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CHRISTIAN TEXTUAL AMULET ON A LEAD SHEET FROM RĘKAWCZYN IN GREATER POLAND PROVINCE

ABSTRACT

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The subject of this article is the discovery of a lead amulet with an engraved Latin inscription. It was found in Rękawczyn (the eastern part of Greater Poland) in 2018 during research conducted by the District Museum in Konin. This artefact is the first and so far only find of its kind in a Polish context. It was identified by comparing it to similar finds from Germany and Bohemia from the 11th-13th centuries that bear apotropaic Latin inscriptions. The text on the amulet consists of 24 lines, which are barely legible and which contain a long quotation from the Gospel of John followed by an apotropaic formula with magical words. The reconstruction of the text is accompanied by a tentative interpretation and commentary. The palaeographical analysis of the script (Gothic minuscule) dates the amulet to the second half of the 14th century. The study presents the amulet in the wider context of similar inscriptions of European origin.

Keywords: Christian amulet, lead amulet, protective magic, Gospel of John, Gothic minuscule, medieval archaeology

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LOCATION AND CONTEXT OF THE FIND

The amulet was found in the village of Rękawczyn (administratively, the village of Słowikowo) within the Orchowo Municipality, Słupca County, Greater Poland Province (52°32'05.31" N; 17°57'39.94" E). According to the physiographic regionalization by Jerzy Kondracki, the location is within the Gniezno Lake District, which constitutes the eastern part of the Greater Poland Lake District (Kondracki 2000, 222). The site is located on a sandy hill overlooking the surrounding area and border on the north-east by Kamienieckie Lake (Fig. 1). The site has been registered as Słowikowo Site 17, area AZP 50-37/17. It covers an area of approximately 4 ha.

Stationary excavations were carried out in 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 as part of subsequent International Archaeological Camps (X-XIII) organized by the District Museum in Konin and the Poland-East Association for Cooperation. The excavation was conducted under the supervision of Krzysztof Gorczyca, MA, and Katarzyna Schellner, MA, with the participation of archaeologists and students of archaeology and history from universities in Poznań, Bryansk, Kiev, Chernihiv, Minsk and membres of Exploratory-Historical Forum of Great Poland. Anthropological analyses were performed on site by a team from the Jagiellonian University. Preliminary reports have been published (Gorczyca *et al.* 2018; Schellner and Gorczyca 2018; Schellner and Gorczyca 2019; Sikora 2019), but a full presentation of the research results will be the subject of a separate study. Rescue excavations were carried out due to significant destruction of the site caused by a bulldozer. The site contains traces of settlement in the form of features and artefacts of various periods. The remains of prehistoric settlements can be associated with such archaeological cultures as Stroke-ornamented Pottery culture, Funnelbeaker culture, Lusatian culture, and Przeworsk culture. The majority of the finds should, however, be associated with medieval and modern times. Most probably, the site was inhabited as early as the 11th century.

At the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries, a wooden house was built on a hill in a plan close to a square measuring 5.6 × 5.6 m. Most probably it was a keep (donjon). It had a basement and maybe two floors. It was burnt down in the 14th century. The scattered material on the surface suggests that another newer house was built a few dozen metres further to the south-east.

Approximately 70 m to the south-west of the manor house, the remains of the Church of St. Laurentius, known from historical sources, were uncovered. It's foundation was destroyed, but a brick crypt with wooden coffins and skeletons are preserved (Fig. 3). The

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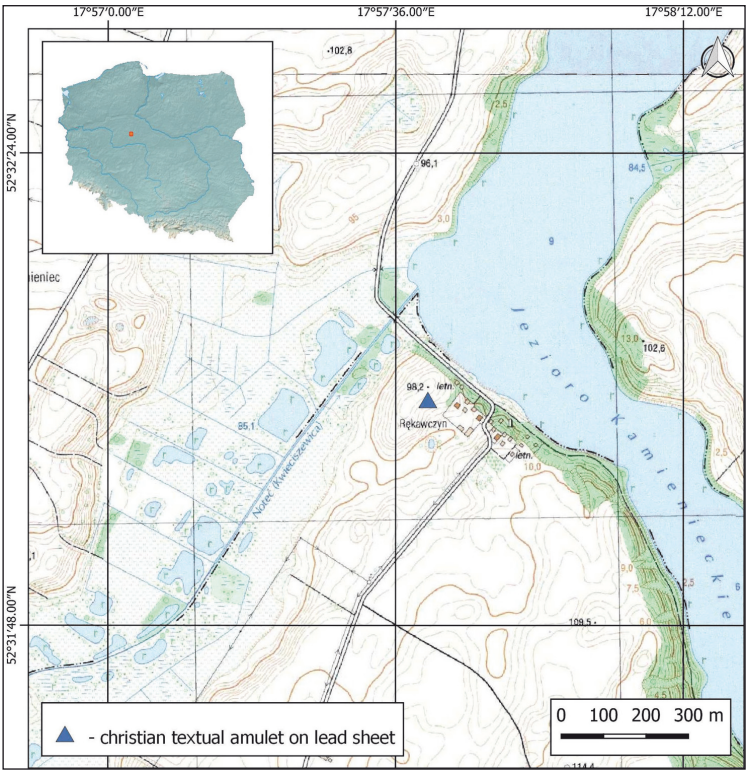


Fig. 1. Rękawczyn, Orchowo Municipality, Greater Poland Province. Location of the amulet discovery on a topographic map (compiled by Paweł Wiktorowicz)

church was surrounded by a graveyard, which functioned from the beginning of the 14th century (?) to the beginning of the 18th century (Fig. 4).

Written sources indicate that part of the now non-existent village of Rękawczyn Kościelny was situated on the hill. It belonged to a large, widely branched family, nicknamed Ligaszcz, that used the Szeliga coat of arms. In the 14th and 15th centuries, this family also owned nearby villages: Rękawczyn Stary, Rękawczyn Nowy (Rękawczynek), Rękawczyn Ligaszczowy, and the still-existing Gałczyn and Gałczynek. They were also closely related to the owners of the Kuyavian villages of Markowice, Kobielice, Smólsk, and the lost Suchorzewo (Karczewska 2010, 88-91). In the 14th century, the family founded the Church of St. Laurentius, which belonged to the Gniezno deanery of St. Michael (it means Zbar deanery). The oldest mention of the church dates back to 1398 (Lekszycki 1889, No. 688), but the furnishings of some of the examined graves indicate that the graveyard (and the church) existed already at the beginning of the 14th century. The church was made of wood with a brick tomb in which its founders were buried. During the Reformation, around

