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INTRIGUE IN THE CLOISTER: PGM LXVI

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## INTRIGUE IN THE CLOISTER: PGM LXVI

In the divisive charm PGM LXVI (from Oxyrhynchos) a writer who does not identify himself aims to sever Philoxenos' relationship with two people, namely the 'friend' Gennadios and the 'elder' Pelagios. After a series of magical words, the text runs as follows: ἔξορκίζω ὑμᾶς κατὰ τῶν ὀνομάτων μεγάλων· εἴςβαλε τὸν Φιλόξενον τὸν ψάλτην μετὰ Γενναδίου φλον (r. φίλου) εἰς μάχην. εἴςβαλε τὸν Πελάγιον τὸν πρεσβύτερον εἰς μάχην μετὰ Φιλοξένου τὸν ψάλτην (r. τοῦ ψάλτου).

Written in the clumsy hand of a slow writer, the text has hitherto been dated to the third or fourth century. It may first be noted that all three names mentioned in the text (Philoxenos, Gennadios and Pelagios) are particularly well attested in the Byzantine period,<sup>1</sup> and that Gennadios is a characteristically Christian name.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, one can be certain that Philoxenos was a Christian cantor, for the term ψάλτης is used exclusively in this sense in the documentary papyri,<sup>3</sup> always in texts of the Byzantine period.<sup>4</sup> Since the *presbyteros* Pelagios is mentioned in connection with a church singer, he is most likely to be a church presbyter.<sup>5</sup> One may conclude that PGM LXVI stems from a Christian milieu, quite possibly from a church or monastery. Probably also the unnamed writer of the spell was a Christian, and so the text provides another piece of evidence for Christians resorting to pagan spells (see Suppl. Mag. I 13 and 43). PGM LXVI will have been written in the fourth century at the earliest, and on the basis of the crude letter forms composition at a later date in the fifth or sixth century can hardly be excluded.

The text is accompanied by a drawing of two naked men (photos: PGM, Vol. 2, Taf. IV and *ZPE* 8, 1971, Taf. IV). Since the aim of the spell is to set two men against another one (Gennadios and Pelagios against Philoxenos), the two figures probably represent Gennadios and Pelagios, and, if so, Philoxenos is not depicted (nor, of course, is the writer of the spell). It follows that the bearded figure to the right is the elder, Pelagios, and that the younger figure to the left is the friend, Gennadios. Pelagios' right hand touches Gennadios' left, probably in a gesture of solidarity against Philoxenos. The free arm of each figure is half raised and bent, probably in a gesture of defiance

<sup>1</sup> See Preisigke, *Namenbuch, s.nn.*, and Foraboschi, *Onomasticon, s.nn.*

<sup>2</sup> See R. Bagnall, "Religious Conversion and Onomastic Change," *BASP* 19, 1982, 111.

<sup>3</sup> ψάλτης is translated only as 'harper' in LSJ and as 'Saitenspieler' in Preisigke, *Wörterbuch*, and the word is accordingly translated in PGM LXVI and in H. D. Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*. However, in Christian contexts (and in the papyri the word occurs only in Christian contexts), the word has the meaning 'church singer'; cf. Lampe, *Patristic Greek Lexicon, s.v.*; P. L. Bat. XIX 24, 1 comm.; P. Iand. VIII 154, 12 comm.

