1. Introduction

The appropriate translation of a particular type of «elementary lexical units», that «resist interruption and re-ordering of parts»,\(^1\) in general called idioms, regularly causes enormous difficulties and necessitates additional exegetical efforts.

A native speaker of English knows precisely what this is, a *red tape*; and he knows perfectly well that a red tape means delay, postponement, interruption, and a huge loss of time, before some bureaucratic body will have resolved an important inquiry or a pressing application. But the same English speaker will be at odds, if confronted with a phrase like *office mould*. This expression is not introduced as an elementary lexical unit into the English vernacular, although its single components, *office* and *mould*, are each well known and defined lexical items. Yet the composite lexical unit *office mould* makes sense only in its German representation *Amtsschimmel*, in which it is a perfect translational correspondent, in fact the closest natural equivalent for the English *red tape*.

Each natural language owns an abundance of such idioms and presumably everyone exploits them frequently. New idioms are constantly added to the already established pool of jargon and phraseologies. In short, one may look at idioms «as a lexical complex which is semantically simplex.»\(^2\) These lexically complex word clusters are also semantically by no means simple, for the meaning of this compound is not at all disclosed by stringing together the senses of each single lexical element. Therefore one cannot infer from traditional

\(\text{\textsuperscript{*} UBS Europe and the Middle East Area Translation Consultant.}\)

2) Ibid., 37.
lexeme based dictionaries the meaning or rather the semantical function of idioms. Not infrequently they are the main causes for the exegetical *cruces interpretum*. In modern languages special dictionaries comprising also a wide selection of idioms assist conveniently the translator.

Dictionaries of classical languages such as Latin or Greek contain, if at all, merely scarce hints for an idiomatic use of such phrases. They usually provide glosses as translational equivalents and sometimes add information for selected specific usage. Yet idioms existed already in ancient languages. They also occur in the source texts of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek Biblical writings. And as far as they are already identified, modern Bible translators feel fit to render them dynamically in their target language.

The task before us is to employ a method by which one can identify an idiom, retrieve its original and contextual meaning, and deliver it into an appropriate receptor language expression. In this paper I shall approach the problem in a rather practical manner by demonstrating a feasible historical and philological method and testing it on a particular passage from the letter to Pergamum in the book of Revelation (2:12-17). The idiom at stake is an expression in Rev 2:17 traditionally rendered as *white stone*. The whole verse runs like this:

*To everyone who conquers I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it.*

The Greek source text writes:

Τῷ νικῶντι δόσῳ αὐτῷ τοῦ μάννα τοῦ κεκρυμμένου καὶ δόσῳ αὐτῷ ψῆφον λευκήν, καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ψῆφον ὄνομα καινὸν γεγραμμένον ὁ οὐδεὶς οἴδειν εἰ μὴ ὁ λαμβάνων.

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This sentence concludes the letter to Pergamum. One therefore is advised to take into account foremost the close context of Rev 2:12-17, i.e. the artificial and fictional letter of the risen and ascended Lord Christ to the leader of the Christian community in the Minor-Asian city of Pergamum, one of seven such epistles to Christian leaders and their congregations in cities of Western Asia, which the Lord revealed and dictated (Rev 1:11) to his servant John (Rev 1:1).

I plan to adopt the perspective and focus of contextual semantics and semasiological investigation in place of a componential analysis of each lexical element in a complex expression that makes an idiom. Other than a metaphor an idiom commonly receives its meaning and semantic purpose independently from the meaning and function of its single lexical elements and also without the help of their components. If we cannot trace the origin and the history of an idiom, we hardly have a chance to identify its meaning. A survey of as many as possible different contexts to an idiom under investigation will yield clues that ultimately guide to the perception of its semantic substance.

2. «White Pebble» (Rev 2:17)

In revelation 2:17, Christ promises that he will give a white stone to those who win the victory, and on this stone will be written a new name, which no
one knows except the person who receives the stone.\textsuperscript{11}) The phrase «those who win the victory», in Greek the dative masculinum singular participle νικῶντι,\textsuperscript{12}) by virtue of context refers to those, who endure suffering and persecution and in spite of this privation and pain perseveres faithfully with Christ and His church. The meaning of νικάν in this context therefore is rather to prevail, to succeed, to triumph \textsuperscript{13}) and implies that Christ will gain victory and triumph in the eschatological battle against Satan and all evil powers and thus all those, who staunchly endure with Christ, too.

There is an old and firm tradition in English translations, to render Rev 2:17b in such a way that the image of a white stone with a name written on it, known only by the person who receives the stone is to be taken literally as an imprinted object of stone. The interpretations still cover a wide range: amulet,\textsuperscript{14}) the tablet

\textsuperscript{11}) Also Ernst Lohmeyer, Die Offenbarung des Johannes (HNT IV,4) (Tübingen: J.C.B.Mohr [Paul Siebeck] [= HNT 16, 3rd ed., 1970], 1926), 25, interprets this stone as an amulet: «Das Bild vom weißen Stein, mit aufgeschriebenem unbekannten Namen, führt in die weitere Sphäre des Amulett- und Namenglaubens … Durch den neuen Namen werden die Ψήφοι unüberwindliche Beschützer gegen alle dämonischen Angriffe. Der Name ist natürlich der Christi; er ist neu, wenn er in der Form bisher unbekannter, nur dem Empfänger verständlicher Zeichen und Zahlen auf dem Stein eingeschrieben ist … Nam en und Zeichen bilden auch bei den Mandäern den Schutz der Seele auf ihrer Wanderung zum Ort des Lebens …» Cf. also Johannes Behm, Die Offenbarung des Johannes (NTD 11), 4th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1949), 21; Eduard Lohse, Die Offenbarung des Johannes (NTD IV,4)(Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 28; Hubert Ritt, Offenbarung des Johannes (NEB 21) (Würzburg: Echter, 1986), 28s. Recently this interpretation has been repeated by Heinz Giesen, Die Offenbarung des Johannes (RNT)(Regensburg: Pustet, 1997), 115s.

\textsuperscript{12}) The singular is to be seen as collective in number, and the masculinum as gender-inclusive.


of someone victorious in sports competitions,\(^{15}\) an entry ticket for a festival banquet.\(^{16}\)

The Greek word underlying the translation «stone» is ψήφος. In Greek ψήφος refers to a little stone or, more precise on the level of referential semantics, to a pebble, which can be found at river banks and sea shores.\(^{17}\) Such pebbles were used for board games and as dice,\(^{18}\) casting lots,\(^{19}\) and also for calculations.\(^{20}\)

A further and the most prominent use of ψήφος in Ancient Greece was in the process of secret voting, either in the city assembly or, more often in court by juries. The following two classical texts show that the court juries in Athens put their voting pebbles initially into two different vessels, one for the verdict of guilty, the other one for the verdict of not guilty. It was the container (κύδισκος) then, not the colour of the pebble, that was significant for the resulting verdict.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ἄγαμέμνων</th>
<th>Agamemnon:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>δίκας γὰρ οὐκ ἀπὸ γλώσσης θεοὶ κλεύντες ἀνδροθήντας Πλιοφόρος</td>
<td>Not mortal voice, but gods himself decreed revenge on Troy detested</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{15}\) Cf. Placidus Häring, *Die Botschaft der Offenbarung des heiligen Johannes*, 69f.