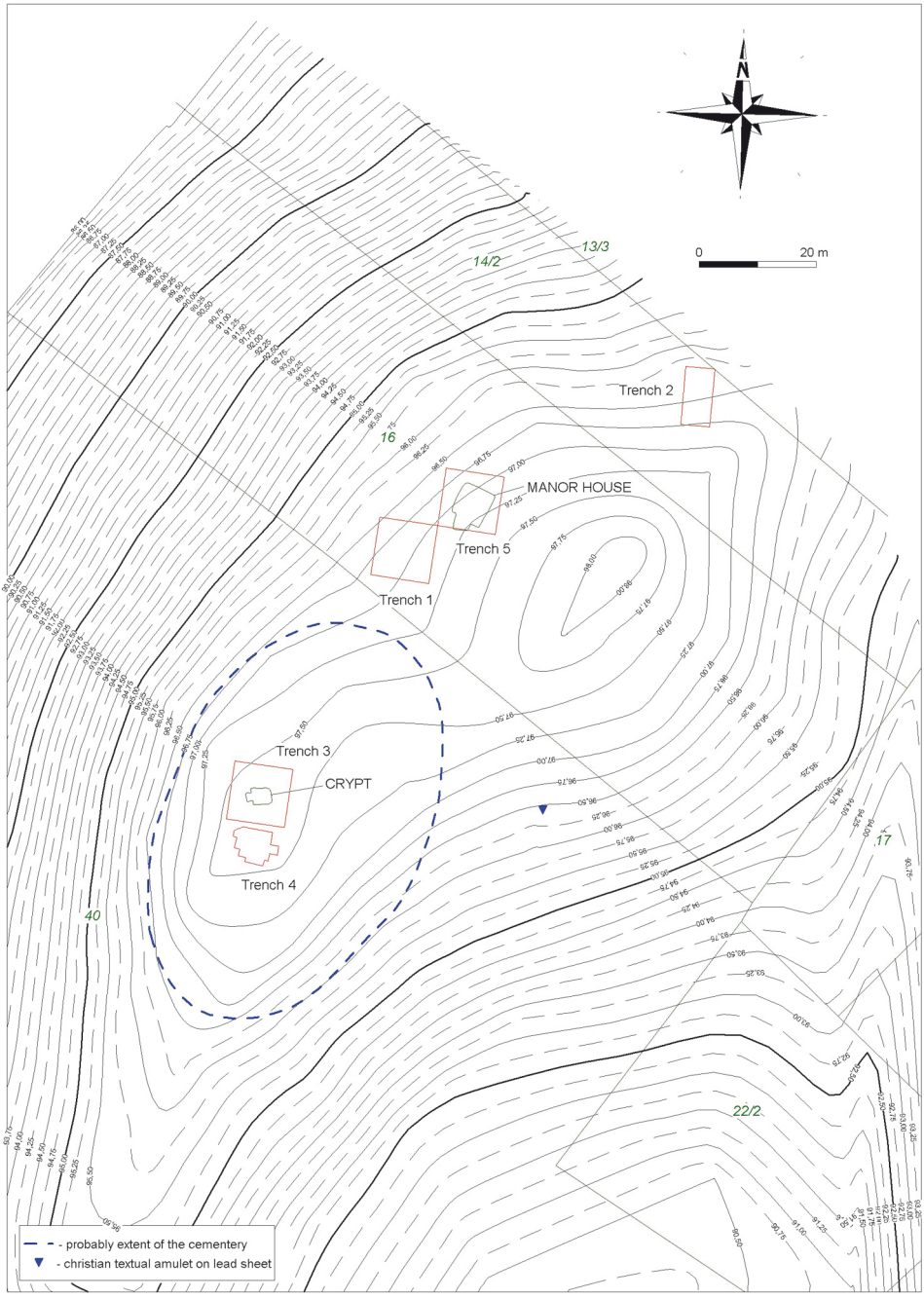


Fig. 2. Rękawczyn, Orchowo Municipality, Greater Poland Province. Location of the amulet discovery on a contour map (compiled by P. Wiktorowicz)

Fig. 3. Rękawczyn, Orchowo Municipality, Greater Poland Province. Trench 3. Crypt. Horizontal view of the graves (photo by K. Schellner)

Fig. 4. Rękawczyn, Orchowo Municipality, Greater Poland Province. Trench 4. Cementery. Horizontal view of the graves (photo by K. Schellner)

1578, new heirs from the Kunowski family converted to Evangelicalism and the parson's land was taken over by a certain Czarliński. Since then, the Church of St. Laurentius stopped fulfilling its functions, stood deserted, and slowly deteriorated. At the end of the 18th century, it had to be demolished and thus physically ceased to exist. The villages belonging to the parish of Rękawczyn were joined to the Kamieniec parish, formally only after 1807 (Łaski 1881, 197; Kozierowski 1914, 255; Librowski 1978, 140, 141).

The lead tablet was found in a humus layer using a metal detector on the eastern slope of the hill, approximately 50 metres east of the church and the surrounding graveyard (Figs. 1, 2). Amulets made of various materials containing inscriptions, including fragments of the Gospel of John, were often sewn into clothing in the Middle Ages (Brückner 1902, 63, 64). It should therefore be assumed that the tablet was ploughed from a grave when the hill was levelled. Similar grave finds are known from Germany (Muhl and Gutjahr 2013, No. 1, No. 3). It is uncertain where the tablet was made. Manufacture of similar amulets has been attributed mainly to monks (Bracha 1991, 21, 29). There were monasteries in the vicinity of Rękawczyn in the following towns: Trzemeszno (15 km), Mogilno (16 km), Strzelno (20 km), and Gniezno (29 km).

DESCRIPTION OF THE AMULET

At the time of finding, the amulet was in the form of a cube made of a folded lead plate measuring approximately 2 × 2 cm. On the outside, it was covered with a thin layer of iron oxide that had become deposited on it. Initially, the discovery went unnoticed. Only when it had been unfolded did it turn out that both sides of the amulet had small, difficult-to-read inscriptions engraved with a sharp tool (Figs 5, 6). Unfortunately, during the unfolding one part of the tablet ruptured. The tablet has a shape similar to a rectangle with the following dimensions: maximum length: 69 mm, width: 38 mm, thickness: 0.5 mm, and weight: 8.5 g. It was folded in half along the longer axis and then into four. The outer parts were folded inwards. The Dřevíč amulet was folded similarly (Blažková *et al*. 2017, fig. 9). On both sides of the tablet, along its longer axis, there is text divided into 12 rows (24 in total), each row underscored with a horizontal line. To ensure clarity, the outer side of the tablet (with traces of corrosion) was designated as A (Fig. 5), and the inner side as B (Fig. 6).

INTRODUCTION TO AMULETS AS A GENRE

This lead amulet from Rękawczyn is the first find of its kind from Poland and thus unique regional evidence of medieval Christian practices fairly common throughout Central Europe that functioned as curative or protective magic, preserving some elements of older pagan traditions.

