Religious Studies
Kaleidoscope

Tomáš Bubík
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Nikola Svobodníková (eds.)

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Preface

In today's globalized world, where diverse cultures, value systems, and religious traditions increasingly converge and intertwine, the study of religious belief and behavior takes on particular significance. Religion, with roots that reach deep into human history, shapes both personal and collective identities and contributes to the dynamics of interpersonal relationships as well as broader social structures.

Within the modern humanities, religious studies—as a secular academic discipline—examines a wide range of religious traditions, their transformations, mutual interactions, and the ways they are reflected in contemporary society. It offers a framework for better insight into how faith, culture, and society engage in dialogue—at times harmonious, at others conflictual—and how these interactions resonate with current global challenges. This monograph aims to enhance comprehension of the variability of religious practices across historical periods and cultural contexts.

The presented publication is a collective work of doctoral students in the field of religious studies working at the Faculty of Arts of Palacký University in Olomouc, where the doctoral program in this field was newly accredited in 2019. It is the first more significant academic achievement of a young generation of scholars, reflecting both their academic enthusiasm and the level of their research. The main goal of the book is to present to the broader public the diversity of research topics and approaches that current doctoral students apply in examining religious and spiritual phenomena. Each chapter is the result of their dissertation projects and the current state of their research. The diversity of selected topics and approaches shows the interdisciplinarity of today's religious studies. The monograph is divided into three thematic parts, reflecting key discipline areas: symbolic and media representations of religion, religion in the context of identity and social structures, and everyday religiosity and rituals.

The first part, "Religion, Symbols, and Media Representation," examines the symbolic and media dimensions of religion. Nikola Svobodníková examines in detail the cultural and religious transfers

of the symbol of Abraxas and the concept of translatability as a key mechanism of religious syncretism. Svobodníková also points to the broader cultural contexts in which these transfers take place and analyzes the impact of symbolic migrations on contemporary spirituality. Vilém Škuta focuses on the thematization of religion by Israeli football clubs on social media in the context of the Arab-Jewish conflict, pointing out the strategic use of symbolic representations to mobilize collective identity. Škuta also analyzes how sports media shape and alter the discourse of religious and ethnic identity. Michaela Šimonová analyzes the transformation of the mythological figure of Loki in modern media, using theories of affective arrangement. She further discusses how adaptations of mythological characters influence broader popular culture and how media representations of mythology respond to societal needs.

The second part, "Religious Beliefs, Identity, and Social Contexts," addresses the ways in which religion influences identity formation and social dynamics. Jaroslav Hurtík offers a detailed analysis of the process of conversion under prison conditions, based on Goffman's concept of the total institution. Hurtík's research shows how the restrictive environment shapes new religious identities while also opening a broader discussion on the ethical aspects of spiritualization in correctional facilities. Markéta Muczková critically discusses the current clash between evolutionary theory and creationism in the Czech educational system, pointing out the broader social and cultural implications of this conflict. She further examines how these debates influence the relationships between school, family, and wider society. Lenka Jedličková provides deep insight into the spirituality of managers and its impact on coping with stress in the workplace. Her work suggests that the integration of spiritual practices into working life can contribute to better decision-making and overall health. Radim Byrtus historically analyzes Pietism in the regional context of Cieszyn Silesia and emphasizes the key role of social and cultural factors in shaping religious movements. Byrtus's work also maps how Pietism influenced local identities and how it contributed to the formation of a specific cultural environment in the region.

The third part, "Rituals, Lived Religion, and Embodied Practices," deals with the issue of everyday religiosity and the importance of

rituals in the contemporary world. Veronika Herníková focuses on the transformation of funeral rituals and attitudes toward death, from the perspective of interdisciplinary approaches including psychology, anthropology, and philosophy. Her chapter also reveals how contemporary societies overcome existential anxiety through innovations in ritual practices. Klára Kubálková analyzes the behavior of members of new religious movements based on costly signaling theories, with a detailed focus on the groups Universe People and Heaven's Gate. Her work offers new insights into the motivations of members of these groups and also into the dynamics of trust within such communities. Cezary Mizia presents the phenomenon of Polish pilgrimage as an example of the blending of traditional religious pilgrimage and modern tourism, based on the concept of homo viator. Mizia also points to the transformation of the significance of pilgrimage sites in contemporary Poland and the influence of these changes on the social perception of religiosity.

We hope that this collective monograph will become a scholarly, albeit modest, contribution to a better understanding of certain religious phenomena and will also shed light on the nature of religious studies at our university.

Tomáš Bubík, editor

Part I

Religion, Symbols, and Media Representation

Transformation, transmission, and representation of religious concepts in history and media

1

A Blessing and a Curse: The Transmission of Abraxas in Ancient Sources

Nikola Svobodníková

Throughout history, the world's nations and cultures have not been frozen in time and space, and for the most part they have not been isolated from external influences. Consequently, these entities have undergone processes of development in various directions. One of the processes under examination is syncretism in all its social, cultural, and religious dimensions. Representing a positive or negative approach, utilization or rejection, resulting from deliberate choice or natural development; the aspects of syncretism appear in the thoughts of scholars since Antiquity. This present work analyzes the syncretic process of the name

Abraxas by examining its presence among the ancient religious and magical traditions. The relevant sources used in this study are Gnostic texts from the Nag Hammadi library, Greco-Egyptian magical tradition found in papyri and amulets, and the Jewish magical texts *Sefer ha-Razim* and *Ḥarba de-Moshe*.[1]

Syncretism and Translatability

Syncretism is perceived as a process of one culture (religion, society, or tradition) adapting symbols and meanings originally belonging to another culture (religion, society, or tradition). Syncretic processes may be traced through a substantial part of human history, with some form of the term *syncretism* often appearing in debates on world religions. These discourses frequently encompass the examination of potential relations, similarities, and oppositions that may be predicated on borrowings or, in contrast, on demarcation from each other. Two opposing approaches have emerged in terms of defining syncretism: negative approach emphasizes the contamination of an original pure tradition, while positive approach considers syncretism as an element enriching a tradition. The term appears in context of other sociological and anthropological concepts such as "acculturation," "culture contact," "melting pot," etc. While these concepts unquestionably hold relevance in disparate thematic frameworks, they are for the purposes of this article to be considered beyond the immediate periphery of interest.[2]

The concept of translatability is inherently embedded within the very definition of the word itself, signifying the inherent capacity or possibility for translation. While the term carries clear linguistic implications, its application may extend to the realm of concepts, ideas, motifs, and traditions. This potential for transfer (translation) of the concept into a context of another culture, society, or religion is a salient aspect of the term's broader significance. The definition of both of the terms *syncretism* and *translatability* engages a central debate

1 The present study is grounded in the author's master's thesis. For more detailed accounts, especially for deeper research into the individual textual sources, see: Nikola Svobodníková, "A Blessing and a Curse: Divine Names in Jewish Textual Tradition" (MA thesis, Palacký University Olomouc, 2021).

