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## La adivinación en los papiros mágicos griegos

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## REFERENCES

Alejandro GARCÍA MOLINOS, *La adivinación en los papiros mágicos griegos*, Zaragoza, Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 2017. 1 vol. 17 × 23 cm, 520 p. (*Monografías de filología griega*, 27). ISBN : 978-84-16935-38-3.

- 1 Over the last decades we have grown used to seeing the terms magic and divination alongside each other in titles of books, articles and book chapters. Despite the indefiniteness of magic and the frequent association of divination with official shrines, both terms refer to religious phenomena that are often studied together; they are often considered as tools of dealing with life crisis and other uncertainties or practices dependent upon the knowledge of religious experts. In this context, special attention is paid to the “magical papyri” of Greco-Roman Egypt which provide a splendid material for anyone who is interested in the late antique integration of private divination rituals in magical manuals and recipes.
- 2 Alejandro García Molinos’s work, based on his Ph.D diss. (*Tipología de la adivinación en los papiros griegos*, Universidad de Valladolid, 2014) has the merit to consider divination recipes of the “magical papyri” written in Greek, not only as sources for religious practices, but also as documents worth studying *per se*, for their material and literary aspects. The rather innovative and courageous goal of the A. is to detect, through systematic comparative study of the divinatory spells, all the standard sequences — involving ritual and verbal schemes — that are systematically used as components of autonomous recipes through multiple stages of redaction, in order to demonstrate the way these constitutive parts are arranged together and the variations on each one’s frequency, during the first centuries CE (see, for instance, p. 36)<sup>1</sup>.

- 3 The book is divided in three main parts: an introduction (followed by a long list of the texts considered by the study)<sup>2</sup>, a typology of divination recipes, i.e. the central part presented under two big chapters, and final thoughts. The introduction offers concise and up-to-date information about the Greek magical papyri along with a brief discussion about the relationship of magic and divination (p. 26–33). The terms “magic, magical” are adopted by the A. not only according to the usage, but also under the assumption that linguistic features of texts generally provide a safe basis that allows us to characterize them as such (p. 20–21)<sup>3</sup>. In order to explain the important presence of divination among magical practices, A.G.M. refers to the progressive transition from oracular sanctuaries to private divination rituals (from the Hellenistic period down to the end of Antiquity), sharing, among others’, Frankfurter’s perspective<sup>4</sup>. Regarding divinatory charms, the A. stresses the prominence of two features — which are proper of the whole corpus of the magical papyri; these are (i) the increasing complexity of rituals, (ii) their widespread written recording and their compilation in handbooks. Finally, the A. offers some clarificatory comments regarding the special choice of texts on which the book focuses: the criterion of his selection is the mention of divination as the exclusive aim of these texts (p. 44). With the exception of two spells representing “applied magic” all texts included in this corpus are prescriptive. The long procedures known as “Mithras liturgy” and “Book of Moses” are reasonably set apart because of their complexity and uniqueness (p. 36–42)<sup>5</sup>. A long list of texts accompanied by commentary (p. 50–182) follows the introduction proper. Here A.G.M. applies the “typology” thoroughly described only later in the book (p. 183–469): each text, classified according to the type of divination recognized, is followed by a summary leading to a schematic account of its structure.
- 4 Chapter 2.1. deals with the divination recipes as autonomous and distinct unities; it mainly concerns: (i) the Greek terms by which the recipes are internally designated, (ii) the graphic devices applied to indicate the beginning and the end of the recipes (see the Table on p. 188–192), (iii) the presentation of the three basic types of divination: Revelation (direct — which means in vision or dream — and indirect — i. e. through the use of lamps, cups and basins), *Prognôsis* (quest for general “clairvoyance” — instead of questions for specific matters) and lot oracle, p. 198–224). Chapter 2.2. is much longer (p. 225–469) and could be considered as the core of the whole work. Here A.G.M. attempts to review all the constitutive elements of the three basic parts of the recipes (i. e. “title”, “practice”, “other information”): more than merely a catalogue, this part explores the actual occurrences of each part providing the reader with precious information and thoughtful observations. The main part of recipes — i. e. the *praxis* — could vary, according to A.G.M., depending on the selection and arrangement of the thirteen possible constitutive elements labeled with ancient Greek terms and presented in an alphabetical order (*anakriseis*, *apoluseis*, *arseis*, *exêchêseis*, etc.). The most complicated of these parts are the *poiêseis* and the *logoi* which represent the very nucleus of the recipes. Inside the category of *poiêseis*, for instance, the A. distinguishes fourteen different constitutive subsections, such as “Ritual Drowning”, “Appropriation of Magical Elements”, “Sprinkling”, etc.
- 5 In the *Final Thoughts* after some brief remarks on the “structural similarity” (*similitude structural*) demonstrated by the detailed comparison of the inner elements of the recipes throughout the preceding pages, an exhaustive chart suggests the correlation of the chronology to the analytical composition of the recipes and leads to some comparative inferences (p. 473–479). Apart from the progressing complexity of the recipes which is

