

FROM RITUAL TO MAGIC:
ANCIENT EGYPTIAN PRECURSORS OF THE
CHARITESION AND THEIR SOCIAL SETTING

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Introduction

Among the magical rituals attested in the Greek-language papyri of the Roman imperial period, there is one specific genre called charitesion. This aims at giving the beneficiary favor, love and similar gains, normally before the king or men (and women!) in general. Up to now, three specific studies have been devoted to it. One is an article by Faraone (1990) later reused as parts of a book (Faraone 1999: 97–110), another is a lengthy remark within the commentary by Kotansky (1994: 353–360) on such a spell attested in a Greek magical amulet. Finally, Winkler (1991, esp. pp. 218–220) noted the interlacing of spells for charm and violence, stressing how this is the necessary form in an agonistic, masked and duplicitous society.

Faraone started from the Homeric description in the *Iliad* (14th book) of how Aphrodite provided Hera with a *kestos himas* to give her affection and desire in order to subdue all gods and mortals. Discussing the various uses of straps, special rings or facial ointment, he pointed out some parallels in Assyrian cuneiform texts, as well as noting the relevant passages in the Greek magical papyri and the *Cyranides* (although they lay outside the time-span he was really dealing with). In spite of the enormous time-gap separating those sources, he spoke confidently of a long-standing Greek tradition of such devices, only partly visible in the extant evidence, that may be traced back directly to Mesopotamia (Faraone 1999: 104). He also noted the blurring of the categories between spells for friendship or love, for good luck and for restraining anger.

Faraone's remarks have to be seen within the context of his general work on Greek magic. This is characterized by two basic assumptions. He tends to regard as Greek much that was transmitted in the Greek-language magical manuals from the Roman Period, rather downplaying the Egyptian religious influence in them. If he looks for foreign

sources and influences, his eyes are more intensely directed toward Mesopotamia, even if he still admits the presence of Egyptian elements (e.g. Faraone 1992; Faraone 1995). Although his work is understandable as a reaction to some excessive claims of Egyptian origin made by Ritner (which in turn were a reaction to previous graecocentric works), Faraone sometimes underestimates the explanatory potential of the Egyptian culture.

Kotansky took his lead from the occurrence of the rare word ἐπαφροδισία “loveliness, elegance” in the amulet he published. He noticed that exactly such an expression was used in a distinct “blessing”-formula attested in the Ptolemaic papyri of the 3rd century BCE. Apart from the documentary texts, the word is only attested in literary texts of the 2nd century CE, and only in authors having strong links with Egypt. As already noticed by Tait (1980: 194) and taken up by Kotansky, this blessing formula can be related to a Demotic greeting formula. Kotansky also demonstrated that extensions of this wish found in other letters combine the wish for loveliness with other items, which closely match the longer lists in some of the magical spells.

In indicating the occurrence of the same rare Greek word in the magical papyri, Kotansky concluded that there was a sharing of Graeco-Demotic terms, and that the magical spells would be the natural outcome of earlier prayers, or blessing formulae, in which favor and loveliness before Pharaoh were invoked. He also noticed that the social context changed, with the magical spells becoming more commercialized and opportunistic. They also often ask for favor before all men and women. Still, quite often, even in the magical papyri, favor before the king was specifically requested.

Although Kotansky did not really discuss the question of ethnic origin, his remarks have done much to clarify the situation. At the same time, it is a challenge to take up where he left off, concerning the relation of the magical spells to the letter formulae, while at the same time taking the lead from his pointing out Demotic Egyptian antecedents in order to arrive at a clearer conception regarding the ultimate origin. I intend to pursue those lines further, and to add a further line of inquiry—namely, concerning similar formulae in Egyptian ritual texts not normally considered magical. The two most important Egyptian key-words are *ḥs.wt* “favor” and *mrw.t* “love”—the latter, according to the typical Egyptian way of expression, the love which one inspires, not the love which one oneself feels.

Finding Favor in Egyptian Letters

Given that the question of letter-formulae was only touched upon by Kotansky for the Ptolemaic period, it seems necessary to expand on it. Already sporadically attested during the Old Kingdom, during the Middle Kingdom it is normal in letters to wish for the addressee that he may find favor in the eyes of specific gods (for many examples, see Collier and Quirke 2002).

Forms of politeness are also attested in an oral greeting transmitted in the literary tale of pWestcar (7, 23f.) from about 1600 BCE. There, the prince is greeted with “in peace, very much, oh prince Hardjedef, beloved of his father. May your father Kheops favor you (*ḥsī*), may he promote your place in old age, may your Ka enchant things against your enemy, may your soul know the ways of yonder to the portals of the necropolis district”—a speech which is explicitly designated as “greeting of a prince” in the text. The high political standing of the addressee explains why favor before the king is mentioned here, whereas in other cases the letter-formula is restricted to wishing for the favor of the gods. We should note that the wish for a personal favored status is explicitly connected in this case with an antagonistic stance involving an anonymous enemy.

Also during the New Kingdom, in the introductory formulae, it was common to wish for the addressee that he/she should be in the favor of one or another god.¹ I would like to take as a sample a relatively large group of letters written at the turn of the Twentieth to the Twenty-First dynasty (Černý 1939; Janssen 1991; Demarree 2006). The typical greeting phrase is: “Be in life, prosperity and health,” followed by “in the favor of god X” (LRL 2, 2; 4, 2; 5, 2; 6, 2; 7, 2f.; 9, 2; 12, 2f.; 14, 1f.; 15, 15f.; 17, 5; 21, 6; 22, 9; 27, 3; 28, 15f.; 38, 1f.; 39, 14f.; 41, 12; 44, 7; 55, 4f.; 57, 3; 62, 5; 65, 3); or “I say to god X: ‘Grant you favor before god X’” (LRL 1, 4; 12, 5), expanded to: “I say to god X: ‘Grant you life, prosperity and health. Grant you favor before god X’” (LRL 3, 3; similarly 38, 2f.; 39, 8f.; 42, 13–15; 44, 13f.; 57, 5f.; 67, 8f.; 68, 16–69, 1); or “Grant you much favor” (LRL 4, 3; 7, 9; 23, 8); or “Grant you favor before the gods and men every day” (LRL 13, 5; 16, 1f.; BM 10440, rt. 5f.); or “Let you be in the favor of the gods and men” (LRL 40, 1f.).

¹ This topic was discussed only very briefly by Bakir 1970: 55.

More specifically: “I say to every god and every goddess whom I see daily: “Grant you life, prosperity and health, and much favor before the general, your lord” (LRL 14, 6f.; similarly 22, 12; 28, 1; 48, 11f.; 66, 7f.); combined as: “Grant you life, prosperity and health, a long life and a good old age, and very many favors (*ḥsw.t*) before Amonrasonthor and before the general, your lord” (LRL 27, 8f.); without mentioning the gods (LRL 29, 7–9); or simply: “Grant you many favors before the general, your lord” (LRL 31, 12f.).

Also instructive is a letter which the mayor of Elephantine writes to the chief of taxes, both of them high-ranking officials (Gardiner 1950). The greeting formula at the beginning is: “May Amun-Re favor Menmaatrenakht! The mayor of Elephantine Meriunu sends a message: (Be) in life, prosperity and health, in the favor of Amonrasonthor. [I say to] Amun-Re, to Harakhte when he rises and sets, to Khnum, Satis and Anukis, all gods of Elephantine: Keep the chief of taxes in health; give him long life and a good old age! Give him favor (*ḥsw.t*) before Amonrasonthor, his good master, and before Pharaoh, his good master every day” (pValençay 1, 1–6).

A shorter notice in another letter is not directly linked to the greeting, but rather set within the main text as a wish for a positive reaction after having heard good news: “May Amonrasonthor favor (*ḥsꜥ*) you, may Month favor you, may the Ka of the Pharaoh, your lord, favor you, after you have driven off the enemies of the Shasu” (P. ESP, 1. 53–55; Helck 1967: 148).

These last examples show options with persons of somewhat higher standing. For them, not only the favor of the gods (with whom everybody had to deal) was important, but they were also in closer contact with high-ranking entities such as the general or even the Pharaoh himself, so that it made sense to wish for favor before them specifically.

Some remarkable points can also be gleaned from model letters of the New Kingdom preserved in several Ramesside manuscripts (Gardiner 1937; Caminos 1954). A fairly simple greeting formula mentioning just the gods is, for example, “Be in life, prosperity and health, in the favor (*ḥsꜥ.t*) of Amonrasonthor. I say to Re-Harakhte at his rising and his setting, to all the gods of the city of Ramses, beloved of Amun, the great Ka of Re-Harakhte: May you be in the favor (*ḥsꜥ*) of Amonrasonthor, the Ka of Merenre, your good lord every day!” (LEM 7, 12–16); or “I say to Amun, ... to all gods and goddesses of Thebes: May you be healthy, may you live, let me see you being healthy, and that I

fill my embrace with you, you being in the favor (*ḥsw.t*) of gods and men!” (LEM 10, 5–11). The last case invokes the favor of men as well as gods, but only on a very unspecific level.

A somewhat fuller form is: “Be in life, prosperity and health, in the favor (*ḥsj.t*) of Amonrasonth. I say to Re-Harakhte, to Seth, to Nephthys and all gods and goddesses of the pleasant area: May you live, may you be healthy, let me see you being healthy, and let me fill my embrace with you, and furthermore: I have heard the many good deeds which you have done for my boat in letting it come. May Montu favor (*ḥsj*) you, may Re favor you, your good lord!” (LEM 5, 14–6, 3). In this case we have the specific element of personal thanks because of services rendered; it is deemed suitable to express this only by again asking for the favor of the gods, not of the government.