2 Rosalind Shaw and Charles Stewart, "Introduction: Problematizing Syncretism," in *Syncretism / Anti-syncretism: The politics of religious synthesis*, ed. Charles Stewart and Rosalind Shaw (Routledge, 1994), 1–4.

in semiotics and conceptual anthropology: the relationship between a signifier (the name) and the concept it signifies. This relationship is either understood as non-arbitrary—where the name is seen as intrinsically tied to or embodying the concept—or as arbitrary, following Saussurean linguistic theory.[3]

In the context of the dichotomy of positive and negative approaches, both syncretism and translatability may be seen to pose challenges to established doctrinal systems—whether religious, philosophical, or even magical—in terms of establishing and perceiving identity and the system's real or potential difference from other identities. These processes often unsettle the authority to demarcate "true" and "false" motifs, traditions, and practices. Self-perception and the power to self-identify often erode in historical translation due to incomplete evidence or ongoing cultural borrowing, creating methodological challenges for research.[4]

Translatability has figured prominently in philosophical, religious, and magical discourse, primarily concerning two dimensions: linguistic (whether traditions can be rendered in another language) and conceptual (whether meanings can transfer across cultures). The positive approach is exemplified by Herodotus, who freely equated foreign deities with Greek counterparts—identifying Baal as Zeus Belus or Amun as Theban Zeus—demonstrating confident cross-cultural theological translation.[5] The opposing view is represented by Origen, who strongly asserts the essential untranslatability of sacred names. He maintains their inherent significance, arguing these names are divinely appointed rather than arbitrarily assigned. Origen extends this principle to magic, contending that only the original, untranslated name retains proper efficacy in magical practice.[6] This untranslatability renders theologically impermissible any equivalence between

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3 Jae Jung Song, "The Translatability-Universals Connection in Linguistic Typology: Much Ado About Something," *Babel* 51, no. 4 (2005): 308–309, https://doi.org/10.1075/babel.51.4.03son; Moshe Barasch, "Visual Syncretism: A Case Study," in *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between*, ed. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (Stanford University Press, 1996), 37–39.

4 Shaw and Stewart, "Introduction," 6.

5 Herodotus, *Herodotus, With an English Translation by A. D. Godley*, Vol. 1, trans. Alfred Denis Godley (William Heinemann Ltd., 1920), 225–227.

6 Origen, *Contra Celsum*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge University Press, 1980), 23–25.

the name "God" (e.g., as understood by Jews and Christians—Origen used the Greek names of his time and region) and pagan theonyms such as Zeus, Amun-Ra, etc.

The dual perception of translatability and untranslatability was not only a matter of varying opinion; it may also be traced throughout the course of history. In the context of early cultures, communication was paramount for mutual understanding, particularly in regard to (potentially shared or disputed) core values, among which religion undoubtedly constituted a significant component. These endeavors resulted in not only linguistic translations, but extended also to cultural translations, which encompassed religious structures and divine names, thereby facilitating comprehension. Foreign deities were likened to the local ones based on their characteristics.[7]

In the interstices between culture and religion, magic and magical practices flourished. Within the paradigm of magic, syncretism appears to exhibit more malleable boundaries, exhibiting a reduced influence from intercultural disparities, particularly in the context of deliberate transmission and utilization of divine nomenclature. A substantial body of evidence indicates that the practice of borrowing and adopting divine names within magical contexts is prevalent. A notable illustration of this phenomenon can be observed in the rich Greco-Egyptian magical tradition, which mirrors the intricate cultural milieu of the Greco-Roman presence in Egypt. This historical context fosters a milieu conducive to social, cultural, and religious syncretism, facilitated by the common language of practice. Evidence indicates that Greco-Egyptian magic was characterized by the integration of diverse cultural and religious traditions. The employment of Greek, Egyptian, Roman, Jewish, Christian, and other Near Eastern divine names, techniques, and processes in magical practices is indicative of the interconnectedness of these traditions.[8]

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7 Jan Assmann, "Translating Gods: Religion as a Factor of Cultural (Un)Translatability," in *The Translatability of Cultures: Figurations of the Space Between*, ed. Sanford Budick and Wolfgang Iser (Stanford University Press, 1996), 25–30.

8 Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 196–214, 341–350; Walter Scott, *Hermetica: The Ancient Greek and Latin Writings Which Contain Religious or Philosophic Teachings Ascribed to Hermes Trimegistus*, Vol. 1 (The Clarendon Press, 1924), 1–15; Charles William King, *The Gnostics and Their Remains: Ancient and Mediaeval* (David Nutt, 1887), 158–175.

In the context of magical syncretism, the linguistic dimension of translatability often becomes less problematic. This is evidenced by the practice of transliterating divine names directly into the letters of the target language. On occasion, these names undergo transformations to align with the forms prevalent in the intended language. Nevertheless, conceptual translatability may present a challenge for researchers, as the syncretic intention may be to adopt the name devoid of any conceptual foundation to be incorporated into a newly created narrative, or it might be adopted solely for the perceived potency that the name constitutes.[9]

Abraxas

The dissemination of information regarding the entity known as Abraxas within the context of European historical discourse was primarily facilitated by engraved gemstones and amulets. In the cultural milieu of the 15th century, engraved gemstones regarded as vestiges of the classical past of the ancient Greek and Roman Empires. The Abraxas amulets were compared with late ancient texts by early Christian theologians such as Irenaeus and Epiphanius, who ascribed Abraxas to a heretic religious movement known as Gnosticism. During the 16th and 17th century, scholars established a view of Abraxas as a syncretic entity combining elements of paganism, Judaism, Christianity, Gnosticism, along with other local cults and movements. The perceived syncretic nature of the amulets has also prompted inquiries into their utilization. These amulets were seen to serve a variety of functions, ranging from ideological representation and tokens of religious advertisement to potent magical instruments.[10] Following the discovery of the Greco-Egyptian magical papyri in the 19th century, in which the name Abraxas can frequently be found, Abraxas transcended his perceived religious role and became a figure within the context of Greco-

9 Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 229–230.

10 Roey Sweet, "Antiquarianism and History," Making History. The Institute of Historical Research, accessed June 17, 2025, https://archives.history.ac.uk/makinghistory/resources/articles/antiquarianism.html; Peter N. Miller, *Peiresc's Orient: Antiquarianism as Cultural History in the Seventeenth Century* (Ashgate Variorum, 2012), 50–59.

Egyptian magical practice.[11] Further discoveries in the 19th and 20th century, or more accurately re-discoveries, of Jewish magical texts maintained Abraxas within the magical tradition.[12] In the 20th century Abraxas also entered popular culture through the religious-mystical works of Carl Gustav Jung and Hermann Hesse.

