

The Electrum Magicum Bell

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In past centuries, there was no separation between spirituality and materiality. The physical world was seen as created, maintained and infused by spiritual forces. In alchemical engravings and paintings we see the alchemist not only performing alchemical operations in his laboratory, but he is also seen meditating, praying, and surrounded by unusual objects. Alchemy was not a narrow, limited discipline, it was fused with many different belief systems. Although not common, magic was one of them.

At first I thought this table bell was just an ornamental item, but on further investigation it turned to be much more than that.

Alchemical Table Bell

Emperor Rudolf II (1552-1612) was Holy Roman Emperor, King of Hungary and Croatia, King of Bohemia and Archduke of Austria. He was a member of the House of Habsburg.

This is a beautiful alchemical table bell of the emperor, made around 1600. It is held in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, Austria.

According to the museum's information, Emperor Rudolf II is reputed to have used this bell in his practice of alchemy. Goldsmith Hans Bulla (of Prague) claimed to have cast the bell from an alloy of seven different metals, called "electrum" in alchemical texts. Its decorations, including the seven planetary gods, their symbols, and the associated zodiac signs, as well as Greek and Hebrew letters on the interior, relate to rituals and beliefs associated with alchemy.

The alchemical electrum concerned here is made of the seven metals (gold, silver, mercury, copper, tin, lead and iron). This is in contrast to the usual electrum that is an alloy of gold and silver alone, and used to make jewelry. In some alchemical or Rosicrucian works, electrum is a symbol for a perfect product at the end of the Great Work, spiritually or physically.

In alchemy, the planets relate to the seven metals, the zodiac relates to the time it takes to perform the Great Work. It is clear that this bell is connected to magical practices. Ringing bells is a common practice in shamanic rituals.

Is it coincidence that the ritual objects of the Tibetan Lamas, who are initiated into magic, include the now well-known singing bowls, as well as their tingsha's (little cymbals) and bells, all of which were made of seven metals, at least before the Chinese invasion of Tibet. Once the tourists and the New Age people became interested in these objects starting in the 1960's, the Nepalese metallurgists were not interested in the effort required to make magical objects (by including all

seven metals) for these people.

The famous magician Aleister Crowley mentions in his *Liber 860*, on page 8, that he used a Tibetan bell, made of electrum, in a lesser Banishing Ritual in September 1908:

Also I took the Almond Wand of Abramelin and the Secret Tibetan Bell, made of Electrum Magicum with its striker of human bone. I took also the magical knife, and the holy Anointing Oil of Abramelin the Mage. I began then quite casually by performing the Lesser.

In his other book, *Book 4*, under *Chapter 14: The Bell*, he again talks about this bell, but the description he gives, shows that he is actually talking about a tingsha:

This Bell summons and alarms; and it is also the Bell which sounds at the elevation of the Host. It is thus also the "Astral Bell" of the Magician. The Bell of which we speak is a disk of some two inches in diameter, very slightly bent into a shape not unlike that of a cymbal. A hole in the centre permits the passage of a short leather thong, by which it may be attached to the chain. At the other end of the chain is the striker; which, in Tibet, is usually made of human bone. The Bell itself is made of electrum magicum, an alloy of the "seven metals" blended together in a special manner. First the gold is melted up with the silver during a favourable aspect of the sun and moon; these are then fused with tin when Jupiter is well dignified. Lead is added under an auspicious Saturn; and so for the quicksilver, copper, and iron, when Mercury, Venus, and Mars are of good augury. The sound of this Bell is indescribably commanding, solemn, and majestic. Without even the minutest jar, its single notes tinkle fainter and fainter into silence. At the sound of this Bell the Universe ceases for an indivisible moment of time, and attends to the Will of the Magician. Let him not interrupt the sound of this Bell.

By the way, the summoning of planetary spirits has always been forbidden by the Catholic Church.

