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# THREE ELUSIVE AMULETS

By A. A. Barb

Each of the three amulets I am dealing with in the following pages raises questions to which I am unable to give conclusive answers. Can we connect the cameo (I) with a certain lady known from an historical source? Are we entitled to assume an inclusion of the figure of Christ into magico-religious syncretism of the Roman upper classes as early as the first century A.D.? What was the material of the Byzantine amulet (II), known only from one (or two?) electrotype copies, with its curious combination of Christian, Jewish and Egyptian elements? and what could Christians of the sixth century see in the figure of 'Horus on the crocodiles' of late Egyptian religion and magic? To which part of Europe or the Near East and to which century A.D. can we ascribe the leather amulet (III) and what is the meaning—if there is any—of its inscriptions in an unknown alphabet?

However inconclusive the commentary I am able to give, the three amulets, each as far as I can see unique in its kind, most certainly deserve publication. I and III are in private hands and might not easily come to the attention of interested scholars, while the electrotype (II), although known and referred to since 1900, has never been adequately reproduced and the whereabouts not only of the original but also of the copy, made in the last decade of the nineteenth century for the Mediaeval Department of the Hermitage, is apparently nowadays unknown.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps better scholars may take up the problems where I must leave them and may produce in due course more satisfactory explanations.

## I. A 'GNOSTIC' CAMEO

The sum total of so-called 'Gnostic' or 'Abraxas' gems—a better name would be 'magic' or 'amuletic' gems<sup>2</sup>—in public and private collections would certainly run into five figures. They are all *intagli*, i.e. they show incised figures and/or inscriptions like seals although, as the lettering clearly indicates, they were never intended for sealing, which would have turned the inscriptions the wrong way round. There exists, however, at least one cameo belonging to this class of monument.<sup>3</sup> I know of its existence through the kindness of Professor Andreas Alföldi, who discovered it in the collection of the late Regierungsrat Leo Merz in Berne and who also sent me the photographs reproduced in Pls. 1a, b. I have to thank Miss Eva Merz for supplying details of material and measurement and for kindly permitting me to publish this important gem.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. K. Preisendanz in Pauly-Wissowa, *R.E.*, Suppl. viii, 1956, Col. 681 f.

<sup>2</sup> For a general survey of this class of gems see my article in *Enciclopedia dell'arte antica classica e orientale*, iii, 1960, pp. 971–74.

<sup>3</sup> The Vienna half-sculpture of the child Horus, cut from emerald-matrix with Horus on the Lotus-flower and Greek amuletic inscription engraved on its back (cf. F. Eichler-

E. Kris, *Die Kameen im kunsthistorischen Museum*, Vienna, 1927, p. 73 f., no. 52) I should not call a cameo proper, as it lacks a background. It rather belongs to the same class of small sculpture cut in semi-precious stones as the haematite 'figurine' of a hawk with magic inscription in the Louvre (cf. A. Dain, *Inscriptions grecques du Musée du Louvre. Les textes inédits*, 1933, p. 178 ff., no. 204).

The cameo is made from a sardonyx of three layers, the figure and the two letters on the obverse appearing milky-white on a bluish background, and the reverse being brown. Its size is  $3.6 \times 2.7$  cm., the maximum thickness 0.8 cm. The obverse shows the familiar figure of the god Hermes or Mercurius in frontal view, slightly turned to the left, with chlamys fastened on his right shoulder, winged cap and wings on his ankles, the kerykeion resting on his bent left arm, and holding a tortoise on his outstretched right hand. On either side of the figure we see a Greek letter: Theta and Chi. The reverse shows the following inscription carefully engraved in nine lines:

Ι Α Ω  
 Α Β Ρ Α C Α C  
 Α Δ Ω Ν Α Ι Α  
 Γ Ι Ο Ν Ο Ν Ο Μ  
 (5) Λ Α Ε Ζ Ι Α Ι Δ Υ  
 Ν Α Μ Ι C + Υ Λ  
 Α Ζ Α Τ C Ο Υ Ε  
 Β Ι Α Ν Π Α Υ  
 Λ Ε Ι Ν Α Ν

There are two or three obvious mistakes for which the engraver is probably to blame. The first letter in line 5 should be Α (Alpha) not Λ (Lambda); the C (Sigma) in line 7 should be an Ε (Epsilon); in both cases the horizontal stroke of the letter has been left out. The unusual cross-form of what should be the letter Φ (Phi) in line 6 might be a similar mistake; the cross-bar is set so low down that it seems intended to be completed by a parallel bar above it with the two bars connecting on both sides. The only other abnormality is in line 2: ABPACAC instead of the usual ABPACAΖ. With these emendations the inscription reads: 'Ιαω 'Αβρασαξ 'Αδωναι ἅγιον ὄνομα 'Αεξιαί δύναμις φυλάξατε Ουέβιαν Παυλείναν = 'Iao Abrasax Adonai, holy name Aexiai, power, preserve Vebia [Vibia? Baebia?] Paulina!' This is one of the usual Greek magic invocations with their frequent strongly Jewish flavour,<sup>4</sup> quite intelligible except for the *vox magica* 'Aexiai' which I have met nowhere else.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For *Iaō*, the widely used Greek transcription of the Hebrew *YHWH* cf. this *Journal*, XVI, 1953, p. 216, n. 44 (and p. 227, n. 153), also M. Delcor in *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, cxlvii, 1955, p. 166. For *Abrasax* see my 'Abraxas-Studien' in *Hommages à W. Deonna* (*Coll. Latomus* xxviii), Brussels, 1957, p. 67 ff. *Adōnai* = Hebrew 'My Lord' is still substituted today by orthodox Jews, when reciting, for the name *YHWH* which must not be pronounced. 'In rabbinic sources of the first and second centuries the name *Dynamis* was widely used as a synonym for God Himself, the esoteric use continued in the circles of the Merkabah mystics' (G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic tradition*, 1960, p. 67; Scholem also gives references to the similar use in the N.T.; cf. also G. Kittel, *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum N.T.*, ii,

p. 286 ff. and K. Preisendanz, *P.G.M.*, Pap. vii, 583; iv, 1276; i, 345). 'Holy Name' cf., e.g., LXX, Ps. 110 (111), 9: ἅγιον καὶ φοβερόν τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ and G. Quispel, reviewing Scholem's book in *Vigiliae Christianae*, xv, 1961, p. 118.

<sup>5</sup> Of more or less similar sounding *voces magicae* I have noted: ΤΙΥΖΙ and ΤΥΖΕΥ (cf. C. Bonner, *Studies in magical amulets*, Ann Arbor, 1950, p. 225 and n. 65); ΤΕΥΖ occurs in a magic formula given by Alexander Trallianus (cf. R. Heim, *Incantamenta magica graeca latina*, no. 204); ΤΙΧΙΑΥ (in *tabula ansata* underneath lion-headed god) on a jasper intaglio in Florence (Inv. no. 2948); ΑΥΖΙ is known as lucky acclamation in imperial times (cf. E. Peterson, *op. cit.*—see below, n. 50—p. 181; L. Robert, *Hellenica*, xi/xii, 1960, p. 23 ff.) and, as a Jewish graffito of Beth-

In contrast to this reverse of typical magico-syncretistic character, as it was developed in Egypt and Syria, the representation of Hermes on the obverse appears to be a pure classical type. The tortoise, although one of his less frequent attributes, is sufficiently well attested on other works of art representing Hermes<sup>6</sup> and is usually connected with the myth of his invention of the lyre.<sup>7</sup> But what of the mysterious letters Θ and X and the exorcism on the reverse, both of which we must take as related to this image of Hermes? Admittedly there are instances where genuine or faked magical inscriptions and sometimes also crude magical representations have been added in more recent times to genuine antique intaglios and cameos.<sup>8</sup> But I feel quite sure that this is not the case here. The form of letters suggests the first century A.D., just as does the execution of the obverse, and would have looked rather different in later centuries, not to speak of the work of Renaissance forgers, who in any case would not have been able to compose such a meaningful, correct text.<sup>9</sup> Besides this, the two letters on the obverse could not possibly have been added after the cutting of the cameo and must be related to the Hermes figure.

There are few Graeco-Roman divinities of such protean significance as Hermes-Mercurius. He is the divine messenger and the *psychopompos* as well as the god of business success—both honest and dishonest. He turns up as the *interpretatio Romana* of various Celtic, Germanic and other foreign local deities. He is identified with the Egyptian Anubis who takes care of the dead but also with the Egyptian Thot who, as Hermes Trismegistos, becomes the great mediator and the teacher of all secret and divine wisdom. We should, of course, be inclined to see the latter meaning on a magic gem and the letter Θ could be interpreted as the initial of Thot; but with Thot I am at a loss to connect a word starting with X; to read χελώνη (= tortoise) and to explain the legend as 'Thot's tortoise' would hardly appeal to anybody. Apart from its connection with the invention of the lyre and occasional symbolism of fertility and pregnancy (which belongs more correctly to frog and toad)<sup>10</sup>

Shearim shows, the form ἀέξω was occasionally used for ἄξω (see B. Lifschitz in *Revue Biblique*, lxxviii, 1961, p. 401 f.). We also know EΛZA and YEZA as names of the Elksaite Gnosis, cf. E. S. Drower, *The secret Adam, a study of Nasoraean Gnosis*, 1960, *passim* (see Index)—perhaps (so G. Scholem, *op. cit.*, p. 67, n. 7) 'the hidden *dynamis*' or (cf. R. Macuch in *Oriental. Literaturzeitung*, lvi, 1961, col. 383, n. 4) 'the hidden God'?

<sup>6</sup> Cf., e.g., the intaglio pl. vii, no. 570 in P. Fossing, *The Thorwaldsen Museum. Catalogue of the antique engraved gems and cameos*, Copenhagen, 1929, and the references, *ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>7</sup> There was also the story of a house-bound virgin Chelone who, summoned by Hermes to attend the wedding of Zeus and Hera refused to do so and was punished by being transformed into a tortoise, thus carrying her house always about—cf. Roscher, *Mythol. Lex.*, i, 892.

<sup>8</sup> The inscription of the haematite hawk in the Louvre (see above, n. 3) appears, according to Dain, to have been added centuries later. The 'gnostic' figure and characters on the reverse of a cameo in the Royal collection of gems at Windsor Castle (obverse reprod. by A. B. Tonnochy in *The Connoisseur Coronation Book*, 1953, p. 57) is probably the addition of a Renaissance engraver or still later. The same is evidently the case with the nonsensical 'magic' lettering on the reverse of a cameo in Vienna (Eichler-Kris, *op. cit.*, no. 20, p. 62, fig. 24) and the 'Abraxas'-figure with faked inscription on a sixteenth-century Italian cameo in the Milton Weil Collection (see *Catalogue . . .* by E. Kris, Vienna, 1932, p. 16 and pl. v, fig. 14).

<sup>9</sup> See, e.g., this *Journal*, XVI, 1953, p. 219, n. 67.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the references in this *Journal*, *l.c.*, p. 214, n. 23 (Kris, Deonna, Lesky) and now

the tortoise usually is a sinister, negative symbol, connected with darkness and the Underworld.<sup>11</sup> Is our Hermes then the guide to the Nether World and should  $\Theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma \chi\theta\acute{o}\nu\iota\omicron\varsigma$  be read? But an amulet to open the way to Tartarus could hardly have been to the liking of the Roman lady for whom it was manufactured. (Cf. also below, n. 37.)

There is, however, still another meaning for the tortoise, viz. as symbol for the Universe, the Kosmos. Although, as far as I can see, this meaning is unequivocally attested only in India, the Far East and Ancient America, it has been convincingly suggested that we must accept it for Graeco-Roman works of art too, at least in the case of Aphrodite Urania, represented by Phidias as resting her foot on the tortoise.<sup>12</sup> The tortoise on the altar of Mercurius Avernus at Leyden has been similarly explained.<sup>13</sup> Thus the type of Hermes holding the tortoise on his outstretched hand would closely resemble the familiar representation of Helios holding the globe in similar fashion, characterizing him as Hermes Kosmokrator, a conception well attested by the magic papyri.<sup>14</sup> Very much as in these magic hymns in Egyptian *grimoires*, Hermes and Helios appear fused into one and the same popular deity in Syria,<sup>15</sup> a deity with an established cult and public sanctuaries, while the Graeco-Egyptian Hermes Trismegistos always remained more or less a god of mystics, theosophists and philosophers. This Syrian aspect of Hermes might even be much older than the 'classical' conception<sup>16</sup> and could reveal the original meaning of his tortoise-attribute, while the myth of the invention of the lyre (a somewhat illogical duplication of the same invention by Apollo)

also R. Lullies in *Theoria—Festschrift für W. H. Schuchhardt* (Baden-Baden, 1960), p. 143 ff.