The investigation of Abraxas is rendered complex due to the heterogeneity of appellations under which the entity can be found in the textual sources. Most modern scholarship uses the form "Abraxas" due to its vast usage in previous Abraxas historiography, although more recent research has shown another form—Abrasax. This theonym has been found more prevalent in the ancient sources, with the discrepancy in letters explained on the basis of the amulets. Abraxas entered European discourse through inscriptions on the amulets, with the confusion likely caused by the corruption of the Greek letters *sigma* and *xi*, which are orthographically similar.[13] Another challenge is posed by transliterations of the name in the various languages the sources are written in. The varying forms in ancient sources have long been recognized as a methodological problem, as the mis/identification of entities has led to potentially corrupted results.[14] In the present text, only sources are cited in which the respective name either clearly refers to Abraxas, or was identified as Abraxas by previous scholars.

The etymology of the name Abraxas has been a subject of scholarly interest, further reflecting its syncretic nature. The etymology of Abraxas diverges into two primary interpretive strands. The first traces the name to Jewish tradition, linking it either through linguistic analysis or contextual usage—with prominent theories proposing

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11 Hans D. Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation: Including the Demotic Spells* (University of Chicago Press, 1986), xliii; Simone Michel, "(Re)Interpreting Magical Gems, Ancient and Modern," in *OFFICINA MAGICA: Essays on Practice of Magic in Antiquity*, ed. Shaul Shaked (Brill, 2005), 143.

12 Yuval Harari, "Moses, the Sword, and The Sword of Moses: Between Rabbinical and Magical Traditions," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 12, no. 4 (2005): 294–296, https://doi.org/10.1628/094457005783478315.

13 King, *Gnostics and Their Remains*, 276–279.

14 Moses Gaster, "Art. VI.—The Sword of Moses. An Ancient Book of Magic, Published for the First Time, from a Unique Manuscript (Cod. Heb., Gaster 178)," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain &* Ireland 28, no. 1 (1896): 165–166, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0035869X00023455.

a connection to the Hebrew theonym known as Tetragrammaton.[15] The second strand emphasizes the Greek character of the name, treating its numerical value (365) and solar symbolism as definitive.[16]

Gnosticism and Gnostic literature

As indicated, Abraxas entered European research as a figure originating in Gnosticism through the designated amulets. This was the prevailing scholarly opinion until approximately the end of the 19th century. Information regarding Gnostic thoughts and practices had not yet been made accessible, as throughout history the various Gnostic sects deliberately guarded and concealed their rituals and written sources from external observers. The extant knowledge of the Gnostics was derived exclusively from secondhand reports by Christian writers, the majority of whom saw Gnostics as heretics. Modern discoveries of Gnostic literature, e.g., the Berlin codex, *The Book of Jeu*, *Pistis Sophia*, and the Nag Hammadi codices, have provided new insights into the rituals and teachings employed by the Gnostics since the 1st century CE.[17]

The source text material examined for the presence of Abraxas derives from the Nag Hammadi codices.[18] This collection of manuscripts is critical to the study of Gnosticism and Gnostic literature. Discovered near the city of Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt in 1945, these texts have become an indispensable resource for scholars tracing the evolution of Gnostic thought across its Jewish and Christian iterations.[19] The texts are all inherently religious in nature, though they vary widely in authorship, provenance, and date of composition.

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15 The ancient Greek term Tetragrammaton (meaning "four letters", rendered as YHWH) is an abbreviation of the ineffable name of God from the Bible. This theonym is often used in ancient Jewish texts.

16 Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 248.

17 April D. DeConick, "Introduction," in *Practicing Gnosis: Ritual, Magic, Theurgy and Liturgy in Nag Hammadi, Manichean and Other Ancient Literature*, ed. April D. DeConick, Gregory Shaw, and John D. Turner (Brill, 2013), 1.

18 The original Coptic manuscripts are available online at The Claremont Colleges: Digital Library, see: "Nag Hammadi Archive," The Claremont Colleges: Digital Library, accessed June 17, 2025, https://ccdl.claremont.edu/digital/collection/nha. This study works primarily with English translations of the Nag Hammadi codices, see: James M. Robinson, ed., *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (HarperOne, 1990).

19 Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965), 2.

Many have been compiled from several older narratives reinterpreted within new theological frameworks. While the codices themselves were likely assembled under Christian Gnostic influence in the latter half of the 4th century,[20] their individual components pose greater chronological challenges. Most were originally composed in Greek during uncertain periods and later translated into Coptic, making precise dating difficult due to their fragmentary state.[21]

In the Nag Hammadi texts, Abraxas is present in the three codices *The Gospel of the Egyptians, The Apocalypse of Adam*, and *Zostrianos*, all of which classify as texts belonging to Sethian Gnostic tradition. This strand of Gnostic doctrine centers on Seth, the son of Adam, who functions as both originator and redeemer for his earthly descendants. Through revealed knowledge, Seth enables their salvation.[22]

The Gospel of the Egyptians, also known as *The Holy Book of the Great Invisible Spirit*, is a mythological Gnostic narrative. While its core traditions likely originate in earlier, possibly pre-Christian phases of Gnosticism development, the extant text demonstrates Christian redaction through the incorporation of Christ-centered motifs and its designation as a "gospel"—a titular framing that reflects subsequent Christian interpretation rather than accurately representing the text's actual genre.[23] The text attributes authorship to the great Seth, progenitor of an "incorruptible race" of men, who is later syncretically identified with Christ within the narrative.[24]

In the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, Abraxas is introduced as a minister to the great Light Eleleth, identified as an angel. This angelic context is further expanded by the use of other names with a suffix "el," which

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20 James M. Robison, "Introduction," in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson (HarperOne, 1990), 1–9.

21 Wolf B. Oerter, "Úvod," in *Rukopisy z Nag Hammádí* 5, ed. Wolf B. Oerter and Zuzana Vítková (Vyšehrad, 2018), 17–33.

22 Pavel Ryneš, "Svatá kniha velkého neviditelného Ducha (Evangelium Egypťanů) (NHC III/2, 40, 12-69, 20 a IV/2, 50, 1-81, 2)," in *Rukopisy z Nag Hammádí* 5, ed. Wolf B. Oerter and Zuzana Vítková (Vyšehrad, 2018), 153; Robison, "Introduction," 2–3.

23 Charles W. Hedrick, "Christian Motifs in the 'Gospel of the Egyptians': Method and Motive," *Novum Testamentum* 23, no. 3 (1981): 242, and 259–260, https://doi.org/10.2307/1560684.

