

Languages, Objects, and the Transmission of the Rituals

An Interdisciplinary Analysis on Ritual Practices
in the Graeco-Egyptian Papyri (*PGM*)

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Protective Statues for Home and Workshop The Evidence for Cross-Cultural Contact in the *Greek Magical Papyri*

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Abstract The *Greek magical papyri*, especially the longer handbooks from Upper Egypt, reflect a good deal of cross-cultural mixture, but often this is not some form of free association, but rather a series of additions to or translations of one culture's traditional ritual or ritual object in order to adapt or update it to new circumstances. This process is especially apparent in two recipes in the famous Paris Magical Papyrus (*PGM IV*) for small wax statuettes designed to protect or prosper houses or shops. In each case, the creator of the recipe begins with a well known domestic talisman drawn from a single cultural tradition – an image of the Egyptian god Pantheos or the Roman god Mercury with his money sack – and then adds divine names or details drawn from other traditions that reveal the cross-cultural currents in the late-antique environment in which he worked. These additions are, moreover, often acts of translation, for example, renaming the god depicted or giving him a new epithet.

Summary 1 Pantheos. – 2 Mercury and his Money Sack. – 3 Three Further Examples: Bes, Selene and Artemis of Ephesus. – 4 Conclusions.

Keywords Cross-cultural mixture. *Greek magical papyri*. Protection. Prosperity. Statuettes. Amulets. Gemstones. Egyptian.

The *Greek magical papyri*, especially the longer handbooks from Upper Egypt, reflect a good deal of cross-cultural mixture, but this is often not, I will suggest, some form of free association, but rather a series of somewhat superficial additions to or translations of one culture's traditional ritual or ritual object in order to adapt or update it to new circumstances. This process is especially apparent in two recipes in the famous Paris Magical Papyrus (*PGM IV*) for small wax statuettes designed to protect or prosper houses or shops. In each case, the creator of the recipe begins with a well known domestic talisman drawn from a single cultural tradition – an image of the Egyptian god Pantheos or the Roman god Mercury with his money sack – and then adds divine names or details drawn from other traditions that reveal the cross-cultural currents in the late-antique environment in which he worked. These additions are, moreover, often acts of translation,

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for example, renaming the god depicted or giving him a new epithet. More interesting, perhaps, is the fact that these additional details are often kept secret from the casual observer of the statue, because they are written on a papyrus hidden inside the statue, inscribed on its reverse or spoken to the image before the shopowner opens his doors to the public. These images also, in short, seem to share their cross-cultural identities only with the readers of *PGM IV* and their clients. I close by discussing three similarly talismanic images that have survived antiquity: Bes, Selene and Artemis of Ephesus. Here, too, we see efforts to take a standard cultural icon – one Egyptian and two Greek – and to add power to it by similar processes of translation or addition, which are in two cases again kept secret from the casual viewer. These arguments for secret cultural mixing are supported, moreover, by the fact that nearly all these images appear on gemstones, whose similarly hidden inscriptions tell us that they, too, were worn in order to protect or prosper the individuals who owned them.

1 Pantheos

In an article published more than twenty years ago, Fritz Graf rightly suggested that some of the rituals prescribed by the *Greek magical papyri* differed little from the “small-scale ceremonies conducted by ordinary householders for their household gods”.¹ We can see this process clearly in the following recipe for a protective amulet (*phylaktêrion*) that will make a place or temple prosper (*PGM IV*, 3125-43):²

Whenever you want a place to prosper greatly, so that those in the place or temple where the *phylaktêrion* is hidden will marvel. For wherever the [phylactery] is placed, if in a temple, the temple will be talked about throughout the whole world; if some other place [the place] will prosper greatly. This is its manufacture: taking Etruscan wax, mold a statue (*andrias*) three handbreadths high. Let it be three-headed. Let the middle head be that of a sea falcon, the right that of a baboon and the left an ibis. Let it have four extended wings and its two arms stretched flat on its breast; in them it should hold a scepter. And let it be wrapped (*i.e.* as a mummy) like Osiris. Let the falcon wear the crown of Horus, the baboon the crown of Hermanubis and the ibis the crown of Isis. Put into its hollow (*i.e.* the statue) a heart of magnetite and write the following names on a piece of hieratic papyrus and put it in the hollow.

