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A MAGIC GEM INSCRIBED IN GREEK AND ARTIFICIAL PHOENICIAN

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(Tafel I b, c)

The unusual, mottled yellow and green jasper (2.8 x 4.0 cm.) published here was brought to my attention by Dr. Jeffrey Spier.¹ It is reported to have come from Lebanon or Syria, but no exact provenance is otherwise known. The Greek letter-forms suggest a date of the 2nd to 4th century AD. The surface shows some pitting, particularly on the reverse, and it has an incidental chip on its right edge; otherwise it is unblemished.

The obverse depicts the ram-headed god, Khnum, standing nude on a ground-line, facing left, with his right arm raised. In his left, he holds an *ankh*-sign, with his arm held stiffly to his side.² On either side of the figure, extending vertically from right to left in two parallel lines, runs a group of characters in a script imitative of Punic-Phoenician. The whole is enclosed in a fine, oval-shaped *Ouroboros*. The reverse carries another five-line inscription in a similar Semitic script, as well as three lines of a Greek text finely engraved with tinier letters in the exergue of the stone.

As for the Semitic inscription, Prof. Joseph Naveh of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem kindly examined an impression of the stone and herewith provides an assessment and transcription of the peculiar letter-forms: "It is an artificial script. The writer does not follow the Phoenician ductus of any period; he tries to imitate Phoenician or Punic letters, but some of them are very distorted: the leftward downstroke of the 𐤇/ד; the proportions between the strokes of the 𐤈 and 𐤆; the length of the 𐤏. At any rate, the sequence of letters does not make sense in Phoenician or any Semitic language."

That the "Punic-Phoenician" text seems to yield no apparent sense may be due to miscopying or to the fact that the letters represent magic names. The text, then, can be read as follows:

Obverse:

Left Side:

יִשְׁנַפֵּת
אִמְרָה

YṬGPT
'MRDT

Right Side:

אִרְדֵּת־מֵרַת
תְּלִמְדַת

'DRDTMRT
TLMDT'

¹ Dr. Spier recently saw the piece in the London antiquities market, and was allowed to make a caste, from which he made a photograph reversed from the negative. I thank him for bringing the gem to my attention. This paper was made possible by a stipend from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.

² For a similar depiction of Khnum, see C. Bonner, *Studies in Magic Amulets* (Ann Arbor 1950), p. 261f. and D52.

Reverse

ארכתיגד	'RKTYGD
כתמיצ	KTMYTŞ
אצרמדממר	'ŞRMDMMR
תתנגנזר	TTNGNZR
ברנגת	BRNGT

The Greek portion contains the sort of invocation against demons found often on papyri, *lamellae* and gemstones:

ἀπόλυσον πάντα
δαίμονα Σεφάρ-
ρακ Ἀμμιά.

"Unbind every demon from Sepphara (daughter of) Ammia(s)."

Comments:

1-2 Ἀπόλυσον πάντα δαίμονα: for ἀπολύειν used for deliverance from affliction, see Bauer, *Wörterbuch*, s.v. 1; and cf., e.g., R.W.Daniel & F.Maltomini, *Suppl. Mag.* I 20, 5-6 ἀπόλυσον ὀνόματι Ἰη(σο)ῦ Χρ(ις)τοῦ; *PGM* 15a, 17-20 καὶ ἐμὲ ἀπολύσατε διὰ τὴν δύναμιν τοῦ πατρὸς κτλ.

2-3 Σεφάρρακ: note πφ > φφ. For the common Semitic name שפירא (which means "nice, beautiful"), cf. J.Naveh & S.Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls* (Jerusalem & Leiden 1985), p. 102 (A14, 1) with note; LXX Ex. 1: 15 (Σεπφωρα); NT Acts 5: 1, 3, 5 (Σάπφισα), etc.

3 Ἀμμιά: genitive of Ἀμμιάς, the name of the father; or one might read Ἀμμιά(ς), i.e. the mother's name in the genitive.



a)

b)

Magische Gemme (a) Rückseite, b) Vorderseite)