<sup>11</sup> S. B. van de Walle, 'La tortue dans la religion et la magie égyptiennes', *La Nouvelle Clio*, v, 1953, p. 173 ff.; L. Voelkl in *Römische Quartalschrift*, I, 1955, p. 104 ff.

<sup>12</sup> W. Deonna, 'Aphrodite sur la tortue', *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, lxxxi, 1920, p. 135 ff.; F. Cumont, 'L'Aphrodite à la tortue de Doura Europos', *Monuments Piot*, xxvii, 1924, p. 31 ff.; *idem*, *Fouilles de Doura Europos 1922-23* (Paris, 1926), p. 206 ff. But there was also an old cult of a Hermes Uranios, as we know from an inscription, see *Inscriptiones Graecae*, v, i, no. 559, 24.

<sup>13</sup> H. Hardenberg, 'L'autel de Mercure Averno à Horn', *L'Antiquité classique*, xv, 1946, p. 5 ff., esp. p. 29 ff. To Hardenberg's references p. 14 add Esperandieu, iii, 2132 (Châlon-sur-Saône).

<sup>14</sup>  $\text{Ἑρμῆς κοσμοκράτωρ}$ : Preisendanz, *P.G.M.*, Pap. v, 401 ff.; Pap. xvii b, 1.  $\text{παντοκράτωρ}$ : *ibid.*, Pap. vii, 668 ff. Here, as in Pap. v, 402, he is also called 'wearer of the chlamys and the winged sandals', i.e. he is seen like the representation on our cameo. Cf. also E. Heitsch, 'Zu den Zauberhymnen', *Philologus*, ciii, 1959, p. 215 ff., esp. p. 223 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. H. Seyrig, *Antiquités syriennes*, v, 1958,

p. 100 ff. ('Mercure Héliopolitain'); *idem*, *Syria*, x, 1929, p. 335 ff. ('Mercure Héliopolitain et le Soleil'); R. Dussaud, 'Temples et cultes de la triade héliopolitaine à Baalbeck', *Syria*, xxiii, 1942/43, p. 33 ff.; O. Eissfeldt, *Tempel und Kulte syrischer Städte in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit*, 1941, pp. 53-57.

<sup>16</sup> The rather academic and pedestrian articles on Hermes in Pauly-Wissowa and Roscher might usefully be supplemented by works like W. B. Kristensen, 'De goddelijke heraut en het woord van God', *Mededeel. d. Koninkl. Akad. van Wetenschappen, Afd. Letterkunde, D. 70, Ser. B, no. 2*, Amsterdam, 1930, or K. Kerényi, *Hermes der Seelenführer* (= *Albae Vigiliae*, N.F. 1, Zürich, 1944). Only now are we gradually realizing the importance of older, oriental beliefs and mythology for the formation of the considerably younger 'classical' Greek religion—cf., e.g., *Elements orientaux dans la religion grecque ancienne* (Colloque de Strasbourg 1958), Paris, 1960. Much that we are accustomed to see classified as late 'syncretism' is rather the ancient and original, deep-seated popular religion, coming to the surface when the whitewash of 'classical' writers and artists began to peel off, cf. my remarks in 'Noreia und Rehtia', *Beiträge zur älteren europäischen Kulturgeschichte*

and the rather insipid story of the housebound woman (see above, n. 7) would be later explanations of an attribute which was no longer understood.<sup>17</sup>

The invocation of Hermes as 'IAO' [=YHWH] Bringer of Light' in a magic papyrus<sup>18</sup> might not mean much in the syncretistic muddle of these texts. But there is a group of magic intagli which seem to suggest more strongly an *interpretatio iudaica* of the god Hermes. These stones show a human figure whose body and limbs are covered with lettering, partly well-known angel names, *voces magicae*, or formulae, partly the usual magic permutations of the seven vowels. Two of these stones (there are nine known to me)<sup>19</sup> characterize the figure clearly as Hermes (cf. here Pls. 1c-e).<sup>20</sup> Now the only explanation for these so far unexplained inscribed figures seems to me to be found in the Cabbalistic (or perhaps better 'Jewish-Gnostic') secret lore of the *Shiur Komah*,<sup>21</sup> which describing God in stark anthropomorphic terms gives not

—*Festschrift für Rudolf Egger*, i, Klagenfurt, 1952, p. 173 ff., or F. v. Duhn in *Deutsche Revue*, xlv, 1919, p. 155.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. also F. Cumont, *Fouilles*, etc. (see above, n. 12), p. 208 f.: 'Quelle était la signification de la tortue? On l'ignorait déjà à l'époque romaine . . .'

<sup>18</sup> Φώσφορ' Ἰάω — Preisendanz, *P. G. M.*, Pap. v, 176 f. But cf. the *deus bonus puer Phosphorus*, below, note 20, and what I note below, p. 6 and note 27 about the *Metatron*.

<sup>19</sup> They have been listed by E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman period*, ii, 1953, p. 269, and more completely by C. Bonner, 'A miscellany of engraved stones', *Hesperia*, xxiii, 1954, p. 151 ff. Bonner describes a stone in the Art Museum, Princeton University (40-392), adds five others from older publications (1-5) and mentions [6] a stone published by Caylus which he thinks is a forgery. But he did not realize that the stones 2 (publ. by Spon) and [6] are now both in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris where I was able to examine them thoroughly and there cannot be a doubt that [6] (published by Caylus with a very correct drawing) is genuinely antique. Two further stones of this group, which escaped Bonner's attention, are—I am counting the Princeton intaglio as [7]—no. 3469 in A. de Ridder's *Catalogue de la Collection De Clercq*, vii, 2 (1911) = [8], and a gem published (from the collection of Luigi Firrao) by G. Minervini, 'Poche osservazioni intorno ad un pietra Basilidiana', in *Bullettino archeologico napoletano*, N.S., no. 110, Febr. 1857, pp. 89-91 and pl. vii/3, = [9]. It seems interesting that of these nine stones five are cut in amethyst (not often used for Gnostic gems) and two in rock crystal—which also might have been originally amethyst; its colour tends to fade

gradually when exposed to light, a fact known to Pliny ('ad vicina crystalli descendit albicante purpurae defectu', *N.H.* xxxvii, 123). This affinity of amethyst and rock crystal appears also in a Hebrew list of gems of the fourteenth century, where we also read that this is the stone of the tribe of Gad and useful in war as well as against demons and spirits: cf. J. Trachtenberg, *Jewish magic and superstition*, 1939, pp. 138 and 266. Three of these nine gems show on the reverse the familiar solar emblem of the Lion.

<sup>20</sup> Pl. 1c after *Thesaurus gemmarum astriferarum antiquarum* interprete Io. Bapt. Passerio, cura et studio Ant. Franc. Gori, Florence, 1750, Vol. I, pl. cxcvii. Pl. 1d after J. Spon, *Voyage d'Italie* etc., La Haye, 1724, i, p. 338. Pl. 1e-f the same stone after a plaster cast from the original in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Cabinet des Médailles, by courtesy of the curator, M. Jean Babelon. As regards the inscribed snake held by all seven of these Gnostic figures I should see some connexion with the Syrian Hermes as 'deus bonus puer Phosphorus (Azizus)' who holds the serpent which symbolizes the course of the sun—cf. R. Dussaud in *Syria*, xxiii, 1942/43, pp. 74-75. But compare also the cabbalistic primeval serpent, 'the great servant of the creation', whose 'head surmounted the heights of the earth and whose tail descended into the depths of Hell' (G. Scholem, 'Gut und Böse in der Kabbala', *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, xxx, 1961, p. 57). Here, I think, we find a more likely explanation than Hermes = Michael conquering the dragon—cf. W. Lueken, *Michael*, Göttingen, 1898, p. 27 f. and 78 f.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, xi, 1907, p. 298. G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition*, 1960, p. 36 ff. *Idem*, 'Die mystische Gestalt Gottes

only the measurements but also the secret names of every part and limb of his 'body'. The small size of the engraved gems enforced, of course, a restriction of the inscriptions to a mere suggestion of what was meant (not to mention the corruptions due to the ignorance of the engravers),<sup>22</sup> but I feel sure that this Gnostic Jewish doctrine must be responsible for these strange representations. It seems highly significant, that on the two (or three) stones where the figure shows some characterization beyond merely human forms<sup>23</sup> it is represented as Hermes.<sup>24</sup> If the oldest forms of *Shiur Komah* speculation developed not in Egypt but in Palestine or Syria<sup>25</sup> this would point to the same environment in which we find Hermes-Helios-Kosmokrator.

Similarly, I think, we must evaluate the appearance of Hermes in Aramaic incantations from Babylonia.<sup>26</sup> Here Hermes is identified with the *Logos*, with *Metatron* (in Jewish mysticism the highest of the angels, the divine mediator and, as it were, hypostasis of God himself), even with 'YAH' [= YHWH].<sup>27</sup> These are conceptions which can hardly be explained from the Graeco-Egyptian Hermes Trismegistos doctrines,<sup>28</sup> but rather from Jewish-Syrian, perhaps Chaldaean, esoteric traditions.<sup>29</sup> I should see the same background in the Greek inscription on a pottery lamp of early imperial times, found in Dioscurias-Sebastopolis (east of the Euxine, now U.S.S.R.) and obviously a

in der Kabbala', *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, xxix, 1960 (1961), p. 139 ff., esp. p. 145 ff.

<sup>22</sup> Still, these antique intagli—hardly later than the third century A.D.—should be an important help for explaining details given in mediaeval manuscripts of the *Shiur Komah* (none earlier than the 11th cent.), a task which G. Scholem (*Eranos-Jahrbuch*, l.c., p. 148) described as 'fast hoffnungslos'. *P.G.M.*, Pap. v, 435 mentions the 'name of Hermes (consisting of) hundred letters'—analogous to the secret name of the Jewish God—but fails to write it down.

<sup>23</sup> The Princeton gem published by Bonner (see above, n. 19) shows the mysterious figure in Persian costume—actually in almost exactly the same attire as the god facing King Antiochos I of Commagene (d. 34 B.C.) on the famous relief of Nemrud-Dagh in Syria, a god called in the inscription 'Apollo-Mithras-Helios-Hermes', see F. Saxl, *Mithras*, 1931, p. 3 and pl. I, fig. 5; M. J. Vermaseren, *Corpus inscript. et monument. religionis Mithraicae*, i, 1956, p. 53 f., no. 30 and fig. 5; T. Nagy in *Acta Antiqua Acad. Scient. Hungar.*, vi, 1958, p. 427, n. 102–103. Cf. also H. Seyrig, 'Héliopolitana' in *Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth*, i, 1937, p. 85 ('cette analogie [with Mithras] fait mieux comprendre comment le dieu-fils d'Héliopolis a pu parvenir au rang d'un cosmocrator') and F. Saxl's aside (*op. cit.*, p. vi), 'der Mithriazismus erscheint uns heute fast als eines der gnostischen Systeme'. On Hermes-Mithras cf. also below, note 44.

<sup>24</sup> It might be relevant to mention that after Helios (who is competing with the ubiquitous Jewish Iao Sabaoth Adonai) no Greek deity is invoked nearly as often as Hermes in the magic papyri, cf. M. Nilsson, 'Die Religion der griechischen Zauberpapyri', *Bull. de la soc. roy. des lettres de Lund*, 1947–48/ii, p. 68 f. (and 63).

<sup>25</sup> Thus Scholem, *Eranos-Jahrbuch*, xxix, p. 151.

<sup>26</sup> See J. A. Montgomery, *Aramaic incantation texts from Nippur*, Philadelphia, 1913, nn. 2, 2; 19, 7; 25, 4 and pp. 113, 123, 208.

<sup>27</sup> With Hermes = Metatron cf. H. Seyrig, *Antiquités syriennes*, v, p. 105: 'Mercure Héliopolitain semble avoir été lié à Jupiter par un lieu d'hypostase, qui faisait de lui le vicaire du grand dieu'; also *idem*, *Syria*, x, 1929, pp. 341–46.

