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Amuletic objects in late antique Italy and Sicily

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on amuletic objects in Italy and Sicily dating to between the third to the seventh centuries CE. The words ‘amulet’ and ‘amuletic’ are used in the thesis to refer to a variety of material things used by people in antiquity to protect, heal, or bring good luck. An introductory chapter establishes this specific definition through a close analysis of Greek and Latin texts and a critical assessment of the definitions used by modern historians and archaeologists, challenging the assumption that amuletic objects were only or mostly worn objects like pendants. The remainder of the thesis examines material culture from late antique Italy and Sicily, finding that the category of amuletic object can be applied to things as diverse as inscribed stones, toads, amber, or mosaics. Using a series of case studies, these three central chapters investigate the themes of bodies, graves, and places respectively. Each of these chapters emphasises the importance of relationality and context to how these objects functioned, drawing on current work in the fields of lived and material religion. The chapters combine this theoretical underpinning with close analysis of literary sources and the material objects themselves to offer new insights into how amuletic objects worked. Overall, the thesis moves the conversation about amuletic objects away from questions of identification or typology to instead investigate how these powerful things were entangled with people, the landscape, and the late antique world at large.
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Chapter 1 – Introduction

On a spring day in February 2000, a small gold object was discovered by chance in the countryside near Sammardenchia, near Pozzuolo del Friuli (Udine).¹ The object was a tiny tube made of gold, closed at both ends and with two metal loops soldered to the side. It contained a rolled-up sheet of gold foil. When the foil was unrolled by staff at the local archaeological museum, it was found to be a tablet inscribed with Greek writing, datable via palaeography to the fourth century CE.² The text addresses ‘Horus son of Ammon of the triple formula,’ calling him ‘virgin, defender, fighter in the first line’ and telling him to ‘save, save.’³ The metal loops attached to the tube-case would have had a cord, chain, or thread passed through them to make a necklace. When Franco Maltomini published the inscription, he confidently described the object as an amuleto (amulet) that was made to be worn at the neck as a pendant.⁴

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¹ Maltomini 2006: 103.
² Maltomini 2006: 103.
⁴ Maltomini 2006: 103.
Although its particular material qualities are unique, the gold pendant is a relatively typical example of what people today would categorise as an amulet. It was likely used in proximity to the body to obtain protection from a supernatural entity. Maltomini’s approach to the Sammardenchia pendant exemplifies the way past scholarship has previously engaged with amulets, in that he simply labels it as an amulet before quickly moving on to its textual features. While this cursory treatment is understandable for an epigraphic publication, it is not especially helpful for understanding how this particular object might be connected to other potential amulets.

As will be further investigated below, past scholarship has often (though not always) identified Roman and late antique amulets as small items, worn on a living body, that brought that body protection from natural and supernatural dangers.⁵ Others have acknowledged that protective objects were not necessarily worn, but included this qualification as an afterthought in a definition that prioritised worn objects.⁶ In these efforts to catalogue and categorise, what has been less studied is how amulets, however they are defined, interacted with people.

This thesis will develop the idea of the ‘late antique amulet’ in several new directions. It will problematise and expand existing definitions of amulets, or preferably, as will be explained in the final section of this chapter, amuletic objects. Following this, by collecting evidence for amuletic objects

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⁶ Bonner 1950: 2.
from late antique Italy and Sicily, it will investigate the relationships these objects were part of, demonstrating how both amuletic and other functions could emerge from such relationships and shape people’s experiences of the world. It therefore expands both our definition of amuletic objects and the ways in which we think about them.

The thesis examines the evidence for amuletic objects from Italy and Sicily dated to between the third and seventh centuries CE. Numerous studies of ancient magical objects have had a regional focus, including Bohak’s work on Palestine, Mitchell on Butrint, Russell on Anemurium, Trzcionka on Syria, and Nuzzo on cemeteries in the city of Rome, as well as Wilburn’s book on Karanis, Cyprus, and Empúries, which vary in scope from a whole region to single settlements. However, nobody has yet produced an area study on amuletic objects from the Italian peninsula and/or Sicily, either under the Roman Empire or in late antiquity. This project’s value is therefore twofold: it presents an area study of amuletic objects from a time and place not previously focused on and then provides novel and important ways to approach them, incorporating methodologies and intellectual frameworks utilised by scholars of ancient lived and material religion that have not been previously applied to this material.

1.1. Summary of chapters
The rest of Chapter 1 will provide a critical overview of scholarly approaches to ancient amulets published over the past two centuries. This will highlight how many older studies are relatively narrow in scope: they focus only or primarily on worn amuletic objects. It will then provide an assessment of the contexts in which Latin and Greek words commonly translated as ‘amulet’ were used, especially in late antiquity, showing that other, non-worn, objects and activities performed amuletic functions and were referred to using the same Greek and Latin terms in contemporary texts. This section will present a revised definition of an amuletic object, one which downplays the importance of form and/or iconography in favour of function.

The following three chapters (Chapters 2, 3, and 4) will take a thematic approach to the material, addressing amuletic objects from third- to seventh-century CE Italy and Sicily in three different contexts of use. These are: worn amuletic objects associated with living bodies, amuletic objects in graves, and amuletic objects that were deposited separately from bodies, living or dead, as part of buildings and enclosures. Throughout the thesis, there will be emphasis on relations between amuletic objects, bodies, and spaces. This is a novel approach in a field which, as we shall see in the literature review, has up to now been primarily concerned with only certain aspects of amuletic objects’ materiality, namely their inscribed images and texts. These relations will be key to my interpretation of amuletic objects, in which they derive agency from interacting with other things.

focusing not just on worn objects and their relations with their wearers, these chapters offer a new and productive way of looking at amuletic objects from the ancient and late antique Mediterranean.

Chapter 2 begins by laying out the evidence for identifying wearable and/or portable items from late antique Italy and Sicily as amuletic. It then goes further than past scholarship by investigating how amuletic objects could have interacted with the world around them while being worn: in other words, their relationality. The chapter will examine the relationships between the amuletic object and the body (both the body of its wearer and the bodies of those surrounding them), the role of an amuletic object in wider social relations, and its role in forming relationships between humans and divine or supernatural beings.

Chapter 3 investigates amuletic objects found in graves. It sorts this archaeological material into what I term ‘old’ and ‘new’ amuletic objects, i.e., reused objects, used in the past for amuletic or non-amuletic functions contrasted with objects that were purpose-made (or newly made) for the grave. This categorisation draws attention to each object’s wider biography, both before and after the point of deposition within a grave. It will demonstrate that these objects, ostensibly deposited for the dead individual(s), also played important roles for the mourners. Additionally, the chapter will consider the variety of spatial relationships an amuletic object could have, both with the body or bodies of the dead people the grave contained and with the grave itself as a unit of space. In turn, these different relationships suggest different ways that the objects might have functioned.

Finally, Chapter 4 considers the relationships between amuletic objects, people, and non-funerary spaces. It will focus on amuletic objects not worn by a living person or deposited within a grave: typically, such contexts are instead within domestic, agricultural, or commercial structures and enclosures. The relationships could vary depending on the objects’ positioning, visibility, and roles in past rituals. The chapter will posit that these differences contributed to the construction and experience of place. It will also distinguish those amuletic objects that marked the boundaries of the area they were meant to affect from those whose powers seem instead to have been understood to radiate out from them as focal points: another subtle but important distinction which has not been hitherto investigated.

A short conclusion will synthesise the insights produced in each chapter and use this to think briefly about how they might be expanded in future. It will also draw together observations of when and how amuletic object use in this area changed over time.
1.2. Key themes

Amuletic objects are valuable examples of material responses to hopes and fears in peoples’ lives in the late antique world. Indeed, the language of risk and danger permeates introductions to modern studies on amulets: we are asked to imagine the daily perils of disease and natural forces, or the terrors of the night, that people of the ancient world encountered. Amulets are presented as appropriate responses to such perils. As responses to an uncertain future, they are not alone. For instance, Esther Eidinow has analysed how cursing and oracle consultation in the ancient Greek world can be treated as ‘comparative, as well as collective, indices of aspects of risk and uncertainty in ancient Greek culture,’ in which oracle users sought assurance that they were making the right decision and cursers wanted to target their perceived opponents. Throughout Chapters 2, 3, and 4, amuletic objects’ shared goals of protection, good fortune, and healing will surface regularly. However, the points where these objects differ from each other will be more of interest, particularly what can be said about the unique experiences of engaging with each of them.

Relations and relationality are therefore also of central importance. In the context of this thesis, relations are defined as the interactions between two or more things. Of primary interest are interactions between person and amuletic object, but other relations are also relevant. This approach aligns with a recent theoretical trend in archaeology and material studies in general sometimes known as the ‘material turn’ but also known as (in Julian Thomas’ words) ‘new materialisms, speculative realisms, object-oriented philosophies and process theories,’ work which expands upon and/or critiques the tenets of processual and post-processual archaeology. Such work frequently advocates for recognising objects as ‘dynamic participants in the world.’ As Thomas notes, the various new materialisms disagree on how exactly to do this: for instance, differing views have emerged over how to characterise relationships between things, the ethics of ‘democratic modesty’ (giving humans the same level of importance as other things), and how the act of archaeological interpretation should...
work in general.\textsuperscript{16} For the purposes of this dissertation, the material turn and new materialisms offer the important insight that objects (and not just humans) are participants in the world. Of course, this view on relationships means that many amuletic objects had the potential to be part of relations that did not lead to amuletic functions. Nevertheless, the dissertation will focus on how the amuletic functions of amuletic objects arose from – and were therefore heavily affected by – their entanglement in certain relations. This does not only include human-amuletic object relations, but also other relations (with the things an object was deposited with, with the structure it was set in, with the animal it was placed on, etc.). All such relations can also produce and/or modify amuletic function.

The dissertation will also draw out the everyday lived experiences of the people who used amuletic objects. The terms ‘everyday’ and ‘lived’ align this dissertation with the goals of those interested in ancient lived religion. Researchers in this area emphasise that their aim when studying ancient religion (itself defined as the ascription of agency to non- or superhuman entities, usually through communicative action) is to focus on the social context of these communicative acts to understand change and differences.\textsuperscript{17} This characterises religion as constantly, dynamically, ‘in the making’ through accumulated individual and group actions, pursued inside or deliberately outside the parameters set by past actions, as narrated by traditions and institutions.\textsuperscript{18}

Although this dissertation does not frame amuletic objects as exclusively religious in nature,\textsuperscript{19} the themes which proponents of Lived Ancient Religion (LAR) highlight are relevant. For example, Valentino Gasparini and colleagues divide their edited volume on the subject into sections on religious experience, the body, places, and strategies of appropriation,\textsuperscript{20} a division which resonates with the themes highlighted above that lie at the heart of the present study. Additionally, there are four terms that some Lived Ancient Religion scholars have identified for bridging the gap between the communicative acts (and accounts of them) that form the bulk of surviving evidence, and the subjective experiences of everyday religion. These are:

- **appropriation**, i.e., the adaptation or use of existing things to suit a person or group’s own aims,
- **competency** or **agency**, defined as the personal knowledge, skills, or experiences that empowers a person or group to provide religious services,

\textsuperscript{16} Thomas 2015: 1291–2.
\textsuperscript{17} Albrecht et al. 2018: 571.
\textsuperscript{18} Albrecht et al. 2018; Gasparini et al. 2020: 3–4.
\textsuperscript{19} See Section 1.3.
\textsuperscript{20} Gasparini et al. 2020: 4–6.
- **situational meaning**, i.e., meaning that is generated from specific contexts and the interplay of interests and agendas,
- **mediality**, or ‘the roles of material culture, embodiment, and group-styles in the construction of religious experience.’

As will be discussed in Chapter 2, this dissertation defines agency rather differently, as something inherent in relations between things. Nonetheless, ‘situational meaning’ and ‘mediality’ highlight the specific experiences generated by interacting with particular objects and the way those objects’ materiality could contribute. Mediality, in particular, is another way of focusing on relations and relationality between things. Additionally, much fruitful work has been produced regarding the knowledge, networks, and practices of ritual experts and non-experts who might have made amuletic objects, i.e., in Lived Ancient Religion terms, their ‘competency.’

Nonetheless, while these are useful terms, my use of the LAR framework here is not meant to imply that amuletic objects were exclusively religious objects. As will be investigated in the following chapters, amuletic objects produced sensory stimuli, effects, and feelings, yet these were not always articulated as amuletic, let alone as religious. They were instead multifunctional objects used for a variety of aims. This means that the dissertation will frequently highlight other functions that amuletic objects performed. This includes amuletic objects used as decorative items of dress, parts of funerary assemblages, structural features like walls, floors, or boundary stones, or even as rhetorical tools for those seeking to influence their readers or listeners. The interplay between these different functions resonates with the interplay between agendas mentioned in the LAR definition of situational meaning.

Emma-Jayne Graham, in her monograph *Reassembling Religion in Roman Italy*, applied the insights from many new materialisms to Roman religion, focusing explicitly on ‘the relationships between human and more-than-human things in the course of ritualised activities, with a particular focus on how these engagements produced religious agency.’ The focus on relationships is valuable, but since amuletic objects were not only engaged with as amulets in ritualised activities, but rather during the course of everyday life, the number of possible relationships over time is even greater.

Overall, the theoretical frameworks used by current research on ancient lived religion can be used to signpost some important aspects of amuletic objects and generate new ways of understanding

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21 Gasparini et al. 2020: 2.
23 E.g., Rebillard 2015: 434, ‘we should reject any one-to-one association which attributes a given meaning to a given artefact on the sole authority of a text.’
24 Graham 2021: 11.
how they worked. However, these insights cannot be transferred over wholesale, but rather need some modification in order to make them useful for amuletic objects.

1.3 Limits and limitations
The geographic bounds of this project are Augustan Italia and the province of Sicilia. Case studies will include objects dated to between the third and the seventh centuries CE, though when appropriate undated, earlier or later-dated objects will be discussed for purposes of comparison or contextualisation. This geographic area can be mostly considered a culturally consistent region at the beginning of the period under study, barring local and regional variations which will be accounted for where necessary. The cultures of Lombard Italy and Byzantine-ruled southern Italy and Sicily can be considered to have begun significantly diverging by the end of the seventh century CE. Nonetheless, the use of amuletic objects continued, even if certain forms of behaviour clustered in certain areas: we might contrast, for instance, the use of hidden coins in northern Italian church structures with the inscribed stones of south-eastern Sicily. Indeed, Sicily was arguably already culturally distinct from mainland Italy in a number of ways from the beginning of this period, particularly in terms of languages and influences from the Greek world. It is included in the study partly because its inclusion in the diocese of Italy under the tetrarchy at the end of the third century, along with Augustan-period Italia and parts of Raetia, suggests that it could be organised with Italy in a political sense. More importantly, though, the material from Sicily, particularly the inscribed stones that will be investigated in detail in Chapter 4, offers valuable insights into how these items might have been experienced and engaged with that the material from Italy alone would not furnish so well.

The area and time period were chosen because of the richness of the archaeological material that has survived that has been already documented but has never been brought together under the rubric of ‘amulets’ or indeed ‘amuletic objects.’ Moreover, the differing amuletic traditions that we will see crop up during this period will tell a story of how ritual traditions fragmented and altered over time during this time. Furthermore, because of the surviving information on archaeological contexts in which much was found, the material is especially appropriate for answering questions about relations and relationality.

The thesis will take a case-study based approach to examining the material. This is partially because of the resources available: compiling a database comprising all of the potential amuletic objects ascribable to late antique Italy and Sicily would have required travel to an enormous number of Italian museums to engage with their collections and unpublished catalogues. This would have been impossible during the data collection period for this thesis, due to rolling travel disruption during that

25 See Chapter 4.
period of the Covid-19 pandemic. Furthermore, focusing on case studies and the individuality of each set of object-person relations (and all the other relations entangled therein) makes space for a new way of looking at these objects, rather than the focus on data and its insights that the other approach would entail.

Additionally, the thesis will use selected texts in Greek and Latin from the third- to seventh-century Mediterranean world, along with references to some of an earlier date. These constitute useful evidence of some of the social discourses relating to amuletic objects in antiquity, however incomplete an account they may render of the full range of opinions at the time. Moreover, many texts, particularly manuals recording ritual instructions or compendia of natural history, but also texts like preachers’ polemics or works of historical enquiry, record information on rituals that could not have left any long-surviving material evidence. The textual examples used in upcoming chapters can be demonstrated to resonate with the objects and offer either contextual information on how others in the past used similar items, or comparative evidence for possible ways in which these objects were used. As they are used primarily to compare and contextualise, this dissertation does not pretend to offer a comprehensive overview of Latin and Greek texts mentioning, describing, or commenting on amulets and their use. Instead, it will offer only illustrative examples, hence also the more relaxed geographic and temporal restrictions applied to their selection.
Figure 1.3 shows the findspots of amuletic objects discussed in the coming chapters. It shows the distribution of identifiable amuletic objects across Italy and Sicily and demonstrates how broad this was. The cluster of findspots in south-eastern Sicily is because of the objects from this region in Chapter 4. The map, like this dissertation as a whole, will largely use modern-day Italian geographical terms (or, for major cities, their English translations) to describe the areas in which these items were found. This is for consistency, because many of the more rural sites do not have known ancient-world names.
The dissertation will mainly focus on objects that are associated with a recorded archaeological context. These are just a fraction of the vast numbers of amuletic objects now in museum and private hands that could have been of Italian manufacture or taken from sites in Italy and Sicily, but either do not have any recorded contexts or have provenances that come to a dead end in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. I have reasoned that contextless finds of relatively low monetary value that are now kept in Italian regional museums most likely came from the surrounding area, and therefore merit cautious inclusion. More valuable or collectible items, especially the vast numbers of contextless and/or unprovenanced ‘magical’ or ‘gnostic’ gems held in major collections in Florence, Rome, or Venice since the early modern period, are too likely to have been traded and collected internationally for me to include them in good conscience.

Section 1.5 will show that the amuletic objects discussed in the coming pages were not the only kind of amulet in the ancient Mediterranean world. Many organic materials may have been used as amulets, some of which simply do not survive. Others, like bones, are hard to detect in the archaeological record because of the huge variety of other potential uses they might have had. Temporary rituals like spitting last for even less time. For this reason, though this study should be considered an attempt at righting the balance in terms of which amulets are studied, the strictures of what objects remain accessible to us in the modern day still apply.

The time period under study, spanning the third to the seventh centuries CE, was one in which Sicily and the Italian peninsula experienced significant social, political, and cultural change. Whereas the beginning of the third century saw the Roman Empire ruled from Rome by a single emperor, the end of the seventh century found most of Italy as part of the Lombard kingdom, with areas like Sicily, Naples, Calabria, and Latium instead under control of the Byzantine emperor based in Constantinople. The intervening span of time saw periods of political and economic instability, new structures of government such as the tetrarchy, and military invasions. By the seventh century, Christianity was the official religion of both the Lombard kingdom and the Byzantine empire, albeit with numerous factions in doctrinal conflict. Generally speaking, local cultures became more important in a world where elite cultures where far less homogeneous than during the Roman empire’s zenith in previous

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26 The appendices to Faraone (2018) give an overview (263–87) including worn amulets in the PGM that comprise inscribed leaves, parchment, wood, or papyrus, bones, plants, or animal body parts, and gems inscribed with images of gods. We will also see in Chapter 2 how Pliny describes a variety of worn amuletic objects.
27 For example, Parker explores the use of stag beetles as amuletic pendants (Parker 2019). Some organic materials had a better chance of surviving in drier conditions, e.g., papyrus in Egypt: de Bruyn and Dijkstra 2011.
28 For example, Arianism and Catholicism. The Lombards were previously thought to have been Arian during the sixth century, but this has been questioned: Fanning 1981; Roach and Simpson 2013.
centuries. This is important context for the world in which these objects’ makers and users lived: it was undergoing significant change that could at times be fast-paced. The uncertainty this may have created, combined with an atmosphere of competition between different emerging and pre-existing religious traditions that could themselves be combined or recombined by different ritual experts, offers a heightened atmosphere in comparison to the high imperial period which preceded it, which may have affected the ways amuletic objects were interacted with. Though neither risk, nor competing ritual/religious experts, nor indeed using amuletic objects were entirely new factors in this period, the arguably greater intensity of the former two justifies greater scrutiny of the latter.

The following chapters will not, however, be heavily concerned with establishing which amuletic objects were Christian, Jewish, ‘pagan,’ or associated with various other religious groups. This is for three reasons. Firstly, some texts found on amuletic objects call upon lists of divine entities that are identifiable as Christian, Jewish, Egyptian, and Greek, suggesting that singular religious identities should not be assigned. Instead, religious practice and amulet use might be rather more complexly related. Secondly, not all amuletic objects were associated with ritual communication with more-than-human entities. As we will come to understand in Chapter 2, while some amuletic objects’ inscriptions called on specific gods and supernatural beings for help, or targeted others as the causes of problems, other objects were thought effective because of their materials or shapes, and yet others worked through both mechanisms at once. Finally, focusing only on those objects that are most easily identifiable as belonging to a religious group, whether that is pagan, Jewish, or Christian, necessarily privileges whichever behaviours, tropes, language, and ritual we already associate with those groups in order to identify those objects as such. This produces a circular argument when objects defined as orthodox Christian (for example) are then used to define the boundaries of a Christian amulet.

Lastly, the study of amulets and amuletic objects neatly crosses three traditionally separate—but overlapping—fields, namely ancient magic, medicine, and religion. In this thesis, amuletic objects are not considered exclusively magical, medical, or religious objects; rather, when performing amuletic functions, an object might be understood as being part of any or all of those categories of behaviour. There are numerous studies of ancient magical objects that have been excavated in specific geographic areas in the Roman Empire with comparable methodologies for identifying their subject

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29 Cameron 1993: 167.
30 Rebillard (2015: 431) made a similar argument about classifying burials: ‘the strategy that consists of studying “Christian burial” can only in a way pre-emptively lead to focus on exclusively Christian places of burial.’
matter in the archaeological record.\textsuperscript{31} Many of them adopt similar approaches to that of Ralph Merrifield’s 1987 book, \textit{The Archaeology of Ritual and Magic}, though only one article explicitly cites it.\textsuperscript{32} Merrifield advocates for a more robust attitude on the part of archaeologists in presenting possible evidence of what he calls non-utilitarian ritual activities, in which assertions are based on comparison with other sites, religions, and, if possible, contemporary textual sources or folk memory.\textsuperscript{33} The term ‘ritual’ is itself fairly loaded. It has been used to describe acts categorised as magic or religious and will be used in this thesis to describe performative events.\textsuperscript{34} Amuletic objects could and did take part in ritual activities, as will be shown, but they were also engaged with in non-performative events as part of daily life.

1.4. Modern definitions of the word ‘amulet’

Writers began to use the word ‘amulet’ to refer to certain objects from the Roman Empire only relatively recently.\textsuperscript{35} Armand Delatte used the term in 1914 to refer to inscribed gems that had previously been defined as Gnostic, pushing back against the seventeenth-century notion that they had all been created by heretical and secretive Gnostic sects.\textsuperscript{36}

In her 2019 study on amulets in the Science Museum in London, Annie Thwaite defined an amulet as an object invested with healing and/or protective power, and used this definition to problematise museum classifications of amulets as a single group of superstitious objects, collected as such by nineteenth and early twentieth-century antiquaries and travellers from both contemporary cultures and historical sites round the world.\textsuperscript{37} Classifications like those critiqued by Thwaite arguably form the basis of many amulet collections that remain intact and studied today, from the collection of French ethnologist Adrian de Mortillet,\textsuperscript{38} to contemporary amulets collected in English museums since the 1800s.\textsuperscript{39} Italian antiquaries from the same period furnished museum collections in a similar way: for example, the collection of ‘amuleti antichi e contemporanei,’ (ancient and contemporary amulets), first collated by Giuseppe Bellucci and exhibited in 1900, remains a distinct collection in the Museo

\textsuperscript{31} These are listed in n. 7 and include area studies of Anemurium, Palestine, Butrint, Syria, and cemeteries in Rome.

\textsuperscript{32} Bohak 2017: 163.

\textsuperscript{33} Merrifield 1987: 2, 7.

\textsuperscript{34} Wilburn 2005: 16.

\textsuperscript{35} Before this, material culture could be referred to as ‘superstition;’ (see, for example, the language used by Paolo Orsi to refer to finds of inscribed metal tablets in graves as ‘superstizione,’ Orsi 1896: 346).

\textsuperscript{36} Delatte 1914; Sfameni 2010: 436. Nowadays scholars think of Gnosticism (still a disputed term, but now seen more as a broad category of esoteric activity and language than a heresy or sect) as just one part of the variety of influences on their manufacture: Sfameni 2010: 437; Dillon 2016.

\textsuperscript{37} Thwaite 2019.


\textsuperscript{39} Cadbury 2015a; 2015b.
Amulets in these collections seem to be overwhelmingly pendants or inscribed gems.

This trend affected the nineteenth-century British collection of Roman and late antique amulets, as demonstrated by contemporary illustrations (Figure 1.4), while even today the majority of objects tagged as ‘amulet’ in the British Museum are wearable items. As Tabitha Cadbury puts it, collection decisions were made ‘in a social evolutionary context’ shaped by anthropologists like James Frazer.

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and Edward Burnett Tylor. Jennifer Grove has suggested that objects understood as sexual, typically depicting human sexuality, nude bodies, or genitalia, were collected as ‘symbols of pre-Christian sexual, social and political mores, with which to think through, and to challenge, contemporary cultural constructions around sexuality, religion, gender roles and the development of culture itself.’

This included objects now understood to have been used as amulets in the Roman world, such as phallic pendants. Jude Hill has emphasised how the British amulet collection once owned by Edward Lovett was later displayed by Henry Wellcome’s Historical Medicine Museum in the early twentieth century in a way that ‘embodied its founder’s belief in evolutionary theory,’ presenting a station on the way from ‘primitive’ to ‘modern’ medicine. There is therefore a growing understanding that decisions about what to collect and label as an amulet in this period tended to reflect the curator’s own interests and intellectual aims. It also reflected the contemporary tendency towards constructing taxonomies of objects.

The mid-twentieth century brought some developments in the way scholars engaged with amulets from the Roman and late Roman empire. Campbell Bonner used the term ‘amulet’ for his 1950 work, entitled *Studies in Magical Amulets, chiefly Graeco-Egyptian*. The time period of interest for him was between the first century CE (when Egypt came under Roman rule) and a loosely defined ‘Christian era.’

His definition of amulet was ‘any object which by its contact or close proximity to the person who owns it or to any possession of his, exerts power for his good, either by keeping evil from him and his property or by endowing him with positive advantages.’ Yet, in practice, he mostly discussed gems, although he did include some bronze pendants. This suggests that Bonner still limited his purview to certain items of jewellery, even if his definition allowed for describing a much larger range of objects as amulets. Despite producing a definition that, as we will see below, chimes well with Latin and Greek textual evidence from the period he studied, Bonner therefore did not apply it to the material to its fullest extent. Instead, he continued to focus on the objects scholars and collectors already focused on: pendants and gems.

Bonner’s methodology, in which he described individual objects, usually gems, found in private collections and museums and concentrated chiefly on their form, material, and inscriptions, set the tone for subsequent published catalogues of similar gems. By the second half of the twentieth

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42 Cadbury 2015b: 413.
43 Grove 2013: 2.
44 See Chapter 2.
45 Hill 2007: 68.
47 Bonner 1950: 2.
century, these were largely divorced from their archaeological contexts and in museums or private collections, which meant scholars had to focus on their iconographic and material properties to understand and differentiate them. Examples of such catalogues include Les intailles magiques gréco-égyptiennes (1964), Die magischen Gemmen im Britischen Museum (2004), the Sylloge Gemmarum Gnosticarum (2003–) and the Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database, which aims to contain over 4000 gems once it is finished. However, these catalogues tend to use terms other than ‘amulet’ to describe the objects they list. For instance, Attilio Mastrocinque uses ‘gemme gnostiche’ (gnostic gems) to describe his corpus of inscribed gems in his Sylloge Gemmarum Gnosticarum, explicitly in preference to calling those gems magical. The rationale given by Mastrocinque is that magic denotes the form of religiosity, whereas gnostic reflects the substance of religious thought that partly inspired the gems’ manufacture. This seems to use gnostic as a catch-all term for esotericism. More specifically, Mastrocinque considers the gems as material evidence of the learned traditions espoused by various practitioners, some of whom have been identified by other scholars as freelance religious practitioners or theurgists. Meanwhile, the Magical Gem Database distinguishes between ‘magical gems, magical(?) gems, amulet gems, amulet(?) gems and votive gems.’ ‘Amulet gems’ are defined as gems that are used as amulets but do not bear any of the inscribed text or images considered key to defining them as magical gems. The traits of ‘magical gems’ are listed as ‘special iconography,’ charaktēres, and voces magicae, frequently accompanied by features like being inscribed on both

50 Mastrocinque 2004: 9, ‘la definizione “magiche” si riferisce alla forma di religiosità, mentre “gnostiche” rispecchia la sostanza del pensiero religioso che ha ispirato una parte degli intagli in questione.’
53 Charaktēres, the transliteration of the Greek χαρακτήρες, literally means ‘letters.’ It is used in modern scholarship to refer to any symbol written on amulets, magical papyri, curse tablets, and manuscripts, that, in Gideon Bohak’s words, ‘looks more or less like an alphabetic sign or a simple ideogram, but which does not belong to any of the alphabets used in that specific magical text, or to any known system of meaningful symbols.’ A distinct feature of many, but not all, of these signs in the context of the Mediterranean of the second century CE onwards is small rings drawn ‘at the tips.’ (Bohak 2011: 27). The term ‘charaktēr’ is used in the Greek magical papyrus to refer to these signs in their instructions for making items like inscribed silver tablets or laurel leaves (see Frankfurter 2019: 648). David Frankfurter argues that this system of unpronounceable letters arose from a ‘widespread Greco-Roman fascination’ with ‘sacred alphabets’ that were unreadable to most, particularly Egyptian hieroglyphs, already used on amulets as ‘letters of power,’ but also influenced by other alphabets like Hebrew (Frankfurter 2019: 651–5).
54 Frankfurter summarises the term voces magicae as a ‘broad subcategory of incantations that modern philologists have found largely untranslatable [which] includes everything from names and epithets of deities from around the ancient Mediterranean world, to equally traditional forms of assonance and alliteration, creative wordplay (such as one finds in children’s word-games), and, presumably, actual ecstatic glossolalia.’ (Frankfurter 2019: 636). He argues that they are the products of their makers’ ideas about ‘exotic’ or ‘foreign’ language, but also were written down to preserve or repeat their utterance out loud (ibid.: 641–2).
All of the catalogues interpret aspects of a gem’s shape, material, or iconography as inherently significant, whether that significance is understood as magical, gnostic, or amuletic. These aspects are often deemed significant because they were found on objects already identified as magical, gnostic or as amulets. This runs the risk of becoming a circular argument if insufficient attention is paid to why those objects were identified as magical in the first place, whether this is from texts also on the object, symbolic interpretation of the iconography, or the recovery of the object from an archaeological context alongside other identifiable amuletic objects.

The situation up to the mid-twentieth century was therefore one in which a functional definition of ‘amulet’ could coexist uncomfortably with a focus on inscribed gems. Things began to change in the late twentieth century when scholars started including a wider range of objects in their studies on amulets. In 1994, Roy Kotansky produced a corpus of Greek-inscribed sheets of gold, silver, copper, and bronze foil tablets that he entitled *Greek Magical Amulets*.\(^56\) Certain written papyrus fragments and inscribed *ostraka* and pieces of wood from Egypt were also described as ‘amulets.’\(^57\) Though written-on metal and wood tablets, papyri, and *ostraka* are all small enough to be portable and some had evidence of being used in jewellery (e.g., papyri or metal tablets in pendants),\(^58\) some metal tablets included under Kotansky’s rubric were explicitly funerary objects placed on human remains,\(^59\) or too large to wear and likely affixed to a stone in a field.\(^60\) Nonetheless, twenty-five years later, Kotansky stated, ‘An amulet is a small protective device usually worn on the body,’\(^61\) which could indicate several different things: that he did not consider all of the tablets he covered in his previous corpus amulets, that the word ‘usually’ was meant to acknowledge this variation, or that he changed his mind.

Around the same time as Kotansky’s corpus was published, work was underway to identify and classify uninscribed worn amulet objects from the Roman world. Véronique Dasen produced a series of articles on largely uninscribed pendants found in graves in Roman Gaul and/or attested in

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57 de Bruyn and Dijkstra 2011; Sanzo 2014; de Bruyn 2017.
58 Rolled-up tablets found inside pendants discussed by Kotansky include ones found in Hungary and Turkey (Kotansky 1994: 93, 169). See Chapter 2 for more on this kind of pendant. De Bruyn discusses traces of wear or affixing, identifying them in papyri as folds, holes or remains of thread: de Bruyn 2017: 140.
59 E.g., the gold ‘*Totenpass*’ from San Paolo fuori le Mura, Rome (Kotansky 1994: 117–22, discussed Section 3.1) or the first- or second-century CE gold tablet found inside a cinerary urn in Gaul (ibid., 44–5).
60 Two bronze tablets bearing near-identical Greek inscribed prayers to avert a hailstorm, from Avignon: Kotansky 1994: 46–53.
61 Kotansky 2019: 507.
Greek and Roman literature, particularly those associated with children. To Dasen, amulets often display a combination of powerful material with a powerful crafted shape. Power, in her view, is based on uncanny properties or connections with the natural world. These consist, for example, of the electrostatic properties of amber, or haematite’s magnetic properties and blood-red colour when crushed and mixed with water, or a shape corresponding to a crescent moon.

Although she did not mention it in her definition, Dasen also used association with more established amulets to help identify other iconography as amuletic. For example, in her discussion of club imagery, she made the case that clubs (to be identified as Heracles’ club) and phalluses were interchangeable imagery in inscribed images when used against the evil eye. This is one association between an established apotropaic motif (the phallus) and clubs, backed up by epigraphic evidence. Secondly, she argued that the club may have been considered a more appropriate design for women’s jewellery than phalluses and that it offered similar protection to children as the bulla. She called on a range of evidence to support these claims, from the presence of club imagery in women’s earrings to the myth of Heracles strangling snakes as a baby. But she also cited the combination, meaningfully in her opinion, of a bulla and a club pendant on a necklace in a child’s tomb in Saint-Fréjus, from the first century CE. To identify a powerful crafted shape, Dasen therefore used not only literary, iconographic, and epigraphic evidence, but also physical association with more established amulets.

Dasen treated the bulla as a simultaneously protective and high-status object, which illustrates another important aspect of her approach. Amulets’ functions in society, in her view, were not just those of protection or healing from malign influences or diseases, or the bringing of good fortune. They also operated as markers of social status (such as the gold bulla in Rome), or, as she also posited, as part of religious rites of transition. Her aims to reconstruct the social dynamics that influenced the manufacture and use of these objects are more far-reaching than Delatte or Bonner, who were heavily focused on understanding and explaining inscribed image and text on single objects.

A 2010 article by Elisa Perego on magical objects in graves from the Iron Age Veneto touches on the contexts and functions of potential amulets and offers a clearer set of criteria than previous studies. Perego explicitly rejected criteria like a lack of ‘immediate practical function,’ or an object’s

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63 Dasen 2003a: 182.
64 Dasen 2018: 131–2.
65 Dasen 2015: 188–90.
67 Dasen 2015: 188.
beauty, strangeness, or rarity. Her chosen factors consisted of material, shape and decoration, resemblance to ‘supposed magic objects,’ association (defined as ‘e.g., in a necklace’) with ‘items whose use as amulets is probable or secure’ or with materials ‘whose use as amulets is certain for their context of origin,’ location of find, recurrent association with individuals who might have been thought of as especially at risk like children, evidence of manipulation, and degree of completeness of manufacture.

Recent dictionaries of the ancient world have allowed a wider range of material forms into their definitions. Although the entry for ‘amulet’ in the Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium called it ‘usually a small artifact worn on the body,’ it also offered the qualification that an amulet ‘could take many forms, from medicinal animal fur to apotropaic door frames.’ The Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World said that amulets are ‘magically potent objects worn for protection against witchcraft, illness, the evil eye, accidents, robbery, etc., also to enhance love, wealth, power, or victory,’ then added, almost as an afterthought, that ‘Houses, walls, and towns could be protected in the same way.’ Brill’s New Pauly argued that ‘amulets were worn around the neck, head, arms and legs or attached to clothing.’ However, the entry also noted that ‘ancient terminology is less specific and more comprehensive than the modern term’s range,’ and that the modern distinction that the entry’s writer observed between the terms ‘amulet,’ ‘talisman’ and ‘apotropaic symbol’ was unsuitable for talking about the ancient world. In contrast to these statements, following a review of ancient literature on amulets, Gideon Bohak stated that ‘There were, of course, many apotropaic devices for the protection of houses, temples, agricultural fields and other enclosed and open spaces, but these probably should not be classified as “amulets” in the narrower sense of the word.’

Christopher Faraone’s 2018 monograph on the development of Greek amulets in the Roman Empire argued that the increased use of inscribed text on amulets in this period had made scholars conclude that they had become more popular, when they had in fact only become more identifiable. He aimed to identify the uninscribed precursors to these inscribed objects in order to argue instead that the spread of the epigraphic habit and the more widespread ‘adaptation and miniaturization of powerful images’ made inscribed text and images more common. Faraone includes non-portable

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70 Perego 2010: 71
73 Bendlin 2006.
74 Bendlin notes how certain words like phulaktērion or praebia ‘highlight the ‘protective’ function of amulets, used either as a means of prevention or as a remedy.’
75 Bohak 2015: 87.
76 Faraone 2018: 1–3.
77 Faraone 2018: 4.
objects protecting property, workshops, family and community in his definition of ‘amulet,’ characterising Roman imperial period amulets in his opening paragraph as ‘images and text in a variety of media ... all designed to protect, heal, or grant some abstract benefit to the persons who wore them on their bodies or placed them in their homes.’ Faraone’s description acknowledges the importance of non-worn objects and covers the functions of amulets that, as we will see below, are demonstrated by Greek and Latin texts. In a later, more thorough definition, he calls amulets ‘any object – plant, animal, or mineral; natural or manmade, image or text – that the Greeks placed on their bodies, domestic animals, homes, ships, vineyards, or cities in the hope of protecting themselves, of curing some illness, or of gaining some benefit, usually understood in the abstract – for example, charisma, prosperity, or victory.’ In theory, this amounts to much the same definition as the one this thesis will use. However, in practice Faraone’s focus is on the novel inscribed objects and comparing them with the uninscribed ones that ‘came before,’ rather than surveying all objects from the time that might have performed the functions of protection, healing, or benefit bringing to bodies or places in proximity to them.

Faraone has also contributed to the debate over identifying amulets. He argued for what he describes as ‘guilt by association;’ for example, an image found alongside ‘a well-known amulet at a doorway or on a necklace ... suggests rather strongly that the former was being used for the same purpose as the latter.’ This argument chimes with Dasen’s use of the club-and-bulla assemblage in Saint-FrÉjus as evidence for clubs being an amuletic form. Yet how often does an image, text or material need to be associated with text or other images that confer guilt by association before that image/text/material itself can be deemed amuletic and capable of imparting guilt by association itself? Faraone is not clear. This lack of clarity over where association stops is problematic. While Faraone does not specify what are the ‘well-known amulets’ that are the Patient Zeros for amuletic guilt by association, we can infer how he identifies them. He cites ancient texts (particularly lapidaries, medical texts, or the Greek magical papyri), or refers to images of people wearing particular items in the forms of votive statuettes, vase paintings, or death masks, to argue for certain objects’ amuletic natures. This indicates that identifying an amulet can still depend on attestation in other sources, textual or otherwise.

78 Faraone 2018: 219, n. 20.
79 Faraone 2018: 1.
80 Faraone 2018: 5.
83 Faraone 2018: 27–40; 46–51.
This literature review has covered the changes in the ways scholars have dealt with two interlinked problems: how to define an amulet in general and how to identify an amuletic object in the archaeological record. Scholars of the early twentieth century focusing on material evidence tended to apply or privilege contemporary norms when approaching this material, focusing on worn or wearable pendants. Bonner’s definition of ‘amulet’ did not include any stipulations for wearability, yet his work focused exclusively on amuletic jewellery. Faraone and, to a lesser extent, Dasen have tried to join these schools of thought back together by de-emphasising wearability as a key factor. However, while both Dasen and Faraone identify uninscribed amuletic objects from their association with known amulets, neither consistently clarify that the identification of those known amulets usually comes from texts. This two-tier system of identification is shaky when its users do not clearly show their working.

There is therefore a gap in the scholarship for laying out exactly what words from surviving texts from the Roman and late antique worlds used that might be translated as ‘amulet,’ and for applying this to the material evidence from a specific geographic area without privileging inscribed or other types of material.

1.5. Ancient terminology

This section will survey the Greek and Latin words most commonly translated as ‘amulet’ to identify what items they refer to and examine the significant textual associations that arise. This evidence will demonstrate that scholars like Faraone are correct in including non-worn material in their definition. It will also show how texts suggest that amuletic power was more complex than a simple one-to-one translation between one English, one Latin, and one Greek word.

Amuletum

Amuletum is of unknown etymology. Both it and the English ‘amulet’ were linked throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to an Arabic word, hamalet,\(^84\) then defined as ‘that which is suspended.’\(^85\) Despite longstanding scepticism towards this theory in some quarters,\(^86\) and the fact that standard Arabic emerged after Latin,\(^87\) Dasen cited hamalet as a possible etymology.\(^88\) Another

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\(^84\) Petrie 1914: 1; Skemer 2006: 6. Also mentioned in Kotansky 1991: 124, n. 5; Cline 2018: 353. None of these sources offer the word in the original Arabic script.

\(^85\) Kotansky 1991: 124, n. 5; Skemer 2006: 6. Gildemeister suggests it was a loanword ‘brought by Arab merchants,’ Gildemeister 1884. It is likely that hamalet refers to the word حمانلة (himāla), deriving from the Arabic root ح م ل (ḥ-m-l): the noun himāla nowadays means straps or rack (https://dictionary.reverso.net/arabic-english/%D8%AD%D9%90%D9%85%D9%8E%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8E%D8%A9. Accessed: 14/03/2023).

\(^86\) E.g., Blau 1906.

\(^87\) Of course, a loanword from pre-Islamic Old Arabic might still have entered Latin.

putative etymology is the Latin verb *amoliri* (to avert, repel, take away). This was discussed in the Roman world: Flavius Sosipater Charisius, a fourth-century CE grammarian, attributes it to Varro and his lost *Res divinae.*

Amuletum does not appear in any known inscriptions. The word is also quite rarely attested in Greek and Roman literature beyond its use by Pliny the Elder. In his *Natural History,* written in the first century CE, Pliny uses *amuletum* to refer to a variety of interventions. Out of the nine times *amuletum* appears in the *Natural History,* three references denote worn objects. These include amber and beetle horns, both tied onto babies, and *iaspis* stones, which Pliny relates were worn (gestare) by everyone in the East as an *amuletum.* Elsewhere, Pliny attributes to the *magi* the saying that fumigating one’s house with a black male dog’s gall is an *amuletum* against all evil potions (*contra omnia mala medicamenta*). Another passage says that an example of Magian fraud (*magicae vanitatis*) is the belief that a bat, carried alive three times around a house or sheepfold, then either fastened underneath the house’s window or hung up by the feet over the fold’s threshold, is an *amuletum* to those spaces. In these examples, smoke or objects fixed in place protect spaces rather than individual people, and the objects are not worn.

The broad characterisation of an *amuletum* as protective, but not necessarily worn, is borne out by Pliny’s other uses of the word. In a section on saliva in the book of the *Natural History* devoted entirely to the so-called Magian frauds, he notes that ‘among *amuleta* is’ the act of spitting on one’s own urine, on one’s right shoe before putting it on, or when passing a place where one formerly met with danger. Pliny also mentions *amuleta* in the *Natural History’s* book on remedies (*remedia*), as part of a list of treatments that he deems shameful but that are still so strongly recommended by his authorities that he feels it would be wrong to omit them. He relates that *magi* say basilisk blood is a remedy for unspecified sickness and an amulet for sorcery (*morborum remedia, veneficiorum*

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89 For *moliri*: Luck 1985: 19. For *amoliri*: Calvi 2005; Lecouteux 2014: 14; Cummins 2016: 164. Curiously, Calvi claims that Varro says that *amuletum* derives from *amoliri* but offers no line reference.
90 Charisius, *Ars Grammatica* 1.15.9: CGL edition: 1.134.3. The *Res divinae* are also known, in conjunction with Varro’s also-lost *Res humanae,* as the *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum.*
91 Plin. *NH* 37.12/37.51, 30.47/37.138-9 attributed to the *magi.*
92 Plin. *NH* 37.37/37.118.
95 Book 30, he calls them this again at *NH* 30.1.
amuleta). He does not specify how basilisk blood is used to furnish these results, but he might have imagined that it was placed in a worn receptacle, ingested, or applied to the skin.

Finally, Pliny uses amuletum in his descriptions of two plant species. Oenanthe’s root, he relates, was used as an amuletum but he does not say how or for what. Secondly, he writes that it is said that where cyclamen root grows, no bad drugs (mala medicamenta) do harm and that it is called an amuletum, adding sarcastically that in that case it ought to be grown in every home.

Pliny therefore uses amuletum to denote a protective function rather than to describe an object or ritual act’s specific form. The behaviours and objects Pliny defines as amuleta operate on a sliding scale of ephemerality, from the amber that might outlast a lifetime to the herb that could rot in a week, right down to spittle that would dry in under an hour. However, proximity to the affected person or area seems important: materials can be worn to protect a person, a house can be fumigated or have a bat fixed up in it to protect its contents, and a plant be planted to protect a surrounding area. This is something that will be explored in greater detail in later chapters.

Amuletum did not reappear in writing until sixteenth-century Renaissance treatises on witchcraft, where it and the English ‘amulet’ were used to describe ‘textual amulets worn on the body.’ In the seventeenth century, the English ‘amulet’ expanded in meaning to encompass Christian objects of devotion like reliquary capsules, medals, or other objects worn around the neck and thought to secure health and fortune through divine intercession. Around this time, too, the division between amulet (a worn object), and talisman (an astrological seal or figure that might be part of a worn object’s decoration but could also feature on other objects) was solidified. Don Skemer has argued that since the Enlightenment, scholars have tended to assume that amulets were ‘small magical objects (or their carrying cases) carried, worn on the body, or kept in one’s home in ancient and non-Western societies,’ aiming to protect or heal people from evil spirits, enemies, misfortune, death, illness, or pain.

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98 Plin. NH 29.19/29.66. The Loeb edition offers ‘sorcery,’ but ‘poisoning’ is more appropriate.
100 Plin. NH 25.67/25.115.
Phulaktērion

The Greek word φυλακτήριον (phulaktērion; plural: phulaktēria) is regularly cited as the Greek equivalent of the Latin amuletum. It derives from the Greek verb φυλάσσειν (phulassēin, to guard). In the ancient world, phulaktērion is used widely and its meaning is highly context dependent.

Sometimes, phulaktērion could denote a worn or carried protective object. In the PGM, objects described as phulaktēria include a sprig of laurel with writing on, cat whiskers, written papyrus, written sheepskin, inscribed tablets of silver, tin, jime wood, and gold, rolled-up linen with writing on, a wolf knucklebone, plaited goat and bull hair, an engraved magnetic stone, an ass or heifer tooth, a cat’s tail and three peonies. These were tied onto limbs, held in hands, hung round necks, or even placed on heads as crowns. An ass’ skull that the practitioner’s foot was meant to rest on is also called a phulaktērion. Most of these were to be used by a practitioner in the course of a ritual, to offer them protection at a dangerous time.

Manuals devoted to the properties of the natural world use phulaktērion to refer to worn objects in a more general sense. In the Orphic Lithica kerygmata, a lapidary (manual on the properties of stones) dated to sometime between the second century BCE and the fourth century CE, topaz is described as a phulaktērion, while coral, when inscribed with certain images, is described as a phulaktērion against fear, insults, the approach of evil or creeping things, or ill-treatment by one’s...
master or owner. When used as a mast-top along with sealskin, coral is also called a *phulaktērion*, while sardonyx is described as a *phulaktērion* of the body. Another Greek lapidary found on a Vatican manuscript, attributed by some to Damigeron, asserts that sardonyx is a great *phulaktērion* of the body, but does not specify if or how it was worn. The *Cyranides* lists numerous recipes for combinations of plants, minerals, and animal parts that it calls *phulaktēria*, from a pyrite inscribed with a phoenix and combined with plant root, called a *phulaktērion* of poisonous animals, to seal hair bound up with various other animal body parts and plants, called a *phulaktērion* for love, protection, and victory. Medical writers say similar things: Dioscorides, active in the first century CE, explains how selenite was tied on by women as a *phulaktērion*, then adds that it was also tied to trees to make them fruitful. He also says that all jaspers seem to be *phulaktēria* when tied onto a person, and promote speedy birth when tied around the thigh. Aetius of Amida relates that a smoke-coloured jasper is a *phulaktērion* for women in childbirth, and Oribasius calls jasper a *phulaktērion* of the body when tied on, adding that it promotes quick birth when tied to the thigh.

Other worn objects called *phulaktēria* were related to specific religious groups. One passage of the Greek New Testament mentions *phulaktēria* when Jesus criticises the behaviour of the ‘scribes,’ presented as a Jewish sect whose dress and conduct he deems unacceptable:

> πλατύνουσιν γάρ τὰ φυλακτήρια αὐτῶν καὶ μεγαλύνουσιν τὰ κράσπεδα, φιλοῦσιν δὲ τὴν πρωτοκλίσιαν ἐν τῶις δεῖπνοις καὶ τὰς πρωτοκαθεδρίας ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς καὶ τοὺς ἀσπασμοὺς ἐν ταῖς ἀγοραῖς καὶ καλεῖσθαι ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, Ῥαββί.

‘[…] they make their *phulaktēria* wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honour at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called “Rabbi” by others.’


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128 Lithica kerygmata 20.
129 Lithica kerygmata 20.
130 Lithica kerygmata 31.
131 The TLG attributes it to Damigeron, with some doubt. If it is Damigeron’s work (otherwise only extant in Latin translation), it was already circulating in the second century CE: Wellmann 1901.
132 From Vat. cod. 578. Περὶ λίθων (Peri lithôn): 320.12.
133 Cyranides, 1.7.19.
134 Cyranides, 1.21.35-41. Other *phulaktēria* recipes at 1.7.117, 12.42, 20.13, 105-6, 105-27, 24.50, 2.5.22, 30.14, 3.1.8, 36.60, 5.1.10.
135 Dioscorides, *De materia medica*, 5.141.
136 Dioscorides, *De materia medica*, 5.142.
Modern biblical scholarship links Matthew’s *phulaktēria* to the custom of Jewish *tefillin*.\(^{139}\) Still used in prayer today in most branches of Judaism, *tefillin* are a set of small leather boxes worn strapped to the head and arms, containing verses from the Torah.\(^{140}\) Late antique exegetes on this passage was divided on what the *phulaktēria* Jesus was referring to were. John Chrysostom asserts that the scribes’ *phulaktēria* were little books (βιβλίοις μικροῖς) suspended from the scribes’ hands.\(^{141}\) He compares them to women wearing the gospels from their necks in his own day.\(^{142}\) Jerome says something similar, glossing *phylacteria* as objects seen as holding power by the ignorant, much as little gospels (*parvulis evangelii*) are treated by superstitious little women (*superstitiosae mulierculae*).\(^{143}\) Isidore of Pelusium compares *phulaktēria*’s being worn to women carrying the gospel around.\(^{144}\) Yet Cyril of Alexandria identifies *phulaktēria* as ‘the things worn on the right hand,’ while John of Damascus calls them ‘signs of purple.’\(^{145}\) Epiphanius explicitly argues that *phulaktēria* are not analogous with *periapta* (lit: ‘tied-on thing’) even though ‘some people used to call their *periapta* “phulakteria.”’ Instead, he says they denoted purple woven stripes on the scribes’ tunics.\(^{146}\)

Worn or portable Christian items could also be *phulaktēria*. Vicky Foskoulou argues that the word *phulaktērion* was used for wearable iron crosses, miniature books of the gospels, or saints’ icons, citing Gregory of Nyssa’s reference to his sister Macrina’s cross pendant, John Chrysostom’s aforementioned reference to women wearing small gospels around their necks as *phulaktēria*, and a hagiography of St Stephen the Younger, which claimed that the only *phulaktērion* the saint had was an icon of Christ and Mary.\(^{147}\) *Phulaktēria* also crop up in canon 36 of the late fourth/early fifth-century Council of Laodicea, which banned priests from manufacturing them on pain of excommunication.\(^{148}\) Epiphanius asserts that heretics used the dust from Elxai’s descendants’ feet and their spittle in *periapta* and *phulaktēria*.\(^{149}\) In a hagiography of the younger Simeon Stylites, hair from his still-living head is used as a *phulaktērion*.\(^{150}\)

\(^{139}\) For a detailed discussion, see Cohn 2008 For a counterargument linking *phulaktēria* to prayer shawls (*tallith*), see Skemer 2006: 35.

\(^{140}\) Primarily considered a remembrance of the Exodus, some scholars consider them to have or have had apotropaic qualities, e.g., Cohn 2008.


\(^{142}\) Ibid, 57.669.33-35.

\(^{143}\) Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, 4.23.5 (PL 26.168). For the trope of linking ambiguous or unacceptable rituals to women, see Sanzo 2019: 236, n. 186.

\(^{144}\) Isidore of Pelusium, letter 150 (PG 78.841).

\(^{145}\) Cyril of Alexandria, *De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate*, PG 68.484.24.


\(^{148}\) Joannou 1962: 145.


