MAGIC AND DIVINATION: TWO APOLLINE ORACLES ON MAGIC

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Introduction

The relationship of magic and divination is a vast topic that has been visited by many scholars over the ages, as has the more specific development that made the two forms of ritual behavior more or less coincide in Christian Late Antiquity, after having been clearly distinct religious phenomena through most of Antiquity. In 1947, Samson Eitrem devoted a seminal book to this topic, identifying the convergence in a pagan desire for personal contact with the divine.[1] Forty-six years and a paradigm-shift later, Marie-Therese Fögen approached it in a very different way, put the blame squarely on the Christians and emphasized the struggle for access to the divine fought by emperors and bishops that led to the disqualification of divination as magic.[2] There is no need to take up this entire and vast topic again; instead, I will take a closer look at two oracles, one well-known, the other one less so, and try to use them as windows into the much wider general topic.[3] The first is an oracle from Clarus given to an unknown town in Western Anatolia and known to us through an inscription found

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[1] Samson Eitrem, *Orakel und Mysterien am Ausgang der Antike*, Albae Vigilae 5 (Zürich: Rhein-Verlag, 1947); he talks about "[das] wachsende Bedürfnis nach persönlichem Kontakt mit der Gottheit" (p. 17). In the meantime, personal religion has been driven out from most of the study of Greek and Roman religion, perhaps unjustly so, although the one monograph—André-Jean Festugière's *Personal Religion Among the Greeks*, Sather Classical Lectures 26 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1944)—certainly shows a Christianocentric understanding of what religion is.

[2] Marie-Therese Fögen, *Die Enteignung der Wahrsager. Studien zum kaiserlichen Wissensmonopol in der Spätantike* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1993). See also Fritz Graf, "Magic and Divination," in David R. Jordan, Hugo Montgomery and Einar Thomassen (eds.), *The World of Ancient Magic, Papers from the First International Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens, 4–8 May 1997*. Papers from the Norwegian Institute at Athens 4 (Bergen: Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1999), 283–298.

[3] See also my Eitrem Lecture of 1997 on "Magic and Divination," *The World of Ancient Magic*.

by the Austrian excavators in Ephesus.[4] The second text comes from Porphyry's *De Philosophia ex Oraculis Haurienda* and is preserved in Eusebius's *Praeparatio Evangelica* (our main source for this treatise of Porphyry), and has been discussed most recently by Aude Busine in her book on Apolline divination in the Imperial Epoch.[5]

Oracle One: Plague and Sorcery in Lydia

The oracle from Ephesus belongs to a well-known series of Clarian oracles advising a specific city on measures against an epidemic that is threatening the city, after its inhabitants sent a delegation to the oracle asking for help. All texts are epigraphical, and they all belong to the second century CE; over the years, I have come to doubt my original assumption that they all dealt with the same event, the Great Plague triggered in 165 CE by the troops of Lucius Verus returning from Mesopotamia.[6] A few years ago, Zsuzsanna Varhélyi discussed them and underscored that the rituals prescribed by the oracle to heal the disease show an intimate knowledge of the local cults of the individual cities. This is an important insight. It helps us to understand how an oracular sanctuary functioned in regional context: we have to imagine mechanisms of communication and information between the Clarian priests and the city and its ambassadors.

The oracle to which I want to return in this paper was given to a town whose name is not preserved; unlike other Clarian texts, it was not inscribed (or not only—but we do not really know) in the town that sent the delegation, but in Ephesus. When I discussed this text after its first publication, I supposed Sardis as the most likely client and addressee, but proof is impossible to gain without new evidence;

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[4] First published by Dieter Knibbe, *Berichte und Materialien des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts* 1 (1991), 14f. (*SEG* 41 no. 481); republished by R. Merkelbach and J. Stauber, *EpAn* 27 (1996), no. 11 and in *SGOst* 1 (1998), no. 03/02/01; see my text and commentary in *ZPE* 92 (1992): 267–278 and Zsuzsana Varhélyi, "Magic, Religion and Syncretism in the Oracle of Claros," in S. R. Asirvatham et al. (eds.), *Between Magic and Religion* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 13–31.

