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THE IDENTITY OF PHILINNA IN THE PHILINNA PAPYRUS (*PGM*<sup>2</sup>  
*XX.15*; *SH 900.15*)

aus: Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik 100 (1994) 119–122

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## The Identity of Philinna in the Philinna Papyrus (*PGM*<sup>2</sup> XX.15; *SH* 900.15)

Of the two spells composed in hexameters preserved in the Philinna papyrus one, perhaps for a skin-condition, is ascribed to a Syrian woman of Gadara, whose name is lost ([ . . . . . ]αϰ Σύραϰ Γαδαρηνηϰ, 6), and the other to Philinna the Thessalian (Φιλίννηϰ Θε[ϰϰ]αλῆϰ, 15).<sup>1</sup> The attribution of the spells to women is unusual, since in the later magical papyri it is men or gods to whom spells are ascribed. Most of the men named are well-known wise men. They are conspicuously not purely mythical characters. The ascriptions are clearly meant to add an aura of authority to the spells, to give the spells as it were a pedigree.<sup>2</sup> In these later magical papyri, there are no exceptions to the rule that it is men whose authority is invoked, although one spell does prescribe a ritual for summoning an old woman who had been the servant of Apollonius of Tyana to be a familiar (*PGM*<sup>2</sup> XIa). That spells should be attributed to men is hardly surprising, since in antiquity it was they who were the great authorities on magic.<sup>3</sup>

The anomaly of women being invoked in a magical papyrus when the normal practice is to invoke male sages from the distant past raises the question of the identity of Philinna and the Syrian woman from Gadara. To that question a number of answers are possible: (1) they are completely fictional and invented characters; (2) they are well-known mythical Thessalian and Syrian witches; (3) they are real women who in fact wrote the spells ascribed to them; (4) they are real women to whom the spell has been ascribed to provide it with a pedigree, though they did not have any part in devising it; (5) one of them is real and one fictional and the real one is the author of the spell ascribed to her; (6) one of them is real and one an invention, but the real woman is only a name on which to hang the spell.

Maas adopts solution (1): Philinna and the Syrian woman from Gadara are fictitious personages, who have been given ordinary Greek names and who are made Thessalian and Syrian respectively because of the association these lands have with sorcery (*loc. cit.* [n. 1])

<sup>1</sup> I am much indebted to C.A. Faraone for allowing me to see an as yet unpublished paper on the spell of the Syrian woman of Gadara. The main previous discussions of the papyrus and/or the spells in it are: P. Maas, "The Philinna Papyrus", *JHS* 62 (1942) 33-38; R. Merkelbach, "Literarische Texte unter Ausschluss der christlichen", *APF* 16 (1958) 85-86 no. 1046; L. Koenen, "Der brennende Horosknabe: Zu einem Zauberspruch des Philinna-Papyrus", *Chr. d'E* 37 (1962) 167-74; A. Henrichs, "Zum Text einiger Zauberpapyri", *ZPE* (1970) 204-209. Robert W. Daniel, "A Note on the Philinna Papyrus (*PGM* XX 1-2)", *ZPE* 73 (1988) 306 has suggested that the same formula was used in the rubric introducing the first spell as in the two succeeding spells and that it is not a spell to cure headache as Maas had suggested but a spell whose author was a woman of Cephallenia. The suggestion would be more attractive, had Cephallenia any associations with sorcery.

<sup>2</sup> On this, see H.-D. Betz, "The Formation of Authoritative Tradition in the Greek Magical Papyri" in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition* III, edd. Ben E. Meyer and E.P. Sanders (Philadelphia 1983) 165-66 (= *Hellenismus und Urchristentum* [Tübingen 1990] 178-79).

<sup>3</sup> J.J. Winkler, "The Constraints of Eros", in *Magica Hiera*, ed. C.A. Faraone and D. Obbink (Oxford 1991) 214-43, esp. 227f.; J. Scarborough, "The Pharmacology of Sacred Plants, Herbs, and Roots", *ibid.* 138-74, esp. 161f.

38). In support of the thesis that Philinna is a run-of-the-mill woman's name Maas cites the list of women's names that Strepsiades comes up with at Ar. *Nu.* 684: Λύκιλλα, Φίλινα, Κλειταγόρα, Δημητρία. Maas takes Strepsiades to be giving typically female names. Philinna does in fact seem to be a perfectly common Athenian name (*IG* 2<sup>2</sup>.2332.col.1.74, 5645.1-2, 8457/8.1-2, 9008.1-2, 10101.1-2, 12092.1-2, 12923.1-2, 12924.1, 12925.1, 12926.1-2), and in Menander's *Georgos* a Philinna appears as an old nurse. Σ*Vad Nu.* 684, on the other hand, says that they were prostitutes (αὐταὶ πόρνοι ἦσαν). They may not all be the names of prostitutes, but it is likely that (1) there is a joke of some sort in this line and (2) the scholiast has recognized at least one name in the list as a name characteristically given prostitutes in his time. There is only one problem with solution (1): it does not fit the pattern we see in the later magical papyri, where the men to whom the spells are attributed are, so far as we can identify them, famous sages.