Other instances involve the king or the administrative elite: “Be in life, prosperity and health, in the favor (*ḥsj.t*) of Amonrasonth. I say to Re-Harakhte, to Amun, to Ptah and the gods and goddesses of the western shore: May you be healthy, may you live, may you be rejuvenated, and may you be in the favor (*ḥsj*) of Pharaoh, your good lord, every day!” (LEM 6, 16–7, 3; similar 8, 10–13).

“May the one of the primeval time of the two lands, Amun-Re the creator of the gods, act for you, may he grant you the favor (*ḥsw.t*) which is with the king, your mouth being safe, without a fault of your lips being brought up, you being in the favor of the king in your time, the Horus, beloved of Maat” (LEM 38, 10–13)—continued in the style of mortuary glorifications. We should note the stress laid on the absence of negative acts of speech (mouth and lips) which will be of relevance for the global interpretation.

“May you find Amun, that he may act according to your heart in his hour of grace, you being favored (*ḥsj*) among the princes, and set firmly in the place of truth” (LEM 45, 14–15).

“Be in life, prosperity and health; be in the favor of Amonrasonth, the Ka of the king User-Kheperu-Re, whom Re has chosen. I say to Re-Harakhte: ‘Keep the Pharaoh in health, our good lord! Let him celebrate millions of jubilees while you are daily in his favor!’” (LEM 62, 1–5; cf. 66, 12–15; 69, 15–70, 2; 70, 13–16; 125, 10–15). In one case, this formula gains particular relevance since it is couched in a letter of congratulation for receiving promotion as a military officer.

Given that these are mainly model letters, not actual archival material, we gain access to higher levels of society than is usual in our preserved record from Egypt. That could explain the relatively high

amount of wishes for favor before the king which decidedly surpasses that in original letters.

For the Demotic letters, the spectrum of attestations can also be broadened by some interesting cases (see Depauw 2006b). First, the text already adduced by Kotansky: “We are greeting Sarapion, the dioicetes, here before Soukhos, lord of Pay, Isis Nepherses. They may make for you every protection of life, and they may grant² you every long life, every good thing,³ and they may grant you favor (*ḥsṯ.t*), love (*mrṯ.t*) and worth (*šw*) before the king...in eternity” (pOx. Griffith 13, rt. 5–9; Bresciani 1975: 12f.; pl. 4). This text again is notable for mentioning the favor before the king, and is again directed to a very high-ranking official—namely the dioicetes whose function is comparable to that of a minister of finance of the state.

Another example from the same archive: “I greet the priests of Soukhos, lord of Pay, and of Isis Nepherses before the gods of the city of the lions, and may they grant you all protection of life, favor (*ḥs.t*) and love (*mrṯ.t*)” (pOx. Griffith 25, 2–5; Bresciani 1975: 28f.; pl. 14).

A rather different formula from Elephantine, probably somewhat earlier, is: “I greet Nes-Khnum-Meti, the first prophet before Osiris, Horus and Isis, the gods of Abydos. May they grant that you be high in the favors of Khnum, the great god.” (pBerlin 13587, x+1–5; in Zauzich 1978).

From a different locality, we have: “I greet the overseer of fields before Soukhos. He will make stable the house of Teos, the overseer of fields, in the favor (*ḥsṯ.t*)⁴ of the king in eternity” (pLoeb 6, 6–11; Spiegelberg 1931; 17f.). Once again, for a high-ranking official the favor of the king is specifically mentioned.

On an unusual writing surface—namely, a limestone tablet—we have: “[May Amonrasonther the] great [god grant] you a long life, and he will give you favor (*ḥsṯ.t*) before the king Haronophris [beloved of Isis], beloved of Amonrasonther, the great god, together with all those of the royal palace” (Tablet Cairo 38258; see Depauw 2006a: 97).

More in the line of spells for averting danger or damage is the following: “It is [NN son of] Petesis who greets Petosiris-Espmet, Son

² Read probably *ḥṯ.t* rather than *šhn* (thus Bresciani), in spite of the strange sign which precedes it.

³ Read *ḥṯ ky nbʿi ḥ(y) nbnfr*.

⁴ To be read *ḥn ḅ ḥsṯ(.t)*, and not *ḥn nṯ ḥsṯ.w*, as proposed by Spiegelberg.

of Bai-ankh... here before Khnum Nikephoros, and may he save you, and preserve you, and let everything befitting happen to you, and may he grant that we will see your face without any damage in every good affair" (pBerlin 15518, 1-7; in Zauzich 1978); similarly, "I greet you here before Osiris, Horus and Isis, the gods of Abydos, and may they grant that I encounter you without damage" (pBerlin 13564, 1-4; in Zauzich 1993); similarly, "I greet you before Ptah, the great god. May he grant that I will see you without damage" (pBerlin 15617, 1; in Zauzich 1993). For evaluating the Late Antique magical attestations, it should be mentioned that such wishes can serve as a valid alternative to wishes for favor.

It should be noted in fairness, however, that all cases cited here are rather exceptional. The most normal demotic epistolary formula, if any is used, is simply, "may the sun-god grant you a long life."

Perhaps it is not inappropriate to point out that the words in question can have a very basic meaning in the context of other letters. In particular, this concerns requests by lower-ranking people to their superiors. There, we have phrases such as *iw=f hpr iw mri=w s i:ir-hr=k* "if it happens that it is loved before you" or *iw=f hpr iw=s hsi* "if it happens that it is favored" as highly polite and indirect introductions. Such usages are instructive regarding what the wish really implies. When the recipients of letters will find themselves in a situation confronting higher-ranking entities, be they gods or the king, they would hope that their proposals and desires will be granted.

From the Greek side, a typical expression already cited by Kotansky is: "Know that Hesies is Isis, may she grant you favor [before the king]" (PSI IV 328 = P. Zenon Pestman 50, 5f.; cf. Hölbl 1993: 17-20) dating from the 3rd century BCE. Equally relevant are some phrases in the archive of the Katochoi of Memphis, where the addressee is thanked for his accomplishments, such as: "for this now, may Sarapis and Isis grant you loveliness, grace and shape before the king and the queen" (UPZ I 33, 8-10 = 34, 5-6 = 35 12-14 = 36, 10-12; Kotansky 1994: 358f.).

Summing up, we find many instances of wishes for favor in Egyptian letters and greeting speeches of all periods. Typically, this is the favor of the gods. Wishes for favor before the king or high-ranking officials are relatively rare, and seem to be restricted to persons of particularly high social standing. This makes sense, because only the elite would be likely to come into contact with the king in a situation where his favor would be an important factor. Quite notable in particular in the

Ramesside model letters, as well as in the greeting to a prince, is the antagonistic stance against enemies combined with one's own success. I will return to that later. Such combinations are instructive for the social reality behind the polite greetings.

Glorification-style Wishes for Favor

I would like to return now to the group of model letters I used earlier in order to take up some exceptional cases which by their length overstep the limits of ordinary politeness. There is a composition almost totally devoted to such formulae: "Oh Mapu, you will be firmly in place, your Ka with you every day; being daily in joy and exuberance, being favored (*ḥsī*) a million times. Happiness and rejoicing cling to you, your limbs are extolling health. You produce an excess of rejuvenation day by day. No adversary will approach you. The year will come, and your good deeds will be remembered. Nobody like you will be found. Your eye is bright every day, your ear firm, you will multiply good years. Your months are in safety, your days with life and strength, your hours in health; your gods are in peace with you. They are content with your utterances. The Good West sends to you. You are not becoming old, you are not becoming sick, you will complete 110 years on earth, while your limbs are firm, such as is done for somebody who is favored (*ḥsī*) like you, while his god favors him. The lord of the gods entrusts you to the lords of the western mountain, food offerings will come forth for you from Busiris, libations from the necropolis. May your soul come forth and walk around in every place it likes" (LEM 24, 11–25, 7; Tacke 2001: 34–35). This covers the whole life-span till beyond the burial, with earthly as well as funerary wishes—the former ones largely outnumbering the latter ones.

Some of the models in this collection are written in the style of longer glorifications (LEM 37, 8–38, 7; 63, 15–64, 6). Noticeable here is the confrontation with antagonists which is combined with the otherwise adulatory form. We hear a recurring phrase: "your enemy is fallen; the one who spoke against you, he does not exist. You have entered before the ennead and have come forth justified" (LEM 38, 6–7 = LEM 64, 5–6).

In my opinion, it is appropriate to follow the line of this antagonistic stance further by studying one particular composition which has up to now defied the interpretation of Egyptologists (pAnastasi V, rt. 7, 5–8, 1 = pChester Beatty V rt. 6, 7–12). The text runs as follows:

Praise to you, while the lotus is in blossom,
 While the...-birds are pinioned,
 While your troop is sent out into the field,
 And their retainers are branded,
 While your hot one is in the wrath of Amun!
 He is an abomination for men,
 The sun will not rise in his sight,
 The inundation does not flow for him.
 He is like a mouse trapped by high inundation.
 He does not find a place to lean on.
 The kite strikes in order to catch him,
 The crocodile is ready for tasting of him.⁵

This was first understood as a description of the sorry plight of the army officer in summer-time (Gardiner 1937: 59). A more recent analysis has interpreted it as a description of epileptic fits (Fischer-Elfert 2005: 91–163). My own understanding of this composition would differ again. I propose reading the first four lines of this composition in the style of a glorification extolling the pleasant life of the addressee who enjoys a typical Egyptian pastime of the elite: going into the fields, fowling and fishing. To enhance this ideal, a contrast is drawn with the “hot one” of the addressee, whom I understand as the antagonistic adversary. For him, life in the countryside is supposed to bring about not enjoyment but the opposite: danger and even death. The Egyptians even seem to revel in the detailed description of his misery.

