

An Assemblage of Coptic Magical Texts on Leather and Their Traditional Context (P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10122, 10376, 10391, 10414, 10434)*

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Abstract

Report on the re-edition of an assemblage of Coptic magical texts on leather manuscripts from Byzantine or early Islamic Egypt, possibly from the Theban region, now in the British Museum. Select new readings and proposals for interpretative context, in the history of pre-modern religion and magic and in the practice of the ancient collector(s) of the manuscripts, are presented.

Keywords

Coptic, magic, Christianity

Between 1828 and 1834, the Scottish draughtsman and antiquarian Robert Hay documented Egyptian antiquities on a series of voyages up and down the Nile.¹ In addition to drawings and casts, he brought back a selection of portable antiquities, including fragments of up to seven Coptic manuscripts on leather, whose texts belong to the genre conventionally termed magic.² The manuscripts are now kept in the British Museum. Recently I have been re-editing and analyzing the texts as part of a project funded by the British Museum Research Board,³ and my aim here is to give a progress report on the textual component of this work. The project as a whole develops a new approach to the conservation, mounting, and publication of manuscripts on leather, joining scientific analysis on leather production with the first complete edition and English translation of the texts as an ensemble.

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¹ On Hay see Tillett 1984, Williams 2004, and O’Connell in this volume.

² A more accurate but unwieldy term would be instrumental religion: Gordon 2014, 253 n. 1; cf. also Richter 2015, 188.

³ For a prospectus and images of all the manuscripts see [www.britishmuseum.org/research/research_projects/all_current_projects/the_hay_cookbook.aspx]; cf. also O’Connell 2019, 72, and Zellmann-Rohrer 2020.

With one exception that will be encountered further on, the manuscripts are formularies, that is, instruction manuals for the performance of magical ritual. The following conspectus shows the manuscripts and their contents, which will be described in more detail below.

Conspectus of Texts

Text 1 («Hay cookbook»)

Formulary (miscellany)

P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10391

Registration no. 68.11.2.464

TM 100015

Ed. pr. Kropp 1930-1931, 1:55-62

text M; tr. id. *ibidem* 2: 40-53

no. XIV, D. Frankfurter and M.

Meyer ap. Meyer / Smith 1994,

263-269 no. 127 (textual notes

p. 378).

Text 2

Formulary (erotic magic)

P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10376

Registration no. 68.11.2.462

TM 99554

Ed. pr. Crum 1934a; tr. D.

Frankfurter ap. Meyer / Smith

1994, 164-166 no. 78 (textual

notes p. 367)

Text 3 (top of Text 4?)

Formulary (erotic; business)

P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10414a

Registration no. 68.11.2.461

Trismegistos no. 99562

Ed. pr. Crum 1934b, 195-197 text

A; tr. D. Frankfurter ap. Meyer

/ Smith 1994, 166-169 no. 79

(textual notes pp. 367-368)

Text 4 (bottom of Text 3?)

Formulary (protection; business)

P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10122

Registration no. 68.11.2.458+459

TM 99566

Ed. pr. Crum 1934b, 197-199 text

B; tr. D. Frankfurter ap. Meyer

/ Smith 1994, 171-174 no. 81

(textual note p. 368); cf. also

Frankfurter 2018, 204-205

Text 5

Formulary (protection; business)

P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10434 a

Registration no. 68.11.2.463

TM 99565

Ed. pr. Crum 1934b, 199 text C; tr

D. Frankfurter ap. Meyer /

Smith 1994, 169-170 no. 80

(textual notes p. 368)

Text 6

Finished product (amulet or copy)

P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10434 b

Registration no. 68.11.2.460

TM addendum

Ed. pr. Crum 1934b, 200 text D;

tr. D. Frankfurter ap. Meyer /

Smith 1994, 170 no. 80

«additional piece»

Text 7

Formulary (small fragment)

P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10414 b

Registration no. (as Text 3)

Unpublished

The topics include divination, healing and protection, and the compulsion of female beloveds, the so-called erotic magic.⁴ The mechanisms are oral invocations of various angelic and demonic powers, inscription of text, signs, and figural drawings, and aromatic offerings.

Walter Crum, who edited five of the texts and assisted in a sixth published by Angelicus Kropp, tentatively proposed a dating for the assemblage in the sixth or seventh century A.D. While this remains palaeographically possible, preliminary results from radio-carbon dating undertaken for the new project on two of the manuscripts suggest a later range in the eighth or ninth century, which can also be reconciled with the palaeography.⁵ Neither the Museum's records nor Robert Hay's manuscript diaries of his travels tell anything of the find-spots of the manuscripts. The generally Sahidic character of the dialect may point to the vicinity of Thebes, as Crum already saw, where Hay also resided.

