 'in all the *agones* the City established.' These contests, however, were not *agones* in the strict sense, but rather competitions held to award the contract to produce the prize amphoras for the Greater Panathenaia.

The habit of turning everything into a contest, commonly referred to as the 'Greek agonistic spirit,' is frequently taken as an innate characteristic of the ancient Greeks. This notion, which goes back to Jacobs Burckhardt's *Griechische Kulturgeschichte*, has rarely been questioned since.[24] However, such essentialist claims obscure the phenomenon of competition rather than contribute to its understanding. A competitive stance and an envious attitude are not natural features of this alleged Greek mentality, but a result of specific social settings promoting rivalry. Competition between members of the elite was consequently, in terms of both forms and functions, quite different from competition among artisans. Since they emerge from specific socio-economic environments, these and other varieties of rivalry in Greek society should not be ascribed to a single cause, namely a putative Greek agonistic ethos.

Struggling to cope with volatile demand for their products, just one risk among many, meant considerable economic insecurity for Greek τεχνίτες and their families. The resulting precarity of living conditions may frequently have contributed to a general climate of ill-will, grudges, and rivalry. Moreover, at least in

[13] For a recent study of the prices of Attic pottery vessels, see Monaco 2019.

[14] The size of workshops is discussed by Noble (1965: xiv), Philipp (1968: 85), Scheibler (1995: 110), and Hasaki (2006: 225). See also, with caution, Acton 2014: 84–108; Lüdorf 2010.

[15] Small craftsmanship and poverty: Ar. *Plut.* 617–618. See Philipp 1968: 76. The comic poet Philetaerus (fr. 4 Austin – Kassel) calls a potter specializing in lamps (λυχνοποιός) a miserable man. Hyperbolus, an Athenian politician, whom Aristophanes (e.g. *Pax* 690; *Eq.* 739, 1315) taunts as a lampmaker and lampseller, was instead probably the owner of a large workshop. More references in Lind 1990: 247, n. 3.

[16] Scheibler 1995: 107. For Athens, see Rotroff 2021: 277–278.

[17] Hesiod, *Erga* 25–26: καὶ κεραμεὺς κεραμεῖ κοτέει καὶ τέκτονι τέκτων, | καὶ πτωχὸς πτωχῷ φθονέει καὶ ἀοιδὸς ἀοιδῷ. See West 1978: 147; Sanders 2014: 34, 40, 51.

[18] Sanders (2014: esp. 33–57) discusses the concept of *phthonos*.

[19] Munich, Antikensammlungen 2307. *BAPD* 200160. Cf. the views of Neer (2002: 51) and Hedreen (2016: 40).

[20] Vicenza, Banca Intesa Sanpaolo 2 (C278). *BAPD* 206564; Chatzidimitriou 2005: 165, 211, no. K47, pl. 17; Haug 2011: 1–2, fig. 1; Distler 2022: 41–44, 221, no. K10, pl. 6:3.

[21] For crowning in general, see Blech 1982; Scafuro 2009. The crowning of victors of athletic contests is discussed by Kefalidou (1996: esp. 62–65).

[22] Distler 2022: 42 with n. 268.

[23] *IG* II^2 6320 (= *CIG* 2, no. 567). Preuner 1920: 69–72; Keesling 2005: 419; Gillis 2021: 249–250, no. F13.

[24] Burckhardt 1902: 89–123 (= Burckhardt 1957: 84–117). Cf. Ehrenberg 1935.

Athens and Attica, craftspeople faced the continuous unrestrained contempt of the elite, an attitude that approaches what Bourdieu called 'class racism' with regard to modern societies.[25] The feeling of frustration evoked by this treatment is hard to envision in the case of the artisans of Archaic and Classical Athens, but today's parallels show that despising and marginalizing elements of society may provoke forceful reactions, not least during elections.

In her seminal book *Natural Symbols*, the social anthropologist Mary Douglas defined a social system that she calls 'small group,' which shows conspicuous similarities with the cramped world of small artisans in ancient Greece. Douglas' small groups are rather closed communities whose members 'know one another and can count their rank and prospects of promotion. [...] Hemmed in and face-to-face, their destiny is in their own hands and they meet it with intrigue and jealousy.'[26] The mindset — Douglas prefers the term 'cosmology' — associated with this type of social setting is dominated by suspicion and mistrust, because '[s]mall competitive communities tend to believe themselves in a dangerous universe, threatened by sinister powers operated by fellow human beings. [...] Here failure is not ascribed to bad luck, nor to moral failing of the victim, but to the hostile, occult powers of his neighbour.'[27] In 'small groups' a theory of evil therefore flourishes that in general terms corresponds to the fear of witchcraft, the evil eye, and suchlike.

Demonic beings at work?

The communities of small craftspeople in Classical Athens and elsewhere clearly show the traits typical of Douglas' 'small groups.' In line with the mindset engendered by this type of social environment, a number of practices aimed at harming other people and their property are thus to be expected. At the same time, individuals can be presumed to have taken protective measures against such attacks on a regular basis. Greek curse tablets dating to the Classical and Hellenistic periods fully confirm the former proposition. When these texts explicitly indicate their professions, the persons targeted are for the most part socially situated in the class of small artisans and keepers of shops or inns.[28] In a tablet dated around 350 BC presumed to have been found in Athens, two of the persons targeted by the binding spell, Demetrios and Demades, are referred to as κεραμοδέτης.[29] The term has been translated as 'potter,'[30] but this compound of κέραμα/κεράμους and δέω probably refers rather to a tiler or some sort of tinker who repairs ceramic vessels.[31] That no potter is mentioned on the extant Greek curse tablets is probably a matter of the surviving evidence.[32]

The crafts of the potter and coroplast are undoubtedly riskier than the work of a cobbler. Certainly the most crucial moment of the whole production process was the firing of pottery or coroplastic objects in the kiln.[33] If the firing failed, several weeks' worth of work would be completely or partly destroyed. Such a misfortune was obviously an economic disaster. In the *Kaminos*, also called the *Potter's Hymn*, a hexameter poem preserved in the Pseudo-Herodotean *Life of Homer*, several perils of the firing process, including *Syntrips* ('he who breaks [the pots]'), are personified as demonic beings.[34] The author claims that Homer improvised the poem when a group of Samian potters offered him some of their products in exchange for a song. Based on the linguistic features, most modern editors agree that the poem was composed in Athens.[35] Albio Cesare Cassio has recently shown how tenuous the evidence for Attic origin of the *Kaminos* is, however, raising the possibility that it was composed in Corinth.[36] To determine the poem's date is even more difficult. Because of its 'general character,' Marjory Milne suggested a date of around 500 BC, while Georg Markwald states that the language of the poem does not go beyond the 5th century BC.[37]

The poem starts with a conditional blessing addressing the goddess Athena: 'If you will pay me for my song, o potters, | then come, Athena, and lay thy hand above the kiln!' Four more verses follow expressing wishes for a successful firing of the pots in the kiln and a profitable sale of the pottery. Athena's protective role in the firing process is clearly alluded to when the goddess is asked to extend her hand over the kiln. The second part of the poem consists of a conditional curse threatening to invoke five demons whose names make their destructive forces explicit: collectively called καμίνων δηλητῆρες ('destroyers of kilns'), they comprise the abovementioned *Syntrips* ('Smasher') together with *Smaragdos* ('Crasher'), *Asbestos* ('Overblaze'), *Sabaktes* ('Shake-to-Pieces'), and *Omodamos* ('Conqueror of the Unbaked'). Without engaging in a detailed discussion of

[25] Philipp 1990: 87–88, 98–100; Scheibler 1995: 122–123; Tanner 1999: 137–139. For the notion of 'class racism,' see Bourdieu 1984: 178–179.
[26] Douglas 1973: 88.
[27] Douglas 1973: 137.
[28] Gager 1992: 152–153. For binding spells against craftspeople and workshops, see also Faraone 1991: 11. Add Curbera 2016: 110–111, no. IB 44 (*SEG* 66, no. 173).
[29] Peek 1941: 97–100, no. 8, pl. 24; Jordan 1985: 164, no. 44; Gager 1992: 162–163, no. 70.
[30] Eidinow 2007: 195, 411–412, no. SGD 44.
[31] Peek 1941: 98–99. The term *keramodetēs* may be added to the lists of occupations in Classical Athens compiled by Edward Harris and David Lewis: Harris 2002: 67–97; Harris and Lewis 2016: 35–36, n. 123.
[32] Pliny *NH* 28.4: *defigi quidem diris deprecationibus nemo non metuit*. [...] *multi figlinarum opera rumpi credunt tali modo,* [...].
[33] Hasaki (2021: 265–273) discusses the firing process and its perils.
[34] Ps.-Hdt. *vit. Hom.* 32. See Milne 1965; Leurini 2010; Gillis 2021: 151–153; Hasaki 2021: 215–216.
[35] Milne 1965: 103, 111; Faraone 2001: 435 and n. 2.
[36] Cassio 2016. See also D'Agostino and Palmieri 2016: 163.
[37] Milne 1965: 110; Markwald 1986: 240. Cf. Faraone 2001: 435: 'sometime in the 5th century BC.' Further discussion and references in Leurini (2010: 75 with n. 28) and Faraone (2021: 41 with n. 79).

these names here, it suffices to note that all of them, as Milne has shown, refer to damage and destruction of the pots in the kiln.[38] Due to textual problems, Wilamowitz nearly a century ago bracketed lines 15-21 of the poem as a later interpolation. More recently, Christopher Faraone convincingly argued that also lines 11-14 are later additions, and that lines 11-21 represent a collection of three hexametrical curses against kilns.[39]

Whereas John Gager argued that the passage mentioning the five demons is based on a once-extant formula for curse tablets,[40] earlier scholars have also suggested that the goblins were, because of their speaking names, only playful inventions of the poet.[41] Yet, even if the latter were the case, the poet would probably have been elaborating on the belief in demonic beings with the potential to disrupt the work of the potter and the coroplast. Esther Eidinow has pointed out that neither the demons mentioned in the *Kaminos* nor similar beings are invoked in the texts of the extant Greek curse tablets.[42] The binding formula of the Classical and Hellenistic curse tablets in fact address only a limited number of deities, most frequently Hermes; they do not mention demons.[43] But early metrical incantations occasionally refer to theriomorphic demons, for example the hexameter charms written on a late 4th- or early 3rd-century BC lead amulet from Phalasarna.[44]

Apotropaic devices

Some scholars have recognized one of the destructive demons of the *Potter's Hymn* in a small ithyphallic figure depicted on a Corinthian votive tablet from Penteskouphia in Berlin (Figure 1).[45] The pinax, though fragmentary, shows a craftsman or assistant with a crippled leg tending a kiln. A retrograde inscription next to the man labels him as Λόκρις (*Lokris*), either an otherwise unattested personal name or an ethnic.[46] The owl sitting on the kiln has usually been taken as a symbol of Athena, the patroness of potters, unless the goddess herself was represented on the lost part of the pinax.[47]

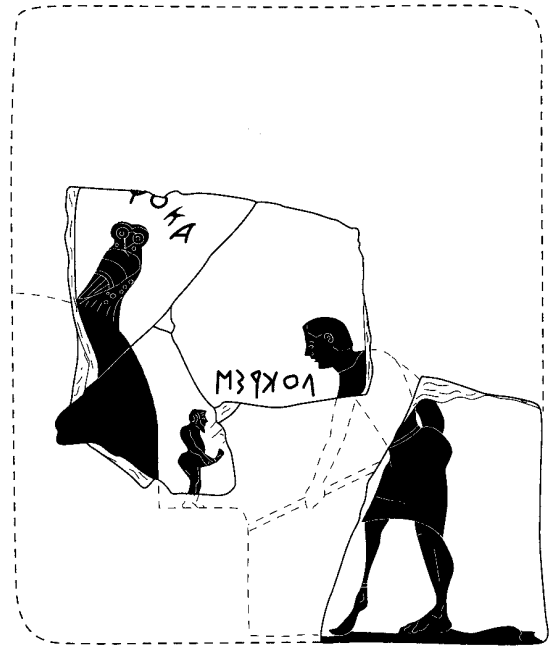

Figure 1. Side B of pinax form Penteskouphia. Berlin, Antikensammlung F 683 + F 757 + F 829, F 822. Preserved width c. 13.2cm (after Hasaki 2021, 141, fig. 4.54).

This identification is, however, less straightforward than it might initially seem.[48] In the wider Greek world, the owl was not associated with Athena as closely as at Athens.[49] The owl's cry and thus the bird itself were moreover commonly regarded as a bad omen in ancient Greece.[50] In connection with Athena, the owl may have been an apotropaic charm,[51] but in her absence, a sinister meaning for the bird cannot be altogether ruled out. The situation is further complicated by the inscription right next to the owl, which cannot be discussed here in detail.[52] Between the worker and the kiln, seemingly standing on the stoking tunnel, appears the abovementioned figure, holding his huge phallus presumably with both hands. Proposing the reading κάμ[ινος], Rudolf Wachter takes the inscription next to the statuette as label of the kiln rather than the name of the small naked man.[53] The figure does not lean towards the worker in front of him, as D'Agostino and Palmieri have suggested,[54] but is simply hunchbacked, a characteristic that fits in well with his prominent buttocks and pot belly. Occasionally, the bearded figure has been referred to as a satyr.[55] His apparent lack of

[38] Milne 1965: 103–105.
[39] Faraone 2001: 438, 442–449.
[40] Gager 1992: 153.
[41] Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1931: 161; Herter 1950: 115 (= Herter 1975: 46).
[42] Eidinow 2007: 193. For a possible representation of such demons in a pottery workshop on a black-figure Boeotian skyphos of the early 4th century BC (Distler 2022: 47–49, 221, no. K16, pl. 8:2–4), see Papadopoulos 2003: 193–195, fig. 3.4. *Contra* Distler 2022: 49 with n. 335.
[43] Gager 1992: 12–13.
[44] Faraone 2001: 439–441.
[45] Pernice 1898: 76: 'schädlicher Kobold', 78; D'Agostino and Palmieri 2016: 164. For the pinax, see Palmieri 2016: 43–44, 93–95, 120, 202, no. Ge21, pl. 5:15; Gillis 2021: 100, no. C86, fig. 9, 149, no. T15; Hasaki 2021: 139–140, no. B40 with figs., 192–193. The best discussion of the inscriptions is Wachter 2001: 144–145, no. COP 63.
[46] Wachter 2001: 145: 'probably the name of the potter or painter.'
[47] Wachter 2001: 144; Gillis 2013: 110; Gillis 2021: 216; Hasaki 2021: 194.
[48] Distler (2022: 31 with n. 137) offers some cautious remarks.
[49] Pausanias (6.26.3) mentions the cock as a sacred animal of Athena Ergane.
[50] Herter 1950: 118–119 (= Herter 1975: 49–50).
[51] Faraone 1992: 55, 67 n. 13.
[52] Wachter 2001: 144.
[53] Wachter 2001: 145.
[54] D'Agostino and Palmieri 2016: 164: 'The demon seems to address Lokris, leaning towards him, with a threatening air.'
[55] Cuomo di Caprio 1984: 82, followed by Papadopoulos 2003: 196 and

Figure 2. Skyphos with relief decoration from Petres. Florina, Archaeological Museum 2351. Height 28cm (after Adam-Veleni 2017: 111, fig. 2).

a horse's tail, however, makes this interpretation,[56] perhaps prompted by a detail in a potter's workshop scene on a black-figure hydria of the Leagros Group in Munich,[57] rather unlikely. At the far right of the scene on the hydria, a figure is tending the stoking channel of a kiln that is decorated with a rather large bearded mask. Although the head clearly shows human ears,[58] scholars have repeatedly described it as a satyr mask.[59] A much later skyphos with relief decoration, found in a metal workshop in Petres in Macedonia and dated to the first half of the 2nd century BC, depicts a bearded male head on one side and a female head on the other (Figure 2).[60] The two heads, which show grotesque facial features, have been identified as those of a satyr and Gorgo-Medusa respectively.[61]

Citing a passage from a lost comedy by Aristophanes, the grammarian Pollux explains that bronze workers protected their furnaces against ill-will with γελοῖα, 'laughable images':

> 'It was customary for bronze workers to hang or plaster up before the furnaces certain laughable images, which were called *baskania* for the aversion of ill-will (ἐπὶ φθόνου ἀποτροπῇ) – *baskania* as Aristophanes (fr. 607 K-A) says as well: "If anyone in need should purchase a *baskanion* for the kiln of a bronze worker…" ' (trans. R. Lamberton).[62]

As Wilamowitz conjectured, Aristophanes' verses may refer to an ugly slave who is unsaleable, if not as a charm to avert evil.[63] Pollux does not specify the appearance of the 'laughable images,' but grotesque figures such as the small hunchback on the tablet from Penteskouphia can be supposed the best candidates.[64] Rather than a harmful goblin, the small figure standing on the praefurnium of the kiln would therefore have been an apotropaic charm.[65] A similar protective function can be assumed for the grotesque heads on the skyphos from Petres, and the master of the hydria of the Leagros Group might have had a head with grotesque facial features in mind when he painted the 'satyr' mask hanging on the furnace. The capacity of such grotesques to make people laugh seems to have been exactly what mitigated the much-feared effects of envious ill-will and the like.[66]

In the case of the small figure on the Penteskouphia pinax, its apotropaic efficacy is further enhanced by the erect phallus. The evil-averting function of ithyphallic figures against the envious derives from the implicit threat of (anal) rape.[67] A depiction of an erect

Smith 2009: 79. See also Kefalidou 2017: 169: 'ιθυφαλλική μορφή (Σατύρου;).'

[56] But note the small image of a Satyr on a furnace in a bronze workshop scene on an Attic red-figure krater by the Harrow Painter: Caltanisetta, Museo Civico 35251. *BAPD* 352517. Chatzidimitriou 2005: 69, 215, no. X19, pl. 31.

[57] Munich, Antikensammlungen 1717. *BAPD* 302031. Chatzidimitriou 2005: 209, no. K39, pl. 10; Gillis 2021: 149, no. T14, figs. 25–26; Distler 2022: 35–38, 220, no. K3, pl. 4:4.

[58] Distler 2022: 36.

[59] Pernice 1898: 77; Smith 2009: 80; Beck *et al.* 1990: 513 (H. Philipp).

[60] Adam-Veleni 2016: 259, 264, no. 37, 267, fig. 18; Adam-Veleni 2017: 111, fig. 2; Gillis 2021: 146, no. T11, fig. 22.

[61] Adam-Veleni 2016: 259, 264.

[62] Poll. 7.108. Faraone 1992: 55–56; Kefalidou 2017. For the adjective βάσκανος ('malicious') and the related term βασκανία, see Sanders 2014: 56. An antidote against a malicious influence is likewise called a βασκάνιον.

[63] Wilamowitz-Moellendorff 1931: 161 n. 3.

[64] Harrison (1922: 190–191) was the first to associate the passage from Pollux with the small figure on the Penteskouphia tablet.

[65] For three Late Roman terracotta figurines found in pottery workshops and interpreted as *baskania*, see Adam-Veleni *et al.* 2017: 222, no. 105 with fig. (K. Tzanavari); 222–230, nos. 106–107 with figs. (T. Savvopoulou).

[66] For the functions of grotesque figures, see now Meintani 2022: 379–382.

[67] Faraone (2018: 76–78) has shown that this association becomes explicit only in the Roman period but is highly likely to have existed

phallus can fulfill the same function. In a large ceramic workshop complex of Hellenistic date at Pantanello, just outside Metapontum in Magna Graecia, a limestone relief showing a phallus was found in situ on the right-hand side of the praefurnium of a large kiln.[68] Joseph Carter has convincingly argued that the rhomboid block (maximum height 59cm) had an apotropaic function for the kiln. The workshop complex was erected in the 2nd century BC on the grounds of an abandoned sanctuary of the Archaic to Classical periods and continued in operation until the early 1st century AD. According to Carter, the phallus relief was previously employed in the sanctuary, then reused as an apotropaic device to protect the kiln.

A recent find from a ceramic workshop at Selinunte in Sicily provides further evidence for the use of grotesque figurines as apotropaic devices. This extensive workshop complex is located in the eastern part of the urban area in the Cotone valley near the city walls, in a rather marginal situation. Between 2010 and 2016, the complex was excavated by a team from the University of Bonn under the direction of Martin Bentz.[69] During an earlier geophysical survey, the whole area alongside the Cotone River had been identified by means of many conspicuous anomalies interpreted as kilns as the artisans' quarter of Selinunte. The excavated workshop was active in the 6th and 5th centuries BC, producing ceramic goods of different kinds, including fine-ware pottery and terracotta figurines. During the Carthaginian conquest of Selinunte in 409 BC, the facilities were destroyed and abandoned.

In the eastern part of the complex, in a spacious rectangular room adjacent to a large kiln, an interesting assemblage of objects with cultic connotations was uncovered, scattered in front of the praefurnium of the large kiln as well as around a staircase in the south-west corner of the room. These finds include a terracotta statuette of a seated female figure wearing a polos, a black-gloss skyphos with two dedicatory inscriptions directed to Zeus, a small pyxis containing a bronze coin, and a terracotta arula.[70] As the excavators remarked, both the distribution of the objects and their stratigraphic positions indicate that they had fallen from a wall niche or the like located in the south-west corner of the room during the building's destruction. In addition to the abovementioned finds, the assemblage also included a fragmentary terracotta figurine with grotesque facial features (Figure 3).[71] This assemblage

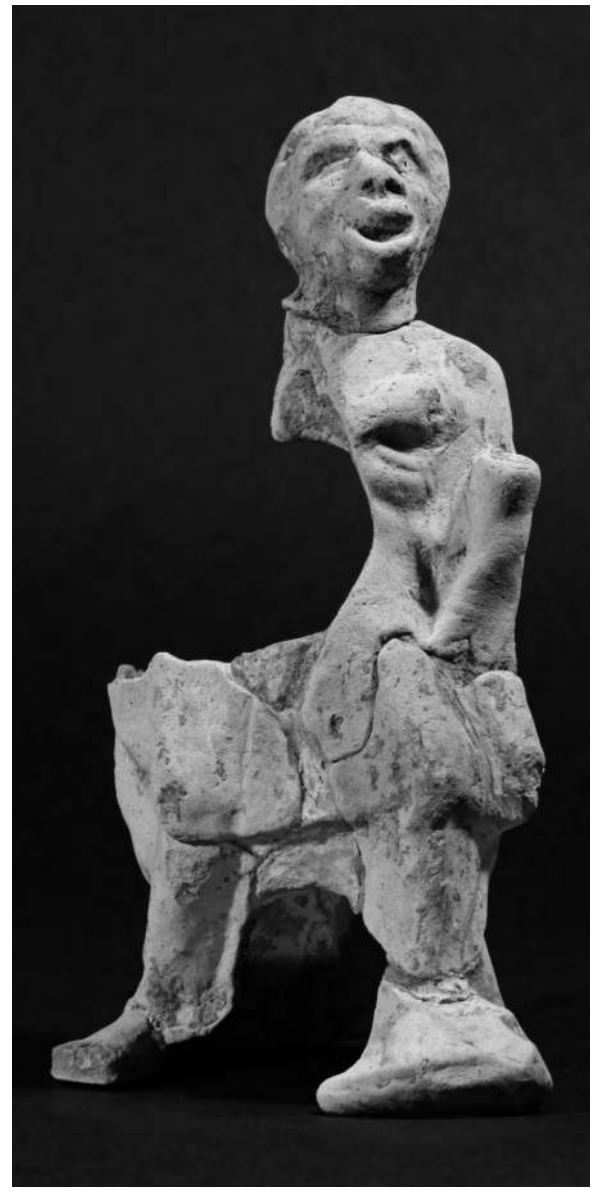

Figure 3. Grotesque terracotta figure, Selinunte SL 31834. (photo: M. Bentz).

in its entirety constitutes an important new piece of evidence for the cult practices of Greek craftspeople. In particular, the dedicatory inscriptions testify to the possibility that Zeus was regarded as a patron by the Selinuntian artisans. The grotesque figurine should most likely be interpreted as an apotropaic device for protecting the production process and the craftspeople themselves.[72]

Conclusion

This paper's aim was to highlight the social conditions that gave rise to the creation and use of apotropaic devices to protect the production process of ceramic

in earlier periods as well.

[68] Carter 2018: 1024, no. PZ St 02, with figs. Hasaki (2021: 193 with n. 44) points out two plaster reliefs showing a phallus on the east wall of a rectangular kiln immediately to the left of the stoking channel in the pottery workshop of Via di Nocera at Pompeii (Peña and McCallum 2009: 67–68).

[69] Bentz *et al.* 2013; Bentz *et al.* 2016; Bentz 2019.

[70] Bentz *et al.* 2013: 80–81, figs. 7–9.

[71] Bentz 2019: 148, 158, fig. 12.

[72] Bentz (2019: 148), however, thinks it a 'demon.'

goods in the first place rather than to fully discuss the evidence for such practices. From Hesiod onward, textual sources testify to the fierce competition and jealousy current among Greek artisans. Furthermore, at least in Athens, small craftspeople, whether slaves, citizens or metics, were deeply scorned by the elite regardless of their status. Together with often precarious living conditions, this may have added to the social climate of rivalry and envious ill-will seemingly prevalent in the communities of small artisans.

As we have seen, such a setting closely corresponds to a social environment that Mary Douglas termed as 'small group.' 'Small groups' usually generate a theory of evil associated with the fear of magic and witchcraft, since failure is not ascribed to moral inadequacy or simply the victim's bad luck, but to the ill-will and occult powers of his or her fellow humans. This picture is consistent with the evidence of several Classical and Hellenistic curse tablets targeting artisans and workshops, since these texts prove that occult practices were intentionally used to harm other people, in some cases perhaps competitors, and their property. Conversely, craftspeople employed a number of practices and devices to protect themselves and their workshops against the effects of *phthonos*. Among the protective devices, referred to as *baskania*, grotesque figures and masks appear to have been prominent. By making people laugh, these *geloia* ('laughable images') had the power to ward off envious ill-will. An erect phallus could either strengthen the protective power of a figure used as a *baskanion* or act as an apotropaic charm in its own right. Grotesque figures and masks appearing in (representations of) workshops should therefore not be interpreted as noxious goblins, since the evidence for demonic beings disruptive to the potter's work is essentially limited to a single literary source, the *Kaminos*. To what extent Greek craftspeople ascribed the effects of jealousy to harmful demons is in fact unknown. What has become clearer, however, is that the climate of rivalry and envy that evoked protective practices such as the use of *baskania* ultimately emerges from specific socio-economic conditions prevalent in communities of small artisans.

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Archaic Anthropomorphic Figurines from the Argolid Potentially Associated with Ritual Activity of an Apotropaic Character

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Abstract

This paper presents some Archaic clay figurines from Argive sanctuaries, dating mainly to the 7th century BC, whose posture, facial features, or painted and plastic decoration suggest they have a connection with rituals of a potentially apotropaic character. A female figurine from the Argive Heraion, published in brief by Waldstein and dating to the late Geometric or Sub-Geometric period, has a plastic cylindrical ribbon or 'scarf' wrapped around its neck and shoulders that could be identified with the depiction of a snake due to the peculiar way it is wrapped and the dots of its painted decoration. If the identification is indeed correct, then the dotted garland or serpentine ornament on the chest of several Argive figurines dating from the late 7th and early 6th centuries BC should be re-examined. These ornaments may symbolize snake(s) and refer to rituals involving snakes that were associated with the cycle of nature and fertility and had an apotropaic character.
On the other hand, some standing figurines from Argos (Aspis hill), based on their posture, are thought to be associated with complexes of ritual dances and perhaps songs, a subject already well known in Archaic coroplastics. The new element of these figurines is the frightening configuration of their face, which I regard as expressing the apotropaic dimension of certain ritual dances and songs, laments, or other metrical utterances.

The Archaic figurines presented in this paper come from the Argolid, more specifically from Argos and the Argive Heraion. The votive figurine from the sanctuary of Hera at Prosymna (Figure 2) was found during the old excavations of 1895[1] and is kept in the National Archaeological Museum (NAM), where I had the opportunity to examine it in 2019.[2] The votive coroplastic material from Argos discussed here was found during the excavations of the French School at Athens both on the Aspis citadel (old excavations of 1902-1904),[3] where the meagre remains of a sanctuary and a deposit were located, probably dedicated to Hera Akraia,[4] and in the sanctuary of Aphrodite (1967-1974).[5]

In Argos, the largest collection of Archaic clay figurines comes from the sanctuary of Aphrodite, near the ancient agora, where about 10,000 figurines have been recorded, dating from the late 7th to the late 6th centuries BC.[6] However, the oldest clay figurines, from the end of the 8th to the 6th centuries BC, have been found in the two citadels of Argos, the higher Larissa and the lower Aspis. In Larissa, a rich assemblage of figurines was found by W. Vollgraff in a depository related to the sanctuary of Athena Polias.[7] Recently, in 2016, a large quantity of Late Geometric pottery from the same site was found in the NAM,[8] including the leg of a clay figurine, apparently LG as well. The total votive material brought to light by the excavations on the Aspis acropolis includes some 950 artefacts,[9] 270 of which are figurines.[10] The oldest votive material dates back to the MG but most of it belongs to the LG period (about 20% of the total), with the most abundant votives dating to the Archaic period (about 77%), while very few are from the Classical and Hellenistic periods (3%).[11] The votives from the more recent excavations on the Aspis hill (1974-2011) have been fully published,[12] while those from the older excavations are under study.[13] The fact that the oldest votive finds of Argos have been found in its two citadels seems to confirm that worship in the city started from peri-urban sanctuaries, as Professor F. de Polignac has argued.[14]

[1] Waldstein 1905.
[2] For their permission and valuable assistance, I would like to thank Dr George Kavadias, the Director of the NAM Collection of Vases, Minor Arts, and Bronzes, and Dr Maria Chidiroglou, that collection's curator.
[3] Vollgraff 1907: 155-56.
[4] Philippa-Touchais 2022a: 469-72; 2022b; 2023.
[5] Synthetic studies on the coroplastic material of the Aphrodision: Aurigny and Croissant 2016; Aurigny 2022; Croissant 2009.
[6] Aurigny and Croissant 2016.
[7] Part of this assemblage has already been published (Banaka-Dimaki 2017), while the rest of it is under study by the same author. I wish to thank Dr A. Banaka-Dimaki for her confidence in showing me this material and for the interesting and fruitful discussions we had at the Argos Archaeological Museum.
[8] Pappi and Philippa-Touchais 2020. The material is under study by Dr E. Pappi (Ephorate of Antiquities of the Argolid).
[9] Some 650 artefacts come from the recent excavations (1974-2011, directed by G. Touchais), and about 300 artefacts come from the old excavations (1902-1904, directed by W. Vollgraff).
[10] 150 figurines come from the recent excavations, 120 from the old ones.
[11] A synthesis of the history of the Aspis sanctuary through time: Philippa-Touchais 2022a: 453-69.
[12] Philippa-Touchais and Alexandridou 2022; Philippa-Touchais 2022a; 2022b.
[13] Philippa-Touchais and Charalambidou forthcoming.
[14] Polignac 1995: esp. 21-25, 150-54; 1998: 148-49.

Figurines from the Aspis hill

The study of the Aspis clay figurines that came from the recent excavations helped us to distinguish and correlate a series of changes in their technology (Quality of Fabric and Paint, hereafter referred to as QFP) and morphology (posture).[15] According to this study's recently published findings,[16] an important technological change seems to have taken place around the last quarter of the 7th century BC. Until then, the fabric was light brown, very fine and hard, with lustrous paint (QFP 1 class), while from the end of the 7th the fabric became red and less fine, with matt paint on a whitish slip (QFP 2 class).[17] Around the same time, another change is noted, the posture of the figurines, which was shown to be connected to the technological change: whereas in the 7th century figurines were almost exclusively standing (and manufactured usingthe QFP 1 technique), from the end of the 7th or the beginning of the 6th centuries BC the seated posture predominates, becoming the hallmark of Argive coroplastic production (manufactured this time using the QFP 2 technique). The figurines that will be discussed here are all handmade, standing, and made according to the seventh-century technology (QFP 1).

The 'Lady with the Stars' and the 'Lady of the Snakes'

A type of female figurine carrying something like four-pointed 'stars'[18] on her outstretched arms was named 'La Dame aux étoiles' (Figure 1a-1b) by Prof. Francis Croissant, who found many like her in the sanctuary of Aphrodite at Argos (about 80 specimens).[19] The figurine, which appears either standing or seated, should be the earliest female seated type in the Argive coroplastic repertoire, probably dating to the late 7th century BC.[20] Her large nose looks like a mouse's snout[21] or a bird's beak,[22] and her mouth is formed as a small protrusion;

Figure 1a-b. Argos, Aphrodision. 'Lady with the Stars' (a) seated (C.22615), (b) standing (C.24919). Photo EFA/F. Croissant.

[15] Philippa-Touchais and Alexandridou 2022: 228-35.
[16] Philippa-Touchais and Alexandridou 2022.
[17] Philippa-Touchais and Alexandridou 2022: 230-31 and Table 5.13.
[18] The stars may depict the flowers of a bush, *αστερίων*, which was supposed to grow in the area of the Heraion: Philippa-Touchais and Alexandridou 2022: 143.
[19] Aurigny 2014: 652-53, fig. 3; Croissant 2009: 187-89, figs. 46-48.
[20] Philippa-Touchais and Alexandridou 2022: 248.
[21] Szabó 1994: 62-63.
[22] Aurigny 2014: 652; Croissant 2009: 187.

Figure 2. Argive Heraion. 'Lady of the Snakes' (NAM 14217). Photo by author, courtesy of the NAM.

the shape of the Lady's features may be caused by a mask worn on her face.[23] She wears a rather unusual garment, thus probably one with a special use: a bustier and a long skirt that leaves the waist uncovered, while a cylindrical garland on the chest is decorated with black dots, to which we will return below. This garment must be associated with and define the role of the figure depicted in the context of some special ritual.

Croissant considered the 'Lady with the Stars' characteristic of the coroplastic material of the Aphrodite sanctuary. This type, however, seems to have been quite well distributed at several other sanctuaries in the Argolid, such as those on the Larissa acropolis,[24] at the Agamemnonion of Mycenae,[25] and at Magoula Kefalariou,[26] while in the Aspis sanctuary two very fragmentary specimens have been recognized as well.[27] The identity of the figurine is unknown. Scholars have suggested that it may depict either a deity[28] or a figure associated with some ritual;[29] the latter seems the more convincing.

The study of the Aspis votive material demonstrated that most of the early Archaic clay artefacts and figurines of Argos had parallels with the material of the Argive Heraion. This is perhaps not surprising since Argos appears to have contributed greatly to the transformation of the Argive Heraion into the main sanctuary of the Argive plain from the end of the 8th century BC.[30] Surprisingly, however, the type of the 'Lady with the Stars' does not appear among the (relatively few) published figurines from the Argive Heraion. Nevertheless, an entirely handmade female figurine in that group shows some elements reminiscent of the 'Lady with the Stars.' This figurine was dated to the Geometric period by the painted decoration of her long dress with its horizontal zones of dots and chevrons (Figure 2a-b),[31] although this decoration could also go down to the Sub-Geometric period (first half of the 7th century). I had the opportunity to examine her at the NAM and better observe her painted and plastic decoration. The figurine is relatively well preserved. The ears protrude strongly and are pierced, indicating the presence of earrings. The hair is missing, apparently because it was attached, like a wig; to the back of the head, the traces show that the hair reached to the nape of the neck. The arms are broken but would have been outstretched.

[23] On masks see recently Spathi 2020 (with extensive bibliography).
[24] Banaka-Dimaki 2017: figs. 5a-b (standing), 6a-b (seated).
[25] Cook 1952: 63, fig. 36, pl. 22, I: 11 (seated).
[26] Banaka-Dimaki 2009: pl. 10, fig. 15 (seated).
[27] Philippa-Touchais and Alexandridou 2022: 246-48 (B196, B198).
[28] Croissant 2009: 188.
[29] Aurigny 2014.
[30] Philippa-Touchais 2022a: 474-78, with bibliography.
[31] Waldstein 1905: 23, fig. 30 (NAM 14217).

On the preserved part of the arms, the remains of four or five-leafed relief flowers can be seen, bringing to mind the supposed stars of the 'Lady with the Stars'. Particularly striking is a kind of cylindrical 'scarf' that is wrapped around the figure's neck and shoulders, ending on the chest, and decorated with a continuous series of black painted dots. The 'scarf' recalls the garland of the 'Lady with the Stars' in its cylindrical shape and dotted decoration. It differs, however, in terms of its position and relation to the figure's body. As far as I know, no parallels to this figurine exist, especially for her intriguing plastic decoration. I strongly suspect that the 'scarf' — in particular, the way it wraps around the body of the figure, as well as its painted decoration — is the key accessory whose identification and symbolism would help unlock the meaning of the figurine.

Figure 3. Samos. Figurine with plastic snake (early 7th century). Photo courtesy of the DAI.

From the identification of the 'scarf' to the figure's meaning

The pattern of the series of painted dots is particularly popular on vases, mainly of the late 8th and 7th centuries BC, sometimes on serpents. Examples of painted snakes with dotted decoration on their bodies or on either sides of them occur from the LG period (mainly on burial vessels), such as the Argive snake krater from Corinth,[32] a fragmentary skyphos from Argos,[33] and the handle of a large vase from Tegea.[34] The dots could denote the scales of the serpent's skin. In the Archaic era, painted snakes appear mainly in votive contexts. The most typical is the well-known mid-7th century BC plaque from the Ancient Agora of Athens depicting the 'Mistress of the Snakes,' where two series of dots frame the bodies of two standing snakes.[35] A similar decoration is found on a Proto-Corinthian plate from Corinth (Anaploga well),[36] while also from Corinth we can mention an early Archaic figurine with a painted vertical snake bordered by dots on one side.[37]

Representations of relief or plastic snakes on Archaic pottery and clay plaques are usually given black dots on the body, as seen on two handles from the sanctuary of Athena Alea at Tegea,[38] and on a small plaque from Corinth.[39] Finally, the only early Archaic anthropomorphic figurine known to us as represented with a plastic snake comes from Samos:[40] the snake hangs from the neck of a male figure down his back and legs, finally coiling around his shins (Figure 3). The reptile is decorated with black dots. Here we should perhaps not omit mention of the most ancient and famous Aegean figurines with snakes wrapped around their arms or bodies, the Minoan 'Snake Goddesses,' noting that the snakes on one of them was also dotted.[41]

[32] Blegen *et al*. 1964: 35-36, 45-46, no. 47-1, pl. 9; Goldstream 1968: 140; Papadopoulos 2007a: 11, fig. 16 (watercolour by Piet de Jong).
[33] Pappi 2006: fig. 12 (Argos Museum 10322).
[34] Dugas 1921: fig. 53.
[35] Laughy 2018: 666-73, fig. 7; Papadopoulos 2007: 149, fig. 138 (with references).
[36] Amyx and Lawrence 1975: 102-103 (An 17), pl. 76, 112.
[37] Stillwell 1952: 33 (I, 10), pl. 1.
[38] Dugas 1921: 406, fig. 53.
[39] Stillwell 1952: 161 (XXII, 14), pl. 34 (double snake).
[40] Jarosch 1994: 159, cat. no. 882, pl. 55 (680 BC).
[41] Marinatos 1993: 158, fig. 140, faience female torso (HM 63).

Figures 4a-b-c. Argive seated figurines with serpentine plastic ribbons on chest (early 6th century BC): a) from Aspis (1902/102.201) EFA/G. Touchais; b) from Aphrodision (*c.*25006) EFA/F. Croissant; c) from Larissa (*c.*1940). Archaeological Museum of Argos, Ephorate of Antiquities of Argolida.

Therefore, based on its shape and dotted decoration, the 'scarf' wrapped around the neck and shoulders of the figurine from the Argive Heraion could be identified as a snake. This figure should hence be called the Argive 'Lady of the Snakes'.

In the Near East and the Aegean, from prehistoric to Archaic times, snakes usually accompany the Potnia Theron, a chthonic deity who later merges with Artemis (or Athena, Demeter, Hera).[42] Potnia guarantees and symbolizes order in the universe because she dominates nature and subdues the wild animals that denote danger and disorder.[43] Snakes also appear in narratives where the boundaries between the upper and lower worlds, in other words life and death, are explored or challenged.[44]

Based on the preceding evidence, we could argue that the 'Lady of the Snakes' from the Argive Heraion probably also represents a deity associated with the domination of nature and fertility. This chthonic female deity, worshipped mainly by agricultural-pastoral communities, could have been involved in magical rituals dealing with death, the regenerative work of nature, and the continuation of life.[45] Alternatively, the figure could be identified as a priestess or a person with supernatural or magical abilities who would represent the deity for the needs of specific rituals or performances of a religious character in the context of a sanctuary. To separate religious from magical rituals is often difficult, as scholars have pointed out. The latter often have an apotropaic character, aiming to repel the action of malignant forces and to ward off evil influences or bad luck (see below).

On the other hand, the 'Lady of the Snakes,' although she does not appear to be in motion, could be associated with the dance known as the *geranos*, a chthonic maze dance that imitated the slithering of a snake. The *geranos* was originally an apotropaic-type dance and in fact appears to have been a snake-carrying dance.[46] Perhaps, then, the 'Lady of the Snakes,' among other responsibilities or roles, had to preside over some ritual involving a crowd of worshippers dancing the *geranos*.

Returning to the 'Lady with the Stars,' we can now suggest, in light of the above data, that her garland, which bears a dotted pattern, could also depict a schematic snake. If the preceding observations are true, then the 'Lady with the Stars,' which dates around the end of the 7th century BC, could echo the tradition of an older apotropaic ritual involving snakes. Over time, the old ritual may have faded away while its memory continued to be reflected in the chest garland of the more recent 'Lady with the Stars.' Moreover, the flowers on the arms of the old Snake Lady also remained on the arms of the new Lady, but in a stylized, star-like form. These elements strengthen the suggestion that the 'Lady with the Stars' may also be associated with rituals of an apotropaic nature.

Similarly, from the beginning of the 6th century, if not earlier, we can observe a horizontally placed serpentine plastic ribbon on the chests of several female seated figurines from Argos and the Argive Heraion, often of the mixed technique and in the Ornate style,[47] in many interesting variations (simple, double, or two individuals facing each other) (Figure 4a-c).[48] The meaning of this serpentine decoration worn on the

[42] Walcek Averett 2007: 165-67.
[43] Marinatos 1999; 2000: 1-31, 92-109.
[44] On myths and meanings of snakes, see for instance Charalambidou 2021: 153-55; Laughy 2018: 667-69, 672-73; Ogden 2013.
[45] Bloch and Parry 1982.
[46] Benešová 2012: 32-33; Lawler 1946.
[47] Philippa-Touchais and Alexandridou (2022: 236-37) present a new discussion of the dating of this type of figurine.
[48] More examples of figurines with serpentine ribbons on the chest: Aurigny and Croissant 2015-2016: 844-45, fig. 48b, c, e; Aurigny 2022: figs. 4, 10 (Aphrodision). See also Waldstein 1905: 25, fig. 39, pls. XLII 9(46), XLIII 11(59), XLIV 3(86), 4(90), 5(91), XLV 13(94).

Figure 5. Argos, Aspis. Complex of figurines, possibly dancers (1902/103.7, 1902/103.25, 1902/103.27). Photo EFA/ G. Touchais.

chest has until now received little attention, usually seen as a mere decorative accessory while its possible relationship to a snake has to my knowledge never been considered. I want to argue here that both the serpentine shape of this particular chest ornament, which in some cases forms a head with eyes (Figure 4a, c), and its decoration, sometimes with small impressed circles (Figure 4b),[49] suggest that schematic snakes may have been placed on the chests of many Argive figurines of the early 6th century BC. As mentioned above, that apotropaic rituals involving snakes were still performed at the end of the 7th century BC is not certain. The same must hold true for the 6th century BC. We do not know whether in the 6th century BC, as also the late 7th, the possible presence of schematic snakes on figurines referred directly to apotropaic performances or expressed a memory of them. Even whether at that period the craftsmen or the users of the figurines were aware of the significance of the snake on the figurine's chest is unknown.

The placement of possible snake-ribbons on the chest of figurines could also be argued to reference the *gorgoneion* on the chest of the goddess Athena (see, for instance Figure 4b), with apotropaic powers embodied and transmuted into the goddess herself. But the presence of this theme on Argive figurines does not appear to be necessarily related to the goddess Athena, since they come from various Argive sanctuaries. This raises another question, of whether the apotropaic chest decoration – with snakes – was not Athena's exclusive property prior to the middle of the 6th century, when the *gorgoneion* is thought to appear on Athena's aegis),[50] but rather associated with a generic female chthonic deity.[51]

More figurines of a potentially apotropaic character

We will now make very brief reference to several more figurines that could also have had an apotropaic character. Vollgraff found them, probably on the Aspis acropolis,[52] in a votive deposit near the central part of the hilltop where the Archaic temple should have been located.[53]

Three standing figurines (Figure 5) present strong similarities to one another both morphologically and technologically, which led us to believe that they must have belonged to the same complex. Reinforcing this suggestion is the shape of their bases, which appear to have been attached to a clay slab, probably a common

[49] Similar circles were found on some of the nine LG clay snakes from Kombothekra: Walcek Averett 2007: 103, 371 fig. 135.

[50] Marx 1993.

[51] See also the proposition of Papadopoulos (2007: 149) on the snakes and the identity of the Mistress of snakes.

[52] Their exact location is not entirely certain because clues have been lost over the course of a century. The material had been transferred after World War II from Argos, where there was no Museum, to the National Archaeological Museum and in the late 1960s it returned back to Argos. However, there are some indications that this votive material comes from the Aspis, see Philippa-Touchais and Charalambidou forthcoming.

[53] Philippa-Touchais 2022a: 463-468.

Figure 6. Argos, Aspis. Female figurine, possibly a dancer or a singer (1902/85.103). Photo EFA/ G. Touchais.

platform. An interesting feature of these figurines is that their bodies are in motion: their arms are outstretched either in front or out to the sides, while their bodies and heads lean slightly back or to the side. This motion, which is not implicit but absolutely demonstrated,[54] may indicate that they are depicted while dancing. On the basis of their similarities, we can also assume that they belonged to a dancing circle, similar to those known mainly from the Argolid and Corinth.[55]

Another interesting feature of these possible dancers is their somewhat frightening faces. Both the eyes, on both sides of the pinched noses, and the mouths are formed with impressed circles,[56] more or less deep, and emphasized with black paint. The ears also appear to have been indicated in the same way but are not clearly distinguished in all cases. No hair is represented. The lack of hair may mean either that the individuals were bald or that their heads (and possibly bodies) were covered by a veil with holes for the eyes and mouth. The figurines could therefore be impersonating either older persons or perhaps ghosts, who often symbolize the dead. In any case, we propose that these likely dancers, with their frightening faces, had some connection with death and the end of the cycle of life. If so, the dance of these figurines, possibly of apotropaic or prophylactic character, could be linked to some ritual performance involving old men or old women[57] (the gender is unclear) and alluding to the passage of time or the rebirth of nature, rituals that still continue today in the Greek countryside.[58]

Another standing figurine, its female gender indicated by two pellet breasts, is also distinguished by strange morphological features (Figure 6) that make its meaning more difficult to understand. Based on the posture of her body, which leans slightly to the side, we might assume that this figurine also belonged to a dance complex. Her broken arms, however, do not give any information about their position, which would be diagnostic for interpreting the figure (dancers' arms were usually outstretched to the sides). Here too, the eyes are replaced by holes but unlike the previous figurines a large notch occupies the middle of the pinched face ('gash' type).[59] This type of face, very common in the 7th-century BC

[54] On this topic, see Muratov and Uhlenbrock forthcoming.

[55] See for instance Albertocchi 2016; Aslamantzidou-Kostourou and Sarri 2013: 399, fig. 5; Aurigny 2014: 651; Banaka-Dimaki 2017: 117-119, and fig. 11; Leriou 2017: 528-529; Philippa-Touchais and Alexandridou 2022: 240-241, 245-246, 253, 275; Stillwell 1952: 42-43.

[56] For similar impressed small circles indicating the eyes and other ornaments on the head and neck, see an example from Aegina, dated to the Archaic era, Spathi 2007-2008: 157, fig. 1: 1. See also a figurine head from Ano Mazaraki with eyes that appear to be indicated by impressed circles, dated by Gadolou (2003: 313, 329 cat.no 66, pl. 34a) in the first half of the 7th century BC.

[57] The chorus of the elderly in classical Greek drama is quite common, e.g., Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, and Aristophanes' *The Wasps* and *Lysistrata*. See also Falkner 1995; Calame 2017.

[58] Pagan dances with similar content, which according to ethnologists have their roots in antiquity, survive even today in the Greek countryside. One such is the 'dance of the dead' during the fair (πανηγύρι) of Ai-Symios in the Messolonghi area (SW central Greece). Two men meet in combat. The first kills the second and dances around the corpse. He then regrets his act and wants to bring the dead man back to life. He pours water on the corpse, which comes back to life, and the two men dance together. The dance symbolizes the circular model of the struggle of life, death, and rebirth. https://iaitoloakarnania.gr/2019/06/to-xakousto-panigiri-tou-ai-simiou-sto-mesolongi/

[59] Stillwell 1952: 25.

coroplastic production of Corinth and Athens (Agora), can be interpreted in no single way because it occurs in figurines of various types. In Corinth and Argos, for instance, the 'gash' is found mainly on female figures, in which case the lower prominent part of the face is considered the chin. In Athens, the 'gash' face is found in riders and the same part of the lower face is interpreted as a beard. We have argued elsewhere that the 'gash' face can also be seen as a large open mouth and therefore indicate a person singing, possibly in association with a dance group.[60]

On her head, the Aspis figurine wears a kind of flat hat with a protruding brim, from which hang two black painted vertical bands covering the sides of the face. These bands, which reach a horizontal painted line just below the breasts, are difficult to interpret. They do not appear to imply locks of hair, because the hair is rendered with plastic bands at the back of the head. Perhaps they were parts of a ceremonial costume, for example ribbons hanging down from the hat or securing the hat. Alternatively, they could have been a kind of facial painting that continued on the neck and chest of the figure. In this case, the black paint that covered a large part of the face, combined with the hollow eyes and the huge mouth, could have been intended to give the figure a frightening appearance. If this figure was actually singing, reciting, praying, or lamenting, that song, recitation, prayer, or lament might have some apotropaic element connected with the aim of helping to prevent evil on a personal or communal level in the context of religious ceremonies (see also below).

Concluding remarks

Although the precise archaeological context of the figurines is unknown, we believe that they date mostly to the 7th century BC based on the technique of their manufacture.[61] This century is characterized as the Orientalizing period in Greece, when Greek art was greatly influenced by Eastern — specifically Near Eastern and Egyptian — ideas, myths and decorative styles. Mythical creatures, including griffins, sirens, and sphinxes (clearly of apotropaic function), are examples of the Eastern hybridization of multiple beasts, often including elements of the human form. In bronze and terracotta figurines, the introduction of the mould from the East led to a great increase in the production of figures made mainly as votive offerings.[62] Our 'apotropaic' figurines do not at first sight appear to recall Oriental art. On the contrary, they belong, as it appears, to the local popular coroplastic production which continues from the Geometric period. Nevertheless, their presence in the Argolid,[63] mainly in Argos (as well as in Corinth,[64] and certainly elsewhere) may constitute a Greek echo of the popularity of the apotropaic figures in Eastern art. Whatever the case, the differences between the Argive 'apotropaic' figures and those of Eastern art are considerable.

The Argive figurines considered as apotropaic, we should note, seem to have no specific typology, nor does their form allow for any standardization to be recognized. A complete lack of typology, however, cannot be asserted because they have been studied neither in detail nor in any related synthetic treatment. In Mesopotamia, in contrast, apotropaic figurines have a specific typology: they are usually spirits, ghosts, gods, and demons.[65] On the other hand, the lack of standardization in the 7th-century BC Argive figurines is to be expected since the great majority of them are handmade,[66] unlike the coroplastic production of Corinth, where many figurines were moulded.[67] But towards the last quarter of the 7th century, several of the Argive handmade standing figurines acquired a more stereotyped form with common morphological features, including the bird-shaped face, long headdress, decorated chest, monochrome long dress, and more explicit gender, usually female (Figure 7).[68] The 'apotropaic' figurines with idiosyncratic, misshapen faces instead either belonged to an earlier phase of the 7th century BC or, more likely, were produced throughout the 7th century but with a different conception of form, use, and meaning. Their less specialized technique, non-stereotypical morphology, and dramatic physical expression aimed to provoke an emotional response in their users, who may be sought among the more ordinary and superstitious individuals generally the sort who was more concerned with magical rituals.

In the ancient world, superstitious beliefs were an important part of everyday life and a serious concern for a large portion of society. These superstitions were grounded in the belief that people, both living and dead, had the capacity to inflict bad luck and negative energy on others. Apotropaic magic was any form of magic designed to avert such harm, ward off evil, and deflect misfortune sent by vengeful beings.[69]

[60] Philippa-Touchais and Alexandridou 2022: 245-46.
[61] See above at note 15.
[62] Boardman 1993: 15.
[63] A few figurines of 'apotropaic' character from certain sanctuaries of Argos and the Argolid were mentioned here. We nonetheless assume that more similar figurines may exist, but the coroplastic material from important Argive sanctuaries (Heraion, Tiryns, Agamemnonion) has unfortunately been published only partially.
[64] Certain figurines could be considered of apotropaic character, e.g., Stillwell 1952: 35 (class I, cat.no. 20, 24), pl. 3-4, and many of the grotesque figures, Stillwell 1952: 51-52 (class VI), pl. 7.
[65] Nakamura 2004: 18, 22, fig. 2.
[66] Philippa-Touchais and Alexandridou 2022: 236-37, 272-74.
[67] From the early 7th century BC, the mould was widely used to make the heads of figurines (mixed technique) and has often been used for bodies in a variety of ways: Jenkins 1940: 193-95.
[68] Philippa-Touchais and Alexandridou 2022: 272-74.
[69] Green 1983: 87; Walker and Berryman 2023: 450-51.

Figures 7a-b-c. Argos, Larissa. Female figurines that may represent xoana of deities (C.1852, C.1855, C.1853). Courtesy Archaeological Museum of Argos, Ephorate of Antiquities of Argolida.

Priests and leaders of religious groups used magical techniques to manipulate, harness, or create invisible sympathies between objects (for instance artefacts, bodies, buildings, clouds, and winds) to achieve desired effects.[70] Apotropaic figurines were components of these magical techniques or ceremonies. They could also be 'an image or copy of the objects (e.g., artefacts, human or animal bodies, etc.) they wished to influence, making their magical manipulation possible.'[71] Scholars have also suggested that the intentional creation of a *humble copy* constituted a cunning dissimulation akin to what Taussig calls 'defacement,' an act which produces 'violated' representations that are no longer merely symbols, but brought to life.[72] Based on the above, if the Argive more or less standardized handmade female figurines of the late 7th century BC with decorated chests could represent early cult statues or *xoana* of deities[73] — symbols, in other words — the idiosyncratic defaced figurines, often genderless, might depict animate spirits, ghosts, or demons involved in magical or apotropaic rituals that dealt with individuals' everyday concerns and anxieties about survival.

Furthermore, based on the morphological elements of the figurines under discussion, they could also be associated with religious rituals or with communal events related to dance and song. Dance, in particular, was of great importance to local, largely illiterate communities because it was a primary means of asserting collective tradition, memory, and identity. In antiquity, as in recent years, many types of dance existed that concerned all aspects of life, among them marriages, burials, harvests, or fertility.[74] Dances accompanying rites of passage could be

[70] van Gennep 1960: 14; Walker and Berryman 2023.
[71] Walker and Berryman 2023: 452.
[72] Nakamura 2004: 17; Taussig 1999: 30.
[73] Donohue 1988.
[74] Benešová 2012.

Fig. 8a-b. Argos, Aspis. Figurines that may represent dancers and/or singers (1902/103.38, 1902/103.37). Photo EFA/ G. Touchais.

magical-apotropaic, ecstatic, worshipful, or amusing-entertaining. In traditional communities people used to tell someone who hesitated to come and dance 'for the good' (*για το καλό*), implying the personal and communal good. Ritual dance, which conveys meaning, contains a dose of obligation for the participants, a dimension of positive offering, and a contribution beneficial to the community. A particularly interesting aspect of the Aspis 'dancing' figurines is that they seem to depict a kind of apotropaic dance, the first time we have some evidence for the representation of such a dance in Argive Archaic coroplastic production.

Finally, the importance of song in ritual or magical ceremonies is worth noting, since many of the 'apotropaic' figurines from the set we have examined are thought to be singing (Figures 6 and 8), narrating (probably myths or epics) or reciting (prayers or poetry), all pre-existing elements of tragedy.[75] In traditional societies, dance usually serves the song — in all its variations, among them the apotropaic[76] — while various body movements or facial expressions serve the narrative or theatrical recitation. Therefore, in addition to 'apotropaic' dancers among the Aspis figurines from the high Archaic period, we should not be surprised to find 'singers,' 'troubadours,' or 'lyrical actors' singing or reciting verses of apotropaic significance and content as well.

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[75] For choral apotropaic songs or prayers in ancient literature, see Kousoulini, this volume.
[76] Katsiaboura 2007.

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Terracotta Figurines of Apotropaic and/or Prophylactic Character in the National Archaeological Museum, Athens[1]

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Abstract

A number of terracotta figurines in the National Archaeological Museum, from Euboea, Boeotia, the Argolid, the Aegean Islands, and other regions of the ancient Greek world, can be integrated into the class of prophylactic and/or apotropaic artefacts based on recent research. These terracottas include dwarfs, grotesques, Baubo, Bes, satyrs, and other ithyphallic figures, as well as some janiform (two-faced) items, such as a Nike figurine; their dates range from Archaic and Classical times to the Hellenistic and early Roman periods. Most of these figurines were found in graves excavated, often unsystematically, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, for instance at Athens and on Melos, while others come from systematic excavations at sanctuaries such as the Kabeirion of Thebes (Boeotia) and the Heraion at Argos (Peloponnesus).

This paper discusses representative examples of these prophylactic or apotropaic figurines before investigating their types, parallels, and (when preserved) the relevant excavation or archival data. Interpretative theories regarding apotropaic figurine types are then summarized. Through this process, some of the social and religious beliefs, obsessions, and occasional playful or wry spirit of the individuals who owned these artefacts and/or the craftsmen involved in their making, as well as their owners' needs for *prophylaxis* and *apotrope,* are outlined.

Introduction

Looking through catalogues of the National Museum's terracotta figurines with a focus on what may be described as apotropaic or prophylactic, a researcher soon realizes she has given herself more questions than clues about the purpose and main descriptive elements of her search. Wishes and definitions for things apotropaic and prophylactic are far more easily found in inscriptional and literary evidence. For instance, in the *Hymn of the Kiln* (*Kaminos*) dated *c.* 500 BC, or to the 5th century BC, we learn of invocations to the kiln daimons 'Smasher,' 'Crasher,' 'Overblaze,' 'Shakeapart,' and 'Underbake' (Σύντριβος, Σμάραγος, Ἄσβετος, Σαβάκτης, Ὠμόδαμος). These daimons were invoked to wreak havoc on the kiln in case a potter failed to pay the hymn singer for his performance.[2]

Public rituals to avert misfortune, sickness, hunger, and poverty, in which all community members could participate, are attested at Athens and other ancient cities.[3] The paradigm par excellence is represented by the expulsion from the societal space and time of a person or animal, often ugly or disfigured, known as the *pharmakos* (scapegoat), attested in ancient Greek and Hebrew Old Testament texts.[4] In consequence, belief in forces that have the power to prevent misfortune or take revenge on sinners and offenders was evidently widespread from the early Archaic period to the Roman Empire. In later periods, clear examples of *prophylaxis* and *apotrope* are provided by invocations in Hellenistic and Roman funerary inscriptions from various regions, including Rhodes and Crete, warning passers-by to respect the grave and foreseeing disaster if they do not.[5]

Prophylaxis and apotrope: methodological questions and the history of research

Returning therefore to an old scholarly topic, let us survey and reconsider the following questions: What type of terracotta object may accurately be described as a figurine of apotropaic or prophylactic character? Can such finds be connected to magical and/or religious practices or to theatrical and mime performance? Can they be seen as expressions in clay of an individual's fears? Might they perhaps be described as ludicrous or strange artefacts, whose possession or viewing could

[1] Thanks to Maria Spathi and Jenny Wallensten, my co-organizers of the Conference *Apotropaia and Phylakteria,* where this paper was presented, as well as to all participating scholars for their wonderful ideas and wide-ranging academic research.

[2] Allen 1912: 212. Reprinted by Merkelbach and West (1967) as fr. 302. Noble (1965: 102-113, Appendix III); Detienne and Werth 1971: 172-74. Representations of kilns with apotropaic amulets (*baskania*) on vases and clay plaques in Chatzidimitriou (2005: 41-42, 68-70). For *baskania* in the form of Medusa-type representations on pre-modern and modern kilns see, e.g., Giannopoulou 2020: 228, figs. 21-22 (kiln at Komboi, Messenia, 1993 photograph).

[3] E.g., Bell 1992, 1997.

[4] *Pharmakos* rituals attested at Athens, Chaeronea, Abdera, Massalia, Leukas, Ephesus, and other cities, see for instance: Aristophanes, *Frogs* 733, *Knights* 1405; Lysias 6.53; Hipponax frgs. 5-11 (West); Callimachus frg. 90; Servius on Vergil, *Aeneid* 3.57 = Petron. frg. 1; Scholia on Statius *Thebaid* 10.793; Strabo 10.452; Plutarch, *Symposium* 693f; *Leviticus* 16. Deubner 1932: 179-88; Bremmer 1983: 299-330; Burkert 1993: 188-91, 540.

[5] Rhodes: *IG* XII.1, 671 (undated). Crete (Axos): *IC* II v 49 (Guarducci 1939; 1st century BC).

bring comic relief to an elite milieu or to every member of an ancient Greek and Roman community? The claim, well proven by scholarly evidence, that throughout antiquity and up to pre-modern times, ruthless ridicule or derision towards various groups of non-Classical-looking or non-white fellow human beings such as Africans and dwarfs, male and female alike, could have been considered part of *apotrope* or *prophylaxis* speaks volumes for some of the most unpleasant aspects of human nature.[6] This attitude may have included both laughing at such pathologically deformed or non-white people (or artisanal figurines) and laughing with them as they performed mimes and acrobatics, as hired or slave entertainers at symposia.[7]

A series of terracotta figurines, as well as artefacts in other materials that realistically represent human physical deformities and are nowadays known as grotesques, were produced from Hellenistic to early Roman times, mainly but not exclusively in Greek cities with multi-cultural populations and trade interests such as Alexandria and Smyrna. They have also been found in Italy, Greece, and Asia Minor; the majority, however, appears to have originated in Alexandria. The pathological conditions they portray include achondroplasia, acromegaly, cretinism, dwarfism, elephantiasis, emaciation, gibbosity, hydrocephalus, hyperplasia, kyphosis, obesity, paralysis, Pott's disease, and protruding bellies. This type of figurine was produced by the hundreds and widely traded around the eastern Mediterranean. In many cases whether these so-called grotesque figural artefacts represent medical conditions or actors is difficult to determine.[8]

From the mid-19th century to the present day, scholars have formulated several theories about the manufacture and use/purpose of various ancient popular art works representing grotesques, protectors against the evil eye, obscene gestures, or other non-idealised figures and objects, in bronze, terracotta and other materials. In 1903, Alan Wace suggested that the popularity of dwarfs and hunchbacks as artistic subjects was due to the fact that their real-life counterparts were credited with magical powers.[9] In later years, Wace was followed, among others, by Evaristo Breccia and Doro Levi.[10] On the other hand, in 1913 Gisela Richter, following the arguments of Friedrich Wieseler in his mid-19th century study of theatrical buildings and monuments, already opposed an exclusively apotropaic interpretation of grotesque artefacts, stressing their theatrical and mime-related character.[11]

The investigations of Wace and Richter resulted in two main scholarly interpretations of these artefacts, one focusing on their apotropaic character while the other claimed they represented mimes or theatrical action in general. In 1972, Simone Mollard-Besques commented in the Louvre's catalogue of terracottas about the term 'grotesque' and its inappropriate and generalized use for non-idealised figurine types.[12] William Edward Stevenson may be the first scholar to compile a systematic corpus of grotesque figurines that described them as medical studies and analyzed their pathological disorders, as well as to declare that no one all-inclusive theory existed to cover such representations. In the late 20th century, Hans Peter Laubscher and Luca Giuliani opened up new scholarly avenues by introducing sociological interpretations of grotesque figurines.[13] Thereafter, terracotta figurines of grotesques, or rather dysmorphic individuals, are considered polyvalent signifiers, a term that also explains their long-term popularity in antiquity.[14] More recently, Alexandre Mitchell has grouped all Roman-period grotesque terracotta figurines into three main categories, the first representing actors, the second featuring caricatures, and the third depicting pathological afflictions.[15] The view that terracotta figurines representing pathological afflictions served only as medical case studies in ancient Alexandria and Smyrna, where figurines of this class originated and proliferated, was countered by comparable and related finds in elite houses in these cities, where they likely functioned as *baskania*.[16]

Modern research has therefore shed some light on questions of the content and scope of this figurine class, but the interpretation of finds regarded as prophylactic, apotropaic or, alternatively, mimetic in character, especially those objects lacking context, remains very controversial.[17] With the exception of inscriptional evidence, almost all other apotropaic and prophylactic finds, especially figural ones, are so characterized mainly because of interpretations dependent on hypothetical reactions, emotional or superstitious, of people who lived millennia ago in various parts of the ancient Greek and Roman world. This form of reconstructed wishful thinking can be understood as largely subjective, perceived through a person's individual or temporally-conditioned lenses.

[6] Garland 1995: 73-86; Peppa Papaioannou, this volume.
[7] E.g.: Dasen 1993; Vickers 2016; Meintani 2022: 245.
[8] Garland 1995: 108-110.
[9] Wace 1903-1904: 103-114 (terracotta figurines: 113-14).
[10] Breccia 1934: 12; Levi 1941: 220-32; Steiner 2009: 71-100.
[11] Wieseler 1851: 92, pl. 12, 11; Richter 1913: 149-56. Meintani (2022: 29-31) gives an overview.
[12] Mollard-Besques 1972: 155.
[13] Laubscher 1982, 75-78; Giuliani 1987: 701-721; Meintani 2022: 38.
[14] Stevenson 1975; Meintani 2022: 35.
[15] Mitchell 2013: 275; Tzanavari 2022: 152. See also Trentin 2015.
[16] Himmelmann 1983; Tzanavari 2022: 153; Peppa Papaioannou, this volume.
[17] Ballet and Jeammet 2011: 39-82; Meintani 2022: 35, 39, 73, 112, 185, 210, 213, 244-45, 277-92, 307, 315, 354-61, 369-87.

Apotropaic and prophylactic themes and images in ancient Greek mythology and iconography

Considering the existence of several contradictory theories on the subject, let us try to trace some aspects of what can be reconstructed or has been considered as apotropaic and prophylactic in archaeological materials and iconography, based on an overview of the relevant ancient sources and find contexts.

Firstly, finds that illustrate aspects of otherness and a belief in magic are numerous. From antiquity to the present, traditional societies have often treated outsiders as imbued with strange features or powers, even magical ones. Circe is the sorceress par excellence in the Odyssey. She lives far from the inhabited world and possesses magical transformative powers, potions, and philtres, defined by the multilayered Greek word *pharmakon*, which is used for both medicines and poisons.[18] The magic of Circe, with her powerful poisons, is invoked in the *Hymn of the Kiln* (*Kaminos*), for example.[19] Medea, a princess of distant Colchis, offers magical aid to Jason in his quest for the Golden Fleece. Seen in Greek lands as a stranger or an outsider, she is related to Circe and certainly considered a sorceress.[20]

Another category of Greek and Roman artefacts, those illustrating physical deformity, is remarkably rich. These objects may have evoked a kind of reverse empathy, a sort of *Schadenfreude*. As we have seen, the category combines representations possibly connected with ancient anatomical observation and medical study, as well as objects related to mime or popular theatrical performance, so that clear distinctions can rarely be made. An increasing preoccupation with magic, together with an interest in abnormal morphology, is attested for the Hellenistic period, when (as well as in earlier and later periods) certain deformities were believed to possess apotropaic significance or scapegoat qualities.[21] Moreover, the ancient Greeks and Romans often considered ugliness a fitting target of mockery. Derision of political adversaries sometimes took the form of caricature, jocular public references to physical deformities or lack of intellect, and could also result in carnival-type mimicry.[22] In fact, ugliness and deformity have often been targets of cheap humour among political and artistic rivals, from antiquity to modern times. Greek iambographic poetry, such as the verses by Alkaios of Lesbos, bears witness to this type of political ridicule in the Archaic period.[23]

Closely related to the category of objects illustrating human or animal deformities, both anatomical and pathological, are ancient Greek and Roman figural artefacts that present a rare or extraordinary feature, gesture, or posture. This type of representation can animate curiosity, fear, or laughter and therefore be powerful enough to allay an individual's fears. Ample evidence also indicates that the enlarged penis with which both the above types of objects are often endowed was a potent charm against the evil eye.[24] Petronius states that Giton's penis was so large 'you would imagine that his body was an extension of a phallic amulet,' whilst Pollux comments on the *baskania* hung in front of the kilns of bronze-workers.[25] Literary evidence suggests the hunchbacked fabulist Aesop, probably born around the last quarter of the 7th century BC, might have been purchased by his master as a living charm, a story which if true only corroborates the argument that physical deformity was considered as an *apotropaion* or lucky charm for those who beheld or embodied it.[26]

Ancient Greek religiosity, expressed in worship, rituals, superstitious beliefs, and magical practices, forms the backbone of all prophylactic and apotropaic material evidence. In general, magical practice and ancient Greek religious beliefs are considered to be loosely differentiated, especially as regards their private and often widespread popular character.[27] Throughout antiquity, people appealed to well-respected gods and goddesses such as Dionysus, Aphrodite, Demeter and Kore, often also *demoteleis* or *pandemoi*, with cults situated in many Greek cities and regions, through invocations that contained magical elements.[28] Various things, such as animals and plants, were regarded as divine attributes and used in associated rituals. Demeter's mythic gifts were of vital importance to

[18] Homer *Odyssey* 10.230-96, 388-95. Kakridis 1987: 220-25; Graf 2004: 34. Circe represented as a sorceress on vases: *LIMC* VI (1992), s.v. Kirke, 51-52, nos. 4-12, pls. 24-25 (F. Canciani).

[19] Detienne and Werth 1971: 173.

[20] Jason and Medea: Sophocles *Kolchides*, frg. 340; Apollonius Rhodius 3.439-1162 (with scholia); Apollodorus 1.129-130. Kakridis 1986, 160-175. Cf. Graf 2004: 108; Otto 2013: 308-47. Medea, represented as a foreigner in terracotta figurines and reliefs: *LIMC* VI (1992), s.v. Medeia, 392, nos. 43-45, pl. 200 (M. Schmidt).

[21] Garland 1995: 13-27, 54-58, 108-22.

[22] Pollux 4.114; Alkaios in Diogenes Laertius 1.81; Aristophanes *Birds* 1377; Pliny *NH* 36.12; Plutarch *Kimon* 4; Cicero *De Or.* 2.230, 237, 239, 245, 249; Athenaeus *Deipnosophistai* 12.551a-d; Plautus *Curculio* 392-400. Several Roman cognomina (family surnames/epithets), such as Strabo ('Squinter'), Paetus ('Blink-Eyed'), Cocles ('One-Eyed'), Naso ('Big Nose'), and Flaccus (Big Ears), denote physical disabilities: Garland 1995: 76-79.

[23] Garland 1995: 76-78. Alkaios in Diogenes Laertius 1.81.

[24] For the concept of *βάσκανος ὀφθαλμὸς* or evil eye, a persistent and popular superstition, see, e.g., Plutarch *Moralia* 682a. Jahn 1885, 28-110; Seligmann 1910; Bonner 1950: 96-99; Herzfeld 1981: 560-74; Limper 1988: 15; Spaer 2001: 77. Subject of exhibition: Kazianis and Merkouri 2010: 17-18.

[25] Petronius *Satyricon* 92; Pollux *Onomasticon* 7.108. Garland 1995: 108-110.

[26] Meintani 2022: 73. Aesop: Herodotus 2.134; Aristotle *Rhetoric* 2.20. Beyer 1994: 290-91; Hall 2016: 171-82. Grotesque figurines as *baskania*: Tzanavari 2022: 149-58.

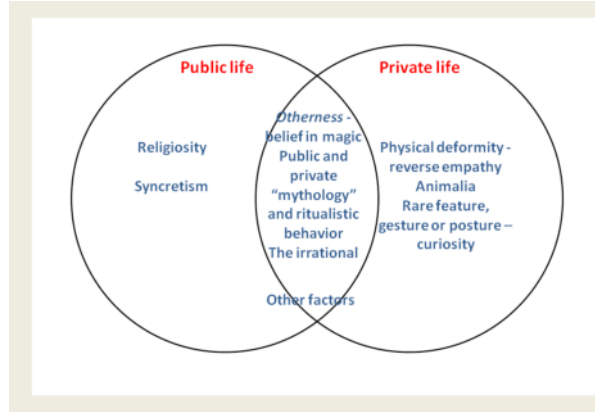
[27] Nilsson 1953-1954: 25-92; Graf 1991: 188-213; Graf 2004: 41.

[28] Public and/or polis-centred religiosity compared to private cultic and magical practices: Burkert 1993: 134, 168, 173, 176, 187, 274, 371, 418, 500, 506, 538-61. Gods who are *demoteleis* and *pandemoi*: Pirenne-Delforge 2005: 55-68.

humankind, and symbols of panspermia such as the pomegranate, a fruit that has evidently retained its imaginary symbolic value in traditional societies even today, were connected with her worship.[29] In the cosmopolitan Mediterranean world of the Hellenistic and early Roman centuries, certain powerful gods were seen as one, and their attributes and powers as combined; this religious syncretism is apparent in the iconographic subjects and motifs that decorate magical gems, with representations of deities that have assimilated attributes from more than one cult, found at various sites.[30]

In general, ancient Greek beliefs regarding the prophylactic or apotropaic character of objects can perhaps be considered part of an individual's public and private mythology and ritualistic behaviours, both constituting forms of the irrational, as Eric Dodds and Christopher Faraone have shown.[31] A number of other factors can be added to this very brief outline of possible definitions and iconographic questions. An interpretation of the same so-called apotropaic artefacts, that illustrate infirmities or unusual qualities, as theatrical or mime themes and types should more often than not also be considered. According to Aristotle's well-known definition of tragedy, it is after all only through the empathy and catharsis evoked by dramatic situations which characters must experience that a theatrical performance could become genuinely educative or emotionally cleansing for members of the ancient Greek public, as probably also for audiences all over the world today.[32]

A few of the categories of ancient Greek concepts and objects that may be described as prophylactic and apotropaic pertain mainly to the public sphere. Apotropaic rituals that involved all citizens or community members, such as the *pharmakos* in Athens and elsewhere, the *lithobolia* in Troizen, and the cock sacrifice at Methana, belong to the public sphere.[33] The majority of prophylactic and apotropaic objects, however, seem to belong to the private sphere, as they concern individual, superstitious, irrational, or compulsive behaviours. In a rough Venn diagram (Drawing I) containing a selection of ancient Greek apotropaic and prophylactic values/concepts and objects of this sort that can be classified according to



Drawing I.

their public or private character, the most meaningful categories of ancient apotropaia and phylakteria, material culture and ritualistic practices, often occupy both public and private spheres, since they transcend the limits of individual superstition and extend to the zone of popular practices.

Vases, terracotta figurines and reliefs with prophylactic and/or apotropaic representations in the National Archaeological Museum

Employing this theoretical approach, let us now examine selected representative terracotta figurines and other objects that can be related to the categories presented above. Throughout antiquity, certain stages in human life, such as childhood, puberty, marriage, and childbearing, were considered particularly prone to accidents or changes of fortune.[34] Prophylactic objects were used to avert this type of danger, especially during childhood. The images of boys on Attic red-figure choes, wine jugs that were used in the feast of the Anthesteria, the yearly festivities for Dionysus, offer some well-known examples.[35] Some of these choes of the late 5th century BC show boys wearing amulets. One such chous (NAM 1321), found in Eretria (Euboea), depicts three boys, their dog, and a toy cart. One of the boys, wearing his himation, has mounted the toy-cart and is being pulled by the other two naked boys while the dog prances in front of them. Each of the two naked boys wears a string of amulets slung diagonally across his chest. Another Attic red-figure chous (NAM 14528), found in Athens and dated to 420-415 BC, is decorated with a symbolic scene.[36] We see a boy wearing a string of amulets fighting off a disfigured old man thought

[29] E.g., clay pomegranate models in graves: Kurtz and Boardman 1971: 61-67, pl. 3.
[30] The analysis of Greek religion by Burkert (1993) is still valid. Magic gems: see Vitellozzi, Barcat, Tsatsou, and Kallintzi and Chatziprokopiou, this volume. Joint gods who share attributes of more than one cult are represented on gems and finger rings of the Archaic, Classical and later periods: Boardman 1994 [1970]: 185, 227, 283, pl. 379, fig. 202.
[31] Dodds 1951; Faraone 1999.
[32] Aristotle *On Poetry* 1449b-1450b.
[33] The pharmakos: Burkert 1993: 188-91, 540; Giannopoulou, this volume.
[34] E.g., Neils 2003: 143-56; Oakley 2003: 162-94.
[35] Dionysos and the Anthesteria: Deubner 1956: 93-123; Burkert 1993:, 114, 186, 215, 241, 344-346, 451, 459, 468, 488-495, 523, 573.
[36] NAM 1321: Height: 0.07m. BAPD 9594; CC 1334; Deubner 1932: pl. 29.4; Van Hoorn 1951: no. 40, fig. 97; Deubner 1982: 828, fig. A. NAM 14528: Height 0.082m, diameter 0.068m. Parts of the mouth are missing. BAPD 2536; Van Hoorn 1951: no. 102, fig. 26; Van Hoorn 1953: 106-110, pl. 33; Green 1971: 205, fig. 8.4, pl. 32A; Ammar 2020: 209-220.

to represent *Kēr (Κήρ)*, the daimon of death,[37] or more likely *Gēras (Γῆρας)*, the personification of old age.[38] A Dionysian symbolism in the context of rebirth as celebrated at the Anthesteria, is probably implied by this image of a combat of opposites. The young boy and the old creature on this chous are depicted fighting over a chous, as a visual play on the feast itself.

Several terracotta figurines of young boys, mortal and divine, are sometimes represented wearing such strings of amulets, among them Harpocrates and Thoth figures, male and female *orans* figures, Baubo-type figurines, and the so-called Cypriot 'temple boys.'[39] Eros, shown as a young boy, may also wear amulets or an encolpion[40] on his chest, attested by a couple of Classical-period Corinthian terracotta figurines of seated boys[41] and the late 2nd/early 1st century BC terracotta figurine of a bound Eros from Myrina in Asia Minor, now in Athens.[42]

Clay gorgoneia, whether individual reliefs, painted figures, or motifs on antefixes and clay plaques, can certainly be considered apotropaic. Myths claimed that the fixed gaze of Medusa, the Gorgon beheaded by Perseus, froze adversaries, therefore helping to keep sacred spaces safe.[43] The clay metopes housed in the National Archaeological Museum from the early Archaic temple of Apollo at Thermon in Aetolia (late 7th century BC; NAM 13402) and a clay antefix from the temple of Apollo at Ptoion in Boeotia (6th century BC; NAM 16341), all bearing representations of Medusa's head, exemplify this mindset.[44]

From ancient Taras (Taranto) in Italy, clay antefixes with relief gorgoneia (NAM VS 688, 689)[45] and a similar plaque (NAM VS 694), are all part of the Vlastos-Serpieris (VS) Collection of the National Archaeological Museum. Michael Vlastos (1874-1936), a successful Greek businessman, was also an erudite collector of antiquities. His collection and archives, rich in art-historical and archaeological observations, were donated to the National Archaeological Museum in 1988.[46] Vlastos' archival notes divide the clay antefixes with gorgoneia from Taras into two groups, one dating to the late 6th to early 5th centuries BC and the other to the 4th century BC. For instance, the gorgoneion VS 689 is dated to the years 520-500 BC. The plaque NAM VS 694, as well as comparable items with gorgoneia, are said to have decorated the walls of cist tombs. Parallels of the first half to mid 6th century BC, also from Taras, are kept in the Louvre.[47] Many other examples have been reported, mainly from sanctuaries in various regions.[48]

The relief gorgoneion NAM 5673 (Figure 1), with female facial features and snake hair, offers an example of the small relief representations in clay. It was found in Thespiae (Boeotia), in a grave excavated near the Lion Monument (Thespian Polyandrion). This monument was constructed in honour of the Thespian warriors who, together with other Boeotians, fought against the Athenians in the Peloponnesian War and fell in the battle at Delium in 424 BC.[49] This gorgoneion relief can be dated to the late Classical or early Hellenistic period.[50]

Figure 1. Clay relief gorgoneion (NAM 5673); from Thespiae, Boeotia.

Several terracotta figurines (Figures 2-5: NAM 10333, NAM 10334, and NAM 10336, 10336.1-4) of male dwarfs are representative of the finds in the categories of

[37] *Kēr*: Homer *Iliad* 2.302, 11.332, 12.326-27, 16.687, 21.548, 22.202; *Odyssey* 5.387, 11.171, 398, 14.207, 17.547, 22.66; Hesiod *Theogony* 211-17; Aeschylus *Seven* 776-77; Euripides, *Helen*, 1252. *LIMC* VI (1992): s.v. Ker, 14-16 (R. Vollkommer).

[38] *Geras* as a personification of old age: *LIMC* IV (1988), s.v. Geras, 180-182 (H.A. Shapiro).

[39] Harpocrates: Török 1995: 67-68, no. 70, pl. XLII. Thoth: Török 1995: 99, nos. 130-31, pls. LXVIII, LXIX. Male *orans*: Török 1995: 127-28, no. 169, pl. XCIII. Female *orans*: Török 1995: 129, nos. 178-179, pl. XCVII. Baubo: Török 1995: 131, no. 184, pl. XCIX. Squatting boy: Török 1995: 135, no. 197, pls. CIV, CV.

[40] Encolpion (*ἐγκόλπιον)*, a jewel worn on the chest. Cf. Liddell, Scott and Jones 1940: s.v. ἐγκόλπιος.

[41] Merker 2000: 68-69, 73, C 236-237, pl. 20.

[42] NAM 5080: Zervoudaki 2003: 197-211.

[43] Perseus and the Gorgon: Hesiod *Theogony*, 270-81, *Aspis*, 216-48; Pindar *Pythian* 10.44-48, 12.7-17.

[44] The temple at Thermon: Papapostolou 2008. The temple at Ptoion: Schachter 1981: 52-73, 1994: 11-21.

[45] NAM VS 689: Gadolou and Kavvadias 2013:, 45.

[46] Gadolou and Kavvadias 2013: 5-15.

[47] Mollard-Besques 1954: 74, 155, B 521, B 522, B 568, B 569, pls. XLVII, XCIX.

[48] Mollard-Besques 1954: 54, B 347, pl. XXXVII (clay relief from Smyrna, first half of the 6th century BC).

[49] The battle of Delium (Delion) was a victory for the Boeotians: Plato *Symposium* 220d-221c. Boardman, Griffin and Murray 1991: 164, 486.

[50] NAM 5673 was found with the clay relief NAM 5672 in a grave near the Lion Monument. Both are 0.05–0.07m tall. Small clay gorgoneia from sanctuaries: Spathi, this volume.

Figure 2, Figure 3, Figure 4, Figure 5. Four terracotta figurines of male dwarfs
(NAM 10333, NAM 10334, NAM 10336 and NAM 10336.1-4); from the Kabeirion of Thebes (Boeotia).

physical deformity and of theatrical activities.[51] Found in the Kabeirion at Thebes in Boeotia, they are dated to the first half of the 5th century BC or perhaps later, between 440 and 410 BC. Kabeiros and Pais, otherwise unknown, were worshipped in this sanctuary; their cult apparently celebrated the fertility of nature, humans, and animals. Boeotian black-figure vases with satirical iconographic themes are known from the sanctuary. A number of visiting gods are also attested in dedications from the Kabeirion.[52] Each of the terracotta dwarf figurines presented here (NAM 10333, NAM 10334, and NAM 10336, 10336.1-4) features a large bald head, deformed face, large ears, distended stomach, and markedly thin legs. Two of the figurines are of semi-naked dwarfs and the rest are wrapped in their himatia. One figure (NAM 10333) is represented with a lion's skin on his shoulders, holding a kithara and plectrum, and is probably a caricature of Herakles Kitharōidos.[53] The National Museum holds a few other terracotta male figures, standing grotesques likewise holding musical instruments, reportedly found in Boeotia and Locris and dated stylistically to the same period.[54] Other terracotta dwarfs from the Kabeirion (NAM 10334, NAM 10336.2) with no attributes are also represented standing, heads turned upwards and hands loosely hanging by their sides.[55] Each head is portrayed with anatomically exaggerated features, such as large ears and mouth. They have been interpreted as grotesque figures or actors.[56] One of these terracotta figurines (NAM 10336) offers an instance of mimic action: it represents a dwarf, standing wrapped in a large himation. Wearing a pointed cap, the figure tilts his head comically to the left, as a mime would when caricaturing an individual or situation.[57]

[51] Theatrical and/or grotesque terracotta figurines from the Kabeirion in Thebes: Schmaltz 1974: 114-26, 177-80.

[52] Schmaltz 1974; Alroth 1989: 103-105 (visiting gods: Aphrodite, Hermes, Pan, Eros, Silenos and Herakles).

[53] NAM 10333: Height 0.22m. Winter 1903: 2.432,

[7:] Schmaltz 1974: 114-117, 177, no. 312, pl. 24; Himmelmann 1994: 90-91, fig. 33; Meintani 2022: 108, fig. 31.

[54] The terracotta figurine NAM 5647 (height 0.27m) of a naked standing grotesque male figure wearing a short polos and holding a lyre, reportedly found in Boeotia, is similar: Winter 1900: 88, fig. 17; Winter 1903: 2.432,6. The figurine was acquired by the Museum by purchase from Lelegiannis, an antiquities dealer. White slip is preserved all over the figurine NAM 5647. Also similar is the terracotta figurine NAM 5688 (height 0.23m) of a naked standing grotesque male figure holding a lyre, which entered the Museum through purchase from Bellas, another antiquities dealer and is reported to have been found in Lokris: Winter 1903: 1.185,7; 2.432,5. White slip is preserved all over the figurine NAM 5688.

[55] NAM 10334: Height 0.198m. Schmaltz 1974: 115, 117, 177, no. 313, pl. 24. NAM 10336.1-2: Respective heights 0.123m, 0.122m. NAM 10336.2 was joined with NAM 10401.73. Schmaltz 1974: 116-118, 177, nos. 318, also nos. 319-320, pl. 25. See also Winter 1903: 2.462,6 (NAM 10336.2).

[56] Hasselin Rous *et al.* 2015: 99-101, no. 62. An example of a terracotta figurine of a disfigured man interpreted as an actor figure is NAM 3917, ex-General Ephorate of Antiquities, inv. no. 1288, from a grave in Velanideza, Attica; Winter 1903: 2.436,2 (height 0.21m). A terracotta Silenus figurine was found in the same grave.

[57] NAM 10336.2: Schmaltz 1974: 116-18, 177, no. 320, pl. 25.

Figure 6. Three terracotta figurines of male dwarfs (NAM 14243 a-c); from the Sanctuary of Hera at Argos.

Terracotta figurines from the Kabeirion also include seated ithyphallic Silen types (among them NAM 10342-10349),[58] and figurines approximating the Bes type (e.g., NAM 10339.1-14).[59] All these ithyphallic figurines have daimon-like or non-Classical facial features. Terracotta figurines of the Egyptian god Bes and of satyrs and silens resembling Bes have been found in sanctuaries, tombs and other sites in Attica and Boeotia, Rhodes, Cyprus, Italy and many regions around the Mediterranean.[60] In Greece, they often date to the late Archaic and early Classical periods. Bes was worshipped as a protector of household, maternity, and childbirth, but later came to be regarded as the defender of everything good and the enemy of all that is bad.[61] Given the context, the iconographic typology of comic scenes on many Kabeiric vases, and the ritual practices at the Kabeirion sanctuary,[62] both of the above interpretations of the Kabeirion terracotta dwarf figurines (grotesques or theatrical types) can be supported. Scenic action that ridiculed social or human situations and wishes for the *apotrope* of life's misfortunes could well be considered a reason to dedicate coroplastic works like this at the Kabeirion of Thebes.

Terracotta figurines of obese male dwarfs of the Bes type were also found in the Sanctuary of Hera at Argos. An example of this is provided by three Archaic-period terracotta figurines (Figure 6: NAM 14243 a-c), two squatting and one standing, with hands crossed on their bellies and austere expressions on their faces.[63] The hair of each figure is shown as a mass with horizontal grooves. The presence of these benevolent daimon-type figurines in the sanctuary deposits in large numbers may indicate their dedication as objects meant to ensure prophylaxis, health, and the well-being of humans and crops, especially in the cultic context of Hera, a goddess typically associated with matrimony, conjugal life and rites of passage.[64]

A terracotta figurine of a dwarf (Figure 7a, NAM 21878) without excavation data provides another example, possibly of Hellenistic period.[65] This figure finds close parallels in figurines from the Kabeirion and another in the Piraeus Museum, indicating that the type was not unknown in regions beyond Boeotia and is perhaps also long-standing.[66] On the other hand, a terracotta

[58] NAM 10342-10349: Schmaltz 1974: 17-25, 148-50, nos. 12-20, 22, 23, 26-38, pls. 2-3. Cf. Mollard-Besques 1954: 55, no. B 354, pl. XXXVIII (third quarter of the 6th century BC); Mollard-Besques 1971-1972: 67, no. D 421, pl. 90 b (late Hellenistic); Schmaltz 1974: 17-32, nos. 12-53, pls. 2-3; Alroth 1989: 104, fig. 60; Schürmann 1989: 43, no. 92, pl. 19; Rubinich 2006: 184-85, nos. 238-39 (late 4th–3rd century BC).

[59] NAM 10339.1-14, respective heights 0.038-0.086m. Schmaltz 1974: 143-45, 186-87, nos. 411-19, pl. 30.

[60] Mollard-Besques 1954: 77, B 540, pl. L.

[61] Bes terracotta figurines of the 4th–3rd centuries BC and later: Sinn 1983: 87-94; Lunsingh Scheurleer 1987: 2-13; Apostola 2018: 113-24; Savvopoulos 2019: 347-48, figs. 31-33. In modern times, Bes and other daimonic-type figurines were often popular collector's items. Examples: NAM 5778: terracotta figurine of squatting Bes, of grey-coloured clay, formerly Archaeological Society Collection, no. 626, acquired by the Museum through purchase from the antique dealer Varvarigos; height 0.10m. The squatting satyr type: Higgins 1954: 73-74, nos. 159-65, pl. 31. NAM 5650, terracotta figurine of a squatting silen with large ears, originally Polytechnion and Archaeological Society Collection 314, M 464, said to be from Boeotia, purchased from Polychronopoulos, an antiquities dealer, for the Museum (height: 0.10m); Winter 1903: 1.215,3b. NAM 4398, terracotta figurine of a squatting silen, said to be from Eleusis, originally Polytechnion and Archaeological Society Collection 1470 (height 0.09m); Winter 1903: 1.215,4e. The terracotta figurine of a squatting silen NAM 20674 (height 0.07m) from Athens, resembles NAM 4398. The face of the terracotta Silen NAM 20674 is modelled better, with thick lips and snub nose, and bears traces of red colour on face and body.

