Critical Notices

Oracles of Orpheus? The Orphic Gold Tablets


I am the child of Earth and starry Heaven, 
But my race is heavenly; know this you too.
—Tablet from Petelia (I.3)

The happy (. . .) life, far from the roaming of generation, 
that is desired by those who, in Orpheus, 
are initiated in Dionysos and Kore: 
“To cease from the cycle and enjoy respite from disgrace.”
—Proclus, In Tim., III.296.7 (OF 348)

The subject of “Orphism” or, to be more precise, the religious cult(s) and literature associated with Orpheus, is an important area of concern for scholars, students and anyone else interested in Plato, Neoplatonism or the Platonic Tradition more broadly. Plato’s references and allusions to “Orphic” books, ideas and mythic traditions have been discussed by numerous scholars and consequently need no elaboration here.1 The later Neoplatonists made great use of Orphic hymns, theology and mythological traditions; they considered Orpheus, like Homer, to be a precursor of Plato.2

It is extraordinary that the history of scholarship on “Orphism” over the course of the previous two centuries or so parallels so neatly (in terms of its direction and major trajectories) the central eschatological pattern of the Orphic cult itself (“life: death: life,” to cite directly from one of the bone tablets found at Olbia).3

1) To cite just a few recent examples, cf. West 1983, 21, 112-113, 118-119; Graf 2011, 53-67 (especially 57-62).
2) Cf. West 1983, 227-229, for a brief summary.
Following the discovery of the first gold tablet (from Petelia) in the nineteenth century, scholars of the history of religions considered the existence of Orphism to be an undeniable fact and interpreted the tablet as being unequivocally Orphic.\(^4\) The discovery of subsequent tablets gave rise to similar interpretations.\(^5\) However, in the 1930’s Wilamowitz adopted a sceptical position on the existence of Orphism as a religious movement and cast doubt on the Orphic character of the gold tablets.\(^6\) Due to his prestigious reputation and influence, subsequent scholars accepted and followed his hyper-sceptical interpretation.\(^7\) However, the subsequent discovery of many additional gold tablets and the bone tablets from Olbia cast doubt on this sceptical attitude. Another challenge to the position of the sceptics came from the discovery of the Derveni Papyrus in 1962, an extraordinary document which has necessarily prompted some significant, positive reassessments of the nature of Orphism in the ancient world.\(^8\) Nowadays, few scholars doubt the existence of Orphism in antiquity although there are still those who are sceptical, either about the existence of Orphism or with regard to the vexed question of the Orphic identity of the gold tablets.\(^9\) One can only hope that current and future scholars will reflect upon the history of scholarship on Orphism and consider the potential pitfalls and problems of the style of ultra-scepticism exemplified by Wilamowitz, which unfortunately often prevails in scholarship on the history of religions.

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\(^4\) The tablet from Petelia was discovered in 1836. For some detailed examinations of the history of scholarship on Orphism and its relation to the gold tablets, cf. Graf 2007, 50-65; Edmonds 2011, 3-14. Scholarship on “Orphism” is vast and this review does not claim to be exhaustive in any way. Cf. the extensive bibliographies in Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008; Edmonds 2011.

\(^5\) Cf. for example, Comparetti 1910; Harrison 1903, 478-623; Olivieri 1915.

\(^6\) Wilamowitz 1931.

\(^7\) Cf. for example, Linforth 1941; Dodds 1951; West 1983, 2, 26; and, most recently, Edmonds 2011, 257-270.

\(^8\) The Derveni Papyrus was discovered in 1962 in the remains of a Macedonian funeral pyre containing the ashes of a high-ranking soldier. Seven columns were published in 1965, while 21 columns were published (without authentication) in ZPE 47 (1982). An official edition has finally been published: Kouremenos, Parássoglou and Tsantsanoglou 2006. Cf. Betegh 2004; Laks 1997, 121-142; Laks and Most 1997; Janko 2001, 1-32; Jourdan 2003; Graf 2011, 62-64.