\(^{16}\) Heinrich Kraft, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, 217f.

\(^{17}\) Cf. Theophrastos, causa plant. III.6.3; Strabo, geogr. 17.1.34; Cassius Dio Hist.; Pausanias I.4.9.6 and Naumachius Epicus: πολυπηρηδία θαλάσσης.


\(^{19}\) Phylarchus (according to Zenobius Sophista, *Proverbs* I.6.13) tells that the Skyths put every night, when they lay down to sleep, a pebble into their quiver, a white one, if the day was without trouble, a black one, if the day was troublesome. When they got killed in action the quiver was emptied and the pebbles were counted: if the white pebbles outnumbered the black ones, it was said, that the fallen had had a good fate. Cf. also Diogenianus Gramm., *Proverbs* 6.9: Λευκῆ ψήφῳ: ἐπὶ τῶν εἰδαμιμῶνς βιοῦντων, and Vettius Valens Astrol., anthologia 1 245.34-246.4: Παραπλήθουσαν δὲ ἀν τις εἰκάσεων ταύτην τὴν άγωγήν τῇ διὰ λευκῶν καὶ μελανῶν ψήφων μαρτυρία: παίγνιον γὰρ ὁ βίος καὶ πλάνη καὶ πανήγυρις, καὶ γὰρ φιλόνεικος τινίς ἀνδρὶς δόλον πανοῦργον ἀλληλός μηχανόμενοι κινοῦντες τὰς ψήφους διὰ πολλῶν εἰθείᾳν καταστίθεντες εἰς τίνας χώρας προμαχεῖν προκαλοῦμενοι.

\(^{20}\) The English word *calculation* derives from *calculus*, the Latin equivalent for Greek ψήφος (cf. Ovid, *metamorph.* XV 44).
These two passages from the trilogy *Oresty* by Aeschylus (put on stage in 458 B.C.) reflect a court procedure in the time of Pericles, mid 5th century B.C. This routine was to ensure the secrecy and unmanipulable independance of court decisions. For this reason the ballot urns were jointly covered by a *κημός*, a funnel-shaped top from wickerwork, allowing a juror to place the voting pebble unseen into one of the two urns, either into the condemning or into the acquitting one. But it seems that these devices were not sufficiently efficient for the purpose of keeping the vote concealed from intruding observation, be it that the movement of the upper arm or the noise of the falling pebble disclosed the verdict. A speech from the orator Lysias (450-380 B.C.), which he delivered after 403 B.C., highlights the importance and necessity of secret ballot and how this was violated by unscrupulous or anti-democratic politicians as for instance the Thirty, i.e. oligarchical tyrants, who rather oppressed than governed Athens for half a year in 404/403 B.C.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>εἰς ἀἵματηρόν τείχος οὐ διχορρόπασος ψήφους ἑδέντο: τῷ δ' ἐναντίῳ κύτει ἐλπίς προσήη χειρός οὐ πληρομένω.</td>
<td>and cast decidedly their votes into the lethal urn, the other jug barely received a glimpse of hope. <em>Aeschylus, Agamemnon</em> 813-817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ἀθήνη ἐμὸν τὸδ' ἔργον, λοισθίαν κρίναι δίκην: ψήφον δ' Ὄρεστη τήνδ' ἐγὼ προσῆη- σομαι. ... νικῷ δ' Ὄρεστης, κἂν ἰσόψυφος κριθή. ἐκβάλλειθ' ὡς τάχιστα τευχέων πάλους, ὄσος δικαστῶν τοῦτ' ἐπέσταλται τέλος.</td>
<td>Athene: Now it's my turn to pass a crucial verdict: I place my pebble for Orest into the jug …Yet equal count of votes acquits. You jurors, who received this charge, out of the jugs now pour the votes. <em>Aeschylus, Eumenides</em> 734ff, 741ff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>οἱ μὲν γὰρ τριάκοντα ἐκάθηντο ἐπὶ τῶν βαθρῶν, οὐ γὰρ οἱ πρυτάνεις καθεζόταν· δύο δὲ τράπεζα ἐν τῷ πρόσθεν τῶν τριάκοντα ἐκείσθην· τὴν δὲ ψήφον οἷκ εἰς καδίσκους ἀλλὰ φανερὰν ἐπὶ τάς τραπέζας ταῦτας ἔδει</td>
<td>The Thirty (tyrants) sat on those benches, where now the officials sit; in front of the Thirty stood two tables. And the pebbles were to be placed openly on these tables instead of in ballot boxes; the pebble for the verdict of guilty had to be placed on the table closer to the tyrants; how could there anybody be acquitted?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Because the system of one kind of pebbles and two receiving containers under a cover did not satisfactorily guarantee the desired and required secrecy, two as regards colour different pebbles were introduced, a black one for the verdict of guilty and a white one for the verdict of not guilty. The atticist Pausanias (2nd century A.D.) quotes from a non extant comedy, named Cheirones, of the famous Kratinos (5th cent. B.C.), a contemporary of Aristophanes (445-386 B.C.), which illustrates the greed of corrupt jurors, who in addition to their legal remuneration of 3 oboles tend to accept bribes.

Of course, the atticist Pausanias lived some 600 years later. But we can trust his reference to Kratinos. The general information that jurors were greedy we also find with Aristophanes in his famous extant comedy The Wasps. This means, we may safely infer that the use of white and black pebbles in arriving at court decisions began somewhere in the second half of the 5th cent. B.C.

The Athenian jurisdiction in ancient time did not know an independent professional judge. Furthermore, experience had led to the assumption that human beings are generally subject to the temptation of corruption. Therefore the Athenian court system tried to prevent dishonesty and bribery by huge juries of more than 200 members. The benches, δικαστήρια, not seldom had more than 500 members and it is mentioned that once all 6000 annually elected jurors jointly decided one single case.21) These jurors had to listen silently to the

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21) Cf. Gerhard Thür, “Das Gerichtswesen Athens im 4. Jahrhundert v. Chr”, Leonhard Burckhardt and Jürgen von Ungern-Sternberg, eds., Große Prozesse im antiken Athen (München:
speeches delivered by prosecutor, who was a private person, and by defendant, who had to defend himself without the assistance of a lawyer. Only the help of an orator, who prepared the speech, was permitted. Defendant and prosecutor were given an equal amount of time for their speeches, measured by a water-clock, κλευδρα.²²) A speech could last about 15 to 30 minutes. Immediately after the speeches the jurors received the pebbles and cast their vote into a bronze urn. Discussion and consultation were prohibited. This also aimed at the preclusion of external influence. A second jug from wood received the unused pebble so that secrecy of vote was secured and manipulation of further cases was averted.²³) The white pebble was cast in favour of the defendant, the black one supported the case of the complainant.

