Università
Ca'Foscari
Venezia

Corso di Dottorato di ricerca

in Studi sull'Asia e sull'Africa Mediterranea

ciclo 38°

Tesi di Ricerca

Ecclesiastical Magic:

The Emergence of a Christian Ritual Discourse in Late Antiquity

SSD: M-STO/07

Coordinatore del Dottorato
ch. Prof. Nicoletta Pesaro

Supervisore
ch. Prof. Joseph Emanuel Sanzo

Supervisore
ch. Prof. Piero Capelli

Dottorando
Michele
Scarlassara
956712

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments 5

Introduction 9

Part I. Magic and Liturgy 38

Chapter 1: Eucharistic Magic: The Epiclesis as a Ritual Technology of Invocation in the Coptic Magical Papyri 40

Chapter 2: Tokens of Ritual Power: The Dynamic Continuum between Magic, Art, and Liturgy in the Endoxon of the Archangel Michael (P. Heid. Kopt. 686) 92

Chapter 3: *Sacramentalia* and Ritual Power: Ecclesiastical Practitioners and Sacred Economy in Late Antique Mesopotamia 128

Part II. Ecclesiastical Practitioners and Ritual Discourse 173

Chapter 4: Tradition and Redaction in Late Antique Magic: A "Modular Approach" 174

Chapter 5: From Performance to Text: The Interface between the Oral and the Written in Christian Magic 210

Conclusions. The Rise of a "Church of Magic": Christianity and Ritual Discourse in Late Antiquity 224

Bibliography 230

Acknowledgments

This dissertation “virtually” emerges as the cumulative outcome of a long series of conversations I’ve been privileged to engage in over the course of the past three years with a series of scholars who exerted a tremendous impact on my academic training. With some, I’ve established bonds whose roots strike deep, reaching far beyond the formal boundaries of academic life. Their guidance sustained me through moments of difficulty and solitude, kept sharp my critical thinking, built my confidence in facing the obstacles of the academic career, and spurred me on to make the most out of every opportunity. I will be eternally beholden to their mentorship.

I set sail in this peripatetic journey of gratitude by thanking my “virtual” mentor, Umberto Eco. The initial impetus for this dissertation originates in my eternal love for Eco’s novel *The Name of the Rose*. This masterpiece indeed shaped the imaginative universe that informs my thesis, which focuses on the interface between “magic” and clergymen. Yet, the most crucial element that resonates deeply with my research posture is the idea of Christianism that comes into view in Eco’s masterpiece. Renowned bishops, sophisticated philosophers, or elegant poets are indeed less of a focus in the present study, which is centered around the lived religion of ordinary Christians, reminiscent of some of Eco’s characters. For late antique ordinary Christians, it was not the erudite study of Scriptures that mattered most, but those symbols (e.g., the cross) and rituals (e.g., Eucharist, Baptism) that helped them navigate through the crises of quotidian life, including the demand of financial gain and the allure of earthly pleasures.

Down this path that stretches from the “virtual” to the tangible, I’m immensely grateful to my early-career mentor, Prof. Piero Capelli (Ca’ Foscari University of Venice). Capelli’s guidance and mentorship through the years have never been short of amazing.

I’m also profoundly grateful to my colleague and friend, Prof. Simcha Gross (University of

Pennsylvania). I had the honor of getting to know Prof. Gross while on a research trip to the Penn Museum in Philadelphia, where he facilitated access to the museum's collection of incantation bowls. Our continued collaboration has since culminated in a recent article that gestures toward future far-reaching outcomes in this realm of studies. His effortless spirit and eagerness to blaze new trails in research continue to serve as an inspiring example.

Next, I wish to acknowledge two scholars to whom I owe an enormous debt of gratitude: Prof. Ra'anan Boustan (Yale University) and Prof. Joseph E. Sanzo (Ca' Foscari University of Venice). I take special pride in considering myself a 'third-generation' scholar within a lineage that began at the University of California, Los Angeles, and has found its continuation at Ca' Foscari.

With Prof. Boustan, I had the immense honor of spending a research period at Princeton. There, I shared daily life with his wonderful family, immersed myself in the hidden corners of Firestone Library, and delighted in the charms of Princeton's fall days. As I recall those memories, I cannot suffocate a smile of joy at the unforgettable moment when Prof. Boustan introduced me to Prof. Peter Brown. As a scholar of Late Antiquity, the experience of having tea at Prof. Brown's house while discussing my dissertation will eternally remain etched in my memory as one of the most inspiring moments of my life.

With Prof. Sanzo, my "doctoral father," I spent most of my time at Ca' Foscari. His guidance over these three years has been truly invaluable, and I am profoundly honored to have served as his doctoral student. His teaching and guidance have always spurred me on to pursue research at the highest level, while shielding me from the solitude that academic life can at times brings.

Ultimately, I am enormously grateful to the many scholars and friends who have supported the spread of my research in different ways: by inviting me to participate in events, sharing materials, reading earlier drafts of the dissertation, and providing terrifically insightful

comments: Paolo Lucca (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), Donata Zambon (Ca' Foscari University of Venice), Marco Moriggi (University of Catania), David Frankfurter (Boston University), Korshi Dosoo (CNRS, Paris), Dina Boero (The College of New Jersey), Dylan M. Burns (Universiteit van Amsterdam), Alberto Camplani (Sapienza University of Rome), Jack Tannous (Princeton University), and Michael Beshay (Penn State University).

I wish to conclude this journey of gratitude by expressing my deepest thanks to my beloved friends and family. To Ilaria, a devoted partner in every day of our life; without her patience and unwavering support, this work would never have been possible. To mom and dad, who are always by my side and will be there, unfailingly, at the very end.

Lonigo, a small and quaint town in Veneto, Italy

September 2025 Michele Scarlassara

Introduction

Daily life in the late antique world was yoked by the same anxieties and urgencies that press upon human experience today. People across the ancient Mediterranean basin faced a wide range of ailments of either a physical or spiritual nature, encompassing fever, headache, childbirth pain, tensions generated by love and hatred, as well as by the unrelenting demand for money and power. Late antique people confronted these issues by resorting to expertise and mediation of a wide range of intermediary figures, including religious experts (priests, monks, rabbis), secular physicians, and ritual specialists. In the study of Late Antiquity, as brought into vivid relief by Peter Brown—particularly through his pioneering study of the cult of the saints in early Christianity—scholars such as Edward Gibbon and Bollandist Hippolyte Delehaye have often approached these social actors, their expertise, and related entrepreneurial dimension of activity through a binary framework that distinguishes between "elites" and "non-elites."[1] This interpretative posture has cast a long net, continuing to inform scholarly approach toward the late antique social fabric. Within the two-tiered model "elites" vs. "non-elites," literate specialists (e.g., rabbis, learned bishops, or physicians) are often tied to systematized religious institutions, whereas figures such as holy men or local ritual experts operated within the decentralized sphere of village religion. In his recent autobiography, Peter Brown recounts how this pervasive posture toward the socio-cultural history of the Late Empire was shaped, somewhat unexpectedly, by scholars such as André-Jean Festugière. Commenting on Festugière's translation of the lives of monks in the Roman East, Brown notes that the Dominican scholar captured their religious world in the following terms:

> Let us go back to the demons. Let us imagine for ourselves the terrors of those persons of the past. Let us try to get into the skins of such people [the monks], whose modes of thought and feeling do not really rise above those of the most savage primitive lost in the forests of the

[1] Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (1981; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 13–17.

> equatorial Africa.[2]

Festugière's contempt for the religious world of the monastic holy men of the villages of Syria, Egypt, and Palestine echoes the dismissive tones through which Delehaye disparaged the religion of late antique masses:

> En effet, l'intelligence de la multitude se manifeste partout comme extrêmement bornée et ce serait une erreur de croire qu'elle subisse, en général, l'influence de l'élite […] Le meilleur point de comparaison pour en démontrer le niveau est l'intelligence de l'enfant.[3]

This purported divide between "elites" and "non-elites" has often been conceptualized through the tension between what anthropologist Robert Redfield has labeled the "Great Tradition" and the "Little Tradition."[4] The former is usually understood as an institutionalized religious system cultivated and maintained by learned specialists, while the latter represents its local articulation, which involves the "village sphere" of religion dominated by the performance of local social actors (e.g., local holy men, ritual experts). These two traditions, while in constant dialogue, are framed as standing in a dialectical tension between each other:

> It is important to recognize that, in actual practice, these two traditions are in perpetual dialectic, such that one can really only pick up differences by comparison: say, the local Jewish world of the demon-protection bowls from Iraq by comparison with the systematizing world projected in the Babylonian Talmud.[5]

The actual interaction between these putative cultural levels often plays out through the dynamics outlined by McKim Marriott and commonly referred to by scholars as "universalization" and "parochialization."[6] The former happens when local, folk, or subcultural elements (e.g., the abovementioned "local Jewish world of the demon-protection

---

[2] Peter Brown, *Journeys of the Mind: A Life in History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2023), 358.
[3] Brown, *The Cult of the Saints*, 17.
[4] See Robert Redfield, *Peasant Society and Culture: An Anthropological Approach to Civilization* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), 67–104.
[5] David Frankfurter, "Magic as the Local Application of Authoritative Tradition," in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, ed. David Frankfurter (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 723.
[6] McKim Marriott, "Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization," in *Village India: Studies in the Little Community*, ed. McKim Marriott (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 171–222.

bowls") are abstracted and transformed into broader, more generalized or "elite" forms that can be understood or adopted across diverse contexts; the latter when universal, foreign, or elite cultural forms (e.g., the "systematizing world projected in the Babylonian Talmud") are adapted and reinterpreted to fit local, indigenous, or popular contexts. In interpreting the cultural world of ritual experts, David Frankfurter has adopted the dichotomy Great Tradition vs. Little Tradition to approach the body of texts and material objects deemed "magic" (e.g., spells, amulets, incantation bowls).[7] In his view, the ensemble of discursive practices, symbols, and gestures falling within the spectrum of "magic" reflect a local reorientation of cultural elements imputable to the Great Tradition:

> So in this perspective, magic would amount to the ritual or material context in which a Great Tradition (that may or may not be associated with living cults or temples) is interpreted by a ritual expert, located in time and space, and linked with particular social circumstances.[8]

This theoretical posture has thus fostered a view of magic as pertaining to a range of phenomena that, while drawing on the authoritative power and symbols of great religious traditions (e.g., Christianity, Judaism, Islam), are enacted outside their institutional setting through the mediation of maverick local religious experts. As a consequence, this approach has resulted in the distorting perception that "magic" is a realm separated from the world of the "elites," remaining relegated to the domain of "popular culture" or "popular religion."

Yet, recent strides in the study of "popular religion" have called for a critical reassessment of the analytical capacity of this interpretative model. It is in this spirit that Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms* stands out as a contribution of pivotal

[7] See for instance David Frankfurter, "The Great, The Little, and the Authoritative Tradition in Magic of the Ancient World," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 16 (2014): 11–30; Frankfurter, "Magic as the Local Application of Authoritative Tradition," in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, ed. David Frankfurter (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 721–745; Frankfurter, "Sortes, Scribality, and Syncretism: Ritual Experts and the Great Tradition in Byzantine Egypt," in *My Lots are in Thy Hands: Sortilege and its Practitioners in Late Antiquity*, ed. AnneMarie Luijendijk and William E. Klingshirn (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 211–231.
[8] Frankfurter, "Magic as the Local Application of Authoritative Tradition," 725.

importance.[9] Central to this work is the attempt to deconstruct part of the theoretical, taxonomic, and ideological baggage carried by scholarly notions such as "popular religion," "primitive culture," and their cognates. In particular, the life and thought of a certain Menocchio—the protagonist of Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms*—offers a window into the ideological cosmos of a sixteenth-century Friulian miller. Menocchio's worldview is the product of sophisticated reworkings of beliefs and ideas that completely reconfigure imagined boundaries between "elite" and "non-elite" cultural forms:

> Here, too, the fact that many of Menocchio's utterances cannot be reduced to familiar themes permits us to perceive a previously untapped level of popular beliefs, of obscure peasant mythologies. But what renders Menocchio's case that much more complicated is the fact that these obscure popular elements are grafted onto an extremely clear and logical complex of ideas, from religious radicalism, to a naturalism tending toward the scientific, to utopian aspirations of social reform.[10]

By throwing into sharp relief the complex logics through which Menocchio's mental universe was forged, Ginzburg has thus reversed the deeply entrenched presumption that "acculturation" is a process instigated by a purported elite culture, and whose downward diffusion is but mechanical and unidirectional:

> Too often, original ideas or beliefs have been considered by definition to be a product of the upper classes, and their diffusion among the subordinate classes a mechanical fact of little or no interest.[11]

Viewed through Ginzburg's lens, the socio-cultural world reflected in late antique magical corpora (e.g., Coptic magical papyri, Aramaic incantation bowls) begins to speak with a novel inflection. The original theological discourse developed in certain ritual handbooks treated in this dissertation (e.g., the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael*, the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"*) indeed resists any interpretative approach that would attribute their content to a

[9] Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).
[10] Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, xix.
[11] Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms*, xiv.

marginal heretical group of purported "magicians." As an illustrative case in point, let us briefly consider the Christian *shahārija* from the region of Salakh (Northern Iraq). In discussing their religious beliefs, historian Chase Robinson's investigative approach was driven by the impelling urgency of connecting them to major streams of the Christian theological discourse, elaborating tortuous hypotheses to account for the apparent strangeness of their doctrines. Commenting on it, Jack Tannous has conversely emphasized how *shahārija*'s theological originality may well have been originated from their distinctive capacity of grappling with complex doctrinal ideas and articulating them in a way that would satisfy the spiritual demands of their community.[12] As Tannous's argument illuminates, the proliferation of local articulations of the Christian religious discourse—so often dismissed and disparaged as aberrant and heretical by Christian elites—reflects the original engagement with those theological ideas that circulated across social strata by ordinary Christians, whose interest in an "orthodox" reading of the Scriptures was less of a focus. Read against the backdrop of the largely rural, poorly educated, and liturgically non-uniform world of late antique Syria and Mesopotamia, theological orthodoxy and the policing of boundaries between the licit and the illicit remained the concern of a narrow clerical elite and had little bearing on the devotional realities of the majority, whose notion of Christianity was primarily shaped by those symbols (e.g., the cross) and rituals (e.g., Eucharist, Baptism) that marked Christian communal identity.

As it strictly relates to the study of ancient magic, the same impetus toward dismantling the prevailing scholarly tendency of forcing this field into the shackles of "non-elite" culture has just started to take shape. Within the realm of the Babylonian incantation bowls, for instance, Simcha Gross and Avigail Manekin-Bamberger have drawn attention to a

[12] See Jack Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 247–259.

series of specimens that bear the stamps of scribes that had perfect mastery of the cultural world of Rabbinic Judaism, demonstrating their ability to navigate the Talmud, the Mishnah, the Midrashim, as well as liturgical and mystical materials.[13] One crucial case in point is an incantation bowl from the Moussaieff collection (no. 164), which arranges together diverse select clusters of literary texts, including parallels to Jewish liturgy, to the Babylonian Talmud, to Hekhalot literature, along with an invocation quoting directly from the Mishnah (mShev 4:13). This latter, quite interestingly, looms large as the earliest Mishnaic citation outside of the Rabbinic literary corpus. As Gross and Manekin-Bamberger have suggested, objects such as Moussaieff 164 render the ostensible dichotomy between the cultural world of the learned rabbinic elites and that of the scribes responsible for producing the bowls quite untenable. In his recent monograph, Joseph Sanzo has powerfully reinforced this view by challenging the assumption that theological speculation and boundary demarcation between the "Christian" and the "non-Christian" were exclusive concerns of Christian intellectual elites.[14] These ungrounded assumptions stand in marked contrast to the evidence offered by magical artifacts, as the same sentiments also permeated the practices of ritual experts operating at a more local level. One probatory example Sanzo examines is Leiden AMS 9, a sixth-to-eighth-century Coptic magical handbook from the Theban region (see further below). This text predicates ritual efficacy on a widespread anti-Jewish motif, i.e., the Jewish sin of being responsible for Jesus's death:

> I heard that your nation rejected your lordship, being wicked and envious, and they persecute you, and they do not want to let you reign over them, being ignorant of this: that you are the king ‹of› those in the heavens and those upon the earth, who gives life to everyone. And what

[13] Simcha Gross and Avigail Manekin-Bamberger, "Babylonian Jewish Society: The Evidence of the Incantation Bowls," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 112, no. 2 (2022): 151–182.
[14] Joseph Sanzo, *Ritual Boundaries: Magic and Differentiation in Late Antique Christianity* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2024), esp. chap. 2.

> indeed is the people of Israel? The dead dog, because they have rejected the living God. For indeed, they are not worthy of your holy gift.[15]

As the quotation lays bare, the practitioner behind Leiden AMS 9 appropriated a vitriolic anti-Jewish trope—specifically, the image of Israel as a "dead dog"—to augment ritual efficacy. Sanzo further demonstrates how such rhetorical strategies capitalize on similar polemical invectives found in patristic texts, including the homilies of John Chrysostom.[16] On a more general level, Sanzo's monograph has the merit of creating a counter to the prevailing scholarly view that magic is a realm permeated by sentiments and anxieties of "non-elite" Christians. Magical objects such as Leiden AMS 9 destabilize these taxonomic binaries, revealing instead a shared cultural world in which theologians and ritual experts alike participated in a broader discourse, yet deployed it through distinct strategies, tailored to the pragmatic needs of their audiences. Jack Tannous's recent work *The Making of the Medieval Middle East* offers, once again, a novel picture of theological literacy among late antique Christian Syriac communities that lends significant support to Sanzo's model. In Christian Mesopotamia, the continuum between Great Tradition and Little Tradition extended deep into cultural and religious apparatuses, creating a hierarchic yet mobile social ladder that connected flourishing Christian theological centers such as Qenneshre—perched on the eastern bank of the Euphrates—with the smaller satellite villages that orbited them. As Tannous has demonstrated, the elaboration and spreading of religious ideas traversed this urban-rural continuum through similar pedagogical frameworks. Clergy, monks, and laymen at different levels of theological sophistication participated in Christological debates on the nature of Christ's body. "Elites" and "non-elites" alike indeed showed keen interest in

[15] Korshi Dosoo and Markéta Preininger, eds., *Papyri Copticae Magicae. Coptic Magical Texts, Volume 1: Formularies (PCM I 1), Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete – Beihefte* 48 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023), 157.
[16] Sanzo, *Ritual Boundaries*, chap. 2, 16–17.

drawing confessional boundaries, often through adoption of diverse theological theories of the Incarnation. This shared cultural world morphed into a broadly intelligible religious idiom that was differently elaborated, performed, and deployed across textual, visual, and gestural registers by social actors operating across diverse social strata:

> We are instead dealing with a world in which there was a continuum of understanding and engagement with doctrinal questions, one where there were both clergy who were theologically unschooled and laity who were theologically literate. What is more, there was, as we shall see, interaction between people at different stages on the continuum, and it is this interaction that helps to explain many of the most important features of the post-Chalcedonian Christian Middle East. [17]

The resulting image speaks to a social scenario in which the general and the particular, the canonical and the vernacular, did not exist in opposition but in a dynamic continuum, generating the cultural landscape that characterized Late Antiquity. In order to ground this novel approach to the complex socio-cultural fabric of Late Antiquity within a comparative anthropological framework, we may heuristically look at, for instance, Stanley J. Tambiah's ethnographic work on the Thai village of Baan Phraan Muan.[18] The cultural milieu of a Thai village indeed articulates in a complex network of social actors—e.g., healers, monks, and ritual specialists—whose expertise is informed by a common training curriculum centered around the Buddhist monastic cultural world. Tambiah shows how a monk, a physician, and a ritual specialist emerge from the very same liturgical and philosophical training, articulated in activities such as writing essays in Thai language, studying the Buddhist canon, memorizing chants, reciting sermons, and learning healing techniques. Accordingly, the access to literacy was permitted via monastic training and the resulting professional figures, although differentiated by particular performance and charisma, operate within a shared cultural register and language. Crucially, as Tambiah articulates, the cultural and religious ecosystem

[17] Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*, 55.
[18] Stanley J. Tambiah, *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

of Baan Phraan Muan was no insular phenomenon; its sprawling ritual economy was tied into a broader, mobile network for the learning and transmission of knowledge that resists taxonomic organization into opposite couples such as town and village, general and particular, Great tradition and Little Tradition. In a similar vein, as Peter Brown has observed, the world of Late Antiquity was organized into dense webs of strictly interconnected small centers, wherein the spatial and cultural barriers dividing the village countryside from the urbanized town collapsed, creating an interpenetrating ecosystem.[19]

This monograph situates itself within this novel understanding of the late antique social fabric. Specifically, it addresses the dynamic continuum between the worlds of the "elites" and the "non-elites" with the help of magical sources that were produced within Christian scribal milieux (e.g., churches, monasteries, shrines, pilgrimage sites). Its main argument maintains that the social actors that operated within these settings were not marginalized figures perched on the fringes of ancient societies but institutional participants––often clerics or monastics—who instigated the crystallization of a Christian ritual discourse and promoted it through their ritual products. Toward this end, this monograph focuses on textual, visual, and material evidence that scholars would commonly deem "magic" (e.g., amulets, grimoires, incantation bowls) and others whose performative agendas may, at times, map onto the semantic contours of this scholarly rubric (e.g., burial inscriptions, liturgical furnishings, frescoes). In particular, I will focus my attention on Greek, Coptic, and Syriac ritual sources from Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages that can be identified as the products of scribes attached to Christian institutions (e.g., churches, monasteries, shrines, pilgrimage sites) on the basis of different interconnected analytical instruments, including codicology, paleography, archaeology, and philological analysis. Recent scholarship on ancient magic has indeed grown more attentive to the key role played by Christian clergy in

[19] Peter Brown, *The Making of Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 3.

the ritual economy of Late Antiquity (see next section for attentive analysis). This pattern of evidence is confirmed by a growing body of sources, including manuscript colophons, hagiographical materials, homiletic sermons, and material evidence. Archaeological discoveries, along with the reedition of magical texts, have shed new light on the deep involvement of institutional religious actors in the production of these materials. By way of example, the following colophon included in the coda of a tenth-century Coptic curse (P. Heid. Kopt. 682) was penned by a minor cleric that served in an alleged monastery dedicated to Michael the Archangel in the Faiyum region:

> I am the deacon Iōhannēs (ⲡⲁⲓ ⲓⲱ), servant of Michael (ϩⲙϩⲁⲗ ⲙⲓⲭⲁⲏⲗ), of Pqellēt. I wrote on the 11th of Paophi in the year 684 (i.e. 967 CE).[20]

As paleographical evidence demonstrates, Deacon Iōhannēs was author of, at least, one other loose-leaf spell (P. Heid. Kopt. 681) and two magical handbooks (P. Heid. Kopt. 685-86) part of the so-called "Heidelberg Magical Archive."[21] Direct evidence of authorship is supplemented by oblique references from literary works. Sources such as a fifth-century *mēmrā* attributed to Isaac of Antioch indeed lament how Syriac priests worked as crafters and suppliers of ritual handbooks for lay people:

> The priests (*kāhnē*) abandoned God and the Holy Gospel, and they bear lot-books (*kṯāḇē d-peṣē*) because of the love for the money. Magic knots (*qeṭrē*) and oracles (*qeṣmē*) and incantations (*luḥšāṯā*) they brought and proposed (them) to us by means of books because of the love for money.[22]

As this quotation suggests, late antique Syriac clergy were well-steeped in the art of crafting ritual products for financial gain, an enduring habitus whose trajectory has been investigated by Nicholas Al-Jeloo during his fieldwork (between 2002 and 2009) in the Assyrian region of

[20] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 279.
[21] On Deacon Iōhannēs, see esp. Iain Gardner and Jay Johnston, eds., *Drawing Spirits*: *The Role of Images and Design in the Magical Practice of Late Antiquity* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023), 51–63.
[22] English translation by Marco Moriggi in "And the Impure and Abominable Priests Fled for Help to the Names of the Devil," *Hugoye*: *Journal of Syriac Studies* 19.2 (2016): 371–384, at 375. For the tradition of this *mēmrā* see also Adam H. Becker, *Isaac of Antioch: Homilies on Moral and Monastic Reform*, *Writings from the Greco-Roman World* 49 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2024), 693, no. 4.

Khābūr.[23] Now, what is the potential cultural background and spatial dimension of agency of ecclesiastical ritual experts such as Deacon Iōhannēs?

Ecclesiastical Practitioners: Identikit of a Scribal Profile

In his influential contribution *Christianizing Egypt*, David Frankfurter has developed what likely is the most robust approach to the interface between magic and monasticism in late antique Egypt.[24] In this respect, Frankfurter has heuristically employed the rubric "monastic scribe" to approach the potential scribal profiles responsible for the copying and dissemination of spells and handbooks across the Nile Valley. In this role, monks navigated within and around a shared cultural world made of psalms, hymns, liturgical formulae, sacred names, and theological motifs, turning them into potent authoritative frameworks for the articulation of their ritual products.[25] This model imputes to monastic scribes two spatial dimensions of activity, one itinerant and one sedentary.[26] In the first case, the spatial dimension of activity involves monastic libraries, where monks copied and disseminated a diversified gamut of textual genres, including apocrypha, hagiographic stories, and ritual texts. Monastic libraries that preserve eclectic materials include, for instance, the Hamuli manuscript archive in the Faiyum and the White Monastery library in Sohag (Upper Egypt). Frankfurter has identified the isolated *laura* as an additional sedentary social site in which monks interacted with lay people. A compelling example of the intersection between monastic life and ritual practices can be found in the cell of Apa Phoibammon of Naqlun, located in the southern part of the Faiyum oasis. Excavations by the Polish mission led by

[23] See Nicholas Al-Jeloo, "Khaldāyūthā: The Spar-Sammāné and Late Antique Syriac Astrology," *ARAM* 24 (2012): 457–92.
[24] David Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), esp. chap. 6.
[25] See Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, 194.
[26] See Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, 184–85.

Włodzimierz Godlewski retrieved a site known as Hermitage 44.[27] The spatial configuration and archaeological findings suggest that the monk supported local laypeople by supplying them with various ritual products, including healing recipes and curses. Another noteworthy example involves the archive of the Theban monk Frange.[28] Ostraca attributed to him reveal how he employed ritual practices to assist his acolytes and fellow monks. Particularly significant are ostraca 190-91, which document apotropaic practices aimed at protecting livestock. In ostracon 191, for instance, Frange instructs an anonymous correspondent to write a blessing (*ϫmou*) and attach it to a cord (*kap*), which is then to be fastened around a mare's neck to keep it safe. The protection of animals through such means indeed represents a recurring theme in the magical practices of the ancient Mediterranean world.[29]

Moreover, Frankfurter has pointed out how monastic scribes also assumed an itinerant cast, travelling around different social settings, including shrines, pilgrimage sites, and villages for offering their expertise and spiritual guidance. Frankfurter's work on itinerant monastic holy men hinges on his coined notion of "regional prophet," which nuances and expands on the quite famous Peter Brown's figure of the Christian holy man.[30] Drawing insights from modern ethnographical sources, through this rubric Frankfurter aptly encapsulates the active role of holy men as agents of religious transformation through a variegated set of discursive practices and gestures, including blessings, healing techniques, curses, the crafting of potent amulets, and the wielding of typical Christian accoutrements

[27] On the hermitage of Apa Phoibammon, see esp. Włodzimierz Godlewski, "The Hermitage of Apa Phoibamon," in *Les civilisations du Bassin Méditerranéen: Hommages à Joachim Sliwa*, ed. Krzysztof M. Ciałowicz and Janusz A. Ostrowski (Krakow: Université Jagellone Institut d'Archéologie 2000), 91–98.
[28] For a general overview on monk Frange and his world, see Chantal Heurtel, "Le petit monde de Frangé: una microsociété dans la région thébaine au début de VIIIe siècle," in «*Et maintenant sont plus que des villages…*»: *Thebes et sa region aux epoque hellenistique, romaine et byzantine*, actes du colloque tenu a Bruxelles les 2 et 3 decembre 2005 (Bruxelles: Association Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 2008), 163–175.
[29] *O. Frange* 190-91, in Anne Boud'hors and Chantal Heurtel, eds., *Les ostraca coptes de la TT 29. Autour du moine Frangé*. Études d'archéologie thebaine 3. (Brussels: CReA-Patrimoine),158–59.
[30] See Peter Brown, "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 61 (1971): 80–101.

(e.g., oil and water) as potent instruments for religious remapping of traditional beliefs. A quite famous depiction of such figures is represented by the following quotation from one of the fifth-century Abbot Shenoute's sermons:

> At the time of suffering, those fallen into poverty or in sickness or indeed some other trial abandon God and run after enchanters or diviners or indeed seek other acts of deception, just as I myself have seen: the snake's head tied on someone's hand, another one with the crocodile's tooth tied on his arm, and another with fox claws tied to his legs-especially since it was an official who told him that it was wise to do so ! Indeed, when I demanded whether the fox claws would heal him, he answered, "It was a great monk who gave them to me, saying 'Tie them on you (and) you will find relief.'"[31]

As this text poignantly captures, itinerant monastic holy men represented the dynamic agents that fostered Christianization by adroitly integrating Christian religious discourse into local milieux of Coptic Egypt. Being fundamental agents of the Christianization of late antique Egypt, itinerant monks helped remapping old Egyptian traditions by attuning them to the Christian authoritative discourse. This dynamic process encapsulates some aspects of the theoretical model Frankfurter has rubricated under the analytical concept "syncretism" (see further below). On this front, Frankfurter envisions Coptic monks as adroit *bricoleurs* that creatively combined old Egyptian traditions with Christian cultural elements. The results of these creative *assemblages* are particularly evident in Coptic magical sources. A cogent case in point is found in the following healing charm from late antique Egypt:

> Jesus Horus [ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ϩⲱⲣ] [the son of Is]is went upon a mountain in order to rest. He [performed his] music, [set] his nets, and captured a falcon, ... a wild pelican. [He] cut it without a knife, cooked it without fire, and [ate it]
> without salt [on it]. He had pain, and the area around his navel [hurt him], and he wept with loud weeping, saying, "Today I am bringing my [mother] Isis to me. I want a messenger-spirit so that I may send him to my mother Isis.
> …
> [The spirit] went upon the mountain of Heliopolis and found his mother Isis wearing an iron crown and stoking a copper oven.
> …
> [Isis] said to him, "Even if you did not find me and did not find my name, the true name that the sun bears to the west and the moon bears to the east and that is borne by the six

[31] Shenoute, Acephalous Work AI4, §§255-259, in Tito Orlandi, *Shenute: Contra Origenistas* (Roma: C. I. M., 1985), 18–20.

> propitiatory stars under the sun, you would summon the three hundred vessels that are around the navel:
> Let every sickness and every difficulty and every pain that is in the belly of N, child of N, stop at this moment! I am the one who calls; the lord Jesus is the one who grants healing![32]

As Frankfurter details, the monk that crafted this seventh-century spell purposefully associated Horus with Jesus Christ, with the latter virtually becoming the protagonist of a quite famous *historiola* attested in older Egyptian spells.[33] This pattern of evidence fuels his claim that monastic scribes instigated the Christianization of Egypt by assimilating and revitalizing indigenous traditions within the discursive framework of the Christian religious system.

Now, while Frankfurter has, in a way, significantly advanced our understanding of Christian ritual specialists, his terminology subsumes these social actors under the monolithic umbrella term "monastic scribes." However, ongoing editions of magical manuscripts have made us more cognizant of the complex diversity of ecclesiastical scribal profiles involved in the ritual economy of Late Antiquity. To better capture this complexity, this study opts for the broader nomenclature "ecclesiastical practitioners" when discussing Christian ritual experts. This designation encompasses a range of ritual experts whose training and authority derived from ecclesiastical structures, but whose space of agency often extended beyond strictly monastic contexts. In this respect, the magical archive housed in the Collège de France contains a miscellany of ritual materials—including a copy of the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael* and the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* (see further below)—penned by a certain Rafae, deacon of Mama, as its colophon attributes (CdF3).[34] In a similar vein, the copy of the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* inscribed on the burial vault of the archbishop of the

[32] See Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, 1–2.
[33] On this cluster of spells, see esp. Frankfurter, "Laments of Horus in Coptic: Myth, Folklore, and Syncretism in Late Antique Egypt," in *Antike Mythen: Medien, Transformationen und Konstruktionen*, eds. Ueli Dill and Christine Walde (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 229–47.
[34] I am grateful to Korshi Dosoo for sharing with me a preliminary transcription of the Coptic colophon.

Nubian center of Dongola, Georgios, preserves a colophon that attributes authorship to a certain Iōhannēs, whom scholars have identified as a priest serving in the monastic complex that hosts the tomb.[35] These colophons represent key pieces of evidence in favor of the involvement of minor clerics in ritual activities. Elsewhere, one late antique Lead talisman from Mesopotamia (see below chapter 3) exhibits overt signs of Christian institutional manipulation—including the ritual invocation of Saint George (Mār Giwargis) along with baptismal liturgical formulae—which suggests clerical authorship, potentially a deacon or a priest. That clergy were engaged in such practices is confirmed by literary evidence: Syriac bishop Isaac of Antioch, in the fifth century, was denouncing similar activities carried out by clerics:

> Scribes have lowered their eyes,
> and the priest has become like the common people,
> And whoever is zealous and inquires about it,
> the foolish have called envious.
>
> The Slanderer has cast a hidden hunting net into creation,
> And placed it in the hand of his disciples
> so that they may fill it in various ways.
>
> While taking verses, one lures the prey to his net;
> Another calls the crowds to destruction
> by the fervor of his hunting horns.
>
> One has taken the bones of the righteous for himself
> in order to cast a lure for the innocent,
> And another plants error in the simple
> with the calling out to demons.
>
> One acts iniquitously in monastic seclusion,
> and another does so in the mournful ascetic life;
> The pollution (*ṭmā'uṯā*) of magic knots, amulets, and charms
> is discovered among the priests (*kāhnē*).[36]

In light of this evidence, the label "ecclesiastical practitioners" allows us to speak about a broader range of scribal profiles—whether monks, deacons, or priests—that were involved in

[35] Jacques van der Vliet and Adam Łajtar, *Empowering the Dead in Christian Nubia: The Text from a Funerary Complex in Dongola* (Warsaw: JJP, 2017), 247–50.
[36] Becker, *Isaac of Antioch*, 481.

the ritual economy of Late Antiquity. Crucially, it is here important to underscore how the rubric "ecclesiastical practitioners" is by no means synonymous with "educated" or "elite." Moreover, my interpretation of this rubric deliberately avoids automatic correlation between education and clerical status. This caution has been magisterially articulated by Jack Tannous, who has called for a more nuanced understanding of the level—and indeed, the kinds—of literacy possessed by late antique clerics.[37] In this respect, ritual evidence suggests that those social actors engaged in the transmission of ritual texts were, in certain cases, only minimally literate, at times being poorly able to read the very language in which they were copying. A striking case in point is that of Deacon Iōhannēs, the copyist of at least six manuscripts part of the so-called "Heidelberg Magical Archive" (see below chapter 2).[38] His inconsistent and non-standard use of Coptic has led scholars to conclude that he was far from proficient in this language, complicating assumptions about linguistic competence within the clerical ranks.

The Rise of a "Church of Magic"

Ecclesiastical Magic focuses on the interface between clergy and "magic." Far from being a marginal phenomenon, the involvement of clerical ranks in magical activities is part of a broader reshaping of ritual efficacy driven by the Christian discourse itself. In this respect, my dissertation contends that the emergence of the Christian discourse in Late Antiquity brought with it a remodeling of the language of ritual power. The Christian cultural world—one made of Psalms, hymnologies, liturgical formulae, as well as biblical and extra-biblical motifs—was turned into a potent authoritative framework, appearing embedded in objects, texts, and inscriptions devised for the ritual resolution of daily concerns (e.g., healing,

[37] See Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*, esp chaps. 1 and 2.
[38] See Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 262.

protection, cursing, justice, business success). The deeply entrenched scholarly tendency has been to conceptualize "magic" as a domain cultivated exclusively by marginal and rogue figures of ritual specialists existing on the peripheral villages of late antique society. In stark contrast to this, evidence points to the emergence of a cohesive community of Christian ritual practitioners operating at the very heart of the Christian institution in Late Antiquity. These practitioners—monks, priests, or deacons—operated within the walls of churches and monasteries, predicating ritual efficacy on substances, texts, and objects embedded within their environment.

The interface between magic and Christian liturgy is one crucial realm of concern of this inquiry. David Frankfurter has framed ritual spells that capitalize on discursive practices, symbols, material substances (e.g., water, oil, dust), and gestures associated with the Christian liturgical discourse as the product of the agency of local ritual experts who adopt and resituate elements of the Great Tradition into local religious milieux:

> In the discussion of *historiolae* and the sanctioning of magical substances in the Local Tradition, one must inevitably confront the creative or entrepreneurial agency of the local ritual specialist, perhaps even a priest or attendant, responsible for the reassignment of such materials—Eucharistic hosts, holy oil and water, Latin incantations, etc.—to quotidian ritual purposes. The magic of these substances, as I have been framing it, derives from their continuing gesture towards (in this case) ecclesiastical authority—the Great Tradition—as the larger context in which all these substances carry meaning and potency.

Yet Frankfurter's model, while it captures salient aspects of the local negotiation of the Christian liturgical discourse, it falls short in addressing the full spectrum of dynamics of mediation between liturgy and ritual power. For while he emphasizes that "magic" involves the deployment of liturgical ritual technologies outside institutional settings, evidence tells a different story. Institutional spaces often served as stages of ritual performance. In tandem with the above-mentioned version of the magical *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"*—preserved in the burial tomb of the archbishop of Dongola—telling is the testimony of Addai the priest—

interlocutor of Jacob of Edessa—relative to a ritual carried out by a priest to reveal his robber:

> Concerning a priest (*qašišā*) whose house is robbed and who enters into his church (*'edte*) and puts out the lamps and overturns the holy table and brings out the sacks of [the relics] of the holy martyrs and hangs them under the sky and sprinkles ash on the urns of the holy martyrs, demanding vengeance from the one who stole his wealth and says: 'A lamp will not be lit in church and the altar will not be set right and these saints will not enter in from the rain and the ash will not be cleaned off their urns until they show who despoiled my house.'[39]

As the text throws into relief, the church's altar is turned into a performative space wherein martyrs relics are deployed as material accoutrements imbued with divinatory power to be wielded against thieves. Even more revealing is the case of the Syriac Sophronius, Bishop of the city of Tella, near Edessa. As the legal proceedings against the cleric show, divinatory séances were regularly held within the episcopal residence at Tella, which was turned into a spatial setting that echoes the sanctity of an altar (see below chapter 3). Elsewhere, we may locate another clue to magical activities that capitalize on the church's altar as locus of ritual agency in the ritual prescriptions appended to London Hay 1, which instruct the practitioner to bury a curse under the altar of a *topos* (i.e., a monastic church or shrine).[40] In much the same spirit, the early medieval Anglo-Saxon charm known as *Ærcerbot* ("field ceremonies") involves a liturgical ceremony for agricultural success carried out within the church building, involving chanting and gestures performed over the altar (see below chapter 1). As Ciaran Arthur has pointed out, when read in conjunction with the situational context of their manuscripts, these charms emerge as experimental *assemblages* of liturgical materials that were cultivated within ecclesiastical scribal milieux. As Arthur has indeed observed, many of the manuscripts containing charms were copied in ecclesiastical centers during the heyday of

[39] Text and translation in Jack Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam: Making Incommensurables Speak" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2010), 313, no. 740.
[40] See Elisabeth R. O'Connell, ed., *The Hay Archive of Coptic Spells on Leather: A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Materiality of Magical Practice* (London: The British Museum, 2022), 90–91.

the monastic reform promoted by Anglo-Saxon patrons such as Dunstan and Æthelwold in the tenth century:

> Several manuscripts containing 'charms' were written at Christ Church after Dunstan's reforms, indicating their approval in this high-status ecclesiastical minster […]Many manuscripts containing 'charms' were written in Winchester at important reforming ecclesiastical centres, particularly the Old and New Minsters, indicating that these rituals were incorporated into Æthelwold's programmes for education and liturgical observances.[41]

Furthermore, ritual activities carried out in institutional spaces often extended to synagogues. In a striking instance, nineteen metal amulets were found—either rolled or folded—in the apse of a late antique synagogue at Ḥorvat Ma'on, in close proximity to the ark of the Torah.[42] Such findspot suggests intimate association between the liturgical language of the amulets and the deposition within the Torah ark. A corroborating evidence emerges from a recipe for preventing the obliteration of knowledge from the Cairo Genizah ([T-S K 1.162] 1b/40–45), which instructs the practitioner to deposit the adjuration beneath the Torah ark.[43] Moreover, synagogues could become arenas of aggressive magical practices. Several amuletic devices—including one bronze lamella from Bar'am designed to silence the client's opponents—bring evidence to the performance of coercive rituals within the synagogue sacred enclosures.[44] A magical recipe from the late antique grimoire *Sword of Moses* confirms this further:

> And if you want your fear to be upon people, write on a lead lamella from X to Y and bury it in a synagogue, in the western direction.[45]

---

[41] Ciaran Arthur, *Charms, Liturgies, and Secret Rites in Early Medieval England*, Anglo-Saxon Studies 32 (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer, 2018), 13.
[42] See reference in Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 315.
[43] See Joseph Naveh, "The Aramaic and Hebrew Inscriptions from Ancient Synagogues," *Eretz-Israel* 20 (1989): 303 (Heb.)
[44] On aggressive magic in synagogues, see Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 318–320.
[45] Yuval Harari, *Ḥarba de-Moshe (The Sword of Moses): A New Edition and a Study* (Jerusalem: Academon, in Hebrew), 44, no. 105.

Other traces of liturgical ritual practices carried out in institutional settings can be glimpsed through the practice of trimming liturgical lectionaries into magical handbooks, as it is the case with the Coptic codices P. Heid. Kopt. 685 and 686 (see below chapter 1). The likeliest hypothesis is that these materials were manipulated by social actors (e.g., monks, priests, and deacons) with direct access to textual sources preserved within local churches or monasteries. The same holds true for the so-called "occasional prayers" preserved in Byzantine *Euchologia*, the Greek prayer books for the use of priests. These small amuletic prayers address a wide range of needs, including the ritual sealing of a child, protection of the house, exorcism, and commemoration of the dead.[46] By way of example, the late manuscript Patm. 689 (f. 114)—dated between the 15th and the16th century CE)—preserves a prayer for relieving breast pain from a woman, followed by ritual instructions for crafting an amuletic device to be hung upon her chest. While *Euchologia* manuscripts tend to be relatively late (between the 12th and the 17th CE), they collect earlier materials whose contents can be traced back well into Late Antiquity. An additional pattern of evidence that casts institutional spaces as ritual stages is the practice of lining external walls with select scriptural excerpts. The Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit, for instance, displays the *Jesus-Abgar Correspondence*—a widespread tactic in the arsenal of ecclesiastical practitioners—on its courtyard walls as a defensive measure against potential malevolent incursions to the site (see below chapter 4). In these instances, we are not witnessing the local reinterpretation of liturgy but the deliberate construction of ritual power through the mediation of institutional actors that operate within institutional settings by manipulating texts, objects, and material

[46] On "occasional prayers" see for instance Markus Vinzent and Claudia Rapp, eds., *Studia Patristica*, vol. CVIII, Papers presented at the Eighteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 2019 (Leuven: Peeters, 2021); Eirini Afentoulidou, "Ministering Spirits, Guardians, Intercessors: The Discourse of Angels in Byzantine Liturgical Texts," in *Inventer les anges de l'Antiquité à Byzance*, ed. Delphine Lauritzen (Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2021), 631–663. More generally, see the publications of the Vienna Euchologia Project lead by Claudia Rapp on their website, https://www.oeaw.ac.at/en/imafo/research/byzantine-research/communities-and-landscapes/euchologia-project.

substances inhabiting these spaces. This perspective expands on Frankfurter's view of magic as a form of local "reorientation" of the Great Tradition, simultaneously repositioning his portrait of ritual experts as social actors operating at the nerve centers of the late antique Christian world. By the sixth-century, the recursive appearance of select invocations, scriptural excerpts, and cluster narratives speaks to the formation of ritual traditions that were systematically copied and transmitted across networks of people and spaces attached to Christian institutional frameworks. On a more general level, my heuristic model reverses the deeply entrenched assumption expressed by Emile Durkheim's in his quite famous statement "There is no church of magic:"

> Magic is an entirely different matter. Granted, magic beliefs are never without a certain currency. They are often widespread among broad strata of the population, and there are even peoples where they count no fewer active followers than religion proper. But they don't bind men who believe in them to one another and unit them into the same group, living the same life. *There is no church of magic* […] To practice his art, the magician has no need whatever to congregate with his peers. He is more often a loner. In general, far from seeking company, he flees it. He stands aloof, even from his colleagues. By contrast, religion is inseparable from the idea of church.[47]

Underlying this claim lies the idea that ostensible "magicians" comprise a social group of people operating as sort of freelance ritual consultants in service of their clientele. As a result, magic appears conceptualized as a social domain which is inherently disentangled from an institutionalized structure such as a church. According to Durkheim, the church model indeed entails a structure where a community of congregants meet to practice and perform a specific series of gestural and discursive practices regimented by a class of religious experts. In stark contrast to this, my research highlights how Christian ritual practitioners operated within the institutional framework of the church, actively shaping emerging ritual traditions that were passed through the centuries. This shift in perspective invites a reevaluation of the boundaries between "magic" and "religion," challenging traditional dichotomies and offering new

[47] Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York-London: The Free Press, 1995), 42–43.

insights into the complexities of the lived religion of Late Antiquity. The range of magical sources I will be focusing on in this thesis, including the so-called Coptic *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* and the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael* indeed demonstrate how specific ritual traditions were copied and disseminated through a network of ecclesiastical institutions across Egypt, tracing a long temporal trajectory from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. A particular case in point comprises, for instance, the abovementioned version of the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* preserved within archbishop Georgios's burial vault in Nubia (see below chapter 4). The *Prayer* appears inscribed as a potent amuletic device on the walls of the tomb of a Christian cleric, serving as compelling evidence to how ritual practices were not confined to private or clandestine settings but were at times conducted within Christian cultic spaces. This and related phenomena explored throughout the dissertation thus prompt a reevaluation of Durkheim's assertion and invite a broader reconsideration of significance, boundaries, and analytical value of the rubric "magic."

Structure of the Dissertation

Ecclesiastical Magic is organized into two sections and five chapters. The first, *Magic and Liturgy*, investigates the fluid boundaries between the scholarly categories "magic" and "liturgy" with the aid of texts, material objects, and symbols from late antique Egypt and Mesopotamia. It is sub-organized into three chapters. The first, "Eucharistic Magic: The *Epiclesis* as a Ritual Technology of Invocation in the Coptic Magical Papyri," focuses its attention on a cluster of Coptic ritual manuscripts that demonstrate striking resonance with discursive practices, symbols, and gestures associated with Christian liturgy, particularly with the Eucharistic *epiclesis*. By deep diving into the textual and socio-cultural aspects of these ritual manuscripts—here heuristically termed "epicletic invocations" —this chapter demonstrates, on the one hand, the key role played by Eucharistic *epiclesis* as a reservoir of

authoritative formulae and symbols to create ritual texts; and on the other, it leverages certain aspects of this cluster of manuscripts to illuminate their likely original setting within a liturgical scribal milieu. On a more general level, it seeks to make an impact on the scholarly discussion on "magic" and "liturgy" by positioning these texts as a fruitful proof of concept to discuss the porous boundaries between these categories. As for the second chapter, "Tokens of Ritual Power: The Dynamic Continuum between Magic, Art, and Liturgy in the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael* (P. Heid. Kopt. 686)," its main focus is on the interface between text and image in the version of the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael* preserved in P. Heid. Kopt. 686, a tenth-century Coptic magical handbook copied by a minor cleric named Iōhannēs who, as scholars have surmised, may have served in an ecclesiastical institution (i.e., monastery or church) dedicated to Michael the archangel. This chapter further reinforces the argument that ecclesiastical practitioners participated in the ritual economy of Late Antiquity by illuminating the continuities between the *Endoxon* and adjacent homiletic and liturgical works centered on the figure of the archangel. Furthermore, it attempts to illuminate how the copyist of P. Heid. Kopt. 686 was highly attuned to the iconographic representation of the archangel in Coptic culture. This point is qualified through detailed analysis of the ritual image of the archangel appended to the coda of the manuscript, which offers an invaluable window into visual scribal techniques deployed by Christian ritual experts. More broadly, the creative approach toward hagiographical, biblical, extra-biblical, and iconographical motifs found in P. Heid. Kopt. 686 speaks to a dynamic continuum between Christian discourse and ritual power. Moreover, the third chapter, "*Sacramentalia* and Ritual Power: Ecclesiastical Practitioners and Sacred Economy in Late Antique Mesopotamia," shifts focus to Christian Mesopotamia. More in detail, this chapter is designed to account for two main arguments: first, that Syriac clergy played a central and often initiatory role in the spreading of Christian discourse through the mediation of ritual knowledge. Second, that the

construction of ritual power among Syriac Christians predicates its efficacy on the materials, language, and gestures of Christian liturgy. Toward this end, the chapter grapples with a diverse range of sources, including literary evidence such as Jacob of Edessa's *Questions-and-Answers* with the priest Addai (see below chapter 3). This canonical work, composed by one of the finest intellectuals in seventh-century Syria, offers a window into the beliefs and practices that surrounded the celebration of the Eucharist in this period. Beliefs over the powers of liturgy were indeed never purely intellectual. They were deeply embedded in material and visual forms, in the objects handled, the substances sanctioned (e.g., water, oil), the garments worn, the words spoken aloud. Liturgical materials functioned not only as sacramental instruments but also as incubators and vehicles for ritual resolution of everyday crises. As such, this text will serve as the backdrop against which I will read and discuss ritual objects such as talismans, amuletic prayers, and incantation bowls written in Syriac.

Following the first section, the second, *Ecclesiastical Practitioners and Ritual Discourse*, attends to two interrelated aspects: first, the redactional strategies used by Christian ritual experts to copy and customize their ritual products; second, the networks of ecclesiastical institutions and scribal contexts through which texts were disseminated over time. This section is organized into two chapters. Chapter four, "Tradition and Redaction in Late Antique Magic: A 'Modular Approach,'" develops what I heuristically term a "modular approach" to interpret the redactional strategies employed by Christian ritual experts in crafting their texts. According to this theoretical framework, ritual sources appear amenable to be organized into discrete redactional units, here referred to as "frame units." These frame units form blocks of redactional materials that are strategically manipulated by ritual experts––combined, expanded, shrunk, adjusted—to accommodate various formats and performative needs. Moreover, I argue that frame units vary according to two main principles, here labeled "intertextual development" and "idiolectic variation." These two rubrics have been designed

to illustrate different ranges of textual variations across closely aligned frame units found in magical materials. Through my analysis of select case studies, I will show how the two principles serve as an analytical toolbox for illustrating the redactional interventions implemented by ritual specialists in shaping their own brand of magical texts. On a broader level, this chapter lays down the conceptual groundwork for describing the emergence of a Christian ritual discourse in Late antiquity.

The final chapter, "From Performance to Text: The Interface between the Oral and the Written in Christian Magic," explores the transmission trajectory of certain ritual manuscripts, with the aim of tracking down the potential social networks responsible for their circulation across the Nile Valley. It argues that a mixed oral-written model of transmission may best account for the textual variations evident in ritual manuscripts, while it points to Coptic monasteries as key social sites of ritual innovation and preservation, wherein ritual materials were continually copied and disseminated over time.

Terminology

1. Magic

The present study engages with a broad range of textual and material sources commonly deemed by scholars "magic." While this classification has come under heavy fire in recent scholarship, I employ the rubric "magic" as a flexible taxonomic tool in agreement with the approach advocated by Joseph Sanzo.[48] My focus here lies less in providing a rigid definition of "magic" than in deploying a working taxonomy that allows productive historical and philological analysis across diverse religious traditions and linguistic media. As Sanzo has highlighted, while there have been attempts to disassociate the term "magic" from scholarly discourse, there indeed remains a general consensus regarding the sources that fall within its

[48] See Sanzo, *Ritual Boundaries*, 8–11.

taxonomic scope. In this respect, I will interchangeably deploy the terms "magic" and "ritual sources" to refer to texts and material objects (e.g., amulets, talismans, handbooks, and incantation bowls) such as those published in volumes like: *Papyri Copticae Magicae*,[49] *Papyri Graecae Magicae*,[50] *Greek and Egyptian Magical Formularies*,[51] *Supplementum Magicum*,[52] *Ancient Christian Magic*,[53] *Amulets and Magic Bowls*,[54] *Magic Spells and Formulae*,[55] *A Corpus of Syriac Incantation Bowls*.[56]

In order to conclude, it is important to stress that, while late antique ecclesiastical authorities frequently framed "magic" as an illicit activity associated with the performance of maverick ritual experts, the range of discursive practices and gestures here explored appear to have been perceived by ordinary Christian as congruent with the Christian discourse.

2. Syncretism

In a number of influential publications, David Frankfurter has developed a robust defense and clarification of the analytical concept of "syncretism."[57] Alongside "magic," the term "syncretism" has engaged scholars in numerous discussions concerning its analytical value for understanding ancient religions. Despite some reservations, this term remains prevalent in contemporary scholarly discourse, particularly in relation to materials deemed "magic." If

[49] Korshi Dosoo and Markéta Preininger, eds., *Papyri Copticae Magicae. Coptic Magical Texts, Volume 1: Formularies (PCM I 1), Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete – Beihefte* 48 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023).
[50] Karl Preisendanz, ed., *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die Griechischen Zauberpapyri*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner, 1973–1974).
[51] Christopher A. Faraone and Sofía Torallas Tovar, eds., *The Greco-Egyptian Magical Formularies: Libraries, Books, and Individual Recipes* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2022).
[52] Robert W. Daniel and Franco Maltomini, eds., *Supplementum Magicum* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990–1992).
[53] Marvin W. Meyer and Richard Smith, eds., *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).
[54] Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1985).
[55] Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1993).
[56] Marco Moriggi, *A Corpus of Syriac Incantation Bowls: Syriac Magical Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia*, Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2014).
[57] See Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, esp. 1–31.

anything, David Frankfurter has significantly moved the field beyond the mere conceptualization of syncretism as a hodgepodge of motifs crossing idealized boundaries between late antique religions. To the contrary, Frankfurter has poignantly used this category as a lens to illuminate cultural processes such as the Christianization of late antique Egypt. More in detail, Frankfurter's nuanced interpretation asserts that syncretism reflects a dynamic process in which the old Egyptian religious discourse is not simply discarded nor obliterated by the superseding Christian religious paradigm. Instead, syncretism delineates a kind of "buffer zone," an integrative space where the old and new religious discourse engage in a continuous and ongoing dialogue. This phenomenon is particularly evident in magical texts, where we observe the persistence of old Egyptian traditions within or in opposition to the emerging Christian religious discourse. However, as Joseph Sanzo has poignantly highlighted, while Frankfurter's theoretical model proves beneficial to address cultural process over the *longue durée*, it can run the risk of obfuscating the specific cultural position of certain clusters of sources.[58] In this dissertation, the concept of syncretism will be employed judiciously and clarified where it proves useful in elucidating dynamics relevant to ecclesiastical practitioners and magic. Conversely, I will demonstrate instances where this concept falls short in explaining processes that require more nuanced analysis.

3. Modular Approach and Frame Units

The second section of *Ecclesiastical Magic* explores the redactional strategies deployed by Christian ritual experts for crafting their ritual products. My engagement with these scribal techniques is based on what I heuristically term a "modular approach." This interpretative model is based on a structural configuration of magical texts into discrete redactional units that can be differently manipulated by ritual experts (e.g., combined, expanded, shrunk) in

[58]See Sanzo, *Ritual Boundaries*, 55–58.

articulating their own brand of products. These portions of texts take on the nomenclature "frame units," which designates the textual building blocks composing a ritual text—be it a specific series of *sacred names* (e.g., the series *Bēth, Bēth, Bēthai*; the couple *Orphamiel/Orpha*) scriptural excerpts (e.g., the *Jesus-Abgar correspondence*; the *Gospel Incipits*), or invocations (e.g., the *Adjuration of the Nine Guardians*). These units often exhibit a partonomic organization: they can be cited in full, abbreviated to a key sentence, or merged with larger redactional units. Frame units straddle the boundaries between the oral and the written, as their textual variations suggest these were "tapped" orally—intoned aloud, recited by heart—but stored in writing-supported archives such as Leiden AMS 9, a late antique Coptic codex which appears to have served as a working manual for ritual specialists. Their recursive appearance across manuscripts, objects, and inscriptions over time point to the formation of distinct ritual traditions cultivated and perpetuated within distinct social networks of the late antique ecclesiastical world (e.g., churches and monasteries).

Part I
Magic and Liturgy

Chapter 1
Eucharistic Magic:
The *Epiclesis* as a Ritual Technology of Invocation in the Coptic Magical Papyri

Upon entering the church of the Red Monastery, situated three kilometers north of Atripe (modern-day Sohag), late antique monks found themselves seized by the dazzling beauty of its triconch apses, finely decorated with *dramatis personae* and motifs sourced from the vast digest of biblical and extra-biblical traditions cultivated in Egyptian monasteries. The subjects portrayed in the *dipinti* decorating the northern semidome—including prophetic figures such as Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel—reflect the angelic, prelapsarian status toward which monks gestured throughout a life paced by continuous prayer and rigid bodily discipline. In the upper level of the eastern lobe of the triconch, an enthroned Christ projected an austere, triumphant atmosphere to the monastic choirs that gathered there to attend to the daily liturgical service.[59] The cadence, rhythms, and choreographic sequences of the collective performances held in monastic churches—involving chanting, praying, reading of the Scriptures, and uttering of divine names—left a distinct fingerprint on a number of magical-liturgical invocations preserved in Coptic.

The focus of this chapter is on a grouping of Coptic ritual manuscripts that demonstrate a marshalling of discursive practices, gestures, and material accoutrements deeply rooted in the Christian liturgical discourse. This body of texts often presents a fictional narrative backdrop against which are staged apocalyptic-visionary depictions of

[59] On the liturgy-space interplay in Shenoute's monastic federation, see Stephen J. Davis, Daniel Schriever, Mary Farag, and Samuel Moawad, eds., *The Feast of the Desert of Apa Shenoute: A Liturgical Procession from the White Monastery in Upper Egypt*, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 681, *Scriptores Coptici* 53 (Leuven: Peeters, 2020); Ugo Zanetti and Stephen J. Davis, "Liturgy and Ritual Practice in the Shenoutean Federation," in *The Red Monastery Church: Beauty and Asceticism in Upper Egypt*, ed. Elizabeth S. Bolman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 27–35; Zanetti, "La liturgie dans les monastères de Shenoute," *Le Muséon* 122, no. 3–4 (2009): 259–292.

God's heavenly throne alongside doxological vignettes casting angelic beings in the role of celestial trumpeters and guitarists that embed them within an exquisite Christian liturgical framework. Yet, the hallmark of these spells lies in their ritual procedure, which hinges on a liturgical-style invocation directed to angelic beings compelling them to channel their celestial powers into a chalice infused with a mixture of efficacious ingredients (e.g., oil, water, wine). As I will attempt to illuminate in this chapter, this singular typology of angelic adjurations presents strong affinities with the *epiclesis*, the central prayer of the liturgy of the Christian Eucharist. In virtue of this striking resonance, I will heuristically employ the label "epicletic invocations" to refer to this category of spells.

