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An Anatomy of Tradition: The Case of the *Charitêsion*

Abstract: This paper traces continuity and change in the structure and formulation of Demotic, Greek, and Coptic *charitêsia* (“good luck charms”) in Roman Egypt. Drawing on the theoretical work of Roy Rappaport and Catherine Bell, it argues that the producers of these charms created a sense of tradition by echoing and modulating pre-established forms of incantation. The resulting products combined both elasticity and specificity so as to be at once recognizable in a broad cultural context and relevant to specific audiences. Key words: amulets, *charitêsion*, Roman Egypt, ritual.

I Introduction

In this paper I propose to examine the transformation over time of a type of spell—the *charitêsion* or “good luck charm”—in light of theoretical work by Roy Rappaport and Catherine Bell. Rappaport’s thinking about how ritualized activity regulates social and ecological systems began with his early work on the Maring people in New Guinea.¹ It culminated many years later in a comprehensive theory published posthumously as *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*.² In the interim, Catherine Bell wrote a wide-ranging critique of ritual theory that both drew on and departed from Rappaport’s work (and that of many others).³ She argued that the effort to define “ritual” and distinguish “ritual” from “non-ritual” is inherently problematic. She proposed that it would be more productive to explore the character and effects of all social behavior that distinguishes and privileges itself through ritualization. Despite the differences between them, Bell’s analysis of how ritualized behavior constructs, modulates, and alters authoritative traditions converges at points with Rappaport’s. It is these points that I wish to pursue here.

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Abbreviations: *PGM* = Preisendanz 2001a and 2001b (items I–VI in vol. 1; items VII–LXXXI and P1–P24 in vol. 2); *SM* I and II = Daniel and Maltomini 1991 and 1992; *GMA* = Kotansky 1994. I follow papyrological conventions when referring to texts, introductions, and notes of items published in papyrological editions; the editions are abbreviated according to Oates et al. 2013.

1 Rappaport 1964.

2 Rappaport 1999.

3 Bell 1992.

“Ritual,” according to Rappaport, denotes “the performance of more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not entirely encoded by the performers.”⁴ In ritualized activity, the more invariable elements are experienced by the participants as being fixed or established by others, whereas the more variable elements may be adapted to suit the particular worldview, expectations, language, etc. of the participants. The more invariable elements render the action authoritative (in Rappaport’s terminology, “canonical”), while the variable elements render it relevant (in Rappaport’s terminology, “self-referential”).⁵ In commenting on this aspect of Rappaport’s analysis, Bell observes that informality and flexibility can in fact be more prominent than formality and fixity.⁶ Nevertheless, she agrees that both are at play,⁷ and points out, significantly, that ritualization can create or invent a sense of tradition through a seeming fixity.⁸

According to both Rappaport and Bell, ritual systems are socially constructed and maintained.⁹ Various dynamics come into play, therefore, when ritual systems change.¹⁰ If ritual systems are modified in a way that maintains—or appears to maintain—the most sacrosanct elements of the system, change may occur without threatening or undermining the sense of order that the systems convey. But if the modifications alter the most sacrosanct elements, change—even change to ritual actions that are low in the hierarchy of the ritual system—may be perceived as revolutionary. Typically, Rappaport argues, a society endeavors to maintain the appearance of order in its ritual systems while it changes or adapts those systems. But as Bell notes, the maintenance of ritual systems is always a process of negotiation between the purveyors or specialists of ritualized action and the participants in that action,¹¹ a process that leaves room for dissonance or resistance as well as acceptance or toleration.

In Rappaport’s analysis, spells and amulets—“acts and utterances mobilizing occult efficacy to achieve physical effects”¹²—are among those actions that are lower in the hierarchy of a ritual system and thus more amenable to change.¹³ It is evident from recipes for spells and individual applied spells that have survived from Roman Egypt that their formulation did in fact change over time.¹⁴ What this

4 Rappaport 1999, 24.

5 Rappaport 1999, 52–54.

6 Bell 1992, 91–92.

7 Bell 1992, 92–93.

8 Bell 1992, 120. See Gordon 2012, 161–73 for an exploration of this phenomenon in Greco-Egyptian spells.

9 Rappaport 1999, 368–70; Bell 1992, 118–42.

10 Rappaport 1999, 406–37.

11 Bell 1992, 204–18.

12 Rappaport 1999, 320–21.

13 Rappaport 1999, 313–14.

14 The principal corpora of recipes (often gathered in collections called “formularies”), spells, and amulets are Bonner 1950; *PGM*; *SM* I and II; *GMA*; and Kropp 1931a and 1931b. Betz² 1992 provides English translations of Greek texts (identified as *PGM* I–CXXX, including but extending beyond items

paper will explore is how they changed and how they maintained their authority and relevance as they changed. I have chosen to focus on spells to acquire charm, favor, or success—called χαριτήσια (*charitêsia*) because they were intended to procure χάρις¹⁵—from Greco-Roman Egypt. What is important for my purposes is that the *charitêsion* is attested in Demotic, Greek, and Coptic corpora, thus spanning a long period of time. Some of the spells are relatively short, comprising a rubric giving the purpose of the spell, a short text that is to be spoken or written, and instructions on how to activate the spell. Other spells, however, incorporate a longer incantation and thus offer more scope for investigation.

In what follows I hope to show how the texts of various *charitêsia* conveyed a sense of tradition by reproducing or recalling the structure and/or formulation of incantation associated with a particular cultic idiom or milieu.¹⁶ Sometimes the texts offer clues as to whether the writer or copier was familiar with a particular cultic practice or associated with a particular cultic institution. Sometimes we cannot discern much, if anything, about the writer or copier and are left with the text alone. We should expect a certain amount of freedom in the structure and the formulation of the text, since spells were lower in the hierarchy of ritual systems and less closely regulated by cultic authorities—to the extent that ritual systems were regulated. But for that very reason we should expect to find aspects of the structure and formulation of the incantations that create a sense of tradition by replicating features associated with a given cultic idiom.