The scope of the Hay collection is diverse, but it probably cohered already in antiquity. The characteristic and unusual choice of substrate is suggestive: tall, thin rolls of leather. So too are the circumstances of accession to the Museum, in a single group as shown by the registration numbers. In two cases a fragment of one of the manuscripts was stuck to another, probably during ancient or medieval deposition, and another two fragments may be assigned to the top and bottom of the same original manuscript (Texts 3-4). There are shared textual elements, such as a peculiar arrangement of divine names and ritual drawings associated with the four cardinal directions in two different manuscripts (Texts 4 and 5). Crum further identified all the manuscripts as the work of a single hand. Close comparison suggests instead at least two copyists who built up a working archive: the identification of a single hand in Texts 3-5 holds, but Texts 1-2, which may or may not belong to a single copyist, differs in general impression and enough particulars to warrant a separate writer, perhaps imitating the first. The small sample size in the short Text 6 shows general similarities but remains insufficient for a firm conclusion. Phonological and orthographic diversity suggests further variation in the hypothetical exemplars copied in this work.

As a whole, one manuscript in the collection may illustrate the collecting activity at work behind the constitution of the assemblage (Text 6). On a small sheet of leather, folded after writing, it lacks rubrics or instructions, giving instead a single sentence in syntactic Coptic surrounded by magical syllables and signs. It appears therefore to be either an activated ritual object, or more probably given its context in a collection, an archival copy. An ancient collector may have met this text (or its exemplar) in the field or received it by correspondence, a circulation of knowledge attested by earlier Coptic and Greek private letters. A third-century Greek letter requests a copy of a healing amulet, and another in Coptic from a Manichaean context in the fourth century gives a copy of a

⁴ For the category in antiquity see in general Faraone 1999; for Coptic, Frankfurter 2001.

⁵ See e.g. the Theban document P.Lond.Copt. I 398 (with Pl. III), internally dated to 749.

bilingual Greek-Coptic invocation for aggressive magic.⁶ The medical authors and physicians Marcellus Empiricus and Alexander of Tralles, both active in the early Byzantine period, included incantations and amulets among their collections of prescriptions, and both refer to their active collection of such material through informal channels in folk medicine.⁷

There is further evidence, from both text and material substrate, for an eclectic and opportunistic process of compilation. First, a medicinal prescription lists among ingredients an herb, «all-heal», followed by an apparent note of a variant reading in another exemplar collated by the writer: «another one had “white calamus”». ⁸ Second, the use of leather offcuts rather than prepared parchment suggests occasional and opportunistic rather than institutionalized production, fitting in turn with the eclectic assemblage of aims and textual motifs.

The manuscripts themselves provide direct indications of the goals behind collection of the assemblage. Two are taken up by one or two recipes each, for invocations of demons to force a beloved into compliance (Texts 2-3). Two others have more varied collections but equal concern with personal gain, particularly success in business (Texts 4-5). The most diverse collection is on an opisthographic leather roll (Text 1) with a total of 26 recipes, of which the following conspectus may be offered:

⁶ P.Oxy. XLII 3068 = Suppl.Mag. I 5; P.KellisCopt. 35 (P.Kellis V); cf. also O.Frange 190-191.

⁷ Marcellus Empiricus, *De medicamentis* pref. §2; Alexander of Tralles, *Therapeutica* 1.15, 1:557-575 Puschmann.

⁸ Text 4. l. 89-90, χαρβανη νερε κου κοω λεγκον. For internal reference to collation in magical texts of the Graeco-Roman period see Dieleman 2005, 36-39 and 72, and Love 2016, 191. A closer contemporary of the Hay texts, Alexander of Tralles, marks a variant «from another exemplar» (ἐξ ἄλλου ἀντιγράφου) among ritual remedies for epilepsy: *Therapeutica* 1. 15, 1:559 Puschmann.

