Let us begin with the tablets from Hipponion, Entella, Petelia and Pharsalus, which constitute a very coherent group with a fairly similar text. Here, a character addresses the deceased in the second person, to describe to him, in the future tense, the places he will encounter upon his arrival in the Beyond, and to exhort him to carry out or avoid specific actions, and to pronounce specific words before some guardians that will come to meet him. In Crete and Thessaly, we find a more reduced version. First of all, let us see the translation of the tablets.


This is the work of Mnemosyne. When he is on the point of dying toward the well-built abode of Hades, on the right there is a fountain and near it, erect, a white cypress tree. There the souls, when they go down, refresh themselves. Don’t come anywhere near this fountain! But further on you will find, from the lake of Mnemosyne, water freshly flowing. On its banks there are guardians. They will ask you, with sagacious discernment, why you are investigating the darkness of gloomy Hades.

Say: “I am the son of Earth and starry Heaven; I am dry with thirst and dying. Give me, then, right away, fresh water to drink from the lake of Mnemosyne”.

And to be sure, they will consult with the subterranean queen, and they will give you water to drink from the lake of Mnemosyne,
So that, once you have drunk, you too will go along the sacred way by which the other mystai and bacchoi advance, glorious.


col. I when he is] on the point of dying
    [hero let him recall
    the murk cover [him]
    on the] right a lake
and nearby to it, erect, a white] cypress.
There, when they go down, the so]uls of the dead refresh themselves.
Don’t] come anywhere near [this fountain!
    ] from the lake of Mnemosyne
water flowing fresh.] And on its banks there are guardians.
They will ask you,] with sagacious discernment,
why you are investigating the darkness of ] gloomy [Hades.
“I am the son of Earth] and starry Heaven
    and I am dy]ing, so give me
cool water to drink] from the lake of Mnemosyne
col. II but my ra[ce is heavenly, know this you too”.
And to be sure, they [will consult with the subterranean queen, and they will [give you to drink from the lake of Mnemosyne.
And then ]
Passwords [ and ]


You will find, to the left of the mansion of Hades, a fountain,
And next to it, a white cypress erect.
You must not approach this fountain, not even a little!

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1 Probably we must read “[let him] recall and get this grav[ed on gold,/lest] the murk cover [him] and lead [him] down in dread” according to **L 3**, 13 f.

2 The name of Persephone and the adjective “venerable” may perhaps be reconstructed in the scanty remains of the two following lines.