One highly important point should be stressed: Egyptologists tend to understand glorifications as funerary compositions (Assmann 2002: 13–37). In some of the cases I have adduced here, however, neither the context nor the actual wording gives any hints that the justification before the ennead has to be understood as a post-mortal judgment of the dead. At least, nothing else in the specific text has any mortuary implications.

This observation forces me to take up the thorny discussion about the origin of the judgment of the dead as codified in Book of the Dead, spell 125. It was once universal and is still the dominant position to understand it simply as a funerary composition. However, an alternative theory was presented by Merkelbach (1968; 1987) and Grieshammer (1974). They took their lead from a Greek-language papyrus containing

⁵ The last two lines are translated here according to the version of pChester Beatty V, 6, 11f. pAnastasi V, 7, 8–8,1 has instead: “He is like a pinioned bird. He does not find an opportunity to fly.”

an oath of Egyptian priests spoken at the occasion of the investiture. This contained phrases quite similar to the declarations of innocence in the Book of the Dead. The two German scholars postulated the origin of the funerary declarations in priestly customs. Others disagreed, mainly pointing out that the Greek papyrus of the 2nd century CE was too late to be of relevance for the much older attestations of the Book of the Dead (Griffiths 1991: 218–224; Lichtheim 1992: 127).

I myself have re-opened the question by pointing out that the Greek papyrus in question is only the translation of a passage from the Egyptian Book of the Temple (Quack 1997), but at the same time proposing that the chapter in the Book of the Dead more likely originates in rituals at the royal court, not the priestly milieu of the temple (Quack 2004a: 18–19). The most important reason for my position is the postscript preserved in some manuscripts of chapter 125. The crucial passage is: “Concerning the one for whom this text is made, he will prosper, and his children will prosper, he will be a confidant of the king and his court.” This, combined with the importance of not having committed any sort of blasphemy against the king in the text, makes me wonder if the ritual might not originally have been designated to declare courtiers as pure (and thus fit to be in the presence of the king). The final aim of the ritual, to receive rations officially, would fit a hypothetical situation at the royal court (depending on royal largesse) as well as the funerary setting from which we have the actual attestations.

While the text, often designated as “negative confession,” is outwardly a declaration of innocence, it has further-reaching implications. As a ritual, it is not only intended to note objective blamelessness, but also to constitute it by its very enactment. Performing the ceremony without fault would achieve a state of purity and innocence for the recipient independently of his real merits.

Rituals for Purification and Gaining Favor

This should induce us to look much more closely at several rituals for purification and protection for the benefit of the living, which are in any way combined with the justification against enemies. An important ritual involving Thot is preserved in pChester Beatty VIII rt. 1, 1–5, 3. It first enumerates the different courts of the gods, and praises Thot at the evocation of each one as the god who satisfied the heart of Osiris against his enemy. The final prayer runs as follows:

“May you be pacified toward NN whom NN has born, may every god and every goddess be pacified toward him, may you make his life-span enduring in years of life, his love (*mrw.t*), his charm, his sweetness in the belly of every man, every nobleman, every commoner and every sunfolk etc.” (rt. 4, 1–3).

In this case, the aim of purification is obviously quite similar to the later *charitesia*; it is all about gaining affection; and the way to achieve it is to overcome all possible enemies at all possible judicial courts.

Of some significance is also the phrase, “The year will come, and your good deeds will be remembered” in the model letter quoted above (LEM 24, 15). The key-word “remember” induces me to take up another ritual of protection, this time in pChester Beatty IX vs. B 12, 10–18,10 (Gardiner 1935: 110f.; pl. 60; Quack 2006a: 149f.): “A good day! Your mouth is opened; all your enemies are felled among the dead and the living. Horus pours water over your fingers; Geb (the god of earth) hands over to you what is in him; your face is washed by your father Nun. Your face is rubbed dry by Hedjhotep(?).⁶ Ptah turns himself to you with the clothing as he did for Re. Your mouth is opened with good speech and choice utterances. One remembers for you on the good day and forgets for you bad things on the good day. Heaven and earth are festive. The gods are rejoicing. Jubilation is in the great house, acclamation in the Benben-house. May you take food in the presence of the great ennead while everybody is praying for health for you; and your heart is rejoicing. Nothing ‘wrinkled’ which you have done will be reproached. There is no evil whatsoever adhering to your limbs, [...] shall be heard for you in the presence of the lords of truth. Oh NN whom NN has born, Re purifies you at his coming forth, Thot at his appearance, when this utterance is told to you which Isis said to her son Horus: You are purified on the sixth day of the lunar month, you are protected on the last day of the lunar month” (pChester Beatty IX vs. B 12, 10–13, 9).

There follows a long list of divinities supposedly purifying and protecting the recipient. The final prayer runs as follows: “Oh all you gods and goddesses, come united that you may purify NN whom NN has born, may you drive out every evil from him, as Re is purified every

⁶ This is a proposal for emendation. The *sh̄tp* transmitted in the text does not make much sense, but altering only the first sign into a relatively similar shape would produce *h̄č-h̄tp*, the well-known god of weaving.

day, as the lords of primeval time are protected, as Isis protected her son Horus against his brother Seth! Oh these gods and goddesses whose names were pronounced, who sit in heaven and eat on earth, their uraeus-snakes on their heads, their souls in Busiris, their mummies in the necropolis, whose names are unknown—but you know their names, you know their businesses—come, may you be gracious toward the great(?)⁷ soul, . . . be gracious regarding him! May you protect him, may you deliver him, may you loosen him from everything bad and evil, from every god, every goddess, every male and every female blessed dead, every male and every female adversary, every male and every female passer-by, every bitterness, every heat,⁸ every deafness, every blindness, every swelling, every thirst, from every revolt, every disturbance, every weakness, every hostility, every raging . . . which is in all lands, being hidden in the course of every day; you⁹ being <protected> like Re is protected every day, having overthrown your enemies in the course of every day. As for NN whom NN has born, he is Re, the sun-disk on his head, the gods being his protection, the ennead his guard. You, NN whom NN has born—<destined for> you¹⁰ are these gods whose names have been pronounced. You were born in front of the kas of the living.” (pChester Beatty IX vs. B 17, 1–18, 7).

This long text which has been somewhat neglected by Egyptologists is actually highly instructive. It is embedded in a long ritual of purification and protection. This seems to be enacted specifically according to important days of the lunar month. There is no very specific indication of the aims, but the antagonism against enemies turns up repeatedly, combined with the reception of food for the recipient of the ritual—the last point structurally similar to the promise of rations expressed in Book of the Dead, chapter 125. We should also note the phrase about the mouth being opened with good speech and choice utterances. This returns us once again to the question of appropriate speech-acts, which I discerned already in one formula of the model letters. Obviously, critical statements or even murmurs of rebellion (or things which could be so construed) were among the most risky

⁷ The facsimile of the hieratic signs given by Gardiner is more in favor of a reading ⲙ than of Gardiner's 3.

⁸ The words translated here neutrally as “bitterness” and “heat” are not unlikely to refer specifically to some skin diseases, see Quack 2005a.

⁹ The text switches for one sentence from the third to the second person in speaking of the recipient.

¹⁰ I emend to *iw <n>=k nn n nčr.w*. As it stands, the phrase is untranslatable.

acts for a member of the Egyptian elite, and this fits with the fact that in the execration texts, acts of bad thinking and bad speaking take a prominent position (Assmann 1994).

At the beginning of the recitation, we have the verbalization of actual acts of physical cleaning with water followed by rubbing dry (with a towel). An act of “natural” purification is often a starting point for ritual purification which has to be undergone (Stolz 1999). On the one hand, the action is elevated by being ascribed to deities; on the other, it is not simply a physical act—the verbal recitation gives it a higher meaning.

More outwardly than the Book of the Dead, chapter 125, this is not simply a text about ascertaining pureness, it is about creating it. Shortcomings are openly admitted and passed to a state of forgetfulness while only the good actions remain in memory, and this social memory is what counts when it comes to achieving the goals, which are to achieve protection in such a way that ensures further success in life, with no enemy being able to use potential flaws to his own ends and your downfall.

Another text meriting closer inspection is the ostracon Deir el-Medineh 1080 (Fischer-Elfert 1997: 108–113; Quack 1999: 139) which also seems to contain a sort of ritual purification. After an invocation to Thot as the one reckoning time and Sakhmet and other female goddesses, we get the key phrases: “May they provide protection of life, stability and strength, may they unite happiness. I am pure [...] on the sixth day of the lunar month. Nothing which enters my belly will go astray, nothing which is in me will get defiled. My house is equally provided. [...] I will not] go down to [...], I will not be forgotten. Every implement is purified, pure like Re is pure in heaven, and Geb is pure in the earth. The four great ones, the lords of the sacred land purify me. [...]”

This text has the orientation in the lunar calendar in common with the previous one. Its state of preservation makes a close analysis more difficult. It might be no more than a “household-spell.” However, the question about being forgotten or remembered establishes an inherent connection with the rituals I have discussed before, as does the date in the lunar month given here.

