A Silver Votive Plaque with a Judicial Prayer against Slander

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The inscribed silver plaque published here belongs, at least marginally, to a well-established Gattung of religio-magical texts that seeks to redress the grievances of the petitioners against persons who have stolen clothing, money, or other valuable properties—or felt that they have been otherwise wronged—by prayerfully asking specific non-chthonian deities to render justice to the aggrieved victims.1 Such ‘Prayers for Justice’, usually written on lead tablets in either Greek or Latin, have been carefully analyzed in recent scholarship by H. S. Versnel and R. S. O. Tomlin, among others—the latter of whom has produced a valuable corpus of the tabellae from the Aquae Sulis at Bath.2 The texts, though showing some

1 The piece is in a private collection in California, USA. In October 2006 it formed part of an exhibition on ancient silver at the San Francisco Fall Fair. I wish to thank the owner for the opportunity to publish the piece here and for providing the excellent photographs. The once heavily patinated and damaged tablet was restored by Irene Shekhtman of New York. Although the exact provenance is not known, some evidence suggests an origin in western Asia Minor (Phrygia, Lycia), or possibly Thrace; see discussion below. I would also like to thank Christopher A. Faraone, Robert W. Daniel, Werner Eck, and the anonymous reader of GRBS for helpful comments in the preparation of this text, none of whom can be held responsible for any shortcoming herein contained.

conceptual and linguistic correlations with known ritual im-
precations, have proven distinct from the usual curse tablets
(κατάδεσµοι, defixiones), although there are enough ‘hybrid’ cases
to propose a kind of trajectory from true curses, to ‘borderline’
examples, on through to full-fledged Prayers for Justice.3 The
border area examples refer to cases, for instance, where the
Praxidikai (figures akin to the Erinyes) are summoned for help
in rendering justice, with the promise that the petitioner will
“bring an offering of rejoicing,” as a votum.4

A group of fourteen lead tablets excavated at Cnidus in Asia
Minor, and dedicated to Demeter in her temple there, seems
representative of the kind of judicial prayers under discussion
and which Versnel seems particularly concerned to address.5 He
cites, as one example, an archetypical text from among that
group which he describes as “clearly formulaic”:6

Artemis “dedicates” (ἀνιεροῖς) to Demeter and Kore and all the
gods with Demeter, the person who would not return to me the
articles of clothing, the cloak and the stole, that I left behind,
although I have asked for them back. Let him bring them in

(Bergen 1999) 125–162, Fluch und Gebet. Magische Manipulation versus religiöses
Flehen? (Berlin 2009), and “Prayers for Justice, East and West: New Finds and
Publications since 1990,” in R. Gordon et al. (eds.), Magical Practice in the Latin
West (Leiden 2010) 275–354. See also J. G. Gager, Curse Tablets and Binding
and Vengeance” 175–199; C. A. Faraone and J. L. Rife, “A Greek Curse
against a Thief from the Koutsongila Cemetery at Roman Kenchreai,” ZPE

3 Versnel, in Magika Hiera, esp. 64–68. Tomlin, Tabellae Sulis 63, had
already noticed that these juridical types of texts “all derive from a sense of
injustice: the thief ‘deserves’ what is coming to him. The tablets are petitions
for justice, not magical spells. They are addressed to respectable deities, not
demons.”

4 Versnel, in Magika Hiera 64.

5 C. T. Newton, A History of Discoveries at Halicarnassus, Cnidus, and Branchidae
(London 1863) II 719–745; A. Audollent, Defixionum Tabellae (Paris 1904) nos.
1–13.

6 Versnel, in Magika Hiera 72: Newton, History of Discoveries no. 82; Audol-
 lent, DefixTab 2; W. Blümel, I.K. Knidos 148.

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person (ἀνενέγκα[ι] αὐτός) to Demeter even if it is someone else who has my possessions, let him burn, and let him publicly confess (πεπρη[ι]μένος ἐξ[ι]γορεύ[ι]ων) his guilt. But may I be free and innocent of any offense against religion ... if I drink and eat with him and come under the same roof with him. For I have been wronged (ἀδίκημαι γάρ), Mistress Demeter.

Examples such as these clearly combine elements of personal punishment, retaliation, and revenge, along with references to the goddess, or god, righting the injury (ἀδικία) of the petitioner with threats of publicly exposing the culprits’ crimes by means of divine intervention. But here elements of the traditional curse (“let him burn”), as often found in the standard defixiones, also occur; and there is a peculiar reference to the petitioner attempting to exonerate herself from unstated misdemeanors, as if her reputation or credibility were at stake. Another Cnidian tablet (see 144 below) suggests that slanderous charges—such as those related to black magic—that were actually levelled against the petitioners of the ‘juridical prayers’ may be the motivation of their composition. In the end, such texts also offer promises of votive gifts on the petitioners’ behalf, should their names be exonerated.7