Text 1 P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10391, Conspectus of Contents

Front	74-76 Multi-purpose invocation («the prayer»)
1-10 Invocation of angelic guardians	76-78 To drive a man from his house
10-12 Instructions for offering	78-79 For favor
12-36 Invocation of angelic powers	79-80 To drive people out of a place
37-38 Instructions for offering	80-82 To cause derangement
39-56 Invocation for revelation (lecanomancy?)	82-84 To separate friends
56-58 Instructions for offering and amulets	85-86 For cursing
58-60 Medical recipe for headache and gout (?)	86-87 For sale of workshop
60 Medical recipe for eye complaint	87-89 For success of workshop
	89-90 To separate people
	90-93 For erotic magic
	93-94 For cursing
	94-95 For cursing
	95-96 Oil magic, erotic
<i>Back</i>	
61-65 Spell against bleeding with apocryphal narrative of Elijah	96-98 Invocation for erotic magic, to separate a woman from her parents
66-67 Textual amulet for sleep	
67-69 Invocation of St. George for protection	99-144 Design for ritual inscription to be used on women, erotic or medicinal?
69-73 Invocation for healing	
	145-154 Invocation to inflict impotence on a man

The manuscript opens with three invocations and instructions for aromatic offerings. Despite the absence of rubrics, a general appeal for the attendance of supernatural beings, which are to descend upon the offerings and enlighten and assist the user, can be recognized. Then there follow three short medical recipes: the inscription of magical signs to cure headache, and two pharmacological preparations to help the legs and eyes.

As the text continues on the back, the healing focus remains with four short recipes for ritual invocations or inscriptions. Then comes a short prayer invoking a single divinity, which is applied in turn in conjunction with a list of holy names, those of the heavenly 24 elders of Revelation,⁹ via twelve sets of directions for more hostile aims, including curses.¹⁰ Two erotic procedures follow, and another for use on women, according to what appears to be a rubric incorporated into some designs for ritual drawings, which could be either erotic or medicinal. A final aggressive procedure closes the collection, an invocation to bind the sexual potency of a man with a woman. The content suggests the primarily self-interested pursuit of personal protection, enlightenment, and gain, with supernatural help, by a user directly or a practitioner on behalf of a client. There are also signs of integration within a community: the aims of the multi-purpose prayer include the prosperity of a workshop.

In the re-edition of the texts, conservation, multispectral imaging, and philological contextualization have yield new readings and interpretations. These build in turn on some unpublished improvements made already by Crum, who, probably in the course of slipping the texts for his *Coptic Dictionary*, collated Kropp's edition of Text 1 against a photograph, presumably the result of the infrared photography applied in his editions of Texts 2-6, the results of which are preserved in his copy in the Sackler Library, Oxford. Three examples of the combined effects are offered here, which also point up the diversity of the traditional strands seen in the assemblage.

The first comes from the most extensive of the seven manuscripts, whose contents have just been surveyed. The ritual in question includes a lengthy, multi-part invocation and closes with ingredients for an aromatic offering. The relevant portion of the invocation (l. 12-18) runs,

⁹ These *πρεσβύτεροι* were angelic powers in their own right in popular religious traditions: for Coptic see in general Kropp 1930-1931, 3:83-85, 130-132. To supplement their anonymity in the Bible, lists of their names were in circulation (Grosjean 1954), which the user of the Hay manuscript would have been assumed to have to hand.

¹⁰ Parallels for the multi-purpose prayer are P.Cair. inv. no. 45060 (ed. Kropp 1930-1931, 50-54, text K), 1-23, and P.Leid. inv. no. F 1964/4.14 (ed. Green 1987 with Green 1988), and more generally the prayers of Seth, son of Adam, in P.Mich. inv. no. 593 (ed. Worrell 1930) and the archangel Michael in P.Heid. inv. no. K 686 (ed. Kropp 1966) and the collection in the codex P.Macq. I 1. pp. 12-16. The Jewish tradition shows similar dispositions, most extensively the *Book of Secrets* (ed. Rebiger and Schäfer 2009) and the *Sword of Moses* (ed. Schäfer 1981, §§ 598 ff. with Harari 2012).

Text 1 = P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10391, l. 12-18 (Pl. 1)

(...) †ϥⲟⲛϥ † vac. παρακαλε μμοκ νποου ρωλ πν-
οϥ νχωωρε ρν τεϥϥομ παι εταζε ερατϥ εχν νκελε βινιπε εϥωϣ εβολ
ντεζε χε ανοκ πε ρωκ νεκμαχε ρν ναχια λ(ι)ρωλ ερωγν επελλωνια διει
15 εβολ νογρω μμπεπινιπε δικινε νογσαειη ντωρω νκαμβαλ εςμοοϥ ε-
[χν ο]γϥρονοϥ εϥχοοϥε διεπιθημα εροϥ λιωϣ εβολ ειχω μοϥ χε αμογ
ωαροι ρωτ νποου πνοϥ νχωωρε ντηνατοϥ ρν πεϥρητ νερϥε μμοκ νβωκ
ωα δδ νεινε μμοϥ νδδ ρν τεουνογ μπατεϥχωκ