Here are the images of the alchemical bell of Emperor Rudolf II:





More on Alchemical or Magic Bells

The Bell of emperor Rudolf II is made of seven metals, had the seven planetary signs on it, and also writing on the interior wall of the bell. It is quite unusual to make such a bell. The emperor was well aware of what he wanted and how to use it. He made the bell around 1600. That is about ten years after the publication of the books of the famous alchemist Paracelsus (1493-1541). Paracelsus (or Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim), was a Swiss physician, alchemist, lay theologian, and philosopher of the German Renaissance.

After Paracelsus' death, his works were edited and published by other physicians who found merit in his ideas. One of the most significant of these editions of Paracelsus was the physician Johannes Huser's ten-volume compilation of Paracelsus' works on medicine and natural philosophy, which was published from 1589-91 in Basel by Conrad Waldkirch.

In Johannes Huser's *Aureoli Philippi Theophrasti Bombasti von Hohenheim Paracelsi*, 1616, page 544 (in German) is the *Archidoxis Magicae*. In the Sixth Book of *Archidoxis Magicae*, called *De Compositione Metallorum*, Paracelsus talks about Electrum, and the objects made out of this alloy, including bells.

Frans Hartman, in his book *The Life of Philippus Theophrastus Bombast of Hohenheim, known by the name of Paracelsus, and the substance of his teachings*, 1896, on page 251, translates some paragraphs from the text from this *Sixth Book*, or *The Composition of Metals*, into English:

"The compositions of the *astra* of metals produce wonderful effects. If we make a composition of seven metals in the proper order and at the proper time, we will obtain a metal which contains all the virtues of the seven. Such a composition is called 'electrum.' It possesses the virtues of the seven metals that enter into its composition, and the electrum is one of the most valuable preparations known to secret science. The ordinary metals cannot be compared with it on account of its magic power. A vessel made of the electrum will immediately indicate it, if any poisonous substance has been surreptitiously put into it, because it will begin to sweat on its outside."

"Many wonderful things can be made of this electrum, such as amulets, charms, magic finger-rings, arm-rings, seals, figures, mirrors, bells, medals, and many other things possessing great magic powers, of which very little is publicly known, because our art has been neglected, and the majority of men do not even know that it exists."

"It would not be proper to explain all the virtues and powers of the electrum, because the sophist would begin to blaspheme, and the ignorant would become angry; the idiot would ridicule and the wicked misuse it; and we are therefore forced to be silent in regard to some of its principal virtues. But there are a few wonderful qualities which it possesses, and of which we will speak. We have observed them personally, and we know that we are speaking the truth. We have seen finger-rings made of the electrum that cured their wearers of spasms and paralytic affections, of epilepsy and apoplexy; and the application of such a ring, even during the most violent paroxysm of an epileptic attack, was always followed by immediate relief. We have seen such a ring begin to sweat at the beginning of a hidden disease."

"The electrum is antipathetic to all evil influences, because there is hidden in it a heavenly power and the influence of all the seven planets. Therefore the Egyptians and Chaldeans and the Magi of Persia used it against evil spirits, and made great discoveries by its use. If I were to tell all I know about the virtues of the electrum, the sophists would denounce me for being the greatest sorcerer in the world."

"I will, however, say that I have known a person in Spain who possessed a bell made out of the electrum, and weighing about two pounds, and by ringing that bell he could cause various kinds of spectres and apparitions to appear, and they would obey his commands. Before using the bell he always wrote some words or characters on its inside. He then rang the bell, and immediately the spirits appeared in such a shape as he ordered them to take. He was even able to attract by the sound of that bell the spectres of

men or animals, or to drive them away when they were not wanted; and whenever he wanted another spirit to appear he wrote some other characters on the inside of that bell. He refused to tell me the secret of these words and characters, but I meditated about it, and found it out myself."

