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.

[2] R. S. O. Tomlin, *Tabellae Sulis. Roman Inscribed Tablets of Tin and Lead from the Sacred Spring at Bath* (Oxford 1988); H. S. Versnel, "Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers," in C. A. Faraone and D. Obbink (eds.), *Magika Hiera* (New York/Oxford 1991) 60–106; "Κολάσαι τοὺς ἡμᾶς τοιούτους ἡδέως βλέποντες, 'Punish those who rejoice in our misery': On Curse Texts and *Schadenfreude*," in D. R. Jordan et al. (eds.), *The World of Ancient Magic*

Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies 60 (2020) 139–157

conceptual and linguistic correlations with known ritual imprecations, 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" (ἀνιεροῖ) 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 Spells from the Ancient World* (New York/Oxford 1992) ch. 5, "Pleas for Justice 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* 160 (2007) 141–157; F. Graf, "Untimely Death, Witchcraft, and Divine Vengeance," *ZPE* 162 (2007) 139–150.

[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; Audollent, *DefixTab* 2; W. Blümel, *I.K. Knidos* 148.

> 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]μένος ἐξ[αγορεύ]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.

[8] D. R. Jordan, "A Survey of the Greek *Defixiones* not included in the Special Corpora," *GRBS* 26 (1985) 151–197, at 158; Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 64, and *World of Ancient Magic* 133 n.28.

[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 (ἐπὶ τοὺς δόλωι φονεύσαντας ἢ φαρμακεύσαντας).[10]

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.[11] 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 (φαρμάκου εἵνεκεν, 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 (ἐγδεικήσσῃς), I shall make a silver palm, if you eliminate him from the human race."[12] 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 ἐκδικέω (= *vindico*)—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.[13] 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.Délos* 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.

[12] J. Curbera, *GRBS* 38 (1997) 397–400; Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 65.

[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/Katakekaumene) and nearby areas of Phrygia.[14] 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 confessors 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.[15]

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]τίθημι Δάματρι καὶ Κούραι τὸν κατ' ἐμο[ῦ

[14] G. Petzl, "Die Beichtinschriften Westkleinasiens," *EpigrAnat* 22 (1994) 1–177. Cf. Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 75–79, and in *World of Ancient Magic* 146; Tomlin, *Tabellae Sulis* 103–104 (with previous literature), especially in respect of the Tatias inscription (see next note).

[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 φάρμακον 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.

ε]ἴπ[α]ντα ὅτι ἐγὼ τῶι ἐμῶι ἀνδ[ρὶ] φάρμακα 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 (1 ἀνιεροῖ) 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 αὐτὸν ἐκ τῶν ζώτων ἄρῃ), (if so) may Antigone, having been struck by a fever (21 πεπρημένα), go up to Demeter and make confession (22 ἐξομολουμ[ένα]), and may she not find Demeter merciful but instead suffer great torments (26–28 μεγάλας βασάνους βασανιζομένα). If anyone has spoken to Ascepiades 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 πεπρημένα is uncertain; Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 73 and in *World of Ancient Magic* 152 (with n.90), is correct to take it from πίμπρημι ("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.[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 oxydized 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 (βασανιζομένα) upon herself, if guilty; whereas in the 'theft' versions at Cnidus (no. 2.A.13–16 = *I.K. Knidos* 148), the engraver rather calls down upon another—the thief—the same "burning and confession" (τι[ς / ἄλλος] (…) / [πεπρη]μένος ἐξ[αγορεύ]ων), 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 independent 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
δεξ[ι]ὰν πρὸς τό τινάς με κατα- ☙
λαλῖν ὡς ἐμοῦ τὸν ἐμὸν σύνβι-
4 ον ἀδικήσαντα φαρμάκου εἵνε-
κεν ·|· οὖν ἄρα ἐγὼ τοιοῦτον ἔ- ☙
τι ἐνενοήθην ἢ ἔπραξα ἢ δι' ἐ-
μοῦ ἄλ<λ>ος τις {ο} σχοίην, πάντας
8 ὑμᾶς κεχολωμένους, `τοὺς´ ἐπιφη-
μιζόντάς με τοιαύτην· πα-
ραδίδωμι δέ σοι τοὺς θρυλοῦν-
τας με ἐπὶ τῇ τοιαύτῃ φήμ[ῃ].
12 ☙ Πονπηεία Γαΐα ματρώνα εἵν[ε]-
κεν ἐγδικίας χάριν ἀνέθηκ[α].
☙ διεκ{ρ}ορκῶ.