<sup>28</sup> Montgomery, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

<sup>29</sup> However Hermes-Thot, Lord of the Egyptian Hermopolis Magna (cf. G. Roeder, *Hermopolis 1929–1939*, Hildesheim, 1959, p. 163 ff.) shows in Graeco-Roman times a certain affinity to the Syrian-Aramaean Hermes, and the important magic Hermes-Invocation, Preisendanz, *P.G.M.*, ii, p. 45 f. (Pap. viii, 1 ff.) is a remarkable combination of Egyptian and Syrian (or Jewish?) elements. The fourfold appearances (according to the four cardinal points) here ascribed to Hermes we find otherwise ascribed to the child-sun-god Harpokrates (cf. 'Abraxas-Studien', n. 4 above, p. 81 ff.) and the same can be said for

devotional, if not a magical object;<sup>30</sup> the inscription recommends turning to 'the Lord Hermes-Mercurius' for salvation.<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps we are now better equipped to explain the Hermes on our cameo and the mysterious letters Θ X. We find the same two letters on an 'Abraxas'-stone reproduced in the seventeenth-century work of Macarius (L'Heureux) and Chiflet.<sup>32</sup> At first glance this gem seems a fake (cf. here Pl. 1g). The crown<sup>33</sup> and the form of the chalice are obviously not antique. But we never know in these old illustrations what suspect details are due to an ignorant draftsman working after a more or less crude sketch or blurred impression. A comparison of this stone with our cameo leaves hardly a doubt that both follow an identical pattern, which is most obvious in the position of the figure and drapery of the garment as well as in the arrangement of the two letters. There must therefore have existed at least one antique magic gem-stone besides our cameo (and probably more than one) of this kind of figure with the letters Θ X. It could have been a Hermes with a tortoise or (if the radiated crown—although differently shaped—were really there) Helios holding some kind of globe, which the draftsman (or perhaps some Renaissance engraver adding an ill-conceived 'improvement') changed into the chalice; there might even have been the whip, which Helios usually holds in his left hand, and which, since it consists of two rather thin lines, could have vanished in the stone-impression or been overlooked by the draftsman. Chiflet<sup>34</sup> offers an interpretation of this stone which is as abstrusely learned as it is absurd. According to him the figure is Bacchus, Θ means 'condemnation' and X 'absolution'. For the radiated crown he refers to Liber pater = Apollo (according to Macrobius) and the chalice reminds him of Gnostic rituals—a *tour de force* which was rejected by Montfaucon, who suggests another explanation, namely *Theos Christos*.<sup>35</sup> The same explanation of Θ X was offered, independently of Montfaucon, by a remarkable scholar of the eighteenth century, P. E. Jablonski, who stressed the fact that the Gnostics liked to represent Christ as the Sun(-god).<sup>36</sup> There are, of course, any number of possibilities for explaining two initials which are not a familiar abbreviation.<sup>37</sup> But if we

his connexion with the 'holy ship' and the Kynoskephalos (cf. my paper 'Zur Deutung des Kahnfahrers vom Magdalensberg', *Carinthia I*, cxlvii, 1957, p. 90 ff.).

<sup>30</sup> On Hermes connected with magic lamps cf. A. Delatte, 'Une clochette magique antique' (this bell shows *Hermes* between Hekate and Nemesis), *Bull. de l'Acad. roy. de Belgique, Cl. des lettres* etc., Ser. 5, T. 40, 1954, p. 260. Cf. also F. Cunen, 'Lampe et coupe magiques', *Symbolae Osloenses*, xxxvi, 1960, p. 65 ff.

<sup>31</sup> περάσεις προσκύνει κυρίῳ Ἐρμῆν Μαρκῦριον ὑπὲρ σωτηρίας — see *Vestnik Drevnej Istorii*, 1958/4, p. 132 f., and *Bibliotheca Classica Orientalis*, v, 1960, col. 204; vii, 1962, col. 12 f. Cf. also the Syrian dedications to Μερκουρίῳ δωμινῶ (R. Dussaud, *Notes de mythologie syrienne*, p. 26), MERCUR(I)O Dom(INO) and DEO MERCYRIO (*Bulletin du Musée de Beyrouth*, i, 1937, p. 83 f.), Μερ(κουρίου) — *Mé-*

*langes de l'Univ. S. Joseph*, xxix, 1952, p. 61). For Κύριος Ἐρμῆς cf. also Preisendanz, *P.G.M.*, Pap. v, 420, and particularly viii, 1-3, 14, 15.

<sup>32</sup> *Abraxas seu Apistopistus* . . . (Antwerp, 1657), pl. xi, 42; according to p. 51 an onyx in the possession of 'Petrus Antonius Rascasius Bagarrius'.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Macarius-Chiflet, *op. cit.*, pl. xix, 77-78, both obviously renaissance forgeries (on the type no. 78 cf. this *Journal*, XVI, 1953, p. 218, n. 56).

<sup>34</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 86.

<sup>35</sup> B. de Montfaucon, *L'Antiquité expliquée* . . . , ii, 2, 1769, p. 366.

<sup>36</sup> In a paper written 1737 and reprinted by Paul de Lagarde, *Altes und Neues über das Weihnachtsfest*, 1891, p. 213 ff.; see p. 227.

<sup>37</sup> Θ X seems familiar only for *Theo(i)s Chthonio(i)s*, 'divinities of the Nether World' — which I cannot find makes sense on our



are to be reduced to mere guesswork I think Θεὸς Χριστός—‘the God Christ’ might be the likeliest interpretation for our cameo and for Chiflet’s specimen. I may refer readers to the well-known words by Pliny the Younger, *Epist.* x, 96, 7, ‘*carmen Christo quasi Deo dicere*’,<sup>38</sup> or—admittedly much later—to invocations in the magic papyri like κατὰ τοῦ θεοῦ τῶν Ἑβραίων Ἰησοῦ (*P.G.M.*, pap. iv, 3020 or τὸν βασιλέα Χριστὸν τὸν θεὸν (*ibid.*, pap. 23, 25). The idea of Christ as Mediator, as Messenger of the highest God could in itself have suggested a more general identification with Hermes.<sup>39</sup> Besides this, Hermes as the Young God, the God-Son, well expressed the widespread feeling of an age which, tired of the remote old gods, expected salvation from the birth of the divine child,<sup>40</sup> be it Horus-Harpokrates the Sun-God born from a lotus-flower, or Kairos replacing Kronos-Chronos as the new Aion, both soon identified with Christ.<sup>41</sup> The familiar representation of the Good Shepherd in early Christian art, so it has been asserted, ‘ne dérive pas directement d’Hermès criophore, mais du jeune dieu solaire criophore probablement conçu en Orient’<sup>42</sup>—i.e. the Hermes-Helios-Kosmokrator of Syria and of the magic hymns, the sun-god and god-son of the triad of Heliopolis; and it can be added—although I would not overrate the importance of this coincidence—that the symbol of this Syrian solar Hermes is the same six-rayed or eight-rayed asterisk (cf. Pl. 1h-i)<sup>43</sup> which very soon became the

amulet (see above, p. 4) and still less in connexion with the radiate (solar?) figure of the Chiflet intaglio. C. F. H. Bruchmann, *Epitheta deorum quae apud poetas Graecos leguntur* (Leipzig, 1893 = Suppl. to Roscher’s *Lexikon der Mythologie*) lists on p. 111 not less than eleven epithets of Hermes starting with *X*, and *chelyklonos* (resounding with tortoise-shell) might look tempting for our amulet; but neither this nor any of the other epithets, except perhaps *chlamydephoros* (wearing the chlamys), would fit the figure on the Chiflet stone.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. also L. C. Mohlberg in *Rivista di archeol. cristiana*, xv, 1937, p. 93 ff.

<sup>39</sup> For Hermes as ‘angelos’ cf., e.g., Th. Hopfner, *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber*, i, 1921, §§ 135, 136, 141, 142; for Christ see J. Barbel, *Christos Angelos. Die Anschauung von Christus als Bote und Engel in der gelehrten und volkstümlichen Literatur des christlichen Altertums*, 1941.

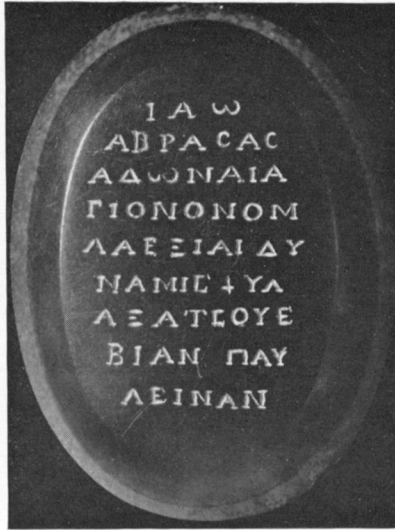
<sup>40</sup> The role of Hermes as the divine child, expressing both youth and eternity, has been stressed for Mercurius Avernius by Hardenberg, *l.c.* (see above, n. 13), p. 31 ff. The paper by G. Murray, ‘Dis geniti’ (*Journ. of Hellenic studies*, lxxi, 1951, p. 120 ff.) could be supplemented from C. G. Jung and C. Kerényi, *Essays on a science of mythology: The myth of the divine child and the mysteries of Eleusis*, New York, 1949 (The Bollingen Series, xxii).

<sup>41</sup> See my remarks in ‘Der Heilige und die

Schlangen’ in *Mitteilungen d. Anthropolog. Gesellsch. in Wien*, lxxxii, 1952, p. 19 ff. Just so ‘Mithras is the new Saturn already at his birth’ (M. J. Vermaseren in *Studia archaeologica G. van Hoorn oblata* (Leiden, 1951), p. 107) and Metatron is ‘the little YHWH’, a ‘youth’—cf. G. Scholem in *Zeitschrift für Neutestamentl. Wissenschaft*, xxx, 1931, p. 170 f. But this ‘Little YHWH’ is also the κύριον ὄνομα and ‘these traditions must have existed already in the first century in a Jewish milieu in Palestine, which was perhaps not really Gnostic, but may be considered as pre-Gnostic’ (G. Quispel in *Acta Congressus Madvigiani*, i, Copenhagen, 1958, p. 233).

<sup>42</sup> R. Dussaud, *Notes de mythologie syrienne*, p. 61; on the cosmic symbolism of Hermes’ goat cf. Hardenberg, *l.c.*, p. 16 ff.; on the type of the ‘Good Shepherd’, cf. F. Saxl in *Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte*, ii (xvi), 1923, p. 88 ff.; A. Stüber, *Refrigerium interim* (Bonn, 1951), pp. 151–75 (‘Die Hirtenbilder der Grabeskunst’).

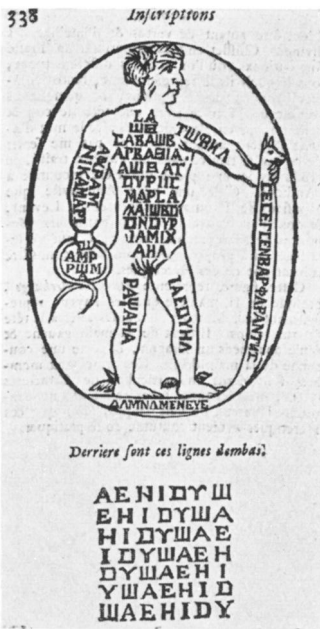
<sup>43</sup> Pl. 1h after *Mélanges de l’Univ. S. Joseph*, xxi, 1 (1937), pl. xxviii/6; Pl. 1i after *Syria*, xxiii, 1942/43, p. 73, fig. 18. But cf. R. Mouterde in *Mélanges syriennes offerts à R. Dussaud* (1939), p. 394: ‘le signe \* . . . est un des signes les plus en usage jusque dans la glyptique néo-babylonienne pour signifier vaguelement ciel, céleste, monde divin . . .’ It can be traced back to Sumerian times!



a, b—Cameo in Bern, Merz Collection (p. 1)



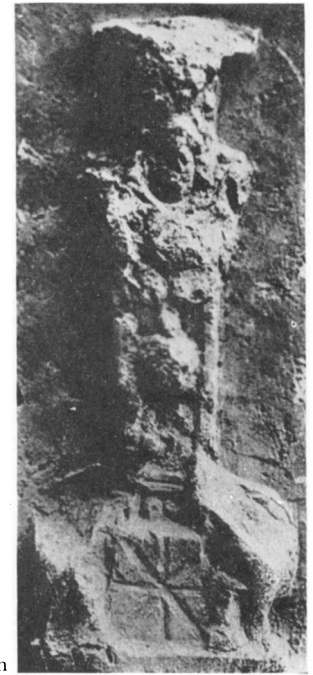
c—Intaglio after *Thesaurus gemmarum astriferarum antiquarum*, 1750 (p. 5)



d—Intaglio after J. Spon, *Voyage d'Italie*, 1724 (p. 5)



e, f—Original of d. Cabinet des Médailles, Paris (p. 5)



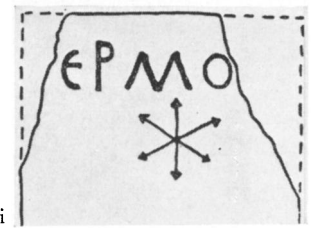
h



g—Gnostic gem after *Macarius-Chiflet*, 1657 (p. 7)



f



i

h, i—Asterisk as Hermes-Symbol on Syrian monuments (p. 8)



a, b—Amulet, British Museum (enlarged photograph from plaster cast) (p. 10)



c—Horus on the Crocodiles. Relief in Cairo (p. 15)



d—Haematite intaglio, British Museum (p. 15)



f—Lost early Christian wall painting from Alexandria (p. 16)



e—Jasper intaglio, Cabinet des Médailles, Paris (p. 15)

symbol of Christ, to be interpreted and transformed only gradually and later into monogram and cross.<sup>44</sup>

So one could well imagine that some Jewish-Gnostic magician from Syria or Palestine who drafted the text of this amulet for some wealthy Roman lady interested in occultism added to the usual formula what could have been considered at that time as the *dernier cri* in mystery religion, the name and figure of Christ. As an adequate representation of the new Saviour-god he would have suggested the figure of Hermes, which then was cut by a competent gem engraver after familiar classical patterns. If the accompanying inscription did not go beyond the initials that would merely have been an advisable precaution at that time and the accusation of 'un-Roman activities' was thus forestalled by the alibi of the *Th(eos) Ch(thonios)*.