Among Coptic magical texts from Late Antiquity, a first grouping of materials falling within the heuristic category "epicletic invocations" can identified on the basis of the shared ritual goal of BL MS Or. 6794, P. Berlin 8318, and PCM 1 17 (P. CtYBR inv. 1791),[60] whose ritual mechanics center on an angelic invocation performed through an *epiclesis* over a chalice aimed at enhancing the vocal performance of the clients. In virtue of their ritual aim, these spells are often referred to as "spells for a good singing voice."[61] A second grouping of texts involves several versions of the ritual tradition known as *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos,"* particularly Heidelberg kopt. 685, London 6796 [2], [3], [1], and the so-called "Dongola

[60] Regarding the dating of BL MS Or. 6794, Crum (see Angelicus Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte*, vol. 1 [Brussels: Édition de la Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1931], xi) places it around 600 CE. Roxanne Bélanger Sarrazin (see "Catalogue des textes magiques coptes" in *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete*, 63, issue 2 [2017]: 367–408, at 382) suggests a slightly broader temporal window, 501–700 CE. Additionally, two unpublished Coptic manuscripts can be ascribed to this tradition: P. PalauRib. 137 and Turin Biblioteca Nazionale Ms. Peyron 158 c.1r. (See Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 241). As for P. Berlin 8318, it is almost certainly from the period 651–800 CE, given its provenance within the Berlin Library collection, which features similar handwriting styles (see Korshi Dosoo's note in Kyprianos: A Database of Ancient Ritual Texts and Objects, accessed January 13, 2025, https://www.coptic-magic.phil.uni-wuerzburg.de/index.php/manuscript/kyp-m81/)." PCM 1 17 is generally dated to the 8th century CE, as argued by Dosoo and Preininger (see *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 247).

[61] Reference to this rubric and related publish and still unpublished materials can be found in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 238–245; see esp. the general notes at 241.

version."[62] Additionally, a number of isolated texts—London Hay 1 and London Hay 4,[63] Cairo JdE 49547,[64] BL MS 6796 (4)[65] PCM 1 10 (P. Morgan Copt. 10),[66] P. Heidelberg Kopt. 686,[67] PCM I 34 (P. Stras Copt. 9),[68] and Berlin 8319[69]—which likewise involve an *epiclesis* over a chalice. My interest in this cluster of manuscript lies in the modalities in which the logics of the Eucharistic *epiclesis* come to be incorporated into the mechanics of the spells. As I will argue, the ways in which the discursive and gestural dimensions of the *epiclesis* play out in these texts position them as instantiations of a sophisticated negotiation between ritual practices rooted in Graeco-Egyptian ritual traditions and the theological and liturgical innovations of the Christian discourse. Coptic epicletic invocations indeed involve material accoutrements (e.g., chalice, white robe), liquid substances (e.g., water, oil), and discursive practices that oftentimes parallel ritual apparatuses operative in the "ritual of apparitions" attested in the Graeco-Egyptian magical formularies. In detail, the rubric "ritual of apparitions" has been designed by Michael Swartz to address a distinct typology of Jewish ritual invocations evident in the Cairo Genizah that attempts to establish contact and communication with otherworldly entities (e.g., angels).[70] Notably, Swartz employs the term

[62] The *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* will be discussed in detail in chapter 4. For a general overview on its manuscript tradition, see van der Vliet and Łajtar, *Empowering the Dead in Christian Nubia*, 128–142.
[63] London Hay 1 and London Hay 4 are part of a magical archive—likely stemming from ancient Thebes—brought together by a group of copyists. Based on paleographical analysis, Michael Zellmann-Rohrer dates the manuscripts between the eight and the ninth century CE. For further details see Elisabeth R. O'Connell, ed., *The Hay Archive of Coptic Spells on Leather: A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Materiality of Magical Practice* (London: The British Museum, 2022), esp. 181—193.
[64] Coptic text in Louis Saint-Paul Girard, "Un fragment de liturgie magique copte sur ostrakon." *Annales du Service des antiquités de l'Égypte* 27 (1927): 62–68. English translation in Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 228–230.
[65] Coptic text in Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte*, vol. 1, 47–49. New edition being prepared by Joseph Sanzo and Korshi Dosoo (forthcoming). English translation in Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 290–292.
[66] Text and translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 103–107.
[67] Text and translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 324–367. P. Heidelberg Kopt. 686 will be discussed in detail in chapter 2.
[68] Text and translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 436–445.
[69] Coptic text in Adolf Erman, *Aegyptische Urkunden aus den Königlichen Museen zu Berlin*, vol. 1 (Teil 1–2) (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1892). English translation in Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 102–103.
[70] Michael Swartz, "Understanding Ritual in Jewish Magic: Perspectives from the Genizah and Related Sources," in *Officina Magica: Essays on the Practice of Magic in Antiquity*, ed. Shaul Shaked (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 233–253, at 242–243.

"apparition" interchangeably with "revelation," as he includes under the same typology of ritual procedures the Jewish mystical-visionary and adjurational body of texts from Late Antiquity known as Hekhalot—particularly those associated with the ritual of the *Śar ha-Torah* and the *Śar ha-Panim*. These texts are concerned with summoning angelic beings to the practitioner in order to endow him with diverse benefits, including the acquisition of secret knowledge over the Scriptures.[71] Korshi Dosoo has poignantly underscored the extent to which the ritual mechanics underlying the category of spells isolated by Swartz in the Cairo Genizah and in the Hekhalot corpus involve a recurrent set of procedures that parallel practices documented in the Graeco-Egyptian magical formularies.[72] Yet, as Dosoo further observes, the nomenclature "rituals of apparition" resists universal adoption among scholars of Graeco-Egyptian magic as it often overlaps with the broader rubric "divination," a category that risks subsuming under its semantic umbrella practices that warrant closer examination and differentiation. This ambiguity arises as the discursive practices, gestures (e.g., preliminary ritual acts including fasting, purification, and sex avoidance), and material accoutrements (e.g., chalice, bowl, lamp, oil, water) often employed in the "rituals of apparition" are also central to divinatory practices such as lecanomancy, dream divination, and bowl or lamp divination.[73] In this chapter, my engagement with the category of spells

---

[71] For a general overview on this category of spells within the Graeco-Egyptian magical tradition, see Korshi Dosoo, "Rituals of Apparition in the Theban Magical Library" (Ph.D. diss., Macquarie University, 2014). As scholars have increasingly noticed, parallel to these spells are also attested in Jewish mystical and magical corpora from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages, particularly the Hebrew magical handbook *Sefer ha-Razim*, the Hekhalot literature, and the magical texts from the Cairo Genizah. On the Jewish tradition of these spells, see in particular Michael Swartz, *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Jae Hee Han, *Prophets and Prophecy in the Late Antique Near East* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 231–256. On their intersections with the Graeco-Egyptian magical tradition, see Rebecca Lesses, "Speaking with Angels: Jewish and Greco-Egyptian Revelatory Adjuration Rituals," *Harvard Theological Review* 89, no. 1 (1996): 41–60.

[72] See Dosoo, "Rituals of Apparition," 221–222.

[73] For a general overview on divinatory practices in the Graeco-Roman world, see for instance Theodor Hopfner, "Mittel- und neugriechische Lekano-, Lychno-, Katoptro- und Onychomantien." In *Studies Presented to F. Ll. Griffith*, ed. S.R.K. Glanville (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1932), 218–232; Hopfner, *Griechische-Ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam: Verlag Adolf M. Hakkert, 1974–2000); Sarah Iles Johnston and Peter T. Struck, eds., *Mantikê: Studies in Ancient Divination* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); Johnston, *Ancient Greek Divination* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008); Leda Ciraolo and Jonathan Seidel, eds., *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World*, *Ancient Magic and Divination* 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2002);

rubricated as "rituals of apparition" is aimed at tracking down affinities of epicletic invocations with earlier ritual technologies, particularly those found in the Graeco-Egyptian magical formularies. On a broader level, my investigation takes as starting point the hypothesis that epicletic invocations represent sophisticated negotiations of certain axiomatical elements found in the "rituals of apparition"—i.e., the utterance of verbal formulae over a cup/chalice, the use of liquid substances to infuse it (e.g., water, oil), herbs, and burning offerings, as well as observance of preliminary procedures such as fasting and purification—and the lexicon, visionary motifs, and gestures of the Christian liturgical discourse, particularly that of the Eucharistic *epiclesis*.

Moreover, behind overt synergies in the deployment of shared formulae and narrative motifs, epicletic invocations point toward a shared socio-cultural world that warrants closer exploration. In this chapter, David Frankfurter's recent formulation of "liturgical experts" will offer an interpretative key to unlocking new facets of the the authorial personae behind magical-liturgical spells.[74] These ritual specialists, as Frankfurter argues, operated at the intersection of institutional liturgy and ritual practice, crafting texts that combine formal liturgical elements with ritual strategies characteristic of magical traditions (e.g., *kharaktēres* and *voces magicae*). Rather than representing deviations or marginalizations of ecclesiastical liturgies, these "hybrid texts" reflect a creative modulation of official ritual forms, tailored to specific ritual needs and local contexts.

The chapter will proceed as follows. After a brief introduction into the scholarly discussion on "magic" and "liturgy" in Late Antiquity, the first section will focus its attention

---

AnneMarie Luijendijk, *"'Thy Are Your Lots': Lot Divination and Books in Early Christianity"*(Leiden: Brill, 2018); AnneMarie Luijendijk, *The Gospel of the Lots of Mary: Christian Divination in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); David Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, 87–90; 130–138.

[74] See David Frankfurter, "Heavenly Liturgy and Its Materialization in Early Coptic Magical Texts," in *Above, Below, Before, and After*: *Studies on Judaism and Christianity in Dialogue with Martha Himmelfarb*, ed. Ra'anan Boustan, David Frankfurter, and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023), 311–329, at 326–327.

on the *epiclesis* as a ritual strategy deployed by ritual specialists to establish contact with supernatural beings in order to benefit from their divine knowledge. The tradition of the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* and the so-called "spells for a good singing voice" will serve as my primary case studies in examining and discussing liturgical-magical texts that adopt the Christian *epiclesis* as a potent ritual strategy. Subsequently, the second section will attempt to track down facets of epicletic invocations that show continuity with earlier magical traditions, particularly those found in the "rituals of apparition." Lastly, the third section offers a sketch of the potential authorial personae behind these texts. In it, I will linger on evidence that aids in reconstructing the likely socio-cultural milieu that facilitated the copying of such texts. By leveraging both primary sources, manuscript archaeology, and secondary literature such as church Canons and hagiographical accounts, this section argues that "liturgical experts" comprised a distinct category of ritual specialists attached to Christian institutions that manipulated both the language of Christian liturgy and that of ritual power. On a more general level, the chapter promises to make an impact on the scholarly discussion on "magic" and "liturgy" by using Coptic ritual texts with marked liturgical registers as productive proofs of concept for discussing the porous boundaries between these categories. These texts vividly illustrate how, in late antique Egypt, liturgy comprised a fluid amalgam of materials capable of being appropriated, adapted, and reoriented by different social actors. The "liturgical experts" responsible for these texts drew on a privileged set of liturgical formulae (i.e., *epiclesis*)—credited with being particularly conducive to indexing divine power—to articulate their own brand of liturgical texts. By integrating liturgical-style formulae with ritual mechanics rooted in Graeco-Egyptian magical traditions—particularly those associated with the rubric "rituals of apparition" attested in Graeco-Egyptian magical formularies—epicletic invocations emerge as poignant instantiations of "hybrid liturgies." As David Frankfurter has recently brought into sharp relief, the proliferation of "hybridizing liturgical

texts" among Coptic magical texts stand as testament to the ritual creativity of ritual specialists that adroitly navigated the intersections of magic and liturgy.[75]

Magic and Liturgy in Late Antiquity between Christianity and Judaism: State of the Art and New Perspectives

Over the past few decades, scholarship on ancient ritual practices has occasionally touched on the complex interplays between magic and liturgy within the ritual traditions of Late Antiquity.[76] While this has grown more attentive to the overlaps between the two domains, research efforts on this topic lag far behind other well-established aspects of the ancient Mediterranean ritual world. This gap in scholarship underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which magic and liturgy, often treated as distinct categories, shared ritual logics and overlapping repertoires.

In the specific context of late antique Egypt, Ágnes Myhálikó's recent publication, *The Christian Liturgical Papyri: An Introduction*, marks a watershed in the study of Coptic liturgy. In particular, this volume looms large as the most robust attempt to identify, collect, and classify liturgical papyri from late antique Egypt. Yet, despite its significant contribution, Myhálikó's work falls short in providing a satisfactory definition of the rubric "liturgy" and in outlining overarching criteria for identifying texts that fall within the semantic horizon of this category. Crucially, Myhálikó acknowledges the fluid boundaries between liturgical texts and other textual or material traditions, including those labeled as "magical" by modern scholarship. She highlights significant affinities, for instance, between the exorcistic prayers found in collections such as the *Euchologion of Sarapion of Thmuis* and

[75] Frankfurter, "Heavenly Liturgy," 315–316.
[76] On Magic and liturgy in late antique Egypt, see esp. Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, 197–206; Frankfurter, "Heavenly Liturgy," 311–329; Ágnes Mihálykó, *The Christian Liturgical Papyri: An Introduction* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), see *sub* "magic" in the index to find references.

similar materials within the Coptic magical corpus.[77] This observation aligns with the work of David Frankfurter, who has emphasized the shared ritual strategies, particularly the use of the *epiclesis*, that appear in both liturgical and magical contexts.[78] As I will attempt to illuminate in the next section, the *epiclesis* serves as a perfect case study for bringing into sharp relief how the discursive practices and gestures of Christian liturgy often functioned as a potent reservoir of ritual strategies to be appropriated by ritual specialists and adapted to suit their particular brand of ritual products.

This pattern of evidence can be reinforced through further comparative analysis with adjacent late antique ritual traditions. In the context of rabbinic and para-rabbinic literature, for instance, the synergies between magic and liturgy have been touched in passing by a number of scholars. Peter Schäfer, for instance, has drawn attention to two fragmentary incantatory prayers from the Cairo Genizah which appropriate widespread Jewish liturgical materials, including the *Eighteen-Benedictions* (*Shmoneh ʻEsreh*), the seven Sabbath blessings, and the *Shemaʻ Israel*.[79] An illustrative example of this dynamic is apparent in a magical prayer—this extant in two versions—termed by Schäfer *Shevaʻ de-Eliyahu*, i.e., "The Seven [Benedictions] of Elijah," and *Shevaʻ Zuṭarti*, i.e., "The Lesser [Prayer of] Seven [Benedictions]." These texts showcase the very process of adaptation and hybridization observed in Coptic magical texts. Specifically, the Jewish prayer combines magical elements (e.g., *voces magicae*, *voces mysticae*) with the seven benedictions of the *ʻAmidah* used on Sabbath and on Holidays. Let us consider, for instance, the text of the first prayer, which preserves the eulogy *Magen Avraham*, i.e., "Shield of Abraham" (MS Oxford 1531 [MS Michael 9] 115a/3-116a/3):

[77] See Mihálykó, *The Christian Liturgical Papyri*, 19; Mihálykó, "Healing in Christian Liturgy in Late Antique Egypt: Sources and Perspectives," *Trends in Classics* 13, no. 1 (2021): 154–194.
[78] See esp. Frankfurter, "Heavenly Liturgy," 311–329.
[79] Peter Schäfer, "Jewish Liturgy and Magic," in *Judentum – Forschungen und Probleme: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Hubert Cancik, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 541–556.

> "Blessed are you YY, by the spirit of his eternal praises. Hear, my God, the speech of my prayer." Holy 12 times. "And may I sanctify this hallowed name in my inward parts and put in me the fear of heaven concerning : Ṣ'T, host, Yah." 12 times. "A Psalm of David. 'I will exalt you, my God and king,'" (Ps 145:1)—all of the psalm. "And before they call, I will answer" (Isa 65:24). "May my speech be pleasing to him," etc. (Ps 104:34). "Blessed are you who hears prayers and supplications before you K; for our eyes long for him and by his name we adjure and decree and command." […] Then a voice came to him and he said, 'Why are you here, Elijah?' And he said, 'I am moved by zeal'" (1 Kings 19:13–14)."KSWN, SRGWN, SRYWN, KMḤQWN, TQPWN, ŠQPWN, ṢLṬWN, ṢDṬN, Justice ṢYDWNYH, KGLNWṢYH, 'PRHWN, QLHWN, Yofi'el, Meṭaṭron, Glory of Heaven, all of them—you (pl.) I adjure by the celestial seals and by the inner division that lifts up the cherubim and by the thousands of thousands and the myriads of myriads of holy angels who stand and bow before the merkabah, that you (pl.) […] Amen Amen Amen Selah Hallelujah Hallelujah Hallelujah Already already already already. Quickly quickly quickly. Blessed are you, Lord, shield (of Abraham)."[80]

As this excerpt from *Sheva' Zuṭarti* lays bare, textual materials sourced from the *Magen Avraham* are sandwiched between other strings of text containing common ritual elements, including *voces mysticae*, expressions such as "quickly quickly," and names of prominent angels, including Meṭaṭron. More recently, Yuval Harari has noticed how the ritual manipulation of the Jewish liturgical blessings amounted to the formation of a distinct genre, the *Shimmush Shmoneh 'Esreh* ("On the use of the eighteen benedictions").[81] Similarly, another ritual genre based on the use of liturgical materials is the *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim* ("The Book on the Use of Psalms"), wherein psalms are systematically treated as potent measures for ritual resolution of daily concerns.[82] Discussion on the ritual potency of psalms can be already found in the Babylonian Talmud, wherein psalms 3 and 91 are credited by rabbis with being particularly effective for battling demons.[83] Another particularly illustrating example of ritual manipulation of Jewish liturgy involves the *'Inyan Sotaḥ*, a ritual designed to reveal the suspected adultery of a woman, and based on the episode of Num. 5:11–31.

---

[80] For text and translation, see Rebecca Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power: Angels, Incantations, and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism*, *Harvard Theological Studies* 44 (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 381 (Hebrew); 385–386 (English).
[81] Yuval Harari, *Jewish Magic before the Rise of Kabbalah* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2017), 266–270.
[82] Harari, *Jewish Magic before the Rise of Kabbalah*, 265–266.
[83] Text, translation, and commentary in Bill Rebiger, *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim: Buch vom magischen Gebrauch der Psalmen. Edition, Übersetzung und Kommentar*, *Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism* 137 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010).

Notably, the magical text attested in the Cairo Genizah offers a magical alternative to that described in the biblical passage.[84]

Turning now attention to the Aramaic incantation bowls, liturgical formulae in this domain of texts are likewise rampant. Although situated within the broader framework of Hekhalot literature, Shaul Shaked and Dan Levene have presciently drawn attention to a number of bowls that incorporate formulae and expressions with distinct liturgical resonances.[85] Although the nature of the bowls' dependence on the Hekhalot literature deserves systematic assessment, it is evident that liturgically inspired formulae recurrently crept into the textual structure of these amuletic devices. In this respect, Simcha Gross and Avigail Manekin-Bamberger have advanced some compelling arguments to place the interdependence between the Aramaic incantation bowls and the broader domains of rabbinic and para-rabbinic literature on firmer analytical grounds.[86] In particular, Gross and Manekin-Bamberger interpret this recurrent "creeping" of formulae and expressions from the diverse domains of rabbinic literature into the bowls as a process they term "clustering." With this rubric, the two scholars refer to a restricted number of bowls that significantly eschew invocations of foreign deities and other expressions that resist strict identification with Jewish motifs, while rely heavily on rabbinic or para-rabbinic materials, including liturgy, halakhic discourse, and mystical traditions. Rather than reflecting a haphazard assemblage of texts, the clustering process represents a deliberate and purposeful strategy aimed at augmenting the efficacy of ritual objects by integrating selected textual portions credited with being invested with authoritative power.

---

[84] Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked, eds., *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum 64, vol. 1 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 15–28.
[85] See Dan Levene, "Jewish Liturgy and Magic Bowls," in *Studies in Jewish Prayer*, eds. R. Hayward and B. Embry (Oxford, 2005), 163–184; Shaul Shaked, "'Peace Be upon You, Exalted Angels': On Hekhalot, Liturgy and Incantation Bowls," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 2 (1995): 197–219.
[86] Simcha Gross and Avigail Manekin-Bamberger, "Babylonian Jewish Society: The Evidence of the Incantation Bowls," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 112, no. 2 (2022): 151–182.

Through this comparison with the Jewish magical tradition, we gain a compelling example of how Jewish ritual experts conceptualized liturgy as a reservoir of ritual tactics to be adopted and articulated in their products. As I will attempt to demonstrate in this chapter, Christian ritual specialists likewise treated the textual, visual, and material dimensions of liturgical discourse as a potent repertoire of elements from which to draw in shaping their ritual texts and objects. Liturgy, in this sense, functioned as a sort of "template scaffolding," a structural and conceptual framework through which ritual practitioners articulated their own expressions of power and efficacy. Building upon these insights, the next section will explore how Christian ritual specialists from late antique Egypt appropriated the ritual mechanics of the *epiclesis*. By reorienting and incorporating the discursive and gestural practices associated with this fundamental part of the Christian Eucharist, these "liturgical specialists" transformed the *epiclesis* into a potent ritual tactic.

1.1 "Hybrid Liturgies": The Emergence of the *Epiclesis* as a Potent Ritual Strategy in Coptic Magical Texts

The *epiclesis*, a central component of the Eucharistic prayer—referred to as *anaphora* in the eastern rites—emerges as the ritual performance whereby the priest invokes the Holy Spirit upon the altar, consecrating the chalice of wine and the bread.[87] The priest then petitions God to sanctify these elements, transforming the wine into the blood of Christ and the bread into his holy body. In the context of late antique Egypt, let us consider the fourth

[87] For a general overview on Christian liturgy in late antique Egypt, see Mihálykó, *The Christian Liturgical Papyri*, esp. her discussion on the *anaphora* at 60–64. See also Maxwell E. Johnson, *Liturgy in Early Christian Egypt* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010); Khs O. H. E. Burmester, *The Egyptian or Coptic Church: A Detailed Description of Her Liturgical Services and the Rites and Ceremonies Observed in the Administration of Her Sacraments* (Cairo: Publications de la Societé d'Archéologie Copte, 1967); Heinzgerd Brakmann, "Le déroulement de la messe copte. Structure et histoire," in *L'eucharistie: célébrations, rites, piétés*, ed. Achille M. Triacca and Angela Pistoia (Rome: C. L. V. Edizione liturgiche, 1995), 107–32.

century *Euchologion of Sarapion of Thmuis* and the *anaphora* preserved in P. Monts. Roca fol. 154b–155a, which both preserve a cogent example of Egyptian *epiclesis*:

P. Monts. Roca 155a[88]	*Euchologion* of Sarapion of Thmuis[89]
Through Him we offer You these creations, the bread and the cup (*arton te kai potērion*). We ask and beseech You to send Your Holy and Comforter Spirit from Heaven (*aitoumetha kai parakaloumen se hopōs katapempsēs ep' auta to hagion sou kai paraklēton sou Pneuma ek tōn ouranōn*) to transform the bread into the Body of Christ and the cup into the Blood of Christ of the New Covenant.	God of truth, let your holy Word come upon this bread (*epidēmēsato thee tēs alētheias ho hagios sou logos epi ton arton touton*) in order that the bread may become body of the Word, and this cup (*to potērion*) in order that the cup may become the blood of truth. And make all who partake to receive a medicine of life for the healing of every illness, and for the strengthening of every advancement and virtue, not for condemnation, God of truth, not for testing and reproach.

As these texts make clear, the core elements of the ritual procedure underlying the *epiclesis* involve a consecrated chalice, infused with certain liquid substances (e.g. water, wine) and accompanied by a votive offering of bread, working as the material medium upon which the Holy Spirit is invoked through the act of uttering certain formulaic phrases. Accordingly, the interweaving of these ritual apparatuses— i.e., chalice, liquid substances, votive offerings, and formulaic speech—comprise the conceptual "scaffolding" governing the mechanics of the ritual procedure. As mentioned above, a number of scholars have noted in passing the striking resemblance between the *epiclesis* in early Egyptian liturgical collections and the

[88] Greek text and English translation in Mikhail Zheltov, "The Anaphora and the Thanksgiving Prayer from the Barcelona Papyrus: An Underestimated Testimony to the Anaphoral History in the Fourth Century," *Vigiliae Christianae* 62, no. 5 (2008): 467–504. On the "anaphora of Barcelona," see also Nathan P. Chase, *The Anaphoral Tradition in the 'Barcelona Papyrus'* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2023).
[89] Greek text and English translation in Maxwell E. Johnson, *The Prayers of Sarapion of Thmuis: A Literary, Liturgical, and Theological Analysis*, (Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1995), 48–49. On the *anaphora* in Sarapion's *Euchologion*, see at 233–253 (which include Greek text, translation, and detailed commentary).

formulaic structure of epicletic invocations in Coptic magical texts.[90] I start approaching these affinities by presenting a synopsis including the magical *epiclesis* found in the version of the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* preserved in P. Heid. Kopt. 685 in dialogue with the *Euchologion of Sarapion of Thmuis* and P. Monts. Roca 155a. Specifically, The prayer extant in P. Heid. Kopt. 685 centers on the invocation of the Virgin Mary upon a chalice, who is called upon to bless and imbue with healing power the water and the oil within it:

P. Heid. Kopt. 685[91]	P. Monts. Roca 155a	*Euchologion* of Sarapion of Thmuis
I adjure you (*ti erak*) today by the twenty-four veils which you created in your wisdom, yea, yea! I adjure you today by the cup of blood (*ti erak mpoou mpapat nesnob*) that which the angels drank from so that they received the Holy Spirit, that ‹you› send to me (*šantouči*) your holy hand upon the water and this oil that are placed before me, I, NN, child of NN, and let it come down upon them, namely, Saint Mary the holy virgin, that she might bless the water so that it becomes a healing and a purification (*efšōpe noučai mn outbba*) so that in the moment that I will wash NN, child of NN, with it let him heal, yea, yea, quickly quickly!	Through Him we offer You these creations, the bread and the cup (*arton te kai potērion*). We ask and beseech You to send Your Holy and Comforter Spirit from Heaven (*aitoumetha kai parakaloumen se hopōs katapempsēs ep' auta to hagion sou kai paraklēton sou Pneuma ek tōn ouranōn*) to transform the bread into the Body of Christ and the cup into the Blood of Christ of the New Covenant.	God of truth, let your holy Word come upon this bread (*epidēmēsato thee tēs alētheias ho hagios sou logos epi ton arton touton*) in order that the bread may become body of the Word, and this cup (*to potērion*) in order that the cup may become the blood of truth. And make all who partake to receive a medicine of life for the healing of every illness, and for the strengthening of every advancement and virtue, not for condemnation, God of truth, not for testing and reproach.

By employing shared terminology (e.g., *ti erak* vs. *parakaloumen*), liquid substances (e.g., blood, water, oil), and material media (e.g., *apat* vs. *potērion*), these texts demonstrate to

[90] This issue has been addressed by Angelicus Kropp in *Ausgewählte Koptische Zaubertexte*, vol. 3 (Brussels: Édition de la Fondation égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1935), 181–207.
[91] Text and translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 300–303.

participate in a broader ritual discourse, challenging strict demarcations between the domains of magic and liturgy. The *Euchologion of Sarapion of Thmuis* exhibits further parallels with the different versions of the *Prayer of Mary at "Bartos*,*"* as both texts invoke water and oil which, once imbued with the power of recited formulae, function as potent healing ingredients against a wide range of medical and "non-medical" diseases, including magic, sorcery, and demonic torments. Prayer 5 of the *Euchologion* includes an *epiclesis* over water and oil, which are turned into "healing medicines," closely resonating with the language employed in P. Heid. Kopt. 685:[92]

P. Heid. Kopt. 685	*Euchologion of Sarapion of Thmuis* (Prayer 5)
I adjure you (*ti erak*) today by the twenty-four veils which you created in your wisdom, yea, yea! I adjure you today by the cup of blood (*ti erak empeou empeapat nesnōb*) that which the angels drank from so that they received the Holy Spirit, that ‹you› send to me (*šantouči*) your holy hand upon the water and this oil that are placed before me, I, NN, child of NN, and let it come down upon them, namely, Saint Mary the holy virgin, that she might bless the water so that it becomes a healing and a purification (*efšōpe noučai mn outbba*) so that in the moment that I will wash NN, child of NN, with it let him heal, yea, yea, quickly quickly!	We bless these creatures (*ktismata tauta*) through the name of the only-begotten Jesus Christ. Upon this water and upon this oil (*epi to hydōr kai to elaion touto*) we name the name of the one who suffered, who was crucified and raised up, and who is seated at the right hand of the uncreated. Graciously give healing power (*dynamin therapeutikēn*) to these creatures so that through eating and drinking every fever and every demon and every disease may be cured, and so that the participation of these creatures may become a healing medicine (*pharmakon therapeutikon*) and a medicine of wholeness in the name of your only-begotten Jesus Christ, through whom (be) to you the glory and the power to all the ages of ages. Amen.[93]

As this quotation lays bare, both P. Heid. Kopt 685 and Prayer 5 identify themselves as powerful invocations aimed at drawing upon water and oil the healing charisma of divine

[92] For Late Antiquity, we can rely on three main versions of the prayer on water and oil for healing the sick: the *Prayers of Sarapion of Thmuis*; P. Mons. Roca fol. 156a.6-156b.3; the *Canons* of Hyppolitus of Rome. At the same time, these three textual traditions reflect influences from three distinct Egyptian areas, respectively: Nile delta (Sarapion), the Lower Egyptian communities (Canons of Hyppolitus), and the Panopolitan nome (P. Mons. Roca). For further details, see Ágnes Mihálykó, "Healing in Christian Liturgy in Late Antique Egypt: Sources and Perspectives," *Trends in Classics*13, no. 1 (2021): 154–194.
[93] See text and commentary in Johnson, *The Prayers of Sarapion of Thmuis*, 53.

entities (Christ in the *Prayer of Sarapion*; Mary in the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"*), turning them into healing remedies (Copt. *efšōpe noučai mn outbba* ["a healing and a purification"] vs. Gr. *dynamin therapeutikēn* and *pharmakon therapeutikon* ["healing power" and "healing medicine"]). The diverse apotropaic finalities of the *epiclesis* are particularly evident in Prayer 17 of the *Euchologion*, which likewise includes an *epiclesis* over water and oil:

> Father of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, having all authority and power, the savior of all people, we all call upon you and we implore you that healing power of your only-begotten may be sent out of heaven upon this oil. May it become for those who are anointed (or to those who receive of these your creatures) for a rejection of every disease and every sickness, for an amulet (*alexipharmakon*) warding off every demon, for a departing of every unclean spirit (*pneumatos akathartou*), for a taking away of every evil spirit (*pneumatos ponērou*) […] Master, let every satanic energy (*energeia satanikē*), every demon, every plot of the opposing one (*epiboulē tou antikeimenou*), every blow, every lash, every pain, or every slap in the face, or shaking, or evil shadow be afraid of your holy name, which we have now called upon […][94]

The range of diseases for which prayer 17 is formulated closely aligns with those enumerated in the different versions of the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos."* These striking affinities are particularly evident in the early Coptic version of the prayer preserved in BL MS Or. 6796 [2], [3], [1] (VI-VII CE) and in the later Greek version inscribed in the tomb of the archbishop Georgios in Christian Nubia (XII CE):

BL MS Or. 6796 [2],[3][95]	Dongola Version
(this) holy prayer that she will request, "By your hand, do it," for herself, so that every power of the devil (ᵉ*nqom nim* ᵉ*nte pdiabolos*) and all his operations (*nefenergeia tērou*), and all his deceptions (*nefiᵉfᵉrhal*) might be abolished […] The one who sits upon his exalted throne […] you must destroy every spirit and every power of the devil.	I invoke you today over the water of this pot and everything inside of it, dissolve all … of NN, all sorcery (*pharmakian*) and all illness (*noson*) and all infirmity (*malakian*) and every destructive meeting … every illness falling upon him by day and by night, so that they flee from him in fear and trembling. Aia, aia, aia. (13–15) […] I ask and beseech you today, my only-begotten son, I, Mary your mother, that you listen to my holy prayer that it may become a phylactery (*phylaktērion*) for all who have it and annihilates all magic (*magian*) and every attack (*labēn*) and every plot of the adversary (*epiboulēn tou antikeimenou*), in every place in which it is proclaimed (53–55).

[94] Johnson, *The Prayers of Sarapion of Thmuis*, 66–67.
[95] Coptic text in Kropp, *Ausgewählte Koptische Zaubertexte*, vol.1, 35–45. English translation in Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 283–289.

Another tradition in which the *epiclesis* plays a major role as a ritual technology is the cluster of manuscripts referred to as "spells for a good singing voice"—which comprises MS BL Or. 6794, P. Berlin 8318, and PCM I 17. This set of spells present a compelling case bringing evidence that the *epiclesis* could be repurposed as a tactic for summoning potent angelic intermediaries to enhance the vocal performance of clients. PCM I 17, for instance, calls upon the angelic being Hormosiel, invoking him upon a chalice:

> I entreat you today (*teso^{e}p^{e}s ^{e}mmok ^{e}mpoou*), and I invoke you (*tiparagale*) Hormosiel, the one with a voice that is sweet, that is pleasant like Philemon, the one with a sweet voice, that you come to me today, me, NN, and you stand over this cup that is placed before me (*piapot etkē erai empamtou ebol*) and you fill it for me with a voice which is sweet (*holeq*), which is pleasant (*notem*) […][96]

According to the ritual mechanics of the spell, the infusion of the chalice with a conction of ingredients involving white honey, white wine, and "water of Tobi" (*mou tōb*) is intended to gift the client with a voice that is "sweet" (*holeq*) and "pleasant" (*notem*). Moreover, another notable adaptation of the *epiclesis* is extant in PCM I 10, a seventh-century Coptic papyrus revolving around a prayer for pregnancy for a barren woman:

> O Master, Almighty Lord God (*despota pantōkrator kyriou hō theos*) since from the beginning, you created man according to your likeness and according to your image, and you also honoured the barren woman and the one who gives birth, you yourself said to our mother Sarah: "By this time next year you will have a child". Again in this way, I entreat you and I invoke you (*tisopops auō tiparakali mok*), you who sit upon the cherubim, that you listen to my prayer today, I, NN, son of NN, over this cup (*apot*) of wine that is in my hand, so that when I give ‹it› to NN, the daughter of NN, you will grace her with a seed of man (*ousperma nrōme*)![97]

In it, God is summoned over a chalice (*apot*) infused with wine. As the ritual procedure implies, the barren woman (*taqnēn; i.e., aqrēn*) would have consumed the consecrated wine

[96] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 240–245.
[97] Coptic text and English in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 106–107. A similar spell involving a bowl (ϕελε) infused with the "Lust of Mastema" (τεπεθιμια ται τεντὰμαστὰμα) is found in London Hay 2. See O'Connell, *The Hay Archive of Coptic Spells*, 118–119.

impregnated with a "seed of man" (*ousperma nrōme*). Most notably, the spell recalls the miraculous pregnancy of Sarah of Gen. 17.15–18.15, 21.1–3 to illustrate the transformative power of divine infusion through wine.

Lastly, here we may add London Hay 1, a seventh-to-ninth-century Coptic magical formulary written on animal skin. The manuscript is part of the so-called "Hay magical archive," which comprises a grouping of seven magical manuscripts likely originating from Thebes. Based on paleographical analysis of the handwriting, Michael Zellmann-Rohrer suggests the archive was brought together by multiple copyists.[98] As mentioned before, London Hay 1 revolves around a series of adjurations rich in liturgical resonances, including one particularly significant that asks God to manifest upon a chalice of water (*apot nmoou*) aimed at eliciting a divinatory vision for the petitioner:

> I adjure [*ti ōrk*] you by the great, true name of the father, whose name is Aio Sabaōth, that you descend for me today upon the cup of water (*apot nmoou*) that lies before me and fill it for me with light like the sun and the moon, sevenfold, and fill my eyes, my vision (*theōristēs*), with light, and reveal to me every mystery about which I shall inquire.[99]

As this quotation suggests, here the *epiclesis* over the chalice is articulated within the ritual framework of a distinct case of bowl divination, a widely attested divinatory technology in the Graeco-Egyptian magical tradition.[100]

Overall, the above-discussed examples of epicletic invocations bring out the remarkable adaptability of the *epiclesis* as a ritual strategy, whose efficacy lay precisely in its

---

[98] See O'Connell, *The Hay Archive of Coptic Spells*, 181–193.

[99] Coptic text and English translation in O'Connell, *The Hay Archive of Coptic Spells*, 88–89.

[100] On bowl divination, or "lecanomancy," see esp. Theodor Hopfner, "Mittel- und neugriechische Lekano-, Lychno-, Katoptro- und Onychomantien." In *Studies Presented to F. Ll. Griffith*, ed. S.R.K. Glanville (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1932), 218–232; Hopfner, *Griechische-Ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam: Verlag Adolf M. Hakkert, 1974–2000); Dosoo, "Rituals of Apparition," 253–257, 398–399; Svenja Nagel, "'Was im Tempel passiert, bleibt nicht (mehr) im Tempel': Transformationen von agyptischem Tempelritual und rituellem Raum in den Praktiken der demotischen und griechischen magischen Papyri." In *Der ägyptische Tempel als ritueller Raum: Theologie und Kult in ihrer architektonischen und ideellen Dimension; Akten der internationalen Tagung, Haus der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, 9.–12. Juni 2015*, eds. Stefan Baumann and Holger Kockelmann, Studien zur spätägyptischen Religion 17 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017), 507–536.

capacity to be reoriented for diverse ritual goals, whether for healing, protection, fertility, divination, or for gifting the client with a pleasant voice. By drawing upon the discursive and gestural dimensions associated with the Christian Eucharistic rite, "liturgical specialists" did not merely appropriate this framework in an ancillary or imitative fashion, but deliberately readapted and redeployed it in the production of ritual texts and objects. This ties in with what my earlier argument that Jewish ritual specialists often treated liturgy as a repository of ritual tactics to be coopted and adapted to articulate their ritual products. And yet as David Frankfurter has poignantly argued, the textual and material products of such appropriations are not to be dismissed as peripheral or as a mere undercurrent to ecclesiastical liturgy. Rather, they ought to be understood as forms of what he terms "hybrid liturgies," i.e., outright Christian liturgical texts whose efficacy is augmented by the integration of ritual strategies (e.g., *voces magicae*, *kharaktēres*). In this vein, the appropriation and readaptation of Christian *epiclesis* by ritual specialists should be not seen as a fascination driven by exoticism for a discursive field perceived as external to a presumed "magical world." To the contrary, epicletic invocations stand as enduring testament to the emergence, during Late Antiquity, of a ritual discourse that is fully attuned to the Christian theological and liturgical traditions, and largely perceived as Christian. As I will reflect upon in the conclusions of this chapter, far from indicating a passive "blurring" of boundaries between magic and liturgy—an analytical framework that presumes an inherent distinction between the two—these ritual adaptations cause us to reconsider such categories not as antithetical but as existing within a dynamic continuum.[101]

[101] On differentiation and "boundary blurring" in late antique lived religion, see Joseph Sanzo, *Ritual Boundaries*, 1–30.

1.2 Innovation and Continuity: "Rituals of Apparition" as the Potential Medium between Christian *Epiclesis* and its Readaptations in Magical Texts

As I've attempted to illuminate in the previous section, epicletic invocations comprise a distinct cluster of manuscripts within the surviving corpus of Coptic and Greek magical texts that involves specific ritual technologies aimed at establishing contact with supernatural beings—particularly angels—and index their divine powers to address a diverse range of ritual goals. These goals include healing, protection, or enhancing vocal performances through the aid of supernatural intermediaries. Toward this end, epicletic invocations mobilize a sophisticated set of ritual tactics, which hinges on the infusion of a consecrated cup/chalice (Copt. *apot*; Gr. *potērion*) with a concoction of liquid substances (e.g., water, oil, wine). The supernatural beings are then summoned through the recitation of a potent formula or prayer, after which the petitioner is instructed—according to the ritual prescriptions often included in the coda of the manuscripts—to drink from the chalice, thereby enabling the invoked entity to manifest.

In the previous section, I've also attempted to stress the innovations introduced by epicletic invocations, particularly emphasizing how they stand as testament to the emergence of a language of ritual power strongly shaped by the Christian liturgical discourse. Yet, the underlying mechanism—i.e., the consecration of a chalice infused with potent liquid substances as a material medium for summoning supernatural entities—bears deep resonances with ritual technologies attested across the ancient Mediterranean basin that invite closer comparative scrutiny. As I've mentioned in the introduction to the chapter, the subset of divinatory ritual strategies often referred to in scholarship as "rituals of apparition" offer a compelling comparative lens through which to explore the affinities found in epicletic invocations with earlier magical traditions. In the context of the Graeco-Egyptian magical tradition, the rubric "rituals of apparition" denotes a wide grouping of spells concerned with

summoning supernatural intermediaries (e.g., deities such as Aphrodite or Helios, angels, divine assistants [*paredroi*]) to assist practitioners in obtaining or perfecting personal competencies or qualities.[102] As Korshi Dosoo has astutely observed, "rituals of apparition" have too often been subsumed in modern scholarship within the broader category of "divination," thereby obscuring practices that warrant closer examination and differentiation.[103] By isolating structurally analogous elements across these ritual practices, Dosoo has thus facilitated the treating of "rituals of apparition" as a coherent category of spells organized around two axiomatical, though variably present, ritual technologies of intermediation: the first involves a human intermediary, such as child, while the second involves an object or other "medium of apparition," such as a cup, lamp, bowl, or dreams.[104] Building upon this helpful model, I approach "spells for a good singing voice" as Christian readaptations of "rituals of apparition" that deploy as "medium of apparition" the consecrated chalice of the Christian Eucharistic rite. As such, my investigative hypothesis is grounded in the idea that epicletic invocations represent a sophisticated negotiation between the ritual procedures operative in the "rituals of apparition" along with lexical, visual, and gestural elements rooted in the Christian liturgical discourse. In other words, I here argue that the ritual mechanics for invoking divine presence found in the "rituals of apparition"—i.e., the utterance of verbal formulae over material media, the use of liquid substances to infuse them, herbs, and burning offerings, coupled with the observance of preliminary procedures such as fasting and purification (see below)—may have provided a template for ritual specialists to readapt the Christian *epiclesis* to the logics of these pre-existing ritual frameworks.

Evidentiary basis for this inquiry consists of "rituals of apparition" involving a cup/chalice or similar vessel as a "medium of apparition." in Graeco-Egyptian formularies,

[102] On "rituals of apparition," see note no. 69 above.
[103] Dosoo, "Rituals of Apparition," 222.
[104] Dosoo, "Rituals of Apparition," 236.

the ritualized use of such objects as potent catalysts for indexing divine power and bringing down supernatural intermediaries to elicit theophanic visions aligns with the broader spectrum of divinatory practices usually subsumed under the category of "lecanomancy."[105] Lecanomancy, as attested in the Graeco-Egyptian magical formularies, involves the use of a cup, bowl, or similar vessel, filled with liquid—commonly water, oil, or other substances—as means for interpreting omens, seeking guidance, acquiring divine insights, through the ritual invocation of divine entities. A particularly salient example of this practice is described in PGM IV. 3209–54, which includes a recipe for what is explicitly termed "saucer divination" (*phialomanteion*).[106] The text instructs the practitioner as follows:

> Having kept yourself pure, as you learned, take a bronze drinking cup (*potērion chalkeon*), and write with myrrh ink the previously described stele (*progegrammenēn stēlēn*) which calls upon Aphrodite, and use the untouched olive oil and clean river water (*chrēsai elaiō anaptikō kai hydati potamiō katharō*). Put the drinking cup on your knees and speak over it the stele mentioned above, and the goddess will appear to you and will reveal concerning what things you wish.

This ritual schema, in which the chalice operates as an active medium for divine encounter, highlights the strategic use of material objects for invoking divine beings—in this case, a means for summoning and petitioning Aphrodite. A different but structurally analogous ritual appears, for instance, in PGM IV. 1928–2005, a "spell of attraction" (*agōgē*) that involves a petition (*entychia*) to Helios recited over a skull cup (*skyphos*) which mentions the power of a man who died a violent death (*biaiothanatos*) as a means for securing ritual efficacy:

> I call upon you (*epikaloumai*), lord Helios, and your holy angels on this day, in this very hour […] I beg you, lord Helios, hear me NN and grant me power over the spirit of this man who died a violent death, from whose tent I hold [this], so that I may keep him with me [NN] as helper and avenger for whatever business I crave for him.[107]

---

[105] On lecanomancy see note no. 98 above.
[106] Greek text and German translation in Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, vol. 1, 178 ff. English translation in Hans Dieter Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 100–101.
[107] Greek text in Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, 132. English translation in Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation,* 72–73. On this spell, see also Christopher Faraone, "Necromancy Goes Underground: The Disguise of Skull- and Corpse-Divination in the Paris Magical Papyri (*PGM* IV 1928-2144)," in *Mantikê: Studies in Ancient Divination*, ed. Sarah Iles Johnston and Peter T. Struck (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 255–283.

Another particularly instructive example of bowl divination (*lekanēs autoptou*) is extant in PGM IV. 154–285, here framed as an epistolary correspondence between the mythical figure of Nephotes and King Psammetichos—a name referencing several pharaohs of the 26th dynasty (c. 664–525 BCE)—concerning the nature of the ritual practice.[108] More in detail, the text contains a systematic exposition of bowl divination techniques, detailing the different steps required to acquire a divinatory vision. Central to it is the recitation of a prayer (*logos*) calling upon Typhon, the Greek god of chaos and disruption, over a vessel. Notably, the epistle lingers on a detailed description of the material properties of the vessel, which may take the form of either a "bowl" (*lekanēn*) or a "saucer" (*phialēn*), both of which must be cast in bronze. Further to this, the epistle provides precise details relative to the nature of the water to be poured in the vessel, which is contingent upon the typology of the invoked entity: rainwater for heavenly gods, seawater for chthonic deities, spring water for necromancy, and river water to summon Osiris or Sarapis. Upon filling the vessel, the practitioner pours a libation of olive oil before placing the consecrated object upon his knees, in preparation for the ritual invocation. Having pronounced the invocation formula three times, the petitioner will then experience the divine encounter (*sustasis*). A salient converging point between "ritual of apparitions" and epicletic invocations lies in the way these two ritual traditions visually mark material media of apparition with drawings and images as to augment their capacity to channel divine power. This practice is particularly evident in the above-discussed PGM IV. 3209–54, wherein the formula to invoke Aphrodite has to be inscribed upon the cup's base using "myrrh ink" (*zmurnomelanos*). A parallel instruction also appears in PDM

[108] Greek text in Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, 76 ff. English translation in Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation,* 40–43.

XIV. 395–427, another divination spell involving a youth as mediator, which directs the practitioner to inscribe an image of Anubis onto a copper cup:[109]

> Formula: You bring a copper cup; you engrave an image of Anubis in it; you fill it with settled water (which is) guarded (so that) the sun cannot find it; you fill up its surface with true oil; you put it on [3] new brick(s) whose undersides are spread with sand; you put another 4 bricks under the youth; you make the youth lie down on his belly; you make him put his chin on the bricks of the vessel; you make him look into the oil while a cloth is spread over him and while a lighted lamp is in his right hand and a burning censer in his left; you put a lobe of Anubis-plant on the lamp; you put this incense up (on the censer); and you recite these above-mentioned formulas to the lamp 7 times […]

In the context of the "spells for a good singing voice," a comparable instruction is found in the coda of PCM I 17, wherein the practitioner is instructed to draw (*shai*) on the basis of the cup/chalice:

> Blood of a white dove, styrax, calamus juice, male musk, white costus. You should draw these things upon the base of the unfired cup. White honey, white wine, water ⟨from the month of⟩ Tobi, 21 nuts (?), 21 papyrus ⟨plants⟩. This is the preparation of the cup. Hang it on your neck. A … bowl (*phiale*), white costus.[110]

Overall, the evidence supplied thus far has laid bare how epicletic invocations and "rituals of apparition" participate in a shared ritual logic in which the cup/chalice or similar vessel function as a privileged conduit for invoking divine presence. Whether employed for summoning deities, attracting success, or bringing foreknowledge, the cup operates as the ritual medium for indexing divine power.

Let us now shift focus from the language of ritual power in epicletic invocations to their gestural dimension. The ritual instructions appended to the coda of this cluster of spells have indeed left a rich seam of details that can be mined to yield valuable insights, helping to illuminate their manifold affinities with the Graeco-Egyptian "rituals of apparition." As an

[109] Demotic text and English translation in Faraone and Torallas Tovar, *Greek and Egyptian Magical Formularies*, 190–191.
[110] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 242–43.

illustrative case, I will begin by analyzing the ritual instructions appended to BL MS Or. 6794, another "spell for a good singing voice:"

> You write the amulets with real honey, undiluted, unscorched, on an alabaster tablet. Wash them in white wine. White grapes–21. Wild mastic–21. Arabian gum, called "claw." A white robe (*štē^{e}n ^{e}nouōbš*). Offering: wild frankincense; wild mastic; cassia. Full up![111]

The reference to the "white robe" (*štē^{e}n ^{e}nouōbš*) in this magical papyrus holds particular significance, inviting comparison with a core feature of Graeco-Egyptian "rituals of apparition." This grouping of spells indeed involves fasting, purification, sex avoidance, and dietary prescriptions as fundamental preliminary procedures aimed at preparing the petitioner entering into communion with the divine. Within this category of spells, wearing pure/white garments is often mentioned as a caveat for the petitioner engaging with the divine sphere, so facilitating the collapse of the barrier dividing the earthly and the celestial. For example, in PGM I. 42–57, a spell for invoking a divine assistant (*paredros*) attributed to Pnouthis, the sacred scribe, mandates abstinence from social interactions and uncleanliness during preliminary purification. On the night of the ritual, the practitioner is instructed to ascend a lofty roof (*dōmatos hypsēlou*) dressed in a "pure garment" (*endedymenos katharōs*):[112]

> [This is] the traditional lore [about the] paredros: After purifying (yourself?) beforehand and abstaining from [every living thing] and all uncleanliness, go up on a high house-top (*dōmatos hypsēlou*) on whatever [night] you wish, (and) after having dressed yourself purely (*endedymenos katharōs*) [recite] the first introduction while the ray of the sun is (i.e. still) absent ... with a black Isis-band upon [your eyes], and grasp in your right hand the head of a falcon [and ...] as the sun rises repeatedly greet it, while shaking the head (of the falcon) [and at the same time] reciting this sacred formula, burning [uncut] frankincense, libating rose oil, and making a burnt offering [upon an earthen] censer over embers from the heliotrope [plant].

[111] Coptic text in Kropp, *Ausgewählte Koptische Zaubertexte*, vol.1, 29–32. English translation in Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 280.
[112] For the Greek text, see Faraone and Torallas Tovar, *Greek and Egyptian Magical Formularies*, 388–389.

Similarly, a divinatory ritual for acquiring foreknowledge, PGM III. 282–409, requires the practitioner to wear "pure white garments" (*esthēta leukēn kai katharan*) before reciting an invocation:[113]

> For a direct vision, set up a tripod and a table of olive wood or of laurel wood, and on the table carve in a circle these characters: [*kharaktēres*] Cover the tripod with clean linen, and place a censer on the tripod. It is advantageous to place on the table a [hollow figurine] of Apollo out of laurel wood. Engrave [on a lamella] of gold, of silver, or of tin these characters [*kharaktēres*] Place the lamella under the censer, near the wooden image, which was set up [at the same time as the] censer, and place [next to] the tripod a beaker or a shell (*depastron ē kogkhēn*) containing [pure] water. In the center of the shrine, surrounding the tripod, inscribe on the floor with a white stylus the following character … It is necessary to keep your self pure for three days in advance. The shrine and the [tripod] must be covered. [If] you wish [to see], look inside, wearing clean [white] garments (*esthēta leukēn kai katharan*) [and crowned] with a crown of laurel,which on the head … worm-wood … [before the] invocation, sacrifice laurel to him … [during the] sacrifice honor the [god] with paians [directed to the sunrise] … ask … [cardamom] … holygod … [almond blossom] … from balsam … and taking … my thought … a buttercup, after taking, taste … fourfooted ….

In a similar vein, the above-discussed bowl divination recipe described in PGM IV. 154–285 requires the practitioner to be clothed in white garments (*amphiesthēti leukois*) as part of the ritual procedure. Upon pronouncing the formula (*logos*) that calls upon the god three times, a manifestation of divine encounter signals the practitioner the moment to perform as follows:

> After you have said this three times: there will be this sign of divine encounter (*sustasis*) but you, armed by having this magical soul, be not alarmed. For a sea falcon flies down and strikes you on the body with its wings, signifying this: that you should arise. But as for you, rise up and clothe yourself with white garments (*amphiesthēti leukois*) and burn on an earthen censer uncut incense in grains while saying this: "I have been attached to your holy form. I have been given power by your holy name. I have acquired your emanation of the goods, Lord, god of gods, master, daimon [*voces magicae*]." Having done this, return as lord of a godlike nature (*isotheou physeōs*) which is accomplished through this divine encounter.

In light of the discussed evidence, there's room to speculate that the "white robe" (*štē^{e}n ^{e}nouōbš*) mentioned in BL MS Or. 6794 may allude to an indument worn during a

[113] Greek text in Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae* Magicae, 45 ff. English translation in Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, 26–27.

purificatory act by the officiant prior to performing the ritual. This assumption finds support when considered alongside the broader set of ritual instructions attached to epicletic invocations, which include in their ritual prescriptions similar performances, many of which require fasting and purification. Particularly noteworthy in this regard are two ritual texts pertaining to the tradition of the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos:"* P. Heid. Kopt. 685 and BL MS Or. 6796 [1]. Despite significant textual divergences, both manuscripts demonstrate to participate in a shared ritual schema in which fasting and purification serve as mandatory prescriptions for the recitation of the prayer of Mary upon a vessel infused with water:

P. Heid. Kopt. 685[114]	BL MS Or. 6796 [1][115]
The procedure (*tqinerhōb*) 7 bay leaves, 7 leaves of marjoram, 7 branches of grass ‹of› Mary, 7 branches of Nubian mint, 7 leaves of citron tree, 7 branches of wood ‹of› Abraham. A new pot (*ouqaleh bēri*) sun-facing (?) water, while you are fasting (*eknēsteu*), while the moon is full (*ere mouh*), while you offer up myrrh, write with new *katam* (?), olive oil; a burning lamp until you finish.	I call out to you today [*voces magicae]* I god of Israel, Jesus, god [...], [who] shatters the counsel [of ...], [...stand in] the counsel of [..O], since he grants [favor] and power [...], [...] living god [. . .]. Offering: frankincense [...]; cassia [...]; wood of [Abraham ...]; pot (*qalahat*) [...]. The preparation (*qōrq*) [of the pot ...]: laurel [...]; genuine (olive) oil [...]; purity (*agniā*) [...]; cassia [...]; censer [...]; linen (*sindon*) [...]; sandals (*hupodēma*) [...].

P. Heid. Kopt. 685 instructs the officiant to prepare a pot (*qaleh*) filled with water, along with a mixture of herbs and plants, as well as olive oil. As further prescribed, the procedure must be performed while "fasting" (*eknēsteu*) during full moon (*ere mouh*). In BL MS Or. 6796 [1], "purity" (*agniā*) is mentioned among a fragmentary list of ingredients and special clothes

[114] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 304–305.
[115] Coptic text in Kropp, *Ausgewählte Koptische Zaubertexte*, vol.1, 46. English translation in Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 289.

(e.g., linen-cloth? [*sindon*]; sandals [*hupodēma*]). Further corroborating evidence stems from the coda of the version of the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael* surviving in P. Heid. Kopt. 686, a tenth-century Coptic parchment codex attributed to the same scribe of P. Heid. Kopt. 685, Deacon Iōhannēs (see next chapter). This manuscript opens with a long invocatory prayer with a pronounced liturgical register petitioning God, along with other supernatural entities, to summon Michael the archangel through an *epiclesis* over oil and water. Most strikingly, the concluding ritual prescriptions for creating a potent amulet bearing Michael's image mandate fasting:

> The amulet. Draw with ‹wine of› the first fruits on a sheet. Bind it to yourself. ‹Offering:› saffron, mastic, agarwood. A pot with three handles, some hidden water. Incense. Seven virgin palm leaves. Unleavened bread until evening. The one who is sick, fast (*nēstia*).[116]

Even more cogent appears the so-called "love spell of Cyprian" (PCM I 28), likewise from the "Heidelberg Magical archive" (see next chapter). Similarly to the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael*, this spell begins with a liturgical-style adjuration calling upon the archangel Gabriel. The chalice as a ritual technology of mediation is here notably absent. Instead, the spell deploys as medium of apparition a clay ostracon: the angel's image is here to be copied upon it and thrown onto fire thereafter. Notably, it prescribes fasting, purification, and specific dressing code prior to performing the procedure:

> Make an offering for him of *mastic, *agarwood?, styrax, musk. Three days, seven prayers daily, from Tuesday until Thursday, while you fast daily (*eknēsteue emēne*) and you eat? on? Thursday? ... Joseph? and olive oil on it? ... while you fast, being pure, wearing clothes (*eknēsteue ektbbeiou ekphōri nhenhaiti*). Mark? it on a clay ostracon with sweat. ‹The› prayer twenty-one times on three occasions. Beware of him. Bind a ... amulet on yourself.[117]

[116] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 360–361.
[117] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 394–397.

Furthermore, references to both "fasting" and "purity" are iterated with greater emphasis in a liturgical invocation found in London Hay 1:

> […] and the blood of the holy spirit and the remnant that lies on the holy table of the son and the sign of the lamb, I beg and I entreat you and your names and your powers and your images and your amulets, that you leave every place where you are and come to me, to the place where I am, I, NN, and you come upon my offering (*thēsia*), this one that lies before me, NN, yes, yes, quickly, quickly.' Its procedure (*qnrhōb*): black (ink), finest (?) white wine – every thing – storax and calamus-juice, three (days) fasting (*nestia*), while the moon is full (*ere poh moh*). Mix these with mastic […][118]

The magical formulary instructs the practitioner to perform the liturgical invocations by combining the offering of votive substances such as storax and calamus-juice, all synchronized with the full moon (*ere poh moh*) and after three days of fasting (*nestia*). Again, this passage underscores the central stage held by physical abstinence and ritual efficacy, serving as fundamental prerequisites for communing with the divine. In tandem with acts of bodily discipline, a further converging point between epicletic invocations and "rituals of apparition" include the burning of votive offerings, particularly resinous incense—most prominent are frankincense, myrrh and storax, usually combined with substances of plant and mineral origin (e.g., costus, cassia, wormwood). The burning of votive offerings functions as an additional preliminary act, reinforcing the efficacy of the ritual performance. Let us consider, for instance, the following synopsis based on the above-discussed evidence:

[118] Coptic text and English translation in O'Connell, *The Hay Archive of Coptic Spells*, 86–87.

BL MS Or. 6794	BL MS Or. 6796 [1]	PGM IV. 1928–2005	PGM I. 42–57
You write the amulets with real honey, undiluted, unscorched, on an alabaster tablet. Wash them in white wine. White grapes–21. Wild mastic–21. Arabian gum, called "claw." A white robe. Offering: wild frankincense (*libanos*); wild mastic; cassia. Full up!	I call out to you today [*voces magicae]* I god of Israel, Jesus, god [...], [who] shatters the counsel [of ...], [...stand in] the counsel of [..O], since he grants [favor] and power [...], [...] living god [. . .]. Offering: frankincense (*th - l*) [...]; cassia [...]; wood of [Abraham ...]; pot [...]. The preparation [of the pot ...]: laurel [...]; genuine (olive) oil [...]; purity [...]; cassia [...]; censer [...]; linen [...]; sandals [...].	After burning armara (*armara*) and uncut Frankincense (*libanon atmēton*), go home. *Enquiry*: Ivy with 13 leaves. Begin from the left side and write on them one by one with myrrh, and after putting on the wreath say over them the same names. And over the skull cup place the same writing on the forehead with the proper words (*voces magicae*).	[…] as the sun rises repeatedly greet it, while shaking the head (of the falcon) [and at the same time] reciting this sacred formula, burning [uncut] frankincense (*libanon atmēton*), libating rose oil, and making a burnt offering [upon an earthen] censer over embers from the heliotrope [plant].