Fig. 5. Rękawczyn, Orchowo Municipality, Greater Poland Province.
Christian textual amulet on a lead sheet, side A, outer side (photo by A. Żaczek)

Fig. 6. Rękawczyn, Orchowo Municipality, Greater Poland Province.
Christian textual amulet on lead sheet, side B, inner side (photo by A. Żaczek)

Since time immemorial, people have endeavoured to face diseases, risks, and various dangers in life and to protect themselves by magical means. Diseases, childbirth, poisonous animals, wars, and natural disasters could jeopardize or even quickly end a human life (Willer and Knauber 2016, 47). In the ancient Graeco-Roman context, an amulet can be defined as "a small protective device usually worn on the body to guard against unwanted supernatural influences, such as daemonic attacks and ghostly visitations, or to provide protection and healing from specific diseases and illnesses thought to have a non-medical cause" (*cf.* Kotansky 2019, 507). In antiquity, amulets could be made of various parts of plants and worn around the neck in a sack. They could also be personalized textual amulets worn in special cases, known as *capsulae,* or protective gems. These uses fall under the category "apotropaic", meaning "warding away" (of evil forces). In antiquity, however, more general functions of amulets were also known, such as for procuring good luck, a successful business outcome, legal victories, love, or triumph in games (Kotansky 2019, 507). The use of magic for protection and deliverance from diseases has therefore been widespread from the earliest times. People in the ancient Graeco-Roman world, as well as those in later medieval times, felt exposed to innumerable dangers. Therefore, they invoked diverse higher powers to obtain protection (Vavřík *et al.* 2020, 1). From antiquity, we know of several personalized text amulets in the form of small *lamellae* (tablets made of silver or gold) with prayers or incantations, sometimes written also on small pieces of papyrus or parchment sheets. From late antiquity, there are also amulets on lead tablets, for example the uterine amulet from Roman Britain – West Deeping in Lincolnshire (*cf.* Tomlin 1997, 291-294). From late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, we also have lead amulets protecting houses and fields or preventing hailstorms and floods (*cf.* Fernández Nieto 2010, 551); some of these were used against snakes and scorpions (*cf.,* for example Urbanová 2019, 1038; Muhl and Gutjahr 2013, 78-91). These old magical practices well preserved all over the Mediterranean did not cease to exist even when Christianity took over the reins. On the contrary, they adapted to the new faith, lived on, and were used abundantly throughout the Middle Ages, and, in addition to the divine apparatus, they often included magical formulae identical to those used in antiquity; all this despite the Church's efforts to eradicate such practices (*cf.* Skemer 2006, 21-73; Sanzo, 2019, 198-239). In the Middle Ages, textual amulets were also a popular and widespread "safety device" – usually small objects to be worn close to the body – which were believed to have magical or miraculous powers to protect their owners or to treat various illnesses and were in demand for any imaginable dangerous situation in life (Vavřík *et al.* 2020, 1-12). Skemer defined Christian medieval textual amulets as "portable devices filled with apotropaic text and images ... which were believed to give the bearer magical protection against the daemonic forces that were blamed for everything from plague and sudden death to toothache and bad luck" (Skemer 2015, 127). Textual amulets were obviously made prevalently by well-educated clerics according to the believers' wishes. Skemer stated that the Church believed in sacred miracles and mysteria; therefore, it is not surprising that clerics were

willing to make amulets since they believed that in this way they provided good Christians with divine protection against the Devil and daemons (Skemer 2006, 22). While some amulets suggest a well-versed manufacturer (*cf.* Muhl and Gutjahr 2013, 41-46), a considerable number of others feature various spelling and syntax errors or unrelated passages, showing that they were copied from manuscript examples rather carelessly and/or without proper understanding of the source text. Various items, the use of which was accompanied by the utterance of magical words or prayers, could play the role of amulet, as well. Medieval Christian textual amulets were based on the faith in protective powers of certain incantations, prayers, divine names, passages of the Scripture, historiolae, and magical signs and symbols that were engraved or inscribed on a small pieces of suitable support material. Then, the amulet was rolled up or folded and could be worn around the neck or put into a piece of cloth and worn close to the body; the procedures for folding lead amulets in the Middle Ages are described by A. Muhl and M. Gutjahr and D. Vavřík *et al.* (*cf.* Muhl and Gutjahr 2013, 59-62; Vavřík *et al.* 2020, 4-6). There are dozens of mostly lead amulets that date to late antiquity and the Christian Middle Ages found in Central and Northern Europe as well as many charms and blessings extant in countless medieval manuscripts (*cf.,* for example, Kieckhefer 1997, 2014; Láng 2005; Heim 1892; Schulz 2003, 10, 11). The amulets in such manuscripts are often only recipes or formularies, *i.e.* inert or non-activated exemplary texts. Such texts can be categorized as "applied magic" only after they have been used to make a particular amulet, *i.e.* activated for personal use (*cf.* Skemer 2015, 129-132; Gordon 2002, 70). Amulets written on parchment – mostly preserved in manuscripts – and most other organic materials frequently have not survived (Skemer 2006, 2015). Schulz also mentioned the use of apples, bread, altar bread, *etc.* in various magical healing rituals (*cf.* Schulz 2003, 109-111). Medieval amulets on lead were preserved more often (*cf.* Muhl and Gutjahr 2013; Blänsdorf 2019; Simek 2011; Düwel 2001; Gastgeber and Harrauer 2001; Vavřík *et al.* 2020). Due to the fact that these protective texts were engraved on lead, they were less susceptible to damage than those amulets written on parchment and thus could survive until today. The recent rise in lead amulet findings enabled by the use of metal detectors has confirmed this fact. Several dozen lead crosses with Christian magical inscriptions have been preserved in north-western Europe. These were made specifically for funerary rites and were deposited in graves to protect the deceased person's body and thus represent a different category of objects (Muhl and Gutjahr 2013, 6 and 86-90).

TEXTUAL AMULETS FROM THE MIDDLE AGES

Passages from Scripture were commonly included in textual amulets right from the beginning; even the oldest Greek and Latin Christian amulets preserved on magical papyri contain quotations from Psalms and passages of the Gospel of John (*cf.,* for example,

Skemer 2006, 85; Daniel and Maltomini 1990, 105-112., Nos. 35, 36). In the Latin West, it was believed that the Gospel of John had apotropaic and exorcistic powers, both as a whole and partially in the form of short quotations and therefore passages from this Gospel have been included in many amulets. Most frequently, the passages concerned were from John 1-14. In particular *In principio erat verbum* (John 1,1) and *Et verbum caro factum est* (1,14), were very popular and people believed that they could provide one with divine protection against daemons, the originators of various diseases. As Skemer claimed, "these fourteen verses [of the Gospel] strongly emphasized the creative power and immutable truth of the word of God as embodied in Christ" (Skemer 2006, 87). Moreover, these verses exemplified the underlying principle by which this Christian textual magic was thought to work: all things were believed to have been created through the word of God, so they could be saved from corrupting influence and restored to divine order by the proper use of the Holy Scripture (Muhl and Gutjahr 2013, 13; Willer and Knauber 2016, 51). Apart from this, medieval textual amulets often contained other features related to the deeds of Jesus Christ described in the Gospels, liturgical (*e.g.* † *Christus vincit* † *Christus regnat* † *Christus imperat*) and ordinary prayers (*Pater Noster, Ave Maria, etc.*). Magical elements such as the so-called *nomina sacra* – the particular 72 names of God, in Exodus, which was supposed to protect the bearer from all ills and perils (*cf.* Lecouteux 2015, 233) – and Christian divine names – which can refer to God the Father, Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Trinity (such as *In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti, Amen*) and the Virgin Mary, or INRI – were included in amulets. Amulets sometimes contain the *tetragrammaton* (*i.e.* the Greek word for the Hebrew ineffable name of God); further Hebrew names of God *Iao, Sabaoth* (*i.e.* Lord of Hosts, sometimes as a holy angel together with *Michael*); and names of powerful angels (Lecouteux 2015, 343). Some texts also contain the acronym AGLA (held as an efficient multi-purpose protective formula against bleeding, fever, daemons, and many other situations, it is most likely an acronym for the initials of four Hebrew words, *atah gibor leolam adonai*, which form a phrase meaning "You are mighty in eternity Lord"). In addition, they sometimes also use crosses or *characteres* (*cf.* Lecouteux 2015, 26-32; Düwel 2001, 231). The holy names in amulet texts are often interspersed with crosses. Furthermore, amulets could contain various stylized depictions of the cross, elaborate crucifixion scenes, or magical symbols and complex sigils. Christian powerful words, symbols, and a vast collection of protective charms meant as a formula can be found, for example, in the well-known Canterbury Amulet dated to the 13th century (*cf.* Skemer 2006, 199-214, 285-304; Bozóky 2003, 72-78; Heim 1892; Kieckhefer 2014). A continuous trend can be perceived in the employed techniques of magic: while earlier amulets (Late Antiquity to c. 11th-12th centuries) tend to feature an explicit incantation or exorcism of evil entities as the central part, often with the same adjuration formula, present on the amulets from Dřevíč and Halberstadt and cited below – which is analogous to older pagan traditions – late medieval amulets mostly showed a preference for a more "humble" prayer form and/or employed cryptic magical words and "exotic", *i.e.* ancient, languages such as (often

