

Helioros

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Abstarct: *The name Helioros (known from magic gemstones) is written twice on a lead or bronze amulet, presumably from north Africa. The find is important, since the complete form of the name has been known so far only from K. Preisendanz's complementation (PGM I, 143-147), which is not unanimously endorsed. The text of the amulet cannot be satisfactorily explained on the basis of the photo found in the bequest of A. Audollent, and the current location of the item itself is unknown.*

Résumé: *On trouve sur une série d'intailles magiques un personnage léontocéphale tenant dans sa main un globe terrestre et un fouet. Cette image correspond à la description d'un papyrus magique selon laquelle c'est cette symbole qui doit être gravé sur un pendentif en pierre (PGM I 143) et sur son revers la formule magique suivante: «ACHA ACHACHA CHACH...». Selon l'inscription sur le papyrus, après avoir passé une ficelle d'Anubis au travers du pendentif, il doit être porté autour du cou». Le papyrus appelle le personnage à tête de lion 'oros, mais Preisendanz le nomme Hélioros — en interprétant ainsi l'abréviation 'oros comme une combinaison d'Hélios et d'Horos (' est le symbole incomplet de Soleil). Jusqu'ici, Hélioros n'était jamais trouvé dans cette forme écrite, mais on a réussi à identifier le nom Hélioros à deux reprises sur une lamelle en langue latine trouvée en Afrique du Nord.*

Keywords: *Helioros, Preisendanz, Audollent, amulet, tabula ansata*

Mots clé: *Hélioros, lamelle de plomb, amulette, intaille magique*

In Karl Preisendanz's collection of magic papyri, the first item is a book of Greco-Egyptian magical recipes currently kept in Berlin, found in the area of Thebes (Egypt), probably as part of a sorcerer's library¹. The first spell of the collection (dated to 3/4 c. CE) aims at winning a *paredros*, an assistant demon (lines 1-2.):

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1. PGM I; Berlin P 5025. I express my thanks to Fabian Reitert (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung), who permitted the publication of the photo of the papyrus. I owe a debt of gratitude to Prof. Marc Mayer and Prof. Jürgen Blänsdorf

«Rite: A *daimôn* comes as an assistant (*paredrikôs*) who will reveal everything to you clearly and will be your companion and will eat and sleep with you»².

A *paredros* is similar to a jinni in the *One Thousand and One Nights*, who fulfils every order of his master: he prepares a banquet, «he stops ships and again releases them, he stops very many evil daimons, he checks wild beasts and will quickly break the teeth of fierce reptiles, and puts dogs to sleep and renders them voiceless. He changes into whatever form of beast you want: one that flies, swims, a quadruped, a reptile.» (lines 115-119.) The *paredros* is unwilling to do only one thing: to touch pork. The papyrus recommends several methods to win his favour. The first one is applied before sunrise, using a mummified falcon which had been drowned in the milk of a black cow. Then follows the highly detailed recipe of a sacred scribe called Pnouthis. Casting spells at sunset on the rooftop and performing various incense rituals make a falcon land from the heaven and drop a stone in front of the sorcerer. After boring a hole into the stone, it must be worn on a thread around the neck. «Share this great mystery with no one else, but conceal it, by Hêlios, since you have been deemed worthy by the lord god. This is the spell spoken seven times seven to Hêlios as an adjuration of the assistant» (lines 130-132). After that we read numerous *vores magicae* (magic words without obvious meaning), then the following lines (143-147): «This is the spell spoken seven times seven to Hêlios. And engraved on the stone is: Hêliôros as a lion-faced figure, holding in the left hand a celestial globe and a whip, and around him in a circle is a serpent biting its tail. And on the exergue of the stone is the name (conceal it): “ACHA ACHACHA CHACH CHARCHARA CHACH”. And after passing an Anubian string through it, wear I around your neck».