12 ρωλ Crum : ρω Kropp 12-13 πνοϥ Crum : ννοϥ Kropp 13 χωωρε Crum : χωρε Kropp; ε no longer visible βινιπε: i² from corr.? 14 ντοκ edd. επελλωνιαδιει Crum : επελλωνιαδδ Kropp 15 νογσαειη edd. 17 νβωκ Crum : νβωκ Kropp 18 νεινε Crum : ντ[ει]νε Kropp

«I beg, I entreat you today, Horus, the great one strong in his power, the one who stands upon the iron bars (or, on iron legs), crying out as follows, «It is I. Prick up your ears at my needs (?).¹¹ I flew off to Pellonia,¹² I came out (15) of a door of iron, I found a beautiful woman, red, dark-eyed, sitting on a lofty throne. I desired her, I cried out, saying, “Come to me myself today, great one, strong and powerful in his heart, rouse yourself and go to NN, to bring her to NN, now, before she stings (...)».

Horus then invokes three decans,¹³ with further dialogue between him and this «great one», which puts in Horus’ mouth the central request, the ritual activation of some radish oil to serve «as a preparation for everything that I may undertake». The key new reading here is the name of the god Horus (ρωλ for ρωρ).¹⁴ As had been previously suspected and can now be more securely accepted, the invocation belongs among Coptic reflexes of Egyptian myths on Horus and his scorpion-brides, applied in turn in incantations.¹⁵ Fittingly here the beautiful woman is «red» (τωρω) and «dark-eyed» (καμβαλ), and liable to sting (χωκ for χω(ω)κε), just as was done to Horus in those myths. The

¹¹ ρν ναχια: if the latter is based on a Greek loanword (να-χια), the noun χρεία «need» (the suggestion of Korshi Dosoo; for the loanword and the spelling see Förster 2002, 878-879) fits the sense better than the μάχη «battle» (from which μάχη would have been expected) assumed by previous translators.

¹² This place is otherwise unknown; possibly Coptic πελ-ωνε (for περ-ωνε) «house of stone». Compare perhaps the Περόνη/Περόνη in or near Alexandria mentioned in Sophronios, *Narration of the Miracles of Ss Cyrus and John* (§ 5), and three Byzantine documentary papyri: Gascou 2006, 34 n. 157; Gonis 2014, 201-202.

¹³ The originally celestial decans figure in demonology already in the *Testament of Solomon* (recensions AB, 18.4, p. 52 McCown) and are firmly identified as demons in Coptic hagiography: Behlmer-Loprieno 1984; Walters 1989, 203. For their role Coptic magic see in general Kropp 1930-1931, 3:29-30 §42.

¹⁴ On the spelling see Crum 1939, 697 b s.v. There is a pun on the name in this form and the following verb ρωλ «fly» (l. 14), which suits Horus’ falcon aspect.

¹⁵ Frankfurter 2009 and 2018, 1-2, 56-58, 209-211; Blumell and Dosoo 2018; for the older Egyptian phase, Ritner 1998.

placeholder NN, for the names of male user and female target, is a remnant of an original context in erotic magic, from which it has been extracted for a more general purpose.

A second example of progress comes in a formulary with an invocation of a demon spoken over wine, to be given to a female victim, to instill erotic desire for the male user (Text 2. l. 13-17). The invocation begins with a narrative device: the demon emerges from the sea, followed by a dialogue between it and a first-person speaking voice, in which the two form a pact, and the following effect on the beloved is sought:

Text 2 = P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10376, l. 13-17 (Pl. 2)

2Ν ΟΥΩΨΕ ΜΑΡΕΣΟΥΨΤ 2Ν ΟΥΜΕ ΜΑΡΕ(ΣΜΕ)ΡΙΤ ΜΑΡΕ ΠΑΟΥΨΕ
 ΜΝ ΠΑΜΕ ΨΩΠΕ 2ΡΑΙ Ν2ΗΤΣ ΝΝΙΜ ΤΨΕΡΕ ΝΝΙΜ ΝΘΕ ΝΟΥ vac. ΑΓΓΕΛΟ-
 15 Σ ΝΤΕ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ ΜΠΕΣΜΤΟ ΕΒΟΛ ΧΕ ΤΕΠΕΘΙΜΙΑ ΤΑΙ ΤΕΝΤΑΜΑΣΤΑ-
 ΜΑ ΣΗΡΕΣΣΕ ΜΜΟΣ 2Ν ΟΥΦΕΑΛΕ ΔΧΝΟΧΣ 2ΡΑΙ 2Ν ΤΑΡΧΗ Μ-
 ΠΕΨΤΟΥ ΝΕΡΟ (...)