Solution (2) runs into the difficulty that, were Philinna the name of a well-known mythical Thessalian witch, some further trace of her existence would in all likelihood be present in the literary record. There is only one mythical Thessalian sorceress who is mentioned in more than one work, Mycale (Ov. *Metam.* 12.262-64; [Sen.] *HO* 525-27; Nemes. 4.69-71). As for the other Thessalian witches mentioned in literature, Erichtho has no identity beyond that given her by Lucan (*BC* 6.508-830); Pamphile, Photis and Meroe owe their existence to Apuleius (*Metam.* 1.7-8, 2.5-6, 22-25) and Palaistra to Ps. Lucian (*Asin.* 13).<sup>4</sup> Since we know the names of no mythical Syrian sorceresses, it is unlikely that the Syrian woman of Gadara was a well-known mythical Syrian witch.

I am inclined to discount solution (3), namely, that the authors of the spells are the women named, on the ground that it is just too good to be true that one spell should belong to a Thessalian witch and the other to a Syrian. Secondly, it is hard to believe in light of the fictitious ascriptions in the later magical papyri that we should have in the Philinna papyrus ascriptions to people who were in some sense the real authors of the spells.

Solutions (4) and (6), namely, that at least one of the women named is a real person but not the author of the spell, have the advantage of conforming to the pattern of ascription that we find in the later magical papyri. We might even argue that if spells, when they are given an ascription, are generally attributed to well-known men, then *a fortiori*, if a spell is to be ascribed to a woman, the woman ought to have a name with which to conjure. Furthermore, if the authority of a female magician is to be invoked, she should come from Thessaly and then perhaps Syria. Egyptian magicians seem on the whole to be male. There is some evidence that Thessaly was also credited with male magicians (*Thessalus veneficus* Plaut. *Amph.* 1043; Πίτυος Θεσσαλοῦ ἀνάκρισις κήνουσ *PGM*<sup>2</sup> IV.2140), but it is the female variety for whom the land is renowned.<sup>5</sup> Syrian sorceresses do not have quite the sameness, but it is

<sup>4</sup> For the double entendre of Palaistra's name see M.B. Poliakoff, *Studies in the Terminology of Greek Combat Sports*, Beitr. z. klass. Phil. 146 (Meisenheim<sup>2</sup> 1986) 101-127, esp. 107 (where the name is traced to Middle and New Comedy).

<sup>5</sup> Ar. *Nu.* 749-50; Pl. *Grg.* 513a5-6; Plut. *Coniug. praecept.* 141b, *De Pyth. orac.* 400b, *De defect. orac.* 416f; Ps. Lucian, *Asin* 54, *Dial. meretr.* 4.1; Ach. Tat. 5.22.2, 26.12; Diosc. Ped. *De mat. med.* 4.131.1; Σ *i*

a Syrian sorceress whom a courtesan suggests to a friend, after the friend had asked whether she knew of some old hag, of the kind that Thessaly produces in great numbers, to cast a love-spell for her (Lucian, *Dial. Meretr.* 4.1,4). Alexander the Great and Marius are supposed to have had Syrian prophetesses or wise women in their entourage (Arr. *Anab.* 4.13.5-6; Plut. *Mar.* 17.1-6; Front. *Str.* 1.11.12).

To the best of my knowledge there is in the literature that survives no famous or infamous woman associated with Gadara, let alone one whose name in the genitive ends in *-αc*. There is, however, a Thessalian Philinna, who was notorious in Hellenistic times. She is the mother of Philip Arridaios, the half-brother of Alexander the Great. Satyrus, quoted by Athenaeus (13 557c) in his *Life of Philip* says that Philip had two children by Thessalian women, Thettalonike, whose mother was Nikesipolis of Pherai, and Arridaios, whose mother was Philinna of Larissa (*FHG* III.161). The historian Ptolemy, the son of Agesarchos, who is also quoted by Athenaeus (13 578a), gives in his *History of Ptolemy Philopator* a catalogue of mistresses enjoyed by kings. In the list is the dancer Philinna (Φίλινναν τὴν ὀρχηστρίδα) who bore Arridaios to Philip (*FGrH* 161 F4). Plutarch says she was the mother of Arridaios. He does not mention her nationality, but says she was of ill-repute and a whore (ἐκ γυναικῶν ἀδόξου καὶ κοινῆς, *Alex.* 77.7-8).<sup>6</sup> In Photius' summaries of Arrian's *Historia successorum Alexandri*, Philinna is the mother of Arridaios and designated either simply as a Thessalian (fr. 1a Roos) or as from Larissa (fr. 1b Roos). Pompeius Trogus refers to her as a *Larissaea saltatrix* without giving her a name (Just. *Epit.* 9.8.2) and has Alexander's general Ptolemy speak of the vile circumstances of Arridaios' birth from a whore of Larissa (*non propter maternas sordes, quod ex Larissaeo scorto nasceretur*, Just. *Epit.* 13.2.11).<sup>7</sup> The tradition about Philinna has nothing to say about her being a sorceress, although there is a story in Plutarch that Philip conceived a passion for a Thessalian woman, who was, in consequence, accused of having bewitched him (*Coniug. praecept.* 141b).