\(^9\) Cf., for a recent example, Edmonds 2011. The caveat that the term “Orphism” is a modern scholarly construct is of course obvious and relevant, yet it might retain some usefulness as an umbrella term; it is used throughout this review as a term to refer to the Orphic cult(s) of antiquity, but with hesitancy and in full awareness of its limitations.
Alberto Bernabé and Ana Isabel Jiménez San Cristóbal can be firmly placed among those scholars who consider the gold tablets to be “Orphic” and who think that Orphism did exist in antiquity. Indeed, they make a compelling case for this line of interpretation throughout their work, but especially in Chapter 10 which they devote to this central question. Edmonds has identified two broad positions in the controversial history of scholarship on Orphism: those of the “PanOrphists and sceptics,” placing Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal within the former camp and describing their “hypothesis of a unified but secret Orphic tradition that produced the tablets.” It is interesting that scholars (particularly those in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) have tended to see Orphism as a monolithic “religious movement” in a way that implies a clear-cut distinctiveness and separation from traditional forms of Greek religion. Yet Orphism is surely a mystery cult rather than a distinctive religious movement, the latter of which perhaps comprises a somewhat “monotheistic” interpretation of the cult. The emphasis on initiation, eschatology and soteriology in the gold tablets surely indicates the ambience of a mystery cult (although, of course, this is not to claim that all ancient mystery cults necessarily included all three elements). Although clearly practised in more than one geographical location (as illustrated by the discovery of gold tablets in Macedonia, mainland Greece, Crete, Lesbos and Magna Graecia), this need not prohibit the environment of a mystery cult. Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal are sensitive to this issue, noting that the mystai mentioned in the gold tablet (L1) are initiates in a mystery religion (p. 52), arguing that the two tablets from Pelinna (L7a and 7b) are connected with a mystery ritual (p. 64) and discussing the initiatory and mystery-cult ambience of the tablets more broadly (pp. 185-86; 189). However, elsewhere in the work, they state “Orphism can be defined as a ‘mysteriosophic religion.’”

There is a much wider issue at stake here, which affects scholarship on Graeco-Roman religious traditions more broadly: the need to find more sophisticated models and conceptual frameworks to describe ancient “polytheistic” religious approaches and modes of praxis. Graeco-Roman mystery cults, religious communities and associations (thiasoi) often used sacred books, yet these cults were non-exclusive and non-dogmatic. This does not preclude clusters or networks of ideas and practices which display unity and coherence being spread over diverse chronological and geographical contexts, so that we could, for example, describe multiple religious communities as “Orphic.” Burkert’s distinction between craft

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10) Edmonds 2011, 10.

and sect is not too helpful here, since the term “sect” may retain connotations of dogma while “craft” hardly captures the piety and closely-linked nature of the modes of praxis of ancient religious practitioners and communities. While Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal clearly do see the Orphic tradition as containing secrecy and unity, their interpretation is much more nuanced than those of nineteenth and twentieth century PanOrphists; furthermore, all of the mystery cults in antiquity were characterised by secrecy, for such is the nature of initiation. Edmonds’ characterisation of “PanOrphists and sceptics” may require some modification, given that recent scholars who favour an Orphic interpretation of the tablets have used critical and interdisciplinary methodologies and are much more sensitive to the multivalence of Greek religious traditions and mystery cults.

Like Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal, this reviewer favours an Orphic provenance for the tablets, yet also wonders how much of a boundary can be drawn between the Orphic and Dionysiac mysteries in general, a question frequently raised either explicitly or implicitly in scholarly discussions. The ancient evidence points to a close link, at the very least. Pausanias’ reference to a heart of orichalcum in relation to the mysteries at Lerna is suggestive in this regard, possibly paralleling the tablets shaped like a heart or ivy leaf discovered at Pelinna (L7a and b). Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal seem to recognise some parallels, referring to the “Bacchic mysteries of the Orphics” (p. 180), yet elsewhere they stringently distinguish the Orphic mysteries from the Dionysiac (pp. 186-190). This is surely a complex and uncertain issue which merits future exploration and research.

