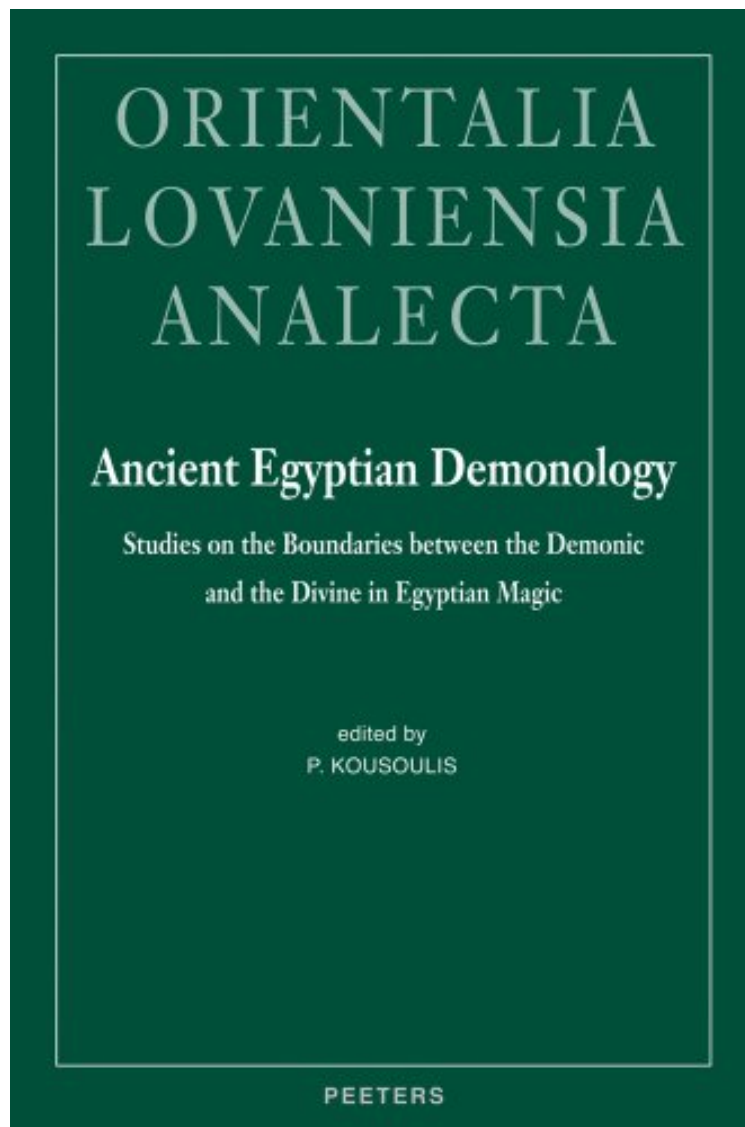


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Ancient Egyptian Demonology. Studies on the Boundaries between the Demonic and the Divine in Egyptian Magic (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta)

P. Kousoulis

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P. Kousoulis : Ancient Egyptian Demonology. Studies on the Boundaries between the Demonic and the Divine in Egyptian Magic (Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ancient Egyptian Demonology. Studies on the Boundaries between the Demonic

and the Divine in Egyptian Magic (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*):

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Decidedly accessible papers on the reach of demons/gods in Egyptian magic practice. By P. Nagy Extreme caution should be exercised when foreign terms, like our modern word "demon", carrying specific values within a certain local and cultural environment are employed to describe Egyptian notions of a diverse and multidimensional nature. They have different connotations in different contexts, scholarly and popular, and are therefore liable to be misleading or completely inappropriate in certain circumstances and local environments. Egyptian demonic entities could be either beneficent or maleficent whereas "demons" in our modern sense are almost always maleficent, either because of personal grudges they bear their victims or because they are the factotums of evil powers such as Satan. To frame the issue posed by the questions in the beginning of this introduction in another way, the question that needs to be the focus of future research on the subject is not "What is an Egyptian demon?", but "When is an Egyptian demon?" In his article, Frandsen has proved quite convincingly that, at least for one category of "evil" phenomena - that of being *bwt* - manipulation is the key to understand why a person or thing could be temporally assigned with *bwt* or not. *Bwt* is not a quality, but intrinsic to things, material or immaterial, as part of their own nature from the time of creation. Since creation was not a static process, but it was re-enacted and renewed every day by the king and the priests within a proper sacramental environment, this creator-giving property of *bwt* could be manipulated in each case. Manipulation through ritual performance is the key to unlock the multifarious character and role of the demonic in the Egyptian belief system. Instead of searching for static representatives of good or evil, we should look at certain literary and iconographical devices of the Egyptian craft -- puns and paranomasia, homophony, alliteration and wordplays on meaning, just to name a few --, which are well known from the funerary texts of the Old Kingdom and continued to be an important feature of funerary and temple texts until the end of the Egyptian language, when Coptic magical texts continued the tradition, and are equally employed for manipulating and exposing the demonic within different ritual frameworks. The inner magical mechanism of the latter, especially through the exploitation of sounds and recited formulae, artificially creates and manipulates names and, thus, divine or demonic beings, since the former are indelibly connected to the essence of the latter. The contributors to this volume were aware of the fact that both magic and demon are value-loaded concepts and that an in depth knowledge of their nature could only be achieved if both notions are placed within their own temporal and cultural framework. They take into account the diverse character and agency of the demonic and to oppose the idea of the predominance of the negative characteristics in it, which has been determined by the arrogant, mainly Christian, concept of primitive religious concepts and ethics developing into higher forms of religiosity in post-Christian times. Similarly, the opposition between magic and religion and the faulty idea of a linear development from magic to ever higher forms of religion that characterized most anthropological and historical studies of religion since the seminal work of James George Frazer in 1900 is clearly refuted. Despite, however, the inappropriateness of the word "demon" to describe the entities on whom this volume focuses, some cognate words, such as "demonic" (the totality of malign characteristics or roles of these spiritual entities) and "demonology" (the whole complex of such beliefs in the Egyptian culture), are used as convenient ways of expressing ideas that otherwise would require elaborate periphrasis. This collective volume of essays on ancient Egyptian demonology and magic owes its origins to the first symposium on Egyptology ever held in Greece. This memorable gathering of scholars took place on the island of Rhodes in July 2003. The symposium was sponsored by the Department of Mediterranean Studies of the University of the Aegean, the Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, and the *Metaekdotiki Publishers*, and was organized by Dr. Mark Collier (University of Liverpool) and myself. In accordance with the thematic sessions of the Symposium, this volume is divided in two sections: the first explores the nature and hypostases of the demonic in theology and magic, the reflections of demons in the Egyptian society, and the demonic interference in dreams. The second section presents new insights at Egyptian magic and magical texts, rituals and apotropaic objects. Each article offers a specific perspective and all cover a wide span of time.

Ten essays which give an account of many aspects of ancient Egyptian demonology. Topics include the multiple persona of the demonic or name vs. identity in the Egyptian formation of the demonic, nightmares and underworld demons, dream rituals and magic, categories of demonic entities and the vague distinction between the divine and the demonic in Egyptian cosmology and ritual, the theological and demonic aspects of Egyptian magic, and demons as reflections of human society.