Philinna was, accordingly, one of those notorious women of Hellenistic historiography who had succeeded in capturing a ruler's affections. The historian Ptolemy mentioned her in the same breath as the women whom Ptolemy Philopator loved. He will principally have had in mind Oinante and her daughter Agathokleia. They were said to have been flute-girls and dancers from Samos and Oinante is called a procuress (Plut. *Cleom.* 54.2, *Amat.* 753d; cf. Polyb. 15.25.32; Plut. *Cleom.* 56.3).

<sup>n</sup> Ap. Rhod. 4.59-61; Lib. *Ep.* 1390.1; Prop. 3.24.10; Ov. *Metam.* 12.262-64; Luc. *BC* 6.436-37, 451, 452; [Sen.] *HO* 525-27; Plin. *NH* 30.6-7; Nemes. 4.69-71; Stat. *Theb.* 2.21-22; Apul. *Metam.* 1.7-8; Claud. *De bell. Pollent.* 235-38.

<sup>6</sup> For κοινή in this sense, cf. *AP* 7.403.7-8 on a pimp: ἀλλ' ὅτι κοινὰς ἢ θρέψας μοιχεύειν οὐκ ἐδίδαξε νέους.

<sup>7</sup> In Philopator's Egypt, a Philinna, daughter of Sostratos (*P. Pt.* 5297) was *canephore* of Arsinoe Philadelphos in 217 B.C.; under the rule of Epiphanes, Philopator's son, another Philinna, daughter of Ptolemaios (*P. Pt.* 5298), had the same eponymous priesthood in 187/6. The name was rare in Egypt; and in papyri I found only one other Philinna, a swineherd (in 248 AD, *P. Pt.* 12033). One wonders whether it was Philinna, the mother of Philip Arridaios, who made the name more popular at the court.

There is every indication, then, that Philinna was notorious and that her connection with Thessaly and Larissa was very much part of her identity. If it is the case that the motive behind the ascription of the spells in the Philinna papyrus was to attach them to famous names, as we see happening with men in the later magical papyri, then Thessalian Philinna will have been the Philinna who was the mother of Philip Arridaios. A reasonably well-educated person of the sort for whom these spells seem to have been composed in verse would have recognized the name and made the connection with the Thessalian royal house.

The men to whose names spells are attached are, so far as we can identify them, sages. The motive, accordingly, for attaching a spell to a man's name is to give the spell the authority of wisdom. Women in antiquity are on the whole not famed for wisdom, and there is no hint in the tradition that Philinna of Larissa was thought to be wise. We might ask whether there was some further factor beside her nationality and fame or notoriety that led to the choice of her name. Her reputation as a ἑταῖρα may also have had something to do with it. In literature, prostitution and magic-working are closely associated. Prostitutes are regularly represented as practising magic, either to bring back men who have deserted them for another woman or to have their revenge on them. They are also accused of using magic to win a man's affections. Simaetha in Theocritus' Second Idyll is the earliest example of this figure. Horace's Canidia is a similar figure (*Epod.* 5.75-81, 17.1-37, *Sat.* 1.8.30-32). Wives accuse courtesans of having won their husband's affections by magic (Lucian, *Dial. meretr.* 8.3), while parents may attribute their son's infatuation with a courtesan to the same cause (Liv. 39.11.12). In Late Antiquity, John Chrysostom mentions a famous actress who was accused of having used sorcery to make men fall in love with her (*In Matth.* PG 58.636; cf. *In ep. ad Rom.* PG 60.627). He also warns the male members of his flock against resorting to prostitutes, lest the prostitutes cast a spell on them or their wives (*In illud: Propt. fornicat.* PG 51.216; cf. *De virg.* 52 SC). Finally, there is a hint of magic-working in the story in Polybius, who is circumspect about reporting such rumours, of what Oinathe, the mother of Ptolemy Philopator's mistress, Agathokleia, did when she took refuge from the enraged Alexandrian mob in the Thesmophorion: she fell to her knees before the statues of Demeter and Kore and performed magical actions (γονυπετοῦσα καὶ μαγανεύουσα πρὸς τὰς θεάς Polyb. 15.29.9). It would seem that a reputation for magic-working was part of the stereotyped image of such women.

As for the name Philinna, it is not necessarily a prostitute's name to judge from AP 9.422, 434, 14.125 and from the respectable women who are given the name throughout much of the Greek-speaking world. On the other hand, it must have had associations with prostitution; one of Lucian's courtesans is Philinna (*Dial. meretr.* 3) and a Philinna, clearly a prostitute, is the subject of two Byzantine epigrams (AP 5.258, 280). The name may have acquired these resonances in the aftermath of Philinna's notoriety or it may have had them before she became famous.