Overall, the articulation of these elements would have functioned as a ritual schema in which bodily preparation through fasting, purification, dressing code, and burning of offerings created the ideal conditions for entering into communion with the divine sphere. The shared reliance on similar ritual technologies points toward a broader ritual logic, wherein the articulation of gestures (e.g., fasting, purification, special clothing, burning offerings) and speech, along with the manipulation of material media (e.g., cup/chalice or similar vessel) converge to secure divine epiphany. In so doing, although framed in an exquisite Christian-liturgical context, epicletic invocations poignantly emerge as Christian readaptations of certain ritual strategies operative in the Graeco-Egyptian "rituals of apparition."

At this juncture, questions arise as to which interpretative framework can be fruitfully leveraged to illuminate the continuities between "rituals of apparition" and epicletic invocations, particularly the ritual procedures involving the summoning of divine entities upon a vessel infused with liquid substances. While it would be methodologically tenuous to

assert a direct genealogical link between "rituals of apparition" and Christian *epiclesis*, the resonances between these ritual traditions are quite striking. The mechanics of invoking divine presence through formulaic speech over a cup/chalice, coupled with the deliberate use of oil and water, may have provided a sort of "conceptual blueprint" that informed the development or adaptation of certain Christian rites. This is particularly plausible given the fluid boundaries between religious and magical practices in Late Antiquity, where ritual experts frequently appropriated and repurposed elements from diverse ritual repertoires to augment their own systems of expertise. The underscored structural parallels between the ritual apparatuses operative in "rituals of apparition" and epicletic invocations suggest not merely shared ritual mechanics but also a shared phenomenology of divine access. Both traditions indeed operate within a framework that seeks to mediate the divine-human interface through a combination of verbal, material, and gestural elements. Accordingly, the adoption of the Eucharistic chalice in Christian ritual practices may have resonated with existing conceptions of the cup/chalice or similar vessel as a potent ritual medium, capable of serving as both a medium for divine communication and a symbol of transcendental authority. By integrating the chalice into their ritual praxis, Christian ritual experts may have drawn upon a broader cultural substrate that associated vessels, liquids, burning offerings, fasting, purification, and speech with the manifestation of divine power.

On a more general level, the process of adopting and reconfiguring ritual apparatuses (i.e., discursive practices, material media, and gestures) operative in "rituals of apparition" within Christian liturgical discourse maps well onto the dynamics outlined by David Frankfurter in his novel interpretation of the analytical rubric "syncretism."[119] Syncretism in Frankfurter's work describes a heuristic approach to the diverse, yet concomitant, cultural dynamics that fostered the Christianization of Egypt. As such, syncretism describes an

[119] On the rubric syncretism, see the discussion in the introduction, at 34–35.

ongoing process in which, to put it in Frankfurter's own words, a "religious tradition is indigenized and rendered comprehensible in particular cultural domains."[120] When analyzed through this lens, the adaptation of Graeco-Egyptian "rituals of apparition" to the language of Christian liturgical discourse addressed in this section becomes intelligible as part of a process of cultural transformation and assimilation. Yet, as Joseph Sanzo has brought into sharp relief in his recent monograph, historical analysis of ancient sources informed by Frankfurter's model may run the risk of obscuring particular connotations of a given text or object by subsuming them under the spectrum of the overarching rubric syncretism.[121] While syncretism may prove a powerful analytical tool in describing cultural transformations over the *long durée*, its application to specific corpora may obfuscate the complex articulations of these phenomena. As a result, approaching epicletic invocations as instantiations of syncretism may undermine the complexity of what is at stake. What Frankfurter's notion of syncretism falls short in capturing here is what Sanzo has termed "modes of agency."[122] Building upon Frankfurter's concept of "indigenous agency," which describes "the assertion of native cultural elements within or against a new religious discourse,"[123] Sanzo refines the discussion by questioning the heuristic value of the term "indigenous" in analyzing the poetics of certain ritual texts. In particular, the widespread adoption of divine names such as Iaō Sabaōth across various religious traditions challenges the explanatory limits of syncretism. In this vein, Sanzo posits two distinct "modes of agency" that govern the appropriation of ritual elements within a given textual corpus:

1. The deliberate application of foreignness or exoticism to a ritual text, enhancing its efficacy by invoking the esoteric or authoritative power of external traditions.

[120] David Frankfurter, "Restoring 'Syncretism' in the History of Christianity," *Studies in Late Antiquity* 5 (2021): 129–130.
[121] See Sanzo, *Ritual Boundaries*, esp. 24–27; chapter 2, at 7–14.
[122] See Sanzo, *Ritual Boundaries*, 25.
[123] Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, 17.

2. The ritual use of an already indigenized or assimilated component, originally derived from a different cultural or religious context but now fully integrated into a shared language of ritual power.

As Sanzo details, the latter form of agency is instrumental in comprehending the ubiquitous presence in ritual texts of the divine name Iaō Sabaōth. The adoption of such a largely codified formula by ritual experts across diverse religious groups signals its complete assimilation and participation in a shared language of ritual power. Conversely, the former modality (i.e., the deliberate marking of foreignness) indicates an active strategy of differentiation, in which ritual specialists enhance their own ritual efficacy by emphasizing the exotic, esoteric, or authoritative power of particular elements. Thus, the transformation of "rituals of apparition" within Christian liturgical practice reflects a complex interweaving grounded in dynamics of continuity and reconfiguration, in which ritual experts expressed active agency both in assimilating resonant visual, textual, and gestural motifs and in strategically differentiating elements to assert religious identity (i.e., the adaptation of Graeco-Egyptian invocations of divine intermediaries over a cup/chalice to Christian Eucharistic rite, particularly the *epiclesis*). This nuanced approach not only expands our understanding of continuity and transformation in ritual texts, but also complicates and simultaneously enriches the notion of Christianization as a process of syncretic adaptation of pre-Christian frameworks. As such, epicletic invocations open up a new critical window into the crystallization of a Christian ritual discourse during Late Antiquity, emerging from a pre-existent substratum of ritual traditions.

1.3 "Liturgical Experts:" Ecclesiastical Practitioners and Ritual Expertise in Late Antique Egypt

In light of these developments, time is now ripe to posit the question of which group of people may loom behind ritual texts with a pronounced liturgical register. Beyond the overt synergies in the deployment of shared formulae and strategies—such as the *trisagion*, hymns, *kharitesia*, and epicletic invocations—magical-liturgical texts exhibit an interweaving of material, lexical, and performative features pointing toward a shared cultural world that warrants attentive scrutiny. What, then, can be said of their composers? And in what social and institutional spaces did these texts take shape? Scholarly attention to the intersection of Christian liturgy and ritual power in Late Antiquity has grown more attentive to the role of ritual experts navigating the intersections of liturgy and ritual practices. In this respect, Frankfurter's model of "liturgical experts" provides a novel heuristic window into the authorial figures behind texts of this type—social actors who, while well-steeped in the language of liturgy, also engaged in the broader logics of ritual production of late antique Egypt.[124] As he argues, such specialists actively adapted the symbols and lexicon of Christian liturgy into ritual tactics, drawing on *epiclesis*, psalmody, and doxological patterns to shape a new language of ritual power. On a broader level, one might read Frankfurter's heuristic rubric "liturgical experts" in light of his broader work on Ethiopian däbtära, a rank of itinerant church cantors engaged in ritual practices—including healing, exorcism, and protective magic—for financial gain. In a number of publications, Frankfurter has productively shown how däbtära, distinctive in Ethiopian society for their liturgical training, offer a productive comparandum to describe a model of ecclesiastical scribe—whether a priest, a deacon, or a monk—engaged in the construction of Christianity through mediation of a cultural world made of Psalms, liturgical formulae, hymns, Scriptures, and apocalyptic

[124] See Frankfurter, "Heavenly Liturgy," 326–327.

motifs for laypeople.[125] Recent strides in the study of däbtära have significantly reinforced the analytical significance of this comparandum. As Diego Maria Malara has poignantly brought into sharp relief, däbtära's ritual expertise reflects an intrinsic contradiction due to its ambiguous position within Ethiopic society.[126] This ambiguity arises, in part, from the paradoxical nature of their ritual strategies, which often mobilize demonic names as powerful countermeasures against disease and affliction. Particularly illustrative in this regard is Malara's ethnographic account of a däbtära named Samson, who articulated the moral complexity of his profession through the example of a healer who summons a demon via illicit means to cure a critically ill patient. As Samson reflects: "You do something forbidden but you save a life; you do nothing, and the person dies. What is better?"[127] The intrinsic contradictory character of däbtära's ritual practices is complemented by its ensuing impact on society. As Malara vividly details, däbtära's expertise stands in dialectic tension with the Ethiopian Orthodox Church—simultaneously accepted and questioned on several grounds, insofar as it draws upon, and yet distorts, Christian authoritative tradition. As Mercier evocatively frames this, däbtära "have two faces, one of them bright and diurnal, lit by the light of the knowledge of God, the other obscure, casting evil spells in the dark of the night."[128] As a consequence, däbtära have frequently been the target of systematic ecclesiastical censure, as Christian leaders have sought to obliterate their ritual authority.

[125] See esp. David Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, 196–197; Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt: Assimilation and Resistance* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 213, 216, 260. On däbtära see, for instance, Kay Kaufman Shelemay, "The Musician and Transmission of Religious Tradition: The Multiple Roles of the Ethiopian Däbtära," *Journal of Religion in Africa* 22, no. 3 (1992): 242–260; Allan Young, "Magic as a 'Quasi-Profession': The Organization of Magic and Magical Healing Among Amhara," *Ethnology* 14, no. 3 (1975): 245–265; Jacques Mercier, *Art That Heals: The Image as Medicine in* Ethiopia (New York: Museum for African Art, 1997); Mercier, *Ethiopian Magic Scrolls*, trans. by Richard Pevear (New York: George Braziller, 1979).
[126] Diego Maria Malara, "Sympathy for the Devil: Secrecy, Magic and Transgression among Ethiopian Orthodox Debtera," *Ethnos* 87, no. 3 (2022): 444–462.
[127] Malara, "Sympathy for the Devil," 10.
[128] Mercier, *Art That Heals*, 44.

These dynamics hold true also for Late Antiquity, in which polemics against ritual practices are more than often filtrated through the prism of the staunch invectives of Christian leaders, whose rhetoric sought to lay bare the inefficacy of ritual practices in contrast to a presumed "mainstream," veracious Christian theological discourse. Yet, the paradox remains: despite the stern reprimands levelled by church leaders such as Shenoute of Atripe against practices associated with the rubric "magic," evidence attests to the continuous copying and dissemination of ritual texts among laypeople and, more poignantly, among clergymen. Shenoute's White Monastery, for instance, remained a vibrant hub for the copying and dissemination of ritual texts well beyond his lifetime.[129]

Building on these foundational insights, this section seeks to further nuance our understanding of "liturgical experts" by closely examining the potential socio-religious contexts in which magical texts with a pronounced liturgical register were composed. As well as the hybridizing nature of däbtära's spells, "liturgical experts" took elements from institutional liturgy augmenting their efficacy through a language of ritual power. When read under the prism of the däbtära's comparandum, most of the late antique materials scrutinized in this section take on new sense. In order to capture the complexities of liturgical experts' scribal world, I will focus attention on a set of diverse sources, including certain motifs and patterns found in epicletic invocations, as well as salient details that can be gleaned from secondary sources, especially monastic literature, including church canons and hagiography. In particular, these will serve as the fictional backdrop against which I will situate magical-liturgical texts, offering a novel venue to reconstructing the potential socio-cultural milieu from which these materials emerged.

[129] For instance, the parchment codex fragment P. Med. Bouriant likely comes from the White Monastery, and the longer iatromagical P.Borg.Copt. 278, was likely linked to the same institution. See for instance Tonio Sebastian Richter, 2014, "Neue koptische medizinische Rezepte", *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 141 (2014): 154–194, at 191, no. 27.

The starting point of my analysis will be the social world of the Christian holy man, particularly in his active role as administrator of charismatic substances (e.g., oil, water) for the needs of laypeople. The provision of sacred water and oil as potent means for healing and blessing amounted to the construction of "micro-societies" based on the interactions of holy men and their acolytes. These social exchanges were part of a broader, well-articulated liturgical system of supplying *eulogias*, substances, and objects which morphed into a full-fledged "miraculous economy."[130] Central to this system was the power ascribed to words and objects associated with the domain of liturgy. This inherent power is thus reflected in the careful handling and safekeeping of sacred objects, which were stored within designated areas of sacred spaces. In the *Coptic Life of Aaron*, for instance, the sacred objects (*skēue*) for the preparation of the Eucharistic rite are indeed said to be kept in a "secret place" (*ouma efhēp*).[131]

Hagiographical accounts are particularly rich in portraits of charismatic holy men while wielding sacred objects and substances (e.g., water, oil) as potent therapeutic strategies. Cast in their role as administrators of sacred substances and performers of miracles, holy men were perceived by their acolytes as unique detentors of the "gift of healing" (*charisma iamatōn*).[132] Set against this backdrop, hagiographical accounts offer crucial glimpses into the intersection of magic and liturgy as reflected in the corpus of Coptic and Greek ritual papyri. Several episodes—largely overlooked by scholars—portray holy men while reciting an *epiclesis* over a cup/chalice infused with water. A particularly salient example is preserved in

[130] In this respect, see for instance Daniel Caner, "Towards a Miraculous Economy: Christian Gifts and Material 'Blessings' in Late Antiquity," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14, no. 3 (2006): 329–377.
[131] Jitse Dijkstra and Jacques van der Vliet, eds., *The Coptic Life of Aaron: Critical Edition, Translation and Commentary*. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 155 (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 92–93.
[132] On the notion of *charisma iamatōn*, see esp. Andrew Crislip, *From Monastery to Hospital: Christian Monasticism and the Transformation of Health Care in Late Antiquity* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005), 21–28. On the healing charisma, see also R. J. S. Barrett-Lennard, "Healing in the *Canons of Hippolytus*," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 13, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 137–164.

the Pachomian *Letter of Ammon*.[133] The letter describes Theodore, Pachomius' successor at the head of the community, while wielding sacred water to heal a young girl:

> And as the sound of a multitude of men and women arose around the monastery (for she had been expected to die), the girl's father came across the river, carrying a silver pitcher full of water. And weeping, he brought it to Theodore and said: "I am of little faith and ask you therefore to invoke the name of God upon this water for her. For I believe that when God hears you, he will make this water a healing medicine for my daughter." And Theodore, taking the pitcher (*xestēn*) and looking up to heaven (Mt 14.19), prayed in tears and made the sign of the cross of Christ over the water.

As this quotation lays bare, Theodore is here calling upon Christ while gesturing the sign of the cross over water. In a similar vein, the above-mentioned *Coptic Life of Aaron* portrays the holy man while praying over a cup of water (*qapei mmou*), which is then employed to propitiate a fishing venture. The blessed water is thusly sprinkled over the fishing net, thereby infusing it with ritual efficacy and granting its success:

> They paid homage at his feet and said, "Pray for us, our holy father, and we shall heed all your words". And thus he prayed over them and gave them a cup of water (*qapei mmou*), (saying), "Sprinkle it over your nets and you will find some". They went in faith and caught large numbers of fish […][134]

Two additional hagiographical accounts attest to the practice of articulating a prayer over water to establish contact with the Virgin Mary. One testimony appears in the *Bohairic Life of Shenoute*,[135] wherein the holy man Apa Shenoute (5th CE) witnesses a vision of the Virgin Mary obtained by gazing into a bowl of water (*lakanē mmōou*). The passage describes how she guides the hands of Apa Psoti, Shenoute's predecessor, toward the water, commanding him to sprinkle it over the plants, and pronounces a blessing formula:

> The holy old man apa Shenoute then saw the holy Virgin Mary with a bowl of water (*lakanē mmōou*) placed before her. She guided the hands of apa Psoti to [the bowl], sprinkled the water over all the vegetables, and spoke thus: "Grow, and never stop." After that, she gave him peace

[133] Coptic text and English translation in James E. Goehring, *The Letter of Ammon and Pachomian Monasticism, Patristische Texte und Studien* 27 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1986), 137–39 (Greek); 169–70 (English).
[134] Dijkstra van der Vliet, *The Coptic Life of Aaron*, 136–137.
[135] Besa [attrib.], *V. Sin*. 150, ed. by Johannes Leipoldt, *Sinuthii Archimandritae Vita et Opera Omnia*, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 41–42, *Scriptores Coptici* 2 (Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae, 1906), 65. English translation by David N. Bell, *Besa: The Life of Shenoute* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1983).

> and departed from him in great glory. Then our father Apa Shenoute knew that the holy apa Psoti was exceptionally righteous and that the Lord Jesus was with him in everything he did.[136]

Notably, the placement of a bowl (*lakanē*) at the center of this scene recalls divinatory techniques, particularly the above-discussed lecanomancy, in which visions are obtained through the reflection of water on material surfaces. Another striking example is recorded in the Ethiopic *Acts of Marḥa Krestos*, which recount how the monastic holy man Marḥa Krestos once pronounced a prayer dedicated to the Virgin Mary, the *Anqasä Berhan* (lit. "Gate of Light") over a water vessel turning it into a potent healing remedy against the plague chastising the village of Däbrä Libanos:

> There was a great plague at the king's court during the absence of our father. The head of the seven hermitages, whose name is Dabra Ṣeyon, was taken and was about to die. while his children were weeping, they heard about the arrival of our father Marḥa Krestos and communicated this to their father. Upon hearing this, he said: "Glory to the Lord! Now I will not die. Quickly, call my father before my soul departs." And when he arrived, he said to him: "*Abba, abba*, my father! Here is where my wound is fatal, place your healing hand on me, and touch the side where I am struck." When he touched him, his hand became like a knife, and the poison of the plague came out of him, and he was healed immediately. At that time, the son of our father, who carried his cross, was struck by the plague. When he saw this, he said: "Bring me the water jug." He read over it the praises of Mary, that is to say, *The Gate of Light*. This water boiled and became as if it had been heated with fire; one could see it rise from the jug about a cubit. When he sprinkled the sick person with this water, he was healed.The news of this water spread among all the king's troops. All those afflicted with the plague sent word to him, saying: "Send me some of your blessed water, which rose up, so that it may heal me." It was done, and countless people were healed by it.[137]

The quoted text illustrates how the liturgical hymn *Anqasä Berhan* is turned into a potent ritual tactic to infuse water with therapeutic power. The positioning of *Anqasä Berhan* within this hagiographical account—serving as the text of the epicletic-like invocations uttered over consecrated water—sheds new light on the intersections between liturgy and ritual power. Furthermore, as a prayer dedicated to the Virgin Mary, it invites comparison with the above-

[136] Bell, *Besa: The Life of Shenoute*, 84.
[137] Stanislas Kur, ed. and trans., *Actes de Marḥa Krestos*, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 330, *Scriptores Aethiopici* 62 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1972), 69 (Ge'ez); 63 (French). See also Steven Kaplan, *The Monastic Holy Man and the Christianization of Early Solomonic Ethiopia* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1984), 83–84.

discussed ritual tradition of the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos."*[138] As noted earlier, this magical invocation centers on an *epiclesis* through which the Virgin Mary is called upon to sanctify a chalice, infusing the water and oil within it with healing power. Upon closer inspection, the surviving manuscripts of the prayer—particularly the version preserved in the tomb of archbishop Georgios in Dongola—shed a startling light on the potential authorial personae behind this ritual tradition. The Dongola version of the prayer features on the northern wall of a crypt—part of the monastic complex at Kom H—dedicated to the memory of Georgios, archbishop of the Nubian center of Dongola between 1063 and 1113 CE.[139] This version of the prayer includes a colophon signed by a scribe named Iohannes—potentially a priest or monk attached to the monastery—who explicitly frames the prayer as a potent phylactery (*phylaktērion*):

> I ask and I supplicate you today. Eloi, Eloi, Eloi […]ouel, Aerame, Enama, Alektor, to make it [the prayer] into a phylactery (*phylaktērion*). Glory to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. [Work] of Ioannes.[140]

The Dongola prayer is thus firmly situated within an institutional Christian context (i.e., a monastery). Yet, its spatial setting—a burial vault kept at a far remove from the public – signals its function as a secret place with restricted access. The textual-spatial dimension of the Dongola version ties in with the ambiguity surrounding the status of the Ethiopian däbtära, whose ritual expertise is widely acknowledged but remains concealed to the majority. As such, the liminality of the Dongola version serves as a crucial proof of concept for reconstructing the profile of the "liturgical experts" behind it. A particularly revealing aspect lies in the ritual prescriptions, which further illuminate the intersections between liturgy and magical praxis:

[138] On this tradition of ritual texts, see below part 2, ch.4.
[139] On the Dongola version of the prayer, see Jacques van der Vliet and Adam Łajtar, *Empowering the Dead in Christian Nubia: The Text from a Funerary Complex in Dongola* (Warsaw: JJP, 2017).
[140] van der Vliet and Łajtar, *Empowering the Dead*, 101 (Greek); 107 (English).

> You shall write [the phylactery]. If you perform this as an exorcism and have placed yourself upon the sacred place (*epi tōn neōn tēseis*), prepare the pot filled with water and crossed. Pray the formula of these exorcisms. Make an offering of mastic […] from the water of the pot. If it concerns an evil work: go round in one way only, then go out backwards; and you must give [the] person to drink from the pot of water (*anthrōpon estin potēsai auton tēs chytras tou hydatos*), pouring out (e*gkheōn*) over him, not over yourself.

These prescriptions reinforce the idea that the scribe responsible for the Dongola version drew on formal elements of Christian liturgy while simultaneously repurposing them for specific ritual goals. The designation "sacred place" (*neōs*) in the text points to a ritual taking stage in a liturgical area. Specifically, the Greek term *neōs* references the central part of Byzantine churches, located between the altar and the narthex.[141] Ritual performances of this sort, bound to liturgical areas—particularly to the church's altar as a locus of ritual agency—surface elsewhere in the corpus of Coptic magical texts. By way of example, a sixth-to-seventh century Coptic papyrus (PCM I 18) contains an adjuration directed to the "angel of the altar" (*panggelos enpethēsiastērion etouaab*) demanding for his avenging power. As the editors surmise, the papyrus was potentially buried under the altar site.[142] One may locate one clue to this hypothesis in London Hay 1, which preserves a ritual instruction that directs the practitioner to bury a curse under the altar of a *topos* (i.e., a monastic church or shrine).[143] Elsewhere, an additional illustrating comparandum is found in the medieval Anglo-Saxon charm known as *Ærcerbot* ("field ceremonies"). As noted by both John Niles and Ciaran Arthur, this spell revolves around a ritual ceremony for agricultural success carried out within the church building, involving chanting over sods placed on the altar and the use of four wooden crosses, each inscribed with the name of one of the apostles.[144]

---

[141] See Vasileios Marinis, *Architecture and Ritual in the Churches of Constantinople: Ninth to Fifteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 49–63. On the term *neōs*, see also the commentary in van der Vliet and Łajtar, *Empowering the Dead*, 118.
[142] See Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 249, no. 5.
[143] See O'Connell, *The Hay Archive of Coptic Spells*, 90–91.
[144] Ciaran Arthur, "Ex Ecclesia: Salvific Power Beyond Sacred Space in Anglo-Saxon Charms," *Incantatio: An International Journal on Charms, Charmers and Charming* 3 (2013): 19; John Niles, "The *Ærcerbot* Ritual in

Turning back to the Dongola magical prayer, the ritual act of "pouring out" (e*gkheōn*) water over the one undergoing healing takes on particular significance, especially given its outright condemnation in canonical literature as an illicit practice. In one of his reprimanding sermons, abbot Shenoute of Atripe inveighs against lay people that, falling sick, resort to ritual applications of oil and water supplied by "presbyters of the church and monks" (*nepresbuteros nte ekklēsia ē ntof henmonakhos*):

> At the time of suffering, those fallen into poverty or in sickness or indeed some other trial abandon God and run after enchanters or diviners or indeed seek other acts of deception, just as I myself have seen: the snake's head tied on someone's hand, another one with the crocodile's tooth tied to his arm, and another with fox claws tied to his legs-especially since it was an official who told him that it was wise to do so ! Indeed, when I demanded whether the fox claws would heal him, he answered, "It was a great monk (*ounoq nrōme monakhos*) who gave them to me, saying 'Tie them on you (and) you will find relief.'" Listen to this impiety! Fox claws! Snakes' heads! Crocodiles' teeth! And many other vanities that people put on themselves for their own relief, while others deceive them. Moreover, this is the manner that they anoint themselves with oil or that they pour over themselves water while receiving (ministrations) from enchanters or drug-makers, with every deceptive kind of relief … Still again, they pour water over themselves (*neshaupōht ečōou mmou*) or anoint themselves with oil (*neshautahsou nouneh ebol hitn*) from elders of the church, or even from monks (*nepresbuteros ntekklēsia ē ntof henmonakhos*)![145]

Shenoute takes aim at individuals that turn to ritual experts instead of trusting divine providence, tying on their necks apotropaic objects made of fox claws, snake heads, or crocodile teeth—objects provided by none other than a "great monk" (*ounoq nrōme monakhos*). This passage has been often cited by scholars on ancient magic in discussion of clerical involvement in ritual practices. Yet, Shenoute's invective extends beyond this, explicitly condemning the practice of "anointing with oil" and "pouring water" as illicit. There's little question that such acts resonate closely with ritual instructions found in Coptic ritual texts, particularly those bearing the fingerprints of "liturgical experts." A particularly significant ritual manuscript, P. Heid. Kopt. 686, presents oil and water as charismatic

---

Context," in *Old English Literature in Context: Ten Essays*, ed. John Niles (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 1980), 44–56. For further examples of ritual practices carried out in institutional settings, see the introduction at 23–26.

[145] See Tito Orlandi, ed., *Shenute Contra Origenistas* (Roma: C. I. M., 1985), 16–21. English translation in Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, 69.

substances invoked through an *epiclesis*. The text opens with a liturgical-style invocation calling upon Michael the Archangel to infuse water and oil with divine power:

> Come well; you came upon this water and this oil, and you breathed upon them, and you filled them with the Holy Spirit, so that when you pour them over NN, child of NN, they will come out of him, namely every suffering which is in his body! Let the Devil be ashamed, and all his power.[146]

Here, the pouring of consecrated oil and water over the afflicted invites comparison with the practices Shenoute condemns. Following the invocation the Archangel Michael, P. Heid. Kopt. 686 prescribes further ritual procedures, including washing or anointing the ritual image of Michael featuring on the manuscript, to augment the potency of the sacred substances:

> 10. A man who is angry because his wife is sinning against him. Draw the image (*shai pisōtioun*) .Wash them off with jasmine oil (*iaou ebal enēh*). ‹Anoint› him (*tiasmē*). No-one will be able to sleep with her. Let ‹him› anoint (*tōhs*) her face. ‹Offering:› mastic.
>
> 11. A woman whose husband is violent? towards her. Draw the image on a shell. Fill it ‹with› jasmine oil. Recite the prayer over it. Anoint her face (*tahs pesha*). He will make peace with her. Offering: mastic, agarwood. [147]

Beyond healing, oil figures in Coptic magic as an agent for instigating attraction and erotic compulsion. A particularly vivid example appears in a Coptic love spell calling upon the Egyptian gods Isis and Osiris (PCM I 8):

> ☩ O oil, O oil, O oil, O holy oil! O oil which flows from beneath the throne of Iao Sabaoth! O oil with which Isis anointed the bones of Osiris! I call to you, O oil! The sun and the moon call to you. The stars of the sky call to you. The servants of the sun call to you. I want to send you; you will go and I will bring you so that you will bring NN, child of NN, to me, I, NN, child of NN, and you will cause my love to be in her heart, and hers to be in mine [like] a brother and a sister, and ‹like› a she-bear [who] wants to suckle her offspring, yea, yea![148]

[146] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 336–337.
[147] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 358–359.
[148] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 93–97.

The love of Isis for Osiris here serves as a paradigm illustrating the power of oil as a charismatic substance capable of mighty wonders. The episode thus recalls the potency of the oil used by Isis to resurrect Osiris's body by anointing his bones. Moreover, the ritual sealing of oil performed by Apa Anoup, the potential local saint invoked in a Coptic spell from the Berlin Museum (Berlin 11347), is highly reminiscent of liturgical rites for healing the sick:

> Apa Anoup has sealed this oil (*afsphragize mpineh*). Michael is the one who intercedes. Jesus Christ is the one who gives healing to N., that he may be renewed in his whole body, like the tree of life that is in the middle of paradise, all the days of his life, yea, yea, at once, at once![149]

Direct polemics against ritual practices involving charismatic substances such as oil and water manifest vividly in two late antique church canons recently brought to scholarly attention by Korshi Dosoo.[150] The first source is a seventh-to-eighth century homily attributed to the name of Athanasius of Alexandria:

> For they do these impieties, and worse things, as our brother bishops who have come with us in exile have told us, much afflicted in heart, for there are some performing these abom- inations in the cities and in the villages. For they say that some wash (*čōkm*) their children in putrid water and in water from the assembly of the theatre, and further they pour (*pōht*) over them water of incantation breaking clay vessels, saying "we cast out the evil eye". Some bind phylacteries to their children, created by the craft of men, those who are dwelling places of demons. Others anoint (*tōhs*) them with oil, evil with incantations, and other things, binding them upon their heads and their necks. [...] I dare to say thus, that every man who takes his children to the feet of the enchanters is in no way different to the one who offers them to demons. Rather than taking your children to the feet of enchanters, take them to the martyria of the martyrs, and they will heal. Will you not listen to James the Apostle ...? For you have seen that the help of those who go to the church is great, for not only does it heal the physical body, but also the sicknesses of the soul, which are our sins. The one who goes to one of the enchanters, he casts the help of God away from him.[151]

[149] Coptic text in Walter Betz, *Die koptischen Zauberpapiere und Zauberostraka der Papyrus-Sammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin*, *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 31 (1985): 32–35. English translation in Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 117–119. On healing in Christian liturgy, see for instance Ágnes Mihálykó, "Healing in Christian Liturgy in Late Antique Egypt: Sources and Perspectives." *Trends in Classics* 13 (1): 154–94.
[150] Korshi Dosoo, "Healing Traditions in Coptic Magical texts," *Trends in Classics* 13 (2021): 44–94.
[151] Dosoo, "Healing Traditions in Coptic Magical texts," 54.

Once again, the interest of this text lies in its deliberate condemnation of washing, pouring, and anointing as practices linked to the expertise of putative enchanters (*refmoute*). Notably absent, however, is any reference to whether these ritual experts maintained affiliation with Christian institutions. Way more illuminating in this regard is the sixth-century *Canons of St. Basil* (CC0090), which discusses at length the consequences faced by clerics who interact with, or even operates as, ritual experts. Below, I present an excerpt translated by Dosoo (with slight modifications) from the recently discovered Coptic version:

> In the time that the Lord gave the Law to Moses he said to him thus: ... you shall not go to an enchanter ... If a cleric goes to an enchanter to chant over blood, or spit upon it: if he is a priest, he is cast out for fifteen years. ... if he is a layperson, he is cast out for seven weeks and he will be taught not go again to an enchanter. If a layperson goes to an enchanter in order that he may take some oil ... let his time be halved. If it happens that one goes to an enchanter to receive a medicament (*pahre*) from him, it is appropriate that he is excommunicated for 25 years. ... Wherefore should a Christian go to an enchanter when they have Jesus, and we have the catholic Church? Of what profit is it to us to anoint with oil of abomination when we have been anointed with the oil of grace? Of what profit is it to us to anoint ourselves with oil of impurity that we might become dwelling places for demons, when we have been made strangers to all this through the oil of exorcism and through the holy baptism? ... The one who is sick among you, let him call upon the presbyters of the church that they might pray over him and anoint him with some oil in the name of the Lord [...] If a Christian pours water over himself from an enchanter, which he has enchanted (*moute*): if a cleric goes to the feet of a magician who works magic, receiving any instruction in things of this manner, let him be stripped of his rank among the clergy and be cut off also from the mysteries thus in the church. If a Christian listens to the contrived words said by a magician, for example, "wait until the sun is coming up and do such-and-such a thing", or indeed, "the full moon" (*mouh ᵉmpōoh*), or again, "when the sun stands still, place some water before it and wash (*čōkm*) the sick person", or again, "when the sun is coming up pronounce invocations over the oil (*taueaš enepiklēsis ečᵉnpneh*) and anoint (*tahs*) him", or "bind (*mour*) phylacteries to him", or "take iron for yourself as a protection, it will drive away demons, for demons are afraid of iron." […] It is easier to forgive a catamite (*malakos*) than a magician. For this reason we command that if a Christian goes to an enchanter, none of the priests will pray for him in the church or anoint him again with the oil of the sick. For it is written that it is not possible to serve God and Mammon, or the holy oil of the altar and the polluted oil (*pneh etčahᵉm*) of the magicians, or the prayers of the priests (*proseukhē ᵉnnepresbuteros*) and the invocations (*epiklēsis*) and the phylacteries of the magicians (*nephulaktērion ᵉmmagōs*).[152]

[152] See Dosoo, "Healing Traditions in Coptic Magical texts," 53. I am also grateful to Prof. Alberto Camplani for sharing with me images of the unpublished manuscript Coptic Museum inv. 13448.

Although filtrated through the stern eyes of a Christian cleric, this testimony speaks volumes about the intersections between clergy and ritual practices. Most strikingly, the *Canons* offer precise reference to the propitiatory moments—with phrases like "during the full moon" or "when the sun is coming up," or again, "when the sun stands still." These moments provide temporal orientation for the application of spoken formulae over water and oil, or chant over blood, which are subsequently used in acts of anointing, washing, or sprinkling upon the sick person. These performative instructions resonate closely with those appended to the coda of certain above-discussed ritual manuscripts, particularly the version of the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* preserved in P. Heid. Kopt. 685 and London Hay 1. These texts instruct the practitioner to recite the magical *epiclesis* over water or votive offerings during full moon:

P. Heid. Kopt. 685[153]	London Hay 1[154]
The procedure: 7 bay leaves, 7 leaves of marjoram, 7 branches of grass ‹of› Mary, 7 branches of Nubian mint, 7 leaves of citron tree, 7 branches of wood ‹of› Abraham. A new pot (*ouqaleh bēri*), sun-facing (?) water, while you are fasting, while the moon is full (*ere mouh*), while you offer up myrrh, write with new *katam* (?), olive oil; a burning lamp until you finish.	I beg and I entreat you and your names and your powers and your images and your amulets, that you leave every place where you are and come to me, to the place where I am, I, NN, and you come upon my offering (*thēsia*), this one that lies before me, NN, yes, yes, quickly, quickly! Its procedure: black (ink), finest (?) white wine – every thing – storax and calamus-juice, three (days) fasting, while the moon is full ⟨*ere poh moh*⟩.

On a more general level, at the heart of passage from the *Canons of St. Basil* lies an interpretative paradigm that tends to erect a firm divide between similar practices based on the authority of those who administer them. In other words, the text positions clerics as endowed with the authoritative power of the church, while casting putative "enchanters" as malicious distorters of Christian discourse, appropriating and subverting the Christian symbolic system to augment their illicit performances. This rhetoric arises in its most vivid

[153] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 304–305.
[154] Coptic text and English translation in O'Connell, *The Hay Archive of Coptic Spells*, 86–87.

form in the concluding passage, where the author evokes the scriptural passages of Matt. 6, 24 and Luk. 16, 13 to frame his invective:

> For it is written that it is not possible to serve God and Mammon, or the holy oil of the altar and the polluted oil of the magicians, or the prayers of the priests and the invocations (*epiklēsis*) and the phylacteries of the magicians (*nephulaktērion ᵉmmagōs*).

The dichotomy between God and Mammon here informs the strict demarcation established by the author/s between "the holy oil of the altar," "the polluted oil of the magicians," and "the prayers of the priests and the invocations (*epiklēsis*) and the phylacteries of the magicians." This sharp duality raises questions as to whether the social scenario portrayed in the *Canons of St. Basil* reflects the actual status of affairs on reality or whether it is a deliberate rhetorical strategy designed to poach away potential competing rivals and assert ecclesiastical authority. It is more plausible to posit that sources such as the *Canons of St. Basil* purposefully take aim at groups of social actors, either clergymen or laypeople, that engaged in practices that were largely perceived as Christian yet challenged the authority and control of certain high-ranking Christians. To the contrary, the evidence I've been discussing in this chapter underscores how certain clusters of ritual manuscripts that deliberately integrate visual, lexical, and material elements rooted in Christian liturgical discourse (e.g., the *epiclesis* and its ritual apparatuses, including the chalice along with water and oil) were copied and disseminated by individuals closely affiliated with the Christian church, likely lower-ranking clerics such as deacons, priests, or monks.

Aside from the Dongola version of the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* previously discussed—which was copied within a monastic complex—one may triangulate different elements from ritual sources to account for their origins from an exquisite Christian, liturgical milieu. In a prior venue, for instance, I've demonstrated how the interweaving of liturgical motifs and ritual instructions found in the above-mentioned "spells for a good singing voice,"

can significantly advance our understanding of "liturgical experts."[155] These materials exhibit a sophisticated synthesis of magical and liturgical elements aimed at enhancing vocal performance through the invocation of angelic intermediaries. My working hypothesis on this category of spells takes its lead from the idea that they reflect the aspiration of monastic cantors to participate in the eternal liturgy of heaven through their earthly chants. First and foremost, the *epiclesis* over a chalice calling upon divine figures such as the angel Davithea-Eleleth and King David situates these spells within a broader tradition of monastic visionary literature, where heavenly liturgy serves as the narrative backdrop against which the ritual mechanics of the spells are staged. The portrait of King David as celestial cantor in one of these spells (BL MS Or. 6794) closely resonates with texts copied and read in monastic circles such as the Coptic *Apocalypse of Paul* (*Visio Pauli*).[156] Similarly, Hormosiel, portrayed in another manuscript pertaining to this tradition (PCM 1 17) as a trumpeter leading the angelic hosts, likely reflects a monastic fascination with the harmonies of the heavenly choir. At the same time, the observance of preliminary acts designed to facilitate communion with angelic intermediaries, further reinforces the hypothesis of a monastic origin. References to special garments—such as the white robe (*štē^{e}n ^{e}nouōbš*) in MS BL Or. 6794—alongside mentions of fasting and purification, as found in the unpublished Ms Peyron 158 (c.1-2v)—which explicitly uses the term purification (*haknia*)—as well as descriptions of the burning of votive offerings, all align meaningfully with the preparatory rituals prescribed in the "rituals of apparition." These rites, which emphasize fasting and purification as essential prerequisites for eliciting visionary experiences speak to a broader ritual framework within which such practices were understood. This intersection of themes raises the possibility that Egyptian

[155] Michele Scarlassara, "Spells for a Good Singing Voice": Magic, Liturgy, Divination, and Monastic Traditions in Late Antique Egypt," *Studies in Late Antiquity*, forthcoming 2026.
[156] Lautaro Roig Lanzillotta and Jacques van der Vliet, eds. and trans., *The Apocalypse of Paul (Visio Pauli) in Sahidic Coptic: Critical Edition, Translation and Commentary*, *Vigiliae Christianae Supplements* 178 (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

monks integrated these elements into their own ritual repertoire, finding them particularly resonant within their cultural landscape—one where body discipline and ascetic exercise were central to attaining an angelic status on earth.

Lastly, further corroborating evidence that offers a way to posit a close association between "liturgical experts" and Christian Egyptian institutions can be gleaned from the materiality of certain ritual manuscripts. A number of them were indeed crafted by trimming liturgical lectionaries. This pattern of evidence has been recently reckoned by Korshi Dosoo and Sofia Torallas Tovar as highly significant for situating the production of magical handbooks by social actors attached to Christian institutions.[157] Two particularly illustrative examples are P. Heid. Kopt. 685 and P. Heid. Kopt. 686, which are palimpsests crafted from a lectionary that contains excerpts of the Pauline letters, likely read in public during the Eucharistic service. Following the preliminary analysis of Hans Quecke,[158] Iain Gardner has convincingly argued how the illustrations featuring in the *scriptio inferior* of P. Heid. Kopt. 685-686 bear close resemblance to those realized by a group of copyists that were in service in the monastery of St. Michael at Phantoou, on the western edge of the Faiyum oasis (for further details, see the next chapter).[159] Additional scribal markers, such as *diplai*, *coronides*, and *obeloi* further buttress Gardner's hypothesis. This assumption is significantly reinforced by a remaining colophon attached to P. Heid. Kopt. 682, likewise crafted by the same scribe of P. Heid. Kopt. 685-686. The colophon (see the next chapter for further details) attributes authorship to Deacon Iōhannēs, whom Gardner argues was a minor cleric serving in a monastery of Michael the Archangel in the Faiyum area. The recursive identifying formula ⲡⲁⲓ ⲓⲱ ⲡⲥⲙⲁⲗ ⲙⲙⲓⲭⲁⲏⲗ lends significant support to this hypothesis, as it finds parallels in the colophons of the cache of manuscripts retrieved near the ruins of the monastery of Kom

[157] See Faraone and Torallas Tovar, *The Greco-Egyptian Magical Formularies*,116–118.
[158] See Hans Quecke, "Palimpsestfragmente eines Koptischen Lektionars," *Le Muséon* 85 (1972): 5–24.
[159] See Gardner and Johnston, *Drawing Spirits*, 53 ff.

Hamuli. In light of the discussed evidence, it would be tempting to posit that the liturgical elements evident in P. Heid. Kopt. 685-686 are indicative of a continuity between magic and liturgy that extends well beyond mere textual elements, revealing a strong link between text and context. More in detail, there's room to speculate that figures of ecclesiastical practitioners such as Deacon Iōhannēs—well steeped in the liturgical service where they operated as coadjutant—likely reused liturgical and biblical manuscripts circulating in their institutions and turned them into magical formularies.

Conclusions

This chapter has largely focused on a cluster of ritual manuscripts that I've heuristically labeled "epicletic invocations." Specifically, I've attempted to demonstrate how these texts borrow heavily from language and ritual logics of Christian liturgy, particularly the Eucharistic *epiclesis*, which they turn into a potent ritual strategy to establish contact with supernatural beings. At the same time, these spells, which involve the infusion of a consecrated chalice and the use of symbolic substances such as wine, honey, and water, also employ ritual strategies attested in the Graeco-Egyptian magical tradition. More in detail, I have entertained the hypothesis that the Graeco-Egyptian elements of these texts, particularly their reliance on ritual techniques resonating with a distinct category of invocations often referred to by scholars as "ritual of apparitions," speak to continuity with earlier magical traditions. In particular, their use of a chalice as a material medium—employed in both Graeco-Egyptian magical formularies and the Christian Eucharistic liturgy—underscores the permeability of ritual boundaries in Late Antiquity. In both contexts, the chalice serves as a site for mediating divine presence, thereby assuming a shared phenomenology of access to the divine. The similar use of formulaic speech and material accoutrements across these sources further suggests that Christian liturgical practices were shaped, at least in part, by the

ritual frameworks of their Graeco-Egyptian predecessors. In addition to contributing to our understanding of the ritual mechanics and cultural position of Coptic magical texts that draw heavily on Christian liturgical discourse, my engagement with epicletic invocations was aimed at erecting a more solid framework for approaching the potential scribal profiles behind these texts. Certain ritual sources bear distinct marks suggesting they were copied and disseminated by ecclesiastical practitioners directly affiliated with Christian institutions, likely low-ranking clerics such as deacons, priests, and monks. When read alongside Christian sources—particularly church canons and hagiographical literature—epiceltic invocations point to a category of "liturgical specialists" that adroitly navigated and creatively negotiated the intersections of liturgical discourse and ritual power in late antique Egypt. A fleeting glimpse of their presence within the Egyptian cultural canvas can be discerned in sources such as, for instance, the *Canons of St. Basil*. This work contains crucial testimonies relative to the involvement of clerics in practices that closely parallel those found in magical-liturgical texts (e.g., recitation of consecratory formulae over liquid substances, particularly oil and water, for use in acts of anointing or washing the sick). As I've argued, the *Canons*' prohibitions against these practices reflect anxieties over the potential disruption posed by the ritual activities of ecclesiastical practitioners, whose engagement with practices considered illicit by Christian leaders threatened to challenge their authority and subsequently destabilize hierarchies of power in Christian communities. Yet, an attentive examination of ritual sources let emerge a striking disconnect between these caveats and the lived realities of ritual practices. Manuscript archaeology, textual and paratextual features, and remaining colophons converge to illuminate a world in which ecclesiastical practitioners engaged in ritual activities largely perceived as Christian. An illustrative example in this regard is the White Monastery of Shenoute of Atripe in Upper Egypt. During Late Antiquity, this monastery became renowned for the strict policing of boundaries between licit and illicits

practices—including those we would deem "magic"—promoted by abbot Shenoute and his successors. Nonetheless, this remained a vibrant hub for the copying of ritual texts well beyond his lifetime. As I've argued, these complexities within Christian Egyptian society can be best approached through the critical lens offered by Diego Maria Malara's work on Ethiopic däbtära—a category of liturgically-trained cantors whose ritual expertise granted them a distinctive, albeit ambivalent, status in Ethiopian society. While däbtära often stood in tension with the Ethiopian Orthodox church, their ritual knowledge remained indispensable to the broader community, who relied on them to navigate daily crises. A comparable dynamic appears to have been at play in late antique Egypt, where "liturgical experts" operated simultaneously as institutional administrators of sacraments and mediators of ritual knowledge. The outcome of this chapter carries broader implications for the study of ancient ritual sources. In particular, my analysis aids in further dismantling the prevailing scholarly tendency toward conceptualizing Christian-oriented ritual sources as deviation from, or distortion of, an ostensible Christian normative discourse. To the contrary, the manuscript cluster analyzed in this chapter should be situated within a broader continuum of institutional liturgy and ritual power. The many overlaps between these two domains in epicletic invocations indeed attest to how the boundaries between the scholarly categories "magic" and "liturgy" were not fixed but dynamically negotiated in the context of lived religious practices. More broadly, these dynamics stand as additional evidence to the emergence, in Late Antiquity, of a discourse of ritual power that was increasingly articulated within the framework of the Christian religious system.

Chapter 2
Tokens of Ritual Power: The Dynamic Continuum between Magic, Art, and Liturgy in the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael* (P. Heid. Kopt. 686)

This chapter situates itself in the wake of my previous arguments regarding the involvement of Christian clergy in the copying and dissemination of materials scholars would classify as "magic." Specifically, its focus is on a tenth-century Coptic magical handbook (P. Heid. Kopt. 686) that contains an extensive invocation spoken by Michael the Archangel to God and his angelic retinue, which has become renowned among scholars of Coptic magic under the label *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael*.[160] Yet, the hallmark of this manuscript lies in the authorial persona behind it, whom scholars have recently established based on attentive manuscript analysis. P. Heid. Kopt. 686 was copied by a certain Deacon Iōhannēs, potentially a low-ranking cleric responsible for copying other manuscripts part of the so-called "Heidelberg Magical Archive."[161] This hypothesis has been advanced on the ground of the striking similarities in handwriting style between a colophon preserved in P. Heid. Kopt. 682 and a number of manuscripts part of the Heidelberg archive. The colophon reads:

> I, the deacon Iōhannēs (ⲡⲁⲓ ⲓ̅ⲱ̅), servant of Michael (ϩⲙϩⲁⲗ ⲙⲓϫⲁⲏⲗ), of Pqellēt, I wrote on the 11th of Paopi (ⲡⲁⲁⲡⲓ) in the 684th year (i.e. 967 CE).[162]

[160] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 324–362. For a prior edition, see Angelicus Kropp, *Der Lobpreis des Erzengels Michael (vormals P. Heidelberg inv. Nr. 1686)* (Brussels: Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth, 1966).
[161] On the "Heidelberg Magical Archive" see esp. Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 259–63; Iain Gardner and Jay Johnston, *Drawing Spirits*, 45–135.
[162] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 279.

In a number of publications, Iain Gardner has convincingly suggested a link between the "Heidelberg Magical Archive" and the treasure-trove of manuscripts renowned among scholars as "Hamuli manuscripts."[163] These manuscripts were excavated in 1910 near the ruins of the monastery of St. Michael at Phantoou, on the western edge of the Faiyum oasis.[164] Gardner's argument is supported, in first place, by the nomenclature "servant of Michael" (ϩⲙϩⲁⲗ ⲙⲓⲭⲁⲏⲗ), which Deacon Iōhannēs uses to refer to himself in the colophon. Most strikingly, the self-descriptive formula "servant of Michael" parallels typical nomenclatures found in the colophons of the Hamuli manuscripts.[165] Furthermore, the original liturgical lectionary lying beneath P. Heid. Kopt. 686 exhibits scribal features resembling the manuscripts produced at Kom Hamuli (see further below). Accordingly, Gardner considered these elements to be a solid foundation for his argument that Deacon Iōhannēs was attached to a Christian monastic institution in the Faiyum dedicated to the archangel Michael, potentially the very same monastic institution from which the manuscripts of Kom Hamuli were retrieved. Further in this vein, when read alongside adjacent sources, the range of textual and visual strategies used in the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael* portrays the archangel in a way that resonates closely with a number of apocryphal works, some of which are preserved in manuscripts from Kom Hamuli, particularly: *Investiture of*

[163] See Gardner and Johnston, *Drawing Spirits*, at 56–61. The work of Gardner is based on the prescient codicological analysis of Hans Quecke, "Palimpsestfragmente eines Koptischen Lektionars," *Le Muséon* 85 (1972): 5–24.
[164] On the scribal community that served at Phantoou, see Stephen Emmel, "The Library of the Monastery of the Archangel Michael at Phantoou." In *Christianity and Monasticism in the Fayoum Oasis*, ed. Gawdat Gabra (Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press, 2005) 63–70; Francesco Valerio, "Scribes and Scripts in the Library of the Monastery of the Archangel Michael at Phantoou: Two Case Studies," in *Coptic Literature in Context (4th-13th cent.): Cultural Landscape, Literary Production, and Manuscript Archaeology*, ed. Paola Buzi (Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 2020), 63–77.
[165] For the colophons of the Hamuli manuscripts, see Arnold van Lantschoot, *Recueil des colophons des manuscrits chrétiens d'Égypte. Tome 1: Les colophons coptes des manuscrits sahidiques* (Louvain: J.-B. Istas, 1929).

the Archangel Michael;[166] Eustathius of Thrace's *Encomium on Saint Michael Archangel*;[167] Pseudo-Timothy's *Encomium on the Archangel Michael*;[168] Severus of Antioch's *Discourse on the Compassion of God, and on the Freedom of Speech by the Archangel Michael*;[169] and the *Encomium of Theodosius on S. Michael the Archangel*.[170]

In the present chapter, I will attempt to put into dialogue P. Heid. Kopt. 686 with a range of textual and visual traditions surrounding the figure of the Archangel Michael. More in detail, I here argue that the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael* reworks central narratives about the archangel that were widely circulating across Christian Egyptian institutions. The first part of it will center on parallels between the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael* and a range of apocryphal works in which the figure of the archangel takes central stage. The *Endoxon* indeed draws on central narrative motifs surrounding the archangel such as God's creation of Adam and his fall occasioned by the malevolent agency of Satan.

The second section shifts focus on the material culture surrounding P. Heid. Kopt. 686. This manuscript indeed pertains to a distinct magical genre whose structure involves the

[166] Available in two manuscripts from the Hamuli archive: M593 (=MICH.AW, 1-60; complete Sahidic version) and M614 (=MICH.AX, 1-32; 9th CE; incomplete Faiyumic version). The Coptic text with German translation has been published by Caspar Detlef and Gustav Müller, eds., *Die Bücher der Einsetzung der Erzengel Michael und Gabriel* (Leuven: Peeters, 1962). A partly preserved Sahidic version from the White Monastery of Sohag is currently held at the Institut Français d'archéologie orientale in Cairo (P. IFAO Copte inv. no. 145–148), edited by David Tibet, "The Investiture of the Archangel Michael: A Diplomatic Edition of the Coptic Text of P. IFAO ff. 145-148" (MA Thesis, Macquire University, 2009). A small Greek fragment of the text has been found in Serra East (Lower Nubia), alongside an Old Nubian fragment from Qasr Ibrim (see Gerald M. Browne, "An Old Nubian Version of the *Liber Institutionis Michaelis*," in *Coptic Studies*: *Acts of the Third International Congress of Coptic Studies*, ed. Wlodzimierz Godlewski [Warsaw: PWN, 1990], 75–79).

[167] Available in a miscellaneous manuscript from the Hamuli archive (unpublished): M592 (see description and bibliography here: http://paths.uniroma1.it/atlas/manuscripts/222). A parallel version in Sahidic (London Or. 7030, ff. ii-v, 44) has been published by Ernest A. Wallis Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London: British Museum, 1915), 74–108. An Italian translation has been published in Antonella Campagnano, Antonella Maresca, Tito Orlandi, *Quattro Omelie Copte. Vita di Giovanni Crisostomo, Encomi dei 24 Vegliardi, Encomio di Michele Arcangelo di Eustazio di tracia* (Milano: Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1977), 105–173.

[168] Available in a Faiyumic version from the Hamuli archive: M607 (=MICH.BB; Fols. 2r-23r; delivered by Theodosius but erroneously attributed to Timothy Aelurus in the introduction). A parallel Sahidic version (MS. Or. 7029, fols. 67v-75v) has been published by Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, 1021–34.

[169] Available in a miscellaneous manuscript from the Hamuli archive: M592 (see description and bibliography here: http://paths.uniroma1.it/atlas/manuscripts/222). A parallel Sahidic version (M. Or. 7597) has been published by Budge (see Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Text*, 735–61).

[170] Preserved in a Sahidic version (MS. Or. 7021) published by Budge (see Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Text*, 893–948).

invocation of divine entities, followed by ritual instructions designed to guide the practitioner in crafting a potent amulet engraved with the image of the invoked entity. Other instances of this genre include the Spell of Cyprian (PCM I 28), the Rossi's Gnostic Tractate (PCM I 12-13), and P. Macquarie I 1 (see further below). Most notably, the wielding of Michael's image as a potent ritual token concerts with certain apocryphal sources, particularly Eustathius of Thrace's *Encomium* (MS. London Or. 7030), wherein a potent wooden image of the archangel is said to have repeatedly defeated Satan's malevolent activities. As I will argue, such parallels bring into relief how P. Heid. Kopt. 686 serves as a key exemplar illustrating the dynamic continuum between art, liturgy, and magic in Late Antiquity.

On a more general level, this chapter seeks to further strengthen the central argument of this thesis that, during Late Antiquity, ecclesiastical practitioners—operating in the integral role of ritual specialists—turned a shared repertoire of hagiographical, liturgical, and hymnological traditions into authoritative frameworks to create potent ritual texts.

Portrait of a Christian Ritual Specialist: Deacon Iōhannēs, P. Heid. Kopt. 686, and the Hamuli Manuscripts

The so-called "Heidelberg Magical Archive" consists of a series of nine ritual manuscripts—enumerated from P. Heid. Kopt 676 to P. Heid. Kopt. 686—that were obtained during two different lot transactions between 1930 and 1933.[171] Significant elements—including ostensible dates, language, and drawings—suggest that six papyrus texts (PCM I 21–29) should be regarded as part of a unique portfolio crafted by a single identifiable scribe.[172] As I've noted above, the colophon which appears at the end of P. Heid. Kopt. 682 attributes its authorship to a certain Deacon Iōhannēs, presumably a minor cleric who allegedly served in a

[171] For an in-depth examination of the archive's story, see Gardner and Johnston, *Drawing Spirits*, 45–51.
[172] See Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 259.

monastery dedicated to the Archangel Michael in the Faiyum oasis, and active in the year 967 CE. The claim that Deacon Iōhannēs was affiliated with an institution dedicated to Michael the Archangel—potentially the Monastery of Michael the Archangel at Phantoou, in the Faiyum oasis—is supported by paleographical and codicological analysis. To begin with, the self-descriptive formula used by Deacon Iōhannēs, "Deacon Iōhannēs, servant of Michael" (ⲡⲁⲓ ⲓⲱ ϩⲙϩⲁⲗ ⲙⲓⲭⲁⲏⲗ), finds striking similarities to those used in the colophons of the Hamuli manuscripts.[173] Dosoo and Preininger have recently nuanced this interpretation, taking the obscure Pcellēt (ⲡⲃⲉⲗⲗⲏⲧ) as the toponym referencing the actual monastic institution to which Deacon Iōhannēs was attached. According to this interpretation, Deacon Iōhannēs indeed belonged to a monastery dedicated to Michael the archangel, yet this institution was not located at Phantoou—the site near which the Hamuli manuscripts were retrieved— but rather at a different, as yet unidentified, *topos* referred to as Pqellēt.[174] Dosoo has also refined our understanding of Deacon Iōhannēs' scribal skills, arguing that these reflect limited familiarity with the scribal expertise of the authorial figures behind the Hamuli manuscripts. Specifically, while Deacon Iōhannēs demonstrates competence in reproducing the *sloping majuscule*—a script style used by Hamuli scribes for composing colophons—there is no hint suggesting he was proficient in the *Alexandrian majuscule*, the script used in the main body of their texts.[175] Furthermore, Dosoo and Preininger have highlighted the numerous errors and irregularities in Iōhannēs' Coptic, suggesting that his scribal training was far from that of a professional copyist. These elements significantly weaken any direct association between Iōhannēs and the scribal community at Phantoou. Yet, despite these discrepancies, additional elements attest to the close interconnection between P. Heid. Kopt.

[173] See Gardner and Johnston *Drawing Spirits*, 53–54.
[174] See Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 279, no. 50–52.
[175] Korshi Dosoo, personal communication, 2024.

686 and the Hamuli scribes. By attending to the nature of the two magical handbooks, Iain Gardner has indeed reinforced Quecke's prescient argument that the magical texts featuring in P. Heid. Kopt. 686 (*Endoxon of the Archangel Michael*) and in P. Heid. Kopt. 685 (*Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"*) were crafted by Deacon Iōhannēs from a liturgical lectionary dated approximately to the ninth century CE.[176] The original codex—23 cm (h) x 6.5 cm (w)—contained excerpts from the Pauline corpus read publicly in Eucharistic services during various feast days dedicated to saints.[177] This codex, alongside contributory evidence—particularly the ornamental decorations in the *scriptio inferior* of the palimpsest, along with the use of scribal signs (e.g., *diple*, *coronis*, and *obelos*)—provided Gardner with a sounder basis for connecting Deacon Iōhannēs's activity with the group of manuscripts retrieved from the present-day village of Al-Hamuli, near the ruins of the nearby monastery of St. Michael Archangel. As Gardner has noted, the two manuscripts (P. Heid. Kopt. 685-686) include nearly every characteristic element of the Hamuli manuscripts (9-10th CE). In so doing, the supplied evidence, while it doesn't allow sufficient room to speculate in favor of a direct link between Iōhannēs and the Monastery of Michael at Phantoou, one might at least surmise that the manuscript he repurposed to copy the magical texts may have been produced in this institution and subsequently sent to the monastery in which Iōhannēs served.