[5] Porph. F 339 Smith = Eus. *PE* 6.3.5; Aude Busine, *Paroles d'Apollon. Pratiques et traditions oraculaires dans l'Antiquité tardive (IIe–VIe siècles)*. Religions in the Graeco Roman World 116 (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

[6] On this event, see Arnaldo Marcone, "La peste antonina. Testimonianze e interpretazioni," *Rivista Storica Italiana* 114 (2002), 803–19. My growing skepticism has been nurtured by J. F. Gilliam, "The Plague under Marcus Aurelius," *American Journal of Philology* 82 (1961): 225–51.

at any rate, the city had close ties to Ephesus and thus was presumably in its proximity. The oracle diagnoses a magical attack as the reason for the disease that plagues the city: an evil sorcerer, as Apollo put it, has hidden wax figurines as carriers of this attack. To counteract its effects, the god prescribes that the citizens should fetch a statue of Artemis from Ephesus, Artemis's main city (hence the Ephesian inscription, as a token of gratitude and religious propaganda). The statue should be golden and carry two burning torches; the city should institute a nocturnal festival in which again torches are vital. The sculpted torches of Artemis and the real ones that her worshippers carry in the ritual will dissolve the instruments of sorcery by melting down the waxen figurines that the evil *magos* has set up (lines 7–9):

> (Artemis) λοίμοιο βροτοφθόρα φάρμακα λύσει
> λαμπάσι πυρσοφόροις νυχίᾳ φλογὶ μάγματα κηροῦ
> τηΐξασα μάγου κακοτήϊα σύμβολα τέχνης.
>
> (Artemis) will dissolve the death-bringing sorcery of the disease, melting with fire-carrying torches in nocturnal flame the forms of wax, the terrible tokens of the sorcerer's craft.

The ritual recalls the many rites in the Babylonian *Maqlû* in which a fire ritual is said to destroy magical figurines. In *Maqlû*, we always deal with accusations of sorcery; the rituals are intended to undo the effects of such an assumed attack. As in many similar cases the world over, there is no need, in the Babylonian context, to reconstruct an actual attack by a sorcerer: the accusation and the ritual it triggers helps to find a way out of a major crisis.[7] I assume that the same is true for our text, and I also assume knowledge of the Mesopotamian technique as a background for the oracular answer. This latter assumption is not easy to prove. The main text of *Maqlû*, after all, comes from Assurbanipal's library and had been written almost a millennium before the Clarian oracle. But copies of the *Maqlû* are still attested in the fourth century BCE, and the tradition of Babylonian exorcists is well attested down into the Seleucid era.[8] It might well have survived considerably

[7] For a modern European example of this mechanism, see Jeanne Favret-Saada, *Les mots, la mort, les sorts. La sorcellerie dans le Bocage* (Paris: Gallimard, 1977) (= *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage*, (tr. by C. Cullen) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980)).

[8] Arthur Ungnad, "Besprechungskunst und Astrologie in Babylon," *Archiv für Orientforschung* 14 (1941/44): 251–282.

later with the "underground" expertise of the itinerant "Chaldaeans," whatever their true nature.[9]

My first assumption—namely, that we deal with an accusation of witchcraft only—is based on the way our text differs from the parallel oracles. All the other oracles share a common structure: before they detail the countermeasures to be taken, they always give the etiology of the disease, either the anger of a divinity or the unmotivated attack of a Plague Demon. From this etiology, they then derive the specific ritual measures that cure the plague: either sacrifices to the angry divinity, or purificatory and apotropaic rituals to drive out the demon. The sorcery oracle, however, does not follow this pattern, but refers to the buried magical figurines in a rather cursory way, as if it were something that the addressees already know. In this case, then, it looks as if the city had not only asked for a cure of the disease, but had also provided a first etiology, attributing the disease to the attack of an unknown sorcerer and his uncanny rites. Again, this falls into a widely attested pattern. In the ancient world, it appears especially in cases of sudden death of infants or young adults; since ordinarily the evildoer remains unknown and unknowable, the texts add a curse to hand over to the gods the punishment of whoever was responsible for the crime.[10]

Given the character of the answer, I see two ways of reconstructing the question. One way is to assume that the client city asked whether the plague resulted from a magical attack (and, presumably, asked for a cure, or implied the cure). A comparable text comes from the Zeus oracle of Dodona, where someone asks:

> ἐπήνεικε φάρμακον | ἐπὶ τὰν γενεὰν τὰν ἐμὰν ἢ ἐπὶ τὰγ γυναῖκα [ἢ ἐ]|π᾽ ἐμὲ παρὰ Λύσωνος·
>
> Did he/she apply a pharmakon against my offspring, my wife or against me, from Lyson?[11]

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[9] A parallel is the survival of Ereshkigal's name (and function) in Egyptian magic of the Imperial age; see *PGM* IV 337, 1417, 2484, 2749, 2913; VII 984; XIXa 7; LXX 5, 9. See Walter Burkert, *The Orientalizing Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), 68.