3 καταλαλεῖν 3–4 σύμβι/ον 4 sc. ἀδικήσασαν 7 σχοίεν
11 Πομπηΐα 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.

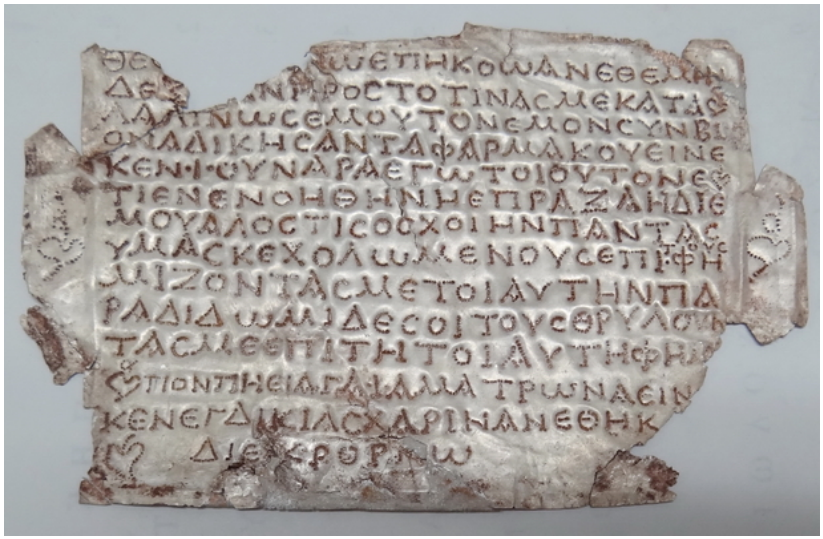

Figure 1: Silver plaque (conserved)

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 [Μεγά]λ̣ῳ ἐπηκόῳ: One reference to something close to this formula, from a search in the Packard Humanities database, yields only μεγίστῳ ἐπηκόῳ θεῷ Σομ̣ε̣ν̣δε[ῖ] (*I.K. Arykanda* 82; cf. *CIJud.* II 1432); otherwise we find ἐπηκόῳ in reference to Zeus (e.g. *IGLSyrie* II 569, *I.Porto* 12, with various epithets), or the "Highest God" (*IGBulg* III.1 1431; *IDR* III.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).[19] 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.[20] A singular Μέγας Θεός, with no other name attached, may refer to a particular local deity.[21] For the notion of the gods giving ear to

[19] See S. G. Cole, *Theoi Megaloi: The Cult of the Great Gods at Samothrace* (Leiden 1984) 63, 126 n.475, 127 n.504, citing B. Hemberg, *Die Kabiren* (Uppsala 1950), for the former, and O. Weinreich, "Θεοὶ Ἐπήκοοι," *AthMitt* 37 (1912) 1–68 = *Ausgewählte Schriften* (Amsterdam 1969) I 121–195, for the latter; cf. A. Chaniotis, "Megatheism: The Search for the Almighty God and the Competition of Cults," in S. Mitchell et al. (eds.), *One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire* (Cambridge 2010) 112–140.

[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 Z. 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[ι]ὰν: 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 δεξιὰς 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

WürzJbb 7 (1981) 229–234; cf. R. Parker, *Greek Gods Abroad: Names, Natures, and Transformations* (Berkeley 2017) 142.

[22] *IG* XII.7 p.1, Side B; Jordan, *GRBS* 26 (1985) 168–169 no. 60; Versnel, in *World of Magic* 126.