II Demotic *charitêsia*: a terminus a quo

Joachim Quack's recent investigation of Egyptian precursors to the *charitêsion* in texts from the Old and New Kingdoms is now fundamental for understanding the structure and formulation of Demotic *charitêsia*.¹⁷ These texts routinely combine the formulation of a wish for or promise of favor with an expression of hostility to-

published in Preisendanz 2001a and 2001b) and Demotic texts (identified as *PDM*). Meyer and Smith 1994 provides English translations of Greek and Coptic texts (including items identified as P1–24 in Preisendanz 2001b, which were not translated in Betz ²1992). In what follows, references to *PGM*, *SM*, and *GMA* are to items; references to Kropp 1931a and 1931b, Betz ²1992, and Meyer and Smith 1994 are to pages. The reader is referred to the introductions of items in *PGM*, *SM*, and *GMA* for bibliography of prior editions and revisions.

15 See the review of the meanings of χαριτήσιον at Haslam et al. 1998, 120 (*P.Oxy.* LXV 4468v, col. i.16 comm.). As a type of spell, the *charitêsion* is related to spells to attract a woman or a man, win at the races, succeed in business, or impress one's audience (see Faraone 1999, 106–9; Faraone 1990, 225–27; Brashear 1995, 3502). In fact, sometimes a *charitêsion* combines a general petition for favor with a specific request for success in amatory or competitive affairs.

16 My approach thus differs from that of Betz 1990b, which discusses evidence in the *PGM* of understandings of the nature, sources, transmission, and classification of materials preserved therein.

17 Quack 2011, anticipated in part by Kotansky's discussion of the Ptolemaic antecedents to the "give-formula" in Greco-Egyptian *charitêsia* at *GMA*, pp. 356–60.

ward and vanquishing of one's enemies. The language of these requests shows that they were meant to secure one's position in the presence of the king or at court, a context where one's standing could be vulnerable to rivals and intrigue. This way of construing the desire for favor can be seen in *P.Lond.-Leid.*, col. XI,¹⁸ a Demotic recipe for a *charitêsion*. In this recipe, the requests for favor (ll. 9–11, 16–20) are followed by the imprecation of enemies (ll. 11–12, 20). The second request for favor within this series, aimed primarily at a woman, speaks of favor before the king and his people (l. 17). It should be highlighted that this latter detail recalls greeting formulae in letters from the New Kingdom, which also sought favor before the king.¹⁹

The requests for favor in this *charitêsion* are preceded by invocation. The form and language of invocation is entirely Egyptian, as Quack has shown.²⁰ The incantation is meant to be recited over a wax image of the god Thoth in the form of a baboon (l. 21).²¹ The god is invoked with the words “Come to me” (l. 1), an expression often employed in the personal prayers of the temple schools.²² An initial request to be heard and protected (ll. 3–4) is followed by an argument wherein the speaker identifies with a series of Egyptian deities using the first person, “I am ...” (ll. 5–9). This was a common and required practice in Egyptian rituals: the speaker takes on a divine status in order to interact with the god on equal terms.²³ A similar series of statements follows the initial request for favor and imprecation of enemies as the grounds for defeating one's adversaries: “because I am ...” (ll. 12–16). None of the gods is addressed in a Hellenistic idiom. In short, the structure and formulation of the *charitêsion* indicate that it originated in a context where the ritual system served to maintain the Egyptian temple cult and the royal court. It is derivative of that ritual system.

What can we learn about the continuing salience of that system from the scribal transmission of the *charitêsion*? From his careful examination of the scribal features of *P.Lond.-Leid.* and its companion manuscript *P.Leiden* I 384, Jacco Dieleman concluded that “the scribes engaged in editing and copying the Demotic spells ... must have been native priests, who had gone through an Egyptian scribal training at an Egyptian temple school.”²⁴ The combination of hieratic and Demotic in the spells—including the *charitêsion*²⁵—indicates that their writers were trained in the rituals and languages of the Egyptian temple. Moreover, the orthography and grammar of the Demotic writing and the particular dialect of the words inserted in “cipher”

¹⁸ Griffith and Thompson 1904, 80–87; tr. Janet H. Johnson in Betz ²1992, 213–15 (*PDM* xiv.309–34).

¹⁹ See Quack 2011, 46–50.

²⁰ Quack 2011, 68–70.

²¹ See Quack 2011, 69.

²² See Assmann ²1999, nos. 176, 179, 181, 189.

²³ See Dieleman 2005, 153–55. On the non-Hellenistic and Egyptian character of “I am” sayings, see Thyen 1994, cols. 148–56.

²⁴ Dieleman 2005, 286.

²⁵ See Dieleman 2005, 54.

script in *PLond.-Leid.*—which appear twice in the *charitêsion*²⁶—points to Thebes as the place of origin of the two manuscripts,²⁷ where there was still a thriving temple cult in the early centuries of the Roman period.²⁸ It is easy to see how this *charitêsion* might continue to be valued in such a context even as Hellenistic modes of incantation gained in popularity, as the juxtaposition of Demotic and Greek spells in the two manuscripts attests.

According to Dieleman, *PLond.-Leid.* and *P.Leiden I 384* were compiled after the beginning of the second century and before the middle of the fourth century CE, “in all likelihood sometime at the turn of the second to the third century CE.”²⁹ Quack observes that the Demotic used in *PLond.-Leid.* was a late form already approaching Coptic,³⁰ and Dieleman offers several reasons that the Demotic spells in the two manuscripts were composed in the Roman period against the background of the now prevalent Greek spells.³¹ However, Quack notes that the *charitêsion* itself “mostly eschews the linguistic innovations of the contemporary speech and rather shows a sort of standard Middle Demotic.”³² On that basis, as well as the lacunose attribution of the spell to (probably) a Persian king, Quack considers the spell itself to be of a fairly early origin. The latter observations explain the derivation of the *charitêsion*, while the manner of its incorporation into *PLond.-Leid.* indicates its continuing salience in a Greco-Roman context.

III Greek *charitêsia*

When we turn to *charitêsia* written in Greek, we encounter a much more variegated ritual system, as one would expect in Egypt in the Roman period after several centuries of Hellenization under the Ptolemies.³³ The great majority of these *charitêsia* have been preserved for us in manuals or handbooks of procedures and incantations, many of them acquired from the region of Thebes by the Alexandrian merchant and diplomat Giovanni Anastasi.³⁴ The manuals have been assigned to the third, fourth, or fifth centuries,³⁵ although the recipes and spells themselves may be older.³⁶

²⁶ *PLond.-Leid.*, col. IX.21–22, Griffith and Thompson 1904, 84–85; tr. Janet H. Johnson in Betz ²1992, 214 (*PDM* xiv.330–31); cf. Dieleman 2005, 304–5. Jacco Dieleman informs me that the translation of l. 21 should read “an ape of red wax,” with no reference to a fish; so too, Quack 2011, 69.

