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Transforming Words into Efficacious Healing Objects: The Case of the Bleeding Woman

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Abstract The miraculous healing of the bleeding woman, *Haemorrhoissa*, as known from Mt 9:20-22, Mk 5:25-34, and Lk 8:43-48, has been reinterpreted and inscribed onto several 'magical' objects to help women recover from gynecological hemorrhage in Egypt (and elsewhere) during the sixth or seventh century. The retelling of the story and the mechanics of healing through these efficacious objects are the focus of this article.

Keywords Haemorrhoissa. Magic. Gospel. Amulet. Gemstone.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 The *Historiola* of the Bleeding Woman on a Hematite Gemstone. – 3 A Coptic Scriptural Amulet. – 4 Power, Faith, and Touch in the New Testament and Late Antique Magical Traditions. – 5 Conclusion

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1 Introduction

A story from the Synoptic Gospels recounts Jesus' miracle in Capernaum (Mt 9:20-22; Mk 5:25-34; Lk 8:43-48).[1] A woman who had been bleeding for twelve years, in literature often referred to as *Haemorrhoissa*,[2] touched the garment of Jesus, causing "power to come out from him". Jesus, not seeing her, asked who touched him. The woman came forward, saying she was healed by touching his garment, to which Jesus responded that it was her faith that healed her. The narrative conveys a thought-provoking idea regarding the efficacy of healing through touch and through concepts of 'power' of Jesus Christ and 'faith' of the believer. But what happens when this narrative is materialized, in particular when it is expressed on healing amulets?

The story of the bleeding woman was retold on two 'magical' healing objects from Egypt, dating roughly between the sixth and eighth centuries: a gemstone inscribed in Greek and a Coptic wooden tablet.[3] Both of these objects were likely aimed at regulating menstrual or uterine bleeding. Although the objects ground their efficacy in the Gospel story, the healing methods they reflect were reinterpreted to suit their respective historical contexts; this article explores why and how the narrative, influenced by a later tradition, changed. The first section discusses the gemstone. The second section engages with certain Coptic sources relating to the *Haemorrhoissa*. In the third and final section, I offer a theoretical discussion on the ways the Gospel narrative was expressed on physical objects for the

1 I would like to thank Ágnes T. Mihálykó, the organizer of the conference *Between Magic and Liturgy: Discussing Christian Ritual Texts* (Vienna, 23-24 February 2023) and its attendants for their remarks on the initial version of this paper; I especially thank Joseph E. Sanzo. I also thank Jiří Dynda and Korshi Dosoo for their suggestions, and Rune Nyord and David Frankfurter for their comments on the initial version of this article. Vladimir Ivanovici helped me to find literature on the *Haemorrhoisa* iconography, for which I am grateful. I thank Eliana Dal Sasso for discussing wooden tablets used for bookbinding with me. I also thank Gajane Achverdjanová and Robert Matthew Calhoun who were kind enough to share their work with me. I also thank the Institut français d'archéologie orientale (IFAO) for sharing the images of the wooden tablet IFAO Copte T. 26 with me. Lastly, I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their suggestions which have helped to improve this paper significantly.

2 *Haemorrhoissa* is a Latin term derived from the Greek <γυνὴ> αἱμορροοῦσα, <woman> who had been suffering from a hemorrhage, Mt 9:20. The earliest reference to the woman as *Haemorrhoissa* I was able to find is from a sixteenth century edition of a sermon by Peter Chrysologus (ca. 380-450), bishop of Ravenna, called *De Haemorrhoissa, et Filia Archisynagogi* (Peter Chrysologus 1534, no. 33), so it is safe to assume this Latin designation has long been established in theological discussions.

3 In this article, I use the term 'magic' as an analytical category, as outlined by Sanzo 2020a, 25. The term 'magical' is used to refer to ritual objects used in non-liturgical healing context.

purpose of magical healing. This essay will primarily attend to the use of this story as it relates to the mechanics of magical healing.[4]

2 The *Historiola* of the Bleeding Woman on a Hematite Gemstone

To explore the use and transformation of narratives about the *Haemorrhoissa* in healing practice, this article focuses on the presentation of two healing objects: a well-studied Greek hematite gemstone and a lesser-known Coptic wooden tablet. Both of these objects likely employed this narrative to prevent, manage, or treat excessive gynecological bleeding. But before discussing these objects, it is useful to cite the fullest account of *Haemorrhoissa*'s healing, which appears in Lk 8:43-48:[5]

> Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years; and though she had spent all she had on physicians, no one could cure her. She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his clothes, and immediately her hemorrhage stopped. Then Jesus asked, "Who touched me?" When all denied it, Peter said, "Master, the crowds surround you and press in on you". But Jesus said, "Someone touched me; for I noticed that power had gone out from me". When the woman saw that she could not remain hidden, she came trembling; and falling down before him, she declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace".

This story is retold on a hematite gemstone (4.8 × 3.6 × 1 cm), kept under the inventory number 17.190.491 and gifted by John Pierpont Morgan to The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York in 1917. As with most magical gemstones, its findspot and dating are difficult to determine. Nevertheless, it was presumably produced in Egypt in the

4 Accordingly, this essay will not focus on the various literary and theological interpretations of this story which have emerged over the centuries (e.g., Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* 7.18). For references to works of other Church Fathers, see the commentary of the Gospel of Matthew by Saint Thomas Aquinas (pages 316-51 in the 1874 edition); for an analysis of the story in the works of the poets Jacob of Serugh and Romanos Melodos, see Walsh 2022.

5 Unless indicated otherwise, all translations of biblical passages are based on the "New Revised Standard Version" of the Bible.

sixth or seventh century (Weitzmann 1979, 440 no. 398).[6] The object is made of hematite – often associated with coagulated blood in the ancient world (see below) – and was probably used as a pendant, as it is set in a "silver mounting with a loop" (Weitzmann 1979, 440 no. 398). The gemstone has been discussed by various scholars after appearing in the exhibition catalogue of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *Age of Spirituality*, in 1979. In 1993, Jacquelyn Tuerk discussed it in more detail, and it has recently been examined again by Robert Matthew Calhoun;[7] this essay partially follows up on both these articles.