Quite instructive is a little-studied prayer to Thot preserved on a writing tablet of the early 18th dynasty (Turajeff 1895: 120–123). After an introductory hymn in honor of Thot, the relevant passage is: “Hail to you, Thot! I am the one who adores you. May you give me a house

and possessions! May you equip me, may you provide for my life in the land of the living for whose life you have provided in the island of fire! May you place my love (*mrw.t*), my favor (*hsw.t*), my [...], my sweetness, my protection in the belly, in the heart, in the breast of everybody, all noblemen, all commoners, all sunfolk etc.! May you overthrow my male and female enemy among the dead or the living!” (l. 6–8). Here again the social setting of love and favor is combined with the overthrowing of enemies. According to its postscript, the text is to be recited after having sacrificed to Thot, and it is a spell to justify a man against enemies—quite evidently in a non-funerary context.

More funerary in its setting, but still of clearly recognisable intention, is a text transmitted in the tomb of Ibi in the 26th dynasty (Kuhlmann and Schenkel 1983: 257f.) with a partial parallel of Ramesside date (Assmann 1983: 224–226). The basic text is a hymn to the sun-god with a particular emphasis on the overthrowing and destroying of its enemy. This is connected with a prayer in favor of Ibi, and the sun-god is asked to put his love, his charm and his renown in the belly of all men. Again we can see how achieving love and favor is connected with the overthrowing of enemies on the real and conceptual level.

Prayers for Favor and a Successful Career

To be reconsidered further are some prayers to gods, mainly preserved in the same corpus of papyri as the model letters which I have cited above (Fecht 1965; Assmann 1999: 407–422). They have been studied for their metrics as well as for their so-called “personal piety.” What has been less focused on is their social setting. At least partially, they are prayers for success in the career as a civil administrator. The most obvious case is also a good starting point because it makes use of the key-word *hswj*.

“May you find Amun acting according to your desire in his hour of grace, you being in favor (*hsw.(t)*) among the high officials, made firm in the place of truth. Oh Amun-Re, your high inundation is overflowing the mountains, lord of fishes with many birds—every poor man is satiated! Place the high officials in the place of high officials, the great ones in the place of the great ones! Place the scribe of the treasury Qai-Geba before Thot, your truthful one!” (LEM 45, 14–46, 2; Fecht 1965: 62–65).

Such a text is a good example of how favor was equivalent to promotion and a successful career. It can be matched by several prayers

to Thot either asking for skill and success, or thanking him for having given his help (e.g. Fecht 1965: 52–58; 65–73). I will however concentrate on one fairly famous text, a prayer to Thot:

Oh Thot, set me into Hermopolis,
your city of sweet life!
You will make provisions for me with bread and beer,
you will guard my mouth in speaking!

Would that I had Thot for me as protector tomorrow!
'Come,' it would be said,
when I have entered before the lords,
'that you may go forth justified!'

Oh great dum-palm of 60 cubits,
the one on which there are nuts.
There are kernels in the nuts,
while there is water in the kernels.
The one who has taken water from far away,
Come, that you may rescue me, the silent one!

Oh Thot, the pleasant well for a thirsty man in the desert,
it is closed for the one who has found his speech,
it is open for the silent one.
May the silent one come, that he finds the well!
Oh hot one, you are under control!"¹¹ (LEM 85, 15–86, 9).

This text has up to now generally been understood to refer to the judgment of the dead. On close examination, it seems difficult to pinpoint it to such an occasion, and several details would be much more appropriate in a setting for the living. The first part, with the wishes for a placement in the cultic city of Thot and for provisions, is certainly to be understood as benefit for the living, as is the last one concerning the well that is only accessible to the "silent one." Also, there is nothing of post-mortal relevance in the passage about the dum-palm and its nuts. Were it not for the preconceived opinions of Egyptologists (who are generally too concerned with death and the afterlife), nothing would prevent us from applying the judgment passage to a situation of the living. We could of course speculate, given the setting of the prayer within a manuscript which is probably a school-text, whether the crucial test for which help is desired might be the final exam deciding whether you would enter a career as a functionary of the state. In any event we can note that once again, special precaution is considered

¹¹ Literally "taken, grasped."

to be important when it comes to verbal utterances for which specific protection is desired.

Especially noteworthy is the last line. Most commentators have proposed more or less serious emendations while the text makes perfect sense as it stands. Given the other texts I have presented here, it is not surprising that a prayer for personal success is combined with an antagonistic stance against an enemy who is said to be in firm grasp, and thus under control and incapable of doing harm.

Besides, a further prayer with a similar theme should be compared, as already noted by Assmann (1999: 414). This one, on an ostrakon in Cairo, runs as follows:

“The one who is poor calls to you, oh Amun!
 The one who is powerful seeks you.
 The one who is in Syria (says) ‘come, bring me back to Egypt!’
 The one who is in the underworld (says) ‘save me!’
 The one who stands before the ruler (says) ‘Give breath, oh Amun!’
 Would that I had Amun as protector tomorrow!
 ‘Come’ would be said.
 I have looked behind me and I saw Amun.
 His breath entered my body.
 Happy is your servant, oh Amun!
 Every evil has left him.” (HO 5, 1; Černý and Gardiner 1957, pl. 5; see also Kitchen 2007: 152).

The central motif of hope for the successful outcome of an impending lawsuit unites this text with the previous one. By positing the audience situation before a ruler as one of several situations where Amun can be helpful, the author makes the this-worldly situation a bit clearer. With the final phrase “every evil has left him,” we reach the ground already covered by several of the previously cited texts. Complete guiltlessness is hardly a realistic option, but ritual and prayer serve to efface possible sins.

The “Hot One” as an Adversary

The key-word of the “hot one” which we have encountered in the prayer to Thot as well as in the passage contrasting the happy life of the addressee with the terrible fate of the “hot one” (pAnastasi V, rt. 7, 5–8, 1 = pChester Beatty V rt. 6, 7–12) makes it necessary to take up several more compositions treating this topic, especially the Ramesside

ostrakon Deir el-Medine 1265 and the famous chapter 4 of the instructions of Amenemope. Recently, an effort has been made to understand all those descriptions of the “hot one” as somebody who is suffering from epilepsy (Fischer-Elfert 2005: 91–163). While such a diagnosis seems quite reasonable to me in the description of the suffering man in pDeir el-Medine 1 verso (Fischer-Elfert 2005: 142–148), a text that does not use the expression “the hot one,” I seriously doubt its relevance for the actual attestations of this expression. In all of them, I prefer to understand the “hot one” as the adversary of the hero figure. This adversary is characterized either by negative behavior which he actively practices, or by the social punishments resulting from such behavior. As a case in point, I would mention the passage in oDeM 1265, II, 10 “he who twinkled with his eyes, he is fallen.” Fischer-Elfert took this to be the description of a restless person who has fits (2005: 134). In reality, the verb *črm* is attested also in the negative confessions of Book of the Dead chapter 125, B 26 (Maystre 1937: 87). There it designates a blameable action, and most likely serves as a kind of signal for a hidden agreement between the judge and one of the two parties—which, in the case of the ostrakon DeM 1265, does not succeed in defeating the just case of the righteous man.

Highly instructive is ostrakon Borchard 1 with a partial parallel in ostrakon Torino CG 50367 (Mathieu 1996: pl. 22–24), a text overlooked by Fischer-Elfert (2005) and seriously misunderstood by previous commentators, who introduced unnecessary emendations and misunderstood the crucial points (Mathieu 1996: 114; Kitchen 1999: 398f.). As transmitted, the text can be easily translated:

A happy day it is to see you,
 my brother, it is a great favor (*ḥsy(.t)*) to look at you!
 May you be introduced to me with beer!
 The musicians (*ḥsy.w*) are equipped with instruments,
 while their mouths are equipped with (songs of) entertaining,
 of joy and happiness,
 after your hot one was brought backwards,
 while you are clever in your office.
 One speaks, and then your voice is listened to.
 The one who has denounced you was brought down.
 Your capable sister is in adoration before you,
 kissing the ground to see you.
 May she be accepted as beer and incense,
 like the pacifying of a god.

Obviously, again we find the topic of favor combined with triumph over an adversary. There is an obvious word-play between “favor” (*ḥsy.t*) and “musicians” (*ḥsy.w*). As seen in this text, it is not a wish but has already happened. What makes this poem so special is that the theme of social favor and triumph here is obviously connected with personal love, expressed here in the mouth of a female lover who pronounces it and offers herself and her love as an offering fit for a god. This foreshadows in some way the shift of the *charitesia* from social success to gaining personal love, which will be relevant for the Graeco-Roman period.

Promises of Favor in the “Oracular Amuletic Decrees”

Besides the wishes, we also have promises. They occur within the framework of the so-called “Oracular Amuletic Decrees” which had a sudden peak of popularity in the 21st and 22nd dynasties (Edwards 1960; Bohleke 1997). They contain long lists of promises made and guaranteed by gods, mainly for protecting the proprietor and keeping him healthy. To some degree, they are also concerned with social success, and in three of them, granting favor is relevant. “I will grant her favor with A[mun], Mut, and Chons without his slaying; I will grant her favor with every action of Month without [...]” (L2 rt. 87–90), or “We will grant her favor before Amun, Mut, and Chons, she being flourishing and she will not be slain” (T2 rt. 90). Both of these texts combine the promise of favor with the negation of “slaying” (*šꜥt*) which I take to mean the actual threat of capital punishment.¹² Such a contrast is also attested in the formulae of the donation stelae (see below). Slightly different is the last case: “I will put his favor and love in the heart of king Osorkon beloved of Amun, my beautiful child” (L7 27–30). Here, the beneficiary is of especially high standing, actually a prince, so the direct contact with the king is relevant. The fixed expression *ḥs(w.t)-mr(w.t)* should be noted, as it is the very one which occurs later in the demotic magical spells.