²⁷ See Johnson 1976; cf. Dieleman 2005, 40–41.

²⁸ See now Klotz 2012.

²⁹ Dieleman 2005, 41–44, quotation at 43.

³⁰ Quack 2011, 68–69.

³¹ Dieleman 2005, 293–94.

³² Quack 2011, 69.

³³ On cults and shrines in Roman Egypt, see, e.g., Bowman 1986, 167–90; Whitehorn 1995; Frankfurter 1998, 97–144; Dunand and Zivie-Coche 2004, 267–76, 299–306.

³⁴ On these manuscripts and associated documents, see Fowden 1986, 168–70; Tait 1995; Bra-shear 1995, 3402–4; Dieleman 2005, 12–15; Gordon 2012, 147–51. *PGM* IV, *PGM* V, *PGM* XII/

The *charitêsia* collected in these manuals are diverse. *PGM* IV.1596–1715,³⁷ an invocation to invest a stone or amulet or similar object with propitious efficacy, is illustrative of *charitêsia* incorporating long incantations drawing on Egyptian tradition, in this case the progress of the sun god through the twelve hours of the day.³⁸ In the litany at *PGM* IV.1648–94, each of twelve appeals to the god to empower the object is preceded by a recitation of the god's form and name in successive hours, some of which belong to the day, others to the night, suggesting a conflation of the progress through the twelve hours of the day with a progress through the twelve signs of the zodiac.³⁹ The gifts associated with each hour recall the fourteen *ka*'s or "life-sustaining forces" of the Egyptian sun god.⁴⁰ The structure of such incantations is readily recognizable from earlier pharaonic litanies and hymns intended to secure the progress of the sun. At the same time, the formulation of the incantations is adapted to the purpose of the text and the predilections of its writer. The recitation of the hourly manifestation and name of the sun god is truncated in comparison to pharaonic litanies and hymns.⁴¹ Moreover, the form and name associated with the god in each of the twelve hours varies in these and other spells,⁴² as does the precise expression of images commonly associated with the sun god. This is what one would expect in rituals that are derivative of more established institutional practices (whether past or contemporary) but not wholly determined by them.

Alongside such long incantations are *charitêsia* that employ the customary structure for prayer in the ancient world (including Egypt) more economically. They call on the god(s) by means of names, epithets, and descriptors (the invocation), ask the god(s) for good fortune (the petition), and offer reasons why the god(s) should fulfill the request (the argument).⁴³ The argument typically consists in a demonstration of the power that the speaker wields by naming the god or uttering an incantation. *PGM* VII.1017–26, a recipe for a *charitêsion*-cum-victory charm, illustrates this tripartite structure nicely:⁴⁴

PDM xii, *PGM* XIII, *PGM* XIV/*PDM* xiv are said to have come from a single find in the region of Thebes; the provenance of *PGM* I, *PGM* II, *PGM* III, *PGM* VII, *PGM* LXI/*PDM* lxi, and *PDM* Suppl. is not known, though they are often grouped with the Theban manuscripts. For the identifier *PDM*, see n. 14 above.

³⁵ For an overview of the chronology, see Betz ²1992, xxi–xxv; cf. Brashear 1995, 3492.

³⁶ See Brashear 1995, 3419–20.

³⁷ Re-edition in Merkelbach and Totti 1990, 104–21.

³⁸ See Gundel 1968, 4–6; Merkelbach and Totti 1990, 104–7; Merkelbach and Totti 1991, 2–8.

³⁹ See Merkelbach and Totti 1990, 105.

⁴⁰ See Merkelbach and Totti 1990, 122.

⁴¹ See, e.g., Gasse 1984; Assmann 1995, 38–66.

⁴² See also *PGM* III.494–553 and *PGM* XXXVIII.18–27.

⁴³ I here adopt J. M. Bremer's modification of Ausfeld's classical analysis. See Bremer 1981, 196; cf. Ausfeld 1903; Versnel 1981, 2; Graf 1991, 189. For examples of this structure in pharaonic Egyptian spells, see Borghouts 1978, nos. 1, 25, 46, 80, 101, 123, 131, 132, 141.

⁴⁴ See also *PGM* XII.182–89.

[A victory charm]: “Hail, Helios! Hail, Ga[briël! Hail, Raphaël! Hail,] Michaël! Hail, whole [universe! Give me] the [authority] and power of Sab[a]ô[th, the strength of Iaô], and the success of Ablanatha[nalba], and [the might of] Akram[m]acha[m]arei. Grant that I [gain] the victory as I have summoned you” (then write the 59-[letter] IAEÔ formula). “Grant [victory] because I know the names of the Good Daimon, HARPON [CHNOUPHI] BRITATÊNÔPHRI BRISAROUAZAR BASEN KRIPH[I NIPTOUMI CHMOU]MAÔPHI” (add the usual) “and accomplish this for me.”⁴⁵

Or the prayer may have a bipartite structure consisting only of an invocation and a petition, as in *PGM* XXIIa.18–27,⁴⁶ a recipe for a *charitèsion*-cum-love charm:

“Hail, Helios! Hail, Helios! Hail, god over the heavens, with your name [being that] of the all-powerful! From the seventh heaven [give] me [steady] favor before every race of men and all women, but especially before her, NN. Make me as beautiful in her presence as Iaô, as rich as Sabaôth, to be loved like Lailam, as great as Barbaras, as honored as Michaël, as famous as Gabriël, and [I shall be] highly favored.”⁴⁷

The structure of such *charitèsia* would render them immediately recognizable as an effective way to get the attention and help of the gods or lesser powers. Moreover, the structure facilitates the incorporation of trans-cultic references in a cultic context where the gods are referred to by many names.⁴⁸

