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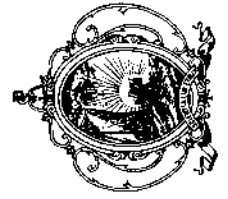
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PEETERS

WHAT ATHENS HAS TO DO
WITH JERUSALEM

ESSAYS ON CLASSICAL, JEWISH, AND
EARLY CHRISTIAN ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY
IN HONOR OF GIDEON FOERSTER

BY

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JEWISH MAGICIANS AND CHRISTIAN CLIENTS
 IN LATE ANTIQUITY: THE TESTIMONY OF
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INTRODUCTION¹

In recent decades, historians and students of Judaism in Late Antiquity and the early Byzantine age have been taking increasing interest in magic. This is evident from the large number of publications that analyze rabbinic traditions on the subject² or that seek to understand the material relics of magical activities, namely, the different kinds of amulets, in particular those with more or less readable inscriptions.³ Such research goes hand in hand with renewed interest

¹ I am honored to contribute to this Festschrift for Gideon Foerster. This paper is a revised version of a lecture delivered at the Society of Biblical Literature & American Academy of Religion Annual Meeting (Boston, November 20-23 1999). My deepest thanks to Leonard V. Rutgers, who invited me to the Consultation and to the SBL Program Committee for their generous travel award.

² G. Veltri, "Defining Forbidden Foreign Customs: Some Remarks on the Rabbinic Halakhah of Magic," in *Proceedings of the Eleventh World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: The World Union of Jewish Studies, 1994), C1:25-32; M. Bar-Ilan, "Exorcism by Rabbinic Talmudic Sages and Magic," *Da'at* 34 (1995): 17-31 (in Hebrew); J. Seidel, "Charming Criminals: Classification of Magic in the Babylonian Talmud," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (ed. M. Meyer and P. Mirecki; Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 129; Leiden: Brill, 1995), 145-66; B. Kern-Ulmer, "The Depiction of Magic in Rabbinic Texts: The Rabbinic and the Greek Concept of Magic," *JSl* 27 (1996): 289-303; M. D. Swartz, *Scholastic Magic, Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1996); P. Schäfer, "Jewish Liturgy and Magic," in *Geschichte, Tradition, Reflexion. Festschrift für M. Hengel* (ed. H. Cancik, H. Lichtenberger, and P. Schäfer; Tübingen: Mohr, 1996), 1:541-55; G. Veltri, *Magie und Halakha. Ansätze zu einem empirischen Wissenschaftsbegriff im spätantiken und frühmittelalterlichen Judentum* (TSAJ 62; Tübingen: Mohr 1997); B.-Z. Rosenfeld, "Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai – Wonder Worker and Magician, Scholar, *Saddiq* and *Hasid*," *REJ* 158 (1999): 349-84.

³ J. Navch and S. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls. Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1987?); Eid., *Magic*

in the so-called cultural 'interaction' between Jews and Christians in different fields of everyday life: in the arts or in the domains of language and social organization.⁴ However, relatively few studies have dealt with the modalities of production of magic tools and with the varieties in approach by the different kinds of clients, be they Jewish, Christian or pagan.⁵

While little information on this topic can be found in rabbinic literature, it seems that, at first glance, such information is abundantly available in Christian sources. It is important to stress, though, that the use of the latter requires great caution: in this literature the distinction between fiction and history is not always a clear one. Therefore, information that can be drawn directly from archaeological remains (in the broadest possible sense of the word) is particularly valuable. Among these remains are, first of all, amulets (including those written on papyrus) and inscriptions. Yet even in the case of these remains, it is not always easy to evaluate them properly because of the generic names or the various syncretistic formulae employed in them.

As is evident from the most recent scholarship on the subject, the very concept of magic in Judaism is still far from having received a

Spells and Formulae. Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1993). Greek materials in R. Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets. The Inscribed Gold, Silver, Copper, and Bronze Lamellae, I. Published Texts of Known Provenance*, (Papyrologica Coloniensia, XXIII/1; Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994).

⁴ J. Neusner, *Jews and Christians. The Myth of a Common Tradition* (London and Philadelphia: SCM Press and Trinity Press International, 1991); L. V. Rutgers, "Archaeological Evidence for the Interaction of Jews and Non-Jews in Late Antiquity," *AJA* 96 (1992): 101-18 (who touches also magic, 108f.); L. H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1993); L. V. Rutgers, "Attitudes to Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 85 (1995): 361-95; G. F. Snyder, "The Interaction of Jews with Non-Jews in Rome," in *Judaism and Christianity in First-Century Rome* (ed. K. P. Donfried and P. Richardson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 69-90. Useful but sometimes forgotten guidelines on this subject, may be found in A. Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of the Hellenism* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1975). It deals with the interaction of Greeks, Romans, Celts, Jews and Persians inside and outside the Roman Empire.

⁵ The starting point of such interest can perhaps be traced in the chapter xii, "Superstition et magie," of M. Simon, *Verus Israel. Étude sur les relations entre Chrétiens et Juifs dans l'empire romain (135-425)* (Paris: De Boccard, 1948), 394-431.

clear, objective, or univocal definition, and the debate on how to arrive at such a definition continues to this very day.⁶ Although I am aware of the difficulties that exist in the area of definition, I will not rehearse the more fashionable but not always useful definitions that have been proposed in recent years. Instead, in this essay I will provide a synthesis, or *memorandum*, and sketch the main problems one encounters in trying to determine the relationship between Jews and Christians insofar as it relates to the history of Jewish magic in late antiquity.

JEWISH MAGICIANS AND CHRISTIAN SOURCES: A SURVEY

First of all, let us start with a quick survey of the image of the Jewish magicians as it appears in the literary sources starting in the Roman period.

It is generally assumed that in early Christian and in Byzantine texts, there exists a widespread *topos* concerning Jews. According to this *topos* the "Jew" is synonymous with the "magus." This *topos* is believed to be particularly visible in hagiographical sources.

To my knowledge no serious research has ever been carried out with regard to the frequency with which this alleged *topos* occurs or with regard to its meaning within the context of the passages in which it appears. I believe that if it were possible to check the number of recurrences of this supposed *topos* in the whole corpus of relevant literary sources, a different and more nuanced picture would emerge, as I will now try to make clear.

Even if we exclude the various Jewish exorcists that are depicted in early Christian writings that date back to the first century (such as, for instance, those mentioned in *Acts* 13:6-12 or 19:13-20), we find that the existence of Jewish magical traditions was already known by Pliny — even though he refers to it in his *Naturalis historia* in a

⁶ G. Veltri, "Defining," esp. 27; P. Schäfer, "Magic and Religion in Ancient Judaism," in *Envisioning Magic. A Princeton Seminar and Symposium*, (ed. P. Schäfer and H. G. Kippenberg; Studies in the History of Religions 75; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 18-43; E.-M. Jansson, *The Message of a Mitsuah. The Mezuzah in Rabbinic Literature* (Skrifter utgivna av Sällskapet för judaistisk forskning 8; Lund: Nova-press, 1999), 22-28.

rather vague and indirect way.⁷ By the second century, Jews were generally considered as "Orientals." Thus it was only natural for contemporaries to believe that they were involved in the field of magical practices as well as in demonology — together with Egyptians, Syrians, Chaldeans (that is, Babylonians or Persians in general), and Persian *magi* (who were themselves often called "Chaldeans"). In those days such a characterization was just one component of a wider prejudice against foreigners. This can be gleaned from the words of the well-known xenophobe and antisemitic satirist Juvenal (died 127 C.E.) according to whom *aere minuto quatuordecimque voles Iudaei somnia vendunt*: "even for a small sum a Jew will sell you any kind of dreams."⁸ In the writings of some Christian apologists of the same period, such as Justin and Irenaeus, Jewish exorcists are likewise not lacking.⁹ And at the end of the same century, the North-African rhetorian and writer Apuleius speaks typically of *Iudaei superstitionis* when he seeks to define the Jewish inhabitants of Palestine.¹⁰

Despite Juvenal's lamentations over the custom of his contemporaries to seek oracles and magical gadgets from the Jews, it is evident that during the first few centuries of the Common Era the great development of certain kinds of Jewish magic took place mainly as a response to the increasing request of magic by non-Jews. This phenomenon, which occurred in both Hellenistic and early Christian circles, grew ever more stronger as time went on, especially from the third and fourth centuries onwards.¹¹

⁷ Pliny, *Nat.* 30.1.1: *est et alia magices factio a Mose et Ianne et Lotape [= Iotape?] ac Iudaeis pendens, sed multis milibus annorum post Zoroastren.* Cf. M. Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (Jerusalem: The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1976) 1:498, nr. 221.