"You need not be surprised to hear that such things are possible, because everything is possible, if it is consistent with natural laws. One man may call another man by his name, and order him to do certain things, and if the latter respects the former, or is awed by his superiority, he will obey his order without being forced to do so with a weapon or stick. On invisible beings the will of man has still more effect, and an inferior being can be made to obey the will of a superior one by the force of the mere thought of a word, because the lower is subject to the higher, and the inferior to the superior, and what else is the will but a power hidden in the thought (mind) of man, and becoming active through his imagination. But the thought of man is as potent to impress a spirit as the spoken word is to impress the mind of a man, for spirits have no physical ears to hear physical sounds, and the voice is only needed for those who cannot hear in the spirit."

"If the astral element in man can be sent into another man by the power of his Olympic spirit, such an astral element may also be embedded in metals and leave its influence in them, and thereby the metal can be raised into a higher state than the one into which it was put by Nature."

A century after Johannes Huser book, we have another translation of some paragraphs of the same text by John Beaumont (c. 1650–1731), an English physician and early geologist.

In his *An Historical, Physiological and Theological Treatise of Spirits* from 1705, at the end of the chapter *An Account of Genii*, on page 187, he talks about making a bell out of electrum, which is a metal composition made from all seven metals, and which can draw or drive away spirits:

I shall conclude this Chapter, with a Relation somewhat in this kind from Paracelsus; tho' how far Spirits may be concern'd in the Matter, I shall not determine.

He begins the Sixth Book of his Archidoxes, thus. No Man can deny but Compositions of Metals, may Work wonderful things in Supernaturals, which may be made good by many Proofs, as I shall clearly shew beneath; for if you Compound all the Seven Metals in a due Order and fit time, and melt them together, as it were into one Mass, you will have such a Metal, in which all the Virtues of the Seven Planets are joyn'd together; you will find all these Virtues in that one Metal, which we call Electrum.

And beneath he writes; you must know that our Electrum (which is Compounded of the Seven Metals) drives away all evil Spirits; for in our Electrum, the Operation of the Heav'ns, and Influences of the Seven Planets are stor'd up. Therefore the Ancient Persian Magi, and the Chaldaeans found

out and perform'd many things by its means. I cannot here conceal a very great Miracle, which I saw wrought by a Spanish Necromancer, who had a Bell not exceeding two Pounds Weight, which, as often as he rung, he could cause to appear about him many Spirits and Spectres of various Kinds; for when he pleas'd, he drew some Words and Characters on the inward surface of the Bell, and afterwards, if he rung it, a Spirit presently appear'd in any Form he would have him: By the sound also of the said Bell he could draw to him also, or drive from him many other Visions and Spirits, and even Men and Beasts; as I saw with my Eyes many of these things done by him: But as often as he would undertake some New thing, so often he renewed his Words and Characters; but he would not reveal to me the Secret of these Words and Characters; though deeply considering the thing my self, I, at length, casually found it; which I shall not here disclose: but I plainly enough observ'd, there was more Importance in the Bell than in the Words, for the Bell was certainly made of our Electrum.

So far Paracelsus. I may here note, That some Persons have told my self, that they have seen a constellated Plate here in London, made of such Electrum, which, if put under a Man's Pillow at Night, will make him hear Heavenly Musick.

A better and more complete translation into English of the beginning section of the *Sixth Book*, or *Composition of Metals*, we find in Arthur E. Waite's *The Hermetic and alchemical writings of Aureolus Philippus Theophrastus Bombast, of Hohenheim, called Paracelsus the Great,* 1894, Part I, on Page 114:

If any one denies that there is great efficacy in the Composition of Metals so far as relates to supernatural affairs, we will answer him, and bring forward so many proofs as shall support our own opinion and force him to subscribe thereto. For if the seven metals were, in just and due order, compounded, mixed together, and united in the fire, you must certainly hold that in one body were conjoined and linked together all the virtues of the seven metals. It has been seen good to call this body electrum. Its efficacy, power, and operations, moreover, shew themselves to be much greater, even supernaturally so, than exist in a latent form grafted by Nature on metals in their rude condition. In those solid and rude metals are only those powers wherewith God and Nature herself have endowed them. Gold, indeed, is the noblest of all, the most precious and primary metal, if we rightly consider it ; and we are not prepared to deny that leprosy, in all its forms, can be thereby removed from the human frame. Nor are we unaware that exterior ulcers and wounds are cured by copper and mercury. The other metals, too, have each their own excellences, and these not by any means to be despised ; but we will pass over these for the moment, since you will hear of them when we come to treat concerning the Life of the Metals, f But metals cannot be used in medicine without injury, unless they be first comminuted, altered, and, after being deprived of their metallic nature,

transmuted into another essence. You can hope for little result from them unless the preparation which Alchemy teaches shall have preceded their administration ; that is, if you have not previously reduced them to their arcana, oils, balsams, quintessences, tinctures, calces, salts, crocuses or the like, and then administered them to the patient. Moreover, the supernatural force or effect of the metals, even though it be present in them, will be of no avail unless you first prepare them according to our method in which we will instruct you. But we greatly desire that our electrum should be compounded, since it can afford great and marvellous results in proportion as it is revealed by practice. If we consented to pass over its praises in silence, we should consider that we were doing it an injury : but since its operation and mighty power surpass belief, we deem it necessary to pronounce an eulogium on its virtues and efficacy. We will defer for the moment any mention of the rude and solid metals, since they admit of no comparison with our electrum. If any appliance used for food or drink be made of this material and diligently watched, it will be impossible for any poison or drug to be placed in it, because in our electrum there is so much sympathy towards man through the force, efficacy, and influence of the planets and the stars of Olympus, that for very pity, and as though in difficulty, directly it is taken in hand it betrays the poison by breaking out into a sweat and projecting spots. For this reason our ancestors used to have their drinking-cups, dishes, and other utensils made of the said material. There still remain in our age many necklaces and ornaments, such as rings, bracelets, remarkable coins, seals, figures, bells, shekels, made out of this, which of old were hidden in the earth. When they were dug up nobody, or very few, understood them, and in their ignorance they gilded them over or tinged them with silver. It is just a mark of the ignorance of our age that it cares nothing for such objects as these. But God would not have it that such a mystery of Nature and such a great treasure of His own should be hid any longer, but that what had been hidden by the more than Cimmerian darkness of the sophists should now, after a long season, come to light again. We do not assume to exhaust the virtues of our electrum. The ribald genius of the sophists would be hurt ; the crowd of fools would be offended, and would receive what we said with idiotic laughter. Over and over again we have been on our guard against scandalising this impious crowd ; so to avoid such a result it will be safest to pass over these matters in silence. Not, however, that we can altogether pass unnoticed certain stupendous effects of our electrum ; since they came under our own eyes we shall be able to speak the more freely concerning them, without any suspicion that we are romancing or making up a story. We have seen rings, for instance, which removed all fear of paralysis or spasm from those who wore them on their fingers. These people, too, never suffered from apoplexy or epilepsy. If an epileptic patient put such a ring on the third finger, even though he be so overcome by the violence of the paroxysm as to be prostrated on the ground, he comes to himself and gets up.

Here, too, should be added something which we do not give from the report

of others, for the same we have seen with our own eyes and know by experience. If the abovementioned ring be worn on the third finger by a man in whom any ailment is latent and growing, so that it would presently break forth in an eruption, the ring would forthwith give an indication by bursting out in a sweat, and as if seized with a sudden sympathy would put forth spots and become depraved in appearance, as we shall shew more fully in our book entitled "Sympathy."

