



**The authorship of PGM VI (P.Lond. I
47) + II (P.Berol. inv. 5026)**

Eleni Chronopoulou

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**The authorship of PGM VI (P.Lond. I 47)
+ II (P.Berol. inv. 5026)***

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The materiality of the Graeco-Egyptian magical papyri has traditionally been neglected in favor of their religious content.¹ Recently, however, scholars have come to realize that the material aspect of these documents can also make a significant contribution to their contextualization and interpretation. The present paper is a contribution to the study of material aspects of PGM II, kept in Berlin, and PGM VI, which is one of the magical texts in London.²

Two days after the Papyrological Congress during a workshop in the frame of the project “Transmission of Magical Knowledge in Antiquity: The Papyrus Magical Handbooks in Context”³ following a paleographical study of the two papyri, it was discovered that PGM VI is a missing part of PGM II. They are parts of the same roll and the column of PGM VI should be read as a column preceding PGM II. The identification of PGM VI as part of the same roll was based on the following observations: a) the *ductus* of the letters, which is identical; b) both papyri feature a marginal note with a missing part at their upper part and when they are put together fit perfectly and form the phrase ποίη|[σ]ις αὐτ|η; c) In the lower part of PGM II, there are some surviving letters at the same height as the two incomplete lines of PGM VI, lines 45 and 56.⁴

My original oral presentation was focused exclusively on PGM II. However, this discovery on one hand forced me to reconsider some points and apply the corresponding changes or additions to the oral presentation during the congress –including the title–, on the other hand it shed more light on some problematic points.

* This research has been performed in the frame of the project FFI2014-57517 “Greek Magical Papyri in Context” funded by the Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad, and the Neubauer Collegium for Culture and Society (University of Chicago) project “Transmission of Magical Knowledge” (2015-2018).

¹ Given that both terms, magic and materiality, tend to be multi-faceted, with multiple meanings and purposes, it is simplest to cite Jan Bremmer’s remarks in Boschung / Bremmer (2015) 7: «The term “materiality” encompasses all the artifacts and ingredients used in magic, usually during the performance of a magical recipe but the papyri are a kind of material used in the framework of magic. As they are written by magicians and they transmitted magical spells, symbols and drawings, their paleographical study could provide us with invaluable information about the identity and the status of the scribes-magicians and about the particular context of their creation».

² PGM VI was bought by G. Anastasi in Memphis, as it is written on the containing sleeve of the papyrus (Preisendanz / Henrichs [1974] 198-199). The place of acquisition of PGM II is less clear. It is believed to have been bought in Thebes. The overall width of the two papyri in their current state is 116 cm about and the overall height 34 cm.

³ This project augments and extends the re-edition and re-translation of magical handbooks from the Greco-Roman Egypt, previously edited by Preisendanz (1928-1931), and comprises their first large-scale study as material objects and media of cultural transmission: <https://papyrusmagicalhandbook.wordpress.com> (last accession 24/10/2018).

⁴ See Chronopoulou (2017). In what follows, I use the term roll to refer to PGM II + VI as a unitary document.

The roll, containing five columns of text and six marginal notes, describes a preliminary ritual aiming at inducing a revelatory dream. The structure of the ritual is complicated because the scribe proposes alternatives in case the main ritual is unsuccessful and the main ritual is interwoven with these alternatives in a way that is confusing.

1. The formal aspects of the roll

The first point regards the particularity of the magical writing. The magical texts are classified as paraliterary texts, and for that reason, in combination with their content, have been largely ignored by mainstream papyrology, so that the handwriting and scribal habits of this genre of text have not yet been as closely compared, analyzed and discussed as the handwriting of the documentary and literary papyri.⁵ Consequently, it is unsafe to apply conclusions derived from the study of literary hands directly to magical documents. Moreover, the problem of the lack of bibliography is exacerbated because so little is known of the provenience and ‘Sitz im Leben’ of these papyri. It is hard enough to reconstruct the contents of Anastasi’s various collections let alone the circumstances of the creation of individual items within them.

a. The use of different inks

The first impression given by PGM II and PGM VI is that the roll was written by two or even three different hands, using two different kinds of ink.⁶ The traditional ink in Egypt was made from carbon (lamp-black or soot) mixed with thin gum to hold it from suspension and provide adhesion.⁷ From the third century BCE we find a so-called ‘iron-gall ink’ being used as well: this was usually made from an infusion of oak-galls mixed with green vitriol (iron sulphate). This type of ink is unstable, liable to fade and tends to damage the papyrus beneath it.⁸ The majority of our roll seems to be written in iron-gall ink, but until this can be confirmed by analysis, it remains a hypothesis.⁹ The remainder of the text seems to have been written in carbon ink. The odd thing is that these two inks alternate throughout the roll. Thus, in the text in columns we note four changes of ink:

a) PGM VI 1 - PGM II 38 in iron-gall ink b) PGM II 39-48 in carbon ink c) PGM II 48-162 in iron-gall ink d) PGM II 162-174 in carbon ink. (See fig. 1).