24 Alexander Böhlig and Frederik Wisse, "The Gospel of the Egyptians (III, 2 and IV, 2)," in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson (HarperOne, 1990), 216–217.

are perceived as that of angelic origin,[25] i.e., Gamaliel, Gabriel etc. In another passage, Abraxas appears alongside the three ministers of Lights—Gamaliel, Gabriel, and Samblo—within a broader cosmological framework. The immediate textual context involves entities (helpers, attendants, guardians, and rulers) associated with motifs of baptism, eternal life, and solar symbolism. These beings are designated as protectors of Seth's spiritual lineage, guiding them through the salvific process.[26]

The story narrated in *the Apocalypse of Adam* is an apocalyptic revelation framed as Adam's visionary account to his son Seth. The absence of explicit Christian motifs and names alludes to a possible pre-Christian origin of the text, while the presence of apocalyptic themes indicates Jewish traditional influences. Scholarly debate has centered on identifying the figure of the "illuminator," with some proposing Christological parallels, though no conclusive evidence supports this interpretation.[27]

In *the Apocalypse*, Abraxas is accompanied by other ministers of the Lights – Sablo (Samblo in the *Gospel* mentioned above), and Gamaliel. Within this narrative, these entities function as saviors delivering those uncorrupted by desires of the mortal world, specifically, the descendants of the great Seth. As such, these three figures are regarded as salvific angels. The passage also incorporates biblical references, including Noah and his three sons, and Seth.[28]

Zostrianos belongs to the corpus of apocalyptic texts that exhibit mythological and philosophical influences, drawing not only from other works within the Nag Hammadi library but also from Neoplatonic philosophical frameworks. Superficially, it also incorporates Christian motifs. The protagonist, Zostrianos—often associated with the spiritual founder and leader Zoroaster—embarks on a celestial journey through the spheres beyond the mortal world. During this

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[25] Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (Behrman's Jewish Book House, 1939), 260–261; Gaster, "Art. VI.—The Sword of Moses," 157.

[26] Böhlig and Wisse, "Gospel of the Egyptians," 212–217.

[27] George W. MacRae and Douglas M. Parrott, "The Apocalypse of Adam (V, 5)," in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson (HarperOne, 1990), 278–282.

[28] MacRae and Parrott, "Apocalypse of Adam," 281–282.

ascent, Zostrianos encounters angels, cosmic powers, and other beings, all arranged in a strict hierarchical order.[29]

In this text, Abraxas is accompanied by Gamaliel and Samblo as well as other entities with names ending in "el" suffix. Later the names of the great Lights are introduced—among them Eleleth. The context enumerates other various helpers, guardians, and angels who facilitate the process of salvation. Although Abraxas is not identified with any characteristics, the figure is likely associated with angelic qualities, given its context among these celestial beings.

The Nag Hammadi accounts place Abraxas into the context of angels, simultaneously ascribing angelic attributes to Abraxas, dispositions which might also be inferred from Abraxas's role as one of the "ministers of the Lights." This governing role aligns conceptually with the "ministering" actions of angels as depicted in *Sefer ha-Razim*, a Jewish magical text that similarly portrays celestial intermediaries operating within a structured hierarchy.[30]

Prior to the discovery of the Gnostic texts, the historical and theological underpinnings of Gnosticism were accessible only in the writings of early Christian thinkers Irenaeus of Lyons, Hippolytus of Rome, and Epiphanius of Salamis.[31] Irenaeus and Hippolytus offer commentary on the figure known as Abraxas, linking him to the Gnostic teacher Basilides, who is documented as having been active during the 2nd century CE in Alexandria. This association indicates a development within Gnosticism that drew from both Greek philosophy and Christian theology.[32] According to Irenaeus and Hippolytus, Abraxas represents a prominent deity within Gnostic systems of belief.[33] Epiphanius elevated Abraxas to the status of the supreme Gnostic

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[29] John N. Sieber, "Zostrianos (VIII, 1)," in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson (HarperOne, 1990), 402–403.

[30] Michael A. Morgan, *SEPHER HA-RAZIM: The Book of the Mysteries* (Scholar Press, 1983), 57, and 80.

[31] Gérard Vallée, *A Study in Anti-Gnostic Polemics: Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Epiphanus* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1981), 1.

[32] Birger A. Pearson, *Gnosticism, Judaism, and Egyptian Christianity* (Fortress Press, 1990), 202–204.

[33] Paul Corby Finney, "Did Gnostics Make Pictures?" in *The Rediscovery of Gnosticism, ed. Bentley Layton* (E. J. Brill, 1980), 452–453.

deity, embodying a formidable and complex entity.[34] The question of Abraxas's role in the Gnostic belief has been a subject of frequent inquiry among scholars, leading to extensive research and etymological analysis of the name. This analysis has revealed a connection between the name Abraxas and Tetragrammaton, the Jewish supreme God.[35]

The Greco-Egyptian Magical Tradition

The magical papyri constitute a component of a corpus of magical literature that spans from the 2nd century BCE to the 5th century CE, during which the "vocabulary" of magical practices and their associated formulas underwent significant development. In the subsequent two centuries, these formulas and practices underwent a process of standardization, leading to the establishment of specific forms. During the 5th century, the production of magical literature began to decline.[36] As relics of the Greco-Egyptian culture, the papyri carry the signs of both cultures; the papyri were written in Greek, Demotic, and Coptic, oftentimes one text includes more than one language.[37] The texts of the papyri show a significant influence of Egyptian magical recipes and formulas, as well as the influence of earlier Greek literary and folkloric sources.[38] The texts demonstrate the rich and complex merging and interweaving of cultures, traditions, and religions present in ancient Egypt, with most prominent examples including Egyptian, Greek, Jewish, and Babylonian traditions. This evident homogenous syncretic ap-

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34 Winrich Alfried Löhr, *Basilides und seine Schule: Eine Studie zur Theologie- und Kirchengeschichte des zweiten Jahrhunderts* (J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1996), 273.

35 Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis: The Nature & History of Gnosticism*, trans. P. W. Coxon, K.H. Kuhn, and R. McL. Wilson (Harper & Row, 1987), 311.

36 Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, xli;* Roy Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets: The Inscribed Gold, Silver, Copper, and Bronze Lamellae, Part I, Published Texts of Known Provenance* (VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1994), xvii–xix.

37 The papyri were analyzed primarily in English translation for this study, see: Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*. For comparison, original Greek texts were also examined, see: Karl Preisendanz et al., eds., *Papyri Graecae Magicae: Die Griechischen Zauberpapyri*, Bd. 1 (B. G. Teubner, 1928).