The gemstone visually and textually (re)presents the story of the bleeding woman, though interpreted through the lens of its time. On the obverse **[fig. 1]**, Christ is identified by the inscription ιc̄ χc̄. He stretches out his right hand over the woman while he holds a book in his left hand. A woman kneels next to him in a *proskynesis* posture, receiving the blessing. The reverse of the gemstone **[fig. 2]** shows (in the center) the woman in an orant position, flanked by palm trees on the left and right. She appears to be healed. The corrupt text written on the obverse and reconstructed here based on Robert Matthew Calhoun's reading (Calhoun 2024, 47-8), recalls the suffering of the woman before being healed, which roughly corresponds to Mk 5:25-26: "And the woman who was in a flow of blood, suffered greatly and spent <money> without being helped but rather kept on flowing" (καὶ ἡ γυνὴ οὖσα <ἐν> ῥύσει αἵματος ἔτη, καὶ πολλὰ παθοῦσα η(?) καὶ ἐδαπάνησα μηδὲν ὠφεληθεῖσα ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον η(?) δραμοῦσα).[8] The text on the reverse reports the result: namely, healing: "The flow of her blood was dried in the name of her faith" (ἐξηράνθη ἡ πηγὴ τοῦ αἱματησμοῦ αὐτῆς ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τῆς πίστεως αὐτῆς), which roughly corresponds to Mk 5:29 and, therefore, incorporates Jesus's proclamation about the woman's faith.[9]

6 However, Jeffrey Spier notes that the gemstone is from the middle Byzantine era, and that the sixth or seventh century dating might be too early (Spier 1993, 44 fn. 111). A Byzantine amulet with Christ in a frontal position blessing the bleeding woman inscribed with Mk 5:25-29 was discovered during excavations at Samos and dated to the seventh century. See Calhoun 2024, 84; ed. pr. W.R. Megow in Kienast 2004, 125 no. 766.

7 Monographs dedicated to the *Hemorrhoissa*: Selvidge 1990; Trummer 1991. The gemstone is discussed by, e.g., CBd-1123; Baert 2010; Baert, Kusters, Sidgwick 2012a; 2012b; Nauerth in Breck, Bol 1983, 560-1 no. 165; Calhoun 2024; Michel 2004, 127-8; Myers Achi 2023, 51 no. 11; Nagy 2012; Sanzo 2024, 65-8; Tuerk 1999; Tuerk-Stonberg 2021a, 6-9; Tuerk-Stonberg 2021b, 87-90; Tuerk-Stonberg, Bardzik 2023; Walsh 2022; Weitzmann 1979, 440 no. 398. Tuerk also suggests the amulet was discussed in Breck, Rogers 1925, 42, but the mention is very brief ("large amulet of hematite with intaglio designs worn as a charm against hemorrhage").

8 I follow Calhoun's reading of τρέχω as 'to flow' rather than the usual 'to run' (Calhoun 2024, 48 fn. 11).

9 For further editions, see Beck, Bol 1983, 560-1; Tuerk 1999, 25-6; Tuerk-Stonberg, Bardzik 2023, 341-3; Lieselotte Kötzsche in Weitzmann 1979, 440 no. 398; Zellmann-Rohrer 2016, 425, no. 5.6.1.2.

Figure 1
Incised healing amulet, obverse. Hematite. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 17.190.491. Courtesy of the Open Access initiative of the MET Museum

Figure 2
Incised healing amulet, reverse. Hematite. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 17.190.491. Courtesy of the Open Access initiative of the MET Museum

Other Late Antique gemstones depicting the *Haemorrhoissa* are also known: one made of rock crystal with frontal-facing Jesus raising a hand upon a crouching woman (who does not seem to be touching the his clothes), bought in Constantinople;[10] another one with an image of a kneeling woman touching the garment of Jesus on one side and a Gorgon on the other, designated by Jeffrey Spier as a bronze token.[11] The Benaki Museum in Athens holds a green chalcedony gem (inventory number 13527) with the *Haemorrhoissa* touching the garment of Christ on one side and the crucifixion on the other.[12] According to Alphonse A. Barb and others, the *Haemorrhoissa* touching Christ's hem is also found in the third row of the reverse of a bronze electrotype of a sixth-century gem (British Museum inv. no. 1938,1010.1).[13] In addition to noting all these gemstones (Calhoun 2024, 49 fn. 15.), Calhoun also pointed out an amulet with Christ in a frontal position blessing the bleeding woman touching the hem of his clothes, inscribed with Mk 5:25-29, discovered during excavations at Samos and dated by context to the seventh century (Calhoun 2024, 84).[14] This latter example closely resembles the gemstone studied here. Remarkably, all these items are dated between the sixth and seventh centuries. That said, Spier proposed that the bronze token and green chalcedony gem might date between the tenth and twelfth centuries.[15] Typically, the decoration on the obverse of these gemstones represents a relationship, and the reverse expresses a state resulting from this relationship. Other iconographical representations of the story of the bleeding woman from the wider Mediterranean area, dating between the fourth and seventh centuries, exist (Baert 2010): a fourth-century wall painting in the catacomb of Marcellinus and Peter in Rome and a sixth-century mosaic in the Basilica of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna are the most famous examples. Private objects, such as a decorated ivory comb from Mirine, dated to the fourth or early fifth century, also depict the bleeding woman's healing (Achverdjanová, Foletti 2021, 80).

10 Baert 2010, 12, fig. 15; Baert, Kusters, Sidgwick 2012a, 674, fig. 10; Baert, Sidgwick 2011, 327; Garrucci 1880, pl. 479 no. 23; Spier 2013, no. 684. Unfortunately, I am not able to find information regarding the reverse of the gemstone.

11 Baert, Sidgwick 2011, 327; Baert, Kusters, Sidgwick 2012a, 676 fig. 12; Spier 1993, 44 fn. 111 no. 38.

12 Image of this amulet was published by Foskolou 2014, 345 fig. 16; Spier 1993, 44 fn. 111.

13 Barb 1964, 10-1; Baert, Kusters, Sidgwick 2012b, 325; Calhoun 2024, 49 fn. 15.

14 Ed. pr. W.R. Megow in Kienast 2004, 125 no. 766.

15 Spier 1993, 44 fn. 111. Felicity Harley-McGowan also dates the amulet from the Benaki museum between the tenth and twelfth century (Harley-McGowan 2019, 114 fn. 56) and provides the following literature arguing for an earlier date: A. Drandaki, in Papanikola-Bakirtzi 2002, 485 no. 659; Vikan 1984, 81 fn. 106.

