

Memory and Authority in the Magical Papyri¹

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It is a commonplace that the religious systems of ancient Greece and Rome had nothing comparable to the Book, as institutionalized in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic world religions. Their identity as practices was not significantly formed by the 'adoption, the interpretation, and the expansion of received Scriptures', such as the Torah, the Septuagint, and the emergent canon of New Testament writings.² The impact of writing is nevertheless everywhere perceptible in the construction of Greek and Roman religious systems, in the composition of hymns, odes, prayers, epic poetry, stage dramas, novels, in the *commentarii* of the Roman priestly colleges and of individual experts among their members, the formulation of 'sacred laws', in the textualization of oracles such as Delphi and Dodona, the Sibyllines, and later the revelations of Clarian Apollo or the 'Chaldaean Oracles', and their crowds of anonymous imitators, in the creation of aretalogies, in the massive efflorescence of mythography and local histories, in the role of written cosmogonies and commentaries in diversifying religious options, for example, the Derveni papyrus, the Orphic *Rhapsodies*, the *Hermetica*, and the creation of natural magic by

¹ A rather different version of this paper was read at the Classical Association meeting in Glasgow in April 2009, in the section 'To Play by the Book', organized by Dr F. Naerebout. I am most grateful to the editors of this volume in honour of Simon Price for inviting me to contribute a paper, which I offer as a token of our long-standing friendship, dating back to Simon's Research Fellowship at Christ's, and my admiration for his work on Greek and Roman religion.

² Lieu 2004, 37.

pseudo-Democritus.³ Inscribed public and private votive offering neatly fused the memorialization of a successful 'vertical' exchange with the 'horizontal' need of political elites and other self-conscious groups for moral display and self-representation.⁴ The genre of curses now called prayers for justice presupposes the power of writing to alert deities to particular, immediate, instrumental needs.⁵ Neither may have had a Book, but we cannot conceive of either Greek or Roman religion *sans* Text.

Directly or indirectly, these literary forms derive their authority from the wider institutions of which they are part, in Foucauldian terms, the *dispositif*, that is, the interplay of talking, thinking, and acting on the basis of a body of culturally recognized knowledge, a complex of multiply interconnected discursive and non-discursive practices.⁶ Strange as they may sometimes be, we can engage with them insofar as we apprehend the genre-rules. We do, however, possess other types of religious texts that do not fit so neatly into our mental docking-apparatus, namely magical texts, whose declared aim is to do something we consider rationally impossible: directly to alter the world by symbolic means.⁷

As soon as we look at the category 'ancient magic', it dissolves into myriad subcategories with little in common, except that the direct evidence for them is now largely lost. What we mainly 'know' is the fearful, fascinated, jocular social discourse *about* magic. As for primary texts, apart from documents such as curse-tablets, amulets, and phylacteries, there survive a few compilations: the *Cyranides*, the Lithic tradition of powerful stones, 'Antonius Musa', *De herba vettonica*, Marcellus Empiricus' *De medicina*, and one or two others, such as the *Geoponica*, pseudo-Apuleius' *Herbarius*, the *Medicina Plinii*, and so on. The great exception is the group of ritual texts from

³ Cf. Rüpke 2005, 191–204; Cancik 2008, 15–26; Finkelberg and Stroumsa 2003; specifically in Rome and its empire, Barchiesi, Rüpke, and Stephens 2004; Elm von der Osten, Rüpke, and Waldner 2006.

⁴ 'Das Einmeißeln auf Stein... ist eine Publizität, die nicht nur alle betrifft... sondern auch dauerhaft sein soll': Robert 1970, 16. On the link between inscription and Textträger as mutually supporting elements of cultural memory, cf. Schörner 2003, 211–24.

⁵ Tomlin 2002, 165–79. For the term judicial prayer, now called prayers for justice, see Versnel 1991, 60–106; Versnel 2010, 275–82.

⁶ For example, Foucault 2001, 1059–62.

⁷ On the specific intentionality of magical ritual, see still Tambiah 1973, 199–229, repr. in Tambiah 1985, 60–86.

Roman Egypt nowadays known, rather misleadingly, as the Greek Magical Papyri.⁸ These are sacred texts of a completely different kind from the 'received scriptures' in the Judeo-Christian-Islamic world religions, since they invoke theological knowledge not as a life-model but as a means of achieving privileged, direct access to the Other World. I want in this paper to say something about the way these texts use selected aspects of cultural memory to validate their claim to authority.

THE 'MAGICAL PAPYRI'

Some preliminary remarks about the magical papyri are in order. As a group, they should in fact be known as 'Late Egyptian Ritual Texts mainly in Greek and Demotic', but such a name could only find favour in the Circumlocution Office. Their basis is essentially Egyptian, combined with eclectic but limited borrowings from Greek and Near Eastern traditions, particularly Jewish.⁹ They may conveniently be divided into two groups. (1) There are the formularies, which are collections of ritual prescriptions, here called 'recipes' because they employ the imperative singular. Some of them are compendious (the longest in Greek contains fifty-three recipes), some very brief, containing only one or two. They purport to be instructions for rituals whose correct performance will enable the practitioner to obtain a specific end, say a revelation from a god, a prophetic dream, protection from fever, attraction of a sexual partner, the death of an enemy, or a whole bundle of such aims. Individual recipes vary greatly in the extent and style of their specialist knowledge. (2) And there are individual 'activated' texts, almost none of which, as it happens, bears any close relation to the surviving formulary recipes.

⁸ On the inadequacy of this term see Smith 1995, 13–27 at 21 n.15 (repr. in Smith 2004, 215–29). Other related documents are the Byzantine magical texts collected by Delatte 1927, the Coptic materials assembled by Kropp 1930–3, and the phylacteries on (precious) metals. Another large group of closely connected material is the magical amulets.

⁹ For brief accounts, see Preisendanz 1926, 104–67; Preisendanz 1964, 203–17; Brashear 1995, 3380–684 at 3398–422. On the Jewish elements in the magical papyri, see Fernández Marcos 1985, 101–27; Betz 1997, 45–64 = Betz 1998, 187–205; Bohak 2008, 196–214 (includes a discussion of the amulets). I here ignore the fairly numerous Christian texts.

Unlike the *Hermetica*, of which there are at least eleven manuscripts dated to the fourteenth or fifteenth century, and which were already translated or paraphrased into Latin by Marsilio Ficino (1433–99), these texts were virtually unknown until the late nineteenth century. Their discovery was made possible by Napoleon's expedition to Egypt in 1798, which was a military and political fiasco but a cultural-historical triumph, producing both the Rosetta Stone and the monumental *Description de l'Égypte*, a massive compendium of the antiquities, ethnography, topography, and natural history of the country (1809–28).¹⁰ It was the early reports of Napoleon's cultural adviser, Vivant Denon,¹¹ that prompted the grand-scale looting of Egyptian antiquities associated with swashbuckling figures such as Bernadino Drovetti, the 'Paduan giant' Giambattista Belzoni, and his sometime employer, the English adventurer and dealer Henry Salt. All were issued with firmans by the regime of the nominal Turkish governor Mohammed Ali after the British left in 1803, which allowed them to do more or less what they liked. The prominent older European collections of Egyptian monuments, in Turin, the Louvre, the British Museum, the Rijksmuseum in Leyden, later the Ägyptisches Museum in Berlin, owe their existence to this flurry of archaeological private enterprise.

Among the tribe of lesser dealers in Egyptian antiquities during this period was an Armenian merchant originally from Damascus, who called himself Giovanni Anastasi (1780–1857), and served among other things as Consul-General of Sweden and its possession Norway.¹² Some time before 1828 Anastasi acquired through his agents from fellahin in Luxor (Thebes) in Upper Egypt a collection of papyri, mainly magical, in four scripts/languages: hieratic, demotic, Old Coptic (that is, Egyptian represented in Greek characters), and Greek, allegedly found together in a tomb.¹³ Four of them, including

¹⁰ Vercoutter 1986; the images from the five vols. of the *Description* devoted to antiquities (and from two of the modern vols.) have been republished in a single volume by Taschen.

¹¹ Cf. Denon 1802 and 1990.

¹² This man is not to be confused with the Greek assistant to Henry Salt, Giovanni d'Athanasī (1798–1854), author of *A Brief Account of the Researches and Discoveries in Upper Egypt* (London, 1836), who also worked at Luxor/Thebes. See, for example, Richards 2005, 126–8. I am not sure on what authority Dieleman 2005, 12, n.30, claims that Anastasi also used the name d'Athanasī.