¹² Edwards (1960: 18 and 66) understood it simply as a reference to a ceasing or diminishing.

Wishes for Favor in Festive Situations

Also in relatively “private” situations, wishes for favor can be expressed. I would like to illustrate this by a few scenes taken from the tomb of Rekhmire, a vizier under the kings Thutmose III and Amenhotep II. In a festival context, the daughters of the vizier Rekhmire present him with sistra while saying: “May the daughter of Re, who loves you, favor you; may she place her protection around you day by day. She embraces your flesh. May you lift her majesty, and then she embraces your breast. May you spend a long lifetime of happiness on earth, life, prosperity and health having joined you!” (Davies 1943: 60; pl. LXIII). To understand the text, it is essential that Hathor, daughter of the sun-god and goddess of love, was symbolized by the very sistrum Rekhmire is receiving and supposed to lift up.

In a festive contest, the mother of Rekhmire receives a friendly greeting while being poured a drink: “For your Ka, may you spend a happy day! May you exist on earth! Amun, your lord, has decreed it to you; may he favor you and love you!” (Davies 1943: 60; pl. LXIV).

At the same fest, a singer addresses Rekhmire directly: “How happy are those years which the god has decreed that you will spend, being joined with favor, in good health, and happy. You will be [enduring],¹³ your voice will be justified, your enemy felled in your house which is united with all eternity!” (Davies 1943; pl. LXVI). This last case shows once again how wishes for success are not uniquely positive, but joined with the concomitant defeat of an antagonist. It can be regarded in the context of a long tradition of combining the motif of feasts and offering-meals with the annihilation of enemies (Quack 2006d).

Reflections on Favor Obtained

From all these wishes, prayers and rituals, we can proceed to reflections on the actual occurrences of favor. Since I have already mentioned above that apart from prayers to Thot for help in the professional career, there are also prayers thanking him for having achieved

¹³ Given the fact that this word was deliberately hacked out, it is likely to have shown a graphic resemblance to the name of Amun which later fell victim to the iconoclasm of Akhenaten; so it is reasonable to restore [mn].^rti’.

success, it would be appropriate to begin with a composition transmitted in Demotic, the so-called “Book of Thot” (Jasnow and Zauzich 2005; Quack 2007). This text focuses on the access of a scribe to the higher levels of esoteric knowledge. It also contains praise to the teacher for having achieved success. The crucial lines, spoken by the candidate, are:

“Oh may your art of elevating be rejuvenated in front of the house of documents with the children of your instruction.
 You have been a craftsman for me, you have reduced (?) my trouble, and you have taken control of my [...]
 You have been a cultivator for me while I was like a field; I being worthy that you make a registration (?) for me.
 I was given to you when I was a block; you have opened me as a statue, you have been a life-giving craftsman.
 You have set free my tongue, you have opened for me the path, you have given me the way of coming and going.
 You have diminished my hatred and brought my love (*mri.t*), you have let my favor (*hsj.t*) come up quickly.
 You have made me ‘old’ while I was young, so that I could send those older than me in your business.¹⁴
 You have given me the status while I was a child; I could sit at rest while the great ones were standing.
 You have caused me to be abundant in nurses while I was solitary; you have made for me a troop of youths.
 The flame (?) of your mouth has revealed to me food provisions; the efficiency of your belly has flowed over me.” (B 02, 7/4–13).

Much could be said about this complex text, but for my actual investigation it is sufficient to stress how the professional career (entailing food provisions and the respect of others) is bound up with questions of love and favor. The benefactor is in this case the teacher, although it can be disputed whether he is really the god Thot himself, as Jasnow and Zauzich thought.

A certain set of expressions shows a remarkable fluctuation between attributing favor and its benefits to divine or royal authorship (Assmann 1979; Assmann 1980). Some cases from the Amarna period, at a time when only one god was officially recognized and success to a great extent depended upon the king, can illustrate the expressions: “I will tell you the benefits which the ruler did for me. He let me

¹⁴ Or “by your magical efficiency”.

unite with the princes and courtiers, I was made great and honored, I thought about joining the princes. I found thee as a wise king. A sun is his majesty who has built the poor one whom he favors (*ḥsi*), who has made princes by his Ka. Destiny which gives life, lord of orders; one lives while he is at peace" (Tomb of Panehsy, Sandman 1938: 25, 6–9).

The Menace of Punishment

Such favors are typically connected with their antithesis—namely, punishment of lack of loyalty. In the same Amarna texts, there are also expressions such as, "He inflicts punishment on him who does not know (recognize) his teaching, his favor for the one who knows him according to the fact that you obey the king." (Sandman 1938: 86, 15–16).

With other cases, we definitely move from divine favor to gaining royal favor, which brings us closer to the magical spells I intend to study. Obtaining royal favor was an important point for the Egyptian elite, as evidenced by the ideal biographies put up in the tombs. Already in the Old Kingdom, we have many tomb inscriptions stressing that the owner was favored by the king, and sometimes showing that royal favor was accompanied by lavish gifts (Kloth 2002: 162–173). This phenomenon is also well documented for the 18th dynasty, for example, where stressing royal favor toward the first-person speaker was one of the most frequent topics (Guksch 1994: 39–54). In addition, from the Old Kingdom onward, actual letters of the king to his official frequently state that the recipient had done what the king loved and favored (Eichler 1991: 165).

Another text genre revealing such conceptions is the so-called "appeals to the living" (Garnot 1938). They typically contain phrases like "as you wish that the ruler favors you," used to interest the addressees in performing certain acts such as offering formulae for the deceased, or respecting purity regulations.

Also in the "Book of the Temple," a large manual for the ideal Egyptian temple (Quack 2000; Quack 2004a), we find instructions for the governor and overseer of the prophets: He should question all those who had been sent on a mission, and favor/reward (*ḥsi*) the competent and successful one while condemning the incompetent one. We have to understand that "favor" in Egypt actually meant rewards for

well-executed missions, and was not just a question of prestige—it also had implications of direct material gains (Jansen-Winkeln 2002). The most valuable expression of this was the so-called “gold of praise” (Butterweck-AbdelRahim 2002; Binder 2008) which in its actual formulation (*nb.w n ḥsw.t*) is rather a “gold of favor”.

All this should be set against the background of a royal court which was most likely a cesspool of intrigues with different factions vying for power, trying to gain royal favor and to put their adversaries in the worst possible light. It is quite instructive to see how often elite tombs, even those of persons who emphasize in their inscriptions how close they were to the king and how firmly in his favor, end up with the depictions of the tomb-owner defaced and his name erased (e.g. the tomb of Haremhab; Brack and Brack 1980: 15f.)—royal favor might be fickle and royal wrath more swift and terrible than you would like. As expressed in an Egyptian didactic text about the king: “Lo, truly great is the favor (*ḥsw.t*) of the god, but also great is the punishment” (Instruction of a Man for His Son § 3, 5; Fischer-Elfert 1999: 58). Such a situation may also explain why one’s own success is not really enough—being victorious over your adversaries is part of the game.

This game, however, has complicated rules which do not always allow for voicing the complete story. It was never difficult to tell of one’s own success, and of having obtained favor. In contrast, it was much more problematic to speak openly about internal rivalries and conflict between factions. In the official autobiographies, decorum did not permit any private individual to mention specific enemies; this has led to a recent scholarly declaration that the Egyptians did not have enemies, only Pharaoh had (Franke 2005: 92). As a matter of fact, even in the official memorial inscriptions there is room for the negative characterization of unspecified persons (Franke 2005: 107f.), and as soon as we leave them, things look even more different. In the instructions there are several passages that mention possible antagonisms between private individuals (for the Middle Kingdom see Quack 2005b: 75 and 79; for the New Kingdom, Quack 1994: 152 and 180–181). It is equally possible to conceptualize the victory over enemies when they are not given a specific individual name but only a general blanket designation, as can be seen in the rituals and greeting formulae I have discussed here. Similarly, underlying rivalries could be expressed in the tomb decoration by showing surrogate images of bulls fighting each other (Seidlmayer 1999). Numerous internal quarrels and antagonisms come to light through actual letters (e.g. Wente 1990: p. 58

no. 67; p. 92 no. 117; p. 93 no. 120; p. 115f. no. 136; p. 120–122 no. 143; p. 124–126 no. 147; p. 127–128 no. 151–152; p. 129f. no. 154; 137 no. 168; p. 140 no. 177; p. 148f. no. 203–206; p. 152f. no. 213–216; p. 172f. no. 288–289; p. 178 no. 294; p. 189f. no. 312; p. 202 no. 329). In one case we even gain the information how a conflict was settled in court by royal decision, with the winner receiving royal largesse—but his boat was spoiled by opponents (LRL 59, 4–13; Wente 1990: 175).