1 Graf 1991, 195.

2 For this translation, see M. Smith in Betz 1986.

Here, then, the imagery is completely Egyptian, but curiously the medium is Etruscan wax. The text to be inserted into the statue is given at the very end of the recipe and is comprised of a series of nonsense words, some of which appear in other magical formulae (*PGM* IV, 3157-73):

The names to be written and recited: "Bichô bichô bi chôbi beu nassou-nainthi nounaith mour sourpheô mourêth animokeô arpaêr sani soumar-ta akermonthôouth animi mimnouêr ieri animi mimnimeui. Give me all favor, all success, because the angel bringing good, who stands beside [the goddess] Tyche, is with you. Accordingly give profit, success to this house. Please, Aion, ruler of hope, giver of wealth, O holy Agathos Daimon, bring to fulfillment all favors and all of your divinely inspired speeches.

Since the rubric only accurately describes the first part of what follows – the string of nonsense words – it appears that the prayer was added later to be addressed to the “names” which are to be imagined (as we see often in the *PGM*) to invoke a powerful supernatural force. The initial run of “names” (*Bichô bichô bi chôbi*) seem, in fact, to reflect an Egyptian name or epithet of the god Horus as the “Great Falcon”.³ This image is additionally empowered by inserting a “heart of magnetite”, a mineral that was used as an amulet by the Greeks to seduce and charm both mortals and gods, if worn on the body.⁴ Here, perhaps, these same “magnetic” properties were thought to attract business to a shop or worshippers to a temple.

The recipe continues as follows (*PGM* IV, 3144-56):

Next, [...] put it in a little juniper-wood shrine (*naiskarion*) [...] and having fixed it [firmly] in whatever place you choose, sacrifice to it a white-faced [falcon]⁵ and burn [this offering] entire; also pour on it as a libation the milk of a black cow [...]. And now make a feast for it, all night long chanting over it the names written on the strip put in the hollow. Wreathe the little shrine with olive and thus <you will prosper?> throughout life. And incant the same spell when you get up in the morning before you open up [*i.e.* your shop or temple].

3 Michel 2005, 145, n. 21.

4 *Orphic Lithika* 319-33 and *Kerygma* 10. Cf. Halleux, Schamp 2003.

5 At line 3146 and earlier at line 2396 in the same papyrus (in another recipe for the consecration of a wax statuette) the text says to offer a sacrifice a “wild (*agrion*) with a white face”, which some supplement as “wild [ass]” or “wild [ram]” (see Hock’s note in Betz 1986 on line 2396). Both cases, however, involve the consecration of small images within a home and I follow Smith (Betz 1986 on line 3146) in restoring the word “falcon (?)”, especially given the parallel of the rooster sacrifice for the Mercury statuette discussed in the previous section.

This recipe, then, directs us to fashion a wax version of the popular Egyptian god Pantheos,⁶ whose images, at least as early as the first millennium BCE, were placed in Egyptian houses for protection.⁷

The prayer inserted into the *PGM* statuette and chanted over it, however, assimilates this Pantheos to the Greek gods Aion, invoked as “the giver of wealth”, and Agathos Daimon, who, as his name indicates, was thought to bring good luck and whose images were also set up in Greek houses.⁸ Here, then, the protective use of the original Egyptian image has been adapted to a new goal (the acquisition of wealth and good luck) by renaming and thereby equating the deity with powerful Greek gods. We can, in fact, see the same overlap of protection and prosperity in the rubric of the recipe, which first calls the wax statue a *phylaktêrion*, a word which usually indicates a protective amulet, but then tells us that the statuette will bring prosperity to different places, including a temple. This *PGM* recipe shows, then, signs of evolution from a traditional Egyptian talisman designed to protect a house to one secretly equated with Greek gods and now used to increase the prosperity of place or temple.

A nearly identical image of this Pantheos survives on a hematite gem in the British Museum (fig. 1), which probably dates a century or two before the fourth-century Paris handbook and thus allows us to compare the cross-cultural adaptations and additions.⁹ First the parallels: the image on the gem “corresponds very closely” to the description of the wax figure in the recipe¹⁰ and hematite, of course, like the magnetite heart inserted in the wax statuette, it is an ore of iron. The text on the reverse of the gem

6 Ritner ad. Betz 1986, line 3135: “so-called pantheistic god”. This seems to be the variant that has a mummiform body of Osiris (with his hands crossed on his chest) and three different animal heads. The Pantheos more often holds Egyptian staffs or flails in his outstretched hands and has a single frontal head (often of Bes) from the sides of which flora and fauna seem grow.

7 Modern scholars refer to as the Pantheos, a scholarly designation that I will continue to use as shorthand, although this god in question is more accurately described as polymorphic or polytheistic, rather than pantheistic; see Quack (2006) for discussion and recent bibliography.

8 Agathos Daimon, usually represented as a snake with the head of a bearded man (like Zeus or Sarapis) was a protector of the houses and the guarantor of fertility in mainland Greece, especially Boeotia, who later became popular in Alexandria Egypt; see *LIMC* “Agathodaimon”. He appears occasionally on magical gems in this guise, e.g. nos. 24 (= Derchain, Delatte 1964, 223) with the inscription: “Grace (*charis*) for the one who wears it” or 26 where the inscription identifies him as “Chnoubis”.