¹³ The most reliable information is provided by Reuvens 1830, summarized by Müller 1831, 545–54. It is now generally agreed that the vocalized glosses to the *voces*

P.Leid. J.384 verso = *PGrMag* XII (partly in Demotic = *PDem* xii), the codex *P.Leid.* J.395 = XIII, and a fragment of the London–Leyden demotic text, *P.Leid.* J.383, were sold in a lot of 126 papyri to the Rijksmuseum in Leyden by Anastasi's agents Tossizza and de Castiglione in 1828,¹⁴ an alchemical text given to the Swedish Kungliga Vitterhetsakademie before August 1832,¹⁵ and a fourth century AD magical codex sold to the British Museum in 1839 (*PGrMag* V). When, after his death, Anastasi's remaining collections of antiquities were auctioned in Paris in 1857, the British Museum bought two Demotic magical papyri, one of first-rate importance (*P.BritMus* 10070), which many years later was recognized by Willem Pleyte to join exactly to *P.Leid.* J.383 (= *PDem* xiv);¹⁶ the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris bought the most famous Greek magical book, the codex now known as *PGrMag* IV; and the Louvre bought another demotic text partly written in hieratic and Old Coptic (*PLouvre* E3229 = *PDem* Suppl.).¹⁷

In addition to this group from around Luxor (Thebes), Anastasi also came into possession of several other magical papyri. One was bought from him by M.J.F. Mimaut in 1837 (*PGrMag* III); two others (*PGrMag* I, II) were sold to Karl Richard Lepsius for the Staatliche Museen in Berlin at the Paris auction in 1857. At least one further text was acquired under unknown circumstances by the British Museum in 1888 (*PGrMag* VII).¹⁸ Whether these too were part of the supposed 'Theban Library' cannot now be established. All that can be said is that *PGrMag* I, II, and III at any rate are closely similar to the Greek

magicae in the London and Leyden text are influenced by Coptic dialect P, associated with Thebes: Johnson 1976, 105–32.

¹⁴ The papyri formed just a small part of the transaction: the Rijksmuseum bought 5675 Egyptological items from Anastasi on this occasion.

¹⁵ Published by Lagerkrantz 1913.

¹⁶ The other was *P.BritMus* 10588, a late third-century AD demotic text with some Greek content in the first two columns of the verso, published by Bell, Nock, and Thompson 1933 = *PDem* lxi.

¹⁷ Ritner 1995, 3333–75 at 3336 urges that all the demotic formularies came from the region of Luxor (Thebes). If true, this would indicate that some at least of the material offered for sale in 1857 came from the Luxor region, in all probability from the same source as the 'Library' texts. Brashear 1991, 71–3 at 71, thought that *PLouvre* E3229 was part of the 'Library'; Dieleman 2005, 13 n.38, denies it.

¹⁸ Most of this information can be gathered from Preisendanz 1926 and his introductions to the various texts; also Powden 1986, 168–72; Brashear 1995, 3401–8; Dieleman 2005, 11–16, 25–9, 40–1.

texts of that group in style and choice of recipe.¹⁹ The Greek hands are generally dated by the papyrologists to the late third/early fourth century AD, though shorter 'activated' versions of at least the *philtro-katadesmos* of *PGrMag* IV 296–466 have been dated to the second–third century AD.²⁰ The London–Leyden Demotic text, however, which, like all the other long formularies, is a compilation from earlier manuscripts, is now tentatively dated to the late second/early third century AD, the individual recipes having been written over the previous century or so; the same scribe wrote out *P.Leid* J 384 verso.²¹ The two other demotic formularies seem to be somewhat later and by different scribes—two different individuals indeed may have been responsible for the recto and verso of *P.Louvre* E3229 (*PDem Suppl.*).²² The contents of the 'Library' itself, whatever they were exactly, are thus likely to have been concealed or buried c. 350 AD.²³ Scattered as they were between different museums, and generally regarded as barbaric, the texts in Greek were slowly published during the course of the nineteenth century, though often in defective transcripts and in poorly distributed periodicals; in that respect Preisendanz' edition of 1928–31, which was based on fresh autopsy, represented a genuine advance. Preisendanz however was a Greek papyrologist, for whom the demotic texts belonged to another specialism. Their omission from his edition has led to persistent misapprehension among historians of Greco-Roman religion of the Sitz im

¹⁹ Brashear 1995, 3403–4 stresses that these items in Greek were never claimed to come from the 'Library'; but in method and spirit they all belong together as a group (this must have been Richard Wünsch's instinct when he was compiling the order of the texts in *PGrMag*, even if putting the Berlin papyri first and second was a piece of misplaced chauvinism; under any view *PGrMag* IV—in Paris—is the outstanding ancient book of magic and should have been placed first). I judge *P.gr. BritMus.* CXXI = *PGrMag* VII to be somewhat different in character both from the texts that certainly belonged to the 'Theban Library' and from *PGrMag* I–III. Frederick Kenyon too evidently thought it inferior: '... the longest of the magical papyri in the BM but not the most interesting': Kenyon 1893, 83. It is however certain that Anastasi claimed that another of his papyri (*P.BritMus* XLVII = *PGrMag* VI), which he sold to the British Museum in 1839, came from Memphis; Kenyon dated it to the second century AD (*ibid.* 81). It is strikingly different in conception from the others, and written in a literary hand.

²⁰ *SupplMag* nos. 46, 47, 48. The original editors however dated them later.

²¹ Dieleman 2005, 41–4.

²² See Johnson in Betz, *GMP in Translation*, lvi–lvii; Ritner 1995, 3336–42.

²³ Dieleman 2005, 22, points out that the Nag Hammadi texts, translated from Greek into Coptic, and surely part of a temple library, were buried not far away from Luxor in the hills of Nag Hammadi perhaps a half century later.

Leben of these texts.²⁴ It was the decision to include all the demotic sections in the English translation organized by Hans-Dieter Betz, and the commentaries on them by R.K. Ritner, that has contributed most to the appreciation of the Egyptian background of these texts among non-Egyptologists.

AUTHORIZING MAGICAL PRACTICE

These magical texts make a generic claim to achieve changes in the world, though surprisingly often these actually involve subjective experiences such as dreams, visions, and hallucinations.²⁵ It hardly needs saying that the broader meaningfulness of such claims is underwritten or protected by a whole series of implicit assumptions about the nature of the divine world, its possible modes of intervention in human life, the prestige and efficacy of theological knowledge, the rhetoric of conjuration, the power of certain words and names, and so on—the underpinning that, at least within the world of this *dispositif*, makes appeal to magic a rational and plausible step.

Despite such underpinning, claims of this sort have a special need of authority.²⁶ Some of them emphasize their exceptional status to the implied reader by claiming to be able to deliver an astonishing range of results. One asserts that it works

for every thing and every rite... It attracts in the same hour, it sends dreams, it causes sickness, produces dream visions, removes enemies when you reverse the spell, however you wish.²⁷

PGrMag. IV 2622–6, tr. E.N. O'Neil

Another, ascribed to Pachrates, the *prophètes* (*hm-ntr* priest) of Heliopolis, presents itself as a

²⁴ Preisendanz simply omitted to register the locations of the demotic sections of the bilingual papyri: Ritner 1995, 3358–9; Dieleman 2005, 16–17. The Demotic London–Leyden papyrus had been published in exemplary manner in 3 vols., with a complete facsimile, by F.L. Griffiths and H. Thompson: Griffiths and Thompson 1904–9, but they presented it for its *philological* interest. The Demotic sections of *PDem* xli were not published until 1933 (see n.16); so far as I can discover; those of *PGM* XII = *PDem* xii not until 1975: Johnson 1975, 29–64.

²⁵ Gordon 1997, 65–92.

²⁶ Betz 1982, 161–70, repr. in Betz 1990, 173–83; Dieleman 2005, 254–80.