[23] As suggested by the anonymous reader for *GRBS*. The curvilinear shape of the *eta* seems to show ἀνέθεμεν "we have dedicated," plausibly in reference to the husband and wife. For the uncommon use of either, cf. ἀνεθέμην in *I.Leukopetra* 111 and 129; *IG* X.2 66; *IGBulg* II 801; *TAM* IV 67, etc.; ἀ[νέθεμεν (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,"*MusHelv* 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 τό: "in respect of the fact that," *vel sim.*, with the neuter τό referring to the clause to follow as the whole *word*, *notion*, *sentiment*, or *phrase* (so LSJ s.v. ὁ, ἡ, τό B.5).[25]

τινάς: 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 με κατα/λαλῖν: με 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 τό με ἐτ/οῖμον εἶναι, 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 ἐμοῦ: literally, "as if by/from me"; cf. the Tatias inscription's ὡς ὑπὸ / Τατιας (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 φαρμάκου εἴνε/κεν: the preposition is postpositive, as was normal. A φάρμακον, 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 Sulis* 103–104.

[27] Cf. Versnel, in *World of Magic* 133 with nn.27–29, citing, *inter alia*, L. Robert, *Collection Froehner* I (Paris 1936) 55–56, and F. Graf, "An Oracle against Pestilence from a Western Anatolian Town," *ZPE* (1992) 67–79.

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 ·|· οὖν ἄρα: 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.

ἐγὼ τοιοῦτον: cf. τοιαύτην in 9 and τοιαύτῃ in 11.

5–6 ἔ/τι ἐνενοήθην ἢ ἔπραξα (κτλ.): a very similar sentiment is represented in Cnidian *DefixTab* no. 1 discussed above: εἰ μὲν ἐ/γὼ φάρμακον Ἀ/σκλ[α]πιάδαι ἢ ἔ/δωκα, ἢ ἐνεθυ/μήθ[η]ν κατὰ ψ/υχὴν κακόν τι / [α]ὐτῷ ποῖσαι (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 ἢ δι' 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 κεχολωμένους: a verb such as <παραδίδωμι>, 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

of the spells to restrain wrath—the so-called θυμοκάτοχα.[28] 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 ⸀τοὺς⸁ ἐπιφη/μιζόντας με: the omitted τοὺς 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 uncompounded 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 πάν/των διεφημίσθη ὡς ὑπὸ / Τατιας τῆς πενθερᾶς αὐ/τοῦ φάρμακον αὐτῷ δεδόσ/θαι, "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 πα/ραδίδωμι 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; commited" = Lat. *commendare*), cf. 80, 99 n.68; in *Magical Practice* 290. *DefixTab* 156.8 ὑμῖν παραδείδω, etc.; cf. *PGM* V.333–334 νεκυδαίμων, ὅστι[ς] / [ποτ'οὖν] εἶ, παραδίδωμί σοι τὸν δεῖνα (in instructions for writing a lead tablet).

10–11 τοὺς θρυλοῦν/τάς με ἐπὶ: unless the preposition is in anastrophe (ἔπι), or misplaced, the expected word-order is παρα-

[28] For which see *Suppl.Mag.* II 34–46; Th. Hopfner, "Ein neues ΘΥΜΟΚΑΤΟΧΟΝ,"*ArchOrient* 10 (1938) 128–148.

δίδωμι δέ σοι τοὺς θρυλοῦντας ἐπί με τῇ τοιαύτῃ φήμ[ῃ]. θρυλέω is both poetic and a good elocutionary word.

11 τῇ τοιαύτῃ φήμ[ῃ]: 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 δέ σφ' ἔμβαλε φήμῃ, "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 τοιαύτῃ, 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 ἱκανοποιοῦ/σα περὶ τοῦ πεφημίσθαι αὐ/τὴν ἐν συνειδήσι τοιαύτῃ).[30]

12 Πονπηεία Γαΐα, ματρώνα (*or*: Ματρώνα): read Πομπηΐα. 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*.[31] *Pompeia* is the feminine form from the father's *gens*, normal for daughters in Latin nomenclature. Although the second element Γαΐα likely represents Latin Gaia—the feminine of the common Gaius—one cannot rule out reading here Γαῖα, from the Greek for "Earth."[32]

[29] Cf. V. J. Hunter, "The Politics of Reputation. Gossip as a Social Construct," *Phoenix* 44 (1990) 299–315.