9 *BM* 173 = Bonner 1951, no. 45. See Michel 2005, 144-5 for the argument that follows. Derchain, Delatte 1964, no. 285 shows a similar scene on the reverse, but without the *voces magicae*; the editors there also point out the parallel with the *PGM* recipe.

10 See the discussion in Michel 2005, 144-5: each figure has four wings and three heads (baboon, falcon and ibis) bearing a crown and each is clothed in a garment that recalls the bandages of the mummified Osiris, with his hands crossed over his chest.



Figure 1. Hematite gem with triple-headed god used for protection (BM 173); photograph of the author

seems, moreover, to be a shorter form of the names that were inserted into the wax statue: *Bichô bichô beu beu chôbi chôbi beu soumarta*. Unlike the *PGM* recipe, then, this earlier gemstone, aside from the use of the Greek alphabet, shows no sign of additions or translations, such as the prayer to Aion as “the bringer of wealth” or the Agathos Daimon. The shorter inscription on the gem has, moreover, a very simple form: variations on Horus’ epithet “Great Falcon” followed by the significant word *soumarta*, which was, in fact, the traditional Greek rendering of the Semitic verb *smrt*, “protect!”.¹¹ This short prayer suggests, in fact, that the much longer text in the *PGM* recipe had grown over the intervening two centuries in such a way as to occlude the originally protective focus of the recipe. In fact, the single-headed version of the Pantheos appears frequently on gemstones of the Roman period and its function, when expressed, seems mainly to

11 Schmitz 2002.



Figure 2. Thunderstone from Ephesus engraved with the Pantheos and magical names surrounded by an ouroboros (Royal Ontario Museum); drawing after Iliffe (1931)

have been protection, for example, on a Neolithic axe-head (fig. 2) reused as an amulet in Roman Argos (probably to protect a house from lightning), as well as on a series of lapis-lazuli, hematite and magnetite gems, where he is surrounded by magical words and vowels that often end with the generic command: “protect (*phulaxon*) from evil!”¹² On the earlier and miniature versions of these Pantheos amulets, then, both image and text maintain their focus on protection; there is no talk of prosperity and no need to translate the image by adding the Greek names of Aion or Agathos Daimon to the invocation.

2 Mercury and his Money Sack

Our second handbook recipe shows a similar pattern of the superficial and secretive addition and translation of names and here, too, the parallels between domestic statuettes and gems give us added insights. This recipe is for a wax statuette of Mercury (*PGM IV, 2359-73*).¹³

¹² *Argive thunderstone*: see Iliffe 1931 and Faraone 2014, 261-3. *Gemstones*: There are at least one hundred extant gems of this type; see the list in Michel 2004, 316-21, many of which are inscribed on unusual stones, e.g. obsidian, steatite, serpentine.

¹³ Trans. R.F. Hock in Betz 1986.

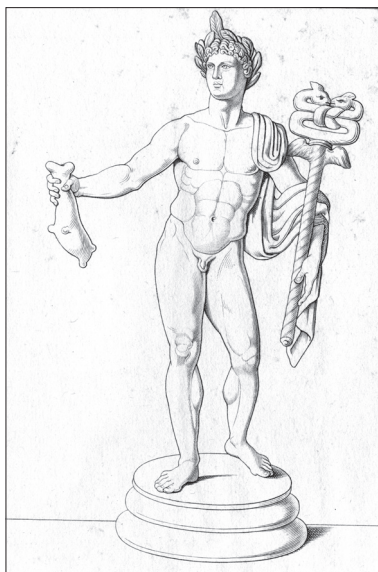


Figure 3. Statuette of Mercury offering a sack of money; drawing after Museo Borbonico (1856) v. 13 tab. 55

A “productive” spell: Take orange beeswax, the juice of the *aeria* plant and ground ivy and mix them together and fashion a hollow-bottomed Hermes holding in his left hand a herald’s wand and in his right a small bag. Write on an hieratic papyrus these names and you will see unceasing [*i.e.* business]:

Chaiôchen outibilmenouôth atrauich
Grant profit and production to this place,
because Psentebêth lives here.

Put the papyrus inside the figure and fill in the hole with the same beeswax. Then deposit it in a wall, unseen, and crown it on the outside. Make a libation of Egyptian wine and sacrifice to it a rooster and light it a lamp that is not colored red.