The way the amulet plays with time is remarkable. The five-part narrative of the *historiola* (woman approaches Jesus; she touches Jesus; Jesus questions her; the woman admits touching Jesus; Jesus declares the woman's faith) was tailored to the needs of the ritual practice by narrowing it down to two moments: the before and after. The obverse carries the initial event and the reverse its outcome.[16] In terms of visual narrative, the obverse represents a relationship, established through an action happening between the two protagonists, whereas the reverse expresses a state of a single individual. Interestingly, when illustrating action, the characters were depicted in profile (obverse: Jesus blessing the woman), but states were depicted frontally (reverse: the healed woman).

The story told by the gemstone, according to the theory of David Frankfurter, constitutes a *historiola*, "the long-standing term for an abbreviated narrative that is incorporated into a magical spell" (Frankfurter 1995, 438). *Historiolae* do not necessarily draw directly from mythical macro-narratives, but rather from a broader contemporary tradition – in this case, the Gospel story as living within the culture of sixth or seventh-century Egypt. Such a tradition would be the rich and complex combination of gestures, customs, iconography, and stories told, among many other elements, resulting in a blend – Frankfurter borrows the Lévi-Straussian term *bricolage* – of various elements (Frankfurter 1995, 473; Lévi-Strauss 1962, 26-47). So, a *historiola* articulates a myth at a particular point in time; it is not identical to a mythical macro-narrative (Frankfurter 1995, 474). The notion of *historiola* helps explain how it is possible that the Gospel narrative does not match the story as told on the hematite gemstone; the gemstone is a result of *bricolage*, in which the Gospel texts are only one of the elements 'tinkered' with, besides conventional iconography or ritual practice. Frankfurter further points out that a magical object can be any material thing that carries agency (Frankfurter 1995, 676). The hematite gemstone is also an object filled with agency, as it is the material embodiment of the *historiola* rooted in a particular time in history and created for a particular purpose, in Tuerk's words, as a 'vehicle' for the transfer of Christ's healing power. But how did such *bricolage* lead to the creation of the hematite gemstone? The text on the gemstone, the images it carries, its materiality, and its use – but in particular *the relationship between these elements* constituting its efficacy – will be examined to answer this question.

In the words of Roland Barthes, the text provides a simple 'anchorage' for the images, explaining what the image represents

16 Tuerk notes that depictions of a woman in orant position flanked by palm trees is a sign of prayer for salvation in Christian art (1999, 39).

(Barthes 1997, 156). The writing on the object is efficacious in two ways; it is itself of importance, as it refers directly to the Scripture, and it also exists as a *historiola* drawing on a wider tradition living a life of its own, as was suggested earlier (Frankfurter 1995, 464).[17] Paolo Vitellozzi considers the use of, for instance, Gospel passages on gemstones as an 'action' providing a template for the ritual:

> The idea of language as an action rather than a mere description of reality also serves to explain the presence of literary quotations […] the sense of which was thought to change reality by providing a normative model for the expected magical action. (Vitellozzi 2023, 29)

Similarly, Tuerk argues, referring to Clifford Geertz's theory of ritual, that the Gospel story is a model for healing (Tuerk 1999, 37-9; Geertz 1973).

In contrast to some of the other parallel depictions of the bleeding woman's healing and the Gospel narratives, based on both the iconography and the text inscribed on the gemstone, the woman did not touch Jesus. On the gemstone, Jesus' arm is stretched above the woman's head, blessing her. Remarkably, in the amulet's reinterpretation of the miracle, the woman's touch remains ignored. Christ's blessing (absent from the Gospel narratives) and the woman's act of *proskynesis* are visually highlighted, and the role of her faith in the healing is stressed in the inscription and the woman's gesture of prayer. The act of touch disappears from the story as told on the gemstone. As Tuerk suggests, "in the absence of Christ's robe" acting as "a channel for Christ's power", the amulet offered a substitute focus for the historical woman (Tuerk 1999, 32). As the amulet was in contact with Christ through the text and image, carrying its agency, "it acted as a vehicle to transfer healing power from Christ […] to the wearer" (33). Whether this omission was intentional remains an open question; on the Samos gemstone, the closest parallel, the woman is depicted as touching his robe, as well as on several other depictions of the scene. Nevertheless, touch, at least implicitly, was ritually meaningful for the object's efficacy (as is discussed below). Besides the act of touch, the gemstone also omits the moment of dramatic narrative tension when Jesus asked who touched him; in the Gospel

17 The use of biblical passages as healing objects is well-attested (de Bruyn 2010; Sanzo 2014; PCM 25-6), and it is the case of the magical gemstone as well.

story, the woman was distressed by his question.[18] But according to the text and image on the gemstone, Christ blessed the woman as she prostrated herself, expressing the relationship that initiated the healing accomplished through her faith.

Concerning the issue of the discrepancies between the Gospel narratives and the story as told on the gemstone, it is necessary to address the identity of the woman on the gemstone. I would argue, similarly to others before me, that it is neither the woman in Capernaum nor the woman who might have used this amulet. It is a third woman, the ideal of the woman using the gemstone combined with the ideal of the bleeding woman from Capernaum, created through the *bricolage* of iconographical conventions and the Gospel accounts and their interpretation, and immortalized into this depiction, applicable to any woman of the time. This ideal woman represented the complex relationship between the mythical (i.e., the woman in Capernaum) and a historical (i.e., the actual user of the amulet) figure.

Calhoun proposed to understand the gemstone in terms of *metalepsis*:

> If my interpretation of the Met amulet's text and images as both abbreviation and revision of Mark 5,25-34 is correct, however, it establishes an identical – not merely analogical – relationship between the women. The end-user reads or even writes herself into the story, such that the world of the narrative and the real world converge. (Calhoun 2024, 55)

According to Tuerk, by reading the text on the gemstone, the woman "incorporated" the story "within her own body" (Tuerk 1999, 33). Tuerk suggested that the object created a 'persuasive analogy' – a term borrowed from Stanley J. Tambiah signaling that 'magical' relationships are not causal but rather persuasive[19] – between the historical woman and the bleeding woman from the Gospels, and an "encouraging precedent" for its owner (29). I agree with these proposals and further suggest that the image represents the ideal *relationship* of any faithful historical woman who wished to receive healing to Jesus Christ. Faith, as I point out in the last section of this paper, is relational, and faith is what, as the text on the gemstone says,

18 Calhoun suggests that this is the moment that might have been depicted on the obverse and the reverse the praying woman, omitted by the evangelists (2024, 50). I suggest reading the object more directly, the obverse depicting Christ blessing a woman, who, in parallel depictions touches his robe and at that moment receives healing, and the reverse is an expression of the faithfulness and gratitude of the Biblical woman, merging with the notion of the ideal woman, as imagined by the creator of the amulet.