The marginal notes are written in carbon ink, i.e. the same ink as is used at the end of the roll (see figs. 2a, b, c, d, e, f).¹⁰

⁵ There are only two studies. See Nodar / Torallas (2015) and Nodar (2017).

⁶ See Preisendanz (1928) 29; Monte (2015) 36-37.

⁷ Lampe (1969) 61. On the inks in Late Antiquity, I refer to the contribution by Ira Rabin in this volume. Each type of ink, as Rabin explains, has distinctive physical and optical properties. Consequently, in our case, the repeated change of ink has created the impression of the intervention of a different hand for some scholars. As I have been informed, the museum will soon proceed with an analysis of the inks in collaboration with Dr. Rabin.

⁸ See Bülow-Jacobsen (2011) 18.

⁹ The papyrus is glued to a paper and that makes ink analysis a very difficult task to undertake. However, I am going to use the terms iron-gall ink and carbon ink in order to distinguish the two different qualities of it.

¹⁰ The left part of the marginal note 2a is in PGM VI. For a complete image of the note see Chronopoulou (2017). It must be stressed that the letters that survive at the bottom of the left margin of PGM II and which in reality are the ends of the lines 45-46 of PGM VI (see fig. 3), before the matching of the two papyri, seemed previously to belong to a marginal note, with the anomaly of being the only one written in iron-gall ink (all the other notes were written in carbon ink). After the matching of the papyri, it becomes clear that it was written in iron-gall ink because it was never a marginal note, but belongs to the text of the first column, which is also written in iron-gall ink.

This fact allows the following hypothesis: the scribe, having completed writing out the *praxis*, read the whole text through again and added some notes in order to help the reader/s not to get lost in this complicated ritual. The handwriting is clumsy and hastily written but the *ductus* of the letters does not differ.

Moreover, there is no clear syntactical justification for the changes of ink. In other words, the change of ink does not correlate with the beginning of different sections or even sentences in the text. On the contrary, the changes of ink may occur, apparently randomly, in the middle of sentences.

b) One or two hands?

The main argument in favour of thinking that only one scribe copied out our text, however, rests upon the analysis of letter-forms and ‘mise en page’. I have employed four criteria for my analysis of these features, all of them in standard use.¹¹ They are:

1. The *ductus* of the letters: the way in which the letters are drawn. 2. The presence or absence of some optional elements (i.e. breathings, accents, lectional marks, punctuation, spelling conventions, etc.) 3. The holistic impression of the handwriting. 4. The format and the layout of the papyrus.

Close inspection of the *ductus* of the letters makes it evident that some letters, notably epsilon, are written in different ways even where the ink is the same (see figs. 5a, b and 9a, b). Conversely, however, a number of letters are formed in closely similar ways in the two different ink blocks (see figs. 5a, b and 9a, b). I will try to show the most eloquent examples with regard to my hypothesis. I have chosen letters from different parts of PGM II, both in iron-gall and carbon ink.

Kappa is formed without lifting the pen (see figs. 6a, b, c, d). The case of *beta* that sometimes features a particular ending in its formation –its upper loop is not closed and its conclusion takes a turn to the right towards the inside of the circle and sometimes even touches its right part– is particularly telling (see figs. 7a, b). Letter *xi* is alike in both types of ink (see figs. 8a, b, c). In both papyri *epsilon* is often formed in two movements: first a semi-circle is drawn (in the form of a big c) and then a smaller one is drawn inside it, joining it at its upper end (see figs. 9a, b). In figures 9a, b we can discern a triangular *delta* but a rounded *delta* appears also in both iron-gall and carbon ink (see figs. 10a, b).

This formalistic comparison could be the basis for reconsideration regarding the two hands. From these details, it seems quite clear that the letter-forms are the same in both metallic and carbon sections.¹² In view of these arguments, the hypothesis that the roll was written by two scribes is surely to be rejected. We must conclude that one scribe alone copied out the entire roll.