Aristocratic and wealthy Roman ladies dabbling in exotic theosophy were apparently not rare in imperial Rome. In his *Jewish Antiquities*, xviii, 3—the same chapter which contains the much discussed *Testamentum Flavianum* on Christ—Flavius Josephus narrates two significant incidents: how Egyptian priests of the Isis-sanctuary in Rome procured the virtuous and wealthy Paulina for her hitherto unsuccessful suitor by faking a *Hieros Gamos* with the Egyptian God Anubis, and how a consortium of four Jewish impostors, one of whom posed as teacher of the mysteries of Jewish religion, fleeced the noblewoman Fulvia—a fraud which induced the emperor Tiberius to banish all Jews from Rome.

Since, according to Josephus, the name of the husband of Paulina as well as of Fulvia was Saturninus, it has been suggested<sup>45</sup> that both were in fact the same woman, to be identified with a lady whose full name in all its aristocratic splendour is known from a Roman inscription to have been BAEBIA, L(ucii), F(ilia), FULVIA CLAUDIA PAULINA GRATIA MAXIMILLA.<sup>46</sup> No doubt there was more than one BAEBIA (or VIBIA??) PAULINA at that time, but the Jewish-syncretistic character of the cameo in Berne would go well with the mystic inclinations of the heroine of the scandalous affair in the Isis sanctuary in Rome, and of the Roman lady associating with undesirable Jewish elements.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> The parallelism Hermes-Christ-Mithras is enhanced by the fact, that this sign also occurs on Mithraic monuments (cf. W. Binsfeld, 'Neue Mithraskultgefäße aus Köln', *Kölner Jahrbuch für Vor- und Frühgeschichte*, v, 1960/61, p. 71, n. 17), most strikingly and exactly in the same shape as we find it on innumerable Early Christian monuments, on a recently found Mithraic cult vessel (Binsfeld, *l.c.*, p. 70, fig. 4 and pl. 16). For new aspects on the relation Christ-Mithras cf. J. Duchesne-Guillemin in *Zeitschr. d. deutsch. morgenländ. Gesellsch.*, cxi, 1961, p. 469 ff.

<sup>45</sup> S. Rogers in *American Journal of Philology*, lii, 1932, p. 252 ff.

<sup>46</sup> *CIL*, vi, 1361—the lower part of a magnificent tombstone erected by [B]aebia Fulvia Paulina . . . for her distinguished brother and herself; that looks as if she was at her later age separated from her husband?

<sup>47</sup> The two incidents are dated (cf. also E. M. Smallwood, 'Some notes on the Jews under Tiberius', *Latomus*, xv, 1956, p. 314 ff.) by Tacitus A.D. 19, by Josephus (and the latter one implicitly by Philo) c. A.D. 30; but possibly the first one occurred at the earlier, the second one at the later date and the disparateness in dating might be due to the fact that both writers found it convenient to deal with these two related subjects simultaneously.

## II. A JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN AMULET

When studying the collection of amuletic gems in the British Museum<sup>48</sup> I was shown by the Department of British and Mediaeval Antiquities the metal object reproduced here, Pl. 2a-b.<sup>49</sup> Obviously a Byzantine amulet, it showed some unusual features which reminded me of an amulet I had read about in the late E. Peterson's *Heis Theos*,<sup>50</sup> that early work by a great scholar which still remains an almost inexhaustible mine of information. Looking up Peterson's description (it was of an electrotype in the Hermitage after a lost original) I found it corresponded exactly with the British Museum amulet except for the second half of the Greek inscription on the reverse.<sup>51</sup> But this apparent difference was due to an error, as comparison with the Russian original publications showed.<sup>52</sup> So this was after all the same amulet. However, the hope that here in the British Museum was the lost original was soon disappointed. A careful examination left no doubt that this too was a galvanoplastic copy. Still, it is most gratifying to be now in a position to study and publish anew this important amulet from an excellent electrotype, whether this be another copy or the same one which was last examined by Russian scholars in 1900–1901<sup>53</sup> and has not so far been adequately reproduced.

The question which of the two sides of the amulet might be called obverse and which reverse is hard to answer. Thus it seems preferable—following the inscriptions and images—to call one side Christian and the other Gnostic.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *Annual Report of the Warburg Institute*, 1952/53, p. 10.

<sup>49</sup> The object, Reg. no. 1938, 10-10, 1, measures 2.3" × 1.75" and is 0.1" thick. It was acquired shortly before the Second World War from Mme Wolkoff-Mouromtsoff in London. My attempts to get in touch with her for further information about its provenance were unsuccessful. I am most grateful to the Trustees of the British Museum for permitting publication.

<sup>50</sup> Erik Peterson, Εἰς Θεός — *Epigraphische, formgeschichtliche und religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen*, Göttingen, 1926.

<sup>51</sup> Peterson, *op. cit.*, p. 121 ff.

<sup>52</sup> The amulet was first published (from an exclusively art-historical point of view and without discussing the inscriptions) by D. V. Ainalow, *Ellinisticheskie osnovy vizantiiskogo iskusstva*, St. Petersburg, 1900, p. 192 ff.; cf. now the English revised edition, *The Hellenistic Origins of Byzantine Art*, ed. by C. Mango, New Brunswick, 1961, p. 250 ff. It was republished by E. M. Pridik in *Zhurnal Minist. Narodn. Prosveshchzniia*, cccxxxvi, 1900, p. 91 ff. with more details and some criticisms of Ainalow, to which the latter replied *ibid.*, cccxxxviii, p. 133 ff. Peterson had inadvertently jumped from the first half of the Greek inscription (p. 95 of Pridik's paper) to

another inscription (*ibid.*, p. 96—on a wedding-ring in the Hermitage, quoted by Pridik as a parallel). The illustration p. 251, fig. 115 of the English edition reproduces the illustration from Pridik's paper which, however unsatisfactory, is still better than the one given originally by Ainalow.

<sup>53</sup> It seems possible that the electrotype in the Hermitage was lost during the upheavals of the Russian revolution, or even officially discarded as not being an original. The other possibility is that the owner of the original had more than one galvanoplastic copy made. I wonder whether the copper amulet ('aus massivem Kupfer hergestellt') published by J. Keil in *Jahreshefte des österr. archäol. Instituts*, xxxv, 1946, p. 135 ff., which quite obviously reproduces a gnostic intaglio is not also an electrotype and might not come from the same Russian workshop (and collection?) as our amulet. Actually C. Bonner found (*American Journal of Archaeology*, liii, 1949, p. 270 ff.) that this amulet, a plaster cast of which was 1856 in the Museum of the University of Dorpat, was a duplicate from the collection of H. K. E. Köhler in St. Petersburg and that the original was said to have been brought from South Russia by Count Sheremetyev.

<sup>54</sup> So already Pridik, *l.c.* (Peterson, *l.c.*,

The Christian side shows four horizontal rows of figures divided by three lines of inscriptions; a further inscription runs along the rim, surrounding the whole. These Greek inscriptions offer no difficulties and read (with emendation of the few orthographic mistakes and omitted letters:<sup>55</sup> Κύριε μὴ δόσης ἰσχύν τοῖς ἐχθροῖς μου ὅτι σκέπτει με ἡ δεξιὰ σου πάντοτε: ('O Lord, give not strength to my enemies as thy right hand protects me everywhere') and along the rim—beginning and end separated by a cross—Κακὰ εἰς τὰς ἐκείνων στρέψον κεφαλὰς, Κύριε ὁ θεὸς ἡμῶν, μὴ δόσης αὐτοῖς δύναμιν ('Turn evil unto the heads of those there, O Lord our God, do not give them power'). These invocations, in the language and style of the Septuagint,<sup>56</sup> could just as well be Jewish as Christian, but the latter element is added abundantly by the figures. The top row is occupied by the bust of Christ, with cross-shaped halo<sup>57</sup> in an oval carried (to heaven? abbreviated representation of the Assumption?) by four flying angels with an eight-rayed star on either side above them. The second row shows first a pastoral group: two shepherds, one resting on a staff and raising his hand towards a large star, the other facing him with pedum shouldered, while behind them—underneath the star—are two animals.<sup>58</sup> Then follows the Adoration of the Magi. Led by a similar star, and preceded by a winged angel with halo and sceptre, they are bringing their gifts to the child who, held by his enthroned mother, stretches his hands towards them (mother and child with halo). In the third row we see, in the centre, Christ standing in frontal view, with halo, sceptre and raised right hand, between two kneeling women. She on the left, touching the hem of His garment, must obviously be the woman healed of the issue of blood.<sup>59</sup> She on the right might be the Canaanite woman interceding for her daughter.<sup>60</sup> Behind her we have Zacchaeus in the tree-top,<sup>61</sup> the man healed of the palsy carrying his bed,<sup>62</sup> and another man clearly characterized by the spots on his naked body as a leper.<sup>63</sup> Left from the centre group we see a man (naked and with his hands

takes the side with Christian scenes as obverse and the gnostic one as reverse).

<sup>55</sup> They are quite obvious and need not be enumerated here, especially as they have been listed already by Pridik, *l.c.*, p. 95.

<sup>56</sup> Cf., e.g., ὅτι τῆ δεξιᾷ σκεπάζει αὐτούς:—*Sapientia Salom.*, v, 16; ἀποστρέψει τὰ κακὰ τοῖς ἐχθροῖς μου: Psalm 54 (53), 7.

<sup>57</sup> The type seems to correspond fairly exactly to the type introduced for Christ on coins of Justinian II, cf. J. D. Breckenridge, *The numismatic iconography of Justinian II*, New York, 1959, p. 46 and pl. v. Cf. also below, note 69.

<sup>58</sup> 'Two ewes, one of which is lying down while the other is leaping', Ainalow, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

<sup>59</sup> Matth. ix, 20 ff.; Mark v, 25 ff.; Luke viii, 43. Cf. also L. Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien*, ii/2, p. 380 f. (and iii/3, p. 1314 ff.), and my notes in this *Journal*, XI, 1948, p. 42 ff. For the survival of this iconographical type cf. also A. Boeckler, *Ikono-*

*graphische Studien zu den Wunderszenen der ottonischen Malerei der Reichenau* (Abh. d. Bayer. Akad., phil.-hist. Kl., N.F. 52), Munich, 1961, figs. 10–14 and text p. 9 f.

<sup>60</sup> Matth. xv, 22; Mark vii, 26. Thus also Pridik, *l.c.*; Ainalow's different suggestions do not seem to make sense. Cf. also L. Réau, *op. cit.*, ii/2, p. 282 f., this *Journal* as quoted above, p. 42, n. 5, and A. Boeckler, *op. cit.*, figs. 78–82 with p. 33 f.

<sup>61</sup> Luke xix, 2–5; L. Réau, *op. cit.*, iii/3 p. 1358 f.