Given the recent discovery of many gold tablets, this study undertaken by Alberto Bernabé and Ana Isabel Jiménez San Cristóbal provides a very useful addition to the scholarly literature available on the tablets. Bernabé is of course a well-respected and prolific scholar in this area and this volume continues to demonstrate his erudition. The Spanish edition of this work was published in 2001; this volume comprises a new (and welcome) English translation by Michael Chase. This edition includes many changes and additions, such as the inclusion of gold tablets found or published since 2001 and new interpretations of all texts which take into account research in this area undertaken since 2001. This work includes a full critical edition of the texts according to Bernabé’s edition of the

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14) Pausanias 2.37.2-3; these gold tablets (L7a and b) were found on the breast of a dead female in a tomb where a small statue of a maenad was also found. Cf. also Calame 2011, 214-217.
gold tablets for *Poetae Epici Graeci, Testimonia et Fragmenta II, Orphicorum et Orphicis similium testimonia et fragmenta fasc. 2*, München-Leipzig, 2005. It also presents a series of iconographical notes, which includes reproductions of some key artistic representations related to the tablets, selected and annotated by Ricardo Olmos (with illustrations by Sara Olmos). The incorporation of iconographical material within the volume is to be praised and represents an excellent resource for scholars; too often, literary, epigraphic and iconographical sources of evidence are examined in isolation from one another, leading to possible imbalances or distortions in interpretative strategies. However, given the diverse geographical locations in which the tablets were discovered, the inclusion of a map marking their places of discovery would have been very useful in order to orient the reader and would also, presumably, have provided further illustration of Bernabé’s and Jiménez San Cristóbal’s central thesis that the tablets are “Orphic.”

The authors have chosen to arrange their commentary by the content of the tablets and structure their work according to what they call “the soul’s transition toward the other world, since most of the tablets refer to various stages of its journey” (p. 6). This structural arrangement which prioritises content over geographical or chronological provenance has some immediate and notable advantages, for it allows the reader to grasp instantly the incredible unity of the tablets’ contents, with significant mystical formulae, phrases and terminology recurring in tablets found in some very diverse chronological and geographical contexts. This structure also allows the reader to follow the trajectory of the soul’s journey to and through the underworld very clearly and adds weight to the view that the tablets are “Orphic”. Chapter 1 examines the tablets from Hipponion, Entella, Petelia and Pharsalus (L1-L6a), postulating that they describe and refer to the “arrival in the subterranean world.” Chapter 2 focuses on the tablets from Pelinna (L7a and L7b) in Thessaly, claiming that they describe a ritual for the dead or a mystery ritual. Chapter 3 explores the tablet from Thurii (L8), which they delineate as “best wishes for accompanying the soul to the otherworld.” Chapter 4 considers further tablets from Thurii (L9, 10a and 10b), connecting their content with the soul’s encounter with Persephone in the Underworld. All of the tablets discussed in these chapters are dated to either the fourth, third or second century B.C. Chapter 5, however, considers a much later tablet from Imperial Rome (L11; c.260 A.D.), which, although containing some extraordinary parallels with the tablets which date from six centuries earlier, seems to present some significant differences, most notably the reference to the initiate’s name (Caecilia

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15 All tablets are referred to according to their numerical classification in Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal 2008.
Secundina) alongside the allusion to her deification. Chapter 6 examines the “great” tablet from Thurii (L12), which is particularly obscure and has catalysed lengthy scholarly debate (discussed below). Chapter 7 examines the tablets from Pherai (L13 and 13A), which contain passwords to accede to the meadow of the blessed and a prayer to Persephone. Chapter 8 considers further tablets (L14-16) from various locations in the Greek mainland, Crete, Macedonia and Southern Italy, most of which contain only a few words, consisting of either greetings to subterranean deities (Pluto and Persephone), the identification of the mystai and / or the dead. Chapter 9 offers some conclusions concerning the soul’s final destiny in the eschatology of the gold tablets. As mentioned above, Chapter 10 discusses the central question of whether the gold tablets are ‘Orphic.’ Chapter 11 considers some parallels to the tablets in other cultures, including Egypt, India, the Iranian world and the Italian environment; the inclusion of such comparative material deserves great praise, for too often the phenomena found in Greek religion are considered in cultural isolation by scholars. Chapter 12 considers some important literary and philological issues relating to the gold tablets.