38 Gideon Bohak, Yuval Harari, and Shaul Shaked, "Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition: A Jerusalem Symposium and Its Wider Contexts," in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, ed. Gideon Bohak, Yuval Harari, and Shaul Shaked (Brill, 2011), 4–5.

proach and assimilation led to the creation of an intricate set of magical practices that incorporated new perceptions of the former traditions.[39]

The presence of Abraxas in the papyri is notable for its frequency, and it is observed not only in its customary form but also in its various forms. In the context of magical papyri, Abraxas is predominantly accompanied by other names and words of magical potency, each of which possesses a distinct identity and origin. The most prevalent context comprises divine and angelic names with roots in Jewish tradition, including Jewish divine names in their Greek form such as Tetragrammaton (Iao in Greek version) and its variations, Sabaoth, Adonai, Elohim, as well as Jewish angelic names, most often Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael. The divine names and presumably various *voces magicae*[40] create strings joining names and words. It has been observed that the entity known as Abraxas is frequently found in proximity to names and words of Egyptian origin, including such notable figures as Osiris, Anubis, and Horus. Additionally, there is a notable presence of Greek divine names such as Helios, Hermes, Zeus, and Apollo. The entity known as Abraxas manifests in several distinct contexts, including those of Persian deity Mithras, Gnostic angelic entities Sablo and Eleleth, and, on rare occasions, Christian iconography, particularly in the figure of Jesus.[41]

The question of the identity of Abraxas is in many instances addressed with the text itself, directly classifying the character as a holy or divine name, god, angel, or, in one instance, as a daimon. In the absence of explicit identification, the determination of the identity may be facilitated through environmental context analysis or precluded due to its placement within a list of names or words. The context can impart a sense of magical potency to the name; however, it remains

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39 Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, xlv–xlvi;* Morton Smith, *Studies in Historical Method, Ancient Israel, Ancient Judaism, vol. 1 of Studies in the Cult of Yahweh*, ed. Shaye J. D. Cohen (E. J. Brill, 1996), 210.

40 *Voces magicae* (singular *vox magicae*) are words/names that have entered standard knowledge and use in magical practices with no specific meaning currently associated with them.

41 Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, 11–309.

challenging to ascertain its specific meaning or to recognize it as *vox magicae*.[42]

Another compound of the Greco-Egyptian magical tradition, which also employs Abraxas, is constituted by amulets. Amulets are defined as protective measures designed to shield the carrier from numerous illnesses, evil influences, and other negative inflictions through their magical potency. The form of amulets varies, including engraved gemstones and metal objects as well as writing on a parchment or papyrus.[43] The subject of Abraxas and amulets encompasses a wide array of amulets of diverse origins, forms, and languages. The amulets under discussion here are engraved gemstones with Greek inscriptions and/or images identified or associated with Abraxas. The dating of these magical amulets is challenging, with the earliest specimens dated to 2nd century CE, and by approximately the 3rd – 4th century they were in common possession.[44] Given the prevalence of Abraxas amulets in the context of the Greco-Egyptian magical papyri, it is widely accepted that they were produced in Egypt. This assertion is further substantiated by the preponderance of Abraxas amulets in archaeological findings, particularly in Egypt and Syria.[45]

The imagery of amulets, presumed to be Abraxas amulets, incorporates an anthropomorphic character with a rooster's head, a human torso dressed in Roman military attire usually holding a shield and a whip or rod in its hands, and two serpent-like legs, often referred to as "anguipede," a character with serpentine legs or a lower body composed of coiled snake. This figure was often accompanied by Greek inscriptions of divine names, among which the name Abraxas

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42 Betz, *Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, 11–314.

43 Claude Lecouteux, *The High Magic of Talismans and Amulets: Tradition and Craft*, trans. Jon E. Graham (Inner Traditions, 2014), 15–16.

44 Orit Peleg-Barkat and Yotam Tepper, "Engraved Gems from Sites with a Military Presence in Roman Palestine: The Cases of Legio and Aelia Capitolina," in '*Gems of Heaven': Recent Research on Engraved Gemstones in Late Antiquity, c. AD 200-600*, ed. Chris Entwistle and Noël Adams (British Museum, 2012), 100; Yvan Koenig, "Des 'Trigrammes Panthéistes' Ramessides aux Gemmes Magiques de l'Antiquité Tardive: Le Cas d' Abrasax, Continuité et Rupture," *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d' Archéologie Orientale* 109 (2009): 311–313; Lucien Janssens, "La Datation Néronienne De L'Isopséphie: Νεῖλος (=Osiris) = Ἀβρασάξ = ἅγιον ὄνομα = Μείθρας," *Aegyptus* 68, no. 1/2 (1988): 105–106; Árpád M. Nagy, "Figuring out the Anguipede ('Snake-Legged God') and His Relation to Judaism," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 15 (2002): 160, https://doi.org/10.1017/S104775940001388X.

45 Peleg-Barkat and Tepper, "Engraved Gems," 100.

appeared with sufficient frequency for the researchers to establish a connection between the name and the image, thus the curious character with human body, rooster head, and serpent-like legs became Abraxas. The connection of the character to the name Abraxas underwent a series of exegesis drawing from combinations of Abraxas's Gnostic lore, solar attributes imagery, the Bible and Greek mythology, the Talmud, and even Hebrew linguistic associations. The syncretic character of the Greco-Egyptian magical tradition further contributed to the complexity of this line of thinking.[46] Notwithstanding, this connection was firmly disapproved by several scholars as a claim without any evidence. This was due to the absence of any evidence that would substantiate the identity of the depicted character, whether in art or literature from Greece, Rome, or Egypt.[47]

The engraved amulets vary in the content from simple one-word inscriptions, or simple images with simple inscriptions, to a mix of images, *characteres* (specific signs used in magical texts), and more complex inscriptions. The term "Abraxas" is presented in its customary orthographic form and in its various orthographic variations, usually accompanied by other words, most frequently Greek versions of "Tetragrammaton" and "Sabaoth" along with variations of these, less frequently Adonai. All of these variations were derived from Jewish divine names. More textually complex amulets may also contain formulas comprising angelic names of Jewish origin such as Gabriel, Michael, etc.[48]

The imagery of amulets typically incorporates the depiction of a rooster-headed anguipede. The most prevalent form of the Abraxas amulet consists of this anguipede accompanied by an inscription of the Tetragrammaton, occasionally accompanied by the name

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46 Campbell Bonner, *Studies in Magical Amulets: Chiefly Graeco-Egyptian* (University of Michigan Press, 1950), 128; Erwin R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period: (Abridged Edition)*, trans. Jacob Neusner (Princeton University Press, 1968), 120; Nagy, "Figuring out the Anguipede," 165–166; Sencan Altınoluk and Nilüfer Atakan, "Abrasax: A Magical Gem in the Istanbul Archaeological Museums," *Anatolia Antiqua* XXII (2014): 219–220, https://doi.org/10.4000/anatoliaantiqua.303; Koenig, "Des 'Trigrammes Panthéistes'," 313–314.

47 Nagy, "Figuring out the Anguipede," 160.

48 This study analyzed amulets that belong to the Campbell Bonner collection of amulets available online, see: The Campbell Bonner Magical Gems Database, accessed June 17, 2025, http://cbd.mfab.hu/.

"Abraxas". The imagery of the amulet frequently exhibits a compound nature, frequently depicting the rooster-headed figure alongside other figures, such as the Ouroboros (a serpent consuming its own tail) or Chnoubis (a lion-headed serpent). These figures are often attributed with Gnostic symbolism and are frequently associated with the sun and its associated aspects. A close examination of the imagery reveals the presence of Greek divine entities such as Hermes and Helios, as well as Egyptian divine entities such as Osiris, Horus and Anubis.