[10] Material in Fritz Graf, "Fluch und Segen. Ein Grabepigramm und seine Welt," in *Zona Archeologica. Festschrift für Hans-Peter Isler zum 60. Geburtstag* (Bonn: Habelt, 2001), 183–191; id., "Untimely Death, Witchcraft and Divine Vengeance A Reasoned Epigraphical Catalogue," *ZPE* 162 (2008): 139–150.

[11] Anastasios-Ph. Christidis, Sotiris Dakaris, and Ioulia Vokotopoulou, "Magic in the Oracular Tablets from Dodona," in David Jordan, Hugo Montgomery, and Einar Thomassen (eds.), *The World of Ancient Magic. Papers from the First International*

Lyson must be the sorcerer who made the *pharmakon*. The reason for the consultation must be childlessness of the couple: γενεά is both the actual and the potential off-spring, and the latter use has parallels in oracular texts.[12] The client does not ask for a cure, only for a diagnosis: were they the victims of sorcery or not? I assume that the client intended to use the services of a professional exorcist, if the god confirmed his suspicion.

The second way is to assume that the city not only asked for a cure but also for the name of the sorcerer. Revenge for such a deed, after all, is a natural reaction, and the curses against sorcerers and sorceresses in the grave-epigrams prove this: They are cursed because there is no other way to take revenge, since either the law would not help, or the culprit remained unknown. The city might even have offered a name, as someone did also in another lead tablet from Dodona:

> κατεφάρμαξε | Τιμὼι Ἀριστο|βόλαν;
>
> Did Timo bewitch Aristobola?[13]

In a way, asking for a name seems much more likely than just asking for a cure: Why come up with the suspicion of a magical attack and then not ask Apollo to reveal the identity of the sorcerer, or even propose a name for the god to confirm? In our case, however, Apollo remained aloof and did not enter this game: Instead of handing over the decisive information that could easily have led to a witch-trial, he prescribed a very elaborate festival that concerned the entire city. Maybe the god even reckoned that the client city would not be happy with his answer: again somewhat unusually, the last line of the oracle contains a threat (l. 18):

> εἰ δέ τε μὴ τελέοιτε, πυρὸς τότε τείσετε ποινάς.
>
> If you do not perform the rite, you will pay the punishment of the fever/fire.

Samson Eitrem Seminar at the Norwegian Institute at Athens 4–8 May 1997. Papers from the Norwegian Institute at Athens 4 (Bergen: The Norwegian Institute at Athens, 1999), 67–72, esp. p. 68 no. 1. The use of γενεά in this text is reminiscent of the self-curse in oath texts such as is reminiscent of the self-curse in oaths. See *ThesCRA* 3 (2005) 237–246.

[12] E.g. in the Epidaurian miracle inscriptions, *SIG*[3] 1168.11 (4th cent. BCE) or another Dodonaean question, *SIG*[3] 1160 (4th cent. BCE).

[13] Ibid. (note 11), 70, no. 4.

In this reading, then, the oracle and its priests realized the problems to the community that a witchcraft accusation against a specific individual would bring, and they wisely refrained to follow the client's lead. Instead, they chose to unite the citizens not by a trial against an outsider—as happened at about the same time to Apuleius in African Oea—but by instituting a major city festival, performed in honor of Artemis, the Great Goddess of Ephesus as well as of neighboring Sardis. A communal festival, not a witch hunt, was the reaction, and it appears surprisingly wise. In its rejection of connecting a known individual with an accusation of witchcraft, this attitude reminds me of the course the Roman senate took in the case of Germanicus, who died under suspicious circumstances more than a century earlier. Tacitus preserves the grisly details of a binding spell found in Germanicus's living quarters ("human body parts, spells and consecrations with Germanicus's name inscribed in lead tablets"), details that might go back to the memoirs of his daughter Agrippina. The senatorial court, however, who tried Cn. Piso and his wife for this death, did not even consider an accusation of witchcraft, despite the fact that the family even produced the witch, but concentrated on Piso's political and military insubordination.[14] Some epochs and cultures appear to be more resistant to the temptation of a witch hunt than others.

Oracle Two: Good Ritual as Magic

All these oracles, the Clarian one as well as the much earlier texts from Dodona, construct sorcery as something negative, a ritual that was the cause of bad things such as pandemic disease or other afflictions. Magic is something that society rejected, and the craft of the sorcerer manifested itself in μάγου κακοτήϊα σύμβολα, "a sorcerer's terrible tokens."

