

Magic in the Ancient Greco-Roman World



Final Exam

*Due by the end of finals period
(Friday, May 16 at noon)*

Final Examination

The Final Exam consists of two sections, the first dealing with the theurgic and related types of magic, the second with the underlying theoretical issues of definition and categorization. Both sections ask you to comment upon texts, although the type of issues you should address in each section are different. In each section, your commentary should be 3-5 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). Your completed final should therefore amount to 6-10 pages of printed text. **There is no time designation for this exam – it is not the equivalent of a self-scheduled, three hour session.** You should, however, prepare for this exam as you did for the midterm, by reviewing the primary materials and preparing notes on common features that you can cite in your commentaries.

In both sets of commentaries, 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. 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 this particular spell. Specific evidence and careful argumentation are the best ways to convince your audience.

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 or book, chapter, and section numbers (e.g. PGM XVI. 1-15 or Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis*, VII.3), whereas modern secondary material should be cited by page number (e.g., Graf, *Magic in the Ancient World*, pp. 13-22 or Smith, J.Z., "Trading Places," p. 16).

Both parts of the final exam are due in my office no later than **noon** on Friday, May 16. You should send the file via email (as .doc, docx, or. pdf), but please make sure that I have acknowledged receipt of the file before you consider it turned in.. Extensions in finals period are negotiable only through the Dean's Office.

Section I (Choose *either* A or B):

A. Comment on PGM XII 270-350, or

B. using the texts we have studied in class (especially PGM IV.475-829 and PGM XIII) as models, create a handbook prescription for a theurgic ritual and then provide a commentary on the features of the spell. Make sure to include any oral components or ritual actions that are part of the spell as well as the inscribed or written components. You should also include in your spell an introduction that provides the spell's claim to authority. Any protective measures or amulets, sacrifices, ritual preparations, purifications, or prayers that are needed should be both described and commented upon.

For either A or B

In your commentary, you should explain the context of the magic, the participants, the underlying cosmology, and the means by which the magic operates (i.e., the standard What, Who, Where/When, Why, and How questions we have explored for the readings). 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 your spell and its context from the examples in the readings, especially any voces magicae (magical words), deity names, or ritual actions that are part of the procedure. You should comment on how the introductory advertisement compares and contrasts with other similar claims to authority in the PGM. You should refer to the readings in the secondary literature, in the handouts, and on Moodle to explain the underlying cosmology and ways in which the magic is thought to work.

Section II (Choose 2 out of 3):

Discuss whether the procedures in the following texts are magical. Under what definitions might each be considered magic? What particular features of each of these procedures might qualify or disqualify these as magic? Discuss with reference to the definitions of magic in the modern scholarly and ancient sources we have read in this semester.

1. **Request for a dream oracle:** Write on a strip of tinfoil, and after crowning the strip of foil with myrtle, set up the censer. Then make a burnt offering of frankincense and carry the leaf of metal around the vapor while saying: "Lords, gods, reveal to me concerning the NN matter tonight, in the coming hours. Emphatically I beg, I supplicate, I your servant and enthroned by you." Then place the piece of foil under your pillow, and, without giving answer to anyone, go to sleep after having kept yourself pure for 3 days.

Formula to be written: "MOU AMOU AU IAO ABARBARASA AIO BAOA CHPHENOURIS AOB AMO ADONAI OIG IIII OTHTHOUO AORCHA ARORCHA CHAXYNNERE MADAA OOO OOO OOA." Write it with a copper stylus.

2. On these conditions a sworn agreement was made by those who stayed there and by those who sailed to found the colony [of Cyrene], and they invoked curses against those transgressors who would not abide by it - whether those settling in Libya or those who remained. They made waxen images and burnt them, calling down the following curse, everyone assembled together, men, women, boys, girls: "The person who does not abide by this sworn agreement but transgresses it shall melt away and dissolve like these images - himself, his descendants and his property; but those who abide by the sworn agreement - those sailing to Libya and those staying in Thera - shall have an abundance of good things, both themselves and their descendants." (Marble Stele from Cyrene, dating from 4th century BCE)

3. The sulfurous [*theiodês*] is mastered by the sulfurous – Nature delights and conquers and dominates nature. Just as a human is composed of elements, so also is copper; and just as a human is composed of liquids and solids and *pneuma*, so also is copper. (*Pneuma* is a cloud, as Apollo says in his oracles: "and *pneuma* darker, wet, unmixed.") ... Copper is cooked with sulfur, reheated with natron-oil, and cleaned off; and repeating these steps many times it becomes fine shadowless gold. And god says this: "Let everyone know by experience that heating the copper with sulfur does nothing; but if you heat the sulfur alone it not only makes copper shadowless, but also turns it toward gold." God granted me this, to know that copper is first heated with sulfur, then the metal of Magnesia [one of various lead alloys] is; and the vapor streams forth until the sulfurous escapes with the shadow, and it becomes shadowless gold.

James



(please check your references!)