An important peculiarity of the text is that the wizard never writes down the word Hêlios (Sun) but applies a common magic symbol: O>. The little circle is omitted only once: in the abbreviation solved by Preisendanz as Hêliôros, where the papyrus has >ôros or >ôôros (the omega starting with a tiny ring on the left). The circle was undoubtedly never written on the papyrus, and not simply worn off it. It is possible that the scribe accounted for this deficiency by placing a little ring on the left part of the omega, yet he may well have forgotten it. Nevertheless, the symbol anyway remained identifiable. Still, Campbell Bonner considers the solution of the abbreviation as Hêliôros uncertain.³

for their useful remarks and advice. I also render my best thanks to the Archives Départementales du Puy-de-Dôme in Clermont-Ferrand for all due help and for allowing me to publish the results. This study forms part of OTKA [Hungarian Scientific Research Fund] programme no. K 81332 (Ancient magic, parallel researches: Curse tablets and magic gems), and the Zaragoza project titled *Espacios de penumbra: Cartografía de la actividad magico-religiosa en el Occidente del Imperio romano* (Ref. FFI 2008-01511 / FISO).

2. English translation by E.N. O’Neil in H.D. BETZ (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, Chicago, London 1986.

3. C. BONNER, *Studies in Magical Amulets: Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, Ann Arbor 1950, p. 19: «Heliorus is Preisendanz’s reading; the papyrus shows only ωροϛ preceded by a sign which Preisendanz

The exact name of the deity was important for Bonner because he knew five magic gems that almost completely corresponded with the description of the papyrus recipe. There are only a few discrepancies between the engraved images and the recipe:

- The images are not surrounded by an *ouroboros* (a serpent biting its own tail).
- The recipe claims that the figure holds both objects in his left, whereas the gemstone images show him holding the whip in his right and the celestial globe in his left.
- The magic words are not identical on the gemstones and in the recipe.
- The gemstone inscriptions read as *Zeth aphobe* (fearless Sêth), and not Héliôros⁴.
- Bonner points out that the gems were all made of rock crystal, whereas the recipe claims that the falcon brings the stone⁵. It is however conceivable that such a divine falcon is capable of bringing even a piece of rock crystal.

Michel adds that none of the gemstones are bored through, thus they could not be worn around the neck hanging on Anubian thread⁶.

We could be surprised to find the name of Sêth right beside the image of Hôros, whose father Osiris had been murdered by Sêth himself. Five out of the six currently known items contain a prayer to him: «Fearless Sêth, ... be gracious to me and my children!»⁷. Bonner supposes that religious syncretism had gone so far that even arch-enemies may well have been melted into one divine character⁸. However, the image of a gemstone in the British Museum offers a more probable interpretation, depicting the lion-headed figure of Héliôros and the donkey-headed Sêth facing each other⁹. There is a highly stylized hieroglyphic symbol between the two figures: *sm3-t3wj*, i.e. «the union of the two lands». The lion-headed Hôros represents Lower Egypt, and Sêth stands for Upper Egypt. According to Michel, the meaning of this representation in magic may be «to unite what belongs together». This stone, nonetheless, depicts Hôros or Héliôros holding nothing in his hands.

interprets as a corrupt symbol of the sun. Even if this point be called in question, Horus must stand as against the conjectures of other editors because of the solar relations of this deity, and perhaps also because the first of the prescribed words is found elsewhere in connection with Horus».

4. BONNER, *Studies in Magical Amulets...*, *cit.*, p. 153.

5. BONNER, *Studies in Magical Amulets...*, *cit.*, p. 152.

6. S. MICHEL, *Die magischen Gemmen*, Berlin 2004, 76.

7. BONNER, *Studies in Magical Amulets...*, *cit.*, p. 153; MICHEL, *Die magischen Gemmen...*, *cit.*, p. 308. The quote is from the Boston gem, since the others contain shorter and more corrupt texts. The sixth gem is inscribed with the name of the year-demon Abrasax (the numerical value of its letters add up to 365) and with the magic name of Yahwe: IAW AIW.

8. BONNER, *Studies in Magical Amulets...*, *cit.*, p. 153.

9. MICHEL, *Die magischen Gemmen...*, *cit.*, p. 402, Plate 32. Fig. 4. For a description of the figure see MICHEL, *Die magischen Gemmen...*, *cit.*, p. 78; 311.