[62] Wolters and Bruns 1940.

[63] NAM 14243: Heights 0.07m, 0.078m, 0.064m. Waldstein 1905: 28, no. 111, fig. 45 (depicting one of the three figurines NAM 14243). Vase fragments with plastic elements of apotropaic character such as a phallos and a snake, found at the Heraia of Argos and Perachora: Payne 1940: 237, 239, nos. 210, 220, pl. 106.

[64] Hera as protectress of marriage: Burkert 1993: 284-93; Pirenne-Delforge and Pironti 2022.

[65] NAM 21878: Height 0.123m. After a court proceeding connected with it, the figurine was confiscated from the antiquities dealer Giagias for the National Archaeological Museum.

[66] NAM 10336.1. Piraeus Museum no. 853: Peppa-Papaioannou 2011: 42-43, 134, 220, fig. 135 (2nd century BC). A related type: NAM 5652, terracotta figurine of a dwarf wearing a himation and pointed head cover. White slip all over, red and pink on the head and cap; height

Figures 7a, 7b. Terracotta figurines of male dwarfs (NAM 21878, 5648); provenance unknown.

Figure 8a.Terracotta figurine of a naked old woman (NAM 5710); provenance unknown.

figurine of the Classical period from Boeotia (Figure 7b, NAM 5648) represents a standing male dwarf with a cup in his left hand. That element may contribute towards an interpretation of the figurine as a theatrical or mime type, likely connected with the cult of Dionysus or some other (possibly Boeotian) fertility cult or with rites of passage.[67]

A theatrical or mime type is probably indicated by the grotesque terracotta figurine of an old naked woman wearing ornate jewellery (Figure 8a, NAM 5710), dated to the Hellenistic or early Roman periods. The figure poses confidently, hands on her hips, perhaps in the stance of a hetaira. A heavy diadem on her head, she wears a necklace with pendants and bracelets on both arms and ankles. Her grotesque facial features are emphasized by the visibility of her tongue, as if in mimicry or joke.[68]

A terracotta figurine of a naked female figure (Figure 8b, NAM 13008) of the so-called Baubo type found in Athens, probably in a grave, can serve to exemplify objects

Figure 8b. Terracotta figurine of Baubo (NAM 13008); from Athens.

related to rituals for Demeter.[69] A nude, old, and rather fat female figure is represented seated on the ground, her legs outspread.[70] Figurines of this and similar types date from the 3rd century BC to Roman Imperial times and are known mainly from Asia Minor, from domestic

0.09m; originally Polytechnion and Archaeological Society Collection 465, M 424; said to be from Dombraina (Boeotia); purchased from Palaiologos, an antiquities dealer, for the Museum; Winter 1903: 2.436,3.

[67] NAM 5648, height 0.12m; formerly Polytechnion and Archaeological Society Collection 1658; provenance unknown; surface worn; Winter 1903: 1.193,6.

[68] NAM 5710, formerly Polytechnion and Archaeological Society Collection 451, M 951; height 0.19m. Winter 1903: 2.457,3 (described as not definitely Greek, thus perhaps Egyptian; mistakenly shown clothed in the illustration).

[69] NAM 13008, height 0.045m; from Liosia (Athens). Cf. Török 1995: 131-133, nos. 188-189, pl. C.

[70] Burn and Higgins 2001: 240-41, no. 2777, pl. 125. The uncertainties of identifying this type of terracotta figurine with Baubo: Pingiatoglou 1993: 75-76, 82-83.

Figure 9a. Terracotta figurine of a satyr (NAM 5633); from Boeotia.

Figures 9b, 9c, 9d. Terracotta figurines of satyrs (NAM 5621, 5651, 12885); provenance unknown (9b), said to be from Boeotia (9c), said to be from Thebes (9d).

contexts and the temple of Demeter at Priene, from Ptolemaic Egypt, including Alexandria, and also from Cyrenaica.[71] Mass-produced in various styles, the exposed vulva was the figurine's main feature. In ancient Greek myth, Baubo is the standard bawdy old woman, a figure of mirth and sexual jokes.[72] When Kore had been abducted by Pluto and Demeter was desperately searching for her daughter, Baubo succeeded in making the mother goddess laugh and relax momentarily by exposing her own body. This gesture of comic relief with a sexual undertone makes her a symbolic figure of the Thesmophoria, a women's festival in honour of Demeter. Iambe is a similar mythic figure.[73] The Orphic poetic tradition provides the oldest and apparently only known ancient testimony for her story, suggesting that the trade, distribution, and popularity of so-called Baubo artisanal figures can be traced no earlier than the 4th century BC. The myth is known from more detailed versions by the early Christian authors Clement of Alexandria and Arnobius.[74] In Graeco-Roman antiquity, especially from the late Classical through the Roman Imperial periods, laughter and ridicule were considered to have great potency against daimons, bad luck, and fears, and as such were sometimes incorporated into rituals,[75] thereby acquiring apotropaic value combined with cultic connotations.[76]

The terracotta figurine of a satyr (NAM 5633, Figure 9a) also possesses interest in regard to the present topic and can represent several of our categories, such as Dionysian objects, grotesques, and/or outsiders. This figurine comes from a Boeotian workshop and is dated to the early 5th century BC.[77] The satyr is represented standing with legs spread. He holds his phallus with his right hand and has a plate with offerings in his left. The red colouring on his face and black on his beard accentuate his animalistic character. This general type is paralleled in figurines from Boeotia (NAM 5621, 5651, 12885, Figures 9b-d) with rudimentary facial features,[78]

[71] Priene: Rumscheid 2006: 220-23, 428-33, pls. 29-30. Egypt: Pingiatoglou 1993: 85, nos. 116-118. Cyrenaica: Burn and Higgins 2001: 240-41, no. 2777, pl. 125. The tangled history of 'Baubo' as a terracotta type-name: Tevebring 2021: 125-31.

[72] *LIMC* III (1986), s.v. Baubo, 87-88 (Th. Karaghiorga-Stathacopoulou).

[73] Iambe: *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 195-205. Baubo and Iambe: Devereux 1983; Olender 1985: 5-9, 50-55, esp. 7, 24, 30, 37-38; Burkert 1993: 499, 583; Olender 2001: 83-85, 104-105. Laughter and ritual: Olive 2010. The Thesmophoria: Deubner 1956: 50-60; Burkert 1993: 48, 232-33, 238, 341, 469, 496-502, 539.

[74] Kern 1922: 126-28, frg. 52; Clement of Alexandria *Protrepticus* 2.2-21; Arnobius *Adversus Nationes* 5.25-26. Olender 1985:15-20; Rumscheid 2006: 223.

[75] Meintani 2022: 112-13.

[76] Pingiatoglou 1993: 82-83 (apotropaia); Rumscheid 2006: 220-23 (votives related in multiple ways to the cult of Demeter).

[77] NAM 5633, from Boeotia, perhaps the area of modern Dombraina; purchased for the Museum; height 0.10m; Winter 1903: 1.219,1d.

[78] NAM 5621, terracotta figurine of a standing satyr; formerly

Figure 10. Terracotta figurine of a monkey (NAM 3980); likely from Thebes (Boeotia).

Figure 11. Terracotta figurine of a monkey (NAM 12980); provenance unknown.

as well as in a terracotta figurine group of dancing satyrs from Boeotia now in the Cleveland Museum of Art dated to the first quarter of the 5th century BC that were probably found as an ensemble.[79]

Figure 12. Terracotta figurine group of a male monkey holding his offspring (NAM 4132); provenance unknown.

Terracotta figurines of monkeys engaged in various human activities have been considered both comic and apotropaic. Two examples are the terracotta figurines NAM 3980 and NAM 12980 (Figures 10, 11), the first probably from Thebes.[80] One terracotta (NAM 3980) represents a monkey standing and holding a tray; the other (NAM 12980) a monkey using a mortar and pestle.[81] Both are dated stylistically to the late 5th/early 4th century BC. Such terracotta figurines of monkeys were also made on Rhodes, but Corinthian coroplasts fully realized this subject's comic potential. Monkey figurines are thought to have been used as fertility symbols and apotropaic devices.[82] Several terracotta figurines of monkeys of the second half of the 5th to the early 4th century BC are known. Some of the Corinthian types depict the monkeys with mortars and pestles, either doing somersaults in the mortar or grinding grain while wearing a veil or crown of pointed leaves and eating a cake. The veil and crown probably denote bridal headdresses. These figurines come from Corinth, Tanagra (Boeotia), Pantikapaion and

Archaeological Society Collection 2074. Purchased for the Museum from the art dealer and excavator Nostrakis; provenance unknown. Parts of arms, hands, and right leg missing; blackened colour on surface; height 0.12m. NAM 5651, terracotta figurine of a satyr resting on his spread legs and tail; said to be from Boeotia; restored but part of left hand missing; height 0.10m; brown lines follow the outline of both of the figure's ears; Winter 1903: 1.219,1e. NAM 12885, terracotta figurine of a standing satyr, with a basket held sideways on his left shoulder and his right hand raised; previously in the Rousopoulos Collection, acquired by the Museum; said to be from Thebes; the right arm and hand, tail, and right leg are all reassembled from pieces; left calf and foot missing; burned; height 0.13m.

[79] Set of three terracotta figurines of dancing satyrs in the Cleveland Art Museum, measuring 0.098m by 0.108m by 0.047m. The group is thought to have decorated the rim of a ceramic wine vessel, such as a krater. Cf. Higgins 1986: 115, fig. 137.

[80] NAM 3980, height 0.07m; confiscated for the National Archaeological Museum from Panagiotaras (a dealer/collector of antiquities) along with the terracotta figurines NAM 3979 and 3981.

[81] NAM 12980, height 0.061m, diameter of base (mortar) 0.061m. Sparkes 1962: 136, no. 63 ('Corinthian'); Villing and Pemberton 2010: 609, fig. 29b; Hudler 2022, in press. Previously in the Rousopoulos Collection; provenance unknown.

[82] Merker 2000: 268. One such terracotta figurine of a monkey from the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in Corinth is dated sometime before 320 BC based on excavation data.

Figure 13. Terracotta figurine of a janiform (two-faced) Nike (NAM 5980); from Melos.

Nymphaion (Crimea), and a number of other regions.[83] The terracotta figurine group NAM 4132 (Figure 12), belongs in the same category; dated to the 5th century BC, it represents a seated male ithyphallic monkey who holds his offspring on his shoulders.[84] Another example is the terracotta figurine group in the Cycladic Museum in Athens dated to the years 430-400 BC, of a satyr or silen carrying a monkey on his back which provides a linking parallel between the two categories of comic and (likely) prophylactic objects.[85] Another complex terracotta, made in Corinth but found in Tanagra and dated to *c.* 350 BC, shows a monkey riding a mule.[86]

A different type of find related to the potential reconstruction of wishful thinking about individual luck and victory is provided by a janiform (two-faced) figurine of Nike (NAM 5980, Figure 13) from the Cycladic island of Melos.[87] This moulded figurine, with a suspension ring attached above the head, represents a double-sided winged Nike joined back-to-back, standing on a small globe that may represent the *oikoumene*. The figure is clad in a *peplos* belted below the breasts, with the hair styled in a melon coiffure, gathered in a bunch (*κρωβύλος*) on top of the head. The same type of Nike figure appears on clay lamps and lamp handles of the early Roman period from Alexandria and other sites in Egypt.[88] Parallels, mainly from Egypt, indicate this terracotta figurine dates to the late Hellenistic or early Roman period, perhaps between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD.

Conclusions

Seen through our modern lenses of interpretation, images and representations of mortal and divine figures, their attributes, and imaginary or historically reconstructed symbols may be considered prophylactic or apotropaic objects in antiquity, although their polysemy often tends to prevail in recent arguments. Some terracotta figurines represent aspects of human physical deformity, rare characteristics, gestures, and poses, other figurines show comic animals mimicking human activities. Certain figurines can be associated with religious beliefs about Demeter, Dionysus, Bes, Nike, and other divine beings that combined elements of more than one deity, such as satyrs and Bes. Syncretism and cosmopolitanism can be traced in figurines of Hellenistic times, such as in the figurine of Nike stepping on the oikoumene. All the examples here, and numerous finds in many other museums, represent ancient artefacts that have come down to us as *aides-mémoires* of an ancient mythology, public and private, that we keep trying to retrieve.

Our small sample shows that a large number of so-called apotropaic terracotta figurines were found in sanctuaries and graves. Houses and other installations, such as workshops, are also attested as having their own prophylactic and apotropaic paraphernalia. This classification of find locations is clearly subject to change according to region and period and is also tentative because many figurines housed in large museums lack provenance data. The deposition of such artefacts in ancient houses, graves, and sanctuaries indicates ritualistic and superstitious behaviour or amusement and brings us closer to tracing aspects of subjectivity, wishful thinking, and the irrational

[83] Villing and Pemberton 2010: 607-611 (one example is the terracotta figurine of a monkey with pestle and mortar in the British Museum, reportedly found at Tanagra in Boeotia).

[84] NAM 4132, height 0.098m, diameter of base 0.042m; provenance unknown. Parts of the monkey's left foot and offspring's legs are missing. White slip overall. A band of red colour runs below the male monkey's waist; traces of light blue colour survive all over the younger monkey. Winter 1903: 1.224,1.

[85] Cycladic Museum terracotta group of Silen and monkey, viewed 10 November 2023 at < https://collections.cycladic.gr/objects/1190/-?ctx=921673256596cea2a73fc331c45d0e7dedfb05ae&idx=100 > Boeotian terracotta figurine of a satyr in the same museum: Marangou 1985: 131, no. 194 (*c.* 460-450 BC).

[86] Held by the British Museum; Higgins 1986: 115, fig. 138.

[87] NAM 5980, formerly Archaeological Society Collection no. 1657); height 0.14m. Intact. Red clay with no preserved colours. NAM Inventory: 'Melos. Purchased. Recorded Nov. 1884' (Μῆλος. 'Ηγοράσθη. Κατεγράφη: Νοέμβρ. 1884). Cf. Pingiatoglou 1993: 71, no. 87.

[88] NAM Benaki Collection, clay lamp handles Be 860, 861, 862, and clay lamp Be 2506: Chidiroglou 2021: 336, 338-40, figs. 38-40, 44.

as experienced by people far away in both time and space, private and public one. Fear of the unexpected and insecurity about the future are, however, far from unknown today. Modern comparanda can be found in the amulets currently sold as souvenirs and trivia in tourist shops, flea markets, and the like throughout the Mediterranean and all over the world. They remind us of the vain and at the same time ever-present human hope of controlling unforeseen, unfortunate, unhappy, or evil aspects of everyday life by some ritualistic, or rather subconscious and compulsive means.

Catalogue of the terracotta figurines discussed[89]

NAM 3980 (Figure 10): Terracotta figurine of a monkey; likely from Thebes (Boeotia). Height 0.07m. Mostly handmade, probably with one worn mould used for the face. Complete, with parts of right arm and hand joined. Traces of white slip, as well as of brown and brownish-red colour. Clay: Munsell 2.5 YR 6/6 (light red).

NAM 4132 (Figure 12): Terracotta figurine group of a male monkey holding his offspring. Provenance unknown. Height 0.098m, diameter of base 0.042m. Mostly handmade, probably with worn moulds used for the faces. Parts of the monkey's left foot and the offspring's legs are missing. White slip over all. Band of red colour below the male monkey's waist and traces of light blue colour all over the younger monkey. Clay: Munsell 7.5 YR 6/4 (light brown).

NAM 5621 (Figure 9b): Terracotta figurine of a standing satyr, of unknown provenance. Height 0.12m. Missing parts of arms, hands and right leg. Black colouring on surface. Clay: Munsell 7.5 YR 6/6 (reddish-yellow).

NAM 5633 (Figure 9a): Terracotta figurine of a standing satyr, from Boeotia. Height 0.10m. Mostly handmade, with a fine mould used for the face. Intact. Black colour on the beard and hoofs, red colour on the face and phallus. Clay: Munsell 7.5 YR 6/6 (reddish-yellow).

NAM 5648 (Figure 7b): Terracotta figurine of a standing male dwarf, holding a cup. Provenance unknown. Height 0.12m. Intact, apart from small flaked areas. Traces of brownish colour on the head. Clay: Munsell 5 YR 6/4 (light reddish-brown).

NAM 5651 (Figure 9c): Terracotta figurine of a standing satyr. Said to be from Boeotia. Height 0.10m. Restored. Part of the left hand missing. Lines of brown colour follow the outline of each of the figure's ears. Clay: Munsell 5 YR 6/6 (reddish-yellow).

NAM 5673 (Figure 1): Clay relief *gorgoneion*, from Thespiae, Boeotia. Height 0.05–0.07m. Part of hair on the right side is missing. Traces of white slip. Clay: Munsell 7.5 YR 6/6 (reddish-yellow).

NAM 5710 (Figure 8a): Terracotta figurine of a naked old woman, of unknown provenance. Height 0.19m. Intact. Very few traces of white slip. Signs of burning on right foot and lower part of legs. Clay: Munsell 2.5 YR 5/4 (reddish-brown).

NAM 5980 (Figure 13): Terracotta figurine of Nike, janiform (double-faced); from Melos. Height 0.14m. Intact. Made from a number of moulds. Traces of dilute reddish-brown slip all over. Clay: Munsell 2.5 YR 5/8 (red).

NAM 10333 (Figure 2): Terracotta figurine of a male dwarf from Kabeirion, Thebes, Boeotia. Height 0.22m. Parts restored. Made from several moulds. Clay: Munsell 7.5 YR 6/6 (reddish-yellow).

NAM 10334 (Figure 3): Terracotta figurine of a standing male dwarf from Kabeirion, Thebes, Boeotia. Height 0.198m. Base and small parts restored. Made from a number of moulds. Clay: Munsell 7.5 YR 6/6 (reddish-yellow).

NAM 10336 (Figure 4): Terracotta figurine of a standing male dwarf from Kabeirion, Thebes, Boeotia. Height 0.12m. Area of left arm and hand and part of the chest and feet restored. Made from several moulds. Clay: Munsell 7.5 YR 6/6 (reddish-yellow).

NAM 10336.1-4 (Figure 5): Terracotta figurines of standing male dwarfs from Kabeirion, Thebes, Boeotia. Height (respectively) 0.123m, 0.122m. NAM 10336.2 was joined with NAM 10401.73. Part of the left side of the body missing. Traces of white slip on the head. Clay: Munsell 7.5 YR 6/4 (light brown).

NAM 12885 (Figure 9d): Terracotta figurine of a standing satyr, holding a basket. Height 0.13m. Said to be from Thebes. Right arm and hand, tail, and right leg are all reassembled from fragments. Left calf and foot missing. Burned. Clay: Munsell 2.5 YR 6/3 (light reddish-brown) and 2.5 YR 5/3 (reddish-brown).

NAM 12980 (Figure 11): Terracotta figurine of a monkey, of unknown provenance. Height 0.061m, diameter of base (mortar) 0.061m. Intact. Traces of white slip. Red colour on the head and chest of the monkey, the pestle and rim of the mortar. Clay: Munsell 10 YR 6/6 (brownish-yellow).

NAM 13008 (Figure 8b): Terracotta figurine of Baubo, from Athens. Height 0.045m. Intact, with small areas

[89] All the terracotta figurines listed here are mould made or have mould made parts. The figurines of Satyrs and monkeys are partly handmade.

slightly flaked. Traces of white slip and black colour or incrustation. Clay: Munsell 7.5 YR 5/8 (strong brown).

NAM 14243 a-c (Figure 6): Three terracotta figurines of male dwarfs from the Sanctuary of Hera at Argos. Height (respectively) 0.07m, 0.078m, 0.064m. Parts of heads and feet missing. Clay: Munsell 5 YR 6/4 (light reddish-brown).

NAM 21878 (Figure 7a): Terracotta figurine of a standing dwarf. Provenance unknown. Height 0.123m. Intact, apart from small flaked areas and a chipped spot. Traces of white slip and pink colour on face, belly, and feet. Black line outlining the top surface of the base. Clay: Munsell 7.5 YR 5/3 (brown).

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Clay Figurines from Smyrna in the I. Misthos Collection at the National Archaeological Museum of Athens: A Study in Deformity and Apotropaic Character[1]

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Abstract

The typology of Hellenistic figurines displaying deformed features is so broad and the objects found so numerous that attempts to study, classify and interpret them continue with undiminished appetite. As some of them combine genuine and actual elements with caricature, it is often less than straightforward to distinguish one contributing feature independently from another.

The stimulus that led to the formulation of the ideas expressed in this communication was provided by twelve unpublished misshapen clay figurines of Smyrna origin, held in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, being part of the Ioannis Misthos Collection donated to the State in 1884 and 1892.

These terracottas due to their deformity can be characterized as apotropaic, according to the definition both of the lexicographer Pollux and the current opinions of modern researchers. However, they do not belong to the category of the Evil-Eye as defined by the Atticist grammarian Phrynichos and have no relation to forms of such devices that we know from excavations. How the deterrent power of an object works and the protection it offers to an individual is a completely personal and particular process.

The typology of Hellenistic figurines displaying deformed features is so broad and the objects found so numerous that attempts to study, classify and interpret them continue with undiminished appetite. As some of them combine genuine actual elements (congenital deformities, signs of hardship or abuse, pathological disfigurement, as well as racial/ethnic or ethnographic characteristics) with caricature (exaggeration for satirical intent), distinguishing one contributing feature independently from another is often less than straightforward.[2] The term 'grotesque' is often used to describe and grade deformity of physical appearance on a case-by-case basis, from the downright revolting through a fascinating strangeness to an unusual or even exotic appearance.[3] Grotesque is therefore a convenient term that scholars, mainly from the 19th century onwards, often used for the generally misshapen figurines of the Hellenistic and Roman era when they wanted to bypass any particular characterization and interpretation of such figures.

The misshapen figurines from Smyrna in the I. Misthos collection

The stimulus that led to the formulation of the ideas in this communication was provided by some unpublished misshapen clay figurines, part of the Ioannis Misthos Collection held in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens (henceforth NAMA). The collection was donated to the Greek State in 1884 by Ioannis Misthos, an expatriate from Smyrna, with the endorsement and facilitation of the then-Prime Minister of Greece Charilaos Trikoupis.[4] Their presentation to the Museum dates to 1889.[5] Misthos made a second donation of clay figurines to the Museum in 1892, three years before his sudden death.[6]

[1] I warmly thank the Organizing Committee (Drs Maria Chidiroglou, Maria Spathi, and Jenny Wallensten) for the invitation to the *Αποτρόπαια και Φυλακτήρια* Conference. I owe thanks to the National Archaeological Museum (in particular the head and the curators of the Department of Vases, Metalwork and Minor Arts, Drs. Georgios Kavvadias, Christina Avronidaki and Vangelis Vivliodetis) and to the Directorate of the National Archive of Monuments of the Ministry of Culture (head Dr Athina Chatzidimitriou and the archaeologist Archontoula Papoulakou).

[2] Besques 1972: 155.

[3] E. Varopoulou, Γκροτέσκο 130 χρόνια, Τέχνη της αναίδειας, *To Vima*, 25-5-2003: '...forms that cause discomfiture while serving an aesthetic of ugliness and ambiguity.'

[4] Philadelpheus 1928: 5; Picaud 2002, 1: 11-12; Vivliodetis and Avronidaki 2013: 32.

[5] Avronidaki and Vivliodetis (2018: 1) state that this collection in the National Archaeological Museum includes 'à peu près 1125 figurines de l' Asie Mineure...'

[6] Avronidaki and Vivliodetis 2018: 5. I thank Chr. Avronidaki for sending me a copy of the handwritten catalogue of this gift to the NAMA, which is kept at the Directorate of the National Archive of Monuments. Winter (1903: LXVI and n. 4) wrote that from 1881 Misthos was in Smyrna, able to assemble his collection, the richest in artistically outstanding objects, and augment it in subsequent years, finally donating it to the National Museum, where Winter saw it on display there in 1892 when he was writing his study on figurine types. The exhibition of the I. Misthos Collection at the National Archaeological Museum: *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 1893:

The first part of the collection includes clay figurines from various Hellenistic centres of Asia Minor; some came from Smyrna. The second donation in 1892 comprised clay figurines exclusively from Smyrna.

The Smyrna figurines of the collection involve a variety of types, mainly from the Hellenistic period but also some from the Roman era. Some, which depict types with realistic or cartoonish features, are hence often broadly termed 'grotesques' in the literature.

The absence of excavation details and the resulting problems

No information exists for the exact place of origin of the Smyrna coroplastic works in the Misthos Collection in the NAMA.[7] The absence of excavation evidence was pointed out by S. Picaud in her study of the coroplastic items in the collection that are now in the Musées Royaux d'art et d'histoire in Brussels.[8] We assume that the surmises of scholars from time to time regarding the conditions under which the clay figurines of Smyrna came to light, now scattered through the great museums and private collections of Europe and America, also apply to the figurines in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens.[9]

The question of the origin of the Hellenistic figurines of Smyrna remains unresolved. The numerous Hellenistic and Roman figurines from there that were assembled in collections during the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century come mainly from unofficial and illegal explorations in the city of Smyrna during the second half of the 19th century. During that period, large-scale building activity was underway in response to the city's population growth and great economic development. As a result, rapid and uncontrolled discovery of antiquities occurred where the modern city has now spread.[10] The coroplastic work of local workshops made up a large part of these antiquities, which hold a prominent place in the history of Greek and Roman coroplastic art due to their typological originality and technical excellence. The clay figurines were sold *en masse*, mainly during the 19th and the first third of the 20th century, with great ease since Smyrna was then a cosmopolitan centre linked to international trade. They ended up in European museums and collections, where scholars and art lovers alike greeted them enthusiastically. A similar fate befell other antiquities originating from unauthorised excavations, notably the Melian clay reliefs of the 5th century BC. These reliefs were channelled wholesale into the 19th-century European antiquities market. The only information provided with them was that they came from the ancient necropolis of the island of Melos,[11] today's Tripiti and Klima. The exact locations and conditions of their discovery therefore remain unknown, while their excellent preservation is considered a strong indication that they came from graves.

From the very first years that the Collection was exhibited at the NAMA, studies were published that made the acquisitions known to interested specialists as well as to the general public. P. Perdrizet admiringly described the Museum's new collection and commented on some figurines, including those from Smyrna, that display 'ethnographic characteristics' (a Gaul and a Negro).[12] A few years later, F. Winter's *Typenkatalog* includes several figurines from the Misthos Collection from Myrina in the NAMA, and a very few labelled as from Asia Minor and Smyrna. Three figurines from Asia Minor represent a clay emblem with a relief of a dead man's head,[13] a dwarf in short trousers with a head covering,[14] and a seated female wearing a himation with a basket and vessels.[15] Three from Smyrna represent, respectively, a hunchbacked man with a deformed face,[16] a man with a misshapen torso,[17] and the head of an Ethiopian.[18] Worth noting is that Winter systematically omitted the extremely important realistic and caricature-like heads of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, apparently because they were found detached from their bodies and therefore did not constitute complete types for cataloguing purposes.

Many questions have preoccupied researchers, especially since excavation contexts became the focus of in-depth study to understand the dating and function of archaeological finds.[19] Added to this mix

191; Reinach 1896: 218 with note by Homolle; Reinach 1896: 14; Picaud 2004: 136.

[7] See the Registers of the National Archaeological Museum for the objects registered in 1889 and 1892, and the documentation on the arrival of donations to the Museum.

[8] Picaud 2002, 1: 21-22.

[9] The largest collections of figurines from Smyrna: Besques (1972: 75, 154-155) on the Louvre Museum, Paris; Hasselin-Rous *et al.* (2015: 2, 5-6 with nn. 3 and 6) on the Archaeological Museums of Istanbul; Leyenaar-Plaisier (1979: 1-5) on the National Museum of Antiquities, Leiden; Burn and Higgins (2001: 127-129) on the British Museum, London; Hasselin-Rous *et al.* (2009: 103) on a Smyrna exhibition at the Louvre; Picaud (2002, 1: 21-22) on the Musées Royaux, Brussels ; Courtois (2007 and 2016: 355-370) on the Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva.

[10] Bru 2010: 195; Martinez 2011: 195; Hasselin-Rous *et al.* 2015: 4; Hasselin-Rous 2016: 2.

[11] Peppa-Papaioannou 2001: 110-111; Matthaiou and Chatzidimitriou 2022: 147-148 with n. 169.

[12] Perdrizet 1897: 209, 214, 216, pl. XVIII no. 1, XVIII no. 2. See also n. 17 below.

[13] Winter 1903: 444. 9, Misthos Collection, unnumbered. Height 0.035m.

[14] Winter 1903: 447. 7, Misthos Collection no. 15. Height 0.135m.

[15] Winter 1903: 468. 7, Misthos Collection no. 470. Height 0.14m.

[16] Winter 1903: 444.7, Misthos Collection no. 1120. Height 0.08m. This figurine, which was included in Misthos' second donation to the NAMA in 1892, is recorded in the Museum Index under the number 5558.

[17] Winter 1903: 447. 2, Misthos Collection no. 171. Height 0.06m.

[18] Winter 1903:448. 5, Misthos Collection, unnumbered. Height 0.03m.

[19] Huysecom-Haxhi 2015: 422-423, 436-439; Süvegh 2017:179-182, table 1.

were matters of authenticity that touched on the Hellenistic terracottas of Tanagra and Myrina but could also involve other sets of Hellenistic figurines collected in unauthorised and unscientific investigations in the past and now belonging to major museums.[20] As far as I could find out, no published systematic comprehensive study of the Smyrna figurines exists concerning the issue of their authenticity.

In the case of coroplastic art from Smyrna, the criteria for classification and interpretation, normally based on the exact place of origin of archaeological objects, are limited and inadequate because excavation evidence is lacking. Their hypothetical provenance from shrines, tombs, houses, or workshops has tended to condition judgements of their function, causing them to be regarded as votives, endowments, decorations, talismans warding off evil or simply products for sale.[21] The absence of stratigraphical contexts remains a fundamental stumbling-block,[22] turning every 'logical' hypothesis into an unconfirmable supposition. No ceramics or other objects associated with the realistic and caricatured clay heads from Smyrna have been identified.

The so-called Smyrna clay figurines are thought to come from the city which developed from the end of the 4th century BC on the slopes of Mount Pagos and expanded towards the coast of the Gulf of Smyrna.[23] Regarding the Smyrna figurines in the Louvre, which come from two main donations, one by S. Reinach (1882) and the other by P. Gaudin (1886), S. Besques speculates that according to the data Gaudin provided, they were found on Mount Pagos, the heights of Deirmen-Tepe and in the small valley between the two.[24] Gaudin was present at an excavation, carried out at the site of a French monastery on a mountainside, that yielded thousands of figurines. He acquired part of these finds, then donated them to the Louvre.[25] Compared to the find types from other excavations, the figurines of Smyrna seem to have come from the city's sanctuaries, private residences and actual coroplastic workshops but not, as Reinach had thought, from the necropolis.[26]

Their mainly 'secular' subject matter and the analogy of related finds from other cities of the Hellenistic world, mainly from neighbouring Priene and the Aeolian city of Myrina, have given rise to the hypothesis that the clay grotesque figurines of Smyrna were found in houses and tombs.[27] Taking the clay figurines from the city as a whole, however, the prevailing opinion as to the exact provenance comes down ultimately in favour of a range of locations. These may include shrines and tombs, as well as houses and workshops, as the discoveries of moulds in the last-mentioned declares.[28]

Those clay figurines that represent gods — whether inspired by famous statues of the 5th, 4th, and 3rd centuries BC, or miniature copies of them, or influenced by classicizing originals of the 2nd and 1st centuries BC — rarely occur exclusively as votive offerings in sanctuaries. They are often found in homes and other places because their genre and themes harmonized perfectly with the approach taken in the decor of private dwellings of employing cheaper alternatives to famous works of sculpture so as to enhance the illusion that one was enjoying expensive luxuries in one's urban lifestyle.

The deformity of the Smyrna heads, even though they lack bodies, is eloquent and irrefutable confirmation of their apotropaic intent.

The meaning of 'grotesque': ambiguity or polysemy?

Before proceeding to present and comment on some of the unpublished misshapen figurines from Smyrna in the NAMA (which, we should note, are characterized as comic heads in the Museum Register), we must briefly review the widely used term 'grotesque.' The multiplicity of meanings the term has acquired has occasionally been discussed. In her 1972 Louvre catalogue of the Smyrna figurines, Besques emphasized the inappropriateness of the name 'grotesque' and the difficulties arising from its generalizing use.[29] Over 30 years later, F. Rumscheid's detailed study of the clay figurines of Priene pointed out the range implicit in the terminology used.[30] So did V. Jeammet, in her study of the 'maux' small-scale sculpture, commenting on the diversity and interpretations of the term 'grotesque.'[31]

But how did we end up with this term for the misshapen and comic works of small-scale sculpture in the 19th century, when such objects first came to light and attracted the interest of artists and researchers? C. Courtois, referring to Besques' reservations about the term grotesque and her own preference for the expression 'figures naturalistes,' distinguishes between the various Smyrna figurines of the de Candolle Collection in the Museum of Art and History in Geneva that have pathological features or deformities. First she introduces the grotesques, then those types with ethnic features often shown in a cartoonish manner (caricatures), and finally the portraits with realistic

[20] Zimmer 1994: 11-18; Kriseleit 1994: 59.
[21] Hasselin-Rous *et al.* 2015:6.
[22] Hasselin-Rous *et al.* 2015: 8-10.
[23] Cumont 1901: 28-29; Besques 1972: 128.
[24] Besques 1972: 154-155.
[25] Picaud 2004: 138-140; Gkikaki 2011: 10-11.
[26] Besques (1972: 155 n. 1) quotes Reinach (1884: 145, 146, 158).
[27] Mrogenda 1996: 150-153; Rumscheid 2006: 27-30 ; Hasselin-Rous *et al.* 2015: 12-13.
[28] Besques 1972: 187-189. Hasselin Rous *et al.* 2015: 5-6, 8.
[29] Besques 1972: 155.
[30] Rumscheid 2006: 499-500, no. 283, pl. 122.3-5.
[31] Jeammet 2011: 45.

features, as well as certain examples connected with the theatre.[32]

A special category of grotesques includes pathological forms, the 'pathological grotesques.' The doctor and anthropologist F. Regnault was the first to use this descriptive term for clay figurines from Smyrna.[33] A little later, a Greek doctor from Smyrna, M. Tsakyroglou, published a treatise on the Smyrna clay figurines in the Museum of the Evangelical School of Smyrna, the Misthos Collection in Athens, and the Gaudin Collection in the Louvre: he saw them as representing individuals who were ill, dividing them into normal and pathological groups.[34]

Among more recent scholars, the first to talk about the 'pathological grotesque' was W. Stevenson.[35] A few decades later, A. Mitchell searched anew for the interpretation of the pathological grotesque in art,[36] while P. Charlier distinguished the pathological types from Smyrna into two large categories: on the one hand, the real grotesques, cheap figurines with grimaces and distortions that provoke laughter like the comic theatrical types, and on the other hand those that served as informative models for the study of diseases at the medical school of Smyrna.[37] In the first case, caricatures are intended; in the second, small-scale models are used as teaching aids. The view that those representing pathological conditions were used to teach medical science is not universally accepted. Yet the possibility that such types were invented in cities with famous medical schools and eminent physicians is not disputed.[38] However, such figurines could not be reasonably used as teaching aids because their method of production lacked the technical perfection required to achieve a faithful rendering of pathological symptoms and conditions, especially on such a small scale. For capturing relief features in detail, artisans usually used wax, which is more malleable, as we know from the lost-wax technique of casting metal for modelled works of art.

The inspiration for these products in the big urban centres is none other than the toilers struggling for their daily subsistence, the wandering outcasts, and the disabled. In recent decades, a growing interest in disability has occupied sociologists and economists as well as scholars of ancient art. All are looking for the reasons why these representations of the disabled human form were made, employing modern theoretical and practical research approaches.[39] The term 'grotesque' appears in the studies of N. Himmelmann and J.J. Pollitt in the 1980s that examine the appearance and interpretation of the artistic trend towards realism and genre (portraiture) in Hellenistic art. Himmelmann showed that realism was engendered in the intellectual milieu of Alexandrian poetry represented by the *Mimes* of Herodas.[40] Pollitt offered an artistic, social, and ethical interpretation which emphasized that scenes of everyday life and caricatures depicting dwarfs and deformed people amused those who laugh at situations that usually evoke pity.[41] G. Richter and M. Bieber were occupied with the question of identifying these deformed/grotesque figurines with theatrical types, while A. Wace addressed the topic of the apotropaic significance of grotesques with large phalluses. Richter's study of a Greco-Roman bronze figurine in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York traced the mime type of the Parasite in this piece, with his hooked nose like the beak of a bird of prey and the piercing gaze of his two eyes set very close to the bridge of the nose. The identification finds many supporters to this day.[42] Bieber later identified the same piece as perhaps a *Dossenus* ('Glutton') figurine from Roman farce.[43] His appearance could also be read as a caricature that provokes not only the viewer's laughter but also aversion or annoyance, feelings derived directly from both the character of Theophrastus's *kolax* ('flatterer') and the protagonist of Menander's now-lost comedy of the same name.[44] Wace ascribed magical properties against the envious evil eye to small clay figurines of grotesques and caricatures with deformed bodies (mainly humpbacks with large phalluses), arguing that the great majority of them come from Asia Minor.[45] He looked for the origin of scenes of everyday life or genre in Asia Minor.[46]

In the study of deformity in the art of the Hellenistic period, then, two terms dominate: 'grotesque' and 'caricature.' But the theme goes much further back in time. Examining the history of the term, we find 'grotesque' was coined for a type or mode of decoration revealed in the excavated remains of ancient buildings in Rome during the Renaissance that became a source of inspiration in Western art from the 16th century until the era of Neoclassicism. The word was used to describe compositions that, though they had a vertical axis of symmetry, were created from a multiplicity of elements (architectural, vegetal, and small imaginary forms) to achieve a result perceived as whimsical or capricious

[32] Courtois 2016: 364.
[33] Regnault 1900: 468. Cf. Regnault (1894: 691), who made earlier remarks on 'déformations.'
[34] Tsakyroglou 1905: 22.
[35] Stevenson 1975: 3-4.
[36] Mitchell 2013: 282 ff., 290-293.
[37] Charlier 2007: 49-50 with n. 3.
[38] Briefly Laios *et al*. 2017: 192-193, 194.
[39] Are disabled people marginal as long as they earn their living in their own way? Giuliani 1987: 718-720; Mitchell 2016: 184, 187.
[40] Himmelmann 1983: 21-22.
[41] Pollitt 1986: 134, 142-146.
[42] Richter 1913: 149-156, pls V-VI.
[43] Bieber² 1961: 247-248 with n. 56, fig. 817.
[44] See also NAMA 5227 in the catalogue referred to here.
[45] Wace 1903-04: 112-114.
[46] Wace 1903-04: 110-112.

(*capriccio*),[47] but not deformed. Thus, in the original Renaissance meaning of the term (something strange and/or bizarre), some ancient forms could be described as mixed and fantastical, created with an intention sometimes cultic, sometimes merely decorative. These are combinations of forms, sometimes hard to interpret, that are thought to possess a deterrent power and capacity to protect against evil.

This category can include hybrid figures connected to folk beliefs, such as the cockerel-man (a male head with a rooster's comb) of the 1st century AD from Ticino (Switzerland);[48] another similar figure exists from Egypt,[49] as well as a bronze figurine of a rooster whose head portrays a bearded man from Begram in Afghanistan, near Kapissa in Bactria, the capital of the Kushana kingdom.[50] The abbreviated version of the figure of Baubo, in the form of a head-vulva set on two bare legs with an offering or lyre at her side, can also be included in the category under discussion,[51] as can the hippalectryon (half-horse, half-rooster) used as a shield-blazon[52] or as a protective figure on the prows of warships.[53] Even a female figure/caryatid, sometimes wearing a polos on her head, who emerges from whirling, sprouting buds amidst a mass of vegetation, or clad in garments ending in spiral plant motifs, can be seen as strange or bizarre, yet tasteful, more placid complementary architectural motifs for ornamenting sumptuous floors and monumental tombs.[54]

Not only the ugly (an affront to nature), therefore, but also the bizarre (the grotesque *par excellence*, both in the ancient sense and its Renaissance revival) can be said to have an apotropaic character.

The figurines of the I. Misthos Collection in the NAMA, owing to their deformity, can be characterized as apotropaic according to the definition both of the lexicographer Pollux (*Onomasticon* 7.108) and the current opinions of modern researchers. However, they do not belong to the Evil Eye category as defined by the Atticist grammarian Phrynichos (Bekker, *Anecdota* 1.30) and have no relationship to any form of such devices known from excavations.[55] How an object's power to deter functions and what protection it can offer to an individual is a completely personal and particular process. Two cases from Olynthos indicate the workings of the apotropaic and amuletic in immediate but completely different ways. In the first, the outer surface of a clay mould for a finely-modelled female head bears an ugly, ill-crafted face with incised eyes, apparently to protect the coroplast's work from misfortunes during the process of production.[56] In the second case, according to the excavator, a lamp with a grotesque female figure plays on an association of the vessel's name, *lychnos* ('lamp'), with the nickname 'Lychnos,' attached to a well-known courtesan named Synoris ('two-horse chariot').[57] The woman's nickname and real name may allude to clients' demands and professional performance. Obviously, for the lamp's owner, it would bring remembrance of some sweet moments, at the same time functioning as a charm.

The misshapen figurines from Smyrna, after being brought into homes, would provide their occupants with a sense of protection. When placed in tombs, they would be a source of comfort to relatives, encouraging the thought that all due care had been taken to ensure the blissful repose of their deceased.

Catalogue

1. NAMA 5324 (Figure 1). Male head. Complete. Made from a two-part mould (one for the back section, one for the front), with the joining seam visible on the skull above the ears. On the lower surface of the neck, now broken off, is a circular hole with remnants of plaster and a small nail that bear witness to the image having once been fastened to a stand for display. Light brown clay. Minimal remains of white slip. Two horizontal wrinkles on the forehead, half-open mouth with fleshy lips, large ears placed unevenly on the head, and a protruding Adam's apple in the neck. Height of face 0.031m (neck to forehead). Width 0.027-0.028m. Depth 0.03m. Loss of the right nostril and hyperplasia (swelling) of the lips indicates disease, likely rhinoscleroma or leprosy.[58]

2. NAMA 5180 (Figure 2). Male head. Made with a two-piece mould (one for the back section, one for the front). Joining seam behind the ears; hollow inside with traces of assemblage visible. Throat and nape of neck missing. Clay clean, brownish-red, internally ash-grey. A few indiscernible traces of white slip. Clear remnants of red paint over entire surface. Skull disproportionately enlarged at the back. Nose crooked and thick; mouth

[47] *Dictionnaire Larousse*, s.v. Grotesque.
[48] Voegtle 2016: 1-2, fig. 1.
[49] Perdrizet 1911: 60, no. 97, pl. 28.
[50] Hackin 1954: 147-148, no. 177, fig. 328.
[51] Rumscheid 2006: 220-223, pls 29-30.
[52] Hippalektryon as a blazon on Athena's shield: Williams 1990: 427-433, figs. 132-136.
[53] Aeschylus, *Fragmenta* no. 61 (134): 'ἐπάνδετος δὲ ξουθὸς ἱππαλεκτρυὼν / στάζει, χυθέντων φαρμάκων πολὺς πόνος' (tr. Smyth 1926: 424: 'The buff horse-cock fastened thereon, the laborious work of outpoured paints, in dripping'). Cf. Aristophanes, *Frogs* 935–38.
[54] Andronikos 1997: fig. 20 (mosaic floor of "andron", palace at Vergina). Grudeva 2015, fig. 1 (caryatids, tomb of Sveshtari).
[55] Tzanavari 2017: 222; Savvopoulou 2017: 222-223; Kefalidou 2017: 167-169.
[56] Robinson 1931: 95-97, nos. 412A, 412B, pl. 56.
[57] Robinson 1952: 383-384, no. 136, pl. 161.
[58] For similar examples, see Regnault (1907: 26-27), who provides a diagnosis of leprosy for a head from Smyrna (Louvre Museum, no. CA 5321). Grmek and Gourevitch (1998: 250) deliver a diagnosis of rhinoscleroma; Stampolidis and Tassoulas 2014: 137 no. 28 (Roman Imperial period); Mitchell 2016: 189, fig. 13.6. A deformed nose and right ear are also visible on another unpublished clay figurine from Smyrna in Athens (NAMA 5319).

Figure 1. NAMA 5324: Mouldmade head of a bald man, front and side views.

Figure 2. NAMA 5180: Mouldmade male head, neck broken off, side view.

Figure 3. NAMA 5494: Mouldmade head and partial neck of a bald, beardless man, side view.

closed, with thick lips in an idiotic grimace; large forehead with horizontal wrinkles; bald, not protruding ear lobes. Maximum height 0.035m. Width 0.022m. Maximum depth 0.045m. Scaphocephaly (pointed head) or dolichocephalic type,[59] or a cartoonish rendering of the Parasite. Hellenistic or Roman era.

3. NAMA 5494 (Figure 3). Head and part of the throat of a bald, beardless man. Most of right ear missing. Made in a two-piece mould; solid. Clay clean, orange-red to brown. Traces of red coating, remains of red paint. Long, lean face with hooked nose, strong cheekbones. The half-open mouth and wrinkles on the forehead convey an expression of pain and suffering. Height of face 0.03m. Width at ears 0.022m. Maximum depth 0.034m. Similarly contorted faces can be seen on

[59] Hasselin-Rous (*et al.* 2015: 102-103 no. 63, Catalogue no. 2330) presents a similar item.

Figure 4. NAMA 5320: Mouldmade mask or fragmentary vase (or lamp?) depicting a mime's face.

deformed dancers from the Smyrna region[60] showing recognizable features of the disease acromegaly (excessive bone growth and soft tissue enlargement).[61]

4. NAMA 5320 (Figure 4). Mask or part of a plastic vase (or lamp) depicting a mime's face, a caricature with an angry expression. The chin, part of the left temple and cheek, and part of the right ear are all missing. Mould-made, with traces of a spatula used on the inside. Clean orange clay. Remains of white slip and red glossy paint over the entire exterior. In the upper part of the forehead is a hole with a plastic rope-like edge or lip, for suspension or to be used as a spout. The face is triangular, with a long, narrow hooked nose whose tip droops towards the mouth, a heavy arching brow, and forehead furrowed by horizontal wrinkles. The eyelids are well-shaped and the iris rendered in relief with a central dot. The relief details are cleanly and crisply delineated. Height 0.051m. Maximum width 0.037m. The type was apparently invented in Smyrna[62] but achieved wider dissemination in the Roman era.[63] Red-glazed plastic vases became popular in the Imperial period.[64]

5. NAMA 5527 (Figure 5). Cartoonish (caricature) head of a male figure. Right half of a head made using two moulds (one for the right, one for the left). Visible on the inside is the strip showing the assembly of the two halves. Smoothing with a spatula is visible externally on the neck and under the chin. Medium-clean clay with mica, light brown to orange with a grey core. White slip and remnants of red paint. Bald head, beardless chin, large forehead, large hooked nose with wide nostrils and tip meeting the upper lip. Strongly prognathous jaw, with huge half-open mouth and thick lips; the upper and lower teeth can be distinguished. Plastic rendering of eyelids and the iris, which has an incised dot in the centre. Maximum height 0.0445m. Maximum width 0.023m. Maximum depth 0.0595m. Probably from the same mould comes a head from Smyrna in the Louvre Museum (CA5376 [1901]); Besques considers it to represent a character from mime, the Parasite of New Comedy or the *stupidus* of the Roman drama, especially popular in the coroplastic output of Smyrna.[65]

Pollux, writing on the masks of New Comedy, observes that the Flatterer and the Parasite have dark (black) skin, a hawkish nose, and are disposed to pleasure, but that the Parasite has cauliflower ears while the Flatterer has a malicious expression, with raised eyebrows.[66] Bieber stated, 'a high forehead, baldness, and a crooked nose characterize the Flatterer, the crooked nose shows insolence and is to be compared to the beak of the greedy crow.'[67] According to her, a 'more refined' version of the above features can be recognized in a mask in Berlin.[68] The link between the Sycophant and the Parasite is very close, for the latter takes advantage of his master by flattering him, as mentioned in Xenophon's *Symposium*,[69] and by his witty satirical mood and humour, as seen in Lucian's dialogue between Tychiades and Simon the Parasite bout the skills required for the role.[70] Some scholars see the Flatterer and the Parasite as one and the same, but others doubt their absolute interconnection.[71] The

[60] Burn and Higgins (2001: 148 no. 2387, pl. 69) have an actor or dancer from Anthedon in Boeotia, now in the British Museum; despite its Boeotian origin, it shows Smyrna clay and style.

[61] E.g., Muratov 2012: 56, figs. 4, 5 (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

[62] For similar types from Smyrna, see Hasselin-Rous *et al.* 2015: 114-115 no. 77 (Catalogue no. 2332) of the Gaudin Collection at the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul. Hasselin-Rous (*et al.* 2009: 190-191; *et al.* 2015: 115, fig. 16) mentions two similar pieces, one in the Louvre (CA 4350) and another in the Musée d'art et d'histoire à Genève (Inv. 10790), plus a third from Smyrna in the Louvre (CA 1406) of the first half of the 2nd century BC.

[63] Cf. Winter 1903, 2:455. 4 (Museo Nazionale, Naples, inv. no. 4645); see also Rohden 1880: 60, pl. L.1 (perhaps from a large lamp).

[64] Hasselin-Rous *et al.* 2015: 115.

[65] Besques 1972: 229-230, pl. 309d (E137); Török 1995: 161, nos. 246-247, pl. CXXXIII.

[66] Pollux, *Onomasticon* 4.148: κόλαξ δὲ καὶ παράσιτος μέλανες, οὐ μὴν ἔξω παλαίστρας, ἐπίγρυποι, εὐπαθεῖς· τῷ δὲ παρασίτῳ μᾶλλον κατέαγε τὰ ὦτα, καὶ φαιδρότερός ἐστιν, ὥσπερ ὁ κόλαξ ἀνατέταται κακοηθέστερον τὰς ὀφρῦς.

[67] Bieber² 1961: 100.

[68] Bieber² 1961: 100, fig. 373a-b.

[69] Xenophon, *Symposium* 1.11-13: Φίλιππος δ' ὁ γελωτοποιὸς... συνεσκευασμένος τε παρεῖναι ἔφη πάντα τἀπιτήδεια – ὥστε δειπνεῖν τ' ἀλλότρια .... (tr. Todd 1997: 539, 'Philip the buffoon... added that with regard to food he had come all prepared, in all varieties - to dine on some other person's ').

[70] Lucian, *Parasite* 58-59 (tr. Harmon 1960: 311-12).

[71] Keramari 2019: 202-206.

Figure 5. NAMA 5527: Mouldmade caricature male head, side view (inner and outer surfaces).

association of the Parasite with the later *Stupidus* is not so clear, although the two types have been argued to overlap iconographically. This is probable because later in the Roman era, Parasites and Sycophants took on the role of the *Stupidus* at banquets to make a living despite the humiliations they suffered at the hands of the host and guests.[72] In the comedic/mime performances of Roman farce, however, gestures, clothing and headdresses[73] were visually dominant, not the types of heads and faces. Mime-actors did not wear masks.[74]

A coroplastic type with exaggerated prognathism, a huge half-open or gaping mouth where the teeth are visible – thus clearly portraying stupidity as deformity – was merged with that of the Parasite and the Flatterer, and so we arrive at this item from the workshops of Smyrna.[75] Süvegh, classifying a head from the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest as of the Parasite type, wonders whether the figurines of this type are wearing masks or are genre figures, because in New Comedy the actors wear small masks and the everyday attire of their time. She therefore raises the question: guise or genre?[76] M. Muratov, publishing a clay head with grotesque features from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, remarks that such heads were generic representations of deformed individuals who exploited their deformity to entertain the public. She attributes the head type to the genre of mime, invoking the representation of the Mime of Hekyra

Figure 6. NAMA 5507: Male head with mouldmade face, side view.

on an inscribed clay lamp from the West Slope of the Athenian Acropolis.[77]

Baldness, a hooked or crooked nose, lack of a beard, wrinkles on the forehead, malformed ears, and an expression of credulity, cunning, or stupidity characterize the heads NAMA 5180, NAMA 5494, NAMA 5320, and NAMA 5527. The course of the transition from a character whose distinguishing features are revealed through speech, to the theatrical mime artist who employs movement to the same end, and from the specific attributes of New Comedy types, to the strange, exaggerated, and even deformed characteristics of the mime and the comic is figuratively represented, we may claim, by the four clay heads from Smyrna presented above.

[72] In public spectacles, mimes sometimes artfully revealed misdeeds that had been hushed up, e.g. the case of the theft of a widow's boat in a mime show at the Hippodrome of Constantinople before the emperor Theophilos. I thank Konst. P. Papaioannou for the information. *Πάτρια*: 224-225.28.

[73] Nicoll 1931: 47-48, 83-84, 90-91; Wüst 1932: 1747-1748; Dunbabin 2004: 2.

[74] Reich 1903: 527-528; Wüst 1932: 1747. *Contra* Nicoll 1931: 91.

[75] Besques 1972: pl. 309d (E137); Bieber² 1961: fig. 373a-b.

[76] Süvegh 2014: 152, fig. 17 (inv. no. T390).

[77] Muratov 2012: 55-56 with n. 16, figs. 4-5 (no. 2000.667.2b).

Figure 7. NAMA 5557: Mouldmade mask of a male face, front and side views.

6. NAMA 5507 (Figure 6). Male head with mould-made face, misshapen and oblong. The profile is unusual, with a hawkish, very pointy nose and a singularly bouffant hairdo shaped using a fine spatula. The mouth is half-open, the cheeks angular. The furrowed brows and pursed lips project an expression of displeasure or puzzlement. The forehead is low, the ears set high on the temples. Orange to light brown clay with an ash-grey core visible at the neck break. Hight (top of head to chin) 0.041m. Maximum width (at the ears) 0.025m. Of a similar type but unknown provenance, it dates to the end of the Hellenistic era.[78]

7. NAMA 5557 (Figure 7). Male mask, mould-made with open back. Cut in a curve about the jawline. Brushmarks on inner surface. Upper part of forehead missing. Clean clay with a few small brown and white inclusions, orange in colour with a greyish core. Minimal traces of white slip. The outline of the face and the chin below the lip are defined in red paint. The humped nose with a low bridge and wide nostrils, thin over-emphasized eyebrows, flabby cheeks, and large half-open mouth show that it represents a character from mime. Height 0.047m. Width 0.034m. The same conception can be seen in a larger, much better-made mask of the Imperial period from Smyrna, now in the Louvre.[79]

8. NAMA 5515 (Figure 8). Head of an old woman made of solid clay using two moulds, one for the front half of the head, the other for the back, with a seam running around the face and the upper part of the skull. Clean, pale brown clay with mica, neck has grey core. Minimal traces of white slip and red paint. Triangular ugly bony face, half-open mouth, wrinkled forehead, strong brow ridges. Hair parted in the middle with additional untidy tufts around the forehead and temples (or a wreath?), tied back to a krobylos (not surviving), and up in a lampadion (bow-shaped bun). The rest of the hair is regular and shaped with a spatula. Height 0.04m. Width 0.032m. A second head in the NAMA has a face made from a similar mould.[80] Besques classified three similar heads from Smyrna in the Louvre Museum as the Old Woman, as per the description of Pollux in his *Onomasticon*.[81]

9. NAMA 5491 (Figure 9). Head of a man wearing the conical cap/pilos of a manual worker, a slave, or a mime. The top of the cap is broken off. Made of solid clay in a two-piece mould. Clean orange clay with a light orange core. Minimal traces of white slip. Red-orange paint over the entire surface. The inclination of the head (relative to the neck) corresponds to that of a move in a dance or mime. The curving profile of the face, strong brow ridges and cheekbones, sunken cheeks, and small slightly beaky nose with slightly projecting tip all indicate racial elements. The forehead has horizontal wrinkles, the mouth is half-open. Circular depressions denote the irises of the eyes. On the neck below the left ear and jaw is a vertical modelled element (a fold or the like), either to reinforce the object or to indicate a piece of cloth that covered the neck. Height of face 0.032m. Maximum width (at the ears) 0.031m. Examples of similar subjects are the peasant or slave with conical cap (and suspension hole on top) from a local Smyrna workshop that P. Gaudin donated to the Archaeological Museum of Istanbul,[82] a brown-glazed head in the

[78] Provenance: G. Weber, Kunsthandel Cologne, acquired in 2000. See *Exotics* 2007: 8-9, no. 3.
[79] Besques 1972: 249, pl. 323c (E183).
[80] NAMA 5504, Misthos Collection, unpublished.
[81] Besques 1972: 214, pls 295d (E/D 1584), 295e (E/D 1583), and 295f (E/D 1585).
[82] Hasselin-Rous *et al.* 2015: 89-90 no. 53 (Inv. 2334).

Figure 8. NAMA 5515: Mouldmade head of an old woman, front and side views.

Figure 9. NAMA 5491: Mouldmade male head with furrowed brow wearing a conical cap (pilos), front and side views.

Louvre,[83] and another head in the Louvre,[84] and a parallel for the conical pilos.[85]

10. NAMA 5322 (Figure 10). Head of a bald and beardless man. He wears the conical cap/pilos of a manual worker or slave. The left ear is worn, with part missing. Made of solid clay using a two-piece mould. The pilos was made separately by hand and attached before firing. Clean clay, with a little mica, light brown. Height 0.042m. The face is lean and triangular, with a bulging forehead,

[83] Besques 1972: 226, pl. 306k (E/D 1724).
[84] Besques 1972: 226-227, pls 306 l-t (ED1723, E/D 1725- E/D 1731, E132).
[85] Ewigleben and Grumbkow 1991: 85, fig. 102.

Figure 10. NAMA 5322: Mouldmade male head with prominent ears and lower lip, beardless and wearing a conical cap (pilos), front and side views .

short nose with a low bridge, wide nostrils, and small projecting tip. The lower lip shows hyperplasia (swelling).

11. NAMA 5508 (Figure 11). Realistic wreathed head of a mature male. Preserved complete, made using two moulds (one for the front, one for the back); hollow inside. Air-hole or suspension hole at the back of the skull. The assembly seam is visible behind the ears, with a horizontal incised guideline below them. The long neck ends in a conical tenon, pierced through to enable attachment to the body with a rod or string (like a puppet). Clay clean, brown. Remains of white slip and traces of reddish-pink and black paint. Varnish applied during conservation. Strong brows, horizontal furrowed forehead, a pug nose, thick lips, half-open mouth, with the teeth visible as a solid mass between the lips. The wreath has incised and impressed decoration. Height with neck 0.074m. Height of moulded face (forehead to chin) 0.041m. Similar heads exist: one from a puppet found in the excavations at Priene, today in the Berlin Museum,[86] another from second-century BC Smyrna, now in the Louvre.[87] Because of their movements and associated sounds, puppets are considered apotropaic devices.

12. NAMA 5558 (Figure 12). Figure of a humpbacked dwarf. The back of the head is missing, as also the upper limbs below the shoulders and the stunted lower limbs below the top of the thighs. Made of solid clay using a two-piece mould. Clay clean, generally orange-red, ash-grey in places and at the core. Traces of white slip. Large bald head with coarse facial features sunken into the broad shoulders; narrow chest and very narrow pelvis with atrophied thighs. Chest, stomach, and abdomen are indicated in relief and with lines. The spinal vertebrae are clearly indicated on the back. Height 0.078m. A figurine from Myrina of Aeolis in the Louvre was made from a similar mould; Besques included it in the Smyrna ensemble, classifying it in the group of *figures naturalistes masculines*.[88] According to M.D. Grmek and D. Gourevitch, the individual suffered from facial acromegaly (overgrowth). The group dates to the Late Hellenistic or Imperial period. K. Laios identified the figure as suffering from achondroplasia with kyphosis (dwarfism with spinal curvature); he thus disagrees with the diagnoses of Stevenson (Pott's disease) and Grmek and Gourevitch (acromegaly), stressing that this

[86] Rumscheid 2006: 499-500, no. 283, pl. 122, 3-5.
[87] Besques 1972: 222, pl. 303b (D1675).
[88] Besques 1972: 169, pl. 235e (D1176).

Figure 11. NAMA 5508: Mouldmade head of a mature male wearing a wreath, front and side views .

Figure 12. NAMA 5558: Mouldmade figure of a humpbacked dwarf, truncated, front and back views.

type was preferred by artists because the features of dwarfism are more immediately apparent.[89] M. Gkikaki attributes this type to the workshop of Smyrna,[90] as had Besques. This figurine came to the NAMA in 1892 in the consignment containing the second donation of antiquities from the Misthos Collection in Athens[91] and was included in Winter's catalogue of types.[92]

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[89] Laios 2009: 11, 15 with nn. 27, 28, fig. 38.
[90] Gkikaki 2011: 6-7.
[91] Handwritten catalogue of the clay antiquities that were received and deposited in the National Museum 14 May 1892, signed by the Ephor General of Antiquities Panagiotis Kavvadias, 2 no. 1120. The list is in the National Archive of Monuments of the Ministry of Culture. See above, nn. 6 and 7.
[92] Winter 1903: 444, 7b.

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The Interpretation of Clay Gorgoneion-Roundels in Sacral Contexts: Evidence from the Sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis at Ancient Messene

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Abstract

This paper discusses the meaning of two clay roundels with gorgoneion depictions found in a foundation deposit in the sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis in ancient Messene. And, while the gorgoneion undoubtedly possesses meaning as an apotropaic symbol, it seems that in sacred contexts, it also marks the transition from childhood to adulthood and would be considered an appropriate votive offering to deities who symbolized this transition. The artefacts will be reviewed here within their archaeological contexts in order to best understand their use, function and social value.

Introduction

The discovery of two clay roundels with gorgoneion depictions in a foundation deposit in the sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis at Ancient Messene has provided the occasion for studying the interpretation not only of these specific roundels as part of the deposit, but also as votive offerings in sanctuaries, mainly those of female deities. The object of this study is thus not only to investigate the deposition ritual that included these gorgoneia, but also to review similar gorgoneion-roundels from the wider Greek area, focussing on contexts of a religious character. Of necessity, this process will also encounter and evaluate the importance of the gorgoneion as a symbol that possesses meaning beyond its known prophylactic and apotropaic character. The interpretation depends on the excavation assemblage in which it was found.

The sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis at Messene

This sanctuary was founded on the southern slope of Mount Ithome, directly above the ancient city of Messene yet within its walls, on a natural rocky spur approximately 500m above sea level situated 800m from the city's agora and 600m from the Laconian Gate, the main entrance to the city from the east (Figure 1). It was discovered at the beginning of the 19th century by Philippe Le Bas,[1] although its plan was not published until 1888.[2] A century later, in 1988, the site was cleaned by Petros Themelis; from 2006 to 2018 excavation work was carried out on the temple and the other buildings around it.[3] The sanctuary has been securely identified on the basis of an inscription that came to light inside the temple, mentioning two priestesses of Limnatis (*IG* V.1 1442) while another inscription found in the agora mentions a 'priestess of Limn[atis] Artemis' (*IG* V.1 1458). Le Bas also recovered three manumission inscriptions, one of which preserves the name Limnatis (*IG* V.1, 1470, 1471, 1472).

The sanctuary's main building appears to be the Ionic temple, which has two Corinthian columns in antis, a deep porch, and a wide cella with a pebble floor (Figure 2). The cult statue stood on a plinth in the centre of the cella. In front of the temple to the east, at a distance of 15m, is a rectangular altar;[4] immediately to the south lie four buildings of differing dimensions (A-D). The drop in level between the temple and the adjacent buildings is 5m; the space between them is not regulated by artificial terrace walls but has been left in its natural form. Below the plateau of the temple complex, and about 15m to its south is a large and long but narrow man-made terrace. Measuring about 40m x 10m, it supports architectural remains that probably belong to a fountain. To its east, the natural cavity of the rock can be seen, where water used to gush up even as late as the 1980s.

Artemis was a deity particularly beloved; signs of her presence were widespread throughout the Peloponnese,[5] and significantly represented in the city of Messene. The cult of Artemis Ortheia was one of the first to be established immediately after the founding of the city.[6]

[1] Le Bas 1844: 426-432.
[2] Reinach 1888: 134-138.
[3] Themelis 1988: 72-73; Themelis 2006: 55-60; Themelis 2008: 42; Wannagat and Linnemann 2017; Feuser and Spathi 2020. The sanctuary is being studied by the author, funded by fellowships from Harvard´s Center for Hellenic Studies, Seeger´s Centre for Hellenic Studies in Princeton and the University of Cincinnati.
[4] Wannagat and Linnemann 2017.
[5] Her sanctuaries in the Peloponnese: Brulotte 1994; Solima 2011.
[6] Themelis 1990: 96, pl. 70; Themelis 1991: 86-102; Themelis 1994.

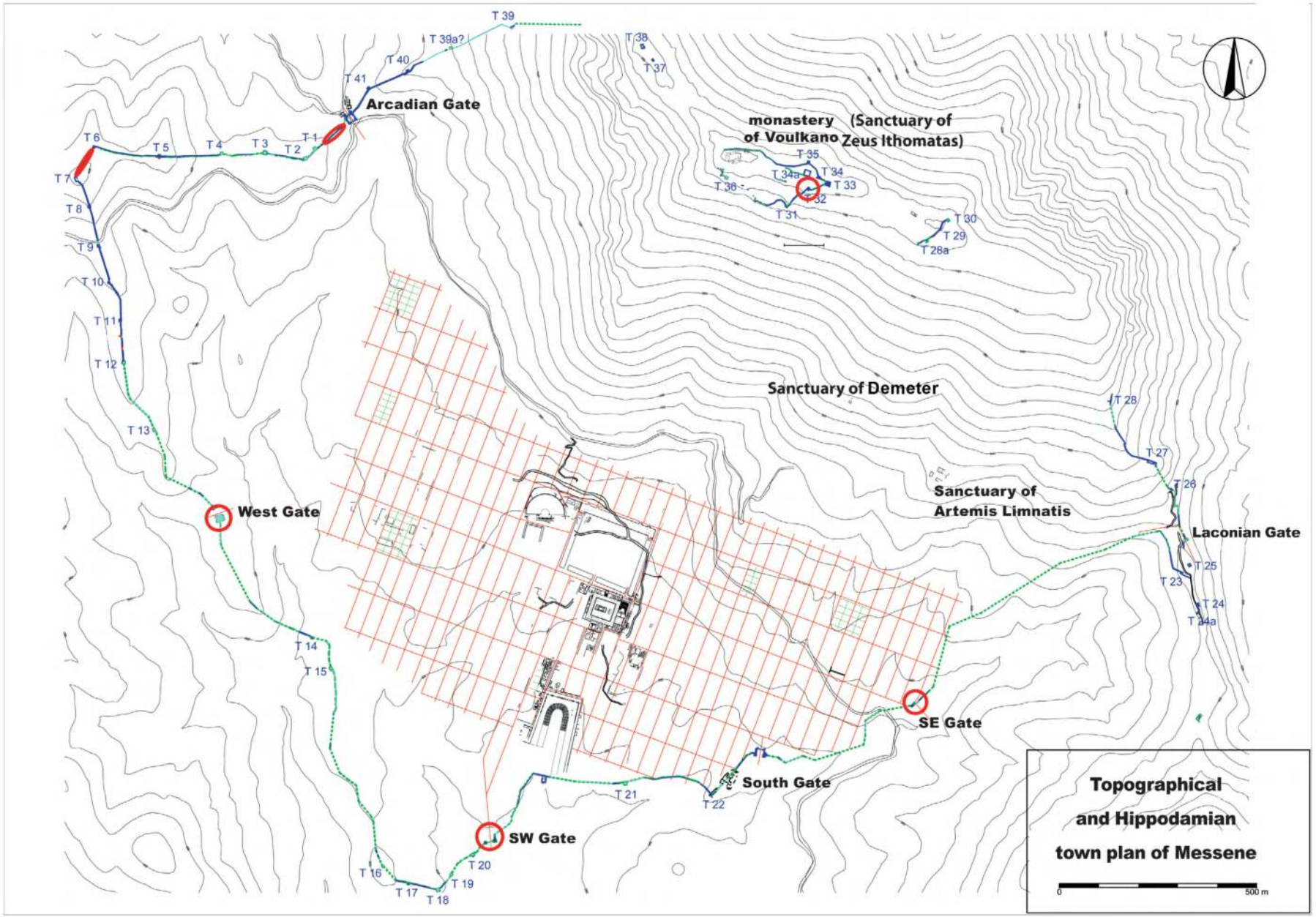

Figure 1. Topographical plan of ancient Messene. Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies.

Figure 2. Sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis. Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies.

Her sanctuary, originally located on the terrace in the north-west corner of the Asklepieion, was transferred to the west wing after the new complex of the Asklepieion was constructed at the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 2nd centuries BC. Many clay statuettes of Artemis depicted as a huntress from the sanctuary of Limnatis, clay and marble pyxides, metal votives such as mirrors and jewellery, miniature phialai, various box handles, and so on are common finds in sanctuaries of Artemis in the Peloponnese. The goddess in Messene is probably associated with the initiation rites of young girls and the transition from childhood to adulthood, without of course downplaying the political importance of the sanctuary of Limnatis for the city of Messene. [7] The proximity of the three sanctuaries on the southern slope of the mountain of Ithome — Artemis Limnatis, the sanctuary of Demeter at a distance of 600m to the west, and Zeus Ithomatas at the top — is not accidental, as all three combine to form a topographical and religious unity.[8]

The building deposit and its contents

The excavation of Building D to the north-west of the sanctuary began in 2016 and was completed in 2018 (Figure 3).[9] The finds were mainly fragments of large vessels, such as table and storage amphorae, lekanai, at least one pithos, plates, kraters, and many drinking vessels, mainly kantharoi. Coming from a dark grey layer with ash and traces of burning that covered the floor, they indicate the building may have been used as a space for preparing meals and drinking wine.

The deposit came to light inside Building D, at its north-west corner (Figure 4). It consists of two Corinthian flat pan roof-tiles uncovered next to each other, oriented N-S. The tiles rested on a layer of gravel that covered the natural rock on which the building was set. The two gorgoneion-roundels of this study (Figure 6) were found close to the tiles, in the very place where they were originally placed as part of the foundation deposit and inauguration ceremony, along with the head of an Artemis figurine (Figure 6), a kantharos, four juglets, a pyxis, a miniature trefoil oinochoe, and a calyx-shaped kanthariskos (Figure 5).

Pottery is the most common find in such deposits. These comprise both closed vessels, which contained not only liquid offerings for libations but also drinking cups, and open vessels for various food offerings. The libations were poured into the foundation, the vases used were then left on the spot to be incorporated in

[7] A violent incident at the eponymous sanctuary of the goddess at Volimos, on the border between Laconia and Messenia, is considered to have caused the First Messenian War and the uprooting of the Messenians (Luraghi 2006: 169-196).

[8] Spathi 2024a (forthcoming).

[9] Feuser and Spathi 2020.

Figure 3. Building D north-west to the Sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis. Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies. Photo by author.

Figure 4. North-west corner of Building D with foundation deposit. Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies. Photo by author.

the backfill. The black-glazed kantharіskos from the sanctuary deposit and the four juglets are interpreted as vessels suitable for libations. From the foundation deposit also come two miniature vases, a black-glazed trefoil oinochoe and a calyx-shaped unpainted krateriskos. The shape of the miniature krater (krateriskos) was very popular in ancient Messene. Similar examples were found in large numbers, all from sacred contexts.[10] Miniature vessels are often typical finds in similar primary deposits as vessels that once contained food offerings.[11] Their small size, though sufficient for offerings, which were representative anyway, emphasized their symbolic use. In other words, they would nicely denote an act of offering to the deity, even empty of contents.

In addition to the above vessels, which would have contained food offerings, a small black-glazed pyxis also came to light. Pyxides represent a vessel type that can undoubtedly be interpreted as a votive by a female dedicant.[12] They are associated with the world of women, to whom they were also presented as wedding gifts, and were a favourite offering at shrines of female deities such as Artemis. Depictions on wedding lebetes depict women, who participate in wedding processions carrying, among other things, pyxides.[13] Several examples of pyxides were uncovered in the sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis.

Figurines, unlike pottery, are uncommon in such deposits. For this reason, the head of Artemis found in this Messenian foundation deposit should not be considered a chance find. The head wears a high stephane and has the hair tightly gathered at the back, a sculptural type common in the sanctuary that can be identified with certainty. It belongs to the 'Messenian' Artemis type mainly shown wearing a short chiton with an overfold and wrapped in an animal skin, who holds a tall torch.[14] Intriguingly, only the head was deposited, as no other body parts were found by the tiles. The offering of this particular terracotta head was not meaningless since it was closely related to Artemis, the deity worshipped here, and probably constituted an appeal to her for protection. Similar examples, although rare, emphasise the importance of including just the head or even another part of the body. For example, an isolated head was found in the Kerameikos in a foundation deposit, together with an olpe and a pin.[15] Similar cases also come from the sanctuaries of Demeter Malophoros in Selinus,[16] Herakleia (Lucania),[17] and Agrigento.[18]

Finally we come to the two roundels from the deposit, each decorated with a gorgoneion. The face is fully frontal, with curly hair and two snakes knotted beneath the chin, thus represents the beautiful type of Medusa;[19] the most obvious feature of the depiction is the snakes entwined under the chin.[20] While in the Archaic and Classical periods the Gorgon is often depicted as a monster with strong facial features, such as tongue protruding from the mouth and tusks, and the snakes for hair, yet by the Hellenistic period the gorgoneion had acquired the characteristics of a beautiful woman. A similar piece was also found in a road fill in the centre of the city of Messene.[21]

The finds from the foundation deposit are almost completely intact and should be understood as evidence of deliberate deposition, not of mere disposal. The foundation deposit, mainly on the basis of the pottery, dates to the end of the 4th century and the beginning of the 3rd century BC and is so far the only such example of a deposit discovered in the city of Messene.

Catalogue

Pottery
1. Kantharos, Inv. No. 18999 (Figure 5)
H. 7.35cm, D. rim 6.2cm, base 4.0, Th. belly 7.3cm, H. handle 4.1cm
Orange clay with greyish core, mica, clean.
Black-glazed inside and out.
Glaze of bad quality, exfoliated, with sediment on the surface.
Rim restored from join of two fragments; part of the body from the top of the belly to the rim and one handle are missing.
Concave upper wall and rounded bowl below, plain rim, handles with horizontal spurs level with the rim, no ribbing. The spur of the handle is small and pointed at the tip.
Second half of the 4th / beginning of the 3rd centuries BC.

[10] Spathi 2024b, from the deposits in the courtyard of the Asklepieion and the so-called sanctuary of Demeter and the Dioskouroi (omega-omega).
[11] The earliest studies of the use of miniature vessels boil down to interpreting them as cheap substitutes for regular-sized vessels (Danninger 1996: 175-180; Boehringer 2001: 92; *contra* Ekroth 2003). More recent interpretations speak of their symbolic significance as souvenirs and tokens, at the same time giving them a utilitarian meaning, even if secondary, as containers that contained offerings, liquid and solid. On the study of miniaturization generally, with a more theoretical approach, see Smith and Bergeron 2011 and Foxhall and Barfoed 2015. A comprehensive interpretation of their use is presented by Spathi (2024b, forthcoming).
[12] The significance and use of Athenian pyxides: Schmidt 2009.
[13] Sabetai 2009: 295; Kokkou-Vyridi 2010: 66 n. 36.
[14] Spathi 2019.
[15] Knigge 2005: 7, pl. 5.1, *Opferstelle* 112.
[16] Dewailly 1992: 38-40, pl. 109.
[17] Gertl 2014.
[18] Sojc 2020: 239, fig. 8.
[19] Furtwängler 1886-1890.
[20] According to Marinatos (2000: 56), the snakes of Gorgo are not chthonic but 'an essential part of her magical image within the context of the East Mediterranean koine.'
[21] Inv. No. 10005.

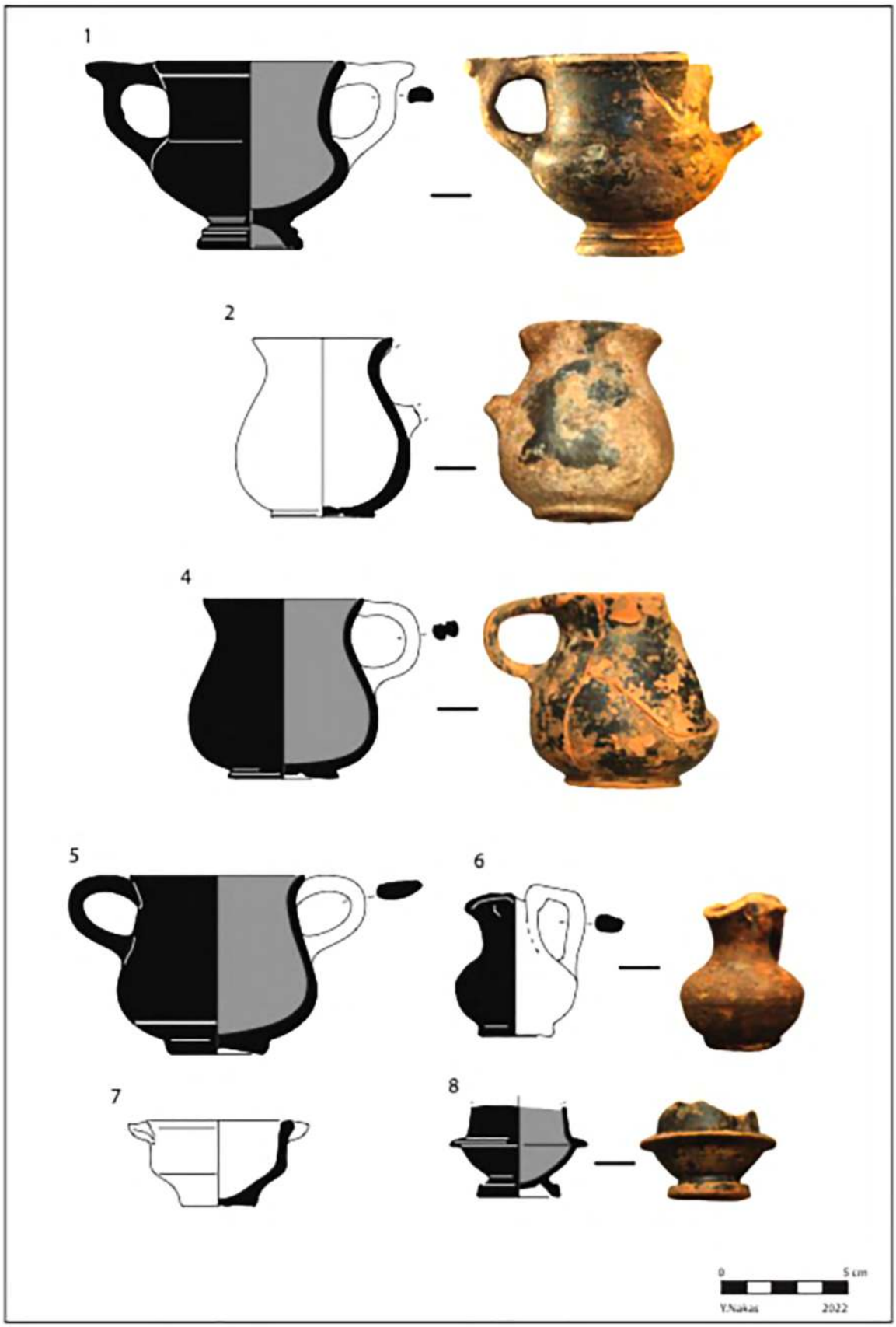

Figure 5. Kantharos, juglets, miniature trefoil oinochoe (chous), calyx-shaped krateriskos, and pyxis from the foundation deposit. Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies. Photo by author. Drawn by Yannis Nakas.

Agora XII: 122, pl. 29, fig. 7; 706-714 (evolution of the handle shape).

2. Juglet, Inv. No. 19001 (Figure 5)
H. 7.0cm, D. rim 5.3cm, Th. belly 6.7cm
Brown clay, clean.
Discoloured inside and out; encrustations all over.
Joined from two parts, almost intact, the handle is missing and the rim is chipped.
Flat base with an ovoid body to a flaring lip. One (or two) flattened vertical loop handles attached at lip and shoulder.
The shape, common in Corinth and Athens, seems to have originated in the Hellenistic period. In Athens, production may have begun in the mid-3rd century BC but reached its peak during the 2nd and 1st centuries. In Corinth, production can be traced from 230 BC through to the early second quarter of the 2nd century BC.
First half of the 3rd century BC (?).
Corinth VII.7: 138-139. *Agora* XXIX: 132-133, figs. 39-40.

3. Juglet, Inv. No. 19000
H. 6.8cm, W. 7.6cm
Orange clay with a few inclusions.
Black-glazed interior.
Joined from two pieces; the base and part of the belly are preserved; encrustations all over.
Ring base. Similar to 19001 above.

4. Juglet, Inv. No. 19002 (Figure 5)
H. 6.9cm, Th. belly 7.15cm
Orange clay, soft with few inclusions.
Black-glazed inside and out.
Joined from four pieces, encrustations over entire surface, glaze exfoliated.
Part of body missing from top of belly to rim. Base low and flat.

5. Juglet, Inv. No. 18998
H. 7.2cm, W. belly 7.1cm, D. base 3.7cm
Orange clay, soft and relatively clean with few inclusions.
Black-glazed inside and out.
Glaze peeling in places, of poor quality, dull and in some places brownish; encrustations on the surface.
Relief band runs under the belly and over the base. Same type as above.

6. Miniature trefoil oinochoe or chous, Inv. No. 10013 (Figure 5)
H. 5.85cm, W. belly 4.6cm
Orange clay, soft with few inclusions.
Interior of the neck and exterior of body glazed.
Preserved intact; glaze exfoliated in places.
Almost squat body on a low disc foot. The neck ends in a trefoil mouth, low strap handle.
Broadly similar to the oinochoai (choai) of shape 3 from the Athenian Agora, although the neck in the Messenian example is longer and the body stubbier.
Agora XII, 60-63, pl. 7 no. 124; 185, pl. 45, no. 1371 (miniature example). *Corinth* XIII: 132-133, 277-279 (small trefoil oinochoe). *Corinth* VII.7: 134-136 (general remarks on the type).

7. Calyx-shaped krateriskos, Inv. No. 19009 (Figure 5)
H. 3.3cm, W. 6.9cm
Orange clay, clear.
Some encrustations.
Body calyx-shaped, with two short lug handles.
Spathi 2024b (similar examples).

8. Pyxis, Inv. No. 19008 (Figure 5)
H. 3.8cm, W. 4.9cm
Grey-blue clay.
Glaze black and dull inside and out, exfoliated in places.
Chips and encrustations mainly on the interior.
Small pyxis. Concave body with ring foot. Similar to Athenian Agora type C.
The lower part of the pyxis body with its base is preserved.
Agora XII: 176-177.
End of 4th century BC.

Terracottas

9. Artemis head, Inv. No. In 3/955 (Figure 6)
Ht. 4.6cm, W. 4.4cm, Th. 5.2cm
Orange clay, clean with mica.
Small chips.
Head of Artemis with hair pulled back and tied in a bun, hanging low at the nape of the neck. The small holes and impressions left in the clay indicate that a band or rim, possibly of metal, was once attached to the head.
Spathi 2020.

10. Gorgoneion roundel, Inv. No. In 2/354 (Figure 6)
H. 10.7cm, W. 12.0cm, Th. 1.5cm
Brown clay with mica and several white impurities.
Obverse is convex, the reverse slightly concave.
From a multiple-use mould, the relief is rendered as relatively flat, with encrustations over the entire surface.
Bottom half missing. Chips around the edge and on the surface.
Two perforations are preserved in the upper part of the gorgoneion.
Roundel with Gorgon's head. Oval face with triangular forehead and slightly protruding chin.

11. Gorgoneion roundel, Inv. No. In 1/953 (Figure 6)
H. 14.1cm, W. 14.4cm, Th. 3.3cm
Brown-red clay, clear.
Preserved complete, with minor scratches.

Figure 6. Two gorgoneion-roundels and head of an Artemis figurine from the foundation deposit. Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies. Photo by author.

The front is convex, the back slightly concave. Fingerprints are visible. Two false holes are preserved in the upper part.

The face is dominated by large flat planes: the forehead is triangular, the nose broad, the lips plump, and the eyes deep-set.

The significance of the foundation deposit

Rituals performed in connection with the construction of a building are a global phenomenon still practiced in various regions of the world today.[22] Foundation (or

[22] Foundation (or building) deposits: Wells 1988; Müller-Zeis 1994; Weikart 2002; Hunt 2006.

building) deposits are usually defined as the evidence of sacrificial rituals incorporated into a structure. Practices of this type embrace all the archaeological finds that can be related to the ritual activity directly connected with the construction of a building, profane or sacred. A motive obviously almost always lies behind this act of deposition. In ancient times, libations were poured and foodstuffs offered to appease the resident spirit of each place, as well as to ensure the goodwill and protection of the gods for the newly built structure. As several examples show, no specific gods are connected with such rites — or at least not known to be with any certainty. Each time, the foundation or building deposit may have been adapted to appeal to local deities. Generally, this type of ritual does not appear homogenous; each instance may have had rather a casual and spontaneous character. Their form taken depends on the local peculiarities. Foundation or building rites took place at some time before or during the process of the building's construction. Many building or foundation deposits that have been recovered were probably dedicated by the builders, an act therefore intended to protect their work rather than to solemnize the consecration of the building.

In Building D in the Limnatis sanctuary, the deposit was put directly on a layer of stone chips resulting from the on-site treatment of the stone blocks during their placement that formed the packing of the floor proper. No other reason can be surmised for this spread, as the building, like the entire sanctuary, is founded on the natural bedrock. The deposit was consequently not made in the strict sense of the term with(in) the foundation, but was put under the floor, which would have consisted of compacted, trodden soil. This ritual was small-scale: the finds are limited in number and no remains of animal bones have been preserved. The offerings would have been bloodless and mainly liquid, based on the vessels that were found. The deposition of the head of Artemis and the pyxis indicate that Artemis herself was the probable recipient of the ritual act, so that the whole ritual was an invocation to the goddess.

In such a deposit, whose purpose was obviously to protect the building and endow it with blessings for good fortune (as well as for those who used it), the depictions of the gorgoneion could have had no other meaning other than apotropaic-prophylactic. A kind of talisman in the form of a gorgoneion .[23] As observed above, the ritual could in fact have been carried out by the masons of Building D and thus belong to so-called "industrial" religion[24] in the broadest sense of the term, while having nothing to do with the visitors and pilgrims to the sanctuary. Beyond the specific primary context of the foundation deposit in which they were found, thus their specific character and purpose, the suspension holes on the upper part of the roundels indicate their use in the deposit was secondary. They appear to have been destined primarily to be hung in the sanctuary, which leads us to the question of their initial meaning as offerings in the sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis, and at other sanctuaries as well.

Similar roundels with Gorgoneia

To answer the above question, similar finds must be examined, especially those from sanctuaries. These would likewise be round in form, with a diameter ranging from 6.5cm to 8cm, and depict the gorgoneion on the front side, while the back is flat or slightly concave (or convex), and has suspension holes.[25] Similar smaller examples are quite different, with no holes and a flat rim all around, apparently designed as attachments to jewellery, furniture, chests, or even coffins.[26]

From the Temple of Athena at Prasidaki in Elis come several examples of terracotta plaques with gorgoneia (Figure 7), together with others depicting the Gorgon Medusa ἐν δρόμῳ,[27] which date to the Archaic period. From Argos come five examples of the 4th century BC from debris near the theatre which have been interpreted as the remains of a possible workshop, although it is more likely a deposit belonging to a sanctuary.[28] From the sanctuary of Athena at Paliokastro of Kythera (Figure 8), examples dating back to the Classical period were also retrieved.[29] Two examples from the same period were also found in the sanctuary of Alexandra/Kassandra (Figure 9) and Agamemnon at Agia Paraskevi at Amyklai.[30] One example was also found in the city of Elis and dates to the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 3rd centuries BC. Froning considers it to be part of a clay shield,[31] but it is equally likely to be from a gorgoneion-roundel. Yet another example comes from Rachi at Isthmia and from a shrine attributed to Demeter and Kore.[32] Several examples of gorgoneia, pierced through the forehead, with long fanned-out locks entwined with serpents on

[23] Lazarou 2019 (gorgoneia depicted on gold amulets). See, Kallintzi, Chatziprokopiou, this volume, with examples and bibliography.

[24] A relatively recent term, referring to the remains of rituals (e.g., in the Athenian Agora, Rotroff 2013) and finds (Penteskoufia at Isthmia, Hasaki 2022) linked to worship as practiced in workshops and craft facilities. Kefalidou (2017) and Hasaki (2000: 433) also discuss figurines as apotropaic devices, and Chatzidimitriou (2005) addresses deterrent symbols in pottery workshops. Excavation data thus far are limited, as are the number of sources that mention anti-evil-eye and apotropaic symbols used against demonic forces to safeguard the labours and output of craftsmen: Pollux *Onom.* 7.108; *IG* IV, 313.

[25] Two examples from Italy, now in Karlsruhe, are 17cm in diameter; Schürmann (1989: 110, pl. 68, no. 975) describes one as a *tondo*.

[26] E.g., Bell 1981: 232-233; Burn and Higgins 2001: 94-95, pl. 38, nos. 2209, 2210.

[27] Arapogianni 2001-2004: 415, 415-416, pl. 93.

[28] Guggisberg 1988: 217-218, fig. 21; D. *c.* 7.4cm, 4th century BC.

[29] Petrochilos 2014: 165-168, D. 16cm.

[30] Salapata 2015: 214-215.

[31] Froning 2010: 141, no. T98, H. 14.8cm, W. 15.8cm.

[32] Anderson-Stojanović 2002: 82, fig. 18.

Figure 7. Terracotta plaques with gorgoneia from the temple of Athena at Pradidaki. After Arapogianni 2012.

Figure 8. Gorgoneion roundel from the sanctuary of Athena at Paliokastro of Kythera. After Petrochilos 2014. Dm. 16cm.

top of the head and wings at the sides, came to light at the Thesmophorion of Pella.[33]

In the cave at Grotta Caruso in Locri Epizefiri, two more examples were found.[34] The Greek sanctuary at Pantanello in Sicily[35] yielded one more example, described as a disc loom weight[36] although it is only 2.1cm thick. Several examples also come from Gela in Sicily, some with gorgoneia, others with 'ugly faces' dated to the 4th and 3rd centuries BC.[37] An example from a residential quarter of Gela preserves the following inscription on the reverse — 'Heracles lives here, let no evil enter!'[38] — eloquently demonstrating its prophylactic and apotropaic use.

All of the above examples bore suspension holes, indicating their original use as votive offerings in the sanctuaries where they were found. Literary and iconographic sources attest that similar plaques could be hung on the walls, the central beam, rafters, or ceiling of a temple or stoa, or even from trees[39] in caves, or open-air shrines.[40] The position of the holes enables us to visualize how the plaques were suspended or attached. When plaques have one or two holes relatively close together at the centre of the top, as above and also those from Messene, they can safely be assumed to have hung either from a tree branch or against a wall by means of a string.