An unpublished first- or second century CE tablet from Athens shows that such damages caused by magic or witchery (φαρμακεία) must have been a common concern of judicial prayers, and related magical texts, when it curses “whoever gave a pharmakon to Hyacinthos”;8 and a late-Roman tablet in the Ashmolean Museum curses, as a form of counter-measure, “whoever bewitched (κατέδεσεν) me, whether woman, man, slave, free, foreigner, townsman,”9 although in these examples

7 Versnel, in Magika Hiera 65, 70.
9 Jordan, GRBS 26 (1985) 197; Versnel, in Magika Hiera 64. A second-century CE funerary inscription from Alexandria (SB 1323; quoted 152 below), belonging to Arsinoe, also refers to persecuting “anyone who may
the petitioners are not themselves the ones charged with magic or poisoning. A pair of identical second-century BCE marble tablets from Rheneia also call upon the Highest God to avenge whoever murdered “miserable Herakleia” by deceit or witchery \( \text{(ἔπὶ τοὺς δόλωι φονεύσαντας ἢ φαρμακεύσαντας)} \).

Of the known judicial prayers in Greek and Latin, almost all are written on lead, with a few of the Latin ones on pewter (an alloy of tin and lead), so that the text presented here, written on silver, proves exceptional. This also aligns the text, to some degree, with the productive collection of magical phylaktēria written on gold and silver lamellae—texts that also, from time to time, present counter-magical spells. Ours, however, is not a magical amulet at all, and indeed shows only a peripheral connection with the world of magic per se, in that it also addresses the issue of a charge of poisoning/magic \( \text{(φαρμάκου ἐίνεκεν, 4–5)} \) levelled against the woman who engraved the plaque—a charge that proves to be the very motivation for the tablet’s composition: the silver tabella is, in fact, a votive offering, both recording the woman’s petition and simultaneously serving as the promised gift to the god. A first-century CE lead tablet from Centuripae in Sicily provides a persuasive parallel: “Mistress, destroy Eleutheros. If you avenge me \( \text{(ἐγδεικήσῃς)}, \) I shall make a silver palm, if you eliminate him from the human race.”

Although the language of this curse is egregiously detrimental to its intended target in the manner of the standard defixiones, it preserves the language of vengeance \( \text{ἐκδικέω} (= \text{vindicō)} \)—a technical term in the Prayers for Justice—and provides a promise of a votive gift to the goddess (addressed as Mistress), features that are not typical of the usual curse tablets, as Versnel points out. The text of the votive plaque published here preserves some of the

have bewitched (or: poisoned) her”: Versnel, in World of Ancient Magic 130.

10 I.Dèlos 2543: Gager, Curse Tablets no. 87; Versnel, in World of Ancient Magic 134 (and discussion below).

11 R. Kotansky, Greek Magical Amulets I (Opladen 1994), nos. 32.33, 36.14–16, 46.10–14, 52.95–109, with commentary.


13 Versnel, in Magika Hiera 65, 67, and in Magical Practice 279–280.
language of the curse tablets as well, albeit in a much milder form, and further betrays the selfsame use of juridical language, although its function seems to be somewhat different from that of the juridical prayers on lead.

Another, final category of texts related to the lead juridical invocations, but more public in nature, are those written on limestone stelai in northeastern Lydia (Maeonia/Katakekau-mene) and nearby areas of Phrygia. These so-called ‘Confession Inscriptions’, of the second- to-third century CE, were set up in public to publicize the writers’ admissions of guilt (ἐξομολογέω), after the intervention of punishment (κολάζω, κόλασις) at the hands of the local deities; to these neighborhood gods or goddesses, the confessor would then leave elaborate praises, or aretalogies, as a form of reparation, or appeasement, of the deities. Such stelai, recording, in at least one case, an allegation of poisoning or black magic, along with the attendant slander and gossip that follows such a charge, offer another valuable set of comparanda for the silver tablet presented here.

Even some of the “clearly formulaic” Cnidian tablets show the same confessional aspects as the Lydian stelai. Several in particular also begin with a formula that affords particularly close parallels to the plea of our text; they further demonstrate that the concern is no longer stolen property. The opening words of one read: [ἀνα]τίθησι Δάματι και Κούραι τὸν κατ’ ἐμο[ῦ


15 Versnel, in Magika Hiera 75, writes of “slander, especially with regard to allegations of poison or black magic,” with special reference to the case of Tatias who was charged with giving a φάρσκον to her son-in-law, who was driven mad. As Versnel translates (76), she “placed ἀραί (curses) in the temple, as if to show that she was not guilty of the transgressions attributed to her, although she was aware of her guilt. The gods subjected her to a punishment that she did not escape.” Text Petzl, “Beichtinschriften” no. 69 = TAM V 318 = E. N. Lane, CMRDM I no. 44; cf. the commentary below.
εἱπ[α]ντα ὅτι ἐγὼ τῶι ἐµῶι ἀνθρώπῳ γλυφομαι ποιῶ, “I dedicate to Demeter and Kore the [person] who said that I worked magic spells against my own husband.”16 This is the mainspring concern addressed in the votive plaque presented here, although in these Cnidian examples, the accused person (always a woman) who engraves the tablet is forced to make a public dedication—and confession—to the goddess, having been exposed by being struck by afflictions, such as debilitating fever.17 In the case of stolen property, the victim temporarily hands over ownership to the supplicated deities, and the culprits, either by torments similar to that visited upon Antigone, or by mental vexations of some kind, return the stolen items, whereupon the happy owners pay restitution to the deities in the form of a portion of their recovered property, or as votive offerings. In accusations of magic, or poisoning, it seems that the accused, at least in the Cnidian

16 Newton, History of Discoveries, no. 85–86; DefixTab no. 4.1–2; I.K. Knidos 150. The phrase ποιεῖν φάρµακα is ambiguous, and can also mean “to make poisons.” See 151 below.

