COLOGNE COPTIC MAGICAL TEXTS: SOME NOTES AND CORRECTIONS

Among several commendable projects which have been announced lately in the field of Coptic studies, that of a comprehensive edition of the rich collection of Coptic magical papyri in the Papyrussammlung of Cologne University certainly ranks among the most promising.1 Awaiting the appearance of this publication, we have to satisfy ourselves, for the time being, with such editions of individual pieces as are available. Since interest in Coptic magic is booming, I venture to present here my notes on four of these previously edited texts from Cologne. The following remarks merely propose some new readings and translations. They are neither exhaustive nor final, and do not pretend to supply a full commentary or an entirely new text. They are, moreover, exclusively based upon the published photographs, not upon personal inspection of the original manuscripts.

The following texts will be discussed: Inv. T 10 (a curse); Inv. 1470 (a love spell); Inv. 10235 (a spell for gaining influence), and Inv. 20826 (a spell for protection). A fifth Coptic spell from Cologne, Inv. 1471 (Pap. Colon. copt. 3 = P. Köln aegypt. 10), does not call for comment.

I. Cologne, Papyrussammlung, Inv. T 10 (P. Köln aegypt. 11)


The observations of the reviewers will not be reproduced here. I merely add two of my own:

1. l. 16 end – 17: the text as it stands is muddled and grammatically incorrect (cf. Tait, loc. cit.). Read:
   
   ![Image]

   “Take away his <noun, fem. sing.>, eat his flesh, drink his blood!”

2. l. 19: instead of ΝΟΥΟΗ read ΝΟΥΟΗΠ, “quickly”, as in ll. 27 and 34.

II. Cologne, Papyrussammlung, Inv. 1470


1. l. 4: ΝΓΜΟΥ, read: ΝΓΜΟΥ (Browne; cf. Emmel, op. cit., p. 345, n. 6).

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1 See C. Römer & H. J. Thissen, ZPE 84 (1990), p. 175.
l. 7: read ΦΗΝ <ΟΥ>ΟΥΩΩ ΩΟΥΑΛΩΤ; for parallel phrases, see e.g. BM Or. 10376, l. 13 (ed. W. E. Crum, JEA 20 [1934], p. 52), another love spell3.

The entire passage (ll. 5 end – 7) should be translated: “as soon as I will throw them (i.e. the ingredients mentioned before) into the water, and the race of Adam and [all] the children of Zoë (Eve) drink thereof, they desire me with desire and with love love me”4.

l. 8 is fairly garbled, but well understandable; read: ΕΝΙΜΕΤΕΝΟΥΣΕ ΝΕΥΝΟΥ (etc.); translate: “they crave for me during the twelve hours of the day and the twelve (hours) of the night”; there is no question of “virgins” here nor of dittography (as suggested by the editor, p. 117, n. 15).

ll. 8 end – 9: translate: “like a [kind of animal?] longing for water”; one is tempted to find an echo of Ps 42 (41): 2 and fill the gap thus: ΝΟΗ [ΝΟΥ]ΟΥΛ, “like a deer”, but this particular image may be too pious for the given context5.

l. 9: a second a omitted by the ed.

ll. 10–11: translate: “every(-body?) who will drink from this water desires me like the sun, [loves me] like the moon, glorifies me like an angel of God”. For parallels, see BM Or. 10414-ro, ll. 9–10 (ed. Crum, JEA 20 [1934], p. 195: sun and moon); BM Or. 10376, ll. 14–15 & 22 (ibid., p. 52: angel of God; Crum refers to Gal 4: 14). What precedes ΝΙΜ remains obscure to me: viderunt sapientiores!

l. 13: the editor’s interpretation of ΦΗΠΟΤΙΚΟΜΕ gives no sense; cf. my note in Aegyptus 71 (1991), p. 222, n. 22. Translate: “they [will be subjected] to me by the fetter of the heavenly ones through which ([Ν]ΗΠΗΣΟ) they (i.e. the latter) are subjected to the Father [. . .]”.