[33] Lilimpaki-Akamati 1996: 74-77, pl. 29, D. 6.6cm, no. 235; 69 examples have white coating and red paint. Reverse surface slightly concave.
[34] Costabile and Lattanzi 1991: 62, inv. nos. 164, 165, D. 6.6cm.
[35] Foxhall 2018: 1059, no. PZ LW 191, D. 7.9cm.
[36] Many loom weights were also found in the sanctuary, which are interpreted as women's offerings to Artemis. However, loom weights from tombs and shrines are also accepted to have had an apotropaic significance and also brought good luck, see Doepner 2002: 159, n. 749 with bibliography.
[37] Orsi 1906: 753-755, pl. 56.
[38] See Faraone, this volume, with other examples and bibliography.
[39] Smardz (1979: 31-37) remarks that sacred objects suspended from the branches of trees possessed an apotropaic significance, such as the gorgoneia and owls from the sacred olive tree of Athena at Athens.
[40] Salapata 2002. Generally for the placement of votive offerings Brulotte 1994: 275-279.

Figure 9. Gorgoneia from the sanctuary of Alexandra/Kassandra and Agamemnon at Agia Paraskevi. Salapata 2015.
https://press.umich.edu/resources/salapata/MIS_1-1.jpg.

The significance of the depiction of the gorgoneion and the interpretation of Gorgoneion-roundels in sacral contexts

Gorgoneion and Gorgon are the terms for the head by itself (Hom. *Il.* 5.741, *Od.* 11.634). Gorgon (or Gorgo) is typically believed to refer only to Medusa, one of the Gorgon sisters; the others were called Stheno and Euryiale (Hes. *Theog.* 270-283). The image of the Gorgon Medusa was popular in ancient Greek culture, appearing not only on shields, ships, temples, and other buildings, but also on artefacts like coins, amulets, lamps, pottery, relief stelai, votive plaques, jewellery, and furniture.[41] The literature on the meaning of the gorgoneion is particularly extensive and the question of the interpretation of its depictions continues to provoke debate, although the consensus among Classical scholars has long been that the gorgoneion should be identified as an apotropaion, in other words, an object employed to avert threatening forces.[42] That interpretation is more plausible than for any other type of frontal face in Greek art,[43] because the myth associated with the gorgoneion assures us that direct eye contact with the figure was fatal.[44]

The head of Medusa was dangerous because it had the power to turn any mortal to stone who looked in its eyes. This belief is attested in literature as early as the first half of the 5th century BC (Pind. *Pyth*. 10.46–48) and also in art as early as the story's first occurrence in the middle of the 7th century BC. On a Cycladic relief pithos, Perseus takes the precaution of averting his gaze as he seizes Gorgo by the hair and prepares to behead her.[45] The myth recounts that, the young hero Perseus was given the tricky task of beheading Medusa and bringing her head to a tyrannical king. The hero managed to behead the monster, later using its head to acquire a bride and dispose of the king. Finally, he gave it to his patron deity Athena, who wore it on her aegis.

Images of gorgoneia may have functioned in several ways: frightening the enemy, appealing to a god for protection, using some magical power inherent in the symbol itself. Of course, not all depictions of gorgoneia can be interpreted as apotropaic; some would have been more decorative or even had other symbolic meaning.[46] Their significance would depend on the

[41] *LIMC* IV (1988), s.v. Gorgo, Gorgones (I. Krauskopf, S. Dahlinger); Besig 1937; Floren 1977.
[42] The apotropaic function of the gorgoneion is recorded as early as the *Iliad* (11.33-40), describing the face that decorated Agamemnon's shield. See also Plut. *Quaes. Conv*. 681E-682A. For the apotropaic meaning of the gorgoneion, Mack 2002: 572, n. 3.
[43] For the interpretation of full-frontal faces, see Hedreen 2017: 156ff.
[44] The literary sources on Gorgo: *LIMC* IV: 285-7, s.v. Gorgo, Gorgones.
[45] *LIMC* IV (1988), pl. 183.
[46] E.g., Napier (1987: 110), who considers the Gorgoneion on the

context in which they were found, as is true for almost all depictions in ancient Greek art.

The gorgoneion-roundels from the Messenian foundation deposit are interpreted in terms of the apotropaic and prophylactic character of the entire ritual act of the deposition. But the holes bear witness to a different original use, as votives that were hung in the sanctuary of Limnatis. So how are they to be interpreted in this primary use? As apotropaic symbols — or is the symbolism broader, related to the full range of happenings in the sanctuary and the worship of the deity? Did they function more as masks and less as apotropaic symbols? What if the representation of the gorgoneion hanging somewhere in the sanctuary functioned as a commemoration of the myth of the decapitation of Medusa by Perseus and its symbolic connotations? In the first place, what were these meanings?

Several researchers see the myth of Perseus and Medusa not only as a hero´s confrontation with a deadly opponent, a monster, but also as a variation on the type of abduction experienced by maidens such as Thetis, Helen and of course Persephone.[47] Hesiod's account of the Gorgons contains a strong sexual element, and even Medusa's death resembles marriage in the sense that both produce children.[48] That the myth of Medusa reflects initiation rituals has been convincingly argued by Marinatos[49] and Jameson,[50] who connected Perseus with an inscription from Mycenae dating to the Archaic period and alluding to rites of passage. Gorgo-Medusa, both protective and terrifying, is a figure of marginality and transition; in this capacity, she fits the phase in which young people find themselves at the point of transition between childhood and adulthood.[51]

The gorgoneia-roundels, as visual emblems in sacred contexts, may mark the transition from childhood to adulthood for both sexes and would be considered appropriate votive offerings to deities who facilitated and symbolized this transition, such as Artemis, Demeter, the Nymphs and even Athena. While the examples from the sanctuaries of Athena at Prasidaki in Elis and Paliokastro on Kythera could also be interpreted based on the depiction of the gorgoneion on the aegis of the goddess Athena and its associated myth, those examples from the sanctuaries of Demeter at Rachi (Isthmia) and still more the Thesmophorion of Pella are better understood through Demeter's relationship with marriage and young women. Demeter was considered responsible for women's fertility, the protection of children, and by extension the fruitfulness of the land and the fecundity of animals; she also appears to have been worshipped by young women and to play a role in the transition to adulthood, then to marriage and its success.[52] The Greek sanctuary at Pantanello in Sicily was dedicated to Artemis, and many of the votive offerings, including the gorgoneion-roundel, are interpreted as women's votive offerings to the goddess[53]. Young women (*parthenoi*) would have come before their wedding to the spring of the sanctuary, would have made libations and offered *aparchai*[54]. But the Nymphs too, who were worshipped in the Grotta Caruso were directly associated with young women and wedding customs.[55] At Amyklai the heroine Alexandra/Kassandra[56] was originally a *parthenos*, repeatedly pursued and abused by men and murdered at the end by Klytaimnestra or Aigisthos (Hom. *Od*. 11.419-26; Pind. *Pyth*. 11.33). She probably symbolised a marginal stage in the life of young women.

The gorgoneia masks from Tiryns and, above all, the sanctuary of Artemis Ortheia in Sparta, as well as individual masks from the sanctuary of Athena in Gortyna and the Kabeirion at Thebes, could all be mentioned as finds of similar importance. We know that initiation rites took place at all these sites.[57] The initiation mask and the gorgoneion are very similar; though not identical, affinities definitely exist between the two.[58] Perhaps both the roundels and the masks were dedicated in sanctuaries to commemorate a ritual associated with initiation rites. For the time being, this must remain an intriguing hypothesis, to be investigated further as more finds are published.

Athenian tetradrachmon issued under Peisistratos as best understood within the concept of state ideology.

[47] Topper 2007, 2010. Many scholars agree that the face of the Medusa, the gorgoneion, may have existed as a decorative motif before the first appearance of the myth; as Aston (2011: 261) wrote, 'we have to entertain the possibility that the story of Perseus was at least in part shaped by the existing gorgoneion as visual emblem.'

[48] The relationship between marriage and death in Greek religion is addressed by Topper (2007) and Dowden (1989: 3). On the sexual dimension of Medusa´s death, Langdon 2008: 208.

[49] Marinatos 2000: 59-61.

[50] Jameson 1990.

[51] Langdon 2008: 74-75, 114-116.

[52] Individual testimonia connect her with marriage, e.g., in Kos, where an inscription from the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 3rd centuries BC is preserved, regarding customs linked to marriage and betrothal (*LSCG* 175, lines 4-5, 9). The relationship of Demeter and Kore to nuptials is discussed by Kledt (2004: 114-147, especially 138 n. 4) and Pautasso (2008). The goddess can also appear in wedding iconography, e.g., on the Sophilos dinos and the Kleitias krater (Kokkou-Vyridi 2010: 214, sub. 131). Wedding vessels such as loutrophoroi and nuptial lebetes have been found in sanctuaries of Demeter, e.g., at Eleusis. There, in the pyres of the Telesterion and elsewhere, a considerable number of black-figure loutrophoroi and nuptial lebetes were found. For their significance, see Kokkou-Vyridi (2010) and Sabetai (2014: 65-66).

[53] Foxhall 2018: 1031.

[54] Carter 2018: 1459-1516 (the cult in the sanctuary).

[55] Costabile and Lattanzi 1991. Larson (2001: 100-120) considers the Nymphs and their relationship to young women and nuptial rites.

[56] Originally worshipped together with Agamemnon but thought to be the main owner of the sanctuary at least by the late Hellenistic period, see Salapata 2015: 45, 219.

[57] Spathi 2018 (with bibliography).

[58] Marinatos 2000: 61.

While the gorgoneion-roundels found in the deposit clearly have an apotropaic significance, as votives they would originally have hung somewhere in the sanctuary, in a temple or even a tree, and been associated with Artemis, a deity connected with youth and rites of initiation. At this point, we should note that Perseus, as attested by the textual evidence, is connected to Messenian royal genealogy. According to Apollodorus's *Library* (Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.87) and Pausanias (4.2.4), Perieris, son of Aeolus, who conquered Messenia, was married to Gorgophone, the daughter of Perseus and Andromeda, with whom he had two sons, Aphareas and Leucippus. These mythical kings of Messenia, Pausanias tells us (4.31.11-12), were depicted with their descendants in a fresco by Omphalion located in the opisthodomos of the temple of Messana, the land's deified mythical first queen. In a deposit associated with the sanctuary of Isis at Ancient Messene south of the Theatre, a larger than life-size marble fragment of Perseus' left hand gripping the head of Medusa was uncovered.[59] The symbolism evoked — both by the various depictions displayed in the city's monumental buildings and by the establishment of specific sanctuaries — was particularly intense, reflecting the effort to assert the newly-founded city's glorious past and to ensure an equally glorious future.[60]

To understand the gorgoneion-roundels, as also the entire array of votive offerings in sanctuaries, a single interpretation cannot suffice. Any fully satisfying explanation will of necessity depend not only on the symbolism of the depiction itself but also on the sanctuary for which it was commissioned and, obviously, on the desires of the individual dedicant.

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[59] Themelis 2017.
[60] Themelis 2000.

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Magic-Related(?) Graffiti on Pottery from Piraeus

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Abstract

Among the epigraphic and archaeological testimonia for ancient Greek magic and divination, various objects bearing inscriptions have been identified, such as inscribed ceramic vessels and lamps that may have been used in such ritual occasions. This paper examines a number of inscribed ceramic objects found during the recent rescue excavations for the extension of the subway and tramline in the modern city of Piraeus. The aim here is to discuss the content of the inscriptions and their possible connection with practices related to divination or magic, and to explore the question of why individuals chose to incise particular graffiti on clay objects in such a context.

Among the evidence for ancient Greek magic and its rituals, we recognize a variety of objects bearing inscriptions, such as lead curse tablets, gems, and figurines. Inscribed ceramic vessels and lamps that may have been used on such occasions also belong with these epigraphic and archaeological testimonia. Some of these inscriptions are graffiti, which have a private and informal character. Therefore, these inscribed objects often preserve examples of special rituals that people used to practice in the context of everyday life.[1]

This paper examines the graffiti inscriptions that were incised on a lamp fragment and a terracotta lamp from the recent rescue excavations for the extension of the tramlines in Piraeus. My aim is to discuss the content of these inscriptions, taking into consideration the selection of a terracotta lamp as a writing medium in both examples. To understand the purpose of this option better, I also discuss a divinatory inscription on another terracotta lamp from the same excavations. Finally, two sherds of black-glazed vases from the rescue excavations for the construction of the subway line in Piraeus will be examined, as they bear unusual graffiti that suggest some additional thoughts on inscribed pottery and its use in particular rites in everyday life.[2]

The provenance of the finds

The ceramic objects discussed here date to the Classical and early Hellenistic periods, mainly to the 4th century BC, when Piraeus experienced great prosperity as an urban centre and its most extensive residential development.[3] They were found during the rescue excavations conducted for major public works in the modern city of Piraeus, which brought new evidence and finds to light that enrich our knowledge of the ancient harbour town (Figure 1).

The rescue excavations that were carried out for the western extension of the tramline in Piraeus took place on Vasileos Georgiou A' Street, between Ethnikis Antistaseos and Karaiskou Streets and in other areas of the modern city. The two lamps and the lamp fragment come from a central area of the ancient city, adjacent to the harbour of Kantharos on the west and the commercial zone of Emporion, and on the east to an area where other spaces connected with the public life of the city have been identified. To be specific, a section of the 28th street in the Hippodamian city plan was found under Vasileos Georgiou A' Street. During the Classical period, the adjacent building blocks contained residential areas and workshops, whereas during the Hellenistic period the Classical plots were combined into larger complexes of rooms with courtyards. During the same period, areas of special use emerged, such as the Association of the Dionysiastai and the complex of rooms where the Bronze Statues of Piraeus were found.[4]

[1] Faraone and Obbink 1991: v-vii.

[2] I would like to thank the Ephorate of Antiquities of Piraeus and the Islands, especially Dr. S. Chrysoulaki and Dr. K. Psaraki, for providing me with this study material. My MA thesis (Koletti 2019) discussed these inscribed terracotta lamps from the rescue excavations for the extension of the tramline in Piraeus, along with other inscribed pottery. I am currently preparing my PhD dissertation, which includes more inscribed pottery, from the rescue excavations for the extension of the subway line.

[3] Grigoropoulos 2005: 38-42; 2016: 241-43.

[4] The excavation results are presented by Psaraki (forthcoming). The *hieron* of the Dionysiastai, which lies a short distance west of modern Korai Square, consisted of a central courtyard surrounded by a colonnaded hall, with a rectangular building (40x23m) on its east side divided into many smaller rooms. The *hieron* was probably built at the beginning of the 2nd century BC and seems to have remained in use until the sack by Sulla in 86 BC. It housed the private cult of the *Dionysiastai*, mentioned in three honorific decrees and a short poem of the early 2nd century BC. Dionysios, son of Agathokles from Marathon, is honoured in the decrees as priest and treasurer of this association because he financed the erection of a sanctuary and cult statue dedicated to Dionysos (*IG* II^2 1325, 1326, 2948; Garland 1987: 124, 146; Mikalson 1998: 204-06). The complex of rooms where the Bronze

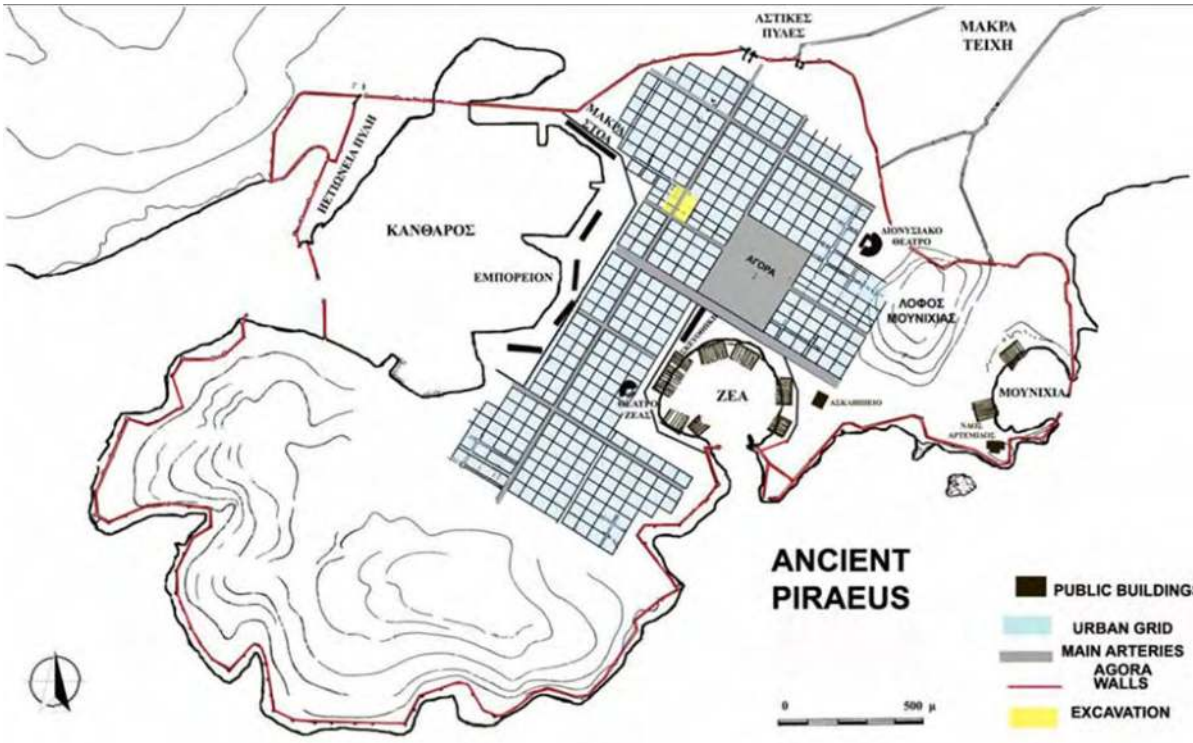

Figure 1. Map of Ancient Piraeus. Courtesy of G. Peppas/Ephorate of Antiquities of West Attica. In Chrysoulaki *et al.* 2017: 418, Fig. 1.

Rescue excavations were also conducted for the extension of the subway line in Piraeus. These excavations brought to light an extensive network of underground structures connected with the water supply of ancient Piraeus. A large number of wells and underground cisterns were revealed in the area of the modern Municipal Theater, while the remains of ancient houses and roads were uncovered in the area of modern Deligianni Square.[5]

The objects discussed here, I should note, were not found in closed contexts. After their first use, many inscribed sherds and vases were discarded like garbage during antiquity in different places in the ancient city or recycled and employed as filling material for the construction of ancient roads and walls.[6] Of course, lack of initial context is a difficulty to be kept in mind when we examine the use of these objects and the purpose of inscribing them.

Inscribed lamps

L.1. Fragment of a black-glazed lamp (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum, no. 19471)

The sherd was found in the embankment for the foundation of an ancient clay pipeline under an ancient building block between modern Kolokotroni and Iroon Polytechniou Streets, where the room complex of the Association of the Dionysiastai was built in a later phase.

The fragment, part of the lamp's filling hole, bears an illegible fragmentary inscription incised after firing, in which syllables and letters are arranged with no obvious meaning (Figures 2 and 3):

[--]ΗΛΗΒΗ Ṇ[--]

Reading from left to right, we can identify a ligature consisting of two conjoined letters, maybe *eta* and *lambda* (ΗΛ), a closed-shape letter, the letter *beta* (Β), and a second closed-shape letter similar to the first one. A second word seems to have followed, from which only the first letter is preserved, possibly a *nu* (Ν). A second

Statues of Piraeus were found was discovered during an excavation by the Ephorate in 1959 which remains unpublished. Four bronze statues were found, along with other objects: a statue of Athena, two statues of Artemis, and an Archaic statue of Apollo: Garland 1987: 190-91; Steinhauer 2007.

[5] Chrysoulaki *et al.* 2017; Chrysoulaki and Koutis 2018.

[6] Of the 63 inscribed objects I studied in my MA thesis, only eight were found in closed contexts, which included an abandoned well and a disposal pit. A large amount of the pottery from the tramline excavations was used during antiquity as raw material for building ancient roads and laying pipelines at various locations in the ancient city (Koletti 2019: 18-9). Respectively, the vast amount of pottery from the subway line excavations, including the inscribed vessels, was discarded in abandoned wells and cisterns or recycled as building material for ancient constructions, for instance the floors and walls of houses.

Figure 2. Fragment of a black-glazed lamp (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 19471).

Figure 3. Fragment of a black-glazed lamp (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 19471). Drawing of the graffito.

ligature may also have existed, because a line from the end of a letter is observable on the second closed-shape letter.

The two closed-shape letters are hard to interpret. Judging from their placement before and after the letter B, we can assume that they are vowels. The letter forms resemble the *eta* (H) in the pre-Euclidean Attic alphabet. The coexistence of the Ionic eta (H) and the pre-Euclidean one suggest a date for the lamp and the inscription in the transition from the early to the later alphabet, perhaps the first decades of the 4th century BC.[7]

A question that arises is whether someone unfamiliar with writing carelessly scratched this graffito or intentionally merged the letters and strokes while inscribing them. The use of ligatures instead of separate letters, we should note, is relatively rare in writing on pottery.[8] In some cases, however, the use of conjoined letters or ligatures and the arrangement of letters and ligatures with no particular meaning seem to be intentional and are considered to be magic-related.[9] On the other hand, papyri, curse tablets, and amulets often feature incomprehensible syllables and words that convey magic phrases.[10]

This inscription was probably incised on the lamp while it was still intact, running along the flat surface of the filling hole disc. Thus, we can assume that it was related to the lamp's specific use. We know that lamps in antiquity mainly performed the practical function of lighting the interiors of rooms and houses. Nevertheless, their cultic use in sanctuaries and houses and placement in tombs as gifts are also known throughout antiquity.[11] Terracotta lamps from different periods are moreover preserved that bear inscriptions testifying to their use in various magic-related rituals.[12]

If this graffito indeed referred to a peculiar and unusual phrase, could that phrase be associated with some special use of the lamp while it was still intact? Unfortunately, this must remain only an interesting question, as the fragmentary state of the find does not allow further observations and the exact use of this item remains uncertain.

L.2. Black-glazed lamp (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 20473)

This second lamp is better preserved: two conjoining fragments of its base and filling hole survive (Figure 4). Found during the excavation of an ancient road on modern Vasileos Georgiou A' Street, the lamp can be dated to the Hellenistic period (250-180 BC, Howland type 32).[13]

Figure 4. Black-glazed lamp (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 20473).

In the centre of the lamp's base, a coarse circular pattern, divided into four almost equal parts by a cross,

[7] Immerwahr 1990: 109, 180.

[8] The publication of the graffiti and dipinti from the Agora Excavations (Lang 1976: 33, no. F46, pl. 12) mentions only one example of a ligature as part of a full name, on a fifth-century BC red-figured cup. In the corresponding material from the Kerameikos, conjoined letters are found on very few examples of *ostraka* and seem to represent efforts to correct mistakes made in incising the names, such as the omission or incorrect rendering of individual letters (Brenne 2018: 93).

[9] Chiarini 2018: 203-04. Rusjaeva (2010: 507, no. S-35) records a sherd from a black-glazed vessel with a magical inscription consisting of various letters and ligatures, dated to the 5th/4th century BC.

[10] Petropoulos 1999: 137.

[11] Dimakis 2015.

[12] Examples in Petropoulos 1999: 137-8, 167-8, no. M97 and M98; Mastrocinque 2007: 88-9.

[13] The dating: Howland 1958: 99-100; Rotroff 1997: 501.

was incised after firing (Figures 5 and 6). Under the circular pattern an inscription was incised after firing:

ΑΓΡ

Figure 5. Black-glazed lamp (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 20473). The graffito on the lamp's base .

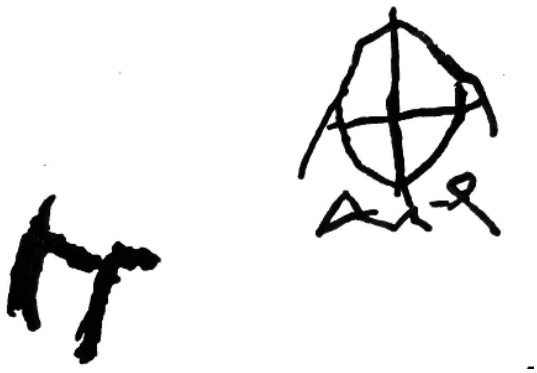

Figure 6. Black-glazed lamp (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 20473). Drawings of the graffiti on the lamp's body (left) and base (right).

Three letters can be distinguished, probably *alpha*, *gamma* and *rho*. The rendering of the letters recalls the cursive writing of the Hellenistic period. The inscription may refer to an abbreviated name: Ἀγρ( ).[14] On the lamp's body, another letter was incised, likewise after firing. The letter seems to be an *eta* (H).

Interestingly, similar circular patterns are found along with abbreviations of names of the constellations and planets in the Greek Magical Papyri from Egypt from the 1st century AD onwards. These are interpreted as astrological diagrams or tables (horoscopes).[15] In another instance, horoscopes were scratched like graffiti on the walls of a Roman house in Dura Europos (Syria), along with the names of the house's residents and their dates of birth. These diagrams appear to have been associated with divination and attempts to foresee an individual's happiness or misery and their lifespan based on the position of the stars on the day he/she was born.[16] The practice of astrology, it seems, provided individuals with the ability to manage the influence of cosmic forces in their lives, and also helping them to protect themselves from possible obstacles and dangers, or even to overcome them.

The comparison with such tables here is necessarily made with caution since they are much later than the lamp. If such a subject can be identified here, the graffito on the lamp would be extremely rare and early (unless it was incised during the lamp's later use). Only the sketch diagram and a related abbreviation seem to have been scratched here, perhaps due to the limited surface available on the lamp's base.

On the other hand, the choice of a lamp for such a ritual is in line with its nature as an object that produces light. Especially from the Hellenistic period onwards, the written sources testify that both lamps and their light acquire a symbolic character.[17] As they illuminate the darkness, they are often used in mystical cults, symbolizing the presence of deities or the human soul itself,[18] while in late antiquity they are sometimes associated with protection from evil spirits.[19]

We don't know if this lamp originally came from a sanctuary or if it could have been used as part of a divinatory ritual in a private house, such as the *Horoscopes* in Dura Europos. However, it is worth noting that the lamp was found at the excavation of an ancient street in the vicinity of the Association of the

[14] Attic names beginning with the letters Ἀγρ, such as *Ἄγρων* or *Ἀγροίτης*: Osborne and Byrne 1994: 8.

[15] Evans (1999: 287-88, fig. 33) explains that the papyrus patterns are thought to reflect the actual boards used by professional astrologers to practice their art.

[16] Baird 2016: 23-24, fig. 2.4. In other cases, circular boards were used by astrologers to calculate whether a sick individual would live or die based on the day of the sickness, the numerical value of their name, the day of the month, and other information: Dosoo 2014: 143. I would like to thank Professor C.A. Faraone for this reference.

[17] Zografou 2010: 283-84. For the very interesting use of lamps as photoamulets in Late Antiquity, see Lapp (2022), who discusses how certain objects were closely linked to the symbolic and protective powers of light and used as amulets in burials to protect the dead person's body from darkness and evil spirits.

[18] Mastrocinque 2007: 94-96.

[19] During the Roman period, clay lamps and terracotta figurines were often placed above the entrances of houses to protect their residents from evil spirits: Grandjouan 1961: 5.

Dionysiastai and other large complexes of rooms that are built during the Hellenistic period.[20]

L.3. Small Unglazed Lamp (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 20557)

Figure 7. Small unglazed lamp (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 20557).

A further example of the association between lamps and divination during the Hellenistic period can be found in an earlier lamp from the tramline excavations (Figure 7). The lamp comes from a building block between Filonos and Ethnikis Antistaseos Streets, near the area of the Association of the Dionysiastai mentioned above, buried along with other objects inside a small deposit of fill in one of the rooms of the building block.[21] The lamp belongs to Howland type 25A Prime (ca. 360-260 BC).[22]

A three-line inscription was incised on the lamp's nozzle before firing, arranged around a square central symbol (total size: 1.5x1.5 cm). The layout of the inscription is reminiscent of the boustrophedon style, since the direction of the letters alternates between lines (Figures 8 and 9):

ΜΑΝΤΗΟΙΣ

Figure 8. Small unglazed lamp (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 20557). The graffiti on the lamp's nozzle (left) and body (right).

Figure 9. Small unglazed lamp (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 20557). Drawings of the graffiti on the lamp's nozzle (left) and body (right).

Here we recognize a word related to divination, written in the dative case: *Μαντήοις*. The person who wrote this inscription chose the letter *eta* (Η) instead of the diphthong *ei*, a phenomenon often observed in texts of the Hellenistic period.[23] The dative case indicates the

[20] During the Hellenistic period, wealthy owners combined smaller Classical houses into larger, more luxurious residences with open courtyards: Chrysoulaki and Koutis 2018: 24-25.

[21] The lamp was found along with other small objects in fill related to the spatial reorganization of the building block after the end of the 4th century BC. The exact use of these premises has not yet been determined by the excavators. Based on the presence of houses and workshops in these streets during the Classical period, the lamp can be supposed to belong into the sphere of a private cult, perhaps to a small domestic sanctuary of the late 4th-early 3rd centuries BC (Koletti 2019: 36-37 and 57).

[22] The dating of the lamp: Howland 1958: 70; Rotroff 1997: 495. Supporting this date is the fact that among the objects found with the lamp was the head of a terracotta figurine (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. Π4193, Figure 10) that probably belongs to a type known from a molded figurine from the Athenian Agora dated to the 4th century BC. The figurine depicts a reclining youth, his weight resting on his missing left elbow, and should probably be understood as a banqueter reclining on a couch (Nicholls 1995: 432, no. 52, pl. 105). I would like to thank my colleague V. Dimitrakopoulou for this reference.

[23] In the Hellenistic period, already from the 4th century BC under the influence of *koine* (Hellenistic-period Greek) a gradual convergence in the pronunciation of the long vowel *ē (eta)* and the diphthong *ei* occurred. Orthographic alternation is very common in written sources, especially before other vowels: Babiniotis 2002: 121; McLean 2002: 346-50. The word: Liddell and Scott 1925-1940: s.v. *μαντεῖον/ μαντῆον* και *μαντεῖος/ μαντῆος*. For the spelling, see Kallini (2016), who discusses the votive graffito ΜΗΤΡΙ ΘΕΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΣΥΝΤΕΛΗΑΙ *(To the Mother of Gods and her Entourage)* on a roughly contemporary kantharos from the Metroon in Aigai, which uses the spelling *συντέληα* instead of *συντέλεια*.

Figure 10. Head of a terracotta figurine (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. Π4193).

inscription is dedicatory, perhaps stating that the lamp was intended 'for the divination' or 'for the oracle.'[24]

Both as a term and practice, lamp divination (consulting an oracle with use of a lamp) was thought to be unknown in Greece before the Roman period and characteristic mainly of Late Antique worship practices.[25] More recent studies, however, indicate that lamps had been used since the Classical period in rituals related to divination and divine epiphanies.[26] Since the inscription was carefully incised on the nozzle before firing, the lamp was probably a special order from a ceramic workshop and intended for this specific use.[27]

On the lamp's body, the letter *alpha* (A) was incised, perhaps before firing (Figures 8 and 9). This letter could have had a special meaning, mentioning either the initials of the buyer's name or the initials of the name of the deity, from whom the prophecy was requested.[28] The nozzle does bear traces of burning on the graffito, so the lamp can be assumed to have been used at least once.[29]

[24] Examples of incised dedicatory inscriptions on terracotta lamps in Pingiatoglou (2004: 115-16).

[25] Practices of lamp divination are described in magical papyri and written sources of later periods (Petropoulos 1999: 135-36).

[26] Pingiatoglou 2004: 113-22; Parisinou 2000.

[27] Edwards 1975: 65-66. Johnston (2015: 17) refers to clay objects with votive inscriptions incised before firing.

[28] Among the deities often associated with lamp divination are Apollo, Helios/Sun, Hermes, Sarapis, Mithras, and Demeter. If the divinatory inscription suggests the worship of a deity associated with divination, the possibility that such lamps were mass-produced by a ceramic workshop cannot be ruled out. In the case of the Roman *Lychnomanteion* (a lamp-based oracle) at Patras, the lamps were probably made in the area of the oracle or somewhere nearby (Petropoulos 1999: 134-35).

[29] According to recipes in the magical papyri, practitioners of magic should use lamps that are pure (*καθαροί*), brand-new (*καινοί*), not painted red (*ἀμίλτωτοι*), and not engraved (*ἄγραφοι*). In other instances, a lamp for daily use (*λύχνος καθημερινός*) was to be used. In the case of the *Lychnomanteion* at Patras, the lamps were used only once, but some of them bear inscriptions. Zografou (2010: 279-80) discusses magical recipes and the ritual of lamp divination. Cf. Petropoulos 1999: 136-39.

Inscribed vase sherds

Although not immediately connected with the present subject because they are not lamps, two sherds from two fourth-century BC vases that came from the subway excavations in Piraeus and bear some unusual graffiti should be mentioned here.

S.1. Sherd of a Black-Glazed Bowl (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 25061)

The sherd, dated to the 4th century BC (Figure 11),[30] was found in the excavation of an ancient street in the area of Deligianni Square.

Figure 11. Sherd of a black-glazed bowl (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 25061). Left: Interior. Right: Base.

Figure 12. Sherd of a black-glazed bowl (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 25061). Drawing of the graffito on the bowl's base.

On the bowl's base, deep, rough incisions were made after firing (Figure 12), forming a large circle, then a smaller one. Within them, a multitude of lines intersects

[30] The dating: Rotroff 1997: 343, no. 1026, fig. 64, pl. 77.

in all directions. Various designs, likely intentional, seem to be incised on the surface of the base, among which a pentagram is the most obvious. The incisions in some spots are so deep that they removed pieces of clay. This act may presumably be associated with an attempt to erase indications of the vessel's previous use, such as letters or other signs.[31]

On the bowl's interior, a ligature was incised after firing (Figure 13):

AP

Figure 13. Sherd of a black-glazed bowl (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 25061). Drawing of the ligature on the bowl's interior.

The ligature consists of the letters *alpha and rho.* This graffito may have been incised on the bowl during previous use, and the letters could belong to a personal name.

S.2. Sherd of a Black-Glazed Plate (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 24842)

The sherd, dated to the 4th century BC (Figure 14),[32] was found in an ancient well in the area of Agios Konstantinos Square, near the modern Municipal Theatre.

On the plate's base, oblique horizontal and vertical lines were incised after firing (Figure 15). On the plate's interior, the letter *eta* (H) or another symbol was incised, likewise after firing, in various spots (Figure 16).

In some cases, such graffiti seem to have had a magical character, as illustrated by similar graffiti on sherds from the excavations of ancient Olbia.[33] Whether they were engraved when the vessels were still intact or after some breakage is still unknown, although at Olbia the breaking and related processing of the fragments is

Figure 14. Sherd of a black-glazed plate (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 24842). Left: Interior. Right: Base.

Figure 15. Sherd of a black-glazed plate (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 24842). Drawing of the graffito on the plate's base.

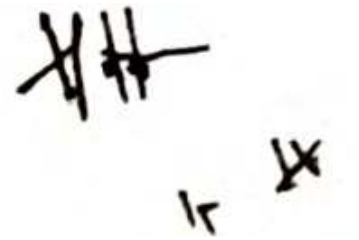

Figure 16. Sherd of a black-glazed plate (Piraeus, Archaeological Museum no. 24842). Drawing of the graffiti on the plate's interior.

testified as a practice.[34] Also, due to the lack of primary context, we cannot be certain whether a magic-related ritual was practiced or the ritual had an apotropaic or some other character. The motif of the pentagram is considered to be related to astrology, however, which brings us back to the theme of the astrological diagram on the lamp shown above.[35]

[31] At least one letter can be distinguished at the bottom of the pattern, perhaps an *epsilon* (E).

[32] The dating: Sparkes, Talcott and Richter 1970: 310, no. 1055, fig. 10.

[33] Rusjaeva 2010: 506, no. S-25, S-26, and S-27. Vanhove (2006: 4, 11) offers a different potential interpretation, mentioning that scratches on vessels are very common and could represent non-alphabetical marks.

[34] The attempt to erase signs of previous use on the first sherd is also worth noting. Could this act be consistent with the need for a 'magical' object to be pure and new (see n. 29 above), or should it be considered part of a wrathful ritual of revenge?

[35] Rusjaeva (2010: 506-07, no. S-30) presents a base fragment of a black-glazed vessel dated to the 3rd century BC with a representation of a pentagram perhaps connected with astral magic.

Conclusions

The objects discussed bear various inscriptions. The syllables and letters on the lamp fragment (L.1) lack obvious meaning, a pattern that raises questions about the character and purpose of the inscription. The drawing on the second lamp (L.2) resembles the much later diagrams of astrological character. This element, in conjunction with the divinatory inscription on the other Hellenistic lamp (L.3), indicates an interest in divination. As mentioned above, the use of terracotta lamps for such rituals is consistent with their special nature as objects that produce light and their particular symbolism. Moreover, to request an oracle with the use of a burning lamp and invocation of divinatory or astrological deities had the aim of predicting and managing the uncertainties and dangers of the future.

This act could also function as a deterrent to evil for the person seeking the prophecy. The well-being and protection of the lives of a house's residents, or of the craftsmen working in a workshop, the prevention of evil, or even a safe sea voyage would have been matters of great concern in the daily life of the inhabitants and artisans of ancient Piraeus, as well as of the sailors who visited the harbour city.[36] At the same time, since these specific objects show that lamps were used in practices linked to divination, they may also indicate the existence of organized oracles in Piraeus, as was the case in other major cities and ports of the Hellenistic period.[37]

Finally, one element worth considering is the use of writing and the act of incising pottery. Inscribing particular graffiti on clay objects appears to have been an integral part of practices associated with divination and/or magic, as the dynamics and success of the ritual would in this way have been enhanced. For example, the divinatory inscription inscribed before firing on the lamp nozzle (L.3) indicated that it was necessary for that particular ritual.

On the other hand, unusual motifs were inscribed on the two base sherds after firing (S.1 and S.2). Especially on the first (S.1), the motif was scratched after its primary use, together with an attempt to erase all previous graffiti in order to create a pentagram, a motif that is related to astral magic. So if a magical character can actually be recognized here, we may suppose that incising various symbols or patterns on these clay objects was either necessary for the performance of certain rituals or intended to retain and maintain magical energy after the rituals concluded.

[36] Rotroff (2013: 80-85) discusses activities and rites designed to protect Athenian artisans and their industrial enterprises. Petropoulos (1999: 135) remarks on the connection between lamp divination and predicting the weather, which was the main concern of sailors.

[37] The oracles of Pharai, Delphi, Didyma, Dodona, Klaros and other sanctuaries were renowned in antiquity (Petropoulos 1999: 135-36, 139; Bonnechere 2007).

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All drawings and photos of the graffiti are by the author.

Reliefs from Ancient Messene: The Motif of the Open Hand

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Abstract

This paper presents a new approach to and re-examination of the use, function, and symbolism of local limestone reliefs from ancient Messene with representations of the open hand. These ten reliefs, three inscribed with dedications to Zeus, date from the Late Hellenistic to the Roman period. Unfortunately, they are random surface finds with no specific excavation context. At the centre of scholarly commentary some time ago, all the elements that contribute to these reliefs' apotropaic character are now investigated and correlated with two other groups of reliefs and sculptures, products of local workshops from the same site, which are included in the same category. Analogous reliefs with representations of open hands have been found in the Asklepieia of Delos, of Paros, and of Athens, along with reliefs which do not originate from healing sanctuaries, such as those from Kalamata and Thessaly that are dedicated to Zeus. A special, separate category comprises reliefs representing soles/footprints, ears, and eyes as symbols of the divine presence (epiphany), associated in the Hellenistic and Roman periods mainly with mystery cults. In this context, interpretation of the specific institutionalized symbols represented on the stones makes it clear that they were linked directly with people's emotions, so intersecting with the philosophical, social and religious milieux of the period.

Introduction

The interpretation of the gestures represented on artefacts of the ancient world and embodying diverse symbolic meanings relating to the emotional universe of the mortal dedicant, his/her social status, sex, and/or age contributes to our understanding of the everyday, the ceremonial, the private, and the public life of individual people (Figure 1).[1]

The hand, as a sign of creation, power, and defence, has been used frequently since antiquity to ward off harmful effects that issue from the destructive force of evil. A polysemous motif, it can be interpreted in various ways: as folk therapeutic practice, social prevention, magical action, or as a field of emotional release and confirmation.[2]

The handprint, with variations in the movement of the fingers, has been considered protective or apotropaic since ancient times. In Egypt, the open hand with outstretched fingers imbued its bearer with power,[3] while the raised arm with half-open hand denotes the worshipper's invocation to the deity even today (Figure 2).[4]

The open hand is incised and imprinted on all kinds of material, while its shape is often adopted for amulets. Examples of amulets in the shape of open hands have

Figure 1. Ancient Messene. Limestone relief of a right open hand with a large part of the forearm (photographic archive of P. Themelis – Society of Messenian and Archaeological Studies).

[1] I thank Prof. Emeritus Petros Themelis most sincerely for encouraging me to take another look and approach anew the material published by Olga Palagia. I am also grateful to the epigraphist Voula Bardani for her invaluable contribution to the issue of the inscriptions, and to Dr. Eleni Zymi for her constructive comments and advice. Thomas 1994: 5-10.
[2] Merkouri 2010: 25-32.
[3] Petrie 1914: 11.
[4] Calabro 2014a: 652-65.

Figure 2. Ancient Messene. instead of plaquette: Terracotta relief from the courtyard of the Asklepieion, inv. no. 6167, Ht.0.243m with two venerating dedicators before the deity (photographic archive of P. Themelis – Society of Messenian and Archaeological Studies).

been recovered from the cemeteries of Akanthos[5] and of Abdera,[6] as well as from the gilded decoration of an intact black-glaze pyxis in the Benaki Museum.[7]

Eight stamps of hands were impressed on a votive inscribed pyramidal loomweight, probably of the second half of the 5th century BC, that carries the name *ΑΡΤΕΜΙΣΙΑ*, from the sanctuary of Artemis Brauronia. These stamps are associated with superstitions that troubled the loom-weight's owner.[8] A hand incised on a marble block near an ore washery at Kamariza in Laurion[9] has been identified as a votive offering to a deity.[10]

The representations of raised arms with hands open, parallel, or even at an acute angle, on stelai and kioniskoi of Late Hellenistic and Roman times reveal that they mark the graves of victims of violent death, the thread of whose lives had been cut suddenly and prematurely.[11] These relief representations, whether or not combined with inscriptions, functioned as curses on the killers of the persons whose graves are marked in this way. A particular handprint on a stone may, however, at the same time signify the dead person's supplication to the gods to right the wrong he (or she) had suffered in life.[12]

A series of dedicatory reliefs found at ancient Messene, of local limestone with representations of open hands, have already been the subject of research and commentary.[13] The aim of this present article is to re-examine the use, function and symbolism of these reliefs from Messene in connection with an analogous corpus of reliefs and sculptures from the same site with common characteristics. Incorporated in the social and religious context of the period spanning the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD, those traits that support their apotropaic character are investigated.

[5] Pandermalis 2004: 18.
[6] Samiou 1990: 565.
[7] Benaki Museum, inv. no. 31459; Ziva 2013: 35.
[8] Pologeorgi 2020: 82-83.
[9] Themelis 1969: 92, pl. 69γ.
[10] Palagia 2011: 63.
[11] Chaniotis 2018: 418-19; Strubbe 1997: 7.
[12] Boardman and Kurtz 1971: 157.
[13] Palagia 2011: 62-69.

Figure 3. National Archaeological Museum. Inscribed votive stele with relief of an outward-facing right open palm (photographic archive of V. Bardani). It carries the inscription *ΕΥΝΟΜΙΑ ΔΙΙ ΤΥΧΩΣΑ*.

The limestone reliefs of Messene

Ten reliefs (including one now in the Archaeological Museum of Sparta) are reconsidered here, four of them inscribed with dedications to Zeus; they are dated from the Late Hellenistic to the Roman period.[14] Since they are mainly surface finds, they lack a specific excavation context.[15] Comparable reliefs with representations of open hands have been found in the Asklepieia of Delos[16] and Athens,[17] whilst others do not come from healing sanctuaries, such as the one from Kalamata[18] dedicated to Zeus (Figure 3).

Open hand representations from funerary assemblages such as those at Kyzikos[19] and in Sicily[20] seem to function also as gestures invoking divine vengeance in cases of unnatural death. Noteworthy is the Attic pedimental grave stele of Zosime, daughter of Herakleon, from Apameia, of the 1st century BC, now in the Epigraphical Museum in Athens.[21] The stele was erected by her father, seeking revenge for his prematurely and unjustly lost unmarried daughter, perhaps a victim of sorcery or poisoning. There is a double handprint of the same person, Herakleon, who seeks divine intervention and the meting-out of justice. Also of exceptional interest are two funerary reliefs from Cyprus. The first is a limestone kioniskos of the 2nd-3rd century AD[22] from the site of Mega Perivolia (Diploaraka) in the village of Kliros near Nicosia (ancient Tamassos), on which, below the inscription *Κειλικᾶ / χαῖρε χρεστὰ / (sic) μνήμης / Μάρθα,* are two open hands carved in relief.[23] A similar representation, of the 3rd century AD, survives on the marble gravestone of Kalliope from Enkomi near Famagusta,[24] who suffered a violent death; it is accompanied by an 11-line inscription in which the dedicant calls on the god Helios to render justice by punishing the murderer of his 28-year-old daughter.[25] An inscribed Roman-period kioniskos (bearing the inscription *Χρύσιππος Ζω/σίμου δὶς Φρό/νιμον τὸν γλυκύτατον/ υἱὸν μνείας/χάριν ἥρωα*), from Didyma in Lycia appears to be in the same vein, since it accompanies a statue base with the relief of a boy together with a pair of hands, again denoting a violent and untimely death.[26]

The kinds of gesture on the reliefs, the archaeological contexts from which they come (findspot and associated finds), as well as the accompanying inscriptions constitute important data for interpreting the reliefs.

In terms of typology, represented on the majority of the reliefs from Messene are the outside of the right open hand with part of the forearm (Figure 4a-c). In two cases from Ancient Messene the inside (palm) of the open right hand is represented (Figure 5a-b), as on the relief from Kalamata.[27]

The variations in the representation of the open hand may provide information about invocations: their type, power, and even the number of people involved.[28] The raised hand of Eunomia on the Kalamata stele, with palm turned outward[29] after Zeus' fulfilment of her invocation, denoted by the use of the past participle τυχῶσα, expresses not only gratitude to the god, but

[14] Palagia (2011: 68-69) provides an analytical description of them.
[15] The detailed catalogue of the reliefs by Palagia (2011: 68-69) does not include the limestone relief with a raised right hand, inv. no. 17769 (Figure 1), a stray find of 3/08/2012 recorded in the east wing of the north stoa of the agora of Ancient Messene that measures 0.546m (maximum preserved height) by 0.233m (maximum preserved width) by 0.13m (maximum preserved thickness).
[16] Museum of Delos A4205, Bruneau 1970: 371, no. 2; van Straten 1981: 127, no. 23.2.
[17] National Archaeological Museum (Athens) 2701, Forsén 1996: 21; van Straten 1981: 120, no. 9.7.
[18] National Archaeological Museum (Athens) 1363 (*IG* V 1).
[19] Palagia 2011: 66 and 68, fig. 10.11
[20] Palagia 2011: 68, fig. 10.12
[21] Epigraphical Museum (Athens) 12862 (*IG* II² 8334).
[22] *SEG* 25, 1127.
[23] Nicolaou 1966: 58-59 (photo. pl.13,5); see also Conze 1922: 22-23.
[24] Voskos 1997: 110-13 (E38) and 358-60; Yon *et al.* 2004: 280, no. 2084 (photo. pl. 32, 328).
[25] Stampolidis and Oikonomou 2014: 134.
[26] Ormerod and Robinson 1914: 3.
[27] See n. 36 below.
[28] Calabro 2013: 73; 2014b: 152.
[29] *IG* V 1, 1363 (EAM): [Εὐ]νομία | Διὶ τυχῶσᾳ.

Figure 4 (a-c) Ancient Messene. Reliefs without inscriptions, with representations of the outside of the right open hand (photographic archive of P. Themelis – Society of Messenian and Archaeological Studies).

Figure 5 (a-b) Ancient Messene. Reliefs without inscriptions, with representations of the inside/palm of the right open hand (photographic archive of P. Themelis – Society of Messenian and Archaeological Studies).

also faith in him and acknowledgement of his power and authority.

The intention to strengthen the invocation to the daimons of the Underworld to punish the guilty is evident in the inscribed grave stele of Zosime from Attica,[30] with the representation of both open hands of her father, which converge. In contrast, the two open right hands of different sizes (the left is smaller) shown on the votive stele from Messene that is in the Archaeological Museum of Sparta[31] declares the participation of two persons, Demetrios and Epigeneia (likely husband and wife, or brother and sister), who pray to the immortal (god), as can be surmised from the dative case *ΑΘΑΝΑΤΩ(Ι)* in the inscription.

But the representation of the outside of the right open hand with relaxed outstretched fingers is more common, indicating a preliminary stage of communication with the deity, the stage of prayer before fulfilment.[32] The more usual choice of the right hand[33] can be explained by the especially propitious significance accorded to the right (*dexter*) in general as opposed to the left (*sinister*) as well as by worshippers' need for a happy outcome of their prayers.

[30] *IG* II² 8334 (EM 12862): Ζωσίμη | Ἡρακλέωνος | Ἀπαμῖτις.
[31] Sparta Museum 398, *IG* V 1 150: Δαμάτριος Ἐπιγένεια Ἀθανάτω (*sc.* εὐξάμενοι); Palagia 2011: 66 (fig. 10.9).
[32] Calabro 2013: 78-80.
[33] Pliny (*NH* 11.103.250-51) referring to the sanctity of some parts of the human body, mentioned the right hand, which was also extended when someone made a promise.

Figure 6 (a-b) Ancient Messene. Votive reliefs of open hand, with dedication to Zeus (photographic archive of P. Themelis – Society of Messenian and Archaeological Studies).

Of the five inscribed stelai from Messene with handprints, three are dedicated to Zeus (Figure 6a-b)[34] and two to Athanatos (daimon or god), who in this case is most probably Zeus Hypsistos, the father of all gods (Figure 7). The dative case ἀθανάτωι, which in one instance is specified by the article τῷ — that is, τῶι ἀθανάτωι ('to the Immortal'), by analogy with τῷ Διί ('to Zeus') — reinforces this reasoning.[35] The epithet 'immortal' (*athanatos*) is encountered rarely, to be precise in three inscriptions, one of the Roman period from Cyrenaica (Πατρὶ | θεῶι | Σαμόθρᾳκι | ἀθανάτωι | ὑψίσ̣[τωι]),[36] the second from Thessaly (Δαίμονι Ἀθανάτωι Θεσ|σαλὴ Λέοντος εὐξαμένη),[37] and the third from Caesarea of Hadrianopolis in Paphlagonia ([ἀγα]θῇ τύχῃ· | [Θεῷ] Ὑψίστῳ | Αὐρ. Ἐπιθύμη|τος κ(αὶ) Βασιλ|[ικ]ὴ σὺν τοῖς πα|[ιδί]οις| ἡμῶν εὐ|χαριστοῦμεν | Θεῷ ἀθανάτῳ).[38]

Figure 7. Ancient Messene. Votive relief of open hand, with dedication to the immortal god (photographic archive of P. Themelis – Society of Messenian and Archaeological Studies).

But who were the people who made the dedication? What did they request from the god? What sentiments moved these people to make this specific gesture and what feelings were expressed during its performance?

The information the inscriptions give about the dedicants who prayed to Zeus mentions two women,

[34] Zeus was a listening (*epekoos*) god, who heard and responded to the prayers of his devotees. Zeus Hypsistos was worshipped with this epithet at Palmyra: Weinreich 1912: 23-24, 36; *LIMC* VIII (1997): s.v. Zeus (*in peripheria orientali*), 387, 162a-b. The god Hypsistos was also worshipped as *epekoos*.

[35] The supreme god (*Hypsistos*) is referred to by the name *Zeus*, in the dative case *Di-we(i),* Διί: Burkert 1997: 15-16.

[36] *Annuario della Scuola Archeologica di Atene* 39/40 (1961/62): 317, 168; *Annual of the British School at Athens* 57 (1962): 25-27; *SEG* 20, 724.

[37] *Archaiologikon Deltion* 46 B1 (1991) 223 (*SEG* 46, 634). See also Tziafalias *et al.* *Bouchon, Darmezin, Decourt, Helly, Lucas, Pernin* 2016: 162-63, no. 72 pl. XVII. (Larisa Museum, inv. no. 91/24; 2nd c. BC).

[38] Marek 1993: Anhang 6 (Katalog der Inschriften von Kaisareia/ Hadrianopolis): 24.

Satyra[39] and Eunomia,[40] and one man by the name of Zoilos.[41] The stelai dedicated to Athanatos are dedicated by a man and a woman named Demetrios and Epigeneia[42] in one case, and by a woman called Epinika in the other (Figure 10).[43]

Demetrios and Zoilos are common male names. The female names Epigeneia, Epinika, and Eunomia are attested for the first time in the Peloponnese, in contrast to the men's names, which are common and also appear at Messene. The name Satyra is known from Arcadia and Achaea,[44] whereas at Messene the masculine form Satyros occurs.[45]

Noteworthy is the absence of the patronymic (an omission usual at Messene), but the personal relationship is what is stressed in this specific case, the familiarity between man and god. The persons praying are not unknown or strange to their god, they are Zoilos, Satyra, Epinika, the god's faithful and pious acolytes, who lift up their hands to their god so that their petition will be heard and every evil averted with the god's help. On the one hand they seek a god who evokes awe, on the other they make supplication to a god who is supportive, comforting, amicable.

These dedications were made by ordinary men and women in the context of popular, private cult,[46] since the particular procedure and content of the dedications is closely linked to the worries and fears of mortals as entities. The devotees' requests, at least according to the epigraphical data from other sites, are simple and concerned with everyday issues, but issues that are personally important, for they always involve the possibility of failure or risk.[47] Often beset by fears and superstitions, human beings have a profound need of tutelary gods, particularly when they turn to mystery cults and rites.[48]

In the context of private worship, in all likelihood the stelai with reliefs of open hands from Ancient Messene — inscribed or not — were set up on graves rather than in some sanctuary, as dedications for the deceased in fulfilment of a vow or invocations to the god (in this case Zeus Hypsistos-Athanatos, the 'Supreme-Immortal,' or some heroized dead individual) to inflict punishment.[49]

Their rough-hewn craftsmanship in the hard local limestone, not in marble, and their general stylistic traits is indicative of artistic work in the folk tradition made by local stonecutters. Included in this context and sharing the same apotropaic orientation are ten stone reliefs with representations of snakes (two with pairs of snakes), four of which come specifically from the Gymnasium of Messene, while the rest are surface finds from around the archaeological site of Messene (Figure 8a-d). The snake's association with chthonic deities is well known, as also with heroes/the dead,[50] Zeus Meilichios/Philios,[51] and often with apotropaic-therapeutic characteristics.[52]

In the same category are 13 distorted, daimonic, and apotropaic heads[53] with intense expressions and grimaces. Each has particularly individualised features,[54] fashioned in local limestone by local sculptors (Figure 9a-d). Again, these are surface finds from the archaeological site of Ancient Messene. The stylistic traits of these reliefs and carved heads from Messene align with folk art of the period spanning the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD, a time of upheaval and realignment in politics, economic life, and society, reflecting the habits, beliefs, fears, and insecurities of many, especially among the city's less affluent.

Eyes, ears and soles

A special category of finds comprises representations of eyes, ears, and feet (or footwear) as symbols of the divine appearance (epiphany) and associated in Hellenistic and Roman times with mystery cults, of Demeter and Kore, of Isis and Sarapis, as well as of Asklepios, whose relationship with the Egyptian deities is confirmed in the Peloponnese and more widely.[55] Joint worship of Asklepios and Egyptian deities is encountered at Aigeira (Achaia), on the Acropolis of Athens, in the Sanctuary of Asklepios at Epidauros, and at Kenchreai (Corinth).[56]

Traces of soles on marble stelai have been interpreted as footprints of the god or of the worshipper in the sanctuary where they were found.[57] A paradigmatic example is the representation of footwear between two baskets that allude to the *cista mystica* with coiled snakes on a Roman-period mosaic floor in the Sanctuary of

[39] Museum of Ancient Messene, inv. no. 15178: Σατύρα Διί.
[40] See n. 32 above.
[41] Museum of Ancient Messene, inv. no. 13782: Ζωίλος Διί.
[42] See n. 34 above.
[43] Museum of Ancient Messene, inv. no. 8874: Ἐπινίκα τ[ῷ] Ἀθανάτωι.
[44] Fraser and Matthews 1997: 389.
[45] Fraser and Matthews 1997: 390.
[46] Also included in private worship is the cult of the dead, which can differ from that practiced by the citizens as a whole but is linked with this through the cult of heroes: Boer 1973: 8.
[47] Eidinow 2007: 43, 45, 264.
[48] The concept of the tutelary god is particularly evident in mystery cults and rites: Nilsson 1963: 115.
[49] Mitford 1980: 2206; 1990: 1374.
[50] Palagia 2017: 131-33, 136.
[51] Lawton 2017: 16, 73-77; Palagia 2017: 134. The chthonic hypostasis of Zeus Meilichios: Williams 1982: 175-81; his worship as god of the Underworld in Thessaly: Chrisostomou 1998: 234 n. 903.
[52] Porto 2020: 498-500.
[53] These heads are being studied by the author.
[54] Cf. the case of a Late Archaic bronze head from the National Garden in Athens; in secondary use, it was inserted into a roughly worked rectangular boulder with protective-apotropaic intent: Zachariadou 2000: 198-203.
[55] Bruneau 1970: 374-75; Pakkanen 1996: 93, 116.
[56] Dunand 1973: 2.134-35, 162.
[57] Dunbabin 1990: 86-88.

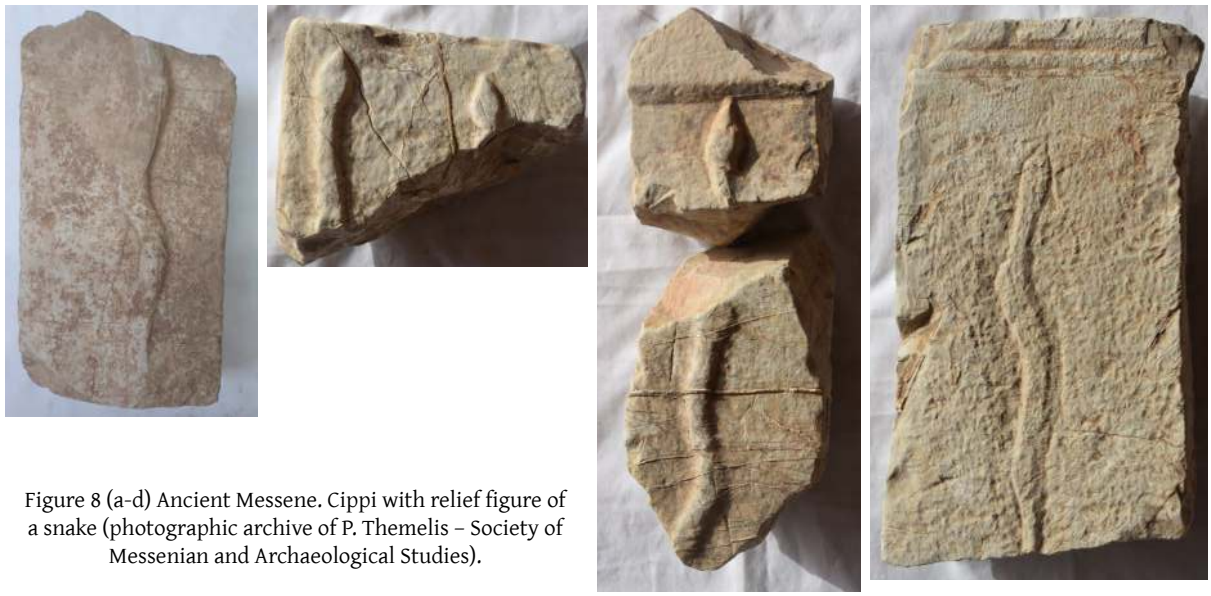

Figure 8 (a-d) Ancient Messene. Cippi with relief figure of a snake (photographic archive of P. Themelis – Society of Messenian and Archaeological Studies).

Figure 9. (a-d) Ancient Messene. Distorted apotropaic heads (photographic archive of P. Themelis – Society of Messenian and Archaeological Studies).

Demeter and Kore on the Acrocorinth.[58] The presence of the footwear in a cultic building in combination with the sacred symbols of the *cistae* and the snakes constitutes evidence of the deity's epiphany.[59] In this instance, the *cista*, snakes, and footprints (characteristic of mystery cults) are attributes of the Egyptian goddess Isis,[60] corresponding to Demeter and Kore; this period (1st century BC – 1st century AD) is in any case a time in which syncretism of cults is observable.[61]

Depictions of footprints or soles are also quite common on mosaic pavements, mainly from bathhouses; they have apotropaic import or warn against dangers.[62] Such dangers included falling, drowning, burns from hot floors and walls, and suffocation in the *caldaria.* As well, bathers were exposed to the envy of other bathers because of their wealth or attractiveness.[63]

The devotee's self-confidence regarding divine epiphanies/interventions[64] is evident in the special kind of dedication on each occasion, as in the sanctuaries of the Egyptian deities,[65] in bathhouses with footprints that manifested their presence, or with representations of relief ears implying that the gods heard their prayers. Anatomical ex-votos likewise show the parts of the body that the god had either cured or afflicted with disease as a punishment, while the uplifted arms on grave stelai informed passers-by, wayfarers, and potential robbers that divine protection had been invoked.[66] A formal embellishment of this kind, often accompanied by an inscription, would have reinforced the sentiments of fear, hope, and gratitude that formed the cultic lived experience of devotees.[67]

Conclusions

The representation of the open hand on stelai, which originated in the Eastern cults brought to Greece during the Hellenistic period, such as the incomer Thracian-Phrygian god Sabazios[68] as well as Isis-Demeter[69] and Sarapis-Zeus/Sarapis-Asklepios,[70] is related to the new soteriological significance of the divine and the metaphysical concerns of individuals in the late Hellenistic and early Roman Imperial period about life after death.[71]

The Messene reliefs with raised open hands as represented on limestone cippi, whether inscribed or not, in the context of folk worship are undoubtedly public testimony of the faith, piety, and needs of ordinary people who were frequently plagued by superstitions,[72] to seek solace and assistance from the immortal gods. Concurrently, however, in the context of specific ritual practice, they served as visual markers in space,[73] intended to draw the attention of visitors/pilgrims, devotees, or even would-be robbers by triggering the appropriate emotion on each occasion.

Whatever the situation, we can read human thoughts, moods, and actions in the specific gesture with which individuals either implore —seeking protection, help, or retribution — or thank a deity for answering their prayers and desires. Whether the gesture represents the hand of the venerator or of the god, it always aims at achieving the deity's epiphany and indicates the transmutation of the human body into a medium of lived religious experience, of communication with the divine.

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[58] Bookidis and Stroud 1997: 366.
[59] Dunbabin 1990: 86-88, 95-96.
[60] Dunbabin 1990: 86, 95; Takacs 2005: 353-69.
[61] Collar 2013:57; Kaizer 2006: 27.
[62] Dunbabin 1990: 99, 101-102.
[63] Dunbabin 1989: 35, 37; Johns 1982: 64.
[64] Chaniotis (2012: 210-11) states that the devotee's self-confidence emanates from his/her piety, which in one sense can be understood as fear of the divine (superstition), but in another is what puts him/her in a privileged position to approach the deity with self-confidence.
[65] Fassa 2016: 68-69.
[66] Graf 2007: 143-47.
[67] Chaniotis 2012: 226-27.
[68] Karamanoli-Siganidou 1967: 149-51; Palagia 2011: 67.
[69] Malaise 2014: 245; Hermann 1999: 71-73, 76.
[70] Sarapis-Zeus or Zeus-Sarapis and his identification with other deities: Veymiers 2009: 202. Catalogue in Bricault and Dionysopoulou 2016. Sarapis-Asklepios: Bricault 2005a: 202/0375 and 202/0376; 2008: 56.
[71] Smith 2004: 329–34.
[72] Reiss 1897: 189.
[73] Chaniotis 2012: 229.

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Fearing the Evil Eye in Graeco-Roman Religion and Magic: Remarks on an Apotropaic Bas-Relief from Actia Nicopolis (Epirus, Greece)[1]

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Abstract

At the onset of evil, rationality is broken, the irrational prevails, and humans resort to symbols that prevent evil. The evil eye as a cause of evil is commonplace in the Graeco-Roman world. Envy and the evil eye are so intimately related that they are sometimes impossible to differentiate. A common apotropaic symbol in the images and texts of the Graeco-Roman world was the phallus. During the excavations of a luxurious domus at Nicopolis that occupies an entire insula and is known as the domus of the *ekdikos* Georgios, a bas-relief was discovered which constitutes rare evidence of apotropaic practices at Nicopolis. The relief, depicting a legged double phallus, is inscribed with apotropaic Latin verses relating to envy and witchcraft.
This paper presents and analyzes the Latin text engraved on the phalluses, as well as the relief itself in its wider Roman context and narrower household context, in an attempt to trace the identity of the owner of the domus, the *paterfamilias*. Considering that in Nicopolis the Greek population was numerically predominant, the relief may shed some light on the coexistence of two communities and their interaction in religious customs and practices.

This paper presents and analyzes a unique apotropaic bas-relief from Actia Nicopolis.[2] The relief was unearthed during the excavations of the luxurious domus of the ekdikos Georgios (Figure 1).[3] This domus extended across a low hill within the boundaries of the Early Christian fortifications, enjoying a panoramic view of the suburb and the adjacent Ambracian Gulf. Built on terraces over three levels on the hill's slopes and flat summit, the domus occupied an entire insula of the Roman city, with a total area of about 1 hectare. Its main entrance, through which passers-by could see the luxurious decoration of the interior, faced the decumanus maximus bounding the property on the south. The main part of the house extended over the summit of the hill and consisted of an atrium with impluvium near the main entrance surrounded by rooms, while further to the north a peristyle courtyard was erected with various rooms around its perimeter, some decorated with elaborate mosaic floors like those in the wings of the portico. Twenty-four rooms around the peristyle were associated both with the private activities of the household (*familia*) and with the public activities of the master of the house (*dominus*), including triclinia for hosting banquets, baths, and a reception room.

The bas-relief, depicting a legged double phallus and inscribed with apotropaic Latin verses related to envy and witchcraft, was found during the excavations of the tablinum of the domus (Figure 2). An imposing entrance north of the atrium and impluvium led to a large rectangular hall (7.70 x 11.60m) that served as a reception room (Figure 3) or the master's office. The house's owner would have met his clients here to receive the daily ceremonial greeting.[4] Today, the threshold of the entrance (6.20 x 0.60m) lies beneath later makeshift walls that reduced its original length. The hall's walls are built in *opus mixtum,* consisting mostly of *opus incertum* and *opus vittatum simplex* at the corners, with a maximum preserved height of 3.0m.[5] The floor was covered with mortar, gravel, and cut marble plaques set at regular intervals.[6] Similar examples can be found during the early Imperial period. While the identity

[1] We thank Dr. K.L. Zachos and Dr. A. Aggeli for permitting us to publish this bas-relief, and furthermore Prof. J. Tzifopoulos, D. Hernandes, and Prof. M. Blumer (for useful advice on reading the inscription), J. Vanderpool (for his excellent photos), V. Souga (for the drawing) and Dr. S. Oikonomou for her support. E. Pavlidis would also like to thank his supervisors P. Reynolds and G. Ripoll, members of the ERAAUB at the University of Barcelona.

[2] Actia Nicopolis, Octavian's victory city on the coast of Epirus Vetus: Zachos 2015.

[3] Excavations at the domus were undertaken between 2005 and 2015 (Zachos and Pavlidis 2010a: 154; Reynolds and Pavlidis 2014; Pavlidis 2015; www.actianicopolisarchaeopark.gr). A new archaeological project within the framework Greece 2.0 began in 2022, during which all the central part of the domus is scheduled to be uncovered.

[4] Pliny mentions that the tablinum was full of codices and souvenirs of acts performed in the course of exercising power (Pliny, *HN* 35.7)

[5] Those types of masonry appear very early at Nicopolis. The stones used in the *opus incertum*, as well as for the corners of *opus vittatum simplex*, are of local beach rock, characteristic of the early Imperial buildings at Nicopolis: Bergemann 1998: 98; Zachos and Pavlidis 2010b: 66; Pavlidis 2015: 69.

[6] Paving types used in the domus: Pavlidis 2015: 69. The pavement with small marble slabs is considered to be one of the earliest in the domus.

Figure 1. Aerial view of the domus of the *ekdikos* Georgios from northeast; a red circle indicates the findspot of the bas-relief (Archive, Ephorate of Antiquities of Preveza; photo I. Soukantos and S. Thermos).

Figure 2. View from the north: the tablinum and the small atrium and impluvium between it and the entrance (Archive, Ephorate of Antiquities of Preveza; photo N. Stournaras).

Figure 3. The bas-relief found in the excavation of the tablinum in 2012 (Archive, Ephorate of Antiquities of Preveza; photo A. Moustakis).

of the owner in the early Roman Empire is unknown, we have evidence for the owner in Late Antiquity. The mosaic floor of the nearby portico attests that the owner was an advocate of the city, the *ekdikos* Georgios, who funded the portico's floors in the 4th century AD.[7]

Although found during the excavations of the tablinum, the relief cannot be proven to have formed part of the decoration of this particular room because such protective carvings were usually located in visible spots above head height on the facades of buildings; that it was placed in this area of the building as interior decoration cannot, however, be ruled out. Also, it unambiguously belongs to this specific domus.[8]

This bas-relief is carved in semi-hard limestone (Figure 4), easy to carve and to transport.[9] The relief, 33cm wide, 31cm long and 10cm thick, is broken only on its left side, while the other edges are well finished.[10]

On the back of the relief, the lower part shows a concentration of roughly engraved marks from the use of the chisel, while the upper right corner preserves traces of clamps, with molten metal poured in holes, obviously to hang the relief on a wall. Similar clamps would probably have existed on the left corner, now missing.

The front side bears a representation of a legged double phallus. Two phalluses of different sizes and shapes grow from a partly preserved right human leg and adjacent groin area. The larger one is erect, whilst the other, smaller one is semi-erect. On both, the glans is not covered by the foreskin and the urethral opening is clearly discernible. Another object, unfortunately indistinguishable, was placed under the second phallus. The shape of the traces that survive suggest the presence of an eye or even a scorpion.[11]

A Latin inscription, partly preserved, covers both phalluses (Figure 5). Written in two verses, one on each phallus, it forms a sentence.

> On the upper phallus can be read:
> {}O[R or B]VS INVIDI[O]SIS NON
> On the lower one:
> FASCINATUR HOC·[Q or O]..[M or N or A]
> Translation:
> ..)O[R or B]US BY ENVIOUS CANNOT
> On the lower one
> BE FASCINATED

[7] Pavlidis 2015: 37.

[8] The archaeological evidence from the domus shows no disturbance or movement of material from adjacent buildings.

[9] Although we have not undertaken macroscopic analysis of the stone so far, it appears to be a kind of travertine (*tiburtinus lapis*) or similar stone. The varieties of beach rock and other stones used in Nicopolis: Zachos and Pavlidis 2010b.

[10] The bas-relief is now in the storerooms of the Nicopolis Museum, catalogue no. 6733.

[11] Such phalluses commonly ejaculate onto eyes or even scorpions. For a similar bas-relief of a fascinus from Leptis Magna (Libya), see Parker 2021.

Figure 4. Three intact sides (front, right edge, back) of the bas-relief (Archive, Ephorate of Antiquities of Preveza; photo E. Pavlidis).

Figure 5. Front of the bas-relief with the inscription (Archive, Ephorate of Antiquities of Preveza; photo J. Vanderpool).

Preceding the adjective *invidiosis*, a subject noun would probably have referred to someone who does not become bewitched or fascinated. Between the left edge of the stone and *invidiosis*, the end of a word — *-obus* or *-orus* — can be distinguished. Unfortunately, the plaque was broken, and the relief's state of preservation makes the reading of the inscription difficult, assuming that the broken part could yield more evidence. If the ending is really *-orus*, it might possibly be part of a name, for instance *Florus*, or if *-obus*, perhaps *Probus*.[12]

The lower phallus is inscribed with a verb, *fascinatur*, and a pronoun, *hoc* (Figure 7). After the verb and the pronoun, a neutral noun would be appropriate as a direct object. Only the letter Q or O in the beginning and one letter in the ending of this object are quite visible — *M* or *N* perhaps *A* — in the area of the glans. At least two letters before this ending can be seen but not deciphered, not enough to ascertain which word existed behind *hoc*.[13]

(Fl)orus or (Pr)obus invidiosis non
fascinatur hoc ...

Figure 6. Detail of the inscription on the first (upper) phallus (Archive, Ephorate of Antiquities of Preveza; photo J. Vanderpool).

[12] The missing space on the body seems insufficient for a longer name.
[13] Which is the same as *hoc* alone.

Figure 7. Detail of the inscription on the second (lower) phallus
(Archive, Ephorate of Antiquities of Preveza; photo J. Vanderpool).

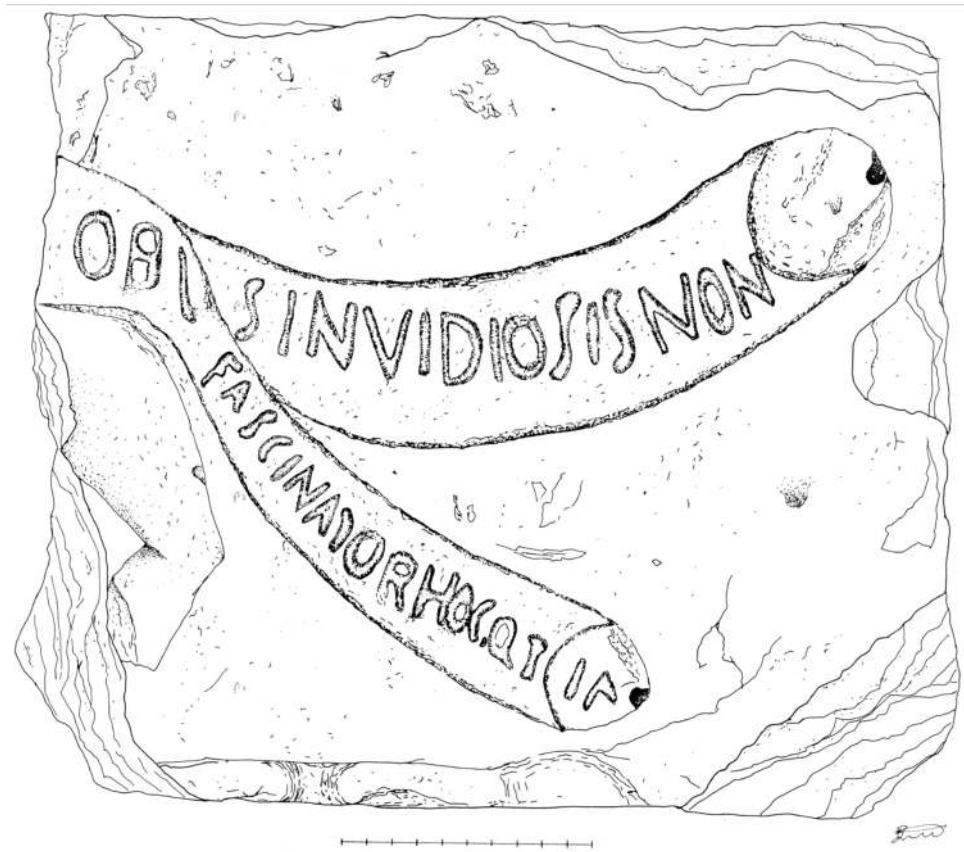

Figure 8. Drawing of the double phalluses with the inscription
(Archive, Ephorate of Antiquities of Preveza; drawing V. Souga).

This (object) or a personal name (e.g., Florus or Probus) cannot be fascinated (charmed) by envious (missing subject).

Worth noting is that the letter forms give the impression of not being really professional and rather resembling graffiti (Figure 8).[14] The rendering of the letters makes the inscription difficult to read and raises the question of whether the inscription is contemporary with the relief or was added at a later time. From what is preserved of the inscription, even though it is amateurishly done, no words are used that could mark its Latin as 'vulgar.'[15]

The verb *fascinare* is understood to derive from the Latin term *fascinus*. In Roman society, the *fascinus* was the incarnation of the divine phallus. The word *fascinus* referred either to a deity named Fascinus, to phallus-

[14] Many examples of Vulgar Latin are known from Pompeii and Herculaneum; see Funari 1995: 11; Adams 1982: 63.

[15] Moser 2006: 24.

shaped amulets, or to magic spells by which people asked for Fascinus' protection. Pliny the Elder called Fascinus the *medicus invidiae*, by which he meant the god provided treatment for victims of envy (the evil eye) and/or protection against witchcraft.[16]

A variety of depictions of phalloi and their interpretation can be found in Latin literature (Catullus, Martial, Juvenal, Horace, Tibullus), including satire, elegy,[17] and the *Priapea*, a collection of poems about the phallic god Priapus.[18] Many scholars have examined Roman phallic imagery from the perspective of eroticism, pornography, and sexual orientation, considering the apotropaic uses of the phallus as a secondary component of the broader study of Roman sexuality. But phalluses endowed with magical and protective properties should be considered separately from other uses of phallic representation in pornographic and erotic studies of sexuality.[19]

This relief can obviously be characterized as an apotropaic device against the evil eye (*oculus invidus* or *invidiosus*) connected with the god Fascinus. This god is mentioned only by Pliny the Elder, and Fascinus is generally accepted to have been an ithyphallic god whose iconographic representation focused on his exaggerated genitals.[20] The earliest relief depicting a phallus as Fascinus, dated to the end of the 2nd century or the beginning of the 1st century BC, is found on the jamb of the southern gate of the Roman wall at Ampurias.[21] During the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, phalluses used as apotropaic devices against the evil eye were frequently depicted in both the domestic and public spheres, appearing on personal amulets, mosaics, bells (*tintinnabula*), and wall reliefs in homes and public places.[22]

Fascinus can be connected with Priapus and with his phallic predecessors, Greek and Latin, Dionysus, Hermes, the *fascinus* in the cult of the Vestal Virgins[23], Liber, and Mutinus Titinus.[24] Priapus can be linked to both Dionysus and Hermes, the two Greek rustic gods whose phallic images were often considered to protect against evil.[25] Priapus can also be associated with Hermes through their shared ithyphallic nature, links with boundaries, and roles as guardians of travellers and the dead.[26] Dionysus, Hermes, Liber, Mutinus Titinus and finally Priapus were all fertility gods, depicted with giant phalli; processions in their honour and their images affirmed prosperity, growth, and fertility.[27]

These ithyphallic gods had a protective role which developed naturally from their fertility-bringing functions. At the same time, gods of this type (Pan, Silvanus, Faunus) might also have hostile, aggressive aspects that frightened and harmed people. In this regard, personifications of deities should be considered powers encompassing both cruelty and kindness.[28] The essential, main power of such deities can conveniently be symbolized by the phallus, a symbol that presents the original god's dual nature, protective on the one hand and aggressive or dangerous on the other. The phallus thus becomes the apotropaic object of Greek and Roman times. The range of objects in the Graeco-Roman world that could be made in the form of the male genitals, or decorated with them, was wide.[29]

The apotropaic symbolism of the phallus seems to have been especially characteristic of Roman Italy. The Greek phallus had a religious role; objects with the same function have been found in Italy. Elements of Hellenistic culture, beliefs and religious practices dated to the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC were transferred to Roman Italy. Iconographic elements of the phallus and its power to avert the evil eye as an apotropaic device were embedded in the art and religion of the Etruscans, as well as of the Greeks. Those origins of the phallus were adapted and developed by the Romans, who turned the Graeco-Italic phallus into a unique independent symbol attested by a variety of images.

In the Roman world there are many different depictions of the apotropaic phallus. Phallic symbols were used both as personal good luck charms and in more public ways, as architectural elements on walls, floors, building exteriors, and the like, not casual graffiti but carefully executed apotropaic depictions. These exaggerated phallic images are found on frescoes in both private houses and public buildings, on amulets, statues, carvings, tripods, drinking cups and vases. These presumed apotropaic symbols protected the inhabitants, the passerby, the wearers, the users from any outside evil. Depictions of the phallus served not only to protect the houses of wealthy Romans but also of the poor, showing the phallus to be a universal force against evil.[30]

The apotropaic phallus is not only joined anatomically to personified gods but can also be seen attached to other figures or in other forms, such as the phallus bird.[31] Belief in its power to avert misfortune and confer

[16] Pliny *HN* 28.
[17] Moser 2006: 70-76.
[18] Fischer 1969.
[19] Moser 2006: 1-2.
[20] Kuhnert, *RE* 6 (1909), s.v. *Fascinum*, cols. 2009-14; Nunó 2011: 113-28.
[21] Balil 1983: 115-16
[22] Nunó 2011: 114.
[23] Beard 1980: 12-27.
[24] Arnobius, *Adversus nationes* 4.7; Palmer 1974: 187–206.
[25] Moser 2006: 31.
[26] Johns 1982: 52.
[27] Johns 1982: 42; Moser 2006: 37.
[28] Johns 1982: 94.
[29] Johns 1982: 63.
[30] Clarke 1998, 2003.
[31] Boardman 1992.

protection against the evil eye in household settings is attested by the presence of phallic apotropaic objects in various places in houses and associated areas. These objects constitute a link between public or state religion and what has been labeled as private religion, since the domus is considered part of an intermediate stage between public and private, the state and the citizen.

The full extent of the phallus' direct individualized power can be seen in the phallic plaques that throng the streets of Pompeii.[32] Throughout the city, on the exteriors of public and private establishments, on buildings and roads, the image of the phallus as an apotropaic symbol is inescapable.

The representations of phalli that line the streets and decorate the interiors of the houses of Pompeii[33] present a deliberate, straightforward use of the phallus as a protective religious force. Their specific locations — on exteriors or interiors, near crossroads, marking public or private buildings, on residences whether poor or wealthy, ubiquitously at entrances, on both main and side streets — create an organized, precise image of a city reliant on the phallus as a form of divine protection.

Phallic good luck charms were not always plainly depicted. They might be accompanied by some other motif to make their apotropaic force even more explicit. Sometimes a phallus was represented in personified form, as a fantastic autonomous little creature or used as the main theme of a complex decorated object. The most common association of the phallus is with an eye, or pair of eyes. Images of eyes were themselves considered a charm against the evil eye. Some versions of the phallus depict it with eyes.[34] Others combine the glans with depictions of eyes, perhaps deliberately to create visual ambiguity. In the Nicopolis relief, the traces of another object under the second phallus that might represent an eye or something else are unfortunately indeterminate.

To provide a preliminary report for the Nicopolis bas-relief, images of diphallic objects or with double phalluses should be examined. Examples survive from Pompeii and Herculaneum,[35] but also appear elsewhere and seem to have been a familiar feature in Roman life all over the Empire. Important in the present instance are bas-reliefs that represent the same or a similar subject.[36] Four such reliefs are known from the island of Delos dated to the 1st century BC.[37] Two of them depict two animal-shaped (zoomorphic) phalluses that themselves have small phalluses, whilst their tails are also depicted as phalluses and the inscriptions have apotropaic meaning. An example from Clunia in Spain has recently been discussed.[38] The bas-relief from Leptis Magna depicting a zoomorphic double phallus ejaculating on a scorpion and an eye offers the closest parallel to the one from Nicopolis in terms of material, technique and iconography.[39] According to Moser, this kind of image has, among other things, prophylactic action, ensuring the protection of the space it is placed in, while the additional phallus can be seen as a way of increasing the protective power.[40]

The inscription on the relief from Nicopolis has great significance. Latin inscriptions are relatively uncommon in Nicopolis, at least up to now, and in fact very rare in the city of Augustus compared to those in Greek. An important Latin inscription from the trophy of Actium is preserved that provides plentiful information about a public cult in Nicopolis, mentioning that Poseidon and Mars helped Octavian win the naval battle against Marcus Antonius and Cleopatra.[41] The Actium trophy, with its inscription, not only dominated the entire ancient city visually but also attested to Roman dominion over the region.

Even rarer are Latin inscriptions that deal with private life, making the inscribed phallic bas-relief thus far unique. The surviving information about the private life of the residents of Nicopolis is very fragmentary. We know that the majority were Greeks from adjacent areas and this population, together with a certain number of Roman colonists, helped create the amalgamated city (*synoikismos*) of Nicopolis.[42]

The bas-relief offers important information about its owner. He was apparently wealthy, since he could afford a luxurious domus and imported goods such as this relief, which was probably imported because it is an artefact that cannot be integrated into the known artistic traditions of Nicopolis and was obviously made by a Roman artist. The owner moreover knew Latin, even if he himself was not a Roman.[43]

[32] Grant 1975; Bragantini *et al.* 1981-1992; Carratelli 1990, vols. 1-9; De Franciscis and Bragantini 1995.

[33] In Pompeii one particular fragmentary example provides a great number of actual relatively iconic representations of the phallus. It also offers more conventionally inspired Priapic, apotropaic images; quite a few memorable examples of Priapus as a phallic god who protects an entrance, a room, a house from the evil eye with his large phallus are evident. Gazda 1991; Moser 2006: 27-40.

[34] Johns 1982: 66.

[35] The standing Priapus, with two erect phalluses, on a fresco in the main lupanar of Pompeii is an excellent example of this type of representation (Galassi 2016: 281-82), along with other objects, usually metallic, such as amulets or bells (*tintinnabulae),* as for instance the extraordinary item in the Naples Museum, inventory no. 27835, first published by Fiorelli (1866: 13, no. 167).

[36] Such representations are in fact quite rare.

[37] Two of them are inscribed marble bas-reliefs in the Delos Museum, inventory nos. A 4020 and A 4021: Marcadé 1973: 329-31.

[38] Villa 2016: 364-65.

[39] Parker 2021.

[40] Moser 2006: 44-45.

[41] Zachos 2015: 65.

[42] Zachos 2015: 23-25.

[43] An important point because the number of Romans in Nicopolis was significantly less than the Greek population: Samsaris 1994: 14-36.

The relief presented in this paper can easily be dated to between the end of the 1st and the mid-2nd century AD. This proposed dating is supported by the material itself, a type of stone (travertine) that can be found in many Roman buildings all over the Empire also dated to this period. During early Imperial times its use was common because this stone was inexpensive, easily cut, and a simple solution for construction work;[44] after the 3rd century AD, its application appears to be more limited.

The letter shapes in the inscription, which are not professionally carved, moreover encourage the assumption that the relief cannot be dated earlier than the mid-1st century AD, though the inscription could have been done later but before the end of the 3rd century.

These observations harmonize with the dating of the domus where the relief was found, which is documented to have been in use from the second half of the 1st century until the early 7th century AD. Taking the excavation data into account, the duration of its use can be divided into three main phases: early (late 1st to late 2nd century AD), middle (with a renovation in the 4th century AD after the 3rd-century barbarian invasions), and late (the early Byzantine period). The relief can be attributed to the first phase of the domus' use.

Finally, the motif of a double phallus in motion accompanying figures or animals is found mainly between the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. As mentioned above, such depictions are known from Pompeii, Herculaneum, Leptis Magna, and other sites. The double phallus represented on these examples depicts diphallia, a rare existent urological condition. Some scholars have suggested that these kinds of depictions, including priapism, even if sometimes exaggerated, do in fact present something natural and existent.[45] Roman society in the early Empire was used to peculiar spectacles. In this context, knowledge of anatomical variations was used not to make scientific statements but to show natural objects or pathological traits while simultaneously believing in their divine and apotropaic powers.

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[44] The use of travertine at Ostia: van der Meer and Stevens 2000. Zachos and Pavlidis (2010b) discuss the use of a local sandstone at Nicopolis that differs significantly from this relief.

[45] The value of anatomical variations, known and depicted by the ancients, to modern medicine: Galassi 2016.

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Sacred Transitions: Protecting City Gates in Sicily and Magna Graecia

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Abstract

The sacred protection of city walls was widespread in the ancient world. Built as fortresses and perceived as symbols of identity, city gates became emblematic of the city itself. To safeguard their integrity, they were placed in the custody of various deities. This paper presents some archaeological evidence of the protective devices and practices employed for the sacred defence of city walls and gates in the Greek colonial world. The evidence is represented by niches of different shapes and sizes, which in Greek cities are considered the best indication that guardian statues were used at thresholds. Based on the occurrence of niches in the archaeological record and the comparison of them with evidence from the Greek motherland, this paper considers the potential protective qualities of such objects in the city walls and gates of Sicily and Magna Graecia, thereby suggesting the essential role of heroes and heroized ancestors in sacred defence. A notable case is the fortifications of the Greek colony of Akragas, where niches were discovered long ago, scattered across the same bedrock into which Gates II and IV were cut.

Introduction

The cities and settlements of Sicily and Magna Graecia were first provided with walls towards the end of the Archaic era.[1] In the ancient world, wall circuits were one of the primary mechanisms to defend urban spaces and define territory. Since they required significant resources from the community, the erection of fortifications must also have been formative for the development of communal identity. The blocks for the walls were usually extracted from local stone quarries, making these structures to some degree part of the natural environment.[2] The monumental size and appearance of these fortifications, however, made them highly emblematic urban monuments.[3] Wall circuits were punctuated with varying numbers of gates that allowed access into the cities and formed transitions between the urban and natural environments.[4] Since the gates were connected to the broader territory by road networks, the separation between the two types of environment did not mean exclusion.[5] Urban gates, therefore, were crucial in communicating with the outside world, which harboured potential dangers from which protection was necessary. Gates were thus built as architectural strong points because they risked being the most vulnerable areas of the city: a construction designed to defend others had to be defended itself.[6] Sacred protection for city walls and gates was widespread in the ancient world. Two recent conferences and books have focused on this phenomenon, especially in connection with the Near East and Egypt and the doors of sanctuaries in late antiquity.[7] This article is part of a larger work, currently in progress, that examines the phenomenon of the sacred defence of gates in Sicily and Magna Graecia, two areas that have thus far been neglected in the literature. Most recent research pertaining to settlement fortifications in these areas has focused rather on architecture and construction methods, using existing remains as sources of evidence.[8]

Research into the sacred protection of city walls and gates in Sicily and Magna Graecia should begin by assessing the archaeological evidence for the nature of the protective devices and practices found at the gates, such as niches for statues, or *pinakes* and bas-reliefs. We must keep in mind the limitations of the reconstruction of these practices through material documentation alone, especially when other sources are lacking, as is

[1] See Scalisi (2010), who also deals with the structural analysis of defensive buildings in Sicily's Greek colonies.
[2] Technical and economic aspects of fortifications: Bessac 2016.
[3] The functions and sociocultural and economic aspects of fortifications: Müth 2016; Müth *et al.* 2016; Müth 2020. Fortifications also had symbolic value, so that they were often depicted as symbols of cities in the visual arts: Camporeale 2012; Müth *et al.* 2016b: 128.
[4] Regarding these aspects: Hölscher 1998: 69. Han (2009: 43) addresses their philosophical implications: 'The intervals articulate not only perception but also life. Transitions and sections lend it a particular direction, in other words, a meaning.' (*Die Intervalle gliedern nicht nur die Wahrnehmung, sondern auch das Leben. Übergänge und Abschnitte verleihen ihm eine bestimmte Richtung, d.h. einen Sinn.* [trans. S. Kennell]).
[5] As Schütte (1997: 160) put it, 'breaking through divisions and establishing connections,' city gates are places where such separations are recomposed (*Trennung durchbrechen und Verbindungen herstellen* [trans. S. Kennell]).
[6] This is only one of the dichotomies that pertain to city gates, which open and close, reveal and hide, separate and connect, and so on (Verderame 2017).
[7] Michel 2017; van Opstall 2018. For the Greek world, see n. 10 below.
[8] On Sicily, see (among others) Fiorentini 2008, 2009; Mertens 2003; Pope 2014; Scalisi 2010; Sconfienza 2003. Two exceptions are Jonasch 2020, who examines the impact of war on Sicily and its inhabitants, and Caliò, Gerogiannis, and Kopsacheili (2020), who review the most recent contributions on the birth and development of fortifications and defensive structures; see also De Vincenzo 2020. Fachard (2016) and Müth, Schneider, Schnelle, and De Staebler (2016: ix-x) provide overviews of the research on fortifications in the Greek world.

the case here. When considering city gates as places of physical transition, we should note that passage from one state to another is always dangerous and that this danger must in ancient times have been controlled by purification rituals and other methods of negotiating liminal zones.[9]

Means of protection: *Theoi propylaioi* and niches

Because of their strategic and symbolic importance and to safeguard their integrity and that of the people who passed through them, city gates were placed in the custody of various deities, to whom rituals and sacrifices were devoted. These deities included Hecate, Hermes, and Apollo in the Greek world,[10] and Culsan and Ianus in the Etruscan and Roman worlds.[11] Rarely have the material remnants of the divine protection of gates in the Greek colonial world been studied or even recognized. Nevertheless, some archaeological traces remain visible in city gates, quarried into the rock or cut into the stone blocks that appear to indicate ancient prophylactic or apotropaic practices.

