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Curses in Context III:

Greek Curse Tablets of the Classical and Hellenistic Periods

Edited by

Christopher A. Faraone and Irene Polinskaya

Norwegian Institute at Athens

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ATHENS 2021

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Foreword

In Norwegian classical studies - which encompasses ancient Greek and Latin literature; languages and civilizations; religion and classical reception – ancient magic has for a long time held a special place. This is undoubtedly the result of the various, trailblazing activities of Professor Samson Eitrem (1872-1966). Eitrem is the one who gave Norwegian classical studies a "renaissance" at a crucial historical moment. He developed classics into a visible, important and available program of study at Norwegian universities. He contributed major new insights to research in papyrology, in ancient magic, and more generally in ancient religion. Together with his colleague Gunnar Rudberg, Eitrem founded the journal *Symbolae Osloenses* in 1922, and therein continued to publish much of his work on magic and papyri. Even today, Eitrem is considered one of Norway's most important and most recognized scholars of classical studies, due to a large extent to his contributions to the field of magic and divination – one of the larger scholarly fields with which the current volume is in conversation.

The first International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens took place in 1997, on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of Samson Eitrem's birth. The organizers were Erik Østby (Norwegian Institute), Siri Sande and Hugo Montgomery (University of Oslo) and David Jordan (Canadian Institute). The topic was "the world of ancient magic," and in addition to marking the anniversary, a chief aim of the conference was to provide a forum for a wide range of contemporary approaches to the study of magic in the ancient world.[1]

Against the backdrop of this tradition, it was a great pleasure for the Norwegian Institute to be contacted by Christopher Faraone in 2017 to explore the possibility of another conference on magic, more specifically on curses, to be co-sponsored by the Institute. The Norwegian Institute was already looking for ways to follow up this research area, and the conference proposal turned

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1. The proceedings of this first Eitrem seminar was published as *The World of Ancient Magic. Papers from the First International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 4-8 May 1997*, edited by David R. Jordan, Hugo Montgomery, and Einar Thomassen. Papers from the Norwegian Institute at Athens 4. Bergen: Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1999.

out to be the perfect match. The conference proper took place in June of 2019, and was organized under a twin heading: as the third conference in Christopher Faraone and Sofia Torallas Tovar's "Curses in Context"-series sponsored by the Neubauer Collegium of the University of Chicago - and as "The Second International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens." Compared to the previous Eitrem Seminar, the second one provided an ample, impressive display not only of new finds, but also of new techniques for cleaning and photographing the lead tablets, thus making them more accessible to a wider group of scholars and in turn generating a wider dialogue about the curse tablets in their local, material and cultural contexts.

As a contribution to this wider dialogue on ancient magic, and curse tablets in particular, we are proud to publish the proceedings of the conference in the Institute's series *Papers and Monographs from the Norwegian Institute at Athens.* The collaboration has given the Institute an important opportunity for continuity in a central field of research for classics in Norway, and opened up for new networks and conversations.

I want to take the opportunity to deeply thank the organisers, Christopher A. Faraone and Sofia Torallas Tovar from the University of Chicago, for excellent and easygoing collaboration. I also would like to extend special thanks to Anastasia Maravela, current professor of classics at the University of Oslo, with special interest in and responsibility for the papyrus collection at the University Library at Oslo. This is the collection that Eitrem himself established together with his later successor Leiv Amundsen, and then left behind for the latter and for further successors to continue to build. Prof. Maravela was a speaker at the conference at which the papers presented in the current volume were originally presented and she was instrumental in bringing the "Curses in Context"-project together with the Norwegian Institute.

It is a great honour to include this excellent volume in the Institute's series!

Jorunn Økland
Director of the Norwegian Institute, 2016-2020

Alphabetical List of Contributors

Jorge J. Bravo III is Associate Professor in the Department of Classics at the University of Maryland, College Park. He is the author of *Excavations at Nemea IV: The Shrine of Opheltes* (2018) and several articles on hero cult, including "Recovering the Past: The Origins of Greek Heroes and Hero Cult" in *Heroes: Mortals and Myths in Ancient Greece* (2009). His research interests more generally include the archaeology of ancient Greek religion, athletics, and gender and sexuality.

Jaime Curbera studied in Madrid and Rome and specializes in Greek onomastics. Since 2000 he has been working at the *Inscriptiones Graecae* in Berlin. His interest in proper names led him to collaborate with David Jordan on the publication of curse tablets from Mytilene, Pydna, and Athens. He still rues the day when he accepted Jordan's idea of publishing a new corpus of Attic *defixiones* (to appear as *IG* II/III^3 8), which has turned out to be bad not only for his eyes, but also for his psychological stability.

Theodore Eliopoulos is a member of the Greek Archaeological Service since 1992. He has worked in the Ephorates of East Crete and (since 1999) of Athens. His chief interests are in Greek religion and Minoan-Mycenaean religion and iconography. He has two monographs in final preparation: the publication of the Dark Age shrine at Kephala Vasilikis in eastern Crete and a book about the seated Minoan-Mycenaean and Early Greek goddess.

Christopher A. Faraone is the Edward Olson Professor of Classics at the University of Chicago. His work focuses primarily on three areas: ancient Greek magic, religion and poetry. His two recent books *Vanishing Acts: Deletio Morbi as Speech Act and Visual Design on Ancient Greek Amulets* (2013) and *The Transformation of Greek Amulets in Roman Imperial Times* (2018) are the product of a decade's work on the design and transformation of amulets in the Greek-speaking world. He has also edited, with Dirk Obbink, *The Getty Hexameters: Poetry, Magic and Mystery in Ancient Greek Selinous* (2013).

Evangelos Kroustalis is an archaeologist, owner (since 2021) of "ILISOS Archaeological Enterprise," a private firm specializing in archaeological survey. Since 2004 he has excavated on behalf of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Piraeus in Piraeus and its environs and on the islands of Salamis and Antikythera. He is preparing the publication of a book tentatively titled *Topography of the North Slope of the Athenian*

Acropolis and the Wider Area, which is based on his PhD thesis. His research interests include the topography of ancient Athens, Piraeus, and Salamis; GIS applications in field archaeology; and Attic epigraphy.

Jessica L. Lamont is Assistant Professor of Classics and History at Yale University. In her teaching and research, she uses ritual objects, such as curse tablets, as a means of accessing social history. She is completing a book on the history of Greek curse tablets, *In Blood and Ashes: Curse Tablets and Binding Spells in Ancient Greece*, under contract with Oxford University Press. She has recently published articles on (i) a group of metrical binding curses from Attica, (ii) a curse inscribed on a cooking pot containing the head and feet of a young chicken, and (iii) a lead effigy with bound hands that was impaled by nails and inscribed with the name Theophrastus.

Irene Polinskaya is Senior Lecturer in Greek History at King's College London. Her research focuses on local aspects of ancient Greek religion, social history, and Greek epigraphy, especially in the Saronic Gulf region (Aegina and Attica) and the northern Black Sea. She is the author of *A Local History of Greek Polytheism: Gods, People, and the Land of Ancient Aigina, 800–400 BCE* (2013) and editor of the English and digital editions of the *Inscriptions of the Northern Black Sea,* a new *IOSPE* (https://iospe.kcl.ac.uk/index.html), as well as author of *Graffiti and Dipinti of Borysthenes/Berezan*, volume II.1 (2020) in that series.

Jutta Stroszeck is the director of the Kerameikos excavations of the German Archaeological Institute in Athens. She is the author of *The Kerameikos in Athens: History, Buildings, and Monuments within the Archaeological Park* (2014); the editor of the *Kerameikos* series; and—together with Heide Frielinghaus—the co-editor of the series Beiträge zur Archäologie Griechenlands (6 vols., 2010–2020).

In Memoriam David R. Jordan

John Traill (University of Toronto)

The passing of David Jordan was a great loss to scholarship. A commanding authority on ancient magic and Greek curse tablets, he traveled widely in the scholarly world, and his opinion was regularly sought on a wide variety of topics in epigraphy, philology, and ancient religion. He possessed a rare and special talent, a quintessential gift, simultaneously to read and interpret the most difficult kind of ancient Greek epigraphical writing, the seemingly illegible scratchings found on lead curse tablets. And he did so with very apparent ease. I often watched him in action, as he brought order to chaos, producing wholly convincing readings from the most desperate texts. In all his scholarship he was a perfectionist; his research was meticulous and thorough, his arguments were balanced and cogent, and his obvious mastery of his subject—a mastery *sans pareil*—was everywhere in evidence. Because of this pursuit of excellence, he did not publish nearly so much as his friends and colleagues would wish; his extremely high standards would not allow him to let anything go to press until he had solved every problem and examined, verified, and approved every detail. His exceeding care reminded me of descriptions of the method of composition of one of his favorite authors, Virgil, about whose writings we corresponded on a number of occasions.

The passing of David is most of all a tremendous loss to his many friends; we shall all miss him greatly. I first met him when we were both members of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens in the late 1960s. We had much in common: a love of epigraphy, a love of Greece, and a love of the convivial, vibrant life of modern Athens with its so many attachments to the ancient city. His accent and manners were those of a gracious southerner, a gentleman—he was born in Georgia. He was engaging in conversation and good-natured in disposition. He was generous in sharing his knowledge, the most generous scholar I have known. I cannot count the number of times he helped me—no, I have a computer, I can count some of them: 227 citations among the curse tablets in *Persons of Ancient Athens*, and I have not counted elsewhere in Attic epigraphy, topography, and prosopography, to say nothing of the unrecorded number of times he saved me from error. An epitome of our friendship may be found in our sharing of the organization and presentation

of the conference *Lettered Attica* at the Canadian Institute on March 8, 2000. "Sharing" is hardly the correct word, as the idea of the conference was totally David's and, typically, he did the majority of the work. The papers were published three years later as *Lettered Attica,* volume 3 in the Institute's series, after the skillful editing and beautiful typesetting of Philippa Matheson, our mutual friend of many years.

David was most loyal and unstinting in his help to all his friends. This virtue was not always reciprocated, unfortunately, and he was denied tenure at two universities in the United States, after which he returned to Greece, where a three-year interim appointment as a librarian—a position most congenial to David, a bibliophile—was not made permanent. These setbacks were great personal disappointments to David, but the loss to these institutions was the Canadian Institute's gain, for he was in Athens and free to assume the directorship of the Institute when it most needed a person of his character, administrative ability, and academic stature.

A philhellene par excellence, David was a lover of both ancient and modern Greece; it was here in Athens that he lived the majority of his life, and it was here that he died.

Introduction

Christopher A. Faraone

This collection of essays arises from the "Curses in Context" project funded primarily by the Neubauer Collegium of the University of Chicago and directed by myself and my colleague Sofía Torallas Tovar. Under its aegis, we organized a series of international conferences with a number of aims: to encourage archaeologists, historians, and epigraphists to give thematic papers on the regional and local features of the curse tablets from the relevant areas; to provide a venue for the presentation of newly discovered curse tablets; and to share techniques for their conservation and photography.[2] As a consequence, we roughly divided the world of curse tablets into regional and temporal areas where they appear to be most popular. The proceedings of the first conference in Lonato, for example, focused closely on those curse tablets that were inscribed in Latin, Oscan, Etruscan, or Iberian and were discovered on the Italian peninsula or in the Western Roman Empire,[3] and the papers delivered at the second conference in Paris primarily dealt with Greek curses from the eastern half of the Mediterannean.[4] We include here versions of papers that were given at our third meeting, which took place in Athens at the Norwegian Institute of Archaeology in June 2019, with the invaluable assistance of the Institute's director, Jorunn Økland, Zarko Tankosic, and the rest of their very helpful staff.

Curse tablets are small inscribed objects, usually, but not always, rectangular lead sheets, whose inscriptions aimed to curse a rival or an enemy, often by means of prayers and/or incantations. The Greeks begin to inscribe curses on lead in Sicily in the late 6th century BCE and in Attica by the late 5th; then the practice spread gradually but continuously throughout the Mediterranean basin, a process that lasted nearly 800 years. By far the majority of the lead tablets of the Classical and Hellenistic periods were inscribed simply with a name or a list of names, presumably of the victim(s), and were then rolled or

2. For the papers on techniques of conservation and photography, see Torallas Tovar and Martin Hernández (forthcoming 2021).

3. Faraone and Gordon 2019.

4. Faraone and Gordon (forthcoming 2021).

folded up and sometimes pierced with a nail; those tablets that provide a more substantial text usually aim at binding or restraining a rival or an enemy, as their ancient name in Greek (*katadesmoi*) attests.[5] The first seven chapters of this volume deal with such binding curses. By the 4th century, however, we begin to see a small number of lead curse tablets belonging to a different genre that Henk Versnel has dubbed "prayers for justice" because they almost always take the form of a plaintive prayer, in which the authors beg a god to punish someone who has wronged them.[6] Perhaps reflecting their relative infrequency during this period, only the last essay in this collection discusses this genre of curse directly. The advent of such curses in written form does not, of course, correlate with the invention of the genres themselves, because we have literary evidence that an oral form of such curses preceded the written form. The "binding song" that the Erinyes use in Aeschylus' *Eumenides,* for example, closely reflects the Athenian use of binding curses against litigants in forthcoming trials, a practice that only begins to show up on curse tablets a half a century after the play was first performed.[7]

The modern study of these artifacts began more than a century ago with two large and important corpora published by Richard Wünsch in 1897 (*Defixiones Tabellae Atticae = DTA*) and by Auguste Audollent in 1904 (*Defixiones Tabellae = DT*).[8] These publications set the stage for the study of these curses

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5. The speech-acts found on these binding spells include the performative "I bind so-and-so!," the wish "May so-and-so be bound!," and the prayer, to a usually chthonic deity, "You, O Hermes, bind so-and-so!" See Faraone 1991a.

6. Versnel 1991. These tablets are often publicly displayed in sanctuaries, name the petitioner, and aim at the divine punishment of the alleged perpetrators or at the return of stolen property.

7. Faraone 1985 and 1989; the latter discusses accusations that curse tablets were used to bind the talented orator Thucydides, the son of Melesias, in a high-profile political trial of the 440s.

8. Historically there has been a problem with the precise terminology to be used in discussing these curse tablets. In all of the "Curses in Context" volumes we have followed the precedent of using "curse-tablet" for the genus of all inscribed tablets, lead or otherwise, and then using the following terms for the two species or subdivisions: (i) we use *katadesmos, defixio* or "binding curse" to describe those used to restrain rivals/enemies in the future; and (ii) we use "prayer for justice" for those used to punish malefactors for past offenses. The equation *defixio* = "curse-tablet" is an old European one enshrined by those two giants in the field, Audollent and Wünsch, but in the end it is an unfortunate equation because the etymology of *defixio* (i.e. a curse that nails down someone) suggests that it is quite suitable for those curses that are indeed rolled up and nailed and which aim at "restraint"; but this term is entirely confusing for other curses in, e.g. Audollent's collection, (e.g. the Cnidian curse-tablets), where revenge or resti-

primarily as epigraphic texts arranged according to the geographical place of their discovery, but with far less attention to their archaeological context or chronological date. Aside from a small group of scholars interested in the history of Mediterranean religions, these tablets were for a long time unwelcome in the academic study of the ancient Greeks and Romans, and, in fact, even Wünsch himself ignored clear signs of the late-classical date of most of the Athenian tablets in his collection, because he could not bring himself to believe that the generation of Plato and Isocrates could have composed such texts. After Wünsch and the others died during and after the First World War, the study and publication of these tablets essentially came to a trickle and it was not until the 1980s that — thanks to the painstaking epigraphical work of the late David Jordan, Roger Tomlin and others, and to the analyses of Versnel, Gordon, and Graf — curse tablets began to be appreciated as wide-spread, numerous and often easily dated texts reflecting both the personal concerns of their authors and the general context of competition or revenge that led to their production. These new studies were, however, usually based on the texts published in the two earlier corpora, augmented by Jordan's important surveys of new finds in 1985 and 2000 and canonized to some extent by the influential collection of English translations published by John Gager in 1992; as a result, they tended to stress the similarities that these curses shared with one another, rather than the differences that arise from the specific era and region of a tablet's deposition.

Indeed, until recently it was commonplace to treat curse tablets *en masse* as easily comparable data, which give us general insight into the personal lives of "*the* Greeks" or "*the* Romans". But we now have far more and much better archaeological data, and a greater appreciation of the local variations one finds in the data. The recent publication of the late classical effigies from Keos and Paros, for example, calls to mind the previously discovered caches of lead and bronze effigies from Hellenistic Delos and may suggest a regional practice in the Cyclades,[9] while the ongoing excavation of the classical cemetery in Olbia and the storerooms of Black Sea collections continues to unearth curses inscribed on both lead and pottery, many of which have carefully preserved archaeological contexts.[10] And then there are the lead tablets of Hellenistic

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tution of a stolen object is the goal and not restraint. For the sea change in thinking about this problem, see the introduction of Jordan (2000), where he explains why he in his second survey has decided to call the wider category "curse tablets" rather than *defixiones*.

9. See the Appendix to Chapter 5; for parallels, see Faraone (1991b) and (2019) 311-32.

10. Polinskaya in the volume.

date recently excavated from a well in the Kerameikos, the forty-six curse tablets found in a grave in Himera all pierced with the same nail, as well as the small cooking pot inscribed with more than thirty names and buried under the floor of a shop in the Agora; the pot, moreover, contained the head and feet of a chicken and was covered by the head of a large nail which had been driven down through the bottom of the pot and into the soil below.[11]

With the exception of Sicily, all of these areas are represented in this collection of essays. The first four essays tilt heavily (and unsurprisingly) toward Attic cemeteries of the Classical period. Jutta Stroszeck leads off with a groundbreaking reevaluation of the finds from the Kerameikos cemetery, which in the 19th and early 20th centuries provided crucial evidence for the "typical" Greek or Attic binding spells, and which now, thanks to her fine-grained analysis, are shown to form distinct concentrations tied to a limited number of very specific locations in the cemetery and to the tombs of those who died prematurely and by violence, or were buried without proper rites and in mass graves. In Chapter 2, Theodoros Eliopoulos discusses recent excavations of the Kynosarges cemetery, which miraculously revealed an elaborate cursing ritual in its original context: a pair of lead effigies, one male and one female, each inscribed with a single name and binding formula and then placed on or just under the surface of a grave tumulus. After a careful analysis of the oxidized surface on the backs of the two effigies, Eliopoulos suggests that they had originally been bound back-to-back in an attempt to ruin the relationship of the couple depicted. Jessica Lamont, in turn, discusses a series of curse tablets that are associated with Attic "pyre deposits," or small assemblages of small ceramic vessels and burnt material ritually buried in shallow pits; she shows, in fact, that seven curses inscribed on lead or ceramic were part of the same purificatory ritual that produced the pyre deposits, which somehow involved contact with the dead or ghosts deemed useful for curses. In Chapter 4, Evangelos Kroustalis provides a careful discussion of the Late Classical curse tablets found in the Ayios Dionysios cemetery in Piraeus, revealing that, like the curses from the Kerameikos discussed by Stroszeck, these were concentrated in a few graves in two family enclosures, in this case owned by wealthy metics from Mytilene or Crete; in one grave, careful excavation revealed that the corpse was buried while holding a curse tablet in each hand, suggesting that those arranging the funeral put them there, or at least saw them and approved.

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11. Kerameikos: see Stroszeck in this volume; Himera: Vassallo (2017); Chicken in the pot: Lamont in this volume.

The last three essays turn to other parts of the Greek world in the Classical and Hellenistic periods, beginning in Chapter 5 with Jaime Curbera's discussion of one of Wünsch's curse tablets that had originally been published as perhaps coming from Melos. Curbera, working with the newly cleaned tablet, superior photographs, and isotope analysis of the lead, presents a new text and confirms the Melian provenience. The Appendix to his chapter suggests in rough outline a possibly regional pattern of "Cycladian" cursing that makes heavy use of lead and bronze effigies, a pattern that suggests Athens as a source. In Chapter 6 Irene Polinskaya provides a detailed analysis of yet another kind of mortuary context for curses by discussing the growing corpus of those inscribed on ceramic bowls primarily from the Black Sea area. She uses the detailed records from the excavations of the Classical cemetery at Olbia Pontica to reconstruct a ritual during which people buried the bowls in the upper level of the soil of tumuli heaped over graves, or placed them on the ground face down, and stepped on them as part of the curse ritual. The chapter also introduces another ceramic shape inscribed with a curse: a lid of a wide-mouthed open vessel, deposited not in a mortuary but cultic context. The proximity of the findspots for these ceramics and their chronology suggests, moreover, that we have another pattern of family involvement in cursing—in this case with metics, just as we see in the chapters of Stroszeck and Kroustalis. The collection closes with two explorations of curses deposited in sanctuaries. Jorge Bravo discusses in Chapter 7 the archaeological context of the curse tablets found in the sanctuary of Opheltes at Nemea and in the shrine of Palaimon in Athens, and shows that in both cases the person who deposited these curses probably did so not because he was a worshipper of these heroes, but rather because he understood that these heroes belonged to the category of the angry dead and were therefore likely agents for a curse. The final essay in Chapter 8, by Christopher Faraone, also concerns a curse placed in a sanctuary, in this case one of the earliest Greek papyri found in Egypt. He argues that Artemisia, the woman who wrote or commissioned this prayer for justice against her husband, replicated in an Egyptian medium (papyrus instead of metal or stone) and in an Egyptian sanctuary, a genre of Greek curses against thieves that was used by women in the Late Classical and Hellenistic periods in the Greek East.

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Chapter 1

The Archaeological Contexts of Curse Tablets in the Athenian Kerameikos

Jutta Stroszeck

Abstract: In 2016, about thirty new curse tablets were found in the Athenian Kerameikos, most of them in the late-4th to early-3rd-century BCE layers of an ancient well in the courtyard of the Kerameikos bathhouse. Before this discovery, the majority of curse tablets from the site belonged to the 5th and 4th century BCE and were found in and around a limited number of tombs and precincts, all situated on the fringes of the Kerameikos necropolis and next to crossroads. As far as we can tell, the corpses buried in the tombs that contained curses fall into certain categories mentioned in ancient sources: people whose course of life was somehow unfinished (*aôroi*), such as children and young adults; people who had not been properly buried for lack of money (*apôroi*); people who were violently murdered or had undergone *maschalismos* (*biaiothanatoi*); and war casualties buried in a mass grave (*polyandrioi*). Among the 5th- and 4th-century examples, only a few were found in layers of ancient streets or in public and private buildings. I propose that at the end of the 4th century BCE there was a general shift away from graves and toward wells for the deposition of curses, due to a law issued by Demetrios of Phaleron (317–307 BCE). Officers were installed at that time to ensure compliance with the new law; their presence must have made it far more difficult to perform magic rites on any tomb in Athens. From then on mostly, public wells were used for that purpose.

Key words: Ancient Athens, Kerameikos excavation, ancient Greek burials, curse tablets, Demetrios of Phaleron, ancient Athenian wells, polyandrion, psyche, eidolon, voodoo dolls

In June 2016, during the excavation of a well situated within a bathhouse in front of the Dipylon Gate, about 30 new lead tablets were discovered in the Kerameikos site.[1] This total includes some uninscribed specimens, as well as

1. I am grateful to Chris Faraone and Sofía Torallas-Tovar for organizing this conference,

badly preserved pieces and lead objects of uncertain function. Prior to this discovery, about 80 curse tablets and four lead figurines or "dolls" (IB 3, 4, 5, 12) had been found in the excavations.[2] Considering that the *Thesaurus Defixionum Magdeburgensis* (*TheDeMa*) records an overall sum of 1711 pieces, of which 323 come from Athens and Attica, this new addition to the corpus is significant.

The curse inscriptions from the Kerameikos site have long attracted the attention of distinguished specialists in the field. The first were excavated by Konstantinos Kourouniotis in 1912 in a tomb situated in the burial precinct of Demetria and Pamphile.[3] Werner Peek treated curses in the inscriptions volume of the Kerameikos series that appeared in 1941;[4] while he was mainly concerned with the texts, Peek also referred briefly to the archaeological context of some of the pieces found by Karl Kübler during the excavations of the 1930s. In 1958, the historian Jürgen Trumpf published one of the most famous lead tablets ever (IB 12), the curse against Mnesimachos, along with a careful presentation of the burial it came from.[5] An important piece was recovered in 1965 from the Dipylon well (B 1), on which the names of a group of well-known figures in Athenian history were scratched. Karin Braun had already read the names of the Macedonian Kassandros and his group (including Pleistarchos) when she published the contents of the well in 1970; a decade later, David Jordan provided a rereading.[6] In 1990, Franz Willemsen published several curses from the necropolis on the so-called Corner Terrace, where a substantial number of curse tablets had been found.[7] Revised versions of these inscriptions were published by Lopez Jimeno and others.[8] Between 1995 and 2007, Felice Costabile published a series of curse tablets from the excavations of the 1960s to 1990s, after the pieces had been restored by the specialized conservators Fani Mitsakou and Marina Lykiardopoulou.[9] Corrections and new readings to these texts were published in 2016 and 2018 by Jaime Curbera and Zinon Papakonstantinou.[10]

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and to the Norwegian Institute and its dirctor Yorunn Økland for hosting it. Many thanks to Chris Faraone also for his patience and to the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

2. Faraone 1991b.
3. Kourouniotis 1913, 185; Kovacsovics 1990, 86, no. 96.
4. Peek 1941, 89–100, nos. 1–9, pls. 22, 23.
5. Trumpf 1958, 94–102, Beil. 71. 72.
6. Braun 1970, 197 pl. 93, 1.2; Jordan 1980, 225-236 nos. 1.2 pls. 93, 1.2.
7. Willemsen 1990.
8. López Jimeno 1992.
9. Costabile 1998; 1999; 2000; 2001; 2004–2005; 2007a; 2007b.
10. Curbera 2016; Curbera-Papakonstantinou 2018, 211-214.

The most recent finds were cleaned and documented by Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI), carried out for the Kerameikos excavations by the conservator Amalia Siatou in 2017 and 2018. This proved to be an outstanding tool to present the details of inscriptions scratched on lead. The texts can be studied letter by letter in detail, they can be enlarged, and they can be viewed under changing incidence of light. The record of the archaeological contexts of the new tablets was published in 2019 by the author, together with a preliminary descriptive catalogue.[11] A new edition of the texts by the editors of the *TheDeMa*, Martin Dreher and Sara Chiarini, is forthcoming.

To summarize, although the Kerameikos curses have been frequent subjects of study by epigraphers in the past, no coherent picture of the precise proveniences and archaeological contexts of this material within the site has been available.

1. Ancient Texts Referring to the Deposition of Curse Tablets

Various written sources from antiquity mention curse tablets and their deposition spots. One major source is the collection of so-called magical papyri (*Papyri Graecae Magicae*, *PGM*), most of which were found in Egypt and date between the 2nd century BCE and the 5th century CE. One formulary, for instance, recommends the following (*GEMF* 74 = *PGM* VII 432–437):[12] "late in the evening or in the middle of the night, where there is a stream or the drain of a bath, having tied a cord [to the plate], throw it into the stream—or into the sea." Some lines later we find the addition (451–455): "But if you cause [the plate] to be buried or [sunk in] river or land or sea or stream or coffin or in a well, write the Orphic formula, saying, ASKEI KAI TASKEI and, taking a black thread, make 365 knots and bind [the thread] around the outside of the plate, saying the same formula again. … And thus [the plate] is deposited".[13] It seems, therefore, that curse tablets could be placed in a well, in the earth, in the sea, in a waterpipe, or in a coffin—obviously because these places seemed to offer proper conditions for the deposition and for the efficacy of the spell. The information about the place is enhanced here—as in other sources—with a kind of *mode d'emploi*, including references to the proper time of day or night, what to say, what materials to use (threads), and which magical actions to perform (like binding and knotting). In the same

11. Stroszeck 2019a, 354–356, 366–370, pls. 99–103.

12. Trans. Betz 1985, ad loc.

13. Betz 1985, 130; Kropp 2015, 75.

papyrus there is advice about how to deposit an erotic curse (*GEMF* 74 = *PGM* VII 460–461): "Inscribe by scratching on a tin lamella. Write and lay it down, walking over it." The part about walking on the curse tablet--which clearly added some effect--will also be of interest with respect to the findspots of Kerameikos examples. About the details of placing a curse tablet in a tomb, *GEMF* 58 (= *PGM* V) 332–33 specifies: "Then taking it away to the grave of someone untimely dead, dig a hole four fingers deep, and put it in and say: "*Daimôn* of the deceased, whoever you are, I give over NN to you, so that he may not do NN thing. Then when you have filled up the hole, go away. Better to do it when the moon is waning."[14]

Another group of finds, curse tablets dating to the 3rd century CE from Kourion, an ancient site on the south coast of Cyprus, give detailed instructions on where to put a curse tablet within a necropolis. They invoke the *daimones* of certain groups of dead persons as proper bearers of the curse:[15]

1. children and others who "died before their time" (ἄωροι),
2. poor people who were "without proper burial" (ἄποροι ταφῆς),
3. people who were "violently killed" (βιαιοθάνατοι), such as murder victims,
4. criminals who had been "axed" to death (πεπελεκισμένοι),
5. people who were "in a mass grave" (πολυάνδριοι), such as war casualties.

From this, we can conclude that the eligibility of certain dead persons as recipients of curse tablets was triggered by one of the following conditions:[16] (i) a somehow incomplete course of life (children, for example, or someone that died before marriage or without offspring); (ii) the termination of life by violence (murder victims, criminals sentenced to death, war casualties); or (iii) the lack of a proper burial (for economic reasons). In all three groups, the ghost, or *daimon*, of the dead person was presumed to be mobile after death, while in normal cases the *daimon* went down to the underworld and was unable to resurface. Plato relates the belief that shortly after death the *daimones*

14. Trumpf 1958, 95; Kropp 2015, 76.

15. The Greek texts are: δέμονες] πολυάνδριοι, πεπελεκισμένοι … και ἄπο]ροι της ἱερας ταφής (*IKourion* 127) ..... and πολυάνδριοι κε βιοθάνατοι κα ἄωροι και ἄποροι ταφής (*IKourion* 129, 131–140); Trumpf 1958; Mitford 1971, 258–260, no. 132; Pleket and Bogaert 1976, 18–20, no. 15.

16. *GEMF* 58 (= *PGM* V) 332–333.

of all persons were still active around the tombs, because they were afraid of Hades (*Phaedo* 81c–d):[17]

> …the soul, afraid of Hades, as is said, hangs about gravestones and tombs (περὶ τὰ μνήματά τε καὶ τοὺς τάφους), close to which one has indeed seen some shadowy phenomena of souls (ψυχῶν σκιοειδῆ φαντάσματα), images (εἴδολα), as they correspond to such souls that have not parted in complete purity from the body, but still take part in the visible (τοῦ ὁρατοῦ μετέχουσι), which is why they can be seen.

Evidence for this belief consists of several representations of *daimones* of the deceased on Athenian white-ground lekythoi, a group of vases that was produced almost exclusively for funeral purposes.[18]

Thus, the souls of children, of unmarried persons, of murder and war victims, and of people buried without proper burial rites were all assumed to be able to mediate between the underworld and the area above and around their tombs. This postmortem restlessness is in turn used by the sorcerer, who with their help performs various rituals of binding.[19] These souls then transport the curse to the underworld, where it can develop its power with the help of Hades, Persephone, Hekate, Lethe, and the other gods there. The findspots of curse tablets in the Kerameikos are, in fact, fully in accordance with this picture; as we will see, curse tablets were found in tombs or grave precincts, in wells, in roads, and—sporadically—in and around public buildings and private houses.

2. Deposition in the Necropolis (Fig. 1, areas 1–4)

First, it must be stated that the deposition of a curse tablet in a tomb is a rare exception. So far, out of thousands of tombs of all periods excavated in the Kerameikos, there are only 18 curse tablets found in single tombs, and only 2 in offering pyres related to tombs. Second, most of the evidence for the practice of cursing at tombs occurs roughly between the middle of the fifth and the last quarter of the fourth century BCE. And finally, an examination of the dis-

17. Translated by the author from Apelt 1913, 71.

18. Peifer 1989. Compare a famous lekythos by the Achilles Painter in New York, Metropolitan Museum 1989.281.72, where the *daimon* of the deceased is represented over the head of the deceased young man: Oakley 1997, 146, no. 234, pl. 123 (440–435 BCE).

19. Jordan 1980, 234.

Fig. 1. Plan of Kerameikos site, with findspots of curse tablets (red) and clusters (blue) indicated – Areas 1-5 (J. Stroszeck and R. Andreopoulou).

tribution of findspots in the Kerameikos necropolis makes clear that the curses were not found in just any burial precinct; rather, they are concentrated in five areas within the site and in connection with some of the categories of the dead mentioned in the ancient texts quoted above. While it is difficult to identify burials of the poor (ἄπωροι), there are six of "untimely dead" (ἄωροι): the tomb of Lissos (hS 193); a neonate in an amphora (hS 191), a child in a clay larnax (Me 75), a child's tomb of the Roman period, and two tombs of young men with loutrophoros tomb markers (Olympichos and Parthenios). There are, moreover, one or two cases of the "violently killed" (βιαιοθάνατοι): an adult on whom the *maschalismos* had been performed (SA 40, and possibly also IB 57), as well as war casualties in mass burials (πολυάνδριοι). The map in Figure 1 shows the five concentrations of curse depositions in the necropolis.

2.1. Area below the precinct of a family from the deme Potamos (Figs. 1, 2)

The earliest concentration (area 1 on Fig. 1) is north of the street of the tombs and below the later precinct of a family from the deme Potamos. There, two adult skeletons of the mid-5th century had curse tablets next to their fingertips, one in the right hand and the other one in the left (tombs P 10 and P 31),[20] so these individuals were obviously intended to carry them to the underworld. Both curse tablets were tightly rolled up when found, and they had been deposited before the tomb was covered with earth. Both corpses received proper burial, as far as one can tell, so they probably belonged to the category of the violently killed or *aôroi*. One of them is further remarkable for the reason that the grave was marked with a tombstone that was found upright at the time of excavation. Given the date of the burials (around 460–450 BCE, according to a lekythos given to one of the deceased), this is unusual, as grave markers occur only occasionally prior to 430 BCE in Athenian necropoleis.[21] A number of other curse tablets, as well as a fragment of a tiny lead sarcophagus, were also found in the area around these tombs.

20. Kübler 1976, 128, no. 429 (P 10 with IB 49); Kunze-Götte, Tancke, and Vierneisel 1999, 108, no. 429 (piece listed as lost); Kübler 1976, 131, no. 438 (P 31 with IB 48); Kunze-Götte, Tancke, and Vierneisel 1999, 110, no. 438, pl. 70:8 (piece listed as lost).

21. See, e.g., Clairmont 1983, 74: "As we know for certain and as excavations in the Kerameikos have irrevocably proven, no marble *stelai* were placed on private tombs of Athenian citizens in the period from about 490–430, not even the most simple of slabs destitute of any sculptural decoration."

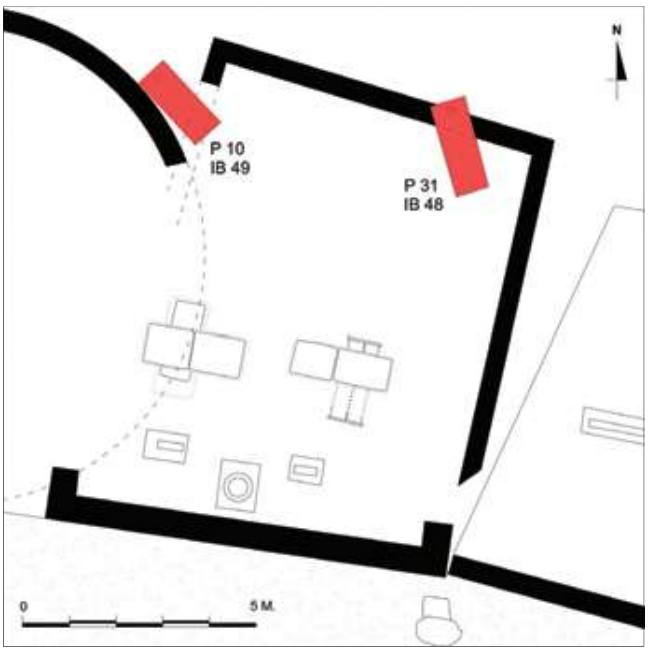

Fig. 2. Detail plan of Area 1. Two tombs below the precinct of the Potamians (J. Stroszeck and R. Andreopoulou).

2.2. On the border of the children's necropolis south of the Sacred Way *(Figs. 1, 3)*

Next in date is a dense concentration (area 3 on Fig. 1) around three tombs on the border of the children's necropolis near a path leading south of the Sacred Way. The burials are placed about 10 m apart from each other. Curse tablets were found in the well-known and richly equipped tomb of Lissos (hS 193), a boy with a skeleton length of 1.30 m, who was buried here around 430 BCE—clearly an *aôros*. While the grave goods were placed within the tile lining of the burial, the fill above them contained three miniature rectangular coffins with lead figurines, as well as two curse tablets. All must have been deposited either during or after the burial ceremony.[22] Close by was the tomb of an adult dated to 420–410 BCE (SA 40) that contained a miniature oval lead coffin with an inscribed lid and another lead figurine. The three parts of the inscribed lid were separated and displaced during the rite of *maschalismos* that took place after the burial. This was most likely the tomb of a person who died through violence (βιαιοθάνατος),[23] and the rite was performed so that the deceased would

22. Schlörb-Vierneisel 1964, 95–99; 1966, 38, no. 73, pl. 51:1; Costabile 1999, 92, no. 2.2; 2000, 85–91.

23. Trumpf 1958, 99; Kübler 1976, 48, no. 148; Kunze-Götte, Tancke, and Vierneisel 1999, 48, no. 148, fig. 9, pl. 28:8–10.

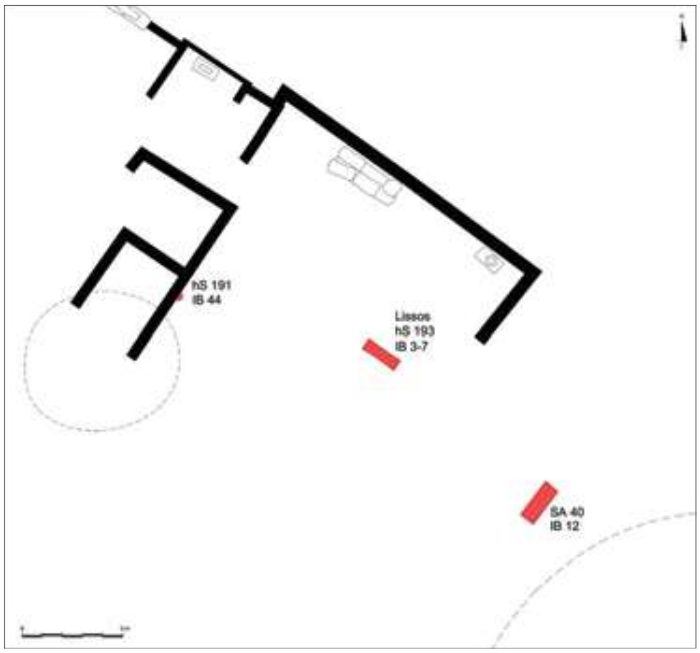

Fig. 3. Detail plan of Area 3. The tombs with curses on the fringe of the child necropolis south of the Sadred street (J. Stroszeck and R. Andreopoulou).

Fig. 4. Kerameikos. Loutrophoros monument of Olympichos, Inv. I 282 (DAI Athen, KER 11771).

not haunt the murderers.[24] A little to the west of these two graves was an *enchytrismos* burial of a neonate (tomb hs 191), datable around 380 BCE, that also contained a curse tablet, again evidence for an *aôros*.[25] Two more tablets were found in the area of these tombs. One of them (IB 45) cannot be related to a specific tomb, but IB 43 was discovered next to the base of the grave monument of Olympichos, son of Diodoros from the deme Skambonidai; here, a loutrophoros indicates the tomb of another *aôros*.[26] The tomb monument was erected around 370 BCE (Fig. 4).

2.3. Area of the Kleomedes precinct (Figs. 1, 5)

Another area of concentration (area 4 on Fig. 1) is around the grave precinct of Kleomedes. It is situated on the transverse road next to the Eridanos bridge that leads to the Sacred Way where two tombs and a pyre held curse tablets. Just outside this peribolos, immediately to the southeast, a late-5th-century sarcophagus (WRB 39) contained fragments of a small lead coffin and pieces of molten lead. A female inhumation burial in another sarcophagus (WRB 37) contained a lead tablet. And a third sarcophagus in this precinct (WRB 20) contained a flat, pierced piece of lead. A huge amount of pottery was deposited in an offering pit next to the north wall of this peribolos around 350 BCE. It also contained curse tablets. After the ceremony performed at this pit, the whole precinct was given up. Yet another tablet was found near this precinct, on top of a water channel.

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24. Maschalismos is a practice performed on murder victims in order to prevent them from coming back for revenge. The dead body is ritually mutilated by cutting off certain body parts (mostly extremities) and attaching them to or arranging them at the height of the arm-pits (μασχάλη). Most famously, it has been carried out on the corpse of the murdered Agamemnon (cf. Aesch.*Cho.*439; Soph.*El.*445). Curiously enough, the well-published evidence for this maschalismos tomb from the 5th century Kerameikos necropolis (Trumpf 1958; comp. Stroszeck 2019a, 349 pl. 88,2) is not even mentioned in the most recent articles on maschalismos. Dunn 2018, 203 even states "We have no independent evidence for a practice in which the cut-off extremities are strung together and attached to the corpse…" and 205: "Aristophanes… does not claim… that it was a practice known to, or performed by, Greeks in the classical period." In fact, the practice was indeed known in Athens, as the archaeological record tells us.

25. Schlörb–Vierneisel 1966, 54, no. 106, pl. 42:5 (c. 385 BCE); *SEG* 54, no. 396; Costabile 2004–2005, 137–172, figs. 2-3. 4-5. 9-34. 38; Curbera 2016, 110, fig. 2.

26. Inv. I 282. Stroszeck 2014, 224, no. 54.

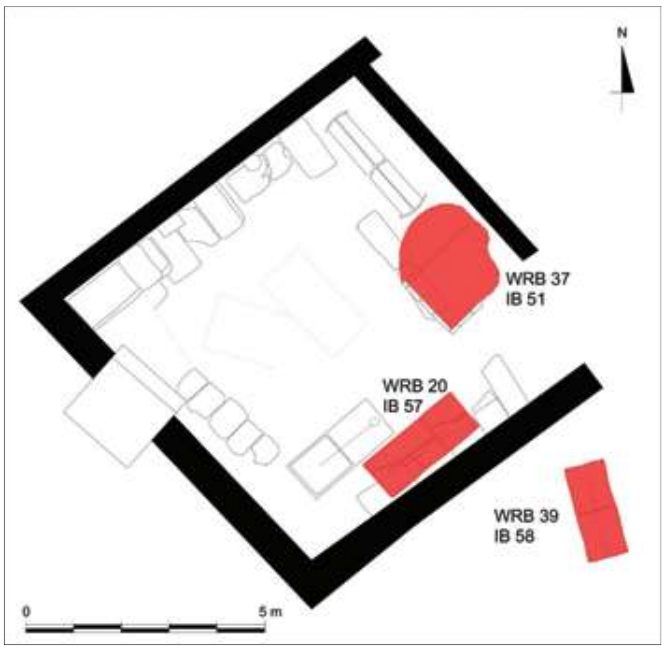

Fig. 5. Detail plan of Area 4. The precinct of Kleomedes with tombs containing curses (J. Stroszeck and R. Andreopoulou).

2.4. Corner terrace *(Figs. 1, 6a, 6b)*

An important concentration of curses (area 2 on Fig. 1) was also found around the grave precincts of the Messenians and on the corner terrace in the precinct of Demetria and Pamphile and south of precinct VII, around five single tombs, all datable to the second half of the fourth century BCE between 350 and 310:

— Below the south path leading to this part of the necropolis, north of the Demetria and Pamphile precinct, seven curse tablets were deposited in the fill of the grave of a 40-year-old woman buried in a poros sarcophagus around 360–350 BCE (Eck 46 in Fig. 6a).[27] Grave goods were a lekythos, an alabastron, a bronze needle, and three bronze nails. There is no evidence that this woman once belonged to the *aôroi* or any of the other categories discussed above.

— In the neighboring precinct of Demetria and Pamphile, during the excavations by Kourouniotis in 1912, seven pieces were found in the fill of a tile-covered tomb of an adult female. The tomb dates around 317 BCE and is likely to be the tomb of Pamphile (DP 6). The woman had

27. Kovacsovics 1990, 57–58, no. 55, fig. 35, pl. 1; no. 46, fig. 33; fig. 37 (Eck 46).

a bronze mirror and a rosette in stucco as grave gifts. Again, there is no evidence available to which category she once belonged.[28] The fact, however, that one of the curse tablets quoted by Kourouniotis[29] mentions Praxidike, the goddess of juridical punishment, who was responsible for acts of vengeance, makes this tablet and the whole context even more intriguing.

— The adjacent Messenian precinct further to the south (Fig. 6b) is special in many ways. From the inscriptions on the well-preserved tomb monuments (a marble relief showing a seated woman, tomb Me 55 [not on the plan], and three marble trapezai) we know that a family was buried here: Philoumene (Me 55), identified by the osteological evidence as a 32-year-old woman, perhaps the mother; the father Philoxenos (Me 27, not on the plan); and two of his sons, Dion (Me 26, not on the plan) and Parthenios (Me 25 on Fig. 6b), were buried here at the same time between 350 and 340 BCE. The simultaneous deaths are themselves unusual and require an explanation. The family members were metics from Messene on the Peloponnese and not Athenian citizens, which would have required them to pass a formal procedure to gain the ownership rights to this precinct, if they actually did so. While Philoumene was inhumed, the father and the two sons were cremated, which was unusual in Athenian private burials of the time. One curse was preserved in the pit containing the cremation of the son, Parthenios (Me 25; IB 23), who was probably an *aôros* and perhaps also a war casualty, as a loutrophoros was selected to adorn his tomb.[30] Another curse comes from a clay larnax 90 cm long in the southwestern part of same precinct (Me 75); both the type of container and its dimensions make it clear that this was another child burial (*aôros*).[31] The third curse tablet from this precinct comes from an offering pit (Me 36; IB 25) that was established following the demolition of the whole peribolos and its monuments. This happened, according to the excavator, Wilfried Kovacsovics, around 338 BCE. The tablet was placed in the offering pyre on the occasion of the purification and reestablishment of the peribolos around 317 BCE.[32]

28. Kovacsovics 1990, 86, no. 96, skeleton length c. 1.90 m (DP 6).

29. Kourouniotis 1913, 185 (DP 6).

30. See, e.g., the discussion of this in Kokula 1984, 143: “Mal…für einen unverheiratet Verstorbenen.”

31. Kovacsovics 1990, 113–114 (Me 75).

32. Kovacsovics 1990, 96.

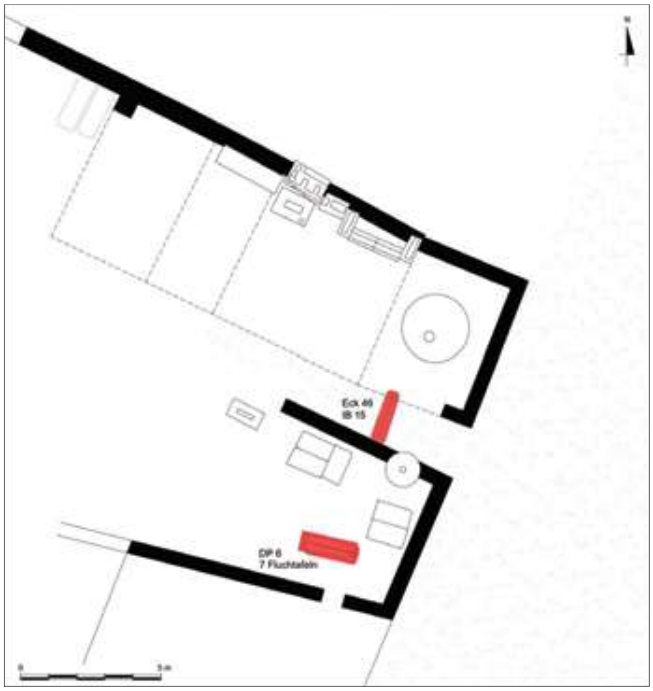

Fig. 6a. Detail of Area 2. The corner terrace with two tombs containing curse tablets (J. Stroszeck and R. Andreopoulou).

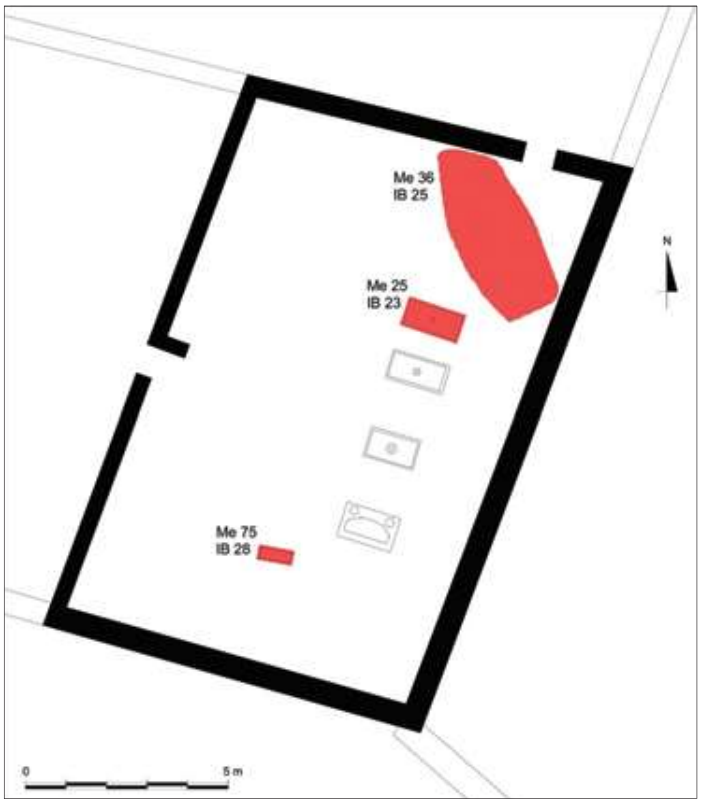

Fig. 6b. Detail of Area 2. The Messenian precinct with tombs containing curse tablets (J. Stroszeck and R. Andreopoulou).

At least eight more curse tablets come from layers in these two precincts (i.e. of Demetria and Pamphile and the Messenian) that are not associated with a specific tomb.

2.5. Burial of the Lacedaemonians (Fig. 7)

During the civil war in Athens and Attica between the democrats and the oligarchs in the summer of 403 BCE, 23 Spartan warriors, who had fought on the side of the oligarchs, subsequently received state burial along Kerameikos Street in a *polyandrion*, situated, as Xenophon puts it, "before the gates in the Kerameikos" (πρὸ τῶν πυλῶν ἐν Κεραμεικῷ).[33] A number of lead tablets were found with these state burials. Some of them were folded, one was slit, and another was bent around a rectangular object, probably a wooden pole, that is now lost.[34] A miniature sword in lead found together with them has a blade that was deliberately distorted,[35] likely as part of a magic procedure that aimed to make an enemy unfit to fight. Because of their clear relation to the state burial of the Spartan casualties, and because of the unique find of a distorted miniature sword accompanying them, these pieces may reflect a ritual performed against one or more opponents of war at that very moment of Athenian history, or even against a wartime enemy force, which would make them in a way public, and we know that public curses were used, for instance, against Alkibiades.[36]

Fig. 7. Kerameikos. Front of the tomb of the Lacedaemonians (DAI Athen, KER 6177).

33. Stroszeck 2006, 102.
34. Stroszeck 2019a, 363–364, pls. 92, 93.
35. Stroszeck 2019a, 363, pl. 92:3.
36. Cf. Plutarch, *Alc.* 33.3.

So the question remains: what makes these particular precincts suitable for the deposition of curses? It must be stressed here that curse tablets were not found in any of the other periboloi in the Kerameikos, occurring only in a very small group of precincts. To begin with the topographical placement of these curses, we note that all the precincts with curses are positioned either at the edges of the necropolis area close to the city, or within the borders of the burial space set aside for children. Another approach might be suggested by the identity of the tomb owners in the various precincts: the Messenians, for example, were metics, not Athenians, and one of them was an *aôros*. The cremation rite—unusual in Athens at the time, except for war casualties—makes one wonder whether the men from this family were in that category, but this remains speculative. It should be noted, however, that metics were expected, or even obliged, to go to war with the Athenians, if necessary. This would present us with a link to the public burial of the Spartans. A closer look shows that the curse tablets were found, as a rule, in or near precincts where one or more *single* tombs contained curses, raising the question of whether a habit may have developed there.

3. Wells

Two Kerameikos wells contained curse tablets: well B 1 in the courtyard of the Dipylon Gate (Fig. 8) and well B 34 in the Kerameikos bathhouse (Fig. 9). The deposition in wells is consistent with the evidence of ancient—albeit mostly Late Antique—texts, and also with finds from other sites, such as the spring in Bath (ancient Sulis) in England, published by Roger Tomlin,[37] or the spring and well of Anna Perenna in Rome, published by Marina Piranomonte and Jürgen Blänsdorf in 2010.[38] In Greece, curses are known from other wells, for instance, in the Athenian Agora and on the island of Amorgos.[39] The fact that wells were also mentioned in the positioning recommendations in the papyrus handbooks quoted above suggests that they were viewed as entrances to the underworld. Further, it seems to have been thought that communication with the underworld was possible through the medium of water and with the help of the water Nymphs who inhabited and protected the wells.[40] Another god

37. Tomlin 1988a; 1988b; 2005.

38. Piranomonte 2010; Blänsdorf 2010.

39. Agora wells: Jordan 1975; Amorgos: I would like to thank Lila Marangou for informing me about this find from 1902.

40. Some wells, like B 34 in the Kerameikos, were placed directly on top of springs, which according to ancient thought, as a rule were always protected by Nymphs. Larson 2001.

mentioned in curse tablets is Hermes Eriounios, who accompanies the souls of the deceased into the underworld. A much-disputed representation on a white ground-lekythos created by the Tymbos Painter around 460 BCE, now in Jena (Fig. 10),[41] shows Hermes directing the arrivals and departures of *daimones* of the deceased from a structure that looks like the top of a pithos set on the ground. There are enough parallels, however, for original wellheads made of clay,[42] as well as those depicted in art, to demonstrate that a Classical wellhead is represented here.[43] The lekythos, then, likely depicts Hermes Eriounios and the souls of unquiet dead leaving and entering the underworld at a well.

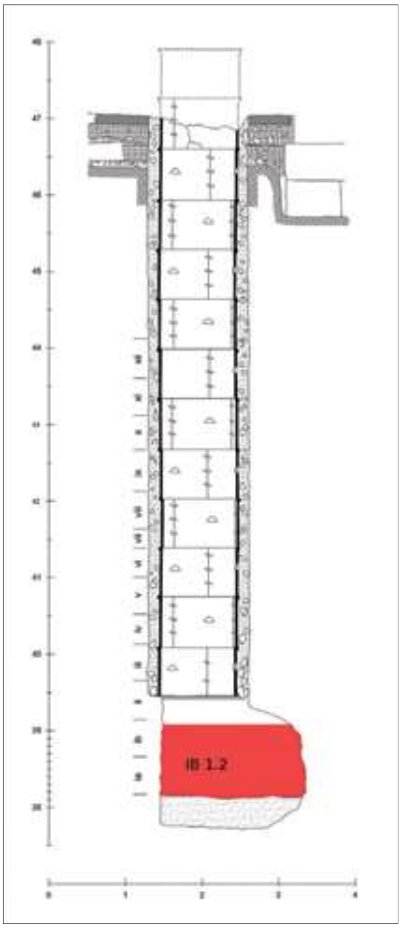

Fig. 8. Kerameikos, Dipylon well B 1 in section (J. Stroszeck and R. Andreopoulou).

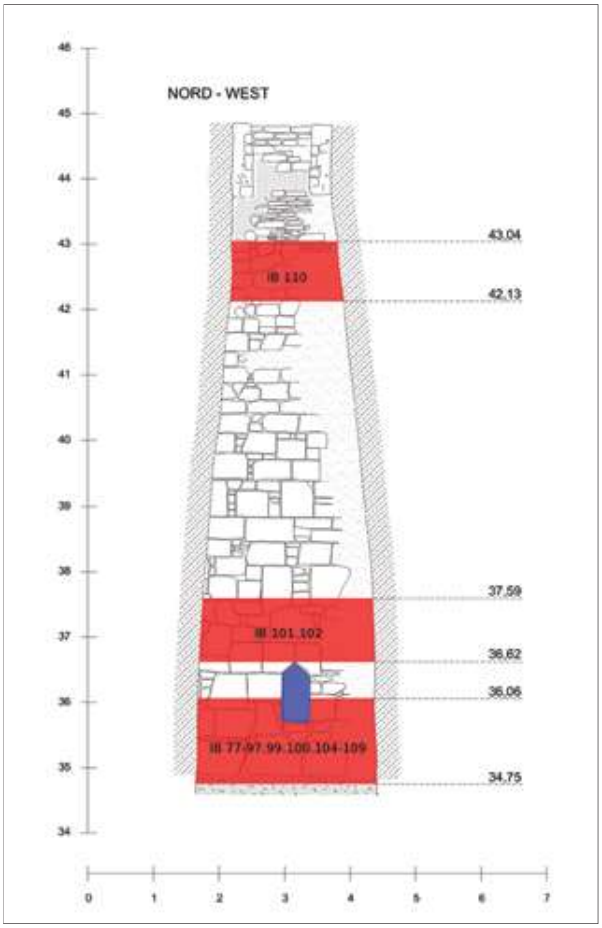

Fig. 9. Kerameikos, well B 34 in the Kerameikos bathhouse (J. Stroszeck and R. Andreopoulou).

41. Stroszeck 2019a, pl. 98:1.
42. Stroszeck 2017, 69. figs. 7–9.
43. Stroszeck 2017, 71, figs. 12–14; 72, figs. 16, 17; 74, figs. 21–23.

Well B 1 in the Dipylon courtyard was a public well. It was dug around 307–304 BCE and abandoned around 250 BCE, when it was partly filled up.[44] Two curse tablets were found in the lowest layers of this well, which accumulated during the well's earliest period of activity. Of these, one was a political curse directed against a group of men around Kassandros the Macedonian.[45] The other has only recently been deciphered by Jaime Curbera.[46]

Well B 34, situated within the Kerameikos bathhouse in front of the Dipylon Gate, was excavated in 2016. Some thirty curse tablets were found there in an Early Hellenistic layer dated between c. 300 and 260 BCE, two more (IB 101, 102) in a Middle Hellenistic layer, and one (IB 110) in a layer of the late 6th century CE (Fig. 9).[47] The majority of these curses were deposited during a phase of intensive use of the well, when the community not only still remembered the building of this impressive structure, but were also aware that the well was erected on top of a strong spring. To facilitate the entrance of the spring water, a pedimented opening was constructed on the bottom of the

Fig. 10. Drawing of Jena lekythos by the Tymbos Painter with Hermes in front of a wellhead (after Daraki 1982 38, fig. 7).

44. Braun 1970, 193–196.

45. Braun 1970, 197, pl. 93:1; Jordan 1980, 229–236, fig. 2, pl. 93:1; Eidinov 2007, 169, fig. 6.

46. Jordan 1980, 225–229, no. 1, pl. 93:2 (no reading). I thank J. Curbera for this information. The new reading is not yet published.

47. Stroszeck 2018 (on two ritually destroyed portrait heads that were deposited in the same well at about the same time as the latest curse tablet); 2019a, 354–356, pl. 99. For magic and curses in ancient bath houses compare Alfayé 2016.

Fig. 11. Kerameikos, well B 34, pedimented niche at the bottom of the well (photo by author).

Fig. 12. Kerameikos, well B 34, cave behind the niche in Figure 11 (photo by Volker Scheunert).

well at a depth of roughly 9 m (Fig. 11), behind which opened a cave at least 4.50 m in length (Fig. 12). This feature is unique among the hundreds of wells that have been excavated so far in Athens. The curse tablets themselves differ from the examples recovered from tombs, which have larger dimensions and substantial weight;[48] most of the tablets from well B 34 were light (4–38 g), small, and folded, with several also pierced. They are rather small packages that could fit into the palm of a hand and be dropped unseen into the well. There are no miniature lead sarcophagi or effigies among them; these occur only in the Classical tombs.

If we look at the distribution of wells in the Kerameikos, it becomes clear that curses have not been found in all wells, but only in 2 of the 44 documented on the site. So what do these two wells have in common? First of all, both depositions in wells date to the Early Hellenistic period, at least 500 years before the depositions in the other wells in the Athenian Agora, at Bath, and at Rome. And in both cases, the Kerameikos curses come from the well's first period of use. It may also be more than coincidental that both wells (B 1 and B 34) were public in character, and of course, that both were excavated to the very bottom.[49] Yet, there is also an important difference: well B 1, containing just two curses, was in use for a short period of time (307–304 BCE until about 250 BCE) before it was abandoned and partly filled in. By contrast, well B 34 was in use from the 4th century BCE until 86 BCE, when it was abandoned, but not filled in. It must have remained open and visible for a long time before it was in use again from the late 3rd to the late 6th century CE.