Plutarchus in his biography of Alcibiades provides us with the following anecdote, which offers not only a good understanding of the unpredictability of Athenian court juries but also of the functioning of black and white pebbles.

Since the time of Demosthenes (384-322 B.C.) and Aeschines (389-314 B.C.) we find repeatedly the phrase «to give a pebble» with the clear meaning «to cast a vote»²⁴). Another frequent meaning of the phrase διδόναι τινὶ ψήφον is, to

²²) Cf. Ibid., 40, 46f.
²³) Ibid., 47f.
²⁴) Aeschines, Ktesiphon 16.11: τῷ τοῦ νόμου δικαίῳ χρῆ διδόναι τὴν ψήφον, Timarchus 77.4, 179.5; Xenophon Athenaios, hell. 7.3.2; Aristotle, Ath. pol. 55.4; Flav. Josephus, ant. 19.268; Archestratos Siculus I.15; Appianus, hist. Rom. 150.7; Aelius Aristides Rhet 46.129, 49.381: τῷ πολέμῳ τὴν ψήφον διδόσαι; Cassius Dio, hist. 38.17.2: τὴν γὰρ σφοδροῦσαν σφαξ ψήφον δεδωκώς ἦν; idem, hist. 40.55.2: καὶ ὃ μὲν σκέψει
hand out the voting pebbles or, more often, simply, to request s.o. to make his vote. The verb ψηφίζεσθαι deriving from the noun ψήφος means «to vote». But even where the voting was done by raising the hand it was called ψηφίζεσθαι. Moreover, the judgement or a public decision was usually called ψήφισμα irrespective of method, technique, and procedure. This shows the following quotation from Aristotle.

In the 4th century B.C. disc-shape bronze medals were in use for voting in Athens, as we learn from Aristotle. Even these bronze tokens were called ψήφοι. Recent excavations in Athens brought six such bronze «pebbles» to light. They were fit with a little tube protruding from the centre of the disc on either side. These bronze-ψήφοι existed in two different versions, one with a hollow tube, the other with a massive tube. The disc with the massive tube was used in place of the white pebble, i.e. voting in favour of the person accused and freeing her from the charge. The hollow tube disc replaced the black pebble in favour of the suitor. The judge took the voting disc (still called pebble!), while giving it into the bronze urn in such a way that thumb and pointing finger covered the tube and no one was able to observe, which vote he was about to cast. Yet everyone present could see, that the juror cast exactly one vote. Neither cumulation nor abstention were permitted.

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25) Demosthenes, or. 59.109; Aristotle, Ath. pol. 68.2; Plutarchos, Numa 7.1, Poplicola 7.5, Titus Flamininus 2.2; Dionysios Hal. antiqu. Rom. 6.66.4; Harpocration, lex. 79; 288; Aelius Aristides 46.246.
The reason for this change from real pebbles to bronze discs lay most probably in the fact that judges (at all times) tend to become corrupt\(^{28}\) and to manipulate the interpretation of laws to the benefit of persons, who are willing to pay them to this purpose.\(^{29}\)

For dating the change from real black and white pebbles to bronze discs two scholia to Aeschines (389-314 B.C.) may be helpful.\(^{30}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek Text</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ἐψηφίζοντο οἱ δικασταὶ διὰ λευκῆς καὶ μελανίνης ψήφου· καὶ ἢν ἢ μὲν μέλαινα ἢ καταψηφίζομενή, ἢ δὲ λευκὴ ἢ σῶξουσα.</td>
<td>The jury voted with a white and a black pebble, the black one condemning, the white one pardoning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>τετρυπημένη δὲ ψήφος ἢν ἢ καταδικάξουσα, πλήρης δὲ ἢ ἀπόλυουσα.</td>
<td>The hollow pebble condemned and the filled one released.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If these scholia are correctly based on utterances of Aeschines, we are to assume that during the active time of Demosthenes’ fierce foe Aeschines the bronze discs began to replace the pebbles, i.e. in the middle of the 4\(^{th}\) century B.C. If we further take into account that the Macedonian conquest of Athens at

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26) Aristotle, Ath. pol. 68. According to Photius, Lex. Seg. 51.8.44.464.8ss: «τετρυπημένη ψήφος τῶν ψήφων οὐδὲν χαλκῶν καὶ αὐλίσκον ἔχουσαν οἱ μὲν ἢς τετρυπημέναι ὡσαί καὶ καταψηφίζαντο, οἱ δὲ πλήρεις ἀτρύπητοι ὡσαί ἠρίσθαν τοὺς κρινομένους.» Cf. Harpocrasion, lex. 288: 'Ἀριστοτέλης ἐν Ἀθηναιῶν πολιτείᾳ γράφει ταύτι ψήφοι δὲ εἰσὶ χαλκαί, αὐλίσκον ἔχουσαι ἐν τῷ μέσῳ, οἱ μὲν ἡμίσειαν τετρυπημέναι, οἱ δὲ ἡμίσεια πλήρεις. οἱ δὲ λαχύντες ἐπὶ τάς ψήφους, ἐπειδὴ ἤρθεν ἐνήμεροι ὡσαί οἱ λόγοι, παραδίδοσιν ἐκάστῳ τῶν δικαστῶν β’ ψήφους, τετρυπημένην καὶ πλήρη, φανερὰς ὁρῶν τοῖς ἀντιδίκοις ἣν μήτε πλήρεις μήτε πάντη τετρυπημένας λαμβάνωσιν." Pausanias, hist. 1.48. 2, writes that even white beans were used in place of a voting pebble. But this may well be sharp irony. Until the discovery of the writing ΑΘΗΝΑΙΩΝ ΠΟΛΙΤΕΙΑ in 1879 (now in Berlin) only these fragments were known. Ten years later another papyrus of this writing was published (London 1888/9)


29) Luke 18:2-5 is also an example. For this context cf. Aristotle, AthPol 68 and 69.

30) Scholia in Aeschinem 1.79 (Vat. Laur).
the end of the 4th cent. B.C. saw the closing stages of autonomous and independent Athenian jurisdiction, we may deduce that the bronze discs, which were exclusively used in the city of Athens, were so for merely a few decades.

Further tools to prevent corruption were random choice generating allotting machines, so that no juror was able to choose his case, and water-clocks,\(^{31}\) which measured the time allocated for the speeches in court. The time measured by \textit{choes} of water (1 \textit{chous} \(\chi'\omicron\omicron\upsilon\zeta\) roughly equivalent to an American gallon) literally «ran out» at a pace of some three minutes per gallon.