Most of the gold tablets are written in dactylic hexameters, yet on more than one occasion prose sequences are introduced, as well as other rhythmic structures, which seem to correspond to mystical formulae, passwords and other phrases of a ritual character. In their introduction, Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal note that these phrases are difficult to interpret and have given rise to lengthy scholarly debates. They correctly observe that “a fundamental cause of this variety of interpretation is, in our opinion, that the expressions in question are suggestive and ambivalent; when they give rise to diverse interpretations we must ask ourselves not whether they mean A or B, but whether they might not mean both A and B” (p. 5). This methodological approach cannot be praised enough, for linear and one-dimensional modes of interpretation have often plagued scholarship in the history of religions. In the context of Graeco-Roman religious traditions, especially modes of praxis involving initiation, mystery cults and divine revelation, a multivalent approach has often proven to be far more fruitful, reflecting the multivalent religiosity of “polytheistic” approaches towards the divine, which are rarely one-dimensional. Indeed, Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal mostly adhere to this methodological approach throughout their work.

However, occasionally this method could be applied more thoroughly. For example, in their discussion of the three phrases which appear on the tablet from Pelinna (L7a, 3-5): “A bull, you leapt into the milk. / Swift, you leapt into the milk. / A ram, you fell into the milk.” The authors note the similarity of these phrases with those which appear in various tablets from Thurii: “A kid, you fell into the milk” (L8, 4) and “A kid, I fell into the milk” (L9, 9). Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal discuss the interpretation which represents the kid and the bull as
relating to the zodiacal signs of Aries and Taurus (although actually the ram was associated with Aries, while the goat was a symbol of the zodiacal sign Capricorn) and associate this interpretation with the assumption that the “milk” (γάλα) signifies the “Milky Way”. Yet they dismiss this interpretation on the grounds that it would lead us to think that the initiates hoped to lead a happy life in the heavens, next to the Milky Way, an interpretation which they claim contradicts the insistence that the destiny of the initiates is beneath the earth. However, this interpretation may be too literal, given the apparent co-existence of these realms in the myth of Er in Plato’s Republic. Additionally, it seems to this reviewer that the “animal fallen into the milk” phrases are ritual in context, in the sense that the initiate describes the stages of his or her “cosmic journey” within the much wider parameters of his ultimate, metaphysical destiny, through a series of mystic formulae that function as passwords of identity. If so, then the initiate would be describing their soul’s journey and essential identity in a similar vein to the mystic formula “I am the child of earth and starry heaven, but my race is heavenly” (found in variant forms in L1-L6a). Thus, there might be no actual contradiction, given that the initiate may well identify their own origin, nature and some stages of their eschatological journey in both sets of phrases, to the guardians and to the subterranean queen in the underworld. The zodiacal connotations of the above-mentioned formulae are surely clear to scholars of ancient astrological texts and theory; their signification of the zodiacal signs of Aries, Taurus and, possibly, Capricorn seems eminently likely. Furthermore, such an interpretation is not necessarily dependent on the identification of the “milk” with the Milky Way, for milk could just as well signify generation—the cycle of life, death and rebirth—for an astrological interpretation to be coherent within this context. This reviewer offers this suggestion not in any way as an exclusive interpretation of the mystical phrases, which also have some obvious Dionysiac connotations, but as one of many connotations which are possibly all implied by the ambivalent phrasing and terminology.


17) Cf. Calame 2011, 208: “The immersion in milk would then represent the moment of rupture; the possession of the wine would be the equivalent of the liminal stage; and the attainment of the blessed state would correspond to the moment of reintegration.”

18) One would not want to exclude, for example, the excellent suggestions of Faraone 2011, 310-330. On the Dionysiac connotations of the “animal fallen into the milk” phrases, cf. Calame 2011, 203-218; Faraone 2011, 310-330.
In examining the tablets from Hipponion, Entella, Petelis and Pharsalus, Chapter 1 postulates that they refer to the “arrival in the subterranean world.” These tablets are striking in terms of the uniformity of the language, terminology and mystical phrases which they display. In particular all of these tablets contain the phrase (or a slight variation thereof): “I am the child of earth and starry heaven, but my race is heavenly, know you this too” (L1-L6a). Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal translate this phrase with the word “son” consistently for all the tablets (L1-L6; the only exception being L6a which seems to contain the word μάτηρ, “mother” in its stead), yet this reviewer has some hesitations with regard to this translation given that the first four tablets (L1-4) contain the Greek term παῖς, “child” and only a few of the tablets (L5a-f; L6) contain the specific term for “son” (υἱός). This translation is surely doubtful, given both the physical context of the tablets (many were discovered in the graves of female initiates, notably the tablet from Hipponion (L1) which was found on the corpse of a woman who wore the tablet) and given the fact that even if they refer to the initiate as a “soul” the Greek term is still feminine. Even allowing for the fact that the tablets from Hipponion (L1) and from Pharsalus (L4) contain the adjective “dry” in the masculine (yet, conversely, the tablet from Petelia (L3) contains the same adjective in the feminine gender), a translation of the term as “child” is surely preferable to “son” given the ambivalent context. To be fair, Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal do express some “gender hesitations” (p. 59) in relation to this issue.