Further connections between P. Heid. Kopt. 686 and the Hamuli manuscripts emerge from the literary nature of the preserved materials, many of which center on the figure of the archangel. The "apostolic memoir" entitled *The Investiture of the Archangel Michael*, which is attested in two Hamuli manuscripts (M593 and M614), is particularly significant in this regard.[178] The persistent similarities between the presentations of the archangel found in this

[176] See Hans Quecke in "Palimpsestfragmente eines Koptischen Lektionars." *Le Muséon* 85 (1972): 5–24.
[177] See Gardner and Johnston, *Drawing Spirits*, 55–56.
[178] Likewise housed at the Pierpont Morgan Library. For a general overview on the Hamuli manuscripts held at the Morgan Library, see Leo Depuydt, *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library* (Leuven: Peeters, 1993). On the widespread Coptic genre labeled "apostolic memoirs", see esp. Joost Hagen, "The Diaries of the Apostles: 'Manuscript Find' and 'Manuscript Fiction' in Coptic Homilies and Other Literary

work with those of P. Heid. Kopt. 686 reveals how homiletic motifs surrounding the archangel crept into this magical handbook. When examined together, the strong emphasis on the archangel's intercessory power in P. Heid. Kopt. 686—along with its visual representation in the manuscript's coda—presents a compelling case for further study of the textual and iconographic motifs embedded within this manuscript.

P. Heid. Kopt. 686 and the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael*

As said above, P. Heid. Kopt. 686 is a palimpsest manuscript written over a liturgical lectionary containing excerpts of Pauline epistles.[179] The magical handbook opens with an extensive prayer with a pronounced liturgical register—which occupies nearly 14 pages of the codex—spoken by the Archangel Michael to God, invoking his intercessory power on behalf of the client of P. Heid. Kopt. 686. The title attached to the invocatory prayer, ⲡⲉⲛⲇⲱⲍⲟⲛ, "praise," while notably absent in P. Heid. Kopt. 686, finds explicit attestation in an unpublished manuscript held at the Collège de France (CdF 2), which ends with the words ⲡⲉⲛⲇⲱⲍⲱⲛ ⲉ̇ⲙⲓⲭⲁⲏⲗ.[180] A related manuscript from the same archive (CdF 3) contains a colophon dated to the 27th of Mesore 427 (=20th August 1035 CE). Notably, the colophon was penned by a certain Rafae, deacon of Mama:[181]

> Lord Jesus Christ, may he bless our God-loving one. Everyone who reads from this book, remember me so that the Lord has mercy on me, Rafae the deacon of Mama (?) (ⲣⲁⲫⲁⲏ ⲙⲁ̄ⲓⲕ ⲉⲙⲁⲙⲁ) on the day of my coming forth from the body so that I hear the voice saying: "Come to me, O blessed ones of my Father, and receive your

Texts," in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millenium*: *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies*, 2 vols., ed. Jacques van der Vliet and Mat Immerzeel (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 339–371; Pierluigi Piovanelli, "Thursday Night Fever: Dancing and Singing with Jesus in the Gospel of the Savior and the Dance of the Savior around the Cross," *Early Christianity* 3 (2012): 229–48; Alin Suciu, *The Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*: *A Coptic Apostolic Memoir* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

[179] For further details, see Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 325–326. See also Gardner and Johnston, *Drawing Spirits*, 123–134.

[180] For further details, see the note in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 329.

[181] Details provided by Michel Pezin, "Les manuscrits coptes inédits du Collège de France," in *Écritures et traditions dans la littérature copte. Cahiers de la Bibliothéque Copte* (Leuven: Peeters, 1982), 23–27. Edition being prepared by Korshi Dosoo (forthcoming).

> inheritance, forever and ever." This very day, the 27th of Mesore, this very year 427 (= 20 August 1035, Islamic era).[182]

It is here important to emphasize how the unpublished version of *Endoxon* held at the Collège de France stands as a smoking gun, showing how the prayer circulated independently as a distinct ritual tradition that could be adopted and readapted by ritual practitioners. Moreover, the *Endoxon* is followed by ritual prescriptions that invest Michael's image with power, setting it to work as a ritual token ([14], 250 – [16], 271). The codex thus comes to a close with a new series of instructions for crafting a potent amuletic device ([16], 272–274).[183] Notably, the structure of P. Heid. Kopt. 686 favorably compares with a number of Coptic ritual manuscripts that similarly open with an extensive liturgical-style invocation directed to divine entities and followed by a series of ritual prescriptions to draw their image upon an object—e.g. a shell, a piece of cloth, a body part—intended to work as an amuletic device. These materials include, for instance, the Rossi's Gnostic Tractate (PCM I 12-13), P. Macquarie I 1, and the love Spell of Cyprian (PCM I 28). The latter is particularly significant, as it belongs to the "Heidelberg Magical Archive." PCM I 28 indeed opens with a long invocation spoken by Cyprian—i.e., the legendary magician Cyprian of Antioch,[184] the fictive practitioner to whom the spell is attributed—and directed to the archangel Gabriel. The ritual prescriptions attached to the coda of the manuscript direct the practitioner to draw the image of the angel upon a clay ostracon and to wear it as an amulet:

> Make an offering for him of *mastic, *agarwood?, *styrax, *musk. Three days, seven prayers daily, from Tuesday until Thursday, while you fast daily, and you eat? on? Thursday? ... Joseph? and olive oil on it? ... while you fast, being pure, wearing clothes. Mark? it on a clay ostracon (*eubēlči*) with sweat. ‹The› prayer twenty-one times on three occasions. Beware of him. Bind a ... amulet on yourself (*mar ouraeis hịčōk natšrahk*).[185]

[182] I am grateful to Korshi Dosoo for generously sharing with me a preliminary transcription of the Coptic text.
[183] See Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 324–362.
[184] On the conflation of materials lying behind the figure of Cyprian of Antioch, see Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 370–371.
[185] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 394–397.

In a similar fashion, the *Endoxon* of P. Heid. Kopt. 686 functions as the invocatory strategy through which the practitioner seeks to compel God's power in order to bestow ritual efficacy onto the archangel's amuletic image (see further below). At a more general level, the narrative motifs found in the *Endoxon* intersect intimately with traditions on the archangel widely circulating across Coptic Egypt. Of particular significance is Michael's portrait as mediator of the angelic court and intercessor with God on behalf of humankind, following a pattern that reverberates in various homiletic works in his honor.[186] The archangel's intercessory power is thusly harnessed in order to ward off the attacks of malevolent forces—including "magic" (*hik*), "shameful magic" (*hik nsōš*), and any "demonic craft" (*tekhni nim ntemōniōn*)—afflicting the client.

The Archangel Michael's Intercessory Power between P. Heid. Kopt. 686 and Coptic Homiletic Traditions

At the onset of P. Heid. Kopt. 686, the magical formulary portrays the Archangel Michael in reverent devotion to God's presence. He humbly bows down before him, pledging allegiance at the Almighty's feet; then raises again in his splendor, equipped with his staff (*hrabtōs*), symbol of his divine power:

> And Michael did obeisance (*abouōšt*) at the feet of the good Father. He stood up, he fixed his staff before him, he set his chariot behind him, he spread his wings of light, and he cried out, saying […][187]

[186] Esp. *Investiture of the Archangel Michael*; Eustathius of Thrace's *Encomium on Saint Michael Archangel*; Pseudo-Timothy's *Encomium on the Archangel Michael*; Severus of Antioch's *Discourse on the Compassion of God, and on the Freedom of Speech by the Archangel Michael*; and the *Encomium of Theodosius on S. Michael the Archangel*.
[187] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 328–329.

The deferential gesture of the archangel resonates in several homiletic works celebrating his figure, particularly in the *Investiture of the Archangel Michael* and Pseudo-Timothy and Theodosius' *Encomia*. The deferential gesture of Michael aptly encapsulates his role as intercessor with the divine sphere for a different range of purposes. In Pseudo-Timothy's *Encomium*, for instance, Michael's supplication to God is said to be instrumental in preserving the fertility of Egyptian landscape by supplying provisions for men and beasts, and regulating the rising of the Nile River:

> Michael goes inside the veil (*katapetasma*) on the same day, falls at the Father's feet, and worships Him (ᶜ*n*ᵉ*fouōš*ᵉ*t*) and he does not rise up again until the Father has accepted his supplications and has provided sustenance for men and beasts, and water in the river Nile.[188]

This motif is presented with even greater emphasis in the Coptic *Synaxarium*, wherein it is said:

> Commemorations and alms were offered in his name on the twelfth day of each month because he [Michael] implored the Lord—may His name be exalted—for the fruits, the rise of the Nile, the balance of temperature, the fall of rain and dew, so that the Lord might bring them to a good end.[189]

Turning back to P. Heid. Kopt. 686, the archangel thusly addresses God and his Son with a long prayer that opens with the words: "Hail (*khere*), Father! Hail, O beloved Son!". This propitiatory formula, known as *kharitesion*, is widely deployed in both Greek and Coptic magical papyri for securing divine favor. In particular, *kharitesia* include a common set of stock formulae centered on the salutation "Hail," which is directed to divine entities—most commonly the sun (e.g., P. Mich. Inv. 3404; P. Berl. Inv. 21243; P. Duk. Inv. 729), but also angels (e.g., P. Mich. 136), or the "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob", as found

[188] Translation with slight modifications from Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, 518 (Coptic); 1027 (English). On this motif, see Pietro D'agostino, "On the Liturgical Memories of the Archangel Michael in the Coptic Church and their Link with the Nile's Rise: Some Reflections," in *The Archangel Michael in Africa: History, Cult, and Persona*, ed. Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, Alexandros Tsakos, and Marta Camilla Wright (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 51–59.
[189] René Basset, *Synaxaire Arabe-Jacobite* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1904), 280.

in PGM IV. 1231–1232. [190] Notably, the prayer sections of P. Heid. Kopt. 686 are in the first singular person. This detail neatly conveys the author's intention to identify the archangel with the client. By so doing, the client himself embodies the intercessory power of the Archangel Michael, who beseeches the Lord to have pity on the entire humankind. Within the context of P. Heid. Kopt. 686 specifically, and in Coptic magic more broadly, *kharitesia* function as anaphorical formulae opening the salutation to cosmic entities. *Kharitesia* thus emerge as a potent strategy designed to secure God's favor by lauding the creation:

> Hail, O Father! Hail, O Beloved Son! Hail, O Holy Spirit! Hail, you who created the sky! Hail, you who established ‹the› foundations of the earth upon the waters! Hail, you who spread out the seven heavens and the seven firmaments! Hail, you who created the sun and gave its warmth to it! Hail, you who created the moon and gave its light to it! Hail, you who created the stars and gave names to them! Hail, you who created angels and gave them spirit! Hail, you who appointed the archangels! Hail, you who created the cherubim and the seraphim and gave six wings to each one of them! Hail, you who appointed the holy Powers! Hail, you who created us, and gave us spirit.[191]

Upon securing divine favor, P. Heid. Kopt. 686 introduces Michael's intercessory prayer toward God, which here emerges as the procedure governing the logic of the ritual:

> I praise you today, you who gave me this great honour! O angels on high, come! Praise the Father with me today! O cherubim on high, come! Give glory to the Son with me today! O Powers on high, come! Dance for the Holy Spirit with me today! Let the sun and the moon and all the stars stand with me today so that I may sing of the glory of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit! O singers of hymns to the Father, sing hymns to the Father with me today! Let the earth open its mouth and swallow the Devil and all his works! Let the gates of heaven open and the angels of the light come to me, until I complete this holy *endoxon*! Listen to me today, O Father of light! I am Michael, my name ‹is› God and man! Lend your ear to me today, O King of kings! I am Michael, I am also the one set over the seven mysteries that are hidden in the heart of the Father, those that he made on the day that he created Man according to his likeness and his image.[192]

[190] On *kharitesia* in Egyptian magical traditions see, for instance, Edward O. D. Love and Michael W. Zellmann-Rohrer, eds., *Traditions in Transmission*: *The Medical and Magical Texts of a Fourth-Century Greek and Coptic Codex (Michigan MS. 136) in Context*, *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete – Beihefte* 47 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022), 268–74. See also Joachim Quack, "From ritual to Magic: Ancient Egyptian Precursors of the Charitesion and their Social Setting," in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, ed. Gideon Bohak, Yuval Harari, and Shaul Shaked, *Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture* 15 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 43–84.
[191] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 328–329.
[192] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 330–331.

Notably, Michael is here cast as the leader of the angelic choir, directing the celestial hosts in hymns of praise to God. The role of Michael here exemplifies an angelic function in Coptic magical texts aptly termed by Korshi Dosoo as "the gathering angel."[193] The angels cast in this role are indeed described as gathering together the angels composing the divine court, as it becomes apparent with the portrait of Hormosiel in PCM I 17 and in London Hay 4:

PCM I 17[194]	London Hay 4[195]
Hail, Hormosiel, the great ruler who gathers those of the heaven and those of the earth, he to whose voice those of the heavens listen, and they delight in it!	Hōrmōsiel the angel, this one with the trumpet in his hand, gathering in the angels for the greeting of the father and all the council of the father […] I beg, I entreat you today, Hōrmisēl the angel, in whose hand is the gathering-in, that you give a gathering-in today, with all the race of Adam and all the children of Zoe […]

Moreover, the depiction of Michael as intercessor with God on behalf of humankind comes anew with particular emphasis in the following passage, which recurs as a sort of refrain:

> Now, my Lord, have pity (*šanahtēk*) upon your likeness and your image, and may you give healing to all men who will bear this holy praise (*piendōksōn etouaab*), and in particular NN, every month, forever (?), yea, yea, quickly![196]

The *Endoxon* here perfectly enshrines the role for which Michael is worshipped in Coptic Christianity. As *Invest. Mich.* qualifies, St. Michael "has no other task than to pray for the souls always."[197] As noted above, the archangel's primary activity is to oversee the entire creation, watching over the destiny of human souls while providing them with the means for

[193] See Korshi Dosoo, "Ministers of Fire and Spirit: Knowing Angels in the Coptic Magical Papyri," in *Inventer les anges de l'Antiquité à Byzance*, ed. Delphine Lauritzen (Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2021), 403–434.
[194] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preiniger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 241.
[195] Coptic text and English translation in O'Connell, *The Hay Archive of Coptic Spells*, 147–149.
[196] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preiniger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 332–333.
[197] M614 (Faiyumic) f. 6v.: ⲙⲉⲛⲧⲏⲙⲓϫⲁⲏⲗ ⲥⲁⲗⲁⲡⲥ ⲛⲥⲱⲃ ⲛⲥⲁⲥⲱⲛϩ ⲉⲓϩⲛⲛⲉⲯⲩϫⲁⲓ ⲛⲟⲩⲁⲓⲱ ⲛⲓⲃⲓ ⲉⲃⲁⲗ.

sustenance, including food and water. This function finds a compelling correspondence in the conclusive passage of the *Endoxon*:

> I bless you with all the creatures that you created, all the beasts of the earth and the birds of heaven who bless you, Aram, Aram, Aram, Anphou. God who is hidden, listen to me! I am Michael, the archangel! Let my praise (*smou*) come in before your greatness! Let my repentance reach your holy throne! Now, my Lord, take pity on your likeness and your image and give healing to everyone that will carry this *endoxon*, especially NN, son of NN, and take away from him every disease, and every disturbance and every strike! For you are the one to whom all glory is fitting, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, forever and ever, amen, amen, amen!

The homiletic *Encomia* delivered on Michael's feast (12th of Hathor) cast in a different light the archangel's intercourse with humankind. Once again, Pseudo-Timothy's *Encomium* provides us with a compelling depiction of Michael in this role:

> We, miserable sinners that we are, obtain through the supplication of Michael the waters of the river Nile, and the dew, and the rain. We obtain through the supplication of Michael a fine climate, and the growth of the fruits of the earth. We obtain through the supplication of Michael sweet spiritual foods. We obtain through the supplication of Michael the wine which we drink, and the other kinds of sweet spiritual foods, and all the rest of the drinks which we drink to the love of God.[198]

In a similar vein, the compassion and fondness of Michael for humankind finds further expression in the traditions surrounding the rich man Dorotheus and his wife Theopiste, whose devotion to the archangel led them to divest themselves of their garments to celebrate his commemorative day. The episode, attested in the *Encomia* of both Theodosius and Eustathius, is epitomized in the *Coptic Synaxarium*, which recounts:

> Now, there was a pious man named Dorotheus and his wife, Theopiste. Both of them loved the chief of the angels, the compassionate Michael. They observed his commemoration on the twelfth day of each month and fasted in his honor. The Lord granted them abundant blessings: wealth and great fortune flowed into their household through the intercession of Michael, the chief of the angels.[199]

Here, Michael emerges in his active role as mediator between the divine and the human realm, fostering not solely agricultural fecundity but also material well-being for those who

[198] Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, 1029.
[199] Basset, *Synaxaire Arabe-Jacobite*, 280.

cultivate his veneration. The hagiographic traditions surrounding him thus reinforce his portrait as a celestial patron, whose intercessory power extends from the cosmic order to the intimate domain of individual piety and prosperity.

Beyond the *Endoxon*, the intercessory role of the archangel is further attested in other manuscripts from the Coptic magical corpus, as it bears evidence of a seventh-to-tenth-century Coptic spell (P. Berlin 11347) calling upon the intercessory power of one "Apa Anoup."[200] The spell centers on the ritual sealing (*sphragize*) of sacred oil (*pineh*) for healing and protection. Significantly, the spell concludes invoking Jesus alongside Michael the Archangel, labeling the latter "the one who intercedes" (*petsops*). A related Coptic spell for alleviating stomach pain (P. Berlin 8313) begins with a *historiola* set upon the Mount of Olives, where Jesus encounters a doe in pangs.[201] The narrative presents Jesus reassuring the suffering animal by announcing the imminent coming of Michael who, armed with his staff, intercedes by invoking the names of Jesus and the twelve apostles, thereby bringing relief to the afflicted creature—here a symbol of the spell's recipient. Michael's intercessory power also emerges in Moen 3, a late Coptic formulary on parchment dating from the 8th to the 10th century.[202] Notably, the spell calls upon Uriel Takuel Akuel Peskinther Anaoth—which can plausibly be understood as magical epithets referencing Michael—describing him as follows:

> the king of those who are blessed, who fear the one who is within the 7 curtains, whom the 7 firmaments surround, whom the 7 angels surround, standing before him, who are these: [...]ael, Suri[el], Raphael, Rakuel, A[...].

[200] Coptic text in Walter Beltz, "Die koptischen Zauberpapiere und Zauberostraka der Papyrus-Sammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete* 31 (1985): 32–35. English translation in Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 117–119.
[201] Coptic text in Walter Beltz, "Die koptischen Zauberpapyri der Papyrus-Sammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete* 29 (1983): 65–67. English translation in Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 95–97.
[202] For the edition of the text see Helmut Satzinger and Pieter J. Sijpesteijn, "Koptisches Zauberpergament Moen III," *Le Muséon* 101 (1988): 51–63. English translation with slight modifications in Meyer and Smith, *Ancient Christian Magic*, 233–37.

More interesting still is the following passage, in which Michael is described as holding in his hands the "souls" (*psikhē*) of people, of men and of women, of reptiles and of beasts and of those that terrify and of those that go upon the ground." This description correlates well with Michael's role as chief angel of the divine court and foremost intercessor on behalf of creation.

Upon preliminary consideration, it thusly comes to the fore how Michael's role as intercessor with the divine sphere largely inheres in P. Heid. Kopt. 686. Most strikingly, the range of motifs and narratives used to portray this foundational function of the archangel draws on an expansive corpus of homiletic, liturgical, and ritual materials dedicated to Michael. This preliminary analysis has laid out the groundwork for engaging with an even more salient theological and narrative motif in P. Heid. Kopt. 686: the fall of the Devil and the creation of the first man, Adam.

The Theological Relevance of P. Heid. Kopt. 686: The Fall of the Devil and the Worship of Adam

One of the hallmark motifs inhering in P. Heid. Kopt. 686 is the creation of the first man, Adam, alongside the narrative of Satan's fall. The cluster of theological motifs and narrative strategies employed in P. Heid. Kopt. 686 to describe this episode displays strong convergence with texts such as the *Investiture of the Archangel Michael*, the *Investiture of the Archangel Gabriel*, and the *Investiture of Abbaton*. These texts present strong alignment in describing the creation of Adam and the fall of the Devil, which results from his refusal to worship the first man.[203] The narrative of the "fall of the Devil" clusters around three main

[203] This apocryphal homily is pseudonymously attributed to Timothy Aelurus. The text falls into line with the literary genre known as "apostolic memoirs," and centers on the narration of the transformation of the angel Muriel into Abbaton, the angel of death. *Investiture of Abbaton* is extant in a single Sahidic manuscript (London Or. 7025) from the British Library. The codex is dated Thoout 12, 698 (= September 9, 981). For a translation with detailed introduction see Alin Suciu and Ibrahim Saweros, "The Investiture of Abbaton, the Angel of

episodes: God creates Adam after his own image and likeness; the Devil, the so-called "First-Formed One" (*parkhēplasma*), refuses to worship Adam; God casts the Devil out of paradise.

Starting with the first episode, P. Heid. Kopt. 686 incorporates and rearranges it as part of the prayer directed by Michael to God:

> I am Michael, I am also the one set over the seven mysteries that are hidden in the heart of the Father, those that he made on the day that he created (*tamia*) Man (*prōme*) according to his likeness and his image (*kata pebini men tef hikōn*) […][204]

When it comes to comparing P. Heid. Kopt. 686 with the above-mentioned apocryphal works, the three texts neatly demonstrate dependence on the scriptural passage of *Gen*. 1:26:

Invest. Arch. Mich.[205]	*Invest. Arch. Abbat.*	*Invest. Arch. Gabr.*
"Let us make (*marentamio*) a man after our likeness (*katapeneine ᵉmnten hikōn*) and our image."[206]	"Let us make (*marᵉn tamio*) man according to our likeness and image (*kata neneine mᵉn tenhikōn*)."[207]	"Now it happened (*nterentamio*) that when we created Adam after our likeness and our image (*katapeneine ᵉmᵉntenhikōn*) […][208]

Death," in *New Testament Apocrypha*: *More Noncanonical Scriptures*, vol.1, ed. Tony Burke (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publisher).

[204]Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preiniger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 330–331.

[205] MS. 593 f. 3v., trans. Hugo Lundhaug (with slight modifications) (see *New Testament Apocrypha*: *More Noncanonical Scriptures*, vol. 2, 510).

[206] M614 (Faiyumic) fol. 2v.: ⲙⲁⲗⲉⲛⲧⲁⲙⲓⲁ ⲛⲟⲩⲗⲱⲙⲓ ⲕⲁⲧⲁⲡⲉⲛⲓⲛⲓ ⲙⲛⲧⲉⲛⲍⲓⲕⲱⲛ.

[207] MS. Or. 7025 f. 9b., trans. by Alin Suciu and Ibrahim Saweros (with slight modifications) (see *New Testament Apocrypha*: *More Noncanonical Scriptures*, vol. 1, 537).

[208] MS. 593 f. 47 r., trans. by Lance Jenott (with slight modifications) (see *New Testament Apocrypha*: *More Noncanonical Scriptures*, vol. 2, 577).

First to be noted, P. Heid. Kopt. 686 and the three apocryphal texts concert in employing a slightly divergent rendition of Gen. 1:26 than that found in sources such as the LXX and the Sahidic Old Testament:[209]

LXX	Sahidic OT[210]
καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν.	ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ⲛⲃⲓ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ϫⲉ ⲙⲁⲣⲉⲛⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ ⲛⲟⲩⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲧⲉⲛⲥⲓ¨ⲕⲱⲛ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲡⲉⲛⲉⲓ¨ⲛⲉ.

Notably, they alter the sequence of the phrase "according to our image and likeness" giving precedence to the Coptic term ⲉⲓⲛⲉ, "likeness:"[211]

LXX	Sahidic OT	P. Heid. Kopt. 686
καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός ποιήσωμεν ἄνθρωπον κατ' εἰκόνα ἡμετέραν καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν.	ⲡⲉϫⲁϥ ⲛⲃⲓ ⲡⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ϫⲉ ⲙⲁⲣⲉⲛⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ ⲛⲟⲩⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲧⲉⲛⲥⲓ¨ⲕⲱⲛ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲡⲉⲛⲉⲓ¨ⲛⲉ.	ⲛⲧⲁⲃⲧⲁⲙⲓⲁ ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲡⲉⲃⲓⲛⲓ ⲙⲉⲛ ⲧⲉϥⲥⲓⲕⲱⲛ.

These apparently subsidiary elements result of particular interest for placing the theological elements of the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael* in dialogue with the exegetical tradition of Faiyumic monasticism. In a letter sent to Calosirius, bishop of Arsinoë, the patriarch Cyril of Alexandria expresses his concern regarding the misinterpretation of Gen. 1:26 operated by certain monks serving in the Faiyum region:

> […] For they were saying that since divine Scriptures say that humankind was created according to the image of God (*kat' eikona theou*), it is necessary to believe that the divine is in human shape (*anthrōpoeides*), which is completely unintelligible and is capable of carrying away those who choose to think in this way with charges of the ultimate impiety. For humankind, it must be

[210] Coptic text from Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, MS. Or. fol. 1605 fol. 1v col. 1 ll. 10–15.
[211] I'm grateful to Joseph Sanzo for turning my attention to this detail.

> acknowledged, is in the image of God, but the likeness is not a bodily one, for God is incorporeal.[212]

Cyril's invective takes aim at their tendency of interpreting God's "likeness" (*homoiotē*s) in *Gen*. 1:26 as of bodily nature (*sōmatikē*). By contrast, the patriarch sustains the absolute "incorporeality" of God's image, here termed *asōmatos*. In light of Cyril's letter, we are allowed to speculate that the author of our texts might have prioritized the term "Likeness" (*eine*) of *Gen*. 1:26 in accordance with the theological tradition of the Faiyum area. Hence, the deliberate act of placing this term at the forefront of the formula should be interpreted as a conscious act aimed at conveying specific theological positions. Consequently, the epistle additionally affords us a valuable window onto the reservoir of exegetic traditions lying beneath the *Endoxon*.

After the creation of Adam, the three apocrypha inform us on how God gathered his angelic retinue, instructing it to worship him. P. Heid. Kopt. 686 incorporates this motif in another adjuration spoken by the Archangel Michael:

> I adjure you today by all the angelic ranks of the heavens (*nentaxis tērou ntangelikē*), they who came and greeted (*auouōšt*) Adam on the day in which you created him![213]

Quite unsurprisingly, the text of the magical handbook strictly aligns with that of the angelic investiture:

Invest. Arch. Mich.:[214]	*Invest. Arch. Abbat.*	*Invest. Arch. Gabr.*
My father said to all the angels and archangels and the cherubim and the seraphim and the twenty-four elders and the entire angelic host, 'Come and worship (ᵉ*ntetᵉnouōšᵉt*) Adam, who is my likeness and my image.'[215]	My Father ordered every heavenly host (*tagma nim et hᵉn ᵉm pēue*) to come and worship (ᵉ*nseouōšᵉt*) him [Adam]. Whether angel or archangel, the entire heavenly host came and worshipped,	The Father commanded all the heavenly ranks (*taxis tērou ᵉnnempēue*) to come and worship (ᵉ*nseouōšᵉt*) Adam. So, they all came and worshipped joyfully.[217]

	first God and then Adam saying, 'Greetings (*khaire*), likeness and image of God.'[216]	

Again, the text of P. Heid. Kopt. 686 displays strong synergy with the ideas and lexicon found in the apocrypha.

The last narrative section revolves around the "fall of the Devil," ensuing from his refusal to worship Adam as likeness and image of God. P. Heid. Kopt. 686 hints at this narrative pattern at p. 4, 1–6:

> After we had made obeisance to Arōmakhrim—who is Adam—Satanaēl, the First-Formed One (*parkhēplasma*), disobeyed you, and you excluded him from your holy glory. The son of perdition, you deprived him of your holy glory.

In conjunction with the three angelic investitures (*Invest. Arch. Mich. MS. 593* f.5r; *Invest. Abbat. MS. 7025* f.13a; *Invest. Arch. Gabr. MS. 593* f.47 r.), P. Heid. Kopt. 686 refers to the Devil through the appeal "First-Formed One" (*parkhēplasma*), once again highlighting a robust lexical alignment with the apocryphal traditions centered around this motif. More significantly, P. Heid. Kopt. 686 diverges from the apocrypha by designating the Devil through the title Satanaēl, a nomenclature that finds a parallel in Theodosius's *Encomium*.[218] By contrast, both *Invest. Arch. Mich.* and *Invest. Arch. Gabr.* employ the "gnostic-style"

[212] See Stephen J. Davis, "Biblical Interpretation and Alexandrian Episcolal Authority in the Early Christian Fayoum," in *Christianity and Monasticism in the Fayoum*, ed. Gawdat Gabra (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2005), 45–63.
[213] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 334–335.
[214] MS. 593 f. 5r., trans. by Hugo Lundhaug (*New Testament Apocrypha*: *More Noncanonical Scriptures*, 512).
[215] M614 (Faiyumic) fol. 4v.: ⲡⲉⲇⲉⲡⲁⲓⲱⲧ ⲛⲛⲉⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲙⲛⲛⲉⲁⲣⲭⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲙⲛⲛⲉⲭⲉⲣⲟⲃⲓⲛ ⲙⲛⲛⲉⲍⲉⲣⲁⲫⲓⲛ ⲙⲛⲡ̅ⲕ̅ⲇ̅ ⲙⲡⲣⲉⲥⲃⲩⲧⲉⲣⲟⲥ ⲙⲛⲧⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲓⲕⲏ ⲧⲏⲣⲥ ⲭⲉⲁⲙⲱⲓⲛⲓ ⲛⲧⲉⲧⲉⲛⲛⲉⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲧⲉⲧⲛⲟⲩⲱⲱⲧ ⲙⲡⲁⲓⲛⲓ ⲙⲛⲧⲁⲍⲓⲕⲱⲛ.
[217] MS. 593 f.47 r.; trans. by Lance Jenott (*New Testament Apocrypha*: *More Noncanonical Scriptures*, 577).
[216] MS. Or. 7025 f.13a; trans. by Alin Suciu and Ibrahim Saweros (with slight modifications) (*New Testament Apocrypha*: *More Noncanonical Scriptures*, 538).
[218] Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, 904: "And there was [a hateful being], who was of the earlier creation, that is to say, Satanaēl, who is called the Devil, and he was an archangel."

appellation *Saklatabōth*.[219] In conclusion, the apocrypha narrate how God punished *Saklatabōth* by casting him out of paradise. Notably, the episode is differently tailored by the apocryphal sources to suit different redactional and readership contexts.

As the previous two sections have elucidated, P. Heid. Kopt. 686 coherently reworks a repertoire of traditions on the Archangel Michael widely circulating across Coptic Egypt. The notable presence of the aforementioned texts in parallel versions within the Hamuli manuscripts further reinforces Gardner's correlation between this archive and the version of the *Endoxon* copied by Deacon Iōhannēs. At a more general level, P. Heid. Kopt. 686 neatly displays how its author capitalized on the dedicatory figure of a local institution to totalize its ritual efficacy. The reworking of the narratives on Michael Archangel extant in the *Endoxon* indeed establishes a solid base to speculate on the potential background of the people behind the text. The strong synergies highlighted between P. Heid. Kopt. 686 and the angelic investitures do not solely speak volumes about his plausible connection with the Hamuli archive but also enables a startling light to be shed on ecclesiastical scribal expertise in late antique Egypt. In particular, P. Heid. Kopt. 686 is a crucial piece of evidence in support of the interpretative model recently advocated by Hugo Lundhaug to approach the logics governing the creation, readaptation, and fluid transmission of apocryphal narratives across the Coptic monastic world. According to this view, Coptic apocrypha emerge as creations stimulated by a narrative imaginary based on the biblical "story-world."[220] The aspect of Lundhaug's approach that is most relevant here concerns the mechanics underlying the

[219] Such a title allegedly originates from the conflation of the two names Saklas and Ialdabaoth (see Jan Dochorn, "Der Sturz der Teufels in der Urzeit: Eine Traditiongesghichte Skizze zu einem Motiv frühjüdischer theologie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Luzifermythos," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 109 (2013): 23–42), rife among the Nag Hammadi materials (e.g., *Ap. John.* II 11,16-17). Notably, in *Invest. Arch. Mich.* 3: 34, the Devil is also referred by the biblical name *Mastema* (see Jub.10:8). This name is also found in the Coptic magical spells to label the evil Satan (e.g., London Hay 2, see O'Connell, *The Hay Archive of Coptic Spells*, 119).

[220] See Hugo Lundahug, "The Fluid Transmission of Apocrypha in Egyptian Monasteries," in *Coptic Literature in Context (4th–13th cent.): Cultural Landscape, Literary Production, and Manuscript Archaeology,* ed. Paola Buzi (Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 2020), 213–229.

continuous reshaping of these narrative blueprints, which scribes deployed to produce ever-new renditions of apocryphal traditions. These logics seem to be largely oriented by ideas circulating across a specific cultural system. In the case of the expansive corpus of apocrypha centered on the investiture of archangels (e.g., *Investiture of the Archangel Michael*, *Investiture of Abbaton*, *Investiture of the Archangel Gabriel*), these materials—the various textual iterations, all of which circulated primarily in Egyptian monasteries—display an ongoing reconfiguration of a shared cluster of narrative motifs. Chief among these are the creation of Adam and the fall of the Devil; the latter prompted by his refusal to venerate the first man. Drawing on Stephen Nichols' work on medieval literary culture, Lundhaug has highlighted how the intrinsic instability of apocryphal narrative cycles necessitates an interpretive framework that accounts for their status as dynamic systems, characterized by what Nichols has termed "mutable stability."[221] That is, these narratives operate through structured yet flexible articulations of core motifs, which function as conceptual blueprints for the continuous generation of new textual iterations, each shaped by the particular needs of its social context and intended audience.With this in mind, the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael* in P. Heid. Kopt. 686 takes on new sense. In particular, the narrative trajectory of this magical handbook intimately intersects with that of the "investiture cycle." This hints at a plausible interaction between P. Heid. Kopt. 686 and the corpus of apocryphal traditions cultivated in Egyptian monasteries. At the same time, it leaves room to speculate that P. Heid. Kopt. 686 emerged in the same cultural milieux in which apocrypha were created —perhaps within the context of monastic libraries. As we'll see in the next section, the visual elements featuring on P. Heid. Kopt. 686 further bolster the assumption that this manuscript was copied in an institution dedicated to the figure of the Archangel Michael.

[221] Stephen G. Nichols, "Mutable Stability, a Medieval Paradox: The Case of Le Roman de la Rose," *Queeste* 23, no. 2 (2016): 71–103.

The Apotropaic Image of the Archangel Michael: From Iconography to Ritual Artistry

The final folium (4r.) of P. Heid. Kopt. 686 showcases an image of the Archangel Michael flanked by two ancillary angelic entities taking on the name *tenamis*, "powers."[222] Beneath Michael's feet lies a small reptilian figure, likely representing the Devil, over whom the archangel stands triumphant. What interests me here are two intertwined aspects of this image. First, the ritual agency through which Deacon Iōhannēs infused power upon the image, which enables startling light to be shed upon the mechanics governing the role of images in Coptic magical texts. Second, the potential iconographic motifs from which Deacon Iōhannēs drew inspiration, which resonate closely with the expansive corpus of depictions of the Archangel Michael in Coptic art. Altogether, my analysis of these two aspects in P. Heid. Kopt. 686. promises to offer a valuable critical window into the continuum between art, liturgy, and ritual power in late antique Egypt. Before entering into discussion of the materials here under scrutiny, it is important to underscore that P. Heid.

[222] As Korshi Dosoo has astutely argued, these two entities are likely representant of a rank of the angelic hierarchies composing the divine court. This assumption is indeed reinforced by direct evidence from p. Heid. Kopt. 686 (see Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 340–341, at 26–29), wherein these entities are framed as warrior angels composing Michael's divine retinue, holding in their hands "swords of fire" (*ere hensebi nsa ti*). Further evidence stems from BL MS Or. 5525 (see Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte*, vol. 1, 15–21), a Coptic spell centering on the Archangel Michael's invocation upon a phylactery inscribed with his image. Notably, the archangel is described as equipped with his "light-wand" (*hraftos nouaein*) in his right hand, his "light-shield" (*harma nouaein*) along with his "great powers" (*qam*) standing before him. In order to reinforce this further, Dosoo persuasively quotes Eph. 1:21 as a potential scriptural precedent attesting to the angelic status of these entities. In the passage, it is said how God, upon raising Jesus from the dead, set him at his right hand, "above all Principalities, Authorities, Powers (*dunameōs*), and Dominions." As Dosoo has surmised, this series of entities may favourably represent an angelic hierarchy. The same enumeration is indeed found in PCM I 17: "Hail, *tabernacle of the Father and the Son and the Spirit and those who are within it! Hail, seven *archangels who stand before the glory of the Father! Hail, *Principalities and *Authorities and *Powers (*tunamēs*) that are on high! Hail, Church of the Firstborn and those who are within it! Hail, Powers! Hail, *cherubim! Hail, *seraphim! Hail, *Twenty-Four Presbyters of the Church that is in the heavens, and all who are in it! Hail, Paradise, and all who are in it! Hail, sun that shines! Hail, twelve powers that surround it! Hail, moon and all the stars! Hail, twelve rulers that appoint the hours of the night! Hail, twelve rulers that appoint the hours of the day! Hail, Hormosiel, the great ruler who gathers those of the heaven and those of the earth, he to whose voice those of the heavens listen, and they delight in it!." Most notably, the "powers" (*tunamēs*) are enumerated alongisde other angelic beings composing the divine court, including the cherubim, the seraphim, and the Twenty-Four presbyters, so reinforcing Dosoo's argument further.

Kopt. 686 has been the subject of prior scholarly attention, particularly in the recent work of Jay Johnston and Iain Gardner.[223] Accordingly, my argumentation here builds upon their study, with the main intent of nuancing some aspects of it—particularly the strong affinities between P. Heid. Kopt. 686 and Coptic iconographies representing Michael the Archangel—thus opening new productive lines of inquiry on the ongoing debates on texts and images in Coptic magic.

As noted earlier in this chapter, the image of the Archangel Michael featuring in the coda of P. Heid. Kopt. 686 is an integral part of the ritual procedure. As becomes apparent from the ritual directives that follow the *Endoxon*, the drawing of the Archangel Michael and his powers constituted a potent *phylaktērion* to be replicated and wielded as a potent talismanic device. The textual part of P. Heid. Kopt. 686 thusly materializes into its visual representation, which is intended to capture a salient moment—i.e., the exaltation of Michael along with his angelic retinue. The strict interplay between text and image in P. Heid. Kopt. 686 is particularly evident at p. 5 (hair),[224] wherein is found mention to the potent "names and powers, and your images, and phylacteries."[225] This recurrent refrain phrase emerges as a rather common ritual tactic in the arsenal of ritual practitioners, which has been referred to by Korshi Dosoo through the fitting nomenclature *horkōmotos*, a rubric which designates "a thing by whose authority the being is adjured."[226] Accordingly, the profound nexus between

[223] See esp. Jay Johnston and Iain Gardner, *Drawing Spirit: The Role of Images and Design in the Magical Practice of Late Antiquity* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2022). For a more general overview on the connections image-text in ritual practices, see Johnston and Gardner, "Relations of Image, Text and Design Elements in Selected Amulets and Spells of the Heidelberg Papyri Collection," in *Bild und Schrift auf 'magischen'* Artefakten, ed. Sarah Kiyanrad, Christoffer Theis, and Laura Willer, *Materiale Textkulturen* 19 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 97–122; Johnston, "Binding Images: The Contemporary Use and Efficacy of Late Antique Ritual Sigils, Spirit-Beings and Design Elements," in *New Antiquities: Transformations of Ancient Religion in the New Age and Beyond*, ed. Dylan Michael Burns and Almut-Barbara Renger (London: Equinox, 2019), 254–274; Johnston, "Esoteric Aesthetics: The Spiritual Matter of Intersubjective Encounter," in *Aesthetics of Religion: A Connective Concept*, ed. Alexandra K. Grieser and Jay Johnston (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017), 349–365.

[224] Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 334–335.

[225] ⲛⲉⲕⲣⲁⲛ ⲙⲛ ⲛⲉⲕⲃⲁⲗ ⲙⲛ ⲛⲉⲕⲥ̅ ⲱ̅ ⲧ̅ ⲟ ⲩ̅ ⲛ̅ ⲙⲛ ⲛⲉⲕⲫ̅ ⲩ̅.

[226] On this rubric, see Korshi Dosoo, "Heathen Serpents and Wingless Angels? Some Notes on Images in Coptic Magical Texts," in *The Iconography of Magic: Images of Power and the Power of Images in Ancient and Late Antique Magic*, ed. Raquel Martín Hernández (Leuven: Peeters, 2022), 131.

text and image becomes apparent as the practitioner adjures the Archangel Michael by pronouncing the *Endoxon*, while simultaneously channelling its intrinsic power and transferring it upon a material token, which is thusly activated. This structural ritual scheme is then supplemented by the ritual prescriptions attached to the coda, which articulate into a series of interplays between text and material objects. To facilitate discussion of them, I will reproduce below the ritual instructions in P. Heid. Kopt. 686:

> A man tormented by a demon. Pronounce the prayer over a flask of rose-water. Pour it on him. He will be healed. Offering: *mastic.
>
> A man in prison. Draw the *power on three new pottery ostraca. Bring? it to him. He will be set free on the street, God willing. Offering: mastic, *agarwood, *costus.
>
> Favour. Draw this image with ‹the› blood ‹of a› white dove. Bind it upon yourself. Offering: *musk incense.
>
> 4. A man who has elephantiasis?. Draw this *image with ‹the› blood ‹of a› vulture. Bind it to him. They will heal, God willing. ‹Offering›: *mastic.
>
> 5. A man with an enmity between him and his wife. Pronounce this prayer upon oil, and she anoints the face. They will reconcile. ‹Offering:› *frankincense.
>
> 6. A man who has been *bound, unable to join with his wife. Pronounce the prayer over oil of the *first fruits. A pot of water, pour it upon him. He will be completely released. Offering: *costus and *storax.
>
> 7. A man who has been given a *cup. Pronounce the prayer three times over a glass *flask filled with rose-water and charlock-water. Have him drink while fasting. It will remove ‹itself›. Offering: white costus.
>
> 8. A man who is in pain. Pronounce the prayer over oil of the *first-fruits. Have him drink ‹it›. It will cease. Offering: bitumen.
>
> 9. A man walking in the desert when the sun is covered. Bind this figure to his hand. Certainly, no robbers or beasts will be able to touch him. ‹Offering:› pig's senna?.
>
> 10. A man who is angry because his wife is sinning against him. Draw the image. Wash them off with jasmine oil. ‹Anoint› him. No-one will be able to sleep with her. Let ‹him› anoint her face. ‹Offering:› *mastic.
>
> 11. A woman whose husband is violent? towards her. Draw the image on a shell. Fill it ‹with› jasmine oil. Recite the prayer over it. Anoint her face. He will make peace with her. Offering: mastic, *agarwood.
>
> 12. A man who is going to an unworthy act. Draw the image. |[25] Bind it to him. No-one will recognise him. Offering: *storax.

13. A man who is unable to rest. Draw the image. Place it before him. ‹He will› sleep. Offering: mastic.

14. An authority to whom you are going. Draw the power which is on the right. Bind it to him. Go to ‹the authority›. Do not speak. Certainly, you ‹will be› well[?].

15. A village you desire to make inhabited. Draw the image. Bury it at a crossroads. Certainly, ‹it› will be inhabited. ‹Offering:› *musk incense.

16. A workshop, to destroy it[?]. A pot of flowing water. Pronounce the prayer over it 7 times, wearing torn clothes, and draw ‹it› backwards until ‹you› pour it out at the door of the house. Offering: charcoal[?].

17. An unconsciousness which you bring upon a man. Pronounce the prayer over some water. Throw it on him. He will be like a dead man. ‹Offering:› *frankincense.

18. A man ‹who› condemns you. Take a piece of cloth that belongs to you. Draw the *image. Bind it to the neck[?] of a swallow. Bring[?] it outside. After three days, from[?] any place in which the man is, he will go[?] with the swallow.

19. A man who chases after a woman. Draw ‹the› image. Let the wife bury it in her house. Certainly, he will not pursue ‹a› strange woman. Offering: *mastic, *agarwood.

20. An enclosure of livestock to which an act of sorcery has been done against you. Draw the bird-faced power. Bury it inside it. It will be completely undone. Offering: mastic.

21. A woman whose children have died. Draw the seven *powers on a sheet. Bind ‹it› to her right forearm. Bind another ‹to› her left forearm. Certainly, her child will ‹not› die. Offering: mastic.

The amulet. Draw with ‹wine of› the *first fruits on a sheet. Bind it to yourself. ‹Offering:› saffron, mastic, agarwood. A *pot with three handles, some hidden water. Incense. Seven virgin palm leaves. Unleavened bread until evening. The one who is sick, fast.[227]

These instructions bring into relief how text, material objects, and bodily gestures articulate into complex *assemblages* imbued with ritual power. This set of dynamic elements thus emerge as networks of connections incorporating diverse interrelated dimensions, including space, text, bodily posture, and iconographic motifs, playing a crucial role in the construction of the mechanics of ancient ritual practices. A productive approach to the logics governing the ritual procedures of P. Heid. Kopt. 686 can be found in the work of Alfred Gell, *Art and*

[227] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 355–361.

Agency.[228] As Gell articulates, images may function as networks of relations established between different concomitant agentic forces.[229] The different material supports (e.g., flasks, cups, pots, cloths) upon which the image of the archangel is drawn function as receptacles capable of being infused with transformative power, consequently affecting reality for a different range of scopes, whether for healing, cursing, or protecting domestic animals. As a result, images themselves emerge as ontological entities imbued with transformative agency. The different ways in which this transformative agency can affect and impinge on reality reveal the "power" of images as social agents. This sense of power imbued in art objects is perfectly captured by Rune Nyord's analysis of the dynamic forces lying beneath ancient Egyptian images.[230] According to Nyord, the different ways in which images can convey and channel power is dependent upon the privileged relation they intend to establish with reality. The grouping of images he classifies through the Egyptian term *sšmw* partly explain the transformative agency held by Michael's image. Using Nyord's own words, in this typology of images—which include ritual images employed in cultic devotion—"design or image is not a representation of the source of transformation but the act of transformation itself."[231] This conceptualization applies directly to Michael's image in P. Heid. Kopt. 686, which functions not simply as an illustration but as an activated presence imbued with ritual power. Words, in this context, become the means by which the image's efficacy is invoked and sustained, forming an essential bond between linguistic and visual power. Another particularly instructive example invoking the image of the Archangel Michael is found in BL MS Or. 5525.[232] This eighth-to-eleventh-century Coptic spell—whose apparent findspot was

[228] Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998). On images and agency, see also David Freedberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).
[229] Gell, *Art and Agency*, 7.
[230] Rune Nyord, *Seeing Perfection: Ancient Egyptian Images beyond Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).
[231] Nyord, *Seeing Perfection*, 15.
[232] Ed. princ. in Kropp, *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte*, vol. 1,15–21.

the Cairo Genizah—adjures the archangel compelling him to "descend upon your figure (*zotion*) and your amulet of salvation (*phylaktērion noujei*). Similarly to P. Heid. Kopt. 686, the figure of the archangel on display in the papyrus was likely activated through invocatory words and then reproduced upon material objects. By the same token, PCM I 3[233] invokes multiple angelic beings, including Michael, who are summoned upon their visual representation (*sōtion*):

> I invoke you, Michael, the angel who stands at the right side of the Father, that you come upon this image (ϵ̄x̄)! I invoke you, Gabriel, the angel who stands at the left side of the Father, that you come for me with your fiery sword upon this image (n̄ιc̄)[234]! I invoke you, Adonai, the great angel who stands over the twelve hours of the day, that you come for me upon this image! I invoke you, Uriel, the great angel who stands over the twelve hours of the night, that you come for me upon this image! I invoke you, Borō, the face of fiery flame, that you come for me upon this image! I invoke you, [...]ēl, the angel [...] the wrath [...] in the [...] of the Tartaruchus of hell, he whose lock of hair is spread out over the entire world, whose name is Sisinaei Pamin, that you come for me upon this image! I invoke you, Espartē, the daughter of the Devil, she who went down to hell and brought up the Tartaruchus of hell, that you come for me upon this image! I invoke you, twelve archangels, your twelve bowls filled with water in your hands, in the moment I cast it into the fire, may you fill the twelve bowls with fire and may you cast them into her heart, her lung, her heart, her liver, her one hundred and fifty-five parts! I invoke you, O seven archangels, who are Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Raguel, Suriel, Asouēl, Salaphouēl, that you yourself, Michael, come down.

Moreover, another compelling perspective on the text-image interplay in the ancient world is aptly captured by Peter Struck's engagement with the notion of "symbol," understood as "a concatenation of the ontological, ritual, and linguistic."[235] A particularly illuminating parallel can here be drawn with Iamblichus's theurgic system, in which symbols function as material conduits to the divine, embodying and transmitting its power. The ritual mechanics of P. Heid. Kopt. 686 present strong affinities with this vision, as its textual-visual *assemblages* serve not merely as records of devotion but as tangible, activated forces transforming the

[233] Coptic text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 58–68.
[234] As posited by the editors (see Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 63, no. 4), the nomenclature n̄ιc̄ stands for the Coptic ϲⲱⲧⲓⲟⲛ ("figure" or "image").
[235] Peter T. Struck, *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 226. On images and words in Coptic magic see also Korshi Dosoo, "Zōdion and Praxis: An Illustrated Coptic Magical Papyrus in the Macquarie University Collection." *Journal of Coptic Studies* 20 (2018): 207–252.

status of affairs of reality. Pertinent analogues to this ritual deployment of "symbols" appear in the so-called "Mithras Liturgy" (PGM IV. 475–829), a complex recipe centered on a heavenly ascent undertaken by the practitioner through the cosmic spheres in pursuit of divine revelation.[236] Of particular import here are the liturgy's directives for crafting protective amulets—which take on the name *symbolon* in the narrative—which are designed to shield the practitioner from hostile deities who might obstruct his celestial passage.

At this juncture, it is crucial to emphasize that the notion of Michael's image as a vessel for ritual power is not confined to P. Heid. Kopt. 686 alone. Rather, a wide penumbra of textual and visual sources attests to this motif, necessitating further exploration. These materials not only reinforce the ritual efficacy ascribed to Michael's image but also illuminate the dynamic continuum between art, literature, and magic within the different Egyptian traditions centered on the figure of the archangel.

To begin with, the veneration of Michael's image as a source of power finds attestation in the *Encomium on Saint Michael Archangel* by Eustathius of Thrace. In the text, the noble woman Euphemia, right before the death of her beloved husband Aristarchus, commissions an icon (*hikōn*) of the Archangel Michael. Upon realization of this on a wooden tablet, Euphemia took it and suspended it in her bedchamber. This potent icon thus served as a powerful apotropaic measure against the recurrent attempts of the Devil to deceive Euphemia. The text thusly recounts how the wooden image of the archangel became recipient of a dedicated shrine-cult which spread erratically across the Empire, until reaching the halls of the "God-loving" Emperor Arcadius and his wife Eudoxia. People flocked to St. Michael's shrine offering firstlings and sacrifices in exchange for his miraculous performances.[237] Way more compelling is the *Encomium* on the Archangel Michael by Pseudo-Timothy. In the

[236] Greek text and English translation in in Hans Dieter Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy": Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).
[237] Budge, *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts*, 130 ff. (Coptic); 104 ff. (English).

Sahidic version (MS. Or. 7029), the text emphasizes how the name of the archangel is credited with being imbued with potent apotropaic properties. What is more, the text includes a series of cryptograms detailing how these should be copied on domestic spaces—walls, garments, vessels, and furniture—to harness his protective power. Most strikingly, these measures find material corroboration in objects recently excavated in Old Nubia. Within the surface of a food bowl retrieved from room 21 of the North-Western annex of the Monastery on Kom H is engraved the sigla: "Michael, Michael, Michael (Belonging to) abba Marianos, archimandrite of Pouk."[238] The threefold repetition of Michael's name here likely carries apotropaic force which is intended to be transferred upon domestic objects. This pattern of evidence—which includes the potential name of the owner along with references to the Archangel—is notably found in other vessels retrieved from room 21, including cups, vases, and saucers, all of which display the cryptogram indicating Michael (ⲭⲡⲑ). In a similar vein, an inscribed tomb near the cathedral tower found by the Egypt Exploration Society in the Nubian center of Qasr Ibrim—situated halfway between the first and the second Nile cataracts—offers further evidence concerning the apotropaic power of the Archangel's name.[239] On the right side of the north wall of the tomb are indeed preserved four lines of numeric cryptograms. This string of numeric cryptograms aligns with the schematic pattern observed in Pseudo-Timothy's *Encomium* and similar data from Old Dongola. Jacques van der Vliet has deciphered these cryptograms, situating ⲭⲡⲑ alongside other sacred names such

[238] Adam Łajtar and Krzysztof Pluskota, "Inscribed Vessels from the Monastery of the Holy Trinity at Old Dongola," in *Dongola-Studien: 35 Jahre polnischer Forschungen im Zentrum des makuritischen Reiches*, ed. Stefan Jakobielski and Peter O. Scholz, *Bibliotheca Nubica et Aethiopica* 7 (Warsaw: ZAŚ PAN, 2001), 169–251. For other objects of this kind, see also Magdalena Łaptaś, "The Apotropaic Function of the Archangels in Nubian Art," in *Inventer les anges de l'Antiquité à Byzance: conception, représentation, perception*, edited by Daniel Lauritzen, *Travaux et Mémoires* 25/2. (Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d'Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance, 2021), 504–506.

[239] On the cathedral of Qasr Ibrim, see esp. Fred Aldsworth *et al.*, eds., *Qasr Ibrim*: *The Cathedral Church*, *Excavation Memoir* 97 (London: Egypt Exploration Society Press, 2010). On the Greek and Coptic inscriptions found in the site, see Adam Łajtar and Jacques van der Vliet, *Qasr Ibrim: The Greek and Coptic Inscriptions* (Warsaw: Raphael Taubenschlag Foundation, 2020).

as Adonai, Eloi, and Sabaoth, thereby highlighting its apotropaic function.[240]

Turning back to P. Heid. Kopt. 686, a distinctive feature of this ritual handbook lies in its concluding image of the Archangel, which draws heavily upon decorative strategies and iconographic motifs attested in other artistic renderings, especially those from the Hamuli manuscripts corpus. This pattern of evidence emerges neatly when P. Heid. Kopt. 686 is associated into dialogue with visual representations of the archangel featuring on two manuscripts stemming from this archive, respectively Pierpont Morgan MS. 607 and MS. 603. As Jay Johnston has suggested, the scribe hand of P. Heid. Kopt. 686 tried to emulate certain peculiar motifs that find resonance with the iconography of the Hamuli manuscripts—most notably, the multiple halo-lines encircling Michael's head.[241] As for the objects held by the Archangel Michael in P. Heid. Kopt. 686, the vertical shaft in his right hand likely represents the "wand" typically featuring in the portraits of the archangel. More contentious remains the identity of the circular object the Archangel Michael holds in his left hand. Johnston has advanced an intriguing hypothesis which oscillates between two potential objects: on the one hand, it strongly resembles the same "orb disc" engraved with a cross held by the archangel of Pierpont Morgan MS. 603, while on the other, it favorably compares with the tripod-form object of MS. 607, which would represent the scale through which the Archangel Michael weighs the soul of the dead. The latter hypothesis finds support when considering the comparison Johnston intriguingly posits between the Archangel Michael and the Egyptian God Thoth, who is adept at weighing the heart as depicted in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*.[242] This connection gains some plausibility when considering the possibility that the monastery of St. Michael at Phantoou—the site wherein the Hamuli manuscripts were found, to which P. Heid. Kopt. 686 presents evidence of continuity—replaced a cult of Thoth

[240] Łajtar and van der Vliet, *Qasr Ibrim: The Greek and Coptic Inscriptions*, 272.
[241] Gardner and Johnston, *Drawing Spirits*, 187.
[242] Gardner and Johnston, *Drawing Spirits*, 188.

at the site. However, Korshi Dosoo has more reasonably argued that the circular object held by Michael represents the "wheel of a chariot." This iconography finds attestation in the homiletic *Encomium* of Eustathius of Thrace, wherein it is said that the archangel holds "a wheel like a chariot" (*outrōkhos mptupos nouharma*).[243] This motif receives further support from the above-mentioned magical papyrus BL MS Or. 5525, wherein the circular object held by Michael is designated as a "chariot of light" (*harma nouaein*). Given this broader textual and material context, the circular object in P. Heid. Kopt. 686 is most at home within this chariot symbolism.

