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INTRODUCTION

Since the time of the largest find of magical papyri at the beginning of the nineteenth century,[1] the study of the Graeco-Egyptian magical literature of the second–fifth centuries AD has undergone at least two stages of misconceptions.[2] At first, it was neglected as the classicist ideal of the period prevented most scholars from seeing the potential of textual material that was considered the degenerate product of syncretistic folk superstition. Then, with the beginning of the twentieth century, an interest in ancient magic started to awaken and increasingly developed within several disciplines up to the present. In 1928–31 Karl Preisendanz and his collaborators assembled all the surviving material known at the time in the edition that remains the basic tool for a study of the corpus: *Papyri Graecae Magicae – Die Griechischen Zauberpapyri* I–II (*PGM*).[3] Despite the merit of making the texts easily accessible, they decided to omit the Demotic sections of the papyri without giving any explanation,[4] and thus unintentionally contributed to strengthening a second misleading conception. The Greek

[1] The so-called Theban Magical Library: a group of papyri discovered by villagers in Thebes some time before 1828 and acquired by Giovanni Anastasi (1780–1857), the Swedish–Norwegian Consul General in Egypt. Between 1828 and 1839 he sold his collection of papyri to different museums, thus scattering it all over Europe. Among the thousands of texts there was also the 'Library', together with other magical papyri of uncertain provenance: a collection containing the most impressive magical texts (as far as contents and conservation status are concerned) ever discovered. Unfortunately, almost nothing is known about the circumstances and place of the find. Brashear 1995, 3400–5. Cf. Zago 2010, especially 31–71.

[2] For the history of studies and relative bibliography see Brashear 1995; Ritner 1995a.

[3] The third volume, containing indices and explanations of the magical words, reached only the stage of galley proofs (1941), photocopies of which are still available to scholars.

[4] It appears even more significant if we consider that in many cases the Greek and the Demotic sections were written by the same scribe.

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language tended to be confused with ethnic Greek culture, so that, even if the complex tangle of multicultural religious influences was certainly recognized and taken into consideration as one of the fundamental characteristics of these texts, they continued to be studied mainly by classicists. For example, though Egyptian tradition was clearly one of the main constituents of the background of the *PGM*, the separation between the Greek and Demotic material, as well as the impasse created by the usually specialized linguistic competences, prevented Egyptologists from taking an interest in this corpus for a long time.

With the end of the last century, Graeco-Egyptian magical texts seem to have finally found their place within the study of ancient Mediterranean cultures. All the Demotic material was available to scholars by the 1970s, though in separate publications (*PDM*),[5] together with the second edition of Preisendanz's *PGM* revised by Albert Henrichs. A first attempt to join the two separate corpora was made by Hans Dieter Betz who, supervising a team of both classicists and Egyptologists, in 1986 published *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation – Including the Demotic Spells*, which, compared to Preisendanz's edition, included fifty new papyri that had appeared in various publications since 1941. Even if this volume cannot be considered a proper 'edition', as it does not include the original texts, it has two great merits: it set a standard for future studies underlining the essential unity of Greek and Egyptian magical texts and it made them accessible to the general public. In 1990–2 Robert W. Daniel and Franco Maltomini published one hundred new Greek texts[6] with translations and notes in the two volumes of *Supplementum Magicum*. The core of the corpus was thus established, while other magical texts have continued to appear in

[5] Griffith and Thompson 1904–9; Bell, Nock and Thompson 1933; Johnson 1975; Johnson 1977; for other minor documents, cf. Ritner 1995a, 3343–5. See also Quack 2008. For more details see **Intro** n.56.

[6] Not only on papyrus, but also on metal and wooden tablets, ostraca and other supports. Forty-one of these magical texts had already appeared in translation in Betz's edition.