4. Other Findspots

As shown in Figure 1, apart from the depositions in wells and in the necropolis, curse tablets have also been recovered from a large private building, the so-called Bau Z,[50] and one was found in the Pompeion. Finally, several pieces were found in layers of ancient streets, with two concentrations around the Sacred and Dipylon Gates (area 5 on Fig. 1). This placement is reminiscent of the prescription for "walking" upon a curse tablet, quoted above, and seems to represent a rather different ritual approach that requires further investigation.

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48. See, e.g., IB 25: Stroszeck 2019a, 364, pl. 94: 5 (weight 99.1 g) or IB 72: 366, pl. 97:5 (94.19 g).

49. Because of the risks inherent in the deep excavation of wells, many wells in Athens have never been excavated to the bottom.

50. Stroszeck 2019a, 370–371.

It may also have to do with the situation of an entrance area. Indeed, deposition in places where the curses will be stepped on is similar to the deposition of curses under house thresholds or charioteer curses under the starting gates in hippodromes, where the horses would start out running over them.[51]

5. Shapes

Most lead curse tablets have two forms: the one they have when they are excavated, and the one they take after they are opened and cleaned. These unrolled forms vary in shape. They are often more or less rectangular or long strips reminiscent of book rolls, while others are oval, triangular, or trapezoidal. There is a variety of rather complicated examples that do not seem to be random shapes, such as the phallus-like piece (Fig. 13), a piece that looks like the blade of an ancient knife (Fig. 14), and an extraordinary one in the form of a liver (Fig. 15). More than once, curse tablets were found together with rod- or bar-shaped ingots, leftovers of molten lead, or other pieces of lead. These may represent the raw materials from which the tablets were made. And quite often, iron nails are found with tablets, suggesting that they may have played a role in the magic ritual. Another recurring, associated find are small round discs made from bronze or bone, probably game pieces.[52] Some folded tablets enclose another object, for instance, a piece of wood, an object that is presumably a wooden doll (Bau Z),[53] another lead tablet,[54] or a rectangular block of lead.[55] The quadrangular form occurs also as a cutting in the center of another curse tablet.[56]

6. Conclusions

In the Kerameikos, curse tablets have been found in connection with 18 single tombs; these were mostly inhumations, with one cremation and two offering pyres. One pyre was established in a ceremony to purify the grave precinct after a destruction (Messenian precinct, Fig. 6b), and the other on the occasion of terminating burials in the precinct (Kleomedes precinct, Fig. 5). The

51. Heintz 1999, 92.
52. Stroszeck 2019a, 358, pls. 104:1, 106:1 (IB 29 and 52, respectively).
53. Stroszeck 2019a, 370, pl. 104:2 (IB 53).
54. Stroszeck 2019a, 367, pl. 102:1 (IB 80).
55. Stroszeck 2019a, 371, pl. 104:6 (IB 74).
56. Stroszeck 2019a, 373, pl. 107:5 (IB 37).

Fig. 13. Kerameikos, phallus(?)-shaped curse tablet IB 80 from well B 34 (photo by author).

Fig. 14. Kerameikos, knife(?)-shaped curse tablet IB 81 from well B 34 (photo by author).

Fig. 15. Kerameikos, liver-shaped curse tablet IB 104 from well B 34 (photo by author).

decedents in most of the tombs belong to the categories of deaths mentioned in magic texts. Six tombs belong to children and young adults who died before their time (*aôroi*).[57] There were also adult males, identified either by osteological analysis or by inscriptions (Lacedaimonians, Parthenios, Olympichos, Lissos), and two adult women: Pamphile in tomb DP 6 and the female in Eck 46,[58] who was at least 40 years old. The men from Sparta were war casualties (πολυάνδριοι). On one adult person, the *maschalismos* had been performed after death (making him an obvious βιαιοθάνατος); the disarranged bones of the skeleton WRB 20, where IB 57 was found, may reflect the same practice.[59]

The practice of depositing curse tablets in the Kerameikos area began shortly before the middle of the 5th century BCE, and the latest deposition can be dated to the late 6th century CE. Thirty-five pieces cannot be dated through their context. From the Middle Hellenistic period around 250 BCE onward, we notice a decrease in the quantity of lead curses that persists throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods (represented by a total of six pieces). It seems, however, that the practice did not stop entirely until the end of antiquity in the 6th century CE. As many as 45 curses from the Kerameikos can be dated between 460 and 317 BCE. They were deposited mostly in tombs and grave precincts. Another 36 can be dated between 317 and 250 BCE, and the majority of those were deposited in wells. This testifies to an obvious and rather sudden change in the practice. It may be no coincidence that the deposition of curse tablets in the necropolis came to an end during the period around 317–307 BCE, and it is very tempting to propose a connection with a new funerary law issued by Demetrios of Phaleron in Athens that restricted the luxury allowed for tombs and tomb monuments at about that time.[60] In the new legislation, quoted by Cicero (*De leg.* 2.65–66), Demetrios not only regulated the kind, size, and inscriptions allowed for Athenian tomb monuments, but he also created a new administrative task force to ensure compliance, setting up fines for people who might try to break the law:[61]

57. Stroszeck 2019a, pl. 88:1–4 (IB 44); pls. 89, 90 (IB 3–5); pl. 94:1, 3 (IB 23, IB 28)

58. Another child burial, as yet unpublished, contains two curse tablets and is Roman in date.

59. The burial context is unpublished; it is described by Kurt Gebauer in his diary: GT 4 (1938), p. 29.

60. Engels 1998, 121–154.

61. Eckstein 1958, 27; the translation is by Keyes (1970, 453–455).

> He [Demetrios], then, lessened extravagance not only by the provision of a penalty for it, but also by a rule in regard to the time of funerals (*non solum poena, sed etiam tempore*); for he ordered that corpses should be buried before daybreak (*ante lucem enim iussit efferri*). But he also placed a limit upon newly erected monuments (*sepulcris autem novis finivit modum*), providing that nothing should be built above the mound of earth (*nam super terrae tumulum noluit quicquam statui*), except a small column no more than three cubits in height (*nisi columellam tribus cubitis*), or else a[n offering] table (*mensam*), or small basin (*labellum*); and he put a special official in charge of the enforcement of these laws (*et huic procurationi certum magistratum praefecerat*).

It is therefore likely that in this period officials controlled Athenian funeral behavior more closely. Practically speaking, they must have been continuously present in the necropoleis of Athens in this function, which would have made it much more difficult to perform acts of cursing at tombs.[62] Still, this practice of cursing was well established in Athenian society, in particular during lawsuits, despite the negative notions attached to it. As a result, people actively sought out other ways of communicating with the powers of the underworld. The possibility of placing small, easily concealed curses in wells, then, must have provided a welcome alternative for those who felt the need to continue this ritual tradition.

In this context it is useful to find out if, and to what degree, acts of cursing and placing curse tablets in tombs were tolerated. It appears that although the practice of cursing was not forbidden by law, it was not generally accepted, as we see, for example, in Plato (*Leg.* 11.933d–e):[63]

> For there are two kinds of poisons used among men, which cannot clearly be distinguished. There is the kind … which injures bodies … there is also another kind which persuades … that they can do injury by sorceries, and incantations, and magic knots, … and makes others believe that they above all persons are injured by the powers of the magician. ... And when men are disturbed in their minds at the sight of waxen images fixed either at their doors, or in a place where three ways meet, or on the sepulchers of parents, there is no use in trying to

62. Conference participant Athanassia Zografou asked whether there was a funeral law forbidding the curses at this time; I am grateful to her for her question. See also Stroszeck 2019b.

63. Translated by Benjamin Jowett, The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Laws,* by Plato.

> persuade them that they should despise all such things because they have no certain knowledge about them.

Although Plato's view does not equate to an official Athenian law, there was probably no official and no general approval of magic practices—as we can deduce from the findspots in the Kerameikos necropolis, where curse tablets were found only in very special tombs and precincts, while in most family precincts there were no curse tablets at all. A rather simple explanation is that Athenian citizens might not have tolerated the use of their deceased as curse bearers. This may also explain why so few curses have been found in the areas reserved for children (the South Hill and the tumulus G): these areas must have been taken care of by the community from the time of their establishment, and there are indications that the ground where they were placed was considered public ground by the Athenians.[64] The maintenance of the grave precincts by family members, especially women, would also have provided close enough surveillance to prevent the use of the deceased to carry curses. This, together with the various conditions of death that might qualify someone to carry a curse, as described above, may explain the distribution pattern we see in the Kerameikos.

64. One indication is the proximity to the ambassadors' graves at the foot of the South Hill, which were erected at public expense; another is the construction of roads on top or on the fringe of these areas, which covered or cut through the child tombs. Most roads were of course public in character.

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Chapter 2

Lead Effigies and Curse Tablets from the Kynosarges Cemetery, Athens

Theodore Eliopoulos

Abstract: A number of objects connected with magic were found in 2001, during the excavation of a building plot near the center of modern Athens. In antiquity, this was the site of the Kynosarges cemetery at the southeast edge of the ancient city. The objects in question were recovered in association with a number of mortuary features, contributing contextual evidence for the way such items were deposited in the cemeteries of Classical Athens. They consist of two high-quality lead figurines and nine lead curse tablets, although not all of them preserved inscriptions. The pair of figurines, a male and a female, was found on a low tumulus-like mound adjacent to an offering trench of 430–420 BCE. They are inscribed on their chests with curses and they may have been tied back to back before being deposited on the tumulus, a configuration echoed in formulas found in some slightly later curse tablets. The curse tablets of the cemetery were found mostly outside the tombs, not in their interiors. Seven of them were found fairly close together in a context that may be a secondary deposition derived from the fill from earlier, destroyed tombs.

Key words: Athens, Kynosarges, cemetery, offering trench, voodoo doll, love magic, curse tablet, binding spell, Semiades, Mynno

This article presents a number of objects connected with cursing that were found in the Kynosarges cemetery in southeast Athens, which is located by the south bank of the Ilissos river. They were discovered in 2001 in the building plot of 10 Diamantopoulou Street. The spot is 320 m due south of the southwest corner of the temple of Olympian Zeus, on the other side of the river (Eliopoulos 2012–2013, plans 1, 2). Although nominally a "rescue" excavation prior to the construction of a new building, it was actually, as are all the excavations of the Greek Archaeological Service, very systematic; it lasted over a year, and proved that we had found the central core of the ancient cemetery—

at least as is known so far—from the 6th to the 4th centuries BCE.[1] In all, 159 graves were excavated in an area of 331 sq. m. In the Hellenistic and Roman periods, the number of tombs decreases, with the latest tombs dating around the 1st–2nd centuries CE. Afterwards, part of the cemetery was covered over by a stucco floor surface (Fig. 1a) that has turned up in the excavation of other adjacent or nearby building plots as well. This floor may be connected with a large rectangular Roman edifice, usually identified with the "Hadrian's Gymnasium" mentioned by Pausanias (1.18.9). There are some grounds to suspect that this building, which covered a substantial part of the Kynosarges cemetery area, was left unfinished. The building plot of 10 Diamantopoulou Street lies inside the central courtyard of this later structure, as reconstructed in Eliopoulos 2012–2013, Plan 2. In Figure 1 are shown two phases of the dig (a and b); in the second (b) the stucco floor has been removed. The handful of Roman-period tombs appearing in the upper left corner and bottom center (Tombs 5, 8, and 9) illustrate the difference in ground level between the later tombs and those of the Late Archaic and Classical period. The objects used in cursing are two inscribed lead figurines and eight or nine (the identification of one as a curse tablet is dubious) complete or fragmentary lead curse tablets. The figurines are published here for the first time, but the curse tablets will be discussed only with regard to their excavation context and form, in accord with the theme of the present volume.[2] The transcription of their texts is ongoing, and they will be published elsewhere in the future.

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1. Preliminary information in Eliopoulos 2001–2004 and Eliopoulos 2010. Some of the data therein have been modified after the completion of conservation. An overview of the area is given by Greco et al. 2011, 503–510 (D. Marchiandi, S. Privitera). The area is usually considered the location of the deme of the Diomeans, cf. e.g. Stephanus of Byzantium, *Ethnika*, *s.v.* Κυνόσαργες, γυμνάσιον ἐν τῇ Ἀττικῇ καὶ δῆμος, ἀπὸ Διόμου, ἀφ' οὗ ὁ χῶρος Ἀθήνησι Διόμεια καλεῖται. Δίομος γὰρ Ἡρακλεῖ ὡς θεῷ θύων τὰ ξενώσων ἱερὰ Ἡρακλεῖ ἥρῳ ἔδειξε, καὶ αὐτῷ κύων λευκὸς ἁρπάσας τὰ μηρία εἰς τοῦτο τὸ χωρίον ἤνεγκεν. ὁ δημότης καὶ τὸ ἐκ τόπου ἐκ Κυνοσάργους, καὶ εἰς τόπον ἐς Κυνόσαργες, καὶ ἐν τόπῳ ἐν Κυνοσάργει. Other excavations of building plots in the cemetery area after 2000 produced mainly Late Roman built tombs.

2. I am indebted to Prof. C. Faraone for the invitation to participate in the *Curses in Context* 3 conference, as well as to the Norwegian Institute in Athens, which hosted the conference. I would like to thank archaeologists M. Panayiotopoulos and L. Panagopoulou for keeping most of the excavation diaries, archaeological illustrator A. Kondonis for drawing the magical figurines, and J. Stroszeck, J. Curbera, J. Lamont, N. Eschbach, Ch. Stoupa, and T. Chatziefthimiou for various information and ideas. My English text was improved and edited by C. Faraone. The use of BCE and CE over BC and AD was decided by the editors.

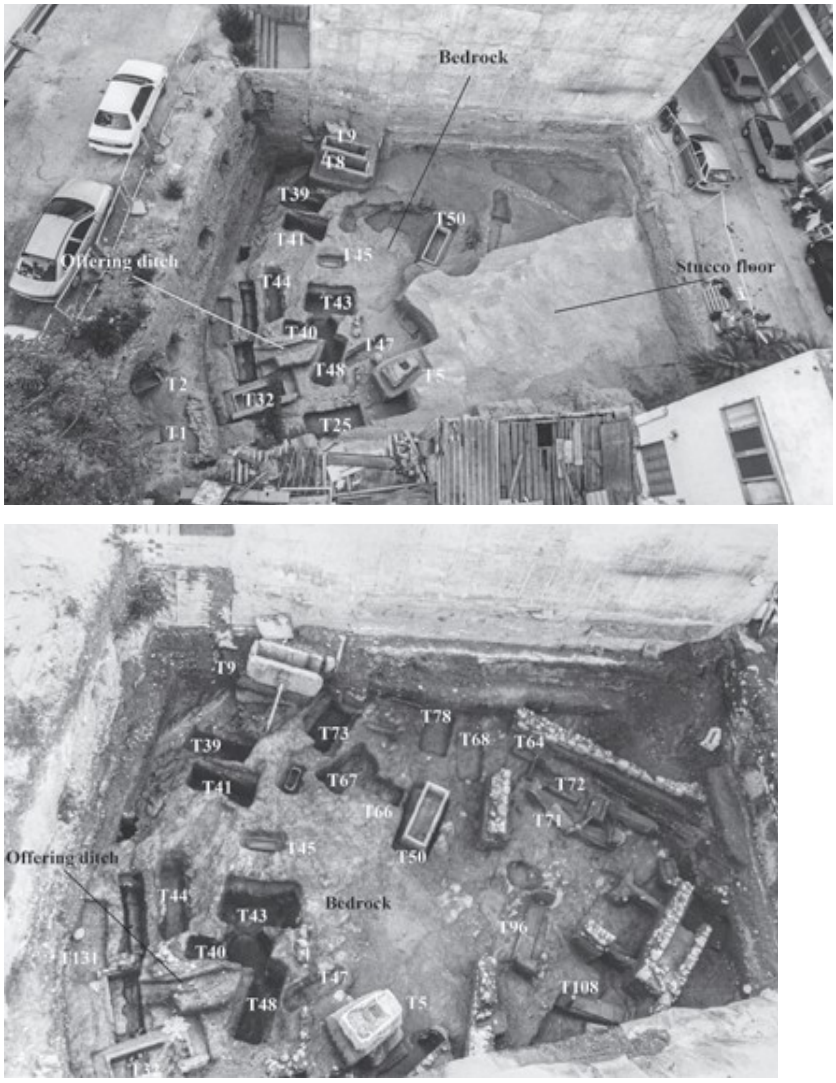

Fig. 1a–b. Diamantopoulou 10 building plot. Two phases of the excavation. To the right the stucco floor (a), afterwards removed (b). Later tombs are nos. 5, 8, 9. North approx. at bottom.

But before considering these curses, mention should be made in passing of an important find from an area very close to where the figurines were discovered, but one probably unconnected with the function of the cemetery: over the Roman-period Tomb 19 (Fig. 2) was found an intact *horos* of the 5th century BCE, inscribed [Δι]ὸς [Π]ολιέως ἄβατον (*SEG* 57.70). Since it had not been been used as a covering slab, its presence in the cemetery was probably fortuitous. This epithet of Zeus (Polieus) is known from the Bouphonia

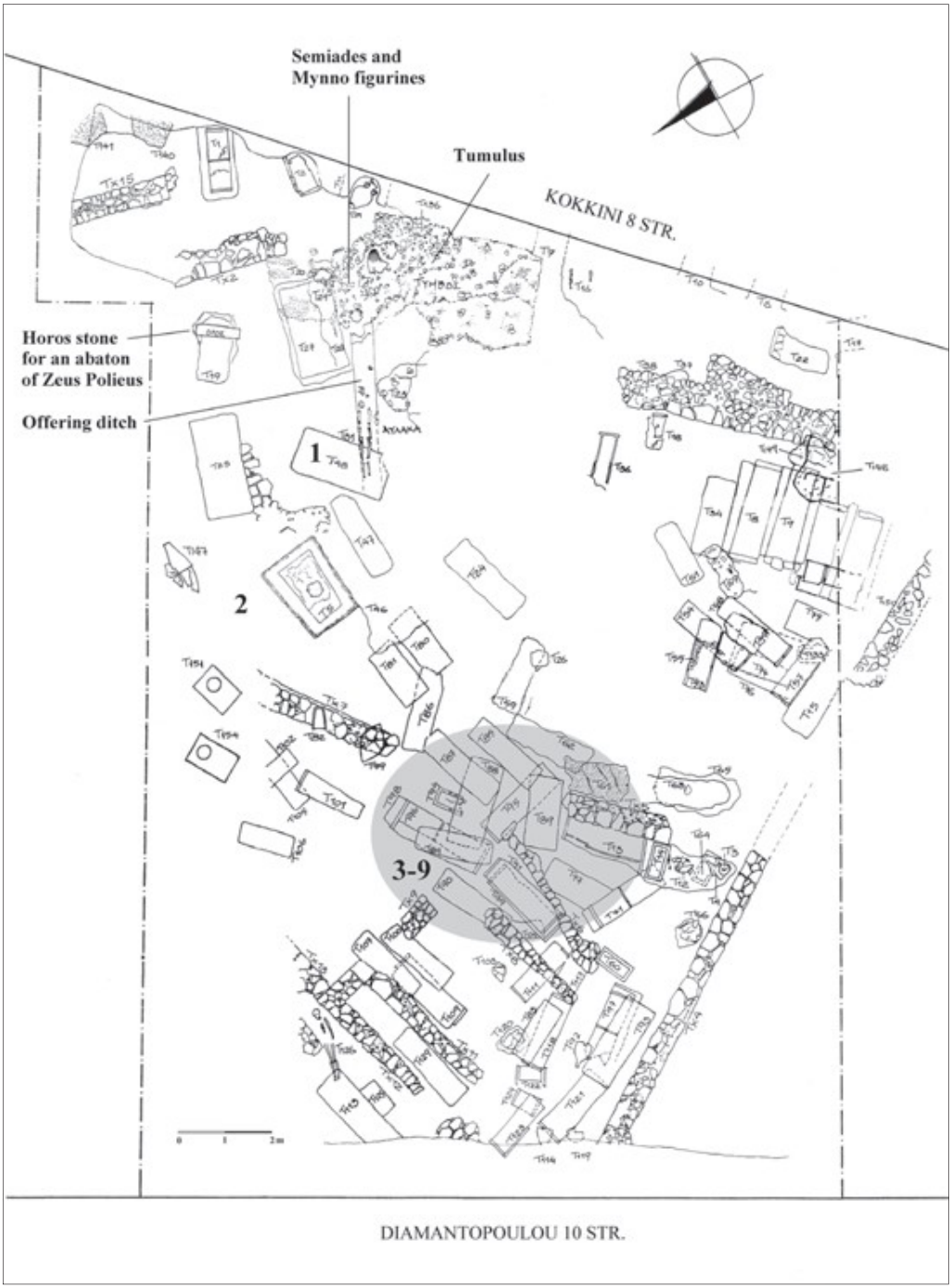

Fig. 2. Plan of the cemetery, with the position of the magical objects.

ritual that apparently took place in the Acropolis shrine near the Parthenon. The worn top of the stone indicates its position by a road with heavy wheeled traffic. Such a road is postulated running through the cemetery and continuing to the southeast, coinciding roughly with modern Vourvachi Street and Vouliagmenis Avenue.[3] The stone, therefore, most plausibly derives from some other sanctuary of the Athenian lower city, which probably lay near to where the stone was found. In the publication of the *horos*, the threads which connect the Bouphonia ritual on the Acropolis and the Kynosarges myths have been discussed and they primarily concern the name Diomos, which on one hand belonged to one of the three founders (*heuretai)* of the Bouphonia (along with Sopatros and Thaulon) and which on the other hand belonged to the hero who first sacrificed to Heracles as a god at Kynosarges. This festival, the Diomeia, can be connected with the Dipolieia festival on the Acropolis, because, as is argued,[4] all three names are only shadowy bynames of Zeus himself.

The burial gifts of the sixth to fourth century BCE discovered in the building plot at 10 Diamantopoulou Street rival those of the other, better known, Athenian cemeteries. An important section of the cemetery is at the northeast edge of the plot. Here was located an artificial heap of earth and river stones mixed with pottery material probably from a tomb or tombs, which formed a rudimentary mound or tumulus (Figs. 2, 3). It continues to the east, outside the limits of the plot, under Kokkini Street. The revealed portion, c. 5 x 2 m, does not present a regular plan. Its height, when it was first heaped up, is difficult to calculate, but would probably not have exceeded 1 m. At the north edge of the mound there was an offering trench and a shaft grave (Tomb 27), partially covered by the material of the tumulus (Fig. 3). These three features—the tumulus, the offering trench, and Tomb 27—all seem to be the result of a single funerary ritual. Tomb 27 (L. 2.07 x W. 1.10; D. of shaft 0.77 m) contained a pyre, but no burial gifts. At a lower level, exactly beneath the north part of Tomb 27, there lay a monolithic poros sarcophagus with a covering slab (Tomb 32, visible in Fig. 1), inserted in a cutting in the *kimilia* (the soft Athenian schist bedrock). It contained a carefully arranged heap of bones, on top of which was the skull and two alabastra. Sherds forming part of a small red-figure hydria were found above the covering slab: on the hydria a woman holds krotala and dances in front of a woman playing the double flute, while a third person looks on.

3. Eliopoulos 2012–2013, 379, n. 48. Additional references in Greco et al. 2011, 429–430 (D. Marchiandi).

4. Eliopoulos 2012–2013, 390–392.

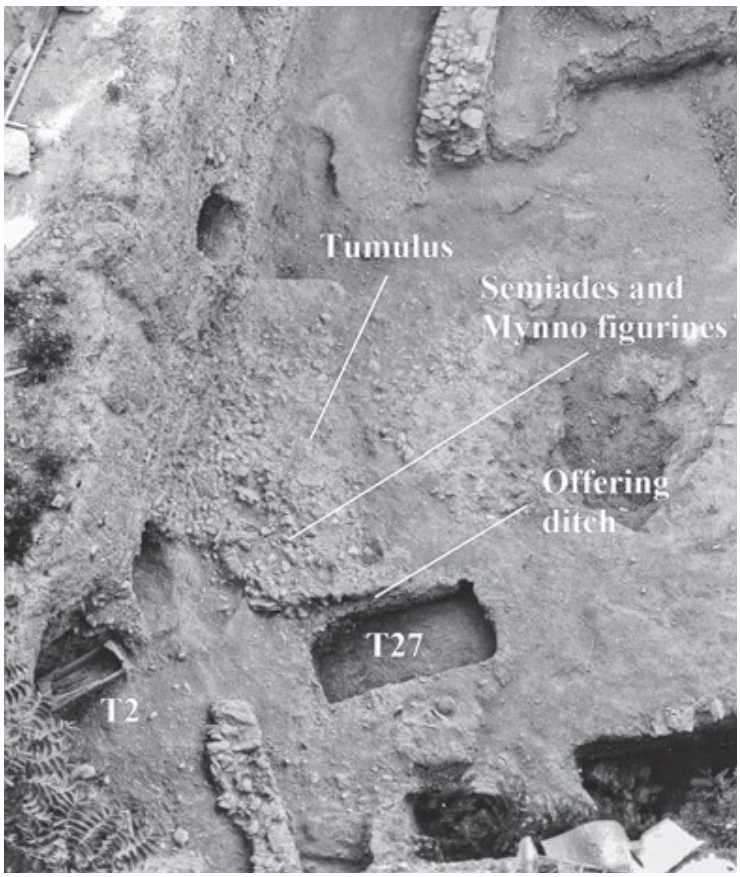

Fig. 3. The northeast part of the building plot, with the tumulus, the offering ditch, the position of the figurines, and Tomb 27.

1. The Offering Trench

In stark contrast to the empty Tomb 27, the elongated and narrow trench or ditch (preserved L. 3.5 x W. 0.3–0.4 m) contained a dense accumulation of pottery, covering part of the ditch for 1.85 m. The ditch itself had a Π-shaped cross-section, the walls and floor covered with clayey earth, 2 to 5 cm thick. Some of the packed multitude of broken and mostly decorated pottery vessels showed signs of burning, but only a minimal layer of carbon underlay the broken pottery. At either end, the original edges of the offering trench have been lost: the east edge was not discernible during excavation, as it runs into the tumulus and the west termination was disturbed in Hellenistic times by a simple burial on a slightly higher level (Tomb 31) of a skeleton almost aligned (accidentally?) with the offering trench and accompanied by a fusiform unguentarium placed by the left shoulder. At a lower level, beneath this spot, there emerged a deep, early 5th-century BCE shaft grave (Tomb 48). In its fill

was found part of a curse tablet (cf. infra). (Tomb 48, visible in Fig. 1, dim. 2.02 x 0.66; depth of shaft 1.49 m; level of floor c. 2 m beneath level of floor of offering trench.) After a prolonged, multi-year period of study and conservation, the following pottery items have been assembled from the offering ditch:

1.1. Red-figure vases *(seven examples)*

Two almost identical Type-1 lebetes gamikoi (with stands). H. with lid c. 70 cm. Both are only partially preserved and decorated with the standard nuptial iconography. On one (Eliopoulos 2010, pl. 36:1), a seated woman holds an infant on her knees. In front of her a standing woman plays the harp with other women present. The women depicted on both vessels (and their stands) carry chests, kalathoi, a lebes gamikos, a loutrophoros, and sashes. There are flying women (Nikai?) below the handles, some of whom carrying kalathoi and sashes.

Two smaller Type-2 lebetes gamikoi, without stands. H. to the top of the handles 17 cm. These are more fully preserved and have an iconography similar to the ones described above. On one of the two the seated bride is holding a chest, with Eros offering her an exaleiptron and a sash (Eliopoulos 2010, pl. 36:2). On the other side, a woman with an alabastron, a sash, and a chest is standing by a Doric column. Here, too, there are flying women below the handles (Eliopoulos 2010, pl. 36:3).

One large hydria, partially preserved (Eliopoulos 2010, pl. 36:4). Two girls balancing on a seesaw, in their midst the lower preserved part of a standing figure, the scene flanked by a standing woman holding an alabastron and by a seated woman with long, free-falling hair, holding a mirror and crowned with a wreath by an Eros.

One almost fully preserved Type-A pyxis (Eliopoulos 2010, pl. 37:1), which depicts a seated Mousaios and the nine Muses, each named and carrying a different musical instrument.[5]

One smaller Type-A pyxis with a woman seated on a rock and two scenes of an Eros pursuing a woman (Eliopoulos 2010, pl. 37:2).

1.2. White lekythoi

Two partially preserved vases and some other fragments. In the best-preserved example, a solitary female figure standing by a funerary stele with curved top and two ribbons.

5. Eliopoulos forthcoming.

1.3. Pottery with floral and linear decoration *(c. seven vases)*

One black kylix (rim dm. 20.8cm), in its rim interior paired ivy leaves with tendrils and berries in applied white.

Four small pyxides with eggs (double borders and black cores) and reserved leaves. One lid with border pattern of triangles.

Two lidded lekanides. Vertical black zigzags between the handles, black rays and reserved paired leaves on the lid.

One shallow two-handled banded cup or lekanis.

1.4. Black-glaze and plain pottery *(ten examples)*

Two skyphoi, one of Corinthian type, the other one an Attic Type A.

Two squat lekythoi, the larger one bearing a reserved band with a running dog pattern.

Five small footed cups.

A plain plate.

1.5. Small finds

Two small identical bone studs, two bone rings, a small bone cylinder, and a black glaze pyramidal loom weight.

The date, range of shapes, and number of vessels found in this trench are, then, similar to those of the Kerameikos offering trench by tomb HS 164, adjacent to the Sacred Way.[6] Such pottery groups, dominated by a pair of lebetes gamikoi, are usually attributed to graves of married women.[7]

2. The Tumulus and the Cast-Lead Figurines *(Figs. 4–7)*

On the surface of the tumulus were found a small (preserved H. 47, preserved L. 48 cm), Late Archaic lion, its legs missing and face broken off intentionally, probably reused as material (Eliopoulos 2010, pl. 39:4), and a pair of standing, naked lead figurines (the exact spot marked with lines in Figs 2, 3). The pair, a male and a female, were found upside down with their heads to the east, the female turned three-quarters to the north and looking away from the male (Fig. 4). They most probably remained in this position after they were deposited in antiquity.

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6. Vierneisel 1963, 27–28, pl. 23. To be published by Norbert Eschbach.

7. For the use of the lebes gamikos and the meaning of its appearance in funerary contexts, see Sabetai 2014, 52–55.

Fig. 4. Semiades and Mynno figurines as found. From west (photograph by M. Panayiotopoulos).

The frontally standing male is intact, except for a missing left thumb.[8] He stands at attention, legs and feet together, with head bent to right. The hair is not clearly rendered. Fingers are in contact, thumbs are turned outwards. Fingers and toes are indicated by incisions in the palms and in the feet. The penis is clearly rendered, not erect. If the attenuated chin denotes a beard, then the effigy probably depicts a mature man. Muscular plastic details in the chest, limbs, and buttocks. The mouth is indicated by an uncertain incision, filled with sediment that was not removed during conservation. Eyes are not shown, the resulting impression being that of sleep or blindness. The figurine stands tiptoe on a conical base left over from the casting process. If one tries to stand the figurine on this "base," it immediately falls over. The well-preserved, oxidized surface is covered at various points with sediment. It was cast using the lost-wax process. No parting lines are visible. Two small areas, on the back (c. 0.8 x 0.6 cm) and more faintly on the buttocks (c. 0.5 x 0.5 cm each buttock) exhibit a totally different, shiny or burnished surface texture, in marked contrast to the oxidized surface of the rest of the figurine. There is a

8. Ht. (with base) 11.8, base Ht. 1.9, W. at shoulders 3.3, diam. of base 3.1 x 2.6 cm. Athens Ephorate (former 3rd Ephorate), inv. no. E1579.

Fig. 5a–d. Semiades and Mynno figurines. Front, back and side views.

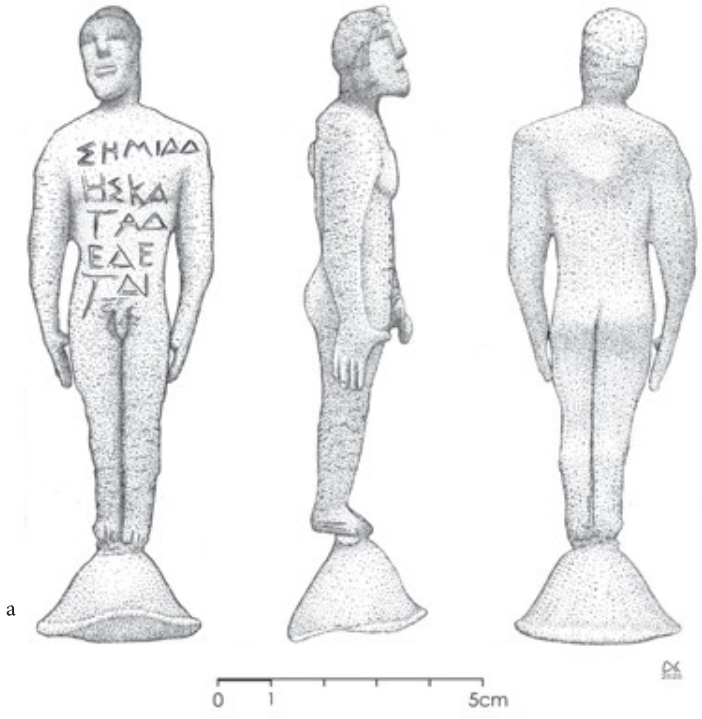

Fig. 6a–b. Drawing of the Semiades and Mynno figurines (by A. Kondonis).

Fig. 7a–d. a–b: Semiades and Mynno figurines, details of the inscriptions. c–d: the figurines hypothetically placed back to back. Two different angles.

deeply incised inscription in five lines on the chest and belly, which is easily read (*SEG* 57–94): "Semiades has been bound" (Σημιάδ/ης κα/ταδ/έδε/ται).

The frontally standing female stands at attention, but her legs do not touch each other.[9] Nor do her hands touch the torso. Her fingers are in contact,

9. Ht. (with base) 11.4, base Ht. 1.6, W. at shoulders 2.9, diam. of base 2.8 x 2.4 cm. Athens Ephorate (former 3rd Ephorate), inv. no. E1580.

rendered by four incisions; thumbs are outstretched, lug-like. Nonexistent or uncertain incisions denote the toes. The mouth and eyes are rendered more clearly than those of Semiades, but they still do not appear as clear plastic elements. Her nose is worn down and her short hair is rendered in relief, as are her breasts. Her body is smoother than Semiades', with wider buttocks, and the musculature is very indistinctly shown. In the area of the genitals there is an irregular and obscure Y-shaped incision, of which the central vertical line is clearer, extending upwards and topped by a small, obscure semicircle. The female effigy also stands on an irregular conical base leftover from the casting process, but her feet rest on it normally, not on tiptoe like Semiades' feet. If left to stand on the "base" the female figurine also leans forward and easily tumbles. The lead has a very well-preserved, oxidized surface, covered at various points with sediment. It was cast using the lost-wax process. No parting lines are visible. The surface of two small areas, on the back (very faint, not measurable) and on the buttocks (c. 1 x 0.4 cm both buttocks) exhibit the same shiny, burnished texture that we find in corresponding areas on the effigy of Semiades. On the chest and belly an inscription is deeply and clearly incised in four lines (*SEG* 57–94 bis): "Mynno has been bound" (Μυννὼ κατα/δέδ/εται).

This pair of cast-lead effigies is a rare find, especially considering (i) that they were found in a clear archaeological context in the cemetery, and (ii) their considerable plastic quality—unusual in "voodoo dolls"—which allows them to be studied as sculptural works. The fact that they were found together supports what would probably have been surmised had they been found singly, namely that they are a couple, made and deposited together for the same purpose, at the same moment in time. Their deposition on the surface of the mound of c. 430–420 BCE gives the terminus post quem. It is impossible to tell, however, whether they had originally been left on the surface of the tumulus or whether they had been hidden, by being slightly inserted or buried within it. The latter option is suggested by the close-up photograph of Figure 4, but the snapshot may be misleading.

The sculptor closely observed the natural body and height of the male and female gender. Semiades is half a centimeter taller and he seems to be a good deal older than Mynno. Both belong to the minority of magical effigies that are not crude works, but well-modeled, skilled products of a professional. But their specialized function influenced or even dictated to some degree their stiff form, hindering any clear stylistic appreciation, when compared with the formal trends of large-scale sculpture of the 5th to 4th centuries BCE. The stiff pose with the hands pressed against the body looks back to Archaic modeling, although without one leg advancing. The musculature is well proportioned

and naturalistic, with careful rendering of the bodily differences of the two sexes. The heads and facial characteristics, when seen in comparison to each other, may indicate an attempt at "portraiture," and a direct reference to real individuals should not, we think, be dismissed out of hand. Nevertheless, some details may indicate that the figurines were deposited before the final touches were rendered: the surfaces have not been finely smoothed, and the casting cones have not been broken off. The claim inscribed on their bodies, namely that they both "have been bound," is not illustrated by any physical features or by any of the usual means found in other "voodoo dolls," for example, the turning back of the head, the hands held behind the body, as if handcuffed, or the impaling with nails.[10] The two effigies simply stand at attention, with palms, not fists, pressed against their thighs.

One interesting element, mentioned above, are the small shiny areas of the back and the buttocks or hips of both figurines (Fig. 5d) and a similar area, albeit more vaguely visible, on the back sides of their conical bases. This difference, when compared with the otherwise oxidized surface of the figurines, does not seem to be fortuitous. One explanation might be that, after they were fashioned, they were attached or tied with cord back to back, so that they touched each other at the back and the buttocks and perhaps at the back of their bases as well. (In the real snapshots, i.e. not digitally created, in Fig. 7c–d, it is clearly evident that when brought into contact back to back, they touch precisely at these points.) As was mentioned earlier, their "bases" are actually the casting channel cones, which were not broken off after the casting, but which were possibly retained not to serve as stands for the figurines (which would have been pointless given their horizontal deposition and the impossibility of them standing upright on these bases), but perhaps for some other reason. The present author had initially considered that this may have had to do with the more secure, steadfast tying (ἀφύκτως) of the figurines back to back, but the question remains open.

Tied, therefore, back to back, they were deposited on top of or (alternatively) buried in the tumulus. They could have been bound together with lead wire or lead bands, as the ones that bind a "voodoo doll" from another Attic grave,[11] but no traces of any such elements were found nearby. If some perish-

10. A recent survey of these "mistreatments" of the effigies by Faraone (2019, 310–317), who interprets the mistreatments in a more metaphorical sense than is usually thought.

11. Faraone 1991, 201, fig. 7; Faraone 2019, 312, fig. 3. Of relevant interest is also a sort of bandage that handcuffs a Kerameikos "doll" inscribed with the name Θοχάρης, from above the grave of Lissos (Stroszeck 2019, pl. 90:2, "Bleimanschette").

able material had been used, it was probably not easily destroyed, because it seems to have kept the figurines tied together for a long enough time to result in the pronounced difference of surface texture at the points of contact. At some later point in time, however, the figurines were detached, or if they had been tied with a perishable cord, this material disintegrated and the figurines rolled over and settled upside down, remaining in this position until their discovery. This hypothesis calls for an explanation, of course, for how the original binding of the figurines back to back furthered the goals of the curse. Such an arrangement could, for example, plausibly be credited to the wish of the curser to separate the couple, to make them turn their backs on each other. Perhaps their enemy wanted to cause childlessness or generally family unhappiness (δυσγαμία), unless the curser was Semiades' lawful wife, who aimed at breaking off Semiades' relationship with Mynno. The considerable difference in age expressed sculpturally between the two figurines might support the notion that Mynno was a young, unlawful lover of a middle-aged man.[12] The often-sizable difference in age between bride and groom in premodern societies, however, makes this intepretation precarious. The penis of Semiades is proportionally larger than is standard in Greek sculpture, but flaccid. The pubic triangle of Mynno is not emphasized in any particular way, apart from a small vertical incision, with a possibly discernible minute semicircle open to the top, too obscure to be shown in the drawing of Fig. 6b. But the possibility that they had been tied back to back before being deposited on or buried in the surface of the tumulus, entails a contradiction: the curser brings them in close contact, not however a happy contact, but a tortuous one. He or she uses their naked bodies to counter their desires: because they cannot see each other or make love, the curser has bound them in yet another, more sophisticated way. One is reminded of the most (in)famous love binding of all, that of Aphrodite and Ares on the marital bed by Hephaistos, who used chains as fine as a spider's web to immobilize them in their nakedness (*Od.* 8.266 ff).[13] If this hypothesis for the original arrangement of the lead effigies is valid, then corresponding textual and conceptual references in ancient magic texts must be sought. In this respect, the use of the verb ἀποστρέφειν with regard to a couple offers a good parallel for the binding of Semiades and Mynno. In two curse tablets of the late 4th century BCE from the Heroön of

12. His possible beard can be correlated to a few possible beards in other effigies; see Faraone 2019, 316, n. 30.

13. The theme of the binding of deities and heros is a vast one, with complicated mythological and religious ramifications (some older bibliography in Faraone 1991, 166, n. 3).

Opheltes at Nemea (see Chapter 7 in this volume for full discussion) the rival, who inscribed the curse, uses this verb when he exclaims in the first person: ἀποστρέφω Εὐβούλαν ἀπὸ Αἰνέα, ἀπὸ τοῦ προσώπου, ἀπὸ τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν, ἀπὸ τοῦ στόματος, ἀπὸ τῶν τιθθίων, ἀπὸ τὰς ψυχάς, ἀπὸ τὰς γαστρός, ἀπὸ τοῦ ψωλίου, ἀπὸ τοῦ πρωκτοῦ, ἀφ' ὅλου τοῦ σώματος. Ἀποστρέφω Εὐβούλαν ἀπ' Αἰνέα ("I turn Euboula away from Aineas: from his face, from his eyes, from his mouth, from his chest, from his soul, from his belly, from his erect penis, from his anus, from all his body. I turn Euboula away from Aineas").[14] In the second Nemean curse tablet, the victims of the curse are Diodoros and Artemidora, and the verb is employed in the infinitive, ἀποστραφῆμεν. The body of Diodoros is divided into 13 named parts, all of which, along with his soul, are to be bound and turned away from Artemidora.[15] Yet another interesting hint is that in modern Greek fortune-telling and astrology the expression νὰ πισωπλατήσει ("to turn the back on," i.e. "to ignore") is still used with regard to any effort to separate lovers.

The names Semiades and Mynno are rare in Attica,[16] Semiades being recorded in the *LGPN* seven times and Mynno even fewer, three. One of the three women called Mynno is the weaver depicted with a wool basket on a stele in Berlin that has been dated on typological grounds to 410–400 BCE.[17] There are, however, various related types of female names with ypsilon and double nu, Μυννία, Μυννίνη, Μύννιον, Μυννάκη or Μυννακή (name of the child in the stele of Σελινώ, Athens, National Archaeological Museum, *IG* II2 12593, dated c. 370 BCE), as are the male names Μύννων, Μύννιχος, Μυννίων (App. *Mith.* 191.1), and Μυννίσκος, the tragic actor from Chalkis (Ath. *Deipnosophistae* 8, 33, 13; Arist. *Poet.* 1461b), who is mentioned as a victor in a 422 BCE inscription (*IG* II2 2318, l. 119). The etymology of this group of names has been connected to a stem that describes children who are unable to articulate words.[18] The compound verb καταδέω has, of course, a long pedigree in literary sources, already in Homer, initially without any con-

14. See Bravo 2016, 127–131 and Chapter 7 in this volume.

15. Bravo 2016, 132–137 (p. 136 for the syntax, recognizing a Doric variation of the infinitive). The verb appears in a third curse tablet from the same area as well. Its occurrence in magical texts has been studied recently by Bravo (2016, 147–148), who stresses the possible ambivalence of the erotic nuances that it expresses.

16. Semiades from mid-6th century BCE, *LGPN* IIA, *s.v.*, with online additions (seangb@ org retrieved April 18, 2020).

17. Scholl 1996, 95, no. 634; 217 and 316, no. 348, pl. 2, 1.

18. Curbera 2016, 256–257, with reference to a gloss of Hesychios, μύναρος· ἄφωνος.

Fig. 8. The lead figurines from Sovana, side view; after Faraone 2019, fig. 7, used with permission.

nection to magic that later eventually contributed the term *katadesmos* itself.[19] The exact form of the perfect tense in third-person singular used in these inscriptions, καταδέδεται, is not the usual form.[20]

The Ionic letter-forms of the two inscriptions raise a problem of compatibility with a dating c. 430–420 BCE, i.e. in close chronological connection with the offering ditch and the creation of the tumulus. There are various ways to address this problem: (a) either the figurines were placed on or buried in the tumulus some time after it had been heaped up; or (b) the figurines and their inscriptions do date to c. 430–420 BCE and are examples of the use of Ionic alphabet in Attic texts before 403 BCE, especially in private objects.[21] Some other instances with similar epigraphy can possibly be dated up to c. 400 BCE: The letter forms of the Mynno stele in Berlin (c. 410–400 BCE (*IG* II2

19. *LSJ*, *s.v.* καταδέω.

20. Καταδέδεται, refering to a cockerel, in a Roman magic text from Carthage; see Audollent 1904, no. 241.

21. Examples and discussion in Threatte 1980, 27–49. For examples of H = [e] in particular, see pp. 42–44.

12193) mentioned above are, for example, very close to those of our figurine. The inscriptions on the Kerameikos lead coffin used to curse Μνησίμαχος (*SEG* 21–1093) are dated by context to 420/410 or 400 BCE, and are also very similar, as testified by the forms of the four-bar sigmas, the omega, and the ypsilon.[22] It could be further noted that the presence of still more "voodoo dolls" from this same period in Athens, inscribed and uninscribed, may indicate a special activity concentrated in space and time. The three lead "dolls" placed within miniature coffins above the Lissos grave in Kerameikos have been dated on the basis of the pottery and the stele from c. 430 BCE to between 410–390 BCE.[23] In the Kerameikos cemetery in general the period 420–350 is characterized as a *Schwerpunkt* for inscribed curse tablets.[24] But any further comments on this are the domain of epigraphists. This suggestion is offered here as a contribution to the dialogue between field archaeology and epigraphy. If the figurines were, however, cast and inscribed at a later date, well into the 4th century, it could be surmised that they were deposited on a spot that had some special meaning, or at least whose importance lingered on for some decades.

The only comparandum known to the author for an inscribed male-female pair of magic lead figurines is the pair from a tomb in Sovana in Etruria (Fig. 8).[25] Although they were placed in the entrance of a 6th-century tomb, they have been dated by style and Etruscan epigraphy to the late 4th/early 3rd century BCE.[26] They, too, are considered a curse sent by a third individual against a married or engaged couple.[27] Their names, without any verb, are inscribed on the left thigh of the man and the left hip of the woman, just like the effigy of Mnesimachos from the Kerameikos. Although in the Sovana case, there are clear differences from the Kynosarges figurines in the violent, expressive depiction of binding, with the hands held back as if handcuffed. Two other pairs of crude "dolls" (male and female) were found together on Delos, but they are uninscribed,[28] and a "voodoo doll" in Berlin, attributed

22. Tile grave SA 40, south of the Sacred Way; Stroszeck 2019, 349–350, 361, no. IB 12, pl. 88:1–3.

23. Tile grave hS 193, by the previous one; Stroszeck 2019, 351, nos. IB 3–5, pls. 89–90.

24. Stroszeck 2019, 343.

25. Faraone 1991, 191, 202, pls. 12–13.

26. Massarelli 2016, 527–528, figs. 13–18.

27. Haynes 2000, 283, figs. 228–229.

28. Faraone 1991, 191, pl. 10; Faraone 2019, 317, fig. 9, commenting on the gender and age distinctions on them.

Fig. 9. Drawing of the back of the lead effigy in Berlin thought to come from Keos; after Curbera and Giannobile 2015, pl.5, used with permission.

on epigraphical grounds to Keos,[29] whose arms are twisted behind his back, which is inscribed with seven names (Fig. 9). The Sovana figurines have their names inscribed on the thigh or hip, so perhaps no particular importance should be paid to the placement of the inscriptions, the main motivation being simply a suitable spot on the figurine. Still, the Kynosarges effigies differ, with the verbal phrase (not only names) emphatically placed on the chest. Could this have been because they were originally bound back to back, that is, so that the inscriptions should remain visible after this binding?

The idea of the sympathetic act of binding in these various "dolls" or figurines from Sovana and Keos is expressed in a single, but powerful way, by the position of the hands twisted back. In the Kynosarges figurines the idea is conveyed in three different, somewhat diffuse ways. The goal of binding is first expressed directly in the inscribed text, without which doubts might have occurred about any magical purpose of the figurines (apart from the use of lead). It is expressed again, if the hypothesis proposed earlier is correct, by binding them back to back, and perhaps even a third time, by their rigid stance; the image of Semiades in particular conveys to the author a sense of petrification or of being thunderstricken (διόβλητος). The tilt of his head could also be an intentional expression of stress or pain. Tilted heads in large-scale sculpture may convey different ideas depending on the context; grief or stress, appearing already in e.g. the seer Iamos in the pediments of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia. Even if these hypotheses are subjective, it is beyond a doubt that the pair was not fashioned

29. Curbera and Giannobile 2015.

by an amateur, but by a professional, who had skills beyond the "Archaic" level of most of the other lead effigies from Attica, which rely on the external expression of distorted body members, crossed hands held back in the age-old rendering of the captive, or worse, by being impaled by nails. All these features lead earlier scholars to compare them to African and Caribbean voodoo dolls. Such manipulations of the dolls can be correlated with magical procedures described in literary sources, inscriptions, and magical papyri. The two Kynosarges figurines, in contrast, seem to attain a Classical, idealized, subtler, and more introverted expression, without bodily "manipulations" and only by means of their inscriptions and stiff stance. The texts of the magical papyri, describing various such procedures,[30] do not seem to attest the binding of two dolls back to back. There have survived, however, a number of wax figurines from Roman Egypt, depicted as couples in an embrace of making love.[31] The opposite notion, the spell for a close, indissoluble contact between anatomical parts of two lovers (lips, belly, thigh, and genitals) is also attested in magical texts, expressed by verbs such as κολλᾶν, συνάπτειν, and συναρμόσαι.[32] This is, of course, the exact reverse of the arrangement suggested above for the Kynosarges effigies.

3. The Lead Curse Tablets (Fig. 10)

Nine fully preserved or fragments of lead curse tablets were found in the same plot where the figurines were discovered (compare Eliopoulos 2010, pl. 40:2, pictured folded as found, before opening, not placed in the final arithmetical sequence numbered here). Their conservation and unfolding presented considerable technical problems and was much delayed. In the present catalogue they are numbered Curse Tablets 1–9, regardless of the size of the preserved part. They were found in three different places:

3.1. Interior of the tomb

Curse Tablet No. 1 was discovered in Tomb 48 a deep shaft grave dug into the *kimilia* schist bedrock and located beneath the western part of the offering trench, at a much lower level (visible in Fig. 1). Oriented north-east-southwest; L. 2.02 x W. 0.66; depth of shaft 1.49 m; mean level of floor -4 m, i.e. c. 2 m beneath the level of the floor of the offering trench

30. Collected by Németh 2018.

31. Faraone 1991, 204.

32. Pachoumi 2013, 312–313.

Fig. 10. Curse Tablets Nos. 1–9, unfolded.

above it. A modern intrusive pit had been cut through a small section of the southeast side of the tomb. This pit, however, had not disturbed the skeleton and the objects deposited in Tomb 48, which were intact. The skeleton lay with the head to the southwest, the feet converging. By the exterior side of the left hand were found two black-figure palmette lekythoi, and by the interior side of the right hand was one black-body lekythos. These three lekythoi date the tomb to c. 475–450 BCE. But the curse tablet itself is only a small uninscribed fragment with a nail-hole and it was found in the fill of the tomb, not on its floor, a configuration that weakens the possibility that it is the remnant of a complete tablet that had once been deposited in the tomb.[33] The date of the tomb itself seems rather early for an Athenian curse tablet, but not altogether out of the question.[34]

3.2. Isolated find outside the tomb

Curse Tablet No. 2 is complete and opisthographic. It was found isolated near Tombs 5 and 25 (depth -1.76 m). The layer, in a depth of -1.70 to -2.04 m, was compact greenish soil from schist decomposition, mixed with reddish soil and pebbles. It contained many sherds, mainly of small lekythoi, obviously from destroyed 5th-century BCE tombs, but with no bone material. It overlay the Classical level proper, and was probably created when the Classical tombs were buried for the laying of the stucco floor that is presumably connected with the erection of the "Gymnasium" discussed earlier. In any case, it cannot be connected concretely with any primary deposit between the tombs. The tablet is rectangular, L. c. 6 x W. 4.4 cm, with two large nail holes, diam. 1 cm. It had been folded once, widthwise, to dim. 4.4 x 3.3/2.9 cm. The iron nail (preserved L. 1.4 cm) therefore pierced two layers of the lead sheet.

3.3. A Group of finds outside the tombs

Curse Tablets Nos. 3–9 were found in an area 5 x 5 m (Fig. 2, indicated in grey), between the depths of -2.22 and -2.50 m. This layer was under the stucco floor and overlay a number of thickly placed tombs, mostly 5th- and 4th-century BCE tile graves, with a few Roman ones (Fig. 1b, to the right of the center). Of these curse tablets, six (Nos. 3–4 and 6–9) are fully or

33. The fragment, c. 4.4 x 2.3 cm, is of irregular, triangular shape, broken off a tablet. At the longest side is preserved part of the circumference of a hole. No letters are visible.

34. The earliest curse tablets of Kerameikos that can be dated by context are placed around 460–440 BCE; see Stroszeck 2019, 343.

mostly preserved. The seventh (No. 5 found a little deeper, at depth -2.78 m) is a small, uninscribed fragment preserving part of a lead tablet folded around a large iron nail. These seven items, found fairly close together, invite speculation about the circumstances of their somewhat concentrated presence, especially because the deposition of curse tablets outside of tombs has indeed been recognized as an excavational fact.[35] This does not, however, seem to be the case here. The layer in which they were found corresponds stratigraphically to that of Tablet No. 2 described above. The fill was deep brown, sandy, with small field stones and it contained mainly Classical sherds, among which were a black-glazed lamp and a squat lekythos, with few later intrusions (parts of Hellenistic unguentaria and the neck of a glass vessel). Pointed feet of transport amphorae were also present. This layer was also created when the tombs were buried prior to the construction of the stucco floor. Whether the objects found in this fill once formed an assemblage connected to a particular tomb or tombs[36] in this area of the cemetery and were later dispersed, cannot now be ascertained. This possibility is currently being studied with reference to the inscribed texts and their letter forms. The shapes of Tablets Nos. 3–9 vary. Four (3, 4, 6, 9) are roughly rectangular and one (7) is square, dim. 5.2 x 5.5 cm, with four large nail holes. It had been folded twice, first lengthwise and then crosswise. Nos. 3, 4, 6, 7, 9 are opisthographic. No. 8 differs in that it is an elongated rectangle, dim. L. c. 14/15 x W. c. 3.8/4.5 cm, which had been rolled, not folded, and was not pierced. No writing is discernible on its surface. To include it in the category of curse tablet one must postulate that there existed a general notional framework, in which even blank lead sheets could fulfill a magical function.[37]

A few general remarks, then, about the nine curse tablets from the excavation at 10 Diamantopoulou Street: All preserved nails are of iron. The shape and way of folding of the seven complete or fairly well-preserved examples varies. The difference in the folding results in various numbers of holes created: The three rectangular tablets (Nos. 2, 3, 4) have been folded once, widthwise yielding two holes, the square one (No. 7) twice, along two different

35. Various instances from the Kerameikos, summary of the contexts by Stroszeck 2019, 346–349.

36. As, e.g., the five tablets connected to a burial pyre from a cemetery near Piraeus; see Lamont 2015.

37. On this, see Lamont 2015, 172–173.

sides, yielding four holes, and another rectangular one (No. 6) twice along the same short side, yielding three holes. No. 9 has three holes in an approximate cross-pattern. Originally it may have had four holes (as No. 7), since the lower right-hand corner is missing. All of the inscribed examples are opisthographic. In contrast to the inscriptions on the figurines, the letters of the curse tablets are lightly scratched and difficult to read (except No. 6). This is not due to wear of the metal surface. Indeed, they probably would have been equally difficult for ancient Athenians to read. It is not clear what this difference in legibility means. Explanations could vary from more practical considerations (i.e. skilled vs. amateur hands or the thinness of the lead sheets vs. the heft of the lead figurines)[38] to the more symbolic (i.e. the text was intentionally meant to be obscure, so that only the writing was important in the magical action, not the reading). The lettering is, however, similar to that on the two figurines, broadly 4th century BCE (etas, four-barred sigmas). The texts on the curse tablets, as far as they have been read, consist of names, some spelled backwards, together with jumbled words.

4. Conclusion

Regarding the curse tablets, the excavation data gleaned from the plot at 10 Diamantopoulou Street point to a possibly disappointing assumption, which, however, is preferable to any false conviction: none of the curse tablets seem to have been inserted originally into a grave, but on the other hand, they do not seem to have been purposely placed alongside the excavated graves. They were, as we have seen, found dispersed among broken tomb furnishings and later material, and therefore cannot be ascribed to any concrete extra mortuary feature or primary layer. As a result, only the pair of lead figurines can be anchored to a certain, artificially made feature, the rudimentary tumulus. The deposition of these effigies on top of the tumulus, possibly left in plain sight on purpose with their inscriptions easily readable by visitors of the cemetery area, could evoke the practice of placing waxen effigies at the tombs of ancestors that near contemporary Plato refers to in the *Laws* (933): he makes it clear that the effigies he refers to were as visible as those left by doorways or at points where three ways meet.

38. Or rather the wax models from which they were cast, see Lamont 2021, 211. This study of an inscribed voodoo-doll from Paros was published while the present article was in press.

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Chapter 3

Cursing in Context: Athenian Pyre Curses

Jessica L. Lamont

Abstract: This chapter explores the relationship between Athenian curse tablets and a contemporary, private ritual practice known only from the archaeological record: pyre deposits. Here "pyre deposit" refers to a small assemblage of specific ceramic vessel types (often miniatures) and burnt material (bone, ash, charcoal) ritually buried in a shallow sub-floor pit (Rotroff 2013). In context and chronology, the earliest pyres recall early Attic curse tablets: both emerge in graves of the Kerameikos in the final decades of the 5th century BCE, and proliferate over the course of the 4th century, appearing also in non-mortuary contexts. At least seven inscribed curses emerge in connection with Attic pyre deposits, seemingly buried on the same ritual occasion; all date from the 4th century BCE, and are inscribed on both lead and ceramic media. These assemblages are catalogued and discussed below, as they raise an important question: What, if anything, was the relationship between these two ritual practices? Curse tablets and pyre deposits correspond so closely in chronology and depositional context that it is tempting to ask whether they somehow evolved in tandem, or reflect social attitudes that sought new forms of interaction with chthonic deities, the supernatural, or the dead. These questions have broader implications for ritualized cursing, and the ways in which curse practice could evolve and diversify over time in a single polis. It seems that over the course of the 4th century BCE, curse-writing rituals came to adopt some features of pyre deposits (and vice versa), and may have been performed by the same practitioners.

Keywords: Curse tablets, pyre deposits, private ritual practice, Athens, Greek epigraphy, Greek archaeology

As more Greek curse tablets emerge *in situ*, we are in a better position to assess their growing numbers in relation to ancient depositional contexts—indeed, this has been one of the many fruits of the *Curses in Context* project. This chapter examines one particular curse context, considering the relationship between Athenian curse assemblages and a contemporary ritual practice: pyre deposits. Here "pyre deposit" refers to a small assemblage of specific ceramic

vessel types (often miniatures) and burnt material (bone, ash, charcoal) ritually buried in a shallow subterranean pit (as in Figs. 1 and 2, showing a pyre from the Classical Commercial Building in the Athenian Agora). These pyre deposits and the rituals that they document are known only from the archaeological record, passing entirely unmentioned in contemporary literary sources. The recent publication of dozens of such pyres by Susan Rotroff (2013) provides a valuable dataset against which Attic curse assemblages might be studied. Distinct and regular offerings in Classical and Hellenistic Attica, pyres are found in funerary and non-funerary contexts, the latter beneath flooring layers in commercial, industrial and domestic buildings ("settlement" pyres). In both context and chronology, the earliest pyres map closely onto the oldest Attic curse tablets; both emerge in graves of the Kerameikos in the final decades of the 5th century BCE, and proliferate over the course of the 4th century, while diversifying in depositional context. At least seven inscribed curses emerge in connection with pyre burials, seemingly deposited in or alongside pyres, on the same ritual occasion. All date to the 4th century BCE, and are discussed below.

Fig. 1. Typical Attic pyre deposit, 375–350 BCE: plates, skyphoi, cup-skyphos, lebes, ribbon-handled plate, bowl, lopadion, chytridion, plate, lekanis, saucers, lopadion lid. Rotroff 2013, 110, Pyre 7. Photo courtesy of Craig Mauzy, Athenian Agora Excavations.

Fig. 2. Typical Attic pyre deposit, 375–350 BCE, shown *in situ* in Room 2 of the Classical Commercial Building, just north of Agora square. Rotroff 2013, 110, Pyre 7. Photo courtesy of Athenian Agora Excavations.

