

5. Amulet against fever¹

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P.Heid. Inv. Kopt. 407
11th–12th century

6,5 x 16,5 cm

Provenance unknown
plate X

The amulet is written on dark brown rag paper with a brownish ink. Fully preserved, the only holes to be seen are the holes used to hang up the amulet. The paper has 7 vertical folds at ca. 2 cm each. The other side contains fragments of three lines, the opening lines of an official letter in Arabic that was written earlier than the amulet, as the piece of paper was cut out of the letter.² Given that the paper was folded and pierced, it was probably actually worn as an amulet.

The hand could be datable into the late 10th or 11th century; compare the letters α, μ, ς in V. Stegemann, *Koptische Paläographie*, Heidelberg 1936, 21, *Historische Notiz*. A late date is also supported by the material. However, as the Arabic text can be dated to the 11–12th century or even a century later, a dating into the 11th–12th century or even later for the Coptic is preferable.

Amulet with the three names of the three young men of Babylon and *voces magicae*.

ΕΝΡΑΝ ΕΠΩΟΜΕΤ ΝΖΑΙ-
ΓΙΟΣ// ΖΑ[Ν]ΑΝΙΑΣ
ΑΣΑΡΙΑΣ// ΜΙΣΑΗΛ
ΖΙΤΡΑΚ // ΜΙΣΑΚ
5 ΑΒΤΝΝΑΚΩ// ΛΑΛ
ΜΟΥΛΑΛ// ΒΟΛΑΛ//
ΜΟΥΧΑΡ// ΔΜΘΙΑ//
ΑΝΙΑ// ΜΑΝΤΟΥΝΑΘΑ
ΤΑΝΕΡΑ// ΤΑΙΕΡΑ
10 ΕΝΘΕΜΑ// ΔΝΘΕΜΑ//
ΑΝΤΩΛΗΛΟΥΛ//
ΜΑΝΤΟΥΛΑΛΑ// ΘΟΥΘΗΛ//
ΚΡΑΘΑ// ΜΕΜΕ//
ΑΜΑΘΑ// ΕΦΡΙΑ//
15 ΑΦΡΑΜΑΜΑ// ΝΑΒΘΑ-
ΜΑΘΑ// ΤΜΘΙΣ
ΑΧΩΔΑ// ΑΧΟΥΕ//
ΘΑΜΝΘΟΥ// ΔΘΑΜΑΣ//
ΚΑΘΜΑΣ// ΜΑΚΑΛ//
20 ΤΕΡΤΑΚΟΣ ΝΑΡΧΗΡ
ΧΤΧ// ΜΑΤΕΕΡ
ΧΙΧΑΡ// ΛΤΗΡ// ΕΥΤΩΛ

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ΜΕΒΛΩΧΙ// ΩΤΑϞ-
ΕΙΑΤΑΤΑΜΩΤ//

1. $\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{R}}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{N}} \overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{Q}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{T}}$ 1–2. ἄγιος

Translation:

The names of the three saints: Hananias, Asarias, Misael; Zittrak, Misak, Abtnnako; Lal, Moulal, Bolal, (*voces magicae*).

1–6 The invocation of the three young men of Babylon, who escaped with divine help from the furnace of Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3) is common in amulets against fever. It was believed that their escape from the hot furnace made them powerful against fever.

Parallels to this formula have been listed by W. Brashear, *Lesefrüchte*, ZPE 50 (1983) 106–107³, to this list some others can be added.⁴ The three men's Jewish and Babylonian names (Daniel 1.7) are listed in these texts. The six names show significant orthographical variations. In only one text, Beltz op. cit. II 42 are they labeled the three holy (ἄγιος) boys.

To the names of these three boys, variants of the *voces magicae* λal μογλαλ βογλαλ are always added. The variants differ in each and every text, but have in common the μ-β and ω or ∅ sequences and the λal endings, the most frequent variant being λal μογλαλ βογλαλ. This usual connection between the three *voces* and the three young men made W. Till (op. cit. 102) suggest that they were understood as the secret names of the young men, this interpretation is supported by Stegemann op. cit. xxvii, 6 and our text.

1 ερωμετ is $\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{Q}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{T}}$ in standardized Sahidic. The scribe could have dropped the μ accidentally, or he could have used it this way.

7–24 These lines contain only *voces magicae* divided by double strokes, which, except for the last line, are marked with a supralinear stroke. Except for $\overline{\text{Θ}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{Y}}\overline{\text{Θ}}\overline{\text{N}}\overline{\text{A}}$, they do not belong to any known tradition of *voces magicae*, I could not find any parallels. However, some of them are Greek or Greek sounding (as $\overline{\text{T}}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{I}}\overline{\text{E}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{A}}$, $\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{X}}\overline{\text{O}}\overline{\text{Y}}\overline{\text{E}}$), or derivations of biblical (Gnostic?) names ($\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{Q}}\overline{\text{P}}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{A}}$, $\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{Θ}}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{M}}\overline{\text{A}}\overline{\text{C}}$), and some others could be understood as variations, word games