One case might, more than anything else, illustrate the risks involved. It is the so-called “literary letter of Moscow” (Caminos 1977; Quack 2001a; Schad 2006: 63–150), a probably fictional composition preserved in a papyrus (Moscow, Pushkin Museum 127) from about 1000 BCE. It opens with one of the longest and most elaborate forms of polite greeting attested in all Egyptian letters. Within this framework, we find the wish, “May your favor (*ḥsw.t*) with the king’s Ka happen to be stable” (1, 3f.). This wish, and all of the introductory section, take on a larger meaning far surpassing simple politeness when we consider the writer’s own experience. He recounts how he was ousted from office by unnamed enemies and driven to a vagabond’s life (Fischer-Elfert 2005: 215–232)—which is what can happen if your favor is not firmly settled with the king.

The dichotomy of promises and threats is expressed clearly in some classes of documents. One typical section is found in donation stela, especially of the Third Intermediate Period. They usually contain threats against those who have overthrown the decisions combined with promises for those who abide by them.¹⁵ A typical example is: “As for the one who will establish this decree, he will be in the favor of Amun-Re and his son will succeed him. As for the one who will disregard it, he will fall prey to the slaughter (*šꜣt*) of Amun-Re.” (Smaller Dakhla-stela, l. 11–13; Janssen 1968: 167). Another one is “[As for the one who will disregard the field-plots...] ..., he will be in the slaughter (*šꜣ.t*) of the king, they will cut off his head... As for the one who will establish these field-plots and not diminish their measuring-rope, he will be in the favor of the god of his town” (Stela Cairo JdÉ 85647; Bakir 1943: 79). The threat of slaughter is very frequent in those texts (Morschauser 1991: 104–109). As the counterbalance to favor, it illustrates very well what favor implied in Egypt.

¹⁵ Morschauser 1991: 225–239 restricts himself to a presentation of the threats and thus fails to provide an adequate analysis of the complex.

Furthermore, such formulae are attested in juridical oaths, especially the royal oaths attested in the Ptolemaic Period (Minas 2000: 163–171). Two typical examples demonstrate the phraseology. “[By the king] Ptolemaios, son of Ptolemaios, the god, by Arsinoe, the brother-loving [goddess], by the brother-loving gods, by the fathers and mothers, I will act for you according to everything which is written above, without falsehood in the oath given above. If I am doing it as perjury, I will be in the punishment of the king; if I will do it as truthful oath, I will be in the favor of the king” (pLille 117, x+7–10; de Cenival 1991: 17). “By king Ptolemaios, the mother-loving god, Isis, Oserapis and all the Gods of Egypt. We will act according to everything written above from [now on for ever.]...[If we will do the] royal oath given above truthfully, we are in his favor, if we do it as perjury, we are in his punishment” (pAshmolean Hawara 18, 10–12; Reymond 1973: 128f.). The word for “punishment” in these texts (*btw*) can often be used to mean capital punishment (Quack & Ryholt 2000: 149; Ryholt 2005: 39). As such, it is the structural continuation of the *šct* “slaughter” we encountered in the donation stelae.

The King Finding Favor with the Gods

Up to now, I have mainly considered wishes for favor for the benefit of a private individual, either from the gods, the kings, or sometimes high officials. When going over to examples of the temple cult, we must also consider the king as the recipient of favor, for the simple reason that officially, the king is supposed to act in the temple liturgy; temple reliefs typically show the king, not priests, enacting the principal rituals.

Actually, one of the most fundamental epithets of the king is that he is beloved of some deity (Morenz 1956; Blumenthal 1970: 67–71; Grimal 1986: 199–201; Schade-Busch 1992: 55f.). This is so ubiquitous that the sheer amount of evidence has deterred most Egyptologists from entering into a more detailed discussion. Many Pharaohs stress that the god loved them more than any previous king. Such expressions are an obvious transposition of the hierarchy one stage higher. Just as the functionaries were dependent on the favor and love of the king (or of their immediate superiors), thus the king himself is dependent equally upon the gods.

A ritual act which is attested, at least during the New Kingdom, as being connected with wishes for favor from the gods, is the presen-

tation of the bouquet to the king (Dittmar 1986: 73 and 158–160). Relevant phrases are found especially in the tombs of high-ranking officials of the 18th dynasty. We have, for example, “For your Ka, the bouquet of your father Harakhthe... May he favor you, may he love you, may he make you live long, may he give you millions of years, annals and jubilees, all lands being under your soles. May he fell your enemies among the dead and the living. [All] happiness be with you, all health be with you, and all life be with you, may you remain on the throne of Re like Re in eternity” (Urk. IV 1780, 16–1781, 4); or, “For your Ka, the bouquet of your father Ptah. May he favor you, may he love you, may he make you live long, may your enemy among the dead and the living be felled!” (Urk. IV 1936, 7–13). Such texts show a rather stock formula in a probably frequent ritual setting. This setting can actually be identified because in the offering ritual of the New Kingdom (Tacke 2003), there is a scene of presenting a bouquet to the king on the sixth day of the lunar month (pChester Beatty IX rt. 14, 8–11). As so often in the material I am presenting, being in favor is combined with the downfall of enemies. There are late period adaptations of such formulae in the temple of Edfu where they are rewritten for the benefit of the living sacred animal of Horus (Edfou VI, 271, 5f.; 272, 11f.). One of them is especially remarkable as it combines the favor and the overthrowing of the enemies with the fact that the beneficiary will gain renown with men and love with women (Edfou VI, 272, 12).

The combination of the roots *ḥsṯ* “to praise” and *mri* “to love” can be traced back to the liturgy of the daily ritual from the New Kingdom onward. There it is found in many cases, especially in connection with incense and libations (Egberts 1995: 119).

A formula of protection has also crept into one spell of the daily temple ritual, as demonstrated in a manuscript from the Roman Period (PSI Inv. I 70, A 1, 11) (Osing & Rosati 1998: 107, pl. 14), where the deity is implored at the end of a spell *ḥsṯ=k s(i)* “may you favor it (the eye of Horus).” The spell itself, a recitation accompanying the lighting of a candle, is well attested in many versions (see e.g. Franke 1994: 224–236), but the formula of interest here seems to be an individual addition.

Equally, several attestations among the offering scenes of the Graeco-Roman temples are relevant. In them, the basic situation is always that of the king sacrificing to the gods and receiving gifts from them. Consequently, the wishes for favor are always formulated in his interest.

Especially frequent are relevant formulae within the scenes for offering the *mnw*-jar, a vessel containing an intoxicating beverage (Sternberg-el Hotabi 1992; Quack 2001b). There, Pharaoh is promised by the goddess that she will place his favor in the heart of the gods, and love for him in the heart of men. One scene combining the menu-vase and incense has the promise of the goddess: “I will place your favor in the hearts of the gods, and I will make the hearts of men inclined toward you” (Dendera VI, 26, 14–27, 1).

Finding Favor in Demotic Magical Texts

All these earlier examples from a variety of sources provide the necessary background for understanding the Late-Antique texts generally understood as “magical,” in which highly elaborate procedures for ensuring favor and love for an individual are sometimes transmitted.

First, I will discuss the demotic attestations (mainly from the 3rd century CE) which strongly resemble the Greek *charitesia*. The demotic linguistic equivalent of the *charitesion* can be determined fairly easily because this genre of spells occurs in the great magical papyrus of London and Leiden (Griffith & Thompson 1904–1909), and is obviously related to the similar Greek-language spells. The keywords are indeed *ḥsṯ.t* “favor” and *mrṯ.t* “love”.

Highly important is a spell for bestowing favor, entitled as such in the manuscript (pMag. LL. 11, 1–26). Perhaps the most remarkable part of the spell is its postscript, which I shall discuss first. This states that the spell is the scribe’s feat of a king whose name is unfortunately largely lost due to a lacuna in the manuscript. The remaining traces only show that the last phonetic sign was an š. This is sufficient to narrow the perspective considerably. Of all the Egyptian kings, only the names of some foreign rulers end with this sound: the Persians Dareios, Xerxes and Artaxerxes as well as an obscure king Khababash who seems to have ruled Egypt for a short time in the fourth century BCE. Also, there is the option that the name could be restored as Necho with the epithet *pʿ šš*, an epithet which has recently been identified as being specific for Necho II (the Nekhepsos) of astrological traditions). This note would thus give the spell a pre-Ptolemaic origin. Obviously, we cannot simply take this at face value, but linguistic arguments are of importance here. In general, the manuscript in question shows a developed form of Late Demotic already quite

close to Coptic; the passage in question, however, mostly eschews the linguistic innovations of the contemporary speech and rather shows a sort of standard Middle Demotic (Quack 2006c). All told, I would be inclined to suppose a fairly early origin for the spell in question, especially since none of the possible kings (except perhaps Necho II) would be an obvious choice for pseudepigraphic attribution.

The principal deity invoked in the spell is Thot, and the speaker first presents himself as a baboon, the sacred animal of that very god. Furthermore, he claims identification with a rather large number of other Egyptian gods. All of them fall squarely within the traditional Egyptian religion, with no obvious foreign elements present—which is actually quite rare in this manuscript and would serve as a further indicator of the relatively old age of the composition.

The link with Thot is further strengthened by the fact that in the manual rite, an actual figurine of a baboon is to be produced in red wax. This is anointed with lotus oil or alternatively other sorts of ointment; styrax, myrrh and the seed of a plant called “great of love” are added and the whole is placed into a faience vessel. In addition, a wreath is brought and anointed before pronouncing the spells. The face of the petitioner is to be anointed with this specific ointment, and he takes the wreath in his hand. He can then walk wherever he wishes among the multitude, and is given very great favor among them. Obviously, the manual rite chooses appropriate symbolism; for the wreath can easily be understood as the Egyptian crown of justification (Derchain 1955), and thus prefigures the successful outcome of any critical encounter at court or in the royal audience-chamber. This text is of completely Egyptian composition, with no Greek or Mesopotamian elements present.