²⁷ ποιούσα πρὸς πάντα καὶ πρὸς πάσαν πρᾶξιν· ἀγεί γὰρ μονούρους, δνειροπομπεί, κατακλίνει, δνειροθανπτει, ἀναιρεί ἐχθρούς μεταστρέφοντός σου τὸν λόγον, ὡς ἐὰν θελῃς.

spell of attraction... It inflicts sickness excellently and destroys powerfully, sends dreams beautifully, accomplishes dream revelations marvelously and in its many demonstrations has been marvelled at for having no failure in these matters.²⁸

PGrMag IV 2441–6, tr. E.N. O'Neil

A third claims *τούτου μείζον οὐδὲν ἔσχευ ὁ κόσμος*, 'the world has nothing greater' (*PGrMag* XII 277). Another way of claiming universal or general efficacy was to appeal to famous Greek, Jewish, Persian, or other 'masters', such as Pythagoras, Moses, Ostanes, or Apollobex.²⁹ The majority, however, deliberately evoke aspects of earlier Egyptian temple-practice. We might see such evocation as the inverse of the defacing of images of ancient gods by Christians at Aphrodisias, Athens, and in Egypt itself discussed elsewhere in this volume by R.R.R. Smith (Ch. 13).³⁰ Whereas the intention there was evidently to dissipate the power felt still to inhere in 'scandalous' images, the authors of the recipes in the magical papyri attempted to enforce the authority of their texts by appeal to what they claimed to be ancient Egyptian practice.

This need not be seen as cynical or even as particularly self-conscious. Rather it links the magical papyri to a variety of moves aimed at registering the uniqueness and antiquity of Egypt in changing political and religious situations, for example, prophetic or apocalyptic texts such as the Oracle of the Potter or Nectanebo's Dream, the aretalogies of Isis, Sarapis, and Amenouthis (Asklepios), and the Hermetic texts, in particular the *Asclepius* which are now known to have emerged in the late Ptolemaic period from an Egyptian priestly milieu influenced by Greek philosophical categories.³¹

The ideological nature of such strategies is well established. Cultural memory is a highly reconstructive affair, in which specific

²⁸ ἀγωγή... ἀγούσα ἀσχέτους καὶ ἀνουσιάστους μονοημέρους, κατακλίνει γενναίως καὶ ἀναιρεῖ ἰσχυρῶς ὀνειροπομπῇ καλλίστως, ὀνειραιτηγῇ θαυμαστῶς καὶ ἐν πλείστοις ἀποδείξουσιν ἐθαυμάσθη οὐδεμίαν ἔγκλιον ἔχουσα τούτων. Although the recipes are unrelated, this frame text is evidently a variation on the first, with the additional reassurance that it has never been known to fail.

²⁹ Dieleman 2005, 263–75.

³⁰ Hahn 2004; for the Latin West, with reservations, Sauer 2003.

³¹ Prophetic texts: Podemann Sørensen 1992, 164–81. Aretalogies: Harder 1944; Bergman 1968; the most important contrary view by an Egyptologist is Müller 1961; also his review of Bergman's book, Müller 1972, 117–30; cf. Dousa 2002, 149–84; for the other aretalogies, see Longo 1969 with the review by K.J. Rigsby: Rigsby 1971, 741–3. Hermetica: Fowden 1986; Jasnow and Zauzich 1998, 607–18.

events, claims, and practices are appropriated, renegotiated and revalued in the service of particular, historically variable interests and aims.³² The past acquires as many forms as present interests require. Neither the group nor its memories are stable: '[La mémoire d'une société] ne cesse pas de se transformer, et le groupe lui-même change sans cesse.'³³ The larger the 'archive' of preserved memories, as in the case of Egypt, where a written culture had already been created between palace and temple c. 3000 BC, the greater the scope for selective memorialization.³⁴ But in the case of the magical papyri there are, I think, more particular reasons for the selective evocation of ancient practice.

CHANGING DEMANDS

It is familiar that one of the major institutional differences between the religious systems of the Fertile Crescent and the Greco-Roman world is the absence from the latter of full-time temple-priests and temple functionaries; this absence is in turn linked to the absence of kingship and of the redistributive palace and temple economy. In these centralized royal economies, magic typically had a regular place in the activities of the priestly caste, being used to protect the king and the palace, but also individuals, from danger.³⁵ In Egypt, the main word for magic, *heka*, defined as what the demiurge 'has given to men as a defence against the effects of events', was also the name of a divinity, and indeed conceived as part of the creator's person, an essential element of the divine power.³⁶ Magic was thus conceived as a morally neutral 'force' capable of effecting changes in the Other World and/or in this by means of symbolic manipulation, and its correct procedures could be learned. The negative attitudes towards

³² Assmann 1999, 15–19. On the role of structural amnesia, see her remarks on p. 61; on history and memory as two forms of remembering, interlinked but not in opposition, p. 134.

³³ Halbwachs 1950 repr. 1997, 135.

³⁴ Assmann 1999, 130–42, terms these respectively *Speichergedächtnis* and *Funktionsgedächtnis*.

³⁵ Borghouts 1972–86, vol. 3, 1137–51. For Babylonia, see for example Bottéro 2000, 63–76; the Hittite kingdom: Haas 1994, 876–911.

³⁶ Étienne 2000, 13–15; Ritner 1995, 3353–5. The other Egyptian word for magic is *akhu*, 'spells' (basic meaning 'bright', 'effective'), and the two often occur together: Ritner 1993, 30–5; Koenig 1994, 298–303.

magic typical of peasant societies, and certainly of Greek and Roman culture, were thus not prominent in Dynastic Egypt, or at least not in the sources available to us—peasant attitudes may have been quite different—and the skills required to perform it were customarily taught in the temple. Indeed the most important magical practitioners in each major temple were the lector-priests, those most skilled in sacred knowledge (*hry-hb hry-tp*). Numerous written recipes survive, though it is often difficult to distinguish them on the one hand from religious texts and on the other from medical ones.³⁷ Some take the form of a hymn, litany, or prayer, but most consist of chains of magical formulae alluding to mythical events (*historiolae*), which seem often to be made up ad hoc since they are never heard of elsewhere.³⁸ As we would expect in a priestly tradition, great emphasis is laid on knowing the true names of demons and spirits against whom protection is sought. At the same time, however, there seem always to have been other providers of magical services, defensive, healing, and aggressive, outside the temple, such as the 'scorpion charmer' (*hry srkt*) and the 'women who know', of whom little is known except that they existed.³⁹

To judge from the surviving magical texts of Ptolemaic date, such as the Brooklyn and the Jumilhac papyri, much of this traditional order survived well into the period of Macedonian rule.⁴⁰ But something of a shift seems to have occurred in the late Hellenistic period and especially the first two centuries of Roman rule. The most obvious signs of change is that dominant genres of 'everyday' temple-magic, particularly protective magic against demons, crocodiles, snakes, and scorpions, are much less attested, and new, or hitherto

³⁷ 'General agreement over the parameters of "magic" [in Egypt] has proved elusive': Ritner 1995, 3334. In general on Egyptian magic: Sauneron 1966, 27–65; Borghouts 1974, 7–19; Kákosy 1985, repr. 1991, 7–101 at 28–30. In medicine, there was a saying, 'Magic with a remedy is powerful; a remedy with magic is powerful' (P. Ebers 3): Westendorf 1999, 91. A selection of 'everyday' texts in Borghouts 1978. The importance of writing in magical practice can be gauged from the fact that the ideograph 'book' often appears in hieroglyphic spellings of the word *heka*.

³⁸ Podemann Sørensen 1984, 5–19; Frankfurter 1995, 457–76.

³⁹ 'Semberebbe che i maghi non sacerdoti appartenessero allo strato della popolazione umile; i loro scopi erano di tipo quotidiano, il più delle volte dovevano creare una difesa dagli animali pericolosi': Kákosy 1985, repr. 1991, 25; Koenig 1994, 34–5; cf. Gardiner 1917, 31–44; 139f. However Ritner 1993, 222, claims that the 'scorpion-charmers' were also trained in the temple.

⁴⁰ Sauneron 1970; Vandier 1962; cf. Johnson 1986, 76–84.

less common, genres become dominant: for private malign and aggressive (mainly erotic) magic; for personal success and attractiveness; written phylacteries.⁴¹ Techniques of iniaturization (of rituals, of ritual paraphernalia), of do-it-yourself, and individual action by the practitioner, become typical.⁴² The implication of this evidence is that the practitioner is imagined as having only a loose connection with an institution, to be more like the 'scorpion-charmers' of the street and the village, who lived from the magical services they could sell.⁴³ On the other hand, the practitioner is assumed to be competent in ritual, to know how to apply 'eye-paint', conduct a bowl-divination with or without medium, recite a fixed prayer, compose a letter to the dead, write *charaktères*, be able to obtain 'hieratic papyrus', natron, and other requisite ingredients.⁴⁴ A training in temple-magic is thus taken for granted.

