

Under the Cover of Darkness: Material Evidence of Magical Practices in Classical Greek Sicily

Although scholarship has traditionally treated *polis* religion and magic as mutually exclusive in the Classical Greek world, recent research has shown that magic is related more closely to religion than previously thought. Sometimes described as an ‘unlicensed religion’, magic functioned on the margins of *polis* religion, offering practitioners attractive opportunities to not only protect themselves and their loved ones, but also manipulate circumstances that they felt were beyond their control. Literary sources discuss the practice of magic (e.g., Hippocratic Corpus *On the Sacred Disease* 1.10–11, 24–32; Sophocles *Trachiniae* 582–586; Apollonius of Rhodes *Argonautica* 1.27–28; Plato *Laws* 932e1–933e5), but the most poignant vestiges of magical activities are found in the archaeological record. Using the site of Kamarina, a Greek city in southeastern Sicily, as a case study, this paper presents material evidence of magic discovered during an analysis of inhumation burials (n=258) from the Passo Marinaro cemetery (ca. 5th through 3rd centuries BCE). The evidence includes *katadesmoi*, commonly called ‘curse tablets’, apotropaic devices, and potential instruments of divination. These objects and their probable uses are discussed within the broader context of known Greek magical practices.