The white pebble or rather the acquitting filled bronze disc also was called \textit{sph\omicron\omicron\varsigma\omicron\upsigma\sigma\alpha} \(\varphi\omicron\omicron\varsigma\omicron\dot{\iota}\omicron\omicron\varsigma\)\(^{32}\) and the black pebble or rather the condemning hollow bronze disc was also addressed as \textit{kata\omicron\omicron\upsigma\omicron\upsigma\omicron\upsigma\varsigma\omicron\upsigma\sigma\alpha} \(\varphi\omicron\omicron\varsigma\omicron\dot{\iota}\omicron\omicron\varsigma\).\(^{33}\) This indicates that in court the verb \textit{sph\omicron\omicron\epsilon\iota\nu} has a specific meaning, namely the meaning of declaring someone as innocent, passing the verdict of not guilty, pardoning somebody. The \textit{Suda}-lexicon adds the explanation \(\varphi\omicron\omicron\varsigma\omicron\dot{\iota}\omicron\omicron\varsigma\ \mu\ell\alpha\iota\nu\ \dot{\iota} \ \kata\omicron\omicron\upsigma\omicron\upsigma\omicron\upsigma\varsigma\sigma\alpha, \ \lambda\epsilon\upsilon\kappa\iota\ \delta\dot{\varepsilon} \ \dot{\iota} \ \delta\iota\kappa\alpha\iota\omicron\upsigma\sigma\alpha\).\(^{34}\)

\[\text{Bronze voting discs, found above left in Piraeus, above right on the Agora in Athens}\]

\(^{31}\) Illustrations are to be found in Thür, “Das Gerichtswesen Athens im 4. Jahrhundert v. Chr”, 40.
\(^{32}\) Cf. Demosthenes (384-322 B.C.), De falsa legatione 66.6; Cassius Dio (150-235 A.D.), Historiae Romanae 38.17.2.
\(^{33}\) Cf. Lucian of Samosata.(120-180 A.D.), Phalaris 2.5.6.
\(^{34}\) Suda, Psi 85.2: «The black pebble is the condemning, the white one is the discharging.»
An official judgment passed in court and published could have the following very short form, reduced to the absolute necessary amount of information:

| οὗτος ἀπέφυγεν παρὼν καὶ ἀπολογεῖτο τὸ δικαστήριον ἢ στοὰ ἢ ποικίλη, τῶν ψήφων αἱ τετρυπημέναι: 100, αἱ δὲ πλήρεις: 399. | This one was summoned, was prosecuted and defended himself. Jury: Stoa Poikile. Hollow pebbles [guilty]: 100; Filled [not guilty]: 399. Inscriptiones Graecae II 1641 lines 25-33 (mid-4th cent. BC) |

It is informative that according to this inscription, found on a stele with records of the Delian confederates (amphiktyones) at Athens, the plaintiff received hardly 20% of the votes possible in favour of his proposal. This was the required minimum.

| Εάν γάρ μὴ μεταλάβῃ τὸ πέμπτον μέρος τῶν ψήφων καὶ ἀτιμωθῇ ὁ ἐνδείξας ἐμὲ Κηφίσιος οὗτος, οὐκ ἔξεστιν αὐτῷ εἰς τὸ ἱερὸν τοῖς θεοῖς εἰσεῖναι, ἢ ἀποθανεῖται. | For if this Cephisius, who reported me to the authorities, does not receive one fifth of the votes, he will be dishonoured and must not enter the holy shrine, or he will die. Andokides (* 440 B.C.), De Mysteriis 33 |

| Μέλητον μὲν οὖν, ὡς ἐμοὶ δοκῶ, καὶ νῦν ἀποσφέωνα, καὶ οὐ μόνον ἀποσφέωνα, ἀλλὰ παντὶ δήλον τοῦτό γε, ὅτι εἰ μὴ ἀνέβη ὁ Ἀνυτος καὶ Λύκων κατηγορήσωσιν τες ἐμῶς, κἂν ὀφλὲ χιλίας δραχμὰς, οὐ μεταλαβόν τὸ πέμπτον μέρος τῶν ψήφων. | I seem to have again escaped Meletus, and not only escaped, for it is obvious for everyone that he would have to pay 1000 Drachmas for not receiving one fifth of the votes, if Anytos and Lycon had not come up to sue me. Platon (427-347 vChr.), Apologia 36a |

| δόσοι δ’ ἕν γράφονται γραφάς ιδίας κατά τὸν νόμον, ἑκά τις μὴ ἐπεξέλθῃ ἢ ἐπεξέλθῃ μὴ μεταλάβῃ τὸ πέμπτον μέρος τῶν ψήφων, ἀποτεισάτω χιλίας δραχμάς τῷ δημοσίῳ. | If the plaintiff in a private action compliant with the law does not succeed or does not receive at least one fifth of the votes in favour of his suit, he is liable to pay 1000 Drachmas to the treasury. Demosthenes, Against Meidias 47 |

Summarizing the data so far presented one realizes that the Greek lexeme ψῆφος as used from the 5th century B.C. onwards owns several lexicographical meanings, which all depart from the referential meaning. First of all ψῆφος refers to a little stone as found at river banks or on beaches and named in English pebble. Such an item was used for quite a few different purposes: as dice or piece in games, as movable object in calculation devices like an abacus, as gemstone, and as ballot. So the lexeme integrated these usages in its semantical functions and adopted them as meaning. Depending on context
ψῆφος means in fact dice, piece, gemstone, calculator, or vote. The handling of pebbles in court decisions became the most prominently one, and therefore the word ψῆφος eventually adopted the meaning «vote» as the most frequent and therefore as the most obvious meaning. The physical composition became unimportant, even irrelevant; important and relevant were purpose and application. This is illustrated by the following text.

\[
\text{'Ανήρ γάρ ἰδιώτης ἐν πόλει δημοκρατοῦ·μένη νόμῳ καὶ ψῆφῳ βασιλεύει.}
\]

\[
\text{In a democracy essentially common man reigns by law and vote.}
\]

\[
Aeschines, \text{ Against Ctesiphon 233}
\]

A further detail concerning the appearance of the bronze voting disc\(^{35}\) is to be mentioned, for it sheds light on the phrase καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ψῆφον ὄνομα καίνον γε-γραμμένον Rev 2:17. On the voting discs found on the Agora in Athens is engraved ΨΗΦΟΣ ΔΗΜΟΣΙΑ, literally: «Public Pebble» or «pebble for casting votes and belonging to the people». A dynamic gloss may even render «National Ballot». This may have been another precaution against corrupt judges, who previously collected pebbles at river banks and now might have been tempted to forge bronze pebbles. The meaning is clear: This bronze pebble belongs to the people or to the city/state and is to be used on behalf of the city or pertaining to public affairs. Discs found in Piraeus carry single capital Greek letters. Each letter indicates a particular bench, δίκαιος τῆς, i.e. court jury. The inscriptions on the bronze discs, that serve as ballot pebbles, name the court, where the particular type of bronze pebbles is used. This again serves as precaution against manipulation and manoeuvring. From this we must conclude that by the time of Aristotle's Athenaion Politeia only official tokens issued and imprinted with the sign of relevant judicial authorities were to be used in court and for each court its own proper series. In spite of the fact that these tokens were made from bronze they were denoted as «pebble» thus demonstrating that the metonymical significance and the symbolic use had become a lexicalized meaning of the Greek word ψῆφος, and that in this case the function was

