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Agency on the Attic Curse Tablets

Sources 1 (the dead as dead and powerless):

1. López Jimeno 1999, 51; SGD 78; Ziebarth 1934a, p. 1038, no. 17; Ziebarth 1899, pp. 116–117, no. 17; DT 69; Wünsch 1900, pp. 65–66, no. 17 (Attica, date unknown):

[κατα]δίδημι Γῆι καὶ . . . πρὸς] Ἑρμῆν χθόνιον [καὶ ὡς οὗτος ὁ νεκρὸς ἀτε]λὴς
κεῖται ὡς ἀτελ[ῆ εἶναι],
I hand him over to Ge and [to] Hermes Chthonios, and he shall be as useless [as this corpse
lies useless].

2. DT 85; Gager 20; Wünsch 1900, p. 70, no. 1; Ziebarth 1934a, pp. 1040–1042, no. 23; Ziebarth 1899, pp. 132–133, no. 1 (Boeotia, 2nd/3rd century AD).

Ὡσπερ τύν, Θεόνναστε, ἀδύνατος εἰ χειρῶν, ποδῶν, σώματος πράξῃ
Just as you, Theonnastos, are powerless in any act or exercise of (your) hands, feet, body...
(transl. Gager)

Sources 2 (Necromancy):

- H. *Od.* 11.12–224; P. Köln III 125 = TGF III fr. 273a (Aischylos, *Psychagogoi*); A. *Pers.* 623–651;
A.R. 4.1665–1690.

Source 3 (cf. DTA 99–100; DT 72: curser addresses Hermes and Earth):

- DTA 98; Gager 83; López Jimeno 2001, 98 (Attica, 4th/3rd century BCE, “borderline case”; curser addresses Earth):

Εὐρυπτόλεμος Ἀγρυλῆ[θ]ε[ν·Εὐρ]υπτ[όλ]εμον καταδῶ καὶ Ξενοφῶντα Ξενοφῶν·τὸν
μετ’ Εὐρυπτολέμου καὶ γλώττας τὰς τούτων καὶ ἔπη καὶ ἔργα τὰ τούτων καὶ εἴ τι
βουλευόνται καὶ εἴ τι πράττουσιν ἀτελῆ ἀν[το]ι[ς] γένοιτο· φ[ίλ]ῃ Γῇ κάτεχε
Εὐ[ρυ]πτόλεμον [κ]αὶ Ξενοφῶντα καὶ ἀδυνάτους αὐτοὺς πόει καὶ ἀτελεῖς καὶ φθόην
Εὐρυπτολέμωι καὶ Ξενοφῶντι· φίλῃ Γῇ βοήθει μοι· ἀδικούμενος γὰρ ὑπὸ
Εὐρυπτολέμου καὶ Ξενοφῶντος καταδῶ αὐτούς.

Euruptolemos of Agrulê I bind Euruptolemos and Xenophôn {Xenophôn} who is with
Euruptolemos, and their tongues and words and deeds; and if they are planning or doing
anything, let it be in vain. Beloved Earth, restrain Euruptolemos and Xenophôn and make
them powerless and useless; and let Euruptolemos and Xenophôn waste away. Beloved Earth,
help me; and since I have been wronged by Euruptolemos and Xenophôn I bind them.
(transl. Gager 1992)

Sources 4 (curse as letter, addressed to gods of the underworld):

1. DTA 102; Gager 104; Wilhelm 1904, pp. 112–113; Versnel 1991, p. 65 [a.1–8 only]; Bravo 1987,
pp. 203–204; SEG XXXVII 219; López Jimeno 2001, 102; Eidinow 2007, pp. 378–379 (Attica, 4th
century BCE):

Ἐπιστο<σ>λήν πέμπων δ]αίμο(σιν) καὶ Φερσεφών(η)<ς> [σδ],
(I am) sending a letter to the spirits and Persephone...

2. Gager 38; DTA 103; Wilhelm 1904, pp. 122–125; SEG XXXVII 220 (Attica, close to 323 BCE according to Wilhelm):

Ἐρμ[ῆ] καὶ Φερσεφ[ό]ν[η] τήνδε ἐπιστο[λ]ήν ἀποπέμπω,
I am sending this letter to Hermes and Persephone ...