What, if anything, is the relationship between these two ritual practices, cursing and pyre deposits? They correspond so closely in chronology and depositional context that it is tempting to ask whether they somehow evolved in tandem, or reflect social attitudes that sought new forms of interaction with chthonic powers, the supernatural, or the dead. These questions have broader implications for ritualized cursing, concerning, for example, the media on which private curse texts were inscribed, and also the ways in which curse practice could evolve and diversify over time in a single polis. The incision of Attic curses on ceramic media may in fact have been a *consequence* of the depositional overlap between private curse rituals and pyre ceremonies. Indeed, the emergence of Attic curses inscribed on ceramic may be seen as a result of the assimilation or combination of curse- and pyre-rituals.

Using only assemblages from secure archaeological contexts, this chapter first assesses curse tablets found in connection with graveside pyres. It then examines curses found in domestic and industrial pyres, showing how both contexts became appealing as sites of deposition soon after the establishment of ritualized cursing in Athens. Attic pyre ceremonies were understood by the 4th century BCE as particularly ripe *loci* for supernatural exploitation, prob-

ably because they provided points of contact with the untimely dead (*aōroi*). The deposition of curses in such assemblages also sheds light on the function of some pyres from industrial and domestic settings; the presence of curse tablets associates pyres with the realm of the dead, suggesting that these deposits (much like graveside pyres) may have been occasioned by deaths and pollution that required purification.

Athenian Graveside Pyres

Let us begin with mortuary contexts, as the oldest Athenian curse tablets and pyre deposits come from the Kerameikos. Evidence from the Kerameikos suggests that sites of deposition were carefully selected by those casting curses. Over 110 curse tablets and effigies were found during excavations of the Kerameikos, around 83 of which have been published, but, as Jutta Stroszeck writes in this volume, they are actually rather uncommon grave finds. Stroszeck notes that of roughly 6,500 excavated tombs, only 15 graves and 2 graveside pyre deposits (*Opferstellen*, "offering places") contained curse tablets. Inscribed curses were not deposited in just any grave, in other words—they aggregate in particular burial precincts, in certain parts of the Kerameikos.[1] Especially important, it seems, was the deposition of curse assemblages in tombs whose denizens met with violent ends and premature deaths. These gruesome and untimely deaths invited supernatural exploitation—likely because the soul of the deceased was deemed particularly restless and volatile.

Let us consider the Kerameikos graveside pyres with which curse tablets were associated. Here "graveside pyres" are small assemblages of mixed ceramic vessels (saucers, lekanides, chytridia, lopadia, drinking cups, and plates), which were deposited atop a layer of ash and animal bone within Kerameikos grave precincts. Before the late 5th century BCE, many of these vessels were closely and exclusively associated with rituals for the dead, and found only in funerary contexts (these ritual deposits bear no relation to cremation "pyre" burials, in which the corpse was burnt on a bier and collapsed down into the grave pit).[2] As Susan Rotroff notes, the proximity of graveside pyres to burials

1. See Chapter 1 in this volume. Stroszeck also notes that only 2 of the 44 wells in the Kerameikos contained curse tablets, and that these wells were in the same region as the burial precincts in which curse assemblages cluster.

2. Rotroff 2013, 68. The presence of burning gives the designation "pyre" to both in English, misleadingly so. The act of burning likely added appeal to those looking to cast a powerful curse, and I know of at least one "pyre grave" cremation that did attract curse tablets in

"ensures that they formed a part of a ritual or rituals associated with the dead"; in other words, these burnt funerary deposits constitute "a strongly marked mortuary assemblage," with a long evolution that began in the 8th century BCE.[3] *Opferrinnen* and variants on these graveside-offering trenches (*Opfergruben*, *Opferplätze*) emerged infrequently over the centuries, that is, until the end of the 5th century, when the practice of burning offerings at the graveside suddenly revived, and intensified during the 4th century.[4] Now termed *Opferstellen* ("offering places") in the Kerameikos archaeological reports, the majority of these deposits comprise small, mixed ceramic assemblages buried in shallow pits, as discussed above. These are the "graveside pyres" most relevant to this study. Roughly 29 *Opferstellen* deposits have emerged in the Eckterrasse and Eridanos cemeteries of the greater Kerameikos (or nearly 50, if similar types of burnt assemblages/sites are included, such as *Opferrinnen, Brandopfergruben*, etc.).

Like the curse tablets documented by Stroszeck in Chapter 1, graveside pyres also tend to congregate in certain burial precincts in the Kerameikos. The precincts of the Eckterrasse contained 18 pyre deposits, with the densest concentrations in Precincts VIII (six *Opferstellen*), VII (four), and X (four).[5] The Eridanos cemetery also contained around ten *Opferstellen*.[6] Only one of these graveside Eckterrasse/Eridanos cemetery pyres dates to the late 5th century BCE; the vast majority date to the 4th, with two from the early 3rd.[7] In both depositional context and chronology, then, the earliest graveside pyres

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Classical Athens: the pyre cremation of a young girl from Ayios Ioannis Rentis, unearthed in 2003 just northeast of Piraeus (Lamont 2015).

3. See Rotroff 2013, 68, for the burning of offerings in shallow graveside trenches.

4. See Houby-Nielsen 1998, 133–135. On these *Opferstellen* as "the resurgence of an earlier custom rather than a complete innovation," see Rotroff 2013, 69–70, Appendix III.

5. Precinct VIII: Kovacsovics 1990 [= *Kerameikos* XIV], 38–44, nos. 25, 28, 33, 36, 35, 44; Precinct VII: 57, 59–61, nos. 54, 57, 60, 62; Precinct X: 15–20, nos. 12, 17, 18, 21. At least two graveside pyres were also found in the Precinct of the Messenians, which has recently yielded new curse tablets: Kovacsovics 1990, 119–120, 126–127, nos. 126, 159.

6. Eridanos cemetery: Schlörb-Vierneisel 1966, nos. 92, 108, 109, 114, 136, 138, 160, 168, 188; Stichel 1990, 41–42; possibly also Schlörb-Vierneisel 1966, no. 107, but this is described only as a *Brandgrab*.

7. "Late 5th century": Schlörb-Vierneisel 1966, no. 92 = Rotroff 2013, Appendix III, no. 19. One additional "offering trench" from the northern side of the Sacred Way (*Opferrinne*: Knigge 1988, no. 44), and a "burnt offering pit" found northwest of the Rundbau (*Brandopfergrube*: Knigge 1975) were dated to around 430 BCE, but these deposits were not precisely recorded as *Opferstellen*, and lie outside the Eckterrasse and Eridanos cemeteries. In Rotroff's words (2013, 71), "these deposits predate the formulation of the pyre assemblage, but seem

resemble the earliest Attic curse tablets, the latter of which also emerged in graves of the Kerameikos during the late 5th century BCE, and proliferated over the course of the 4th (with far fewer dating to the 3rd).

Two graveside pyres from the Kerameikos contained or were associated with lead curse tablets, suggesting that whatever occasioned the pyre ritual (rites for chthonic powers or the dead) was also deemed appropriate for the casting of a curse. Let us assess the oldest known pyre with which a curse tablet was associated, to see how the two practices may relate to one another. Precinct VII in the Eckterrasse contained no fewer than four graveside pyres, all of which dated between c. 370 and 350 BCE.[8] One of these pyres was associated with the amphora burial of a newborn, and the nearby sarcophagus of a woman who was probably the infant's mother. The two likely died together during childbirth. The woman was around 40 years old at the time of death, and had been laid out on her back with her head facing north (skeleton length 1.65 m); the infant was interred in an amphora, the mouth of which faced south, and the vessel was buried at the southwest corner of the sarcophagus grave.[9] Immediately beside the amphora burial and associated with it was a pyre deposit in a small, shallow pit.[10] The ceramic assemblage was set atop a thin layer of ash with boar bones (including teeth), and contained the following offerings: one skyphos, one pyxis (with burn marks), one miniature jug, two plates, two miniature chytrai,[11] four bowls, two lid pans, one lid, three alabastra made of alabaster,[12] and two small bronze plaques.

This pyre was deposited in close temporal and spatial proximity to the infant and female burials, especially the amphora burial of the newborn. It surely served as an offering to the deceased, or to the chthonic powers associated with the grave or Underworld. Yet this pyre ceremony was not the only ritual performed alongside these two burials: less than one meter away from

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to point forward toward it." See too the early graveside offering from the Eridanos cemetery reported in Schlörb-Vierneisel 1966, no. 66.

8. Rotroff 2013, 195–196, nos. 12–15; Kovacsovics 1990, 50–53, 57–59, nos. 55 (woman), 56 (infant).

9. Kovacsovics 1990, 57–58, no. 55 (Eck 46), no. 56 (Eck 48).

10. Kovacsovics 1990, no. 57 (Eck 49).

11. Two small chytrai: H. 5.7 and 5.9 cm.; Diam. 8.2 and 8.5 cm.; one-handled. Fine, household fabric. One vessel not completely preserved, carries burn marks.

12. An alabastron made of alabaster was also recovered within the sarcophagus, at the left foot of the inhumed female. This vessel type—used as a grave good for the woman, and also as an offering within the pyre deposit—suggests that the pyre ceremony was connected to both graves.

the pyre deposit, archaeologists also recovered a curse tablet in the cutting for the woman's sarcophagus burial (Cat. 1.1). The deposition of the tablet in the fill of the grave suggests that, like the pyre assemblage, the curse was deposited at the time of burial and bore some relation to the corpses. Though not found *within* the pyre assemblage, the lead tablet was deposited on the same occasion, just before the graves were filled in and sealed off. The curse tablet is triangular in shape, and was folded vertically so that the interior text was sealed off; the lower corner is missing, and there is no obvious nail hole. The curse is judicial in nature and, like the sarcophagus and amphora burials, dates to c. 360 BCE. The nine lines of text were transcribed by Franz Willemsen as follows (Cat.1.1):

1 Εὐκράτης ΦΕΡ̣ΣΙΘΕΦΙΩΝΙ
Διοκλῆς Πιθε(ύς) : Ἀριστοκράτη[ς
Πό(ριος)(?) : Δημόστρατος Κεφι(σιεύς) : Αὐτο-
μένης Κηφι(σιεύς) : Καλλίας Εὐπυ(ρίδης),
5 Μνησίθεος Ἀγρυ(λῆθεν) : Κόνων
[—]εύ(ς) : Αἰσχίν̣[ης] Ὀῆθ[εν] : [Δί]-
αιτο[ς], Δ[ημά]ρετος,
συνδι[κοῦν]τος Εὐ-
κράτος

The text primarily contains personal names with demotics. There are no verbs, but συνδικοῦντος (line 8) reveals that the tablet was prompted by a court case, and Diokles of Pithos was among the targets. Diokles was a prominent, wealthy Athenian who served as both trierarch and *choregos*, and was active in the leasing of mines at Laurion during the early to mid-4th century.[13] The relationship of the cursed individuals to the deceased woman and infant is unclear, but there need not have been any connection; the graves marked two untimely deaths, and these appealed to the curse writer for supernatural exploitation. The unexpected nature of the deaths was probably why this precinct attracted both a pyre deposit and a curse tablet. The argument by Rotroff and others that graveside pyres marked deaths that were untimely would help to explain both their irregularity in the graves of the Kerameikos (roughly five graves for every pyre), and why there would be depositional overlap between

13. *PA/APF* 4048; Willemsen 1990, 142–143. This may be the same Diokles cursed in *DTA* 94.

graveside pyres and curse tablets. If pyre ceremonies provided some form of contact with the dead, and sought to appease and/or purify untimely deaths, the curse against Diokles aimed to exploit and harness that same presence, and thereby consign its victims to the Underworld.[14]

Attic Settlement Pyres

Graveside pyres were deposited in close proximity to tombs in the Kerameikos; so-called settlement pyres, by contrast, emerge in private Athenian buildings such as shops, industrial workshops, and houses. Settlement pyres contain the same ritual assemblages as their graveside counterparts: deposits of specific ceramic vessel types, often miniature in scale, and burnt materials (bone, ash, charcoal) buried in shallow pits on or beneath the floors of interior spaces. Settlement pyres first emerge around the Athenian Agora at roughly the same time that graveside pyres appear in Kerameikos precincts: the late 5th century BCE, or just slightly thereafter.[15] Sparkes and Talcott and, more recently, Rotroff, have argued that settlement pyres, though deposited well outside mortuary contexts, were "modeled on those already being offered in the cemetery."[16] On the basis of the parallel chronologies and typologies of graveside and settlement pyres, and the uneven distribution of the latter in Athenian buildings, it seems quite probable that these rituals bear some relation to one another—indeed, they likely shared a function. Surely some settlement pyres found *outside* the Kerameikos did mark "deaths that were untimely or unexpected,"[17] and possibly this held true for *all* pyre deposits with which curses were associated. The remainder of this chapter examines settlement pyres from the

14. The second curse tablet that emerged in a funerary pyre (Cat. 1.2), *SEG* 40.267 (IB 25), cursed a woman named Glykera, the wife of Dion. The tablet was associated with the offering pit in a grave in the precinct of the Messenians, and was found with an alabastron. There is reason to believe that this curse tablet was placed in the grave of Glykera herself, the target of the curse: Stroszeck 2019, 341.

15. Though some settlement pyres have been connected to rituals occasioned by the construction or renovation of the spaces in which they were deposited, their precise function is unknown; scholars understand them as expiatory, purificatory, or apotropaic in nature. For "settlement" pyres from the Athenian Agora, see Rotroff 2013, 56–66 and *passim*; for pyres from Building Z in the Kerameikos, see Knigge 2005; for pyres from the construction of the Acropolis metro station and the new Acropolis Museum, see Eleutheratou 1996–1997, 115–116.

16. Rotroff 2013, 71–73. See also Sparkes and Talcott 1970, 45. Non-graveside settlement pyres grew in popularity over the course of the 4th century BCE, and continued long after the Kerameikos graveside pyres ceased.

17. Rotroff 2013, 75.

districts surrounding the Athenian Agora—contexts not far from the Kerameikos precincts—which contained or were associated with curse assemblages. Indeed, the lead and ceramic curses that have emerged in settlement pyres link these assemblages to graveside pyres and rites for unexpected deaths. Rotroff convincingly wrote that "the ritual documented by the pyres may, at least in some instances, have been enacted to turn away malevolent entities, and was probably perceived as a species of purification"; put another way, these pyres can be seen as "reaction[s] to an untoward event."[18] Settlement pyres may well have been created in response to sudden or unexpected deaths within secular structures, in moments when malevolent or restless powers were deemed to be proximate. If these deposits (and the rituals that they document) were meant to ward off supernatural threats to the workplace or household, this could explain why curse tablets were deposited in pyre assemblages; if pyres provided some form of contact with the dead, curses aimed to exploit that same presence, harnessing it to torment victims and consign them to the Underworld. I would even suggest that, over the course of the 4th century BCE, curse-writing rituals came to adopt some features of pyre deposits, and vice versa. This blending of private rituals may account for the emergence of Athenian curses inscribed on ceramic (rather than lead) media. Ceramic curses from 4th-century Attica may thus be products of the merging or collapsing of pyre ceremonies with curse-writing rituals, and both appear to have been performed in similar contexts by the same sorts of practitioners.

Let us now examine some curse tablets linked to settlement pyres. In 1967, American archaeologists excavated a small rectangular building of 4th-century date—probably a private house—located just south of the Agora square on the slopes of the Areiopagos. Below the northwest corner of a cross-wall in the southern room of the house, excavators recovered a lead curse tablet buried inside a small chytra, a miniature ceramic pot (Agora IL 1504; Cat.1.3; Figs. 3, 4).[19] A fragment of another cooking pot was found nearby, from which it was inferred that "these vessels lay under the floors or had been placed in a pit dug through them"; parallel assemblages suggest that this should be understood as a pyre deposit, due especially to the inclusion of a chytridion of non-cooking fabric (Fig. 3).[20] The interment of the opisthographic lead curse tablet, *SEG* 49.322 (Fig. 4), was clearly part of the broader ritual of making a pyre. The curse text was inscribed as two columns of personal names, eight male and

18. Rotroff 2013, 84, 81, respectively.

19. Rotroff 1997, 212; Jordan and Rotroff 1999, 148.

20. Jordan and Rotroff 1999, 148.

one female, written in the same order on both sides of the tablet. The spelling of the names was deliberately distorted, with each successive pair of letters reversed (hence the string of letters ABCDEF would be written BADCFE), producing ΕΛΝΩ for Λέων (line 2), ΩΔΟΡΣ for Δῶρος (line 9), and so on. The goal in scrambling the letters was to analogically twist, confound, and muddle the targets themselves. The next step in the ritual process, however, was peculiar: the curse caster folded the lead tablet and inserted it within the chytridion. Then, probably during a pyre ritual, the miniature chytra was buried alongside the cross-wall beneath the floor, in what was described as a "disturbed pyre or pyrelike deposit" just above bedrock.[21] Though the curse was inscribed on lead, its placement within a ceramic chytra and burial within a domestic structure recalls other Attic curses of the 4th century BCE, some of which also emerged in connection to settlement pyres. Here is clear evidence of an overlap between curse writing and pyre ceremonies.

In her study of pyre deposits from the Athenian Agora, Rotroff noted two other inscribed curses that were buried together with pyre assemblages: a lead tablet cursing bronze-workers from room 5 of House D outside the Athenian

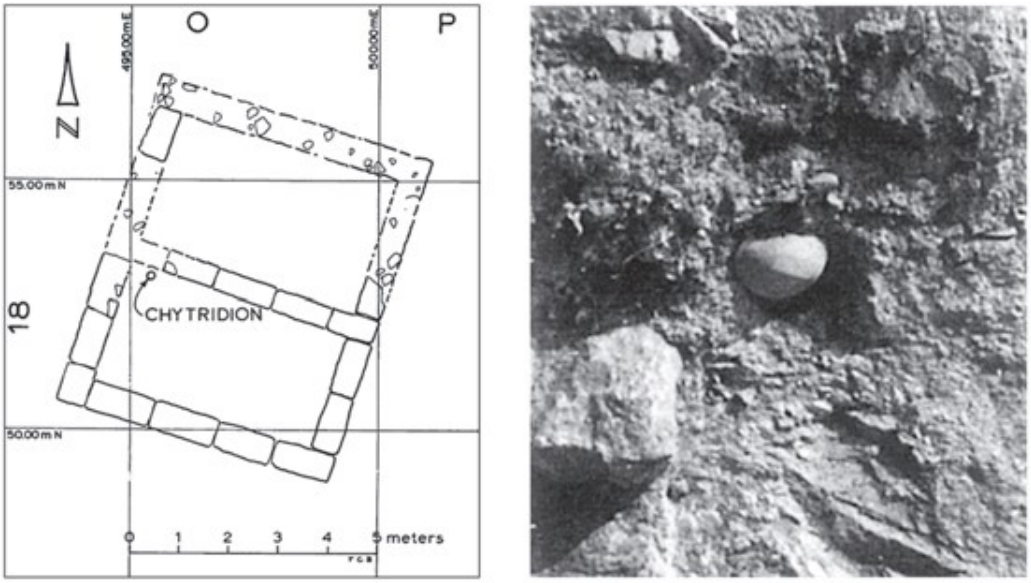

Fig. 3. Domestic structure and probable pyre chytridion (*Agora* XXIX, 212 = Jordan and Rotroff 1999, 148) in which *SEG* 49.322 (Fig. 4) was deposited. Photo and drawing courtesy of Athenian Agora Excavations.

21. Jordan and Rotroff 1999, 152.

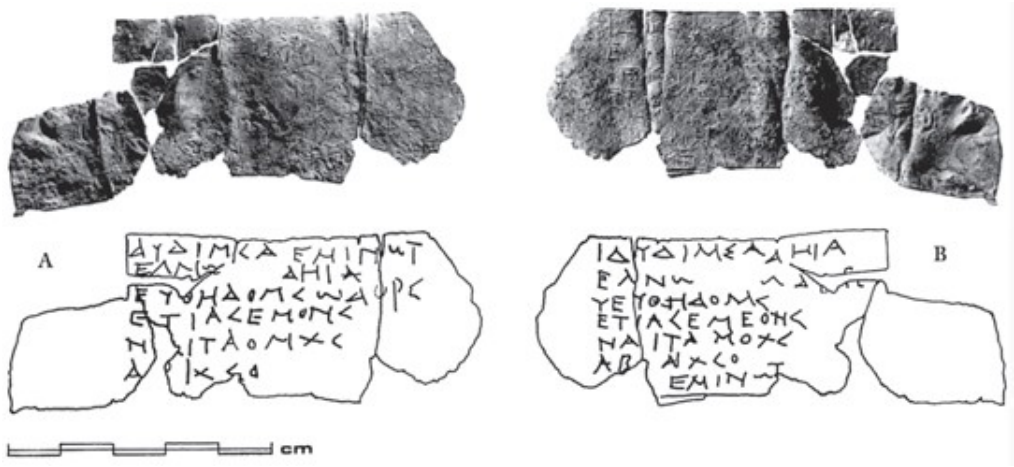

Fig. 4. Late-4th-century BCE lead curse tablet (*SEG* 49.322 = Jordan and Rotroff 1999) found inside a chytridion (Fig. 3). Photo and drawing courtesy of Athenian Agora Excavations.

Agora, which may have originated in a disturbed pyre in that same room (IL 997; Cat. 1.4), and a black-glaze lamp from another house on the slopes of the Areiopagos (Agora L 5298; Fig. 5; Cat. 1.5). This latter curse was inscribed on top of the nozzle and rim of a ceramic lamp that emerged in a sub-floor context as part of a pyre deposit.[22] The names of six men in the nominative case were aligned at the left and inscribed backwards on the lamp's exterior—Philodemos, Antikleides, Praxias, Arkesilas, Alkias, and Antimedes—another attempt to "confound" the victims through the analogical reversal of text.[23] Together with the lead tablet interred in the chytridion (*SEG* 49.322), both *SEG* 48.357 and *SEG* 28.366 emerged in secular, sub-floor contexts surrounding the Athenian Agora, and appear to have been cast in connection with pyre deposits. Here, too, it seems that pyres provided occasions of contact with the dead or the supernatural, and were exploited by those looking to craft a powerful curse.

This may be the best way to interpret another ceramic curse from the late 4th century BCE, excavated in debris from a Late Classical house on Salamis (Cat. 1.6). Like the lamp curse from the slopes of the Areiopagos (Cat. 1.5), this new Salamis text was incised on the interior of a black-glaze bowl (Fig. 6). The serpentine text targets a group of individuals, mostly in the genitive, and may call for their punishment "in the bowels of the earth," παρὰ γαίης (though this line can be transcribed in other ways, most simply as another

22. Lamps were sometimes included in pyre assemblages alongside other ceramic vessels.
23. Thompson 1958, 159; Mastrocinque 2007, 88.

proper name in the genitive). While the bowl fragment was found in an unsealed refuse deposit, Chairetakis argues that it had been buried "in a small pit beneath the floor of a house".[24] He convincingly connects this curse to those from structures surrounding the Agora, discussed above, and with Attic pyre deposits more broadly. Pyre ceremonies are also found on Salamis, and Chairetakis understands them as a "means of communication with the chthonic gods and the dead [which] seem to constitute a fertile ground for the exercise of magical practices".[25] The Salamis bowl may thus provide another example of a private curse buried beneath the floor of a secular building in the mid- to late 4th century BCE. Most of these curses seem to have been deposited in connection with pyre ceremonies.

Significant, too, is the ceramic medium. Infrequent though they are in Athens, ceramic curses may represent something more than just the use of a new writing material a cheap and readily available support other than lead. It is tempting to view the emergence of inscribed ceramic curses in 4th-century Athens as a result of the combination of curse- and pyre-ritual assemblages.

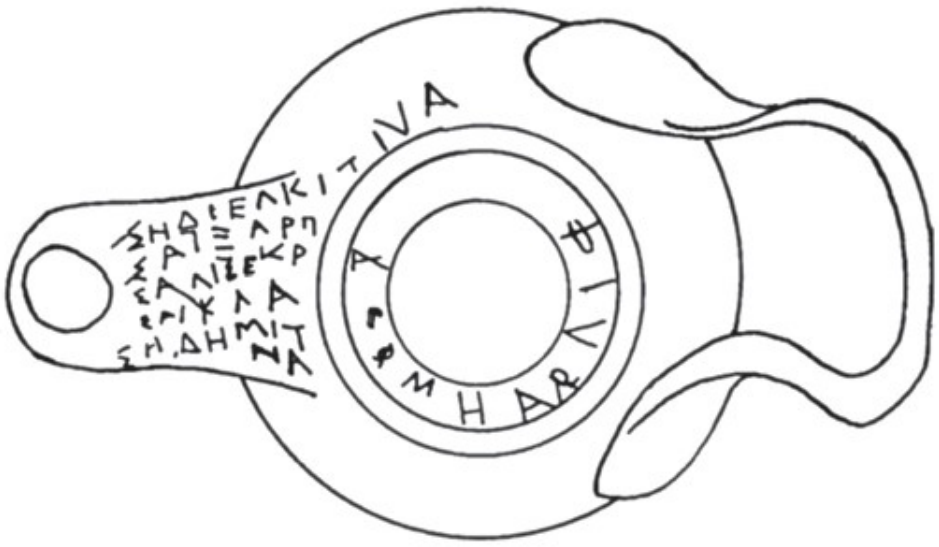

Fig. 5. Black-glaze ceramic lamp from slopes of the Areiopagos; individual names inscribed backwards on top of nozzle and rim (*SEG* 28.366; *Agora* XXI [Lang 1976], C 32, pl. 6). Drawing courtesy of Athenian Agora Excavations.

24. Chairetakis 2018, 139, 141.
25. Chairetakis 2018, 141.

Fig. 6. Inscribed black-glaze "curse bowl," Salamis (Chairetakis 2018).

Despite a rich Athenian "epigraphic habit" that favored the writing of text on ceramic—from civic ostraca to private graffiti—ceramic curses only emerge in connection with settlement pyres in Attica, as far as I am aware.[26] I suspect that we are glimpsing a merging or conflation of these two private rituals, both of which were associated with chthonic powers (possibly ghosts) and the realm of the dead. Again, this blending may explain the deposition of ceramic curses in sub-floor domestic contexts, and also why so few Attic curses were committed to anything other than lead, despite robust social attitudes that favored the writing of text on ceramic.

The merging or "hybridization" of curse practice with pyre ceremonies in 4th-century Athens is perhaps best illustrated by a recent discovery from the Athenian Agora. In their interment beneath the floors of interior structures, the pyre curses discussed above resemble a small ceramic chytra uncovered in 2006 in the back corner of the so-called Classical Commercial Building, a structure associated with industrial production (Fig. 7). This chytra, as it

26. I know of only one other possible ceramic curse from Athens, but it lacks archaeological context, and it is not obvious to me that it is in fact a curse. The text was inscribed on a black-glaze sherd "at the very beginning of the fourth century" (Nilsson 1955, 801). Several have considered it to be a curse tablet (see below), and the text certainly flirts with maledictory genres, but it is unclear whether the object was ever employed within curse ritual. Nilsson first encountered the text in the Kinch Collection at the National Museum of Copenhagen (Inv. 7727), and transcribed it as Ἀριστίωνι ἐπιτίθημι τεταρταῖον ἐς Ἄιδα; this has been understood as a wish for quartan fever, and may be roughly translated as "I set upon Aristion a quartan fever, into Hades!". See Gager 1992, 31, "I lay upon Aristion a deadly (*es aida* or until death) quartan fever," and Kazantzidis 2014, 115, "a quartan fever be put on Aristion and kill him." The sherd resembles an ostracism ballot, and one wonders if it may have been used instead in a civic context. Was this a cheeky way of casting a vote for ostracism? The lack of context permits no certainty. On ostraca, see Kosmin 2015; Sickinger 2017.

Fig. 7. Excavation of Agora P 35446, showing chytra *in situ* in Room 6 of Classical Commercial Building. Photo courtesy of Athenian Agora Excavations.

turned out, was no ordinary cooking pot. The vessel's exterior was inscribed with more than 30 personal names, several new or previously unattested in Attica, while the interior contained the dismembered head and lower limbs of a young chicken (Agora P 35446; Cat.1.7; Fig. 8). The pot was pierced with a large iron nail and buried with a bronze coin around 300 BCE beneath the building's deepest floor stratum. The assemblage belongs to the broader realm of Athenian binding curses but, like the ceramic curses examined above, shows how curse practice had come to incorporate Attic pyre ceremonies by the 4th century BCE. I believe that this deposit is best understood as another instance in which Attic curse casting came to overlap with settlement pyres; by the close of the 4th century BCE, the two rituals could combine, and pyre deposits could both influence and incorporate private curses.

Together with the iron nail, bronze coin, and dismembered chicken, the vessel—a small chytra, similar to the pot in which *SEG* 49.322 (Cat.1.3) above was buried—is peculiar for its use within a curse ritual.[27] Here the pot itself served as the medium for a curse text, a sort of ceramic curse tablet, which

27. Lamont 2021.

Fig. 8. Chytra curse assemblage Agora P 35446. Photo courtesy of Craig Mauzy, Athenian Agora Excavations.

consisted of personal names in the nominative case, inscribed without patronymics, demotics, or other civic/occupational identifiers. Apart from the handle, all exterior surfaces of the chytra were covered with text. It is clear that the chytra once carried over 55 names, dozens of which now survive only as scattered, floating letters or faint stylus strokes. These names can be analyzed in five groups of text inscribed on different parts of the vessel (I–V). The well-preserved text on the underside of the pot (Fig. 9) comprised a vertical list of 20 names on the vessel's bottom (I), 4 names added to the vertical list (II), and a group of at least 11 names incised later, in a semicircle above the vertical list (III). Only a few scattered letters are visible on the vessel's walls in groups IV and V. These names run downward from the rim, but it is unclear how they relate to one another; possibly they connect. At least two hands are discernible. The presence of different hands is surprising, and largely unprecedented in Greek curse tablets. My impression is that the two acts of writing occurred in a single session, suggesting that the pot was inscribed by more than one person acting together; the ritual was thus performed by (or in the presence) of more than one individual, and this may be another way in which curse practice had come to diversify over the course of the 4th century.

Fig. 9. Underside of Agora P 35446, groups I (vertical list of names), II, III. Drawing by Anne Hooten, Athenian Agora Excavations, with additions by author.

Agora P 35446 (Cat.1.7)
Small inscribed chytra
Athens, Agora: Classical Commercial Building, room 6
c.300 BCE

I	II	III
1 Πολυκράτης	15 Βουίδιον	19 Καλλις
2 Φιλίππα Δημ[ώ]	16 Μίκα	20 Δρομέας Ρ–[4–5] – ΗΔΟΥΜΕΝ. . .
3 Λάχης Ξενόκριτος	17 Δινίας	21 ΙΣ.Ο . . . Μένων Νάννη Μῆτρις
4 Δ῾η῾μόκριτος Φίλων	18 Ἀνδρικός	22 Στάχυς
5 Πολύκριτος		23 Στράτων Βάκαλ
6 Φιλουμένη Ἄσκρα		
7 Λάχης Πατροκλῆας		
8 Ματροκλέας		
9 [Ν]εβ[ρ]ίς Παμφίλη		
10 Ἀγαθόκλεια		
11 Ἀγαθοκλῆς		
12 Δορκάς		
13 Δορκις		
14 Δόρκι[ο]ν		

	IV	V
24	.[1–2] . Δ̣.[1–2] . Κ̣ –[c.6] – Μανία	31 N .
25	Ξ̣ . .	32
26	Μ̣ . . . . Ο̣ Ι̣Ο̣	33
27	–Ν̣Ο̣Ι̣–– N Σ̣Ρ̣ .	34
28	Κ̣α̣λ̣λ̣ίστ̣ρ̣α̣[τος?]	35
29	Ι̣Σ̣ Μί̣κ̣α̣ –– –[c.19]– – –ΑΝ̣–[c.6]–Ν. .Η[	36 ΣΤ
30	Ε̣Ρ̣Χ̣. . . . Κ̣–[c.4]– Ι̣ .	37 Κ̣
		38
		39
		40 Κ̣

Most of the discernible text records individual names in the nominative case, like *SEG* 49.322 and *SEG* 28.366, the other sub-floor curses buried near the Athenian Agora. The verb δοῦμεν, "we bind," may be present in line 20, but this restoration is far from certain. The number of cursed women is striking. Group I contains no fewer than seven female names, and possibly ten: Φιλίππα, Φιλουμένη, Παμφίλη, Ἀγαθόκλεια, Δορκάς, Δόρκιον, perhaps also Δορκίς and the restored Δημώ and Νεβρίς. Women are also well represented in the other groups: Βουίδιον (usually female), Νάννη, and Μανία. Of the preserved names, roughly one-third to one-half are female (11–15). Is this a clue to the social context of the curse? Women were sometimes cursed in judicial tablets for their participation as witnesses, supporters, and family of the legal opposition. The women cursed on our chytra may have worked in Attic craft industries, or been the wives, daughters, or mothers of the cursed men. Still others, like Μανία, may have been *hetairai*, which could indicate that some of the men belonged to elite male citizen groups, as *hetairai* were accessories at the symposium. Finally, and perhaps relatedly, many of these names are documented in Attica for female slaves, including Δόρκιον, Μανία, Μίκα, and Παμφίλη (so too the male Ἀγαθοκλῆς, Φίλων, and Μένων).[28]

The best-preserved section of text, group I, takes the form of a columnar list of names. The simple list of names was the most popular format for Greek curse tablets, and this is the easiest way to understand the chytra's inscription:

28. Vlassopoulos 2010, 132, 138, 140. For Boidion, see Kapparis 2018, 328–329. It was not uncommon for slaves to work in commercial and industrial establishments.

lists of individuals destined for "binding" by the curse ritual—as in the other pyre curses examined above.[29]

This assemblage is unique in the archaeological, literary, and epigraphic records, and shows how ritualized cursing had diversified over the course of the 4th century. No single parallel exists, but parts of the ritual can be contextualized alongside other private practices from Athens. First, the small chytra served as the support for a binding curse, which took the popular format of a list of names in the nominative (cf. Cat. 1.1, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5). The inscribed chytra was then pierced with a large iron nail. In this way the pot was subjected to the same ritual nailing as hundreds of lead curse tablets that, after incision, were pierced through prior to deposition and burial. The incision and nailing of the chytra thus resembles private binding rites known from contemporary Attic curse practice. Another significant element in the assemblage is the small bronze coin (Fig. 10); it was placed in the mouth of the chytra, atop the iron nailhead, after the pot was pierced but before the assemblage was covered with soil. Now fused to the nailhead, the coin was a deliberate addition to the assemblage just prior to burial. One way to interpret the coin's deposition in the mouth of the vessel is through contemporary Attic funerary customs, whereby obols and other coins were placed on the mouth or person of the deceased at burial.[30] Perhaps the insertion of a low-denomination coin within the mouth of the chytra after the chicken's death, just prior to burial, ritually simulated the interment of the named individuals, and their transferal to the Underworld.[31]

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29. Another reading, less likely in my opinion, could hinge upon interpreting the word Μανία in line 24 as the common Greek noun for "madness"; possibly the curse aimed to drive its victims into a state of madness or insanity.

30. See the silver coin buried in the mouth of the corpse in a recently discovered inhumation from Athens' Kynosarges cemetery: Eliopoulos 2010, table 35.3. In numerous Attic graves of Hellenistic date, bronze coins were found in the mouth of the deceased individual, though sometimes in the hand, loose in the grave, or in a vessel (cf. Rotroff's settlement pyres): Stevens 1991, 224–225; Morris 1992, 106. By the 5th century BCE, literary sources suggest that the placement of a coin in the corpse's mouth served as payment to Charon, the ferryman responsible for conveying the souls of the dead to the Underworld: Ar. *Ran*. 140–141.

31. More prosaic explanations are also possible. Coins are common finds in Attic domestic contexts, and were popular dedications in Athenian shrines and sanctuaries (see the many coins in the inventory inscriptions from the Athenian Asklepieion from the 4th and third centuries BCE: *IG* II^2 1532–1539, with Aleshire 1989, 1991; so too the sanctuary of Amphiaraos at Oropos: *IG* VII 303.74–102; inventories from the temple of the Athenians on Delos documenting the dedication of coins: *IG* II^2 1636–1653, with *IG* II^2 1636.29–30 recording coins dedicated by women).

Fig. 10. Small bronze coin on iron nailhead (Agora IL 2010), found inside chytra. Photo by author.

Coins were also present in settlement pyres from the industrial, industrial-domestic, and domestic buildings surrounding the Athenian Agora, and this forms a point of overlap between our ceramic curse pot and Attic pyre ceremonies. Indeed, coins occur in 18% of Rotroff's undisturbed pyres, and in 12% of her overall total; small bronze coins like that on our chytra were associated with 10 undisturbed or minimally disturbed pyres bordering the Agora.[32] Most of the coins found in settlement pyres were single instances, and all were small change—bronze coins of local issue.[33]

Another parallel between Attic settlement pyres and the chicken-curse assemblage is the chytra itself. The chytra is similar to those found in pyre deposits; it is rather small, and made of non-cooking fabric. Small chytrai

32. Rotroff 2013, 18–19, 37. These percentages suggest that their inclusion was a deliberate part of pyre ceremonies in the Agora region, if intermittently.

33. Rotroff 2013, 37. Small bronze coins within pyre assemblages in the Classical Commercial Building: Rotroff 2013, no. 5, from room 1, c. 250 BCE; no. 15, from neighboring room 5, 300–275 BCE. Small bronze coins in pyre assemblage roughly five meters southwest of room 5 in the Classical Commercial Building: Rotroff 2013, no. 18, c. 350 BCE, with two bronze coins.

emerged in 76% of Rotroff's undisturbed pyres, and some of these pyres contained more than one chytridion.[34] Furthermore, the context in which this new assemblage emerged is very important: the Agora's Classical Commercial Building has yielded 14 pyre deposits to date, with five additional pyres in the immediate vicinity.[35] This building, associated with the working of bronze and marble, in addition to other craft activities, contains the largest concentration of pyres anywhere in the vicinity of the Athenian Agora. No fewer than eight of the pyres within this structure included small chytrai within the deposits; furthermore, of these eight pyres, six contained two or more chytridia.[36] Nine of the pyres within this building were deposited in the same general period as our curse assemblage (325–275 BCE), and one pyre emerged in 2009 in room 6 (Rotroff 2013, no. 16)—the very room in which our small chytra was buried. This pyre (no. 16) dates to 300 BCE and was found less than five meters away from our chytra assemblage; both deposits may have been created in the wake of a sudden or unexpected death, when a malevolent or restless power was deemed proximate.[37] When we set the chytra curse alongside the 14 pyres deposited across the same building, especially the nearby pyre no. 16

34. The circumstances surrounding the burial of our assemblage were also similar to the Agora's pyre deposits. The chytra was deposited against the back wall of the industrial building; the pit cut below the structure's deepest floor level, into older strata dating to the late 6th/early 5th century. No pit was detected during the course of excavations, but one must have been cut because the strata into which the Early Hellenistic chytra was deposited, and the fill used to bury the assemblage, were dated much earlier than the curse assemblage on the basis of pottery, to the "late 6th–early 5th" century (M. Handler, Agora field notebook BZ 1407 [2006], 8118–8121). A patch of floor level was found in room 6 at an elevation of 52.188 masl, a surface just high enough to fully cover the chytra; it is likely that the pit for the chytra was cut down under this surface, as the mouth of the chytra was detected at an elevation of roughly 52.167 masl.

35. Excavations in Beta Zeta in 2015 recovered the fourteenth pyre, two years after Rotroff's book was published; the pyre included the usual collection of vessels (a small chytra, lopadion, saucers, dishes, a lamp, drinking cups) with some signs of burning, along with bones, buried *in situ* beneath the floor of room 4.

36. Pyres numbered according to Rotroff's catalogue (2013, 95–182), where possible: no. 4 (three chytridia in pyre, room 1, c. 325 BCE); no. 6 (one chytridion, cooking ware, room 2, c. 400–390 BCE); no. 7 (one chytridion in cooking ware, one black-glaze chytridion, room 2, 375–350 BCE); no. 9 (two chytridia, household ware, room 2, 275 BCE); no. 11 (two chytridia, cooking ware, room 3, 325 BCE); no. 12 (two chytridia, household ware, room 3, 310–300 BCE); no. 15 (two chytridia, household ware, room 5, 300–275 BCE); pyre J 2:30, recovered in room 4 in 2015 (one chytra, c. 375 BCE, uninventoried).

37. Rotroff notes that a kiln-stacking ring from the pyre may indicate industrial activity in the immediate vicinity; iron slag was also recovered from the room (2013, 118).

dating from c. 300 BCE, our assemblage can be situated in relation to these private rituals; it may even have been part of one, like the six "pyre curses" discussed above.

A final parallel between this discovery and Attic settlement pyres can be found in the ritual use and manipulation of an animal. A unique aspect of the assemblage is that it includes the bones—apparently unbutchered and unburnt—from the head, lower legs, and feet of a chicken that was killed before the age of seven months. About two-thirds of pyres from the Agora included the sacrifice of an animal, but exclusively ovicaprids; usually the sheep/goat bones were thoroughly burnt, which suggests that they were placed directly into the fire, unlike our dismembered chicken.[38] The Agora pyres thus differ from our chytra in both the selection and the deposition of the sacrificed animal: pyres seemingly involved the sacrifice of sheep and goats, with parts of the animal then burnt and deposited under or alongside the ceramic assemblage. Although two graveside pyres from the Kerameikos did contain bird bones, our chytra, containing the head and feet of a chicken, is unusual.[39] Still, we can point to one important parallel. Preliminary study of the bone from the Agora pyres suggests that the meat-poor parts of sheep/goats were routinely burned during pyre ceremonies, primarily the animals' lower limbs and feet, but also the skull.[40] These are the same parts of the young chicken that were selected for burial within our chytra. Though the species differed, there was anatomical consistency: just as in pyres, our assemblage utilized the meat-poor lower limbs (legs and feet) and skull of the animal. The other

38. Rotroff 2013, 16, 41. Preliminary study of the bones from the saucer pyres suggests that "the uniformity of species and the selection of body parts is a strong indication that the pyre ritual included the sacrifice of an animal, at least in some cases" (Rotroff 2013, 41). The publication of the bone and other organic remains from the Agora pyres remains to be published.

39. *Kerameikos* XIV, 44, 57, nos. 37, 54. The best parallel, however, is a peculiar assemblage from Roman Imperial Mazan (southern France), containing a lead curse tablet buried in an urn-like pot with the bones of a small chicken. This is certainly the closest ritual parallel to the new Agora assemblage, though it was buried centuries later and found in a mortuary rather than domestic context. The ensemble emerged in the necropolis of Saint-Andéol, and was associated with an inhumation burial; the vessel containing the curse tablet and chicken were found outside of the tomb, but at the same elevation as the head of the deceased. The excavators report that within the urn, the lead curse tablet was found beneath the chicken, hidden under the bones; they interpreted the assemblage as a gift or an offering to the infernal deities: Barruol and Barruol 1963, 89–123.

40. Rotroff 2013, 41; Snyder and Rotroff 2003. Ribs and vertebrae appear also to have been burnt in pyre rituals, but rarely.

parts of the chick may have been sacrificed or eaten. Later Greco-Roman curse rituals were known to have used and manipulated animals, including dogs, frogs, fish, bats, roosters, other birds, and a chameleon.[41] These effigies were dismembered, bound, or buried in rites meant to analogically incapacitate human victims.

Placing the chytra assemblage alongside the concentration of pyre deposits in the Agora's Classical Commercial Building has revealed several points of overlap. The ritual shows how Athenian binding curses had come to subsume elements of pyre ceremonies by the late 4th century—the time in which other ceramic curses emerge in interior spaces on the Areiopagos and Salamis, also in connection with pyre deposits. Keeping in mind the lead and ceramic curses discussed above, we may conclude that by the late 4th century BCE (1) some Athenians were using non-lead (namely, ceramic) media for curse writing, possibly due to the fusion of curse-writing and pyre rituals; (2) that sites of curse deposition had expanded from mortuary contexts to include domestic and industrial sub-floor burials, a trajectory also observed in pyre rituals; and (3) that private curse practice could diversify in scope—implicating young chickens and bronze coins—and adopt aspects of other ritual practices (namely, Attic pyre deposits, but perhaps also mortuary rites involving the interment of a coin with the deceased). The *fil rouge* linking these assemblages to curse tablets deposited in Attic mortuary contexts, and also to graveside and settlement pyres, was surely the connection to the dead and the Underworld.

Conclusion

We have now examined two contemporary ritual practices that pass almost entirely unmentioned in Greek literary sources: curse assemblages (inscribed lead tablets and ceramic vessels) and pyre deposits (graveside and settlement). Both private rituals required subterranean deposits; both were made in mor-

41. For the use of other animals within curse rituals, see *DT* 222 B 1–2 (*huic gallo lingua vivo extorsi*); *DT* 241.16 (ὡς οὗτος ὁ ἀλέκτωρ καταδέδεται); Pind. *Pyth.* 4.213–219 (ποικίλαν ἰύγγα τετράκναμον); Theoc. *Id.* 2 *passim* (Ἶυγξ, ἕλκε τὺ τῆνον ἐμὸν ποτὶ δῶμα τὸν ἄνδρα); *PGM/PDM* xii (= *GEMF* 15) 376–379 (λαβὼν νυκτερίδαν ζῶσαν ἐπὶ τῆς δεξιᾶς πτέρυγος ζωγράφησον ζμύρνῃ τὸ ὑποκείμενον ζῴδιον, ἐπὶ τῆς ἀριστερᾶς τὰ ζ′ ὀνόματα κατάγραψον θεοῦ, "take a living bat: on the right wing paint with myrrh the following figure; on the left write the seven names of the god"); Bouloumié 1985 (baby fox); Stylow 2012, 149–155 (frog); Lib. *Orat.* 1.245–249 = vol. 1, p. 140 Foerster (chameleon); Ogden 2014; Watson 2019, 127–148; Faraone 2019.

tuary and domestic/industrial contexts; and both appeared in Attica by the late 5th century BCE and peaked over the course of the 4th. This chapter also posed the question of whether pyre deposits, which comprised various ceramic assemblages, may have given rise to the inscribing of curses on ceramic in 4th-century Athens. The question is especially relevant as all obvious instances of ceramic curses emerge in connection with pyre deposits, and most were inscribed on terracotta vessels characteristic of pyre ceremonies (a small chytra, lamp, bowl), rather than broken ceramic sherds. Did Attic ceramic curses result from the convergence of curse-writing rituals and pyre deposits? It seems to me a possibility. As more pyre deposits emerge and are published, especially those from the Athens metro and Acropolis Museum excavations,[42] it is likely that more curse assemblages will also emerge, shedding further light on the relationship between these two curious practices and their practitioners.

Curse assemblages made in connection with pyre deposits were seemingly occasioned by moments in which the dead or chthonic powers were deemed proximate. In several cases discussed above, I suggested that we have a collapsing of two private rituals that hinged upon the presence of the recently deceased and/or subterranean spirits. The collocation of the chytra assemblage and the many pyre deposits in the Agora's Classical Commercial Building—with five additional pyres in the building's immediate vicinity—is striking. The density of deposits within this space suggests that these rituals were repeated over time by the same groups of individuals. The rituals must have been understood as efficacious and important, to have recurred with such frequency over multiple generations. Whatever activities transpired in the building continuously warranted these private rituals, which involved the procurement of various ceramic and organic materials, followed by acts of deposition, burning, and burial.

I agree with Rotroff and others that such rituals were probably responses to unexpected deaths in the workplace, or perhaps attempts to purify a space from a lingering malevolent presence. I have further thoughts on the relationship between settlement-pyre rituals and such chthonic powers, though these must remain speculative in nature. We know of other types of purificatory rites that aimed to rid practitioners of a harmful supernatural presence—whether ghosts or other malevolent spirits. Such rites are described on the so-called *Lex Sacra* from Selinous, Sicily, a 5th-century ritual text concerned with purification, ablution, and expiation (*SEG* XLIII.630). The tablet reveals that

42. Metro and Acropolis Museum excavations: Eleutheratou 1996–1997, 2019.

within the city, communal anxieties clustered around chthonic deities and vengeful spirits, including Zeus Eumenes, Zeus Meilichios, the Eumenides, "pure and impure Tritopatores" (*SEG* 43.630A.10–13), and *elasteroi*. *Elasteroi* are understood to have been vengeful, ghostlike spirits associated with the dead and the Underworld; they could haunt and hound individuals in a manner similar to Aeschylus' Erinyes. The text describes rites for ridding oneself of an *elasteros*, a process that required an animal sacrifice (with the slaughter facing downward, toward the earth) and the marking of a boundary with salt (*SEG* 43.630B.1–13). Another set of purificatory regulations is known from Cyrene, Libya (*SEG* 9.72). This inscription, dating to 325–300 BCE, and thus a rough contemporary of the Agora's chytra and pyre assemblages, describes purification from an ἱκέσιος ἐπακτός, "an invasive suppliant" (*SEG* 9.72.111). The intruding presence could be banned by calling out the spirit's name, crafting a set of figurines, preparing a meal, and depositing the figurines in the ground in an uncultivated wood. This cathartic ritual, sometimes called a "ghost-banning rite," required the burial of materials underground, and would have left little trace in the archaeological record. It is possible that the Agora's pyre deposits capture another such purificatory rite, the final stage in a process meant to appease, cleanse, or banish a dangerous supernatural power—whether a recent and unseasonable death within the building proper, a distressing *elasteros*, or something similar.

Changes in material culture—in this case, the emergence in late-5th-century Athens of two new, private ritual practices that hinged upon depositional acts—were conditioned by the choices of individuals and family groups in response to social, religious, and economic factors. Assessing how curse assemblages and pyre deposits worked, and how they were related to one another (and to wider communities of practice), is fundamental for addressing the role played by individuals in altering physical objects and ritual practice. The appearance of curse tablets and pyre deposits in late-5th-century Athens, and the coalescence of the two rituals soon thereafter, sheds new light on how individuals interpreted unforeseen events and managed the unanticipated, the threatening, and the supernatural in daily life.

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1. Catalogue of Inscribed Attic Pyre Curses

	Publication of Text; Inv. No.	Description	Medium	Date (BCE)	Location and Context	Associated Pyre Deposit	Pyre Type
1	*SEG* 40.265, Kerameikos IB 51	Judicial curse against Diokles et al.	Lead	c. 360	Athens, Kerameikos (Eckterrasse, Precinct VII) Found in grave fill of cutting for sarcophagus of a female; nearby amphora burial of infant	*Kerameikos* XIV, no. 57 (Eck 49); *Brandopferstelle*	Graveside
2	*SEG* 40.267, Kerameikos IB 25	Curse against Glykera, the wife of Dion	Lead	317–307 BCE	Athens, Kerameikos, Precinct of the Messenians; offering pit in grave, found with an alabastron	*Opfergrube* (grave Me 36)	Graveside
3	*SEG* 49.322 Jordan and Rotroff 1999, 151	Opisthographic curse; two columns of personal names (8 male, 1 female); spelling of names distorted	Lead	Late 4th century	Athens, Agora (house on slopes of Areiopagos) Lead tablet inserted in chytridion, buried along crosswall beneath floor in "disturbed pyre or pyrelike deposit" just above bedrock	Jordan and Rotroff 1999	Settlement
4	*SEG* 48.357 Curbera and Jordan 1998, 216; Agora IL 997	Curse against bronze-workers	Lead	Mid- to late 4th century	Athens, Agora (House D, room 5)	Rotroff 2013, no. 39	Settlement

	Publication of Text; Inv. No.	Description	Medium	Date (BCE)	Location and Context	Associated Pyre Deposit	Pyre Type
5	*SEG* 28.366, Rotroff 2013, no. 58; Agora L 5298	Curse against 6 men in nominative; inscribed backwards	Ceramic: black-glaze lamp	Late 4th century	Athens, Agora (house south of the Agora square) Sub-floor context	Rotroff 2013, no. 58	Settlement
6	Chairetakis 2018, 138–140; no inv. no.	Curse against persons in genitive	Ceramic: black-glaze bowl	Late 4th century	Salamis, Late Classical house Debris from unsealed refuse deposit	Chairetakis 2018	Settlement
7	Lamont 2021; Agora P 35446	Curse against 30+ persons in nominative; chicken bones, large nail, coin inside	Ceramic: small chytra	c. 300	Athens, Agora (Classical Commercial Building, room 6) Chytra buried sub-floor along wall in back corner of room	Lamont 2021; Rotroff 2013, no. 16	Settlement

Chapter 4

A Group of Curse Tablets from the "Ayios Dionysios Cemetery" in Piraeus

*Evangelos Kroustalis**

Abstract: This paper examines five curse tablets that were excavated from a cemetery located at the northwest side of the Piraeus harbor, not far from the ancient fortification wall and the gate of Eetionia. They all date to the 4th century BCE. Despite their common provenience, these curse tablets were associated with various archaeological contexts, having been deposited under different circumstances. Two of them were discovered on the floor of a sarcophagus, in the palms of the dead, two others were found in the fill of a funerary enclosure surrounding a grave with two successive burials, while the fifth curse tablet could not be securely linked to any particular grave. This study has verified that the precise knowledge and analysis of the archaeological contexts of curse tablets can yield vital information, even if no legible texts survive on them. The author has further explored if it is possible to integrate the text with the context of a curse tablet and has argued that when rich information can be deduced from the archaeological context, this information may in some cases help us illuminate issues raised by the text itself.

Keywords: Peribolos tombs, libations, Kantharos harbor, Eetionia, citizens, foreigners, Brachyllos, Oinades, Demetrius Poliorcetes

In 2007 a rescue excavation conducted at the site of the former Ayios Dionysios railway station in Piraeus brought to light part of the ancient city's cemetery.[1] The excavation yielded, among other finds, five curse tablets. Al-

* I want to thank Chris Faraone for inviting me to submit this paper for publication and for his corrections and advice. I am also grateful to Angelos Matthaiou for reading an earlier version of this text and for making several valuable observations.

1. The excavation took place on the occasion of technical works for the replacement of the old rail-tracks. The work was conducted under the author's supervision and under the general oversight of Aris Tsaravopoulos, archaeologist at that time of the 26th Ephorate of Prehistoric

though since the 19th century a number of tablets coming from the wider area of Piraeus have been published, as a rule no information is known about the exact provenience and the archaeological contexts of these finds.[2] In this paper I analyze the archaeological contexts of the curse tablets from the "Ayios Dionysios cemetery" in order to investigate what kind of information can be deduced from them; in the cases of those with legible texts, I will also explore if the textual data can be integrated with evidence deriving from the contextual analysis, to allow a more thorough understanding of these texts.[3] This last venture may look too ambitious, as it is usually assumed that curse tablets "have no special relevance to the burial they accompany."[4]

1. The Archaeological Setting

The site of the excavation is located by the northwest coast of the Kantharos harbor in Piraeus and approximately 260 m to the north of the Eetionia gate (see Fig. 1).[5] This gate constituted the northwest cornerstone of the Piraeus fortifications, giving access to the city from the north.[6] The proximity of the "Ayios Dionysios cemetery" to the Eetionia gate testifies to its central position in the topography of the ancient city. The orientation of the finds suggests that the excavated part of the cemetery spread along the south edge of a road running from east to west; at some distance to the west this road presumably met a major artery leading into the city through the gate of Eetionia.

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and Classical Antiquities. I am grateful to him for allowing me to study the curse tablets, along with the rest of the archaeological material from this excavation. The results of the excavation have been reported in preliminary form in Kroustalis and Tsaravopoulos 2008. See also Tsaravopoulos and Kroustalis 2009. All the finds of the excavation—the curse tablets included—are kept in the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus.

2. See e.g. Wünsch 1897, nos. 1–2, 5–6, 38, 55b, 58–59, 66–67, 96–97, 103, 153. Only for nos. 38 and 67 is it vaguely stated that they originated from tombs in Piraeus.

3. Ideally, the study of a curse tablet should be able to shed light on a series of crucial issues. They include the date of the tablet; the identities of the individuals targeted by the curses; the identity of the composer of the curses; the motives of his or her action and the background of the story; the desirable outcome of the curses; the supposed mechanisms of their accomplishment. In practice, however, only a small fraction of these questions can usually be answered, with variable degrees of probability.

4. Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 217.

5. Unless otherwise stated, all photos were taken by the author.

6. For the ancient gate and the fortifications in the area of the Eetionia peninsula, see Alten 1881, 19–21; 1881–1894; Eickstedt 1991, 34–44, 145; Foucart 1887; Kroustalis 2019, 165; Lechat 1887; 1888, 337–354, pl. XV; Steinhauer 2003.

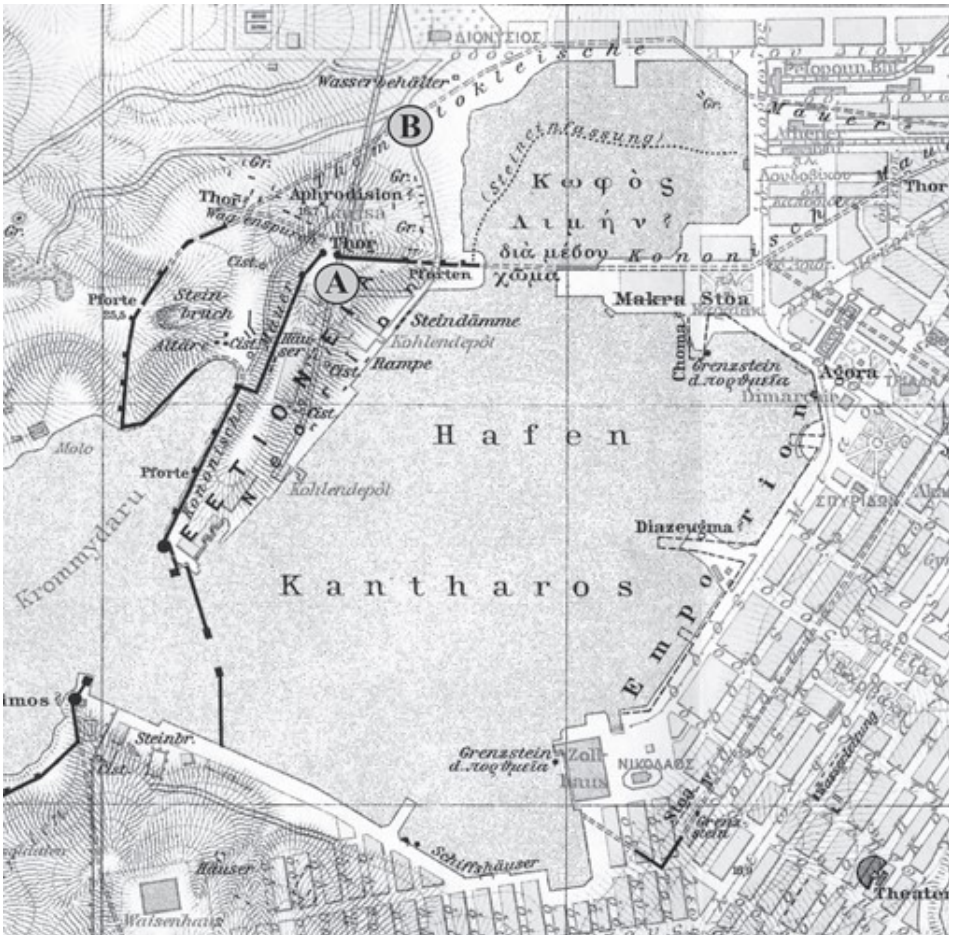

Fig. 1. Map of the Kantharos harbor in Piraeus.[7] A. The position of the gate at the Eetionia peninsula; B. The site of the cemetery.

The archaeological investigation revealed the remains of five funerary enclosures and 54 graves, most of which were found unlooted (see Fig. 2). Various grave types and burial practices were used. Of the excavated burials, 33 were inhumations in rock-cut pits, five were inhumations in tile-graves, while two more adults were buried in sarcophagi of yellowish porous stone. Four cremations were also discovered, two of which were secondary. Three infants were buried in clay *larnakes* and four children in tile-graves. The portable finds suggest that the cemetery was in use primarily during the second and third quarters of the 4th century BCE.

7. According to Judeich 1905, pl. III.

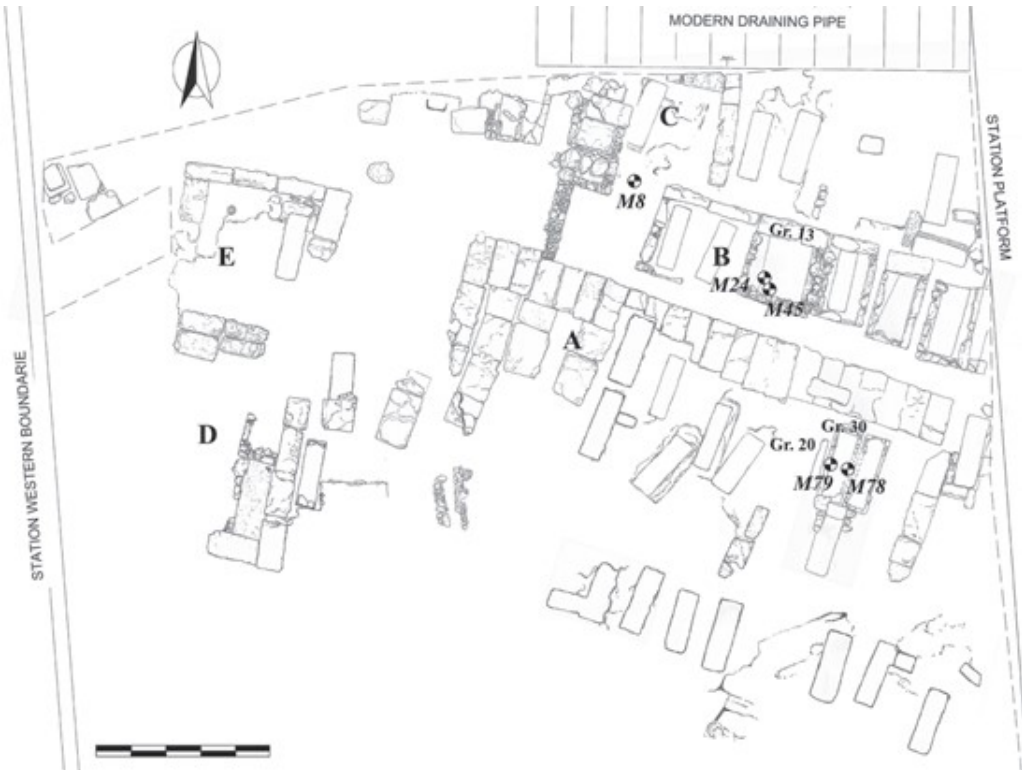

Fig. 2. Plan of the cemetery, with the find-spots of the curse tablets (drawing: I. Gkion, annotated by the author).