⁸ Juvenal, *Sat.* VI.546-547. Cf. Stern, *Authors*, 2:101, nr. 299.

⁹ Justin, *Dial.* 85 (PG 6:680); Irenaeus, *Haer.* 2.6.2 (PG 7:726). Cf. D. E. Aune, "Magic in Early Christianity," in *ANRW* 23.2: 1546.

¹⁰ Apuleius, *Flores* 6. Cf. Stern, *Authors*, 2:204f., nr. 362.

¹¹ On late antique magic in general terms, cf. A. A. Barb, "The Survival of Magic Arts," in *The Conflict between Paganism and Christianity in the Fourth Century* (ed. A. Momigliano; Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1963), 100-25; R. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1966), 95ff.; P. Brown, "Sorcery, Demons and the Rise of Christianity," in *Witchcraft, Confessions and Accusations* (ed. M. Douglas; London: Tavistock Publications, 1970), 17-45, repr. in *Religion and Society in the Age of Augustine*, London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 119-46; M. Smith, "On the Lack of a

In the fourth century, as the overall public attitude towards Judaism began to change, complications arose. People who had traditionally resorted to Jewish practitioners in the field of medical remedies were now suddenly regarded with suspicion. In his *Adversus Iudaeos*, John Chrysostom openly stigmatized those people in fourth-century Antioch who went to the Jews to receive amulets and spells for medical purposes.¹² In an environment of increasing suspicion and official disapproval of the Jews, it could even happen that their primacy was denied and their role as "precursors" of Christianity forgotten. This occurred to such an extent that even pagan gods and ancient philosophers were now credited with being the authors of prophecies on the advent of Christianity.¹³

When seen in that light, it is interesting to note that in the famous Title Sixteen on magic and sorcery contained in the *Codex Theodosianus* (IX.16.4-5; repeated in *Codex Iustinianus* II.9.18.5), ethnically charged references to people involved in the occult and in prohibited sciences (named *malefici, vates, augures, mathematici, baroli, and venefici*) relate only to *Chaldaei* and *magi* — that is to say, Babylonians and Persians — but not to Jews.¹⁴ No less interesting, however, is the fact that the practitioners of the so-called "depraved sciences," which included sorcery, astrology, vulgar divination, and

History of Greco-Roman Magic," in *Althistorische Studien für H. Bengtson* (ed. H. Heinen et al.; Historia Einzelschriften 40; Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1983), 255f.; J.-B. Clerc, *Homines Magici. Étude sur la sorcellerie et la magie dans la société romaine impériale* (Bern: Lang, 1995); V. Flint, "The Demonisation of Magic and Sorcery in Late Antiquity: Christian Redefinition of Pagan Religions," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe* (ed. B. Ankarloo and S. Clark; London: Athlone, 1999), 2:277-348 (292-96 on "The Demons of Jewish Tradition").

¹² John Chrysostom, *Adv. Iud.*, 8.5.935; 8.7.937-938 (PG 48:935, 937f.). Cf. M. Simon, *Vetus Israel*, 418f.; R. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). On the relationship between magic and medicine in Jewish magical documents, see Naveh and Shaked, *Spells*, 31-39.

¹³ P. Bariffol, "Oracula hellenica," *RBi* 13 (1916): 177-99; S. Brock, "A Syriac Collection of Prophecies of the Pagan Philosophers," *OLP* 14 (1983): 203-46.

¹⁴ C. Pharr (ed.), *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1952), 237. Cf. moreover F. R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization, c. 370-529* (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 115; Leiden: Brill, 1993), 1:62f., 66f., and now V. Neri, *I marginali nell'Occidente tardoantico*, (Bari: Edipuglia, 1998), 258-86. On the absence of references to the Jews in the laws concerning magic, see Simon, *Vetus Israel*, 419f.

poisoning, were defined in broad terms as "foreigners" or "aliens" to nature (*naturae peregrini*) and as "enemies of the human race, in whatever part of the earth they are" (*in quacumque sint parte terrarum, humani generis inimici credendi sunt*; *Cod. Theod.* IX.16.5-6). Even though explicit references to the Jews are thus absent, it is nevertheless impossible, at least for me, not to note how closely these words resemble those used by Tacitus in his general definition of the Jewish people as characterized by their "hatred and enmity against all others" (*adversus omnes alios hostile odium*).¹⁵

Even if secular powers did not openly recognize the indissoluble connection between Jews and magic, such a connection was, in any case, unquestionable for Christian authorities. This follows from the inflamed tone used at the Council of Laodicea. It also follows from the famous homily of Isaac of Antioch, *De magis, incantatoribus et divines*, in which this connection acquired its definitive shape and in which "the Jews, the magicians and their chief Satan" were identified as the source of every evil in the world.¹⁶ Henceforth, Christianity would be associated with true *religio* and the "us;" Judaism and Hellenism represented the "other," and the shaming concept of *superstitio*.¹⁷

When seen within the context of these developments, it is not surprising that the image of the "Jewish magus" had already been standardized by the time it started to appear in the literature of the middle Byzantine period. This is particularly apparent in Byzantine hagiographies. There the role of the magician seems almost regularly replaced by that of the sorcerer, which reflects on the ideological and religious attitudes of the time.¹⁸ The starting point of this tendency towards standardization is generally associated with the so-called

"Theophilus legend" (seventh century).¹⁹ In this tale, the action takes place in the hippodrome of Apamea in Cilicia, where a Jewish magician interacts with Theophilus — a presbyter who is eager to revenge himself on the new bishop of the city. The role of the Jew in this account is merely that of a mediator who evokes the devil. It is the devil himself who ultimately makes a contract with Theophilus.²⁰

Another Jewish sorcerer appears in the *Miracula SS. Cyri et Iobanthis*. He uses his powers against a physician named Theodore from Lapethus, in Cyprus.²¹ In this text we find an exemplary exposition of power hierarchies, from weakest to strongest, in this order: the physician, the magician, the saints. In this case, we encounter, moreover, a couple of saints who are also physicians. Other and later texts suggest that saints do not need to be physicians to be better magicians.²² In some cases even knowledge of medicine was useless, and the saints appear powerless, as long as the *remedia* are managed by Jews. This seems to have happened in the case of a Jewish physician named Timotheos who is described as a magician and sorcerer (another emphatic and ideological addition) in the *Life of St. Simeon Stylites the Younger*. This Timotheus is accused of having caused the death of the emperor Justin II (565-578 C.E.) through the use of forbidden treatments.²³

¹⁹ L. Rademacher, *Griechische Quellen zur Faustsage* (Sitzungsberichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse 206.4; Vienna and Leipzig: Holder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1927), 53-117, 186-90; cf. Magoulias, "Lives," 244f.; Brown, "Sorcery," 35.

²⁰ On the Church's views concerning hippodromes as centers of magical practices, sorceries, and all kinds of misconduct, see the comments in H. J. Magoulias, "Lives," 245f. It is interesting to note that a spell to win at the chariot race appears in the magic Hebrew handbook *Sefer ha-mazim*, 3, 35-43 (on which see below, note 41).

²¹ A. Mai (ed.), *Spicilegium Romanum* (Rome: Typis Collegii Urbani, 1840), 3-mir. 55, 556-59; Magoulias, "Lives," 236.

²² The conflict between holy men and physicians — these latter, not infrequently, of Jewish or "foreign" descent — is also of great interest. Such conflicts have found their way into hagiographical sources, see for instance H. J. Magoulias, "The Lives of the Saints as Sources of Data for the History of Byzantine Medicine in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries," *ByzZ* 57 (1964): 127-50.

²³ P. van de Ven, *La Vie antienne de S. Symeon Stylite le Jeune (521-592)*, (Subsidia Hagiographica 32; Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1:1962), 179; Magoulias, "Lives," 238f., who also quotes other sources on Justin II and on the trust of his wife Sophia in oracles and magicians, some of whom came from Egypt.

¹⁵ Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.51; Stern, *Authors*, 2:19, 96, nr. 281.

¹⁶ On this important text, see the notes of Simon, *Vetus Israel*, 416-18; and *ib.*, 421f., 430 for the Council of Laodicea.

¹⁷ These themes are now summarized in M. Beard, J. North, and S. Price, *Religions of Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1998), 1:214-27.