3. Bravo 1987, 206ff. = SEG XXXVII 673 (Olbia, 4th/3rd century BCE, reference to unpublished piece, a dead person seems to be the recipient of the curse).

4. López Jimeno 1990, pp. 134–144, no. 27; SGD 109 (Lilybaion, late Hellenistic):

πέμπω δῶρον...
I send a gift (significance unclear)

5. SGD 54 (Attica, date unknown):

[εἰς τὸ] δαιμόνιον σκοτεινὸν καὶ καταχθόνιον (fσ -ον) καὶ [[- - -]] εἰς ὅλους τοὺς
θεοὺς ΠΑΣΑΓΗΣ πέμπω δῶρον...
to the dark and restraining spirit and to all the gods, Pasages, I am sending a gift ...

6. Ziebarth 1934a, p. 1039, no. 20 (Eretria? 3rd century BCE?; cf. DTA 109; Gager 61; López Jimeno 2001, 109):

πρὸς τὰς Πραξιδίκας πρὸς Ἑρ[μῆν]
to the Praxidikai, to Hermes

7. DT 43 and 44 (Megara, 2nd/1st century BCE):

Ὅταν σὺ ὦ Πασιάναξ, τὰ γρ[α]μματα ταῦτα ἀναγνώσ, ...
If you, Pasionax, read this letter...

8. DTA 99; Bravo 1987, 204; SEG XXXVII 223; López Jimeno 2001, 99 (Athens, 3rd century BCE or later):

Δαίμονι χθονίῳ καὶ τῇ χθονίᾳ καὶ τοῖς χθονίοις πᾶσι πέμπω δῶρον...
I send a gift to the male and female spirit of the underworld and to all the underworld gods...

Sources 5 (active souls of the dead):

In X. Eph. 5.7.7–8, one of the dead, not a god, strikes Anthia with epilepsy.

Cf. also Hom. *Il.* 22.358–360; *Od.* 11.72–73; Hes. *Op.* 124 = 254; A. *Pers.* 618–80; *Ch.* 129–130, 456, 489–509; E. *Alc.* 1003–1004; Pl. *Lg.* 865e, 926e–927b.

Cf. also passages in the much later magical handbook PGM IV 296–466 = GMP pp. 44–47; PGM IV 1416–1431 = GMP p. 65; PGM IV 1460–1495 = GMP p. 66; PGM IV 2725–2739 = GMP p. 89; PGM IV 2943–2966 = GMP p. 94.

Sources 6 (the dead as *atelestoi*):

1. Cf. source 1.1

2. Gager 22; DT 68; Petropoulos 1988, 219–220; Ziebarth 1899, pp. 114–116, no. 16; Wünsch 1900, p. 65, no. 16 (*atelês* as unmarried (Gager) and useless; Attica, early 4th century BCE), side B:

[ὡς] οὗτος [ἐ]ντ[α]ῦ[θ]α ἀτε[λ]ῆς κ[ε]ῖται, οὕτως] ἀτέλεστα εἶναι Θεοδώρ[ας πάντα, καὶ] ἔπη καὶ ἔργα τὰ πρὸς Χαρίαν καὶ [πρ]ὸς ἄλλος ἀνθρώπος. καταδ[ω] Θεόδωραν πρὸς τὸν Ἑρμῆν τὸ<γ> χθόνιον καὶ πρὸς τὸς ἀ]τελέστος καὶ πρὸς τὴν Τῆθιν· ἀ[τελέστα κ]αὶ ἔργα τὰ πρὸς Χαρίαν καὶ τὸς ἄλλος [ἀνθ]ρώπος, **δε**

Just as this (sc. dead person) lies here *atelês*, so let all things of Theodora, her words and deeds with respect to Charias and other men, be *atelesta*. I bind down (sc. Theodora) before chthonic Hermes and the *atelestoi* and Tethys; let her deeds with respect to Charias and other men be *atelesta*, etc. (transl. Jordan 1993, 130).