13 μαρεπαου[ωψε] Crum 15-16 τα[ι] ετενταμαστεμα Crum 16 μμοσ: μ² corr. from η? 2ν
 ου. ρακ Crum 17 η[εψ]τοου Crum

«In desire may she desire me, in love may she love me, may desire for me and love for me be within her, N daughter of N, like an angel (15) of God in her presence. For this is the lust that Mastema scraped (?) in a bowl, he cast it into the source of the four rivers (...).»

The new readings of φεαλε «bowl» and σηρεσσε «scrape», the first a Greek loanword from φιάλη and the second probably from ξυρίζω (via the aorist infinitive ξυρίσαι), provide the clue to a previously obscure passage, which proves to be a piece of folklore elaborating on biblical apocrypha. Mastema, originally a figure of apocalyptic Judaism as chief of demons, here substitutes for Satan in an episode from a Greek apocryphon associated with the apostle Bartholomew. As Satan tells it there, «I took a bowl in my hand and scraped the sweat from my chest and armpits and washed in the outlets whence the four rivers [of Paradise] flow, and Eve drank and contracted lust. For if she had not drunk that water, I could not have deceived her». ¹⁶ The Coptic text fittingly invokes an origin-myth of the fleshly desire it seeks to inflict.

¹⁶ *Questions of Bartholomew* 4. 59, ed. Bonwetsch 1897, 26.11-16 (cf. *CANT* 63; Kaestli 1988; P.Worp 5). For the apocryphon in Coptic magic see also van der Vliet 1991, 225-228.

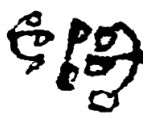
A final example shows the reconstruction of a recipe via conservation that has allowed re-union of two fragments of a manuscript. A detached piece regarded by Crum as an unplaced fragment of Text 3, to which it had been incorrectly joined by modern adhesive tape, can now be assigned to Text 5, as conservation and imaging have shown that it is actually the bottom of a manuscript, and its textual content prevents its placement as the bottom of the original manuscript of Text 3. Thus regained is the lost beginning of a procedure for a man to gain favor (denoted by the Greek loanword *χάρις*) with a woman, continuing at the top of the back of the top fragment of Text 5.

Text 5 = P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10434 a, l. 18-32 (Pl. 3 a-b)

(Front, bottom fragment)

ΤΙ ΧΑΡΙC ΝΔΔ ΕΞΟ-

Ν ΕΝΙΜ ΤΩΕΡΕ ΔΔ

20  CΩΝΞ ΝΝΔΔ

ΝΤΩΤϥ ΔΔ

(Back, top fragment)

ΝΤΩΤϥ ΝΔΔ

 ΜΙΧ-

ΔΗΛ ΤΙ ΧΑΡΙC ΓΑΒ-

25 ΡΙΗΛ ΜΔ ΤΑΝΞΩ

CΟΥΡΙΗΛ † ΤΑΗΙΩ

ΡΑΦΔΗΛ ΤΑΝΞΩ

CΕΒΘΩΡ ΤΙ ΧΑΡΙC

ΑΝΔΗΛ † ΤΑΙΩ ΒΔΘΟ-

30 ΥΗΛ † ΝΟΥΩΩΕ ΝΝΔΔ

ΕΞΟΥΝ Ε ΔΔ ΝΝΕΞΟΥΥ

ΤΗΡΟΥ ΝΠΕϥΩΝΞ

18-19 ΤΙ ΧΑΡΙC ΝΤ... ΝΕ ΝΙΜ Crum 21 ΝΤΩΤϥ ΔΔ Crum

«Give favor to so-and-so before her, so-and-so daughter of NN (20) (*signs*). Bind NN to NN, to NN! (*signs*) Michaël, give favor, Gabriël, (25) give salvation, Souriël, give honor, Raphaël, (give) salvation, Sebthōr, give favor, Anaël, give honor, Bathouël, (30) put desire for NN into NN, for all the days of his life».

The origins of the motif, a sort of angelic roster that assigns a different aspect of this favor to each of a diverse group of angels,¹⁷ one of whom has an Egyptian name, Sebthōr,¹⁸ lie probably in the angelology of apocalyptic Judaism, firmly embedded in turn in an Egyptian Christian context.

