1. Introduction

The human need to protect oneself against malevolent supernatural entities is as old as humankind itself. From all periods of human culture, talismans, amulets, and other inscribed and un-inscribed objects are known that were produced in order to keep malevolent entities such as demons away. These objects were either carried directly on the body or placed in strategically important places within the domestic environment, e.g. under the threshold or in the corners of the house, so that evil entities could not enter the domestic sphere.

From Late Antiquity many different amulets are known. Whereas in Asia Minor, Syria, and Palestine lamellae, i.e. small inscribed metal plates, were predominant, which were normally rolled or folded and carried in small containers around the neck, there was a own tradition of apotropaic artifacts in Babylonia between the fourth and eighth century: incantation bowls.

Regarding form and material, these bowls do not differ from the domestic earthenware in daily use, but in contrast to them, they display an inscription that can be normally seen on the concave side, spiraling from the center of the bowl towards its outer rim. Some incantation bowls display anthropomorphic figures. Due to their attributes, such as horns, chicken legs, or bound hands, these figures are normally interpreted as demons, against which the incantation was written. At present around 2000 incantation bowls are known that are housed in several museums and private collections. Unfortunately, only a minor part of these bowls is already edited and accessible for the broader scientific community. It is very likely that many more incantation bowls will be known in future. Regrettably, the major part of these bowls will be without clear provenance because of the present political situation in Iraq, which facilitates the uncontrolled entry of incantation bowls into the international antiquities market.

Nearly all incantation bowl texts known so far are written in one of several Aramaic dialects, such as Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, Mandaic or Syriac. According to the language in which the incantation bowl texts were written, it can be attributed to one of several different population groupss in Sasanian Mesopotamia: it is supposed that incantation bowls written in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic were written by Jewish scribes, those in Mandaic by Manicheans and those in Syriac by Christians. But it is not clear, and in fact it is rather unlikely, that the clients for whom the incantation texts were written were also part of the same population group as the scribes. There is, for example, a great number of incantation bowls written in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic that display a client with a Persian name. Whether those clients were Zoroastrians or Jews using Persian names cannot be easily determined because, on the one hand, there are many indications that Jews were very well integrated and assimilated into Sasanian society, while on the other hand, Jews were considered magicians during Antiquity and the Middle Ages[[1]](#footnote-1).

In contrast to the question regarding practitioners and clients, there is no doubt that all incantation bowls, irrespective of the language in which there are written, do share formulaic and stylistic parallels, but they are also anchored in their own culture: incantation bowl texts written in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic display not only quotations from the Hebrew Bible, but also from rabbinic such as the Mishna and from liturgical texts.

This cultural and literary anchoring of incantation bowl texts and the fact that they were mostly written by rather experienced hands have led scholars to question the social status of these objects. Whereas researchers during the 19th century pejoratively named those bowls “magic bowls,” trying to separate these texts from Babylonian rabbinic Judaism, researchers now locate these incantation texts in the center of Judaism within Sasanian Babylonia. Incantation bowl texts not only use quotations from biblical and rabbinic writings and were written by experienced scribes, but they have also been found in late antique synagogues in Iraq.

The question of whether incantation bowl texts should be considered as “magical” texts or not is less a question that could be answered based on the philological examination of those texts than a question that depends on the present scientific discourse regarding the term “magic.” In contrast to the Bavli and official liturgical texts, which have undergone a multidimensional redaction process, incantation bowl texts provide an ad hoc insight into the genesis of personal non-authoritative ritual texts.

1.0 Synopsis and purpose of the current study

Whereas most incantation bowl texts can be clearly considered as apotropaic texts, there is a special sub-group of incantation bowl texts that has been described as aggressive or curse texts. The present study is dedicated to a special sub-group of incantation bowl texts that have been formerly considered to be curse texts, the so-called קיבלא bowls. In contrast to previous studies, the present thesis argues that these bowls should be considered as apotropaic bowls although most of them clearly indicate an antagonist. By doing so, it will be provided evidence that the so-called קיבלא bowls share important stylistic and formulaic features as well as historiolae and several motifs with incantation bowl texts that are undoubtedly apotropaic.