My second oracle contradicts this. Eusebius cites it from Porphyry's *De Philosophia* in a context where the Christian bishop attacks the pagan philosopher on account of his ideas about fate. Eusebius begins

[14] Tacitus, *Annals* 2.53–61, 69–74; 3.12–19; see Anne-Marie Tupet, "Les pratiques magiques à la mort de Germanicus," *Mélanges Pierre Wuillemier* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), 345–352. On the sorceress Martina who died on her arrival in Brindisi see *Annals* 3.7. The record of the senatorial trial is preserved in an inscription from Spain; see Werner Eck, Antonio Caballos and Fernando Fernández (eds.), *Das Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre*. Vestigia 48 (Munich: Beck, 1996).

his discussion with a polemical remark against Porphyry: "See by what means this author […] says that the doctrines of fate are dissolved." Then, he directly cites him:[15]

> When a certain man prayed that he might be visited by a god, the god (ὁ θεός) said that he was unfit because he was bound down (καταδεδέσθαι) by nature, and on this account suggested certain expiatory sacrifices (ἀποτροπαισμούς), and added:
>
> ῥιπῆι δαιμονίηι γὰρ ἅλις ἐπιδέδρομεν ἀλκης
> σαῖσι γοναῖς ἃς χρὴ σε φυγεῖν τοίαισι μαγείαις.
>
> With a blast of daemon power, force has overrun
> the fortunes of thy race,
> which thou must escape by magical rites such as these.
>
> Hereby it is clearly shown that the use of magic in loosening the bonds of fate was a gift from the gods, in order to avert it by any means.

In his polemical search for internal contradictions in pagan divination, Eusebius adds the sarcastic remark that the god would have better used magic himself to prevent his own temple from burning down. This refers to a long oracle given to the Athenians on the final cataclysm of the world in fire that Eusebius had cited at length in the previous chapter.

I am not very interested in what Eusebius does with this text in his attack on pagan divination—except that his commentary guarantees that we deal with an oracle of Apollo; with Aude Busine, I would also think that we are dealing not with a free-floating text, but with an oracle issued from a major oracular shrine, although we cannot know whether it is Didyma, Clarus, or even Delphi. Eusebius got all his information from Porphyry: there is no reason, then, not to take literally Porphyry's attribution of the text to ὁ θεός, although not necessarily to the same oracular shrine as the preceding oracle (which I am tempted to attribute to Delphi, on the force of the address to Athens.)[16] Nor am I interested here in Porphyry's reasons for citing this text. It is obvious that these reasons are different from Eusebius's and concern Porphyry's struggle with the concept of μαγεία on the one hand, and

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[15] Euseb. *PE* 6,3 (English after E. H. Gifford, 1903) = Porph. F 339 Smith (I follow Smith's version of the oracular text).

[16] The oracle is neither cited in H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1956) nor in Joseph Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle. Its Responses and Operations* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978).

his intention in *De Philosophia* to claim divine origin and revelation for pagan religion and ritual on the other hand, as a reaction to Christian claims and attacks. He used this oracle to prove that magical rites are god-given and thus should not be rejected. Recently, Aude Busine said what needed to be said on this issue;[17] I am more interested in the original oracle of which Porphyry gives us a summary and, presumably, the final two hexameters.

The question addressed to Apollo concerned divination itself, specifically the experience of spirit-possession associated with Apolline and other divination, where the god was thought to descend to the person asking for him, such as the Pythia.[18] The god explained that a person asking for such an epiphany was too involved with the material world, so that he was unable to open up to the divine and receive the divinity in himself. The direct citation clarifies that this inability was presented as a basic human condition, not as the problem of one specific individual, polluted for whatever reason. But there were rites that were able to heal this condition and to remove humans from their closeness to matter. Porphyry called these rites "expiatory or apotropaeic sacrifices" (ἀποτροπαϊσμούς), Apollo μαγεῖαι, in a rare plural.

Hans Lewy understood the text as a Chaldaean oracle;[19] in their respective editions, neither des Places nor Majercik have followed him.[20] Lewy based his attribution on the parallels with clearly attributed Chaldaean texts; he found the command to free oneself from the bonds of nature in another oracle, the connection of the material world with demons in a third one. The positive connotation of μαγεία would, of course, fit a context in which magic is more nobly called theurgy.[21] The problem, however, is Porphyry's attribution of the text to Apollo: Lewy utterly disregards this. If we take Porphyry seriously, however, things get more exciting.

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[17] Busine 2005, 212f., 268f.

[18] See Lisa Maurizio, "Anthropology and Spirit Possession. A Reconsideration of the Pythia's Role at Delphi," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 115 (1995): 69–86.

[19] Hans Lewy, *Chaldaean Oracles and Theurgy. Mysticism, Magic and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire*, 2nd ed., Michel Tardieu (ed.), (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1978) (orig. Cairo, 1956), 53–55.