Despite the generally good state of preservation of the burial finds it has been impossible to determine the names of any individuals who were buried at this site. This lack of concrete positive evidence must be attributed, at least to some extent, to the leveling operations that took place during the construction of the rail-tracks, at the beginning of the 20th century. The modern installations were set immediately above the covering slabs or the mouths of most graves; consequently, if any fragments of grave markers were preserved until that time above this level, they were swept away. Only two fragmentary *stelai* inscribed with names of the dead were discovered. One of them records the names of two persons from Mytilene, while on the second stone, the name Hyperanthes can be restored, who was probably an Athenian. Since, however, both of these *stelai* were reused as building material in structures of the ancient cemetery, they were likely transferred from a different location.

On the other hand, the excavation of grave 33 yielded a pendant of mountain crystal decorated with an engraved sea monster (see Fig. 3). Since the same creature was depicted during the late 5th and the 4th century on coins

from Itanos, one of the biggest cities on the east side of Crete, this find may suggest a Cretan origin for the occupant of grave 33.[8]

Fig. 3. A. Pendant of mountain crystal decorated with sea-monster from grave 33. B. The reverse side of a silver coin from Itanos, Crete, *c.* 350-320 BC.[9]

This grave was included in a funerary enclosure (*peribolos* A). With a front wall measuring no less than 15 m in length, it is one of the largest funerary enclosures ever excavated "all over" Attica.[10] The monumental size of this *peribolos*, coupled with the excessive ostentation of wealth that characterizes the grave goods of several of its burials (see the next section), seems to accord with the idea that this structure was associated with non-Athenians.

2. Curse Tablets from Grave 30

Among the graves of *peribolos* A, four were separated from the rest by their inclusion in a special compartment. This suggests that the persons who were inhumed in these graves were closely related to one another.[11] Two of them

8. For coins from Itanos depicting this creature, see Svoronos 1890, 203–204, nos. 13–23, pl. XVIII, no. 37, IX, no. 1–9.

9. http://www.wildwinds.com/coins/greece/crete/itanos/t/html.

10. Cf. the dimensions of other funerary enclosures, as they are recorded in the catalogues compiled by W. E. Closterman (1999) and R. Garland (1982).

11. For the graves of this group, see Kroustalis and Tsaravopoulos 2008, 133–35, 137, 146, figs. 11–12.

were buried in a pair of twin sarcophagi made of soft porous stone. Although the skeletal remains in both sarcophagi were poorly preserved, the presence of a *pyxis* and a bronze mirror in the eastern one (grave 31) suggests that it belonged to a woman. Conversely, the west sarcophagus (grave 30), which contained no offerings, may have belonged to a man. Thanks to the bright hue of their stone material, both sarcophagi would convey a luxurious impression, which indicates that the members of this family at least aspired to be perceived as persons of high status.[12]

Fig. 4. Grave 30: the bottom of the sarcophagus with the human remains and curse tablets M78 and M79 *in situ.*

On the floor of the west sarcophagus lay two curse tablets (see Figs. 2, 4).[13] Each was folded several times, vertically and horizontally, and then pierced with a bronze nail. Although the human remains in the sarcophagus were slightly displaced from their original position due to taphonomic processes, it is clear that both tablets were discovered at the exact spots where the palms of the dead were initially placed, namely, at the sides of the body and slightly

12. This conclusion is further corroborated by the numerous and luxurious items that accompanied the woman who was buried immediately to the west of the sarcophagi, in grave 20 (not depicted in Fig. 2). The excavation of this grave yielded, among other things, an *alabastron* made of alabaster, a *pyxis*, a bronze mirror, several jewels, and 34 gilded clay disks decorated with the head of Athena Parthenos in relief, which would have been sewn on the shroud of the dead; see Kroustalis and Tsaravopoulos 2008, 133, 134–135, 137, 146, fig. 11.

13. Excavation inv. nos. M78, M79.

below the level of the pelvis. This suggests that a relative or friend of the deceased put the tablets in his hands during the funeral. Perhaps the spirit of the dead was meant to personally handle a situation or to deliver the messages to a deity of the underworld. However, since the tablets were heavily oxidized and, therefore, it has proved impossible to unfold them, the content of these messages remains unknown.[14] If we accept the prevailing theory, we may conjecture that the person who was buried in this grave had died by violence or prematurely.[15] One may wonder if the curses in his hands were targeting individuals who were regarded as responsible for his loss.[16]

3. Curse Tablets Associated with Grave 13

Although the next two curse tablets are also associated with a grave (no. 13), the circumstances of their deposition appear to be entirely different from those described above. Grave 13 displays very interesting features;[17] it held two successive burials, the earliest of which was a cremation (see Figs. 2, 5). After the corpse was burnt inside a deep and spacious rectangular pit, its remains were gathered and deposited in a clay urn. Then the vase was placed at the northwest corner of the pit and buried under the ashes of the pyre. The rest of the pit was filled with soil. Later, the west part of the grave was reopened and the pit was expanded by about 0.5 m to the west, to receive an inhumation. The corpse was covered by a chamber, in the form of a tile-grave, and finally, the pit was refilled with soil. An iron strigil is the only item that accompanied this person. It seems reasonable to assume that the inhumation belongs to a man, the cremation to his wife.

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14. Only one of these curse tablets was partially unfolded by the conservator of antiquities Eughenia Drosou in the laboratories of the Archaeological Museum in Piraeus, but the legible text on its inscribed internal surfaces is very incomplete.

15. See e.g. Kurtz and Boardman 1971, 217.

16. Curse tablets that were discovered in graves, placed in or under the hands of the dead, are also known from other cemeteries, but they do not appear to be a common find. For two curse tablets coming from graves of the Kerameikos cemetery in Athens, which were dated around the middle of the fifth century BCE, see Peek 1941, 89, nos. 3, 6. For another example from Acanthus, dating around 300 BCE, see Jordan 2001, 15, no. 43. In all these cases single curse tablets were discovered in each grave, which contained the inhumation, presumably of an adult. I want to thank C. Faraone for pointing out these parallels to me.

17. For grave 13 and the curse tablets associated with it, see also Kroustalis and Tsaravopoulos 2008, 133–134, 136, 145, figs. 9–10, 150, fig. 19.

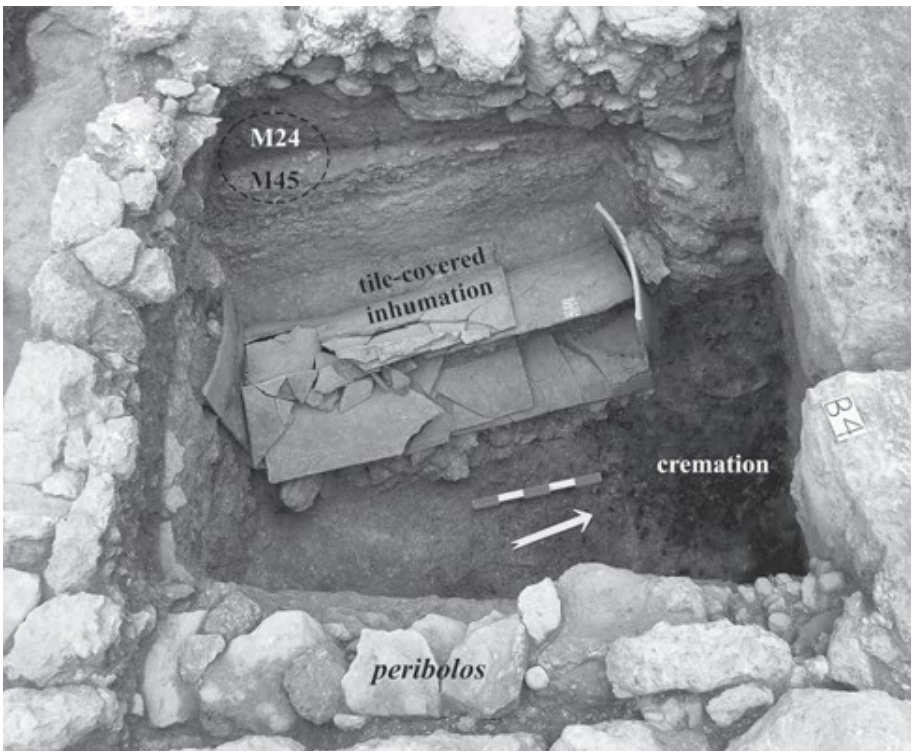

Fig. 5. Grave 13 with the tile-covered burial and the cremation *in situ*; the find-spot of M24 and M45 is noted. View from the E and above.

Grave 13 belongs to a group of at least eight graves, which were laid out in a single row, running from east to west. In this group various grave types and burial practices are present. Besides grave 13, the group includes three inhumations in pit-graves with covering slabs, two inhumations in tile-graves, the inhumation of an infant in a clay *larnax*, and a cremation at the bottom of a pit. These graves were surrounded as a group by a funerary enclosure, *peribolos* B, built of ashlar blocks, and simultaneously, each of them was separated from the others by its inclusion in a smaller enclosure. Finally, these individual enclosures were filled to their tops with soil and stones.

However, it must be emphasized that initially, all these graves stood free; it was only at a later phase that they were included in the burial enclosures.[18] We cannot determine with great precision how much time elapsed between the last burial and the construction of the enclosures. What is of great significance

18. This conclusion is based, among other things, on the observation that the burial pits and their enclosures are misaligned.

is that the construction of the enclosures was accompanied by libations. In the case of grave 28, which lay immediately to the west of grave 13, holes were opened on one of its covering slabs. After the wine was poured inside the burial pit, the vases used for the rite, a miniature *kantharos* and a jug, were placed on the cover of the grave and then they were built over. Both of them were discovered *in situ* (see Figs. 2, 6). More vases, these with perforated bottoms, were discovered in the gaps, where they were inserted between graves 6 and 14, and between graves 14 and 19.

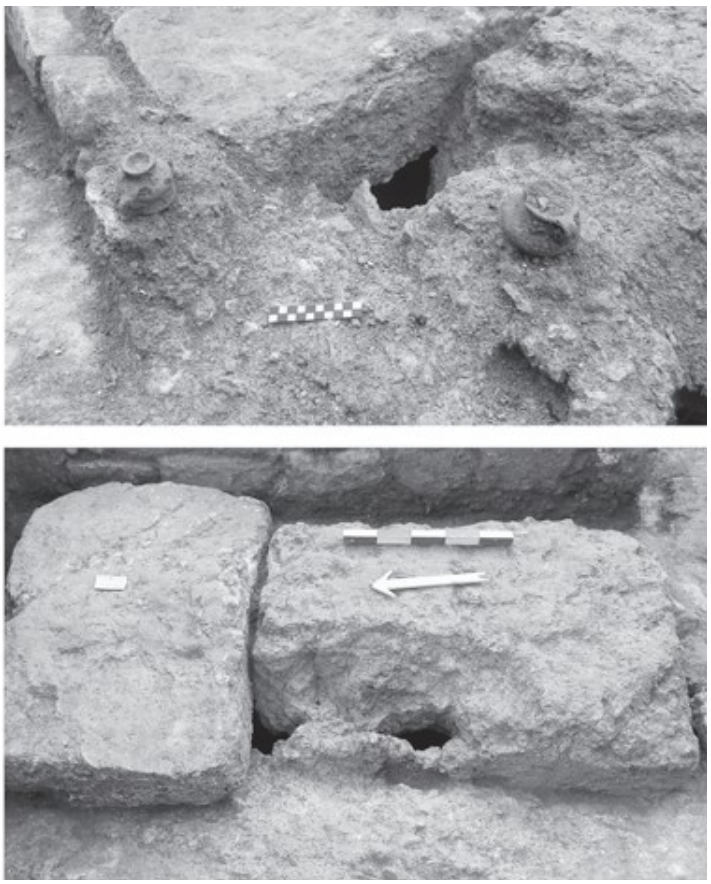

Fig. 6. Grave 28: A. Miniature vases used for libations, *in situ* above the cover of the grave; B. The cover of the grave, cleaned, after the removal of the vases; view from the W.

These vessels suggest that the funerary enclosures of *peribolos* B were constructed during the third quarter of the 4th century BCE. They also allow dating the two curse tablets associated with grave 13 in the same period. Both tablets were discovered in the southwest corner of the enclosure of grave 13, in

the same archaeological layer but at different levels. The first tablet (M24) was found folded twice, vertically and horizontally, and pierced with three bronze nails. It was only partially unfolded in the laboratory of the Archaeological Museum in Piraeus. If any text survives, it remains concealed in the invisible surfaces of the folded sheet. The second curse tablet (M45) is roughly rectangular, with a series of holes opened along each of its lateral sides. It was loosely folded once, along its vertical axis, in order to hold ten small bronze nails (see Fig. 7). Its inscribed inner face is badly corroded. The tablet is inscribed, in generally canonical orientation and spelling, with a catalogue of names, which include Βράχυλλος (lines 1, 7), Λυσίστρατος (lines 2?, 3), Δημήτριος (line 4), Πρόξενος (lines 4?, 6), Πυθύδηλος (lines 6, 7, 8),[19] Τιμοκράτης (line 9), and some more names, whose restoration is uncertain.[20]

Fig. 7. Curse tablet M45 with the 10 bronze nails it included.

19. This seems to be an altered version of the well-attested name Πυθόδηλος; cf. *PAA* 794080–794150 (entries of this type refer to the Athenian prosopography compiled by J. S. Traill [1994–2016]).

20. For the detailed publication of the curse tablets from the Ayios Dionysios cemetery, see Kroustalis, forthcoming.

Since most of these names are common in Attica, and they are not accompanied by patronymics, demotics, or other qualifications, we cannot securely identify them with individuals known from other sources. However, the name Βράχυλλος is a welcome exception. From our surviving sources, we know only three persons with that name who were related in some way to Athens. The first lived in the second half of the fifth century BCE and, probably, a bit later. He was brother of the famous orator Lysias and his daughter was Lysias' wife ([Dem.] 59.22).[21] The second Βράχυλλος, son of Βάθυλλος from the deme of Erchia, is epigraphically attested as the proposer of one or two decrees;[22] in the first decree, dating to 343/2, the Athenian Council honors Eudoxus Sypalettios for his service to the Council itself.[23] The second decree probably dates to 333/2 BCE; in it the Athenian Demos honors two men from Herakleia, probably merchants, for contributing to the provision of the city with grain. The name of the proposer was restored by J. Kirchner as [Βράχυλλος Βαθύλ]λου Ἐρχιεύς.[24] On the other hand, the son of this person, who was also called Βράχυλλος, is mentioned in an honorary decree by the Athenian Demos, as a member of an unspecified board of eleven officials; they had held office in the previous year, *viz.* in 304/3 BCE.[25] The name Βράχυλλος is also recorded on a gravestone, above the name of a Βάθυλλος.[26] As S. Lambert has noted, the Βράχυλλος of the gravestone may be identical with either of the two persons who are named on the 4th-century decrees.[27] If we accept that the Βράχυλλος who is mentioned on the curse tablet from Piraeus should be identified as one of the two members of the Erchian family, then which of the two namesakes is the more likely candidate? Although either of them could be named on our tablet, I believe that the date of the archaeological context favors the senior Βράχυλλος.

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21. *PAA* 268830. See also Sean Byrne's "Athenian Onomasticon," http:/www.seangb.org/B-D.html, *s.v.* "Βράχυλλος" no. 4. Last accessed March 31, 2020 (the same date applies for all the following references to this webpage).

22. *PAA* 268840; http:/www.seangb.org/B-D.html, *s.v.* "Βράχυλλος" nos. 1, 2. Byrne's two entries almost certainly refer to the same person.

23. *IG* II3 1, 306, line 43.

24. *IG* II2 408, line 5. S. D. Lambert, at his recent (2012) republication of the inscription (*IG* II3 1, 339), did not adopt Kirchner's restoration.

25. Http:/www.seangb.org/B-D.html, *s.v.* 'Βράχυλλος' no. 3. For the inscription, see Lambert 2000, 492–495, E6; *SEG* L 143, line 8 (Cf. *IG* II2 488, where, however, the name was misread as Θ]ράσυλλος Θρασύλλου).

26. *PAA* 268835, 268837; *SEG* XXI 1013; Bardani and Papadopoulos 2006, 280, no. 1642.

27. Lambert 2000, 492, n. 31. Byrne prefers the senior of the two namesakes.

The text of the tablet from grave 13, as a simple list of names, provides no concrete evidence about the motives of its creation. I believe, however, that some clues can be deduced from the analysis of the archaeological context. First, we have to keep in mind that the deposition of the two curse tablets above grave 13 was not an isolated act; it was rather part of a wider spectrum of ritual actions that were intended to honor and placate the dead. In this framework, libations were made and the funerary enclosures were constructed. These activities suggest that the people whose ancestors and other relations were buried there wanted to emphasize that they had strong and deep roots to this place. In response, they would expect the active assistance of the dead to cope with the difficulties they were facing; the dead may also have been invoked to restrain the rivals or enemies of the family.

Conceivably, all this activity may be related to the historical conditions prevailing in Athens during this period. Since the middle of the 4th century, and for extended periods, Athens faced tremendous challenges in the field of foreign policy. These upheavals threatened and, finally, limited the political independence of the city, causing at the same time the gradual loss of her territories. These troubles went hand in hand with severe political conflicts.

The aforementioned decrees suggest that the senior Βράχυλλος was involved in some kind of political activity; this activity could have made him an enemy of another family.[28] The same may be true for his son, who held his office just three years after the "liberation" of Athens from Demetrios of Phaleron by Demetrios Poliorketes in 307 BCE. On the same inscription on which his name appears, Lysikrates son of Lysistratos of Melite is also mentioned as a member of the same board (line 6). This person will reappear in 302/1 as the proposer of a decree praising someone in a military context.[29] S. D. Lambert has proposed that this Lysikrates may have been one of the stronger supporters of Demetrius Poliorketes in Athens.[30] If this is correct, the same may be also true for Βράχυλλος Jr. One could also wonder if the father of this Lysikrates, Lysistratos, should be identified with another person named on our curse tablet from grave 13.

28. Perhaps it is not without significance that on the tablet where the name Βράχυλλος appears, only males are named. Although this may be coincidental, it is also consonant with the idea that the motives behind this curse tablet may have been more serious than a simple domestic conflict.

29. *IG* II2 506, line 1.

30. Lambert 2000, 495.

4. Curse Tablet M8

The fifth curse tablet is distinguished from the rest because it is opisthographic and inscribed with quite extensive texts.[31] It was discovered outside of a grave lying in undisturbed soil immediately to the west of the funerary enclosure B, at a spot that may be linked to enclosure C (see Fig. 2 above). Although the pit-grave of a child was found a short distance to the west, it is uncertain if the tablet must be linked to this particular burial. Because we cannot propose a narrow date for this tablet based on its archaeological context, any date within the lifespan of the cemetery is possible. The tablet was folded three times vertically and pierced with a long and thick bronze nail. Despite some damage caused by the nail, the text survives in good condition (see Fig. 8).

Fig. 8. Curse tablet M8, and the bronze nail, by which it was pierced (Pir. Arch. Mus. inv. no. 15947a-b).

31. Archaeological Museum of Piraeus inv. no. 15947a–b. See also Kroustalis and Tsaravopoulos 2008, 150, fig. 20. In 2017 this curse tablet was successively displayed at the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Arts in New York and at the Acropolis Museum in Athens, in the framework of the archaeological exhibition entitled "A World of Emotions: Ancient Greece, 700 BC–200 AD," which was organized by the Onassis Foundation. Cf. Kroustalis 2017.

The text on both sides of M45 generally consists of letters facing to the right but with retrograde spelling. The letters on the first side are elegantly inscribed and neatly spaced. The composer of the curse binds down the hands, the feet, the tongue, the words, the mind, and the soul of Οἰνάδης, Λῦσις, Δίφιλος, Εὔξενος, and Ἱερομνήμων, as well as of all the women and men who are associated with them. This text presents no serious difficulties and is typical for the 4th century BCE.

The situation is, however, entirely different for the text on the second side of the tablet, which is difficult to read. Overall, the text looks messy; individual letters vary in size, while the wide spacing between the final four lines is in sharp contrast to the crowded and confused text on the upper right part. Despite the discrepancies in writing between the two sides of the tablet, the similarities in individual letter forms lead me to believe that the entire text was inscribed by the same person, who was in a different mental state when writing each side. The text of the second side adds little information. A major part of it refers to the same individuals, who were cursed on the first side, without repeating their names (lines 1–10). It is hoped that "lead be produced in their deeds" (μόλυβδος ἐς τὰ τούτων γενέσθα[ι], lines 1–3). In the final section of the text (lines 10–13) a certain Μνησίας is also bound with curses.

Despite its considerable length, the text of this curse tablet does not provide any decisive information to clarify the motives behind its creation. Besides, the six names inscribed on the tablet are not accompanied by their patronymics, demotics, or any other specification. Since most of these names are more or less common in Athens, their identification with persons known from other sources is virtually impossible. Only the name Οἰνάδης is rare, not only in Athens but also throughout Greece. From the surviving sources we know two persons who bore this name during the 4th century BCE. The first came from the island of Tenos. His name is mentioned in the accounts of the Amphiktyons for the years 377/6–374/3 BCE.[32] However, there is no evidence that this Οἰναδης had any direct associations with Athens.

The name of the second Οἰνάδης appears only once, on a marble base that is built into the north wall of the Athenian Acropolis.[33] This base was part of a choregic monument that was dedicated by Lysistratos, son of Atarbos, from Thoricos. Οἰνάδης is the first of three sculptors who signed the base, followed by Σουνιεὺς and Ἐπιχάρης. Jaime Curbera and Andronike Makres, among

32. *IG* II2 1635, lines 23, 133.

33. *IG* II3 4, 1573.

others, have dated this inscription to the second half of the 4th century BCE based on its letter forms and the prosopography of its dedicator.[34] Taking into account this date and the rarity of the name Οἰνάδης, I find it quite probable that the person who is named on the curse tablet from Piraeus can be identified as the sculptor from the Athenian Acropolis.[35]

Should the above be accepted, one may be tempted to propose more identifications of other individuals who are named on the same curse tablet, based on the assumption that these men may have shared with Oinades more things besides the curse. For instance, our sources record an actor named Diphilos, son of Astyphylos, who won at Thorikos around 360 BCE,[36] as well as another actor named Ieromnemon, son of Euanorides from Kydathenaion, who won three times at the Lenaia around 330 BCE.[37] Nevertheless, proposals of this kind seem very uncertain. As for Mnesias, who is mentioned on the second side of the tablet, this name is not very common in Athens and appears in another curse tablet found in a grave of the 4th century BCE in Kerameikos.[38] However, this does not necessarily mean that both curse tablets refer to the same person.

I cannot find in the archaeological context of tablet M45 any clue to further elucidate its text. It is probably not a coincidence that among the curse tablets from the "Ayios Dionysios cemetery" only this cannot be linked for certain with a specific grave.

5. Conclusions

Although it is well-established that cemeteries constitute a major source of curse tablets, one has to keep in mind that not all burial contexts are similar to one another. The study of the tablets from the "Ayios Dionysios cemetery" shows that such contexts can be highly variable. Determining crucial aspects of the context is vital for establishing a thorough interpretation of a curse tablet. Among other things, it is worth investigating if a tablet may or may not be closely associated with a specific burial or group of burials or another delimited context; if the tablet was placed at the site simultaneously with the

34. Curbera *apud IG* II3 4, 1573; Makres 2009, 240–241.

35. A. Matthaiou has reached the same conclusion independently from me. I want to thank him for communicating his ideas to me.

36. *PAA* 368800.

37. *PAA* 532660; *IG* II2 2325, line 279; 3073, line 4.

38. *PAA* 655675; Peek 1941, 92, no. 3, line 52.

performance of a funeral or in a different occasion; if its deposition was an isolated act or part of a broader array of ritual actions. When the association of a curse tablet with particular burials is possible, it is also vital to identify the individuals (name, provenance, sex, status, and so on), to whom these burials belonged. The more information we possess about such issues the better our understanding of a curse tablet will be, even if no recognizable text survives on it. However, what I perceive as the greatest challenge is to try to illuminate issues raised by the text itself, which otherwise would remain obscure, by using information deriving from the archaeological context.

In this paper, I have argued that a comparison between tablets M45 and M8 from the "Ayios Dionysios cemetery" can show us how important the integration of a text with its rich archaeological context can be. In and of itself the text on tablet M8 looks much more interesting, since it is quite long and inscribed on both sides of the tablet. However, the text itself gives us no information to clarify several vital issues, for instance, why and under which circumstances it was inscribed. Nor does the archaeological context of this tablet provide any further help. Conversely, curse tablet M45, as a simple catalogue of names, seems at first glance to be a much less promising document. Nonetheless, when combined with the rich information deduced from its archaeological context, this text demands greater attention, because it can be connected to significant events in the history of Athens during the second half of the 4th century BCE.

These observations underscore the necessity of a holistic approach to the study of curse tablets. In several cases, important elements for a thorough understanding of these objects can be found in the archaeological trench. Consequently, excavators can contribute greatly to the comprehension of curse tablets by recording in detail their archaeological contexts and making this evidence available to the public.

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Chapter 5

A Tablet Without Context: Wünsch's "Tabella Melia"[1]

Jaime Curbera

Abstract: In 1897, Richard Wünsch published a lead tablet, allegedly from Melos, in the introduction to *IG* III Appendix. Following an isotopic analysis of the lead, I discuss (and cautiously support) the alleged provenance, propose a date, and offer a new text.

Keywords: Melos, curse tablets, Athenian invasion, onomastics, lead, isotope analysis, Berlin Antikensammlung

Spectacular finds such as those in the Athenian Agora and Kerameikos should not distract us from the fact that the bulk of known curse tablets still come from the antiquities market, which means that information about their provenance is at best vague and often invented—a problem encountered by everyone who works with this kind of material. We know enough about Attic epigraphy to identify a text as Attic, but when the tablet is not Attic the situation becomes trickier. Each tablet has its particular story. Alphabet, dialect, onomastics, and characteristics of the lead all need to be considered. The later the curse, the more difficult the task, as local features disappeared over time and the sources of lead multiplied. The key is in the details, and fortunately we now have a toolbox of handbooks, lexica, and new technologies to help us. In this chapter I present a tablet that may disappoint those interested only in magical lore: as often, the circumstances around it are more interesting than the object itself.

1. I am grateful to Andreas Scholl, director of Berlin's Antikensammlung, for permission to publish this object; to Uwe Pelz and Sabrina Buchhorn for their help in technical matters; and to Enrique Nieto Izquierdo and Chris Faraone for their comments.

The Object

Among the tablets that Richard Wünsch (1869–1915) bought in Athens from the collector Athanasios Rhoussopoulos, published in 1897, and later sold to Berlin's Antikensammlung, there is a small one rather hastily transcribed in the introduction to his volume.[2] This lead tablet (originally c. 10 x 10 cm), with its right side partly preserved, was folded at least four times horizontally and is now broken into six large and four tiny fragments. The back features three colored marks (blue, orange, and purple). An examination by Sabrina Buchhorn (Antikensammlung) has shown that, in addition to the pigments, the marks also contain coarse particles of lime and the binding agent is starch, in unusually good condition. Crucially, the marks are partially on top of the cracked structure of the patina, but the weathering of the metal has had little effect on the pigment layer—a clear hint that they are not ancient. Figure 1 shows a likely collocation of the different fragments.

Fig. 1. Inv. Misc. 8123, W. VIII B2. Drawing by author.

Origin

The most important question here is that of provenance. According to the seller, the tablet came from Melos, the southwesternmost island in the Cyclades, where no other curse tablet has been found. There are indications that the seller may have been correct. The vocalism of the names Νεολαίδαν (8) and –όδαμον (11) suits a place of Doric dialect, like Melos, but also any other region of non-Ionic or non-Attic dialect. The alphabet offers more precise information, because it uses "epichoric" letters, such as Λ-shaped lambda, pi

2. *IG* III Suppl. 3, p. VIII. For the history of the collection, see Curbera 2013.

with a shorter right leg, tailed rho, a rather open four-barred sigma, V-shaped upsilon, and phi without projecting vertical bar. Wünsch considered the tailed rho of line 3 to be a lapsus ("fortasse labente stilo orta est"), but closer examination shows that a similar rho is also used in lines 8 and 9. This alphabet has close parallels in the Peloponnese (Lakonia, Messenia, Arkadia, Achaia), but also in Melos—not in the oldest inscriptions (with P = rho and with KH and ΠH = *kh* and *ph*, as on Thera and Crete), but in those of the 5th cent. BCE, like the epitaphs *IG* XII 3, 1145, 1158, or 1179.[3] This more recent alphabet reflects the ties the Melians had to Sparta and the Peloponnese.

To further explore the question of provenance, an examination of the lead isotopes was conducted in 2016 by the Bundesanstalt für Materialforschung in Berlin.[4] Intriguingly, the results do not point either to the Peloponnese or to Melos: the isotope ratio of the tablet perfectly matches that of the Attic curse tablets from the Wünsch collection and the Laurion lead ores. This is not entirely surprising. While lead was not produced everywhere in Greece, it was very abundant in Attica, so Laurion lead was used for curse tablets in neighboring regions like Boeotia. What *is* surprising, however, is to find Laurion lead in an object purportedly from Melos—which was not only far away from Athens, but (like other Cycladic islands such as Siphnos, Syros, and Keos) produced its own lead.[5] A clue to understanding this puzzle may lie in the fact that in 416 BCE Athens invaded Melos and settled 500 colonists there, who may have brought to the island the practice of writing curses.[6] To be sure, military occupation is not the only way to explain the adoption of an Attic practice, but it may account for its early adoption in such a distant place. The isotope ratio, then, may in fact support Melos as place of origin of the tablet. As for the use of foreign lead, the likeliest explanation is that this is a reused object – either a curse tablet (a feature that made it preferable to one of local lead), or, more simply, a business letter on lead that was sent from Athens to Melos and reused, just for convenience, to write a curse, as Chris Faraone has suggested (pers. comm.).[7]

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3. For the Melian alphabets, see Zschietzschmann 1931, 585–586; Guarducci 1967, 321–326; Jeffery 1989, 320–322.

4. Vogl et al. 2016.

5. Melian lead: Gale and Stos-Gale 1981, 186–188; Wagner and Pernicka 1982.

6. Thuc. 5.116. In 405 BCE the Spartans expelled the Athenian colonists: Xen. *Hell.* 2.2; Plut. *Lysand.* 14.3. See Sparkes (1982, 49–50) and Wagstaff and Cherry (1982, 140–142).

7. For "secondhand curse tablets," see Curbera 2015, 107–108. A curse written on the back of a lead letter was published by Wünsch *IG* III App. 3 p. XIV (from Megara).

Dating

Originally a Sicilian practice, curse tablets are known in Attica from the late 5th century BCE, where they became a popular and inexpensive way to deal with one's enemies. From Athens the practice seems to have spread throughout continental Greece and the islands. Our tablet belongs to an early generation of extra-Attic tablets, joining a late 5th century tablet from Aegina with some Attic features (and an allusion to *Prometheus Bound*) and an early 4th century lead statuette from Keos (not from Corinth, as the seller maintained).[8] Significantly, these are all places with ties to Athens and Attica. The use of a local alphabet might seem to point to a date in the late 5th century for our text, but caution is needed here. Local alphabets inevitably have an archaic flavor, but this is partly a problem of perception, as we associate them with public inscriptions from the Archaic and Early Classical periods. In fact, in some regions the local alphabet continued in use well into the 4th century—in Boeotia at least until the 380s, and in Sparta until the 370s.[9] Local feelings as well as the character of the document (public vs. private), may have determined whether the local script was preserved. A date between 400 and 380 BCE, when, in the aftermath of the Athenian occupation, life on Melos had come back to normal, is likely. Indeed, the "tabella Melia" is a local product, and, if it in fact comes from Melos, it is definitely not the work of an Athenian colonist.

The lack of archaeological context for this tablet is not the setback that one might imagine, as curse tablets were usually deposited in graves that were necessarily older; thus even a well-documented context does not always provide precise dating for these objects. A *defixio* from a grave in the Kerameikos was dated to c. 450 BCE on the basis of the pottery deposit, whereas the language shows features of the Attic dialect as spoken c. 350 BCE.[10] The (unpublished) Agora tablet IL 669 was found in the Tholos in a context that suggested c. 475 BCE. The alphabet used also seemed to fit with such a date—remarkably early for an Attic curse tablet.[11] Now that the whole text has been read, we can see that it was written by a foreigner in a non-Attic alphabet (with Ψ = *ch* and H = *h*), which automatically makes it look older than it really is (late 5th or early 4th cent. BCE). The late-5th-century curse tablet from Aegina

8. See the catalogue below (nos. 1 and 2).
9. Johnston 2012.
10. Threatte 1980, 8–9.
11. Immerwahr, 1990, 125.

mentioned above (no. 1 in the catalogue) was placed in a 6th-century BCE chamber grave. Such circumstances, part of the slippery and shadowy nature of curse tablets, make it difficult to fill in the gaps in our knowledge.

Onomastics and Prosopography

The persons cursed did not have names characteristic of a single Greek region, as one can now easily check in the *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names*, but there are two interesting hints. Σάτυρος (8) is definitely not a local name; it was first used in Attica c. 450 BCE, but soon spread throughout Greece. By contrast, Νεολαίδας (8) is documented only in the Peloponnese (Arcadia, Achaia, Elis, Sparta). An epigram by Antipater (*Anth. Pal.* 6.109) contains a dedication by the Arcadian hunter Κραῦγις (or Κράμβις) παῖς Νεολαίδα; the basic form Νεόλας seems to have been common in Sparta: did our Νεολαίδας come from Sparta or the Peloponnese? In line 9 we can integrate Θεόφορβος or Κλεόφορβος; both names are rare, but, interestingly, the second was hitherto documented only for a Διόδοτος Κλεοφόρβου Μήλιος honored in Delos c. 300 BCE (*IG* XI 4, 513). Εὐπάτωρ (10) is only interesting for being the oldest known example of this name. The main victim was Εὔφρων (2), mentioned before the catalogue of victims. The name is ordinary. If the tablet had been written in Peloponnese, and in the 370s, this could be Euphron of Sikyon, an ideal victim for a curse tablet.[12] Yet there are too many uncertainties and the tablet is too fragmented to accept such a possibility.

The Text

The curse is written in clear letters, that are (particularly in lines 1–6) carefully spaced out. At least two lines at the top have been lost, whereas the spacing beneath line 11 suggests that this was the last of the text. Wünsch offered a rather inaccurate transcription (7 πρὸς τὸν Ἑρμῆν] κάτοχον, 8 …νιον ἀλλὰ, 9 ε...φορ..., and 10 .. τὰ το(ῦ) Ῥα…), which was reproduced by Audollent.[13] The text is missing from Hiller von Gaertringen's corpus of Melian inscriptions (*IG* XII 3, Berlin 1898) and from his Supplement of 1939.

12. On Euphron, see Griffin 1982, 70–75.

13. Audollent 1904, no. 39 (with –πον instead of – –κον in line 1), reproduced by Eidinow (2007, 390).

c. 400–380 BCE Inv. Misc. 8123, W. VIII B2

– – – – – – – – – – – – –
[– – – –]δ[ι]κον πάντας
[– – – – Ε]ὔφρρονα
[– – – – κα]ὶ τὸς συνε[ργ]ὸς
[καὶ αἳ ἄλλος τ]ις συνδίκος·
[τούτος π]άντας
[καταδέω· – –]ίοχον,
[Σ]άτυρον, Νεολαίδαν
[Κλ]εόφορ[β]ο[ν (?),– – –]
[Εὐ]πάτορα, Π – – – – – –
– – –όδαμον – – – – – – –.

Line 1: The text began with a general phrasing using the verb καταδέω (or καταδῶ), but it is uncertain how the first line is connected with what follows. Since the σύνδικοι are mentioned below, we may think of a different word (τὸς ἐπιβολεύσαντας ἄ]δικον?), or of a proper name in –δικος.

Line 2: A way to explain this accusative separated from the catalogue of victims in lines 7–11 is to integrate [τὸς περὶ Ε]ὔφρρονα, "those around Euphron," a known construction, cf. *IG* III App. 79.3 τὸς περὶ Μενόκριτον; Thuc. 6.97 οἱ περὶ Διόμιλον ἑξακόσιοι; Xen. *Hell.* 4.4 οἱ περὶ Ἰφικράτην μισθοφόροι, etc.

Line 3: καὶ τὸς συνεργός. The term is novel in curse tablets. The usual meaning of "fellow workman" or "colleague" is possible, but it is likelier to see a negative sense (helper or accomplice), as when Thucydides (8.92) speaks of a ξυνεργός of the killer of Phrynichos. Diodorus (15.70) writes of Euphron of Sikyon that συνεργοὺς λαβὼν Ἀργείους ἐπέθετο τυραννίδι.

Line 5: Before the first iota there is no trace of the cross-bar of a tau, no doubt because, as in line 10, the right part of the bar was never written. A similar tau is used in semicursive writing on papyri. The term σύνδικος may have been used in its basic legal meaning ("advocate"), but it may also have a more generic sense, as in *IG* III Suppl. 66 line 3 τὸς μετ' Εὐαράτο συνδίκος καὶ ὅσοι ἂν συνπράττωσι μετ' Εὐαράτο; on this ambiguity, see Eidinow (2007, 179).

Line 7: Wünsch's [πρὸς Ἑρμῆν κάτ]οχον suits the space but not all the traces on the lead, which suggest a proper name like Ἀνίοχος or Ἀντίοχος.

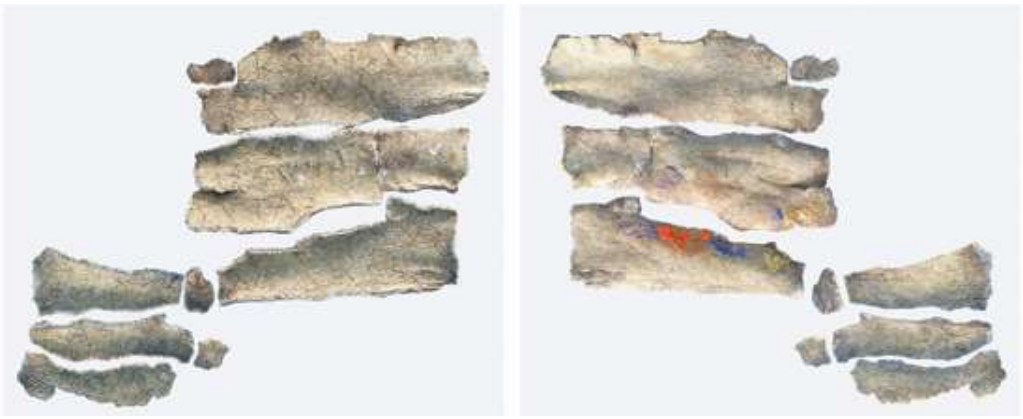

Plate 1. Inv. Misc. 8123, W. VIII B2. Photo by Helmut Franke.

Catalogue of Curse Tablets from Aegina and the Cyclades: A Regional Pattern? By Christopher A. Faraone

As was suggested above, in the Late Classical period the cultural habit of inscribing binding curses on lead tablets is likely to have migrated to Aegina, Keos, Paros, and Melos from Attica. This raises the question of whether this was part of a wider regional pattern that included the rest of the Cyclades. Curses from this area (catalogued here) do seem to be similar in date, ranging from the 4th to the 2nd centuries BCE, and if we include, as we should, the parallel habit of using manufactured metal effigies in binding rituals, it is striking that nearly all of these effigies found in the Greek East come from Attica, Delos, Keos, and Paros. This pattern is in sharp contrast, for example, with the islands further east, where the use of curse tablets is attested much later (Kos, Rhodes, and Cyprus) and there are no surviving "voodoo dolls."

There are, however, important differences within the region. Some of the effigies from Delos were cast in bronze, not lead, and the practice of inscribing them with the victims' names also varies. None of the Delian dolls have inscriptions, and those that do show different patterns of placement: the effigies from the Kerameikos are each inscribed with one name on the thigh or shoulder; the one from Keos with multiple names on its back; and the Parian doll once on his head, back and leg. The Kerameikos effigies, moreover, are the only ones that were buried in small lead coffins, which were inscribed with curses. Finally, the curse tablets from Amorgos and Delos are later than all of the above, dating as they do to the end of the Hellenistic period, and also belong to a different genre of curse, the "prayer for justice," which aims not at binding a rival or enemy, but rather at imploring the gods to punish a thief or other malefactor for some grave misdeed. Both, moreover, were probably put in a sanctuary originally, rather than deposited in a grave or body of water.

AEGINA

1. Tablet found in Μύλοι, outside the city of Aegina, in a chamber grave of the 6th cent. BCE that was reused and plundered several times. The tablet was used twice. It was first written with text *A*, folded, pierced with a nail and buried; later it was unearthed, the nail removed, and, once a second text had been written, the nail was placed inside the tablet, which was folded and buried again. The oldest text (in larger and more irregular letters) is a curse against Aristeus and Theodotos; the later text curses a Mantitheos, mentions Prometheus, Bias and Kratos, and contains the hexametric sequence ὥς Ἥφαιστος ἐδήσατο ματέρα τὰν αὐτοῦ δεσμοῖς κρατεροῖς. The editor connects the tablet with the Athenian occupation of the island between 431 and 405 BCE. Published by Papachristodoulou in *IG* IV 2^2 1012 and, with a longer commentary, in Papachristodoulou 2007–2009 (*SEG* 57.313). Curbera (2015, esp. 107) comments on its secondhand use.

KEOS

2. Lead statuette bought in Athens and said to come from Corinth, now in Berlin's Antikensammlung. H. 9.6 cm, inscribed with six names in the local Kean alphabet. An isotope analysis has shown that the lead is in fact from Keos. Interestingly, however, the victims' names (Χαλκιδηύς, Γνάθιος, Εὔδικος, Κάπανις, Νικόδικος, Ἠπιγένης, Τίμαρχος) are more common in Attica than elsewhere, which could indicate that the tablet was written against a group of Athenians, even if not necessarily those involved in the rebellion in the 360s against Athens, as the authors suggest. Published by Curbera and Giannobile (2015), with lead isotope analysis by Vogl and Rosner (2015).

PAROS

3. Lead voodoo doll from Paros. Fourth century BCE, from a sarcophagus in the necropolis outside Παροικία. H. about 10 cm, figurine of a naked man, with hands tied behind his back, legs spread apart, a ring around his neck, with nails in his mouth, eyes, head, and anus. The object is inscribed thrice (on its head, back, and back left leg) in the local alphabet. Hastily published by Lopez Jimeno (2010). Recently republished in Lamont (2021) with better photographs, corrected descriptions and corrected readings.

AMORGOS

4. Opisthographic lead tablet, found June 1899 εἰς τὸν ἀγρόν μου εἰς τὸν Ἄ. Ἰωάννην πλησίον τῆς Ἀρκησίνης, and known only from a transcription by the Papâs Prasinos. H. 5 cm, W. 21 cm, written horizontally, with one hole made by a nail. An owner asks for the help of Demeter (κυρία Δημήτηρ Βασίλισσα), for he has been left by all his slaves, even his handmaid, and he blames a certain Epaphroditos for doing that through fraudulent means and magic (συναπεθέλγετο). He wishes the ruin and death of Epaphroditos. Because of the vulgarisms (καταντίσας = καταντήσας, Εὐγιλάτου = Εὐιλάτου, ἵνα with infinitive, etc.) Homolle (1901, 456) ascribed the text to the 2nd

cent. CE or later, whereas J. Zingerle (see the bibliography in Jordan, 1985), because of resemblance of the language to that of the papyri *enteuxeis*, thought of the 2nd cent. BCE. The text was first published (together with a phylactery against a φῦμα ἄγριον) by Homolle (1901), and reproduced by Hiller von Gaertringen (*IG* XII 7, p. 1). The basic bibliography was collected by Jordan (1985, 168–169, no. 60). Add now Versnel 1985, esp. 252–255 (on μὴ τράπεζαν ἱλαρὰν θεῖτο); 1991, esp. 69–81; 2009, 18–19; Pleket 1981, 189–192; Ogden 2008, 143–144.

DELOS

5. Four cast-bronze male figurines, H. 6–9 cm, found together in a house of Hellenistic date near the agora. Three have their hands bound behind their backs, and two are ithyphallic. Published by Dugas (1915). Cf. Faraone 1991, 202, no. 11.

6. Four lead figurines, H. 6–7 cm, two male and two female, each roughly carved from a rectangular slab of lead. The males are each pierced through the eyes, ears, and mouth with iron nails; their right hands seem to cover or hold the head of the nail that penetrates the mouth. The females are simply bound around the neck with thick collars. They were buried together in the retaining wall of the sanctuary of Zeus Hypsistos and date to the 1st cent. BCE. Published by Plassart (1928). Cf. Faraone 1991, 202, no. 12.

7. Opisthographic lead tablet, H. 14, W. 14 cm, found in a well in a house at the foot of the *rue de l'Inopos*. The author invokes the Lord Gods Sukonaioi and the Lady Goddess Syria Sukona and asks punishment for the thief of a necklace (καταγράφω τὸν ἄραντα, τὸν κλέψαντα τὸ δραύκιον) as well as his accomplices (τοὺς συνειδότες, τοὺς μέρος λαβόντες). Letter forms of 1st cent. BCE or 1st cent. CE. First published by Bruneau (1970, 649–653); better edition by Jordan (2002, 55–60). Cf. Jordan 1985, 168, no. 58; Baslez 1977, 95–96; Versnel 1991, 60–106, esp. 66; 1998, 233.

8. Lead tablet, H. 4.7, W. 9 cm, in which two figures of warriors or gladiators are engraved ("une lame de plomb ou sont decoupées les figures de deux guerriers ou gladiateurs combattants"), perhaps with the inscription Λεύκιος. Mentioned by Jarde (1905, *BCH* 29: 40). Cf. Robert 1946, 116; Bruneau 1970, 650; Jordan 1985, 168, no. 59.

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Chapter 6

Inscribed Ceramic Bowls and Other Curses from Classical and Hellenistic Olbia

Irene Polinskaya

Abstract: The chapter presents an overview of all known curses from Olbia Pontica and situates a specific group of Olbian curses, those inscribed on complete ceramic shapes, in their local context—topographic, archaeological, and historical. Of the four ceramic curses, all dated to the 4th–early 3rd century BCE, three are inscribed on the interior of shallow bowls and were found in the immediate vicinity of burials in the territory of the Olbian necropolis; the fourth (an opistographic ceramic lid) comes from a cultic site located on the edge of the same necropolis. A comparative analysis of all four Olbian ceramic curses suggests that the choice of the media, the graphic design, the formulae, and the manner of deposition represent a distinct local variety of religious knowledge and practice. At the same time, various features of Olbian ceramic curses invite comparison with the broader regional context of the Black Sea, such as Apollonia Pontica, and with the wider Hellenic world—where a growing number of examples suggest that curses inscribed on complete ceramic vessels were a distinct variety of Classical curses, previously little recognized in scholarship.

Keywords: lead tablets, ceramic curses, magic bowls, ceramic lid, necropolis, tumulus, graffito, dipinto, cult site

Objects inscribed with texts of curses have been known at the site of Olbia Pontica since the 19th century.[1] The earliest documented find was made in 1873;[2] since then, scientific excavations have yielded a number of additional curses, but even more finds have come and continue to come to light from illicit digging by residents of nearby villages and, very likely, by visitors from

1. Throughout this chapter, "curses" is shorthand for "objects inscribed with texts of curses." All photos and drawings are by the present author unless noted otherwise. I would like to thank the State Hermitage Museum for permission to publish the photos of **C1** and **C2**, and the Institute of Archaeology, NASU, for permission to publish the photos of **C3** and **C4**.

2. This is our **C2**, discussed in detail below.

further afield.[3] Sometimes objects from these illegal excavations become known to scholars (see Appendix 1),[4] but there is no doubt that a large number over the years have disappeared without a trace into the hands of dealers and private collectors.

While individual Olbian curses have attracted scholarly attention in Ukraine, Russia and internationally,[5] they have not been studied as a corpus until recently. A digital database *TheDefix* (Thesaurus Defixionum) aims to encompass all known *defixiones*, including those from the Black Sea. In recent years, Alexey Belousov has restudied some known Olbian curses and published first editions of several new ones, in collaboration with other colleagues.[6] Olbian curses, alongside other graffiti (edited by Irene Polinskaya) and lapidary inscriptions (edited by Askold Ivantchik), will be included in volume II of *Inscriptions of the Northern Black Sea—New IOSPE* (https://iospe.kcl.ac.uk/index.html).

The purpose of this article is to contextualize the interpretation of a distinct group of Olbian curses: those inscribed on complete ceramic shapes. The contexts discussed here are topographical, historical, and archaeological. The chapter begins with an overview of all known Olbian curses (presenting a concordance), followed by a comparative analysis of four curses inscribed on complete ceramic shapes, and concludes with three Appendices (Appendix 1 tabulates

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3. Over more than a hundred years of Olbia's existence as an archaeological site, despite the best efforts of authorities and archaeologists, it has been impossible to prevent looting of antiquities from its territory due to a number of factors: the vast size of Olbia, and especially of its necropolis (its territory in the Hellenistic period, the time of its greatest extent, covered c. 500 ha, or 5 km^2, and surrounded the citadel on three sides: north, west, and south; Papanova 2006, 71; Petersen 2010, 48; cf. Kryzhitsky and Leipunskaya 2011, 102, giving the size as 300 ha); the absence of fencing; and the impossibility to maintain permanent guards throughout the calendar year. Traditionally, scientific excavations take place from late spring to early autumn (May through September), and looters come to the site when archaeologists leave. Illegally excavated objects were already available for purchase at antiquities markets in prerevolutionary Russia in many provincial centers, including those close to Olbia, such as the cities of Ochakiv, Mykolaiv and Odessa. The antiquities market is the recorded provenance of **L1–L7** and **L14**.

4. On typical modern circumstances, see Tokhtasiev 2000, 2007, 2009; Belousov, Dana, and Nikolaev 2015, 2016; Belousov and Dana 2017; Nikolaev 2019.

5. E.g., Jordan 1987, 1997; Bravo 1987; Chaniotis 1992; Slings 1998; Izquierdo 2016.

6. Belousov 2014, 2015a, 2016a, 2017, 2018; Belousov and Dana 2017; Belousov, Dana, and Nikolaev 2015, 2016. In partial delivery on his promise (Belousov 2016b, 41) to produce a corpus of all magical inscriptions from the Northern Black Sea, Alexey Belousov has now collected his earlier studies of Olbian curses into a corpus of Olbian *defixiones* 2020, 2021, reprinting those studies virtually without changes, hence my discussions refer to the original publications.

information on the biography of objects: dates of find, current location, and autopsy; Appendix 2 tabulates chronological and archaeological metadata for each object; Appendix 3 presents a catalogue of the ceramic curses with detailed discussions of archaeological contexts).

1. Olbian Curses: Concordance and Overview

The tables below and appendices at the end of the chapter provide an overview of all relevant objects known to the author of this article, up to the date of its publication. The tables present in chronological sequence (moving from left columns to right) the appearance of items in relevant corpora and reference publications, including *SEG* and ending with Belousov 2020/2021 (catalogue numbers are the same in the Russian 2020 and the English 2021 edition). For items that have not yet been included in corpora, an *editio princeps* or first mention is noted. Jordan 1985 and 2000, as well as Avram, Chiriac, and Matei 2007, do not include full Greek texts, but these can be found in Dubois 1996 and *SEG*, accessible online via PHI Searchable Greek Inscriptions and Brill *SEG* databases.

Sixteen curses (thirteen on lead, **L1–L13**, and three on ceramic shapes, **C1–C3**) that definitely originate from Olbia have been published so far. Two more lead curses (**L18, L19**) and one ceramic (**C4**) await publication. This brings the total of identified curses from Olbia to nineteen. Four additional lead tablets (**L14–L17**) are also probably from Olbia, and seven more (**L(d)1–L(d)7**) are likely, but not certainly curses; they await further study.[7] If uncertainty concerning the provenance and identification of texts could be removed in the case of these eleven, we would have some thirty (lead and ceramic) curses from Olbia. Finally, two more (**Ch-L1, Ch-L2**) originate from the chora of Olbia, from settlements at a distance of 3.5–10 km away from Olbia. All this

7. Vinogradov (1989, 130, n. 206) mentions a private lead letter in the collection of the Institute of Archaeology in Kyiv, dated to the 4th cent. BCE and found at the necropolis of Olbia. This item is no. 4 (Letter of Batikon(?) to Diphilos) in Vinogradov's (1998, 154) list of private letters. Tokhtasiev (2000, 300, n. 3) provides the inventory number for this letter (O-62/2, 1968, excavations of Y. I. Kozub), suggests an alternative reading of the name (Βάτις) and rejects Bravo's (1987, 206) hypothesis that the letter might be a *defixio*. Bravo's hypothesis is based on the findspot (necropolis), which does raise questions. I have not seen this lead tablet and will reserve judgement until autopsy, but we may note that curses in letter form are attested in the Black Sea region, e.g., at Apollonia Pontica, a curse of Aristokrate against Hegenasa, addressed to Leimonios ("Ἀριστοκράτη Λειμωνίῳ χαίρειν ... ἐπίπεμψον ἐπὶ Ἠγήνασαν ποινὰς καὶ ἐρίνυν…": Sharankov 2016, 299; Baralis and Panayotova 2019, 299).

material represents a substantial corpus that lends itself to comparative analysis likely to yield important insights into local magical practices.

LEAD—OLBIA. Published texts, inscribed on lead, securely identified as curses and originating from Olbia. Comparatio numerorum with the main corpora. **L** stands for lead.

	Audollent 1904	Jordan 1985	Dubois 1996	Jordan 2000	Avram, Chiriac, and Matei 2007	*SEG*	Belousov 2020/2021
L1	88		103		3		2
L2	89		107		11		17
L3		171	101		1	30.930	14
L4		172	110		15		12
L5		173	109		13	37.673	21
L6		174	104		4		5
L7		175			14		22
L8			102	117	2	44.670	3
L9			106	116	6	44.669	15
L10				118	7	50.702	24
L11				119	8	50.702	16
L12				120	9	50.702	7
L13				121	10	50.702	8

LEAD—OLBIA(?). Published texts, inscribed on lead, identified as curses, where Olbian provenance is probable but not securely documented.

	Audollent 1904	Jordan 1985	Dubois 1996	Jordan 2000	Avram, Chiriac, and Matei 2007	*SEG*	Belousov 2020/2021	*Editio princeps*
L14		176			20	37.681	23	
L15						57.748	9	
L16							10	
L17								Nikolaev 2019

CERAMIC—OLBIA. Published texts inscribed on complete ceramic shapes securely identified as curses and originating from Olbia. **C** stands for ceramic.

	Audollent 1904	Jordan 1985	Dubois 1996	Jordan 2000	Avram, Chiriac, and Matei 2007	*SEG*	Belousov 2020
C1			105		5		18
C2			108		12	3.595	13
C3						64.685	6

LEAD and CERAMIC —INEDITA. Texts securely identified as curses, originating from Olbia and not yet published.

	Reported	*Editio princeps*
C4	Kozub 2001, 33	Polinskaya, forthcoming 2022b
L18	Vinogradov 1994, 106, no. 7	Polinskaya, forthcoming 2022a
L19	Rusyaeva and Ivchenko 2014, 163	

LEAD—CURSES(?). Probable curses (on the basis of material features and find-spots). Texts inscribed on lead, originating from Olbia but not yet studied. The items in this list are given special **L(d)** numbers for the ease of reference in the discussion that follows; (d) for *defixio* is placed in paretheses to indicate that the probability of the identification is coupled with a degree of uncertainty. I expect that as these objects are studied more fully in the future, some or perhaps all of the items in this list will be added to the list of securely identified curses.

	Reported in publications
L(d)1	Kozub 2001, 30, no. 72
L(d)2	Kozub 2001, 30, no. 73
L(d)3	Kozub 2001, 30, no. 74
L(d)4	Kozub 2001, 30, no. 77
L(d)5	Kozub 2001, 33
L(d)6	Khmelevsky 2017, 125
L(d)7	Papanova and Lyashko 2015, 178, no. 21

CHORA—LEAD. Texts inscribed on lead, originating from settlements in the vicinity of Olbia, conventionally identified in scholarship as the *chora* of Olbia. **Ch** stands for chora.

	Editio princeps	Belousov 2020/2021
Ch-L1	Belousov, Dana, and Nikolaev 2016, no. 1	19
Ch-L2	Alekseyev and Loboda 2016	11

I am aware of several more lead tablets recently reported from the site of Olbia that have not yet been noted in publications.[8] There is no doubt that the number of curses known from Olbia will continue to grow, both through scientific and legitimate excavations and, regrettably, through illegal activity.

Out of twenty published curses from Olbia and its chora (see Appendix 1), only six are available for study (**L3, L8, L14, C1–C3**), as they are preserved in the collections of museums and academic institutions. Eleven unpublished curses (**L18–L19**, **L(d)1–L(d)7**, **C4**) are also preserved in known collections and are due to be studied in the near future. Other tablets are either lost or in private hands, sometimes unknown.

DUBITANDA

The concordance presented here is organized in a different way from the corpus of Belousov 2020/2021, and excludes four items included there: nos. 1, 4, 20, and 25. The difference in our respective approaches is directly relevant to the subject matter of this article and requires a brief explanation. First, however, I should note that my reservations about no. 25 are similar to those expressed by Belousov, who also places this text under "Dubia et Spuria." This tablet, found in 1994 but now apparently lost, could not be easily read at the time of its discovery,[9] and the published drawing does not yield an intelligible text. Since lead tablets in Olbia were used as writing material in various contexts and for different purposes (private letters, possible voting tokens or

8. I would like to thank Alla Buyskikh for sharing with me the information about a lead tablet (inscribed, with several lines visible) found in the course of underwater investigations at Olbia in May 2019. The category of text for this graffito is not yet established. Nikolay Nikolaev has also collegially shared with me that he is preparing for publication (jointly with E. Slipets) up to eight lead tablets from Olbia (currently in private hands), of which some are likely to be curses.

9. Nazarchuk 1996.

identification badges, and accounts),[10] the identification of this tablet as a curse is far from certain. Most significant in my view, however, is the archaeological context of this tablet; its location in the ruins of a Hellenistic house in the citadel, as Belousov (2020, 137) also notes, is atypical for Olbian curses.

I decided, for different reasons, to exclude from the present concordance three other texts included in Belousov 2020 (nos. 1, 4, 20). The texts in question are inscribed on potsherds—that is, fragments of pottery deliberately chosen as writing surfaces after they had acquired their potsherd shape. Belousov's corpus of Olbian *defixiones* focuses on curses as texts, which are grouped and ordered according to formal textual features, such as types of cursing formulae, and within those groups, according to chronology, from the earliest to the latest. Because textual features are chosen as the main organizing principle of the corpus, the material, physical shape, and archaeological context of the epigraphic monuments in question are downplayed. As a result, for instance, lead and ceramic curses are intermigled in the corpus, complete shapes and ceramic fragments are treated indiscriminately, and curses from Olbia and from the Olbian chora are mixed together. All three criteria (material, shape, and location), however, are key to the identification and understanding of curses as evidence for magical practices in a given region. It is therefore important, in my view, to distinguish lead tablets from complete ceramic shapes as vehicles of cursing (hence the focus on the latter in the present study), to question the identification of texts on potsherds as curses, and to consider curses from Olbia per se separately from those found in scattered locations of its chora.

Therefore, I group ceramic (**C**) curses separately from lead (**L**) curses, and consider the deliberate choice of media and differences in ritual manipulation that can be suggested for each group, as discussed more fully below. I also find it useful to view curses from Olbia proper as a dossier that is meaningful on its own, as it reflects the interaction of the local population with the options afforded by the specific social and ritual landscape of the citadel and its surrounding necropolis. Other locations in the chora would have had their own peculiar spatial and social conditions for the choice of media and contexts of deposition. Ideally, in each context these conditions should be investigated on their own merits, although in my catalogue, finds from several locations in the chora (**Ch-L**) are grouped together for the sake of concise presentation.

10. Lead tablets from Olbia used as "tesserae or, less probably, as pinakia of dikastai" (Vinogradov 1994, 103–104 and n. 2); lead letters (e.g., Dubois, *IGDOP* 25); lead accounts (Nikolaev, forthcoming).