<sup>4</sup> Ten certain attestations from the sixth century and later: Lefebvre, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques-chrétiennes d'Égypte*, no. 2 (AD 530); P. Ant. II 109, 16 (VI AD); P. Haun. III 62, 16 (VI-VII AD); P. Iand. VIII 154, 12 (VI/VII AD); P. Lond. IV 1430, 112 (VIII AD); 1748, 1 (Arab period); P. L. Bat. XIX 24 (Arab period); P. Ross.-Georg. V 63, 3 (VI AD); Stud. Pal. III 411 (VII AD); VIII 801, 1 (VII AD). A likely earlier example: P. Strasb. IV 638, 3 ψάλτης (IV AD); cf. comm.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. P. Iand. VIII 154 ("Weinverteilung am Sitze einer Mutterkirche"), where wine is distributed among others to τῷ ἀρχιπρ(εσβυτέρῳ) (line 1), τοῖς ψάλτ(αι)ς (line 12) and τῷ πρεσβ(υτέρῳ) τοῦ τόπο[υ] (line 14); for τόπος as 'cloister', cf. comm. *ad loc.* and Preisigke, *Wörterbuch, s.v. g.* Cf. also the passage from the *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua* cited at the end of this article.

against Philoxenos. The figures are naked, perhaps because they have taken off their clothes to fight with Philoxenos. As I see the drawings, each figure is drawn without sexual organs (on this, see below), though the navel of each is represented.

So the undersigned interprets the text and the drawing of PGM LXVI. A Christian setting was not recognized by previous scholars. K.Preisendanz regarded the figures as fighting against each other, in which case the one to the right is the 'elder' Pelagios, and the one to the left Philoxenos. The figures were so identified also by L.Koenen (*ZPE* 8, 1971, 199 note 1), who suspected that the unnamed man who wrote the charm had sexual interest in Philoxenos and that Pelagios as 'elder' was a competing ἐραστής who desired Philoxenos. He pointed out that the younger figure to the left is without sexual organs, and he stated that the male member of the older man is clearly visible. This figure, however, which shows sagging flesh around the hips, has a broad curved stroke open at the top  centered *above* the point where the legs join, and there is nothing below this point; the curved stroke looks to me like a roll of fat at the lower abdomen.

If the situation between the parties is such as I have suggested above, the unnamed writer of the spell had a grudge against Philoxenos. If the writer's jealousy was of a homosexual nature, his desire will rather have been for the young 'friend' Gennadios, not for the cantor Philoxenos. It is also possible erotic jealousy is only *part* of the motivation of the spell, and it could be that it plays no role at all. Given the likely setting of the spell, one should by no means exclude the possibility of an intense "normal" friendship of the kind that is especially likely to exist in the all-male environment of a monastery or an army, and it is also possible that the word φίλος has the neutral meaning 'associate', as so often in documentary papyri. Furthermore, as I see it, there is nothing erotic either in the text or in the drawing of the two hostile figures, and if homosexuality played a role, one would expect to see the naked figures' sexual organs. It is safest to conclude that the writer begrudged Philoxenos his good relationship with the 'friend' Gennadios for any number of possible reasons, homosexual jealousy being only one of them. As to the other aspect of the spell, i.e. the severing of the good relationship between the singer and the presbyter, I suspect professional jealousy on the part of an aspiring rival cantor who hoped to enjoy the favor that Philoxenos had in the eyes of the presbyter Pelagios. Canon no. 10 of the *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua* may serve to illustrate the authority that a church presbyter had over a cantor: *Psalmista, id est cantor, potest absque scientia episcopi, sola jussione presbyteri, officium suscipere cantandi, dicente sibi presbytero: Vide ut quod ore cantas, corde credas; et quod corde credis operibus comprobas.*<sup>6</sup> The person who wrote PGM LXVI was quite obviously not such a model of integrity.

Another spell that aims to establish strife between one man and two others was first published by O.Guéraud in *Mélanges Maspero* II (MIFAO 67, 1934-37), pp. 206-212. This text will be republished as Suppl. Mag. II 55.

Cologne

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<sup>6</sup> Ed. Ch.J.Hefele, *Histoire des conciles d'après les documents originaux* II.1 (Paris 1908), p. 113. According to Hefele, *loc.cit.*, pp. 102-108, the 104 canons called *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua* are for the most part of Oriental origin; they are ascribed to the fourth church council held at Carthage in 398, but the collection was compiled somewhat later (*terminus ante quem*: late VI AD) and from various councils (the Carthaginian ones and others).