[20] Édouard des Places, *Oracles chaldaïques* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 1971); Ruth D. Majercik, *The Chaldaen Oracles. Text, Translation, Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1989).

[21] On the semantics of magia and theurgia see below, note 34ff.

The oracle attributes the fact that humans cling too closely to matter to a demoniac attack. Porphyry calls the rituals that should free humans from such an attack "apotropaeic"; if we can once again take this literally, we are not dealing with purification rites for the soul but with rites that are destined to fend off a superhuman agent, which agrees with the preserved text. This fits the cosmology of the Chaldaean Oracles, as Lewy has pointed out: it is the demons that pull the human soul towards nature (φύσις);[22] nature is identified with destiny;[23] ritual frees the soul from this bond.[24] "They (the theurgists) drive out and root out any evil spirit; they purify from every evil and passion; they achieve participation with the pure in pure places," says Jamblichus.[25] Proclus calls the telestic rites μαγεῖαι, with the same rare plural.[26]

Thus Lewy seems to be correct, compared with the more recent editors. There are, however, two things that make me pause. One is the clear origin of our text: it is an oracle of Apollo, not of Hecate, as at least the clearly attributed Chaldaean Oracles are; this is the reason Busine rejected Lewy's attribution. But this might be a too simplistic and uniform view of what the corpus of *Chaldaean Oracles* contained; it need not be only oracles of Hecate. The other, more important difference is that we are not dealing with the middle-Platonic ascent of the soul from its place in matter toward the divine realm from where it originated; instead, we are dealing with the descent of "the god" into a human being. The two differences are intertwined. The descent of a god is a clear model of Apolline inspiration, as for example described in a rather graphic passage in Virgil's *Aeneid* for the Cumaean Sibyl,[27] or as presupposed (although rarely stated) for the Pythia in Delphi.[28] More to the point, such a model is the only one possible for an institutional oracle where the inspired (or possessed) medium does not show any sign that her soul is traveling upward to meet her god "up there," as happens in theurgy or in divinatory rites in the Magical

[22] See e.g. Majercik, *Or. Chald.* 89.
[23] Ibid., Majercik, 102 and 103.
[24] Ibid., Majercik, 110 (Proclus's commentary; he calls them τελεστικὰ ἔργα).
[25] Iamb. *Myst.* 3.31.
[26] Proclus talks of οἱ ἐπὶ μαγειῶν πατέρες, the divine overseers of the theurgic rites, in his introduction to *Or. Chald.* 78.
[27] Virg. *Aen.* 6.77–79.
[28] Theological reasoning, however, objected to such a crude view of Delphic prophecy. See Plut. *De def.* 9, 414 DE; its root is Platonic, *Symp.* 203A, see the commentary of Andrea Rescigno (ed.), *Plutarco. L'Eclissi degli Oracoli* (Naples: D'Aurio, 1995), 291, n. 80.

Papyri.[29] As in any other temple ritual in Greece and elsewhere, it is the god who arrives from "out (and up) there." Another oracle in Porphyry, once again coming from Apollo, describes this as "the flux of Phoebean radiance from above" that, "enchanted through song (Apolline μολπαί) and ineffable words, […] falls down on the head of the faultless medium (literally 'receptacle', δοχεύς),"[30] enters her body and "brings forth from the mortal instrument a friendly voice." In other words: Apolline song, dance and prayer make the god arrive and speak through the body of the divinatory medium.

Rather than arguing, with Lewy, for the narrow Chaldaean origin of these texts, I would take them as an indication that in later Antiquity there was no clear demarcation line between what one could call general theurgy and institutional divination: they overlapped or even coincided regarding cosmology, anthropology and the resulting interpretation of their respective ritual actions. Thus it is possible that an individual who had not succeeded to connect with a divinatory deity asked Apollo for advice, and he received the advice couched in a terminology that was very close to that which we find in the Chaldaean Oracles.

The use of μαγεῖα in the sense of "apotropaeic rites" invites a final comment; in the end, this will clarify better how institutional oracles and theurgy could come together. Μάγος, as we all know, always had two connotations in its Greek usage, due to the very history of the term: the religious specialist of the Persians, the *magu*š; and by extension of the term the Greeks had learned from the Persian occupiers of Western Asia Minor, the despised and distrusted religious quack of the Greeks.[31] The two uses, the ethnographical and the polemical, always

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[29] I am referring especially to PGM IV475–819, the so-called Mithras Liturgy; see Hans Dieter Betz, *The "Mithras Liturgy". Text, Translation, and Commentary*, Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum 18 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003).

