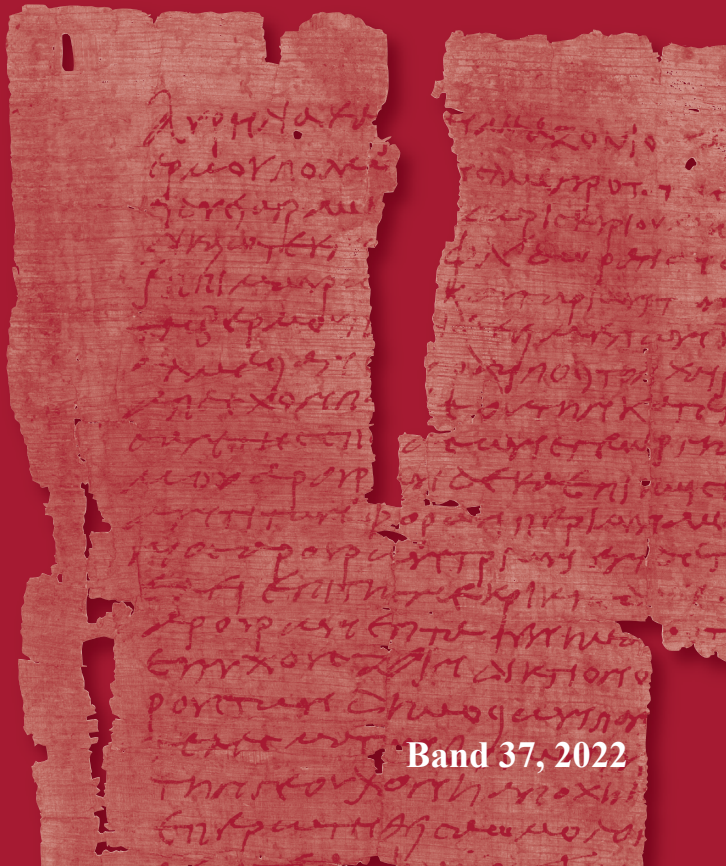


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JURAJ FRANEK

Early Byzantine Amuletic Pendant for Megale, Daughter of Charitous (BNF Froehner.630)*

Plate 14

The object of our present study is a previously unpublished apotropaic amulet in the form of a leaf-shaped bronze pendant equipped with a suspension loop, measuring 5.5 cm in height (incl. the loop) and 2.9 cm in width.¹ In addition to the inscription, discussed below, the piece features two *charaktères* and an engraved image of a lion attacking a snake. The amulet, currently housed in the collection of the département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques of the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BNF; inv. No. Froehner.630, *olim* Froehner VII, 610), was posthumously bequeathed to the BNF by Wilhelm Fröhner (1834–1925), a German-born naturalized French historian, archaeologist, epigraphist, and collector of antiquities also known under his francophone name Guillaume Froehner.²

Despite the lack of any specific information regarding its provenance, the amulet clearly exhibits significant genealogical rapport with so-called ‘Holy Rider’ magical pendants, which feature on one side the inscription εἰς θεὸς ὁ νικῶν τὰ κακά (‘one god conquering evil’) and an engraved image of a rider mounted on a horse (often identified with Solomon or Sisinnios on magical gems and apotropaic medallions depicting the same scene) attacking a female demon with a spear (conspicuously missing on Froehner.630!) and the other side always containing a variety of textual and visual motifs, such as invocations of angels, short apotropaic formulae, or the *incipit* of Psalm

* I am grateful to Mathilde Avisseau-Broustet, conservateur en chef au département des Monnaies, médailles et antiques de la Bibliothèque nationale de France for her kind assistance, and to the two anonymous reviewers of this paper for their valuable suggestions. This study is a result of the Czech Science Foundation project No. 21-06319S, ‘Performative Utterances in Epigraphical Documents of the Ancient Mediterranean Tradition’.

¹ The entry for the amulet is missing in the authoritative catalogue of Froehner’s Greek-inscribed antiquities, cf. L. Robert, *Collection Froehner I: Inscriptions grecques*, Paris 1936.

² For an outline of his rather colourful life, which included ghost-writing a history of Julius Caesar for Napoléon III and an accusation, following the French defeat at Sedan in 1870, by his fellow curators at the Louvre that he allegedly spied for the Prussians (which resulted in his brief imprisonment), see esp. M.-C. Hellmann, *Wilhelm Froehner*, Paris 1982 and M.-C. Hellmann, *Wilhelm Froehner: Un collectionneur pas comme les autres*, in: A.-F. Laurens, K. Pomian (édd.), *L’Anticomanie: La collection d’antiquités aux XVIII^e et XIX^e siècles*, Paris 1992, 251–264.

90(91).³ Similarities with the present pendant include the use of identical magical formulae (including, but not limited to, the inscription ‘one god conquering evil’), iconographical aspects (a *charaktêr* in the form of an eight-pointed star with circular finials on both sides and the image of an apotropaic lion on Side B),⁴ material considerations (a similar size and shape, the use of bronze alloys, the presence of a suspension loop

