

Jacco Dieleman: Priests, Tongues, and Rites. The London-Leiden Magical Manuscripts and Translation in Egyptian Ritual (100-300 CE) (= Religions in the Graeco-Roman World; Vol. 153), Leiden / Boston / Tokyo: Brill Academic Publishers 2005, XIV + 346 S., ISBN 90-04-14185-5, EUR 65,00

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Jacco Dieleman's study of the bilingual magical papyri of Roman Egypt comes to bridge the worlds of Egyptian and Greek magic and to raise questions about the social context of the production and function of these papyri. The study focuses on the texts of P. Leiden 384 I verso and P. London-Leiden (that is, P. BM 10070 and P. Leiden I 383), which are regarded as an independent subgroup of the Theban Magical Library. The aim of closely examining the form and context of these texts is to sketch the identity and milieu of those who composed and read / used the magical spells. Based upon the premise that "the authors, editors and readers of the manuscripts must have gone through a priestly scribal training and [...] that the two extant manuscripts must derive somehow or other from an Egyptian temple milieu", the author chooses to examine the texts in the light of their Egyptian authorship and readership. This pro-Egyptian attitude of the author is in accordance with the generally accepted theory that in Roman Egypt only Egyptian priests used the Demotic and hieratic scripts and thus they were the only ones capable of handling such magical spells, which involved the use not only of Demotic, but also occasionally of glosses written in hieratic and Old Coptic. This argument, I believe, is sound as far as the Egyptian material is concerned, but nothing suggests that the Greek material, although collected in the same papyri, was composed and used in the same way as the Demotic one.

In general, the author has produced an excellent study of the Demotic and Greek magical papyri, a very controversial material that for long needed an overall close examination. In this book, the author touches, as will be shown in the following summary of each chapter, upon a wide range of thought-provoking topics, such as bilingualism in Graeco-Roman Egypt or the relationship of the Egyptian priesthood with the world of magic.

The book is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the world of Graeco-Roman magic and its scholarship, while its last section is a useful presentation of the aims and methods of the following investigation.

Chapter Two is a presentation of the three magical papyri constituting the core of the study. In this chapter, the author comments on the contents of the papyri, their palaeography, provenance, and dating. With regard to the last two, he establishes the Theban area as the provenance of the papyri (2.4) and dates them to the Roman period with the late first or second century AD as their *terminus post quem* (2.5).

The third chapter is the first part of the analysis proper and examines the combination of, and relationship between, the different scripts used in the papyri. In this chapter, the author raises a number of interesting questions, such as the enigmatic use of hieratic glosses for Demotic passages (56-62). With regard to this topic, the author states with confidence that such use of hieratic glosses did not function as a guide to correct pronunciation of special words or phrases as Demotic or Old Coptic glosses did, but it was probably a marking of different paths of textual transmission.

Another interesting topic discussed in this chapter is the value of secrecy in Egyptian religion and magic and the question of whether encrypted words and passages in the magical spells were there to hide information from a certain type of audience that may have had access to the texts (3.4). After pointing out and discussing all uses of 'cipher' scripts in the magical papyri, the author concludes that "the 'cipher' script was meant as a means to control and limit the access to professional knowledge, even though the system was not applied with consistency" and that "the 'cipher' system was initially not invented for spells in Demotic", but it was rather adopted at a later stage of editing from the Greek (96). [1]

Chapter Four discusses the interaction of Egyptian and Greek in the magical papyri, focusing on the Greek loanwords in the Demotic spells and the foreign loanwords in the Greek ones (in both cases leaving out the *voces magicae* which, according to the author, constitute a different class of linguistic interference and are discussed as such in 3.3.3). The theoretical backbone of the discussion of bilingualism in this chapter is mainly based upon a sociolinguistic approach (as the bibliography given in footnote 1 of the chapter suggests), as well as Willy Clarysse's work on bilingualism in documentary texts from Graeco-Roman Egypt (see 106-109 and footnotes 5 and 13). At this stage, and in addition to the author's suggestions on the subject, one should also consider the fact that the majority of intercultural borrowings in the magical papyri were terms drawn from bodies of specialized jargon rather than widely used lexical units of the vernacular. This is the reason why sociolinguistic theories that are favoured by the author and that are based upon observations on speech events cannot fully apply to this material (see also the comments of the author on the distinction between actual speech events and results of textual transmission on page 115). This explains why in the last section of this chapter the author ends up talking more of textual transmission than everyday linguistic interaction (144).