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various publications up to the present. At this stage, the change in scholarly attitudes towards Graeco-Egyptian magic was complete.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

Greeks and Egyptians in Graeco-Roman Egypt and the survival of indigenous religious tradition: an outline

The recognition of the importance of the Egyptian element in the *PGM* raises some particular questions: who wrote or collected these texts? Greeks or Egyptians? This in its turn implies a more general issue: can we distinguish between ethnic identities in Graeco-Roman Egypt? And what about cultural identities and religious traditions? Are the *PGM* the product of a hybrid society or not? An extensive account of the scholarly opinion on the issues of ethnicity, cultural identity and plurality or fusion of religious traditions in Graeco-Roman Egypt lies outside the scope of this study, but I will summarize some main points which are essential to establish the basis of my methodological approach to the *PGM*.[7]

First, it has to be noted that, since the main interest here is the cultural set-up, we can focus on the Greek and Egyptian elements and leave aside the Roman. In fact, under Roman rule Egypt remained a Greek-occupied land and, despite the political and social changes, it is hard to identify any specific penetration of Roman tradition as far as cultural interactions are concerned.[8] Furthermore, when dealing with the *PGM*, such a Graeco-Egyptian focus is even more justified: Latin does not appear in the corpus and, more importantly, the compilatory nature of the *PGM* sets both the composition of these texts

[7] For a thorough treatment of the subject see the literature quoted throughout this chapter.

[8] Even the use of Latin remained very limited and mainly confined to the military administration: Bowman 1986, 158; Bagnall 1993, 231–2, 244; Montevecchi 1988, 445; Evans 2012; Jördens 2012, 250–2; Depauw 2012, 500–1.

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and the origin of their sources earlier than their late date (though, as far as the composition is concerned, hardly before the time of the Roman conquest: see below pp. 22–3 point 3).

The Greek immigrants in Ptolemaic Egypt who lived in the few Greek poleis (especially Naukratis, where Greeks already settled in the sixth century BC, Alexandria, Ptolemais and later Antinoopolis) might have often succeeded in keeping their ethnic identity distinct. However, mainly in the countryside, marriages between indigenous Egyptians and Greek settlers were common so that a few generations after the conquest of Alexander the Great in 332 BC ethnicity became difficult to determine. The study of onomastics can be misleading too since the children of these mixed unions could be given Greek or Egyptian names, or indigenous Egyptians could take a 'second' Greek name (and sometimes vice versa).[9] They could also acquire the status of 'Hellenes' through military service or playing a role in the administration, but the prerequisite for, or the result of, these activities must have been a certain degree of Hellenization.[10] When Alexander conquered Egypt, the necessity for a smooth takeover of the Egyptian administration created a system of cooperation with the Egyptian upper class. Soon after, the increase in the demand for 'Hellenized' officials promoted the diffusion of Greek schooling throughout Egypt, and whoever, regardless of ethnic origin, wanted to have a

[9] Lewis 1986, 27–36; Huzar 1988, 351, 356–7; Peremans 1981; Bagnall 1993, 232–3; Vandorpe 2012, 268–9, 271–2; cf. Colin 2001, 8–15.

[10] In the Ptolemaic period 'Hellenes' identifies a category of people enjoying some fiscal privileges, but the term does not seem to refer to ethnic Greeks or descendants of Greeks exclusively. Even when Augustus changed the social organization establishing that everyone who was not a Roman citizen, a citizen of the Greek poleis, or a Jew was 'Egyptian', this categorization did not reflect any 'ethnic' reality. On the whole subject see Thompson 2001; Thompson 1994, 75; Bowman 1986, 63; Lewis 1983, 31–5; Lewis 1986, 24–5, 29–30, e.g. 139–52; Lewis 1970, 10; Huzar 1988, 362–4; Bagnall 1993, 232; Bagnall 1997; Vandorpe 2012, 262–7; Jördens 2012, especially 249–50; Stephens 2003, 241–2. See e.g. the example of Horpakhepesh in Klotz and LeBlanc 2012.

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position in the administration had to learn Greek: as the language of the ruling class it became a sort of lingua franca and was used by indigenous Egyptians too.[11] From the papyrological documentation we know that a wide range of Greek authors was available to the literate upper class. Since 'classical' authors had always been employed for the teaching of Greek, whoever learned the writing also acquired some familiarity with Greek literature, i.e. with one of the highest expressions of Greek culture.[12] Nevertheless, the use of Greek did not necessarily indicate an exclusively Greek cultural background, and despite the possibility of mixed unions and/or Hellenization, the cultural differences were still felt: many natives did not learn Greek and had fiscal disadvantages; the Ptolemaic legal system had separate courts for Greek and Egyptian speakers and manifestations of mutual contempt are often attested. The general impression is that Greeks and Egyptians remained culturally more distinct than it would seem at a first glance.[13]

An interesting example is the use of the two Egyptian scripts, Demotic and Hieratic. First, Egyptian literacy had always been rooted in the temples since it was fundamental for the performance of temple rituals and it was in the 'Houses of life', annexed to the temples, that texts were copied and studied and writing and reading were often taught, so that the role of the scribe was

[11] Welles 1970, 508–9; Lewis 1986, 26–7; Ritner 1995a, 3361; Depauw 1997, 41–4; Depauw 2012, 494; Frankfurter 1998, 248–50; Cribiore 1996, 43–8; Thompson 1994, 72–5.