³ A corpus of the ‘Holy Rider’ apotropaic implements, including magical gems, pendants, medallions, bracelets, and rings is in preparation by the author. Well over 100 leaf-shaped bronze pendants belonging to the same category as Froehner.630 have been published so far; see, e.g., G. Schlumberger, *Amulettes byzantins anciens destinés à combattre les maléfices et maladies*, REG 5 (1892) 73–93; E. Peterson, ΕΙΣ ΘΕΟΣ: *Epigraphische, formgeschichtliche und religions-geschichtliche Untersuchungen*, Göttingen 1926, 96–109; N. Makhoully, *Rock-cut Tombs at El Jish*, The Quarterly of the Department of Antiquities in Palestine 8 (1939) 45–50; R. Mouterde, *Objets magiques: Recueil S. Ayvaz*, MUSJ 25 (1942/43) 105–128 (esp. 121–126); C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets, Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*, Ann Arbor 1950, 208–221; E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period, Vol. II: The Archaeological Evidence from the Diaspora*, New York 1953, 227–235; B. Bagatti, *Altre medaglie di Salomone cavaliere e loro origine*, RAC 47 (1971) 331–342; F. M. Schwartz, J. H. Schwartz, *Engraved Gems in the Collection of the American Numismatic Society: I. Ancient Magical Amulets*, Museum Notes (American Numismatic Society) 24 (1979) 149–197 (esp. 184–187); M. Chébab, *Fouilles de Tyr, La nécropole, Vol. IV: Description des fouilles*, Paris 1986, 180–187; C. Walter, *The Intaglio of Solomon in the Benaki Museum and the Origins of the Iconography of Warrior Saints*, Δελτίον της Χριστιανικής Αρχαιολογικής Εταιρείας 15 (1991) 33–42; D. Nuzzo, *Immagini cristologiche negli amuleti di Salomone cavaliere*, Bessarione 10 (1994) 101–115; S. Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum, Band I: Text*, London 2001, 280–283; J. Spier, *An Antique Magical Book Used for Making Sixth-Century Byzantine Amulets?*, in: J.-M. Spieser, V. Dasen (éd.), *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l’Antiquité à la Renaissance* (Micrologus 60), Firenze 2014, 43–66; J. B. Yon, J. Aliquot, *Inscriptions grecques et latines du Musée nationale de Beyrouth* (BAAL, Hors-Série 12), Beyrouth 2016, 254–257; J. Aliquot, J.-B. Yon, *Inscriptions grecques et latines du musée de l’American University of Beirut*, Berytus 56 (2016) 149–195 (esp. 192–195); C. Faraone, *The Transformation of Greek Amulets in Roman Imperial Times*, Philadelphia 2018, 112–115.

⁴ The combination of the *charaktêr* (a magical sign with uncertain significance and function) of this particular type and the motif of a lion attacking a snake is found on two other bronze pendants; see G. Vikan, *Two Byzantine Amuletic Armbands and the Group to Which They Belong*, JWAG 49/50 (1991/92) 33–51, 50 (fig. 15) and J. Franek, D. Corral Varela, *Apotropaic Amulet from the Collection of Gustave Schlumberger with a Bilingual Inscription in Greek and Samaritan Hebrew*, ZPE 216 (2020) 156–166. The apotropaic lion is at times also depicted as attacking the Evil Eye, cf. Schlumberger, *Amulettes* (n. 3) 81 and a hitherto unpublished amulet in the Bibliothèque nationale de France (inv. No. AA.Seyrig.50). On occasion, we find the motif of a lion and a snake combined with a Christ-like figure, likely as a visual echo of *Psalms* 90(91):13 (‘You will tread on the lion and the adder, the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.’), cf. Spier, *Antique Magical Book* (n. 3) 48 and B. Pitarakis, *The Incarnated Logos, Divine Music, and Exorcism*, in: B. Pitarakis, G. Tanman (eds.), *Life Is Short, Art Long. The Art of Healing in Byzantium: New Perspectives* (Istanbul Research Institute Publications 38), Istanbul 2018, 43–62, 45. This curious pastiche that imbues originally stand-alone pagan apotropaic imagery with a new significance has likely been influenced by the considerable popularity of the image of Christ treading on beasts, with numerous instances attested in the 5th and 6th century CE Ravenna, of which the large-format mosaic in the Archbishop’s Chapel is probably the most famous one; cf. D. M. Deliyannis, *Ravenna in Late Antiquity*, Cambridge 2010, 73.

perpendicular to the plane of the body of the amulet), and palaeographical affinities. Since the centres of production of the Holy Rider amulets may be placed in the 5th and 6th century CE Syro-palestine, it is reasonable to suppose that Froehner.630 may have been created in one of the specialized workshops within the same spatiotemporal coordinates.

In what follows, I offer an edition of the Greek text — a task much impaired by the amulet’s state of preservation, exhibiting significant wear and the effects of corrosion —, followed by an English translation and a brief commentary.

Side A		Side B
Ἰάω, Σαβα-		Ῥαφαήλ
ώ, Μιχαήλ, Γ-	10	εἶς θεὸς ὁ κι-
αβριήλ, Οὐρι-		κῶν τὰ κακ[ά]
ήλ, Ῥαφαήλ, φ-		ἐγὼ εἰμι Νοσκαμ(αρδοτεναν)
5 υλάζεται Μ-		
εγάλην, θυγ-		
ατέρ(α) Χαρι-		
τοῦν		

l. 4–5: φυλάξατε, l. 7–8: Χαρίτου vel Χαριτοῦτος l. 9: Ῥαφαήλ, l. 10: νικῶν

Iao, Sabaoth, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael, protect Megale, daughter of Charitous. Raphael. One god conquering evil. I am Noskam(ardotenan).