The niches are considered the best archaeological evidence for the use of guardian statues at the entrances to Greek cities.[12] As they contained statues, these niches could also be considered akin to open-air sanctuaries, but typological criteria for their basic functional interpretation are lacking. Whether the niches housed statues, reliefs, offerings, or simple and functional lighting systems can be determined thanks to historical-literary sources, context, location, and structural characteristics such as shape, size, presence of cornices, dowel holes, and other hollows, such as cuttings for statue bases. Niches could also fulfil a practical function (like a shelf) not necessarily connected with the protection of the gate and the city.[13] The best criteria, however, would be the niches' structural characteristics. One of the best examples of this is found in the ancient Sicilian city of Akragas, which was founded by settlers from Gela *c.* 580 BC (Figure 1).[14]

Near the Archaic city gates (Gate II, Gate IV, and Gate IX), several niches intended to contain *pinakes* are still visible.[15] Gate II is dated to the late Archaic-Classical period, contemporary with the walls' foundation. The niches are located in a natural indentation in the rocks. At the base of the niches, a small rectangular area was found excavated into the tuff, with ritual pits and remains of hearths (Figure 2).[16] Despite the lack of details to support a definite interpretation, the niches of Gate II at Akragas appear unsuitable for housing large cult statues, since they are small and shallow.

Another interesting case is the Greek colony of Selinus, founded by Megara Hyblaea *c.* 628 BC.[17] Two different kinds of niches are found in the northern bastion of the city walls, which was constructed during the 4th century BC to reinforce the urban defences following military conflicts with the Carthaginians.[18] The first niche, it has been suggested, contained a *tropaion* that displayed arms to commemorate a victory over the defeated enemies (Figure 3),[19] whereas no hypothesis has been advanced for the second niche.[20] As at Selinus, some of the remains of the city gates at Paestum (ancient Poseidonia), founded by Sybaris, should be attributed to subsequent reconstructions of the original wall; that is the case of the niche in Porta Marina, which was rebuilt after the establishment of the Roman colony in the 3rd century BC.[21] Also in continental Italy, an isolated niche exists inside the city gate of Moio della Civitella, 20km from Velia, a Greek *phrourion* or fortified Lucanian settlement dating to the end of the 4th century BC.[22]

The prophylactic or apotropaic function of these remains, or at least of their supposed content, can be discussed through comparison with evidence from other areas and periods of the Greek world. Here the most famous testimonies of niches in city gates are single structures accompanied by reliefs of deities,

[9] Van Gennep 1981; Parker Pearson and Richards 1994: 22. In this sense, city gates can be defined as instances of 'architectural structuring of ritualized action' (Garwood 2011: 271).

[10] The safety of a vulnerable space and those who frequented it could be achieved by creating places of worship for specific deities (Seiffert 2006). On the *Theoi propylaioi* in the Greek world, see also Charitonides 1960; Maier 1961; Pugliese Carratelli 1965; Weißl 1998 [2012], 2003.

[11] Belfiore 2015; Camporeale 2012; Cruccas 2016; Pugliese Carratelli 1965; Stevens 2016, 2017; Weißl 1998 [2012]; Zografou 2010. Literary sources indicate that subordinating the construction of the boundary walls to the inauguration of the *pomerium* seems to have been customary, thus sacralizing the outline of the walls. The furrow made by the plough was interrupted at the gates to make that space traversable, as it was not sacred. The sacredness denied to the doors was subsequently compensated by the exposition of *Theoi propylaioi*: *ThesCRA* 4 (2005), s.v. *Porta* (296-99, F. Marcattili).

[12] Faraone 1992: 7-8.

[13] Weißl 1998 [2012], 11. A function of convenience is suggested by the position inside the gate, as opposed to outside.

[14] The foundation date of Akragas coincides in Pindar and Thucydides, Cordano 2000: 37-38.

[15] Some of the niches are plastered. Gate IX: De Miro 1986: 242. The gates of Akragas in general: Caminneci and Cucchiara 2020; De Cesare and Portale 2020; Fiorentini 2008, 2009; Tripodi 2003.

[16] The fill of the pit is unknown: Fiorentini 2009: 70 and 74–76. Gate II, with other examples of niches: Portale 2020: 143-51. We have only photographs of these niches, which lack exact dimensions and comprehensive descriptions.

[17] Cordano 2000: 41 and 99.

[18] The fortifications of Selinus: Mathieu 2003; Mertens 2003.

[19] Dimensions: height 153cm, width 0.74cm, and depth 0.55cm (Mathieu 2003: 184, Abb. 181-182). Further details of trophies: Bettalli 2009.

[20] Dimensions: height 0.52cm, width 0.55cm, and depth 0.53cm (Mathieu 2003: 189-91, Abb. 292).

[21] The foundation of Poseidonia: Cordano 2000: 57-59; Brands 1988: n. 30.2.1, figs. 138-143; *ThesCRA* 4 (2005: 297), s.v. *Porta* (F. Marcattili). The bas-reliefs of Porta Sirena can be compared to similar decorations of the Mid-Republican period (Vitti and Voza 2010: 324–25). Other niches found inside gates, such as the Arcadian Gate at Messene: Weißl 1998 [2012]: 232-234; Seiffert 2006: 147–48. The Italian peninsula: *ThesCRA* 4 (2005: 296-99), s.v. *Porta* (F. Marcattili).

[22] Greco and Schnapp 1983: 393–94. I thank Agnes Henning for bringing this source to my attention.

Figure 1. Archaeological Map of Agrigento. After Schmidt and Griffo 1958.

such as those of the pillars of the gates of Thasos,[23] as well as the niche in the Spring Gate at Priene.[24] Literary, iconographic, and epigraphic sources sometimes provide information about the practitioners of the cults and the rites that were performed at the gates,

[23] Maier 1961; Müth 2016: 185 and n. 7 (with further references); Picard 1962.

[24] Charitonides 1960; Seiffert 2006: 147. On Priene, see below n. 47. The representative and perhaps protective role of grave monuments in Greece already in the Late Mycenaean period: Hubert 2016: 76–79 on Mycenae.

Figure 2. Agrigento, Gate II. Niches. Photo Author.

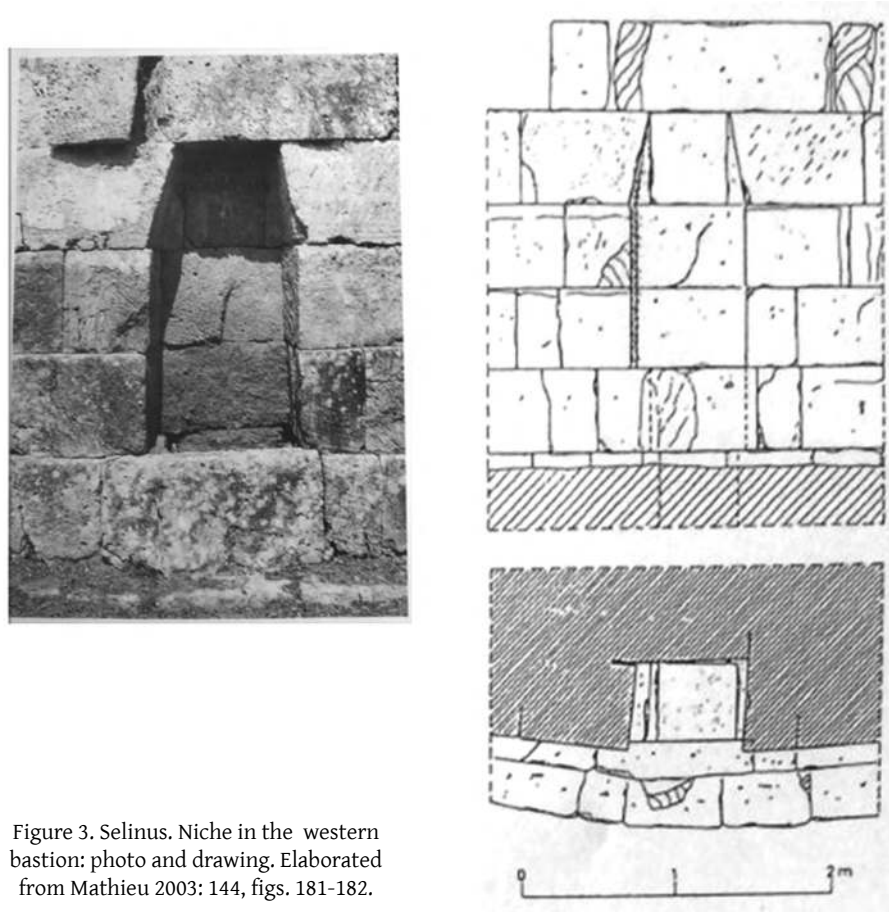

Figure 3. Selinus. Niche in the western bastion: photo and drawing. Elaborated from Mathieu 2003: 144, figs. 181-182.

Figure 4. Akrai : pinax representing the so-called 'heroic banquet or funeral'. http://www.arachne.dainst.org/entity/174560. Photo H. Oehler.

confirming the widespread practice of placing deities at boundaries for protection.[25]

Regarding niches of varying size placed in rows, such as those at Akragas, the most relevant comparisons from a structural point of view are with monuments dating to the Hellenistic period, especially in eastern Sicily, including those at Akrai, Neaition (Noto), and Syracuse, which were all centres located in a culturally and politically coherent area.[26] Some artefacts located mostly in quarries come from Syracuse, a colony founded *c.* 734 BC by Greek settlers from Corinth. In the Latomia St. Venera, for example, some recesses can be seen along the walls of the paths created by the removal of the stone, apparently created during the extractive phase.[27] As with the niches at Akragas, these recesses might have had a religious purpose, possibly as a form of compensation to the rock nymphs for the stones that had been quarried.[28] The best-known evidence of niches can be found at Akrai, founded by Syracuse in 663 BC.[29] These niches appear as quadrangular recesses, some of which still contained *pinakes* (stone reliefs, not clay tablets) representing the so-called 'heroic banquet or funeral' (Figure 4). This theme, popular among the funerary artefacts of the Hellenistic period, was adopted as a distinctive scheme for the heroes and gods who were close to men.[30] The reliefs in the quarry of

[25] Rituals performed in honour of Hecate: Seiffert 2006: 130; Weißl 1998 [2012]: 166-70; Zografou 2010: 93–122.
[26] See also Portale 2017: 148-49.
[27] These recesses cannot therefore be linked to a cult that would have started after the area was abandoned, as initially proposed (Mastelloni 2014: 236). The evidence in Syracuse: Portale 2020: 153-63.
[28] Mastelloni 2014: 225.
[29] See *BTCGI* 13 (1994: 189-204), s.v. Palazzolo Acreide (Marotta D'Agata, Garozzo, and Moreschini).
[30] Portale 2012. The *Totenmahl* in Hellenistic Sicily: Portale 2011. The rituals of hero-cult: Ekroth 2007: 106–108; the status of the hero:

Figure 5. To the left Henna and to the right Mount Alburchia. Elaborated from Valbruzzi and Giannitrapani 2015: fig. 5, and Cucco 2016, fig. 19, respectively.

the Intagliatella in the Templi Ferali (the urban area) were sometimes accompanied by inscriptions explicitly attesting the title 'hero.'[31] This title was combined with one or more proper names and/or accompanied by attributes. Old excavations identified the remains of ritual practices such as libations and *thysiai.*[32] In Neaition, which literary sources record only from the 3rd century BC, niches occupied the walls of two small rocky sanctuaries defined as *heroa* which are believed to have served as places of cultic and funerary rituals.[33]

The niches found in central Sicily have also been attributed to heroic cults or the heroized dead. One is situated in the St. Ninfa district of Henna (Enna), where one of the city's gateways was apparently located;[34] the other is located on Mount Alburchia near Gangi (Palermo), close to a path that led to the necropolis and was thus probably one of the access routes to the city (Figure 5).[35]

All the above-mentioned Sicilian examples were located along roads and quarry routes or near areas that had funerary uses, such as Gate IX at Akragas (Figure 6).[36] Only the series of niches by Gates II and IV in Akragas, however, were part of the city walls, in other words, cut into the rock of the city gate.

My preliminary hypothesis is that the size and quantity of the niches likely constitute a distinguishing factor and hint at their function. Within the walls, isolated niches such as those at Selinus, Poseidonia, or Moio della Civitella could house a cult statue[37]. This interpretation is supported by the example of the right wall of the Porta Marina in Pompei, which was built in the Augustan period, where a niche contained the remains of a terracotta statue of Minerva, and by the niches of Porta Stabia.[38]

More crowded niches, however, could house monuments related to a specific cult, such as that of the heroized dead during the Hellenistic period in Akrai. Of Gate II at Akragas, Julius Schubring, a pioneer of the archaeology of Akragas, wrote in 1870, 'The narrow, sunken way to the gate, perhaps artificially deepened by human hands, contains a multitude of epitaphs (*eine Menge Epitaphien*) that show that men knew how to increase the ruggedness of this gorge path, wedged in between two hills and most advantageously dominated by them, still further by hallowing it with the burial of corpses.'[39]

Such comparisons and observations can contribute to a working hypothesis that gives the deceased (perhaps through the process of heroization) an important role in protecting the main entrances to cities in ancient Sicily and Magna Graecia. In the case of Gate II, the most controversial aspect remains the chronology of the niches and the foundation of the cult — whether or not it dates back to the construction of the wall during the Classical or Hellenistic period, in keeping with the

Ekroth 2015 (with references).

[31] A recess of the quarry located near the main entrance to the public area contains a large rock carved with a bas-relief of a sacrifice and banquet. Portale (2012: 142–44) considers the protagonists of this scene to be the founding heroes of the community, who continue to protect it.

[32] Portale 2012: 144; Scirpo 2015: 483; 2018: 312; Portale 2020: 163-66.

[33] Ferrara and Santalucia 2018.

[34] The topography of the greek city is almost unknown. Some scholars believe that the little valley of the St. Ninfa district also had a sanctuary dedicated to Demeter (Valbruzzi and Giannitrapani 2015: 45–46, figs. 5-6).

[35] Here, the Hellenistic-Roman contexts, which are located outside the urban area, have been linked to the cult of the heroized dead (Cucco 2016).

[36] De Miro 1986: 242, tables XXXVI-VII: in the long rocky wall close to the Hellenistic necropolis, interpreted as a quarry, dozens of small rectangular niches have been excavated, some of them with architectural façades.

[37] See nn. 17 and 22.

[38] Porta Marina: Brands 1988: n. 33.2.4, figs. 194-199; Weißl 1998 [2012]: 155-56. Ellis and Devore (2008: 317–19) date the walkways inside the Porta Stabia to around the end of the 2nd century BC.

[39] Schubring 1870: 16 (trans. V. Garaffa, rev. S. Kennell). Cf. Schubring 1887: 53–54.

Figure 6. Akragas. Gate IX. After De Miro 1986: tav. XXXVI.

other Sicilian examples. Recent archaeological research suggests the area near Gate II was abandoned during the 4th – 3rd centuries BC,[40] a time of conflict in the history of Greek Sicily.[41] The possibility that the niches were built after the walls might thus explain the analogies with similar monuments in other *poleis* in Sicily, such as Akrai, Neaition (Noto), and Syracuse, though further research would be needed to confirm this.

Furthermore, we do not know whether the recipients of worship, the figures of the heroized dead, should be divided into two different categories—ancestors/founders and/or heroes/founders—since both cults played an important role in the promotion of the political-religious identity of ancient communities in general.[42] Regarding the presence of an ancestors' cult, Classical Sicily offers the extraordinary testimony of the *Lex Sacra Selinuntina*, which mentions the *Tritopatores*, ancestors or ancestral spirits who received sacrifices like the heroes.[43] 'Progenitor and founding heroes'—the *Genétores*—are also documented in non-Greek Sicily, especially in the Elymian-Sikel area during the 4th – 3rd centuries BC. Mentioned in the so-called Decree of Nacone, they received annual sacrifices.[44]

In Greece and Asia Minor, hero worship is a well-known practice. Heroes were more locally defined than deities. From the Archaic to the Hellenistic periods, ritual sacrifices were made to both heroes and gods, and some cult areas, such as niches, were shared.[45] Heroes were also worshipped in the city gates, which sometimes held cenotaphs or places of worship, as is true of the tomb of Aetolus inside the gate leading to Olympia and the 'Spring Gate' at Priene, which has a niche accompanied by a fourth-century inscription.[46] These examples highlight the role of heroes as wartime protectors.[47]

The review of these monuments from Magna Graecia and Sicily can be enriched with examples of sculptures mostly found out of context attributed to city gates

[40] Evidence for ritual in the Archaic and Classical period: Portale 2020: 146.

[41] Parello and Amico 2015. In particular, Akragas saw a succession of victories and defeats of different Greek and Punic factions that correspond to phases of destruction and restoration of the city walls (Fiorentini 2008: 115–17).

[42] Caneva and Coppola 2002 (with references).

[43] The lead tablet contains texts with prescriptive norms on sacrifice and purification, intended to regulate cathartic measures: Salvo 2012. '(Sacrifice) to the *Tritopatores*, the impure, as (one sacrifices) to the heroes, having poured a libation of wine down through the roof, and of the ninth parts burn one': Salvo 2012: 128. For the *lex sacra*, see also Cusumano 2013; Scullion 2000. The sacred area and the rituals linked to the *Tritopatores*: Helas and Adorno 2021 (with references). The *lex sacra* of Selinus moreover represents a point of union with Ain Hofra, an extra-urban area of Cyrene where niches, reliefs, and inscriptions have also been discovered (Fabbricotti 2007; Inglese 2014; Luni and Salvo 2012).

[44] The decree of the Elymian-Sikel centre: Lombardo 1992. Ekroth (2002: 288–89) also notes analogies between the cult of the *Tritopatores* and that of the *Genétores*. The transposition of hero cult to civic scale (possibly in favour of the founding fathers), Portale 2012: 142.

[45] Ekroth 2007: 108–111.

[46] Pausanias 5.4.4 (Elis and Olympia); Cruccas 2016: 7, nn. 31-32; Maier 1961: 104; Ekroth 2007: 111. Priene: Weißl 1998 [2012]: 236-37. Other niches probably related to gates: Ruppe 2007.

[47] Hero cult and its widespread presence in the archeological record: Ekroth 2009. Ancestor cult in Messenia: Contursi 2017 (with references).

in some indigenous centres and the Phoenician island of Motya. In the latter, a sculpture showing a fight between a bull and two heraldic lions was found that probably belonged to the upper part of the north gate; as the excavator wrote, 'The strength of the beasts would function as a guarantee of security for the walls and safety for the whole city and its inhabitants.'[48] The same subject, a bull slaughtered by a lion, appears in a second sculpture from the end of the 6th century BC, probably from Halaesa.[49] Finally, a limestone sphinx that the excavator attributes to a city gate comes from the indigenous centre of Castiglione di Ragusa.[50]

In addition to being sites of demarcation, protection, and decoration, city gates may have had a fourth function that at present has been found only at Mendolito di Adrano, an anonymous indigenous centre in eastern Sicily. Embedded within the southern city gate, which can be dated to the 6th century BC, is an inscription on a block of sandstone that records the lexical triad *akara*, *touta*, and *verega*. Though as yet incompletely translated, this inscription recalls the institutional Italic *okri, touta, vereia*, or *acrem, civitas, iuventus*.[51] It may have been a way of proudly conveying the identity and institutional consciousness of the centre's inhabitants to both the Greek and the Italic worlds.[52]

Conclusion

The preceding discussion shows that in Magna Graecia, from the Archaic period at least down to the 3rd century BC, certain city walls and gates were provided with niches that could accommodate statuettes and bas-reliefs. Even some city gates in the non-Greek areas of ancient Sicily were modified to protect the community as well as to aesthetically enhance and mark the point of passage. Comparisons with structures in the Greek motherland, iconographic representations of preserved bas-reliefs with inscriptions in Sicily, analysis of sacred texts (the *lex sacra Selinuntina* and the decree of Nacone), and other evidence from quarries and access roads to settlements suggest that these niches housed images which received a form of worship dedicated to heroes or heroized ancestors. Their location near city gates suggests their sacred defensive role. The niches of heroes and ancestors of Gate II at Akragas are less monumental compared to the other temples and shrines that protected the walls of the city with great visual impact.[53] As a sacred place of the *Heroes Propilai*, however, these niches would have safeguarded the city's entrance at its most difficult moments.[54]

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[48] Mertens-Horn 1993: 139–42. The Lion Gate at Mycenae: Hubert 2016: 78.

[49] Moscati 1988: 647 n. 377.

[50] Di Stefano 2016. *Thorsphingen* in the East: Ritter 2011; Weißl 1998 [2012]: 83-84. Regarding the sphinx in the East, Greece, and the Etruscan and Roman world, see the other papers in Winkler-Horacek 2011.

[51] Which I translate as 'citadel, political unit and youth organization.' For treatments of the inscription see, e.g., Pelagatti 1964–1965: 250–52; Cordano 2012: 169; Mignosa 2017-2018: 221.

[52] The symbolic role of fortifications in terms of the idea of civilization and the sense of community belonging: Müth, Laufer, and Brasse 2016: 133–34.

[53] Brienza *et al.* 2016: 60.

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Some Evidence for Amulets in the Demeter and Kore Greek Sanctuary at Ancient Corinth[1]

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Abstract

Evidence is elusive for the dedication of amulets in the Demeter and Kore Sanctuary at Ancient Corinth because no literary or epigraphic sources referring to the dedicatory practices that took place in it have survived. On the other hand, the Sanctuary's plentiful published material evidence, especially the terracotta figurines and sculpture, is very helpful in bridging that gap. These publications suggest that many of the finds were probably offered in association with family-related issues such as birth, marriage, death and the household, and referred to the main deities' protection of human and agricultural fertility. These notions are now further supported by several, mostly unpublished, objects in various materials that were likely offered as amulets. The focus of this paper is to present these finds, their chronological framework and relevant manufacture details, to discuss their possible function as amulets, and to offer interpretations regarding their apotropaic power in the Sanctuary.

Introduction

Among the numerous miscellaneous finds dedicated in the Demeter and Kore Greek Sanctuary at Ancient Corinth (Figure 1) are at least 15 objects in various materials that were likely offered as amulets.[2] Following a brief review of the site's topography, main literary sources, and current knowledge about its chronology and religious context, I describe the selected objects in roughly chronological order grouped in three sections. Presented in the first section are 12 handmade objects: seven scarabs, five in faience, here represented by the clearest and possibly earliest one (Figures 2 and 3), and one in carnelian (Figures 4 and 5); in the second section are five handmade terracotta pendants, represented by two finds (Figures 6 and 7); and in the third section three coral objects are presented consisting of one handmade pendant (Figure 8) and two coral branches in their natural form. After describing and dating the objects in each section, I speculate on their potential apotropaic powers in the context of the Sanctuary and on the individuals and circumstances that may have driven their dedication.

The site's archaeological, literary, chronological, and religious context

The Sanctuary is located on the north slope of Acrocorinth and covers more than 700m^2. (Figure 1, with grid locations). It extended southward and up the hillside in a series of terraces and was linked to the city below by a road that passed along its lower north side. On the lowest part of the Sanctuary is the so-called Lower Terrace that was composed of a series of dining rooms (LT, I-N:12-29). According to current evidence, the earliest dining rooms date to around the third quarter of the 6th century BC, and by the late 5th century BC they extended across the hillside in four rows. In the late 5th century BC, a stepped processional way formalized movement through this part of the site. Until the late 4th century BC all the main cult buildings were located farther up on an artificial terrace called the Middle Terrace (MT, O-P:12 to P-R: 26). These consisted of a large square enclosure, called the *Oikos*, that presumably functioned as a temple in the Archaic and Classical periods, fronted by an open court, an altar, offering pits, and several rooms of uncertain function. The steepest part of the site above the Middle Terrace was the Upper Terrace (UT, Q–U:13–23) with theatral areas constructed for viewing the rituals below.

[1] I owe Ronald S. Stroud and Nancy Bookidis an immense debt of gratitude, as they encouraged me to publish the miscellaneous finds from the Sanctuary, sharing their vast knowledge of the site and Ancient Corinth with me. A first version of this paper was presented at the International Conference: Apotropaia and Phylakteria. Confronting Evil in Ancient Greece (December 14-15, 2020). I extend warm thanks to the organizers and participants of the conference for their helpful remarks, and to Nancy Bookidis and Véronique Dasen for commenting on an early draft of this paper. I also thank the following: Christopher A. Pfaff, Director of the Corinth Excavations, for his support; Ioulia Tzonou, Associate Director, and Manolis Papadakis, Assistant to the Associate Director, for facilitating my work in the museum and storerooms at Corinth and for their assistance with the images; David Peck, for the plan of the site, digitized by James A. Herbst (Figure 1); the late Ino Ioannidou and Lenio Bartzioti, and Petros Dellatolas, for photographs of the Corinth material (Figures 4-8); and Christina Kolb for the drawing of the faience scarab (Figure 3).

[2] This number does not necessarily include all the objects that were used and/or offered as amulets in the Sanctuary. For example, the *astragaloi* or knucklebones in terracotta and bronze, which marked ritual acts, may have become amulets too, see Klinger 2021: 114-116, nos. 148-149, pl. 22; Klinger 2022. For their actual use of amulets elsewhere, see the one in gold from the necropolis of Akanthus in Northern Greece (Dasen 2015: 196, pl. 11b), and another in amber secured with silver wire on a necklace from pyre S-D on Thasos (Sgourou 2001: 343- 345, figs. 29, 31). Other finds that may have been amulets are rings in various metals, a stalagmite piece, and several bronze bells, to be published in a later fascicle of *Corinth* 18.

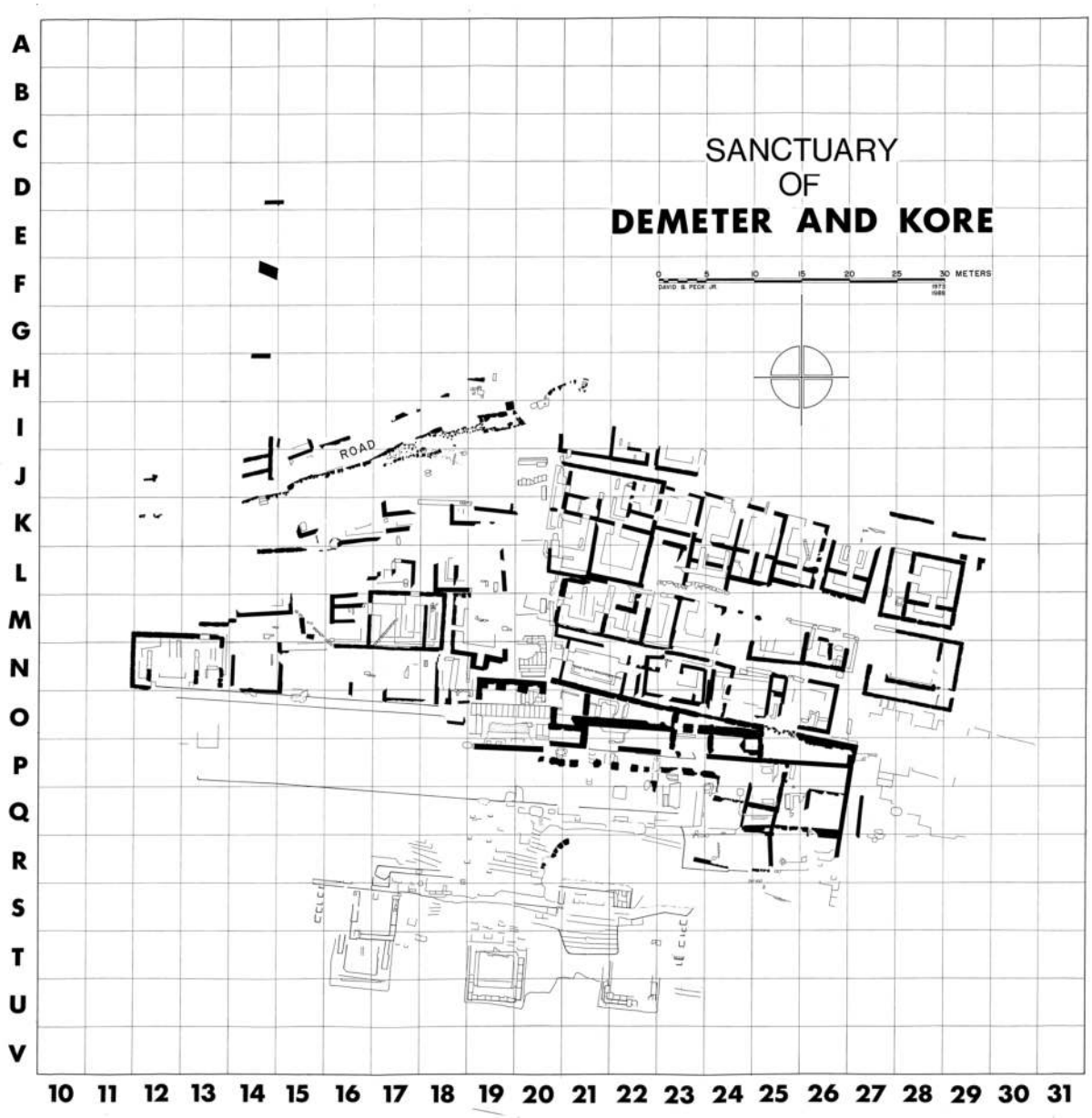

FIgure 1. Plan of the Sanctuary by David Peck, digitized by James A. Herbst, Photo ASCSA, Corinth Excavations.

The few literary sources relating to the Sanctuary and its deities do not preserve founding legends or give testimony on its timing, nature, or administration. One important source is Pausanias, who visited Corinth in *c.* AD 160. As he ascended Acrocorinth, he described ten shrines on his way (Pausanias, 2.4.6-7), one of which is that of Demeter and Kore. Another key source is Hesychius (5th century AD), who applied the epithet *Epoikidie* to Corinthian Demeter (Hesychius, *Lexicon*, II, s.v. ἐποικιδίη). This epithet is usually associated with Demeter's little house (*Oikos*) in the Archaic period and with her patronage of the household and protection of the family.[3] In addition, the identities of the goddesses in the Sanctuary are attested by graffiti,[4] typical kinds of terracotta sculpture and figurines,[5] models of food on *likna*,[6] and offering trays.[7]

In general, the site's transition to a place of worship devoted to Demeter and Kore occurred during the early 8th century BC, as suggested by the appearance of the earliest bronze jewelry of that date.[8] While some early miscellaneous finds are tentatively dated to the late

[3] Discussion of the sources in Bookidis and Stroud 1997: 1-8, 72, n. 23; Klinger, 2021: 2, 6, 11.

[4] Stroud 2013.

[5] Bookidis 2010; Merker 2000.

[6] Brumfield 1997.

[7] Bookidis and Pemberton 2015.

[8] For the material from Protogeometric through Protocorinthian (the 10th to the early 7th centuries BC) together with the earliest metal dedications, see Pfaff 1999.

7th or early 6th century BC, most of the finds discussed here are dated to the Archaic and Classical periods. The dating of these and most other finds from the Sanctuary, however, is imprecise for several reasons: few close deposits, steepness of the site, and its chronological span. In fact, dumped fills, composed of material from a lengthy chronological spread that almost always include Archaic, Classical, Hellenistic, and Roman layers, form the core of its stratigraphy.[9] Thus, in the discussion of the finds described here I note two kinds of dates: the object's estimated date, derived mainly from parallels presenting similar stylistic and formal qualities during the period in which the specific type was used, and the date of the latest objects within the context or lot where the item discussed here was found.

A review of the finds presented by the various publications of the Sanctuary indicates that its focus was agricultural and human fertility, the protection of children and their transition to adulthood, as well as the family. In some cases, the areas of responsibility of Demeter and Kore may have been overlapped by those of other visiting deities: Aphrodite, Artemis, Hermes, and, from the late 5th or early 4th century BC onward, Dionysos. A hero cult or cults may also have existed under the deities' protection. Examination of the terracotta finds' manufacture and, in many cases, their close connection with known workshops, and the paucity of imports support the conclusion that most worshippers were local. The types of finds furthermore suggest that the worshippers were mainly though not exclusively female.[10]

Based on one important discovery—grapes, a pomegranate seed, and figs—recovered through flotation from the floors of the Dining Building N:21 (Figure 1), Bookidis determined that one of the festivals celebrated in the Sanctuary was the Thesmophoria, or a local version of it. This is not necessarily the only ritual that took place. As Merker and Bookidis pointed out, within the course of a year several festivals might likely have been held there that were associated with the protection of childhood, marriage, and motherhood.[11]

The amulets

The verb περιάπτειν (periáptein) 'to tie on' and its derivatives are the most popular Greek terms concerning amulets, for example, περίαπτα (*periapta),* περιάμματα *(periammata)* 'the thing tied on' or 'amulets.'[12] Much scholarly work has been invested in describing and studying amulets, but most studies focused on those from the Roman period and later. An important exception is Faraone's work, which summarized and updated earlier studies on the various forms and types of amulets, natural or handmade, images and texts, that existed in ancient Greece.[13] In addition to this study is the increasing number of publications of various types of objects considered to be amulets that come from archaeological sites dedicated specifically to Demeter and to other deities,[14] as well as from graves.[15] All this work has provided parallels that pave the way to suggesting that the following objects found in the Sanctuary are also amulets. Though none of them carry Greek inscriptions to hint that they were amulets, and no literary sources have survived to suggest their use and offering as amulets, one important text does refer to Demeter's healing powers, one of the typical reasons for offering amulets in the ancient world.[16] In the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (lines 227-230), Demeter in disguise promotes her acceptance as a wet nurse for the newborn prince of Eleusis by claiming that she knows antidotes, presumably the use of her powers against disease, demons, or witchcraft, to keep such sources of harm away from a newborn child:

> θρέψω κοὔ μιν, ἔολπα, κακοφραδίῃσι τιθήνης
> οὔτ' ἄρ' ἐπηλυσίη δηλήσεται οὔθ' ὑποτάμνον:
> οἶδα γὰρ ἀντίτομον μέγα φέρτερον ὑλοτόμοιο,
> οἶδα δ' ἐπηλυσίης πολυπήμονος ἐσθλὸν ἐρυσμόν
>
> Never, I ween, through any heedlessness of his nurse shall witchcraft hurt him
> nor yet the Undercutter: for I know a charm far stronger than the Woodcutter,
> and I know an excellent safeguard against woeful witchcraft.

The translator noted that 'Undercutter' and 'Woodcutter' are probably popular names (after the style of Hesiod's 'Boneless One') for the worm thought to be the cause of teething and toothache.[17] A more likely translation for Demeter's terms in her speech, however, is not worms, but rather a supernatural force or demon thought to cause pain in the gums of teething babies.[18] As Dasen has pointed out,[19] in antiquity teething was considered potentially dangerous for small children, and various objects therefore served as amulets to ease the process and protect children. With these two aspects in mind, Demeter's healing and protective powers and the types of finds considered to

[9] For the problems of the Sanctuary's stratigraphy, see Bookidis and Stroud 1997: xx-xxii; Merker 2000: 1-2, 5-9; Bookidis and Pemberton 2015: 7; Klinger 2021: 2-3, 17-18 (the summary written with Bookidis).
[10] Merker 2000: 334-335; Bookidis 2010: 272-274; Klinger 2021: 6.
[11] Merker 2000: 335-341; Bookidis 2010: 268; Klinger 2021: 15-17.
[12] Dasen 2003: 276; Faraone 2018: 6-7, n. 26.
[13] Faraone 2018.
[14] Faraone 2018: 44, n.103, 73-74.
[15] Examples in Dasen 2003; Dasen 2015; Dubois 2012; Hermary 2000; Leurini 2000; Mazarakis Ainian 2005; Sgourou 2001; Tassignon 2005.
[16] On medical cures and Demeter and Kore elsewhere in the Greek world, see Forsén 1996: 142–144; Petridou 2017.
[17] Trans. H. G. Evelyn-White, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, London, 1974.
[18] Faraone 2001; Faraone 2018: 205.
[19] Dasen 2015: 191-194, figs. 4-5.

be amulets in earlier publications, some of which are used as parallels below, I proceed to a discussion of the finds: scarabs, terracotta pendants, and coral objects.

Scarabs

The six scarabs consist of five in faience (e.g., Figures 2 and 3) and one in carnelian (Figures 4 and 5). The primary function of an engraved scarab or gem was to serve as a seal, and indeed some of the loomweights from the Sanctuary bear incised or stamped markings.[20] None correspond to the scarab designs presented here, however; whether they were actually used as seals prior to their dedication is thus unknown.

The five scarabs made of faience are: MF-12529, MF-1970-063, MF-12050, MF-1970-02, and MF13274.[21] All are generally similar in their Egyptian blue color and type of material, mould-made and decorated with Egyptianizing subjects.[22] They were found among materials occupying a wide chronological span that cannot help date them or reconstruct their place of deposition. Nevertheless, the parallels suggest they all belong to the Archaic period.

Detailed examination of one of the earliest and most distinct of the five, MF-12529 (Figures 2 and 3), is particularly helpful in understanding their date and deposition in the Sanctuary. The scarab has a carefully modelled, slightly flat head and simply modelled legs. The prothorax is divided from the elytra by two incised lines and the elytra by one. On its underside, the motifs of the intaglio are placed vertically on three levels. Above is the very worn image, now mostly encrusted with dirt, of a recumbent creature with a large crown to the right and perhaps an ankh on top of its rump. The middle (main) level shows a crouching figure to the right with his left hand to his mouth, identified as an infant Horus, in front of a vertical Egyptian cartouche containing three signs that from top to bottom read *men-ka-Ra*. The cartouche was once identified to the name of a prince of the 25th dynasty, dated 750-650 BC,[23] but currently its meaning, 'Stable is the ka of Ra', could also be considered as a powerful maxim.[24] Beneath, on the bottom level, is a *nb (neb)* basket sign, 'lord.' The scarab is longitudinally pierced for suspension.

FIgure 2. MF-12529, faience scarab from the Demeter and Kore Sanctuary, Photo author.

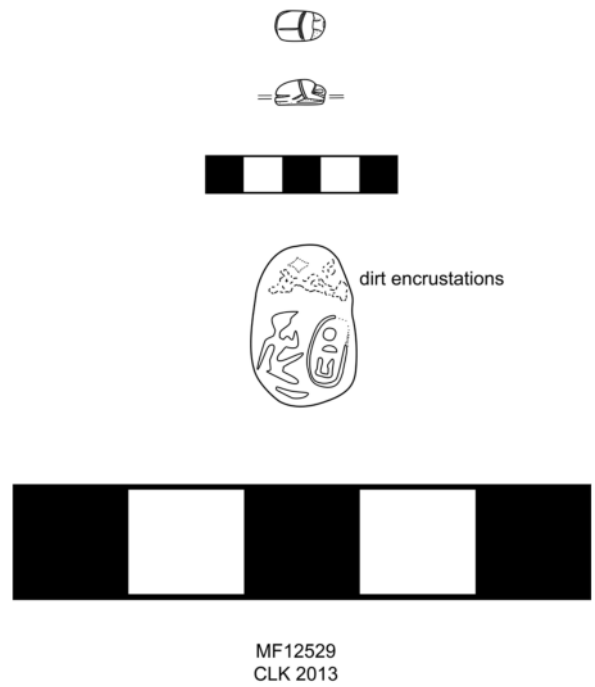

FIgure 3. MF-12529, faience scarab from the Demeter and Kore Sanctuary, Drawing by Christina Kolb.

The closest parallel for the scarab's modelling, as well as the vertical design, composition, and iconography of its underside, is a scarab from nearby Perachora,[25] which however, has double lines dividing the upper and middle levels, a winged sphinx above, and a falcon-headed god on the middle level. The Perachora scarab was found east of the temple together with

[20] Bookidis in Klinger 2021: 129, pls. 26-27.

[21] MF-12529, L. 0.012, W. 0.008; LT, M:17-18, from a votive pottery dump overlying. Building M:16-17, rooms 1, 2, post-abandonment fill, lot 3222. The latest date of the lot is 3rd century AD; MF-1970-063, L. 0.013, W. 0.010; LT-MT, M-O: 27-29, from the surface fill in quarry, lot 2210. The latest date of the lot is 4th century AD; MF-12050, L. 0.12, W. 0.0085; MT, O: 22-23. Trapezoidal Building, construction fill under room 1, lot 2250. The latest date of the lot is early 3rd century BC; MF-1970-2, L. 0.011, W. 0.008; UT, Q-R:15-16, from the west side of the Theater, surface to bedrock, lot 6233. The latest date of the lot is Roman; MF13274, P.L. 0.014, W. 0.0095; MT, O:22-23. Trapezoidal Building, Roman fill over north side Room 1, lot 2163. The latest date of the lot is Middle Roman (2/2 2nd to 4th centuries AD). They are mentioned in Skon-Jedele 1994: 219, 220, 239-240, nos. 0132-00136. They will be published in a later fascicle of *Corinth* 18.

[22] Gorton (1996: 1-4) discusses the term, material, and general information on the types.

[23] Gorton 1996: 80, 85, 183.

[24] Masson 2018: 22-23

[25] James 1962: 466, 470-471, 481, 483, D60, fig. 30.

Figsures 4-5. MF-12156, carnelian scarab from the Demeter and Kore Sanctuary, Photo ASCSA, Corinth Excavations.

Protocorinthian and Corinthian pottery, *c.* 700-600 BC, and belongs to Gorton's Type XXV A.[26] Gorton's examples of Type XXV A include additional scarabs decorated on their undersides with vertical designs that sometimes lack horizontal divisions between the levels like the Sanctuary's scarab, with Egyptian cartouches that also read *men-ka-Ra*, the figure of an infant Horus, and various recumbent creatures on the upper level. The origin of this type of scarabs is disputed. According to Gorton, the type may have been produced either in Egypt at a Nile Delta site or in Rhodes,[27] while Skon-Jedele related them to types in the Aegean, most probably on Rhodes.[28] Gorton believes many of these small and relatively cheap faience scarabs of various types, including Type XXV A, were carried to western Mediterranean sites by travelling merchants or other itinerant individuals of many different nationalities.[29] Though Egyptian symbols were possibly poorly, if at all, understood by their Greek dedicators, they were imbued with some mysterious apotropaic significance, considering that they came from a country renowned for its powerful magic.[30] Thus, such objects were talismans most probably dedicated for good luck, protection, healing, or some other benefit. This assumption is supported by their ubiquity in several sanctuaries, sometimes in vast numbers, as for example, in nearby Perachora, and also in graves.[31]

The carnelian scarab MF-12156 (Figures 4 and 5) is mostly complete, with chips missing from the head.[32] To work such a hard stone, the artist needed to use a drill and a cutting wheel.[33] The body and legs are modeled and deeply incised; the prothorax is divided from the elytra by two incised V-lines, the elytra by one vertical line. The scarab is longitudinally pierced for suspension. On the underside, within a border of two lines and crosshatching, is a winged bull in intaglio so that, in principle at least, it could serve as a seal for guarding possessions. The bull faces right with head turned back over the shoulder to face left. The forelegs are bent under as if kneeling. The head carries one high curved pointed horn, the eye and ear are triangular, and the mouth is open, while the recurved erect wing has two rows of feathers, parallel oblique strokes marking the neck and breast, and the tail curves down beneath the rear legs. Earlier publications date it to 530-480 BC, a date based both on its style and its findspot.[34] Boardman compared it to a group of carnelian seals decorated with various forms of winged bull foreparts, not a standard motif but rather a new one perhaps adopted from Achaemenid art.[35] The adoption of this new motif was probably motivated by the engraver's

[26] Gorton 1996: 82-83, no. 18.

[27] Gorton (1996: 80-85) discusses the distribution, chronology, and origin of type XXV A. For the respective parallels, see 81-83, nos. 5-6, 10, 12, 14, 18, 24, 26-27, 33, 35, and 37 (vertical designs); 30-33 (without dividing the levels); 4-5, 9, 14, 18, 26, 27, 30, 33, 33a, and 35 (Egyptian cartouche that reads *men-ka-Ra*); 9 (infant Horus); 6, 14, 18, 26, 33a, and 37 (recumbent creatures on upper level). For examples of type XXV A that were made in the Scarab Factory at Naukratis, and the argument that Scarab Factory products replaced some of Gorton's types from Rhodes such as those from type XXII, see Masson 2018: 17, 22, 29.

[28] Skon-Jedele 1994: 191

[29] Gorton 1996:1, 185

[30] For various examples, see Masson 2018: 29, 82, 86, 88.

[31] For those from Perachora, see James 1962; for a recent review of the scarabs from Perachora and their possible meanings, see Skuse 2021; for the dedication of scarabs and other such amulets in various Greek sanctuaries in the Mediterranean world especially for the protection of women and children, see Masson 2018: 82-83, 89-90; for this type of finds in graves, see for example, Arrington 2016.

[32] L. 0.021, W. 0.011, Diam. of pierced hole 0.002. Dark orange carnelian, almost complete save for chipping and a mostly missing head. From the MT, O-P:21-22, Pit 1965-3, deposit in pit, lot 4351, dated 2nd quarter of 5th BC.

[33] Boardman 1970: 380-381.

[34] Richter 1968: 68, no. 184a; Boardman 1968: 144, 146, no. 490, pl. 33; Stroud 1968: 312, pl. 88c; Pemberton 1989: 87; Bookidis and Stroud 1997: 164.

[35] Boardman 1968:144-146, nos. 491-494, pl. 33.

interest in marketing a novel design.[36] Like the faience seals described above, whether it was ever used as a seal is unknown.

Clearer and most significant not just for the date is the scarab's findspot, which formed part of the fill of pit E (1965-3) in O-P:21-22 in the North Corridor, just north of the *Oikos* and within reach of those approaching the Middle Terrace (Figure 1). The practice of placing this type of small rectangular pit along walkways began in the Sanctuary in the 5th century BC; cut into the ground and lined with limestone slabs, such pits were intended for the deposition of votive offerings. In pit E, a deposit of 11 vases and this carnelian scarab amulet was laid on the floor, covered with earth, then sealed with roof tiles.[37] Thus, the findspot suggests the scarab was dedicated in the Sanctuary for good luck and protection by a worshipper on his/her way to the terrace.

Terracotta pendants

Five of the terracotta pendants found in the Sanctuary are probably amulets as well. These are MF-13249, MF-1969-343, MF-14417, MF-10358 and MF-13251, represented here by the last two (Figures 6 and 7).[38] All are handmade of Corinthian clay, decorated with incisions and black and/or red paint, most probably originating in the Potters' Quarter, and are dated to the Archaic period by their contexts or parallels. The first, MF-13249, has a form that may have been inspired by Egyptian opium containers. The hollow space in its neck was used to contain a substance or recalled one, either the opium or the tiny seeds of the poppy.[39] The other four pendants, two of which are shown here (Figures 6 and 7), take the form of poppy seedpods.

Pendant MF-10358 (Figure 6) illustrates a mature poppy seedpod consisting of an elongated globular body scored with uneven vertical incisions indicating the seedpod's sutures, a short flaring neck with pierced suspension hole, a broad rim, and a top decorated with eight radial incised lines intersecting at the center. Not only is the shape similar to a mature poppy seedpod, but the eight radial divisions and the indentations at the edge correspond to the seed compartments (opium poppies usually have 8 to 12) within the fruit's discus stigmaticus.[40] This pendant may have been modelled to show the capsule's state as

FIgure 6. MF-10358, terracotta pendant from the Demeter and Kore Sanctuary, Photo ASCSA, Corinth Excavations.

FIgure 7. MF-13251, terracotta pendant from the Demeter and Kore Sanctuary, Photo ASCSA, Corinth Excavations.

'still green,' described by Dioskourides (*De materia medica* 4.64.2) as the best time to harvest them for their opiate latex.[41] Pendant MF-13251 (Figure 7) is in the form of a dry poppy seedpod consisting of a pointed bottom, an ovoid body moulded with seven concave surfaces separated by vertical incised ridges, a very short flaring neck with a small suspension hole and a broad crown, flat on top, decorated with diagonal lines intersecting at the centre to indicate the many-rayed stigma. The pendant may depict the later stage that is best for harvesting the

[36] For some 5th-4th century BC Greek examples in various media that also seem to have been inspired by Achaemenid art, see Miller 1997: figs. 13-16, 18, 20, 22, 47-49.

[37] For pit E, see Bookidis and Stroud 1997: 163–165, 428–429; Bookidis in Klinger 2021: 5; for the pottery from the filling, see Pemberton 1989: 87–88.

[38] Published in Klinger 2021: 83-88, nos. 111-115, pl. 18, which forms the basis for this discussion. For a discussion of poppy seedpods and further bibliography, see Klinger 2021: 78-79, 85-86.

[39] Klinger 2021: 79, 82, 86, n. 171, no. 111, pl. 18.

[40] Klinger 2021: 85, 88, no. 113, pl. 18. For the fruit, see Seeberg 1969:8. For the type of pendant in coral, see, e.g., Dunbabin 1962: 526, no. J 10, pl. 195.

[41] Scarborough (1995: 15–16) discusses this passage in Dioskourides, noting that comparison of modern harvesting techniques with Dioskourides' description shows little change over the centuries.

seedpod.[42] Such seeds sometimes decorate terracotta cake models placed on *likna*, thus referring to their use in the preparation of real cakes.[43] Poppy seeds were a cereal crop that, even during the Classical period, was still considered a sustaining and concentrated food in emergencies.[44]

The careful rendering of these examples suggests that Corinthian coroplasts had firsthand knowledge of the plant, the capsules' growth, and their possible uses. This is certainly possible considering that, in addition to the pendants, the fruit models offered in the Sanctuary include at least two terracotta models of poppy seedpods.[45] Furthermore, poppies are held by either Demeter or Kore, for example on two Corinthian plates attributed to the Sam Wide Group, one of which is from the Sanctuary. Its close association with the Sanctuary continues into the Roman period for example in the marble figure of the deity, who carries stalks of wheat and a poppy seedpod or capsule in the crook of her arm.[46] These examples make clear that the fruit was a votive offering, and also consumed in the Sanctuary, perhaps during ritual feasts.

Seedpods, which produce many seeds, denote fertility and are found in various sites associated with deities connected with female rites; they appear associated especially with Demeter and Kore, as the numerous examples from various sanctuaries to them indicate, for example at Knossos and in Magna Graecia.[47] Furthermore, Pautasso's valuable study on the symbolic use of poppy seedpods in Archaic coroplasty in Catania discusses the literary sources mentioning the uses of poppy seedpods in connection with female life and concerns.[48] She identifies two main uses: the granular seeds were extracted from the dry capsule for their nutritive oil and used with grains for baking, and opium was extracted from the mature capsule. Opium's sedative properties could have been used for gynecological problems. Indeed, as Scarborough pointed out, nine of thirteen references in the Hippocratic corpus to the use of opium or the opium poppy are nestled within the gynecological tracts, suggesting that midwives utilized them for women's concerns.[49] Pautasso connects the poppy's properties, both nutritive and sedative, with the seedpods' symbolic use and dedication in sanctuaries concerned with sexual maturation and marriage, such as those of Hera and Demeter in Catania.[50] A similar connection between the poppy seedpod, the Demeter cult, and maidenhood was suggested by Voutiras in his discussion of the so-called Berlin goddess statue in Berlin (Antikensammlung SK 1800).[51] He identified it as representing a young woman dressed as a bride who had reached the age of marriage but died before she could marry. He furthermore identified the object she holds as a poppy capsule rather than a pomegranate, and proposed a connection between the statue, its donor, and the cult of Demeter.[52]

The connections between the pendants' shapes (see Figures 6 and 7), modelled on the capsule from which the sap or juice with its opiate qualities is extracted, and the similarity of one of the pendants (MF-13249) to an opium container imply the use of opium in the Sanctuary. It may have been used as a powerful gynecological pharmakon, or was perhaps, as Stroud suggested, added to the well-known *kykeon*, the drink associated with Demeter referred to in the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (208–210).[53]

In short, like the symbolic use and dedication of poppy seedpods in Archaic coroplasty at the other abovementioned sanctuaries associated with sexual maturation and marriage, worshippers in the Sanctuary were very probably aware of the poppy's nutritive and sedative properties, as well as of the likely use of opium or opium poppies by midwives for women's concerns. The pendants may therefore have been offered as some kind of apotropaic amulets, probably strung on necklaces worn prior to being dedicated, then offered to the deities in connection with marriage, fertility, pregnancy, and childhood survival.

Coral finds

The Sanctuary also preserves three finds made of coral: two are unworked branches, MF-13593 and MF-13592,[54]

[42] MF-10358, H. 0.024; Diam. 0.017. MT, P–Q:25, fill overlying rooms A and E, lot 871. The latest date of the lot is 3rd century AD or later.; MF-13251, H. 0.023; Diam. 0.016. LT, N:24, Dining Building M:21–22, fill behind south wall, lot 2189. The latest date of the lot is second half of 5th century BC. Klinger 2021: 85, 88, no. 115, pl. 18. For the literary sources on these stages, known from modern practice as well, see Scarborough 1995:15–16. Literary sources on the use of poppy seeds and the extraction of opium in antiquity are also collected by Dalby (2003: 268, s.v. poppy), and Pautasso (2015: 27, 29-30).

[43] For the poppy seeds on cakes in Athenaios' descriptions and a possible example placed on a terracotta cake model, see Brumfield 1997: 148, 155, n. 52, and lot 1991:1, 167, no. 92, pl. 52.

[44] Seeberg 1969: 11.

[45] Klinger 2021: 78, 79, 82, nos. 105-106, pl. 18.

[46] For the plates attributed to the Sam Wide Group, see C-1964-208, Pemberton 1989: 135, 136, no. 296, pl. 32, dated to the third quarter of the 5th century BC; for the plate in Athens, National Archaeological Museum 5825, Klinger 2015: 36-37, fig. 6 with earlier publications; for the Roman figure, S-2662, see Stroud 1965: 23, pl. 9e.

[47] Klinger 2021: 78, nn. 123-124.

[48] Pautasso 2015: 30-31; additional reference in Klinger 2021: 78, n. 125.

[49] Scarborough 2010: 5.

[50] Pautasso 2015: 30-31.

[51] Voutiras 2016.

[52] Seeberg (1969) sets out the differences between pomegranates and poppy capsules. Examination of the differences and comparison with the pendants presented here recently led Véronique Dasen to identify the gold amulet in the bracelet from the Necropolis of Akanthus, previously described as a pomegranate (Dasen 2015: 196, pl. 11b), as a poppy capsule (pers. comm.).

[53] Stroud 2013: 147. On other possible ingredients of the kykeon, see Foley 1994: 47–48.

[54] MF-13593, single fragment, broken ends, P.L. 0.068, Max.D. of branch 0.0825m; salmon pink in color (*Munsell* 1994: 10R 6/8); MT,

while one is a handmade pendant, MF-1970-285 (Figure 8).[55] The pendant is tooth-shaped, with a top and two spurs. The top may be broken, so that its means of suspension may have required a further element, and it is decorated with two grooves separated by a low collar. The vertical shaft forms a small hook (or spur) at the top and bottom. Though the pendant comes from a mixed context that cannot be dated precisely, one of the unworked branches, MF-13593, is from a lot in the Middle Terrace conclusively dated to the Archaic or early Classical period. The other, MF-13592, comes from the Lower Terrace, in a lot dated to the 4th century BC. This pendant could therefore be Archaic or Classical like the branches.

Coral (gr. Κοράλ(λ)ιον or κουράλλιον; lat. *curalium*, *corallium*) was well-known in antiquity as an offering in sanctuaries and appears in the literary sources. Finds made of coral have been recovered mostly but not exclusively in sanctuaries dedicated to female deities: Demeter and Kore, Hera, Athena, Artemis and Aphrodite, but also Poseidon and Adonis.[56] The three finds of coral in the Sanctuary have close parallels nearby. They comprise a single branch from the Sacred Spring at Corinth, a sanctuary whose female deity remains obscure;[57] numerous finds from Perachora, including a branch found in the Geometric deposit of the temple to Hera Limenia and several other branches, along with pendants, a scarab, and a seal from the temple to Hera Akraia dated to the Archaic period;[58] one branch from the Argive Heraion;[59] and more in the Archaic temple to Poseidon at Isthmia, still uncatalogued and unpublished.[60] As well, many coral finds come from sanctuaries further afield, with pendants sometimes even combined with metals.[61]

According to the lists and map published by Hermary, coral finds appeared especially at sites linked to maritime

FIgure 8. F-1970-285, coral pendant from the Demeter and Kore Sanctuary, Photo ASCSA, Corinth Excavations.

commerce, with the Adriatic a possible supply source.[62] Thus, the Sanctuary's corals may have been brought and offered by seafarers and travellers. But the marine character of the Sanctuary's studied assemblage is slim, largely confined to the offering of five terracotta models of boats and galleys,[63] making it unlikely that they were offered mainly for their association with the sea. Also unlikely is Kyrieleis' claim that these offerings were mere natural curiosities.[64] Examination of the collective evidence, in other words, the substantial number of coral finds at numerous sanctuaries, their import and cost, considered scarce and expensive even by Pliny the Elder (*NH* XXXII 23), and their occasional decoration to become pendants (e.g., Figure 8), sometimes in combination with precious metals, suggests that they were offered for their symbolic powers. Indeed, corals, especially red ones (*Corallium Rubrum*), were considered amuletic, possessing medical and protective properties according to Greek and Roman literary sources.[65] One pertinent source among them is Pliny the Elder, who reported that branches of coral, worn as amulets by babies, were believed to have protective powers (*NH* XXXII 10: *Surculi [i.e. curalii] infantiae adalligati tutelam habere creduntur*). Their amuletic powers remind us of Demeter's words from the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* (lines 227-230, cited above) when she claims to have

R:23-24, dumped fill over area D, lot 1991. The lot is dated to the 7th -6th century BC; MF-13592, two joining fragments broken all around, P.L. 0.062, Max.D. of stem 0.015, Th. of stem at top 0.009m; light gray (*Munsell* 1994: 10YR 6/1), burnt, with calcium carbonate on it (D. S. Reese, pers. comm.); LT, Dining Building N–O:22–23, fill over west half, lot 4474. The lot is dated to the 4th century BC with later intrusions. Both will be published in a later Corinth fascicle (XVIII.18).

[55] MF-1970-285, single fragment, P.L. 0.023, Max.Th 0.005m; pinkish white in color (*Munsell* 1994: 5YR 8/2); LT, I-K:18-19, from surface fills from area east and west of stairway, cuts 5:70, 7-10:70, lot 6509. The latest date of the lot is Roman.

[56] Tassignon 2005: 294-296. Boardman and Hayes (1966:167, no. 111) present an unworked coral branch from Tocra, another sanctuary devoted to Demeter and Kore. For Adonis and coral offerings, see Torelli 1997: 254-255, fig. 21 b.

[57] Lot 5156, unpublished.

[58] Payne *et al.* 1940: 77; Dunbabin 1962: 525-527, nos. J 1-J 16, pl. 195.

[59] Norton 1905: 354, no. 92, pl. 140; Baumbach 2004: 84-85, fig. 4.26.

[60] Noted by Hermary (2000:136).

[61] With silver from Kythnos, see Mazarakis Ainian 2005: 97, pl. 18G, with additional parallels. See also the sites listed in Dunbabin (ed.) 1962: 526, pls. 195, 19; Hermary 2000:136-137; Ferrara and Meo 2017: 115.

[62] Hermary 2000: 136-138; on the gathering of red coral, see Purpura 2005.

[63] Klinger 2021: 14, 67-70, nos. 72-76, pl. 15.

[64] Kyrieleis 1986: 218-219, fig. 6.

[65] Literary sources reviewed by Leurini (2000) and Faraone (2018: 90-91).

powers against a supernatural force or demon thought to cause pain to the gums of teething babies. Coral is not specifically listed among the various materials and objects that served as amulets to ease the process.[66] Nevertheless, because it was used for amulets worn by babies at the time when teething occurs, we wonder if the actual offering of the coral pendant and branches as amulets in the Sanctuary also was intended to protect the young during the potentially dangerous teething process.

Conclusions

All 15 finds, represented here by the items in Figures 1-8, were most probably amulets dedicated in the Sanctuary and used for good luck and the protection they could offer, especially during illnesses, weddings, pregnancies, births, and the perils of childhood. The materials collected by Faraone led him to associate the role played by women, especially the elderly, in their work as midwives or wet nurses, with their importance as providers of amulets.[67] Demeter's role as a wet nurse (described above) and some of the objects presented here, particularly coral amulets worn by babies, as well as the poppy seeds with their beneficial properties for gynecological illnesses, support associations of this type. Except for the coral branches and possibly the coral pendant, all the finds are pierced with suspension holes, enabling them to be threaded and worn on necklaces or as pendants before their dedication, like other offerings at the Sanctuary in various materials, and like those retrieved from graves.[68] Although no specific evidence is available for women's use of pendants as amulets in Corinth, some visual evidence elsewhere indicates that pendants were worn as amulets on necklaces and baldrics already in the Archaic period, such as those worn by the Archaic 'caryatid' nude female on a bronze mirror in New York.[69] Moreover, the evidence collected from Greek and Roman contexts and literary sources suggests women owned many amulets because they were the most vulnerable members of the community, and attached them to different parts of their bodies.[70] Concurrently, according to Greek custom, apotropaic amulets were also given to children shortly after birth as a magical means of protecting vulnerable infants against bad luck, illness, or the evil eye, and to ensure a successful passage through the dangers of infancy.[71] Their protection continues also after death. In Iron age Lefkandi, for example, scarabs, scaraboids and other such objects were meaningfully and deliberately deposited with children in burials as talismans or amulets.[72] Evidence to support the use of pendants as magical talismans in graves also in the early Archaic period is the silver bead, of a type similar to the terracotta pendant MF-10358 (Fig. 6), found on the chest of an infant in a tomb at Vitsa, northern Greece and dated to the 7th century BC.[73] Likely looped on a cord, it would have been worn across the chest, like the amulets hanging from diagonal cords that babies and small children on numerous Attic *choes* and the so-called temple boys wear.[74]

When offered in the Sanctuary, some amulets may have been strung together like those mostly recovered from graves at various sites in the Archaic, Classical and Hellenistic periods.[75] Only for the carnelian scarab (Figures 4-5) do we know the circumstances of final deposition; it was put into pit E as the worshippers made their way towards the main cult buildings in the Middle Terrace. Although the other finds were not found *in situ*, they were probably offered in close proximity to the divinity as well,[76] somewhere near or at the altar on the Middle Terrace (Figure 1, MT, area D, R:23-24), placed either on it or on a bench nearby, hung on a peg or nail or to adorn a statue or statuette.[77]

The interpretation presented here is feasible even though few texts are available to support it. First, its basis is material, arising from the finds' similarities to objects offered to deities at other sanctuaries with comparable cultic concerns. These similarities form a sort of 'thematic network,' to use François Lissarrague's phrase in his last study on the circulation of subjects and motifs across different media and periods and their stability of meaning.[78] Second and most relevant, the interpretation focuses on the objects' contextual background, particularly the vast number of finds that were offered in the Sanctuary to preserve the memory of the deities' powers and to ensure their protection of the worshippers.

[66] Dasen 2015: 191-194, with additional bibliography.
[67] Faraone 2018: 27, 251-254.
[68] Klinger 2021:15; for examples from various graves, see Faraone 2018: 55-56, figs. 2.1-2.2.
[69] Metropolitan Museum of Art 38.11.3, referred to by Congdon (1981: 14, 47, 111, 272, no. 15, fig. 18, pls. 12-13).
[70] For the types of amulets associated with girls and women that include jewelry and some examples, see Sgourou 2001: 342–348, figs. 29–36; Dasen 2003, with further bibliography; Dasen 2015: 196–198, fig. 6, pl. 11:b; Faraone 2018: 37-40, 52-53.
[71] Dasen 2003; Faraone 2018: 51-52, 58.
[72] For the Iron Age practice of burying children with them at Lefkandi: Arrington 2016: 1, 15-16.
[73] Dubois 2012: 338–339, fig. 11:a.
[74] Dasen (2003: 278-279, 282-283; 2015: 197-198) provides numerous examples and the possible circumstances in which they were offered. See also Faraone 2018: 28-35; Klinger (2021: 86, n. 176), for a list of such including one example found in Corinth.
[75] Sgourou 2001: 343- 346, fig. 29; Dubois 2012: 339; Chacheva 2015: 7-11, figs. 5-7; Faraone 2018: 54-58, figs. 2.1, 2.2.
[76] For the placement of votives near altars and possible parallels elsewhere, including a most extraordinary find at Kalapodi, see Alroth 1988.
[77] For the practice of hanging terracotta votives in the Sanctuary, see Klinger 2021: 15; Young (2014: 144-146) offers a useful discussion of how jewelry might have been displayed in the sanctuary on the acropolis at Stymphalos and adds relevant parallels.
[78] Lissarrague 2022: *passim*, esp. 18.

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Tracing the Possible Prophylactic Attributes of Parthenos at Ancient Neapolis (Kavala)

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Abstract

Excavations by Georgios Bakalakis and Dimitris Lazaridis in Kavala's old town (Panagia peninsula) in the mid-20th century brought to light impressive finds from the sanctuary of Parthenos, the patron deity of ancient Neapolis, one of Thasos' most important colonies. Dating mainly to the Archaic period, these finds testify to the cosmopolitan character of the sanctuary, its high number of visitors, and its key role as a Northern Aegean social and economic centre. The archaeological record includes architectural members, inscriptions, and substantial amounts of pottery (both local and imported), along with significant small finds. In particular, the latter need to be addressed, as they invite a fresh examination of the characteristics of this goddess.

This paper investigates the possible prophylactic and apotropaic attributes of selected objects from the sanctuary, among them large astragaloi, an extraordinary lead-fitted knucklebone, gaming pieces, pendants, and figurines. Close study of this material leads to an exploration of the role of Parthenos beyond her poliadic and kourotrophic powers that focuses on her protective nature.

Ancient Neapolis was a flourishing Thasian colony situated at the crossroads between the Thracian hinterlands and the Northern Aegean (Figure 1). Its privileged location and rich natural resources guaranteed the city's prosperity and development as a religious, maritime, and commercial centre.[1]

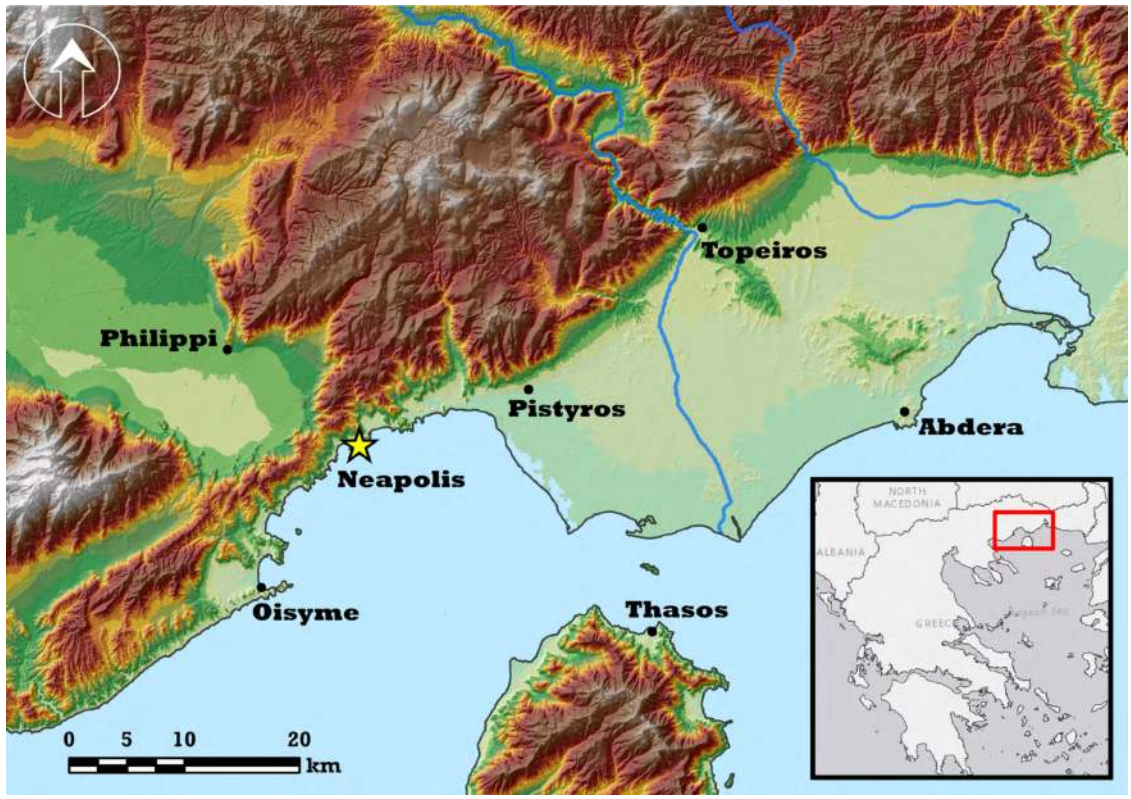

Figure 1. Map of Thasos and its *peraia*. Drawn by Jamieson C. Donati.

[1] Bakalakis 1936: 3, 42–43; Pouilloux 1954: esp. 154; Lazaridis 1969: 14–17; 1971; Koukouli-Chrysanthaki 1980: 309–314; Isaac 1986: 10–11, 65–69; Loukopoulou 2004: 856; Tiverios 2008: 66–91; Loukopoulou and Psoma 2008; Prokova 2014: 31–45; Zannis 2014: 181–182, 325–326, 330–331, 365–366, 553–558. For a discussion of Neapolis, its *chora*, and

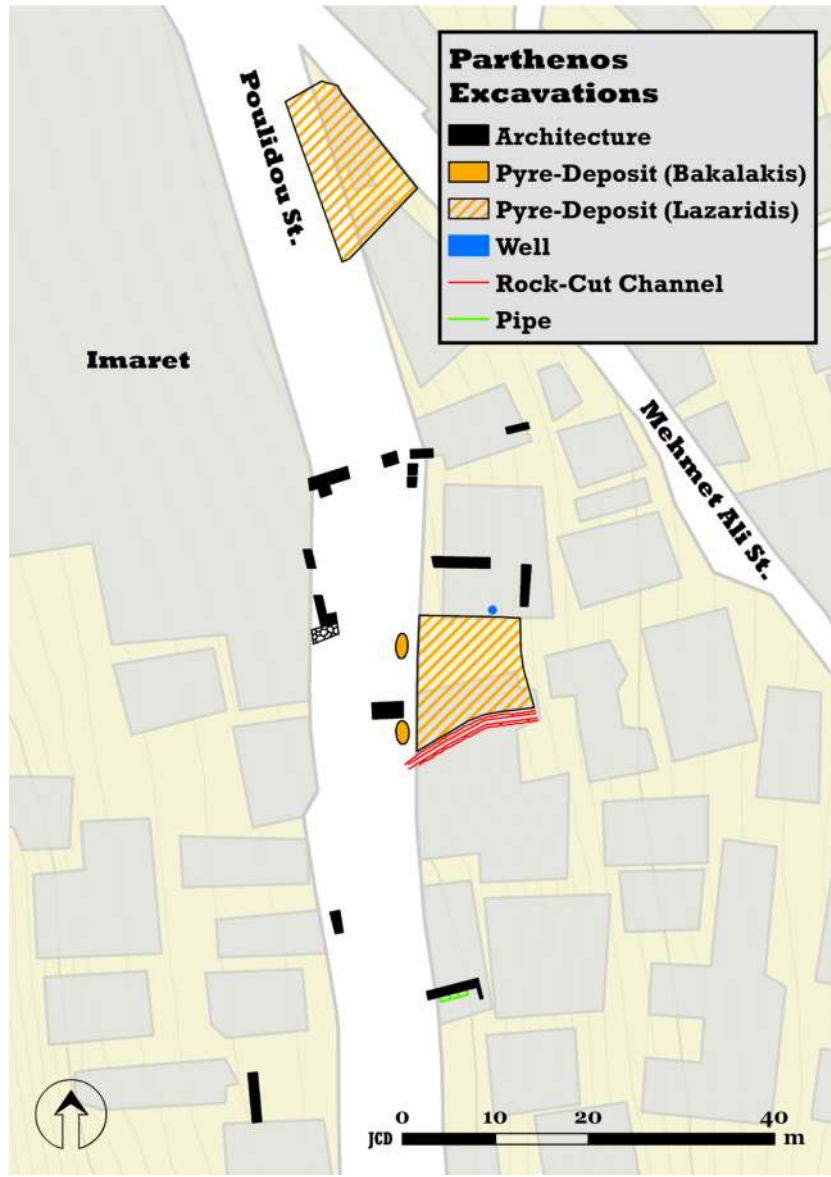

Figure 2. Architectural remains and other features discovered during the 20th-century excavations of the sanctuary of Parthenos. Drawn by Jamieson C. Donati based on Bakalakis 1937, 60, fig. 1; Lazaridis 1961–1962, 236, pl. 3, and Malama 1998.

The patron deity of Neapolis was Parthenos, a deity often assimilated to Artemis.[2] Her sanctuary was first identified in the 1930s by Georgios Bakalakis near the Ottoman Imaret (Figure 2).[3] Many of Bakalakis' finds were either lost, pillaged or destroyed during the Second World War,[4] while the next round of excavations, led by Dimitris Lazaridis, took place in the late 1950s and 1960s.[5] Since then, rescue excavations have been conducted on occasion by the local Ephorate of Antiquities.[6]

The majority of finds from the sanctuary of Parthenos date to the Archaic and Early Classical periods, while the Hellenistic era is also well represented.[7] Noteworthy are the architectural remains of an early 5th-century Ionian temple, sections of walls and of a peribolos—now buried under modern buildings—as well as traces of pyres and deposits. The latter contained large quantities of fine

the foundation of Philippi through epigraphic and numismatic data, see Psoma 2016, with previous bibliography. For a concise overview of Kavala's history through the centuries, see Karagiannakidis and Lykourinos 2009: 13–18, 80–84, 144 on ancient Neapolis.

[2] Bakalakis 1936: 36–37; Lazaridis 1953 and 1969: 17; Koukouli-Chrysanthaki 1997; Bellelli and Cultraro 2006: 198–199; Prokova 2014: 48–50; 88–115. On the Bosporan Parthenos, see Bilde 2009; Dana 2012.

[3] Bakalakis 1936; 1937; 1938a; 1938b. See also Avramidou forthcoming.

[4] Lazaridis (1969: 75–77) cites the relevant passage from the Greek Ministry of Education publication *Ζημίαι των Αρχαιοτήτων εκ του Πολέμου και των Στρατών Κατοχής* (1946: 37, 97).

[5] Lazaridis 1960, 1961-62, 1963a, 1963b: 295–297; 1964, 1965, 1967, and the 1959–1963 excavation logs.

[6] Of the recent campaigns, the one undertaken by Malama (1998) is the most relevant to the Parthenos sanctuary.

[7] For an overview of the finds see Avramidou 2022a, Avramidou forthcoming, Avramidou and Amoiridou forthcoming, and nn. 3 and 5 above. The Attic pottery from the sanctuary is introduced in the preliminary report (Avramidou 2022b).

Figure 3. Three bovine *astragaloi* from the sanctuary of Parthenos.
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and plain pottery, both local and imported. In addition to ceramics, the excavations produced various other artefacts, such as inscriptions, sculptures, figurines, and several minor objects.

In 2018, the study of the material from the sanctuary of Parthenos was resumed with the aim of producing a systematic analysis of the finds and examining this important northern Aegean site afresh. Preliminary investigation of the finds and the excavation logs confirms the occurrence of pyres, sacrifices, and libations, while the large numbers of sympotic vessels and lamps attest to sacred meals and nocturnal activities in the temenos. At the same time, the use of the sanctuary as a venue for private offerings (often inscribed) and for affairs of state (for example, setting up decrees) is attested by the archaeological and epigraphical record.[8] Such a range of cult practices reinforces the complex character of Parthenos, indicating that she was not associated solely with the world of women and coming of age, as her name might imply, but also functioned as a poliadic deity. The variety of objects discovered at the sanctuary reflects the wide appeal of Parthenos' cult and the diversity of her devotees, while similarities with the Artemision of Thasos have also been noted.[9]

Following this brief overview, I focus here on selected small finds from the sanctuary of Parthenos that indicate her possible prophylactic attributes. I start with three large bovine astragaloi[10] (Figure 3) that were found by Lazaridis in the debris of the 8m-long rock-cut channel and the adjacent fill in the centre of the excavated area of the sanctuary, near a well (Figure 2).[11] To these, we may add Bakalakis' report on 'several knucklebones from the pyres, of which at least one was pierced.' Although his finds are no longer preserved,[12] it is still important to know that the three large knucklebones do not stand in isolation.

We learn from literary sources and iconographic examples that astragaloi were used as amulets, as gaming pieces by children and adults, and as a means of divination.[13] Knucklebones might also accompany the deceased—usually women and children—to the grave,[14] or serve as votive gifts, a practice attested in numerous sanctuaries throughout the Greek world.[15] Regarding

[8] See n. 7 above and Avramidou 2021 on the inscribed pottery. For decrees, see *IG* I^3 101 (Athens, Epigraphical Museum 6598) and *IG* II^2 128 (Athens, National Archaeological Museum 1480); Lawton 1995: 85, no. 7, pl. 4, and 95–96, no. 28, pl. 15.

[9] See n. 2 above; Chalazonitis 2019; Avramidou 2022a. The Thasian Artemision is discussed by Grandjean and Salviat (2000: 89-90, 283, 298). The finds from the Artemision of Thasos: Coulié 2002; Huysecom-Haxhi 2009; Maffre 2009, 2017; Maffre and Tichit 2011; Prêtre 2016.

[10] Archaeological Museum of Kavala, inv. no. ΠΑ219.

[11] The rock-cut channel, described in the excavation log of 1959 as 8m long, with a depth varying from 1.0m to 4.80m, contained many figurines, mostly fragmentary, relief clay altar(s), charcoal, animal bones, astragaloi, and Late Classical and Hellenistic pottery. A well was located nearby, empty of finds: Lazaridis 1960: 219; Lazaridis 1961–1962: 236–238. Water management in Greek sanctuaries: Cole 1988; cf. Bournias (2016), who has an emphasis on Cycladic sanctuaries. An oracular well in the sanctuary of Artemis Soteria and Apollo Paian in Kerameikos is discussed by Stroszeck (2017), with relevant bibliography.

[12] Bakalakis 1937: 61 and 1938, no. 327. The poor state of preservation of Bakalakis' finds is documented in n. 4 above.

[13] *Astragalomanteia* and astragaloi as divination tools: Amandry 1984: 377; Gilmour 1997, 172–173; Graf 2005, 60-66; Caré 2010 and 2012; Dillon 2017, 272. On gaming pieces, Schädler 1996; Gilmour 1997, 171–172; De Grossi Mazzorin and Minniti 2013; and n. 15 below. An example of a knucklebone amulet is found in the golden pendant from the necropolis of Varna (burial 36): Leusch, Armbruster, Pernicka and Slavčev 2015: 357, fig. 3a. See also Caré 2013: 93 and Prêtre 2021, 48–50.

[14] Knucklebones in burials: Caré 2010 and 2012; De Grossi Mazzorin and Minniti 2013; Trantalidou 2014–015: 11.

[15] Gilmour (1997: esp. 169–170) comments on astragaloi from Greek sanctuaries, including the Corycian Cave, the Idaean Cave, and an altar in the Athenian Agora, along with previous bibliography and a

Figures 4a-b. Worked sheep *astragalos* fitted in lead, disk-formed casing from the sanctuary of Parthenos. © Ephorate of Antiquities of Kavala and Thasos. Photo by author.

the knucklebones from the Parthenos sanctuary, no persuasive arguments exist at this point to support their interpretation as divination tools. Found among other debris in the temenos, including figurines, small clay altars, and pottery of late-Classical and Hellenistic date,[16] they can plausibly be interpreted as toys turned into votives, perhaps offered to the goddess on the occasion of a new life-stage or premature death.[17] In this light, it is Parthenos' prophylactic nature that is invoked, a quality that goes hand in hand with her kourotrophic aspect, also reflected in the types of terracottas discovered in the sanctuary, such as the Archaic fat-bellied figurines, thought to protect women during pregnancy, and numerous animal figurines, a popular group of toys in antiquity.[18]

The prophylactic powers of Parthenos resonate in another artefact: a peculiar sheep knucklebone set within a circular lead case and held in place by five lead pins, one in the centre and four at the corners (Figure 4a-b).[19] Its top has been smoothed to match the level of the lead surface, while its sides and bottom are no longer visible after its insertion into the metal casing. This disk-like artefact is 4.3cm in diameter, 1.4cm thick, and weighs 131gr.[20] It can be set on either of its surfaces, although the sides are not completely flat because of its bulging exterior 'ring,' and it can be rolled, albeit not too far on account of its weight.

In 2021, microscopic analysis and digital 3D imaging of the object were undertaken by the Laboratory of Physical Anthropology at the Democritus University of Thrace, providing further details.[21] The knucklebone was identified as belonging to the left ankle of a sheep or goat, and had noticeable traces of cutting and processing on its visible (top) surface. Similar treatment appears to have been applied on the opposite side, now fully inserted into the lead, detectable from tiny holes on the surface. The five holes piercing the astragalos' centre and corners were filled in with liquid lead, which then solidified inside the bone.

Even though knucklebones come in various sizes and from a variety of contexts, few examples exist that can be compared to the lead-encased one from the Parthenos sanctuary.[22] The closest parallels come

discussion of astragaloi from Anatolia and the Levant.

[16] On the context, see n. 11 above.

[17] Games with knucklebones: Paraskeuaidou 1989: 88–92; Schädler 1996; Kurke 1999; Kidd 2017; Ignatiadou 2019: 148. Manakidou and Manakidou (2015: 62) give an overview of sources and iconographic examples. Vasilopoulou (2003: 46-49) discusses their survival in the Byzantine and modern Greek eras as *kotsia*. For children coming of age and references to games, see Neils and Oakley 2003. Beaumont, Dillon, and Harrington 2021 is a recent study on children, including their role in rituals.

[18] For Apollonia Pontica, see Prokova (2014: esp. 279–278 on fat-bellied figurines and 303–319 on animal figurines; 2017, fig. 4).

[19] Archaeological Museum of Kavala, inv. no. ΠΑΜ8.

[20] Kroll (2020) offers a discussion of the Athenian balance weights.

[21] The study was undertaken by PhD candidate Asterios Aidonis under the supervision of Associate Professor Christina Papageorgopoulou at the Democritus University of Thrace, using a Zeiss Stemi 305 0.8-4.0X stereoscope and a Zeiss AxioCam ICc 3 camera.

[22] On peculiar astragaloi, see Malamidou and Papaoikonomou 2013; Trantalidou 2014–2015.

from the tomb of Persephone in Vergina,[23] a grave at Apollonia Pontica, and primarily from the necropolis of Locri Epizephyrioi. The Apollonian example is nearly rectangular in shape (3.6cm x 2.9cm) and presumably of 4th-century BC date. Pinned in the centre, it has a smoothed top, though not as even as the Parthenos example.[24] Even closer to our piece are the lead-encased knucklebones from Locri Epizephyrioi, especially the circular ones from graves 353 and 1033. These examples fall into Barbara Caré's Type E3, based on her study of astragaloi from the Lucifero Necropolis at Locri.[25] Caré mentions further that this type of worked knucklebones is found nearly exclusively at Locri, except for some unpublished examples from Kroton. However, the two examples from Neapolis and Apollonia Pontica suggest these artefacts were more widely diffused than originally supposed, far beyond the colonies of South Italy. The Parthenos piece is even more important, since it is the only knucklebone so far to originate from a sanctuary, not a grave or the antiquities market.

The interpretation of these lead-fitted astragaloi is debated. Due to their funerary findspots,[26] accompanying the deceased to the Underworld, an apotropaic connotation may be attributed to them. As well, they differ from those knucklebones identified as amulets or gaming pieces, while explaining them as divination tools is equally unsatisfactory. Roland Hampe was the first to associate them with metrology, a theory further explored by Charles Doyen and Barbara Caré.[27] In my view, identifying these astragaloi as weights does not negate their apotropaic character. Rather, it acknowledges their polysemic qualities. In funerary contexts, the lead-fitted astragaloi could be interpreted as evil-averting objects that weigh down the deceased in the Underworld to prevent them from rising back to the world of the living. In the case of the Parthenos sanctuary, the lead-inlaid astragalos could also be understood as a magical object, perhaps reflecting the desire to keep something/someone attached and tied in place under the spell of Parthenos—a practice similar to that of *katadesmoi*.[28]

To summarize so far, the pierced knucklebone from the Parthenos sanctuary that Bakalakis reported could have been an amulet, while the three large astragaloi discovered by Lazaridis and an undefined number mentioned by Bakalakis may be understood as votives, invoking the protection the goddess bestowed upon children coming of age. On the other hand, the lead-encased astragalos has an apotropaic connotation.

Let us now move to another enigmatic object. The excavation log of the Parthenos sanctuary describes a spool-shaped artefact made of rock crystal, similar to those discovered on Thasos, which Clarisse Prêtre has interpreted as luxury copies of game tokens or divination tools.[29] Such objects have been found in many female sanctuaries and graves around the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. In the ancient world, prophylactic or healing properties were attributed to many stones, including rock crystal, qualities that explain the occurrence of rock crystal objects in burials and sanctuaries as valued polysemic artefacts.[30] Unfortunately, the spool-shaped example for the sanctuary of Parthenos at Neapolis remains unlocated and is known to us only through this brief reference and an outline sketch.[31] Shaped like a small bobbin, scholars have variously explained these artefacts as supports for miniature vases, lenses, earspools, gaming pieces, and divination tokens. Even though I personally favour the interpretation of these objects as ear studs,[32] setting aside the question of their function for a moment, their material alone hints at prophylactic qualities.

In general, the visitors to this northern Aegean temenos seem to have been preoccupied with the question of luck, as the discovery of numerous gaming pieces or counters suggests.[33] Usually made from disused black-glaze drinking vessels, so far over 40 roundels and a handful of squarish, semi-circular, or polygonal sherds have been registered; some of them exhibit different color slip on each side, scratching, or even graffiti (Figure 5). The diameter of the roundels ranges from

[23] The Vergina example is in Trantalidou (2014–2015: 5), who also discusses gilded knucklebones.

[24] This item (Archaeological Museum of Sozopol 3735) is catalogued in Baralis, Panayotova, and Nedev (2019: 242, cat. 286 [K. Panayotova]), who also present the lead cast of an astragalos (Archaeological Museum of Sozopol 3680), half of it smoothed, the other half imitating the porous texture of the bone, from the Archaic sanctuary of St. Kirik at Apollonia Pontica (2019: 242, cat. 287 [K. Panayotova], mentioning lead astragaloi—not encased—from burials at Olynthus as comparanda.

[25] Caré 2013: fig. 6, Type E3.

[26] See nn. 23–25 above.

[27] Hampe 1951: 12–13. De Grossi Mazzorin and Minniti (2013: 372–373) include previous bibliography; more recently, see Doyen 2018 and Caré 2019 (focusing on metal and bone replicas). A gigantic bronze knucklebone found in Susa, looted from the sanctuary of Apollo at Didyma, is discussed by Luce (2011: 53–73). Ashton (2019) associates the imagery of astragaloi on coins with astragalomancy practiced at sanctuaries in Asia Minor.

[28] For *katadesmoi* (*defixiones*), see, e.g., Faraone 2001 and Eidinow 2007.

[29] Prêtre (2018: 347, fig. 2) interprets the Thasian examples as luxury versions of game-counters or divination tools.

[30] Giannakis 1982: 19–35; Skaraki 2018: 569–578; Avramidou and Tasaklaki 2021: 55–56.

[31] The excavation log for 1962-1963 (Aik. Rhomiopoulou and E. Giouri) recorded this rock crystal find on 19.12.1962, including a drawing of the object.

[32] Avramidou and Tasaklaki (2021) identify them as ear studs and explore their association to Artemis within a larger northern Aegean religious network while offering an overview of all known rock crystal spools and their previous interpretations.

[33] Roundels: Archaeological Museum of Kavala, inv. nos. ΠΑ205, ΠΑ206i-iii, ΠΑ407, ΠΑ467, ΠΑ471, ΠΑ502, ΠΑ509bis, ΠΑ521i-xi, ΠΑ523, ΠΑ538, ΠΑ551; Square sherds (*pessoi*): ΠΑ425, ΠΑ 454, ΠΑ461, ΠΑ521ii. On glass counters, see Ignatiadou (2019: esp. 148–150) and Schädler (2019: esp. 162–164)

Figure 5. Roundels (*pessoi*) from the sanctuary of Parthenos. ©Ephorate of Antiquities of Kavala and Thasos. Photo by author.

1cm to 2.8cm, while their thickness is less than 0.5cm, dimensions that render their use as wipes, plugs, or stoppers[34] rather implausible. Even though a function as inexpensive decorative elements (for instance, as furniture or chest appliqués) cannot be ruled out,[35] I find it plausible to interpret them as gaming pieces or counters. Whether viewed as simple pastimes or symbolic practices, *astragalizein* and *petteuein* could have taken place under the auspices of Parthenos, with her powers influencing the outcome of the game. Playing board games and casting dice were common occurrences in Greek sanctuaries, the most famous example being the much-frequented temenos of Athena Skiras on the way to Eleusis, a favourite meeting place of gamblers.[36] Not unlike the knucklebones, gaming pieces may also be construed as votives deposited by children and adults seeking the protection of Parthenos as they entered a new stage in life or set off on a new endeavour.

Another object worth examining is a diamond-shaped clay item with two holes in the centre.[37] This artefact recalls the descriptions of toys/musical instruments associated with the forces of enchantment and love spells, known as a rhombus or an iynx. A similar clay piece, this time disk-shaped, is partially preserved (Figure 6a-b).[38] Whether the terms iynx and rhombus refer to the same object is debated. An iynx is usually described as a circular or disk-shaped device with two holes in its centre. Two threads are passed through them, their ends extending on both sides and held in

[34] Papadopoulos 2002: 423–427; Kurke 1999a and b; *RE* XIII.2 (1927) cols 1900–2029 (H. Lamer). Lamburgo (2022) explores the role of similar small objects, i.e., flat or spherical stones and pebbles found in burials and sanctuaries throughout antiquity, proposing a variety of interpretations that range from game pieces associated with children or entertainers to counters, tools, sling projectiles, and divination pebbles.

