

Ian MOYER

Miniaturization and the Opening of the Mouth in a Greek Magical Text (*PGM* XII.270–350).

Among the heterogeneous rituals preserved in the magical papyri is a Greek text (*PGM* XII.270-350) giving instructions for the creation of a magical ring engraved with an image of Helios. The content and structure of the ritual provide insight into the way a practitioner went about composing rituals suitable for the magico-religious praxis represented by the Greek magical papyri. The rite for creating the ring falls into two parts: a general consecration of the divine image, and a second ritual invocation used whenever the practitioner wished to command the god to accomplish something for him. The second of these operations, called the "Ouphôr," is especially significant. M. Smith (in Betz 1992) misleadingly translated the spell as though Ouphôr were the name of an otherwise unknown divinity, and supplemented the text accordingly, though the unmodified text of Preisendanz (1974) clearly shows that the name refers to the ritual. Egyptologists, moreover, have identified *Ouphôr* as a Greek transcription of the Egyptian *wp.t-r3*, "Opening of the Mouth" (e.g. Thissen 1991). The "Opening of the Mouth" was a ritual used in Egyptian temples as late as the Graeco-Roman period (e.g. at Edfu and Dendara) in order to vivify divine images when making them, or to awaken them as part of the daily temple liturgy. The latter function of the *wp.t-r3*, accords well with the intended use of the *Ouphôr*-ritual. The *Ouphôr* is, in fact, a small-scale version of the temple-based ritual adapted to the demands of Late Antique ritual specialists. As J.Z. Smith has shown with regard to sacrifice, the "miniaturization" of ritual as it is transferred from the temple to the domestic context or to the repertoire of a mobile professional is one of the most striking features of the Greek magical papyri. The nature of this miniaturization process, not only in sacrificial ritual but also in rites such as the Ouphor, reveals both the creative adaptation of traditional religious practice and the meta-ritual qualities of these texts (J.Z. Smith 1995).

In the first case, the use of a miniaturized Opening of the Mouth in order to summon the power of the divinity shows that the practitioner understood the small carved figure of Helios as parallel to a traditional cult image. The ring functioned as a miniature statue of the sun god, no longer situated in the temple, but portable and always available to the itinerant practitioner. In traditional Egyptian cult, direct access to the divine image was normally limited to priests who carried out daily liturgies within the sacred precincts of the temple, and presided over festivals in which the god went forth from his abode. By constructing a personal divine image and offering it worship and hymns, the practitioner assumed the functions and prerogatives of an Egyptian priest, and the special relationship to the divine inherent in that status. The ritual described in the *PGM* text thus transforms key elements of traditional religious practice ? ritual, cult image, and priest ? in a shift from locative to utopian modes of accessing the divine world (see J.Z. Smith 1978).

The process of miniaturizing the Opening of the Mouth which results in the magical Ouphor reveals not only an alternate configuration of the relationship between human and divine in religious practice, but also the meta-ritual qualities of some texts in the magical papyri. The Ouphor actually bears little resemblance to the pharaonic Egyptian ritual of

Opening the Mouth, which in its most extensive versions, included dozens of ritual actions. The process of miniaturization, in this case, is accomplished by synecdoche. Verbal elements take the place of a wider array of ritual actions. Opening pronouncements in Greek, then a series of phrases each beginning with a Greek transcription of the Egyptian *i i3w* "O hail . . .", and most importantly the name of the Ouphor ritual itself stand in for the traditional ritual. The name Ouphor is repeated five times in introducing a relatively brief spell, and is explicitly associated with the appropriate function of the rite: bringing images to life. Naming the rite and classifying its function give a relatively non-specific series of utterances their specific power. The mistaken understanding of Ouphor as the name of a divinity thus takes on a surprising significance. The "invocation of Ouphôr" (*epiklêsis Ouphôtros PGM XII.335*), can be read with a double meaning, construing the genitive as both possessive and objective: the practitioner pronounces the invocation belonging to the Ouphor, and also invokes the traditional Egyptian Opening of the Mouth as an abstracted ritual power. The Late Antique practitioner, by miniaturizing ritual to another level of abstraction from everyday action has devised a "ritual of ritual," a practice which in part derives its effectiveness from a discourse on the names and functions of traditional rituals (J.Z. Smith 1995, 27).

SELECTED REFERENCES:

BETZ, H. D. (ed.). *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells*. Second Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

PREISENDANZ, K. (ed., trans.). *Papyri Graecae Magicae. Die Griechischen Zauberpapyri*. 2 Vols. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1972-1974.

SMITH, J. Z. *Map is not Territory: Studies in the History of Religions*. Leiden: Brill, 1978.

"Trading Places," in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*. Edited by M. Meyer and P. Mirecki. Leiden: Brill, 1995.

THISSEN, H.J. "Ägyptologische Beiträge zu den griechischen magischen Papyri." In *Religion und Philosophie im alten Ägypten. Festgabe für Philippe Derchain zu seinem 65. Geburtstag am 24. Juli 1991*. *Orientalia Lovanensia Analecta* 39. Leuven: Peeters, 1991.