How are we to reconcile these two apparently contradictory representations? It is true that the temple did slowly decline as an institution during the Roman period. On the other hand, despite the restrictions on priests' privileges and income (the *syntaxis*) imposed by the Roman administration, they continued in many parts of Egypt, especially in rural areas, to maintain their fabric, put on festivals, and encourage pilgrimages. Native Egyptian religious life went on—it was after all part of Roman policy to require native Egyptian priests to be able to read and write hieratic and Demotic.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Though they are not new, the sheer number of divination procedures, the face-to-face vision (*ph-ntr*, 'petition [to] god'), visions of god in a bowl, with or without medium, lamp-divination, dreams, as a proportion of the whole set, must draw our attention. In this connection, Homer-oracles are clearly a Greek import.

⁴² Moyer and Dieleman 2003, 47–71.

⁴³ Smith 1993, 172–207; Smith 1995, 23–7. Examples are PGrMag I 84–5: κ[αι] (τὸν θεὸν) εἰς στενὸν τόπον ἐνεγκὼν, ὅπου κατοικεῖς, καθ[ίστη] πρῶτον δὲ τὸν οἶκον στρώσας, καθὼς πρέπει, 'take (the god) into a small room, where you live, and sit him down. But first clean the room, as is fitting...'; III 193; 302; IV 1859–61 ~ 2187–9; VII 540–1; 727; 875 XII 164; XIII 5–7; 1034 XXXVIII 5–6. In all these cases *oikos* means a room in a house, but occasionally it seems to denote a workshop or place of business, for example XII 104: ἐν ᾧ οἶκῳ πραγματεύομαι ἐγὼ <δ>δε... Ritner 1995, 3354, rightly suggests that it had always been customary for priests to offer magical services outside the temple in their free time; but he insists that virtually nothing changed in Egyptian magic, not merely in the types of procedures followed but in the range of 'products', which seems to me one-sided.

⁴⁴ This last was surely not as difficult as has been made out: there were shops or dealers for such requisites, as in the modern Sahel.

⁴⁵ Bowman 1986, 166–90; Frankfurter 1998, 37–144. Internal changes, for example Ciampini 2002, 27–40.

Part of the explanation seems to lie in changes in demand. We know that Egyptian temple personnel were historically open to change.⁴⁶ From the fourth century BC, they had borrowed and adapted Babylonian mathematical astronomy in order to predict the movements of the heavenly bodies, and then adapted Greek astrology when it became modish.⁴⁷ The transformation of Isis and her 'circle' into a family goddess is further evidence of a readiness to absorb Hellenic influence.⁴⁸ The case of protective and healing amulets is yet another. By the first or second century AD traditional Egyptian amulets (Fig. 7.1), except for scarabs, had ceased to be manufactured in favour of new types, with new iconography, made from semi-precious stones placed in a ring or other setting, following a wholly Greek or Greco-Roman fashion (Fig. 7.2a, b).⁴⁹ The manufacture of such amulets required new types of technical skills, as well as interest in new types of semi-precious stones; both were presumably common in Greek craft communities, say in Alexandria, or the numerous Greek settlements along the Nile.⁵⁰ Such readiness to meet new demands combined with a specialized knowledge of Egyptian religious traditions offers, I suggest, a quite precise parallel to the emergence of the magical papyri.

Who might have been the customers in Egypt for new types of magical services? The obvious possibility is the Greek and Hellenized inhabitants of the *polis* of Alexandria, and the increasingly Hellenized inhabitants of the larger *metropoleis*, including the relatively wealthy gymnasiac class (nominally Egyptians of peregrine status), whose members had profited from the large-scale privatization of land that took place under Roman rule, especially in the Fayum, and who

⁴⁶ Adaptation in Egyptian religion during the Hellenistic and Roman periods is one of the themes of Kákossy 1995, 2894–3048.

⁴⁷ Jones 1995, 25–51 at 36. The use of zodiacs in Egyptian astronomical astrology begins in the third century BC; Derchein 1966, t53–5.

⁴⁸ Dunand 1979. I have already mentioned the case of the Hermetica (n.31), which owe their survival to their adaptation into Greek.

⁴⁹ Philipp 1986, 13–26; Nagy 1995, 153–79.

⁵⁰ These stones came largely from India, via the well-established aromatics trade-route, which used the Red Sea ports of Berenike and Myos Hormos (Quseir al Qadim), and transported both aromatics and stones on a large scale across the desert to the Nile, and so to Alexandria; see Begley and De Puma 1991; Peacock and Williams 2007. Jean de Thévenot (1633–67), who visited Alexandria in 1652, reports that magical amulets were constantly being found by the inhabitants and sold to Europeans: Kákossy 1995, 3032. Egypt was thus probably the source of most of such gems in modern museum collections.



Fig. 7.1. A selection of traditional Dynastic Egyptian amulets representing hieroglyphs, made from semi-precious stones. From l. to r.: an *ankh* (sign of life), a *nefer* (denoting 'heart and lung' = 'good'), a *tit* (knot of Isis, usually made of a red stone), a *djed*-pillar (as an ideograph, 'enduring', associated primarily with Osiris, but also other gods), a *wad*-column, in the shape of a young papyrus-plant, meaning 'be green' (usually made of a light green stone). For the rich, such amulets were made of precious stones or gold; for the less-well-off, of ceramics, semi-precious stones, or even bronze; they were normally hung round the neck of the person (dead or alive) to be protected or cured. Museo Egizio, Turin. Photo: A. Roccati (ed.), *La magia in Egitto ai tempi dei Faraoni* (exhibition catalogue, Milan 1985) (Modena, 1985) 80 fig.18 (Foto Lovera).

supplied the *bouleutai* after the introduction of town councils early in the third century.⁵¹ We know that both catarchic and genethliacal astrology were much in demand in Egypt during the same period to provide specific advice about business and family decisions in one's own locality;⁵² the central role of divination-recipes in the magical papyri is likely to be connected with the same sort of demand, whether we imagine replies mediated by reputed local specialists or direct do-it-yourself (or a mixture of both). It was with the needs of these Hellenized groups that practitioners of magic, whether inside or

⁵¹ Bowman and Rathbone 1992, 107–27; Tacoma 2006.

⁵² Neugebauer and Van Hoesen 1959; Jones 1995.



Fig. 7.2a. Haematite ring-amulet (obverse), showing a dog- and an ass-headed figure (that is, Anubis and Seth) holding the *sa*-hieroglyph ('protection') and supporting Aphrodite on their joined hands, with three stars below. Below this scene, an Osiris-mummy and a lion, walking left. Round the edge, a variant of the Bakaxichych-logos (another variant of the same logos on the reverse). Interpretation uncertain, no parallels. Skoluda Collection, M070. Photo: S. Michel, *Bunte Steine - Dunkle Bilder* (Munich 2001), pl. 22 no. 134.

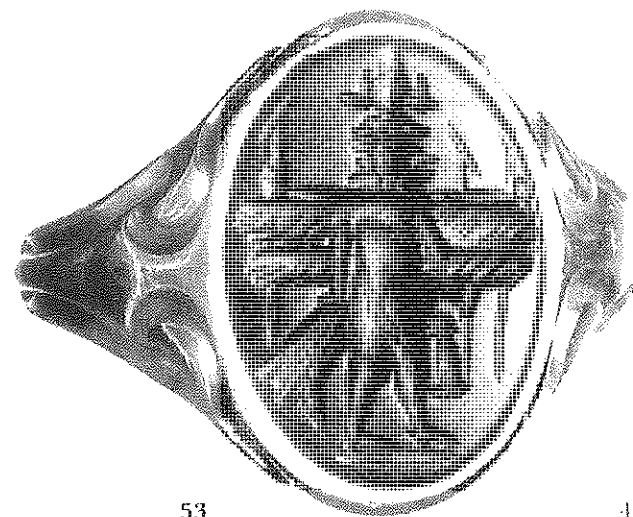


Fig. 7.2b. Green jasper in a nineteenth-century ring, showing a pantheistic Bes with double wings, the *atef*-crown flanked by two cobras, a crocodile tail. In three of his hands he holds *was*-sceptres; possibly a *nefer*-sign in the fourth. Several parallels. Royal Albert Museum, Exeter, inv. no. 5/1946.356, from the Montague collection, perhaps from Alexandria. Photo: S. Hoey Middleton, *Seals, Finger-rings, Engraved Gems and Amulets in the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter* (Exeter 1998) 65 no. 53 (size: 4:1).

outside the temple, needed to communicate if they were to gain access to this relatively wealthy potential market.⁵³

Another consideration is that these texts display a wide range of competence, learning and ability. A hierarchy both of aims and abilities is indeed implied by Kalasiris, the Egyptian priest (*προφήτης*) in Heliodorus' *Ethiopian Story*, a novel now generally dated to the first half of the third century, if not a little earlier:

⁵³ Whether such Hellenized Egyptians had specifically Greek models of magical practice I rather doubt. Though there are some (early) texts with plainly Greek content, such as *SupplMag* 72 (Augustan), *PGrMag* XX (first century AD) and VI (see n.19), the great bulk of the content of the magical papyri in Greek is plainly Egyptian. Ritner 1995, 3368–71, suggests that even the 'hymns', usually taken as clear evidence of the splicing of traditions, may have been written by Egyptian priests, on the model of the Isis-hymns of Medinet Mâdi. I incline therefore to think that Faraone 2000, 195–214; cf. Faraone 2008, 224, exaggerates the impact of specifically Greek models on the content.