A sample passage from the actual wishes is, “Grant me favor (*ḥṣi(.t)*), love (*mri.t*) [and reverence before NN whom] NN [has born] today, and he may give me every good thing, and he may give me nourishment and food, and he may do for me everything which I [want, and he should not] injure me so as to harm me, and he may not say anything which I hate today, tonight, this month, this year, in [every] hour [of my life (?). But as for the enemies], the sun-god shall impede their hearts, blind their eyes, and cause the darkness to be in their faces” (11, 9–12).

The final prayer is: “Oh all you gods [whose names I have spoken] here today, come to me in order that you might hear what I have

said today and in order that you might rescue me from all weakness, every defect, everything, every evil today! Grant me favor (*ḥsṯ(.t)*), love (*mrṯ(.t)*) and reve[rence] (*šfe.t*) before] the woman NN, the king and his people, the mountain and its animals (?), so that he does everything which I shall say to him [together with every man who will se]e me (or) to whom I shall speak (or) who will speak to me from among all men, all women, all youths, all old people, all people [or animals or things in the] whole land, [who] shall see me in these hours today so that they create my praise (*ḥsṯ(.t)*) in their hearts in everything which I will [do] daily, together with those who will come to me in order to overthrow every enemy!" (11, 16–20).

This composition obviously continues the tradition of rituals for gaining favor and overcoming rivals, with the antagonistic stance clearly present. The first prayer is even quite specific insofar as it seems to intend the position of a favored client to a great patron for the beneficiary of the ritual.

Much shorter is another recipe in the same text. In the main part, this is a straightforward love-charm making use of body-parts of a shrew-mouse. But the same text also contains a short note that the heart of the animal, set into a ring, would bring great praise (*ḥsṯ.t c3.t*), love (*mrṯ.t*) and respect (*šfe.t*) to the bearer (pMag LL 13, 21; better preserved vs. 32, 12–13). Such a muddling of the border between spells for favor before the king and officials, and private love charms, is consistent with what we know from the Greek papyri. Due to the purely technical description which is devoid of any mythological allusions or actual incantations, I would be reluctant to state an opinion regarding the ultimate cultural affiliations of this recipe. I can, however, note that the shrew-mouse is an animal of real religious significance in Egypt. It can be linked with a specific form of Horus, namely the one from Letopolis (Brunner-Traut 1965).

A relatively short recipe for gaining favor (*ḥsṯ.t*) and love (*mrṯ.t*) is preserved in pBM 10588 rt. 7, 1–5 (Bell, Nock and Thompson 1933: 9 and 12; Ritner 1986: 98f.). It is indicated as being in the Nubian language, although no linguistic analysis of such terms has yet been published, and some words give the impression of being based on a Greek model—for example, having Abrasax as magical name (Quack 2004b: 447). The instructions for the actual performance are in clear Demotic: You should put gum into your hand and kiss (or spit?) on your shoulders before confronting whomever you wish. The fact that the target person is a man (*rmč*), not specifically a woman, should be

regarded as a strong indication that this spell concerns social success, not love magic.

Since in the Greek tradition, spells for currying favor frequently go hand-in-hand with those for gaining the love of a woman, it seems appropriate to discuss here two fairly important love spells with complicated manual rites, both transmitted in the demotic magical Papyrus of London and Leiden. They are of special interest since they both make use of a magically enhanced oil with which the face and phallus of the practitioner are to be anointed, and thus belong to a field for which Faraone has indicated only Greek and Mesopotamian cases. Actually, they are two divergent versions of a single ritual, with differences mainly in the exact wording of the invocations. The oil is prepared over a period of time lasting from the end of one lunar month to the next full moon, by being dripped off a fish, being collected in a vessel, and formulae being recited over it. The practitioner identifies himself mainly with Shu and a female entity (perhaps the fish) with the uraeus-goddess, also called Nubian cat, the daughter of Re. Thus the magical precedent used is the love of Shu and Tefnut, a traditional Egyptian mythological theme which, to give an additional dimension to the composition, is normally connected to the theme of those two coming to help their father and overthrowing his enemies (Sternberg 1985: 224–227). In one of the two variants, the invocation actually alludes to this by saying: “You are Sakhmet, the great, lady of Ast who has overcome every rebel” (pMag. LL 12, 22–23).

The first one has a fragmentary title probably to be restored as “[a spell to make a woman] love a man.” Even though this makes it sound like a simple love-spell, the actual invocation-prayer says: “Give me favor (*ḥs.t*), love (*mrj.t*) and respect (*šfe.t*) before every womb and every woman” (12, 17–18). The second is entitled: “Another way to give a man favor (*ḥsj.t*) before a woman.” (12, 21), which makes it even more into a charitesion. In any case, they show that already within the Egyptian tradition, there were cases where this type of spell was used for love magic, and not only for career-related questions; but the choice of mythological analogy still links it subtly with the spells where social success is connected with the victory over enemies.

For a complete understanding, it should be pointed out that magical prayers for favor are not confined to spells which identify themselves as charitesia in the title; they also occur within the body of quite different genres. One remarkable case is the “vessel inquiry of Chons” (pMag. LL 9, 1–10, 22). While the later parts of the text are quite

losophy had high prestige, and they would naturally have been taught to those Egyptians who wished to retain some status, since they had to learn the Greek language (and school was based on the Greek classical authors, see Cribiore 2001). Religious affiliation was quite a different matter. There, we can actually see an enormous influx of Egyptian cults into the whole Roman world. Greeks in Egypt were greatly attracted to Egyptian funerary beliefs; even among the cults for the living, the Egyptian religion normally had the upper hand. Temples for purely Greek gods were fairly rare in the Egyptian chora, even in regions where a relatively high number of Greek colonists resided.

Furthermore, if we look for cultural or religious affiliation in any specific ritual—for example, as preserved in the PGM, we should be careful about understanding the drift of our own question. As modern scholars, we might say that some specific spell contains Jewish elements (or are they Gnostic?), or that it is based on traditional Egyptian concepts, since we are trained to conduct research into the origins of a practice or belief system (Ritner 1998; Faraone 2005). Such questions did not concern the ancient magician. He was interested in the pragmatic aim: that those rituals should work, that they should produce the desired effect. He certainly did not pledge his allegiance to any single deity or pantheon by collecting only rituals based on the traditions of one specific ethnic or religious group. Typically, the large manuals (most famously, PGM IV with more than 3000 lines of text) contain many different spells which not only vary in the preference given to any specific religious tradition, but can be seen to include Egyptian deities, Jewish or “Gnostic” figures and even Greek gods (or such whose name is linguistically Greek, even if, like Hermes or Helios, in this text group they are likely to mean an Egyptian deity like Thot or Re) existing side by side in a combination which might seem incongruous to us but caused no problem at all for the actual users of these handbooks. In such a situation, inquiring about the ethnic or cultural origins of a spell might have diachronic relevance, but for the synchronic use it is utterly irrelevant. We should bear this in mind when coming to the actual examples.

Instructive here is a lengthy practice in the Mimaout papyrus which is stylized as a prayer to the sun-god (PGM III 495–611). It is a fairly complex ritual which can be used for different aims. But the prayer contains elements clearly at home in the charitesion tradition. We have, for example: “Come to me with a happy face to a bed of your

choice, giving me, NN, sustenance, health, safety, wealth, the blessing of children, knowledge, a ready hearing, goodwill, sound judgment, honor, memory, grace, shapeliness, beauty to all who see me" (PGM III 575–580).

The cult of the sun-god Helios as an important deity is not widespread in Greece but is obviously very much so in the Egyptian tradition. The primary magical means of rendering the deity propitious is by demonstrating knowledge of its different forms and symbols, as we have seen in the Demotic vessel inquiry of Chons. This is done specifically by enumerating the different forms of the sun-god in the different hours, as well as its specific favorite trees, stones, birds, animals and sacred names. This resembles the Egyptian tradition of having different forms of the sun-god in the different hours of the day. We can even go one step further. The specific forms of the sun-god evoked in this papyrus are familiar from other traditions. They correspond to a set known as dodekaoros (von Lieven, in press), even though the sequence seems confused in comparison with other attestations (Gundel 1968: 6). The dodekaoros can be recognized as a late-Egyptian conception. It is known from magical manuscripts of Roman-period Egypt, from actual depictions of the animals on a zodiac found in Egypt, and from astrological treatises giving its constituents as parts of the non-Greek constellations.

The Egyptian background is strengthened by the fact that this prayer ends with a famous text, the hymnic conclusion of the hermetic "Perfect Discourse" (*teleios logos*) which is mainly known from the Latin translation in the treatise *Asclepius*, as well as a Coptic version preserved among the Nag-Hammadi-codices (Nock & Festugière 1946: 353–355; Mahé 1978: 160–167).

Quite similar in some basic structures is the consecration of a stone in PGM IV 1596–1715. We have a prayer to the sun-god: "Give glory and honor and favor and fortune and power to this NN stone which I consecrate today." Here also, the different shapes of the sun-god according to the dodekaoros are fundamental. Again, we are very much in an Egyptian setting, and the concluding sentence "When you complete the consecration, say 'One is Zeus and Sarapis'," again illustrates the Graeco-Egyptian cultural horizon of the practitioner.