\(^{150}\) *Life of the younger Simeon the Stylite*, 130.
Some texts discuss non-worn phulaktēria, like the recipe, preserved in the Papyri Graecae Magicae (PGM), for a wax statuette phulaktērion that brings fortune to a temple or commercial establishment,\(^1\) or the instructions in the Cyranides that say laying a snake hide down inside the house is a phulaktērion.\(^2\) In Libanius’ fourth-century-CE Progymnasmata, a compendium of model rhetorical exercises, Athena’s statue in Troy, apparently stolen by Odysseus, is referred to four times as the phulaktērion of the city.\(^3\) Elsewhere, saints’ corpses,\(^4\) ascetic saints’ former cages,\(^5\) parts of the True Cross,\(^6\) the text of Jesus’ apocryphal letter to Edessa as inscribed on Edessa’s walls,\(^7\) and images of a cross,\(^8\) are all called phulaktēria of cities or empires. Eusebius also asserted that the painted image of the cross was a phulaktērio of the Roman empire,\(^9\) and that a statue set up by Constantine in Rome of himself holding a cross was a phulaktērion of Rome and the empire.\(^10\)

Spoken or written words could also be phulaktēria. In the PGM, phulaktērion is used several times to describe a series of words, but the instructions are unclear on what the practitioner is meant to do with those words.\(^11\) Horapollo’s Hieroglyphica refers to a hieroglyph depicting ‘two men’s heads’ as a phulaktērión, while Hephaestion’s Apotelesmatica uses the word to describe an image of Chnoubis, a lion-headed snake.\(^12\) Eusebius implies that phulaktēria are speech when he advises that instead of phulaktēria and an ἐπῳδή (epōdē; song or spell), someone should go through hymns if they are afraid.\(^13\) Christian religious writers of the late antique/early medieval period asserted that various ritual practices like baptism, fasting, prayer or even the sign of the cross offered a phulaktērion to the believer.\(^14\)

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1. PGM IV.3125-71.
5. Eleusius, Life of Theodore of Sykeon, 27.
6. Procopius, History of the Wars, 2.11.15.2.
8. Eusebius, Life of Constantine, 1.4, 3.49.
9. Ibid., 1.4, 3.49.
12. Horapollo, Hieroglyphica, 1.24; Hephaestion; Apotelesmatica: 12.21; 143.9 in epitome. Neither specify what materials the phulaktēria should be drawn on. For more on Chnoubis, see p. 57.
Prayer: Athanasius, De virginitate 6.1-2; In illud: qui dixerit verbum in filium, PG 26.668.11; Amphiloctus, Against heretics, I.176; Anthochus, Pandecta scriptura sacrae, homily 84, I.34 (PG 89.1689); Gregory of Nyssa,
Phulaktērion was used by Greek historians to refer to guarded fortifications.\footnote{Herodotus, \textit{Histories}, 5.52.7, 12, 19; Thucydides, \textit{History of the Peloponnesian War}, 4.31.1.6, 33.1.3, 110.2.10; Xenophon, \textit{Cyropaedia}, 7.6.12-3; Diodorus Siculus, \textit{Bibliotheca historica}, 17.50.3, 4; Appian, \textit{Libyca} 87, \textit{Civil War} 4.17.130; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, \textit{Roman Antiquities}, 13.12. Procopius, \textit{Buildings}. 1.3.9.5, 2.6.9.4, 8.11.5, 11.12.4, 3.6.23.1, 4.1.6.4, 5.1.4, 5.4.13.2, 14.4, 8.9.3, 6.2.2.5, 7.1.2, 8.6, 15.2, 17.5; \textit{History of the Wars}, 1.10.9.3-10.4, 22.5.3, 2.13.14.6, 29.8.2, 30.7.2, 8.2, 15.2, 27.2, 30.3, 31, 5.22.15.3, 16.6, 19.6, 25.11.11, 15.7; 6.9.16.8, 12.6.3, 28.30.2; 7.3.2.1, 9.22.4, 10.6.6, 12.12.4, 17.10.3, 18.10.2, 20.1.7, 7.23.5.2, 7.4, 18.4, 36.1.4, 13.4, 17.1, 37.9.2, 20.1, 38.11.2, 39.28.2, 8.4.5.5, 8.17.6, 23.2, 10.3.4, 8.10.5.1, 12.17.4, 21.1, 31.2, 13.8.4, 14.51.2, 16.7.4, 24.35.1, 25.24.2, 26.4.2, 18.2, 28.2.3, 11.2, 33.4.2, 10.2, 11.1; \textit{Secret History}, 26.31.1, 33.1, 8.34.9.2.}

It also appeared in this context in other genres, from rhetoric to Christian biblical commentaries.\footnote{For rhetoric: Aeschines, \textit{On the false embassy}, 133.6; Themistius, \textit{Orations}, 16: 212a.5; Libanius, \textit{Orations}, 59.117. Biblical exegesis: Basil of Caesarea, \textit{Commentary on Isaiah} 1.20.13, 1.21.6, 1.21.13.} It could also be used to refer to defences more generally, even natural ones, as in Aelius Aristides’ \textit{Panathenaic Oration} where the Attic peninsula is described as jutting out ‘in place of any other phulaktērion.’\footnote{Aelius Aristides, \textit{Panathenaic Oration}: 96.1.} Moreover, Procopius uses it to refer to a church, protecting the σωτερία (sōteria; salvation) of the city and of the true faith.\footnote{Procopius, \textit{Aed}, 6.2.20.1.} Phulaktērion was also used to denote a safeguard or a guarantee of safety, from the phulaktērion offered to the state by the governing assembly’s specialist knowledge proposed by one of the interlocutors in Plato’s \textit{Laws},\footnote{Plato, \textit{Laws}, 962c.} to references to Jesus, Mary or God as phulaktēria.\footnote{Jesus: Pseudo-Romanos the Melodist, \textit{Cantica dubia}, 62. strop. 4.5. \textit{Mary}: Romanos the Melodist, \textit{Cantica} 56.1.32, Pseudo-Romanos the Melodist, \textit{Cantica dubia} 8.4.1.1.32 (same set of hymn verses as above). \textit{God}: Gregory of Nyssa, \textit{Life of Moses}, ch.2 section 262 l.3.} Additionally, six texts refer to body parts acting as phulaktēria to other body parts.\footnote{Philo Judaeus, \textit{De specialibus legibus} 1.216 (fat as phulaktērion of innards); Joannes Philoponus, \textit{In Aristotelis libros de anima commentaria}: 395.3 (eyelids as phulaktēria of eyes); John Chrysostom, \textit{Homily on the martyrdom of Romanos} (homily 2) [PG 50.614.17; mouth as phulaktērion of tongue]; Theodoret, \textit{Interpretatio in Ezechielem} [PG 81.1096.2-3; chest as phulaktērion of heart]; Pseudo- Gregory of Nyssa, \textit{De creatione hominis sermo alte}: 70.2 (eyelids as phulaktēria of eyes).}

Unlike \textit{amuletum}, the word phulaktērion features in inscriptions on objects made of various materials, apparently in reference to the object itself. Examples of objects with phulaktērion written on them appear both within and outside late antique Italy. Most of them are portable and take the form of folded papyri or rolled-up metal tablets.\footnote{E.g., Egypt: Suppl. Mag. 23, 28, and 34 (papyri); SEG 42.1582, edited Kotansky, Naveh, and Shaked 1992; P. Köln inv. T 33 = P. Köln 8 Gr. 339 (silver lamella, SEG 47.2151). Ságvar, Hungary: Kotansky 1994: 81–8 (silver lamella, SEG 49.2383).}
The word appears on three inscribed metal tablets from Sicily. One is a bronze tablet written in Aramaic and Greek with an exorcistic text, dated to the fourth or fifth century CE. The only Greek words on the document are ‘τὸ φυλακτήριον’ (the *phulaktērion*), while the Aramaic text is a fragmentary prayer to God asking for protection from evil spirits, the impure eye, and every weakness and sickness, in addition to a fragmentary exorcism.

The second, occasionally referred to as the ‘Phylactery of Moses,’ is dated to between the mid-second and mid-third century CE. It is a copper tablet thought by some to be an amulet, but by others a formulary, that is, a compilation of instructions for rituals or list of recipes. The word *phulaktērion* is used in the titles to three different recipes, referring first to ‘A *phulaktērion* which Moses used to [protect] him in the Holy of Holies, to lead him in the glory of (the) divine,’ which consists of a gold leaf bearing the name Σαβαώθ (Sabaōth). The second use of *phulaktērion* is in the section immediately following, as ‘A *phulaktērion* of Moses when he went up on Mount Sinai […] to receive the magic bands.’ This time, the following sentences clarify the object’s use in protecting from any sorcerer (μάγον), evil spirits, or binding spells (κατάδεσμοι), followed by a warning to ‘carry it in purity.’ The final mention of *phulaktērion* consists of ‘A *phulaktērion* of Moses when he went up on Mount Sinai to get the golden tablet, to get the amulet.’ This is followed by the same list of dangers that were to be kept away by the *phulaktērion* above (sorcerers, binding spells, evil spirits, etc.) and the requirement to ‘carry it in purity.’

The third inscribed object, a lead tablet dated to the sixth or seventh centuries CE, is inscribed on one side with Psalm 1:1-3 and the description ‘thus a dissolver and chaser-away for all spells/potions [φάρμακα; *pharmaka*].’ The other side has a list of *charaktēres* and angel names, with the description ‘a *phulaktērion* against *pharmaka,*’ followed by another list of names, then the phrase ‘seal of Solomon.’

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173 Found in Priolo Gargallo, Sicily, now at Museo archeologico nazionale di Siracusa, inv. no. MAR 11173. Edited in Rizzone 2015: 54–7.
174 Rizzone 2015.
177 Translation from Kotansky 1994: 130.
179 These were aggressive rituals that attempted to control a person through binding their bodies or wills, for a variety of reasons from competition (whether sports, legal battles, and so on) to forcing someone to love, marry or be seduced by a specific other person. See, e.g., Faraone 1999; Gager 1999; Eidinow 2019a.
180 Kotansky 1994: 130.
182 *Lamella* no. 5 in Appendix 1.
183 Pugliese Carratelli 1953: 181.
Two other Sicilian inscriptions call the wearability of a *phulaktērion* into question. These are two stones which are each inscribed on both sides with Greek text and dated to the 6th century CE. Both call on variously named angels, as well as Jesus, to give and increase the harvest of a vineyard; the former is described as the vineyard of Kyriakos son of Zosimos, the other as the vineyard of Petros. Both specify that the vineyards are where ‘the’ or ‘this’ *phulaktērion* lie. Additionally, the stone related to the vineyard of Kyriakos has a fragmentary inscription on one side relating to protection from hail. While, based on the word’s etymology, *phulaktēria* should only be for protection, the Sicilian stones’ functions go beyond that and ask for the harvest to be improved. Along with some other inscribed stones from the same area, these stones will form a key part of the evidence examined in Chapter 4 and will be integral to the arguments developed there.

*Phulaktērion* continued to be used in later Byzantine magical treatises: for example, it is used in the *Hygromanteia Salomonis* to refer to two plants. Phylacterium was a Latin word that derives from the Greek *phulaktērion*. Marcellus of Bordeaux used it to refer to three pierced cherry stones hung on a linen thread as a preventative treatment for eye pain, while Augustine warned his audience not to hang up *phylacteria* or diabolical *characteres*. In another sermon, he grouped hanging up diabolical *phylacteria* or *characteres* with what he considers pagan customs: worshipping fountains and trees, using diviners or soothsayers, and hanging up herbs and amber, declaring that whoever does these things loses the sacrament of baptism. Elsewhere, he describes *phylacteria*, along with various divination methods, as practices whose Christian practitioner would not be helped by God. A decree, thought to have been circulated by Pope Gelasius in the fifth century CE, declared that ‘all *phylacteria*, which are not compiled with the names of angels as they pretend, but rather those of demons were apocryphal texts to be avoided’ (*phylacteria omnia, quae non angelorum, ut illi configunt, sed daemonum magis nominibus conscripta sunt*). Perhaps influenced by Augustine, Caesarius of Arles told people not to hang on (*adpendere*) diabolical *phylacteria*.

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184 See Chapter 4, n. 2.
185 See Chapter 4, n. 1.
186 Lines 13-4 of Side A of both inscriptions.
187 Side B of the inscription, especially lines 1-2, 9-16.
188 *Hygromanteia Salomonis*, CCAG 8.2: 161.36, 171.3.
189 Marcellus Empiricius, *De medicamentis* VIII.27. He specifies that the wearer can avoid eye pain for a year if they manufacture this as soon as cherries are ripe and in season and vow not to eat cherries that year ‘against the rising sun’ (*contra solem orientem*).
193 It is more likely to have been written in the sixth century CE: see Demacopoulos 2018.
194 von Dobschütz 1912: ch. 5.
alongside *characteres*, amber, and herbs, and repeats much the same point in four other sermons.\(^{196}\)

The English word ‘phylactery’ comes via the Latin and vernacular words deriving from it, like the Middle English *filateries*.\(^{197}\) Nowadays, ‘phylactery’ is used as the English translation of the Hebrew word *tefillin*, as a synonym for Roman and late antique *lamellae*, and, in tabletop role-playing games, as objects of power with specific amulet-like functions.\(^{200}\) In the medieval period, it was found to refer to ‘pagan amulets that included magical incantations,’ Jewish *tefillin*, or portable Christian objects like reliquaries or pectoral crosses.\(^{201}\)

Based on this data, we might conclude that, as with Pliny’s *amuleta*, physical contact with a human body was a commonly occurring but not necessarily essential aspect of *phulaktēria*. Nonetheless, the focus on hanging up or depositing some *phulaktēria* in specific places and the wearing of some others suggests that proximity was valued. This evidence calls into question the necessity of including wearability or portability in a definition of ‘amulet.’ It also suggests that guarding or protection were also not defining characteristics for *phulaktēria*, which might instead have been used to bring success, good fortune, or healing.

Other function-dependent words for ‘amulet’
The centrality of function in defining what was and was not a *phulaktērion* or *amuletum*, rather than form, opens up another avenue of enquiry. There are numerous other terms used by ancient writers to refer to functions of healing, protecting, or bringing good luck. Perhaps unsurprisingly, some modern scholars have occasionally translated these terms as ‘amulet.’ This section will briefly examine each of these words to understand the functions of the things they referred to, and thus what relationship they might have had to the *phulaktēria* and *amuleta* described above.

Dasen suggests that the Latin term *remedium* (plural: *remedia*) could be translated as ‘amulet.’\(^{202}\) As noted above, one of Pliny’s *amuleta* was described in the book of the *Natural History*...
on remedia. Other Latin uses of the word *remedium* abound from the classical period onwards to refer to cures, medicines, or means of aid. In terms of interventions using worn objects, the historian Ammianus Marcellinus uses *remedium* to describe something worn around the neck against quartan fever. Alexander of Tralles, a sixth-century CE Lydian doctor, describes recipes which he considered more dubious as *phusika*: his justification for including them is that some patients were unable to keep to dietary or medicinal regimes, and because it would be immoral to exclude any aspect of healing practice. *Phusika* (φοισικά; singular: *phusikon*) comes from the adjective φυσικός (*phusikos*). The Liddell and Scott dictionary translates the adjective as ‘natural’ (i.e., produced by nature or concerning its order) or ‘belonging to occult laws of nature, magical,’ making a *phusikon* a natural or occult thing. Bohak characterised these *phusika* as ‘natural’ treatments and noted the inclusion of what he considered uninscribed amulets among them. Alexander of Tralles’ *phusika* include ingested, fumigated, and worn prescriptions, consisting of plants, animals, minerals, or even human blood. Additionally, Alexander provides recipes for some προφυλακτικά (*prophulaktika*, prophylactics) that treat gout: one consists of vulture sinews tied to the legs, the other of a gold tablet inscribed with a list of names, worn in a leather case on the ankles and accompanied with a prayer. Both these words therefore refer to a range of interventions aimed at protecting from or curing disease. Moreover, they could at times be connected to the words *phulaktērion* or *amuletum*, through being used to refer to the same interventions. However, as *phulaktērion* or *amuletum* generally tended to refer to protective rather than curative activities, these words cannot be considered fully equivalent. Nonetheless, the focus on curing and preventing disease is a common feature of these words.

Dasen also argues that *praebia* should count as a term for amulet. *Praebia* have this name, according to Varro, ‘because they are *remedia* on the necks of boys’ (*quod sint remedia in collo pueris*, possibly referring to *bullae*). In the eighth century CE, Paul the Deacon also explained *praebia* as *remedia*, in the context of the *remedia* that Tanaquil put on her sash. Tanaquil was the wife of Tarquinius Priscus, the legendary fifth king of Rome, considered by some the originator of the *toga*.

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203 Book 29.
204 Lewis and Short 1879b.
208 LSJ s.v., φυσικός.
213 Varro, De lingua latina, 7.107.
214 Paul the Deacon, *De verborum significatione*: 276.
praetexta and bulla as protective dress for freeborn boys.\textsuperscript{215} Paul also says that visitors took scrapings from her statue’s sash and called those præbia because they stopped evil things (\textit{mala}).\textsuperscript{216} This information suggests that \textit{præbia} were generally protective objects. In a poem attributed to Petronius, the speaker asserts that in the case of invasion, thin rags would offer \textit{præbia} against barbarians looking to kill the rich,\textsuperscript{217} suggesting that \textit{præbia} could also be non-amuletic objects offering practical protection through other mechanisms, in this case as a disguise.

Several terms also exist for objects thought to ward off the evil eye.\textsuperscript{218} Dasen suggests that in Latin, objects protecting against this phenomenon were known as \textit{fascina},\textsuperscript{219} while in Greek they are thought to have been called προβασκάνιον (\textit{probaskanion}) or βασκάνιον (\textit{baskanion}).\textsuperscript{220} These do not only describe worn objects. In the Greek Septuagint, the Letter of Jeremiah, a biblical text of disputed origin railing against idolatry, idols are described as being like a \textit{probaskanion} guarding uselessly over a cucumber patch.\textsuperscript{221} Writers of the second century CE like Julius Pollux and Phrynicus define \textit{baskania} and/or \textit{probaskania} as grotesque objects hung up by varying kinds of craftsmen in their workshops.\textsuperscript{222} They therefore did not necessarily constitute worn objects attached to a living body, particularly when they were meant to protect things other than the human body. Overall, these words focus on things’ function over their form. The latter varies considerably, from rituals to ingested substances to worn objects and deposited items.

Words for tying on

The function-focused words discussed in the section above often appear with some other words, however. Consisting of the words περίαμμα (\textit{periamma}; plural: \textit{periammata}), and περίαπτον (\textit{periapton}; plural: \textit{periaptta}) and \textit{ligatura} (plural: \textit{ligaturae}), these have also been translated as ‘amulet’ and deserve closer scrutiny, as they do only denote items that were tied on to living bodies. Their etymology, based on the Greek περίαπτω (\textit{periaptwo}, I tie around) or the Latin \textit{lego} (I tie), focuses on how the item was tied around the neck or arm of its owner.

\textsuperscript{215} See Chapter 2.
\textsuperscript{216} Paul the Deacon, \textit{De verborum significatione}: 276.
\textsuperscript{217} Petronius, \textit{Apocolocyntosis}: 412-3.
\textsuperscript{218} A concept spanning many cultures and time periods and referred to in Greek as βασκανία (\textit{baskania}), ὀφθαλμός πονήρος (\textit{ophthalmos poneros}, literally ‘evil eye’), or simply as φθόνος (\textit{phthonos}: envy) and in Latin as invidia (envy), \textit{fascinus}, or \textit{fascinatio}, the evil eye is understood as the idea that an envious person can inflict harm on someone (or something) else through the power of their gaze. See Limberis 1991; Dickie 1995; Elliott 2015a; 2015b; 2016; 2017. For criticism of Elliott, see Kotansky 2018.
\textsuperscript{219} Corti 2001; Whitmore 2017; Dasen 2018: 129.
\textsuperscript{221} LXX \textit{Ep. Jer.}, 69-70.
Periamma, periapton and ligatura were used by writers in the early Christian church with largely negative connotations. For example, Gregory of Naziansen identifies periammata and ἐπασματα (epasmata; enchantments) as kinds of phulaktēria, a larger class of protective things that included the rather more acceptable holy trinity. Similarly, Augustine classes ligatura as a type of remedia (cures). Non-Christian writers also offer some uses of both words. In a letter, the fourth-century emperor Julian likened his books to both periapta and phulaktēria, because he always had them with him. This suggests that he considers both objects that needed to be kept in proximity. An earlier writer, Plutarch, asserts that the Egyptian goddess Isis tied around her neck (περιαπτεσθαι, periaptesthai) a phulakterion. Unlike phulaktērion, periapton, periamma, and ligatura are not known to have been used on any inscribed or written item to refer to itself.

Late antique comments on objects known as periammata, periapta, or ligatura therefore linked them with phulakteria and occasionally used both words for the same item. The comments generally show that although items tied on to living bodies were an important and controversial kind of protective, healing, or fortune-bringing practice, they were, crucially, not understood as the only such practice. Moreover, criticism and allegations of superstition did not only extend to worn amuletic objects but were directed at other practices like incantations or ritualised gestures. Tied-on objects known as periammata or periapta were therefore not even uniquely controversial.

Contemporary commentators overall tended to class tied-on objects that elicited healing, protection, or good fortune as a subcategory of a more general group of rituals and objects that did the same things. Manuals and compendia tell a similar story. The section above already described how some of Pliny’s amuleta were tied on. Numerous Greek manuals and compendia also mention periapta, periammata, and phulaktēria together. The infinitive περιαπτεῖν (periaptein, to tie on) appears in a few instructions for manufacturing phulaktēria in medical compendia, lapidaries (works describing the use of stones) and papyrus ritual manuals. Especially of interest is the ‘eagle-stone’ used against recurring chills and fevers that Alexander of Tralles describes as an example of phusika periapta (i.e., tied-on phusika), or the recipe in the Cyranides that instructs the reader to tie on (periapte) a scorpion’s sting, the top of a basil plant, and a swallow’s heart, all wrapped in a stag’s skin, Chapter 2 will investigate this further.

Gregory of Nazianzus, On Baptism (PG 36.381A).
Augustine, De doctrina christiana, 2.20.30 (PL 34.50).
Julian, Letters 80.12.
Plutarch, De Iside et Osiride 377B, 378B.
PGM IV 818, 1318, 3012, VII 220; Suppl. Mag. 94; Dioscorides, De materia medica 5. 142; Pseudo-Dioscorides De lapidibus 12; Cyranides 1.24.50, 2.30.14, 3.36.60, Oribasius, Collectiones medicae, Book 13, chapter lambda, section 20, line 5; Aetius of Amida, Iatricorum, book 2, ch. 36, l. 4; Lithica kerygymata 8.
to drive away the mania of epileptic seizures, elaborating that this is a *phulaktērion* which both drives out noncompliant demons and compels them to go away.\textsuperscript{230} Additionally, two lapidaries use *periamma* in entries that call the same intervention a *phulakterion*.\textsuperscript{231} Therefore, sometimes these writers found it necessary to use multiple terms to emphasise both what the object did (i.e., protection, healing or good luck) and how it was used (i.e., tied on).

Indeed, the definition of tied-on object could itself be complicated. The following three examples illustrate how the instruction ‘tie on’ is used in three different compendia of natural historical information. They will demonstrate how objects meant to elicit good fortune, healing, or protection could be tied on to things that were not living bodies.

Firstly, the *Cyranides* contains 122 recipes that involve tying something on using the verb *periaptein*.\textsuperscript{232} They address a variety of issues or goals, from treating illnesses and injuries,\textsuperscript{233} to aiding childbirth,\textsuperscript{234} to acting as contraceptives,\textsuperscript{235} or aphrodisiacs,\textsuperscript{236} to stopping or producing sleep,\textsuperscript{237} giving the wearer prophetic powers,\textsuperscript{238} or even letting them win court cases or battles.\textsuperscript{239} Most of them do not specify to what the items in question should be tied; however, the majority of those that do, specify a body part such as the forehead,\textsuperscript{240} neck,\textsuperscript{241} thigh,\textsuperscript{242} foot,\textsuperscript{243} hand,\textsuperscript{244} or elbow.\textsuperscript{245} A minority are instead tied to items such as a ship’s mast,\textsuperscript{246} garment,\textsuperscript{247} bed,\textsuperscript{248} bowl,\textsuperscript{249} or figurine.\textsuperscript{250}

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\textsuperscript{230} *Cyranides* 1.24.48-51.

\textsuperscript{231} Dioscorides, *De materia medica* 5. 141; Pseudo-Dioscorides *De lapidibus* 32.

\textsuperscript{232} This text’s date is uncertain, but similarities to works associated with Hermes Trismegistus suggest an original date of the first or second centuries CE: Scarborough 2012.

\textsuperscript{233} *Cyranides* 1.1.10, 50, 157, 159; 1.2.13, 1.4.27, 1.10.45, 1.12.22, 1.12.25, 1.15.25, 1.19.16, 1.21.58-9, 1.22.19, 20, 21, 1.23.20, 1.24.32, 1.24.48-51, 2.1.7, 2.2.38, 2.3.8, 2.5.12, 2.5.23, 2.8.54, 2.12.12, 13; 2.14.31, 2.16.8, 13; 2.23.10, 30; 2.24.6, 30; 2.26.7, 16; 2.30.13, 2.36.7, 10; 2.40.41, 53; 2.43.6, 2.47.4, 3.1.38, 40, 45; 3.1.52, 71, 74; 3.9.4, 3.12.10, 3.18.11, 3.22.14, 3.28.4, 3.33.6, 3.35.2, 3.36.46, 3.46.6, 3.50.15, 18, 4.1.5, 4.2.6, 4.9.4, 4.11.4, 4.30.2, 4.34.2, 4.39.7, 4.49.5, 4.53.7, 4.59.4, 4.65.18-26, 4.74.2, 4; 5.11.8.

\textsuperscript{234} *Cyranides* 1.21.48, 2.47.9, 3.34.9, 3.50.29, 3.55.3, 6.9.4.

\textsuperscript{235} *Cyranides* 1.3.16, 2.2.24, 2.7.15, 2.15.5, 3.26.4.

\textsuperscript{236} *Cyranides* 1.18.48, 50, 2.2.14, 2.22.9, 4.58.3.

\textsuperscript{237} *Cyranides* 1.5.21, 1.17.19, 21, 2.28.6, 3.34.8, 3.13.5, 4.12.4.

\textsuperscript{238} *Cyranides* 2.3.10.

\textsuperscript{239} *Cyranides* 3.36.57, 4.67.23.

\textsuperscript{240} *Cyranides* 3.50.18.

\textsuperscript{241} *Cyranides* 1.1.10, 157; 1.19.16, 1.22.21, 2.16.8, 2.43.6, 2.47.4, 3.1.71, 3.12.10.

\textsuperscript{242} *Cyranides* 1.21.48, 3.34.9, 6.9.4.

\textsuperscript{243} *Cyranides* 2.5.12, 3.36.46.

\textsuperscript{244} *Cyranides* 2.14.31, 3.1.74, 3.36.46.

\textsuperscript{245} *Cyranides* 2.36.10, 2.47.4.

\textsuperscript{246} *Cyranides* 2.1.21.54.

\textsuperscript{247} *Cyranides* 1.17.21.

\textsuperscript{248} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{249} *Cyranides* 2.40.41

\textsuperscript{250} *Cyranides* 2.38.8.
Secondly, the Byzantine farming manual known as the *Geoponics* uses *periaptein* in fifteen recipes.²⁵¹ For example, early figs, mullein root, and crabs are tied to fig or nut trees to stop them from dropping their harvest early.²⁵² black ivy’s fruit tied to the spleen drives away pain,²⁵³ deer horn tied to horses or cattle stops them from falling ill,²⁵⁴ and dittany tied to farm animals improves milk production.²⁵⁵

Thirdly, in the *Natural History*, produced in the first century CE, Pliny the Elder records numerous instructions to tie on various items using the Latin verb *adalligare*.²⁵⁶ He often attributes such recipes to the *magi* and casts doubt on their efficacy.²⁵⁷ While the majority are related to healing, some bring victory in lawsuits,²⁵⁸ or protection to the wearer.²⁵⁹ Pliny sometimes uses both *adalligare* and *amuletum* in his description of the same object, as with the beetle horn tying discussed above.²⁶⁰ That suggests that the two terms were not synonymous to him, and instead described two different aspects of the same object: form (tying on) and function (protection).

This data indicates that tying on things to produce a healing, protective, or fortune-bringing effect did not necessarily involve a living body. This is understandable given the use of suspended

²⁵¹ This document, dedicated to the Byzantine emperor Constantine VII, is a tenth-century compilation of older agricultural works: Kazhdan 2005.
²⁵² *Geoponics* 10.48.2, 64.6, 87.2.
²⁵³ *Geoponics* 11.30.4.
²⁵⁴ *Geoponics* 16.1.17, 3.6.
²⁵⁵ *Geoponics* 18.10.2, 12.1. Other recipes are at: 12.38.1, 13.8.7, 13.9.8, 13.10.12, 15.1.30, 18.17.8.
²⁵⁷ E.g., his assertion that the *magi* revere the mole above all and that this is evidence of their fraudulence, adding that they think its tooth, extracted from the living animal and tied on (*adalligato*), cures toothache: *NH* 30.17/30.19-20.
objects in other texts: Sanzo points out that Chrysostom ‘somewhat begrudgingly approved of the suspension of biblical artifacts on bedposts for healing,’ which was unacceptable to Caesarius of Arles.\footnote{Sanzo 2019: 235. Texts cited are John Chrysostom, Homiliae in epistulam I ad Corinthios 43.7 (PG 61.372.55-373.11) and Caesarius of Arles, Sermo 50.1.} This demonstrates that even a word like *periaption* might not map neatly onto a more modern idea of a small item of jewellery worn on a living body.

Focusing on verbs that specify tying on might moreover unnecessarily privilege certain ways of interacting with objects as markedly amuletic. The *Cyranides* uses other verbs to describe what to do with a powerful object, including many instructions to wear or carry them.\footnote{E.g., the recommendation that beryl, when worn (φοροῦντα) makes one charming (*Cyranides* 1.2.25).} The *Testament of Solomon* instructs its reader to tie on,\footnote{περιάψει (*periapsei*), Testament of Solomon 18.32/p.57.15.} wear,\footnote{φορέι (*phorei*), Testament of Solomon 18.16/p.54.6. Both this and the recipe at 18.32 above specify ‘on/round the neck.’} place,\footnote{θήσει (*thēsei*), Testament of Solomon 18.22/56.1.} and carry\footnote{βαστάζει (*bastazei*), Testament of Solomon 18.25/56.9.} different inscribed metal tablets or written papyri to drive off specific demons.\footnote{A pseudepigraphic work that is thought to have reached its current form in the third or fourth century CE: Grossman 2011.} That suggests that while the verb *periaptein* was especially associated with objects that produced healing, good luck, or protection, other verbs might also be used to describe similar activities. This is important because it bolsters the case for understanding tying on as just one way of interacting with an object that did these things. It further supports the case for widening the definition of ‘amulet’ to include objects that were interacted with in other, less specific, ways than being tied to a single living body.

The evidence above nonetheless demonstrates that tying on could be an important way to apply an object that healed, protected, or brought good fortune to people, plants, or animals. These functions are identical to those performed by *phulaktēria* and *amuleta*. The difference is that *periammata*, *periapta*, and *ligaturae* took a specific form in being material objects that were tied on to something, either the thing they were to affect (e.g., a sick person’s body) or something proximate to the affected party (e.g., a sick person’s bed).

1.6. A functional definition
The evidence above demonstrated how the Greek and Latin terminology occupied two fields. Firstly, words like *phulaktēria*, *prophulaktika*, *praebia*, *phusika*, or *probaskania* could denote the specific functions of the things they referred to, from protection to healing. The physical forms these things took varied considerably, from ephemeral ritual to boundary stone. On the other hand, some words, like *ligatura*, *periammata*, or *periapta*, referred exclusively to tied-on items that usually brought...
healing, good fortune, or protection and were usually, but not always, attached to the living body they were meant to affect. The overlap in terminology – some interventions were called both *phusika* and *periapta*, for instance – indicates that the latter (i.e., tied-on objects producing healing, good fortune, or protection) are best understood as a subset of the former (i.e., things that produce healing, good fortune, or protection). Rather than focusing on whether an amulet was worn, we can better reflect the norms of the later Roman world if we emphasise an object’s function as a protecting, healing, or good-fortune-bringing thing.

This dissertation will consequently use the term ‘amuletastic objects’ rather than ‘amulets.’ This is for two reasons. Firstly, the use of an adjective (amuletastic) rather than a noun (amulet) emphasises that such objects were often multifunctional: in other words, that being amuletastic was often just one of the things an object was or could do. Secondly, the inclusion of the word ‘object’ reiterates that, based on our study of words like *amuletum* and *phulaktērion* above, Greek and Latin amulets could also be intangible rituals like spitting or tugging one’s ear. Since these often leave no trace in the archaeological record, and it is only surviving objects that will be our main focus, it makes sense to foreground this qualification from the start.

The study of ancient and modern definitions of the word amulet above, combined with the concerns discussed, has led me to produce the following functional definition:

An object is amuletastic if it is worn or deposited with a degree of proximity to the parties it is to affect, and is thought to perform any or all of the following three functions:

1. protection from or aversion of harm, disease, misfortune and/or unspecified bad or evil things (loosely equivalent to being apotropaic).
2. healing or exorcism or removal of evil from a person or place.
3. bringing success or good fortune to a person or place.

This definition puts emphasis onto the functional aspects of amuletastic objects (i.e., defining them by the things they do), rather than any iconographic or physical aspects (i.e., defining them by the things they are, whether that is material, shape, or inscription). It modifies and clarifies Bonner’s written definition of ‘amulet,’ which included non-worn objects, accounted for proximity, and described protective or good fortune bringing functions but neglected to mention healing or exorcism.

The thesis will apply this definition to the archaeological material examined in the following chapters. Unlike Bonner, it will apply it to a much wider range of material, removing his implicit additional definition of ‘amulet’ as a pendant or gem. This is motivated by the Latin and Greek texts
from the early Christian period and earlier, which demonstrated that a much greater variety of things, from rituals to deposited objects, could also be amulet in function. It confirms the assertions of writers like Faraone that an amulet could constitute something people ‘placed ... in their homes’ rather than just wore on their person.268 However, unlike Faraone, this thesis will give weight to Roman and late antique material that cannot be said to have significant ‘images and text,’ from animal remains to nails to hidden coins. It will focus on objects’ archaeological contexts and materiality as indicators for their amuletic functions and will acknowledge the other ways they might have interacted with people besides being amulet.

The pendant case from Pozzuolo del Friuli with which this chapter started is amuletic under this definition, as its materiality (the pendant case) suggests it was worn and thus had a degree of proximity to the wearer. The text inscribed on the tablet suggests it was meant to perform the function of protecting its wearer. Maltomini’s description of the object as an ‘amuleto’ is therefore in agreement with this definition. However, what he focuses less on, is the question of how the pendant worked as an amulet and what it might have done to or with its wearer and those around them. That is the subject of the next chapter.

268 Faraone 2018: 1.
Chapter 2 – Amuletic objects and the living body

This chapter investigates amuletic objects that were worn on the body. As discussed in Chapter 1, earlier work often takes for granted the idea that amuletic objects were worn on living bodies. However, such work focuses on categorising items as worn amulets, rather than thinking about the relationship between amulet and body. In more recent years, some scholars have discussed how amulets might relate to the living bodies that wore them. For example, Véronique Dasen has speculated on how magical gem users might have experienced iconography depicting gods in battle with animals as *historiolae*, mirroring and influencing their own fight against disease.¹ Christopher Faraone has noted how the placement of protective amulets on the chest or at the throat characterises the skin as a ‘line of defence’ similar to the walls of a house, and the chest or throat as entry points similar to thresholds.² Others have drawn attention to the logistical and sensory aspects of making or wearing amulets. For example, Alissa Whitmore has performed experiments to investigate how a phallic pendant suspended from the neck might have moved about with its wearer’s movements, while Adam Parker has done tactile research into beetle remains to investigate their potential use as *materia magica*, including experimenting with various methods of suspension.³

This chapter offers another way to theorise worn amuletic objects by considering three key themes: how amuletic objects could have related to the bodies of the wearer and the people close to them, how they might have created and sustained wider social relations, and finally how they could have shaped relationships between mortals and the gods or other supernatural beings. It will build on the important insights relating to sensory encounters and practicalities produced by Parker and Whitmore to ask whether, and how, worn amuletic objects shaped and were shaped by encounters with people. To do this, it will apply some of the theories and methods used in sensory archaeology scholarship. This approach encompasses not only encounters with individual objects, but also the way worn amuletic objects could be used and engaged with as objects of social discourse and of communication with the supernatural.

Written in the early second century CE, Plutarch’s *Life of Pericles* offers an anecdote that neatly demonstrates how complex wearing and engaging with a worn amuletic object could become and why these complexities deserve closer attention.

Τότε δὲ τοῦ Περικλέους ἐσικεν ὁ λοιμός λαβέσθαι λαβήν οὐκ ὄξείαν, ὥσπερ ἄλλων, οὔδὲ σύντονον, ἀλλὰ βληχρὰ τινὶ νόσῳ καὶ μῆκος ἐν ποικίλαις ἔχοσε μεταβολαῖς διαχρωμένην

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¹ Dasen 2018: 132.
³ Whitmore 2017; Parker 2019.
τὸ σῶμα σχολαίως καὶ ὑπερείπουσαν τὸ φρόνημα τῆς ψυχῆς. ὁ γοῦν Θεόφραστος ἐν τοῖς Ἑθικοῖς διαπορήσας εἰ πρὸς τὰς τύχας τρέπεται τὰ ἡθοντες καὶ κινούμενα τοὺς τῶν σωμάτων πάθεσιν ἐξιστατεῖ τῆς ἁρετής, ἵστορηκεν ὅτι νοσῶν ὁ Περικλῆς ἐπισκοπούμενως τινὶ τῶν φιλῶν δείξειε περίαπτον ὑπὸ τῶν γυναικῶν τῷ τραχῆλῳ περιηρτέμενον, ὡς σφόδρα κακῶς ἔχων ὅποτε καὶ ταύτῃ ὑπομένει τὴν ἀβελτερίαν.

‘At this time, it would seem, the plague laid hold of Pericles, not with a violent attack, as in the case of others, nor acute, but one which, with a kind of sluggish distemper that prolonged itself through varying changes, used up his body slowly and undermined the loftiness of his spirit. Certain it is that Theophrastus, in his “Ethics,”4 querying whether one’s character follows the bent of one’s fortunes and is forced by bodily sufferings to abandon its high excellence, records this fact, that Pericles, as he lay sick, showed one of his friends who was come to see him an amulet (periapton) that the women had hung round (periērtēmenon) his neck, as much as to say that he was very badly off to put up with such folly as that.’

Plutarch, Life of Pericles, 38, translation from LCL 65:110-111.

Though Pericles does not seem to think the amulet will heal him, the women who put it on him presumably consider it effective. This is clear even if Pericles is shown to disagree. Plutarch’s tale can be contrasted with a passage from Diogenes Laertius’ Lives of the Eminent Philosophers about the third-century BCE philosopher, Bion of Borysthenes. Writing in the third century CE, Diogenes associates use of amuletic objects with repentance for atheism:

πολλὰ δὲ καὶ ἄθεώτερον προεφέρετο τοῖς ὁμιλούσι, τοῦτο Θεοδώρειον ἀπολαύσας. καὶ ὕστερον ποτε ἐμπεσών εἰς νόσον, ώς ἔφασκον οἱ ἐν Χαλκίδι—αὐτόθι γάρ καὶ κατέστρεψε—περίαπτα λαβείν ἐπείσθη καὶ μεταγινώσκειν ἐφ’ οἷς ἐπλημμέλησαν εἰς τὸ θείον.

In his familiar talk he would often vehemently assail belief in the gods, a taste which he had derived from Theodorus. Afterwards, when he fell ill (so it was said by the people of Chalcis where he died), he was persuaded to wear amulets (periapta) and to repent of his offences against religion.

Diogenes Laertius, Lives of the Eminent Philosophers, 4.54; translation from LCL 184: 430-431.

4 Theophrastus was a Greek philosopher who lived in the late fourth/early third century BCE, few of whose non-botanical treatises survive beyond fragments: Sharples 2012.
Diogenes then comments, ‘Fool for wishing that the divine favour might be purchased at a certain price, as if the gods existed just when Bion chose to recognize them!’ This aside offers Diogenes’ own opinion: that Bion still did not understand how a productive relationship with the gods worked. While both stories are impossible to verify and are structured for rhetorical effect, both confirm that worn amuletic objects were used to manage fears of sickness. However, Diogenes’ narrative also relates worn amuletic objects to religious supplication and excessive, misplaced, religious fervour. Much like Plutarch, he casts piety in the form of amuletic object wearing as the province of elderly women, asserting later that Bion ‘cheerfully allowed an old woman to put a charm round his neck’ (ῥαῖ δὲ ξεν εὖμαρῶς τράχηλον εἰς ἑπωδήν). Diogenes’ ambivalence towards amuletic object use, in presenting Bion’s behaviour as too late and for the wrong reasons, contrasts with the negative presentation of amuletic object wearing as generally inappropriate for high-status men in Plutarch’s passage.

These stories show how multifunctional worn amuletic objects might have been and warns us against excessively simplistic interpretations of them. For the women in Plutarch’s anecdote about Pericles’ amulet, the object was a curative remedy. Wearing the amuletic object did do something for Pericles, just not healing; specifically, it allowed him to neutralise a household dispute via compromise. Plutarch and Theophrastus also use the amuletic object, this time to declare a stance on the power dynamics of gender and health. Pericles, the story implies, would normally have been too ‘excellent’ to surrender his bodily autonomy to women, but his illness altered or undermined this aspect of his character. When Pericles shows his visitor the amuletic object round his neck to convey the gravity of his condition, he assigns it yet another function as a communicative aid. The narrative therefore allows the amuletic object to be and do many different things; from the cure the women see it as, to the tool in social interactions Pericles uses it as, right down to the symbol of the decline of a great man Plutarch and Theophrastus present it as. These different usages interact with and affect each other, too: the amuletic object’s association with the women of his household is used to communicate something negative about its femininity by Pericles, another character in the anecdote, and by Plutarch and Theophrastus as the tale’s editorialising narrators. Similarly, in Diogenes Laertius’ story, worn amuletic objects are used by Bion as part of a series of religious acts attempting to negotiate with the divine for an improvement in health. Diogenes includes amuletic object wearing in a longer list of pious acts, including burnt sacrifice, incense, binding his arms with leather, and placing

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5 Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Eminent Philosophers* 4.57. Note the slippage between ‘periapta’ (always a material object) in his earlier statement and ‘epoide’ here, which could without this context just be spoken words.

6 Fortenbaugh agrees, saying they ‘saw in Pericles an example of good character being affected for the worse by bad fortune in the form of sickness’ Fortenbaugh and Gutas 2010: 348, fragment 463.
a *rhamnus* and laurel branch over the door. But his comment about the gods’ favour being bought, amuletic objects’ association with elderly women, and his specific wording about being persuaded to wear an amuletic object and ‘allowing’ it to be put on, characterise Bion as disempowered by fear of death. Indeed, the mention of other acts indicates that this kind of multifunctionality was not restricted to worn amuletic objects: other amulets, or even other ritual activities in general, could also be used in discourses and other ways beyond their functions. The anecdotes’ association between women and worn amuletic objects show how gender and its performance could factor into this, adding a further layer of body-amuletic object relations.

Overall, this chapter will engage with the complexities demonstrated by these two historical anecdotes by focusing on worn amuletic objects’ interactions with other things in the world. Such interactions can be understood through the frame of relational agency. This archaeological perspective, practised by new materialist scholars like Andrew M. Jones and Nicole Boivin, asserts that agency arises from interactions between things, rather than any of those things themselves ‘having’ agency. Reframing agency in this way foregrounds how different amuletic objects might interact in different ways with different people at different times, depending on what characteristics and affordances all participants brought to the occasion. Moreover, it draws attention to the variable outcomes of those relationships. Not only could they produce diverse varying healing, protective, or fortune-bringing effects, but they could also set a precedent for subsequent relations between amuletic objects, mortals, and supernatural beings.

2.1. What are worn amuletic objects?

Chapter 1 demonstrated how, while past scholarship often takes for granted that amulets were mostly or only worn objects, textual evidence from the Roman and late antique period suggests that was not always the case. Moreover, though worn amuletic objects still form an important sub-group of amulets, the act of wearing is itself not a uniform activity: a person might tie an amuletic object on themselves and wear it about their day, attach it to the clothing of a young child, tie it to an animal, or, as in Pericles’ case, allow a family member to put it on them. The archaeological material from Italy and Sicily is diverse in both forms and contexts, and therefore requires a refined application of the definition reached at the end of Chapter 1. This section will therefore identify some key groups of objects and consider how and why each might have been both worn and an amulet.

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7 Propitiating the gods for healing was a widespread practice: an interesting material example from Ticinum is two bronze tablets detailing instructions for ‘mysterious illness’ that involves propitiating gods: D’Angelo 2017.

8 Jones and Boivin 2012: 351; Rieger 2016: 309–10; Graham 2021: 29.
Lamellae

*Lamellae* are best defined as tablets made of small, thin sheets of metal and inscribed through something sharp pressed or scratched into them to leave an impression. Outside late antique Italy and Sicily, *lamella* has been applied to metal tablets by modern writers producing scholarly editions of an oracular inscribed tablet from Dodona (Greece),⁹ and a gold tablet found in a tomb in Pherae (Thessaly, Greece) thought to have been used in a mystery initiation ritual.¹⁰ However, the bulk of modern scholarship that uses the term *lamella* tends to focus on metal tablets with inscriptions that suggest amuletic functions, in that they were used to heal, protect, or bring good fortune.¹¹ Kotansky’s corpus of *lamellae* features examples from the first century BCE to the sixth century CE.¹² This range of dates also applies to known examples from Italy and Sicily, although a few slightly later ones have also been recorded. The materials for Italian and Sicilian examples are typically gold, silver, copper, bronze, or lead.¹³

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⁹ Liapis 2015.

¹⁰ Rigsby 2011.

¹¹ E.g., Kotansky 2002; Maltomini 2006; Moriggi 2006; Németh and Szábo 2016. In his corpus of *lamellae*, Kotansky defines them as inscribed pieces of metal foil, but also specifies that the inscriptions on them are ‘protective magical texts (φυλακτήρια).’ He observes that while the word ‘phylactery’ is also a recurring term used for inscribed metal tablets in modern scholarship, it works less well than *lamella* as it is easily confused with Jewish *tefillin*, Kotansky 1994: xvi n. 3. Nonetheless, not all of Kotansky’s *lamellae* are amuletic; for example, he includes a curse written on a gold tablet found in Romania (Kotansky 1994: 97–100).


¹³ Kotansky deliberately excluded lead tablets from his corpus, reserving them for a forthcoming volume.
Ancient evidence for use of the word *lamella* in this context comes from the text inscribed on a silver tablet found in Rome (fourth or early fifth centuries CE, Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2 above).¹⁴ This was inscribed with the Greek sentence ‘Against those suffering through the moon, on a silver *lamella*’

¹⁴ Bevilacqua 1999a: 18.
(Πρὸς σεληνιασζομένους ἐν λαμελλα ἀργυρῶν), above a drawing of an ouroboros snake (i.e., a snake eating its own tail). This seems to be instructions for manufacturing an amuletic object by inscribing text on a silver lamella, copied either by mistake or by design along with the letters, letter-like symbols, and images from either another example or a handbook. Meanwhile, other terms in the Greek magical papyri for sheets of metal foil inscribed with images and texts and used as worn amulets include lamna, lamnion, petalon, lepis, and ptuchion. Latin literature paints a slightly different picture: Vitruvius uses lamella to describe a sheet of shiny metal that can be used as a mirror, whereas Festus uses it to describe the material of a star placed at the entrance to inaugurated temples, and Seneca uses it as a metonym for small coins.

The texts preserved on many of the lamellae request healing, protection, or good fortune from, or in the name of, an enormous variety of named entities. These include the Graeco-Roman and Egyptian gods, the Jewish and the Christian God (sometimes assimilated together), Jesus Christ, Solomon, angels, saints, or natural phenomena like winds and rivers. Other tablets have entirely as-yet indecipherable text. Many use deliberately incomprehensible or foreign-sounding words known

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16 For the relationship between handbooks and individual amuletic objects, see (e.g.) Faraone 2018: 17–8.
17 Kotansky 1994: xiv, n. 3; Bevilacqua 1999a: 19.
18 Vitruvius, 7.3.
20 Seneca, De Vita Beata 21.3.
21 E.g., three inscriptions on lamellae (nos. 1, 2 and 3: for ease of reading, the references for the lamellae discussed in the next three pages are collected in Appendix 1) which acclaim Zeus Serapis. Another lamella addresses Ptah (no. 4), while an inscription on a sixth- to seventh-century CE lead lamella from Catania (no. 5) mentions the name Bes in a list of other voces magicae. One lamella inscription mentions Artemis as a negative influence on the bearer and orders her to flee (no. 6).
22 An Aramaic inscription on a lamella records a prayer that God will protect from various dangers (no. 7) and a lamella records an inscribed Hebrew prayer to God to save a woman named Ammia and her family (no. 8). Another lamella adjoins ‘by the great living god, who is above the god Sabaoth, Iao, who is above Iao [...]’ to protect someone named Schybos (no. 9). Lastly, a lamella is inscribed with an exorcism performed in the name of the trinity (no. 10).
23 Lamella no. 10 also exorcises through ‘the body and the blood’ of Jesus.
24 Solomon is named in the inscription on one lamella (no. 11). The seal of Solomon is referred to in inscriptions on two further lamellae, nos. 5 and 12.
25 The angel Michael is referenced in the inscriptions on lamellae nos. 5, 10, and 12. Also, lamella no. 13’s inscription asks for help from ‘Eisdramel.’ Another lamella inscription adjoins demons in the fragmentary name of an angel (no. 14).
26 Lamella no. 15’s inscription calls upon the Anargyrioi (the saints Cosmas and Damian) to drive away various diseases, weather phenomena, and pests.
27 Lamella no. 15’s inscription also calls upon the ‘twelve winds,’ while the inscription on lamella no. 12 adjoins a demon by the river Jordan and Jesus’ baptism.
as voces magicæ, 28 and letter-like drawings known as charaktēres. 29 Some of the texts use voces magicæ to denote entities which they address directly. 30 A few inscriptions from outside Italy and Sicily even address charaktēres directly. 31 The characteristics of the texts inscribed on them, from charaktēres to voces magicæ to lists of names of deities and more-than-human powers, and their content, explicitly requesting help, healing, or good luck from the powers named, are not exclusive to these objects. Similar traits recur in inscribed gems and metal pendants (on which more below), and on larger, less wearable items such as terracotta plaques, 32 ostraka, 33 or parts of buildings, such as inscribed stones or mosaics. 34

Ostensibly, these tablets do not seem especially wearable. They are flat squares or rectangles made of thin metal foil with no holes for suspension or attachment. However, several were found rolled up inside cylindrical or hexagonal metal cases that had one or more suspension loops soldered on. 35 Some of the pendants thus produced were found in graves, including one at the neck of the deceased. 36 Some mummy portraits from second- and third-century CE Egypt also depict the deceased

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28 Frankfurter summarises this group as a ‘broad subcategory of incantations that modern philologists have found largely untranslatable [which] includes everything from names and epithets of deities from around the ancient Mediterranean world, to equally traditional forms of assonance and alliteration, creative wordplay (such as one finds in children’s word-games), and, presumably, actual ecstatic glossolalia’ (Frankfurter 2019: 636) He argues that they are the products of their makers’ ideas about ‘exotic’ or ‘foreign’ language, but also were written to preserve or repeat their utterance out loud (Frankfurter 2019: 641–2).

29 As noted in Chapter 1 (n. 53), charaktēres refers to letter-like symbols on manuscripts and inscriptions. Chapter 1 also observed that characteres is a Latin term Augustine and Caesarius of Arles used to refer to unacceptable protective objects.

30 For example, one inscription on a lamella refers to ‘Semesilam the fire-darter over the world,’ (no. 16) and the name Semesilam reappears in the inscriptions on lamellae nos. 13 and 17.

31 These come from areas like Hebron and Apamea and include inscribed amuletic objects and curses (Frankfurter 2019: 655).

32 E.g., the fourth-century CE inscribed terracotta tablet, now lost, once acquired by an antiquary in Rome, that recorded a Greek and Latin exorcism addressing a demon and ordering them to remove themselves from ‘Florentia, who lusta bore.’ Trismegistos no. 279245; EDR no. EDR119611; discussed in Giannobile 2005b: 164–5; Bevilacqua 2010: 45–6.

33 E.g., the eighth-century CE clay tile fragment inscribed with an exorcistic Greek prayer to the ‘God of Alexander,’ ‘God of Polydoros,’ and the angel Michael for ‘help,’ and a fragmentary historiola (a narration of an event that models the desired cure: for historiolae, see p. 195) This fragment was found in the Villa di Publio Valerio at Lazzàro and is now at the archaeological museum in Reggio Calabria. D’Amore thought it likely that, given the object’s relatively large dimensions (16.5x11cm), it was meant to have been deposited rather than placed or worn on a living body. See Mosino 1995; D’Amore 2005. 157–60; Bevilacqua 2010: 41–2.

34 See Chapter 5.

35 These consist of lamellae found in Ripe San Ginesio, Macerata (Kotansky 1994: 124–5); Trento (no. 19) Como (see the lamella discussed in Caporusso 2001a, Blockley and Niccoli 2006: 147–8; Miazzo 2006; and those discussed in Tagliasacchi 1877; Mastrocinque 2002); Molteno, Lecco (Museo di Lecco cat. no. St. 57519, Magni 1912; Nobile 1992): 26, 59–60; Priolo Gargallo (no. 8); Rome (no. 14); Syracuse (Orsi 1893: 301); and Calabria (dated to the second or third centuries CE, held a much older tablet: see Marshall 1911, no. 3155, British Museum inv. 1843,0724.3). A further unopened ‘capsule’ pendant was found in Aquileia (Giovannini 2001), while one found in Rome and dated to the late fourth century CE was found to contain tiny nails (De Rossi 1888; Denzey Lewis 2017: 263, n. 20).

36 See Chapter 4.
wearing a tubular pendant with a suspension loop (Figure 2.3). This offers further information on how such pendants might have been used in death and is also indicative of how they might have been worn in life.


**Inscribed gems**

The inscribed gems discussed in this chapter are those so-called ‘magical gems’ that have been assigned Italian or Sicilian contexts. ‘Magical gems’ are a heterogeneous modern grouping of inscribed gems based on certain shared characteristics, such as the inscription of *charaktēres* and *voces magicae*, or of composite creatures like the Chnoubis snake,[^37] Pantheos[^38], or a cockerel-headed, snake-footed (‘anguipede’) creature[^39]. They use similar textual devices as the *lamellae*, but typically lack an accompanying inscription that specifies the ailments, dangers, or desires that the object was

[^37]: A lion-headed snake, discussed Bonner 1950: 54. Italian examples are gem nos. 1 and 2 (again, for ease of reading, the references for the gems discussed in the next three pages are collected in Appendix 2).
[^38]: A ‘polymorphic’ deity that combines the features of multiple gods, discussed Faraone 2018: 144–6. Italian examples are gem nos. 4 and 5.
[^39]: For this definition, see Nagy 2002; 2019. Examples from Italy and Sicily include gem nos. 5, 6, 7 and 8.
made to address. Nonetheless, the use of voces magicae and charaktēres suggests similar usage, as does a minority of inscriptions that convey wishes or requests for protection or good health. Moreover, numerous medical, magical, or natural historical manuals describe the use of gemstones, sometimes inscribed with images, for specific kinds of healing, protection, or to bring good luck.

Assessing the wearability of these gems can be difficult. Many were found without any setting and others had been reused in later periods, such as the third-century CE jasper gems whose places of manufacture have been attributed to Aquileia and Volterra, which are now in modern rings. However, textual and material sources can help us to assess how these gems might have been worn. Galen suggests that an inscribed jasper, used as a treatment for the stomach and oesophagus, could be ‘tied on’ as an amulet (περιαπτόμενον; periaptomenon), and elaborates that some people set them into rings, while he conducts an experiment with an uninscribed piece of jasper he attached to (ἐξῆπτον; exēpton) a necklace. Additionally, some late antique gem settings do survive. Two gems found in the Piazza della Consolazione treasure (Rome), dated to the second or third centuries CE, are set into gold cases with suspension loops, to form a pendant: both the setting and the necklaces they hang from are dated to the fifth or sixth centuries CE.

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40 Gems from Italy and Sicily that have inscribed voces magicae or charaktēres include gem nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 14.
41 Examples are gem nos. 13 and 15.
42 E.g., the Chnoubis gems described in n. 37 above are thought (based on descriptions of their use in some medical manuals from the ancient world) to have been used for stomach problems: Bonner 1950: 54. Another example of gems with a specific purpose, though none are known to have come from Italy or Sicily, are the uterine gems, used to control the womb and thus address various dangers or conditions, from the ‘wandering womb’ to childbirth (Aubert 1989; Hanson 1995; Dasen 2018; Tsatsou 2019). See also Nagy 2012.
43 Björklund 2017; Tsatsou 2019.
44 van den Hoek, Feissel, and Herrmann 2015.
47 Gem nos. 3 and 6. The hoard is thought to have been deposited during the fifth century.
Figure 2.4: Gem inside a gold casing, hung as a pendant from a gold chain alongside a gold ‘marriage medallion.’ Piazza della Consolazione treasure. Gem dimensions: 3.13 x 3.6cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, public domain, https://images.metmuseum.org/CRDImages/md/original/dp30716.jpg Accessed: 14/03/2023.
Figure 2.5: Gem inside a gold casing, attached as a pendant with two suspension loops onto a gold chain alongside an embossed gold medallion. Piazza della Consolazione treasure. Gem dimensions: 2 x 1.6cm. Second image shows back of medallion and a close-up of the gem. Willers and Raselli-Nydegger 2003: 135.