19 More on this theory can be found in e.g., Tambiah 1985, 17-86.

initiated and brought about the healing; in this sense, faith plays a central role of both the obverse (visual expression of the relationship) and the reverse (depiction of a praying woman combined with the Gospel passage on the role of faith in her healing). The conventional way the woman and Jesus were iconographically represented, the fact that a New Testament passage accompanied the depiction, and the fact that these were reproduced on a hematite gemstone associated with coagulated blood and intended for personal use, made the gemstone comprehensible to most Christians living in Late Antiquity.

As it relates to the materiality of the gemstone, it is useful to consider Rune Nyord's analysis of pharaonic Egyptian cultic images, in which he applies Jane Bennett's concept of 'vibrant substances' to the materials onto which the images are inscribed. According to Nyord, these are not just raw materials, but things with a life of their own (Nyord 2020, 30; Bennett 2010). Nyord's theory serves as an inspiration for my thesis, as it is tailored for the understanding of images in pharaonic Egypt. In their very physicality, such 'vibrant substances' contain an intrinsic connection of one substance to another, which goes beyond simple symbolic association (Nyord 2020, 31). In this case, hematite from which the gemstone was made, was considered to have an intrinsic connection to coagulated blood in Antiquity since this mineral was likened to solidified blood.[20] In this sense, as Nyord argues, transforming hematite into a gemstone is in itself an enactment of the relationship between the raw stone and the coagulated blood. Through text and image, this connection between the blood and the stone was actualized (32). The material from which the gemstone was made manifested coagulated blood (i.e., the desired 'practical' *outcome*) while the text and image on the gem 'anchored' the image and thus explained its *purpose* (i.e., healing blood flow). Furthermore, the image shows the obedient relationship of the woman to Christ, who blesses her and thus *causes* the healing – at least according to the Gospel.

Taken together, the material, the text, and the image 'enacted' the healing and created meaningful relationships between the various actors: Christ; the bleeding woman from the Gospel; the ideal woman; and the historical woman. Thus, the raw hematite was a vibrant substance, actualized to its potential as a healing object by allowing the words of a Gospel, a depiction of Christ, and of the ideal woman to emanate from it. The ritual specialist who produced this object was, in a way, aware of these relationships, knowing that a further step in actualizing the efficacy of the object was its practical use as a healing pendant, tying together its materiality, stylized depictions, canonical text, and traditional practice.

20 E.g., Plin. *HN* 35.37-8. See discussion in Dasen 2015, 34; Tuerk 1999, 30-1.

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The connection between the image and the entities depicted on the gemstone, the signified and the signifier, is created in different ways, according to Nyord. The relationship relevant here is the one that was "meant to induce changes or otherwise influence the entity depicted through the making and/or subsequent manipulation of the image" (54). The gemstone was supposed to bring change – healing – to the person who owns and uses it. Because this user identified with the depicted woman, as suggested by Calhoun, perhaps the object not only provided a focus and encouragement, as Tuerk suggested, but could also have stimulated the healing process on a deeper level. Nyord proposes that it is "the ritual manipulation of the image that can end up influencing the depicted entity". When the gemstone was ritually manipulated (for instance, worn on the body) by someone who identified with the depicted ideal woman, it may have initiated the healing of its owner. As Nyord argues, the relationship between the user of the object and the entities depicted could materialize through a general relationship between the object and its user, through 'presence' and 'proximity' (57). Simply put, the user could have made the relationship between her and Jesus happen by keeping the object that enacts it close to her. So, on the theological and intellectual level, faith created the healing relationship (between any of the three women discussed here and Christ), and on the material, practical, or 'magical' one, of primary interest here, the proximity to the object further enabled it.

To conclude, the hematite as the material substance of the gemstone contains its potential (residing in the intrinsic connection between hematite and coagulated blood), the depiction and text actualize this potential by making the desired relationship between the user and the divine agency apparent, the words of the Scripture and depiction of Jesus gives the object authority, and the ritual manipulation of the object means that it had to remain in proximity to its beneficiary in order to be effective. These elements combined imbue the object with agency.

3 A Coptic Scriptural Amulet

The second object carrying the story of the bleeding woman, IFAO Copte T. 26 (12.5 × 33 × 0.14 cm), edited by René Coquin (1984), is a damaged, undecorated wooden tablet covered by a coating and pierced in the middle on top, likely for suspension.[21] The tablet is

21 For details of this object, see KYP M345. Ed. pr. by Coquin 1984. Coquin suggests that the coating of the tablet was originally white; on the image available to me and provided by the IFAO, a few white dots are visible, perhaps remnants of the paint (1984, 55), but otherwise the tablet appears smooth and slightly shiny, apparently with a coating.

inscribed lengthwise and contains the Coptic version of Lk 8:41-56, a passage in which the healing of the bleeding woman took place as Jesus was going to the sick daughter of Jairus, whom he raised once the bleeding woman was healed. It appears that the object is a palimpsest (55).

Coquin suggests that the object was suspended on the wall as an amulet for healing (60). He writes that the tablet has two other holes for suspension (one of which is partially obstructed by a piece of metal), which are visible on the top. Based on my inspection of the photographs of the tablet kindly provided to me by the Institut français d'archéologie orientale, I suggest the presence of only one additional hole, on the right margin of the tablet, which, as Coquin suggests, seems obstructed, perhaps by a piece of metal. I would argue that these two holes were not – at least initially – intended for suspension on the wall. Rather, their presence could suggest that the object was originally a writing tablet, often used for school exercises. Such tablets were frequently covered with a coating, allowing them to be easily reused, pierced one or multiple times along the top of the longer side of the rectangular tablet, and joined together to form a notebook (called *album* or *leukōma*; Cribiore 1996, 65). IFAO Copte T. 26 carries these characteristics and is also of a similar size to a tablet from such a notebook.[22] Why one of the holes is partially obstructed by metal is unclear to me; another similar object, a tablet from Brussels (Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Historie de Bruxelles E 6801), identified as magical by some and as a school text by others, contains this same feature.[23] Coquin argues, based on the paleography, that the object was produced in Egypt in the seventh or eighth century (Coquin 1984, 55).[24]

As Nathan Carlig and Magali de Haro Sanchez have already noted, amulets are occasionally difficult to differentiate from school texts (Carlig, de Haro Sanchez 2015; cf. Delattre, Martin, Vanthieghem 2020). An argument for IFAO Copte T. 26 being a school exercise, besides the materiality, would be that the text does not seem to contain any 'magical' markers, such as *kharaktēres*. Nevertheless,

22 This is also noted by Coquin (1984, 59-60), who compares it to the tablet Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Historie de Bruxelles E 6801, measuring 12 × 30 × 1.7 cm (ed. pr. Préaux 1935).