bastardized) Greek and Hebrew. In all probability, this is connected with the increasing prosecution of heresy, daemonic magic, and later witchcraft as well as the parallel rise in scholarship with accompanying occultism and the greater availability of translated ancient works on magic (Vavřík *et al.* 2020, 11).

PUBLISHED MEDIEVAL LEAD AMULETS FOUND IN CENTRAL EUROPE

The amulet from Rękawczyn is similar to other medieval artefacts of the kind found in Central Europe, although it also displays some unique features, namely a specific adaptation of the usual formulae. The amulet is inscribed on both sides of the lead plate with 12 lines on each side (the space for each is outlined on both sides, but the writing often crosses the grid). The number of 2 times 12 lines, 24 in total, is most probably intentional and might serve an additional magical purpose according to Judaeo-Christian numerology. Among other meanings, 12 refers to the number of the Tribes of Israel and the Apostles, thus combining the Old and the New Testament and possibly likening the Rękawczyn amulet to a "bible *en miniature*". A direct parallel for magical employment of the numbers 12 and 24 can be found in an amulet from Halberstadt: "*...p(er) xii apostolos (et) p(er) xii p(ro)phetas (et) p(er) xxiiii seniores...*" (*cf.* Muhl and Gutjahr 2013, 33), see below. Our text features the entire first chapter of the Gospel of John (1-14) written horizontally. Lead amulets usually do not contain such long quotations from the Gospel of John as we find in our amulet. We mostly find only the first three to five lines, presuming that users knew the rest of the text by heart. Longer texts appear in several manuscripts, however, such as an Italian amulet dating to the late 15th century supposed to protect a certain Illioneus, the Amulet for Francesco (*cf.* Skemer 2006, 214-222, 309, 310). Moreover, in F. M. Guazzo's book *Compendium maleficarum* (Guazzo 1992, 3, 14, 11) there is a reference to such amulets from the Moravian Episcopate of Olomouc with quotations from Psalms and the Gospel of John that were used to treat people possessed by the devil. The passage from the Gospel of John on our amulet comprises over three quarters of the text written on both sides of the tablet, while the hardly readable last six lines (19-24) contain an accumulation of various protective formulae and sacred names, including perhaps a personalized or "customizable" passage, as we can guess from line 22: *ut sit salus animae et corporis...*

Among published medieval lead amulets from Central Europe, and partially also from Scandinavia, we find numerous corresponding formulae. The highest number of such artefacts come from this area, especially Germany (Sachsen-Anhalt). So far, 14 such amulets have been published (*cf.* Muhl and Gutjahr 2013, 78, 79) and one amulet from Mörstadt dated to the 7th century (*cf.* Blänsdorf 2019). Even though altogether 23 lead amulets have been found in Germany, several have not yet been unfolded or published (ongoing research by K. Knauber). There is also a recent finding (2014) from the Dřevíč hillfort within

the Czech lands – Central Bohemia, (*cf.* Blažková *et al.* 2017; Vavřík *et al.* 2020) dating to the early 12th century. These surviving amulets display many common features regarding their content, dating, lead materiality (the proportions of the lead tablets are 14-10 cm × 8-4 cm), folding method (into small booklets), and location (where the context is known, these findings come from graves or graveyards). Based on the conformities in the formulae used, we can observe many parallels between particular amulets from this area. For the sake of comparison in this study, we will work with nine amulets, eight of which come from Germany (*cf.* Muhl and Gutjahr 2013, Nos. 1-5, 7, 13; Blänsdorf 2019) and the ninth of which comes from Dřevíč (*cf.* Vavřík *et al.* 2020). Some amulets, just like the one from Rękawczyn, begin with several verses from the Gospel of John, mostly citing only the first three to five verses. This pertains, for instance, to the amulet from Elbeu – Ohrekreis in Sachsen-Anhalt (Muhl and Gutjahr 2013, No.1), which cites the first three verses of the Gospel of John followed by other Christian formulae such as *in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti* and *signaculo sanctae crucis*... The text is damaged, and so the name of the person protected by the amulet is missing; apart from this, the text also includes a magical seal. The text of an amulet from the Salhausen hillfort – near Wolmirstedt, district Bröde in Sachsen-Anhalt (Muhl and Gutjahr 2013, No. 3) is structured similarly, containing only a short sequence from the Gospel of John, *In principio erat verbum,* followed by the names of other Christian entities: *Jesus Christus, Maria mater*, and the names of the Four Evangelists. The amulet was supposed to protect a certain Herwihin.

Other amulets do not cite the Gospels but use an apotropaic adjuration formula by which they banish evil spirits and diseases. Such is the case of an amulet from Halberstadt in district Harz Sachsen -Anhalt (Muhl and Gutjahr 2013, No. 5; Fuhrmann 2014, 1,142-1,144), the text of which was engraved on the sides of a central depiction of crucified Christ and which was dated to 1142 and was supposed to protect God's servant Tado. The text of this amulet starts with the sequence † *In nomine patris (et) [f]ilii (et) sp(iritu)s s(an)c(t)i (et) in nomine d(omi)ni n(ost)ri ih(es)u xp(ist)i* and continues with an exorcistic adjuration formula to banish dark powers. First, it addresses a daemon or elf named *Albis* (a mysterious but originally not necessarily evil being from Germanic mythology, known from lead amulets and manuscript charms, sometimes gendered and pluralized as *eluos aut eluas*; Simek 2011), an embodiment of a dark power that could harm the amulet's owner (in most preserved amulets the 'elves', are thought to cause illnesses, and are characterized as daemonic beings (Vavřík *et al.* 2020, 10). In accordance with the usual practice of magical texts, it preemptively enumerates all ordinary life situations in which the dark powers would not be able to harm the servant of God.

Adiuro te alb(er) qui[u]ocaberis diabolus v(e)l sat[anas] p(er) p(atrem) (et) filiu(m) [et] sp(iritu)m s(an)c(tu)m (et) p(er) om(ne)s ang(e)los (et) arca(n) g(e)los p(er) xii apostolos (et) p(er) xii p(ro)phetas (et) p(er) xxiiii senio(re)s (et) p(er) cclxiiii mil(ia) Innocent(i)[um] non habeas potestat[em] in [- - - i]sta [- - -]lica [- - -]dere aut [- - -]

famulu(m) de[i] TADO. N[e] nocere p[o]ssis non [in] die neq(ue) in [n]octe non in [..] sic neq(ue) non bibendo [ne]q(ue) manducand[o - - -] in stanti[- - -] [ne]q(ue) sedendo [- - -] neq(ue) [- - -] loco [- - -]lere nec anima(m) condem(n)[- - -] Coniuro te [- - -] s(an)c(t)e marie fac ad illum [- - -] non possis [- - -] mcxlii [- - -]mini.