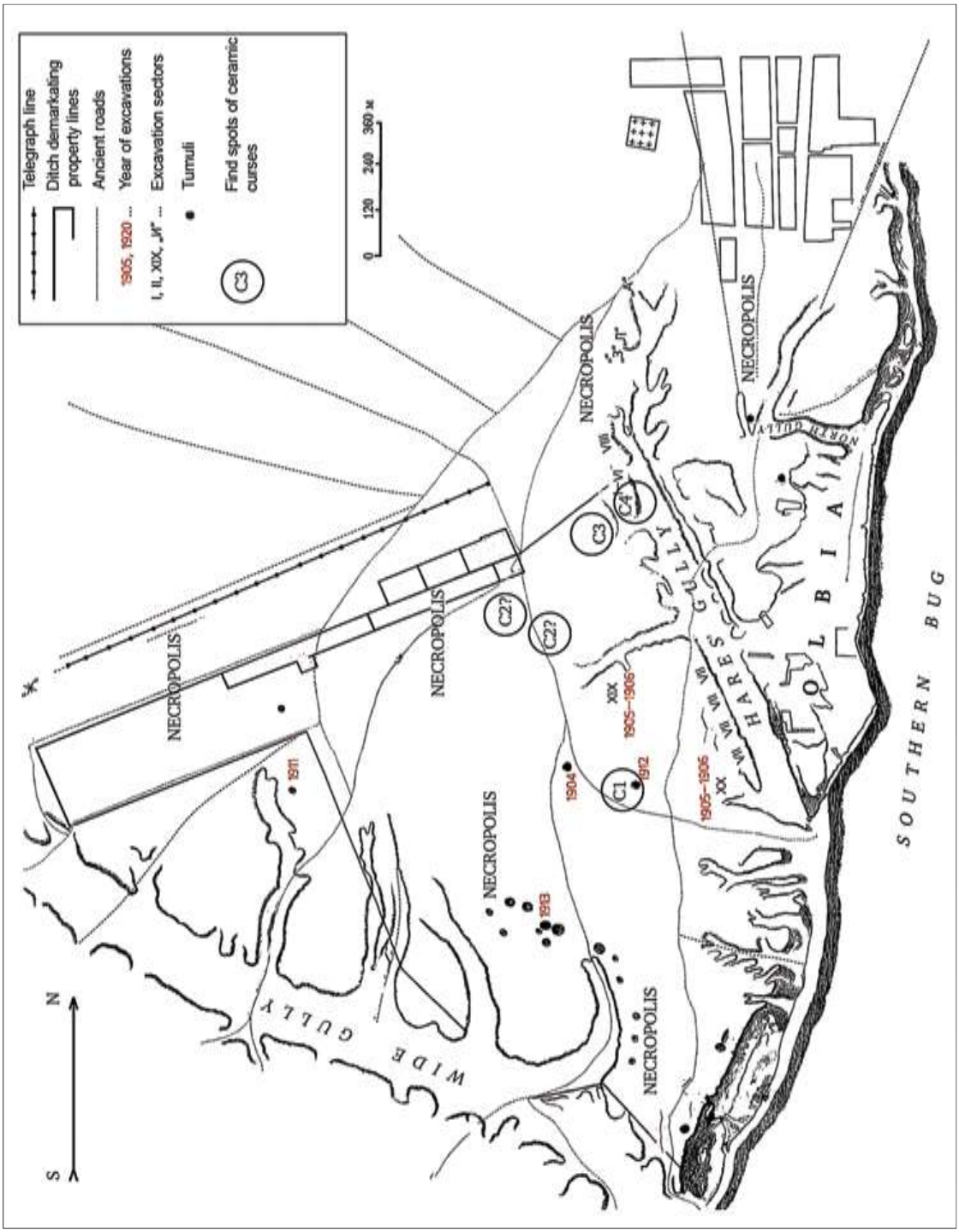

Fig. 1. Find spots of ceramic curses C1-C4. Adapted from Papanova 2006, fig. 29 and Parovich-Peshikan 1976, fig. 1.

Finally, in contrast to the approach of Belousov, I exclude inscriptions on potsherds (Belousov 2020, nos. 1, 4, 20) from my catalogue of curses altogether because I find the grounds for identifying them as curses insufficient or unconvincing. First and foremost, there is a lack of reliable comparanda for the use of potsherds as vehicles (writing surfaces) for the inscription of curses in the Classical and Hellenistic periods in any area of ancient Greece.[11] Second, the textual features and graphic images of two Olbian ceramic graffiti in question (Belousov 2020, nos. 1 and 20) find no match among other securely identified Olbian curses, whether on lead or on complete ceramic shapes,[12] and the list of three or four names found on the third (Belousov 2020, no. 4) easily allows alternative interpretations.[13] Finally, the context of finds in all three cases is residential, whereas mortuary context is inarguably prevalent in Olbia, and only locations within or on the border of the Olbian necropolis are attested for securely indentified Olbian curses. A detailed discussion of alternative interpretations for the graffiti in question (Belousov 2020, nos. 1 and 20) is forthcoming.[14]

2. Olbian Curses Inscribed on Ceramic Vessels

The present study is concerned with the archaeological context of a distinct group of Olbian curses inscribed on complete ceramic shapes (**C1–C4**), of which there are four known at Olbia to date. Significantly, for three out of four, the archaeological context is well documented (see Fig. 1 and Appendix 2). This allows cross-referencing of independent dating criteria (archaeological and palaeographic) and offers opportunities for new suggestions about the context of cursing. Archaeological context is also known for lead tablets **L19**

11. I share Lamont's reservations (Chapter 3 in this volume, n. 26) about identifying as a curse the sherd of the Classical period with graffito inscription (Ἀριστίωνι ἐπιτίθημι τεταρταῖον ἐς Ἀίδα) in the Kinch Collection of National Museum of Kopenhagen (inv. 7727; Nilsson 1955, 801). Lamont suggests that this graffito might represent "a cheeky way of casting a vote for ostracism."

12. Belousov 2020, no. 1 = Dubois, *IGDOP* 97, *SEG* 34.770, 46.953; Belousov 2020, no. 20 = Dubois, *IGDOP* 98, *SEG* 30.976, 34.771, 46.954, 51.980. There is a great variety of opinions on the nature of these two inscribed objects, their peculiarity being the rounded shape of the potsherds, the mention of cultic officials associated with Hermes, and the presence of graphic images of heads drawn in profile.

13. *SEG* 52.742. It should also be noted that this find comes not from Olbia, but from the site of Kozyrka XII in the chora, 12 km away from Olbia.

14. Polinskaya, forthcoming 2022a.

and **L(d)1–L(d)7** (see Appendix 2), but as long as these monuments remain unstudied, they do not contribute to the interpretation of **C1–C4**.

Two notes should be made at the beginning of our discussion. The first is chronological: no Olbian curses, in my view, postdate the 3rd century BCE (see Appendix 2), while the vast majority date in the 4th century BCE, with possibly two in the 5th.[15] The second note is that no curses with known find-spots originate from the citadel of Olbia; they all come from the necropolis, and one distinct group (**L(d)1**–**L(d)6**, **C4**) originates in an area of the suburb/necropolis, west of the citadel, that was probably a sanctuary.

2.1 Overview of Objects and Texts (full details in Appendix 3: Catalogue of Ceramic Curses)

Ceramic curses at Olbia include texts inscribed on three bowls and one lid. All have been studied by the author *de visu*.

C1 is a graffito on the interior of a fully preserved ceramic bowl (Diam. 13.5, H. 4.3 cm) of light yellow clay, of local Olbian production (Fig. 2). The text is laid out in two concentric circles, with the third circle spiraling counterclockwise, from the closure of the second concentric circle.

The writing is neat, with even lettering (H. c. 0.8–0.9 cm), using four-bar sigma with splayed bars throughout. The text, in Ionic script and dialect, can be dated, on the basis of palaeographic criteria and archaeological context, to c. 350 BCE.

Καταδέω γλώσσας ἀντιδίκων καὶ μαρτύρων, Τελεσικράτεος καὶ παί-
2 δων
Τελεσικράτεος, Ἄγρωνος, Ἱππονίκῃ, Ἀρτεμιδώρῃ, Ἀχιλλοδώρου
4 καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους τοὺς μετ’ {αοτα}αὐτοῦ πάντας.

C2 is a dipinto in black on the interior of a fully preserved ceramic bowl (Diam. 12.7, H. 4.0 cm) of pale yellow clay, of local Olbian production (Fig. 3). The text is laid out in a column in the center of the interior surface, in seven lines, with one word per line. The lettering (H. 0.4–0.5 cm) is similar to papyri hands, but no cursive forms are used. Two forms of sigma are notable:

15. The present author is preparing a separate study on the palaeography and dating of Olbian graffiti, including curses, as part of the *Inscriptions of the Northern Black Sea: New IOSPE* project.

Fig. 2. Bowl inscribed with curse C1 (inside, underside, side view and profile).

Fig. 3. Bowl inscribed with curse C2 (inside, underside, side view and profile).

four-bar with splayed bars (once) and lunate (four times). The text, in Ionic script and dialect, can be dated, on the basis of palaeographic criteria, to c. 325–300 BCE.

ταμπαρμη
Σιττυρᾶ
τὴν γλῶσσαν
ταμπαρμη
καὶ Θεμιστᾶ
καὶ Ἐπικράτευς
καὶ τὴν δύναμιν

C3 is a graffito on the interior of an Attic black-gloss bowl (Diam. 9.2, H. 3.1 cm), "small bowl: later and light" (*Agora* XII, 134**)** variety, datable between 450 and 380 BCE, fully restored from eight fragments found together in situ. The text is inscribed on the interior surface along the rim, in concentric layout, with one complete and one incomplete circles of text (Fig. 4). The lettering (H. 0.2–0.4 cm) is neat and mostly even, using the four-bar sigma with splayed bars throughout. The text, in Ionic script and dialect, can be dated, on the basis of palaeographic criteria and archaeological context, to c. 350–300 BCE.

Ἡρόφιλος, Ἀθηναῖος, Ἀγάθαρκος, Λητόδωρος, Διοκλῆς, Εὐκλῆς, Ἀρχίβιος | Εὐβούλη, Τυκοτα, Δι<ό>δωρος.

C4 are dipinti in black on the interior and exterior surfaces of a fully preserved conical clay lid (Diam. 15.3, H. 3.8 cm) with inverted cone knob, finished with yellowish slip (Fig. 5). The text is painted in concentric circles parallel to the rim, fully covering the available surfaces. The lettering (H. 1.0–2.0 cm) displays flowing, curvy letter strokes, with broad shapes, but no cursive forms. The full text is being prepared for publication, but we can mention here that the better-preserved interior surface bears at least two personal names in the genitive: Ἀγαθάρκου and Ἀντιφῶντος. The inscription can be dated to the late 4th/early 3rd century BCE.

2.2 Ceramic Shapes: Bowls and Lid

In terms of ceramic typology, **C1–C3** are shallow bowls with incurving or inturned rim, on ring base, with diameters ranging between 9.2 and 13.5 cm, and heights ranging between 3.1 and 4.3 cm. In addition to the similarities in

Fig. 4. Bowl inscribed with curse C3 (inside, underside, side view and profile).

Fig. 5. Lid inscribed with C4. Photos of inside and outside.

type, **C1** and **C2** (Fig. 6a, b) also have the same fabric and were likely locally produced, while **C3** is an Attic import.[16] While all of these bowls may have been used as table ware or household ware, the Attic type (**C3**) is certainly attested in domestic contexts and sometimes in funerary ones, as well as in the 4th-century BCE "saucer pyre" assemblages found in buildings surrounding the Athenian Agora.[17] Olbian bowls **C1** and **C2** are common in funerary settings; complete shapes mainly come from graves, as, for example, our comparandum in Figure 6c and a few other examples.[18] This type of bowl is thought to be of local Olbian production, but we should keep in mind the report of several bowls inscribed with curses found in Apollonia Pontica.[19] The indicators are that the Olbian bowls, although often found in burials, were not specifically made for funerary purposes, but were in household use prior to deposition in burials or use for cursing.[20] At the same time, the association of this shape with the burial ritual may have been one of the factors that suggested its suitability for inscribing a curse. In addition, the undecorated, plain surface made it especially suitable for writing.

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16. On locally produced tableware: see Krapivina 2006a, 182-183, figs. 199, 201.

17. E.g., Rotroff 2013, 110, Pyre 7 (bowl, Agora P 31363, 375–350 BCE); 113, fig. 36, Pyre 11 (broad-based bowl, Agora P 35980, c. 325 BCE); 137, fig. 63, Pyre 28 (bowl from complex south of the Tholos, Agora P 35715, 375–350 BCE). See also Lamont, Chapter 3 in this volume.

18. State Hermitage Museum, O.1908.46, from Olbia, Tumulus of 1908, Grave 4. Diam. rim 14.0, Diam. base 6.4, H. 4.2 cm. Parovich-Peshikan (1976, 172, Chamber Tomb 73) dates the grave to 4th–3rd(?) century BCE and notes that this bowl was deposited together with a black-gloss cup in a small hole in the floor of the grave pit, by the head of the sarcophagus. Diehl (1915, 43, n. 1) refers to analogous Olbian bowls illustrated in *ИАК* 8 (1903), no. 7, pl. V (first row, first from right); in my view no. 9 (second row, second from left) is of the same type. Diehl also cites bowls found at Priene (Wiegand and Schrader 1904, 422, nos. 75–77, fig. 539; in my view, only the shape of no. 77 is comparable to our Olbian bowls). For the Classical period, Kozub (1974, 54, no. 1, fig. 13) lists unglazed bowls of just one type (greyware or redware with incurving, rolled rim, H. 5.5–6.5, Diam. 16–20, Diam. base 5.8–7.5 cm), while black-gloss types come in the second half of the 6th and continue into the 4th century BCE.

19. The shapes of the Apollonian bowls are very similar to the Olbian, although they are finished with a red-brown slip or burnish that is absent on Olbian bowls (see further discussion below). The question of "local production" or of a regional vernacular of ceramic shapes in both cases requires further consideration.

20. A greyware bowl identical in shape to **C1** and **C2** (Odessa Archaeological Museum, inv. 41650, from excavations of Shtern on Berezan in 1909; Diam. rim 14.5, H. 8.0, Diam. base 6.0 cm; restored from two large fragments: cracked through the middle, two fillers added in restoration, wall segments up to the rim) has a graffito on the underside (ΔH in ligatura), which is either a commercial or ownership mark.

Fig. 6. Bowls inscribed with C1 and C2, with comparanda.

It must be said that our inscribed Olbian bowls, both in their appearance and use as a medium for magical writing, bear an uncanny resemblance to the "magic bowls" widely attested in several areas of the Near East, but dating hundreds of years later, in any case, not earlier than the 4th century CE.[21]

21. Most "magic bowls" were undecorated ceramic shapes inscribed in black ink on the interior, and rarely also on the exterior of bowls. The inscriptions are mostly protective spells, and the objects are often likened to amulets. They were usually buried under the floor of houses and were meant to protect from harmful spirits (for overview, see Bohak 2019, with most recent bibliography collected in n. 18). For a corpus of Jewish Aramaic magic bowls, see

C4 is on a lid from a vessel that had an interior flange on which the lid could rest. Further study is necessary to determine whether this ceramic shape is attested widely at Olbia in the 4th century BCE, and in what contexts. How unusual the use of such a ceramic shape for cursing was can only be properly assessed in the context of comparanda from across the Greek world (a study is in preparation by the present author):[22] my investigations so far have yielded no other examples of ceramic lids, but the range of ceramic shapes used for the inscription of curses may have been relatively wide (lamps, chytridia, bowls, and cups, including miniatures). Lids made of lead, such as covers of lead boxes imitating little coffins with lead figurines placed inside, were sometimes inscribed with curses.[23]

2.3 Topography of Finds

All four ceramic curses originate in the area west of the citadel of Olbia (see map, Fig. 1). The extent of the citadel was defined by three gullies (the North Gully in the north, the Hares' Gully in the west, and the Wide Gully in the south) and the shore of the Southern Bug in the east.[24] The area west of Hares' Gully was used as a necropolis throughout Olbia's existence, although some parts opposite the northwest corner of the citadel were occupied by a residential suburb in the Classical period. The findspots of **C1–C4** are in relative proximity to one another, the distance between **C1** and **C3** being about 650–700 m.

C1 was found in the topsoil of the "Tumulus of 1912," whose location is relatively well established, although the mound was completely removed during the excavations. It is located roughly due west of the southern tip of the citadel of Olbia, in the fork between the 4th South Road and the 6th Southeast

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Levene 2003. There are, however, examples that are not protective, but aggressive (discussed by Bohak 2019, 399–400), recommending deposition in a mortuary context—making them very close indeed in shape, function, and context to our Olbian examples (see Gager 1992, no. 109 = Naveh and Shaked 1985, 174–179, no. 9). Further discussion on the Olbian bowls and the Near Eastern lookalikes is in the forthcoming study by the present author (Polinskaya, forthcoming 2022d).

22. Polinskaya, forthcoming 2022d.

23. E.g., Avram, Chiriac, and Matei 2007, 416, no. 8; Gager 1992, 17, fig. 3; no. 41, p. 127, fig. 17.

24. It has become common to use translations rather than transliterations of local toponyms Северная Балка, Заячья Балка, Широкая Балка: Nord Schlucht, Hasen Schlucht, Breite Schlucht (Vinogradov and Kryzhitsky 1995, fig. 2); Ravin Septentrional, Ravin du Lièvre (Kryzhtisky and Leipunskaya 2011).

Road.[25] The "Tumulus of 1912" is south of the excavation area of 1905–1906 and east of the "Tumulus of 1904" (Fig. 1 and Parovich-Peshikan 1974, 5).

C2 was also found in the topsoil of a tumulus, but its location in the Olbian necropolis is uncertain, although some references in the report of the excavations allow us to make educated guesses (marked **C2**? in Fig. 1). It is clear that, in Tiesenhausen's excavations of 1873 in the necropolis, no record was kept of precise locations of burials, their numbers, or all objects found in them; only the more remarkable finds were noted down and reported. Fortunately, some of these were inventoried and transported to St. Petersburg, including **C2**. Deposition in the topsoil of a tumulus brings to mind the manner of deposition attested for two lead effigies at the Kynosarges cemetery at Athens (see Eliopoulos, Chapter 2 in this volume).

For **C3** the location is known precisely: in the necropolis of Olbia, west of the citadel, within several meters of 4th-century BCE graves (see Appendix 3).

For **C4** the location is known precisely. The cultic area where the lid was found sits at the edge of the necropolis and just outside the citadel, the border between the two being marked by Hares' Gully (Fig. 1). It was also just outside the so-called suburb (*proastion*) in the Classical period, or part of the necropolis.[26] The site's suburban location (outside city walls) on the edge of the necropolis, its layout, ritual installations and deposits suggest cultic activity, but not its addressee(s) (for details, see **C4** in Appendix 3). Taken together, the topographic and chronological proximity of **C1**–**C4** suggest that we might be dealing with a contemporary practice of a relatively homogeneous social stratum of Olbia.[27]

2.4 Manner of Deposition

The manner of deposition of our four objects varies. **C1** was dug very shallowly (c. 20 cm below the surface) into the topsoil of a tumulus raised over

25. It is marked on the map (fig. 1) in Parovich-Peshikan 1976, 6, and on the same (but slightly modified) map in Papanova 2006, 72 (fig. 30, Map of the Hellenistic necropolis of Olbia).

26. Summary of recent investigations in the suburb (Vorstadt): Fornasier, Bujskich, Kuzmiščev 2018a, 2018b.

27. There are no non-Greek names, or obvious nicknames (common for slaves) on C1–C4. More broadly, Olbian lead curses contain both Greek and non-Greek names, although the former predominate. Many names (of the victims) have been psosopographically associated by Nikolaev (2016) with prominent aristocratic clans of Olbia: some of his suggested identifications are indeed intriguing, but nevertheless remain circumstantial (depend on the prosopographic analysis of *IOSPE* I^2 201) and should be considered with caution.

two pit graves of the mid-4th century BCE, close to the inner side of the crepis surrounding the tumulus, presumably in a place where it was easy to dig, within easy reach and at human height.[28] **C2** can only be supposed to have been similarly deposited, as it was found in the topsoil of a tumulus, intact (so unlikely to have come in with topsoil moved from another location), but the depth of deposition is unknown. **C3** may have been placed directly on the ground, or at most only lightly covered with grass, turf, or soil that did not form a layer. In contrast with **C1** and **C2**, there does not seem to have been a great effort to conceal or bury **C3**. This manner of deposition seems to emphasize the importance of proximity to the graves rather than the need to bury the object in the ground, unless we are dealing with the case of unsuccessful deposition, whereby the *defigens* failed to find an opportunity to place the bowl directly beside or on top of a specific grave.

With **C3** we also have an apparently deliberate placement of the bowl upside down.[29] In his study of Olbian funerary assemblages of the Archaic and Early Classical periods, Petersen specially noted examples of ceramic vessels placed thus in Olbian burials (jugs, twice, and an amphora and a cup, once each) and wondered whether such placement symbolized the finality of death.[30] Another aspect of the Olbian burial construction might or might not be related to the symbolism of inverted vessels placed inside graves: niche burials were often closed off with a row of amphoras, placed either upright, or, more often, bottom up.[31] The deposition outside of—but in immediate

28. Shallow deposition ("four fingers deep") of a curse in the topsoil of a grave is recommended by a recipe in the Greek magical papyrus *PGM* V (= *GEMF* 58) 334.

29. Cf. Near Eastern late antique magic bowls that were predominantly deposited in this manner and commonly interpreted as a device for trapping harmful demons (Levene 2002, 10; Bohak 2019, 396).

30. Petersen 2010, 86 and n. 63. He adds that the paucity of examples may be due to limited records of find circumstances or to the lack of recognition of such placement as significant. Petersen further notes that in other Archaic Classical necropoleis (Poseidonia, Corinth), vessels (especially drinking cups) are attested in inverted position. In Corinth (Blegen, Palmer, and Young 1964, 82), the inverted position of cups seems to be a particular feature of the 6th century.

31. Papanova (2006, 93) notes that about 30% of all niche burials were closed off with rows of amphoras and the majority of such closures were made of inverted amphoras, although sometimes a mixed construction was used (with amphoras in alternating upright and inverted positions, presumably so placed for practical reasons, to create a tighter screen). Photos of examples: Farmakovsky 1913, 195–196, figs. 35, 36. A comparable use of amphoras as structural elements in the construction of tombs at other sites in the Black Sea is discussed by Damyanov (2005), with Apollonia Pontica presenting particularly close parallels.

proximity to—the graves, and in virgin soil, is paralleled in the case of *defixio* M45 from the Ayios Dionysios cemetery in Piraeus (see Kroustalis, Chapter 4 in this volume). A final note should be made about the fact that the bowl was found crushed in situ, with all fragments found together. In conjunction with the apparent deposition directly on the ground or under a very light covering of degradable material, the broken condition of the find raises the question of a possible deliberate destruction.[32] If that were the case, it would contrast with the intact condition of the other two bowls (**C1** and **C2**) and suggest a different or additional type of sympathetic ritual, perhaps comparable to the practice of walking over deposited curses—a recipe that seems to be behind the discovery of several lead curses in street layers of the Kerameikos cemetery in Athens (see Stroszeck, Chapter 1 in this volume).

C4 was found at a cult site without prominent monumental features, but with several clearly cultic installations: built and monolithic altars, reservoirs for burning, and a variety of ceramic and metal finds. **C4**, in particular, was found in an assemblage with apparently ritual objects: a lead labris, a lead bucranium, and a kalpis jar; it may have also been placed near the findspots of **L(d)4** and **L(d)5**.[33] The exact position of **C4** via-à-vis other objects in the assemblage is not known, but in several deposits found in the same cultic area, we also observe inverted deposition (see Appendix 3, **C4**, "Archaeological Context").

In sum, the location and manner of deposition suggest that the ritual meaning of cursing bowls (**C1**–**C3**) must be understood in conjunction with burials. The ceramic lid **C4**, by contrast, is not directly associated with and not found in immediate proximity to burials, but the whole cultic site is positioned on the edge of the cemetery, outside the city walls, and thus the inverted placement of **C3** might be a thread, however tenuous, connecting its ritual handling with the shape and handling of **C4** (see below).

3. Objects, Texts, Ritual Context

All Olbian ceramic curses appear on complete open shapes that date to the 4th/early 3rd centuries BCE. Ceramic curses **C1**, **C2**, and **C3** share further charac-

32. Rusyaeva and Ivchenko (2014a, 162; 2014b, 70) favor this view; crushing is understood as an act of analogical magic.

33. On lead bucrania, labris heads, and other lead figurines in cultic contexts at Olbia: Zaytseva 1971, 2004; Papanova and Lyashko 2014, 2015. Elsewhere: e.g., miniature lead labris heads at the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia in Sparta (Wace 1929, 254).

teristics: their shapes (all are bowls with inturned/incurving rim), the placement of texts on the interior, and the deposition in immediate proximity to burials in the Olbian necropolis. Additional similarities interrelate various pairs of curses: **C1** and **C2** are identical in ceramic shapes and the manner of deposition. **C1** and **C3** are graffiti with similar graphic display, with texts placed on the interior surfaces of the bowls, in a circular manner along the rim. **C2** and **C4** share a common technique: they are dipinti in black ink, and as a result of the dipinto technique, their lettering is similarly curvy, yet neither is cursive. The variation in writing technique—graffito in **C1** and **C3** and dipinto in **C2** and **C4** —suggests that both were acceptable in local magical recipes.

That bowls could be vehicles for cursing was a difficult argument to make until very recently, so that even in 1996 Laurent Dubois was compelled to reference the remark made by Pfister in 1925 regarding **C2**,[34] that despite the medium of writing not being lead, the use of the words *glossa* and *dynamis* indicated that the text was a curse. The reservations of scholars are understandable: compared to hundreds of lead curse tablets, only a few complete ceramic shapes used as media for cursing in classical antiquity have been attested so far (as mentioned earlier, the so-called Mandaen and Babylonian magic bowls are late antique or early medieval). It is possible, however, that some ceramic curses have gone unrecognized in cases where vessels had not survived intact, and fragmented graffiti have been misidentified as other more common categories of text.[35]

The cursing formulae inscribed on **C1**–**C4**, and even those on the most comparable shapes (**C1**–**C3**), while paralleled elsewhere, are different from one another. On the three very similar-looking bowls, we have three different varieties of formulae: (1) on **C1**, an explicit binding formula with the use of the verb *katadeo*, naming, in the accusative, the body parts (*glossas*) affected and their subjects (*martyroi* and *antidikoi* = Telesikrates and his sons) in the genitive; (2) on **C2**, an abbreviated formula that possibly has a verb of cursing hiding behind the unintelligible *tamparme,* and lists, in the accusative, the faculties cursed (*glossa* and *dynamis*) and, in the genitive, their owners; and (3) on **C3**, the most concise version, with nothing but the names of the affected subjects in the nominative. The choice of similarly shaped vessels combined with the variation in magical formulae, accompanied by the variation in writing technique and layout, points to certain characteristics of what

34. Dubois 1996, 174–175, no. 108.

35. See Polinskaya, forthcoming 2022d.

might be called religious "local knowledge." The differences in palaeography and hands suggest that we are dealing with four different individuals involved in the inscription of our four ceramic curses. Yet, at least three out of four of these individuals shared the knowledge of what the appropriate ceramic shape should be for their intended purpose, and also where the writing should appear (interior of the bowls). All three also knew that their cursing vessels should be taken to the cemetery for deposition and that shallow deposition was sufficient. The use of different writing techniques and formulae also suggests to me that, whether they were magical experts or nonspecialists, the individuals who inscribed our bowls were not necessarily working from the same or even from any recipe book at all, but more probably from oral knowledge of what was customary in composing a curse. And here, we note a curious semantic clash of the text and the medium, namely the use of the verb *katadeo* in conjunction with ceramic vessel. This verb is commonly used in connection with lead tablets in magical recipes (e.g., *PGM* VII [*GEMF* 74] 453–455), and various forms of binding action involved in the handling of lead effigies (e.g., binding of hands behind their backs) or of tablets themselves (folding and piercing with nails) are often thought to perform the action spelled out in the curse (see, e.g., the case of two effigies bound together back to back and inscribed on the chests with the word καταδέδεται: Eliopoulos, Chapter 2 in this volume). Ceramic bowls, as a rigid and inflexible medium, do not readily lend themselves to the semantics of binding.

One obvious difference between lead and baked clay as media is that one is pliable, the other rigid. Lead curses inscribed on thin strips of metal were typically manipulated—folded, bent, and often pierced with nails. Clearly, bending was not involved in the handling of ceramic objects. At the same time, the inverted position and the crushed state of **C3**, if deliberate, point to the availability of other methods of handling the ritual object, and of an opportunity for investing such handling with special meaning. Crushing in place, either by walking over or by stomping on top, may have been perceived by the one performing a curse to carry a form of magical force. Another possibility is suggested by a further difference between lead and ceramic curses: lead tablets are flat strips of metal, writing surfaces par excellence, while ceramic shapes are not just surfaces, but containers. Whether Olbian bowls were used to contain something more than writing, such as a liquid of some kind that was poured into the ground, or whether they were used as covers (lids are covers by definition, but bowls placed bottom up become virtual lids) are important possibilities to consider. We may speculate that the inverted deposition of **C3** and the shape of **C4**, rendering them both covers, in fact suggests a common

denominator for the ritual handling of these ceramic curses from Olbia. At the same time, there is no reason to expect that Olbians would have been limited to a single and uniform mode of using ceramic shapes for cursing; we have seen divergences among Olbian ceramic curses in at least three areas: in the choice of ceramic shapes (bowls vs. lid), technique of inscription, and of places of deposition (burials vs. cult site). As we look farther afield, the range of possibilities in the use of ceramic vessels as media of cursing only grows: in Attica, for example, lamps and chytridia are favored as shapes, and ritual pyres as well as residential and industrial quarters as contexts.[36] Among the known Attic ceramic curses, the two chytridia involved in the cursing ritual were in fact used as containers (one contained a lead curse tablet, and the other, itself inscribed with the names of those being cursed, contained bones of a baby chick, most likely evidence of an accompanying sacrifice). Much later, in late antique Rome, ceramic lamps were used as containers into which rolled-up lead curse tablets were inserted before being dropped into the holding tank of the Fountain of Anna Perenna.[37]

In Olbia, the example of three very similar ceramic cursing bowls brings us back to the hypothesis of a distinct local tradition, a form of local magical know-how. Just how "local" this religious knowledge was, that is, whether it was local or perhaps regional, cannot be fully explored in the present paper, but reports of several similar finds from Apollonia Pontica, another Milesian *apoikia* on the west coast of the Black Sea, suggest that possibility.

Two ceramic bowls inscribed with curses have been reported from Apollonia Pontica and were included in a recent exhibition at the Louvre, with photos, Greek texts, and brief commentaries by Nicolay Sharankov presented in the exhibition catalogue.[38] One such bowl, completely preserved,[39] plain, with reddish slip, comes from the tumular necropolis of Kolokita/Kolokytha, a site located on the coast, some 5 km south of Sozopol (the center of ancient Apollonia Pontica). Another bowl, plain, with reddish-brown burnish, also

36. See Lamont, Chapter 3 in this volume. Lamp: Lang 1976, C32 (Agora L 5298). Chytridia: Lamont (2021 and Chapter 3 in this volume); Jordan and Rotroff 1999. Other shapes: Chairetakis (2018) reports a drinking cup from Salamis with graffito on the interior that he interprets as a curse.

37. Mastrocinque 2007.

38. Baralis and Panayotova 2019, 298–299, 429, nos. 346, 516.

39. The object is in the Archaeological Museum of Sozopol (inv. 1950). The shape (H. 7.1, Diam. rim 22.6, Diam. base 11.4 cm) is said to be typical for local (Thracian) production (Tsaneva 1985, 357).

nearly complete, comes from the necropolis of Apollonia at Kalfata, also on the coast, south of Apollonia, but closer to the ancient city than Kolokita.[40] The bowl from Kolokita was found in 1981, in a ritual pyre deposit at the foot of a burial tumulus (c. 30 m in diameter and 3 m high) raised over two graves.[41] The main grave dates to c. 375 BCE and contained a bronze mirror and two alabastra, suggesting that it was a female burial.[42] The foundation circuit of the tumulus above the grave contained 120 amphoras, some placed upright and others upside down, while a stone circle surrounded the tumulus, and a ritual pyre was located on the periphery of the tumulus, forming a semicircle from west to south along the foot of the mound.[43] Most of the vessels in the pyre were found in inverted position, fragmented in place. The bowl with the curse was the only intact shape among numerous broken vessels in the pyre and also found in inverted position.[44] The fact that this was the only intact ceramic shape in this location suggests to me that it was not part of the pyre ritual that involved intentional destruction of pottery at its conclusion, but was deposited at the end of or after the pyre ritual, in a separate cursing procedure, either by someone who had earlier participated in that funeral or by another person who knew about the funeral and decided to use the fresh grave—and perhaps the pyre context specifically—as a suitable occasion and vehicle for sending a curse. The evidence of the massive ritual pyre with numerous vessels, as well as the distinctive location at some distance from the city, the elaborate construction of the tumulus, and the presence of several other similar structures at the site of Kolokita, suggest to Damyanov performance of large-scale funerals, with many in attendance, that mark this necropolis out as a site of "non-normative burial practice"; it is possible that this treatment was reserved for individuals of distinctive status or of elite background standing above the mass of other citizens of Apollonia, well over a thousand in number, who were buried at the seemingly more egalitarian necropolis of Kalfata.[45]

In light of these Apollonian comparanda, several similarities with the deposition context of the Olbian curse **C1** come to mind: that cursing bowl was also

40. See Baralis and Panayotova 2013, 242, fig. 1 (map with sites marked).

41. The burial mound was originally labeled "Thracian" (Tsaneva 1985, 1986), but has since been securely identified as Greek (Damyanov 2012, 48, 51). The plan of the tumulus is published in Damyanov 2005, 215, fig. 2.

42. Damyanov 2012, 51; 2005, 214–216 and fig. 2.

43. Tsaneva 1985, 356–357.

44. Tsaneva 1985, 357.

45. Damyanov 2012, 51–53.

found in the tumulus, moreover, also close to (probably just next to the interior of) the stone circle surrounding the mound heaped over the main grave, which also belonged to a woman—a wealthy one, to judge by the golden jewelery and other grave goods that accompanied her (see Appendix 3 for details). At the same time, the inverted placement of the Kolokita bowl recalls the Olbian ceramic curse **C3**. If the identification of the buried person in the Kolokita tumulus as female is correct, then the text of the curse suggests that she was not the addressee of the curse, but only the possible messenger, since the curse, in the form of a letter, is addressed to *Leimonios*; whether this is Persephone or another *daimon* is not entirely clear.[46] The long graffito curse is laid out in circular fashion along the circumference on the interior surface of the bowl, again in an identical manner to that of the Olbian **C1**, and is dated by Sharankov to the third quarter of the 4th century BCE,[47] although I see no palaeographic features that would prevent it from being dated earlier, c. 370 BCE, making it contemporary with the date of the main burial under the tumulus. In fact, the letter forms and the ductus, as much as one can judge on the basis of the photograph, are uncannily similar to those of the Olbian curse **C1**, and incidentally to those of the second Apollonian cursing bowl.[48] The latter was found in 2007 in the necropolis of Apollonia proper (sector of Kalfata, cadastral plot UPI 5518, burial no. 66, 2007).[49] It bears the names of at least 12 men, inscribed

46. The text was originally misread and misinterpreted (Tsaneva 1986, 172), but eventually recognized as a curse (Slavova 2009, 207; Sharankov 2016, 299 and n. 5). Sharankov offers the following reading of the opening line (in Baralis and Panayotova 2019, 299 and n. 14): Ἀριστοκράτη Λειμωνίῳ χαίρειν, and suggests that Λειμωνίῳ should be understood as an epithet of Persephone. The choice of the masculine, however, here introduces some ambiguity, unlike in the comparanda (dedication, c. 200 BCE?) from Amphipolis that Sharankov cites: Φιλωτέρα Ἀπολλοδώρου Κόρηι Λειμωνίαι (*Revue Archéologique* 1935: 67,2). If Λειμωνίῳ agrees with the implied θεῷ, where the latter can indeed be used as a feminine and masculine form, it would clash with the choice of the feminine form for the second epithet presumably applied to the same addressee: Νέη (young, youthful). The full annotated edition of the text has not been published yet, nor a high-resolution photo that would enable us to check the readings.

47. Sharankov 2016, 307, fig. 2. Sharankov gives a less precise date (4th century BCE) in Baralis and Panayotova 2019, 299.

48. In fact, the style of writing is so similar on the Olbian **C1** and on both Apollonian bowls that it raises the possibility of the same hypothetical itinerant specialist inscribing all three. At the least, the similarity of style points to the near contemporaneity of the three graffiti.

49. The object is in the Archaeological Museum of Sozopol (inv. 3236). The shape (H. 6.5, Diam. 19.5, Diam. base 8.5 cm) is similar to the Olbian cursing bowl **C1**. In 2016, Nicolay Sharankov (2016, 299, n. 5, with reference to Panayotova, Gyuzelev, and Nedev 2008, 319) wrote of "a few more curses from Apollonia representing names scratched on the inside of bowls,"

partly in a column positioned roughly along the central axis (similar to the layout of the Olbian **C2**), and partly along the circumference perpendicular to the central axis of the bowl's interior, but still one under another, rather than in a continuous line. This bowl is almost fully restored from fragments, and the fracture lines show that it was clearly found shattered in situ, perhaps in a scenario similar to the one that left the Olbian **C3** crushed on the spot.

Overall, the parallels between the Apollonian and the Olbian cursing bowls are striking. Complete ceramic vessels are chosen for the inscription of curses, with very similar shapes used in five cases—relatively wide and shallow bowls or cups. Their surfaces are undecorated, and samples of local production are preferred. The texts are inscribed (mostly in graffiti form) on the interior, often along the circumference, but also in columns. The bowls are deposited in or near the tumuli or graves, and all the associated burials date to the 4th century BCE. At least three out of five bowls indicate judiciary context as the background of the grievance that a curser seeks to redress. The other two curses simply contain lists of names, yet despite the variety of cursing formulae employed, the material features of the five cursing bowls from Olbia and Apollonia and their deposition contexts strongly suggest a shared regional religious practice and know-how.

While the existence of ceramic curses may have required special pleading as recently as 1996, the accumulating evidence suggests that this category of curses may have been more widespread than previously thought, and that it may have included distinct local or regional varieties. Finally, it should be emphasized that the ready availability of lead in Olbia, evidenced by its predominant use as material of choice for curses as well as for other cultic objects, such as figurines,[50] refutes the possible argument that ceramic shapes would have been used as simple substitutes for lead in its absence. Rather, the use of specific vessels and the specific manner of inscribing and deposition suggest that the choice of complete ceramic shapes for cursing in Olbia was not indiscriminate, but deliberate, meaningful, and probably informed by local religious knowledge that was shared by practitioners who understood the differences between ceramic and lead curses, as they pertained both to the manner of handling the magical objects and possibly to the ritual mechanism needed to activate the magical process.

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but later (pers. comm., 2019), he mentioned just one other bowl inscribed with personal names, which must be the one under consideration here.

50. See Papanova and Lyashko 2014, 2015.

Appendix 1

Olbian Curses (verified and presumed). Date of find, current location, autopsy.

	Year found	Repository and inventory number	Autopsy
L1	1894	lost	
L2	1894	lost	
L3	1908?	Odessa Archaeological Museum, 44309	vidi 2017
L4	1908?	lost	
L5	1908?	lost	
L6	ante 1930	lost	
L7	ante 1905	lost	
L8	1908	State Hermitage Museum, Ол. 17308	vidi 2019
L9	1982	lost	
L10	ante 1996	private hands, unknown	
L11	ante 1996	private hands, unknown	
L12	ante 1996	private hands, unknown	
L13	ante 1996	private hands, unknown	
L14	ante 1915	Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, Brussels, A1858	
L15	ante 2007	private collection, Kyiv	
L16	ante 2014	private hands, unknown	
L17	2015	private hands, Mykolaiv	
L18	ante 1927	State Hermitage Museum, Ол. 4791	vidi 2019
L19	2013	Inst. of Arch, Kyiv, No. unknown	
C1	1912	State Hermitage Museum, O.1912.489	vidi 2019
C2	1873	State Hermitage Museum, O.1873.83	vidi 2019
C3	2013	Arch. Museum, Kyiv, O-2013/Некр/156	vidi 2019
C4	2000	Arch. Museum, Kyiv, O-2000/Некр/198	vidi 2019

L(d)1	1997	Inst. of Arch, Kyiv, O-97/ Некр/72	
L(d)2	1997	Inst. of Arch, Kyiv, O-97/ Некр/73	
L(d)3	1997	Inst. of Arch, Kyiv, O-97/ Некр/74	
L(d)4	1997	Inst. of Arch, Kyiv, O-97/ Некр/77	
L(d)5	2000	Inst. of Arch, Kyiv, O-2000/Некр/208	
L(d)6	2000	Inst. of Arch, Kyiv, O-2000/Некр/209	
L(d)7	2007	Inst. of Arch, Kyiv, O-2007/Некр(ю-з)/no N.	
Ch-L1	ante 2016	private collection, Mykolaiv	
Ch-L2	ante 2017	private collection, Mykolaiv	

L14 The tablet was available to Wünsch in 1915 (see Jordan 1987, 165, n. 7, with reference to Wünsch's obituary by Deubner [*ARW* 18:vi–vii]).

L18 The Hermitage record for this item is very brief, only stating that the item derives from the excavations of Farmakovsky in Olbia. No date is provided, but Farmakovsky's last season at Olbia was in 1926.

Appendix 2

Olbian Curses. Dates, dating criteria, find circumstances, and archaeological contexts.

	Date (BCE)*	Dating criteria	Find circumstances	Archaeological context
L1	in 4th	palaeography	known	unknown
L2	ex 4th	palaeography	known	unknown
L3	5th	palaeography, dialect	unknown	known partially
L4	3rd	palaeography	unknown	unknown
L5	4th/3rd	palaeography	unknown	unknown
L6	4th/3rd	palaeography, dialect	unknown	unknown
L7	4th/3rd	palaeography	unknown	unknown
L8	400–350	palaeography	unknown	unknown
L9	4th	palaeography, dialect, archaeology	known	known
L10	350–300	palaeography	unknown	unknown
L11	350–300	palaeography	unknown	unknown
L12	350–300	palaeography, dialect	unknown	unknown
L13	350–300	palaeography	unknown	unknown
L14	350–c.300	palaeography	unknown	unknown
L15	350–300	palaeography	unknown	unknown
L16	350–300	palaeography	unknown	unknown
L17	2015	palaeography	unknown	unknown
L18	5th–4th	palaeography	unknown	unknown
L19	4th	archaeology, palaeography	known	known
C1	4th	archaeology, palaeography, dialect	known	known
C2	4th/3rd	palaeography, dialect	known	known partially
C3	4th	archaeology, palaeography	known	known

C4	3rd?	archaeology, palaeography	known	known
L(d)1	ex 4th–in 3rd	archaeology	known	known
L(d)2	ex 4th–in 3rd	archaeology	known	known
L(d)3	ex 4th–in 3rd	archaeology	known	known
L(d)4	ex 4th–in 3rd	archaeology	known	known
L(d)5	ex 4th–in 3rd	archaeology	known	known
L(d)6	ex 4th–in 3rd	archaeology	known	known
L(d)7	4th	archaeology	known	known
Ch-L1	ex 4th–in 3rd	palaeography	known partially	unknown
Ch-L2	350–300	palaeography	unknown	unknown

* "In" stands for *ineunte (saeculo)*, "ex" for *exeunte* (*saeculo*) as they refer to the beginning and end of a given century. The texts of **L(d)1–L(d)6** are unstudied and unpublished, but their find circumstances and archaeological contexts are documented in publications (see Tables in section 1, this chapter).

L4 Dubois 1996 and Avram, Chiriac, and Matei (2007, no. 15) date this tablet to 2nd/1st cent. BCE, Belousov (2020, 51, no. 12) to 2nd cent. BCE. Their reasoning is not clear to me. Since palaeography is the main criterion for dating this tablet, we ought to look for comparanda of letter forms and ductus. In this tablet, only omega displays a cursive form, while epsilon is rectangular, alpha has a straight crossbar, and sigma is lunate. In the North Pontic region, fully developed cursive is present in graffiti on the frescoed walls of the Aphrodision at Nymphaion (Crimea), dated to 225–200 BCE (Vinogradov 1999) or 275–250 BCE (*SEG* 39.701). Those graffiti consistently display cursive forms, such as lunate sigma and lunate epsilon, cursive omega, and alpha with a loop, as well as extended diagonals for alpha, delta, lambda, and mu. The absence of a looped alpha and of a lunate epsilon suggest that our Olbian text is earlier than the aforementioned Hellenistic graffiti from Nymphaion. In Olbia, other graffiti dated to the 3rd century BCE also display cursive alpha and lunate sigma, e.g., *IGDOP* 84 (dedication on a ceramic fragment); Rusyaeva 2010, 168, no. 15 (graffito on a lekanis lid), 167, no. 14 (graffito with names of deities, from the archaeological context dated to the 6th–2nd cent. BCE). Also comparable is the script of two *defixiones* from Western Crimea dated c. 320–270 BCE (Stolba 2016). These comparanda strongly suggest a date in the early 3rd cent. BCE for **L4**. Nikolaev's (2016) dating, based on prosopographic data, supports mine.

L9 This tablet was found in 1982, in the course of planned excavations by the members of the Institute of Archaeology, Kyiv (National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine): Vinogradov 1994. The records of excavations that I have been able to consult in the Archive of the Institute of Archaeology, Kyiv, provide conflicting information and require further investigation. The tablet is currently missing.

L19 The tablet is unpublished, but the context of find is the same as for **C3**: they were found within 1 m of each other.

Appendix 3

Catalogue: Ceramic Curses from Olbia Pontica

(C1)
Bowl, bearing a graffito curse against Telesikrates, his sons, and all others with him

Monument[51] (Fig. 2)
Type: Bowl. **Material**: [52] Light yellow clay. **Dimensions**:[53] Diam 13.5, H. 4.3 cm. Diam. base 6.8, H. base 0.9 cm. **Additional description**: Unglazed bowl of local Olbian production,[54] with ring base and incurving rim, decorated with a relief band of petal shapes on the underside of the wall, just above and around base (Fig. 7). Fully preserved.
Place of origin: Olbia. **Find place**: Olbia, necropolis. **Find context**: "Tumulus of 1912" (Fig. 1). **Find circumstances**: Found in 1912, excavations of B. V. Farmakovsky.[55]

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51. Description of epigraphic monuments is based on the design of lemmata in *Inscriptions of the Northern Black Sea: New IOSPE*: see, e.g., https://iospe.kcl.ac.uk/3.1.html; https://iospe.kcl.ac.uk/5.6.html. The inscriptions discussed in this article will be included in volume II of this corpus.

52. My identification is based on autopsy. Earlier published descriptions of clay vary: simply "clay" (*OAK for 1912*, 31); light yellow (exterior, but) pale red in the break, with some mica (Diehl 1915, 44: "из простой светложелтой глины, имеющей в изломе бледнокрасный цвет, кое-где видны мелкие блестки"; light yellow (Tolstoy 1953, 45, no. 63); redware (Parovich-Peshikan 1976, 173, no. 76; the identification is probably influenced by Diehl's characterization of the color in the break); Rusyaeva and Ivchenko (2014a, 161 and n. 14) note the difference in descriptions and follow Parovich-Peshikan.

53. My dimensions are based on autopsy. Diehl's (1915, 44) measurements: Diam. rim 13.8 cm, H. 5.3 cm, Diam. base 6.6.–6.7 cm, H. base 1 cm. Belousov (2016a, 121; 2018, 165) follows Diehl.

54. Rusyaeva and Ivchenko (2014a, 161) add that "the Olbian production may have been an imitation" (presumably, of a similar Attic type).

55. While B. V. Farmakovsky was the overall head of excavations, the team also included several assistants (*OAK for 1912*, 1), but Papanova (2006, 40) is apparently mistaken in asserting that S. A. Polovtseva was in charge of the excavation of the tumulus of 1912; rather, the latter was involved in the excavation of the tumulus of 1913 (*OAK for 1913–1915*, 1), as Papanova's (2006, 272) reference to the archival material also supports (Половцева, С.А. *Курган 1913 года* (РА ИИМК РАН, 1913, Фонд 1, Дело 393).

Fig. 7. Bowl inscribed with curse C1. Angled view showing decorative band above base.

Fig. 8. Drawing of C1.

Modern location: St. Petersburg, Russia. **Institution and inventory**: State Hermitage Museum, O.1912.489 (old number: Ол. 3802). **Autopsy**: 27 March 2019.

Epigraphic field

Position (Fig. 2): Complex layout: two concentric circles on the inside of the bowl close to the rim, with the third circle spiraling counterclockwise, centripetally, from the closure of the second concentric circle. The inscription starts in the outermost circle, closest to the rim, and unfolds counterclockwise. At the end of the full circle around the circumference there was not enough space to complete the word παίδων; thus the last three letters (-δων) are raised into the space right above line 1 and are written above the first three letters (Κατ-) of the first word Καταδέω, so that letters –δων are scratched between the first concentric and the second concentric circles of text. For ease of reference, I will count the three letters -δων as line 2. It is notable that the author chose not to continue the text in line 2, but to start a new line. The second concentric circle of text is therefore line 3, and it starts with the name Τελεσικράτεος, which is set off to the left of and above –δων. This second concentric circle is completed with Ἀχιλλοδώρου, and the following καὶ (at the start of line 4) is inscribed at a rising angle counterclockwise, climbing over Τελεσικράτεος and spiraling centripetally inward, but not linking up with the start of the line to form a full circle. The original design of full concentric circles switches to a spiraling layout in line 4.

Lettering (Figs. 2, 8). Graffito. Neat, even lettering. Generally straight letter strokes, with just a hint of curving in sigma. Four-bar sigma with splayed bars throughout. Upsilon with long vertical; wide omega with horizontal legs and either a simple domed loop (e.g., in καταδέω) or a slighty pitched loop formed by two short verticals topped with two diagonals meeting at obtuse angle (e.g., in παίδων and Ἄγρωνος). Omicron and omega are not significantly smaller than other letters, although they vary in size. **Line spacing** on average is 0.6–0.7 cm, but varies between 0.2 and 1.8 cm in places. **Letter heights**. On average 0.8–0.9 cm, with some omegas and omicrons at 0.5–0.6 cm and some upsilons and lambdas at 1.0 cm.

Text

Category: Judicial curse.

Date and dating criteria: c. 350 BCE (archaeological context, palaeography, dialect).

Editions: Diehl 1915; Tolstoy 1953, 45–46, no. 63.

Discussions: Dubois *IGDOP* 105; Belousov 2016a, 121–122, no. 4; 2018, 164–166, no. 4, 2020, 82-91, no. 18

Καταδέω γλώσσας ἀντιδίκων καὶ μαρτύρων, Τελεσικράτεος καὶ παί-
2 δων
Τελεσικράτεος, Ἄγρωνος, Ἱππονίκō, Ἀρτεμιδώρō, Ἀχιλλοδώρου
4 καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους τοὺς μετ’ {αοτα}αὐτοῦ πάντας.

Apparatus criticus: 3 Ἀρτεμιδώρου Tolstoy

Translation: “I bind the tongues of the opponents and witnesses, Telesikrates and the sons of Telesikrates—Agron, Hipponikos, Artemidoros, Achillodoros—and all others who are with him.”

Commentary

The image published by Diehl in the *editio princeps* is a more accurate representation than that of Tolstoy, reflecting clearly preserved extraneous strokes over tau and the first iota of ἀντιδίκων in line 1. Dubois republishes the latter, Belousov the former. Figure 8, above, is a new facsimile by the present author.

Tolstoy erred in printing a final upsilon in the ending of Ἀρτεμιδώρō and interpreted αοτα as dittography. My translation is the same as that of Tolstoy. Dubois and Belousov, for reasons unclear to me, depart from the grammatical singular of the text (μετ’ {αοτα}αὐτοῦ) and translate “with them” (avec eux).[56] Unlike Tolstoy and Dubois, Belousov seems to be of two minds on how to take Τελεσικράτεος of line 3, providing two translations on the same page: in the first, he puts a colon after παίδων, “and his children: Telesicrates, etc.,” so that Telesikrates the father is accompanied in the presumed lawsuit and in this curse by five sons, the first of whom is named Telesikrates like his father; in the second, just two paragraphs later, he puts a colon after Τελεσικράτεος of line 3, reading “and sons of Telesikrates: Agron, etc”.[57] Both readings are syntactically possible, and one’s preference here, while it should at least be consistently applied, does not materially affect the interpretation of the graffito and its function as a whole.

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56. *IGDOP* 105, p. 171, Belousov 2018, 166 (although in 2016a, 122, he sticks to the singular form — “кто вместе с ним”).

57. Belousov 2016a, 122. In the English version of the same paper (Belousov 2018, 166), the translation more consistently identifies Telesikrates in line 3 as the son of Telesikrates in line 1.

Palaeography, Dialect, and Dating

All earlier editions argued in favor of a date in the first half of the 4th century, and all relied exclusively on palaeographic and linguistic features. In the *editio princeps*, Diehl argues in favor of this date on the basis of two criteria: the gen. sing. ending still varies between O and OY, and there are no cursive letters.[58]

Letter forms are consistent and uniform in this graffito, only with a slight difference in the execution of omega (see above), suggesting a practiced hand. The generally straight strokes and the consistent use of four-bar sigma might point to the earlier part of the 4th century BCE. A variety of sigma shapes (four-bar, lunate, wedge-shaped lunate, rectangular) are attested in 4th-century Olbian graffiti,[59] and often, especially in curse tablets, we encounter a mixing of sigma shapes (see, e.g., **L2**, **L4**, **L5**, **L9**). This mixing appears to be the case in contemporary Istros as well.[60] While four-bar sigma with splayed bars is undiagnostic in itself, as it is used in Olbia from the Archaic to the Hellenistic period,[61] it might be tempting, in light of the common mixing of shapes in the 4th century, to take the consistency of the four-barred shape within one long text as indicative of an earlier date rather than a later one.

At the same time, dialectal features provide a more complex picture. For Diehl, Dubois, and Belousov, the use of ō in place of ου in the ending of gen. sing. is a sure indication of a date before 350 BCE.[62] This feature, however, is not seen by Vinogradov as a barrier to dating **L9** in the late 4th century (325–300 BCE).[63] In my view, it is the mixing of forms that is rather suggestive: we witness a transitional stage where old spelling is still remembered and used, but the new is already known and sporadically preferred. This mixing suggests that the conventionally accepted boundary of 350 should be viewed more flexibly, something that Dubois in fact allows for **L9**, which he dates to 360–340 BCE, followed by Avram.[64] The main problem we face is that most

58. Diehl 1915, 44.

59. E.g., in the Boreikoi graffito from Olbia, dated c. 300 BCE (*IGDOP* 95).

60. Avram, Chiriac, and Matei 2007, Istros no. 1 (sigma: four-bar, lunate, rectangular), Istros no. 5 (four-bar, rectangular), Istros no. 7 (four-bar, lunate).

61. On Olbian lapidary palaeography, see Vinogradov 1976, 24–27; 2000.

62. Dubois (*IGDOP* 105), 171 ("l'hésitation graphique entre -ου et ō au génetif singulier thématique exclut une date postérieure au milieu du IVe siècle"). Belousov 2016a, 122; 2018, 166.

63. Vinogradov 1994, 106.

64. *IGDOP* 106: Dubois 1996, 172, 173: "Compte tenu des variations possibles de ductus entre Athènes et Olbia, une fourchette 360–340 serait admissible;" Avram, Chiriac, and Matei 2007, 386, Olbia no. 6. Both disagree with Vinogradov's (1994, 106) later date (325–300 BCE).

of the Olbian epigraphic examples in question do not come from precisely dated archaeological contexts but rather from those that span three centuries (5th to 3rd cent. BCE) or even more. In light of these problems both at Olbia and Istros, Dubois and Avram, Chiriac, and Matei resort to Attic comparanda, where, it should be noted, the phenomenon is rare, but not entirely absent after 350 BCE.[65] Belousov notes further Ionian phonetic features in our text that, in his view, support a date prior to 350 BCE, namely, diphthong αυ > αο ({αοτα}αὸτοῦ) and uncontracted ending of sigmatic stem nouns in –ης (Τελεσικράτεος), yet these features are in fact attested in Olbia down to the 3rd century.[66] All in all, palaeographic and dialectal features allow a date in the first half of the 4th century, but do not preclude a date c. 350 or shortly after. The archaeological context (see below) supports this conclusion.

Language of the Curse

The formula (first person sing. of the verb of binding — καταδέω) is the only example from the North Pontic region where this "direct binding formula" is used.[67] The binding of the tongue, especially in conjunction with the specification of victims as "opponents (in lawsuit) and witnesses" gives a clear indication of the category of text as a "judicial curse." The rounding-up formula "and all others [who are] with him" finds parallels in similar phrasing of other Olbian curses: **L3** (καὶ τὸς αὸτῶι συνιόντας πάντας), **L9** (και οἱ ἄλλοι οἱ ἐναντίοι ἐμοί), **L11** (περὶ Ἀπατούριον καὶ Πιταθάκην καὶ Βατικῶνα πάντα<ς>), **Ch-L1** (πάντα[ς] αὐ[τούς]… [ὅσ]τις πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐχθρὸς Διρνύσιρς ṗάντων), and in contemporary Istria.[68]

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65. Dubois (in *IGDOP*) and Avram, Chiriac, and Matei (2007, 394, n. 28) cite Threatte (1980), who is careful in specifying the applicability of his observations to lapidary inscriptions alone, and even then allows sporadic, albeit disappearing, use after 350 BCE: "by mid-fourth century the use of of O instead of OY for [o] or ου is very rare in state decrees" (p. 252), "no example of O for OY on a stone text of the third century is very convincing" (p. 259), "examples of O for OY are rare by 355–350, and only two (both in the negative ὸκ, ὸδέ) are later than 345 BCE." (p. 352).

66. Vinogradov 1994, 106; αυ > αο: Dubois 1996, 183 (Appendice Grammatical, §3), *IGDOP* 10 (4th cent. BCE), *IGDOP* 26 (3rd cent. BCE); gen. sing. ending –εος of sigmatic stems in –ης: Dubois 1996, 189 (Appendice Grammatical, §11), *IGDOP* 13 (c. 350 BCE), *IGDOP* 11 (end of 4th cent. BCE), (while *IOSPE* I^2 201, c. 300 BCE: Λεωκράτους).

67. On "direct binding formula," see Faraone 1991, 5.

68. Avram, Chiriac, and Matei 2007, 390, Istros no. 1.

Archaeological context

The bowl was found in the topsoil of a tumulus, which may have originally been 4.5 m in height and 12.5 m in circumference (judging by the reconstruction drawings of V. D. Golov in *OAK for 1912* [fig. 50, 51]; see Fig. 9a, b). The tumulus was probably heaped over two contemporary pit burials and surrounded by a stone crepis, built of rectangular ashlar blocks laid in a single row of alternating headers and stretchers. Three stretchers and one header of that crepis survived and could be examined at the time of the excavation (Fig. 6). The bowl was found just 20 cm below the contemporary (1912) surface of the tumulus, right next to the inner (south) side of the crepis. The blocks of the crepis were abutting the short back end of a rectangular stone chamber tomb with pitched roof that was constructed in the side of the original tumulus. This later chamber tomb (I), and two more of the same kind (II and III), found at a distance of 7–8 m south and southeast of the former, were then also covered by a tumulus,[69] so that we have to imagine two layers of tumuli, the later subsuming the earlier one. It is this later tumulus covering three stone chamber tombs and contemporary pit burials, subsuming the remains of the original tumulus and its related pit burials, that is called in publications the "Tumulus of 1912" (Fig. 9c). It is essential to understand the chronology and functional relationship of the structures and objects in this setting to reconstruct the original deposition context for the inscribed bowl. This was already clear to Diehl, the author of the *editio princeps*, and his interpretation of the stratigraphy, offered in 1915, remains largely convincing. Judging on the basis of the spatial relationship between the crepis and Stone Chamber Tomb I (Fig. 10), Diehl concluded that the bowl had been inserted into the topsoil of the original tumulus sometime after it had been completed but before Stone Chamber Tomb I was built. It becomes crucial, therefore, to establish the date of the original tumulus. I have perused the existing publications and records to verify Diehl's observations, adding clarity of detail and adducing supporting documentation, in order to arrive at a more precise chronology of the archaeological context.

The published archaeological report of the Imperial Archaeological Commission for the year 1912 (author unknown) noted that just one tumulus (a burial mound, "kurgan" in Russian terminology) was explored that year, and yielded

69. Tombs that are cut into/inserted into the sides/slopes of a preexisting tumulus—like all three stone chamber tombs in the "Tumulus of 1912"—are called, in Russian terminology, "впускные погребения." It is imposibble to speculate whether such burials belonged to the same family and were for that reason allowed to encroach upon the preexisting burial mound.