Including this introductory chapter, the present thesis is divided into six chapters. The present chapter will not only provide an overview about incantation bowls in general, but also examine their research history. We will discuss incantation bowls as material remains as well as examining the dialects in which the texts are written.

The second chapter of this study is dedicated to קיבלא bowls. First of all, the current scientific issue regarding the definition of the term “magic” will be discussed, but by no means comprehensively. In fact, we will be show that this discussion is not relevant for the purpose of the current study. Due to the fact that קיבלא bowl texts are traditionally considered to be aggressive, several criteria will be established that must be fulfilled before a text can be described as a curse. It will be shown that most קיבלא bowl texts do meet several of those criteria, but not all. Further, the term קיבלא and its use within several Aramaic dialects as well as in other Semitic languages will be investigated, and the corpus of bowls selected for the present study will be presented. The final part of the second chapter will be dedicated to the apotropaic aspects of קיבלא bowl texts.

The third chapter presents in detail the corpus on which this study is based. Each incantation bowl text in Aramaic as well as an English translation will be given. Further, an extensive linguistic commentary will be provided.

Within the fourth chapter stylistic as well as formulaic features of the presented incantation bowl texts will be discussed. First, recurrent formulae within the present corpus will be analyzed. Second, the presented incantation bowl texts will be analyzed stylistically. Third, biblical quotation as well as allusion to be biblical themes will be discussed. Last, the performativity of incantation bowl texts will be investigated.

The fifth chapter is dedicated to the research on incantation bowl texts in the context of Rabbinic Judaism in Late Antique Mesopotamia. An overview about Judaism in the Sasanian Empire will be given. Further, incantation bowl texts will be discussed within the context of Mediterranean “curse” texts.

The sixth chapter should be considered as a conclusion of the present study as well as a short outline of research questions connected with the study of incantation bowls in general and קיבלא bowls in particular that should be investigated in the future.

The current study aims to provide a comprehensive contextualized analysis of the קיבלא bowl text genre. The detailed analysis of the selected texts, as well as a linguistic and philological commentary on incantation bowl texts that have been already published as well as incantation bowl texts published for the first time within this study, aim to provide access to this textual genre also to readers who are interested in the linguistic features of the bowls but not completely familiar with the dialectical features of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic.

1.1. Incantation Bowls

An incantation bowls is a domestic bowl-shaped earthenware artifact inscribed with ink. These bowls were wheel-made and can be divided into two basic types, hemispherical and flat-based (Hunter 1995a), of which the hemispherical type is predominant.[[2]](#footnote-2) According to Morony 2003, p. 87, around 80% of the incantation bowls are hemispherical.[[3]](#footnote-3) Regarding their physical appearance, incantation bowls do not differ from uninscribed mass-produced bowls that were used for domestic purposes.[[4]](#footnote-4) These inscribed clay artifacts have mostly been found in the historical region of Mesopotamia, i.e. modern Iraq, but also, more rarely, in neighboring regions such as Iran.[[5]](#footnote-5) Due to the fact that only a minority of them have been excavated in controlled archeological excavations, the exact provenance of most bowls is uncertain. “Thus far, incantation bowls have been found *in situ* only at sites in central and southern Iraq: from Medain Ruqba and Warka in the South-east to Tell Ibrahim, Tell Baruda (Coche) at Mada’in, and the Diyala region in the north. Many come from Nippur and its environs – Bismaya, Kish, and Borsippa. They also come from Khafahe and Khuabir, thirty miles northwest of Mussayib, west of Baghdad, on the right bank of the Euphrates. These places appear to define the region with hemispherical bowls. Flat-bottomed , flared-rimed bowls have been found at Kish and Nippur, so there is some territorial overlap” (Morony 2003, 87f.).