\(^{35}\) I wish to remind the reader that this bronze disc in Greek texts is always (without any exception!) called ψῆφος, «pebble». Only by the adjectives pierced (τετραπληκτής) and massive (πληρός) or not pierced (ἄτριπλης) it becomes clear, of which material the vote casting requisite is made of. The word ψῆφος in this context has completely acquired the meaning «ballot». In order to understand and translate Rev 2:17 this is to be kept in mind.
semantically more important than the material composition. This is indirectly indicated also by Act 26:10 in the Lucan speech of St. Paul before Agrippa:

Act 26:10

... δικαιών ἐγὼ ἐν Ἰερουσαλήμ, καὶ πολλοὺς τε τῶν ἁγίων ἐμφανίζω, τὴν παρά τῶν ἀρχιερεῶν ἐξουσίαν λαβών, ἀναιρουμένων τε αὐτῶν κατήνεγκα ψήφον, ..

NRSV Act 26:10

And that is what I did in Jerusalem; with authority received from the chief priests, I not only locked up many of the saints in prison, but I also cast my vote against them when they were being condemned to death.

Surely Luke does not imply that St. Paul used a (black) pebble for the process of passing the verdict of a death sentence against the early Christians. The phrase does not even prove that Paul was a member of an official court with this purpose. The phrase to cast a pebble is at his time already an idiom with the precise meaning to cast a vote. The character of the vote can be formal and official, but it can also be personal and private, meaning: I agreed with the death sentence and supported it by assisting in executing it. For Act 26:10 this is accepted by most modern translations.

The Greek lexeme ὄνομα not only refers to proper names but to designations of things and matter also. Therefore one is not obliged to assume a natural person being indicated in Rev 2:17. In the context of ballot pebbles the phrase ἐπὶ τὴν ψήφον ὄνομα καίνων γεγραμμένων rather means, that it is not the people’s court or the official state’s court that delivers, but delivery will be solely in the name of a new court, by the court of God, where Christ is the juror and judge.

Thus ψήφος, predominantly used in the context of politics and jurisdiction, means the pebble, by which a vote is cast; in most cases it means the vote itself, even if the vote is cast by raising hand or by small metal discs.36 In connection with the adjective attribute λευκή («white») the noun ψήφος refers to the absolving judgement by a jury member.37 whereas the black pebble (μελαίνη

36) This seems to be reflected by Julius Wellhausen, Analyse der Offenbarung Johannis (AGG NF IX,4)(Berlin, 1907), 6, who translates Rev 2:17b: «... und ich gebe ihm eine weiße Marke ...»
37) Cf. Plutarchos, Alc. 22. Diogenianus, prov. 6.9.1; Claudius Aelianus, var. list. 13.38.13; Pausanias, att. onom. syn. 48.4; Lucianus, Harm. 3.34; Vettius Valens, anth. 246.1.
ψήφος) signifies a condemning vote at court.38)

The phrase διδόναι ψήφον means to cast a vote, as can be seen from the following classical texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek Text</th>
<th>English Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Εἰ μὲν τοῖςν, ὃ ἄνδρες δικασταί, συνέβαινεν τοῖς Ἀλιμούσιοις περὶ ἀπάντων τῶν δημοτῶν διαψηφίσασθαι ἐν ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ, εἰκὸς ἦν καὶ εἰς ὄψει ψηφίζεσθαι, ἵνα ἀπηλλαγμένοι ἦσαν ποιήσαντες τὰ υμῶν ἔγνησιμένα.</td>
<td>Now, men of the jury, if the Halimusians had been deciding on that day the status of all the members of the deme, it would have been reasonable for them to continue voting until late, in order that they might have fulfilled the requirements of your decree before departing to their homes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>εἰ δὲ πλείον ἢ εἶκοσιν ὑπόλοιποι ἦσαν τῶν δημοτῶν, περὶ ὧν ἔδει τῇ ὑστεραιᾷ διαψηφίσασθαι, καὶ ὅμως ἦν ἀνάγκη συλλέγεσθαι τοὺς δημότας, τῷ ποτὲ ἦν τὸ δισχερές Εἰβουλίδη ἀναβάλλεσθαι εἰς τὴν ὑστεραιαν καὶ περὶ ἐμοῦ πρῶτον τὴν ψήφον διδόναι τοῖς δημόταις:</td>
<td>But, seeing that there were more than twenty of the demesmen left regarding whom they had to vote on the following day, and that the members of the deme had in any case to be convened again, what difficulty was there for Eubulides to order an adjournment until the morrow, and then let the demesmen vote on my case first?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>διότι, ὃ ἄνδρες δικασταί, οὐκ ἦν γὰρ εἰβουλίδης ὅτι, εἰ λόγος ἀποδοθῆσαι καὶ παραγένοιτο μού πάντες οἱ δημόται καὶ ἡ ψήφος δικαίως δοθεῖν, οὐδαμοῦ γενήσονται οἱ μετὰ τοῦτον συνεστηκότες.</td>
<td>The reason was, men of the jury, that Eubulides knew very well that, if an opportunity of speaking should be granted to me and if all the men of the deme should be present to support me and the ballots honestly given out, those who had leagued themselves with him would be nowhere!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek Text</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Χρή γὰρ, ὃ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, τὸ αὐτὸ φθέγγεσθαι τὸν ρήτορα καὶ τὸν νόμον: ὅταν δὲ ἔτεραν μὲν φονήν ἄφη ὁ νόμος, ἔτεραν δὲ ὁ ρήτορ, τῶν τοῦ νόμου δικαίῳ χρή διδόναι τὴν ψήφον, οὐ τῇ τοῦ λέγοντος ἀνασχυντι.</td>
<td>Citizens of Athens, speaker and law must be in agreement; if law and speaker sound different, one needs to vote for the just cause of the law and not for the impertinence of the speaker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>δόσα μὲν γὰρ περὶ τῶν τότε</td>
<td>For what he understood about what had</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