1–4: *Iao, Sabaoth, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael.* Our amulet begins with the invocation of two divine beings (Iao and Sabaoth) and four angels. The syntagma ‘Iao Sabaoth’ is clearly a Greek rendering of the Hebrew expression יהוה צבאות (‘Yahweh [of] Hosts’) and, as Edward Love recently put it, ‘by the 4th century CE, Iao Sabaoth had become an essentially pan-cultural theonym for a superordinate deity ubiquitous in the Graeco-Egyptian magical tradition’.⁵ In a number of Greek magical texts of the Late Antiquity, however, the theonyms ‘Iao’ and ‘Sabaoth’ seem to be employed independently and likely denote two individual entities (or two distinct names of a single divine being).⁶ In terms of spelling, the most commonly attested variant on amuletic

⁵ M. W. Zellmann-Rohrer, E. O. D. Love, *Traditions in Transmission: The Medical and Magical Texts of a Fourth-Century Greek and Coptic Codex (Michigan Ms. 136) in Context* (Archiv für Papyrusforschung, Beiheft 47), Berlin, Boston 2022, 263.

⁶ G. H. van Kooten, *Moses/Musaeus/Mochos and His God Yahweh, Iao, and Sabaoth, Seen from a Graeco-Roman Perspective*, in: G. H. van Kooten (ed.), *The Revelation of the Name YHWH to Moses: Perspectives from Judaism, the Pagan Graeco-Roman World, and Early Christianity* (Themes in Biblical Narrative: Jewish and Christian Traditions 9), Leiden, Boston 2006, 107–138, esp. 126–135. This is obviously the case whenever the syntagma ‘Iao Sabaoth’ is separated by an additional element or treated individually; cf., e.g., A. Mastrocinque, *Les intailles*

bronze pendants is Ἴάω Σαβαώθ, but we find numerous instances of Ἴάω Σαβαάω (the spelling on our amulet)⁷ and even the hypercorrected variant Ἴάωθ Σαβαώθ.⁸ Much to the dismay of early Christian authorities,⁹ the invocations of angels formed part and parcel of apotropaic magical practices throughout the Mediterranean world and the combined invocation of Iao, Sabaoth, and the angels is frequent on amuletic bronze pendants of the 5th and 6th century CE.¹⁰

The individual components of this angelic invocation are never introduced in a haphazard fashion. Rather, they seemed to have been fixed in a formulaic sequence in

magiques du département des Monnaies, Médailles et Antiques, Paris 2014, 43, No. 88 (a blood jasper magical gem with the inscription Ἴάω Σολομῶν Σαβαάω) or R. S. O. Tomlin, *Sede in tuo loco: A Fourth-Century Uterine Phylactery in Latin from Roman Britain*, ZPE 115 (1997) 291–294 (a uterine amulet on lead lamella with the formula *adiuro te per Iao et per Sabao et per Adonai* [...]). Influence from a ‘Gnostic’ or ‘Gnostic’-inspired tradition may be at work here, since Iao and Sabaoth were considered to be two distinct archons in the theology of some Nag Hammadi treatises. Z. Pleše, *Poetics of the Gnostic Universe: Narrative and Cosmology in the Apocryphon of John* (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies 52), Leiden, Boston 2006, 192, viewed the triad Iao, Sabaoth, and Adonai(os) as ‘a stable element’ and ‘apparently a fixed incantatory formula’; the same conclusion has been reached by R. van den Broek, *The Creation of Adam’s Psychic Body in the Apocryphon of John*, in: R. van den Broek, M. J. Vermaseren (eds.), *Studies in Gnosticism and Hellenistic Religions* (Études préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l’Empire romain 91), Leiden 1981, 38–57, 42, who argued that ‘the sequence Iao, Sabaoth, Adonaios was used by preference and formed a fixed magic formula’. W. Ameling (in a brief commentary to an amuletic bronze pendant similar to Froehner.630, found in Sycamina) argued that ‘Sabaoth’ in the syntagma ‘Iao Sabaoth’ may sometimes refer to ‘an angel in his own right’ (CIIP 2154).

⁷ Cf., e.g., Makhoul, *Rock-Cut Tombs* (n. 3) 48; Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (n. 3) 304, No. 310; Bagatti, *Altre medaglie* (n. 3) 333–334, No. 2.

⁸ Cf., e.g., Schlumberger, *Amulettes byzantins* (n. 3) 82, No. 10; J. Germer-Durand, *Amulette contre le mauvais oeil*, *Échos d’Orient* 9 (1906) 129–130; Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (n. 3), 304; Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols* (n. 3) 227.

⁹ The use of ‘angelic invocations’, rendered inherently suspicious by *Col* 2:18 and its warning against the ‘worship of angels’ (ἐν [...] θρησκείᾳ τῶν ἀγγέλων), has been criticized ever since Irenaeus of Lyons; cf. *Adv. haer.* II, 32, 5 (ed. Brox): *Nec invocationibus angelicis facit aliquid neque incantationibus neque alia prava curiositate; sed, munde et pure et manifeste orationes dirigens ad dominum qui omnia fecit et nomen domini nostri Iesu Christi invocans, virtutes ad utilitatem hominum sed non ad seductionem perficit*. By the 6th century CE, the *Gelasian Decree* (V, 8, ed. Dobschütz) still decried the practice by suggesting that the purported names of the angels on the amulets are in reality the names of demons (*phylacteria omnia quae non angelorum, ut illi configunt, sed daemonum magis nominibus conscripta sunt*).