The identification of Hôros and Hêlios is confirmed by a written record as well. Following a rather imaginative explication, Hôrapollôn writes: «Hôros is Hêlios, so called because he rules the hours (*hôrôn*)»¹⁰. Still, the Egyptian grammarian does not claim that this syncretistic divinity was called Hêliôros. In her recent study, Aglae Pizzone proposed that perhaps some reminiscence of a ritual preserved in a magic papyrus, which she believes to be connected to Hêliôros, are attested in *The Egyptian Tale* of Synesios¹¹. However, the papyrus mentions not Hêliôros but Hêlios Mithras, and Synesios writes about Osiris and Typhôn (i.e. Sêth). Synesios, deeply familiar with the land of Egypt, started writing his work around 400 CE, and PGM IV is dated to the 4th c. CE (according to Preisendanz)¹². The author of the papyrus roll from the Theban magical library and Synesios may well have been contemporaries, nurtured by the culture of the same region. Consequently, it is not a mere coincidence to find the same or similar thoughts in their writings. Pizzone is undoubtedly right in the sense that an analysis of the works of Synesios and his contemporaries must take into consideration texts of magic, which are mostly disregarded by historical investigations of literature and philosophy¹³.

As we see, the human figure with a lion's head, holding a celestial globe and a whip in his hands, is denoted as Hêliôros only by the Berlin papyrus, if we accept the reading of Preisendanz. No other written source confirms this name of a syncretistically united divinity of the solar god Hêlios and the Egyptian Hôros, thus the name Hêliôros is not unanimously accepted¹⁴.

Tabula ansata

Auguste Audollent (1864-1943) was one of the most significant researchers of *defixiones*, i.e. lead curse tablets. He participated in excavations in North Africa (mainly Carthage and Hadrumetum) and in his vast corpus he also published or re-published *defixiones* found by others¹⁵. His bequest is in the county archive in Clermont-Ferrand, France, since he used to be the professor of the local university and director of Musée Bargoin¹⁶. Box Nr. 19 J art. 12 contains the drawings and photos

10. Horapollon 1, 17; cited by BONNER, *Studies in Magical Amulets...*, *cit.*, p. 150.

11. A.M.V. PIZZONE, «Elementi magico-rituali nel "De providentia" di Sinesio di Cirene: dalla liturgia di PGM IV 475-824 all'immagine di Helioros», in B. PALME (ed.), *Akten des 23. Internationalen Papyrologenkongresses*, Wien 2007, p. 541-548. The compared passages: PGM IV 475-824. and Synesios: *De providentia*, 1, 8-1, 10. I owe a debt of gratitude to Bernhard Palme, who made Pizzone's study (inaccessible in Hungary) available to me.

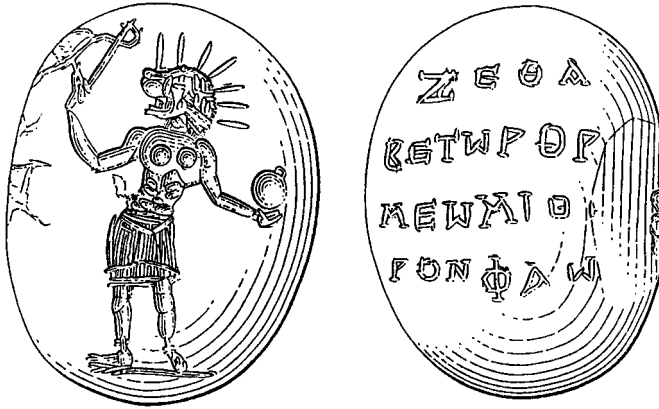
12. PGM 1973, 64-65.

13. PIZZONE, «Elementi magico-rituali...», *cit.*, p. 548.

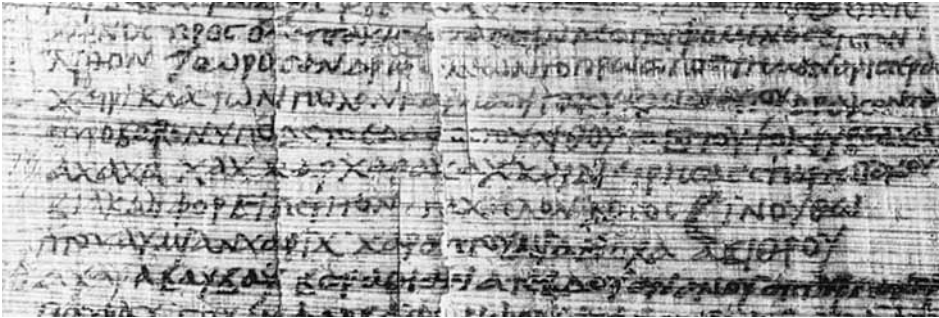
14. For the debate see MICHEL, *Die magischen Gemmen...*, *cit.*, p. 76.