The Abraxas amulets are composed of two distinct components: inscriptions and images. A close examination of these components reveals a striking similarity to the textual context found in Greek magical papyri. According to contemporary academic thought, there is a degree of contextual resemblance that has been observed. This observation has led to the hypothesis that the amulets and papyri share the roots of magical practices.[49]

The inquiry regarding the identity of Abraxas within the amulets remains unresolved. The prevailing hypothesis that Abraxas amulets were affiliated with Gnosticism posited that the amulets functioned as religious artifacts, reflecting the beliefs of their adherents. This perspective was further substantiated by the doctrine of Basilidean cosmology, which identified Abraxas as a deity. In the absence of the Gnostic assumption, ascertaining the identity of Abraxas from the amulets is a rather complex undertaking, primarily due to the paucity of contextual information when viewed in isolation from the magical papyri. A preliminary analysis of the amulets suggests the presence of magical properties, which could be indicative of *vox magicae* or the representation of a specific divine or angelic entity.[50]

Jewish Magical Texts

For centuries researchers have studied Jewish magical traditions, with their interests ranging from historical to geographical and to structural and formal. Some researchers have also debated the religious aspects

[49] Paolo Vitellozzi, "Relations Between Magical Texts and Magical Gems Recent Perspectives," in *Bild und Schrift auf 'Magischen' Artefakten*, ed. Sarah Kiyanrad, Christoffer Theis, and Laura Willer (De Gruyter, 2018), 181–183, https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110604337-008.

[50] Altınoluk and Atakan, "Abrasax," 220; Peleg-Barkat and Tepper, "Engraved Gems," 100.

of magic, logically assuming disfavor of magic practice from a religious perspective. The subjects of this study are two texts: *Sefer ha-Razim* (The Book of Secrets) and *Ḥarba de-Moshe* (The Sword of Moses). These texts belong to the category of early Jewish magical texts and played a crucial role in the development of Jewish magical practices between the Talmudic and medieval periods. The texts demonstrate the influence of Talmudic and Jewish mystical literature, Greco-Egyptian magical practices, and purported connections to other magical sources, e.g., the Aramaic incantation bowls.[51]

As many other magical sources, *Sefer ha-Razim* and *Ḥarba de-Moshe* present analogous research challenges concerning the date and place of their origin. Similar to the Nag Hammadi codices, these two texts are compositions of sections written in various languages (*Sefer ha-Razim* in Hebrew, Arabic, Latin, and Greek transliterated in Hebrew characters; and *Ḥarba de-Moshe* in Babylonian and Palestinian Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek). Such cultural heterogeneity complicates geographical assessments as to the origin of the texts.[52] Despite the familiarity and accessibility of both texts from the Middle Ages to the 19th century, the discovery of the Cairo Genizah[53] at the close of the 19th century yielded novel and pertinent textual fragments as well as fresh insights into the history of Jewish communities. The wealth of recently discovered fragments found in the Genizah has enabled further research and the compilation of versions of both magical texts.[54]

Dating the magical texts is complicated due to the fragmentary character of individual parts despite the extensive linguistic and terminological analyses. A multitude of debates have emerged concerning the dating of the texts, and while a majority consensus has emerged, reservations persist. *Sefer ha-Razim* is predominantly dated

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51 Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 315; Harari, "Moses, the Sword, and The Sword of Moses," 294.

52 Morgan, *SEPHER HA-RAZIM*, 3–6; Harari, "Moses, the Sword, and The Sword of Moses," 295–297.

53 A genizah is a storage space usually in or near a synagogue used to house old, potentially damaged artifacts, most often written documents, that bear God's name or were utilized in religious practices. Given the sacred nature of these objects, they cannot be disposed of, thus they are meticulously stored in the genizah.

54 Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 175–176; Yuval Harari, "The Sword of Moses (Ḥarba de-Moshe): A New Translation and Introduction," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 7, no. 1 (2012): 63–65, https://doi.org/10.1353/mrw.2012.0008; Morgan, SEPHER HA-RAZIM, 3–6.

to the late 3rd or early 4th century CE, and *Ḥarba de-Moshe* is regarded as originating in the period subsequent to 500 CE. Another aspect of the fragmentary character of the texts that has been discussed is the possibility, and/or probability, that the magical practices described in the texts have a much older origin.[55]

An intriguing discovery was the Arabic manuscript *Sifr Ādam* (*The Book of Adam*) which contained three Jewish magical treatises – including *Ḥarba de-Moshe* and *Sefer ha-Razim*. In this manuscript, *Ḥarba de-Moshe* is integrated within the framework of *Sefer ha-Razim*. A preliminary analysis of the Arabic text reveals notable differences when compared to the Aramaic *Ḥarba de-Moshe*. The Arabic text appears to be devoid of any reference or allusion to Jewish tradition. For instance, the title of the Arabic text is "The Sword of God," and Moses is clearly omitted from the narrative. The elimination of Jewish tradition may have been a deliberate attempt by the redactor to render the text more accessible to a broader audience. This could be indicative of a perceived efficiency or of popularity among the recipients of the magical practices.[56] The manuscript in its entirety evinces modifications to both Christian, and in certain instances, Muslim rhetorics. A recently unearthed manuscript of the same text *Sifr Ādam* shows signs of an adaptation process aimed at aligning the text with Islamic traditions[57] thereby signifying a potential expansion of the tradition to encompass a more extensive and intricate religious milieu.

In the introduction of the magical treatise *Sefer ha-Razim*, it stated that it was entrusted to Noah by the angel Raziel. The primary text is divided into seven sections, each corresponding to a distinct firmament, thereby echoing ancient Jewish cosmological systems. The seven firmaments, also known as the seven heavens, are each

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55 Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 174; Gaster, "Art. VI.—The Sword of Moses," 172; Harari, "Moses, the Sword, and The Sword of Moses," 296; Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, 315; Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism,* 99.

56 Alexander Fodor, "An Arabic Version of 'The Sword of Moses'," in *Continuity and Innovation in the Magical Tradition*, ed. Gideon Bohak, Yuval Harari, and Shaul Shaked (Brill, 2011), 341, 370, 371, and 383; Alexander Fodor, "An Arabic Version of Sefer Ha Razim," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 13, no. 4 (2006): 417, and 425.