¹⁸ Chr. H. Magoulias, "The Lives of Byzantine Saints as Sources of Data for the History of Magic in the Sixth and Seventh Centuries A.D.: Sorcery, Relics and Icons," *Byzantion* 37 (1967): 228-69; D. de F. Abrahamse, "Magic and Sorcery in the Hagiography of the Middle Byzantine Period," *ByzZ* 8 (1982): 3-17; R. Greenfield, *Traditions of Belief in Late Byzantine Demonology* (Amsterdam: Hakker, 1988).

Among the various stories regarding the life of Anastasius the Sinaite, yet another Jewish magus named Daniel is mentioned. He lived in the first half of the seventh century in Constantia (Salamis, Cyprus) and was burned, but not before he had confessed that his magic was powerless vis-à-vis Christians who communicated daily — a detail that sounds like a clear admonition on the part of the writer.²⁴ In this review the *Life of the Bishop Leo of Catania* (Sicily) should also be included. Its hero does not seem to belong to the local bishops of that period. Rather he seems inspired by the homonymous figure described by Pope Gregory the Great — a bishop Leo who lived in the sixth to seventh century. In this *Life*, as in the “Theophilus legend,” we encounter, once more, an experienced Jewish magus who allows Leo’s rival, Heliodorus, to make a pact with the devil.²⁵

Let us return now to the observation made at the beginning of this section: if we would collect all the evidence on Jewish magicians in late antique and Byzantine literary sources and along with it all the hagiographical texts of those periods which have come to us, would the number of references suffice to justify our usage of the term *topos* when referring to the Jew as quintessential magus?

²⁴ Magoulias, “Lives,” 239.

²⁵ For the text and a useful commentary, see now A. Acconcia Longo, “La vita di S. Leone vescovo di Catania e gli incantesimi del mago Eliodoro,” *Rivista di Studi Bizantini e Neellenici* 26 (1989) [1990]: 3-98. It should be noted that in A. Messina, “Le comunità giudaiche della Sicilia nella documentazione archeologica,” *Henoch* 3 (1981): 202f., the “Jewish magus” in this source is erroneously introduced as the same Heliodorus. In later times, there are many other examples of “Jewish mediation” in such matters. For instance, in the libel against the patriarch Photius of Constantinople, who is accused, in a laughing tone, of having sold his soul to the devil with the help of a “Jewish magician” as intermediary: cfr. C. Mango, “Diabolus Byzantinus,” in *Homo Byzantinus. Papers in Honor of A. Kazhdan*, (ed. A. Cutler and S. Franklin; Dumbarton Oaks Papers 46; Washington: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1992), 220. For other examples, A. Acconcia Longo, “Vita,” 19 f.; V. von Falkenhausen, “Lebraismo dell’Italia meridionale nell’età bizantina (secoli VI-XI),” in *L’Ebraismo dell’Italia Meridionale Peninsulare dalle origini al 1541* (ed. C. D. Fonseca et al.; Proceedings AISG Congress, Potenza — Venosa 1992; Potenza: Congedo Editore, 1996), 35.

Interestingly enough, a test of this kind has been done some years ago using forty-eight late hagiographical texts that date to the period from about 800 to 1000 C.E. The result: while explicit figures of magicians appear in only six texts (!), none of these carry explicitly Jewish connotations.²⁶ To sum up. Although it is unquestionable that the references to Jewish magicians that occur in the literary sources are characterized by a high degree of continuity, the paucity of these references and the isolation in which they occur do not seem to justify the conclusion that we are dealing with a *topos* that was really widespread. In fact, we may wonder, instead, if these references are not to be interpreted as expanded literary reflections of real events that occurred at distinctive places and times.²⁷ To verify this conclusion, let us turn to inspect the direct evidence.

THE AMULETS: JEWISH, PSEUDO-JEWISH MAGIC AND THE PROBLEM OF IDENTIFICATION

Our second question is directly related to the amulets themselves: which represent Jewish and which pseudo-Jewish magic? This question has been debated for a long time, but a definite answer on how to distinguish between the two has never been reached.

If we leave out all the magical documents that were written in Hebrew or Aramaic, that originated in Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor, that are Jewish in content, and that were evidently produced by Jewish manufacturers for Jewish customers, we are left with very little evidence that is indisputably Jewish. In Roman and late antique Egypt, for example, despite the hundreds of written remains in Greek, to date only three documents written in Aramaic letters have been found that may contain magical elements identifiable as Jewish.²⁸

²⁶ D. de F. Abrahams, “Magic,” 6.

²⁷ The same check should be made also with regard to the number of Jews depicted in some hagiographical sources as taking part at the funeral of Christian saints (see, for instance, Paolinus of Nola, Agata of Catania, etc.).

²⁸ Amulet on lead sheet from Oxyrhynchus; Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets*, 82-85, nr. 9; papyrus with a magical text from Oxyrhynchus: M. J. Geller, “An Aramaic Incantation from Oxyrhynchus,” *ZPE* 58 (1985): 96-98; fragments of papyrus of unknown origin (fifth/sixth century): P. Marrassini, “I frammenti aramici,” *SCO* 29 (1979): 125-30. For an introduction to magic in Late Antique

These three documents have been seen as exceptional and isolated cases, especially since most scholars hold that outside of Palestine the language of Jewish magic was Greek.²⁹ However this may be, evidence from both Egypt and the western Diaspora indicates that it is quite difficult to identify magical artifacts as the product of Jewish hands even if they sometimes show deep Jewish influences. The penetration of Jewish traditions into non-Jewish contexts — as happened in the case of the famous Greek magical papyri from Egypt — probably dates back to the very beginnings of the syncretistic tendencies that accompanied the emergence of Hellenistic Judaism. Moreover, it runs parallel to other “foreign” influences that also need to be taken into account. The migration of Syrians, Babylonians, and Persians, first in the Hellenistic and then in the Roman world, is one such influence that should be mentioned in this context. Their presence has seldom received the same attention as that paid to the Jews.³⁰ In the case of Egypt there is the complicating factor that after the revolt of 117 C.E. there is little evidence for widespread Jewish settlement in that country, and written documents are almost non-existent. In light of such

Egypt, cf. C. H. Roberts, *Manuscripts, Society, and Beliefs in Early Christian Egypt* (London: Oxford U.P., 1979), 82 and *passim*; R. S. Bagnall, *Egypt in Late Antiquity* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1993), 272-75.

²⁹ Cf. W. M. Brashear, “The Greek Magical Papyri: an Introduction and Survey,” *Annotted Bibliography* (1928-1994), *ANRW* 18.5: 3428 and note 233.

³⁰ On the multicultural basis of the *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, cf. H. D. Betz, “Magic and Mystery in the Greek Magical Papyri,” in *Magika Hiera. Ancient Greek Magic and Religion* (ed. Ch. F.araone and D. Obbink; Oxford: Oxford U.P., 1991), 248-53; Brashear, “Papyri,” 3412; Ch. Faraone, “The *Mystodokos* and the Dark-Eyed Maidens: Multicultural Influences on a Late Hellenistic Charm,” in *Ancient Magic*, 297-334; idem, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Harvard: Harvard U.P., 1999), 16, 30-38. For the Jewish elements in amulets and papyri, E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Graeco-Roman Period* (Bollingen Series 37; New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), 2:153-295; N. Fernández Marcos, “Motivos judíos en los papiros mágicos griegos,” in *Religion, superstición y magia en el mundo romano* (Cádiz: Universidad de Cádiz, 1985), 101-27; P. S. Alexander, “Incantations and Books of Magic,” in E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (175 B.C. – A.D. 135) (ed. G. Vermes et al.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), 3.1:342-79; M. Smith, “The Jewish Elements in the Magical Papyri,” *SBLSP* 25 (1986): 455-62; G. Voltri, “Jewish Traditions in Greek Amulets,” *Bulletin of Jewish Greek Studies* 18 (1996): 33-47; H. D. Betz, “Jewish Magic in the Greek Magical Papyri,” in idem, *Anike und Christentum. Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 4:187-205. See also below, note 40.

considerations, it seems reasonable to conclude that the presence of Jewish elements in amulets cannot automatically be taken to mean that such amulets were either actually used or produced by Jews. It is also evident, however, that magic traditions that incorporated such Jewish elements were very popular and remained in use well into the fifth century and beyond.