Lastly, since I would not pass over or omit any word in favour of electrum, it is a preservation and an antidote against evil spirits. There is latent in it an operation and a conjunction of planetary influence which make us the more easily believe that the old Magi in Persia and Chaldea attempted and accomplished much by its aid. If we sought to enumerate all the cases specifically, we should indeed enter upon a marvellous chronicle. Not, however, to give any occasion of offence or allow persons to make a handle of this, it will suffice to have touched the subject in few words. The Sophists, who are my deadliest enemies, would not hesitate to proclaim me Arch-Necromancer. But I cannot refrain from telling a miracle which I saw in Spain when I was at the house of a certain necromancer. He had a bell weighing, perhaps, two pounds, and by a stroke of this bell he used to summon, and to bring, too, visions of many different spectres and spirits. In the interior of the bell he had engraved certain words and characters, and as soon as the sound and tinkle were heard, spirits appeared in any form he desired. Moreover, the stroke of this bell was so powerful that he produced in the midst many visions of spirits, of men, and even of cattle, whatever he wished, and then drove them away again. I saw many instances of this, but what I particularly noticed was that when he was going to do anything new, he renewed and changed the characters and the names. I did not, however, get so far as to induce this man to impart to me the secret and mystery of the names and characters. At length I began to speculate more thoroughly about this circumstance ; and there came into my mind—ideas which we will pass over in silence here. There was more in that bell than one can put into words ; and of this be very sure, that the material of which it was composed was this electrum of ours. You will therefore have no difficulty in believing that Virgil's bell (Nola) was of such a kind as this. At its stroke all the adulterers and adulteresses in the king's palace were so excited and alarmed that suddenly, as if struck with lightning, they rushed over the bridge into the river. Think not this story a mere fable : the thing really happened.

The practice of summoning planetary spirits by the means of an electrum bell was carried further within the Order des Gold- und Rosenkreutz, or Order of the Gold and Rosy Cross. This was a German Rosicrucian organization founded in the 1750s, in which alchemy was to be a central study for their members. In their texts, rituals are described for the summoning of celestial and supercelestial spirits via the animation of statues and the striking of bells. Both statues and

bells were made from *electrum magicum*, and thus they are receptive to the influences of the seven planets. There are two types of *electrum magicum* bells described in their *De Magia Divina*. One bell, called *the bell of the lesser angel*, is for the summoning of the seven princes of the planets. This bell is cast with Latinized Hebrew names of God: on the exterior, *Saday* and *Tetragrammaton*, together with the planet and constellation of the operator's birth; on the interior, *Elohim*; and on the clapper, *Adonay*. The other bell, called *the bell of the greater angel*, is for summoning the angelic superiors of the planetary princes. This bell is cast with *Jesus*, *Tetragrammaton* and *Adonay* upon the exterior, together with the names of the seven angels (*Oriphiel*, *Sachiel*, *Samuel*, *Michael*, *Aniel*, *Raphael* and *Gabriel*).

In the British Library, in their Sloane Collection, they have a manuscript, *Tabulae theosophiae Cabballisticae*, that dates from the 17th century, in which there is painting that shows Heinrich Khunrath (1560-1605), a German physician, hermetic philosopher, and alchemist, kneeling before an altar with several magical objects to help him in securing the aid, solace and counsel of *a great benevolent spirit from the Empyrean*. All the way to the right on the table is a bell made from *electrum magicum*.

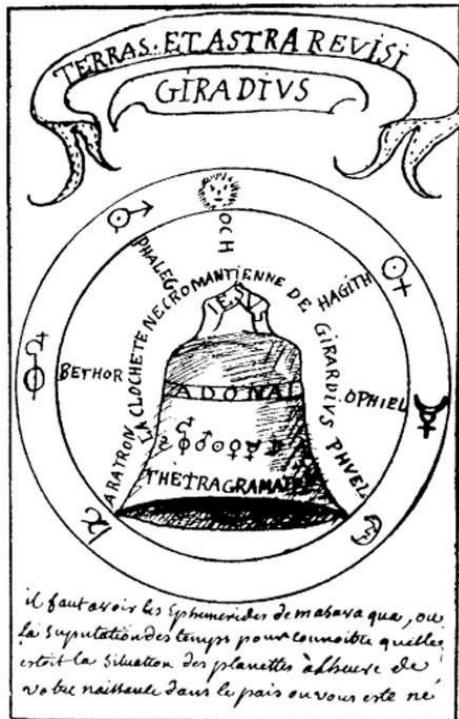
Second image is a detail with the bell.





