

Magic in the Greco-Roman World
Midterm Exam

Due before class March 17, 2025

Midterm Examination

Provide a commentary on the features of these two spells. You should explain the context of the magic, the agent and the target, and the means by which the magic operates (i.e., all of the standard What, Who, Where/When, Why, and How questions we have explored for the readings). You should make sure to analyze the dynamics of the interactions with the divine powers invoked, as well as the way the different components of the spell work within the overall structure. Since the magical tradition in the Greco-Roman world operated by use of familiar elements complemented by competitive innovations, you should provide parallels for the features of these spells and their contexts from the examples in the readings, especially any *vores magicae* (magical words), deity names, or ritual actions that are part of the procedure. You should use the comparisons and contrasts with the parallels to illustrate the meanings and functions of the common elements within these spells. Parallels need not be exhaustive, but you should try to cite more than a single parallel for common features (3 or 4 examples is good; 6 or 8 is better; 15 or 16 is excessive). The purpose of the assignment is for you to demonstrate your familiarity with and understanding of the primary texts and secondary interpretations we have studied. While you should discuss the specific features and context of the spell in terms of the broader context of magical practices in the ancient Mediterranean world, please avoid vague and sweeping generalizations. Please assume that your reader has a good general background in the subject of ancient magic but is perhaps excessively skeptical of any claims you might make about these particular spells. Specific evidence and careful argumentation are the best ways to convince your audience.

Your commentary should be about 6 pages of printed text, given a double-spaced document with reasonable font and margins (e.g., this document is Garamond 12 pt. with 1" margins). Please proofread your papers carefully to ensure that they are free from annoying typographical, spelling, and grammatical errors. You should cite the parallels according to the bibliographic form, abbreviations and conventions used in Gager. Ancient primary texts should be cited by the number in the collection and line number (e.g. PGM XVI. 1-15 or Gager #13), whereas modern secondary material should be cited by page number (e.g., Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, pp. 13-22 or Graf 1997:13-22).

You may use any books or notes or other resources you have prepared, but please spend no more than around 3 hours on this exam. The exam is due before class on **Monday, March 17**. Any late assignments will be penalized by one grade for each 24 hour period they are late (including weekends). Extensions are negotiable only if you discuss the situation with me no less than 24 hours in advance. Please send your exam to me via email as a .docx file with your last name in the file name.

1. from a large papyrus codex, allegedly found in a tomb in Egypt, dating to the 3rd or 4th century CE

Bear-Charm which Accomplishes Everything

Formula: "I call upon you the greatest power in heaven (**others:** 'in the Bear'), appointed by the lord god to turn with a strong hand the holy pole, NIKAROPLEËX. Listen to me, Helios, Phre, hear the holy prayer, you who hold together the universe and bring to life the whole world, THÔZO-PITHË EUCHANDAMA ÔCHRIENTHËR OMNYÔDËS CHËMIOCHYNGËS IEÔY" (perform a sacrifice) "THERMOUTHER PSIPHIRIX PHROSALI KANTHIMEÔ ZANZEMIA ÔPER PEROMENËS RÔTHIEU ÊNINDEU KORKOUNTHO EUMEN MENI KËDEUA KËPSËOI" (add the usual).

Petition to the Sun at Sunset. Formula: "THËNÔR, O Helios, SANTHËNÔR, I beseech you, lord, may the place and lord of the Bear devote themselves to me" (while petitioning, sacrifice armara [for recipe, see "offering", below]. Do it at sunset).

Charm of Compulsion for the 3rd Day: "ANTEBERÔ-YRTÔR EREMNETHËCHÔR CHNYCHIROANTÔR MENE-LEOCHEU ÊESSIPO DÔTËR EUARËTÔ GOU PI PHYLAKE ÔMALAMINGOR MANTATONCHA do the NN Thing."

The First Formula in a Different Way: "THÔZOPITHË, Bear, greatest goddess, ruling heaven, reigning over the pole of the stars, highest, beautiful-shining goddess, incorruptible element, composite of the all, all-illuminating, bond of the universe,

A E Ë I O Y Ô
E Ë I O Y ÔA
Ë I O Y ÔA E
I O Y ÔA E Ë
O Y ÔA E Ë I
Y ÔA E Ë I O
ÔA E Ë I O Y

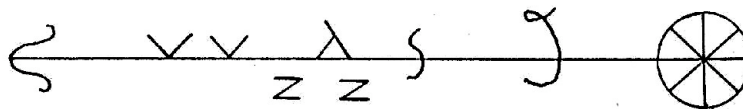
You who stand on the pole, you whom the lord god appointed to turn the holy pole with strong hand: THÔZOPITHË (formula)."