What were the reasons of such longevity and success? Part of the answer lies in the prestige, not to say the glamour, of some characteristically Jewish features. First among these was the language. Ἰεζραήλ ὁ σὲ κατὰ τῆς ἐβραϊστῆς φωνῆς: “I adjure you by the Hebrew voice,” we read in one of the most complex and interesting pieces of the *Papyri Graecae Magicae*.³¹ There can be little doubt that in non-Jewish contexts Hebrew was considered a sacred language for a long time, just as was Aramaic (which was usually called “Syrian”). For that reason, it was believed to be particularly congenial to the supernatural and to magical practices. Evidence for this may be found, for example, in the *Alexander Pseudoprophets* of Lucian of Samosata. There we read, in a Greek context, how Alexander, “uttering a few meaningless words like a Hebrew or Phoenician” [ἄλλα γένοιτο ἔν Ἰεβραϊκῶν ἢ Φοινικῶν] dazed the creatures, who did not know what he was saying.³² That such a description made perfect sense was due to several, interconnected reasons: First, the spread of Jewish communities throughout the Mediterranean, and with them, of their strange rites and “different” ways of life; second, the obscure, apparently meaningless but evocative, sound of the ceremonial language of the Jews; and third, the specific association of Jews and magic which was a *opinio communis*, as we have seen before.³³

In this context, mention should also be made of the fact that Samaritans also were deeply involved in magic. Like the Jews, the Samaritans, whose national language was Aramaic, were also considered masters in this field. As such they were often confused with the Jews. For the sake of brevity we have to postpone exploring this matter to another time. However, when studying ancient magic one

³¹ *PGM* III:119; also in R. Merkelbach and M. Tori, *Abnax: ausgewählte Papyri religiösen und magischen Inhalts* (Papyrologia Coloniensis 17; Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990), 1:81-103 (nr. 48), 91.

³² Lucian, *Alex.*, 13. Cf. Stern, *Anthorb.*, 2:222f., nr. 373.

³³ On these arguments, cf. Brashear, “Papyri,” 3426f.

must always keep in mind the importance of the Samaritan factor, which was especially significant from the sixth century C.E. onwards (after the major Samaritan revolts of 529 and 555 C.E.) and in the Samaritan Diaspora.³⁴

To leave the Samaritan problem for now and to return to our initial question: In which cases are "Jewish" textual elements in non-Jewish magical contexts a reliable indicator that such magic was of Jewish derivation? Along similar lines: How Christian are those late antique amulets that are commonly labeled "Gnostic" but that in reality contain elements derived from the Jewish tradition — a tradition which, in turn, integrated in a syncretistic mix also Greek elements, references to the name of Jesus, and one or more crosses. In cases where typically or indisputably Christian markers are not available, how should a Greek amulet with verses from the Psalms or from another book of the Hebrew Bible be labeled: Gnostic, Christian, Jewish, or, better still, pseudo-Jewish? The same identification problem also arises with regard to references to Moses, Solomon, or the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob — not to mention the angelic and the divine names such as Ἀδωναι, Ιεω or Σαββαθ.³⁵

³⁴ On the Samaritan magical traditions and their remains, see J. A. Montgomery, *The Samaritans: The Earliest Jewish Sect* (Philadelphia: Winston, 1907), 277; M. Gaster, "Samaritan Phylacteries and Amulets," in his *Studies and Texts in Folklore, Magic, Medieval Romance, Hebrew Apocrypha, and Samaritan Archaeology* (London: Macgys, 1925-28), 387-424 (-461); J. Kaplan, "Two Samaritan Amulets," *IEJ* 17 (1967): 158-62; idem, "A Samaritan Amulet from Corinth," *IEJ* 30 (1980): 60-62; H. Lozachmeur and J. Margain, "Une amulette samaritaine provenant de Tyr," *Sem* 30 (1982): 117-20; R. Reich, "A Samaritan Amulet from Nabariya," *RBi* 92 (1985): 383-88; V. Morabito, "Orientali in Sicilia: i Samaritani e la Sinagoga di Siracusa," *Archivio Storico per la Sicilia Orientale* 86 (1990): 78, 83; Navch and Shaked, *Spells*, 28-31; J. Margain and H. Lozachmeur, "Un anneau-sceau samaritan avec motif ornamental," *Sem* 47 (1997): 97-104.

³⁵ For Moses, cf. J. Gager, *Moses in Greco-Roman Paganism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973), 134-61; for Solomon, to the bibliography in Brashers, "Papyri," 3427 note 224, add now S. Lasine, "Solomon the Wizard of Oz: Power and Invisibility in a Verbal Palace," in *The Age of Solomon: Scholarship at the Turn of the Millennium* (ed. L. K. Handy; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 373-91. On both, now G. Luck, "Witches and Sorcerers in Classical Literature," in Ankarloo and Clark, *Witchcraft*, 115-17. Cf. also the selection of Christian papyri in J. L. Calvo Martínez and M. D. Sánchez Romero, *Textos de magia en papiros griegos* (Biblioteca Clásica Greco-latina 105; Madrid: Gredos, 1987), 395-410.

When it comes to identification by contemporary scholars, one is left with the overall impression that attributions are based on assumed connoisseurship rather than on objective data. That this is so is not entirely surprising as it must be admitted that such hard data are simply lacking in most instances. The difficulty in finding "purely Christian" magic is due to the fact that Christian magicians seem to have been particularly interested in appropriating foreign spiritual codes and techniques, in order to incorporate them into their own religious system. As a result, it is often exceedingly difficult to say who was appropriating what from whom. In this context one may recall an interesting story told by Damascius. It is about the sophist Theosebios' engagement with a woman possessed by a *daimonion*:

not persuaded to leave the woman by gentle words, Theosebios compelled it to do so by an oath, although he was not versed in magic, nor practiced theurgy. He adjured it while stretching forth (his hand), by invoking the rays of the sun and the God of the Hebrews.³⁶

The resort, among the other things, to the "God of the Hebrews" — ὁ θεὸς δὲ τῆς ἡλίου πρὸς τὴν ἀκτίαν καὶ τὸν Ἰσραήλίου θεόν — in this context is remarkable. But it is not necessary to regard it as a symptom of "a unsuspected avenue for conversion to Christianity and at the same time crypto paganism."³⁷ It seems more meaningful, rather, to suggest that Theosebios was not immune from the "magical world" that surrounded him. He himself was the satisfied owner of a protective ring-amulet against the enemies of chastity — a gift of a Chaldaean (i.e., Persian or Babylonian) magus.³⁸ The "God of the Hebrews" appears also in the so-called "Hebraikos Logos" of *PGM* IV:3009-3085 (l. 3019) — a text rich in Jewish materials, even though it also mentions the name of Jesus, and was probably assembled by pagan hands. In a world characterized by constant cultural

³⁶ Dam., *Vita Isid.* 56; *Damascii Vitae Isidori reliquiae* (ed. C. Zintzen, Hildesheim: Olms, 1967), 82; R. Henry (ed.), *Photius — Bibliothèque* (Paris: Les Belles-Lettres, 1971), 4:18f. Cf. Stern, *Authors*, 2:673, nr. 547; Trombley, *Hellenic Religion*, 1:52.

³⁷ Trombley, *Hellenic Religion*, 1:53.

³⁸ Dam., *Vita Isid.* 59, 311; Zintzen, *Damascii Vitae*, 82, 87f.; Henry, *Photius*, 19, 56; Trombley, *Hellenic Religion*, 1:54. See also G. Fowden, "The Pagan Holy Man in Late Antiquity," *JHS* 102 (1982): 33-59.

borrowings, even Origen accepted the idea that Jewish and pagan magic could be successful, as long as the names of the "God of the Jews" were used.³⁹

Although the magic *opus* was, usually, the work of a single, more or less professional operator, magic was normally dependant on the authority and support of concrete traditions, specifically of written traditions. This is clearly shown by repertoires of spells among the *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, such as the *Eighth Book of Moses*,⁴⁰ and by magic handbooks in Aramaic or Hebrew, such as the famous *Sefer ha-razim*,⁴¹ as well as by the works of the so-called Hekalôt literature, whose main texts contain a number of incantations and angelic invocations. As has been pointed out, in the religious system of Hekalôt mysticism magic was "a necessary and integral component."⁴² If it was to transmit age-old knowledge and $\mu\sigma\tau\epsilon\rho\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma$ over

³⁹ Origen, *Cels.* 3,24; and see also, on the name of the patriarchs, 1,22 and 4,33. Other literature quoted in Simon, *Vetus Israel*, 395-401; Aune, "Magic," 1546f. M. W. Dickie, "The Fathers of the Church and the Evil Eye," in *Byzantine Magic* (ed. H. Maguire; Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), 9-34, esp. 28f.