due to the multiplication of their constitutive parts in the course of time, A.G.M. also observes some changes regarding the divination types: among others, an increase of the number of the spells aiming at a direct revelation through vision. A substantial bibliography as well as two indices further enhance to the book.

- 6 A.G.M. fully masters an abundant material and offers valuable guiding to anyone looking for organizational principles in the outstanding diversity of ritual elements transmitted by the magical papyri. His book goes beyond his intended purpose, as it could be useful not only for the study of divinatory charms, but, also for the understanding of ritual recipes sharing similar elements. He takes into account the multicultural background of several ritual components, such as apotheosis by drowning — *Esiês* ritual (p. 346–350). Furthermore, the fact that divinatory spells are examined from both papyrological/philological and religious/historical points of view is reassuring for the navigation in the rather misty universe of late antique practices. External sources in Greek and Latin, including, not only related corpora — *Corpus Hermeticum*, *Chaldaic Oracles*, *Cyranides*, etc. — but also literature, philosophy and history ranging from Homer to the Late Antiquity are accurately invoked to contextualize recipes and to provide valuable insights. Another merit of this book is that it makes use not only of recent scholarship, but also of older fundamental studies<sup>6</sup>. Unfortunately, a number of spelling mistakes and misprints slightly undermine the value of this huge work<sup>7</sup>.
- 7 The choice of divination recipes as a subject of study is systematically argued, although, given the variety of forms adopted by the quest for divine knowledge and its close association to other purposes — acquaintance of memory, divine energy, general success, — one could expect either in the *Introduction* or in the *Final Thoughts* a more in-depth discussion about the very nature of divination in magical papyri. To give but one example, in *PGM IV*, 1949–1954 (quest for a spirit of a *biaiothanatos* to serve as an assistant<sup>8</sup>) the intended goal of the ritual is expressed as follows: “lord Helios [...] grant me power over the spirit of this man who died a violent death [...] so that I may keep him with me as helper and avenger for whatever business I crave from him”<sup>9</sup>. In fact, impressive descriptions of anticipated visions<sup>10</sup> and detailed reports of the desired intimate relationship with superhuman beings insinuate that some contacts which offer superhuman knowledge are invaluable *per se*. Charms for obtaining a divine assistant (sometimes named *paredros*), but also some charms aiming at a union (*sustasis*) with gods are typical of this search for intimacy and union.
- 8 Despite some minor possible objections<sup>11</sup>, the substantial discussion about every one of the constitutive elements named by the A. really sharpens the understanding of the complex contents of the recipes. Attention is paid, among others, to the titles of the recipes<sup>12</sup>; the related chapter (p. 225–241) closes with a useful inventory of the titles showing the numerous ways the recipes are referring to themselves. Nevertheless, questions about the exact nature and the rigor of these categories can be raised. Firstly, the use of Greek terms point to distinctions implied by the recipes themselves; still, some of the Greek terms adopted are rather loosely used in the texts, so that a number of classifications depend upon interpretation<sup>13</sup>. More important, although meant by the A. as separate sequences (i.e. as mutually exclusive distinct passages), these constitutive parts, in many cases, could be integrated the one into another (i.e. a *thusia* can be part of *apolusis*, sprinkling could serve purification purposes, etc). It is not easy to understand, *inter alia*, why *libations* appear as sub-section of *poiêseis*, whereas *thusiai* are considered as a distinct part of the *praxis*<sup>14</sup>.

- 9 Despite these disadvantages, *La adivinación en los papiros mágicos griegos*, is a valuable tool to anyone who seeks to handle the multicultural ritual grammar of magical papyri and to study divinatory practices during Late Antiquity.