23 For the most recent discussions of the object, see Carlig, de Haro Sanchez 2015, 77-8; Delattre, Martin, Vanthieghem 2020, 14-21. Another potential explanation for the presence of metal on the tablet could be that at some point, it might have been reused for bookbinding. However, without further examination, this cannot be confirmed. I would like to thank Eliana Dal Sasso for discussing this issue with me. For instance, the Inv.T.021 from the Cologne collection (16.7 × 27.8 × 0.7 cm) is an inscribed wooden tablet, originally used for bookbinding, published by Koenen 1974.

24 See also Bélanger Sarrazin 2020, 195-6; Worp 2012. A possible parallel for the hand is, for instance, PCM 10.

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there are also arguments for the tablet being reused to function as a scriptural amulet: the single hole on top suggests suspension (for the significance of this, see below). Furthermore, the chosen passage is significant, as both stories address women's issues. The text is written in a quick, informal hand, similar to that of amulets,[25] and the last line on the recto is very irregular (it was perhaps uncomfortable for the scribe to write the last line, given the thickness of the tablet). School texts often have lines to ease regular writing and tend to be repetitive, features this object lacks (Cribiore 1996, 65-9). Most importantly, there are at least two other magical texts written on very similar tablets.[26] Last but not least, magical texts are very often written over other texts and on reused materials, so the use of a wooden tablet originally intended for other purposes is not surprising.[27] I would argue that the last scribe effaced an older text and wrote this passage over it to serve as an amulet to be affixed on a wall.

The tablet tells the story of the bleeding woman according to Luke's version. Jesus asks the woman, bleeding for twelve years: "Who (m. sg.) touched me?" (recto l. 7 ⲛ̈ⲓ̈ⲙ ⲡⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲭⲱϩ ⲉⲣ[ⲟⲓ]). "For I myself know that a power came out from me" (recto l. 10 ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲁ̈ⲓ̈ⲉⲓⲙⲉ ⲉⲩⲃⲟⲙ ⲉⲁⲥⲉ̈ⲓ̈ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̀ϩⲏⲧ), he further explains. When he discovered it was the woman, he concluded: "My daughter, it is your faith that saved you. Go in peace" (verso ll. 13-14 ⲧⲁϣⲫⲉⲣⲉ [ⲧⲟⲩⲡⲓⲥⲧⲓⲥ ⲧⲉⲛⲧⲁⲥⲛⲁ̀ϩⲙⲉ ⲃⲱⲕ] ϩⲛ ⲟⲩⲉⲓⲣⲏⲛⲏ).[28] This narrative is followed by the story of the daughter of Jairus: when Jesus took the hand of his deceased daughter and commanded her to get up, she was healed.[29] The very last line on the verso contains a few letters which are difficult to read, the remainder being damaged; indeed, it might be the key to understanding the

25 E.g., PCM 10; PCM 15; O.Crum ST 398 (KYP M124).

26 P.Ryl.Copt.Suppl. No. 50 (KYP M734; ed. pr. Giversen 1959), pierced with two holes, 11 × 44 × 1 cm, suggesting that this could also have originally been part of a notebook, and later affixed to a wall (?). Besides the nature of the text – the Jesus-Abgar correspondence exists often within magical contexts (Bélanger Sarrazin 2020, 191-3) – the existence of a colophon suggests that this is an amulet rather than a school exercise. PGM T1 is another example of a magical text written on a wooden tablet, 7.2 × 13× 0.8 cm, and pierced similarly with two holes, indicating reuse of a school notebook. P.Kellis I 88 (KYP M1105) is a liturgical text, a prayer, perhaps written on a notebook. Other possibly magical texts on wooden tablets with holes, possibly for suspension: T.Varie 13 (KYP M107); P.Bad. IV 60 & 65 (KYP M519 & 630); Paris, Louvre M.N.D. 552 b (KYP M1077; ed. pr. Passoni dell'Acqua 1980; Warga 1988 (KYP M1808); PGM T2b (KYP M2139).

27 For instance, PCM 15, a re-used wax tablet, also seems to be a palimpsest.

28 Edition from Coquin 1984, 56-7, translation of the author.

29 Coquin suggests that the stories about the bleeding woman and the story of Jairus' daughter appear together because of their connection with the number twelve – Coquin proposes it could have been suspended above the bed of a sick twelve-year-old girl; a hole on top of the tablet suggests it could have been suspended as an amulet (1984, 60).

nature of the text. Coquin presumes that after a staurogram, the text is dated as indiction year 13 (ιг) (Coquin 1984, 59). While possible, the traces of the text are not fully legible.[30] However, if it is a colophon, then it was likely an amulet, as a date would not be expected in a school exercise or even in a copy of the biblical passage used, for instance, for liturgical purposes.[31]

If it were used as an amulet, the tablet would have presumably targeted gynecological issues.[32] But how could it have been used? The practice of affixing an amulet to a wall for protective purposes is attested in magical documents from Late Antique Egypt. Towards the end of a Coptic prayer of Gregory from the seventh or eighth century, a 14-page text containing many adjurations of God to repel evil influences and protect its user, the prayer directs its reader as to how it should be used:

> The Holy Trinity spares everyone who has with them this seal, and those who have with them this prayer, and every place in which it will be affixed (ⲙⲁ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲉⲧ̣ⲟⲩⲛⲁⲧⲟϭⲥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ̣), so that it will be for them a phylactery and a remedy and every healing in (?) every pain of every sort (PCM 11, p. 13 l. 23-p. 14 l. 4).

The Coptic Jesus-Abgar letters, correspondence allegedly exchanged between King Abgar of Edessa and Jesus, who supposedly granted healing through his reply, also contain a similar passage describing their use (Bélanger Sarrazin 2020, 192; Preininger forthcoming). A copy of the letter is reproduced in the same as the prayer of Gregory and ends with the following passage:

> The place to which this manuscript will be affixed (ⲡⲙⲁ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲛⲁⲧⲱϫⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ), no power of the Adversary nor unclean spirit will be able to approach nor to reach into that place, and forever. (PCM 11, p. 25 ll. 13-20)

The Jesus-Abgar letters (Bélanger Sarrazin 2020, 192) and a prayer of Gregory (PCM 11, p. 13 ll. 28-9) both state that wherever the amulet (alternatively called a prayer; Sanzo 2020b, 110-13) is affixed, no evil will be able to approach it; thus, the practice of attaching an amulet

30 I was unable to find a document in which the year would be indicated after a staurogram in this way. I am not sure the traces correspond to Coquin's reading; perhaps these were ritual instructions or 'voces magicae'?