⁴⁰ For the *PGM* see K. Preisendanz, *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die griechischen Zauberpapyri* (ed. A. Henrichs; 2d ed.; Stuttgart: Teubner, 1973-1974) (basic Greek text); H. D. Betz (ed.), *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells* (2d ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); Calvo Martínez and Sánchez Romero, *Textos* (Spanish transl.). Cfr. also the *corrigenda* and new hints in Brashhear, "Papyri," 3506-74, with corrections and index of further texts. The *Eighth Book of Moses* is in *PGM* XIII.

⁴¹ For the *Sefer ha-razim*, cfr. M. Margalioth, *Sefer ha-Razim. A Newly Recovered Book of Magic from the Talmudic Period* (Jerusalem: s.n., 1966) (Hebrew text); M. A. Morgan, *Sefer ha-Razim. The Book of the Mysteries* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983) (English translation). A valuable commentary in J. H. Niggemeyer, *Beschwörungsformeln aus dem Buch der Geheimnisse* (Judaistische Texte und Studien 3; Hildesheim: Olms, 1975).

⁴² P. Schäfer, "Magic and Religion," 42. In general terms, cfr. Alexander, "Incantations"; P. Schäfer, "Jewish Magic Literature in Late Antiquity and Early Middle Ages," *JSJ* 41 (1990): 75-91; Naveh and Shaked, *Spells*, 17-31; M. D. Schwartz, "Magical Piety in Ancient and Medieval Judaism," in Meyer and Mircecki, *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, 167-83. The main texts of the "Hekalôt literature" are collected in *Synopse zur Hekalôt-Literatur* (ed. P. Schäfer, M. Schlüter, and H. G. von Mutius; TSAJ 2; Tübingen: Mohr, 1981); *Konkordanz zur Hekalôt-Literatur* (ed. G. Reeg, K. Herrmann, and P. Schäfer; TSAJ 12-13; Tübingen: Mohr, 1986-1988); *Übersetzung der Hekalôt-Literatur* (ed. P. Schäfer et al.; TSAJ, 17; 22; 29; 46; Tübingen: Mohr, 1987-1995).

the long term, professional magic simply could not do without written references.

The existence of handbooks and collections of spells further complicates the problem of identifying who produced the magic objects that have survived. Such handbooks did not just circulate locally in late antique societies, but they were also reproduced and retailed miles and centuries from the place where they had first come into being. Even if the work of the original "magicians-writers" was simple in that they just had to choose the charm or the spell most useful to the circumstance, they always made sure to pay the proper attention to one factor in particular: "foreign" magic was always believed to be a better and stronger kind of magic — a magic that was able to give responses that were more adequate in extreme situations. Thus exotic elements were often included.⁴³

At the end of the fifth century, in the *Life of Severus* by Zachariah of Mytilene, we find a description of the books of magic owned by the notable John Foulon of Thebes who lived in Beirut. They contained magical drawings, spells, and lists of *nomina barbura* attributed, according to the text, to Zoroaster, Ostanes, and Mantho.⁴⁴ In this case, then, we have explicit references to Persian and Babylonian influences. In reality, however, most of the references display Jewish elements. These also include the artificial Judaization of non-Jewish elements, such as Greek or Egyptian names and *vores magicae*, which received typical "Hebrew" suffixes such as *-el* — used to create new angelic names — or the feminine plural ending *-ôt*, or the Aramaic suffixes *-ā* and *-tā*. These were created in order to lend a more reliable Semitic or Jewish *habitus* to the text. A list of such *vores* would be long.⁴⁵

⁴³ Brashhear, "Papyri," 3427.

⁴⁴ Zach., *Vita Sev.* 61; Trombley, *Hellenic Religion*, 2:35f.; on the apparently large presence of such books of magic among the Hellenes, cfr. *ib.*, 39-41.

⁴⁵ See Brashhear, "Papyri," 3427f. and the glossary *ibid.*, 3576-3603; which is, as Brashhear observes, in some cases a veritable repository of pseudo-philological oddities. It is the obvious result of the traditional lack of cooperation between Semitists and students of Hellenic culture in the difficult field of the etymological researches. This lack of cooperation continues to this very day. See now also the observations of D. Ogdén, "Binding Spells: Curse Tablets and Voodoo Dolls in the Greek and Roman Worlds," in Ankarloo and Clark, *Witchcraft*, 46-50.

Given the alleged involvement of Jews in things magical, it should come as no surprise that it is not uncommon to find in the Greek magic papyri of late antiquity *voes magicæ* or complete *formulae* preceded by explanatory additions such as "Hebrew" (ἑβραϊστί) or "Syrian" (συριαστί, i.e. Aramaic), along with "Greek" (ἐλλήνιστί) and "Egyptian" (αἰγυπτιστί).⁴⁶ It is often forgotten how important such additions were. With the exception of the rabbis, throughout antiquity the difference between Aramaic ("Syrian") and Hebrew was never clearly perceived. This gave rise to errors and misinterpretations which may be found abundantly, for instance, in many Christian sources of the early centuries, the Gospels included. In later Mesopotamia and Egypt even go so far as to claim to be in Hebrew, even though they show no traces of Hebrew whatsoever.⁴⁷

A clear example — just one among others — of the prominent position of magical handbooks in the practice of magic — even among magicians living in villages in remote regions — can be found in the *Life of St. Theodore of Sykeon* (mid sixth century).⁴⁸ The magus that appears in it is a certain Theodotos, surnamed Kourappos, of the rural village of Mazamia in Galatia. No indication of his religious status is included. At the end of the history, however, he is led to baptism. This Theodotos is depicted as "a skillful sorcerer, thoroughly versed in wickedness."⁴⁹ When a conflict arose between him and St. Theodore, Theodore first tried to eliminate the holy man. When he was unsuccessful in this, he acknowledged the superiority of the holy man and then asked to be baptized. Yet Theodore refused to do so until the latter had brought forth his books of magic. They were all burned.

Further on this passage, it has been observed correctly that according to the *Civil Laws* the possession of books on magic was punished with the death penalty, and the books had to be burned. As we read

⁴⁶ Cfr. *PGM V*:473 (συριαστί, ἑβραϊστί); XIII:82 (ἐλλήνιστί). Other examples are summarized in R. W. Daniel and E. Maltomini, *Supplementum Magicum* (Papyrologia Coloniciensia, 16, 1; Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992), 2:92f. (which index lacks of voces as "Hebrew," "Jews," or "Judaism"); Brashear, "Papyri," 34-34.

⁴⁷ See the (Coptic) materials quoted in Brashear, "Papyri," 3405 n. 84.

⁴⁸ E. Dawes and N. H. Baynes, *Three Byzantine Saints* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1948), 112; Magoulias, "Lives," 235f.

⁴⁹ Magoulias, *ibid.*; Trombley, "Paganism," 340.

in the text in question, this was because "not only is the *practice* of this art prohibited, but also the *knowledge* of the same."⁵⁰ Although the story of Theodotos may be apocryphal, one is nevertheless tempted to speculate about the question of what kind of "magic books" the author of the *Life* had in mind or might have had direct or indirect knowledge of. If we were asked to select a possible candidate, then the choice would fall on a text similar to the *Testament of Solomon* — a pseudepigraphic work which has been judged "probably the most popular magic treatise in early Byzantium."⁵¹

At this point, something should also be said about the alleged "heretical" position of Jewish magic within the larger framework of the Jewish theologies and ideologies of late antiquity. It is well known that in many religious traditions it is difficult to draw a clear line distinguishing between magic and religion. Moreover, at the present time no one seems to believe any longer in the usefulness of a sharp distinction between a simply "orthodox" or "pure" Judaism on the one hand and a magical kind of Judaism that was totally outside the Law and rabbinic Judaism on the other.⁵² Such a division is too simplistic, nor does it do justice to the varied and eclectic nature of late antique Judaism — a reality that is only poorly represented in the rabbinic sources, but all the more so in the kaleidoscopic image provided by many archaeological findings.⁵³ The humorous image used by Marcel Simon to define late antique Jewish magic, as "la revanche du synchrétisme sur le monothéisme juif," could be expanded today to nearly the whole of Jewish life in late antiquity.⁵⁴

Interestingly enough, the various elements one encounters on magical artifacts may in fact be used to help identify and describe the different kinds of Judaism that were alive and well up to the end of

⁵⁰ Quoted by Magoulias, "Lives," 236 note 1 (italics mine).