2. Why change inks?

The question that at once arises is why the scribe changed inks like this. I can suggest two possible scenarios. The first is that the text was written over a relatively extended period of time and that the scribe had different kinds of ink at his disposal at these times. Quite apart from other duties, it is clear from the expression ἐν ἄλλῳ δὲ οὕτως εὔρον (l. 50), «in another version of this *praxis* I found an alternative procedure» that he was comparing his ‘Vorlage’

¹¹ Konstantinidou (2010) 355.

¹² The readers can find a photo of this papyrus in the site of the museum and compare more letters <http://ww2.smb.museum/berlpap/index.php/record/?result=0&Alle=5026> (last accession 5/09/2018).

against at least one other. The main objection to this scenario is that the word τετριμμένα (l. 38) (See figs. 11a, b) is written partly in iron-gall ink and partly in carbon, for it would be very odd to leave a word incomplete between writing sessions.

The second hypothesis is that the writer of our roll was also a professional scribe, or someone who had various qualities of ink at his disposal, and worked without paying attention to which ink was used each time. I imagine that the appearance of the different inks was not so evident at the time of writing. The iron-gall ink was not faded, neither did it leave marks around the letters, so the two inks would not have given a different visual impression when they were fresh.

There might also be a third scenario. A study of the chemical composition of inks has been undertaken to ascertain the type of ink used on Demotic and Greek texts dating from 252-298 BCE in the collection of the Louvre. The PIXE analysis method was employed.¹³ The analysis showed that all the Demotic texts were written in carbon ink whereas all but one of the Greek texts were written in iron-gall ink.¹⁴ Perhaps our scribe was aware of this tradition and he tried to follow it: however, it seems probable that either he lacked sufficient supplies of iron-gall ink, or, perhaps more likely, he simply became distracted from time to time and used other quality of ink.

3. The date

I have left the most difficult issue till last. This is the dating of the papyrus. We have to bear in mind that sometimes the handwriting of magical texts is more or less stylized. It appears that the scribes deliberately avoided personalizing their handwriting. Their writing tends to be neutral because most of the magical scrolls or codices were used as manuals addressed to other persons and kept in magical libraries.¹⁵ This is something making the dating of these papyri a difficult task. Our roll is an excellent case in point, since PGM II was dated to the fourth or fifth century¹⁶ while Kenyon dated PGM VI to the second¹⁷ and Wessely to the third century CE,¹⁸ yet the hand is identical in both.

I believe that the fifth century can be rejected because the handwriting is not so late in my opinion and the papyrus should be dated between the second and the third century. A careful paleographical study demonstrates that the *ductus* of the majority of the letters –such as *eta*, *epsilon*, *pi*, *kappa*, and *delta* appear in both centuries. Although I must stress that the general impression of the papyrus, at least to my eyes, would indicate the second century, the third century cannot be ruled out.¹⁹

¹³ Proton Induced X-ray Emission (PIXE) is an X-ray spectrographic technique, which can be used for the non-destructive, simultaneous elemental analysis of solid, liquid or aerosol filter samples. Although the method is not sensitive to carbon, carbon ink could be deduced by its lack of metallic elements compared to iron-gall ink.

¹⁴ Nicholson / Shaw (2000) 238. See also Clarysse (1993) 189; Delange et al. (1990) gives examples of demotic papyri written in carbon ink while in the same document, the Greek subscription is written in iron-gall ink.

¹⁵ See Suárez (2012).

¹⁶ The first editor, Parthey (1865), although he did a very good job in reading the papyrus, did not attempt to give a date of production. Shubart (1925) 68 made the first attempt, dating the papyrus to the 4th century. Preisendanz was not sure either and proposed three different centuries, the 5th century (1927) 107, the 4th century (1928) 18, and the 3rd century (1933) 93. Bagnall (2009) 83-85 proposed 3rd century as the century of their creation. The most recent study, as far as I know, that of Monte (2011) 55, follows Preisendanz, dating the papyrus to the 4th century.

¹⁷ Kenyon (1893) 81-83.

¹⁸ Wessely (1988) 125.

¹⁹ The unknown circumstances surrounding the discovery of PGM I and II have provoked a long and continuing debate about their incorporation or not into the so-called Theban Cache. The majority of scholars include it in

Regarding the possibility of the 4th century dating, although some elements, such as the form of *epsilon* in some rare instances (see fig. 5a) belong to this century, the *ductus* of the other letters and especially the general impression of the roll, does not correspond to the fourth century.