The number of incantation bowls known today can be estimated at approximately 2,500 bowls, but it is most likely that this number will need to be corrected upwards due to the increasing number of bowls constantly entering the antiquities market.[[6]](#footnote-6) Incantation bowls are hosted both in museums and private collections. Morony 2003, pp. 87–93 indicates at least 885 bowls, many of them in the British Museum in London[[7]](#footnote-7) and the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad[[8]](#footnote-8). Unfortunately, he does not include the huge number of bowls preserved in private collections, e. g. in the collections of Martin Olsen Schøyen (Norway), Gil Shaya Moussaieff (Israel), Shlomo Moussaieff (England), Samir Dehays (Jordan) or the Barkat Gallery (England).

Most incantation bowls display a spiral inscription on their concave side,[[9]](#footnote-9) normally beginning in the center of the bowl and moving towards the outer rim. However, there are also incantations beginning from the rim and moving towards the center of the bowl.[[10]](#footnote-10) Besides the most common spiral writing design, there are some bowls with a different layout. The writing may be adjusted to the drawing on the bowl or executed in such a manner that the writing itself displays a specific figure or shape.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The majority of incantation bowls are written in Aramaic dialects such as Jewish Babylonian Aramaic [henceforth: JBA], Mandaic or Syriac.[[12]](#footnote-12) According to Levene 2003c, the majority of bowls, approximately two-thirds, are written in JBA, whereas 25 percent of the bowls found so far display Mandaic texts and fewer than 15 percent feature Syriac writing, including both Manichean and Estrangelo. Although JBA is also the language of the Babylonian Talmud, the language of the incantation bowls differs considerably from the ductus of the Bavli regarding morphology, syntax and phonology.

Some bowls also display figurative decorations (Vilozny 2010, 2013), most commonly a drawing of a bound demon, or geometric paintings that may be also accompanied by letters or letter-shaped scribblings. Many incantation bowls show drawn circles that restrict the writing both in the center and/or at the rim edge. Some bowls also display cartouches, words or text segments that are enclosed by a single line.

Incantation bowls were mainly produced between the fifth and seventh centuries[[13]](#footnote-13) and were used by Jews, Christians, Mandaeans, Manicheans, and Zoroastrians, to whom the bowls are generally attributed according to the language of the inscription.[[14]](#footnote-14) This emphasizes that in Mesopotamia during the Sasanian era (241-651 C. E), as in the late-antique eastern Mediterranean in general, a large number of beliefs and customs were shared by various ethnic and religious groups.[[15]](#footnote-15) The majority of bowls are written in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic and can be considered an important textual corpus, alongside the Babylonian Talmud, for late-antique pre-Muslim[[16]](#footnote-16) Babylonian Jewry.

1.2. Research History

Incantation bowl texts have been studied since the mid-nineteenth century, but there has been a significant increase in published bowls over the last decades and there are still many bowls waiting for publication.

The first six incantation bowls (five JBA and one Syriac bowl) were published by Thomas Ellis (Layard 1853, pp. 434–445) in Layard’s travel book *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, where he described the results and findings of his expedition to Mesopotamia, which was sponsored by the British Museum.[[17]](#footnote-17) Although only few pages of Layard’s volume were dedicated to the incantation bowls, Ellis’ contribution initiated the systematic scientific research into incantation bowls and their language and contents, which started with Levy’s re-publication of Ellis’ first bowl (Levy 1855). About twenty years later, a bowl preserved in the British Museum was initially published by Rodwell 1873 and republished by Halévy 1877. In the *corpus inscriptionum hebraicarum* (Chwolson 1882), some of the bowls already published were critically re-edited. Subsequent studies on several incantation bowls were made by Moïse Schwab, the French translator of the Yerushalmi (Palestinian Talmud) (Schwab 1882, 1886, 1890, 1891, 1892, 1916/17), Henri Hyvernat, who edited one bowl from a museum in Cannes (Hyvernat 1885), and Joseph Wohlstein, who published five incantation bowls from Berlin (Wohlstein 1893), one of which was republished by Rudolf Stübe in his book *Jüdisch-babylonische Zaubertexte* (Stübe 1895). In 1892, Henri Pognon, the French consul in Baghdad, published the first Mandaic bowl (Pognon 1892), which was followed by a more elaborated work with full apparatus and several appendices (Pognon 1898-99). Some years later, Mark Lidzbarski published his article “Mandäische Zaubertexte” after editing five Mandaic incantation bowls (Lidzbarski 1902). One bowl found during the University of Pennsylvania’s expedition to Nippur was published by Richard Gottheil within the second volume of Peters’ *Nippur, or Explorations and Adventures on the Euphrates* (Peters 1898). Another bowl from the University of Pennsylvania’s collection was edited by Myhrmann 1909.