⁵¹ G. Vikan, "Art, Medicine, and Magic in Early Byzantium," *DOP* 38 (1984): 79.

⁵² This point of view, born in the nineteenth-century, is maintained in the most classical work on this subject: L. Blau, *Das altjüdische Zauberwesen* (2 ed.; Berlin: Lamm, 1914).

⁵³ Aune, "Magic," 1511-16; Veltri, "Jewish Traditions," 40. For the possible interpretations of variety in late antique Judaism, see now the materials and discussions collected in L. V. Rutgers, *The Hidden Heritage of the Diaspora Judaism. Essays on Jewish Cultural Identity in the Roman World* (Leuven: Peeters, 1998).

⁵⁴ Simon, *Versus Israel*, 398.

the amoraic period. Among the elements we encounter, quite a few can be considered as falling within the boundaries of so-called orthodox Judaism. This holds true for the amulets in which, for instance, there are invocations to Adonai, to the Patriarchs, or to Moses. It also holds true, however, for magic that is closer to mystical speculation. In fact, the mystically charged examples are quite innocuous when compared to Jewish texts such as the *Sefer ha-razim* in which appear more than just one adjuration to pagan gods, as well to the sun and the moon.⁵⁵

Finally, the problem of the *quantity* of magic produced would require a separate treatment. Here, I would like to observe that we should be cautious about the alleged "mass production" of amulets which some scholars believe to have existed. This erroneous belief is based on only two or three isolated and possibly questionable instances.⁵⁶ If we take into account, on the one hand, the socially marginal character of magic (to which we shall return later), and, on the other, the legal prohibitions about practicing magic, the idea of mass production in *officinae* that specialized in magic artifacts does not seem appropriate. This is not to say that magic was not in high demand. Christian crowds in Constantinople or in North African towns, for example, could depend on a mass of Christian magicians. Still, these figures were mostly individuals who preferred to remain invisible and who belonged to the most marginal levels of local society.

THE CLIENTS: CULTURES AND MENTALITIES

In a letter of Jerome to a Spanish woman named Theodora — a letter which is sometimes remembered for a sarcastic sketch of the pseudo-Hebrew *voes magicae* — we find two interesting terms that relate to people associated with the Jewish magical artifacts. The first one is that of *inperiti* — a term which can be translated both as "unqualified" (in a technical sense) and "illiterate." The second is *mulierculae*

⁵⁵ Cfr. also Schäfer, "Jewish Magic Literature," 82.

⁵⁶ See the *status questionis* in Brashear, "Papyri," 3418f. The most representative evidence of this "mass production" seems the whole of documents in three languages (Greek, Coptic, and Aramaic) quoted above, note 46.

or "silly women."⁵⁷ This latter derogatory qualification resurfaces again in Jerome's *Commentary to Matthew* when he talks of the *superstitiosi magistri, captantes auram popularem, atque ex mulierculis sectantes lucra*... and then of the Palestinian Christian *mulierculae* who made phylacteries with small books of the Gospels or with various kinds of relics.⁵⁸ This negative association that connects women with magic was not limited to Jerome. We also encounter it in the works of his contemporary Augustine when he recalls the case of a North African noble woman (*clarissima foemina*) Petronia who consulted "a certain Jew" (*quidam Iudaeus*) of Uzalis who gave her a ring-amulet.⁵⁹

When we turn to the evidence provided by late antique amulets themselves, two examples of real *mulierculae* come immediately to mind: the first one lived in Hadrumetum (again, North Africa) towards the end of the third century and was named Domitiana, daughter of Candida. Her name was engraved on an amulet with a love charm found in a tomb. The amulet betrays Jewish manufacture.⁶⁰ The second one, known on the basis of a silver *lamella* from Beirut, is a certain Alexandra. She asked Jesus and a number of angels for help against demons and evil magicians. In this case too the amulet, which was probably made by a Jew, was buried with her.⁶¹ To this can now be added another recently discovered example deriving the Christian catacombs of Naples (Italy). There, in an undisturbed tomb that dates to the sixth century C.E. a Greek amulet was found that clearly displays Jewish connotations. The

⁵⁷ Jerome, *Epist.* 75.31, see J. Labourt, *Saint-Jérôme. Lettres* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1954), 4:35: *nequaquam suscipiens, Armuzel, Barbelou, Abriaxan, Balsamum, et ridiculum Levisboram, ceteraque magis portenta quam nomina, quae ad inperitiorum et muliercularum animos concitandos, quasi de Hebraicis fontibus hauriunt, barburo simplices quosque terrentes sono: ut quod non intelligunt, plus mirentur.*

⁵⁸ Jerome, *Comm. in Math.* 23.5-6 (CCL LXXXVII:211f.): (...) *Hoc apud nos superstitionae mulierculae in parvulis evangelis et in crucis ligno et istismodi rebus, quae habent quidem zelum Dei sed non iuxta scientiam, usque hodie faciunt, culicem liquantes et camelum glutientes.*

⁵⁹ Augustine, *Civ.* 22.8 (CCL 48:824).

⁶⁰ On this amulet, cfr. Alexander, "Incantations," passim.

⁶¹ A. Héron de Villefosse, "Tablette magique de Boyrouch," in *Florilegium ou Recueil de travaux d'érudition dédiés à monsieur le marquis Melchior de Vogüé à l'occasion du quatre-vingtième anniversaire de sa naissance* (ed. M. de Vogüé and G. C. C. Maspero; Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1909), 287ff.; cfr. C. Mango, "Diabolus," 218.

person who ordered it was a local woman called Papiria Crispina. She was the daughter of Pompeia Crispina.⁶² The Neapolitan example is also an amulet against the demons, in which is invoked the "unique God" (ὁ ἕως ἑ ὁῦν) along with Son'el, Abroath Iao, Iao Sabaoth and Mikael; the abbreviation ΤΕΗΝ'Ν'ΠΣ that precedes the name of Papiria Crispina has been convincingly explained as τῆν ἰουδαίων / πιστευόντων.⁶³

These testimonies lead us to the problem of the clients of Jewish (and Samaritan) magicians, their cultures, values, and mentalities. As we have seen before, the laws against occult sciences in antiquity, and above all in the Byzantine empire, were severe. Even though magic was (sometimes) tolerated if its purpose was to preserve human health, the death penalty was the regular punishment for sorcerers, who were considered *malefici* or "evil workers."⁶⁴ Thus, with regard to the relationship between magicians and clients we should remember, first of all, that their interaction generally occurred on an unofficial level.

At first sight the continuous resort to "alternative" forms of intervention may strike us as amazing and even unnecessary, especially we take into account the abundance of miraculous events and magic powers that occur standardly in traditional Christian prayers, on crosses, and on reliquaries and icons. Our surprise is tempered, however, as soon as we realize that in Byzantium direct contact with unorthodox practices and magic often emanated from and was sponsored by the lower clergy itself. Such people were clerics of humble origin and poor socio-cultural backgrounds. They served in both the suburbs and in rural areas. For them, practicing magic probably represented a way of earning money not otherwise obtainable.⁶⁵

⁶² F. Miranda, "Una gemma 'gnostica' dalle Catacombe di S. Gennaro," *RAC* 72 (1991): 115-24. As it has been noted, the text of the gem (mainly on the back side) is almost identical to the amulet of unknown origin (North Africa?) published by D. Wörrmann, "Neue magische Gemmen," *Bj* 175 (1975): 63-82, 76-81 nr. 15.

⁶³ Miranda, "Gemma," 121.

⁶⁴ Cf. for instance *Cod. Theod.* 9.16.4; *Cod. Justin.* 2.9.18.5; 2.9.19.5. For the legislation against magic and sorcery in Late Antiquity, cf. C. R. Phillips, "Nathan *crimen sine lege*: Socioreligious Sanctions on Magic," in Faraone and Obbink, *Magika Hiera*, 260-76; Trombley, *Hellenic Religion*, 1:59-72.

⁶⁵ Magoulias, "Lives," 229, talks of sorcery, relics, and icons in Byzantium as "interrelated phenomena." On the lower clergy and their involvement in magic, cf.

In most cases, magic's primary focus was on helping people to recover from every kind of illness, particularly from fever, hemorrhage, as well as from the bites of scorpions and snakes. This often implied by launching an attack on those evil spirits believed to be responsible for these diseases.