Even more laconic are *charitèsia* that consist only of a formulaic petition. For instance, *PGM* VII.390–3 is a recipe that instructs a charioteer to write “Give me success, loveliness, reputation, glory in the stadium” (with permission to elaborate) on the hoof of his horses.⁴⁹ Similarly, *GMA* 60, a strip of silver metal (*lamella*) reads “AEËIOUÔ IA ... Adônaie Sabaôth, give favor, friendship, success, loveliness to him who bears the amulet.” Such petitions are the *sine qua non* of a *charitèsion*. However long or short an incantation might be or whatever powers it might invoke, the petition “Give me success, loveliness, etc.” or “Give me the power of X, the strength of Y, the grace of Z, etc.” is what made the incantation a *charitèsion*. It was what enabled ancient collectors to identify a spell as a *charitèsion*,⁵⁰ just as it does editors today.⁵¹

The structure of these *charitèsia*—whether incorporating a long litany, following a more succinct pattern of prayer, or consisting only of a petition—reflects a relatively

45 Tr. Ronald F. Hock in Betz ²1992, 145 (modified); see Merkelbach and Totti 1991, 122 for the revised reconstruction of l. 1017.

46 See also *PGM* VII.528–39; *PGM* XXXVI.211–30.

47 Tr. John Scarborough in Betz ²1992, 260 (modified).

48 See the papers of Sarah Iles Johnston and Joseph E. Sanzo in this volume on how references to deities and heroes resonate with assumed or actual cultural associations.

49 Tr. Ronald F. Hock in Betz ²1992, 128 (modified). See also *PGM* VII.919–24.

50 See, e.g., *PGM* XXXVI.35–68 and 211–30. However, not all procedures so titled would contain an identifiable formula; cf. *PGM* XXXVI.275–82, a procedure for writing *charaktères* and *voces mysticae* on a silver lamella, introduced as a charm for gaining favor. For a rare instance of mislabelling, see *PGM* VIII.1–63, which is not a love spell but a *charitèsion*, as ll. 4–6, 26–27, and 61–63 show.

51 See, e.g., Daniel 2009, 23–24, 28 (*P.Kramer* 2 intro. and ll. 7–8 comm.).

stable or invariable aspect of the practice. But, as is already apparent from the above review, that structure is tolerant of a measure of variability. For instance, in invocations of Helios—common in *charitêsia*—we find images associated with the mythology, iconography, and hymns of the sun god in Egypt, as one might expect.⁵² Helios is addressed as the one who rises from the primeval ocean,⁵³ who sits upon the lotus,⁵⁴ who begins each day a young man and ends it an old man,⁵⁵ whom all the gods serve as attendants.⁵⁶ But the vocabulary has expanded, conjoining Egyptian, Greco-Roman, and Semitic names, imagery, and conceptualizations,⁵⁷ as one can see from *PGM* IV.1596–1715 (ll. 1704–15),⁵⁸ *PGM* XXXVI.211–30,⁵⁹ and *P.Duke* inv. 729. The latter addresses Helios as you “who are above the Cherubim,” “Abraxas,” “who are called Hephaistus in Memphis,” and “Mithras.”⁶⁰ Whatever meanings these forms of address might have had in particular cultic rituals are here alternately attenuated or enriched by flowing into the syncretistic *koinê* of the Greco-Egyptian milieu.⁶¹ The elasticity of the forms of address would presumably have enhanced—or have been thought to enhance—the relevance and viability of the spells in a more diverse and layered cultic context.

IV Syncretism, specificity, and adaptability

At the same time, within this syncretistic environment there are *charitêsia* that retain a considerable measure of cultic specificity. I would argue that the use of the idiom of a particular cult lent a certain authority to the *charitêsion* because it would have (or would have appeared to have) drawn on a larger ritual system. I wish to consider three examples.

PGM VIII.1–63, a fourth- or fifth-century recipe, consists of an extended incantation addressed to Hermes, instructions for carving an image of the god, and a text to be written on papyrus. The incantation not only displays the speaker’s knowledge of the forms of the assimilated Greco-Egyptian god Thoth-Hermes (the squatting dog-

52 For an overview of the ancient Egyptian background and further bibliography, see Müller 2001 and Allen 2001. A recently edited, fragmentary *charitêsion* from the University of Michigan is an exception; it appears to describe Helios in a wholly Greek fashion (Cohn 2012, 245).

53 *PGM* XXXVI.217, with Merkelbach and Totti 1991, 60 (l. 217 comm.); Jordan 2006, 160–64 at l. 31.

54 Jordan 2006, 160–64 at l. 33; cf. Morenz 1973, 179–80; Assmann ²1999, nos. 43.2, 127 A.70.

55 *PGM* IV.1695; *PGM* XXXVI.218–19, with Merkelbach and Totti 1991, 60 (l. 218 comm.); Jordan 2006, 160–64 at ll. 32–33; cf. Gundel 1968, 6–7.

56 *PGM* XXXVI.215, with Merkelbach and Totti 1991, 59 (l. 215 comm.).

57 On this phenomenon see Fauth 1995, 34–120.

58 See Fauth 1995, 71–72.

59 See Fauth 1995, 72–74.

60 Jordan 2006, 160–64 at ll. 34, 36, 47.

61 See, e.g., Bohak 2008, 198–200 on the transformations of the Jewish god and his angels in spells.

headed baboon; the ibis, his plant (the olive), his tree (ebony), and his cultic center (Hermopolis) (ll. 9–10, 12–14; cf. ll. 29–30, 41–43). It also proclaims, in several declarations, the union of the speaker with the god (ll. 37–38, 49–50).⁶² Moreover, the carving of the god combines Egyptian and Greek iconography: a dog-faced baboon wearing a winged helmet, with a box on its back in which a papyrus is to be placed (ll. 53–56). All this suggests that the spell issues, originally if not immediately, from a devotee of Thoth-Hermes.⁶³ It is telling, therefore, that the text to be written on papyrus is comparatively generic. It combines the names of Thoth—“Phthoron Phthionê Thôuth” (i. e., Thoth)—with the “great names Iaô Sabaôth Adônaia Abla⟨na⟩thanalba Akrammachamarei, 365” (365 being the numerical value of “Abraxas”), followed by a “give-formula” (ll. 59–63). If a papyrus with such a generic formula would happen to be found without the preceding incantation, we would not know it to draw on Hermetic devotion but for the initial names of Thoth, and even then the inference would be a speculative leap. The specific cultic idiom of the incantation enhances the authority of the recipe.