There is very little in this recipe that is exotic and much that recalls the previous one: a wax statue shaped in the form of a traditional domestic guardian, into which we are to insert a chit of hieratic papyrus inscribed with special words. Indeed, aside from the type of wine (Egyptian) and the nonsensical or non-Greek words inscribed on the papyrus - to which we will turn presently - there is little in this late-antique recipe that would have been unfamiliar a few centuries earlier to a person living in late

republican Rome or Herculaneum (see *e.g.* fig. 3): a traditional Roman image of the god Mercury with his wand and purse set up in a house or shop and offered the sacrifice of a bird and wine. These table-top images, of course, are commonly found in domestic contexts wherever the Romans lived and worked.¹⁴ Scholars often point to the sack of coins that Mercury stretches forth in his hand and suppose rightly that these images, which first appear on the Italian peninsula in the second-century BCE, are closely connected with prosperity, both as the focus of household and workshop cult and more vaguely as a kind of good luck charm or talisman, although, aside from our Paris handbook, no ancient text tells us this.¹⁵

The recipe from *PGM* IV, however, never acknowledges that the wax statue in question is a traditional Roman image, identifying it as “Hermes”, not “Mercury”. The text that is to be inserted into the statue goes even further to dissociate this image from its original cultural setting. As in the case of the text inserted into the wax Pantheos, we see a magical name (*Chaiôchen outibilmenouôth atrauich*), followed by a brief prayer (“Grant profit and production, because Psentêbeth lives here!”). Such a request is, of course, completely appropriate for an image of Mercury designed for a manufacturing shop, but it has not been noticed, I think, that this prayer imitates the so-called Herakles Kallinikos inscription: “The son of Zeus, resplendent in victory, Herakles, lives here. Let no evil enter!”.

These inscriptions first appear in Hellenistic Gela and by the imperial period they are found all over the Mediterranean.¹⁶ An incident narrated in pseudepigraphic letter of Diogenes the Cynic underscores, moreover, the perceived power of this inscription, when it describes how the philosopher, after seeing these verses inscribed on a house in the Greek city of Cyzicus, pestered a reluctant bystander with hostile questions:¹⁷

But why, he asked, if this practice profits you, do you not inscribe the same text on the doors of the city, but rather on your houses, into which

14 *LIMC* s.v. “Mercury” nos. 388-98.

15 Laforge 2009, 89, for example, describes Mercury as “protecteur du commerce et de la prospérité de nombreuses *tabernae* [...] souvent représentés sur les facades des boutiques et ateliers” and she suggests that his frequent appearance in domestic *lararia* may indicate that the owner of the house was a businessman. The derivation of the god’s name from Latin *merx* (“commodity”) points to his original role as a god of commerce; later he is identified with Hermes and Thoth; see Lipka 2009, 68.

16 Hellenistic Gela: Gallavotti 1977. Roman Period: for a full bibliography, see Weinreich 1915, Robert 1965 and Merkelbach 1991, 41-3, especially his note 1 for a dozen or so examples from areas as far apart as Pompeii and Kurdistan. A Latin version, *CIL* 3.5561 (*Felicitas hic habitat, nihil intret mali*), and a parody during the reign of Commodus (Cassius Dio 72.20.3) both point to wide usage in the Roman period.

17 Ps.Diogenes, *Epistle* 36 (Hercher). A similar incident appears in Diogenes Laertius 6.50. See Weinreich 1915, 8-10 for commentary.

Herakles is unable to go (*i.e.* because of his great bulk)? Is it because you are willing to let the city suffer evilly, but not your individual households?

When the poor man admits he is unable to answer, Diogenes asks him what kind of evil did he imagine Herakles to ward off, to which he responds “disease, poverty, death, these sorts of things”. In practice, of course, the boast of Herakles’ presence probably refers to the small statues or paintings of Herakles that were commonly placed in Greek houses or shops.¹⁸

The papyrus chit to be inserted into the wax statuette of Mercury, then, imitates the form of the Kallinikos inscription (“Do X, because Y lives here!”), but names *Psen-te-bêth* as the supernatural occupant, an Egyptian phrase that means “son of the female falcon” and is an epithet of Thoth, a god often assimilated to Hermes and Mercury.¹⁹ The logic seems to be as follows: the prayer asks one supernatural force (*Chaiôchen outibilmenouôth atrauich*) to grant profit and production to the house, because the Son of the Female Falcon, *i.e.*, Thoth-Hermes, is living there. Here, then, as in the case of the Pantheos image, our *PGM* recipe for a traditional Mercury statue shows a concern to equate this Roman talisman with gods drawn from two different cultural traditions: Greek Herakles and Egyptian Thoth. But as is also true of the Pantheos talisman, these gestures towards cultural pluralism remain secret, because they are hidden within the wax statue itself. In this case, however, the secret name and hidden prayer do not alter the ultimate purpose of the statue: it remains a talisman for profit and production.