The project also aims to set the Hay manuscripts in the context of the diachronic development of magical texts in Coptic. Such texts are already well represented in the corpus of Old Coptic, where, in a trend continuing into the classical phase of the language, a repertoire rooted in ancient Egyptian traditions expands via Greek-language traditions informed by both Hellenic and Jewish religion and culture, circulating in Egypt for centuries already.¹⁹ The incantation derived from the myth of Horus belongs to the former strand, and it can be set alongside others from outside the Hay assemblage, involving other traditional Egyptian deities such as Amun and Thoth, their language marked by poetic and archaic features, but also making use of Greek loanwords and referring to the Judaeo-Christian God.²⁰

The Hay manuscripts witness the nearing end of such material: the Horus narrative is barely recognizable, within a demonological frame divorced from its original context. A Greek-inflected, Christian tradition appears to be ascendant. Invocation of angelic supernatural beings predominates, with borrowings also from Christian scripture and hagiography. Besides the Bartholomew apocryphon, there is an invocation of St. George:

Text 1 = P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10391, l. 67-68 (Pl. 4)

(...) ΓΕΩ<P>ΓΕ

ΝΤΑϸΨΑΛΕ ΖΝ ΠΕΨΑΛΜΟ ΠΝΟΥΤΕ † ΖΤΗΚ ΕΤΑΒΟΗΘΕΑ

68 ΝΤΑϸΨΑΛΕ Σϣμ : Κροπ ΕΤΑΒΟΗΘΕΙΑ Σϣμ : ΕΤΑΒΟΙΘΙΑ Κροπ

«George, he who sang in the Psalm, “God, attend to my help”».

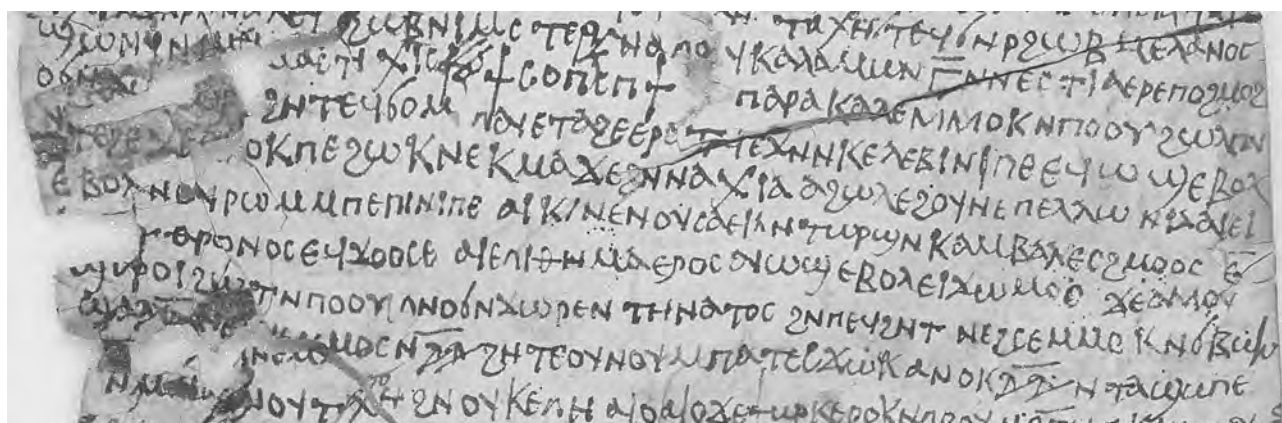
¹⁷ Cf. British Library Ms. Or. 5525 (ed. Kropp 1930-1931, 1:15-21, text C), l. 116-119; British Library Ms. Or. 6796 (2-3) recto (ed. ibidem, 1. 35-40, text G), l. 89-100, and verso (ed. ibidem, 1. 41-45, text H), l. 43-56. For possibly related claims to being surrounded by apotropaic divinities see Levene / Marx / Bharyo 2014; P.Kramer 2.

¹⁸ R. Ritner, cited in a note to the translation in Meyer/Smith 1994, 169-170 no. 80, identifies an otherwise unknown Egyptian epithet, «[The] one who equips Horus (Sbte-Hor)», which would refer to the god Horus mentioned also in Text 1. Other theophorics might also be considered, such as «Wall of Horus» (CΟΒΤ-ΖΩΡ) or «Horus is prepared» (CΕΒΤ(ΩΤ)-ΖΩΡ).