While one pendant setting leaves the other side of the gem visible (Figure 2.4), the other does not (Figure 2.5). Another earlier magical gem, set into a fifth- or sixth-century CE ring and found at Santa Maria dell’Orto in Rome, also allows for both inscribed sides to be seen (Figure 2.6).48

48 Gem no. 5.
This suggests that by this period, some magical gems had inscriptions that were hidden from onlookers’ eyes, either temporarily until the wearer twisted the pendant round, or permanently by the setting in which they had been placed. This reflects the same hiddenness of the writing on lamellae, which were rolled up and kept inside tube pendants, and were therefore also inaccessible to the viewer.

Inscribed brooches, rings, buckles

Annewiese van den Hoek et al. argued that any inscription wishing good luck had a ‘magical flavor,’ because it implicitly called upon a force or deity to bring that luck.\(^{49}\) Wearable objects like brooches or rings inscribed with wishes for good fortune could therefore (if we accept their argument) be understood as amuletic.\(^{50}\) Similarly, general wishes like vivas/vivat in deo or Κ(ύριε) ε βοήθη τον

\(^{49}\) van den Hoek, Feissel, and Herrmann 2015: 309.

\(^{50}\) E.g., a ring from Locri (Reggio Calabria, CIG 8575, van den Hoek, Feissel, and Herrmann 2015: Group C.2b), a sixth-century gold applique from Luni (La Spezia, Alessi, Ratti, and Rossini 2005: 119, EDR no. EDR132421; Trismegistas no. 503840), a fourth-century CE pendant from Ravenna (now at the archaeological museum of Ravenna, pictured at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ciondolo_a_goccia_in_filigrana_con_grappoli_d%27uva_e_le_lette_re_VTFL_(Vtere_Felix)_dalla_ne copoli_marabina_310_dc_ca.jpg Accessed: 14/03/2023), and a ring inscribed in Hebrew at the archaeological museum in Cagliari (inv. 9449; JIWE i 196, EDR no. EDR153823). Less wearable items could have similar inscriptions, such as the fourth- or fifth-century CE spoons from a treasure trove in Vercelli (ICI XVI 220-2).
φορ(ούντα) (may X live in God, or Lord help the wearer) are also found inscribed on worn objects like brooches, pendants, or rings (e.g., Figure 2.7). Some gemstones also have similar inscriptions.

Some gemstones also have similar inscriptions. It is worth considering how much these inscriptions suggest the objects had an amuletic function and how much they indicated commonplace wishes that were never taken seriously. Indeed, the way that amuletic objects function through relating to different people means they could be both at once. These inscribed requests for good fortune are much less specific and actionable than many of the healing, protective, or good-fortune-bringing inscriptions found on the lamellae, for instance. However, the association between some good-luck jewellery inscriptions and ‘cryptic’ letters and words noted by van den Hoek et al. might indicate that some were made with an understanding of

51 E.g., a ring from Syracuse (CIG 9057, van den Hoek, Feissel, and Herrmann 2015: Group G.3b), a ring from the Pantalica treasure (van den Hoek, Feissel, and Herrmann 2015: Group G.3b), a brooch from Sicily (Manganaro 2002: 483, EDR no. EDR109545; Trismegistos no. 284819), a ring from Ostia (CIL XIV 5313.4, EDR no: EDR110086; Trismegistos no. 258240), nine brooches from southern Italy (ICI XIII 52-60), a ring from Palestrina (CIL XIV 4123.1, EDR no. EDR160876), a brooch from Tortona, Alessandria (ICI VII 114), a ring from Aeclanum, Campania (ICI VIII 82), a ring from the Montorio area, Bologna (ICI X 2), a ring from Chiusi, Siena (ICI XI 63).

52 E.g., a ring with a gem setting inscribed with the Latin Cromati vivas (Cromatus, may you live) from Formia, Latina (CIL X 8061.11), and a gem inscribed with vivas in deo from Osimo, Marche (ICI X 31). Also, gem no. 15 bears a wish that its owner ‘always bear [it] in good health.’

the same textual techniques that were used in the manufacture of inscribed *lamellae*, magical papyri and gems, and curse tablets.\textsuperscript{54} These similarities suggest that at least some were made using an understanding of how such objects worked, which makes it more likely that they were also used as amulets. Nonetheless, their other functions (as gifts, as decorative objects, and as items with monetary value) probably also played a role in their lives. In the sections below on amuletic objects’ interactions with the wearer and with society, I will examine this tension, and the ways a worn amuletic object might do different things at different times, in greater detail.

**Round pendants**

This section deals with *bullae*, medallion-shaped pendants, and pierced coins. As Szilágyi notes, in classical Latin the term *bulla* not only denotes a pendant but also any object ‘of round or globular shape,’ which could be a round pendant, but also knobs on a piece of furniture or on a belt.\textsuperscript{55} However, the term tends to be used by modern scholars to refer to metal pendants composed of two round or teardrop-shaped plates of metal, joined by soldering, hammering, and/or a hinge that doubles as a means of suspension on a necklace (e.g., Figure 2.8). Similar pendants have been found in central Italy and attributed to the Etruscans, suggesting a long history of use.\textsuperscript{56} In modern archaeology, the term can also be used to denote amber pendants that seem to be carved replicas of the same kind of pendant (Figure 2.9). *Bullae* are understood as amulets because of the claim in literary texts from the Roman and late antique worlds that they were used to protect people of certain social statuses or who were undergoing specific ceremonies.\textsuperscript{57} According to iconography that depicts people wearing *bullae*, they tend to have been worn as single pendants on a chain or string around the neck.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{54} Frankfurter 2019.  
\textsuperscript{55} Szilágyi 2005: 9.  
\textsuperscript{56} Dasen 2003b: 283.  
\textsuperscript{57} See Section 2.3 below.  
\textsuperscript{58} Goette 1986: 143–51.
Late antique medallion pendants and pierced coins have also been interpreted as having been made and worn for amuletic purposes. In the case of the medallions, this conclusion typically comes from an evaluation of the inscribed or moulded images or text that adorned them, which strongly resemble those used in the lamellae and gems. This includes composite figures of animals (see Figure 2.10).\(^{59}\)

\(^{59}\) Examples from Sicily are discussed in: Manganaro 1989: nos. 6, 12–3; Giannobile 2002: nos. 2–5; Zellmann and Martínez-Chico 2021. Also a bronze pendant from Rome (Bevilacqua 1999a: 27–30).
ouroboros snakes, voces magicae, charaktēres, direct addresses of conditions and calls for help, and the invocation of Solomon (again, see Figure 2.10). Other images are shared with those on contemporary building features from across the empire, like the ‘much-suffering eye,’ depicting a disembodied eye attacked by various animals and weapons which was likely used against the Evil Eye, or the ‘holy rider,’ a nimbate horse rider depicted trampling a demonic, often feminine, figure, identified via text on them variously as Solomon or St. Sissinius. Pendants could also depict healing or protective saints like Theodorus or Simeon Stylite. Many come from late antique Sicily, though some have been attributed to areas like Ostia or Rome, and one depiction of Simeon Stylite comes from Aquileia.

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60 Giannobile 2002: nos. 1–5; Zellmann and Martínez-Chico 2021.
63 One pendant from Gela addresses the womb (Mastrocinque 2005a). Other pendants, also from Sicily, have inscriptions in Greek reading ‘help,’ or ‘Lord, help’ Manganaro 1989: no. 23; Giannobile 2002: nos. 6–7.
65 Sicily: Elworthy 1895: 130; Giannobile 2002: nos. 6–8; Camminecci 2014. The ‘much-suffering eye’ is named after an apparent reference in the late antique Testament of Solomon to a demon called Lord Envy (Ῥυξ Φθονεωθ) who casts an Evil Eye on every human and whose power is dispelled by an engraved ‘much-suffering eye.’ (Testament of Solomon 18.39. Translation: Elliott 2016: 227). For the much-suffering eye in building decorations, see Chapter 5.
66 Sicily: Manganaro 1989: no. 23; 1994a: 459–60; Giannobile 2002: nos. 6–9, 12, 15, 21; Camminecci 2014. The holy rider also appears in a wall painting at the monastery of St Apollo in Bawit, Egypt: Maguire, Maguire, and Duncan-Flowers 1989: fig. 23.
68 Giovannini 2010.
Figure 2.10: Photographs and drawings of a round bronze pendant depicting a seated figure and an anguipede, each surrounded by voces magicae and an ouroboros. Sicily. 5.4 x 5.4cm. Giannobile 2002: pl. 13a.

Some coins were pierced and reinscribed with similar images to the pendants discussed above. For example, the reverse of a contextless coin pendant, consisting of a follis of Maximian (late third century CE), was replaced with a much-suffering eye (Figure 2.11).69

Figure 2.11: Follis of Maximian, reverse replaced with a much-suffering eye. Findspot unknown. No dimensions given. Perassi 2011a: pl. VII.8.

69 Perassi 2011a: 300. For further reuses in the Byzantine empire, see Maguire 1997: 1041; Winges 2018.
Additionally, some have argued that pierced coins that were not modified in this way were used as amulets. Claudia Perassi has rejected the literary evidence that is often cited in support of this argument as insufficient, but has noted that material evidence does demonstrate that some pierced coins were used as amulets (namely Roman and Byzantine coins modified into pendants or other jewellery pieces with additional amuletic inscriptions or images). However, she calls for caution in identifying every pierced coin as an amulet, arguing that pierced coins could have any combination of decorative, amuletic or devotional functions. This combination of functions makes it especially difficult to identify which pierced coins were amuletic from their materiality alone, unless they were altered with amuletic inscriptions or images. It has been argued that archaeological context (such as a findspot alongside more clearly amuletic pendants) can help make the case for a possible amuletic function, as might the depiction of gods or concepts like Concordia or Felicitas. Perassi argues for this but suggests that it might be hard to separate out religious and/or magical use as individuals’ engagements with these objects could be highly personal. The situation is further complicated if one considers how a pierced coin might have been used as an amulet prior to being put in the archaeological context in which it was found, leaving no trace of this past use. Overall, for most pierced coins in the archaeological record for late antique Italy and Sicily, the possibility that each might have been used as an amulet remains uncertain.

So much for pierced coins’ use as amuletic objects: what of their status as worn objects? There is limited evidence from Italy for how pierced coins might have been worn. No depictions of coins being worn from this area survive. A few examples from Italy show signs of wear that demonstrate they were worn on the body, such as suspension holes that are broken through, or one side that is significantly more worn. Moreover, several pierced coins have been found in graves with beads, or set into pendants on necklaces.

Phallic, crescent moon, and clenched-fist pendants

Numerous finds of phallus-shaped pendants, made from materials as diverse as cast bronze, carved amber, bone, or coral, or moulded glass paste, come from all over the Roman empire, including Italy.

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70 Perassi lists some early examples of such arguments: Perassi 2011b: 223–4. For a modern example of the argument, see Maguire 1997: 1039–40.
74 For a survey of those found in northern Italy, see Perassi 2011a.
75 E.g., a coin from a tomb in Brescia: Perassi 2011a: 276.
76 E.g., a coin from the burial area at Pianello Val Tidone (Piacenza): Perassi 2011a: 289–90.
77 E.g., the coin pendant in Perassi 2011a: 281–2.
78 E.g., a gold necklace with three coins (solidi of Honorius and Theodosius II) set as clasps and the central setting of the pendant (Trapani): Baldini Lippolis 2010: 130.
and Sicily (Figure 2.12, Figure 2.13, and Figure 2.14). The majority are quite early, dated to the first two centuries CE. However, a minority have been found in contexts which date them to the third century or later.

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80 As observed by Giovannini and Tasca 2016: 59.

81 E.g., one from Brescia (fourth century CE, Gagetti 2004; Whitmore 2017: 51), and two from Aquileia (second or third centuries CE, Calvi 2005 nos. 323, 334).
The suspension loops found on these objects makes the case for them having been used as pendants: some broken loops might also indicate quite extensive wear. 82 One much earlier bronze votive recently excavated from a deposit in San Casciano dei Bagni (Siena) depicts a swaddled infant with a phallic pendant placed on its chest, although it shows no means of attachment: nonetheless, it suggests they

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were placed in proximity with the body. Though this votive was Etruscan, it does offer an idea of the context from which some Roman and late antique ways of wearing pendants might have emerged. In addition, several child-sized gold rings (Figure 2.15) with a phallus motif embossed or soldered onto the bezel have also been found, including three attributed to sites in Italy.

Phallic imagery has been widely assumed to have been a Roman way to protect against envy and the Evil Eye. Pliny the Elder says the god Fascinus protected children and generals, was worshipped in Rome by the Vestals, and was hung under generals’ chariots during their triumphs to protect them from envy. He does not, however, clarify what the god looked like in this guise. Information on the material form Fascinus took comes from other Latin texts, where the word is a slang term for an erect penis or a dildo.

Moreover, some scholars have identified as phallic pendants the ‘shameful and deformed’ pendants worn by children around their necks to protect them discussed by Varro in the first century BCE. This information bolsters the identification of phallic jewellery as amuletic items.

There are also numerous crescent-moon-shaped pendants from late antique Italy and Sicily that can be characterised as worn amulet objects. As Henning Wrede has demonstrated, in portraits and depictions of people in terracotta figurines, reliefs, and portraits of the imperial period of the Roman empire prior to the third century CE, there is a strong association between crescent moon pendants and women, children, and animals, but rarely (if ever) free adult men. As he observes, this might reflect a wider contemporary norm under which free adult men did not tend to wear necklaces.

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83 Lambertucci 2021.
84 One from Aosta, discussed in Ori delle Alpi: 365 no. 31 (Figure 2.15); one at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale dell’Umbria, Beni Culturali no. 1000002373; one at the Museo Poldi Pezzoli (Beni Culturali no. 0302023637, Roffia, ed. 1981: 274, n. 61).
85 For the Evil Eye and its relationship with envy in the Roman and Byzantine empires, see Dickie 1995; Elliott 2016; 2017.
86 Pliny, NH, 28.7/28.39.
87 Horace, Epode. 8.18; Petronius, Satyricon, 138; Arnobius, Against the Pagan, 4.7.
89 Wrede 1975: 246.
However, he notes that this norm changed after the third century CE, and men were depicted in texts and iconography as wearing gold necklaces, including ones with crescent-moon pendants.\textsuperscript{90} This suggests that, depending on the object, some amuletic objects might no longer have been as distinctively gendered during late antiquity. Despite this, we will see in the section below that many amuletic objects and practices continued to be associated with women by their detractors.

Overall, much like the phallic pendants, the crescent-moon pendants found in Italy and Sicily that can be dated to the Roman and late antique periods were made from diverse materials, such as precious metals or amber.\textsuperscript{91} Unlike phallic pendants, their use seems to have declined much more slowly over the course of late antiquity: several examples date from the third century,\textsuperscript{92} with a significant number dating from the fourth or fifth centuries.\textsuperscript{93} Wrede has described how crescent-moon pendants continued to be depicted on the gear of horses on Byzantine textiles and ivory and gold objects until the twelfth century,\textsuperscript{94} while depictions of men on a fourth-century CE sarcophagus in Arles, tomb frescoes in Durosturum (Silistra) and a fifth- or sixth-century CE Coptic textile show them wearing crescent-moon pendants.\textsuperscript{95} He also observes that the Trier museum has examples of crescent-moon pendants dating from the first to the fourth centuries CE,\textsuperscript{96} while finds of crescent-moon pendants from just beyond the borders of the late Roman empire suggest that the imagery was able to spread even at that time.\textsuperscript{97} Perhaps this was because crescent moons were more palatable images in an increasingly Christian age, given that phalluses were shaped like the pagan god Fascinus. The reappearance of phalluses (and vulvas) on some pilgrim badges in late medieval northern Europe might suggest that if the temporary lack of phallic imagery on jewellery was due to shame around genitals, this was not a uniform sentiment throughout the medieval period.\textsuperscript{98}

\textsuperscript{90} Wrede 1975: 246. He does observe that the strong proportion of men depicted seem to be servants, suggesting it was still a marker of lower social class.
\textsuperscript{91} For metal examples, see Emanuele 2020, for amber, Calvi 2005 nos. 366–70.
\textsuperscript{93} Noll 1963: 131, 141; Pavesi 2001: no. 15; Emanuele 2020.
\textsuperscript{94} Wrede 1975: 244.
\textsuperscript{95} Wrede 1975: 246.
\textsuperscript{96} Wrede 1975: 245–6.
\textsuperscript{97} Wrede 1975: 250–1.
\textsuperscript{98} Gimbel 2012.
As in Figure 2.16 and Figure 2.17, these pendants tend to have a suspension loop attached to the apex of the moon, with the horns pointing downwards. Often, both of the crescent’s horns have a small round ball on either tip.

The case for identifying crescent-moon pendants as amuletic comes primarily from two late antique texts. One, an entry in Hesychius’ *Lexicon* (fifth century CE), glosses the word σελήνις (*selēnīs*)...
as a *phulaktērion* which is worn at the necks of children. The other, a late antique scholion for Gregory Naziansus, edited in the *Patrologia Graeca* from a medieval codex held in Munich, glosses *periammata*, a word that can be translated as ‘amulet’,\(^99\) as ‘the bits of coloured thread round wrists, arms, and necks; and moon-shaped plates (*σελήνια μηνίσκων*) of gold, silver, or cheaper material, which foolish old women fasten upon infants.’\(^100\) Like the anecdotes from Plutarch and Diogenes with which this chapter began, the scholion associates women with supplying others with worn amuletic objects.

The associations between crescent-moon pendants, women, and children hold for other references that do not mention an amuletic function. Faraone notes that these objects are associated with women and children in the Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic Greek worlds.\(^101\) The Latin term *lunula* (literally ‘little moon’), is used by Plautus to describe a gold gift given to a girl by her father on her birthday, along with a gold ring.\(^102\) In late antiquity, Isidore defines *lunulae* as ‘adornments of women in the likeness of moons, little gold hanging *bullae*’ (*ornamenta mulierum in similitudinem lunae, bullulae aureae dependentes*), while Tertullian refers to *lunulae*, in his sermon on how women should dress, as an adornment to be avoided.\(^103\) Jerome’s Latin translation of a passage of Isaiah renders the Hebrew *šahärōnîm* (כָּהָרֶנִים, crescent-moon ornaments) as *lunulae*, in a prophetic passage describing the finery of the daughters of Zion that will be taken away by God.\(^104\) Cyprian quotes this same passage to criticise the dress of Christian women who had taken vows of virginity.\(^105\) This triangulation of femininity, worn amuletic object use, and ornamentation will be returned to in Section 2.3.

The other group of living beings mentioned in textual sources as wearing a crescent-moon pendant around their necks is domesticated animals. The references come from Latin poetry of the Neronian period and later: Statius describes the horse ridden by Parthenopaeus as wearing an ivory crescent necklace on its upper chest (*niveo lunata monilia dente*), while Calpurnius Siculus describes a tame deer that not only has glass *bullae* hanging from a strap encircling its midriff, but also a boar’s tusk hanging from its neck in a crescent shape.\(^106\) This textual confirmation that domestic animals could wear pendants will be returned to in Section 2.2.

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\(^99\) See Chapter 1.


\(^103\) Tertullian, *On the Adornment of Women/De cult. fem.* 2.10.

\(^104\) Isaiah 3:18-19.

\(^105\) Cyprian, *De habitu virginum*: *PL* 4.451-2.

Another image that appears frequently in combination with phalluses or crescent moons on pendants, and occasionally on its own as a pendant, is the clenched fist. These depictions of clenched fists portray an obscene hand gesture widespread in the ancient Mediterranean that perhaps originated in Egypt.\textsuperscript{107} It consists of a closed fist with the thumb inserted between the first two fingers. The materials of the examples from Italy and Sicily vary from glass paste (Figure 2.20),\textsuperscript{108} to amber (Figure 2.18),\textsuperscript{109} and bronze (Figure 2.19).\textsuperscript{110} They also tend to be early in terms of the dates assigned to them, either dated very vaguely as ‘Roman,’ or to the first or second centuries CE.\textsuperscript{111}

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\textsuperscript{107} Faraone 2018: 71.
\textsuperscript{108} Pantano, Angelini, and Quaranta 2006; Scerrato 2006; Mandruzzato and Giovannini 2008: 87.
\textsuperscript{109} Calvi 2005 nos. 338-42.
\textsuperscript{110} Manganaro 1985: 163.

\textit{Figure 2.18: Amber clenched-fist pendant, pierced at centr, undated. Aquileia. 2.5 x 1.3 x 0.4cm. Calvi 2005: pl. 83.1d.}
Unlike *bullae*, crescent-moon pendants, or phallic pendants, little textual or iconographic evidence survives about clenched-fist pendants. When describing rituals during the Lemuria (a Roman festival of the dead), Ovid describes a similar gesture. He says that the worshipper (possibly the
**paterfamilias**\textsuperscript{112} must get up at midnight, be barefoot, and make ‘a sign with his thumb in the middle of his closed finger,’ then wash his hands before continuing with the rest of the ritual.\textsuperscript{113} This rite is associated with the dead: the black beans the worshipper later casts away without looking back are picked up by ghosts, and the ritual ends when the worshipper clashes bronze and says ‘Ghosts of my fathers, leave!’ (\textit{manes exite paterni}) nine times.\textsuperscript{114} The gesture therefore seems to be part of the preparation for the ritual, but its function beyond this is less clear.

The identification of objects of this shape as worn amuletic objects also rests on modern apotropaic use of the gesture.\textsuperscript{115} The modern Italian term, \textit{mano di fica}, identifies it as representing the vulva. The aggressive and insulting undertones of the gesture’s modern counterpart might indicate, as Faraone observes, that it was meant more as a sign of aggression towards encroaching danger than a good-luck symbol of fertility.\textsuperscript{116} However, while some textual evidence exists for the use of the extended middle finger as an aggressive and obscene gesture,\textsuperscript{117} no such contextualisation exists for the ancient \textit{mano di fica} gesture.

Phalluses, crescent moons, and clenched fists do not only appear as pendants by themselves. Numerous pendants, including from Italy and Sicily, combine the three (e.g., Figure 2.23), sometimes with additional elements like bulls’ heads (Figure 2.21). Many larger examples may have been worn by animals, particularly horses.\textsuperscript{118} Others, smaller in dimensions (e.g., Figure 2.22), could have been used as pendants for humans.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{112} Meadows 2014: 117.
\item \textsuperscript{113} Ovid, \textit{Fasti}, 5.429-35.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Ovid, \textit{Fasti}, 5.436-44.
\item \textsuperscript{115} Rouse 2017: 27.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Faraone 2018: 72.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Nelson 2017.
\item \textsuperscript{118} These will be investigated further in Section 2.2.
\end{itemize}
Figure 2.21: Cast bronze bull head pendant, with phallus, clenched fist. Bull snout ends in a penis. Suspension ring from top, first to third c. CE. Veneto. 4.8 x 6.2cm. Beni Culturali no. CRV-RA_0010825.

Figure 2.22: Bronze clenched-fist and phallus pendant, suspension loop at top, undated. Sicily. 2.5 x 4.5cm. Manganaro 1996: 139, fig. 21.
Just as with those other pendants, metals and bone were used to manufacture these objects. However, a strong majority are made of bronze, suggesting greater uniformity of choice of material.

2.2. Worn amulets and the person

Having reviewed the evidence for amulet objects that were worn on the body, this next section will consider the relationships worn amulet objects could have with the person wearing them. The main areas of interest will be the way an amulet object’s material nature could have affected its wearer’s senses, what that would have done to their experience of engaging with it, and what the different outcomes of those engagements were. It will investigate what ‘wearing’ might have meant to someone in the Roman and late antique world and think about how the experience of wearing an amulet object might have differed at different times and in different spaces. To do this, the section will use language and concepts developed and used in sensory archaeologies of the Greek and Roman worlds.

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As noted by several introductory essays, the terms ‘sensory archaeology’ and ‘sensory studies’ cover numerous approaches. What these approaches have in common is an understanding of a ‘shared and sensing body,’ and a desire to draw attention to that as ‘a way of broadening our perspective on the past.’ While early sensory studies on the ancient Greek and Roman worlds collated evidence for sensory encounters in Latin and Greek textual sources, more recent investigations have examined archaeological evidence for both objects and places, including late antique evidence. This more recent research tends to follow the ideas of the ‘sensory school’ originated by David Howes and Constance Classen, in which the senses are emphasised ‘as both an object and means of study,’ and understood as being formed and conditioned differently by different societies. This approach comprises a variety of methodologies. It includes Yannis Hamilakis’ calls to revolutionise the entire field of archaeology as a ‘sense/memory practice’ focusing on encounters between entities that should dissolve the dualities of mind/body, self/other, and subject/object, but also includes investigations focused on specific places, experiences, events, and objects. These can utilise the personal experiences of the investigator, or combine textual and material evidence to consider how possible experiences would change according to seasonal and other rhythms.

Drawing attention to those aspects of an amuletic object’s materiality that might have affected its wearer’s senses and those of others around them, often called an object’s ‘sensory affordances,’ is valuable as it foregrounds data that might otherwise be overlooked. While, historically, academic focus has been on cataloguing the various visual aspects of amulets, there is other sensory information available that should be appreciated, such as the sounds amuletic objects produce or the feeling of touching them. The sensory affordances of individual objects can help imagine when, how, why, and for whom their amuletic functions might have been most prominent when people formed relationships with them.

This section will begin by outlining what the materiality of certain Italian and Sicilian amuletic objects suggests about how they were worn, then move on to thinking about how sensory encounters and relationships with them might have differed. Finally, it will use ideas from sensory archaeology

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120 Day 2013: 6.
121 Betts 2017a: 2–3.
123 E.g., Hunter-Crawley 2013.
124 Skeates and Day 2019: 2.
125 Hamiliakis 2013: 417.
127 Betts 2017b; Graham 2018.
about habituation to ask questions about how amuletic objects placed by one person on another entity, such as children or animals, might have worked.

How was something worn?
The previous section demonstrated how items might have been attached to the body, through being tied around necks or limbs, onto belts by string passed through suspension holes or loops, or as rings, bracelets or brooches. The method of attachment is usually inferred from the survival of the means of attachment, whether a suspension hole or loop, the cord it was attached to, or a means of clipping onto fabric. However, the fact that something could have been worn does not necessarily mean that it was worn. Nonetheless, material evidence like a suspension hole or loop, along with other information about an object’s sensory affordances, can allow us to imagine different ways people might have encountered the object and the experiences and relationships that emerged from that. This section will therefore outline the material and textual evidence for wearing amuletic objects, before considering a case study of amber objects from Aquileia and the evidence they provide both for wearing and for haptic sensory encounters. The following section will investigate the bigger picture of amuletic objects’ sensory affordances, using further textual evidence.

As mentioned above, a few amuletic objects with means of attachment show signs of wear: some are worn out more on one side suggesting they rubbed repeatedly against the wearer, while others have signs of wear or breakage at the suspension hole. For example, an undated, centrally pierced bronze coin found in a Roman grave in Pianello Val Tidone (Piacenza), has an obverse that is entirely worn away, but the reverse depicts a discernible figure with its arms outstretched.128 Another example of wear is a necklace consisting of a gold chain with a bulla pendant suspended on it, found in a grave in Milan. The chain had a broken clasp, suggesting use before its deposition (Figure 2.33).129

This evidence for how an amuletic object might form a physical relationship with a living body is bolstered by evidence from medical texts. In the second century CE, Galen expressed scepticism about the use of engraving a radiate serpent on a green jasper to cure stomach ailments:

128 Perassi 2011a: 289–90. Other examples are the phallic pendants broken at their suspension loops now at the archaeological museum in Milan (Bolla 1997: nos. 133–4, 143–4), or the corroded bronze coin found in excavations at the via Trieste in Brescia where a peripheral hole has broken through at the top, perhaps from rubbing against a string (Perassi 2011a: 276).
τούτου μὲν οὖν τοῦ λίθου κἀγὼ πείραν ἰκανὴν ἔχω, καὶ ὑμαθίον γέ τι ποιήσας ἐκ λιθιδίων τοιούτων ἐξήπτων τοῦ τραχήλου σύμμετρον οὕτως, ὡς ψαύειν τοὺς λίθους τοῦ στόματος τῆς γαστρὸς, ἐφαίνοντο δὲ μηδὲν ἦττον ὕψιες ἢ εἰ τὴν γλυφὴν οὐκ ἔχοιεν, ἢν ὁ Νεχεφψ έγραψε.

‘The testimony of some authorities attributes to certain stones a peculiar quality, which is actually possessed by the green jasper. **Worn as an amulet,** it benefits the stomach and the oesophagus. Some set it in a ring and engrave on it a radiate serpent, just as King Nechepsos prescribed in his fourteenth book. Of this stone I, too, have personal experience. I made a string of small stones of this type and **hung it from my neck** at such a length that the stones touched the oesophagus. They seemed no less beneficial, even though they had not the design that Nechepsos prescribed.’


The same prescription, radiate serpent included, appears in a late fourth-century CE treatise by Marcellus of Bordeaux, so Galen’s experiment did not gain complete traction even among medical writers.\(^{130}\) Although his experiment is only meant to test the efficacy of the inscribed image on the jasper, Galen also alters another variable, namely the way the stone was worn. Galen’s decision to wear jasper beads rather than Nechepsos’ ring with a jasper setting does echo how other prescriptions seem to aim at contact between the amulet object and the body part to be protected or healed.\(^{131}\) Indeed, he emphasises how the necklace touched his oesophagus. But the original prescription of a ring demonstrates that strict association between amulet and affected body part was not a fixed rule.

Amuletic objects therefore could be worn and the physical interaction between body and object was theorised to have curative powers, but the specific details of where on the body something should go were less consistent. A useful case study to help us understand the different ways an amuletic object might have interacted with a human body, and the sensory encounters that might have resulted, consists of the amber carvings from Aquileia (Figure 2.24 and Figure 2.25). These objects are largely undated, apart from a minority attributed to graves of the first century BCE to the second century CE.\(^{132}\) Pliny the Elder asserts that amber ‘is of benefit to babies when it is attached to

\(^{130}\) Faraone 2018: 152. The radiate serpent has been identified, as the Chnoubis serpent that appears on many magical gems, often radiate, with a lion’s head and accompanied with the Greek word ‘Chnoubis,’ and a series of crossed-out S signs (Bonner 1950: 54). The name comes from Demotic Egyptian and Greek astrological tables, representing an astrological decan (Faraone 2018: 154; Dasen and Nagy 2019: 428).

\(^{131}\) Faraone 2018: 247–51.

\(^{132}\) See the datable graves edited in Calvi 2005.
them as an amulet’ (infantibus adalligari amuleti ratione prodest).\textsuperscript{133} Moreover, some of the shapes that these ambers were carved into are indicative of amuletic function, such as phallic carvings.

Figure 2.24: Amber phallic pendants, mostly undated. Aquileia. Calvi 2005, pl. 81.

Figure 2.25: Amber phallic pendants, mostly undated. Aquileia. Calvi 2005, pl. 82.

Figure 2.24 and Figure 2.25 demonstrate how some of the phallic carvings had no means of suspension. Glynn Davis has argued that a lack of suspension holes meant that an amulet could have been concealed within clothing, suggesting that that would have made them ‘easier to roll and rub in the hand.’\textsuperscript{134} The limited evidence of wear on most of the phallic carvings pictured above does invite

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[\textsuperscript{133}] Plin. \textit{NH} 37.12/37.51.
\item[\textsuperscript{134}] Davis 2018: 76.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the question of whether they were habitually held by a living body or produced for burial. The lack of recorded archaeological context for most of these items is unhelpful. Of the objects photographed in Figure 2.24 and Figure 2.25, just three objects have assigned provenances.

Other amber objects from Rome and Aquileia do show signs of wear but are not as obviously identifiable as amulets. A small, irregularly shaped amber cube of a golden yellow hue (Figure 2.26) was found in a sarcophagus containing the mumified body of an eight-year-old girl, recovered from a late-second-century CE tomb in Rome known as the ‘tomba di Grottarossa.’ The images in Figure 2.26 show the cube as rounded on all its corners, with an X incised on one face and further incisions along at least one other side. It is significantly less regular in shape than the other amber items attributed to the tomb, including a shell-shaped hinged case and miniature jug, which might imply that its irregular shape is a sign of wear. Gabriella Bordenache Battaglia knew of no similar objects but speculated that the X could be a Greek χ with a secret magical significance, while the indentations along the side reminded her of a casket with a sliding drawer. Unfortunately, little information was recorded on precisely where the cube was found in the sarcophagus. It would, for instance, have been interesting to know whether it was placed on the girl’s body, tucked into her clothing, or elsewhere.

Unpierced amber objects from Aquileia, classed by Calvi as toys and ‘trinkets’ alongside dice, knucklebones, and game counters, show some signs of wear. They include highly polished nuggets of

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135 Chapter 3 will investigate the difference between amuletic objects made for and reused for grave goods.
136 Calvi 2005: nos. 320, 323, 335.
139 Bordenache Battaglia 1983: 120.
amber of various colours, and some semi-circular objects, some of which have repeated indented patterns along their curved edge (Figure 2.27).

The unusually high shine on the amber nuggets might indicate that they were deliberately polished, or that they were held and rubbed in the hands in much the same way that Roman writers like Martial, Juvenal, or Fronto described women and girls doing. The indentations near the middle of the photographed side of the uppermost semi-circular amber object in Figure 2.27 are also intriguing, suggesting it might have been knocked against something sharper, carved or scratched, or even chewed on (as opposed to the regular indentations along the edges of both it and the object below, that seem more deliberately crafted). Amber is a relatively soft material, so those activities are likelier to leave a mark on them than on other items of jewellery.

These diverse ambers demonstrate how amulet-like objects could have encountered bodies in more ways than just being tied to limbs or belts or being held in the hand. Children might have had devices sewn into their clothing in pouches, as with the Roman-period child’s shirt found in excavations at the Cave of Letters in the Judaean desert, of which it has been argued that the pouches tied into the garment contained apotropaic or prophylactic materials. If an item was carried around

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140 Martial Epigrams, 3.65.5, 11.8; Juvenal, Satires, 26.573–4, Fronto, On Speeches 4. Jet gorgoneia from Roman Britain were also capable of a high polish or lost features, possibly from being rubbed: Parker 2016a: fig. 9.6.
141 However, despite its popularity in modern alternative medicine circles, no Roman writers associate amber with teething cures or toys. Instead, they recommend pierced tooth amulets worn around the neck and smearing various substances on the gums: see Dasen 2015: 191–2. It is possible that amber objects were generally too small to give to babies who might choke on them, even when pierced as a pendant.
142 Causey 2019: 18.
143 Bohak 2015: 92; Morgan 2017: 25.
in the folds of clothing, a bag, or a pouch, its owner could have taken it out to hold, or reached in to touch or rub it. Children might have sucked or bitten on it, while adults might have scratched it or knocked it against something else. The range of potential ways to engage with an amuletic object’s materiality is overall far wider than wearing a single pendant. Moreover, as demonstrated by the textual evidence from Galen and Marcellus of Bordeaux, this variety did not necessarily affect the purposes for which they were worn.

How does wearing an amulet interact with the senses of the wearer?
The act of wearing could therefore comprise a variety of different encounters with amuletic objects, from stringing them onto a necklace to sewing them into a pocket. What is yet to be investigated is how this variety might have affected the relationship a wearer had with an amuletic object. Another passage from On Simple Remedies alerts us to the variety of possible sensory affordances one might encounter when wearing an amulet:

οἷς δὲ ἡμαντικὴ τὴν δύναμιν ἐστὶν ἰαχυρός, ὥστ' οὐκ ἄν ἀπελπίσαιμι καὶ περιαπτομένην αὐτὴν εὐλόγως πεπιστεύσθαι παιδίων ἐπιλήψιας ἰάσοθαι. καὶ οὐδα γέ ποτε παιδίον ὁκτὼ μοι μηδὲ ὅλως ἐπιληφθέν ἐξ ὀτου τῆς ρίζης ἐφόρει, ὡς δ’ ἀπερρύῃ πως ἀπὸ τοῦ τραχήλου τὸ περιάπτον, εὐθὺς ἐπελήφθη, καὶ αὐθίς τε περιαφθέντος ἐτέρου πάλιν ἀμέμπτως εἶχεν. ἐδοξε δὲ μοι κάλλιον εἶναι καὶ αὐθίς ἀφελεῖν αὐτὸ πεῖρας ἑνεκα, καὶ οὐτω πράξαντες, ἐπειδὴ πάλιν ἐστάθη, μέγα τε καὶ πρόσφατον μέρος τῆς ρίζης ἐξηρτήσαμεν αὐτοῦ τοῦ τραχήλου, κάντευθεν ἢ τοῦ λουποῦ τελέως ὑψίῃς ἐγένετο ὅ παις καὶ οὐκέτ’ ἐπελήφθη. εὐλόγων οὖν ἢ ἂπορρέοντά τινα τῆς ρίζης μόρια, κἀπείτα διὰ τῆς εἰσπνοῆς ἔλκομενα, θεραπεύειν οὖτω τούς πεπονθότας τόπους ἢ καὶ τοῦ ἀέρος αὐτοῦ τρεπομένου καὶ ἀλλοιομένου πρὸς τῆς ρίζης.

‘Peony root, taken as a whole, has an extremely drying power, so I cannot abandon the hope that it was right to have faith in it to treat epilepsy in children, even if suspended. And I knew a child who had absolutely no attacks of epilepsy for eight months, during which time he wore a piece of root (of peony); but when, in some way, the amulet came off his neck, he was immediately seized by epilepsy, and when another piece of root was attached to him, he found himself again perfectly well. It seemed to me that it was better, in order to make a real test, to remove the root. That’s what I did. The child was again seized with convulsions. I attached to his neck a large piece of root, very fresh, and since that time the child has been henceforth in perfect health and has had no more attacks of epilepsy. It was therefore logical to consider either that certain particles of the root, falling off and then
being breathed in, were having a therapeutic effect on the affected parts; or that the air itself was transformed and altered by the root.’

On Simple Remedies 6.3 (Kühn 11: 859–60); translation: Gourevitch 2016: 268

Although Greek botanical texts also discuss the efficacy of peony as a treatment for epilepsy based on its assigned astrological traits,¹⁴⁴ Galen focuses on several material aspects of the root that he deems efficacious: its freshness and friability, its smell, and its potential ability to change the air. Much like the tactile nature of the late antique eye, which was conceived of in some quarters as shooting out particles that touched the seen things,¹⁴⁵ smell here overlaps with touch. Galen therefore pays attention to non-visual sensory affordances in his efforts to work out how the amulet worked. This suggests that some in the ancient world were aware of the non-visual aspects of sensory encounters with amulets and that these aspects could affect the relationship the wearer had with the object. This should embolden us to seek out what non-visual sensory affordances amulets from late antique Italy and Sicily might have had.

A useful case study here is phallic pendants and figurines depicting single phalluses. Alissa Whitmore has published several articles on phallic pendants from across the Roman Empire. In one, she relates an experiment where a volunteer was filmed performing activities (playing cards, conversing, walking) while wearing a phallic pendant. She concluded from the footage that, when its wearer was moving their head or neck, the pendant was ‘in a near-constant state of motion,’ but was relatively little affected by walking.¹⁴⁶ In another article, Whitmore contrasts the Roman material with modern-day Thai usage of phallic amulets, particularly the difference between the Thai pendants’ typically being hidden when worn and the most-likely visible Roman ones.¹⁴⁷ Both methodologies pay close attention to the visual aspects of wearing an amuletic object, as Whitmore posits that one of the ways the ancient amulets might have worked was in drawing the eye away from the wearer, citing how Plutarch asserts that probaskania (anti-Evil Eye amulets) worked by trying to catch the eye of the envious through looking bizarre.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, the tactile eye mentioned above, which shot out particles that touched the things it saw, had implications for ideas about envy and the Evil Eye. Basil of Caesarea, a fourth-century CE Christian bishop, describes envy as being ‘hurled’ (epiballein; ἐπιβάλλειν) from the eyes at its victims.¹⁴⁹ This demonstrates how Roman and late antique concepts

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¹⁴⁴ Gourevitch 2016: 268.
¹⁴⁶ Whitmore 2017: 57.
¹⁴⁷ Whitmore 2018: 59.
¹⁴⁹ Limberis 1991: 164–5. He also notes that in this Basil echoes Plutarch, who asserted that the eyes draw on the evil influence of envy and then attack the target ‘as if with poison arrows,’ (Limberis 1991: 176).
of the senses did not strictly adhere to modern-day divisions between them. However, a phallic pendant’s sensory affordances were not restricted to visual aspects or tactile aspects attributed to onlookers: tactile properties also came into play for the wearer. We need to ask what sensory traits the wearer might have accustomed themselves to, and which would have led them being conscious of an amuletic object’s presence.

As noted in Section 2.1, examples exist of phallic pendants fashioned from metal (especially bronze), coral, glass paste, bone, and minerals. Different materials would each have warmed at different rates with contact with the wearer’s living body, but also heated and cooled differently in different environments. More conductive materials like metal would been noticeably cool when first put on. Other affordances, like the object’s weight hanging from a cord around the neck, limb or on a belt,\textsuperscript{150} may have been easier to get used to (known as ‘habituation’ in sensory studies) and thus would not have constantly dominated the perception of its wearer.\textsuperscript{151}

The size and shape of the pendant is also relevant: a larger item that ‘gets in the way’ more would have been more prominent in its wearer’s consciousness whenever that happened. The phallic pendants that depict single phalluses found in Roman and late antique Italy and Sicily can be divided into two major types. The most common is broadly cylindrical, depicting an erect penis and, usually but not always, the testicles sculpted on one end and lines on the other indicating the glans.\textsuperscript{152} The other is a flat, square shape with rounded corners denoting the testicles, while incisions on the surface denote a flaccid penis. In terms of dimensions, they tend to have similar volume but those depicting erect penises are longer and thinner, which might have caught the eye when in motion (as Whitmore suggests) or have otherwise caught the wearer’s notice. In his article on the sensory aspects of signet rings, Ian Marshman notes how a ring’s wearer would have grown accustomed to it yet would have been reminded of its presence when it caught on something or was removed.\textsuperscript{153} The same might be said for phallic pendants, and for small phallic carvings in general. Marshman’s framing highlights how variable one’s access to the sensory aspects of a worn amuletic object might be: a wearer might have become accustomed to affordances like weight or texture, and only have had their attention drawn back to it under other circumstances, such as when it caught on things or otherwise got in the way of movement.

\textsuperscript{150} Whitmore mentions that Roman soldiers may have worn phallic pendants on their belts; Whitmore 2018: 21.

\textsuperscript{151} For habituation and sense loci, see Betts 2017a: 30.

\textsuperscript{152} With amber phallic pendants, Calvi distinguishes them as Groups A and B(α and β), Whitmore just calls them ‘erect’ and ‘flaccid.’ Calvi 2005; Whitmore 2017; 2020.

\textsuperscript{153} Marshman 2017: 141.
Amuletic objects ‘getting in the way’ leads us to think more deeply about the role of kinaesthetic sensory affordances. In her pendant-wearing experiment, Whitmore drew attention to how motion on the part of the wearer led to the pendant being in near-constant motion, which she noted was likely to draw the eye of an onlooker. This motion could have led to the pendant knocking against other objects and jingling, especially if it was on an active child’s string of crepundia,154 or near to noisemaking items like bells.155 Votive figurines depicting children wearing crepundia, while typically earlier in date than our period under study, do show strings of pendants that hung diagonally across the child’s body, or, in other cases, swaddled infants with visible pendants, but no clear means of attachment.156 The way the pendant remained ithyphallic during most of the upright activities investigated by Whitmore raises the question of whether and how these pointy objects would have been noticeable to the wearer when lying down or trying to sleep.157 Other motion on the part of the wearer would also have interacted with the object’s sensory affordances: rubbing amber was described as generating a smell by Roman writers,158 while the different textures (largely smooth, but with sharp edges where incisions have been made) would have been sensed by someone fiddling with it. The signs of wear on the Aquileian amber objects might have been the products of these interactions. The Roman texts also raise the question of the varying degrees of conscious engagement: they bring up girls and women holding and rubbing amber specifically to produce scent, suggesting one could have deliberate as well as casual physical contact with amber. Davis has argued that this rubbing might have had a ritual function to activate the object’s ritual functions.159

If an amulet-like object was worn to protect someone or bring them good luck, especially from specific dangers or for specific benefits, then the wearer might have been more aware of its weight and pressure on the skin or body at times when they encountered those dangers or stood to gain those benefits. They might have reached for the object, which would have resulted in conscious engagement with more of its sensory affordances, such as its tactile qualities, scent, or the sound it could make when touched, tapped, or rubbed. All of these things affected the relationship a wearer might have with the object: when it came to mind, and most importantly, when it was felt to be working.

154 Indeed, the term crepundia itself indicates a noise-making object: Dasen 2003a: 179. For more on crepundia, see Section 3.1. 
155 Parker 2018. Aside from crepundia, two phallic pendants held at the archaeological museum in Aquileia (one bronze and one gold) are joined on a single gold loop (Artefacts no. AMP-4011).
156 For the former, see Faraone 2018: 28–35. For the latter, see the Etruscan bronze swaddled infant at San Casciano dei Bagni, discussed at p. 69.
157 The encumbrance this caused likely depended on the length of the cord it hung from.
158 Juvenal (6.573-4), Martial (3.65.5, 11.8), Fronto (On Speeches 4). It also produced an electrostatic effect: Causey 2011: 38.
159 Davis 2018: 75.
What does a worn amuletic object do to the senses of those around the wearer?

The focus in this section so far has largely been on the experience of the wearer and assumes that they were always adult humans who chose to wear the amulet themselves. However, this was clearly not the case for all the amuletic objects in the archaeological record for Italy and Sicily. Some objects were worn by children, as can be determined from textual sources, and from archaeological evidence associating amulets with the bodies of children in graves. Indeed, as Pericles’ amulet story revealed, even adults’ choices to wear an amuletic object could be complicated: Pericles allowed an amulet on his person but did not necessarily seek it out. Furthermore, Marshman observes that signet rings’ small size restricted who could access the image, as viewers had to either come in the wearer’s personal space or be handed it to look at. This idea of restricted access demonstrates how those around the wearer would have interacted differently with worn amuletic objects’ sensory affordances.

Section 2.1 above discussed some larger bronze pendants, typically depicting a combination of one or more phalluses, clenched fists, and a crescent moon (Figure 2.28). These may have been attached to the harnesses of domestic animals, especially horses. The evidence for harness amulets in Italy and Sicily offers a useful way to explore the issues of agency and differences in sensory experience that the examples above raise.

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160 E.g., the textual sources linking amber amulets and children discussed above, p. 81, or those discussing bullae in Section 2.3.
161 See Chapter 4.
162 Marshman 2017: 139.
163 Whitmore suggests that phallic pendants could have ‘provided indirect protection’ to soldiers when hung on their mounts or chariots, especially given Pliny’s assertion that they hung from the triumphal chariot: Whitmore 2018: 22.
Figure 2.28: Die-cast pendant of crescent moon/lunula, phallus, clenched fist, second frontal phallus, first-second century CE. Veneto. 6.8 x 6.2cm. Beni Culturali no. CRV-RA_0010819.

In Italy, harness pendants like these are mainly known from the north-east region around the Veneto.\textsuperscript{164} Similar objects have been found in a much wider area covering much of Gaul, Germania, and parts of Spain,\textsuperscript{165} while further unprovenanced examples are held in numerous museum collections, including in the UK.\textsuperscript{166} Interpreting these pendants as amulets for horse harnesses explains their distribution across the empire, clustering around areas that saw Roman military activity.\textsuperscript{167} Further designs of bronze ‘harness amulets’ have also been identified; namely, crescent moons (\textit{lunulae}) (measuring 4-7 centimetres in width) and a small number of ‘coffee bean’ or ‘scallop shell’ designs interpreted as depicting vulvas.\textsuperscript{168} Nicolay identifies \textit{lunulae} and ‘bone amulets’ (roundels of antler horn, sometimes carved with images of genitalia) as key protective symbols in first-century CE horse gear.\textsuperscript{169} He argues that the use of protective images expanded in later centuries to include the phallic pendants that combine crescent moons, phalluses, and clenched fists.\textsuperscript{170}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{164} See this chapter, n. 119.
\item \textsuperscript{165} See Artefacts nos. PDH-4019, PDH-4112, PDH-4048, and PDH-4111.
\item \textsuperscript{167} Hoss 2020; Parker 2020.
\item \textsuperscript{168} Hoss 2020: Lists 6-8.
\item \textsuperscript{169} Nicolay 2007: 227.
\item \textsuperscript{170} Nicolay 2007: 229.
\end{itemize}
What remains to be understood is where exactly on a horse’s harness these pendants hung, which is key to understanding how the horse’s rider and those around them experienced them. The fourth-century CE ‘Belgrade cameo,’ depicting a triumphant emperor trampling his enemies, shows a single tiny downward-pointing crescent-moon pendant hanging from the collar/‘breastband’ of the horse (Figure 2.29).\(^1\)

\(^1\) Also noted by Noll 1963: 66. The cameo, a fragment of a larger decorative piece, was found on an excavation in the Serbian countryside near Belgrade c. 1900: Krug 2011.
The six breastbands made of interlocking gilded silver plates found in the fourth-century CE Esquiline treasure (one pictured at Figure 2.30) are similar to that shown on the cameo, with one key difference.\(^{172}\) They have a single large downward-pointing lunula pendant hanging from a central plate depicting an eagle, while smaller teardrop pendants hang from other plates depicting lions. This would imply that at least the pendants with a single suspension loop at the top primarily hung from the breastband of the horse’s harness. Gravestone reliefs dating from the first to the fourth centuries CE, primarily from Germania, show that multiple pendants could also hang from the breastband or from the straps behind the saddle.\(^{173}\)

Archaeological evidence from Roman horse burials in Hungary, Belgium, and the Netherlands offers a more complex picture, where phallic and lunate pendants adorned different parts of the horse’s skeleton.\(^{174}\) In the Hungarian burial, four phallic pendants adorned the sides of the horse’s head and chest, while in the third-century CE Belgian burial they seem to have been positioned on the chest or behind the saddle.\(^{175}\) The two Dutch examples also differ: one had phallic pendants associated with the bridle and a large \textit{lunula} that was associated with the head and thus probably hung on the forehead or neck, the other had a large lunate pendant that terminated at both ends in an eagle’s

\(^{172}\) Junkelmann identifies them as breastbands, asserting that they are too short for the band behind the saddle; Junkelmann 2008: 98. For a full summary, see Shelton 1981: 89–91, nos. 36-41. The objects are now at the British Museum: museum nos. 1866,1229.29, 1866,1229.28, 1866,1229.30 1866,1229.25, 1866,1229.26, 1866,1229.27.

\(^{173}\) Bishop 1988: nos. 1, 4, 6-8, 10-6, 20, 25, 28.


\(^{175}\) Ibid.
Northern Italy does not have any horse burials from this period to confirm whether this happened there. However, the comparative evidence above is dated to a similar period to the Italian material, making the positions described above plausible, if not certain, for this area.

In summary, potential locations for amuletic pendants on horse gear were: hanging from the breastband, hanging from the strap behind the saddle, or hanging from the bridle. In those positions, the horse’s rider would have struggled to see them from the saddle, while they remained highly visible for anyone else in the vicinity. However, when the horse was in motion, the bronze pendants were likely to strike other metal parts of the harness like the phalerae (particularly when hung from the breastband or behind the saddle) and make a noise in time with the horse’s movements. Any jingling would have been joined by and thus amplified by any bells on the harness. The sound of pendants jangling when the horse was in motion would remind the rider of their presence. This noise might also have been heard by bystanders, provided they were close enough. However, bystanders would also have been able to see the pendants. Their designs, frequently incorporating obscene gestures and genitalia, were likely thought to draw the evil eye away from their wearer. It follows the logic of Roman envy and the evil eye that onlookers (the potential sources of the evil eye) would have had better visual access to the amulet than the horse’s rider. However, the sound of the pendant in motion meant that the rider was not completely cut off from sensing the amulet’s presence and could be reassured and protected by it as a result.

Were these amulet objects meant to protect the horse, the rider, or both at once? Chapter 4 will demonstrate that livestock and crops could have been protected by amuletic objects placed in or on specific buildings or enclosures. Owners and riders might have been trying to draw the envious eye away from horses, as valuable sources of wealth and a vital part of cavalry equipment in a military setting. However, the accompanying use of crescent moons, clenched fist, and animal imagery, all of which is slightly less specifically related to envy and the evil eye in textual sources, suggests these objects were also meant to offer a more generalised protection. This protection and the protection from envy might have extended to the horse’s rider, much as the image of Fascinus that Pliny says was hung from the triumphal chariot of a general was meant to protect him from envy. The horse might therefore have been protected as a valuable item, or as an extension of the rider’s self.

This case study has investigated how a protective object on another living creature, in this case a horse, might have interacted with the senses of its rider and others around them. We

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176 Ibid.
177 See Chapter 1, n. 218.
178 Pliny, NH, 28.7/28.39.
considered how visual and auditory affordances, particularly jingling and movement, affected people. Onlookers might have felt warned off envying the wealth on display, while the rider might have felt protected. The anecdote from Plutarch discussed in this chapter’s introduction, about Pericles’ having an amulet ‘put on him’ when elderly and unwell, shows how decisions on wearing an amuletic object did not happen in a vacuum, nor were they always taken by one wearer alone. Those who felt responsible for another’s wellbeing, whether this was a human adult or child or indeed a horse, could put an amuletic pendant on them, with varying levels of consent on the part of the wearer. One could argue that subsequent interactions with the pendant’s sensory affordances would then have reminded them of the protection conferred: in Pericles’ case, this would have been the women around him. Such interactions could also have indicated to those wishing the wearer harm that the wearer was protected.

Summary

This section has investigated some of the different ways in which a worn amuletic object might have interacted with proximate entities. It has considered the circumstances under which an object’s wearer and those around them might have been likely to engage with it. The way an amuletic object’s functions and sensory effects could have entangled more individuals than just the wearer indicates how they took on a social role. In this section, we have primarily concerned ourselves with individuals close to the wearer who either felt responsibility for them or wished them harm. The next section will further investigate the different ways that worn amuletic objects could relate to society at large, including both their users and their detractors.

2.3. Worn amuletic objects and society

Plutarch’s anecdote about the sick Pericles being made to wear an amuletic pendant demonstrates how multiple other people could interact with amulets. This chapter’s introduction also discussed how Plutarch and Theophrastus used the story to demonstrate how sick Pericles was at the time, relying on norms about who usually used amulets (women) and who usually had power over their bodies (men like Pericles) to show how old age and illness had upended those norms. This section will explore the relationship between worn amuletic objects and the society in which they were embedded. Firstly, it will use a case study of bullae to assess their roles as social signifiers and protective objects based on evidence from Roman literature and objects found in Italy and Sicily dated to the Roman and late antique period and evaluate how bullae changed in shape and function over time. This case study will demonstrate how amuletic objects might have functioned as objects with significant meaning in society, marking specific statuses (citizenship, childhood, wealth) to others. Next, this section will evaluate the references made to worn amuletic objects in sermons and ecclesiastical law by some of
their most vocal opponents: early Christian preachers. This will show how worn amulet objects were used in rhetorical discourse to think and preach with as vessels of symbolic meaning, especially to designate ‘bad Christians.’ These uses not only constituted another way to relate to the objects, but also could end up shaping how people engaged with the objects subsequently.