¹⁰ Regarding the invocations of angels in specifically magical contexts, see R. Lesses, *Speaking with Angels: Jewish and Greco-Egyptian Revelatory Adjurations*, *HThR* 89 (1996) 41–60; R. Cline, *Ancient Angels: Conceptualizing Angeloi in the Roman Empire* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 172), Leiden, Boston 2011, esp. 135–165 and G. Bohak, A. H. Hoog (éds.), *Magie: Anges et démons dans la tradition juive*, Paris 2015. Among the recent general works on angels in Jewish and Christian traditions, cf. E. Muehlberger, *Angels in Late Ancient Christianity*, Oxford 2013; A. Yoshiko Reed, *Demons, Angels, and Writing in Ancient Judaism*, Cambridge 2020; M. Ahuvia, *On My Right Michael, On My Left Gabriel: Angels in Ancient Jewish Culture*, Oakland, CA 2021; and D. Lauritzen (éd.), *Inventer les anges de l’Antiquité à Byzance: Conception, Représentation, Perception* (Travaux et mémoires 25/2), Paris 2021.

which the names are arranged in a particular order, namely ‘Iao, Sabaoth, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel’, with the final element (if present) taking the form of either the collective appellation of the heavenly host (Cherubim, Seraphim) or the angel Raphael. The longest sequence attested is ‘Iao, Sabaoth, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Cherubim, Seraphim’;¹¹ whenever it was necessary to shorten the formula (e.g. because of a lack of space on the amulet’s surface or to make room for another visual or textual element), this was always executed through retrograde elimination. Accordingly, we find the sequence abbreviated to ‘Iao, Sabaoth, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Cherubim’;¹² ‘Iao, Sabaoth, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel’;¹³ ‘Iao, Sabaoth, Michael, Gabriel’;¹⁴ ‘Iao, Sabaoth, Michael’;¹⁵ and ‘Iao, Sabaoth’.¹⁶ The inclusion of Raphael on our pendant is rather rare, and the sequence ‘Iao, Sabaoth, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael’ is attested only on a recently published amuletic pendant with a bilingual inscription in Greek and Samaritan Hebrew (BNF Schlumberger.190), with which it shares also other important visual and textual elements.¹⁷

4–8: *Protect Megale, daughter of Charitous.* The invocation of protective powers is directly followed by the personalized apotropaic formula φυλάξεται Μεγάλην, θυγατέρ(α) Χαριτοῦν. The verbal form φυλάξεται, attested also on a papyrus amulet from Fayum dated to the 3rd or 4th century CE,¹⁸ is to be understood as 2. pers. pl. imper. aor. act. φυλάξατε ‘protect!’. The verb thus links the two formulae on Side A and instructs Iao, Sabaoth, and the angels to protect the amulet’s wearer.¹⁹ The beneficiary

¹¹ Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (n. 3) 304, No. 311.

¹² Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen* (n. 3) 280, No. 451.

¹³ Michel, *Die magischen Gemmen* (n. 3) 280–281, No. 452.

¹⁴ Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (n. 3) 304, No. 310.

¹⁵ Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (n. 3) 304, No. 309. Regarding the importance of Michael, who is always named first (and therefore eliminated last), cf. T. J. Kraus, *Angels in the Magical Papyri: The Classic Example of Michael, the Archangel*, in: F. V. Reiterer, T. R. R. Nicklas, K. Schöpflin (eds.), *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings — Origins, Development and Reception*, Berlin, New York 2007, 611–627 and J. Ch. Arnold, *The Footprints of Michael the Archangel: The Formation and Diffusion of a Sainly Cult, c. 300 – c. 800*, New York 2013.

¹⁶ Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols* (n. 3), 227; Bagatti, *Altre medaglie* (n. 3) 333–334, No. 2.

¹⁷ Franek, Corral Varela, *Apotropaic Amulet* (n. 4). Outside of the scope of amuletic bronze pendants, the sequence including four archangels is more common; see, e.g., R. W. Daniel, F. Maltomini, *Supplementum Magicum, Vol. I*, Opladen 1990, 92 (No. 32, ll. 11–12): Μιχαηλ, Γαβριηλ, Ουριηλ, Ραφαηλ, λ̄δε, λ̄δε π̄νους, λ̄δε, ἤδ[η] ἤδη, ταχύ (‘Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael, undo, undo the pains, undo, now now, quickly.’).

¹⁸ Daniel, Maltomini, *Supplementum* (n. 17) 27, No. 10: φυλάξεται Τουθοῦν, ὦν ἔτεκεν Κάρα, ἀπὸ παντὸς ῥίγους καὶ πυρετὸς, τριτέου, τεταρτέ[ο]υ, καθημερηνόν, ἀμφημερηναὶ ἢ μίαν παρὰ μία<v>. In the upper register of the amulet (i.e. above the apotropaic formula), we find many names of the protective deities, including, but not limited to, Iao and Sabaoth (inscribed in a *tabula ansata*) as well as the names of the angels Uriel, Michael, Gabriel, Souriel, and Raphael.

¹⁹ Regarding the use of the verb in the apotropaic magical formulae, compare, e.g., φυλάξατε τὸν δεῖνα, ὄν δεῖνα, ἀπὸ πάσης ἐπιηρείας ὄνειρου τε φρικτοῦ καὶ πάντων ἀερίων, διὰ τὸ μέγα, ἔνδοξον ὄνομα (PGM VII, 313–315) or φυλάξατέ με, τὰ μεγάλα καὶ θαυμαστὰ ὄνόματα τοῦ μεγάλου θεοῦ (PGM VII, 501–502). Regarding this formula directly following a long list of angels, cf. PGM XXXVI, 171–177 (ἄγγελοι, φυλάξατέ με ἀπὸ παντὸς πράγματος ἐπερχομένου μου).