One kind (of Egyptian wisdom) is popular, we might say creeping along the ground, ministrant to images and wallowing among corpses, addicted to simples, and relying on incantations. It neither attains any good end itself, nor brings any good to those who use it; most often it finds itself at fault, such successes as it achieves being painful and meagre... But the other knowledge, ... the true wisdom, of which this other has spuriously assumed the name, and in which we priests of prophetic line are trained from our youth, looks upwards to the heavenly region: companion of the gods, partaker of the nature of the higher powers, it traces the motions of the stars and gleams foreknowledge of the future.

Aithiop. 3.16.3–4 tr. J.R. Morgan (adapted)

Although the detail here does not quite fit, since a formulary such as the Great Paris codex (*PGrMag* IV) contains a substantial amount of 'creeping magic' as well as elevated divinatory rituals, and deploys its learning, albeit unevenly, to both ends, Kalasiris' distinction seems to apply at any rate roughly to the surviving texts. His radicalization and moralization of the division between low and high magic, which is foreign to the Anastasi formularies, must however owe something to the Roman view of magic, which has been seen as responsible for the secrecy attending the practice of ritual magic in Roman Egypt, and evidently also lies behind the dispute between Porphyry and Iamblichus over 'controlling the gods' (*goeteia*).⁵⁴ The hierarchy of knowledge and prowess was also of course heavily inflected by financial considerations, that is how much the client was prepared to pay for a given service, and thus the effort worth investing in the contract.

With the exception of *POslo* 1 = *PGrMag* XXXVI, an illustrated papyrus of twelve columns bought by Sam Eitrem in the Fayum in 1920, the books collected by Anastasi, mainly in their known form late and, it seems, from Upper Egypt, represent the longest and most sophisticated formularies that survive. Rather more than half (54) of the 103 non-Christian magical documents from other sites in Egypt, scattered among numerous papyrological collections, and republished by Preisendanz as *PGrMag* nos. VIII–XI, XV–XXXV, XXXVII–LX, LXII–LXXXI, are individual 'activated' texts, phylacteries for protection,

⁵⁴ Ritner 1995, 3355–8; Betz 1995, 153–75, repr. in Betz 1998, 152–74. Theurgy: Iamblichus, *Myst. Aegypt.* 194.2–7 condemns magic, i.e. 'creeping magic', in strongly moral terms, cf. Shaw 1995, 85–7, 168–9.

aggressive (erotic), or malign magic.⁵⁵ The rest are copies of individual recipes, mainly amulets or phylacteries, but also erotic; only ten are formulary collections.⁵⁶ Among the seventy-nine non-Christian texts published since 1941 and collected by Daniel and Maltomini in *SupplMag*, there are thirty-one formularies, only one of which, of Augustan date and untypical (no. 72), is longer than a few lines; none is remotely comparable to a text such as the Great Paris codex (*PGrMag* IV), *P.gr. BritMus* CXXI (*PGrMag* VII) or even *P. gr. BritMus* XLVI (*PGrMag* V). Moreover, apart from *PGrMag* LXII 24–46 and LXXVII, virtually none of the non-Anastasi texts concerns direct-vision (*ph-ngr*), bowl-divination, or dream-vision, which is a main emphasis of the Anastasi texts.⁵⁷ Although they do contain 'low' magic, it is thus tempting to think that the latter represent a type of relatively elevated, self-conscious temple-magic, otherwise lost, focused especially on divination and on the display of theological erudition. Such a profile was surely designed to be attractive to relatively sophisticated customers mainly wanting divine help in decision-making.⁵⁸

QUESTIONS OF LANGUAGE

The most striking innovation in this area, however, is the very fact that these texts are, with the exception of the Demotic texts I return to later, all in Greek.⁵⁹ Historically, ritual texts in Egypt show great conservatism in the choice of medium: the Egyptian language in its various forms was considered uniquely appropriate to religious ends. Although one can see the advantage in the magical market-place of selling protective phylacteries in a language intelligible to Greek-

⁵⁵ I use Preisendanz' own figures at *PGrMag* vol. 2 p. ix. The total is actually considerably smaller, since he included many questionable texts, for example XXIII, XXVI, XXIX, XXX, XXXI, XXXIV, LVI–LVII, LXI, LXXIII–LXXVI, rightly omitted by Betz from the translation.

⁵⁶ I count only *PGrMag* VIII, X, XX, XXIIa and b, LII, LVIII, LXII, LXIII, LXX. None contains more than five recipes.

⁵⁷ *PGrMag* LVII seems to be for acquiring a *paredros*, a mystic assistant. On the central place of high-level divination texts in the major demotic (and indeed Greek) formularies, see Ritner, 'Magical Practice' (n.17) 3346–8.

⁵⁸ I make no comment here on Thessalus of Tralleis, on whom see for example Ritner 1995, 3356–8; Frankfurter 1998, 168–9, 219–20.

⁵⁹ The oddity of accepting Greek into a ritual domain is remarked on by Dieleman 2005, 63.

speakers, what was it that impelled priests, or at any rate practitioners on the periphery of the temple, to create, translate, or transpose entire formularies, most of whose recipes were never intended to be seen by non-experts? It is this process of translation or transposition of magical materials into Greek that remains baffling if we try to maintain, with R.K. Ritner, that nothing much changed in the area of magical practice from Late Dynastic times. For it is not that the texts in Greek exist alongside a mass of Demotic material: with the exception of the four Anastasi demotic texts and the earliest Coptic ones, which date to the second century AD but are mostly (much) later, virtually all the surviving magical texts of the Roman period are in Greek.⁶⁰

We need again, I think, to invoke the market envisaged. It is instructive that the 'distinctively' Egyptian astrological books of 'Nechepso' and 'Petosiris' were also written in Greek even though demotic astrological texts are known.⁶¹ The desire to supply the Hellenized strata of the population with 'applied' or 'activated' texts must have opened up a niche for bilingual entrepreneurs (whatever their nominal religious status). Insofar as divinatory sessions were conducted with Greek-speaking clients, divinatory texts in Greek were required. The best explanation for the existence of texts consisting of single recipes is that there was a trade in such items, or exchanges of them within the scribal class. Moreover, where clients' own information had to be included, for example in erotic magic, it was easier for the model likewise to be in that language.⁶²

At the same time, the pragmatic shift to a language that was empty of religious merit and significance had a cost, a cost that impelled a search for new ways of registering the Egyptian authenticity of the

⁶⁰ See Depauw 1997, 109–11. It must be said however that demoticists are both few in number and little interested in this type of text; Prof. J.-F. Quack (Heidelberg) tells me there are indeed numbers of as yet unpublished items.

⁶¹ The astronomical texts (second half of second century AD) of the cache of ostraka found in 1938 by A. Vogliano in the temenos of a temple in Medinet Mâdi (and subsequently destroyed thanks to the ineptitude of the authorities of the Cairo Museum) were likewise in Greek; Baccani 1989, 66–77. For the demotic astrological texts, see Depauw 1997, 106–7.