15. A. AUDOLLENT, *Defixionum tabellae quotquot innotuerunt tam in Graecis Orientis, quam in totius Occidentis partibus propter Atticas*, in *Corpore Inscriptionum Atticarum editas*, Paris 1904.

16. Archives Départementales du Puy de Dôme.



1. Drawing of a *Hélioros-gem*



2. Photo of Berlin P 5025 with the name *>ōros*

he used for his dissertation in 1904. However, there are several photos and drawings mixed with the aforementioned ones that were either for later publication, or remained entirely unpublished. An example for this latter category is a photo and a drawing of a lead or bronze *tabula ansata* (tablet with dovetail handles) inscribed on both sides¹⁷. There is no information about the provenance of the tablet, since there is no writing on the back of either the photo or the drawing made by Audolent. The drawing is fairly rough-and-ready: Audolent seems to have spent little time with deciphering the inscription before probably other commitments drew his attention away. Since all other photos depict north African, more precisely Tunisian tablets, we can presume (though not affirm) that this *tabula ansata* is also from Hadrumetum or Carthage. Its shape is not typical either among curse tablets

17. Height: 0.042 m, width: 0.066 m. Audolent contoured the tablet, thus we can establish the original size by measuring the internal edge of the outline,

or among the few preserved lead amulets¹⁸. Among the inscribed magical *tabulae ansatae* written on lead or other metal tablets, we have six so-called prayers for justice¹⁹. This special type of inscription is common in Britain and addresses not dark demons, as curse tablets normally do, but commonly worshipped divinities (e.g. Minerva, Mercurius, etc.) and aims at redeeming stolen objects²⁰. Two judicial curse tablets are known, one of them is a so-called *dyptichon*, consisting of two sheets²¹. The third type of magic *tabula ansata* is a Greek bronze amulet, a *phylaktêrion* found in Bouchet, France. It was produced to protect a land estate against hailstorm and snow²². Consequently, the shape of the object does not enable us to determine its use with certainty, since it could equally contain the text of a curse, a prayer or an amulet²³. This question could be answered only by deciphering the text.

Some letters of the inscription are surprisingly legible with the help of the hundred-year-old photograph found in the archive of Clermont-Ferrand. There are five lines on the one side and six on the other. The text is written in Latin alphabet on both sides.

A. EXCESSIM
ELEXISECNE
IEHEBENERIL
LIFLETONLO
5. GON

18. Lead amulets with inscriptions in Greek are listed in S. GIANNOBILE, S.D.R. JORDAN, «A Lead Phylactery from Colle Basilio (Sicily)», in *GRBS* 46, pp. 73-86.