Additional compelling depictions of the Archangel Michael that may aid in enriching the analysis of the iconographic motifs in P. Heid. Kopt. 686 feature on a monumental wall-painting in the Northwest annex of the monastery on Kom H in Dongola (between the third-fourth Nile cataracts), portraying Michael's glorious enthronement.[244] The depicted scene plausibly refers to the apocryphal *Liber Institutionis Michaelis*,[245] which includes a description of the investiture of the archangel after the defeat of the evil *Saklatabōth*. Most notably, Magdalena Łaptaś has entertained the hypothesis that the painting was realized for apotropaic purposes, as suggested by the presence of small eyes adorning the wings of the angel. This decorative motif is of great import also for P. Heid. Kopt. 686, since it is reasonable to posit that the apotropaic elements embedded in the text also had visual continuity.[246] The scriptural antecedent referring to angelic beings with multiple eyes stems

[243] Dosoo, "Heathen Serpents and Wingless Angels?," 148–149.
[244] For a general overview on the discoveries of the Polish archaeological mission in Christian Nubia see Buzi, *Coptic Literature in Context,*183–209 (with bibliography).
[245] For the Old Nubian version of this text see Gerald M. Browne, "An Old Nubian Version of the *Liber Institutionis Michaelis*," in *Coptic Studies*: *Acts of the Third International Congress of Coptic Studies* [Warsaw, 20-25 August 1984]). For a Greek version discovered in Serra East, see Browne, *Old Nubian Texts from Qasr Ibrim II, Texts from Excavations 10 (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1989)*, 76.
[246] Magdalena Łaptaś, "The Position of the Archangel Michael within the Celestial Hierarchy: Some Aspects of the Manifestation of his Cult in Nubian Painting," in *The Archangel Michael in Africa*: *History, Cult, Persona*, ed. Ingvid Sælid Gilhus, Alexandros Tsakos, and Marta Camilla Wright (London-New York-New Dehli-Sidney: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 95–107, at 100–101. As she documents, many a Nubian wall-paintings present the same decorative pattern.

from the famous vision of the *Merkavah*, "God's chariot," in the *Book of Ezekiel*. Specifically, reference to the eyes featuring on the wings of the so-called "four living creatures," the *ḥayyot*, which watch over the *Merkavah* appears in Ezek. 10:12: "Their entire bodies, including their backs, their hands, their wings, and the wheels, were full of eyes[247] all around—the wheels of the four of them."[248] Furthermore, descriptions of angels' wings dotted with eyes are rife in the late antique Jewish mystical-visionary narratives found in the corpus of the Hekhalot. Such corpus of literature lingers in detailed descriptions of the eyes of the "four living creatures," which hold aloft and transport the throne of God. The holy creatures are therefore the closest angels to God's throne, being their primary guardians, who stand opposite to the entrance of the seventh and last palace, called *'aravot*. In a sequence of the *macroform Hekhalot Rabbati* (§§ 246-248),[249] the four creatures are described as presenting two hundred and fifty-six faces and five hundred and twelve eyes. They lift their watchful eyes upon the mystic traveler entering the seventh heaven, whose appearance is like they "dart like lightningbolts" (§§ 247).[250] Another tradition particularly conversant with the Coptic image found in Dongola involves the so-called *Third Book of Enoch*. This post-Talmudic hekhalotic-style work revolves around the angelic metamorphosis of the patriarch Enoch in the angel Meṭaṭron, and his subsequent enthronement as viceregent of the godly kingdom.[251] In the account of his transformation contained in 3 *Enoch* § 12, God enlarges

[247] מלאים עינים.
[248] On the iconographic motif of the "four living creatures" in Egyptian art, see esp. Héléna Rochard, "Le trône divin et les quatre Vivants dans la peinture égyptienne (VIe-XIIIe siècle)," in *Inventer les anges de l'Antiquité à Byzance: conception, représentation, perception*, ed. D. Lauritzen, *Travaux et Mémoires* 25/2 (Paris, 2021), 435–458.
[249] On the distinction between macroforms and microforms introduced by Peter Schäfer to divide the hekhalotic corpus, see "Tradition and Redaction in Hekhalot Literature," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 14, no. 2 (1983): 172–181, at 181.
[250] כברקים ירוצצו. The reading is maintained in all the manuscripts of the *Synopse*, except for MS. M22 (see Peter Schäfer *et al*., eds., *Synopse zur Hekhalot Literatur* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981), 110–111). English translation by James Davila, *Hekhalot Literature in Translation*: *Major Texts of Merkavah Mysticism* (Leidein: Brill, 2013), 129–130.
[251] For a general overview on 3 *Enoch* see Peter Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 315–327.

him to enormous dimensions, makes seventy-two wings and 365,000 wings grow on him, and enthrones him in heaven.[252] The wall painting of the Archangel Michael in Dongola integrates motifs that align with the angelic beings depicted in Jewish mystical-visionary works. The visual strategy of punctuating the angel's wings with eyes effectively communicates the potent aura of authority and vigilance attributed to Michael. Now, this decorative pattern proves particularly insightful for interpreting the ritual drawing of P. Heid. Kopt. 686. Notably, the central figure's wings—commonly taken as a representation of the Archangel Michael—are punctuated with small circular shapes that align with the circular-shaped form of the angel's eyes. Upon closer scrutiny, one might also note how the circular-shaped elements on the middle section of the left wing and on the upper right part of the right wing are interrupted by other ornamental motifs—including *kharaktēres*-like shapes and potential strings of vowels—that establish a clear demarcation. If we conjecture that the thin shaft motif on the left wing reflect the author's attempt to reproduce the texture of the feathers, then it is reasonable to infer that the circular motifs represent eyes. This hypothesis gains further support when framed in dialogue with the angelic being featuring on P. Heid. Kopt. 681, as well crafted by Deacon Iōhannēs. Again, we may note the small circular-shaped motif punctuating the upper areas of the angel's wings and partly overlapping with the *kharaktēres*-like shapes. This decorative pattern separates from an undulating motif that clearly attempts to reproduce the angel's wings. Although the present argument is rather a personal submission than a firmly grounded assumption, its significance becomes pronounced when framed in context with the figure of its copyist, Deacon Iōhannēs. It is

[252] Notably, the post-Talmudic apocalypse *Sefer Zerubbabel*—which draws on a wide range of Jewish and Christian apocalyptic traditions—identifies the angel Michael with Meṭaṭron, asserting they constitute a singular celestial entity. The linkage between the two angels established by this late apocalyptic work holds significance to document these late associative dynamics at play within the Jewish and Christian apocalyptic traditions. In this regard, see John C. Reeves, *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic*: *A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

indeed reasonable to speculate that the image he reproduced, or altered, indeed featured on the walls of an ecclesiastic institution dedicated to the Archangel Michael.

Magic and Monastic Tradition in Early Islamic Egypt: Conclusive Remarks

In conclusion, this chapter has focused on P. Heid. Kopt. 686, a tenth-century Coptic magical handbook copied by a minor cleric, Deacon Iōhannēs, opening with a long invocatory prayer termed *Endoxon*, addressed to Michael the Archangel. Most notably, the textual and visual elements composing the handbook reveal strong synergies with the reservoir of Coptic traditions centered on Michael the Archangel, particularly with the treasure-trove of Coptic manuscripts retrieved from the site of Kom Hamuli, in the Faiyum oasis. Specifically, P. Heid. Kopt. 686 recalls upon the expansive story-world centered on the archangel, which the authorial personae behind the *Endoxon* skillfully readapted to suit the structure of a ritual text. All indications suggest that the extant two copies of the *Endoxon* indeed formed a tradition of ritual texts that was cultivated and disseminated across Egyptian ecclesiastic institutions in Late Antiquity and beyond. The existence of such ritual texts further strengthens the idea that a shared world of ecclesiastical practitioners continually expanded, copied, and transmitted so-called "magical texts," integrating the specificities of this genre (i.e., *voces magicae*, invocations, formulae, etc.) with cultural elements stemming from other literary traditions. In so doing, P. Heid. Kopt. 686 stands as a testament to the adroit ability of Christian ritual experts in navigating the textual traditions of the Coptic homiletic genre, being an example of how a shared reservoir of Coptic traditions on Michael the Archangel is turned into a potent authoritative framework functioning as an outline for a ritual text. Furthermore, P. Heid. Kopt. 686 not solely incorporated traditions and specific formulaic passages echoed in homiletic texts such as the *Investiture of the Archangel Michael,* the *Investiture of the Archangel Gabriel*, and the *Investiture of the Archangel Abbaton*, but also

drew on the visual representations of the Archangel Michael found across Egyptian ecclesiastical sites. On a more general level, my multidimensional approach to the visual and textual motifs found in P. Heid. Kopt. 686 carries broader implications for the study of the intersections between Christian scribal culture and ritual expertise. In particular, my analysis of P. Heid. Kopt. 686 have attempted to illuminate how its copyist had a deliberate interest in creating a connection between the textual and visual registers through which the figure of the Archangel Michael is presented in Coptic literature. More broadly, this narrow interplay between texts and images accrues to the study of text-image nexus in ancient ritual practices. As I've argued, the activation of the *Endoxon*'s ritual efficacy was indeed predicated upon the ability of the practitioner to concert bodily posture and verbal performance to infuse Michael's amuletic device with the ritual power of words. This inquiry into P. Heid. Kopt. 686 thus contributes to broader discussions surrounding the intersections of scribal practice, visual culture, and ritual authority in late antique and early Islamic Egypt. P. Heid. Kopt. 686 is indeed more than a repository of ritual instructions; it is a material artifact shaped by overlapping discourses of liturgy, magic, and homiletic memory.

Chapter 3
Sacramentalia and Ritual Power: Ecclesiastical Practitioners and Sacred Economy in Late Antique Mesopotamia

In 1850, the Church of England's delegate to the Church of the East, George Percy Badger, visited the village of Lizan in Kurdistan.[253] Here he met Kasha Kena, the village priest, who was well-versed in the tradition of copying and providing his community dwellers with potent ritual charms. In the later chronicle of his journeys in the Middle East, *The Nestorians and their Rituals* (1852), Badger couldn't suffocate his loathing for what he had seen during his visit to Lizan:

> I regret to state that the clergy are generally the authors of these absurd and profane effusions; and I was not a little surprised to learn, on my visit to Leezan in 1850, that Kasha Kena, who is so highly spoken of both by Mr. Ainsworth and Mr. Layard, is in the practice of drawing up and transcribing similar charms, which he sells to the people in the surrounding villages.[254]

Badger's disconcert before the involvement of Nestorian clergy in ritual activities perfectly encapsulates a certain dismissive tone with which modern scholarship continues to treat Syriac magic. Works concerning so-called magical practices indeed lag far behind the scholarly pursuit in other literary domains of Syriac Christianity. Notably, Daniel King's recent mammoth *The Syriac World* (2019) still lacks a structured section dedicated to ritual practices in the domain of Christian Mesopotamian communities.[255] This silence becomes all the more deafening when, as Marco Moriggi has correctly observed,[256] we realize that the *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* avoids reference to rubrics such as "magic," "amulets," or "incantation."[257] Fortunately, recent concerted efforts by Moriggi and Siam Bhayro have begun to address this lacuna in the field. Their collaborative work, *Studies*

[253] George P. Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, vol. 1 (London: Joseph Masters, 1852), 263.
[254] Badger, *The Nestorians and their Rituals*, 240.
[255] Daniel King, ed., *The Syriac World* (London: Routledge, 2019).
[256] Marco Moriggi and Siam Bhayro, eds., *Studies in the Syriac Magical Traditions* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 2.
[257] Sebastian Brock *et al.*, *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage* (New Jersey: Piscataway, 2011).

in the Syriac Magical Tradition (2021), marks a sea change in modern scholarship on ritual practices within the Syriac tradition. Among other important contributions, the volume brings into sharp relief the extent to which Syriac clergymen themselves were active agents in the production and dissemination of ritual texts and objects. Recent strides in the study of Syriac ritual practices have drawn attention to a vast and still underexplored body of material evidence. The recent collaborative work *La religion populaire des chrétiens de tradition syriaque* (2024) offers a key intervention in this regard, bringing together scholars working across the intersections of multiple overlapping fields, including hagiography, canonical literature, and ritual practice.[258] Among its contributions, Sergey Minov's essays provide a novel and incisive survey of literary sources attesting to the clerical participation in activities labeled "magical" or "divinatory." Drawing on an expansive array of canonical and hagiographical sources—e.g., the *Canons* of Isaac of Antioch and the canonical *Questions-and-Answers* of Jacob of Edessa (particularly the collection of responses named *Questions Which Addai the Priest and Lover of Labors Asked Jacob, the Bishop of Edessa*)—Minov illuminates a rich seam of details and episodes concerning popular religious practices in late antique Mesopotamia that can be mined with palpable rewards.[259] The recurring patterns of evidence in these texts include, among others, practices such as the provision of amulets by clergymen to laypeople to be suspended on children, the use of contact relics to bestow power and agency on portable objects, healing measures involving washing or anointing with oil and water, and diverse forms of divinatory practices, including bibliomancy. This textual evidence finds corroboration in material records. Although Syriac amulets and handbooks survive in relatively limited numbers, they indeed resonate strongly with the narrative contexts staged in literary sources. For instance, one leather amulet tentatively dated to the

[258] Alice Croq and Sergey Minov, eds., *La religion populaire des chrétiens de tradition syriaque*, Études syriaques 19 (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 2024).
[259] Croq and Minov, *La religion populaire*, 307–349.

ninth-century calls upon Saint George (Mār Giwargis) to protect the crops.[260] Two early medieval amulets from Lebanon invoke the Holy Trinity along with the power of the saints Mār 'Abdisho', Saint Cyriacus, Saint Cyprianus, Saint Asia, and Saint Mary.[261] Most notably, one of them was found folded and tied to a child's sleeve, echoing a practice attested in the sixteenth-century account of the Italian Jesuit Jérôme Dandini, who observed: "There are several other abuses which I will not speak, no more than a large number of superstitious bills which they wear on them, especially children."[262] Further evidence is found in a *mēmrā* pseudonymously ascribed to Ephrem the Syrian:

> The common people come to the Church and (they are) driven there by Satan, and (he is) borne at their necks like the necklaces of regal dignity. This one bears him on his head and the other one (on the other end) at his neck , and the young boy (*šaḇrā*) who does not know anything comes bearing the names of the devils (*šmāhē d-daywē*).[263]

These practices did not vanish with the end of Late Antiquity. Rather, they survived—indeed blossomed—well into the Middle Ages and the Modern periods. The Turfan Oasis (China), for instance, handed over to us a small number of prayer amulets rich in liturgical elements invoking saintly intercession. Most notable is the so-called "Prayer of Mār Tamsis" extant in two copies, one preserved in BL Add. 14653, a ninth-century Syriac manuscript from Mesopotamia. As Erica Hunter, editor of the two amulets, has entertained, the "Prayer of Mār Tamsis" was likely brought to Turfan by a monk or missionary travelling along the Silk Road.[264] Perhaps the most illuminating evidence for clerical involvement in ritual activities is found in the so-called *Turgāmā on Charms and Sorcery* by Ignatius VII ʿAzīz bar Sāḇtā,

---

[260] Sebastian Brock, "A Syriac Protective Talisman," in *To the Madbar and Back Again: Studies in the Languages, Archaeology, and Cultures of Arabia Dedicated to Michael C.A. Macdonald*, ed. Laila Nehmé and Ahmad Al-Jallad (Leiden: Brill, 2020), 309–327.
[261] Gaby Abousamra, "Two Syriac Amulets from Hadath Grotto," *Parole de l'Orient* 38 (2013): 213–230.
[262] Jérôme Dandini, *Voyage du Mont-Liban* (Paris: R. Pépie, 1884), 127.
[263] Marco Moriggi, "'And the Impure and Abominable Priests Fled for Help to the Names of the Devils'": Amulets and Magical Practices in Syriac Christian Culture between Late Antiquity and the Modern World," *Hugoye*: *Journal of Syriac Studies* 19 (2016): 371–384, at 374.
[264] Erica Hunter, "Traversing Time and Location: A Prayer-Amulet to Mar Tamsis from Turfan," in *From the Oxus River to the Chinese Shores: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in Central Asia and China*, ed. Dietmar W. Winkler and Li Tang (Orientalia-Patristica-Oecumenica 5. Salzburg: Lit Verlag, 2013), 25–41.

patriarch of Ṭūr ʿAbdīn (1461–148).[265] This piece of pastoral literature discusses different typologies of charms crafted by clergymen, including binding spells, amulets and prayers for headache, eye pain, erotic compulsion, or childbirth.

This growing body of evidence foregrounds two interrelated insights central to this chapter's argument. First, that clergy played a central and often initiatory role in the instigation of Christianity and the mediation of ritual knowledge. Second, that the construction of ritual power among Syriac Christians was deeply rooted in the materials, language, and gestures of liturgical life. The objects and practices of the Eucharist—prayers, psalms, liturgical furnishing (e.g., chalices, patens, holy table), and sacred substances like oil and water—functioned not only as sacramental instruments but also as incubators of ritual power for resolution of everyday crises. A compelling framework for understanding these dynamics is found in Jack Tannous's recent landmark contribution *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*.[266] This monograph offers a well-informed exploration of the religious and ritual practices of Syriac Christians, shedding new light on the intersection of liturgical practices and the lived religion of what he terms "simple believers."[267] Crucially, Tannous underscores the centrality of the sacramentals in shaping religious adherence and demonstrates how their administration by clergy provided a powerful mechanism for cultivating and maintaining Christian identity. Rather than relying on rhetorical persuasion or doctrinal argumentation, Tannous argues, the clergy wielded the sacraments as a practical and

[265] Syriac text and English translation in Sergey Minov, "Syriac Christians and Popular Religion in Early Ottoman Mesopotamia: The Testimony of Abū al-Maʿānī," *Aramaic Studies* 22, no. 2 (2024): 243–259.
[266] Jack Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018).
[267] See Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*, esp. 134–160. My understanding of the rubric "simple believers" is tremendously indebted to Jack Tannous' formulation in his landmark contribution. Through this analytical concept—which posseses a lexical equivalent in the Syriac *he̲dyuṭē* (Gr. *idiōtai*) or *pšiṭē*, "the simple"—Tannous spefically refers to the vast majority of the largely agrarian and illiterate Christians, who were neither theologically educated nor primarily engaged in the doctrinal disputes that were tearing apart the Christian world in the post-Chalcedonian season. The more so, this coined rubric deliberately avoids automatic correlation between education and clerical status, as illiteracy and inadequate training were prominent even among clerical ranks in Late Antiquity (see Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*, 31–34).

efficacious means of instigating religious ideas and addressing the existential concerns of ordinary Christians. As he aptly puts it, "A Christian priest, armed with the sacraments, had power to both heal the body and deliver it from hell."[268] At the heart of Tannous's analysis lies the recognition that "simple believers"—i.e., the majority of lay Christians who were neither theologically educated nor primarily engaged in doctrinal disputes—experienced their faith primarily through participation in Christian Eucharistic service and sacramental encounters. For these believers, sacraments and sacramentals functioned not merely as symbols of divine grace but as tangible instruments through which divine power could be harnessed and mobilized to solve everyday social crises.[269] This dynamic is vividly illustrated in the canonical writings of Jacob of Edessa, who provides an invaluable window into this ritual economy. Jacob's canonical responses to the priest Addai articulates a vision of sacraments and sacramentals as potent tools for addressing the quotidian crises faced by Christians, ranging from illness to protection against malevolent forces. Jacob's writings reveal that the Eucharist, in particular, was imbued with overt apotropaic and curative powers, deployed by clergy in a variety of ritual contexts. By way of example, the holy chalice (*kāsā d-quḏšā*) and the wrapping of the holy table (*zunārā*) are described as objects capable of healing physical ailments, such as in the case of a woman in childbirth. Similarly, the Eucharist could be celebrated to imbue a talismanic status onto livestock, a practice

[268] Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*, 139.

[269] The Christian religious discourse poses a formal disctintion between the rubrics "sacraments" and "sacramentals," which was articulated by the mid-twelfth century. In this process, fundamental was the influence of theologian Peter Lombard, whose *Sentences* significantly contributed to the establishment of sacraments in number of seven (See Elizabeth Frances Rogers, *Peter Lombard and the Sacramental System* (Merrick, NY: Richmond Publishing, 1976). Those acts, gestures, and objects excluded from the normative list came to be classified under the rubric "sacramentals" (On this rubric, see for instance Magnus Löhrer, "Sakramentalien," in *Sacramentum Mundi: An Encyclopedia of Theology*, vol. 4, ed. Karl Rahner (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 341–47; J. R. Quinn, "Sacramentals," in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed., vol. 12 (Detroit: Gale, 2003), 790–792. On the theology of sacramentals, see Herbert Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992). For the sake of clarity, I here adopt the later medieval distinction, referring to "sacramentals" as sacred objects and materials—e.g., liquid substances (e.g., consecrated oil, baptismal water), relics of the martyrs, sacred books, icons, and priestly vestments.

reflecting the ritual priorities of many Syriac Christian communities. Jacob, however, expresses ambivalence about such uses, noting the tension between the Eucharist's theological purpose—ensuring the salvation of human souls—and its deployment for the protection (*nṭurtā*) and healing (*'āsyuṯā*) of animals.[270] Nevertheless, Jacob's work underscores the pervasive belief among lay Christians in the Eucharist's efficacy as a protective and curative agent, further emphasizing its role in the interface between human and divine. Beyond the Eucharist, Syriac clergy and monks wielded other sacramental materials in similar ways. The holy *Myron* (baptismal oil) and the water of Baptism were commonly employed as remedies for illness or as protective agents against evil forces.[271] Monks even facilitated the uprooting of specific plants, such as the thorny *genešya*, while reciting Psalms to confer apotropaic power upon it.[272] Such practices illustrate how sacramental elements and ritual gestures were not confined to their liturgical contexts but were adapted to meet the broader ritual needs of laypeople. In so doing, Tannous's analysis of simple believers' beliefs in late antique Syria provides a framework for understanding how ecclesiastical sacraments and sacramentals became repositories of ritual strategies, blending discourse and materiality to address the concerns of everyday Christians.

Clergy and Magic in Late Antique Mesopotamia: An Overview

In 449 CE, Presbyter Simeon and the deacons Kyrios and Eustathios of Tella brought to the attention of Juvenalis, Bishop of Jerusalem, a series of petitions (*libulos*) presented in form of *hypomnēmata*—"memoranda" or "recollections"—concerning the deplorable conduct of Sophronius, Bishop of the city of Tella, near Edessa.[273] This official testimony is preserved in

[270] Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*, 140.
[271] Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*, 144.
[272] Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*, 141.
[273] Syriac text in Johannes Flemming, ed., *Akten der Ephesinischen Synode vom Jahre 449: Syrisch mit Georg Hoffmanns deutscher Übersetzung und seinen Anmerkungen* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1917), 81–85. English translation in Samuel Perry, *The Second Synod of Ephesus, Together with Certain Extracts Relating*

the Syriac acts of the Synod of Ephesus (449) and is perhaps the most striking documentary attestation of clerical ritual activities during this period, and may be read alongside, if not directly compared to, the more widely known legal proceedings against Apuleius of Madaura. The text lingers on a detailed account of a divinatory séance organized by Sophronius within the episcopal residence at Tella, involving bowl divination (Syr. *pilamanṭiya*). Given the great import of this testimony, I will present below a long excerpt from the passage:

> Iōannēs, presbyter and first of the notaries, said: Presbyter Simeōn and the deacons Kyros and Eustathios from Tella have directed to Your Holiness petitions, which I hold in my hands, to read them aloud, if it pleases your great and blessed synod. Juvenalis, bishop of Jerusalem, said: Let them be read and entered into the record of the memoranda. And he read: Of the holy and God-loving ecumenical synod, assembled through God's grace in the metropolis of Ephesus: From Presbyter Simeon and the deacons Kyros and Eustathios, and the other clerics of the city of Tella. Since we are instructed by the holy fathers to accept those whom God praises and to reject those who blaspheme Him, we ask that the libellus we bring be received, and that it be read aloud before your holy and ecumenical synod. Sophronios, bishop of our city Tella—who is a cousin of Ibas, bishop of Edessa—has cast aside the beautiful name of the priesthood, which was given by God; and although he remained in prayer by night and by day, and not only for his own sins but also for those of the community, he did not consider doing anything at all for atonement. On the contrary: he engaged in demonic practices, disgraceful calculations of the motion and wandering of the stars, divination and pagan soothsaying. He learned from his relative Ibas the evil doctrine of Nestorius. Yet that was not enough for him; he went further and added to it all those other wicked things. Therefore, we ask your piety to deign to hear the many matters that we—in all humility—now report. For once, while on a journey, it happened that he lost a certain amount of gold; and when he suspected some people and had them swear on the Gospel, that was not enough for him. Instead, like the pagans, he conducted a test with bread and cheese and forced them to eat. When he did not find the thief, he personally carried out a bowl-divination (*pilamanṭiya*) and said: "With this or that man the gold will be found; his name is so-and-so, and his garment is such-and-such."And because the demons, in their deception, wished to confirm him, they sometimes pointed out the thief—not because they wanted to expose him, but because they sought to drag a bishop into disgrace. He did this again later and carried it out through the same bowl-divination (*pilamanṭiya*). We learned this from Simeon, who used to serve him in the bishop's residence. He brought his son—along with his relative, the deacon Abraham—into the sleeping chamber (*qayṭunā*), alone. After they placed a table (*pāṯurā*) in the middle, they set under the table incense as a sacrifice to the demons, and on the table a bowl (*piyalin*) containing oil and water. He (Sophronios) placed the boy naked beside the table, covered everything with a clean linen cloth (*seḏunā naqdā*), and the deacon began to whisper words, which the bishop had composed with his evil divining skill. They then asked the boy: "What do you see in the bowl?" And he answered: "I see flashes of fire rising." After a short time had passed, he asked again: "What else do you see?" He answered: "I see a man sitting on a golden throne, clothed in purple, and wearing a crown on his head." Then they dug a deep pit behind the door, filled it with oil and water, placed the boy inside, and asked him: "What do you see in the grave?" And he said: "I see Ḥabīb, the bishop's

to It, from Syriac Manuscripts Preserved in the British Museum, and Now First Edited: English Version (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881), 188 ff. On this text, see Erik Peterson, "Die Zauber-Praktiken eines syrischen Bischofs," *Miscellanea Pio Paschini* 1 (1948): 95–102; Peterson, "Die geheimen praktiken eines syrischen Bischofs," in *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis: Studien und Untersuchugen* (1959): 333–345.

> son, coming on the road—for he has just traveled from Constantinople—and this one," the boy said, "is sitting on a black military horse; his eyes are shining, and two men are walking behind him on foot." They brought an egg and poured it, after it was opened—it was a white egg—and the boy said, when asked, "What do you see in the egg?" "I see Ḥabīb coming along the way on horseback; a necklace is around his neck, and two men are coming before him."And on that same day, the bishop's son arrived from Constantinople, just as his father had testified.The boy, together with his father and mother, swore upon the Gospel before witnesses and said: "What the boy saw—so it was, and so it happened." The boy also used to say: "For eight months now, when I go out singing, I see seven men clothed in white garments walk with me." And for those eight months, the boy—driven mad—remained in a state of madness, and they could hardly bring him out of it, even after leading him to the holy places and anointing him with holy oil. But what can one say about those books of the astrologers (*'asṭrāwlāwgia*)? Those who wrote them are in Tella: the scribes, the subdeacon Mārās, the deaconesses of the church: Aidesia and Stratonikē, and the chief physician (*'arkiṭrus*) of the city, Petros, who even admitted that he had read them (so he said). Deacon Ouranios, who had entered the bishop's residence, to bear witness, also said that the heretic carried the copper divination globe (*'espirā*) of his evil prophecies, looked into it, and described what he saw; and he shared with all his companions what he had seen, as if he had descended into it—even all that was evil […]

The *hypomnēmata* concerning Sophronius, bishop of Tella, emerge against the backdrop of the turbulent Christological controversies that were tearing apart the Syriac Church in the post-Chalcedonian season. Notably, Sophronius's ritual expertise is framed as genealogically linked to Ibas, the controversial bishop of Edessa (435–457 CE), often accused of Nestorian sympathies. The dossier portrays Sophronius as a ritual expert engaged in a wide spectrum of illicit activities, encompassing "demonic practices, disgraceful calculations of the motion and wandering of the stars, divination and pagan soothsaying." More in detail, the dossier situates Sophronius within a wider network of ritual knowledge which involved well-known practices. At one point in the text, he is said to have resorted to the divinatory art of *tyromanteia*—divination over bread and cheese—forcing the suspected thieves to consume the ingredients in the attempt of gaining back the gold he was stolen from.[274] When *tyromanteia* failed in revealing the culprits, the bishop turned to a second, more elaborate method: *phialomanteia*, which involves divination over a cup infused with water and oil.[275]

[274] Notably, this practice finds parallels in the Graeco-Egyptian magical formularies, as PGM V. 172–212 bears evidence to it. In this recipe, Hermes is invoked over bread and cheese to reveal the identity of a thief (see Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation,* 104).

[275] On *phialomanteia* (or *lecanomancy*) in the Graeco-Roman world, see Theodor Hopfner, "Mittel- und neugriechische Lekano-, Lychno-, Katoptro- und Onychomantien," in *Studies Presented to F. Ll. Griffith*, ed. S. R. K. Glanville (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1932), 218–32; Hopfner, *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam: Verlag Adolf M. Hakkert, 1974–2000); Dosoo, "Rituals of

Upon preparing the vessel, the bishop pronounces the formula "With this or that man the gold will be found; his name is so-and-so, and his garment is such-and-such," —a formulaic utterance designed to conjure revelatory visions through demonic assistance. Moreover, a particularly vivid scene unfolds when Sophronius orchestrates a séance involving the young son of Simeon the Presbyter. The bishop's residence at Tella, particularly the sleeping chamber (*qayṭunā*), is thusly set as the stage of the gathering. In preparing the location for the ritual procedure, a bowl (*piyalin*) containing water and oil is arranged upon a table, beneath which an incense offering for demons is placed. With the aid of his relative, Deacon Abraham, Sophronius thus positions the naked boy beside the table, shrouding everything with a linen garment. Muttering incantatory words into the child's ear, the deacon elicits the divinatory visions, turning the boy into a "medium of apparition" through which revelatory knowledge is disclosed. Beyond these ritual performances, the text gestures toward a broader culture of ritual expertise centered in Tella. The city is indeed said to be home to a library of astrological materials. The text names specific clerical figures—the subdeacon Mārās, the deaconesses Aidesia and Stratonikē, and the chief physician (*'arkiṭrus*) Petros—as the "scribes" (*kṯāḇē*) responsible for preserving and copying these materials. On a more general level, the *hypomnēmata* of Sophronius opens a rare window into clerical illicits in Late Antiquity. The articulated ritual landscape they narrate—composed of divinatory practices, incantations, and illicit textual transmission—maps well onto wider Syriac traditions and motifs, solidly suggesting how bishops and clergy in the Syriac East often functioned as ritual specialists.

Another piece of literary evidence deserving attentive scrutiny is a fifth-century

---

Apparition," 253–57, 398–99; Svenja Nagel, "'Was im Tempel passiert, bleibt nicht (mehr) im Tempel': Transformationen von agyptischem Tempelritual und rituellem Raum in den Praktiken der demotischen und griechischen magischen Papyri," in *Der ägyptische Tempel als ritueller Raum: Theologie und Kult in ihrer architektonischen und ideellen Dimension; Akten der internationalen Tagung, Haus der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, 9.–12. Juni 2015*, ed. Stefan Baumann and Holger Kockelmann, *Studien zur spätägyptischen Religion* 17 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2017), 507–36.

mēmrā, whose attribution has long been contested between Ephrem and Isaac of Antioch.[276] Most recently, Adam Becker has resumed the philological *quaestio*, asserting that while the text shares many verbal affinities with Isaac, it should more properly be contemplated as a Pseudo-Ephremic composition.[277] His reasoning rests on the self-identification of the anonymous author with the poet Ephrem appearing at the end. Regardless of its precise authorship, the *mēmrā* pitches a stern invective taking aim at clergymen, particularly deacons (*šamāšē*) and priests (*kāhnē*), attached to the Christian church who were actively engaged in the crafting and dissemination of ritual objects for the use of lay people. These items encompassed, for instance, "lot-books," "magic knots," and "incantations:"

> The priests (*kāhnē*) abandoned God and the Holy Gospel, and they bear lot-books (*kṯāḇē d-peṣē*) because of the love for the money. Magic knots (*qeṭrē*) and oracles (*qeṣmē*) and incantations (*luḥšāṯā*) they brought and proposed (them) to us by means of books because of the love for money.[278]

The spreading of this sort of practices among Syriac Christians are lamented across numerous sources. By way of example, John bar Penkaye, writing in the late 680s, severely denounced the ubiquity of soothsayers among the Christians of Mesopotamia: "For in Egypt, the mother of enchanters, John observed, 'divination was not as abundant as it is in our time. Indeed, in Babel, augurs and soothsayers were not as numerous as they are now among Christian people'".[279] Later still (8th CE), the patriarch Cyriacus similarly inveighed against clergymen who "employ magic knots or amulets or go to charmers or soothsayers or those who mutter incantations or write scraps of writing for fever or other sicknesses."[280] What emerges from

[276] Moriggi, "And the Impure and Abominable Priests," 371. On the authorship of this *mēmrā*, see Th. J. Lamy, *Sancti Ephraem Syri Hymni et Sermones*, II (Mechliniae: H. Dessain, 1886), cols. 393–94.
[277] Becker, *Isaac of Antioch*, 693, no.4.
[278] I quote the text according to Moriggi's translation (with slight modifications), "And the Impure and Abominable Priests," at 375.
[279] John bar Penkaye, *The Book of the Main Events*, ed. by Alphonse Mingana, *Sources Syriaques*, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1908), 151.
[280] Canons of Patriarch Cyriacus (AD 794) 12 (ed. and trans. Vööbus, *The Synodicon in the West Syrian Tradition II* [CSCO 375-376: SS 163–64] (Louvain, 1976), 10 [Syriac].

the sources is a sustained and deeply embedded concern with clergy actively trafficking in practices that Christian leaders would have never approved in first place.

Turning back to the *mēmrā*, an interesting datum concerns the selling of "lot-books" (*kṯāḇē d-peṣē*) for financial gain, which the author condemns as an act of love for "Mammona," (*māmunā*)— a direct allusion to *Matthew* 6, 24 and *Luke* 16, 13. This testimony not solely offers glimpses into the ritual economy of Late Antiquity but also equips us with a critical lens through which to trace continuity with earlier traditions. In a recent scholarly contribution, Nicholas Al-Jeloo witnessed such dynamics during fieldwork among the Assyrians of the region of Khābur (between 2002 and 2009).[281] Notably, the scholar collected photos and testimonies relative to a medical-magical tradition of texts known under the title *Spar-Sammānē*, "book of medicines"—texts closely resembling the "lot-books" described in the *mēmrā*. The rubric *Spar-Sammānē* indeed designates a collection of astrological-medical materials that survived in diverse recensions throughout the history of Syriac Christianity, and which was copied and transmitted by social actors attached to Christian institutions (e.g., deacons, priests, monks). As Al-Jeloo has poignantly observed, the materials coalesced within this genre survived scattered through recensions that took on names such as the abovementioned "book of protection" and the "book of medicine", and whose cultural position likely stretch back to Late Antiquity. Further in this vein, The *mēmrā* relays how priests operated as divinatory consultants:

> The priest who gave an oracle (*peṯgāmā*) and caused the flock of Christ to err together with the sorcerers they count him and he is not separated from the diviners (*qāṣumē*).[282]

[281] See Nicholas Al-Jeloo, "*Kaldāyuthā*: The Spar-Sammāné and Late Antique Syriac Astrology, *ARAM* 24 (2012): 457–92.
[282] Moriggi, "And the Impure and Abominable Priests," 376.

The practice of providing oracular responses (*petgāmē*) is well-documented within Syriac sources. In this respect, the Syriac word *petgāmē* appears to point to a distinct form of divination, namely, "bibliomancy"—an oracular practice in which responses were drawn from sacred Scriptures. Clerical involvement in such practices emerges neatly in Isaac of Antioch's homily *On Rebuke and Admonition* (181–228).[283] Interestingly enough, Isaac frames these practices as emerging from the pagan milieu of pre-Christian Mesopotamia. Detailed explanations of this are found in his paired homily *Against Those Who Go to Diviners* (1 and 2), wherein divination is said to have originated from Egypt and then transported to Assyria:

> I began to revile Assyria, but I discovered it in our own city;
> Our province became a daughter of Babylon, for in her the smell of Chaldeans
> was fragrant.
> The smoke of Assyria has blinded us as has the odor from the Chaldeans;
>
> Thick smoke rose up from Egypt, and it soiled our city with its burnt offering
> Egypt ignited the fire, and Assyria drew from it.
> By the smoke that rose up, it pressed us, and it dyed us with the color of a kid.
> Divinations are practiced in our city, and sorceries spread forth within our boundaries;
> Our ear of grain became weeds from the two winds that blew.
>
> Egypt blew sorceries upon us, and Assyria blew Chaldeans.[284]

For Isaac, these foreign elements have crept into the Christian discourse. One particular passage of *On Rebuke and Admonition* (181–228) denounces the misuse of Scriptures for divination:

> Women's feet have stepped up to the door of sorcery and Chaldeans,
> and diviners and servants of demons have taken shelter under the pretext of scriptural verses (*petgāmē*) […] [285]
> But let also divination be silenced, which fools, agitated by sin, senseless of what is hidden, have called 'taking verses' (*petgāmē*).[286]

[283] Becker, *Isaac of Antioch*, 455–505.
[284] Becker, *Isaac of Antioch*, 709–710.
[285] Becker, *Isaac of Antioch*, 479.
[286] Becker, *Isaac of Antioch*, 495.

He further condemns the use of martyrs' relics as instruments for divination:

> One has taken the bones of the righteous (*garmē d-kāhnē*) for himself in order to cast a lure for the innocent […][287]
> Satan found them to be empty of knowledge,
> And he filled them with visions and insipid tales.
> One says, 'The martyrs spoke and showed me secret things,'
> And another lies and says, 'Angels came to me.' [288]

This anxiety over clerical divinatory practices surfaces also in Jacob's canonical responses to Addai. In it, Addai the Priest makes direct reference to a divinatory work named "The Lot of the Apostles":

> Addai:
> Is it permissible for a priest or a monk to give a response (*msaḇ petḡāmā*)—whether for himself or for another person—using materials from that [work] which is called *The Lot of the Apostles* (*pesā d-šliḥē*) or from the Gospel, or from the Psalter, or from any other book, whatever it may be? Or, if it is not right, what should a person who uses such things suffer?
>
> Jacob:
> It is not right for a Christian to give responses of any kind—not from *The Lot*, which is not of the Apostles, but rather of the Evil One and his disciples; nor from the Gospel, nor from the Psalter, nor from any other book at all. Now as for the one who does this: if he is a clergyman and will not be persuaded to distance himself from this error, he should fall from his rank. If he is a monk and educated and he has some level of ordination, he should, in addition to falling from his rank, also be cut off from communion for a certain period of time. The same [should be the case] for a layman.[289]

Additional key evidence of the ritual economy structured by and around clerical social actors appear in the late work of Ignatius VII ʿAzīz bar Sāḇtā, *Turgāmā on Charms and Sorcery*.[290] Notably, Ignatius' harangue opens with a direct address to an audience composed by "priests, teachers, presbyters, and deacons," whom he accuses of involvement in illicit ritual activities driven by financial gain: "You write these and similar to these, and you receive reward (*metgarin*), and you acquire for yourselves iniquity, wickedness, and the unquenchable fire." In detail, the catalogue of ritual services is quite expansive:

---

[287] Becker, *Isaac of Antioch*, 481
[288] Becker, *Isaac of Antioch*, 483.
[289] See Mardin 310, fols. 202a-b. English translation (with modifications) by Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 261, no. 611.
[290] Syriac text and English translation in Sergey Minov, "Syriac Christians and Popular Religion in Early Ottoman Mesopotamia: The Testimony of Abū al-Maʿānī," *Aramaic Studies* 22, no. 2 (2024): 243–259.

> […] Why do you make yourselves an occasion and instrument for the demon to lead many people astray from the truth of Christ? And you make yourselves an occasion for him, and him for you, in that you write bindings and dismissals (*'esārā w-šrāyā*), and you make writings for eye pain and for headache, and for evil eye (*'aynā bištā*), and for stopping blood. And you make writings so that babies would live, and you make writings so that women would give birth, and you make a writing of devilish love (*kṯāḇā d-ḥuḇā šiḏānāyā*), so that they would commit whoredom with each other, and you write for fever and for belly ache, and you tie for you knots (*qeṭrē*) of iniquity.[291]

These activities, while condemned by ecclesiastical elites, clearly responded to the concrete needs of lay devotees. Whether for bringing relief to a mother during childbirth or to trigger erotic compulsion between a couple, clerical ritual activities operated within a framework that blurs the boundaries between medicine, magic, and religion. In so doing, these ritual practices gave rise to what we might term a "Christian ritual economy," a system in which ritual knowledge, liturgical life, and social crises intersected in different ways. The convergence of the material and discursive dimensions of liturgical life with forms of ritual expertise emerges neatly in the canonical responses of Jacob of Edessa to Addai, a text that will form the focus of the next section.

Toward a Christian Ritual Economy: Liturgy and Sacramental Power in Jacob of Edessa's Canonical Responses to Addai the Priest

The initial impetus for this section is tremendously indebted to Jack Tannous' recent engagement with the figure of Jacob of Edessa. The scholarly curriculum of Jacob is studded by a long series of landmark contributions being—as Tannous has magisterially shown—crucial nodes in shaping the cultural world of Syriac-speaking Christians.[292] Jacob was

[291] Minov, "Syriac Christians and Popular Religion in Early Ottoman Mesopotamia," 252.
[292] See Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 169–213.

trained in Greek and Scriptures in the famous Miaphysite monastery of Qenneshre before moving to Alexandria.[293] By the late sixth-century, the importance of the monastery of Qenneshre became consecrated for its training curriculum in Syriac-Greek studies. Jacob, one of the most famous products of the Miaphysite Syriac-Greek cultural season, left behind a prolific literary legacy spanning productions in all the domains of Christian knowledge, including translations from Greek to Syriac, the interpretation of Scriptures, along with the study of philosophy, liturgy, theology, and canonical law. Within this latter realm of knowledge lays my interest for Jacob's intellectual production. More in detail, Jacob's juridical activity encompassed both the composition of canons and a distinctive genre known as *Question-and-Answer*, based on the dialogical exchanges between Jacob and his interlocutors on diverse matters related to the administration of the church's liturgical life.[294] A significant example from this genre is the abovementioned work titled *Questions Which Addai the Priest and Lover of Labors Asked Jacob, the Bishop of Edessa*.[295] In it, the priest Addai presents Jacob with a series of inquiries faced by clergymen in their role as administrators of the sacraments. As Tannous has poignantly emphasized, the key

[293] On Qenneshre and its intellectual environment, see Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*, 160–181; Tannous, "You are What you Read: Qenneshre and the Miaphysite Church in the Seventh Century," in *History and Identity in the Late Antique Near East*, ed. Philip Wood (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 83–102.

[294] On this Juridical genre, see esp. Herman Teule, "Jacob of Edessa and Canon Law," in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Time*, ed. B. ter Haar Romeny (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 83–101.

[295] Unless indicated otherwise, the following passages from this work refer to the edition of Thomas J. Lamy, *Dissertatio de Syrorum fide et disciplina in re eucharistica* (Louvain, 1859), 98–171, in which were published seventy-one questions by Addai to Jacob contained in MS. Paris Syr. 62 (9th C.E.). See also the edition of Paul de Lagarde, *Reliquiae Juris Ecclesiastici Antiquissimae, Syriace* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1856), 117–44. The text has been translated into German (see Carl Kayser, *Die Canones Jacob's von Edessa: Übersetzt und erläutert* [Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs, 1886], 11–33) and French (see François Nau, *Les canons et les résolutions canoniques: de Rabboula, Jean de Tella, Cyriaque d'Amid, Jacques d'Édesse, Georges des Arabes, Cyriaque d'Antioche, Jean III, Théodose d'Antioche et des Perses: traduits pour la première fois en français* [Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1906], 38–66). MS. Harvard Syriac 93 (8th C.E.) and MS. Mardin 310 (8th-9th C.E.), and MS Cambridge Add. 2023 (13th CE) contain additional materials. Unedited excerpts have been recently published by Sergey Minov, "Syriac Christian Polemic against Popular Religion: New Evidence from the Islamic Period," *Scrinium* (2025): 1–44. For further information on the manuscript tradition, see Robert Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997), 602–9; Arthur Vööbus, *Syrische Kanonessammlungen: Ein Beitrag zur Quellenkunde, I: Westsyrische Originalurkunden*, 1, B CSCO 317: Subsidia 38 (Louvain, 1970), 273–98. On the *Question-and-Answer* genre, see Herman Teule, "Jacob of Edessa and Canon Law," in *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Time*, ed. Bas ter Haar Romeny (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 83–101.

significance of this work lies in the fact that its contents are representative of "actual, real-life situations and incidents," offering a window into the everyday struggles of clergy and laity alike.[296] At the heart of the text is the Eucharist and church rituals as privileged channels through which clergymen exerted power and authority over the masses of "simple believers." For the rural, largely illiterate, Christian society of the late antique Middle East, liturgy along with its material and gestural articulations constituted the primary arena in which Christian life was materially and visually encountered. The Eucharist, in particular, functioned as the central axis around which the rhythms of religious life revolved. This aspect becomes more apparent when considering how Eucharist may be wielded as a potent strategy for exerting control and regimenting the life of Christians masses. Transgression and misconduct are met with the threat of exclusion from Eucharistic participation—a penalty that carried profound spiritual and communal consequences.[297] What emerges from Jacob's juridical responses is a vision of the Eucharist as a repository of material, textual, and gestural power working as a technology capable of regulating religious behavior and delineating the boundaries between licit and illicit practices. And yet, while Eucharist is perceived as a substantive regulative tool by Christian elites, from the standpoint of simple believers—including both devotees and their administrators (e.g., priests, deacons, monks, presbyters)—it also constituted a domain of ritual power, one that could be navigated, contested, and, at times, strategically harnessed for diverse aims.[298] The spectrum of finalities for which the Eucharist was wielded—by both clergy and devotees alike—amounted to the formation of what can be described as an "economy of ritual power," structured around the circulation and exchange of liturgical byproducts: the dust beneath the altar, water and oil from the service, fragments of

[296] Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*, 135.
[297] See Tannous, *The Making of the Medieval Middle East*, 136–137.
[298] In order to render the reader's imagination more attuned to the diverse ways in which a Christian "simple believer" may have engaged with institutional discourse, I warmly recommend Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller.* Trans. by John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

consecrated particles. These materials were credited with being incubators of ritual power, capable of materializing the sacred into tangible ways. The vivid language found in Addai's questions to Jacob of Edessa provides rare insight into these ritual economies. The practices described are often presented as consistent with Christian norms, yet are, strikingly, first condemned not by church authorities but by concerned clergy themselves. In one striking exchange, Addai asks whether it is permissible for a Christian to carry a piece of the Eucharistic particle and use it in domestic spaces—turning it into potent amulets, suspending it on believers' necks, placing it in beds and walls:

> Addai:
> If it is right that in the case of everyone who asks for a portion from the sacred elements (*mnāṯā men quḏšē*) to go with him to his house, that it be given to him without examination and when it is not known beforehand to whom the elements are going to be distributed? And whether it is appropriate that they be distributed through the hands of laymen or at the hands of a woman, because people have been found who have taken pieces of the elements and, sinning, have tied them into a knot (*ṣrārā*), as certain charms or hung them on themselves like phylacteries (*pulaqṭirya*), or placed them in their beds or the walls of their houses. I want to learn if it is appropriate for these things to happen? Or if it is not appropriate, what punishment should people who do such things receive?
>
> Jacob:
> Because such evil has been dared, it is right that those elements be given with examination, if possible, and with foreknowledge of to whom they will be distributed. If, however, this had not been heard of, a precise examination to this extent would at all have been necessary; neither is it possible for the clergy to completely carry this out in the crowded congregations of the cities, either to completely examine and investigate or to themselves go and deliver the elements—to the sick or to others who need this. On account of this, there is no reproach and nothing which prohibits against their being distributed by God-fearing laymen or a chaste woman. If this had not been possible in accordance with an ancient custom, the clergy should deliver the elements with appropriate honor. As for those, however, who dared the serious affront against the venerable elements of the body and blood of Christ who is God, such that they regard them only as certain things, other and ordinary, but honored by Christians, so that they hang them on their necks with the cross or with the bones and blessings of the saints, or they place them in their beds or the walls of their houses for protection, or in vineyards or gardens, or enclosed areas or, in short, for the protection of something physical, and they do not understand that these holy mysteries are only the nourishment of souls (*tursāyā d-napšāṯā*) which have taken the seal of Christ and the pledge and earnest of the resurrection from the dead and the life everlasting. Now if they are clergy [who do this], their deposition should by all means take place and along with this, let them be held back from participating in the Mysteries for three years, until they are contrite. If, however, they are laymen, they should be held back from

> participating in the mysteries for four years and they should be in repentance.'[299]

As this passage lays bare, the Eucharist is here perceived as intrinsically infused with apotropaic power, capable of being mobilized for the safekeeping (*nṭurtā*) of the domestic sphere—both its indoor (e.g., house's walls, beds) and outdoor spaces (e.g., vineyards, gardens, orchards). My interest in this text lies in the direct association it establishes between the Eucharist and material objects commonly termed "magic," such as a "phylacteries" (*pulaqṭirya*). This association points to the ways liturgy became in Late Antiquity a privileged channel through which to index and exert ritual power. This view was by no means confined to late antique Mesopotamia; rather, the idea that sacraments and sacramentals were intimately imbued with ritual power was deeply ingrained in the late antique and medieval Christendom. That such practices had a broader cultural resonance is evident from Peter Browe's work on medieval popular beliefs relative to Christian sacraments and sacramentals––particularly the Eucharistic bread.[300] The Eucharist was deployed across a wide spectrum of purposes, carried into the pocket, thrown into a water spring, or buried underground. Narratives preserved by authors such as Peter Damian and Caesarius of Heisterbach further testify to the circulation of the Eucharistic host within vernacular forms of ritual power, particularly in the domain of erotic manipulation.[301] In a notable episode, Caesarius relates that a certain priest, having failed to obtain a woman's consent, retained the consecrated host in his mouth after Mass, hoping that by kissing her in this state, her will might be bent to his own:

> A certain lustful priest was making indecent advances toward a woman. And when he could not obtain her consent, after saying Mass, he held the most pure Body of the Lord in his mouth, hoping that if he kissed her in that way, by the power of the sacrament her will would be

[299] Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 106–109. See also MS. Mardin 310, fols. 195b-196a, translation by Jack Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 293–294, no. 689.
[300] Peter Browe, "Die Eucharistie als Zaubermittel im Mittelalter," in *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 20 (1930), 134–154.
[301] Browe, "Die Eucharistie als Zaubermittel," 135.

inclined to his desires.[302]

This logic—wherein the Eucharist is situated within a broader field of ritual technologies—recurs in other accounts as well. Berthold of Regensburg, for instance, recounts the tale of a woman who, in an act of transgressive piety, attempted to concoct a love philter by dissolving the consecrated host in liquid.[303] Caesarius similarly records how a woman in Cochem scattered pieces of the Eucharistic bread over vegetables in an effort to ward off plague.[304] Bernardino da Siena later remarks on hosts inscribed with magical characters and biblical verses deployed as amuletic devices, testifying to the host's circulation within hybrid economies of ritual and textual potency.[305]

Taken together, such evidence illuminates the degree to which Christian communities, from Late Antiquity through the Middle Ages, perceived the sacraments and sacramentals not merely as vehicles of divine grace but as receptacles of ritual power. During this period, liturgy thus morphed into a realm of gestures, objects, sounds, and words forming authoritative frameworks that could be adopted and deployed by taking advantage of local environments, simultaneously reasserting their elements against a vast array of material media—molded, worn, inserted, tied, concealed—to solve daily-life concerns. In so doing, Liturgy becomes ingrained in symbols and materials inhering in daily-life spaces, forming a topography of power stretching from the church's altar to the sickbed. This nexus between domestic sphere and church space emerges neatly in the moment Addai raises the following concern:

> Whether it is right, in addition to those things that have been said, for those that will be; if it is appropriate for the dust (*ʿaprā*) from the sanctuary to be given for the sake of healing, especially from that which lies before or beneath the holy table? Whether it is appropriate for knots (*ḥuṭēː*) to be fastened to the feet of the holy table while the Mysteries are celebrated and

[302] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, IX, 6.
[303] Browe, "Die Eucharistie als Zaubermittel," 136.
[304] Caesarius of Heisterbach, *Dialogus Miraculorum*, IX, 9.
[305] Browe, "Die Eucharistie als Zaubermittel," 138.

> then to be given to the sick, so that they may be tied on themselves? Whether it is appropriate for the priest to be persuaded, for those who request it, at the moment of the invocation of the Holy Spirit, to stretch his hand upon the soil of the sanctuary while genuflected, and to take up whatever is present there, and distribute it to the sick, so that they may hang it upon themselves?

To which Jacob replies:

> The dust from the sanctuary, if those who request it in good faith are the sick, in order to place it with their food or water as a remedy or for healing, then it is right to give it to them. But if they request it in order to fasten and hang it upon themselves, or to scatter it over their beds or houses, in the manger or in the water of the cattle, or to fasten it around the animals' neck, then it is not right for this to be given to them, even if they ask in good faith; for many times indeed it happens that a crumble of the bread of the holy body falls in it. As for knots, those who ask them to be fastened around the feet of the holy table, and either for the priest that stretches his hand, and whatever is present there, in the sacred moment, upon the soil of the sanctuary, he takes and distributes it to the sick that request it for the sake of healing—these are nothing but the machinations of the evil one who seeks to entice us with his counsels, mixing the good seed of the faith owned by us with the evil seed of error and the teaching of foolish old women (*sābāṭā snāyān*). For this reason, it is not right for the priest to distribute anything of this kind, for it may happen something that can be shown with an easy example, as if some mucus it has been dropped to take, or excrement of a reptile, or of a scorpion, or something else of this kind. If he shares in madness with those who request such things and distributes them, then it is right that his deposition may happen.[306]

Within this framework, the above-mentioned passage illuminates the interpenetration of the domestic space by the civic sphere for ritual resolution of diverse concerns. This dynamic is particularly apparent in the polyvalent uses of the dust (*'aprā*) collected by the priest from the altar, which can be either turned into an ingredient to be mixed up with food and drink or even transformed into an amuletic device to be hung on people or animals. In the same vein, the threads (*ḥuṭē*) tied to the feet of the holy table can be repurposed into potent therapeutic devices. As David Frankfurter has poignantly argued, religious beliefs and practices in domestic spaces amount to a "cluster of concerns and orientations" that exists within a continuum with local and institutional apparatuses.[307] From this perspective, domestic religious practices appropriate elements of local liturgical life, integrating them in symbols, materials, and gestures composing the domestic religious sphere. Yet, the religious domestic

[306] Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 114–115. Personal translation from MS. Mardin 310 fols. 197a-b.
[307] David Frankfurter, "The Interpenetration of Ritual Spaces in Late Antique Religions: An Overview," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 10, no. 1 (2008): 211–222. See also Frankfurter, "The Spaces of Domestic Religion in Late Antique Egypt," *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 18/19 (2016/17): 7–24.

sphere discloses marked tensions vis-à-vis Christian institutional world. Firmed demarcations between the two domains remain elusive and, when established, these are usually driven by the Christians' elites preoccupation of regimenting religious life. These tensions arise, for instance, when Addai asks if it's licit to carry sacramentals out of the church and use them to solve social concerns:

> Addai:
> Whether it is appropriate for a priest to carry to a sick person, to his house, an empty holy chalice so that he can press it into his side for him because it is hurting him? Or [can he bring] the girdle (*zunārā*) of the Holy Table so that it can bind up [a woman] who is in distress with the pains of birth. Or [can he bring] the precious book of the holy Gospel?
>
> Jacob:
> With respect to the holy vessels, it is entirely not right that they travel to a sick person. Even when he comes to the church, it is not permitted that he touch them—not the chalice and not the girdle, and nothing else from the holy vessels. For we have not learned these things from the holy Apostles who gave commandments concerning one who is sick. Let the priests rather anoint him with oil in the name of Our Lord. If, however, they are asked to bring the Gospel, it is not forbidden and not reproachable if they take [it].'[308]
>
> Addai:
> Whether it is right for the clergy to place the refuse (*npāṯā*) of the sanctuary and the sweepings (*'aprā hw d-knāštā)* in a cistern of water from which animals drink?
>
> Jacob:
> The sweepings of the sanctuary should all the more be buried in a field and not thrown into a cistern of water. If the drinking from the cistern were only for human beings who were believers and it were not for the washing and drinking of beasts, the matter perhaps would have been without reproach and the sweepings could be cast into the cistern.'[309]
>
> Addai:
> Whether it is appropriate for a priest to give some of the waters of baptism (*mayā d-ma'muḏiṯā*) after the candidates are baptized to women for them to put in their houses for healing or for the purposes of sprinkling.
>
> Jacob:
> It is not right at all that the waters of baptism be given for anything like this because they are not common and unconsecrated, not even after the candidates have been baptized. Let rather

[308] Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 116–119. English translation by Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 298, no. 699. A parallel canon is preserved in the *Letter from Jacob of Edessa to John the Stylite of Litarab Concerning Ecclesiastical Canons* (ed. and trans. By Karl-Erik Rignell [Lund: CWK Gleerup,1979], 56–59).
[309] Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 118–119.

> only the waters which are blessed on the night of Epiphany be given for healing and blessing.'[310]

One may easily peer through Addai's questions the involvement of the clergy in activities carried out in the effort of supporting their devotees. This representative selection of passages indeed confronts us with issues related to the translation of sacraments outside the borders of institutional sacred spaces. As such, these testimonies accrue to the documentation of aspects of a "ritual economy" based on the interactions between clergymen and their acolytes for the provision of material needs. Various substances (e.g., baptismal water, dust) and sacred objects (e.g., belts, chalices, holy books) from the liturgy thus functioned as potent venues for channelling ritual agency, deployed within domestic contexts for purposes ranging from the mixing of food and drink, to the consecration of a well, to the mediation of healing through tactile contact.

Moreover, Jacob's canonical responses to Addai offer further striking insights into the strict interplay between the civic and domestic religious sphere in Syriac Christian communities. Throughout these textual records, clerics appear cast in the active role of "liturgical experts" and instigators of Christianity through the mediation of ritual knowledge in domestic spaces. This nexus of liturgical life and domestic space becomes particularly apparent in the following passage:

> Addai:
> Concerning priests who mutter incantations (*kāhnē d-lāḥšin*) and say that they are praying intently, and who tie knots and make amulets (*qmi'ē*), and who write out little texts for tumors and headaches, and who cast out convulsions for human beings and beasts, and who make divinations and auguries using birds--they pay attention to both their twitterings and to their days and seasons and certain incidental actions which take place, they also [pay attention to] spots on human bodies, and along with these things, the interpretation of dreams, in addition to other evils.

[310] Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 120–121. English translation by Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 301, no. 709.

> Jacob: If it were possible to reckon people who wickedly do one of these things Christians, I would have said that they should by all means fall from their rank. But because it is completely impossible to number them among Christians, such a statement is superfluous.'[311]

The spectrum of ritual activities here listed reflects a nuanced repertoire of activities through which clerics leveraged liturgy to take advantage of the surrounding environment for exerting ritual agency. In a few instances, verses from the Scriptures (*petgāmē*) are presented as a privileged channel through which to index divine power, for they were credited with being a potent measure for regimenting the weather:

> Addai:
> Concerning a priest who speaks verses from the Scriptures (*petgāmē*) and hail does not fall on the lands of his village that year: whether it is on his account that it does not fall, or because of chance, and it does not fall because of his decision?
>
> Jacob:
> He himself is not a priest; he should be classed with the group which they have just spoken about [i.e., non-Christians]. Now, so that we know the judgment of God, we will answer concerning these things with precision, in the following way: it is not possible. Now perhaps, either there did not chance to be hail there in that year—for it is by all means not the case that every year this takes place—or this was ordained by God when He wanted to send upon them the error upon which they had relied and turn them over to a reprobate mind, as it is written.'[312]

By the same token, clerics are said to gesture the cross and play the *nāqušā* or *sēmantron*—a liturgical tool consisting of a wooden plank that is struck with a mallet to summon people to communal prayer— against meteorological phenomena.[313] Psalms, again, are recited in agricultural rites, such as the uprooting of the *genešya*, a thorny plant whose therapeutic properties were particularly beneficial for the sick.[314] Way more compelling is the following

[311] Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 134–136. English translation by Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 262, no. 614.
[312] Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 136–138. English translation by Tannous (with slight modifications), "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 302, no. 713.
[313] Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 150–153. English translation by Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 302, 712. On the Syriac *nāqušā* (Gr. *sēmantron*) see Bojan Miljković, "Semantra and Bells in Byzantium." *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 55 (2018): 271–303; Alex Rodriguez Suarez, "The Semantron to Western Ears: Othering Through Sound." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 48, no. 2 (October 2024): 235–252.
[314] Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 136–137. English translation by Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 296, no. 693.

passage, wherein Addai describes the habit of crafting curses using material media such as needles and locks:

> Addai:
> Concerning those who bend a needle and put its tip through its eye and they fasten locks and throw them into a deep well or bury them in the earth, in order to keep a husband from his wife.
>
> Jacob:
> Those who do such things should be rejected from the Church while being made known as sorcerers and murderers, for they have practiced enchantments and also killed.[315]

There's little question that the ritual logics underlying the described practices exhibit striking resemblance to the binding objects largely known as *defixiones*. This ritual technology, which involved the inscription of cursing formulae upon diverse material supports—most commonly lead tablets and papyri—then pierced and deposited in specific sites (e.g., wells, tombs, water springs, temples), is widely adopted across the Mediterranean basin to curse human targets.[316] Jacob's condemnation of this phenomenon aligns with broader late antique anxieties about ritual technologies aimed at binding, severing, or otherwise manipulating social intercourses. Clerical engagement with similar practices is also evident in cursing rituals involving the suspension of curses (*ḥarmē*) upon trees.[317] Another compelling testimony of clerical ritual expertise sheds light upon the usage of imprecatory formulae to curse robbers. Again, this strategy is ubiquitously attested in the ancient world, bringing into relief how cursing functioned as a privileged countermeasure through which to combat robbery:

> Addai:
> Concerning a priest (*qašišā*) whose house is robbed (*'eṯḥallaṣ*) and who enters into his church (*'iḏtā*) and puts out the lamps and overturns the holy table and brings out the sacks of [the relics] of the holy martyrs (*tarmālē d-sahdē*), and hangs them under the sky and sprinkles ash (*qeṭmā*) on the urns of the holy martyrs (*gurnē d-sāhdē qaddišē*), demanding vengeance

[315] Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 140. English translation by Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 259, no. 605.
[316] For a general overview on *defixiones*, I recommend David Frankfurter, ed., *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 351–388.
[317] Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 146–147.