[35] Andrianou (2006: 233–234, n. 62) discusses luxury furniture appliqués.

[36] On *skireuoi*, see Eustathius' commentary on *Odyssey* 1.107, citing the fragment of Hipponax 129a; Pollux *Onom.* 9.96–97 and the overall discussion by Fisher (2001: 359–360). Indicative of the wide occurrence of dicing and gambling in sanctuaries is an inscription from the Asklepieion of Epidauros, dated *c.* 320 BC, describing the healing of a devotee's hand through a dream of knucklebones; see also Rhodes and Osborne 2003: 535, 22 (iii) (*IG* IV² i 121). Cf. Diogenes Laertius (9.3), who mentions Heraclitus played astragaloi with children at the sanctuary of Artemis at Ephesos. Board games: Ignatiadou (2019: with previous literature); Widura (2015: board games in sanctuaries); Caré (2021: gameboards from public spaces).

[37] Archaeological Museum of Kavala, inv. no. ΠΑ499, 3.2x4.6cm; Böhr 1997: 109–123.

[38] Archaeological Museum of Kavala, inv. no. ΠΑ522, Diam. 3.5cm. Such roundels have also been interpreted as lids, with a cord for a handle.

Figures 6a-b. Clay *rhombus*(?) and *iynx*(?) from the sanctuary of Parthenos. © Ephorate of Antiquities of Kavala and Thasos. Photo by author.

both hands. By stretching and relaxing the threads, the disk revolves rapidly from one end of the cords to the other, making a whistling sound that resembles that of the bird iynx (wryneck). While the iynx-wheel is a frequent attribute of Eros and women in vase painting, literary sources also mention it. The rhombus, on the other hand, was presumably a rectangular or diamond-shaped instrument of attraction, suspended from a stick and spun in the air.[39] When moved slowly, it produced a low-pitched sound, when quickly, a high-pitched one.[40] Dedicating artefacts with possible magical connotations to Parthenos implies that the dedicants were aware of their power to enchant and that by entrusting them to the goddess they may have placed themselves under her protection. Once again, we come upon modest votives of a polysemic nature, oscillating between toys, gaming pieces, and magical instruments. Their study demonstrates that Parthenos was not only a kourotrophic deity who watched over family traditions and civic affairs, but perhaps also a goddess who allayed common worries and appeased secret desires.

The protective nature of Parthenos is reflected in two clay amulets that were discovered in her sanctuary. The first one is a crescent- or sickle-like undecorated piece, pierced on one end (Figure 7).[41] Its shape evokes the chthonic qualities of both the moon and the sickle, characteristics of deities such as Hekate or Artemis, to whom Parthenos has been assimilated in the past.[42] The

Figure 7. Crescent- or sickle-shaped amulet from the sanctuary of Parthenos. ©Ephorate of Antiquities of Kavala and Thasos. Photo by author.

Figure 8. Hook-shaped amulet from the sanctuary of Parthenos. ©Ephorate of Antiquities of Kavala and Thasos. Photo by author.

representation of a harvesting implement, in particular, alludes to agricultural bounty as well as to its use as a weapon, if we recall the myth of the castration of Uranus. In this light, the prophylactic powers of such an amulet become even stronger, and imparts particular interest to the depiction of a sickle-like object on early 4th-century BC coins of Neapolis behind the head of Parthenos.[43]

The second pendant resembles a fishing hook and represents on both sides a scaly creature, perhaps a fish or a snake(?) (Figure 8).[44] On one side, its body, round head, and eye are rendered in brown paint and incisions, while on the other, the scaly body is denoted by zigzag and wavy painted lines, the round head is rendered in outline, and the eye by incision. Two small holes pierce the narrow lateral surfaces on the pendant's top.

[39] Astragaloi and a rhombus were among the trinkets the Titans gave to baby Dionysos to distract him, according to Orphic mythology; more details in Levaniouk 2007.

[40] In Theokritos' *Idyll* 2, Simaitha uses both a rhombus and an iynx to attract her lover Delphis and put him under her spell: 'may Delphis turn to my door, the same way the rhombus is whirled': Gow 1934; Bannert 1988; Levaniouk 2007. Faraone (1993) explains the imagery of a tortured wryneck as a metaphor for erotic torture.

[41] Archaeological Museum of Kavala, inv. no. ΠΑ346ter.

[42] Bakalakis (1936: 36) and n. 2 above. Prokova (2014: 404–406, no. HG2, Archaeological Museum of Kavala, inv. no. E668) records a figurine of Kybele; cf. the vacant marble naiskos in Damaskos (2013: 146–147, no. 148, fig. 359).

[43] Papaevaggelou 2000: 108, 266, nos. 427–430 (Group E282–284, O386–389).

[44] Archaeological Museum of Kavala, inv. no. ΠΑ346bis; Surveys of ancient fishing gear: Galili, Zemer and Rosen 2013, Marzano 2013.

The talismanic quality of the pendant is suggested by the large bulging eyes on each side and the peculiarities of the creature represented. On the other hand, its hook-like shape makes one wonder whether interpreting it as a fisherman's charm might be better, perhaps a small votive to Parthenos requesting her support for or thanking her after a good catch. The ship-graffito on a black-glaze sherd found in the sanctuary highlights the importance of the sea for worshippers,[45] while among the weights discovered in the temenos, we should note that a couple of disk-like examples, including one made of stone, could be associated with fishing nets.[46] Taken together, these observations strengthen the hypothesis of a fisherman's amulet. A comparable case is described in a 3rd-century BC poem preserved as *Anthologia Palatina* 6.4 (Leonidas of Tarentum): Diophantos the fisherman dedicates the tools of his trade to Poseidon, and the first item on the list is his *εὐκαπὲς ἄγκιστρον* (the 'easily-gulped-down hook').[47] Let us not forget that fish is still available in plenty in modern-day Kavala, while the sanctuary's location overlooking the harbour underscores its close connection to the sea and maritime activities.

In conclusion, despite their small scale and modest material, these select artefacts from the sanctuary of Parthenos expand our understanding of her divine qualities while shedding some light on her possible prophylactic powers, in addition to her kourotrophic and poliadic nature. Votives such as toys, gaming pieces, pendants, and charms were for many devotees appropriate, affordable means of connecting with the goddess while seeking her protection. Even though not apotropaic per se, since the qualities of the objects discussed above are not necessarily or primarily evil-averting, these artefacts from the sanctuary of Parthenos nonetheless invite us to pursue more nuanced interpretations that help elucidate the deity's prophylactic powers.

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[45] Archaeological Museum of Kavala, inv. no. ΠΑ419.

[46] Archaeological Museum of Kavala, inv. no. ΠΑ-ΥΦ390. Bela Dimova, who will be publishing the loomweights from the sanctuary, has kindly informed me that this stone weight has a diameter of 7.7cm and weighs 141gr.

[47] Similar practices are attested at other Mediterranean sanctuaries, e.g., an amber hook-shaped object found at the peripteral temple of Artemis at Ephesos, dated *c.* 750–650 BC (Siepel 2008: 190, no. 191), and bronze hooks dedicated at the Samian Heraion (Tsakos and Viglaki-Sofianou 2012: 360–361).

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Things Jingling from the Beyond: Tracking the Amuletic Function of Bells in Roman Greece

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Abstract

Bells and bell-shaped objects of presumed amuletic function are known from Greece since at least the Early Iron Age. Similar objects are also mentioned in ancient literary sources in a variety of contexts from the Classical and Hellenistic period, suggesting that they were used as votives and for apotropaic purposes. Less well-known is their use in Greece during Roman times, a period when, nevertheless, such objects occur very often in mortuary and domestic contexts. Based on a collection of published data, this paper considers the potential apotropaic qualities of such objects in Roman and Early Byzantine Greece. The evidence suggests a shift in their perception as amulets, which from the Roman Imperial period onwards became more closely associated with personal protection during lifetime, especially for children and women. This gender-specific preference can be traced in other provincial settings too, suggesting that this practice echoed empire-wide trends but materialized differently depending on local cultural and social norms.

Introduction

Small bells of various shapes and materials were used in Greece throughout antiquity, as is suggested by their frequent discovery in settlements, sanctuaries, and cemeteries. While previous scholars have provided broader surveys and typological studies based mostly on the material of earlier periods,[1] this paper focuses on the evidence of bells during Roman and Early Byzantine times and explores their use in amuletic practices. Archaeological discoveries, together with iconographic evidence and references in literary sources, suggest that bells were used widely and for a variety of purposes across the Roman Empire and beyond.[2] They were placed around the necks of herding animals or could be hung from the collars of domestic pets[3] or on horses and wagons. They were also used in military camps, baths, and gymnasia, as instruments in the performance of various daily routines or in cult activities. At home, they frequently hung from sophisticated wind chimes (*tintinnabula*) along with other objects of apparently apotropaic function; they could be also used in cult or deposited with the dead.[4] In some cases, bells were decorated or bore inscriptions, sometimes even explicitly apotropaic ones.[5] However, since they are most frequently unremarkable objects, their amuletic function is not always self-evident and can only be elicited from their association with other items of material culture, as dramatically illustrated by the so-called 'sorceress' kit' that was discovered a few years ago in Pompeii.[6]

Their multivalent character and wide range of functions make bells intriguing for studying amuletic practices, yet such study is not without its problems. Unfortunately, numerous plain and decorated specimens dated to Roman times in museums and collections around Europe and North America have little or no provenance data and therefore serve mostly in typological and art-historical studies.[7] A more promising line of research presents itself when contextual information of finds from surveys or excavations is compiled systematically and examined in a comparative and quantitative manner.[8] For instance, the spatial distribution of bells and their discovery contexts can prove revealing with respect to their relative frequency in certain regions or site types, while also shedding light onto their preferred use for specific purposes and/or by certain social groups. Comparisons between their chronological distribution may furthermore allow tracking the development of amuletic practices and their overall popularity in a specific province or region. For Greece in particular, the long tradition of using

[1] See e.g., Pease 1904; Möbius 1938; Trumpf-Lyritzaki 1981; Marcos-Casquero 1999; Villing 2002.
[2] For Roman-period material from European sites beyond the Roman Empire, see Nowakowski 1988; 1994.
[3] Autengruber-Thüry 2021.
[4] Nuzzo 2000; Parker 2018.
[5] Examples in Brown 1902: 229–230; Nagy 1992.
[6] Pompeii, press releases, 2019, viewed 10 May 2022, <http://pompeiisites.org/en/press-releases/the-luck-and-the-protection-against-the-bad-fate-in-the-jewelery-of-regio-v/>.
[7] See, for instance, the bell published in Nagy 1992.
[8] For a recent survey of the evidence from Roman Britain, see Eckardt and Williams 2018.

bells as votives in sanctuaries and as amulets of various sorts that goes back to the pre-Roman period offers a unique opportunity to explore continuities and shifts in this practice over the longer term.

Keeping these observations in mind, this paper focuses on bells dated to the Roman period from Greek sites as published or reported in the archaeological literature from the 19th century to the present. The source material has been compiled from final and preliminary publications, including interim reports and short notes of archaeological discoveries in the literature and in various other sources indexed in *Archaeological Reports* and *Archaeology of Greece Online*. This is also not without problems, since the quality of reporting and the level of information included in each case varies significantly, making consistency and total coverage difficult to attain. Furthermore, small finds from Roman sites in Greece have rarely been published in a manner that helps to form a basis for typological classifications or allows more detailed contextual analyses. For this reason, and because a first-hand inspection of all the material has not been possible, the study does not focus on matters of typology and chronology. Instead, the purpose here is to examine the reported evidence by placing emphasis on aspects of distribution, frequency, and function.

To do this, the evidence has been classified according to criteria such as dating, provenance by site type, and find context (see Appendix for the data). From a geographical point of view, an attempt has been made to gather information from the entire territory of modern Greece, which in Roman times was part of different administrative units (provinces). From a chronological point of view, although the emphasis lies on the Roman Imperial period (late 1st century BC – 3rd century AD), I have also included finds dated to the Late Roman (4th – 7th century AD) and Early Byzantine (8th – 9th century AD) periods, as their occurrence provides more temporal depth to the examination. For comparative purposes, material from Greek sites dating to pre-Roman times, in other words, Early Iron Age to Hellenistic, is also taken into consideration. Overall, I am particularly interested here in examining in what site types and in what specific contexts bells have been discovered and what this can tell us about their function and use in amuletic practices.

Bells and their distribution in Roman Greece

A compilation of the material from Greek sites from all the above-mentioned sources has yielded 108 bells dating from Roman Imperial to Early Byzantine times (see Appendix). Most are small, ranging between 2 and 7 cm in height, made either of bronze, copper alloy, iron or, more rarely, lead, and usually featuring a suspension loop.[9] In most cases, an iron clapper is also preserved. Of these, 78 are reportedly dated to Roman Imperial times, 26 to the Late Roman period, and three to the Early Byzantine period. Six other finds for which no precise dating is reported are included here for the sake of completeness. Compared to the *c.* 268 finds reported for the Archaic to Hellenistic periods that I have been able to record, the Roman finds make up a significantly smaller number, but it should be noted that over half of the pre-Roman evidence (136 finds) consists of material from one site only, namely the sanctuary of Athena at Sparta. In addition, most finds from the latter site, and more than half of all pre-Roman bells, are made of terracotta — a material used extensively for this purpose in the Archaic and Classical periods but apparently not during Roman times, when small bells were manufactured exclusively in metal. For the reasons mentioned above and because metal artefacts were by default recycled, the number of bells attested from Roman phases of Greek sites is likely to be strongly underrepresented and should therefore be regarded as only a minimum number of the reported finds. Still, this minimum number is significant, as it gives an impression of the scale of such objects' circulation and their chronological range.

Even if the actual numbers of Roman bells are low, they have a wide distribution, from the Evros river to Crete and from the Ionian Islands to the Dodecanese (Figure 1). In most cases, this concerns single attestations only, but several sites, including Corinth, Athens, Patras, and Thessaloniki, have yielded several finds. In addition, some regions, such as Pieria and central Macedonia proper, appear to have significant concentrations, while for others, such as the central part of the Greek mainland and the Cyclades, no finds have been registered. Whether this pattern reflects differing degrees of use in some regions compared to others or whether it is due to modern research bias and differences in the level of archaeological reporting is unclear. Even so, this geographical distribution suggests that in Roman times bells circulated extensively and enjoyed widespread use all over Greece. This is also borne out by their chronological distribution. Although more than two-thirds of the total finds date to the Roman Imperial period, several sites, such as Abdera, Thessaloniki, Beroia, and Athens, have also yielded bells dated to the Late Roman period, while at Corinth they have been retrieved not only from Roman Imperial and Late Roman but also from Early Byzantine contexts. This strongly indicates, for some sites at least, the existence of a persistent tradition in the use of bells for centuries down to the Early Byzantine period.

[9] Unfortunately, precise measurements and descriptions are rarely provided in the available reports.

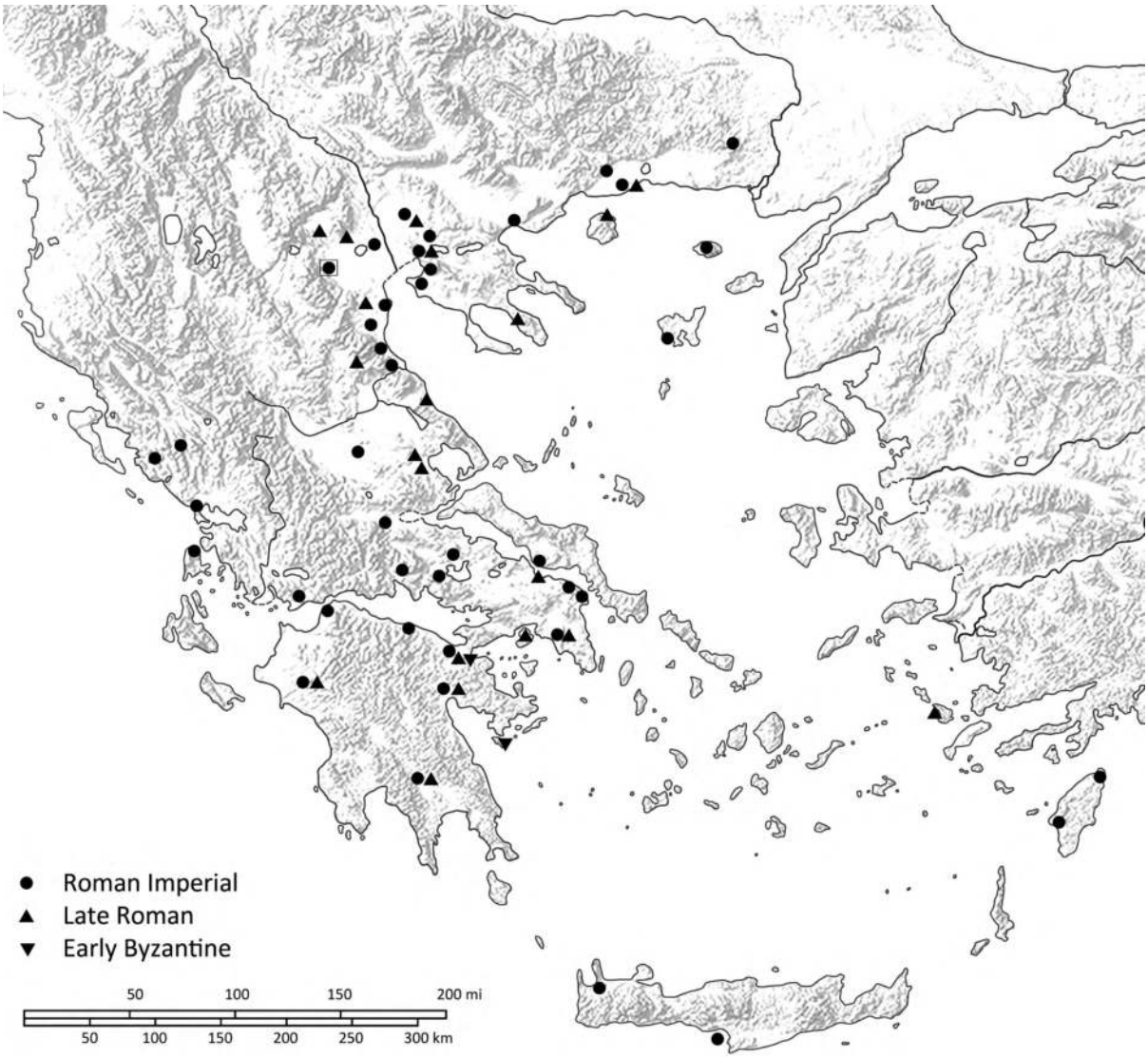

Figure 1. Distribution of bells, Roman Imperial to Early Byzantine (for the data, see Appendix).

The widespread use of bells in Roman Greece is also reflected in the types of sites at which they occur. Most bells have been discovered at urban locations, a fact which is hardly surprising given that ancient Greek cities have been a prime focus of excavation (Figure 2). Nevertheless, it is perhaps important that the finds do not appear to be concentrated at urban sites of any particular status, as they are found in Roman colonies, free cities and other urban settlements alike. The findspots include both major provincial centres like Thessaloniki, Amphipolis, and Dion in Macedonia, Corinth, Athens, and Patras in Achaea, and Nikopolis in Epirus (47% of the total), as well as smaller towns (17% of the total) or other settlements (18% of the total), as in the case of Rhamnous in Attica, Hyampolis in Phokis, Mazarakia in Thesprotia, or Siana on the island of Rhodes. In contrast, the number of finds reported from rural sites, ranging from small farmhouses to larger villas, is low (11% of the total) and in most cases appears to be related to rural production activities, specifically animal husbandry. For instance, a small but interesting cluster of bells comes from rural sites in Thessaly and Pieria dated from the later 2nd to the 4th centuries AD. They were discovered together with agricultural tools and have been interpreted as animal bells.[10] Only 6% of the finds were discovered in sanctuaries.

Examination of the find contexts also reveals some interesting patterns (Figure 3). Most striking is perhaps the minimal number of bells discovered in cultic contexts (5% of the total). Only five such bells dated to the Roman period are known: one from the sanctuary of the Great Gods in Samothrace, one from Delphi,

[10] Vlachaki 2017; further references in the Appendix. For a find from the rural site of Regginion, tentatively interpreted as a toy, see Papastathopoulou 2013: 581.

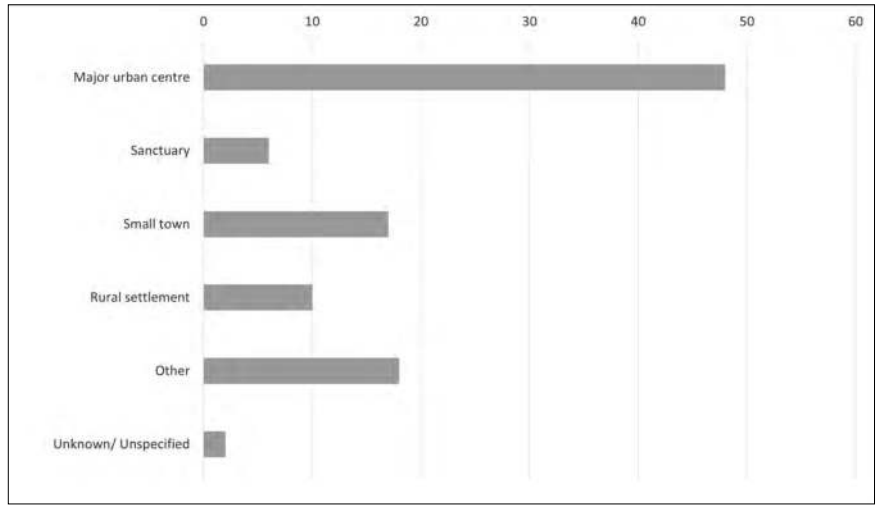

Figure 2. Bells by site type, Roman to Early Byzantine (expressed as percentages of total finds; for the data, see Appendix).

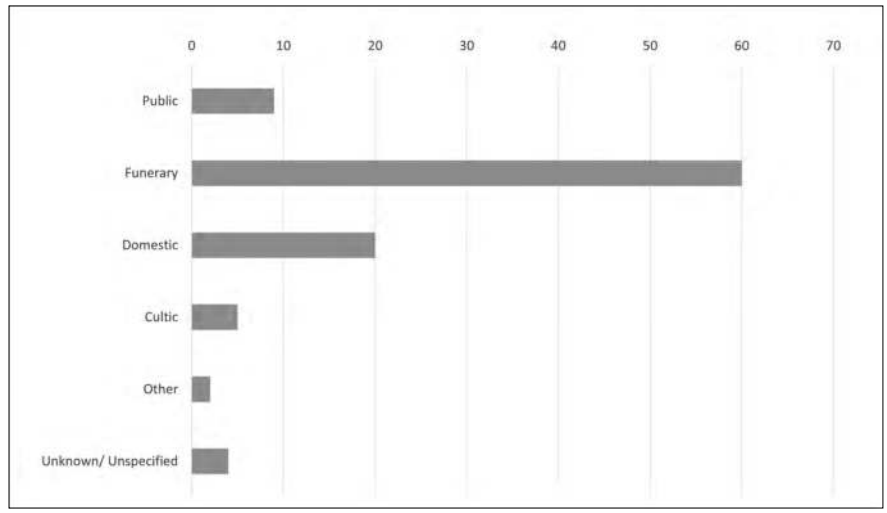

Figure 3. Bells by find context, Roman to Early Byzantine (expressed as percentages of total finds; for the data, see Appendix).

one from the Argive Heraion, one from Olympia, and another discovered in a building tentatively interpreted as the Sebasteion of the Roman colony at Dion in Macedonia.[11] A similarly small number is composed of finds from public locations, such as marketplaces, baths, or other public buildings. In contrast, the majority of finds come from tombs (60% of the total). By far the largest number involve finds associated with inhumations, but some bells have also been found in cremations, such as those from the cemeteries of Lete in Macedonia and Mazarakia in Thesprotia.[12] In addition, bells from domestic contexts both in urban and rural locations make up a sizable group (21% of the total). As stated above, this includes finds from rural locations associated mostly with animal husbandry but bells are also found in the destruction debris of domestic rural buildings, as at Agrosykia in Macedonia, in storerooms (at Thasos), near workshops (at Chalkis), or in urban dwellings (at Dion).[13] In Rhamnous, a bell was found inside the extension ring of a beehive associated with the Roman phase of a small domestic building.[14] Finally, bronze bells have been reported from a hoard off Agia Galini on the southwestern coast of Crete. They were discovered as part of an extensive underwater scatter that apparently represents the remains of a Roman shipwreck dated to the 1st century AD.[15]

[11] See Appendix; dating of most finds is uncertain.
[12] For Lete, see Tzanavari 2013: 616; the cemetery at Mazarakia: Palli 2019.
[13] See Appendix for further references.
[14] Petrakos 1996: 18.
[15] Platon and Davaras 1960: 508-509.

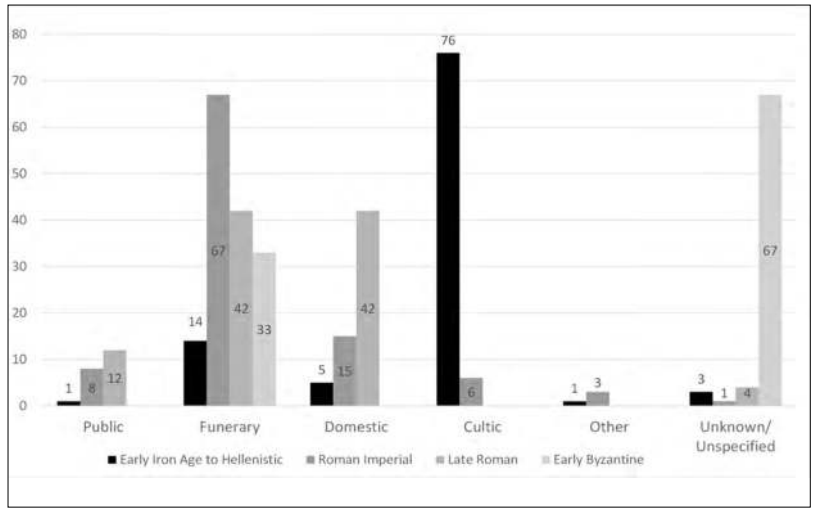

Figure 4. Bells by find context, all periods (expressed as percentages of total finds; for the data, see Appendix).

A comparative examination of the find contexts

To put the Roman evidence into perspective, it is instructive to examine briefly the find contexts of bells more closely, taking into account the evidence from the preceding centuries (Figure 4). For the entire pre-Roman period as a whole, the data make readily evident that the largest number of bells come from sanctuaries, shrines or cult sites (76% of all finds). As already stated, the largest group is from the sanctuary of Athena at Sparta, but significant numbers dating to the Archaic and Classical periods have also been found at the Heraion of Samos and the Kabeirion of Thebes.[16] Smaller concentrations or single finds dated from the Archaic to the Hellenistic periods have also been reported for other Greek cult sites, such as the sanctuary of Apollo at Phana on Chios, the Corycian Cave at Delphi, the sanctuary of Artemis (?) or Apollo at Eutresis, the Kadmeia of Thebes, the Athenian Acropolis, the sanctuary of Hera at Perachora, the sanctuary of Poseidon at Isthmia, the Menelaion at Sparta, and the sanctuary of Korythian Apollo at Longa, as well as for smaller shrines in urban locations: the Athenian Agora, Aigiai in Laconia, and at the sanctuary at Palaiopolis on the island of Kythera.[17]

Even if the exact find contexts are not always known or made clear, the occurrence of bells at sanctuaries strongly suggests that they were either dedicated as votives or had some cultic function.[18] It has been suggested, for instance, that some may have been hung from the necks of sacrificial animals, as indicated by iconographic evidence, but other uses in a ritual context or in the everyday function of sanctuaries are also possible.[19] Furthermore, several Greek bells from pre-Roman times carry explicitly votive inscriptions, although this is by no means a precondition of special function. Also, it has been observed that terracotta bells, which were especially popular in Classical times and make up a sizeable part of all pre-Roman finds, frequently lack their clapper; it has been argued that, as a result, they were less functional than bronze bells, or could only produce an inferior sound.[20] Finally, the overwhelmingly votive or at least cult-related character of bells during pre-Roman times is underscored by finds from northern Greek sites such as Amphipolis, Pella, and Petres, where bells have been discovered with figurines and other paraphernalia apparently associated with domestic cult activity.[21]

Only a comparatively small percentage of bells dated to pre-Roman times (24% of the total) were in fact found outside sanctuaries or settings not explicitly related to cult, including domestic, public and funerary contexts. Bells recovered from houses and other domestic contexts (e.g., workshops, utilitarian buildings) represent a very small percentage indeed (5% of the total) of all pre-Roman finds. The best-known case concerns several bronze bells discovered at Olynthos, where, it has been argued, they hung from windows or doorways and served an apotropaic function.[22] Elsewhere, bells in Classical and Hellenistic domestic contexts are known from Sparta, Delos, and possibly Lousoi.[23] Other than that, solitary finds have been made

[16] Villing 2002: 224–246, 253 n. 57, 261–265; Sabetai 2022.
[17] See Appendix with further references.
[18] For the terracotta bells found at the Kabeirion, see Sabetai 2022, who links them with coming-of-age rituals.
[19] Villing 2002: 284–285.
[20] Villing 2002: 245–246.
[21] See Appendix.
[22] Villing 2002: 254 n. 61.
[23] Sparta: Zavvou 2004: 153. Delos: Siebert 1976: 815. Lousoi: Mitsopoulos-Leon 2017: 166-167 (cat. no. 344) (date uncertain).

in public spaces, such as marketplaces (1% of all pre-Roman finds), while about 3% of all finds come from miscellaneous or unspecified contexts. Interestingly, only 14% of the bells dated from the Early Iron Age to Hellenistic times were discovered in tombs. These are, attested from various sites on the islands and the Greek mainland. During this long period, however, they were apparently never as popular as other types of objects placed with the dead and, as discussed below, their occurrence is restricted to specific regions.

Most finds (67% of the total) dated to the Roman Imperial period were discovered in tombs. This pattern seems to continue into the Late Roman period, as a significant portion (42% of the total) also comes from funerary contexts, and, to a lesser extent, even into the Early Byzantine period (33% of the total). Only 15% of the bells from the Roman Imperial period were discovered in domestic contexts but their number increases by Late Roman times (42% of the total). Many come from rural sites and are interpreted as animal bells, but the use of some domestic finds for apotropaic purposes cannot be ruled out. For instance, some may have been used as doorbells, as in the case of a find from Telendos,[24] or suspended together with other pendants and charms from wind chimes (*tintinnabula*). Such elaborate objects, whose amuletic and apotropaic function is undisputed, are known mostly from Italy and the western provinces, but their existence in Greece is confirmed by a recently published find from Sparta.[25] Since no other such objects are known from elsewhere in Greece so far, however, their use was probably restricted to higher-end households and social groups. Finally, only a few bells have been discovered in public contexts dated to the Roman Imperial period (8% of total), though the percentage increases by Late Roman times (12% of total). Some were discovered in baths, as at Argos,[26] while others were found deposited in wells, cisterns in public places, or in public buildings proper.

A shift from votive to amulet?

Compared to the overwhelming number of bells found in sanctuaries and domestic shrines from Archaic to Hellenistic times, finds dating to the Roman Imperial, and, to a lesser extent, the Late Roman period have been recovered predominantly from funerary contexts (Figure 5). This pattern reflects a remarkable change in the preferred deposition of these objects that deserves further examination. For one, the scarcity of bells from the assemblages of Greek sanctuaries of the Roman period is noteworthy, even when the long-standing disregard of Roman phases and the shortcomings of modern research are considered.[27] In fact, bells are not uncommon in sanctuaries elsewhere in the Roman Empire. In a short study, Nowakowski has drawn attention to the evidence from Moesia and Thrace, where numerous bells have been found at sanctuaries of the Thracian rider, Epona, and Jupiter Dolichenus. The former finds have been interpreted as dedications by horsemen for the health and well-being of their horses, while the latter are associated with the spread of oriental cults in these provinces.[28] Ritual use of bells in Roman times is mentioned in literary sources, especially in connection with Bacchic rituals and other mystery cults.[29] Various such cults are also attested in Greece during the Roman Imperial period, but the material evidence about objects used in their rituals is very scant. It is therefore conceivable that by the Roman period bells continued to fulfil votive or ritual functions in Greek sanctuaries and cult places but were used in ritual contexts about which we currently know little.

Even if such caveats are taken into account, the increase in the number of bells in Roman funerary contexts seems to imply a major shift in their use and symbolic significance. This possibility is reinforced by the almost total disappearance of terracotta bells after the Classical period and the exclusive preference for bronze and copper alloy bells during Roman times. If so, what were the reasons for this shift and how it can be interpreted? And since bells discovered in tombs have been frequently viewed as apotropaic objects, could this shift indicate a transformed perception of them as amulets rather than votives? To approach these questions, it is first instructive to examine specifically the occurrence of bells in the funerary record in a diachronic perspective. For such an examination, the associated artefactual assemblage and the available mortuary data, especially the age and sex of the deceased, are important parameters. It should be noted that only for a small number of the reported cases is age and sex identification based on a thorough examination of the skeletal remains. For others, the information has been derived from other criteria, for instance (in the case of inhumations) the size of the grave and the character of the associated finds. Still, even bearing these limitations in mind, a comparison between the pre-Roman and the Roman period can be enlightening.

Between Archaic and Hellenistic times, bells are found mainly in the tombs of infants and children, as well as in a certain number of burials of adult males and women, suggesting that preference for their deposition was not gendered (Figure 6). The significant proportion

[24] Koutellas 2012: 402. Outside Greece, for Late Roman and Early Byzantine finds from domestic contexts, see Russell 1995: 42–43; Pülz 2020: 135 (several from contexts of the 3rd and 4th centuries AD).
[25] Vapheiadis 2018. On *tintinnabula* as apotropaic objects, see Parker 2018.
[26] Aupert 1980: 450, nos. 428-429; Sarri 2009: 87.
[27] Grigoropoulos 2021.
[28] Nowakowski 1992.
[29] Pease 1904: 54–55; Marcos Casquero 1999: 54; Villing 2002: 285–289.

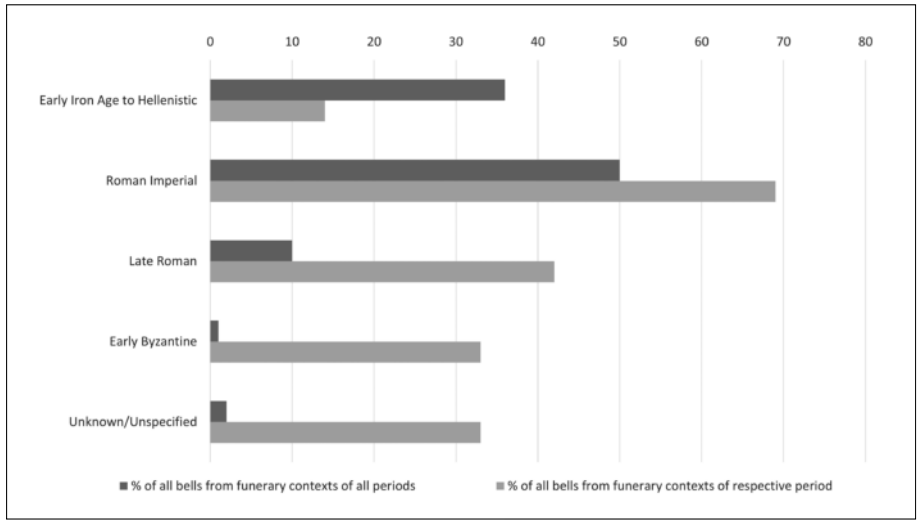

Figure 5. Bells from funerary contexts for each period group and across all periods (expressed as percentages; for the data, see Appendix).

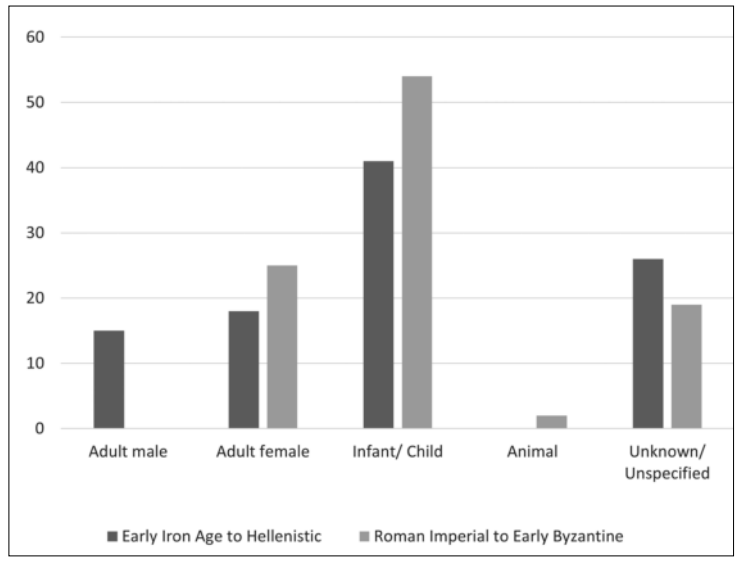

Figure 6. Bells from funerary contexts by sex/age group of the deceased, all periods (expressed as percentages of total finds; for the data, see Appendix).

of bells associated with adult male burials during these periods is noteworthy. Since some have been found together with weapons and horse trappings, they may relate to either the deposition of horse gear or the custom of hanging bells from shields, which is mentioned in literary sources of the Classical period and substantiated by finds from battlefield sites, as for example Thermopylae.[30] Bells from burials of this type could thus represent a symbolic surrogate for artefacts *not* deposited in the tomb, as in the case of a rich cremation of an adult male from Koukkos near ancient Pydna, dated to the last quarter of the 4th century BC.[31] Here it should be stressed that nearly 80% of the reported bells from child burials before the Roman period come from only two regions, Attica and Boeotia, whereas in other areas they occur irregularly.[32] But even in Classical Athens, as several scholars have shown, children during their lifetime received various other types of amulets for protection against harm.[33] At the Kerameikos cemetery, moreover, those child burials with bells are clearly a minority compared to

[30] Lemerle 1939: 312.

[31] Koukkos: Besios and Noulas 2014: 136.

[32] See Villing 2002: 289–292. For the Boeotian sites, see relevant entries in the Appendix: in addition to Thebes, finds are also reported from Akraiphia, Eleon, Neochoraki and possibly also Tanagra.

[33] Merkouri 2010; Faraone 2018: 28–32.

those containing other types of grave gifts.[34] It is also interesting to note that the majority of finds date to the Archaic and Classical periods, whereas bells reported for children's tombs dating to the Hellenistic period are extremely rare.[35]

The evidence for the Roman to the Early Byzantine period suggests otherwise. Firstly, not only are bells now primarily associated with the burials of infants or children, also appearing in significant numbers in female burials, but are completely absent from those of adult males. A single bell from Lade in the Evros region was discovered with the burial of a young horse under a tumulus and most probably belonged to its trappings but, interestingly, was associated with a child inhumation dated to the 1st century AD.[36] Secondly, the geographical distribution of bells from such burials is wide, with the largest part coming from the cemeteries of urban sites of different status. Although clearly not all child or female burials at any given site contained bells, this pattern suggests that the practice was not limited to any region but common throughout Roman Greece. It is also noteworthy that, although the number of recorded cases becomes significantly lower, bells continued to accompany child burials even after Roman Imperial times, suggesting that this practice survived until late. A representative instance is the bronze bell found in an infant's tomb dated to the late 6th or early 7th centuries AD in the Late Roman cemetery of Delion in Boeotia.[37] Another interesting example, also from a 6th- or 7th-century AD infant's burial, is known from the last phase of use of the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore on Acrocorinth. The latest recorded case comes from the area of the Forum of Roman Corinth, where an Early Byzantine burial dated to the 9th century AD contained at least two children and a bronze bell.[38]

Bells as amulets for children and women in the Roman Empire

The evidence considered above shows that, while bells are found in children's tombs in Greece already in pre-Roman times, it was only from the Roman Imperial period onwards that they begin to be associated increasingly with this group (Figure 7). The scarcity of bells from children's tombs dated to the Hellenistic period, even in areas like Attica and Boeotia, where they occur frequently in Archaic and Classical times, is puzzling but reflects the general dearth of burial offerings accompanying children during this period.[39] This picture, if corroborated by further evidence in the future, may indicate that the association of bells with children and women in Roman Greece developed not from a continuous local tradition but was (re-)

Figure 7. Finds assemblage from a child burial at Hyampolis, early 2nd century AD (photo: M. Papageorgiou; after Papageorgiou and Grigoropoulos, forthcoming) © Hellenic Ministry of Culture – Ephorate of Antiquities of Phthiotida and Evrytania.

[34] Stroszeck 2012; Dimakis 2020 (especially 108–111).
[35] See Appendix (Phthiotic Thebes).
[36] Triantaphyllos 2009: 891
[37] Chamilaki 2009: 1170, with fig. 12.
[38] On the Corinthian examples, see Ott 2016: 230–231.
[39] Dimakis 2020; 2021.

introduced as a result of external influences. It is worth noting that, in contrast to Hellenistic Greece, bells appear frequently in children's and women's burials in other Mediterranean societies before the Roman conquest. In addition to numerous examples from Ptolemaic Egypt, a recent study has noted a certain preponderance of such objects in the tombs of children and women in the Punic Mediterranean.[40] A strong association between bells and children is furthermore borne out by the funerary record in pre-Roman Iberia.[41] Finally, Faraone has noted that the amulets of Roman times in Campania and South Italy may reflect the persistence of strong Greek influences. These local traditions and the increased connectivity between Greece and these regions from the Late Hellenistic period onwards arguably helped to prepare the ground for the spread of the practice in later times.

In this context, it is important to note that the deposition of bells in the tombs of children and women is not unique to Roman Greece but mirrors the scale of the phenomenon elsewhere in the Roman Empire. Flinders Petrie was amongst the first to register their occurrence in Roman and Coptic Egypt, noting that they were probably used to track children.[42] Bells found in the tombs of women and children are also known from Roman Italy. In addition to accompanying the dead in the grave, at the catacomb of Pamphilus in Rome bells were incorporated into the mortar that seals exclusively children's tombs.[43] Numerous bells from Roman Spain and Gaul have also been found in burials of children or infants, in most cases together with objects of explicitly apotropaic character, as in the case of a tomb in Arras, where a bell was attached to an ithyphallic *pelta*-shaped pendant.[44] A recent study by Hella Eckardt and Sandie Williams on the distribution of bells in Roman Britain has shown that finds from funerary contexts are associated with either young women or non-adolescents.[45] In one noteworthy case from the Finsbury Circus cemetery in London, a bell was found with the remains of a mother and child buried together.[46] Bells discovered in children's and women's graves are also known from Roman-period cemeteries as far away as Judaea, Nabataea, and several regions around the Black Sea.[47]

While bells are often still viewed as children's toys, several scholars have emphasized their apotropaic qualities, seeing them in the context of superstition and magic.[48] A common theme is that bells are noisy instruments that by the power of their sound were especially appropriate for protection against evil spirits and demons. It has been suggested that their material also played a significant role, since ancient sources credit bronze with purifying and prophylactic qualities.[49] Several scholars have also pointed out that in the funerary record bells occasionally occur together with other artefacts producing rattling or jingling sounds, such as perforated coins, gemstones, and jewellery, or other apotropaic objects, such as *peltae*, animal teeth and miniatures, which would reinforce the effect.[50] Such 'amulet sets' are identified with the *crepundia* mentioned in Latin literary sources, elaborate series of pendants that were hung from strings around the necks of infants or young women, or sometimes kept in special boxes (*cistellae*) or purses.[51] Their occurrence in burials has been associated not only with the premature death of children but also with ideas of incomplete womanhood. It has been argued, for instance, that the deposition of *crepundia* along with other artefacts in exceptionally richly furnished tombs of young women and girls in Roman Italy specifically concerns unmarried individuals, reflecting elite Roman social beliefs about unrealized marriage.[52]

A tendency prompted by the overwhelmingly funerary character of the evidence is to interpret bells strictly as amulets for the dead. The fact that a significant number of bells from burials have been found with their clappers and could, theoretically, still produce sound, while others are also inscribed with magical or apotropaic texts,[53] nonetheless leaves little doubt that they were functional objects meant to be used, heard, and viewed by the living. Especially in the case of women and children, it is worth stressing, the apotropaic function of bells need not necessarily derive from the funerary context but from the objects' social biographies. Amulet strings with bells found in Pompeian houses or worn by skeletons of women who perished in AD 79, or in domestic caches, as in the case of Augusta Raurica, insula 24, recall the textual references to *crepundia*, indicating that these were important personal possessions.[54] Behind this lies the perception

[40] Egypt: Abd El Hamid 2015; Punic Mediterranean: Fariselli 2012/2013; Ibiza: Bellard 1984.
[41] Chapa-Brunet 2008.
[42] Flinders Petrie 1914: 28, no. 124; 1927: 24.
[43] Nuzzo 2000: 252–253; Bevilacqua 2014, 518.
[44] Spain: Mezquíriz Irujo 2011; Gaul: Le Pesant 1966; Jelski 1984; Dasen 2003: 287; Pfäffli 2013: 42 fig. 14.
[45] Eckardt and Williams 2018: 197–198.
[46] Eckardt and Williams 2018: 198.
[47] Judaea: Tal et al. 2014: 164. Nabataea: Perry 2016: 395–396. Black Sea: Simonenko *et al.* 2008: 63, no. 54, pl. 42d; 351, no. 54, pl. 84.5–6 (burial of juvenile); 372, no. 170, pl. 178.6.
[48] Pease 1904: 47–48; Dasen 2003: 287; 2015, 189; Russell 1995: 42–43; Faraone 2018: 85.
[49] Marcos Casquero 1999: 57–58; Villing 2002: 289–290; Faraone 2018:85–87.
[50] See e.g., the bells and other objects strung on a rattle from a child's grave in Rouen, Pfäffli 2013: 42 fig. 14.
[51] For *crepundia* in a purse found in a child's grave from Colchester, see Philpott 1991: 368.
[52] Martin-Kilcher 2000.
[53] Bevilacqua 2014: 518, fig. 3.
[54] Dyer 1867: 446; Faraone 2018: 58. See also n. 5 above. Amulet cache from Augusta Raurica: Pfäffli 2013: 47.

that at the beginning of life children, especially newborns and infants, were fragile, prone to harm and premature death and thus in special need of protection. This widespread belief engendered the criticism of John Chrysostom, who, writing in the late 4th century AD, condemned mothers who still tied amulets and bells on the wrists of their children instead of trusting in the power of the cross.[55] As Faraone has noted,[56] childhood amulets could be retained into adulthood by women for added protection or as mementos, which would explain their occurrence in female burials. Seen from this angle, the deposition of bells in tombs has a twofold significance. On one level, it could reflect a generic belief that these objects, once put to the protection of a person during his/her lifetime, did not lose their amuletic qualities and apotropaic function with the person's passing. On another, the bells could serve as a demonstration to contemporaries, especially those present at the burial, that the family, following accepted social norms, had taken the necessary steps to ensure the deceased person was protected from harm while still alive.

Local specificities

Because of the intrinsically personal character of such objects and considering that perceptions of childhood and social beliefs about the protection of children and women likely varied between different parts of the Empire,[57] local preferences and numerous variations may be expected to have existed in their arrangement and use. Véronique Dasen notes, for instance, that although given to both boys and girls alike, bells were especially popular in Roman Gaul compared to the types of amulets more common in other parts of the Empire.[58]. Similarly, John Chrysostom's remark about the practice of hanging bells and other amulets from children's wrists, although referring to no specific place or region, must have been coloured by his own life experiences in Constantinople and adjacent areas. As already noted, in Roman Italy and the western provinces bells, whether in funerary or other contexts, are rarely found alone but rather associated with other objects of apotropaic function that were originally attached to a string and worn as a necklace.[59] In Roman Spain, it has been argued that they were attached to children's clothing.[60] Representations on Egyptian terracottas and lamps show children and the child god Harpocrates wearing bell necklaces. At the same time, bells from Roman Egypt include specimens attached to bracelets or strung from linen cords or other organic materials that have survived in the archaeological record.[61] In Palmyra, local women commemorated on sepulchral reliefs of the 3rd century AD are shown wearing typical thick bracelets of twisted wire with one hanging bell.[62] A 3rd-century AD relief from Lydia shows a bacchant in ritual dress wearing several bells across his chest and suspended from his belt.[63]

For Roman Greece, given the limitations of the evidence and the small sample size, only preliminary remarks about local preferences in the personalized use of bells can be made. Most bells from burials were found without other associated items, nor does clear evidence for their suspension from amulet strings or sets of charms in a manner comparable to that attested in Italy and the Western provinces exist so far. Even if such amulet strings were in use, nothing indicates that the tradition of wearing them tied diagonally under the armpit, as represented on painted vases and terracottas from Classical Athens and Argos, had survived down to Roman times.[64] Similarly, evidence for purses or boxes containing bells together with other apotropaic items is scant.[65] If amulet sets like the Italian and Western ones were in circulation, they are more likely to have been used by persons of higher standing, whereas simpler arrangements with less costly materials may have been more common. In the west cemetery of Thessaloniki, the inhumation of a young girl dated to ca. AD 300 was accompanied by two bells, one bronze mirror, one bronze and two bone hair pins, twelve glass beads, and an animal tooth. The glass beads and the animal tooth were found close to the neck, so probably belonged to a pendant, unlike the two bells that were found beneath her feet.[66] Glass beads found together with bells are reported from burials dating as late as the Early Byzantine period, but whether they formed part of an amulet string is not clear.[67]

Several bells recovered from burials were found hanging from or together with simple wire bracelets. A good example was discovered at the cemetery of Mazarakia in Thesprotia (Figure 8), while a bronze bracelet with an attached bronze bell was also reported from a child burial near Pydna in Pieria.[68] The bracelet from Mazarakia is simple, consisting of no more than a thin metal wire featuring just one bell twisted around it on a separate wire, an arrangement that should be considered the most basic. An early 2nd-century AD burial of a young

[55] *Patrologia Graeca* 61 (1862): 105, 8.
[56] Faraone 2018: 610.
[57] Comparative discussion in Pearce 2001; Roman Italy: Rawson 2003.
[58] Dasen 2011: 311.
[59] Dyer 1867: 466; Martin-Kilcher 2000: 64–67; Dasen 2003: 287; Faraone 2018: 59–60 with fig. 2.4.
[60] Mezquíriz Irujo 2011: 68.
[61] Flinders Petrie 1914: pl. 15 nos. 124a-b; 1927: pl. 18, nos. 33-37; Abd El Hamid 2015: fig. 42, fig. 56.
[62] Mackay 1949; Krag and Raja 2016: 142, fig. 10.
[63] Robert 1983: 597–599 with fig. 1.
[64] Merkouri 2010; Faraone 2018: 28–32.
[65] For a possible wooden box holding bells from a child's burial in Patras, see Papakosta 1992: 145.
[66] Makropoulou 2007: 140 no. 190 (Grave 257).
[67] See e.g., from Corinth: Ott 2016: 380 (Grave 1926-022).
[68] Thesprotian finds in Riginos and Tzortzatou 2015: 57; for Pydna, see Bessios and Athanasiadou 2015: 187.

Figure 8. Bells from the cemeteries of Mazarakia and Kambos Zervochoriou (after Riginos and Tzortzatou 2015; Archaeological Museum of Igoumentitsa, inv. nos. ΘΕ 7185, ΘΕ 8473) © Hellenic Ministry of Culture - Ephorate of Antiquities of Thesprotia.

girl at Nikopolis in Epirus contained a pair of bells and a pair of bracelets, presumably to be worn in tandem on each wrist.[69] At any rate, the preference for wearing bells on the wrist is also suggested by the position that they have been found in inhumation burials. Whenever such information is available, bells are usually reported to have been found close to the wrists or hands, as in the case of a child burial of the early 2nd century AD from Hyampolis in eastern Phokis and another dated to the beginning of the 4th century AD from the west cemetery of Thessaloniki.[70] The bell from the latter burial was found together with a perforated coin and belonged to an amulet apparently intended to be worn on the wrist. In the absence of a metal bracelet in these cases, we are led to speculate that the bells were tied to a string made of wool or some other organic material that has disintegrated. Closer study of the funerary environment including use of analytical methods to recover traces of such organic residues will arguably offer more opportunities to shed light on this matter in the future.

Conclusion

Despite the limitations of the archaeological evidence and the difficulty of interpreting patterns based on finds that for the most part have not been fully published, this examination has attempted to demonstrate that small metal bells in Roman Greece were widely used by the provincial population as amulets, especially in association with children and women. Although bells already occur sporadically in children's and women's burials since the Archaic period at the latest, only during Roman Imperial times did this distinctive pattern emerge, mirroring the trends elsewhere in the Roman Empire but manifesting itself according to local preferences. The practice in Roman Greece appears to have been extensive, attested in nearly all regions and at sites of different status and function, and persistent through time, continuing even after the spread of Christianity and surviving for centuries, despite the severe criticism by Fathers of the Church. John Chrysostom's remark about the use of bells as children's amulets provides an interesting sidelight to the picture revealed by the mortuary evidence but also serves as a reminder that ancient perceptions regarding the use of such objects may not be directly reflected in the archaeological record. Rather than belonging to the realm of the dead, it points out that bells were amulets for the living, given by families to children and women during their lives as personal possessions to protect them from harm. Greater attention should therefore be paid to the occurrence of such finds not only in burials but also in domestic contexts and other locales where children and women were very likely present. In the future, rigorous contextual analysis of such archaeological finds using more advanced methods has the potential to help us approach these practices and the social identities of the persons behind them with greater accuracy.

[69] Zachos and Georgiou 2003: 591.
[70] Thessaloniki: Makropoulou 2007: 363 no. 84 (Grave 784); Hyampolis: Papageorgiou and Grigoropoulos, forthcoming.

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Site	Material	Context	Site type	Comments	Age/Sex	Date
Abdera	B/CA	P	Major urban centre			H
Abdera	B/CA	P?	Major urban centre	animal bell?		RI?
Abdera	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	From LR cemetery	Infant/ Child?	LR
Agia Galini	B/CA	O	Other	Shipwreck, 3rd century AD (more than one bell reported)		RI
Agrosykia	B/CA	F	Other	Inhumation burial	Adult male?	EIA
Agrosykia	B/CA	D	Other	From destruction deposit		LR
Agrosykia	B/CA	F	Other	Inhumation	U/U	LR
Aigiai	B/CA	C	Sanctuary			CL
Aigiai	T	C	Sanctuary			CL
Akraiphia	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	2nd half 5th century BC	Infant/ Child	CL
Akraiphia	T	F	Major urban centre	inhumations	Infant/Child	CL
Akraiphia	T	F	Major urban centre	exact number not reported	Infant/ Child	CL
Alykes Kitrous	B/CA	F	Other	inhumation	Female	CL
Alykes Kitrous	B/CA	F	Small town	Inhumation	Infant/ Child	RI
Amphipolis	B/CA	C	Major urban centre	Domestic shrine?		H
Amphipolis	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Inhumation, early 3rd century BC	Female	H
Anthedon	B/CA	F	Other	inhumation	U/U	U/U
Argos, Giakoumakis plot	I	P	Major urban centre	From hypocaust area of bath		LR
Argos	B/CA	P	Major urban centre	Bath complex, destroyed 585 AD		LR
Argos, Heraion	B/CA	C	Sanctuary			U/U
Argos, Heraion	B/CA	C	Sanctuary			RI?
Athens, Academy	T	F	Major urban centre		Infant/ Child	A
Athens, Agora	T	P	Major urban centre			A
Athens, Agora	B/CA	P	Major urban centre	Destruction debris north of east bay		RI
Athens, Agora	B/CA	P	Major urban centre	Well		RI
Athens, Acropolis	T	C	Sanctuary			A?
Athens, Ilissos Cemetery	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	2nd-3rd century AD	U/U	RI
Athens, Kerameikos	T	F	Major urban centre			A
Athens, Kerameikos	T	F	Major urban centre	Südhügel	Infant/ Child	A-CL
Beroia	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Inhumation	Infant/ Child	RI
Chaironeia	B/CA	F	Small town	Inhumation	Infant/ Child	RI
Chalkidiki	B/CA	U/U	U/U			U/U
Chalkis (Euboea)	B/CA	D	Major urban centre	Found close to kiln; inscribed; silver-plated		RI
Chinitsa	B/CA	U/U	U/U			EB
Chios, Apollo Phanaios	B/CA	C	Sanctuary			A
Cholorema	B/CA	D	Rural settlement	animal bell?		LR
Corinth	B/CA	U/U	Major urban centre			LR
Corinth	B/CA	P? O?	Major urban centre	MF 5563		RI?
Corinth	B/CA	U/U	Major urban centre	MF 1809; together with Domitianic coins?		RI?
Corinth	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Inhumations	Infant/ Child	RI

Site	No. of finds	References
Abdera	1	Lazaridis 1951: 299
Abdera	1	Kallintzi 1994: 460 with fig. 16
Abdera	2	Triantaphyllos 1984: 258
Agia Galini	2	Platon and Davaras 1960: 508-509
Agrosykia	1	Chrysostomou 2009: 811
Agrosykia	1	Chrysostomou et al. 2007: 27 with pl. 1.15:3
Agrosykia	1	Chrysostomou et al. 2007: 239 with pl. III.24,1
Aigiai	1	Villing 2002: 248 n. 33
Aigiai	2	Villing 2002: 254 n. 59
Akraiphia	2	Andreiomenou 1993: 135, 141
Akraiphia	2	Andreiomenou 1990: 149
Akraiphia	2	Sabetai 2000: 302
Alykes Kitrous	1	Bessios 1997: 388
Alykes Kitrous	1	Bessios and Athanasiadou 2015: 187; PYDNA. - Alykes Kitrous - 2011, Archaeology in Greece Online, report 2700, created 30 July 2012, viewed 25 March 2021, <https://chronique.efa.gr/?kroute=report&id=2700>
Amphipolis	1	Malama and Salonikios 2004
Amphipolis	2	Papadopoulou 2016: 199–200, no. 176
Anthedon	1	Sapouna-Sakellaraki 1998: 197
Argos, Giakoumakis plot	1	Sarri 2009: 87
Argos	2	Aupert 1980, 450, nos. 428-429
Argos, Heraion	1	Villing 2002: 255
Argos, Heraion	1	Villing 2002: 255 fig. 22
Athens, Academy	1	Villing 2002: 252, n. 50
Athens, Agora	1	Villing 2002: 252 n. 52
Athens, Agora	1	viewed 25 March 2021 <https://www.ascsa.edu.gr/resources-landing/details?source=dc&id=Agora:Object:B%20257>
Athens, Agora	1	Robinson 1959: 53, pl. 53, no. J-17
Athens, Acropolis	2	Villing 2002: 252 n. 52
Athens, Ilissos Cemetery	1	Skias 1898: 79
Athens, Kerameikos	1	Villing 2002: 252 n. 52
Athens, Kerameikos	3	Villing 2002: 252 n. 50-51 fig. 17
Beroia	1	Kotzias 1961: 168
Chaironeia	1	Kountouri and Petrocheilos 2017
Chalkidiki	1	Villing 2002: 255 n. 66
Chalkis (Euboea)	1	Tsountas 1912: 56
Chinitsa	2	Koilakou 2001: 69
Chios, Apollo Phanaios	2	Villing 2002: 256
Cholorema	1	Vlachaki 2017: 97
Corinth	1	Davidson 1952: 338, cat.no. 2898
Corinth	1	viewed 25 March 2021 <http://ascsa.net/id/corinth/object/mf%205563?q=%22bronze%20bell%22&t=&v=list&sort=&s=6>
Corinth	1	http://ascsa.net/id/corinth/object/mf%201809?q=%22bronze%20bell%22&t=&v=list&sort=&s=3
Corinth	2	Ancient Corinth - 2010, Archaeology in Greece Online, report 6929, created 13 August 2019, viewed 25 March 2021, <https://chronique.efa.gr/?kroute=report&id=6929>

Site	Material	Context	Site type	Comments	Age/Sex	Date
Corinth, Demeter sanctuary	B/CA	F	Sanctuary	Inhumation, 6th-7th century AD	Infant/ Child	LR
Corinth, Forum	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Inhumation 7th - 9th century AD	Infant/ Child	EB
Corinth, North Cemetery	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Inhumation (4th century AD or later)	Infant/ Child	LR
Delion	B/CA	F	Other	6th-7th century AD	Infant/ Child	LR
Delos	B/CA	D	Other	South of the 'salle hypostyle'		H
Delos	B/CA	D	Other	North of the 'Îlot des Bronzes'		H?
Delphi	B/CA	C	Sanctuary	Date uncertain but type common in Roman times		RI?
Delphi, Corycian Cave	B/CA	C	Sanctuary	Uncertain		A-H?
Dion	I	C?	Major urban centre	animal bell? Sacrificial victim?		RI
Dion	I	D	Major urban centre	animal bell?		RI
Edessa	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Inhumation	Infant/ Child	LR
Eleon	T	F	Small town	Inhumations; several bells reported	Infant/ Child	CL
Evinochorion	B/CA	F	Other	Inhumation	Infant/ Child	RI
Epanomi	B/CA	F	Other	Inhumation	U/U	LR
Eutresis	T	C	Other	More than one bell reported		CL
Giannitsa, Archontiko	B/CA	F	Other		Female	CL
Halai	T	F	Major urban centre		Infant/ Child	CL
Hyampolis	B/CA	F	Small town	Inhumation	Infant/ Child	RI
Hypate	B/CA	P	Major urban centre	public building		RI
Isthmia	T	C	Sanctuary			A
Kambos Zervochoriou	B/CA	F	Other		U/U	RI
Kassope	B/CA	P	Major urban centre	From stoa?		H
Kastri Dolichis	I	D	Rural site	animal husbandry		LR
Kerdyllia	B/CA	F	Small town	Inhumation	Infant/ Child	RI
Kerdyllia	B/CA	F	Small town	Inhumations	Female	RI
Kierrion, Pyrgos	B/CA	D	Small town	animal bell?		RI
Kissamos	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	LR burial in dromos of ER tomb	U/U	LR
Komnina, Mytikas	I	D	Other	animal bell?		RI
Knossos	B/CA	F?	Major urban centre			A-H?
Kolchida Kilkis	I	D	Rural settlement	animal bell?		LR
Koukkos	B/CA	F	Other	last quarter of 4th century BC		H
Kythera, Palaiopolis	B/CA	C	Sanctuary	Found near altar		CL
Lade	B/CA	F	Other	Horse burial, associated with child inhumation, 1st century AD	Animal	RI
Langadas (ancient Lete)	B/CA	F	Other	Cremation, 2nd - 3rd century AD	U/U	RI
Lemnos, Myrina	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Inhumation	Infant/ Child	RI
Lemnos, Myrina	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Inhumation	Infant/ Child	RI
Lemnos, Myrina	T	F	Major urban centre			H
Leukas, North Cemetery	B/CA	F	Major urban centre		U/U	H
Leukas, Tsechlibou	B/CA	F	Major urban centre		U/U	CL
Leukas, Tsechlibou	B/CA	F	Other	early 2nd century AD	U/U	RI
Longa	B/CA	C	Sanctuary			CL
Louloudies Kitrous	I	D	Other	animal bell?		LR
Lousoi	B/CA	D	Small town			U/U

Site	No. of finds	References
Corinth, Demeter sanctuary	1	Ott 2016: 230
Corinth, Forum	1	Ott 2016: 230
Corinth, North Cemetery	1	Slane 2017: 86 cat. no. CTS-B9 pl. 78
Delion	1	Chamilaki 2011: 1170, with fig. 12
Delos	1	Deonna 1938, 325, no. 816
Delos	1	Siebert 1976, 815
Delphi	1	Villing 2002: 258 n. 78
Delphi, Corycian Cave	1	Rolley 1984: 275, fig. 29 no. 59
Dion	1	Vassileiadou 2011: 217 no. 29
Dion	2	Vassileiadou 2011: 218 nos. 30–31
Edessa	1	Chrysostomou 1997: 450
Eleon	2	ÉLÉONAS. - Terrain Verykokos - 2003, Archaeology in Greece Online, report 3029, created 26 April 2013, viewed 22 May 2022, <https://chronique.efa.gr/?kroute=report&id=3029>
Evinochorion	1	Chouliaras et al. 2014: 183
Epanomi	1	Pazaras 2009: 88, 150, fig. 196
Eutresis	2	Villing 2002: 253 n. 57
Giannitsa, Archontiko	1	Chrysostomou and Chrysostomou 2009: 771
Halai	1	Villing 2002: 253 n. 57
Hyampolis	1	Papageorgiou and Grigoropoulos, forthcoming
Hypate	1	Papakonstantinou-Katsouni 1990: 162
Isthmia	2	Gebhard 1998: 107, n. 79
Kambos Zervochoriou	1	Riginos and Tzortzatou 2015: 57
Kassope	1	Dakaris 1955: 208
Kastri Dolichis	2	Vlachaki 2017: 97-98
Kerdyllia	6	Malama and Darakis 2008: 435-436, pl. 85-86
Kerdyllia	2	Malama and Darakis 2008: 435-436, pl. 85-86
Kierrion, Pyrgos	2	Vlachaki 2017: 96
Kissamos	1	Skordou 2018
Komnina, Mytikas	1	Triantaphyllos 1998: 396
Knossos	1	Platon and Davaras 1961/1962: 288
Kolchida Kilkis	1	Papanikola-Bakirtzi 2002: 133, no. 140
Koukkos	1	Besios and Noulas 2014: 136
Kythera, Palaiopolis	1	Petrocheilos 2016/2017: 268, n. 12
Lade	1	Triantaphyllos 2009: 891
Langadas (ancient Lete)	1	Tzanavari 2013: 616
Lemnos, Myrina	1	Pottier and Reinach 1887: 85-86 (no. 59)
Lemnos, Myrina	1	Blackman 2001-2002: 92
Lemnos, Myrina	1	Pottier and Reinach 1885: 203-204
Leukas, North Cemetery	1	Blackman 1998-99: 65
Leukas, Tsechlibou	1	Douzougli 1998: 289
Leukas, Tsechlibou	1	Zachos 1997: 284
Longa	1	Villing 2002: 248 fig. 12
Louloudies Kitrous	1	Papanikola-Bakirtzi 2002: 133, no. 141
Lousoi	1	Mitsopoulos-Leon 2017: 166-167 (cat. no. 344)

Site	Material	Context	Site type	Comments	Age/Sex	Date
Mavra Litharia	B/CA	F	Other	Inhumation	Infant/ Child	RI
Mazarakia	B/CA	F	Other	cremation?	U/U	RI
Messene (Ancient)	B/CA	P	Major urban centre	From well near bath building		H
Mikrothives	B/CA	D	Rural settelement	animal bell?		LR
Neochoraki	B/CA	F	Small town	Burial pyre		CL
Neoi Poroi, Pigi Athinas	B/CA	D	Rural settlement	animal bell?		RI
Nikopolis	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Inhumation	Infant/ Child	RI
Olympia	B/CA	C	Sanctuary			RI
Olympia	B/CA	F	Sanctuary	Inhumation	U/U	LR
Olynthos	B/CA	D	Major urban centre			CL
Omolion	B/CA	U/U	Small town	Not stratified; paradosi*?		CL
Omolion	B/CA	F	Small town	Tomb 16		CL
Oropos	B/CA	F	Small town	Inhumation	Infant/ Child	RI
Palatiano Kilkis	B/CA	D	Other			RI
Patras, Benizelou Roufou 9	L	F	Major urban centre	Inhumation	Infant/ Child	RI
Pella, East Cemetery	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Inhumations	Female	CL
Pella, Sector I, House 1-4	B/CA	C	Major urban centre	Domestic shrine		H
Pella, Phakos	B/CA	F	Small town	Neronian	Young girl	RI
Pella, Roman colony	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	More than one bell reported	Adult female	RI
Pellinaion	B/CA	F	Small town	Adult?		U/U
Perachora	B/CA	C	Sanctuary			U/U
Petres Florinas	B/CA	C	Small town	Domestic shrine		H
Pherai	B/CA	U/U	Unknown			A
Phthiotic Thebes	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	inhumation end of 3rd century BC	Infant/Child	H
Platia Strata, Vourlies	T	F	U/U	Inhumation	Infant/Child	CL
Pydna, West Cemetery	B/CA	F	Other	Inhumation, early 3rd century AD	Infant/ Child	RI
Rhamnous	B/CA	D	Small town	From extension ring of beehive		RI?
Rhodes, Rhodos Town	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Inhumation, 1st-2nd century AD	Infant/ Child	RI
Rhodes, Siana-Kymisala	B/CA	F	Small town	Inhumation	Infant/ Child	RI
Rhodes, Rhodos Town	B/CA	F	Major urban centre		U/U	RI
Rhodes, Rhodos Town	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Close to cinerary urn	U/U	RI
Salamis, Maurovouni	B/CA	F	Other	Inhumation	Infant/ Child	LR
Samos, Heraion	B/CA	C	Sanctuary			G
Samos, Heraion	B/CA	C	Sanctuary	Some possibly Roman?		U/U
Samos, Heraion	B/CA	C	Sanctuary			H?
Samos, Heraion	B/CA	C	Sanctuary			A-.H
Samothrace	B/CA	C	Sanctuary			RI
Sparta, Athena sanctuary	T	C	Sanctuary			CL
Sparta, Athena sanctuary	B/CA	C	Sanctuary			CL
Sparta, Menelaion	B/CA	C	Sanctuary			A-CL
Sparta, Menelaion	T	C	Sanctuary			A
Sparta	T	D	Major urban centre			CL

Site	No. of finds	References
Mavra Litharia	1	Mavra Litharia, Roman cemetery, West Corinth - 2014, Archaeology in Greece Online, report 10761, created 16 March 2021, viewed 25 March 2021, URL https://chronique.efa.gr/?kroute=report&id=10761
Mazarakia	1	Riginos and Tzortzatou 2015: 57
Messene (Ancient)	1	Themelis 1993: 66 pl. 37γ
Mikrothives	1	Vlachaki 2017, 96
Neochoraki	1	Charami 2001, 284
Neoi Poroi, Pigi Athinas	2	Adam-Veleni et al. 2003: 241 nos. 334–335; Poulaki-Pantermali and Syros 2012 : 213
Nikopolis	2	Zachos and Georgiou 2003: 591
Olympia	1	Villing 2002: 258 fig. 25
Olympia	1	Völling 2007
Olynthos	10	Villing 2002: 254 n. 61
Omolion	1	Vittos 2017: 301-302
Omolion	1	Vittos 2017: 124
Oropos	2	Kraounaki 1995: 82; Parianou 2003: 85
Palatiano Kilkis	1	Anagnostopoulou-Chatzipolychroni 2012: 148
Patras, Benizelou Roufou 9	3	Papakosta 1992: 145
Pella, East Cemetery	2	Lilimbaki-Akamati and Akamatis 2014: 258
Pella, Sector I, House 1-4	1	Makaronas 1967: 340 with pl. 396β
Pella, Phakos	1	Chrysostomou 2008: 667
Pella, Roman colony	2	PELLA - 2006, Archaeology in Greece Online, report 485, created 1 December 2009, viewed 25 March 2021, <https://chronique.efa.gr/?kroute=report&id=485>
Pellinaion	1	Karapanou 2003: 521
Perachora	1	Villing 2002: 250 fig. 15
Petres Florinas	5	Adam-Veleni 1997: 8 with fig. 7
Pherai	1	Villing 2002: 261, fig. 29
Phthiotic Thebes	1	Alexandrou 2014: 611
Platia Strata, Vourlies	2	Kountouri 2011: 182
Pydna, West Cemetery	1	Kallini 2010: 538–539
Rhamnous	1	Petrakos 1995: 18
Rhodes, Rhodos Town	1	Patsiada 2012: 259
Rhodes, Siana-Kymisala	1	RHODES. - Siana, Kymisala - 2009, Archaeology in Greece Online, report 5876, created 30 November 2016, viewed 25 March 2021, <https://chronique.efa.gr/?kroute=report&id=5876>
Rhodes, Rhodos Town	1	Patsiada 1996: 472
Rhodes, Rhodos Town	1	Patsiada 1997: 622
Salamis, Maurovouni	1	SALAMIS Mavrovouni - 2008, Archaeology in Greece Online, report 737, created 11 March 2010, viewed 25 March 2021, <https://chronique.efa.gr/?kroute=report&id=737>
Samos, Heraion	1	Villing 2002: 261–265
Samos, Heraion	13	Villing 2002: 261–265
Samos, Heraion	1	Villing 2002: 261–265
Samos, Heraion	15	Villing 2002: 261–265
Samothrace	1	< https://samothrace.emory.edu/metals/>
Sparta, Athena sanctuary	102	Villing 2002: 224–246
Sparta, Athena sanctuary	34	Villing 2002: 224–246
Sparta, Menelaion	1	Villing 2002: 247
Sparta, Menelaion	2	Villing 2002: 251 fig. 16
Sparta	1	Zavvou 2004: 153

Site	Material	Context	Site type	Comments	Age/Sex	Date
Sparta	B/CA	D? F?	Major urban centre	Workshop, followed by burials in LR times		LR
Sparta, SW Cemetery	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Age/ sex unspecified		RI
Tanagra	B/CA	U/U	Major urban centre			G?
Telendos	B/CA	D	Other	Suspension chain attached		LR
Thasos	B/CA	U/U	Major urban centre			U/U
Thasos	B/CA	D	Major urban centre	From storeroom facility?		LR
Thebes	T	U/U	Major urban centre	In British Museum		CL
Thebes, Kabireion	B/CA	C	Sanctuary	Inscribed; British Museum		H
Thebes, Kabireion	T	C	Sanctuary	Not exact number reported		CL
Thebes, Kadmeia	T	C	Major urban centre			CL
Thebes, Mouriki bridge	T	F	Major urban centre	Inhumation	Infant/Child	CL
Thebes, Stephas plot	T	F	Major urban centre			CL
Thermopylai	B/CA	O	Other	More than one bell reported		CL
Thespies, Polyandrion	T	F	Major urban centre		Adult males	CL
Thessaloniki, East Cemetery	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Inhumations	Infant/ Child	RI
Thessaloniki, West Cemetery	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Tomb 16, inhumation; 2nd half 3rd century AD	U/U	RI
Thessaloniki, West Cemetery	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Tomb 246, child	Infant/ Child	RI
Thessaloniki, West Cemetery	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Tomb 257, inhumation	Adult female	RI
Thessaloniki, West Cemetery	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Tomb 344, inhumation	Infant/ Child	RI
Thessaloniki, West Cemetery	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Tomb 784, inhumation	Infant/ Child	RI
Thessaloniki, Langada St.	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Tomb 15, inhumation	Adult female	RI
Thessaloniki, Oraiopoulou St.	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	Inhumation, 4th century AD	U/U	RI
Thessaloniki, Toumba	B/CA	D	Rural settlement	Animal bells?		RI
Trilophos	I	F	Other	No bones	Infant/ Child?	RI?
Tripotamos Sithonias	B/CA	D?	Rural settlement	Animal bell?		RI
Troizen	B/CA	F	Major urban centre	First half 4th century BC	Adult male	CL
Velika	B/CA	D	Other	Animal bell?		LR

Abbreviations used:

Material _B/CA bronze/ copper alloy
I iron
L lead
T terracotta

Context
C Cultic
D Domestic
F Funerary
O Other
P Public

Date EIA Early Iron Age
G Geometric
A Archaic
C Classical
H Hellenistic
RI Roman Imperial
LR Late Roman
EB Early Byzantine

U/U Unknown/Unspecified

Site	No. of finds	References
Sparta	1	SPARTA - 2000, Archaeology in Greece Online, report 1480, created 7 December 2010, viewed 25 March 2021 <https://chronique.efa.gr/?kroute=report&id=1480>
Sparta, SW Cemetery	3	Themos et al. 2009: 264–265, fig. 27.13
Tanagra	1	Villing 2002: 264 fig. 34
Telendos	1	Koutellas 2012: 402
Thasos	1	École française d'Athènes 1951: 169
Thasos	1	École française d'Athènes 1956: 425
Thebes	4	Villing 2002: 253 fig. 18
Thebes, Kabireion	1	Walters 1899: 48 no. 318
Thebes, Kabireion	8	Villing 2002: 253 n. 57
Thebes, Kadmeia	2	Sabetai 2016: 274 no. B6 with fig. 9
Thebes, Mouriki bridge	1	Aravantinos 2011: 143
Thebes, Stephas plot	3	Pharaklas 1969: pl. 165β
Thermopylai	2	Lemerle 1939: 312
Thespies, Polyandrion	3	Villing 2002: 252 n. 56
Thessaloniki, East Cemetery	2	Trakosopoulou et al. 2018: 521 with fig. 12
Thessaloniki, West Cemetery	1	Konstantoulas 2012: 60-61
Thessaloniki, West Cemetery	1	Makropoulou 2007: 138
Thessaloniki, West Cemetery	2	Makropoulou 2007: 140
Thessaloniki, West Cemetery	1	Makropoulou 2007: 166
Thessaloniki, West Cemetery	1	Makropoulou 2007: 363
Thessaloniki, Langada St.	1	Makropoulou 2007: 518, n. 92
Thessaloniki, Oraiopoulou St.	1	Makropoulou 2007: 518, n. 92
Thessaloniki, Toumba	3	Soueref and Chavela 2000
Trilophos	1	Soueref 2006: 544-545
Tripotamos Sithonias	1	Papanikola-Bakirtzi 2002: 132, no. 138; Vlachaki 2017: 98
Troizen	1	TROIZEN - 2003, Archaeology in Greece Online, report 2094, created 18 June 2011, viewed 25 March 2021, URL https://chronique.efa.gr/?kroute=report&id=2094
Velika	1	Vlachaki 2017: 97

An Etruscan Silver Ring Depicting a Scorpion from a Deposit in an Archaic House in Philia (Karditsa)

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Abstract

The paper deals with an Etruscan silver ring showing a scorpion found in a pit inside an apsidal house in Philia, Thessaly (Central Greece). Although the circumstances of the ring's burial hint at its accidental loss during the destruction of the early 6th-century BC phase of the house, the object's exotic origin, precious character, and extraordinary iconography indicate it must previously have been used as an amulet. Ample evidence for the folklore and iconography of the scorpion in ancient Greece and beyond is adduced to substantiate this conclusion.

Introduction

An Etruscan silver ring of the 6th century BC depicting a scorpion was unearthed from a pit inside an apsidal house in the settlement of Philia, district of Karditsa, in Western Thessaly (ancient Thessaliotis). The extraordinary iconography, exotic origin, and peculiar circumstances of the find all pointed to the possibility that the ring had been used in some ritual/magical action before or during its burial. Thanks to the kind invitation of the editors of this volume to present the ring, we conducted a detailed examination of the artefact and its context in order to establish whether it was used as a protective/apotropaic device before, or even after being buried.

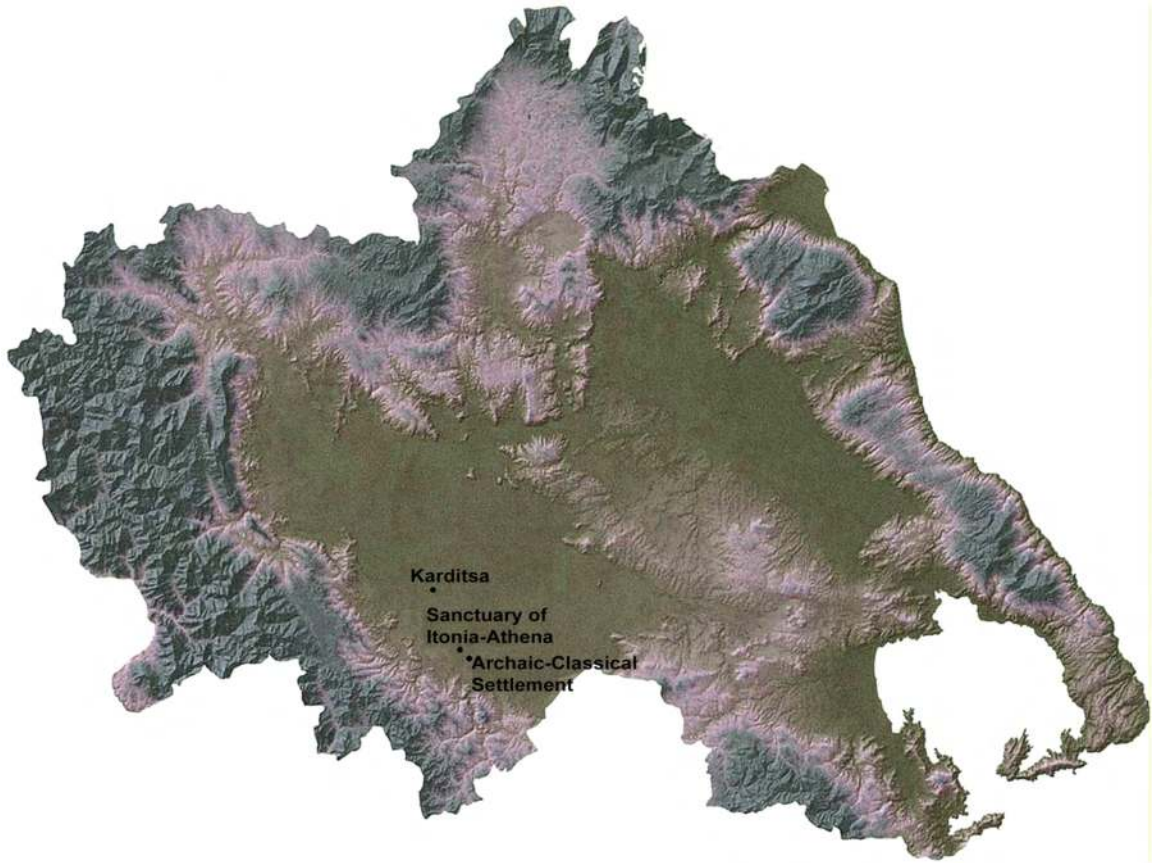

Figure 1. Map showing the location of the Philia settlement. Courtesy EFA of Karditsa.

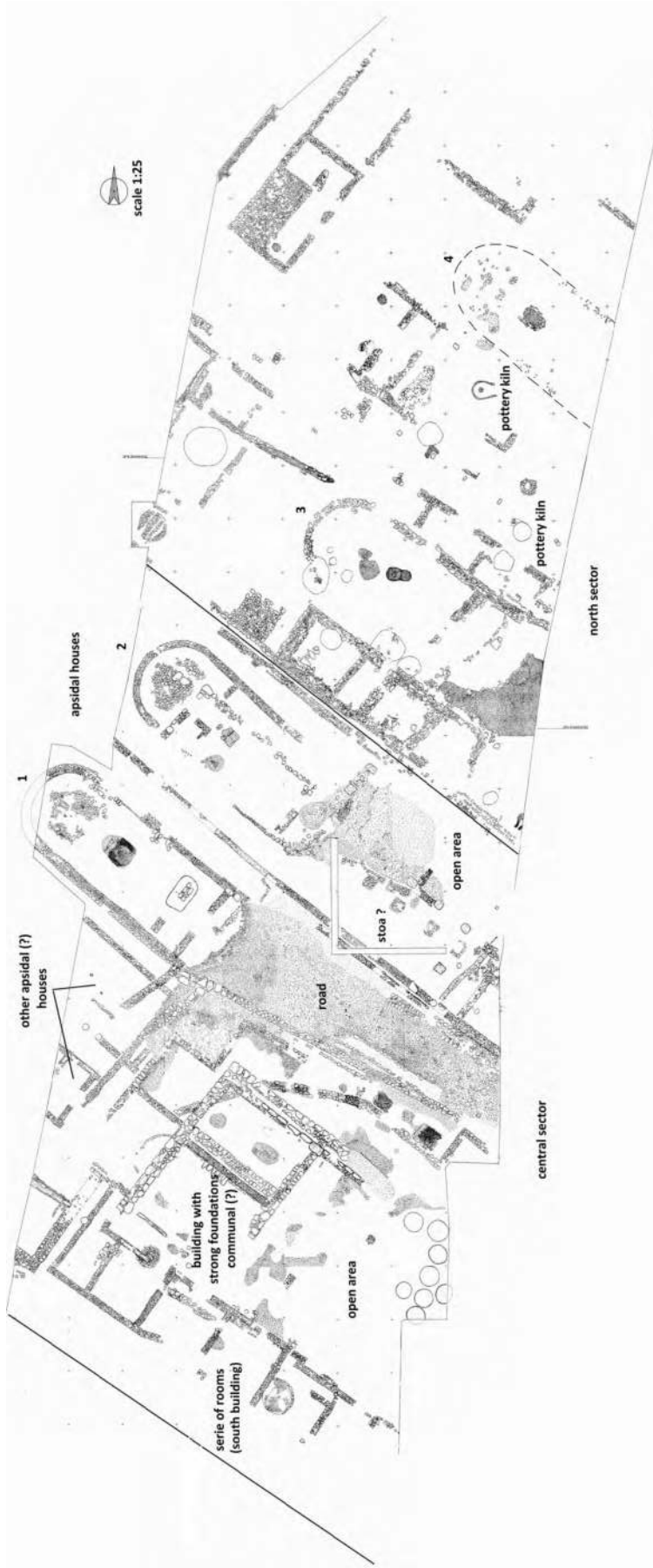

Figure 2. . Plan of the Philia settlement. Courtesy EFA of Karditsa.

The excavation

The settlement of Philia[1] (Figure 1) is situated about 3km SE of the sanctuary of Athena Itonia, the seat of the Thessalian League in the Hellenistic period. Judging from the pottery finds, Philia was founded at the beginning of the 7th century BC in a plain delimited to the south by a stream providing fresh water. The salvage excavation by the Ephorate of Karditsa under the direction of Christos Karagiannopoulos revealed several structures within an area of 5.6 acres, although the settlement evidently extended further to the north and the east. At least six houses were revealed in various stages of preservation. Five phases of occupation have been identified: during the initial phase in the 7th century BC are wood-frame huts with mudbrick walls and roofs covered with branches. During the early 6th century BC and in the next phase, around 550 BC, the houses have stone foundations, an apsidal plan, mudbrick walls coated with clay or plaster, and roofscovered with Laconian rooftiles. Finally, in the 5th century BC, the plan of the houses acquires an orthogonal shape.[2] Occupation ended abruptly in the last quarter of the 5th century BC. Some evidence exists for human habitation in the area during the 3rd and 4th centuries AD and perhaps later.[3]

The two 6th-century BC phases are better preserved (Figure 2), since later agricultural activity has erased most of the layers belonging to the 5th-century settlement. The apsidal buildings, arranged in a row, have the same dimensions (*c.* 16m x 5m) and same NW-SE orientation. The entrance on the SE is preceded by a shallow hall in antis. The houses have a single room, but at least two dwellings were provided with additional rooms adjacent to the long sides. Small courts paved with large river pebbles, open in front of the houses. Around the houses were low stone walls delimiting the properties and open courts paved with river pebbles. In the middle of the settlement was a road paved with stones, dividing the residential zone from an area of large buildings and complexes with small rooms, apparently intended for storage and communal meetings, administration, and ritual activity.

The Etruscan ring was found inside a pit within House 1 (Figure 3), situated at about 1.55m from the entrance.

Figure 3. Philia settlement, House 1, indicating the location of the pit near the door. Photo courtesy EFA of Karditsa.

[1] Karagiannopoulos 2018, 2020.

[2] Whereas mudbricks are still used for the elevations and Laconian tiles cover the pitched roofs: Karagiannopoulos 2018: 118; 2020, 461-62; Karagiannopoulos and Paleothodoros 2022: 451.

[3] Karagiannopoulos 2018: 115; 2020: 463.

Figure 4. Philia settlement, House 1. Area of pit before excavation. Photo courtesy EFA of Karditsa.

The pit (Figure 4) was 0.60m deep: its lower layer (0.35m deep), has a round plan and was filled with earth that contained a very few sherds of coarse vases and the handle of a plain amphora. In the upper layers, the pit is enlarged acquiring an oval shape (2.60m x 1.40/1.50m wide). This part of the pit was filled with light brown earth, clay/mud from destroyed bricks (Figure 5), small fragments of plaster, burned wooden architectural elements, and an abundance of pottery dating to the 7th and early 6th centuries BC. Diagnostic sherds for the dating include a late 7th-century BC large open vessel, fine Corinthian in style but made of pale brown buff clay not from Corinth (Figure 6), local black-glazed lekanai and oinochoai, a coarse ware lid, Corinthian alabastra, a local (?) dinos with a broken maeander on the shoulder (Figure 7), a local hydria with painted decoration, a glazed cup of local manufacture, an Ionian kylix, an imitation Euboean kotyle decorated with vertical strokes on a reserved zone, and a grey ware jug decorated with white and black motifs. In addition, numerous fragments of pithoi and large storage vessels were uncovered. The ring was found in the upper level of the pit, *c.* 0.20m from the surface, inside a small chunk of mudstone.

An overview of the fill and detailed study of the stratigraphy indicate that the pit was opened in the 7th century BC for storage purposes (Figure 8). At some point in the early 6th century BC, the hut was destroyed by fire and replaced by an apsidal house with stone foundations (phase 2). The owners of the house expanded the upper part of the fill and filled the interior with debris from the destroyed hut, because in the new plan the pit was obtruding on the entrance. Still later, during the destruction of the phase 2 house, the area was covered with a layer of dark earth (Figure 9) containing a large number of vases dating to the first half of the 6th century BC, most of them authentic or imitation Corinthian (oinochoe, phiale, kotylai, and miniature kotylai, alabastra, aryballoi, kraters, lekanides, and an oinochoe lid), local glazed vases, pithoi, and plain amphorae, two thymiateria, a black-glazed cup with vertical strokes on the band of the handles, a plain cup of local manufacture (Figure 10) and an Attic black-figure amphoriskos of 580-570 BC (Figure 11). This thick layer of earth, debris, and pottery was leveled when the phase 2 house was destroyed in order to create the floor of the house in the subsequent phase, sometime around the middle of the 6th century BC. The rest of the material from the destroyed phase 2 house was buried in a deposit a few metres south of the house.[4]

[4] This is borne out by the fact that while the Attic amphoriskos AE2886 Π2250 was found inside the pit, one fragment of pottery was unearthed in the deposit S of the house. The latter context also contained Corinthian vases contemporary with the phase 2 occupation period.

Figure 5. Philia settlement, House 1. The upper layer of fill, showing brown earth, debris, and broken vases. Photo courtesy EFA of Karditsa.

Figure 6.AE2839 Π2219. Late 7th-century BC large open vessel from inside the pit. Photo courtesy EFA of Karditsa.

Figure 7. AE3374 Π2724. Local (?) dinos from inside pit. Photo courtesy EFA of Karditsa.

Figure 8. Philia settlement, House 1. The lower part of the pit at the end of the excavation. Photo courtesy EFA of Karditsa.

Figure 9. Philia settlement, House 1. The area of the pit covered with a layer of dark earth. Photo courtesy EFA of Karditsa.

Figure 10. Archaeological Museum of Karditsa. 15441. Local plain cup. Photo courtesy EFA of Karditsa.

Figure 11. AE2886 Π2250. Attic black-figured amphoriskos from the layer above the pit. EFA of Karditsa.

Figure 12. Archaeological Museum of Karditsa 16857. Etruscan silver cartouche ring, detail of cartouche. Photo courtesy EFA of Karditsa.