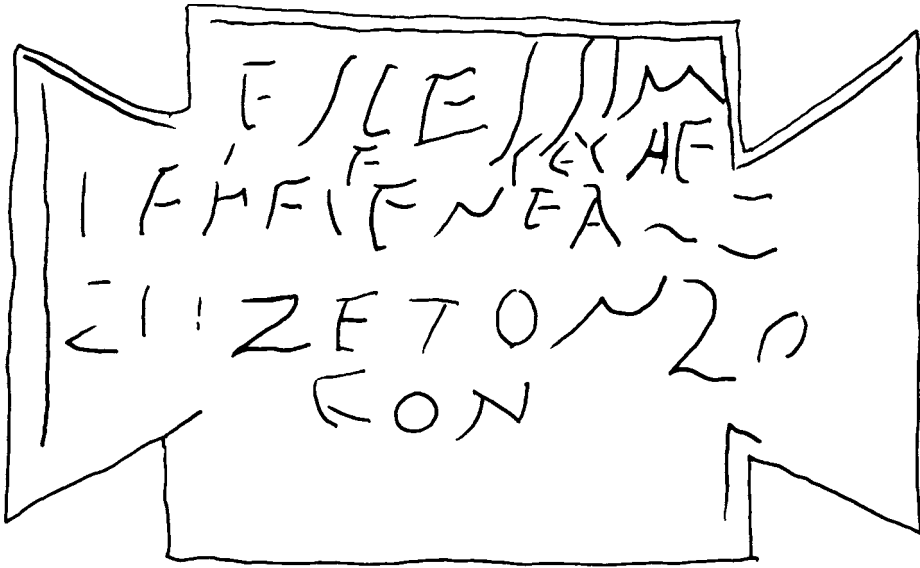
19. H. VERSNEL, «Beyond Cursing: The Appeal to Justice in Judicial Prayers», in Ch. FARAONE, D. OBBINK (eds.), *Magika Hiera*, Oxford 1991, pp. 86-90.

20. A. KROPP, *Magische Sprachverwendung in vulgärlateinischen Fluchtafeln* (defixiones). Tübingen 2008, 5.1.7/1: Rottweil, Nr. 1-3., no name of deity; KROPP, *Magische Sprachverwendung...*, cit., 2.2.1/1: Bolonia (Hispania), prayer to Isis Myrionyma; KROPP, *Magische Sprachverwendung...*, cit., 3.16/1: Lidney Park, the tablet mentions Mars Nodens; KROPP, *Magische Sprachverwendung...*, cit., 2.3.1/1: Prayer to Domina Fons, cf. R. TOMLIN, «Cursing a Thief in Iberia and Britain», in R.L. GORDON, F.M. SIMÓN (eds.), *Magical Practice in the Latin West*, Leiden, Boston 2010, pp. 245-273; KROPP, *Magische Sprachverwendung...*, cit., 3.7/1: Caerleon, prayer to Neptunus; K. BRODERSEN, A. KROPP, *Fluchtafeln. Neue Funde und neue Deutungen zum antiken Schadenzauber*, Frankfurt am Main 2004, pp. 108-109: Caerleon, naming Nemesis; KROPP, *Magische Sprachverwendung...*, cit., 8.3/1: Petronell, calling Dis pater. For *tabula ansata* used as curse tablet, see P. KIERNAN, «Britische Fluchtafeln und “Gebete um Gerechtigkeit” als öffentliche Magie und Votivrituale», in BRODERSEN, KROPP, *Fluchtafeln...*, cit., pp. 108-109.

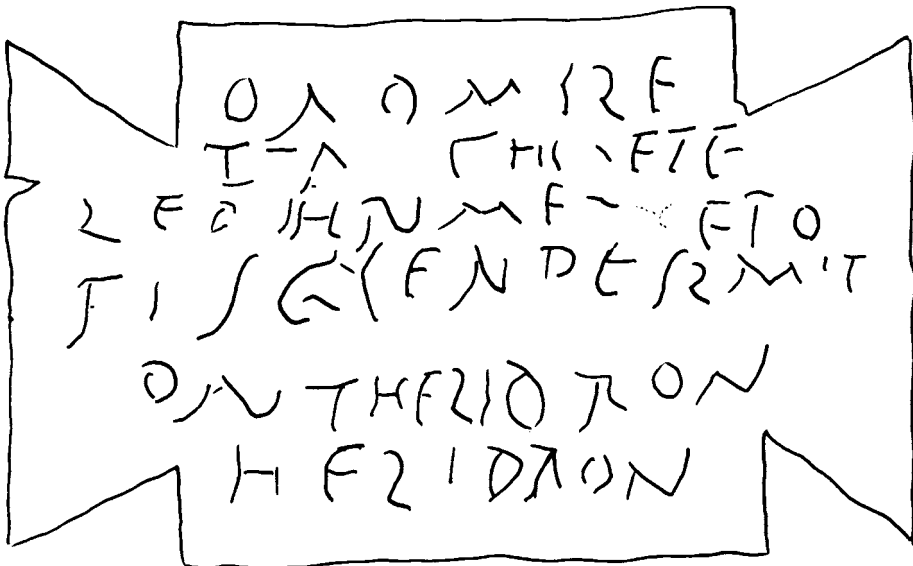
21. KROPP, *Magische Sprachverwendung...*, cit., 4.3.1/1: Diptychon, containing two curses, Chagnon, Gallia; KROPP, *Magische Sprachverwendung...*, cit., 5.1.4/10: Kreuznach.