17 I provide here the translation (with adaptations) from Gager, Curse Tablets no. 89, Side A, of the text of Newton, History of Discoveries no. 81 = DefixTab no. 1 = I.K. Knidos 147: “I, Antigone, make a dedication (ἐν ἄνευροί) to Demeter, Kore, Pluto and all the gods and goddesses with Demeter. If I have given poison/spells to Asclepiades or contemplated in my soul doing anything evil to him; or if I have called a woman to the temple, offering her a mina and a half for her to remove him from among the living (16–18 ἵνα αὐτόν ἐκ τῶν ζώτων ἄρῃ), (if so) may Antigone, having been struck by a fever (21 περιπλήσω), go up to Demeter and make confession (22 ἐξοµολογήσε, and may she not find Demeter merciful but instead suffer great torments (26–28 μεγάλας βασανιζοµένα. If anyone has spoken to Asclepiades against me or brought forward the woman, by offering her copper coins…” In this case it is not her own husband that Antigone is accused of poisoning; instead, she has been accused of hiring another woman to have the person killed. The participial περιπλήσω is uncertain; Versnel, in Magika Hiera 73 and in World of Ancient Magic 152 (with n.90), is correct to take it from πίµπριμ (“burn”) and refer to an affliction by fever; cf. H. S. Versnel, “Peprêmenos: The Cnidian Curse Tablets and Ordeals of Fire,” in R. Hägg (ed.), Ancient Greek Cult Practices from the Epigraphic Evidence (Stockholm 1994) 145–154. Newton, History of Discoveries 726–729, took the participle to come from πέρνηµι (“to sell”) and to refer to the person being sold into temple slavery.
material, are the ones themselves who write up the prayers and invite fever, and additional afflictions, to be brought down upon their own heads, should such accusations of magic against them prove true.\(^\text{18}\) With our silver tablet, however, there seems to be no reference to torments other than the ‘affliction’ of gossip that has been visited upon Pompeia; she, as a victim of rumor, instead “hands over” (παραδίδωµι) the maligning gossipers to the god, for proper justice.

Thus, both the Cnidian-type judicial prayers, and the ‘confession’ texts, along with other kinds of prayers for justice on lead, provide a valuable set of comparanda for our votive plaque, which, nevertheless, still remains in many respects sui generis. But like the confessional inscriptions from Lydia and Phrygia, ours is also a public document that had been set up, most probably, in some sanctuary, or area sacred, to the god invoked (Θεὸς Μέγας); it was meant to be read publicly by passersby and was not something folded, rolled up, or pierced with a nail. But unlike the confessional texts, the woman here accused of magic (or poisoning) seems in no mood to confess her crimes; she, rather, turns to the Great God “who hears prayers” (ἐπήκοος) in order to exonerate herself from any accusations of malfeasance.

The tablet, which has been restored, was originally somewhat crumpled and bent, with much damage to the lower right-hand corner, along the bottom, and at each of the other corners. There is no evidence of original suspension-holes, but these may have been in the missing corners. The silver surface, before restoration, had not oxidized much from sulfides in the air but did carry a greenish-brown patina, which has been removed.

\(^{18}\) In the Cnidian tablet DefixTab no. 1, it is the woman herself who, accused of magic, is enfevered (πεπρηµένα) and invokes Demeter’s additional disfavor and visiting of torments (βασανίζοµενα) upon herself, if guilty; whereas in the ‘theft’ versions at Cnidus (no. 2.Α.13–16 = I.K. Knidos 148), the engraver rather calls down upon another—the thief—the same “burning and confession” (τις/ἄλλος […] / [πεπηρηµένος ἕξισµορεύον], in order to bring him to justice. But in tablet no. 4, the woman invokes fever upon the man who has accused her of magic (see further in the commentary below).
Where possible, especially along the bottom edge, the tablet has
been restored with filler, in one case affecting the legibility of the
K of the last word, where much of the edge had been torn away.
The sheet, thicker and larger than the usual magical lamellae,
was engraved by a stippling technique, using a sharp stylus.
Although the tablet does not appear to have been folded, the
punching of the letters may have caused a noticeable horizontal
ridging between the lines. Delicate, straight borders once ran
along all edges, including those around the outline of the tabula
ansata handles, each of which encloses a stippled ivy leaf, with
tendrils. Ivy leaves also occur at the ends of lines 2 and 5, and at
the beginning of lines 12 and 14. The two on the right side,
which are smaller, simply serve as space-fillers for single letters
at the ends of the lines to avoid improper word-divisions. The
two large ones at the beginnings of lines 12 and 14, instead,
demarcate sense-divisions, essentially separating out two inde-
pendent paragraphs or sentences.