Similar images of Mercury show up in abundance on Roman gemstones, most of them uninscribed, and here a recipe from another kind of handbook – a lapidary – explains their popularity:²⁰

And in addition, it (*i.e.* the agate) provides prosperity (*euporia*) to those who carry it. Carve into the stone a standing Hermes holding a sack in his left hand and a book roll (*biblion*) in his right and at his feet a baboon stretching forth its hands as if praying.

This agate gemstone, then, can be transformed into a charm for good business (*euporia*) simply by engraving a miniature version of the image of Mercury and his sack. Here, again, we see some superficial nods to the Egyptian tradition: Hermes holds a book, rather than his usual wand, perhaps a reference to Trismegistos, and the adoring baboon at his feet

18 Merkelbach 1991.

19 Ritner in Betz 1986.

20 *Kerygma* 3.5-6. Cf. Halleux, Schamp 2003.



Figure 4. Hematite gem with Mercury and money sack used for prosperity (LIM 406); photograph by A. Mastrocinque used with permission

shows up frequently on other magical gems (*e.g.* SMA nos. 244-47 and BM 149-54), where it probably refers to some solar aspect of Hermes in Late-Antiquity, given the fact that (according to Greek sources at least) baboons “naturally” worshipped the rising sun at dawn by intoning the seven vowels. A unique image on the reverse of a gem in Florence comes close, in fact, to following this recipe: we see Mercury in his usual pose, but holding out the head of a ram instead of a purse, while the baboon reverses him.²¹

In the Roman period, in fact, the image of Mercury and the money-bag, but without the baboon, appears on a few gems with inscriptions that reveal their status as amulets (fig. 4), as you can see in the next page. All four of these examples seem to be amulets of one sort or another, but only the second explicitly connects the amulet with business or financial prosperity. The other examples just have magical words or symbols, for example, the first on the list, a gem from Aquileia, which has Mercury and three stars on one side and on the reverse the magical word *Abrasax* with some magical symbols.

21 *SGG* 2 no. Fi 72 (green jasper with brown streaks). On the obverse, we see a lion walking left with a bull’s head in his mouth and below his feet a thunderbolt and a scorpion.

Table 1

	Obverse	Reverse
green jasper (Aquilaia) (SGG no. AQ 18)	Mercury three stars	magical symbols Abraxas
hematite (LIM no. 406)	Mercury	<i>euporei</i> («have plenty!»)
burnt coralline (Paris) (Derchain, Delatte 1964, no. 229)	Mercury seven vowels + Iaô	magic words
carnelian agate (Madrid) (Marco-Símon no. 3)	Mercury	seven vowels magical words

3 Three Further Examples: Bes, Selene and Artemis of Ephesus

In the early nineteen sixties, Michailidis published a roughly hewn limestone statuette from Memphis (roughly 15x10 cm) that depicts the household guardian Bes and has inscribed in Greek on its back a list of sixteen divine titles, all presumably of Bes:²²

The greatest god of the womb of women. The unstinting god of the womb of women. The one who implants the female womb. The who does good for the womb of women. The one who seeds the womb of women. The overseer of the womb of women. The guardian of the womb of women. The healer of the womb of women...

The original context of this image is unknown, but it was clearly designed to facilitate and protect the womb and fertility of a woman or a group of women living in the place where the image was set up. Michailidis noted that a hematite gem, also found in Egypt, was configured in a similar manner. It depicts on the obverse Bes holding Harpocrates, with perhaps Sarapis behind him, and on the reverse a similar, albeit abbreviated, list, which adds magical names after each of the titles, *e.g.* “God the womb of women, *Abanbaô*. God the womb of women, [31 vowels]. Lord of the

²² Michailidis 1960-62.

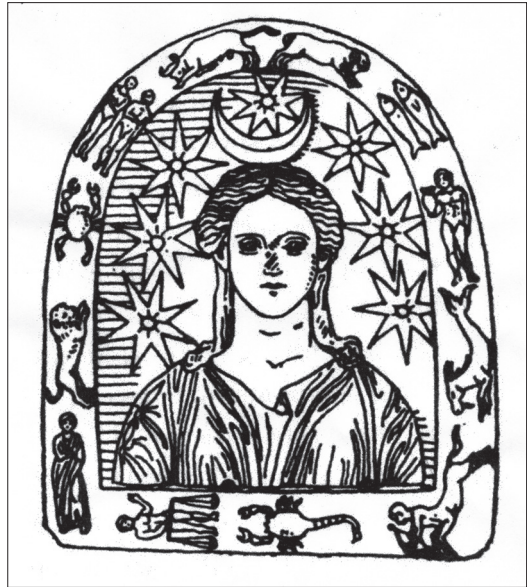


Figure 5. Marble bust of Selene from Argos with hidden magical inscription; drawing after Delatte (1913a)

womb of women, *Orôriôuth Aubax*. Guardian the womb of women, [34 vowels]. Savior the womb of women, *Amoun*".²³