of the pendant's apotropaic power is a woman called Megale, daughter of Charitous. As opposed to many other contexts in which a patronymic is commonly used, magical texts virtually always employ the name of the mother as a unique identifier of a specific person, not so much to make the identification more secure (as a Roman law maxim states, *mater certa, pater semper incertus*), but rather because of the influence of Egyptian magical practices.²⁰ The preserved and eminently readable form of Megale's mother's name, Χαριτοῦν, is likely the accusative form of the name Χαριτοῦς, employed erroneously by the writer *in lieu* of the expected genitive (Χαριτοῦτος); the use of accusative may be explained as *tractio* to the preceding accusatives Μεγάλην and θυγατέρ(α). Another possibility is to read Χαρίτου{v} (assuming nominative Χαρίτος) or even Χαριτοῦ{v}<ς> (assuming nominative Χαριτώ),²¹ a hypothesis that is not far-fetched in light of another obvious spelling mistake on Side B (κικῶν for νικῶν).

Unlike apotropaic spells written on papyri or lamellae, where the name of the beneficiary is routinely included, the presence of an explicit personalized apotropaic formula on the 5th and 6th century CE bronze amuletic wearables, be they leaf-shaped pendants (like Froehner.630) or circular medallions, is exceedingly rare. In the case of pendants, on about two dozen pieces with the 'Holy Rider' visual motif and its accompanying tag εἷς θεὸς ὁ νικῶν τὰ κακά ('one god conquering evil') on Side A, we find the inscription Ἰάω, Σαβαώθ, Μιχαήλ, βοήθει ('Iao, Sabaoth, Michael, help!', with various spellings) combined with the motif of an Evil Eye attacked by weapons (two daggers and a trident) and animals (usually a lion, bird, snake, scorpion, and leopard) on Side B.²² The recipient of this magically induced help is clearly the amulet's wearer, but his or her name is never included.

The only leaf-shaped bronze pendant on which a beneficiary is named is the bilingual piece from the BNF (inv. No. Schlumberger.190), on which the formula reads φύλαζον τὴν φοροῦσα(ν) [...] Μαξίμιαν, θυγ[α]τέρ(α) καλῆ(ν) Οὐα(λερίας?) ('Protect the woman that is wearing this amulet [...] Maxima, beautiful daughter of Valeria').²³ On a closely related class of bronze pendants coeval to Froehner.630, with modestly different shapes (rounder and slightly larger) and a motif of a male figure (possibly to be identified with Solomon or Sisinnios) whipping a female demon, the beneficiaries are always explicitly named, but no more than six pieces have been identified so far

²⁰ J. B. Curbera, *Maternal Lineage in Greek Magical Texts*, in: D. R. Jordan, H. Montgomery, E. Thomassen (eds.), *The World of Ancient Magic: Papers from the First International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens*, 4–8 May 1997, Bergen 1999, 195–204.

²¹ The name Χαριτώ is reasonably well attested, cf. LGPN I, 15696; II, 67103–67105; IIIa, 16182; IV, 13911; IV, 35161; Vb, 13550 and Vb, 27301.

²² See, e.g., Makhoul, *Rock-Cut Tombs* (n. 3) 49; Mouterde, *Objets magiques* (n. 3) 125, No. 60; Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (n. 3) 302–303, Nos. 298–300; A. Barb, *Magica Varia*, Syria 49 (1972) 358; J. Mitchell, *Keeping the Demons Out of the House: The Archaeology of Apotropaic Strategy and Practice in Late Antique Butrint and Antigoneia*, in: L. Lavan, E. Swift, T. Putzeys (eds.), *Objects in Context, Objects in Use: Material Spatiality in Late Antiquity* (Late Antique Archaeology 5), Leiden, Boston 2007, 271–310, 289–291; Spier, *An Antique Magical Book* (n. 3) 46; Aliquot, Yon, *Inscriptions grecques* (n. 3) 192, Nos. 118–119.

²³ Franek, Corral Varela, *Apotropaic Amulet* (n. 4) 156.

(out of close to 200 known bronze amuletic pendants datable to the 5th or 6th century CE).²⁴

On circular medallions, the apotropaic formulae are more varied but also generally lack personalization; we find the likes of ‘drive all evil away from the wearer’ (ἀποδίοξον πᾶν κακὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ φοροῦντο<ς>),²⁵ ‘help the wearer’ (βοήθι τοῦ φορο<ῦ>ντι),²⁶ ‘protect the wearer’ (διαφύλαξον τὸν φοροῦντα or φύλαξον τὸν φορο<ῦ>ντα),²⁷ or ‘protect the wearer of this amulet from all evil’ (φύλαξον ἀπὸ παντὸς κακοῦ τὸν φοροῦντα τὸ φυλακτήριον τοῦ<το>),²⁸ whereas the invoked superhuman powers are predominantly angels, the Seal of Solomon, and the seal of the living God. Rarely, the unnamed beneficiaries stand in the plural (βοήθι τοὺς φέροντας)²⁹ and the protective formula on circular medallions is unequivocally individualized only three times: an amulet from Carthage reads ‘Seal of Solomon, help John’ (σφραγὶς Σολομοῦνος βοήθι Ἰωάννου)³⁰ and two amulets from Sicily have ‘protect Zosimus’ (φύλαξον Ζώσιμιον)³¹ and ‘protect Phelaste whom Thermous bore’ (δειαφύλαξον Φηλαστε ἣν ἔτεκεν Θερμοῦ<ς>).³²