Overall, this section will investigate the role of worn amulet objects as social objects in the worlds of both their users and their detractors. These objects were used to designate either a positive social status, such as *bullae* marking a wealthy, free child, or a negative one, such as a coin-pendant denoting an unfaithful Christian. It will compare this role to those of other items of dress, from the *toga praetexta* (which itself had amuletic function) to discourses over ascetic women’s dress practices, to show that worn amulet objects were also items of dress, subject to social strictures and invested with powers in social interactions.

**Dress, protection, and social status**

Dasen observes that some amulets have a social function in that they ‘can characterise status and gender,’ notably the Roman gold *bulla* for freeborn boys.\(^{179}\) This section will begin by investigating what a *bulla* did in Roman imperial-period literature, then compare it to archaeological evidence to argue that *bullae* changed in form and function over time: in the fourth century CE, *bulla* pendants were both smaller than in previous centuries and likely to have been worn by a larger demographic than young, free boys. This suggests that their social function may have been different from that described by Dasen. However, this section will argue that *bullae* still functioned as items of adornment and as objects that designated their wearer as wealthy bearers of privilege that deserved the protection they conferred.

In *Roman Questions*, written in the first/second century CE, Plutarch tackles the problem of why Romans ‘adorn their children’s necks with amulets [περιδεραίοις, *peridermaioi*, literally ‘objects passed around the neck’] which they call *bullae*.’ He ponders whether it was in honour of the Sabine women, or to honour Tarquin’s bravery in battle as a boy. He continues:

> Ἡ τοῖς παλαιοῖς οἰκετῶν μὲν ἐρᾶν ώραν ἐχόντων οὐκ ἦν ἄδοξον οὐδὲ αἰσχρόν, ὡς ἔτι νῦν αἱ κωμῳδίας μαρτυροῦσιν, ἐλευθέρων δὲ παῖδων ἱσχυρῶς ἀπείχοντο, καὶ ὅπως μηδὲ γυμνοῖς ἐντυχόντες Βάμφινονοσείην, ἔφορον οἱ παῖδες τὸ παράσημον; Ἡ καὶ πρὸς εὐταξίαν ἐστὶ φυλακτήριον τούτο, καὶ τρόπων τινὰ τοῦ ἀκολάστου χαλινός, αἰσχυνομένων ἀνδροῦσθαι πρὶν ἢ τὸ παιδικὸν ἁπαθεῖσθαι παράσημον; Ὁ μὲν γὰρ οἱ περὶ Βάρρωνα λέγουσιν ὧν πιθανὸν ἔστι, τῆς βουλῆς ύπὸ Αἰολέων βόλλας προσαγορευομένης, τούτο

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\(^{179}\) Dasen 2015: 177.
σύμβολον εὐβουλίας περιτίθεσθαι τούς παίδας. Ἀλλὰ ὃ ῥα μὴ καὶ τοῦτο διὰ τὴν σελήνην φοροῦσι.

‘Or did the Romans of early times account it not disreputable nor disgraceful to love male slaves in the flower of youth, as even now their comedies testify, but they strictly refrained from boys of free birth; and that they might not be in any uncertainty, even when they encountered them unclad, did the boys wear this badge? Or is this a safeguard to ensure orderly conduct, a sort of bridle on incontinence, that they may be ashamed to pose as men before they have put off the badge of childhood? What Varro and his school say is not credible: that since boulê (counsel) is called bolla by the Aeolians, the boys put on this ornament as a symbol of good counsel. But consider whether they may not wear it because of the moon.’


Plutarch’s first suggestion here is that the bulla was meant to protect a freeborn boy from sexual assault after being mistaken for a slave, much like the argument that the toga praetexta was meant to mark a freeborn child as deserving protection from inappropriate behaviour or exploitation. Along with Macrobius’ later (early fifth century CE) assertion that it was generals in a triumph who carried the bulla ‘containing spells…against the Evil Eye,’ this seems very close to the function of phallic pendants on triumphal chariots in Pliny the Elder’s first-century CE testimony, where they too were meant to drive off fascinatio.

Other writers also connect youths wearing the bulla and toga praetexta to historical precedents: Plutarch, in his Life of Romulus, describes the practices as two of the honours given to the Sabine women’s sons. Macrobius claims that Romulus honoured the first son of the Sabine women this way, and says that the bulla and toga praetexta were meant to remind the wearers of the need for courage and shame respectively. Pliny and Macrobius both assert that Tarquinius Priscus (the fifth legendary king of Rome) presented his son with a bulla and toga praetexta after killing an enemy in battle.

Some of these writers also suggest that bulla use was not restricted to young boys. Macrobius claims that the reason Tarquinius Priscus presented his son with the bulla and toga praetexta was that the latter was already worn by magistrates and the former by those celebrating a triumph, who

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182 Plutarch, Life of Romulus, 20.
183 Macrobius, Saturnalia 1.16-17.
'carried it before them in the procession, containing spells (remediis) believed to be most effective against envy/the Evil Eye (adversus invidiam),' though he also offers the alternative origin story that Priscus simply valued the dress of freeborn boys enough to put rules in place about it. That suggests that Macrobius believed that adult men wore the bulla under certain circumstances in the Archaic period. The repeated appeals to history emphasise how quintessentially Roman the practice was thought to be. According to them, the bulla marked its wearer both as the bearer of privileges and expectations and as someone in need of protection. These narratives overall link masculinity among free, elite boys and men in an idealised past city of Rome with the use of bullae.

Round, double-sided pendants are depicted on young men and boys in sculpture from the late Roman republic onwards, which is why modern scholars identify them as bullae. As discussed in Section 2.2, these strongly resemble pendants found in the archaeological record, which are also identified as bullae on this basis. Figure 2.8 and Figure 2.9 show what these pendants could look like: they could vary from the metal pendants mentioned above to similarly shaped carved amber pendants. However, both the archaeological and iconographic record tell a different story about who might have worn these objects and, implicitly, why. Objects of this shape are not exclusively associated with young men. Small signs of discrepancy already exist in iconography, where at least one portrait in terracotta relief of a Roman soldier (possibly emperor Caracalla) standing triumphant and holding an enemy up by their hair, seems to depict him wearing a bulla. (Figure 2.31) This would suggest, as with Macrobius’ evidence, that adult men could wear a bulla under certain circumstances, particularly martial ones.

184 Macrobius, Saturnalia 1.8-11.
However, the discrepancy goes further. Young girls might also have worn *bullae*: writing in around 211 BCE, Plautus has his heroine recognise a gold *bulla* among a boxful of *crepundia* she was given as a baby, though Hans Goette warns that this might have been a clumsy Latin translation of the original Greek play.\textsuperscript{187} Some portraits of women and girls depict round pendants that have been identified as *bullae*. This identification is, however, also disputed by Goette.\textsuperscript{188} Yet archaeological evidence from

\textsuperscript{187} Goette 1986: 137–8. Plautus, *Rudens* 1171. Goette also discounts past suggestions that various depictions of women in reliefs or mummy portraits depict women or girls wearing *bullae*, arguing it was restricted to portraits of young boys; Goette 1986: 144–5.

\textsuperscript{188} Goette 1986: 137–8.
two Roman provinces, Britain and Pannonia, come together to show that *bulla*-shaped pendants were found in the graves containing remains identified as adult men, women and children, suggesting that gender and bulla use might have been very different on the margins of the empire.\textsuperscript{189}

![Image redacted for ORO deposit.]

\textit{Figure 2.32: Items from tomb no. 11 in the necropolis on via Gorizia, Riva del Garda. The bulla is the pierced metal object on the bottom right, while the pierced coin is bottom left. The other items pictured are the beads mentioned above, two bronze armillae, and an iron billhook. Ori delle Alpi: 498, fig. 120.}

While the archaeological record for *bullae* found in late antique Italy or Sicily is not as complete, there are three examples of *bullae* associated with human remains identified as female. Firstly, a pendant described as a double-sided bronze *bulla* was found associated with a pierced coin and three glass beads in the fourth-century CE grave, identified as being of a seven- to eight-year-old girl, in a rural burial area in Riva del Garda (Figure 2.32).\textsuperscript{190}

\textsuperscript{189} Szilágyi 2005: 21; Parker 2016b. Péchoux lists finds of *bullae* in Gaul but does not give details on any graves they were found in: Péchoux 2010.

\textsuperscript{190} \textit{Ori delle Alpi}: 498, no. 1216.
Secondly, a double-sided *bulla*, this time gold and decorated with ribbing on the sphere and a soldered-on gold ball in the centre and found with a fragmentary gold chain, comes from an inhumation grave (dated 350-425 CE) containing remains identified as a woman aged 30-35, in the cemetery underneath the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan, part of a rich funerary assemblage (Figure 2.33).

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Thirdly, the early fifth-century CE tomb of the empress Maria, wife of Honorius, in what is now the south-eastern transept of the Vatican, was found in 1544 to contain a gold ‘bulla’ with Latin text in a chi-rho shape (Figure 2.34).\textsuperscript{192} Now in the Louvre, it reads \textit{Honori(us), Maria, Stel+icho, Ser+ena, viva+tis} on one side and \textit{Stel+icho, Serena, Ech+eri(us), Therma+antia viva+tis}.\textsuperscript{193} These translate to a wish that a list of members of Maria’s family (herself, Honorius, her father Stilicho, her mother Serena, and her siblings Echerius and Thermantia) may live.\textsuperscript{194} While this pendant was certainly round and golden, that is where most resemblances to traditional \textit{bullae} end. Instead, the pendant is a squat cylinder set with two inscribed agates on either end. The gold between them is decorated with emeralds, rubies, and diamonds, and has a gold suspension loop attached. The pendant’s original excavators called it a \textit{bulla}, but that categorisation is questionable given how much it differs in form from the \textit{bullae} described above. However, the object still demonstrates how amuletic double-sided round pendants in this period varied in nature enough that it is difficult to know where to draw the line in identifying \textit{bullae}.

\textsuperscript{192} Bevilacqua 2014: 514.
\textsuperscript{193} Kotansky quotes an inaccurate 19\textsuperscript{th}-century reading, MARIA DOMINA NOSTRA FLORENTISSIMA STILICHO VIVAT (Kotansky 1994: 105).
\textsuperscript{194} In the same grave was a gold \textit{lamella} within a silver capsule containing the Greek text ‘Μιχαήλ Γαβριήλ Ῥαφαήλ Ούριήλ’ (Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Ouriel; the names of archangels), though the latter is now long missing.
The two first examples suggest that bullae were quite small in this period: the first is visibly the size of a coin in photographs (Figure 2.32), while the second has a diameter of 1.7 centimetres. Even Maria’s bulla/pendant has a fairly similar diameter (1.8 centimetres). Other data suggests bullae had shrunk over the first three centuries in the common era. While metal finds from first-century CE Italy and earlier had diameters ranging from six to ten centimetres,195 amber bullae from Aquileia, which date from the first century CE onwards, are much smaller, typically measuring around two centimetres in width.196 Metal bullae dated to the first- to second centuries CE have similarly smaller dimensions, suggesting this was not just a response to the demands of raw amber.197 Even smaller are the metal bullae from the third century onwards that measure under two centimetres in diameter.198 The same trend was noted by Szilágyi in Pannonian material which ranges from 1.4 centimetres to 2.1 centimetres in diameter and dates from the second century CE onwards.199

The changes in scale and form might indicate a change in bullae’s sensory affordances and amuletic functions. However, the archaeological contexts in which they were found remain the same: they continue to be found in graves and hoards.200 This shows that they remained appropriate funerary objects and might show they were still worn in life. The inscription on Maria’s pendant, requesting that she and her family may ‘live,’ suggests a continued association between bullae and guarantees of safety, though it is left open in this case whether the safety requested is physical, spiritual, or both. The change in size also means bullae were increasingly indistinguishable from pierced coin pendants and amuletic medallions, as can be seen by the strong similarity between the coin and the bulla pendants in Figure 2.32. However, the variety of the dimensions of medallions is far greater, with many measuring 4-7 centimetres in diameter,201 though a few are smaller.202

Perhaps, then, the bullae’s change in size aligned them more closely with other round pendants, which led to more ambiguous social and amuletic functions and thus a greater variety of users, but this was not noted by such a backwards-looking commentator as Macrobius. Maria’s pendant would in that case be an excellent example of this sort of mixture. Alternatively, bullae might

199 Szilágyi 2005: 12.
200 Graves: Ori e argenti dell’Italia antica, nos. 919–20; the bullae pictured at Figures 2.32 and 2.33. Hoards: Ori e argenti dell’Italia antica, no. 762, Baldini Lippolis 2010: 130.
have always been used by women and girls, but this was ignored by commentators like Plutarch or Macrobius in favour of constructing a narrative around idealised masculinity and the past. Based on this evidence, bullae’s functions as markers of social statuses like youth, free birth, or gender might be questionable. Yet their valuable materials and (in Maria’s pendant’s case) inscription show how they might still have been used as gifts or jewellery that signified wealth, in addition to amuletic functions. This sort of use, as a marker in social discourses that those around the wearer used to draw conclusions about their status, was another way of relating to amuletic objects as items of dress.

Policing unacceptable dress
This section will expand on the argument made above about amuletic objects interacting with society by analysing how worn amuletic objects could also be used in rhetorical strategies by those who disapproved of them. We already saw an example of this behaviour in Plutarch’s anecdote at the beginning of this chapter, where worn amuletic objects symbolised Pericles’ decline in health and his resultant loss of power and masculinity. Writers in the late antique world, particularly Christian clerics, constructed a complex discourse surrounding making amuletic objects, conducting amuletic rituals, and wearing amuletic objects. This formed part of their individual projects of policing deviant behaviour in their own congregations that were situated largely in the eastern Mediterranean in cities like Antioch, Caesarea or Constantinople. However, the language and attitudes extended to the writings of individuals in the western Roman Empire like Augustine in North Africa, and Caesarius of Arles in Gaul.

One sermon that encapsulates these tendencies was preached by John Chrysostom in the fourth century CE to catechumens (converts to Christianity receiving training before baptism), in Antioch or Constantinople.\footnote{Ad illuminandos catechesis 2.5, PG 49.240} He exhorts his audience to renounce Satan and his ‘pomps’ regularly in advance of their baptism. Though he mentions other satanic pomps, such as the circus, the theatre and ‘all sin,’ the ones he focuses on link dress, ritual, and women’s behaviour. These consist of jewellery, omens, worn amuletic objects (periapta), and the employment of those who perform incantations in the home. His tirade against jewellery is explicitly directed towards married female audience members, while he characterises incantation makers as ‘drunken half-witted old women’ who misuse the name of God. Regarding omens, he describes the practice of taking the first person one sees on leaving the house as an omen for the day and criticises the apparently circulating belief that spotting a virgin at that point was a bad omen for business, while spotting a sex worker was a good one. Regarding worn amuletic objects, he is less gender-specific, but laments:
Τι ἂν τις εἴποι περὶ τῶν ἑπωδαίς καὶ περιάπτοιοι κεχρημένων, καί νομίσματα χαλκά Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ Ἡμαῖος καὶ ταῖς κεφαλαῖς καὶ τοῖς ποσὶ περίδεσμοι τῶν; Αὕτα οἱ ἑλπίδες ἡμῶν, εἰπέ μοι, ἵνα μετὰ σταυρὸν καὶ θάνατον Δεσποτικὸν εἰς Ἑλλήνος βασιλέως εἰκόνα τὰς ἑλπίδας τῆς σωτηρίας ἔχωμεν;

‘And what is one to say about those who use incantations and amuletic objects (periaptois), and who bind bronze coins of Alexander of Macedon around their heads and feet? Are these our hopes, tell me, that after the cross and death of our lord, we should place the hopes of our salvation on an image of a Greek king?’

Ad illuminandos catechesis 2.5, PG 49.240; translation: Maguire 1997: 1040.

Here, Chrysostom links spoken incantations with amuletic objects, specifically the kind that are tied on, and also criticises tying on coins depicting Alexander the Great for similar end goals. Claudia Perassi argues that survival of actual Alexander coins into the fourth century was unlikely, suggesting that they were instead coin-like pendants depicting Alexander, much like those that circulated in medieval and later Greece depicting Constantine.204

This passage shows that Chrysostom was concerned with how a ‘good Christian’ was dressed and adorned and how they dressed or adorned others. Wearing amuletic objects was both unacceptable ritual and unacceptable dress. Later, Chrysostom is explicit on how incorrect practice in both dress and ritual behaviour could distract his audience from other loyalties.205 Clothes had been a source or intensifier of social conflict earlier in the Roman empire, as sumptuary laws directed at women in republican and early imperial Rome show.206 Kristi Upson-Saia and Amy Place investigated the treatment of ascetic women’s dress by early Christian writers, to show how it was used as a symbol of Christian moral superiority and represented anxieties around conformity and gender norms.207 Similarly, disputes on the proper dress of priests, as part of larger power struggles, preoccupied ecclesiastical minds into late antiquity.208 Chrysostom’s assertions show how worn amuletic objects were co-opted into a rhetorical struggle over ideal Christianity and especially Christian femininity. Wearing amuletic objects was used as a symbol of the immorality that preaching clerics wanted their audiences to reject, while simultaneously constituting a concrete behaviour that they wanted their listeners to refrain from.

205 Ad illuminandos catechesis 2.5/PG 49.240.
207 Upson-Saia 2011; Place 2020.
208 Serfass 2014; Urbano 2014.
This was not the only example of clerical objections to worn amuletic objects. For example, Chrysostom elsewhere complains of periapta and a bell hung on the hand, and scarlet threads being used for protection instead of the sign of the cross, while Gregory of Naziansus argues that periammata and incantations (ἐπάσματα, epasmata) are tools of Satan. He asserts that listeners should instead give their children the Trinity as a phulaktērion. Chrysostom also praises the idea that a woman might refuse to use periapta for her sick child, adding that she would be a martyr for not succumbing to idolatry. Some other early Christian writers also warn against the use of both periapta and phulaktēria. Early Christian writers in Latin offer a more complex picture. Julius Africanus, active in third-century CE north Africa, included remedies involving tying items around people or animals’ necks in his medical compendium. Yet in a letter, Augustine describes ligaturae as a superstition to be detested (execranda superstition) asserting that they, like other types of bodily decoration, are used to serve demons (ad serviendum daemonibus). In De doctrina christiana, he expands on his definition of superstition, asserting that ligaturae and all remedies (remedia) condemned by doctors are superstition, whether they consisted of incantations, written charaktēres, hanging or tying on objects, or performing dances with them. These were fraudulently dependent on hidden signs, and therefore idolatrous. Further Latin examples of clerical criticism exist, indicating that the practice was relatively widespread.

The end goal of many of these sermons was to better define the practices that made a ‘good’ Christian, and to designate an out-group of ‘bad’ Christians. This objective overlapped with discourses on class, age, gender, and differing religious groups. Lucy Grig analysed this sort of rhetorical strategy in the context of Caesarius of Arles’ criticisms of new year rituals. She characterised it as an ‘ultimately class-based discourse’ that stigmatised certain practices as characteristic of rural, female, or uneducated groups in order to discourage elite audiences from participating in them. In other late

209 John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Epistles of Paul to the Corinthians 1, 12.13/PG 61.105.
210 Gregory of Naziansus, On Baptism/PG 36.381A.
211 Ibid.
212 John Chrysostom, In epist. ad Colossenses 3.7.5/PG 62.357-360.
213 John Chrysostom, Commentary on Corinthians 43/PG 58.669 (criticism of gospels hung around the neck), Athanasius, Syntagma ad monachos (from cod. Vat. gr. 733), 122.36; Epiphanius, Panarion Holl II 315, III 36, III 24.3-6, 525. Yet in the same document Epiphanius is emphatic that the New Testament phulaktēria were not periapta (Panarion Holl I 208–9; Williams 41-2).
215 Augustine, Letters, 56.
216 Augustine, De doctrina christiana, 2.20.30/PL 34.50.
217 Skemer 2006: 32.
218 Augustine, Tractatus in evangeliwm Ioannis 7.12/PL 35.443 (put the gospel to your head to cure a headache instead of using an amulet). Pseudo-Augustine, Homilia de sacrilegiis 22 (wearing iron rings. armlets or keeping iron in the house to scare away demons is sacrilegious). Caesarius of Arles, Sermons 13.5, 14.4 (amulets of amber or herbs around the neck are diabolical). For further examples, see Mastrocinque 2005b: 302, n. 8.
219 Grig 2021: 141.
antique sermons, marginal demographic groups such as old women or Jewish people were accused of persuading Christians to use amulets,\textsuperscript{220} even though, as noted below, ecclesiastical edicts show that Christian priests also made amuletic objects. These accusations may have stemmed from a desire to control the rituals and social interactions of lay persons, who were not already under the scope of ecclesiastical law. Dayna S. Kalleres has argued that bishops’ condemnations were because they wanted to control domestic ritual practice and extend the church’s power into the family.\textsuperscript{221} Similarly, Joseph Sanzo has suggested that the reason ‘apotropaic and curative ritual’ attracted this level of scrutiny from ecclesiastical leaders was because it ‘encouraged social and symbolic exchanges between local Christian and non-Christian communities and groups. Such exchanges could in turn produce configurations of religious boundaries out of step with those promoted by church functionaries.\textsuperscript{222} Hostility towards certain demographics of ritual practitioners was already expressed by the ‘educated classes of the Roman Empire’ of previous generations.\textsuperscript{223} In the days of Pliny the Elder, though, this was typically directed at the imagined class of ritual practitioner known as the magi.\textsuperscript{224} To an extent, then, this gendering of amuletic object use was novel to late antiquity.

The negative scrutiny upon wearing amuletic objects extended to banning their manufacture by Christians. Ecclesiastical edicts show that amulet making was classed with cursing, divination, or performing incantations as an unacceptable activity for priests.\textsuperscript{225} This zeal among Christian authority figures contrasts with the ambivalent attitudes presented by other figures and institutions. For example, the edicts preserved in the Theodosian Code never deal directly with amulets at all, even as restrictions around other practices like divination or sacrifice progressively tightened over the course of the fourth century.\textsuperscript{226} Late antique and Roman rabbis were ambivalent: while Catherine Hezser detects evidence of a few rabbis’ dislike of written amulets, she notes that references to them in...
general ‘suggest that Jews [...] had amulets written for themselves’ in the period from 10-c.500 CE.227 Doctors were permitted to decide on amulets for themselves,228 while in general ‘rabbis insisted on empirical and pragmatic criteria to judge customs, medical procedures, and remedies.’229 This offers some context as to what clerics like Chrysostom were preaching: church authorities as a whole were waging a war on two fronts, against those who made amuletic objects and those who performed amuletic practices, including but not limited to wearing amuletic objects. However, this disdain was not shared by the wider public, including other religious and cultural leaders. Indeed, de Bruyn’s evidence from late antique Egypt suggests even some priests did not obey such interdicts,230 while Caesarius of Arles’ sermons from late antique Gaul suggests that priests were producing amuletic objects there.231 The amuletic objects and practices in sermons like Chrysostom’s were therefore not just there as practices to be avoided by the listening congregation. They were being used as part of a rhetorical toolkit to persuade listeners into dividing their world into the categories of Christian and not-Christian-enough. Like Plutarch and Theophrastus’ use of Pericles’ amulet to signify his weakness in the face of illness, bishops’ evocation of amuletic objects and their use demonstrates how amuletic objects in general were not just used as vehicles of social status but also used rhetorically to convey negative traits.

Summary
This section has demonstrated how worn amuletic objects could be used to say things in and about society by both their users and their detractors. Wearing amuletic objects sometimes signified belonging to an in-group (as with bullae and boys/generals to Plutarch or Macrobius) or to an out-group (as with many amulets to early Christian authority figures). This relationship was in turn used by writers and speakers to convey bigger ideas about ideal gendered or religious identities. However, this is not the only way a relationship with worn amuletic objects might have involved communication. Faith Pennick Morgan singles out several clothing embellishments that, to her, carry messages that were meant to be understood by ‘certain deities or supernatural powers’ that would help the wearer, listing as examples the toga praetexta, biblical scenes, crosses and knots.232 In the next section, we will consider how some worn amuletic objects took on the role of mediator between an object’s wearer and more-than-human entities.

227 Hezser 2001: 222.
228 Veltri 1997: 278.
229 Veltri 2010: 598.
230 de Bruyn 2017: 8.
231 Grig 2021: 141, n. 9.
232 Morgan 2017: 11.
2.4. Worn amuletic objects and the supernatural

Many of the texts inscribed on worn amuletic objects portray a world in which the bodies they affected existed in a world of helpful and harmful powers, connected by pre-existing and predictable relationships and influences. As will be shown in this section, this includes malicious entities like demons or personified diseases and the Evil Eye and friendly ones like gods, angels, or saints. Interventions, in the form of making or wearing an amuletic object with these inscriptions, tugged on some of these relationships to achieve the desired outcome. The section will also demonstrate how inscribed texts were often hidden from display, for example, when inscribed on the back of gems or on lamellae that were rolled up and placed inside pendants. However, the contact the wearer’s body had with them would have been a reminder of the divine, demonic, and natural powers that endangered, cured, or protected them. The section will consider the relationship between inscriptions on amuletic objects directed at divine entities and inscribed prayers more generally. Moreover, it will investigate how the esotericism of the language and the hiddenness of these texts may have allowed the amulets’ makers and wearers to present themselves in human society as holders of special knowledge about the world. The section will, finally, suggest that much like the social meanings ascribed to worn amuletic objects that were discussed in the section above, worn amulets’ use as messages to the divine and demonic worlds could be used to communicate their wearer’s access to wealth or knowledge.

Numerous inscriptions on worn amuletic objects declare that they were meant to target invasive entities. This could be demons, evil spirits, or malign influences like spells (φάρμακα, pharmaka) or the Evil Eye. However, these texts still often characterise symptoms or diseases as invasive towards the body. They address them directly, giving orders such as ‘flee.’ The inscription on a silver lamella from the Esquiline (Rome) claims it exorcises ‘demons of fever, chills, pains, and powerful sorcerers.’ Other texts group diseases together in the same list of dangers as spirits, demons, or pests, implying that the diseases are equally invasive. A modern observer might divide

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233 E.g., lamella no. 6 (see Appendix 1), which describes itself as a ‘phulaktērion against pharmaka’ or gem no. 14, which requests protection from ‘every daimon or apparition or all pharmaka or all evil.’

234 E.g., lamella no. 13 adjoins ‘every spirit of fever, epilepsy, rabies, evil eye, and every violent spirit’ not to touch its owner, lamella no. 10 orders ‘sittesma’ (possibly denoting epilepsy, possession, headache or visions) and ‘all evil and all sorrowful and all powerful and all overthrowing and all unclean spirits’ to ‘flee from’ its owner, lamella no. 6 orders Artemis and ‘every evil’ to ‘flee from’ the bearer, lamella no. 12 orders ‘incontinence and demonic visitation’ to flee from the bearer. There is order to ‘free Iulia from headache’ on lamella no. 18. A round bronze pendant, inscribed in concentric circles, from Gela, ‘binds the black and blackened womb,’ (Mastrocinque 2005a).

235 Lamella no. 14.

236 E.g., lamella no. 7, which lists weakness and fever with evil spirits and the ‘impure eye’ and lamella no. 15 that lists filth, envy, fire, fever, wind, weasels, winds, and inflammations. Lamella no. 19 lists ‘obstructive sickness’ with ‘every danger, fear, demon, ghost, spectre’ and ‘every malign spirit.’
these different dangers between possible causes and observable symptoms, but this distinction is lacking in most of the inscriptions. Instead, all of them are treated as things that can be removed from or barred from touching the body. This falls in line with what Marx-Wolf calls the ‘pollution’ model of sickness in Graeco-Roman antiquity, in which spiritual forces in the cosmos were thought to possess the sick person. In this later amuletic material, such spiritual forces were increasingly identified as demons or satanic influences in a Christianised cosmos. A relationship between a sick body and an invasive entity was therefore expressed by the amuletic object that was tasked with breaking that relationship. The act of wearing it, whether as a pendant, bracelet, or through some other means of attachment, characterised the body as porous and in need of defence. Yet their placement on the affected body also drew attention to where it ended and the outside world began.

Worn amulet objects’ inscriptions and iconography do not just portray the human body as potentially permeable to malicious entities. Many of them also try to control helpful powers. Some point to existing contracts or relationships that those helpful powers have with the addressed malicious entities. Others reference binding relationships more vaguely, such as by naming the Seal of Solomon, a ring attributed to the biblical king Solomon that, in the Testament of Solomon and some contemporary Hebrew and Arabic texts, he used to control demons. Some refer to hierarchies: the inscription on a gold lamella from Comiso (Ragusa) adjures a list of entities ‘by the great living god, who is above the god Sabaoth, lao, who is above lao, Eleon, who is above Eleon, Elan, who is above Elan, Marmario, who is above Marmario, lakoba, who is above laboch’ to protect the wearer (pictured Figure 2.34). Several texts on amulet objects refer to the owner as the ‘slave of God’ (δουλὸς θεοῦ/δοῦλη θεοῦ; doulōs theou/doulē theou), suggesting that their relationship with God offers some protection.

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238 For example, lamella no. 11 orders every evil spirit to ‘be mindful of the contract you made for fear of Solomon and the angel Michael, when they swore the great and holy oath by the holy name and uttered ‘We will flee, and that should not be a lie.’ Another (lamella no. 10) orders ‘sittesima’ (an otherwise unknown word, likely denoting epilepsy, possession, headache or visions) and all unclean spirits to flee through the ‘body and the blood of my lord Jesus Christ.’ The inscription on gem no. 13 orders to protect the named wearer ‘because the great name of the god Pankouthen lao Sabaoth orders you.’
239 Conybeare 1898: 2. Lamella no. 12 adjures the evil eye and demonic possession to flee in the name of the seal of Solomon, the archangel Michael, the cherubim, the twelve patriarchs, the eighteen prophets, and the river Jordan and Jesus’ baptism. Lamella no. 5 mentions the seal of Solomon. Some bronze medallions also have text reading ‘Seal of Solomon,’ Giannobile 2002: nos. 1, 3.
240 Lamella no. 9.
241 This is used on the inscriptions on lamella no. 9, a lead cross (likely a funerary object: see Section 3.1) from Sicily (Manganaro 1994a: 457–9), and an inscribed bronze pendant from Gela exorcising a womb (Mastrocinque 2005a).
Requests to divine powers could easily be described as inscribed prayers, and some indeed use language that seems typical of that. Latin inscriptions wishing that the owner ‘live’ or ‘live in God’ (‘vivas/vivas in deo’), or the Greek wish that the ‘Lord help’ the wearer appear on objects of personal adornment, but also appeared on portable furniture and utensils. Moreover, the inscription ‘[name] vivas/vivat in deo’ also appears as graffiti in churches, cemeteries, near reliquaries, and in biblically significant places. Amuletic inscriptions found in funerary contexts suggest that inscribed wishes for things like life or aid could not just refer to someone’s continued earthly life and safety, but also to their eternal life and salvation after death. This implies that bodily and spiritual salvation were sometimes viewed as interwoven. Wearing items with inscriptions that called for divine salvation therefore came with more ideas than simply practical healing, good fortune, or protection: they could at times have functioned as expressions of a worldview incorporating relationships with the divine and spiritual salvation.

242 See pp. 60-1.
243 ICI VI 105; VIII 81.
244 E.g., ICI III 5, found in the church of S. Michele Archangelo in Vittorio, Aquileia. Other locations: Binsfeld 2006: 151.
The mechanics of amuletic objects like these were therefore entangled with ideas about salvation, exorcism, healing, and protection in the various religious traditions circulating Italy and Sicily at the time, including Christianity, Judaism, and the various ‘pagan’ cults. Unpicking what was spiritual salvation and what was physical safety in these contexts does the objects an anachronistic disservice, since their makers and users do not appear to have made clear distinctions between these. When texts inscribed on worn amuletic objects appeal to beneficent powers for aid and cite pre-existing contracts and relationships like the Seal of Solomon, they portray the world as a web of interconnected beings that follow rules that can be exploited. At its most complex, this world turned the body into a battleground between malicious and beneficent entities, with the desired result being health, safety, or good fortune.

The voces magicae, charaktēres, and images inscribed on some worn amulets were also thought to help with the desired outcomes. In the case of voces magicae, there is a significant slippage between what was seen as a nonsense word and what was seen as a cosmic power. In a similar vein, some late antique non-Italian texts involving charaktēres seem to invoke them as entities in their own right rather than names of entities not nameable with ordinary letters. These include inscribed curse tablets and amuletic objects from areas like Hebron and Apamea and spoken incantations in the PGM with injunctions made in the name of ‘holy charaktēres.’ It is perhaps unsurprising that there should be this sort of slippage. While names of deities and more-than-human powers were able to travel the empire through copying, either from handbooks or existing tablets, makers were also free to innovate and add ‘foreign-sounding’ elements. Frankfurter argues that this behaviour is evidence for a relationship between voces magicae, charaktēres, and hieroglyphs. In a world where only a select few, even in Egypt, were able to read hieroglyphs, this gave them power. This power was transferable to other cryptic or incomprehensible sounds and signs, suggesting access to a hidden world of power. It is tricky to know what seeing pseudo-letters and nonsense writing might have communicated to people with varying literacy levels. Nonetheless, whether someone could read Greek, Latin, Egyptian, Hebrew or no languages at all, encountering letter-like shapes they could not parse might have presented the wearer of the object that bore them as the possessor of secret knowledge. A bronze pendant like the one pictured in Figure 2.10 might have communicated monetary wealth, but the voces magicae, charaktēres, and esoteric illustrations inscribed on it might also have communicated intellectual wealth. Worn amuletic objects’ use of images of creatures composed of different animals,

245 E.g., lamella no. 19, whose inscription opens with a series of Egyptian-influenced voces magicae, then the order to ‘stop the headache of Iulia daughter of Euphemia,’ more voces magicae, then the order ‘free Iulia from headache.’ This could imply that the voces are what is being addressed.
247 Frankfurter 2019.
pseudo-characters, unintelligible text, and/or obscure named entities borrowing from languages like Hebrew and Egyptian, played on what the objects’ makers and users alike understood to be foreign and mysterious.

The materiality of some worn amuletic objects adds to the hiddenness of the world they claimed to access. Not only does the slippage between name and nonsense word, pseudo-letter/charaktēr, letter and god add to the difficulty in understanding what and how the amuletic object is meant to work, some of the objects themselves had text or material hidden to the casual onlooker and kept close to the wearer’s body. For example, as noted above, lamellae were not displayed on the body, but instead were placed inside metal capsules. That meant that the already obscure text was entirely inaccessible to onlookers, who indeed could not be sure that they even contained a lamella. Yet the wearer had a reminder of the inscription and the world the lamella sought to manipulate from the weight of it around their neck, its heating and cooling in response to the air around it, and the sensation of its movement with them.

Summary
What emerges from these inscribed amuletic objects is a variety of relationships between gods, spirits, and humans that could be helpful or harmful to an individual. These relationships could be exploited to obtain healing, protection, or good fortune. Worn amuletic objects’ use of hidden writing, obscure images, and pseudo-text also communicated the wearer’s access to hidden knowledge and understanding of the more-than-human world. In this way, the triangular relationship between worn amuletic object, wearer, and the supernatural/hidden world might also have been used to communicate something about the wearer, further entangling the object in different interacting relations.

2.5. Conclusions
This chapter has described several types of worn amuletic object and has explained why each could be characterised as a ‘worn amulet.’ It has also investigated three kinds of interactions with amuletic objects, the encounters between a worn amuletic object and the wearer’s body, between a worn amuletic object and society, and between a worn amuletic object and the supernatural world. Investigating these different layers of interactions has revealed the variety of ways in which worn amuletic objects were used: as healing, protective, or fortune-bringing objects, rhetorical tools

248 Capsules could also contain other substances. For example, a late-fourth-century CE gold capsule was recovered from a grave in the catacomb of Valentinus, Rome, that contained four tiny nails; De Rossi 1888; Denzey Lewis 2017: 263, n. 20.
(positively or negatively), bargaining chips for household cohesion, methods for propitiating the gods, decorative items of jewellery, gifts, or a way to show off one’s access to wealth or secret knowledge.

Overall, this chapter has demonstrated that amuletic objects can be better understood through investigating their interactions with others. Section 2.2 noted how different sensory affordances might have affected the experience of wearing an amuletic object, while Section 2.3 showed how worn amuletic objects were used in social discourses to signify positive or negative things about their wearers, and Section 2.4 explored how amuletic objects interacted with both people and divine entities. It has also pointed to some ways worn amuletic objects might have changed in character over the period under study. Some shapes, like phallic pendants, gradually disappeared, while bullae grew smaller and became assimilated into a larger group of round medallions. Discourses changed, too: Christian preachers overlapped their criticisms of worn amuletic objects with discourses on gender, class, and religious groups to identify them with out-groups of ‘bad Christians’ and dissuade their listeners from using such objects.

The next chapter will investigate amuletic objects in a specific archaeological context, namely that of the grave. The discussion will focus on the objects’ relationships with the dead body or bodies and with the grave as a whole; it will also build upon the insights about amulets’ multifunctionality and the agency that arose from their different interactions to ask how differences in these relationships affected experiences of burial and mourning.
Chapter 3 – Amuletic objects in graves

The previous chapter focused on amuletic objects’ relationships with living bodies. However, many amuletic objects, including some that may have once been worn on living bodies, have been found in graves. This chapter will investigate the evidence for amuletic objects in graves from late antique Italy and Sicily. It will first divide these objects between ‘old’ (amuletic objects already used by living bodies) and ‘new’ (objects made for amuletic use in the grave) in order to think about their wider biographies and relationships, and to draw new attention to the decisions of the mourners who deposited them. This will reveal that amuletic objects at times shaped the experiences of the living as part of funerary ritual, forming relationships with the living based on their materiality and/or their actual or imagined pasts. Next, it will analyse questions of proximity and the spatial relationships these different kinds of object had with a dead body and with the grave as a unit of space. This will show that different degrees of proximity modified the relationship between grave, body, and object, resulting in different amuletic functions and in different experiences for mourners.

The inclusion of objects (both amuletic and non-amuletic) in burials was subject to changing social expectations around burial over time and in different areas. This is evident from wider burial trends during late antiquity. Studies of burial in late antique Italy and Sicily have noted certain transformations in burial trends;¹ there was a growing tendency to use abandoned buildings as burial areas, the construction of catacombs in urban areas and, importantly for this chapter, a reduction in the use of both funerary inscriptions and grave goods,² part of a general decline in the use of grave goods throughout the territories once ruled by the Roman Empire.³ Therefore, amuletic objects found in graves should be considered part of a larger, gradually declining, tradition of grave assemblages, albeit one which had not yet died out.

A key question to begin with is which objects found in graves might be considered amuletic. Some of the worn objects discussed in Chapter 2, such as bullae, metal lamellae rolled up in pendant cases, inscribed gemstones, medallions, or phallic, crescent-moon, or clenched-fist pendants, have been found in graves, including in assemblages of pendants. As also discussed in Chapter 2, the texts inscribed on some worn amuletic objects, as well as literary texts that refer to them or to the imagery they portray, suggest that when they were worn on the living body, they could protect it, heal it, or bring it good fortune. This chapter will show that when found in a grave, an object’s role in that context may not directly reflect any former functions it might have fulfilled. The chapter will examine how and

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¹ This period also showed the results of change during preceding centuries: inhumation had become the ‘predominant rite’ over cremation by the second century CE: Martin-Kilcher 2000: 66.
why the category of amuletic objects in graves could include objects not immediately associated with wearing, like nails, unpierced coins, stones, animal remains (either curated body parts like teeth or claws, or entire bodies), or metal tablets that were not kept in pendant cases. Some of these objects have obvious amuletic inscriptions on them. Others are identifiable as potentially amuletic from their specific archaeological contexts, such as their spatial arrangement relative to the body or the grave. Examples of the latter include animal bodies or selected body parts, or other natural materials such as eggs or stones, in addition to reused items from daily life like coins or nails.

Amuletic objects might have been deposited in graves to protect the body of the dead person, to protect the living people who survived them, or to protect the grave as a unit of space. Protecting the living could have been achieved by stopping the soul or body of the dead person from wandering, or by neutralising any lingering remains of what killed them. Such objects therefore addressed some of the needs that the dead person was perceived to have, or the dangers they were thought to pose, and were considered to be part of a ‘proper’ burial for a particular person. Moreover, following Nicola Denzey Lewis’ argument that ancient tombs ‘were not merely pragmatic storage to contain a corpse, they were for the very purpose of remembering;’ we should see these objects, alongside other grave goods, as part of that remembering. Their relationship with mourners doing this remembering was therefore as important as their relationship with the body and resting place of the dead.

Archaeologists often identify any ‘unusual’ or ‘non-normative’ grave objects as amuletic, magical, or connected with ritual. In such cases, it can be rewarding to unpick the various functions that a deposited object may have fulfilled when placed in a grave. Though non-normative burial, especially in terms of treatment of the dead body, has been an avenue of enquiry in British and German archaeology for over a century, scholarly attention has only recently been drawn to the subject in Italy and Sicily. This attention has provided a variety of explanations for unusual treatment of the dead, under which rubric is included non-normative deposits, post-mortem manipulation or non-normative places of burial or body positions. The explanations consist of local mortuary rituals, violent deaths, natural disasters, or epidemics. Aside from these factors, deposited objects might

4 Denzey Lewis 2016: 266.
5 While the standard term in British work on the subject has for some time been ‘deviant’ burials, see Aspöck’s valid criticism of the term as inaccurately implying the social deviancy of the buried individual and suggestion of more neutral language; Aspöck 2008: 29.
7 Recent studies of areas across Italy and Sicily include Costantini 2014; Mastronuzzi 2016; Quercia and Cazzulo 2016; Tulumello 2018; Ferreri 2020.
8 See Tsaliki 2008. Different scholarly traditions privileged different explanations: Aspöck argues that scholars on the European continent are more likely than British ones to suggest fear of the dead as a reason for deviating from the norm in a burial: Aspöck 2008: 28.
have had amuletic functions within the grave but might also have had other simultaneous functions as grave goods, the remains of sacrifices or a funerary banquet.

3.1. Old (used in life) versus new (made for death)

Amuletic objects deposited in graves did not always become amuletic under the same circumstances. The enormous variety of amuletic objects known from graves can be divided broadly into two groups, the ‘old’ (previously used in life) and the ‘new’ (made for death). In other words, we can draw a distinction between objects that had previously been used (as amulets or not) which were then deposited in a grave as amulets, and objects that had been produced specifically as amulets for the grave.

A similar distinction between old and new has also been used to characterise votives. Jessica Hughes has contrasted purpose-made, mass-produced (i.e., ‘new’) votives, such as ‘anatomical votives, figurines, temple models, and sculpted reliefs bearing scenes of sacrifice or healing’ with non-purpose-made votives, such as reused clothing, jewellery, toys, or tools.9 She argues that the latter often had a closer relationship with the dedicant’s body and biography and were able to be more specific to the situation they addressed.10 Similar observations might be made about amuletic objects in graves. Old amuletic objects had much longer biographies which could have been entangled with the life and memory of the deceased or of other past owners. Informed by the idea of the object biography, distinguishing old from new highlights the importance of points in these objects’ existences prior to their deposition in a grave. While earlier attempts to write histories or biographies of different objects exist,11 the modern formulation of the term ‘object biography’ is generally credited to the anthropologist Igor Kopytoff.12 His argument, as summarised by Chris Gosden and Yvonne Marshall, was that ‘things could not be fully understood at just one point in their existence and processes and cycles of production, exchange and consumption had to be looked at as a whole.’13

There have been previous attempts to write biographies of ritual objects from the late Mediterranean. For example, Jeremy Smoak has laid out a biography of two silver tablets, inscribed with Hebrew, found in the Iron Age tomb complex of Ketef Hinnom, southwest of Jerusalem. By doing so, he aimed to better understand their presence in the tomb, which he took as their ‘final performance.’14 He focused first on the silver material: the circumstances of its manufacture from ore,

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10 Hughes 2017: 182.
11 Lehmann 2021.
12 Kopytoff 1986. Credit given in (e.g.) Gosden and Marshall 1999: 170; Lehmann 2021.
but also its association with temple artefacts and the priesthood, backed up by the references to
‘shining’ in their inscribed texts;\textsuperscript{15} secondly, he considered the tablets’ past interactions with living
bodies as wearable miniature versions of temple scrolls.\textsuperscript{16} Finally, he investigated the different
significance the objects would have had at the different stages of burial at the site.\textsuperscript{17} He argued that
while in the burial, the objects were placed with other ‘comfort features’ such as a bed, adornment,
and a room resembling domestic architecture, to animate and ‘keep alive’ the body for a time, they
arrived in the secondary burial as part of a collection of metal that had survived decomposition,
detached from their past wearer.\textsuperscript{18} Smoak emphasised the tablets’ roles in memory making and
construction of the past in both these acts, and overall interpreted their presence in the secondary
burial as a way to construct ‘Judean priestly ritual pasts’.\textsuperscript{19} The separation into three key periods
(manufacture, interaction with the living body, use in the grave) is a useful structure for us to bring to
our amuletic objects. The way that aspects of earlier periods informed their later use should remind
us to be alert to similar things happening in our period.\textsuperscript{20}

Another useful approach to object biography is offered by Anna-Katharina Rieger. She
introduced the concept of an ‘adjusted’ biography in her study of the altars of the Augustan \textit{Lares
Augusti} in Rome. Her article focused on material evidence for different points in the altars’ existences,
from when they were set up to their renovation and eventual abolishment. Her adjustments, aimed
at addressing the weaknesses she saw in the existing object biography paradigm, incorporated an
awareness that objects do not live and die like organisms, that objects do not develop and change in
a linear way, that objects have relationships with things other than humans, and that each object is a
unique individual rather than just a member of a typology.\textsuperscript{21} Some of these adjustments are more
important for this chapter than others: the fact that objects do not ‘die’ after deposition and that each
are individuals will be key to understanding old and new amuletic grave objects alike. This is because
even after an amuletic object was deposited, mourners and visitors in general could continue to
engage with it. The degree to which visitors could engage physically depended on an object’s
accessibility: something buried inside a grave was not as accessible as something kept on the surface,
like an object set into sealing mortar in a catacomb or an amuletic grave inscription. Hiddenness also
influenced who knew about or suspected an amuletic object’s presence. Nevertheless, even a hidden

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Smoak 2019: 438–42.
\item Smoak 2019: 442–6.
\item Smoak 2019: 446–7.
\item Smoak 2019: 448–9.
\item Smoak 2019: 450.
\item Here, the association between silver and temple objects ‘presenced’ the temple in the mind of a living
wearer, then the amulet, an index of this relationship between human and divine, was placed in a tomb as part
of the ‘cultural memory’ of the Jerusalem temple.
\item Rieger 2020: 116–7.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
object would have affected the experience of a visitor who knew it was there, and thus continued to relate to them.

Drawing on these ideas, this chapter section will explore case studies of old and new amuletic objects from graves. While there is not enough available information to produce detailed biographies of each object, considering what might have happened to them before their deposition nevertheless has clear advantages. In the case of ‘old’ amuletic objects in graves, it draws attention to how the new context of the grave may have changed the objects’ function and meaning. With ‘new’ objects, it highlights questions of how and by whom they were selected, crafted, and subsequently used. By picking up on certain points in these objects’ lives, rather than attempting to tell a linear story through time, this approach to a biography also follows Jody Joy’s ideas about writing object biographies for prehistoric objects, since she also focuses on ‘the interplay between objects and people’ rather than a complete and linear biography.  

Old (used in life)

Amuletic objects previously used for living bodies

Amuletic objects’ prior use on living bodies can be determined from several factors. These consist of inscriptions indicating or implying use in life, signs of wear on the object, means of suspension (e.g., a suspension loop or hole), or an object that seems to have been made much earlier than the date of the grave’s establishment. These vary in reliability: signs of wear, or a much older object, in general make a much stronger case for past use than means of suspension. This section will go through each of these indicators in turn, analysing relevant case studies to explore what signs of past use might have meant for the objects when they were deposited in a grave.

Sometimes, use in life can be inferred from the presence on the object of an inscription describing amuletic effects that seem inappropriate for the dead. For example, a gold pendant case with three suspension loops containing a gold lamella was found within an inhumation burial in Ripe San Ginesio (Macerata, late second century CE). It was found with a gold necklace, from which this pendant may have hung, and alongside other rich furnishings including glass vessels and a gold ring with a carnelian bezel.  

Unfortunately, the assemblage’s present location is unknown, but a drawing was published in 1887 of the unrolled lamella. From this drawing (Figure 3.1), Kotansky identified a Latin text, translated as ‘For pain or distress of the eye,’ followed by voces magicae. The inscription explicitly deals with an illness afflicting the living, making its presence in a grave somewhat startling.

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24 Kotansky 1994: 124. For voces magicae, see Chapter 1, n. 54.
It suggests that at the time of deposition the object was thought to have continued relevance to the deceased in the grave, even if it had been made for a living person and its original amuletic function was no longer immediately relevant. The precise location of the pendant within the grave is not recorded, but the preservation of the case along with the tablet and necklace suggests it was treated as an item of jewellery, closely associated with the person, and perhaps even the body, of the deceased.

*Figure 3.1: Drawing of a gold lamella, from inside a pendant case in a grave in Ripe San Ginesio, late second century CE.
Kotansky 1994: 124, fig. 31.*

An association between old amuletic pendant and a body was not restricted to inhumation burials. A silver tablet (Figure 3.2) was found inside a silver pendant case during excavations at a burial area alongside the strada provinciale 118 running from San Giorgio, Arco (near Riva del Garda, 175-225 CE). The inscription on the lamella seems to indicate a highly personal object as it names the person it is meant to affect as Tertius, son of Sira, and lists a variety of specific ailments and dangers. Much like the lamella inscription from Ripe San Ginesio, the illnesses suffered, including ‘every obstructive sickness,’ ‘epilepsy,’ and ‘dizziness’ suggest an owner who was still living, even though other dangers
like ‘every danger, fear, demon, ghost, spectre’ might be imagined as capable of endangering the dead or the living. It was found in a cremation grave within an assemblage that included coins, ceramic and glass vessels, and a silver ring inset with a blue chalcedony engraved with an image of Mercury. The pendant did not seem to have been burned with the body on the pyre. This indicates that the mourners did not consider the necklace enough of an extension of the dead person’s self to join them on the pyre. Nonetheless, it was included in the burial and left touching the burnt remains. Did those who performed this burial worry that burning would ruin the object in some way, either through damaging its aesthetic appeal or stopping it from being ritually effective? Or was it not burned because it was considered a funerary good, not an item of clothing? Did it actually belong to a mourner, rather than the dead individual, and they placed it in the final deposition as a last-minute gift after the cremation had already taken place? In every case, it is clear that this object’s former function as an amulet for the living played a role in its subsequent use in a burial. Whether the pendant was thought to have been integral to the dead person’s identity, to protect them in death, or both at once, physical contact between cremated remains and an intact pendant was important.

Image redacted for ORO deposit.

Figure 3.2: Inscribed silver lamella from inside a silver hexagonal case with one suspension loop. Late second-early third c. CE. San Giorgio, Arco, Trento. Cavada and Paci, 2002: 223.

Cavada and Paci 2002: 231.
The second characteristic that can indicate an old amuletic object is signs of wear which suggest past use in life. For example, as discussed in Chapter 2, a gold necklace with a small gold bulla pendant was found in tomb 1724 of the necropolis of the Università Cattolica in Milan, from an inhumation burial dated to the early fourth century CE. Note was taken of the necklace’s missing closing hook (on the right-hand side of Figure 2.33), a sign of wear consistent with regular use.26

The third characteristic of an old amuletic object is the age of the object relative to that of the grave it was found in. In the catacombs of San Gennaro in Naples, a lapis lazuli gem was found inscribed with a Greek request to ‘protect and preserve’ Papiria Crispina ‘from every daimon or apparition or all pharmaka or all evil, because the great name of the god Pankouthen Iao Sabaoth orders you.’27 On the reverse are charaktères and a brief quotation from Exodus 3:14, ‘the god who is.’ This text could make sense for a living or dead beneficiary. However, while Jeffrey Spier dates the gem and its inscriptions to the second or third century CE, the tomb it was found in was dated to the sixth century CE.28 The object’s materiality and archaeological context only offer two snapshots of its history of use, namely the circumstances that may have prompted its manufacture, and the circumstances that led to its deposition in a grave. But the gap between the dates of manufacture and deposition suggests that other encounters, perhaps numerous, took place between them. This in turn lets us imagine two scenarios relating to the gem’s age: firstly, that the gem was an heirloom (as an amulet or because of its precious material) and that it was deposited with a degree of awareness of these intervening encounters, or that it was not and was instead deposited because it was old, with the depositors imagining its past ritual uses, especially the one which led to its manufacture.

Finally, we can use means of suspension or attachment as evidence for an old worn amuletic object. There are amuletic objects in late antique graves that could have been worn on a living body, based on the presence of means of attachment, but which retain no clear evidence of wear. Visual or textual evidence that describes a similar object’s use in life means we can suggest, though not be certain, that a particular amuletic object might have been reused for the grave. A huge number of pendants, not only individual phallic, clenched fist, crescent-moon shapes, and some pierced coins, but also collections of pendants like the crepundia found in some infant graves, fall into this category.29

27 Miranda 1991. For full citations, see gem no. 13 in Appendix 2.
28 Spier 2007: 82.
29 In the case of lamellae in pendants, examples include a bronze tube containing a (blank?) bronze tablet, originally wrapped in fabric and then another sheet of bronze, was found in Molteno, Lecco, in a half-destroyed tomb (fourth century CE): see Magni 1912; Nobile 1992: 60. In Como, a fourth-century grave contained (alongside rich grave goods) a gold pendant consisting of a sheet of metal rolled into a tube and enclosed on both ends and two suspension loops soldered to its side, on a gold chain. This contained two rolled up pieces of foil, one gold and one lead. The gold one has been unrolled, revealing that it was inscribed
Though many date from the first or second centuries, a few appear in fourth-century graves. Others are harder to date and could come from a Roman imperial or late antique context, such as the silver crescent-moon pendants found with coloured glass beads in graves in the cemetery of San Donato di Lamon (Belluno, first to fourth century CE), or those found in cremation graves in Salorno (Bolzano, second to fourth century CE). Also of interest is the bronze medallion stamped with the image of a ‘Holy Rider,’ set in a glass frame, found in tomb 12 of the cemetery area in the basilica at Sofiana (Caltanissetta, third to sixth century CE).

Other wearable items, like bells and pierced coins, are also worthy of scrutiny. Here the problem consists not only of establishing their past wear, but also identifying whether they were worn for amuletic purposes. Claudia Perassi has documented the use of pierced coins in Italy under the Roman empire, using a sample of recent finds from graves in Milan and Cisalpine Italy to demonstrate that their production (and implicitly their deposition in graves, a frequent findspot) was rare but not unheard of. In addition, she described a number of coins made into pendants, through piercing or other modifications, with amuletic texts and images inscribed on them and which dated from the first to the sixth centuries CE but rarely had a recorded findspot. As Perassi noted, the association between pierced coins and beads and pendants demonstrates their use in jewellery, but it is harder to argue for their use as amulets without alterations in image and text. Depictions of figures like

with charaktères. The lead one has not been unrolled. See Caporusso 2001: 232; Blockley and Niccoli 2006: 14–8, 46.