In the 18th century grimoire, *Parvi Lucii Libellus de Mirabilibus Naturae Arcanis* (1730), by Albertus Parvus Lucius, we also find a description of an electrum bell. There it is called *the Necromantic Bell of Girardius*. This intriguing text can be found in l'Arsenal manuscripts 2350 and 3009 in the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal in Paris (Girardius, 1730). According to this manuscript, the bottom of the bell bears the ineffable name "Thetragrammaton"; above this are the hieroglyphs appropriate to the seven planets; above these, again, is the word "Adonai," and, lastly, "Jesus" is inscribed upon the ring. In a circle round the bell are the names of the seven planetary spirits by means of whom the operation is performed; they are Aratron, the spirit of Saturn; Bethor, Jupiter; Phaleg, Mars; Och, the Sun; Hagith, Venus; Ophiel, Mercury; and Phuel, the Moon. Between the handle and the upper circle the date of birth of the person who is to make use of the bell.

Always, according to this document, the bell must be composed of an alloy of lead, tin, gold, copper, fixed mercury, and silver. These metals must be cast together at the day and hour of the birth of the person who desires to be in confluence and harmony with the bell.



the Necromantic Bell of Girardius, from the book Libellus de Mirabilibus Naturae Arcanis

For those interested in making Electrum magicum, Frans Hartman, in his book mentioned above, gives a recipe for making this Electrum for the making of magic mirrors:

The Electrum Magicum

The *electrum magicum* is prepared as follows:

"Take ten parts of pure gold, ten of silver, five of copper, two of tin, two of lead, one part of powdered iron, and five of mercury. All these metals must be pure. Now wait for the hour when the planets Saturn and Mercury come into conjunction, and have all your preparations ready for that occasion; have the fire, the crucible, the mercury, and the lead ready, so that there will be no delay when the time of the conjunction arrives, for the work must be done during the moments of the conjunction. As soon as this takes place melt the lead and add the mercury, and let it cool. After this has been done, wait for a conjunction of Jupiter with Saturn and Mercury, melt the compound of lead and mercury in a crucible, and in another crucible the tin, and pour the two metals together at the moment of such conjunction. You must now wait until a conjunction of the sun with either one or both of the above-named planets takes place, and then add the gold to the compound after melting it previously. At a time of a conjunction of the moon with the sun, Saturn, or Mercury, the silver is added likewise, and at a time of a conjunction of Venus with one of the above-named planets the copper is added. Finally, at a time of such a conjunction with Mars, the whole is completed by the addition of the powdered iron. Stir the fluid mass with a

dry rod of witch-hazel, and let it cool."

"Of this *electrum magicum* you may make a mirror in which you will see the events of the past and the present, absent friends or enemies, and what they are doing. You will see in it any object you may desire to see, and all the doings of men in daytime or at night. You will see in it anything that has ever been written down, said, or spoken in the past, and also see the person who said it, and the causes that made him say what he did, and anything, however secret it may have been kept."

"Such mirrors are made of the *electrum magicum*; they are made of the diameter of about two inches. They are to be founded at a time when a conjunction of Jupiter and Venus takes place, and moulds made of fine sand are used for that purpose. Grind the mirrors smooth with a grindstone, and polish them with tripoli, and with a piece of wood from a linden-tree. All the operations made with the mirror, the grinding, polishing, etc., should take place under favourable planetary aspects, and by selecting the proper hours three different mirrors may be prepared. At a time of a conjunction of two good planets, when at the same time the sun or the moon stands on the 'house of the lord of the hour of your birth,' the three mirrors are to be laid together into pure well-water, and left to remain there for an hour. They must then be removed from the water, enveloped in a linen cloth, and be preserved for use."