But the cornerstone of the systematic scientific research on incantation bowls was laid by Montgomery 1913, who not only presented a detailed review of the work done by scholars before him, but also (re)edited 40[[18]](#footnote-18) bowls from Nippur which were found during the University of Pennsylvania’s campaign. The diligently annotated transliterations and translations were accompanied by a broad study on the scriptural and linguistic features of the bowls and a detailed survey of their sociocultural and historical environment. A special chapter was dedicated to the magic of the bowls. In keeping with the Zeitgeist of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Montgomery’s approach to the magic of the bowls is characterized by a perceived dichotomy between religion and magic, between Jewish monotheism and eclectic foreign – mainly Babylonian and Hellenistic – influences.[[19]](#footnote-19) Consistently, he claims that the incantations within the bowl text are only “degenerate successors of the elder incantations” (Montgomery 1913, p. 108) and that the “religious element is totally wanting” (Montgomery 1913, p. 111). Additionally, he points out that “in the use of the Jewish Scriptures, which is very scanty, the passages of real religious import are not employed” (Montgomery 1913, p. 112). Consequently, he concludes that the bowls “are not so much illustrative of a special Jewish magic as of the eclectic religious conditions of later Mesopotamia” (Montgomery 1913, p. 116). Although the intercultural and interreligious syncretism of bowl magic is still an important issue within the research on incantation bowls, nowadays, the idiosyncratic particularities of incantation bowl texts ascribed to different cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds are more thoroughly observed.   
Montgomery’s readings and translations were corrected and critically discussed by Brown 1921, Barton 1913/14, Epstein 1922 and others.

From the 1930s Cyrus Gordon, a student of Montgomery, was one of the most influential scholars in the research on incantation bowls for more than half a century. In 1934 he published eight incantation bowls[[20]](#footnote-20) from museums in Istanbul and Baghdad (Gordon 1934a, 1934b, 1934c), three years later eight – five Aramaic and three Mandaic – bowls followed (Gordon 1937). In 1940 two bowls of the Yale collection were published by Julian Obermann (Obermann 1940). In 1941 Gordon not only published eleven Aramaic bowl texts[[21]](#footnote-21) and several fragments, but also contributed extensively to the cataloging of bowls preserved in several museums (Gordon 1941). Contrary to Montgomery, who was anchored in the scientific discussion of the early twentieth century, Gordon’s approach towards the magic of the bowl, and the distinction between magic and superstition on the one side and magic and science on the other side, was more pragmatic and historically based:[[22]](#footnote-22) “It is perhaps worthwhile here to make a fundamental distinction between science and superstition. If something appears plausible at a certain time, it may fairly be classified as scientific; but if later disproved and yet people adhere to it, it is then superstition. Thus to look down upon ancient scientists of Babylonia because they believed in astrology, would be to lack historical perspective” (Gordon 1957, p. 160).