Equally, a binding love spell of Astrapsoukhos (PGM VIII 1–63) has some structural similarities to the two compositions I have just discussed. The crucial prayer is: "Give me favor, sustenance, victory, prosperity, elegance, beauty of face, strength of all men and women."

Again, knowledge of the names and shapes of the god is the essential justification of the practitioner. Here, the spectrum is reduced to four different animals in the cardinal regions of the sky: in the east an ibis, in the west a dog-faced baboon, in the north a serpent, and in the south a wolf. All of those animals are familiar in the Egyptian religious bestiary—the wolf is of course a sort of jackal in the same way as the cult-place of Upuaut is called Lykopolis by the Greeks. The deity invoked is itself identified as Hermes, which fits very well with animals such as the ibis and the baboon which are sacred to Thot. In addition, the analogy of Isis is presented, who invoked the god at a time of crisis. Of some interest is a specific section in the spell: “May you save me in eternity from poison and malice and all calumny and evil tongues, from every hatred of gods and men. They shall give me favor and victory and success and prosperity. For you are me and I am you, your name is mine and mine yours, for I am your image. If anything happens to me in this year or this month or this day or this hour, then it will happen to the great god Akhkhemen Estroph whose name is carved on the prow of the sacred ship” (PGM VIII 32–41). This incantation shows close similarities to Egyptian spells, as I have demonstrated elsewhere (Quack 2006a: 61f.). Affirming the fundamental identity of the speaker (or recipient) with the god is quite typical. Again, this is one of the PGM spells with a particularly strong and undiluted Egyptian character. Note that possible actions of antagonists are treated in detail, like in several of the earlier Egyptian cases I have cited.

Quite remarkable also are two spells for the consecration of a ring (PGM XII 201–69 and 270–350). This begins with the fact that although the language of the spells itself is Greek, the actual title, “A ring,” is written in Demotic. One of the consecrations is given the name of Ouphor, and this is likely to be a phonetic rendering of the Egyptian word *wpi.t-r* “opening of the mouth,” a ritual actually used for consecrating objects produced by handcraft, and even attested for a ring-stone with a scarab within the Egyptian documentation (Moyer & Dieleman 2003; Quack 2006b: 144f.). The Egyptian elements in the spells are quite clear, even though some elements of obvious Jewish or Greek derivation are present—it is after all a good example of the intermingling of magical traditions so typical of Roman-period Egypt. Some segments, like an invocation beginning with the phrases “the gates of heaven were opened, the gates of earth were opened” (PGM XII, 323) sound exactly like Egyptian cultic language (Moyer

and Dieleman 2003: 63–66; Dieleman 2005: 175–182) and might even derive from the canonical Egyptian Ritual of Opening the Mouth (Quack 2006b:145). The text certainly cannot simply be cited as an example of a Greek practice similar to an Assyrian one, as claimed by Faraone (1999: 103).

There is one spell for favor (PGM XXXV) that seems to have a mainly Jewish background. None of the mythology is Egyptian, whereas invocations of the god of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are prominent. The charitesion indicated in PGM VII 186–190 is too short and too exclusively focused on the technical side to provide much of interest for my enquiry. For lack of space, I will also refrain from discussing the passages PGM IV 2373–2440; 3125–71 and XII 99–106 which deal mainly with success in business,¹⁶ as well as the truncated and untitled section PGM XII 182–189 which is recognisably a charitesion according to its first sentence.

Faraone had noted that the practice of anointing the face with oil can be paralleled in neo-Assyrian texts, and he produced several texts showing that anointment for similar purposes was known in Greece (Faraone 1999: 105–106). This line of argumentation seems insufficient to me. Obviously, anointing yourself as part of a process aiming at making you attractive—especially if the oil is scented with some plants—is almost a universal practice; at least it is so frequent that no conclusions on ethnic affiliations of magical practices can be drawn from it. Instead, we have to look much more closely at the details of the individual rites, and these are quite telling.

The first spell Faraone cites is a prayer to the sun-god as a charm to restrain anger and for securing favor (PGM XXXVI, 211–230). It contains a phrase, “I ask to obtain and receive from you life, health, reputation, wealth, influence, strength, success, charm, favor with all men and all women, victory over all men and all women.”

In my opinion, the text is difficult to attribute to any specific culture in itself, because it is relatively short and does not contain many elements of clear-cut affiliation, although among the magical names, forms such as Harponkhnouphi and Niptoumi point to Egypt. In any case, it is a shorter example of what is shown in much more detail in

¹⁶ For this, the section about the dendrachate in the orphic kerygmata with an engraving of clear Egyptian origin (Hermes with a book accompanied by a dog-headed ape) should be compared (Halleux and Schamp 1985: 148f.).

the Mimaut papyrus, and thus is unlikely to come from a totally different background. The long sequence of blessings which the practitioner requests sounds quite a bit like a typical Egyptian enumeration beginning with the basic elements *ꜥnh* "life" and *snb* "health."

Even more telling is Faraone's second example. There, ointment of myrrh is used, and the charm is, "You are the myrrh with which Isis has anointed herself when she went to the bosom of Osiris, her own husband and brother, and on that day you gave her charm" (SM 72, 2, 4–8). Faraone admits "the influence of a popular Isis and Osiris legend" but supposes nevertheless simply that this was a Greek technique (Faraone 1999: 105). The papyrus manual from which this text is taken proclaims itself to be a translation of a book found in Heliopolis, written in Egyptian letters and then translated into Greek. With the possible exception of one charm in it concerning the use of apples in love magic,¹⁷ there is nothing in the actual wording of the papyrus which would run counter to a real Egyptian origin.

Regarding the passage about the consecration of magical rings (PGM XII, 270–350), I have already commented on it above. Furthermore, it is problematic to cite the Cyranides concerning magical rings in order to establish an unbroken chain of Greek traditions, as does Faraone. The Cyranides are regarded as a 4th-century Alexandrian composition (Alpers 1984), and they are so much in the tradition of the international Graeco-Roman magic and amulets (Waegeman 1987) that they can hardly be claimed as evidence of undoubtedly Greek traditions.

Rings for gaining friendship, favor and affection are attested in several other treatises on stones and their use in rings. The orphic poem on stones and the kerygmata indicate that the Galaktites should be worn when approaching rulers in order to render them propitious and inclined to forget your faults (Halleux and Schamp 1985: 92 and 147), and Damigeron and Evax also stress their use for making the porter agreeable (ibid. 274). Agate is supposed to be effective for procuring love and rendering people well-inclined in social contacts (ibid. 115 and 163f.). In the book on stones by Socrates and Dionysus, the emerald is said to possess great virtues for currying favor and procuring success. The engraving should be a figure of Isis, which stresses the Egyptian background (ibid. 166). Similar powers are also attributed to the chalcedon (ibid. 167), Babylonian stone (ibid. 168), some sort of

¹⁷ Even for this, pMag. LL. 15, 21–23 provides a parallel in the Egyptian language.

onyx (ibid. 170), opal (ibid. 171), agate (ibid. 172 and 255), sard-agate (ibid. 173), swallow-stones (ibid. 174f.), cock-stone (ibid. 257), stone of the Syrte (ibid. 262), topaz (ibid. 268), chrysolite (ibid. 282). Many more descriptions of the magical properties of stones go at least some way in this direction, multi-purpose use being a characteristic of many of the supposedly more powerful stones. The manuals in question seem to be mainly a product of an international culture of the Roman Imperial period, with at least some admixture of Egyptian elements. One such example occurs in the so-called "Graeco-Judaic decan book" concerning the second decan of Leo, again using agate (Gundel 1936: 388). This text has some Egyptian background in using the astrological concept of the decans, but otherwise is rather international, with the exact origins difficult to pinpoint.

I do not claim any Egyptian influence on the Homeric scene (although I feel equally skeptical about the supposed Mesopotamian influence). Equally, the idea of using spells for currying favor and gaining love and affection is, in itself, certainly too basic and too easily conditioned by the social constraints of many ancient (and modern) cultures to be attributable to any specific culture from which it developed exclusively and was taken over by others. However, the PGM instances can certainly not be read as part of one long and only partially visible Greek tradition; the technique of the charitesion in them clearly follows models present in Egypt, and most of the specific invocations are based more on Egyptian religious concepts than on any others.

In conclusion, Faraone's principal methodological weakness is that he based his conclusions on very broad similarities, often no more than a technique as such, without paying attention to the question whether such a technique was in any way likely to be specific enough for attribution to any single culture. We should recognize that many of the aims in magical spells have their roots in the general cultural structures of traditional societies; for example, wishes for healing are ubiquitous, and charms for favor come up naturally in every society where different rivaling members vie for the attention of the leader. I have tried to indicate how deeply rooted such concerns were within the Egyptian culture, without wishing in any way to imply that it would be the only one to develop such usages, or be predominant in it.

Equally, some of the techniques employed are not very useful as an indicator of the ethnic or cultural origin of a practice. In particular, procedures such as putting on ornaments and embellishments, such as

textile straps, are quite natural ways of promoting attention and desire; and nobody would claim that today's sexy women's underwear derives from Assyrian practices.

Only a really close analysis of each individual text can produce reliable results. For the charitesion, we can at least say that there are good precedents for it in Egyptian texts, and that most of the longer examples from the Roman-period manuals in the Greek language show quite strong signs of Egyptian background.

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