[30] Petzl, "Beichtinschriften" no. 69.11–13. LSJ, svv. ἱκανοποιέω and συνείδησις 6, cite only this text.

[31] For use as a title, e.g. *I.Cilicie* 31 *Iulia Hermione Itale matrona* (…) συνβίῳ Ἰουλία Ἑρμιόνη Ἰτάλη ματρώνα; *SEG* VIII 703 Αἰλία Ἰσιδώρα καὶ Αἰλί[α] / Ὀλυμπιὰς ματρῶναι 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 Γαΐᾳ, sc. *Valeria Gaia*; for other feminine praenomina, e.g. *JHS* 22 [1902] 344 no. 73 (Lycaonia) Σαλουίᾳ Πουβλίᾳ Πουβλιλ[ίᾳ, sc. *Salvia Publia 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 Γαΐα as Latin *Gaia* here, as well.

[33] Karen K. Hersch, *The Roman Wedding: Ritual and Meaning in Antiquity* (Cambridge 2010) 187–189; G. D. Chase, "The Origins of Roman Praenomina," *HSCP* 8 (1897) 103–184; M. Kajava, *Roman Female Praenomina. Studies in the Nomenclature of Roman Women* (Helsinki 1994), Gaia used of upper-class women in the Empire (index s.v.).

[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, *Türsteine* no. 462, preserves a funeral inscription prepared by "Asclepiades son of Titus and his most sweet wife, Pompeia (Πονπεΐα), who loved her husband (ἡ φίλανδρος)," with a curse against anyone damaging the monument: ἐνορκιζόμεθα δὲ / τὸ μέγεθος τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοὺς καταχθονίους

ματρώνα: *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 ἐγδικίας: sc. ἐκδικία (not ἐνδικία). 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 ἐκδικέω (cf. ἔκδικος), where it seems to mean "to avenge, vindicate" (see below), as well as "to decide a case," or "make a claim" (LSJ).[36] The injustice here, of course, must refer to the whole matter of slander and resultant gossip described in lines 1–10.

Since ἐκδικέω/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, εἰ δὲ δόλος με / [δάμασσε], θεῖον φάος ἔκδικον ἔστω, "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[α]: cf. *IGBulg* III.2 1597, V 5904 (εὐχῆς χάριν ἀνέθηκα), *IScM* II 375 (μνείας χάριν ἀνέθηκα), etc.; see also the examples with εὐχὴν ἀνέθηκα at Philadelphia discussed in Versnel, in *Magika Hiera* 77.[37] εἴν[ε]κεν is pleonastic (LSJ s.v. 4), as if to make χάριν the "favor" that Pompeia now offers.

14 διεκ{ρ}ορκῶ: 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 *kappa* has been obscured by a modern repair to the metal). διεξορκόω, an intensified form of ἐξορκόω (and an earlier form of ἐξορκίζω), is otherwise unattested and means, "to solemnly administer an oath," or "to solemnly adjure."[38] 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 ὅρκους, ἀνακαλεῖ δὲ δεξιᾶς / πίστην μεγίστην, "she shouted *oaths*, and called up the mightiest assurance of her *pledge*."

November, 2019

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[37] H. Malay, "The Sanctuary of Meter Phileis near Philadelphia," *Epigr Anat* 6 (1985) 111–125.

[38] On ἐξορκίζω in magic see R. Kotansky, "Remnants of a Liturgical Exorcism on a Gem," *Le Muséon* 108 (1995) 143–156; in Petzl, "Beichtinschriften," nos. 27.4–5, 105.3–4, 107.3–4, 6–7.