"In the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit and the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. I conjure (*i.e.* banish) you, Alber, who shall be called devil or Satan by the Father and Son and Holy Spirit and by all Angels and Archangels, by the Twelve Apostles and the Twelve Prophets and the 24 Elders and the 264 thousand innocents, so that you do not have power ... over God's servant Tado. So that you cannot harm [him], neither day nor night ... not while drinking, nor eating, nor standing, nor sitting [The following text is extensively damaged and so cannot be coherently translated] ... nor at the place(?), ... nor condemn the soul... I conjure you ... Saint Mary ... do ... toward him ... [may] you be unable, [in the year] 1142 of [our] Lord".

A similar adjuration formula is also found in an amulet from Dřevíč – Central Bohemia dating to the beginning of the 12th century that was supposed to protect God's servant Rozmysl against daemons and diseases:

Pax et patrocinium Sacr[o]sancte crucis super famulum [t]uum Roszmycil dei contra fraude[m] callidi diaboli † [- - -] Vas † Rubies † Riskme [..] Valentine R[isk]as Riskas Tr[isk]as Rubeam Mariam ... Adiuro albis qu[i] vocaris diabolus vel satanas per patrem et fil [i]um et spiritum sanct[u]m...

Peace and protection [...] of the most venerable Cross over your servant Rozmysl, (servant) of God, against the maliciousness of the scheming devil [...] vessel † reddening [...] (Saint) Valentine † dry out [...], inflammation! Mary(?) [...] I implore you, Elf, who are called devil or Satan, through the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit..." (for the entire text and commentary, see Vavřík *et al.* 2020, 9-11).

The amulet from Mörstadt – in district Alzey-Worms in Rheinland-Pfalz, dated by archaeological context and palaeography to the middle of the 7th century and thus representing rare evidence from the early Middle Ages, contains the following formulae: *...Per passionem Iesu Christi, per sangui[nem domi]ni nostri Iesu Christi, per resur(r)ec<t>ionem domini nostri Iesu Christi, ut non noceatis famulo dei Ch[...]iuht...* (for the entire text, translation, and commentary, see Blänsdorf 2019, 279-282). Another amulet from the extinct village of Zehlingen – near Ballenstedt in district Harz in Sachsen-Anhalt (Muhl and Gutjahr 2013, No. 4) contains the Gospel of Matthew.

The most documented type of amulet in Central Europe includes a combination of the incipit of the Gospel of John and an adjuration formula, as is the case for amulets from Klein-Dreileben – in district Bröde, Sachsen-Anhalt, Salhausen, Seelschen – near Ummen-

dorf in Sachsen-Anhalt (Muhl and Gutjahr, 2013, Nos. 2, 3, 7), and Schleswig. In addition, the amulet from Schleswig – in Schleswig-Holstein (Gastgeber and Harrauer 2001, 207-226) is a very illustrative example of contemporary notions of protection through these artefacts, including explicit exorcistic formulae after the beginning of the Gospel of John – *I(n) no(m)i(n)e d(omi)ni n(ost)ri Ie(s)u Chr(ist)i c(on)iuro vos demones sive albes et om(ne)s pestes om(n)iu(m) infirmitatu(m)...* – and another formula after the usual preemptive list of ordinary life situations – *Ecce cruce(m)* † *d(omi)ni fugite, partes adv(er)s(ae)*. "In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, I conjure you, daemons and elves, and all the infections of all illnesses... See the cross †of Christ! Flee, you hostile forces!" (English transl. Simek 2011, 26-28).

PALAEOGRAPHY, DATING, COMMENTS ON THE SCRIPT OF THE AMULET FROM RĘKAWCZYN

Palaeographic analysis and determination of the age of the script found on the lead amulet must reflect two facts: the characteristics of the material used (soft lead) and the writing technique (engraved by a sharp stylus). Both of these naturally result in certain graphic characteristics that distinguish this type of evidence from other contemporary texts, including inscriptions or, generally, more quickly written texts of an epigraphic nature that can be considered typologically closest to amulets. In contrast, texts written on so-called palaeographic materials, especially in this case parchment, can hardly be compared (when it comes to external features) with lead amulet texts. Despite this reservation, the graphic treatment of the script in amulets respects the basic framework of the development of Latin script and the authors naturally used elementary components typical of the contemporary style of writing in the respective periods. Consequently, both of these aspects are taken into account while dating the amulet discussed here. On the one hand, we must consider the rough writing material and technique (engraving) used to create relevant text that may seem conservative; on the other hand, we must interpret those features of the used ductus that are decisive for classifying a text into a particular period. An appropriate combination of both perspectives thus secures reliable chronological classification of the analysed artefact. The preciseness of the dating is, however, directly proportional to the number of similar preserved and already published findings for which the dating can be supported by warranted archaeological context. Comparisons performed in the wide territorial horizon typical of amulet dating can provide us only with approximate dating. From the most general point of view, the script found in the Polish lead amulet represents a very casual and uncultivated writing style that displays substantial graphic lability in particular letters. These are generally isolated, with rare use of ligatures, which is a distinctive divergence from the script found in literary codices of the time. So-called Meyer ligatures, *i.e.* Gothic nexuses, are completely absent, which certainly indicates the

inexperience of the amulet's author with contemporary literary script. Conversely, the engraver was familiar with a ligature regularly used for the conjunction *et* (&; *cf.* Fig. 7, No. 16). The text is written mostly in minuscule, but with a very unstable minuscule outline, which is due to the small letter size and also the engraving technique on a lead tablet with previous line spacing for only part of the text. Remarkably, the optional presence of the upper-case letter *Q* in the first line of side B of the amulet (in the abbreviation *Quoquod*) and lines 15 (*Qui*) and 19 (*Qureah*) of the same side is of chronological significance. All of the letters used in the amulet tend to break round strokes; it is therefore beyond any doubt that the basic style of the text is Gothic. The amulet is engraved with a casual Gothic minuscule with upper-case features made mostly in an isolated ductus. Even when rounding occurs, it is easily explained by the lead-engraving technique: see, for instance, the letter *o*, which is predominantly represented by a shape composed of two separate strokes of half-arches broken once (*cf.* Fig. 7, No. 9). The same morphology is found in the letter *c*, the shape of which is closely related to the letter *o* (*cf.* Fig. 7, No. 3). The letter *m* also has a fully Gothic ductus: it is composed of three isolated stems provided with serifs above and below (*cf.* Fig. 7, No. 7). The stems in the letters *n* and *u* are also equipped with serifs (within the frame of advanced Gothic assimilation): the letter *n* has a serif on its second stem (*cf.* Fig. 7, No. 8), and the letter *u* on its first stem (*cf.* Fig. 7, No. 15).