A Jewish idiom is evident in *PGM XXXV*,⁶⁴ a fourth-century *charitêsion* prepared for and used by a certain Paulos Julianos.⁶⁵ It invokes a series of angelic powers who are identified by their spheres of authority and their names, which are derived from Hebrew and Aramaic, often obscurely so (ll. 1–13).⁶⁶ Similar invocations of angelic powers can be found in other applied spells,⁶⁷ though the names in this *charitêsion* of the angels governing natural and geographical phenomena are not attested elsewhere.⁶⁸ These angelic powers are then adjured by “the god of Abram, Isaka, and Iachôb” to do Paulos’ bidding and grant him “favor, power, victory, and strength” over all manner of people (ll. 13–19)—including gladiators, soldiers, and civilians (ll. 17–18), who otherwise never figure in *charitêsia*. This type of adjuration, preserving the supremacy of the highest god, is typical of incantations with Jewish elements.⁶⁹ The authority of the god over these angels is expressed in the customary formula associating qualities with names: “the power of Iaô, the strength of Sabaôth, the garment of Elôê, the might of Adônai, and the crown of Adônai” (ll. 19–22). Just as this god has given “good gifts to Albanathanalba [sic] and Akramachamari

⁶² See Betz 1990a, 164–69.

⁶³ On this cult see Fowden 1986, 22–27.

⁶⁴ Re-edition in Merkelbach 1996, 71–79.

⁶⁵ For the date see now Cavallo et al. 1998, 119 (no. 38).

⁶⁶ See *PGM XXXV*.1–10 apparatus and *GMA* 52.40–41, 42–43, 47–48 comm.

⁶⁷ See *GMA* 52 intro.; cf. Kropp 1931a, 64–65 (ll. 2.3–3.7) with Kropp 1931b, 177–78 (translation) and Kropp 1930, 74–76 (discussion).

⁶⁸ See *GMA* 52.33 comm.; cf. *GMA* 33. For catalogues of angel names in biblical and extra-biblical sources, see Barton 1912; Peterson 1926; and Michl 1960. An overview of the development of angel names from the Ancient Near East to the Middle Ages can be found in Grévin 2002. The development of angel-traditions in Second Temple and Rabbinic writings is discussed by Mach 1992 and Olyan 1993, but these studies do not treat later litanies like the one considered here.

⁶⁹ See Kotansky 1995, 250–51, 260–61, 263–64.

[sic],” so too is he enjoined to grant Paulos Julianos favor and victory (ll. 22–24).⁷⁰ As Fauth has observed, this formulation introduces a distinction between the highest god seated among the cherubim and seraphim, Iaô Sabaôth Elôhim Adônai, and the subordinate powers Ablanathanalba and Akrammachamarei.⁷¹

It has been suggested that angelic litanies like the one in *PGM XXXV* derive from a body of literature originating in the Hellenistic Jewish community in Alexandria.⁷² Since other invocations employ similar litanies but differ in the details,⁷³ there was evidently some freedom in the use of sources. In any case, the scribe who wrote *PGM XXXV* was probably at several removes from a Jewish milieu. He appears to have been copying from another text, since the last two lines to the left of the three figures are reversed in relation to their grammatical sequence⁷⁴ and there are several instances of dittography.⁷⁵ He or his source was not well versed in the lore he is copying, since the spelling of Isaac is irregular—perhaps influenced by contemporary spellings of the name?⁷⁶ Moreover, he employs scribal practices associated with Christian texts. The *charitêsion* begins with a row of seven crosses (l. 1 apparatus), and it includes three *nomina sacra*: $\bar{\kappa}\nu$ for $\kappa(\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron)\nu$ (l. 13), $\theta\nu$ (without a supralinear stroke) for $\theta(\epsilon\omicron)\tilde{\upsilon}$ (l. 14), and $\bar{\theta}\tilde{\upsilon}$ for $\theta(\epsilon\omicron)\tilde{\upsilon}$ (l. 34 right). Although crosses appear in amulets that lack any other Christian elements,⁷⁷ the only other instances of a series of seven crosses in spells known to me are in Christian texts.⁷⁸ The *nomina sacra* are more ambiguous, since the text does not employ names that are distinctively Christian, and $\theta\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ and $\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$ are occasionally abbreviated by contraction or suspension in Greco-Egyptian collections of recipes and spells,⁷⁹ unlike other words that are abbreviated by contraction or suspension in Christian papyri but written out in the manuals, such as $\pi\alpha\tau\eta\rho$, $\nu\acute{\iota}\omicron\varsigma$, $\pi\nu\epsilon\tilde{\upsilon}\mu\alpha$, or $\omicron\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$.⁸⁰ The *charitêsion* is thus evidence of the reception of a specific cultic idiom by a wider public.

⁷⁰ On the three busts at the bottom of the papyrus, depicting Paulos Ioulianos between Ablanathanalba and Akrammachamarei, see Dijkstra 2015, 280–81.

⁷¹ Fauth 1995, 95.

⁷² See *GMA* 52 intro.

⁷³ See *GMA* 52 intro.

⁷⁴ See *PGM XXXV.39* apparatus. I thank the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence, for permission to view the papyrus and Professor Rosario Pintaudi for his gracious hospitality at that time. A digital image (*PSI* I 29) can be viewed at <http://www.psi-online.it>.

⁷⁵ E.g., $\epsilon\pi\kappa\alpha\lambda\omicron\upsilon$ | {λου}με (ll. 5–6); $\kappa\alpha\iota$ {καί} (l. 18).

⁷⁶ Instances of $\iota\sigma\acute{\alpha}\kappa\alpha$ can be found in documentary papyri, but not in literary texts; see *PCair.Masp.* III 67328, p. 10.26; *P.Col.* VII 132.10 (but cf. $\iota\sigma[\alpha]\acute{\alpha}[\kappa]$ at l. 3).

⁷⁷ E.g., *PGM XXVc.1*; *PGM XXVIIIc.1*; *SM* I 1; cf. Choat 2006, 117–18.

⁷⁸ Brashear 1991, 63–64 (l. 19); *SM* I 35.15; also *PKöln* VIII 340 frg. A, which begins with a row of seven staurograms. Cf. De Bruyn and Dijkstra 2011, Tables 1–3.