<sup>62</sup> Matth. ix, 6 ff.; Mark ii, 9 ff.; Luke v, 24 ff. Cf. Réau, *op. cit.*, ii/2, p. 376.

<sup>63</sup> Matth. viii, 2 ff.; Mark i, 40 ff. Cf. Réau, *op. cit.*, ii/2, p. 374. Ainalow is obviously wrong explaining the figure as 'the demoniac after he has been healed' (*op. cit.*, p. 253): the spots on the body of this figure are clearly indicated and can be compared with the same figure reproduced by A. Boeckler, *op. cit.*, figs. 1 and 4, cf. also text p. 7 ff.

fettered behind his back?), probably the demoniac raving, while two evil spirits, seen in the air on both sides of him, are just leaving him.<sup>64</sup> Behind him—on the extreme left—the blind man washing his eyes in the waters of Siloam<sup>65</sup> ('the spring is represented as a brook flowing out of a little hill, a youth stretches out his hand towards it'<sup>66</sup>). Of the seven episodes represented in this third row five occur also on the famous gold-medallions of Adana<sup>67</sup>—probably of the sixth century which is also the most likely date for our amulet—where Greek legends added to the figures leave no doubt about the interpretation.<sup>68</sup> The bottom row represents Christ, again with cross-shaped halo,<sup>69</sup> standing in a kind of aedicula<sup>70</sup> *en face* and joining a couple in matrimony, a subject familiar from Byzantine marriage belts (and marriage rings)<sup>71</sup>—although without the aedicula. On our amulet five amphorae at the left of the marriage scene extend the subject to the Wedding of Cana, and at the right five(?) loaves (or baskets?) and two fishes<sup>72</sup> seem to extend the whole group to a symbol of the Eucharist.<sup>73</sup> On the other hand two verses in the *Epithalamium* of Paulinus of Nola<sup>74</sup> show that the miracle of Cana served as a symbol of Christian marriage and it seems not unlikely that our amulet was intended as a wedding present.

While this 'Christian' side of the amulet is in almost perfect condition, the surface of the 'Gnostic' side is unfortunately damaged in several places. Here too we find (in the lower part) a Greek inscription, which reads (again with some orthographical mistakes and omitted letters which are corrected in the following):<sup>75</sup> Σισίννος[?]<sup>76</sup> Βισισίννος καταπα[τεϊτ]ε<sup>77</sup> τήν μυσερὰν μηκέτι ἰσχύειν.

<sup>64</sup> Mark v, 2 ff.; Luke viii, 26 ff. Very similar A. Boeckler, *op. cit.*, fig. 19, cf. text p. 12 ff.

<sup>65</sup> John ix, 7 ff.

<sup>66</sup> Ainalow, *op. cit.*, p. 252. This representation might follow the pattern of Moses striking water from the rock, cf., e.g., A. Ferrua, *Le pitture della nuova catacomba di via Latina* (1960), pl. xxxv.

<sup>67</sup> J. Strzygowski, *Das Etschmiadzin-Evangelium*, Vienna, 1891, p. 100 ff. and pl. vii. D. Talbot Rice, *The Art of Byzantium*, 1959, p. 302 and pl. 66.

<sup>68</sup> The blind man (*typhlos*), the leper (*lepros*), the woman with the issue of blood (*haimorrhousa*), the sufferer from the palsy (*paralytikos*), the fettered demoniac (*daimonizomenos*).

<sup>69</sup> Differently from the simple round halo without cross which Christ has in the miracle scenes of the third row here the cross (as in the top row) is added again. Perhaps this cross is reserved for Christ crucified (and risen) and therefore left out in representations of his human life on earth.

<sup>70</sup> It might be relevant to note, that today orthodox Jews still celebrate the marriage under a kind of baldachin, cf. *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, v (Berlin, 1930), col. 573 (s.v. *Chuppa*) and the illustration in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*,

viii (New York, 1906), p. 341.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. now E. H. Kantorowicz, 'On the golden marriage belt and the marriage rings of the Dumbarton Oaks Collection', *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, xiv, 1960, pp. 1 ff., with references to earlier publications.

<sup>72</sup> Matth. xiv, 19; Mark vi, 39; John vi, 10.

<sup>73</sup> For the connexion of the miracle of Cana with the Eucharist cf. Cyril of Jerusalem as quoted in this *Journal*, XI, 1948, p. 37 and L. Réau, *op. cit.*, ii/2, p. 364 (1).

<sup>74</sup> '... tali lege suis nubentibus adstat Iesus pronubus et vini nectare mutat aquam . . .' (cf. E. H. Kantorowicz, *l.c.*, p. 9 and n. 41).

<sup>75</sup> See above, note 55.

<sup>76</sup> Pridik and following him Peterson suggested reading ΒΙΣΙΣΙΝ[ΝΟΣ] but quite clearly the first word of the legend is (as Pridik copied it out correctly in majuscules—*l.c.*, p. 93) ΣΙΣΙΝΝΟΣ.

<sup>77</sup> Pridik, Peterson, and following them Preisendanz (cf. above, n. 1) read: κατ' Ἀπάτ[η]ς = against the (demon of) Deceit. Although this could make sense (the various meanings of the word *Apatē* are enumerated with his usual admirable erudition by L. Robert, *Hellenica*, xi/xii, 1960, p. 7 ff.) the last letter is distinctly not a Sigma but an Epsilon and the corroded space is much too large

Σφραγίς τοῦ Σολομῶνός σε κατήρησεν. Μίχαηλ Γάβριηλ Οὐρηλ Ράφαηλ δεσμεύουσίν σε. Ἄλιμερβιμαχ, i.e. 'Sisinnos Bisisinnos, tread down the abominable [female] one that she should not have strength any more. The Seal of Solomon has annihilated thee. Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael fetter thee.' The last word, *Alimerbimach*, appears to be a *vox magica*, which however I have not met anywhere else and which I cannot explain. Underneath the inscription we see the Hexagram—later so familiar as the Jewish emblem *kat'exochen*<sup>78</sup>—flanked by two lions;<sup>79</sup> above each of the two lions the crescent and eight-rayed star, above the Hexagram (rather faint) what seem to be three little circles. In the centre of the upper half stands a naked four-winged figure in frontal view, with halo, lion masks on his knees, holding two scorpions in each hand and treading two crocodiles under his feet—the familiar 'Horus on the crocodiles' of ancient Egyptian magic.<sup>80</sup> He is surrounded by a number of

for a single Eta. For the use of καταπατεῖν in similar magic prayers parallels can be found in large numbers, obviously with reference to the Septuagint, Psalm 90 (91), 13: καταπατήσεις λέοντα καὶ δράκοντα. Cf., e.g., A. Vassiliev, *Anecdota graeco-byzantina* (1893), p. 344: τὸν διάβολον καταπατήσω καὶ πάντας τοὺς ἔχθρους μου καταπατήσω. (Cf. also below, p. 16).

<sup>78</sup> See E. L. Ehrlich, *Die Kultsymbolik im Alten Testament und im nachbiblischen Judentum*, 1959, p. 128 ff. (Cf. also M. Grunwald in *Grab und Friedhof der Gegenwart*, hrsg. von St. Hirzel, Munich, 1927, pp. 41–44). G. Scholem has shown conclusively (*Commentary*, viii, New York, 1949, pp. 243–51; his paper, originally published in Hebrew in the Annual *Ha'arez*, Jerusalem, 1948, appeared also in a French translation, cf. Ehrlich, *op. cit.*, p. 128, n. 350) that this 'symbol of Judaism' originates from its use on antique magic amulets where (just as the pentagram) it was interpreted as the powerful 'Seal of Solomon', which is mentioned also in the Greek legend of our amulet.

<sup>79</sup> The two lions, flanking a sacred emblem, are among the most frequent motives in the art of the synagogue, from antiquity (cf., e.g., B. Kanael, *Die Kunst der antiken Synagoge*, Munich etc., 1961, figs. 62, 67, 74; E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman period*, vii, p. 29 ff.) throughout the Middle ages into our times.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. K. C. Seele, 'Horus on the Crocodiles', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, vi, 1947, p. 43 ff. While abundant on reliefs of all sizes the figure of Horus on the Crocodiles is rare on engraved 'gnostic' amulets. One example (cut in grey jasper) was published by E. Drioton in *Annales du service des antiquités*, xlv, 1947, p. 83 ff. (no. 13). Here the young god is invoked under the name AKPIMAKPAΓETA

KYPIE (= 'O Lord Akrimakragetes') to preserve the wearer from all reptiles. Drioton's unconvincing attempt to explain *Akrimakrageta* was rightly censured by C. Bonner (*American Journal of Philology*, lxxv, 1954, p. 303 ff.). But I do not think that it is, as Bonner maintains, 'a meaningless magical word'. It seems to me that the well-known magical formula *Akramachamari* was turned here into a Greek-sounding noun (cf. Preisendanz, *P.G.M.*, Pap. iv, 2330 Ἐρμῆς θεῶν ἀρχηγέτης; 2289 μάγων ἀρχηγέτης Ἐρμῆς; 1748 ἀρχηγέτης πάντος γεννήσεως; v, 402 [and 407] Ἐρμῆς λόγων [and γλώττης] ἀρχηγέτα; similar vii, 670). Similarly Horus on the Crocodiles appears on an elaborate late bronze amulet (we read on the reverse the name Jesus combined with *Iao*) published by W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Amulets*, London, 1914, no. 135 aa, pls. xxii and xlix with the legend *Akrammachamarix*, again a name formed from the formula assimilated to the name *Abrasax* which we read on the other side of the figure. G. Scholem (*Jewish Gnosticism . . .*, p. 97 ff.) discovered that the formula *Akrammachamarei*, so frequent in magic papyri and on 'Gnostic' gems, is Aramaic, meaning something like 'uproot the magic spells', and was simply no longer understood in Graeco-Roman times. Thus it could easily have been personified in the same way, as—I think—the name *Sisinnios* originated (see anon). Incidentally we read AKPAMMAXAMAPEI (together with magic characters) also on the Horus-Pantheos intaglio reproduced here Pl. 2d. In Coptic magic texts *Akrammachamari* turns up as a Jewish-Christian divine or angelic name, sometimes assimilated to the familiar angel-names by an added *-el* (*Akramiel*, [*Akram*]machamariel). Cf. A. M. Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte*, iii, 1930, p. 123.



magic *characteres*, of the kind we find abundantly on late amulets and in the magic papyri, without being so far able to interpret them.<sup>81</sup> There are, however, at the left a crescent and eight-rayed star as symbols of Moon and Sun<sup>82</sup> and underneath it (badly damaged) a lion sitting, turned to the right, with a branch(?) in its mouth, a bird(?) behind the lion, and the second *character* in the line above the Greek inscription (left of the crocodiles) appears to be a monogram of Christ:  $\times \overset{\text{P}}{\underset{\text{O}}{\text{C}}}$ . On the other side of Horus a bird <sup>82a</sup> which could be an ibis is standing, turned to the right, on the magic character in the same row as the lion on the other side. The whole is surrounded by the Uroboros, the serpent devouring its own tail, just as we find it on innumerable 'Gnostic' engraved gems.<sup>83</sup>

The couple Sisinnos-Bisinnos—the first usually assimilated to the Christian Saint Sisinnos, while the name of his companion varies,<sup>84</sup> who are invoked here together with Solomon and the four archangels—is familiar from many similar magic formulae. It seems that a no longer understood (Semitic?) *vox magica*, duplicated<sup>85</sup> by popular magic glossolalia, was later interpreted as a pair (later even turning into a kind of threesome) in Jewish magic folklore<sup>86</sup> of helpers against the evil (female) demon. Possibly the three unexplained mediaeval Jewish 'angel names' (SaNVI SaNSaNVI SaMaNGaLaPH) as well as the Byzantine couple of apocryphal saints could be traced back through the—equally unexplained—SESENGES BARPHARANGES (Sesenges, son of Pharanges ?), most frequent in Greek magic

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Th. Hopfner in Pauly-Wissowa, *R.E.*, Suppl. iv, 1183 ff. Most characteristic and frequent are the so-called ring-letters (German 'Brillenbuchstaben'), as we see them on our amulet, signs with little circles at the end of each line, which survived in Jewish (cf. J. Trachtenberg, *loc. cit.* above, n. 19—p. 141 f.) and Arabic (cf. H. A. Winkler, *Siegel und Charaktere in der muhammedanischen Zauberei*, 1930, p. 150 ff.) and were in general use in the occult arts of mediaeval Europe. Winkler's suggestion (*op. cit.*, p. 167) that they might be derived from Babylonian cuneiform characters seems to me so far the most likely explanation and deserves a systematic investigation.