The letter *a* (*cf.* Fig. 7, No. 1) is composed of two strokes: the basic stem and the belly are broken; as a result of a faster engraving pace, the two strokes sometimes do not touch and therefore the lower part of the letter is open. The letter *e* has the most complicated ductus (*cf.* Fig. 7, No. 4), which is composed of three strokes: the basic arch is made of two markedly broken strokes, and a cross-bar runs from the location where the two strokes connect. The cross-bar is significantly emphasized by a diagonal extension, which can be regarded as a peculiar individual attribute of the engraver. The same phenomenon is found in the letters *g* (*cf.* Fig. 7, No. 5) and *t* (*cf.* Fig. 7, No. 14), while the letter *g* often lacks the loop running to the lower line. The letters *b* (*cf.* Fig. 7, No. 2), *h* (*cf.* Fig. 7, No. 6), and *r* (*cf.* Fig. 7, No. 12) are usually not stylized in a distinctive Gothic way; only sporadically do we find a serif on the basic line of the stem of the letter b. The presence of the long *s* and its exclusivity for the graphic realization of the consonant [s] (*cf.* Fig. 7, No. 13) is very important for dating. The preference for this grapheme can be explained by the specifics of the writing material, which suits direct lines rather than arches. This principle influenced the ductus of the letter *p* (*cf.* Fig. 7, No. 10), as well. The letter is composed of two strokes: a basic stem ended by a serif below and a fragment of an arch that is, however, represented by a direct line, which results in the upper part of the letter being open. Decomposition and the resulting disconnection of individual engraved lines, which was mentioned above with the letter *a*, was caused by a faster pace of engraving when making the amulet. The presence of the upper-case letter *Q* in a minuscule context is of significance, as well. The use of upper-case letters for writing whole texts, *i.e.* apart from initials and other distinguishing forms of script, disappears from epigraphic material (where the Gothic upper case remained

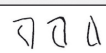
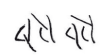
Number	*Letter*	*Realization of the letter in source*
1	a	
2	b	
3	c	
4	e	
5	g	
6	h	
7	m	
8	n	
9	o	
10	p	
11	abbreviation "Qd.qd."	
12	r	
13	s	
14	t	
15	u	
16	ligature &	

Fig. 7. Table of signs (compiled by D. Havel)

for the longest time) during the 14th century (Semkowicz 2011, 532). The occurrence of this (probably relic) upper case is found in the abbreviation *Quodquod* (*cf*. Fig. 7, No. 11; amulet, side B, first line) together with the upright minuscule *d*. The aforementioned abbreviation used for the conjunction *et* in a ligatured form (*cf*. Fig. 7, No. 16) can be considered a peculiar individual form. It occurs in two forms: more frequently it resembles the Greek upper-case Φ, and in other forms it is reduced. In conclusion, the author of the text engraved on this Polish lead amulet used Gothic minuscule with fully established Gothic features (angular lines) for all strokes, with optional roundedness determined by the used material and engraving technique. Conversely, the occurrence of the long *s* as well as the

extraordinary use of the upper-case letter *Q* are conservative features of the analysed text. Engraved texts did not aspire for an aesthetic function; the authors of such texts did not strive for any ornaments or artistic stylization of the script. All of the morphological features of the used script correspond to the second half of the 14th century, the period that therefore represents the chronological range of the amulet's production.

INSCRIPTION – EDITION

The edition generally follows the epigraphic conventions of the Leiden System (Epigraphic Conventions 2015) with certain modifications with respect to the medieval origin of the amulet. For this reason, we have also considered the common editorial principles of the *Die Deutschen Inschriften* series, namely the principles formulated for the Viennese part of the project, as these guidelines are generally accepted for critical editions of medieval epigraphic material (Koch 1991).

Therefore, in the transliteration we have used square brackets to restore letters that are now illegible due to damage to the amulet (the precise number is indicated by the number of full stops, where possible), dotted letters indicate cases where only a small part of a letter is visible due to erasure but which could be restored from the context, and abbreviations are signalled by the mark of general abbreviation (superscribed or subscribed strokes are used). In the transcription, the abbreviations are expanded without further notice, curly brackets are used in cases that needed to be suppressed (*e.g.* dittography), and omissions that disturb the meaning of the text and therefore had to be supplied are placed in angle brackets. The inscription is written in *scriptura continua* and almost exclusively in minuscule letters. The transliteration keeps the minuscule letters, while the transcription reconstructs the text based on its sense, and therefore word division, punctuation, and capital letters are used accordingly.

PAGE A (outer side, see Fig. 5)

TRANSLITERATION

1. † iniciū sc̨ị euāgeḷį̣ scđm̨ į̣ohanē † in p̣r̄icipio
2. erat ūbū êt ūbū er[.]t [..]u[.] đm êt đs er[.]t ūbū
3. ħ erat ī p̣r̄į̣n[.....] [...]t̨ đm omīa p̲ ipsụ̄ facta sūt êt
4. sine ipso factū ę̄ nichi q̨đ factū e[.]t i[.] ipso vį̣ta erat
5. vį̣ta erat lụ[.] ḥominū êt lu[.] į̣n̨ tenebris lụcet êt tene
6. bre eā n̄c̨p̣r̄[.....] [.....] [..]s̱s̱ụs a đo cụį̣ nom̄erat ioha
7. nes ḥ ueniṭ testimoniụ̄ ut ṭesṭimonị̄ p̲iberet
8. đ lumine ū [..]s cređr̥ēṭ p̲ illū n̥̄ era[.] [.....] test

9. timoniū p̣ḥ[.....]ṭ đ lụmine erat lux ụ[...] [...] ị̣ṇluminat
10. ọmē hom[.]ṇē u[.]n[...]tē i[.] [.....] ị̣ṇ ṃ̣ụ̄do erạt
11. êt ṃ̣ụ̄dụ̣[.] [...] [..]ṣụ̄ factu[.] [.....] [...]dus eū ṇ ọognouit
12. in [...] [.]ẹnit [.....] noṇ

TRANSCRIPTION

1. †*Inicium sancti euangeli<i> secundum Iohannem† In principio*
2. *erat verbum et verbum erat aput Deum et Deus erat verbum.*
3. *Hoc erat in principio aput Deum. Omnia per ipsum facta sunt et*
4. *sine ipso factum est nichi<l>, quod factum est. In ipso vita erat*
5. *<et> vita erat lux hominum et lux in tenebris lucet et tene-*
6. *bre eam non conprehenderunt. Fuit homo missus a Deo, cui nomen erat Ioha-*
7. *nes. Hic venit <in> testimonium, ut testimonium per<h>iberet*
8. *de lumine, ut omnes crederent per illum. Non erat ille lux, sed ut test-*
9. *{t}imonium perhiberet de lumine. Erat lux vera, que inluminat*
10. *omnem hominem venietem in mundum. In mundo erat*
11. *et mundus per ipsum factus est et mundus eum non cognovit.*
12. *In propria venit et sui eum non*

PAGE B (inner side, see Fig. 6)