22. M. MARTIN, *Sois maudit! Malédiction et envoûtements dans l'Antiquité*, Paris 2010, p. 170. Another tablet with nearly identical inscription was found in Mondragon (France), but it has been lost. The Mondragon tablet is different from the Bouchet tablet in naming the owner of the land, Iulius Pervincus.

23. I do not make reference here to votive inscriptions on *tabulae ansatae*, which is the most common type. For recent discussion, see S. BRACKMANN, «Ein Votivtäfelchen mit einer ungewöhnlichen Weihinschrift für Zeus», in *ZPE* 178, 2011, pp. 221-222.



3. Drawing of the *tabula ansata*, side A



4. Drawing of the *tabula ansata*, side B

B. OROMILE
TROCHOOETE
LEGIHRIMFEMETORO
FISGTERPESLAQVE
5. ONTHELIORON
HELIORON

A. 1. excess'i I'sim
2. elexi secne
3. iehe bene il-
4. li fle ton lo-
5. gon

B. 1. oro mile
2. trocho oete
3. legi hrimfem et oro
4. fig ter les laque-
5. ont Helioron,
6. Helioron

Some words of the inscription are in Greek, though written in Latin alphabet. For example, the reading of A 4-5 seems certain: *ton logon*, i.e. «the spell» (in accusative). It was relatively common in ancient magic to write Greek texts in Latin, or Latin texts in Greek alphabet. The *lingua franca* of «scholarly» magic originating from Egypt was Greek, so a wizard with limited proficiency in Greek could at least approximate his spell to his model by using the proper alphabet²⁴.

A

1. *excessi Isim*: from *excedo* — «I left Isis»²⁵.

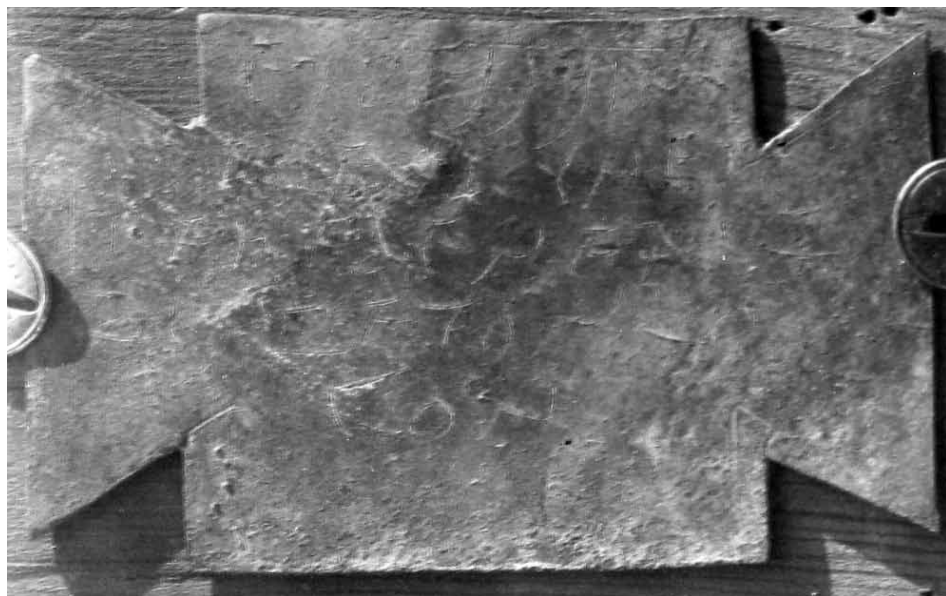
2. *ellexi secne* = *elegi segnem*, «I found her (him?) tardy». Perhaps she delayed helping the suppliant. For the form *ellexit* cf. *CIL* 406.