⁷⁹ See Traube 1907, 38–40.

⁸⁰ See the indices at Preisendanz 2001b, 270 and Daniel and Maltomini 1992, 338. The fact that $\omicron\upsilon\rho\alpha\nu\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ is not abbreviated (ll. 2–7) does not necessarily tell against this conclusion, since abbreviated forms appear more frequently only in the fifth century or later; see Paap 1959, 104, cf. 109–10.

In *PGM* P21 we encounter a *charitêsion*-cum-*phylactery* against demons that is distinctively Christian. The invocation follows the pattern of early Christian prayers in calling upon God “through our Lord Jesus Christ” (ll. 7–8).⁸¹ The attributes ascribed to “God almighty”—“who is above every ruler and authority and lordship and every name that is named” (ll. 2–5)—echo Ephesians 1:21, where Paul declares that God has made Christ to “sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named.” The epithet attached to Christ—“the beloved child” (l. 8)—recalls the phraseology of ante-Nicene Christian writings and prayers.⁸² Most interesting of all is the doxology addressed to Christ at the end of the text: “Jesus Christ, you king of all the aeons, almighty, inexpressible creator, nourisher, master, almighty; you child, benevolent son, my unutterable and inexpressible name, truly true form, unseen forever and ever, amen” (ll. 41–49).⁸³ In form and vocabulary the doxology resembles invocations of divine names found in Greco-Egyptian spells,⁸⁴ and the phrases “my unutterable and inexpressible name” and “truly true form” recall expressions used in Egyptian solar hymns.⁸⁵ But several features of the *charitêsion* suggest that it may have originated in a Valentinian milieu.⁸⁶

First, the language of the doxology is akin to language used in Valentinian writings preserved in codices found at Nag Hammadi.⁸⁷ There the Son is said to be the “name” and “form” of the Father, and it is from the Son that the aeons receive their name and form. As the writer of the *Gospel of Truth* says, “[The Father] manifests whomever he wishes by giving him form and giving him a name.”⁸⁸ Or, as a Valentinian excerpt preserved by Clement of Alexandria explains, when the aeons are educated about their true identity, they come to understand that “what they are, they are by the grace of the Father: unnameable name, form, and knowledge.”⁸⁹

The unusual *nomina sacra* used for “Jesus Christ” in the *charitêsion* also point to a Valentinian milieu. The scribe writes $\iota\upsilon\ \chi\rho[\eta]\nu$ (l. 8) for the genitive, $\iota\upsilon\ \chi\rho\eta\varsigma$

⁸¹ On prayer addressed to God through Christ, see Jungmann ²1965, 144–71.

⁸² See Harnack 1980.

⁸³ At line 45 $\sigma\upsilon\ \pi\alpha\iota$ should be read rather than $\epsilon\tilde{\upsilon}\pi\alpha\iota\varsigma$; the initial sigma is clearly visible, while the final sigma is not. The pronoun $\sigma\upsilon$ at line 45 accords with Preisendanz’s proposed $\langle\sigma\rangle\upsilon$ at line 41. I thank Professor Rosario Pintaudi for providing me with a digital image of the papyrus.

⁸⁴ Cf., e.g., *PGM* XIII.637–40.

⁸⁵ Cf. *PGM* XII.201–69 at 235–37, with Merkelbach and Totti 1990, 175 (l. 235 comm.) and Dieleman 2005, 153–57, 161.

⁸⁶ I discuss what follows in greater detail in de Bruyn 2013.

⁸⁷ The works themselves, originally composed in Greek, date from the late second or early third century (Thomassen 2007, li); the Coptic translations, from the late third to the mid fourth century (Poirier 2006, xxxiii–xxxiv). For an overview of the movement associated with Valentinus, see Thomassen 2007; for a detailed exposition of Valentinian thought, see Thomassen 2006.

⁸⁸ *Gospel of Truth* (NHC I,3) 27.27–29 (Attridge 1985, 96–97); cf. *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I,5) 62.33–38, 64.28–66.29 (Thomassen and Painchaud 1989, 78–80 and 84–88, with 300 and 304–10).

⁸⁹ Clemens Alexandrinus, *Excerpta Theodoti* 31.3 (Sagnard 1970, 126).

(ll. 26–27) for the accusative, and ἡς χρης (l. 41) for the nominative, all with supra-linear strokes.⁹⁰ Since eta and iota were indistinguishable when spoken, eta is occasionally substituted for iota when Χριστός is spelled out in full,⁹¹ though in fact the substitution is far less common for Χριστός than for χριστιανός.⁹² But *nomina sacra* for Χριστός with eta are exceedingly rare,⁹³ unattested in Greek and Coptic spells and documents.⁹⁴ However, χριστος is frequently used in Valentinian works in the Nag Hammadi codices,⁹⁵ and the abbreviation πεχρ̄ης occurs once in the *Tripartite Tractate*,⁹⁶ along with the more common πεχρ̄ς and πεχ̄ς.

Although a fifth- or sixth-century date has recently been proposed for this papyrus,⁹⁷ which had been assigned to 300,⁹⁸ it would appear to have been written in the fourth or fifth century.⁹⁹ Valentinians were still active in Egypt in the latter part of the fourth century, according to Epiphanius.¹⁰⁰ It is not inconceivable that the writer of the papyrus, who gives his name in a postscript written in Coptic,¹⁰¹ was affiliated with them. In any event, the *charîtêsion* is an example of how a set formula—the petitioner calls on God to send out his archangels to bestow victory, favor, etc., because the petitioner has Jesus Christ before him, Iaô Sabaôth Adônai behind him, etc. (ll. 9–35)¹⁰²—was adapted by incorporating the language and conventions of a particular cultic idiom.

90 In Greek papyri the more common and regular abbreviations for the nominative form of Χριστός are χς or χρς; for the genitive, χῡ or χρ̄ῡ; and for the accusative, χ̄ν or χρ̄ν; see Paap, 1959, 94.

91 Paap 1995, 94, nos. 69 (*BKT VI 9794*) and 149 (*PLond. VI 1928*); no. 104 (*PGM IV.1234*) is in fact written in Coptic.