III. Cologne, Papyrussammlung, Inv. 10235


Although this interesting spell has been competently edited, Weber’s reconstruction of the badly damaged opening lines (ll. 1–9) can be improved. The spell invokes an anonymous power, who in ll. 1–5 is characterized as particularly formidable by a series of more or less conventional epithets; in ll. 5–9, he is invited to appear to the magician, together with his two “decans”, Archôn and Lamei6; in l. 10 ss., the magician formulates his wishes.

As Weber correctly saw, the demon in question is invoked as ΚΤΩΡΠΕΙΟΜ “[a strong one] in his power” (ll. 0–1)7. This epithet is expanded by a double series of “invocatory” relative clauses (l. 1: ΠΕΝΙΛΑ[η...] l. 4: ΠΕΝΙΠΕ [………………………………………]);

the first one describes some of the power’s superhuman feats; the second, his superhuman stature. Unfortunately, the greater part of l. 3 cannot be read from the plates nor can Weber’s tentative reconstruction be accepted. I propose the following readings:

l. 3 end: Ε[Β]ΟΛ [ΜΠΝ]ΟΕ ΕΤΗΒΕ (the lacuna leaves room for a preposition preceding [ΜΠΝ]ΟΕ). 


6 For names and terms involved, see the references in Van der Vliet, “Satan’s fall”, p. 415, n. 72.

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ll. 7–8: nγούen≈k nai eβο[λ ταναγ εροκ n[σο / μν] 2ο : nγώαξε nàμαι ιταπφ[ο 2ι ταπφο

Translate: “[I invoke you today, NN, a strong one] in his power! He who [. . .] / [of?] iron he dissolved9 [. . . / . . .] the great finger / of his right hand! He whose [head] is in heaven, [whose foot] / in the earth!10 I invoke you today, in order that / you shall come to me in this place wherein I am for you / and that you shall reveal yourself to me and [that I shall see you], face / [to] face, and that you shall speak with me, mouth to mouth11, / together with your two decans, namely Archôn and Lamei, and that you shall bring me . . . (etc., etc.).”

IV. Cologne, Papyrussammlung, Inv. 20826

This spell for protection was edited by C. Römer & H. J. Thissen, in ZPE 84 (1990), pp. 175–181, pl. VIII. An English translation by M. Meyer can be found in Meyer & Smith, Christian Magic, pp. 110–11, with a note at p. 362.

ll. 3–5: from εκε† onwards, these lines (a prayer over honey) contain several problems which the editors did not solve satisfactorily.

First, the word which they read as ετηπΗΤ (l. 3) looks rather like ετηπΗΤ, ετηπΗΤ, or the like (the editors’ interpretation, p. 179, is highly improbable); -ΠΗΤ seems quite certain, the two preceding letters less so. With some hesitation, I propose to read εκεΠΗΤ, admitting that the ensuing construction (a circumstantial clause which separates the main verb, -†, from its object, the “twelve powers” of l. 4), is not conspicuously elegant. An alternative interpretation would be to take the word as a scribal slip for επεχΠΗΤ, and translate “you shall bring down upon it . . .”.

Secondly, the editors’ interpretation of ΜΠΕΛ as a writing of ΠΕΛΗΕ is unacceptable: the element ΛΗ must be (and actually is) an orthographic variant of the feminine demonstrative pronoun (or, article) †-12.

The latter, undubitable reading strands us at a meaningless element ΜΠΕ at the end of l. 3. The most economical solution would perhaps be to suppose that our scribe, in introducing the object of the verb †, choose the wrong gender, corrected masc. ΠΕ- into fem. ΛΗ-, but did not bother to write the object marker (Μ-) again. Less economical, but preferable from the point of view of literary structure and coherence, is the assumption that a masculine noun on a par with -ΗΟΣ (l. 4) and governing ΛΗΜΗΣΘΝΩΤΥΣ Ν ΛΗΕΝΑΜΙ has been omitted after ΜΠΕ-. This assumption is strongly recommended by the imperfect matching of ΠΕ- (article) and ΛΗ- (demonstrative) and by the group ΛΗΩ ΠΕΥΡΗΞΗ / ΛΗ (ll. 4–5), where ΛΗ = ΟΝ, “again, also”, with its suggestion of symmetry.