3. *iehe*: Perhaps an interjection. Cf. *ehem* / *eheu* / *ieie*, see Fr. 1 of Varro's *Argonautae*, Book 2:

*Te nunc Coryciae tendentem spicula nymphae
hortantes 'o Phoebe' et 'ieie' conclamarunt.*

24. Greek words transcribed in Latin alphabet by a Carthaginian sorcerer: *DTAud* 243, 34: *cundensate* = *syndêsate*. Latin spells written in Greek is more common, see *DTAud* 231; 252; 267; 269; 270; 304.

25. I render my best thanks to Béla Adamik for his valuable help in deciphering these lines. The name of Isis was also his suggestion, which provides the prayer with a proper frame from the goddess to Hêliôros.



5. Photo of the *tabula ansata*, side A



6. Photo of the *tabula ansata*, side B

Thus in the cave of nymphs, the suppliants yelled: «*ieie*». We find EIE IHOY as *voces magicæ* in the text of a 3rd c. CE copper amulet from Sicily²⁶.

bene: well.

illi: singular dative of *ille* «that». If it is connected to *fleo*, then the meaning is: «Cry out to her!»

fle: 2nd person singular active imperative of Latin *fleo*: «sigh!», or «cry out!», or «lament!».

4-5. *fle ton logon*: «Sigh/cry out weeping/lamenting the spell!», *ton logon* is in Greek but written in Latin alphabet.

B

1. *oro mile*: that is *oro* «I beg, I pray», *mile* for *mille* [*die*], i.e. «I pray countless times (every day)»²⁷.

2. *trocho*: «with a hoop». A *trochus* is mostly used as a toy, cf. e.g. Horatius *Carm.* 3, 24, 57:

*nescit equo rudis
haerere ingenuus puer
venarique timet, ludere doctior,
seu Graeco iubeas trocho
seu malis vetita legibus alea*²⁸.

In this case it may refer to a magic wheel, called *inyx* e.g. by Theocritus²⁹.

Though no magic wheel was called *trochos*, the wheel of Ixion (*trochos Ixionios*) is indeed attested in love magic³⁰.

oete: Either referring to Mt. Oitê/Oeta, where Hercules was burnt on a pyre and deified, or vocative of an Egyptian plant called *oetum* (Greek *oiton*), the latter being less probable. Hercules is not unattested in ancient magic. The «semen of Hêrakilês» is the secret magical name of the plant *sisymbrium officinale* (London rocket)³¹. The terrible pains of Hercules were caused by a *philtron* (love potion)³². The text of an unpublished North African amulet against snakes (with a wording similar to a *defixio*) includes Hercules together with Caele Pater and Terra Mater. Hercules is also commonly found

26. The so-called Phylactery of Moses, see R. KOTANSKY, *Greek Magical Amulets I*, Opladen 1993, p. 129; p. 142.

27. Cf. Hor. *Sat.* 2, 1, 4.

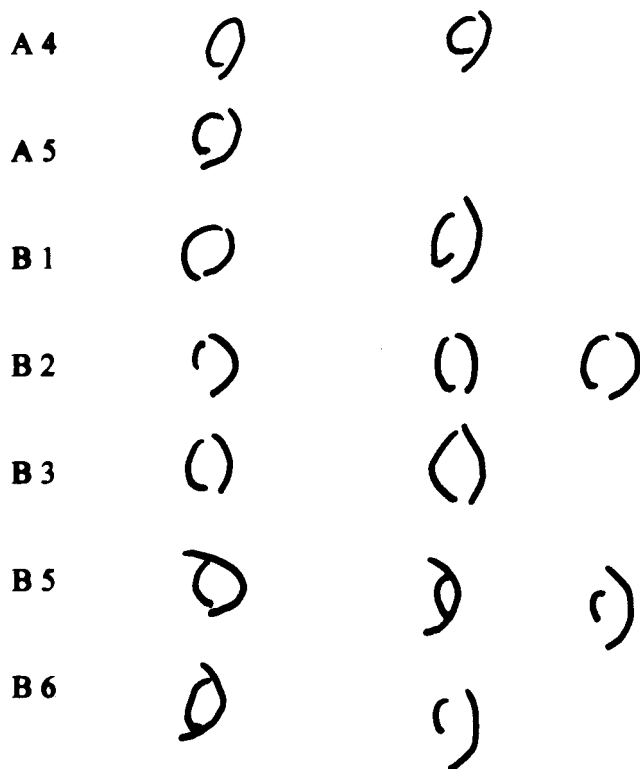
28. Cf. Plin, *NH* 9, 166: *Erythini et channae volvas habere traduntur; qui trochos appellatur a Graecis, ipse se inire.*