9: *Raphael*. Side B of our amulet continues with a repetition of the name ‘Raphael’, an angel already included in the longer list of angelic powers at the beginning of Side A. The spelling on Side B, however, reads Ῥαφαγήλ, as opposed to the commonly used and scripturally correct form Ῥαφαήλ that is found on Side A. There are two reasons for accepting the spelling Ῥαφαγήλ and resisting the low-hanging fruit of a rather inviting emendation to Ῥαφα{γ}ήλ. First, the use of intervocalic -γ- as a glide is rather well attested.³³ Second, a similar amulet, also housed in the BNF (Schlumberger.190), exhibits the exact same distribution and spelling of the name ‘Raphael’ — on its Side A, we find Ῥαφαήλ (without the *gamma*!) in the list of the angels and on Side B, an

²⁴ See H. Seyrig, *Invidiae Medici*, Berytus 1 (1934) 1–11, 5–8; Barb, *Magica Varia* (n. 22) 344–357; Spier, *An Antique Magical Book* (n. 3) 53. To these attestations, one may possibly add Chébab, *Fouilles de Tyr* (n. 3) 181 (XXX, M 35–36, M. 4045A/2) but Side A is almost completely corroded and therefore inconclusive.

²⁵ Schlumberger, *Amulettes byzantines* (n. 3) 74–75, No. 1 (numerous republications).

²⁶ T. Matantséva, *Les amulettes byzantines contre le mauvais oeil du Cabinet des médailles*, JbAC 37 (1994) 111–112, No. 4.

²⁷ A. Sorlin Dorigny, *Phylactère Alexandrin contre les Epistaxis*, REG 4 (1891) 287–296 (numerous republications) and Matantséva, *Les amulettes byzantines* (n. 26) 110, No. 1.

²⁸ C. Bonner, *Two Studies in Syncretistic Amulets*, PAPHS 85 (1942) 466–471, 467–471.

²⁹ B. Pitarakis, *The Magic of King Solomon*, in: B. Pitarakis (ed.), *Life is Short, Art Long: The Art of Healing in Byzantium* (Pera Museum Publications 73), Istanbul 2015, 240–251, 248–249, No. 33 and P.-L. Gatiér, *BEY 004: Poids et amulettes de Béryte*, BAAL 3 (1998/99) 157–164, 163–164, No. 8.

³⁰ Matantséva, *Les amulettes byzantines* (n. 26) 121, No. 6.

³¹ First published by C. W. King, *The Gnostics and Their Remains, Ancient and Mediaeval*, London 1887, 248–249. King saw and described this amulet while it was in the collection of the famed Neapolitan *antiquario* Giulio Nino Sambon, from whom the piece was ultimately bought by none other than our Wilhelm Froehner (today in the BNF as Froehner.638).

³² M. Zellmann-Rohrer, D. Martínez-Chico, *A Sicilian Amulet in Madrid and Its Tradition*, GRBS 61 (2021) 62–72.

³³ E. Dettori, *Su ἐπιγούριον: ZPE 199, 206, p. 112, ll. 5 e 12, ZPE 204 (2017) 136–137.*

isolated name Ῥαφαγῆλ (with the *gamma*!) is present alongside other magical formulae.³⁴ Both observations lead me to believe that the form Ῥαφαγῆλ is not a scribal mistake and should be preserved as a variant spelling of Ῥαφαήλ. The spelling might be emphasizing the Hebrew לַפָּר ('God has healed'), an apposite etymology for an apotropaic amulet. Furthermore, as R. Ast pointed out,³⁵ the numeric value of both Ῥαφαγῆλ and the abbreviation χμγ equals 643, the latter present together with Ῥαφαγῆλ on Schlumberger.190.

10–11: *One god conquering evil.* The acclamation εἷς θεός ('one god') is exceedingly common in the ancient Mediterranean, being attested on hundreds upon hundreds of inscriptions, predominantly from the regions of Syropalestine and Egypt.³⁶ The acclamation 'one god', in and of itself, is neither monotheistic nor a priori Christian or Jewish,³⁷ since its interpretation always depends on the context. As A. Chaniotis put it, 'not every attestation of the formula *heis theos* refers to a single god; sometimes, it designates a deity as unique within a polytheistic system'.³⁸ If we limit ourselves to the archaeological documents from Syropalestine (the probable provenance of our amulet), the acclamation is mostly found in funerary inscriptions and in addition to its most simple form (εἷς θεός)³⁹ it is routinely expanded to 'one god helper' (εἷς θεός ὁ βοηθῶν),⁴⁰ 'one single god' (εἷς θεός ὁ μόνος or εἷς θεός μόνος),⁴¹ 'one God and his Christ' (εἷς θεός καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς αὐτοῦ),⁴² 'one God and his Christ and the Holy Spirit' (εἷς θεός καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸ Ἅγιον Πνεῦμα).⁴³ These may be combined even further to, for example, 'one God and his Christ, helper' (εἷς θεός καὶ ὁ Χρ(ιστὸς) αὐτοῦ, ὁ βοηθῶν)⁴⁴ and so on.

³⁴ Franek, Corral Varela, *Apotropaic Amulet* (n. 4) 156, 160.

³⁵ R. Ast, ΧΜΓ = ΡΑΦΑΓΗΛ in an *Apotropaic Amulet*, ZPE 217 (2021) 178.

³⁶ Peterson, ΕΙΣ ΘΕΟΣ (n. 3); L. di Segni, Εἷς θεός in *Palestinian Inscriptions*, SCI 13 (1994) 94–115, and now esp. C. Gers-Uphaus, *Paganer Monotheismus: Anhand der ΘΕΟΣ ΥΨΙΣΤΟΣ- und ΕΙΣ ΘΕΟΣ- Inschriften*, JbAC 60 (2017) 5–82.