(*nqamtā*) from the one who stole his wealth and says: 'A lamp will not be lit in church and the altar will not be set right and these saints will not enter in from the rain and the ash will not be cleaned off their urns until they show who despoiled my house.'

Jacob:
This is an act of anger and of being attached to possessions. Along with this, [it is an act] of not relying on God who is the Provider and Giver of possessions, even if he has demanded that his vengeance on his plunderers come from His saints. Therefore, he should have a moderate rebuke, even if he is distressed at the loss of his property, on the grounds that he did not seek help from God and His saints through prayer, but rather in anger and through force. Let him learn that God, who is merciful, is not persuaded with our feelings of enmity and our passions to become a killer of humans and an enemy and one who hates, when He is a lover of humanity.'[318]

Jacob's condemnation of the practice is grounded in the firm rejection of the humans' appeal to saints as sources of divine justice pursued through violence. Yet, the passage offers key evidence that liturgical objects could be repurposed into powerful material accoutrements for ritual aggression. In this distinct instance, the hallmark of the ritual lies in its setting and material media. The church becomes the main stage of the ritual, the altar is turned into the main locus of agency, and martyrs' holy fragments, along with ash (*qeṭmā*), transmogrify into receptacles of ritual power. More in detail, the formula pronounced by the priest reveals how relics were invested with divinatory power capable of identifying culprits. A comparable case is found in MS. Mardin fols. 207a-b:

Addai:
about two men, neither of whom knows incantations (*luḥšāṯā*), whether to write or to pronounce, when they have a great dispute and make noise, coming to a point of great enmity, one of them go and carve out lines (*neḥruq ḥerqē*) over the reliquaries of the saints, and over the tomb of the leprous (*qaḇrā d-'aryānē*), in name of his target; and also under the table of altars (*pāṯurā d-madbḥē*) and hands him over there and he becomes sick and gets injured or is afflicted by evil: if this is the case, will he get sick? If it happens, will he get ill or will something evil happen to him? [319]

In this rather obscure passage, the practice recounted in Addai's report brings additional evidence to how sacred objects can serve in practices of ritual aggression.

[318] Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 144–145. English translation by Tannous (with slight modifications), "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 313, no. 740.
[319] English translation (with modifications) by Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 305, no. 717.

Overall, the evidence supplied thus far has thrown light onto how liturgy constituted a privileged realm of concern infused with ritual power. As I've attempted to demonstrate, with liturgy here I meant not solely ecclesiastical rites but a wholesale domain of elements encompassing objects, prayers, gestures, and social practices of daily religious life. Clerics played a pivotal role as both administrators of these elements and mediators of knowledge and material needs with their acolytes. Jacob's canonical responses to Addai have thus presented us with a rich ethnographic account of how liturgy permeated the everyday life of Christian believers, regulating the continuous interpenetration of the civic religious sphere by the domestic religious sphere. Words, songs, objects, and gestures of liturgy functioned as a vast repertoire of ritual elements that were adopted by both clerics and laypeople and turned into potent authoritative measures for resolution of daily concerns. What Christian leaders might demonize as "magic" appears here as a deeply integrated feature of the Christian ritual economy. As the following section will demonstrate, many of these practices resonate closely with material evidence from Syriac incantation bowls, amulets, and other ritual objects.

A Blueprint for Ritual Texts: The Dynamic Continuum between Liturgy and Magic

The Previous sections have sought to illuminate how, within Christian Syriac communities, material, textual, and gestural elements associated with the liturgy comprised a privileged channel through which exert ritual power. Yet, at the heart of the discussion was the aim to bring into relief how liturgy provided ritual experts with a repertoire of symbols, words, and gestures to be adopted and reasserted under the veneers of their ritual products. As I will argue in what follows, liturgy served as a kind of "blueprint" for the creation of ritual texts and objects. To preview where we are headed, the material records here under scrutiny stand as enduring testament to how, in Late Antiquity, a Christian ritual discourse gradually

crystallized around liturgical expressions, offering us a novel window into the Christianization of late antique Mesopotamia.

As largely documented in the previous section, the wearing of amulets appears to have been a quite common and widespread habit among both clerical and lay members of Syriac-speaking Christian communities. In his homily *On Rebuke and Admonition*, Isaac of Antioch takes aim at this very phenomenon, lingering in detailed descriptions (lines 245–280) of scribal expertise and ritual dynamics associated with the production of amuletic devices:

> Sorcerers and reciters of incantations have written the names of demons as if
> they were angels,
> And like expensive pendants each name is celebrated on women's necks.
> Suited to the stiff neck is the necklace that fraud has fabricated,
> Adorned with various polluted incantations, each calling demons by name.
> In the beginning Eve was fettered by the incantations of the impure serpent,
>
> And the glory which adorned her chastity was stolen from her limbs.
> However, now that with the coming of Christ she has recovered her glory,
> She has given herself over to the reciters of incantations that they may strip her
> of her baptism.
> By the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit the bitter poison of the serpent
> has been uprooted,
> While calling the cherubs as well as the seraphs by name has not been any
> help.
>
> For everything that is created, however high it may be, is lowly,
> For it too is unable to suffice for itself without the power of the divine essence.
> Between angels and animals, the human being is like an intermediary;
> He is lower than the angels and higher than the animals,
> And if the human being, who is rational and can speak, should give his speech
> and reason to the beast,
> Would an angel also suffice to fulfill human need?
>
> For all of them, the high ones, as well as the intermediaries and the low ones,
> Draw everything they need from that one source of the creator.
> If, therefore, the name of the angels is superfluous in conjunction with God,
> How is calling the demons by name to be mixed with God?
>
> Neither is darkness intermingled with light nor does it dwell along with it,
> And neither does Satan partake in Christ nor does he act along with him.
> Rather, sorcerers and reciters of incantations lead the foolish people astray,
> While mixing blasphemy with a verse of the Holy Spirit.
> When they iniquitously write the name of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit,
>
> They cause the names of demons to cleave to it, and they pollute the sanctity

of the divine names.
So too the race of women mix together the holy psalms
With destructive incantations in the amulets that are on their necks.
The errant have selected scriptural verses and taken them for their craft,
And they have hidden iniquity in the truth in order to hunt the foolish by it.

So too whoever strikes a counterfeit in the currency of foreign lands
Overlays it with silver and gold so that deception may be adorned with truth,
And after youth has been deceived and received the secret counterfeit
The expense along with the humiliation is the payback for being deceived,
And although the folly belongs to the craftsman who strikes the counterfeit in the currency,
The law has condemned to death also whoever receives it.[320]

Isaac's rhetoric offers a crucial window into the nexus between liturgical language and ritual technology. Of great import in this passage are the references to the Holy Trinity and the Psalms, coopted as potent authoritative elements within the textual economy of amuletic devices. The activities here fiercely lambasted by Isaac find material corroboration in the extant corpus of Syriac amulets from Late Antiquity—albeit a meager one—whose surviving specimens attest to the blending of liturgical formulae and ritual expressions (e.g., angelic names, *voces magicae*). While the invocation of angelic names in this textual evidence is relatively commonplace, what here deserves closer inspection are the ways in which liturgical phrases appear to have served as nodal elements in the construction of a ritual text. As such, this passage is key to situating the surviving material evidence within the broader ritual landscape of Christian Mesopotamia. A case in point is the portfolio of Syriac amulets crafted on behalf of a certain Xvarr-Veh-zād, daughter of Denaq (BnF Syr. 400/1-3).[321] These three amuletic texts, designed to protect the client against malevolent entities, are remarkable for the articulated pool of textual elements they preserve. The syncretic spectrum of motifs they draw upon ranges from ancient Mesopotamian motifs—including the deities Nergal, Šamiš, and Bagdana, as well as the zodiacal signs—to Christian liturgical formulae. Given the variegated panoply of cultural elements they display, scholars have struggled to ascribe their

[320] Becker, *Isaac of Antioch*, 485–489.
[321] The three amuletic texts have been published by Philippe Gignoux, *Incantations magiques syriaques*, Collection de la Revue des Études Juives 4 (Louvain: Peeters, 1987).

copyist(s) to a distinct religious group. Yet, if we approach them through the lens Isaac provides, one may interpret these elements not merely as haphazard and aberrant creations of some pagan groups with a fascination for Judaeo-Christian elements, but rather as instantiations of a broader ritual discourse in which Christian liturgy started to assert itself as the preeminent cultural matrix. While Philippe Gignoux, editor of BnF Syr. 400/1-3, ascribed the three amulets to a putative Jewish scribal context of origin—citing as evidentiary basis references to angelic names, to the *Shekhinah* (III, 38), to the Sabbath (I, 80), along with a potential allusion to the patriarch Enoch and the scribe Baruch (III, 70-72)—its assumption deserves reassessment. First, angelic nomenclature, while abundant in Jewish traditions, is hardly diagnostic in magical texts, appearing ubiquitously in this genre. Similarly, the *Shekhinah* (Syr. *škintā*), far from being an exclusively Jewish referent, is a pervasive topic since the earliest Syriac literary sources, including Aphrahat.[322] In the same vein, boundary demarcations between Jews and Christian concerning the Sabbath appear to have been fuzzy, owing to the ambiguous ritual and polemical space it occupies in Syriac Christianity. As evident from anti-Jewish polemic from the period, it served less as a cultural boundary-marker than as a site of negotiation and contestation in the construction of Syriac Christian identity.[323] Moreover, Gignoux's textual hypothesis that the biblical figure of Enoch and Baruch are referenced in BnF Syr. 400/3 (70-72) has been recently confirmed and further substantiated by the concerted efforts of Nils Korsvoll and Liv Ingeborg Lied.[324] At the same time, I join issue with the two scholars in challenging Gignoux's claim that this reference is

[322] See for instance, Alexander Golitzin, "The Place of the Presence of God: Aphrahat of Persia's Portrait of the Christian Holy Man," in *ΣΥΝΑΞΙΣ ΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΙΑΣ: Studies in Honor of Archimandrite Aimilianos of Simonos Petras, Mount Athos*, ed. John Chryssavgis and Douglas C. Burton-Christie (Athens: Indiktos, 2003), 391–447. For a general overview, see Dominique Cerbelaud, "Aspects de la Shekinah chez les auteurs chrétiens syriens," *Le Muséon* 123, no. 1–2 (2010): 91–125.
[323] See for instance, Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Jewish Observance of the Sabbath in Bardaiṣan's Book of the Laws of Countries," in *Jews and Syriac Christians: Intersections across the First Millennium*, ed. Aaron Michael Butts and Simcha Gross (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 89–102; see also, J. Edward Walters, "Anti-Jewish Rhetoric and Christian Identity in Aphrahaṭ's *Demonstrations*," in the same volume, 291–320.
[324] Nils Hallvard Korsvoll and Liv Ingeborg Lied, "Enoch and Baruch: Unusual Suspects in a Syriac Amulet," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 75, no. 2 (2016): 349–359.

indicative of a Jewish context of production, arguing instead that it should be read as "part of a wider apotropaic tradition within the Sasanian Empire."[325]

Notably, another amuletic text pertaining to the tradition of the three manuscripts published by Gignoux, MS Or. 2480, further complicates the picture.[326] This single leaf vellum was crafted on behalf of the same client of BnF Syr. 400/1-3, Yāzdān-zārag, the daughter of Dēnaq. From a paleographical and lexical perspective, MS Or. 2480 doesn't exhibit sufficient probatory elements that tilt the scale in favor of a direct association with the scribal profile behind BnF Syr. 400/1-3. A key element in this regard may be the spelling of "Enoch," which appears to be *'anok̲* in BnF Syr. 400/3 vs. *ḥanoq* in MS Or. 2480. As such, one may simply posit that MS Or. 2480 was copied for the same client yet by a different scribe. Despite these divergences, MS Or. 2480 appears to belong to the same scribal tradition of Gignoux's amulets. This point is corroborated by a series of converging textual elements, including the use of a sectorial lexicon rich in angelic names and demons, reference to the patriarch Enoch, and the use of the trinitarian formula at the beginning of the manuscript. Whether or not these texts derive from a "Christian," "Jewish," or otherwise religiously distinct scribal milieu is ultimately less revealing than the liturgical elements animating them. Particularly compelling indeed is the trinitarian formula which opens and closes BnF Syr. 400/2-3, along with other liturgical-like expressions, including doxological appreciations for the Godhead (BnF Syr. 400/2, 2): "God is alive and strong, honor is due to Him, and wisdom! And in the name of the living and valiant spirit, it is sealed […]," and references to his glorious "presence" (*škintā*) (BnF Syr. 400/3, 38). This pool of elements underscores the emergent authoritative power held by liturgy among ritual practitioners of late antique Mesopotamia. While these phrases do not definitively pin down the religious

[325] Korsvoll and Ingeborg Lied, "Enoch and Baruch," 360.
[326] Erica Hunter, "Another Syriac Amulet on Leather? MS Or. 2480," *SARA* 3 (2023): 69–121.

identity of the scribal profile/s behind the texts, they are diagnostic of the emergence of a ritual discourse shaped by the symbolism and performative power of liturgy. On this score, Marco Moriggi has suggested the heuristic rubric "contamination" to address ritual texts in which liturgy is deliberately juxtaposed to non-strictly Christian motifs, whether these may be considered "pagan" or indicative of a Jewish cultural matrix:

> The "contamination" of liturgical texts by magic traits would thus be, as in the Jewish Mesopotamian context, the consequence of all the texts being produced in the very same *scriptoria* by a clergy who were in the same way aware of articles of Christian faith but whose cultural background embraced issues coming from old pagan traditions, older or contemporary religious movements (e.g. Manichaeism).[327]

As Moriggi suggests, there's room to speculate that such contamination of liturgy with elements of diverse cultural and religious origins were often cultivated by Syriac clergy who, as adroit "bricoleurs," created hybrid ritual *assemblages* that defy strict typologies. Once again, this cultural dynamic maps well on David Frankfurter's rendition of the notion "syncretism." The essence of Frankfurter's original interpretation of this analytical rubric lays in the fact that, rather than persisting as mere "pagan survivals," pre-Christian elements delineate out as authoritative frameworks that become reassorted under the veneers of the new Christian discourse.[328] As he further elucidates, syncretic creations should be taken as "experimental *assemblages*," social practices carried out by ritual practitioners designed to revitalize older religious traditions. Far from being a void cognitive frame, syncretism permeates different spheres of the social and religious life, finding expression in diverse social settings, including shrines, temples, and villages. In light of these considerations, it is insightful to extend the theoretical framework proposed by Frankfurter beyond Egypt, contextualizing the concept of syncretism in dialogue with ritual evidence from Christian

[327] Moriggi, "And the Impure and Abominable Priests," 382.
[328] Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, 7–15.

Mesopotamia. This evidence supports the argument that late antique Syriac clergy not solely became key figures in dispensing ritual products but also played a crucial role in preserving and perpetuating elements of the pre-Christian cultural world (see further below). A fruitful model to explain this evolving paradigm has been identified by Frankfurter in his *Religion in Roman Egypt*.[329]According to Frankfurter, ritual practitioners once attached to temple institutions gradually moved toward more de-centralized performative arenas, including domestic spaces, shrines, monasteries, hermitages. Consequently, the ritual expertise of ancient Egypt partly survived throughout Late Antiquity thanks to what would later have been the Christian clergy. During Late Antiquity, the most crucial evidence illustrating the continuities between priests' ritual expertise and alleged "magicians" is the corpus of the Graeco-Egyptian magical formularies. Many a ritual product of this nature, such as those included in the so-called Theban Magical Library, bring evidence that archives of priestly ritual texts contained potent remedies for ritual resolution of daily-life concerns.[330] Ritual technologies from the pre-Christian world thus became a reservoir of traditions that were transmitted and incorporated in the later corpus of Coptic magical papyri. In a similar vein, Frankfurter's model proves of significant value as to envision a consonant evolutionary model from Mesopotamian priests, the *ašipus*, to Christian ritual experts. Notwithstanding the specificities of Mesopotamia, we are allowed to imagine that Syriac clergy employed ritual technologies that harked back to their priestly heritage, which was turned into a potent reservoir of authoritative traditions to be included in their ritual products. The most compelling example of this evolutionary pattern has been identified by Siam Bhayro in the figure of Bardaisan of Edessa (d. 222 CE), a philosopher and physician.[331] Bardaisan, a pagan

[329] See Frankfurter, *Religion in Roman Egypt*, 198–238.
[330] For a general overview, I recommend Frankfurter, *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, 283–322. See also Korshi Dosoo, "A History of the Theban Magical Library," *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 53 (2016): 251–274.
[331] Siam Bhayro, "Syriac Magic and Medicine: A Near-Eastern Paradigm of Priestcraft," in *Studies in the Syriac Magical Traditions*, ed. Marco Moriggi and Siam Bhayro (Leiden: Brill, 2021), 31–56.

who converted to Christianity, served at the court of Abgar VII (177-212 CE). With expertise in a wide range of disciplines, including theology, philosophy, astronomy, astrology, anthropology, and poetry, Bardaisan embodies the characteristics of an ancient Mesopotamian *ašipu* within a Christian cultural framework. Such a figure likely played a pivotal role in the transmission of ancient Mesopotamian knowledge into Syriac culture. As Bhayro has poignantly observed, Bardaisan refers to the "Books of the Chaldeans" in his *Book of the Laws of the Countries*, which likely contained elements directly related to ancient Mesopotamian astral traditions. Bardaisan's cultural profile thus exemplifies how ancient Mesopotamian motifs were transmitted into Syriac culture, mediated by figures with genealogical ties to the pre-Christian world, such as priests or their descendants. This cultural dynamic is particularly evident in ritual sources, offering broader insights into the Christianization of late antique Mesopotamia.

A particularly striking case in point illustrating the strict nexus between Christian liturgy and ancient Mesopotamian motifs is found in a Lead talisman edited by Sebastian Brock.[332] According to the script—referred to by Brock as "medial estrangelo,"—the Lead tablet (8x25 cm) has been roughly dated between the eighth and the twelfth century CE. The ritual object is referred to in the text as a "talisman" (*ṭalismā*), whose protective power is deployed to protect the crops of a certain Bspr whom, as the editor suggests, could represent the tenant farmer of Theophilus son of Sisinos), on whose behalf the object was crafted. Alongside the name of Theophilus, the final line of the talisman calls upon the power of Saint George:

> Trust⟨ed⟩ (is) the God of Mār Giwargis who blesses us. O Christ, confirm us in the faith.

[332] Brock, "A Lead Syriac Protective Amulet," 309–27.

The reference to "Mār Giwargis" strongly suggests the author was a Christian, likely a lower-rank cleric, potentially a deacon or a priest, as also suggested by Brock.[333] The talisman appears to have functioned in agrarian contexts, being placed near the borders of a field in order to protect the crops from infesting agents, whether animals, insects, men, or demonic entities. I present below Brock's translation with slight modifications that are aimed at bringing into clearer definition the ritual lore from which the object emerged:

> A.
>
> By the might of these three zodiacal signs (*malwāšin*), Lamb, Bull, and Two Images (*tren ṣalmin* [*sic*]); by the might of […]; by the might of the strength of these seven powerful verses (*peṭgāmē*) which God spoke to his Son when he created. […]-iel, Gabriel, come […] […] Michael, these seven verses by the power of the law: To you I speak, evil creeping creature and evil (wild) animals, that you should go and leave the confine (*ṭḥumā*) of the land of BSPR, and do not enter it ever again, as long as this talisman is in his land, and do not be seen by him again, forever, as long as these charms and these verses are inscribed on this talisman. *O God, incline to me Your ear* (Ps. 17:6), and bring to completion and bless the produce BSPR; preserve and seal his confines from evil harm through Your invincible power.
>
> B. (verso?)
>
> […] by the might […] by the might […]; by the might of these three zodiacal signs, Lamb, Bull, and Two Images, by the might of […] *him who changes times and seasons* (Dan. 2:21) […] blessed water, […] and the seed, olive, and vineyard, and crops of BSPR all the days of the life of Theophilos, the son of Sisinos. And may you cause to reside on his moneys blessings, and may his enemies be kept away, and become like dead, buried people, and like a blind man without a guide. Trust⟨ed⟩ is the son of Mār Giwargis who blesses us. O Christ, confirm us in faith.

This apotropaic object is best at home within the rural setting of late antique Mesopotamia. As Simon Brelaud has documented, the rural areas of late antique Mesopotamia were home to a wide array of ritual practices centered around agricultural fertility by calling upon the power of God and the saints in their role as protectors of the crops, the animals, and the

[333] Brock, "A Lead Syriac Protective Amulet," 310. On Saints in Syriac amulets, see Erica Hunter, "Saints in Syriac Anathemas: A Form-Critical Analysis of Role," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 32 (1987): 83–104; Sergey Minov, "The Cult of Saints and Popular Religion among Syriac Christians," in *La religion populaire des chrétiens de tradition syriaque*, ed. Sergey Minov and Alice Croq, 247–272.

domestic space.[334] The same concern for the safekeeping of the fields from destructive agents is attested in the *Acts of the Martyrs of Berdin* (second half of the 7th century):

> Bless, Lord, this region where we are about to be sacrificed in Your name, and protect its inhabitants. Increase [...], the prosperity of this land where we are going to be executed for Your love. Whoever will remember us before You in this place, in Your goodness, bless their house and their fields [...]; let the barren woman bear children; may the one who has lost a child bear others; and may anyone who seeks refuge in this place not be buried under a demonic influence or the effect of evil actions from men [...]; may there be no locusts in the fields, no hail in the vineyards, no worms, no fire-blight, or mold, no epidemic either for people or for flocks.[335]

In a similar vein, a hymn penned by Thomas of Marga on behalf of the holy Maran ʻammeh reads:

> May our Lord guard our feebleness by his prayers,
> and surround with the wall of thy care the sheep of Thy flocks.
>
> At his entreaty rain down Thy showers upon our fields,
> And drive away from them granary worms, and locusts, and hail, and the scorching wind.
>
> May our crop become [increased] an hundredfold, like that of Isaac,
> That the offering of the humble as well as of the great man may come Thy home.
>
> Bless, Our Lord, the herds of our cattle, and the flocks of our sheep,
> That orphans and the needy may be clothed from them like those of Job […][336]

When read alongside the above-discussed invectives of Jacob of Edessa against the misuses of Eucharistic rites for agricultural purposes, it comes into clearer definition how liturgy became one of the axiomatical nodes regulating daily life among Syriac rural communities. In one passage, the Christian leader laments the peasant habit of conducting masses outside sacred spaces for mediating agricultural prosperity:

---

[334] Simon Brelaud, "Les milieux populaires ruraux et leurs pratiques religieuses dans les sources syro-orientales," in *La religion populaire des chrétiens de tradition syriaque*, ed. Sergey Minov and Alice Croq, 107–146.
[335] Syriac text and English translation in Sebastian Brock, *The Martyrs of Tour Ber'ain* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2014), 600–601.
[336] Ernest Wallis Budge, ed., *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastic of Thomas, Bishop of Margâ AD 840* (London, 1893; repr., Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003), 372.

> Addai:
> Whether it is appropriate for a Eucharist to be offered up on a mountain or in vineyards or in gardens or in sheep and goat folds, for the protection of these things?
>
> Jacob:
> On a mountain—if this is necessary, it is not forbidden and moreover, there is nothing blameworthy in a Eucharist being celebrated on behalf of believers who are in need of it. But as for in vineyards and fields or in [enclosures] for beasts that do not speak—goats or sheep or cattle or horses—if it is for the sake of a gathering of believers who are found there that the Eucharist is celebrated, nothing prohibits that this take place, just as in chapels, the holy ones of God are separated off. But if [the Eucharists are celebrated] for the protection of speechless things which are nearby, although those who are doing this are doing it in faith, I do not judge that it is appropriate nor do I permit that it take place because, as I have stated, the celebration of these holy mysteries is for the sake of the salvation of souls—of those who are alive and of those who have passed away—and it is not for the protection of cattle or the healing of speechless animals, even if when celebrating the mysteries, we supplicate God, who cares for the living, even for the protection of livestock and for the fruitfulness of the harvest.[337]

This testimony offers valuable glimpses into the social interactions between clergy and laypeople in late antique Mesopotamia. Cast in the role of administrators of the sacraments, clerics mediated ritual knowledge and power for a wide spectrum of purposes, including safekeeping of domestic spaces, reaping of the harvest, and protection of the cattle.

When read against the backdrop of Mesopotamian rural culture, Brock's Lead talisman takes on new significance. More specifically, this talisman cracks open a novel window into the ritual economy of Mesopotamian rural communities, which was largely based on the negotiation and exchange of material needs supplied by clergy for ritual resolution of daily-life crises. Interestingly though, the ritual object deploys a typology of ritual technology to protect crops that stretches back to pre-Christian Mesopotamia. More in detail, the talisman draws on the ancient practice of the *kudurru*, namely, boundary-stones inscribed with ritual formulae working as amuletic devices designed to keep away potential enemies from a cultivated area.[338] Moreover, when attending to the nature of the ritual procedure underlying Brock's talisman, further affinities with *Kudurru* emerge as the ritual

[337] Lamy, *Dissertatio*, 110–112. Englisgh translation by Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 294, no. 690.
[338] For a general overview on *Kudurru*, see Leonard W. King, *Babylonian Boundary-Stones and Memorial Tablets in the British Museum* (London: The British Museum, 1912).

object here under scrutiny seeks to protect the client's crops by calling upon the powers of the zodiacal signs. Notably, *Kudurru* worked as powerful receptacles capable of receiving the power of the zodiac, as its signs often display on their surfaces engraved emblems which scholars tend to trace back to the ancient Babylonian astral lore. Notable is indeed the deployment of the Aramaic term *malwāšin*, which directly calls upon the Akkadian form *lumāšu*:

> By the might of these three zodiacal signs (*malwāšin*), Lamb, Bull, and Two Images (*tren ṣalmin*); by the might of […]; by the might of the strength of these seven powerful verses (*peṯgāmē*) which God spoke to his Son when he created.

As Brock has pointedly observed, the reference in the text to the zodiacal signs of the Lamb, the Bull, and "Two Images" find reference in a Greek text attributed to Apollonius of Tyana, wherein these signs are credited with being representative of the spring period, spanning from mid-March to mid-June.[339] Given the overt agricultural focus of the text, the zodiacal triad is certainly linked to its perceived role in protecting the crops during a time in which the harvest was particularly vulnerable to the attacks of infesting agents. Ulla Koch-Westenholz has further observed that this grouping reaches back to ancient Mesopotamia, where a ram, a humpbacked bull, and two armed figures symbolize Aries, Taurus, and Gemini respectively. [340]

It is worth underscoring that appeals to the power of the zodiacal signs are well attested in other ritual objects from late antique Mesopotamia, including the above-mentioned amulets published by Philippe Gignoux (BnF Syr. 400/1-3) and three Aramaic incantation bowls (CBS 18059) in the Penn Museum collection. With regards to BnF Syr. 400/3, this amulet serves as a particularly insightful comparandum, for it rests on a ritual schema that

[339] Brock, "A Protective Lead Talisman," 318.
[340] Ulla Koch-Westenholz, *Mesopotamian Astrology: An Introduction to Babylonian & Assyrian Celestial Divination* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1995), 164.

closely parallels Brock's talisman—a point to which I return in the next section.[341] Notably, the text waves together liturgical-like formulae with an extended series of adjurations calling upon the power of the Zodiac (*malwāšē*) to protect its client (lines 35-44): "I adjure you […] by the race of the Bull (*šarbaṯ tawrā*) […] by the race of the Scorpion […] by the race of the Capricorn […]." A similar deployment of astral power appears from the bowl incantation CBS 18059, which calls upon the power of the zodiacal signs to inflict constriction upon a human target: "And against him will be the constellations; his wife Mayduxt and Kumboy, and the zodiacal signs (*mlw'šh*) of their sons and daughters shall be sealed."[342] Another exemplar from the Penn collection, CBS 2923, calls upon the power of the Zodiac to bound malevolent entities: "I bind you by the bound with which were bound the seven stars and the twelve signs of the Zodiac (*mlwy'šyn*) unto the day of judgment."[343] In a similar vein, CBS 16018 appears to mention the Zodiac (*mlw'šyh*) as a protective measure for sealing the body of the client.[344] On a more general level, the persistence of astrological materials in Mesopotamian ritual objects from Late Antiquity should be heuristically understood as an insightful window onto the overlapping processes of assimilation and resistance to the Christianization of the region.[345] As presciently noticed by Siam Bhayro, this continuity was already perceptible in the intellectual world of Bardaisan of Edessa, who, in his *Book of the Laws of the Countries*, refers to the "Books of the Chaldeans," a source preserving fragments of Mesopotamian astrology:[346]

> Bardaisan said then: "Have you read the books of the Babylonian Chaldaeans (*kṯābē d-kaldāyē d-bābel*), in which it is described what influence the stars in their constellations exercise upon

[341] Gignoux, *Incantations magique syriaque*, 48–53.
[342] Text and German translation in Christa Müller-Kessler, *Die Zauberschalentexte in der Hilprecht-Sammlung, Jena* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), 100 (no. 33b). See also Müller-Kessler, "Aramäische Beschwörungen und astronomische Omina in nachbabylonischer Zeit. Das Fortleben mesopotamischer Kultur im Vorderen Orient," in *Babylon: Focus mesopotamischer Geschichte, Wiege früher Gelehrsamkeit, Mythos in der Moderne*, ed. Johannes Renger (Berlin: Saarbrücker Druckerei & Verlag, 1999), 427–443.
[343] Text and translation in James Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (Philadephia: University Museum), 133–138.
[344] Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, 195–200.
[345] See for instance Moriggi and Bhayro, *Studies in the Syriac Magical Traditions*, 40–46.
[346] Moriggi and Bhayro, *Studies in the Syriac Magical Traditions*, 42.

> the horoscopes of men? And the books of the Egyptians, in which all the different things that may befall people are described?"

Furthermore, the Mandaean *Asfar Malwašia* ("Book of the Signs of the Zodiac"), dated by Christa Müller-Kessler to the second or first half of the third century CE, attests to the same process: the slow migration of Babylonian cosmology into the conceptual worlds of Mandaic religion.[347]

Alongside elements reaching back to the ancient Mesopotamian lore, the talisman presents formulae that deliberately imitate Christian liturgy. As Brock's analysis of the artifact has brought into relief, its textual scaffolding is built around formulaic expressions appearing in liturgical materials, particularly the Syriac baptismal rite attributed to Timothy of Alexandria.[348] Significantly, these liturgical formulae appear as the foundational linguistic elements that structure the ritual, functioning as outlines for textual construction. In order, in the introducing formula "by the might of these zodiacal signs" (*b-tuqpā d-malwāšin*), the Syriac term *tuqpā* ("might") resonates closely with the formula *b-šmā taqipā d-alāhā* in Timothy's baptismal rite. Furthermore, this formula is followed by the expression "To you I speak (*'āmarnā lāk*)," which displays linguistic elements converging with exorcistic formulae employed in Timothy of Alexandria's baptismal liturgy. Moreover, the talisman displays further expressions paralleling the baptismal ordo, including the participle *ršimin*, "marked", which recalls the anointing of baptismal candidates with the sacred oil, the holy *Myron*, as well as the expression "bring to completion and bless" (*šamli w-barrek*), which brings to a close the first part of the ritual procedure.

---

[347] Müller-Kessler, "The Mandaeans and the Question of their Origin," *ARAM* 16 (2004), 47–60, at 53–54. For an English translation of the *Asfar Malwašia*, see Ethel S. Drower, *The Book of the Zodiac (Sfar Malwāshia)* (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1949).
[348] See Sebastian Brock, "A New Syriac Baptismal Ordo Attributed to Timothy of Alexandria," *Le Muséon* 83 (1970): 367–431.

Even more striking appears the incorporation of scriptural quotations (Ps. 17:16 and Dan. 2:21) introduced under the heading *petgāmē* ("verses"), which usually designates practices associated with the ritual consultation of the Scriptures, including bibliomancy and, similarly, the genre of the so-called *sortes sanctorum*. As said before, a particular case of this oracular genre is referred to by Jacob of Edessa in his canonical responses to Addai:

> Addai:
> Is it permissible for a priest or a monk to "take a verse" (*msaḇ petgāmā*)[349]—whether for himself or for another person—using materials from a text known as *The Lot of the Apostles* (*pesā d-šlīḥē*) or from the Gospel, or from the Psalter, or from any other book, whatever it may be? And if it is not permitted, what consequence should befall someone who makes use of such things?
>
> Jacob:
> It is not right for a Christian to give responses of any kind—not from *The Lot*, which is falsely attributed to the Apostles but is, in truth, a work of the Evil One and his disciples; nor from the Gospel, nor from the Psalter, nor from any other book whatsoever. As for the one who engages in this practice: if he is a clergyman and refuses to abandon this error, he should be removed from his clerical rank. If he is a monk who is educated and holds any degree of ordination, he should not only be deposed but also excluded from communion for a designated period of time. The same judgment applies to a layperson.[350]

As the text lays bare, clergy perceived scriptural verses as potent venues for ritual resolution of daily crises, offering through them divinatory responses for Christian acolytes. Although this might not be the case *stricto sensu* for Brock's talisman, it is nonetheless interesting to notice how the text participates into a broader and codified ritual language in which liturgy and Scriptures became potent sources. By contrast, it appears neatly how Brock's talisman enshrined certain liturgical expressions from baptismal exorcistic rites, turning them into authoritative prompts for constructing a ritual text. In so doing, this textual and material evidence emerges as crucial evidence illustrating the emergence of Christian liturgy as a privileged linguistic realm from which to draw for framing a ritual product.

Further in this wake, an additional magical object from Late Antiquity that lends

[349] For this translation, see Becker, *Isaac of Antioch*, 481, no. 50.
[350] English translation (with modifications) by Tannous, "Syria between Byzantium and Islam," 261, no. 611.

support to this view is IBC 3, a Syriac incantation bowl held at the Bibliothèque Centrale de l'Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik (Lebanon).[351]As scholars have noted, the bowl's text exhibits striking affinities with the Syriac liturgy, pointing to the possibility that it was drawn from the section of a Syriac prayer book. I present the text below according to Moriggi's edition:

> In front of you, physician and living healer and the one who performs (acts of) goodness, he who came with the announcement of heaven and brought life to men. Put on them your holy hands, being they filled of mercies and supplied with grace, give strength to their interior man and healing which is from all external pains of the fleshes which they are dressed with, dress them of your divine arms, in order that they will be on their right (and) left sides, put on their heads helmets of life, by means of which it is abolished the strength of evil and the preparation of the Gospel which is of peace, may it be in the form of a wall raising against all darts of evil, and heal and strengthen and protect and accomplish and establish and by means of your many mercies may the name of your majesty and of your divinity be praised from now and forever and ever. Amen. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ʾʾ bbggdd hh ww zz ḥ ḥṭṭ yy kk llm [m nnn] ss ʿʿppṣṣ qqrr šštt.

Gaby Abousamra has found in the Maronite breviary compelling parallels to the bowl's text, bringing into clear definition its liturgical lore. Among these are, by way of example, the trinitarian formula, the reference to Jesus as "physician and living healer," along with the mention to the "laying of the hands." This latter may be indeed taken as the potential liturgical performative act lying behind the text, which Abousamra reads in connection to the *Pšiṭṭā* to Mt. 9:18: "My daughter is now dead; but come, lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live!" Furthermore, Joseph Sanzo and Nils Korsvoll have recently refined our understanding of this text by bringing into relief how it draws heavily upon a pool expressions found in the *Pšiṭṭā* to Eph. 6: 10-17.[352] Through their comparative analysis of the two passages, Sanzo and Korsvoll have meaningfully documented a case in which a late antique practitioner engaged directly with a biblical text, altering its contents to accommodate his ritual finalities.

---

[351] Marco Moriggi, *A Corpus of Syriac Incantation Bowls: Syriac Magical Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 208–210 (no. 49). For a prior edition, see Gaby Abousamra, "Coupe de prière syriaque chrétienne," *Parole de l'Orient* 35 (2010): 27–38.
[352] Joseph Sanzo and Nils Korsvoll, "A New Testament Text on a Syriac Incantation Bowl: Eph. 6:10–17 on IBC 3," *Vigiliae Christianae* 71 (2017): 417–432.

Beyond Late Antiquity, this logic of engagement is retained. When attending to the nature of Syriac amulets from the Middle Ages, one may indeed easily notice how liturgy here emerge preeminently as a shared "grammar" for predicating ritual efficacy. Two Medieval Syriac amulets retrieved from the Qaddisha Valley (Lebanon) bear testimony to this pattern of evidence.[353] One, crafted on behalf of a certain David son of Yasmine, was found folded within the jacket sleeve of a child's mummy. The other, instead, was found within the leather pouch tied to the leather belt of a female mummy named Sitt-ad-Dar. As Gaby Abousamra, editor of the two manuscripts, has noticed, the two amulets are modulated around the same ritual matrix, opening and closing with liturgical formulae:

Amulet of David son of Yasmine	Amulet of Sitt-ad-Dar
In the name of God the Ever Living. By the names of Hanania, Azaria, Michael, and Daniel of the pit […] By the prayers of Saint Cyriacus and Cyprianus and Saint Asia and Saint Mary.	In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. The prayer and request of the triumphant Mār ʻAbdishoʻ the anchorite and the solitary who was [staying] in the mountain forty years […] In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

As one may notice, both texts weave together a compelling pool of elements from the liturgical traditions of late antique Christians, including saintly and martyr figures, along with the Three Youths of Dan. 3: 16-30. Notably, the practice of dedicating amuletic prayers to saints and martyrs, as argued by Erica Hunter, became a fully established tradition by the Middle Ages, continuing throughout the Modern periods.[354] In this respect, one monastic archive (9th-13th CE) near Bulayïq, in the Turfan Oasis (China), has handed over a wealth of

[353] Gaby Abousamra, "Two Syriac Amulets from Hadath grotto (Qadisha)", *Parole de l'Orient* 38 (2013) 213–230.
[354] See Erica Hunter, "Saints in Syriac Anathemas: A Form-Critical Analysis of Role," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 32 (1987): 83–104. See also, Sergey Minov, "The Cult of Saints and Popular Religion among Syriac Christians," in *La religion populaire des chrétiens de tradition syriaque*, ed. Sergey Minov and Alice Croq (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 2024), 247–272.

Syriac liturgical and biblical fragmentary texts, including some specimens of amuletic prayers similar to those found in Lebanon. One Mār Tamsis and Mār Cyprian are the dedicatory figures of two of them.[355]

In conclusion, through the interpretative line of enquiry developed in this section I've attempted to lay out how, in late antique Mesopotamia, started to emerge a Christian ritual discourse deeply shaped by the logics of the liturgical language. The evidentiary cases here scrutinized have thus demonstrated how certain recurring formulae of the liturgy (e.g., trinitarian formula, doxologies, baptismal ritual formulae) functioned as foundational building blocks for the construction of ritual texts. Accordingly, they have offered us a novel insight into how Christian liturgy, as a privileged linguistic and performative realm, came to organize the production of ritual knowledge in Late Antiquity.

Christianizing Late Antique Mesopotamia: Conclusions

It is here important to conclude by attempting to recapitulate the salient issues I've been dwelling on in this chapter. One of the primary aims of the discussion was to address the relative paucity of scholarly efforts toward the reconstruction of the potential socio-cultural milieu from which the extant Syriac ritual sources emerged. Accordingly, this preliminary study has highlighted the need to recontextualize certain late antique Syriac amulets within the broader cultural landscape of Christian Mesopotamia. Following on the line of enquiry developed throughout the dissertation, I have drawn on a wide spectrum of sources to illuminate, once again, the key role played by Syriac clergy in the ritual economy of late

[355] For a general overview on the Syriac manuscripts retrieved from the site, see Erica Hunter, "Syriac Manuscripts from Turfan: Public Worship and Private Devotion," in *From Ancient Manuscripts toModern Dictionaries: Select Studies in Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek*, ed. Tarsee Li and Keith Dyer (Piscataway, NJ: 2017), 77–96. See also Hunter, "Traversing Time and Location: A Prayer-Amulet to Mar Tamsis from Turfan," in *From the Oxus River to the Chinese Shores: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*, edited by Dietmar W. Winkler and Li Tang, Orientalia–Patristica–Oecumenica 5 (Zürich/Münster: LIT Verlag, 2013), 23–41; Hunter, "Syriac Prayer-Amulets from Turfan," *The Harp* 33 (2018): 413–438; Hunter, "Discovering 'Paradise' at Turfan," in *Šalmūtā Šapīrtā: Festschrift for Rifaat Y. Ebied in Honour of His Contributions to Semitic Studies*, ed. Erica Hunter (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2023), 73–86.

antique Mesopotamia. By reading amuletic texts in connection to patristic sources such as Jacob of Edessa's *Question-and-Answer* with Addai the priest and Isaac of Antioch's homiletic works, I have laid out an interpretative model rooted in the idea that Syriac clergy have been essential in the process of construction of a ritual discourse that draws on ancient Mesopotamian traditions, while reasserting them against the emerging Christian cultural framework. Toward this end, I've argued that the lexicon, symbolism, and gestures associated with Christian liturgy served as the privileged authoritative framework for the construction of a Christian ritual discourse. Through a diachronic engagement with a range of sources spanning Late Antiquity into the Middle Ages, I've attempted to shed new light on the gradual crystallization of this process across the centuries. At a more general level, this chapter corroborates the view that, by Late Antiquity, a distinct Christian ritual discourse had begun to take shape, with the structures and language of the liturgy serving as its foundational grammar.

Part II
Ecclesiastical Practitioners and Ritual Discourse

Chapter 4
Tradition and Redaction in Late Antique Magic: A "Modular Approach"

The preceding chapters have sought to illuminate the tremendous impact that liturgy had on the emergence of a Christian ritual discourse in Late Antiquity. Yet, if interrogated further, magical sources can tell us more about the cultural world of ecclesiastical practitioners. This chapter advances the claim that, by Late Antiquity, distinct traditions of ritual texts had begun to take shape, setting in motion trails of transmission that would endure well into the Middle Ages. Drawing on a diverse array of textual, visual, and material evidence, here I am to track down the perimeter of these emerging ritual traditions, shedding light upon how they were copied and transmitted among social actors and networks tied to the Christian institutional fabric. On a broader level, I posit that these emerging ritual traditions eventually coalesced into a "story-world," i.e., a reservoir of symbols, gestures, and cluster narratives that constituted the paraphernalia of a shared world of social actors operating at the intersections of "magic" and the Christian discourse. In order to solidly ground this investigation, the chapter will fasten attention on ritual sources from the corpus of the Coptic magical papyri, a body of materials that offer a critical window into these socio-cultural dynamics.

The main focus of the first section will be on the redactional strategies Christian ritual experts employed in crafting their products. When approached systematically, Coptic spells indeed exhibit clusters of stock phrases, arranged in textual units, that recurrently manifest in varying lengths, orders, adaptations, and combinations. When examined both through diachronic and synchronic perspectives, the pervasive transmission of these blocks of materials across a large number of spells suggests their integral role as the paraphernalia of social actors operating within a shared ritual world. This observed variability is indicative of their strategic deployment to suit diverse spell formats and ritual objectives. In order to best analyze these blocks of textual materials, it is crucial to adopt what I term a "modular approach" to ritual sources. The rubric "modular approach" is borrowed from Michael Swartz's recent engagement with Peter Schäfer's structural configuration of the corpus of the

late antique Jewish visionary and adjurational texts known as Hekhalot, which he organizes into modules of redactional units labeled *macroforms* and *microforms* (see further below). My use of a "modular approach" also maps onto the logics orienting Joseph Sanzo's engagement with the Gospel *Incipits* tradition—a well-known tactic in the arsenal of ritual experts, where the opening lines of the four Gospels come to be incorporated into spells and amulets as a way of indexing ritual power.[356] As Sanzo explains in his *Scriptural Incipits*, the way Gospel *Incipits* are employed in amulets from late antique Egypt presupposes a structural configuration of texts organized in thematic units that can be easily extracted and arranged alongside other textual sections.[357]

Partonomy as Taxonomy: Toward a "Modular Configuration" of Magical Sources

The view of magical sources as organized in unit-based texts has already been alluded to by scholars of ancient magic. As mentioned earlier on, Joseph Sanzo has engineered a theoretical approach for analyzing Scriptural pericopae featuring in ritual sources. This model is rooted in the working hypothesis that the extant amuletic evidence from late antique Egypt shows an approach to Scriptures (i.e., the Bible and the Gospels) based on meronymic relations between the wholes and their respective parts.[358] As Sanzo details, this part-whole relation is organized around a partonomic structure that moves from the general to the specific. According to this view, the Bible stands as a "whole" at the summit of the partonomy, while its sub-corpora (e.g., Gospels, Psalms, Prophets) occur at a lower level. Down this hierarchy are the sections of each biblical book and, yet at a lower level, select chapters, paragraphs, and sentences. Sanzo has meaningfully illustrated the extent to which this taxonomic structure becomes instrumental in approaching scriptural *Incipits* in amulets from late antique Egypt.

[356] On Gospel *Incipits*, see Joseph Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).
[357] Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits*, 47–52.
[358] On this issue, see in particular Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits*, 24–53.

Scriptural *Incipits* in Egyptian amulets are consistent with the fact that, in Late Antiquity, people would have encountered the Bible through formats such as the lectionary; to wit, collections of portions of scriptural texts (e.g., portions sourced from the Gospels, from the Old Testament, from the Prophets, or from individual Psalms) collected and organized around a common theme.[359] The way Gospel *Incipits* are employed in amulets presupposes a structural configuration of texts organized in thematic units that can be easily extracted and arranged alongside other textual sections:

> I contend that in late antique Egypt the scriptural "wholes" containing ritual power were limited to individual thematic units. These units could range partonomically from entire psalms or narrative/apophthegmatic items to single verses or phrases and could be "tapped" in various ways, from direct citation to visual depiction to creed-like summaries. [360]

By way of example, Sanzo's extensive examination of the occurrences of MT PS 91:1 (LXX Ps 90:1) along with the *Incipits* of the Gospels in magical sources lends support to this view, shedding light upon how these scriptural passages were extensively employed in a range of different combinations by Christian ritual specialists.[361] At a more general level, Sanzo's analysis attest to how a unit-based view of scriptures betrays a specific bent of the mind of late antique ritual specialists.[362]

On the front of Jewish studies, Peter Schäfer's modular approach to Hekhalot has underscored the advantages of adopting a partonomic configuration of this body of literature, organized in larger and smaller redactional units named *macroforms* and *microforms.*[363] Investigations on Hekhalot informed by this approach have illuminated how the partonomic

[359] See Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits*, 30ff.
[360] Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits*, 26.
[361] Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits*, 47–52.
[362]Sanzo *Scriptural Incipits*, 70–72.
[363] On the definition of *macroform* and *microform*, see Peter Schäfer, "Tradition and Redaction in Hekhalot Literature." *Journal of the Study of Judaism* 14, n.2 (1983): 172–81. For a general overview on this body of literature, see Ra'anan Boustan, "The Study of Hekhalot Literature—Between Religious Experience and Textual Artifacts," *Currents in Biblical Research* 6 (2007): 130–60.

hierarchization of these texts extends to subsidiary textual segments within a single redactional unit. This datum strongly suggests that their redactors creatively combined, juxtaposed, and arranged a vast array of anthologies of diverse materials. A pertinent example concerns *Hekhalot Rabbati* §§204-205,[364] wherein a magical adjuration addressed to the angel Suryia is sandwiched between materials from the mystical section on the great *ḥavurah*. As scholars have argued, the different style of these two paragraphs invites to conclude that the redactors of *Hekhalot Rabbati* approached their materials as unit-based textual segments that can be combined to suit different narrative and ritual ends.[365] This assumption is further buttressed by the fact that pericopae of passages from the Hekhalot have been located among the Aramaic incantation bowls. In this vein, the mutual osmosis apparent between the magical bowls and the mysticism of the heavenly palaces speaks volumes about the porous boundaries between these two literary realms and the fluctuating status of their materials.[366] Simcha Gross and Avigail Manekin-Bamberger have recently qualified this phenomenon in the domain of the Aramaic bowls as part of a process of "clustering."[367] In essence, the magic bowls bear evidence that the materials manipulated by ritual specialists were likely known in form of pericopae of texts which could be extracted and clustered together in ritual texts by social actors operating at the convergence of magic and adjoining literary genres. In particular, such pericopae feature materials stemming from diverse literary domains of rabbinic literature, including Bible,

[364] Jewish text in Peter Schäfer, Hans G. von Mutius, and Margarete Schlüter, eds., *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1981). For an english translation of the *macroform Hekhalot Rabbati*, see James R. Davila, *Hekhalot Literature in Translation: Major Texts of Merkavah Mysticism*, *Supplements to The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2013).
[365] Annalies Kuyt, *The 'Descent' to the Chariot* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995), 80–81; Ra'anan Boustan, *From Martyr to Mystic: Rabbinic Martyrology and the Making of Merkavah Mysticism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 259–64.
[366] On incantation bowls and *Hekhalot* literature see esp. Shaul Shaked, "'Peace be Upon You, Exalted Angels: on Hekhalot,' Liturgy, and Incantation Bowls." *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 3 (1995): 197–219.
[367] Simcha Gross and Avigail Manekin-Bamberger, "Babylonian Jewish Society: The Evidence of the Incantation Bowls," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 112 (2022): 1–30.

liturgy, Mishnah, Talmud, Hekhalot, Midrashim, alongside typical ritual narratives such as the *geṭ* formula for divorcing demons.[368]

In dialogue with these recent scholarly insights, I here argue that a unit-based perspective on magical texts can be advantageous for addressing both the formation of distinct clusters of recurring materials within the surviving body of ritual sources from late antique Egypt and the redactional interventions their authors implemented by drawing on their personal repertoires of tactics. These recurring blocks of textual materials will assume here the heuristic label "frame units," a rubric whose analytical rationale and significance will be fleshed out in the next section.

Ritual Paraphernalia: A Kit for Producing Spells

My investigation into the range of redactional strategies deployed by Christian ritual practitioners now requires us to grapple with the notion of "frame unit" as applied to magical sources. The rubric "frame unit" here specifically designates recurrent clusters of stock-phrases unified by a definable narrative, forming a discrete redactional unit within a larger ritual text. The borders of a frame unit are flexible and vary as to the author's specific redactional interventions, stylized to accommodate the textual unit into his ritual composition. This working definition of frame unit builds upon John Miles Foley's analysis of the Serbian healing-charm tradition known as *basma*.[369] This ritual performance was preserved and passed down by the female part of the classical Serbian extended families

[368] On this formula, see esp. Shaul Shaked, "The Poetics of Spells: Language and Structure in Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity, 1: The Divorce Formula and Its Ramifications," in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives*, ed. Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn (Groningen: Styx Publications, 1999), 173–195; Marco Moriggi, "Jewish Divorce Formulae in Syriac Incantation Bowls," *Aramaic Studies* 13, no. 1 (2015): 82–94. On the juridical context of the formula, see Siam Bhayro, "Divorcing a Demon: Incantation Bowls and BT Gittin 85b," in *The Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, ed. Mark J. Geller (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 121–131.

[369] John Miles Foley, *The Singer of Tales in Performance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 136–181. See also John Miles Foley and Barbara Kerewsky Halpern, "The Power of the Word: Healing Charms as an Oral Genre," *Journal of American Folklore* 91, no. 362 (1978): 903–924.

(*zadruga*). As Foley illustrates, frame units constitute the discrete textual sections that, arranged together, compose the structure of the ritual performance uttered by the *bajalice*, the female ritual specialist. Frame units exhibit variability contingent upon the performer's discretion in arranging and deploying his repertoire of formulae. These variations encompass the length, position, prosodic and semantic value, and ritual function the frame units assume within the spell. In addition to Foley's formulaic model, my working definition of "frame unit" draws theoretical support from structural linguistics, particularly from Lévi-Strauss's influential analysis on Oedipus myth.[370] With due caution regarding the internal specificities of the matters under comparison, what interests me of Lévi-Strauss's reading of Oedipus myth is the idea that myths, in a way tantamount to language, can be reduced to a structural configuration organized around molecular units—the "mythemes"—whose meaning arises through their pattern-dependent relations to each other. In a similar vein, frame units generate new ritual meaning through their combination and recombination within ritual texts. It is exactly this capacity for both repetition and combination intrinsic in the logics of a modular approach that shed startling light on the ritual world of late antique Egypt.

Within the spectrum of this definition of "frame unit" falls identifiable redactional units ranging from the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* and the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael*, to smaller units such as, for instance, the so-called *Adjuration of the Nine Guardians*,[371] to isolated scriptural passages including Psalm 90 (91) , the Gospel *Incipits*. Armed with this definition of frame units, time is now ripe to illustrate the principles dictating their variations. In particular, frame units exhibit a spectrum of variations subsumable under principles that I heuristically label "intertextual development" and "idiolectic variation." Starting from the first rubric, "intertextual development" designates

[370] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, trans. Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (New York: Basic Books, 1963), 206–232.
[371] On this invocation, see Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 311.

textual variations dictated by the author's own preference in arranging the materials of a frame unit.[372] In particular, intertextual developments can be circumscribed to 5 redactional interventions, respectively: conservation of materials; conflations of materials stemming from different traditions; expansion of materials; transposition of the materials' setting and order; omission of materials. Each of these redactional strategies is manifest in our case study, the abovementioned *Adjuration of the Nine Guardians*. This ritual invocation features both in London Hay 1 (EA 10391)[373]—an eighth-to-ninth-century magical formulary from Upper Egypt (Thebes?)—and in the later tenth-century magical handbook P. Heid. Kopt. 685, where it appears after the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* (see further below).[374] The two manuscripts, while drawing upon a closely related set of formulae, present two distinct versions of the same invocation:

[372] It is here in place to point out how this rubric invites comparison with the general redactional interventions scholars of the *Redaktionsgeschichte* associate with the scribal profiles that compiled and arranged the materials of the Gospels. See for instance Robert H. Stein, *Gospels and Tradition: Studies on Redaction Criticism of the Synoptic Gospels* (Michigan: Baker Book House, 1991).
[373] On London Hay 1 see Elisabeth R. O'Connell, ed., *The Hay Archive of Coptic Spells on Leather: A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Materiality of Magical Practice* (London: The British Museum, 2022).
[374] For a general overview on P. Heid. Kopt. 685 and the "Heidelberg Magical Archive," see Gardner and Johnston, *Drawing Spirits*, 45–51.

London Hay 1	P. Heid. Kopt. 685
Amanou, Phourat, Phourani, the three guardians strong in their power, these ones who watch over the body and the blood of the almighty; Bēth, Bēth, Bēthai, the three guardians strong in their power, these ones who watch over the body and the blood of the beloved son, Abiout, Karnabot, Karnabiēl, the three guardians strong in their power, these ones who watch over the body and the blood of the holy spirit […]	O Manix, Phourat, Phouranei, the Three Guardians who protect the body ⟨of⟩ the Father Almighty, may you (s.) protect my body, me, Joseph, son ⟨of⟩ Paraseu! O Abiouth, Garnabiouth, Garnabiēl, the Three Guardians who protect the body of Jesus Christ, the son ⟨of⟩ God, may you (s.) protect my body, me, NN! O Bēth, Bēthaf, Bēthaei, the Three Guardians who protect the body of the Holy Spirit, may you (s.) protect ⟨my⟩ body, me, Joseph, son ⟨of⟩ Paraseu, yea, yea!

Notably, the two textual units present the invocation to the Nine Guardians in a different order, as London Hay 1 follows the series: Amanou, Phourat, Phourani, Bēth, Bēth, Bēthai, Abiout, Karnabot, Karnabiēl. By contrast, P. Heid. Kopt. 685 invokes them in a different sequence: Manix, Phourat, Phouranei, Abiouth, Garnabiouth, Garnabiēl, Bēth, Bēthaf, Bēthaei. Furthermore, it is noteworthy to highlight how the two redactional units amalgamate and organize the entreaty to the Nine Guardians with other identifiable redactional units. Specifically, London Hay 1 combines the angelic adjuration with a liturgical-style invocation, creating a seamless and cohesive textual continuum:

> "'Amanou, Phourat, Phourani, the three guardians strong in their power, these ones who watch over the body and the blood of the almighty; Bēth, Bēth, Bēthai, the three guardians strong in their power, these ones who watch over the body and the blood of the beloved son, Abiout, Karnabot, Karnabiēl, the three guardians strong in their power, these ones who watch over the body and the blood of the holy spirit and the remnant that lies on the holy table of the son and the sign of the lamb, I beg and I entreat you and your names and your powers and your images and your amulets, that you leave every place where you are and come to me, to the place where I am, I, NN, and you come upon my offering , this one that lies before me, NN, yes, yes, quickly, quickly! […]

By contrast, the same adjuration in P. Heid. Kopt. 685 figures in a larger and more sophisticated format, centered around a crucifixion scene and a description of "God's body," interspersed with other identifiable frame units:

> I adjure you, O Nine Guardians, by the first labour pang that Mary suffered until she gave birth to Christ, the Son of God that you (s.) protect NN, yea, quickly! I adjure you, O Nine Guardians, by the suffering that the son of God experienced upon the wood ⟨of⟩ the cross that you (s.) protect the body ⟨of⟩ NN, the son ⟨of⟩ NN, yea, yea, quickly! I adjure you, O Nine Guardians, by the five nails which pierced the hands and feet of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, whose names are Sōtōr, Aretō, Tenēt, Ōtera, Rōtas, that you (s.) watch over the body of NN, yea, quickly! I adjure you, O Nine Guardians, ⟨by⟩ the vinegar and the gall that Jesus, the Son of God, tasted when he was upon the cross that you (s.) protect NN, yea, yea! I adjure you, Nine Guardians, by the three sounds that Jesus cried out until ⟨he⟩ gave the spirit ⟨into⟩ the hands of the good Father that you (s.) watch over NN, yea! I adjure you, O Nine Guardians, by the wound ⟨from⟩ the spear which was thrust in the right side of Jesus, the Son of God, when he was upon the cross – water and blood poured out – that you (s.) protect NN, yea! I adjure you, O Nine Guardians, by the three teardrops which came from, the eyes of the good Father upon the head of his son, Jesus, when he was upon the cross, that ⟨you⟩ watch over NN, yea, quickly! I adjure you, O Nine Guardians, by the holy remains that are placed upon them, the body and the blood of Jesus, the Son of God, in the Church of ⟨the⟩ Firstborn in the heavens, that you protect!
> I adjure you, O Nine Guardians, by Ōpha, the body of the Father, and Ōrphamiēl, the great finger on the right hand of the Father, and Abrasax, who measures the right hand of the Father, that you (s.) protect the body ⟨of⟩ NN, yea, yea, quickly! I adjure you, O Nine Guardians, by the two hands of the Father Almighty, whose names are Adramiēl, which is his right, Drakhaēl, which is his left, that you watch over NN, yea! I adjure you, O Nine Guardians, by the two feet of the Father Almighty, whose names are Thaōth, which is his right, Thaōtha, which is his left, that ⟨you⟩ watch over NN, yea, quickly! I adjure you, O Nine Guardians, by the four pillars that bear heaven, whose names are Sēt, Sēntas! Sēntalalas, Sēntalalia, that you protect the body ⟨of⟩ NN, yea! I adjure you, O Nine Guardians, by these blessed names, which are on the right side of the altar of the Father, which are Sabaoth, Mēthēmōn, Soumithion, Perikhē, Akramata, Taektōr, Fmiēl, Santalalia, protect NN, yea.