Although the match of the two papyri gives us a fuller text it seems that PGM VI is not the beginning of the papyrus. The beginning of PGM VI is fragmentary but the part that has survived reveals an invocation to Apollo and consequently it is not likely to be the beginning of the ritual. It is also remarkable that if indeed the left margin of PGM VI –as the surviving fragments are now arranged– is placed in the right position²⁰ then the marginal space is significantly wider than the margins that separate the columns in PGM II, thus we can assume there was no other column in this roll. This assumption allows us to think that the beginning of the magical practice was written on another roll.

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the Theban Library and there are few that remain unconvinced, among them Brasher and Dieleman. About the Theban library see Dosoo's article (2016) 251-274. Indisputably, these two papyri seem quite different from the rest of the papyri of the Theban Library and they present some common particularities. They also seem to have the same history because they appear suddenly together at the same time. I am not going to propose another model about the Theban Library here, but I want to stress that it is highly likely that among other things, the similarities they share reveal the same period of production. The hands are not the same but similar. A fundamental difference is that the letters are generally formed separately and not linked together. Furthermore, in my opinion PGM I belongs to the 3rd century and there are some *comparanda* that support this dating such as P.Oxy. XIV 1697.

²⁰ There is a piece of unwritten papyrus separated from the rest of the roll. During the restoration it is placed in the bottom left part of the column of PGM VI. It seems to me that the fibers fit and that it is placed correctly.

Preisendanz, K. / Henrichs, A. (1972–1974), *Papyri Graecae Magicae. Die griechischen Zauberpapyri*. vols. I-II (Stuttgart).

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Plates²¹



Fig. 1. PGM II

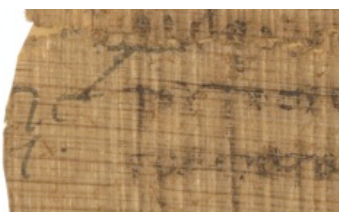


Fig. 2a

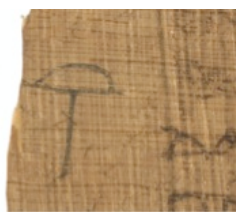


Fig. 2b

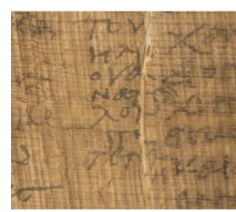


Fig. 2c

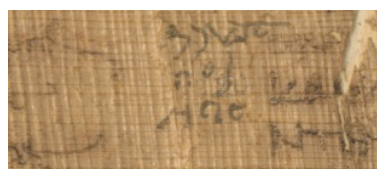


Fig. 2d

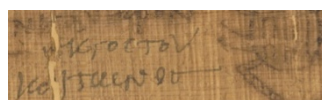


Fig. 2e

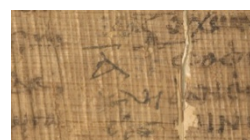


Fig. 2f

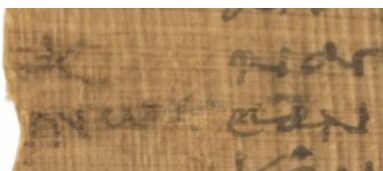


Fig. 3

²¹ All the images belong to Berlin, Staatliche Museen P.5026. © Ägyptisches Museum und Papyrussammlung.

