

Cursing for Justice

Magic, Disputes, and the Lawcourts in Classical Athens

by Zinon Papakonstantinou

DESCRIPTION:

This book is a comprehensive exploration of curse tablets in the Athenian legal domain. Drawing on sociological and critical theory, Zinon Papakonstantinou outlines a framework for the interaction between curse tablets and legalities, namely in both formal and informal manifestations of the legal sphere, in Classical Athens. By delving into the complex world of Athenian daily life and disputes, Papakonstantinou argues that Athenians involved in litigation deployed binding curses as polysemic acts of conflict management and information control. They also used them as transgressive transcripts that went beyond normative or legislative taxonomies. Further, Papakonstantinou demonstrates how Athenians acting in a self-assessing and long-term agential mode employed curse tablets strategically to advance their individual agenda and position in Athenian society.

As a result, Athenian legal curse tablets point to a conceptually malleable perception of "law" and "litigation" driven by utility and self-interest that clashed with claims to justice, the pursuit of the rule of law, and attitudes towards jurors articulated by litigants in Athenian forensic orations.

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