- 3 V. Stegemann, *Die koptische Zaubertexte der Sammlung Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer in Wien*, Heidelberg 1934. 30–31. xv. (amulet, parchment, 10–11th cent.), 50–52. xvii. (amulet, parchment, 10–11th cent.); W. E. Crum, 'La magie copte.' *Recueil d'études égyptologiques dédiées à la mémoire de Jean-François Champollion*, 1922, 542–543. III. (fever amulet, parchment); P.Lond.Copt. I 524 (charm for pregnant woman, parchment); W. E. Crum, 'Magical texts in coptic.' *JEA* 20 (1934) 197–199. B. (mixed magical text, parchment); P.Hermitage.Copt. 65. (fever amulet, parchment); A. Kropp, *Ausgewählte Zaubertexte II*. 1931. 114–117. xxxiv. = W. Beltz, 'Die koptischen Zauberpapiere und Zauberostraka der Papyrus-Sammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin.' *APF* 31 (1985) 32–35. II. 42. (healing charm through sacred oil, paper, 8–9th cent.); W. Till, *Koptische Kleinliteratur*, ZÄS 77 (1942) 102. (amulet, papyrus, 9th cent.).
- 4 W. E. Crum, *Eine Verfluchung*, ZÄS 34 (1896) 85–89 (curse, papyrus, reference to the three boys without their names).
A. Alcock, *A Coptic Magical Text*, *BASP* 19 (1982) 97–103 (fever amulet, paper, 11th century).
H. Quecke, *Zwei koptische Amulette der Papyrussammlung der Universität Heidelberg* (Inv. Nr. 544b und 564a), *Le Muséon*, 76 (1963) 255–265 (fever amulet, parchment).
M. Meyer, *The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels*, 1996, 42–43, 101–103 (recipe for amulet against fever, parchment, 10–11th century).
P.Rainer Inv. K 5859 (unpublished amulet, paper, 11th century, on courtesy to Adrienn Deák).

with these once meaningful words. They are mainly variant repetitions of these words,⁵ which sometimes form a threefold structure with a third, totally different word.⁶ On these techniques of creating *voces magicae* see H. S. Versnel, *The Poetics of the Magic Charm*, in: P. Mirecki - M. Meyer (edd.), *Magic and Ritual in the Ancient World*, Leiden 2002, 105–158, esp. 131–132.

The author of the text made use of Greek words in creating a text that was meant for supernatural communication, thus did not have an earthly meaning. The use of a foreign language of a sacred status as a source for *voces magicae* is well attested in the magical practice of different periods, see W. Brashear, *The Greek Magical Papyri: an Introduction and Survey*, ANRW II 18.5, Berlin 1995, 3429. In later Coptic magic Greek language had this position, reinforced by its liturgical use. A text published by J. Van der Vliet, *The amulet P. Mil. Vol. Copt. Inv. 22.: Some Addenda*, *JCoptStud* 7 (2005) 141–145, a fever amulet from the 10th–11th century, for example, also contains corrupt forms of Greek words such as *παῦσον* or *θύσια*. It is remarkable that the words applied in both this text and our one come from the semantic area of religion and magic.

9 ταιερα can stand as a Greek word, τὰ ἱερά.

10 ανθεμα is possibly derived from ἀνάθημα.

12 θογηλ: the divine name *θωθ*, plus the frequent ending of angel names, *ηλ*, a derivation from the Hebrew name of the Lord. Frequent way of creating angelic names, see Versnel, *op. cit.* 114–115.

13–14 κραθα may have a distant connection to κράτος.

15 αφραμαμα can be regarded as a derivation of the name of Abraham, he comes across in an amulet against fever (R. Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets*, 1994, 347 Nr. 59.)

17–18 αχογε may be a misspelled form of ἄκουε, with αχωα and θαμνηογ it forms a threefold structure.

18–19 αθαμας is an orthographical variant of αδαμας, which might be a variant for the name Adam, or a late reminiscent of the Gnostic figure of Adamas, the Tyrant, one of the twelve archons of Pistis Sophia and the first man of the Gospel of the Egyptians. This name comes across also in another magical papyrus, Kropp, *op. cit.* II. xiii., where it refers to Adam, the first man, either Gnostic or orthodox, as it occurs in the self-identification as the offspring of ‘Adamas’. This doesn’t necessarily imply to any knowledge of Gnosticism in the 11th century, the compiler of this text may just have borrowed his material from earlier magical texts.

20 τερτακος: Greek sounding word, it can have a connection to τετρακόσιοι.

21 ματεερ may be of Latin origin (‘mater’ mother).

23–24 As apart from these letters only the first one and a half line, which doesn’t contain names, is not marked by a supralinear stroke, it is probable that these last letters weren’t understood as names, either. However, they cannot be interpreted as regular Coptic or Arabic. They might be some very corrupt Coptic words.

5 Such as τανερα// ταιερα and maybe εθεμα// ανθεμα//.

6 As αθηια// ανια// μαντογναθα; κραθα// μεμε// αμαθα, αχωα// αχογε// θαμνηογ; αθαμας// καθμας// μακαλλ//; and maybe αντωλλμλογλ// μαντογλαλα// θογηλ// and ματεερ χιχαρ// λτηρ.