Tabula Ansata. Silver. H. 6.7 cm., W. 11.5. Second century CE
(letter-forms). Provenance unknown (Asia Minor or Thrace?).
Private collection (California). Figure 1.

Θεῷ [Μεγά]λῳ ἐπηκόῳ ἀνεθέμην
dex[i]αν πρὸς τὸ τινάς με κατα- β
λαλίν ὡς ἐμοῦ τὸν ἐμὸν σύνβι-
on ὁδικήσαντα φαρμάκον εἶνε-
κεν | · οὖν ὥρα ἑγὼ τοιοῦτον ἐ- β
τι ἐνενοήθην ἢ ἐπραξά ἢ δι’ ἐ-
μοῦ ἀλ<λ>ος τις {ο} σχοίν, πάντας

υμάς κεχολωμένους, τοῦς’ ἐπιφη-
μιζόντας με τοιαύτην· πα-
ραδίδωμι δέ σοι τοὺς θρυλοῦν-
tας με ἑπὶ τῇ τοιαύτῃ φήμη[η].

Πο νπηεία Γαία ματρώνα εἶν[ε]-
κεν ἐγδικίας χάριν ἀνεθηκ[α].

β διεκ[θ]ορκῶ.

3 καταλαλεῖν 3–4 σύμβι/ον 4 sc. ὁδικήσασαν 7 σχοίν
11 Πομπηία 13 ἐκδικίας 14 διεξορκῶ
To the [Great] God who listens to prayers I have offered up a pledge in respect of the following: certain ones are slandering me, as if I were the one having (4) harmed my husband in consequence of a spell (or: poison). Therefore I—whether I ever conceived of such a thing, or did it, or whether through me some other person might have—(8) (hand over) all of you who are enraged, the ones speaking against me, as such. And I hand over to you those babbling against me with such a rumor as this. (12) I, Pompeia Gaia, a lady (or: Pompeia Gaia Matrona), for the sake of vindication, have offered (this favor).

I thoroughly administer (this) oath.

Figure 1: Silver plaque (conserved)

This plea of Pompeia’s, initially dedicated as a kind of surety (1–2), soon turns to the tangible issue at hand: it is Pompeia herself who has been accused of having poisoned, or bewitched, her spouse; an unnamed group has become enraged at her and begun to spread malicious rumors (2–5). Pompeia counters with a three-pronged rebuttal that clearly imitates the specifics of the charge against her, namely that she had either thought up the
crime, carried it out herself, or had someone else do it for her (5–7). As a consequence, Pompeia appeals to the god by handing the maligners over to the deity, for justice (7–11). She then offers up a promissory votive (12–13)—evidently the plaque itself—along with declaring a solemn oath (14).

1 Θεῷ [Μεγάλῳ ἐπηκόῳ: One reference to something close to this formula, from a search in the Packard Humanities database, yields only μεγίστῳ ἐπηκόῳ θεῷ Σομενδεί[ν] (I.K. Arykanda 82; cf. CIfjud. II 1432); otherwise we find ἐπηκόῳ in reference to Zeus (e.g. IGLSyr Ί 569, I.Porto 12, with various epithets), or the “Highest God” (IGBulg 2 1431; IDR ΊΙΙ.2 222, 223; CIRB 64, 1260, etc.). The epithet μέγας used with θεός (usually identified) is fairly common (especially in respect of the Samothracian Θεοὶ Μεγάλοι). At a small temple in Istros there was found a dedication to the Great God (I.Histriae 145); and at Dionysopolis, the priesthood of the Θεὸς Μέγας, held by Akornion, son of Dionysios, is distinct from his priesthood of the Theoi Megaloi. A singular Μέγας θεός, with no other name attached, may refer to a particular local deity. For the notion of the gods giving ear to


20 Cole, Theoi Megaloi 73–74, with 145 no. 11.9, 19, ca. 48 BCE.

21 A coin-type of Odessos, which names a ΘΕΟΥ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ, also points to a distinct deity. In fact, the three cities Istros, Dionysopolis, and Odessos that preserve references to the Θεὸς Μέγας are all located on the west coast of the Black Sea in Thrace. Cole, Theoi Megaloi 76, rightly argues that this Theos Megas must be a local divinity not directly associated with the widespread Samothracian Theoi Megaloi or their mystery cult: “Theos Megas is traditionally represented as a bearded figure, sometimes carrying a cornucopia, and he is often compared to the Greek Hades” (76 with n.614, citing the numismatic evidence). See also Bruno Müller, Megas Theos (Halle 1913). For the identity of this regional Great God with the Thraco-Dacian deity Derzalas see Ž. Gočeva, “Der Kult des Theos Megas-Darzalas in Odessos,”
prayer, note the use of ἐπάκουσον in a juridical curse from Amorgos.\(^{22}\)