On the statue, then, these Greek titles, despite the fact that they are hidden on the back of the image, seem designed to make this traditional Egyptian guardian more comprehensible to a Greek speaking audience. The text on the reverse of the gemstone, however, translates the god's power into a third kind of cultural language, that of magical names, one of which (*Orôriôuth*) shows up regularly on another popular series of gems designed to cure gynecological problems.²⁴ But here, too, because the titles of Bes appear to be hidden on the back of the statue and the gem, these acts of translation are known only to the person who made the image and the one who owns it. We saw this same secrecy, of course, in both of the *PGM* recipes, where the nonsense names were inserted into the wax images of Pantheos and Mercury or inscribed on the backs of gems, where they seem designed for a very small audience: the sorcerer and his client. But in the case of Bes, neither the statuette nor the gem reveals any obvious signs of Greek or Roman influence, beyond the important fact that the inscriptions are all in Greek.

23 The gem was originally published by Barry 1906, n. 1 with commentary.

24 Various versions of the magical name *Orôriôuth* show up on hematite gems that show a womb and key device and seem to be used for both controlling menses and the wandering womb; see Faraone (2011a) 56-57 and (2011b).

A small marble bas-relief from Argos and now in the British Museum (fig. 5) houses in an arched niche a frontal bust of Selene with large eyes, whose pupils are strongly emphasized.²⁵ She has three stars on either side of her head and on top a crescent moon with horns pointed up, within which sits a seventh star. Along the wide border runs a complete set of zodiac figures. The original publication called this object a votive monument, but as Delatte pointed out more than a century ago, this designation ignores a fairly long magical inscription of seven names engraved on the bottom of the bust that would have been hidden from view: *Iaia Phrainphiri Kanôthra Lukusunta Dôdekakistê Sabaoth Abôthchersas*.²⁶ Delatte, working in the age when such inscriptions were thought to be “Gnostic”, suggested that the image was the focal point of cult in a communal hall, an unlikely suggestion given the small size of the image, roughly six inches high.²⁷ More recently it has been suggested plausibly that the image would have protected the building in which it stood, “empowered by the inscription concealed on the bottom”.²⁸

Selene appears only rarely on magical amulets, however, and it is possible that this statue was used for a more nefarious purpose. A recipe in a PGM handbook tells us, for example, to make an image of Mistress Selene the Egyptian “as shown below” from potter’s clay mixed with sulfur and goat’s blood. Unfortunately, the promised drawing at the end of the recipe was lost at some point in the transmission of the recipe. We are then told to place the clay statue in an olive-wood shrine and then late at night offer it “lunar incense” and pray to the goddess to send an “angel” to lead a sleepless woman by her hair and feet to the man who performs the spell.²⁹ The goddess is summoned, moreover, by many names, including *Dôdekakistê*, which appears as one of the seven names inscribed on the bottom of the Argive statue.³⁰ The rubric for this recipe identifies it expansively as the

25 LIMC “Selene” no. 2, a “niche votive” (13.5x10 inches).

26 *Iaia Phrainphiri*, *Dôdekakistê* and *Sabaoth* are well known; see the commentaries of Delatte 1913, Patterson 1985 and Brashear 1990.

27 Delatte 1913, 336: “un monument de culte d’une communauté gnostique, qui devait figurer dans une sale de réunion ou plutôt d’initiation”.

28 Morton Smith in an unpublished letter to Helmut Koester (Nov. 13, 1982) cited by Patterson 1985, 439-41, nn. 2-3 and 9. The words in quotation marks are those of Patterson (439 n. 2) summarizing Smith; see also 439 n. 3 (“the inscription, which gives the stele its power”).

29 PGM VII, 867-79.

30 PGM VII, 895-98: “Come to me just as I have summoned you, *Orthô Baubô Noêre Kodêre Soire Soire Sankistê Dôdekakistê Akrouborere Kodêre Sampsei*, hear my words and send forth your angel!”. We find a similar string of names in the middle of a long list of the names of Hekate-Artemis-Ereshkigal in an exorcism formula on a lead-curse tablet used to compel a corpse-demon to bring a woman named Matrona to have sex with the speaker (SM 49.39-



Figure 6. Terracotta plaque of Roman date showing a frontal image of Artemis of Ephesus in a temple with magical words in the background; after Stephani (1850)