3. Jordan 1993, 129–131 discusses curse tablets from Selinous and the meaning of *atelês*.

4. Cf. Pl. *Phd.* 69c (*atelês* as uninitiated).

5. Gager 6; SEG XXXIV 1437; SGD, p. 192f. (Apameia, 6th century AD):

δέμ[ο]νας ἀώρ[υ]ς, δέμονας βιέους
may they see *daimones* (of those) who have died prematurely, spirits (of those) who have died violently (transl. Gager)

6. DT 52; SEG XLIX 321; Ziebarth 1899, pp. 118–120, no. 20; Wünsch 1900, p. 67, no. 20 (Attica, 3rd/2nd century BCE)

παρὰ τοῖς ἡϊθέοις
to the unmarried

Sources 7 (the dead as agents / graves as sites of deposition explicitly mentioned):

1. Gager 41; Trumpf 1958, 94–102; SGD 9; Jordan 1988, 275f. (Athens, early 4th century BCE, voodoo doll in coffin):

Βαβυρτίδης Ξώφυγος Νικόμαχος Οἰνοκλῆς Μνησίμαχος Χαμαῖος Τεισωνίδης
Χαρίσανδρος Δημοκλῆς καὶ ἔτις ἄλλος μετ' ἐκένων ξύνδικός ἐστι ἔμάρτυς

Barburtidês Xôphugos Nikomachos Oinoklês Mnêsimachos Chamaïos Teisônîdês
Charisandros Dêmoklês and if there is any one else with them as an advocate or witness.
(transl. Gager 1992)

2. Gager 64; DTA 55; Wilhelm 1904, pp. 107–108; SEG XXXVII 215; Bravo 1987, 198–199 [lines a.16–18 and b.7–9 only]; López Jimeno 2001, 55 (Attica, late fourth century BCE):

καταδω τούτο<ν>ς ἐ<ν> μνήμασιν κα<ι> ἐν ἀπορίαι καὶ ἐν τύμβοις.
I bind these in graves, in distress, and in tombs.
(transl. Gager)

3. Gager 62; DTA 87; SEG XXXVII 216; Bravo 1987, 199 [lines a.9–10 only]; López Jimeno 2001, 87 (Attica, 4th century BCE):

τούτους πάντας καταδω ἐ<ν> μνήμασι ἀσφαραγίαι
all of these I bind ... in the unsealed graves
(transl. Gager)

- Cf. most curse tablets mentioned above.

Sources 8 (curse tablet in right hand of corpse):

1. Gager 105; Peek 1941, pp. 91–93, no. 3; Jeffery 1955, p. 75, no. 19; SGD 1; López Jimeno 1999, 1; Ziebarth 1942, 19 (Athens, 5th century BCE)
2. López Jimeno 1999, 2; SGD 2; Peek 1941, pp. 95–96, no. 6; Ziebarth 1942, 19–20; Jeffery 1955, p. 75, no. 20 (Athens, 5th century BCE)

Sources 9 (Hermes, bind!):

1. DT 50 (p. 86 with commentary); Ziebarth 1899, pp. 113–114, no. 15; Wunsch 1900, pp. 64–65, no. 15:

Ἑρμῇ κάτοχε κα[ὶ Φερσεφόνη κατέχετε Μυρρίνης τῆς Ἀγνο]θέο(υ) Πειραιέως
 γυναικὸς σῶ[μα καὶ ψυχὴν καὶ γλῶτταν καὶ πό]δας καὶ ἔργα καὶ βου[λὰς ἕως ἂν εἰς
 Ἅιδου καταβῇι . . .] φθίνουσα,

Hermes Restrainer and Persephone, both restrain the body of Myrrhine, wife of Hagnotheus from the Peiraeus, and her soul and tongue and feet and deeds and plans, until she goes down into Hades, she who is being consumed.

2. López Jimeno 1999, 48; SGD 75; Ziebarth 1934a, p. 1036, no. 13

Sources 10 (Hermes katochos):

e.g.,

DTA 85; López Jimeno 2001, 85

DTA 86; Gager 67; López Jimeno 2001, 86

DTA 87; Gager 62; SEG XXXVII 216; López Jimeno 2001, 87

DTA 88–91

DTA 93; López Jimeno 2001, 93

DTA 100; SEG XXXVII 217; López Jimeno 2001, 100; Versnel 1991, 65–66

DTA 109; Gager 61; López Jimeno 2001, 109

DTA 161; López Jimeno 2001, 140

Sources 11 (trial in the underworld):

Hom. *Od.* 11.568; Pl. *Ap.* 41a; *Grg.* 523e–524a.