The ring

The Etruscan ring[5] (Figures 12-14) has an oval bezel bearing two images: a six-legged scorpion with its tail facing left, which occupies most of the surface, and beneath it a palm tree with fruit in the lower part. The border is hatched. The bezel is 1.66cm long and 0.4cm wide. The hoop has a diameter of 2.174cm and a thickness of 0.27cm. Both bezel and hoop are silver. The bezel is solid and was clamped onto the hoop. Judging from the width of the hoop, the ring belonged to a male adult, for it is too large for a child's or a woman's finger. That this ring was destined to be suspended on a cord and worn around the neck or other part of the body of a person of any size, gender, or age as an amulet is of course also possible.

Figure 13. Archaeological Museum of Karditsa 16857. Etruscan silver cartouche ring, side (profile) view. Photo courtesy EFA of Karditsa.

The Philia ring belongs to a well-known class of Etruscan jewellery, the so-called cartouche rings (type B).[6] Typically, examples of this class have an oblong straight-sided bezel with rounded ends, placed in line with the hoop so as to lie across the finger, the hoop being made separately and fixed in the holes in the lower part of the bezel. Most are made of gold or gilded silver, but a few examples are in silver[7] and bronze. The class, which contains 148 documented examples,[8] is generally

Figure 14. Archaeological Museum of Karditsa 16857. Etruscan silver cartouche ring, detail of underside with scale. Photo courtesy EFA of Karditsa.

[5] Karditsa Archaeological Museum 16857: Karagiannopoulos 2018: 124, fig. 115; Vaiopoulou 2018: 60, no. 26 (Karagiannopoulos). Both authors of the present study suggested an Etruscan origin, subsequently confirmed by such eminent scholars as John Boardman, Alessandro Naso, Laura Ambrosini, and Chiara Procacci, whom we warmly thank for their advice and help. We also wish to thank the conference organizers for inviting us to publish this extraordinary find.

[6] Boardman 1967: 9-12; Procacci 2012.

[7] Boardman 1967: nos. B I 10-11, B II 22 (with gilt bronze hoop), B II 47, B II 49, B II 55 and B IV 1.

[8] Procacci 2012: 401 n. 2.

considered to be of Etruscan origin, since all the known findspots are located in Central and Northern Italy. The two larger sub-groups identified by John Boardman, types B I and B II, differ in that the decoration of the rings in the first group is divided in three registers. Our ring belongs to type II (single motif across the bezel), but in fact bears two iconographic elements arranged not symmetrically (as on other rings in the series) but vertically, with the large figure of the scorpion above the schematic palm tree. Thus, in terms of iconography, it is closer to the rings of type I, although lacking the division in registers.

The scorpion, one of the deadliest small creatures in the ancient world, belongs to the class of arachnids. Its body consists of three parts: a carapace covering the head and the bases of the legs, a seven-segmented abdomen approximately equal in length to the carapace, and a narrow three-segmented post-abdomen ('tail') ending in a telson (the sting), which holds a pair of venom glands. Besides the eight legs, the scorpion has a pair of pedipalps on the front, ending in large pincers and chelae.[9]

The engraver of the Philia ring departed from a naturalistic rendering of the scorpion in several respects, the most obvious being the addition of two round projections in the place of eyes and the omission of a pair of legs. Perhaps the artist confused the scorpion with some other insect. The carapace is engraved in a convincing manner, but the tail is not segmented. The pincers and the tail are accurately drawn. The palm tree is schematically incised. The identification lies in the horizontal bands of the trunk. The hatched border is chiseled with less precision than usual, but this may be due to the very small dimensions of the ring. The iconography is unparalleled among cartouche rings, so any stylistic comparison is difficult to establish.

The most likely place of manufacture of the cartouche rings is one of the cities of Southern Etruria, most probably Vulci, because of the stylistic similarities of some later examples to vases of the Pontic group, a class of black-figure vases manufactured there.[10] The attribution is further supported by known findspots (17 examples from Vulci, 13 from Cerveteri). Unfortunately, only a handful of rings has been discovered in secure archaeological contexts.[11] With the exception of two rings from a votive deposit in Brolio, all other cases known thus far (nine in total) have come from tombs, either female burials or chamber tombs with two or more depositions, one of them always female.

Stylistic considerations and comparison of the later examples of type B rings to Etruscan Pontic vases lead us to adopt a date in the second half of the 6th century BC for the majority of the known examples. Chiara Procacci places the entire series within the second half of the 6th century BC, with the exception of some very late pieces dated to the first decades of the 5th century BC.[12] John Boardman prefers a date somewhere in the second quarter of the 6th century BC for the earliest examples.[13] Other scholars have opted for dates in the late 7th[14] or the early 6th century BC.[15] Boardman argued that the rings of this class were made by Ionian migrants in the West,[16] but no other example has been found in the eastern Mediterranean and the iconography, at least of the later examples, is overtly Etruscan.

Philia in Thessaly is a far-off destination for an object made in Etruria. In his recent survey, Alessandro Naso[17] has enumerated 260 metallic objects and 150 clay vases from Italy that have been discovered in Greek sanctuaries alone, dating from the Late Bronze Age to the 5th century BC, and a few more can be found in other contexts, especially bucchero ware from Athens, Corfu, Chios, Naxos, Delos, and Corinth,[18] as well as bronze *infundibula* from a variety of sites.[19] The main destination, however, is usually one of the great sanctuaries of the Archaic period: Olympia, Delphi, Samos, Lindos, the Athenian Acropolis, or Perachora. Half of the metal objects have been found in Olympia, including a silver ring and a diadem. A recently published ivory tessera from the sanctuary of Parthenos at Neapolis near Kavala shows that the Etruscan presence could indeed penetrate as far as northern Greece.[20] The Thessalian sanctuaries of Athena Itonia in Philia and Zeus and Ennodia in Pherai are definitely more oriented towards the Balkans and the North (as the abundant finds of West Illyrian fibulae show) than the great sanctuaries of the South and the East. But both display an array of exotic finds, including Egyptian scarabs and statuettes (Philia), Egyptian situlae (Pherai) of types that circulate with greater frequency in insular and southern Greece,[21] and fibulae of Italian types.[22] The settlement at Philia has a cosmopolitan character, as shown by the imports of painted and black-glazed pottery from Euboea, Corinth,

[9] Frembgen 2004: 96.
[10] Boardman 1967: 10.
[11] Procacci 2012: 402-403, n. 8.
[12] Procacci 2012: 401 and n. 3.
[13] Boardman 1967: 10.
[14] Higgins 1961: 262.
[15] Furtwängler 1900: III, 89.
[16] Boardman 1967: 10.
[17] Naso 2015. See also Naso 2014; von Hase 1997.
[18] Gras 1976: 344-48.
[19] Naso 2014: 325-26.
[20] Bellelli and Cultraro 2006: 201-02, figs. 3-4.
[21] Egyptian and Oriental objects in Philia: Kilian-Dirlmeier 2002: 223-26. Situla from Pherai: Pendlebury 1930: 92, no. 227, pl. 3.
[22] Kilian 1975: 66, 70, 73, 81, 83. Note, however, that most of the Italian types at Pherai and Philia are considered local imitations rather than imports.

Athens, Boeotia, Laconia, and East Greece, of Corinthian amphorae, and of perfume flasks from Ionia.[23]

The ring could have arrived via either a maritime route — through Corinth, Athens or some other important centre of the Aegean — or a land route from the Illyrian coast and further west. It may have been purchased from merchants, such as the Ligurians who helped Themistocles to reach Asia from Epirus (Diod. Sic. 11.56), or been offered as a gift by an Etruscan nobleman visiting a Panhellenic sanctuary (Delphi?)[24] or even travelling to Thessaly. Whatever the case, the silver ring is a prestigious object of great value, in fact the only silver object unearthed in the excavation apart from lumps of wire that probably come from earrings.

The scorpion in art

Besides the fact that the Latin word for the scorpion, *napa*, is probably Etruscan,[25] next to nothing is known about scorpions in Etruria. The only other Italian artefacts known to depict a scorpion are amber scarabs of the 7th and 6th centuries BC,[26] a 6th-century BC bronze oinochoe (*Schnabelkanne*) from the Veneto decorated with a series of relief images on the lower part of the body (also a lizard, a snake, and a snail)[27] and a 4th-century BC ring that appeared on the market recently.[28] This lack of artistic representations may be because the species of scorpions found in Central and Northern Italy are not particularly harmful[29] and thus noticeable, as opposed to their cousins in Egypt, North Africa, Syria, Palestine, Anatolia, Iran, and (to a lesser extent) mainland and insular Greece, or because the scorpion was not incorporated in local religion and magic. Despite the strong influence of Egypt and Phoenicia on Etruscan art, especially during the 7th and early 6th centuries BC, the scorpion did not attract the interest of Etruscan artists.

In contrast, the scorpion was an extremely popular subject in Mesopotamia and Egypt, connected to divinities (Ishḫara, Ishtar, Tiammat, Shelket, Seth, Isis, Horus) and daemons (Pazuzu), mentioned in mythological (Flight of Isis) and literary (Gilgamesh epic) narratives, used in divination and depicted in countless images from the 6th millennium onwards.[30] From Egypt and the Levant, the scorpion motif arrived in Minoan Crete, where it acquired amuletic properties as well as astronomical and religious connotations.[31] In Cyprus, the motif of the scorpion, Phoenician-inspired in style, appears on seals in deposits at the sanctuaries of Ayia Irini, Arsos, Maroni, and Soloi in the late 7th century BC, although an early Iron Age example from an unknown context has also been noted.[32]

In the Greek world, depictions of scorpions begin to appear in the first half of the 8th century BC. One cannot, however, speak of an established pictorial norm, since the objects are disparate in time, place of origin and media. The earliest seem to be two golden fibulae from Anavyssos (Attica) dated to the Middle Geometric II period (800-760 BC), engraved with a swastika on one side and two scorpions on the other.[33] A Late Geometric Boeotian bronze fibula in the British Museum shows, among other things, a man fighting a lion, followed by a tiny scorpion.[34] The scorpion appears as a filling ornament or decorative device on Cretan, Laconian, Boeotian, and Argive vases of the Late Geometric period.[35] Particularly interesting are three gems, a tabloid serpentine ring from a votive deposit in Argos showing a man attacked by a huge scorpion,[36] a gem in the British Museum with two confronted scorpions,[37] and a square pierced steatite seal from Ypsili in Andros with the image of a six-legged scorpion on one side and a man leading a horse on the other.[38]

[23] Karagiannopoulos 2018: 123-24; 2020: 464; Karagiannopoulos and Paleothodoros 2022: 457.

[24] Similar journeys are hinted at on the base of the Daochos Monument at Delphi, which tells the story of Daochos' great-great-uncle Telemachos. In the early 5th century BC, Telemachos wrestled the strongest Etruscan and accidentally killed him. Jean-Paul Thuillier (1985) thinks the fight must have been an unofficial event, taking place as an informal show during a Panhellenic festival, most likely the Pythia at Delphi; since professional wrestlers in Etruria were of servile status, Thuillier suggests that the Etruscan champion was toured in Greece by his patron and owner, a nobleman visiting Greece to watch the Games.

[25] Discussion in Pieroni 2004: 71. The grammarian Festus (163L) considered it an African word.

[26] Negroni Catacchio 1978: 177.

[27] Bouloumié 1973: pl. 68, figs. 228-32.

[28] Bertolami Fine Art e-live Auction 33, 1 October 2016, lot 23 (we thank the anonymous reviewer for bringing this item to our notice). <https://auctions.bertolamifinearts.com/en/auc/12/e-live-auction-33-intagli-and-antiquities-1-october-2016/1/ > , viewed 25 May 2023.

[29] Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 11.89 (scorpions, brought to Italy by the Libyan tribe of the Psylloi, are harmless there).

[30] Toscanne 1917; Van Buren 1937-1939; Deonna 1959; El-Hennawy 2011.

[31] Sakellarakis 1997; Banou and Davies 2016. In contrast, the scorpion motif is very rare in Bronze Age mainland Greece, appearing only in a wall painting in Argos (Tournavitou and Brekoulaki 2015: 229, fig. 9, a pair of yellow scorpions and perhaps an octopus). Two Dodecanesian stirrup jars depicting various marine and land creatures include scorpions (Sakellarakis 1997: 452). A scorpion may appear on a painted hydria from Mycenae, tomb 521 (Papadimitriou 2015: 310-11).

[32] Reyes 2001: 28, fig. 17b (Early Iron Age blue frit seal with two scorpions flanking an animal), 194-195, figs. 515-519, nos. 514-521 (black, grey, cream, and blue scarabs).

[33] Athens 1515-16: Coldstream 2003: 56 and 58; Kaltsas 2007: pl. 172.

[34] Walters 1899: 372-73, no. 3205, figs. 85-86.

[35] On the handle of a large Cretan pithoid amphora in Herakleion used as a cinerary urn (Orsi 1897: 256, fig. 4); on a well-known Late Geometric pyxis from the Amyklaion, showing dancers and a pair of lyres (Coldstream 2003: 138-39, fig. 52d); on a Late Geometric Argive flask, a horse is surrounded by mourners and several animals (deer, lion, fish, rabbit, birds and a scorpion: Langdon 2010: 10, fig. 10). Boeotian: Hampe 1936: 28, no. V50, pl. 27.

[36] Vollgraff 1928: pl. 17 (bottom right).

[37] London 1921-1212-1. < https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1921-1212-1 > , viewed 24 September 2022.

[38] Stefani, Tsangaraki and Arvanitaki 2019: 140, no. 7 (Televantou).

In the Archaic period, the scorpion frequently appears on objects (usually of small size) dedicated at sanctuaries and in vase-painting. Among the earliest ex-votos is a bronze shield from the Idaean Cave (720 BC) showing two women framing a millipede or scorpion.[39] Bevan's catalogue[40] lists scorpion representations on six artefacts from the sanctuary of Orthia (five intaglios on the back of ivory dogs and an ivory seal, all dated *c.* 700 BC). Six examples are known from the Acropolis of Athens (a 5th-century BC relief pithos with scorpions depicted above chariots).[41] Four bronze plaques of the Archaic period show the Master of Animals with scorpions above the lions, one from Lindos (a bone disc with the engraved image of a scorpion), eight from Perachora (three faience scarabs, two ivory seals, two 6th-century BC gems and the bezel of a bronze ring dating to the Late Archaic Period) and one from Olympia (scorpion engraved on the base of a bronze cock). To this list we may add a gold ring bearing the relief image of a scorpion on the bezel from the sanctuary of Apollon and Artemis at Vryokastro, Kythnos,[42] a bronze statuette of a scorpion decorating a now lost vessel from the small shrine of Apollon at Mon Repos in Corfu,[43] and two bronze shield band attachments with lions flanking a scorpion from the Acropolis of Athens.[44] Other finds include a blue faience scarab in the British Museum depicting a man, a lion, a bird and a scorpion,[45] a sealing from Boeotia,[46] scarabs from Naucratis, the seat of an Egyptian scarab factory operating along with the Greek settlement,[47] and the electron and silver coins of Mylasa in Caria.[48]

For most of the objects dedicated to sanctuaries, especially those where the scorpion is not the main iconographical item represented, a talismanic or apotropaic/prophylactic function is unlikely. Bevan's overview of the material dedicated to the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia[49] gives the following numbers of animals: 3 bears, 120 birds, 3 boars, 30 bovines, 50 lions, numerous deer, 41 dogs, 6 fish, 4 frogs, 7 tortoises, 15 goats, 2 hares, well over 100 horses, 106 rams and sheep, 3 snakes, a spider and 6 scorpions. One may argue that we have a panorama of the local fauna, with greater emphasis to domestic animals, deer, the animal of prey for Artemis, and lions, whose symbolic function as a royal and divine symbol is widespread in the Greek world. Scorpions, snakes and spiders, let alone bears, fish, hares, and frogs apparently represent least characteristic elements of the surrounding environment and for that reason those images were appropriate gifts to the goddess of the wilds.

On the other hand, the amuletic function is certain for a number of objects listed above. The most obvious case is the pierced rectangular serpentine seal from Ypsili in Andros, destined to be worn on the body. Other items of similar usage are the ivory seals, scarabs and rings from Perachora, the ivory disc from Lindos, the seal in Argos with the man fighting the scorpion, the faience seal in the British Museum with the fighting scorpions, the scarabs from Naucratis and the golden ring from Kythnos. It is to this group of artefacts that the Philia ring is semantically and functionally attached.

In the 7th century BC, scorpions appear on vases, usually as a filling ornament or as participants in an animal frieze.[50] A local imitation of Corinthian kotyle from Halai (circa 625 BC) is interesting for showing a number of animals (bull, snake, hare or small dog, large dog, scorpion, dolphin, and a panther or lion) in flight, convincingly interpreted as symbols of constellations.[51] The Constellation of Scorpion was known to the Babylonians; its earliest mention in Greek literature is found in a fragment of Kleostratos of Tenedos, who flourished in the late 6th century BC.[52] If Barnes' interpretation of the iconography of the kotyle from Halai is accepted, then the translation of the Babylonian astronomical works in Greek would have occurred at a considerably earlier time.

The number of representations in vase-painting rises significantly during the 6th and early 5th centuries BC, largely due to the scorpion's popularity as a shield device. Few representations are of interest: on the now lost krater by the Amphiaraos Painter from Cerveteri showing the departure of the famous hero, a scorpion climbs on a pillar. Other animals are also depicted (two lizards, a snake, a hedgehog and a bird).[53] In Attic

[39] Athens 11763: Sciacca 2013: 248 and 268, figs. 13-14.
[40] Bevan 1986: 437 (with references).
[41] Ducati 1922: 398, fig. 364.
[42] Mazarakis-Ainian 2017: 113.
[43] Kalligas 1968: 311, pl. 251e.
[44] Athens NM 6961 and 6966: Touloupa 1991: 259, no. I3, fig. 30 and 261, no. I6.
[45] Walters 1926: 40, no. 326, pl. VI.
[46] Felsch 1994: 10, fig. 7, no. 1.
[47] Masson 2006: 19, fig. 43, and 24, fig. 60.
[48] Konuk 2003: 89-90. The Carian connection of the scorpion is highlighted by an anecdote attributed to Aristotle and cited by Pliny, Aelian, and the paradoxographer Antigonus. Aristotle stated that on the mountain of Latmos in Caria, scorpion bites do little or no harm to foreigners, while they are next to fatal for the indigenous population. Antigonus, *Mirab.* 16: Ἐν Λάτμῳ δὲ τῆς Καρίας φησὶν Ἀριστοτέλης τοὺς σκορπίους ἐὰν μὲν τῶν ξένων τινὰ πατάξωσιν, μετρίως λυπεῖν, ἐὰν δὲ τῶν ἐγχωρίων, ἕως θανάτου κατατείνειν. Aelian *Hist. Anim.* 5.14: Ἐν Λάτμῳ δὲ τῆς Καρίας ἀκούω σκορπίους εἶναι, οἵπερ οὖν τοὺς μὲν πολίτας σφίσι παίουσιν εἰς θάνατον, τοὺς δὲ ξένους ἡσυχῇ καὶ ὅσον παρασχεῖν ὀδαξησμόν· ἐμοὶ δοκεῖ τοῦ Ξενίου Διὸς τοῖς ἀφικνουμένοις τὸ δῶρον τοῦτο ἀποκρίναντος. Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 8.229: *In Latmo Cariae monte Aristoteles tradit a scorpionibus hospites non laedi, indigenas interim*.
[49] Bevan 1986.
[50] A Protocorinthian aryballos from the Argive Heraion (Waldstein 1905: 147, fig. 89); an imitation Protocorinthian vessel from Corfu (Dontas 1968); an Orientalizing oinochoe from Aetos in Ithaca (Heurtley and Robertson 1948: pl. 32, no. 466).
[51] Barnes 2014.
[52] Kayser and Irby-Massie 2008: 483-84, s.v. *Kleostratos of Tenedos* (H. Mendel).
[53] Formerly Berlin F 1655 (BAPD 9036825).

black-figure, the scorpion is either a filling motif[54] or an element of the fauna, as on a white-ground phiale showing a hare hunt and bearing an outer frieze with snakes, birds, foxes, a crane and a scorpion that has human arms and plays the double pipes. The double pipes player scorpion is also found on the shoulder of a stamnos in St. Louis, where a scorpion in faint added red color is depicted, and on a cup in Bonn, where the motif decorates the shield of an attacking warrior.[55] Crabs playing the pipes are used as shield devices on the famous Sarpedon Krater by Euphronios and on a volute krater by the Karkinos Painter.[56] Lissarague argued that these images are puns exploiting the idiomatic phrase for playing the pipes, "like a good flute player, you've got to make the crab[57] (Athenaeus 15.667a), or allusions to the armed dance (provided that the armed dance is accepted as the subject of the reverse side of the Sarpedon Krater).[58] Anatomical and iconographic affinity between the two creatures might explain the motif of the scorpion playing the pipes.[59] A more obvious interpretation is that the idea occurred to the painters because the pincers of scorpions and crabs are used to procure food, making them structurally and functionally analogous to human arms.

In scenes of Poseidon assaulting a giant with the rock that later became the island of Nisyros, the scorpion is usually included as an element of the fauna, along with the octopus, the hedgehog, the hare, the dolphin, the snake and the deer, in various combinations.[60] These animals represent the fauna of the island's three distinct environments: the surface, the surrounding sea, and the underground.

64 representations of scorpions as shield devices in vase-painting have been recorded. All but the earliest and latest vases[61] are Attic, ten in the black-figure technique (the device painted in added white colour) and 54 in the red-figure technique, dating from the mid-6th to the mid-5th century BC (device painted in silhouette with black glaze on the reserved surface of the shield).[62] Some of the most accurate depictions of scorpions in Greek art are found in this class; otherwise, there is little variation. In black-figure, most scorpion shields belong to departing or fighting warriors. In red-figure, departing or fighting warriors (some winning, others falling wounded or dead) form the majority of the scorpion shield-bearers, but we also encounter Amazons, Giants, Achilles, Kyknos in his fatal encounter with Herakles, Athena, and armed runners (*hoplitodromoi*).[63]

These shield devices have been interpreted as terrifying symbols,[64] but a more subtle idea is also intrinsic to them: that the stroke of the warrior's lance or spear is as painful and deadly as the scorpion's sting. This association is likewise evident from slingshots, which are usually decorated with scorpions, as well as thunderbolts and other weapons.[65] Other qualities of the scorpion that would have encouraged painters to depict it frequently as a shield device are its courage and its refusal to withdraw from battle, always holding its ground and fighting to the end, unlike the snake.[66] In addition, Neils has observed that the scorpion and crab shield devices on the reverse of the Sarpedon Krater showing warriors arming 'reinforce this concept of bodily protection.'[67]

With some rare exceptions,[68] the scorpion disappears from the visual arts in the Classical period, perhaps because it plays no significant part in any major mythological narrative. It reappears as part of an Oriental- and Egyptian-inspired artistic repertory during the late Hellenistic and Roman periods.

The scorpion in myth, folklore and magic

The symbolism of the scorpion in the Orient, Egypt, and the Graeco-Roman world has been the subject of

[54] On the lip-cup Munich 2142 (BAPD 31932)

[55] London B 678 (BADP 3566); Washington University of St. Louis Museum WU3268 (BAPD 9030385); Bonn 1644, by the Bonn Painter (BAPD 203666).

[56] Rome; formerly New York 1972.11.10 (BAPD 187); New York 59.11.20 (BAPD 20209).

[57] Lissarague 1990: 81. See also Lissarague 2009: 17.

[58] Spivey (2018) discusses the motif of the crab in Late Archaic art.

[59] Rotroff 2014.

[60] Vatican 16566 (BAPD 202472), by the Diogenes Painter; Paris, Cabinet des Médailles 573 (BAPD 204546), cup by the Painter of the Paris Gigantomachy; Vienna 688 (BAPD 202916). See Cook 1940: 13-18, n. 3 and pl.II-III.

[61] Vatican 88, an Early Corinthian column krater by the B.N. Hunt Painter, dated c. 600 BC (Albizzatti 1922: pl. 10). Bern 15222, red-figured Lucanian bell-krater by the Pisticci Painter, dated c. 430 BC (Trendall 1967: pl. 4.2). A late 7th-/early 6th-century BC date must be assigned to the lead figurines of armed warriors carrying shields with a scorpion blazon dedicated at the sanctuary of Artemis Orthia: Muskett 2014: 162 (acc.n. C936/1).

[62] 59 are listed in the BAPD, to which the following red-figured vases should be added: 1. Artemis Gallery, cup with a warrior falling back, in the tondo: https://www.liveauctioneers.com/item/131909745_greek-attic-red-figure-kylix-hoplite-w-scorpion-shield 2. London 1863.0728.244, fragmentary bell-krater from Gela: warrior running to the left. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/G_1863-0728-244 3. London C137.12, fragment from Naucratis showing part of a shield. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/X_AshmLoan-296

[63] Amazons: On the cup Hamburg 1983.277 by Apollodoros (BAPD 1558), the volute krater Munich 1740 Giant, and on the cup Paris, Cabinet des Médailles 573 (BAPD 204546). Achilles: on the calyx krater Ferrara 20297 (BAPD 213446); Kyknos: on the amphora Louvre G1 by the Andokides Painter (BAPD 200002). Athena: on the amphora Parma C3 (BAPD 3351) and on the Panathenaic amphora Hermitage 10330 (BAPD 303080). Hoplitodromoi: on the cups London E7 (BAPD 200378), Baltimore, WAG 48.2747 (BAPD 9023363), and Rome (BAPD 9027826).

[64] Chase 1902: 84.

[65] Kelly 2014: 293, 299.

[66] Frembgen 2004: 97. Kitchell 2014: s.v. *Scorpion*, 166.

[67] Neils 2009: 217 and 219 n. 43.

[68] On Thasian (Tzochev 2016: 145, no. 210) and other Northern Greek amphora stamps (Lawall 1995: 326 and 347, NG18: Agora SS 9463). Various other isolated coin emissions are not listed here.

numerous studies that need not be summarized here. Deonna's full if outdated survey[69] isolated six different notions of the scorpion in antiquity: celestial symbol; maleficent, bellicose, or beneficial creature; symbol of fertility; and embodiment of prosperity and abundance.

Most texts of the Classical period emphasize the malevolent nature of the scorpion (*σκορπίος*). 'Everyone detests scorpions' (Aelian *Hist. Anim.* 9.25); 'they are worse than snakes, because they afflict their victims with a lingering death lasting three days' (Pliny *Nat. Hist.* 11.25.86); 'you kill scorpions and snakes on sight' (Pseudo-Demosthenes 25.96). "Young beauties are worse than scorpions: a scorpion must touch you to do harm, but a beauty can do it from a distance, when all you do is contemplate him!" (Xenophon *Memorabilia* 1.3.12). Regarded as cunning and evil, they seek to sting whomever they can reach out of sheer malignity[70] and devour their own offspring (or parents).[71]

Like other creatures of this kind, the scorpion was said by Hesiod to have arisen from the blood of the Titans.[72] Only one major Greek myth exists in which the scorpion plays an important role, namely the death of the giant Orion. Several variants are known, but one particular version harking back to Hesiod makes the scorpion the instrument of Rhea's or Artemis' revenge for a sacrilege committed by the great hunter.[73] This myth's popularity among authors of the Hellenistic and Roman periods is undoubtedly due to its connection to astrology, since both Orion and Scorpio (the scorpion) are the names of constellations. Although it may act as the agent of a goddess, to consider the scorpion an animal sacred to Artemis, even if it is connected to her in Christian spells, or to Aphrodite[74] (undoubtedly as an embodiment of all female demons) would be a mistake. A scorpion is one of the creatures that accompany Hermes on monuments dating to the first few centuries AD.[75] Apollo is an enemy of the scorpion and the snake, and keeps them away from the grove of ash trees around his sanctuary at Claros (Aelian, *Hist. Anim.* 10.49 = Nicander, *Ophiaca*, fr. 31 G-S; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 16.64).

Greek scorpions were not as lethal as their Egyptian,[76] North African, and Iranian cousins, but their sting can still be fatal for infants and children, the most vulnerable members of the household, who by nature spend more time on or near the floor where scorpions are found. The sting of the scorpion is also called a 'bite' or an 'arrow.'[77] The general symptoms are accurately described: extreme pain followed by great agitation, sweating, thirst, muscle spasms, convulsions, swollen genitals, slow pulse, irregular breathing. Death is caused by respiratory failure.[78] The sting was thought to be most effective during the morning (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 27.6), although the scorpion is a nocturnal hunter, who rests underneath rocks during the day.[79]

The malevolent nature of the scorpion is further emphasized by metaphors involving bad citizens, informers and politicians. A famous *skolion* (banquet song) by Praxilla of Sicyon runs 'beware, comrade, the scorpion under every rock' (ὑπὸ παντὶ λίθῳ σκορπίον, ὦ ᾽ταῖρε, φυλάσσεο). Scholars understand it as a metaphor used in the aristocratic context of social conflict and betrayal.[80] The idea was adopted by Aristophanes, who paraphrased the 'old proverb' by substituting the word 'orator' for 'scorpion.'[81] Sycophants are furthermore equated to scorpions and snakes in a fragment of Eupolis (*Poleis* fr. 245).[82] Finally, Pseudo-Demosthenes in

[69] Deonna 1958: 648-58.

[70] Beavis 1988: 28.

[71] Mother devours her offspring, but one escapes, climbing on her back and killing her: Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 11.91 (a false statement misinterpreting the correct observation that the mother carries the newborn on her back). Young scorpions killing their father: Antigonus of Karystos, *Mirab.* 87.

[72] Fr. 148, Nicander, *Theriaca* 8-12: ἀλλ᾽ ἤτοι κακοεργὰ φαλάγγια σὺν καὶ ἀνιγρούς / ἑρπηστὰς ἔχιάς τε καὶ ἄχθεα μυρία γαίης Τιτήνων ἐνέπουσιν ἀφ᾽ αἵματος, εἰ ἐτεόν περ ᾽Ασκραῖος μυχάτοιο Μελισσήεντος ἐπ᾽ ὄχθαις ᾽Ησίοδος κατέλεξε παρ᾽ ὕδασι Περμησσοῖο ('Men say that dangerous spiders, together with grievous reptiles and vipers and the countless burdens of the earth, arose from the blood of the Titans, if indeed the Ascraean on the slopes of furthest Melisseeis, Hesiod beside the waters of the Permessus, spoke the truth'). In the Zoroastrian religion, evils and dangers in the natural world such as snakes, scorpions, lizards, poison ivy, weeds, and thorns were created by the evil spirit Ahriman.

[73] See in general Gantz 1993: 271-73. Hesiod (*Astronomia.,* fr. 148 M-W) said that Gaia sent a scorpion to kill Orion because he boasted to Artemis and Leto that he would be able to kill any kind of animal on earth. In another version of the myth, Artemis sent a monstrous scorpion to kill Orion because he attempted to assault her sexually: Sch. Homer, *Iliad* 18.486 = Euphorion fr. 105; Eratosthenes *Katasterismoi* 7; Aratus, *Phain.* 1.636-646; Germanicus, *Aratea* 655. Nikander (*Theriaca* 13.20) recounts that a tiny scorpion hidden under a rock stung Orion at the instigation of Leto for the same reason. A similar story about the hunter Panopeus, Meleager's companion, looks like a duplicate of the Orion myth (*Anth. Pal.* 7.578; cf. Deonna 1959: 54). Neither of the two narratives found a place in Greek art, nor did the story of Pasiphae punishing Minos for his numerous adulterous relationships by casting a spell that made him ejaculate a swarm of serpents, scorpions, and millipedes (Antoninus Liberalis, *Metamorphoses* 41.4.20: Ὁ γὰρ Μίνως οὔρισκεν ὄφεις καὶ σκορπίους καὶ σκολοπένδρας καὶ ἀπέθνησκον αἱ γυναῖκες ὅσαι ἐμίγνυτο . . . κύστιν αἰγὸς ἐνέβαλεν εἰς γυναικὸς φύσιν καὶ ὁ Μίνως τοὺς ὄφεις πρότερον ἐξέκρινεν εἰς τὴν κύστιν). Zucker (2022) also argues that the scorpion is a symbol of sexual impotence.

[74] *PMG* XXVIIIa, 1-7, XXVIIIb, 1-9, XXVIIIc, 1-11. Tod 1939: 58 and 60.

[75] Deonna 1958: 642-44.

[76] Epitaphs recording deaths of children from scorpion bites in Greco-Roman Egypt: Tod 1939: 55-58. See also Aelian (*Hist. Anim.* 10.23), on a particularly toxic species in the region of Coptos.

[77] Arrow: Aeschylus, *Xantriai* fr. 148 (*TGF* 3): ἐκ ποδῶν δ᾽ ἄνω ὑπέρχεται σπαραγμὸς εἰς ἄκρον κάρα κέντημα λύσσης, σκορπίου βέλος λέγω. The similarity of a scorpion's tail to an arrow: Lissarrague 2009: 19. See also Nicander, *Theriaca* 805. One type of arrow-shooting device was called 'the scorpion.'

[78] Scarborough 1979: 18.

[79] Frembgen 2004: 96-97.

[80] Konstan 1997: 45. The phrase became proverbial. It is paraphrased in later authors: *ἐν παντὶ γάρ τοι σκορπίος φρουρεῖ λίθῳ* (Sophocles, fr. 37); *ὑπὸ παντὶ λίθῳ σκορπίος, ὦ ἑταῖρ᾽, ὑποδύεται* (Ath. 15.695d).

[81] *Thesmophoriazusae* 530: τὴν παροιμίαν δ᾽ ἐπαινῶ τὴν παλαιάν˙ ὑπὸ λίθῳ γὰρ παντί που χρὴ μὴ δάκῃ ῥήτωρ ἀθρεῖν. See Kanellakis 2020: 172.

[82] Τῆνος αὕτη, πολλοὺς ἔχουσα σκορπίους ἔχεις τε. συκοφάντας.

Against Aristogeiton (25.52) claims his opponent 'makes his way through the Agora like a snake or a scorpion, with sting erect.'

In later periods, the scorpion was regarded as a bad omen when it appeared in dreams[83] and in divination by rolling the dice,[84] as a metaphor for heretics,[85] or as a manifestation of evil generally.[86] The bad omen idea may be quite old if, as scholars have argued, the animals on the lost Amphiaraos krater of *c.* 570–550 BC (hare, lizard, scorpion, snake) are not mere filling ornaments but function to accentuate the tragic outcome of the story and the departing hero's imminent death.[87]

True zoological research only started with Aristotle, who recognized species possessed different levels of toxicity depending on their geographical distribution; it was continued by eminent Hellenistic poets and doctors who wrote treatises on venoms and antidotes, producing taxonomies based on colour and shape.[88] Popular belief held that scorpions were generated by dead crabs, crocodiles, human corpses, rotten wood, the herbs mint and basil, or simply from the earth itself.[89]

Countless remedies are reported in later ancient sources, either for preventing stings or for curing the suffering caused by stings, or both.[90] Some are clearly absurd: a man should have sex with a woman, but the woman would then suffer (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 28.44); a man should whisper in a donkey's ear (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 28.155), or sit on a donkey with his face by the animal's tail, saying 'a scorpion has stung me' (*Geoponica* 13.9, 15.1) and the pain is relieved, but the donkey then dies (*Cyranides* 2.31.27–9), or say 'two' (Δύο) upon seeing a scorpion, which stops it from stinging (Attalus in Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 28.5.24). Other remedies are rooted in popular medicine and pharmacology, but also influenced by the concept of analogical effect, such as applying chopped-up house mice (Dioscorides, *Materia Medica* 2.69) or leaving geckos to rot in oil because scorpions were said to be terrified by them, or silver foam boiled with oil or earwax (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 29.90, 28.40), or applying a boiled scorpion to the wound (*Geoponica* 13.8), drawing a circle around a scorpion with a heliotrope in order to prevent the creature from moving (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 22.60), paralysing the scorpion with aconite root because it is scorpion-shaped, and reviving it with white hellebore (Dioscorides, *Materia Medica* 4.76), or repelling it with marjoram (Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 21.163). More elaborate antidotes, concocted with herbs, roots (scorpio plant, sideritis), seeds (scorpio plant), flowers (white poppy), plants (radish, aconite), and/or minerals (a special type of agate, haematite), appear in the learned works of Hellenistic and Roman pharmacologists and physicians (among them Apollodorus, Dioscorides, and Galen) and compilators (Pliny, Nicander).[91] The magical papyri mention spells, written on parchments and undoubtedly spelled out as incantations to be used as amulets or applied to wounds.[92]

Medical treatises and magical texts alike continued a long tradition of Mesopotamian and Egyptian popular wisdom and medical knowledge, but may also have incorporated the observations of farmers and the remedies they used against scorpions to protect themselves and their cattle.[93] House-cleaning and wearing shoes must have been the most effective measures people could take.[94]

Through a well-known mechanism, the scorpion's maleficent nature was turned into an apotropaic and thus beneficial symbol for protective purposes. This is evident on Roman mosaics and amulets, where the scorpion, along with other beasts (lion, panther, ibis, snake, bird, dog) and offensive weapons (thunderbolt, trident, club) surround and attack the evil eye.[95] This inversion of meanings allows for the great popularity of the scorpion on amulets of the Roman Imperial period. The so-called scorpion amulets are rings in yellow jasper (a stone believed to provide protection against scorpions), decorated on one side with the image of a scorpion, and on the other bearing a magical inscription. Image, material, and spell are all elements contributing to the amulet's magical power to protect the wearer of the ring.[96]

If an object was powerful enough to keep scorpions away, it could also provide relief from pain to those

Sansone (2011) interprets the phrase as A: 'This is Tenos, which has a lot of scorpions and vipers.' and B: 'And sycophants.' See also Sch. in Aristoph. *Plutus* 718.

[83] Artemidorus, *Onirocritica* 2.13.35. Keller 1913: 476; Deonna 1958: 650.

[84] Graf 2005: 88, no. XXIII.

[85] See Tertullian's treatise *Scorpiace*.

[86] Appearing in numerous passages in the Gospel of Luke.

[87] Keller 1913: 476; Méautis 1931: 246; cf. Deonna 1959: 53. The notion that the animals are a bad omen for Amphiaraos is discussed in greater detail (and with specific reference to the lizard) by Hurwit 2006: 128.

[88] Scarborough 1979: 15; Beavis 1988: 21-25. Aelian (*Hist. Anim.* 6.20) lists 11 species, Pliny nine (*Nat. Hist.* 11.30.86-87), derived from Apollodorus' lost *Peri Therion*. These include the white scorpion, probably a newborn scorpion, the winged scorpion (not a real creature), and the scorpion with two stings (in fact a very rare genetic anomaly). Nicander of Colophon (*Theriaca* 768-804) records only eight species.

[89] Beavis 1988: 27.

[90] Beavis 1988: 28-32.

[91] The ingredients of such an ointment (47 ounces of red poppy, 7 ounces of acorn or *akyllonion* and some strychnine) are listed in a graffito on a 4th-century AD pot from the Athenian Agora: Lang 1976: 11, no. B19.

[92] Amulets: *PGM* CXII, 11-15 and CXIII, 1-4. Remedy for stings: *PGM* VII, 193-196. See in general Chouliara-Raios 2008. Incantations were also used in 'official' medicine: Galen (in Alexander of Tralleis, *Therapeutica* 11.1 Puschmann) declares that he had experimented with reciting Homeric verses while treating patients stung by scorpions.

[93] Scarborough 1979: 4.

[94] Shoes: Ostracon, Cairo Museum 60329 (text in Tod 1939: 61).

[95] Dasen 2015: 182-83, with further references.

[96] Bonner 1950: 77-78; Faraone 2011: 55.

who had been stung. Thus, a later source states that if a silver ring was applied to the afflicted part of the body, it would drive away the pain (*Geoponica* 13.9). Seal rings of unspecified material were also considered a remedy for scorpion 'bites' (*Cyranides* 1.24.100-107).

Christopher Faraone has made a strong case that Greek amulets underwent a major transformation during the Roman Imperial period which affected the style and the elaboration but not the purposes for which they were used.[97] Indeed, evidence for incantations and amulets specifically targeting the scorpion is recorded in Classical times, but only as hints in obscure passages of literary sources.

Asclepius was said (Pindar, *Pyth.* 3.47–53) to have used four types of cures: incantations, potions, medicaments wrapped around afflicted limbs, and surgery. Healers would sing when treating wounds, but evidence indicates that incantations were also used to repel snakes, scorpions, and other wild beasts, as well as to cure illnesses.[98] Amulets were a type of periapt (*περίαπτον*), suspended from a cord and hung on the body or neck of the person seeking protection.[99] Examples appear in abundance on late 5th-century BC Attic red-figured miniature *choes*, a shape destined for and decorated with images of children.[100] The use of curative rings, presumably made of metal and bearing inscriptions to prevent harm by scorpions and snakes, is alluded to in a passage of Aristophanes' *Wealth* (*Plutus* 885-87). The righteous man says that he has no fear of the blackmailer because he wears a ring purchased from a certain Eudemus for a drachma, to which the blackmailer objects, 'but it is not inscribed 'for an informant's bite' (*συκοφάντου δήγματος*). The joke, as Bonner explained, required that rings with the expression 'bite of the scorpion' be used at that time for protection against dangerous animals[101] and exploits the metaphor of sycophants and politicians as vipers and scorpions (discussed above). The use of protective rings must have been quite widespread or at least well known for Aristophanes' audience to have understood the joke.

The palm tree

Palm trees are not particularly popular in Etruscan art, although found on late 8th-century BC imports (Phoenician bowls and a faience vase from the Bocchoris tomb in Tarquinia).[102] A frieze of palm trees appears on an early 7th-century BC oinochoe,[103] then the motif dies out. In contrast, the palm tree is found on Late Geometric vases from Rhodes and Kos[104] and on Archaic Greek gems.[105] The palm tree was a popular ex-voto at the sanctuaries of Delphi and Delos, but we also read of dedications of palm trees on the Acropolis.[106] It is often depicted on vases of the 6th and 5th centuries BC. Sometimes the scenes refer directly to Apollo and Artemis, but in other cases the contexts either lack any significant mythological allusion, or use the motif to denote some exotic location (including Troy and Africa).[107] The great iconographic popularity of the palm tree compared to other trees is perhaps overstated given that it is the only tree species securely identifiable in vase-painting.[108] The tree is of Eastern origin, introduced into Greece early enough to have a strong impact on the iconography of Minoan religion and cult, especially in sacrificial scenes.[109] The small size of the tree on the Philia ring might be understood as an element of the environment in which the scorpion belongs, undoubtedly an Oriental or Nilotic setting.

Interpretation

Does the act of burying the silver ring in a pit have special meaning? To answer this question, we must first envisage which of the following four potential interpretations (A-D) of the find's archaeological context is the most likely. Option A: The ring and the broken vases were deliberately placed in the pit for ritual purposes during the foundation-laying of the new house. Option B: The ring was deliberately placed in the pit at a different time from the pottery and other finds. Option C: The ring was accidentally lost by its owner inside the house and later disposed of in the pit along with broken pottery, debris, and earth. Option D: The owner discarded the ring intentionally, throwing it into the pit while it was being filled.

Given the ring's precious material and exotic origin and iconography, option D is the least likely. The archaeological data presented above does not appear to favour A, which was our initial interpretation. Foundation deposits usually consist of miniature pottery, as the numerous examples from Archaic-period Ambracia show.[110] In theory, the pottery could

[97] Faraone 2017.

[98] Plato, *Euthydemus* 290a: ἡ μὲν γὰρ τῶν ἐπῳδῶν ἔχεών τε καὶ φαλαγγίων καὶ σκορπίων καὶ τῶν ἄλλων θηρίων τε καὶ νόσων κήλησίς ἐστιν, ἡ δὲ δικαστῶν τε καὶ ἐκκλησιαστῶν καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ὄχλων κήλησίς τε καὶ παραμυθία τυγχάνει οὖσα. Dickie 2001: 24-25.

[99] Dasen 2015: 178-80.

[100] Hamilton 1992.

[101] Bonner 1950: 4-5. See also Kotansky 1991: 110-11; Faraone 2017: 87-88.

[102] Phialai: Spivey 1997: 45, fig. 30 (from the Regolini-Galassi Tomb, Cerveteri). Faience vase: Cardarelli and Naso 2019: 155, fig. 3.5.1.

[103] Martelli 1987: 78, 252-53, no. 23; Cardarelli and Naso 2019: 152, fig. 3.4.2.

[104] Walter 1968: pl. 89. Nos 499-500.

[105] Boardman 1970: pls. 234, 248 and fig. 197.

[106] Deonna 1951: 174-78.

[107] Apollo: Deonna 1951 (the association goes back at least to the *Odyssey*). Artemis: Sourvinou-Inwood 1985; Monbrun 1989. Other figures iconographically linked to the palm tree include Leto, Dionysos, satyrs and maenads, Hermes, Odysseus, Herakles, as well as several heroes of the Trojan War, Amazons, archers, crouching hoplites and black warriors.

[108] Chazalon 1995: 107.

[109] Marinatos 1984.

[110] M. Niarou, pers. comm. (12/11/2021).

have been discarded as garbage, but the ring was buried at a subsequent date (option B) with the intention to protect the house from scorpions and other dangerous creatures. Detecting where the pit was situated would have been easy, even after considerable time had passed, because of the colour of the earth that filled it, as also reopening it to deposit the ring. If this was indeed the case, then the burial of the ring would have occurred before the phase 2 house (the early 6th-century BC house with stone foundations) was destroyed and the area above the pit subsequently covered with dark earth (see above). Some textual evidence, admittedly of very late date, does support this theory, a Byzantine source that preserves the tale of how Apollonius of Tyana chased away swarms of scorpions infesting Antioch by making a bronze effigy of a scorpion and burying it under a pillar.[111] The ritual act is strikingly parallel to the custom of binding or burying effigies of enemies, demons, and ghosts in order to inhibit their ability to harm.[112] The ring, much like a voodoo doll, would have kept scorpions away or deprived them of the capacity to harm the inhabitants. Although this solution fits better with the chronology of Etruscan cartouche rings, thus allowing for a date of manufacture, use, and burial of the Philia ring in the second quarter of the 6th century BC, the archaeological data do not support it.

The most likely interpretation of the find is clearly option C: a deposit of discarded material. The ring would have been lost during the hut's phase 1 period of occupation (end of the 7th or beginning of the 6th century BC). The loss must have occurred during the destruction of the building, otherwise the owner would have searched for the ring and found it on the earthen floor. Although this hypothesis fits the archaeological evidence better, the resulting date for the burial of the ring (late 7th or early 6th century BC) is incompatible with the general chronological outline of cartouche rings. A final option that would account for the chronological discrepancy might consider the Philia ring an Aegean predecessor of the Etruscan cartouche rings, predating the introduction of the form into Italy. This is unlikely: had such a class of rings ever existed, scholars would have undoubtedly noticed it among the numerous examples of gold and silver rings found in Greece, Cyprus, and Asia Minor. Since the dating of the Etruscan cartouche rings is based not on secure archaeological dates but on stylistic considerations and comparisons, the least impossible solution may be to put the beginning of the series of cartouche rings in the late 7th or early 6th century BC, as some earlier scholars have suggested.[113] This possibility strongly favours option C.

These questions need not affect the interpretation of the ring as an amulet or as a generally talismanic object with prophylactic properties in the period before its burial. The literary evidence surveyed in the previous section shows that the idea of using a ring as a scorpion amulet existed in Greece at least by the beginning of the 4th century BC (the date of Aristophanes' *Plutus*) and was certainly widespread at a much later period, during the first centuries of our era when the scorpion amulets of yellow jasper were manufactured. The pierced pendant from Ypsili in Andros proves that the concept of a scorpion amulet first appeared in Greece in the 8th century, perhaps brought there from the Near East or Egypt, where truly dangerous species were common and scorpion amulets in various forms were abundant. The intent of the Etruscan craftsman was not necessarily to create an amulet. He was simply following a pattern of depicting oriental motifs such as those found frequently on cartouche rings (winged beetle, sphinx, and the like). Once in Thessaly, the ring was given a new context and meaning, used to protect the owner or the whole household from the real and harmful activity of scorpions. The Philia settlement lies in a marshy area where scorpions must frequently have been encountered. Indeed, modern stories exist of the relocation of villages in Thessaly due to the danger that scorpions presented.[114]

Conclusion

Archaeological data favour a late 7th- or early 6th-century BC date for the burial of the ring. This date is not compatible with the current dating of the cartouche rings to the second quarter or even the second half of the 6th century BC. Although the problem could be solved if we admit the possibility of the ring being buried at a later period than the rest of the material in the pit, this scenario is unlikely, if not wholly untenable. The safest way to resolve the dating problem is to assume that the cartouche rings did indeed appear during the late 7th or the early 6th century BC, which is rather earlier than recent scholarship has supposed. The ring would thus be far more likely not to have been buried on purpose, but lost during the destruction of phase 1 of the house.

Despite the absence of obvious ritual action at the time the ring was buried, the most obvious interpretation of its use is to identify it as a prophylactic object against scorpions. Although most images of scorpions in Greek art of the Archaic and Classical periods are generic or symbolic, a small nucleus of scorpion-bearing objects that were undeniably used as amulets does exist. The (admittedly later) literary evidence shows rings of non-

[111] Malalas, *Chronographia*, p. 264 Dindorf. Effigies of scorpions were also made of wood: Plutarch *Quaest. Conv*. 2.1.

[112] Faraone 1991.

[113] See nn. 14 and 15 above.

[114] Arvanitopoulos 1914: 170: the presence of a dangerous species of scorpion caused the villagers of Domenico (region of Elassona, district of Larissa) to abandon the plain and resettle in the woods. As well, similar stories circulated in antiquity concerning Rhoetum in the Troad and an area in Ethiopia (Agatharchides 59; Strabo 16.4.12; Diodorus Sic. 3.30; Aelian, *Hist. Anim.* 17.40; Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* 8.29.104). See also Beavis 1988: 29.

perishable material were employed as amulets against scorpions since at least the early 4th century BC. Other artefacts, such as the pendant from Ypsili in Andros, ivory seals, scarabs, and rings from Perachora, Argos, and Naucratis point to the adoption of the scorpion's image on amulets already in the 8th century BC. The Philia ring, thanks to its faraway origin, precious metal, and exotic yet very specific iconography, must also be counted among the relatively rare scorpion amulets of the Archaic period. What makes it unique among objects with a similar function is that it was crafted not in the Orient or Egypt, nor to imitate an object from those places, but in Etruria, a rather unlikely provenance for an amulet found in the interior of Thessaly.

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Apotropaic and Prophylactic Jewellery from Abdera

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Abstract
At Abdera, historical and archaeological evidence reflects the anxiety of the inhabitants to protect themselves, their loved ones, and the entire community from intangible, undefined evil (such as contagion, contamination, and the evil eye/*vaskania*) or a definite form of it (namely an illness). In regard to the former, the reference to the official purification that the city adopted by means of a *pharmakos* is quite revealing: a magical practice closely associated with the timeless effort of human beings to communicate with the supernatural and to control the forces of life, death, and nature.
As contemporary scholars do not have any other written sources concerning practices of this kind in Abdera at their disposal, they inevitably turn to archaeological evidence, which is not to be ignored. A multitude of magical objects, such as jewellery, figurines, crosses, curse tablets, architectural members, and rock crystal prisms and many more, which extend chronologically from the Archaic period to Byzantine times, has been collected. They reflect the beliefs, trace humans' need to be protected against misfortune, and reveal their endeavours to achieve individual and social well-being with the aid of the supernatural.
In this wide range of objects, those that can be worn as everyday jewellery or on specific occasions predominate. A considerable number of them has been found either in the city or in the cemeteries. From common glass eye beads, to gold pendant-amulets and necklaces, scarabs, glass double-faced pendants, and semi-precious stones, they show great variety. Worthy of particular mention are the necklace-amulets such as those depicted on votive statues of stone or terracotta from Cyprus, the so-called 'Temple-Boys.'

This paper attempts to trace those practices by presenting the most representative items in this particular group, dating from the 7th century BC to the early Roman times.

Introduction

The intimate need to turn from our material world to the world of the divine and the metaphysical in order to seek protection from intangible, undefined evil (such as contagion, contamination, the evil eye/*vaskania*) or a definite form of it (namely an illness) resulted in the adoption of several magico-religious practices. Their origins are to be detected in popular beliefs, not so much in state religion, justifying their survival among many different religions.

Historical and archaeological evidence informs us that the people of Abdera were concerned about their community as a whole, about themselves, and their loved ones. In regard to the first instance, a reference to the official purification adopted by the city by means of a *pharmakos* is quite revealing. The *pharmakos* ritual is mentioned briefly in a fragment of the poet Callimachus, where a slave appears to be speaking: 'There, Abdera, where now ... leads (me) a scapegoat'.[1] An ancient commentator on Callimachus provides a detailed commentary:

> 'In Abdera a slave, bought in the market, is used to purify [the city]. Standing on a block of grey stone, he enjoys a rich banquet, and so fed to the full he is led to the gates called *Prurides*. Then he goes round the walls in a circle purifying in his own person the city, and then the *basileus* and the others throw stones at him until he is driven beyond the boundaries.'[2]

This excerpt presents a vivid description of the purification of this city by means of a *pharmakos*. A slave is sent into exile, taking with him all the malevolent supernatural powers that could cause harm to the community. Magic is being practiced, closely associated with human beings' timeless efforts to communicate with the supernatural and to control the forces of life and nature.

As contemporary scholars do not have any other written sources relating practices of this kind in Abdera at their disposal, they inevitably turn to the archaeological evidence, which is not to be ignored. A multitude of magical objects that extend chronologically from the Archaic period to Byzantine times has been collected.

[1] Callim. fr. 90, *Διηγήσεις*.

[2] Schol. ad Callim. 1.97 *Σχόλια εἰς Καλλιμάχου Αἴτια*, 90 ln. 2.29-40. See McLean 1996: 97-98.

Figure 1a. Four clay roundels of a diadem from the cemetery of tumuli, Paliochora, area 95.19. Burial pithos.

Figure 1b. Gold diadem from the Hellenistic cemetery at Valta Zambaki. Grave T23.

Among them are jewellery, figurines, crosses, curse tablets, architectural members, and rock crystal prisms and many more, reflecting the beliefs, charting humans' need to be protected against misfortune and revealing their endeavours to achieve individual and social well-being with the aid of the supernatural.

Jewellery as amulets

Among this wide range of objects, items that can be worn as everyday jewels or on specific occasions predominate. The current study aims to present the most illuminating items of this particular group, dating from the 7th century BC to the early Roman period and through their typology, symbols, and the symbolism attached to each of them, to trace these practices, examining whenever possible issues relevant to the quantity and types of jewellery-amulets found in the city of Abdera and its cemeteries,[3] how exactly they were deposited in the graves, the kind of materials generally preferred, the gender and age of the wearer, and the date and duration of the custom's appearance.

Our main concern about the choice of this particular group (jewellery) was its separation from the aforementioned general assemblage of apotropaic objects found in Abdera. The thought that nevertheless prevailed was that this jewellery forms a structured and homogeneous unit which could be examined separately. Furthermore, specific issues associated with the management of the material as well as its interpretation had to be kept in mind. Although many of these objects come from the cemeteries, representative chance finds from the city were also included.

Diadems

Diadems are head ornaments often found in funerary contexts.[4] During the Hellenistic period, they were widely favoured as jewellery by living wearers, but were also deposited in graves. Two were recovered in Abdera; their purpose seems to have been exclusively sepulchral.[5] They are presented below:

Four clay roundels bearing a gorgoneion in relief. Cemetery of tumuli, Paliochora, area 95.19 (MA[6] 4825 α-γ, MA 5514; Figure 1a).

The diadem originally consisted of a fabric band decorated with four clay roundels bearing a gorgoneion

[3] The presence of jewellery in the cemeteries of Abdera: Kallintzi 2007.

[4] Despini 1996: 28-31.

[5] Kallintzi 2007: 260.

[6] MA = inventory number of catalogued objects in the Archaeological Museum of Abdera.

relief.[7] No trace of the textile survives. A large part of one roundel is missing. They were found in the burial *pithos* of a woman aged between 25 and 30[8] that is dated to the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 3rd century BC. They were interpreted as parts of a diadem because they were found near the skull and had apertures on the rear side with pieces of wire attached to them.[9] Traces of white and red paint on the outer and inner surfaces indicate their funerary use.[10] Gorgons were widely used in jewellery, often embellishing pendants or earrings. Invocation of these chthonic beings, with their repulsive looks, during life on Earth was without doubt a means of warding off evil. Their presence in this woman's burial is unsurprising, as their purpose was to protect her in Hades.[11]

Gold diadem with embossed portrait of Cybele. North Enclosure, Valta Zambaki Hellenistic cemetery, cist grave T23 (MA 6129; Figure 1b).

The diadem is composed of a band of hammered gold sheet whose ends are pierced by a pair of holes so that it could be fitted with a cord and tied around the head.[12] The central part of the band is decorated with an embossed portrait of Cybele, with a crown in the form of a towered wall on her head and a pomegranate or poppy seed pod in her left hand. The rest of the surface is adorned with vegetal and other decorative motifs. It was discovered in the grave of a young girl near the forehead area. The burial, dated to the first half of the 2nd century BC, contained a lot of grave gifts, among them numerous items of amuletic jewellery.[13] We will return to this burial several times in the subsequent discussion.

Necklace-amulets with pendants

These are amulets (*phylakteria*) in the form of necklaces worn by children, according to Hesychius. They have holes to facilitate suspension on a chain or cord and were worn over vital parts of the body, diagonally across the chest or around the neck. Their protective value derives from the objects and creatures depicted on them as well as from the material of which they are made. Chains of this kind appear in representations of toddlers on numerous Attic *choes*,[14] on votive statues of stone or terracotta from Cyprus, the so-called 'Temple-Boys,'[15] on Italiote coinage, and on fourth-century BC pottery.[16] Three necklaces with pendants, all part of grave deposits, have been found in Abdera:

Necklace comprising 21 bone pendants. Cemetery of tumuli, Almyri Limni (former Touzla Giol), burial pithos IX (MA 366; Figure 2).

Found in a *pithos*[17] (jar burial) dated to *c.* 300 BC, the necklace accompanied a two-and-a-half- to three-and-a-half year-old child.[18] The other offerings suggest the burial may be that of a girl.[19] The 21 pendants form two distinct groups. The first consists of 10 objects: a comb, a pomegranate, a shell, an arm with a clenched hand, two double-axes, a cicada, a clover-shaped pendant, a crescent (?), and a shell. The second one comprises 11 animals, including a monkey, dog, sheep, hare, frog, rooster and parrot.[20] All these bone representations in the grave could be interpreted as symbolic of death or associated with fertility and birth. Such representations are often deposited at sanctuaries of kourotrophic divinities who preside over crucial events in the lives of children (Artemis, Demeter and Kore, Hera, nymphs).[21] The beads of the first group belong to a necklace type of the Late Classical and Hellenistic periods. The second group shares a physical peculiarity: the lower part of each pendant is flat (often projecting), forming a base/pedestal that enables them to stand upright. This means that their function was not only metaphysical but also practical, since children could use them as toys (game pieces?) or in educational contexts through

[7] Diameter 0.028-0.029m.

[8] Ascertained by laboratory analysis of the bones by Prof. A. Agelarakis of Adelphi University (NY, USA).

[9] Kallintzi (1995: 647-48, pl. 197β; 2007: 260, fig. 3) gives a more detailed presentation of the excavation and finds. Similar terracotta discs with traces of a loop at the back are presented by Marshall (1969: 245, nos. 2150-2151, pl. XLII), who interprets them as necklace elements, whilst Hasselin Rous and Huguenot (2017: 28, fig. 22) think they are buttons attached to a garment. A similar gold disc from a grave in Oropos was interpreted as a decorative element of a fabric hair band by Pologiorgi (1988: 122, pl. 59β). Lazarou (2019) highlights some characteristic gold examples, mainly jewellery, depicting the gorgoneion and gorgon; Touratsoglou (1986: 645-49) collects all available material.

[10] Themelis and Touratsoglou 1997: 56.

[11] The Gorgon Medusa's apotropaic/protective powers: Zolotnikova 2016; Karoglou 2018: 1-27; Lazarou 2019.

[12] Length 0.275m.

[13] The excavation and finds of grave T23: Samiou 1988: 474-79 (the diadem in particular: 475-76, fig. 8); Samiou 2004: 300; Kallintzi 2007: 260.

[14] *Choes,* miniature vessels decorated with images of childhood, were connected with the *Anthesteria*, a three-day celebration of the new vintage and the arrival of spring in which children also participated: Golden 1990: 41-43; Dasen 2003: 278.

[15] Beer 1994; Caneva and Delli Pizzi 2014.

[16] Dasen 2003; Kallintzi and Papaikonomou 2006: 483, fig. 4; Kallintzi 2007: 262. Miller Ammerman 2007: 147.

[17] For the necklace, see Kallintzi 1990: 565, fig. 8. The *pithos* burial is one of the most common types of burial for children in Abdera during the Classical and Hellenistic times (Kallintzi 1990: 564; Kallintzi and Papaikonomou 2010: 136).

[18] According to the laboratory analysis of the bones, carried out by Prof. A. Agelarakis.

[19] Among the offerings were female figurines, a *plangon*, gilded models of earrings, glass beads etc. For the excavation at the tumulus of Almyri Limni (former Touzla Giol), see Kallintzi 1990. For further discussion on the gender of the child, cf. Dubois 2014: 107-110.

[20] Length: 0.01-0.02m.

[21] For the presence of the bone model of the cicada in the necklace along with the other models, see Kallintzi and Papaikonomou 2006: 483. For the symbolic character of the double-axe, the hand, the crescent and the clover-shaped pendants in the necklaces – amulets, see Ziva 2009: 32-35. For representations of animals dedicated as statues or figurines to Olympian gods and Artemis in particular, see Bevan 1985.

Figure 2. Bone amulet necklace from the cemetery of tumuli at Almyri Limni. Burial pithos IX.
Left: The group of 10 objects. Right: The group of 11 animals.

observation.[22] Similar glass pendant-amulets with a base are listed in the catalogue of the Corning Museum of Glass, which are of Egyptian origin and date from the 6th to the 3rd centuries BC.[23] A comparable necklace with cylindrical gold beads and pendants comes from a grave in Pantikapaion and is dated to the end of the 3rd or the beginning of the 2nd century BC.[24]

Necklace with glass beads, a boar tooth, and bone figural pendants. Cemetery of tumuli, Molos, Lakkiotis plot, burial pithos X (MA 1695α-δ and MA 1696α-δ; Figure 3).

The necklace accompanied a four-year-old child.[25] The rest of the offerings suggest the burial was of a girl, dating to *c.* 300 BC.[26] All the necklace's elements — five glass beads, three bone pendants (a cicada, a double axe, and a female figure wearing a *periamma*), and a boar's tooth with a deep oblong crack — were found interspaced in the area of the neck and chest strung together on a fine bronze wire.[27] The figural pendants and the tooth have added suspension loops made of silver wire. Only one of the glass beads is preserved in good condition and is presented below. Teeth, along with horns and claws, were believed to be symbols of animal strength. In every culture they came to be considered magical objects, natural amulets possessing healing powers. Teeth relate primarily to children, especially those at the crucial age of teething, when many risks arose that could lead to death. They were used either intact or in pieces, in combination with jewels or other objects that necessarily gained amuletic or healing properties. The evidence shows a preference for the teeth of animals that are powerful or have symbolic significance, such as wolves, dogs, and dolphins.[28] A similar boar's tooth which served as a pendant-amulet was found in a burial pit at Acanthus (dated to the end of the 6th century BC).[29] Similarly, animal teeth used as necklace elements have been found in the graves of toddlers in the cemetery at Apollonia Pontica (450-350 BC).[30] The cicada can be associated with the transition from childhood to adulthood. In other words, these insects are regarded as fertility symbols[31] since the growth of

[22] Kallintzi 1990: 565; Papaikonomou 2006: 245-247, pl. 36.2; Kallintzi 2007: 262, 271 fig. 9.
[23] Goldstein 1979: 161.
[24] Despini 1996: 141, 245, no. 127.
[25] According to the laboratory analysis of the bones carried out by Prof. A. Agelarakis.
[26] For the rest of the finds from the same burial (a gold earring, a miniature terracotta *pyxis* with a lid and terracotta gilded beads), see Kallintzi 2007: 261, 269, figs 6, 9. For short reports concerning the rescue excavation at the Lakkiotis plot in Molos, where part of the tumuli necropolis of Abdera extends, see Kallintzi 1990: 563, notes 4,5; Kallintzi 1991: 457-458; Kallintzi 1992: 489: Kallintzi 1993: 289-391.
[27] MA 1695α-δ (glass beads). Diameter: 0.009-0.012m. MA 1696 (bone pendants): Height: 0.016-0.037m.
[28] Dasen 2015: 191-94.
[29] Kaltsas 1998: 51, pl. 42α.
[30] Chacheva 2015: 8-9, 16-18 (S2, S8, S9).
[31] Huysecom-Haxhi 2007: 412-13.

Figure 3. Amulet necklace from the cemetery of tumuli, Molos, Lakkiotis plot. Burial pithos X.

youths is followed by sexual maturity and reproductive capacity. The cicada is also associated with death and the afterlife.[32] Once a symbol of immortality connected with regeneration and the cult of Demeter,[33] the cicada's presence in the grave is a sign that the deceased will receive help in the afterlife.

Necklace with 14 silver pendants, North Enclosure, Valta Zambaki, Hellenistic cemetery, cist grave T23 (MA 6137-6148, 6183-6184; Figure 4).

All pendants were found in the chest area of a young girl: three disc pendants (one with an embossed image of a turtle), a cylindrical pendant, a clover-shaped pendant, a sickle-shaped pendant, two clubs, two triple link chains, an Eros, a spear-shaped pendant, a crescent, and a double axe. [34] Most of these shapes have well-known symbolism and appear on similar necklaces, made of a wide range of materials. Among them are a silver amulet-necklace from the cemetery of Thasos (early 4th century BC)[35] and a gold one from Acanthus (4th century BC).[36] An earlier example with gold elements, comes from the necropolis of Banditella in Etruria (first quarter of the 7th century BC).[37]

Pendants

Various types of pendants have been found at Abdera, made of a great variety of materials. Their presentation here is organised according to type, shown either in groups or individually.

Gold cylindrical case-amulet. North Enclosure, chance find (MA 2103; Figure 5a).

The amulet consists of a hollow open-ended cylinder that is divided into five vertical bands decorated with twisted wire, each ending in a pair of globules of unequal size. It was designed to hang horizontally from a suspension loop mounted on the central band, the front part of which is adorned with a plain rosette.[38] Such cylinders contained magical inscriptions, soil, sulphur, or other materials associated with magic. This particular type was widespread around the Mediterranean from Classical to Byzantine times. Cylindrical case-amulets are found either on their own, such as the examples from the cemetery of Zone (5th-4th centuries BC)[39] and of Acanthus (480-470 BC)[40] or as necklace elements, for instance from the cemeteries of Acanthus (4th century BC),[41] Vathia on Euboea (2nd –

[32] Ziva 2009: 29-31.
[33] Kallintzi and Papaikonomou 2006: 483; see also Assaël 2003.
[34] Length 0.011-0.025m.
[35] Sgourou 2001: 343-46.
[36] Nasioka 2019: 232, no. 152.
[37] Now in the Florence Museum: Cianferoni 2012: 263.

[38] Length 0.018m. Height with suspension loop 0.0125m. Triandaphyllos 1993: 403.
[39] Iliopoulou 2015: 127-28, figs. 216, 217.
[40] Kaltsas 1998: 72, no. 31, pl. 73ε.
[41] Nasioka 2019: 232, no. 152.

Figure 4. Silver amulet necklace from the Hellenistic cemetery at Valta Zambaki. Grave T23.

1st century BC),[42] and from grave T23 at Abdera (1st half of the 2nd century BC). Significant examples in later centuries, dating from as late as the 7th century AD, are those from Eleutherna[43] and Mytilene.[44]

Gold pendant with an embossed frontal lion's head. Cemetery of tumuli, Asprolofos (former Aina Tepe), burial pithos[45] (MA 6936; Figure 5b).

The lion head is embossed in high relief on a round sheet disc which is bordered by plain wire. The thin suspension loop is surrounded by a glass bead.[46] It strongly resembles a silver necklace pendant from Thasos that has been dated to the beginning of the 4th century BC.[47] The lion is a popular motif in Greek art, symbolizing strength and courage, qualities that are essential for the deceased to confront death. It induces terror in one's adversaries and was a favoured means of protecting the deceased in the afterlife, receiving an apotropaic character.[48]

Gold crescent-shaped pendant (*μηνίσκος*). South Enclosure, chance find (MA 6979; Figure 5c).

The pendant is made from a plain sheet of gold. The suspension loop is a thin sheet soldered to the top of the crescent and decorated with a drop of gold at the front. Two similar drops are attached at the ends of the crescent.[49] Known in the Greek world since the Mycenaean period,[50] crescent-shaped jewellery is a common find in domestic contexts and sanctuaries as well as in cemeteries. Its amuletic function is likely linked to Artemis, who was the patron goddess of birth and maturity for both humans and animals. They have been associated with female fertility and especially children, since they are usually encountered, together with other protective symbols – amulets, *periammata*, in the necklaces which are depicted worn by children diagonally over their chests.[51] Pendants of this type

[42] Ignatiadou and Chatzipanagiotou 2018: 286.
[43] Giagaki 2004: 187-204.
[44] Touratsoglou and Chalkia 2008: 122-24.
[45] Found in 1972. Further excavation data is unfortunately unavailable. The object probably comes from one of the two graves mentioned in the annual report in the *Αρχαιολογικόν Δελτίον* (Koukouli-Chrysanthaki 1973: 451).
[46] Diameter 0.014m.
[47] Sgourou 2001: 343-46, figs. 30, 34.
[48] Huysecom-Haxhi 2003: 99.
[49] Length 0.011m. Height 0.01m.
[50] The oldest (13th century BC) come from Eleusis (Dasen 2003: 280) and from two graves at Perati (Iakovidis 1969: 122, pl. 37β [M209] and 247, pl. 72β [M89]).
[51] More extensive references for the crescent's apotropaic function:

a. Gold pendant in the form of a hollow cylinder

b. Gold pendant, with an embossed head of a lion

c. Gold crescent-shaped pendant

d. Two bronze pendants in the form of a triple link

Figure 5. Pendant-amulets.

are also found independently, even as elements of earrings. [52] Crescents, unadorned or more elaborately made, are found in various regions of the ancient world from various chronological periods. Many comparable examples exist, including those found at Acanthus (5th century BC), [53] Olynthus (late 5th – early 4th century BC),[54] and Zone (5th – early 4th century BC).[55]

Two bronze pendants in the form of a triple-link chain. North Enclosure, Valta Zambaki, Hellenistic cemetery, grave T23 (MA 6181, MA 6182; Figure 5d).[56]

All the circular links have leaf- or fin-shaped projections on them. Chains of this kind have a long history and are very common in Macedonia and the region of Illyria. Similar examples were found in the cemeteries of Galipsos (6th–5th centuries BC),[57] Epanomi (late 6th century BC),[58] Aineia (1st quarter of the 5th century BC),[59] and Samothrace (2nd half of the 3rd or beginning of the 2nd century BC).[60] Five specimens of triple-link gold chains come from the necropolis of Elizavetovskoie west of Rostov (2nd half of the 4th century BC).[61] A similar chain (Roman-period) was also found at Corinth.[62] Several interpretations of these chains have been proposed, but their use as pendant-amulets is clear in the case of the Abdera finds, which should be associated with the two small chain-pendants of the silver necklace noted above (Figure 4), also from grave T23.

Five double-faced (bifacial) pendants. Chance finds. MA 2939, MA 3236, MA 4620, MA 5041, MA 5923 (Figure 6a).

The pendants, found accidentally in the city, are made of dark blue translucent glass. Four of the five depict males, whilst one portrays a young woman.[63] Most probably parts of the same necklace, they are believed to be representations of deities.[64] Some of these facial

Dasen 2003: 280; Ziva 2009: 32-34; Dasen 2015: 189-190.

[52] Kaltsas 1998: 51-52 (grave 1381, no 934, pl. 42ε).

[53] Kaltsas 1998, 51-52 (grave 1381, no 934, pl. 42ε); Romiopoulou 2007: 194, no. 8.

[54] Robinson 1941: 125-28, nos 426-37.

[55] Iliopoulou 2015: 126-127, figs 214-15.

[56] MA 6181, link diameter 0.013-0.014m. MA 6182, link diameter 0.011m.

[57] Koukouli-Chrysanthaki (2006: 182, pl. 27.3) considers them decorative elements (e.g., of garments or belts) and reveal cultural influence from Thrace.

[58] Tsimbidou-Avloniti 1989: 324-26, fig. 11.

[59] Vokotopoulou (1990: 97, no. 10, pl. 61δ and 101, no. 9, pl. 63ε [graves V and VI]), who regards them as very probably elements of a horse's harness.

[60] Dusenbery 1998: 478.

[61] Musée Cernuschi 2001: 127, no. 94

[62] Davidson 1952: 305, 307, no. 2659, pl. 126.

[63] The initial height of the pendants was estimated at 0.020 to 0.022m. With the exception of MA 2939, the remaining four pendants are described by Kallintzi, Hatziprokopiou and Chrysafi (2010: 405-406, nos. 495-498).

[64] The four bifacial pendants (MA 2939, MA 3236, MA 4620, and MA 5041) were found in the north enclosure of the city in the same plot at different times and were handed over by the owner. They may have comprised parts of the same scattered assemblage. No evidence is available concerning the exact findspot of the fifth pendant (MA 5923) or the circumstances of its recovery, but it is deemed to have

a. Five glass bifacial pendants. From left to right: MA 2939, MA 3236, MA 5041, MA 5923, MA 4620

b. Head pendant of opaque yellow glass

c. Glass head pendant, demonic mask (grotesque) type

Figure 6. Anthropomorphic glass pendants.

representations may be traced to the world of satyrs and silens, a very common motif around Macedonia in the 4th century BC.[65] This type of pendant was widespread around the Mediterranean and dates to the 4th and 3rd centuries BC.[66] A similar amulet, found near the neck of a deceased child in the cemetery of Acanthus (350 BC), formed the centrepiece of a necklace with beads and most probably depicts a satyr or silen. Some published specimens come from Classical-period graves at Pydna. Similar examples have been found in Athens, Thebes, and Volos, while some pendants depicting a Silen and Isis are from Hellenistic Rhodes. Another one, unearthed in Nea Philadelphia, is dated to the end of the 1st century BC or the beginning of the 1st century AD.[67]

Head pendant of opaque yellow glass. Chance find, exact provenance unknown (MA 5512; Figure 6b).

The pendant is dated to the 3rd century BC.[68] Though it probably depicts the head of a woman, identification of this kind of pendant has been a subject for scholarly dispute. Possibly produced in the Aegean region or on Cyprus,[69] these pendants were appreciated not only for their decorative value but also for their magical-apotropaic character, since their blue colour and intense eyes were thought to ward off evil. Their small

been part of the same assemblage as the previous four.

[65] The silen's head has the same function as the *phallus*, which is absent from Greek charms. Associated with fertility, mainly male virility, the head may also imply the silen's role as guardian-pedagogue (Huysecom-Haxhi 2007: 413; Dasen 2015: 196).

[66] Spaer 2001: 160-62, 167-68, nos. 321-24.

[67] Trakosopoulou 2002: 83-84.

[68] Preserved height 0.0195m. Kallintzi, Hatziprokopiou and Chrysafi 2010: 407, no. 499.

[69] Where the industry responsible for these pendants was located is a matter of conjecture. Their origin has been placed in Phoenicia or Egypt, but also in Carthage and the Eastern Mediterranean (Grose 1989: 82-83). Spaer (2001: 158-160, 166-167, nos. 310-316) divides them into two categories. The first (nos. 310-313) comprises pendants that are slightly larger, produced somewhere in the Aegean or Cyprus, and dating to the 3rd–2nd centuries BC. The second category comprises the smaller ones (nos. 314-316), most probably made in Egypt and dating to the late Hellenistic period (down to the mid-1st century BC). The example here falls into the first category. See also Grose 1989: 72, 82-83, 90-92, nos. 50-59.

size also enabled them to be worn as the centrepiece of a necklace with beads, or as earrings.[70]

Glass head pendant, demonic mask (or grotesque) type. North Enclosure, chance find (MA 1855; Figure 6c).

This triangular-shaped head, made of dark green or black glass, with eye sockets rendered in high relief in white glass, is dated to the 6th/5th century BC.[71] Head pendants of this type belong to the realm of amuletic-apotropaic magic. Their provenance has been a matter of dispute. Some scholars regard them as products of the Syro-Palestinian coast, distributed by the Phoenicians,[72] while others trace them to Rhodes and Carthage. They served as the centrepieces of necklaces strung with eye beads.[73]

Bronze pendant depicting Hecate. Chance find, exact provenance unknown (MA 6892; Figure 7a).

The pendant, probably dating to the end of the 2nd / early 1st century BC, depicts Hecate in her triple form, which corresponds to the three phases of the Moon.[74] Triple-bodied Hecate was believed to have apotropaic power, averting envy and the evil eye. A similar pendant was found on Delos in a building identified as a taverna (*taberna vinaria*).[75]

Glass pendant representing Harpocrates. North Enclosure, chance find (MA 2962; Figure 7b).

The pendant is made of translucent deep blue glass and depicts the Egyptian god Harpocrates in the finger-to-mouth pose. Traces of a suspension loop survive on the back.[76] Although Harpocrates is usually shown as a naked boy, this example wears a himation. A similar faience pendant, found in the grave of a child in Milan (Italy) dated to the early 1st century AD, makes a date in the 1st century BC or the first half of the 1st century AD likely for the Abdera Harpocrates.[77] Some pendants also exist in materials other than glass.[78] Pendants of this type were very popular for a long period of time and undoubtedly belong to the category of amulets given to children to ward off malevolent powers.

a. Bronze pendant of Hekate b. Glass pendant of Harpocrates

Figure 7. Pendants representing divinities

Beads

A great number of apotropaic beads have been discovered in the city as well as in burials. In some cases they were worn as pendants, while in others were found scattered in the graves.[79] A selection is presented below:

Assemblage comprising a variety of beads and pendants. North Enclosure, Valta Zambaki, Hellenistic cemetery, grave T23 (MA 6149, MA 6151, MA 6152, MA 6154–6172; Figure 8a).

The assemblage consists of one glass bead in the form of a dove, a faience model of an arm with clenched hand, a glass model of an astragalus, and 19 beads of glass, faience, and clay.[80] Also among the plain beads were distinctive eye beads in a variety of colours and materials. Some of these elements were discovered in the chest area of the deceased, while others were found randomly placed inside the grave.

Assemblage comprising a variety of beads and pendants. North Enclosure, Valta Zambaki Hellenistic cemetery, tile-covered grave T37 (MA 6225α-ιη; Figure 8b).

The assemblage consists of glass and bone beads, a faience scarab, a bone model of an arm with a clenched

[70] Staikou 2023.
[71] Height 0.024m.
[72] Goldstein 1979: 109-110, nos. 216-219.
[73] Spaer 2001: 155-157, 165, nos. 301-304.
[74] Height 0.025m.
[75] Papadopoulou 2017: 130, no. 52γ.
[76] Height 0.025m.
[77] Uboldi 2015: 259-260. See also Spaer 2001: 162, 169, no. 331 (1st century BC – first half of 1st c. AD).
[78] Representative examples: Papadopoulou 2017: 130, no. 52δ from Delos (parallel in bronze, end of the 2nd – beginning of the 1st century BC); Laffineur 1980: 418-19, figs. 121-22 (parallel in gold).
[79] A similar practice is also found at the cemetery of Sindos (Despini 2016: 140 ff).
[80] Samiou 1988: 477.

a. Assemblage with various beads from the Hellenistic cemetery, Valta Zambaki. Grave T23.

b. Assemblage with various beads from the Hellenistic cemetery, Valta Zambaki, Chatzopoulos plot. Grave T37.

Figure 8. Assemblages of beads

hand, and shells.[81] All these items were found gathered between the knees of a dead woman. The burial is dated to the 2nd century BC.[82]

The eye symbol has always played an important role in magical beliefs and practices. Eye beads were commonly accorded special virtue, protecting wearers against the evil eye.[83] Various types of eye beads have been found in both the city and the cemeteries, ranging chronologically from the 6th to the 2nd centuries BC. We present some typical examples:

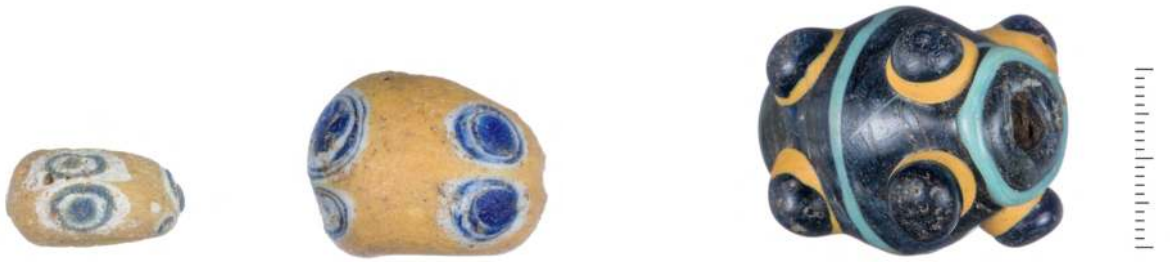
Glass eye bead of the 'three-plus-four' type. Cemetery of tumuli, Molos, Lakkiotis plot, burial pithos X (MA 1695δ; Figure 3, upper right corner).

Glass bead with four eyes close to one another around one hole and three eyes around the other, one of the elements of the necklace from Molos mentioned above (MA 1695α-δ, MA 1696).[84] The type, which dates to the 6th–5th centuries BC and even later, is very common in the eastern Mediterranean, including Egypt and Cyprus, but is also encountered in the western Mediterranean and may be regarded as primarily Phoenician-Punic. The bead's seven eyes are most probably due to the magical associations of the number seven.[85]

Two cylindrical eye beads. South Enclosure, from the excavations near the area of the western walls, Section B (MA 2601, Figure 9a left), South Enclosure, chance find (MA 4478; Figure 9a right). [86]

Eye beads of opaque yellow glass, decorated with four pairs of eyes of white and dark blue glass (6th–3rd centuries BC).[87]

[81] Length: 0.007-0.023m.
[82] For a short report of the excavations conducted at the Hellenistic cemetery in 1991, see Koukouli-Chrysanthaki 1991: 197-199.
[83] On the symbolism and magical powers of the eye see Selingman 1910; Bonner 1950: 96-99; Limper 1988: 15; Spaer 2001: 77 and their sources.
[84] Diameter: 0.012m. See above, nn. 25-27.
[85] Spaer 2001: 84, 91-92, nos 93-98, pl. 7. For chronological issues, see also Eisen 1916: 14-16; Shiah 1944.
[86] MA 2601. Diameter: 0.012m. MA 4478. Diameter: 0.017m. Length: 0.013m.
[87] For parallels see Spaer 2001: 90-91, nos 88-89,92, pl. 7.



a. Two glass cylindrical eye beads of opaque yellow glass. MA 2601 (left), MA 4478 (right)

b. Large eye bead of the 'horned-eye-bead' type

Figure 9. Eye beads.

Roughly globular eye bead. Hellenistic cemetery, Chatzopoulos plot, tile-covered grave T37. (MA 6225ζ; Figure 8b, right side).

Eye bead of dark blue glass, with many eyes arranged in diagonal rows, belonging to the assemblage from grave T37 mentioned above.[88] The burial itself is dated to the 2nd century BC but the bead type has been assigned to the 4th–3rd centuries BC. [89]

Large eye bead of the 'horned-eye-bead' type. North Enclosure, chance find (MA 2621; Figure 9b).

The bead is made of opaque blue glass with eight protruding cane eyes of the simplest kind (blue spot with yellow ring), arranged symmetrically in two zones separated by three parallel light blue bands.[90] Unlike the typical eye beads which abound in the Abdera area, this apotropaic bead is one of a kind. Similar examples were found in the cemeteries of Epanomi[91] (end of the 6th century BC) and Mieza[92] (second quarter of the 5th century BC). A comparable specimen was noted in the Stathatos Collection,[93] from a grave in Corinth dated to the end of the 4th century BC. This unique find is thought to be of Phoenician origin, as many beads like it have been discovered in regions under Phoenician influence dating to the 5th and 4th centuries BC.[94] But the closest parallel we could find, which has only the protruding eyes whilst the horns are absent, is in the collection of the Israel Museum and dates to the late Hellenistic or Roman period.[95]

Beads in the shape of poppy seed pods

The oldest, most common names for these beads are melon or lotus beads. They were very popular and were also considered amulets.[96] In Abdera, they have been discovered in the city as well as in the cemeteries, in various colours and sizes, with the majority dating to the 5th–2nd centuries BC.

Scarabs and scaraboids

Amulets in the form of a scarab, the Egyptian dung beetle, are the most popular and numerous of all items manufactured by the Egyptians from the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC to the Graeco-Roman period.[97] Phoenician traders facilitated their distribution throughout the Mediterranean and due to their exotic character were in great demand. The presence of Egyptian magic in the Greek world is made evident by the discoveries of scarabs and scaraboids in graves and other contexts. They were sometimes used by individuals in rings, while others were made into pendants in necklaces or in other amuletic compositions. The scarab represented life, creation, and resurrection.[98] A few have been found in Abdera; two of them are presented below:

Blue faience scarab. Chance find, exact provenance unknown (MA 5160α; Figure 10a).

It is pierced lengthwise for suspension.[99] Incised on its flat base is a scorpion, a Egyptian motif common in Egypt with an apotropaic function.[100] A date in the 7th or early 6th century BC is probable.

Blue faience scaraboid. Chance find, exact provenance unknown (MA 5160β; Figure 10b).

It is pierced lengthwise for suspension.[101] On its flat base is an incised griffin(?) seated to the right with a *Maat*

[88] Diameter 0.015m. See n. 80 above.
[89] Spaer 2001: 85, 93, no. 102, pl. 8.
[90] Length 0.036m.
[91] Tsimbidou-Avloniti 1989: 324, 329, fig. 10.
[92] Romiopoulou and Touratsoglou 2002: 95, pl. 13, Π1673.
[93] Amandry 1953: 68, no. 199, pl. XXIX.
[94] Pemberton 1985: 295-296, no. 6, pl. 83.
[95] Spaer 2001: 94, no. 113.
[96] Eisen 1930: 21-25; Ignatiadou and Chatzinikolaou 2002: 63-65.
[97] Andrews 1994: 50; Spaer 2001: 201.
[98] Andrews (1994: 50-59) provides general information on scarabs, their motifs, and amuletic powers.
[99] Length 0.015m, width 0.011m, height 0.007m.
[100] Andrews 1994: 36. Boardman and Vollenweider (1978: 9, no. 49) show a similar scorpion on a limestone gem. Televantou (2019: 140) notes a square seal-pendant from Andros.
[101] Length 0.013m, width 0.01m, height 0.007m.

Figure 10. Two scarabs of blue faience. MA 5160α (left), MA 5160β (right).

feather in front of it (?). A half-cartouche is depicted to the left, containing three debased hieroglyphic signs, a cross-shaped symbol between two discs. It is dated to the 7th or early 6th century BC.[102]

Terracotta plaque

One enigmatic object from the cemetery of the Clazomenians (MA 267; Figure 11) deserves mention. A small terracotta plaque was found in the 7th century BC cemetery just outside pithos K161, which contained the remains of an adult male.[103] Incomprehensible characters, probably linked to some magical ritual, are incised on both sides of the plaque.[104] The excavator thinks that it may have been worn around the neck as an amulet or stood upright on its base. It could moreover be interpreted as an early curse tablet.[105]

Figure 11. Terracotta plaque with magical inscriptions on both sides.

Jewellery with a twofold function

During the Classical and Hellenistic periods, only a few symbols, among them the gorgoneion, the phallus, and the frontal eye, were considered traditionally apotropaic. Jewels with a twofold use do exist, however, that bear symbols difficult to classify as either purely decorative or intended to serve other purposes as well.[106] Representative material is presented below:

The Herakles knot and the snake

An especially powerful symbol in ancient Greek jewellery is the Herakles knot. Knots and bindings in general (such as the *periammata* below) with protective and healing properties are among the most ancient elements of popular belief. Another one is the snake, a chthonic and apotropaic motif, associated with fertility, protector of the home and emblem of the gods: Both of these symbols were dominant motifs in Hellenistic jewellery.[107] The two examples below were found in the Hellenistic cemetery:

Gold finger ring. North Enclosure, Valta Zambaki Hellenistic cemetery, cist grave T23 (MA 6131; Figure 12a).

The ring was found on the deceased's right hand.[108] Spiral in shape, it is composed of five coils that create two complete snakes facing in opposite directions, their tails joining to form a Herakles knot. The centre

[102] Masson (2019: 25, fig. 70) presents a similar scarab.
[103] Skarlatidou 2010: 154-55, 336.
[104] Height 0.073m, width 0.03m, thickness 0.012m.
[105] Skarlatidou 2010: 336.
[106] Faraone 2011: 50.
[107] Ignatiadou and Chatzipanagiotou 2018: 277-78. The symbolic and prophylactic character of the Herakles knot: Despini 1996: 14.
[108] Length 0.036m. Samiou 1988: 476, fig. 10.

12a. Gold ring from the Hellenistic cemetery, Valta Zambaki. Grave T23.

12b. Gold ring with oval bezel from the Hellenistic cemetery, Valta Zambaki. Grave T23.

of the knot is inset with a deep red, lozenge-shaped gemstone.[109]

Gold necklace-chain. Hellenistic cemetery, Molos (ΑΓΚ[110] 1565).

The necklace was among the many grave goods found in a cist grave of a woman, as the remaining finds suggest, and dates to the 3rd century BC.[111] The necklace consists of a plain chain embellished with prominent female heads and a Herakles knot at the clasp.[112]

Deities on engraved gemstones

Whilst gems often played an important role as seals, validating authority, identity, and/or ownership, quite a few are more likely to have served as amulets and/or adornments. Three amuletic gemstones that bear depictions of various deities are presented below:

Gold ring with oval bezel. North Enclosure, Valta Zambaki, Hellenistic cemetery, cist grave T23 (MA 6132; Figure 12b).

The deceased wore the ring on her left hand.[113] The ring consists of narrow individual strips of gold sheet soldered together. The bezel is inset with a gemstone engraved with a representation of Tyche, the Greek goddess of good fortune and fate, holding a cornucopia in her left hand and a steering oar with her right.[114]

Gold *periamma*. Exact provenance unknown (MA 6969; Figures 12c-12d).

This *periamma* presumably had a funerary use, but the interpretation cannot be confirmed because the artefact was confiscated on behalf of the Greek Archaeological Service.[115] Pomegranates hang from two of the four bands, which are decorated with floral spirals. A central elliptical bezel is inset with a deep red gemstone (garnet) engraved with the figure of Apollo Kitharoidos, facing right. Behind him is a tripod on top of a column.[116] The two bands tied crosswise across the upper torso are a symbol of fertility. This precious *periamma*, intended to give the deceased the strength to survive in the afterlife, dates to the 3rd century BC.

[109] Amandry (ed.) 1963: 253, no. I 256/261, fig. 152. Cf. Despini (1996: 262, no. 191) for bracelets of the same type. The same bracelet, which probably comes from Eretria, is also catalogued by Pfrommer (1990: 58, 135-36, 300, no. HK 12, 349, no. SR13, fig. 18, 10, pl. 22.6), dated between the end of the 3rd and the first half of the 2nd century BC. Naumann-Steckner 1998: 96, fig. 13.1; Deppert-Lippitz 1998: 92, fig. 13.1.