E.g., the gold pendant depicting a phallus and a clenched fist found in a grave in the cemetery of Cascina Romana, Bernate Ticino, near Milan (Zopfi 2007). Other early examples include the gold or silver second-century phallic or crescent-moon pendants found in the cemetery on via Don Moreschi in Borno, Brescia (Ori delle Alpi nos. 125–6; Pavesi 2001: 28), the amber phallic, crescent moon and clenched-fist pendants associated with graves (first-third century CE) from Aquileia, now kept at the archaeological museum there, including those from the Necropoli di ponente (tomb 18: inv. 22667 Calvi 2005: no. 323; tomb no. 3: no inv. Calvi 2005: no. 334), Necropoli di mezzogiorno (unknown tomb no: inv. 50704/5, 50704/4, 50706-10; Calvi 2005: nos. 335, 369); Necropoli di Terzo (tomb n11: inv. 23312, Calvi 2005: no. 341); Necropoli ‘di Levante’ (tomb 4: inv. 52827/5, Calvi 2005: no. 370); necropolis at S. Stefano (tomb 5: inv. 56.111, Bertacchi 1996: 50), the ‘strata sepolchrale’ out of Aquileia at la Bacchina (inv. 53.662, Bertacchi 1996: 40). Also from this museum is the gold ring with an ivory phallus and gold double phallic pendant hanging from it, thought to be from Beligna (Giovannini 1996: 43). The gold ring with phallus relief found in tomb 5 of the suburban necropolis northwest of Saint Martin de Corléans, Aosta (late first century CE), the burnt bone phallic pendant from tomb 10 of the Porta Nocera necropolis at Pompeii (of a 3-10-month-old child, before 79 CE: Whitmore 2017: 51), and the glass paste phallic pendant found at the neck of a 5-12-month-old child in grave F38 in the cemetery at Vagnari, Puglia (first century CE, Whitmore 2020: no. 11) also count.

E.g., the bronze phallic pendant found near an iron chain, tomb 27 of the necropolis at via San Faustino in Brescia (fourth century CE): Gagetti 2004; Whitmore 2017.

Emanuele 2020.


See Chapter 2.


Perassi 2011a.

Victoria, Fortuna, or other virtues on the reverse, though, might have prompted amuletic use: an amuletic way of thinking might have envisioned such depictions as bringing those good things to the wearer. In a similar vein, bells are frequently found in graves throughout the areas controlled by the Roman empire, particularly those of children, and are thought to have had an apotropaic function in that context, though with no textual corroboration. Other evidence suggests use in rituals for the living. During the earlier Roman empire, bells could be used in protective rituals, as part of apotropaic phallic wind chimes known as tintinnabula, be tied onto animals, and used to mark the opening and closing times of markets or bathhouses. Bells continued to be found in graves in the late antique period: some of the strings of pendants known as crepundia investigated in the next subsection include bells, while more were found on their own in other graves. Yet bells by themselves in graves are equally hard to identify as having been used as amulets prior to their deposition, as without the context from which they had already been removed, no evidence remains.

The evidence described above demonstrates that many of the wearable amuletic object shapes covered in Chapter 2 were eventually found in graves. Potential old worn amuletic objects come with their own interpretive challenges. For example, a silver quinarius of Hadrian set into a gold frame with a suspension loop (Figure 3.3), was found during excavations in 1918 at the neck of the deceased, who was identified as female based on skeletal evidence, in a richly furnished burial. This was in a tomb alla cappuccina in the necropolis at via Ostiense, near the church of San Paolo fuori le Mura (Rome, from a relatively late phase of the necropolis). Bordenache Battaglia suggested that, given the absence of a metal chain, the pendant was originally hung on a cord made from organic material that had since decayed. The coin’s reverse depicted a winged Victory, while the obverse depicted the emperor Hadrian. It is not known for certain which side faced outwards, though the wear on the reverse and the orientation of the suspension loop to leave the obverse upright might indicate that the reverse was the side in contact with the wearer. Coin-pendants like these always might have...
been used as amulets on a living body and subsequently in a grave, but it is hard to prove conclusively. Nonetheless, ignoring the possibility of amuletic reuse of this sort does the objects as much of a disservice as claiming that that is the only potential interpretation. In this case, attention should be paid to how the arrangement of the coin within the setting prioritises the emperor’s portrait, suggesting that that was the primary focus. Yet the decision to leave the reverse (with its depiction of Victory) accessible within the setting, rather than also covering it with metal, might also be significant. The reverse of the coin, resting as it did against the wearer’s skin or clothing, might then have operated as a secret amuletic feature. This role might have been brought into the grave, too.

Sometimes these factors combine in a way that reinforces the possibility that they were old worn amuletic objects. For example, two other tablet-and-pendant assemblages included inscriptions that could have worked in either life or death. First, a silver tablet bearing the Greek text ‘Evil, get away from Valerius,’ and a bronze tablet with inscribed charakteres were found rolled up together inside a copper tube in a grave in Longone al Segrino (Como, fourth- to sixth-century CE). Second, a bronze tablet, found rolled up inside a bronze cylinder in Priolo Gargallo (Syracuse, fourth or fifth century CE), bore a lengthy Aramaic inscription asking for protection against various dangers and referred to itself as τὸ φυλακτήριον (the phulaktērion) (Figure 3.4). It was a surface find in an area used for catacombs. In both cases, the existence of pendant cases and means of suspension, so much more useful for

49 Mastrocinque 2002.
50 For citations, listed as lamella no. 7 in Appendix 1. See Chapter 1 for the significance of this word as an ancient Greek term for ‘amulet.’
attaching the *lamella* to a living body than a stationary dead one,\footnote{See below for *lamellae* found in contact with the bodies of the deceased without a pendant case.} make it likelier that these were also reused old amuletic objects. The generic protection against evil and danger their inscriptions call for could have been considered useful for the grave, too.

In all of these cases, there was continuity between an amuletic object’s function in life and its function in death. Just as it once protected a living body, so then could it continue to protect a body, perhaps the same one, after death. In some cases, their purposes seem easily transferrable: protection against evil or danger could work as well for a dead body as a living one, as the dead were also susceptible to both physical dangers (e.g., tomb robbers) and metaphysical ones (journey to the afterlife, ...
guaranteeing salvation). However, this was not the only function an amuletic object in contact with a living body had, as was observed in Chapter 2. Objects could simultaneously have fulfilled other functions like personal adornment or communication of personal identity. These functions could have also contributed to the decision to place the object in the grave, as an integral part of a person’s dress, or as an attempt to include beautiful or costly things in their assemblage. Importantly, none of these functions were mutually exclusive, meaning that an old amuletic object could have been as multifunctional in the grave as it was outside it. Other case studies, especially the cremated remains found with a pendant containing an inscribed lamella from Arco, showed how worn amuletic objects might have been considered important to mourners’ ideas of the dead person’s identity.

The case studies in this section are examples of reuse where awareness of past interactions affects subsequent ones. I argued above that the lapis lazuli gem inscribed with a prayer for protection for Papiria Crispina, found in a grave that was much later in date than the date of the gem’s inscription, might have been deposited while imagining its use in the past. This illustrates how imagined – not just actual – pasts of these amuletic objects could become important to the mourners’ experience of their deposition. Overall, past relationships, both remembered and imagined, shaped the relationships that the object had while being deposited in the grave.

Case study: crepundia

Necklaces involving multiple pendants might also have been used as amulets before being deposited as amulets in a grave. This section will investigate how such necklaces, known as crepundia, were deposited in graves, especially those in infants’ or children’s burials. After assembling Roman contextual evidence and the late antique evidence from Italy and Sicily, it will ask how a string of pendants might have worked as an amulet within a grave, from use as a protective object to something meant to appease or keep in the deceased child. It will investigate whether such necklaces’ past use as teething objects and children’s worn amuletic objects might have informed their subsequent use in the grave.

The terms crepundium and crepundia are sometimes used for necklaces made of multiple pendants hanging from one string, and sometimes for miniature items. A key characteristic of both kinds of crepundia is their frequent appearances in the graves of children and infants. Well-known examples from Italy in the Roman imperial period are the pendants found in tomb 37 of the Castel Malnome cemetery (Lazio, first or second century CE), also containing the remains of an infant aged about one year.52 These were found lined up alongside the mandible, the right upper limb, and the right upper side of the chest, suggesting they had been put around the child’s neck or diagonally across

52 Cianfriglia and De Cristofaro 2012.
their chest. Also notable are the miniature tools, also called crepundia, found in tomb W of the burial area at 10.450km on the via Nomentana (Rome, first century BCE to second century CE), which contained the remains of a child. Two undated necklaces, described as ‘magic circlets’ by Rodolfo Lanciani and consisting of pendants of various materials shaped into a variety of forms including elephants, bells, doves, hares, knives, rabbits, daggers, mice, the goddess Fortuna, octopuses, human arms, phalluses, and hammers, were found round the necks of two different inhumed infants on the via Salaria in Rome. Finally, tomb 32 in the huge cemetery on the Via Tiburtina in Rebibbia, Rome, on the site of the III Casa Circondariale, furnished four faience pendants (one clenched fist, three frontal phalluses) and some round beads. This tomb was described by Paola Filippini et al. as an infant burial, without further elaboration. All of these assemblages are identified by Laura Cianfriglia and Alessio De Cristofaro as crepundia. Maureen Carroll also listed further examples of imperial-period ‘strings of apotropaic amulets worn as necklaces’ found in infants’ graves, including some from the Roman suburbs, Salò (Brescia), Gubbio (Umbria), and Porto Recanati (Macerata).

The association between infants’ and children’s graves and collections of pendants continued into late antiquity. Perassi reported on a possible necklace consisting of a pierced coin, silver crescent moon pendant, a bone amphora-shaped pendant, a pierced animal canine, three rings, and two beads (one glass paste, one possibly lignite). The collection was found near the head of an eighteen-month-old child’s skeleton in the fourth-century CE inhumation tomb 3148 of the necropolis at the Università Cattolica in Milan. Additionally, a probable necklace, composed of a small bronze bulla, a pierced Flavian coin, an amber bead and two glass paste beads was found in the fourth-century CE grave of a seven- to eight-year-old child along with two bronze armlets and a small iron billhook (grave no. 11, cemetery at via Gorizia, Riva del Garda). Further modest examples of necklaces with multiple pendants were also found in children’s graves. An infant’s grave in the burial area located alongside the strada provinciale 118 near San Giorgio, Arco (near Riva del Garda), dated no earlier than the Constantinian period contained a pierced coin and two glass beads. The tomb of a three-year-old

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53 Cianfriglia and De Cristofaro 2012: 257.
55 Fiorelli describes these as bone, ivory, rock crystal, onyx, jasper, amethyst, amber, touchstone, metal, glass, paste, and enamel, Fiorelli 1886: 210; Lanciani 1892: 285–6; Denzey Lewis 2017: 262–3.
56 Pantano, Angelini, and Quaranta 2006.
57 Filippini et al. 2002: 293. They also mention a second infant burial containing glass paste beads, but do not elaborate.
58 Cianfriglia and De Cristofaro 2012: 261.
60 Perassi 2011a.: 281–2.
61 See Figure 2.32.
62 Ori delle Alpi: 498, no. 1215.
child in the western necropolis of Gnatia (Salento) held two bronze bells, an amber bead, and ten pierced shells of the genus *Cyprea*.63

There are other necklaces (or better, collections of pendants associated with each other that likely once constituted a necklace) that strongly resemble these *crepundia* but are not known to have been found in children’s graves. For example, a pierced coin, a bronze medallion (decorated with a spiral motif), bronze bell, and faience and amber beads were all found in the same corner of tomb 167 in Oleggio (Novara, second century CE),64 while a Tiberian tomb in the cemetery at Nave (Brescia) furnished a pierced coin, bronze pendant, and glass beads in close association with each other.65 Two cremation graves in the cemetery at via Rossini in Alba Pompeia (Cuneo, first century CE) also had a collection of pendants, consisting of an amber bead, bronze bell, pierced coin and pierced bronze disc in the former and two pierced coins and some turquoise melon beads in the latter.66 That excavation report is less clear about how closely the objects were associated with each other, though Perassi suggests that the coins and beads in tomb 31 might have constituted a necklace.67 Pendant assemblages were therefore not exclusively the preserve of children, though the association remained strong.

Could these strings of pendants have been amuletic? For them to have worked as such, the items collected on the string would have had to protect the dead individual or the grave or keep them down and away from the world of the living. Cianfriglia and De Cristofaro asserted that when used in life, the different pendants in *crepundia* functioned as amulets and as representations of animals sacred to the deities from whom help was sought.68 In death, though, they thought that the power of *crepundia* was as a tool to placate the child’s unquiet and prematurely deceased spirit and empower their journey into the afterlife.69 Given the context of these objects within larger funerary assemblages, this seems an overstatement. If deposition of *crepundia* was to restrain the dead, this was not performed in concert with other activities that might be considered necrophobic. None of the infants’ remains had been restricted (e.g., through weighing or nailing down), mutilated, laid out in an unconventional position, or buried especially deep in the ground, which were the practices identified by Alessio Quercia and Melanìa Cazzulo as likely evidence for necrophobia.70

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64 Spagnolo Garzoli 1999: 207–8; Perassi 2011a: 289.
68 Cianfriglia and De Cristofaro 2012: 261.
69 Cianfriglia and De Cristofaro 2012: 262–5.
70 Quercia and Cazzulo 2016: 29.
Potentially more relevant is Dasen’s suggestion that crepundia may have been used to address teething.\textsuperscript{71} Additionally, the use of crepundia might have been, as Stefanie Martin-Kilcher argued for both crepundia-pendants and miniature items, a way to symbolise the unattained adulthood that was reached by girls through marriage: in the earlier imperial period girls were meant to dedicate their jewellery and dolls to the gods, something these dead children never managed to do.\textsuperscript{72} That said, as with the inclusion of any grave goods, it was still not a universal practice,\textsuperscript{73} while, as Martin-Kilcher notes, some items might have been mass-produced for dedication and never used in life.\textsuperscript{74} In those cases, though, an even more complex relationship between past and present use would exist. The objects, representing toys and children’s jewellery (though never used as such) were created to be sold to people for dedications in advance of weddings, but ended up buried in a grave to represent the unattained wedding of a dead child. The same imagined relationships between person and object ended up governing the use of objects that never actually had those relationships. In any case, though, crepundia were clearly deposited as part of a programme of care for the dead child, and a concern to provide them with a burial which reflected their young age.

Amuletic objects previously used in relation to places
Some old amuletic objects might not have been worn or associated with an individual living body. In Chapter 1, it was observed that some words in Latin and Greek conventionally translated as ‘amulet,’ such as amuletum or phulaktērion, could refer to deposited objects, building features, or even rituals. Chapter 4 will consider the evidence for objects deposited in non-funerary contexts that had amuletic functions. For now, it is enough to observe that some non-wearable amuletic objects found in graves may have been amuletic objects reused from contexts beyond being worn on a living body and to investigate those examples.

For example, in Rome, a terracotta relief depicting Isis, Horus, and Serapis was found to cover a grave dated to the third century CE in the catacomb of Praetextatus, the placement of which, Donatella Nuzzo observed, ‘suggests a desire to protect the burial place by the deliberate reuse of an image reclaimed from a disused structure.’\textsuperscript{75} The same could be suggested for two undated images of a Gorgon in the catacomb of Pamphilus, one in black glass and one in relief in sealing mortar, or a porphyry slab depicting a snake-headed mummy in the catacomb of Novatian (both also in Rome).\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{72} Martin-Kilcher 2000: 69–73.
\textsuperscript{73} Prowse and Brent note that in the Vagnari cemetery, infant burials had the fewest associated items: Brent and Prowse 2014: 105–6.
\textsuperscript{74} Martin-Kilcher 2000: 69.
\textsuperscript{75} Nuzzo 2000: 251.
\textsuperscript{76} Nuzzo 2000: 253–4; Giovannini 2010: 120.
Amuletic objects previously used for non-amuletic purposes

Other manufactured objects might have been assigned new amuletic functions, without being physically modified, when deposited within the grave. This might include the twelve glass bowls found set into the mortar of a grave sealing in the catacomb of Pamphilus (Rome). Nicola Denzey Lewis suggested these might have been apotropaic on account of their context in the sealing mortar, though she concedes that they are more difficult to identify as such than other objects like Gorgons’ images.77

This category also includes objects such as coins and nails, which had distinct other functions but could also have been used as amulets in the grave. The reasons for the presence of metal nails in the grave can be tricky to ascertain. They might have formed part of coffins, funeral biers, hobnails for shoes, or wooden furniture that has since decayed.78 However, Claudia Lambrugo suggested that single nails found by themselves, especially with the more decorative and less practical circular heads, were likely to have had a magical or ritual scope.79 Francesca Ceci suggested the same interpretation for groups of one to three large nails found in graves.80 These would have to be of a size that was unlikely to have come from hobnails on shoes, and few enough in number to not have come from a coffin or funerary bier. The practice of depositing nails, already noted for earlier centuries, continued to be detectable in some graves into the medieval period.81 Commentators have tended to assume that, given their other function as tools for fixing things down, if nails were deposited inside a grave with an amuletic purpose, it was to nail down or otherwise keep in the dead.82 Some archaeological evidence from the imperial period in Italy does support this. For example, Quercia and Cazzulo identified cremation urns from Tronzano Vercellese and Aquileia that were surrounded by nails and tribuli (pointed metal objects used by the Roman army to slow down enemy forces) respectively,83 along with an inhumation burial from Acqui Terme (Alessandria, third century CE), where the body was found surrounded by nails in a non-aligned way that suggests they did not come from a coffin.84 Three first- to third-century CE graves from Bologna contained skeletons that had had nails fixed in them (in the skull, chest, and/or lower back).85 Other ritual contexts in which nails have been found also suggest fixing-in-place: several curse tablets have been found folded and nailed together, while some clay ‘poppets’ have been found with nails sticking out of them.86

77 Denzey Lewis 2017: 265.
78 Maioli 2010: 163.
79 Lambrugo 2005: 262.
81 For example, the late antique burials containing nails from Ravenna discussed by Ferreri 2020: 231, 240–1.
82 E.g., Bevilacqua 2001: 133–4; Ortalli 2010: 28.
83 Quercia and Cazzulo 2016: 33.
84 Quercia and Cazzulo 2016: 35–6.
85 Milella, Mariotti, and Belcastro 2010.
86 Maioli 2010: 165.
Other contexts seem less aggressive. In a burial area in Rome, two imperial-period tombs were found to contain a nail located on the chest of the buried person.\textsuperscript{87} Additionally, small nails were found inside a fourth-century-CE tube-shaped pendant from a grave in Rome, suggesting they might have been used in a similar way to \textit{lamellae}.\textsuperscript{88} Ceci has also drawn attention to the frequency with which nails were found in funerary assemblages with a coin and a small \textit{olla} (ceramic pot), suggesting that they were deposited to help defend the tomb against incursions by symbolically fixing it in place.\textsuperscript{89} The occasional finds throughout the empire of nails with so-called ‘magical’ inscriptions, involving \textit{voces magicae} and \textit{charaktēres}, makes the case for their use in protective rituals more generally,\textsuperscript{90} while extant nails with the names of archangels or crosses inscribed on them show an ongoing ritual value during the rise of Christianity.\textsuperscript{91} Nails were also used in some healing rituals: Pliny relates cures including one for epilepsy, where an iron nail is driven into the place someone first falls in an fit,\textsuperscript{92} and one for quartan fever, where a nail taken from a cross is tied around the neck of a sufferer.\textsuperscript{93} All of this suggests that the amuletic role of nails in graves was rather more complex and situation-specific than always being used to hold down the dead.

Coins appear in funerary contexts throughout the Roman empire and continue to be found in graves throughout late antiquity in Italy and Sicily, though they are by no means present in every burial.\textsuperscript{94} Alessandro Costantini observed that the most common object in funerary assemblages in third- and fourth-century CE Tuscany was a single coin,\textsuperscript{95} while Debora Ferreri described the presence of coins in the mouths or near the hands of the deceased in late antique Ravenna.\textsuperscript{96} This choice of location had a longer history: in Ceci’s sample of coins in imperial-period graves in Rome, she also noted that the majority of coins were found inside a skeleton’s mouth, something also discussed in literary sources from the third century CE onwards.\textsuperscript{97} As mentioned above, others were found along with nails, a small ceramic pot, and sometimes a lamp.\textsuperscript{98} In late antiquity, new locations were also possible: Ceci noted cases from the Roman catacombs where coins were discovered fixed into the

\textsuperscript{87} Ceci 2001: 90.
\textsuperscript{88} De Rossi 1888; Denzey Lewis 2017: 263, n. 20.
\textsuperscript{89} Ceci 2001: 89; 2005: 411.
\textsuperscript{90} Bevilacqua 2001.
\textsuperscript{91} Ceci 2001: 90.
\textsuperscript{92} Pliny, \textit{NH}, 28.17/28.63.
\textsuperscript{93} Pliny, \textit{NH}, 28.11/28.46.
\textsuperscript{94} Ceci 2001: 87.
\textsuperscript{95} Costantini 2014: 109.
\textsuperscript{96} Ferreri 2020: 220.
\textsuperscript{97} Ceci 2001: 88.
\textsuperscript{98} Ceci 2001: 89; 2005: 411.
sealing mortar. The practice of depositing coins in graves, as with nails, continued into the late Middle Ages, although it was with ever-decreasing frequency.

At least in earlier periods, the images or text on coins may also have been significant. Ceci drew attention to a coin bearing the image of Janus on the reverse found in a first-century grave in Rome, arguing that in the early empire his image was considered good luck during times of change like the new year or marriage. The usual interpretation of a coin’s function in a grave is as an obol for Charon, the boatman who guided the dead over the Styx, but, as Ceci observed, the sheer variety of the contexts in which these coins were found suggests that a single one-size-fits-all explanation might be inappropriate. Moreover, as Flavia Marani argued, the practice could have taken on new meanings over time and should not just be viewed in late antiquity as a relic from a past pagan age. This contrasts with Ceci’s suggestion that, in some cases, the gesture of including a coin might have continued as a tradition, without those performing it thinking about why they were doing it. Like the variety of possible functions attributed to nails in graves, it is difficult to separate out protective or healing functions from the other reasons a coin might have been included in a grave. Nonetheless, some combining factors, such as any good-luck associations of its images or texts, or an association within the grave with other more obviously amuletic items, suggest that at least in some cases a coin might have been deposited as an amulet.

There are many potential reasons for an old object to enter a grave. It might have been part of funerary goods, deposited at or around the time of the placement of human remains within the grave. This can sometimes lead to confusion, especially when objects’ functions overlap with the other functions some amuletic objects performed. However, objects could also have made their way into a grave as part of a separate, subsequent ritual event. One inscribed tablet, dated much earlier than the period under study, is worth briefly looking at in this context as the evidence we have on its biography is especially clear. This gold tablet, found in the mouth of a skull placed inside a terracotta

101 Ferreri 2020: 221.
102 Ceci 2001: 91.
107 For example, a bone doll found in the infant cemetery at Poggio Gramignano, Lazio, was proposed by Soren et al to be ‘possibly associated’ with magic and that it resembled the ‘poppets’ sometimes used in cursing (Soren, Fenton, and Birkby 1999: 518). But Shumka rightly observed that the item seems much more closely linked to the ivory and bone dolls found in the graves of young girls than any aggressive ritual activities aimed at the living (Shumka 1999: 616–7). Dolls like that, as argued by Martin-Kilcher, were deposited to reflect the dead’s unmarried status and unattained adulthood, mimicking the bride’s dedication of toys to the gods before her wedding (Martin-Kilcher 2000 65–6).
urn in columbarium 3 of the Vigna Codini columbaria at Rome, was dated to the Augustan period.\textsuperscript{108} The Greek text inscribed on it, requesting victory from ‘Lord Sarapis,’ led to a variety of interpretations depending on different readings of the final clause. Kotansky argued that it was originally a victory spell or healing charm asking for victory over ‘the names written below,’ that had been repurposed as an amulet for the dead, perhaps one that enabled passage to the afterlife (i.e., a Totenpass).\textsuperscript{109} Faraone instead suggested a return to an older reading that translated the final phrase as ‘those below the tombstone.’\textsuperscript{110} He posited that the tablet was an amulet originally used to protect a ritual practitioner during one or more necromantic divinatory rituals performed using the skull with which it was buried. He argued that the practitioner had wanted to ‘retire’ the skull and thus had placed the tablet inside the ‘mouth’ to neutralise it, put the entire assemblage in the urn, and then deposited it in the columbarium. One could thus understand the tablet as an amuletic object used to protect the living from the dead and as an object that had once been used to contact them, or as a powerful and amuletic object used to gain entry to the afterlife. Faraone’s hypothesis argues that amuletic objects could enter graves under a variety of circumstances, not just as part of a funeral. However, detecting these circumstances depends on identifying and explaining unusual aspects of the burial, such as, in this instance, the presence of a disembodied skull in a burial area typically used to house cremation burials.\textsuperscript{111}

Another case study illustrates how complex reuse of old objects that were not previously amulets could become, specifically the use of prehistoric stone tools as amulets in graves. The processing of prehistoric stone tools into pendants should be understood as a tradition that, in Italy and Sicily, dated back to the Iron Age and continued into the medieval period.\textsuperscript{112} Two pierced examples are known from Italy, one from an undated tomb in Narce (Viterbo) where a pierced ‘celt’\textsuperscript{113} accompanied many small blue beads.\textsuperscript{114} Secondly, a pierced nephrite blade was found in the late antique catacomb at Bolsena (Viterbo).\textsuperscript{115} However, another example of a stone tool has been discovered with an unfinished hole at one end, on the chest of the remains of the occupant of a grave in the ‘Führer’ catacomb in Syracuse (Figure 3.5).\textsuperscript{116} The hole is unfinished because the piercing does

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{108} Kotansky 1994: 113–4.
\item \textsuperscript{109} Kotansky 1994: 113.
\item \textsuperscript{110} Faraone 2005.
\item \textsuperscript{111} Columbarium no. 3 had enough niches to house 950 urns but also purportedly had a ‘crypt’ that was also filled with bones: see Borbonus 2014: 165–6.
\item \textsuperscript{112} Cherici 1989: 332.
\item \textsuperscript{113} This is an archaeological term for a long, thin prehistoric tool made of metal or stone, once attached to a wooden handle and used for cutting and digging.
\item \textsuperscript{114} Faraone 2014: 272. Narce was a Faliscan settlement inhabited up to the third century BCE, close to Civita Castellana (Viterbo, ancient name Falerii). Civita Castellana remained inhabited after Narce’s abandonment.
\item \textsuperscript{115} Cherici 1989: 356.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Orsi 1895: 476.
\end{itemize}
not reach through to the other side of the stone. It therefore could not have been worn as a pendant, as there are no means of suspension.

![Figure 3.5: Semi-pierced ‘thunderstone’ (prehistoric stone celt). Catacombs in Syracuse. Orsi 1895: 476.](image)

The unfinished hole in the Syracusan celt and its placement on the dead individual’s chest might indicate a shared knowledge of how fully pierced stone tools were worn. The Syracusan celt is small enough that it might have been carried around instead of tied on. Celts’ prehistoric use as tools, though, was not widely understood in the ancient world. According to several Greek and Roman lapidaries (a type of literary compendium devoted to the uses of different kinds of stones), thunderstones were not thought to have been manufactured by humans but instead to have come from the spots where lightning struck.\(^{117}\) Faraone argues that small stone blades reused in the Graeco-Roman Mediterranean world should be understood as ‘thunderstones,’ amulets that protected the wearer from lightning strikes, just as larger ones are thought to have been inscribed and deposited to protect houses and other structures from lightning.\(^{118}\) Within this framework, these were not only reused items that had not been previously used as amulets, but also objects that were reused without full awareness of their past use. They were instead linked to the natural and divine spheres since lightning itself was linked to Zeus and Jupiter. This illustrates how inferences made in the late antique world about an object’s past use or origins might not map onto what we can glean from an object today. Those inferences, however, affected how the object was used as an amulet at the time.

**Summary**

For all the objects in this section, a complex chain of relations led to their deposition within a grave. They had to be manufactured from materials like metal ore, animal remains, or mined stones or gems. Those materials could have come from anywhere in the Roman empire or beyond and have passed through several hands before being processed into coins, pendants and so on. They could then be

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\(^{117}\) Faraone 2014: 259–60.

processed or remade at other points in their biographies. Examples of remaking include pierced coin pendants, particularly the quinarius of Hadrian, and the pierced thunderstones, which were respectively constituted from older coins and stone tools. In the previous chapter, I demonstrated how people might engage with and interact with the materiality of amuletic objects, and how this shaped their experiences of the world. The feeling of someone else being protected, and memories of it being worn, might have made it more important for mourners that the item be included in the dead person’s funerary assemblage or adornment, as might its status as an heirloom. The circumstances of an object’s making, remaking, or past relationships with the dead person, therefore might all have affected how and why it was included in a grave.

Amuletic objects’ other functions might also have made them important for burial. Adam Bollók has explored the different reasons why someone might have wanted to protect the dead in their journey to the afterlife in a Byzantine context, citing both the precedent of Charon’s need for a fee in the form of a coin and early bishops’ presentation of the journey to heaven or an interim place to await the Last Judgement.\textsuperscript{119} Crepundia or bullae might have been buried to protect a child, but also reflected their youth and unattained adulthood.\textsuperscript{120} In her study of magical objects in Iron-Age Veneto, Elisa Perego noted the importance of distinguishing amulets owned by the deceased before death and interred ‘as part of his/her own personal grave assemblage’ from ‘magical devices intentionally selected for the funeral by the mourners and believed to protect the burial and/or the living from evil supernatural forces, including the return of the “walking dead.”’\textsuperscript{121} This section has demonstrated that it is not always easy to unpick these functions from each other.

New (made for death)
There are also amuletic objects that seem to have been created or used specifically as amulets for the grave and which were associated with the newly dead. As with old amuletic objects, they were made and deposited to protect the body, the entire grave or group of graves, or to protect others from the dead. This section will start with specially crafted objects. Firstly, it will survey items made of inscribed metal foil, namely lamellae and crosses. These were deposited within graves and bear inscriptions that suggest that they were manufactured for the grave rather than reused. After that, it will cover inscribed structural features of a grave, both visible and invisible to visitors. Next, this section will consider found or less ‘crafted’ objects, namely stones from the local area and animal remains. Stones have been found in graves, specifically on the limbs or inside the mouths of inhumed bodies. Animal remains have also been found in graves or buried near to them. In each case study, I will consider how

\textsuperscript{119} Bollók 2013: 239.
\textsuperscript{120} Martin-Kilcher 2000.
\textsuperscript{121} Perego 2010: 72.
and why the amuletic object was made or appropriated for this particular death and the role it played in each burial and subsequent commemoration.

It is clear that some objects were made for the grave because their inscriptions tell us so. For example, a gold tablet was found in a second- to third century CE tomb on the site of the church of San Paolo fuori le Mura at Rome (Figure 3.6).  

![Figure 3.6: Gold lamella inscribed in Greek, second to third century CE. San Paolo fuori le Mura, Rome. 6.5 x 2.4cm. © The Trustees of the British Museum, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/1613486419. Accessed: 14/03/2023.](image)

The inscription, in Greek hexameters, strongly resembles those found on a corpus of gold foil tablets found in graves in Greece and southern Italy dating to the fourth century BCE, known as ‘Orphic’ tablets.\(^{123}\) Those were thought to have been used to guarantee the bearer’s safety in their journey to the afterlife (i.e., a Totenpass), as their texts either (like this one) describe a dialogue between the dead individual and chthonic entities that let them pass on, or describe the geography of the Underworld.\(^{124}\) While modern scholarship has problematised the assumption that these tablets formed part of an Orphic mystery cult, most agree that they were used by initiates into Bacchic mysteries.\(^{125}\) Fritz Graf suggested that the initiate received the tablet during their initiation, to be

\(^{123}\) Bernabé and Cristóbal 2008; Graf 2017.  
\(^{124}\) Edmonds 2011; Graf 2017.  
\(^{125}\) Graf 2017.
eventually taken into the grave.\textsuperscript{126} If so, and if this ritual context was the same hundreds of years later in Rome, the tablet was probably made for Caecilia and her grave in particular before her death.

Other late antique inscribed objects also suggest that they were made to accompany someone in the grave. Found in Sicily but of otherwise unknown archaeological context, Giacomo Manganaro described a ‘Byzantine’ lead foil cross, pierced on one end, which was inscribed on both sides in Greek with a complex prayer addressing ‘Lord,’ ‘God,’ and the saint Ananias, asking them to help or have mercy on their ‘slave’ (δούλη; doulē) Hagia, daughter of Anata, along with christograms, eight-armed stars, crosses, and other geometric shapes (Figure 3.7).\textsuperscript{127} He thought it likely that the cross, which had traces of folding across each of its arms, was deposited in Hagia’s grave with her body.\textsuperscript{128} The pierced end might indicate that it was attached to her clothing or other jewellery.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Lead inscribed cross, Byzantine. Sicily. 8.5 x 8.5cm. Manganaro 1994b: pl. VI-VII.}
\end{figure}

Other metal foil crosses are also known to have been associated with the bodies of the dead in the late antique period. ‘Lombard crosses,’ gold foil crosses with equilateral arms, were widespread in northern and central Italian graves dated between the sixth and eighth centuries CE.\textsuperscript{129} They have been studied as a distinct type of object since the nineteenth century,\textsuperscript{130} and have been interpreted

\textsuperscript{126} Graf 2013; 2017.
\textsuperscript{127} Manganaro 1994a: 457–9.
\textsuperscript{128} Manganaro 1994a: 459.
\textsuperscript{129} E.g., those in Perassi 2014; Flapp 2018.
\textsuperscript{130} Augenti 2018: 137.
as an indicator of Romanisation among Lombard elites.\textsuperscript{131} In the grave, they are understood as funerary offerings and markers of the wearer’s Arian Christian faith and politics.\textsuperscript{132} Hagia’s lead cross from Sicily came from a cultural context that was rapidly diverging from the areas of Italy in which the Lombard crosses were found: the Lombard kingdom never extended to Sicily, and Lombard crosses have not been found in graves there. Indeed, Neil Christie has argued that a key difference between Byzantine and Lombard burial culture, at least on the Italian mainland, was the latter’s expansive use of grave goods where the former only provided a limited number of dress items.\textsuperscript{133} Nonetheless, the use of crosses as funerary goods does offer useful comparative information on how Hagia’s lead cross might have worked. It demonstrates how new amuletic objects might simultaneously be expressions of faith.

In both these cases (Caecilia Secundina’s lamella and Hagia’s cross), the objects would have been hidden from view once the grave was closed. Access to information on their presence was therefore restricted to mourners who had been present at the burial or were in contact with those who were. A visitor to the graveside could have been entirely unaware of these objects’ presence and/or power, or fully cognizant and thus able to engage with them as a protective force for the dead person on their way to the afterlife. Miles and centuries apart, the two objects suggest that some forms of religious beliefs and traditions could have complex relations with protective objects.

In addition to new objects, parts of the grave itself could be constructed to protect the grave’s contents and can therefore be considered amuletic. Many such features come from the city of Rome and its suburbs. They consist of amuletic inscriptions on stone placed on the surface of a fill to mark the grave, text or images scratched into stone tomb structures, or mortar in an underground catacomb. Inscriptions include the undated marble tablet found in the former Villa Patrizi on the via Nomentana in Rome, an area occupied by late antique cemeteries, which was inscribed on both sides with Greek nonsense text and voces magicae like ablanathanalba, a common palindrome used on amulets and curse tablets alike.\textsuperscript{134} The word Iaō in Greek letters (a Hebrew name of God that regularly appears in Greek inscriptions on amuletic lamellae and pendants) was scratched twice into the sealing mortar of a loculus in the catacomb of Marcus and Marcellinus, around a tile that had been sunk into it.\textsuperscript{135}

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\textsuperscript{131} Porta 2016: 195.
\textsuperscript{132} Flapp 2018: 2–4.
\textsuperscript{133} Christie 2010: 117.
\textsuperscript{134} Bevilacqua 2010: 38; 2014: 527–8. A fragmentary mosaic featuring Medusa’s face was also found on the site: Vaglieri 1908. For more on Medusa mosaics, see Chapter 4.
\textsuperscript{135} ICUR IV.12090; Nuzzo 2000: 249; Denzey Lewis 2017: 267.
In the catacomb of Commodilla in Rome, a marble slab was found engraved with an image of the ‘Holy Rider,’ a figure on horseback holding a lance and attacking a demon, found elsewhere on gemstones, medallions, and armlets, including Byzantine Sicily.\textsuperscript{136} The inscription it accompanies reads, in Latin, ‘Here lies Felix who lived in peace one year, six months, eleven days,’\textsuperscript{137} suggesting it once marked a child’s grave. Nuzzo suggested this image was ‘an allusion to good over evil,’\textsuperscript{138} but it is also striking how, unlike gemstones and medallions with the same image found in other graves around the empire, this image and accompanying text would have been visible to any visitor passing the grave. Further inscriptions with drawings similar to those found on lamella inscriptions come from the Roman catacombs: two different marble tablets with single ring signs (eight-pointed stars with rings drawn on each point) were found in the catacombs of Cyriaca and Hippolytus respectively.\textsuperscript{139} Another ring sign appeared next to a short backwards inscription (reading II R – I) scratched next to a tomb in the northern wall of ambulacrum 24 of the catacomb of Commodilla.\textsuperscript{140} Again, imagery usually reserved for small and portable amuletic objects (ring-signs appear often on inscribed lamellae) was made accessible to all viewers.

Backwards writing, another feature of inscriptions on worn amuletic objects, was itself not unheard of in the Roman catacombs. The epitaph for Laurentius, found in the catacomb of Sant’Agnese, was written backwards, reading Laure\textit{n}tius \textit{vixit annus} / \textit{La}[...].\textsuperscript{141} Other epitaphs also appeared backwards, including the Latin epitaphs for Elia Vincentia, attributed to the catacomb of Praetextatus,\textsuperscript{142} and for Luscinus, found in the catacomb of Octavilla.\textsuperscript{143} A brief backwards Greek epitaph for Heraclides was also found in the catacomb of Domitilla.\textsuperscript{144} The alphabet has also been found scratched out on several surfaces in the catacombs, which Nuzzo argued had a ‘magical value.’\textsuperscript{145} Without detailed information on the locations of these inscriptions, it can only be theorised that they had a role in attempting to protect the graves from incursions. This is not the case for outright curses inscribed as epitaphs, as with the one from the catacomb of Sant’Agnese that wishes in Latin that ‘May whoever violates this tomb die a terrible death, lie unburied, never rise again, and share the fate of Judas.’\textsuperscript{146} Denzey Lewis suggested that this expressed anxiety about necromancers

\textsuperscript{136} Giannobile 2002.
\textsuperscript{137} \textit{ICUR} II 6190.
\textsuperscript{138} Nuzzo 2000: 251.
\textsuperscript{139} \textit{ICUR} VII.19893b; 20332b, Nuzzo 2000: 249–51; Denzey Lewis 2017: 267.
\textsuperscript{140} \textit{ICUR} III.8713b; Nuzzo 2000: 249–51; Denzey Lewis 2017: 267.
\textsuperscript{141} \textit{ICUR} VIII.21140; Denzey Lewis 2017: 267.
\textsuperscript{142} \textit{ICUR} IV.12551.
\textsuperscript{143} \textit{ICUR} II.4351.
\textsuperscript{144} \textit{ICUR} III.8056.
\textsuperscript{145} \textit{ICUR} III.8030a, 8703-4, VIII 22905b, 23055, listed in Nuzzo 2000: 251.
\textsuperscript{146} \textit{ICUR} VIII.21396.
breaking into the grave, more than someone attempting to steal the spot for another burial.\(^\text{147}\) A similar fear might be expressed in the Latin inscribed prayer on a tombstone from Cozzo Ciricello (Ragusa, fifth-sixth century CE) that orders ‘Swear by (the Christian) God and the gods of the underworld that nobody may be allowed to open (my tomb) or take (my body).’\(^\text{148}\) A different anxiety is expressed by the prayer in a funerary inscription dated to 398 CE of unknown provenance but preserved in Rome, which declares, *hic con(s)iste deus, hic [-] ne Bacus inqu(u)s temptet* (‘Here stays God, here let Bacus the enemy not attack’).\(^\text{149}\) Nuzzo proposed that ‘Bacus’ here refers to an evil spirit who the inscription is meant to bar from the grave.\(^\text{150}\) I will demonstrate in Chapter 4 how declarations that powerful entities were present in a certain place could protect it and alter the experience of being in it. In the present context, these inscriptions would also have reminded readers that the grave’s intactness was being guaranteed by named or unnamed powers. They therefore protected the integrity of the structure by enlisting more-than-human powers in the same way that inscribed *lamellae* investigated in Chapter 2, and inscriptions that will be encountered in Chapter 4, did.

Other grave inscriptions seem to protect specifically against incursions on the grave from outside. A limestone slab was found covering a double inhumation burial within a tomb in Punta Secca, Ragusa. When lifted, the underside was found to have a *trisagion* (the Greek words ἅγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος, holy holy holy) written on it backwards, along with a line drawing that might be a swastika.\(^\text{151}\) Roger Wilson associated both the backwards writing and the swastika with magical significance, noting the latter’s association with good luck in the ancient world.\(^\text{152}\) The tomb was likely established in 625-630 CE and contained the remains of an approximately 25-year-old adult and a four-year-old child, both identified as female and, through DNA analysis, as parent and child.\(^\text{153}\) The child was buried a year or two after the parent. The burials were the only one found in the building that housed them, which featured a bench, offering table, and remains of ceramics and hearths. Wilson emphasises the timing of the inscription’s incision: he thinks this occurred after the tomb had been broken into by robbers, during works (perhaps by the deceased’s family) to repair it, citing the way the bones appeared to have been disturbed then commingled, the apparent addition of two larger slabs to replace two smashed ones, and the fact that this inscribed slab appeared to have mortar on the underside, indicating it previously faced upwards.\(^\text{154}\) In this case, we can reconstruct at least four different stages

\(^{147}\) Denzey Lewis 2017: 271. The vast majority of these curses come from Asia Minor, not Italy: see Strubbe 1991; Rebillard 2009: 73–5.


\(^{149}\) Ferrua 1940: 19–20.

\(^{150}\) Nuzzo 2000: 249.

\(^{151}\) Wilson 2013: 172–3.

\(^{152}\) Wilson 2013: 174.


\(^{154}\) Wilson 2013: 176.
in the grave’s story: the first deposition of the adult, the second deposition of the child, the break-in, and the subsequent rebuilding with the addition of an amuletic inscription. That further serves to demonstrate that it should not be assumed that all amuletic objects entered a grave at the point of the deposition(s) of the human remains. In addition, the offering table, ceramics, and hearths suggest that at least one funerary banquet took place over the course of these events. The way the writing was hidden inside the tomb also resonates with the hiddenness of amuletic grave objects that were deposited inside the grave. Either the protective text was meant to reflect directly onto the bodies contained in the grave, or the secrecy of their addition was meant to give them power.155

Amuletic objects that were new and ‘made for death’ could come from a variety of sources. This includes found objects drawn from the immediate local area. These objects might have been picked up for the grave spontaneously. For example, four graves in the fifth-century CE infant cemetery in Poggio Gramignano (Terni), all from the same room of the former villa that housed the cemetery, were found to contain stones, pebbles, and bricks in close association with infant remains. Among the burials were the skeletal remains of one toddler aged two or three, found with a stone on each hand and a reused tile covering the feet (Figure 3.8);156 an eight to ten year old child, found with a small piece of limestone and attached mortar in their mouth, 157 and two infants aged between newly-born and two months, one found with stones placed over their wrists and ankles and a brick wedged under the chin, and the other with stones placed over their abdomen and neck and a small, square, stone inside their mouth (Figure 3.9).158 The debris and rocks found on the bodies were likely taken from the decaying structure in which the burial area was located. The mourners therefore selected these otherwise unremarkable materials from the immediate environment for a funerary ritual act, which is only detectible through the archaeological context in which they were found.

155 For amuletic deposits in non-funerary contexts, see Chapter 4, especially hidden ones in Section 4.5.
156 Soren, Fenton, and Birkby 1999: 508; Montagnetti et al. 2020: 283.
Ideas vary over what exactly these stones were intended to do. Roberto Montagnetti speculated that ‘The stones may have rendered them [the infants] unable to move or, in instances where stones were placed in the mouth, speak or emit pestilential vapors.’\footnote{Montagnetti et al. 2020: 292.} Jordan Wilson suggested that the stones were placed out of fear that the children’s cause of death was supernatural.\footnote{Wilson 2022: 222, 235.} David Soren et al. interpreted the treatment as ‘to keep [them] from rising from the dead or being used in necromancy.’\footnote{Soren, Fenton, and Birkby 1999: 518.} These interpretations characterise the children’s remains as dangerous. They contrast with commentary on both Roman Italian and medieval British child burials. Roberta Gilchrist has argued that the inclusion of any amulet or object in children’s graves in late medieval Britain were aimed at protecting the child rather than holding it down, as children were unlikely to have accumulated enough sin to come back as revenants.\footnote{Gilchrist 2008: 148–9.} This is a medieval Christian worldview that it would be inappropriate to project onto late antiquity. However, fear of the infant dead is not fully established for the Roman period either. Carroll argued against the assumption that Roman infants’ deaths were intrinsically impure and thus deserving of less elaborate burial, pointing to the use of grave coverings or containers, inclusion of age-appropriate grave goods, and (often) close association with other family members.\footnote{Carroll 2011: 114.} Therefore in the late antique period during which the Poggio Gramignano cemetery was established, fear of dead infants would have had to both appear and
disappear over the course of a few centuries. Nonetheless, the fact that the only two non-infant burials in this site were treated in this way is significant. It indicates that the grounds for this treatment might have had factors associated with (though not exclusive to) an older age at death.

The burial area these remains were found in is widely thought to have been used over a short period of time to house the remains of infants who died in a malaria epidemic.\textsuperscript{164} Perhaps its young victims were interpreted as special cases, in a way that other dead infants were not. Indeed, Gilchrist notes how traces of ashes in burials at a time of plague might, in combination with evidence from contemporary penitentials (texts listing penitentiary acts to be taken for specific sins), indicate that burning plant material or lining graves with ash was an attempt to restrain the ‘dangerous’ dead who had died of plague.\textsuperscript{165} No traces of ash were noted at Poggio Gramignano, but the malaria association may offer an explanation for the stones found in the infants’ mouths. Gilchrist also pointed out that in medieval Britain, a few skeletons with various pathological signatures were associated with objects that might indicate an attempt to heal the corpse in advance of an anticipated resurrection on judgement day. This included a male skeleton with poliomyelitis and traces of tuberculosis who was found with a stone in the mouth.\textsuperscript{166} Though this is highly speculative, perhaps the stones in the mouths of the infants at Poggio Gramignano might have been used to heal the respiratory symptoms of their malarial illness. We saw in the section above how smaller objects like coins or metal tablets were also placed in the mouths of the dead. There, literary and epigraphic evidence served to suggest that they were meant to protect or aid the dead person rather than keep them down. We might profitably ask what aspect of the stones made them any different: their size, making the insertion seem more violent and therefore directed more \textit{against} the dead person than \textit{for} them? The insertion \textit{of} one of the stones into the newborn’s mouth does seem violent, based on photographs of the skeletal remains. It wedged open the infant’s jaw (Figure 3.9). Nonetheless, it is possible that our ideas of violence towards the dead do not map onto those of antiquity.

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{164} Lane 1999; Soren, Fenton, and Birkby 1999: 520–3; Sallares 2002: 68; Montagnetti et al. 2020: 284.
  \item \textsuperscript{165} Gilchrist 2008: 146.
  \item \textsuperscript{166} Gilchrist 2008: 149.
\end{itemize}
Other contemporary examples of rocks placed on the limbs or in the mouths of the dead come from elsewhere in the empire. A grave found in northern Britain (fourth century CE) contained the remains of an individual thought to have been a *gallus*, with two pebbles in the mouth. Two middle-imperial-period inhumation graves from Sarsina (Forlì-Cesena), possibly belonging to *peregrini*, were located in a marginal area and covered with a heap of boulders. The existence of numerous other infant burials throughout the cemetery at Poggio Gramignano without the same rock-based interventions means it was a choice whether to use stones or not.

167 *Galli* were cult officials who worshipped the goddess Cybele. According to contemporary literature, they were often eunuchs. The identification of these remains as that of a *gallus* comes from the juxtaposition of bone remains, identified through analysis as male, with typically feminine jewellery consisting of bracelets, necklaces, and an anklet including jet beads. Modern terminology and gender assignations for this individual varies between scholars: Pinto and Pinto 2013.


169 I.e., a free non-Roman citizen, inhabiting the provinces; the term became obsolete after 212 CE when the Constitutio Antoniniana granted citizenship to free inhabitants of the empire (apart from formerly enslaved people and those who had become subjects through surrender in war, who were referred to with other terms anyway).

170 Ortalli 2010: 27.
Unlike many of the other objects, these stones were probably building materials sourced from the villa itself. They were therefore more liable to have been truly ad hoc decisions taken at the point of burial that created an amulet out of nearby debris. Other amuletic objects that were made for death required more forward planning. This must have been the case for animal remains found within or near to graves, as an animal had to be selected, killed, and then buried. Poggio Gramignano’s infant burials also offer some illustrative examples of animal remains that were likely amuletic. These consist of the skeletons of at least twelve puppies aged under six months and one young dog found buried around the area, and the remains of a toad found in one of the infant graves. Moreover, an assemblage of a candelabrum, a cow skull, and a pickaxe head was found very close to the oldest child’s grave: it was thought by Montagnetti to have been involved in a ritual event that took place during the burials. The dogs’ frequently missing jawbones and skulls might indicate that they had been killed either by beheading or ripping apart the cranium or mandibles; while the relative lack of surviving neck vertebrae meant no cut marks from beheadings are now detectable, Michael MacKinnon did observe that several mandibles were broken at the back, which might indicate violent ripping. Conversely, the toad was described as ‘nearly complete,’ and no butchery marks were mentioned.

Data on the proportion of cemeteries containing animal remains in late antique Italy and Sicily is lacking, but contemporary data from late Romano-British cemeteries would suggest that the presence of dog burials was unusual but not unheard of: however, the remains of animals more typically used for food were more common, particularly chickens but also cows, sheep, or goats. Other examples of late antique dog burials associated with infant burials are those of the necropolis on via Tommaso Gar in Trento (Trentino, third century CE), the infant, horse, and dog burials at the theatre in Prata d’Ansidonia (L’Aquila, mid-fifth century CE), and Colombarone (Pesaro Urbino, sixth-to seventh-century CE). Each of these burials differ in how the dogs relate to the infants’ bodies. In Trento, individual dogs were buried close to individual infant inhumation graves, whereas in Prata d’Ansidonia they were found in the same large mass burial pits that housed multiple inhumed infants, along with horse parts. In Colombarone, a single dog burial was found near the wall of a large Republican-era residence, alongside which eight infant inhumation burials were arranged along three

173 BS9, of an infant aged nine to twelve months in an amphora. Montagnetti et al. 2020: 286.
177 Bassi, Amoretti, and Fontana 2015.
178 Fiore and Salvadei 2011; Vitale 2017: 105. Four of the seven pits dug in the ancient theatre site held mass infant graves.
parallel and approximately straight lines. Notably, all of the above are scattered across northern and central Italy, suggesting that this was a tradition limited to these areas.

Outside Italy, the most famous example of associated infant and dog burials in the ancient Graeco-Roman world is the Agora Bone Well in Athens, dated to the second quarter of the second century BCE. There, over 450 infant skeletons, those of a few older individuals, and over 150 dog skeletons were found commingled in a well. Also of interest is the dog burial found in a pit with ceramic fragments, the bones of at least two goats (one with gnaw marks), and a red deer tooth in Ferento (Viterbo, from at least the fourth century CE), about thirty kilometres west of Poggio Gramignano. Trauma to the skeleton suggested the dog was killed by a stab wound to the right side: between this, the other animal remains, and the position of the pit next to a threshold, it seemed plausible to archaeologists that that dog was meant to be a sacrifice. Though public animal sacrifice was, in late antiquity, increasingly criticised among elite Christian groups, banned by edicts since the mid-fourth century and on the decline in cities like Antioch because of lack of funding, the act of killing and burying an animal as an offering had clearly not died out completely by this time.

Toad and frog burials are similarly rare, though their bones are small enough that there may have been cases where their remains were overlooked. A few comparable examples do exist: some wells in third- to fourth-century CE Roman Gaul contained frog and jackdaw remains, but only the latter, when found whole, were thought to have been deposited intentionally. Mixed anuran bones (i.e., amphibians, including frogs and toads) were found in a cremation urn at Pompeii, but were thought to have come from amphibians that fell in the unsealed urn and perished, while a so-called cache of thousands of frog bones was recently found in a ditch in Britain and dated to the Iron Age. Beyond these potentially accidental inclusions, two decapitated frogs were found buried next to the remains of a new-born baby in a grave in Baggiovara (Modena, sixth century CE).

There is therefore scant but credible evidence for the association of both frog/toad and dog remains with infant remains in northern and central late antique Italy, though not southern Italy or Sicily. What remains to be understood is why each kind of animal was included in the first place.

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181 Liston et al. 2018: 25, 58.
182 Alhaique and Fortunato 2015.
183 Alhaique and Fortunato 2015: 112.
184 Ullucci 2011: 133–6.
185 Cameron 2010: 65.
186 Lepetz and Bourgois 2018.
188 Alberg 2022.
189 Labate and Palazzini 2010.
Analyses of the Italian dog burials mentioned above typically draw attention to the chthonic Greek and Italic entities that are known to have received dog sacrifices: Mater Matuta, Genita Mana, the powers honoured by the Robigalia, and Hecate.\textsuperscript{190} They suggest that these dogs were sacrificed to similar goddesses, and argue that the dogs’ sacrifices might have done several things: propitiated chthonic entities and purified the infants’ untimely death(s), protected and accompanied dead children in their journeys to the afterlife, or even acted as sources of healing or milk.\textsuperscript{191} Giulia Pedrucci, the originator of the latter idea, also problematised the concept, put forward by Soren, that dogs might have acted as guardians over the boundary between life and death, protecting the dead children but also protecting the world of the living from the untimely dead.\textsuperscript{192} She argued that excessive focus had hitherto been placed on the children as potential contaminants, suggesting that other reasons less founded in fear of the dead should be given equal weight. This echoes my own arguments about how we should examine the stones on the bodies of some of the children’s remains found at Poggio Gramignano.

Yet other possible reasons for dogs’ inclusion in graves, as listed by Nicholas Cooke, were as pets of the deceased or as the remains of food consumed on site.\textsuperscript{193} However, in this case the young (sometimes prenatal) ages of the buried children and foetuses in this area make the former option less likely, while the relative completeness and articulation of the dogs’ skeletons, mostly untouched by butchery marks, excludes the latter.

In the case of the toad, Pliny describes toads and/or frogs (the same Latin word \textit{rana} was used for both)\textsuperscript{194} as ingredients in concoctions or rituals for warding off ‘storms, eye infections, earache, toothache, or coughs,’ and the tertian or quartan fevers we now associate with malaria.\textsuperscript{195} Soren \textit{et al} suggest this association might have informed the decision to bury the toad with the infant: in other words, the toad’s curative properties made it an appropriate choice to heal or protect the infant from the disease that afflicted them.