Chapter 6 examines the so-called “Great” tablet from Thurii, an atypical tablet which “has defied the attempts at interpretation of various philologists who tried to read it as a continuous text” (p. 137). This tablet contains various terms surrounded by largely unintelligible letters; it has remained largely incomprehensible for many years and represents a source of intensive debate for scholars. Three broad lines of interpretation have been offered by scholars: firstly, some have seen it as containing multiple errors made by scribes due to repeated re-copying. Secondly, others have argued that we might be dealing with a magical text which contain incomprehensible formulae comprising the voces magicae, or “unknowable names”, drawing on the physical context within which the tablet was discovered: given the fact that it was used as a wrapper for another tablet, it has been suggested that it served as a kind of phylactery to safeguard the other tablet or as a type of amulet. Finally, an old hypothesis suggests that the text may be

19) Cf. Dieter Betz 2011, 102-119, who translates the phrase in accordance with the chiastic structure, “A child of Earth am I and of starry Heaven.”
20) Diels 1902; criticised by Comparetti 1910.
21) Murray 1903; Burkert 1974, 326; Kingsley 1995, 310. The “great tablet of Thurii” as a
inscribed in another language (distinct from Greek), which preserved only the names of the gods (pp. 138-139). 22

Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal offer a new reading of this tablet: given that more than fifty words in the text can be read, yet around them we find sequences of letters that seem to be “meaningless” and which resist attempts at analysis, they suggest that this duplicity is deliberate and that the message is similar to a “word search puzzle” intended to deceive the “non-initiate”. In other words, they propose to read the text as deliberately constituted for initiates who would know which words to look for, while the tablet would deceive (by appearing as a meaningless nonsense) any person not initiated into whose hands it might fall. While this interpretation is ingenious, it scarcely fits with the immediate physical context of the tablets, which were buried with initiates in tombs. The wider context and usage of the tablets preceding the initiate’s death may provide a more fitting environment for this interpretation, yet this broader context of usage remains obscure and debatable. Rather, this reviewer favours the interpretation proposed by critics suggesting that this tablet is a magical text containing the “unknowable names” or voces magicae. Even given the observation that this tablet does not feature the phonic sequences that are usual in this type of text (for example, it does not contain strings of vowels in the same way as is usually exhibited in the extant magical papyri), this interpretation still seems probable; it is important to remember that that the texts which survive containing such magical formulae must represent only a tiny proportion of texts of this kind which circulated in the ancient world and therefore may not be entirely representative of such incomprehensible formulae or “unknowable names”. In fact, this interpretation fits very well with the scheme proposed by Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal regarding the legible portions on the inscription of the tablet, which they claim, convincingly, follows a coherent scheme of religious reference as follows: the fundamental gods, the new order of Olympian gods, the structure of the universe, man’s situation in the universe, the rite as an instrument of salvation, and the happy result of the entire preceding process—the attainment of the status of “hero” and a happy life in the other world (pp. 149-150). If such a schema setting out successive cosmological, theological and ritual hierarchies is correct, it would correlate neatly with an interpretation of these apparently “meaningless” letters as so-called “unknowable names”, given that various ancient writers claim that the latter represent an articulation and consequent manifestation of divine language and reality through ritual means: a performative aspect of the ritual phylactery to safeguard the tablet wrapped within it: Carratelli 1993, 67; as an amulet of some kind: Kotansky 1991, 114ff., 121.