³⁷ Di Segni, Εἷς θεός (n. 36) 114–115 and Gers-Uphaus (n. 36) 74: 'Die Formel konnte in diesem Zusammenhang sowohl von Juden, Christen, Samaritanern als auch von Heiden verwendet werden und ist daneben auch literarisch seit der Antike breit bezeugt.'

³⁸ A. Chaniotis, *Megatheism: The Search for the Almighty God and the Competition of Cults*, in: S. Mitchell, P. van Nuffelen (eds.), *One God: Pagan Monotheism in the Roman Empire*, Cambridge 2010, 112–140, 119. This is very clear from expressions like εἷς θεός Σέρρατις (IG XIV, 2413,2).

³⁹ IGLSyr II, 323; IGLSyr II, 396; IGLSyr II, 663.

⁴⁰ RECAM II, 160; IGLSyr II, 390; IGLSyr II, 405; IGLSyr II, 671. The names of the beneficiaries in dative usually follow.

⁴¹ MAMA VIII, 459; IGLSyr II, 443; IGLSyr II 596; IGLSyr II, 689. O. Tal, *A Bilingual Greek-Samaritan Inscription from Apollonia-Arsuf/Sozousa: Yet More Evidence of the Use of ΕΙΣ ΘΕΟΣ ΜΟΝΟΣ Formula Inscriptions among the Samaritans*, ZPE 194 (2015) 169–175, 173–174, however, argued that εἷς θεός μόνος ('one single god' or 'only one god') has been employed primarily, if not exclusively, by Samaritans.

⁴² IGLSyr II, 309; IGLSyr II, 477; IGLSyr II, 599.

⁴³ IGLSyr II, 490; IGLSyr IV, 1417.

⁴⁴ IGLSyr II, 360; IGLSyr II, 394.

In the particular case of the leaf-shaped bronze amuletic pendants, the invocation of choice is unequivocally εἰς θεὸς ὁ νικῶν τὰ κακά. Indeed, one may consider it a staple of the ‘Holy Rider’ amulets, since the image of the mounted warrior, depicted in the performative act of spearing an unnamed female demon and trampling her under the hooves of his horse, thereby neutralizing the misfortunes and illnesses she might bring about, is almost always accompanied by the inscription ‘one god conquering evil’, located in the upper register above the rider.⁴⁵ On four occasions, we find the simple version εἰς θεός as on Side B as an abbreviated repetition of the extended version that is presented (together with the Holy Rider) on Side A.⁴⁶

Instances where the expression εἰς θεός ὁ νικῶν τὰ κακά is found without the rider motif on leaf-shaped bronze amulets are exceedingly rare. In addition to Froehner.630, I am aware of only one single example, a hitherto unpublished bronze oblong pendant with a suspension loop (6.5 × 3.4 cm) from a private collection in Jerusalem, which features on its Side A a central cross dividing the surface into four equally spaced quadrants, in which we find Ἰ(ησοῦ)ς, Χ(ριστό)ς, Α, and Ω. On Side B, we read εἰς θεός ὁ νικῶν τὰ κακά, κύριε, βοήθῃ τοῦ φο(ροῦν)τι, ‘one god conquering evil, Lord, help the wearer!’. On circular medallions, the image of the Holy Rider is likewise accompanied by the usual ‘one god conquering evil’,⁴⁷ but in two instances, undoubtedly from the same workshop, this is modified to ‘one god conquering the wicked one’ (εἰς θε(ε)ὸς ὁ νικῶν τὸν πονερόν),⁴⁸ a single piece also has ‘god conquers the evil one’ (θεὸς νικῶ τὸν πονηρό<v>).⁴⁹ Froehner.630 is therefore interesting not because of the presence of the inscription εἰς θεός ὁ νικῶν τὰ κακά, but rather because of the absence of the visual motif with which it seemed to have been intimately bound.

12: *I am Noskam(ardotenan)*. The inscription on our amulet ends with the enigmatic performative acclamation ἐγὼ εἶμι Νοσκαμ(αρδοτεναν) ‘I am Noskam(ardotenan)’. The resolution to Noskamardotenan is warranted by the two ‘Holy Rider’ bronze pendants belonging to the same category as Froehner.630, which both feature on Side A the image of a mounted warrior and the inscription εἰς θεός ὁ νικῶν τὰ κακά; on Side

⁴⁵ For a concise overview of the most important publications, see the bibliography in n. 3.

⁴⁶ G. Vikan, *Early Byzantine Pilgrimage Art (Revised Version)*, Washington, DC 2010, 69 (only Side A is reproduced); Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (n. 3) 303–304, Nos. 302 and 306, and a hitherto unpublished bronze amuletic pendant from The Israel Museum, Jerusalem (inv. No. 2010.65.1840).

⁴⁷ Bonner, *Two Studies*, (n. 28) 467–471 and J. Engemann, *Römische Kunst in Spätantike und frühem Christentum bis Justinian*, Mainz am Rhein 2014, 225–226.

⁴⁸ M. C. Ross, *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection, Vol. I: Metalwork, Ceramics, Glass, Glyptics, Paintings*, Washington, DC 1962, 53–54, No. 60 and J. Goodnick Westenholz (ed.), *Images of Inspiration: The Old Testament in Early Christianity*, Jerusalem 2000, 103, No. 76 (the author reads εἰς θεός ὁ νικῶν τὸν ὡ νερωῶν [*sic*] and translates it as ‘the One God who overcomes ...’).