38) Cf. Plutarchos, Alcibiad. 22, where it is said of Alcibiades that he answered to the question «Don’t you trust your fatherland?»: «As far as my life is concerned, I do not even trust my mother, that she may not by accident cast the black pebble instead of the white one into the ballot box.» The same story we find in Claudius Aelianus Sophistes, variae historiae 13.38. Plutarchos tells this story again in apophthegmata 186. E.8-10. Cf. also Eutecnius, alexipharmaca 17.25: τὸν θανάτου παρατηρήσαμεν τὴν μέλαιναν ψήφον
Occasionally ψήφον διδόναι even means «to express an opinion about someone». But the phrase διδόναι ψήφον means also to give someone the voting pebble, in order to make him vote on an issue or to make him pass a verdict on a person. This may be deduced from the following texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek</th>
<th>English</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>οὕτῳ δίδωσιν ἐν μὲν τῇ βουλῇ τὴν ἐπι-χειροτονίαν, ἐν δὲ τῷ δικαστηρίῳ τὴν ψῆφον· ἐὰν δὲ μηδεὶς βούληται κατ-ηγορεῖν, εἰδὸς δίδοσιν τὴν ψῆφον:</td>
<td>So he makes them vote in city council by raising hands, in court by means of the pebble; If no one wants to accuse, he makes them vote right away;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Κλαύδιος δὲ, ἐπείπερ εἰς τὸ Παλάτιον ἀρίκευτα ἡγαγαγων τοὺς ἐπί-χειροτονοῦν, ἐν δὲ τῷ δικαστηρίῳ τὴν ψῆφον· ἐὰν δὲ μηδεὶς βούληται κατ-ηγορεῖν, εἰδὸς δίδοσιν τὴν ψῆφον:</td>
<td>When Claudius arrived in the Palace, he gathered his counsellors and made them judge Chaerea. Although they approved of the deed [the murder of Caligula], they accused the culprit of high treason and punished him and Luppus and even more Romans with death, a just punishment as a deterrent for the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>καὶ γενομένης αὐτῷ σιωπῆς, ἐἶπεν ὅτι τοὺς μὲν οἰόζει αὐτὸς ἀποχρῶν ἦν δικαστής, περὶ δὲ τῶν ἄλλων τοὺς πολίτας ἐλευθέροις ὅσις ψῆφον δίδωσι: λεγέτω δ’ ὁ βουλόμενος καὶ πειθέτο τὸν δήμον. οὐκέτι μέντοι λόγον ἐδέσαν, ἀλλὰ τῆς ψῆφου δοθείσης, πᾶσας ἄλλοτε ἐπελεκισθήσαν.</td>
<td>[Brutus] returned and said, after they had calmed down, to judge his own sons he was right, but concerning the others he was to leave the judgment with the free citizens. Whoever wishes to speak may do so and convince the people. Since there was, however, no need for speeches, the verdict was passed and those were condemned unanimously and then</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

39) Cf. Aelius Aristides (2nd AD), Plato’s Rhetoric 115.11: ἐξαίρεται δὲ ἡμᾶς αἰτίας καὶ ὁ πάντα ἁγιός Ἀσκληπιός, ψήφον οὐκ ἀτιμον οὐδὲ αὐτὸς δίδοις, τὰ μὲν ἐν μέτροις, τὰ δὲ οὕτωσι πεζῆ.
Thus we learn that the phrase διδόναι ψήφον means to vote as well as to have someone vote. From the passage of Demosthenes' speech against Eubulides (oratio 57,15f) we may infer that this usage is not necessarily exclusive, but rather in form of the figure of speech of an antanaclasis, in one sentence in both functions. The way Josephus and Plutarchus employ the phrase, shows that it is clearly detached from the real procedure, for in Rome never a pebble was used in voting, but a table, tabella. A tabella was utilized in the Roman comitia for electing magistrates. In this case the citizen wrote the name of the candidate, whom he wished to vote for, on the table. Tables were also needed for passing bills. If the citizen wished to support the proposed bill, he took the table with the inscription U. R. (uti rogas = as you suggest); if he wished to reject the proposal, he took the table with the inscription A. (antiquo = leave it as it was).40) In court each juror received three tabellae: one with the inscription A. (absolvo = I acquit), one with the inscription C. (condemno = I condemn), and the third one with the inscription N. L. (non liquet = no decision). In Athenian courts the third possibility, no decision, did not exist.

The idiom of the pebble even was used by Roman authors of the first and second centuries A.D. and thus entered the literary Latin culture,41) although the Romans never at all did use calculi, the Latin equivalent for ψήφοι, or lapilli, i.e. little stones, but wooden tabellae. And their courts functioned quite different from the Athenian δικαστήρια.

40) Cf. Cicero, In Pis. 3; 96; Phil. 11:19.
41) Ovid, Metamorphoses XV,41-48; Pliny the Younger, Letters I,2; VI,11.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Publius Ovidius Naso (43 B.C. – A.D. 17)</th>
<th>Metamorphoses XV 41-48</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nec est, quod putes me sub hac exceptione veniam postulare. Immo, quo magis intendam limam tuam, confitebor et ipsum me et contubernales ab editione non aborrere, si modo tu fortasse errori nostro album calculum adieceris.</td>
<td>I would not have you imagine that I am bespeaking your indulgence, by filing this counter-plea: on the contrary, to induce you to exercise the utmost severity of your criticism, I will confess, that neither my familiars nor myself are averse to the publication of this piece if you should give your vote in favour of what may be pure error on my part.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus Minor (62-114 A.D.) Epistulae I,2

| O diem (repetam enim) laetum notandumque mihi candidissimo calculo! | It was a day (I cannot but repeat it again) of exquisite happiness, which I shall ever distinguish with the fairest mark. |

Plinius Minor, Epistulae VI,11

We also find the idiomatic use of ψήφος in theological texts:

| οἱ γὰρ βουλήθηκαί ο̶�̶θεός δικάσας τὴν θνητὰ γένει χωρὶς ἠλέου, τὴν καταδικάζουσαν ψήφον οίσει μηδενὸς ἀνθρώπων τὸν ἀπὸ γενέσεως ἥχρι τελευτής βιῶν ἀπαιστὸν εἰς ἑαυτὸς δραμόντος, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν ἐκουσίας, τὸ δὲ ἀκούσιας χρησαμένον τοῖς ἐν ποσίν ὀλισθήμασιν. | “If God wanted to judge the mortal breed devoid of pity, he would pass the verdict of damnation, since no human being lives from birth till death without failing, but freely as well as reluctantly commits transgressions.” |

Philo of Alexandria (1st cent. A.D.), Quod Deus sit immutabilis 75

| ἀλλὰ ὁ τῶν ἐν ψυχῇ ταμιευμένων ἐπίσκοπος ἰδὼν, ἤ κατειδίκην ἐξεστὶ μόνῳ, τὰ ἅθεατα γενέσει, τὴν καταδικάζουσαν ἀπὸ τούτων ψήφου ἦγεγκε, μάρτυς ἀνευδέστατος ὁμοῦ καὶ κριτὴς ἀδέκαστος ὁ αὐτὸς ὦν: | Since the guard of all, that is buried in the soul, saw, what only he is able to see and which is concealed from mankind, he passed the verdict of damnation, for he himself is the most truthful witness and the most incorruptible prosecutor. |