<sup>82</sup> The same symbols of sun and moon also occur on the Byzantine gold medallion of Mersine (A. Grabar in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, vi, 1951, p. 25 ff.) and again above the two lions at the bottom of our amulet. As A. Drioton (*Bull. de la Soc. d'archéol. copte*, x, 1944, p. 71 ff.) has shown, the couple sun-moon express in hieroglyphic writing 'Eternity'. On the long history of this symbol and its survival into mediaeval art see the studies by W. Deonna, *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, cxxxii, 1947, p. 5 ff.; cxxxiii, 1948, p. 49 ff.

<sup>82a</sup> See *Addenda*, p. 22.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. C. Bonner, *S.M.A.*, p. 250; K.

Preisendanz in *Brauch und Sinnbild—E. Fehrle zum 60. Geburtstag*, Karlsruhe, 1940, p. 194 ff.; W. Deonna in *Artibus Asiae*, xv, 1952, p. 163 ff.; B. H. Stricker, *De grote Zeeslang*, Leiden, 1953.

<sup>84</sup> SISINNARIOS, SISYNODOROS, etc. Cf. H. A. Winkler, *Salomo und die Karina*, 1931, *passim*. SISINNIS and SISINNIA ([ΣΙ]σιννῆς καὶ Σισιννία) the pair is called on an early Byzantine amulet, publ. by H. Seyrig, *Berytus*, i, 1934, p. 5 ff. For the frequency of the personal noun Sisinnios (Coptic Susennios) in late antique and Byzantine sources cf. W. C. Till in *Anzeiger der österr. Akad. der Wissensch.*, xcii, 1955, p. 176. See also below, n. 101.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. the remarks by E. Norden, *P. Vergilius Maro: Aeneis Buch vi erklärt*, 2nd ed., 1916, p. 136 ff. about *verba geminata*; H. A. Winkler, 'Die Aleph-Beth-Regel' in *Oriental Studies Enno Littmann überreicht*, Leiden, 1935, p. 1 ff.; E. Peterson, *op. cit.*, p. 117, n. 1.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. J. Trachtenberg, *op. cit.* (see above, n. 19), p. 101 ff. To his reference (*op. cit.*, p. 292, n. 56) I should add: H. A. Winkler, *Salomon und die Karina*, p. 107 f.; 123 f.; Athanasius Kircher, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, i, Rome, 1652, p. 322 f.; I. M. Casanowicz in *Journal of the American Oriental Soc.*, xxxvii, 1917, pp. 42 and 51.

papyri and on gnostic gems,<sup>87</sup> and the Aramaic SISGIN BaR PhaRVNGS<sup>88</sup> to the SSM BeN PhDRS found on a Canaanite magic incantation of about 700 B.C.<sup>89</sup> That would mean that a powerful *vox magica*, variously bowdlerized and misunderstood, was transmitted through more than two millennia, most likely by Jewish magicians.<sup>90</sup> Thus while the representations on the one side and the unobtrusive monogram on the other side are clearly Christian, the text of all the inscriptions and the Hexagram flanked by lions (perhaps also the tent of the marriage scene) appear to be more Jewish than Christian.

These Jewish and Christian elements are here combined with the Egyptian figure of Horus in an attitude familiar from a large group of magic monuments, of which we reproduce an example on Pl. 2c.<sup>91</sup> On some of these magic stelae and on numerous magic intaglios the figure of the juvenile sun-god with his typical fore-lock<sup>92</sup> has been fused with—or replaced by—the figure of the age-old Bes-Pantheos in similar attitude, but now with four wings and lion's masks on his knees (see Pl. 2d, e),<sup>93</sup> two characteristics missing on the usual Horus images but clearly in evidence on our amulet. Now these two (together with other) characteristics of the late Egyptian grotesque and sinister Bes-Pantheos figure appear again in countless mediaeval representations of Satan and one might wonder whether the figure on our amulet does not represent the evil demon, the *μυσερά*<sup>94</sup> of the Greek inscription underneath it. But I find it more likely—startling as this might appear at first—that this figure is meant to be no other than Christ Himself.

Evidence for the fact that the figure of Horus was used in early Christian iconography for our Saviour was assembled years ago by W. Drexler.<sup>95</sup> Particularly revealing in this respect is the wall painting in a Christian catacomb at Alexandria, discovered in 1858 and described by Néroutsos-Bey<sup>96</sup>

<sup>87</sup> The late antique magic formula *σισισρω σισισφερμου* (SISISRO SISIPHERMOU) on the reverse of two gems published by C. Bonner, *S.M.A.*, p. 312, nos. 348–49, and an (unpublished?) one in the Cabinet des Médailles, Paris (Inv. no. N 3508), also sounds similar. It also occurs addressed as 'Lord' (*κύριε*) on a *tabella defixionis*, cf. *Bulletin de l'Inst. français d'archéol. orientale*, xxxix, 1940, p. 30.

<sup>88</sup> G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 84 ff.; 94 ff.

<sup>89</sup> H. Torczyner, 'A Hebrew incantation against night-demons from Biblical times', *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, v, 1946, p. 18 ff.; Scholem, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>90</sup> The Sisinnios legend has always been thought to have originated in Jewish folklore, cf. E. Peterson, *op. cit.*, p. 117 ff.

<sup>91</sup> After G. Daressy, *Textes et dessins magiques* (= *Catal. génér. des antiquités égypt. du musée de Caire*), Cairo, 1903, pl. 1.

<sup>92</sup> E. Pridik, *l.c.*, p. 92, mistook this fore-lock inside the halo for a crescent moon.

<sup>93</sup> Pl. 2d, Haematite in the British Museum,

publ. by C. Bonner in *Hesperia*, xx, 1951, p. 332, no. 43. Pl. 2e, dark blue-green jasper in the Cabinet des Médailles, Paris. Inv. no. Y 21587(a) [Don Adrian Blanchet 1945]. Cf. also the interesting and unusual three-headed rendering publ. by C. Bonner, *S.M.A.*, pl. xxi, no. 378.

<sup>94</sup> For the *μυσερά* of our amulet we find *μειστημένη* (= the hated one—also female) on a number of Byzantine amuletic medallions; cf. G. Schlumberger, 'Amulettes byzantines anciennes' (reprinted from *Revue des études grecques*, 1892), in his *Mélanges d'archéologie byzantine* (1895), p. 117 ff. (Amulets nos. 1–3).

<sup>95</sup> Hidden away in his encyclopaedic article on Isis in Roscher's *Lexikon der griech. und. röm. Mythologie*, ii, col. 431 f. The article on Horus in the same *Lexikon* does not mention this fact, but see also G. Michailidès in *Bulletin de la société d'archéologie copte*, xiii, 1948/49, p. 86 ff. and my remarks in 'Der Heilige und die Schlangen', *l.c.* (see above, n. 41), pp. 19–21.

<sup>96</sup> Néroutsos-Bey, *L'ancienne Alexandrie*, Paris, 1888, p. 38 ff.

who saw it in 1860, shortly before its complete destruction soon after 1864. The drawing which he adds to his description (here reprod. Pl. 2f)<sup>97</sup>—obviously influenced by the artistic style of his period—must, of course, be taken partly as a reconstruction: it is unlikely that the state of preservation allowed all the details to be seen clearly and beyond doubt. But he too was struck by the similarity with a Horus relief in the Museum of which he also publishes a drawing.<sup>98</sup> The figure of our amulet takes its place iconographically between these two representations.<sup>99</sup> It is also interesting to compare the monogram in the right-hand bottom corner of the Alexandrian painting (about which Néroutsos-Bey does not comment) with the similarly placed Christos-monogram on our amulet. The Greek inscription underneath the wall painting was copied by Néroutsos-Bey as follows: ΕΠ' ΑΣΠΙΔΑ ΚΑΙ ΒΑΘΙΛΙΣΚΟΝ ΕΠΙΒΗΧΗ ΚΑΙ ΚΑΤΑΠΑΤΗΘΕΙΣ ΛΕΟΝΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΔΡΑΚΟΝΤΑ<sup>100</sup>—that is a quotation of Psalm 90 (see above, n. 77) using the same verb καταπατεῖν found on our amulet. The invocation on the latter could thus begin with the monogram: Christ together with Sisinnos–Bisinnos (whence the plural καταπατεῖτε), assisted by the archangels and the powerful 'seal of Solomon', is asked to 'tread down' the evil demon. While we have Christ shown in the shape of Horus we might see the 'seal' in the Hexagram between the two lions.

There exists an interesting affinity between our amulet and a certain group of amuletic bracelets of the same early Byzantine period.<sup>101</sup> Here, as there, Psalm 90 is quoted in the inscription (verse 13 on the Byzantine wall painting and less literally on the amulet, verse 1 ff. on the bracelets), here as there we have the astonishing combination of familiar representations from the gospels (Annunciation, Nativity, Baptism, Crucifixion, Resurrection on the bracelets)

<sup>97</sup> After *op. cit.*, p. 49.

<sup>98</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 46. It is the same relief reproduced after Daressy here, Pl. 2c, and a comparison of the two reproductions shows Néroutsos-Bey to be quite competent. Cf. also Cabrol-Leclercq, *Dict. d'arch. chrét.*, i, cols. 1135 ff. with figs. 285/6. (The similarity of the figure on our amulet with the Horus-relief reproduced by Néroutsos-Bey was noted also by Pridik, *l.c.*, p. 192, who however failed to notice the connexion with the Christ-representation). My suggestion ('Der Heilige und die Schlangen'—see above, notes 41 and 95—p. 21, n. 145) that the Bes-mask over the Horus-figure was taken over as the head of God the Father in Christian iconography (cf. also *Bollettino dei musei civici veneziani*, vi, 1961, no. 4, p. 14) is reinforced by the fact that on the Alexandrian wall-painting too God the Father as 'L'ancien des jours' (Néroutsos-Bey, *op. cit.*, p. 48) appeared above Christ–Horus.

<sup>99</sup> On the other hand the Alexandrian painting finds its iconographical continuation in another respect in mediaeval representations, as suggested by E. Mâle and O. Wulff,

cf. *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, i, p. 1147 f., s.v. 'Aspis'.

<sup>100</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 48.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. J. Maspero in *Annales du service des antiquités d'Égypte*, ix, 1908, p. 246 ff.; for further literature see E. Peterson, *op. cit.*, p. 91 ff., to which might be added O. Wulff, *Altchristliche Bildwerke . . .*, Berlin, 1909, p. 227 ff., nos. 1109 f. On one of these bracelets (Peterson, no. 7), similar to our amulet, SISINNIAS (!—for *Sisinnios*? but cf. above, n. 84) is added to the invocation of the 'Lord'. Just so, *Sisinnios Sisinnarios* is added also rather incoherently to the legend on an amulet of this period, threatening the 'memisemene' (see above, n. 94) with Solomon, on which C. Bonner remarks (*Proc. of the Amer. Philos. Soc.*, lxxxv, 1942, p. 471, n. 22), 'Sisinnarius may be a brother of Sisinnius, or, perhaps more probably, the word may be a mere jingling repetition of the same Sisinnius with an amplified ending' (referring to parallels). 'Hagie Sisinnie' (O St. Sisinnius) also added on an amulet in Bonner's own collection, see *ibidem*, fig. 8, after the words 'There is one God who conquers the evil'.

with figures like the Egyptian solar Chnoubis-serpent,<sup>102</sup> so frequent on 'Gnostic' intaglios, the 'Seal of Solomon' and King Solomon himself on horseback, treading down and transfixing with his lance the female evil demon. The latter image again, extant on numerous late antique haematite-intaglios (usually with the legend *sphragis theou* [Seal of God] on the reverse) is taken over as the favourite obverse of a well-known class of Byzantine amuletic medallions.<sup>103</sup>

These medallions as well as the bracelets are engraved in copper or bronze, often showing silver plating (only some of the bracelets are solid silver?), and I think it most likely that the same applies to the lost original of our amulet.<sup>104</sup> Against the possibility that the original might have been an engraved gemstone<sup>105</sup> we have the appearance of the workmanship—apparently a burin and not the stone-engraver's drill or rotating little wheel was used—and the spots of damaged surface which correspond more to the damage caused by metal corrosion than to the shell-like splintering off from a gemstone.