“Lunar Spell of Claudianus and the Ritual of Heaven and the Big Dipper” which was “found in Aphroditopolis [beside] the greatest goddess Aphrodite Urania, who embraces the universe”. Here, then, we see the combination of Aphrodite-Selene as a cosmic goddess who controls the heavens, something not unexpected in late-antique Egypt, of course, but one sees such a combination already in Theocritus’ second *Idyll*, where Hecate is summoned to help at the start of an aggressive erotic spell, which is then followed by a plaintive prayer to Selene.³¹ Without the drawing missing from the papyrus recipe it is impossible to know how much this clay statue differed from the Argive marble, although the title “Selene the Egyptian” certainly does suggest a non-Greek form of representation. We can say, however, that like this clay statue in its olive-wood shrine, the Argive image (itself depicted in an *aedicula*), was probably also the object of some small scale domestic offering like incense.

48): “Do not disobey me, corpse-demon, whoever you are [...] For I adjure you by the mistress Hekate Artemis [...] *Orthô Baubô Noêre Kodêre Syie Sankistê Dôdekakistê Akrouborera*”.

31 See Betz 1986, 141 n. 141.

Our final example of an extant domestic image used for magical purposes is a curious terracotta plaque or *pinax* found on a beach near Syracuse (fig. 6).³² It depicts the famous statue of Artemis of Ephesus on her familiar cylindrical base, with the two fillets descending from her wrists and terminating in crescent moons; a star sits on either side of her head.³³ Like the Selene image discussed above, this statue stands in a temple, this one briefly indicated by a pair of thin Corinthian columns that support a triangular pediment with a circular device at its center.³⁴ And as was true of the Argive Selene, scholars originally suggested that this *pinax* was a votive left at a temple or shrine, but here, again, this designation does not explain why the field of the plaque is filled entirely with nonsensical Greek letters of the type that one often finds on magical amulets, suggesting that this *pinax* was likewise designed as an amulet to protect a house or shop or aid in some private ritual.³⁵

There seems, in fact, to have been a tradition connecting this image of Artemis and protection. The second-century CE lexicographer Pausanias claimed that the cult statue of the Ephesian Artemis itself was inscribed with the famously prophylactic text known as the *Ephesia Grammata*.³⁶ By the Roman period, at least, there was general agreement that this incantation could be summed up as six nonsense words *aski*, *kataski*, *lix*, *tetrax*, *damnameneus* and *aision*.³⁷ This image, however, differs from all of

32 It measures precisely 13.5 by 7.5 cm. Figure 8 is after Stephani 1850, 5. For full discussion, see Manganaro 1963, 64-78.

33 Gasparro 1973, 179-80, no. 44 diffidently identifies the goddess as a form of Artemis-Isis, in part because it was discovered on a beach near the Porto Piccolo, at a place near a temple of Isis. But stylistically it is clearly Artemis of Ephesus; see Fleischer 1978, 347, no. 297 (“mit Isis hat die Darstellung nichts zu tun”).

34 Manganaro 1963, 64 notes also the presence of two difficult-to-see heraldic horses standing on either side of the shield.

35 There are, however, among the readable letters or words no parallels with known magical names or formulas, although scholars have suggestively isolated the Greek word *phaos*, “light”, directly over the goddess’s head. Additional letters are inscribed in the three rectangles along the lower edge of the plaque, but they are apparently too indistinct to be transcribed accurately.

36 Eustathius *ad Hom. Od. T 247*: “Pausanias in the *Rhetorical Lexicon* says that the Ephesian letters were sounds encompassing in themselves the natural sense of warding off evil. He also says that Croesus spoke these on the pyre (*i.e.* to save his life), and that such letters seem to have been inscribed unclearly and enigmatically on the feet, girdle and crown of Artemis”.

37 The claim in latter Roman times that the Ephesian statue itself was inscribed with the *Ephesia grammata*, seems to be a back formation of sorts: the adjective *ephesia* in the phrase probably means something like “sent out”, from the verb *ephiemi*, but later is misunderstood as “Ephesian” and connected with the already powerful statue; see Bernabé. Tuplin (2004, 263) thinks the cult statue in Ephesus was inscribed in pre-Roman times.

the previous examples, because it was mass produced from a mould and because the nonsensical magical words attached to it are not hidden from the casual viewer, much the same as the *Ephesia grammata* on the cult statue were allegedly visible on the feet, girdle and crown of the famous cult statue.³⁸

As was true for many of the domestic statuettes discussed above, this Ephesian image also appears on gemstones that are inscribed with magical words, symbols and prayers that show us that they, too, were used as amulets. One asks for money and another is inscribed “with good luck”.³⁹ None of the magical words on these extant gems, however, resemble the magical names on the Syracusan *pinax* or the *Ephesia grammata* or ask for protection; they seem concerned instead with the acquisition of some abstract benefit, such as victory, wealth, power or money, a common feature, to be sure, of a number of Roman-period amulets, both personal and domestic. The limestone statuette of Bes, the marble bust of Selene in her niche, the clay statuette of “Selene the Egyptian” in her olivewood shrine and the terracotta image of Artemis beneath a temple façade all seem to be obvious sites for domestic worship, like the juniper-wood *naiskarion* in which the wax image of Pantheos was offered a holocaust sacrifice. All but the clay image of “Selene the Egyptian”, moreover, carry nonsensical inscriptions typical of Greek amulets of the period.