The fifth chapter turns to the study of form and contents, analyzing a

number of Greek spells. In this chapter, the author points out a number of parallels between Greek spells and Egyptian funerary texts, such as the opening lines of PGM XII.323-333 and parts of the 'Opening of the Mouth' ritual (176-177) or the layout of the same spell with the Demotic *Harpist's Song* (177). In the last section of the chapter (i.e. 5.4), the author stresses the importance that such parallels have for the study of the sources and the context of the composition of the magical spells.

Chapter Six, which is the longest chapter of the book, is examining the relationship between these spells and the status of the Egyptian priests which, according to the author's premises, composed and used at some point the magical papyri. The examination focuses on the Greek spell PGM XII.401-444 whose opening lines include a unique reference to magical ingredients carved on Egyptian statues, a rather literary device that bestowed prestige and trustworthiness to the following spell. In 6.2, the author discusses the herbal ingredients mentioned in the opening lines, associating them with what we know about ancient botany and pharmacology. In sections 6.3.1 to 6.3.3.2, the author offers a lengthy presentation of the status of priesthood in Pharaonic and post-Pharaonic Egypt, in which all of his observations are based on primary sources (as, for instance, the references to priests found in Egyptian and classical literature in 6.3.3.1 and 6.3.3.2). The largest part of this presentation, however, functions mostly as a general introduction to the status and role of the Egyptian priesthood, complimenting, rather than directly promoting, the discussion of the identity of the composers and audience of these spells. For the sake of the flow of arguments, I believe, this general discussion of the Egyptian priesthood should have been restricted only to those points that are relevant to the association of priests with magic. This presentation comes abruptly to an end, followed by a number of sections discussing the rhetorical strategies employed in the spells (254-280). The conclusions of this chapter are presented in section 6.5, in which the author argues that the Greek magical papyri were produced in Egypt and "address an audience, resident in Egypt, that views ritual and magic from a slightly different perspective than the users of the Demotic spells" (284).

In the last chapter, the author attempts to bind together all the points made in the course of his analysis reaching the following interesting conclusions:

- 1) the Demotic and Greek spells differ in a number of points, among which the most important being that of addressing different audiences; and
- 2) there is a conflict between the assumption that Greek spells were familiar with the stereotype of Egyptian exoticism and the initial argument for Egyptian authorship; this is resolved by using David Frankfurter's theory of 'stereotype appropriation'.

These, combined with a number of points made in the course of the

analysis, led the author form the scenario that the Demotic and Greek magical spells were composed by Egyptian priests of the Theban region who, after collecting and studying the Greek spells, decided to create a whole new Demotic genre in accordance with the features observed in the Greek spells.

The seven chapters of the book are followed by six useful appendices, all related to specific sections of the analysis. Finally, after the bibliography, there is an index of passages cited and an index of subjects discussed.

Overall, I would like to stress once again the importance of Jacco Dieleman's study, since it is a remarkable accomplishment from which both Egyptologists and classicists will greatly benefit.

Note:

[1] On the topic of secrecy and encrypted writing I would agree with the author's view and add that, as with the Ptolemaic temple writing, the choice of codification may suggest that such texts were not composed to be directly used by a reader but rather to record material in use. On the Ptolemaic writing, see also L. Morenz' discussion; L. Morenz: Akrophonisches oder konsonantisches Prinzip - eine angemessene Alternative für die Visuelle Poesie?, in: *Discussions in Egyptology* 61 (2005), 101-115.

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