31 A magical amulet with the Jesus-Abgar correspondence is signed (P.Ryl.Copt. Suppl. no. 50, ed.pr. Giversen 1959), as well as PCM 23, which includes a colophon. On colophons in liturgical texts, see Mihálykó 2019, 75.

32 As Coquin, the first editor of the wooden tablet points out, this might have also been a writing exercise (1984, 59-60).

to the wall as a protection from evil influences is attested within the context of Christian Egypt in the seventh or eighth centuries at least. Although in this case, we are not dealing with images but with text, Nyord's notion of proximity as the crucial element in establishing the desired relationship between the user and the entity depicted on the object remains relevant. The effectiveness of the ritual use of the wooden tablet and the gemstone lies in their proximity to the owner. The healing efficacy of the tablet is increased or reduced depending on its proximity to the beneficiary – as with the gemstone.

However, there are principal differences between the wooden tablet and the gemstone. The physical boundaries of efficacy of the objects were likely intuitively defined by their users; in the case of the gemstone (or any amulet attached to the body), this boundary was the body itself. In case of a suspended amulet, the boundaries might have been defined by the walls of a room or of the entire house. Both objects gain agency principally from their reference to the Gospel; the material efficacy of the scriptural amulet stemmed from the text written on it, not from the support it was written on, in contrast to the gemstone. Perhaps, as the inscribed gemstone originated in a more professional setting – and was likely more expensive – it draws from other sources of efficacy besides just the Gospel citation, such as the hematite and the carved image, in order to enhance its impact. As the tablet comes from a more modest context, the text was its main source of efficacy. Nevertheless, the nature of the text remains unclear, and the evidence suggesting that it was affixed to a wall is only circumstantial.

4 Power, Faith, and Touch in the New Testament and Late Antique Magical Traditions

In this section, I analyze the story of the bleeding woman as it appears in the New Testament, before assessing its reflection in later theological and amuletic traditions. In the Gospels, touching the garment of Jesus was an established healing technique, an efficacious act on its own (Mt 14:36; Mk 6:56) and, as Lk 6:19 indicates, "And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them". But in Capernaum, only the bleeding woman – ritually unclean when hemorrhaging, according to the rules laid out in Leviticus (15:20-28)[33] – was healed, even though the crowd was pressing against him. As Jesus points out, it was her faith that cured her.

33 Ritual pollution in this context was discussed by Feinstein 2014, 191; Klawans 1998.

Mk 5:28 explicitly lays out the bleeding woman's motivation: "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed".[34] She is right to think so, as touching the garment of Jesus will heal her (at least based on the stories that she might have heard). So, why is this particular moment different? Why is the touch not enough? Christ did not seem to take any action to heal the woman; he was not even aware of her touch at first. Almost as if his power were mechanically transferred; "Power had gone out from me" (δύναμιν ἐξεληλυθυῖαν ἀπ' ἐμοῦ, Lk 8:46). Perhaps it was the woman's faithful thought that set her apart from the crowd.[35] On other occasions, Jesus said, "according to your faith let it be done to you" (Mt 8:13; 9:29), suggesting that faith is an important and occasionally the sole factor for the potential healing. The *act* of touching the garment, combined with the faithful *thought*, resulted in the bleeding woman's cure; Jesus did not need to perform any specific action.

To further understand how the woman was healed, other curative mechanisms appearing in the New Testament should be discussed. According to the Gospel, Jesus healed the sick (1) by utterance ("[H]e then said to the paralytic – "Stand up, take your bed and go to your home". And he stood up and went to his home," Mt 9:6),[36] by (2) touch ("[H]e touched her hand, and the fever left her, and she got up," Mt 8:15),[37] and (3) as a consequence of faith ("And Jesus said to the centurion, "Go; let it be done for you according to your faith". And the servant was healed in that hour," Mt 8:13).[38] Furthermore, combinations of these methods appear as well; (4) touch and utterance,[39] (5) and faith of the worshipper together with touch (Mt 9:29). Only two narratives document the latter healing mechanism, one of them is the story of the woman in Capernaum, and the other is Mt 9:29, "Then he touched their eyes, and said 'According to your faith let it be done to you.'" But in the case of the bleeding woman, it is the woman, out of her own will, who touches Jesus; it is not Jesus who takes the initiative. Consequently, the case of the woman of Capernaum is unique in this context.

34 In Mt 9:21, the woman thinks "If I only touch his cloak, I will be made well".

35 I would like to thank Jiří Dynda for pointing this out to me.

36 Mt 8:16; 8:32; 12:13, 15:28; Mk 1:25; 2:11; 3:3; 5:12-13; 7:29; Lk 4:24; 4:39; 5:24; 6:10; 8:30-33; 9:42; Jn 4:53; 5:8; 11:43. This type of healing, together with the one described in (3) is a performative utterance (see Frankfurter 2017).

37 Mt 8:15; 9:25; 14:36, 20:34; Mk 1:31; 3:10; 8:22-25. Cases where Christ heals with saliva and clay fall within this category, Mk 7:23; Jn 9:6.

38 Mt 8:13; 15:28; Mk 10:52; Lk 7:9; 17:19; 18:41-42. This category is very similar to healing by utterance, but the proclamation of faith of the sick by Christ seems to be at the forefront.

39 Mt 8:2-4; Mk 1:41; 5:41; 7:33-34; 9:25-27; Lk 5:13; 7:11-14; 8:54; 13:12.

Power (Greek δύναμις/Coptic ϭом) and faith (Greek πίστις/Coptic ⲡⲓⲥⲧⲓⲥ) are key terms reoccurring in the story of the bleeding woman. Power appears in the accounts of Mark (5:25-34) and Luke (8:43-48). Firstly, it is as an entity that 'goes out' (ἐξελθυῖαν) from Jesus (Grundmann 1985, 189; Zweip 2019, 267-8). As this happens without his knowledge, Jesus does not seem to be actively controlling it in that moment. Secondly, the power affects the woman in a very limited way. The target of the power is solely her medical problem, the bleeding; she cannot control the power in any way. This power is a *healing* power. The question now is, why was only the woman affected? How did she make herself the target of the effect of the power?