TRANSLITERATION

13. ṛecepe[.]ūt Qđqđ autē receperūt eū dẹdit eis
14. potestaṭē filiọs đi fieri q̄ credụ̄t ī noīe
15. eius q̄ n̄ eẋ ṣaguinibuṣ neq̄ex uolūtạte carniṣ
16. nẹq[.] uiri [.]et đo nati sūt êt ūbū caro factū ē êt
17. habitauit ī nobis êt uidiṃ̄gl̀m eiuṣ gl̀am quasi u
18. nigenit a patre plenū grē êt ueritatis Ioh † [..]ị̣ụṛ
19. Qureaḥ † ṣirah † idrā † remiasis † mẹdio ill êt dis
20. [.]p̣ṣṣat † [.....]asṣ eṭ sit salus hụịc portātị
21. steppoḥṇẹ †† marcus †matteus † lucas † iohanes
22. † scā mā[.] sit salus anime êt corporis † f̣ạṃulo đ[.]
23. elo̱ eloṃ ọe sabaọṭ ṣạḅaoht elia ẹli ado a
24. tan agla ttragrạma

TRANSCRIPTION

13. *receperunt. Quodquod autem receperunt eum, dedit eis*
14. *potestatem filios Dei fieri <his>, qui credunt in nomine*
15. *eius, qui non ex saguinibus neque ex voluntate carnis*
16. *neque <ex voluntate> viri, set <ex> Deo nati sunt. Et verbum caro factum est et*
17. *habitavit in nobis et vidimus gloriam eius, gloriam quasi u-*
18. *nigenit<i> a patre, plenum gracie et veritatis. Iohannes † iur*
19. *Qureah † Sirah † Idra † Remiasis † medio illorum et dis-*
20. *perssat †* [.....]*ass, et sit salus huic portanti*
21. *Stepphone †† Marcus † Matteus † Lucas † Iohanes*
22.† *sancta Maria † sit salus anime et corporis † famulo Dei.*
23. *Eloy, Elohim, Eloe, Sabaot, Sabaoht, Elia, Eli, Adonay, A-*
24. *<re>tan, Agla, Tetragrammaton.*

COMMENTARY AND TENTATIVE INTERPRETATION

The reading of the amulet is presented here as a work in progress. Initially, Konrad Knauber transcribed the text with the help of a set of macroscopic photos and scans with different lighting, contrast, and angles provided by Krzysztof Gorczyca, but without being able to consult the original. In a first handwritten transliteration, he identified the passages from the Gospel of John and parts of the subsequent text on the lower half of the inner side (B) of the amulet. His reading was then revised by Daniela Urbanová, while a facsimile of the amulet was produced by Lucie Urbanová. The initial transcription was subsequently reworked and edited by Petra Mutlová and Dalibor Havel. All participating authors have extensively conversed on the inscription and its interpretation. Nevertheless, some passages are irreversibly corrupted and remain unreadable. Further clarifications, if possible, will be published in a follow-up article.

The text from the Gospel of John (verses 1-14) takes up the entire outer side of the tablet (lines 1-12) and half of its inner side (lines 13-18). The last undoubtedly identifiable word in line 18 is the end of the relevant part of the Gospel of John (*veritatis*); the remainder (8 to 10 characters) of the line is hardly legible, but it seems possible that it is followed by an abbreviated form of the evangelist's name (*Iohannes*), followed by a cross and perhaps the word *iur[o]* (as in *adiuro* or *coniuro*), but, since the reading is uncertain at this part, it is unclear whether this explicit conjuration formula (which appears regularly in earlier Christian and pagan amulets) was used in this amulet text at all or whether it was rather a magical word, sacred name, or formulaic abbreviation since they appear in the following passages. Still, it is possible to assume that the formulaic part of the text starts already at the end of line 18 as signalled by the cross (crosses represent the act of blessing

as occurs in Catholic Church missals, as noted by C. Wulf). However, since this location has not only been damaged by the unfolding procedure but also irreversibly deformed by its location at the flexion point made by folding of the lead plate, our proposed reading remains a matter of conjecture.

Lines 19 to 24 begin under the horizontal dividing line created by the first (vertical) folding of the tablet. These represent a unique part of the amulet: they consist of a sequence of magical words and the names of the Evangelists and protecting formulae, which were in all probability personalized according to the needs of the owner of the amulet. The use of a shortened version of magical precepts for the production of amulets was common in the Middle Ages as well as in antiquity, see Section 3.1. Sadly, it is exactly this part that is hardly readable and partially damaged by lead corrosion. Moreover, the fact that the letters are not engraved into prearranged lining spaces – and the individual lines intersect especially on the inner side of the lead sheet (page B) – further complicates the reading. With respect to the aforementioned, the last six lines of the text cannot be coherently translated; however, some of the parts offer sufficient grounds for at least a tentative interpretation. Basically, these lines contain a compilation of magical words, sacred names, and formulae from different contexts and purposes (possibly also originating from various text sources), as suggested also by the crosses that partially separate them. The sequence *mediomardis* or *medio ill(orum)* at the end of line 19 is very uncertain. As *mediomardis* (or *dio iuardis* and other possible combinations), it might belong to the sequence of unclear, unidentifiable, or corrupted magical words or sacred names divided by crosses that are listed in the same line (*Qureah* † *sirah* † *idra* † *remiasis* †). Reading this sequence as *medio ill(orum)* opens the possibility for a *pars pro toto* use of the popular formula *Iesus autem transiens*, often employed for safe passage and to prevent capture; in its most common form, it appears as *Iesus autem transiens per medio illorum ibat*, referring to the Gospel of Luke (4, 30), and is often used in similar abbreviated forms elsewhere (Lecouteux 2015, 184-186). Christine Wulf (*per litteras*) proposed adding *(ce)ssate* † *(satan)ass* in the subsequent line (there is an unreadable gap corresponding to about seven characters), *i.e.* 'retreat, satanic forces' in order that salvation may be brought to the owner of the amulet, as the following passage suggests (being read as *et sit salus huic portanti*; we have also considered the variant reading *ut sit salus hinc portatus,* but it does not rest on safe palaeographical grounds). Another possibility is to read the passage as *medio ill(orum) et dis-p(er)ssat demonass* (or *satanass*), implying that by means of these (*i.e.* the sacred names) may the dark forces be dispersed.

Lines 21 and 22 contain five Christian protective entities separated by crosses, which are quite usual in amulets: the names of the Four Evangelists separated by crosses in line 21 and *sancta Maria* in line 22. The first word in line 21 – *steppohne* – is understandable only with great difficulty. It is separated from the names of the Evangelists by two crosses. Providing that it draws on the previous protecting formula, it could express the name of the amulet's owner, perhaps a dative or vocative form of *Stephanus* or its misspelled or