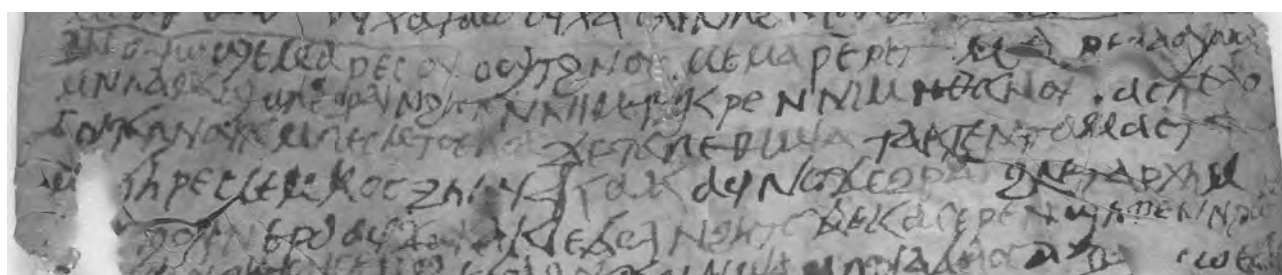
¹⁹ For this corpus and its antecedents see Dieleman 2005; Sederholm 2006; Love 2016; Quack 2017, 64-65.

²⁰ See e.g. P.Mich. MS 136. pp. 5-7, ed. Worrell 1930, 17-37, l. 60-110; for this codex see most recently De Bruyn 2017, 80-81.

The reference is to the first verse of Psalm 69(70). Beyond the increasing popularity of Christian scripture, and especially the Psalms, in Late Ancient and Medieval magic,²¹ there is a more specific motivation for this choice. This same Psalm was recorded in hagiography as the one used by St. George in prayer before his interview with the Roman authorities,²² and hence the recipe may draw an analogical connection between that sacred precedent and the scenario of use, in which protection is sought both from the saint and his divine patron, who responded to the Psalmic invocation in the past. Documenting this distinctive and eclectic Christianity of the late Byzantine and early Islamic periods in Egypt, it may be said in closing, is the signal contribution of the Hay manuscripts. However incomplete, their perspective on the concerns and aims of the association or family of collectors responsible for the assemblage may be highlighted once again: an attempt to profit from literacy and the accumulation of knowledge, which may at the same time stem from genuine curiosity.



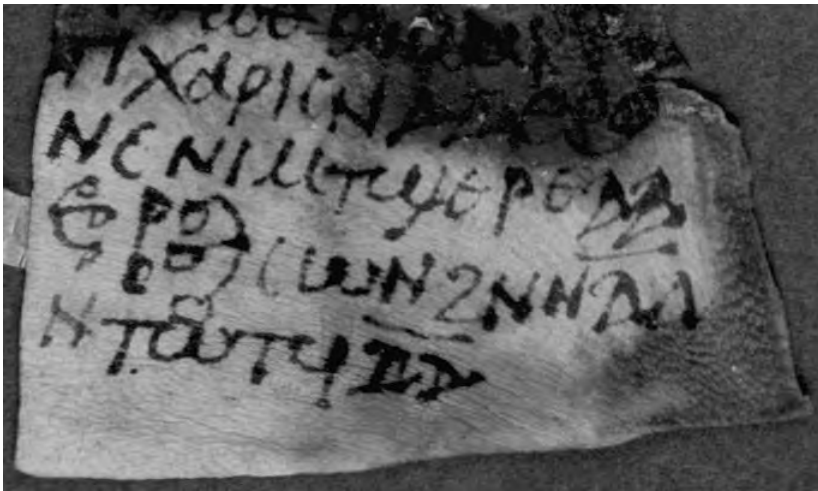
Pl. 1. Text 1 = P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10391, l. 12-18. Infrared-reflected image by Lucy-Anne Skinner, reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.