The observed redactional interventions strongly indicate that the authors of the spells purposefully stylized their materials to accommodate the ritual format of their compositions. This adaptation serves the dual purpose of fitting the prescribed ritual structure and effectively conveying a distinct ritual thrust. Notably, the redactors of P. Heid. Kopt. 685 created their own brand of the *Adjuration of the Nine Guardians* on behalf of a certain Joseph son of Paraseu. The subsequent crucifixion scene and depiction of "God's body" emerges as a balanced and negotiated conflation of ritual materials—including the widespread SATŌR formula and the couple *Ōrphamiēl/Ō(r)pha*, the "great finger" and "body" of God—skillfully adapted into a

coherent textual continuum.[375] As for London Hay 1, which persists as an anonymous formulary, the copyist negotiated for it a different ritual position. This is evident in the incorporation of a liturgical-style invocation appended to the appeal to the Nine Guardians. This addition is introduced by the ubiquitous *liaison*, "I beg and I entreat you and your names and your powers and your images and your amulets."[376]

This redactional agenda is corroborated by the surviving corpus of Coptic spells. As Korshi Dosoo and Markéta Preininger have noted, the frequent appearance of the Greek markers *koina* ("usual")—often abbreviated through the Coptic word *koi*—and *apologia* ("request") are interpreted as paratextual notes indicating where a reader should personalize the text.[377] An illustrating case in point is the so-called "Rossi's Tractate" (P. Biblioteca Nazionale Turin, a.IV.27),[378] a seventh-to-eighth-century Coptic codex wherein the marker *apologia* likely serves as the placeholder signaling where the text is to be personalized by the ritual expert:

> Adōnaēl, the one who is over the coming in of the Father and his coming out! —request (ⲁⲡⲟⲗⲟ)—so that you will come to me.[379]

Additionally, I recognize a partonomic hierarchization within frame units themselves. In particular, the frame unit can be organized into thematic sub-units according to a hierarchical configuration moving from general to specific. This implies, I heuristically posit, the frame unit having a sort of roughly stable core that can be expanded or shrunk by adding or

[375] Notably, the ritual specialist has applied the SATŌR formula to the nails (*nibt*) used to pierce hands and feet of Jesus Christ. See Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 313.
[376] The recursiveness of this stock-phrase and the various contexts in which it is found iterated strongly suggests that it served as a sort of *liaison* formula—which has been referred to by Korshi Dosoo through the fitting nomenclature *horkōmotos*—aimed at signaling the introduction of a new invocation (see Korshi Dosoo, "Heathen Serpents and Wingless Angels? Some Notes on Images in Coptic Magical Texts," in *The Iconography of Magic: Images of Power and the Power of Images in Ancient and Late Antique Magic*, ed. Raquel Martín Hernández [Leuven: Peeters, 2022], 131).
[377] See Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 34.
[378] Now PCM 12. Coptic Text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 172–219.
[379] Coptic Text and English translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 183.

subtracting portions of texts. For instance, we count several manuscripts that mention only names of the nine guardians (e.g., BKU I 24;[380] BKU III 387;[381] London Hay 1 and 4[382]), roughly dependent upon the fluctuant series Bēth, Bēthai, Bētha. This case invites association with Sanzo's idea of the *pars pro toto* model in scriptural *incipits*.[383] In essence, we might speculate that the isolate reference to the three guardians Bēth, Bēthai, Bētha implies a metonymic transfer designed to link the entirety of the invocation.

Complementing "intertextual development" is what Foley has termed "idiolectic variation."[384] This rubric denotes the diverse solutions negotiated by individual practitioners that draw upon a shared lexical and performative repertoire, yet enact it according to their own ritual idiom. A poignant case of "idiolectic variation" discussed by Foley involves the Slavic epic singers Mujo Kukurozović and Halil Bajgorić.[385] In portraying the epic motif of the "crying prisoner," the two poets diverge as they rely on different arsenals of formulaic expressions. While Kukurozović usually employs the two expressions "He cried out for a period of time" or "How he cried out, it was his misfortune," Bajgorić propends for the formula "[name] cried out in prison." In turn, when they want to voice the length of the prisoner's suffering, Kukurozović can either say "For three white days" or "A little week of days", while Bajgorić usually says "For two white days." As Foley points out, although the sentences share a number of features, they are framed according to the author's own arsenal of formulaic expressions. In order to summarize, we encounter an "idiolectic variation" when in a given shared linguistic medium (e.g., Coptic or Greek for Egypt) an individual ritual specialist

[380] Edition by Walter Beltz, "Die koptischen Zauberpergamente der Papyrus-Sammlung der Staatlichen Museeun zu Berlin," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete* 30 (1984): 85, no. III 13.
[381] Edition by Helmut Satzinger, *Koptische Urkunden III. Band, 2. Heft (BKU III)* (Verlag Bruno Hessling: Berlin 1967).
[382] Coptic Text and English translation by Michael Zellmann-Rohrer in Elisabeth R. O'Connell, ed., *The Hay Archive of Coptic Spells on Leather: A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Materiality of Magical Practice* (London: The British Museum, 2022).
[383] Sanzo, *Scriptural Incipits*, 20–52.
[384] On this notion, see James Miles Foley, *Traditional Oral Epic: The Odissey, Beowulf, and the Serbo-Croatian Return Song* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1990), esp. chaps. 5, 8.
[385] James Miles Foley, *The Singer of Tales in Performance*, 155–56.

employs in his product a formulaic expression carefully selected among a repertoire of formulae.

I will now illustrate how the principle of "idiolectic variation" as formulated by Foley can fruitfully be applied as an analytical tool to illuminate the variations of formulaic expressions in the frame units composing magical texts. For instance, let us examine the spectrum of "idiolectic variation" evident in the *incipits* of the following magical manuscripts:

P. Macquarie I 1[386]	London Or. 5987[387]	P. Berlin 5527[388]
I give thanks to you, and I call upon you, the Bakhiotha: The great one, who is very trustworthy, the one who is lord over the forty and nine kinds of serpents, they all being servants to him, namely, the ones who are in the abyss and under (?) the air, the deaf and the blind, those who can hear and (those) who can see. It is your fear which is over them all.	I invoke you today, Baktiotha, who is trustworthy over the ninth kinds of serpents […]	I call upon you, Bakthiouthah: The great one who is trustworthy, the one who is set over the forty-nine races (and) kinds, and all who are servants to you; namely, the deaf and the blind and the others who are in the air, the ones that we know and the ones that we know not: The lord over them all.

The three manuscripts here under scrutiny open with an invocation directed to an angelic being named Bakhtiotha. They exhibit cases of "idiolectic variations" as the authorial personae behind the manuscripts, despite relying on a very similar group of stock-phrases,

[386] P. Macquarie I 1 is a seventh-to-eight-century Coptic parchment codex now housed in the Museum of Ancient Cultures at Macquarie University, Sydney. Text and traslation in Malcolm Choat and Iain Gardner, *A Coptic Handbook of Ritual Power*, The Macquarie Papyri 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014).
[387] London Or. 5987 is a Coptic magical papyrus dated between 501 and 650 CE. Text and translation in Choat and Gardner, *A Coptic Handbook of Ritual Power*, 107–114.
[388] P. Berlin 5527 is a sixth-to-seventh-century Coptic ritual papyrus. For text and translation, see Choat and Gardner, *A Coptic Handbook of Ritual Power*, 115–117.

negotiated their own version of the invocation to the supernal being through diverse formulaic expressions, emphasis, narrative flourish, and semantic coloring.

Below, I will take a preliminary step toward drawing a checklist of frame units that routinely appear in ritual manuscripts marked by Christian institutional mediation. This list does not pretend to be complete and exhaustive, but it aims at sketching the emergence of distinct Christian ritual traditions and the networks within which these circulated and were transmitted over time. Toward this end, I will adopt a working nomenclature indebted to that developed by Dosoo and Preininger, who have designed a genre-based approach to the surviving corpus of Coptic ritual manuscripts.[389] They indeed identify distinct formal genres among the Coptic ritual manuscripts, each characterized by its own constellation of redactional strategies and intertextual sources. Building on this organizing framework, I distinguish three main categories of ritual texts: magical liturgies; first-person exorcistic prayers; scriptural amulets. Far from being an exhaustive taxonomy, this scheme will serve as a heuristic map for tracking the development of frame units across the Christian ritual landscape of late antique and early medieval Egypt.

1. Magical liturgies:

   This category encompasses frame units whose contents show striking alignment with lexical, visual, and gestural registers commonly found in Christian liturgy. These include formulaic phrases that deliberately imitate the Eucharistic anaphora, sacred substances such as water, oil, and wine, alongside the employment of material accoutrements such as the sacred chalice. In both register and form, these texts aim to replicate the ritual atmosphere of Christian liturgy. Notable redactional units within

[389] See Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 22–26.

this category are: the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael*;[390] the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* (see further below); the *Adjuration of the Nine Guardians*.

2. First-person exorcistic prayers:

   As Dosoo and Preininger have observed, this typology of spells possesses an enduring tradition that survived well into the Middle Ages. These texts are typically constructed around a first-person voice—usually a saint or martyr—who addresses demonic powers and malevolent forces with a typical exorcistic tone. In Coptic magic, the representative frame unit pertaining to this category is the *Prayer of Gregory*[391]

3. Scriptural amulets:

   This third category involves redactional units whose contents are passages sourced from biblical and extra-biblical texts, and from liturgical anthologies of *sacred names*. The ritual efficacy of these words and names lies in their scriptural authority, which is activated by inscribing them on amuletic devices. The most frequently attested redactional units of this kind are: the Gospel *Incipits*; *Psalm* 90 (91); the *Jesus-Abgar correspondence*;[392] the *Seven*

[390] On the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael*, see part I, chapter 2 above.
[391] On the *Prayer of Gregory*, see Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 109–172. See also Joseph Sanzo, "At the Crossroads of Ritual Practice and Anti-Magical Discourse in Late Antiquity: Taxonomies of Licit and Illicit Rituals in Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 and Related Sources," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 14, no. 2 (2019): 230–254. For a Greek parallel of this textual tradition, see Dom A. Strittmatter, "Ein griechisches Exorcismusbüchlein: Ms. Car. C 143b der Zentralbibliothek in Zürich." *Orientalia Christiana* 20 (1930): 169–178; Strittmatter, "Ein griechisches Exorcismusbüchlein: Ms. Car. C 143b der Zentralbibliothek in Zürich." *Orientalia Christiana* 26 (1932): 125–144.
[392] On the *Jesus-Abgar correspondence* in magical texts, see references in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 151. On its widespread usage on amulets and inscriptions from monastic contexts, see Roxanne Bélanger Sarrazin, *Medicine, Magic, Miracle: The Role of Monks and Monasteries in Healthcare in Late Antique and Early Islamic Egypt* (paper presented at the Remus Seminar, University of Oslo, 2023).

Sleepers of Ephesus;[393] the *Forty Martyrs of Sebaste*;[394] the *Twenty-Four Presbyters*;[395] the couple *Orphamiel*/*O(r)pha*;[396] the *Adjuration of the Nine Guardians*.

In this checklist, I've thus included mobile cluster narratives representing discrete redactional units that circulated across texts of varying length, format, and ritual purpose. These cluster narratives routinely appear under different renditions—expanded, compressed, juxtaposed, modified—across ritual manuscripts from late antique Egypt. Their recurrence suggests the formation of distinct ritual traditions that circulated and were perpetuated within networks of social actors attached to Christian institutions. In the following section, I turn to two illustrative case studies: MS Leiden AMS 9 and the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"*. The former—a sixth-to-eighth-century Coptic magical handbook—appears to have functioned as a sort of working manual from which ritual specialists would excerpt and adapt individual frame units in their own brand of amulets or spells. The significance of this manuscript lies precisely in its modular structure, bearing evidence that ritual specialists crafted their materials on the basis of guideline prompts. The *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos*,*"* by contrast, exhibits a long trajectory of transmission, surviving in versions of different lengths, format, and narrative structure. The fluidity and adaptability of its materials stand as enduring testament to its status as a living literary tradition, perpetuated through always new performative reconfigurations.

[393] On the occurences of the *Seven Sleepers of Ephesus* as magical names see Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 167.
[394] On the *Forty Martyrs of Sebaste*, see Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 169.
[395] On the powers of the *Twenty-Four Presbyters*, see Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 487–488. See also Joseph Sanzo, "The 24 Presbyters in Hay 1 (British Museum EA 10391): Ritual Practice and Biblical Reception at the Intersection of Inscription, Materiality, and Gesture," *Civiltà e Religioni* 9 (2023): 43–62.
[396] On the couple *Orphamiel*/*O(r)pha*, see Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 205. See also, Richard L. Gordon, "Charaktêres between Antiquity and Renaissance: Transmission and Re-invention," in *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*, ed. Véronique Dasen & Jean-Michel Spieser (Florence: SISMEL / Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2014), 253-300.

1. MS Leiden AMS 9: A Working Manual for Ritual Specialists

MS Leiden AMS 9 serves as a proof of concept for the utility of a "modular approach" to ancient magical sources. As I will explain further below, an investigative approach that organizes ritual sources into discrete modules of texts is beneficial for illuminating the operative logics by which late antique ritual experts copied and adapted ritual texts. As mentioned earlier, MS. Leiden AMS 9 is a sixth-to-eighth-century Coptic magical handbook from the Theban area that clusters together a series of textual units widely attested across the Coptic magical corpus. Although its precise provenance remains unknown, Roxanne Bélanger Sarrazin has astutely observed that the material and paratextual features of MS. Leiden AMS 9 suggests that this ritual manuscript is best at home within a monastic setting. More specifically, she argues that certain features of the codex—particularly the Alexandrian majuscule hand, the impagination, the paratextual features, and the beautiful leather cover—corroborates its potential monastic origin.[397] These formal features, in tandem with the nature of its textual contents, strongly suggest that the codex may have served as a ritual compendium intended for use by ritual practitioners, likely monks or other minor clerics (e.g., deacons, priests) serving in monastic settings.[398] As such, Leiden AMS 9 appears to have been a sort of working manual, namely, a repository of ritual materials designed to offer prompts for the composition of spells and amulets. This hypothesis has been entertained also by Theodore De Bruyn, who has stressed the significancy of the collection of materials it

[397] See Sarrazin, *Medicine, Magic, Miracle*, 13.
[398] See also Joseph Sanzo, "At the Crossroads of Ritual Practice and Anti-Magical Discourse in Late Antiquity: Taxonomies of Licit and Illicit Rituals in Leiden, MS. AMS 9 and Related Sources," in *Magic*, *Ritual*, *and Witchcraft* 14 (2019): 230–54.

preserves.[399] I will reproduce this below according to the textual division established by Dosoo and Preininger in *Papyri Copticae Magicae*:[400]

1. p. 1 l. 1 – p. 14 l. 13: Prayer of Gregory
2. p. 14 l. 14 – p. 20 l. 5: Prayer for protection
3. p. 20 l. 6 – p. 23 l. 26: Letter of Abgar to Jesus
4. p. 24 l. 1 – p. 25 l. 23: Letter of Jesus to Abgar
5. p. 25 l. 24 – p. 28 l. 21: Prayer of Judas Cyriacus
6. p. 28 ll. 22–27: Names of Seven Sleepers of Ephesus
7. p. 29 ll. 1–22: Names of Forty Martyrs of Sebaste
8. p. 29 l. 23 – p. 30 l. 28: *Incipits* of the canonical Gospels and Psalm 90 (91)

First to be noted, each of the textual units found in Leiden AMS 9 represents widely known ritual tactics in the arsenal of ritual specialists from late antique Egypt. More in detail, the singularity of AMS 9 in its structural order, which juxtaposes textual units to form a miscellaneous collection of materials that, I surmise, were likely sourced and adapted by ritual specialists to suit the textual structure of their ritual products.[401] As such, Leiden AMS 9 operated as a ritual toolbox whose combinatory potential was creatively negotiated by ritual experts. More crucially, the structural logic of Leiden AMS 9 lends support to the notion of frame units as the foundational building blocks within a larger redactional unit. The potential monastic origins of MS Leiden AMS 9, in tandem with its peculiar textual structure and contents, provide crucial evidence to the emergence of a Christian ritual discourse rooted in a shared repository of ritual strategies. Accordingly, these ritual strategies encourage us to view magical sources as harmonized patchworks of materials skillfully selected and manipulated by ritual experts from a shared repository of ritual paraphernalia. This perspective perfectly dovetails with my investigative approach. By tracing the diverse ways in which individual frame units are adapted within ritual products, we can indeed discern the redactional

[399] Theodore de Bruyn, *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Contexts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 87.
[400] See Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 109.
[401] For Leidein AMS 9 as a miscellaneous book see for instance Armando Petrucci, "From the Unitary Book to the Miscellany," in *Writers and Readers in Medieval Italy: Studies in the History of Written Culture*, ed. Armando Petrucci, ed. and trans. Charles M. Radding (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 1–18, at 10.

strategies at play, while simultaneously appreciating the creative logics that oriented the agency of ritual experts. On this score, a unit-based perspective can thus be tremendously advantageous to map the textual architecture of magical texts.

1. The Prayer of Mary "at Bartos": Anatomy of a "Virtual Text"

Through the conventional rubric *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"*, scholars designate a group of Coptic, Greek, Arabic, and Ethiopic sources revolving around a magical prayer centering on the Virgin Mary's healing and apotropaic powers.[402]

1.1. Tracing the whereabouts of Mary "at Bartos:" The Early Scholarship on the Tradition of the Virgin's Magical Prayer

Over the course of the last quarter of the 19th century, a group of three European scholars—Ignazio Guidi, Carlo Rossi Contini, and René Basset—turned scholarly attention to a series of Arabic and Ethiopic sources centered on the account of the miracles that the Virgin Mary performed in a non-specified land named "Bartos."[403] The narrative revolves around the freeing of the apostle Matthias by the Virgin Mary, following his captivity in a placed called "Bartos" at the hands of a malevolent general named Macrinus. More in detail, the miracles performed by Mary involve the utterance of a powerful "prayer"—whose distinctive

[402] For an overview on the manuscript tradition, see esp. van der Vliet and Łajtar, *Empowering the Dead in Christian Nubia*, 128–142. For a more general overview on the traditions of the Virgin Mary in Early Christianity see Stephen J. Shoemaker, *Ancient Traditions on the Virgin Mary's Dormition and Assumption* (London: Oxford University Press, 2002); Simon Claude Mimouni, *Les traditions ancienne sur la Dormition et l'Assomption de Marie* (Leiden: Brill, 2011). For the Coptic traditions on the Virgin see Tito Orlandi, *Coptic Texts Relating to the Virgin Mary* (Rome: CIM, 2008).

[403] The interpretation of the toponym "Bartos" remains elusive and lacks a clear geographic identification. In his prescient "La Leggenda di S. Mattia a Bartos" (*Giornale della Società Asiatica Italiana* 3 [1889]: 173–179), the Italian scholar Ignazio Guidi first speculated that the toponym "Bartos" may have represented the Ethiopic rendition of the Greek ethnic label Πάρθοι, taken as the "land of the Parthians." Following on the same track, the French orientalist René Basset sustained that "Bartos" is best interpreted as the Arabic translation of the Greek Πάρθος (see René Basset, *Les Apocryphes éthiopiens* [Paris: Librairie de l'art indépendant], 1895, 3–7).

magical/apotropaic nature has been pointed out especially by Basset[404]—that Jesus himself would have taught to her mother. Ever since Guidi's 1889 article, the account of the deeds of Mary in the land of "Bartos" have become known under the label *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"*. Moreover, an additional assumption shared by the three scholars posits that the prayer reasonably emerges from a late antique Coptic original, then translated into Arabic and Ethiopic. Somewhat later, Father Angelicus Kropp arranged together in his *Oratio Mariae ad Bartos* four Coptic ritual texts (P. Jand. 9A-B, P. Heid. Kopt. 685, and London Or. 6796 [2; 3]) that feature parallel passages with the Arabic and Ethiopic versions of the Prayer and that were credited by him as being inherently connected to the tradition of the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos."*[405] At a more general level, Father Kropp's publication grounded the previous scholarship conviction that the ritual narrative associated with the magical prayer uttered by Mary at "Bartos" reaches well back into late antique Egypt. As a result, contemporary scholarship still contemplates the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* as a ritual tradition that outlived Late Antiquity, surviving well into the medieval Arabic and Ethiopic world.

1.2. A Checkered Textual Tradition: The Relationship between the Coptic, Ethiopic, and Arabic Versions of the Virgin's Magical Prayer

Subsequently to Kropp's *Oratio Mariae ad Bartos*, new influential contributions on this subject were published by Marvin Meyer, whose edition of P. Heid. Kopt. 685—a tenth-century Coptic parchment palimpsest containing a version of the prayer—considerably advanced our understanding of the textual tradition of Mary's magical prayer.[406] Later still, Jacques van der Vliet and Adam Łajtar's edition of a new specimen of the prayer has marked

[404] Basset, *Les Apocryphes éthiopiens*, 3–7.
[405] Angelicus Kropp, *Oratio Mariae ad Bartos*. *Ein Koptischer Gebetstext aus den Gießener Papyrus-Sammlungen* (Berichte und Arbeiten aus der Universitätsbibliothek Giessen, 1965).
[406] See Marvin Meyer, *The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels (P. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 685)*: *Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1996).

a watershed in the study of this ritual tradition.[407] The two scholars published a version of the prayer featuring on a wall-inscription contained in a burial vault previously unearthed in 1993 by the Polish archaeology mission in Dongola, an important Christian center in Old Nubia.[408] The tomb commemorates a certain Georgios, archbishop of Dongola, and is lodged in the Northwestern part of the monastic complex on Kom H. Notably, the northern wall hosts a Greek version of the magical prayer of the Virgin Mary "at Bartos." In their collaborative work, van der Vliet and Łajtar have challenged the previous scholarly assumption that the tradition of the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* originates in late antique Egypt, destabilizing the conviction that the prayer pertains to a unique chain of tradition transmitted down from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages. By contrast, van der Vliet and Łajtar have heuristically posited the existence of two separated textual traditions of the prayer, one labeled "Tradition A" and one "Tradition B":[409]

- Tradition A includes: the "Dongola text;" P. Heid. Kopt. 685[410]; London Or. 6796[411]; Cairo 4958[412]; P. Jand. 9 A-B.[413]
- Tradition B includes: London Or. 4714,[414] the Ethiopic witnesses,[415] and the Arabic witnesses.[416]

[407] Van der Vliet and Łajtar, *Empowering the Dead in Christian Nubia: The Texts from a Medieval Funerary Complex in Dongola* (Warsaw: JJP, 2017).
[408] See Włodzimierz Godlewski, "Crypts 1 and 2 in the Northwest Annex of the Monastery on Kom H in Dongola: Report on the Exploration in 2009," in *Polish Archeology in the Mediterranean 21*, ed. Godlewski *et al. (*Warsaw: Warsaw University Press, 2012), 338–360.
[409] See van der Vliet and Łajtar, *Empowering the Dead in Christian Nubia*, 128–39.
[410] Coptic text and translation in Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae*, 287–324.
[411] Coptic text and Translation in Kropp, *Koptische Zaubertexte*, vol. 1, 45–50.
[412] Extant only in English translation by Marvin Meyer, "Mary Dissolving Chains in Coptic Museum 4958 and Elsewhere," in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millenium*: *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies Leidein, 27 August – 2 September 2000*, ed. Mat Immerzeel and Jacques van der Vliet (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 369–76.
[413] Coptic text and translation in Kropp, *Oratio Mariae ad Bartos*, 151–57.
[414] Coptic Text and Translation in Walter Crum, "A Coptic Palimpsest," in *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 19 (1897): 210–22.
[415] French Translation in Basset, *Les Apocryphes éthiopiens*, 11–47. For the Ethiopic text, see "La redazione copta della preghiera della vergine fra i parti," *Rendiconti della reale Accademia dei Lincei* 5 (1896): 457–79.
[416] French translation in Basset, *Les Apocryphes éthiopiens*, 48–71.

While I concur with van der Vliet and Łajtar on the internal coherence of the texts grouped under the label "Tradition A", I nonetheless find the idea of tradition as applied to the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* difficult to maintain. In view of the conspicuous divergences between the different surviving versions of the prayer, I would more cautiously posit that the shared cluster narratives they incorporate certainly point toa repertoire of common narrative patterns, yet these don't necessarily attest to the existence of a textual tradition.

Turning our attention to what van der Vliet and Łajtar named "Tradition B," it is crucial to note that the early medieval Coptic text of London Or. 4714 doesn't feature any reference to the land of "Bartos," nor to the freeing of the apostle Matthias, rendering the later Ethiopic and Arabic texts the only evidence that includes such narrative units.[417] In contradiction to van der vliet and Łajtar, I'm more inclined to interpret London Or. 4714 as belonging to "Tradition A," as the text possesses redactional units pertaining to this grouping

[417] Another Italian scholar, Carlo Rossi Contini, turned scholarly attention to a Coptic fragment of the apocryphal tradition on the *Life of the Virgin Mary* (MS Borg. CXVIII; see "La redazione copta della preghiera della vergine fra i parti," *Rendiconti della reale Accademia dei Lincei* 5 [1896]: 457–79). According to Rossi Contini, this fragment would further attest to the existence of a Coptic tradition of the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"*. However, besides a conversant depiction of the Mary as a supernal being judging humankind, the unique element that directly calls upon the "Bartos" account is the mention to the governor "Magrinus" (ⲙⲁⲅⲣⲓⲛⲟⲥ), which figures in the Ethiopic and Arabic versions. Nonetheless, the narrated events are staged in Bethlehem, not in "Bartos". This aside, direct hints at the apotropaic prayer uttered by Mary or at the account of the freeing of the apostle Matthias are notably absent. Furthermore, Conti Rossini has attempted to buttress Basset's assumption—who had already noted the presence of common Coptic ritual strategies, such as the palindrome formula SATOR—by reprojecting some sentences of the Ethiopic tradition of the prayer into Coptic. In addition to the very common Coptic *nomina sacra* Iaō, Iouō, Iaōth and *nomina gnostica* such as the Valentinian rubric βυθός, he claimed that the underlying Coptic original would contain ritual formulae such as: ϣⲱⲧⲙ ⲉⲣⲟⲓ ⲡⲁⲓⲱⲧ ⲉⲓⲉⲡⲓⲕⲁⲗⲉⲓ ⲛⲡⲉⲕⲣⲁⲛ ⲛⲁⲫⲑⲁⲣⲧⲟⲛ ⲉⲧⲁⲙ ⲡⲉ ⲙⲡⲉ ("Heed me, my Father, so that I may invoke your incorruptible name which lies in the heavens"), widely attested among Coptic magical spells. Although there's no denying that ritual strategies such as the SATŌR formula and the *nomina sacra* Iaō, Iouō, Iaōth are best at home within the religious context of Roman Egypt, their extensive outreach and circulation across this region urge us to reassess their probatory value for asserting genealogical relationships between texts and the religious traditions underlying them. In a recent contribution, Ra'anan Boustan and Joseph Sanzo (see "Christian Magicians, Jewish Magical Idioms, and the Shared Culture of Late Antiquity," *Harvard Theological Review* 110 [2017]: 217–40) have indeed cautioned against the prevalent scholarly impulse to capitalize on divine names—such as the ubiquitous Adonai, Iao, Sabaoth—to make claims on the religious affiliation of ritual experts. Although it is undeniable that a Coptic tradition on the powerful prayer uttered by Mary exerted a certain impact on the Arabic and Ethiopic versions, I believe that the elements isolated by Basset, Guidi, and Rossi Contini can be more "economically" explained as the result of the assimilation into the Ethiopic and Arabic versions of the "Bartos" account of ritual strategies that were widely circulating already in late antique Egypt.

of manuscripts.[418] Moreover, it is worth highlighting how the Arabic witnesses, although they undoubtedly share parallel passages with the Ethiopic version, they nonetheless remarkably diverge from their "prayer-style" structure. Upon closer scrutiny, the Arabic versions indeed align well with the Coptic genre known under the rubric "apostolic memoirs."[419] The texts indeed incorporate fictional cluster narratives that pertain to this widespread late antique Coptic genre. For instance, the narration starts by attributing the text to a famous Christian leader, Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386). Subsequently, they recount how the patriarch himself found the book in the "library of the apostles" and stage the subsequent events right after the resurrection of Jesus and his apparition to the twelve apostles. In the balance of these observations, I argue that there's sufficient ground to sustain that the Arabic versions are representative of a late "apostolic memoir" that crystallized around the narrative kernel of the miracles performed by the Virgin Mary in the land of "Bartos". Accordingly, the idea of a "Tradition B" becomes even more nuanced and difficult to postulate. In so doing, I more cautiously claim that the late textual sources van der Vliet and Łajtar clustered under the label "Tradition B" simply call upon a shared pool of traditions that center on the miracles of the Virgin at "Bartos," yet they constitute substantially different texts. Nonetheless, I join issue with van der Vliet and Łajtar in claiming that no Coptic tradition on the Virgin Mary at "Bartos" played a significant role in shaping the actual structure of the texts grouped as "Tradition A:"

> […] Also, the Dongola text and its closest parallels, among which are London 6796 and Heidelberg, are structurally rather far removed from the Ethiopic and Arabic prayers *ad Bartos*, in spite of a number of parallel passages. In fact, a closer look at

[418] Despite significant divergences in the language structure, the ritual mechanics of the prayer—particularly the *epiclesis* over the chalice—exhibit striking similarities with the other manuscripts of "Tradition A."
[419] On the widespread Coptic genre termed "apostolic memoirs", see esp. Joost Hagen, "The Diaries of the Apostles: 'Manuscript Find' and 'Manuscript Fiction' in Coptic Homilies and Other Literary Texts," in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millenium*: *Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies (Leiden, 27 August – 2 September 2000)*, vol. 2, ed. Mat Immerzeel and Jacques van der Vliet (Leuven: Peeters, 2004), 339–71; Pierluigi Piovanelli, "Thursday Night Fever: Dancing and Singing with Jesus in the Gospel of the Savior and the Dance of the Savior around the Cross," *Early Christianity* 3 (2012): 229–48; Alin Suciu, *The Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon*: *A Coptic Apostolic Memoir* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

> the Dongola text and its next of kin the Coptic prayer of the Virgin suggests that the Matthias narrative at no time played a role in their textual make-up.[420]

In the balance of the previous considerations, I'm inclined to believe that if a *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* ever existed as a textual tradition, this reflects a late phenomenon to which only the Arabic and Ethiopic versions strictly pertain.

In my conclusion, these two introductory chapters were aimed at clearing the way toward a better understanding of the textual evidence connected to an ostensible *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* that emerged in late antique Egypt and survived well into the Middle Ages. Toward this end, my theory argues for a deep chasm between "Tradition A" and "Tradition B," positing that a *Prayer of "Mary at Bartos"* never existed in late antique Egypt and that the cluster of texts grouped as "Tradition B" doesn't utterly reflect a textual tradition but just quite different sources that reworked and incorporated narrative patterns circulating in medieval Egypt. In the following section, I will fasten attention on the sources constituting "Tradition A."

1.3. The Greek-Coptic Magical Tradition of Mary's Prayer: A Survey of the Extant Evidence

In this paragraph, I will offer a new survey of the textual evidence that pertains to what van der Vliet and Łajtar have labeled "Tradition A." Thanks to the courtesy of Korshi Dosoo—who has shared with me images of an unpublished witness of the prayer (Collège de France 2)—I've been able to enrich the previous checklist drawn up by the two authors. To the best of my knowledge, we can currently count seven magical texts pertaining to "Tradition A," respectively featuring in: P. Heid. Kopt. 685 (Coptic; X CE); London Or. 6796 [2], [3]

[420] See van der Vliet and Łajtar, *Empowering the Dead in Christian Nubia*, 132.

(Coptic; VI-VII CE); Coptic Museum 4958 (Coptic; IV-IX CE); Collège de France 2 (Coptic; XII CE); "Dongola version" (Greek; XII CE); P. Jand. 9A-9B (Coptic; IV-IX CE); London Or. 4714 (Coptic; XI-XII CE).[421] According to van der Vliet and Łajtar, P. Jand 9A-9B (Giessen) represents the oldest witness of "Tradition A," tentatively dated between the fifth and the sixth century CE.[422] In this vein, they propose the latter half of the fifth century as the potential timeframe during which the prayer originated. Based on the customary chain of translation from Greek into Coptic, the authors contemplate the hypothesis that the prayer may have originally been composed in Greek. However, this assertion lacks substantial evidence. Overall, it is crucial to emphasize how the Greek-Coptic magical Prayer of Mary is one of the unique ritual texts that widely circulated across Coptic Egypt in two languages and different Coptic dialects over a long chronological window, extending from Late Antiquity well into early Islamic Egypt. An important point to be brought up here concerns the material support and formats through which the prayer was copied and transmitted over time. Starting from the material supports that transmitted the prayer, we count two single sheet papyrus texts (London Or. 6796 [2], [3] and Coptic Museum 4958) and one fragmentary parchment text (Collège de France 2). Additionally, P. Heid. Kopt. 685 is a twenty-page palimpsest parchment codex, while the "Dongola text" is a burial inscription. As for P. Jand. 9A-9B, Kropp's description of this specimen suggests that it contained more sheets arranged into a larger codex.[423]

As for spell format, London Or. 6796 [2], [3] persists as an isolated case of applied

[421] London Or. 4714 deserves separate considerations, as this manuscript incorporate textual elements that overlap with both the distinct features classified as Tradition A and B. Nonetheless, over against van der Vliet and Łajtar, I maintain that there are corroborating evidence tilting the scale in favor of London Or. 4714's affiliation with the texts of "Tradition A." In particular, this manuscript maintains the "eplicletic invocation" format discernible in all the texts of "Tradition A." To the contrary, this element is notably absent in the Ethiopic and Arabic versions, which distinctly exhibit a distinctively narrative structure and register.
[422] van der Vliet and Łajtar, *Empowering the Dead in Christian Nubia*, 128–36. Uncertain remains the nature of BKU I 6 (P. Berlin 8327), which shows some textual elements analogous to the textual structure of "Tradition A."
[423] Kropp, *Oratio Mariae ad Bartos*, 159.

spell containing the prayer. As for Coptic Museum 4958, its fragmentary status resists any clear classification, rendering the ritual position of this specimen quite uncertain. Special mention deserves P. Heid. Kopt. 685, which incorporates the name of an individual, Joseph son of Paraseu, alongside the general name marker NN.[424] As scholars have reasonably postulated, two potential scenarios can be conjured up to explain this exceptional case: the first maintains that the scribe reported the individual name as he directly copied the text from an applied manuscript, while the second considers it a purposeful insertion indicative of a "personalized juncture" in the manuscript.[425] Regardless of the actual circumstances, it is crucial to emphasize how both scenarios underscore the flexible formats through which the prayer circulated. These formats could be distinctly tailored to different ritual contexts, highlighting the diverse nature of its transmission. Furthermore, the "Dongola version" confronts us with another peculiar case. In particular, while the burial vault in which the prayer is inscribed commemorates Georgios, archbishop of the Christian city of Dongola, the text persists as an anonymous formulary. This datum is easily discernible by the presence of the general name marker NN, which routinely occurs in the inscription.

This quick foray into the status of affairs on the "Tradition A" of the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* has revealed the exceptional, lasting reception history of this ritual text. Its fluid transmission and readaptation over time provide an invaluable window into the reservoir of strategies used by ritual specialists for copying, transmitting, and perpetuating a ritual tradition that traces a remarkable temporal trajectory, extending from Late Antiquity well into the early Middle Ages

[424] See Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 313.
[425] See Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 313.

1.4. Anatomy of a "Virtual Text": A Modular Approach

Even the most cursory glance into the status of affairs on the Virgin's magical prayer reveals the vanity of claiming to retrieve the original version of the text. Although predicated around a shared cluster of stock-phrases and discernible redactional units, the seven versions of the prayer indeed betray substantial divergences and variations, resulting in seven distinct instantiations of the same "virtual text." In what follows, I will argue that a philologically oriented approach toward the prayer hardly accounts for the scribal personae behind this ritual tradition and its potential milieu of origins.

Accordingly, despite the versions of the prayer undoubtedly build upon a shared reservoir of cluster narratives, I argue that the idea of a textual tradition of the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* is untenable. By contrast, I will here treat the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* as a geographic designation, a "virtual region" of texts whose fluctuant materials were continually expanded and modified by the creativity of Christian ritual specialists.

A particularly interesting interpretation of the rubric "virtual" has been provided by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze, who influentially explained how "virtuality" can be conceptualized as a dimension of reality that is not actualized but possesses the potential to be so.[426] More specifically, "virtual" designates a reservoir of potentialities that can be actualized through various processes of becoming; a creative dynamism constantly generating new possibilities and variations. By contrast, "actualization" denotes the real, tangible manifestation of virtual potentialities. Deleuze's notion of "virtual" aids in configuring and addressing the fluctuant ensemble of materials labeled *Prayer of Mary at*

[426] See in particular Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minesota: University of Minesota Press, 1987).

"Bartos" and the creative, performative activities of the people that loom behind this late antique ritual tradition. In particular, this rubric elucidates the creative ways in which the prayer is integrated into ritual productions at various levels. The fluctuant and creative ways in which the materials of the prayer occur are discernible at different levels. Notably, the prayer emerges as a discrete redactional unit which, in turn, can be further divided into smaller redactional sub-units. In this vein, we could say that the prayer configures as a large frame unit obtained by the summation and arrangement of smaller yet discrete sub-units. A peculiar and instructive example is provided by the "Dongola version." This version of the prayer, featuring in the north-wall of the monastery complex in the city of Dongola, is here juxtaposed to minor frame units forming a coherent continuum. These include an exorcistic prayer labeled by van der Vliet and Łajtar *Exorcism of Solomon*, an excerpt sourced from the so-called *Conversio Cypriani* (or *Prayer of the virgin Justina*), alongside two additional redactional units: one revolving around a prayer addressed to the divine *logos*, and one including a conclusive, commendatory prayer directed by the Virgin to her son.[427] Overall, the entire textual composition featuring on the burial vault can be structured into the following frame units: *Prayer of Mary*; *Exorcism of Solomon*; *Prayer of the Virgin Justina*; *Prayer Addressing the Divine Logos*; *Prayer of Mary for the Efficacy of the Text and Concluding Doxology*.

At this juncture, it is instructive to frame the structure of the "Dongola version" in comparison with that of P. Heid. Kopt. 685. Again, in this ritual handbook the *Prayer* is juxtaposed to other redactional units configurable according to the following series:

11. p. 2 ll. 1–25 – p. 9 ll. 1–23: Prayer of Mary
12. p. 9 ll. 24–31: Recipe for exorcism
13. p. 10 ll. 1–18: Instructions for an amulet calling upon the protector of Solomon
14. p. 10 ll. 19–27: Invocation of Sator names for help and protection
15. p. 11 ll. 1–11: Recipe against bleeding
16. p. 12 l. 1–29 – p. 16 ll. 1–15: Adjuration of the Nine Guardians

[427] See van der Vliet and Łajtar, *Empowering the Dead in Christian Nubia*, 102–107.

17. p. 16 ll. 16–27 – p. 17 ll. 1–10: Formulary against bleeding
18. p. 17 ll. 11–45: Recipe for good business
19. p. 18 ll. 1–17: Recipe to heal fever

P. Heid. Kopt. 685 serves as additional evidence, showcasing the dynamic nature of the Virgin's prayer, susceptible to manipulation and inclusion in various ritual contexts. Its malleable and open redactional position is complemented by the internal structure of the ritual text, demonstrating a partonomic organization into redactional sub-units. In particular, I heuristically posit that the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* can be divided into fourteen redactional sub-units, which occur with a certain stability across the seven versions: *Opening invocation of Mary*; *Mary's Names*; *The Power of God's Name*; *Second Invocation of God in his Majesty*; *Epicletic Invocation*; *Adjuration by the Twenty-Four Elders*; *Terror of the Tyrants; Sanctus: The Throne Scene*; *Invocation of Bathuriel*; *Adjuration by the Katapetasma*; *Adjuration by the Four Luminaries*; *Adjuration by the Seven Archangels*; *Guardian Angels Prayer*.[428] The chart below is designed to show the fluctuations of the frame units within the seven versions of the prayer:

	P. Heid. Kopt. 685	MS London Or. 6796	"Dongola Version"	P. Jand. 9 A.B.	MS Cairo 4958	MS London Or. 4714	MS Collège de France 2
Opening Invocation of Mary	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mary's Names	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
The Power of God's Name	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Second Invocation of God in his Majesty	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No
Twenty-Four Elders	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

[428] The denominations of the redactional sub-units are based on van der Vliet and Łajtar's nomenclature (see Van der Vliet and Łajtar, *Empowering the Dead in Christian Nubia*, 102–107).

Terror of the Tyrants	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Sanctus: The Throne Scene	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Adjuration by the chalice	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Invocation of Bathuriel	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Instructions for Crafting the Amulet	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
Adjuration by the Katapetasma	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Adjuration by the Four Luminaries	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Adjuration by the Seven Archangels	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No
Guardian Angels Prayer	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No

The "modular approach" I've here adopted to map the textual architecture of the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* is particularly indebted to Michael Swartz's recent engagement with the corpus of the Hekhalot. In his recent *The Mechanics of Providence,* the author revisits the long-running dispute regarding the philological nature of this body of materials.[429]Addressing the issue through the insights of "New Philology," Swartz points out the instability of this literary tradition, which results from the deliberate exploration of textual variations pursued by their authors. Accordingly, the Hekhalot corpus reflects the existence of "regions of texts" rather than "stemmatic traditions," whose instability originates from the continuous expansion and re-configuration of their boundaries.[430] As Swartz further observes, to a significant degree, the entire rabbinic literature demonstrates to be impermeable to the classical Lachmannian concept of "tradition." Peter Schäfer, the figurehead of the research on

[429] See Michael Swartz, *The Mechanics of Providence* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), 200–20.
[430] Swartz, *The Mechanics of Providence*, 210.

the Hekhalot over the course of the past four decades, noted this aspect with particular poignancy:

> When I say that in most cases [an Urtext] has never existed, this is an epistemological statement based on an ontological presupposition. It does not mean that the Urtext is not "recoverable" because of the defective evidence ... but that the category "Urtext" cannot be applied to rabbinic literature.[431]

A key contribution of the New Philology paradigm has been bringing into relief the text fluidity that characterizes the transmission of late antique manuscripts passed down to us. Such "fluidity," though, manifests in various degrees. Beyond variations in isolated phrases found in parallel versions of the same account, Jewish and Christian texts from Late Antiquity can even exhibit differences that significantly affect the structure of specific cluster narratives. In this vein, Swartz's approach to the Hekhalot corpus proves beneficial to examine the reception and transmission of the Virgin's magical prayer. By applying a modular approach to the seven versions of the prayer, we may indeed observe how redactional units have been arranged, combined, juxtaposed, and modified within manuscripts. Two instructive instances of these fluctuations are provided by the frame units *Adjuration by the Four Luminaries* and *Adjuration by the Katapetasma*. These two redactional units exhibit distinct cases of "intertextual development" and "idiolectic variations," with significant expansion and modification of formulaic phrases:

Adjuration by the Four Luminaries:

P. Heid. Kopt. 685	Dongola Version
I adjure you today by the four imperishable mysteries (*mestērion natōčen*), which are	I adjure you by the 24 immutable luminaries (*analliōtous phōstēras*), of

[431] Swartz, *The Mechanics of Providence*, 202.

Daueithea, Eleleth, Ōrem, Mōsiēl, who are spread out upon the four sides of heaven!	which these are the names: Dauethiel, Lariel, Elee. Help me!

Adjuration by the Katapetasma:

P. Heid. Kopt. 685	Dongola Version	P. Jand 9A-9B
I adjure you today by the twenty-four veils (*katapetisma*) which you created in your wisdom, yea yea!	I adjure you by your veil (*katapetasmatos*) that you yourself created, aia aia aia, be my helper.	I adjure you by your 24 veils (*katapetasma*) of light within which you are!

To offer some brief comments, we might indeed note how these two redactional units evidence the existence of a tradition of formulaic phrases whose lexicon and order is significantly modified to suit various ritual contexts. For instance, the names of the four formularies, although similar, show the deliberate negotiation of the ritual specialist, who modifies and varies the text according to his own repertoire of stock phrases.

In my conclusion, in this paragraph I've posited that a "modular approach" aids in significantly illuminating the status of affairs on the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos."* In particular, a textual configuration organized into modules of redactional units allows us to think about the Virgin's prayer as a "region of texts," a "virtual localization," where clusters of evolving units can be always arranged and modified in always different combinations and variations.

2. From Text to Context: Visual Power and Apotropaic Strategies in Monastic Settings

The primary aim of this section is to demonstrate how my investigative "modular approach" to ritual sources is not confined to the realm of manuscripts. To the contrary, a substantial body of archaeological sites attests to the deployment of frame units as powerful "grapho-linguistic" techniques. With this rubric, I refer to non-semantic scribal technologies that predicate ritual efficacy on distinct traditions of graphic frames. Instances of this kind may be considered the Christian forms of sacred writing known as *nomina sacra*, as well as the so-called *kharaktēres*—i.e., letters, signs, and geometrical frames that imitate Egyptian hieroglyphs—which designate a ritual writing system which is central to ancient spells and handbooks.[432] In this particular circumstance, we have the additional case in which frame units, in virtue of their widely perceived ritual authority, are intentionally displayed on architectural and funerary surfaces, thereby activating their ritual efficacy through visual contact with visitors.

Now, my working definition of "grapho-linguistic" techniques is calibrated to account for a range of epigraphic materials uncovered at various sites across the Nile valley. These include two tombs from the site of Qasr Ibrim (Nubia), one from Ukma West (Nubia), and a grotto from Faras (Nubia), a chapel from the Theban area, and the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit. What is absolutely striking across these Egyptian sites is the consistent appearance of frame units drawn from the genre previously termed "scriptural amulets." Below is a chart that describes their contents:

[432] On *Kharaktēres* see, for instance, David Frankfurter, "The Magic of Writing in Mediterranean Antiquity," in *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 189, ed. David Frankfurter (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 626–58.

Qasr Ibrim Tomb 1	Qasr Ibrim Tomb 2	Ukma West Tomb	Faras (Nubia) Grotto	Dayr al-Dik Chapel	Bawit Monastery courtyard
Gospel *Incipits*	Gospel *Incipits*	Gospel *Incipits*	Gospel *Incipits* *Jesus-Abgar Correspondence* *Forty Martyrs of Sebaste* *Seven Sleepers of Ephesus*	Gospel *Incipits*	*Jesus-Abgar Correspondence*

The inscribed contents at these sites are, without exception, drawn from widely attested ritual formulae from Coptic ritual texts. Their occurrence in funerary and monastic contexts reinforces the thesis that these functioned as powerful ritual strategies. As scholars have indeed surmised, the presence of the Gospel *Incipits* in burial contexts is certainly linked to their apotropaic function. This also holds true for the inscription containing the *Jesus-Abgar Correspondence* at display on the courtyard's walls of the Monastery of Apa Apollo at Bawit, which was likely designed to work as a defensive measure against potential malevolent attacks to the site. Yet, the most evocative case is certainly the Faras anchorite grotto, which clusters together a remarkable number of frame units. There's no denying that the monk who inhabited this space regarded these scriptural excerpts as sources of ritual power. His deliberate decision to string together the Gospel *Incipits*, the *Jesus-Abgar Correspondence*, the *Forty Martyrs of Sebaste*, and the *Seven Sleepers of Ephesus* lends support to my assumption that Leiden AMS 9 may well have functioned as a working manual for storing and copying ritual strategies in order to suit a variety of performative and protective contexts. This hypothesis is further buttressed by an interesting personal note penned by Francis Griffith in his description of the hermit's site:

> "But the most interesting memorial that the hermit has left us is the series of Coptic texts which he painted upon the whitewashed walls in square compartments like the *pages of a book* greatly magnified."[433]

Griffith's impression captures more that the aesthetic at display; it indeed encourages us to conjure the scenario in which the anchorite was copying his texts mimicking the layout of a written exemplar. Although this rests on rather speculative grounds, it is nonetheless suggestive to imagine that he may have had at hand a ritual compendium similar to Leiden AMS 9, which potentially functioned as a sort of template for inscribing the texts on the walls of his dwelling.

In order to bring the discussion to a close, this brief section was aimed at bringing into relief the dynamic interplay between textual authority and visual effects in ritual strategies that draw on the power of Scriptures. Furthermore, the scrutinized evidence has attested to how "scriptural amulets" were cultivated and perpetuated within Christian institutional settings. In particular, their presence in settings such as tombs, chapels, and monasteries signals the emergence of institutionalized ritual strategies that formed the grammar of a Christian ritual discourse. As such, these afford a vantage point from which to speculate on the complex dynamics through which a Christian ritual discourse crystallized in late antique Egypt.

Conclusions

This chapter has developed what I heuristically term a "modular approach" to ritual sources. Building upon Sanzo's analysis of the structural logics underlying scriptural amulets from late antique Egypt, I have argued that such an investigative framework offers a new venue to interpret ritual texts as assemblages of modular redactional units tailored to be used for diverse performative finalities. As Sanzo has observed in his *Scriptural Incipits*, the structure and arrangement of ritual texts were not arbitrary but congruent with notions of ritual efficacy. This

[433] Francis L. Griffith, "Oxford Excavations in Nubia." *LAAA* 14 (1927): 57–116, at 82.

compositional architecture finds corroboration in Peter Schäfer's structural organization of the Hekhalot into variable redactional units called *macroforms* and *microforms*. The concept of "frame units," as employed throughout this chapter, seeks to capture this compositional strategy by identifying discrete, functionally oriented textual segments—often recurring across manuscripts—that were selected for insertion, extraction, or recombination. This perspective has been sharpened through the insights offered by Michael Swartz's work on the Hekhalot corpus. Drawing on the principles of "New Philology," Swartz has illuminated how the instability of this body of literature is predicated upon the purposeful exploration of textual variants pursued by their authors. When seen through this lens, the modular arrangement of frame units emerges as a deliberate compositional strategy that balances inherited tradition with situational adaptation. These textual units—e.g., Gospel *Incipits*, the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos,"* or the *Adjuration of the Nine Guardians*—were "tapped" from a shared scribal repertoire and manipulated by ritual experts with an eye toward ritual resolution of pragmatic concerns. Attending to the intersections between modularity and New Philology thus offers a novel analytical lens for understanding late antique ritual texts as the creations of scribal profiles that navigated the intersections of the oral and the written.

Chapter 5
From Performance to Text: The Interface between the Oral and the Written in Christian Magic

The range of redactional strategies that has been the focal point of the previous chapter prompts a shift in focus for the final discussion, directing attention toward broader considerations within the realm of Christian magic. In particular, my "modular approach" to Christian ritual sources has brought into sharp relief how, on the one hand, these circulated in the format of discrete redactional units and recurrently represented through a long chronological window under different instantiations, attesting to the very porous linguistic, geographic, and confessional borders across which their authors operated. On the other hand, my investigative approach has illuminated a range of textual variations that go beyond the more common visual errors committed by copyists, such as haplography, dittography, skipped lines, or misinterpreted letters. They indeed exhibit more substantial textual modifications, alterations, and readaptations that pertinently require us to investigate the potential scribal milieu in which they were crafted and disseminated.

In a recent contribution, Korshi Dosoo and Lincoln Blumell have speculated about a potential oral-written model for the transmission of magical manuscripts in Coptic Egypt.[434] Building upon David Carr's work on the biblical *Book of Proverbs*,[435] the two authors posited that the textual variations evident in the so-called "Schmidt Magical Dossier"[436]and other

[434] Lincoln H. Blumell and Korshi Dosoo, "Horus, Isis, and the Dark-Eyed Beauty: A Series of Magical Ostraca in the Brigham Young University Collection," *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 64/1 (2018): 199–258.
[435] David Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 13–36.
[436] On the Schimdt's dossier see Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 80–93. See also David Frankfurter, "The Laments of Horus in Coptic: Myth, Folklore, and Syncretism in Late Antique Egypt," in *Antike Mythen: Medien, Transformationen und Konstruktionen*, ed. U. Dill and C. Walde (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2009), 229–251.

adjacent parallel texts can be best explained as the result of scribal errors arising in the course of remembering and transmitting an oral-based tradition. While Dosoo and Blumell's argument contains some valid points, I contend that it falls short in comprehensively capturing the full range of textual variations discernible in ritual texts. Additionally, I posit that Carr's model deserves careful consideration within the specific context of the textual tradition under his scrutiny, namely that of the biblical *Book of Proverbs*. Specifically, Carr has pinpointed sets of textual variations—including abbreviation or expansion of a textual sequence, presence/absence of optional prepositions, spelling and word-order variation, or replacement of terms with slightly different rubrics—which bears the marks of the scribe's attempt to bridge an oral-derived tradition with a writing-supported training. The instantiation of this event materializes in what Carr defines "memory variants." Focusing on the *Book of Proverbs*, Carr has shown that recursive textual blocks within this body of literature underwent variations that occur when a tradent strives to reproduce a text by recalling it in his memory. As Carr has pointed out, "memory variants" lie at the conjunction of the gestures of writing and recalling sequences of passages stored in the collective memory of a cultural tradition. Again, although insightful, Carr's model rests in significant degree upon a conception of scribal tradition whose primary aim is to faithfully recover the original version of a transmitted text. As such, Carr's model hardly accounts for the whole spectrum of redactional processes discernible in ritual sources from Late Antiquity. Throughout my analysis, I've discussed manuscripts in which ritual specialists purposefully altered the sequence, vocabulary, and ritual finality of certain blocks of materials here referred to as "frame units." Expanding on Dosoo and Blumell's conclusions, I postulate that the nature of the textual variations detected in the above-surveyed materials can be best interpreted as the result of the author's active performance. The benefit of embracing the concept of "performance" rests on the assumption that ancient magic was less interested in "transmitting" than in "creating" always new iterations of the same redactional

units. In consideration of the concepts "intertextual development" and "idiolectic variation" explored in this study, we are prompted to interpret textual discrepancies as deliberate redactional interventions negotiated by ritual experts in the course of crafting their artifacts. Within this framework, the term "performance" is construed as the deliberate utilization of a shared repository of dynamic traditions, resulting in the creation of novel iterations of the same "virtual text." Through this lens, magical sources can be perceived as occupying the intersection of the oral and the written, as they emerge from the performative endeavors of authors who adeptly amalgamate techniques from both realms. T. M. Smallwood's analysis of charms transmission in early medieval England offers an insightful comparandum that helps in buttressing my working hypothesis.[437] In particular, Smallwood has argued for a mixed oral-written interpretative model to account for the diverse strategies of transmission adopted by copyists of ritual texts in medieval England. Smallwood's argument presupposes an ostensive metric of categorization by which oral and written modalities of transmission can be deduced on the ground of contents and format of the spells. As such, a short, loose-leaf spell could be indicative of an oral milieu of transmission, while longer spells appearing in different versions across diverse manuscripts could well have been subjected to written transmission. Yet, Smallwood concedes that the two poles of this spectrum can intersect in different ways. As Smallwood details, one can find cases in which different versions of a putative written charm exhibit variations inexplicable as mere scribal errors. To the contrary, Smallwood registers cases in which scribes purposefully altered sequences of words in order to produce an impact on the readers:

> And one or two charms in Middle English are so long and factually detailed that it is hard to think of them as often memorised. Nevertheless, this is written transmission with a difference. It is selective copying, and perhaps not always straightforward copying at all, since what was read in the exemplar might have had to compete with knowledge of a charm already carried in the head. The form of most charm-copies in Middle English accords very well with

[437] T. M. Smallwood, "The Transmission of Charms in English, Medieval and Modern," in *Charms and Charming in Europe*, ed. Jonathan Roper (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 11–31.

> transmission of this sort. Textually they seem in most cases to have been treated with little respect; the compiler/copyist seems to have felt entitled to rework them as he thought fit. This might involve finding fresh rhymes for old ideas.[438]

The model described by Smallwood maps onto the dynamics I've traced for late antique Egypt. In light of these considerations, the heuristic value of the rubric "performance" becomes clear when the interface between the oral and the written morphs into a fertile space for creative ritual productions.

A pressing question concerns the very connective media through which shared ritual traditions circulated among ritual experts. In this regard, the "modular approach" to ritual sources adopted in this study allows us to conceptualize a scribal context of redaction characterized by a dynamic and extensive array of textual materials readily available for collection and creative implementation in ritual texts. An instructive example in this regard is, once again, Leiden AMS 9. Both contents and format of this ritual compendium suggests it served as a working manual for ritual specialists. In particular, my assumption is that this codex was used for storing ritual texts and, at the same time, providing a template for copying them onto various formats and writing supports. In addition to this, scholars have pointed out that both script and cover of Leiden AMS 9 suggests this manuscript is best at home within a monastic milieu of production. In this vein, the modifications and readaptations apparent from the seven versions of the prayer allow room to envision ecclesiastical practitioners attached to monastic institutions as the creative hands that transmitted these traditions, and monastic libraries as the workshops wherein blocks of ritual materials were continually readapted and modified to suit new textual frames. Significantly noteworthy is the aforementioned P. Heid. Kopt. 685, a Coptic formulary dating to the tenth century CE. As seen before, recent scholarly contributions attribute this manuscript to Deacon Iōhannēs, whose scribal hand has been

[438] Smallwood, "The Transmission of Charms in English," 18.

identified as responsible for copying five additional manuscripts within the "Heidelberg Magical Archive."[439] The extensive compilation of materials found in P. Heid. Kopt. 685 provides evidence that its copyst operated within a tradition tracing back to Late Antiquity. On this ground, we are prompted to view Deacon Iōhannēs as the operative figure perpetuating a shared tradition, presumably surviving through the intermediary role of Egyptian monasteries. In a number of recent contributions, a range of scholars has particularly insisted on the fundamental role played by Egyptian monasteries in the copying, transmission, and development of Coptic literature, encompassing biblical and extra-biblical traditions, liturgy, apocalyptic literature, and elements categorized as "magic."[440] Monks indeed played a significant role throughout Late Antiquity, emerging as a formidable driving force responsible for developing and enlarging the vast "story-world" of Christian Egyptian literature. Their engagement with various literary *corpora* attests to how they perceived these spheres as ever-expanding "living traditions" from which to extract materials and rework them in new iterations.