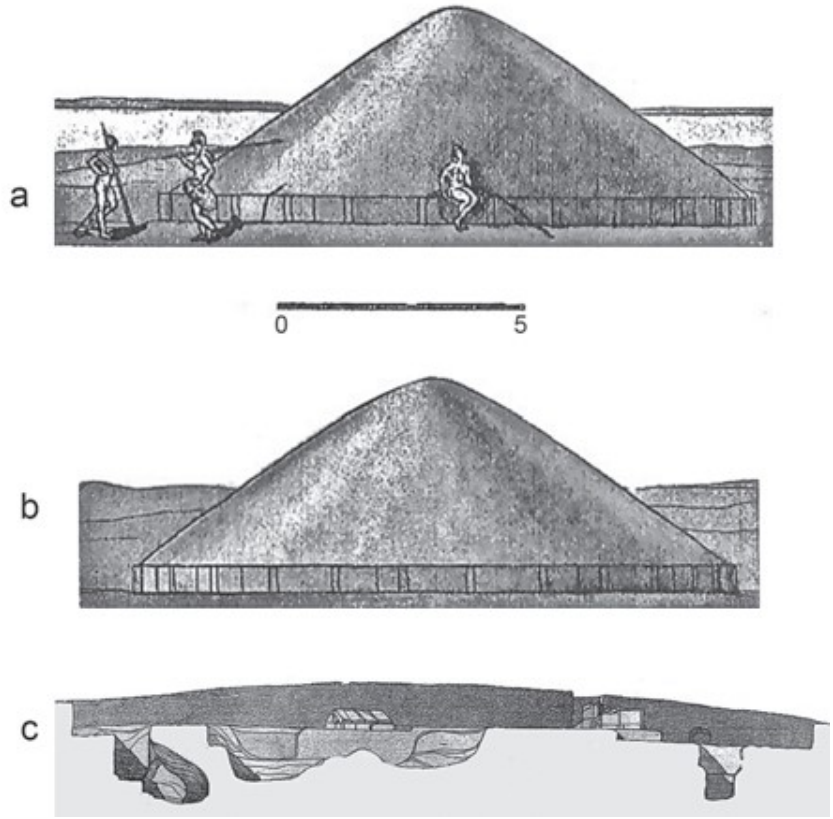

Fig. 9. Reconstruction drawings of 'Tumulus of 1912' by V.D. Golov (*OAK* for 1912, fig. 50, 51).

seven pit burials and three stone chamber tombs (Fig. 10).[70] The tumulus was excavated and then completely removed; a ground plan showing positions of burials, section views, and an artist's reconstruction of the original appearance were produced to document the monument.[71] The three stone tombs in the "Tumulus of 1912" are of the simple type: rectangular chambers sunk into the ground and lined with cut stone blocks, with a pitched roof made of cut stone slabs propped

70. Pit burials ("ямные" or "грунтовые могилы" in Russian) are cut in loess or bedrock and are often lined with wood paneling, mud bricks or combinations of material, and are most often covered with flat roofs of wooden planks ("pit burials with wooden covers": Petersen 2010, 196), stone slabs, or amphoras lined in a row (Papanova 2006, 80–90, with figs. 32–35). They are sometimes described as shaft graves (Ger. "Shachtgrab"): Farmakovsky 1913, 195.

71. *OAK for 1912*, figs. 46–51; Diehl 1915, 41–42, figs. 1–3; Papanova 2006, 162, fig. 78 (no. 3 —section plan of the tumulus).

up one against another, and the entrance blocked by one or two stone slabs set across it (Fig. 11).[72] Stone Chamber Tomb I is dated by Parovich-Peshikan to the end of the 4th century BCE, on the basis of grave goods.[73]

If Diehl's reconstruction is correct, Stone Chamber Tomb 1 (late 4th century) was built into the side of the original tumulus some time after the latter had been raised and surrounded by a crepis, therefore well before the end of the 4th century, and blocks from the crepis may have then been reused in the construction of Stone Chamber Tomb I. Two more tombs of the same construction type and of slightly later date (early 3rd cent. BCE) were found similarly built into the slopes of the original tumulus.[74] Reuse of earlier mounds for later burials is a common phenomenon in the Olbian necropolis. Since the original tumulus would have been raised to cover one or several earlier tombs, we should now turn to the pit burials associated with it.

The main pit burial under the original tumulus was located in the space between later Stone Chamber Tombs II and III, as can be seen on the plan in Figure 10.[75] A detailed description is provided in the catalogue of Kozub (1974, 156, no. 185): "Pit burial 2к/1912, under the Tumulus of 1912. Orientation: N–S. Dimensions: L 3,4m, W 1,75m, D 1,34m, cut into loess to the depth of 1.1m. This is the main burial under the tumulus. The pit was lined with logs (12cm in section) almost to the full depth of the grave. Seven logs

72. Stone chamber tombs ("каменные склепы" in Russian) appear in Olbia after 350 BCE, and those in the "Tumulus of 1912" represent "stone chamber tombs Type I" (Papanova 2006, 114–119, figs. 47, 48).

73. Parovich-Peshikan 1976, 172, no. 76, fig. 50: Burial I/1912, in the northwest part of the "Tumulus [of 1912]" (Архив ЛО ИИМК, фонд 1, дело 372 за 1912). Size: 2.75 x 1.46 m, wall height 1.13 m, height to ceiling 1.60 m, cut into loess at 0.6 m depth. Orientation: south–north. Construction: rectangular chamber tomb with pitched roof made of 12 well-worked limestone slabs (the largest 1.27 x 0.65 x 0.26 m, the smallest 0.95 x 0.31 x 0.20 m); the slabs were set up vertically on their long sides into a groove (D. 0.04 m); the entrance was blocked with two superimposed slabs; the walls of the tomb were constructed from 22 slabs set in two rows (the largest 1.23 x 0.63 x 0.26 m, the smallest 0.63 x 0.41 x 0.22 m). Inside: earth floor; the bones were scattered, but must have originally been inside a wooden sarcophagus covered with a lid (wooden remains, seven bronze and several iron nails). Grave goods: in the northeast corner, fragments of an amphora; by the south and west walls, fragments of an alabastron, ceramic and golden beads.

74. Stone Chamber Tomb II: Parovich-Peshikan 1976, 45 and fig. 54, p. 174, Catalogue № 78. Burial II/1912 (c. 300 or early III cent. BCE). Stone Chamber Tomb III: Parovich-Peshikan 1976, 45, 52, with fig. 55 (c. 300 or early 3rd cent. BCE).

75. Identification of the main tomb under the Tumulus of 1912: *OAK for 1912*, 31; Farmakovsky 1913, 196. The plan is modified from Diehl 1915.

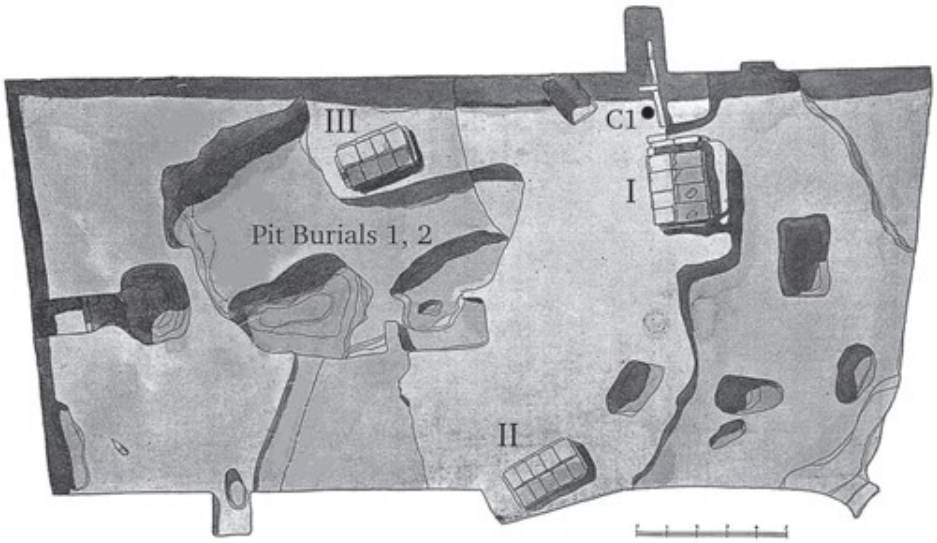

Fig. 10. Plan of 'Tumulus of 1912,' showing find spot of C1. Adapted from Diehl 1915.

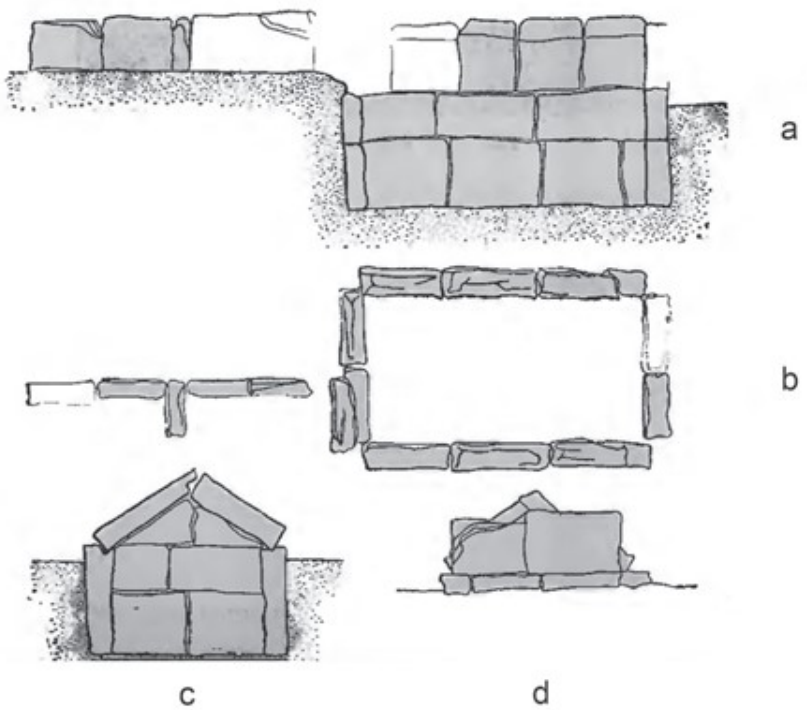

Fig. 11. Stone Tomb I in 'Tumulus of 1912' (plan and side view drawings). Adapted from Parovich-Peshikan 1976, fig. 50.

were preserved on N side of the grave. The floor was covered with seaweed, or eel grass,[76] on top of which was placed a rectangular wooden painted sarcophagus (fragments of wood, showing black and red colours). The sarcophagus stood close to the E and S walls of the grave. It was decorated with gypsum ornaments. Size of sarcophagus: L 2,45m, W 0,92m, H 0,75m. The skeleton was supine, stretched out, head to South. Grave goods: next to the head, on the left – Thasian stamped amphora with red stripe below the rim (ОЛ 12361),[77] on the head – 8 stamped gold plaques with the image of Medusa (ОЛ 17548),[78] 10 plaques of the same kind bearing an image of female head turned right, 7 gold plaques with image of palmette (ОЛ 17550), on the chest – gold pendant in the shape of female head in kalathos (ОЛ 17551 = О.1912-402);[79] next to the left leg – gypsum figurine of a dove in pink colour (№ 178), iron knife with bone handle (ОЛ 3878), iron needle, remains of woven cloth from a dress (ОЛ 13858); next to left palm – BG kylix (№180), on the finger of the left hand – gold wire ring (ОЛ 17547 = О.1912-397), silver ring (ОЛ 17544 = О.1912-387), 15 golden beads, silver gilded halfmoon pendant (ОЛ 17546 = О.1912-396), fragments of iron spear (?). Female burial, 4th cent. BCE."[80] The most diagnostic item, the golden pendant in the shape of female head in elaborate headdress (State Hermitage Museum, О.1912.402), has a very close parallel in the pair of earrings from the necropolis of Pantikapaion, dated 350 BCE (State Hermitage Museum, П.1840.37, photo in Williams and Ogden 1994, no. 103).

The main burial may have been accompanied by a contemporary pit burial of a child or slave.[81] The two pit burials (2к/1912 and 1к/1912) are described

76. Petersen 2010, 66 and n. 53.

77. The reported amphora is not in the collection of the State Hermitage Museum and may have never been sent there (Sergey Monakhov, pers. comm., 2020), so its shape and stamp could not be inspected and used as a guide to more precise dating in this case: several varieties of Thasian stampted amphorae with red stripe below the rim are attested throughout the 4th cent. BCE (Monakhov et al. 2019, 124-135, Cat. nos. Th. 9-Th.27).

78. Golden plaques were produced using different methods: hammering over matrix and casting. A Classical stone mold in the shape of gorgoneion for production of plaques is known from Olbia (photo in Kryzhitsky and Leipunskaya 2011, 133, fig. 107:7.

79. Farmakovsky 1913, 197–198, fig. 39:5.

80. This material remains unpublished, but most of the objects are in the Olbian collection at the State Hermitage Museum. I am grateful to the keeper, Yulia Ilyina, for showing me the photos of these objects and for providing new inventory numbers where known.

81. Parovich-Peshikan 1976, 161, no. 23. Pit Burial 1к/1912 (Архив ЛО ИИМК, фонд 1, 372/1912). 4th–3rd cent. BCE(?). Construction: the tomb is covered with a roof of wooden

as being "underneath the tumulus," while the rest of pit burials (five in all) are "in the mound of the tumulus" and are dated to the early 3rd century BCE.[82] A probable chronological sequence can be restored: two pit burials were initially dug into the ground in the middle or early in the second half of the 4th century BCE and were then covered by a tumulus reinforced with a crepis; then, at the end of the 4th century, a Stone Chamber Tomb I was built into the northwest side of the tumulus, reusing the blocks of the crepis (either initiating or continuing its demolition), and subsequently Stone Chamber Tombs II and III (c. 300 BCE) and pit burials 3–7 (early 3rd cent.) were cut into the sides of the mound and covered with another layer of soil, creating the multilayered "Tumulus of 1912."

The grave goods in the main pit burial underneath the tumulus suggest a date around or just after 350 BCE, while the Stone Chamber Tomb I (dated to the late 4th cent. BCE) provides a terminus ante quem, since it was apparently built after the crepis surrounding the original tumulus had been partially demolished. One particular event in the second half of the 4th century BCE presents a plausible context for the spoliation of ready-made building material from stone crepides of Olbian tumuli—a need for the reinforcement of city fortifications in the wake of the attack and siege of Olbia by Alexander's general Zopyrion (331 BCE). It was a watershed moment in Olbia's history,[83] and similar emergencies are known to have caused the demolition of funerary monuments in other parts of ancient Greece,[84] and of public buildings in

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logs(?). Size: 1.70 x 1.30 m, depth 0,91 m; cut into loess by 0,73 m. Orientation: NW–SE. No bone remains. Remains of wood (from roof?) and reed bedding. Grave goods: fragments of amphoras, black- and red-gloss ware, astragals. The same burial is no. 184 in the catalogue of Kozub (1974, 155). Kozub adds that it is a child's burial but does not explain her reasoning (unless astragals are taken to be diagnostic). She assigns a date in the 4th cent. BCE, noting (n. 47): "Farmakovsky speculated that this may have been a slave of the noble Olbian woman buried in the main burial. He considered the two burials contemporary. But in our view there are no grounds to consider the child's burial as that of a slave. Perhaps the deceased was a family member of that noble woman."

82. Parovich-Peshikan 1976, 158, pit burials no. 7 (3к/1912) and no. 5 (4к/1912), p. 159, no. 15 (5к/1912), p. 160, no. 16 (6к/1912).

83. Vinogradov 1989, 24, 150–176.

84. Perhaps the best-known example is that of the Themistoklean Wall, for which ruined houses, temples, and cemeteries of Athens were spoliated to build the lower courses in a short period of time: Thuc. 1.93.2. Theocharaki (2011, 105 and figs. 11, 12) notes that spolia were identified at a minimum of 10 excavation sites of the Themistoklean wall. Grave stelae built into the Themistoklean wall: Bäbler 2001. Chersonesos (Crimea): reuse of tomb stones for the reinforcement of Zenon Tower (early 2nd cent. BCE: Scheglov 1978, 130-131).

Olbia itself in later periods of its history.[85] The date of the construction of the original tumulus may be narrowed to between c. 350 and 331 BCE. If our hypothesis about the circumstances leading to the demolition of the crepis is correct, the bowl inscribed with a curse would have been deposited into the topsoil of the tumulus, on the inner side of the crepis, prior to 331 BCE; as it is more likely that it would have been soon after the tumulus had been heaped rather than close to the date when it was partly destroyed, I incline toward the date c. 350 BCE.

(C2)
Bowl, bearing a dipinto curse against Sitturas, Themistas, and Epikrates

Monument (Fig. 3).
Type: Bowl.[86] **Material**:[87] Pale yellow clay. **Dimensions**:[88] Diam. rim (exterior) 12.7, Diam. interior of incurving rim 11.4; H. 4.0 cm. **Additional description**: Unglazed bowl of local production, with ring base and incurving rim, of the same type as **C1**. Fully preserved. On the underside, within the ring base, two greenish spots that might indicate prolonged contact with a bronze object.[89]
Place of origin: Olbia. **Find place**: Olbia, necropolis, west of the citadel. **Find context**: long mound, top soil. **Circumstances of find:** Found in 1873, excavations of V.G. Tiesenhausen.

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85. Vinogradov 1989, 248, 262: reinforcement of the fortification walls of Olbia in sector "P19" during the time of Mithridates of Pontos, involving reuse of votive statues and architectural members from the East temenos of Olbia.

86. Strangely, Belousov (2014, 64) describes the object as a wall fragment of patera, despite listing the *editio princeps* of Stephani (1877), who describes the object as "eine völling unverzierte Schale von gelblichem Thon," and a later study of Diehl (1923, 226), who describes it as "vas (pateram dicere possis)… totum incolume est," publishing photographs of the top and side views of the bowl (no figure number) on the page preceding the article. Another misleading reference is in Gager (1992, 31, n. 5, on curses on ostraca): "From a much later period ("late Roman") stem two ostraca from Egypt, one (*PGM*, vol. 2, Ostraca 1)… while the other apparently seeks to bind (no verb is used) the tongue and power of Sittyras and Epikrates (*PGM*, vol. 2, Ostraca 5)." There is, however, no such Egyptian ostracon: *PGM*, vol. 2, O5 is a reference to our Hermitage bowl from Olbia.

87. My identification is based on autopsy. The inventory card at the State Hermitage Museum states "light yellow clay" and "local Olbian production."

88. My dimensions are based on autopsy. Stephani (1877, 106): H. 4.0, Diam. rim 12 cm; Diehl (1923, 226): H. 4.5, Diam. rim 12.3–12.4, Diam. base 5.4–5.5 cm.

89. Diehl (1923, 226) speculates that they might have been left by a copper nail.

Modern location: St. Petersburg, Russia. **Institution and inventory**: State Hermitage Museum, O-1873.83 (old number Ол. 1618). **Autopsy**: 27 March, 17 May 2019.

Epigraphic field (Fig. 12): Seven lines of text arranged in a column occupy a rectangle roughly 4.3 x 4.8 cm in the center of the bowl's interior.
Lettering (Fig. 13): Dipinto in black ink; flowing hand, similar to papyri, but no cursive letter forms. Alpha with straight crossbar. Two types of sigma: four-bar at the beginning of Σιττυρᾶ and lunate in the remaining four cases, including middle and ultima positions. Omega in γλώσσαν consists only of the loop without legs that appears angular like a squat lambda.[90] Mu on three occasions has a very shallow drop to the middle bars, so that is looks almost like pi (second mu of ταμπαρμη in line 4, and mu in Θεμιστᾶ and δύναμιν).
Letter heights (cm): 0.4 – 0.5.[91]

Text
Category: Curse.
Date and dating criteria: 325–300 BCE (palaeography, dialect).
Editions: Stephani 1877, 106; Diehl 1923, no. 1; Thomsen 1924; *SEG* 3.595; Belousov 2014.
Discussions: Pfister 1925, 381: δύναμις, Belousov 2014; 2020, 56-61, no. 13.

ταμπαρμη
Σιττυρᾶ
τὴν γλῶσσαν
ταμπαρμη
καὶ Θεμιστᾶ
καὶ Ἐπικράτευς
καὶ τὴν δύναμιν

90. A very close parallel is in the Istrian *defixio* of the second half of the 4th cent. BCE (Avram, Chiriac, and Matei 2007, 405 [photo and text], no. 3; *SEG* 57.667), in the name Ἀκέστωρ (line 9). Another parallel is in a graffito, dated 350–325 BCE, from Panskoye I (Stolba 2002, 233, H31 and pl. 151: Πρω).

91. Diehl (1923, 226) notes that the height of omega in line 3 is only 1.8 mm. Indeed, it is very flat.

Fig. 12. Bowl inscribed with curse C2 (angled view and close-up of inscription).

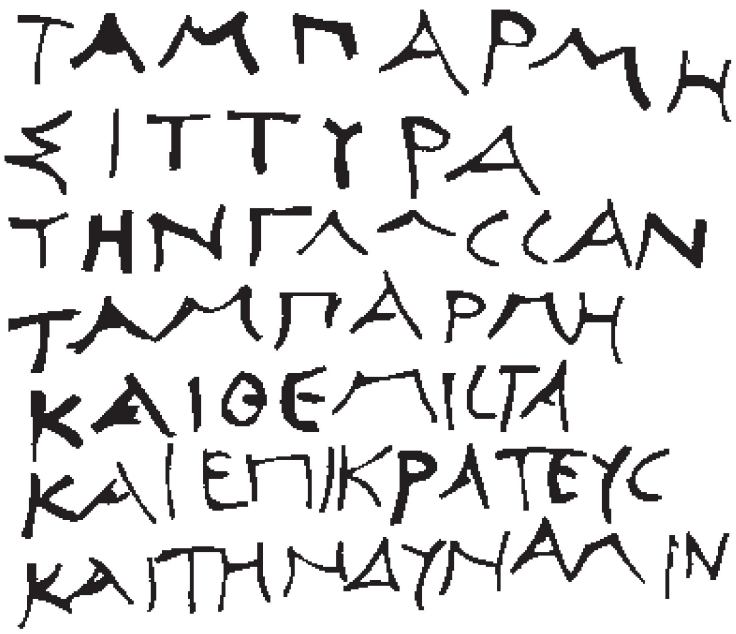

Fig. 13. Drawing of C2.

Apparatus: **1** Τὰμ πάρμη(ν) Belousov, **2** σιττυρα Stephani; **4** τὰμ πάρμη(ν) Belousov, **5** θεμιστὰ Stephani; **7** Δύναμιν Diehl

Translation: *Tamparme* the tongue of Sittyras, *tamparme* also (the tongue) of Themistas and of Epikrates, and also (their) bodily power/ capacity.

Commentary

All previous publications reproduce the drawing of Stephani (1877). Figure 13 is a new facsimile by the present author.

Palaeography

The lettering is fluid and curvy, as is expected in a painted inscription, but there are no distinct cursive shapes (such as lunate epsilon, alpha with a loop, or double-loop omega), and no extended horizontals for pi. Alpha has straight crossbar throughout.[92] Two forms of sigma are used: four-bar with splayed

92. The pixelated reproduction in Belousov 2014, 64, gives a misleading impression of a broken crossbar in the first alpha of line 1.

bars, (once, in the initial position) and lunate sigma (four times, in middle and final positions). The mixing of letter shapes, especially sigmas, is attested in other Olbian curses (e.g., **L5**, **L9**) and graffiti, dated to the 4th or early 3rd century BCE (see **C1** commentary, above).[93]

Dipinti from other Classical–Hellenistic sites of the Northern Black Sea with well-documented archaeological contexts are too short to be of significant value.[94] Dipinti from the Athenian Agora are not numerous in the 4th–3rd centuries BCE. The closest comparandum for our dipinto is a dating formula on a Chian amphora, dipinto in black on the shoulder, found in the context of the late 4th–early 3rd century BCE: ἐπὶ Νικήτου | [ἄ]ρχοντος.[95] Both our dipinto and this Athenian one display four-bar sigmas with splayed bars and upsilon with long vertical and shortened diagonals; the difference is in pi, which has a pronounced extended horizontal in the Athenian case. Other comparanda may be sought among 4th-century documentary and literary papyri from Egypt: e.g., a marriage contract from Elephantine, 310 BCE (BerlPap P. 13500), offers a very close parallel to the letter forms of **C2**: rectangular epsilon, peaked omega, pi with the end of the short right vertical curving upwards, mu with very shallow drop of the intersection of diagonals, alpha with straight crossbar, and lunate sigma.[96] The only difference in the Olbian dipinto is that the latter uses both four-bar and lunate sigmas. An earlier literary papyrus, a fragment of *Persae* by Timotheos of Miletos, second half of the 4th century BCE, is another close parallel to our dipinto, except for the shape of sigma, which is exlusively four-bar in this papyrus.[97] Other relevant comparanda for providing a *post quem non* date are wall graffiti from the Aphrodision of Nymphaion (Crimea), variously dated to 275–250 or 225–200 BCE, where we find fully developed Hellenistic forms, including cursive epsilon and omega;[98] the Nymphaion graffiti suggest that the dipinto on our Oblian bowl is sig-

93. E.g., in the graffito of Boreikoi, dated c. 300 BCE (*IGDOP* 95) or 4th/3rd cent. BCE (*SEG* 64.683).

94. E.g., at Panskoye I: Stolba 2002.

95. Agora P 9754: Lang 1976, 70, no. Hc 2(a), pl. 39. Lang speculates that "[i]f the archon is Athenian, there are two possible years: 332/1 and 225/4." The archaeological context down to early 3rd century would seem to preclude the date in 225/4, but these dates are, in any case, in contention only if the dipinto is Athenian rather than Chian.

96. BerlPap P.13500, http://berlpap.smb.museum/03734/ = HGV P.Eleph. 1 = Trismegistos 5836.

97. BerlPap P. 9875, https://berlpap.smb.museum/02776/ = Trismegistos 62931. This parallel has already occurred to Diehl (1923, 226, n. 5).

98. Vinogradov 1999, 272; *SEG* 39.701; *BullEp* 103 (1990): 555, no. 590.

nificantly earlier. The palaeographic features, therefore, allow us to propose a date close to 300, perhaps even c. 325–300 BCE.[99] Diehl, Dubois, Avram, and Belousov date it to the 4th/3rd century BCE.[100]

Dialect

The only clear ionicism is the contraction of vowels in the gen. sing. of the noun stems in -ης, that is, in line 6: Ἐπικράτευς < Ἐπικρατέους < Ἐπικράτεος.[101] This feature is also attested in the Olbian lead curse **L6**, dated to the first half of the 4th century: Εὐσθένης Πρωτογένευς (lines 5–6), Γοργίας Ἡροκράτευς (lines 7–8), Ἀρτεμίδωρως Δεινομένευς (lines 11–12).

Text

Except for non-capitalization of ταμπαρμη, my edition is the same as those of *SEG* 3.595 (1927) and Dubois, who, however, did not seem to know Stephani's *editio princeps*.[102] Stephani published both a facsimile drawing and an edition of the text, while Diehl published a diplomatic transcription and a critical edition.[103]

Ταμπαρμη is not a recognizable word in Greek. Hence, from the time of the *editio princeps*, various suggestions have been made that it is a form of *ephesia grammata* (Stephani), or a loan word from Scythian (Diehl), signifying either a divine name, an invocation, or a cursing formula. Dubois notes that the word is puzzling ("mystérieux"), but tentatively translates it as "I curse" ("je maudis??"). Most recently, Belousov has proposed to read the first line as an article (τὰμ) and noun (πάρμη(ν)) phrase.[104] The main linguistic obstacle to this reading would seem to be the Doric vocalization of the article in acc.

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99. Stephani (1877, 107) dated the inscription to the "erste christliche Jahrhundert" on the basis of letter forms, but his criteria reflect an outdated stage in the understanding of epigraphic palaeography.

100. Diehl 1923, 226 ("saeculo quarto exeunte vel tertio ineunte"); Dubois 1996, 174; Avram, Chiriac, and Matei 2007, 387, Olbia no. 12; Belousov 2014, 64.

101. Dubois 1996, 187, Appendice Grammatical, §9 (the form is limited to 4th–3rd cent. BCE). The phenomenon is also attested in inscriptions from Apollonia Pontica: Slavova 2009, 207: Κρεσφόντευς (*IGBulg* I^2 449, 5th/4th cent. BCE).

102. Dubois (1996, 175) refers to Diehl's edition and laments the absence of a photograph of the text (there are, however, a top and a side view of the bowl), which, I expect, was deemed unnecessary by Diehl, who knew that Stephani had already published a good drawing.

103. There is a mistake in Diehl's transcription: it shows that the first sigma in γλώσσαν is four-bar and the second is lunate. In fact, both are lunate.

104. Belousov 2014, 66–67.

(τὰμ<τὰν) in the context of an otherwise Ionic inscription: if πάρμη were a noun, one would expect τὴμ πάρμη(ν).[105] Other articles with feminine nouns in this inscription display normal Ionic forms (τὴν γλῶσσαν, τὴν δύναμιν). In addition, if the presence of τὴν γλῶσσαν is indicative, then we have before us a judicial curse, as has been accepted by all interpreters, and the cursing of a shield (if that were the meaning of πάρμη) would not sit well next to the cursing of the tongue in this context. Finally, while the dropping of final nu is possible, it would be hard to explain why only that word, and not the two other nouns, suffered this loss. I therefore doubt that Belousov's reading is satisfactory. The supposition that a non-Greek word, or a deliberately unintelligible sequence of Greek letters, are to be read in lines 1 and 4 remains, in my view, the best explanation.

Further confirmation of the function of lines 1 and 4 may emerge from the consideration of the structure of the text and its comparison with other curses—especially those from the Black Sea region, as it is likely that similar formularies would have been known and available in the neighboring areas, either because they would have been used by the same itinerant specialists, or because they may have been part of the wider local knowledge, as other items of folklore in regional circulation.

There are four lexical and syntactic categories in our text: a sequence of letters ταμπαρμη; Greek nouns in the accusative preceded by the definite article τὴν γλῶσσαν and τὴν δύναμιν; three personal names in the genitive, of which Ἐπικράτης is widely attested, and Σιττυρᾶς and Θεμιστᾶς known in other regions; conjunction καὶ used three times, as the first word in each of the last three lines of the text. Leaving aside lines 1 and 4, which are least intelligible, we note that the nouns γλῶσσα and δύναμις are common in curses (as in, e.g., **C1**), representing the body parts and bodily power of the person being cursed; these are the body parts/faculties the curse is aiming to incapacitate. The tongue is the sole body part being cursed in a lead *defixio* from the Olbian chora (**Ch-L1**), dated to the end of the 4th/beginning of the 3rd century BCE: [ὅσ]τις πρὸς ἡμᾶς ἐχθρὸς | πάντων τὴν γλῶσαν κα[τα] | γράφω (column IV, lines 19–21). The focus on the tongue as the cursed body part is commonly seen as the indicator of a judicial curse.

The objects of a curse are in the accusative when they are direct objects of the verb of cursing/binding. We may therefore expect such a verb to be either

105. Cf., e.g., the famous Olbian honorific decree for Protegenes, 3rd cent. BCE (*IOSPE* I² 32): A.I τὴμ παρὰ τοῦ πάτρος εὔνοιαν (lines 6–7), τὴμ πόλιν (l. 52), τὴμ Πρωτογένους προθυμίαν (lines 80–81), B.I τὴμ παρώνειαν (l. 16).

written down (e.g., in **C1**, καταδέω, and in **Ch-L1**, κα[τα]γράφω) or implied (e.g., in **L3** and **L11**). A close parallel is a 4th-century curse from Istros (Avram, Chiriac, and Matei 2007, 390, Istros no. 1 = *SEG* 57.665) where speech (literally, "words") and bodily power (*dynamis*) of several persons are cursed. The structure of that curse as a whole is a good parallel for our inscription as it also uses an almost chiastic sequence of personal names and direct objects in repeated sets where personal names are added with conjunction καὶ and the repeated naming of body parts/faculties being cursed is also punctuated with the repetition of καὶ: Γράφω Διογένεος ὄνομα τῶ Ὀνομάστω (καὶ) λόγως τῶς ἐκείνω καὶ | Ἀ(γαθή)νορο(ς) ὄνομα τῶ Διονυσοδώρω καὶ λόγως καὶ δύναμιν | καὶ Ἱέρηκος Λύκ(ε)ω καὶ Ἀρήτω Λύκεω καὶ Πυθοκλήιδεω | τῶ Ξενοφάντω καὶ τῶν συνεπιόντων μετὰ Διογένε[ος] | τῶ Ὀνομάστω παρ' Ἀρι(σ)τόβωλον. As in our Olbian curse, in this Istrian text καὶ δύναμιν appears at the end of the sequence of cursed objects: ὄνομα…(καὶ) λόγως… ὄνομα… καὶ λόγως καὶ δύναμιν. Our Olbian text may appear as an abbreviated, condensed version of the Istrian cursing formula, with the verb of cursing replaced with repeated ταμπαρμη. The date of the Istrian curse is 360–350 BCE. *Dynamis* also appears in another Istrian curse of the second half of the 4th century BCE.[106]

On the basis of these comparanda, we may be quite certain that *dynamis* is a noun and not a name in our text, as was thought by Diehl and Thomsen, corrected by Pfister.[107] Conversely, Stephani, the author of the *editio princeps*, had doubts about θεμιστὰ, viewing it as a noun, not as a personal name. Of the three names, Epikrates is the most common, attested in other Olbian curses (e.g., **L13**, **L15**) and in lapidary inscriptions.[108] Θεμιστᾶς, while known in different parts of the ancient world (Athens, Asia Minor, west coast of Black Sea), is not attested before the 1st century CE.[109] Names formed in the same way as Θεμιστᾶς, that is with the use of suffix -ᾶς, are common in Olbia and its chora in the 4th and 3rd centuries BCE and are attested in curses,[110] e.g., [Ἀ]πολλᾶς (**L2**), Ναννᾶς (**L4**, **Ch-L1**), Βατᾶς (**Ch-L1**). Σιττύρας, if we dis-

106. Avram, Chiriac, and Matei 2007, 411–412, Istros no. 5, line 4.

107. Thomsen 1924; Pfister 1925. If *dynamis* were a personal name, it would be hard to explain a sudden change from the genitive form of names used in lines 2, 5, 6 to the accusative of personal name in line 7.

108. For lapidary examples, see Vinogradov 1994, 107.

109. *LGPN Online* (vols. II, IV, Va) identifies nine individuals, all in epigraphic sources, from CE 46 to at least as late as 256.

110. Dubois (1996, 175, n. 167) and Belousov (2014, 65–66 and n. 1), with further references, comment on the etymology and formation of such names.

regard the difference in accentuation, is attested epigraphically four times in one region (Hypata and the surrounding Aenis, northwest of Malian Gulf, in Spercheios valley) in the 2nd century BCE.[111] Thus, all names can be taken as Greek.

The structure of the curse is compelling. If we identify ταμπαρμη as the word of cursing, then the objects are τὴν γλῶσσαν (line 3) καὶ τὴν δύναμιν (line 7), joined by a conjunction, and the owners of these faculties are expressed in the genitive and also joined by conjunctions: Σιττυρᾶ (line 2) καὶ Θεμιστᾶ (line 5) καὶ Ἐπικράτευς (line 6). The chiastic layout need not be seen as puzzling, since the emotive and affective force of the curse might have been built into the immediate stringing together of the magical action word, the most relevant person, and the most relevant body part. The rest of the content was appropriately added after the repetition of the word of action, as secondary information, but still functionally linked to the basic formula of the first three lines by the use of the accusative and genitive cases, grouped with either the faculties affected or their owners. The stringing of analogous elements is achieved by the conjunction καί. In curses, repetition of certain words is common within one and the same text, and all structurally important elements (verbs of cursing, objects being cursed, and names of the cursed) can be repeated (as, e.g., in **Ch-L1** and in the Istrian curse discussed above). In our Olbian text, the objects (τὴν γλῶσσαν…καὶ τὴν δύναμιν) are not repeated, but connected with καὶ, so if πάρμη were a noun, the repetition of only this one out of the three cursed objects would require yet more special pleading. In light of all the reservations expressed above, the most economic explanation would be to see the asyndetic repetition of ταμπαρμη as indicative of its function as a verb/word of cursing.

Archaeological context

The information about the find spot and archaeological context derives from the excavation report of V. G. Tiesenhausen, submitted to the chairman of the Imperial Archaeological Commission, Count S. G. Stroganov, on 9 October 1873, that is, shortly after the end of the excavation season.[112] The report was

111. Dubois (1996, 175 and n. 168) takes this view. *LGPN Online* (vol. IIIb) identifies four individuals named Σιττύρας (V3b-17238: S. son of Mynnion, V3b-17239: S. son of Moschion, V3b-17240: S. son of Moschion, V3b-17241: S. son of Amphias. Dubois (1996, 175) also draws attention to Σίττυρος, attested in the 4th-century BCE accounts at Epidauros (*IG* IV^2 1, 118; *SEG* 24.277)

112. The archival copy is preserved in the Archive of the Institute of History of Material

published in the Reports of the Archaeological Commission, referenced by Stephani, and quoted by Diehl.[113]

The following descriptions are taken from the original source (archival copy of Tiesenhausen's report). The excavations conducted by Tiesenhausen and his team in 1873 were located to the left and right of the road leading (north–south) from the village of Ilyinskoye-Parutino (on the northern edge of Olbia) to the Wide Gully (marking the south border of the Olbian necropolis). It is impossible to say with precision which of several possible roads is meant, but I have marked probable locations as "**C2**?" along the main such road, on the map in Figure 1. The topographic features that were excavated were described as "smaller tumuli (kurgans) and long mounds, west of the citadel."[114] The report goes on to describe the typology of graves excavated, but does not provide a list of numbered graves or a record of grave goods for each. There instead follows a list of highlights among finds, associated with a long mound: "during the excavation of a mound stretching over all the mentioned graves, in different parts of it, the following were found... a clay bowl with a seven-line Greek inscription on the interior."[115] Despite the vagueness of the details about the find circumstances, we can be certain that the bowl was found not inside a burial and not among the grave goods, but in the topsoil of the mound heaped over a series of burials. The absence of precision regarding the association of tombs and grave goods in the report precludes attempts at using the archaeological context for dating. The find context, however, does resemble that of **C1**.

Culture (Архив Археологической Комиссии, Ф. 1, опись 1, 1873 года, дело №16, листы 21–27) and published as Appendix 1 in Papanova 2006, 223–226.

113. Guédéonow 1876, XXX: "les remblais continus situés à l'ouest de la cité, à droite et à gauche du chemin qui mène du village d'Illinskoïé-Paroutino au sud, dans une vallée d'érosion vulgairement nommée "Chirokaïa-Balka" (le ravin large)… En fouillant le remblai qui recouvrait tous ces tombeaux on découvrit çà et là… une écuelle d'argile avec sept lignes d'inscription grecque en dedans, un grand as olbien avec l'empreinte"). Stephani 1877, 106: "Ausserdem haben diesselben Ausgrabungen eine völlig unverzierte Schale von gelblichem Thon, welche 1 Verschok (0,04 Mètre) hoch ist und 2¾ Verschok (0,12 Mètre) im Durchmesser hat, zu Tage gefördert." Diehl 1923, 226, n. 1.

114. "... мне пришлось ограничиться раскрытием меньших курганов и сплошных насыпей, лежащих к западу от городища, по правую и левую сторону дороги, ведущей из села Ильинского-Парутино к югу, в так называемую "Широкую Балку" (Papanova 2006, 223).

115. "При раскопке насыпи, лежавшей над всеми означенными гробницами, в ней открыты в разных местах… глиняная чашка с начертанною, внутри нее, семистрочной греческой надписью" (Papanova 2006, 224).

(C3)
Bowl, bearing a graffito curse against Herophilos, Athenaios, and seven others

Monument (Fig. 4)
Type: Bowl. **Material**: Clay. **Dimensions**:[116] (my autopsy) Diam. rim 9.2; Diam. rim interior 8.0; H. 3.1; Diam. base 5.8 cm. **Additional description**: Black glaze inside and out; thickened rim, sloping inwards, inturned. Ring foot, concave molding beneath. Reserved: resting surface, junction of foot and wall (partially) and underside with two glazed circles and central dot. "Small bowl: later and light" variety, Sparkes and Talcott 1970, 298, e.g. nos. 872, 876, underside of 867 (see discussion below). Fully restored from eight fragments (found together *in situ*).

Place of origin: Olbia. **Find place**: Olbia, necropolis. **Find context**: Sector "Orient," grid square 28Я (Fig. 1). **Find circumstances**: Found in 2013, excavations of A. S. Ivchenko.
Modern location: Kyiv, Ukraine. **Institution and inventory**. Archaeological Museum, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, O-2013/Некр/156. **Autopsy**: 27 May 2019.

Epigraphic field (Fig. 4)
Position: On the inside of the bowl, along rim, clockwise, two lines. Line 1 is formed by letters running one full concentric circle along the rim. Line 2 begins under the first letter of line 1 and continues in a semicircle closely below it (space between lines c. 0.1–0.3 cm).
Lettering (Fig. 14): Neat and mostly even, allowing for the concave surface. Mostly straight strokes, with very slight bending noticeable in the left vertical of nu and left diagonal of lambda and alpha. Theta with crossbar (in Ἀθηναῖος, the bar is somewhat obscured by the break). Omicron is nearly the same size as other letters. Four-bar sigma with splayed bars. Upsilon with half-height or shorter vertical. Omega with a prominent, slightly pointed dome and wide horizontals.

116. Rusyaeva and Ivchenko (2014a, 152) provide the following: Diam. rim 9.3 cm, Diam. base 3.8 cm, H. 3.25 cm. The biggest discrepancy with my measurements is in Diam. of base (5.8 vs. 3.8 cm). I suspect a typo in their publication, as fig. 1 in Rusyaeva and Ivchenko (2014a, 169) also clearly shows that the base diameter is much wider than half the size of the rim diameter, as would be the case if their published measurements were accurate.

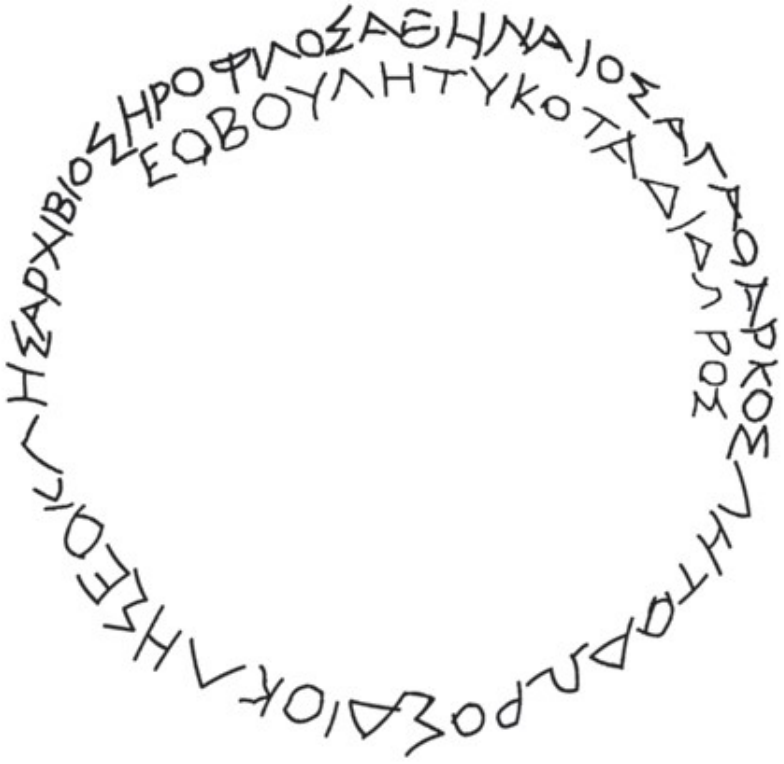

Fig. 14. Drawing of C3.

Letter heights (cm): 0.2–0.4.

Text
Category: Curse.
Date and dating criteria: 400–350 BCE (palaeography, archaeological context).
Editions: Rusyaeva and Ivchenko 2014a, 2014b; *SEG* 64.685.
Discussions: Belousov 2015b; 2016a, 120–121, no. 3; 2018, 162–164, no. 3; 2020, 27-32, no. 6.

Ἡρόφιλος, Ἀθηναῖος, Ἀγάθαρκος, Λητόδωρος, Διοκλῆς,
Εὐκλῆς, Ἀρχίβιος | Εὐβούλη, Τυκοτα, Δι<ό>δωρος.

Translation: Herophilos, Athenaios, Agatharkos, Letodoros, Diokles,
Eokles, Archibios | Eoboule, Tykota, Di<o>doros.

Commentary

Text, category, and date

The inscription consists of nine Greek names, seven male and two female, in the nominative. This is the most common format of curses attested in Olbia (**L1**, **L4**, **L7**, **L8**, **L13**, **L15**, **L16**).[117] Of the names, several have been previously known at Olbia, including lead curses:[118] Herophilos (**L9**, **L12**, **L16**), Athenaios (**L1**, **L4**, **L8**, **Ch-L1**), Agatharkos (**L15 [**Agatharchos], **C4**), and Diokles (**L12**). Since prosopography is not the focus of this study,[119] the feature of interest to us is rather the spelling of the names Εὐκλῆς and Εὐβούλη: a preference here for rendering ευ as εο in the prefix, but not in the stem (Εὐβούλη, cf. **L3**) is indicative of the 4th-century date.[120]

Bowl type and date

Rusyaeva and Ivchenko (2014a, 152 and n. 2) suggest that the cup is an exact analogy to "bowl, incurving rim" type, Sparkes and Talcott 1970, 295, no. 828, pl. 33 (375–350 BCE), and that nos. 831–839, pl. 33 (350–325 BCE) are also similar, but bigger. While the proportions of H. to Diam. (rim) to Diam. (base) of no. 828 are indeed close to our bowl, the latter does not have a very pronounced incurving of the rim; the rim of our bowl is rather rounded, slightly inturned, closer to the profiles of "small bowl: later and light variety," e.g., nos. 858, 860, 872, 876, which range from c. 450 to c. 380 BCE. In addition, we should note the underside of bowls under consideration, which again point away from the "incurving rim" variety. Our underside is an exact parallel to the underside of no. 867 (425–400 BCE), of the "small bowl: later and light variety," illustrated on pl. 33 and described (p. 298) as: "Ring foot, concave moulding beneath… Reserved: resting surface, junction of foot and wall and underside with two glazed circles and central dot." This type of underside is

117. The list can be expanded, if we add the format of curse where a list of names in the nominative, without patronymic, ends with a rounding-up formula "and all others with him" or some variation thereof (**L2**, **L3**, **L11**, **L14**, **Ch-L1**).

118. Detailed discussion of names in Rusyaeva and Ivchenko 2014a, 154–161; 2014b, 67–69; Belousov 2016a, 121, n. 1; 2018, 164, n. 45.

119. Nikolaev (2016, 253–257) analyzes prosopographic data of the text, in comparison to *IOSPE* I^2 201, and suggests the date of 326–312 BCE.

120. Dubois' examples (1996, 183, Appendice Grammatical, §3), *IGDOP* 4, 8, 9, 23, 101, 106, suggest that while in the 5th century, εο was preferred in both prefixial and stem positions, in the 4th century, ευ is more common in the stem, and by the 3rd century ευ is used in both. See also Vinogradov (1994, 106) on ionicisms that disappear from Olbian inscriptions by 300 BCE, cf. Εὔκαρπος in **L9**.

found in "small bowl: later and light variety" down to no. 876 (380 BCE); by contrast, the "incurving rim" variety, including no. 828, typically presents grooved resting surface and nipple on underside, features quite absent in our case. A possibly earlier date for our bowl than that proposed by Rusyaeva and Ivchenko is not in conflict with the 4th-century archaeological context of the findspot and dating of the text, as the bowl may have been in household use for a while before it was inscribed and then deposited in the cemetery.

Archaeological context

The inscribed bowl was discovered in grid square 28Я (Fig. 15), almost on the border with grid square 29Я just to the west.[121] It was found in the course of the excavations of a Roman tomb located in grid square 29Ю, with its dromos stretching N-NW into 29Я (not shown on my map). The bowl was found about 2 m east of the dromos of the Roman tomb, but the proximity of the Roman tomb and the bowl is only circumstantial: the Roman tomb was cut into the space between several earlier tombs, dated between the Archaic and the Hellenistic periods. It is the context of these earlier burials that is significant in the understanding of the circumstances of the inscribed bowl's deposition.

The map (Fig. 15) shows the position of the bowl in relation to these earlier burials, of which the closest are: **П7/2012**, niche burial, disturbed, of late 4th/early 3rd cent. BCE (pottery and coin); **П8/2012**, in grid square 30Я (about 1m W of the Archaic burial), of the late 4th cent. BCE (grave goods included a Heracleian amphora dated to 360–330s BCE, kantharoi of 325–300 BCE, a lekythos of the late 4th/early 3rd cent. BCE); **П10/2013**, in grid square 29Я, about 4 m W-SW of the bowl, of Archaic date; **П1/2015**, in grid square 29Ю, about 4.5 m SW of the bowl, dated to c. 350–300 BCE; **П7А/ 2015**, in grid square 28Ю, about 3–4 m SW of the inscribed bowl, of the second half of the 4th cent. BCE (grave goods included a kantharos of c. 350 BCE and a coin of c. 360 BCE); **П7Б/2015**, in grid square 28Ю, about 3–4 m SW of the inscribed bowl, dated to 325–300 BCE (grave goods included a lekythos of the second half of the 4th cent., saltcellar of c. 350–325 BCE); **П2/2015**, **П7/2015**, **П7a/2015**, **П7b/2015**, a complex of niche burials of the late 4th/early 3rd cent. BCE disturbed by a trench cut by looters.[122] The findspot of the bowl, amid

121. Square grids are 5 x 5 m, oriented to compass points and marked with numbers from east to west (28 is east of 29) and with letters of the Russian alphabet from south to north (Я is north of Ю).

122. I would like to thank the head of excavations at this necropolis site, Andrey Ivchenko,

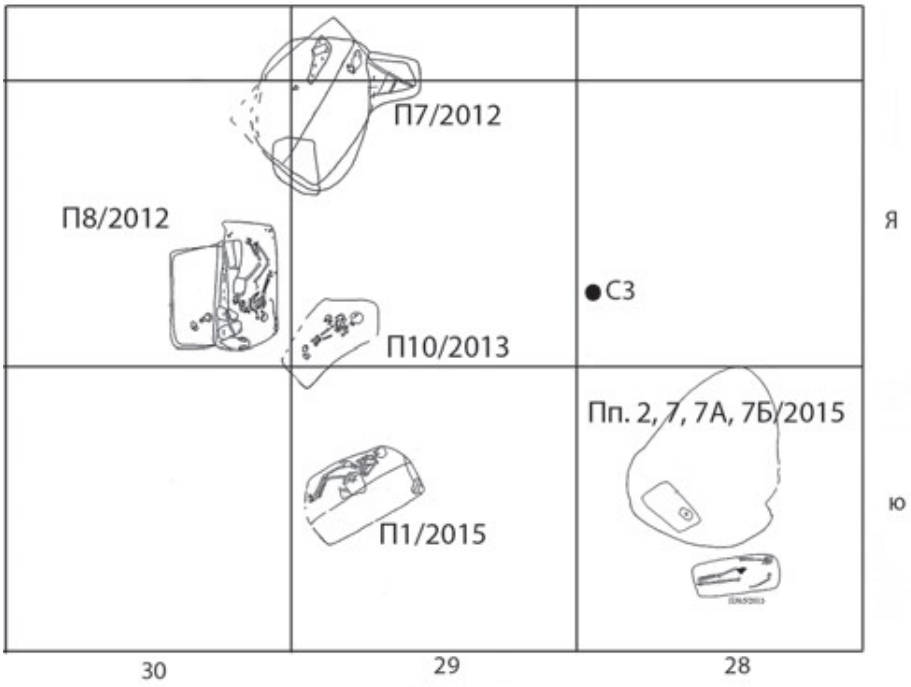

Fig. 15. Find spot of C3. Adapted from the excavation plan (curtesy of A. Ivchenko).

the 4th-century burials, none of which predates 360 or postdates the early 3rd cent. BCE, suggests that this time span should be seen as the indication of the bowl's date of deposition, which is likely to have been close to the timing of the funeral.

Authors of the *editio princeps* note that the bowl was found at the depth of 0.8 m from the modern surface.[123] According to A. Ivchenko, the archaeologist in charge of the excavation, the bowl was not buried in the ground at the time of deposition, but placed on the ground surface in an inverted position and apparently crushed in place, either accidentally or deliberately; if the bowl was not simply left on the surface, it might have been covered or hidden only very slightly, either with grass, turf, or soil in such a way that this covering did not form a traceable layer.[124]

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for supplying the details from his excavation report and field notebooks. A full account of excavations (including identification of burial types and grave goods) awaits publication.

123. Rusyaeva and Ivchenko 2014a, 152; 2014b, 65. Belousov (2016a, 120; 2018, 162) repeats their information.

124. A. Ivchenko (pers. comm., 2019).

The excavation report adds further important details of the find circumstances.[125] Within the distance of 0.25 m, and in the same layer, a lead tablet was found, broken in two fragments placed one on top of the other and then folded in half. The text can be identified as a curse (**L19**, Appendices 1 and 2), and a preliminary assessment based on photographs shows that the tablet contains personal names in the nominative, while the letter forms and dialectal features suggest a 4th-century date. The names are not the same as on **C3**, so the two objects inscribed with curses are not duplicates in different media. Their proximity, however, suggests that perhaps the same opportunity (a burial of a recently deceased person) invited the action on the part of two different individuals who each had a list of their own opponents to curse. We also cannot rule out the possibility that one and the same individual cursed two groups of people,[126] using different media, for some special reason. The lettering of **C3** and **L19** is quite similar. Notable also, as with **C3**, is the deposition of this lead tablet in proximity to, but not within, a grave.

(C4)
Ceramic lid, bearing a dipinto curse against several people

Monument (Fig. 5)
Type: Lid. **Material**: Clay. **Dimensions**: Diam. rim 15.3; H. 3.8; Diam. knob 3.4 cm. **Additional description**: Conical shape with slight flaring of the edges; exterior is a tiered slope from flattened top under the knob to slightly convex middle to flattened, flaring rim; interior is a plain inverted cone. Inverted cone knob, with concave depression and undercutting. Light clay, with large inclusions. Yellowish slip. Fully preserved.

Place of origin: Olbia. **Find place**: Olbia, on the border with necropolis.[127] **Find context**: West of the Citadel, western plateau of the Hares' Gully, Hill

125. A. Ivchenko kindly provided me with the report. These details are also briefly noted in Rusyaeva and Ivchenko 2014a, 162; 2014b, 70.

126. Cf. two lead *defixiones* apparently deposited together in the same spot, written by the same hand but cursing different individuals (although possibly related), found just outside the wall of an ancient farmhouse in Western Crimea and dated c. 320–270 BCE (Stolba 2016).

127. Kozub (2001, 34) identifies the site as "a cultic area*" near* the suburb, but not inside it: no relevant artifacts were found in the area that could suggest residential occupation or any form of productive use; rather, the so-called cultural layer is entirely absent. Khmelevsky

"alpha," North Promontory 2[128] (Fig. 1). A ritual site with two monolithic altars and several deposits, consisting of ceramic and metal objects. The lid was located next to the monolithic limestone altar N1 (Khmelevsky 2017, 124, fig. 3:1), together with a lead labris, lead bucranium, and a kalpis jar (see commentary below).[129] **Find circumstances**: Found in 2000, excavations of Y. Kozub.

Modern location: Kyiv, Ukraine. **Institution and inventory**. Archaeological Museum, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, O-2000/Некр/198. **Autopsy**: 27 May 2019.

Epigraphic field. Inside and outside.
Position: Entire surfaces, with lines of text arranged in concentric circles parallel to the rim, with possibly spiraling layout closer to the center. The direction of writing varies within lines and from line to line.
Lettering: Dipinto. Flowing, curvy letter strokes, broad shapes. No cursive forms. Omicron is nearly the same size as other letters. Omega with domed loop and possibly with a shallow peaked loop. Lunate sigma throughout.
Letter heights (cm): 1.0–2.0.

Text
Category: Curse.
Date and dating criteria. late 4th - early 3rd cent. BCE (palaeography, archaeological context).
Editions. Unpublished.[130]

Commentary
Text
While the full publication of this inscription and its archaeological context is in preparation by the present author, a few observations can be made in the context of this discussion. On the basis of a preliminary study, it is possible to say that at least part of the text contains personal names in the genitive, e.g., on the interior surface, in the outer circle along the rim (Ἀγαθάρκου), and in

(2017, 125) associates the site with the necropolis, arguing that the date of the associated objects (c. 325–early 3rd cent. BCE) precludes its identification with the suburb as the latter had ceased to exist by then.

128. Cf. map in Khmelevsky 2016, 174, fig. 1.

129. Information is derived from Kozub 2001, 34.

130. The object is mentioned in Kozub 2001, 34; Rusyaeva and Ivchenko 2014a, 163; 2014b, 71.

the middle circle (Ἀντιφῶντος). The former is attested in Olbia, including curses,[131] while the latter is not attested in Olbia or elsewhere in the Black Sea region until the 1st century CE, but this might be due to the vagaries of preservation, as it is attested in other Ionian cities in the Classical period (Miletos, Erythrai, 4th century BCE).[132]

Ceramic shape

The shape of our lid requires a vessel with an interior flange. It closely resembles lids of Hellenistic Attic lopadia, although they are generally smaller, with Diam. range of 8.0–10.5 cm. The shape of Rotroff 1997, 387–388, no. 1487 (Diam. 10.0 cm, 325–300 BCE) is particularly close. Other possible parallels are Hellenistic Attic "covered bowls," their Diam. ranging from 12 to15 cm, although their lids typically are more convex than ours (cf. Rotroff 1997, 388–389, nos. 1492–1499). Both these shapes are associated with special deposits, the so-called saucer pyres, which, in at least two cases, have been used as contexts for cursing.[133] Before pronouncing final judgment on the relationship of our lid to Attic examples, it would be necessary to consider also local and regional comparanda.[134]

Archaeological context

The site is not fully published and requires further study. The context is quite complex, and here I will only highlight some of its features relevant to the

131. Ἀγάθαρκος = Ἀγάθαρχος: Dubois (*IGDOP*, p. 65) identifies dissimilation of aspirates here. *LGPN Online*, s.v. Ἀγάθαρχος, lists 133 individuals. In Olbia, the name is attested on curses **L15** (= *SEG* 57.748, Ἀγάθαρχος), **C3** (= *SEG* 64.685, Ἀγάθαρκος), in a lead letter of Artikon (*IGDOP* 25, Ἀγάθαρκος = *LGPN Online* V4-15034, and on a vase (*LGPN Online* V4-15035, Ἀγάθαρχος).

132. *LGPN* lists 6 individuals at Olbia bearing the name Ἀντιφῶν, the ealiest (V4–15612) in the 1st century CE; at Miletos, c. 334–330 BCE (*LGPN Online* V5b-15110), at Erythrai, 4th–3rd century BCE (*LGPN Online* V5a-24931).

133. See Lamont (Chapter 3 in this volume); Jordan and Rotroff 1999. Examples of lopadia in pyres, with good illustrations: Lopadia with lids: e.g., Rotroff 2013, 99, Pyre 1 (315 BCE), fig. 17 (lopadia P 28560, 28561); 146, Pyre 36 (Poros Building, Industrial District, 315–300 BCE), fig. 74 (lopadion P 20147); 176, Pyre 62 (South of the Agora square, 300–290 BCE), fig. 114 (lopadion lid P 28497); 112, Pyre 9 (c. 275 BCE), fig. 34 (lopadion lid P 33607); 114, Pyre 12 (310–300 BCE), figs. 37, 38 (lopadion P 32619); 124, Pyre 21 (Kolonos Agoraios), fig. 51 (lopadion with lid P 9724). Unpaired lids (lids without pots) are sometimes also found in pyres, and may have been used us saucers: see, e.g., Rotroff 2013, 121, fig. 48, five unpaired lopadion lids in Pyre 19 (270–265 BCE).

134. Krapivina 2006b, 188, figs. 203, 205.

subject matter of the present article, based on Kozub 2001. The site is located on the North Promontory 2 of the plateau on the west side of Hares' Gully, opposite northwest corner of the citadel of Olbia (Fig. 1). No major architectural features, such as walls or buildings, are reported from the site, so it can fairly be identified as an open-air cult site.

The main feature of this cultic complex is Built Altar no. 2, a square (0.80 x 0.82 m) construction of limestone slabs of various sizes, tightly fitted together, of which three sides survive (the west side is missing). The interior of the altar is a flat platform, made from a layer of pressed yellow clay, with tiny coals imbedded in the surface. Two lead bucrania and two lead labris heads were found directly on top of the altar. Two more fused bucrania were at the south side of the altar, as well as shapeless fragments of lead tablets. Under the altar, at a depth of 0.3–0.45 m below the modern surface, remains of a sacrifice (no further details in Kozub 2001) were detected occupying an area of 0.52 x 0.42 m. On top of the sacrifice, a shattered greyware fishplate was placed bottom up. Immediately below the fishplate were rims of two black-gloss cups and the lower parts of four fragmented redware vessels of uncertain shape. Another kylix is reported as having been placed bottom up, but its position in this complex is unclear.