⁶² Ritner 2005, 3362, thinks it 'highly possible that few of the preserved Greek magical papyri were ever intended for a Greek audience'. This is surely to take the continuity thesis to absurd lengths; and anyway 'papyri' is not the issue—we need a distinction here, which we do not get, between longer formularies and individual recipes.

recipes in their new, blank format. The 'true' identity of magical practice behind its new guise needed to be reaffirmed. This involved recourse to Aleida Assmann's *Funktionsgedächtnis*, selective, interest-led modes of memorialization.⁶³ Such selective retrospection was a long-familiar practice in Egypt, the Late Egyptian temple being itself a representation of the past, an expression of a specific historical consciousness: 'Der ägyptische Spätzeitempel ist gebaute Erinnerung'.⁶⁴ The practices, the use of specific plants and empowered liquids, *historiolae*, threats, letters to the dead, modelled figurines, divination by dreams, subjection-strategies, and the rest, remained no doubt largely constant. But such continuity is not the point. What was needed were strategies that reaffirmed the 'true' identity of the enterprise as a whole.

In this connection, I want briefly to look at three important types of memorialization-strategies in the magical papyri: referring back to the institution of the temple, attempts to reproduce older magical modes in new forms, and 'reverse' translation.

1. Evoking the world of the temple

One of the traditional magical modes in Egypt was the inscribed stone stela, such as the Horus stele (Fig. 7.3).⁶⁵ Stelae of this type comprised three types of communication: the primary 'epiphanic' appearance of Horus; above him a narrative evoking aspects of the divine world, which continues onto the reverse; and finally the text itself.⁶⁶ Typically water was poured over such stelae, thus absorbing the power of the words and pictures, and given to the patient to drink.⁶⁷ Originally therefore a stele was an inscribed magical object. In the Anastasi formularies, however, the Greek word *στίλη* is consistently (though not quite invariably) used to mean a set of instructions with the

⁶³ Assmann 1999, 134.

⁶⁴ Assmann 1992, 181.

⁶⁵ Koenig 1994, 100–30; Kákosy 1985, repr. 1991, 59–66, 130–1. The Egyptian word was *oba*, 'offering-stone'.

⁶⁶ The text in this case consists of a *historiola*, a mythical anecdote, in which Horus is stung by a scorpion; his mother Isis receives advice from the scorpion goddess Salket, and the god Thoth appears with an antidote. The text ends with a threat against the gods if the magic should fail.

⁶⁷ Sist 1983, 253–60.

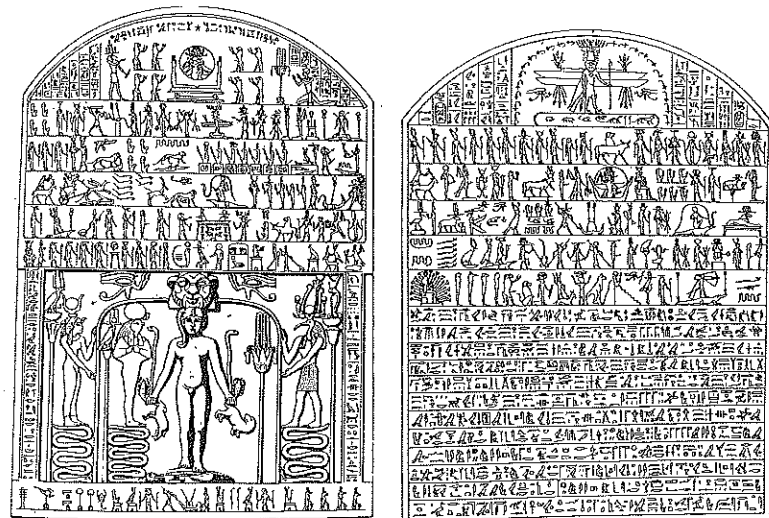


Fig. 7.3. Miniature basalt stele showing Horus-the-child standing on a crocodile (h: 8.7 cm, w: 5.1 cm, d: 2.3 cm). In his right hand, Horus holds a snake, a scorpion, and an oryx (sacred to Seth); in his left, a snake, a scorpion, and a lion. A Bes-mask above his head. Such stelae were intended as amulets against attacks by creatures such as snakes, scorpions, and crocodiles. Egyptian, XXX Dynasty (fourth century BC). Museo Archeologico, Milan. Publ.: L. Sist, 'Una stela di "Horo sui crocodrilli"', *Oriens Antiquus* 22 (1983), 253–60.

appropriate words, that is a 'recipe' for a ritual procedure.⁶⁸ What had been a complex magical object for ritual use has become a word for a text, a set of explicit instructions.

The significance of this shift is made clear by numerous references to the discovery of claimed originals in temples, for example:

A copy of recipes from the <book?> found in Heliopolis, in the holy book called 'of Hermes', in the inner shrine, (written) in Egyptian letters and translated into Greek.

P.Berol. inv. 21243 = SupplMag 72.1–5

⁶⁸ *PGrMag* III 424 (which also provides an 'Egyptian' word for the hoopoe); IV 1115–66; 1167–1226; 2572; 3249 and 3252; V 96–172; 423; VII 215; 863–5; 941; termed 'sacred': XIII 61, 54; 568. There are only three instances of the word *stela* in a magical context outside the Anastasi texts; two are Christian (*SupplMag* 23.11; 60.1), the third is found in a fifth-century AD erotic spell now in Cologne (45.18).

Copy of a sacred book found in the treasury of Hermes.

PGrMag XXIVa2–4

I utter the names that Hermes Trismegistus has inscribed in hieroglyphic writing at Heliopolis.

PGrMag IV 884–7

Your true name is inscribed on the sacred stela in the inner shrine at Hermopolis.

PGrMag VIII 41–2

The transcript is claimed to enjoy the same authority as the original, whose power is itself guaranteed by its location, its script, or its truthfulness.⁶⁹ Only in the first case (of Augustan date) is the book claimed to be in hieroglyphics, which could at that time still be read; thereafter the 'original' is cited to underwrite the pronunciation of the name.⁷⁰ There are also references to the editor or author having been given a recipe by a person of authority, for example, a '[doctor] in Oxyrhynchus', such men being in fact practitioners of iatromagic.⁷¹ Or the practitioner may himself claim to be a senior priest: 'For I am a *prophètes* (that is: *ḥm-ntr* priest), and since I am about to call a terrible, fearful name . . . open [the holy temple], the world [built on the earth] and welcome Osiris, because I am . . .'.⁷²

Closely related to appeals to the temple, in some cases identical, is the claim that a given recipe was devised by a named authority. Thus Pnouthis, the alleged author of a recipe for the difficult task of acquiring a personal daemonic factotum, is said to have been a senior temple priest, a *hierogrammateus* (that is: *ḥry-ḥb ḥry-tp*); Pachrates,

⁶⁹ For other examples, see the commentary of Daniel and Maltomini, *SupplMag* 72 on col. i.1–5 (pp. 111–12); Brashear 1979, 261–78 at 266. Daniel and Maltomini point out (p. 113) that in an actual Egyptian temple such books would not have been kept in the *adyton* but in the library; *adyton* is actually a Hellenism; indeed, we might take it that the device as a whole is Graeco-Roman. Unsurprisingly, the same formulae are also found in astrological contexts, for example *Cod. Berol.* 173 f.177 verso = CCAG 7 p.62; cf. *Cod. phil. gr. Vindob.* 108 f.263 verso = CCAG 6 p.10, 'The table there in the Egyptian language . . .'.
⁷⁰ Claims to be able to 'utter' hieroglyphics appear at *PGrMag* XIII 81, 149, 599 ('hieratic' and 'Egyptian' too); a name to be written in hieroglyphs 'as the *prophetai* call them': XII 276. *PGrMag* IV 96–172 is plausibly supposed to be ascribed to Ieu, a 'writer of hieroglyphics'.
⁷¹ *PDem* xiv.1–92 (?); 528–53; cf. Westendorf 1999, 65–76; 360–88; 524–35. The implied author of *PGM* I 42–195 claims to be 'an expert' (43).
⁷² *PGrMag* VII 323–6; cf. XII 229. The 'prophetic dress' of I 262–347 seems however to be Apolline.

the alleged author of a multi-purpose recipe, a *prophêtes* at Heliopolis.⁷³ Another text opens in the form of a letter from the alleged author, Nephotes (which is usually a divine name), to Psammetichus, presumably the famous Pharaoh of the XXVI Dynasty (664–610 BC), recommending its amazing powers. Yet another claims to be by King Pitys, who elsewhere addresses a recipe to King Ostanes, and may in fact be an Egyptian alchemist, Bitys.⁷⁴ The land of Egypt is mentioned several times, not merely as a source of ingredients but also as the focus of divine blessing and protection.⁷⁵

Although the process of collecting and editing recipes from different sources led to the citation of many other names from the 'Occultic International', among them Greek and Persian names, I see the devices that refer specifically to Egypt as part of a wider strategy of establishing identity through memory of an indigenous tradition now fixed in an ideal past. Indeed, it picks up on a device occasionally used in much earlier magical practice to legitimate recipes, but reworks it to serve as functional memory.⁷⁶

2. Reproduction

In Egypt, the special status of hieroglyphic script was marked by its rank as the speech of the gods. By the second century AD, however, hieroglyphs could no longer be read even within the temple; their 'force' continued to be evoked by various means, notably in the creation of commentaries, such as Horapollo's *Hieroglyphica*, which

⁷³ *PGrMag* I 42–195; IV 2447–8. We also hear of books or recipes by Manetho (*PGrMag* III 440; XIII 440), Khonsu (*PDem* xiv 239–95), and Paysakh, a priest (232–8).