⁴⁹ Mouterde, *Objets magiques* (n. 3) 123, No. 57.

B, we find the easily legible full-fledged formula ἐγὼ εἰμι Νοσκαμάρδοτεναν.⁵⁰ The abbreviated version ἐγὼ εἰμι νοσκαμ is further attested on the following magical wearables: (a) a Holy Rider bronze amulet together with the names Iao, Sabaoth, and Michael as well as an apotropaic image of a lion attacking a snake together with a *charaktêr* in the form of an eight-pointed star with circular finials (i.e. all the elements that are preserved also on Froehner.630);⁵¹ (b) BNF Schlumberger.190, an amulet that shares all important formulaic and visual elements with Froehner.630;⁵² (c) two bronze amulets with multiple magical formulae and the visual motif of the male figure whipping the hand-bound female demon (the inscription is placed right below the image in one case and right above in the other);⁵³ (d) a leaf-shaped bronze pendant with a depiction of Christ trampling on beasts (again, ‘I am Noskam’ is placed right below the image).⁵⁴ There is also one single occurrence of the name ‘Noskam’ without the ἐγὼ εἰμι syntagma.⁵⁵

The formula in the form of ‘I am NN’ is well attested in documents of Mediterranean magical tradition.⁵⁶ By employing it, the beneficiary of the magical implement (be it an apotropaic amulet or an aggressive curse spell) assumes the role of a higher being and thus effectuates the desired effects that are spelled out elsewhere in the text — in our case, the desired effect is naturally the protection of Megale against misfortune, sickness, and death. We might therefore hypothesize that ‘Noskam’ and ‘Noskamardotenan’ are an abbreviated and the full form of a single personal name of a superhuman being. Since the appellation Noskam(ardotenan) is attested only in the context of apotropaic magic, we might further presuppose that it is a name of an ‘noble spirit’ (ἀγαθοδαίμων) who may ensure good luck and protection for the wearer.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (n. 3) 304, No. 312 (adding that ‘[t]he reading is certain, but the last word has not been seen elsewhere’) and L. Robert, *Amulettes grecques*, JS (Janvier-Mars 1981) 3–44, 30–34.

⁵¹ Vikan, *Two Byzantine Amuletic Armbands* (n. 4) 50 (fig. 15).

⁵² Franek, Corral Varela, *Apotropaic Amulet* (n. 4) 156.

⁵³ Barb, *Magica Varia* (n. 22) 344–353 and Spier, *An Antique Book* (n. 3) 53 (fig. 6).

⁵⁴ Pitarakis, *The Incarnated Logos* (n. 4) 47.

⁵⁵ Barb, *Magica Varia* (n. 22) 353–357.

⁵⁶ S. Chiarini, ‘Εγὼ εἰμι Ἑρμῆς: Eine dramaturgische Facette der antiken Zaubersprache, *Tyche* 31 (2016) 75–101.

⁵⁷ Numerous interpretations of the word Νοσκαμ(άρδοτεναν) have been proposed, unfortunately with scarce results. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (n. 3) 214 considered νοσκαμάρδοτεναν unintelligible; Barb, *Magica Varia* (n. 22) 351, 357 proposed two equally unlikely solutions, namely another (magical) name of Solomon or Greek transliteration of Latin *noscam* that references *ICor* 13:12 (ruled out by the longer form of the name); Robert, *Amulettes magiques* (n. 50) 34 suggested a Semitic background; M. Patera, *Figures grecques de l’épouvante de l’antiquité au présent: Peurs enfantines et adultes* (Mnemosyne Supplements 376), Leiden, Boston 2015, 198 cautiously reprised Bonner’s *non liquet* verdict. J. Spier, *Medieval Byzantine Magical Amulets and Their Tradition*, *JWI* 56 (1993) 25–62, 60 correctly understood Νοσκαμ(άρδοτεναν) as an ‘enigmatic magical name’, an interpretation that was taken over *verbatim* by Pitarakis, *The Magic of King Solomon* (n. 29) 260.

To conclude and summarize, Froehner.630 is a valuable new addition to the group of leaf-shaped amuletic pendants, likely produced in the 5th and 6th century CE Syropal-estinian region and harnessing the combined forces of magical formulae and apotropaic imagery to guard their wearers against the evils of all conceivable shapes and forms. All of the textual and visual elements present on this amulet — i.e. the invocation of Iao, Sabaoth, and the angels; the personalized protective formula; the acclamation ‘one god conquering evil’; the performative symbolic metamorphosis into a mysterious protective deity Noskam(ardotenan); the image of a lion attacking a snake; the magical signs (*charaktères*) — are known from other magical wearables.

Froehner.630 is, however, conspicuous by the absence of by far the most emblematic motif found on these pendants: the Holy Rider. Of note is also its close proximity to Schlumberger.190, since our amulet contains all the formulae and imagery found on this bilingual pendant *sauf* the expanded angel list (with ‘Cherubim, Seraphim’); the abbreviation XMIΓ, and the acclamation ‘there is none like the God of Jeshurun’ (Deut. 33:26), written in Samaritan Hebrew. The overlap in the image and text, the palaeographical minutiae and material aspects, and the presence on both amulets of the dual form Ῥαφαήλ (in the list of angels on Side A) and Ῥαφαγήλ (isolated on Side B) makes it probable that Froehner.630 and Schlumberger.190 originated from the same workshop, indeed even from the same hand.

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BNF Froehner.630 side A and B
(Foto © Franek/Bibliothèque nationale de France)

zu J. Franek, S. 97