4 Conclusions

We have seen, then, how the magical handbooks preserve a number of important recipes for domestic statues or gemstones used as amulets. In the two recipes drawn from *PGM IV*, we found instructions for the manufacture of a traditional domestic image – the Egyptian Pantheos and the Roman Mercury – in order to protect or bring prosperity to a home or shop. As we saw, the description of the Pantheos statue and its use in a domestic setting, follow traditional Egyptian usage fairly well, with the sole exceptions that this image is addressed in a short prayer as the Greek god Aion or Agathos Daimon. The images of Mercury likewise take the form of the traditional statuette found in Roman houses and shops, but in our recipes non-Roman details have been added, for example the wax statue is in the Egyptian language called “Son of the Female Hawk”, a epithet of the god Thoth, while the gemstone image replaces the traditional herald’s staff with a book roll and adds the image of the adoring baboon. In the cases of Pantheos and Mercury, moreover, the handbooks confirm what schol-

38 See note 36 above.

39 Maaskant-Kleibrink 1978, no. 1109 and *SGG* no. RO 23

ars have often suspected about these statues: that both images served as household amulets, although in the case of the former we have seen signs in the recipe itself that the traditionally protective mission of the Pantheos image was altered or enlarged to include the aim of prosperity.

There are also some more subtle details of cross-cultural contact that are hard to call significant: Egyptian wine, for example, is offered to the Mercury image and Etruscan wax used to manufacture the Pantheos. These, then, are the limited signs of multi-culturalism in the manufacture of domestic statues in the *PGM* handbooks and in most cases they would not be visible in the final product, a feature that one cannot explain if, as some have argued, these recipes were designed by native Egyptian priests to repackage older Pharaonic rituals and devices for their new Greek-speaking clients.⁴⁰ Closer to the truth, it seems, are the more recent insights that the priests themselves were the implied audiences of these handbooks and that in many cases they were trying to recast Greek magical rituals in a form that they themselves could appreciate and understand.⁴¹ In this context the secret placement of Thoth's epithet "Son of the Female Falcon" inside of a wax image of Mercury suggests that the author of this recipe hoped to secretly empower this foreign statue by adding a new epithet or by translating his name entirely. The statue of Mercury itself, moreover, is in the end completely hidden from view and thus the secret name and the boastful Greek inscription about the god's presence in the house ("because x lives here!") can only be appreciated by the client and the sorcerer who created the culturally composite image for him.

The situation is, however, somewhat reversed in the two cases when traditional Egyptian images are used and are not hidden away in a wall. When looking at the Bes statue and gemstone, for example, the casual viewer would see nothing more than a traditional Egyptian image sculpted in limestone or engraved on a ring, because the list in Greek of the god's titles would be invisible on the reverse sides of the images. This is also true for the wax statuette and hematite gem of three-headed Pantheos, whose exterior shows no sign of any non-Greek influence, but whose interior or

40 Frankfurter 1998, 198-237 and 2000 - *e.g.* 181 (the *PGM* and *PDM* spells were designed "to create magical experiences for outsiders" *i.e.* Greeks) - develops some insights of J.Z. Smith (1978) and argues that the longer Anastasi papyri (see next note) were the working handbooks of native Egyptian priests struggling in the imperial and late-antique periods to reconfigure their priestly and scribal selves as itinerant specialists, in part through the process of stereotype appropriation.

41 More recent work however, - *e.g.* Graf 1997, 103 ("the impression of magicians working in splendid isolation, speaking only to god and demons"), Gordon 1997 and (2002) on the "marvelous" in these spells and on the peculiar absence of references to clients, or Dieleman 2005 on the implied readers of the longer papyrus handbooks - has thrown into contention the commonplace assumption that such texts were from the library of working magicians trying to translate native Pharaonic magic for Greek.

reverse holds similar inscriptions in Greek letters that seem to preserve a protective prayer that may be Phoenician in origin. Most of our evidence comes from Egypt, of course, but the marble bust of Selene from Argos, with its hidden magical inscription, and the clay plaque from Syracuse with its very visible one, show us even more variations.

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