[12] Thompson 1992; Thompson 1994, 76–7; Bowman 1986, 61, 122; cf. Bagnall 1993, 99–100; Depauw 2012, 496; Cribiore 1996, 48–9; Cribiore 2001, 178–80, 192–204, 225–38; cf. Miguélez Cavero 2008, 23–9, 97–105, 197–263.

[13] See Thompson 2001, 302–3, 306–11, 313–15; Thompson 1994, 80–2; Lewis 1983, 40–1, 156–7; Lewis 1986, 4–5, 26–36, 85–7; Bowman 1986, 61, 125–6; Bagnall 1997, 7; Huzar 1988, 359–62; Montevecchi 1988, 420–1; Vandorpe 2012, 268–70; Jördens 2012, 253–7; Bowman 1986, 61, 125–6; especially on the Ptolemaic legal system Yiftach-Firanko 2009, 541–52; Manning 2010, 165–201.

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hardly separable from priestly office.[14] In particular, the knowledge of Hieratic had been confined to the temple scriptorium since about the seventh century BC, following the introduction of Demotic as the script of the administration. The latter in its turn, with the introduction of Greek, gradually lost its *raison d'être*. Demotic was confined to communication with those natives who did not know Greek and, as a literary language, was mainly kept alive by the 'hard core' of the Egyptian tradition, the temple scriptorium,[15] where Demotic works (mainly cultic–religious texts, but also narrative and scientific literature) continued to be copied and composed at least until the second century AD.[16] However, while Greek influences have been hypothesized in Demotic literature, Greek literature does not seem to show any particular Egyptianizing traits.[17] This is not surprising if we consider that there were certainly many more 'Egyptians' reading Greek literature than 'Greeks' reading Egyptian. There are examples of Greek speakers who learned, or tried to learn, Demotic, but they are very few and must represent an exception.[18] Though Egyptian texts might

[14] Baines 1983, especially 580–3; Wente 1995, especially 2216, 2219–20; Vleeming 1994; Tait 1994, 190–2; Hoffmann 2012, 545–6; Cribiore 1996, 40; Clarysse 2009, 565–8, 573; cf. Williams 1972, 216; Jasnow and Zauzich 2005, I.33–6.

[15] Depauw 2012, 494–9; Frankfurter 1998, 210–12; Sauneron 1962a; Cribiore 2001, 22–3; Dieleman 2005, 21–3; Ritner 1993, 204–14, 220–33; Thompson 1994, especially 82–3; by the end of the first century AD Demotic had almost disappeared from the administration, also owing to Roman policy, which strongly favoured Greek.

[16] See Quack 2005a; also Depauw 1997, 24–6, 85–121; Hoffmann 2012; Jasnow 2002; cf. Mertens 1992, now outdated.

[17] Thissen 1999; Podemann Sørensen 1992, especially 171–2; Bowman 1986, 162–4; Hoffmann 2012, 549–51; Jasnow 2002, 214–15. However, the subject is still debated: see Depauw 1997, 86; cf. e.g. Rutherford 2000; Stephens 2003, especially 6–12, 17–18, 254–7.

[18] Especially in order to gain a living in medicine. See Bowman 1986, 124; cf. Lewis 1986, 153–6; also Fewster 2002, especially 236–45. Considering the difficulty of the script, compared to alphabetic Greek, and its relative uselessness for social ascent, Greek settlers and their descendants could not have been particularly keen on learning Demotic (or other Egyptian scripts).

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be translated into Greek,[19] their scanter accessibility helped to keep Demotic literature the privileged field of expression of the Egyptian cultural background.[20] It is not by chance that Demotic was also more persistent in areas such as the Thebaid, which had a very small Greek population but powerful priestly and military indigenous families and was the site of various Egyptian rebellions.[21] Furthermore, a proficient user of Demotic, not to mention Hieratic, must have come from the Egyptian priestly milieu and thus must have been in contact with the centre of the Egyptian cultural transmission, the temple.