29. Theocr. *Id.* 2, 17 sqq.

30. PGM IV 2906.

31. PGM XII 435.

32. Diod. Sic. 4, 38.



7. Letter «O»-s from the *tabula ansata*

on magic gems bringing luck or helping childbirth³³. All these may account for the presence of Oitê in the text of an amulet.

3. *legi hrimfem*: from *lego* «I collected». I could not make any sense of the following word(s).

et oro: «and I pray».

4-6. *fig ter les laqueont Helioron, Helioron*: I cannot interpret the letter string *figsterles*. The middle element may be *ter* «thrice», but it still does not help to decipher *fig* and *les*. The phenomenon of writing «o» for «u» is common in vulgar Latin texts, thus *laqueont* = *laqueunt*. «They noose Hêliôros, Hêliôros.» It is not clear who nooses the deity and how it helps the bearer of the amulet. In fact only the final three letters (-ont) seem certain from *laqueont*; originally I preferred the reading *senper mittont* («they always send»), however, Jürgen Blänsdorf, to whom I sent the photo and the drawings (both Audollent's and mine) of the amulet, decidedly argued for *laqueont*. Furthermore, Blänsdorf claims that the first «O» of *Helioros* is different from the second one in both occasions, which renders the reading *helidron* more probable. He relates it to *chelidrus* (grass-snake), which is mentioned in Vergil's *Georgica* in the form *chelydris*³⁴. In my view, the interpretation with *chelidrus* is not well-supported by enmeshing with a net, since we have no ancient report of catching grass-snakes with a net. As for the shape of letter O, there are no two identical items among the 15 occurrences on side A and B altogether. The fact that they were engraved on a metal surface determines their shape fundamentally. There are, however, two common features in all of them. All Os are drawn with two lines that do not meet, similarly to the edges of a pair of parentheses: (). The line on the left, however, is almost always smaller (sometimes considerably smaller) than that on the right: c) The corresponding letters of lines 5-6 on Side B in the name of the divinity are also drawn in accordance with the above. The only difference between the two Os of *Helioron* in B 5 is that the two lines are adjoined in the case of the first one, whereas they do not meet in the second. The left stroke of each O is considerably smaller than the right stroke at the end of the inscription, still, Blänsdorf does not read *-dn* for the *-on* ending. Marc Mayer suggested that *helidron* might be an abbreviated form of the *heliodromus* known from Mithraism³⁵. Nevertheless, since the length and the phonetic form of the two words are conspicuously different and no other detail of the inscription hints at the cult of Mithras, I find this solution implausible.

33. MICHEL, *Die magischen Gemmen...*, cit., pp. 280-281.

34. Verg. *Georg.* 2, 214.

35. Personal communication.

The text is difficult to interpret as a whole. It seems to be an amulet protecting its owner from something, possibly from snakes. Side A is explanation that outlines the settings of the prayer, and side B contains the prayer itself.

The papyrus recipe uses Héliôros for winning the favour of a *paredros*, thus for protective and not harmful magic. The figure of Héliôros on gemstones is meant to protect the owner of the stone and his/her family members. Consequently, this tiny lead or bronze lamella might well have had a similar purpose. An Egyptian syncretistic deity set out on his way towards the West and got at least as far as Hadrumetum or Carthage, whereas gemstones bearing his image spread all over the Mediterranean. On the basis of the *tabula ansata* inscription, we can identify Héliôros in the divine figure with a lion's head, holding a whip and a celestial globe in his hands, since the name in the papyrus recipe (complemented by Preisendanz) is confirmed by the inscription of the (lead or bronze) lamella in Latin alphabet: *Helioron, Helioron*.