The dogs’ and toad’s violent deaths and/or their bodies might have had protective or healing functions, leading to their burial in proximity to the dead infants. However, there is a tension here between our understanding of the differences between sacrificial remains and an amuletic object.

\textsuperscript{191} Pedrucci 2014: 203–8. 
\textsuperscript{192} Pedrucci 2014: 196–7. 
\textsuperscript{194} Pliny does distinguish poisonous frogs called \textit{φρυνοι} in Greek in \textit{NH} 32.18/32.50-52. 
\textsuperscript{195} Soren, Fenton, and Birkby 1999: 517, discussing Pliny, \textit{NH} 18.70/18.294 (storms); 32.18/32.52 (fevers), 32.24/32.74 (eye); 32.25/32.78 (earache); 32.26/32.80 (toothache); 32.29/32.91 (coughs); 32.38/32.114 (fevers).
Were the remains understood as powerful things with continuing influence on the world (amuletic), or simply as the remnants of an expiatory act that needed to be disposed of (sacrificial)? These two definitions are not mutually exclusive. My definition of ‘amuletic’ is focused on an object and its functions (those of protection, healing, or bringing good fortune), and on a single physical feature, specifically the object’s proximity to the affected party or place. Animal sacrifice focuses on the act of killing and the activities performed with the remains immediately following that act. It does not exclude the possibility that a sacrifice, once it had taken place, could leave remains that were then used as amuletic. Indeed, a sacrifice might partially have been performed to produce amuletic remains. This possibility is borne out by some textual evidence, and Chapter 4 will discuss in more detail how various ancient sources claim that animals’ bodies and body parts could be fixed, deposited, or buried to protect buildings, enclosures, and fields. Among these, Pausanias relates that in Methana on the Peloponnesian peninsula, in order to stop a summer wind causing blight, two men each ran around the vines with half of a white cockerel in opposite directions and buried the pieces where they met again.\textsuperscript{196} As noted in Chapter 1, Pliny related how fumigating a house with a black male dog’s gall was considered an \textit{amuletum} by the \textit{magi}, and that the same effect could be obtained with the blood of a dog sprinkled on the inner walls of a home, or its genitals buried under the front door’s threshold.\textsuperscript{197} Pliny therefore deems a dismembered body part as much of an \textit{amuletum} as more ephemeral and easily dispersed or decomposed materials like blood or smoke, an idea which further commingles the concepts of ‘amulet’ and ‘sacrifice.’ \textsuperscript{198}

Archaeological evidence from other periods also suggests the continued importance of sacrificial remains after killing and offering had taken place. While discussing animal remains in Etruscan sanctuaries, Angela Trentacoste pointed out how the presence of isolated animal body parts (e.g., a single rib or toe) in some of the deposits at Poggio Colla (Florence) suggested that the assemblages might have been consciously curated, observing, ‘[p]erhaps the role of animals in some religious or cultic activity did not end at death or extend only to one organ, but was finalized in an act of purposeful deposition.’\textsuperscript{199} The choice to bury one puppy’s dismembered body in two separate pits at Poggio Gramignano seems to suggest a similar degree of ‘conscious curation,’ as does the positioning of another puppy as curled up.\textsuperscript{200} Similarly, the absence of skulls and mandibles from many of the puppy burials has been taken as a deliberate omission.\textsuperscript{201} It is entirely possible, therefore, that

\begin{table}
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196 Pausanias 2.34.2. & \\
197 Plin., \textit{NH} 30.24/30.82. & \\
198 Although, as noted in Chapter 1, this thesis is chiefly concerned with amulets for which we have archaeological evidence, i.e., amuletic objects made of durable materials. & \\
199 Trentacoste 2013: 100. & \\
201 MacKinnon 1999: 548. & \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{References for Further Readings}
\end{table}
the remains could have been both remnants of a sacrifice and amuletic objects created for the grave through the sacrificial act of killing.

Other organic and animal remains, beyond corpses that were buried soon after killing, have been found in or near graves. For example, Ferreri argues that the remains of eggs found in late antique burials in Ravenna, Nocera Umbra (Perugia), and Rutigliano (Bari) were deposited either as a food offering or a symbol of rebirth.\(^{202}\) Margherita Bolla also described the post-burial deposition of an egg (containing the remains of a chick) in a third-century CE cremation tomb in Casteggio (Pavia).\(^{203}\) In those cases, it is even harder to tell what might have been a food offering and what might have been an amuletic object, but we should keep in mind that either or both interpretations are possible.

Sometimes it can be difficult to determine whether an object was made for the grave or not. For example, the raven’s claw found on the chest of another infant buried at Poggio Gramignano,\(^{204}\) two bear teeth discovered in an inhumation grave in the catacomb of San Giovanni in Syracuse,\(^{205}\) or the animal knucklebones and teeth found in graves in Ravenna,\(^{206}\) have all been interpreted as amulets. These are much more portable objects that might have been separated from the animal that was killed to provide them well before the burial took place. As a single, more durable animal body part, a tooth, claw, or knucklebone is less likely to have been from a sacrifice or food offering onsite. It might have already been carried around as a portable amuletic object for the living, as we know that animal teeth were often pierced and used as pendants,\(^{207}\) while in the fifth century CE, the abbot Shenoute in Egypt railed against monks and priests distributing fox-claws as amulets.\(^{208}\) This makes them more ambiguous objects to categorise, as are some other objects we will investigate next.

Ambiguous objects

There are some objects that are difficult to categorise as unambiguously old or new due to insufficient information. For example, two clay bells with Greek inscriptions wishing for victory and/or good luck were found near the deceased’s head in an inhumation tomb on the Acqua Bollicante estate, on the Via Praenestina at Rome.\(^{209}\) Their materials suggest they were not used as conventional bells, as clay does not tend to jingle like metal. Additionally, no record exists of whether they had clappers or not. If they did, they could have made a noise, but not a typical bell-like one. Their inscriptions’ wishes for

\(^{202}\) Ferreri 2020: 242.
\(^{203}\) Bolla 2011: 40.
\(^{204}\) Soren, Fenton, and Birkby 1999: 495, 517.
\(^{205}\) Orsi 1893: 285. Another example of a bear tooth in a grave comes from a second-century child’s grave in Como: tomb no. 37 in the viale Varese cemetery, see Cattaneo et al. 2005; Sartori 2005: 311.
\(^{206}\) Ferreri 2020: 240.
\(^{207}\) Dasen 2015: 191.
\(^{208}\) Shenoute, Against the Origenists 255-262. Translated in Frankfurter 2000.
\(^{209}\) Bevilacqua 2014: 518; IG XIV 2409.7; IG XIV, 2409.8.
good fortune are vague enough that we could still imagine that they had previously been given as gifts or used as domestic amulets. Unpierced items can also be ambiguous. For example, a bone token depicting a sphinx is attributed to the Roman catacombs, and a lapis lazuli plate depicting Bes Pantheos flanked by two snakes and surrounded by pseudo-hieroglyphic script was found in the catacombs of Hippolytus in Rome. They could have been used as tokens or jewellery or carried about as amulets before their deposition.

Many lamellae are found in graves without any pendant cases, and bear inscriptions that could have meant they were used in life and/or death. For example, two tablets found in different graves in the same cemetery in Gnatia (Salento) were each inscribed with what appears to be identical Greek text written in the same hand, aside from copying errors, and dated via palaeography to the fourth century CE. The text is vague: it asks for protection for ‘the bearer’ by ‘holy gods’ with Egyptian or Egyptian-sounding names. This protection could presumably have been conferred in life or in death. Each tablet was found rolled up; one inside the mouth of a skeleton, the other within the ribs, having presumably been placed on the body’s chest and then fallen in during the body’s decomposition. A second-century CE find of a gold tablet with inscribed charaktēres and the Greek word Óveβεννουθ (Phnebennouth, a transliteration from the Egyptian pȝ nb (n) nȝ ntr, meaning ‘the lord of the gods’) was found rolled up under the neck vertebrae of a skeleton within the necropolis of via Basiliano in Rome.

In the cases of the Gnatia tablets and the one from via Basiliano, the lack of pendant case makes it more likely that the tablets were created for the grave. This is because there is no evidence that they were hung from a person’s neck as a pendant, and their delicate materials could prevent them from being carried around as an amulet. The near-identical nature of the texts on the two Gnatia tablets also suggests that neither had moved far from their place of production, and indeed that they had been mass produced nearby. Nonetheless, the fact that all three were found rolled up does recall the way other tablets were rolled up before being inserted into pendant cases. This indicates that they were treated in one way like worn lamellae, even in the absence of a pendant case. Was rolling part of the deposition ritual? Could they instead have been removed, already rolled up, from pendant cases and then deposited in the grave? Were they worn, carried, or suspended on a living body in another way? Either way, their close spatial relationship with the bodies of the deceased, combined with their inscriptions, suggests that they were used to protect or help the dead individual within the grave.

210 See gem no. 4 in Appendix 2. Nuzzo thought it was probably embedded in sealing mortar, Nuzzo 2000: 251.
211 Bevilacqua and Ferrandini Troisi 2007: 250.
212 Bevilacqua and Ferrandini Troisi 2007: 256.
214 Giannobile 2005a; Bevilacqua 2014: 525.
Maybe this was to aid passage into the afterlife (as with Caecilia Secundina’s tablet, discussed above), to protect, heal,215 or preserve the body of the deceased against negative outside influences or the disease that killed them, or to neutralise or manipulate them in the way the skull-and-tablet assemblage at Vigna Codini may have once been used. While the same person wrote on both Gnatia tablets, that does not mean the same people performed the two burials. If they received no instructions on where to place the tablet, they might have been unaware of what the other tablet users were doing. Instead, they worked with what felt right based on their own understanding of the world and any prior ritual experience. On the other hand, the people performing the burial may have known of, or indeed been advised of by the tablet’s maker, the different ways one could use it. These ways might have had slightly different meanings or resulted in slightly different functions for the object.

In other cases, interpretation is hampered by a total lack of contextual information. Sometimes, the only contextual information for a lamella not found in a pendant case is that it came from a grave.216 Several other lamellae were noted to have come from graves with multiple occupants, including relatively nearby to Gnatia in Barzanò (Lecco).217 Another came from a hypogeum in the Grotticelle catacomb in Syracuse.218 Most interestingly, two further tablets (also now lost), this time made of bronze and inscribed with what Paolo Orsi called ‘geometric signs,’ were found in Grotticelle ‘near’ (presso a in the Italian report) two skeletons.219 These are likely to be late antique in date: the coinage finds from the catacombs date from the late third to the ninth centuries CE.220 Orsi’s choice of words is interesting: ‘near’ could indicate they had been found in the vicinity of rather than on either of the bodies. If so, they had a different relationship with the bodies within the grave than the tablets from Gnatia. Rather than a one-to-one relationship between a single object and a single deceased body, we could imagine that the two tablets were instead meant to affect both the bodies.

215 From diseases that afflicted the deceased in life.
216 For example, the copper tablet found in a burial area of six tombs marked with terracotta tiles, found during works at a house on a road off Corso Vittorio Emanuele, Comiso, during the early twentieth century, that had ‘unintelligible’ writing on it: see Pace 1926: 36, n. 3. The lamella and bulla purportedly found in the grave of empress Maria, wife of Honorius, discussed in Chapter 2, do not have an exact findspot: Kotansky 1994: 105.
217 A rolled-up metal tablet was found in a fourth-century CE inhumation grave containing three or four skeletons, along with other grave goods: Balbiani 1959. The tablet has never been unrolled. For tablet’s item record, see http://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/reperti-archeologici/schede/G1010-00002/. Accessed: 14/03/2023. For grave goods, see http://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/reperti-archeologici/schede/G1010-00164/. Accessed: 14/03/2023.
218 The remains of a silver tablet (no known text, now lost) were found in in the 1890s in loculus A of hypogeum 16 in the Grotticelle necropolis in Syracuse, which contained fourteen skeletons (including three children). Orsi 1896: 347; Bevilacqua 1999b: 82.
220 Orsi 1896: 335, 337.
in the grave at once or even the entire space, or indeed place, of the grave. These differences in proximity will be the focus of the final section of this chapter.

Summary

In this section, I examined the variety of amuletic objects in graves, using a broad division into ‘old’ and ‘new’ types. This has enabled me to identify different ways objects could be part of the grave or burial site or be experienced as powerful, drawing out certain points in their object biographies as influential on their use in the grave. This distinction also helped to draw out the interpretive grey areas of amuletic objects reused from past activities, whether they were remains of an animal sacrifice, nails and coins made for practical purposes, or amuletic gems passed down through generations before ending up in a grave.

3.2. Proximity, bodies, and places

The theme of proximity has been hinted at throughout the chapter and indeed the thesis so far. It applies to old and new objects alike and yields further insight into how those conducting the burial and subsequent visitors to the burial site might have related to the objects.

Chapter 2 used approaches developed in sensory studies to investigate how an amulet worn by a living animal or person could be experienced by those around them. It established that amulets placed on and worn by those who were unable to consent (e.g., animals), had limited ability to consent (e.g., young children), or those who consented but explicitly did not believe in their efficacy (e.g., the Athenian politician Pericles) affected the people around the wearers. This insight helps us to understand a key point about amuletic objects in graves: as grave goods, amuletic objects were not just for the dead person, but for their mourners, too. It was argued in the previous chapter that proximity and touch were central to much of amuletic objects’ use on living bodies: they were held by, rubbed by, or tied to a moving body. In Chapter 1, we also saw how many, though crucially not all, of the Greek or Latin words translated as ‘amulet’ were etymologically linked to verbs meaning ‘to tie.’

In the grave, proximity could be achieved in several ways. Sometimes, amuletic objects were placed touching a dead body. Unlike the relationships between amuletic objects and living bodies in the previous chapter, the relationship between deposited object and deceased’s body was relatively static, involving little motion or change in its character over time. Any changes that did occur, for example shifts in the position of an object during decomposition, usually happened slowly. Amuletic objects placed on a dead body could also differ in location from where they were worn on a living body.

For more on amulets and place, see Chapter 4.
body. The two near-identical Gnatia tablets were placed in the mouth and on the chest, suggesting that proximity with the dead could be achieved through a greater variety of means than with the living.

Some amuletic objects could be juxtaposed with cremated remains. In those cases, proximity to a body was maintained, but had been disrupted. Others might have their proximity to the body disrupted in another way. For example, a bronze tablet inscribed with charaktēres was found within a bronze tube by Paolo Orsi in the catacombs known as Cassia de Ponente, in Vigna Cassia in Syracuse.\textsuperscript{222} This object was found inside a rough clay bowl within a loculus containing a single skeleton, situated in the largest gallery of the catacomb, which was generally dated to the early Christian period.\textsuperscript{223} The use of a bowl to contain an amuletic object recalls the burial of incantation bowls inscribed with Aramaic in Sassanian Babylonia of the same period.\textsuperscript{224} While most of those seem to have been found buried in houses, a few were also discovered in graves.\textsuperscript{225} Those bowls were thought to act as ‘demon traps,’ protecting the space in which they were deposited. The bowl in Vigna Cassia might have been placed to perform something similar, producing a protective assemblage of pot and tablet. Certainly, placing the object apart from the deceased person’s body within a grave makes it seem as though any amuletic powers it might have had would affect the whole grave. The similarity to incantation bowls, which were also used to protect places rather than individual people, further solidifies this connection. Other inscribed amuletic objects from Sicily do use Aramaic,\textsuperscript{226} while in the shared catacombs of Sicilian cities Jewish occupants’ faith could be announced through an incised menorah on the walls.\textsuperscript{227} That suggests that the ritual significance of bowls might be applicable to certain bowls found in Sicily. Other amuletic assemblages involving pots consist of the association between ceramic pots, coins, and nails that Ceci noted for some graves in Italy in the Roman imperial period.\textsuperscript{228}

In some cases, though, amuletic objects in graves were not placed in direct contact with a body, cremated remains, or their vessels. Instead, we might find them deposited in other parts of the grave. Often this was on the margins of the grave, as with amuletic inscriptions on stone grave markers, or objects found sunk into the sealing mortar of tombs in catacombs. Examples of the latter include the second-century CE inscribed lapis lazuli gem depicting the composite god Bes Pantheos and pseudo-hieroglyphic script, pierced and thus perhaps once used as a pendant, but was discovered

\textsuperscript{222} Orsi 1893: 300.
\textsuperscript{223} Orsi 1893: 301.
\textsuperscript{224} Bohak 2019.
\textsuperscript{225} Hunter 2000.
\textsuperscript{226} E.g., lamellae nos. 6 and 7 in Appendix 1, from Mazzarino and Priolo Gargallo respectively, and the tablets described in Lacerenza 2002.
\textsuperscript{227} Rizzone and Sammito 2014: 7.
\textsuperscript{228} Ceci 2001: 89; 2005: 411.
in the catacomb of Hippolytus in Rome, likely embedded into a loculus’ sealing mortar. Another example is the glass paste medallion depicting a scorpion in the catacomb of Cyriacus on via Ostiense in Rome. Bells and coins were also found sunk into the sealing mortar of loculi in the Roman catacombs, along with objects like inscribed gemstones, suggesting that wearable or portable items did not always need to be closely associated with a body to work as amulets, but could also be powerful on the margins of a grave.

At other times, amuletic objects were deposited in the vicinity of (rather than within) a grave or graves. The way that the deposited bodies of the puppies at Poggio Gramignano were found dotted throughout the burial area, but not buried with any individual infants, is a case in point. MacKinnon speculated that the puppies had been dismembered and spaced out to try and cover as wide an area as possible and have every infant burial associated with at least one dog, but the absence of any dogs in one of the rooms occupied by the burials undermines this theory. The comparative evidence from the other late antique dog burials is inconsistent: some seem to have been buried in one-to-one associations with infants, others not. The single dog and the infants in Colombarone seem to offer the closest parallel to Poggio Gramignano. The dog and the infants were all associated with the wall of a villa, suggesting that this structural feature was a focal point of the place and that the dog affected all the burials associated with it. Perhaps the rooms at Poggio Gramignano were understood as distinct spaces which the dogs’ protective (or other) powers could suffuse. In that case, their absence from one room is intriguing.

Summary

All these different locations for depositing an amuletic object not only point to slightly differing amuletic functions, but also indicate that the experience of depositing them and of subsequently visiting that location could vary considerably. Some of these objects were hidden from view once the burial was completed, particularly those that had been placed on or near the body of the dead person. Others, especially those used to mark the margins of a grave, were still visible to subsequent visitors. Knowledge of the existence of hidden objects was restricted to those present at the burial or informed of what had taken place. Yet these objects’ functions were still ongoing in two ways. Firstly, in the landscape inhabited by those who deposited them, they continued to perform their amuletic functions. Secondly, and more generally, they continued to work as parts of a mourning and memory-making process, affecting the experience of visiting the gravesite and playing a part in how the

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229 See gem no. 4 in Appendix 2.
230 Giovannini 2010: 120.
231 Nuzzo 2000: 252; 414.
mourners remembered the act of burial.\textsuperscript{234} Just as Rieger suggested, these objects did not immediately die (i.e., cease to relate to others) when they were deposited.\textsuperscript{235}

Though the materials used differed, many of the textual strategies (e.g., prayers, charaktēres) and images used on lamellae and jewellery (e.g., the Holy Rider, who, in the catacombs, appeared on pendant set into sealing mortar and in an inscription outside a loculus), to protect a single body reappear in inscriptions on stone to protect a whole grave. This suggests a degree of assimilation between a dead person’s remains and the grave they were buried in. As we shall also see in the following chapter, the same stratagems could be deemed appropriate for living bodies and places, from houses to public buildings.

3.3. Conclusions

This chapter has focused on the themes of new versus old and proximity in relation to amuletic objects deposited in graves in late antique Italy and Sicily. It has drawn a distinction between new objects made for the grave, and old objects that were reused for it, utilising the approach of object biography to understand the possible ramifications of these differences. My discussion has also moved beyond these differences to explore the theme of proximity, examining the different physical relationships between object and affected person or place. Furthermore, I have explored what these differences could mean for the experiences of those who performed the burial, visited the grave site, and commemorated the dead person.

This chapter has also revealed similarities between amuletic objects and other items found in graves, from incantation bowls to gold Lombard crosses. These similarities show how there is no strict boundary between amuletic objects and other grave goods. Indeed, other categories of object, such as votives, also have a demonstrable overlap. Relating to an amuletic object by depositing it might happen concomitantly with other funerary activities involving the object. For example, animal remains found in and around burials could function as the remains of a sacrifice, amuletic objects, or both at once.\textsuperscript{236} Similarly, objects visible from the corridors of the catacombs might also work as grave markers.\textsuperscript{237} Moreover, amuletic objects that were worn in life might have been selected for the grave as much for their value, adornment, or links to the deceased’s identity or personality as for their

\textsuperscript{234} Denzey Lewis has argued that visitors to a tomb in the Roman catacombs decorated with ‘pagan’ mythological figures not only commemorated the buried person, but also the cultural figures, myths, and rituals that had ‘been short-circuited by the growth of Christianity.’ Denzey Lewis 2016: 267–8.

\textsuperscript{235} Rieger 2016.

\textsuperscript{236} Poggio Gramignano also furnished ample evidence of wood burning and two upturned bronze cauldrons, suggesting yet other ritual activities were taking place there, the remains of which might also be considered amuletic. Adams 1999: 604; Soren 1999: 627.

\textsuperscript{237} Fiò 2012: 17. She also relates the counterargument that multiple similar items along the same corridor would not have worked as recognisable markers, citing D’Angela 1995: 323.
amuletic properties. Any amuletic properties that did transfer were transformed within the new context of the grave to meet the needs of a dead, rather than a living, person. The same can be said for amuletic objects reused to protect the ‘place’ of the grave rather than just the body that the grave contained. This demonstrates how amuletic objects were part of complex and overlapping sets of relationships, inside and outside the grave context and before and after their deposition.

The amuletic objects considered in this chapter were used in antiquity to address some of the worries mourners might have had about their loved ones. These could have been corporeal fears, such as worries about bodies and/or graves’ susceptibility to manipulation by necromantic practitioners, thieves, and those who wished to deposit their own dead unauthorised by the site’s owners. They could also have been metaphysical, such as fears about salvation, demons, or safe travel to the afterlife. Sometimes it is hard to tell which of these fears the objects were used in response to, or if indeed they addressed multiple ones. The evidence provided from late antique Italy and Sicily expands our view of how amuletic objects could be related to many aspects of funerary practice. These objects formed part of the funerary assemblage of the people in whose graves they were placed and were a part of the funeral and mourning process for the living people who buried them. By using one or more of these objects, those who buried the graves’ occupants could perform an act of care that addressed the specific dangers they believed their loved one now faced. In so doing, they formed relationships with the amuletic objects; relationships were also formed between the objects and their loved one’s body, and between the objects and the newly designated area of their grave. Graves were not the only places in the late antique world that people sought to affect using amuletic objects. In the next chapter, I will explore fixed amuletic objects that were deposited in other sites of daily life, from domestic structures to agricultural building and enclosures.

Liana Brent has explored Roman grave-opening practices and the subsequent deposition of further bodies (Brent 2020: 134). The legal penalties incurred by those who introduced a body into a tomb, when unauthorised by the tomb’s owners, are found in Paul’s Sententiae (ibid., and Rebillard 2009: 61–2).
Chapter 4 – Amuletic objects beyond the body

Chapter 1 introduced two inscribed stones from late antique Sicily, which each bore an inscription referring to the stone as a ‘phulaktērion.’ In that chapter, they were used alongside a range of other texts and objects to argue that things not worn by or attached to living bodies should also be understood as amuletic in the context of late antique Italy and Sicily, in contrast to prevailing trends in scholarship which have focused on worn amuletic objects. This chapter returns to these two stones and uses them as the basis for a more detailed exploration of amuletic objects that were not closely associated with living or dead bodies. It looks at the different relationships amuletic objects formed with other things – be those things people, objects, places, demons, or divine entities – and argues that these relationships generated unique types of place. This framing follows the insights of place theorists: anthropologists and geographers who have defined ‘place’ as the ephemeral product of relations between things in a space. Place theory helps to characterise amuletic objects as things defined by – and bound up in – their relations with other things, especially people, which is an ongoing theme of this thesis.

Throughout the chapter, the two Sicilian inscribed stones, together with a range of other evidence including inscriptions, mosaics and hidden coins, will help to articulate some of the ways in which an amuletic object beyond the body (i.e. an amuletic object not worn by, or placed next to, a living or dead body) might still have related to people, and how those relationships made special places associated with amuletic protection. The discussion will focus on four key kinds of relationship, involving (1) moving amulets, (2) amulets marking boundaries, (3) amulets that provided fixed focal points, and (4) hidden amulets. In each of these instances, the amuletic object had different spatial relationships with the areas it occupied, and with the people and things around it. But in each case, as I will demonstrate, relationships worked to produce ‘protected’ places.

Section 4.1 will examine the aforementioned two Sicilian stones in greater detail. It will consider the language used in the inscriptions to refer to the locations of the stones and the property they were meant to affect. It will then introduce some theoretical ideas about place and its relationship with people and objects, which will offer a new framework for investigating the different ways people might have engaged with the Sicilian stones. Section 4.2 will broaden my analysis and consider how movement could shape an amuletic object’s relationship with a place, including evidence for movement of objects both through an area, and around its edges. Section 4.3 engages with the issue of edges more closely, positing that these objects could mark the boundaries to their effects. While the evidence thus far suggests that these amuletic objects were sometimes used to delineate the edges of amuletic protection, Section 4.4 considers another phenomenon: cases where
power seems to have radiated outwards from the amuletic object onto any entities nearby, with the object consequently becoming a focal point of the place. Finally, Section 4.5 will investigate hidden amuletic objects. Variable accessibility to a hidden object meant that it might not always be perceived or understood as amuletic, since knowledge of its presence or purported protection, healing, or good fortune-bringing properties would have been restricted to certain people. All five sections will emphasise that there is no single neat answer when it comes to the ways in which people and amuletic objects interacted in contexts beyond the body and grave.

4.1. Two stones

We will now investigate the pair of stones that will form this chapter’s main case study more closely. These are stones inscribed in the sixth or seventh century CE found in south-eastern Sicily. Their inscriptions each address the ‘angel of the lord,’ the ‘angel of God,’ and Jesus himself to request increased returns on the crops from specific vineyards whose owners are named.

**Petros’ stone:**

side A: [charaktēr] Πρὸς ἕνκαρ-πήα(ν), χουρίον (κέ) κλα-ρίον ἄνγελος τοῦ Θ(εο)ῦ ὁ Κραμαμιλα Φινάηλ 
Λουιλ Ἀμεναυθ Κρεφ(ή)λ 
Φακτώελ Ἀνεμούηλ Μου 
Μουκαθάλ Λουχανδά 
Εἰσοδραμέλ γιάμεν σέ, Ἰανου Χ(ριστ)έ τε, δός τόν καρ-πόν κέ τίν ἰαφοράν ἦς τόν ἀνπελόναν ἀπτό καρποῦ 
σίτου κέ ὤνου (κέ) ἐλέου τοῦ 
Πέτρου(ν), οὐποῦ κίτε τοῦ φυλα-κτήριον τοῦτου εὼ[---] -τητο κτήσαντα Μιχάηλ 
[Γ]αβρίαυλ, Οὐρήλ, Ραφαήλ 
τὸν Μισχοῦτον, τὸν δυνάτον 
δός χάριν ἦς τὴν σύνθε-

side B: ἔλεονα, τόν ἀν-πελονα τοῦ Πέτρου 
πλθυνον, πλύθυ- 
νον νῦ(ν) Κύ(ριε) Ἰεσοῦ Ἰ(ριστ)έ τε, νὲ ἀμέν 
[charaktēr]

---

σην ἀποὺ καρποῦ
σίτου (κὲ) ὄνου (κὲ) ἐλέ-
ου

**side A:** [charaktēr] For the harvest, land and smallholding, o angel of God, o Kramamila Phinael Louiel Amegaoth Krephiel Phaktoel Anemoul Mou Moukathal louxhanda Eeisdramel, as for you, Jesus Christ, give the harvest and the tribute to the vineyard from fruit, wheat and wine and oil of Petros, where there lies the phulaktērion [...] created Michael Gabriel Uriel Raphael to the Mischotos, the powerful, give favour to the harvest from fruit and grain and wine and oil.

**side B:** The olive grove, the vineyard of Petros, multiply, multiply, now Lord Jesus Christ, yes Amen. [charaktēr]

Translation my own, adapting the Italian translation from Bevilacqua and Giannobile 2000.

*Figure 4.1* (left): Side A of Petros’ stone. 22.5 x 18 x 3 cm. Manganaro 1994b: fig. 7.

*Figure 4.2* (right): Side B of Petros’ stone. Manganaro 1994b: fig. 9.
**Kyriakos’ stone:**

**side A:** [charakter] Πρὸς ἕνκαρπία(ν) χ-ορίον κὲ ἄνπελονα
ἀγγελὸς τοῦ Θ(εο)οῦ ὁ Κραμαθᾶ-
μαμιλία Φιναῆ Λουιλ
Ἀμεγαούθ Κρεφίλι Φατο-
έλ Ανεμουήλ Μουκαθᾶ-
λ λουηχάνδα Εισδραμά-
λ Μεσηλη γιάμεν σὲ, ἱ-
σοῦ Χριστῆ, δός τὸν καρ-
πόν (κέ) τὸν ἴσοροφὸν ἵκ τὸν ἄμπελονα τοῦ Κυριακο-
ῦ Ζοσίμου.

**side B:** Πρὸς χά[λαζαν Μιχα]ια
λαζόκου
ἀν κὲ τιθὶς ἵθ τρῖς
γόνιας τοῦ ἄνπελο-
νος . . . Μιχαὴλ Γαβρ-
ὴλ Οὐρίηλ Ῥαφαὴλ ἱα-
ωά [star] το[ῦ Θ(εο)ῦ] τέρισαν
ἀυτοῦ το[ῦ] . . . στερεύμ[α]
tοῦ σύρανου [. . ] κειμὸς ὀρ-
kόζο ρος Νεφ[α]ηλ ἄτας κα-
tά τοῦ Θ(εο)ῦ Μιχαλαζόκου
Πισιτες τὸν ἄνπελονον το-
ῦ Κυριακοῦ Ζ{ζ}οσίμου ρύσσα-
θε αὐτοῦ Ἰμερᾶς κὲ νυκ-
ὸς αὐτοῦ ἄπο τοῦ ἀρμοῦ ἔλ-
ης αὐτοῦ
[charaktēr]
Χ(ριστ)έ τε νίκα X(ριστ)έ
[τε β]οήθη τοῦ ἄνπε-
[λονος] το[ῦ] Κυρια-
κοῦ [charaktēr]

νὲ Ἀμέν.
[charaktēr]

**side A:** For the harvest, land and vineyard, o angel of the lord, o Kramamila, Phinael, Louil, Amegaoth, Krephiel, Phatoel, Anemouel, Moukathal, Louechanda Eisdramal, Meseel. Regarding you, Jesus Christ, give the fruit/harvest and the tribute to the vineyard of Kyriakos son of Zosimos, where this phulaktērion lies, there (are) Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael, and the Muschoutos the

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powerful, give favour to the harvest from fruit, food and wine of Kyriakos; the fruit food and wine and oil, multiply, multiply [...] Lord Jesus Christ yes Amen. [charaktēr]

**Side B:** Against the hail and (against) Michalazokos, placing (it) in the three corners of the vineyard.... Michael Gabriel Uriel Raphael Iao-a [charakter] of God protect him [...] the firmament of the sky [...] I adjure (?) Nephael, regarding the ruins against the god Michalazokos Pisites, protect the vineyard of Kyriakos son of Zosimos, protect it day and night, and from the soul of the undergrowth. [charaktēr] Christ conquer, Christ help the vineyard of Kyriakos [charaktēr]

Translation my own, adapting the Italian translation from Bevilacqua and Giannobile 2000.
In the coming sections, these two stones will be compared with other objects from the same south-eastern area of Sicily (see map at Figure 4.4), which covers large parts of the modern-day provinces of Ragusa and Syracuse. In the Roman and late antique periods, this area was bordered by two major land routes. The coast road passed through Gela and Camarina from the west to the southern tip of Sicily, then north again to Helorus and Syracuse. A second road split off and cut through the interior, passing through Akrai/Acrae (now Palazzolo Acreide) on its way to Syracuse. This part of the interior had few large settlements, aside from Syracuse. However, some of Sicily’s largest known late antique villas, such as the ones at contrada Caddeddi (near Noto) or Casale (near Piazza Armerina) just to the north, were constructed in the fourth century CE. They were continuously occupied into the seventh century, though with modification at Casale of some rooms into mills, presses, and kilns. This suggests that the countryside was not entirely devoid of settlements, and that the people living there might have produced the inscribed objects discussed in the coming pages, including Petros’ and Kyriakos’ stones.

Figure 4.4: Map of south-eastern Sicily, marking major settlements of interest. Modified from Antiquity À-la-carte, released under Creative Commons CC BY-NC 3.0 licence.

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3 Evidence for Roman or late antique occupation of Syracuse is patchy due to its continuous occupation. However, Wilson notes that some ‘stray’ evidence of domestic structures exists, alongside the converted ‘temple-church’ of Athena and funerary structures (Wilson 1990: 125, 104, 134).

4 Other fourth-century villa sites in Sicily include Settefrati and Patti Marina on the north coast (Wilson 2016: 10, 21), Pistunina (Messina) at the north-eastern tip of Sicily and Gerace, northwest of Piazza Armerina (Wilson 2016: 15).

5 Wilson 2016: 3.

As mentioned above, both inscriptions contain requests to Jesus and some angels for a better return on the crops in a vineyard. Kyriakos’ stone also preserves (depending on how the text is interpreted) either an order to supernatural ‘cloud-drivers’ not to damage the vineyard with hail,\(^7\) or a request to an angel (Nephael) to target the hail-demon Michalozokos and protect the vineyard. Both suggest that Kyriakos wanted not just a better harvest, but also protection against hail-related dangers that were personified and addressed directly. Both inscriptions are very specific about the goods that Jesus and the angels are to protect, listing wine, oil, grain, and fruit, which they refer to collectively as the ‘harvest,’ rendered as ἐνκαρπία (enkarpia) or ἐνκαρπηα (enkarpēa).

The area to be affected is described using a number of different words in both inscriptions. In the opening sentences on Side A of both inscriptions, this area is called land, vineyard, or holdings (χορίον/χουρίον (chorion/chourion, Attic Greek: χωρίον), ἀμπελόν (ampelon, Attic Greek: ἀμπελών), κλαρίον (klarion, Attic Greek: κληρίον) respectively), while Side B of Petros’ inscription also mentions an olive grove (ἐλεον, eleon, Attic Greek ἐλαιών). These different words could denote different physical areas, but Manganaro suggests that the reference to an olive grove means olive trees were dispersed among the vines, instead of in a separate space.\(^8\) They are each identified as the property of an individual, namely Petros or Kyriakos.

Both inscriptions specify that the affected area is ‘where the phulaktērion lies.’\(^9\) The instruction can be interpreted in multiple ways. Firstly, the stone could have been placed in different locations before it was deposited for the final time. For instance, it could have been placed sequentially in three corners of a triangular property, before being left in the third corner, or placed sequentially in three corners of a quadrilateral property and then left in the fourth corner. Alternatively, it might imply that three individual but identically inscribed stones, of which this is one example, were placed in three corners of the vineyard. While the language is thus a little unclear about the precise layout of each vineyard and where the stones were placed within them, we do know from the equation of ‘Petros’/Kyriakos’ vineyard’ and ‘where this phulaktērion lies’ that the stones were eventually placed within the vineyards.

\(^7\) As suggested by Jordan 2000.
\(^8\) Manganaro 1994b: 498. Referred to in English-language scholarship as ‘combination cropping,’ ‘intercropping,’ or ‘inter-cultivation.’ Combining cereals with olive trees was first mentioned by Columella (5.9.7) and was likely used to improve profits while the trees were growing and to help with yields thereafter (White 1970: 288; Mattingly 1996: 219). Combining fruit trees and legumes was also mentioned by Varro but required irrigation (Varro, De re rustica, 1.23.6). Erdkamp suggested combination cropping was a viable strategy for small landholders (Erdkamp 2005: 42). That would not map well onto late antique Sicily with its large and prosperous estates (Wilson 1990: 234), but the situation in Comiso might have been unusual.
\(^9\) Bevilacqua and Giannobile 2000: 146.
Overall, these inscriptions record a complex but close relationship between the stones and the area they were meant to affect: a relationship which place theory will help to illuminate. Place theory characterises place as ‘the particular outcome of actions in a location,’ something transformed from space through ‘individual and communal experiences and memories.’ Place theory’s focus on experiences and memory-making aligns with how previous chapters have focused on amuletic objects’ relationships with people that similarly produced experiences and memories. The theoretical framework and language offered by place theorists, however, allows us to be more specific about how this worked for objects in spaces beyond the body and the grave. They help to sharpen the focus on the situational meaning generated in those cases.

4.2. Movement

The reference on the Kyriakos amulet to being placed ‘in the three corners of the vineyard’ might suggest, as noted above, that the stone was carried between multiple locations in sequence before reaching a final resting place. If we do assume that a single stone was carried between locations, then that ritual constitutes a specific ‘time-space event’ (a movement and deposition ritual) that created a specific protected place. Overall, the inscriptions on Petros’ and Kyriakos’ stones do not give full information about the multiple time-space events they might have participated in. Combining place theory with other evidence for movement rituals will therefore provide valuable context that will help us to understand Petros’ and Kyriakos’ stones better.

The practice of moving items around an area to be protected is not unheard of in the Roman and Byzantine Mediterranean. As noted in Chapter 1, Pliny the Elder related that a bat carried alive round a house or sheepfold, then either nailed up under the house’s window or hung up by the feet over the sheepfold’s threshold, was an amuletum, at least according to the magi. Writers like Columella in the republican era, Pliny the Elder in the early imperial period, and, in late antiquity and the early medieval period, Palladius and the compilers of Geoponics, offer evidence of protective, healing, or good-fortune-bringing ritual procedures that provide useful points of comparison with the archaeological material. In their works (summarised in Table 4.1), there are several instructions to carry an object around a specific enclosed area, typically a farmer’s land, to set up, bury, or place an object on the land, and/or to place, bury or plant something around the property’s edges:

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10 Moser and Feldman 2014: 5; Rohl 2015: 5. However, not everyone agrees: Nieuwenhuis and Crouch argue that space itself was affective and connected with life: Nieuwenhuis and Crouch, eds. 2017: xiv. Nonetheless, Peatfield and Morris argue that the ‘richer use of language’ of place theorists offer a reminder that humans are not outside observers, but part of the world: Peatfield and Morris 2019: 190.

11 For this phrasing, see Moser and Feldman 2014: 6.

12 Pliny, NH 29.26/29.83.

13 Most of these are investigated by Ager 2010.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, text citation</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Remaining instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pausanias 2.34.2</td>
<td>keep summer winds from withering the vines</td>
<td>white cockerel, split in half</td>
<td>Each half taken by a man, they run around the field in the opposite direction to each other, the halves are buried where they meet.¹⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pliny, NH 18.45/18.158</td>
<td>protect growing millet from disease</td>
<td>toad</td>
<td>Carried around the field at night before it is hoed, buried, dug up before the field is sown, otherwise the land turns sour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palladius 1.35</td>
<td>hail is warded off</td>
<td>hyena-, crocodile-, sealskin</td>
<td>Carried around land and hung up by the house or courtyard gate.¹⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoponics 1.14 (citing Africanus)</td>
<td>hail will not fall</td>
<td>hyena-, crocodile-, sealskin</td>
<td>Carried around land and hung up by the farm gate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>marsh tortoise</td>
<td>Carried upside down in the right hand around the whole vineyard, then placed alive and upside down in the centre of vineyard, with earth heaped round it so it cannot flip itself back over. ‘Some insist’ this must be done at the sixth hour (day or night).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoponics 2.18 (citing Africanus/Apuleius)</td>
<td>ensure the harvest is not bitter</td>
<td>toad</td>
<td>Before the land is hoed, toad carried around it at night, fastened in an earthenware container, buried in the middle of a field, when it is time to sow, dug up and thrown off the land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoponics 2.42, citing Sotion/Demokritos</td>
<td>make lion-plant retreat, pulses will improve</td>
<td>cockerel</td>
<td>Carried by a virgin girl ready for marriage, barefoot and naked, hair</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹⁴ Ager speculates whether the white cockerel was chosen for ‘sacrificial connotations as well as its availability to ordinary farmers,’ Ager 2010: 142.

¹⁵ Ager 2010: 139. Sailors cover mastheads in hyena skin in Plutarch’s Quaestiones conviv. 4.2, Moralia 664C-D., while Suetonius claimed that Augustus always took a sealskin around with him as protection against thunder and lightning (Life of Augustus 90).
loosened, around the field. The remedy is ‘relying on nature and antipathy’ and might work because the lion-plant is afraid of the cockerel.

Table 4.1. Procedures involving carrying an object around an enclosure.

Unlike the two stones, all of the objects carried around in these accounts are animals or animal parts. However, some of the stated goals are remarkably similar to those recorded on the inscribed stones, including protection from bad weather and ensuring a good harvest. Other desired outcomes, namely protection from disease or pests, are less comparable, but still feasible in the context of trying to protect a vineyard or a field. In almost all cases, the ephemeral event of carrying an item around an area also involves leaving a longer-lasting marker. The item is displayed or deposited in a fixed location, though it leaves no indication of the past procession other than what a visitor might surmise from its presence in conjunction with cultural knowledge about what it was previously used for. This, again, bears some similarity with the testimony from Kyriakos’ stone’s inscription, which says it was ‘carried around the three corners of the vineyard.’

Two rituals from the Roman period, one in the city of Rome and one in the Italian countryside, also bear comparison with these accounts and with the two Sicilian stones. One, first described in a fragment of Varro (active in the first century BCE), involves a stone called the manalis lapis. This stone was apparently dragged or carried through the city of Rome in order to cause rainfall. It was discussed as a past ritual by Festus and Servius, grammarians of the second and fourth/fifth century CE respectively. Festus adds that the stone was usually kept at the Porta Capena, near the temple of Mars. Britta Ager argued that this ritual was not so much meant to create rain as ‘elicit it, either from gods or natural forces which are withholding it unseasonably.’ The second ritual comes from a description from Augustine of Hippo, writing in the early fifth century CE, but claiming to be quoting from a work of Varro. He asserts that the celebration of the god Liber’s rites involved carrying a penis figurine around the Italian countryside in a wagon, to display it first at crossroads, then in town.

16 This remedy is broadly similar to the ‘caterpillar charm,’ wherein a menstruating woman walks around a garden or field infested with caterpillars, after which the caterpillars fall off the plants, dead; Columella 10.357-68, 11.3.63-4; Pliny, NH 17.47/17.267, 28.23/28.77; Palladius 1.35, Geoponics 12.8, Ager 2010: 53–56. 17 Nonius Marcellus, M.574/p.877. 18 Festus, De verborum significatione: 2; Servius (ad Aen. 3.175). Analysed in detail as a rainmaking ritual by Ager 2010: 133–4. 19 Festus, De verborum significatione: 115. 20 Ager 2010: 135. 21 These assertions do not appear in extant works or fragments of Varro, though they could stem from a now-lost work. 22 Augustine, City of God 7.21.
Lanuvium, a whole month was allegedly devoted to Liber’s processions during which everyone had to use ‘the most shameful words’ (omnes verbis flagitiosissimis uterentur), interpreted by Ager as bawdy songs,\(^{23}\) culminating in the phallus being crowned publicly by the most honourable matron in the city upon its arrival in the forum.\(^{24}\) This was, Augustine claims, meant to ensure the health of the crops and avert *fascinatio* (i.e. the effects of envy and the Evil Eye) from the fields.\(^{25}\) Phallic processions are known of elsewhere in the Roman empire.\(^{26}\) Moreover, Augustine’s testimony resonates with what is known of Dionysiac phallic processions in classical Greece.\(^{27}\)

These rituals’ purposes are comparable with both the procedures from manuals outlined in Table 4.1 and with the requests inscribed on Petros’ and Kyriakos’ stones. Their desired outcomes centre around the harvest and the factors that affect it, from weather conditions to invasive weeds. The way they were moved around locations is also worthy of comparison. Many of the procedures from Table 4.1 are especially concerned with the final location in which the item was placed, whether this was at the meeting point for two men running around the land, as in Pausanias’ account, at the gate, as in instructions from Palladius or the *Geoponics*’ instructions, or in the middle of a field, as in the *Geoponics*. The *manalis lapis* and phallic processions did not end, as those procedures did, with the permanent or semi-permanent installation of the processing object. The phallic procession did however specifically connect crossroads outside the city with the forum within the city, while the *manalis lapis*, kept outside the city walls at the time, similarly entered and passed through the city before being returned to its original location.

This textual evidence also contains certain details not provided by the Sicilian stones. It names the actors who moved the objects, from nominated individuals as in Pausanias’ account or the instructions in the Geoponics,\(^{28}\) to *pontifices* in Servius’ account of the *manalis lapis* ritual,\(^{29}\) to ‘everyone,’ including a key role for the city’s most honourable matron, in the Lanuvium phallic procession.\(^{30}\) This draws our attention to something missing from the Sicilian inscriptions: who moved them around and/or placed them in their final resting place? Were other stipulations, such as time of

\(^{23}\) Ager 2010: 205.


\(^{25}\) The Liberalia is also discussed by Varro (*De Lingua Latina* 6.14) and Ovid (*Fasti* 4.76-65) but Ovid and Varro do not identify it as an agricultural festival (Ager 2010: 175).

\(^{26}\) A second- or third-century CE funerary inscription from Edessa, possibly for a pig, mentions a ‘chariot of Phallos,’ SEG 25-711.

\(^{27}\) Csapo 1997: 265.

\(^{28}\) Pausanias 2.34.2; *Geoponics* 2.42.

\(^{29}\) Servius (*ad Aen.* 3.175).

\(^{30}\) Augustine, *City of God* 7.21.
day or accompanying rituals, met? All these aspects would have affected how participants formed relationships with the objects and thus contributed to the creation of a unique place.

Summary
This section has investigated the different ways amuletic objects beyond the body might have been carried around the edges of the area to be affected. It has taken account of diverse rituals for which we have evidence from literary sources, ranging from agricultural procedures whose instructions survive in farming manuals to traditional communal rites described by writers like Augustine and Festus. It has sought to relate these accounts back to the two stones from Sicily belonging to Kyriakos and Petros to show what information is still missing from those stones' inscriptions and materiality. If Kyriakos’ inscription is read as describing a procession around the vineyard’s corners, that would mean that the vineyard was delineated by the movement of both human participants and the stone itself. The fields described in the Sicilian stones’ inscriptions, during (and after) the times in which the stones were set up, became the territories of holy creatures that were invested in helping the humans whose livelihoods depended on the survival of the crops growing there. The embodied experience of carrying Kyriakos’ stone around the field became linked to this worldview, and the path that the participants took around the fields marked its boundaries. However, this memory was only fully accessible to those who had moved the stone around in this way. Others, whether they had been told of the ritual or understood from local cultural norms that it might have happened, could only imagine the experience.

4.3. Boundaries and edges
The section above discussed processions of amuletic objects through or around the area the object was meant to protect, heal, or bring good fortune to. It noted that in cases where the object was taken around the area, the procession might have marked its boundaries. It also became clear that the enigmatic language of Kyriakos’ stone could have meant several things. All the above interpretations pay particular attention to the edges and corners of the vineyard. This section will show that placing an amuletic object at the edges of the area to be affected, whether this was a field, a room, or a building, was also not uncommon, nor was placing it in particular at a point of entry into the area such as a doorway or gate. To aid the discussion, I will divide the relevant material into two groups: amuletic objects deposited along the edges of fields, and amuletic objects deposited or installed at doors or gates to domestic, commercial, or agricultural structures. I will argue that using amuletic objects to mark the edges of their effects gave places near them the binary quality of being either affected or

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31 See Section 4.1.
unaffected by the amuletic object. Moreover, the protected areas were considered uniformly affected within those boundaries.

Marking property boundaries

This section will first lay out the evidence for amuletic objects deposited at the edges of agricultural property. It will then compare this with the evidence for religious engagement with property boundaries in the Roman period, which provides important background information for understanding the late-antique material in this chapter.

The instruction on Kyriakos’ stone to place it ‘in the three corners of the vineyard’ is comparable with another inscribed stone found in Sidi Kaddou (Tunisia).\footnote{SEG 44-859.} Although the Sidi Kaddou stone is slightly earlier in date (second-third century CE), and comes from beyond our area of study, the similarity between these inscriptions is striking: the inscription calls upon ‘sovereign gods’ to hinder and turn away a variety of ills, including hail, locusts, and winds, from the vineyards, olive groves, and seeding places, ‘as long as these stones engraved with your sacred names are here lying about the land.’\footnote{Kotansky 1994: 53; Faraone 2018: 247.} Meanwhile, literary sources from the Roman and Byzantine periods provide accounts of and instructions for ritual procedures which required people either to place multiple things around the edges of an enclosure or to plant something along the same boundaries. Their desired outcomes were also protection from adverse weather or invasive plants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, text citation</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Columella 10.346-7</td>
<td>unknown</td>
<td>skinless ass’ head</td>
<td>Set up by Tages (Etruscan inventor of divination) near edge of field.\footnote{Ager 2010: 140, 227.}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>protect from lightning</td>
<td>bryony</td>
<td>Tarchon (Etruscan hero) planted it surrounding his fields.\footnote{Ager 2010: 140.}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pliny, NH 18.45/18.160</td>
<td>no birds will enter field</td>
<td>plant of unknown name</td>
<td>Buried at four corners of the field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pliny, NH 23.17/23.28</td>
<td>keep hawks away, keep poultry safe</td>
<td>black bryony</td>
<td>Planted surrounding a villa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palladius 1.35</td>
<td>against hail</td>
<td>white bedwort/potwort</td>
<td>Circled the entire area of the garden.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32 SEG 44-859.
34 Ager 2010: 140, 227.
35 Ager 2010: 140.
The texts in Table 4.2, from first-century-CE Italy (Columella and Pliny) to seventh-century-CE Asia Minor (Eleusius), describe objects, from crosses to plants, that had different degrees of visibility to the naked eye. Some were buried, others planted, and yet others placed on the ground. For those present at the time of their deposition, for those that saw them afterwards, and those who remembered where the buried ones were located, they offered clear demarcations of space into areas that were or were not affected by the powers they called on or the benefits they accrued. They can therefore be understood as boundary markers.

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36 Fernández Nieto 2010: 578. Papyrus Wilbour 47.218.138, from Egypt between the thirtieth dynasty and the Ptolemaic era, also instructs the reader to place effigies of Ptah in the four corners of an orchard to keep reptiles out: Goyon 2012; Faraone 2018: 398, n. 19.

A collection of three further late antique inscriptions from the same part of Sicily provide further evidence for depositions on the edges or corners of the same property in this area. These consist of two inscriptions from a field in Crucidda (also known as *contrada* Crocilla),\(^\text{38}\) Comiso, now in the Museo Archeologica Ibleo in Ragusa,\(^\text{39}\) and an inscription from the Museo Civico Castello Ursino in Catania.\(^\text{40}\) The former two stones mention the land they protect as belonging to someone named Paulos. Mario Burzachechi grouped the pair with the Catania stone, dates them all to the third to sixth centuries CE and asserts that the third stone must have come from the same area as the other two stones based on the similarity between the inscribed *charaktēres* on all three.\(^\text{41}\)

![Image redacted for ORO deposit.](image)

*Figure 4.5: Side A of Paolos’ stone 1. 47 x 25.5 cm. Burzachechi 1959: pl. I.*

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\(^{38}\) Patitucci and Uggeri 2007: 367.


\(^{40}\) *ed. princeps*: Burzachechi 1959: no. II. Given the sources of the rest of the museum collection, the stone likely belonged to Ignazio Paternò Castello, a wealthy patron active in the mid-eighteenth century.

\(^{41}\) Burzachechi 1959: 401.
Figure 4.6: Side A of Paulos’ stone 2. 31 x 12 cm. Burzachechi 1959: pl. III.

Figure 4.7: Side B of Paulos’ stone 2. Burzachechi 1959: pl. IV.
Figure 4.8: Catania stone. No dimensions given. Burzachechi 1959: pl. II.1.

Figure 4.9: Drawing of original fragments of the Catania stone. Burzachechi 1959: pl. II.2.
**Table 4.3:** English translations of the three inscriptions edited by Burzachechi 1959. Translations my own, adapted from Burzachechi’s Italian translations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paulos’ stone 1</th>
<th>Paulos’ stone 2</th>
<th>Catania stone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Amel. Ga[briel (?)]—</strong>. Christ, who has multiplied stars in the sky and the water in the sea, multiply also the fruits in the vineyard of Paulos. [charaktēres]</td>
<td><strong>side A:</strong> fruits [and the ...] of the land and the vineyard of Paulos. Look upon this pen (?) of his. Abimel, Lasthel, Amiael. [...] Eao. Azael.</td>
<td><strong>In the name of the lord, for the vineyard [...] Abimel, Lasphen, Amuel, Eloem, Elao, Azaer, Korphiel</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>side B:</strong> charakter + + α +</td>
<td></td>
<td>Phaktobar, Adonael, [...] Abrax IAPHEN [...] ACHAELMERMORMORKATHALOK THA[...OD[...]AMELMOUKEROSAENOS [...] Erael, Amen, Erael THULATASE [...] TEO [...]PH Jesus Christ, o you who have multiplied the [...] in the sea, multiply also the vines in the vineyard [...] of Paulos?] O LMETR [...] [charakteres]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The three texts share striking similarities. Two (Paulos’ stone 1 and the Catania stone) depict Jesus as multiplying both crops and, analogously, natural elements like stars and water,\(^44\) while Paulos’ stones (both found in Crucidda) share a named landowner.\(^45\) The stones might therefore have been used for the same property in the same or different locations, or each might have designated a different vineyard. The two stones for Paulos’ vineyard were both found in the same modern-day field at the same time, suggesting that they might have marked different parts of the same vineyard. Generally, the references to multiple stones ‘lying about the land’ in the Sidi Kaddou inscription, the mention of one or more stones being placed ‘in the three corners of the vineyard’ in the inscription on Kyriakos’ stone, and the placement of crosses, potsherds, and oleander branches in the corners and centre of the affected land in the *Geoponics* and *Life of Theodore of Sykeon* offer comparable cases where multiple amuletic stones might have been placed along the boundaries of a property.

\(^{42}\) Translation adapted from Jordan 1984: 298.  
\(^{43}\) Translation adapted from Jordan 1984: 300.  
\(^{44}\) This technique is referred to as a *historiola* in ancient magic studies, defined by Frankfurter as an abbreviated narrative incorporated into a magical spell: Frankfurter 1995: 458.  
\(^{45}\) Two inscribed bronze tablets from Avignon targeting weather-related dangers for gardens were found approximately 15km from each other: Kotansky 1994: 46.
Boundary markers denoting landowners’ property had been significant in traditional Roman cult, and particularly the Terminalia. This was a yearly festival, which honoured the god Terminus (himself embodied as a boundary stone or stump) and was said to have been instituted by Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome.\textsuperscript{46} The festival involved two landowners crowning the god-marker from either side, sprinkling it with lamb’s blood, and making offerings of garlands, cakes, and burnt offerings.\textsuperscript{47} Siculus Flaccus, a land surveyor active in the second century CE, describes a boundary marker installation ceremony, where a sacrificial victim’s ashes and blood, wine, incense, honeycombs, wine, and chips of stone were buried underneath the stones.\textsuperscript{48} Writers of the Augustan period offer further details. Horace says that, in autumn, offerings of fruit were made to Priapus and Silvanus and calls the latter ‘protector of the boundaries’ (\textit{tutor finium}).\textsuperscript{49} Ovid emphasises Terminus’ fixity in space, as well as the certainty that his presence gave about the limits of farmers’ property, enjoining him, ‘whether they beat you with rakes, or ploughshares, call out: “This is your field, and that is his!”’\textsuperscript{50} These ceremonies and the markers they honoured offered definite evidence of the limits of landowners’ property, defusing potential disputes. In the presence of a boundary marker, the division of different areas into ‘X’s land’ versus ‘not X’s land’ is likely to have been central to a visitor’s experience of place, especially during these ceremonies. Ovid’s and Horace’s presentation of the ongoing role of boundary markers outside such ceremonies suggests that people engaged with them throughout the year.