South of Built Altar no. 2, at a distance of 1.2 m, a red-figure pelike, with its bottom carefully knocked out, was placed into the ground as what Kozub identified as a kind of bothros. A miniature cubical limestone altar was in the immediate vicinity of Built Altar no. 2 and the pelike. Further south, at a distance of 4–7.5 m from Built Altar no. 2, two reservoirs were found (no. 1: 2.7 x 1.5 x 0.7 m; no. 2: 2.63 x 1.26 x 0.38 m) dug into the ground, with walls thickly covered with clay that showed signs of prolonged exposure to intense fire and heat. The fill of the reservoirs was soft ash and coals, with fragments of alabastra, small bronze nails, and small decorative carved-bone plaques. At a distance of 1.5–2 m northeast of Built Altar no. 2, in the layer that contained virtually no other finds,[135] four folded sheets of lead were discovered (**L(d)1**, **L(d)2**, **L(d)3**, **L(d)4**).

At the same site (with unclear topographic connection to Built Altar no. 2), two monolithic Limestone Altars were found. Monolithic Altar 1 (0.7 x 0.52 x 0.15 m) had a circular depression (Diam. 0.1 m) on the top surface. Next to Monolithic Altar 1 was another limestone slab, Monolithic Altar 2 (0.5 x 0.36 x 0.11 m), framed on three sides by an area paved with fragments of

135. Khmelevsky 2017, 124.

ceramics and animal bones. Underneath this altar, at a depth of 0.75 m, there was a fragmented red-figure krater, with deposits of other broken and intact pottery nearby. On the north side and underneath Monolithic Altar 1, the following were found: fragmented miniature kalpis with black-figure geometric ornament, red-figure fragments, and a fragment of a terracotta protome of uncertain type. Underneath the altar were fragments of a redware thin-walled vessel. At a short distance from Monolithic Altar 1 was a group of lead objects: lead tablets **L(d)5** and **L(d)6**, lead bucranium and lead labris, and also our inscribed ceramic lid **C4**.

The presence of altars, animal bones, and ritual deposits strongly suggests that this was a cultic site, but its specific function is as yet unclear. Further study of the relevant excavation reports and material remains is needed and being planned.

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Chapter 7

The Shrines of Heroes as a Context for Curse Tablets

Jorge J. Bravo III

Abstract: To what extent were hero shrines considered suitable places to deposit curse tablets in Classical and Hellenistic Greece? Curse tablets were frequently deposited in chthonic sanctuaries and graves, but only rarely have archaeologists found them in hero shrines, despite the chthonic nature of heroes and the common association of their shrines with graves. To date, only two hero shrines have produced curse tablets: the Heroön of Opheltes at Nemea and the Sanctuary of Pankrates and Palaimon in Athens. A review of the tablets from these two locations illustrates a heterogeneity in the nature of their curses while also demonstrating the many traits they share with curse tablets from other contexts. Nothing in either the treatment of the tablets or the texts they contain points to a special relationship between heroes and curses. Instead, other factors may explain the choice to deposit curse tablets in these shrines. In particular, the mythic narratives associated with the figures worshipped therein may have been decisive. Both Opheltes and Palaimon were portrayed as *aōroi* and *biaiothanatoi*, individuals who died untimely and violent deaths, and so belonged to categories of the dead that were considered to have a special efficacy for curses and other forms of magic.

Key Words: hero cult, hero shrine, chthonic, curse tablet, Opheltes, Palaimon, Melikertes, *aōroi*, *biaiothanatoi*, mythic narrative

One of the patterns that has emerged from the study of curse tablets in the Greco-Roman world is that their findspots cluster in distinct locations. It is well known that they are frequently found in or near graves, especially in the Classical era, and that the sanctuaries of chthonic divinities, Demeter in particular, have yielded a large number. Finally, curse tablets of the Roman period have also been found in springs or wells. If there is one common characteristic all these sources share, it is that, as Fritz Graf notes, they provide "contact with the subterranean world". [1]

1. Graf 1997, 127 (quotation) with n. 26, and 134. The examples of mortuary contexts are

This chapter addresses the question of whether we should also expect to find curse tablets in hero shrines. Based on the contexts just described, such an expectation might seem doubly justified; in light of the traditional categorization of heroes as chthonic powers, in contrast to the Olympian gods, we might expect their shrines to be a natural choice of location for depositing a curse tablet.[2] Furthermore, since ancient literary sources make clear that Greek hero shrines were often sited at what was believed to be the hero's tomb, one might expect the same logic to apply to a hero shrine that we see at work in the choice to bury a curse tablet in graves of the ordinary deceased.[3]

The archaeological record is surprising, however, for in fact the discovery of curse tablets in a hero shrine seems exceedingly rare, based on the present state of our knowledge. To be sure, the number of excavated hero shrines is very small in comparison to the number of excavated graves, but it is not negligible. The identification of a hero shrine in the archaeological record, admittedly, can be tricky, but Anne Pariente, in the course of studying the remains of a shrine at Argos dedicated to the Seven against Thebes, proceeded to catalogue 32 examples of archaeologically documented hero shrines, and even her list could be augmented.[4] Yet to my knowledge, only two have produced curse tablets, all seemingly of Late Classical to Hellenistic date.

In the following pages I will present the context of these two shrines and examine the tablets found within them. In addition to describing the features of the inscribed curses I will consider how those from the two shrines compare to one another and to those found in the other common contexts to which Classical and Hellenistic curse tablets belong. I will then return to the question of the

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too numerous to list but include tablets from the Kerameikos cemetery in Athens, from the Koutsongila cemetery of Kenchreai (see Faraone and Rife 2007), and from Olbia (see Bravo 1987, discussed further below). Examples from the sanctuary context include the Sanctuary of Demeter, Kore, and Plouton at Cnidus; the Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Corinth; the Sanctuary of Demeter Malophoros at Selinous; the Sanctuary of Demeter at Mytilene; the Sanctuary of Minerva Sulis at Bath, England; and the Temple of Mercury at Uley, England. For examples from wells, see, e.g., Jordan 1985, on tablets from a well in the Athenian Agora.

2. On the traditional characterization of heroes as chthonic, see Ekroth 2009, 131. As she comments, however, scholars have increasingly disputed the validity of a strict Olympian-chthonic binary in Greek religion, particularly in regard to hero cult and animal sacrifice. See further Ekroth 2002, esp. 15–16, 212–213; 2007; Parker 2011, Appendix 4; Polinskaya 2013, 63–64, 78–80.

3. On the association of hero shrines with their graves, see Ekroth 2009, 123–125.

4. Pariente 1992, 204–211. On the difficulties of identifying hero shrines in the archaeological record, see Ekroth 2009, 122–124.

relationship between heroes, the ordinary dead, and the magic of curses, and finally consider what factors other than the presence of a hero shrine might account for the deposition of curse tablets in these locations.

The first hero shrine to be considered is the Shrine of Opheltes, located in the southwestern part of the Sanctuary of Zeus at Nemea (Fig. 1). The cult of the child hero Opheltes played an important role from the Archaic to the Early Hellenistic period, when the Nemean Games were held in the sanctuary, as the Games were believed to have originated as funeral games in honor of the slain hero—a connection made explicit in numerous ancient literary sources and artistic representations. The shrine thus marked the location of his grave and served as the focal point of his cult, which entailed burnt animal sacrifice, libations, and small votive offerings, as excavation made abundantly clear.[5]

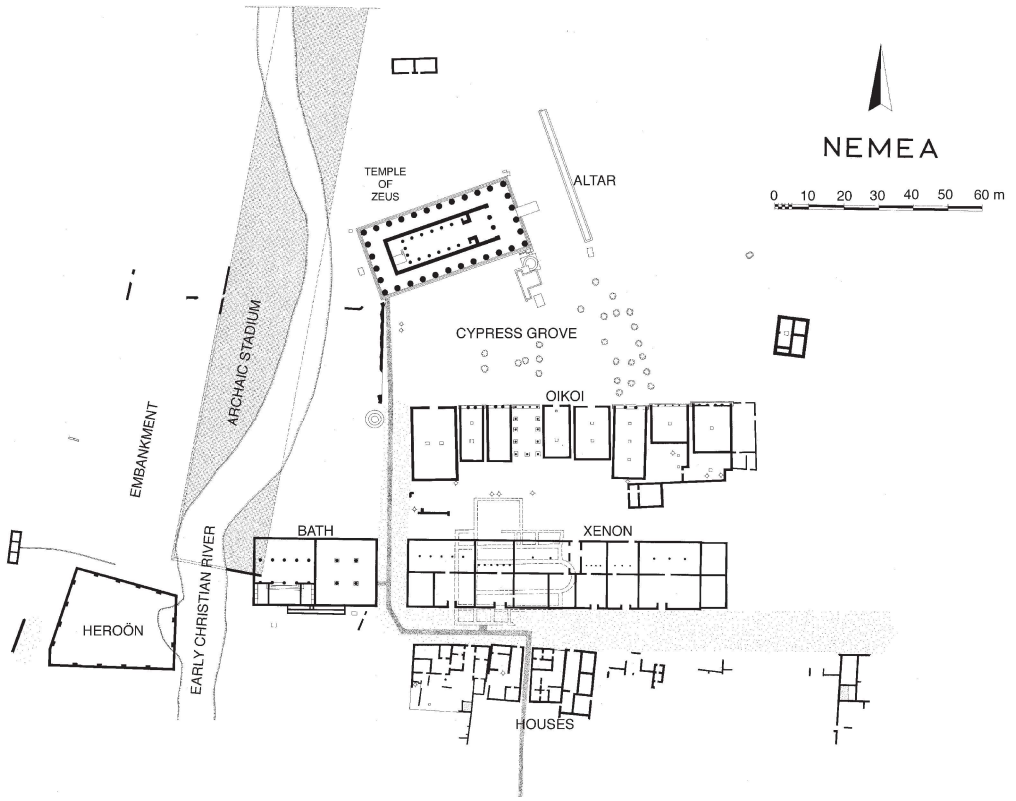

Fig. 1. Restored plan of the Sanctuary of Zeus at Nemea. Courtesy of the University of California, Berkeley, Nemea Excavation Archives, no. PD 03.1 (with enhancements by J. Bravo).

5. See now Bravo 2018, esp. 3–78 on the physical remains of the shrine and their interpretation. The summary presented here is derived from this study.

Constructed in the second quarter of the 6th century BCE, the shrine had the shape of a broad, low earthen mound elevated 1.5 to 2 meters above the surrounding terrain on its south, west, and east sides. To the north it was attached to the end of a long earthen embankment that served as the viewing area on one side of the Archaic stadium track used in celebration of the athletic festival. The state plan of the shrine illustrates that stone rubble lined much of the perimeter of the mound, and the principal feature on the surface of the mound, marked out in solid black, was a construction of large unworked conglomerate stones (Fig. 2). It was in the vicinity of this feature, particularly to the south of it, that the greatest concentration of ash, burnt bone, pottery, and other votive material was found, suggesting that it served as a focal point of the ritual activity in the shrine. It may thus be identified as the marker of the tomb of Opheltes, a feature reported by Pausanias (2.15) when he visited Nemea in the second century CE. In the early 3rd century BCE the shrine received a new enclosure wall built of poros foundation blocks and a superstructure of conglomerate blocks, a portion of which survives today. By the end of the second quarter of the 3rd century, however, the shrine fell into disuse, along with the rest of the Sanctuary of Zeus, when the Nemean Games were moved to the urban center of Argos, the polis that administered the festival.

Among the material recovered from within the hero shrine were seven folded or rolled lead tablets, four of which turned out to bear legible inscribed curses in differing states of preservation.[6] What is more, two of the tablets from the shrine preserve a distinct pattern of holes resulting from being punctured with nails after folding. John Gager, among others, sees this act as deriving from a performative analogy between the use of nails for fastening and the binding or coercive force of the curses.[7] Or, as Esther Eidinow describes it, the nailing of the tablet was a "ritual reinforcement" of the idea of control expressed by the verb of binding.[8] The other three lead tablets are probably curse tablets as well, as suggested by the fact that each has one or two evident nail holes, and proper conservation and study may one day reveal their texts.

6. See Bravo 2016 for a study of the four legible tablets. The study reappears in Bravo 2018, 297–321, with additional details about the fourth tablet, which proved extremely fragile upon opening and now consists of more than 30 fragments.

7. Gager 1992, 18. In some instances the tablets are found with the nails still in them. See also Graf (1997, 135), who notes that the act of nailing can also appear in the text of a curse (e.g., *DT* 49).

8. Eidinow 2013, 149.

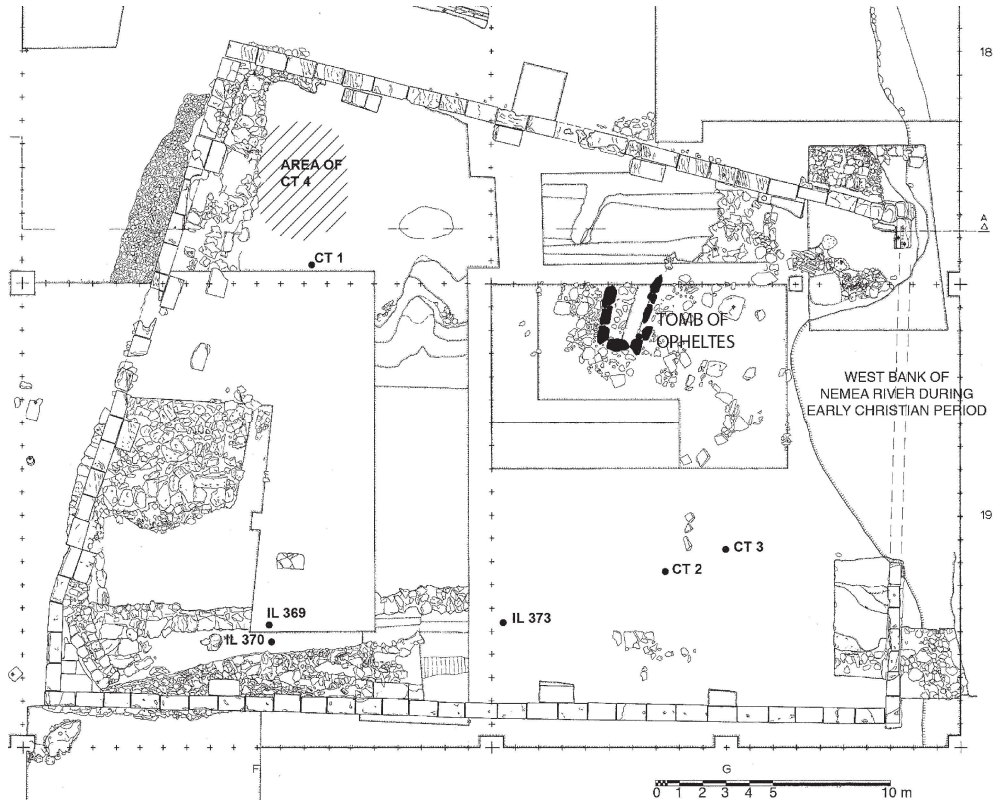

Fig. 2. State plan of the Hero Shrine of Opheltes at Nemea, with the location of lead tablets indicated. Courtesy of the University of California, Berkeley, Nemea Excavation Archives, no. PD 03.2 (with enhancements by J. Bravo).

All seven of the lead tablets from the Heroön originate from within the area of its Early Hellenistic enclosure wall. In Figure 2, the four legible curse tablets are labeled CT 1–4, corresponding to their numbering in Bravo 2016, and the other three tablets are labeled with their Nemea inventory numbers, IL 369, IL 370, and IL 373. Because Tablet 4 was only discovered during the processing of the context pottery and its exact findspot is unknown, the area indicated in Figure 2 represents the excavated layer from which the tablet came. With regard to the date of the tablets, the archaeological context unfortunately provides no stratigraphical basis for determining whether they were written and deposited in the shrine during the centuries when it supported an active cult, or at some later time before Late Antiquity, when a community of farmers began churning up the debris that had accumulated over the shrine's surface.[9]

9. On the ambiguity of the stratigraphy, see Bravo 2016, 125–126. This corrects the claim

The internal evidence of the tablets themselves sheds more light on the question of their date. The letter forms on all four tablets are cursive, consistently featuring the lunate sigma, lunate epsilon, and lowercase omega. While these forms do appear already in the 4th century BCE, the complete absence from our texts of the earlier forms of these letters does suggest a more advanced date, and thus it is much more likely that the tablets were deposited after the Heroön went out of use. On the other hand, the relatively straightforward syntax of the curses finds fewer parallels in Imperial times. Thus a date in the Hellenistic period is on balance more likely.[10] Additionally, although all four tablets are written in the Doric dialect and share basic similarities in their syntax, vocabulary, and theme, it is nevertheless apparent that different hands were at work in inscribing them. Hence, it is impossible to know how far apart in date the tablets are from one another.

The constraints upon victims that the curse tablets invoke pertain to a wide range of human affairs. On a fundamental level, however, they are usually agonistic in nature, as Christopher Faraone has observed; the curser often seeks to profit at the expense of one or more perceived opponents or rivals within spheres of competition such as court cases, athletics, commerce, and love.[11] The curse tablets from the Heroön are of the last variety. The erotic context can be likened to a typical love triangle, in which the individual who resorts to this kind of magic seeks to free or protect a love interest from the affections of a rival, real or potential.[12]

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in the preliminary excavation reports that the tablets could be dated stratigraphically to the 4th century BCE. On the Early Christian community of farmers and their effects on the stratigraphy of the hero shrine, see Bravo 2018, 75.

10. Bravo 2016, 126.

11. Faraone 1991, 10–17; Graf 1997, 152–161. More recently Eidinow has expressed unease with this characterization and the classification of the curses into different arenas of rivalry and competition; she proposes seeing the curses instead as responding to various socially constructed forms of risk: Eidinow 2013, *passim*, esp. 11–25, 158–159, 229–241.

12. Love triangles: Faraone 1991, 13; but see also Jordan 1985, 222-223 and Gager 1992, 79–80, on the variety of amatory situations. In later periods spells to attract lovers also become more common. Eidinow 2013, 210–216, discussing the difficulty with the classification of these curses in light of the widely varying and often ambiguous situations involved, prefers to call them “relationship curses” instead.

In Tablet 1 (Fig. 3), the two lovers whom the curser wishes to drive apart are a woman named Euboula and a man named Aineas:

1 ἀποc{c}τρέφω Εὐβούλαν
ἀπὸ Αἰνέα, ἀπὸ τοῦ̣
προcώπου̣, ἀπὸ τῶν ὀ[φ-
θαλμῶν, ἀπὸ τοῦ cτόμ[α-
5 τος̣, ἀπὸ τῶν τιθθί<ω>ν,
ἀπὸ τᾶc ψυχᾶc,
ἀπὸ̣ τᾶc γαcτρ̣ός̣, ἀπ̣ὸ
τ]οῦ [ψ]ωλ̣ί̣ου, ἀπὸ τοῦ πρω-
κ̣τοῦ̣, ἀφ᾽ ὅ̣λου τοῦ cώμα-
10 τος̣. ἀποστρέφω Εὐβού-
λαν ἀπ᾽ Αἰνέα.

I turn Euboula away from Aineas: from his face, from his eyes, from his mouth, from his chest, from his soul, from his belly, from his erect penis, from his anus, from all his body. I turn Euboula away from Aineas.

The curse begins with the operative verb of the tablet, ἀποστρέφω, "I turn away," and continues, starting in line 2, with a list of the parts of Aineas' body away from which the curser wants to turn Euboula. The curse concludes with a restatement of the opening wish in ring composition. The emphasis that this device creates through repetition, particularly of the operative verb, qualifies the ending of the text as an example of "emphatic summary" found in many curses.[13]

13. Bravo 2016, 131.

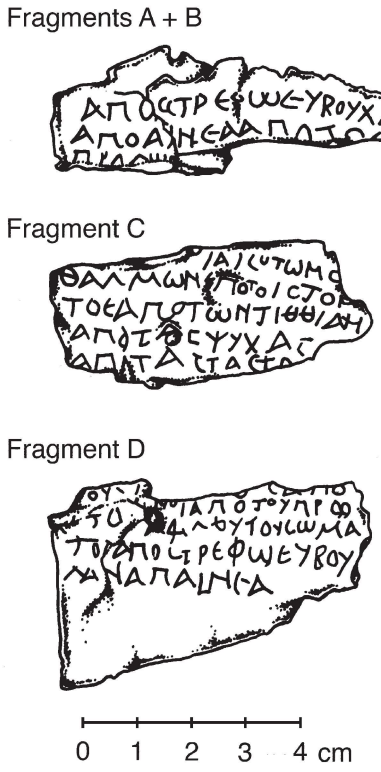

Fig. 3. Drawing of curse tablet (= Bravo 2016, no. 1) from the Shrine of Opheltes. Courtesy of the University of California, Berkeley, Nemea Excavation Archives, no. PD 02.8 (with enhancements by J. Bravo).

The curse of Tablet 2 (Fig. 4) likewise seeks to separate two lovers, in this instance a male Diodoros and female Artemidora, but the syntax of the tablet differs somewhat:

1 κατα-
δίδεμι
Διοδώρ̣-
ου τὰν̣
5 κεφαλὰ-
ν ἀποστ-
ραφῆμ̣-
εν ἀπ᾽ Ἀ-
ρ̣τεμιδώ-
10 ρ̣ας, τὸ μέ̣-
τ̣ωπον̣,
τοὺς ὀφθ-

αλμούς,
τ]ὰ <ῶ>τα, τὸ
στόμα, τ-
ὸ γένε<ι>ον,
τὰ γυῖα.
καταδίδ<ε>μ[ι
τ̣ὰν ψυχ-
ἀ̣ν Διοδώ-
ρ]ο̣υ ἀποστρ-
α̣φῆμεν ἀ-
π᾽ Ἀρτεμιδ-
ώρας, τάν
γ̣αστέρα, τὸ
σ]ῶμα, τὸ ψ̣-
ωλίον, τὰ
σ̣κέλη, το-
ὺ̣ς πόδας.
κ̣αταδίδε-
μι ΤΦΛΙΑ
τὰν ἀγ̣ά̣-
παν μισ̣-
ῆσαι . . [- - - -]
. CωT . . . [- - - -]
ᵛᵛ C ᵛᵛ [- - - -]

I bind the head of Diodoros to be turned away from Artemidora, his forehead, his eyes, his ears, his mouth, his chin, his arms. I bind the soul of Diodoros to be turned away from Artemidora, his belly, his body, his erect penis, his legs, his feet. I bind [his affection?], his love to hate [her?] . . . .

Here the operative verb is καταδίδεμι, a variant spelling of καταδίδημι, which is an athematic form of Attic καταδῶ, "I bind." In many curse tablets this verb is used in an absolute sense with the victim's name, body parts, faculties, and/or activities as direct objects, but occasionally the syntax is expanded to include the expression of a desired outcome. In this text the verb and its objects are paired with an object infinitive to express purpose: in lines 6–8 and again in lines 21–22 the infinitive is ἀποστραφῆμεν, the Doric form of

the aorist passive infinitive of ἀποστρέφω, the same verb we see in Tablet 1. The bulk of the text presents a list, beginning with Diodoros' head, of the 13 parts of his body that the curser binds to be turned away from Artemidora. The curse concludes, so far as can be read, with another kind of emphatic coda. The operative verb is once more paired with a complementary infinitive, μισῆσαι, "to hate," so that the focus shifts from body parts to emotions. I have suggested reading the intended words τ<ὴν> φ<ι>λία<ν>, "fondness, affection" in the preserved letters of line 31, so that Diodoros' affection and love are being bound to hate Artemidora.[14] Judging by the appearance of similar words on the more fragmentary Tablets 3 and 4 from the Shrine of Opheltes, it appears that they too are erotic curses employing similar syntax and rhetorical structures.[15]

The Nemean curses are notable for their use of the verb ἀποστρέφω, which appears in other tablets as well as papyri and amulets, and is the subject of an excellent study by Chris Faraone. He concludes that this verb is used in two distinct senses in the magical texts. In early curses, he notes, it is used with an absolute and physical sense of twisting back, and thus incapacitating, opponents or their body parts, an action that is thus analogous to the many lead magical figurines or dolls in which a figure's body parts are twisted back—analogous too, I would add, to the incapacitation expressed by verbs of binding as well as the physical deformation of the lead tablet through folding or rolling and piercing it with a nail. A second, later usage of the verb, which appears by the Roman period, sees it take on an avertive or apotropaic sense, and can often be translated "turn away." On many magical amulets, for example, the verb is part of an incantation to turn away bad things from the possessor, such as a disease or a storm.[16] The other notable aspect of the tablets from the shrine of Opheltes is the extensive listing of body parts, conforming to what Henk Versnel has called "anatomical curses," in which the list aims to be more comprehensive in describing the cursed individual.[17] The effect is to register a heightened sense of emotional reaction to the named victim, and often the curse entails an expressed desire for the victim to suffer. "Anatomical curses," Versnel argues, are to be distinguished in aim and motivation from "instrumental curses," which list only those parts of the body that logically must be checked in order to accomplish the curse, for instance binding a litigant's mind and mouth or an athlete's hands and feet.

14. Bravo 2016, 135–137.

15. On these two tablets, see Bravo 2016, 137–144; 2018, 307–316.

16. Faraone 2005. See 31–40, on the two distinct senses of ἀποστρέφω summarized here.

17. Versnel 1998.

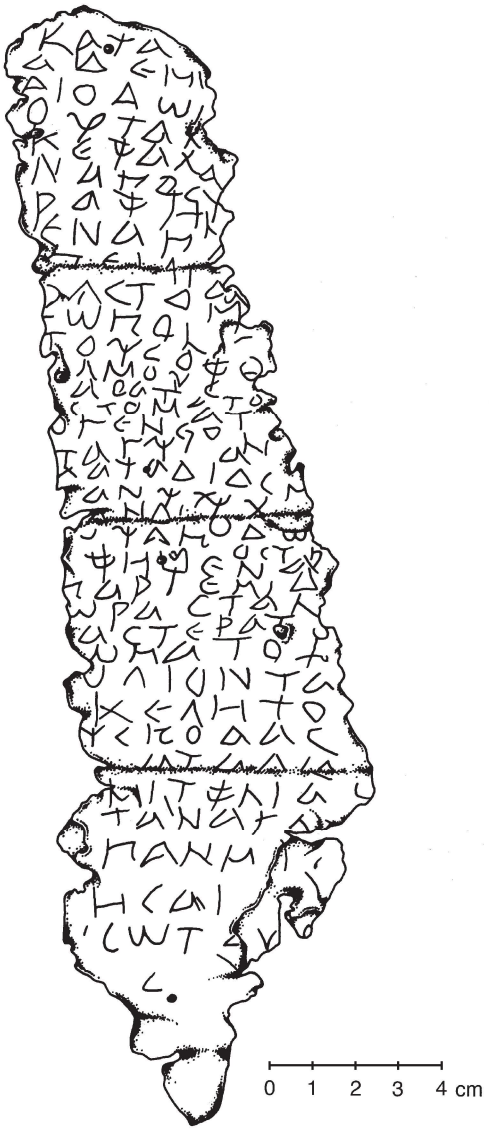

Fig. 4. Drawing of curse tablet (= Bravo 2016, no. 2) from the Shrine of Opheltes. Courtesy of the University of California, Berkeley, Nemea Excavation Archives, no. PD 02.9 (with enhancements by J. Bravo).

I argue elsewhere that both of these features lead to an ambiguity that makes it difficult for us as readers to know the exact intention of the curser, namely, which person named in the tablets is the one the curser desires.[18] Despite this rhetorical uncertainty, it remains clear that the curses from the Shrine of Opheltes employ various techniques of coercive and analogical magic, and that these techniques are not unique, but rather find parallels in tablets from

18. Bravo 2016, 145–148.

other contexts of Classical and Hellenistic date as well. Moreover, it bears pointing out that there is nothing explicit in the texts themselves that acknowledges the context of their deposition within a hero shrine. There is, however, a possible *implicit* reference to the hero Opheltes, to be discussed below.

Aside from these tablets from Nemea, the only other curse tablet that, to my knowledge, possibly originates from a hero shrine is a tablet given preliminary publication by David Jordan in 2008, in a festschrift honoring the memory of Michael Jameson.[19] The tablet was found in Athens in the Sanctuary of Pankrates, which was excavated in the 1950s by Greek archaeologists Ioannis Miliadis and Spyridon Iakovidis. Unfortunately, the excavations received only preliminary publication, and a planned final publication of the sanctuary under the direction of Athena Kalogeropoulou was interrupted by her death in 2004.

The sanctuary resembles a small, open-air court with rock-cut terraces or steps and the remains of an altar and small enclosure near a natural cleft in the ground. In addition to the tablet, a series of sculpted and inscribed votive reliefs of Late Classical to Hellenistic date were also found in the shrine and have been published by Eugenia Vikela.[20] These suggest that not one but two figures were worshipped in the shrine. One, portrayed as an older, bearded male, usually holding a cornucopia, seems to be named variously as Pankrates, Plouton, Palaimon, or Theos in the accompanying inscriptions. The second, shown as a younger male, is named either Pankrates or Herakles Pankrates. He is frequently depicted wearing a lion skin, the conventional attribute of Herakles, and sometimes a club is present as well.

Accordingly, although Jordan describes the shrine as "sacred to two heroes, Pankrates and Palaimon",[21] we cannot in fact be sure whether the shrine should be counted as a hero shrine, a shrine to chthonic divinities, or perhaps a combination. Herakles Pankrates and Palaimon are both the names of heroes, the latter being best known for his cult at the Sanctuary of Poseidon at the Isthmus of Corinth; but Plouton and Theos are certainly not heroes, and Robert Parker has also noted that the name Pankrates itself, like the attribute of the cornucopia, can be associated with Zeus as well.[22] Perhaps the final publication of the sanctuary remains could bring some resolution to this question.

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19. Jordan 2008. The tablet also received brief description as no. 14 in Jordan's earlier corpus, *NGCT* (Jordan 2000).

20. Vikela 1994, 1–9, for a description of the excavated remains and summary of the types of the votive reliefs.

21. Jordan 2008, 134.

22. Parker 2005, 421. For Palaimon, see further below.

Setting aside for the moment the question of whether the ancient Greeks considered the sanctuary a hero shrine, let us look to the contents of the tablet itself, which was found rolled up and pierced with a nail. Its inscribed text is fairly well preserved, apart from some damage along the tablet's edges, and on the basis of its letter forms, Jordan suggests a date for the tablet in the later 4th century BCE (Fig. 5). The curse deals with another agonistic sphere commonly seen in the curse tablets: the court case. As the text makes clear, the curser directs his curse against a principal opponent named Aristophanes, as well as a list of other men who may be co-litigants or witnesses:

1 Καταδῶ πρὸς τ̣[ὸν Π]α̣λαίμονα Ἀρισ-
τοφάνην κα̣ὶ Ἀ̣ρίσταρχον καὶ Κηφ-
ισοφῶντα κ̣αὶ Κηφισόδοτον καὶ Ἐπί-
κουρον κ̣αὶ Ἀλέξα<ν>δρον καὶ Ἀλεξία-
5 ν, καὶ δέομαί σου, ὦ Παλαῖμον, τιμ-
ωρὸς γένοιο τούτων ὧν ἀπέγραψ-
ά̣ σοι, καὶ δικασταῖ<ς> ἄδικα δοκωῖε-
ν̣ λέγειν, καὶ μάρτυσιν ἅτε πράτο̣-
[υ]σιν ἄχ<ρ>εια γένε. Καὶ δέσμευ{δεσω-
10 ο̣ν}σον α̣ὐτ̣ῶν χεῖρας, γ{ω}λῶττ{α}-
αν, ψυχήν, καὶ ἔργα τὰ τούτω-
ν, ἄδικα γὰρ καὶ ποιοῦσιν̣
κ̣αὶ λέγουσι. Ἀδικῶν οὖν {Ἀριστ-}
Ε̣Υ̣Ο̣ΥΣΥΜΩ σου τυχεῖν.
Upside down:
15 Ἀριστοφά(νης)

I bind down before Palaimon Aristophanes and Aristarchos and Kephisophon and Kephisodotos and Epikouros and Alexandros and Alexianos and I beseech you, O Palaimon: become a punisher of those whom I have listed for you, and to the judges let them seem to speak unjust things, and for the witnesses may what they do be useless. And bind their hands, tongue, soul, and their works, for unjust things they both do and say. Acting unjustly, may then {Arist-} find you (sing.)…. (upside down:) Aristopha(nes).[23]

23. Text and translation from Jordan 2008, 137.

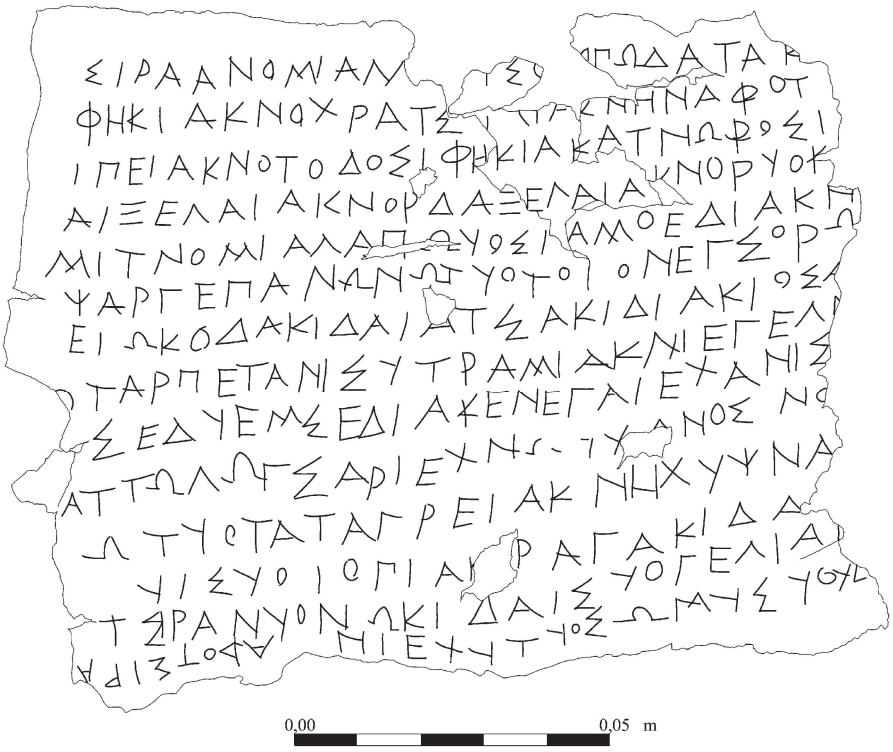

Fig. 5. Drawing of tablet from the Shrine of Pankrates and Palaimon in Athens. Drawing by J. Curbera, reproduced with permission.

As with the Nemea tablets, this tablet's treatment and the details of the language itself employ typical elements of coercive and analogical magic, as Jordan explains. In addition to the rolling and nailing of the tablet, the idea of constraining the victim is made explicit through the use of the binding verb καταδῶ at the start of the text, and a second verb of binding appears in lines 9 and 10. Another striking feature of the curse is that most of the text is spelled backwards, from right to left, or ἐπαρίστερα in Greek, which likewise employs a kind of analogical metaphor for constraint and incapacitation. As Jordan points out, this metaphor is made explicit in another Attic curse tablet, *DT* 67, which also employs backward spelling and where the words of the victim, Krates, are wished to become cold and backward just like the letters on the tablet.[24] As a metaphor of incapacitation, therefore, the backward writ-

24. Jordan 2008, 137–138.

ing of the Athenian tablet becomes comparable to the action of twisting back expressed by the verb ἀποστρέφω in the tablets from Nemea.

Later in the curse, in lines 10 and 11, we encounter another list of body parts, which combines with the verb of binding to convey the sense of coercion sought in the curse. Here we have an example of what Versnel would call an "instrumental" curse,[25] as the list does not aim for the kind of completeness that we see in the more complete curses from Nemea.

There is more to the Athenian tablet, however; apart from its coercive and analogical aspects, the curse features language that is not paralleled at Nemea and that is characteristic of a less common type of curse, namely, the prayer for justice or call for vengeance, which is often found in sanctuaries of Late Classical and Hellenistic date (see Faraone, Chapter 8 in this volume).[26] Most conspicuously the tablet names Palaimon, first stating that the victims are to be bound "in the presence of" or "before Palaimon," if Jordan's restoration is correct. This formula of πρός + a name in the accusative is most often used with the god Hermes, but on occasion other chthonic divinities such as Ge, Persephone, and Hekate are found. There are also instances in which the deceased are named, particularly the name of the deceased in whose grave the tablet is deposited.[27] But if the curser had in mind the same Palaimon as the hero known from the Isthmus, then we have a unique instance, so far as I know, of a direct appeal to a hero in a curse tablet, using a formulation that alludes to the power of the hero to exact justice from the named victims.[28] The appeal to the hero becomes unambiguous direct address in line 5, as the curser beseeches Palaimon to become a punisher, δέομαί σου, ὦ Παλαῖμον, τιμωρός γένοιο, language that in combination with the multiple references to injustice in the text serves to characterize the curse as a prayer for justice.[29]

Unlike the tablets from Nemea, then, the tablet from Athens *does* explicitly acknowledge the sanctuary context in which it was deposited, by referring to one of the figures worshipped in the shrine, perhaps as a hero. In its coercive

25. Versnel 1998, 217–222.

26. On this type of curse, see Versnel 1991; 2009; cf. an example from a Roman-period tomb at Kenchreai in Faraone and Rife 2007.

27. Jordan 2008, 138.

28. Riess 2012, 209, argues by comparison with judicial texts that the formulation "renders the accursed person subject to the jurisdiction of the chthonic powers named." I thank the anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this implication.

29. Jordan 2008, 139–140. As Jordan also discusses on p. 141, lines 9–10 likely contain an imperative verb, in which case Palaimon is also being directed to bind the named victims in the curse.

aspects this tablet has much in common with those from Nemea and elsewhere, and in its distinctive traits of a prayer for justice, it still finds parallel in tablets from other contexts. In sum there is nothing we can observe either in the treatment of the tablets or in the texts they contain to suggest a special relationship between heroes in general and curse tablets, and in light of the extreme paucity of tablets recovered from hero shrines, we should ask if any other factors might explain the choice to deposit curses in these shrines.

Since graves are a common source of curse tablets, the belief in the presence of a grave in the case of the Heroön of Opheltes could have been part of its appeal. Now, there are different opinions about the role of the deceased in this form of magic. On the one hand, Benedetto Bravo has argued that the original reason for placing curses in contact with the dead was strictly analogical; like the use of lead itself, and the piercing of the tablet with nails, its placement with a dead body extends the metaphor that the victim of the curse is to be rendered ineffective, incapacitated, isolated, or inert.[30] Adducing examples of Late Archaic and Classical date, he notes that the deceased merely serves as a point of connection to the chthonic divinities, like Hermes, Persephone, Hecate, and Ge; it is they who are invoked in the early tablets, not the deceased.

Sarah Johnston, on the other hand, believes that the dead played a more active role from the time of the earliest tablets. At the very least, the dead person was thought to convey the message to the underworld, a role that Graf evocatively describes as the "infernal postman who brings the text to the divine or demonic addressees".[31] This view overlaps with Bravo's idea of the dead as a point of contact with the powers below ground; but Johnston argues further for an early belief in the dead as the agent that carries out the wishes of the curser upon the named victim(s).[32]

In the Hellenistic period, however, Benedetto Bravo agrees that curses begin to regard the dead as playing this more active part. For example, a curse tablet of the 3rd century BCE from Olbia Pontike, the starting point of his study, is addressed to an unnamed dead individual and offers him a gift in exchange for incapacitating certain opponents who are threatening legal proceedings.[33] Some scholars have since disputed that the main tablet discussed by Benedetto Bravo is a curse at all, but this still does not affect his overall

30. Bravo 1987, 198–203; see also Graf 1997, 130–132, citing *DT* 68, side A; Eidinow 2013, 152–154.

31. Graf 1997, 131; also Johnston 1999, 85.

32. Johnston 1999, 86–88.

33. Bravo 1987, 189 (= *SGD* 173), with five more examples discussed at pp. 204–205.

argument, which is based on multiple texts.[34] The same conception is manifest in the spells of the later magical papyri, where the dead is often called a νεκυδαίμων.[35] To explain the change in how the curses relate to the dead, Bravo looks to the phenomenon of the heroization of the ordinary dead attested in Hellenistic times. The association of the ordinary dead with heroes, he reasons, leads to the development of the new idea that the dead can be efficacious agents in magical spells.[36] Such an explanation, however, presumes *a priori* that the heroes had such power for magical spells, yet again we are confronted with the rarity of finding curse tablets in hero shrines.

All dead are not alike, however, when it comes to their magical potency. Two classes of the dead are particularly desirable, to judge from the recipes of the ancient magical papyri as well as the texts of many curse tablets: the ἄωρος, one who has died an untimely death; and the βιαιοθάνατος, one who has died a violent death.[37] Moreover, although the papyri and curse tablets are of Imperial date, archaeological excavation has provided some confirmation that the preference for those who have died young existed even as early as the Classical period, as some of the graves that yielded curse tablets contained the remains of verifiably young individuals, but admittedly the archaeological evidence is scant and needs further corroboration.[38] There are, in addition, two exceptionally early curses that seem to appeal to the concept of the untimely dead; both are from Attica and date to the late fourth century BCE. One of the them, *DT* 52, binds several victims παρὰ τοῖς ἠϊθέοις, "before the (i.e. deceased) unmarried youth." The other, *DT* 68, is restored as binding a woman πρὸς [το(ὺ)ς] ἀτελ[έ]σ[το(υ)ς], perhaps meaning "in the presence of the unmarried dead".[39]

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34. Vinogradov 1994, 106, n. 7; cf. Jordan 1997, who considers it a curse. See also Gager 1992, 118, 138; Johnston 1999, 86.

35. Bravo 1987, 196.

36. Bravo 1987, 210–211.

37. Graf 1997, 134 (citing *PGM* V [= *GEMF* 58] 304-369, 150 (citing *PGM* IV [= *GEMF* 57] 296–466 = Gager 1992, no. 27); López Jimeno 1999, 38–41. Curse tablets with references to ἄωροι and βιαιοθάνατοι include *DT* 14, 15, 22, 24–26, 28–32, 35, 38, 188, 234, 235, 237–240, 242, and 249, as well as Gager 1992, no. 28, which appears to be based on the recipe in *PGM* IV [= *GEMF* 57] 296–466.

38. Jordan 1988, 273–275.

39. For a discussion of these texts, see Eidinow 2013, 153, 397–398, 400–401. Eidinow (2013, 154) questions whether a belief in the special magical efficacy of the untimely dead prevailed in the Classical and Hellenistic periods. What we may be witnessing in the Nemea tablets, then, is evidence for the development of the idea.

Without doubt, the hero Opheltes is a quintessential ἄωρος and βιαιοθάνατος: the story of his death is preserved for us in numerous literary sources as well as in artistic representations from throughout antiquity.[40] The basic outline of what happened is that his nurse Hypsipyle was charged with holding and caring for him as an infant; in some accounts there was even an oracle specifically forbidding him to be placed on the ground. When the Seven Against Thebes came with their troops into the Nemea valley on their journey from Argos to Thebes, they came upon Hypsipyle and asked her for water. In her eagerness to fetch it for them, she placed the infant Opheltes upon the ground, and in that moment of vulnerability a monstrous snake appeared and killed him. While some details of the story vary, Opheltes is universally described as an infant or small child. Plutarch, in fact, specifically describes him as ἄγαν ἄωρος at the time of his death (*Cons. Ap.* 110f). Moreover, as the victim of the snake's fatal attack, whether killed by its poisonous bite or its constrictive coils, he also dies by violence. The Heroön of Opheltes at Nemea, therefore, was believed to contain not just a grave, but a grave with the kind of dead body that held great promise for procuring the desired effect spelled out in lead, and this may have been its appeal to the authors of our texts.[41]

As for Palaimon in Athens, Jordan makes two suggestions about naming him in the curse. First, the curser may have perceived an etymological association of the name with wrestling (compare Greek πάλη and παλαίω) and so, finding it fitting for his sense of struggle in court, sought out this particular figure and his shrine. Alternatively, Jordan notes that there is evidence recovered from the shrine for the participation of Phoenician clientele. If the resident of the Athenian shrine was equated with the Palaimon worshipped at the Isthmus of Corinth, where he was also known as Melikertes, then the curser might have been a Phoenician who associated him with Melqart.[42]

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40. For a study of the accounts of the death of Opheltes in ancient literature and the visual arts, see Bravo 2018, chaps. 3 and 4.

41. It may also be possible that the story of Opheltes' death indirectly shapes the wording of the curses deposited in his shrine. Apart from the primary meanings explored above, the operative verb ἀποστρέφω may also have resonated with the role of the snake in the death of Opheltes, for our ancient sources provide evidence that the twisting and coiling motion of snakes fall within the semantic range of the verb στρέφω. Compare Aristotle, *PA* 692a, describing the special ability of snake to turn its head back (στρέφειν τὴν κεφαλήν) while keeping the rest of its body still. On the iconography of the death of Opheltes, which frequently shows the hero trapped in the coils of the snake, his own limbs helplessly twisted, see Bravo 2018, chap. 3, and cf. especially figs. 137, 140, 141, and 143.

42. Jordan 2008, 139. For the second suggestion Jordan draws on the arguments of Vikela

Both explanations are at least plausible, but if indeed the Palaimon invoked here was identified with the Isthmian hero, then he may have had the same appeal as Opheltes as an agent of cursing. For Palaimon too died an untimely death as a child, when his mother Ino plunged into the sea with him to escape her mad husband Athamas; his body was subsequently transported to the Isthmus on the back of a dolphin, an image featured in the Roman-period shrine of Palaimon at Isthmia, as we know from the evidence of Corinthian coins. His body came to shore at the Isthmus, where King Sisyphus of Corinth ordered the body to be buried and funeral games to be held, thus originating the Isthmian Games. Since Palaimon was buried at the Isthmus, however, the fact that the shrine at Athens did not contain his body marks a fundamental difference from the situation at Nemea. Perhaps it was sufficient for the curser to invoke an ἄωρος even if the tablet would not be deposited in his grave.

The limited nature of the evidence unfortunately precludes any firm conclusion about the choice of a hero shrine as a context for the deposition of curse tablets. The rarity of finding curse tablets in this context does suggest, however, that there was no strong association between hero cult in general and the practice of such magic. Instead, we can take it as a working hypothesis that the decision to deposit tablets in the Shrine of Opheltes at Nemea and the Shrine of Pankrates in Athens reflected particular factors at work in each local context. In the case of Opheltes, his shrine could be regarded as the kind of mortuary context that was increasingly sought for the efficacy of curses, namely, the grave of the ἄωρος and the βιαιοθάνατος. In the case of Palaimon, it may simply be that the shrine along the Ilissos River was considered a chthonic sanctuary, not a hero shrine at all, or perhaps the fact that chthonic divinities were worshipped together with Palaimon made the location suitable enough. That the tablet focuses on Palaimon rather than the other figures worshipped in the shrine still calls for explanation, however, and again the status of Palaimon as an ἄωρος may have been a factor. Thus, in the case of both Opheltes and Palaimon, it just may be that the elements of the specific mythic narratives associated with them, rather than their categorical status as heroes, played the decisive role in the deposition of these tablets.

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(1994, 81–108). On the myth and cult of Melikertes-Palaimon at the Isthmus of Corinth, see Gebhard and Dickie 1999; Pache 2004, 135–180; Gebhard and Reese 2005.

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Chapter 8

Artemisia's Curse at the Memphite Serapeum and the Hellenistic Curses against Thieves

Christopher A. Faraone

Abstract: Hellenists and Egyptologists agree that the papyrus "Curse of Artemisia" was displayed publicly in some manner in the sanctuary of Oserapis (the divinized Apis bull) in Saqqara, the necropolis of Memphis, but they disagree whether it is a Greek "prayer for justice," or a Greek translation of a Demotic "Letter to the Dead" or a similar Egyptian petition to the gods. In what follows I argue that the papyrus is, in fact, more closely related to the Greek prayer, especially when we take into account: (1) the sanctuary context in which the papyrus was presumably placed so it could be read by the public; (2) the female gender of the author; (3) the material features of the papyrus itself (its large letters and layout); and (4) some important details in the text—uncommented on by previous scholars—which suggest that Artemisia was imitating an East Greek practice of public cursing, whereby women placed written curses against thieves publicly in sanctuaries. I conclude, nevertheless, that the curse is both Egyptian and Greek: Egyptian in content, with Artemisia's concern with the afterlife (tombs, funerary gifts, and, of course, Oserapis himself), but Greek in its social context (a Greek document placed publicly in a sanctuary by an aggrieved woman) and especially in its rhetorical form, which asks a powerful deity and his retinue to judge the matter and pressure the thief to return the stolen goods.

Key words: Curse of Artemisia, Oserapis, Apis bull, Saqqara, Memphis, Demotic, "Letter to the Dead," petition, "prayer for justice," public notice, thieves, sanctuaries, tombs, funerary gifts

The "Curse of Artemisia," which dates to the early 4th century BCE, is celebrated as one of the oldest Greek papyri, a designation that rests in part on its early epigraphic look and on other features of its paleography.[1] Hellenists and

1. Vienna, Nationalbibliothek *p.gr.* 1. I first became interested in this papyrus in the autumn of 2018 when Bernhard Palme showed it to me in the papyrus collection in Vienna and I was

Egyptologists are, moreover, in agreement that this curse was displayed publicly in some manner in the sanctuary of Oserapis (i.e. the divinized Apis bull) in Saqqara, the necropolis of Memphis, but they disagree about what genre of speech-act it comprises and whether this genre is Egyptian or Greek. The lines were drawn in the sand nearly thirty years ago: Henk Versnel in his classic article on the Greek "prayers for justice" argued that it displayed most of the features of such prayers, albeit with some echoes of Egyptian practices of petition.[2] John Ray, however, along with Robert Ritner, argued independently that it was essentially a "word-for-word" Greek translation of a Demotic "Letter to the Dead" or a similar petition to a god.[3] To my knowledge, the two sides have never directly addressed the claims of the other and in what follows I will argue that Versnel's approach takes better account of: (1) the sanctuary context in which the papyrus was presumably placed so it could be read by the public; (2) the female gender of the author; (3) the material features of the papyrus itself (its large letters and layout); and (4) some important details in the text —uncommented on by Versnel and others—which suggest that Artemisia, although she was the daughter of a man with the Egyptian name Amasis, was

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struck by the large size of the letters and their epigraphic cast; I am grateful to Prof. Palme for his hospitality and infectious interest in all things papyrological, to the audience at the "Curses in Context 3" conference in Athens for their vigorous questioning and helpful comments, and to Korshi Dosoo for his timely help with the penultimate draft of the chapter.

2. Versnel 1991, 67: "Here we have a real prayer for justice, requesting punishment of a guilty party, directed to powerful divine judges (of the underworld).… Evidently the prayer has been placed in the temple, clearly visible for everyone, with the risk that someone might take it away. That person will also have to be punished by the god. Although it is not entirely clear from the text, it seems that Artemisia leaves open the possibility that she herself can (if she wishes) grant the order to remove the letter of supplication. Just like other, still-to-be-treated texts … this supplication shows similarities with the worldly formulas of the Ptolemaic, and especially the imperial, periods…." For more recent treatments of the Greek and Demotic materials, see Endreffy 2010 and Kotsifou 2016, who point out that Greek prayers for justice and the Demotic letters to gods evolve around the same time and share a common emphasis on divine justice.

3. Ritner 1995, 3360: "The Curse of Artemisia (*PGM* XL) was written by a Greek woman in Egypt before the arrival of Alexander the Great. It was deposited in the shrine of the Egyptian funerary bull-god Osiris-Apis, following standard Egyptian practices of petitions to deities. It uses Egyptian formulas and is concerned with the theft of funeral gifts for a tomb…. The only thing "Greek" about this text is its language—not its culture—although it is undeniably written by a woman of Greek descent." Ray 1996, 55: "Although written in good Greek, it can be turned almost word for word into Egyptian Demotic; indeed, the Curse of Artemisia can almost be said to be an ancient Egyptian text written in Greek. Surely this is assimilation to a remarkable degree."

imitating a practice of East Greek women who placed written curses against thieves in sanctuaries, curses that Artemisia would have presumably learned from her Greek mother or other female relations. I stress a female tradition here, because, nearly all of the known authors of Hellenistic curses against thieves were women.

Using these Greek comparanda, as well as a recently published Demotic curse displayed in the courtyard of the same sanctuary of Oserapis at Saqqara, I will argue that Artemisia's curse was set up publicly in order to be read by visitors to the sanctuary in the hope that the stolen property be returned.[4] I will conclude, nevertheless, that the curse is both Egyptian and Greek: Egyptian in content, with Artemisia's concern with the afterlife (tombs, funerary gifts, and, of course, Oserapis himself), but Greek in its social context (a document placed publicly in a sanctuary by an aggrieved woman) and especially in its rhetorical form, which asks a powerful deity and his retinue to judge the matter and pressure the thief to return the stolen goods. This debate also illustrates a common and healthy divide between "lumpers" and "splitters" in any scholarly inquiry, the "lumpers" stressing the broadly shared elements of the data, while the "splitters" stress the discordant details and focus on the local. In this chapter—and indeed this is the design of the "Curses in Context" project—I take up the role of a "splitter" by stressing the existence of a discrete subtype of the Greek "prayer for justice" that is placed by a woman in a sanctuary, that targets a thief, and that generally prefers, when at all possible, the restoration of the stolen property, rather than the punishment of the offender.

The argument unfolds in four stages: in the first I present the text and a translation of the papyrus and discuss its purpose, its placement in the sanctuary, and an important textual problem that can only be solved by comparison with the Greek material; in the second and third, I survey a series of Greek curses against thieves from Hellenistic Cnidus and elsewhere, whose female authors and public display reveal an old Greek tradition; and in the last I compare the format and the size of the letters on Artemisia's papyrus with those same curses against thieves. I conclude by noting that since this Greek practice of female curses against thieves seems to have been borrowed from the Levant, and since the Demotic practice of petitioning gods in their sanctuaries about theft arises around the same time as the Hellenistic Greek practice,

4. I would like to thank Korshi Dosoo for discussing with me the Demotic materials and the site of Memphis and especially his prompt and detailed e-mails offering bibliography and other kinds of crucial help.

we must leave open the possibility that the Levantine practice influenced both traditions.[5]

The Papyrus in Vienna

The papyrus was acquired and brought to Austria in 1820 or 1821 together with other objects from Memphis, so it was probably found among the ruins of the Serapeum in Saqqara or somewhere nearby. But since the Serapeum itself was not properly "discovered" by Mariette until thirty years later, we have no information about the precise findspot of the papyrus.[6] The papyrus (Fig. 1) is wide and short (35.5 x 8.5 cm), but there is also no description or drawing of the papyrus before it was conserved and put under glass in Vienna, so there is no way to reconstruct whether or how it was folded or rolled up, although some vertical cracks suggest that it was indeed folded at some point. Beyond these few facts, then, the text and its paleography remain our only guides to its use and the original context of its deposition. The text runs as follows:[7]

1 Ὦ δέσποτ' Ὀσερᾶπι κὰ θεοὶ οἱ μετὰ τοῦ Ὀσερ[άπιο]ς κα[θήμενοι, εὔχομ]αι ὑμῖν, Ἀρτεμισίη
2 ἥδ', Ἀμάσιος θυγάτηρ, κατὰ τοῦ πατρὸς τῆς θυγατρός, [ὃς αὐτὴν τ]ῶ[ν] κτ[ερ]έων ἀπεστέρησε
3 καὶ τῆς θήκης. εἰ μὲν οὖν δίκαια μὲ ἐποίησε ἐμὲ καὶ τὰ τέκνα ταὐτοσαυτοῦ, δίκαια ὥς(?).
4 ὧ<σ>περ μὲν οὖν ἄδικα ἐμὲ καὶ τὰ τέκνα τὐτοσαυτοῦ ἐποίησε, δόη δέ οἱ Ὀσερᾶπις καὶ οἱ θεοὶ,
5 μὴ τυχεῖν ἐκ παίδων θήκης μ[η]δὲ αὐτὸν γονέας τοὺ<ς> αὐτοσαυτοῦ θάψαι. τῆς δὲ
6 καταβοιῆς ἐνθῦτα κειμένης, κακῶς ἀπολλύοιτο κὲγ γῆι κὲν θαλάσσηι καὐτὸς
7 καὶ τὰ αὐτοῦ ὑπὸ τοῦ Ὀσερ[ά]πιος καὶ τῶν θεῶν τῶν ἀμπ' Ὀσερᾶπι καθημένων,

5. Such a possibility jibes with the most recent work on these materials, e.g. Chaniotis (2004), Endreffy (2010), Salvo (2012), and Kotsifou (2016), who emphasize the commonalities between the two traditions and look for universal emotions or ideas about bargaining that are shared by many ancient cultures.

6. Kreuzsaler 2013.

7. UPZ I.1 = *PGM* XL.

8 μηδὲ ἱλάονος τυχάνοι Ὀσεράπιος μηδὲ τῶν θε[ῶ]ν [τῶ]ν μετὰ τοῦ Ὀσεράπιος
9 κα[θ]ημένων. κατέθηκεν Ἀρτεμισίη τὴν ἱκετηρίην τα[ύ]την, ἱκετύουσα τὸν
10 Ὀσ[ε]ρᾶπιν τὴν δίκην δικά[σαι καὶ το]ὺς θεοὺς τοὺς μετὰ τοῦ Ὀσεράπιος καθημένους,
11 τῆ[ς] δ' ἱκετηρίας ἐνθαῦ[τα κει]μένης, μηδαμῶ[ς] ἱλαόν[ω]ν [τ]ῶν θεῶν τυγχάνοι
12 ὁ πατὴρ τῆς παιδίσκης. [ὃ]ς δ' ἂ[ν ἕλοι] τὰ γράμματα ταῦτα [κα]ὶ ἀδικοῖ Ἀρτεμισίην,
13 ὁ θεὸς αὐτῶι τὴ<ν> δίκην ἐπιθ[είη …μ]ηδενὶ.. θεραπυο[…]βοντι, ὅτι μὴ
14 τοὺς Ἀρτεμισίη κελύει, ὅτι[...] τοδε[ ] ὥσπερ …… κοὐκ ἐπαρκέσαι [ ]
15 με περιεῖδε ἐπιδ[εῆ...]
16 κἀμοὶ τῆι ζώσηι [
17 περιεῖδε ἐπιδε[ῆ...].

1 O master Oserapis and the gods who sit with Oserapis, I [pray] to you, I, Artemisia,
2 the daughter of Amasis, against my daughter's father, [who] deprived [her] of her funeral gifts
3 and tomb. If he indeed acted justly toward me and his own children, (these things?) are thus just(?).
4 Just as he indeed has acted unjustly toward me and his own children, (i.e., so, too,) may Oserapis and the gods grant
5 that he not obtain a tomb from his children, nor bury his own parents.
6 As long as my cry for help is deposited here, may he himself and the things that belong to him be badly destroyed both on earth and on sea
7 by Oserapis and the gods who sit together with Oserapis,
8 and may he not find Oserapis propitious, nor the gods who sit with Oserapis.
9 Artemisia deposited this supplication, supplicating
10 Oserapis to judge the case justly and the gods who sit with Oserapis.
11 As long as my supplication [is deposited] here, may he in no way find the gods propitious,
12 the father of my little girl. And whosoever [seizes] this document [and] does an injustice to Artemisia,

13 may the god inflict the (i.e., same) penalty on him … to no one … that (does) not(?) …
14 … Artemisia commands, because(?)... this…, just as... and does not suffice...
15 observed me in need of ...
16 and to me as I live ...
17 observed … in need of. ...

A few initial words about names, dialect, and paleography. Artemisia's theophoric name is Carian, and the Ionian Greek in which she wrote or dictated this curse suggests that she was a descendent of a group of Greek-speaking immigrants from Anatolia, who had settled in Memphis in the late 6th century BCE; her father Amasis, in fact, need not have been Egyptian at all, but rather a direct descendent of a Greek mercenary whom the Pharaoh had settled in the city generations earlier.[8] Oserapis, on the other hand, was the divinized bull Apis, who was the most important god in the vast necropolis at Saqqara, but he is not the only god that she invokes, for in addition she calls upon an anonymous collective: "and the gods who sit with Oserapis," who are most likely the other animals worshipped in the sanctuary as mummies.[9] The formulation "the gods who sit with X" is said to imitate a Demotic Egyptian expression popular in and around Memphis ("the gods who rest in the necropolis of the Serapeum"),[10] but, as we shall see, this appeal for judgment from a tribunal of gods also appears in a number of Greek *comparanda* of Hellenistic date, where there is little suspicion of Egyptian influence. As we shall see, Artemisia also uses the language of Greek law ("cry for help" and "judge the case") and supplication ("Artemisia … supplicating") that is common on prayers for justice and – most notably – she uses two expressions found on the Greek sanctuary curses from Cnidus: the plea "may he not find the goddess propitious" and the offer of both blessings and curses to the thief, neither of which appear in the Demotic petitions.

8. Thompson 2012, 89.

9. The "Serapeum" was the sanctuary and necropolis of Oserapis, the Apis bull, and was itself part of Saqqara, the immense necropolis of the city of Memphis.

10. See e.g. Ray 1976, 55–57, no. 13: "... my lord Osiris-Apis, the great god, and the gods who rest in the necropolis of the Serapeum and in the necropolis of Hapnebes and the gods who rest in the Resting Place of Per-Thoth in Memphis," or Devauchelle 2001, 41–42: "Their names will endure forever … in the house of Osiris-Apis and the gods who rest with him." Many thanks to Korshi Dosoo for providing me with these examples.