⁷⁴ *PGrMag* IV 1928, 2006. Pibechis is claimed to be another Egyptian magician: *PGrMag* IV 3007–86 with Preisendanz 1941, 1310–12. Various deities, such as Osiris, the healer Imhotep, and Thoth/Hermes appear as authors of recipes (*PDem* xiv 627–35; 93–114; *PGrMag* V 213–303; VII 919–24; etc.).

⁷⁵ *PGrMag* IV 2967–3006; XIII 34, XII 98; IV 1341, 2371; protection: IV 1640. Allusions to Memphis, the grave of Osiris at Abydos, the Nile, crocodiles, apes, and so on all tend in the same direction, the establishment of the specific identity of Egypt.

⁷⁶ For example: 'This magic was found in the night, in the great hall of the temple at Coptos, by its lector-priest, a secret (belonging) to Isis. The earth was plunged in darkness, but the moon lighted the book all the way to Cheops... to whom it was brought as a wonder': *P. BritMus.* 10059 (*P. med. Lond.*, c. 1350 BC) V 274; other examples in Kákosy 1985, repr. 1991, 26–8.

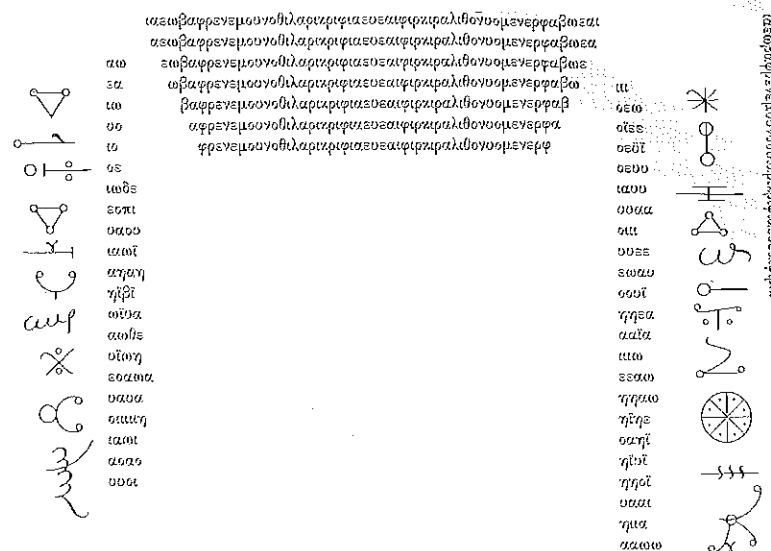


Fig. 7.4. *Charaktères* from *PGrMag* IV 409–34 = Bibl. Nat. suppl. gr. 574 p.6, as represented in the edition by C. Wessely, *Denkschriften der Akad. der Wiss. in Wien* 36 (1888) 27–208 at 55. The *charaktères* are aligned with two 'bricks', that is, columns of vowel sequences, and a large 'heart', composed of the *Iaeobaphrenemoun*-palindrome. The codex is dated early fourth century AD, though individual recipes are certainly older (the Old Coptic sections are generally dated second-third century AD on linguistic grounds).

purported to reveal their inner or true significance.⁷⁷ The shift of sacred writings into Greek created a double distance from this divine language. It is therefore not surprising that some effort went into imagining means of representing this lost system of 'vertical' communication.

One is the development of *charaktères* (Fig. 7.4), invented pseudo-letters that were addressed as though they were sentient and full of force, and claimed to be a form of instant communication with the other world.⁷⁸ They were evidently considered condensed symbols of

⁷⁷ This was already beginning to be the case in Chaeremon's day: van der Horst 1986; cf. Sternberg-El Hotabi 1994, 218–45. For Horapollo, see Thissen 2001.

⁷⁸ I know of no satisfactory account of *charaktères*, though see Hopfner 1924, 1183–8 on theurgic use. The most important passages are *PGrMag* I 263–76 and LVII 20–36.

divine power to be used in a variety of ways. About thirteen of these signs occur often, hundreds of others only once. It is likely that they were taught, or the ability to invent convincing examples was taught, as part of late temple education. Pirating or inventing bizarre signs is of course a simple method of generating an apparently authoritative magical 'language', and to my mind their values were underdetermined; but it is clear enough from the (rather original) examples in Fig. 7.4 that *charaktères* were deliberately intended to be immediately distinguishable from Greek signs. They do not exist in earlier Egyptian magic, and the idea was surely to evoke the way in which hieroglyphics stand out in a hieratic text. They thus acted as a analogy to the now lost system of hieroglyphic writing.⁷⁹

A striking feature of Graeco-Egyptian magic is another form of 'vertical' communication, the use of *voces magicae* (the 'names' used to invoke divinity). Such 'names' or 'words' occur in quite small numbers in earlier Egyptian magic,⁸⁰ but become very much more common in the Greek texts, where they number literally hundreds.⁸¹ Because such names were unintelligible (often in 'sunken' Egyptian), they were extremely liable to distortion; yet the power of the text to gain its ends was considered to reside largely in the reproduction of the supposedly correct sound of each. To meet this difficulty, a technique was evolved of 'fixing' the words to preserve their separate identities by means of a line drawn over them, as in Fig. 7.5.⁸² Admittedly this effort occurs only sporadically; other recipes in the same book do not carry them; and we know from the so-called fixed expressions, termed *logoi*, which constantly show quite radical variation, that it was impossible to maintain the integrity of such items in a primarily oral, albeit text-assisted, culture. The invention of a standard device reveals a determination among some practitioners to resist the erosion of time by preserving 'authentic' sounds. But once this device became a mere memento, transcribed into a new context, the formulary, where the same effort was not consistently made, their value changed and they became mere functional memories.

⁷⁹ Pseudo-hieroglyphs are actually found in the London-Leyden text, at col. V 1.8–10 (cf. Dieleman 2005, 100–1), and on magical amulets, cf. for example Michel 2001, nos. 51, 102, 274, etc.—sometimes actually authentic ones, for example no. 20.

⁸⁰ For example the entire page of such 'words' in *P. BritMus* 10042 (*P. mag. Harris*) col. XII.1–5 (p. 98 Lange).

⁸¹ Preisendanz made an effort to list them in *PGrMag* vol. 3 (never published), Index XII, 'Zauberworte'.

⁸² Cf. Brashear 1995, 3429–38. Daniel 1991, consistently gives the overlinings in *PGrMag* XII and XIII; Preisendanz equally consistently omitted them.

στιμων σκ[ο]πτικον τριψον ενχρειε τους οφθαλμους σο
 κ λαβων πτερον ιβεως δακτυλων ιδ χρειςας ροδι
 νω μυρω η κριννω περιελιξας οθονιω βυσσινω
 ως βιβλιον εχε μετα χειρας βλεπε δε τω αριστερω
 οφθαλμω παρεμβλεπων ουτως λ μουνειπδσις
 ηυφθανουθι θιεσημι νουσινηιθι χρεχρεωσι
 νωρημουχ ορωου ενθεριωι εωη μουνιαχ
 νεσωι μουνεσωχ μουνι ενιμεχρε
 μουρενεε σονσνηι ωσμουχορ ωουενθερι
 ανοκ' σωσερμαιχω εντευμουτοιχηνη χρεμου
 τηχβας πνητε κυφοχ' εμμιεβοχνης τχηνη
 φιμουχου νουιχωω ιμ . . . ουννευμοι ινονρι :

Fig. 7.5. A section of *P. BritMus. gr. CXXI* col. 10 = *PGrMag* VII 336–47 as printed by F. Kenyon, *Greek Papyri in the British Museum, 1: Catalogue* (London 1893) 95, showing the lines drawn over the *voces magicae* to ensure their correct transmission. Script: fourth century AD.