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## NOTES

1. A systematic presentation of the key components of divination rituals in the papyri known as the “Theban Magical Library” is recently attempted by K. DOSOO, *Rituals of Apparition in the Theban Magical Library*, Macquarie University, Sydney, 2014 (Ph.D Thesis).
2. Immediately after the *Introduction*, the A. has inserted a kind of a useful appendix (p. 50–182) — which surprisingly doesn’t appear in the *Contents* — consisting of the texts in ancient Greek which are the focus of the study, as they are published by K. PREISENDANZ, *Papyri Graecae Magicae* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. rev. by A. Henrichs), Stuttgart, 1973–1974 (also cited as PGM) and R.W. DANIEL, F. MALTOMINI, *Supplementum Magicum I–II*, Opladen, 1990 and 1992 (with the exception of a number of variations, see p. 48–49).
3. The terms “magic, magical” will be used in this review simply in relation to the special corpus studied by the A.
4. D. FRANKFURTER, *Religion in Roman Egypt. Assimilation and Resistance*, Princeton, 1998.
5. E. SUÁREZ DE LA TORRE, “La divinazione nei papiri magici Greci”, in M. MONACA (ed.), *Problemi di storia religiosa del mondo tardo antico: tra mantica e magia*, Cosenza, 2009, p. 13–44; “Divination et magie. Remarques sur les papyrus grecs de l’Égypte gréco-romaine”, *Kernos* 26 (2013), p. 157–172.
6. Notably the major work of T. HOPFNER, *Griechisch-ägyptischer Offenbarungszauber*, Leipzig, 1921–1924 [1974–1990<sup>2</sup>], which is the first attempt to systematically present the divinatory charms of the magical papyri, but also important publications by A. Abt and S. Eitrem.
7. Errors in Greek: p. 26, 69, 115, 163, 214, 216, 226, 228, 374, 404, 413, 416, 449, 454, 473–479; in names of modern authors: p. 488, 510 (right spellings: MOREAU, CHRONOPOULOU, SYKOUTRIS); other misprints: p. 7, 137, 179–181, 346, 511, 513.
8. Cf. 1979 *paredreuei*.
9. Even if this recipe contains an interrogation — *anakrisis* — and, without doubt, aims at divination, it could difficultly be considered as *exclusively* divinatory.
10. See, for instance, PGM IV 1103–1114.
11. In the discussion about PGM IV, 3087–3124 (*Mantia Kronikê*), for instance, the association of Oceanus with salt seems somewhat odd, considering that this god is firstly the personification of Ocean’s *fresh* and fertile water. For a different interpretation of this passage, see A. ZOGRAFOU, *Des dieux maniabiles. Hécate & Cronos dans les Papyrus magiques grecs*, Paris, 2016, p. 137–171. In the chapter about the structure of prayers and hymns one could also wonder (i) if the term *pars epica* is appropriate to designate the middle part of a prayer, since narration is mostly absent in the corpus, (ii) why the frequent quest for epiphany — expressed through imperatives such as *kluthi*, *akoue* — could not be considered as an authentic *prex* and (iii) whether a long invocation — listing selected adjectives and participles — could be considered the *argumentum* — as it happens in the case of the *Orphic Hymns*. Concerning magical hymns, we can add to the A.’s bibliography the recent study of L.M. BORTOLANI, *Magical Hymns from Roman Egypt: A Study of Greek and Egyptian Traditions of Divinity*, Cambridge, 2016, and also A.C. CASSIO, G. CERRI (eds.), *L’Inno tra rituale e letteratura nel mondo antico. Atti di un colloquio Napoli 21–24 ottobre 1991*, Rome, 1991, and

I. PETROVIC, « Hymns in the Papyri Graecae Magicae » in A. FAULKNER, O. HODKINSON (eds.), *Hymnic Narrative and the Narratology of Greek Hymns*, Leiden, 2015, p. 244–267.

12. The A. establishes a distinction between title and epigraph (p. 45, note 67) which is not always clear. See p. 145, 152, 155 (where *oneiraitêton* is considered as “title”) vs. p. 153 (where the same word is understood as “epigraph”).

13. The terms *epanagkos* and *sustasis* for instance, could apply either to *logoi* or to a more complex ritual. Besides, the definition of *epanagkos* as *coacción* (p. 47) could give the impression that coercion is limited only in the related cases (i.e. as an additional means, in case the principal procedure fails). Finally, it is not clear why the A. doesn't recognize *sustasis* at PGM II, 43 (*hina oun sustatheis...*).

14. For the fumigations and the various kinds of offerings in magical papyri, see also A. ZOGRAFOU, *Papyrus Magiques Grecs : Le mot et le rite. Autour des rites sacrificiels*, Ioannina, 2013.

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