It has often been pointed out that the survival of the indigenous tradition was closely connected with the Egyptian priesthood and temples, and thus with the persistence of religious traditions (it is not accidental that the last preserved Demotic texts, apart from the graffiti left in Philae by pilgrims and priests, belong to magico-religious literature).[22] One of the purposes for which the Ptolemaic rulers preserved these indigenous institutions was the necessity to legitimize the small Greek immigrant elite. In order for the Ptolemies to present themselves as restored Pharaohs and be accepted by the population, it was necessary to promote a programme of construction and decoration of

[19] E.g. the famous case of Manetho, whose *History of Egypt* seems to have been translated from Egyptian, or the *Myth of the eye of the sun*, for which we have both the Demotic and Greek versions: Dillery 1999; Depauw 1997, 92–3; West 1969; cf. Ryholt 1998. For cultic/ritual texts see e.g. Merkelbach 1968, 13–30; Quack 1997.

[20] See the common scholarly opinions about the so-called Demotic 'nationalistic' literature (Podemann Sørensen 1992, 168–70; Bowman 1986, 30–1; Frankfurter 1998, 242–8; Lloyd 1982, 37–55; Ray 1994, 63–6) and how they may have to be reconsidered (see Quack 2009a; Quack 2011b).

[21] Manning 2010, 104–16; Montevecchi 1988, 441–2; Foraboschi 1988, especially 823–4; Łajtar 2012; Pestman 1995; cf. Clarysse 1995, especially 19; cf. Johnson 1986; on the role of language in ethnicity see Hall 1997, especially 177–81.

[22] On this and all the following, Bowman 1986, 166–86; Bagnall 1993, 235–7, 240–1, 251; Frankfurter 1998, 14–15; also Hoffmann 2012, 557; Kákosy 1995a, especially 2898–931; Quack 2002; Verhoeven 2005; cf. Dunand 1979, 124–8.

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monumental temples in line with Egyptian tradition, and thus collaboration with the Egyptian priestly class became fundamental.[23] Similarly, many religious practices rooted in the Egyptian temples were preserved during the Graeco-Roman period: for example, the mummification and burial of sacred animals or the processions of local gods' images or bark shrines outside the temples (often with oracular purposes).[24] Leaving aside the great Egyptian temples, we can find both Greek and Egyptian shrines and cults displaying different degrees of 'syncretism'. For example, traditional festivals may have involved comedians and athletes on the Greek model, while at the same time the Greek element was often represented only by Greek equivalent names given to Egyptian gods (e.g. Zeus-Ammon), and typically Egyptian deities, such as the crocodile god Sobek, the hippopotamus Taweret and the dwarf Bes, were still venerated in the Roman period.[25] The range of cults and deities was vast, and anyone, regardless of their cultural background, could worship one or the other god without any difference, but in many cases the nature of the divinity, despite an added Greek name, remained faithful to its origin.[26]

When a real fusion can be observed with certainty, it appears to have been motivated primarily by political reasons: that is the case with the pair Sarapis/Isis. Ptolemy I probably chose to promote the cult of the Memphite living Apis bull because it

[23] The temples depicted the foreign rulers, but the iconography, hieroglyphic writing and religious themes stuck to the Egyptian tradition. See Bagnall 1993, 48; Huzar 1988, 379–80; Manning 2010, especially 82–3, 90–6; Thompson 1994, 72–3; Clarysse 2009, 576; Minas-Nerpel 2012 (focusing on the Roman period); see also Milne 1928, 230.

[24] Frankfurter 1998, e.g. 38–9, 44, 153–7; Łajtar 2012, 180–1; Taylor 2001, 244–63; Kákosy 1995a, especially 2958–60, 3018–20; Clarysse 2009, 569–70; cf. **Concl**. pp. 338–9.

[25] Frankfurter 1998, 58, 98–9, 106–11, 121–31; Quaegebeur 1983; Pfeiffer 2005; Kaper 2005, 305–6; Whitehorne 1995; cf. Bernand 1969, 30–1; cf. Smelik and Hemelrijk 1984, 1863–9, 1879–905, 1955–81.

[26] Frankfurter 2012, 320–1; Kákosy 1995a, 2948–92; Whitehorne 1995, 3053, 3058–85; Dunand 1999.