ἀνεθέμην: the 2nd aor. middle 1st pers. sg., which is uncommon (contrast line 13), with -HN in ligature.\(^{23}\) The verb ἀνατίθημι is otherwise commonplace; for its occurrence in juridical prayers see the Cnidian tablets, and Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 73–74 and *World of Magic* 145, citing a text beginning, “I consecrate to the Mother of the Gods (ἀνατίθημι Μητρὶ θεῶν) the gold pieces that I have lost.”\(^{24}\)

2 δεξ[ή]ν: δεξιὰν (sc. χεῖρα), as a form of “pledge” or “assurance” (cf. LSJ s.v. 2). In Xenophon, *Anab.* 2.4.1, it is used with the verb φέρειν in reference to “bearing pledges to some others (sc. a Persian delegation) from the (Persian) King” (καὶ δεξιάς ἐνίοις παρὰ βασιλέως ἔφερον; cf. *Anab.* 7.3.1). Here the pledge is used with ἀνατίθημι (cf. further LSJ s.v., for φυλάσσειν and τηρεῖν). This is not the normal language of prayer (sc. εὐχήν) as found in the juridical pleas. On the usually lead judicial prayers (in both Greek and Latin)—where, for example, clothes or property are stolen—the victims promise votive gifts of the returned wares, if recoverable, to the gods addressed. Here, the sense must be proleptic, in that the wife is making a pledge that if her grievance is addressed and needs met, then the silver plaque on which her request has been made will be presented to the god. The unusual use of ἀνατίθημι with δεξιάν shows the dual nature


\(^{23}\) As suggested by the anonymous reader for *GRBS*. The curvilinear shape of the eta seems to show ἀνεθέμην “we have dedicated,” plausibly in reference to the husband and wife. For the uncommon use of either, cf. ἀνεθέμην in *L.Leukopetra* 111 and 129; *IG X*. 2 66; *IGBulg* II 801; *TAM IV* 67, etc.; ἀνεθέμην (restored) only in *IGBulg* III.1 1445.

\(^{24}\) Published by C. Dunand, “Sus aux voleurs! Une tablette en bronze à inscription grecque du Musée de Genève,” *Muschel* 35 (1978) 241–244 [SEG XXVIII 1568].
of this ‘prayer’, from a temporal standpoint: the ‘pledge’ is forward-looking, with the expectation that the malicious rumors will be stopped and the woman vindicated, although the verb itself is in the past tense. The woman has formed her composition with the high hopes that the god will indeed ‘hear’ her request, regardless of what transpires. No matter the result, the wife will obligingly offer the silver votive as a gift, expecting that the rumor-mill will eventually stop and any guilty judgment against her will be mitigated; see below on 13.

πρὸς τὸ: “in respect of the fact that,” *vel sim.*, with the neuter τὸ referring to the clause to follow as the whole word, notion, sentiment, or phrase (so LSJ s.v. ὁ, ἡ, τὸ B.5).

tινάς: the unnamed adversarial slanderers who have charged the wife, who as subjects of the infinitive to follow are the subject of the clause in indirect discourse.

2–3 μὲ καταλαλεῖν: μὲ is the direct object of the verb of slander καταλαλεῖν that goes with ἀδικήσαντα (4), albeit in the wrong gender (see below). Here begins the first mention of slander brought against Pompeia for having “poisoned” her husband, charges described in lines 5–11. The details against her detractors not only include the evil report in this line but also the spreading of ill repute, gossip, and rumor (ἐπιφημίζειν 8–9, θρυλεῖν 10–11, and φήμη 11); cf. Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 98 n.51 (on κακολογέω).

A similar case, in respect of the unfortunate woman Tatias, is recorded in “Beichtinschriften” no. 69 from second-century Lydia. After Iucundus, her son-in-law, had unexpectedly gone mad, the mother-in-law was thought to have been the culprit, perhaps having bewitched him. In an attempt to clear her good name, Tatias confessionally “placed the scepter” (9–10 ἡ δὲ Τατιας ἐπέστησεν / σκῆπτρον) in the temple, a ritual act of absolving one’s self, and called down curses upon herself (10–11 καὶ ἀρὰς ἔθηκεν ἐν τῷ ναῷ) to prove her innocence, should she be found lying (cf. below on 11). Unfortunately, she died. But

25 Cf. Petzl, “Beichtinschriften” no. 98.4–5 διὰ τὸ μὲ ἐτ/οῖμον ἔιναι, with commentary.
not only this, her own son, Socrates, who had trespassed a sacred grove and dropped a pruning sickle on his foot, perished a day later—all of which provided clear evidence that the gods had found her (and her family) guilty. It was the children of Iucundus who ‘confessed’ the familial offense, and in acknowledging the god’s power by setting up the confessional stele, hopefully lifted the cursed household from further gentilitial misfortune.²⁶

3 ὡς ἐμοῖ: literally, “as if by/from me”; cf. the Tatias inscription’s ὡς ὑπὸ / Τατίας (6–7).