92 See Shandruk 2010.

93 Paap 1995, 75, no. 421, has one irregular form: χ̄η̄ρ̄.

94 For Greek spells, see the indices at Preisendanz 2001b, 270 and Daniel and Maltomini 1992, 338. A search of Greek documentary papyri in Papyrological Navigator, www.papyri.info, 30 April 2013, using the terms #χρης# and #χρην#, yielded no relevant instances. For Coptic spells, see Stegemann 1934, 34–37. For Coptic documents, see the indices in Hasitzka 1993–2012.

95 *Treatise on the Resurrection* (NHC I,5) 43.37, 48.19, 50.1 (Attridge 1985, 148, 154, 156); *Tripartite Tractate* 122.19 (Thomassen and Painchaud 1989, 222); *Valentinian Exposition* (NHC XI,2) 26.23, 28.23, 33.17, 39.30, 40.13, 40.19, 40.33, 41.17, 42.32–33, 43.37–38 (Funk 2000, 321, 323, 325, 326, 327).

96 *Tripartite Tractate* (NHC I,5) 136.1 (Thomassen and Painchaud 1989, 254).

97 Daniel 2009, 23 n. 3.

98 Hopfner 1935, 355.

99 Personal communication from Guglielmo Cavallo, 1 June 2013, who offered his observations cautiously, noting that the writing is difficult to date and the digital image is not very clear.

100 Epiphanius, *Panarion* 31.7.1 (Holl 1915, 395.16–19).

101 For the text of the postscript, see Hopfner 1935, 365–66; de Bruyn 2013, 130–31.

102 Cf. *P.Kramer* 2.2–6 (Daniel 2009), assigned to the third century.

V Coptic *charitêsia*

Coptic manuals, recipes, and spells take us into the last centuries of the Roman Empire and the early centuries of the Arab conquest. They allow us to see what endures and what changes as the miaphysite Coptic church develops its own trajectory, as Greek gradually gives way to Coptic in the liturgy of the Coptic church, and as eventually Islam becomes more deeply established in Egypt. Most of the items we will consider have been assigned on paleographical grounds to the sixth century, though the texts themselves may be older;¹⁰³ a few items are of a later or undetermined date.

University of Michigan Ms. Copt. 136,¹⁰⁴ a small vellum codex assigned to the sixth century,¹⁰⁵ is an eclectic collection of folk medical remedies and spells. The dialect of the Coptic is Sahidic, but parts of the text are in Greek, suggesting that the manual drew on sources originally in Greek.¹⁰⁶ It contains a recipe for a *charitêsion* addressed to the sun god that is clearly in the tradition observed above in PGM VII.1017–26:

Favor. Hail, Sun! Hail to those who are with you! Hail to the one who is yours! Hail, Hail, Mi-chaël! Hail, Gabriël! Hail, Semesilamps! Give me the power of Iaô, the strength of Abrasax, the favor of Sabaôth before all people, especially before N. child of N., their face toward my face. Now, now or quickly, quickly! (ll. 115–24).¹⁰⁷

The fact that this *charitêsion* is copied into this eclectic collection, and that it is rendered into Coptic, speaks to the continuing relevance of this incantation. Tradition is maintained through replication.

A number of Coptic *charitêsia* take the form of an epiclesis over oil and/or water, so that when the client applies the ointment, favor will be bestowed by the consecrating power.¹⁰⁸ The practice of calling down divine power upon oil can be found in non-Christian Egyptian handbooks, such as *P.Lond-Leid*, col. XII.21–27.¹⁰⁹ However, in these Coptic *charitêsia*, as well as other Coptic spells, the invocation is clearly

103 See the remarks of W. E. Crum in Kropp 1931a, ix–x.

104 Worrell 1935, 17–37.

105 Worrell 1935, 17, on account of the Bohairic abbreviation Ⲫⲉ̅.

106 Worrell 1935, 17.

107 Tr. Worrell 1935, 33; Meyer and Smith 1994, 87 (modified).

108 Crum 1905, 417–18 (*P.Lond.Copt.* I 1007a), written on paper and thus probably after the seventh century (cf. www.trismegistos.org/text/98051); Kropp 1931a, 43 (ll. 57–73) and 44 (ll. 82–91), with Kropp 1931b, 91–92 (translation), segments of a long spell preserved on papyrus (London Oriental Manuscript 6796 [2,3] verso), one of a group assigned by Crum to around 600 (see Kropp 1931a, xi); Weber 1968 (*P.KölnLüddeckens*, Part II 3), written on papyrus and assigned to the sixth century; Beltz 1983, 75–76 (*BKU* I 10), a papyrus fragment whose date is not specified by Beltz but is elsewhere assigned to between the sixth and eighth centuries (see www.trismegistos.org/text/108885).

109 Griffith and Thompson 1904, 90–93; tr. Janet H. Johnson in Betz ²1992, 216 (*PDM* xiv.355–65).

shaped by Christian liturgical prayers, as Kropp observed in his classic study.¹¹⁰ There are echoes of the language and materials of, for example, liturgical prayers for the consecration of the oil for the anointing of the catechumens or the sick, which call upon God to send forth his power or his Holy Spirit on the oil (and water) to bless and seal it (them).¹¹¹ Nevertheless, the invocations in these *charitêsia* are diverse: “I appeal and call upon you today, O Nazarene, you who are the Lord and God of the Hebrews”;¹¹² “Unique one in the heavens [and upon] the earth, Doulaiô Iaô Sabaôth [Adôn]aei E[lô]ei Elahar Azaba[k]d[an]ei Ankraten, almighty, who is seated over the four cherubim of light that are established, that are [glorious].”¹¹³ Thus these *charitêsia* display both the influence of the now dominant Christian cult (in the structure of the epiclesis) and the independence of the local specialist (in the formulation of the epiclesis).