A third technique intended to evoke ancient magic is the prescription in formularies of images to be used in rites; sometimes actual drawings of deities are included. In Dynastic practice, the image of the deity was believed itself to possess invocative power; as we saw in the case of the Horus stele, image, script, and text constituted a sort of *Gesamtwerk* designed for maximum effectiveness.⁸³ The Greek formularies, and some activated texts, carry a range of divine images to be employed during the rite; in one case, an image of Bes with a sword and sceptre is prescribed, and illustrated immediately below the recipe (Fig. 7.6a). This image, like other such images in the papyri, is from the standard iconographic repertoire (Fig. 7.6b shows an analogous terracotta statuette).⁸⁴ In such cases, the image alludes to an epiphanic or mythical moment at which the god's power is made

⁸³ Tefnin 1984, 55–72; Koenig 1994, 79–82.

⁸⁴ In many cases, for example *PGrMag* III 707–9 (Harpokrates), V 242 (Isis), VII 629–30 (Imhotep), the recipe assumes knowledge of the iconography.

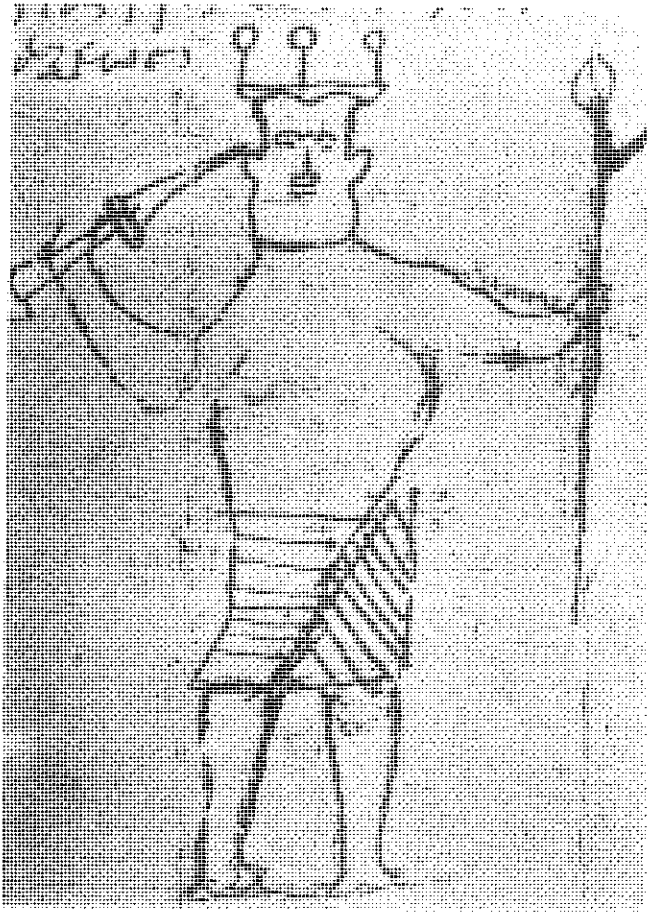


Fig. 7.6a. The image of Bes, with feather-crown, sword, and sceptre, to be drawn on one's palm to obtain a dream-vision of the god: *P. BritMus CXXII* col. iii = *PGrMag* VIII after I.110. Script: fourth–fifth century AD.

manifest, and thus hints at an interpretation of how the incantation is to take effect.⁸⁵ The presence of such drawings in the Anastasi papyri signals once again their claim to be continuing an ancient tradition.

⁸⁵ Cf. Grumach 1970, 169–76.



Fig. 7.6b. Terracotta statuette of Bes (h. 11.3 cm), with the feather-crown broken off. Perhaps Fayum, probably third century AD. Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin inv. no. 11630. Photo: W. Weber, *Die ägyptisch-griechischen Terrakottas* (Berlin 1914) 163 no. 261.

Yet things are not in fact quite the same as 'before', for alongside these 'ancient' drawings we find numerous drawings of a quite different, indicative or performative, kind.

3. Translation

My final area of memorialization is the phenomenon of 'reverse' translation. Already in 1904 Griffiths and Thompson suspected that the ninety-three recipes in the London–Leyden demotic text might be a collection of translations of earlier recipes written in Greek.⁸⁶ Dieleman has recently suggested that *PDem* xii (*P.Leid.* J 384) and xiv (London–Leyden) are rather the product of a process of reaction by members of the Theban priestly elite in the late second to early third century AD to the success in Lower Egypt of the magical texts in Greek.⁸⁷ It is certain that such translations can only have been undertaken in the House of Life (the Egyptian name for the temple), since by this date the only people still fluent in Demotic as a written and spoken language were temple-priests. A close analysis of the rhetoric and theology of the two texts suggests that earlier hieratic and demotic texts were taken over largely complete or curtailed, edited, and spliced into Greek texts, perhaps through a whole series of re-writings in a variety of scripts and languages, ultimately producing a new type of 'Graeco-Demotic' magical text.⁸⁸ In some cases, it can be shown that items have been translated from Greek into Demotic; occasionally a Greek sequence is retained untranslated.⁸⁹

What is going on here? Some years ago John Ray pointed out that demotic Egyptian in the Hellenistic and Roman periods is a highly selective linguistic mode, which deliberately screens out not only dialect but also the changes—Greek and Aramaic lexical borrowings, and grammatical shifts—that were taking place in the spoken language.⁹⁰ Ray plausibly compared it to modern Greek *καθαρεύουσα*. Dieleman is right to stress that the two Leyden texts have a relatively high incidence of Greek loan-words, but they are still almost insignificant by comparison with the number of Egyptian words (62 against 1121), and are anyway due to the scissors-and-paste method of composing the texts.⁹¹ The clear implication is that the Theban priests were attempting to represent the Greek magical texts in the

⁸⁶ Griffiths and Thompson 1904–9: 1: 10–12.

⁸⁷ Dieleman 2005, 185–284.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 103–83.

⁸⁹ Greek and Coptic glosses sometimes provide the 'correct' pronunciation of *voces*.

⁹⁰ Ray 1994, 251–64.

⁹¹ Dieleman 2005, 110.

medium of a genuinely sacred language not so much to mark their legitimacy as a means of registering their 'true' Egyptian quality. Only in a pure language could they truly make contact with the Egyptian gods. Such reverse translation represents functional memory in its most resolute mode: the creation of spurious 'originals'.

Abbreviations

- ANRW *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*
 Betz, GMP Betz, H.-D. (ed.) 1986, 1992². *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
 Description *Description de l'Égypte*. Hong Kong and Cologne: Taschen, 1995, repr. 2007.
 PDem *Demotic papyri* (re-)translated by J.H. Johnson in Betz, GMP in translation.
 PGrMag K. Preisendanz (ed.) 1928–31, *Papyri Graecae Magicae*. Leipzig: Teubner; cited from 2nd edn by A. Henrichs 1973–4, Stuttgart: Teubner.
 RE *Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft*
 SupplMag Daniel, R. W. and Maltomini, F. (eds.) 1990–2, *Supplementum Magicum*. Papyrologica Coloniensia, 16.1–2. Opladen: West-deutscher Verlag.

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8

Epigraphy and Ritual

The Vow of a Legionary from Sulmo

John Scheid

In an age in which revisiting ancient sources seems often unnecessary and in which religious practices are more likely to be defined according to modern theories, historians can be at risk of arriving at major misinterpretations. In the field of ancient religion, one of the practices most blatantly misunderstood is the vow. It shows the degree to which Roman religious history is still seen through the prism of anachronistic concepts. Eight years ago, during a wonderful Lent term residence at Brasenose College as a visiting fellow, I presented some of the elements of this case to my friend Simon Price, other colleagues, and Oxford graduate students. It is in memory of that stay and of our discussions, that I would like to develop this theme somewhat further. I will focus mainly on a graffito discovered in a temple.

The presence of religious graffiti in the porticos or rooms of places of worship should not come as a surprise. An inscription from the Villa Bonelli, in Trastevere, states that one C. Julius Anicetus, who restored in AD 102 a sanctuary of Sol Divinus, asks *ex imperio Solis, ne quis velit parietes aut triclitas inscribere aut scari phare*.¹ This warning is a precious testimony of the behaviour of the users of religious spaces. We learn that the *cultores* had the bad habit of scratching graffiti on the walls and furniture. This regrettable habit is also

¹ ILS 4335.

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