[30] The term reappears in Majercik, *Or. Chald*., 211 who places it, with Dodds and Des Places, among the doubtful texts.

[31] On the early history of the terminology, see my *Magic in the Ancient World* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1997), 20-27 and especially Marcello Carastro, *La cité des mages. Penser la magie en Grèce ancienne* (Grenoble: Millon, 2006); Jan N. Bremmer, "The Birth of the Term Magic," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 126 (1999): 1–12; and in Jan N. Bremmer and Jan R. Veenstra (eds.), *The Metamorphosis of Magic from Late Antiquity to the Early Modern Period*, Groningen Studies in Cultural Change 1 (Leuven: Peeters, 2002) 1–11 contradicts me, but our arguments are not mutually exclusive. It should also be noted that the term was used negatively already in ancient Iran, see my *Magic in the Graeco-Roman World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 21.

coexisted, but the polemical term expanded so quickly and became so ubiquitous that it became necessary to point out the positive Persian usage already in Hellenistic times.[32] Still, the Persian μάγοι remained guardians of alien wisdom throughout Antiquity; only the Philostratean Apollonius of Tyana is somewhat less impressed by them.[33]

At some point in later Antiquity, this led to a non-ethnographic usage that still remained positive; we see it in a list of definitions that distinguish, among other things, between γοητεία and μαγεία. This list is attested rather late, in a Byzantine commentary on the hymns of Gregory of Nyssa by the eighth-century bishop Cosmas of Jerusalem. Cosmas makes differentiations according to demonology and purpose:[34]

> διαφέρει δὲ ***μαγεία γοητείας***· ἡ μὲν ***μαγεία*** ἐπίκλησίς ἐστι δαιμόνων ἀγαθοποιῶν πρὸς ἀγαθοῦ τινος σύστασιν, ὥσπερ τὰ τοῦ Ἀπολλωνίου τοῦ Τυανέως θεσπίσματα δι' ἀγαθῶν γεγόνασι· ***γοητεία*** δὲ ἐστιν ἐπίκλησις δαιμόνων κακοποιῶν περὶ τοὺς τάφους εἱλουμένων ἐπὶ κακοῦ τινος σύστασιν (γοητεία δὲ ἤκουσεν ἀπὸ τῶν γόων καὶ τῶν θρήνων τῶν περὶ τοὺς τάφους γινομένων)· φαρμακεία δὲ ὅταν διά τινος σκευασίας θανατοφόρου πρὸς φίλτρον δοθῆι τινι διὰ στόματος.
>
> Magic is different from sorcery: magic is the invocation of beneficent demons to achieve some good thing (as the oracular sayings of Apollonius of Tyana served a good purpose); sorcery is the invocation of maleficent demons for some bad purpose. These demons dwell around graves, and the term γοητεία is derived from dirges and laments around the graves.

He then adds a definition of a third term, φαρμακεία, "poisoning," that does not refer to any supernatural action but to ingestion of a powerful and harmful substance.

The definition of μαγεία is rather unorthodox coming from a bishop, and his reference to Apollonius of Tyana might explain its main thrust: Byzantines, after all, used talismans made by Apollonius to keep away

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[32] Ps.-Aristotle, *Magika* frg. 36 Rose, sometimes ascribed to the Peripatetic Antisthenes of Rhodes.

[33] Philostrat. *VAp* 1.26; Philostratus takes a somewhat playful stance against what must have been the communis opinio among his cultured audience, see for example Dio Chrysost. *Or.* 36.40 on Zoroaster; Porphyry, *Abst.* 4.16 on magi and abstinence, or *VPyth* 6 on Pythagoras and the magi.

[34] Cosmas, *Ad carmina S. Gregorii* 64 (*Patrologia Graeca* 36, 1024A); the same definitions are varied in Georg. Monach. *Chron.* 1.74.10–20 de Boor = Suid. *s.v.* γοητεία (γ 365); the final definition of φαρμακεία is also in Georg. Monach. *Chron.* 1.74.18 de Boor = Suid. s.v. φαρμακεία (φ 100).

insects and other pests.[35] The reference to oracles, however, connects it closely with our context, the use of μαγεία in order to contact the divine, except that Cosmas subscribes to the much more widespread theory that divination is not the work of gods but of demons, an idea that in a Christian context is most prominently, but by no means for the first time, expressed in Augustine's *De divinatione daemonum*.