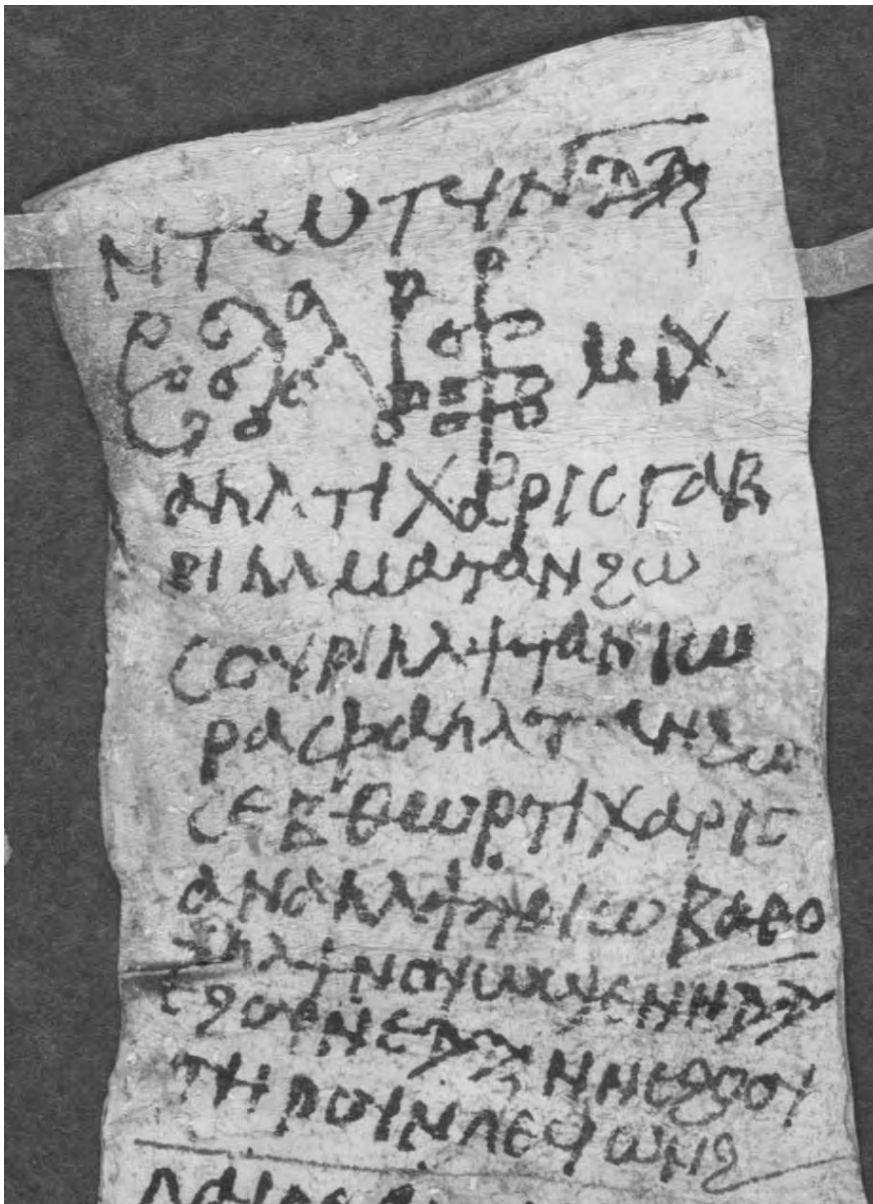
Pl. 2. Text 2 = P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10376, l. 13-17. Infrared-reflected image by Lucy-Anne Skinner, reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

²¹ For the present instance see Sanzo 2014, 120-121 no. 44. For Coptic magic, beyond the popular Ps. 90 (91), for which see recently P.Stras. inv. no. WG Kopt. 1 (ed. Kreps 2014), there is e.g. Ps. 109 in P.Vind. inv. no. K 50 (ed. Stegemann 1934, 25-26, 62-63 no. XLII with Till 1935, 214), Ps. 119:105 in P.CtYBR inv. no. 1792 (ed. Parássoglou 1974), and Ps. 119:173, 175 in P.Berl. inv. no. 20982 (ed. Beltz 1985, 35-36). For the medieval tradition more generally see Zellmann-Rohrer 2018.

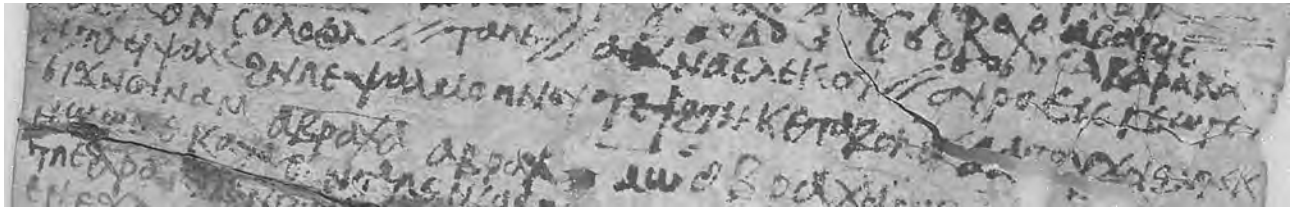
²² In the Coptic version ed. Budge 1888, 7 (wrongly Ps. 22. 19), and the Greek text ed. Canart 1982, § 5.



Pl. 3 a. Text 5 = P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10434a, l. 18-32 (Front, bottom fragment). Infrared-reflected image by Lucy-Anne Skinner, reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.



Pl. 3 b. Text 5 = P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10434a, l. 18-32 (Back, top fragment). Infrared-reflected image by Lucy-Anne Skinner, reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.



Pl. 4. Text 1 = P.Brit.Mus. inv. no. EA 10391, l. 67-68. Infrared-reflected image by Lucy-Anne Skinner, reproduced courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.

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