To answer this, the concept of faith should be discussed. The word appears regularly in both the New and Old Testaments, and it is challenging to grasp all its nuances depending on the context; I do not attempt to do so here.[40] As others have proposed, faith is a relational term referring to the loyalty between Christ and the people (Morgan 2015; Oakes 2018), suggesting intentionality. *Pistis* is not only a state of the mind but also praxis.[41] The faith of the woman, specifically her conviction that if she touched the garment of Jesus, she would be healed (Mk 5:28; Mt 9:21), seems to be a compass for or an attractor of this power, the embodiment of this faith, which is intentional and relational. Borrowing from philosophical conceptions of 'essence' and 'accident', originally based on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, in the very short instant of the healing touch, an *essential* property of this power – healing – *accidentally* affected the bleeding woman.[42] Thus, the act of touch guided by faith and resulting in a 'transfer of power' is the efficient healing mechanism described in the story of the bleeding woman.

Fast forward a few centuries, this Gospel narrative resonated with Christians living in Egypt. The Coptic *Life of Bishop Pisentius* by John the Elder contains a reference to the story of the bleeding woman, introducing it as a testimony of the 'power of faith' (ϯϭом ⲛ̄ ϯⲡⲓⲥ†ⲥ) of the woman.[43] In this account, Pisentius combined the notions of power and faith, clearly differentiated in the original Gospel narrative and the New Testament in general. While acknowledging the importance of the touch, he also highlights the immaterial efficacy of faith, locating the 'power' within 'faith' itself, making

40 For a detailed discussion of the term, see Frey, Schliess, Ueberschaer 2017; Hay 1989; Morgan 2015; Oakes 2018; Spicq 1979.

41 For 'faith' in the earliest Christian writings, see Morgan 2015, 212-61.

42 The topic is discussed in various passages of Arist. *Metaph*. 5.30 can be cited as an example of accidence versus essence. For a comprehensive summary, see Roca-Royes 2011.

43 The copy of this manuscript (Brit. Mus. Ms. Oriental 7026) dates to the eleventh century; the manuscript is dated by a colophon (Budge 1913, xxxii). Budge 1913, 85, 271.

any intermediaries for power (such as the garment of Jesus in the Gospel or any amulet) irrelevant. Shenoute of Atripe, abbot of the White Monastery in Egypt, also cites the story, and his interpretation addresses the question of whether Jesus knew that it was the bleeding woman who touched him or not:

> Perhaps also he did not know who had touched the edge of his garments so that her flow of blood ceased and dried up? Likewise, when the wickedness of your father Satan burst, did it burst in your heart, O pagan, and all the more fill you with lack of faith? I will speak and confess the truth: not only did he know that the flow of blood had been with her for twelve years, but he knew her from when she was in her mother. If a potter is ignorant of the vessel that he created with his own hands in his own life, Jesus nonetheless knows the ones whom he formed in the womb. Those who know that […]. (Brakke, Crislip 2015, 271)

Shenoute diminishes the narrative tension of the story. He does not use the story in the same way as Pisentius – that is, as a testimony of the 'power of faith' – but to present Jesus as the creator of life who knows everyone whom he created. According to Shenoute, Jesus Christ knew all along who touched him, so no mystery, from which the story draws its appeal, occurred, diminishing the role of the woman's faith and of her touch.

I now propose to ask whether the healing methods used in the New Testament – touch, proclamation of Jesus, and faith – are present in the later healing traditions in Christian Egypt, and if so, how they have changed. Within the Coptic magical corpus, the healing touch of Jesus was considered efficacious, and this is especially evident in scriptural amulets against fever. P.MoscowCopt. 36 is a parchment amulet from the eighth or ninth century to heal Theōnaia of her fever:

> And after Jesus came to the house of Peter, he saw his mother-in-law lying down feverish, and he touched her hand and the fever left her. She arose and she served him. […] The prayers of Patriarch Severus, Saint Theodoros the general, Saint Thekla, invoke God that he graces Theōnaia with healing![44]

This text, as well as two other healing amulets against fever from the corpus, draws from Mt 8:14-15, but is personalised for a historical

44 P.MoscowCopt. 36 recto ll. 14-20, ll. 30-6 (KYP T717): ⲓ̅ⲥ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲧⲉⲣⲉϥⲉⲓ ⲉⲥⲣⲁⲓ ⲉⲡⲏⲓ ⲙⲡⲉⲧⲣⲟⲥ ⲁϥⲛⲁⲩ ⲉⲧⲉϥϣⲱⲙⲉ ⲉⲥⲛⲏⲭ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉⲥⲉⲏⲙ ⲁϥⲭⲱⲥ ⲇⲉ ⲉⲧⲉⲥⲃⲓⲝ ⲁϥⲕⲁⲁⲥ ⲛⲟⲓ ⲛⲉⲓⲙⲟⲙ ⲁⲥⲧⲱⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲥⲇⲓⲁⲕⲟⲛ[ⲉⲓ] ⲛⲁϥ […] ⲛⲉϣⲗⲏⲗ ⲙⲡⲡⲁⲧⲣⲓⲁⲣⲭⲏⲥ ⲥⲉⲩⲏⲣ \ο/ ⲡⲉⲁⲅⲓⲟⲥ ⲑⲉⲟⲇⲟⲣⲱⲥ ⲡⲉⲥⲧⲣⲁⲧⲏⲗⲁⲧⲏⲥ ⲑⲁⲅⲓⲁ ⲑⲉⲕⲗⲁ ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲕⲁⲗⲓ ⲛ̀ⲛⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲛϥⲭⲁⲣⲓⲍⲉ ⲙⲡⲧⲁⲗⲃⲟ ⲛⲑⲉⲟⲛ̀ⲁⲓ̀ⲁ. Jernstedt 1959b, no. 36.