[110] ΑΓΚ = inventory number of catalogued objects in the Archaeological Museum of Komotini.

[111] Triandaphyllos 1973-1974: 809, pl. 598a.

[112] Length 0.435m. Extensive description and detailed bibliography in Pfrommer (1990: 23-24, 243 FK 76, 307 HK 76, 328 TK 111, pl. 29.17) and Despini (1996: 172-73, 255, nos. 163-64).

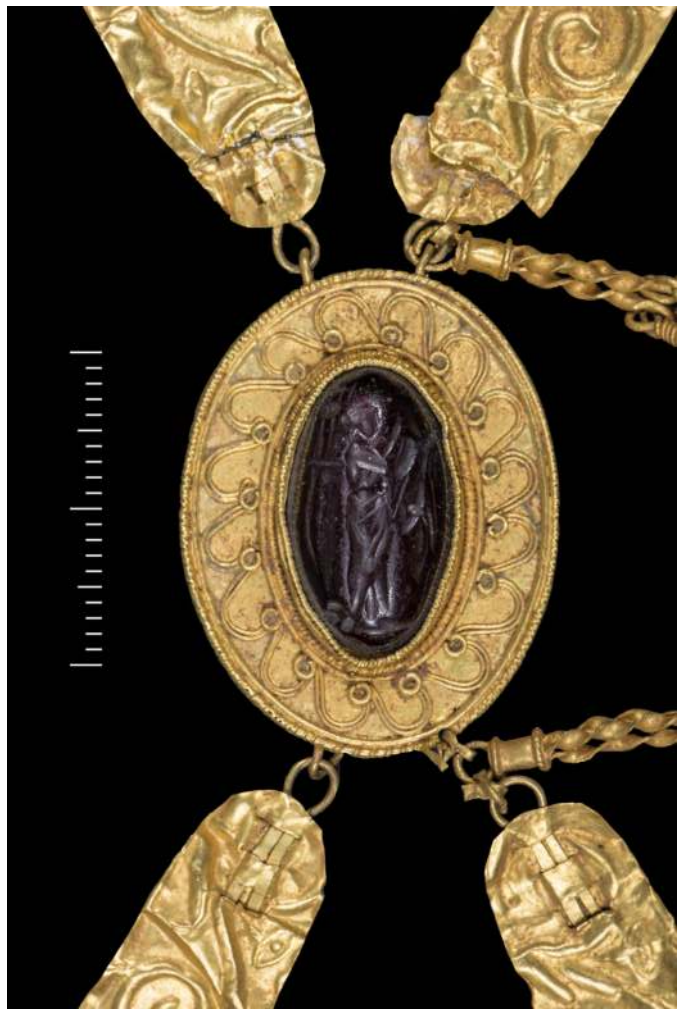
[113] Length of bezel 0.033m, width of bezel 0.025m (Samiou 1988: 476).

[114] Pfrommer (2001: 34-36, fig. 24a-d) discusses a similar gold finger ring with intaglio gemstone depicting Tyche holding a double cornucopia and sceptre (late 3rd–early 2nd century BC). Papapostolou (1978: 361-63, pl. 112a-b) describes a gold ring from a late Hellenistic grave of a woman in Patras, its bezel depicting Isis in the iconographic type of the goddesses Tyche and Nike; she holds a palm branch and leans on a ship's rudder. She is considered the protector/guardian of the grave and advocate of hope for salvation in the afterlife.

[115] Maximum length 0.42m, length of bezel 0.02m, width of bezel 0.012m.

[116] Koukouli 1968a: 361; Koukouli 1968b: 249-250; Triandaphyllos 1979: 102, no. 419, pl. 58.

c. Gold *periamma*



d. Gold *periamma*. Detail of bezel.

Figure 12. Jewellery with a two-fold function

Light red ring stone (carnelian?) with the head of Asklepios in profile facing left. North Enclosure, Ampelotopos, chance find (MA 2864; Figure 13a).

The god is depicted bearded and wearing a laurel wreath. In the lower left field is the head of a serpent, the god's attribute.[117] The lower left side is missing (1st century BC–1st century AD).[118]

Semiprecious gemstone depicting Fortuna Panthea. South Enclosure, chance find (MA 3981; Figure 13b).

The gemstone represents Fortuna Panthea, goddess of prosperity and good fortune, in profile facing right. Winged and wearing a helmet, she holds a rudder in her right hand. Poppies(?) and ears of wheat are depicted in field.[119] The gem dates to the Roman period.[120]

13a. Gemstone with engraved head of Asklepios

Figure 13b. Gemstone with engraved figure of Fortuna Panthea

Conclusions

Considering that only 15% of the graves with offerings excavated thus far have contained jewellery,[121] the following conclusions can be drawn:

No jewellery with an apotropaic context can be dated before the beginning of the 6th century BC, excepting the scarabs and the enigmatic terracotta plaque. Between the end of the 6th and the mid-2nd century BC, only 11 graves out of the 350 that remained unplundered contained jewellery with an apotropaic function. This percentage (3.1%) is extremely small and the graves with this context are the exception, not the rule. Apotropaic burial practices seem to be rather infrequent, as far as the other remnants allow us to assume. The use of amulets appears to be very limited until the end of the 5th century BC, compared to the Hellenistic period and especially the 3rd–2nd centuries BC. Nevertheless, this inference does not necessarily reflect the way the Abderites warded off evil in the Archaic and Classical period, but results from the use of perishable materials, the frequency of depositing grave goods, and the trends of the time.

The great majority of amulets were found in graves of women and infants because they were the most vulnerable members of the community. Pregnancy and childbirth were common causes of female mortality. On the other hand, childhood was also full of dangers that prevented many children from reaching adulthood.[122] Abdera in particular was known for high rates of child mortality, with childhood a crucial period even during prosperous times.[123]

Despite the fact that most Greek vase-painting and sculptural depictions show boys with amulet cords, in Abdera they come from girls' graves, as the other grave offerings indicate.[124]

Unfortunately, the exact placement of amuletic jewellery in graves remains elusive, though when enough archaeological evidence is available, it is obvious that items of jewellery did have a protective amuletic function during the individual's lifetime, since the deceased wore them in the same manner. The only exception is constituted by certain beads, because several were found scattered in the graves whilst others were gathered in one place.

[117] Maximum diameter 0.015m.
[118] Cf. Richter 1920: 113, nos. 179-80, pls 46, 48.
[119] Maximum diameter 0.0135m.
[120] Cf. the bronze statuette of the goddess Isis-Fortuna Panthea discussed by Pollini (2003).
[121] Kallintzi 2007: 265.
[122] Dasen 2015: 178.
[123] Burial practices, offerings, and other issues related to children's graves in Abdera: Kallintzi 2019.
[124] Dasen (2015: 197) comes to the same general conclusion.

The most common types of amulets are necklaces with pendants, followed by necklaces with various types of beads, pendant-amulets, individual eye beads, and poppy seedpod beads. Anthropomorphic amulets, scarabs, and Egyptianizing objects in general are rarer. The preferred materials are primarily gold, semi-precious stones, bone, and glass.

The assumption that the deities depicted on some of the jewellery were worshipped locally is not to be dismissed. Public sanctuaries of Dionysus, Apollo, Athena, Tyche, and Hecate, as well as small domestic shrines of Cybele, were found all around the city.[125] Whether some sort of connection was thought to exist between the wearer and the corresponding deity or whether these jewellery items as such were linked to specific sanctuaries is unknown. The wearers or their families would most likely have been familiar with the deities represented on the jewellery.

On the whole, the amulets of Abdera can be said to have been functional objects, worn in everyday life and deposited in graves owing to their symbolic connotations. This paper has presented only a glimpse of the material to open the way for further consideration and research toward a broader study that will comprise all available objects with apotropaic and amuletic properties. This is the only way we can understand some of the practices employed by the Abderites to reach a longed-for level of metaphysical safety and to appreciate their problems, their deepest fears, and their desires.

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Technical Phylactery in Graeco-Egyptian Ritual Practice[1]

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Abstract

This paper discusses an amulet type that was used during magical rituals to protect the ritual practitioner and the other participants from the divine agency invoked. The research is based on the Graeco-Egyptian magical papyri, which often provide very detailed descriptions of how to create and use such objects. The focus will be on the following aspects: what makes a ritual tool a technical phylactery, what features distinguish technical phylacteries from other amulets, how technical phylacteries can be recognised in the descriptions, and what problems emerge in the process because of other similar ritual objects. The paper also touches upon the relationship of the amulets to the entities invoked and to the practitioners.

Introduction

The Graeco-Egyptian magical papyri have become the object of many studies in the last few decades. The structure of and implements required for the rituals they describe allow insights into a unique area of religion. Consequently, I will take a closer look at an amulet type (phylactery) that appears in approximately 30 texts in this magical corpus.[2] Even though it plays a very important role in the ceremony, this amulet is very often neglected in the modern literature. To make it easier to refer to them and avoid long descriptions, I will call this amulet type technical phylactery.[3]

The word *φυλακτήριον* (phylactery) comes from the Greek verb *φυλάσσω*, which means 'protect,' 'preserve.'[4] In this word the Greeks understood all kinds of protection; they did not have a distinct term for those apotropaic amulets used only during the ceremony to protect the participants.

The primary sources for descriptions of these amulets are the Graeco-Egyptian magical papyri. Found[5] in Egypt during the 19th and 20th centuries, they were sold to a number of museums and collectors.[6] Unfortunately, their provenance is doubtful, and the archaeological context is almost completely unknown to us. Nonetheless, attempts were always made to recognise similar features among the papyri that might indicate common places of origin and possible collections. The efforts of the team preparing the new edition of the papyri have identified 23 possible collections.[7] The largest and most significant from late Roman Egypt is the so-called Theban Magical Library,[8] with the Hermonthis Magical Archive[9] next in size.

Although these handbooks were found in Egypt, similar 'recipe books' quite possibly existed in other parts of the Mediterranean, only under conditions that were less favourable for their survival.[10]

The papyri contain rituals, formularies, hymns, and invocations to deities of various religions. They date mainly from the 2nd century BC to the 5th century AD, when Egypt was under the rule of the Greeks (332–30 BC), the Romans (30 BC–AD 395), and the Byzantines (AD 395–641). The majority of the papyri are written in koine Greek but also contain Demotic and Old Coptic sections.

The recipes show traces of various Mediterranean cultures and traditions: besides Greek and Egyptian,

[1] The paper represents the results of preliminary research and forms part of my ongoing PhD dissertation.
[2] In this paper I do not list all texts that mention such amulets, only a representative selection.
[3] By 'technical,' I understand the ritualist's *magica* knowledge and skill (*τέχνη*). I thank Árpád M. Nagy for help in naming the category.
[4] LSJ, s.v. φυλάσσω
[5] Jean d'Anastasy, a Swedish-Norwegian Consul General in Egypt, began acquiring the first lots of ancient papyri along with other artefacts sometime around 1828. His collection contains the majority of Graeco-Egyptian magical papyri even today and is often referred to as the Anastasy Collection.
[6] The three main sales were to the Dutch government (1828), the British Museum (1839), and France (1857).
[7] For a list of the possible collections believed to come from Egypt between the 2nd and 11th centuries AD, see Dosoo and Torallas Tovar 2022a: 57–63. Research was limited only to Demotic, Greek and Coptic texts.
[8] For more about the library, see Dieleman 2005: 11–21; Dosoo 2015 and 2016a. Based on the most recent examination of the papyri, the following pieces are considered to belong to the collection: *PGM* I, II + VI, IV, V, Va + P.Holm, *PGM* XII/*PDM* xii, *PGM* XIII, XIV/*PDM* xiv, *PDM Supplementum* and P.Leiden I 397 (Dosoo and Torallas Tovar 2022a: 58).
[9] Dosoo and Torallas Tovar (2022a: 59) list the following papyri: *PGM* VII, VIII, IX, X, XIa, P.Lips. inv. 39 + P.Bonn inv. 147(?). The first to identify the archive was Dosoo, who included only *PGM* VII, VIII and XIa (2016b: 711–15).
[10] Betz 1986: xli-xlii; Dieleman 2019: 284.

they also contain Persian,[11] Mesopotamian,[12] Hebrew[13] and Christian[14] elements. Many magical words (*voces magicae*)[15] in the rituals are borrowed from these languages or at least attempt to sound like them. The cultural complexity of the texts requires scholars from different fields[16] to work together in order to gain a better understanding of these rituals and of the cultural background in which they were created.

The first translation of the Greek papyri was published by Karl Preisendanz with the title *Papyri Graecae Magicae. Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* in 1928 and 1931, which was followed by a second edition in 1973–74 by Albert Henrichs, who corrected the existing texts and added new ones.[17] These German editions contained only the Greek and Coptic texts, completely omitting the Demotic parts. In the first English edition, edited by Hans Dieter Betz in 1986, in addition to the translation of the Greek and Coptic, the Demotic texts were also included. Robert W. Daniel and Franco Maltomini collected further magical texts in Greek,[18] publishing them in two volumes (*Supplementum Magicum* I–II)[19] in 1990 and 1992. The newest transliteration and translation of the papyri, the *Greek and Egyptian Magical Formularies: Text and Translation* I[20] appeared in print in 2022; Christopher A. Faraone and Sofía Torallas Tovar were principal editors.

The Greek texts are traditionally referred to as *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (*PGM*)[21] after the title of the German edition; following this pattern, the Demotic parts are called *Papyri Demoticae Magicae* (*PDM*). These abbreviations will be used in the present paper.

Rituals in the *PGM*

The discovery of the magical papyri opened up a whole new world in ancient religious studies. In Korshi Dosoo's words: '[They are] the fullest surviving primary sources for ancient ritual practices classified by modern scholars as "magical".'[22] They give an insight into what a *praxis* looked like, what kind of materials practitioners used, what sacrifices they offered, and what tools they found necessary to perform a successful rite.[23] The rituals described in the *PGM* are often very complex and required specialised knowledge, for instance to calculate the right time for the praxis. Many papyri that describe such rituals are considered to be parts of ancient collections.[24] At least some of the papyri from the collections very likely belonged to Egyptian priests who composed, compiled, and performed the rituals.[25] Simpler texts exist as well, for ceremonies that would have been easy to perform, even for non-professionals.

Before the rite, preliminary preparations took place. Everyone and everything to be included had to be purified[26] because of the belief that the divine would not show itself in an impure environment. Numerous ritual descriptions in the *PGM* give instructions on how to purify oneself, often days before the main rite.[27] Dressing up in a sacred manner and making and/or obtaining the prescribed objects were also necessary steps before the rite could be performed. The *praxis* included the invocation of the deities, sacrifices, prayers, ritual acts, and potential interactions with the divine (summoning, uttering requests or wishes, threatening, conversing directly with them).

Technical phylacteries

Some texts describe rituals that involve direct interactions with the gods and daimons[28] invoked who could harm a person. When encountering the divine, mortals were exposed to the deities' anger and to their supreme energy generally. In order to remain unharmed at this critical time, it was crucial for the practitioner to defend himself against the divine agenda throughout the ritual. The *PGM* contain many descriptions of protective devices for this purpose.[29] The texts call them *φυλακτήρια*, similar to those apotropaic amulets that provided general protection, which makes it more difficult to differentiate the two types. Although the technical phylactery is clearly a subcategory of

[11] E.g., in the so-called 'Mithras Liturgy' (*PGM* IV 475–834): Meyer 2012.
[12] Mesopotamian motifs in the *PGM*: Schwemer 2019.
[13] LiDonnici 2007: 87–108.
[14] Christian elements in the *PGM* and other magical objects: de Bruyn and Dijkstra 2011; Meyer and Smith 1994.
[15] Dieleman 2019: 285; Graf 1991: 191–92.
[16] Such as Papyrology, Classical Philology, Classical Archaeology, Egyptology, Hebrew Studies, Iranian Studies, Assyriology, and Christian Studies.
[17] The two editions: Betz 1986: xliii-xliv.
[18] Only one text is in Latin (*SM* 36).
[19] The majority belongs to the category of applied magic. On the two categories of formularies (handbooks) and applied/activated texts, see Dieleman 2019: 289; Graf 2003: 3–4.
[20] The papyri are in chronological order and the first volume has texts only up to the 4th century AD. Publication of the second volume is expected in 2024.
[21] The new edition (along with *PGM* and *PDM*) uses the *GEMF* abbreviation. For a concordance of the *GEMF* and *PGM/PDM* numbers, see Faraone and Torallas Tovar 2022b: ix-xii.
[22] Dosoo 2021: 17.
[23] The so-called magical rituals are often considered miniature versions of temple rites: Moyer and Dieleman 2003; Smith 2003.
[24] On these collections, see n. 7 above.
[25] Dieleman 2005: 22; Frankfurter 1997; Ritner 1993: 191–233.
[26] On ritual purification in the *PGM*, see Chronopoulou 2016: 31–35; in Greece, Parker 1996; in Egypt, Quack 2013.
[27] E.g., *PGM* IV 52–57 ("Keep yourself pure seven days before full moon by not eating meat and uncooked food ... and not drinking wine").
[28] In many cases, the two divine entities are not distinguished clearly and the words *θεός* and *δαίμων* are interchangeable (along with *πνεῦμα* and *ἄγγελος*). On the use of these four words as synonyms in the *PGM*, see Canzobre Martínez 2020.
[29] This type of object seems to have been used almost exclusively in the rituals described in the *PGM* and entirely missing from ancient Greek and Egyptian temple rituals.

protective amulets, it receives little attention and the modern literature seldom mentions it.[30]

Phylacteries were created to protect the practitioner against every divine entity that might appear during the ceremony. They provide only a temporary defence at the time of the ritual and are not used outside the ritual context, an aspect also reflected in the choice of their materials. The majority of the technical phylacteries mentioned in the *PGM* are made of organic substances (different plants or animal parts, for example laurel,[31] peony,[32] wheat,[33] a cat's whiskers,[34] papyri,[35] a piece of clothing)[36] or are not physical objects,[37] but some mentions of lodestones,[38] lamellae,[39] and animal bones also exist.[40]

Non-technical phylacteries were also made of organic and/or long-lasting materials such as stone,[41] and it was a very common practice to sell them. Some of the magical gems, for example, show signs of chipping on their edges or holes in their top ends which indicate that they originally belonged on rings and necklaces.[42] As jewellery, they were exposed to public view and stylistic trends very likely influenced their designs and materials. The owner's name could also be included on these amulets.[43]

Technical phylacteries, however, were not made for clients but for the practitioner's own use, and were not meant to be seen by the public. Usually they contain only *characteres*,[44] *voces magicae*,[45] and Greek[46] or Coptic[47] texts; only a few examples where a figure had to be drawn or carved into the amulet survive.[48] The owner's name never appears.

Most texts instruct the specialist to wear the technical phylactery around his neck,[49] wrists,[50] or arms,[51] on the head as a wreath[52] or to hold it in his hands.[53] Some cases do not specify where exactly the phylactery should be on the body.[54] Several texts refer directly to them with the word *φυλακτήριον*, but others offer only implications of their purpose.

How can we identify them?

Understanding their roles in the rituals is not always without difficulties. In many cases, however, certain guidelines can help us to identify these amulets. The safest way is when both the word *φυλακτήριον* and the description of its use are present in the recipe:

PGM IV 930–1114 is a lamp divination.[55] A piece of cloth[56] from a statue of Harpocrates serves as a protective device during the ceremony. The deity invoked is Horus-Harpocrates.[57]

> *φυλακτήριον τῆς πράξεως, ὅ δεῖ σε φορεῖν | ἐπιβαλλόμενον πρὸς φύλαξιν σου ὅλου | τοῦ σώματος ... φόρει | περὶ τὸν τράχηλον, ἐὰν πράσσῃς.*[58]
>
> *Phylactery for the rite* that you must wear *for the protection of your whole body...* and wear it around your neck *whenever you perform the ritual.* (ll. 1071–1084)

The intentions expressed in *PGM* IV 2441–2621 are to gain love, cause illness, send dreams, and ask for divinatory dreams. The phylactery is a piece of papyrus that must be tied around the right arm.[59] The amulet works against Hecate.

> μὴ οὖν εὐχερῶς πράσ|σῃς, εἰ μὴ ἀνάγκη σοι γένηται. ἔχει δὲ | *φυλακτήριον πρὸς τὸ μή σε καταπεσεῖν· | εἴωθεν γὰρ ἡ θεὸς τοὺς ἀφυλακτηριαστοὺς | τοῦτο*

[30] Dosoo 2015: 390–92; Faraone 2018: 263–65; Molinos 2014: 409–13; Nagel 2019: 144–45; Skinner 2013: 403–4.
[31] *PGM* I 262–347; *PGM* VII 795–845.
[32] *PGM* LXII 1–24.
[33] *PGM* IV 850–929.
[34] *PGM* III 1–164.
[35] *PGM* IV 52–85, 1331–1389, 2441–2621.
[36] *PGM* IV 930–1114; *PGM* VII 222–249; *PGM* VIII 64–110.
[37] E.g., a magical circle drawn on the ground (*PGM* VII 846–861); a name written on a boy intermediary's chest (*PGM* LXII 24–46).
[38] *PGM* IV 2622–2707, 2785–2890.
[39] Silver: *PGM* IV 154–285, 2622–2707; tin: *PGM* VII 478–490.
[40] A wolf's knucklebone: *PGM* IV 1275–1322; a donkey's tooth: *PGM* IV 2891–2942; a pig's rib: *PGM* IV 3086–3124; a donkey's skull: *PGM* XIa 1–40. Bones in rituals for protection and harm: Wilburn 2012: 151–160.
[41] For the collection of stones that may served as amulets, see *The Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database* (CBd), viewed 23 August 2023 <http://cbd.mfab.hu/>
[42] Dasen and Nagy 2019: 423. Examples of chipping: CBd-10, -1068; holes: CBd-128, -136.
[43] E.g., CBd-5, -2928, -2943; *Supp.Mag.* I 23.
[44] E.g., on laurel (*PGM* I 262–347) and on silver lamella (*PGM* IV 2704–2707). The *characteres* are often called 'magical signs' that create a connection with the divine sphere. No system for their use seems to exist. See Dzwiza 2013; Gordon 2011: 28.
[45] E.g., on tin lamella (*PGM* VII 478–490); on silver lamella (*PGM* IV 154–285).
[46] E.g., on a piece of cloth (*PGM* IV 930–1114); on papyrus (*PGM* IV 2441–2621).
[47] On papyrus (*PGM* IV 52–85).
[48] E.g., Hecate on a lodestone (*PGM* IV 2785–2890); Zeus on a rib taken from a piglet or pig (*PGM* IV 3086–3124).
[49] E.g., *PGM* IV 930–1114; *PGM* VII 222–249; *PGM* VIII 64–110.
[50] *PGM* IV 2891–2942, *PGM* LXII 1–24; *PGM* XII 1–13.
[51] *PGM* IV 2441–2621, 52–85.
[52] *PGM* III 1–164; *PGM* IV 1331–1389; *PGM* VII 795–845.
[53] *PGM* I 262–347; *PGM* IV 850–929.
[54] *PGM* IV 154–285, 1275–1322.
[55] On this specific spell and on lychnomancy rituals in the magical papyri generally, see Nagel 2019.
[56] Nagel (2019: 144) articulates the importance of textiles from divine statues in rituals.
[57] Harpocrates: Sandri 2006.
[58] All the Greek texts used in this paper are based on the readings and edition of Preisendanz–Henrichs ²1973–1974. A more accurate transliteration of the papyrus texts will likely be published by Faraone and Torallas Tovar (forthcoming).
[59] Brashear (1991: 43) surveys the literature on the use of the right hand in magical contexts.

πράσσοντας ἀεροφ<ερ>εῖς ποιεῖν καὶ | ἀπὸ τοῦ ὕψους ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν ῥῖψαι. διὸ οὖν | ἀναγκαῖον ἡγησάμην καὶ τοῦ φυλακτηρί|ου τὴν πρόνοιαν ποιήσασθαι, ὅπως ἀδι|στάκτως πράσσῃς.

Do not be unwary with the ritual, only perform it when it is necessary. It also contains a *phylactery that protects you from falling: as the goddess [Hecate] is accustomed to lift up into the air and throw down to the ground from above those persons who perform the ritual unprotected.* For this reason, I found it necessary to provide the phylactery, so that you perform the ritual without hesitation. (ll. 2505–2513)

The description of the technical phylactery usually appears at the very end or towards the end of the text,[60] sometimes phrased like this, *φυλακτήριον τῆς πράξεως* ('phylactery of the rite') as in the following examples. The ritual described in *PGM* IV 1275–1322 promises to fulfil any purpose. The invoked deity is the Bear constellation.

φυ|λακτήριον τῆς πράξεως· λύκου ἀστρά|γαλον περιάπτου, μίσγε δὲ τῷ θυμια|τηρίῳ χυλὸν κατανάγκης καὶ ποταμο|γείτονος, γράψον μέσον τοῦ θυμιατηρίου | τὸ ὄνομα τοῦτο· θερμουθερεψιφιριφιπισαλι (γράμματα κδ).

Phylactery for the rite: Tie a knucklebone of a wolf around you and mix the juice of vetch and seaweed in an incense burner, write on the middle of the incense burner the following name: θερμουθερεψιφιριφιπισαλι (24 letters). (ll. 1316–1322)

PGM IV 2785–2890 can achieve anything. The phylactery is used against Hecate.

φυλακτήριον τῆς | πράξεως· λαβὼν λίθον σιδη|ρίτην, ἐν ᾧ ἐνγεγλύφθω Ἑκάτη τριπρόσωπος, καὶ τὸ | μὲν μέσον πρόσωπον ἔτω | καρασφόρου παρθένου, τὸ δὲ | εὐώνυμον κυνός, τὸ δὲ ἀπὸ | δεξιῶν αἰγός. μετὰ δὲ τὸ γλυ|φῆναι πλύνας αὐτὸ νίτρῳ | καὶ ὕδατι χάλασον αὐτὸ | εἰς βιαίου αἷμα, εἶτα παρά|θεσιν αὐτῷ ποιήσας τὸν | αὐτὸν λόγον λέγε ἐπὶ τῆς τε|λετῆς.

Phylactery for the rite: Take a lodestone and carve the three-faced Hecate[61] on it. Her middle face should be a horned virgin's,[62] the left a dog's, and the right a goat's. After carving it, wash it [the stone] with natron and water, and plunge it into the blood of someone who died violently. Place food in front of it,[63] then say the words while consecrating. (ll. 2878–2890)

When the word *φυλακτήριον* does not occur in the text, their role in the ritual is more difficult to comprehend. In these cases, only the context can help us, as in the following example. *PGM* VII 222–249 is a divination ritual. The phylactery here is a piece of cloth from a statue of Isis and the deity invoked is Bes,[64] an Egyptian god of protection.

τὸ δὲ ῥάκος περίθου | περὶ τὸν τράχηλον, *ἵνα μή σε πλήξῃ.*

Tie the piece of cloth around your neck so he [sc. Bes] *will not hurt you*. (ll. 231–232)

Difficulties in identification

Sometimes whether the amulet to be used in the *praxis* serves as a technical phylactery or another ritual tool is unclear. For example, when the text says that the practitioner should wear or hold an object in his hands while performing a rite but does not specify its purpose, that does not necessarily mean that it is a device to protect against the divine. The object can also work for summoning, as is the case in the following text.

PGM V 447–458 is a ritual for dream revelation in which the summoning tools are a ring (set with a jasper stone), olive, and laurel. On the obverse of the jasper in the ring, Sarapis[65] must be carved with his usual attributes (seated on a throne holding a sceptre), and on the reverse the god's name. During the apparition ritual,[66] the practitioner holds the ring in his left hand and branches of olive and laurel in his right, swinging them towards the lamp while speaking the words of the text provided seven times. Then he puts the ring on the finger of his left hand in such a way that the depiction of the god (on the obverse) faces inward. He then goes to sleep while holding the stone to his ear. The putative result is clear: the god visits the practitioner in his dream and reveals to him whatever he wishes. In this procedure the stone with the image and name of Sarapis helps the ritualist to connect with the god and create a channel through which the god can appear in his dream.[67]

Another revelation ritual, *PGM* VII 846–861, instructs the practitioner to wear the tail of a cat on his head while speaking *voces magicae*. The divine entity invoked is the shadow of the sun. The relationship between the

[60] The list of the objects for the ceremony is often placed at the end of the texts, similar to the Egyptian practice. Egyptian magical texts: Borghouts 1978.
[61] The trimorph Hecate on gems: Theis 2018.
[62] Hecate with horns appears on some magical gems: CBd-1293, -3582, -3583.
[63] As an offering.
[64] The god Bes: Loeben 2020.
[65] Sarapis on ancient gems: Veymiers 2009.
[66] On the apparition rituals: Dosoo 2015.
[67] Faraone (2020) discusses other examples of the role of divine images in divinatory context.

cat[68] and the sun was well known in ancient Egypt. The animal is one of the sun god's many manifestations, as well as the Sun's protector against the giant snake Apophis during the god's daily journey.[69] The rite is as follows:

> εἰς τὸν ἥλιον σκιά·λέγε ἀγνεύσας *πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον | ἐλθών, ἐστεμμένος οὐρὰν αἰλούρου* ἐπὶ ὥρας ε' | [*voces magicae*]. ταῦτα εἰπὼν ὄψ[ῃ] σκιὰν ἐν ἡλίῳ | καὶ καμμύσας ἀναβλέψ[α]ς ὄψῃ ἔ[μ]προσθεν σου | σκιὰν ἑστῶσαν, καὶ πυνθάνου, ὅ θέλεις | [*vox magica*]. *φυλακτήριον·ἡ οὐρὰ |* καὶ οἱ χαρακτῆρες σὺν τῷ κύκλῳ, <ᾧ> ἐφεστήξει, γράψας κρήτῃ. | οἱ δὲ χαρακτῆρές εἰσιν οἵδε· [*characteres*].
>
> Shadow in the sun: After purifying yourself, *say the following towards the sun* at the 5th hour, *having crowned yourself with the tail of a cat* [*voces magicae*].
>
> After saying this, you will see a shadow in the sun. Close your eyes, look up, and you will see a shadow in front of you. Ask him whatever you want [*vox magica*].
>
> *Phylactery: the tail [sc. of the cat]* and a circle with *characteres*, in which you will stand after drawing it with chalk. These are the *characteres*: [*characteres*].

The cat's tail at the beginning could be interpreted as a summoning tool because the practitioner has to wear it while summoning the god. However, the last part of the text clarifies that the tail, together with the circle, serves as a technical phylactery.[70]

Similarly, the amulet mentioned at the end of *PGM* IV 1331–1389 could obviously not be categorised as a technical phylactery unless the beginning of the text had referred to another component of the same amulet as a *φυλακτήριον*. This makes it clear both components were used as protective devices. At the beginning of the text, the first part of the amulet is characterised as follows:

> ἀρκτικὴ δύναμις πάντα ποιοῦσα. λαβὼν | *ὄνου μέλανος στέαρ καὶ αἰγὸς ποικίλης | στέαρ καὶ ταύρου μέλανος στέαρ* καὶ κύ|μινον αἰθιοπικὸν ἀμφότερα μῖξον | καὶ ἐπίθυε πρὸς ἄρκτον, *ἔχων φυλακτή|ριον τῶν αὐτῶν ζῴων τρίχας, πλο|κίσας σειράν,* ἥνπερ ὡς διάδημα φόρει | περὶ τὴν κεφαλήν.
>
> The power of the Bear (constellation)[71] which achieves everything. Take the *fat of a black donkey,*[72] *a mottled goat and a black bull* and Ethiopian cumin, mix them all together and perform a sacrifice to the Bear while *having as a phylactery the hair of the same animals woven into a cord* that you must wear around your head as a wreath. (ll. 1331–1338)

And at the end of the text the second component:

> *τὸ δὲ ἑκατονταγράμματον τοῦ Τυφῶνος | γράφε εἰς χάρτην* ὡς ἀστέρα στρογγυ|λοῦν καὶ *ἔνδησον ἀνὰ μέσον | τῆς σειρᾶς* τῶν γραμμάτων ἔξω βλε|πόντων. ἔστιν δὲ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦτο. | αχχωρ αχχωρ αχαχαχπτουμι | χαχχω χαραχωχ χαπτουμη ·| χωρα χωχ απτουμιμη χωχα|πτου χαραχπτου · χαχχω | χαρα · χωχ πτεναχωχεου.[73]
>
> *Write on a papyrus Typhon's*[74] *100 lettered-name* like a round star, and *tie it on the middle of the cord* in such a way that the letters point outward. This is the name: [*voces magicae*]. (ll. 1381–1389)

As we have seen, the amulet is the hair of the animals woven into a cord and the papyrus with the name of the god that has to be tied on that cord.

The entities invoked in this ritual are the chief daimons (*ἀρχιδαίμονες*) of the great god. Even though the ritual does not name the deity, he is presumably Seth because of his relationship to the Great Bear[75] and because of the name on the amulet. The god who sends the daimons to help the practitioner does not just have control over them but at the same time his name serves as a defensive power against the daimons.

Similarly, in *PGM* IV 154–285 the ritualist not only gains protection against the deities invoked through Seth's name, but that name also helps him to summon them and later send them away.

> δεῦρο <μοι>, ὅ τις θεός | ὄφθητι μοι ἐν τῇ ἄρτι ὥρα καὶ μή μου θαμβήσῃς τοὺς | ὀφθαλμούς. *δεῦρο μοι, ὅ τις*

[68] *PGM* III 1–164 uses the whiskers of a cat as a technical phylactery against the sun.
[69] Quack 2007.
[70] The protective circle in Egypt: Roblee 2018; Theis 2016.
[71] The Great Bear was a sign of Seth. The Egyptians interpreted it as the foreleg of Seth, the bull that Horus cut off and placed in the sky. For the relationship between the god and the constellation, see Velde 1967: 86.
[72] By the late period of Egypt, Seth was associated with the animal and often depicted as a donkey or with a donkey's head (Velde 1967: 14). In the next ritual (*PGM* IV 154–285), part of the technical phylactery against Seth also comes from a donkey (the skin). The relationship of the god to the animal in the *PGM*: Lucarelli 2017.
[73] The name consists of only 98 letters, not 100. In *PGM* IV 154–285 nearly the same letters appear as the name of Seth on a silver lamella that is also a technical phylactery (against any daimon or god). The lamella with the name is designated as a *φυλακτήριον* that the ritualist must wear during the entire ritual process (*PGM* IV 257–260).
[74] Typhon is a monster in Greek mythology who was identified with the Egyptian Seth in Graeco-Roman Egypt.
[75] See n. 71 above.

θεός ἐπήκοος μοι γενοῦ, *ὅτι τοῦτο θέλει καὶ ἐπιτάσσει* αχχωρ αχχωρ ·| αχαχαχ πτουμι χαχχω χαραχωχ · χαπτουμη ·| χωραχαραχωχ · απτουμι · μηχωχαπτου · χαραχ|πτου · χαχχω χαραχω · πτεναχωχευ (γράμματα ἑκατόν) *... τοῦτο ἔστιν τὸ πρωτεῦον ὄνομα τοῦ Τυφῶνος* ... ὅπερ ὄνομα | ῥηθὲν *θεοὺς καὶ δαίμονας ἐπ' αὐτὸ βίᾳ φέρει.* ἔστιν | δὲ γραμμάτων ρ' τοῦτο τὸ ὄνομα. *ἐν ὑστέρῳ σοῦ φωνήσαν|τος φανήσεται*, ὃν φωνεῖς, *θεὸς ἢ νέκυς*, καὶ ἀπο|κριθήσεται περὶ ὧν ἐπερωτᾷς πάντων. ἐπὰν | δὲ ἐκμάθῃς, *ἀπόλυε τὸν θεὸν μόνον τῷ ἰσχυρῷ | ὀνόματι τῷ τῶν ἑκατὸν γραμμάτων λέγων·* ἄπιθι, δέσποτα. τοῦτο γὰρ θέλει καὶ ἐπιτάσσει σοὶ ὁ μέγας | θεός, τις. λέγε τὸ ὄνομα, καὶ ἀπελεύσεται *... ἔστιν δὲ | αὐτὸ τὸ φυλακτήριον, ὃ φορεῖς* καὶ ἱστανόμενος | *πράσσων·* εἰς λεπίδα ἀργυρᾶν *αὐτὸ τὸ ὄνομα γραμμάτων ρ'* | ἐπίγραψον χαλκῷ γραφείῳ καὶ φόρει εἴρας ἱμάντι ὄνου.

Come to me NN god, appear to me in this hour and do not frighten my eyes. *Come to me NN god*, listen to me, *because he [Seth] wants and commands this.* [*voces magicae*] (100 letters).[76] *... This is the greatest name of Typhon ...* which name when uttered, *forcibly summons the gods and daimons.* This is the name that contains 100 letters. *After saying the name, the god or [the spirit of] the dead,* whom you call, *will appear* and reveal everything that you ask. When you have learned it, *send the god away only using the strong 100 lettered-name* while saying the following: "Go away, lord, because NN [Seth], the great god wants and commands this." Say the name and he will leave. *... This is the phylactery that you will wear during the ritual,* even while you are standing: write on a silver lamella the *100 lettered-name* with a bronze stylus and wear it after stringing it on a thong made of donkey skin. (ll. 236–260)

The relationship between the god and the technical phylactery

Amulets are connected to the divine through their materials, forms, the depictions and texts written on them. They help to gain the favour of a god or daimon who in exchange provides its energy to fulfil certain wishes like success, wealth, love, protection, health, etc.

In the case of technical phylacteries, analysing the relationship between the amulet and the invoked deity is also very important. Many times, we can assume the nature of this link, while in other cases how they are related if at all is unclear. In one hand, the material of the phylactery and the symbols and depictions it bears can be favourable to the divine agency, like the laurel to Apollo[77] or a piece of cloth from a statue of Harpocrates to Horus-Harpocrates.[78]

On the other hand, the amulet can also threaten the entity with pictures and symbols, like the 100 lettered-name of Seth against any daimon or god that might be summoned[79] or the depiction of Zeus holding a sickle against Cronus.[80] In both cases, the practitioner's goal is, of course, to remain unharmed to the end of the ceremony.

An example of gaining divine favour is the above-mentioned recipe (*PGM* IV 930–1114), where a piece of linen from a Harpocrates statue provides protection against the god.

φυλακτήριον τῆς πράξεως, ὃ δεῖ σε φορεῖν | ἐπιβαλλόμενον πρὸς φύλαξίν σου ὅλου | τοῦ σώματος· *ἀπὸ ὀθονίου ἀρθέντος ἀπὸ | Ἁρποκράτου ψηφίνου* ὄντος ἐν ἱερῷ οἵῳ δή *γράψον ἐπ' αὐτοῦ* ζμύρνῃ ταῦτα· *ἐγώ εἰμι Ὧρος | ... υἱὸς Ἴσιδος | ... καὶ Ὀσίρεως* Ὀσορνωφρεω·| διαφύλαξόν με ὑγιῆ, ἀσινῆ, ἀνειδω|λόπληκτον, ἀθάμβητον, ἐπὶ τὸν τῆς ζω|ῆς μου χρόνον. καὶ βαλὼν ἔσωθεν τοῦ ῥά|κους αἴζωον βοτάνην, ἑλίξας δῆσον | ζ' λιναρίοις ἀνουβιακοῖς καὶ φόρει | περὶ τὸν τράχηλον, ἐὰν πράσσῃς.

Phylactery for the rite that you must wear for the protection of your whole body. *Take a strip of linen from a marble Harpocrates statue* from any sacred place and *write on it* with myrrh the following: *I am Horus* [*voces magicae*], *son of Isis* [*voces magicae*] and *of Osiris* Osornophris. Keep me healthy, unharmed, unstruck by apparition and make me fearless in my whole lifetime. And put sempervivum plant inside the strip. After rolling it up, tie it with Anubian linen seven times, and wear it around your neck whenever you perform the ritual. (ll. 1071–1084)

Using a piece of cloth from the statue of the god, writing his name on it, and identifying with the deity (a very common practice in the rituals)[81] are all part of the strategy to win his benevolence and support.

The following *praxis* provides a very clear example of the opposite approach, where the ritualist has no intention of gaining the god's favour in order to remain unharmed but instead chooses to create a threatening environment in which the divine cannot act against him.

[76] Exactly 100 letters this time, contrasting with the 98 letters in *PGM* IV 154–285, see n. 73 above.

[77] *PGM* I 262–347.
[78] *PGM* IV 930–1114.
[79] *PGM* IV 154–285.
[80] *PGM* IV 3086–3124.
[81] The identification of priests as deities in Egyptian rituals: Assmann 1984: 109.

In *PGM* IV 3086–3124, the god invoked is Cronus, father of Zeus; Greek myth recounts that Zeus imprisoned him in Tartarus after defeating him.[82] The aim of this ritual is divination.

> Μαντία Κρονικὴ ζητουμένη ... ἐὰν δὲ λέγων τινὸς ἀκούσῃς βάτην βαρείας καὶ σύγκρουσιν σιδήρου, ὁ θεὸς ἔρχεται ἀλύσεσι πεφρουρημένος, ἅρπην κρατῶν. σὺ δὲ μὴ πτοηθῇς, φυλασσόμενος τῷ φυλακτηρίῳ τῷ σοι δηλωθησομένῳ. ... τὸ δὲ φυλακτήριον τὸ ζητούμενον αὐτοῦ· εἰς χοιρίαν σπάθην γλῦφε Δία ἅρπην κρατοῦντα καὶ τὸ ὄνομα τοῦτο· *χθουμιλον*. ἤτω δὲ σπάθη ἀπὸ συὸς μέλανος, λεπροῦ, ἐκτομιαίου.
>
> The sought-after oracle of Cronus:[83] ... If, while saying the text you hear someone's heavy steps and clashing of iron, the god is approaching, bound with chains and holding a sickle. But do not be frightened, since you are protected by a phylactery that will be revealed to you later... [Prayer] The sought-after phylactery for this rite: on the rib of a piglet carve Zeus holding a sickle and this name: *χθουμιλον*. Or the rib can be from a black castrated pig[84] with rough bristles. (ll. 3086–3120)

The *praxis* invokes the god Cronus, who according to the prayer created the world but at the same time would have thrown it into chaos if Helios had not stopped him. In the rest of the prayer, the speaker identifies himself as Zeus to prove that he possesses the power to summon and control Cronus. In the ritual, the Zeus-practitioner forces Cronus to come up from the underworld and carry out his wishes. When the god is approaching, the sound of his steps and chains becomes audible, but the description assures the ritualist that he has no need to be scared because the amulet will protect him. The depiction of Zeus holding a sickle on the phylactery and the presence of Zeus (the practitioner acting as Zeus) will undoubtedly make Cronus feel threatened so that he will be unable to cause any harm to the expert and will accomplish everything the mortal desires from him.

The relationship between the god and the practitioner

As we have seen, encountering the divine was considered dangerous. Those who wished to establish a direct connection with the gods had to be prepared to face the potentially frightening experience that would naturally accompany them. The deities, as shown in the examples, could act aggressively when conjured and often appeared amidst horrifying sights and sounds. The texts reassured the practitioners that they need not worry about their safety if they possessed the correctly made phylactery, as in *PGM* IV 3086–3124:

> *σὺ δὲ μὴ πτοηθῇς,* φυλασσόμενος τῷ φυλακτηρίῳ τῷ σοι δηλωθησομένῳ.
>
> *But do not be frightened* since you are protected by a phylactery that will be revealed to you. (ll. 3093–3095)

Besides its encouraging words, *PGM* I 262–347 also contains a warning not to cause any harm to the phylactery (the laurel) during its preparation because the amulet would therefore be unable to function and to defend the practitioner.

> *βλέπε δέ, μὴ ἀπολέσῃς φύλλον [καὶ] σεαυ|τὸν βλάψῃς* τοῦτο γὰρ μέγιστον σώματος φυλακτικόν ... ἔστιν γὰρ φυλακτήριον μέγιστον τῆς πρά|ξεως, ἵνα μηδὲν πτοηθῇς.
>
> *Be careful not to cause any harm to the leaf (of laurel) and (thereby) hurt yourself:* because this is the greatest protection for the body... Because this is the greatest protection for the ritual, so you should not fear anything. (ll. 271–276)

Some of the gods and daimons invoked were considered dangerous (like Hecate or Seth), whilst others had no negative connotations in the magical papyri (for example Apollo, the Sun God or Bes). Then why does the encounter with them have the risk of destruction for the ritualist?

Direct experience of the divine was always considered unsafe for mortals, and approaching the gods could take place only in a controlled environment. People believed that deities used intermediaries to show themselves to mortals. That medium was usually a statue of the god in human or animal form, or a dream. They did not reveal themselves during ceremonies but showed their will through different signs that certain humans (for example priests) were able to decode. Unlike the temple rituals, the *praxeis* described in the *PGM* have the gods appear directly to the participants, who can see, hear, or otherwise sense them and even speak with them. And this direct contact is what justifies the concerns about the practitioner's safety.

Found throughout Greek mythology are many examples of immortals approaching humans through an intermediary. When the controlled environment breaks down, however, and the gods reveal themselves in their original form, the consequences are fatal. For

[82] Hesiod *Theog.* 717–18.

[83] Although Cronus appears in no other divination ritual in the *PGM*, why he is conjured here is easy to understand. He is associated with the underworld, and chthonic gods and daimons are often the addressees of these kinds of *praxeis*.

[84] On the identification of the different sacrificial animal types in the Greek world, see Pitz 2023: 51–68, especially 65–67 (the Appendix).

example, in the famous Greek myth Semele, pregnant with Zeus' child, asked the god to fulfil one wish of hers: to show her his true form. Zeus was reluctant to comply with the request, knowing that inevitable destruction awaited the person who directly experienced a god's true nature and power, but because he was bound by an oath finally revealed himself. Semele's recklessness led to her immediate death.[85]

Conclusion

As the examples above have demonstrated, the Graeco-Egyptian Magical Papyri contain many descriptions of technical phylacteries that have a special and simultaneously crucial role in the rituals. Success and safety depended on amulets, correctly made and used.

I have listed ritual tools in this category according to the following principles:

1. the technical term *φυλακτήριον τῆς πράξεως*, or only the word *φυλακτήριον*, is used, mainly at the end of the text, where the objects for the rite are usually listed.

The texts moreover had to contain implications about

2. the protective use of the phylacteries *in* the rites; and about
3. their power to protect against divine agency, strictly speaking only against divine forces that might appear during the ritual, not generally.

Nearly all ritual recipes that prescribe the use of technical phylacteries belonged to an assumed ancient collection (Theban Magical Library, Hermonthis Magical Archive) and most of them are dated to the 2nd to 4th centuries AD.[86] These collections were very likely in the possession of individuals familiar with Egyptian priestly rituals or at least knowledgeable enough to understand and be able to perform the often very complex *praxeis*.

Based on the texts examined, technical phylacteries appear to have belonged to the ritual kit of practiced professionals who possessed skill (*τέχνη*) sufficient to perform highly difficult rituals that required direct contact with divine entities.

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[85] *Corpus mortale tumultus / non tulit aetherios donisque iugalibus arsit*. The mortal body could not endure the divine power and burnt in the marital embrace (Ovid *Metam.* 3.306–307).

[86] Dating based on Faraone and Torallas Tovar 2022b.

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Reflections on Some Cases of *interpretatio aegyptiaca* on Magical Gems[1]

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Abstract

A small group of so-called "magical" gems present clear cases of *interpretatio aegyptiaca*, i.e. the representation of a Greek divinity is associated with an Egyptian name (engraved in Greek letters). Among these objects, we are particularly interested in those depicting female figures named Hathor or Boubastis. Iconographic analysis sheds light on how explicit references to Egyptian divinities are used, in particular to facilitate the delivery of the newborn.

The study of 'magical gems,' which has developed widely in recent years,[2] raises many questions that have yet to be answered. One angle of approach is to try to understand how these objects fit into the broader subject of the reception of Egypt in the Mediterranean world.[3] In relation to the mechanisms of religious hybridisation, a key concept is that of *interpretatio*. *Interpretatio graeca* and *interpretatio aegyptiaca* function as two mirror phenomena that can be traced to understand the mechanisms of interaction between Greek and Egyptian religion. The former is for the most part more thoroughly documented, both in written sources and by archaeology. Following the more elementary aspect, *interpretatio graeca* consists of drawing equivalences between Greek and foreign — here, Egyptian — deities by means of what looks like a translation of their Egyptian names into Greek.[4] Since the age of Herodotus and even the Archaic period, we know that Greeks ordinarily designated the Egyptian gods in this way.[5] The first evidence of *interpretatio aegyptiaca* appears much later, during the Hellenistic period. The examples are few, nevertheless. The same cases are commonly cited, foremost among them the *interpretatio* of the Dioscuri who, in the form of crocodiles, were worshipped in a sanctuary at Oxyrhynchos.[6] The identification of cases of *interpretatio aegyptiaca* is often a subject of debate, since they are based only on iconographical interpretations in the absence of an inscribed name.[7] One of the possible cases cited by Malaise is Aphrodite sometimes taking on the attributes of Hathor or Isis. The rare examples invoked show that *interpretatio aegyptiaca* is rare and often difficult to establish. Interestingly, magical gems represent an ensemble of material in which *interpretatio aegyptiaca* is attested more frequently than *interpretatio graeca*, with the latter quite absent[8] while the former is attested by at least a small group of stones. By studying this small set of relevant objects, the study of the phenomenon of *interpretatio aegyptiaca* in gems can allow the decipherment of the way Greek mythological figures and concepts were incorporated, perceived, and adapted into the multicultural context of Egypt in the Graeco-Roman period.

The issue also underlies the relationship between the magical papyri (PGM and PDM) and the magical gems. The most recent studies have answered this question by hypothesizing that the gems and the magic papyri are closely related, although disagreement still exists on this point.[9] The magical papyri are, for the

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[2] For a definition of this material and the issues specific to it, see, e.g., Dasen and Nagy 2019 and Endreffy, Nagy and Spier 2019. The Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database is now the essential reference tool for any research on these objects (<http://cbd.mfab.hu/visitatori_salutem> viewed 06 June 2023), referred to in this article with the abbreviation CBd for each object mentioned.

[3] Even for present purposes, this issue can fruitfully be considered in the context of a history that goes back to the beginning of the first millennium BC. For the Roman period, the subject has been widely studied in a series of works among which we can cite those of Versluys 2002, 2017, C.E. Barrett 2019 and M. Swetnam-Burland 2015. This is one of the research perspectives in the context of the post-doctoral project 'Présence de l'Egypte dans la glyptique d'époque romaine impériale,' 2018-2023, University of Fribourg (CH), supported by the SNSF.

[4] On this issue, see Morenz 1954, Kolta 1968, Bergman 1969, Henri 2015, and von Lieven 2016. The notion of *interpretatio* appears for the first time in Tacitus (*On the Origin and Situation of the Germans* 34.3).

[5] See, in particular, Herodotus 2.156; von Lieven 2016.

[6] Oxyrhynchus Papyri II 254. Quaegebeur 1983; Vaelske 2012.

[7] Malaise (2005: 121–125) refers to other situations using this term and cites some examples of iconography where a Greek deity is accompanied by elements of Pharaonic origin, such as Aphrodite wearing the headdress of a vulture or carrying a small Harpocrates in her hand, suggesting that Aphrodite is in this case an Isis.

[8] The only case I identified in the Campbell Bonner database is CBd-1975. The stone represents the solar child and the god is designated as Apollo — 'Great Horus, Apollo, Harpocrates, favour the bearer' (Μέγας Ὧρος Ἀπόλλων Ἁρποχράτη εὐίλατος τῷ φοροῦντι) — but the inscription is post-antique, on an ancient cameo (Zwierlein-Diehl 2008: 186–189, 331–337, No. 19).

[9] Nagy (2002: 177–79) underlines the close relationship. Vitellozzi (2018) and Sfameni (2015) insist on the random preservation of papyri to explain the lack of real correspondences. This point is also

most part, clearly from an Egyptian background, yet incorporate elements of Greek literature and Jewish texts. With regard to the gems, however, we must take the possibility into account that, as Vitellozzi thinks (confirming a proposal already made by Árpad Nagy), the designers of the gems came from different backgrounds and created their own interpretations of the written formulas.[10] Another question concerns the historical context and religious environment in which these gems were conceived, made, and used. In the absence of archaeological context, this issue remains largely unresolved, although increased interest in this material over the last 15 years has allowed some progress. For instance, Dasen refers to some examples of magical gems as products of a Hellenized Egyptian elite.[11] For the magical gems as a whole, however, the lack of archaeological data makes definitive resolution of these questions far from simple. Therefore, without excessive pretension in any case, our study must lie within this framework.

I. Egyptian names for Greek deities

As regards the whole group of magical gems, the names of the Greek deities are often simply associated with their corresponding image; this is the case for Ares, Aphrodite, Eros, and Hecate.[12] But in some cases, the name could also be an Egyptian name transposed into Greek letters. One of the best examples is the representation of an Aphrodite Anadyomene with the name of Hathor on the reverse. Four stones appear to show this scheme: a haematite from the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna (Figure 1),[13] a lapis lazuli from Hannover, [14] a moss agate, also from Hannover,[15] and a lapis lazuli from the royal Egyptian collection.[16] We know that Aphrodite, as the goddess of love, was associated with Hathor as well as with Isis, attested by some texts that call the Egyptian sanctuaries of Hathor sanctuaries of Aphrodite.[17] On this point, Joachim Friedrich Quack states, 'Hier wird also auf die aus dem griechischen Bereich gekommene Ikonographie in Ägypten eine indigene Interpretation gelegt, die sich allerdings rein auf der Textebene bewegt und von der Ikonographie her allein nicht zu erschließen gewesen wäre – was durchaus zum Grübeln über manche rein ikonographisch analysierbare Objekte der Römerzeit aus Ägypten anregt.'[18]

Figure 1. Haematite, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, Inv. IX B 1239. Inscription : AΘWPI. CBd-2421. © KHM-Museumsverband.

To be noted is that divine names could be included in *voces*, *logoi* or formulae that do not appear as possible cases of *interpretatio*. For example, we can mention a gem with the image of the solar child represented on

used by Faraone (2018: 9) in order to minimize what the magical gems meant due to the Theban papyri.

[10] As Vitellozzi (2018: 246) wrote, 'It seems that the gems, being products of ritual practices, provide many different interpretations of the designs described in the texts; their great number, especially by comparison with the papyri, results not only from their durability and higher intrinsic value, but also from the creative mind of the gem makers, who made variations on their fixed models according to the occasion and to their own cultural background.' See also Nagy 2002: 157–158.

[11] Dasen (2019: 57) stated, 'Hellenization did not suppress local religious traditions; on the contrary, it enriched them with new nuances'. See also Quack 2013.

[12] Some examples: CBd-756 (Ares) ; CBd-4205 (Aphrodite) ; CBd-3679 (Eros); CBd-4221 (Hecate).

[13] The inscription : AΘWPI. Zwierlein-Diehl 1991: 151, no. 2178; Michel 2004, No. 4.1.d_1. (CBd-2421).

[14] The inscription: ANAK/AΘOP ('I am Hathor'). Schlüter, Platz-Horster and Zazoff 1975: 309–310, Taf. 224 No. 1705; Michel 2004, No. 4.1.a_14. (CBd-5058)

[15] The inscription : AΘOP|OYAIPI|NEBNOY|EAPHC. Michel 2001b: 116, No. 132. (CBd-1740).

[16] Drioton 1947: 82–83. The inscription: AΘWP/APPWPI/ΦPAΣINA/WCVCIPIN/XAPEBHΘ/IZOVP/W.

[17] Kolta 1968: 74–81; Malaise 2005: 181, n. 1; von Lieven 2016: 63.

[18] Quack 2013: 195.

the obverse and the acclamation 'Isis is victorious!'[19] on the reverse, or another where Osiris is surrounded by a sequence of utterances beginning with the name of Artemis (Ἄρτεμι).[20] Gods are sometimes invoked without their images, which is likely to cause some confusion. We will therefore limit references to cases of *interpretatio* that do not seem to present ambiguity.

Apart from those concerning Hathor, other cases can be adduced. On a jasper from Naples,[21] Zeus Heliopolitanus is accompanied by the name of Phre, as the name of the solar deity Ra is commonly written in late magical texts.[22] Another jasper, in the British Museum, presents Hermes with the *kerykeion* propelling a wheel on one side and the name Thoth on the other.[23] Here, the *interpretatio* follows relations that are familiar. The association between Thoth and Hermes is well known.[24] If Zeus is more generally equated with Amon, that a Zeus Heliopolitanus is approximated to the Egyptian solar deity is not surprising.[25] More remarkable are two cases which testify to less common associations. The first one, a red jasper recently studied by Véronique Dasen, shows a representation of Athena brandishing an axe to strike down a snake and surrounded by Greek letters which form the name of Taweret.[26] Athena is more generally linked to the goddess Neith, the patroness of the city of Sais in the western Delta.[27] But Dasen showed that the use of the name of the hippopotamus goddess Taweret to designate Athena could be explained by the evolution of the cult of the goddess in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, since an oracle of Taweret-Athena is attested at Oxyrhynchos and Esna. Moreover, the association Taweret-Athena is well attested in the papyri of Oxyrhynchos in the 2nd-3rd centuries AD, the presumed date of the gem's engraving. A last, very interesting case is a haematite in the Staatliche Museen, Berlin where a Hecate in triple form is encircled by the following inscription: ΒΟΥΒ[.] Σ[. . .], which in all probability corresponds to the name of Boubastis. This case deserves slightly more in-depth discussion (Figure 2).[28]

II. Hecate-Boubastis

Figure 2. Haematite, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung, Inv. 9838. Βούβ[α]σ[τις] (Philipp 1986: 53, No. 52). CBd-2028.

Usually it is Artemis who is linked to Bastet/Boubastis.[29] Hecate, on the other hand, is sometimes assimilated to Hathor on certain gems, such as a hematite from the Cabinet des Médailles that represents the goddess with a cow's head.[30] The simplest interpretation would be to consider that, since Artemis and Hecate share several aspects, this association is due to the fact that Hecate is linked more specifically to magical practices. But we can go further thanks to a passage from Stephanus of Byzantium (6th century AD), who quotes Eratosthenes. This passage, the notice under the entry *Aithopion*, sheds light on the nature of the relationship between Hecate and Boubastis.

> '[...] Artemis Aithopia. Some say that it is because Apollo brought her back while she stayed with the Ethiopians. Others say that she was the same as Selene and received this epithet from the verb αἴθω, as Kallimachos explains (fr. 702). Still others say it is because she is the same as Hekate, who always holds burning torches, as Eratosthenes notes.' (FGrHist 241 F 46=SH 399; Stephanus Byzantius, *Ethnica, s.v. Aithopion*., trans. Aydın Mutlu).

[19] νικᾷ Ἶσι(ς): Museo Nazionale Romano, Medagliere. Inv. 78774. Mastrocinque 2008: 131, Ro 1. (CBd-2224).

[20] British Museum, London. Inv. EA 56040. Michel 2001a, 2, No. 3 (CBd-382). A relationship between the represented deity and the named deity nevertheless exists in this case: 'Der Name Artemis erweckt die Assoziation an die säulenhafte Artemis von Ephesos, die ebenfalls als Mumie erscheinen kann' (Michel 2001a, 2, No.3).

[21] Naples, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Inv. 27232/1370. Inscription: Φρῆθ δὸς ν{ε}ίκην, χάριν, ὄλβον ('Phreth! Give victory, kindness, wealth!'). Mastrocinque 2008, NA18; Michel 2004, no. 6.2_3 (CBd-2205).

[22] Quack 2013: 195 and n. 94.

[23] Θωουθ: British Museum, EA 56382; Michel 2001: 40, no. 61 (CBd-440).

[24] Herodotus 2.67; von Lieven 2016: 71.

[25] Kolta 1968: 1-15, 134-139; von Lieven 2016: 62.

[26] ΘΟΗΡΙΣ: Dasen 2019: 52-57 (CBd-1187). Athena was linked to Taweret through the identification of the latter with Neith as the mother of Sobek: Dasen 2019: 56.

[27] Herodotus 2.28, 59; El-Sayed 1982.

[28] Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Inv. 9838. Philipp (1986: 53, No. 52) restores Βούβ[α]σ[τις]; Michel 2004, no. 21.1_6 (CBd-2028).

[29] Herodotus 2.59, 138, 156 ; von Lieven 2016: 64.

[30] Cabinet des Médailles, Inv. 58.2207; Mastrocinque 2014: 144 (CBd-3583).

This passage was recently analysed by Jean-Yves Carrez-Maratray; some points from his study will be repeated here.[31] Firstly, we should note the identification made between Artemis Aithopia and Hecate Phosphoros, and secondly the fact that the author mentions the opinion that the goddess was brought from Ethiopia by her brother Apollo. This second point refers quite clearly to the myth of the Eye of the Sun – a text in demotic. In it, the Lioness Tefnut, the Distant Goddess, is brought from Ethiopia to Egypt by her brother Onouris/Shou under the aspect of Thoth.[32] In another related myth dating back to the New Kingdom, the Book of the Heavenly Cow, the Distant Goddess changes from a bloodthirsty lioness into the cat Bastet, in Greek Boubastis. As a domesticated goddess, she turns into a protector of the home, of women in childbirth and young children.[33]

The existence of a cult to Artemis Aithopia is attested at Brauron, Amphipolis in Thrace, Erythrae, and Mytilene.[34] Artemis Aithopia, 'Flamboyant Artemis,' literally derives from the verb αἴθω, 'to burn.' However, the *epiclesis* is also very close to another attribute, Aithiopia, 'the Ethiopian,' which is the reading in some authors according to Stephanus of Byzantium. He writes, 'some say that it is because Apollo brought her back while she stayed with the Ethiopians.' This reading does not take into account the missing iota that would distinguish flamboyant 'Aithopia' from Ethiopian 'Aithiopia,' but this can be explained by the fact that the Greek name Αἰθίοψ in fact means 'burnt face.'

With this passage we see that, if Boubastis is Artemis in Herodotus, the late documentation (the gem from Berlin and Eratosthenes' testimony as reported by Stephen of Byzantium) tells us that she could also be Hecate. Here, the connection with Artemis Ethiopia is based on three aspects. The first is her relation to the moon. The second is her association with fire, since she is Hecate Phosphoros, 'who always holds burning torches.' Finally, from the second point, a third can be deduced. Since the torches, according to Libanios (4th century AD), represent the luminous signal at the moment of delivery, they must lead the newborn from the womb into the light.[35] All these elements bring us back to the question of the relationship with fire, which is also an important aspect of the Distant Goddess. Indeed, the Distant Goddess is the Eye of Ra, which spreads light every morning, as well as the burning flame that destroys the enemies of the state and punishes humans according to the will of the demiurge.[36]

In summary, Stephanus of Byzantium explains that Hecate is Artemis Aithopia and that Artemis Aithiopia is the Distant Goddess. This makes it a particularly useful passage for understanding the gem from Berlin, which reveals an even more direct connection with a Hecate called Bubastis. We have every reason to think that the protector of women in childbirth is being invoked here, since in addition to the relationship to fire and its light, this function is probably the major linking aspect.

III. Around Aphrodite and others...

Another stone bears the name of Bubastis. A jasper from the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden presents an Aphrodite Anadyomene on one side and on the other a list of words including the name of the Egyptian goddess.[37] The text on the reverse refers to a charm in PGM VII (385-389), a love charm which had to be recited seven times over a cup and was said to be 'the holy names of Kypris' (in other words, Aphrodite). Among these names, more or less mysterious, are Isis and Bubastis, both able to assume the functions of the Greek goddess of love. Intriguingly, if the love charm was originally meant to be spoken over the beverage to be drunk by the desired woman, it was consequently being diverted from its original purpose — unless we theorize that the gem served as a memory aid for the owner when performing the ritual.

This takes us back to Aphrodite and to the first stone discussed, the Vienna haematite (Figure 1). Here the goddess is surrounded by two animal-headed deities, a configuration attested on three other stones: a haematite[38] and a carnelian[39] of the Skoluda Collection in Hamburg (Figures 3 and 4), and a haematite belonging to the Babylonian Collection at Yale University (Figure 5).[40] The Vienna hematite and one in the Skoluda Collection show similar scenes, with a jackal-headed deity and a donkey-headed deity framing Aphrodite, all three figures standing above Osiris on the lion's back. On the Yale gem, the three figures are depicted below the *tabula ansata*, while on the carnelian of the Skoluda Collection they occupy the entire face A of the stone.

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[31] Carrez-Maratray 2013.

[32] Spiegelberg 1917; West 1969; de Cénival 1988. Many different deities, such as Hathor, Mut, Bastet, Sekhmet, Tefnut, can function as the 'Eye of Ra' (Pinch 2004: 90).

[33] Maystre 1941; Darnell 1997.

[34] Brulé 1993.

[35] Libanios 5.26; Morizot 2010: 469–470.

[36] Yoyotte 1980: 56, 69–71; Yoyotte 1980–1981. Darnell (1997: 41, No. 42) explains that the Eye of Ra (Hathor, Sekhmet, Bastet) can take on the function of a torch lit for the soul of the deceased, and its red glow reflects its anger and power of destruction.

[37] Inscription: 'κανωπι|υπγοιηροδσ|ερκααυ character ασ|ρεκινποθησει|ρεντουνμορφυσ| |αριεσπαφιετι|ρισιωβουκασστι|[- -]ωγιιωερωτ|εζεβεβι'. Rijksmuseum van Oudheden. Inv. GS-01112, Michel 2004: no. 4.1.a_20 (CBd-3157). On this stone: Mastrocinque 2017. On the association between Bastet and Aphrodite, see von Lieven 2016: 63. The association between Boubastis and Artemis is attested in the Pistis Sophia (dated to the 3rd century AD (Schmidt 1925: 161-166). Herodotus' description of the Boubasteia (2.60) emphasizes the sexual connotations of the festivities and runs along the same lines.

[38] Skoluda Collection, Inv. M070; Michel 2001b: 117, No. 134 (CBd-1742).

[39] Skoluda Collection, Inv. M030; Michel 2001b: 115–116, No. 131 (CBd-1739).

[40] Yale University, Babylonian Collection, Inv. YPM BC 038597; Bonner 1950: 321, No. 395 (CBd-1542).

Figure 3. Haematite, Skoluda Collection, Hamburg, Inv. M070.
Michel 2001b: Pl. 22, no. 134. CBd-1742.

Figure 4. Carnelian, Skoluda Collection, Hamburg, Inv. M030.
Michel 2001b: Pl. 21, no. 131. CBd-1739.

Figure 5. Haematite, Yale University, Babylonian Collection, Inv. YPM BC 038597 (Photo by Kaufman, 2019).
CBd-1542.

We can speak about a 'syntactic unit,' that is to say, a motif or a scheme comprising several figures occurring together on several gems.[41] Nevertheless, the pose of the two male figures is different in each case: they lay their hands on Aphrodite's hips, lift them under her feet, hold them up as in a gesture of acclamation, or hold them downward, with the woman kneeling. In the last case (Figure 4), we should note the figure is surrounded by letters that include the name 'Artemis.'

How can this iconography be understood? It may be useful here to deepen the 'mise en série' of the images. This triad of characters is in fact paralleled by another one probably related to it, that presents a male figure flanked by two female deities.[42] This configuration always appears (unless I am mistaken) in relation to the figure of the polymorphic god on the lion, another syntactic unit.[43] The triad is represented on the reverse

[41] For a useful application of this idea, see Endreffy and Nagy 2020.

[42] CBd-676, CBd-677, CBd-678, CBd-679, CBd-680, CBd-1780, CBd-2313, CBd-2872.

[43] On the interpretation of this entity – the so-called 'Pantheos' – on magical gems, see Quack 2006, 2019. This triad is present on a majority

above a *tabula ansata*. The two sides of the stone are covered with *logoi*, *voces magicae*, utterances and letters; among them appears a formula of the following type: φύλαξον ἀπὸ παντὸς κακοῦ, 'Protect from all evil!' Like the female figure in the former examples, the male of the triad is nude, while the two females wear long garments. Generally, one of them – *Sigè* – raises her left hand to her mouth, performing the sign of Harpocrates, while the other seems to extend her hand toward the central figure. Simone Michel cites Smith, who indicated the parallel with the Capitoline triad, which appears on coins as well as on some gems of the Imperial period.[44] But some substantial divergences exist. First of all, the central figure here is totally naked with no attributes, while Jupiter holds at least a sceptre and sometimes a thunderbolt. Secondly, the gestures of the female deities are also different. The relationship to the first type of triad, with a female at its centre, can be established not only through the trinitarian scheme but also by the specific composition of the haematite from Yale (already presented in Figure 5). Here, the different elements evoked above are fascinatingly mingled. Two *Sigè* figures surround the polymorphic god, while another triad composed of two *Sigè* on each side of a snake-footed figure and accompanied by a smaller figure (perhaps a child?) appears on the reverse of the *tabula ansata*. Under the *tabula* the nude female reaches with upraised hands toward two animal-headed deities. These variant triads are found in the same compositions and thus linked in their meaning.

IV. Symmetry and the alliance of opposites

Quack states that the uses of gems with the figure of Pantheos are relatively unspecific and speaks of a complete pictorial motif that can be instrumentalised according to individual wishes rather than being limited to one particular use.[45] The formula φύλαξον ἀπὸ παντὸς κακοῦ suggests likewise. However, the nudity of the central figure of the triads (male or female) and the sign of Harpocrates recall an intention associated with love charms.[46] This does not contradict Quack's assertion, since love magic can be one of the uses of a more multifunctional object.

We shall now address the question of the identity of the two animal-headed deities and their function in the composition of the image. Zwierlein-Diehl identifies Anubis (jackal-headed) and Seth (donkey-headed) on the gem from the Kunsthistorisches Museum of Vienna and interprets the presence of the two deities according to their role in the myth of Osiris. She states, 'The depiction may be "read" as follows: Seth threatens, and Anubis supports Isis; the lion, star sign of the beginning of the Nile flood, carries Osiris, who was awakened to eternal life by the mummification (in the myth performed by Anubis).'[47] Quack thinks that Horus is more probable than Anubis here, since the shapes of the heads are not absolutely clear and since the pair Horus/Seth is more widely attested in Egyptian religion than the pair Seth/Anubis.[48] He also judges the gem as likely post-antique because of the association with the lower scene (Osiris on the lion). But if the engraving is modern, each motif, taken separately, could have been copied from an ancient model.[49]

Following Zwierlein-Diehl's interpretation the central figure, the goddess Hathor-Aphrodite, would be equivalent to Isis. Indeed, the convergence between the figures of Hathor and Isis on the magical gems is well attested on some magical gems.[50] As well, the progressive replacement of Hathor by Isis as the main universal Egyptian goddess is an evolution that extends in large part to the first millennium BC.[51] On this stone, however, Aphrodite is called Hathor without any reference to Isis.[52] Nor does anything indicate that the two deities play different roles, since their gesture is strictly identical in the image. Looking at the other gems (Figures 3-5), we see that if the movement changes significantly, it always retains the same symmetry. In addition to these examples, a magnetite from the British Museum must be mentioned, which shows two animal-headed figures intertwined in a configuration that recalls both Hekate and Cerberus (Figure 6).[53] We can also refer to another gem in the British Museum, where Seth and Horus take the place of the two Nile gods on both sides of this very strange *sema-taouy*.[54] The action of the two gods here is clearly coordinated, not antagonistic. We have reasons to suppose that symmetry has not only a graphic and aesthetic function in the image's composition but also

of the gems bearing the polymorphic god on the lion listed in the CBd. (exceptions: CBd-675, CBd-1542, CBd-3329).

[44] Michel 2001a: 182-183, No. 290; Smith 1981.

[45] 'Die konkret genannten Nutzungsanwendungen bleiben dabei relativ unspezifisch. So dürfte die polymorphe Gestalt der Gemmen ebenso wie ihre ägyptischen Vorläufer mehr ein nach individuellem Wunsch instrumentalisierbares macht volles Bildmotiv darstellen, als auf eine spezifische eingeschränke Nutzung beschränkt zu sein.' (Quack 2022: 355).

[46] The gesture of silence: Catullus 74.4 ; Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 9.692. In the magical practices of the Roman period, the gesture is associated with love charms (PGM LXI 1-38). See comments under entry 534 in the CBd.

[47] Zwierlein-Diehl 1991: 151, No. 2178.

[48] Quack 2022: 359-360, n. 154.

[49] 'Der Verdacht muß sich erheben, daß hier sekundär, vielleicht erst neuzeitlich, Motive unterschiedlicher Herkunft zusammen-gebracht worden sind' (Quack 2022: 360).

[50] CBd-490, CBd-852, CBd-1293, CBd-1294, CBd-1740.

[51] See, e.g., Hollis 2009.

[52] Zwierlein-Diehl does not seem to identify the name of Hathor, whereas no ambiguity exists here (Quack 2022: 195, n. 90; cf. Zwierlein-Diehl 1991: 151).

[53] British Museum, Inv. EA 56121; Michel 2001a: 47-48, No. 71 (CBd-471). This jackal-headed dimorphic deity is depicted with four arms and three legs in such a way that two bodies can be discerned, one going toward the right and the other toward the left.

[54] British Museum, Inv. EA 56033; Michel 2001a: 168-9, No. 274; Michel 2004: No. 39.7_4 (CBd-137).

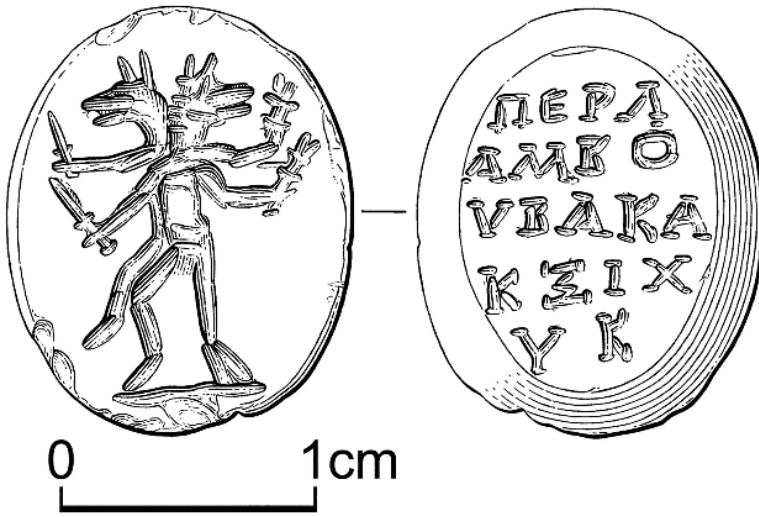

Figure 6. Magnetite, British Museum, Inv. EA 56121, © The Trustees of the British Museum, CBd-471.

substantial meaning. Consequently, we can postulate that in the previous examples the two figures are in all probability rivals, but their rivalry is precisely the reason that their union is powerful.

Concerning the identity of the two deities, the pair Seth and Anubis is rarely represented. That in itself is a substantial argument for positing the presence of Horus instead of Anubis on the right side of the image on the Vienna haematite, and on the left side of the Hamburg haematite. The other figure, with a mane, is clearly a donkey and consequently represents Seth (Figures 1 and 3). Alternatively, arguments concerning the hypothesis of Anubis can also be advanced. First, Anubis and Seth sometimes appear together, as on the vaulted ceiling of the tomb of Seti I.[55] We should also note that PDM LXI (unfortunately very fragmentary) in the same passage mentions a 'Lady of the Flood' (who could be the Distant Goddess if the translation is correct), Anubis, and the following expression, 'it is this god who [...] face of a donkey' (thus a probable reference to Typhon/Seth).[56] Another instance, still more explicit, in the literature of the Late Ptolemaic period is found in the Papyrus Jumilhac, where Seth transforms himself into Anubis in order to lash out at the body of Osiris.[57] This could explain the confusion that sometimes arises in the representations of the two gods. The haematites of Vienna and Hamburg (Figures 1 and 3) , to a lesser extent, the Hamburg carnelian (Figure 4) present two clearly different entities, while on the stone in New Haven the two animal heads are quite identical. Two other cases can be added here: a haematite from the British Museum[58] and a steatite from the University of Michigan (Figure 7),[59] where the two gods stand around a sceptre (on the uterus) and around Osiris mummified, respectively. The image seems deliberately to createconfusion in representing the two figures,

Figure 7. Steatite, University of Michigan, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, Inv. 26124. CBd-1531.

[55] Boussac 1920: 204.

[56] Betz 1986: 286–287.

[57] Vandier 1961: 105, 114–115.

[58] British Museum, Inv. EA 56294; Michel 2001a: 240, No. 380 (CBd-751).

[59] University of Michigan, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology, inv. 26124; Michel 2004, no 39.7_4 (CBd-1531).

sometimes in the very same way. The magnetite from the British Museum illustrates this even better (Figure 6).[60]

Therefore, we can infer that confusion is added to symmetry to show that the action of the two gods is coordinated to the same end. The probable idea expressed on the different stones in iconographic ways is the powerful union of antagonistic figures. The nude female (Hathor-Aphrodite) could be understood in the context of love charms, which magnify and compel the feminine entity.[61] The choice to represent Hathor in the form of Aphrodite Anadyomene parallels the other type of triad with a central male figure. On the other hand, the carnelian from the Skoluda Collection (Figure 4) shows that the triad can also be used to indicate a function that is likely gynaecological. Here, the naked woman is indeed in a position suggestive of childbirth[62] and the two figures are shown helping the woman at ground level, thus no longer carrying her. The fact that, on the latter, the protagonist is named Artemis, no longer Aphrodite, favours it, since Artemis is (like Bastet) a protectress of childbirth.[63] The abovementioned gem with the two male figures standing on the uterus also confirms this use of the motif.[64]

Concluding remarks

This short study has presented some interesting cases of magical gems that may be instrumental in understanding the mechanisms underlying the composition of the images on the stones. If Greek and Egyptian divine figures meet, it occurs in the context of a specific device that aims always to find the best way to acquire power over reality (present and future). Understandably, encounters between figures belonging to different religious traditions lead to the subject of *interpretatio*. The issue is complex, long practiced in the Mediterranean world, but in which magical gems seem to be set apart. At least two ancient authors of Late Antiquity, Origen and Iamblichus, resolutely assert that translating spells or magical names would inevitably render them inoperative.[65] Origen gives, as examples, the Jewish names Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Sabaoth, but Iamblichus speaks of translation as a whole in magical practices. This idea is of great interest, because it may help explain why there are relatively few cases of explicit *interpretatio* in magical glyptics, inviting us to consider that word choice is never insipid. In magical glyptics, we should understand cases of *interpretatio* most often literally (a goddess named Hathor is Hathor, even when represented as an Aphrodite). This approach contrasts with the *interpretatio graeca* as usually practiced in literature, where the reader is expected to understand 'Bastet' when the author refers to 'Artemis.'

That magical gems may be the only body of material containing several cases of explicit *interpretatio aegyptiaca* but perhaps no instances of *interpretatio graeca* is potentially very significant. We opined in the introduction about the approach that tends to situate the magical gems within the whole phenomenon of the reception of Egyptian culture (in Greek, Phoenician, Etruscan, or Roman productions). The apparent absence of explicit *interpretatio graeca* and the existence of the reverse process could lead us to consider this material as evidence of the reception of Greek culture in Egypt rather than the opposite.[66] If we want to take this idea further, we could add that the Egyptian deities used by the engravers for magical purposes are more numerous and occur much more often than Greek deities.[67] In addition, recalling the quotation from Quack at the beginning of this paper, we may be tempted to ask whether each Greek figure in the iconography of the magical gems should be interpreted as a representation of an Egyptian divine entity, with the answer most probably not. Nevertheless, in the study of each particular case, the possibility of an implicit *interpretatio* is always worth considering. In all cases, the state of Egyptian religion and magic, which had been considerably modified in relation to what it had been during the Late Pharaonic and Ptolemaic periods, must be kept in mind. Ancient Egyptian rituals had been adapted for use in individual applications. Greek and Jewish concepts had been progressively integrated, and the Greek language gradually, yet ultimately, had replaced the knowledge of ancient Egyptian writing.[68]

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[60] CBd-471.
[61] Ficheux 2008.
[62] Here, we join Michel: 'Material und Form (Karneol-Perle) sowie die zwischen Esel- und Schakalköpfigen kniende weibliche Figur könnten auf ein Amulett aus dem Bereich der Frauenheilkunde hinweisen.' (Michel 2001: 115-116, No. 131). Concerning Omphale and other female figures in the childbirth position on gems, *inter alia*, see Dasen 2015.
[63] Morizot 2010.
[64] See n. 58 above.
[65] Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 1.25; Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, 250–330. See Sfameni 2010: 461–462.
[66] The question of the reception of magic gems in the Roman world certainly remains quite relevant. The lack of archaeological context for this type of material is a disadvantage but data, although rare, do exist.
[67] Readily apparent in the tables of contents of some catalogues, e.g., Delatte and Derchain 1964.
[68] Quack 1998: 93–94.

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A Gem to Counter the Empousa

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Abstract

The article reviews the evidence pertaining to prophylactic and apotropaic measures in case of an encounter with a particularly dangerous female bogey in the Greek and Roman world, the Empousa. Two prophylactic-apotropaic traditions are identified—one that relies chiefly on verbal banishment and another that pins its hopes on a gemstone. The latter tradition, known through Dionysius' *Periegesis* 723-725, is explored with emphasis on the identification of the gemstone that Dionysius describes as "nubilous *iaspis*."

The Empousa was one of the most terrifying and potentially harmful supernatural apparitions that populated the ancient collective imagination.[1] A distinctive feature of this essentially female bogey was a capacity for endless transformation.[2] The instability of Empousa's external appearance was reflected in the conception of her legs as disparate both in shape and material. The hapless individuals – primarily male, to the extent that inferences about gender can be made from the relevant sources – who, aware of it or not, met an Empousa were in danger of being devoured by the shape-shifting spectre whose name, among other aspects, echoes her appetite for blood (ἔμπουσα ~ ἐμπίνουσα).[3]

This paper reviews the evidence pertaining to the prophylactic and apotropaic measures an individual who knew or suspected that he had encountered an Empousa could apply to protect himself. Two prophylactic-apotropaic traditions are identified – one that relies chiefly on verbal banishment and another that pins its hopes on a gemstone. The latter tradition, which has received less attention in the scholarly literature, surfaces in the textual record from the Roman Imperial period, in other words at a time when the amuletic use of gemstones, though by no means a new trend, gathered pace.[4]

I. Banishing the Empousa by word (and gesture?)

The prophylactic and apotropaic measures adopted by individuals who had reason to fear that they might be faced with an Empousa may be gleaned from the scene in Aristophanes' *Frogs* (277-308) of a mock encounter with this bogey. Earlier scholarship has shown that the scene is rooted in mystic initiation rites and popular superstitions.[5] The episode is nevertheless worth revisiting briefly, with special attention paid to the ways in which the protagonists, the god Dionysus and his servant Xanthias, seek to protect themselves and ward off the bane.

Dionysus, who has just disembarked on the shore of the Underworld disguised as Heracles, is joined by his servant Xanthias, posing as Dionysus. Together they consider how to proceed in the darkness that envelops them. Xanthias is eager to move on lest they encounter 'the terrifying beasts' (278-79: τὰ θηρία / τὰ δεῖν') that Heracles had warned them of. This remark points back to the conversation that Dionysus had with the real Heracles before the journey, when the veteran of the Underworld *katabasis* had warned him, '...you will see snakes / and ten thousand most terrifying beasts,' to which Dionysus responded (143-45), 'Do not try to strike me with panic and fill me with fear. / You will not deter me.' His statement verbalizes the central aspects of an encounter with the Empousa: the terror that strikes the human when faced with the bogey, and the double option he has, either to turn and flee or to stand firm and find a way of banishing the monster. In keeping with this earlier declaration, Dionysus is now eager to 'meet with some adventure, / to win some contest worthy of the journey' and prove that Heracles was boasting (280-84). Not surprisingly, Dionysus' bravery is short-lived. The mock Heracles rushes to hide behind Xanthias when the latter pretends to hear a noise, allegedly

[1] The earlier scholarship includes Waser 1905; Johnston 1999: 133-135; Andrisano 2002, 2007; Arata 2008; Patera 2014: 249-290; Eidinow 2018.

[2] In certain respects, Empousa represents an aggressive, dangerous counterpart of Thetis whose shapeshifting was for self-defence.

[3] The young man who is dragged to the chamber of an old hag in Ar. *Eccl*. 1057-8 compares her to an 'Empousa clothed in a ... blister of blood;' see Gonzáles Terriza 1996. In Ar. *Frogs* and the two episodes from Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (henceforth referred to as *Vita Apollonii*, abbreviated *VA*), discussed in Part I below, Empousa's targets are male too.

[4] Faraone 2018.

[5] Borthwick 1968; Brown 1991; Lada-Richards 1999: 70-72 and 90-93. See also the recent discussion by Faraone (2019: 214-223).

produced by 'a huge beast' (288: θηρίον μέγα).[6] The servant goes on to describe a shape-shifting creature (289-92): '... it assumes all kinds of shapes. / Now it is an ox, now a mule, and now/ a lovely woman' ... 'Hold on! Now it is not a woman but ... a bitch."[7] The creature's multiformity already leads Dionysus to conclude that they must be faced with Empousa (293: Ἔμπουσα τοίνυν ἐστί), which Xanthias confirms by describing two more of the apparition's distinctive features: a blazing face and legs of different materials, one of bronze, the other of dung (293-95). A terror-stricken Dionysus seeks protection by all means available. He turns to his own priest, sitting in the front row of the audience, with a plea for protection (297: ἱερεῦ, διαφύλαξόν μ' ...), while Xanthias duplicates the move by appealing to Heracles (298: ὦναξ Ἡράκλεις) who was customarily invoked as 'averter of evil' (ἀλεξίκακος). In a response that at the same time constitutes a further prophylactic move, Dionysus-Heracles begs Xanthias not to reveal his name (299: μηδὲ κατερεῖς τοὔνομα), since knowledge of it would abandon him to the control of the supernatural being.[8] At this point, Xanthias terminates the joke by pretending to banish the creature with the apotropaic formula 'go where you come from' (301: ἴθ' ᾗπερ ἔρχει)[9] and informing his master that the formula has worked – 'the Empousa is gone!' – a development which Dionysus, keen to observe the ritual in all its details, asks his servant to confirm with a triple oath.[10]

The Aristophanic scene no doubt incorporates a measure of comic exaggeration and distortion. All the same, it offers a vivid picture of Empousa's embodiment in Greek popular imagination as a female shapeshifter with disparate legs and of what an individual could do to ward off the creature in the event of an encounter. The appeals to the priest and Heracles probably allude just to the tendency of pinning one's hopes on communally sanctioned religion in moments of danger.[11] Of greater interest are the other strategies adopted, in other words, concealment of one's name for prophylaxis and use of an apotropaic formula. Both may be considered as verbal strategies. The apotropaic formula conveys banishment *expressis verbis*, while silence and withholding of information represent negative variants of verbal expression.

Verbal banishment is the apotropaic tactic that the sage Apollonius of Tyana also adopted in his nocturnal encounter with an Empousa, described by Philostratus (*Vita Apollonii* 2.4). Apollonius and his companions are on their way to India. They set out from Syrian Hierapolis and essentially followed the trail of Alexander of Macedon, travelling overland toward the river Indus. On the way they cross Mount Caucasus, presumably the Indian Caucasus (Hindu Kush) located in the region of what is now central and western Afghanistan and north-west Pakistan. At a point between the mountain range and the river (ἐν δὲ τῇ μέχρι τοῦ ποταμοῦ τούτου ὁδοιπορίᾳ), 'they were travelling in bright moonlight when they were ambushed by an apparition of an Empousa, that changed into this and again into that shape, and was none [sc. of the shapes it assumed].[12] Apollonius realized the nature of their attacker, and he himself rebuked the Empousa non-stop (ἐλοιδορεῖτο τῇ ἐμπούσῃ), commanding his companions to do the same, since precisely this thing is a remedy to this attack (ταυτὶ γὰρ ἄκος εἶναι τῆς προσβολῆς ταύτης). As a result, the apparition departed hissing as spectres do.'

Philostratus is not explicit about the exact content of the rebukes (*loidoria*) that Apollonius and his fellow travellers hurled against the Empousa. The philosopher may have resorted to repeating an apotropaic formula like the one used by Xanthias in the *Frogs*.[13] This seems doubtful, however, in view of the other, apparently famous, episode in which Apollonius unmasked an Empousa at Corinth (Philostr. *VA* 4.25). In Philostratus' version of the story, the creature on this occasion posed as a Phoenician woman and pretended to be in love with Menippus of Lycia, one of Apollonius' disciples, whom she lulled with promises of marriage while she was in fact fattening him up to devour him. Apollonius, who again recognized the plot, showed up at the wedding feast and unmasked the creature by disclosing her true nature and intentions, stating 'the fair bride is one of the Empousas, that common folk consider as lamias and mormolyces. They are amorous, but above all they love human flesh and subdue the persons they wish to devour by way of love.' As a result of Apollonius' *elenchos,* a combination of reproach and unmasking of the Empousa, the bogey confessed her identity and true aim, and her fake abode vanished into thin air.

A considerable distance, both temporal and geographical, separates the encounters with the Empousa presented by Aristophanes and Philostratus. The episodes also differ fundamentally in character and intent. The Aristophanic scene is a mock-encounter with the bogey, whereas Apollonius' confrontations with the Empousa were allegedly real, publicly known episodes in the sage's life. The prophylactic-apotropaic

[6] No scholarly consensus exists whether Xanthias actually sees the Empousa or merely feigns to; Sommerstein 2009: 170.
[7] All translations in this article are mine unless otherwise indicated.
[8] Borthwick 1968: 203-04.
[9] Zielinski 1906, 5-6; Borthwick 1968: 201.
[10] Borthwick 1968: 204.
[11] An ancient scholiast of the passage makes a remark in the same vein: *Scholia rec. et glossae* in Aristoph. *Ran*. 297a [= *Schol. in Aristoph.* Pars III, fasc. Ib, ed. M. Chantry 2001: 55].
[12] Or 'was non-existent.' The Greek at this point (καὶ οὐδὲν εἶναι) is ambivalent, referring both to the creature's multiformity and her immateriality. The emendations that have been proposed remove the ambiguity and have judiciously been rejected by the most recent editor (Boter 2022).
[13] Eidinow (2018: 222-223) reads the episode as an allegory of an initiatory experience.

strategy adopted is nevertheless essentially the same. The Empousa is banished by verbal means, be they apotropaic formulas or disclosing the creature's nature and aims in a combination of exposure and rebuke. The use of gestures by Apollonius is unlikely given the silence of the author, whose declared concern is to inform the reading public of what really happened. The emphatic remark – either attributable to Philostratus or reproducing a statement of Apollonius himself – that *loidoria* is the appropriate means of repelling the attack explicitly endorses verbal defence.