On Hades as judge, cf. e.g., A. *Supp.* 228–231; *Eu.* 273–275.

Pl. *Phd.* 107c–108b, 113d–114d takes a trial in the underworld for granted, which punishes the wicked and rewards the good.

In “prayers for justice”, councils of judging gods are regularly mentioned (cf. Versnel 2009, 29–30).

Sources 12 (Plato’s *peitho*):

Pl. *R.* 364b–c: ἀγύρται δὲ καὶ μάντιες ἐπὶ πλουσίων θύρας ἰόντες πείθουσιν ὥς ἔστι παρὰ σφίσι δύναμις ἐκ θεῶν ποριζομένη θυσίαις τε καὶ ἐπαυδαῖς, εἴτε τι ἀδίκημά του γέγονεν αὐτοῦ ἢ προγόνων, ἀκείσθαι μεθ’ ἡδονῶν τε καὶ ἑορτῶν, εἴαν τέ τινα ἐχθρὸν πημῆναι ἐθέλῃ, μετὰ σμικρῶν δαπανῶν ὁμοίως δίκαιον ἀδίκῳ βλάβειν, ἐπαγωγαῖς τισὶ καὶ καταδέσμοις τοὺς θεοὺς, ὥς φασι, πείθοντές σφισιν ὑπηρετεῖν,

and begging priests and soothsayers go to rich men’s doors and make them believe that they by means of sacrifices and incantations have accumulated a treasure of power from the gods that can expiate and cure with pleasurable festivals any misdeed of a man or his ancestors, and that if a man wishes to harm

an enemy, at slight cost he will be enabled to injure just and unjust alike, since they are masters of spells and enchantments that {persuade} the gods to serve their end (the verb ‘constrain’ in Shorey’s Loeb translation is too strong).

Pl. *Lg.* 909a–c: ὅσοι δ’ ἂν θηριώδεις γένωνται πρὸς τῷ θεοῦς [μὴ] νομίζειν ἢ ἀμελεῖς ἢ παραιτητοὺς εἶναι, καταφρονούντες δὲ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ψυχαγωγῶσι μὲν πολλοὺς τῶν ζώντων, τοὺς δὲ τεθνεώτας φάσκοντες ψυχαγωγεῖν καὶ θεοὺς ὑπισχνόμενοι πείθειν, ὡς θυσίαις τε καὶ εὐχαῖς καὶ ἐπωδαῖς γοητεύοντες, ιδιώτας τε καὶ ὅλας οἰκίας καὶ πόλεις χρημάτων χάριν ἐπιχειρῶσιν κατ’ ἄκρας ἐξαιρεῖν, τούτων δὲ ὅς ἂν ὀφλῶν εἶναι δόξη, τιμάτω τὸ δικαστήριον αὐτῷ κατὰ νόμον δεδέσθαι μὲν ἐν τῷ τῶν μεσογείων δεσμοτηρίῳ, προσιέναι δὲ αὐτοῖς μηδένα ἐλεύθερον μηδέποτε, τακτὴν δὲ ὑπὸ τῶν νομοφυλάκων αὐτοὺς τροφὴν παρὰ τῶν οἰκετῶν λαμβάνειν. ἀποθανόντα δὲ ἔξω τῶν ὁρίων ἐκβάλλειν ἄταφον,

But as to all those who have become like ravening beasts, and who, besides holding that the gods are negligent or open to bribes, despise men, charming the souls of many of the living, and claiming that they charm the souls of the dead, and promising to persuade the gods by bewitching them, as it were, with sacrifices, prayers, and incantations, and who try thus to wreck utterly not only individuals, but whole families and States for the sake of money,—if any of these men be pronounced guilty, the court shall order him to be imprisoned according to law in the mid-country gaol, and shall order that no free man shall approach such criminals at any time, and that they shall receive from the servants a ration of food as fixed by the Law-wardens. And he that dies shall be cast outside the borders without burial. (transl. Bury, R., Loeb edition)

Pi. *P.* 4.219 explicitly mentions *peithô* in close connection to magic, too.

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