Cosmas's positive definition, in the long run, must come from pagan tradition; it is too idiosyncratic in a Byzantine context, although it was popular enough, at least among learned monks, to end up in the Lexicon Suda.[36] In polemical rejection, a similar list appears already in Augustine. He refers to people who make differences between *goetia*, *magia*, and *theurgia*, in order to ennoble theurgy. Augustine contrasts biblical miracles and magic:[37]

> Fiebant autem simplici fide atque fiducia pietatis, non incantationibus et carminibus nefariae curiositatis arte compositis, quam uel ***magian*** uel detestabiliore nomine ***goetian*** uel honorabiliore ***theurgian*** uocant, qui quasi conantur ista discernere et inlicitis artibus deditos alios damnabiles, quos et maleficos uulgus appellat (hos enim ad ***goetian*** pertinere dicunt), alios autem laudabiles uideri uolunt, quibus theurgian deputant; cum sint utrique ritibus fallacibus daemonum obstricti sub nominibus angelorum.
>
> These [miracles] happened through straightforward belief and trust in piety, not through spells and chants made up by science based on impious curiosity. The people who try to make distinctions call it magic or in the more contemptible name, sorcery, or in a more reputable name, theurgy. They intend to make more contemptible those persons who are dedicated to the forbidden arts, telling us that they are occupied with sorcery (ordinary folks call them wizards), whereas others seem more commendable to whom they attribute theurgy. But both groups are involved in fallacious rites of demons that hide under the name of angels.

Magia, for Augustine, is a generic term of which *goetia* and *theurgia* are speficic subcategories, one bad and one good. His overall target is not magic but theurgy and its proponent, Porphyry, "who promises a sort of purification of the soul through theurgy." Given the

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[35] W. L. Dulière, "Protection permanente contre des animaux nuisibles assurée par Apollonius de Tyana dans Byzance et Antioche. Evolution de son mythe," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 63 (1970): 247–277.

[36] It is not surprising that a later writer implicitly rejected this widespread definition; see Nikephoras Gregoras, *Schol. in Synesii De insomniis* (*Patrologia Graeca* 36, 1021B).

[37] Augustine, *CD* 10.9, compare 10.

importance of theurgy in this context and the fact that the definitions concern Greek and not Latin terms, and finally given the interest Porphyry has in theurgy, it seems likely that Augustine derived the entire system of differentiations from him, although he attributes it to an anonymous group ("people who try to make distinctions") that makes it clear that in Augustine's time the distinctions were rather common. Porphyry in turn might have used older definitions that made a distinction between bad γοητεία and good μαγεία, adding theurgy to it; Cosmas of Jerusalem then draws not on Porphyry, but on the same general background, as does the oracle used by Porphyry.

This background is much older, as the Derveni Papyrus has recently demonstrated. The overall argument of this text (that in all likelihood was composed before the end of the fifth century BCE) is still being debated; but it might be safe to say that it is a theological treatise of some sort.[38] At the beginning of the preserved text, its unknown author talks, among other things, about *daimones* and souls. The relationship between them is not well understood, due to the fragmentary nature of the papyrus roll: they are either the same, souls of the deceased, or play a comparable role. In the sixth preserved column, the author begins to discuss the function which the rites of the *magoi* play to keep away *daimones* that hinder the contact between humans and gods:[39]

> εὐ]χαὶ καὶ θυσίαι μ[ειλ]ίσσουσι τὰ[ς ψυχάς·] | ἐπ[ωιδὴ δ]ὲ μάγων δύναται δαίμονας ἐμ[ποδὼν] γι[νομένο]υς μεθιστάναι· δαίμονες ἐμπο [δὼν εἰσὶ] | ψ[υχαὶ τιμω]ροί. τὴν θυσίαν τούτου ἕνεκεμ π[οιοῦσ]ιν ||[5] οἱ μά[γο]ι, ὡσπερεὶ ποινὴν ἀποδιδόντες.
>
> Prayers and sacrifices appease the souls, and the incantation of the magi is able to remove the *daimones* when they impede. Impeding *daimones* are avenging souls. This is why the magi perform the sacrifice, as if paying a penalty.

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[38] See Gábor Betegh, *The Derveni Papyrus. Cosmology, Theology and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); see also Richard Janko, "The Derveni Papyrus. An Interim Text," *Zeitschrift Für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 141 (2002): 1–53; id., "The Derveni Papyrus (Diagoras of Melos, Apopyrgizontes Logoi?): A New Translation," *Classical Philology* 96 (2001): 1–32.