In the absence of a boundary marker, land ownership could become a source of dispute or anxiety. Plutarch claims the sacrifices at the Terminalia were bloodless in Numa’s time, because Numa thought the god of boundaries should be a ‘guardian of peace’ (\textepsilon ρήνης φύλακα), showing that marking such boundaries helped to resolve potential conflict. Roman land surveying manuals record boundary disputes,\textsuperscript{51} while inscriptions describe examination of the disputed boundary and its markers by adjudicating state officials.\textsuperscript{52} Local legends claim that amuletic objects set along regional or national boundaries were used in defence of entire areas during conflicts. Photius, a ninth-century encyclopaedist, quotes an anecdote from the early-fifth-century-CE history by Olympiodorus of Thebes. In it, the administrator of Thrace confiscated three silver statues, resembling prostrate barbarians with their hands tied behind their backs and dressed in embroidered barbarian clothing.

\textsuperscript{46} Plutarch, \textit{Life of Numa}, 16.  
\textsuperscript{47} Ovid, \textit{Fasti} 2.638-684 (1\textsuperscript{st} c. CE); Siculus Flaccus, \textit{De condicioni agribus} 12 (probably Antonine, Burian 2006).  
\textsuperscript{48} Siculus Flaccus, \textit{De condicioni agribus} 11.  
\textsuperscript{49} Horace, \textit{Epistles}, 2.21-22.  
\textsuperscript{50} Ovid, \textit{Fasti} 2.677-8. Translation by Kline 2000.  
\textsuperscript{51} Nardis 1994.  
\textsuperscript{52} Elliott 2004: 11–39.
that had been dug up along the border between Thrace and Illyricum, facing towards Illyricum. In doing so, he ignored the local inhabitants’ warnings that the place was sacred. The result was that Goths, Huns and Sarmatians were able to invade Greece, in the absence of the statues which had previously repelled each of the three nations. Photius also summarises another anecdote from Olympiodorus, in which a statue in Rheggium (Reggio Calabria), originally set up to ward off the fires of Mount Etna and prevent barbarians from crossing the sea, repelled Alaric’s attempted invasion in 410 CE. When the statue was destroyed, both Etna’s eruptions and barbarian invasions damaged Sicily. Both of these stories demonstrate how the line between curse and amulet object could become quite thin, as techniques aimed at fixing down or turning away might be employed against any perceived dangers, including other humans. These texts and objects indicate that marking off sections of land and assigning them with a specific quality, whether this was ownership, supernatural protection, or indeed both, was often important in the late antique world.

Boundaries might be thought to be incompatible with the idea of places as ephemeral products of relations and experiences shared between things. The anthropologist Tim Ingold has theorised that although places could have centres, or might be better described as centres, they have no boundaries, pointing out, ‘[i]n journeying from place A to place B it makes no sense to ask, along the way, whether one is “still” in A or has “crossed over” to B.’ Nonetheless, he observes that features like rivers, fences, or walls are part of the landscape, i.e., constitute its ‘contoured and textured surface replete with diverse objects.’ These features might be identified as boundaries drawn across the landscape, but are not a condition for the constitution of the places on either side of them; nor do they segment the landscape, for the features with which they are identified are themselves an integral part of it. In other words, while places do not have boundaries or edges, qualities (e.g., ownership) that are themselves constituents of places, do. This insight is valuable for making sense of amuletic inscribed stones like Petros’ or Kyriakos’, or the stone from Sidi Kaddou. It clarifies that people engaging with the stones could have experienced the division of the area around them into protected and unprotected spaces, making that division into part of the place that arose from their relationship. However, the areas divided by the boundary were not two different places, but rather one place in which bounded qualities were important. The assertions in the inscriptions on both Kyriakos’ and Petros’ stones that the vineyards affected are ‘where this phulaktērion lies,’ can thus be read as a way to materialise an otherwise intangible quality, that of land ownership and, by

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53 Treadgold 2004: 715–7, Photius, Bibliotheca, cod. 80, 60a.23-60b.5.
55 Ingold 1993: 156.
56 Ingold 1993: 154.
57 Ingold 1993: 156.
extension, the extent of the protection and help desired. Additionally, the durability of the protection is linked to the durability of the object, as made clear in the Sidi Kaddou inscription, which emphasises that the aid it calls on lasts only ‘as long as’ the stones lie about the land.

This section has thus far explained how Petros’ and Kyriakos’ stones, as well as the three stones edited by Burzachechi, can be understood as boundary markers and amuletic objects; it has also indicated (partly through comparison with other, earlier sources) how far engaging with these stones might have shaped people’s experiences of place. However, exactly how people might have engaged with these particular stones is yet to be investigated. Throughout the stones’ individual biographies, from their quarrying, preparation, and inscription to their movement to the vineyard and their deposition, to any subsequent visits, people formed relationships with them. Until the process of their installation on the land they were meant to protect (through a ritual or otherwise), the stones were not active, or indeed activated, as amulets. When it came to the experience of installing or depositing the objects, as Section 4.2 suggested, the embodied experiences of carrying the stones around the land let participants feel for themselves the boundaries of the effects that the rite and the object they carried were meant to produce. While the rites outlined in Table 4.2 show that tracing those boundaries precisely was not necessary, the experience of moving between each of the corners and/or the centre of the area to be affected with the items to be deposited was still an embodied experience. Participants in the deposition of these objects, either following instructions from written manuals or a ritual expert or copying past experiences, would have acted to draw the boundaries to the benefits they wanted the land to accrue. Movement therefore helped to bring together land, stone, and people: the key participants in the relationship that made the stones into amulets.

The experience of setting up these objects, however, was not the same as the experience of subsequent visits. These stones might have integrated with the landscape in many different ways. Were they laid on the ground with one side hidden, part of a wall, or driven into the earth? Or were they buried entirely? Different levels of sensory access would have dictated the nature and degree of visitors’ engagement with the stones after their deposition. A worked stone might have been inserted vertically into the ground, like the Catania tablet which seems to have uninscribed space along its bottom. This would have been easier for more people to engage with than Petros’ stone, which was rounded at the edges and therefore could not so easily stand upright. Instead, it would have had to lie on one of its flat sides. This is a problem for accessibility because both flat sides were inscribed. Therefore, some of the inscribed text would have been inaccessible to visitors as one inscribed side was resting on the ground. This variety reflects that of cippi, freestanding stone sculptures used as
boundary markers and milestones. Many of those were pillars as wide as they were tall.\textsuperscript{58} Others, though, could be flatter and less tall, and have areas left unworked for insertion into the ground.\textsuperscript{59} The question of visibility is one we will return to in Section 4.5 when discussing hidden amuletic objects. For the purposes of this section, though, it is important to note that access to these objects, and thus knowledge of their amuletic effects and the edges of those effects, might have been limited. This meant that people without access to the inscriptions or information on their use, or those who did not know they were there, would have engaged differently with them, or not engaged at all. The anecdote from Olympiodorus (via Photius) about the buried statues along the Thracian border is fascinating in this context. He claims that locals continued to pass on information to each other about the ritual efficacy of hidden items. Though this story was, in Warren Treadgold’s estimation, a legend transmitted to achieve Olympiodorus’ own ideological goals,\textsuperscript{60} it shows how stories about hidden amuletic objects (and, indeed, stories about stories about hidden amuletic objects) might have been passed between people.

Place theory draws attention to how changing the components of a place fundamentally changes the place itself. Recently, scholars working on archaeological evidence derived from sites occupied during the Roman period have used place theory to investigate evidence for cyclical ritual practices understood as ephemeral and repeated ‘time-space’ events,\textsuperscript{61} to consider whether specific periods of occupation or use should be privileged over others in the presentation of monuments,\textsuperscript{62} and to assess how seasonal changes or festivals might create different places in the same location of a Roman cemetery.\textsuperscript{63} The chief use of place theory in recent Roman archaeological scholarship has therefore been to emphasise that places changed over time due to a variety of contributing factors. In the case of Kyriakos’, Petros’, and Paulos’ stones, their materiality would have been a factor that was especially slow to change, although limestone does slowly wear away when exposed to the elements and lichens, or brambles could cover visible parts. If they were buried entirely, environmental factors indicating a recent burial would also have gradually vanished, such as a mound, disturbed or bare soil, and destroyed vegetation. However, other factors changed at much faster rates. Human visitors to a fixed and visible stone brought different memories, anxieties, ambitions, and knowledge about the stone, its inscriptions, and how it was meant to work as an amulet. The interplay between memory, anxiety, ambition, knowledge, and other components of a place, such as the

\textsuperscript{58} Neudecker 2006.
\textsuperscript{59} E.g., milestone \textit{cippi} of the early Roman empire, such as \textit{CIL VI} 37032a.
\textsuperscript{60} Treadgold 2004: 717.
\textsuperscript{61} Moser and Feldman 2014: 6.
\textsuperscript{62} Rohl 2015: 10–1.
\textsuperscript{63} Graham 2018.
weather during times of hail or drought or the presence of a rival farmer, might also have contributed. A hidden or partially hidden stone could also have engaged with these different components in the experience of a visitor, but only one in the know about its presence.

The Sicilian stones related to people in different ways at different points in their biographies. The precise nature of these relationships depended on how much the visitors knew about the stones and their intended purposes; however, as we have seen, one central and widely perceived role of these objects does seem to have been the marking out of an area’s edges. We will now move on to explore other possible ways of marking the edges of a space, looking particularly at built structures such as rooms, walls and buildings. The next sub-section will compare this built evidence with the agricultural spaces discussed above, considering the different roles played by amuletic objects in each of these broad categories of place.

Doors and points of entry
This sub-section will show how, in cases where the edges of the area to be affected were already bounded by walls, amuletic objects placed on those edges often marked points of entry such as doorways or windows. It will use two case studies, one of the third-/fourth-century CE floor mosaics of a house in Ostia and another of a fifth-century CE inscribed terracotta slab from south-eastern Sicily, to consider what marking doorways and entrances might have done to the way people formed relationships with amuletic objects and the places that arose from that.

Our first case study is the Domus delle Gorgoni (I.XIII.6) in Ostia – a domestic building which has three mosaic floors depicting Gorgons. The mosaics in this building are dated to the end of the third century or the first half of the fourth century CE at the earliest,\(^\text{64}\) coinciding with the building’s final construction phase, approximately during the reign of Constantine.\(^\text{65}\)

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\(^{64}\) Becatti 1961: 24–5.

\(^{65}\) Heres 1982.
The Gorgon mosaic in Figure 4.10 comes from room 11. It is positioned facing the main entrance from the peristyle, although another entrance in the west wall on to a corridor might have been a later addition. On the three sides of the gorgon’s square frame not adjacent to the main threshold is a geometric mosaic. This layout is typically interpreted as that of a *triclinium*, since the three geometric mosaics might have adorned the spaces where couches were placed. If that was the case, then the gorgon would have sat directly beneath the table or, in its absence, at the centre of any gathering. Its prominence in the experience of any visitor to the room would therefore have been partly determined by furniture layout. The same can be said for the mosaic, now destroyed, that depicted a similar *gorgoneion* in room 3 (Figure 4.11). Giovanni Becatti described its location as close to the room threshold, oriented to be viewed from the entrance.66

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Another gorgon mosaic was situated just beyond the threshold of room 17 (Figure 4.12 and Figure 4.13). It depicts a Gorgon’s frontal face (i.e., a gorgoneion) and is accompanied by text reading ‘avoid the Gorgon!’ (GORGONI BITA, interpreted as Gorgoni vita, translated elsewhere less convincingly as ‘life to Gorgo!’). There, the rectangle picked out by geometric shapes just beyond it might have designated a bed or a desk.68

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68 Bakker 1999.

Gorgons’ frontal faces were frequently used to turn away envy. In one Byzantine text describing the uses of stones, a red coral engraved with a gorgon’s face is deemed useful while travelling, to combat fear, the abuse of wicked people, and attacks from ‘creeping things.’ Gorgoneia also appeared on apparel worn by figures in mosaics and other visual sources, most famously on Alexander’s breastplate in the Alexander Mosaic, now at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale Napoli. Italian and Sicilian examples of Gorgon imagery include mosaics taken from the first-century CE House of the Centenary and the House of the Vestals in Pompeii, the Hadrianic-dated floor mosaic at the Gardner Museum, numerous second-century CE mosaics from Rome, and second-century CE mosaics from Ostia, Bologna, and Prima Porta.

Although the structure was identified by the excavators as a domus, Jan Theo Bakker has questioned this assignment and considered whether it might instead have been the premises for a brothel or professional association. Whether this was a domestic or commercial property, or a combination of both, the three rooms may have had distinct functions. The remains of the rest of the mosaic floors of Rooms 11 and 17 suggest a triclinium and a bedroom/office respectively. The destruction of Room 3 makes it harder to assign the room a function. The orientation of all the Gorgons towards the thresholds is important not only for what it suggests about the doorway as a potential entry point for danger and especially the envious, but also for how it affected visitors. Those entering each room would have been met immediately with a large image that dominated the space. The spaces for furniture in rooms 11 and 17 are situated behind the Gorgon’s face, as if she was defending them. A person sitting there might have been less aware of its presence than they had been on entering the room.

John Clarke has argued that protective mosaics often were placed ‘at particularly dangerous spots,’ which included doorways to houses and baths to ward off the Evil Eye in the envious gaze of a visitor and ‘the collective potential harm of demons that might inhabit the space.’ Doorways were points of entry for the potentially envious visitor, so the Ostian gorgoneia might have been directed at the envious as they came in. Their presence right at the threshold may have presented those entering with a choice: either walk over the Gorgon’s face or move closer to the walls to avoid touching

69 Faraone 2018: 91.  
70 Mureddu 2015. This is in keeping with how the goddess Athena used the gorgoneion on her armour (Elliott 2016: 133).  
71 IX.8.3-6, Room 55 and VI.1.7, Room 38. Both at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Napoli (inv. no 112284 and no inv. no respectively).  
73 Blake 1936.  
74 Blake 1936: 89, 101, 119.  
or trampling her. In this way, the *gorgoneion* could direct movement around the threshold and the room in general.

In addition to material evidence like these *gorgoneia*, there are numerous literary texts (summarised in Table 4.4) that describe the placement of objects near entrances or gaps in boundaries to protect, heal, or bring good fortune:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author, text citation</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Instructions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Columella 7.5.17</td>
<td>cure a sick herd of sheep</td>
<td>a sheep from the herd</td>
<td>Buried upside-down at the entrance to the fold, the herd walk through that entrance over it.(^77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pliny, <em>NH</em> 20.39/20.101; citing Pythagoras.</td>
<td>keep off evil drugs/enchantments (<em>mala medicamenta</em>)</td>
<td>squills</td>
<td>Hung up on door thresholds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pliny, <em>NH</em> 28.27/28.104; attributed to <em>magi</em>.</td>
<td>make the tricks of the <em>magi</em> ineffective, as they can neither call down or speak with the gods</td>
<td>hyena blood</td>
<td>Painted all over door posts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pliny, <em>NH</em> 28.37/28.135-6.</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>pig’s fat</td>
<td>Considered <em>etiam religiosus</em> (quite sacred) and therefore smeared on door posts by brides on entering their homes <em>sollemne</em> (ritually).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^77\) Ager 2010: 2.
| Pliny, *NH* 18.73/18.303 | ? | toad | Hung up by one back leg at threshold of barn before carrying corn in. |
| Pliny, *NH* 28.44/28.157. | counteract sorceries (veneficia) | wolf’s preserved muzzle, or fur from wolf’s neck, legs included | Hung up on gates of villas. |
| Pliny, *NH* 29.26/29.83. | *amuletum* | bat | Carried alive three times around house then fastened under window, or around sheepfold and hung up by the feet over the threshold. |
| Pliny, *NH* 30.17/30.52. | cure painful spleen | live green lizard hung up in a pot | Hung before the door of the patient’s bedroom, so that he can touch it with his hand on entering or leaving. |
| Pliny, *NH* 30.24/30.82. | act as an *amuletum* against all evil drugs/enchantments (*mala medicamenta*) | dog’s genitals | Buried under threshold of front door. |
| Pliny, *NH* 32.16/32.44. | evil drugs/enchantments (*mala medicamenta*) cannot enter or at least cannot harm | starfish smeared with fox blood | Fastened to upper lintel of door with bronze nail. |
| Porphyry, *Philosophy from Oracles* frg. 130 Wolff = Eusebius, *Praeparatio evangelica* 5.14 | drive ‘them’ out (demons?)\(^{78}\) | red, white, and black wax statuettes of Hekate | Placed before the doors. |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Reference</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tyrannius Rufinus, Historia ecclesiastica, 2.29, PL 21.537.</td>
<td>protection</td>
<td>(in the past) busts of Serapis; (in Rufinus’ present) crosses</td>
<td>Adorn houses in Alexandria at entrances, windows, and doorposts.⁷⁹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theodoret of Cyrrhus, Historia religiosa, 26.12; PG 82.1472D-1473A</td>
<td>gain some protection and safety for the people</td>
<td>small representations of Simeon Stylites</td>
<td>Set up by people in Rome at entrances to workshops.⁸⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palladius 1.35</td>
<td>avoid hail damage</td>
<td>hyena, crocodile, or sealskin</td>
<td>Carried around the land and hung up by the house or courtyard gate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoponics</td>
<td>1.14, citing Africanus.</td>
<td>hail will not fall</td>
<td>Carried around land and hung up by the farm gate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>protect house against hail</td>
<td>Set up before your house.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoponics</td>
<td>13.8, citing Florentinus; 14.5, citing Demokritos.</td>
<td>keep snakes out of pigeon coop</td>
<td>Written on the four corners of the coop and on the windows.⁸²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoponics</td>
<td>13.15, citing Pamphilos.</td>
<td>in a section of methods against fleas</td>
<td>Written on the entrance door when no one is looking and before the 15th of May.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoponics</td>
<td>15.8, citing Leontinos.</td>
<td>prevent enchantment (μῆς φαρμακούσθαι) of hoof of right foreleg of a black donkey; liquid unburnt pine resin,</td>
<td>Bury the donkey hoof under the threshold of the entrance; pour on pine resin, salt,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁷⁹ Osbourne 2014: 74.
⁸⁰ Osbourne argues that Symeon was considered present in the images, Osbourne 2014: 42.
⁸¹ Dalby, the translator into English of the Geoponics, notes this alternate reading.
⁸² Ager 2010: 259.
beehives, fields, houses, animal sheds, workshops  
salt, Heracleotic oregano, cardamon, cumin; bread, squill, twist of white or red wool, chaste-tree, vervain, brimstone, pine torches, amaranth, panspermia (mixture of all seeds)  
oregano, cardamon, cumin; every month bring to it bread, squill, wool, chaste-tree, vervain, brimstone, pine torches, and amaranth; pile them up, then throw on the panspermia and leave it there.

Table 4.4: Amuletic procedures involving setting up, hanging up, or burying something at a door or other entrance.

Much as the procedures in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 were largely concerned with protecting produce from bad weather, weeds, and other dangers, these texts also discuss protection from or treatment for dangers assailing living beings within the structure in question. These dangers vary from enchantment to hail damage to snakes, which are kept away through emphasising potential points of entry like doors and windows. Doorways and windows are understood by historians of later periods as spaces that mark a point of transition between two or more different places and as weak points in the boundaries of those places. Concealed shoes and garments in early modern buildings are interpreted as an attempt to protect them as weak points, since their permeability made them especially likely points of entry for malignant influences. There is a significant gap of time and space between these concealed shoes, frequently reported in more northerly areas like England, and our materials. Nonetheless, the focus on points of transition is interesting as it aligns with interpretations of earlier Roman rituals surrounding doorways.

Evidence from the earlier Roman world suggests that in this period doorways were seen as points of transition. Janus, the Roman god of doorways, was considered the god of transitions and beginnings and endings. Ardle Mac Mahon has argued that, for the Romans, front doorways resembled images of Janus. M. B. Ogle has catalogued the instances in Graeco-Roman literature of the idea that stumbling at a threshold was a bad omen. The earlier Roman custom of a bride avoiding touching the threshold of the groom’s house also nodded to the idea of the doorway as transitional space. Isidore of Seville, writing in sixth-century CE Spain, argued that the practice was because, at a

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83 Cohen, for example, describes them as such when discussing the practice of ‘house-scorning’ (a term encompassing attacks and attempts to bring shame on a house) in early modern Rome, Cohen 1992: 621.
84 Houlbrook 2013: 167–9; Eastop 2015.
85 Mac Mahon 2003: 60.
86 Ogle 1911: 251–3.
doorway, the doors ‘both come together and separate.’ Servius claimed that Varro said the avoidance was because it was sacrilege for brides who were about to lay aside their virginity to touch something consecrated to Vesta. Plutarch, on the other hand, links brides being carried over the threshold to the mythological rape of the Sabine women and suggested that it was to make the bride seem reluctant to enter. The malignant influences warded against in other rituals are not absent, either. The material from Table 4.4 above, in which Roman brides are tasked with smearing doorframes with various substances to keep off envy, suggests that at weddings, the married couple were considered in particular danger from the envious and in need of amuletic protection at the point of the threshold.

Other times of life might also have been part of this triangulation of thresholds, danger, and the endangered. Augustine cites a ritual from a now-lost work attributed to Varro in which three gods tasked with protecting a woman after childbirth, named as Intercidona, Pilumnis, and Deverra, are represented by three men who go about all the thresholds of the woman’s house at night and strike each with an axe, then with a pestle, and finally sweep it with a broom to protect her from Silvanus. Augustine does not clarify whether the practice survived into his day, but his discussion suggests it still occupied late antique minds.

Earlier threshold mosaics and frescoes from Roman Italy offer precedents for amuletic objects or images placed at doors and thresholds. Using evidence from Pompeii, Joe Sheppard has suggested, for instance, that frescoes depicting gladiators near doorways might have been chosen for their protective and supernatural connotations. Other threshold and vestibule mosaics from second-century CE Ostia and Rome depict a phallus and a much-suffering eye respectively. Numerous other examples of the much-suffering eye exist, including a vestibule floor mosaic from Roman Antioch. Additionally, Italian illustrations of the much-suffering eye come in the form of undated limestone reliefs from Rome, Ostia, and Aquileia.

Nonetheless, other evidence for amuletic objects or images in domestic contexts is less doorway focused. Pliny relates that dog’s blood sprinkled on a house’s inner walls could act as an

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87 Isidore, Etymologies, 9.7.12.
88 Servius, ad Ecl. 8.29.
89 Plutarch, Roman Questions 29 (Moralia 271D); Life of Romulus 15.5.
90 Osbourne 2014: 73, Augustine, City of God 6.9.
91 Sheppard 2021.
92 Phallus mosaic: found in Regio IV.IV.3 (Domus di Giove Fulminatore), mosaic laid to be viewed from the front door, still in situ. Becatti 1961; Moser 2006: 62–3.
amuletum against all evil drugs/enchantments (mala medicamenta), and elsewhere he recommends hanging up the plant pistolochia above the hearth to drive snakes out of the house. Elsewhere, he says that a holly tree planted in a villa or townhouse keeps off sorceries (veneficia). A Coptic sermon attributed to Timothy, a fourth-century CE archbishop of Alexandria, which was preserved on a paper manuscript dated to the tenth century CE, describes a similar technique. It recommends that if the reader wants ‘to make the name of Michael protect [them] in every temptation,’ they should write Michael’s name on the four corners of their house, both inside and outside, and on the edges of their clothing. This writing is meant to protect the person who does so from ‘every evil which shall rise up against you, both that which is hidden and that which is manifest.’ Similarly, the Jewish Book of Mysteries (Sefer-ha-Fazim) recommends hanging four silver tablets, one on each wall of the room, during childbirth. This suggests that the desire to mark the corners and edges of an affected area, rather than just its entry points, could still exist for an area bounded by walls.

There is, therefore, much information from the Roman empire and the late antique Mediterranean that suggests that amuletic objects were installed at doorways and windows, and that amuletic objects were also sometimes placed at the corners of a house or room. Many of these objects would have been visible to those entering; moreover, depending on their orientation, they could have affected the way people moved into and around the space of the room or building. This suggests that Kyriakos’, Petros’ and Paulos’ stones were somewhat part of a tradition across the Mediterranean. The ‘corners’ mentioned in the Kyriakos’ stone’s inscription might also have constituted entrances if people entered the fields at these corner points. If that were the case, then stepping over or around the stone would also have affected people’s entrances into and exits from the space.

Another inscription from late antique Sicily, our second case study in this section, helps to deepen our understanding of the relations between amuletic objects, the spaces they protected, and the people who moved around these spaces. This is a rectangular terracotta plaque (Figure 4.14, Figure 4.15, and Figure 4.16) found in contrada Aguglia in Palazzolo Acreide (ancient Akrai).

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95 Pliny, NH 30.24/30.82.
96 Pliny, NH 25.55/25.101.
99 Grig 2021: 467.
100 Date of find unknown, now at Museo Archeologico di Siracusa (inv. no. 13048). Editio princeps: Pugliese Carratelli 1953: 184–7, Trismegistos no. 284749; EDR no. EDR112336. The precise location of contrada Aguglia might be near the modern-day agriturismo named Aguglia, around 7km southeast of Akrai (see https://www.tenutaaguglia.com/en/locations/. Accessed: 14/03/2023).
Figure 4.14: Workshop amulet (side 1). From Palazzolo Acreide. Dimensions not given, but based on Figure 4.16, likely slightly larger than 21 x 29.7cm (A4 size). Pugliese Carratelli 1953: fig. 3.

Figure 4.15: Workshop amulet (side 2). From Palazzolo Acreide. Pugliese Carratelli 1953: fig. 4.
Unlike the other five Sicilian stones discussed so far in this chapter, which mention only fields and vineyards, this inscription also refers to a building, specifically a winegrower’s workshop.\textsuperscript{101} It attributes authorship of the text to ‘holy angels’ who wrote their names (perhaps Gauriel and Michail, written on the reverse of the slab) on the workshop,\textsuperscript{102} and describes a vineyard, to which the workshop was presumably attached, as belonging to God.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{101} Bevilacqua 2010: 44–5.
\textsuperscript{102} Pugliese Carratelli 1953: 186.
\textsuperscript{103} Bevilacqua 2010: 44–5.
**Winegrower’s workshop amulet.**

**side A:**

ἐν ὀνόματι Κ(υρίο)υ Ι(ησο)ῦ Χ(ριστοῦ)

ἀγιοὶ ἅγελοι Ο ἐπιν[ρ]άφ-

οντες ὑλιστίριον το[ῦ]το

ἄμπελοεργανίτας [:άμπελοεργός]

Βοιθί μου ἵς τὸν καρπό(ν)

Π(ρὸς) [ἄμπιελοναν τὸ(ν) Θ(εο)ῦ

[charaktēres] Θ(εό)ς

**side A:** *In the name of the lord Jesus Christ, holy angels who write your names on the workshop of this winegrower. Help me in the harvest. For the vineyard of God [charaktēres]. God.*

**side B:** *[charakter] God, Lord [charakter]. Gauriel Michail.*

Translation my own, adapted from Italian translation in Bevilacqua 2010: 44.

This sort of invocation is not without comparanda in the ancient and late antique Mediterranean worlds. Firstly, in the Roman imperial period and perhaps even before that, people would inscribe a boast in Greek or Latin verse that Heracles Kallinikos (i.e., Hercules the resplendent-in-victory) lived somewhere, followed by the order ‘Let no evil enter!’

Examples of these inscribed verses have been found from Pompeii to Thasos to Kurdistan. Secondly, Faraone notes how although extant examples had been traditionally dated to the Roman period as a rule, a pierced terracotta disc (also known as an *oscillum*) was found in an excavation of a Hellenistic-era residential quarter of Gela that prompted a reconsideration of this habit (Figure 4.17). This *oscillum* had a *gorgoneion* on one side, and a Greek inscription on the other. *Oscilla* are generally thought to have been hung up, so both...

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104 Greek text from Bevilacqua 2010: 44.
105 Faraone 2018: 115–6.
sides could have been visible at any time. Archaeological finds of *oscilla* and depictions of them on frescoes suggest they were hung in colonnades at Pompeii.  

![Image redacted for ORO deposit.](image)

*Figure 4.17: Hellenistic oscillum from Gela. No dimensions given, but Faraone calls it ‘small.’ Orlandini 1968: 54-6, Faraone 2009: fig. 1.*

Evidence for statements about the presence of divine powers also exists from late antiquity. Numerous inscriptions preserve declarations that Jesus or other Christian powers were present in a place. In fifth- to sixth-century CE Syria, one of the many protective formulae inscribed on door lintels was the assertion that Christ lived in the building.  

Though this was most common in Syrian domestic buildings, the same sentiment appeared inscribed in a church vestibule in Constantinople.  

Though these boasts are not found in late antique Sicily or Italy, they demonstrate that such assertions were associated with doors and points of entry elsewhere at the time. This is important for an object like the winegrowers’ workshop inscription, which otherwise lacks a solid and precise archaeological context.

What did it mean for a place to have a more-than-human power present in this way? The concept of the *historiola* here offers a useful framework for understanding what reading or hearing these assertions might have done. A *historiola* is a modern term used to describe brief stories narrated as part of magical incantations that offer a mythic precedent for the things the practitioner wanted to achieve. They were already used in written spells from ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia and recur.

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109 One from Herakeh (524 CE), says ‘Our lord Jesus Christ, the Son, the Word of God, dwells here: let no evil enter,’ Another, from a house in Refādeh, reads, ‘Jesus of Nazareth, who was born of Mary, the son of God, dwells here, etc.’ Prentice 1910: 140, 146–7.

110 The Hagia Sophia’s entrance porch inscription reads, ὁ ἅγιος Θ(έο)ς ἐνθάδε κατοικήσας μηδεὶς βέβηλος ἐσώτερον ὁ θεος Θυμίζει, let no one [uninitiated enter]. Weinreich 1915: 265.

111 Graf 2006.
frequently in the *PGM*.  

The two Sicilian inscriptions from Section 4.2, which address Christ ‘who has multiplied stars in the sky and the water in the sea,’ are another example, as is the image of Heracles throttling the lion drawn onto potsherds in the *Geoponics*’ instructions for keeping away lion-plant from the fields. David Frankfurter has distinguished the ‘mythic’ dimension where the action took place, the human dimension where the problem is, and the ‘speech act’ of the *historiola* which applies one as a precedent for the other. In the world of the *historiola*, the act of narrating transferred power between the two realms, by articulating a story whose ending provided a rule that the present must follow, something Frankfurter also saw in ‘iconographic vignettes,’ such as the Holy Rider, the much-suffering eye, and in quotation and citation of scripture. The articulation of a power as present in the space did not, however, exactly draw on an already-completed story to impose it as a precedent on the world. Instead, the wine workshop inscription, as with the Kallinikos inscription from Gela or the Syrian inscriptions on door lintels’ assertion that Christ lived there, brought the myth directly into the space around it. However, the story told about the world was just as ‘continually powerful,’ to borrow Frankfurter’s phrasing, as a *historiola* proper. The angels of the winegrower’s workshop wrote their names on the wall every time someone read the text.

The evidence introduced in this section helps us to understand the function of amuletic objects at doorways. The Ostian floor mosaics showed how people might have physically interacted with such amulets, and why they might have been placed, i.e., to counteract envy. The evidence from Table 4.4 suggests doorway amuletic objects were often set up to address anxiety about the ill will of other people in the community, given the focus on stopping or neutralising the harmful activities of others, which were referred to variously as *mala medicamenta*, *veneficia*, or *pharmaka*. If this evidence shows what fears people could have brought to a place, the Sicilian winegrower’s workshop inscription, conversely, shows what more-than-human entities the amuletic object might have drawn in. Just as some of the worn amuletic objects in Chapter 2 drew upon a network of humans and divine or demonic beings to achieve their goals, these inscriptions brought angels, gods, and holy figures into a space, further affecting readers’ experiences of it and the place that produced. Placing such an item at an entry point modified how readers related to it, and the experiences that arose from that engagement.

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112 Graf 2006.
113 *Geoponics* 2.42.
115 A nimbate horse rider depicted trampling a demonic, often feminine, figure, found on pendants and a wall painting in Egypt. See Chapter 2, n. 66.
116 See Chapter 2, n. 65 for its image on jewellery.
Summary

Overall, amuletic objects set at the edges of the boundaries of their area of effect did different things depending on their contexts. This section has demonstrated how some might have marked the corners and edges of the area affected like a property boundary marker, particularly for fields and areas where those boundaries might otherwise have been unseen. It has also shown how, with areas of effect also bounded by structures such as walls, amuletic objects could instead have been placed at points of entry, making it harder to avoid for anyone (or anything) entering. This could have had the effect of priming visitors to experience the more-than-human powers that had been brought into the place. Ingold’s presentation of places as things which encapsulate, rather than are defined by, boundaries allows us to see these amuletic objects and markers as things which were part of places, not just a boundary.

The two Sicilian stones marking Petros’ and Kyriakos’ vineyards, in calling upon Jesus and angels to multiply their crops, can also be seen as interacting with the late antique landscape in multiple ways. They (or at least Kyriakos’ stone) marked the edges of an area of effect through their placement in a corner of the vineyard; they also provided any visitor reading the inscription with a model for experiencing any places within that area, by describing which divine entities had been drawn into affecting it. Meanwhile, divine involvement and presence were manifested through a prayer for intervention. The next section will consider how divine involvement might also offer a model for another way of engaging with amuletic objects, specifically, where their power to protect, heal or bring good fortune radiated from them without any clear edges or boundaries. Instead, the greater the proximity, the more powerful were their effects.

4.4. Proximity and sensing

In the two previous sections, I asked whether certain amuletic objects might have been used to mark the edges of their amuletic power. In doing so, they would have demarcated an affected area. In turn, that meant that the experiences and thus places they helped to produce were marked as being protected or indeed unprotected, which could be important. However, other ways of working as an amulet beyond the body were possible. Chapter 2 considered how sensory encounters between a worn amuletic object and people could lead to variable experiences of its powers, while Chapter 3 investigated how differences in proximity to the dead body within the grave might indicate different functions for an amuletic object. Some objects were placed along the edges of a grave, seemingly to protect it as a whole, while others were situated close to the body of the deceased, to protect it specifically.
Instead of demarcating a protected area, could an amuletic object beyond the body have worked in other ways? Several of the instructions for placing objects collected in Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 specify that items be placed in the middle of the field to be affected. This instruction is sometimes presented together with the instruction to place items in the corners of the field. Table 4.5 lists some other instructions from farming and natural history manuals that specify that one or more things be placed ‘in’ an area.\(^{119}\)

<table>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pliny, <em>NH</em> 18.45/18.158</td>
<td>protect millet from disease</td>
<td>toad in a pot</td>
<td>Carried around the field at night before it is hoed, buried, dug up before the field is sown otherwise land turns sour.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pliny <em>NH</em> 18.70/18.294</td>
<td>vineyard will be less damaged by storms</td>
<td>painting of a bunch of grapes</td>
<td>At setting of the Lyre (marking beginning of autumn), consecrated among the vines <em>(consecretur inter vites)</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>grain won’t be damaged by storms</td>
<td>toad in a new pot</td>
<td>Buried in the middle of a corn field <em>(in media segete)</em>, attributed to Archibius.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pliny <em>NH</em> 19.58/19.180</td>
<td>exterminate caterpillars</td>
<td>female equid skull</td>
<td>Fixed up on a stake in a garden.(^{120})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>protect against caterpillars</td>
<td>river crab</td>
<td>Hung up in the middle of the garden <em>(in medio horto)</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pliny <em>NH</em> 10.75/10.152-3</td>
<td>stops thunder from killing a hen’s eggs</td>
<td>iron nail or earth from the plough</td>
<td>Placed under the nest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{119}\) As a result, it repeats some of the entries in Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.4 above which contained that instruction.

\(^{120}\) Ager 2010: 238–9.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Palladius 1.35</th>
<th>against hail</th>
<th>owl</th>
<th>Placed on ground with wings outstretched.(^{121})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>protection against ‘impending danger’ (hail?)</td>
<td>sealskin</td>
<td>Thrown over a vine in the middle of the vineyard (\textit{in medio uinearum loco uni superiecta uiticulae}), protects entire vineyard.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>against caterpillars</td>
<td>crabs</td>
<td>Nailed to crosses in several places within the garden (\textit{pluribus locis intra hortum}).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make plants nearby fruitful.</td>
<td>female equid skull, must have foaled</td>
<td>Fixed up on a stake in a garden.(^{122})</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geoponics 1.14, citing Africanus</th>
<th>vines and crops will not be injured by hail</th>
<th>girl’s first menstrual rag</th>
<th>Buried in the middle of the land (\textit{ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ χωρίου}).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hail will not fall on that field or any field of yours</td>
<td>marsh tortoise</td>
<td>Taken in right hand, carried upside down around whole vineyard, placed it alive and upside down in the centre of the vineyard (\textit{ἐῖς μέσον τοῦ ἄμπελῶνος}), with earth heaped round it so it cannot flip back. ‘Some insist’ this must be done at the sixth hour (day or night).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fruit won’t be damaged by hail</td>
<td>drawing of a cluster of grapes on a tablet</td>
<td>Set up as a shrine in the vineyard, sounding a lyre. The lyre must begin to sound on 23(^{rd})</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{121}\) Ager 2010: 139.  
\(^{122}\) Ager 2010: 238–9.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source, Section, Author</th>
<th>Action 1</th>
<th>Action 2</th>
<th>Comment 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Geoponics</em>, 1.16, citing Africanus</td>
<td>Prevent lion plant/osproleon/broomrape</td>
<td>Potsherds with IA BO written on</td>
<td>Buried in the field (μέσον τῆς ἀρούρης).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Geoponics</em>, 2.42, citing Sotion</td>
<td>Prevent grubs</td>
<td>Burned vine shoots mixed with vine sap and wine</td>
<td>Poured into the middle of the vineyard (εἰς μέσον τοῦ ἀμπελώνος).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Geoponics</em>, 13.5, citing Apuleius</td>
<td>Against field mice</td>
<td>Piece of paper with: ‘I adjure you, mice found here, do not wrong me yourselves, nor allow others to do so; for I give you this field (specify which). But if I find you here again, calling the mother of the gods to witness I will</td>
<td>Placed where the mice are, writing outward, before sunrise, on the natural rock.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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123 Ager notes that the lack of direct contact with the vines makes it ‘more like an amulet than a lotion.’ (Ager 2010: 239).
124 Ager 2010: 244–245.
This material (Table 4.5) offers a mixed picture. Several texts mention placing something ‘in the middle’ of the area to be affected, which could be interpreted as an attempt at maximising the proximity of the whole space to the object. Writing in the late fourth or early fifth century CE and a landowner with holdings in Italy, Sardinia, and possibly Gaul, Palladius’ assertion that a horse’s skull fixed up on a stake makes nearby plants fruitful seems explicitly indicative of a need for proximity. The instruction, also from Palladius, to crucify crabs around the garden in ‘several places’ (pluribus locis), suggests that the places did not have to be highly specific: indeed, in that case, one wonders whether the element of surprise was considered useful. Agricultural manuals or compendia of natural history also preserve injunctions to grow various plants in a garden to protect against equally various pests. However, those remedies and procedures needed direct contact with plants, animals, or pests, rather than an unspecified degree of proximity to them. Additionally, many of the instructions listed in Table 4.5 do not offer any directions regarding placement or descriptions of the extent of their effects, which means it is difficult to tell whether they worked through proximity. Yet earlier writers in Italy imply it does. Columella offers a cure for a sick herd of sheep where one sheep was buried under the fold’s entrance, so that the rest of the flock had to walk over it. In the same vein, Pliny suggests a cure for painful spleen where a lizard in a pot was kept at a bedroom door for the patient to touch on entering or leaving.

Placing an object in the middle of the affected area, rather than its edges, does suggest a different approach to categorising areas as affected or unaffected by the amulet. It implies that we should imagine its powers as radiating outwards into a zone of gradually diminishing effects. This is significant for how we could interpret Kyriakos’ and Petros’ two stones. Kyriakos’ stone, placed ‘in the three corners of the vineyard,’ might not (or not just) have marked the edges of the space it was to affect. Power might have been felt to radiate out from it into that space. The following subsections will argue that amuletic objects beyond the body could require proximity in order to work. It will start by considering the evidence for amuletic objects which work, together with prayer, to bring divine beings into places. Then it will use two case studies of amuletic objects from late antique Sicily: one of an exorcistic inscription and one involving inscribed prayers and divine images. These will

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125 Spurr 2012.
126 Palladius 1.35.
127 E.g., Geoponics 5.48, peony grown among the vines to repel pests.
128 Columella 7.5.17.
129 Pliny, NH 30.17/30.52.
demonstrate how distinct religious phenomena could become entangled in an amuletic object, and will also show how proximity was a major factor which linked amuletic objects with exorcism and divine images. In each of these phenomena (amuletic objects, exorcism and divine images) power radiated out from a physical thing (the amuletic object, the exorcist, or the image) towards any entities nearby. Looking at the shared logic of these phenomena – which at first sight might appear quite distinct – can thus help us to deepen our understanding of amuletic objects in late antiquity.

Prayer and divine presence

There is a plethora of evidence for how amuletic objects made the divine present in the places and experiences they were part of. Chapter 2 discussed the ways in which worn amuletic objects related to divine entities, bringing those entities into relation with both the object and its wearer. In Section 4.3 of this chapter, the use of historiolae to bring divine beings into a place, whether that was a workshop, house, or field, was also investigated. Prayers are frequently found in inscriptions on Italian and Sicilian amuletic stones. The content of the inscriptions on the Sicilian stones of Kyriakos and Petros amounts to an inscribed prayer to Jesus, ending in ‘Amen.’ Such prayers have parallels in other inscriptions found in Sicily that have been dated to a similar period, such as this inscription (sixth to eighth century CE, from contrada Commaldo, Rittiddini/Rosolini, Ragusa):

**House protection inscription:**

130

+ Κ(ύρι)ε Κ(ύρι)ε Κ(ύρι)ε μή ’σεν[έγκης]

ἲς πρασμὸν, ἀλλὰ ῥ[ūσε ιμᾶς]

ἀπὸ τοῦ πονιροῦ κέ [τῶν ἀγγέλων]

τῶν αὐτοῦ ῥūσε ιμ[ᾶς ἀπ]-

ὁ τοῦ πονιροῦ κέ τῶν [ἀγγέλ-]

ὡν αὐτοῦ ῥūσε ιμᾶς [ἀπό]

τῆς ἐπιβουλῆς τῶν ἔπα[νιστ-]

αμένων ιμ[ῶν ὀρατίς το[ῦ]

ἀοράτου ῥūσε ιμᾶς ἀπὸ συ[σ-]

τοφ[ίς τῶν πονιρευομένων]

diασκέδασον τὰς βουλίς αὕ-

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130 Greek text from Rizzone 2008: 22–6.
τῶν ἀπὸ ἀνδρὸς ἁδίκου κέ {δ}
dίωκε λυδόρου κέ δυνάσ-
tου κέ συκοφάντου ρὑσε
tοῦ ὦκου Συντρό-
φου ἁμίν, ἀλλὰ [ῥῦσ-] ε ἱμ[άς ἀπὸ ---]

Lord, Lord, Lord, lead us not into temptation, but deliver [us] from evil and [from his angels,] deliver us from evil and from his [angels,] deliver us from the plots of those who oppose us, from visible and invisible (plots), deliver us from the turmoil of the wicked, make their designs vain, from the unjust man, and chase him away, the abusive man and the powerful man and the slanderous man, deliver the house of Syntrophos, but [deliver] us [from evil?...]

Translation my own, adapted from the Italian translation in Rizzone 2008.

Vittorio Rizzone has suggested that this inscription was from a house occupied by monks.131 He notes that a Byzantine church had been found in the area along with a presbytery, though both structures had since been destroyed.132 As a prayer protecting ‘the house,’ it was not alone in late antique Sicily. It finds an echo in the inscription ‘Lord help the [house...]’ found carved into a trapezoid limestone block in Cava del Prainito (Ritiddini/Rosolini, Ragusa, seventh century CE.133 The block was found set into a drystone wall.134 In both cases, the references to ‘the house’ (οἶκος or οἰκία, rendered in these texts as ὦκος or υκία) could refer to the building in which it was deposited. In addition, an undated dedicatory inscription recorded in Messina’s archaeological museum relates the following prayer:135

Κ(ύρι)ε βοήθι τιν δούλιν σου Φεβρονίας
NTINNENT ἐν τῷ ὦκου τούτου κολόμναν κεκιροφορία 
ἀμίν

Lord help your servant Febronia.

NTINNENT in the column of this house (dedicated?).

Amen.

132 Rizzone 2008: 22.
133 Edited in Manganaro 2001: 142–8, Trismegistos no: 491423.
134 Manganaro 2001: 142. It is unspecified whether this wall was interior or exterior.
The phrase ‘Lord help your servant’ (Κύριε βοήθει τὸν δούλον/τὴν δούλην) is commonly found in late antique funerary inscriptions. Therefore, the language used in these cases is remarkably like that used on behalf of the dead. The request ‘Lord help’ also appears on worn amuletic objects’ inscriptions, as investigated in Chapter 2. Inscribed prayers directed towards God or Jesus, seeking protection for ‘the house’ and utilising the language of prayer, were therefore not unheard of. They could, based on the Rittidinni evidence, have been set into walls of the buildings. The prayers suggest a relationship in which the amuletic object brought the divine closer to the area affected. They do not specify where exactly these entities are in this space, nor do they suggest that protection was not uniform within the allotted area. Yet the way they call upon a god, angel, or other supernatural being to affect the area and sometimes to be actually present there, whether this was in the form of chasing away the unjust or writing their name on a workshop wall, suggests that the feeling that they were nearby was important to the sense of protected place they engendered.

Exorcism

Exorcistic inscribed prayers suggest that proximity could be a powerful way in which an amuletic object beyond the body worked, going so far as to imply that the closer the proximity, the stronger the effects. An inscribed limestone fragment (Figure 4.18), dated to the fourth or fifth century CE, shows how inscribed amuletic objects beyond the body could utilise the language of exorcism to achieve protection, healing, or good luck. Found in contrada Maurino, to the northwest of Ragusa Ibla, the inscription comes from the area of modern Ragusa thought to lie on the site of the ancient settlement of Hybla Heraea.

136 E.g., on epitaphs, SEG 14.588 (Akrai), 15-886 (Tripoli), 53.1856 (Jerusalem), 42.1179 (Dinek). The phrase also appears on a jug found in a tomb in Gela: SEG 16-569, Manganaro 2001: 138–42.

137 Date given in SEG 18.415.

138 For exorcistic worn amuletic objects, see, e.g., Kotansky 1994: 97–100.


There are only a few words of recognisable Greek, namely a command to come out (ἐξελθ(ε), exelth(e)) followed by the word diabole (διαβολε) crowded up against what might have been the right-hand edge of the complete stone, followed by some fragmentary voces magicae (Adonai, Sabaoth).\textsuperscript{141} The rest of the inscription consists of charaktēres and Greek letters not currently deciphered as words. Understanding the inscription therefore hinges on interpreting the word diabole. We could read it as the vocative form of the Greek noun διάβολος (diabolos; slanderer). This makes sense in an early Christian context: ‘diabolos’ was used in the Greek New Testament to refer to Satan.\textsuperscript{142} Moreover, two of the gospels claim that Jesus used the imperative ἔξελθε (exelthe) in exorcism,\textsuperscript{143} while hagiographies report that saints used the same imperative in their exorcisms.\textsuperscript{144} This suggests that the phrase formed part of the vocabulary of exorcism for some.

The stone’s editor does not provide its dimensions, nor does he mention where the object was taken after its excavation in 1950. However, the photograph he supplies does seem, despite the

\textsuperscript{141} Pugliese Carratelli 1953: 183–4. Adonai and Sabaoth both come from Hebrew names of God. Adonai (אדונָי) means ‘My Lords.’ Sabaoth comes from the Hebrew tzvaot/zebooth (תְּזוֹאֹת), often accompanied by Iao (יוֹא), the Greek rendering of YHWH, to form the phrase ‘Lord of Hosts.’ Sabaoth and Iao Sabaoth both appear frequently on amulets and papyrus ritual compendia as voces magicae.

\textsuperscript{142} Matthew 4:1.

\textsuperscript{143} Mark 1:25, 9:25, Luke 4:35.

\textsuperscript{144} In the Life of saint Bartholemew, he uses the imperative exelthe to order a demon out of a man and a cult statue (εἴδωλον, eidolon: Life of St Bartholemew, lines 3.6, 6.52.), while in the Life of saint Phocas, the saint uses the word to order a spirit out of a man (Life of St Phocas, 10.9 (BHG 1535y), 10.14 (BHG 1535z).}
absence of scale rulers, to depict a sizeable fragment. This fact and the lack of any apparent means of suspension or attachment make it unlikely to have been a worn object. Depending on how big the original inscription was, it could have been laid on an ailing or possessed person, as has been theorised with some small terracotta plaques, but the use of limestone in this context is unparalleled. Instead of exorcising a single person, could it have been set up somewhere to exorcise a place and its living contents? While examples of demonic possession of crops are few and far between, herds of livestock could be depicted as possessed, such as the section of the New Testament in which Jesus casts two demons out of the two humans they were initially possessing into an entire herd of pigs. That suggests that, at least for late antique Christians, there was a biblical precedent for viewing livestock as liable to demonic possession, even if ways to deal with that were less clear.

This is not the only evidence for exorcistic language used in an agricultural context from the late antique and early medieval Mediterranean. Indeed, on Kyriakos’ stone, the word ὤρχιζο (Attic Greek ὤρκιζω; horkizō, I adjure) was used either to bind an angel (Nephael) to act against one or multiple hail-causing entities, or to bind the dangerous ‘cloud-drivers’ themselves. The Geoponics records instructions for getting rid of mice, in which the afflicted farmer is to place on a rock near the mice a piece of paper with the following writing: ‘I adjure you, mice found here, do not wrong me yourselves, nor allow others to do so; for I give you this field [here the instructions say to specify which field]. But if I find you here again, calling the mother of the gods to witness I will divide you into seven pieces.’ The verb at the beginning, rendered as ‘I adjure in the translation above, was ἐξορκίζω σε (exorkizō). This verb was particularly frequently used in late antique Greek exorcistic texts, on worn amulets targeting demonic possession and demonised disease, in curses and in ritual manuals, and in the reported speech of exorcising saints in hagiographies. That suggests that garden pests

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145 See, for example, the Latin- and Greek-inscribed plaque exorcising a demon (referred to as ‘demonem’) from Florentia daughter of Iusta, now lost: Bruzza 1880; Giannobile 2005a: 164–5; Bevilacqua 2010: 45–46, or the eighth-century CE clay tile fragment found in Villa di Publio Valerio at Lazzaro, Reggio Calabria, inscribed with a Greek exorcism beginning with Ὅ God of Alexander, o God of Polydoros. And the angel Michael, help. The angel met the demon and said to that demon Barzon…”: Mosino 1995; D’Amore 2005; Bevilacqua 2010: 41–2.
146 Matthew 8:28–34.
147 See Section 4.3.
148 Two gold lamellae from Italy and Sicily use the word, one found in a nymphaeum in Comiso (Museo Regionale di Camarina inv. no. 2209, Trismegistos no. 284839) and one whose findspot was attributed to Rome, apparently now lost (Trismegistos no. 279243).
149 The verb horkizo was used once per line in PGM I 305–12; then in lines 342, 344, 345. It also appears in a papyrus, possibly a written exorcism and identified as having Christian elements (PGM P10, lines 1, 14, 20, 29, 35, 41). It is also used in an exorcistic recipe from PGM IV known as the ‘charm of Pibechis’ where the possessing demon is adjured in the name of Jesus ‘the god of the Jews.’ (‘ὁρκιζε ςе κατὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῶν Ἑβραίων Ἰησοῦ), PGM IV 3015–6. In the Cyranides (3.23) it is part of a speech made into the ear of a captured eagle.
150 For example, in the Life of saint Phocas, as preserved in two different medieval codices, Phocas uses horkizo to adjure a demon several times (Life of St Phocas, 6.9, 7.1, 18, 27 (BHG 1535y), 6.9, 7.1, 22, 10.2 (BHG 1535z)).
and dangers were at times quite literally demonised using the language of exorcism, which strengthens the case for this inscription being used for something similar.

Without textual or contextual information confirming its use in agriculture or livestock rearing, the diabole stone might have been deposited to deal with a demonic infestation of non-agricultural space. A few early Christian texts imply that physical contact or proximity was thought to be involved in casting out a demon. That contact or proximity could be with a living exorcist’s body,¹⁵¹ things they had touched,¹⁵² or saints’ relics. Gregory of Nazianzus says that the bodies of various saints, ‘when touched or venerated,’ can accomplish the same things as their souls, namely healing disease and casting out demons,¹⁵³ and elsewhere he attributes the same to the cremated remains of the saint Cyprian.¹⁵⁴ The proximity of Julian the Martyr’s relics was enough to make the demon-possessed flee, according to John Chrysostom.¹⁵⁵ Although exorcism primarily involved spoken or written acts rather than touch,¹⁵⁶ this evidence suggests proximity could occasionally be valuable in exorcistic (or at least anti-demonic) miracles. An inscribed amuletic object placed beyond the body could similarly have worked though proximity, on the same terms as some exorcistic miracles performed by priests or holy relics. This has consequences for how we view their relations with people and the resultant experiences and places. Rather than thinking of an amuletic object as a marker which designated the limits of amuletic protection, itself a quality that was uniform in strength within the boundary it marked, this evidence suggests an amuletic object might instead have had powers that radiated out from it into a zone of influence.

Divine images

Other objects in the ancient world can also be seen in terms of ‘radiating power.’ Divine images might have worked in a similar way and certainly had a complex relationship with amuletic objects. Christopher Faraone has suggested that protective statuettes and ‘domestic guardians,’ like the Greek herm and triform Hecate, the Egyptian Pantheos, and the Roman Mercury, became miniaturised into

¹⁵¹ Augustine characterises the casting out of an unclean spirit as ‘laying on hands or exorcising’ (manum imponere vel exorcizare) in De beata vita 3.17 (PL 32.968). However, Bastiaensen is keen to emphasise that the exorcist’s struggle against a demon almost never came to hand-to-hand combat; see Bastiaensen 2011: 133–4. Sulpicius Severus, writing in fourth-fifth century CE Gaul, remarked that Martin of Tours did not need to touch the possessed to cast their demons out, unlike contemporary clerics (Wiśniewski 2020: 109), suggesting touch was common enough in exorcisms to distinguish someone who did not need it as especially skilled.

¹⁵² In Acts 19:11-16, items Paul had touched were enough to heal or drive out demons from people.

¹⁵³ Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 4, Against Julian I, 69.

¹⁵⁴ Gregory of Nazianzus, Oration 24, On Cyprian.