3–4 τὸν ἐμὸν σύνβι/ον: the woman is using a common term of endearment (cf. the example in n.31 below), as if to solicit favor. The husband’s name is never mentioned.

4 ἀδικήσαντα: for the commonplace use of the masculine participle for the feminine (ἀδικήσασαν) see Suppl. Mag. I 31.3 τὴν φοροῦντα, II 72.13, both with detailed references, ancient and modern. With juridical pleas, it is usually the writer of the ‘curses’—the victim—who makes the charge that she has been wronged, or injured. Here, the slanderers are charging her with the selfsame crime, but with ἀδικέω referring specifically to physical harm, or injury, to the party involved (the husband). In the judicial prayers, the verb (and cognates) refer primarily to an injustice, and occasionally to a social (or even emotional) ἀδικία, but not usually to physical injury. In any event, it seems that the husband has not died as a result of the injuries sustained by the pharmakeia, if indeed it has even occurred.

4–5 φαρακοῦ εἶνε/κεν: the preposition is postpositive, as was normal. Α φαρακοῦ, as is well known, is ambiguous and refers to either poison or magic.²⁷ If it is a “poison” that causes the injury, such a pharmakon is the result of witchery, nonetheless. For similar charges of magic in texts like these see the introductory comments above. The overall wording is close to that of the Tatias inscription (see below on lines 8–9). In the epitaph from

²⁶ Cf. Tomlin, Tabellae Salis 103–104.

Alexandria (n.9 above), the conditional ‘curse’ reads: “To the God Most High and the Sun who oversees all and the Nemeseis: Arsinoe, who died untimely, raises her hands. If anyone made spells (or: poisons) against her (εἴ τις αὐτῇ φάρμακα ἐποίησε) or if anyone rejoiced in her death—or will rejoice—go after them!” For an in-depth examination of this *topos* from a social and epigraphic standpoint, see the section “on poison, black magic, slander, gossip and mocking” in Versnel, in *World of Magic* 130–141.

5 · 6 οὖν ἀρα: a strong adversative, marked off, as well, by a division-line. On the combined particles see J. D. Denniston, *The Greek Particles*² (Oxford 1950) 43, citing Plato *Charmides* 160E, *Theaetetus* 149B, etc.

6–7 ἐγὼ τοιούτον: cf. τοιαύτην in 9 and τοιαύτη in 11.

5–6 ἐ/τι ἐνενοήθην ἢ ἐπραξάξα (κτλ.): a very similar sentiment is represented in Cnidian DefixTab no. 1 discussed above: εἴ μὲν ἐγὼ φάρμακον Α/σκλ[a]π[ιάδα] η ἐ/δοκα, ἢ ἐνεθυ/μήθη[ν] κατὰ ψ/υχὴν κακὸν τι / [α]ὔτο ποίσαι (κτλ.), “Whether I gave a poison/spell to Asclepiades, or pondered in my heart to do any harm against him.” The verb ἐννοέω seems rather ‘bookish’—a favorite of Plato and Euripides. It is not the usual vernacular and may indicate the level of the writer’s education, upbringing, or social class.

6–7 ἡ δὲ ἐ/μοῦ ἄλ<λ>ος τις {ο} σχοίην: that is, whether someone else has committed the crime on her behalf. But it is not as if Pompeia Gaia were unaware of what she may have done, only that she includes all options of possible slanders against her, as if specifying denials of those exact charges.

7–8 πάντας / ὑμᾶς κεχαλωμένους: a verb such as <παρα-δίδωμι>, as in 9, is to be understood. Whether this is an error of omission or a case of elliptical writing is difficult to say. Early curse tablets often omit the verb of ‘cursing’ and merely record the victims’ names in the accusative. There may also be a conscious effort here to refrain from using the language of magical curses. The subject matter, but not the verbiage, is reminiscent

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of the spells to restrain wrath—the so-called θυμοκάτοχα. Here, “all you who are enraged” uses a term, χολόω (not χολάω), not usually found in the magical literature: it is widely represented in Homer (and often in this same participial form) but otherwise occurs relatively rarely, apart from the tragedians and other poets. This may suggest, with other language throughout this text, a familiarity with Greek literature and poetic diction.

8–9 τούς ἐπιφη/μιζόντας με: the omitted τούς was added in smaller letters above ΦΗ, at the end of the line. The verb usually means “to speak ominously,” “pledge” (or “promise”), “call, name,” “dedicate,” etc. (so LSJ s.v.). Here, its clear sense is “to speak against,” “slander” (ἐπί + φημί) and is indeed the sense preserved in the uncompound form φημίζω. In the Tatias inscription, we find the same charge of magic, where, again, rumor—not the magic itself—seems to be of foremost concern: καὶ ὑπὸ πάντων διεφημίσθη ὡς ὑπὸ / Τατίας τῆς πενθερᾶς οὐ/τοῦ φάρμα-κον οὐν ἄκος ἀναφημίζει, “and it was rumored by all as if a pharmakon were given to him (sc. Iucundus) by Tatias, his mother-in-law”; see further on 11 below.