8 Although a bit long for a mere point, the last sign is certainly too short for I.

9 Possibly, “[the door of] iron”: cf. Weber’s remarks, p. 59. Obviously, this phrase is part of a conventional series of mighty feats which the Coptic magicians ascribe to the supernatural powers they invoke; such series usually include “dissolving iron”, “splitting rocks”, etc., and frequently contain descensus-motifs; for characteristic examples, see Michigan 1190-ro, col. I, ll. 1–11 (ed. W. H. Worrell, Or 4 [1935], p. 6) and Berlin P. 8314 (see the forthcoming re-edition by S. Richter and G. Wurst). Ideally, the phrase mentioning “the great finger of his right hand” should fit into the same context.


11 Cf. ed. Weber, pp. 59–60. For almost identical phrases in a similar, though literary, context (“Offenbarungszuhauber”), cf. Confessio Cypriani, copitc: Άξιον επιλεξώκμε ιερό πο πορονθέωρυμε ηςίν ον ηςίν πορονθέωρυμε άξιον. Άριτμή μεμονιταπφο ρω ταπφο αλάξωξε έμμιαλα, “I saw the devil face to face and through offerings caused him to reveal himself to me . . . I kissed him mouth to mouth and he spoke with me” (ed. Von Lemm, p. 11).

I propose to read the entire passage thus:

\[ \text{εκε} \text{ι} \text{ ε} \text{φα} \text{ι} \text{ ε} \text{κ} \text{λ} \text{λ} \text{θ} \text{ Π} \text{πιεε} \text{ιω} \text{ω} \text{ \ eκε} \text{ι} \text{ ε} \text{κΠ} \text{Πινε} \text{ ε} \text{ρο} \text{ι} \text{ ΜΠε<...... Ν><} \text{διμηντηονους} \text{ Ν' Α' ένα'μικ·} \text{ λυω} \text{ Πεγιωος} / \text{ λν} \]

I translate: “you shall come down upon this honey; rushing towards it, you shall give the <noun, masc. sing., of> these twelve powers and their sweetness as well!” Although slightly hypothetical, the present translation has the merit of best fitting the conventional character of this passage as a “magical epiclesis”.

- l. 14: translate: “its light, which came down upon me!” (the verb is \iota\, “to come”, not \epsilon\).
- ll. 20–22: translate: “you shall give me the sun as a garment, the moon that I cover myself with it as a cloak” (no relative clause here, but a conjunctive, 1st sing.).
- l. 24, beginning: ms. has \textit{eκε} \textit{τι}.
- l. 25: \textit{Ππεορε}, with Meyer, p. 111: “the stuff”.
- l. 26: ms. has clearly \textit{πινουτε}.

verso, l. 1: read: \textit{<Μ>\Piκ<ς>\E0ογ} \textit{ΜΠε}, “you shall give me the glory of the sun too . . .” (this sentence is the last of a series of parallel phrases, featuring i. a. “the boat of the sun” and “the stuff of the stars”).

- l. 6: the obliterated names can still be read with reasonable certainty as: \textit{CHT} \textit{ιωT} \textit{ΒδΡιθ}.

Finally, one is astonished to read that the editors believe the language of this spell to be a “Mischdialekt” with distinct Bohairic elements (p. 175). In fact, we are dealing with a common kind of non-literary Sahidic, exposed to occasional extraneous (Middle Egyptian or Fayyumic) pressure on the vowel-system (characteristic examples in this text: \textit{λν}, \textit{σπς}, \textit{Σλι}, \textit{κεν}, \textit{Ρε}, \textit{ΣΗ} and, once only, \textit{ςνοπι})\textsuperscript{13}. I am unable to detect any Bohairic here.

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\textsuperscript{13} The classic reference remains: Kahle, \textit{Bala'izah}, vol. 1, pp. 48–192, ch. VIII (“Dialectical variations in Sahidic non-literary texts”).