As for the paleography, we can see in Figure 1 that, in addition to the large size of the letters (height 0.4–0.6 cm), a feature I will address toward the end of this chapter, some of them also imitate shapes often found on contemporary inscriptions in stone and in metal, for example, the *theta* with a middle dot, the pointy *omega* with flat arcs, or the *sigma* as a wedge, which is thought to be an intermediate stage between the "epigraphic" and lunate forms of the *sigma*.[11] In explaining the epigraphic cast of this handwriting, Frederic Kenyon, in fact, suspected an epigraphic model for the Artemisia papyrus, when he suggested that the papyrus "is not the work of a professional scribe, but the writing of an uneducated woman who uses uncial letters, because … such letters were commonly before her eyes in public places, while she had probably seldom seen a book".[12] Kenyon's views here are, of course, outdated—most papyrologists nowadays would say, for example, that the writing on the Vienna papyrus is rather well executed—, but in what follows, I will, among other things, explore his intuition that Artemisia or her scribe were influenced by what they saw in "public places" (i.e., Greek inscriptions) and that their goal was similar: that the papyrus be legible in a public place like a sanctuary. Indeed, we will see that there are a good number of Greek "prayers for justice" from the Hellenistic period that were: (i) concerned with theft, like Artemisia's curse; (ii) publicly set up by women in goddess sanctuaries; and (iii) inscribed with letters that were, like those on Artemisia's papyrus, large enough to be read by visitors to a sanctuary.[13] These last two points are especially important, because they suggest that the papyrus was designed to be read by a human audience, in addition to the gods who are invoked in the prayer itself.

11. For the *theta* and the wedge-shaped *sigma*, see Jordan and Curbera 2008, 137–138, who compare the Vienna papyrus with a lead curse tablet of similar date, and for the *sigma* alone, see the lead tablet published by Jordan and Rotroff 1999, 150.

12. Kenyon 1899, 57.

13. The situation is similar to other sanctuary inscriptions that were meant to be read by visitors, for example, votive graffiti on pottery, whose letters are often about the same size as those in the papyrus (c. 0.5 cm).

Fig. 1. Curse of Artemisia; photograph ©Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Papyrussammlung, with thanks to Bernhard Palme.

But let us turn to the rhetorical sequence of Artemisia's curse, which is, in fact, quite clear:

(i) Artemisia accuses her daughter's father, who is unnamed in the extant portions of the text, of acting unjustly by "depriving" (the verb is ἀποστερέω) the daughter of her tomb and funeral gifts;

(ii) She asks Oserapis and the other gods at Memphis to prevent her daughter's father from obtaining proper burial from his own children and from burying his own parents;

(iii) She asks the following for her daughter's father, as long as her "cry for help" (καταβοή) and her "supplication" (ἱκετηρία) are deposited in the sanctuary:

  (a) that he be badly destroyed on land and sea;
  (b) that he fail to find Oserapis and the gods "propitious" (μηδὲ ἱλάονος τυχάνοι Ὀσεράπιος … μηδαμῶ[ς] ἱλαόν[ω]ν [τ]ῶν θεῶν τυγχάνοι)

(iv) She asks that these gods apply the (i.e., same) punishment to whomever seizes the document and (i.e., thereby) does an injustice to Artemisia.

The emphasis on the physical text is itself of great interest, of course, in reconstructing the lost depositional context of this curse. It is twice said to be "deposited here" (lines 6 ἐνθῦτα κειμένης and 11: ἐνθαῦτα κειμένης) and Artemisia says that she has "deposited" it (9: κατέθηκεν), presumably in the Memphite sanctuary of Oserapis. Section (iv) suggests, moreover, as Versnel and others have noted, that the papyrus was placed somewhere accessible to the public and in a manner that would allow a friend or colleague of the girl's father to identify its contents and then to remove it. It was deposited, in short, in a manner that allowed visitors to read the text after it had been left in the sanctuary.

But even more important, perhaps, are the stipulations in Section (iii) that suggest that the continued presence of the papyrus in the sanctuary is equated with the duration of the curse; to paraphrase: as long as this text remains in the sanctuary, all of its stipulations will remain in effect. Such a clause implies, however, that under certain circumstances Artemisia might at some point remove the curse, if the father acts in some positive manner. But this possibility is never spelled out, at least not in the legible portions of the papyrus. The most likely way for the father to get the curse removed, of course, would be to re-

store the daughter's tomb and funerary gifts. I should also add parenthetically that, although the verb ἀποστερέω can mean to "rob" or "steal," I think it is unlikely that the husband physically removed a tomb and funerary offerings from a burial ground, but rather that he "deprived" her of these things simply by refusing to pay for them in the first place.

Finally, there is a problem in this text that most scholars understandably choose to ignore. It concerns an odd pair of conditional statements that appear in lines 3–5:

3 εἰ μὲν οὖν δίκαια μὲ ἐποίησε ἐμὲ καὶ τὰ τέκνα ταὐτοσαυτοῦ, δίκαια ὥς(?).
4 ὧ<σ>περ μὲν οὖν ἄδικα ἐμὲ καὶ τὰ τέκνα τὐτοσαυτοῦ ἐποίησε, δόη δέ οἱ Ὀσερᾶπις καὶ οἱ θεοὶ,
5 μὴ τυχεῖν ἐκ παίδων θήκης μ[η]δὲ αὐτὸν γονέας τοὺ<ς> αὐτοσαυτοῦ θάψαι.

3 If he indeed acted justly toward me and his own children,
(these things?) are thus just(?).[14]
4 Just as he indeed has acted unjustly toward me and his own children, (i.e., so, too,) may Oserapis and the gods grant
5 that he not obtain a tomb from his children, nor bury his own parents.

No editor has been able to make complete sense of line 3, which seems to be missing some words, a lacuna generated no doubt by the similarities in the two conditional sentences.[15] I will argue in the next section, in fact, that Artemisia or the scribe hired by her has given us a corrupt version of a fairly common pairing of blessing and curse that we find in Hellenistic oaths and (more im-

14. Or perhaps "let/may things be just for him in this way."

15. Scholars have not, in fact, adequately addressed the problem, presumably because of their reliance on Preisendanz, who emended the μέ in line 3 to μή and translated (my emphasis): "Wenn er nun an mir *nicht* recht getan hat und an seinem Kindern – wie er ja auch unrecht an mir und an seinem Kindern getan hat – so mögen ihm Oserapis und die Götter erwirken, dass er kein Begräbnis erhalte von seinem Kindern, und dass er auch seine Eltern nicht begrabe." It is not clear to me how this emendation clarifies the text. There are very few copying errors in this text – μή(δε) is correctly written elsewhere in lines 5, 8 and 13 – and the close parallels between lines 3 (μὲν οὖν δίκαια μὲ) and 4 (μὲν οὖν ἄδικα ἐμὲ) ensure that the pronoun μέ in line 3 is the correct reading, although it is true that the scribe mistakenly repeated the pronoun after ἐποίησε. I have followed the lead of Versnel (1991) 69, who translates: "Now, if he has done justice to me and to his children, then may that be just. Exactly in the way that he did injustice to me and to my children, in that way Oserapis and the gods should bring it about that he not be buried by his children and that he himself not be able to bury his parents." Preisendanz's emendation persists in Kotsifou (2016) 174 n. 31.

portantly) in the curses against thieves discovered in Cnidus, some of which offer the accused thief a blessing, if he returns the stolen property, as well as a curse, if he does not.

The Cnidian Curses against Thieves

The best comparanda for the Greek curses against thieves are the well-known lead tablets discovered in the sanctuary of Demeter at Cnidus.[16] To understand why, it is important to note the context of their deposition. Charles Newton, the archaeologist who excavated them in 1857–1858, reported that they were found "broken and doubled up," but he concluded nevertheless that "they were probably suspended on walls, as they are pierced with holes at the corners".[17] Since then scholars have, for the most part, neglected the second part of Newton's remarks, perhaps because it is found some 350 pages later in his report, or more likely because, when the drawings of the Cnidian tablets were made five years later at the British Museum, only a single hole was visible and it was not even in the corner of a tablet, but rather in the center of the top edge (Fig. 2A–B). There are, then, two ways to interpret Newton's report: (i) that he was mistaken when he wrote that they were "pierced with holes at the corners" and that the tablets were, in fact, all folded up and placed as private missives to the goddess of the sanctuary; or (ii) that between the time of the discovery and the making of the drawings, the friable corners and edges of the remaining tablets had broken off.[18] Rather than dismiss the eyewitness account of the archaeologist, it seems best to adopt the second scenario and understand that at Cnidus the tablets were first hung publicly from suspension holes and then at some point taken down, folded up, and discarded, or (more likely) preserved so that the lead could be reused later for the same purpose.[19]

16. Faraone 2011.

17. Newton 1863, 382, 724.

18. Of the seven other better-preserved tablets, only *DT* 1 is clearly without the suspension holes reported by Newton. *DT* 3–5 are missing their upper corners and 6–8 are missing their entire upper edges. The remaining tablets are even more fragmentary.

19. In Faraone 2011 I argue that the lead tablets were probably displayed during the Thesmophoria, a time when the women of Cnidus camped out in the sanctuary for at least three days. Two of the Cnidian tablets were, in fact, reused simply by flipping them over and using the reverse side. On the list that follows in the next paragraph, this would be *DT* 3, which contains two curses concerned with the theft of a deposit (the first congenial and hoping for restitution and the second hostile and asking only for punishment), and *DT* 4A and B, which has curses against different people on each side.

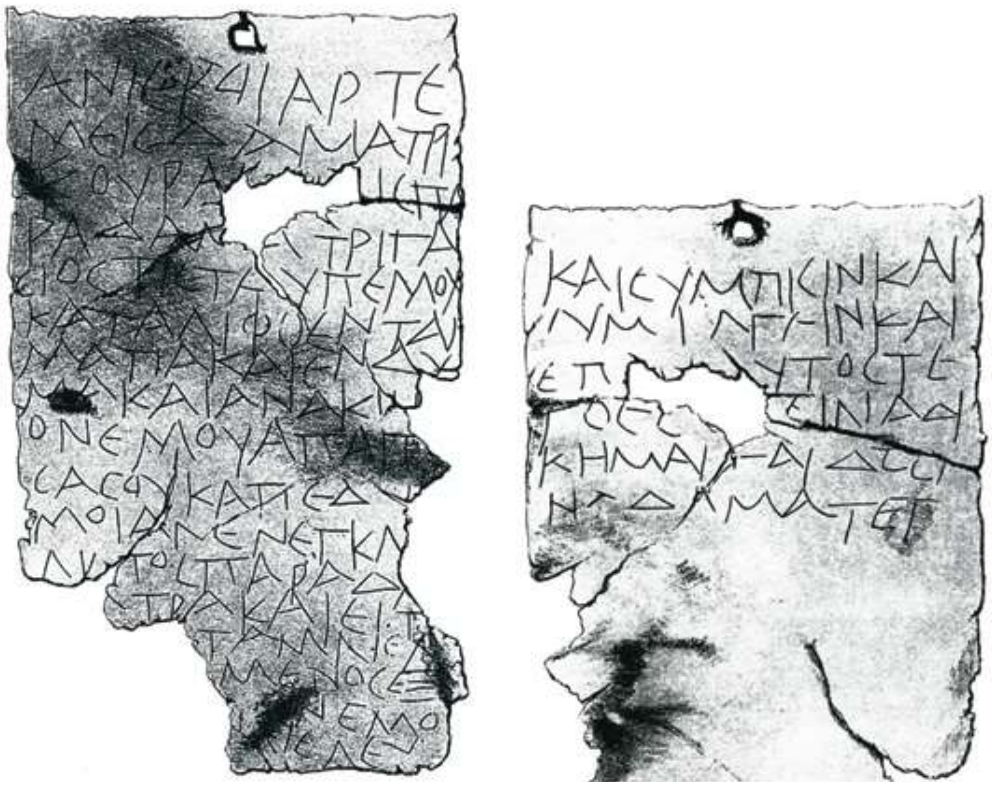

Fig. 2. Lead-Curse of Artemeis (obverse and reverse) from the Sanctuary of Demeter Thesmophoros in Cnidus; drawing after Newton (1863).

The Cnidian curses date to the late Hellenistic period and give us important insights into how women used these curses to identify usually unknown wrongdoers and frighten them into returning stolen goods or confessing to slander:

DT 1: slander about poisoning a husband
DT 2: stolen clothing
DT 3: stolen deposit of money
DT 4A: slander about poisoning a husband
DT 4B: stolen bracelet
DT 5: stolen(?) husband
DT 6: stolen cloak
DT 7: (accusation lost in a lacuna)
DT 8: theft and poisoning(?)
DT 9: (accusation lost in a lacuna)
DT 10: stolen(?) husband

DT 11: stolen plate
DT 12: stolen drinking horns
DT 13: assault and battery

Typical of these Cnidian texts is this curse against a slanderer (*DT* 4a = Blümel no. 150A):

> ἀνα]τίθημι Δάματρι καὶ Κούραι τὸν κατ' ἐμο[ῦ ε]ἴπ[α]ντα, ὅτι ἐγὼ τῶι ἐμῶι ἀνδ[ρὶ] φάρμακα ποιῶ· ἀνα[βαῖ] παρὰ Δάματρα πεπρημένος μετὰ τῶν αὐτοῦ [ἰδίων] πάντων ἐξαγορεύων, καὶ μὴ τύχῃ εὐειλάτ[ου] [Δ]άματρος καὶ Κούρας μηδὲ τῶν θεῶν τῶν παρὰ Δά[μα]τρος …
>
> I am dedicating to Demeter and Kore the person who slandered me (i.e., by saying) that I am preparing poisons (or perhaps "incantations") against my husband. May he go up to Demeter with all his family confessing out loud, because he is burnt (i.e., with fever). And may he not find Demeter and Kore merciful, nor the gods with Demeter …

Here we are struck right away by the final wish that the accused "may not find Demeter and Kore merciful, nor the gods with Demeter," which finds a close parallel in Artemisia's sanctions, with only the one change from "merciful" to "propitious":

> μὴ τύχῃ εὐειλάτ[ου] [Δ]άματρος καὶ Κούρας μηδὲ τῶν θεῶν τῶν παρὰ Δά[μα]τρος
>
> And may he not find Demeter and Kore merciful, nor the gods with Demeter …
>
> μηδὲ ἱλάονος τυχάνοι Ὀσεράπιος μηδὲ τῶν θε[ῶ]ν [τῶ]ν μετὰ τοῦ Ὀσεράπιος κα[θ]ημένων (Artemisia)
>
> And may he not find Oserapis propitious, nor the gods who sit with Oserapis

In both cases it is unclear why these appeals could not have been made to Demeter or Oserapis alone, but it is understandable that a judgment rendered by a tribunal of gods, rather than a single god, might be more effective. This curse concerns slander and it is a forthright prayer for justice or revenge, in that it asks the gods to make the anonymous slanderer sick with fever and force them to come to the sanctuary with their family to confess their crime.

But, as we saw in the list above, most of these Cnidian curses are against thieves and as such they are less concerned with revenge (at least initially) and they contain a mixture of curses and blessings that points to the different and more practical goal of restitution, as we see, for example, in this curse of Hegemone in (*DT* 4B = Blümel no. 150B):

> I, Hegemone, am dedicating (ἀνατίθημι) the bracelet, which I lost (ἣν ἀπώλεσα) in the gardens of Rhodokles, to Demeter and Kore and all the gods and goddesses (with them). If he (or "she," i.e., the unknown thief) gives it back, may all things be lawful and free (ὅσια καὶ ἐλεύθερα) … for me, because I recover (the bracelet) and for him, because he gave it back. But if he does not return it and if it is sold, for him let there be anger (ἐνθύμιον ἔστω) from Demeter, Kore and all the gods and goddesses who are with them….

The tone of this appeal is markedly different, because Hegemone does not use the language of theft and suggests some culpability on her own part, when she says she "lost" the bracelet.[20] In her appeal, moreover, Hegemone combines a conditional blessing and curse similar to those used in Greek oaths:[21] if the finder returns the lost item, all will be well, but if not, he will experience divine wrath instead. We see a similar pattern in another Cnidian curse, the name of whose author is lost in the initial lacuna (*DT* 6A = Blümel no. 152):

> (So-and-so, is dedicating) to Demeter and Kore … the cloak she lost (ἀπώλεσεν). If he gives it back, may she (Demeter) be merciful (εὐειλάτος) to him, but if he does not give it back, may he carry it up by himself to Demeter and Kore, burnt by fever, and may he not find them merciful….

Here, too, the author, like Hegemone, first offers a conditional blessing, if the cloak is returned. I suggest, in fact, that Artemisia or her scribe was fa-

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20. Other curses against thieves curse the person "who stole my bracelet," whereas some of the Cnidain curses, like the one under discussion, change the agency by describing the object as the "bracelet that I lost."

21. See e.g. the Hippocratic Oath: "If I fulfill this oath without violating it, may it be granted that I enjoy a happy life and profession, honored always among men. But if I violate it and perjure myself, may the opposite befall me." (Text of Heiberg 1929, 27, in my translation.) There are, in fact, many oaths, which, like the proverbial carrot and stick, encourage good behavior with a promise of reward and discourage bad behavior with a threat of punishment. See Faraone 1993; 2006.

miliar with such paired blessings and curses and that this model created the confusion in lines 3-5 of her own curse that was noted earlier. In the Cnidian prayers these stipulations always take the same conditional form: *if* the thief returns the stolen property, *then* all will be well and Demeter and her colleagues will be merciful, but *if* he does *not*, the gods are asked to curse him with disease.

I suggest, therefore, that in the problematic lines 3–5 of the Vienna papyrus, Artemisia seems to have adapted, albeit in a flawed and somewhat awkward manner, a pair of conditional sentences of this type. Indeed, instead of giving the usual blessing and curse formula, which refers to possible actions in the future ("if he does just things, may he be blessed, and if he does unjust things, may he be cursed"), she transforms the latter half of the curse into an accusation, by putting the apodosis of the condition in the aorist ("if he did just things") and then asking Oserapis to punish him, as one would in a prayer for revenge. She forgot, however, to remove all of the blessing, which also appears in the past tense in a very cramped and incomplete form: "And if he did just things to me and his own children, (these things?) are thus just(?)." In the full form, the conditional blessing would have sounded something like this: "If he acts justly (i.e., and provides the tomb and funerary gifts), may he find Oserapis propitious and the gods with him." This mistake, moreover, is a crucial bit of evidence, because such paired blessings and curses never appear in the Demotic petitions.

Hellenistic Curses against Thieves from Other Goddess Sanctuaries

Additional comparanda come from goddess sanctuaries in other parts of Greece, especially in the East. Although they do not, as a rule, use the paired curses and blessings to motivate the thief to return the stolen goods, their threats and public display make it clear nonetheless that restitution is a consistent goal in all of them. These tablets are also predominately commissioned by women. The example closest in chronology to the early 4th- century Vienna papyrus is a bronze tablet from Calabria that dates to the 3rd century BCE (i.e., at least a century before the Cnidian curses). It was inscribed with a pair of curses, but only the second is complete (*DT* 212):[22]

22. I use the text of Blomqvist 1975, 18, no. 9.

> Kollura is consecrating (ἀνιαρίζει) to the attendants (ταῖς προπόλοις) of the goddess the three gold pieces that Melitta took and has not returned. Let her consecrate to the goddess twelve times the amount with a measure of incense which the city customarily makes use of. Let her not breathe freely until she consecrates (these things) to the goddess….

Kollura accuses a woman named Melitta of theft and then encourages the goddess to make her ill in order to force her to bring the stolen coins to the sanctuary, using the same language of "proleptic" consecration (ἀνιαρίζει), that we saw at Cnidus (*DT* 2.1: ἀνιεροῖ).[23] And, as we can see in Figure 3, this bronze tablet has squared-off letters, similar to those on the Vienna papyrus, which were apparently punched into the bronze with a chisel, rather than carved. The tablet was, moreover, clearly designed to be hung visibly in the sanctuary, as we can tell from the suspension hole along the bottom edge, that must have been matched by one along the missing top edge.

I should also add that, although scholars usually interpret the "attendants of the goddess" as human priestesses, I suspect that because Kollura *consecrates* the missing coins to "to the attendants" (the *propoloi*) they may indeed also be goddesses and together form a divine group with "the goddess", like the anonymous goddesses with Demeter and Kore at Cnidus. Who was the goddess invoked by Kollura? Most scholars suggest Persephone,[24] and, in fact, Persephone herself is said to have at least one *propolos*, albeit in an Eleusinian context (*Hom. Hymn Dem.* 439–41):

> τῆισιν δ᾽ ἐγγύθεν ἦλθ᾽ Ἑκάτη λιπαροκρήδεμνος
> πολλὰ δ᾽ ἄρ᾽ ἀμφαγάπησε κόρην Δημήτερος ἁγνῆς·
> ἐκ τοῦ οἱ πρόπολος καὶ ὀπάων ἔπλετ᾽ ἄνασσα.

23. These parallels have been repeatedly discussed; see Versnel 1991, 73–74. We can also compare the accusation that Melitta "took" the coins "and does not give them back" (lines 10–11: ἔλαβε ... καὶ οὐκ ἀποδίδωτι) with the wording in the second curse of Nanas (*DT* 3b.3–5: λαβόντες ... οὐκ ἀποδίδοντι). And like the second curse of Nanas, this one seems to involve a named person, Melitta, who apparently received a deposit and refuses to return it. For recent discussion, see MacLachlan 2004–2005, 251–254.

24. Some scholars, stressing the Locrian dialect of the text, have suggested that it was originally displayed in the temple of Persephone, the chief goddess of the city of Locri, but they are at a loss to explain how the tablet ended up several hundred miles away in Calabria. But other goddesses have been suggested, e.g. Hera and Demeter. See MacLachlan 2004–2005, 251, who cites all the earlier literature, but supports Persephone as the most probable candidate.

And Hecate of the glossy veil joined them,
and gave the daughter of holy Demeter many an embrace,
from which time the goddess became her attendant and servant.

Fig. 3. Bronze Tablet of Kollura from Calabria; photograph after Blomqvist (1975).

The final line suggests that Hecate is a powerful goddess—she is called *anassa* at the end of the third verse—, but that she also plays a subsidiary role with respect to Persephone, both as a *propolos*, literally "one who goes before" Persephone as an attendant and also—somewhat paradoxically—as an *opaôn*, literally "one who follows after" Persephone, a word that means "comrade" or "companion," but also "servant".[25] If the unnamed goddess on the Locrian bronze tablet is indeed Persephone, then we should probably imagine some kind of underworld court, in which Persephone and her attendants, including Hecate, adjudicated such petitions.[26]

25. In fact, an inscription from Demeter's sanctuary at Cnidus and of similar Hellenistic date seems to refer to the belief (inspired by a dream visitation from Hermes) that a dead woman "was serving as a *propolos*" to Persephone in the underworld (*I.Knidus* 131). See Rigsby 2003; Chaniotis 2009, 63.

26. The context in the second day of the Thesmophoria at Cnidus is not, of course, very

A similar transfer of stolen goods is recorded on another bronze tablet, this one now in Geneva. It is thought to come from somewhere in Asia Minor and it is usually dated between 100 BCE and 200 CE: "I dedicate (ἀνατίθημι) to the Mother of the Gods the gold pieces that I have lost, all of them, so that the goddess will track them down and bring everything to light and will punish the guilty in accordance with her power and in this way will not be made a laughing-stock".[27] Here again, as in Kollura's curse, the stolen coins are ceded to the divinity, who in turn becomes a victim of a crime and must take action against the thief. We can, moreover, see that this bronze tablet from Geneva (Fig. 4) also has a suspension hole in the same position.

Fig. 4. Bronze Tablet in Geneva; Photograph ©Musées d'art et d'histoire, Ville de Genève, with thanks to Philippe Bourgeaud.

different. Faraone (2011) shows, in fact, that the lead tablets were probably set up in the sanctuary during the Thesmophoria festival, that was for the most part a somber occasion during which women sat and slept on the ground and recalled Demeter's grief over Persephone's abduction, which was itself, of course, a most celebrated case of theft, but also a case in which Demeter was successful in having the "stolen property" returned, at least for part of the year.

27. Dunant 1978.

Yet another tablet—this one of lead and dating to the 2nd century BCE—was found in a farmer's field on Amorgos, an eastern Aegean island not far from Cnidus. It curses a man who has in some way or another stolen or alienated some slaves from the author (SGD 60):[28]

> Lady Demeter Queen, as your suppliant, as your slave, I fall at your feet. He has taken away my slaves, has led them into evil ways, indoctrinated them, advised them, misled them, he has rejoiced, he has them wandering around the marketplace, he persuaded them to run away. This is what a certain Epaphroditus has done…. Lady Demeter, this is what I have been through. Being bereft I seek refuge in you. Be merciful and grant me my rights. Grant that the man who has treated me thus shall have satisfaction neither in rest nor motion, neither in body nor in soul.

This text has all of the earmarks of a prayer for revenge: like the author of the anonymous Cnidian curse against a slanderer quoted in the previous section, the author takes the role of a suppliant, claims to have suffered injustices, and asks Demeter to punish the criminal who is the source of this suffering.[29] There is apparently no hope of restitution and therefore no offer of a blessing along with a curse.

There is a second, probably later curse inscribed on the reverse of the same tablet:[30]

> Lady Demeter, I supplicate you because I have suffered injustices (παθών ἄδικα); hear me, Goddess, and pass a just sentence. For those who have cherished such thoughts against us and who have joyfully prepared sorrows for my wife Epiktesis and me and who hate us, prepare the worst and most painful horrors.

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28. Translation by Versnel 1991, 69–70. David Jordan (apud Versnel 1991, 96 n. 40) suggests that the words *epaphroditus tis* do not refer to a man named Epaphroditus, but rather describe an anonymous person (i.e., "some charming fellow"), which would fit the pattern of anonymous perpetrators that we see in the Cnidian curses. But it is hard to imagine that this man could have had such a devastating effect on the household without anyone learning his name. Versnel (1999, 125 n. 1) points out, too, that Epaphroditus was a very popular name in the Roman period.

29. Versnel 1991, 70-71.

30. Versnel 1999, 125–127 suggests that the curse on the back was added to the tablet after the couple had posted the first curse and their neighbors (after learning of their problems) ridiculed them. For the later addition of a second curse on the back of two of the Cnidian tablets, see n.19 above.

A. Face.

ΚΥΡΙΑΔΗΜΗΤΗΡΒΑCΙΛΙCCΑΙΚΕΤΗCCΟΥΠΡΟCΠΙΠΤΩΔΕΟΔΟΥΛΟCCΟΥΤΟΥΕΜΟΥC
ΔΟΥΛΟΥCΥΠΕΔΕΞΑΤΟΤΟΥΚΑΚΟΔΙΔΑCΚΑΛΗCΕΕΓΝΩΜΟΔΟΤΗCΕCΥΝΕΒΟΥΛΕΥCΕ
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5 ΛΟΝΤΟCΕΧΕΙΝΑΥΤΟΝΓΥΝΑΙΚΑΑΥΤΗΝΔΙΕΚΗΝΗΝΤΗΝΑΙΤΙΑΝΔΕΑΥΤΗΝΠΕΦΕΥ
ΓΕΝΑΙΟΥΝΚΑΙΤΟΙCΑΛΛΟΙCΚΥΡΙΑΔΗΜΗΤΗΡΕΓΩΩΤΑΥΤΑΠΑΘΩΝ ○ ΕΡΗΜΟC
(Trou de clou)
ΕΩΝΕΠΙCΕΚΑΤΑΦΕΥΓΩCΟΥΕΥΓΙΛΑΤΟΥΤΥΧΕΙΝΚΑΙΠΟΙCΑΙΜΕΤΟΥΔΙΚΑΙΟΥΤΥΧΕΙΝ
ΠΟΙΗCΑΙCΤΟΝΤΟΙΑΥΤΑΜΕΔΙΑΘΟΜΕΝΟΝΜΗCΤΑCΙΝΜΗΒΑCΙΝΜΗΔΟΥΕΜΠΛΗCΘΗΝΑΙ
ΜΗCΩΜΑΤΟCΜΗΤΕΟΝΟΥΜΗΔΟΥΛΩΝΜΗΠΑΙΔΙCΚΩΝΜΗΔΟΥΛΕΥΘΟΙΤΟΜΗΥΠΟΜΥ
10 ΩΝΜΗΥΠΟΜΕΓΑΛΟΥΜΗΕΠΙΒΑΛΟΜΕΝΟCΤΙΕΚΤΕΛΕCΕCΑΙΤΟΚΑΤΑΔΕΕCΜΟΑΥΤΟΥ
ΤΗΝΟΙΚΙΑΝΛΑΒΟΙΤΟΕΧΕΙΜΗΠΑΙΔΙΝΚΛΑΥCΕΤΟΜΗΤΡΑΠΕΖΑΝΙΛΑΡΑΝΘΥΤΟΜΗΚΥΩΝ
ΕΙΛΑΚΤΗCΑΙΤΟΜΗΑΛΕΚΤΩΡΚΟΚΚΥCΑΙΤΟCΠΕΙΡΑCΜΗΘΕΡΙCΑΙΤΟΚΑΤΑΝΤΙCΑCΚΑΡΠΟΥC
ΜΗΕΠΙΕΥΙΤΟΕΤΕΡΑΝΜΗΓΗΜΗΘΑΛΑCCΑΚΑΡΠΟΝΕΝΕΝΚΑΙΤΟΜΗΧΑΡΑΝΜ..ΑΡΙΑΝ
ΕΧΕΙΤΟΑΥΤΟCΤΕΚΑΙΕΩCΑΠΟΛΟΙΤΟΚΑΙΤΑΠΑΡΑΥΤΟΥΠΑΝΤΑ.

B. Revers.

ΚΥΡΙΑΔΗΜΗΤΗΡΛΙΤΑΝΕΥΩCΕΠΑΘΩΝΑΔΙΚΑΕΠΑΚΟΥCΟΝΘΕΑΚΑΙΚΡΙΝΑΙ
ΤΟΔΙΚΑΙΟΝΙΝΑΤΟΥCΤΟΙΑΥΤΑΕΝΘΥΜΟΥΜΕΝΟΥCΚΑΙΚΑΤΑΧΑΙΡΟΝΤΕΚΑΙΑΙΤΙΑC
ΕΠΙΘΕΝΑΙΚΑΜΟΙΚΑΙΤΗΕΜΗΓΥΝΑΙΚΙΕΠΙΚΤΗCΙΚΑΙΜΙCΟΥCΙΝΜΑCΠΟΙΗCΑΙΑΥ
ΤΟΙCΤΑΔΙΝΟΤΑΤΑΚΑΙΧΑΛΕΠΩΤΕΡΑΔΥΝΑΒΑCΙΛΙCCΑΕΠΑΚΟΥCΟΝΗΜΙΝ
ΠΑΘΟΥCΙΚΟΛΑCΑΙΤΟΥCΗΜΑCΤΟΙΟΥΤΟΥCΗΔΕΩCΒΛΕΠΟΝΤΕC

Fig. 5. Lead Tablet from Amorgos; drawing after Homolle (1901).

The author begins, as he did on the first side, addressing Demeter by himself ("Lady Demeter, I supplicate you …"), but then he switches to the plural "us," whom he identifies as "my wife Epiktesis and me." The naming of the wife, but not the self, suggests again that in such sanctuary appeals to Demeter it was fitting for a female petitioner to identify herself, but not a male one. Versnel has pointed out, moreover, that both of these curses reflect the same situation, and Side B probably aims at neighbors who are enjoying the spectacle of this couple's misfortunes.[31] Although this tablet is lost, an early drawing of it (Fig. 5) shows that it, too, had a hole in its right margin, from which it was presumably hung vertically from a nail in Demeter's sanctuary.[32]

Finally, there is a nearly square lead tablet discovered on Delos in a well of a house at the foot of the "rue de l'Inopos." It has been dated to the 1st century BCE or CE[33] and there is a good chance it came from the nearby sanctuary of the Syrian goddess, which was probably destroyed during Mithridates' assault on the island in 88 BCE.[34] The first side reads:

> Lord Gods Sukonaioi, K . . , Lady Goddess Syria Sukona …, punish, show your power and direct your anger at whoever took, stole the necklace, at those who had any knowledge of it, at those who took part in it, whether man or woman.

Here we find a group of male gods, who are invoked in the company of the Syrian Goddess to curse a thief and those who know about the theft or took part in it. The tablet was apparently not folded or rolled up, suggesting that it could have been displayed in a sanctuary, although the drawing (Fig. 6) does

31. Versnel 1999, 125–129.

32. In fact, seven years after Homolle published the tablet, Delamarre 1908, republished the text in *Inscriptiones Graecae* and reported that the tablets were found near the church of St. Joannis, where there had been a temple of Demeter, Persephone, (the presumably chthonic) Zeus and Eubuleus.

33. Bruneau 1970, 649–655; SGD 58; Gager 88.

34. Siebert 1968. Irene Polinskaya (pers. comm.) suggests that the handwriting agrees with this date: "To me the text looks thoroughly Hellenistic, that is, the script is heavily influenced by papyri hands: lunate sigma (although there are some a little more angular) and epsilon, flowing alpha with leftward loop, extended right diagonal of lambda, alpha, and delta. There are no rectangular shapes (for normally rounded forms), or alpha with broken crossbar, or serifs … I see no problem with dating this text before 88 BCE.... But then, these letter forms do continue into the 1st century CE, so 1st cent BCE to 1st CE is a safe range…. The hand does not look unpracticed to me."

not show any holes for suspension. Despite the Semitic recipients of this plea,[35] it has all of the hallmarks of the Hellenistic Greek texts discussed above.[36]

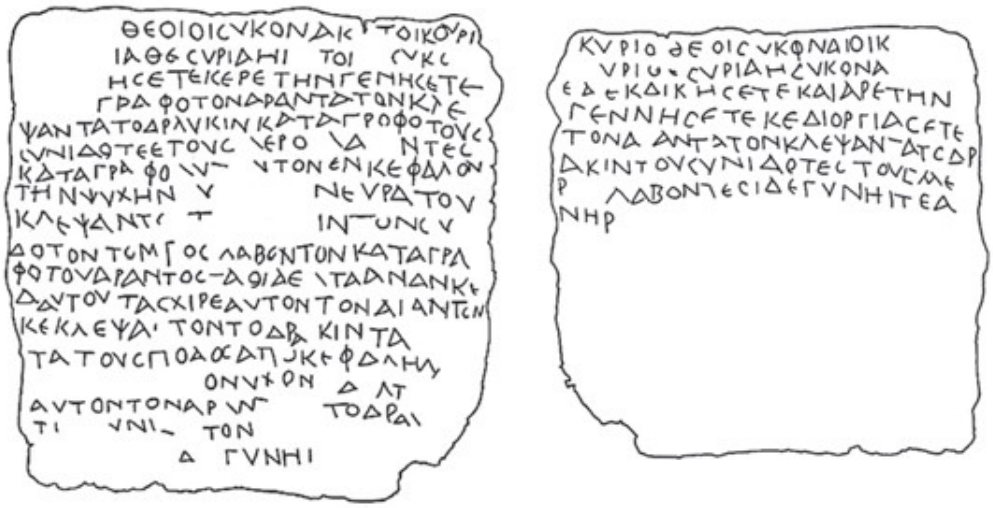

Fig. 6. Lead Tablet from Delos (obverse and reverse); drawing after Bruneau (1970).

35. The Syrian goddess is, of course, well known. As for her epithet *Sukona* and that of her male associates, *Sukonaioi*, Carolina López-Ruiz (pers. comm.) informs me that they are related to the Northwest Semitic divine name "Skn," which is attested in other proper names from the area and a few inscriptions, although nothing else is known about this god, whose name is part of the compound theophoric name Sanchouniathon preserved by Eusebios (*P.E.* 1.9.20), following Philon via Porphyrios, which is also attested in the Phoenician-Punic language (*sknytn* and *shknytn*) and adapted to Greek according to the same patterns evident in the Septuagint. The second part of his name exhibits the root *ytn*, "to give," frequently used in West Semitic proper names already in the second millennium BCE, and the name therefore means: "Skn gave [him]," or the like, similar to the Greek "Hero-dotos." See Baumgarten 1981, 42–45, 48.

36. It is not without interest, of course, that a curse uttered against an unknown thief by Micah's mother in the Hebrew Bible (Judges 17:1–4) seems to been an ancestor to the later Greek practice; see the end of this chapter and Faraone, Garnand, and López-Ruiz 2005.

TABLE 1. Average Letter Sizes (Width x Height in cm)

Letter	Artemisia	Kollura	Cnidus 1 (Artemeis)	Cnidus 2 (Hegemone)	Asia Minor	Sykona (A)	Sykona (B)
Mu	0.6 x 0.4	0.7 x 0.5	1.0 x 0.7	0.6 x 0.4	1.0 x 0.9	0.9 x 0.5	0.6 x 0.5
Tau	0.3 x 0.5	0.4 x 0.4	0.7 x 0.9	0.5 x 0.6	0.9 x 1.0	0.8 x 0.5	0.6 x 0.5
Delta	0.4 x 0.4	0.4 x 0.4	1.0 x 0.5	0.6 x 0.3	0.7 x 0.5	0.6 x 0.6	0.7 x 0.4
Rho	0.3 x 0.6	0.3 x 0.5	0.5 x 0.9	0.3 x 0.5	0.4 x 0.9	0.3 x 0.7	0.3 x 0.5
Alpha	0.4 x 0.4	0.4 x 0.4	1.0 x 0.7	0.6 x 0.4	1.0 x 0.7	0.7 x 0.6	0.6 x 0.5
Epsilon	0.4 x 0.6	0.4 x 0.5	0.7 x 1.0	0.3 x 0.4	0.6 x 1.0	0.5 x 0.7	0.3 x 0.5
Kappa	0.4 x 0.5	0.4 x 0.5	0.6 x 0.9	0.4 x 0.6	0.8 x 1.1	0.6 x 0.7	0.4 x 0.5

Suspension holes suggest, therefore, that with the possible exception of the tablet from Delos, all of these bronze and lead inscriptions, were displayed publicly in the sanctuary of a goddess, and we can assume from this that they were designed to be read by visitors. The relative size of their lettering allows us to draw the same conclusion about Artemisia's curse, as we can see in Table 1. In the first two columns, for example, the two oldest examples, the curses of Artemisia and Kollura, are roughly comparable, as is the curse of Hegemone from Cnidus in column 4. But the rest of the tablets in columns 3 and 5–7 (the Cnidian curse of Artemeis that still retains its suspension hole, the bronze tablet from Asia Minor, and the lead tablet from Delos addressed to the Syrian Goddess and her entourage) all have significantly larger letters. It would seem, in short, that the letters on the Vienna papyrus, although not as large as these examples, were nonetheless—like the curses of Kollura and Hegemone—large enough to be read by visitors to the sanctuary.

Some Possible Counterarguments

In closing, let me anticipate three possible counterarguments. First, there is very little extant evidence for the posting of papyri in sanctuaries as public

documents, as so often happened with texts engraved on metal and stone, but the latter are, of course, far more likely to survive antiquity. The closest parallel, in fact, was a papyrus found in Saqqâra near to the sanctuary of Oserapis and of similar date to Artemisia's curse: a sign inscribed in Greek that displays "epigraphic" letter forms and was probably attached by six nails to the door of an Egyptian priest's house.[37] More relevant, however, is a linen text (roughly 30 x 20 cm) that also came to light in Saqqâra attached to a pair of slender sticks that were apparently used to affix it to a wall as a public notice (Fig. 7); it is, in fact, a Demotic prayer to the god and it was found just inside the Western Gate of the main temple enclosure of the same sanctuary of Oserapis at Saqqara.[38] Like the Vienna papyrus, the letters are large and the text complains about theft:[39]

> The voice of the servant Onnofri (?) son of Tjaeyn (?), says (to) my great (lord) Oserapis (in) prayer. Irpy, daughter of Petosiri, she has taken my woman and app[ealed] against me (?). I have no protector apart from Oserapis. Do justice to her which is severe.

According to its editor, the prayer "was mounted somewhere in the great temple enclosure, where the god, and no doubt the neighbors, could be expected to read it".[40] We can, I think, easily imagine that Artemisia's curse, displayed in the same sanctuary of Oserapis in Saqqâra, could have also been suspended in similar fashion. There is also a well-known Demotic prayer to Thoth, this one on papyrus and probably from Hermopolis, in which two sons curse "a cruel father" for his lack of child support and other mistreatment; it ends with the following stipulations: "As for anyone in the world who will set this document on fire to destroy it, let him not escape from our plea, let him read it from the

37. Turner 1974, 239: "Unevenness of size between letters, and they are irregularly placed in relation to each other. Indeed, the same letter varies in size. The first E is 2.0 cm high, the second 2.6 cm. H M Π are usually broad and shallow, A Δ E I K P T are tall, E is rectangular, Σ has four movements (epigraphists would call it "4- barred"), Ω is epigraphic; the cross-bar of A is sometimes straight, sometimes formed of two strokes angled in relation to each other; the two obliques of both A and Δ are produced vertically after uniting; Θ is round with a central dot, Y a shallow cup above a long vertical; the two obliques of K are short in relation to the very high vertical to the center of which they cling." See also Cavallo and Maehler 2008, 28–29, no. 3: "the four holes along the top edge of its right-hand half, suggest that this notice was put up in a public place."

38. Ray 2005, 171–179.

39. Translation by Ray (2005). On p. 174 he reports that "the hand is large and sprawling."

40. Ray 2005, 177.

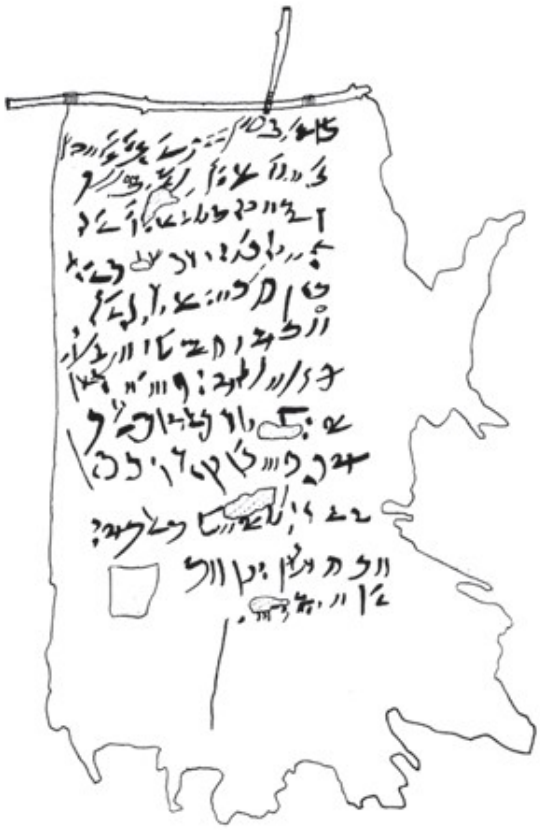

Fig. 7. Demotic petition to Oserapis with two sticks used for mounting on a wall; drawing after Ray (2005).

beginning to its end. Let that man be made to read it at the south entrance, the north entrance, the west entrance, and the east entrance of the place in which the gods rest".[41] The text here is not entirely clear, but it seems to suggest that copies of this prayer were supposed to be posted at all of the public entrances to the sanctuary.[42] These parallels suggest, of course, that in Saqqâra, at least, public notices were inscribed on papyrus or linen and hung up in the sanctuary of Oserapis, in the same way that bronze or lead curses against thieves were hung up or otherwise placed in public view in Greek sanctuaries of the late classical and Hellenistic periods.

A second potential counterargument is that Artemisia uses the verb *kata-tithêmi*, "to lay down" or "deposit," when she describes what she is doing with her papyrus, whereas the parallel texts from the Hellenistic period use verbs of

41. Translation of Hughes (1969), which is also quoted by Kotsifou (2016, 172, n. 27).

42. See the commentary in Hughes 1969, 54, where he says that although the repeated word for gate or door is secure, it is not exactly clear what the accursed person is to do there.

"setting up" (*anatithêmi*), a word that often implies public display. The verb *katatithêmi*, however, is a fairly standard verb for entrusting important documents to an archive or court, which in the latter case, at least, certainly does not mean they were kept private, but rather that they were part of the public record of a trial. The verb *katatithêmi*, moreover, may have been particularly appropriate for curses deposited in chthonic sanctuaries like that of Oserapis in Saqqâra, which was itself part of an enormous graveyard. We find this same verb of deposition (*katatithêmi*) repeated multiple times on a rather large (23 x 11.7 cm) lead tablet found in a well in the Athenian Agora; it was rolled, but not perforated with a nail, and dates to the 1st century CE (SGD 21):

> I register (καταγράφω) and deposit (κατατίθημι) with Pluto and the Fates and with Persephone and the Furies and with every harmful being. I deposit with Hekate Theetophagus(?); I deposit with the goddesses and gods of the underworld, and with Hermes the attendant (διάκονος); I deposit those who stole from the little house in the quarter/street called Acheloou—(who stole) a chain, three blankets (one woolen, white and new), gum arabic … linseed oil, and three white (objects): mastic, pepper, and bitter almonds. And I deposit also those who know about the theft and deny it and all of them who have received the items entered into the account (τὰ ἐνφερόμενα,) in this deposition. And you, mistress Hekate of the heavens, Hekate of the underworld, Hekate of the crossroads, Hekate the triple-faced, Hekate the single-faced, cut the hearts of the thieves or thief, who took the items entered into the account (i.e., "the things listed above"). Let the earth not be walkable, the sea not sailable; let there be no enjoyment of life, no increase of children, but may utter destruction visit them or him….

This is, of course, another prayer for revenge, because unlike many of the curses discussed earlier, it does not imagine that the stolen material will ever be returned. And, although there is a tendency to think that this tablet was deposited in the well in order to contact the gods of underworld, we have seen in the case of the Delian tablet that wells could also be a place for dumping such prayers for justice when they were no longer needed. And here, once again, we see the same pattern that we saw with the Cnidian and Memphite gods: a tribunal with a single god as chief and a plurality of subordinates, for example, "Pluto and the Fates" or "Persephone and the Furies." But in the end, it is Hekate, who will "cut the hearts of the thieves or thief" with her brazen sickle. The setting suggests, in fact, an underworld court, in which Pluto and

Persephone are judges, each with their own retinues, and in which Hekate plays the role of executioner.

The third possible counterargument, related to the last, is why does Artemisia, unlike the women in Cnidus, Calabria, and elsewhere, pray to a male god, Oserapis? To this last question, I agree with Henk Versnel that Oserapis and the gods worshipped with him in the necropolis would have easily been comprehensible to a Greek as a tribunal of gods similar to the judges in the Greek underworld, a feature that we also saw in some of the prayers for justice concerned with theft, for example, in the lead tablet from the Athenian agora quoted just above, which invoked Pluto with the Fates and Persephone with the Furies, in Kollura's bronze tablet that mentions an unnamed goddess (i.e., Persephone) and her *propoloi*, or in the Delian lead tablet addressed to Lady Goddess Syria Sykona and the Lords Gods Sykonaioi.

Conclusions

In the comparative chart in Table 2, we can see that the bronze and lead tablets share three important features: (1) they were all probably displayed publicly in goddess sanctuaries in the Cyclades or Asia Minor, with the exception of Kollura's Calabrian curse; (2) they are all authored by women or, in the case of the unnamed husband of Epiktesis, on their behalf; and (3) they all involve cases of theft and some display the hope that the stolen material will be returned. These parallels have helped us to see, moreover, that the papyrus text which Artemisia or her scribe composed in Ionian Greek and deposited in a sanctuary frequented by descendants of Carian and Ionian immigrants reflects this same East Greek tradition of female cursing, albeit transplanted to Lower Egypt. These findings, moreover, return us to the more general question: to what degree have Greek prayers for justice and Egyptian petitions influenced her curse? First of all, given the early 4th-century BCE date of Artemisia's curse, could it be that the Greek curses on metal are imitating an otherwise under-documented Egyptian tradition of cursing thieves publicly in order to recover stolen property? The linen curse posted at the gateway of the sanctuary of Oserapis in Saqqâra dates, for example, to just before the Ptolemaic period or even earlier. There is, more importantly, the probability that this tradition of sanctuary curses against thieves was invented in the Levant and then moved independently to both Egypt and Greece. If you consult the first item on the chart of curses (again in Table 2), you will see that there is a much earlier example of an oral curse against thieves in a passage in the Hebrew Bible, in which a woman named Micah stands in a sanctuary, curses out loud

the unknown person who stole her silver coins and consecrates the coins (or at least part of them) to the god of the sanctuary—a story in which the unknown thief identifies himself and returns the money.[43]

The close dating of these Egyptian and Greek practices allows us, then, to speak only of correlation, not causation or precedence,[44] but it is probable that both traditions were in play, when Artemisia, a Greek woman living in lower Egypt was faced with a situation similar to those faced by women in East Greece: she used a native Greek formula that was still remembered among the women descended from Greek mercenaries living in Egypt and she composed her curse in the Greek language. But she also chose to make her curse public by inscribing it on a papyrus in large letters and setting it up in a Memphite sanctuary where she presumably saw similar native Egyptian petitions posted on the walls in linen and papyrus sheets. The perception of Ritner and Ray that in her curse Artemisia imitates Egyptian idioms or copies them verbatim is, of course, understandable, given her focus on grave goods, tombs and the burial of children and parents, as well as her invocation of Oserapis and the other mummified animals at Memphis. The *content* of the Vienna papyrus is, in short, undeniably Egyptian. But in its rhetorical *form*—especially in its plea that the father "not find Oserapis propitious" and in its botched combination of the conditional blessing and curse—the papyrus of Artemisia clearly reflects a traditional curse displayed publicly by Greek women in sanctuaries—usually of Demeter and/or Persephone—and most often in late Classical and Hellenistic times.

43. Faraone, Garland, and López-Ruiz 2005. The story is broadly dated to the 7th–5th centuries; the unknown thief turned out to be Micah's son, who overhears the curse and returns the money.

44. Endreffy (2010, 53) comes close to this conclusion: "Demotic letters to gods might have also belonged to the same, international tradition as the Greek (and Latin) judicial prayers, and perhaps also played a role in their development."

TABLE 2. Comparative Chart

Reference	Plaintif	Addressee	Place (Date)	Crime	Intervention	Display?
Judges 17.1-4	Micah's Mother	Jahweh	Israel (7-5 cent BCE)	theft of silver coins	consecration of coins to divinity	speech in a sanctuary
UPZ I 1 (papyrus)	Artemisia	Lord Oserapis and the gods With him	Memphis (4 cent BCE)	theft of grave-goods	dedication of the text (κατέθηκεν)	placed in a sanctuary (in Ionic dialect)
DT no. 212 (bronze)	Kollyra	"the goddess"	Calabria (3 cent BCE)	theft of gold coins	consecration of coins to divinity (ἀνιαρίζει)	public inscription (nail hole) in a sanctuary (in Locrian dialect)
DT no. 2 (lead)	Artemeis	Lady Demeter, Kore, and the gods w/ them	Cnidus (2-1 cent BCE)	theft of clothes	consecration of thief to divinity (ἀνειροῖ)	public inscription (nail hole) placed in a sanctuary
DT no. 4a (lead)	Hegemone	Lady Demeter, Kore, and the gods w/ them	Cnidus (2-1 cent BCE)	theft of bracelet	dedication of bracelet to divinity (ἀνατίθημι)	public inscription placed in a sanctuary
MH (1978) 241-44 (bronze)	anonymous	Mother of the gods	Asia Minor? (1 BCE – 1 CE)	theft of gold coins	dedication of coins to divinity (ἀνατίθημι)	public inscription (nail hole) probably placed in a sanctuary
SGD no. 58 (lead)	anonymous	Lady Syria & the Lords Gods who inhabit Sykona	Delos (1 BCE – 2 CE)	theft of necklace	registration for revenge	public inscription? (unrolled, inscribed on both sides; found in a well)

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Afterword

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In *Curses in Context III* we have adopted an innovative approach to the study of curses by shifting scholarly attention away from the contents and language of curse tablets, a perspective that has tended to produce a somewhat homogenized view of them as a magical genre. In this volume, in contrast, we have focussed on the variety of their material forms and archaeological contexts that for the first time allow contrasts to be drawn between geographical areas, revealing local and possibly broader regional patterns. This achievement is in no small part due to the conception of the *Curses in Context* project that deliberately sought to present side by side contemporaneous cursing practices (Classical and Hellenistic) attested in different regions of the Greek world. This Afterword offers some observations on the picture that emerges from this collection of studies in three areas: (i) the materiality of curse tablets, (ii) the archaeological contexts of their deposition, and (iii) the different regional patterns that emerge.

The materiality of curses appears in the volume in three types of media: a very familiar one of lead (as both tablets and effigies), a mostly unfamiliar one of fired clay (as complete ceramic vessels), and as a rare surviving example of papyrus (the so-called 'Curse of Artemisia') that may have been displayed as a public inscription. The archaeological contexts of deposition reveal the localisation of cursing activities within specific social topographies (mortuary, residential/industrial, and cultic); and the geographic distribution of curses analysed in this volume suggests peculiar regional patterns in Attica, the Cyclades, and the Black Sea.

The first four chapters represent Attica. Chapters 2 and 4 add to our knowledge of lead curses by providing precious carefully documented archaeological contexts from recent excavations in the vicinity of Athens – at ancient cemeteries in the Kynosarges area and Piraeus. In the Ayios Dionysios cemetery in Piraeus, we see a very rare case of a tomb with a preserved skeleton that was apparently buried holding lead curse tablets in each hand, leading to the conclusion that the relatives of the deceased must have used the occasion of the funeral as an opportunity for cursing (chapter 4). In the Kynosarges cemetery, a no less tantalising find of two inscribed lead effigies (male and

female) that were fused together back to back and placed on top of the grave tumulus, emphasises the importance of deposition in proximity to a grave, but not necessarily inside it (chapter 2). The same observation applies to the Kerameikos cemetery, where curses found inside graves are rare, but at the same time, specific patterns of clustering are clearly discernible – proximity to the burials of untimely dead is a distinct preference in the Classical and Hellenistic periods (chapter 1). Lead curses, while predominant in Attica, are not the only known variety; ceramic curses, on occasion, demonstrate quite elaborate forms (chapter 3), yet the local specificity is evident in the divergence of deposition contexts: the former mostly in mortuary settings, and the latter exclusively, so far at least, in residential and industrial. In addition, a particular variety of Attic lead curses - inscribed effigies - might be another local trend that came to be exported to the Aegean islands, accompanied by diversification in the metals used (chapter 5, Appendix).

The four additional chapters (5-8) look beyond Attica to the Cyclades, Peloponnese, Black Sea and Egypt. Curses inscribed on complete ceramic shapes emerge as vehicles for cursing in at least two broad regions of the classical Greek world: Attica and the Black Sea (chapters 3 and 6), and are attested there in the same periods when lead tablets are also and in fact predominantly used. Yet there are important regional variations in the choice of ceramic shapes (bowls versus chytridia), in the placement of the inscriptions (inside versus outside surfaces), as well as in the contexts of deposition (mortuary versus residential/industrial) and in the ways they were ritually handled (intact shapes, perhaps placed in inverted position versus upright deposition but punctured and nailed to the ground). Olbia Pontica and Apollonia Pontica are the two sites that have so far yielded finds of ceramic bowls inscribed with curses in mortuary contexts (chapter 6). The apparent similarity of the cursing media point to a local or regional pattern that awaits further analysis, as the material from Apollonia remains unpublished. A cross-regional link, however, appears between the sites as far apart as Olbia, Nemea, Athens, and Memphis, where curses have been found at cultic sites, the latter certainly being very different in character: what might be a shrine of Demeter at Olbia, hero shrines in Nemea and Athens, a sanctuary of Oserapis in Saqqara, Memphis. In Olbia and Athens, in particular, the use of cultic sites for deposition of curses raises the question of choice: one could, it would appear, choose EITHER a burial site OR a sanctuary in their residential areas, since both locations are attested, and it would seem important to know what determined the cursers' choices of one or the other. While some form of communication with the power expected to effect a curse is attested at both mortuary and cultic sites (e.g. a ceramic

curse in letter form addressing Leimonios at Apollonia Pontica (in chapter 6 and an invocation of Palaimon in a curse found at his sanctuary in Athens in chapter 7), sanctuaries more often than not attracted the type of curse that is identified as 'prayer for justice' (Athens, Memphis – chapters 7, 8). It may be the case, therefore, that at burial sites, the addressee of request for a curse was perceived to be located further away from the human supplicant (requiring mail delivery) than at cultic sites, where a deity's presence could be expected to be more proximate or immediate.

In mortuary contexts in Attica, depositions inside, on top of, and in the immediate vicinity of a grave are attested. In Olbia Pontica, securely attested contexts confirm deposition in the top soil of tumuli (perhaps comparable to Attica, in chapter 2) and on the ground in the immediate vicinity of burials. In residential and industrial quarters in Athens, curses were typically placed below floor levels, and usually in association with pyre deposits, which themselves are thought to have served as a form of purification in cases of sudden/untimely deaths (chapter 3). In cultic contexts, hero shrines (Athens, Nemea) were chosen as suitable locations for cursing apparently because of those specific heroes' untimely and/or violent deaths (chapter 7), and sanctuaries inside or on the border of necropoleis (Memphis, Olbia Pontica) also suggest that proximity to burials was important (chapters 6, 8). In fact, all deposition contexts, whether mortuary, residential or cultic, in one way or another, highlight the sphere of death and of the dead as an umbrella concept that permeates cursing practice. If proximity to the dead seems to unite the seemingly varied deposition contexts, certain differences in the ritual means of cursing suggest peculiar local patterns. In the Athenian Kerameikos, for example, further localised foci emerge as effective deposition contexts, such as sections of roads near the gates (both the Sacred Gate and the Dipylon) and wells (chapter 1). The powers of foot traffic and deep water seem, in short, to serve as supplements to the potency already present in such a place as necropolis. The curse deposited in a well within a cemetery may have been thought to carry a double charge of potency. The power of rituals that brought one in contact with the dead was also apparently transferrable outside of defined mortuary realms, as we find the so-called pyre deposits (common at gravesides) appearing in residential and industrial buildings in Athens, possibly as rituals of purification for accidental and untimely deaths that occurred on the premises; and sometimes curses are found alongside such pyres (chapter 3): here, the dead are away from the site of curses' deposition, and yet if it is right that those were places where death took place, then a pyre deposit appears to function as effectively as a graveside for cursing. The timing of death and burial, as an occasion for

cursing, would seem to have been important: many curses would have been deposited close to the time of the funeral. In the context of shrines of heroes, however, at least of those whose mythical lives ended in untimely deaths (such as Opheltes and Palaimon), the remote time of their deaths apparently did not lessen their appeal as suitable sites for curse deposition (chapter 7). In turn, sanctuaries of immortal deities situated at the sites of necropoleis apparently acted as suitable locations because the deities may have been thought of as inhabiting or capable of visiting the underworld (chapters 6, 8).

The new data presented in this volume on precise archaeological contexts for curses in mortuary settings prompts further venues of consideration. For instance, the statistics from the Athenian Kerameikos show that while the cemetery accommodated thousands of burials across all periods, it has yielded only 110 curses so far (chapter 1), and even though they cluster significantly around the burials of the untimely dead, it is also clear that not every untimely death was utilised as an occasion for cursing. Burial sites across Attica reveal child burials (always untimely) and those of women of child-bearing age (who may have died in childbirth), as well as those of young men who died in battle (see e.g. Papadopoulou 2017), that are in the vast majority of cases not accompanied by depositions of curses.[1] In addition, the Kerameikos curses might represent a significant proportion of all curses in Attica (about 110 out of about 350 curses known from Attica and Athens, according to the *TheDeMa* database), which raises questions about the special status of the Kerameikos and its perceived relevance to the practice of cursing. In addition, the repeated choice of specific sites for the deposition of curses emerges, in the analysis of several scholars in this collection, as a result of some local tradition (chapters 1, 4), an instance of what might be called 'local knowledge'. Finally, it should be noted that a nuanced evaluation of contexts of cursing in the future will also have to be carefully correlated with the changing picture of funerary topography, where several analyses of recent archaeological excavations in

1. I would like to thank the anonymous peer reviewer for pointing out that death for women in childbirth and for men in battle, while possibly considered untimely, would not have been unusual and would not have been expected to result in restless dead, whereas death of a maiden before marriage, and of a youth before their first battle, that is, before either had a chance to fulfil their potential, would have. In that regard, it would be interesting to look in our archaeological record for burials of adolescents, both girls and boys, to see whether they attract more curses than burials of adults. The general observation, however, would not be likely to change, namely that only a small proportion of "eligible" deposition sites seem to have been actually used, underpinning the need for a careful and nuanced analysis of those that were.

classical Attica and elsewhere suggest that the worlds of the living and the dead were much more closely interwoven spatially than has been previously thought: cemeteries and private burial sites were not always far removed from residential quarters and in many places, houses, as well as public spaces such as the agora, were located in close proximity to burials (Papadopoulou 2017, Steinhauer 2017, Snodgrass 2016). This spatial proximity of the living and the dead should be taken into consideration when we build historical reconstructions relying on the presumed secrecy, marginality, and danger involved in the practice of depositing curses in mortuary contexts.

We expect that readers will find in the present collection many insights into Greek practice of curse tablets relevant to their particular fields of interest. We also acknowledge that the present collection can only be a beginning and that further detailed studies of the contexts of cursing, especially of archaeological contexts, are needed to improve our understanding of this phenomenon in the full range of its forms, local specificities, and historical patterns of use.

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