Nevertheless, the volume as a whole makes an important contribution to the study of Greek religion, as befits its most illustrious honorand.

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TIES THAT BIND

E. VOUTIRAS: *Marital Life and Magic in Fourth Century Pella*. Pp. xvi + 151, 11 pls. Amsterdam: J. C. Gieben, 1998. Paper, Hfl. 70. ISBN: 90-5063-407-9.

The focus of this articulate and attractively presented monograph is a lead tablet found in grave 18 of the oldest cemetery in Pella, Macedonia. It is an interesting document for various reasons. As a text composed in a hitherto unparalleled North West Greek dialect (pp. 20–34), it may be one of the first pieces of direct evidence of the language spoken and written in Macedonia during the Classical period (V. judiciously eschews dogmatism; the dialect of the tablet may turn out to be an intrusive rather than indigenous form, bearing in mind the mixed background of Pella's inhabitants, pp. 32–4). Whatever its precise linguistic connections, the tablet is one of the oldest inscribed objects found in Macedonia. The grave contained no goods and the only dating evidence is derived from the context of the cut (pp. 1–7). The shaft belongs to a group of similar graves cut into the soft local yellow stone during the first half of the fourth century B.C. The area was subsequently redesigned as part of a new town plan around the *agora.* This contextual data accords well with the letter forms, which resemble those of the Derveni and Timotheos papyri (*Studies on the Derveni Papyrus*, edd. André Laks, Glenn Most [Oxford, 1997], appeared too late to be included here). V. is tempted to push the date of the tablet upwards, closer to the second quarter of the fourth century rather than the third quarter (pp. 5–6). With so little comparative evidence, a categorical answer is impossible.

The content of the text is equally compelling (pp. 8–19). The agent (the *defigens*) is a woman; only the second syllable of her name is preserved, and V. inserts the likeliest first syllable to make this name Phila. She casts a binding spell upon the marriage of her former lover (?), Dionysophon, and his bride Thetima, in the hope that somehow their marriage will be forestalled or nullified. As V. explains, the nature of a binding spell is to inhibit an act, not cause harm to the named subjects (see John G. Gager, *Curse Tablets and Binding Spells from the Ancient World* [Oxford, 1992]). At the same time, the agent appeals to the *daimones* of the nether regions to support her just cause and seeks to deflect other potential spouses, but more especially Thetima (ll. 4, 5, and 7). V. distinguishes the first three lines of the text from what follows. There seems to be an inconsistency in the two parts, the first containing no direct reference to the identity of the agent or the powers invoked, and taking the standard form of a binding spell; the second half, on the other hand, names agent and powers explicitly, and is an overt prayer for Thetima's annihilation. Completing the first part is the bestowal of the curse upon Makron (otherwise not referred to, but presumed to be the person in whose grave the tablet was discovered), and the statement that Dionysophon should only marry if the agent were to dig up and read this text again (pp. 35–67). V. proposes that the text was actually written by 'Phila' herself, and provides some formulaic examples, probably from the hands of travelling 'magicians', by way of contrast (pp. 58–67).

V. develops his thesis by examining the social context of the *defixio*, namely the status of the agent and her relationship with Dionysophon (pp. 68–89), then the kinds

of magic acts which could have accompanied the burial of the tablet in order to make the text efficacious (pp. 90–111). Two short appendices follow, exploring the use of *telos* as a term for marriage and Plato's condemnation of magic (pp. 112–27). So little is known about relationships between men and women in Macedonia, and even less about attitudes to sympathetic magic, that these chapters can do little more than suggest possible lines of approach. Future investigation of settlement evidence in the region, and detailed research on individual domestic units, will provide some guidance, while analysis of skeletal material and patterns of mortuary behaviour could tell us something more about approaches to the afterlife or the nether world, as well as enhancing the number of known lead tablets. V. deserves credit for presenting this unique document so clearly and crisply, for offering useful *comparanda* (individually translated), and for providing a well-defined starting point to any further discussion of this and similar texts.

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CHURCH PARADE

G. L. Irby-Massie: *Military Religion in Roman Britain.* Pp. 387, maps, tables, pls, fig. Leiden, etc.: Brill, 1999. Cased, $103. ISBN: 90-04-10848-3.

The religions attested within Roman Britain have not lacked attention in the past. Studies have ranged from overarching surveys to explorations of individual gods and cult sites, and indeed I.-M.'s twenty-five-page bibliography provides some indication of the scale of scholarly interest. What the present volume seeks to achieve is an examination in detail of the religious dimension of Rome's presence within Britain, but from the viewpoint of a specific typology of worshipper, especially army personnel. There are, of course, problems in any such approach. Cults may be included which have only passing relevance to the military; Isis is a case in point. Another, as I.-M. herself points out, is the scale and nature of the evidence. As the most garrisoned of provinces, Britain is not particularly short of religious representation in a military context, but even this must represent only a minuscule fraction of what once existed, and survival was doubtless all too often dependent on chance. Of what does survive there is much that is accompanied by inscription, giving us the status of the donor and perhaps the reason for the dedication. Equally there are many objects, ranging from sculpture to intaglios, which must speak to us simply through their motifs, with all the attendant danger of misinterpretation and the temptation to extract significance where none is justified. I.-M. is not blind to this; yet there are places where words like 'may' and 'probably' lie thick upon the page.

The book divides basically into two parts. In the first section six chapters are devoted to the various types of cult encountered. I.-M. opens, naturally enough, with state religion, topics such as the festal calendar, the imperial cult, the rôle of the imperial *genius* and *numen*, the cult of the standards, deified abstractions, and the gods of the state. A basic feature of the approach is to preface discussion of the British material with preliminary evidence from elsewhere in the empire—useful enough and even essential at times, as, for instance, in the case of the calendar—but it does on occasion leave one wondering where in the overall argument one is.

Chapter II deals with eastern gods like Jupiter Dolichenus and Mithras, both attracting devotees from the higher ranks and generally concentrated in the northern

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