### III. AMULETUM KIRCHERIANUM

A few years ago a London antique dealer, Mr. Ivar Mackay, took a rather unusual kind of amulet which he had recently acquired to the Department of Mediaeval Antiquities at the British Museum for an explanation of it. The

<sup>102</sup> Cf. J. Maspero, *l.c.*, fig. 1 (middle medallion) and fig. 2 with C. Bonner, *S.M.A.*, pls. iv/v, figs. 81–101. I have suggested on another occasion ('Abraxas-Studien' in *Hommages à W. Deonna*, Brussels, 1957, p. 76) that this serpent is meant to represent God himself, finding only later that a similar suggestion had been made by H. Gressmann in *Zeitschr. für die A.-T. Wissensch.*, xliii, 1925, p. 14; for his derivation of the 'Darstellung des Gottes als Schlange' cf. more recently R. Goossens in *La Nouvelle Clio*, vi, 1954, p. 5 ff. (the Hebrew letter *Nun* = Serpent = Eternity). I was guided to my conclusion by the attribute *Gigantorhekta* of the Chnoubis-Serpent on 'Gnostic' intaglios. We might see this Hellenistic-Jewish motif on a Syrian relief (cf. E. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols* [etc.], vii, fig. 214 and p. 191), where the ubiquitous divine horseman (see following note), be it 'Solomon' or some other hypostasis of God himself (for Solomon = God cf., e.g., W. F. Volbach in *Amtliche Berichte aus den Kgl. Preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, xxxix, 1917/18, col. 124 f.), is actually shown in the role of *Gigantorhekta*.

<sup>103</sup> Of the extensive literature about the Rider-Saint-Amulets I should mention besides G. Schlumberger, *l.c.* (see above, n. 94) and C. Bonner, *S.M.A.*, p. 208 f. only two more recent papers: H. Menzel in *Jahrbuch des Röm.-Germ. Zentralmuseums Mainz*, ii, 1955,

p. 252 ff. and A. V. Bank in *Vizantiiskii Vremennik*, viii, 1956, p. 331 ff. For the iconographical derivation of the motif see now E. H. Kantorowicz in *Art Bulletin*, xxvi, 1944, p. 207 ff. (the legends of figs. 31/33 and 32/34 should be exchanged).

<sup>104</sup> We can exclude gold, as all the known gold medallions of this period are not engraved, but embossed. However, it might be that the lost original was a bronze mould for the fabrication of such gold amulets; that moulds of this kind were used is documented beyond doubt by the two identical gold medallions of Adana, see above, note 67. This hypothesis would explain the rather puzzling fact, that our amulet shows neither perforation nor traces of a loop, by which it could have been suspended. Such a loop would, of course, have been soldered on separately on a gold medallion.

<sup>105</sup> There can be no doubt that the original of the copper amulet referred to above, note 53, was an intaglio and we are used to seeing both the Horus-Figure and the surrounding Uroboros on engraved gems. The unusually large size would not be without parallels, cf. the two Early Christian intagli published by H. Wentzel, *Münchener Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, 3. F., viii, 1957, p. 48 ff., no. 3–4. But our electrotype shows two flat faces of equal size, while on a gemstone we would expect one side to be smaller and one convex.

apparently quite unique object proved to be just as puzzling to the experts there, but they suggested to him that he show it to me.

The black tablet measured  $5\frac{5}{8}$ "  $\times$   $2\frac{7}{8}$ " and was about  $\frac{1}{4}$ " thick. It looked like ebony or black soapstone, but closer examination revealed the typical cracks of very old, but well preserved, almost petrified leather (see the enlargement, Pl. 3c). As regards any further comments I had to confess that I was by no means more knowledgeable than the learned staff of the Museum. But I had a photograph of the amulet taken (here reproduced Pl. 3a, b) and promised Mr. Mackay that he would hear from me one day, if I ever came across a similar object. It was the lucky kind of coincidence which so often earns one the quite undeserved reputation of formidable erudition, that a few days later I opened—merely during my routine work as librarian—one of the folios of that curiously baroque polyhistor Athanasius Kircher, S.J. (1601–1680); and here I saw to my amazement Mr. Mackay's amulet<sup>106</sup> (here reprod.—after Kircher—Pl. 3d). Quite definitely this was *the* amulet, not just a very similar one. Not only was every single one of the numerous and curious magic characters faithfully reproduced by Kircher's engraver, there was also the same left top corner broken off. However, Kircher's accompanying text provided another surprise: according to him it was a *bronze* tablet, belonging to the collection of antiquities of the famous (and prosperous) lawyer and university professor of Padua, Giovanni Galvani (1593–1665).<sup>107</sup> The Paduan humanist Johannes Rhodius (1587–1659), a distinguished physician, philologist and antiquarian<sup>108</sup> had sent this 'tabulam aenam exoticorum characterum varietate intricatissimam' to the learned Jesuit, 'ut si fieri posset, tantae mysteriorum sub iis reconditorum caligini aliquam lucem adferrem'. Now I do not think that Athanasius Kircher was unable to distinguish between pressed leather and bronze and we must accept the fact that the enthusiastic Paduan collector had—consciously or unconsciously—acquired a bronze cast of our leather amulet for his *gabinetto*.<sup>109</sup> That is to say that Mr. Mackay's amulet is the original, as it would have been quite easy to make a bronze cast of it, but practically impossible to reproduce so exact a replica of a bronze amulet in pressed leather. Besides this, the whole fashioning of the amulet reveals that it was planned for leather technique, the deepened reverse being intended to bring out a sharper relief on the obverse when the soft *cuir bouilli* was pressed between two moulds, while another set of magical characters was obviously added later by hand with a blunt stylus on the now almost hardened surface.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Athanasius Kircher, *Oedipus Aegyptiacus*, iii, Rome, 1654, p. 36.

<sup>107</sup> About him cf. C. G. Jöcher, *Allgemeines Gelehrten-Lexicon*, ii, Leipzig, 1750, p. 849.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, iii, 1751, p. 2051.

<sup>109</sup> On the vogue for such casts in the seventeenth century cf. my remarks in this *Journal*, XVI, 1953, p. 226, n. 138, to which may be added A. Blanchet, 'La correspondance de Peiresc et les faux archéologiques' in *Bull. de la Soc. nat. des Antiquaires de France*, 1933, p. 99 f.

<sup>110</sup> On *cuir bouilli* cf. J. W. Waterer in *A History of Technology*, ed. by Chas. Singer [a.o.], ii, 1956, p. 171; but see also L. De Laborde, *Notice des émaux, bijoux et objets divers . . . du Louvre*, ii, Documents, Paris, 1853, p. 238 ff., who lists documentary evidence for this term from A.D. 1185 onwards. Interesting for this technique of the pressing and hardening of leather are the experiments (copying bronze age leather shields) reported by J. M. Coles in *Illustrated London News* of 2 March 1963, p. 299 f.

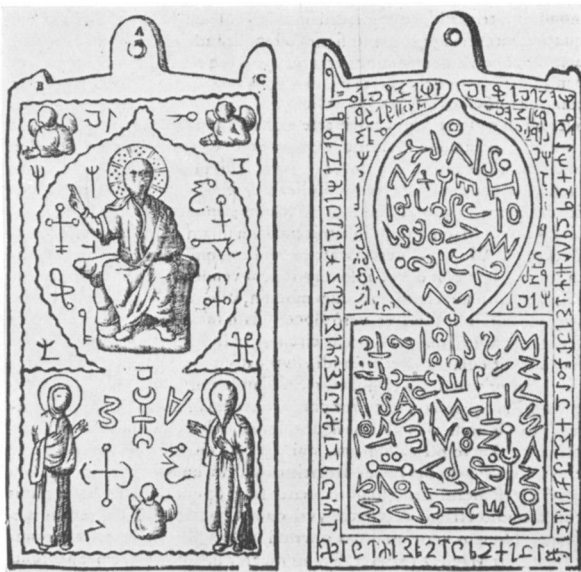


a

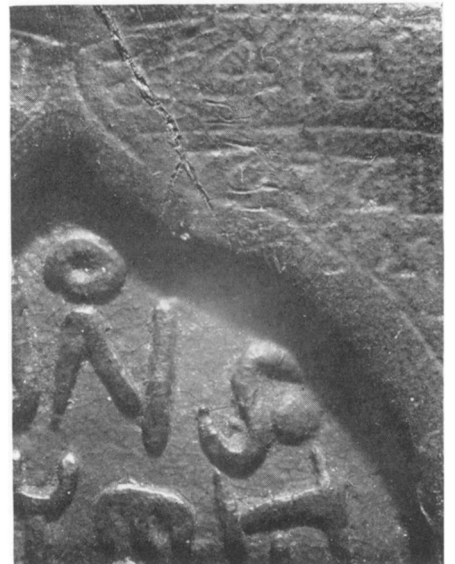


b

a, b—Leather amulet. Private collection (*p.* 18)



d—Bronze amulet published by Athanasius Kircher, 1654 (*p.* 18)



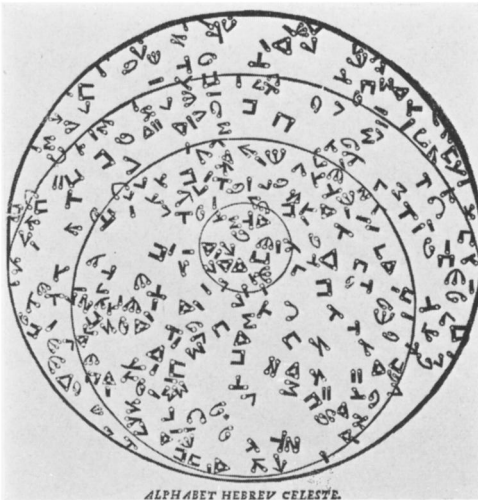
c—Enlarged detail from b (*p.* 18)



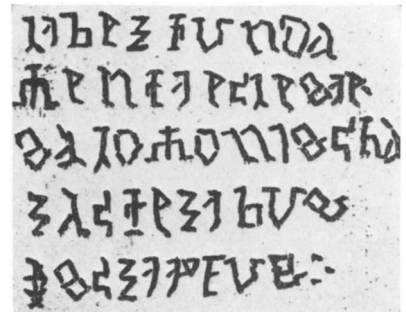
a—Inscription stone from Almería, 1137  
(p. 21)



b—Inscription stone from Granada, 1367  
(p. 21)



c—The Northern Hemisphere in 'celestial' characters after Gaffarel, 1629 (p. 21)



d—Faked 'Early Christian' inscription from Granada, late 16th century (p. 21)

Kircher, of course, could not resist the request of the Paduan antiquarian, and tried his very best to explain the mysterious object.<sup>111</sup> With his usual and enviable self-confidence he feels able to do so—'res itaque sic se habet'. First he deals at some length with the fact that Christians of Moorish and Arabian descent,<sup>112</sup> not satisfied with holy images as such, think it essential for their efficiency as amulets to 'deform' them (following the impious traditions of the Gnostics) 'occultis quibusdam Cabalistarum Magorumque Schola depromptis characteribus'. This heretical and objectionable usage, familiar to him from numerous crosses, medals and tablets sent to him as an expert from all parts of the world, he sees amply manifested in this amulet. He had, of course, no difficulty in identifying on the obverse the enthroned Christ, the Holy Virgin, St. John the Evangelist, and three angel busts. But here the fact that he knew only a bronze cast and not the original influenced his interpretation in a curious way. From the leather original it is clear that the faces of all these five figures, being the most protruding part of the amulet, had been worn off by longish use; as the faces of the two angels in the top corners show, the rubbing away of the hardened top layer had even allowed corrosion of the leather to set in. But the bronze cast with a uniformly even surface showed nothing of the kind and led Kircher to the belief that all the faces were veiled. He explained the veiled face of Christ as signifying its inaccessibility to human intellect,<sup>113</sup> and, in mentioning the veiling of the other five faces also, he appears to see mysteries in all of them. The two angels in the top corners he identifies as Gabriel (left) and Michael (right) 'as the letters added at the side of either of them signify', not saying however anything about the third angel. In the signs surrounding the enthroned Christ he recognizes the signs of the seven apocalyptic spirits<sup>114</sup> in characters derived 'ex Gymnosophistarum Schola', characters which at the same time correspond to the seven planets. (But there are in fact eight signs and he does not explain the one at the top right.) The four signs in the four corners around the Christ signify, he asserts, the four 'Intelligences' presiding over the four parts of the world. 'By their power—as is [to be found] in S. Irenaeus<sup>115</sup>—[the Gnostics] believe impiously

<sup>111</sup> '... summa quoque indagine ad arcana huius tabulae sacramenta penetranda omnes animi ingeniique vires applicui.'