This combination of dependence and independence is also seen in incantations that ask to be surrounded and graced by the seven archangels and Iaô Sabaôth Adônaei Elôei, expanding on a formula already observed in *PGM* P21. Such petitions are numerous in Coptic spells,¹¹⁴ including London Oriental Manuscript 6796 (2,3) verso,¹¹⁵ a *charitêsion* written for a certain Severus in which the Coptic predilection angelology is given full play. Although such requests have an Egyptian pedigree¹¹⁶ —a comparable formula, calling upon Horus, Isis, and Nephthys, can be found *P. Lond.-Leid.*, col. IX.19¹¹⁷—angels have replaced the older deities.¹¹⁸ Thus powers that made their way into Greco-Egyptian incantations in a Hellenistic Jewish milieu have become firmly entrenched in the Coptic Christian universe. At the same time, the layered and repetitive structure of London Oriental Manuscript 6796 (2,3) verso suggests a writer who is at a greater distance from Christian liturgical norms than, for instance, the composer of *PGM* P21, a comparable *charitêsion* that is more direct and economical in structure and formulation. Indeed, London Oriental Manuscript 6796 (2,3) verso is part of a portfolio of spells whose writer is something of an impre-

110 Kropp 1930, 183–95.

111 Sending forth power: cf. Weber 1968, 87 (*P.KölnLüddeckens* Part II 3.9–15) with Serapion, *Euchologion*, Prayer 17, in Johnson 1995, 66. Sending forth the Holy Spirit: cf. Kropp 1931a, 44 (ll. 27–28) with the Coptic rite for the consecration of chrism and the oil of catechumens in Denzinger 1961, 256. Blessing and sealing: cf. Kropp 1931a, 43 (ll. 69–70) with the same rite in Denzinger 1961, 256.

112 Weber 1968, 87 (*P.KölnLüddeckens* Part II 3.1–8).

113 Kropp 1931a, 43 (ll. 62–65), tr. Meyer and Smith 1994, 287 (modified).

114 See Kropp 1930, 76–78; Meyer 1996, 70–73.

115 Kropp 1931a, 42–43 (ll. 30–56), tr. Meyer and Smith 1994, 286–87; cf. n. 108 above and n. 119 below.

116 See Kropp, 3, 77 n. 1.

117 Griffith and Thompson 1904, 70–71; tr. Janet H. Johnson in Betz ²1992, 211 (*PDM* xiv.257).

118 Their popularity is also indicated by P.Gieben Copt. 1, a ninth-century *charitêsion* in which the mythological narrative [*historiola*] that is the basis for the ensuing request speaks of the sending of the angel Χαρούιλ; see Van der Vliet 2005, 136.

sario, drawing freely on traditions associated with Davithea, Jesus, Mary, and a plethora of angels, all of which is infused with actions and expressions taken from the liturgy of the Coptic church.¹¹⁹

VI Conclusion

In the Introduction to *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, Rappaport observed that “the fundamental question to ask about any evolutionary change is ‘*What does this change maintain unchanged?*’”¹²⁰ Clearly, the textual production of *charitêsia* in Egypt changed during the Roman period and beyond. In those changes one can see shifts in cultic orientations, as different incantations to the sun god attest. He is called upon in traditional Egyptian cadences, as Helios in Greco-Egyptian fashion, as the high god in the company of Jewish angels. These different forms of address—and the others we have surveyed—are derivative of a cultic milieu, some more immediately than others. That is to say, they draw on idioms that developed in specific cultic settings, be that the traditional Egyptian temple cult, the more cosmopolitan Hellenistic world, Jewish circles in Alexandria and elsewhere, the cult of Thoth-Hermes, or a Valentinian Christian community.

By surveying *charitêsia* that employ different cultic idioms one can see what change left unchanged. At times the structure of the *charitêsion* bears more of the burden of continuity; at times, the formulation does. The Demotic incantation of *P. Lond.-Leid.*, col. XI, preserves forms of invocation typical of pharaonic Egyptian rituals. The Greek appeals to Helios follow the customary structure of ancient prayer. The adjuration of the ranks of angels observes the hierarchy of the Jewish heavens. But at the same time, as Bell might point out, these received elements are modulated with some freedom. Thus the Greco-Egyptian Helios doubles for the Jewish God almighty to the point that the categories “Greco-Egyptian” and “Jewish” break down. A procedure invoking Hermes employs a generic Hellenistic Jewish inscription. A scribe employing Christian conventions copies a Jewish adjuration. A Valentinian (?) writer uses a set formula for obtaining the protection and graces of the archangels. In each instance there is a conveying of tradition(s) by making one’s own what is or has been someone else’s (or what is everyone else’s), however proximate or remote the cultic orientation of the material being appropriated. This activity of reception and adaptation is both the product and the producer of “authoritative tradition.”

When a specific cultic idiom dominates the horizon of a producer of a *charitêsion*, one finds a greater degree of particularity in the incantation. Obvious examples

¹¹⁹ See Meyer and Smith 1994, 275–92. On London Oriental Manuscript 6796(4), 6796 (=Brit. Lib. Or. 6796[4], 6796), another spell within the portfolio, see the paper of Joseph E. Sanzo in this volume.

¹²⁰ Rappaport 1999, 7 (author’s italics).

of this are the Demotic *charitêsion*, derivative of the Egyptian temple cult, and the Greek Christian *charitêsion*, with its distinctive Valentinian invocation. The majority of texts, however, were transmitted by producers or copiers who were not so exclusive in their cultic orientation. The scribes who collected and copied the recipes and spells preserved in the Anastasi manuscripts were eclectic in their purview, as was the scribe who produced the portfolio of spells for Severus. The emergence of the Christian church in the late Roman period as the dominant cult is, of course, reflected in the latter set of spells. But the way in which the scribe modulates Egyptian, Jewish, gnostic, and Christian motifs in that portfolio suggests that he is removed from the institutional center—certainly more so than the scribe of the Greek Christian *charitêsion*. In a real sense he is the heir of the producers of the Demotic and Greek manuals, improvising on forms of invocation and petition conveyed in earlier recipes and spells, often discretely. The fact that Severus commissioned a set of spells from such a scribe is evidence of the continuing viability and necessity of the ritual subsystem that he and his predecessors represent. Whatever his cultic affiliation(s), he displays what David Frankfurter has described as “the indigenous appropriation of a new idiom for the essential mainstays of native tradition and its sense of accessible power.”¹²¹ What I hope this paper has contributed is a sense of how a particular type of spell was continually modulated by incorporating idioms derived from larger ritual systems, and a sense of how this practice, manifested in both the structure and the formulation of the incantations, invested the spells with the authority of tradition while at the same time allowing their writers considerable freedom.

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121 Frankfurter 1998, 32–33.

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