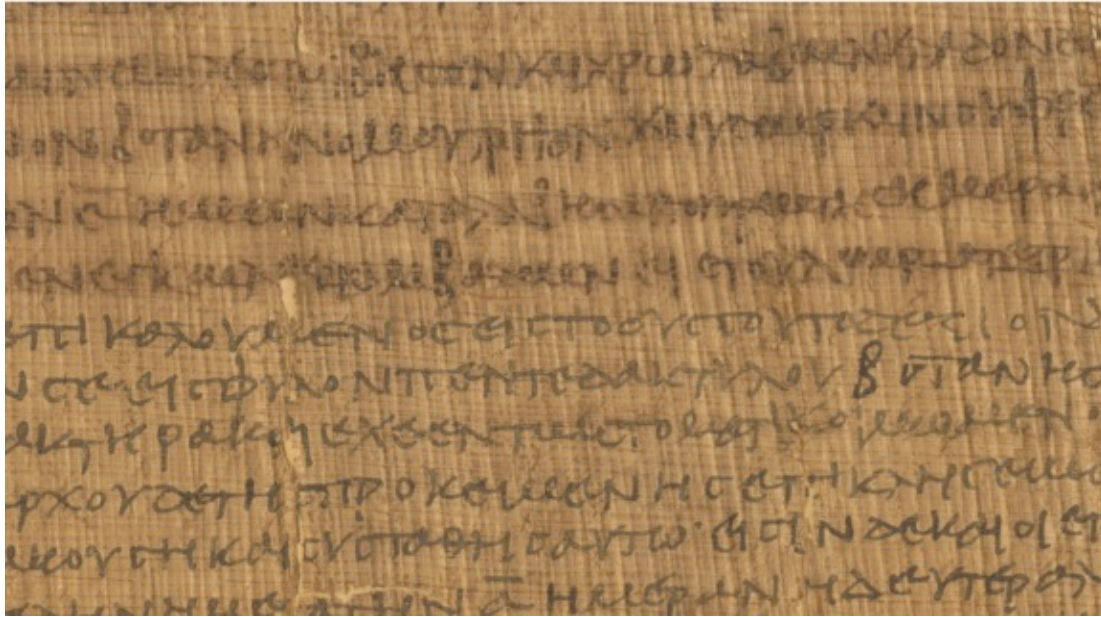


Fig. 4

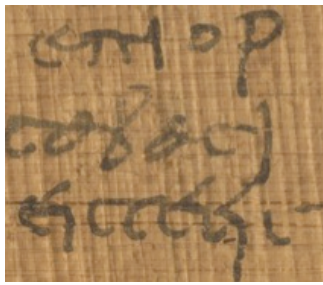


Fig. 5a

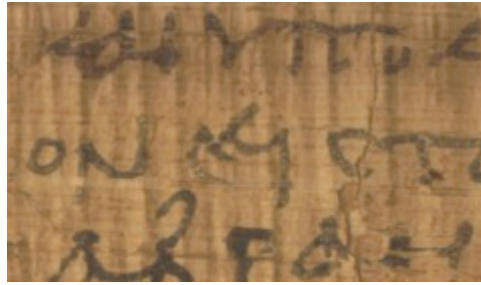


Fig. 5b

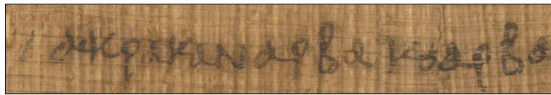


Fig. 6a

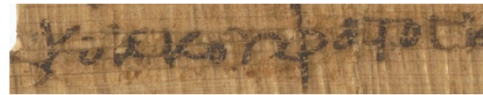


Fig. 6b



Fig. 6c



Fig. 6d

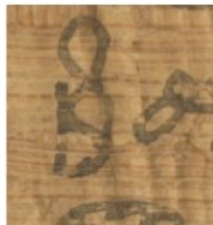


Fig. 7a

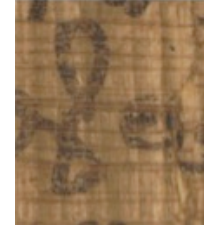


Fig. 7b

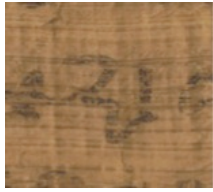


Fig. 8a

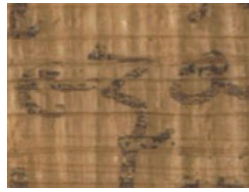


Fig. 8b

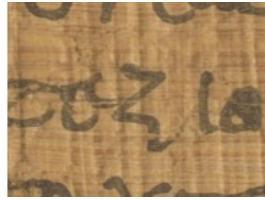


Fig. 8c

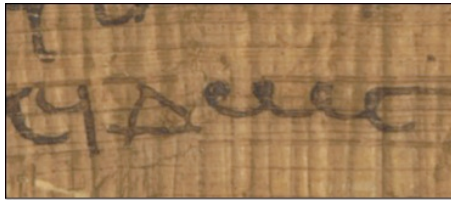


Fig. 9a



Fig. 9b



Fig. 10a

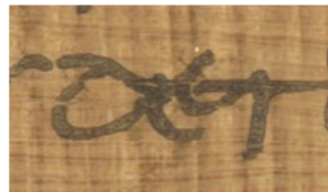


Fig. 10b

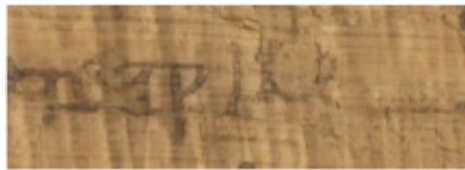


Fig. 11a

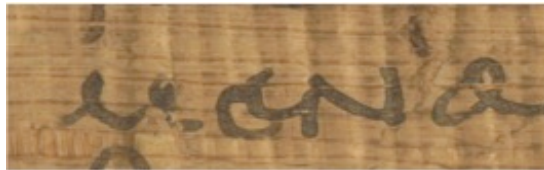


Fig. 11b