22) Gruppe 1912, 103; Zuntz 1971, 349, rejects this hypothesis.
which is considered to "call forth" a theophany or manifestation of the divine which it evokes.\textsuperscript{23} 

An important question remains, to which my title alludes: were the Orphic gold tablets conceived of in Antiquity as "oracles" (and, if so, were they attributed to Orpheus)? The mystical and revelatory aspects of the tablets, the all-encompassing knowledge and perspective of the "narrator", as well as the presence of hexameters, instructions in the imperative (or the infinitive-imperative) and prohibitions in the subjunctive with a negation within the tablets, indicate that this is certainly a possibility. This question has already been raised in various contexts: one of the earliest editors of the first discovered tablet assumed that it was a response from the Oracle of Trophonios.\textsuperscript{24} Much more recently Edmonds has argued that certain tablets \textit{might} be verse oracles, implying that this interpretation undermines an "Orphic" attribution.\textsuperscript{25} Yet positing an oracular provenance for the tablets does not necessarily preclude an Orphic attribution; in the mythic tradition, Orpheus' head famously continued to deliver oracles during its journey downstream to Lesbos after his dismemberment by the Thracian women. Moreover, Musaeus had oracles attributed to him which were gathered in oracle collections in antiquity; ancient writers often mention Orpheus and Musaeus in the same breath. The alternative possibilities are that the texts are brief poems taken from (1) an oral or written archetype which may be a didactic, canonical poem, a lengthy \textit{hieros logos}, or (2) from a variety of models.\textsuperscript{26} Bernabé and Jiménez San Cristóbal seem to favour the latter option (Ch. 11) and consider it likely that the Orphics who produced the tablets attributed the texts to Orpheus (p. 181). However, the tablets' central concern with initiation does not preclude an "oracular" interpretation and may even offer further corroboration: late antique epigraphic evidence attests that many of those who consulted the Oracle of Claros were simultaneously initiated into a mystery cult, while the Oracle of Trophonios clearly offers certain parallels.\textsuperscript{27} Furthermore, these sacred utterances inscribed

\textsuperscript{23} Addey 2011, 279-296. 
\textsuperscript{24} Goettling 1843, 7. 
\textsuperscript{25} Edmonds 2011, 257-270. 
\textsuperscript{26} For some attempts at reconstruction, cf. Janko 1984; Riedweg 2011, 219-256. 
\textsuperscript{27} The Oracle of Claros and initiation into a mystery cult: Macridy 1905, 164-165; 1912, 50-52; Picard 1922. Cf. also Iamblichus, \textit{De mysteriis}, 3.11. The Oracle of Trophonios required a ritual journey to the "otherworld" before the god's oracular wisdom could be obtained: cf. Pausanias 9.39-40. Bonnechere 2003, 169-192, draws specific connections between the Oracle of Trophonios and mystery cult initiation, demonstrating convincingly (from the extant ancient evidence) that "The sanctuary of Trophonios, then, was conceived since
on the tablets bear some resemblance to the Chaldaean Oracles in terms of their cosmological and mystical scope; indeed both were read and interpreted in a similar way by the later Neoplatonists. Yet a major argument against reading the Orphic tablets as "oracles" is the absence of a question, the presence of which is often assumed to be a defining characteristic of oracles in antiquity. However, the Chaldaean Oracles do not contain or mention questions either. Perhaps these Orphic utterances were conceived of as oracles, yet in such "cosmological" or "mystical" oracles the question is so profound that it is taken to be implicit rather than explicit, relating to the very nature of reality and of the human's place within it, or to the nature of life and death.

The volume includes an extensive bibliography, Index Locorum and general Index, in addition to the critical edition of the texts and iconographical notes. It will prove to be an invaluable resource to all those interested in the religious elements of the Platonic tradition, historians of religion, classicists and anthropologists. It will additionally be of great interest to scholars of material culture and to archaeologists. Perhaps the most certain statement that we can make about the gold tablets is that much of their context and provenance remains uncertain and enigmatic. The mysterious and hauntingly beautiful inscriptions on the tablets have certainly provoked more questions than answers to date. There remains much work to be done in this controversial yet fascinating area of scholarship. Future research will surely bring to light further interpretations aided, hopefully, by the discovery of new evidence. Yet all in all, Alberto Bernabé and Ana Isabel Jiménez San Cristóbal have made a significant and valuable contribution to scholarship on the gold tablets.

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Classical times as an oracle very much like a mystery cult, both by its rites and by the nature of its revelation . . . the Mysteries quite permeated the life of the manteion."


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