In 1949 William Rossell, a student of Cyrus Gordon, finished his dissertation entitled *A Grammar of the Dialects of the Aramaic Incantation Texts*,which was later published as part of a broader volume (Rossell 1953). In the following twenty years several compilations of Aramaic (e.g. Isbell 1975),[[23]](#footnote-23) Mandaic, (e.g. Yamauchi 1967), and Syriac (e.g. Hamilton 1971) bowls appeared. Isaac Jeruzalmi’s doctoral dissertation at the Sorbonne was also dedicated to Aramaic incantation bowl texts (Jeruzalmi 1964). One Aramaic incantation bowl text was published by Yamauchi 1965 and five bowls from the collection of the Rozal Ontario Museum, two in Aramaic and three in Mandaic, were published by McCullogh 1967.

In 1976, two Aramaic incantation bowl texts were published by Isbell and one Aramaic and one Syriac bowl by Markham Geller, who continued working in the field (Geller 1980, 1986). Two years later, a Syriac bowl, and in 1981 an Aramaic one, were published by Harviainen, who was especially interested in the orthography and grammar of incantation bowl texts.

In 1985 Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked published their remarkable book *Amulets and Magic Bowls* (Naveh and Shaked 1985), and seven years later *Magic spells and Formulae* (Naveh and Shaked 1993). Both volumes feature not only a detailed philological analysis of the presented texts, but also a general discussion of Jewish magic culture in Late Antiquity. Presenting incantation bowl texts together with amulets from Israel and fragments from the Cairo Genizah, Naveh’s and Shaked’s work underscored the similarities between Palestinian and Babylonian Jewish magic[[24]](#footnote-24) and the borrowing of magic motifs and formulae from west to east. Since then, Shaul Shaked and his students have continually contributed to the research on incantation bowls. One the one hand, Shaked wrote various articles on the demonology of the incantation bowl texts, e. g. Shaked 1985, their connection with Rabbinic, Merkavah and Hekhalot literature, e. g. Shaked 1995, their literary structure, e. g. Shaked 2005, or their intercultural and interreligious significance. On the other hand, he continued to edit hitherto unpublished bowls, publishing in 2013, for example, together with James Nathan Ford and Siam Bhayro, bowls from the Schøyen collection (Shaked et al. 2013).[[25]](#footnote-25) Besides an extensive philological commentary and a broad discussion of several literary features, this volume also offers an outline of the figurative art of the incantation bowls, written by Naama Vilozny, and a detailed analysis of the linguistics features by Matthew Morgenstern, who has contributed a great deal to the research of Aramaic dialects in general (Morgenstern 2011) and to the scientific discussion about the language of the bowls in particular, e. g. Morgenstern 2005, 2007. According to Morgenstern, the non-standard writings within the incantation texts should be considered as phonetic spellings.[[26]](#footnote-26)

Aside from the editing and publication of unpublished bowl texts and research on the cultural and sociological background of the bowls, their language has always been one of the main issues. In 1999, almost half a century after Rossell’s dissertation, Juusola published his systematic monograph *Linguistic Peculiarities in the Aramaic Magic Bowl Texts* with an extensive morphology and phonology of the JBA bowls.[[27]](#footnote-27)

Interestingly, the archeological and especially ceremological nature of the incantation bowls has been totally neglected by scholarship for a long time. Only a few scholars have contributed to our knowledge of their archeological features, e. g. Hunter, who contributed a chapter about the physical features and decorative aspects of the bowls in Segal 2000, and Morony 2003.[[28]](#footnote-28) In the same vein, the art of the incantation bowls and their relation to the texts, has had a very shadowy existence for many decades. After two articles by Hunter 1995b and Swartz 2006, Naama Vilozny was the first who dedicated a full study to the iconographic aspects of the incantation bowls (Vilozny 2010, 2017).[[29]](#footnote-29)

Over the last two decades, a substantial number of bowls – both from museums and private collections – have been edited. In 2000, Judah Segal published seventy-five JBA, forty-one Mandaic, four Syriac and twenty-two pseudoscript bowls from the collection of the British Museum, with a slender overview of the religio-cultural framework and the assumed ritual behind the incantation bowl magic as well as an introduction to their linguistic peculiarities (Segal 2000). In 2005, Christa Müller-Kessler published a volume about the incantation bowls from the Hilprecht-Sammlung in Jena (Müller-Kessler 2005). After having contributed immensely to the research on incantation bowls in general, e. g. an edition of twenty bowls from the Moussaief collection ( (Levene 2002a) and several articles (Levene 2002b, 2003a, 2003b, 2005, 2011, 2007), Dan Levene published a volume especially dedicated to the so-called curse bowls (Levene 2013) – bowls that attempt to harm a human target, editing 14 hitherto unpublished bowls from the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin[[30]](#footnote-30) and reediting several other bowls.