Philo., De migratione Abrahami 115

| ἀπαραλόγιστος γὰρ ἢ τοῦ θεοῦ ψήφος εἰς τὸ δικαιότατον κρίμα. | God’s verdict of damnation is not at all unreasonable. |

Clement of Alexandria (2nd cent. A.D.), Stromateis 7.3.20

One may be amazed to finally learn that even today, in contemporary Modern
Greek language the word ψήφος is used with this meaning. In the Greek-German dictionary by Mandeson\(^2\) the following meanings are presented for the word ψήφος:

*Voice, Vote, Pebble, little Stone, Sphere for Voting, Right to Vote, Voting System.*

Mandeson also notes specific uses:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{δίδω ψήφον λευκὴν} & = \text{to give a white ball or to vote} \\
\text{δίδω ψήφον μαύρην} & = \text{to give a black ball or to deny the vote (i.e. to vote against)}
\end{align*}
\]

Although the word for the colour black has changed in Modern Greek, the idiom is retained with the adjective μαύρη instead of μελαίνη.

It is startling then that of the translations into the three Modern Greek vernaculars, Katharevusa (καθαρέωσισ), Neoelliniki (νεοελληνική), and Dimotiki (δημοτική) only the Katarevusa version, which is very close to ancient Koine-Greek as used in Septuagint and Greek New Testament retains the idiom.

42) Mandeson, Σύγχρονο Ελληνογερμανικό Λεξικό. Athenai, 1469.
44) Η καινή διαθήκη του Κυρίου και Σωτήρος ήμών Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Τὸ θεῖον ἀρχετύπον καὶ ἡ μετάφρασις αὐτοῦ, ὑπὸ τοῦ ὀρθοδόξου κληρικοῦ καὶ καθηγητοῦ τοῦ Ἐλληνικοῦ Πανεπιστημίου, αειμνήστου Νεοφύτου Βαμβα (The New Testament in Ancient and Modern Greek. Printed for the Gideons International by United Bible Societies.
It may well be that this is owed to the strong view held by Philologists of the 19th and 20th centuries, which claims that Attic and Koine Greek are so different that Septuagint and New Testament must not be read and interpreted in the light of Classical Greek. This is certainly an important and weightful argument. Yet my claim here is not, to interpret Koine texts in general on the basis of the Classical lexicon and grammar, but to realize that the idiom of the white pebble survived the historical changes of the Greek language until today and that it therefore might be advisable to use the data extant from Classical sources, in order to recover the intended meaning of Rev 2:17. The famous Greek Philologist and Harvard scholar Herbert Weir Smyth writes in the introduction to his Greek Grammar:

_In its spoken form the Koinè consisted of the spoken form of Attic intermingled with a considerable number of Ionic words and some loans from other dialects, but with Attic orthography. The literary form, a compromise between Attic literary usage and the spoken language, was an artificial and almost stationary idiom from which the living speech drew farther and farther apart. … Some writers distinguish, as a form of the Koinè, the Hellenistic, a name restricted by them to the language of the_
The language of the New Testament is according to Friedrich Rehkopf neither literary nor classical Greek. But then again it is to be underlined that phrases from socio-linguistic areas like the medical or the forensic registers, that concern and influence strongly every-day life of citizens and provincials in the Roman empire and the Hellenistic world, more likely than not exported their specific terms into the ordinary common Greek. Therefore the hint at general differences between Attic and Koine, between literary and non-literary vernacular does not really concern these linguistic areas and consequently is neither convincing nor persuasive.

Against the background of the idiomatic use of the word pebble in Greek courts and here in the NT we may now understand, what Christ is promising to those who remain faithful to him in spite of persecution and suffering: He will cast for them the vote of acquittal. Of course, in the light of the Oresty as written by Aischylos we remember: It was the goddess Athena, who cast the pebble in favour of Orest, causing an equal vote of pebbles for condemnation and acquittal and thus acquitting him from the charge put forward by the Eumenids, the dark spirits of revenge. In order to make up for the murder of his father Agamemnon by his mother Klytaimnnestra, Orest had killed his mother Klytemnnaistra following orders of the god Apoll. Knowing this Greek myth and taking into account that ψῆφος usually means «vote» we must not repeat anymore the opinion, that the white pebble in Rev 2:17 serves as an amulet or as a sign of victorious faith or as an entry ticket to the heavenly banquet.

Before I bring my survey to a close, I want to look at the final part of Rev

48) Blass – Debrunner – Rehkopf, p. 3.
49) Vgl. Zahn 276ff. The only interpretation, which comes close to my proposal, I read in a homily never held but created as a literary genre and device and published in 1862 by Siegmund Henrici: «Neben diesem Manna aber – hält Jesus der siegenden Christenseele vor – einen weißen Stein. … Die Anerkennung des Ueberwinders, als eines Reinen, Gerechten, und eines des Ehrenlohnes würdigen Siegers. Im Alterthume, da war es nämlich bei den Gerichten Sitte, dem, der im Gerichte als unschuldig und gerecht befunden wurde, einen „weißen Stein“ einzuhandigen.»
2:17.

... ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν ἐὶ μὴ ὁ λαμβάνων ...

Normally this phrase is understood in such a way that the Christian, who proudly and victoriously prevails in faith, will receive the pebble from Christ. But in light of forensic register and court language we ought to interpret the meaning and function of this last part in a different way, too. Ancient Greek texts simultaneous with the book of Revelation demonstrate that the phrase ψήφον λαμβάνειν means *receiving the pebble, in order to cast a vote*. The recipients are citizens or jurors, who use it for decision or judgment. *Receiving the pebble* thus is synonymous with *to pass a verdict* or *to cast a vote*, respectively.

| έκ τοῦτον χαλεπῶς διακειμένους τοὺς Ἀθηναίους πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐπειράτο παρηγορεῖν καὶ ἀναθαρρύνειν. οὐ μὴν παρέλυσε τῆς ὀργῆς οὐδὲ μετέπεισε πρότερον, ἢ τὰς ψήφους λαβόντας ἐπὶ αὐτὸν εἰς τὰς χεῖρας καὶ γενομένους κυρίους ἀφελέσθαι τὴν στρατηγίαν καὶ ζημιῶσαι χρήσαι, ὄν ἀριθμὸν οἱ τὸν ἐλάχιστον πεντεκαίδεκα τάλαντα. | Although Pericles tried to comfort and to encourage the Athenians, he did not succeed to calm their fury and to change their mind, until they could vote against him, dispose him of his office as commander and charge him with a ransom of at least 15 talents gold. *Plutarchus, Pericles 35.4* |
| "Αμα δ’ ἤμερα τῆς ψήφου δοθείσης, ἢ τε πρῶτη φυλή τὸν θριαμβὸν ἀπεγνωρίζετο, ... ἀλλ’ ἄγε λαβὼν αὐτοὺς ἐπὶ τὴν ψήφον. | When at dawn the vote was taken, the first detachment rejected the triumph ... but now go and make them vote; *Plutarchus, Aemilius 31.1* |
| ΚΛΩΘΗ: Παῦσαι ἀπειλῶν, ἄλλα ἐξειπθη: καιρὸς ἢ ἡ σε ἀπαντάν ἐπὶ τὸ δικαστήριον. ΜΕΓΑΠΕΝΘΗΣ: Καὶ τίς ἁξίωσε κατ’ ἄνδρός τυράννου ψήφον λαβεῖν: | Klotho: Cut the threats and step in; the time has come for you to appear in court. Megapenthes: And who dares to pass a verdict against the sovereign? *Lucian, Cataplas 13* |