9 με τοιαύτην: one indication that this text is somewhat formulaic is the fact that Pompeia’s name is not inserted here, where one might expect it, but is added only later. Is τοιαύτην, then, the equivalent of τὴν δεῖνα—“(her) so-and-so”—of the magical papyri, and elsewhere? See on 11 below.

9–10 παραδίδω με δέ σοι: Pompeia “hands over” to the god those gossiping against her in the sense that she consigns to the Great God the duty of dispensing justice. The verb is sometimes found in the defixiones; cf. Versnel, in Magika Hiera 73 (“entrusted; committed” = Lat. commendare), cf. 80, 99 n.68; in Magical Practice 290. DefixTab 156.8 υμίν παραδείδω, etc.; cf. PGM V.333–334 νεκυδαίων, ὅστις / [ποτ' οὖν] εἰ, παραδίδωμι σοι τὸν δεῖνα (in instructions for writing a lead tablet).

10–11 τούς θυρολούν/τάς με ἔπι: unless the preposition is in anastrophe (ἐπί), or misplaced, the expected word-order is παρα-
δίδωμι δέ σοι τοὺς θυρλοῦντας ἐπί με τῇ τοιοῦτῃ φήμῃ. θυρλέω is both poetic and a good elocutionary word.

11 τῇ τοιοῦτῃ φήμῃ: Versnel, in *Magical Practice* 136, aptly writes “Envy breeds gossip … Gossip, in its turn, generates evil fame,” and introduces, among other texts, Hesiod *Cat.* fr.176.2 M.-W. κακῇ δὲ σφ' ἐμβολε φήμη, “and cast them into malicious gossip,” and *Op.* 760 ff., for the long-standing Greek views on the insidiousness of gossip.29 For the general connection, also with τοιοῦτη, note the Tatias text, for which we here present an alternative interpretation: “Tatias set up the scepter and laid down curses in the temple, as if having made satisfaction concerning her being slandered with such a crime as this” (ὡς ἰκανοποιοῦσα περὶ τοῦ πεφήμησθαι αὖ/τὴν ἐν συνείδησι τοιοῦτη).30

12 Πομπηεία Γαία, ματρώνα (or: Ματρώνα): read Ποµπηία. This is the Latin female name, Pompeia Gaia with the third element, Lat. *mātrōna*, representing in inscriptions either a title (“married woman,” “matron,” “lady”) or a personal *Beiname*. Pompeia is the feminine form from the father’s *gens*, normal for daughters in Latin nomenclature. Although the second element Γαία likely represents Latin Gaia—the feminine of the common Gaius—one cannot rule out reading here Γαῖα, from the Greek for “Earth.”32

30 Petzl, “Beichtinschriften” no. 69.11–13. *LSJ*, s.vv. ἰκανοποιεῖω and συνειδῆσις 6, cite only this text.
31 For use as a title, e.g. *I.Cilicie* 31 *Italia* 31 *Iulia Hermione Itale matrona* (…) συνβἱο Ἰουλία Ἐρμιόνη Ἰτᾶλη ματρώνα; *SEG* VIII 703 Αἰλία Ἴσιδώρα καὶ Αἰλί[α] Ἡλυμπιάς ματρώναι στολάται. For use as a name, e.g. *I.Cilicie* 87 Ταρία Λουκίλλα ἡ καὶ Ματρώνα ἡ γυνὴ αὐτοῦ. In point of fact, the distinction may be largely immaterial.
32 As pointed out by the anonymous reviewer, who rightly observes that Gaia may be the freedwoman of a Pompeius. But for examples in the East where the second element seems to preserve Latin Gaia, see e.g. *Öjh* 6 (1903) Bbl. 7 no. 9 (Macedonia) Οὐαλερίᾳ Γαίᾳ, sc. *Valeria Gaia*; for other feminine praenomina, e.g. *JHS* 22 [1902] 344 no. 73 (Lycaonia) Σαλοβία Πούβλια Πούβλιλία, sc. *Sallvia Publica Publilia*. Although one cannot be certain in such matters, I have found no unambiguous cases where the second element Gaia,
With males, the gentilitial will always come second, after the praenomen, e.g. Gaius Pompeius. But with daughters, especially during the late Republic and early Empire, the nomen gentilicium would come first, taken from the father’s gens, namely Pompeius (whose first name we have no way of knowing, in this case). To this, then, would be added a second name, either a feminized form of a common male praenomen (Publia, Servia, Lucia, Gaia, and so on), or a name, perhaps, indicating birth-order: Tertia, for example, if there were more than two daughters.\(^{33}\)

In Latin sources, the feminine Gaia is the most common name used, and it may represent an example of the practice of a woman acquiring her second name from her husband, at marriage. Hence, the name Pompeia would be from her father, but Gaia from her husband.\(^{34}\) Pompeius, of course, is the famous plebeian gens to which Pompey the Great belonged, but prosopographically, we do not know if there is any affiliation between our Pompeia Gaia and any figures of recorded history.\(^{35}\)

following an initial Latin gentilitial name, as in the examples given here, is the Greek personal name Γαῖα (“Mother Earth”). This, especially given the presence of both Pompeia and matrona in our name, probably favors reading Γαῖα as Latin Gaia here, as well.