Christianity itself contributed greatly to the idea that Christians lived in a world full of demons and spirits (and hence, really needed magic). There can be little doubt that the spreading and penetration of the Gospels in the late antique society was one of the factors that led to an increased sensibility of the masses towards demons and evil spirits. After all, the Gospels abound with images of demons and with the stories of Jesus' triumphs over them. In late antiquity demons were believed to be omnipresent in people's daily lives. Demons worried people in every stratum of late antique society greatly, and those belonging to lower classes in both town and countryside in particular.⁶⁶

The organic relationship between magical and medical practice was, in any case, a phenomenon that sunk its roots deep into the popular mentality of this largely illiterate society.⁶⁷ That this should be so is not strange at all: when it came to physical diseases and the search for remedies, the resort to all sorts of beliefs seems perfectly natural. In my opinion, to describe such an attitude as "irregular" on the ground that it conflicts with the idea of "orthodoxy" or "consistency in belief" is wrong because such consistency exists only in theory and almost never in practice. With regard to people's behavior, we may appropriately quote Plutarch, who noted that "people with

J. Engemann, "Zur Verbreitung magischer Uebelabwehr in der nichtchristlichen und christlichen Spätantike," *JbAC* 18 (1975): 22-48; C. Cupane, "Una classe sociale dimenticata: il basso clero metropolitano," in *Studiis zum Patriarchatsregister von Konstantinopel* (ed. H. Hunger; Vienna: Verlag der Akademie, 1981), 1:61-83; A. Kazhdan, "Holy and Unholy Miracle Workers," in Maguire, *Byzantine Magic*, 73-82; G. T. Dennis, "Popular Religious Attitudes and Practices in Byzantium," in *The Christian East, Its Institutions and Its Thought, A Critical Reflection* (ed. R. E. Taft; OChrAn 251; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 1996), 255f.

⁶⁶ On these topics, cf. J. M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 1974); M. Smith, *Jesus the Magician* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978); idem, "How Magic was Changed by the Triumph of Christianity," *Grecio-Arabica* 2 (1983): 51-57, and the recent surveys of C. Mango, "Diabolus," *passim*; Dennis, "Attitudes," *passim*.

⁶⁷ See literature quoted above and Vikar, "Art," *passim*.

chronic diseases, when they have despaired of ordinary remedies and customary regimens turn to expiations and amulets and dreams.⁶⁸

In addition to natural diseases or accidental injuries, there were other important worries for the masses too. In rural subcultures these included, for example, the risk of sorceries, problems of various kinds that related to the rhythms of everyday life in an agricultural society, or the idea of having been touched by a magic spell — an idea that was widespread in urban contexts also and against which special amulets were requested. With danger lurking everywhere and amulets readily available, a “war of amulets” sometimes ensued.

Among the most interesting magic interventions in agriculture, at least to my knowledge, is a group of Greek inscriptions from late antique and early Byzantine Sicily. This region is often neglected in studies on ancient magic. It represents a microcosm of particular value to reconstruct how Jewish magic was applied in a context where Hellenism and Christianity had coexisted for a long time. This is a good place to search for examples of “magical mentalities” in contact, as has been partially done already.⁶⁹ It is not possible here to give a complete account of all Jewish elements that can be found in magic materials from Sicily, including inscriptions as well as the amulets written in Greek and even in Hebrew or Aramaic.⁷⁰ Yet we can elaborate on the most common feature of the items in question: the continuous and systematic resort to angelology.

It should not surprise us that there was an enormous upsurge in the reliance on precisely such angelic powers. People hoped to counteract

⁶⁸ Plutarch, *Fac.* 920B, quoted by Aune, “Magic,” 1518.

⁶⁹ R. J. A. Wilson, *Sicily under the Roman Empire* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1990), 310-12, 414 s.; G. Mangano, “Documenti magici della Sicilia: dal III al VI sec. d.C.,” *Studi Tarbanti* 6 (*Hestia*, *Studi di tarda antichità offerti a S. Calderone* 6 [1989]): 13-41; L. V. Rutgers, “Interaction and its Limits: Some Notes on the Jews of Sicily in Late Antiquity,” *ZPE* 115 (1997): 245-56.

⁷⁰ A. Vogliano and K. Preisendanz, “Laminetta magica siciliana,” *Acme* (1948): 73-85; S. Calderone, “Per la storia dell’elemento giudaico nella Sicilia imperiale,” *Rendiconti dell’Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei* 10 (1955): 489-502; U. Schmoll, “Die hebräische Inschrift des Goldplättchens von Comiso,” *ZDMG* 113 (1963-64): 512-14; S. Sciaccia, “Philaberrion con iscrizione magica greco-ebraica proveniente dalla Sicilia sud-occidentale,” *Kokabos* 28-29 (1982-83): 87-104; Veltri, “Jewish Traditions,” 34-37; G. Lacertenza, “Magia giudaica nella Sicilia carbonificata,” in *Gli Ebrei in Sicilia dal tardoantico al medioevo. Studi in onore di Mons. B. Rocco* (ed. N. Bucaria; Palermo: Flaccovio, 1998), 293-310.

and neutralize the power of demons on the body, the soul, and on activities of daily life. In some provinces such angelic powers were even considered autonomous deities.⁷¹ The true dimension of this belief in angels can best be measured by taking into account the number of inscriptions as well as the testimony of the Church Fathers and of several Church Councils. They all condemn every form of preaching or invocation of angels, and place special emphasis on the field of magic, following the pronouncement, agreed upon at First Council of Rome, against those *phylacteria omnia quae non angelorum, ut illi confingunt, sed daemonum magis nominibus conscripta sunt*.⁷² Such phraseology suggests that among the learned circles in Christian society there existed, as with Jerome, a concrete awareness of the difference between true names of angels and *nomina barbata* ending in *-el*.

The Church also plainly disapproved of magic in general — considered the work of Satan — including horoscopes and resorting to more or less legitimate angelic powers. Yet, I believe that the massive Christian recourse to Jewish magic — or, alternatively, the success of Jewish magicians — was due to this factor in particular: the popularity of the angelic cults and Judaism’s supposed special relationship with these cults.

Jews had, so it was believed, an experience with angelic matters that was centuries old. In addition, Hebrew and Aramaic were held in high regard when it came to cultivating contacts with the heavens. The widespread idea of a correspondence between Jewish script and “magic” — an idea rooted in Jewish beliefs — further added to the luster of these beliefs. The same held true for some Jewish symbols — this in spite of the fact that certain symbols absorbed by Judaism were of pagan origin, just as certain formulae that use the Greek alphabet in Hebrew and Aramaic amulets are of Greek derivation.⁷³ How entangled the various traditions could become can be illustrated on the basis of a still-unpublished amulet from Sicily. Among a plethora of symbols, there appear, on its upper left corner,

⁷¹ Cf. A. A. R. Sheppard, “Pagan Cults of Angels in Roman Asia Minor,” *Italica* 12-13 (1980-81): 77-101.

⁷² Cf. Simon, *Vetus Israel*, 422f., 430; F. Malmomini, “Cristo all’Enfrate. PHeid.C.1101, amuleto cristiano,” *ZPE* 48 (1982): 166f.

⁷³ See for instance Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets*, A14, 25, 102-105; Naveh and Shaked, *Spells*, A18, 57-60; Naveh and Shaked, *Spells*, A21, 68-72.

a small cross, which is followed, in the lower line, by a five-branched *menorah*.⁷⁴

It is well known that Moses and Solomon remained the greatest demon-dominators. The latter's ring, containing a "seal" that was able to tame angels, spirits, and demons, was displayed for a long time to the crowds of Christian pilgrims who visited the Holy Sepulchre.⁷⁵ We may reasonably suppose that such a sight had a considerable impact on the pilgrims and their imaginations. The average late antique magician can best be portrayed as a mediator between different realities, modes of thought, and situations: between learned and popular culture, between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, and between traditional faith and other cultures.

What can be said about the clients? And what kind of information can we obtain from an analysis of the sources? First at all, it should kept in mind that the equation "Jewish amulet" = "Jewish client" is not always correct — just as amulets that are vaguely Christian are not necessarily proof of Christian clients or manufacture. The lack of certainty about the religious status of customers and purchasers of ancient amulets was already pointed out by Campbell Bonner.⁷⁶ His observations hold particularly true in the case of amulets without the name of the client, as well in cases in which the anthroponym does not show any religious or ethnic characterization.