<sup>112</sup> Apparently he is not thinking of Moriscos in Spain but of the Oriental Christians in Syria, Palestine, and Egypt: he marks this paragraph at the margin as dealing with the *Melchitae* (who incidentally were reconciled with the Roman Church only after Kircher's death).

<sup>113</sup> '... per faciem velatam, humano intellectui inaccessam significabant, per extensam manum benedicentem misericordiam, per absconditam, iustitiam eiusdem, ob poenitentiae spem tardantem, innuebant.'

<sup>114</sup> He gives their names as Sebtaël, Zedakiël, Madamiël, Schemfiël, Nogaël, Cocha biël, Levaniël.

<sup>115</sup> What Kircher has in mind is obviously Irenaeus, *Contra haereses*, i, but he quotes, as it

seems, from memory and incorrectly. I cannot find there a passage corresponding reasonably well with Kircher, although Irenaeus mentions various *quaterniones* (τετράδες), dealing with the involved aeonial genealogies of the various gnostic systems. Nearest to Kircher is Cap. XV, 3 (*P.G.*, vii, 619). Kircher gives the names of these four *mundi partium intelligentiae praesides* as 'Mahaziel, Azaël, Saviel, Azazel'. Actually the last one of these is mentioned by Irenaeus (Cap. XV, 6 = *P.G.*, vii, 628), but in a completely different context, as an evil angel (cf. also the commentary, *P.G.*, vii, 1474). Cornelius Agrippa, *De occulta philosophia*, ii, Cap. 7, lists these four names (two of them slightly differently spelled) as the '*quatuor principes daemoniorum nocentes in elementis*'. About the role of the four parts of the world in late antique esoteric speculations cf. my remarks in



that Christ, the Word of God, finds entrance (*influxus*) into the mystical world of his Church'. This mystical Church he sees aptly represented by the veiled figures of the Virgin and St. John the Evangelist and by the cross [the one in relief?] with two crescents. Here he refers to the Cabbalistic 'archetype *Malcuth*' [= the Kingdom] which he equals with the 'Luna supercoelestis'. The two signs in relief flanking this cross he reads as the well-known symbolic Greek letters *Alpha* and *Omega* and finds in the [engraved] cross an expression of the idea that this 'influxus' of the 'Word' or 'Malcuth' took place through the cross and passion of our Lord. This, he sums up, is the explanation of the obverse of the tablet where 'holy images are mixed with Cabbalistic, Greek, Hebraic, and Arabic characters of Spirits' to make the holy images more powerful, a superstitious custom still prevailing in his days, as he knows, with many Christians in the Orient.<sup>116</sup> Having thus, it seems, exhausted all his spiritual and intellectual powers<sup>117</sup> he sits back, as it were, and declares that the reverse of the amulet, which is 'disfigured' with magic signs, would better never have seen the light and is no further concern of his here, especially as it does not contain anything Egyptian.<sup>118</sup> So far the learned Father Kircher.

Now the 'veiled faces' by which his mystical interpretation was obviously guided are, as I have shown, due to a misunderstanding. As regards Kircher's interpretation of the *characteres* I find it difficult to comment. No doubt the learned polyhistor knew far more about mediaeval Oriental occultism than I do, and he may be right in some of his assertions. I do not know from what alphabet he reads the names of the angels Gabriel and Michael. I have doubts about his reading of *Alpha* and *Omega*: these two signs resembling roughly an A and a W or M and turned into a quite irregular angle occur again among the many queer relief signs with which the reverse is 'disfigured'. (But see below, n. 128.) The signs of the *Intelligentiae* or planetary spirits are not known to me in this form, but it is just possible that he found them in some Hebrew, Arabic or Syriac manuscript.<sup>119</sup> The signs we find in Cornelius Agrippa's (1486–1535) *Occult Philosophy*<sup>120</sup> are different, although equally strange looking; however we know that they are not nonsensical inventions but (as so much in the more authentic sources of Cabbala, magic, and astrology) the results of serious and strenuous, if misguided and often mentally abnormal speculation, as has been shown not long ago in this *Journal*.<sup>121</sup> The nonsense into which all that was turned by dilettanti, quacks, and impostors

'Abraxas-Studien', *l.c.* (see above, n. 4), p. 81 ff.

<sup>116</sup> '... multis Christianis Orientalium partium usitatum novimus.' See also above, n. 112.

<sup>117</sup> See above, n. 111.

<sup>118</sup> 'Altero vero pars Magicis characteribus deturpata, uti indigna fuit, quae lucem aspiceret, praesertim quod nil Aegyptiacum contineret, ita hic quoque minime apponenda fuit.'

<sup>119</sup> No less than eighty different 'ancient' alphabets are listed and reproduced in the

Arabic treatise of Ibn Wahshiya (c. A.D. 850), published and translated by J. Hammer [-Purgstall], London, 1806. This work was known and used by A. Kircher (together with other similar esoteric writings), although in a manuscript different from that discovered by Hammer (cf. his introduction, p. xvii ff.). For still older systems cf. J. Doresse, 'Cryptographie copte et cryptographie grecque', *Bulletin de l'Institut d'Égypte*, xxxiii, 1952, p. 215 ff.

<sup>120</sup> *De Occulta Philosophia*, ii, Cap. 22.

<sup>121</sup> Vol. xii, 1949, p. 46 ff. and 196 ff.

is another story. Thus I feel reluctant to subscribe wholeheartedly to what would probably be put forward as the most likely suggestion, namely that all these abstruse characters on our amulet have no meaning at all and were just invented *ad hoc* to give the amulet a mysterious look. There are clearly two different 'alphabets'—if this expression is adequate—on the reverse, one in relief impressed from the mould and one inscribed round the margin with a stylus. The messy conglomeration of the relief letters—apparently without distinct lines—looks admittedly suspicious; but we would think the same, for instance, of the two tables which Jacques Gaffarel (1601–81—incidentally an exact contemporary of Athanasius Kircher) added to his queer book<sup>122</sup> (Pl. 4c), if we did not have his explanation that this is a 'Configuration des étoiles en caractères célestes' and his obligingly added key to the *Celestial Hebrew Alphabet*.<sup>123</sup> I wonder how many would be inclined to dismiss it as nonsense if they were shown a sample from the lead books of Granada (here Pl. 4d), that much discussed pious Spanish (or Morisco) fake of the late sixteenth century.<sup>124</sup> But if some explanatory hint is forthcoming—as it obviously was in this case—you can read on this sample the Latin words 'Liber Funda/menti Ecclesiae/, Salomonis Cha/racteribus/Scriptus'. If this is comparatively easy, I for one would be completely out of my depth if confronted with similar cryptic writing, say in Arabic.<sup>125</sup> It therefore seems not impossible that some time an expert might be able to decipher at least part of these inscriptions. I must however refrain from such an attempt, just as Kircher did, but with a frank *ignoramus* and *sine ira et studio*.

There still remains the question when and where this amulet originated. A clue seems to me to be found in the characteristic architectonic shape both on obverse and reverse, that horseshoe-shaped and slightly pointed arch set over a square, resembling somehow the prayer niche or *Mihrab* of Islamic architecture.<sup>126</sup> Rather striking however is the similarity with certain ornamental stone slabs with Cufic or Arabic inscriptions of which I reproduce two examples from Spain here (Pl. 4a and b).<sup>127</sup> We have seen that Kircher with his extensive knowledge of such things decided that our amulet is a creation of Christian and Arabian contacts.<sup>128</sup> Could it not be that he was fundamentally right but erred in looking towards the Orient and not towards

<sup>122</sup> *Curiositez inouyes, sur la sculpture talismanique des Persans, Horoscope des Patriarches et lecture des Estoilles*, Paris, 1629.

<sup>123</sup> This as well as other similar occult alphabets are reproduced in Cornelius Agrippa's *De occulta philosophia*, iii, cap. 30.

<sup>124</sup> T. D. Kendrick, *St. James in Spain*, London, 1960, p. 69 ff. Our Pl. 4d is reproduced from this book, pl. xii(b).

<sup>125</sup> Cf. above, note 119.

<sup>126</sup> Cf., e.g., *Ars Hispaniae—Historia universal del arte hispánico*, iii, 1951, p. 144 ff., figs. 187 and 189.

<sup>127</sup> Pl. 4a (Marble stele from Almería, dated A.D. 1137) after *Al-Andalus*, xxii, 1957, pl. 7. Pl. 4b (Dedicatory inscription of the 'Maristan' in Granada, A.D. 1367), after J. A.

Gaya Nuño, *La arquitectura española en sus monumentos desaparecidos*, Madrid, 1961, p. 81. (Cf. also *Ars Hispanica—Historia universal . . .*, iv, 1949, p. 159.) Similar also the 'Gate of Pardon' in Cordova, see F. Calvert and W. M. Gallichan, *Cordova, a city of the Moors*, London, 1907, pls. 56–59, 121, 126.

<sup>128</sup> The 'Alpha and Omega' on our amulet could also be interpreted from Islamic magical characters (cf. H. A. Winkler, *Siegel und Charaktere . . .* [see above, n. 81], p. 145 ff.) and the general type of our amulet—a square tablet perforated for suspension—has the closest parallels I can find in the Arabic protection tablets in Cairo, reproduced by Rudolf and H. Kriss, *Volks Glaube im Bereich des Islam*, ii, Wiesbaden, 1962, figs. 20–22.

Spain with her population of christianized Moors? If we take this clue we might go even further and point to a place both reclaimed from Islamic to Christian denomination and famous for its mastery in the art of leather-working—I mean Cordova. Her unsurpassed leather products, which enriched the English (and French) language with words for shoemaker—*cordwainer* (*cordonnier*)<sup>129</sup>—were famous throughout the Middle Ages.<sup>130</sup> This would seem to me the most likely place where an object of this quality, surviving the centuries, might have been fabricated.

In which century should we now date the amulet? We have, of course, the indisputable *terminus ante quem* of the appearance of the bronze cast in the Paduan collection, say about 1630; the leather amulet had already been considered, probably for quite a long time, as an object of great antiquity worth having a bronze cast made from it. But this *terminus ante quem* does not mean much for us, as from an art-historical point of view the figures of the obverse show clearly the style of the twelfth century A.D. If we accept the attribution to Cordova—and I am well aware that this is just a hypothesis—we would have to take the year 1236 A.D. as *terminus post quem*, viz. the year in which Cordova changed after five centuries from Islamic back to Christian rule and religion. As in so many cases of popular and industrial art, especially when existing moulds were in use, a twelfth-century artistic style might well be possible for an object fabricated, say, about the middle of the thirteenth century. About this time then and for Cordova I would tentatively fix the origin of Mr. Mackay's Christian leather amulet. But, I repeat, *tentatively*.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. Cordovan, Cordwain, Cordwainer; W. v. Wartburg, *Französisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, ii, 1946, p. 1182, s.v. Corduba.

<sup>130</sup> Its renown can be traced back into Carolingian times (see the references quoted by Du Cange, *Glossarium mediae et infimae latinitatis*, s.v. Cordebisus, Cordenisae pelles, etc.). Cf. also Baron Ch. Davillier, *Notes sur les cuirs de Cordoue, guadamaciles d'Espagne etc.*, Paris,

1878 (Spanish translation, Gerona, 1879); Henri Clouzot, *Cuir décorés, II: Cuir de Cordoue*, Paris, 1925; T. G. Larraya, *Cueros artísticos (corioplastia). Historia y técnicas*, Barcelona, 1956; Sociedad española de amigos del arte. *Cordobanes y guadamacies, Catalogo ilustr. de la exposición*, por J. Ferrandis Torres, Madrid, 1955 (esp. p. 17 ff.); *Exposición de cueros de arte. Catálogo ilustrado*, Barcelona, 1953.

#### ADDENDA

- p. 2, n. 4: For the dominating rôle which *dynamis* plays in the gnostic system of Simon Magus cf. H. Leisegang, *Die Gnosis*, 1924, p. 88 ff.
- p. 7, n. 31: For an illustration of the lamp from Dioscurias-Sebastopolis see *Illustrated London News*, 25.4.64, p. 644, fig. 2.
- p. 14, n. 82a: About birds on King Solomon amulets cf. G. Manganaro in *Rend. Accad. Naz. dei Lincei*, ser. viii, vol. xviii, 1963, p. 68 and C. Bonner in *Hesperia*, XX, 1951, p. 337 (nos. 56/7—'hoopoe').