Offering for the Procedure: 4 drams of frankincense, 4 drams of myrrh, 2 ounces each of cassia leaf and of white pepper, 1 dram of bdellion, 1 dram of asphodel seed, 2 drams each of amomon, of saffron, or terebinth storax, 1 dram of wormwood,... of vetch plant, priestly Egyptian incense, the complete brain of a black ram. Combine these with white Mendesian wine and honey, and make pellets of bread.

Phylactery for the Procedure: wear a wolf knuckle-bone, mix juice of vetch and of pond-weed in a censer, write in the middle of the censer this name: "THERMOUTHEREPSIPHIRIPHI PISALI" (24 [Greek] letters), and in this way make an offering.

2. from a lead tablet discovered in a grave in Egypt, dating to the 4th or 5th century CE

I adjure you, corpse-daemon, whoever you are, by the mistress Brimo, dog-leader, Baubo, night-roamer, subduer of men, summoner of men, conqueror of men, LAKI LAKIMOU MASKELLEI MASKELLÔ PHNOUKENTABAÔTH OREOBAGRA RÊXICHTHÔN HIPPOCHTHÔN PYRIPEGANYX, restrain the anger, the wrath of Paomios, whom Tisatis bore, now now, quickly quickly.



EULAMÔ
ULAMÔE
LAMÔEU
AMÔEUL
MÔEULA
ÔEULAM

Aye, lord, SISISRÔ, SISI PHERMOU CHNOUÔR ABRASAX PHNOUNOBOËL OCHLOBAZARÔ.

Through the holy name
IÔBEZEBYTH, Zeus
of the depths of the sea,
IÔBARIAMBÔ
MERMERIOU
ABRASAX

EULAMÔ
EULAM
EULA
EUL
EU
E

ÔMALUE
MALU
AL
A

EULAMÔ
ULAMÔ
LAMÔ
AMÔ
MÔ
Ô

Restrain the wrath, the anger of Paomios, whom Tisate bore, now now, quickly quickly.

ERËKISITHPHËARARACHARARAËPHTHISIKËRE
RËKISITHPHËARARACHARARAËPHTHISIKËR
ËKISITHPHËARARACHARARAËPHTHISIKË
KISITHPHËARARACHARARAËPHTHISIK
ISITHPHËARARACHARARAËPHTHISI
SITHPHËARARACHARARAËPHTHIS
ITHPHËARARACHARARAËPHTHI
THPHËARARACHARARAËPHTH
PHËARARACHARARAËPH
ËARARACHARARAË
ARARACHARARA
RARACHARAR
ARACHARA
RACHAR
ACHA
CHA
A

HOPLOMYRTILOPLËX
EXANAKERÔNITHA LAMPSAMERÔ
LAMPSAMAZÔN BASYM IAÔ
HOPLOMYRTILOPLËX ANACHAZA
EXANAKERÔNITHA ANAXARNAXA
KERASPHAKERÔNAS
PHAMETATHASMAXARANA BASYM
IAÔ IAKINTHOU. Restrain the anger, the
wrath of Paomis, whom Tisatis bore, now
now, quickly quickly.

BELIAS BELIÔAS AROUËOU HAROUËL CHMOUCH CHMOUCH, bind, bind down the anger, the wrath of Paomis, whom Tisate bore. For I call upon you, the great apparently corporeal incorporeal one, you who bring down the light, the lord of the first creation, IAÔËIÔIAIEOU IABOR SABAÔTH LENTAMAOUTH ERËKISITHPHËARARACHARARAËPHTHISIKËRE IÔBEZEBYTH MERNERIOU ABRASAX IAËIAËË. Restrain the anger, the wrath of Paomis, whom Tisate bore, and his mind and wits, so that he not speak against us, against me Horigenes, whom Iouille also called Theodora bore, but so that he be obedient to us, now now, quickly quickly.