In contrast, the fact that the Aristophanic scene was performed must have left ample scope for movements, ritual gestures, and even handling of objects to complement the words of the characters and manipulate meaning. Movements and actions could have been either prescribed in stage directions or improvised by the actors on stage. Borthwick has made the attractive suggestion that Xanthias' triple oath would have been accompanied by solemn throwing of stones to avert the return of the Empousa.[14] That gestures or even handling of material objects would accompany the words in other parts of the scene, including the apotropaic formula uttered by Xanthias, is conceivable. These aspects of the banishment scene are lost to us, and material means for warding off the Empousa and similar bogeys do not surface until the Imperial period. By that time, as Eidinow argued, the boundaries that separated the world of humans from that of the monstrous had become more fluid and the various bogeys, especially the Empousas, could circulate and hide in human guise.[15]

II. An amuletic gemstone to keep Empousas away?

A group of testimonia, the earliest dating to the Imperial period, advertises a material means of protection against the Empousa and related apparitions: a specific variety of *iaspis* used as a gemstone. The earliest extant source that refers to *iaspis* as a means for banishing Empousa-like apparitions is the epic poem *Description of the Known World* by Dionysius of Alexandria (Periegetes), dated by an embedded acrostich to the Hadrianic period, perhaps after 130 AD. A passage from the part of the poem that deals with the Caspian Sea (ll. 723-25) highlights its mineral resources:

> Among the many marvels it [sc. the Caspian Sea] engenders are rock crystal and nubilous jasper, a bane to hobgoblins and to other ghosts. (tr. Lightfoot 2014: 237).[16]

The expression θαύματα ('marvels') in l. 723 anchors the passage in the ethno-geographical *mirabilia* tradition. The mineralogical information (l. 724) may derive from the lost geographical treatise of Metrodorus of Scepsis.[17] Whether the information pertaining to prophylactic magic (l. 725) comes from the same work, from another source, or is an addition of Dionysius himself is uncertain. As Jane Lightfoot remarks, it is 'entirely in the style of lapidaries with magical, occult content.'[18] Dionysius himself is credited with a work in this genre (see below). Verses 724-25 are also quoted (with a slight variation) by Porphyry, the anonymous scholiasts of Homer, *Od*. 10.323 and Eustathius of Thessaloniki in his commentaries on the *Odyssey* and the *Periegesis*. The exegetical crux these ancient commentators tackle is why Circe, whom the poet of the *Odyssey* refers to as a 'goddess,' in other words an immortal, fears Odysseus' sword. One of the explanations provided is that Circe's fear of the sword is apotropaic in nature – as the scholiasts formulate it, it occurs 'naturally' (φυσικῶς), as a reaction to the material nature of the sword, since various demons shun specific materials.[19] The lines now transmitted only as part of the *Periegesis* are adduced as evidence in support of the explanation, save that they are ascribed to Dionysius' *Lithi(a)ka*.[20]

The word that Lightfoot renders as 'hobgoblins' in *Perieg*. 725 is a dative plural (Ἐμπούσαις); as she already noted, the plural form is unusual. A possible explanation may take the comprehensive focus of the passage into consideration, since it is concerned with prophylaxis against not only the Empousa but also a multitude of frightening spectres (εἴδωλα) associated and occasionally confused with the former (Lamia, Mormo, Gello).[21]

The passage from Dionysius' *Periegesis* is the earliest testimony for a gemstone being used to keep the

[14] Borthwick 1968: 205.
[15] Eidinow 2018: 228-230.
[16] Dion. *Perieg*. 723-25: ἢ δὴ πολλὰ μὲν ἄλλα μετ' ἀνδράσι θαύματ' ἀέξει,/ φύει δὲ κρύσταλλον ἰδ' ἠερόεσσαν ἴασπιν,/ ἐχθρὴν Ἐμπούσῃσι καὶ ἄλλοις εἰδώλοισιν.
[17] Göthe 1875: 37.
[18] Lightfoot 2014: 424.
[19] Porph. *Quaest. Hom. ad Od.* 10.323: διὰ τί ἐφοβήθη ἡ Κίρκη τὸ ξίφος τοῦ Ὀδυσσέως θεὰ οὖσα; φαμὲν ὅτι τοὺς πολὺν χρόνον ζῶντας δαίμονας θανάτῳ δὲ ὅμως καθυποβαλλομένους θεοὺς εἴωθεν ὀνομάζειν ὁ ποιητής. ἢ φυσικῶς φοβεῖται τὸ ξίφος ἡ Κίρκη, ὡς καὶ ἄλλας τινὰς ὕλας τινὲς τῶν δαιμόνων, ὡς καὶ Διονύσιος ἐν Λιθικοῖς· φύσει δὲ κρύσταλλον ἰδ' ἱερὴν ἴασπιν, ἐχθρὴν Ἐμπούσῃσι καὶ ἄλλοις εἰδώλοισιν ('why did Circe get scared of Odysseus' sword although she was a god? We answer that the poet habitually calls gods divinities that live very long but succumb to death. Or that Circe shuns the material nature of the sword, as some of the divinities shunned some other materials, as Dionysius [states] in *Lithika*: "by nature [sic!] crystal and holy *iaspis*, hated by Empousas and the other sceptres";' *Schol. H Q T in Od.* 10.323 (ed. Dindorf): διὰ τί δὲ ἐφοβήθη ἡ Κίρκη τὸ ξίφος τοῦ Ὀδυσσέως θεὰ οὖσα; (...) ἢ φυσικῶς φοβεῖται τὸ ξίφος ἡ Κίρκη, ὡς καὶ ἄλλας τινὰς ὕλας τινὲς τῶν δαιμόνων· ὡς καὶ Διονύσιος ἐν Λιθικοῖς 'φύσει δὲ κρύσταλλον ἰδ' ἱερὴν ἴασπιν, ἐχθρὴν Ἐμπούσῃσι καὶ ἄλλοις εἰδώλοισιν.' See also Eust. *Comm. in Hom. Od.* 10.294 and Eust. *Comm. in Dion. Perieg*. 723 ὅτι δέ τινα δαιμόνια ὕλας πτοοῦνταί τινας, πολλοῖς δοκεῖ, ὡς καὶ ἐν Ὀδυσσείᾳ εἴρηται ('many consider that some demons are afraid of certain materials, as stated in the *Odyssey*.'
[20] See Amato (2005: 68-73) on Dionysius' *Lithi(a)ka*, a hexameter poem in three books, and its relation to the *Periegesis*.
[21] Patera 2014: 249.

Empousa and similar dangerous apparitions at bay. A point of contact, and of potential tension, with the episode from Philostratus' *VA* discussed above is worth noting. Apollonius' first encounter with an Empousa takes place in the region south-southeast of the Caspian Sea which, according to Dionysius, yields the gemstone used against this and related apparitions. We may wonder whether the two traditions – that the region around and south-east of the Caspian Sea teemed with Empousas and similar ghostlike apparitions and that one could protect oneself by bearing a *iaspis*-gemstone – emerged together at some point before Dionysius and Apollonius lived, possibly in the Hellenistic period. Dionysius' verses emphasize the element of the tradition pertaining to *prophylaxis*. Against this backdrop, Apollonius' insistence that verbal abuse (*loidoria*) was the prescribed means to counter the Empousa may be considered an implicit reaction against the new prophylactic trend through a statement of open support for the established tradition of banishing the Empousa verbally.[22]

Any attempt to identify the gemstone that according to Dionysius (and his source) has apotropaic effect against the Empousa and similar spectres raises the tricky question of the modern equivalent of ἴασπις. Is ἴασπις identical to the microgranular quartz designated as 'jasper' in modern times, an equivalence adopted by Lightfoot? Or does this one-to-one transliteration represent yet another case of identity confusion, not unusual for the gemstones mentioned in the ancient lapidaries and other literature on gems?[23] Does Dionysius' description of the gemstone give any clues to its typology? Does he refer to a magical gem, in other words a gem inscribed with text and image, or was the prophylactic and apotropaic power inherent in the stone itself?

The last question does not admit of a facile answer, given the poet's reticence; his interest is in the locality (Caspian Sea) and its mineral resources, not in the precise way in which *iaspis* keeps Empousa-like monsters away. No mention of text or image is made by Dioscorides Pedanius either, who notes the use of different types of *iaspis* gemstones for protection and to facilitate quick childbirth (*MM* V 142 'all varieties [sc. of *iaspis* gemstones], hung around the neck, are considered as phylacteries and as bringing about quick birth when worn around the thigh').[24] Amuletic and therapeutic use of *iaspis* gems of various types is mentioned in other medical and medico-magical works, sometimes though not always with reference to inscribed *voces* and images.[25] On balance, a definitive answer is difficult, and all that can be said is that the source does not mention any inscribed text or image(s).

The issues of the gemstone's identity and typology cannot be resolved straightforwardly, either. In her recent comprehensive discussion of the challenges and misconceptions that have complicated identification of the stones treated by ancient gemmological works and related literature, Lisbet Thoresen restated the uncertainty surrounding accurate identification of the modern equivalent of ἴασπις.[26] Thus, only the meaning of ἠερόεσσαν, the qualifier of ἴασπιν in Dionysius' passage, can guide us. What features of the stone does it indicate and, more crucially, what does it express – an actual quality of the stone, or an evocation of poetic tradition? The second option, we should note, does not necessarily rule out the adjective's encapsulation of a genuine identifying feature of the gemstone.

In early Greek epic, the adjective ἠερόεις qualifies nouns such as Τάρταρος, ζόφος ('darkness') and a few other nouns, always in contexts referring to death and the darkness of the Underworld.[27] Hence its usual rendering as 'cloudy,' 'misty,' 'murky,' 'dark,' 'gloomy,' and the like. Lightfoot's 'nubilous' falls within the same semantic field.[28] This interpretation of ἠερόεσσαν in Dion. *Perieg*. 724 is reflected in the ancient explanations and paraphrases of the passage, which cohere in glossing the adjective with σκοτεινήν ('dark').[29] A dark-coloured stone would be appropriate for protection against the Empousa's power, as its colour would mirror the darkness from which the creature emerged and in which the action unfolded.[30]

[22] The double apotropaic tradition is echoed in the remark of the Byzantine high administrator and historian Niketas Choniates, who fused the Empousa and Circe (or rather the exegetical discussions and literary echoes of these two figures, not least Lucian's Onoskeleis in *VH* II 46) when he remarked that the Empousas 'flee and disappear when they are showered with abuse and threatened by bare sword' (*Oration* 8.85 … ὕβρεσι δὲ πλυνόμεναι καὶ γυμνοῖς διαπειλούμεναι ξίφεσιν οἴχονται φεύγουσαι). The Christian bishop Epiphanius of Salamis in a chapter on *iaspis* reproduces and undercuts Dionysius' information using the words of the Philostratean Apollonius (*De xii gemmis* 6: ἄλλη δὲ κρυστάλλου ὕδατι ὁμοία· λέγεται δὲ ὑπὸ μυθοποιῶν ἄκος εἶναι φαντασιῶν).

[23] Thoresen 2017. Lüle (2012) also discusses issues of gem nomenclature and the field of archaeogemmology.

[24] Diosc. MM V 142 … δοκοῦσι δὲ πάντες εἶναι φυλακτήρια περίαπτα καὶ ὠκυτόκια μηρῷ περιαπτόμενα.

[25] Ps.-Diosc. *De lapid.* 12; Epiph. *ap*. Andreas *Comm. in Apocal. Logos* 4 ch. 10. 4, 2-3; Gal. *De simpl. medic. temp. ac fac.* XII 198 K. and 207 K.; Alex. Trall. *Therap.* ch. 15 (I 567 and 571 Puschm.); *Cyran*., Στοιχ. ι 7 (Ruelle 1898: II 24) etc.

[26] Thoresen 2017: 162. Already discussed in Caley and Richards 1956: 107-108 (commentary on Theophr. *On Stones* 27).

[27] *LexfgrE* II 898-899 *s.v.*

[28] Waser (1905: 2541) follows the same line, while Brodersen (1994: 91) differs: 'Gar viel anderes auch, was den Menschen ein Wunder, erzeugen sie, aber vor allem Kristall und Jaspis, an Farbe der Luft gleich, der abwehrt der Empusen und andrer Gespenster Bezaub'rung.'

[29] Eust. *Comm. in Dion. Perieg*. 723: … καὶ ἴασπιν ἠερόεσσαν, ὃ ἔστιν ἀερώδη, σκοτεινὴν; *Paraphr. Dion. Perieg*. 718-725: … ἀναβλαστάνει δέ καὶ τὸν κρύσταλλον καὶ τὴν σκοτεινὴν ἴασπιν.

[30] Explicitly mentioned by Idomeneus of Lampsacus (FGrHist 338 F2: ἐκλήθη οὖν ἡ μήτηρ Αἰσχίνου Ἔμπουσα … ὡς δὲ Ἰδομενεύς φησι Περὶ δημαγωγῶν, ἐπεὶ ἀπὸ σκοτεινῶν τόπων ἀνεφαίνετο τοῖς μυουμένοις). The scenes in Aristophanes' *Frogs* and Philostratus' *VA* 4.2 also take place in the dark.

Figure 1a: © Franz Joseph Dölger-Institut, Bonn, Inv.-Nr. 69, obverse
Photo ©: Akademisches Kunstmuseum Bonn, Jutta Schubert.
Figure 1b: © Franz Joseph Dölger-Institut, Bonn, Inv.-Nr. 69, reverse.
Photo ©: Akademisches Kunstmuseum Bonn, Jutta Schubert.

The representations of Empousa identified on gemstones indeed depict Hekate with disparate legs against the dark background provided by the green and red variety of jasper known as 'heliotrope' or 'bloodstone,' its red spots potentially reminiscent of the apparition's predilection for blood.[31] A heliotrope of unknown provenance, now in the collection of the Franz Joseph Dölger-Institut zur Erforschung der Spätantike in Bonn, (Figure 1), clearly had a prophylactic use, to judge from the inscription running around its bevel, which consists of a magical palindrome (ΑΒΛΑΝΑΘΑΝΑΛΒΑ) and the prayer 'protect Romana' (ΦΥΛΑΞΟΝ ΡΩΜΑΝΑΝ). In this light, a prophylactic function may also be contemplated for the jasper gemstone in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris, which on its reverse bears a personal name (ΦΑΥCTINA) encircled by the same magical palindrome (ΑΒΛΑΝΑΘΑΝΑΛΒΑ) that has been interpreted as appropriate for love magic.[32] The use of the heliotrope from Gadara, which has the *vox magica* ΑΒΡΑCΑΞ engraved on its reverse, cannot be determined. Even when protection is explicitly stated as a gemstone's function, as in the case of the Bonn gem, its specific protective aim can only be conjectured. Heliotropes depicting Hekate-Empousa thus had an amuletic function. Whether they could be used for protection against the creature of darkness itself is an open question.[33] Such use would be in line with the semantics of ἠερόεις and the context of Empousa's action (darkness or concealment). However, the issue has yet another aspect, poetological in character, that complicates the picture.

The adjective-noun combination ἠερόεσσαν ἴασπιν occurs in the exact same metrical position in one of the epigrams about gemstones (*lithika*) attributed to Posidippus of Pella, no. 14 A-B (= P.Mil.Vogl. VIII col. ii.33-38).[34] The epigram praises an *iaspis* gem for its deftly conceived and executed scene of Pegasus' flight to heaven after Bellerophon fell from his winged horse (14, 1-2 A-B εὖ τὸν Πήγασον ἵππον ἐπ' ἠερόεσσαν ἴασπιν/ χεῖρά τε καὶ κατὰ νοῦν ἔγλυφ' ὁ χειροτέχνης). As Bellerophon plunges down towards the earth (the

[31] Mastrocinque (2011: 115-118) considers three specimens to be depictions of the Empousa: (a) Franz Joseph Dölger-Institut, Bonn, Inv.-Nr. 69 = Zwierlein-Diehl 2002: 51, fig. 16, no. 115; (b) de Clercq. 3470 = De Ridder 1911: no. 3470; Mastrocinque 2014: 171, no. 466 (Baghdad, Iraq) [CBd-3695]; images of this gem are accessible: https://medaillesetantiques.bnf.fr/ws/catalogue/app/collection/notices/record/ark:/12148/c33gb1rrmq; and (c) Henig and Whiting 1987: no. 424 (Gadara, Jordan).

[32] Mastrocinque (2011: 118) makes the connection to love magic.

[33] Arata (2008: 23-24) differs, proposing that in a clash of opposites the purity of the material of the gem repels the impure creature.

[34] Austin and Bastianini 2002: 34 (with facing Italian and English translations). First edition: Bastianini, Gallazzi and Austin 2001.

Aleian plain in Cilicia), the winged horse, startled by its unexpected freedom to move, leaps up 'towards the dark blue sky' (εἰς κυανῆν ἠέρα). The final line of the epigram (14, 6 [ἵ]ππ[ον ἐν] αἰθερίωι τῶιδ' ἐτύπωc‹ε› λίθωι, 'the horse he [sc. the engraver] impressed on this heavenly stone'),[35] incompletely preserved, resumes two of the core thematic elements at l. 1, the horse and the gemstone (14, 1 τὸν Πήγαcον ἵππον ~ 14, 6 [ἵ]ππ[ον; 14, 1 ἐπ' ἠερόεccαν ἴαcπιν ~ 14, 6 ἐν] αἰθερίωι τῶιδ' ... λίθωι). Thus, ἠερόεσσαν and αἰθερίωι echo each other with the prepositional phase εἰς κυανῆν ἠέρα (14, 4) as an intermediate verbal link and an intermediate stage in Pegasus' heavenly ascent. The colour of the sky that forms the backdrop to Pegasus' flight can reasonably be assumed to coincide with the colour of the gemstone. This has prompted the hypothesis that the gemstone described in Posidippus 14 was blue in colour.[36] Furthermore, scholars have argued that the gemstone on which Pegasus' flight was depicted was a blue chalcedony, a variety of gem that frequently carried depictions of flying birds.[37]

This interpretation finds apparent support in the information concerning *iaspis* in Pliny's *Natural History* (*NH* XXXVII 37: '*Iaspis* is green and often translucent, a stone which, though surpassed by many others, still retains its former fame. Many countries produce it. That of India resembles smaragdus; that of Cyprus is hard and grey green in colour; that of Persia is like the air; hence its name, *aërizusa*. Such is also the Caspian *iaspis*. (...) But it is less pertinent to distinguish the several localities that furnish it than it is to distinguish degrees of quality. The best variety is that which has a shade of purple, the second best is the one has a shade of rose-red, and third best is that with (a shade of) the colour of smaragdus. To each [sc. of the above varieties] the Greeks have assigned names based on evidence. The fourth variety they call *boria*; it resembles the sky on an autumn morning. This should be identical with the variety called *aërizusa* (...).'[38] Pliny then proceeds to remark on the use of seals made of various sorts of *iaspis* as amulets in the eastern parts of the Roman Empire.[39]

At this point, the testimony of the magical handbook GEMF 15 (*olim* PGM XII), copied in the latter half of the 2nd century AD, becomes relevant.[40] GEMF 15.251-313 (PGM XII 202-264) describes a procedure for consecrating a multivalent and extremely efficient ring (GEMF 15.251-2 δακτυλείδιον πρὸς πᾶσαν πρᾶξιν καὶ ἐπιτυχείαν (...) | λείαν ἐνεργές (...), 'A ring for every procedure and success ... very effective'), the stone of which is identified as an ἴασπις ἀερίζων.[41] On the gemstone an *ouroboros* is to be engraved and within its circle the crescent of the moon with a star on either horn, and above it the image of the sun. Magical names are to be carved on either side of the gemstone (ΑΒΡΑCΑΞ) and around the bevel (ΙΑΩ CΑΒΑΩΘ). Following the ritual of consecration (ll. 260-316), 'you will succeed in everything you propose to do.' 'Everything you propose to do' is a vague way of phrasing the potential use of the ring, and does not point specifically in the direction of protection. However, the request in the prayer uttered during the consecration ritual suggests that the ring fitted with the *iaspis aerizôn* gemstone will, among other things, protect the bearer.

> ἐπάκουcόν μου καὶ τέλεcόν μοι τήνδε τὴν πρᾶξιν ἐπὶ τῷ φοροῦντί μοι τήν|δε τὴν δύναμειν ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ, ἐν παντὶ χρόνῳ ἄπληκτον, ἀκαταπόνητον, | ἄcπειλον ἀπὸ παντὸc κινδύνου τηρηθῆναι, φοροῦντί μοι ταύτην δύναμειν. | ναί, κύριε, cὺ γὰρ πάντα ὑποτέτακται τῷ ἐν οὐρανῷ θεῷ, καὶ μηδεὶc δαίμων (l. δαιμόνων) ἢ | πνευμάτων ἐναντιωθήcεταί μοι (...) (GEMF 15.307-311)
>
> Listen to me and perfect this procedure for me, as I wear this power (sc., the ring), in every place, in every time, (sc., so that it) is protected unstricken, inexhaustible, intact from every danger, for me, as I wear this power (sc., the ring). Aye, lord, because all things submit to you, the god in heaven. And none of the daimons or spirits will oppose me, because upon (this) rite I have invoked your great name.

As the editor of GEMF remarks, the grammatical subject of 'protected' (τηρηθῆναι) is the power, in other words, the ring inlaid with the *iaspis* gemstone. The expected subject, the person wearing the ring, is expressed

[35] This is how the editors of the papyrus restore the verse. Livrea (2002: 70) has restored the verbal form as ἐτύπωc‹α› ('I impressed'). In this reading, the stone which functions as a seal is the speaker.

[36] Gutzwiller 1995: 386; Conca 2002: 24-25; Christensen 2011: 153-158 (referenced in Elsner 2014); Rush 2012: 86n. 57; Elsner 2014: 162-163 (referencing and developing Christensen 2011). Austin and Bastianini rendered it as 'un cupo diaspro/dark jasper' (Austin and Bastianini 2002: 35).

[37] Proposed by Christensen 2011: 153-158 (followed by Elsner 2014). See also Thoresen 2017: 162.

[38] Pl. *NH* XXXVII 37: *viret et saepe tralucet iaspis, etiam victa multis antiquitatis gloriam retinens. plurimae ferunt eam gentes, smaragdo similem Indi, Cypros duram glaucoque pingui, Persae aëri similem, quae ob id vocatur aërizusa; talis et Caspia est. (...) sed minus refert nationes quam bonitates distinguere. optima quae purpurae aliquid habet, secunda quae rosae, tertia quae smaragdi. singulis Graeci nomina ex argumento dedere. quarta apud eos vocatur boria, caelo autumnali matutino similis; haec erit illa, quae aërizusa dicitur.* Also Dioscorides Pedanius (*MM* V 142) also includes ἀερίζων among the varieties of *iaspis*.

[39] Pl. *NH* XXXVII 37: *reliquas sphragidas vocant, publico gemmarum nomine his tantum dato quoniam optime signent. totus vero oriens pro amuleto gestare eas traditur.* See also Diosc. *MM* V 142, Ps.-Diosc. *De lapid.* 12 etc.

[40] Leiden, Rijksmuseum van Oudheiten, P. I 384 (TM 55954). The edition referred to in this article is the most recent collective edition of the papyrus, designated as GEMF 15 in Faraone and Torallas Tovar (2022: 63-134).

[41] The manuscript reading is λαβων ιαcτην αεριζοντα, but the corruption from ἴασπιν is palaeographically very plausible. The emendation must thus be considered secure.

in the dative. However, the formulation 'for me, as I wear/bear this power' (ἐπὶ τῷ φοροῦντί μοι τήν|δε τὴν δύναμειν) leaves little doubt that ring and wearer are entangled and that the requests concerning the ring also extend to the person wearing it, who aspires to be kept unharmed and to find no demon or spirit standing in his way. The dangers envisaged and the powers to be checked are again not specified: they likely included dangerous apparitions and bogeys. A textual tradition thus testifies to the magical and, more specifically, amuletic use of the *aerizôn* or *aerizousa* variety of *iaspis* to withstand demonic powers and spirits.

Do these pieces of evidence prove cumulatively that the variety of *iaspis* labelled *aerizôn* or *aerizousa*, the amuletic use of which is confirmed, can be identified with Posidippus' and Dionysius' ἠερόεσσαν ἴασπιν, and that in turn with blue chalcedony? To my mind, this line of argument presents certain problems and ambiguities that counsel caution. First, is the sky towards which Pegasus flies in Posidippus' Epigram 14 unambiguously blue, turning from cloudy blue to clear, aethereal blue as Pegasus leaps from restraint to freedom, according to Elsner's attractive argument?[42] An element overlooked in this interpretation is that Pegasus ascends towards his heavenly catasterism, which is visible against a clear night sky. Taking this detail into consideration makes it possible to see Posidippus wielding a darker colour palette in this epigram. Following the traditional semantics of ἠερόεις at l. 1, with which his readership would have been very familiar, he poetically engraves the winged horse on a dark *iaspis* to represent him rising after his rider's fall 'towards the black (or dark blue) sky (or air),'[43] and finally imprints him poetically on the gemstone, 'heavenly' (αἰθέριος) in the sense of αἰθήρ both representing the higher strata of the atmosphere that Pegasus has finally reached after passing through the dark ἀήρ and denoting the dark heavens in which Pegasus' catasterism is permanently inset. I therefore suggest that Posidippus' *iaspis* is not necessarily light blue, or blue at all, if we prefer to assume that the poet left the colour options ambiguous.

Pliny, it should also be observed, does not spell out the colour of the *iaspis* stone called *aërizousa*. He describes *iaspis* from Persia and the Caspian region as *aëri similem* ('resembling the air') and adds that the variety *aërizousa*, whose properties overlap with those of the variety for the North (*boria*) resembles 'morning sky in the autumn' (*... caelo autumnali matutino similis*). What the appearance and colour(s) of the sky on an autumn morning might be, especially when the variety is named 'of the North,' is anybody's guess.

The above considerations complicate the interpretation of Dion. *Perieg*. 723-725 which is closely connected to Posidippus 14, at least at the level of expression. Thus, the question of the variety of *iaspis* that was used to banish Empousas and similar apparitions remains open. The magical procedure for consecrating a powerful ring adorned with a *iaspis* gemstone from GEMF 15/PGM XII confirms the use of the *iaspis* variety known as *aerizôn/ aerizousa* for prophylactic purposes. Whether this gemstone was blue chalcedony, however, and whether it was identical to the *iaspis* variety from the Caspian Sea region that was used to banish the female bogey is less clear.

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[42] Elsner 2014: 162.

[43] LSJ s.v. κυάνεος II.2

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Chnoubis, Glykon, Agathodaimon, and the Strange Story of the Swamps of Central Macedonia: Notes on Magical Gems Depicting Snakes[1]

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Abstract

The discovery of a therapeutic amulet in central Macedonia representing the serpent deity Chnoubis provides an opportunity to elaborate on the role of deities depicted as snakes on magical gems of the Graeco-Roman times. This paper studies these gems in light of stories related to swampy areas, in order to investigate the meaning of the metaphorical connections that exist between the serpent deities and to examine the conditions that may have influenced the use of therapeutic amulets during the Graeco-Roman period.

Introduction

The great majority of magical gems were not recorded *in situ* at the moment of their discovery but are found in private collections of ancient artefacts and consequently lack a secure archaeological context. Those that have been found *in situ* are therefore particularly important since they give us a clearer picture of their use. One notable example is a magical gem recovered from the tomb of a physician in the Roman cemetery of Pella. The importance of this discovery is underscored by its occurrence in a region renowned for its favorable conditions for the development of illnesses. The circumstances surrounding the gem's discovery raise intriguing questions, such as the reason behind its presence in Pella and, more specifically, within the tomb of a physician. Answers to these questions could potentially offer valuable insights into the role played by gem amulets in the daily lives of people in antiquity.

The study of gem amulets can unveil the needs, desires, and innermost thoughts of countless anonymous individuals in antiquity, about which the literary and philosophical texts of that time offer only titbits of information. People used a variety of them for diverse purposes, ranging from the promotion of longevity, potency, and fertility to ensuring success in love affairs, preventing diseases, or even curing illnesses.

The first reference to the use of amulets in ancient Greek literature is found in Pindar's *Third Pythian Ode*, written in the early 5th century BC. Pindar sheds some light on the medical practice of his time, describing some of the practices Asclepius employed to cure his patients. The list includes the use of incantations, medicines, and surgery, as well as the technique of applying an amulet to the body of the patient.[2] Obviously, that Asclepius' legendary healing practices were considered the source for the spread of the use of therapeutic amulets in the Greek medical tradition should not come as a surprise, even if Asclepius himself rarely appears on them.[3]

Half a century after Pindar, this practice is documented in Aristophanes' *Plutus*, where a character says that he is not afraid of bites because he wears a ring, for which he 'paid a drachma.' The reference shows that from that time onwards ordinary people used to purchase and wear amulets as rings or pendants, pinning their hopes for therapy and protection on this new magical technology.[4]

By the Late Hellenistic period, amulets had become extremely popular.[5] People believed that their divine power secured a life without danger or health problems and endowed them with special powers. A wide variety of amulets was used to eliminate deadly poison from a scorpion sting, to cure diseases ranging from gout to indigestion, to prevent miscarriage, to protect a newborn infant, or at other times to attract the attention of a woman with whom the amulet's wearer has fallen in love. From that time onwards, amulets acquire special characteristics that clearly

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[2] Pindar, *Pythian Ode*, 3.52-4: τοὺς μὲν μαλακαῖς ἐπαοιδαῖς ἀμφέπων, τοὺς δὲ προσανέα πίνοντας, ἢ γυίοις περάπτων πάντοθεν φάρμακα, τοὺς δὲ τομαῖς ἔστασεν ὀρθούς.

[3] In fact, among the approximately 5500 amulets that reside in the museums worldwide, there are only nine of them that depict Asclepius.

[4] Aristophanes *Plutus*, 883–885. See also Nagy 2012: 92-95; Faraone 2018: 87.

[5] Erika Zwierlein-Diehl (2019) has created a framework for dating this type of gem. 'Magical gems' in general: Bonner 1950; Michel 2004; Faraone 2018; Dasen and Nagy 2019: 416-455; Endreffy, Nagy and Spier 2019.

Figure 1. A typical Chnoubis amulet. 3rd-4th century AD.
(HU_Budapest, Museum of Fine Arts, Classical Collection. Inv. No.: 53.155.
Photo: L. Mátyus. CBd-6. The Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database (2010-), Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest (editor-in-chief: Á. M. Nagy), <cbd.mfab.hu/cbd/6> , viewed 08 June 2023.

distinguished them from similar objects such as jewels and seals, leading contemporary scholars to put them in the category of 'magical gems.'

The term 'magical gem' is a modern concept for describing a specific type of engraved stone that was used mainly during the Graeco-Roman period. The first feature that characterizes these gems are the inscriptions engraved on them. These are names of gods, verbs in the imperative mood to express desires, palindromes, and the seven vowels, along with words and phrases lacking any obvious meaning but regarded as powerful, known collectively as *voces magicae*. The second feature is the unintelligible quasi-alphabetic signs carved on the amulets. These signs, which were considered mystical symbols enabling direct communication with the gods, are known as *charaktêres*.[6] The final distinguishing feature is images of gods and polymorphic deities from Greek or Egyptian mythological tradition, depicted in new iconographic compositions or new versions of older mythical narratives. New deities moreover emerge, such as the cock-headed Anguipede and the lion-headed Chnoubis, that are appear almost exclusively on this type of object.

Chnoubis on the gems and in the ancient sources

Chnoubis, one of the new deities who appear only on the gem amulets, seems to encapsulate some new religious quest of individuals living in the late Hellenistic period. He appears as a lion-headed snake standing upright, on his head a nimbus with either seven or twelve rays.[7] Most scholars believe that Chnoubis derives from a syncretism of the old Egyptian god Khnum and one of the 36 decans of Egyptian astrological tradition.[8] His image is usually found on three types of amulets. The first type has the deity depicted on green stones, jasper or chalcedony, bearing the inscribed name XNOYBIC or XNOYMIC together with a carved triple S that has a horizontal stroke in the middle, the so-called 'Chnoubis sign' (Figure 1 and Figure 2). Amulets of this type were believed to be effective against abdominal illnesses and digestive problems. The second type are amulets made of white translucent stone bearing the inscription XNOYBIC and the crossed triple S symbol, in which Chnoubis seems to promote breastfeeding (suckling).[9] The final type presents Chnoubis among other deities in the so-called uterine amulets, protecting a symbol that most scholars interpret as symbolizing the uterus, which is also carved on them.[10]

The therapeutic gem of Pella belongs to the first type of Chnoubis amulets. It was discovered in 2006 in a burial of a man who lived in the early 3rd century AD.[11] The medical instruments found in the tomb indicate that

[6] The *Charaktēres:* Gordon 2014: 253–300; Dzwiza 2015: 31-56.

[7] Chnoubis amulets in general: Bonner 1950: 54-60; Michel 2004; Mastrocinque 2005: 61-87; Dasen and Nagy 2012: 291-314; Barbara and Trinquier 2012; Nagy 2019: 179-216; Faraone 2018: 152-55. Shandruk (2016: 127-66) offers a computational approach to Chnoubis amulets.

[8] The origin of Chnoubis: Jackson 1985; Dasen and Nagy 2012: 291-314; Faraone 2018: 152-55, esp. n. 37; Quack (forthcoming).

[9] Dasen 2019, 2023.

[10] The Uterine Amulets: Dasen 2005: 574-77; 2007: 41–64. New interpretation by Tsatsou (2019: 271-82).

[11] Chrysostomou 2008: 659–672. Magical gems from ancient Macedonia found *in situ:* Tsatsou 2015: 113-32.

Figure 2. Chnoubis amulet. 2nd-3rd century AD.
(The J. Paul Getty Museum, Villa Collection, Malibu, California. Inv. No.: 83.AN.437.54. Gift of Damon Mezzacappa and Jonathan H. Kagan
CBd-2350. The Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database (2010-), Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest (editor-in-chief: Á. M. Nagy), <cbd.mfab.hu/cbd/2350>, viewed 10 September 2023.

the man was probably a physician. The amulet is made of green chalcedony with some red spots. It is set in gold and has a suspension ring. The obverse depicts the lion-headed snake Chnoubis that points toward the left with his head crowned with seven rays. Three lines come out of his nose, which may symbolize his fiery breath. To the right and left of the representation, the inscription ΧΝΟΥΦ appears, that is an alternate version of the name Chnoubis. On the reverse is the Chnoubis sign, which is surrounded by the inscription COPPOOPMEPΦEPBAPTAPMAPΦPIO. The inscription is a variant of the *σορροορ-logos*, which is sometimes found on Chnoubis amulets.[12] Above and below the sign the letters ΥΡΙ and ΝΓ (Figure 3).

Ancient writers often mention amulets of this type, but they rarely specify the name of the figure that is carved on them. Galen, the famous physician of the 2nd century AD, referred to these gems and advocated for the effectiveness of their use through firsthand experience. The text specifically reads:

> 'The testimony of some authorities attributes to certain stones a peculiar quality which is actually possessed by the green jasper. Worn as an amulet, it benefits the stomach and esophagus. Some also set it in a ring, and engrave on it the radiate serpent, just as King Nechepsos prescribed in his fourteenth book. I myself have made a satisfactory test of this stone. I made a necklace of small stones of that variety and hung it from my neck at just such a length that the stones touched the position of the cardiac orifice. They seemed just as beneficial even though they had not the design that Nechepsos prescribed.'[13]

Galen does not bother to mention the deity's name, nor does he describe the snake as lion-headed, since he believes that the efficacy of the amulet does not originate in the inscription or the image that is carved on it. In fact, he believes that the improvement in his health came from the material of which the amulet was made, in this case green jasper, as well as in the placement of the stone on the appropriate part of the body, close to the painful area, in this case on the cardiac orifice, to affect the stomach and the esophagus. In the text Galen references a famous astrological treatise written in the late 2nd or early 1st century BC whose authorship was attributed to Nechepso and Petosiris, a legendary pair of astrologers.[14] This type of amulet therefore seems to have been in use long before the 2nd century.

Information about the deity's lion head is found in the famous lapidary handbook *On Stones* (*Περί Λίθων*) of Socrates and Dionysus that describes the therapeutic

[12] CBd-180, CBd-182, CBd-353, CBd-354, CBd-702.

[13] Galen, *De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultatibus* 12.207.1–10. English translation by Bonner (1950: 54, n. 2). See also Jouanna 2011: 44-77.

[14] Cf. Fraser 1972: 437; Tester 1987: 22.

Figure 3. Chnoubis amulet. 3rd century AD.
(Archaeological Museum of Pella, without inventory number). Reproduced with the permission of the Archaeological Museum of Pella. Photo: E. Tsatsou

and magical properties of gems, written probably in the 4th century AD. In one passage we read: 'Engrave on it (a kind of onyx) a serpent coil with the upper part or head of a lion, with rays. Worn thus it prevents pain in the stomach; you will easily digest every kind of food.'[15]

Half a century later the Egyptian astrologer Hephaistion of Thebes writes that 'it was generally accepted that Chnoumis, the third decan of Cancer, could be used in amulets for the stomach.'[16] During the same period, the Latin medical writer and distinguished physician Marcellus of Bordeaux described 'a serpent with seven rays carved in jasper, in a gold setting' as a therapy for stomach ailments.[17]

The fact that Hephastion and Marcellus do not describe the serpent on the amulet in detail or refer to its lion head may be explained by a number of gems that depict the Chnoubis snake without a lion head. In these cases, Chnoubis can easily be associated with other serpentine deities of that time, one of which is the popular Agathodaimon.

Chnoubis, Agathodaimon and Alexander the Great

Agathodaimon was the 'genius of Alexandria', the snake god who, after the founding of Alexandria by Alexander the Great, became the city's protective deity.[18] Ancient writers appear to have considered Agathodaimon and Chnoubis counterparts since their characteristics are very similar. In the *Greek Magical Papyri,* the names *Agathodaimon* and *Chnouphi* sometimes occur together.[19] Moreover, the so-called 'Chnoubis sign' is most often depicted on the objects that are interpreted as Agathodaimon's amulets. An interesting example is an amulet from the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology that was used to treat stomach problems. The obverse shows a deity who in place of a human head has the head of an ibis and the head of a crowned snake, which is Agathodaimon. Around the figure we read the *αρπονχνουφι-logos*, which includes reference to Chnoubis. On the reverse, among various *voces magicae*, are inscribed the words πεσε πεσε Χνουβις ('Chnoubis, digest, digest'), together with the characteristic crossed triple S symbol (Figure 4).[20]

The link between the two gods becomes even clearer in an amulet that we encounter in the Numismatic Museum of Athens. The gem depicts on the front side Agathodaimon, while on the back side, the name Χνουβις (Chnoubis) is inscribed, accompanied by the voces magicae *ναλβις βοενουτ* (Figure 5).[21] This is a

[15] *Orphica, Lithica kerygmata* 35. 3–6.
[16] Hephaestion, *Apotelesmatica* 12.20-24.
[17] Marcellus of Bordeaux, *De Medicamentis* 20.98.

[18] For Agathodaimon in general see Fraser 1972: 209-11; Mitropoulou 1977: 155-68; Dunand 1981: 277–78; Martin 2012: 172–73.
[19] *PGM* VII 1023; *PGM* IV 11705-10.
[20] Bonner 1950: 205; Dunand 1981: 279.
[21] Derchain 1964:179-81.

Figure 4. Amulet against stomach ache. 3rd-4th century AD.
(US_Ann Arbor, University of Michigan, Kelsey Museum of Archaeology. Inv. No.: 26059. Photo: C.A. Faraone. CBd-1441. The Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database (2010-), Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest (editor-in-chief: Á. M. Nagy), <cbd.mfab.hu/cbd/1441> , viewed 08 June 2023.

Figure 5. Agathodaimon-Chnoubis amulet. 3rd-4th century AD.
(Numismatic Museum of Athens. Tzivanopoulos collection. Inv. No.: 83 (97). Reproduced with the permission of the Numismatic Museum of Athens.
Photo: E. Tsatsou

variation of the "Ναβις βιενουθ logos" which appears almost exclusively on Chnoubis gems.[22] Nevertheless, the most explicit reference to the connection between Agathodaimon and Chnoubis is found in the *Praeparatio Evangelica* where the 1st-century historian Philo of Byblos refers to the identification of the two gods, writing 'the Phoenicians call the snake Agathos Daimon and similarly, the Egyptians name it Kneph.' The name Kneph should be an early form of the name Chnoubis.[23]

Agathodaimon played a significant role in the foundation of Alexandria.[24] In the *Alexander Romance*, the popular collection of facts and legends about the achievements of Alexander the Great written in the 4th century AD but echoing far older sources, [25] is a description of how Alexander's architects were planning to build the new city between the rivers Agathodaimon and Drakōn. The text mentions that in the marshes on the western edge of the Nile River delta, Alexander slaughtered the great serpent Agathodaimon and ordered that the place be garlanded in memory of the serpent's killing and a shrine erected there. From the shrine's doors emerged numerous snakes that found refuge in the houses of Alexandria. The Alexandrians started to worship them as benevolent deities (*ἀγαθοὶ δαίμονες*) that protected the city and to make sacrifices to them.[26] Recent evidence suggests that they also hung images of Agathodaimon on their houses for protection or tied them on their bodies as amulets to prevent illnesses or cure their diseases.[27]

Alexander himself became gradually assimilated with Agathodaimon and their cults seem to have amalgamated. An interesting bronze statuette from 2nd-century AD Alexandria may be associated with this phenomenon. The statue today is in the J. Paul Getty Museum and, although various identifications had been proposed, most scholars agree that it represents Agathodaimon in the human form of Alexander the Great.[28] The presumed relationship between Alexander and Agathodaimon is strengthened by indications that the sacrifices to the city's protector snakes were held in the same area where the temple of Alexander may have been, suggesting that the temple of Agathodaimon and the temple of Alexander were one and the same.[29]

The deification of Alexander associated with the dynastic cult of his descendants was adopted in large parts of their territories from the early years of the Hellenistic period, while myths about Alexander's conception through Olympias' intercourse with a snake and legends of his healing skills appeared and circulated widely. Graeco-Roman writers described him as a serpent-born hero[30] and as a healer who either inherited his mother's therapeutic skills or learned the mysteries of healing from his teacher Aristotle.[31]

A belief in Alexander's power to heal and protect existed until at least the end of the 4th century AD. At that time people used coins with Alexander's image as amulets, hanging them around their necks or binding them around their heads and feet to cure ailments. A passage from the *Historia Augusta*, a 4th-century AD text, informs us that the image of Alexander was employed in rings, silver discs, and other jewellery, as people believed that it helped those who used it in all their pursuits.[32] Not only polytheists but also at least some Christians observed this custom of using images of Alexander as therapeutic amulets. John Chrysostom, the great Church Father of the late 4th and early 5th centuries, was particularly irritated by this behaviour and strictly condemned the use of Alexander amulets.[33]

Surprisingly, in Macedonia, his region of origin, Alexander's cult appears only in the first half of the 3rd century AD.[34]Around this period, the material evidence suggests that his cult in Macedonia was associated with that of the snakes Draco and Dracaena. The most noteworthy item is a votive monument found in Florina (western Macedonia) which bears a depiction of Alexander the Great together with Zeus and Hera. In its gable, the monument contains an image of opposed snakes with an egg in the centre.[35] Outside Macedonia, but on the borders of Upper Moesia near present-day Skopje is an equally interesting monument dedicated to the deities 'Jupiter, Juno, Draco, Dracaena, and Alexander' (*Iovi et Iunoni et Dracconi et Draccenae et Alexandro*).[36] Since the name 'Alexander' is explicitly mentioned, the monument is believed to be related to the aforementioned cult, and most scholars agree that

[22] Bonner 1950: 199.

[23] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio Evangelica*, 1.10. For the relationship between Kneph and Chnoubis see Thissen 1996 who cites further bibliography.

[24] The foundation myth of Alexandria: Ogden 2013: 286-93; 2015: 129–50.

[25] The *Alexander Romance* of Pseudo-Callisthenes: Kroll 1926; Wolohojian 1969; Stoneman 2008; Zuwiyya 2011; Nawotka 2018: 525–42.

[26] *Alexander Romance* 1.32.

[27] Dunand 1981; Faraone 2018: 172.

[28] Frel (1981: 70-71, 113; 1987: 78) initially thought the figure was Sarapis, while Bricault (2018) argued that he was Hermanubis. See also Svenson 1995: 74, 244, 393; Grossman 2001: 60-61.

[29] *Alexander Romance* 1.32: *καὶ θυσία τελεῖται αὐτῷ τῷ ἥρωι ⟨ὡς ὀφιογενεῖ⟩*. Full discussion by Taylor (1927: 162-69; 1930: 375–78). See also Ogden 2013: 286-87; 2015: 129–50; Djurslev and Ogden 2018: 11-21.

[30] Plutarch, *Life of Alexander* 2.4, 3.1. See also Asirvatham 2001: 93–126; Ogden 2013: 331-35; Wojciechowska and Nawotka 2018: 427-48.

[31] Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica* 17.103.8; Cicero, *de Divinatione* 2.135.

[32] *Historia Augusta*, *Tyranni Triginta* 14.3-6.

[33] John Chrysostom, *Patrologia Graeca* 49.240. Discussions in Maguire (1997: 1037-54); Fulghum 2001: 139-47, at 144.

[34] Reluctance to deify Alexander the Great during the Antipatrid and Antigonid dynasties is noted by Rizakis and Touratsoglou (1996: 955-56 with n. 28); they also consider (1996: 955-59) the phenomenon of Alexandrolatry. See also Hatzinikolaou 2007: 266-72.

[35] Rizakis and Touratsoglou 1996: 957; Jovanova 2015: 310.

[36] Šašel Kos 1991; Rizakis and Touratsoglou 1999: 955–59; Jovanova 2015.

the 'Alexander' of the second monument, to whom the dedication is made, is in fact Alexander the Great. This connection can hence be associated with the narratives that describe Alexander as a serpent-born hero.

Not everyone agrees with this assumption, however. Some scholars consider this particular Alexander in fact to be Alexander of Abonouteichos, the controversial proponent of the Glykon cult in Paphlagonia.[37]

Glykon: the 'Asclepius of Pella'

Lucian, the famous 2nd-century AD satirist, told the story of Alexander of Abonouteichos. His pamphlet describes Alexander of Abonouteichos as a religious impostor who functioned as the negative image and the reverse example of Alexander the Great. In the text, Lucian mentions that when Alexander of Abonouteichos came to Pella, he was impressed by the snakes he found there. They were 'great, quite tame, and gentle, so that they were kept by women, slept with children, let themselves be stepped upon. They did not become angry when they were stroked and took milk from the breast just like babies.' He mentions also that he has 'no doubt that a serpent of that sort slept with her (queen Olympias) when she was carrying Alexander,' connecting the snakes of Pella to the myth of the miraculous conception of Alexander the Great.[38]

Lucian relates that while in Pella, Alexander bought one of the snakes and returned to Abonouteichos, a small town on the south coast of the Black Sea, where he founded a sanctuary, introducing a new cult dedicated to that snake. He named the snake Glykon, 'the new Asclepius.'[39] Obviously, the roots of the new deity could be traced back into the Asclepian tradition, but Glykon was in fact a new god with a hybrid nature, appearing as a serpent with humanoid face.

The new cult had a strong mystical aspect as well as a solidly therapeutic character. Alexander himself was probably a physician trained by a disciple of Apollonius of Tyana. He prescribed medical treatments, diets, and other useful remedies to devotees and even developed a healing ointment made from bear's fat called *cytmides.*[40]

Even if Lucian cynically describes the founder of the new cult as a charlatan who aimed at personal gain and deceived his followers, the archaeological evidence not only from Abonouteichos but also from Dacia, Nicomedia, Athens, and Rome confirms that the worship of Glykon was widespread and long-lived, as well as that Alexander and the snake god enjoyed strong recognition among both the simple, naive inhabitants of Abonouteichos (as Lucian implies) and members of the educated Roman elite.[41] Images of Glykon appeared on Roman provincial coins for many decades beginning in the middle of the 2nd century AD. He can also be seen in bronze figurines and an impressive marble statue found in Constanza.[42]

Among the gem amulets Glykon's presence is rather rare, since only two of those we know contain references to him. Still, both of them mention Chnoubis. On the first amulet, now in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris, a clear connection between the snake god of Pella and the lion-headed Chnoubis is evident (Figure 6).[43] The amulet presents the image of a lion-headed, radiate snake, while the inscription contains three names: *Chnoubis*, *Glykona*, and *Iao*. The last is an early Greek form of the unpronounceable name of the Jewish god, frequently shown on amulets. The presence of the names Glykona and Chnoubis in the same frame proves the link between them. Whoever made and used this amulet obviously considered the two deities assimilated to each other.

The second talisman, now lost, is known from a drawing that the antiquarian Comte de Caylus made in the 18th century (Figure 7).[44] On the amulet's obverse is a snake upon a column facing right with rays encircling its humanoid head. This snake may be a representation of Glykon. On the reverse appears the mythic phoenix, often depicted on therapeutic amulets. De Caylus comments that around the amulet's edge is an inscription that reads XPOYBIC (Chrouvis), certainly a different form of the name Chnoubis.

Unfortunately, we cannot be sure of the extent of the identification of Chnoubis and Glykon since no other sources confirm their relationship. That the popularity of Chnoubis was used to increase Glykon's influence in the wider Black Sea region as a snake god with therapeutic properties is nevertheless possible, so that Glykon's followers likely saw their own therapeutic deity in the face of Chnoubis.

On the other hand, the link between the cult of Alexander of Abonouteichos and that of Alexander the Great is more than obvious. In fact, the 'false prophet' of

[37] Šašel Kos 1991; Rizakis and Touratsoglou 1999: 957-58.
[38] Lucian, *Alexander 7.*
[39] Lucian, *Alexander* 38–40. The role of snakes in Asclepius' cult: Girone 1998: 91 and n. 35. Glykon's cult in general: Sfameni Gasparro 1996: 565-90; 1999: 275-305; Mastrocinque 1999: 341-52; Chaniotis 2002: 67-85; Petsalis-Diomidis 2010; Bremmer 2017: 49-78.
[40] Lucian, *Alexander* 22.
[41] Archaeological evidence for Glykon's cult: Bordenache Battaglia 1981: 279-83; Robert 1989: 747-69; Mitchell 1993: 13, esp. n. 24.
[42] Coins, bronze figurines, and marble in Glykon's cult: Mitropoulou 1977: 188-200. See also Bordenache Battaglia 1981: 279-83; Petsalis-Diomidis 2010: 14-41.
[43] Delatte and Dercain 1964: 68. Mastrocinque (1999, 2009) sees a link between Glykon and the serpent that the Gnostics worshipped in the Eastern Empire, whom he identifies as Chnoumis. In contrast, Dasen and Nagy (2012) consider the connection between the two deities on this particular amulet fortuitous.
[44] Caylus 1762: 70; Van den Broek 1972: 439; Mastrocinque 2003: 260.

Figure 6. Chnoubis-Glykon amulet. 3rd-4th century AD.
(FR_Paris, Cabinet des Médailles. Inventory Number: 58.2190bis. Photo: A. Mastrocinque.
CBd-360. The Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database (2010-), Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest (editor-in-chief Á.M. Nagy), <cbd.mfab.hu/cbd/360>, viewed 08 June 2023.

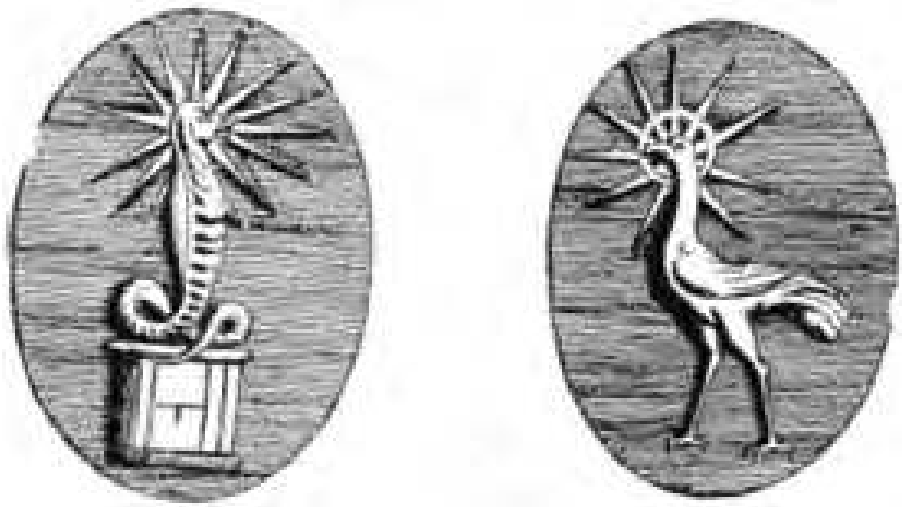

Figure 7. Chnoubis-Glykon-Phoenix amulet. 3rd-4th century AD. Engraving reproduced from Caylus 1762 (*Recueil d'antiquités égyptiennes, étrusques, grecques et romaines* 5: 70)

Abonouteichos tried to connect the cult he had created to elements of the tradition associated with Alexander the Great. This is evident not only through his self-comparison to the Macedonian king, as Lucian hints, but also through his serpent deity's origin from Pella.[45]

The snakes and the swamps

In many ancient cultures, snakes were seen as powerful religious symbols of knowledge, strength, and immortality and were worshipped as gods. This is due to their peculiar characteristics, suited to communicate symbolic meanings. That they glide along the ground, shed their skin, and give the impression they regenerate, that their eyes do not blink, suggesting they are creatures of divine wisdom, their tongues are forked, and above all, that their venomous bite induces a primordial fear of death propel discussion about the nature of human existence and the meaning of human life.[46] Snakes inhabit the margins between the upper

[45] Petsalis-Diomidis (2010: 45, esp. n. 78) notes allusions to Alexander the Great in Lucian's text.

[46] Snakes in antiquity: Mitropoulou 1977; Ogden 2013; Rodríguez

and lower worlds, and are thus said to provide a link between them. Their ambiguous nature works for both good and evil, creating chaos as well as order, and is associated with death, rebirth, and immortality. They are consequently difficult to categorize, for they live in a state of permanent transformation.

In ancient Greek mythology, snakes were considered guardians and protectors of sacred groves, lakes, and temples, so that iconic heroes would often fight and kill them. Greek tradition offers a multitude of relevant tales, such as those of the sacred snakes of Ares that protected the groves. The first snake, in Colchis, was killed by Jason or put to sleep by Medea,[47] while the second was killed by Cadmus, who was himself transformed into a snake after founding Thebes in Boeotia.[48] The great snake Python is another example of a guardian snake; it protected the sacred oracle at Delphi and was slain by Apollo. There is also the multi-headed serpent Hydra, guardian of the entrance to the Underworld in Lerna, that Heracles famously killed. To that series of myths and legends, we can undoubtedly add the story of Alexander the Great's slaughter of the sacred snake Agathodaimon and the assimilation of Agathodaimon's cult to the cult of Alexander. All these narratives are evidently related to snake cults of the eastern Mediterranean that were gradually incorporated into the worship of new deities or heroes.

From the 4th century BC onwards, when Alexander the Great's mother Olympias is believed to have brought some kind of serpent-worship from Epirus to swampy Pella, his birthplace, snake cults were of special importance in ancient Macedonia.[49] The area experienced great growth when the Macedonian king Archelaus chose it as the most suitable place to build his capital city at the end of the 5th century BC. The region's location provided great opportunities for development. Although the area of Pella was originally on the coast, from the 4th century BC its four rivers (Echedoros, Axios, Loudias and Haliacmon) began to create an alluvial plain that eventually closed the mouth of the gulf and formed a swamp.[50] These conditions, we should note, are very similar to those in the area in Egypt where Alexander the Great founded the city that bears his name a century and a half after Pella's foundation.[51]

Despite the peculiarity of the port of Pella, the area attracted numerous inhabitants of different origins, composing a large and prosperous society at least until the Battle of Pydna in 168 BC, when the Romans conquered it. Livy, writing at the end of the 1st century BC, describes Pella as a cleverly chosen capital because of its fortifications, surrounded by inaccessible swamps.[52]

Although the existence of the swamps ensured the city was naturally fortified, they caused major disadvantages for the health of the area's inhabitants. The toxic vapours from the swamps and the lack of springs to provide clean water would have strongly affected their daily lives, provoking chronic illnesses such as splenomegaly, dysentery, and malaria.[53]

The detrimental effect on the health of the inhabitants of swampy areas such as Pella led people to believe that areas like this are bridges linking the world of everyday life with the underworld. Swamps and marshlands were often seen as gates to Hades or as boundaries between the living and the dead. They were seductive and mysterious, but also sinister and dangerous. In Greek mythology are many narratives mentioning this issue. Dionysus went to the underworld to bring his mother Semele back to life, using an entrance located in the swamps of the lake of Lerna.[54] Aristophanes in his comedy *Frogs* describes Dionysus' journey to the underworld through the marshes of lake Acherousia. During his trip, the god encounters the ghosts of dead frogs, 'slimy offspring of the marshland,' singing hymns to honour Dionysus, the 'god of the marsh.'[55] According to Pausanias, Pluto abducted Kore, the daughter of Demeter, in the swampy region of Lerna and brought her to his underworld kingdom. In one version of the Orpheus myth, Orpheus goes to Aornum, a swamp in Thesprotis considered to be the entrance to the underworld, to find his beloved dead wife.[56] Even the meaning of the name *Aornum* itself derives from the

Pérez 2015, 2021.

[47] Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 1.9.16; Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 2.402-06.

[48] Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Bibliotheca* 3.4.1; Euripides, *Bacchae* 1330-39, 1355-60.

[49] Plutarch, *Alexander* 2.6; cf. Aelian, *De Natura Animalium* 11.2. See also Carney 2006: 88-103. In Pella and the wider region are numerous finds that reveal the existence of a cult dedicated to a snake as an autonomous deity or linked to the cult of Zeus Ktesius, Zeus Melichius, and Asclepius: Düll 1977; Hatzinikolaou 2007; Saatsoglou-Paliadeli 1992: 51-67.

[50] Pseudo-Scylax, *Periplus* 66.

[51] Diodorus Siculus (*Bibliotheca historica* 17.52) and Flavius Josephus (*De bello Judaico* 2.386) refer specifically to the rivers and the marshes that enclosed and protected the city of Alexandria.

[52] Livy, *History* 44.46.

[53] At the beginning of the 20th century Pella's swamps provided a good hiding place for the fighters in the Macedonian Struggle. They also inspired *The Secrets of the Swamp*, the acclaimed book by Penelope Delta (1937, *Στα μυστικά του βάλτου*. Athens: Estia) that pays tribute to the Greek soldiers who fought to expel Bulgarian armed bands from the swamp, describing the hardships, the area's bad air, and the diseases which afflicted the fighters and the inhabitants. Pella's swamps were finally drained in the years 1928-36 to expand agricultural production and to rid the region of malaria.

[54] Pausanias 2.37.5.

[55] Aristophanes, *Frogs* 185-224; Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 11.13. The topography of the underworld: Zografou 2021. Snakes in the underworld: Ogden 2016.

[56] Pausanias 9.30.6.

fact that the swamp gave forth poisonous vapours so that no bird could safely fly over it.[57]

The association between wetlands and epidemic diseases was not unnoticed by Hippocrates, the great 5th-century BC Greek physician. His *Miasmatic Theory* suggests that diseases arise from unhealthy, polluted vapours rising from swamps or from poor water quality.[58] In fact, Hippocrates states that the miasma itself is not related to a violation of some moral law or the resulting state of ritual impurity, but is a noxious form of 'bad air' that causes diseases.[59]

Soranus of Ephesus, a Greek physician of the 1st century AD, and the *Suda Lexicon* inform us that Hippocrates visited the Macedonian king Perdiccas to cure him of an illness he was suffering.[60] Perdiccas was the father of Archelaus, the founder of Pella. Although this meeting has scant basis in historical fact, that Hippocrates indeed traveled to Macedonia and knew the characteristics of the region from firsthand experience is not improbable. Consequently, the unhealthy atmosphere of the Macedonian capital might have played a role in the formulation of his *Miasmatic Theory* of disease.

As might be expected, the poor water quality in the vicinity of Pella and the unhealthy living conditions of the inhabitants were so well known in antiquity that stories were created reflecting the problem. In the *Deipnosophistae*, written by Athenaeus of Naucratis in the early 3rd century AD, are two entertaining anecdotes. The hero in both stories is Stratonicus, the distinguished 4th-century BC musician, well-known for his witty spirit and sharp tongue. In the first anecdote, Stratonicus arrives in Pella, well informed about the splenic diseases that the environment caused in the inhabitants. Initially, when he saw young people visiting the public baths and in excellent physical condition, he thought that the information he had received was incorrect. He noticed, however, that the doorman had a spleen twice the size of his belly. Then he said jokingly, 'the doorman should be careful with the spleens of the bathers, as, if they are large, there will be a problem of overcrowding in the baths.'[61] In the second anecdote, a thirsty Stratonicus was standing in front of a well and asked the locals if the water of the well was drinkable. When they confirmed that they drank from the well, assuring him the water was safe to drink, he noticed the colour of their skin – it was yellowish-green – he then said it was 'not drinkable.'[62]

The region's unhealthy air and poor water quality were so well known in antiquity that it became the subject of paradoxical and farcical narratives in which, though suffering from chronic abdominal swelling and jaundice, the inhabitants of Pella seemed unperturbed by these symptoms of their illness. The passages from the *Deipnosophistae* lead us to assume that they had adopted certain practices, such as the use of amulets, to manage their illness and its consequences. These practices reassured them that they would get better. This expectation could then activate their capacity for self-healing and provide them with the desired relief from their illness.[63] In that sense, the use of therapeutic amulets was considered an effective practice. The fact that the physician in the Roman cemetery of Pella was buried with his Chnoubis amulet to take along to the underworld proves the intensity of belief in its efficacy.

Conclusion

The Graeco-Roman world formed the larger environment that molded and influenced decisions made by individuals who sought treatment for various health issues through healing artefacts such as amulets. This paper examined the conditions that may have influenced the use of therapeutic amulets during that period.

Since few magical amulets have been unearthed *in situ*, the discovery of the Chnoubis gem in Pella serves as an example of how popular snake-themed healing amulets could be in swampy environments with poor water quality and inadequate hygiene. In addition, the fact that the gem was discovered in the tomb of a physician confirms that what Galen did when he tried the Chnoubis amulet on himself to ease his pain was not an isolated event. Doctors of the time not only advised their patients to use such amulets but also utilized them themselves, demonstrating their belief in the therapy they could potentially provide.

In the world of amulets, concepts are combined creatively to produce new forms of supernatural creatures that are not dependent on one specific religious tradition but rather act individually and independently. The amulets examined in this paper have allowed us to increase our understanding of the harmful and unhygienic conditions that people in ancient times had to endure. People discovered ways of confronting and treating their sicknesses, of dealing

[57] The term ἄορνος means 'without birds.' Latin writers used the corresponding term *avernus* to characterize certain swampy lakes and caves that gave off mephitic vapours and noxious gases. Cf. Vergil, *Georgics* 4.490-92. See also Pfanz *et al.* 2014. The marshes played an important role in ancient Egypt: Kantor 1945 (esp. the chapter 'The Swamp Plant').

[58] Hippocrates, *De aere aquis et locis* 7.

[59] The notion that bad air causes diseases is reflected in the modern term 'malaria' ('bad air,' from the Italian *mala aria*); Vaiopoulos 2007. Miasma in general: Parker 1996.

[60] *Vita Hippocratis secundum Soranum*, See Pinault 1992: 61-77.

[61] Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 8.41.

[62] Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 8.45.

[63] The placebo effect: Harrington 1997; Humphrey 2002: 225-46; Benedetti 2009.

with anguish and relieving their innermost concerns through the use of these minuscule artefacts, which served as small sacred spaces for communication between this world and the other.

In the light of the unearthing of the Chnoubis amulet, some examples of ancient serpent-like deities have been presented, along with the metaphorical connections prevailing between them. The Chnoubis of the Graeco-Roman amulets is connected to Agathodaimon, a protective deity who assumes a serpent's shape throughout the Hellenistic era and is eventually associated with Alexander the Great. Chnoubis is linked to Agathodaimon as well as to Glykon of Alexander of Abonouteichos, a divine creature originating from a serpent found in Pella. Chnoubis' origins, however, remain a mystery. The intriguing theory that some relationship exists between Chnoubis and Alexander the Great and the swampy region of the latter's birthplace can be formulated considering that he is at least secondarily associated with the two serpentiform deities.

Even though discerning the exact significance and connections that lie behind all these associations and resemblances is a challenge, Chnoubis, Glykon, Agathodaimon, and perhaps the snake-born Alexander the Great can all safely be assumed to be linked by the ardent conviction that snakes represent a primal force transcending good and evil, a power that connects life and death while remaining medial. Diseases are a manifestation of this intermediate position. One can slither away from it much as serpents do, using an amulet with the image of a snake that usually slithers along the ground but when faced with a threat (disease) rear up forcefully and fights back.

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‘Against a Demon and Fears.’ A Phylactery in the Archaeological Museum of Perugia

Paolo Vitellozzi[1]

Abstract

The paper aims to provide further comment on a recently published magical gem housed in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale dell’Umbria (Perugia, Italy). The gem, showing Hermanubis blessing a corpse which is probably that of the dead Osiris, can be clearly recognised as a phylactery against a demon thanks to the inscription on its bevelled edge. A comparison of the gem’s text and image with the rituals described in the Greek magical papyri, as well as with other gemstone amulets, is the starting point for reconstructing the ritual tradition surrounding the creation of this kind of amulets, as well as the popular beliefs underlying their use. The paper also investigates the relationship among medium, image and text, as well as that between the inscribed text and the magical formulae in the papyri. The epigraphic features are also discussed, including those regarding the magical symbols (*charaktêres*) engraved on the amulet.

The collection of gems in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale dell’Umbria in Perugia, which had been largely neglected until its 2010 publication,[2] includes a group of Greek magical amulets of the Imperial period that were first noticed by the authors of the Sylloge Gemmarum Gnosticarum.[3] Among these extremely interesting artefacts is a black chalcedony[4] showing Hermanubis blessing a corpse in a coffin (Figure 1), which can be easily recognised as a phylactery against demons thanks to the explicitness of the inscription running round its bevelled edge. The artefact, measuring 2.2cm × 1.8cm × 0.5cm, formerly belonged to the Perugian collector Mariano Guardabassi, who purchased it in Rome in October 1861.[5] The first commentary on it was by G. Lovatti,[6] whose description was partially reported by C. Bonner in his 1950 monograph on magical amulets.[7]

The rather unusual motif, alongside the absence of images on the reverse and the exceptional quality of the inscriptions, might raise questions about the antiquity of the artefact, whose real provenance unfortunately still remains unknown. However, the position of the elements engraved on its surface shows parallels among the so-called magical gems: bipartite intaglios are in fact not uncommon,[8] while the presence of an ouroboros in one register, accompanied by a further figure or inscription, above or below, is also attested, albeit rarely.[9] From a strictly stylistic point of view

Figure 1: Perugia, MANU (inv. no. 1733) = *CBd*-4250. Black chalcedony. Obverse: Hermanubis next to a coffin + *charaktêres* / bevel: inscription πρὸς δέμονα κὲ φόβους. Photo: Paolo Vitellozzi, used with permission.

[1] I wish to thank the Organising Committee for the opportunity to present this paper, which provides further comment on a magical amulet that I first published in 2010. I am also grateful to Christopher A. Faraone and to an anonymous reviewer for their insightful suggestions on an earlier version of this paper. In addition, I thank Tiziana Caponi (Museo Archeologico Nazionale dell’Umbria) for the permission to publish my original photograph of the Perugia gem, Flavia A. Tulli and the copy-editor for revising my English manuscript.

[2] Vitellozzi 2010a; Vitellozzi 2010b.

[3] *SGG* II: 102-118, pls. 29-34.

[4] Lovatti 1862: 51-52; *IG* IV, 2413, 8; *SGG* II: 103, no. Pe 1; Vitellozzi 2010a: 24-25, no. A5; Vitellozzi 2010b: 411, no. 510; *CBd*-4250.

[5] Perugia, Biblioteca Augusta, Ms 2259: 9R; Ms 2363: 81, 169, Rome 26th October 1861. See also Salimbene 2010: 64, fig. 52 (the original text is incompletely reported, but visible in the figure).

[6] Lovatti 1862: 51-52.

[7] *SMA*: 95.

[8] E.g., a jasper in Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, inv. no. Luynes.166 = *LIM*: 72, no. 168 [*CBd*-3332].

[9] E.g., two jaspers in Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, inv. no. AA.Seyrig.20 = *LIM*: 52, no. 118 [*CBd*-1300], obverse: Hermanubis above an ouroboros / reverse: Ἀβρασάξ; inv. no. AA.Seyrig.67 = *LIM*: 61, no. 141 [*CBd*-3310], obverse: Ouroboros and winged scarab / reverse: inscription.

then, the rendering of the figures,[10] which is rather accomplished, shows no elements that might raise doubts about the authenticity of the intaglio, nor does the cutting of the inscriptions, which clearly resembles that of a red porphyry from Cairo now in Paris.[11] In light of these data, therefore, no element here seems to invalidate the authenticity of the gem, which could well be dated to the 3rd century AD.

As seldom happens, the function of this amulet has been made clear by the engraver, who explicitly states that the gem is supposed to work πρὸς δέμονα κὲ φόβους (read πρὸς δαίμονα καὶ, though δαίμονας may have been intended),[12] *pros demona ke phobous*, that is, 'against a *daimon* and fears.'[13] Although rare, a similar way of indicating an amulet's function is also found on other gems, for example, a dark brown ironstone once belonging to Edward T. Newell and published by Bonner[14] shows the figure of Isis-Hecate on the obverse and bears a long magical *logos* where the scholar reads the words *pros petla* (*pros petala*), 'against a curse tablet,' while a much more prosaic gem in Copenhagen[15] proudly declares it was created πρὸς κωλάνεμον, 'against wind from the rectum.'

Likewise, the writer of the inscription helps us to understand the function of the amulet clearly and in consequence link its creation to the ritual performances reported by the Greek magical papyri. The rubric of a magical recipe in Michigan (Ἑκάτης Ερεσχιγὰλ πρὸς φόβον [...]σιον[16]) in fact offers analogous protection against fear and perhaps also against impeding demons like Empousa,[17] while a British Museum papyrus[18] reports the recipe of a 'charm to restrain anger' which is said to work against enemies, accusers, brigands, phobias, and nightmares (πρὸς [...] φόβους καὶ φαντασμοὺς ὀνείρων). The charm consists in inscribing

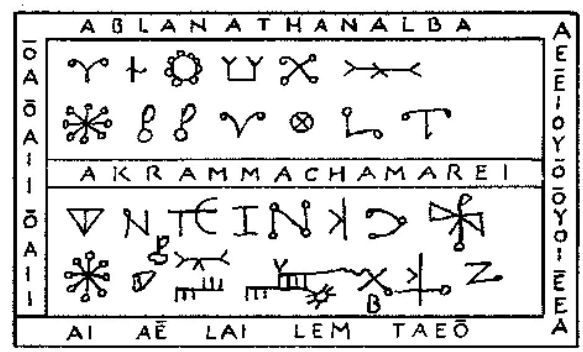

Figure 2. *PGM* X, 24-35. Graphic model for a gold or silver phylactery, explicitly said to work against 'enemies, accusers, brigands, phobias and nightmares.' Drawing by the author after *GMPT*: 149.

Figure 3. *PGM* IV, 2705-2707. Graphic model for a protective charm on a silver leaf. Drawing by the author after *GMPT:* 88.

a gold or silver leaf with a series of magical signs, thus creating a phylactery, sketched as in Figure 2.

Although understanding the meaning of those magical symbols currently seems impossible, some of them distinctly resemble those on the Perugia gem. Furthermore, the great magical papyrus of Paris[19] offers a graphic model (Figure 3) of how to make a silver phylactery consisting of magical characters within the complex procedure called 'Slander Spell to Selene.'

In this case as well, some of the symbols drawn on the papyrus are also present on our intaglio, which likely means that all these combinations of protective magical signs belong to a long tradition of which the Perugia phylactery is also part. Scholars have in fact found good evidence through the centuries of a transformation in amulet-making, a shift from carving gems with texts and images to the practice of inscribing metal foil and papyri with similar designs. Over time, as technologies and styles changed, images and text previously used for engraved gems were transferred to other media such as thin metal sheets and papyri that were more easily worked, especially by trained scribes rather than gem-cutters.[20]

The elaborate series of symbols inscribed in the lower half of the obverse are therefore closely connected to

[10] For example, the rendition of Anubis's robe can be paralleled with that on the Berlin agate ÄM inv. no. 10117 = Philipp 1986: 96, no. 144 [*CBd*-2099], while Anubis's head clearly resembles the BM jasper, inv. no. G 387, EA 56387 = Michel 2001: 32, no. 50 [*CBd*-429].

[11] Paris, Cabinet des Médailles (inv. no. Froehner 2952) = *LIM*: 213, no. 600 [*CBd*-3830]. Inscription: ἡ χάρις Κανδίδῳ 'Favour for Candidos,' below: a wreath and a flail.

[12] Cf. *SMA* 95, lines 15-16.

[13] The reading of the inscription, wrongly reported in *SGG* II: 103, no. Pe 1, is correctly given in the other editions: Lovatti 1862: 51-52; *IG* IV, 2413, 8; Vitellozzi 2010a: 24-25, no. A5; Vitellozzi 2010b: 411, no. 510.

[14] *SMA*: 278, no. 156. Brown ironstone, obverse: Hecate and inscription: Ωαιωωαιουευωιαιηευοευμαρζακριμωθεραφρωφιαβλαβι ουιουλευλανθιβηρομαχθερκαχλαβωδρεξλολιχηωιαφρενουμερζωρ**προ οσπετλα**αρθερμαιμαδυζωρ — πρὸς πέτλα = πρὸς πέταλα? 'against a tablet'? (C. Bonner).

[15] Copenhagen, National Museum, inv. no. 7034 = Michel 2004: 237, no. 1.2_2 [CBd-4003], haematite. Obverse: Aeolus and eagle / reverse: προσ|κωλα|νεμ|ον → πρὸς κωλάνεμον

[16] *P.Mich.* 3.154 = *PGM* LXX = *GEMF* no. 56: The original *PGM* reading 'Εκάτης Ερεσχιγὰλ πρὸς φόβον κολάσιος ('Against fear of punishment from Hecate Ereschigal') has been recently emended by Faraone and Torallas Tovar (Faraone 2019: 207, n. 8).

[17] Faraone 2019.

[18] *Gr. P.* CXXIV = *PGM* X, 24-35 (4th-5th century CE).

[19] Bibl. Nat. suppl. gr. 574 = *PGM* IV (= *GEMF* 57), 2705-2707.

[20] On this process, see esp. Faraone 2022.

the function of the phylactery. The probable objective of the gem maker(s) was to create a magic protective glyph against which no evil entity could operate.

Most of these symbols seem to imitate Greek letters, basically by adding little circles (the so-called *Brillenbuchstabe*) serving as finials or apices or supernumerary lines; sometimes, more complex shapes are inspired by hieroglyphs, or simply combine two or more basic alphabetic signs. In this instance, as Richard Gordon has demonstrated,[21] *charaktêres*[22] were evidently intended to take over the role assumed to have been fulfilled by hieroglyphs, since their primary function would be to underscore the claim to be the legitimate heir of Pharaonic temple practice, even at a time when hieroglyphic writing was no longer taught in the temple. As remains of knowledge allegedly preserved from time immemorial, these magical signs, unless regulated by a secret code that we have not yet deciphered, still serve to supply the symbolism required by the practitioner. They furthermore perform two implicit functions, to make occult knowledge exclusive to an *élite* and to proclaim infallible authority over the other world. In fact, the unfamiliarity of the designs implies the otherness of the ideal readers, namely the gods and the *daimones*.

While the inscribed words are clear enough to explain the function of the gemstone, which, as its shape suggests, was probably inserted into a pendant and worn on the chest, its imagery and material reveal much more of its concept. The black chalcedony of which the gemstone is made is in itself instructive, since perfectly black stones, although rare in the *corpus* of magical gems, are always dedicated to deities of the underworld,[23] especially related to the sphere of night and death: two meaningful examples of this are obsidian amulets now in Paris, one depicting Osiris as a mummy,[24] the other one showing Seth seated on a chair, watching over Osiris's mummy lying upon a bed.[25] In addition, one of the probable epithets of Osiris must be mentioned: *kmj* ('the black one'),[26] so that the colour of our stone therefore makes further reference to the god of the afterlife. The colour black can be also connected to Anubis himself, with whom a Demotic magical text associates black dogs.[27]

The colour of the gemstone and the engraved image, which was most probably kept visible, finally bring us to the amulet's cultural background, which can be found in the Egyptian Pharaonic tradition, more specifically in the *Book of the Dead*.[28] Within the circle made by the Ouroboros biting its tail stands Hermanubis, dressed in a long robe. His iconography is quite unique: with his right hand slightly extended, he points his herald's staff (*kērykeion*) downward at what evidently appears to be a coffin containing a corpse. Although the minute size of the latter figure does not provide any clues to its identity, many parallels lead us to infer that the dead body inside the coffin may have been envisioned as that of Osiris: numerous gems show the dead Osiris surrounded by an ouroboros and protected by the scarab (Khepri) and Horus's hawk.[29] The word *AMEN* (ἀμ<έ=ή>ν, 'Amen'),[30] which we can imagine Anubis himself uttering in a sort of speech bubble, appears to be a rare example of avant-garde interaction between spoken word and image, although similar examples do occur in the wide *corpus* of inscriptions preserved by the extant gems.[31]

Thus, encircled by the coils of the ouroboros, symbolizing the limit between order and chaos, being and non-being, the dead Osiris journeys through the darkness of the netherworld, blessed by Anubis who protects him from the evil forces of death trying to hinder him on his way to eternal life.

Both the *Book of Caverns*[32] and the *Amduat*[33] show the dead journeying through the underworld protected by the coils of a serpent[34] (Figure 4), while the *Book of The Dead* offers a representation of Anubis standing by the bier upon which the mummy of the deceased is laid.[35]

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[21] Gordon 2011.

[22] On the so-called *charaktêres* see Mastrocinque in *SGG* I: 90-98; Gordon 2011; Dzwiza 2013; Gordon 2014; Dzwiza 2015; Dzwiza 2019.

[23] Cf. Michel 2004: 225, esp. lines 24-26. See also Mastrocinque 2011.

[24] Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, inv. no. AA.Seyrig.23 = *LIM*: 37, no. 72 [*CBd*-1279], obsidian. Obverse: Osiris as a mummy / reverse: winged scarab.

[25] Paris, Cabinet des Médailles, inv. no. AA.Seyrig.17 = *LIM*: 37, no. 71, obsidian. Obverse: Seth seated next to the corpse of Osiris / reverse: inscription.

[26] Schmidt 1935: col. 1174, and the apparatus *ad loc*. Cf. also Ritner in *GMPT*: 157, n. 31; Brashear 1995: 3589, s.v. κημι.

[27] *GMPT*: 226, *PDM* xiv, 554-62.

[28] See esp. Hornung 1979; Faulkner 1993.

[29] Listed in Michel 2004: 313, no. 39.2.

[30] Lovatti (1862: 51-52), thought that the letters αμεν referred to Amenthes 'dio degli inferi,', which is '(Amentet), the Egyptian Hades according to Bonner (*SMA*: 95, line 12), who gives no further interpretation of this word. In my opinion, postulating such an abbreviation, as well as the one suggested in *IG* 2413, 8 (Ἀμεν(ωφί)?, 'Amenophis?'), is unnecessary since the long open-mid front unrounded vowel ⟨ε⟩ deriving from the diphthong ⟨αι⟩ is written as *epsilon* in the inscription; we can therefore suppose that this is also valid for that of the word ἀμήν (pron. /ɑːˈmɛn/), written as *epsilon* instead of *eta*. Furthermore, *Imntt* (Imentet or Amentet) is a goddess, while both the figures shown on the gem seem to be male gods, and Amenophis's name seems to have no relationship with the motif. Finally, the spelling ἀμέν instead of ἀμήν appears in *Hippiatrica Excerpta Lugdunensia*, 104, line 8 (*CHG* II: 297), at the end of a Latin prayer transliterated into Greek.

[31] E.g., on a British Museum jasper (inv. no. G 241, EA 56241 = Michel 2001: 5, no. 8 [*CBd*-387]) the mummy of Osiris is flanked by the words ἐγὼ ὁ ὤν ('I am the Existing One'), while two haematite amulets against sciatica in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (Michel 2004: 329, nos. 47.1.b_2-3 = *LIM*: 170, nos. 463-464 [*CBd*-3692 and 3693]), show the old Egyptian motif of a reaper, with the inscription ἐργάζομ{ε}<αι> κ{ε}<αὶ> οὐ πονῶ ('I work and do not toil') on the reverse.

[32] Hornung 1984.

[33] See esp. Hornung 1963; Hornung and Abt 2007.

[34] Hornung 1979: 86-94.

[35] Wasserman 1994: pl. 33.

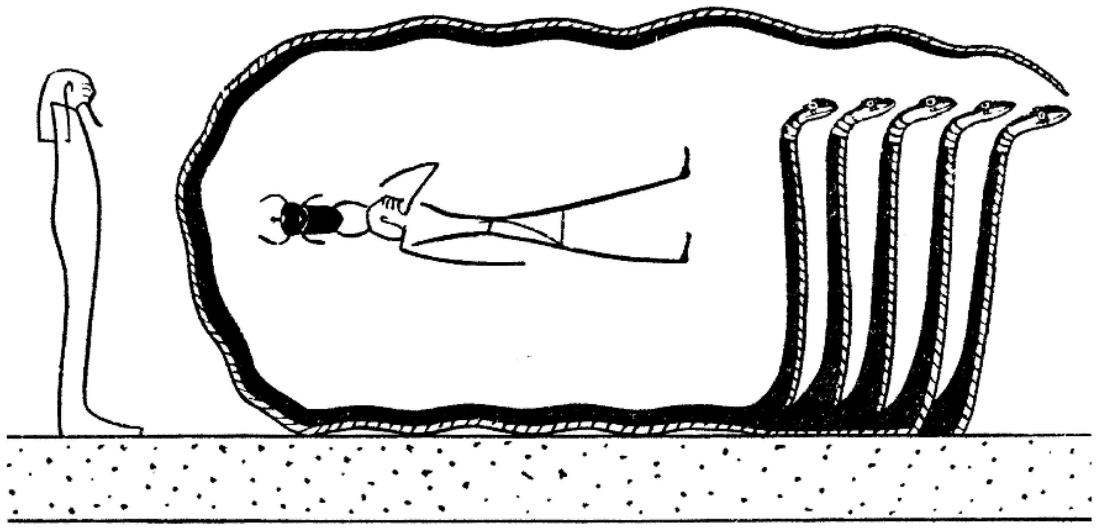

Figure 4. Amduat: detail from the sixth hour. Drawing by the author after Schweizer 2010: 121.

This scheme finds a perfect parallel on a Getty Museum jasper amulet of the Roman Imperial period,[36] perhaps a perfect example of the continuity of themes and motifs through the centuries.[37]

Furthermore, in the fifth hour of the night, the *Amduat* shows the motif of the tomb of Osiris.[38] The element of the tomb, coffin, or 'chest,' which provides shelter for the process of regeneration, is of the utmost importance in this scene, and the god standing in front of it is in fact called 'Anubis of the chest.' Addressing the two mourning birds that surround the tomb, the Sungod says:

> May you guard your chest!
> May your voice be loud and your throats truthful!
> May this image you guard be concealed.
> May you spread your wings and do your duties,
> that I may pass by you in peace.
> (trans. D. Lorton, in Schweitzer 2010)

In the sixth hour of the night, the Sungod descends into the depths of the netherworld, where the laws of night, silence, and death reign. At the deepest point of the netherworld, on the threshold between the world of the living and that of the dead, is where the Sungod encounters the most intense darkness and the most ominous danger, where the greatest mystery lies hidden: the corpse of the Sungod, which is also that of Osiris. Here, at this absolute depth, nonbeing, which is both life-threatening and liberating, comes into contact with Osiris's realm of the dead. And it is here that the transcendent mystery of the union of the Sungod Ra and Osiris, the god of the netherworld, takes place. Here, at the very edge of the primeval waters of Nun and their primordial darkness, where Apophis threatens creation with chaos and nonbeing, lies a huge, ouroboros-like, many-headed serpent with multiple faces encircling the corpse of the Sungod in his form of Khepri. This image alludes in several ways to the mystery of the renewal of life in the depths of the night. The recumbent body is called the 'corpse of Khepri as his own flesh' or 'corpse of Osiris.'[39]

The Perugia amulet is therefore evidently referring to the moment of Osiris's descent into darkness. The inscription along the edge recalls the protective circle of the ouroboros depicted on the obverse: the blessed corpse of Osiris can pass through the dark realm of chaos into the light of resurrection, and in the same way the wearer can avoid the nightly visits of demons as well as of his deepest fears.

Although most of the gems showing Osiris contain clear references to the god's future resurrection, our amulet seems to leave no place for such a hope. The black colour of the stone, together with the word *Amen* pronounced by Anubis, in fact appear to emphasize the opposite, in other words the solemnity of death which the jackal-headed god, as guide of souls, proclaims as ordained.

Therefore, we may even suppose that the demon mentioned in the inscription, whom the wearer seems to fear, could have been the restless spirit of a dead individual, a wandering soul that had to be returned to the realm of the dead where it belongs. Just as Anubis,

[36] Malibu, Getty Museum (Inv. no. 83.AN.437.51 = Michel 2004: 314, no. 39.5.a_5 [*CBd*-2347]). Green jasper showing Anubis watching over a mummy.
[37] On this topic, Faraone 2018.
[38] Hornung 1963: 80-88.
[39] Hornung and Abt 2007: 190-200. Cf. Schweizer 2010: 119-132.

here significantly equated with Hermes in his role as psychopomp, proclaims the death of Osiris, binding him in the underworld, the wearer of this magical gemstone might have wished to banish a wandering ghost with its power.

Such procedures to avert underworld entities, which were believed sometimes to emerge from the realm of the dead to attack the living and could be driven away by special words and gestures, are present in a number of narratives from the Roman Imperial period, such as the aforementioned Michigan recipe, which probably originated as a text of instructions for initiates facing attacks in Hades, where new arrivals in the Underworld were confronted by terrifying enemies such as Empousa, a shape-shifting demoness often assimilated to Hecate, who caused a plurality of fears.[40] The text of our inscription, which similarly addresses a single demon using a singular accusative and a plurality of fears with a plural one, may have been conceived to confront an analogous entity, even Empousa herself.

In his *Lover of Lies*, Lucian[41] puts a complete description of such an encounter in the mouth of a character named Eucrates, who describes how he used 'a ring of iron made from crosses' that an Arab had once given him to protect himself against Hecate, who emerged from Hades, then approached him in a threatening manner. Eucrates, whom the Arab had taught 'an incantation of many names,' says he was able to chase the demon away by turning the gem on his ring around to the inside of his hand, showing a ritual pairing of magical formulas and gestures that we can probably imagine the wearer of the Perugia amulet also used. As well, in a ritual procedure reported by a Demotic papyrus,[42] the performer proudly proclaims 'Osiris is he who is in my hand!' likely alluding to the possession of an amulet showing the god's image, just as in this case.

Together with the abovementioned evidence of the Greek papyri, some innovative studies on ancient Egyptian demonology[43] may shed further light on the amulet's possible function. According to the inscription, we can undoubtedly interpret the amulet as a device against a demon causing fear, but the similarity of our formula to that of the lamella cited in *PGM* (X, 24-35: πρὸς φόβους καὶ φαντασμοὺς ὀνείρων) may even lead us to conjecture that the gem was also intended to protect the wearer from one of his recurring nightmares, which in the Egyptian tradition were often attributed to demons. We now have enough evidence to suppose that in ancient Egypt dreams may have been understood as an external phenomenon coming from a liminal zone between the world of the living and that of the divine, which could also be the *Duat*.[44] An extremely disturbing belief was that dreams could allow the vulnerable sleeper to be watched or even assaulted by the hostile dead.

Accordingly, while gods could make themselves visible to mortals in dreams, so could the hostile dead, who were held responsible for terrifying nightmares. New Kingdom spells, such as those reported by the well-known Leiden papyrus I 348, vs. 2,[45] which introduces itself as a 'book for driving out terrors which come in order to descend upon a man in the night,' attest to the prevailing fear of nightmares brought by the dead crossing over from the other world, while the complex steps that could be taken to ensure safety during the night emphasize the tangible nature of the demons of darkness, who were blamed for problems related to the possession of individuals or the invasion of places. To combat these demonic entities coming from the darkness, numerous Egyptian spells, including a few that became part of the *Coffin Texts*, prescribe the use of various amuletic figurines, usually made of clay.[46]

In light of these factors, our amulet may even be explained as a device for restful sleep, undisturbed by visits of the unquiet dead in the form of bad dreams. Such a mundane interpretation might find a parallel, according to a recent remark made by Faraone[47] about a famous British Museum jasper.[48] This amulet shows a mummy and bears a long inscription[49] that correlates a *historiola* narrated in the present tense concerning the young Memnon with the amulet's user, thus demonstrating the efficacy of such associations. Faraone convincingly interprets the British Museum example as a means to lull a child to sleep. Consequently, if the myth of Osiris was used in that case to induce sleep, then the Perugia gem, when correlated with the information we find in the papyri, may also be interpreted in a similar way. If this holds true, we can then infer that the belief in the efficacy of our amulet, which the user might well have worn in bed while sleeping, could have rested on an analogy between the nocturnal voyage of the dead Osiris in the realm of darkness and the nightly sleep of the wearer protected by the amulet from his own deepest fears.

[40] Faraone 2019. I want to thank Christopher A. Faraone for this suggestion. See also A. Maravela's essay in this volume.
[41] Luc. *Philops.* 24; Faraone 2019: 219-222.
[42] *GMPT*: 227; see also A. Mastrocinque in *SGG* I: 56.
[43] E.g., Szpakowska 2011.
[44] Szpakowska 2011: 76.
[45] Burghouts 1971.
[46] Szpakowska 2011: 74.
[47] Faraone 2016: 111-112.
[48] Inv. no. G 241 (EA 56241) = Michel 2001: 5, no. 8 [*CBd*-387].
[49] Obverse: 'Ημέρας γόνος Μέμνων κοιμᾶται κραβαζαζηραβιραθκηβα 'Ιάω εω. / 'Memnon, the son of Hemera is asleep.' Reverse: Φιλίππας γόνος Ἀντίπατρος κοιμᾶται κραβαζαζηραβιραβιραθκηβα 'Ιάω εω; 'Εγὼ ὁ ὤν. / 'Antipatros, the son of Philippa is asleep' (*voces magicae*). 'Ιάω (two vowels), I Am the Existing One.'

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CBd The Campbell Bonner database: http://classics.mfab.hu/talismans (seen 14.04.2023).

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IG *Inscriptiones Graecae* 1873–...

GEMF Faraone, C. and S. Torallas Tovar (eds) 2022. *Greek and Egyptian Magical Formularies* 1....

GMPT Betz, H.D. (ed.) 1992. *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation...*

LIM Mastrocinque, A. 2014. *Les intailles magiques du département des Monnaies...*

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Apotropaia and Phylakteria. Confronting Evil in Ancient Greece is the outcome of the conference held in Athens in June 2021 and hosted by the Swedish Institute at Athens.

The belief in the existence of evil forces was part of ancient everyday life and a phenomenon deeply embedded in popular thought of the Greek world. Fear of such malevolent powers generated the need for protection and we find clear traces of these concerns in both textual and archaeological sources. From the beginnings of literature, there is mention of ghosts and other daemonic beings that needed appeasement, and of ways of repulsing evil, such as the use of baskania and antibaskania (apotropaia). Repeatedly, we meet rituals of an apotropaic or prophylactic character conducted as part of everyday and family life, as for example on the occasion of a birth, marriage or death in the oikos (the cleansing of the house and household, libations and sacrifices in honour of oikos ancestors), and other practices that focused on the protection of the community as a whole, i.e. the Pharmakos ritual. Archaeology reveals an abundance of material objects thought to have the power to attract benevolent, and avert evil, forces. Traces of ritual practices necessary to ensure prosperity and avert personal disaster are manifest today in the form of amulets, certain semi-precious stones believed to protect women and children, eye-beads found in large numbers in many archaeological assemblages, possibly various types of terracotta figurines, such as nude female grotesques and various ithyphallic characters, to name a few. In addition, symbols and certain iconographic motifs, such as the phallus, the open hand, the Gorgoneion, images of triple Hekate, and Hermes, have been subject to a number of differing interpretations relative to apotropaic power.

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