In the case of Jewish materials, this identification problem is made more difficult by another problem that is widespread and well-known: the difficulty of distinguishing Jews from pagans or Christians on the basis of the names they bore (the three groups in question often used exactly the same names). To give just one example, in a well-known manumission document of 291 C.E. from Oxyrhynchos (*POxy*. IX 1205) we find a Jewish woman bearing an Egyptian name, Paramone, along with two representatives of Jewish communities. One is named Dioskoros (a Greek name) and the other Iustus (a Latin name). When we find names such as Paramone, Dioskoros, and Iustus together in one and the same magical document or

⁷⁴ Private collection.

⁷⁵ J. Wilkinson, *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusaders* (Warminster: Aris and Phillips, 1977), 59; Vikan, "Art," 85f.

⁷⁶ C. Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets* (University of Michigan Studies Humanistic Series 49; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1950), 18.

amulet, what conclusions are we to draw about the religious or ethnical status of the persons mentioned?⁷⁷

In light of this evidence, it hardly needs to be stressed why it is vitally important to know the exact provenance of the amulets (whether they are, for instance, from a Christian or Jewish necropolis), in order to establish the kind of connection between the object and, at least, its last owner. Unfortunately, as is well-known, most ancient amulets published to date derive from private collections or clandestine excavations, so that an important source of data about their effective cultural value is, in the vast majority of cases, lost for ever.⁷⁸

In an attempt to pin down the possible clients of the amulets that have survived, it is useful to refer to the Hebrew and Aramaic amulets from the Middle East. Among those published years ago by Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked,⁷⁹ we find at least two cases of amulets that were probably manufactured for a Christian clientele.

Amulet I is a silver sheet of unknown provenance.⁸⁰ It was made for the health of a client whose name is spelled as Qûzmah ben Salmînu (*quzmb bn shmynu*, l. 4) in one instance, but elsewhere appears as Qûzmah bar Salmînu (*quzmb br shmynu*, ll. 11, 15, 22), the Aramaic form being nearest to the original name. The amulet, written in Hebrew with heavy Aramaic influences, contains a biblical quotation (Zech 3:2-3), some Jewish formulae, and a series of magic names, which rely partially on Greek original forms. The magic act is mostly directed to exorcize spirits, especially from Qûzmah's bones. As the editors note only implicitly, the name Qûzmah bar Salmînu sounds typically Christian: while the matronymic Salmînu is of uncertain derivation, Qûzmah certainly stands for Cosmas, a name particularly popular among the Christians of Syria.⁸¹ So it seems

⁷⁷ The problem of how to identify Jews in documents from late antique Egypt has been touched upon also by Bagnall, *Egypt*, 226f. For the earlier period, see most recently L. E. Fokhman, "On Onomastics of Greek and Roman Egypt," in *Classical Studies in Honor of David Sobelberg* (ed. R. Katzoff et al.; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan U.P., 1996), 403-14.

⁷⁸ A valuable list of magic materials from North Africa stemming from the local Jewish milieu, is given by Y. Le Bohec, "Inscriptions juives et judaïsantes de l'Afrique romaine," *AntAfr* 17 (1981): 196, 198-200.

⁷⁹ Above, note 3.

⁸⁰ Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets*, A1, 24, 40-45; cf. also Schäfer, "Jewish Magic Literature," 83.

⁸¹ Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets*, 42.

unlikely that this amulet has been manufactured in Palestine; rather, it was made in Syria. Such a provenance seems likely, especially since another amulet similar to this one certainly comes from Syria. This other amulet was most probably destined for a Christian customer.

The amulet in question is amulet 4 in Naveh and Shaked's corpus. It was found in a tomb near Aleppo. Like amulet 1, it was incised on a silver sheet.⁸² The text is in Aramaic, but interspersed with rather obscure Hebrew phrases. It contains several biblical allusions, mixed with sequences of incomprehensible letters and some magical characters of hybrid Semitic derivation. The name of the client, this time a woman, is not decisive: Aqemû daughter of Em-Rabban (*qmw brth d'mrbn*, l. 16).⁸³ The magic act, against "fever and shivering," is accomplished by invoking divine names and adjuring spirits. The interesting point lies in l. 8, where the Christian monogram *chr-rho* is incised clearly, between the divine Hebrew epithets *hay*, 'Living', and *ehyeh 'I am'* (an abridged form of the famous *ehyeh aser ehyeh*). The editors are not convinced of the Christian value and meaning of the monogram, but this position does not seem tenable, given the context.

The clients of other amulets in mentioned collection cannot so easily be determined. They lack symbols or names that can be assigned to one religious group of the other. This is, for instance, the case with:

- Antonina (*ntumnh*, with matronymic lost).⁸⁴
- Cassianos son of Domitia (*qsynus br dmti*).⁸⁵
- Clara daughter of Kyrana (*ql'r brth dgyr nib*).⁸⁶

⁸² Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets*, A4, 22, 54-61, with previous bibliography, which starts from M. Schwab, "Une amulette judéo-araméenne," *JA* 2^{ème} s., 7 (1906): 5-17.

⁸³ The editors (Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets*, 60) just note that *imbn* is probably to be read as Em-Rabban. Semitic names on the root *qwm* are known in North Arabic contexts: see H. Wüthnow, *Die semitischen Menschennamen in griechischen Inschriften und Papyri des vorderen Orients* (Studien zur Epigraphik und Papyruskunde 1.4; Leipzig: Dieterichsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1930), 58 (Izzer's male name) and 163f. (*varia*, on the root *qwm*); A. Negev, *Personal Names in the Nabataean Realm* (Qadim 32; Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology, The Hebrew University, 1991), 14 nr. 141 (*qumaw*, common in the Safaitic inscriptions).

⁸⁴ Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets*, A15, 104-10 (unknown provenance). It is noteworthy that the amulet contains the text of an *historiôla* which has been transmitted in later times mainly by the Christian side: cf. *ibid.*, 111-22.

⁸⁵ Naveh and Shaked, *Spells*, A30, 105-107 (unknown provenance).

⁸⁶ Naveh and Shaked, *Spells*, A18, 57-60 (unknown provenance).

- Georgios son of Megaures (*gyurgys brh dangiwrts*).⁸⁷
- Habibi son of Haritah (*hbyby brh dhrych*).⁸⁸
- Maximion (*mksymyon*).⁸⁹
- Nonna daughter of Megale (*nwnb brth dmghl*).⁹⁰
- Qadûmah son of Kyril (*qdwmb bn qyrl*, elsewhere *qdwmb brh dgyrl*).⁹¹
- Selones son of Demetron (*slwnb br dmtryn*).⁹²
- Teo (possibly for Theodora or Theodosia) daughter of Matrona (*tyw brt mtrwnb*).⁹³
- Theodosius son of Theodora (*tydusius brh dtydator*).⁹⁴

At first glance one could be tempted to consider these amulets as Jewish products for Christian, or even pagan, clients. But in the majority of cases, the finding place of these amulets is unknown, and the damage to our knowledge is complete. Since we know that Jews used non-Jewish names frequently — especially in late antiquity — we simply cannot be certain. For that reason, further research in this area is a desideratum.⁹⁵

⁸⁷ Naveh and Shaked, *Spells*, A29, 99-101 (Irbid).

⁸⁸ Naveh and Shaked, *Spells*, A26, 87-90 (unknown provenance); with Palmyrene parallels for both names.

⁸⁹ Naveh and Shaked, *Spells*, A20, 67f. (unknown provenance).

⁹⁰ Naveh and Shaked, *Spells*, A25, 85-87 (unknown provenance); *nwnb* is uncertain.

⁹¹ Naveh and Shaked, *Spells*, A24, 80-84 (unknown provenance); with Nabataean parallels for the name *qdwmb*.

⁹² Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets*, A7, 23, 68-77 (Ağabeyli, Turkey).

⁹³ Naveh and Shaked, *Spells*, A23, 77-80 (unknown provenance).

⁹⁴ Naveh and Shaked, *Spells*, A22, 73-76 (unknown provenance).

⁹⁵ Nor should we forget that the same holds true with regard to Samaritan materials. A good example is a Samaritan amulet found in a Christian context, a little bronze plaque from Nahariyya published by Reich, "Amulet." See, moreover, the amulets from Anemurium (Asiur Minor), a well excavated site, discussed in J. Russel, "The Archaeological Context of Magic in the Early Byzantine Period," in Maguire, *Byzantine Magic*, 35-50.