\(^{34}\) Varro wrote that “Gaia is celebrated above all other names [super omnes celebrata] formed from the praenomen of the husband”: quoted by Peter Keegan, “Roman Gaia and the Discourse of Patronage: Retrograde C in *CIL* VI,” in John Bodel et al. (eds.), *Ancient Documents and their Contexts* (Leiden/Boston 2015) 152–173, at 155 with n.7 (citing *De praen.* 7), 157–159 for the social and historical background on the well-known *ubi tu Gaius ego Gaia* formula, and 159–166 for female naming practices.

\(^{35}\) It is interesting to note that an inscription from Brouzos in Phrygia, M. Waelkens, *Türisteine* no. 462, preserves a funeral inscription prepared by “Asclepiades son of Titus and his most sweet wife, Pompeia (Πομπεί아), who loved her husband (ἡ φίλανδρος),” with a curse against anyone damaging the monument: ἐνορκιζόµεθα δὲ / τὸ µέγεθος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοὺς καταχθονίους

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ματρόνα: *matrona* refers generally to a “married woman,” or “wife,” but very early on acquired the dignity of social rank and breeding. The expense of having a silver tablet carefully (and professionally) inscribed, as well as the language used and the social context of the text overall, suggests that Pompeia Gaia was a woman of high social standing.

13 ἐγδίκιας; sc. ἐκδίκια (not ἐνδίκια). Lexically, the noun is the equivalent of ἐκδίκησις, “avenging,” or in judicial contexts, the act of giving “satisfaction,” “redress,” or “legal remedy” (LSJ s.v.). It is a favorite of the juridical prayers, at least with the verbal equivalent ἐκδίκεω (cf. ἔκδικος), where it seems to mean “to avenge, vindicate” (see below), as well as “to decide a case,” or “make a claim” (LSJ). The injustice here, of course, must refer to the whole matter of slander and resultant gossip described in lines 1–10.

Since ἐκδίκεω/ἔκδικος in the context of juridical prayers means “avenge” and “avenger,” the whole phrase, as indicated above, would seem to mean “for the sake of vindication, I, Lady Gaia Pompeia, have offered (this).” One reason why we must recognize an implication of injustice as suggested in the noun, rather than the import of vindication alone, is the whole sense of Pompeia’s need, as reflected in the urgency of lines 1–10, which requests redress. The plaque is dedicated (ἀνέθηκα) because the anger of the opponents, the slandering, and the malicious gossip, all remain viscerally present in the almost agitated language of the woman’s pledge to the Great God.

δαί/μονας, “we adjure the greatness of the god and the chthonian daimones.”

The two children named on the tomb are Gaius and Asclepiades.

36 See Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 71; in *World of Ancient Magic* 131, on the Amisos sepulchre *Studia Pont.* III 9, ἐστι δὲ δόλος με / [δαύμαστε], ἑπιον φώς ἐκδίκον ἑστο, “if a cunning scheme killed me, may the divine light avenge me.” Cf. G. Björck, *Der Fluch des Christen Sabinus* (Uppsala 1938) = *Suppl.Mag.* II 59.11 εἰς ἐκδίκησιν, 19 ἐκδίκησον; *World of Ancient Magic* 134, “may you avenge (ἵνα ἐγδικήσῃς) this innocent blood,” in the second century BCE texts from Rheneia (n.10 above).
ἐγδικίας χάριν ἀνέθηκ: cf. IGBulg III.2 1597, V 5904 (ἐὐχής χάριν ἀνέθηκα), IScM II 375 (μνείας χάριν ἀνέθηκα), etc.; see also the examples with ἐὐχήν ἀνέθηκα at Philadelphia discussed in Versnel, in Magika Hiera 77.εἰν[ε]κεν is pleonastic (LSJ s.v. 4), as if to make χάριν the “favor” that Pompeia now offers.

14 διεξορκῶ: the engraver falsely added an intrusive rho in anticipation of the true ρ, in attempting to write διεξορκῶ, thus causing the xi not to be aspirated (further, the final καπ has been obscured by a modern repair to the metal). διεξορκόω, an intensified form of ἔξορκόω (and an earlier form of ἔξορκίζω), is otherwise unattested and means, “to solemnly administer an oath,” or “to solemnly adjure.” But since there is no direct object of the verb, as in later magical texts, it is hardly the adjuration of the god, but rather an oath or vow that was solemnly executed by Pompeia. In Euripides, Medea 21–22, the famed witch combines a similar use of “oaths” with the kind of “pledge” that we find at the beginning of our text: βοᾷ μὲν ὥρκους, ἀνακαλεῖ δὲ δεξιᾶς / πίστην ἐγίστην, “she shouted oaths, and called up the mightiest assurance of her pledge.”


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