The sentence Rev 2:17b contains therefore three distinct parts with three
different acts in three diverse expressions, but to one end:

1. καὶ δῶσω αὐτῷ ψῆφον λευκὴν,
2. καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν ψῆφον ὄνομα καινόν γεγραμένον
3. ὃ οὐδεὶς οἶδεν εἰ μὴ ὁ λαμβάνων

Each of these expressions forms an idiomatic metaphor with these meanings:

1. And I will acquit him
2. in the name of a new authority,
3. which only he knows, who passes the verdict.

The three idiomatic expressions are stringed together to build one composite, bold, hybrid metaphor. All three parts of this composite metaphor have the same logical subject: It is Christ, who acquits the faithfully enduring believer; it is Christ's authority, by which this believer is acquitted; it is uniquely Christ, who knows this new authority. The qualifying adjective new indicates that this authority is different from the authority, that put Antipas to death. And the implied information is of course that this new authority does not put to death but grants life.

**4. Translational Proposal for Rev 2:17**

As translation for Rev 2:17 I propose the following rendering:

_I will provide everyone, who proudly prevails, with manna stored in heaven, and I will acquit him in the name of a new authority, which no one knows except he, who passes the verdict._

Since the author of this paper is not a native speaker of English, the proposed translation can only be a tentative proposal, a suggestion, that hopefully will stimulate better and more idiomatically appropriate translations. If this presentation and proposal sufficiently demonstrated the inappropriateness of most traditional formal correspondent, so called literal translations, its purpose is
achieved. If not it may well come to pass that meaning, significance, and value of
the Biblical message linger lost in translation.

<Keywords>
Idioms in Translation, White Pebble, Public Pebble, Ancient Greek idiom,
Bronze voting disc.
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번역에서 잃어버린 부분
-요한계시록 2장 12-17절: 관용구 번역의 한 사례-

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‘훈제한 청어’(틀리고 잘못 인도하는 단서), ‘흰 코끼리’(쓸모없는 큰 짐), ‘검은 다리’(동료 일꾼들은 파업하는데 일하는 사람)와 같은 관용구들은 번역에 있어 특별한 문제를 만들어 내고 사전적인 단어 대 단어의 전략으로는 다루어질 수 없다. 관용구들은 예를 들어 성서와 같은 고대의 책을 번역하는 데 있어서 특별히 어렵다. 이 소논문은 성경의 마지막 책 요한계시록 2장 17절의 한 구절을 과제로 삼는다. 그 구절은 “그것을 받는 자 외에는 아무도 모르는 새 이름이 그 위에 쓰여진 흰 돌을 그들 각각에게 내가 또한 줄 것이다”(Good News Bible, 1994). 그리고 사례 연구로 “어떤 사람에게 흰 돌을 주다”라는 구절이 정확히 “무죄 판결을 내리다”라는 의미를 갖는 법경 관례와 언어에서 유래된, 분명히 널리 퍼져 있던 고대 그리스어 관용구임을 보일 것이다.

기원전 5세기 초, 재판관들이나, 좀 더 정확히 이야기하면, 배심원들은 각 투표의 비밀성과 독립성을 확실히 하기 위해 깔때기 모양의 뚜껑이 덮여진, 하나는 정죄를 위한 다른 하나는 무죄를 위한 사면을 위한 투표인, 두 개의 다른 투표 항아리에 조약돌을 넣음으로 그들의 결정을 표현했다. 기원전 5세기 후반에, 무죄를 위한 흰색, 정죄를 위한 검은색의 두개의 다른 조약돌들이 한 특별한 단지에 던져졌다. 마지막으로, 기원전 4세기 후반에, 조약돌들은 더 이상 법정에서 결정할 때 쓰이지 않았다. 두 개의 다른 형태로 된 조약돌 항아리의 판을 가진 작은 청동 원판이 이 목적으로 쓰였다. 검은 조약돌은 빈 판을 가진 청동 원판에 의해 교체되었고, 흰 조약돌은 채 한 판을 가진 원판에 의해 교체되었다. 염지와 검지가 통을 가리도록 하여 어떻게 투표하는지 아무도 볼 수 없도록 하지만, 모든 사람이 오직 하나의 투표만 하는 것은 알 수 있게 하였다. 기원전 321년에 아테네의 민주 정체(政體) 그리고 그와 함께 배심원을 갖는 법정은 폐지되었다. 그 때문부터 아마도 조약돌이나 원판은 결정을 하는데 더 이상 사용되지 않았을 것이다. 그러나 후대의 그리스 작가들은 “평결을 내리다”라는 뜻으로 “조약돌을 주다”라는 구절을 여전히 사용한다. 그래서 “어떤 사람에게 (흰) 조약돌을 주다”라는 구절은 오늘날까지 그리스 언어에서 관용적 표현으로 살아남았다.
그 청동 원판에는 **ΨΗΦΟΣ ΔΗΜΟΣΙΑ** (국민의 조약돌)이라는 단어들이 새겨져 있었는데, 그것은 (“국민의 이름으로”라는 현대 어구가 그러하듯) 궁극적으로는 아테네 국민이 결정을 내린다는 것을 표현한다. 그래서 그 새겨진 글은 그 청동 원판이 청동으로 만들어졌음에도 조약돌이라 불리어졌고, 그 새겨진 글은 결정이 내려지는 것이 누구의 이름의 권위로 되어지는 지를 가리킨다. (문자적으로 “조약돌을 받는 것”을 뜻하는) 어구 **λαμβάνειν ψήφον**은 또한 만들 어진 관용어구이고, 고소되어서 심판받는 사람을 가리키는 것이 아니라 유죄 또는 무죄의 평결을 내리기 위해 조약돌을 받는 배심원을 가리키는 것이다. 그러므로 요한계시록 2장 17절은 다음과 같이 번역될 수 있을 것이다: “새로운 권위의 이름으로, 나는 그를 무죄로 선언한다. 그 평결을 내리는 사람 이외에는 아무도 이 권위를 모른다.”