¹⁵⁶ Sorensen notes that while touch is a ‘major feature’ of New Testament healing, it rarely occurs in exorcisms. He lists Tertullian, the Apostolic Tradition, and Origen for the earliest mentions of ‘laying on hands’ in exorcisms in early Christian literature; Sorensen 2002: 184, n. 36.
worn amuletic objects in the Roman imperial period.\textsuperscript{157} This shows that there was a slippage between amuletic objects and other objects associated with the divine and indeed that amuletic power could have come from, or have produced, relations with the divine. As noted in Table 4.5, Pliny the Elder specifies in one passage from the \textit{Natural History} that a painting of a bunch of grapes should be consecrated ‘among the vines’ to protect a vineyard against storms.\textsuperscript{158} In Latin works of history, ethnography, and rhetoric, \textit{consecrare} is used to refer to votive offerings or to consecrated places from temple sites to sacred groves in Gaulish religion,\textsuperscript{159} and had legal significance.\textsuperscript{160} Pliny’s use of the term therefore indicates that an amuletic object, worn or deposited, could have involved a close relationship between it and the divine. More specifically, it could itself have been seen as, or made into, a sacred object.

Another, somewhat earlier, Sicilian inscribed object seems to further blur the distinctions between amuletic objects and divine images (Figure 4.19).\textsuperscript{161} This is a fragmentary bilingual Latin and Greek inscription that likely formed part of the base of a Priapus statue. It was found at Casalotto, near Acireale (Catania) further north along the coast from Syracuse, on the site of a Roman-period rural estate.

\ \ 

\textit{Figure 4.19: Illustration of stone fragment from a statue base, with a reconstruction of the original full inscription. Late second-late fourth centuries CE. Casalotto (Catania). No dimensions given. Manganaro 1985: 162, fig. 15.}

\textsuperscript{157} Faraone 2018: 129.
\textsuperscript{158} Pliny, \textit{NH} 18.70/18.294.
\textsuperscript{159} Caesar, \textit{The Gallic War}, 6.13 (\textit{in loco consecrato}), Cicero, \textit{De Partitione Oratoria} 10.36 (\textit{in locis...consecrati an profani}), Tacitus, \textit{Germania}, 9 (\textit{lacuos ac nemora consecrant}).
\textsuperscript{160} See Cicero’s speech \textit{De Domo Sua ad Pontifices} in which he tried to revoke the consecration of his confiscated house on the Palatine to the goddess Libertas.
\textsuperscript{161} Wilson 1990: 314.
Ἐμὲ Πρίαπον Σάμιους τὸν κτουρὸν

[ἐνταῦθ᾽ ἔθηκεν ἐνθα καὶ ἐνθὰ βλέψοντα]

[μὴ εἰσέρχεσθαι τοὺς ἀπ᾽ ἁστεώς πτωχοὺς,]

[μὴ τ᾽ εἰσέρχεσθαι τοὺς ἀπ᾽ Ἀκίδος κλώπας,]

[σωσοντα τ᾽ αὐτῷ καρπὸν ὡς ὁρθὸν φαίνω]

[ἐμὸν πέος] τοῦτο τὸ παχὺ τοῖς σαλὼσιμοῖς

[Posuit hic] me Samius utroque in[spicientem,]

[meum en]ormem penem ut osten[dam furibus.]

[?] (vac.) Rubri Sami fil[i.]
Greek: [Samius] set me up to look both ways, so that beggars from the city should not enter, nor thieves from Akis [i.e., Akrai], and to protect the crops for him, as I display my erect penis in all its thickness to despoilers.

Latin: Samius set me up, facing in both directions, so that I may show off my enormous phallus. Rubrius son of Samius made this.

Greek: Manganaro 1985: 163. Translation my own, adapted from the Italian in Manganaro.

This inscription, written from Priapus’ point of view, explicitly offers protection from human interlopers and threats to the property. The literary tradition offers some corroboration for Priapus’ role in protecting gardens: from Horace’s Satire written from the point of view of a Priapus on the Esquiline scaring away two graverobbing witches, to references in agricultural and natural historical works. Greek and Latin writers assert that Priapus, in the form of a wooden statue, protected growing things from theft and interference and augmented their produce. Further evidence comes from undated reliefs from Italy and nearby provinces. A limestone relief from Aquileia depicts Priapus aiming his erect penis at a disembodied much-suffering eye (Figure 4.20), while another limestone relief on display in Koper, Slovenia, identified as a votive, has Priapus holding the same curved blade and raising his tunic to reveal an oversized erect penis, though it is missing the disembodied eye that is his target in the other reliefs.

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162 Horace, Satires, 1.8.
163 Pliny, NH, 19.19/19.50; Columella 10.108. See also Ager 2010: 208.
Somewhat like the amuletic objects marking boundaries to their powers discussed above, the Sicilian Priapus, in ‘facing both ways,’ sets up an opposition of Samius’ land against everything else, where only his crops gain protection from beggars and thieves. Again, that might seem to counter Ingold’s argument about places not being bounded, but we should not understand ‘the space Samius owns’ as a distinct place. Rather, places in the vicinity of the statue gained the quality of owned or not-owned by Samius, with the statue potentially offering a marker for the boundary between these qualities. Amuletic effects in this case did not map onto ownership. The phrase ‘looking both ways,’ appearing in both Greek and Latin, implies that Priapus repelled any thief he sensed. The subsequent clauses clarify that this was, in fact, so that he could be sensed by passers-by. Instead of designating the edge of a zone of protection, Priapus’ protection against robbers was therefore meant to radiate outwards, repelling incomers who perceived it from all directions. Even if it was placed at the edge of Samius’ property, it was still thought important that Priapus was able to repel thieves coming from all angles, even those already within the bounds of the property. Proximity was therefore important, but only insofar as it enabled perception by visitors. It therefore arguably fits into both of the categories
delineated so far: it both marked the edges of property and had its apotropaic powers radiate outwards from it.

A terracotta *pinax* (plaque) from Syracuse offers a further example of what might be considered an amuletic object combined with a divine image. It was discovered on Syracuse’s beach, near the Porto Piccolo and relatively close to the site of a temple of Isis. The surface of the *pinax* is covered in Greek letters, and has a depiction of Artemis of Ephesus’ cult statue at the centre. Both the statue and the letters are framed by a temple-like structure composed of two columns, with a triangular pediment above (Figure 4.21 and Figure 4.22).

![Image redacted for ORO deposit.](image)

*Figure 4.21: Illustration of terracotta pinax depicting Artemis of Ephesus surrounded by voces magicae within a shrine. Third century CE. From Syracuse. 13.5 x 7.5cm. Faraone 2018: fig. 6.12.*

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While scholars initially interpreted this plaque as a votive object, Faraone noted that the nonsensical Greek text and the image of Artemis could be linked with amuletic protection through the Greek tradition of the *Ephesia grammata*, a protective incantation known on amulets from the fifth century BCE onwards.\(^\text{168}\) He suggested that it was perhaps a ‘business amulet’ used in a shop,\(^\text{169}\) and linked it to other examples he saw of ‘domestic guardians’ in the Hellenistic and Roman world that, he argued,

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\(^{168}\) Faraone 2018: 170.

\(^{169}\) Faraone 2018: 172.
were miniaturised into wearable ‘body amulets’ such as magical gems.170 The use of charaktēres and voces magicae are textual strategies also common on worn amuletic objects, as encountered in Chapter 2. Two other Sicilian inscriptions, one on limestone, one on terracotta, each have voces magicae and charaktēres inscribed on them respectively and were found as part of the walls of buildings.171 A comparable image on a gold lamella of a ‘time-god’ was found in Ciciliano (Lazio, second century CE), on the site of a Roman villa, depicting a standing nude figure with clawed feet holding poppies and surrounded by voces magicae.172

The columns and pediment suggest that something complex is going on: this was an amuletic object depicting a cult statue within a shrine. There are textual parallels to this object. In PGM IV, recipes for creating wax representations of Mercury/Hermes, Pantheos and a ‘little beggar’ are introduced in the text as being, respectively, for business and productivity, to make a place prosper greatly, and for acquiring business and calling in customers.173 The use of divine images in these recipes makes the god present and ready to enact the desired effects. Moreover, the maker is instructed to consecrate each of these statues once they are put in place, reading out incantations and offering sacrifices. This suggests that a religious image in a household shrine and an amuletic object could be similar in how they were set up. While this makes distinguishing one from the other tricky, this very similarity demonstrates that the way an image of a god made the divine manifest in the world might also have been the case for an amuletic object. The Artemis plaque supports this relationship between divine image and amuletic object. However, the fact that it is a very specific depiction of a cult image shown inside its shrine also complicates that relationship, suggesting that not only cult images, but images of those images, could have had amuletic powers.174 If the object was set into a wall, as with the other Sicilian voces magicae plaques, the image would have imitated and miniaturised a domestic shrine. Visitors to the building in which such a plaque was installed could have engaged with it as with a domestic shrine to Artemis.

In Frank Graziano’s anthropological work on miraculous images in modern-day Mexico, he points out that worshippers’ efforts to get as close as possible to an image out of the range of touch implies that the image’s power radiates out from it, noting beforehand the long history of physical touch and contact in the creation of, and miracles performed by, relics from the early Christian period

170 Faraone 2018: 129.
171 Limestone with charakteres dated as ‘late Roman,’ found in a building alongside the decumanus in Akrai: Curcio 1971: 53. Terracotta with voces magicae from Monte Cavalli, Hippana, near Palermo, thought to have been set into a wall: Bevilacqua 2010: 46.
172 Kotansky 1994: 118.
173 PGM IV.2359-2373, 3125-3171, 2373-2440 respectively. For the Pantheos identification, Faraone 2018: 144.
174 As argued by Faraone 2018: 129.
Jessica Hughes has explored how votive clustering at gods’ cult statues might reflect a similar thought process in polytheistic Roman religion. The decontextualised nature of the Artemis plaque, and the lack of associated votives, makes it difficult to ascertain whether visitors might have felt drawn to get as close as possible to it in the same way. The pinax’s depiction of a cult image of Artemis as surrounded by voces magicae might have been meant to indicate the numinous power surrounding the statue. But it does not clarify whether the pinax itself was also surrounded by similar power. Similarly, the language used in the Priapus inscription of ‘looking both ways’ to gain the attention of as many passers-by as possible, suggests that these items might have been meant to draw visitors’ focus and attention, and that some of their powers worked through that.

The Priapus statue inscription and the Artemis plaque therefore each suggest that in this earlier period of late antique Sicily, amuletic objects placed beyond the body could have been engaged with to an extent as instances of the divine in and of themselves. The idea of amuletic objects combined with divine images resonates with the veneration of Terminus in the form of a boundary marker, or the description of the god Fascinus as adorning generals’ chariots on a triumph that were noted in previous sections of this chapter and in Chapter 2 respectively. The Letter of Jeremiah, a text included in some Christian churches’ canons for the Old Testament, also compares pagan cult images to probaskania (i.e., anti-Evil Eye devices) guarding uselessly over a cucumber patch. This indicates that amuletic statues against the Evil Eye and cult images were equated, albeit disparagingly, in a piece of Jewish literature that continued to circulate into the early Christian period. Moreover, early Christian writers characterised pagan cult images as demonically possessed and archaeological evidence suggests that cult statues were sometimes ‘Christianised’ through their destruction or the inscription of crosses or other Christian symbols.

One might think that this hard line against so-called idolatry would have dissuaded many Christian believers from using amuletic and sacred objects. Instead, though, we see certain images marked out as acceptable. We already saw how priests and bishops in the early church described and prescribed approved activities as phulaktēria, such as the sign of the cross or the use of biblical verses. Cross imagery has been interpreted as amuletic by a few modern commentators, especially

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177 Section 4.3.
178 Sections 2.1 and 2.2.
179 This text is considered ‘deuterocanonical,’ i.e., canonical to non-Protestant Christian churches, but apocryphal to Protestant denominations.
182 Sections 1.5 and 2.3.
when the crosses are placed near entrances to late antique and Byzantine churches. Indeed, Gavin Osbourne argued that the repetition of cross emblems along Byzantine church aisle mosaics might have been intended to enhance their ritual effectiveness, citing the way repeated sounds were used in incantations as described in the Greek magical papyri. Other behaviours, not approved of by preachers, also continued. Coptic texts from Egypt suggest that in spite of some Christian criticism, sacrifices or libations continued as part of rituals to summon amuletic power. They were made during the manufacture of worn amuletic objects, as part of a spoken incantation for good business, or to renew the power of a foundation deposit of a wax figurine.

Being drawn towards an amuletic object/divine image had consequences for the sort of experience a visitor might have had, and the places that emerged from those experiences. A visitor might have found that an amuletic object drew their attention and therefore sought to get closer to it to better guarantee its effects. This might have involved touch or simply moving closer, given that touch and physical closeness were sometimes important for worshipping cult images or for exorcism. But touching the terracotta slab depicting Artemis, with its relief depiction of the goddess and voces magicae rendered in raised letters, would have differed considerably from the rough surface of the surviving limestone fragment of the exorcistic inscription. This might have been connected with their different protective roles: an exorcistic inscription left in the countryside, perhaps in a field, might have needed to be less eye-catching or ornamental than a relief inside a shop.

Summary

By treating an amuletic object beyond the body as a focal point whose effects radiated outwards to proximate entities, comparable to exorcists or cult images, this section has focused on questions of proximity, a key element of the definition of ‘amuletic object’ with which this thesis began and one which was revisited in Chapters 2 and 3. Focusing on proximity has produced several insights that could be applicable to Petros’ and Kyriakos’ stones. By bearing inscribed prayers that called upon Jesus and angels to affect the harvest, Kyriakos’ and Petros’ stones were efforts at communication with the divine given material form. Though there is no evidence they were considered instances of the divine themselves, unlike, for instance, the Priapus statue from Sicily, they still played with notions of proximity similar to those used by amuletic cult images. They brought those powers into the space and made them, or at least their effects, proximate to visitors. The idea of power radiating out from amuletic objects could also be applicable to Petros’ and Kyriakos’ stones. Instead of simply designating

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an area within which their powers were uniform, we could imagine their powers as radiating out into that area. The idea of proximity, as evidenced by amuletic prayers, exorcistic amulets, and amuletic cult images, therefore usefully complicates our ideas of how Petros’ and Kyriakos’ stones and, by extension, amuletic objects beyond the body in general, worked.

4.5. Hidden amuletic objects

This chapter has focused thus far on the ways an object could have been accessed and where they were placed, whether this was in being moved around, marking an edge or a boundary, or being treated as a focal point in the centre of an area. However, this overlooks one last potential location for amuletic objects: somewhere hidden. This section will therefore focus on when and how an amuletic object might have been rendered inaccessible, specifically through being hidden. The tension between display and hiddenness in some amuletic objects from late antique Italy and Sicily, and the effects that hidden amuletic objects (or hidden aspects of amuletic objects) is the main subject of investigation of this section. It begins with a discussion of coin deposits, as one of the most common kinds of archaeological find. It will then describe the evidence for deliberately hidden amuletic objects in late antique Italy and Sicily, focusing on three metal lamellae found buried in pits not containing human remains. It will think about the different relationships between places and amuletic objects that arose once an amuletic object was hidden. This includes those relationships formed by the people who deposited the object and were aware of its existence, and those who engaged with the landscape of which it was a part unknowingly. It will end by asking whether hidden amuletic objects offer a new way of thinking about how amuletic objects could no longer function as amulets when no one was left to engage with them as such.

Coins, as small objects which are easy to uncover through metal detecting, and which are regularly recorded in archaeological reports, provide an excellent way to investigate how and why an object might have been deposited and hidden. Chapters 2 and 3 dealt with how coins on living bodies and in graves could be used as amulets. The tension between seen and unseen has already been explored in Chapters 2 and 3, firstly when thinking about worn items with hidden elements, such as metal pendants with rolled-up inscribed lamellae (metal tablets) inside, or worn items with restricted access to viewers, such as inscribed gems, and secondly when considering what the effect of an accessible or non-accessible grave amuletic object was on subsequent visitors, who might not have known the latter were present. What is left to investigate is what happened when an amuletic object was deposited in a hidden place that was not a grave, and if (or when) that act made it amuletic. There is a small but growing body of archaeological evidence for the deliberate deposition of coins in

188 Sections 2.2 and 3.2.
hidden or hard-to-reach parts of buildings and other architectural structures. Ine Jacobs has presented on coins in deliberate hidden deposits in the Roman and Byzantine empires, arguing that they may be more common than thought because of incomplete archaeological publications and the quantity of unpublished material. Nonetheless, for Roman and late antique Italy, some exciting evidence exists. Grazia Facchinetti has discussed what she calls ‘foundation offerings’ of coins in private buildings and of a variety of deposits in public buildings in Aquileia, while Perassi reported on an intentional coin deposit from the Capitolium of Verona and described a variety of contemporary Flavian evidence from coin deposits in and around Rome. Additionally, Michael Donderer listed all extant coin finds under mosaic or opus sectile pavements in the Roman Empire up to the fourth century CE, including twelve sites from Italy and Sicily.

The differences in terminology that arise from this brief summary point to a major issue with talking about hidden amuletic objects. Facchinetti’s definition of foundation offerings focused on whether these deposits were intentional, whereas Perassi’s definition of deliberate deposits was based on coins being placed in subsequently inaccessible locations. However, although one can establish a deposit as intentional and/or irrecoverable, the precise reasons behind an object or assemblage’s deliberate and final deposition often remain hard to reconstruct. Scholars have suggested a variety of possible functions for intentional, irrecoverable deposits (especially of coins):

1. as a ‘time capsule’ recording the date of the work’s completion. 
2. as an amulet or talisman. 
3. as an offering for protection or good fortune of the building or its inhabitants. 
4. as an offering for the building works going well, or for the continued structural integrity of the building. 
5. as a thanks-offering for completion of a building. 
6. as a binding agent or inclusion in a layer of mortar.

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189 Jacobs 2020. 
190 Facchinetti 2008; 2012. 
192 Donderer 1984: 184. 
194 Perassi 2008: 583. 
198 Donderer 1984: 181. 
to deal with the powerful remnants of a ritual.\textsuperscript{202}

Several of these functions might be categorised as amuletic: for example, an offering to divine powers for the building’s protection/good fortune or building works going well. Others, such as the time-capsule theory, are well-evidenced in the modern world but lack strong support in the Roman one.\textsuperscript{203} Several combine sacrifice with amuletic functions, such as the offerings or the idea of disposing of the remnants of a ritual, something redolent of the amuletic animal remains discussed in Chapter 3. While some archaeological contexts can exclude some options,\textsuperscript{204} often it is impossible to tell what reason lay behind a particular deposit. Instead of offering a binary choice between a coin deposit having been amuletic or not, these suggested functions show that they could occupy a spectrum of potential ritual or practical functions, in which overlapping intents could easily exist. It is therefore both easier and more accurate to suggest that a deposit might have had an amuletic function without excluding the other possibilities.

The late antique world does offer examples of hidden deposits. For example, Perassi has suggested that coins found in baptismal fonts in late antique churches might have been deposited as amulets against demons or for the purification of the spirit. She observed that if so, they would have had a similar function to other baptismal rites with close connections with classical culture, like fasting, exorcism and prayer.\textsuperscript{205} Several coins found directly underneath fourth-century CE Aquileian mosaics were located in corners of the mosaic designs or of the rooms they adorned.\textsuperscript{206} That suggests that certain of these hidden amulet objects also worked with ideas of boundaries by conforming to existing, more visible ones. Other coins found under Aquileian floors, however, were not restricted to corners in the Great Baths,\textsuperscript{207} under road foundations,\textsuperscript{208} or in houses.\textsuperscript{209} Other finds under mosaic pavements of coins struck from the third century onwards are known of in Friuli,\textsuperscript{210} Nora (Cagliari), Ostia (Lazio), the villa at Casale in Piazza Armerina (Enna), Taranto, Rimini, and on the Tellaro (Syracuse),\textsuperscript{211} but their precise location within rooms was rarely recorded. Elsewhere in the late

\textsuperscript{202} Trentacoste 2021.
\textsuperscript{203} Perassi cites two 19\textsuperscript{th}-century examples and argues that for Roman structure the possibility must be considered for coins whose date of manufacture is very close to the date of construction for the structure. Given that coins are often the most secure method of dating structures (or at least providing \textit{termini post quern}), this could become rather circular: Perassi 2008: 584–5.
\textsuperscript{204} E.g., single coins are unlikely to have been binding agents, while deposits in layers corresponding to the final phases of construction or restructuring are unlikely to have been offerings for the success of the building works: Donderer 1984: 181; Perassi 2008: 586.
\textsuperscript{205} Perassi 2018: 60.
\textsuperscript{206} Facchinetti 2012: 340–1.
\textsuperscript{207} Facchinetti 2008: cols. 161–2; 2012: 342.
\textsuperscript{208} Facchinetti 2008: cols. 158–9; 2012: 341–2.
\textsuperscript{209} Facchinetti 2012: 341.
\textsuperscript{210} Facchinetti 2012: 341.
\textsuperscript{211} Donderer 1984: 184. This might be from the villa at Caddeddi.
Roman empire, in Sagalassos, three ‘Holy Rider’ medallions were found together with coins in preparation layers for pavements in the upper agora site, in storage rooms used either in the fourth to fifth centuries or the sixth to seventh centuries CE.\(^\text{212}\) The coin evidence therefore usefully complicates our notions of a hidden deposited amuletic object: just as coins’ different uses in graves were multifarious and difficult to untangle, so were their uses in this context. Nonetheless, the regularity with which their findspots have been recorded helps to demonstrate that some (though not all) hidden amuletic objects worked with the same ideas about boundaries as visible, displayed ones.

Other items, manufactured for deposition rather than having previously fulfilled other functions,\(^\text{213}\) demonstrate the same multiplicity of use. The context of some inscribed lamellae also suggest that they were deposited secretly in places other than graves. A gold tablet inscribed in Greek with transliterated Egyptian words and the Greek request to ‘stop the headache of Julia daughter of Euphemia,’ dated to the early second century CE,\(^\text{214}\) was found folded on the top of the fill of a brick-lined cut containing the remains of a ritual or funeral banquet, in Villa del Foro (Alessandria).\(^\text{215}\) There was no evidence of inhumed or cremated human remains or an urn, but the pit it was in was situated alongside a road with evidence for several adjoining buildings. Close by were stone fragments, including a small marble herm.\(^\text{216}\)

Another gold tablet, bearing no traces of folding or rolling, inscribed with the Greek voces magicae ‘Chentemma te Phrei Chentephrais blu’ (Χεντεμμα τε Φρεϊ Χεντεφραις βλυ), was found in Brindisi in the neighbourhood of Bastione San Giacomo during building works in 1923 and dated to the Roman period. The same text was also prescribed to be written on a tin tablet as part of a remedy for gout in the Hippatrika, a late antique veterinary treatise.\(^\text{217}\) The only grave nearby was a fifth- to fourth-century BCE grave.\(^\text{218}\)

A lead tablet from San Giovanni Galermo (Catania, sixth or seventh century CE) was also found in a deposit without traces of human remains. It was reportedly found by a farmer some time before 1927 underneath a large rock, with traces of burning nearby and some small clay lamps, which left Guido Libertini, its original editor, unsure whether the site constituted a settlement or a burial area.\(^\text{219}\) The image provided by Libertini suggests the tablet had not been rolled up but that it might show...
traces of folding in half along its vertical side. On one side, it is inscribed in Greek with Ps. 1.1-3 and then the statement ‘Thus a dissolver and chaser-away for all spells (pharmaka).’ The other side, again in Greek, reads ‘Against the demon,’ followed by charaktēres and voces magicæ, including the name Michael, then the phrase ‘Amulet [phulaktērion] against spells. Ukob. Bes. Seal of Solomon,’ followed by some less decipherable Greek.\footnote{Manganaro 1963a: 71–3.}

These examples all have inscriptions that suggest their use as amulets. The first is closely related to the ailments and body of one individual (Julia), another was likely used for curing gout, and the final one was used to get rid of negative demonic or magical influences. Their archaeological contexts demonstrate how amuletic objects were sometimes deposited in holes and ditches, sometimes as part of larger deposition rituals (based on the remnants of banqueting or burning in some of the cases above). The tablets related to gout and headaches, moreover, suggest that treatment of these illnesses could have involved a ritual burial of this tablet, a procedure which, on account of the tablet’s lack of ongoing proximity with the sufferer, would not necessarily have rendered the buried item an amulet.\footnote{A similar procedure is described in Pseudo-Theodorus Priscianus’ fourth century Additamenta to the Euporiston, where he prescribes, to induce sleep, silently writing voces magicæ and the name and metronym of the sick person on a clean piece of paper and placing it under their head without their knowledge: Theodorus Priscianus, Additamenta 2: 308.} Alternatively, the tablets may have been reused in a ritual of unknown purpose, as explored in Chapter 3 when discussing old amulets in graves.

The inscriptions ostensibly offer some clarity of purpose: to chase away demons, to cure disease, and so on. But the possibility that each might have been reused from those original purposes at the point when they were deposited makes it harder to be sure why the deposition took place. Textual sources can clarify what sort of amuletic functions a hidden deposited object might have performed. Some rituals described in the PGM involve the concealment of amuletic objects, for example the protective wax statue of Hermes/Mercury discussed in Section 4.4.\footnote{PGM IV.2359-2373. Faraone 2018: 143.} Additionally, the statues of bound barbarians on the Phrygian border analysed in Section 3.1 were buried, as were similar spells that a hagiography of the abbot Shenoute in Egypt alleges the people of Plewit buried on the road to stave off Shenoute’s coming.\footnote{Frankfurter 1997: 125–6; 1998: 68–9.} One can also point to Tacitus’ account of the rebuilding of the temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus on the Capitoline, in which unmarked metal is thrown into the foundations,\footnote{Tacitus, Hist. 4.53.4.} Siculus Flaccus’ second-century evidence concerning boundary markers, where he claims that they were set up in a ritual involving the burial of a sacrificed animal’s ashes and blood,
incense, wine, honeycomb, corn and stone chips; and finally a canon from the fourth-century Council of Elvira banning the baptised from putting coins into the font. These texts suggest that deposits of amuletic objects could have been made for a variety of purposes, from bringing business to ritual offerings to staving off enemies.

Hiding a powerful object might also have neutralised or sealed it. Pliny attributes a cure for a painful spleen to the magi: a fresh sheep’s spleen should be placed on the patient’s spleen, accompanied by an incantation, then plastered into the walls of patient’s bedroom, sealed with a ring twenty-seven times, while the same incantation is repeated. In that case, putting the spleen in the wall seems less a way to designate it as a boundary and more to seal it off from the sick person. When something was deposited in a wall, it could therefore also be an attempt to either hide or seal off a dangerous item.

The power of hidden things is a topic also discussed by studies of ancient cursing, evidence of which has been recovered from various hidden places, from underneath houses to chthonic locations like springs or cemeteries, as well as Tacitus’ description of Germanicus’ death in the Annals, where harmful substances and written curses related to what he calls malefica are buried underneath the house of the victim. It is therefore significant that the slippage between the categories of amuletic object and curse is most prominent when it comes to hidden objects: both the fox-claws buried in Plewit and the bound statues along the Thracian border are arguably both amuletic objects and curses. Faraone and Gordon characterised curse tablets in particular as a sort of ‘hidden transcript;’ a way for those who chose not to, or who were unable to assert themselves openly, to appeal secretly to another world. Hidden transcripts were originally defined by James C. Scott as strategies of resistance and critiques of power that are hidden from the powerful. However, the existence of curses apparently produced by or for free adult men, particularly those directed by them against women they wanted to sleep with, suggests something subtly different. Cursers perceived themselves as lacking power, regardless of what social, monetary, or other power they might

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225 Siculus Flaccus, De condicioni agribus 11.
226 Canon 48, discussed Perassi 2018: 50–1.
227 Pliny, NH 30.17/30.52.
228 For a foetus recovered from underneath a house in Kellis (Egypt), see Frankfurter 2006. Curse tablets recovered from domestic contexts are in a minority relative to those found at temples, springs, or graves: of the 312 curses McKie assembled from Roman Britain, Gaul and Germany, eight have domestic contexts (McKie 2017: 31).
229 Tacitus, Annals 2.69.
231 Scott 1990. Examples given are ‘hopes of a returning prophet, ritual aggression via witchcraft, celebration of bandit heroes and resistance martyrs,’ in the forms of ‘rumors, gossip, folktales, songs, gestures, jokes, and theater of the powerless.’ (xi-xiii).
nonetheless have held.\footnote{This idea of cursers’ perceived lack of power was discussed in the question session of the ‘Magic’ seminar of the ‘Reassembling Ancient Material Religion’ seminar series (14/04/2021). For the misogyny demonstrated by some curse tablets, see Faraone 1999; Cooper 2014; McKie 2017: 17–8. In the context of ‘erotic’ cursing, Eidinow has also pointed out the evidence for women (potentially but not necessarily sex workers) cursing other women if they perceived them as threats to a relationship and their economic or emotional security (Eidinow 2019b: 757).} Similar nuance can profitably be applied to hidden amuletic objects. They were also secret appeals to more-than-human powers for help, or as powerful agents in their own right. Might hidden amuletic objects have been produced in response to social pressures, real or perceived, that prevented the open expression of the anxieties or ambitions they demonstrated? It is difficult to tell, especially given that secrecy itself could have been a powerful gesture.\footnote{Betz 1995.}

Focusing on the secrecy of, or restricted knowledge about, a hidden amuletic object necessarily draws our attention to those subsequent visitors who were in the know about the presence of that object. Facchinetti has pointed out that many different people might have ordered or enacted a foundation deposit; in the case of a private building, those involved might have consisted of labourers or artisans on the building site or the structure’s commissioner. These different people’s needs might have resulted in different functions for the deposit, as a building’s owner had an interest in the prosperity of a building and its denizens, whereas (for example) a mosaicist might be more interested in the ongoing success of the mosaic they had produced.\footnote{Facchinetti 2008: cols. 182–3; 2012: 344–5.} Facchinetti’s observation is meaningful in another way: it also implies that knowledge of a hidden amuletic objects’ presence could not be possessed by everyone who encountered that place, as they would not be able to sense them for themselves. In a similar vein, Karen B. Stern suggested that the hiding of inscribed spells in synagogues was powerful in that they ‘transformed communal spaces into private ones.’\footnote{Stern 2016: 216.}

While the dichotomy of public and private Stern envisioned is inappropriate for the huge variety of landscapes, buildings, and places discussed in this chapter, the individuality of the relationship between object, depositor and resultant place is suggestive. It offers a model in which places resulting partly from hidden amuletic objects were different in character from the places that resulted from openly displayed amuletic objects. In other words, people might have experienced a room differently depending on whether or not they knew a coin was hidden underneath the floor, therefore this knowledge produced different places. However, experiences of protected place might not have depended on knowing an amuletic object was hidden somewhere, but instead on suspecting one might have been. In that case, people might have experienced the place as protected and behaved accordingly in response, whether that took the form of stifling envy or feeling safe. But if someone did
not know or did not assume an amuletic object was hidden somewhere, their experience of the place
did not include it and the protection it would have brought. As time passed, people would have been
less likely to know or suspect a hidden amuletic object’s presence, as information about hidden
amuletic objects or the traditions they stemmed from was altered or not passed on. More so than a
visible one, a hidden amuletic object could have been forgotten, and thus stop working as an amulet.
Being hidden and not talked about might have been powerful, but it could also have been risky.

Summary
This exploration of hidden amuletic objects brings us back to the two stones of Petros and Kyriakos.
In some ways, they present the opposite problem to that of our hypothetical house with a hidden
amuletic object beneath the floor. It can be inferred from the stones’ inscribed texts that they were
used as amulets, but our limited knowledge of their original deposition spot makes it difficult to know
exactly how people might have engaged with them. Additionally, Petros’ stone was both rounded and
written on two sides, meaning one side might have been hidden from view if it was laid flat. The
inscribed charaktēres, voces magicae, and deliberately esoteric language also connotes hiddenness.
That suggests that understanding how these stones worked and why they were there, even if a visitor
was able to see and touch parts of them, might not have been easy. The double-sided winegrowers’
workshop inscription investigated in Section 4.3 might have been fixed into a wall, obscuring one of
its inscribed sides. Therefore, some of these stones probably had hidden writing.

Both Kyriakos’ and Petros’ stones were uncovered through ploughing, suggesting that they
either were always buried or eventually ended up so over the course of years. One can imagine a
gradual decline in their upkeep and relevance, as seasons changed, the stone they were made of
degraded (and, in the case of Kyriakos’ stone, broke apart), as plants grew up around them, making
accessible text less legible, and as the properties they protected changed hands, altered in size, shape,
and function, and perhaps were cyclically abandoned and reoccupied. After their unearthing,
publication, and eventual acquisition and display by two different local archaeological museums,
persons are engaging with them again, but in a different context. Hiddenness and obfuscation could
have made their Late antique owners feel powerful. Nowadays, they are part of the puzzle of
understanding these objects.

4.6. Conclusions
This chapter has laid out the evidence for late antique Italian and Sicilian amuletic objects that were
not worn on the living body or placed in graves. It opened with a detailed analysis of two inscribed
stones, which were used throughout the chapter to show the different locations amuletic objects
beyond the body could be placed, the resultant effects on people’s experiences of them and
relationships with them, and the places that resulted from that. The chapter then moved into considering rituals of amuletic object installation that incorporated movement along the boundaries of the area the object was eventually meant to affect. Looking at Petros’ and Kyriakos’ stones along with textual evidence and further inscribed stones from Sicily, it offered two different frameworks for understanding the way amuletic objects deposited in a specific location might have worked: (1) as markers of the boundaries of their uniform effects on the contained area, and (2) as focal points of places whose benefits were thought to radiate out onto those nearby. The last section focused on hidden amuletic objects and how these might have worked differently. Throughout, a key focus has been on relationships between amuletic objects, places, and the people who variously encountered and interacted with them in those settings.

In every section, we returned to two inscribed stones associated with the vineyards of Petros and Kyriakos. Thinking about these has made it possible to demonstrate how different ways of relating with the same object could produce different types of place at different times. One thing that has repeatedly emerged, but which has not yet been fully expressed, is how amuletic objects were always just one participant in the places they helped to construct. Other elements, from different human visitors to the time of year, would have affected what sort of role an amuletic object played in a place, and how prominent it was in that place. For example, the inscription on Kyriakos’ stone asks for protection from or banishment of entities causing hail. The goals of protection against inclement weather and improvement in crop yields were by no means unusual. Wanting protection against hail was especially common: Franco Maltomini’s index of all the inscriptions edited to date that he considers examples of ‘rural magic’ puts hail as the danger mentioned most often.\textsuperscript{237} Material interventions in the weather continued elsewhere in the early medieval world: for example, an eighth-century Frankish homily laments that people ward off storms ‘with inscribed lead tablets and enchanted horns.’\textsuperscript{238} The focus on an end goal offers another way that amuletic objects beyond the body might have affected places. An object protecting against hail could have been more prominent in visitors’ experiences of the place in times of bad weather, when the stone’s perceived power was needed more. These objects were often multifunctional: they might have simultaneously been property markers, as with Kyriakos’ stone and Petros’ stones, or decorative elements, as with the Gorgon mosaics. Sometimes, those other functions might have been more prominent than the objects’ amuletic functions.

\textsuperscript{237} Maltomini 2008: 171–6. Hail appears in eight inscriptions, whereas the next most represented dangers are locusts, rust, wind, and snow, with two appearances each.  
\textsuperscript{238} Filotas 2005: 274–6; Ager 2010: 146.
As discussed in earlier chapters, the term ‘amulet’ has been infrequently and patchily applied in modern scholarship to non-worn things. Yet the evidence laid out in this chapter demonstrates that amuletic objects could and did exist beyond the body and the grave. Faraone suggested that Greeks could have assimilated the human body to a house or a building by covering limbs, torso, and head with amulets in much the same way that amulets might have been placed in all four corners of a building, or by using the same imagery as body amulets (he suggests phalluses, triple Hecate, or Heracles’ clubs). The evidence analysed in this chapter has shown another way that people formed embodied relationships with amuletic objects that were not immediately associated with the living or dead body. In this way, it has highlighted how the human body cannot ever really be absented from a discussion of amuletic objects. This has been demonstrated in particular by this chapter’s focus on the unique relationships and individualised experiences that formed between bodies and amuletic objects and which in turn generated particular places.

Osbourne argued that the ‘powerful mosaics’ he studied were different from inscribed gemstones in that their effects were not just for the wearer, describing this as a ‘communal aspect’ of their power. This chapter has turned this framework somewhat on its head, and looked for the individual relationships with supernatural powers that lay within the communal aspects of the amuletic objects’ protection, healing, or good luck. Regardless of whether a deposited amuletic object was meant to affect a group of people or just one, the relationship that every person formed with it would have been personal. This chapter has already demonstrated how encounters with worn and non-worn amuletic objects could, in fact, be quite similar. The same factors such as anxieties or desires, other people, weather, time of year, or sensory affordances, might have worked to produce highly variable experiences of encountering a particular object. Additionally, as this chapter has also shown, engaging with the objects in different ways, such as using them to mark bounded areas of effect (or entrances to those areas), focusing on them as a central point of power, or hiding them, all produced different and highly specific experiences which we can call places.

239 Faraone 2018: 248.
240 Osbourne 2014: 76.
Chapter 5 – Conclusion

By focusing on objects from late antique Italy and Sicily, this thesis has produced a new area study of amuletic objects within a combined place and timeframe that have not previously been investigated in this way. Chapter 1 established a definition of ‘amulet’ that would be applied to the archaeological evidence from Italy and Sicily analysed in subsequent chapters. To do this, the chapter presented a survey of how the word ‘amulet’ had been used in modern scholarship and an analysis of the Greek and Latin texts which use words translated nowadays as ‘amulet.’ The latter revealed that the things these terms referred to were more varied than the pendants that the modern English term typically denotes. The chapter therefore proposed that it is necessary to broaden the category of ‘amulet’ when it is applied to the analysis of objects from antiquity, in order to align better with ancient contemporary norms rather than simply focusing on the carved, presumably worn, gemstones. However, to show that this broadening of the term also included ephemeral rituals and substances that are easily lost in the archaeological record, the chapter clarified that the objects under study in this thesis, consisting of physical items made of relatively durable materials, are most accurately described as ‘amuletic objects.’

The definition established in Chapter 1 offered a new direction for the study of late antique amulets: one which characterised the ‘amuletic objects’ under study as material objects that provided protection, healing, or good luck to people in that period. My discussion of this modified terminology recognised that these objects were a subset of all possible amulets in that period (including rituals like spitting), and it emphasised that these objects were multifunctional. Indeed, the thesis as a whole has emphasised the complex multifunctionality of amuletic objects. All three of the themed chapters which follow Chapter 1 showed how amuletic objects might have had other practical uses, from being attached to horse harnesses to serving as grave markers or property boundary stones. Chapter 2 showed how pendants like bullae might, in addition to their amuletic functions, have functioned to advertise wealth and social status, while others might have been used as rhetorical tools to designate good and bad groups or behaviour, as was the case with Pericles’ amulet and the rhetoric of early Christian bishops. These were powerful objects, even when used symbolically in speech and writing. Chapter 3 showed how amuletic objects could have been part of funerary assemblages, whether as adornment for the dead individual, or as part of the structure of the grave, engaging with both a body and a distinct unit of space. Chapter 4 demonstrated how amuletic objects might also have become part of the landscape, and how their functions might have included marking property, decorating rooms, or sometimes functioning as cult images.
As well as expanding our definition of amulets and emphasising their multifunctionality, a further important contribution of this thesis has been to bring the ancient material into conversation with current theoretical models in social sciences and humanities regarding object-human interactions, namely object biography, sensory studies, place theory, and lived ancient religion. Each of these positions made it possible to draw out a different and new facet of how amuletic objects and people interacted with each other, whether this was through investigating how their meanings changed over time and how past uses influenced later ones, how they affected the senses, or how their situational meanings were shaped by interactions with other objects and bodies: an idea that is emphasised in both lived religion and in place theory. As a result, the thesis has offered a more nuanced reading of these objects that centres on the experience of the people in the late antique world who encountered them. This is significant because past studies have instead generally focused on the moment of the objects’ manufacture and the ways that their iconography reflected the intellectual climate of the time.

The thesis has also shown how the status of ‘amulet’ was something that was not necessarily permanent. While many types of objects might have been used as amulets (animal parts, coin pendants, and so on), we still need to be careful when attributing amuletic functions to objects. For instance, the dog burials at Poggio Gramignano were likely amuletic at the point of their burial, but not all animal burials can automatically be assumed to have been amuletic. Additionally, the thesis has demonstrated that even objects we can confidently identify as amuletic might not always have been so. The concept of the ‘object biography’ was shown to be particularly productive for thinking through this issue, as it helped to map out when an object was and was not amuletic. In Chapter 3, object biography was helpful for thinking about ‘old’ and ‘new’ amuletic objects used in graves and understanding the idea of reuse in that context. Overall, the approach contributes perspective to the field, showing that archaeological context and an object’s proximity to other objects thought to be amuletic based on their shape, material, or inscribed text (the methodology espoused by Faraone and Dasen) provides information on only a subset of the possible amuletic relationships an object might have had, whereas their second approach, based on object’s own materiality and focusing on iconography, form, and material, provides information on a slightly different set of possible amuletic relations. The use of object biography in this context should therefore enable future analyses of amuletic objects to be more specific about what aspects of an object they consider indicative of past amuletic use, and what that past use constituted.

5.1. Amuletic objects and the late antique world
The objects investigated in this thesis tell a story of how amuletic objects changed during this period and who interacted with them in different ways, which contributes to our knowledge of ritual and
society in late antique Italy and Sicily. The phallic objects of diverse materials found scattered across the area under study and dated to the fourth century CE or earlier, as noted in Chapter 2, had all but died out at the end of the period under study. Crosses and cross imagery, sometimes referred to by ecclesiastical sources as phulaktēria, are instead widespread enough that tracking them would have been a thesis in itself. Other changes were also afoot: clusters of certain forms of amuletic objects, like the harness pendants of third- to fourth-century northern Italy or the inscribed stones of late antique Sicily, show that regional differences continued and that traditions could have become increasingly fragmented. The use of Greek throughout the Italian peninsula on many inscribed objects, particularly lamellae, is also worthy of note in this context. What in Sicily, with numerous Greek speakers around, may have been comprehensible to the literate, might not have been so in smaller settlements further north. That suggests that even ostensible similarities like the use of Greek script would have had different effects in different contexts.

Many of the case studies in previous chapters demonstrated how different people could have brought different experiences to engaging with an amuletic object. The focus was largely on highly personal aspects like memories, fears, or ambitions. Yet the objects also showed how there might also have been differences along social lines. The use of some worn amuletic objects as items of jewellery and display showed how access to resources and access to this sort of protection could go hand-in-hand and signal wealth and high status. Late antique preachers’ explicit characterisation of amulets and apotropaic rituals as ‘bad Christianity,’ associated variously with the rural poor, women, or Jewish healers,¹ provided rhetoric that those inside and outside those groups had to contend with when performing such practises. Amuletic objects like coins might have been hidden within buildings by those working on their construction or repair, either on their own to guarantee the durability of their work or on the orders of their employers to protect the entire space. A terracotta plaque or inscribed limestone in a vineyard or workshop would have been experienced differently by the property’s owner to their dependents and enslaved workers, and differently again by temporarily employed labourers with less of a stake in the business’ success. Overall, one’s place in society affected how one might have related to an amuletic object, from the scrutiny placed on one’s dress or practices to the stake one might have had in its outcomes.

5.2. Themes

Three recurring key themes underpinned the outcomes of the thesis. Firstly, throughout the thesis, I explored the idea of amuletic objects and proximity. For example, Chapter 2 outlined the sensory affordances of amber objects and horse harness pendants to consider how these might have affected

¹ See Section 2.2.
the experiences of people engaging with them. Chapter 3 investigated how different degrees of proximity to a body within a grave might indicate subtly different amuletic functions, distinguishing between objects used to protect an individual body and those used to protect a grave as a unit of space. Chapter 4 similarly touched on amuletic objects’ proximity to spaces and bodies within them when it investigated the differences between placing amuletic objects along the edges, at the entrances to, or in the middle of affected spaces. Proximity and the different degrees to which it could be felt – to spaces, objects, and bodies – was revealed to have been a vital modifying factor in how amuletic objects worked.

Another important theme was relationality. Amuletic functions (healing, protecting, bringing good luck) arose from relationships between person(s) and the object in question. These relationships could differ depending on the ways people interacted with an amuletic object. For instance, Chapter 2 investigated the ways a person wearing an amuletic object might have interacted with it. A passage from Plutarch’s *Life of Pericles*, along with material evidence for amuletic pendants for horses and children, was used to demonstrate how an amuletic object’s function could come from a more complex and interlinked set of relationships, not just between wearer and object but also involving other people who cajoled the wearer into using it or simply placed it on them. This nuance was also vital for the following two chapters (Chapters 3 and 4). Chapter 3 uncovered not only how amuletic objects in a grave related to the grave and to the deceased body, but also how the bereaved and those who constructed the grave were involved in creating and maintaining that relationship. Chapter 4 utilised ideas developed in place theory to consider how different arrangements of amuletic objects in or around the area they were meant to affect changed the relationship between the people nearby, the amuletic object itself, and the landscape they were all part of. For instance, an object placed in the centre of a space might have drawn people’s attention to it but might also imply that its effects radiated outwards like the power of a cult image. An object placed at a boundary might instead have marked the edges of an area of effect, within which the amuletic power was felt consistently. The object would then have applied a much more binary quality of protected versus unprotected to the space around it, much like a property boundary marker or a wall.

The third key theme was how hiddenness affected relationships between a person and an amuletic object. Chapter 2 considered how secret, hidden, or esoteric writing on *lamellae* directed at divine or demonic entities not only constructed a special relationship between the object, the wearer, and the entities in question, but also made the wearer a bearer of hidden knowledge that may have made the object more powerful. Chapter 3 emphasised how many amuletic objects within graves would not have been accessible to visitors after burial had taken place, meaning their presence was known only to those who had been present at the burial or who were told about them. Chapter 4
featured a section (section 4.5) focused on hidden amuletic objects beyond the body, concluding that the restricted knowledge of their presence meant that visitors in the know were in a subtly different place to those who were not. The chapter also indicated how hiding an amuletic object in a deposit was risky: once nobody remembered the amuletic object, it could no longer be in relationship with anyone. This illustrates the central finding of this thesis: that while amuletic objects in this period were fundamentally relational (i.e., deriving their functions from how they related to people), such relations were modified by a variety of factors.

5.3. Further research opportunities

The outcomes of this thesis point to several avenues of potential further enquiry. Firstly, this thesis has demonstrated that amuletic objects can be dealt with as a single class of functional objects that transcends categories like magic, religion, or medicine. Comparison with the functions of other objects often associated with these categories could offer a more comprehensive understanding of how ancient materiality, ritual, and everyday life interacted. The themes of proximity and distance mentioned above might be profitably explored in relation to ancient ritual objects in general, comparing amuletic objects, votives, and curses. Proximity might also offer a useful way to think about the lasting effects of rituals, such as exorcism, along with how all of these practices were embedded in social relations. While numerous works have investigated these practices and objects, conclusions are usually reached through focusing on single groups or categories of object. Building on this and comparing these objects that might work similarly would, like my inclusive approach to amulet, help to investigate where the boundaries to categories like magic or religion became blurred.

While this dissertation has taken a case-study based approach, the field of amulet studies could also benefit from the construction of a large database that incorporates all amuletic objects found in museums in Italy and Sicily. This would require extensive in-person research within museum collections, as many do not have published catalogues. Such a study could focus on change and continuity more closely, as it would have access to more comprehensive data from more sources with which to perform statistical analyses. This work could draw upon the work done here in revising the definition of ‘amulet’ to incorporate more objects than just pendants and gems, allowing for wider conclusions to be drawn about what these objects could look like.

Finally, there is great scope for bringing amuletic objects into dialogue with Greek medical texts, including herbals and lapidaries, and particularly later ones written after Galen’s time: the value of these texts was indicated in Chapter 1 of this thesis. This work would begin, in some instances, with translating and editing the medical texts themselves, since many of them (the Cyranides, for example) have never received a full English-language edition or translation; meanwhile, large swathes of works
by Oribasius, Alexander of Tralles, and Aetius of Amida remain untranslated into any modern language. Even those texts which are already translated might be investigated more extensively for insights into amulet use. Chapter 2 demonstrated the potential of such an approach, showing how texts like Pliny’s *Natural History* give valuable insights into ancient ideas about amuletic objects and their uses. The sheer volume of healing, fortune-bringing, and protective encounters with objects found in these texts would be a rich starting point for further work on amuletic objects.

This study has demonstrated how amuletic objects were, at heart, items that did things to people. They featured in a range of everyday scenarios in the late antique world and were engaged with in many different ways. Nonetheless, what remains central to each of those past encounters is a person using an object to try to impose their will on their world. They are evidence of profoundly personal paths through life and death.

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Appendix 1: Table of inscribed *lamellae* referred to repeatedly in Chapters 3 and 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Material</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Findspot</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>EDR no.</th>
<th>Trismegistos no.</th>
<th>Bibliography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>gold</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>columbarium of Tomb of the Scipios, Via Appia, Rome</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>EDR115040</td>
<td>277994</td>
<td><em>IG XIV 2413.3</em>; Bevilacqua 1991: 38–9</td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>bronze</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>EDR115037</td>
<td>277991</td>
<td><em>CIG 6002c</em>, <em>IG XIV 2413.2</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>bronze</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>EDR115034</td>
<td>277993</td>
<td><em>IG XIV 2413.1c</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>gold</td>
<td>Roman</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Greek, Egyptian</td>
<td>EDR114687</td>
<td>277992</td>
<td>Kotansky 1994: 101–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Period</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Museum</td>
<td>Inv. No.</td>
<td>Reference</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>gold</td>
<td>4th-6th c. CE</td>
<td>necropolis, San Leonardo Ebraico quarter, Comiso</td>
<td>Hebrew</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Museo Archeologico P. Orsi, Syracuse, inv. 16280; <em>JIWE</em> I.156; Lacerenza 1998: 300–5; Bevilacqua 1999b: 70; Di Stefano 1998; Rizzone and Sammito 2014; Foa, Lacerenza, and Jalla 2017 no. 60; Pugliese Carratelli 1953: 181; Pace 1926: 36 n. 5.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>gold</td>
<td>5th c. CE</td>
<td>nymphaeum of Greek baths, Comiso</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>EDR110288</td>
<td>284839</td>
<td>Museo Regionale di Camarina inv. 2209; Manganaro 2007: 265–6; Foa, Lacerenza, and Jalla 2017 no. 61; Bevilacqua and De Romanis 2003.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>lead</td>
<td>7th-8th c. CE</td>
<td>Reggio Calabria</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>silver</td>
<td>5th-6th c. CE</td>
<td>Esquiline, Rome</td>
<td>Greek/Aramaic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>silver</td>
<td>3rd c. CE</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>EDR118241</td>
<td>279244</td>
<td>Bevilacqua 2002: 118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Material</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>EDR 114688</td>
<td>British Museum acc. no.</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>gold</td>
<td>1st-4th c. CE</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>EDR114688</td>
<td>277990</td>
<td>British Museum acc. no. 1846,0629.8; Bevilacqua 1991: n. 37.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>gold</td>
<td>early 2nd c. CE</td>
<td>Alongside via Fulvia, site of Municipium of Forum Fulvii, Alessandria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Zanda and Betori 2002; Giannobile 2005b</td>
</tr>
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## Appendix 2: Table of inscribed gems referred to repeatedly in Chapters 3 and 4

<table>
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<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Material</th>
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<th>EDR no.</th>
<th>Trismegistos no.</th>
<th>Bibliography</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>lapis lazuli</td>
<td>1st-2nd c. CE</td>
<td>Vigna Barberini, Rome</td>
<td>Chnoubis, Greek text saying 'Chnoumis' on reverse.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rossi 2006; Mastrocinque 2007: 145, Ro 42; Gliozzo et al. 2011.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>chalcedony</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>Luni, La Spezia</td>
<td>radiate Chnoubis, 3 Chnoubis-signs (S S S) on reverse</td>
<td>EDR136727</td>
<td>661157</td>
<td>Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Florence, inv. 72543, Mastrocinque 2007: 81, Lu 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>heliotrope and gold</td>
<td>necklace: 5th c. CE, gem: c. 2nd-3rd c. CE</td>
<td>Piazza della Consolazione treasure, Rome</td>
<td>necklace, gold chain made of double eyelets and gold embossed pendant, and a second gold pendant set with gem depicting Pantheos, a three-headed winged humanoid with one bird foot and one human foot. On left, near feet, is a bundle of lightning, on right, victory trophy. Inscribed Greek reading ĒARŌZN.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Willers and Raselli-Nydegger 2003: 134.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>jasper and gold ring</td>
<td>5th-6th c. CE, gem older</td>
<td>Santa Maria dell’Orto, Trastevere, Rome</td>
<td>Set into a late antique ring.</td>
<td>Louvre inv. BJ 1290; Metzger 2006: 186–90.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>haematite and gold necklace</td>
<td>early 5th c. CE; gem: 2nd c. CE</td>
<td>Piazza della Consolazione treasure, Rome</td>
<td>Necklace of gold chain with gold 'Marriage Medallion' and haematite gem (depicting anguipede, crowned Harpocrates on reverse, Greek text (vowels, <em>voces magicae)</em>.</td>
<td>Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY, acc. no. 1958,58.12.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>jasper</td>
<td>3rd c. CE</td>
<td>Sicily</td>
<td>Cock-headed anguipede on one side and <em>voces magicae</em> and <em>charaktēres</em> on other.</td>
<td>EDR109584 284859 Museo Archeologico A. Salinas, Palermo, inv. 29817; Manganaro 1989: 20; Mastrocinque 2007: 101, Pa 7; Sfameni Gasparro 2015: 245.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>jasper</td>
<td>3rd-4th c. CE</td>
<td>Sicily</td>
<td>Cock-headed anguipede holding frusta and shield, on reverse: standing figure (wrapped in mummy wrappings?), other signs and letters.</td>
<td>EDR109605 285016 Museo Archeologico P. Orsi, Syracuse, inv. 25840; Mastrocinque 2007: 147, Si 1; Sfameni Gasparro 2015: 191–2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>carnelian</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>Luni</td>
<td>Variant of Chnoubis-sign (3 's') on reverse, IAŌ.</td>
<td>EDR136727</td>
<td>661157</td>
<td>Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Florence, inv. 72552; Mastrocinque 2007: 82, Lu 3.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>jasper</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>Luni</td>
<td>scorpion surrounded by <em>voces magicae</em>, on reverse more <em>voces magicae</em>.</td>
<td>EDR136728</td>
<td>661158</td>
<td>Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Florence, inv. 72542; Mastrocinque 2007: 81, Lu 2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>onyx</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>Luni</td>
<td>Fortuna holding a cornucopia, surrounded by a few fragmentary letters.</td>
<td>EDR129485</td>
<td>661159</td>
<td>Museo Civico Archeologico U. Formentini, La Spezia, inv. F 1388.</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>sardonyx</td>
<td>undated</td>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>Greek text, ‘Stratonike, always bear in good health!’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bevilacqua 1991: 14–5; van den Hoek, Feissel, and Herrmann, Jr. 2015: 341,</td>
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<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Stone</td>
<td>Period</td>
<td>Location</td>
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Abbreviations


**CIG**: Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum (1825-1860). Ed. Böckh, A.


Editions of ancient and medieval texts

Note: if the edition used was from the *Patrologia Graeca* or *Patrologia Latina*, the volume, column and line reference will have been given in the footnote and not included here. Many of the editions cited are available on the TLG or as Loeb Classical Library online editions.


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