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woman, Theōnaia.[45] A different manuscript containing a prayer for healing deafness refers to the story of Malchus, the High Priest of Caiaphas (Mt 26:51; Mk 14:47; Lk 22:50-51; Jn 18:10-11). Simon Peter cut off the ear of the servant Malchus, likely to prevent the arrest of Jesus. Nevertheless, Jesus healed Malchus by touching his ear. The Coptic prayer using this story calls upon Jesus to do as he had done with Malchus: "But now, Lord Jesus Christ, stretch out your right hand and touch this deaf!" (BnF Copte 129.20 fol. 178 (135), verso ll. 1-7: ⲧⲉⲛⲟⲩ ⲇⲉ ⲡ̀ⲭ̀ⲟ̄ⲉ̄ⲥ ⲓ̄ⲥ̄ ⲡⲉ̄ⲭ̄ⲥ̄ ⲉⲕⲉⲥⲟⲟⲩ̣ⲧ̣ⲛ̀ ⲛ̀ⲧⲉ̣ⲕ̀ⲥ̀ⲓ̀ⲭ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲛⲟⲩ̣ⲛⲁⲙ̣ ⲛⲉⲕⲭⲱⲥ · ⲉⲡⲉ̀ⲓⲁⲗ) (Preininger 2022, 353-4). So, not only is the touch of Jesus mentioned in scriptural amulets, but also in prayers that do not contain direct quotations of the New Testament. Thus, the efficacy of Jesus Christ's healing touch extended not only to the Gospel but was part of a larger contemporary healing tradition, and this concept was creatively employed in prayers.

Concerning the proclamation of Jesus, it remained effective in the Coptic magical material through the scriptural amulets. Rarely, however, were the amulets conceived as the direct speech of Jesus, with the notable exception of the amuletic letters supposedly written by Jesus to King Abgar (Bélanger Sarrazin 2020, 191-3). Lastly, concerning faith in Jesus, πίστις does not typically occur in the magical material written in Coptic as a concept efficacious for healing, apart from direct citations of the Gospels on scriptural amulets, gemstones, or other 'magical' objects. However, as Sanzo pointed out, in a group of amulets for protection against fever from Oxyrhynchus, written in Greek and dated to the fourth century, faith of the clients is mentioned "as a prerequisite for ritual efficacy" (Sanzo 2024, 57).[46] I carefully suggest that the concept of faith played an implicit role in magical practices, in which the rituals and objects played an explicit one, as they were 'material' or 'tangible' additions of sorts to the ephemeral faith.

5 Conclusion

The research question posed at the beginning of this paper concerned understanding the healing effects of the hematite gemstone and the wooden tablet, both of which reference the Gospel story about the *Haemorrhoissa*. Faith, while allegedly sufficient for the biblical woman according to the Gospel narratives and perhaps also for the

45 P.HermitageCopt. 65 (Jernstedt 1959a, no. 65; KYP M55); British Library MS Or 6948 (2) (Crum 1922, no. 3; KYP M334). See also PGM Christian 18 for a Greek written amulet with the same motive.

46 P.Oxy. 6.924; P.Oxy. 82.5306; 82.5307.

ideal woman, was not enough for the historical one; that is where magical practices come into play. In both the New Testament narratives and in the practical ritual use of the objects referring to them, a 'power' emanated; in one case from Jesus, in the other from the objects representing or even enacting this narrative. In the Gospel miracles, the woman received an 'accidental' property of the 'essence' of power that came out from Jesus Christ through her touch. In the ritual use of amulets, their users, by being in their proximity, participated in the representation of the healing relationship enacted through the objects.

The story was transformed to fit the material constraints of the hematite object; for instance, it was simplified into a two-part narrative to correspond to the double-sided form of the gemstone. The constraints of the tradition from which this object emerged, and which shaped it, are complex. Iconographically, the story must have been told in a way that was understandable at first glance, according to the contemporary conventions. At the same time, the role of the images was (in addition to other elements such as materiality) to ensure the object's efficacy. A literal iconographical depiction of the story would likely not suit the needs of the user of the amulet; something is unsettling about this miracle in Capernaum, as Jesus had his back turned to the woman when she touched him, resulting in him questioning her. This moment is not only omitted on the object, but its role is also minimized in Shenoute's and Pisentius' interpretations of the narrative, one putting forward Christ's knowledge of all creation, the other highlighting her 'power of faith'. The act of touch was minimized, and faith combined with the act of blessing gained prominence. The woman being in a *proskynesis* posture and blessed by Jesus is the proper and ideal relation of these two figures, which cannot be misinterpreted, and, more importantly, incorporates the attitude of the user of this amulet, creating the already-mentioned ideal woman to suit the particular historical context.

So, the object enacted the relationship of the ideal woman with Jesus, to which the historical woman directed her intention in the hopes of being healed. Therefore, the Gospel narratives and the episode as conveyed through the amulet seem different; the story was re-told to suit an object of specific use belonging to a particular historical tradition, to which the initial healing method of the Gospel miracle (i.e., making a power emanate from Jesus through the act of touch and faith) did not belong anymore. But the story of the *Haemorrhoissa* was also reinterpreted on the tablet, simply by copying it onto a surface intended for specific, perhaps amuletic, use. This recontextualization is also a reinterpretation of the text, now referring not only to the bleeding woman in Capernaum but also implicitly to a suffering historical individual for whom it was intended. Similarly to the gemstone, it operated through proximity

and drew efficacy from the text itself. To conclude, not only did this story of the bleeding woman resonate in the theological discourses of Shenoute and Pisentius, but it also resonated in folk traditions, precisely in ritual practices, among the Christians living in Egypt.

Abbreviations

CBd = Nagy, Á.M. (ed.). *Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database*. Budapest: Museum of Fine Arts. http://cbd.mfab.hu/cbd/1123.

KYP M = Dosoo, K.; Love, E.O.D.; Preininger, M. (eds). *Kyprianos Database of Ancient Ritual Texts and Objects*. Würzburg: University of Würzburg. https://www.coptic-magic.phil.uni-wuerzburg.de/index.php/manuscripts-search/.

KYP T = Dosoo, K.; Love, E.O.D.; Preininger, M. (eds). *Kyprianos Database of Ancient Ritual Texts and Objects*. Würzburg: University of Würzburg. https://www.coptic-magic.phil.uni-wuerzburg.de/index.php/texts-search/.

PCM = Dosoo, K.; Preininger, M. (2023). *Papyri Copticae Magicae*. *Coptic Magical Texts. Volume 1: Formularies*. Berlin: De Gruyter.

P.Oxy. 6 = Grenfell, B.P.; Hunt, A.S. (1908). *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. 6. London: The Egypt Exploration Fund.

P.Oxy. 82 = Gonis N.; Maltomini, F.; Henry, W.B.; Slattery, S. (2016). *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, vol. 82. London: Egypt Exploration Society.

PGM = Preisendanz, K.; Henrichs, A. (1973-74). *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die Griechischen Zauberpapyri*. Stuttgart: Teubner.

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