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was theologically connected with kingship as the bearer of the divine office and, once deceased, it was identified with Osiris, the most popular Egyptian deity. The sovereign needed to convert the Egyptian religious and royal tradition into a form comprehensible to Greeks, thus *Wsỉr-Ḥp*, Osiris-Apis, was given the Hellenized Egyptian name Sarapis and a Greek iconography on the model of Zeus-Hades. Sarapis was needed to reinforce the image of royal power and give the king the possibility of being deified as living god, especially among non-Egyptians. However, despite this politically motivated syncretism, it seems that among the indigenous population Sarapis continued to be perceived just as an *interpretatio graeca* of Osiris.[27] Therefore, his connection with Isis was almost automatic. Isis was originally mainly a mother goddess in close connection with royalty, being the wife of Osiris, king of the gods, and the mother of Horus, who inherited his father's kingdom. She was also known to be a great magician – for example, she revived the dead Osiris and healed the poisoned, or otherwise sick, Horus – and was connected with the inundation of the Nile in her form of the star Sothis, Sirius, whose rising coincided with the beginning of the inundation. These characteristics, reinterpreted according to the occasion, made her easy to associate with the majority of female Mediterranean deities. For example, her connection with the inundation, and thus the produce of the earth, as well as her involvement in the revival of Osiris, the dead god, made her look like a chthonic deity of vegetation (e.g. Demeter/Ceres, Persephone/Proserpina, Cybele); her identification with Sirius, in connection with the

[27] Quack 2013, especially 237–8, 241–7; Pfeiffer 2008; Schmidt 2005; Hölbl, *LdÄ* 'Serapis'; Stambaugh 1972, especially 12–13, 41–4, 61–5; Dunand 1973b, 45–66; cf. Welles 1962; Tran Tam Tinh 1984, 1713–22; see also Borgeaud and Volokhine 2000; cf. Plu. *De Iside* 362b–d. On the establishment of the cult of Sarapis as Ptolemy's response to a public demand from Greeks already living in Egypt see Paarmann 2013, especially 275–8. In particular on Osiris-Apis, see Devauchelle 2010; Devauchelle 2012, stressing the predominance of Osiris and the minor role played by Apis in the 'birth' of Sarapis.

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rising of water, allowed her association with lunar goddesses (e.g. Selene/Luna, Artemis/Diana, Hecate); as queen of the gods she was Hera/Juno, as magician she was Hecate; in Egypt she was identified with Hathor, the cow, sky goddess of love, joy and music, but, since the *interpretatio graeca* equated Hathor with Aphrodite, Isis ended up absorbing the Greek goddess of love too. The strongly attractive power of Isis' cult made almost all the female Mediterranean deities susceptible to being used as different names for Isis 'the One'.[28] Nevertheless, since in the royal ideology of classical Egypt Isis represented the throne and cosmic protection of the king, the tendency to universalize this goddess as the counterpart of Sarapis seems to 'reflect the agenda of particular syncretistic constituencies more than religion "on the ground"'.[29] Despite their political promotion, Sarapis and Isis are the best example of the syncretistic trend of the period which coexisted with the persistence of indigenous traditions.

The Egyptian temples that had been fundamental for the preservation of this indigenous lore witnessed their final decline under Roman rule. Following the Egyptian programme of Augustus, the temples started to lose their economic independence in favour of the state, and their administration was centralized under a Roman official and kept under strict control by a complex bureaucratic system. The situation became even worse when, with the reform of Septimius Severus around AD 200, the temples were brought under the administration

[28] E.g. Vanderlip 1972, 1.14–24, 26; the famous passage in Apul. *Metam.* XI.2.5, cf. Griffiths 1975, 145–57; P. Oxy. 1380; Collart 1919; in general, Tran Tam Tinh, *LIMC* 'Isis', especially IV, 793–6; Witt 1971, especially 100–10, 123–51; Dunand 1973b, 1–26, 66–108; Leclant 1986; Merkelbach 1995, 51–3, 60–2, 94–8; cf. Bowman 1986, 176–8.

[29] Starting from Arsinoe II, sister–wife of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, the king's consort was identified with Isis and the establishment of the dynastic cult was completed. On the whole subject see Frankfurter 1998, 101–6; Dunand 1973b, 27–66; also Žabkar 1988, 12–15, 89–90; Pfeiffer 2008, 394–6, 398–400; Van Oppen de Ruiter 2007, especially 101–6, 210–19, 512–16.

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