vernacular variant. However, it does not seem very plausible that the word *steppoḥṇe* could refer to the first name of a mortal person as it appears before the "sacred" names in the line (it could also be an acronym made of divine words that is not known to us). Therefore, we cannot reject the possibility that it refers to the protomartyr Saint Stephen, who was stoned to death and, corresponding to the principles of sympathetic magic, is often called upon against headaches and specific diseases, such as kidney stones. The relics of Saint Stephen were translated in the 6th century and today are housed in the Basilica of San Lorenzo fuori le mura in Rome next to those of Saint Lawrence. Therefore, there might be a connection to the local church of Saint Laurentius at Rękawczyn near the location the amulet was found if lesser relics of Saint Stephen were brought from Rome together with those of Saint Lawrence that were needed for consecration of the main altar at Rękawczyn and thus local veneration of Saint Stephen may have also followed. If the word *steppoḥṇe* was really meant to refer to the intended user of the amulet, then its position could be explained by copying – in a now incomprehensible order – from multiple exemplars of different lists of sacred names, magical words, and blessings; such a practice is attested to in various extensive multi-purpose amulets, the Canterbury amulet, mentioned above, being the most renowned example. Moreover, in the lead amulets found in Central Europe, the name of the bearer usually appears only after the names of the Evangelists or other divine forces and is preceded by the sequence *famulus/a Dei*; see, *e.g*., the Dřevíč amulet: *Pax et patrocinium Sacr[o]sancte crucis super famulum [t]uum Roszmycil dei contra fraude[m] callidi diaboli*; the amulet from Halberstadt: *famulum dei Tado*; and the amulet from the Seelschen hillfort (Muhl and Gutjahr 2013, no. 6): *famule dei Hazga*. Considering that our text also contains the phrase *famulo Dei* at the end of line 22, it could be expected that the bearer's name should follow it. Yet this is not the case. Therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility that the owner of this amulet was a certain Stephanus and the writer of the amulet used a prescription hitherto unknown to us. Additionally, in the longer textual amulets from the later Middle Ages, the formula with *famulus/a Dei* sometimes appears to have been faithfully copied without individualization, *i.e*. without providing the names of the actual patients, or alternatively the patients' names might have been put in the wrong place. Misplacing and mixing up personal names with sacred names can be seen in the 13th century amulet for Adam and Osanna from the Ingleby Arnliffe Crucifix mentioned by Skemer (2006, 185, 186). Line 22 of our amulet starts with a cross and continues with the abbreviated *scâ mâ*, *i.e. sancta Maria,* followed by the formula *sit salus anime et corporis* † *famulo Dei*, meaning 'may the soul and body of the servant be healthy/redeemed', or potentially 'may Holy Mary be the salvation of soul and body for the servant of God' (with the formula maybe also addressing the aforementioned Evangelists and – possibly – Saint Stephen, if these names do not instead represent separate semantic units).

The following two lines (23-24) contain Hebrew names for God. Line 23 – in all probability – includes *Eloy, Eloim, Eloe* (variants of *'Elohim*') and *sabaǫt ṣabaoht*, *i.e. 'Sabaot(h)*', and the misspelled *Sabaoht*, *Elia, Eli, Adonay*. Similar sequences of magical

words are well attested in medieval magical manuscripts, such as, for example., † *ely* † *eloy* † *tetragramaton* and † *ely* † *eloy* † *alfa et o* † in the Italian amulet of a certain Ilioneo (*cf.* Skemer 2006, 214 and 308-310) and *ely, eloe, emanuel* in the Canterbury amulet (Skemer 2006, 290) or *on* † *ely* † *eloy* † *agla* † (Lecouteux, 2015, 69); for the sequence *Eloy, Eloim, Ely*, see the list of 72 names of God (*cf.* Lecouteux 2015, 191) or (Lecouteux 2015, 236) *Eloy* † *Eloim* † *Ely* documented in the *Enchyridion Leonis Papae* (or the Lesser Key of Solomon), perhaps the most similar sequence of magical words appears in the Canterbury amulet: col. 3, in the sequence *Haec sunt nomina domini. on enofaton. el. eloe, sabaoth. eleon. eloe. adonay. saday* (Skemer 2006, 290).

The last line of our amulet, 24, starts with *tan*, and it is unclear whether the last letter in line 23 (*i.e. a*) can provide the beginning for the name *Arethon* (Lecouteux 2015, 204), meaning 'virility' or 'strength', or even more likely *Areton* (gk. 'the inconceivable' as a name of God); this is followed by *Agla* (*cf.* Section 3.1.) and an abbreviated form of the *Tetragrammaton* (a common code for the four letters of the unspeakable personal name of God, see also the sequence *Sabahot, Tara* † *Tetragrammaton* in Lecouteux 2015, 236).

SUMMARY

The last six lines of the amulet – which represent the most valuable, original, and personalized section – start with possibly five or more unidentified sacred names. Most probably, these begin after the cross at the end of line 18 where the quotation from the Gospel ends, (18) † *iur* / (19) *Qureah* † *Sirah* † *idra* † *remiasis* †, and seem to be followed by a protective formula. The last word in line 19 might pertain either as the sixth magical word (*mediomardis*) in the previous sequence of sacred names interspersed with crosses, or it could be read as *medio ill(orum)* and belong to the following protective formula. The lacuna at the beginning of line 20 may be interpreted as *et dis/sp(er)ssat demonass* or *satanass*; the second part of this line reads *et sit salus huic portanti*. The overall meaning is that through these holy names (*i.e. Querah, etc.*) the evil forces (*i.e.* the daemons) are to be driven away and salvation is to be brought upon the bearer of the amulet. The beginning of line 21 starts with the unusual word *steppohne*, which may be understood as a peculiar form of a personal name: **Stephanus* can be either the person to be protected by the amulet or a reference to Saint Stephen. Separated by two crosses, another sequence of well-known Christian sacred names follows: Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, and Holy Mary (it is worth noting that the sequence of the Four Evangelists does not correspond to the Vulgate but seemingly testifies to Marcan priority), together with another protective formula: *sit salus anime et corporis famulo Dei*, which can be understood as 'may the soul and body of the servant of God be healthy or redeemed'. The last two lines conclude the protective effort by invoking mighty names – they contain various names and epithets of God from Hebrew tradition and other powerful magical devices, such as the acronym *Agla* and the

Tetragrammaton. All in all, it remains to be decided whether the amulet belonged to a certain Stephen and had a general apotropaic function by combining various more specific magical remedies, or it was intended to secure divine protection for, *e.g.*, a specific safe passage. As it was folded down into a small portable size, however, it seems that it was intended to be worn on the body for a longer period of time. The invoked entities and the magical names still need to be deciphered with more precision, while it is safe to assume that the total number of 2 times 12 or 24 lines was specifically chosen to enhance the amulet's power according to Judaeo-Christian numerology. In any case, the fact that a lengthy portion from the Gospel of John is cited here marks the amulet as an outstanding example of an older tradition, especially in the Central European context. Additionally, it shows typical characteristics of amulets from the later Middle Ages: the tendency towards longer but also less individualized texts from a long tradition of compiled sources, maybe even specific medicinal manuscripts or other collections, as well as the obvious avoidance (if we exclude the very unclear reading in line 20) of direct addressing/naming of evil entities such as daemons or personified illnesses. Instead, the power of this amulet and its contemporaries was derived from clerically sanctioned liturgical prayers and blessings as well as a diverse number of divine names and magical words with a tendency to favour (bastardized) Greek and Hebrew, which were thought of as much closer to the miraculous accounts from the Bible and, thus, much like the older *historiolae*, invoked "sacred time" and heavenly power, restoring the divine order of God's creation by manifesting them through the act of writing. The Rękawczyn amulet is unique evidence for the manufacture and use of medieval textual amulets as it represents the easternmost discovered surviving physical example from the sphere of medieval Latin Christianity to date in the wider European context (the closest, though older, local evidence in Central Eastern Europe is from Dřevíč, dating to the 12th century from the Czech Republic, and a 14th-century parchment example discovered in St. George at Prague [Nováček 1901, 353 and Mach and Šittler 1910, 403]).

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