57 Dóra Zsom, "Another Arabic Version of *Sefer ha-Razim* and *Ḥarba de-Moše*: A New *Sifr Ādam* Manuscript," *The Arabist, Budapest Studies in Arabic* 37 (2016): 182–183, https://doi.org/10.58513/ARABIST.2016.37.13.

characterized by a distinct hierarchy of angels which fulfill specific functions and may participate in designated rites and magical practices, thereby assuming the role of powerful active entities.[58]

In the angelic hierarchy of the fourth firmament, Abraxas holds a prominent position. This context makes use of angelic names, with the most notable being Gabriel. These angels are believed to preside over the movement of the Sun, thereby identifying Abraxas as an angelic figure associated with the Sun, occupying the primary position.[59] A series of non-angelic names appear within the text outside of the fourth firmament, including biblical names, Greek divine names, and Greek mythological names of constellations. On several occasions, the text makes allusions to Greek figures without explicitly naming them.[60] Despite the evident influence of Greek magical practices on the magical recipes, as evidenced by in the Greek magical papyri, only a limited number of Greco-Egyptian borrowed divine names can be recognized. This may be attributed to the potential presence of copying errors and misrepresentations that occurred during the centuries of transmission.[61]

The text of *Ḥarba de-Moshe* commences with a delineation of the ritual elucidating the method by which one may gain dominion over the Sword. The second section of the treatise is the *Ḥarba de-Moshe* itself, which is a list of divine names and Aramaic phrases. The preponderance of research in this field suggests that these phenomena are manifestations of *voces magicae* of various origin which may also be transliterations of Greek names written in Hebrew letters.[62] In the third section, which is dedicated to specific magical practices, the divine names are linked to the purposes to which they are intended, such as medicine, love, etc.[63] The final passage employs a combination of Greek and Babylonian magical terminology, a feature absent

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58 Morgan, SEPHER HA-RAZIM, 6–7; Reimund Leicht, "Some Observations on the Diffusion of Jewish Magical Texts from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages in Manuscripts from the Cairo Genizah and Ashkenaz," in *OFFICINA MAGICA: Essays on Practice of Magic in Antiquity*, ed. Shaul Shaked (Brill, 2005), 214.

59 Morgan, *SEPHER HA-RAZIM*, 68, and 87–90.

60 Morgan, *SEPHER HA-RAZIM*, 17, 38, 44, and 81.

61 Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 172.

62 Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 176–179.

63 Harari, "Moses, the Sword, and The Sword of Moses," 294–295.

in Aramaic. In certain instances, it utilizes Aramaic transliterations of the original terms.[64]

The entity known as "Abraxas" is referenced on three separate occasions within the text of *Ḥarba de-Moshe*, twice in the list of divine names accompanied by various forms of the Tetragrammaton and structures that appear to reiterate and reproduce the Tetragrammaton. The third instance of Abraxas's emergence occurs in the final section of the treatise, where it plays a pivotal role in a significant revelation magical ritual. Notably, no other divine names appear in this context.[65] The compendium of divine nomenclature encompasses a plethora of divine entities, emanating from diverse origins. The most salient elements are the names belonging to Jewish tradition such as Tetragrammaton (and its variations), Sabaoth and Elohim,[66] along with various angelic names such as Gabriel, Michael, etc.[67] According to the findings of preceding studies, there is a proposal that Greek and Egyptian divine names, including Zeus, Isis, Osiris, and Thoth are present.[68] However, analogous to the observations made in *Sefer ha-Razim*, there appears to be a certain corruption of the names, which may be attributable to the process of transmission.[69]

Concerning Abraxas's identity in *Ḥarba de-Moshe*, while in the successive list of names the identity is not apparent or assumable from the context as no fixed or preferred context may be found, it seems that Abraxas here serves as a *vox magicae*. In the context of a magical ritual, Abraxas is designated as "prince,"[70] thus assuming a prominent role of a powerful entity. The notion of a prince as a ruler might have been connected to the role of angels as rulers of celestial bodies as well as other natural phenomena.[71] Reference to Abraxas as a prince appears also in *Sefer ha-Razim*, in which the context clearly

64 Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 178–179.

65 Gaster, "Art. VI.—The Sword of Moses," VIII, IX, and VIII.

66 Gaster, "Art. VI.—The Sword of Moses," VII–IX, XI–XII, and VIII.

67 Gaster, "Art. VI.—The Sword of Moses," VIII, IX, and XI.

68 Gaster, "Art. VI.—The Sword of Moses," VII, and VIII.

69 Gaster, "Art. VI.—The Sword of Moses," 165–166; Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic*, 179.

70 Gaster, "Art. VI.—The Sword of Moses," 183.

71 Peter Schäfer, *Rivalität Zwischen Engeln und Menschen: Untersuchungen zur Eabbinischen Engelvorstellung* (Walter de Gruyter, 1975), 23–27.

associates the term with angels.[72] A parallel term is "minister," which is used in the Gnostic literature as well as with regard to "ministering" actions in *Sefer ha-Razim.*[73]

Conclusion

The transmission of tradition through syncretic processes has been a subject of considerable debate in historical and anthropological research since the 16th century, as these processes have played an essential role in the development of societies and cultures. The process itself can be illustrated with the use of one word, more precisely one name – Abraxas. This study shows the results of an analysis of three primary traditions which feature the name Abraxas as well as the characteristics of this entity: Gnosticism, the Greco-Egyptian magical tradition, and Jewish magical texts.

Abraxas appears in all of the examined sources, indicating syncretic processes occurring since the concept entered diverse religious traditions, including Gnosticism, Judaism, and the polytheistic-syncretic religious world of magical papyri. Abraxas appears in at least three linguistic variations according to the language of the source, generally following the form Abraxas (Abrasax). The contexts surrounding Abraxas comprise a mixture of divine and angelic names from Jewish, Greek, Egyptian, and other traditions. This "divine" and "angelic" context is suggestive of formidable magical potency and celestial identity. However, in select sources, Abraxas is attributed with a potency that surpasses these attributes.

A close examination of the question of translatability reveals that Abraxas was not translated from a linguistic perspective, nor was it translated from a conceptual perspective. It was, for the most part, transliterated into other alphabetical systems. In the majority of the contexts in which it was transliterated Abraxas maintained its angelic and/or divine identity. Despite its deliberate avoidance of translation, the concept of Abraxas has seamlessly integrated into various religious traditions. This suggests that translatability and transferability are not inherently dependent on each other.

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72 Morgan, *SEPHER HA-RAZIM*, 68.

73 Morgan, *SEPHER HA-RAZIM*, 57, and 80.

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2

The Role of Religion in the Social Media of Israeli Football Organizations in the Context of the Arab-Jewish Conflict

Vilém Škuta

Introduction

This chapter examines the policies of Israeli football organizations concerning the Arab-Jewish conflict. The focus is on three important organizations – the Israeli Football Association, the Jewish Israeli club Beitar Jerusalem, and the Arab Israeli club Bnei Sakhnin. By analyzing posts on the official social media accounts of these three organizations, their respective stances on the tensions between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel will be examined.

Scholars and observers familiar with the protracted tensions between Jewish Israelis and the Arab minority may find the football environment particularly significant. Football serves as a rare arena where these typically segregated communities routinely interact—not only as competitors on equal footing but also, at times, as collaborators. Despite their marginalized position in broader Israeli society, Arab representation in football is disproportionately high relative to their demographic share. This suggests that, at least within the realm of the world's most popular sport, the integration of the Arab minority has achieved a notable degree of success.