[39] *P. Derv.* col. VI 1–5. See now Th. Kouremenos et al. (eds.), *The Derveni Papyrus*, (Florence: Olscki, 2006). The key supplement, 3 δαίμονες ἐμπο[δὼν ὄντες εἰσὶ] | ψ[υχαὶ τιμω]ροι, is only one among several possibilities. See Walter Burkert, *Babylon, Memphis, Persepolis. Eastern Contexts of Greek Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 118–121; Sarah Iles Johnston, *Restless Dead. Encounters Between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 273–279.

He then describes some of the rites (libations of milk and water, and cakes) and compares the rites of the magi with those of the initiates (μύσται, VI 8): initiates too desire direct contact with their divinity or divinities.

The situation is close to what the oracle describes. Humans want to enter into direct contact with a divinity, for divination in the oracle, initiation in Derveni, but they are hindered by *daimones*. Special rituals, performed by *magi* and therefore called μαγεῖαι, remove this hindrance and make the contact possible. One difference is that in the oracle the hindrance results from human attachment to matter, in good Platonic tradition, whereas the Derveni Papyrus shows no trace of Platonism or a comparable cosmology or anthropology. We do not know why the *daimones* in the Derveni text intervene as an obstacle, and the respective sentence is heavily restored. Betegh's restoration that I have printed above—the *daimones* are "avenging souls," ψ[υχαὶ τιμω]ροί—assumes that they bear a grudge against humans; this is more likely due to individual behavior than to a common human nature. Another restoration, however, makes them into ψ[υχῶν ἐχθρ]ροί, which sounds more general but even more enigmatic.[40] But in both cases the rituals can be described as apotropaeic, ἀποτροπαισμοί, placating and thus removing the *daimones*. Another difference is that the Derveni text leaves open the question (at least for us) who the μάγοι are: are we dealing with a Greek interpretation of a regular Persian sacrifice, or with a Greek rite? Given the semantics of μάγοι and the apparent seriousness of the text, some scholars have argued for the "ethnographic" meaning.[41] But if this should be the case, the author nevertheless explains a Persian rite—sacrifice with prayer, that is bloodless libations and an incantation—not in Persian terms, but in the Greek cosmological categories of *daimones* moving between humans and gods;[42] and although Herodotus describes what the magos does during a regular Persian sacrifice as "chanting" (ἐπαείδει), he also insists on the bloody character of these sacrifices; there is no place for water, milk and the "many-knobbed sacrificial cakes," πολυόμφαλα πόπανα of the Derveni text.[43] Thus it might be easier to follow Johnston's and Betegh's suggestion that μάγος is a

[40] The restoration is Tsantsanoglou's.

[41] See the discussion in Betegh, 78–80; to his short doxography, add Johnston 1999 who, unlike Burkert or Tsantsanoglou, like Betegh understood them as Greek religious specialists.

[42] The definition of certain demons as "helpers of the god" is found in col. III 7.

[43] Hdt. 1.132.

self-description of the author who in col. V had described himself as a religious specialist dealing with divination, against Tsantsanoglou and Burkert who follow the ethnographical reading. This then would move this text even closer to the much later oracle.

But it also can help to explain the persistence of similar ideas through more than half a millennium of Greek religion, from the late fifth century BCE to the second or third century CE, and give more contours to the general tradition behind this persistence. Religious specialists share traditions and knowledge in a transmission that can span centuries and surfaces only occasionally, when it makes a chance appearance in a preserved text. The Greek Magical Papyri preserve the name Ereshkigal more than a millennium after its last attestation in Mesopotamia; the corpus of Orphic gold tablets contains a text from second-century CE Rome that has its only parallels in three texts from a fourth-century BCE tumulus in Southern Italian Thurii, about half a millennium earlier. In both cases, we have to assume not only a tradition of ritual texts, but also a line of ritual specialists to preserve such lore.[44] As in the first oracle with its knowledge of the *Maqlû*, here too the oracular shrine tapped into an otherwise hidden source of esoteric religious knowledge.

Conclusion

The first of my two texts has used μάγος in a negative sense, in the second μαγεῖαι are positive ritual acts. Although the second text might be younger than my first, albeit by a century at most, we cannot understand this difference in terms of development: if anything, the Derveni text shows that the positive meaning is as old as the negative one. What counts is function—to use the demons against a city in the first text is evil, to keep away the demons from a human being in the second is beneficial; but both are μαγεῖα. Divination in turn is not μαγεῖα, but it can talk about it; already in the Derveni text, divination, sacrifices and prayers are different areas of expertise, even when handled by the same specialist. Only when divination is read in terms of demonology, as in mainstream Christian discourse, do divination and magic converge.

[44] On Ereshkigal above, note 9; the Orphic texts are Bernabé's frgs. 488–490 (Thurii, 4th cent. BCE) and 491 (Rome, 2nd cent. CE).