2. Ecclesiastical Practitioners and the Emergence of a Ritual Story-World in Late Antique Egypt

At the end of the previous section, I've introduced the notion of "story-world," emphasizing the heuristic capacity of this rubric to analyze the scribal world in which magical spells and handbooks were produced and disseminated. Now, what is a "story-world"? To this question is devoted much of Sarah Iles Johnston's recent book, *The Story of Myth*, which offers a

[439] See part I, chapter 2 above.
[440] See for instance, Hugo Lundhaug, "The Fluid Transmission of Apocrypha in Egyptian Monasteries." *Coptic Culture in Context (4th-13th cent.): Cultural Landscape, Literary Production, and Manuscript Archaeology*, ed. Paola Buzi (Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 2020), 213–29. See also David Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, esp. 184–197.

compelling answer by drawing an analogy to the world of Greek mythology.[441] For Johnston, Greek myths were not isolated texts but networks within a vast cultural repository of narrative clusters. One of the hallmarks of her argument lies in the idea that Greek myths can be favorably compared to modern fan fictions. Drawing on the perspective of literary theorists such as Landy Joshua and James Phelan, Johnston envisions the Greek mythological world as a vast repository of stories that can be infinitely reworked and adapted to accommodate various reading settings. It is precisely in virtue of this combinatory capacity that Greek myths warrant the fitting nomenclature "storyworld":

> The vast range of mythological narrations Greeks contrived were tailored to suit specific audiences, during isolated circumstances, especially feast. In so doing, we can surely talk about the existence of a mythological "storyworld."[442]

Johnston's reading of the various renditions of the Oedipal mythological cycle is particularly illuminating. The more concise version of the myth found in the book 11 of Homer's *Odyssey* (11: 271-280), for instance, reasonably reflects an oral tradition familiar to a wide Greek-speaking audience. By contrast, the sophisticated version presented in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* reflects the necessity to encounter the expectations of the Athenians that flocked to the theatre of Dionysus. Despite their divergences in respective aims and purposes, both the versions of the myths sought to adapt to different recipients. As Johnston poignantly observes:

> Whether a fictional work is the creation of single mind (a novel, a poem, a stage illusion) or drawn from common cultural property (a fable, an urban legend), it can be tailored almost infinitely to suit the tasks that its narrator intends it to serve.[443]

What emerges more pointedly from Johnston's words is that every new adaptation of the myth expands both cultural universe and cognitive space in which this operates. Each new

[441] Sarah Iles Johnston, *The Story of Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018).
[442] Johnston, *The Story of Myth*, 120.
[443] Johnston, *The Story of Myth*, 84.

version of the myth thus engenders new reflections and interpretative postures toward the tale of Laio's son:

> And when it is tailored and narrated skillfully, a fictional work can present something that we have never experienced before so convincingly that our minds accept it—thus enlarging our sense of what might be possible. [444]

In a way highly consistent with this interpretative lens, Coptic ritual texts present us with distinct traditions of narrative materials that appear in different versions, format, language, and performative finalities. The above-analyzed *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* and the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael* can indeed be seen as part of the dynamic process of expansion of the biblical story-world. The extant versions of these texts always shift their narrative frame to encounter the diverse needs of the communities in which these materials were supposed to exert an impact. In this view, each new version of the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* is not solely a copy but a new scribal performance calibrated to suit shifting audiences, ritual finalities, and performative contexts. Yet all draw upon a distinct and recognizable ritual tradition—one made of liturgy, Scriptures, and apocalyptic imagination—cultivated within particular networks of readers and practitioners.

What ultimately defines such texts as integrating part of a shared story-world is the communities of readers, scribes, and practitioners that cultivated them and expanded their narrative universe. As it relates to late antique Egypt, a number of scholars converge in designating the culture of Egyptian monasticism as the fitting cultural context of mediation to account for the fluid transmission of scribal materials (e.g., liturgy, apocrypha, apocalypse, magic) evident in the manuscripts handed over to us. Chief among them is David Frankfurter, whose insistence on the central role held by monastic scribes in shaping the cultural world of Egyptian Christianity had a tremendous impact on scholarly approach

[444] Johnston, *The Story of Myth*, *Ibid.*

to this body of literature.[445] The profile along with the eclectic cultural interests of these scribes can be reconstructed on the basis of their libraries, including the Nag Hammadi codices[446] and the White Monastery Library.[447] The extra-canonical interests of the scribal profiles that composed and arranged together the materials of these collections become more and more variegated starting from the fourth century.[448] Somewhat later—by the seventh century—this phenomenon had become a major issue, as laments the monk and bishop John of Paralos in his *Homily Against Heretical Books*, wherein he takes aim at the proliferation of extra-canonical works among ecclesiastic scribes and the institutions in which they served:

> For they have written all kinds of blasphemous books, including the one called the *Investiture of Michael*, the *Preaching of John*, the *Laughter of the Apostles*, the *Teachings of Adam*, the *Counsel of the Savior*, along with the blasphemous words they have written. They have abandoned the light of the holy Scriptures of the prophets, apostles, and all the fathers, the teachers of the church who have strengthened the orthodox faith; they became strong in every virtue that pleases God. For the wicked heretics dared to read from some writings full of curses and bitterness. When simple people (*haplous*) pay heed to them in the villages and cities of Egypt, and even some serious people (*spoudaios*) listen to them, they think the words they hear are true.[449]

As the passage lays bare, the kind of social actors engaged with these books included ordinary Christians as well as people who potentially held theological literacy, whether learned laypersons or members of the clergy.[450] This scribal world has been further

---

[445] See Frankfurter, *Christianizing Egypt*, 190–192.
[446] On the potential monastic origins of the Nag Hammadi library, see Hugo Lundhaug and Lance Jenott, *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices*, *Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christen tum* 97 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015); Lundhaug and Christian H. Bull, eds., *The Nag Hammadi Codices as Monastic Books*. *Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum* 97 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022).
[447] Tito Orlandi, "The Library of the Monastery of Saint Shenute at Atripe," in *Perspectives on Panopolis: An Egyptian Town from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest*, ed. A. Egberts *et ali* (Leiden: Brill, 2002) 211–31.
[448] See for instance Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, "Canonization—a Non-Linear Process? Observing Canonization through the Christian (and Jewish) Papyri from Egypt," ZAC 12 (2008): 193–214.
[449] Arnold van Lantschoot, "Fragments coptes d'une homélie de Jean de Parallos contre les livres hérétiques," in *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati*, vol. 1, Bibbia – Letteratura Cristiana Antica (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1946), 304. English translation by Christian H. Bull and Lance Jenott in *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, vol. 2, 539–544.
[450] For a fitting comparandum that illustrates the capcacity of poorly educated laymen to engage with literate culture and ideas, see the case of Menocchio in Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

illuminated by Hugo Lundhaug, who has reinforced this scholarly line of inquiry by putting emphasis on the key role held by Egyptian monasteries as strategic workshops wherein literary materials of diverse nature were continually copied, adapted, adjusted, and disseminated across the Nile Valley. In this view, monastic scribes were thus responsible for the cultivation of narratives that expand on the biblical story-world.

A cogent case in point is the body of fictional Coptic narratives known under the label "apostolic memoirs."[451] Through this coined-label, Coptic scholars identify a coherent set of cluster narratives patterned after hidden teachings of Jesus that were penned down and preserved by the apostles. These narratives typically stage the rediscovery of a book containing such doctrines by one of the church fathers during pilgrimage to the Holy Land. As such, they are pseudonymously attributed to famous New Testamentary figures such as Peter, John, Bartholomew, or James the Just. Usually, the location of the book's retrieval varies from the house of Mary—the mother of John named Mark (Acts. 12:12)—to the library of Jerusalem, to the house of Prochorus—a disciple of John the apostle. Despite substantial divergences and variations of certain scenarios and narrative dynamics, the "apostolic memoirs" share a consonant fictional backdrop and draw on similar narrative patterns and theological motives.

One particularly interesting grouping of "apostolic memoirs" are the so-called "angelic investitures."[452] Under this label, scholars identify texts such as the *Investiture of the Archangel Michael*,[453] the *Investiture of the Archangel Gabriel*,[454] and the *Investiture of*

[451] See above p. 198 no. 415.
[452] See Hugo Lundhaug, "Fluidity and Monastic Fanfiction: The Case of the *Investiture of the Archangel Michael* in Coptic Egypt," in *The Archangel Michael in Africa: History, Cult, and Persona*, ed. Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, Alexandros Tsakos, and Marta Camilla Wright (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 59–74.
[453] For the Coptic text, see Carl Detlef and Gustav Müller, eds., *Die Bücher der Einsetzung der Erzengel Michael und Gabriel*, *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* 225–26, *Scriptores Coptici* 31–32 (Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1962), 2–61. English translation by Hugo Lundhaug in *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, vol. 2, ed. Tony Burke (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 499–552.
[454] For the Coptic text, see Detlef and Müller, *Die Bücher der Einsetzung der Erzengel Michael und Gabriel*, 62–82. English translation with introduction by Lance Jenott in *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, vol. 2, 559–79.

Abbaton.[455] The manuscripts associated to these three works were copied within monastic settings. Both the *Investiture of the Archangel Michael* and the *Investiture of the Archangel Gabriel* are part of the corpus of manuscript retrieved at Al-Hamuli, on the western edge of the Faiyum oasis. As I've explained in detail in chapter 2, this cache of manuscripts is connected to the group of scribes that served in the nearby monastery of St. Michael at Phantoou. The angelic investitures are extant in two Coptic manuscripts currently housed at the Morgan Library in New York: MS. 593—which contains the Sahidic version of the *Investiture of the Archangel Michael* and the *Investiture of the Archangel Gabriel*—and MS. 614—which contains the Faiyumic version of the *Investiture of the Archangel Michael*. As for the *Investiture of Abbaton*, the homily is preserved in a Sahidic manuscript stemming from the monastery of St. Mercurius, situated near Edfu in Upper Egypt. The three works center on the account of the investiture of the highest of God's angels to the rank of "vice-regent" of his heavenly kingdom. Within them, this role is respectively attributed to Michael, Gabriel, and Muriel (alias Abbaton). The fundamental narrative of the three homilies is predicated around three main motifs: the fall"of Satan—referred to in the text as the "First-Creature" (*arkhēplasma*)—; the enthronement of the highest of God's angels; the role of the highest angel as vice-regent of God's kingdom. The texts share a common narrative kernel, which centers on the story of the fall of Satan, yet this is negotiated in different ways in response to the various aims and circumstances the authors sought to encounter. Every angelic investiture is indeed tailored to suit the festive recurrence of the three angels. As the texts indeed inform, these were expected to be publicly read during the feast day of the three angels according to the Coptic calendar. While adhering to the same narrative "blueprint," the

[455] For the Coptic text, see Ernest A. W. Budge, *Coptic Martyrdoms in the Dialect of Upper Egypt* (London: British Museum, 1914), 225–48 (Coptic); 474–96 (English). For a more recent translation with introduction, see Alin Suciu and with Ibrahim Saweros, "The Investiture of Abbaton, the Angel of Death," in *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*, vol. 1, ed. Tony Burke and Brent Landau (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 526–54.

authors thus modified and adapted it to meet the imaginary and stimulate the pedagogical demands of those people who came to join the feast days associated with each of the three angels.

Now, traces of such apocryphal narrative motifs surface also in Coptic spells. For instance, the narrative of the fall of Satan is found in the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael*, wherein is recounted how the angel is excluded by God from the heavenly kingdom after his refusal to worship the first man, Adam:

> After we had made obeisance to Arōmakhrim—who is Adam—Satanaēl, the First-Formed One, disobeyed you, and you excluded him from your holy glory. The son of perdition, you deprived him of your holy glory. You disturbed his foundations. He brought down upon them a great sickness, until they fulfilled his wish. After that, he did violence to the men whom you created; after that, you would heal them. [456]

In a similar vein, London Hay 2 preserves another account of the Devil's transgressions, which is here embedded within an erotic spell:

> For this is the lust of Mastema scraped in a bowl, he cast it into the source of the four rivers, he bared himself in it, so that the children of men would drink of it and be filled with the lust of the Devil. NN has drunk of it, he has been filled with the lust of the Devil.[457]

Notably, this short *historiola* is linked to the apocryphal work *Questions of Bartholomew*, which preserves a similar story that recontextualizes and expands on the biblical episode of Eve's deception by the Devil.[458] In it, the Devil infuses his sweat into the Eden's waters in order to deceive Eve when he would drink of them, filling her with desire (*epithumia*). The logic of this story is congruent with one of the typical literary strategies used in fan fictions, the so-called "missing scenes."[459] This literary device is aimed at filling a narrative gap with

[456] Dosoo and Preininger, *Papyri Copticae Magicae*, 333.
[457] O'Connell, *The Hay Archive of Coptic Spells on Leather*, 119.
[458] See Nathanael G. Bonwetsch, 1897. "Die Apokryphen Fragen des Bartholomäus," in *Nachrichten von der Königl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* (Göttingen: Commissionsverlag der Dieterich'schen Universitätsbuchhandlung), 26.
[459] Bro Larsen, "Fan Fiction and Early Christian Apocrypha: Comparing Hypertextual Practices," *Studia Theologica* 73, 1 (2019): 43–59, at 9–11.

a “missing scene” of the story designed to meet the imaginative demands of a community of readers. As Kasper Bro Larsen has further pointed out, the logics underlying fan fiction stories exemplify the notion of hypertextuality developed by literary theorist Gérard Genette, which designates literary productions wherein a new story is framed by rewriting and expanding a prior text—what Genette calls the *hypotext*. In order to best capture the logics of this literary genre, Genette likens hypertextual productions to manuscript palimpsests: just as palimpsests are new literary productions grafted on a preceding literary text, so hypertexts rewrite and expand the materials of a preceding narrative universe. In both Coptic “apostolic memoirs” and the Coptic spells, this dynamic is particularly evident in their continuous process of reconfiguration, adaptation, and expansion of an already existing universe of narrative materials—that of the Bible.

Conclusions

This chapter has laid down the groundwork for approaching late antique ritual sources as products of a shared repository of symbols, images, and narrative motifs that amounted to the formation of a ritual “story-world” cultivated and expanded by scribal profiles attached to Christian institutions. It is in the combinatory logics and creative imagination of this scribal world that lies the genius of the late antique Christian cultural enterprise. This manifests in the prompt ability of scribes in redeploying symbols, images, and narrative motifs, reorienting and recontextualizing them to suit format, register, and purposes of different texts. The recollection and recontextualization of clusters of apocryphal or biblical materials could thus serve just as readily in a liturgical homily, in an apocalyptic narrative, or in a magical spell. Yet, this sprawling network of overlapping motifs, rhetorical strategies, and registers across diverse literary materials point to a very similar scribal context of mediation. As

alluded to in this chapter, these performative agendas allow us to imagine Egyptian monasteries as the fertile soils from which these variegated scribal practices sprung. The vast array of literary materials collected within these hubs—biblical and extra-biblical, liturgical, apocalyptical, and magical—were cultivated by the ecclesiastical profiles inhabiting these spaces (whether monks, priests, or deacons) to respond to the pastoral, pedagogical, and pragmatic needs of the nearby communities of acolytes who flocked to these outposts of Christian knowledge.

Conclusions
The Rise of a "Church of Magic":
Christianity and Ritual Discourse in Late Antiquity

This dissertation has sought to illuminate the interface between Christian institutional actors and the textual practices scholars usually deem "magic." Through the investigation of a wide range of textual and material objects from the late antique Mediterranean world—e.g., amulets, incantation bowls, grimoires—I've traced the hands of scribes whose work bears the stamps of ecclesiastical affiliation. These scribal profiles—monks, priests, and deacons—operated as instigators of a ritual discourse intimately tied to the Christian religious enterprise. In order to capture the complexities of these diverse social agents, I've adopted the nomenclature "ecclesiastical practitioners," which was designed to identify scribal figures whose training curriculum allowed them to navigate within and around the Christian cultural world—e.g., liturgy, Bible, apocrypha, psalms—and turn it into the foundational grammar of their ritual discourse.

As seen in chapter 1, part of these dynamics becomes apparent when investigating manuscript clusters such as the "epicletic invocations". This conventional rubric refers to a distinct range of Coptic magical manuscripts in which the language of the Eucharistic *epiclesis* is turned into a potent strategy to gain ritual efficacy. In the deliberate appropriation of textual, material, visual, and gestural elements associated with the *epiclesis*, I've shown how ecclesiastical practitioners treated Christian liturgy as a potent reservoir of ritual technologies that were differently manipulated to articulate their own brand of magical products. As such, Christian ritual experts demonstrated to participate in a shared ritual discourse in which liturgy played a key role.

Yet, ecclesiastical engagement with ritual practices extended far beyond the mere appropriation and reconfiguration of cultural elements associated with the Christian liturgical

discourse. As demonstrated in my analysis of the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael* in chapter 2 and the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* in chapter 4, Late Antiquity witnessed the emergence of distinct ritual traditions that were copied, preserved, and passed down across networks of Christian institutional settings. These long adjurations addressed to the Virgin Mary and the Archangel Michael reveal a transmission trajectory that took shape in Late Antiquity and continued well into the Middle Ages. Detailed analysis of manuscript tradition, textual composition, and scribal *milieux* of mediation allowed room to speculate about the trails of transmission that facilitated the spread of these ritual traditions across the Nile Valley. More broadly, my engagement with these two works throughout the book has been key to counter David Frankfurter's influential view that magic defines a range of beliefs and practices grafted onto the so-called "Great Tradition" of Christian authoritative discourse yet enacted *outside* their institutional settings. In stark contrast to this, the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* and the *Endoxon of the Archangel Michael* emerge as highly original ritual creations that were deeply embedded within the institutional and intellectual settings of late antique Christianity. Evidence indeed points to Egyptian monasteries as the strategic hubs in which these two traditions were copied and preserved. One particularly revealing piece of evidence, which perfectly encapsulates a central argument of this dissertation, is the version of the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* preserved within the tomb of the archbishop of Dongola, Georgios (d. 1113 CE), an important Christian center in Old Nubia. Notably, this version was penned by a minor cleric named Iohannes, who served within the monastic complex that hosted Georgios's burial vault. Both setting and possible copying of this text aid in reversing Frankfurter's idea that magic was a phenomenon cultivated on the fringes of ancient societies, sustained by the entrepreneurial activities of maverick ritual experts. To the contrary, the version of the *Prayer of Mary* preserved in Old Nubia offers clear testimony to the degree to which magical practices permeated Christian institutional spaces.

The implications of this view become clearer when we shift our focus to Christian Mesopotamia, as explored in chapter 3. Through the critical lens offered by Jacob of Edessa's canonical responses to the priest Addai, I've attempted to highlight the key role played by Syriac clergy in mediating the ritual economy of their communities of acolytes. Here, Christian sacramentals such as the Eucharistic host, the holy *Myron*, or the baptismal water are wielded as potent ritual strategies against diseases and demonic attacks, becoming also integrated into amuletic devices held on display on people's necks, within the walls of churches, or hung on sickbeds. In this vein, the idealized boundaries between sacred and domestic spaces, between private concern and public ritual, dissolve into a continuum of overlapping spheres. In this respect, Addai and Jacob's canonical dialogue brings further evidence to how institutional spaces (i.e., churches) may have been turned into designated settings for ritual activities. The sacred materials preserved in these spaces—e.g., relics of martyrs—may have also become instruments used in divinatory rituals. The explored evidence speaks to an organized ritual economy regulated by the agency of Christian ritual specialists gravitating around institutional capacities such as churches and monasteries. Once again, this calls for a critical reassessment of "magic" as expression of a rogue enterprise of freelance specialists.

But clerical engagement in ritual activities does not amount to haphazard *assemblages* of words and symbols that "tap into" an abstract and idealized discourse organized around the notion of a "Great Tradition" of ancient Christianity. Chapters 4 and 5 of this dissertation have indeed proposed a more nuanced interpretation, grounded in what I've termed a "modular approach" to ritual sources. This model configures magical texts into discrete redactional units—what I call "frame units"—that can be differently manipulated by ritual experts (e.g., combined, expanded, shrunk) to fit the redactional needs and ritual aims of their products. Through a modular approach to ritual sources, I've thus illuminated the different

redactional strategies and ritual technologies that orient the crafting of ritual products in Late Antiquity. In particular, these two chapters have sought to illuminate the originality and recurrence of ritual strategies such as the quotation of Gospel *Incipits* on amuletic devices from late antique Egypt. This strategy reveals an original approach to scriptures that was developed within circles of practitioners, becoming codified over time as a potent measure to index and exert ritual power. In a similar vein, apocryphal prayers such as the *Prayer of Gregory*, the *Prayer of Judas Cyriacus*, and the *Prayer of Mary "at Bartos"* reveal the adroit creativity of ecclesiastical practitioners in creating new ritual traditions that were passed down across the centuries. These traditions were not mere top-down reflections of the Christian Great Tradition, but active and original entrepreneurial efforts geared toward creating a shared ritual discourse centered around the Christian cultural world.

Taken together, the evidence collected in *Ecclesiastical Magic* challenges long-standing scholarly models to approach ritual sources. By stressing the originality of the Christian ritual discourse in Late Antiquity, along with the related set of strategies developed by ecclesiastical practitioners, my dissertation has prompted a reconsideration of the adequacy of Redfield's "Great Tradition vs. Little Tradition" model for approaching the world of Christian ritual specialists. The range of redactional strategies and ritual technologies adopted by Christian ritual experts in crafting their products reveal not just a mechanical readaptation of ideas drawn from a quite abstract notion of a "Great Tradition," but a creative development of traditions, tactics, and narratives that amounted to the formation of a distinct Christian ritual "story-world." And yet at a further remove, evidence of a Christian ritual discourse developed by social actors attached to Christian institutions reverses Émile Durkheim's stark separation of magic from institutional religion. By contrast, the evidence explored in this dissertation speaks to a social fabric in which Christian ritual specialists were integral agents operating at the heart of the late antique Christian enterprise.

In this spirit, the provocative notion of a "church of magic" here proposed as a counter to Durkheim's famous statement encapsulates the central claim of this work. Magic in Late Antiquity was, to a significant degree, a central aspect of the Christian institutional life, cultivated by social actors operating at its very core. It is through the traces left upon their creations that we can catch the distant echo of a world where magic stood as yet another way of indexing and channelling the power of the divine.

Bibliography

Abousamra, Gaby. 2010. “Coupe de prière syriaque chrétienne.” *Parole de l’Orient* 35: 27–38.

Abousamra, Gaby. 2013. “Two Syriac Amulets from Hadath Grotto.” *Parole de l’Orient* 38: 213–230.

Aldsworth, Fred, et al., eds. *Qasr Ibrim: The Cathedral Church*. Excavation Memoir 97. London: Egypt Exploration Society Press, 2010.

Afentoulidou, Eirini. 2021. “Ministering Spirits, Guardians, Intercessors: The Discourse of Angels in Byzantine Liturgical Texts.” In *Inventer les anges de l'Antiquité à Byzance*, edited by Delphine Lauritzen, 631–663. Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d’Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance.

Al-Jeloo, Nicholas. 2012. “Kaldāyuthā: The Spar-Sammāné and Late Antique Syriac Astrology.” *ARAM* 24: 457–492.

Arthur, Ciaran. 2013. “Ex Ecclesia: Salvific Power Beyond Sacred Space in Anglo-Saxon Charms.” *Incantatio: An International Journal on Charms, Charmers and Charming* 3.

Arthur, Ciaran. 2018. *Charms, Liturgies, and Secret Rites in Early Medieval England*. Anglo-Saxon Studies 32. Woodbridge, UK: Boydell & Brewer.

Badger, George P. 1852. *The Nestorians and Their Rituals*, vol. 1. London: Joseph Masters.

Becker, Adam H. 2024. *Isaac of Antioch: Homilies on Moral and Monastic Reform*. Writings from the Greco-Roman World 49. Atlanta: SBL Press.

Bell, David N., trans. 1983. *Besa: The Life of Shenoute*. Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications.

Beltz, Walter. 1985. "Die koptischen Zauberpapiere und Zauberostraka der Papyrus-Sammlung der Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin." *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 31.

Betz, Hans Dieter. 1992. *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells*. 2nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Betz, Hans Dieter. 2003. *The "Mithras Liturgy": Text, Translation, and Commentary*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Bhayro, Siam. 2021. "Syriac Magic and Medicine: A Near-Eastern Paradigm of Priestcraft." In *Studies in the Syriac Magical Traditions*, edited by Marco Moriggi and Siam Bhayro, 31–56. Leiden: Brill.

Blumell, Lincoln H., and Korshi Dosoo. 2018. "Horus, Isis, and the Dark-Eyed Beauty: A Series of Magical Ostraca in the Brigham Young University Collection." *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 64, no. 1: 199–258.

Bohak, Gideon. 2008. *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bonwetsch, Nathanael G. 1897. "Die Apokryphen Fragen des Bartholomäus." In *Nachrichten von der Königl. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*. Göttingen: Commissionsverlag der Dieterich'schen Universitätsbuchhandlung.

Boud'hors, Anne, and Chantal Heurtel, eds. 2016. *Les ostraca coptes de la TT 29. Autour du moine Frangé*. Études d'archéologie thébaine 3. Brussels: CReA-Patrimoine.

Boustan, Ra'anan. 2005. *From Martyr to Mystic: Rabbinic Martyrology and the Making of Merkavah Mysticism*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Boustan, Ra'anan. 2007. "The Study of Hekhalot Literature—Between Religious Experience and Textual Artifacts." *Currents in Biblical Research* 6: 130–60.

Boustan, Ra'anan, and Joseph Sanzo. 2017. "Christian Magicians, Jewish Magical Idioms, and the Shared Culture of Late Antiquity." *Harvard Theological Review* 110: 217–40.

Brakmann, Heinzgerd. 1995. "Le déroulement de la messe copte. Structure et histoire." In *L'eucharistie: célébrations, rites, piétés*, edited by Achille M. Triacca and Angela Pistoia, 107–132. Rome: C.L.V. Edizione liturgiche.

Brelaud, Simon. 2024. "Les milieux populaires ruraux et leurs pratiques religieuses dans les sources syro-orientales." In *La religion populaire des chrétiens de tradition syriaque*, edited by Sergey Minov and Alice Croq, 107–146. Études syriaques 19 (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 2024).

Brock, Sebastian. 1970. "A New Syriac Baptismal Ordo Attributed to Timothy of Alexandria." *Le Muséon* 83: 367–431.

Brock, Sebastian, et al., eds. 2011. *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*. New Jersey: Piscataway.

Brock, Sebastian, ed. 2014. *The Martyrs of Tour Ber'ain*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press.

Brock, Sebastian. 2020. “A Syriac Protective Talisman.” In *To the Madbar and Back Again: Studies in the Languages, Archaeology, and Cultures of Arabia Dedicated to Michael C.A. Macdonald*, edited by Laila Nehmé and Ahmad Al-Jallad, 309–327. Leiden: Brill.

Browe, Peter. 1930. “Die Eucharistie als Zaubermittel im Mittelalter.” *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 20: 134–154.

Brown, Peter. 1971. “The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity.” *The Journal of Roman Studies* 61: 80–101.

Brown, Peter. 1978. *The Making of Late Antiquity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Brown, Peter. 1981. *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*. Reprint, 2015. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Brown, Peter. 2023. *Journeys of the Mind: A Life in History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Browne, Gerald M. 1990. “An Old Nubian Version of the *Liber Institutionis Michaelis*.” In *Coptic Studies: Acts of the Third International Congress of Coptic Studies*, edited by Wlodzimierz Godlewski, 75–79. Warsaw: PWN.

Budge, Ernest Wallis, ed. 1893. *The Book of Governors: The Historia Monastica of Thomas, Bishop of Margâ AD 840*. London. Reprint, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003.

Budge, Ernest A. W. 1914. *Coptic Martyrdoms in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*. London: British Museum.

Budge, E. A. Wallis. 1915. *Miscellaneous Coptic Texts in the Dialect of Upper Egypt*. London: British Museum.

Burke, Tony, and Brent Landau, eds. *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*. vol. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016.

Burke, Tony, and Brent Landau, eds. *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*. vol. 2. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020.

Burke, Tony, and Rick Brannan, eds. *New Testament Apocrypha: More Noncanonical Scriptures*. vol. 3. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2023.

Burmester, O.H.E. 1967. *The Egyptian or Coptic Church: A Detailed Description of Her Liturgical Services and the Rites and Ceremonies Observed in the Administration of Her Sacraments*. Cairo: Publications de la Société d'Archéologie Copte.

Campagnano, Antonella, Antonella Maresca, and Tito Orlandi, eds. *Quattro Omelie Copte. Vita di Giovanni Crisostomo, Encomi dei 24 Vegliardi, Encomio di Michele Arcangelo di Eustazio di Tracia*. Milano: Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1977.

Caner, Daniel. 2006. "Towards a Miraculous Economy: Christian Gifts and Material 'Blessings' in Late Antiquity." *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 14, no. 3: 329–377.

Carr, David. 2011. *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible: A New Reconstruction*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Cerbelaud, Dominique. 2010. “Aspects de la Shekinah chez les auteurs chrétiens syriens.” *Le Muséon* 123, no. 1–2: 91–125.

Chase, Nathan P. 2023. *The Anaphoral Tradition in the ‘Barcelona Papyrus’*. Turnhout: Brepols.

Ciraolo, Leda, and Jonathan Seidel, eds. 2002. *Magic and Divination in the Ancient World*. Ancient Magic and Divination 2. Leiden: Brill.

Choat, Malcolm, and Iain Gardner, eds. 2014. *A Coptic Handbook of Ritual Power*. The Macquarie Papyri 1. Turnhout: Brepols.

Cohen, Shaye J. D. 2020. “Jewish Observance of the Sabbath in Bardaiṣan’s Book of the Laws of Countries.” In *Jews and Syriac Christians: Intersections across the First Millennium*, edited by Aaron Michael Butts and Simcha Gross, 89–102. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Croq, Alice, and Sergey Minov, eds. 2024. *La religion populaire des chrétiens de tradition syriaque*. Études syriaques 19. Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner.

Crum, Walter. 1897. “A Coptic Palimpsest.” In *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 19: 210–22.

D’agostino, Pietro. 2019. “On the Liturgical Memories of the Archangel Michael in the Coptic Church and Their Link with the Nile’s Rise: Some Reflections.” In *The Archangel Michael in Africa: History, Cult, and Persona*, edited by Ingvild Sælid Gilhus, Alexandros Tsakos, and Marta Camilla Wright, 51–59. London: Bloomsbury.

Daniel, Robert W., and Franco Maltomini, eds. 1990–1992. *Supplementum Magicum*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.

Dandini, Jérôme. 1884. *Voyage du Mont-Liban*. Paris: R. Pépie.

Davis, Stephen J. 2005. "Biblical Interpretation and Alexandrian Episcolal Authority in the Early Christian Fayoum." In *Christianity and Monasticism in the Fayoum*, edited by Gawdat Gabra, 45–63. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

Davis, Stephen J., Daniel Schriever, Mary Farag, and Samuel Moawad, eds. 2020. *The Feast of the Desert of Apa Shenoute: A Liturgical Procession from the White Monastery in Upper Egypt*. Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 681, Scriptores Coptici 53. Leuven: Peeters.

De Bruyn, Theodore. 2017. *Making Amulets Christian: Artefacts, Scribes, and Contexts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. 1987. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Depuydt, Leo. 1993. *Catalogue of Coptic Manuscripts in the Pierpont Morgan Library*. Leuven: Peeters.

Detlef, Carl, and Gustav Müller, eds. 1962. *Die Bücher der Einsetzung der Erzengel Michael und Gabriel*. Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 225–26, Scriptores Coptici 31–32. Louvain: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO.

Dijkstra, Jitse, and Jacques van der Vliet, eds. 2020. *The Coptic Life of Aaron: Critical Edition, Translation and Commentary*. Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae 155. Leiden: Brill.

Dochorn, Jan. 2013. “Der Sturz der Teufels in der Urzeit: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Skizze zu einem Motiv frühjüdischer Theologie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung des Luzifermythos.” *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 109: 23–42.

Dosoo, Korshi. 2014. “Rituals of Apparition in the Theban Magical Library.” PhD diss., Macquarie University.

Dosoo, Korshi. 2016. “A History of the Theban Magical Library.” *Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 53: 251–274.

Dosoo, Korshi. 2018. “Zōdion and Praxis: An Illustrated Coptic Magical Papyrus in the Macquarie University Collection.” *Journal of Coptic Studies* 20: 207–252.

Dosoo, Korshi. 2021. “Ministers of Fire and Spirit: Knowing Angels in the Coptic Magical Papyri.” In *Inventer les anges de l'Antiquité à Byzance*, edited by Delphine Lauritzen. Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d’Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance.

Dosoo, Korshi. 2021. “Healing Traditions in Coptic Magical Texts.” *Trends in Classics* 13: 44–94.

Dosoo, Korshi. 2022. “Heathen Serpents and Wingless Angels? Some Notes on Images in Coptic Magical Texts.” In *The Iconography of Magic: Images of Power and the Power of Images in Ancient and Late Antique Magic*, edited by Raquel Martín Hernández, 131. Leuven: Peeters.

Dosoo, Korshi, and Markéta Preininger, eds. 2023. *Papyri Copticae Magicae. Coptic Magical Texts, Volume 1: Formularies (PCM I 1)*. Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete – Beihefte 48. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Drijvers, Hans. 1965. *The Book of the Laws of Countries: Dialogue on Fate of Bardaisan of Edessa*. Assen: Van Gorcum & Comp.

Durkheim, Émile. 1995. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. New York–London: The Free Press.

Emmel, Stephen. 2005. "The Library of the Monastery of the Archangel Michael at Phantoou." In *Christianity and Monasticism in the Fayoum Oasis*, edited by Gawdat Gabra, 63–70. Cairo and New York: The American University in Cairo Press.

Faraone, Christopher A., and Sofía Torallas Tovar, eds. 2022. *The Greco-Egyptian Magical Formularies: Libraries, Books, and Individual Recipes*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Flemming, Johannes, ed. 1917. *Akten der Ephesinischen Synode vom Jahre 449: Syrisch mit Georg Hoffmanns deutscher Übersetzung und seinen Anmerkungen*. Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung.

Foley, James Miles. 1990. *Traditional Oral Epic: The Odyssey, Beowulf, and the Serbo-Croatian Return Song*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Foley, John Miles. 1995. *The Singer of Tales in Performance*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Frankfurter, David. 2008. "The Interpenetration of Ritual Spaces in Late Antique Religions: An Overview." *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 10, no. 1: 211–222.

Frankfurter, David. 2009. "Laments of Horus in Coptic: Myth, Folklore, and Syncretism in Late Antique Egypt." In *Antike Mythen: Medien, Transformationen und*

Konstruktionen, edited by Ueli Dill and Christine Walde, 229–247. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Frankfurter, David. 2014. "The Great, the Little, and the Authoritative Tradition in Magic of the Ancient World." *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte* 16: 11–30.

Frankfurter, David. 2016/17. "The Spaces of Domestic Religion in Late Antique Egypt." *Archiv für Religionsgeschichte*18/19: 7–24.

Frankfurter, David. 2018. "Sortes, Scribality, and Syncretism: Ritual Experts and the Great Tradition in Byzantine Egypt." In *My Lots Are in Thy Hands: Sortilege and Its Practitioners in Late Antiquity*, edited by AnneMarie Luijendijk and William E. Klingshirn, 211–231. Leiden: Brill.

Frankfurter, David. 2018. *Christianizing Egypt: Syncretism and Local Worlds in Late Antiquity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Frankfurter, David. 2019. *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*. Leiden: Brill.

Frankfurter, David. 2019. "The Magic of Writing in Mediterranean Antiquity." In *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, *Religions in the Graeco Roman World* 189, edited by David Frankfurter, 626–658. Leiden: Brill.

Frankfurter, David. 2019. "Magic as the Local Application of Authoritative Tradition." In *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, edited by David Frankfurter, 721–745. Leiden: Brill.

Frankfurter, David. 2021. "Restoring 'Syncretism' in the History of Christianity." *Studies in Late Antiquity* 5: 129–130.

Frankfurter, David. 2023. “Heavenly Liturgy and Its Materialization in Early Coptic Magical Texts.” In *Above, Below, Before, and After: Studies on Judaism and Christianity in Dialogue with Martha Himmelfarb*, edited by Ra‘anan Boustan, David Frankfurter, and Annette Yoshiko Reed, 311–329. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Freedberg, David. *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Gardner, Iain, and Jay Johnston, eds. 2023. *Drawing Spirits: The Role of Images and Design in the Magical Practice of Late Antiquity*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Gell, Alfred. 1998. *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Gignoux, Philippe. 1987. *Incantations magiques syriaques*. Collection de la Revue des Études Juives 4. Louvain: Peeters.

Ginzburg, Carlo. 1980. *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*. Translated by John Tedeschi and Anne C. Tedeschi. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Godlewski, Włodzimierz. 2000. “The Hermitage of Apa Phoibamon.” In *Civilisations du Bassin Méditerranéen: Hommages à Joachim Sliwa*, edited by Krzysztof M. Ciałowicz and Janusz A. Ostrowski, 91–98. Krakow: Université Jagellone Institut d’Archéologie.

Godlewski, Włodximierz. 2012. “Crypts 1 and 2 in the Northwest Annex of the Monastery on Kom H in Dongola: Report on the Exploration in 2009.” In *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 21, edited by Godlewski et al., 338–360. Warsaw: Warsaw University Press.

Goehring, James E. 1986. *The Letter of Ammon and Pachomian Monasticism*. Patristische Texte und Studien 27. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Golitzin, Alexander. 2003. "The Place of the Presence of God: Aphrahat of Persia's Portrait of the Christian Holy Man." In *ΣΥΝΑΞΙΣ ΕΥΧΑΡΙΣΤΙΑΣ: Studies in Honor of Archimandrite Aimilianos of Simonos Petras, Mount Athos*, edited by John Chryssavgis and Douglas C. Burton-Christie, 391–447. Athens: Indiktos.

Gordon, Richard L. 2014. "Charaktêres between Antiquity and Renaissance: Transmission and Re-invention." In *Les savoirs magiques et leur transmission de l'Antiquité à la Renaissance*, edited by Véronique Dasen and Jean-Michel Spieser, 253-300. Florence: SISMEL / Edizioni del Galluzzo.

Gross, Simcha, and Avigail Manekin-Bamberger. 2022. "Babylonian Jewish Society: The Evidence of the Incantation Bowls." *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 112, no. 2: 151–182.

Hagen, Joost. 2004. "The Diaries of the Apostles: 'Manuscript Find' and 'Manuscript Fiction' in Coptic Homilies and Other Literary Texts." In *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium: Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies*, 2 vols., edited by Jacques van der Vliet and Mat Immerzeel, 339–371. Leuven: Peeters.

Hallvard Korsvoll, Nils, and Liv Ingeborg Lied. 2016. "Enoch and Baruch: Unusual Suspects in a Syriac Amulet." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 75, no. 2: 349–359.

Han, Jae Hee. 2023. *Prophets and Prophecy in the Late Antique Near East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Harari, Yuval. 2017. *Jewish Magic before the Rise of Kabbalah*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press.

Harari, Yuval. n.d. *Ḥarba de-Moshe (The Sword of Moses): A New Edition and a Study*. Jerusalem: Academon. In Hebrew.

Heurtel, Chantal. 2008. "Le petit monde de Frangé: una microsociété dans la région thébaine au début de VIIIe siècle." In *«Et maintenant sont plus que des villages…»: Thebes et sa région aux époques hellénistique, romaine et byzantine (actes du colloque tenu à Bruxelles les 2 et 3 décembre 2005)*, 163–175. Bruxelles: Association Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth.

Hopfner, Theodor. 1932. "Mittel- und neugriechische Lekano-, Lychno-, Katoptro- und Onychomantien." In *Studies Presented to F. Ll. Griffith*, edited by S.R.K. Glanville. London: Egypt Exploration Society.

Hopfner, Theodor. 1974–2000. *Griechische-Ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber*. 3 vols. Amsterdam: Verlag Adolf M. Hakkert.

Hoyland, Robert G. 1997. *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*. Princeton: Darwin Press.

Hunter, Erica. 1987. "Saints in Syriac Anathemas: A Form-Critical Analysis of Role." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 32: 83–104.

Hunter, Erica. 2013. "Traversing Time and Location: A Prayer-Amulet to Mar Tamsis from Turfan." In *From the Oxus River to the Chinese Shores: Studies on East Syriac Christianity in Central Asia and China*, edited by Dietmar W. Winkler and Li Tang, 23–41. Orientalia-Patristica-Oecumenica 5. Salzburg: Lit Verlag.

Hunter, Erica. 2017. “Syriac Manuscripts from Turfan: Public Worship and Private Devotion.” In *From Ancient Manuscripts to Modern Dictionaries: Select Studies in Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek*, edited by Tarsee Li and Keith Dyer, 77–96. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press.

Hunter, Erica. 2018. “Syriac Prayer-Amulets from Turfan.” *The Harp* 33: 413–438.

Hunter, Erica. 2023. “Discovering ‘Paradise’ at Turfan.” In *Šalmūtā Šapīrtā: Festschrift for Rifaat Y. Ebied in Honour of His Contributions to Semitic Studies*, edited by Erica Hunter, 73–86. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press.

Immerzeel, Mat, and Jacques van der Vliet, eds. 2004. “Mary Dissolving Chains in Coptic Museum 4958 and Elsewhere.” In *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium: Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies Leiden, 27 August – 2 September 2000*, 369–376. Leuven: Peeters.

Johnson, Maxwell E. 1995. *The Prayers of Sarapion of Thmuis: A Literary, Liturgical, and Theological Analysis*. Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale.

Johnson, Maxwell E. 2010. *Liturgy in Early Christian Egypt*. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press.

Johnston, Jay. 2017. “Esoteric Aesthetics: The Spiritual Matter of Intersubjective Encounter.” In *Aesthetics of Religion: A Connective Concept*, edited by Alexandra K. Grieser and Jay Johnston, 349–365. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Johnston, Jay. 2019. “Binding Images: The Contemporary Use and Efficacy of Late Antique Ritual Sigils, Spirit-Beings and Design Elements.” In *New Antiquities: Transformations of Ancient Religion in the New Age and Beyond*, edited by Dylan Michael Burns and Almut-Barbara Renger, 254–274. London: Equinox.

Johnston, Jay, and Gardner. 2020. “Relations of Image, Text and Design Elements in Selected Amulets and Spells of the Heidelberg Papyri Collection.” In *Bild und Schrift auf ‘magischen’ Artefakten*, edited by Sarah Kiyanrad, Christoffer Theis, and Laura Willer, 97–122. Materiale Textkulturen 19. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Johnston, Sarah Iles. 2008. *Ancient Greek Divination*. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.

Johnston, Sarah Iles, and Peter T. Struck, eds. 2005. *Mantikê: Studies in Ancient Divination*. Leiden: Brill.

Johnston, Sarah Iles. 2018. *The Story of Myth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kropp, Angelicus. 1931. *Ausgewählte koptische Zaubertexte*, vol. 1. Brussels: Édition de la Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth.

Kaplan, Steven. 1984. *The Monastic Holy Man and the Christianization of Early Solomonic Ethiopia*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag.

Kayser, Carl, ed. 1886. *Die Canones Jacob’s von Edessa: Übersetzt und erläutert*. Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs.

King, Daniel, ed. 2019. *The Syriac World*. London: Routledge.

King, Leonard W. 1912. *Babylonian Boundary-Stones and Memorial Tablets in the British Museum*. London: The British Museum.

Kropp, Angelicus. 1965. *Oratio Mariae ad Bartos. Ein Koptischer Gebetstext aus den Gießener Papyrus-Sammlungen*. Berichte und Arbeiten aus der Universitätsbibliothek Giessen.

Kropp, Angelicus. 1966. *Der Lobpreis des Erzengels Michael (vormals P. Heidelberg inv. Nr. 1686)*. Brussels: Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth.

Kur, Stanislas, ed. and trans. 1972. *Actes de Marḥa Krestos*. Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 330, Scriptores Aethiopici 62. Louvain: Secrétariat du Corpus SCO.

Kuyt, Annalies. 1995. *The 'Descent' to the Chariot*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Łajtar, Adam and Jacques van der Vliet, *Qasr Ibrim: The Greek and Coptic Inscriptions*. Warsaw: Raphael Taubenschlag Foundation, 2020.

Łajtar, Adam, and Krzysztof Pluskota. "Inscribed Vessels from the Monastery of the Holy Trinity at Old Dongola." In *Dongola-Studien: 35 Jahre polnischer Forschungen im Zentrum des makuritischen Reiches*, edited by Stefan Jakobielski and Peter O. Scholz, . Bibliotheca Nubica et Aethiopica 7. Warsaw: ZAŚ PAN, 2001, 169–251.

Lamy, T. J. 1859. *Dissertatio de Syrorum fide et disciplina in re eucharistica*. Louvain.

Lamy, Th. J. 1886. *Sancti Ephraem Syri Hymni et Sermones*, II. Mechliniae: H. Dessain.

Łaptaś, Magdalena. 2019. "The Position of the Archangel Michael within the Celestial Hierarchy: Some Aspects of the Manifestation of His Cult in Nubian Painting." In *The Archangel Michael in Africa: History, Cult, Persona*, edited by Ingvid Sælid Gilhus, Alexandros Tsakos, and Marta Camilla Wright, 95–107. London–New York–New Delhi–Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic.

Łaptaś, Magdalena. 2021. “The Apotropaic Function of the Archangels in Nubian Art,” in *Inventer les anges de l’Antiquité à Byzance*, edited by Daniel Lauritzen, 504–506. Paris: Association des Amis du Centre d’Histoire et Civilisation de Byzance.

Leipoldt, Johannes. 1906. *Sinuthii Archimandritae Vita et Opera Omnia*. Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium 41–42, Scriptores Coptici 2. Paris: E Typographeo Reipublicae.

Lesses, Rebecca. 1996. “Speaking with Angels: Jewish and Greco-Egyptian Revelatory Adjuration Rituals.” *Harvard Theological Review* 89, no. 1: 41–60.

Lesses, Rebecca. 1998. *Ritual Practices to Gain Power: Angels, Incantations, and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism*. Harvard Theological Studies 44. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International.

Levene, Dan. 2005. “Jewish Liturgy and Magic Bowls.” In *Studies in Jewish Prayer*, edited by R. Hayward and B. Embry, 163–184. Oxford.

Love, Edward O. D., and Michael W. Zellmann-Rohrer. eds. 2022. *Traditions in Transmission:The Medical and Magical Texts of a Fourth-Century Greek and Coptic Codex (Michigan MS. 136) in Context*. Archiv für Papyrusforschung und verwandte Gebiete– Beihefte 47. Berlin: De Gruyter.

Luijendijk, AnneMarie. 2014. *The Gospel of the Lots of Mary: Christian Divination in Late Antiquity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Luijendijk, AnneMarie. 2018. “‘Thy Are Your Lots’: Lot Divination and Books in Early Christianity.” Leiden: Brill.

Lundhaug, Hugo. 2020. “The Fluid Transmission of Apocrypha in Egyptian Monasteries.” In *Coptic Literature in Context (4th–13th cent.): Cultural Landscape, Literary Production, and Manuscript Archaeology*, edited by Paola Buzi, 213–229. Rome: Edizioni Quasar.

Lundhaug, Hugo, and Lance Jenott. 2015. *The Monastic Origins of the Nag Hammadi Codices*. Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 97. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Malara, Diego Maria. 2022. “Sympathy for the Devil: Secrecy, Magic and Transgression among Ethiopian Orthodox Debtera.” *Ethnos* 87, no. 3: 444–462.

Marriott, McKim. 1955. “Little Communities in an Indigenous Civilization.” In *Village India: Studies in the Little Community*, edited by McKim Marriott, 171–222. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mercier, Jacques. 1979. *Ethiopian Magic Scrolls*. Translated by Richard Pevear. New York: George Braziller.

Mercier, Jacques. 1997. *Art That Heals: The Image as Medicine in Ethiopia*. New York: Museum for African Art.

Meyer, Marvin. 1996. *The Magical Book of Mary and the Angels (P. Heid. Inv. Kopt. 685): Text, Translation, and Commentary*. Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter.

Meyer, Marvin W., and Richard Smith, eds. 1999. *Ancient Christian Magic: Coptic Texts of Ritual Power*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Meyer, Marvin. 2004. “Mary Dissolving Chains in Coptic Museum 4958 and Elsewhere.” In *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium: Proceedings of the Seventh*

International Congress of Coptic Studies, Leiden, 27 August – 2 September 2000, edited by Mat Immerzeel and Jacques van der Vliet, 369–376. Leuven: Peeters.

Mihálykó, Ágnes. 2019. *The Christian Liturgical Papyri: An Introduction*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Mihálykó, Ágnes. 2021. "Healing in Christian Liturgy in Late Antique Egypt: Sources and Perspectives." *Trends in Classics* 13, no. 1: 154–194.

Miljković, Bojan. 2018. "Semantra and Bells in Byzantium." *Zbornik radova Vizantološkog instituta* 55: 271–303.

Minov, Sergey. 2024. "Syriac Christians and Popular Religion in Early Ottoman Mesopotamia: The Testimony of Abū al-Maʿānī." *Aramaic Studies* 22, no. 2: 243–259.

Minov, Sergey. 2024. "The Cult of Saints and Popular Religion among Syriac Christians." In *La religion populaire des chrétiens de tradition syriaque*, edited by Sergey Minov and Alice Croq, 247–272.

Mingana, Alphonse, ed. 1908. *The Book of the Main Events by John bar Penkaye*. Sources Syriaques, vol. 1. Leipzig: Harrassowitz.

Moriggi, Marco. 2015. "Jewish Divorce Formulae in Syriac Incantation Bowls." *Aramaic Studies* 13, no. 1: 82–94.

Moriggi, Marco. 2014. *A Corpus of Syriac Incantation Bowls: Syriac Magical Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia*. Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity, vol. 3. Leiden: Brill.

Moriggi, Marco. 2016. "'And the Impure and Abominable Priests Fled for Help to the Names of the Devils': Amulets and Magical Practices in Syriac Christian Culture between Late Antiquity and the Modern World." *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 19: 371–384.

Müller-Kessler, Christa. 2004. "The Mandaeans and the Question of Their Origin." *ARAM* 16: 47–60.

Müller-Kessler, Christa. 2005. *Die Zauberschalentexte in der Hilprecht-Sammlung, Jena*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Nagel, Svenja. 2017. "'Was im Tempel passiert, bleibt nicht (mehr) im Tempel': Transformationen von ägyptischem Tempelritual und rituellem Raum in den Praktiken der demotischen und griechischen magischen Papyri." In *Der ägyptische Tempel als ritueller Raum: Theologie und Kult in ihrer architektonischen und ideellen Dimension. Akten der internationalen Tagung, Haus der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, 9.–12. Juni 2015*, edited by Stefan Baumann and Holger Kockelmann, 507–536. Studien zur spätägyptischen Religion 17. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag.

Nau, François, ed. 1906. *Les canons et les résolutions canoniques: de Rabboula, Jean de Tella, Cyriaque d'Amid, Jacques d'Édesse, Georges des Arabes, Cyriaque d'Antioche, Jean III, Théodose d'Antioche et des Perses: traduits pour la première fois en français*. Paris: Letouzey et Ané.

Naveh, Joseph, and Shaul Shaked. 1985. *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press; Leiden: E.J. Brill.

Naveh, Joseph, and Shaul Shaked. 1993. *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press.

Nichols, Stephen G. 2016. "Mutable Stability, a Medieval Paradox: The Case of *Le Roman de la Rose*." *Queeste* 23, no. 2: 71–103.

Nyord, Rune. 2020. *Seeing Perfection: Ancient Egyptian Images beyond Representation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

O'Connell, Elisabeth R., ed. 2022. *The Hay Archive of Coptic Spells on Leather: A Multidisciplinary Approach to the Materiality of Magical Practice*. London: The British Museum.

Orlandi, Tito. 1985. *Shenute: Contra Origenistas* (Roma: C. I. M.).

Orlandi, Tito. 2002. "The Library of the Monastery of Saint Shenute at Atripe." In *Perspectives on Panopolis: An Egyptian Town from Alexander the Great to the Arab Conquest*, edited by A. Egberts et al., 211–231. Leiden: Brill.

Orlandi, Tito. 2008. *Coptic Texts Relating to the Virgin Mary* (Rome: CIM).

Lagarde, Paul de, ed. 1856. *Reliquiae Juris Ecclesiastici Antiquissimae, Syriace*. Leipzig: Teubner.

Preisendanz, Karl, ed. 1973–1974. *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die Griechischen Zauberpapyri*. 2nd ed., 2 vols. Stuttgart: B. G. Teubner.

Perry, Samuel. 1881. *The Second Synod of Ephesus, Together with Certain Extracts Relating to It, from Syriac Manuscripts Preserved in the British Museum, and Now First Edited: English Version*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Peterson, Erik. 1948. “Die Zauber-Praktiken eines syrischen Bischofs.” *Miscellanea Pio Paschini* 1: 95–102.

Peterson, Erik. 1959. “Die geheimen Praktiken eines syrischen Bischofs.” In *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis: Studien und Untersuchungen*, 333–345.

Petrucci, Armando. 1995. “From the Unitary Book to the Miscellany.” In *Writers and Readers in Medieval Italy: Studies in the History of Written Culture*, edited and translated by Charles M. Radding, 1–18. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Pezin, Michel. 1982. “Les manuscrits coptes inédits du Collège de France.” In *Écritures et traditions dans la littérature copte*. *Cahiers de la Bibliothèque Copte*. Leuven: Peeters.

Piovanelli, Pierluigi. 2012. “Thursday Night Fever: Dancing and Singing with Jesus in the Gospel of the Savior and the Dance of the Savior around the Cross.” *Early Christianity* 3: 229–248.

Quack, Joachim. 2011. “From Ritual to Magic: Ancient Egyptian Precursors of the *Charitesion* and Their Social Setting.” In *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, edited by Gideon Bohak, Yuval Harari, and Shaul Shaked, 43–84. Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 15. Leiden: Brill.

Quecke, Hans. 1972. “Palimpsestfragmente eines Koptischen Lektionars.” *Le Muséon* 85: 5–24.

Rebiger, Bill, ed. 2010. *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim: Buch vom magischen Gebrauch der Psalmen. Edition, Übersetzung und Kommentar*. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 137. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Reeves, John C. 2005. *Trajectories in Near Eastern Apocalyptic: A Postrabbinic Jewish Apocalypse Reader*. Leiden: Brill.

Richter, Tonio Sebastian. 2014. "Neue koptische medizinische Rezepte." *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde* 141: 154–194.

Rochard, Héléna. 2021. "Le trône divin et les quatre Vivants dans la peinture égyptienne (VIe–XIIIe siècle)." In *Inventer les anges de l'Antiquité à Byzance: conception, représentation, perception*, edited by D. Lauritzen, 435–458. Travaux et Mémoires 25/2. Paris.

Rodriguez Suarez, Alex. 2024. "The Semantron to Western Ears: Othering Through Sound." *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 48, no. 2 (October): 235–252.

Roig Lanzillotta, Lautaro, and Jacques van der Vliet, eds. and trans. 2022. *The Apocalypse of Paul (Visio Pauli) in Sahidic Coptic: Critical Edition, Translation and Commentary*. *Vigiliae Christianae* Supplements 178. Leiden: Brill.

Rossi Contini, Carlo. 1889. "La Leggenda di S. Mattia a Bartos." *Giornale della Società Asiatica Italiana* 3: 173–179.

Saint-Paul Girard, Louis. 1927. "Un fragment de liturgie magique copte sur ostrakon." *Annales du Service des antiquités de l'Égypte* 27: 62–68.

Sanzo, Joseph. 2016. *Scriptural Incipits on Amulets from Late Antique Egypt*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Sanzo, Joseph. 2019. “At the Crossroads of Ritual Practice and Anti-Magical Discourse in Late Antiquity: Taxonomies of Licit and Illicit Rituals in Leiden, Ms. AMS 9 and Related Sources.” *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 14, no. 2: 230–254.

Sanzo, Joseph, and Nils Korsvoll. 2017. “A New Testament Text on a Syriac Incantation Bowl: Eph. 6:10–17 on IBC 3.” *Vigiliae Christianae* 71: 417–432.

Sanzo, Joseph. 2024. *Ritual Boundaries: Magic and Differentiation in Late Antique Christianity*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press.

Satzinger, Helmut, and Pieter J. Sijpesteijn. 1988. “Koptisches Zauberpergament Moen III.” *Le Muséon* 101: 51–63.

Schäfer, Peter, Hans G. von Mutius, and Margarete Schlüter, eds. 1981. *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*. Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum 2. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Schäfer, Peter. 1983. “Tradition and Redaction in Hekhalot Literature.” *Journal of the Study of Judaism* 14, no. 2: 172–181.

Schäfer, Peter. 1996. “Jewish Liturgy and Magic.” In *Judentum – Forschungen und Probleme: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag*, edited by Hubert Cancik, Hermann Lichtenberger, and Peter Schäfer, 541–556. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Schäfer, Peter, and Shaul Shaked, eds. 1997. *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*. Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum 64, vol. 1. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Schäfer, Peter. 2011. *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Shaked, Shaul. 1995. "'Peace be Upon You, Exalted Angels': On Hekhalot, Liturgy, and Incantation Bowls." *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 3: 197–219.

Shaked, Shaul. 1999. "The Poetics of Spells: Language and Structure in Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity, 1: The Divorce Formula and Its Ramifications." In *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretative Perspectives*, edited by Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn. Groningen: Styx Publications.

Shelemay, Kay Kaufman. 1992. "The Musician and Transmission of Religious Tradition: The Multiple Roles of the Ethiopian Däbtära." *Journal of Religion in Africa* 22, no. 3: 242–260.

Smallwood, T. M. 2004. "The Transmission of Charms in English, Medieval and Modern." In *Charms and Charming in Europe*, edited by Jonathan Roper, 11–31. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Struck, Peter T. 2004. *Birth of the Symbol: Ancient Readers at the Limits of Their Texts*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Suciu, Alin. *The Berlin-Strasbourg Apocryphon: A Coptic Apostolic Memoir*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017.

Swartz, Michael D. 1996. *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish* Mysticism. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Swartz, Michael 2005. "Understanding Ritual in Jewish Magic: Perspectives from the Genizah and Related Sources." In *Officina Magica*: *Essays on the Practice of Magic in Antiquity*, edited by Shaul Shaked, 233–253, at 242–243. Leiden: Brill.

Swartz, Michael. 2018. *The Mechanics of Providence*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Tambiah, Stanley Jeyaraja. 1970. *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Tannous, Jack. 2010. "Syria between Byzantium and Islam: Making Incommensurables Speak." PhD diss., Princeton University.

Tannous, Jack. 2018. *The Making of the Medieval Middle East: Religion, Society, and Simple Believers*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Tibet, David. "The Investiture of the Archangel Michael: A Diplomatic Edition of the Coptic Text of P. IFAO ff. 145–148." MA thesis, Macquarie University, 2009.

Teule, Herman. 2008. "Jacob of Edessa and Canon Law." In *Jacob of Edessa and the Syriac Culture of His Time*, edited by B. ter Haar Romeny, 83–101. Leiden: Brill.

Valerio, Francesco. 2020. "Scribes and Scripts in the Library of the Monastery of the Archangel Michael at Phantoou: Two Case Studies." In *Coptic Literature in Context (4th–13th cent.): Cultural Landscape, Literary Production, and Manuscript Archaeology*, edited by Paola Buzi, 63–77. Roma: Edizioni Quasar.

van Lantschoot, Arnold. 1929. *Recueil des colophons des manuscrits chrétiens d'Égypte. Tome 1: Les colophons coptes des manuscrits sahidiques*. Louvain: J.-B. Istas.

van Lantschoot, Arnold. 1946. "Fragments coptes d'une homélie de Jean de Parallos contre les livres hérétiques." In *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati*, vol. 1, *Bibbia – Letteratura Cristiana Antica*, 304. Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana.

Vööbus, Arthur. 1970. *Syrische Kanonessammlungen: Ein Beitrag zur Quellenkunde, I: Westsyrische Originalurkunden, 1, B*. CSCO 317: Subsidia 38. Louvain.

Walters, J. Edward. 2020. "Anti-Jewish Rhetoric and Christian Identity in Aphrahaṭ's Demonstrations." In *Jews and Syriac Christians: Intersections across the First Millennium*, edited by Aaron Michael Butts and Simcha Gross, 291–320. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Young, Allan. 1975. "Magic as a 'Quasi-Profession': The Organization of Magic and Magical Healing Among Amhara." *Ethnology* 14, no. 3: 245–265.

Zanetti, Ugo. 2009. "La liturgie dans les monastères de Shenoute." *Le Muséon* 122, no. 3–4: 259–292.

Zanetti, Ugo, and Stephen J. Davis. 2016. "Liturgy and Ritual Practice in the Shenoutean Federation." In *The Red Monastery Church: Beauty and Asceticism in Upper Egypt*, edited by Elizabeth S. Bolman, 27–35. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Zheltov, Mikhail. 2008. "The Anaphora and the Thanksgiving Prayer from the Barcelona Papyrus: An Underestimated Testimony to the Anaphoral History in the Fourth Century." *Vigiliae Christianae* 62, no. 5: 467–504.