The three organizations were selected for analysis due to their divergent stances on the Arab-Jewish conflict. Bnei Sakhnin, the most successful Arab football club in Israel, represents the Arab minority. Beitar Jerusalem is rooted in far-right Jewish organizations, and its die-hard fans are notorious for their strong aversion to Arabs and Muslims. Both clubs are affiliated with the Israeli Football Association. The analysis will explore several key questions concerning these organizations' engagement with the Arab-Jewish conflict. These include examining the official approaches adopted by both Arab and Jewish football clubs toward this issue, as well as investigating the Israeli Football Association's alignment in relation to these opposing stances. Furthermore, the study will assess whether the documented instances of Arab-Jewish coexistence within Israeli football are similarly reflected in the social media activity of these three organizations. Additionally, the role of religious identity in shaping these dynamics will be considered.

The Arab-Jewish conflict and religion

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a topic that has frequently been discussed in the media, with interest rising and falling regularly depending on the stage of the conflict. Since 7 October 2023, however, it has attracted enormous attention from news outlets around the world, as violence has flared up to unprecedented levels.[1] Nevertheless, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict itself is only indirectly related to the goals of the research featured here, i.e., the tensions between Jews and Arabs within the state of Israel itself, a theme which receives much less media coverage. The term Arab-Jewish or Jewish-Arab conflict more accurately captures this phenomenon. In this context, conflict assumes a distinct meaning—not referring (strictly) to physical confrontation, but rather to the Arab minority's struggle for full integration into Israel's Jewish-

[1] On this day, Hamas gunmen infiltrated Israeli territory from the Gaza Strip, killing more than 1,400 Israeli civilians. At least 5,400 were wounded and more than 240 were abducted into the Gaza Strip. Leo Sands, "Why are Israel and Hamas at war? A basic explainer," The Washington Post, October 30, 2023, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/10/17/israel-hamas-war-reason-explained-gaza/.; "Hamas hostages: who are the people taken from Israel?," BBC, November 2, 2023, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67053011.

-majority society.[2] This conceptualization aligns with usage in certain English-language academic works by Israeli scholars, where the term denotes sociopolitical tensions surrounding minority inclusion rather than overt hostilities.[3]

Religion plays a significant role in both the Israeli-Palestinian and Arab-Jewish conflicts. The Palestinian militant organization Hamas, which has governed the Gaza Strip since 2007, originated in 1987 and gradually transformed into a radical Islamist movement. Hamas's unexpected electoral victory over Fatah (the dominant faction in the West Bank) during the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections was likely facilitated by its extensive social welfare network in Gaza's impoverished communities. According to political scientist Marek Čejka, Hamas' long-term goal is the destruction of the Jewish state of Israel and the establishment of the Islamic state of Palestine in its place.[4] The meticulously coordinated attacks of October 7, 2023, represented a strategic effort by Hamas to advance substantially toward this objective. While mainstream media coverage frequently overlooks the religious dimensions of Hamas's conflict with Israel, the movement's Islamist foundations remain incontrovertible. This is evidenced not only by the leadership's consistent employment of Islamic rhetoric and religiously framed objectives, but also by the pervasive recitation

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2 As scholars have noted regarding the complexity of the terminology surrounding these issues, the terms Arab-Israeli conflict or Arab-Israeli wars are also used to refer primarily to a series of armed disputes between Israel and neighbouring Arab states over the territory of the Holy Land. Kirsten E. Schulze, *Arabsko-izraelský konflikt* (CPress, 2012).

3 For example, in her article "Under the Radar" Israeli psychologist Lipaz Shamoa-Nir develops a thematic analysis focusing on the reflection of the Arab-Jewish conflict in the testimonies of Jewish students. By the term Arab-Jewish conflict, Shamoa-Nir indicates the religious-ethnic conflict between Israeli Arabs and Jews. Lipaz Shamoa-Nir, "Under the Radar: How is the Jewish-Arab Conflict Reflected in Internal Jewish Dialogue?," *International Journal of Psychological Studies* 14, no. 1 (2021): 16-20, doi:10.5539/ijps.v14n1p16. Rachel Ben Ari's article *Coping With the Jewish-Arab Conflict* presents three different models for dealing with the Arab-Jewish conflict in Israel. Rachel Ben-Ari, "Coping With the Jewish-Arab Conflict: A Comparison Among Three Models," *Journal of Social Issues* 60, no. 2 (2004): 307-322, doi:10.1111/j.0022-4537.2004.00111.x.

4 Marek Čejka, *Korán, meč a volební urna: zdroje a podoby islamismu* (Academia, 2020), 155–156.

of Islamic phrases among Hamas operatives, as documented in multiple visual records of the attacks.[5]

From a religious perspective, the city of Jerusalem occupies a central position in the Israeli-Palestinian and, more generally, in all Arab-Jewish conflicts, serving as a sacred site for all three Abrahamic faiths. In 1999, an independent commission consisting of a Jew, a Christian and a Muslim identified a total of 326 holy sites in Jerusalem, and these only in the Old City, Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives, not the entirety of the city.[6] The site most often mentioned in the media in connection with the conflict is the elevated plaza in the Old City called the Temple Mount, known by Muslims as Haram al-Sharif (Noble Sanctuary). As the holiest site for Judaism[7] and the third holiest site for Islam,[8] it is not surprising that this has been the site of many different riots and provocations. In 2000, for example, Ariel Sharon, then an Israeli opposition politician, visited the Temple Mount accompanied by over a thousand police officers. This incident precipitated the outbreak of the Second Intifada.[9] A subsequent armed attack occurred in Jerusalem following the events of October 7, resulting in three fatalities. Hamas publicly claimed responsibility for the assault.[10]

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5 While it can be argued that these terms are widely used generally in Arabic and may therefore lose their religious meaning, the religious fanaticism of these adherents is still hard to dispute. Graeme Wood, "Is Hamas Waging a Religious War?," *The Atlantic*, December 12, 2023, https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2023/12/hamas-israel-religious-organization/676303/.

6 By comparison, fifty years earlier only thirty sacred sites had been identified. Gil Yaron, *Jeruzalém, stře(d)t světa: historicko-politický průvodce* (Vyšehrad, 2016), 223; 249-250.

7 The Temple Mount was to be the site of the first and second Temple of Jerusalem, of which only one part, now known as the Western Wall, remains. Jewish access to the Temple Mount is currently restricted due to rabbinical prohibitions rooted in the site's supreme sanctity within Jewish tradition.

8 According to Muslims, the Prophet Muhammad was supposed to have ascended to heaven at this place. The Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif currently functions primarily as a Muslim place of worship, housing two of Islam's most significant religious structures: the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock

9 Marek Čejka. *Judaismus a politika v Izraeli* (Společnost pro odbornou literaturu – Barrister & Principal, 2009), 235–236; 241.

10 Dan Sabbagh, "Hamas claims responsibility for deadly Jerusalem bus stop shooting," *The Guardian*, December 1, 2023, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/nov/30/jerusalem-bus-stop-shooting-attack-killed-injured.

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