In 2018, Siam Bhayro, James Nathan Ford, Dan Levene, and Ortal-Paz Saar[[31]](#footnote-31) contributed another milestone in the research on incantation bowls to the scientific community by publishing a volume dedicated to the incantation bowls from the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin (Bhayro et al. 2018). They presented not only an edition of sixteen so far unpublished incantation texts with a transliteration, translation and a commentary, but also offered a catalogue of 169 bowls from the museum’s collection, which will be very useful for further research.

While incantation bowls were considered a peculiar aberration of the uneducated at the beginning of bowl scholarship in the 19th century, their importance for the history of Judaism in general, and for the history of Jewish magic in particular, is now acknowledged within the scientific discourse, as can be seen in Bohak 2008, or in Harari 2017, who not only presented a short overview of the history of scholarship on the subject but also offered an exemplary analysis of an incantation in his *Jewish Magic before the Rise of Kabbalah.*

Although most publications within the field are still dedicated to editing new incantation bowl texts from museums and private collections, there is growing interest in the so-called second-level research, which uses these texts as a source for addressing linguistic and literary questions.

The present study is

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1. The question of whether incantation bowl texts should be considered as “magical” texts or not will be addressed later in this study. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Within the selection of incantation bowls on which this thesis is based, all bowls belong to the hemispherical type. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. For his study, Morony 2003 has examined the physical appearance of 855 bowls from 27 museums. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. For an analysis of utilitarian pottery in Late-Antique Mesopotamia cf. Venco Ricciardi 1967. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Although the vast majority of bowls with known provenience can be located in Mesopotamia, there are also some bowls found in the western part of modern Iran, especially in Khuzistan and around the city of Susa (cf. Gordon 1951, p. 306). Considering the fact that all of these regions were part of the Sasanian empire, the findings around Susa – a major city of Achaemenian and Sasanian administration – are not surprising.   
   Having in mind Montgomery’s statement that “[t]he provenance of this material is thus confined to a small region, extending from Nippur and Bismaya on the south to Ashur on the north, lying on both sides of the Euphrates” (Montgomery 1913, p. 22), Gordon’s contribution from 1951 should be considered as an important enlargement of the bowls’ provenance.   
   A detailed map, showing archeological sites where incantation bowls were found in situ, was produced by Müller-Kessler 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Due to the political situation in Iraq, many archeological artifacts, both from museums and collections and from unauthorized digs, have been entering the international antiquities market since the 1990s*. [The spelling “artefact” is not incorrect, but I have been using American rather than British spellings and conventions consistently; that spelling is British.]* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. 142 incantation bowls are housed in the British Museum’s collection and were published by Segal 2000. Due to the fact that some of Segal’s readings could be significantly improved, some bowls were republished, e. g. by Levene 2013 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. According to Morony 2003, 565 bowls are housed in the National Museum of Iraq, whereas Faraj and Moriggi 2005, following Teixidor 1962, state that the collection consists of 256 bowls. Unfortunately, there was no possibility to contact anybody at the National Museum of Iraq to verify the number of bowls. The majority of the collection still remains unpublished. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. A small number of bowls also displays markings or instructions in Aramaic or Pahlavi on its outer side. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Within the British Museum collection, BM 91723, BM 91745, BM 91770, BM 108820, BM 103360, BM 117826, and BM 135563 show this text arrangement. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. This highly sophisticated writing can be considered as evidence for the fact that the writers of the bowls were professional scribes and may have written other materials that have not been preserved. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. There is also a very small number of bowls written in Pahlavi or Arabic. Some bowls display a variety of pseudo-script or scribble. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. It can be surmised that the production of incantation bowls continued until the early eighth century. Although incantation bowls are mainly dated due to archaeological and paleographical considerations ( cf. Faraj 2010, pp. 17–18), there are some bowls from the Schøyen Collection with explicit date specification, e. g. MS 2053/284 or MS 2053/19, which will be published by Shaul Skaked and James Nathan Ford. For time designations in Aramaic incantation bowls cf. Shaked 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. This attribution is quite problematic and will be further discussed in chapter 5.1 “Babylonia in Late Antiquity”. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. This cultural overlap and interrelation is mainly absent from the authoritative writings of these groups, e. g. the Talmud Bavli, the Zoroastrian literature, and the writings of Mani. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Although there are no bowls known so far that can be dated after the Islamic conquest of Babylonia, there are some bowls written in Arabic characters. They are currently being prepared for publication by James Nathan Ford. One of these bowls – partly written in Arabic – can be dated to the time of Muawiyah I, the first caliph of the Umayyad caliphate (reign 661-680). [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Ellis considered the bowls to be Chaldean: “Amongst the various curious objects found on the banks of the Euphrates, and in the ruins of ancient Babylonia, were several bowls or cups of terracotta, round the inner surface of which were inscriptions in the ancient-Chaldean language written in characters wholly unknown, and, I believe, never seen before in Europe” (Layard 1853, pp. 434–435). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Thirty bowls were written in JBA (called “Rabbinic” texts by Montgomery), eight in Syriac and three in Mandaic. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Cf. Montgomery 1913, p. 68: “Our magic is a degenerate survival of the religious and magical developments of ancient Egypt and Babylonia, of the Hellenistic world, of Judaism.” [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Some of the bowls published by Gordon in 1934 have duplicates that had already published by Hyvernat, Layard, and Lidzbarski. For a detailed explanation cf. Yamauchi 1965, p. 512. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Some of the bowls published by Gordon in 1941 had already been edited by Schwab (Yamauchi 1965, p. 512), but they were substantially emended by Gordon. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Gordon also emphasizes the fact that the study of bowl magic is based on “dead records” and that the accompanying ritual can “only be partially surmised from the words” (Gordon 1957, p. 161). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Several of the Aramaic bowls published by Isbell had already been studied in Jeruzalmi 1964 but had not been published. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Shaked’s view of “magic” is very pragmatic: Although he admitted that “[a]nyone working within the field of magic in Judaism in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages knows the difficulties besetting any attempt to define it” ( Shaked 1995, p. 197), he claims that “there are not very many cases of hesitation when one tries to identify magic texts” (Shaked 1995, p. 197). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. This volume is the first publication of an ongoing project that intends to publish all the bowls in the Schøyen collection. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Following Morgenstern, these texts should be assessed as an inevitable supplement to the Rabbinic writings for the reconstruction of the linguistic features of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic. In contrast to the authoritative Rabbinic texts, there was no redaction and transmission of specific bowl texts due to the fact that most of the bowls were ritually buried directly after the writing process. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. It should be mentioned that the introduction also contains an overview of East Aramaic Dialects. Due to the enormous number of bowl texts published over the last twenty years, from today’s point of view Juusola’s volume is unfortunately based on a very limited number of bowls. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. In his article on the special qybl’ bowls, Dan Levene – highlighting the bitumen markings of some bowls – also touched on some archeological features (Levene 2011). *Elsewhere,* qybl’ *is always* קיבלא. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Parallel to recurring formulae within the incantation texts, Vilozny identified several visual patterns. These patterns are not only contextualized within the cultural environment of bowl practitioners, but also connected to the corresponding textual features. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. One of the newly edited bowls (SD 27) is not part of the museum’s collection, but located in the Samir DeHays Collection in Jordan. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Matthew Morgenstern, Marco Moriggi, and Naama Vilozny also contributed to this volume. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)